



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

March 8, 2018, to December 6, 2018
and Partial Index

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker



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The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, March 8, 2018

Day 1

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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

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

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

Party standings:

New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 25 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent: 1 Vacant: 2

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Shannon Dean, Law Clerk and Director of	Committee Services	Chris Caughell, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms
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Hanson	Rosendahl
Kazim	Woollard
Kleinsteuber	Vacant
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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

3 p.m.

Thursday, March 8, 2018

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

[The Clerk read the Royal Proclamation dated February 14, 2018, summoning the Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to convene on this date]

The Clerk: Please be seated.

[The Sergeant-at-Arms left the Chamber]

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

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

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon, fellow parliamentarians.

I would ask that we please each bow our heads and let each of us in our own way pray or reflect. We are the blessed daughters and sons of indigenous people, of pioneers, and of immigrants from every part of our world. We are here because of our elders, whose sacrifice, hard work, and wisdom paved a path. We exist and are strong due to our shared love and compassion for each other. We thrive because of our families and this land's bounty. We are blessed because of both our diverse and also shared beliefs passed down from our mothers and our fathers. We are here to fulfill our shared commitment and responsibility to make a better world. Let us never fail in our duty to serve and lead through example for the sake of our children's children and all those who come after us. Let us be defenders of democracy and models of it.

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

Hon. Members and Guests:

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

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Presentation to the Assembly of Hon. Jason Kenney Member for Calgary-Lougheed

The Speaker: I would invite the Official Opposition House Leader to proceed to the main doors of the Chamber.

Hon. members, I have received from the Chief Electoral Officer of Alberta the report of the returning officer for the constituency of Calgary-Lougheed containing the results of the by-election conducted on December 14, 2017, which states that a by-election was held in the constituency of Calgary-Lougheed and that the Hon. Mr. Jason Kenney was duly elected as the Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

[Mr. Nixon escorted Mr. Kenney to the Mace]

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to introduce to you and to this Chamber the Hon. Mr. Jason Kenney, the new Member for Calgary-Lougheed, who has taken his oath as a member of this Assembly, has inscribed the roll, and now claims his right to take his seat.

The Speaker: Let the hon. member please take his seat.

Entrance of the Lieutenant Governor

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

[The Mace was draped]

The Speaker: Hon. members, the Royal Canadian Artillery Band musical interlude will now be played. The piece to be performed is *Concerto in C Major*. This concerto for double trumpets is one of the few solo works of the early 1700s to feature brass instruments. It is the only such piece by Vivaldi. What is remarkable is that the work itself is among Vivaldi's best known creations, yet we know very little about it. The material is appropriately flashy and fanfarelike, marked allegro, while propelled by vigorous rhythmic support, much like this Chamber occasionally is.

The RCA Band, Canada's oldest regular army band, was formed in Quebec City in 1879. It was subsequently stationed in Montreal and in Halifax. It is now claimed by our province of Alberta. It has been in service in both world wars and in Korea, and it has travelled across Canada and beyond our borders. Reconstituted in Edmonton in 1997, the band today is under the direction of Captain Christopher Embree, CD, who is in the Speaker's gallery.

Please enjoy listening to the Royal Canadian Artillery Band brass ensemble performing Vivaldi's *Concerto in C Major*.

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

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

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

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

[A fanfare of trumpets sounded]

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

Her Honour: Please sit down.

Speech from the Throne

International Women's Day

Her Honour: Fellow Albertans, welcome to this, the first day of the new session of your Legislature. We gather today on the traditional territory of Treaty 6 and acknowledge the Métis people of Alberta, who share a deep connection with this land.

I also want to acknowledge that today is International Women's Day. In the halls above this Chamber are tributes to Alberta's Famous Five, whose historic win ensured that many Canadian women were considered persons. Much later indigenous women

won that same recognition. Throughout our history women in Alberta have done great things, women such as the recently retired Beverley McLachlin, a brilliant and proud Albertan, who left her mark on her country and our Supreme Court as Chief Justice. Alberta women won medals for our country in six events at the recent Olympics. Alberta was the first province in Canada to have a cabinet where the majority of ministers are women. On this International Women's Day we recognize these successes and more. Women's rights are human rights, and your government celebrates them.

Saluting Alberta's Heroes

As citizens of Alberta, people who proudly celebrate one another, we also defend one another. When tested, Albertans come through for each other. Again this past year we were tested, by terror in our capital and fire in our south. Again Albertans stepped up to defend one another. We saw that in the brave and selfless efforts of James Hargrave, a volunteer firefighter tragically lost battling a wildfire near Hilda, and in the unbreakable resolve of Constable Mike Chernyk of the Edmonton police, who protected his neighbours when their lives were threatened. On behalf of all Albertans, thank you. And to the family of Mr. Hargrave, our deep condolences for your loss.

Courage, resilience, generosity, and openness are found in every corner of our province. When we're down, we help each other up. And we know that no matter who we are, however we worship, where we come from, or who we love, we are stronger when we look out for one another.

Ensuring Canadian Tidewater Access for Alberta Energy

That applies to Canada, too. Albertans fuel the economic strength of this great country. We are hard-working people who create wealth and jobs across Canada, we are forward-looking people who know climate change requires us to look out for the world we leave for the next generation, and we are practical people, united in the conviction that a new pipeline to the Canadian coast must be built and our land lock must end.

Canada's decades-long inability to diversify our export markets is holding us back, all of us. Billions of dollars for schools, hospitals, and public services have evaporated, thousands of good jobs have been tossed aside, and money that should be in the pockets of working Canadians has been redirected south of our border.

The dispute British Columbia triggered with its attack on Canadian workers will not stand. We won't let it. We have been vigilant in defending our workers, and we will remain vigilant. When the city of Burnaby tried to block the Trans Mountain pipeline in court, your government intervened. When the government of British Columbia tried to overstep its authority and regulate something it has no right to regulate, your government stepped up. We shut down talks about electricity sales to British Columbia, talks that could have meant up to \$500 million per year for them; we banned British Columbia wine from Alberta shelves; and we brought together a task force of experts and notable Canadians to provide us with the best advice. Those measures were effective in getting British Columbia to back away from the illegal point in their plan and effective in making sure all Canadians knew our resolve.

We refuse to let anyone turn their backs on the thousands upon thousands of working people in our energy sector. Some people have asked how far we are willing to go. Today we reaffirm that we will do whatever it takes. In the past when workers in our energy industry were attacked and when the resources we own were threatened, Premier Peter Lougheed took bold action. Your

government has been clear: every option is on the table. We will not hesitate to invoke similar legislation if it becomes necessary owing to extreme and illegal actions on the part of the B.C. government to stop the pipeline. Make no mistake. Alberta has no desire to take this step, but it is important that B.C. and the country know that we will do whatever it takes to make sure our constitutional rights are respected as partners in Confederation.

Albertans are united. We will remain united. Together we will get this pipeline built.

Choices Made during the Downturn

The last few years have underscored our need to diversify our markets and diversify our economy. When your government was first elected, we inherited an economy in free fall. The boom had ended, and the bust had just begun. But this bust was unlike others that had come before, different not only for its severity but in how we chose to respond, by working to make life better and putting the priorities of regular people first. We did not rest idle or turn our backs on the day-to-day needs of people and families.

Based on the solid advice of David Dodge, the former governor of the Bank of Canada, we invested in bricks and mortar, tarmac and rails and put Albertans to work building our province. A new cancer centre is being built in Calgary. On Edmonton's growing south side we are planning a new hospital. Both will serve patients and families for generations.

After years of overcrowding, hundreds of new schools have either been built or are under construction. More will be announced this year.

In the Industrial Heartland new petrochemical plants are on the way.

Better highways, bridges, and overpasses are being built across Alberta.

The construction of the green line in Calgary is the largest public infrastructure project in the city's history. It will create tens of thousands of jobs, and when complete, it will serve more than 60,000 people every day.

Not only did these efforts help rebuild and re-energize our cities and towns; these efforts supported and created tens of thousands of jobs for Albertans when those jobs were needed most.

With our plan working and the private sector regaining strength, your government will again act on the advice of Mr. Dodge and bring the level of public-sector capital spending down. But make no mistake. Unlike previous years when infrastructure announcements were made in front of empty fields that would remain empty indefinitely, the projects your government has already announced will be built.

Things Are Looking Up

The cumulative impact of making different choices is paying off. Although there is more work to do to make sure each and every Albertan benefits from the recovery, things are looking up. Our province is leading Canada in economic growth. Our economy is diversifying. Almost 90,000 people have found a new full-time job over the last year.

Signs that things are looking up don't stop there. Manufacturing is up. Housing starts, exports, and retail sales are up. So too is drilling activity and earnings. We steered our way through the recession by focusing on the fundamentals: good jobs, day-to-day affordability, and public services people and families can rely on.

Now that the economic recovery is here, we will keep our focus on the priorities of regular people. This time the economic recovery will be built to last. It's to that plan that we now turn our attention.

Diversifying Our Economy

Albertans want off the resource royalty roller coaster. Rather than sitting back and hoping for the best, your government's main priority for this legislative session will be to further diversify our economy and build a more resilient future. Thankfully, we are not starting from a standstill. Action already taken is paying off. More workers are finding more jobs in manufacturing, tourism, and renewable energy. This is encouraging, but more can and must be done.

With the economy looking up, now is the time to help more Albertans find jobs in new areas of opportunity. Toward that end, three bills will be aimed at diversifying our economy. The first bill will focus on diversification within the energy sector. As we work to diversify the markets our energy resources can access via pipeline, we will also do more to add value to our resources right here at home. The second bill will focus on diversification across our economy. The third bill will focus on laying the groundwork for new renewable energy jobs and an electricity system with more stable prices. Let's look at each of those measures in turn.

Diversifying Our Energy Sector

We begin with our traditional strengths in the energy sector. Guided in part by the advice of the Energy Diversification Advisory Committee, your government will act boldly to help the industry innovate and diversify. We believe the public sector can and should help foster the next generation of technology in our energy sector. Through Bill 1, the Energy Diversification Act, Alberta will support the commercialization of the partial upgrading of our bitumen. This will increase the number of refineries that can accept our energy resources, increase pipeline capacity by removing the need for diluent for some of our exports, and create good jobs.

In addition, we will embark on the second phase of petrochemical diversification to further broaden our recovery and further diversify our economy. The first phase exceeded expectations. We received nearly double the number of applications we expected. Taken together, those applications represented more than \$20 billion in potential investment in Alberta. We want to seize that investment potential and build on this success with more petrochemical plants, plants that will employ more Albertans and put more of our feedstock to use in new and prosperous ways. And when it comes to that feedstock, we will work with industry to incentivize investment in new straddle plants to separate high-value natural gas liquids from Alberta natural gas, creating jobs in value-added industries, diversifying our products and our markets.

These measures are not one-off fixes. They are part of a long-term plan to put our province on a more diversified and resilient economic footing.

Diversifying through Education, Training, and Business Development

While your government works to diversify our traditional strengths, we will also diversify by helping other sectors of our economy grow. The second bill your government will table before this Legislature will be the Growth and Diversification Act. This act will expand existing tax credits, introduce new tax credits, place major resources behind education and training, and help make postsecondary education more affordable. We will extend the capital investment and Alberta investor tax credits to help businesses grow and expand.

We will also support job creation in digital industries with a new digital industries tax credit. This act will also create thousands of

new spaces in our postsecondary institutions dedicated to technology, an investment that will enable more Albertans to get the education and training they need to get good jobs in this growing sector. At the same time we will continue to make postsecondary education costs here more competitive with costs elsewhere. The tuition freeze will be continued, saving students up to \$1,500 on a four-year degree. To keep education affordable and to protect the gains we have made on behalf of students and families, any future tuition increase will be capped by law. To make education more accessible and affordable in northwest and central Alberta, colleges in Grande Prairie and Red Deer will begin their path to becoming degree-granting institutions.

Diversifying Our Electricity Sector

Your government will create new jobs and protect people from wild electricity price swings. Since Alberta's electricity system was deregulated, families, businesses, and investors have been subject to volatile electricity costs. That volatility was keeping investors on the sidelines. At the same time, the electricity system generated harmful air pollution, with Alberta burning more coal than every other province combined. We had a choice. We could change nothing and leave families exposed to price spikes, we could change nothing and leave our health and environment exposed to pollution, or we could act to make sure consumers have more predictable bills, investors have more certainty, and our electricity mix is diversified into wind, solar, and natural gas.

We chose to act. Last year Alberta's renewable energy auction secured new renewable energy at the lowest cost in Canadian history. This year we will see more low-cost renewables and more work to make sure communities across Alberta, including indigenous communities, see the economic benefits.

We will also lay the groundwork for a more stable electricity system by introducing legislation to create a capacity market. Our province needs billions of dollars in new investment to keep our electricity reliable and efficient. A capacity market will enable us to get the new, low-cost electricity supply Alberta will need to power our long-term economic prosperity. The old model relied on squeezing consumers to attract investors. The new model will attract investors through stability and reliability. While we take the time to implement a new, more stable system, our electricity price cap will continue to protect consumers from the sudden price spikes they've endured since deregulation.

As Canada moves toward cleaner ways to generate electricity, we will support the communities that have powered our province for generations. We have made sure some coal plants are able to convert to natural gas. We are helping coal workers with a \$40 million fund to support training, retirement security, and economic development. Taken together, these efforts will help further smooth out the bumps between boom and bust, diversifying our economy into green energy and green energy jobs, and help make sure this economic recovery works for working people.

Path Back to Balance

Another legacy of our province's boom-and-bust history is wild government spending swings, swings that created uncertainty for people. When your government was first elected, we outlined a plan that invested in people when times were bad but which would also return to a path to balance when times were better. Key to that plan is smoothing out those spending swings and making sure our schools, hospitals, and public service providers can count on stable, predictable funding.

Last week we released our third-quarter update. Coupled with an improving economy, the deficit is lower than projected, in keeping with the plan to which we have been working.

In the coming weeks we will release our budget. It will show that our economy continues to grow and diversify. It will also show that as we move toward a balanced budget, our dependence on nonrenewable resource revenue will be lower than what it has been historically.

The path to balance will also require working in partnership with the public sector to reduce costs. The people who work across our public sector are integral to the services Albertans rely on. We have already reached practical agreements, with no raises and better job stability, with many labour partners, including teachers and nurses, and a tentative agreement has been reached with our allied health professionals such as paramedics, lab technologists, and X-ray technologists.

We have also extended the pay freeze that covers all government managers for two more years while also expanding its reach. At the same time, your government is committed to making sure taxes on people and businesses remain the lowest in Canada.

Making Government Work for People

As we stay on track to balance the budget, we will continue to make sure your government puts regular people first. That means getting rid of long-standing executive perks and insider excess, all of which have been paid for by the many but enjoyed by the few. We have significantly reduced hospitality and travel costs and eliminated ridiculous perks like taxpayer-funded golf club memberships for well-paid executives of public bodies. We will continue to reduce salaries for executives and board members.

Building on our work to reduce exorbitant salaries in government agencies, boards, and commissions, work that has seen salaries cut significantly, with some executives seeing their salaries cut to the tune of hundreds of thousands of dollars a year, we will now focus on our postsecondary institutions. We owe it to our students to ensure that funding for education goes where it belongs, the classroom.

We will also continue our work to take big money out of politics. The days of union and corporate donations are done. Strict spending and contribution limits are now in force, and new accountability measures for third-party advertising have been put into law.

To further assure Albertans that their government is working for them, not for insiders, not for campaign donors, and not for special interests, this session we will also act on the advice of an all-party committee and reform Alberta's lobbyist laws.

Protecting Albertans from Crime

Across Alberta, from our rural communities to our urban centres, every Albertan deserves to feel safe. Today in Alberta, especially in rural areas, people are concerned for the safety of their homes, their property, and the well-being of those they love. That must change.

Your government invests more than half a billion dollars annually into police services across the province. Our police officers serve and protect Albertans with a bravery and dedication that is unmatched.

Yet more can be done to protect people and property and help Albertans feel safe. Together with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police we have developed new initiatives to combat rural crime. The focus will be to act on the advice of our police and law enforcement experts, including specific measures to better address the challenges of policing in rural communities and new measures to make sure people who refuse to obey the law are held to account.

This includes investing in new bait-and-tracking technology, including technology related to farm equipment, new measures to help police spend less time on paperwork and more time on the street, and putting boots on the ground where they're needed most to protect families.

Working with Indigenous People

When your government was first elected, we made a government-wide commitment to make sure that the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples was respected in all policy deliberations. Your government is working to keep that promise, and it is paying dividends. Initiatives such as affordable housing for indigenous people living off-reserve, the climate leadership plan, the renewable energy program, the curriculum review, work to better protect children in care, and more have all been strengthened because they engaged indigenous people and their interests in a constructive and practical dialogue.

We recently finished consultations with the people who were robbed of their families, communities, and language during the '60s scoop. The purpose of those consultations was to bring their suffering to light and help to reconcile this destructive legacy with a formal apology. Work will continue on this important matter.

We have invested to make sure First Nations communities in Alberta will have the infrastructure necessary to bring safe, clean, reliable drinking water to people. This year that work continues.

The Opioid Crisis

The opioid overdose crisis affects the lives of a growing number of Alberta families. Every affected person has a right to dignity, respect, and medical care. In this session your government will introduce legislation to ensure safety and quality care in private treatment facilities. We will provide more public treatment options, more harm reduction services, and more public education.

Driven by the best advice, scientific research, and evidence on how more lives can be saved, we will expand access to supervised consumption services. This work will continue to be guided by a diverse and committed emergency response commission that includes public health leaders, law enforcement, community workers, and Albertans who have experienced this crisis first-hand.

Addressing Inequality

When government fails to work for people, inequality rises. Since coming to office, your government has ensured that Alberta makes progress in building a fairer province. Too often in recoveries of the past the poor and most vulnerable have been left behind. This time we will make sure the economic recovery works for everyone.

That is why we have protected funding for our schools, hospitals, and the services on which Albertans rely, and it is why we will continue to protect and improve public services. It is why hundreds of thousands of families have received financial support through the Alberta child benefit and the enhanced Alberta family employment tax credit. It is why we have built more affordable housing for people and introduced better supports for seniors. It is why we have made changes to help protect LGBTQ2S youth, including new guidelines within our housing and homelessness system that are the first of their kind in Canada. It is why this year we will have a minimum wage of \$15 per hour.

We introduced a new school nutrition program to help kids get a good, healthy meal to start the day. This year that program will expand. We pioneered a new, affordable, high-quality child care program so the paycheques of new parents go further. This year that

program will also expand. Your government will take action in response to the child intervention panel so we can do more to help vulnerable children and to reduce the number of indigenous children in government care.

More also needs to be done to make sure every Albertan can live to their fullest potential. Accordingly, your government will support our most vulnerable neighbours by improving income support programs. We are also conducting a review of the persons with developmental disabilities program to determine how best to support persons living with disabilities.

Finally, owing to the bravery and resolve of women speaking out about sexual violence, we are facing up to a reality that unfolds daily in the lives of countless women. We hear them, and we stand with them. That's why we have invested to expand counselling and crisis services so more survivors who take the brave step to come forward have the supports they need.

Looking to the Future with Optimism

With the economic recovery upon us and as working Albertans get back on their feet, now is the time for unity. Our task together is to make sure this recovery works for working people. This recovery must be more diverse and long lasting.

It is time to look to the future with confidence, optimism, and the determination to build a more resilient economy, one that puts the economic security of people first. It is time to build on our traditional strengths and help Albertans seize a broad range of opportunity. It is time to overcome our land lock. A new Canadian pipeline to the Canadian coast must be built. Whatever differences members of this Assembly may have, we must move forward united.

Differences over strategy and tactics are healthy, democratic, and always encouraged. At the same time, we must resolve to make sure those differences remain rooted in our love for this great province. We are Albertans, all of us. We all want our province to succeed and our citizens to prosper. Let no one in this Chamber, this province, or this country cheer for Alberta to fail. We must stand united in defence of our collective security and well-being. Together we will get a pipeline built to the coast. Together we will diversify our export markets. Together we will unleash the potential of this province and its people.

To those who would say that Alberta's best days are behind us, we have proven them wrong, and we will continue to prove them wrong. Alberta's best days will always be ahead when we are home to diverse, talented, hard-working people.

This recovery is proving things can be done differently and that good things happen when governments proudly stand on the side of working Albertans. Our task is to make sure this recovery keeps working for working people, which is exactly what your government is committed to do.

Thank you, my friends and fellow Albertans.

God bless Alberta.

God bless Canada.

And God save the Queen.

The Sergeant-at-Arms: Order!

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

Hon. Members and Guests:

God save our gracious Queen,

Long live our noble Queen,

God save The Queen!

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

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

The Speaker: Please be seated.

[The Mace was uncovered]

[The Premier returned to the Chamber]

The Speaker: Hon. members, ladies and gentlemen, I am honoured and privileged to stand before you as Speaker of this Legislative Assembly to share a few words about a very significant anniversary. I'm referring to the 100th anniversary of the first two women to take their seats as legislators in this Legislative Assembly of Alberta. As well, it should be noted that these women were the first to be elected not only to our Assembly but to an Assembly anywhere in the British Empire, now the Commonwealth of Nations. On this day, International Women's Day, it is also with great pride that I say that a century after electing the first women to this Assembly, this 29th Legislature now hosts the largest number of women legislators in our history. Ought we not ask ourselves: why did it take so long?

On February 7, 1918, Louise McKinney and Roberta MacAdams were sworn in as Members of the Legislative Assembly in the fourth Legislature. Women in Alberta, at least some women, had gained the right to vote and hold office two years earlier, in April 1916, with the passage of the Equal Suffrage Statutory Law Amendment Act. In fact, it was only in the 1950s that barriers to the election of women and men on racial and religious grounds were eliminated. It was only in 1960 that all status indigenous people were finally granted the unconditional right to vote. The full enfranchisement of Albertans was only possible due to the sacrifice of many, many nameless Canadians who fought to move the dial slowly but surely forward towards equality.

In any event, Louise McKinney and Roberta MacAdams were elected in the provincial general election of 1917. McKinney was elected as the member for Claresholm, and MacAdams was elected for the province at large as a soldiers' overseas representative because she was serving in the First World War at the time of the election.

Louise McKinney and Roberta MacAdams were indeed remarkable individuals. McKinney was a dedicated social reformer who was active in the temperance and women's suffrage movements. She was also, later on, a member of the Famous Five, the group that advocated for women to be recognized as persons under the Canadian Constitution. In 1929 the United Kingdom's Judicial Committee of the Privy Council granted the status to Canadian women, thereby enabling women to be appointed to the Senate.

As an aside, as the members know, there is a wonderful exhibit dedicated to the Famous Five on the fifth floor of this legislative building. I encourage our guests here today to take time to visit that display.

Roberta MacAdams trained as a dietitian and joined the Canadian Army military corps in 1916, serving as a lieutenant during the First World War. Following her election in 1917, MacAdams became the first woman in the British Empire to introduce a bill, an Act to Incorporate the Great War Next-of-Kin Association. The bill was passed into law, giving legal recognition to this veterans' organization and reflecting MacAdams's dedication to veterans and their dependants.

As we embark upon the new session, as legislators, parliamentarians let us together remember the enduring contributions of

Louise McKinney and Roberta MacAdams and so many others who have come before us in this Assembly and in this great province.

Today let us celebrate the endowment made by women to our society and acknowledge the struggles that they still face at home and around the world, and let us commit to promoting equality and freedom and respect, no matter what Albertans' race, colour, creed, or gender identity may be.

Thank you.

Tablings

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

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Bill 1

Energy Diversification Act

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good afternoon, hon. members. I'm very pleased this afternoon to introduce Bill 1, the Energy Diversification Act.

Diversifying our energy sector has been a dream of Albertans for decades, but it is our government that is taking action to make it happen. We are acting, Mr. Speaker, in the proud tradition of Peter Lougheed, who believed that government can and government

should help to foster the next generation of technology in our energy sector.

If passed, this bill would lead to the creation of programs to support partial upgrading of our bitumen as well as a program to boost the collection of raw resources needed in petrochemical manufacturing such as ethane. It will also launch a second round of a successful petrochemical diversification program. This legislation is part of a long-term plan, Mr. Speaker, for a more diversified and resilient energy sector, one that is built to last.

With that, I am truly proud and honoured to move the first reading of Bill 1. Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 1 read a first time]

Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that the speech of Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor to this Assembly be taken into consideration the week of March 12, 2018.

[Motion carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I move that the Assembly stand adjourned until Monday, March 12, at 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 4:01 p.m.]

Bill Status Report for the 29th Legislature - 4th Session (2018)

Activity to Thursday, March 8, 2018

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

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

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

Bill 1 — Energy Diversification Act (McCuaig-Boyd)

First Reading — 6 (*Mar. 8, 2018 aft., passed*)

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, March 12, 2018

Day 2

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (UCP),
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Anderson, Hon. Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (NDP)
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (UCP)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (NDP)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (NDP)
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (NDP)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (NDP)
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP),
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Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (NDP)
Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP)
Cortes-Vargas, Estefania, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (NDP),
Government Whip
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Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (NDP)
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (NDP)
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)
Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (NDP)
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP)
Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP),
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Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (UCP)
Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (NDP)
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)
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Schneider, David A., Little Bow (UCP)
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Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (NDP)
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (NDP)
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (UCP)
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (UCP)
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (NDP),
Deputy Government Whip
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)
Vacant, Fort McMurray-Conklin
Vacant, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake

Party standings:

New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 25 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent: 1 Vacant: 2

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Kazim	Woollard
Kleinsteinuber	Vacant
Loewen	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, March 12, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Hon. members, welcome back.

If you could just bow your heads in prayer and contemplation. On this Commonwealth Day I would ask that we, each in our own way, reflect on the deep ties that link the Commonwealth together. In our deliberations today let us strive towards a common future together with our partners across Canada and the Commonwealth. Let us not forget that it is only through exchanging ideas and collaborative work that we can build an inclusive and more peaceful future. As practitioners of democracy let us serve as models for the betterment of the world's human condition.

Hon. members, as is our custom, we pay tribute to members and former members of this Assembly who have passed away since we last met.

Mr. Garth Alphonse Turcott
July 30, 1930, to January 11, 2018

The Speaker: Mr. Garth Alphonse Turcott was elected as the first-ever New Democrat member in Alberta and represented Pincher Creek-Crowsnest following a by-election held on October 6, 1966. He served until May 22, 1967. Mr. Turcott received his bachelor of arts and his bachelor of laws from the University of Saskatchewan. He served the community of Pincher Creek faithfully through his law practice for over 30 years. Mr. Turcott passed away on January 11, 2018, at the age of 87, following 65 years of marriage to the love of his life, Joan Turcott, and will be dearly missed by his granddaughter and nillywog, who is sitting in my gallery today and with whom he shared many cherished summer camping trips.

In a moment of silent reflection I would ask you to remember Mr. Turcott as you may have known him.

Hon. members and ladies and gentlemen, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Mr. R.J. Chambers, and I would invite all to participate in the language of their choice.

Hon. Members:

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

The Speaker: Thank you. Please be seated.

Statements by the Speaker

Commonwealth Day Message from the Queen

The Speaker: Hon. members, before we begin, I would like to take a moment to recognize that today is Commonwealth Day. I have a message from Her Majesty the Queen I would like to read. Copies of this message have been placed on your desks for your reference.

We all have reason to give thanks for the numerous ways in which our lives are enriched when we learn from others. Through exchanging ideas, and seeing life from other perspectives, we grow in understanding and work more collaboratively towards a common future. There is a very special value in the insights we gain through the Commonwealth connection; shared inheritances help us overcome difference so that diversity is a cause for celebration rather than division.

We shall see this in action at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting which takes place in the United Kingdom next month, bringing together young people, business and civil society from across the Commonwealth.

These gatherings are themselves fine examples of how consensus and commitment can help to create a future that is fairer, more secure, more prosperous and [more] sustainable. Having enjoyed the warm hospitality of so many Commonwealth countries over the years, I look forward to the pleasure of welcoming the leaders of our family of 53 nations to my homes in London and Windsor.

Sport also contributes to building peace and development. The excitement and positive potential of friendly rivalry will be on display next month as we enjoy the Commonwealth Games on the Gold Coast, Australia. Contributing to the success of the Games, alongside athletes and officials, will be thousands of volunteers.

Voluntary effort, by people working as individuals, in groups or through larger associations, is so often what shapes the Commonwealth and all our communities. By pledging to serve the common good in new ways, we can ensure that the Commonwealth continues to grow in scope and stature, to have an even greater impact on people's lives, today, and for future generations.

Members' 10th Anniversary of Election

The Speaker: Hon. members, before we introduce our visitors and guests this afternoon, March 3, 2018, marked the 10th anniversary of the election of two members of this Assembly. Firstly, I would ask the hon. Premier if she would join me at the dais. The hon. Premier has represented Edmonton-Strathcona for some time and also has a new job in this place.

I need the steps to be a little taller. It's the only time that that happens to me.

The second member also has served 10 years in this establishment. I would ask that the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti please come forward. I must tell you – and I think there would almost be unanimous consent – that this is a very gentle man whom I've had the privilege of meeting.

1:40

I would like to thank both of you and your respective families for the sacrifices they, too, have made to allow you to serve as members of this Assembly. In this 29th Legislature, having spent a decade as an MLA makes you elders of this hallowed hall. I know you both will continue to pass on the knowledge and experience you have gained to all of your colleagues. Congratulations.

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: Hon. members, with our admiration and respect there is gratitude to members of the families who shared the burdens of public office and public service. Today I would like to welcome members of the Turcott family, who are present in the Speaker's gallery. Please rise as I call your name and remain standing until all have been introduced: Gabrielle Kirk, Cameron Kirk, and Michael

Lavorato. Thank you for being here today, and thank you for your services.

The Member for Calgary-South East.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you my friend Mr. Stephen Mandel, the newly elected leader of the Alberta Party. Mr. Mandel has had a long and successful career in both business and politics, founding the Mandel Group and serving as mayor of Edmonton for nine years. He has dedicated himself to addressing homelessness, expanding seniors' housing, and engaging with multicultural communities. Stephen is also a dedicated father, husband, and grandfather to his grandson, which I admire the most. I and many Albertans look forward to Stephen's leadership in building up the Alberta Party to be the first choice for pragmatic, responsible government. I'd ask that Mr. Mandel, who is sitting in your gallery, sir, stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Introduction of Guests

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

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my distinct pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislature a class from Earl Buxton school, which is in Edmonton-Whitemud. This is Earl Buxton elementary. The students are accompanied by their teacher, Ms Laura Wenger, and a chaperone, Mrs. Jennifer Brayer. I'd ask them to rise and receive the usual warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks and minister responsible for the climate change office.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members assembled a number of dedicated public servants in Environment and Parks. I'll ask them to rise as I call out their names: Mr. Victor Daramola, Ms Zoya Sekhon, Mr. Tychon Carter, Mr. Phillip Phuong, Miss Leah Arnason, Ms Kristine Cariaga, Chantel Danylyshen, Graham Brittain, Cecile Novel, Wenhao Guo, and Ben Branscombe. I want to thank them for their service to this province.

The Speaker: Thank you. Welcome.

The Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. A great honour for me to rise and introduce to you and through you to the House two committed animal activists, wildlife activists: a biologist, Lisa Dahlseide, and an activist, Laurel Ambrose, from Calgary. Please stand. Thank you. I'm proud to say that Laurel Ambrose is a constituent of mine in the riding of Calgary-Mountain View, a member of Russell's Private Advocacy Group, known as R-PAG, a group dedicated to driving wildlife rehabilitation advocacy initiatives in Alberta. Lisa comes to us from the riding of Calgary-Bow. She's a wildlife biologist advocating for rehab of all wildlife and for science to better reflect wildlife management and policy. These passionate advocates have helped rally thousands of people to sign petitions urging this government to lift restrictions on the rehab of bears and other large wildlife. People like Lisa and Laurel are the environmental conscience of Alberta. They are seated in the public gallery. I ask all members to give them the usual welcome.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Health and Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce some very special guests who are in the members' gallery. I ask that they rise as I introduce them. They are Jayden Strauss's family as well as Kristopher Phillips and his family – please rise – and the Alberta Children's Wish Foundation of Canada team, based here in Edmonton. They're here today to celebrate children's wish month. Jayden's wish was the 25,000th wish granted by this organization. Kristopher will be fulfilling his wish in the near future. We know that granted wishes are beneficial to the psychological well-being of children as well as their families. I'm incredibly honoured to acknowledge the Children's Wish Foundation for their dedication to granting wishes in support of children who are sick and their families. I ask that all of our members please extend the warm welcome of our Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Cortes-Vargas: It's an honour to introduce to you and through you, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the MLAs from Strathcona county the organization committee of the Sherwood Park & District Chamber of Commerce, the first annual International Women's Day organization committee. On March 8 they set an agenda to press for progress to build workshops to support equality in the workplace, and it's my pleasure today to thank them for their dedication and vision. From the chamber of commerce we have with us – I'd ask them all to rise at once – board president Penny Jennings, executive director Todd Banks, chair of the organization committee Elan Lynes, and all of the rest of the staff that put this day together. Thank you very much. Please extend the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my absolute pleasure to rise and introduce a good friend of mine. You know, there are people who make politics better and then there are people who do the opposite of that, and this particular individual makes politics incredible. He is the most principled guy that I have ever had the opportunity of working with. He has a knack for knowing what everyday voters care about and are passionate about. He was an incredible member of our team over a very long period of time, and he's leaving the capital region for the land of opportunity. I invite him to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly, Mr. Evan Menzies.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions today. The first one. It's my honour to rise and introduce to you and the Assembly a team of individuals helping to ensure the long-lasting success of Alberta's energy industry. The Energy Diversification Advisory Committee put in hundreds of hours in meetings and policy work, all to determine how best to invest in the value-added downstream sector here in Alberta. The vision of their final report was reflected in Bill 1, the Energy Diversification Act, which will go a long way to achieving a stronger and more diversified energy sector. I know that not all of them could be here to join us today, but I would introduce them and ask them to rise as I say their names: our co-chairs Jeanette Patell and Gil McGowan as well as fellow members Carol Moen, Marie Robidoux, Rocky Sinclair, and Warren Fraleigh. I thank them for all the hard work they did on behalf of Albertans and ask the members to join me in the traditional welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. members, I seek the guidance of the House. We have a number of introductions to be made. Is the House prepared to consider a motion?

The Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Then, I will move to ask unanimous consent to continue till the conclusion of introductions.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: The Minister of Energy again.

1:50

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I may have the same situation of not all guests being here, but I would like to now present to you and through you some guests joining us here today for the debate on the future of our province. Albertans from all walks of life know that building a pipeline to tidewater is crucial to Alberta getting a better, fairer price for our resources. Workers, communities, indigenous leaders, and industry all understand this to be true. It's my honour to welcome today to hear this debate, Mark Scholz, president of the Canadian Association of Oilwell Drilling Contractors; Ben Brunnen, vice-president of oil sands with CAPP, Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers; Elizabeth Aquin, Petroleum Services Association of Canada; Bill Clapperton, VP stakeholder and environmental affairs, Canadian Natural Resources; Julie Woo, public affairs lead, Canadian Natural Resources; Keri Scobie, public affairs manager for Imperial's Edmonton refinery; and lastly, Scott Wenger, manager of government relations at Suncor. I ask those who are here to please rise and accept the warm reception of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and to all members of the Assembly two outstanding Albertans. Margaret and Ron Monroe are residents of the humble constituency of Edmonton-Gold Bar. When they were 17, they met as students at Red Deer College, soon to be a university. They fell in love and have been together ever since. The Monroes are lifelong New Democrats who volunteer for me and are dedicated servants of their community. They are also two of the kindest, most generous people that I have the privilege of knowing, and I wish to thank them for all of their support. My guests are seated in the gallery behind me. I ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly members of the Building Trades of Alberta. The BTA represents 16 unions and more than 70,000 Alberta members who build and maintain our province's roads, bridges, and critical energy infrastructure. As these Alberta men and women have built our province, they are here today to make sure we keep building into the future and hopefully listen to the debate on Government Motion 2. Our partners in the building trades know that we will get this pipeline built together. I'd now like to ask those members to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the rest of the Assembly Chief Billy Morin of the Enoch Cree Nation, who will be joining us to hear about the motion being presented this afternoon. Chief Billy is part of the Enoch Cree Nation, which is a signatory to Treaty 6 and which is bordered, of course, on its eastern side by the city of Edmonton. Chief Billy is supportive of Alberta's efforts to access new markets for its landlocked oil and gas resources and is looking forward to observing the debate on the Trans Mountain pipeline, that we are expected to have later today. I'd like to ask the Assembly to provide him the warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's great to be back. I'd like to introduce to and through you to all the members of the Assembly Mr. Rob Johnson. Rob, if you could please rise. Rob Johnson is a friend, a really good friend of mine, and a farmer in the heart of my riding, which I would say is the heart of Alberta. Three years ago, however, I narrowly won a nomination contest over him by only eight votes. Would you please join me in welcoming and giving him the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Peace River.

Ms Jabbour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Seated in your gallery today are eight board members of the Royal Commonwealth Society of Edmonton. The Edmonton branch was founded in 2005, during the visit of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II to Alberta. The Royal Commonwealth Society has a long history dating to 1868, and this year marks the 150th anniversary. The theme for this year is Towards a Common Future, which explores how the Commonwealth can address global challenges and work to create a better future for all citizens through subthemes of sustainability, safety, prosperity, and fairness. Our guests are here to recognize Commonwealth Day, which is celebrated annually on the second Monday in March. I would ask that they each rise as I call their names. We have Joe Zasada, who is the chair, commonwealth society of Canada; Rick Stewart, treasurer; and directors Bernie Baker and Kath Baker. I'd ask the Assembly to please give them the warm welcome.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Statement by the Speaker

Rotation of Questions and Members' Statements

The Speaker: Hon. members, I'd like to make some remarks on the rotation of oral questions and Members' Statements before the Assembly proceeds to Oral Question Period. As noted in the procedural memorandum dated February 22, 2018, and sent to all members, I encouraged House leaders to come up with an agreement on these rotations. At 12:09 p.m. on March 8 my office received a House leaders' agreement outlining new Oral Question Period and Members' Statements rotations to reflect the caucus changes since the fall sitting. At the appropriate time I will be tabling the House leaders' agreement.

I have reviewed and accepted the agreement. Accordingly, on March 9 my office sent to all members a chart showing the Oral Question Period rotation and a projected sitting days calendar to

reflect the allotment of members' statements among other things. Concerning the details of the Oral Question Period rotation, the third party will continue to receive question 4. It is also allocated question 11 on days 3 and 7 in addition to days 1 and 5, for a total of 12 questions over the eight-day rotation.

There have been changes at question 6. The Member for Strathmore-Brooks is now allocated question 6 on days 4 and 8, and the Official Opposition receives question 6 on days 3 and 7.

There is a change at question 10 as well. The government caucus is allocated question 10 on each day except for day 5, when the Official Opposition is entitled to ask that question.

Lastly, in terms of changes to the rotation, the Official Opposition is allocated question 12 on each day.

In terms of the total number of questions over the eight-day rotation, the number of questions remains the same for each of the caucuses and the independent member, except for the third-party opposition, which, as mentioned, receives two more questions.

A few changes have been made to the allocation of members' statements. The third opposition is now allocated a member's statement each Thursday.

Furthermore, each of the single-member caucuses and the Member for Strathmore-Brooks retains one statement over the three-week rotation. That statement is allocated on a Thursday. The change is that the Liberal caucus receives its statement on week 1, the Progressive Conservative on week 2, and the Member for Strathmore-Brooks on week 3.

I will implement these rotations starting today, the first day of the Fourth Session of the 29th Legislature. Today is day 1 of the Oral Question Period rotation.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As this is my first opportunity to speak in this Chamber, let me begin by thanking my constituents in Calgary-Lougheed for their confidence, the members of my party for the opportunity to serve as Leader of the Opposition, and offering a word of respect to the hon. the Premier and members of her government for their public service. I hope that while we will disagree, we can do it without being disagreeable.

Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion Opposition Carbon Levy

Mr. Kenney: Now, having said that, it's my job to hold the government to account. I always recall that my grandma used to say that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. So we were very flattered with the throne speech, seeing the government do a complete one-eighty in accepting the strategy we have long advocated: to fight for our pipelines by being prepared to turn off the taps. The question, Mr. Speaker, is: why did it take so long?

2:00

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, I'm also very pleased to welcome the member opposite to the House.

You know, at the end of the day, we're not going to take lessons, although from the leader of the UCP, on our energy future. We had Conservatives in Ottawa, we had Conservatives in Edmonton, and we had conservatives in Victoria for nine years, and they couldn't get a pipeline built, Mr. Speaker. No pipeline, no diversification.

They had their chance, and they blew it. That won't happen again. We will get that pipeline built.

Mr. Kenney: They are taking lessons, and we appreciate that, Mr. Speaker. We hope they'll take more of our good ideas. I'm also glad that the NDP has accepted our call for a debate and, hopefully, a unanimous motion where we could all speak to the importance of our resources and against the B.C. New Democrats' efforts to violate the Constitution and the rule of law. I have a very simple question for the government. Will the government accept one of our constructive amendments calling on the federal government to use its clear power to override Victoria's delay tactics by invoking section 92 of the Constitution Act and declaring the Trans Mountain pipeline as being . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I certainly do hope that the members opposite support our motion because I think it's very important for all Albertans to come together and actually get this pipeline built. With respect to the member opposite's motion the fact of the matter is that the federal government already has that authority because the pipeline crosses boundaries. In fact, accepting that motion would somehow suggest that they don't already have that authority. We know they have that authority. They approved the pipeline, and we will get the pipeline built.

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's a constitutional power that we believe the federal government could invoke and stop the New Democrats in Victoria from blocking our resources.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have here an important piece of literature. It's the NDP platform for the last election, and try as I might, I cannot find a single reference to the carbon tax. Right here, page 24: lots of other tax increases but not one reference to the job-killing carbon tax. Months after this platform was presented, the NDP imposed the largest tax hike in Alberta history. My question for the Premier is simple. Why did the NDP mislead our . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, we're going to work on those times together. I'm sure we'll catch it up.

The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What I will say is that when it comes to our climate leadership plan, the member opposite is actually batting zero. He said that our economy would tank, and Alberta's economy is leading growth in the country. He said that jobs would flee – would flee – Alberta, but last year alone: 90,000 jobs created in Alberta. He said that we won't get the pipeline built, and my advice to him: welcome back to Alberta; never bet against Alberta. [some applause]

The Speaker: Hon. members. Hon. members.

Hon. member, first of all, welcome to the House. I would respectfully ask that you not rise until I ask you to do so. Please proceed.

Mr. Kenney: I was just receiving a standing ovation, Mr. Speaker.

Energy Policies and Social Licence

Mr. Kenney: You know, it shows how out of touch the NDP is. They're talking about happy times when 175,000 Albertans are unemployed, and their high-tax strategy led to one of the biggest and longest recessions in our history.

I want to ask the Premier about her so-called theory of social licence. She told Albertans that if we just pay more for everything, somehow, magically, pipeline opponents will become pipeline supporters and pipelines would get built. But Justin Trudeau vetoed Northern Gateway, killed Energy East; Barack Obama vetoed Keystone XL; and now the B.C. New Democrats are doing everything they can to kill Trans Mountain, so whatever happens . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member.

Ms Notley: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, speaking of written records, it's quite interesting. The member opposite was in Ottawa for nine years, and the phrase "Trans Mountain pipeline" left his lips once, about three days before he finally left Ottawa. What we actually need is a government that is committed to getting the pipeline built, committed to innovating our energy sector so that we are world leaders and continue to be world leaders. That is exactly the work that this government is doing, and we will in fact succeed.

Mr. Kenney: With 10,000 full-time jobs lost last month, Mr. Speaker, it shows how out of touch they are.

Now, just eight weeks ago the NDP raised their job-killing carbon tax by 50 per cent, and now they're promising to raise it by another 67 per cent. Why? Because Justin Trudeau asked them to, and they're keeping the door open to even higher raises beyond that. Since the carbon tax hasn't done anything to get us a pipeline, Mr. Speaker, my question is: will the Premier stand and commit today that she will not raise the carbon tax by a further 67 per cent just to satisfy her ally Justin Trudeau?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What I would say to the member opposite is that climate denial is, quite frankly, a dead end for Alberta. The UCP wants to walk down that road again. We say no. We say that Alberta is a world energy leader. We say that we need to have those new jobs, like those 90,000 new jobs last year. We need new industries, we need innovation, we need diversification, we need renewable energy, and we need a pipeline to tidewater, all those things that this government is going to get done.

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, again, the NDP said that their carbon tax would buy us something called a social licence. Somehow it was supposed to turn pipeline opponents into pipeline supporters. That didn't work with Justin Trudeau killing Northern Gateway and Energy East or the B.C. New Democrats trying to kill Trans Mountain or Barack Obama vetoing Keystone XL. Can the Premier name a single government, municipality, environment organization, or political party that has moved from no to yes on pipelines and energy as a result of her multibillion-dollar carbon tax?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In November 2016 the federal government of this country approved the Kinder Morgan pipeline, and when they did it, they did it with specific reference to the climate leadership plan that Alberta brought into place, which is leading the country in helping our country to do its part on climate change while we take our place as the world-leading energy producer.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, that's the same federal government, her close allies, that killed Northern Gateway, that killed Energy East, about which this government did nothing to protest.

Energy Policies

Mr. Kenney: I want to ask the Premier: when Justin Trudeau forced the National Energy Board to get into the business of regulating up- and downstream emissions, which lead to the death of the \$16 billion Energy East pipeline, why did this government do nothing to defend Alberta's jurisdiction? The regulation of oil and gas production is a jurisdiction won by Peter Lougheed in the Constitution. Why isn't this government defending that?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think the member opposite knows that the outcome with respect to Energy East had nothing to do with the NEB decision. More importantly, the member opposite should also know that our government spoke up against having downstream emissions considered with respect to NEB decisions, so we did actually do that. But at the same time we are going to also do our part to make sure that we take our place as an energy leader producing sustainable energy that has a strong market across the world, and we will . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Kenney: Well, I regret to see, Mr. Speaker, how, apparently, our Premier didn't even follow the decision by TransCanada, where the president explicitly said that it was the uncertainty created by the NEB by getting into the business of carbon emissions which resulted in them pulling the project and killing the dream of energy independence for Canada.

Mr. Speaker, recently I visited the Sundre seniors' centre, where they're paying 8 per cent of their small, \$18,000 annual budget on the NDP carbon tax. They may even have to close the place because of it. What message does the Premier have for the Sundre seniors who are thinking of closing their centre just to pay . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What we can say and have said is that we will be working with community members in Sundre and across the province, quite frankly, to come up with different ways by which we can support nonprofit agencies in increasing their efficiency and reducing their costs. That work, paired with the other work that we have already done to support seniors, to support nonprofits, to support communities, will ensure that those organizations get to move forward and, in fact, are strengthened.

2:10

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, this government has made a total shambles of Alberta's power policy. Their carbon tax made it uneconomical to produce power in this province, and then a ham-fisted legal strategy by the government forced power companies to court. This government lost, now settling and forcing taxpayers to eat hundreds of millions of dollars of costs as a result of their power policy fiasco. My question for the hon. Premier is: will someone in her government take responsibility for costing taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars by mismanaging power policy?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our government took legal action to protect Albertans from previous governments' misactions. The excess consumer supply that was created by that likely benefited Albertans, didn't hurt them. At the same time, we're very pleased to see that the matter is resolved, and now we look forward to working with all of our industry producers to actually fix what was a broken electricity system and provide cleaner electricity, more stable electricity, more reliable electricity, and greater renewable investment.

Nonprofit Organizations

Mr. Fraser: One of the government's favourite lines is that they are making life better for Albertans. Well, that's also the goal of the nonprofit sector although they do it with fewer resources and less fanfare. That's why it's very troubling to hear that many of the government's actions are having a direct and negative effect on nonprofits across the province. The carbon tax, for example, is hurting their bottom lines and taking away money from those that need it the most. With the carbon tax slated to keep increasing, they're worried about their future and rightly so. To the Premier: will you commit to a carbon tax exemption for nonprofits so that the dollars are going towards the people they're intended to help and not government coffers?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, nonprofits truly are the beating heart of Alberta communities, and we will do everything we can to continue the work that we've been doing to support them. When it comes to energy efficiency and the carbon levy, we've created the nonprofit energy efficiency transition program. We have already provided support to more than 100 nonprofits across the province. That's in addition to other things that we have done like, for instance, increasing FCSS funding for the first time in over a decade, by about 25 per cent. These are the kinds of things you do to make life . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Fraser: Well, Mr. Speaker, the carbon tax is not the only measure this government has taken that's impacting our nonprofits. The increase in minimum wage has been made with good intentions, but the government isn't the one that has to deal with those consequences. The increase in labour costs means fewer staff, shorter hours, or it might mean a nonprofit has to close its doors completely. The effects of this increase could be substantial for the nonprofit sector, and it would be wise of this government to understand what the effects of another hike would look like. To the Premier: will the government commit to a review of the impact of the changes to the minimum wage on the nonprofit sector before introducing yet another increase?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What we know is that in this province, during the recession as well as during the previous booms and now during a time when things are recovering, we absolutely cannot have people go to work in the morning, work for eight hours, and then go home and have to stop on the way at the food bank in order to feed their families. It doesn't matter if they work in the retail sector or in the nonprofit sector or in corporate offices. It is unacceptable. Our government took action to stop that, and we are proud of that.

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

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Oh, I'm sorry. Second supplemental. My apologies.

Mr. Fraser: It is a long way from here to there, isn't it, Mr. Speaker?

I understand there might be some on the government side of the House that think services in the charitable organizations, that they provide, should come from the government programs instead. Well, Mr. Speaker, I disagree with that notion. While we all agree that these organizations could use some more resources, nonprofits are about Albertans making life better for Albertans, not politicians. The relationship between governments and nonprofits should be a partnership, and that's not how nonprofits feel they're being treated right now. To the Premier: when will this government start treating nonprofits as an equal partner in making life better for Albertans?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, our government has done quite a wide range of work with nonprofit sectors as they provide the important services that they do, and in fact we do absolutely respect the work that they do. As I mentioned previously, one of the first things our government did when we just got elected was, after many, many, many years of asking the previous government, of which the member opposite was a part, to increase FCSS funding after not touching it for years. We did increase it. The Finance minister tells me that it was 33 per cent, not 25 per cent. So we will continue to work with nonprofits because we understand how important they are for making life better for Albertans.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Now the hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion Project

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Trans Mountain pipeline expansion project is critical to ensuring that Alberta's energy products get to market. Given the recent actions on electricity sales and wine exports it is clear that this project is important to our government and to working Albertans. To the Minister of Energy: how important is the pipeline to Alberta energy jobs?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the member raises a very important question. He's right to say that this is an important project, not just for Alberta but for everyone in Canada. Recently Scotiabank put out a report suggesting that these delays are costing \$15 billion a year to the Canadian economy. These pipelines create thousands of construction jobs and operational jobs. It's important to all of us that our energy sector is supported. That's why we're not going to stop fighting until this pipeline is built.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know that Alberta energy products sell at a discount on the open market. To the same minister: how will the Trans Mountain pipeline make sure that Alberta gets a fair price for its valuable resources?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, for a number of years the U.S. was our biggest customer and we enjoyed good dollars in that relationship, but now they're our biggest competitor, so we have to expand our markets to Asia because we can't continue here in Alberta to sell our product at a discount. We made it very clear in the throne speech that this is an important enough project that we're going to do all it takes to get it built, and we are going to get that pipeline built.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government has shown it's willing to take action by banning B.C. wine imports, cancelling electricity sales, and maybe even turning off the taps in order to get this pipeline built. Given the opposition to this project by other jurisdictions, to the same minister: how will the Trans Mountain pipeline provide benefits not just for Alberta but for all of Canada?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, as many know, I live in northwest Alberta, and a number of workers who work up my way are actually from B.C. They pay taxes in B.C., and they live in B.C., but they work in Alberta. We're talking 40,000 people in the last while who are from B.C. but work here, so it's a benefit not just to Alberta but to B.C. workers. When I was on holidays last summer, I met people in Nova Scotia who work in Alberta in our economy and enjoy the benefits, so this is important not just to us, not just to B.C.; this is important for all of Canada. This money is going to help pay for the services that we all enjoy in this province.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Oil Sands Development Concerns

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's clear that our oil sands provide incredible opportunities for fossil fuel energy, economic returns, and jobs for citizens across this country. The current impasse with B.C., however, has also highlighted Albertans' growing concerns emphasized by the Auditor General report of two years ago on the growing unfunded reclamation liabilities in the oil sands and its contributions to our rise in greenhouse gas emissions. To the Premier: will you in the public interest commit to establishing a public consultation or summit on the future of oil sands development in Alberta in relation to both the benefits and the risks to Albertans now and in the future?

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much to the member for his important question. You know, Mr. Speaker, I think that in some ways a lot of that work is already under way. Obviously, through our climate leadership plan, one of the critical components of it, which actually is a very persuasive argument when we talk to folks in B.C., is the fact that we put in place an emissions cap and that industry agreed to that and worked with government. Paired with that, we are supporting industry as they come up with more innovative, safe, sustainable ways to extract that resource, so it's kind of a win-win. That's one piece that's going on. As well, the minister of environment can talk at quite great length in terms of much of the work that's going on with the LARP.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.
First supplemental.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, again to the Premier: given that the oil sands operators have set aside a mere 4 per cent of the estimated \$21 billion required for oil sands cleanup, which could be passed on to Albertans if these multinational companies default, when will the Premier require these multinationals to guarantee security for the cleanup?

2:20

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. The matter related to development of the oil sands is being captured under the lower Athabasca regional plan and also the new tailings management framework. As we receive the plans from the companies with respect to the tailings management framework, we're looking at our reclamation criteria. We hope to have more to say over the course of this year.

Thank you.

Dr. Swann: Well, again to the environment minister: given the lack of clear public data on our net greenhouse gas emissions and the priority you've placed on climate change, will you commit to annual reporting, including year-over-year trends of Alberta's total greenhouse gas emissions so that Albertans can readily know what progress is being made on our greenhouse gas emissions?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member will be pleased to learn that Alberta reports in to Environment and Climate Change Canada, as we always have. We have very robust measuring, reporting, and verification systems in place, in part to safeguard the integrity of the offsets market but also to ensure that we are being transparent with Albertans. We've just gotten our preliminary data back from 2015-16. It takes that amount of time in order to ensure that we've got the verification pieces in place.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Carbon Levy Increase

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Despite the NDP government wanting Albertans to believe that everything is great, Alberta lost 10,000 full-time jobs last month. Unemployment in Alberta is the highest outside of Atlantic Canada. Calgary has the second-highest unemployment of any city in Canada. We also know that many Albertans have given up looking for work altogether. On top of it, this NDP government hiked their carbon tax by 50 per cent on January 1, making life more expensive. Why does this out-of-touch government insist on making it more expensive for Alberta families to make ends meet?

The Speaker: The hon. Finance minister.

Mr. Ceci: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, we have some work to go as a government, as a province to make sure that every Albertan feels the economic recovery that is going on in this province, but it is undeniable that 90,000 new full-time jobs were created over the last year and the unemployment rate fell to its lowest level in two years. Things are looking up in this province. Wages are up in this province. Small-business confidence is up. I can go on and on and on. I don't know why the opposition continues to run down this province. We're turning it around. The economy is coming back.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, I think the Finance minister didn't read his new update.

Given that the latest carbon tax hike makes it more expensive to fill up at the pumps and given that Albertans are paying more for fresh fruit and vegetables at the grocery store because of the carbon tax and given that this NDP government claimed that a carbon tax would buy us a so-called social licence for pipelines, yet that's clearly been a failure, why are Albertans paying more to drive to work and buy their groceries if the carbon tax isn't even doing what they were promised?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. More than 60 per cent of Alberta households receive rebates for the carbon levy, and small-business taxes were cut by 33 per cent. In 2018 carbon levy rebates will be provided for \$300 for single adults, \$450 for couples, and \$45 for each child under 18. Over the next three years there will be \$1.4 billion invested in rebates and, of course, investments in green infrastructure and in large-scale renewables, clean tech, bioenergy, and coal community transition.

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, the minister responsible for climate change is forgetting about the other 50 per cent that don't receive the carbon tax cheques.

Given that many Airdrie residents commute outside the city to go to work, provided that they still have a job despite the NDP government's policies, and given that the NDP carbon tax makes driving to work much more expensive and given that it's clear that this NDP government is only making things harder for Airdrie residents and the rest of Alberta, Mr. Speaker, when will this government admit that the carbon tax is a sham, stop punishing Albertans, and scrap the carbon tax?

Ms Phillips: Well, you know, curiously, Mr. Speaker, this weekend we learned from the leader of the UCP that Ontario is the big brother of Canadian Confederation. If that's the case, then Preston Manning is surely the granddaddy of Canadian conservatism, and even he supports a price on carbon.

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

Carbon Levy

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government claimed that their carbon tax would win the so-called social licence for pipelines. Standing right here less than two years ago the Minister of Economic Development and Trade said that the carbon tax will, quote, get social licence to get pipelines approved and get our product to tidewater. Two years later no pipeline, but the constituents of Chestermere-Rocky View are still paying a carbon tax to heat their homes in winter, and what a winter. Will the government agree to suspend their carbon tax since the so-called social licence argument was clearly a myth?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The climate leadership plan is part of a policy that will ensure that we get pipelines to tidewater, that we build an economic recovery to last, that we diversify the economy, and that we make investments in new, diversified areas like renewables and energy efficiency. We're an energy province, and not just oil and gas. Oil and gas, yes, but also a number of new areas. We'll continue to build and diversify this economy.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that a former member of this government's oil sands advisory group recently said of the carbon tax that, quote, it was a false premise to assume that that therefore means it was a bargain for a pipeline. I mean, that's quite the investment. She also said that the carbon tax for a pipeline trade, quote, wasn't going to work from the beginning, and it's not working now. Well, why does this government expect Albertans to believe that the carbon tax will result in a pipeline approval if the government's own advisory panel group doesn't believe it themselves?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Mr. Speaker, thank you. Of course, on this side of the House we believe that the climate leadership plan will result in a pipeline approval because the climate leadership plan resulted in a pipeline approval. Of course, we heard from the leader of the Conservatives that Ontario is the big brother of Confederation, as I said. But you know who my brothers and sisters are? They're up there in that gallery. They're the electricians, the insulators, the boilermakers, the pipefitters that are all getting back to work as a result of our policies.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, her brothers and sisters are also paying this carbon tax, so we'll see what happens with that.

Given that this government did not campaign on this carbon tax and given that the carbon tax is failing to produce any economic benefit promised and given that the Calgary area – and to reiterate: 7.9 per cent unemployment, Mr. Speaker. I mean, that's the second highest in Canada. I think the hon. member already mentioned that. Why won't the government scrap the tax and the cash grab? This hurts our not-for-profit organizations, shelters, schools, and other service delivery providers that actually help Albertans.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Speaking of Calgarians, of course, we are investing a billion dollars into the green line so that Calgarians can get to work quicker and spend more time with their families and less time on the road. The Conservatives would, of course, endanger the green line and the southeast valley line here in Edmonton by cancelling the climate leadership plan, and that is no way to build this province.

Nonprofit Organizations and the Carbon Levy

Mr. Nixon: This government's reckless carbon tax is hurting Alberta communities. Here's what Leona Bennett from the Sundre & District Aquaplex recently said: we're really getting hit hard; it's not just us that are impacted, it's the community as a whole; our little organizations are what keep Sundre going, and without these facilities in the community, we won't have a community; because of the carbon tax, we had to increase our rates, but we couldn't increase them as much as required because people are also paying the carbon tax. Mr. Speaker, why does this government insist on hurting our communities with their job-killing carbon tax?

The Speaker: The Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we know that the Sundre West Country Centre is a vital recreation hub for local gatherings and community activities. In fact, my office reached out and spoke to the mayor this morning. We are listening to their concerns. We have arranged for an energy efficiency round-table to be held in the community, and there are a number of other initiatives that I'll be pleased to report to the House in the supplementals.

Mr. Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that this Sundre community centre, seniors' centre, has been asking this minister to speak with them for months and in fact the Premier's office's only communication back to them was to hold a fundraiser or raise their rates on fixed-income seniors, I'll ask this question: since this government insists on continuing to punish everyday Albertans with their carbon tax, why won't they at least exempt right now community groups from this punishing tax?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are in fact reinvesting in community infrastructure like arenas and pools and other municipal infrastructure. The Minister of Municipal Affairs will have more to say about that in the coming days.

2:30

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, given that charitable giving in Alberta has declined 10 times faster than the national average and given that the carbon tax makes it more expensive for nonprofit and community groups to heat buildings and buy gas and given that this tax disproportionately impacts rural Albertans, will the government finally do the right thing and exempt groups from their cash grab – yes or no? – or will they continue to stand side by side with their Trudeau allies and punish our seniors, punish our veterans, punish our children, punish our homeless, and on and on?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member will be pleased to learn that in Sundre more than 100 homes, businesses, nonprofits, and others are currently participating in and benefiting from Energy Efficiency Alberta programs. We've also provided over \$2 million in grants to repair, renovate, upgrade, or expand community facilities for seniors across the province, including the Rocky Mountain House Pioneer Centre in the member's riding, in Rocky Mountain House. We've also provided over \$200,000 in grants to nonprofit organizations in the member's riding, the Sundre & District Aquatic Society and the Bergen Community Association.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Inter Pipeline Heartland Petrochemical Plant

Ms McKittrick: Merci, M. le Président. Diversification is key to ensuring long-term success for Alberta's energy sector. Given the recent release of the Energy Diversification Advisory Committee report and the press release this morning with Inter Pipeline could the Minister of Energy explain the importance of the investment by Inter Pipeline, which is located in my constituency, and building the plant in the Industrial Heartland, and how the petrochemicals diversification program helped Inter Pipeline make the investment?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, that's a very important question. Inter Pipeline's investment in the Industrial Heartland is most welcome. They were, as you know, one of the recipients of the first PDP round. You know, we've heard from Albertans all across Alberta through EDAC and others that they're tired of the boom-and-bust roller coaster we've been on for all of my lifetime here in Alberta and that they want a recovery that's built to last. The Inter Pipeline project is one piece in our move to diversifying our economy, and petrochemicals is going to play a big role in that.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: how many jobs in Alberta have been created during construction and for the operation of the plant?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we know that most projects in construction are between 2,000 and 4,000 jobs, and we know that they create anywhere from about 180 to 250 in operational jobs. We heard this morning from Inter Pipeline themselves that they believe that at peak when they're doing their project, there are going to be 13,000 indirect and direct jobs, and that doesn't count all the services around that expand because of people having work and spending money. We know that this is a huge impact in Alberta, and it's a great move to diversify our economy, something that wasn't done in many years.

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

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Partial upgrading means that companies can ship bitumen through a pipeline without adding diluent, which means that they can ship more bitumen through the same pipeline. To the same minister: does this mean that we don't need pipelines anymore?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In our new Bill 1, where we're talking about diversifying the economy, part of it is partial upgrading and allowing products to be created that can go to new refineries, that don't have access to those refineries right now. But one of the other sidelines is that we will be able to increase pipeline capacity 30 per cent. That doesn't mean that we don't need other pipelines, because we're going to grow this economy. Energy is here to stay for a long time, and we're going to need that capacity for new products as we move forward.

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

Energy Industry Diversification

Mr. Clark: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Economic diversification has long been the dream of governments in this province, for as long as most of us can remember, but the question remains: what is the role of government in encouraging that diversification? This government has not surprisingly taken a hands-on approach, which could mean that it is government, not the free market, that chooses winners and losers. To the Minister of Energy: what assurance can you provide that your plans will not distort the market and put taxpayer dollars unduly at risk?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, again, you know, the parts of Bill 1 that we introduced today and had a press conference about the next details show that we're taking a competitive approach. We have three areas: petrochemical diversification round 2, partial upgrading, and a feedstock strategy to supply those feedstocks to the projects. With them, there are incentives to build, but in the case of PDP they will not be getting any of those BRIK, or bitumen royalty in kind, dollars until the project is up and running.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
First supplemental.

Mr. Clark: It still sounds like government choosing over the private market, Mr. Speaker.

Given that Alberta already has one of the most diverse economies in Canada and given that we don't have as much of an economic diversification problem as we do a government revenue diversification problem, again to the Minister of Energy: can you quantify the problem you are trying to solve? Can you provide data that shows specifically that any investments of taxpayer dollars will be better used to subsidize private investment than they would be funding core services or reducing Alberta's substantial deficit?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, this diversification plan is something that we heard loud and clear from Albertans. They're tired of the boom and bust. When prices are high, everything is good. When prices are low, everybody is getting laid off, and the economy is in jeopardy. So we've launched a diversification plan to do just that. I was just in Houston last week, and I know and saw first-hand how competitive it is. We have a plan, something that hasn't been around since Premier Peter Lougheed. This is a government that's going to lead. We have a plan, and we've put the stake in the ground that Alberta is open for business.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Clark: Mr. Speaker, given that the Auditor General has recently reported that the APMC, which is the agency which will be responsible for this program, isn't able to prove it is managing the risks associated with Alberta's substantial investment in the Sturgeon refinery and given that this is far from the only area where this government or its agencies have failed to define objectives, track risks, or report either of those to Albertans, again to the Minister of Energy: what specific, measurable objectives will you create for your diversification programs? How will those be reported to Albertans and when?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we did with PDP 1, it was an open and transparent process. It was a competitive process, and it was reported publicly. We will do the same. We welcome the Auditor General's comments on how we can do better. We're absolutely following up on that. All these endeavours: as we go forward, these processes will be open and transparent. You can check our website. We will be reporting back to Albertans on a regular basis. There will be no secrets.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Hays.

Carbon Levy
(continued)

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this NDP government wants Albertans to believe everything is just great again and given that the ATB chief economist recently said that people are making less money and job prospects, when they do exist, are at lower pay and given that Calgary has the second-highest unemployment rate in Canada and Alberta's youth unemployment rate is over 13 per cent, second only to Atlantic Canada, to the Energy minister: with all of this mounting energy against the carbon tax, why will your government not scrap it?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, jobs are up. We know that there's more to do, but we've got 90,000 new full-time jobs created over the last year. Of course, RBC is forecasting Alberta to lead the country in job growth in 2018. We're also forecasted to lead the country in GDP growth. Wages are up. Small-business confidence is up. Manufacturing is up. Housing starts are up. Exports are up. We know there's more to do, and that's exactly why we're taking measures to do things like diversifying the economy. But what we won't do is cheer for Alberta to fail as the Conservatives are doing.

Mr. McIver: Well, given, Mr. Speaker, that the minister just demonstrated she seems unaware that 10,000 full-time jobs were lost in Alberta last month and given that she seems also unaware that the carbon tax has failed to produce any of the economic or environmental benefits promised and given that the carbon tax makes it more expensive for all Albertans to heat homes, to fill up cars, and to buy groceries, to that minister: why does the NDP continue to nickel and dime Albertans with a carbon tax that makes everything they buy more expensive and has a net negative environmental impact?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's hard to know where to start unpacking that series of statements. So let's just focus on some facts, shall we? The Conference Board of Canada predicts Calgary's economy grew 4.6 per cent last year. Of course, we know that there's more to do, but a good start is where Calgary Economic Development beat their target and has attracted and supported the expansion of 90 companies that have created more than 5,000 jobs in 2017. Compared to a year ago, Calgary created over 28,000 new full-time jobs. Things are looking up. We know there's more to do, and that's why we have a comprehensive diversification strategy in place as well as those pipeline approvals.

2:40

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, given that the minister is a job-loss denier, as she just stated, and given that the Calgary Chamber of commerce reports that 73 per cent of businesses said that their costs will increase because of the carbon tax and given that the Canadian Federation of Independent Business found that 92 per cent of their business owners are not confident in this NDP government and not confident they're committed to increasing the business climate and given that the carbon tax is another obstacle stopping hiring and paying employees, to the minister: why does your government insist upon punishing small businesses through the carbon tax while denying the damage that is so obviously there?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, small-business taxes have been cut by a third; \$40 million has gone toward small-business tax reduction already. We've also exempted small and medium-sized Alberta oil and gas facilities from the carbon levy until 2023, saving both large and small oil and gas companies who operate those facilities more than \$2.5 billion over that period. We've also provided between \$1.5 billion and \$2 billion of free carbon offsets to companies investing in methane reduction and invested \$440 million in innovation funding specifically for in situ oil sands facilities. That's all part of the package.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Electricity Power Purchase Arrangement Lawsuit Settlement

Mr. Panda: The government and Enmax have reached an out-of-court settlement over the power purchasing agreement lawsuit. The NDP caused the lawsuit by raising the carbon tax, which invalidated the contracts with the power generators. The settlement means that Enmax will transfer carbon offset credits to the Balancing Pool in exchange for a payment of unknown value. To the Minister of Energy: how much is the government paying to the Balancing Pool to cover the purchase of these carbon offset credits? What's the secret number?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the government took legal action over two years ago to fight for Albertans' interests. Many parties such as Enmax were involved, but to be clear, that action was against the previous governments. We're pleased to have this final agreement signed off because now it allows us to work together with them and other companies to go forward in our electricity transition, where we're going off coal and into renewables and using natural gas to fill that gap. We're very pleased with that, knowing that we're going to move forward with cleaner air and a better electricity system.

Mr. Panda: Given that the former president of the Balancing Pool, Gary Reynolds, said that the entire situation has been in complete shambles since 2015 and given that the legal action has actually cost consumers hundreds of millions of dollars because the legal action forestalled the Balancing Pool from terminating the PPAs sooner, why hasn't this government taken responsibility for the \$70 million cost to taxpayers each and every month as a result of their mismanagement?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, this agreement does provide for the transfer from Enmax to the Balancing Pool of carbon offset credits as part of their agreement. Many of the details certainly are between themselves and the government. These offset credits are going to allow the Balancing Pool the flexibility in meeting future greenhouse gas emissions compliance obligations. At the end of the day, this is, again, a step we took as government to stand up for Albertans for backroom deals that were arrived at by a previous government. Enmax and other companies were a part of that, and we're glad that all of the agreements are signed so that we can move forward.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, given that the PPA debacle has cost Albertans millions of dollars because the NDP raised the carbon tax on electrical generation and given that the third-quarter results update shows that the Balancing Pool will need to borrow \$650 billion in debt, which is \$418 million more than the budget, will the minister stand in this House and tell Albertans: how much is the total cost of this NDP PPA debacle?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, we took action on a broken system that we inherited from the previous government. We're pleased that this final agreement has been reached because we are taking action on climate change. We're taking action on fixing a broken system, and now we can work with all the companies to go forward and create a system that Albertans deserve, one that's stable and predictable and, you know, provides predictability for month-to-month bills and not the spikes that we used to see before.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, given that one government cannot sue a former government – it's called the Crown; it's not divisible – and given that the government just signed an out-of-court settlement with Enmax and given that the minister has refused to tell us how much it is, I will offer the minister another opportunity to be forthcoming with Albertans. How many tens or hundreds of millions of tax dollars have we lost in this secret court settlement?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, with other agreements as with this one, the agreements are between the government and each of the companies. The broad strokes of this one is that it involves turning back some of the carbon offset credits to the Balancing Pool. But at the end of the day, each agreement is different because each company is different. At the end of the day, we're all going to work together to create a new system from one that was broken, one that we inherited from the previous government, as we go on to a capacity market, renewables, all the different things and creating a more stable system. We're now free to work with all these companies on that. I'm pleased with this arrangement.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think this will now be the fifth opportunity for the minister to answer the question given that she has not done so yet. This is a matter of clear public interest for Alberta taxpayers on the floor of this Legislature to learn how much the government has just signed away to a power company that it sued and sued wrongfully. So will the minister please disclose: how big is the cheque that it's writing to Enmax from Alberta taxpayers? Will she disclose that, or will it stay a secret?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned, as with all the other companies that we made arrangements with, this one is between the company and the government. At the end of the day, we're pleased that this agreement has been reached. It's been a long two years. Again, this whole court thing was because of backroom deals from previous government, who set up a system of volatility that was hard on Albertans, hard on people's pocketbooks. This is something we are fixing along with our new electricity grid.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, given that the government cannot spend public money without the authorization of the Legislature and given that it has to be voted supply to write the cheque to Enmax, Alberta taxpayers and members of this place have a right to know. How big is the bill, and will this minister take responsibility for the fiasco that has cost Alberta taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars? Come clean. How much is the cost? How many hundreds of millions has this government lost us?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely, there will be a budget that all of us will discuss after the 22nd, I believe, when it will be put forward. We'll have opportunity to discuss a number of matters and also with estimates.

But today, again, this is an arrangement that has been reached between Enmax and ourselves. It allows us now that we're complete with all the agreements that we can move on with working with coal communities. We can work with transitioning to renewables and natural gas. We can work on creating a system that's going to be stable, without spikes, and predictable for consumers.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The Member for West Yellowhead.

Geothermal Project in Hinton

Mr. Rosendahl: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Hinton geothermal project will be a unique opportunity to provide heat to public buildings in the town of Hinton. This initiative will be the first in Canada to use one or more repurposed oil and gas wells to heat buildings. To the Minister of Energy: how does this Hinton geothermal project fit into Alberta's climate leadership plan?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

2:50

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Certainly, there's a lot of excitement in Alberta about geothermal energy. When we did our Renewable Electricity Act, we included geothermal for that reason, its very low emissions. With more than 80,000 inactive wells here in Alberta, we have an opportunity to look at how we might repurpose some of those wells for geothermal. We're very well positioned, and certainly in the member's riding are extremely well positioned, to look at those higher thermal gradients. There is a particular project in that area that we're looking at very closely to learn from.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

First supplemental.

Mr. Rosendahl: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the support for this project from municipal leaders, including the mayor of Hinton, to the same minister: what does the funding of this project mean for the local community?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, projects like this will focus on how we can make life better for all Albertans. This is a project that we can learn from, look at how it can work in a municipality, how we can use deep geothermal resources to power our municipalities. We're very excited to watch and see how the community of Hinton manages this and how we can learn to help other communities in Alberta.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Rosendahl: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the investment in the project by Western Economic Diversification as well as the government of Alberta and Alberta Innovates what does this project mean for Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the fact that we got Western Economic Diversification's interest in this as well shows that it's not just good for Alberta, but it's good for Canada. This is the first type of project like it in all of Canada, where we're going to use operational oil and gas wells to harness heat. As I've said, there's huge potential in learning from this project. We are supporting it because this is a good project that'll help us deal with our climate leadership goals. It's helping the folks of Hinton. It's going to help all of Alberta when we learn from it and are able to move that around to other areas.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Hon. members, we'll proceed with Members' Statements in 30 seconds.

Members' Statements

International Women's Day

Cortes-Vargas: On March 8 we recognized International Women's Day. This year's theme is Press for Progress.

Since the 1800s women have been campaigning for women's rights, yet women are still not equally represented in corporate boardrooms, decision-making tables, and public office. The women that have fought to be treated as equals are our role models as we move forward. We are seeing the paradigm shifts in movements like Me Too, Time's Up. The women's marches speak out about the injustices endured predominantly by women for far too long.

With these changing tides and as we move towards equity, we know that governments must and should respond accordingly. Our government stands with women and families in the prevention and elimination of sexual violence by providing operational funding to sexual assault centres. Our government stands with women in lower income situations by addressing the gender wage gap and increasing minimum wage. Our government stands with women in business when we provide grants to support women entrepreneurs as they take risks and grow our economy.

We see the collective effort to support women in overcoming barriers in the workplace when chambers of commerce like the one in Strathcona county provide workshops to build capacity so that we can address inequities in the workplace. I am proud to see this kind of work being done in Strathcona county and across Alberta.

Lastly, but perhaps most importantly, we are reducing the barriers that keep women from leadership positions. This is necessary to see the aforementioned progress. As such and as the youngest female ever elected in Alberta's Legislature, my story provides hope for others that want to see more diverse representation at decision-making tables. Whether you are young, racialized, female, or part of any other minority group, don't let that hold you back. Press for progress.

Former Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to a well-liked, caring, hard-working, true Albertan who rose to prominence, served

Alberta and conservatives, and is now taking a well-deserved and earned leave. I'm speaking about the former Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin, Brian Jean.

After having served the residents of Fort McMurray as their Member of Parliament for nearly a decade, Brian rose to prominence in the 2015 Wildrose Party leadership contest, winning the leadership and subsequently winning 22 seats in the snap general election. Right away Brian knew that a political realignment needed to happen with Alberta's conservative parties. The theme of the party's fall convention that year was Unite the Right People. His dancing shoes were on, and the dance began to unite conservatives at the grassroots level.

Life is never a straight and easy path. Along the way there are personal tragedies that take on greater significance when a person is in the public eye. The death of Brian's son Mikey during the 2015 leadership race drew attention to problems within Alberta's health care system. The loss of Brian's house during the Fort McMurray wildfire showed just how vulnerable even our most prominent citizens are to forces that get beyond human control.

Brian was in the middle of it all and wore the mantle of an everyday Albertan experiencing great personal loss with dignity and grace. Brian's Facebook following exceeded the daily average print and digital circulation of any Alberta newspaper, providing a very powerful platform to communicate to Albertans. He was concerned about Albertans, and they were concerned about him.

Eventually Brian found his dance partner to unite conservatives, but he also found a life partner, marrying Kim Michelutti in the summer of 2016.

Brian, on behalf of your caucus colleagues, thank you for your unlimited sacrifice, dedication, and service to this province, and may God bless you and Kim in all your future endeavours.

Challenge in the Rockies 2018

Mr. Rosendahl: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to talk about the fifth annual Challenge in the Rockies. This fun hockey experience takes place in Hinton and Jasper this year from March 29 to April 1.

The challenge is an inclusive event which allows all youth to participate, from pond hockey, minor hockey, shinny, and ringette, plus any new and returning skaters. The challenge enhances youth sport while helping with fundraising for future programming and other community nonprofits. This affair is a testament to the dedication of the organizers and more than 200 volunteers who support the athletes, families, and coaches participating in venues in both Hinton and Jasper.

Over five days of hockey, with teams from all over Alberta, Saskatchewan, and B.C., more than 600 players play in close to 100 games. This is not a tournament. Players aged four to 18 face off on the ice, with a focus on physical literacy and staying active. The challenge is a Chiefs event hosted by the Hanson brothers. This year we'll be welcoming alumni from the Edmonton Oilers and honouring the late Dave Semenko. All players will be wearing his number on their jerseys.

Over 2,500 people converge in the area, gathering more than a quarter million dollars in revenue for the local hotels and close to a million dollars in business for the region's economy.

I would like to thank the organizers, volunteers, and more than 25 sponsors that make this event possible. Come on out to West Yellowhead and join us in the Challenge in the Rockies from March 29 to April 1 in Hinton and Jasper.

Thank you.

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

Women's Political Engagement

Mrs. Aheer: Mr. Speaker, last Thursday marked International Women's Day. Following a year of unprecedented upswing in political engagement on a global level, I took a little bit of time to reflect on the role that women have played in shaping and driving the conversation.

In the last year women started an international cultural shift with the Me Too and Time's Up movements. Millions of women have bravely shared their stories, prompting a fundamental cultural shift in the way that our societies perceive sexual assault and harassment. This movement gave millions of women a strong and united voice and politically engaged those that may not have traditionally taken an active role. We are so hopeful that this will also lead to an upswing in women running for public office.

There are already many amazing, competent women holding key positions around boardroom tables, women rallying across the world and standing up for what they believe in, and the UCP wants to encourage and see more. Our party is built on principles of inclusivity and diversity, and we want everyone to feel this momentum. All Albertans have a home in our party. Every woman from the home to the boardroom should feel engaged and valued and that they have a voice.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot stress the importance of a continuation of this engagement and its momentum. Despite all of the accomplishments and the momentous past year we still have a long way to go. I know that I feel extremely blessed to live in this country, ruled by democracy, that allows the right to elect our representatives.

3:00

Let us be the ones that inspire increased political engagement, to see more women running for public office. The Member for Airdrie and I are honoured to work with these gentlemen, whom we work with every day. We honour each other's unique gifts and talents and what we all bring to the table. As a woman I feel empowered to speak my mind every day; you can ask them. Let's continue to inspire citizens to be more involved in our political process, to speak out, to get involved.

To all of the powerful women and men out there that are part of the change: thank you, and let's keep it going.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, I'd request unanimous consent of the House to extend Orders of the Day until the completion of the Routine.

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

Volunteer Firefighters

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a few weeks ago I joined the Beaver Emergency Services Commission and Fire Chief Dave Oleksyn for a Thursday night training session in Tofield. After talking with the team about occupational health and safety amendments and the changing communications equipment, we got to work. After trying to pull on 45 pounds of gear in 90 seconds, which is much harder than it looks, we went to the training area to practise transferring a person from the rooftop to the ground using only a ladder and ropes. Then, to practise strength and precision, we played a game of Jenga using a 20-pound piece of equipment similar to the jaws of life, where we pulled two-by-fours out of the tower, grasping each piece out of the middle and – yes, you guessed it, Mr. Speaker – putting it on top. It was exhausting.

This visit was important to me, Mr. Speaker, because volunteer firefighters are at the heart of every rural Alberta community. They protect critical infrastructure, control fires, clean up environmental spills, provide emergency first responder services, are often the first on scene at major vehicle collisions, and, when trained, can deliver life-saving naloxone. These brave men and women commit countless hours to training and answer the call while we sleep soundly in our beds.

But, Mr. Speaker, their bravery comes at a cost. Exposure to these traumatic events can result in major consequences to their mental and psychological health as well as increased rates of cancer from exposure. That is why ensuring our first responders have PTSD coverage is so important. That's why I'm so proud of our government's recent announcement to expand workers' compensation benefits for firefighters who contract ovarian and cervical cancer and to reduce the minimum exposure period from 20 years to 10 for compensation for testicular cancer.

Equipping our firefighters properly through training grants, accessing support for communications equipment, and legislation that will better protect all Albertans in an emergency is something I will continue to fight for, Mr. Speaker, because we owe it to them.

Heart Health and Emergency Services

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, there is something I'd like to get off my chest and get right to the heart of the matter. Six months ago I had emergency heart surgery. This is what happened. Seventeen days prior to that I had chest pains scary enough that I asked my wife to take me to the hospital. My blood pressure was just about off the charts, but through the night the good folks at the Wainwright hospital both monitored my chest pains and got my blood pressure under control. Enzymes that would indicate a heart attack were low, but they knew something was going on.

Ten days later the next step consisted of an echocardiogram, which showed a birth defect, revealing a bicuspid aortic valve, stenosis, and an alarming 5.4-centimetre aneurysm. Once the technician saw the results, she immediately contacted the hospital, came back into the room, and told me to go straight to the hospital: "Do not go home. Don't go for coffee. Go to the doctors; they want to see you right away." At that point the ball was rolling towards surgery.

Over the next couple of days I underwent a CT scan, an angiogram, another echocardiogram, and numerous chest X-rays while constantly being connected to a monitor. By Monday all the tests were done, and on Thursday I was first up for surgery. After the surgery they found that the aneurysm had actually grown to almost seven centimetres, about the size of a baseball, and as a result they told me afterwards that I had had about two days left to live.

Heart health awareness is something we need to be cognizant about all year round. Heart attack signs can include pressure, tightness, pain, or a squeezing, aching sensation in your chest and arms that spreads to your neck, jaw, or your back. Symptoms may include nausea, indigestion, heartburn or abdominal pain, shortness of breath, cold sweat, fatigue, lightheadedness or sudden dizziness. If you think that you're having these things, get checked immediately for signs of a heart attack.

Mr. Speaker, unlike the Tin Man from *The Wizard of Oz*, I didn't need a new heart. A big thank you to the doctors and nurses and staff at the Mazankowski and the Wainwright hospital for the great care that they gave me.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I think we could all listen very carefully to your message, and by the way, on behalf of all of us, it's nice to have you back.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you.

Presenting Petitions

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

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to present a petition on behalf of 3,224 Albertans. The petition seeks to urge the Alberta government to allow rehabilitation sites to accept all Alberta wildlife to allow rehabilitation of any injured, diseased, or orphaned wildlife that is not fully capable of surviving in the wild. Omitting sections 4 to 8 of schedule A would be preferable as it is what prohibits the rehabilitation of select species.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Tabling Returns and Reports

Dr. Swann: To follow up again, Mr. Speaker, these very energetic activists I introduced earlier collected another approximately 14,000 signatures from around the world calling on the government to review its policies related to large-animal rehabilitation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I have one tabling this afternoon. I table five copies of the March 9, 2018, memo and attachments to all members regarding the Oral Question Period and Members' Statements rotations.

Thank you.

The Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table five copies of a regional crime survey that has been done by the MD of Bonnyville; 61.4 per cent of the respondents have confirmed themselves as victims of rural crime.

The Speaker: Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have five copies to table of excerpts from Alberta Transportation's project administration manual, October 2006, that outline the developer-pay policy of the government.

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

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of a third report that was suppressed from the research committee by Alberta Energy and obtained under FOIP by the Official Opposition. This report is entitled Resource Management & Environmental Stewardship: Integrated Research Strategy, Final Report, February 2, 2016.

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, over the weekend I happened to meet a patriotic Canadian in Vancouver. Her name is Vivian Krause. She did extensive research and produced this report, which is an exclusive summary and introduction and conclusion about the campaign targeting the oil sands. They call it The Tar Sands Campaign. There is lots of good information in this. I'm sure the members in this Chamber will benefit from reading it.

The Speaker: Thank you. I'm sure they will, hon. member.

Mr. Panda: Thank you.

3:10

Orders of the Day

The Speaker: I recognize the Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I request the unanimous consent of the House to waive Standing Order 8(1) to proceed to consideration of Government Motion 2.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Government Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Trans Mountain Pipeline

2. Ms Notley moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly support the government of Alberta's fight on behalf of Albertans' interests to ensure the lawfully approved Trans Mountain pipeline expansion is built, and be it further resolved that the Legislative Assembly call for the federal government to continue to take all necessary legal steps in support of the pipeline's construction, and be it further resolved that the Legislative Assembly reaffirm its support for the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion as a key component of Alberta's energy future.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm privileged to stand today and move Motion 2.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to stand before you today to sponsor this motion, that is, quite frankly, of the utmost importance to every Albertan and indeed to every Canadian. It's a motion that is aimed at sending a clear and unequivocal message to the country: Albertans are united; Albertans are resolved; Albertans are determined. Together Albertans will secure our place as a world energy leader, open up new markets for our energy products, end the land lock, and build the Trans Mountain pipeline.

Now, before I move into the substance of my remarks, I want to start by welcoming everybody back to the Legislature. And to the new Leader of the Opposition: in 35 seconds I wasn't able to fully welcome him, but I do so now. I know that we will have a constructive and vigorous debate over the next many months. But whatever our differences may be, everyone in this Chamber shares a deep love for Alberta and is united in our conviction that Alberta's best days lie ahead.

Friends, we gather today at a very critical juncture in Alberta's history, perhaps one of the most consequential in recent memory. Alberta is just coming through a very difficult and deep recession. Three years ago, owing to a dramatic collapse in oil prices, tens of thousands of Albertans lost their jobs, businesses were shuttered, and many families struggled to keep their homes and make ends meet. Fighting this recession has been the central preoccupation of my government since being sworn into office.

We have moved on all fronts. With interest rates at historic lows, we invested more in modern infrastructure, putting thousands of Albertans to work on projects like the Calgary cancer centre, highways, roads, and transit. We cut the small-business tax to help businesses cope, and we raised the minimum wage to help our lowest paid workers put food on the table. We expanded access to capital for Alberta business, and because an oil price collapse is no excuse to sacrifice our children's future or the health of our loved ones, we protected vital public services that working people depend on. We expanded the child tax credit. We piloted and expanded affordable daycare. We expanded skills training and froze tuition. We cut school fees and built hundreds of new schools. Mr. Speaker, we took these and many other measures as part of a deliberate and considered plan to absorb as much of the shock as possible from the oil price collapse and to put our economy back on stable footing.

Today I'm pleased to report that things are looking up in Alberta. Ninety thousand new jobs were created in the last year, almost every economic indicator is headed in the right direction, and Alberta has the fastest growing economy in the country. Now, are we there yet? No. No, we are not, and we won't be until every Albertan feels the security that comes from a meaningful economic recovery. But I do believe that we're on the right track. With our economy growing, we're taking action to expand and secure a lasting recovery for working people, a recovery that isn't as vulnerable to boom-and-bust cycles in the way that we have been plagued for many generations, a recovery that is more resilient and more diversified, a recovery where every Albertan is lifted up, a recovery that is built to last.

Mr. Speaker, to build that recovery, it's critical that we diversify our energy economy and our energy markets. Here, too, our government has taken aggressive and forward-looking action.

Through the climate leadership plan we've taken steps to spark unprecedented investment in renewable energy. Through initiatives such as the petrochemical diversification program we are incenting billions of dollars in new investment to get more jobs and more value out of our energy products, and with Bill 1, the Energy Diversification Act, which will be debated in this House in the coming days, we are taking action to secure our place as one of the world's energy leaders.

Together, the actions taken to modernize and diversify our energy sector and to tackle climate change have put Alberta at the forefront of energy leadership, and they are why after years of failure Alberta took another major step forward with the approval of the Trans Mountain pipeline, which brings us to the motion that we are discussing today.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans know well the arguments for the Trans Mountain pipeline, but I'm compelled to make them again today in an effort to inform our fellow Canadians again. Because Alberta is landlocked, we are forced to sell our energy products to one customer, the United States, at a discounted price. This geographic fact of life is costing the Canadian economy billions of dollars and tens of thousands of jobs.

Just a few weeks ago Scotiabank reported that that lack of pipeline access to tidewater will cost the Canadian economy \$10.7 billion this year alone, and a new U of C study concludes that the Alberta government is losing \$7.2 billion per year in oil revenues. Think about how absurd that is for just a moment. In Alberta, Canada is home to some of the world's most abundant energy resources, resources that contribute to the well-being of every community in the country. As I like to say, there is not a school, not a hospital, not a road, not a bus, a bicycle lane, or a port anywhere in this country that does not owe something to Alberta's energy resources.

At the same time, the world needs more energy products, but the world can't buy them from us because we won't let them. Quite frankly, it's maddening. I'm hard-pressed to think of another country that so willingly handcuffs its economy in this way, certainly not countries like Norway, which has built one of the world's most prosperous, healthy, equal, environmentally responsible societies in the world using its abundant oil reserves. But in Canada we have been content to sell only to the U.S., take a discounted price, and let the future take care of itself. It makes absolutely no sense. It's an abdication of our responsibility to each other and to future generations, and it must change.

Mr. Speaker, the vast majority of Canadians understand this. The vast majority of Canadians want to see it change, and when this government was elected, the cycle of failure and recrimination that has characterized pipeline politics for too long in this province and in this country began to change. Albertans came together from all

walks of life to help chart a path forward. In partnership with industry, workers, and community leaders we established the climate leadership plan, the most far-reaching response to climate change anywhere in North America. We phased out pollution, invested in energy efficiency, and reinvested in an economy-wide price on carbon into energy diversification. We also capped emissions. This is very important for all Canadians to understand. Because Alberta capped oil sands emissions, a new pipeline to tidewater does not – does not – increase carbon emissions. We also lobbied Ottawa a lot in public and behind the scenes, and we reached out to our fellow Canadians to explain why the new pipeline was so important for our shared future. The change paid off.

In November 2016 Ottawa approved the Trans Mountain pipeline, a historic accomplishment for our province and the country, for which all Albertans deserve credit. At every step along the way our government has made the case to Canadians. In British Columbia I reminded audiences of how important the oil sands are to their economy. It's not all about new condos and inflated house prices. Sometimes economies look different than that.

3:20

In 2013, 44,000 people who lived and paid taxes in B.C. actually worked in Alberta, most of those people in the energy sector. Those British Columbians earned more than \$2 billion, most of which was spent supporting their local economy back in B.C. I spoke about the community benefit agreements that will provide millions of dollars for local priorities and the additional property taxes that will include the local governments of B.C. along the way in the pipelines. I reminded them that getting their energy exports off railroads into modern, well-regulated, well-designed, and closely supervised pipelines would be safer and much more secure. Put another way, our products are going to be shipped one way or another. We can either ship them less safely by rail at a much smaller return to marginally interested customers, or we can ship them safely by pipeline to people who want our product and get much better value for every barrel that we sell.

I also reminded them that every Canadian, including every Albertan, cherishes Canada's coastline and wants to see it protected because it's not only British Columbia's coast; it's Canada's coast. It's also Canada's gateway to the Pacific. Vancouver is one of the world's great port cities, and the people who manage trade through the port are experts in safety and protecting marine ecosystems. Indeed, every year thousands – thousands – of commercial ships travel the coast safely and reliably. In fact, B.C. has been asking for years, for decades, for more resources to make sure that that level of safety is actually increased, and for years that request to the federal government fell on deaf ears, so it bears repeating that with the conversations around the Trans Mountain pipeline, the federal government has also committed \$1.5 billion in ocean protection programs to B.C. This improves the safety of shipping for everybody, of all shipments all along the western marine area. In fact, the completion of the Trans Mountain pipeline actually improves and increases marine safety off our west coast.

I've also reminded all Canadians just how significant Alberta's contribution is to the Canadian federation. One fact stands out, and everywhere that I have gone and given this speech, it is the one that often catches the most attention, particularly in other parts of the country. Mr. Speaker, there are four net contributors to the Canadian federation: Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and B.C. On a per capita basis the good people of Saskatchewan contribute about \$554 every year to our country beyond what they receive back through federal programs. In Ontario that number on a per capita basis is an average of \$650 per person. In B.C. – great job – an

average of \$886 per person. But in Alberta every man, woman, and child contributes an average of \$5,148 each to our country, six times more per person. All in, Alberta contributes \$22 billion more per year to Ottawa than we receive in return even after the effects of the oil downturn and the recession.

Mr. Speaker, I did not make this point to shame other provinces. I made it again and again to drive one simple point home, and that is this: when Alberta is strong, Canada is strong. When Alberta is working, Canada is working. And when some try to harm Alberta's economy, they are also harming themselves. So it's not actually a hard sell, we discovered. The vast majority of Canadians want Alberta to succeed, and that includes many of our fellow citizens – I would go so far as to say most of our fellow citizens and neighbours – in B.C. It's close, but it's a small majority.

Just let me quote a few British Columbians who have sent us their thoughts over the past few weeks. "I fully support you & your government's stand for the pipeline through B.C. I was born in B.C. & have always lived in our wonderful province. We all need fuel for our cars & need to heat our homes. Keep up the fight." That was from Brenda at Qualicum Beach, B.C. Another one: "We all want to, and can, protect the environment and have well engineered and safe pipelines to bring oil to tidewater and across the oceans. As BC and Canadian citizens we need to get on with supporting our energy industry." That's from Don in Delta, B.C. Finally, Cheryl from Invermere: "We must get our oil to tidewater so we can get top price for it, in order to help pay for health care, education, roads, infrastructure and all the extras that Canadians enjoy."

Mr. Speaker, these are just a few of the hundreds and hundreds of testimonials that we received. Canadians understand the need for a new pipeline, but sadly the government of British Columbia appears not to.

Up until recently B.C.'s case was being heard in the Federal Court of Appeal, the appropriate place for pipeline opponents to be heard. A ruling is expected soon, and I'm confident that Alberta and Canada will prevail. When that happens, what should also happen is that the dispute should end. Canada's decision should be upheld, and we can carry on with construction. But the new B.C. government in coalition with the Green Party has now determined that it is willing to use any means necessary, including unconstitutional ones, to harass and delay the Trans Mountain pipeline.

Let's be clear. That's a change in their strategy. That fact became clear on January 30 of this year. On January 30 B.C. released what's now known as point 5, a blatantly unconstitutional attempt to limit what flows through a federally regulated pipeline. I want to pause for a moment to reflect on what the B.C. government was actually saying with point 5. In essence, B.C. was saying that it had a right to unilaterally overturn a federal government decision made in the national interest; that it did not care that that decision came after the most exhaustive environmental review and consultation process in Canadian history; that it was not bothered by the fact that it would damage the entire Canadian economy, threaten the country's ability to meet its climate change commitments, and cost the economy tens of billions of dollars; that it was happy to pretend that B.C. is its own country, free to make up its own laws to serve its short-term political interests.

To say that this was disappointing was an understatement. This is not how our country was built to operate. It is political game playing at its worst and the most serious of consequences for the livelihoods of working Canadians. At the end of the day, that is who we all are here to serve.

So it demanded swift retaliatory action. Within days of B.C.'s actions Alberta did five things. First, we shut down electricity sales to British Columbia, talks that could have meant up to \$500 million

per year for them. Second, we formed a Market Access Task Force of experts and notable Canadians to give advice. Third, we banned B.C. wine from our shelves. Fourth, we threatened escalating action if B.C. didn't back down on point 5. Finally, we escalated our Canada-wide public education campaign and asked Canadians to show their support for Alberta's position, which tens of thousands of Canadians have since done. I want to pause for a moment to thank Canadians for their support. Albertans know that we are not alone in this fight, and that means a very great deal.

Mr. Speaker, if B.C. didn't see Alberta's response coming, they really should have. You can't pick a fight with Alberta and expect us to walk away. We will act to defend our interests.

A few days after we imposed the wine ban, B.C. did back down. They shelved point 5, and they said that it would go to the courts to see if they have the right to overturn the Constitution. Interesting strategy. For that reason I decided to suspend – suspend – the B.C. wine ban with a clear warning that it would come back if B.C. continues its campaign of harassment and delay. Let me say that the support Albertans showed for the wine ban was overwhelming, and I thank them for it, including the Leader of the Opposition. To retaliate against our fellow Canadians is not an easy decision or one we take lightly. We don't want to hurt B.C. businesses or B.C. workers. We don't want to put at risk the deep economic connections that bind our two provinces.

Let me be clear. Albertans don't want a trade war, but as I've said from the beginning, we won't shy away from doing what is needed. If anyone was confused on that point, let there now be no doubt. We will protect our economy, our workers, our made-in-Alberta climate plan, and our rights in Confederation.

Mr. Speaker, in proposing point 5, B.C. crossed a fundamental line, and it put its cards on the table. Not only did they pick a fight with Alberta; they picked a fight with Canada. In doing so, they took it upon themselves to change the rules of engagement.

As Premier I've reflected on this at great length. From my very first day in this office I together with my colleagues and all Albertans have worked to break the land lock. Every step of the way we have played by the rules, and we have pulled our weight. Our climate leadership plan is second to none. Our energy industry is a world leader in environmental innovation, and it is getting better every day. Our energy workers are the best-trained energy workers anywhere, and Trans Mountain was subject to one of the most exhaustive environmental reviews in Canadian history.

3:30

So how does one respond when a partner in Confederation says that the rules don't seem to apply to them? Let me be clear. I love this country too much to play political games that threaten it. As Premier I have a profound responsibility to uphold its institutions and to act in its best interests. I take that responsibility very seriously. It's a trust that I and everyone on this side in government hold dear. But as the B.C. government's approach to Trans Mountain has changed, so too has ours. The wine ban was but one tactic in a larger strategy that we are executing. In consultation with our Market Access Task Force, my cabinet, and Albertans the government is actively preparing additional measures that can be deployed judiciously and strategically to make sure that the pipeline is built. We're preparing a public awareness campaign aimed at all Canadians to ensure that the loudest and most extreme pipeline opponents are not allowed to dominate the conversation.

We're working closely with Ottawa to align our legal strategies to expedite permitting and construction. The federal government has this power now and must act on it. Invoking additional legal powers such as section 92(10)(c) is not needed on a pipeline that already falls under federal jurisdiction. That section of the

Constitution is designed only to apply national interest status to a project that is completely encapsulated within a province. The federal government already has the power, and the issue is to make them use it. The power exists, and the federal government must assert it to ensure that a decision that it made in the national interest is carried out in the national interest. We seek the support of all Members of this Legislative Assembly to join us in that call to Ottawa.

Finally, in last week's Speech from the Throne our government said that if it becomes necessary, we will invoke similar legislation to that which Peter Lougheed used to defend Alberta's interests almost 40 years ago. Mr. Speaker, in this session we will introduce legislation that will give Alberta the ability to control the supply of oil and gas in order to ensure that we maximize access to markets and benefits for Albertans. It's no secret that I do not relish taking this action, but I have determined that at this moment, under these specific circumstances that we face, in particular an intransigent B.C. government that has shown its willingness to act outside the law and is intent on a strategy of harassment and delay, it is in Alberta's strategic interest to put it on the table.

Let me be clear. Though some want to cut off gas to B.C. this second, for this government it's not a first but a last resort. After all, it will hurt working people on both sides of the Alberta and B.C. border. In the Lower Mainland and around B.C. life is already expensive enough. Affordability is already a huge challenge for people living in B.C.'s Lower Mainland. Two or three dollar a litre gas will cause real hardship and pain for regular working people who are just trying to go about their lives, and here in Alberta we, too, would have to make difficult sacrifices. But if it becomes necessary to help build a pipeline that will benefit, ultimately, all those working people for generations to come, then this government will act.

Mr. Speaker, let me conclude my remarks. As I said at the outset, we are gathered at a historic juncture in Alberta's history. In an uncertain and increasingly volatile world this province is a beacon of hope. We have built a democratic, prosperous, and inclusive society in a beautiful, if at times inhospitable, environment. Alberta stands as a tribute to the idea that we can accomplish so much more working together than we can working alone.

That is why the motion before the Assembly today transcends political divides. It is why today we must speak not as partisans but as citizens committed to our province, our country, and to the larger good of all Albertans and all Canadians. I urge all members to support this motion and stand united. Albertans are counting on us. Canadians are counting on us. Together we will overcome the land lock. Together we will secure Alberta's economic future. Together we will build on the work of generations to build a more hopeful, inclusive, optimistic province and country. My fellow Albertans, my fellow Canadians, together we will get this pipeline built.

I thank the members for taking the time to listen to my remarks. I urge you to support this motion, and I look forward to everyone's contribution to this debate.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order, please.

The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed an honour for me to rise to deliver my first speech in this august Chamber although I will reserve the custom of a maiden speech until my response to the Speech from the Throne tomorrow. Let me begin simply by once again saying to all hon. members from both sides that I am honoured to be serving with you. As the rookie I begin by

recognizing that I have an awful lot to learn in this place, and I look forward to doing so.

Mr. Speaker, let me also again thank my constituents of Calgary-Lougheed for the tremendous honour of representing them, being their voice in this Legislature, and my colleagues for their confidence to serve them as Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to thank the hon. the Premier for the opportunity to have this debate in this Legislature. The Premier will recall that I wrote to her several weeks ago proposing that the Legislature be called into session shortly following the decision of the NDP government in British Columbia to seek to delay and perhaps kill the proposed Trans Mountain pipeline expansion. My proposal to the Premier at the time was that it would be, I think, helpful to her case as our head of government and to Alberta's interests to demonstrate how we could come together across party lines to put the province's interests ahead of our own respective partisan interests. I regret that I have not yet received a response to my letter. I'm sure it's on the way. Perhaps it got lost in the mail. But I am glad that the Premier has accepted our proposal, in principle, of having a motion before this place.

I did propose in that letter, Mr. Speaker, that I would be willing as Leader of the Official Opposition to work with the government and the other parties and independents to negotiate in good faith a hopefully unanimous resolution that could reflect this Legislature, speak on behalf of Albertans of all political persuasions. To that end, the Official Opposition House Leader, I believe, had discussions with his hon. government counterpart late last week and suggested some constructive amendments – I think three, to be precise – that in our judgment would make this motion more likely to speak for a broad spectrum of Albertans. We would ask the government to give fair consideration to those motions. I think the key thing here is that we all operate in good faith. Let's be blunt. All of us in this place are elected officials. We all have our own partisan and political interests, but at a moment like this it serves us all well, it serves our constituents well if we are prepared to put some of our water in our wine.

We certainly are prepared to accept the bulk of this motion, which I read into the record. Moved by the hon. the Premier that

the Legislative Assembly support the government of Alberta's fight on behalf of Albertans' interests to ensure the lawfully approved Trans Mountain pipeline expansion is built and be it further resolved that the Legislative Assembly call for the federal government to continue to take all necessary legal steps in support of the pipeline's construction and be it further resolved that the Legislative Assembly reaffirm its support for the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion as a key component of Alberta's energy future.

We broadly agree. The Official Opposition broadly agrees with the pith and substance of the motion, Mr. Speaker. However, we do have some concerns. While we certainly salute the Premier's recent approach to responding to her New Democrat allies in Victoria, we believe the government should be going further and should be taking stronger measures and being more forceful in asking for federal intervention. While we support the measures, essentially our position is that the measures taken by the government to date are necessary but not sufficient.

Therefore, we would humbly request that the government consider an amendment to the first paragraph in the Premier's motion to say, "that the Legislative Assembly support the efforts of the government to fight on behalf of Albertans' interests" because we broadly support the strategy, but we think more should be done.

3:40

Secondly, we would like to propose, as will be done by my hon. colleague the Official Opposition House Leader, that the second

paragraph call explicitly for the government of Canada to invoke the so-called declaratory power of the Constitution Act, section 92(10)(c), which allows the federal government to declare a project as being in the general interest, a provision that has been employed some 400 times in the history of Confederation.

Now, admittedly, the declaratory power has not been used in recent history, but these are not normal times, Mr. Speaker. In recent Canadian history we have not had one provincial government proposing to violate the Constitution, directly undermine federal jurisdiction, in this case over the regulation of interprovincial pipelines, and attack the economic union while also undermining this country's vital economic interests.

Some have referred to the declaratory power, section 92(10)(c), as, quote, the nuclear option. Well, I think it's time, Mr. Speaker, that this Legislature and government call upon Prime Minister Trudeau's government to demonstrate that it is serious about defending Canada as an economic union, defending our Constitution, defending the principle of interprovincial free trade, and defending the country's long-term economic interests by removing any doubt about the federal jurisdiction to override purported B.C. regulations or statutes seeking to block the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion.

Those are two of the amendments that we will put forward formally following my remarks.

Mr. Speaker, let me back up, though, and say that I agree with much of the Premier's remarks. Alberta is blessed to have some of the world's greatest energy reserves. Countries all around the globe envy the position, the blessings of nature that we as Albertans have inherited and developed, and that development has been central to our economic history and our prosperity. Alberta possesses the third-largest oil reserves on earth after Venezuela and Saudi Arabia, before Russia and other countries. If we were able to commodify those reserves at today's current global price of slightly over \$60 a barrel, they would represent a current global market value of some \$11 trillion. Now, that's a lot of money. I don't even think the hon. Finance minister could spend that much although I'm sure he would try if he had the opportunity.

An Hon. Member: Don't tempt him.

Mr. Kenney: No, I won't tempt him. Don't give him any ideas.

But, Mr. Speaker, \$11 trillion. Now, according to the Fraser Institute, Canadian governments collectively owe about a trillion dollars in debts, unfunded liabilities, unfunded health care, and pension liabilities. A trillion dollars collectively. This government is running the highest deficit of any provincial government in Canada as a share of gross domestic product. According to Standard & Poor's they are on track to quadruple Alberta's public debt to some \$86 billion. Their fiscal policies and recklessness have led to six credit downgrades for Alberta's debt, meaning that we have to pay more to borrow more. We have to pay more in interest payments. What does that do? It simply enriches bankers and bondholders and diverts tax dollars from public services.

It's not sensible, but this is unfortunately and increasingly the case across the country. There was a period – they called it the Chrétien consensus – of a good 20 years in the country when governments were committed to trying to stay within balance, but sadly that is no longer the case, neither here nor in Ottawa.

Here is the point. We are now not on the cusp of but in the midst of a radical demographic change in our society. We're fortunate here in Alberta to have the youngest average population in Canada. But overall our population in this country: this province is aging. We need look no further than southern Europe to see the consequences of an aging population. When the bills come due,

when the IOUs have to be cashed in, when the debt obligations have to be repaid to the bankers, if you have a shrinking tax base and a growing population of retirees and beneficiaries and people who are in their acute years of health care consumption, when that happens, governments can go bankrupt. The government of Alberta effectively once did go bankrupt, Mr. Speaker. This is not some kind of an implausible scenario. Developed governments, members of the OECD, have been verging on bankruptcy because of their inability to service their debts in recent years.

Here is my point. If we as Canadians, as Albertans want to avoid a similar fate; if we want to have the public resources and the revenues, the jobs and incomes to handle those future debt obligations to pay back the debt being racked up by this government, to honour our future pension obligations, to pay for increasingly expensive health care with an aging population; if we want to manage those trillion dollars in accumulated public debts and unfunded liabilities; and if we also want to be able to provide the very best of public services to future generations, the highest quality health care and education, infrastructure; if we want to be that generous, caring, and compassionate society that we aspire to be in the future, then we must develop those resources and the revenues that they represent.

Mr. Speaker, according to the International Energy Agency, they project that there will be a growing global demand for hydrocarbon-based energy through at least the year 2045. So for at least the next generation, they claim, there will be a growing global economic demand for the oil and gas that we have here in abundance. The question then becomes for us as Canadians an existential one. Will we, as some say, leave that in the ground undeveloped and will we in so doing assume an opportunity cost of trillions of dollars of future wealth, or will we do what is right for future generations and will we develop those resources in an environmentally responsible way to sell them on global markets?

Mr. Speaker, I maintain that not only is this an existential question for our prosperity, current and future, but it is also a moral question. It is a moral question because the world's other major oil and gas producers, many of them, are amongst the world's worst regimes. Number one reserves: Venezuela, a socialist dictatorship where people are dying of starvation and deprivation of basic health care, where political prisoners are tortured and imprisoned, a disaster notwithstanding having the world's largest oil reserves and, by the way, a government that fuels conflict throughout Latin America and, regrettably, a government that has fans on the other side of this House.

3:50

Then you have the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: Saudi Arabia, the second largest oil reserves, that treats women like property rather than people and that for the better part of four decades has exported forms of extremism and financed terror organizations in every part of the world. Then you have, Mr. Speaker, Canada, the third largest reserves, and then Russia, Vladimir Putin's Russia, an authoritarian state in gross violation of human rights standards, that as well has fuelled conflict around the world, including the prolongation of the recent Syrian civil war. Then in the top 10 you have other jurisdictions like the emirate of Qatar which, even more than Saudi Arabia, is responsible for bankrolling genocidal organizations like Daesh, the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, and you have the Islamic Republic of Iran that hangs gay men, that is responsible for stoning women accused of adultery, that through the al-Quds Force of the Iranian revolutionary guard is responsible for projecting terror around the world, a country whose leadership has called for the obliteration of the only Jewish state on earth, a member state of the United Nations, Israel. I could carry on, but

these are the other countries that are together with Canada in the club of the world's largest energy reserves.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Here's the question, Madam Speaker. If Canada keeps it in the ground, if the B.C. New Democrats get their way and block the Trans Mountain pipeline, if Justin Trudeau gets his way and effectively prevents any other pipeline application from going to approval because of their Byzantine and ridiculous new process; if Justin Trudeau gets his way and quote, phases out, the oil sands; if the so-called environmental organizations, many of them foreign funded, get their way, like the NDP's friend Tzeporah Berman, and shuts down our industry; if David Suzuki, who was recently paid up to \$50,000 by the teachers' union to come to Alberta, gets his way and keeps it in the ground; all of these fellow travellers of the NDP, if they get their way and we shut down Canada's energy production, I have a question for fellow members. Will Venezuela, Saudi Arabia, Russia, Iran, or Qatar stop exploration, development, and shipment of oil and gas on the global market? Absolutely not.

This is not, actually, an environmental question. This is not a question about global greenhouse gas emissions because as long as there is a growing demand, there will be a supply to meet it. The question, then, is whether or not Canada, primarily Alberta, will be central to that supply, whether or not we will compete with and displace, hopefully, hydrocarbon-based energy from some of the world's worst regimes. I submit, Madam Speaker, that it is not only in Alberta's interests and Canada's interests, but it is in the world's interests that we see more production and shipment of energy from this province that has amongst the world's major oil producers by far the highest and best environmental, human rights, and labour standards on Earth. I submit that this is a question for our economic future, but it is also a moral question. It is not an environmental question insofar as the growing global demand will be met by supply. That is why, I think, Albertans have a growing understanding about the importance of getting our resources to market.

I was proud to belong to a federal government that saw the approval and construction of four major pipeline projects, Madam Speaker, that doubled the capacity to ship oil within Canada, and that approved the Northern Gateway pipeline that would have given us market access to Asian markets. I regret that after the deal done between Premier and Prime Minister on the carbon tax, the federal Trudeau Liberals by fiat arbitrarily vetoed the approved Northern Gateway pipeline, a project that would have had a direct investment of \$9 billion on which, I believe, the proponent had already spent \$800 million.

Then, Madam Speaker, former President Obama vetoed the proposed Keystone XL pipeline, an application by TransCanada PipeLines for a presidential authorization of that pipeline to cross the Canada-U.S. border, against the advice that he had received in two exhaustive studies conducted by his own State Department, the second of which concluded that Keystone XL would actually lower global greenhouse gas emissions because if the Alberta energy did not move by pipe, it would move by rail. Whose carbon footprint is higher? President Obama, for ideological and political reasons, rejected Keystone XL even though he endorsed the Alberta NDP government's carbon tax. So much for social licence.

Then, Madam Speaker, after TransCanada had spent hundreds of millions of dollars advancing the Energy East proposal, it was killed by the National Energy Board, which decided last August to change the rules of the game midstream by indicating that the pipeline application would include an assessment of up- and downstream emissions notionally related to the Energy East pipeline. Now, I

must say, I found this more than peculiar because, first of all, as I asserted during question period, the production of oil and gas is the exclusive jurisdiction of the province in which it is produced. That was established in the Constitution by Premier Peter Lougheed during his negotiations around the repatriation in 1981 and '82. So the National Energy Board, an agency of the federal government, has absolutely no business sticking its federal nose in the regulatory authority of the province of Alberta as it did. Regrettably, this government still to this day has not raised a syllable of protest to this flagrant federal violation of our hard-fought jurisdiction.

Now, during question period, Madam Speaker, the Premier, to be charitable, demonstrated that she has been, let us say, misbriefed on the reasons for the cancellation of the Energy East pipeline route, by the way, a project that represented a \$16 billion capital investment, thousands of direct jobs, potential value to the Canadian economy of hundreds of billions of dollars, and the dream of energy independence. Had that pipeline been built, our friends and fellow Canadians in eastern Canada would no longer be dependent on foreign oil, including from conflict regimes. They could have displaced those imports from Venezuela and elsewhere with ethically produced Alberta oil, but sadly that dream is dead, at least for years to come.

Now, the Premier, as I said, betrayed a misunderstanding, shall we say, about the reasons for which Energy East was killed. Madam Speaker, in August the National Energy Board said that it was changing the approach to include carbon emissions because it had been asked to do so by the federal government. I'm going to quote here from the National Energy Board statement on August 23.

Given increasing public interest in [greenhouse gas emissions], together with increasing governmental action and commitments (including the federal government's stated interest in assessing upstream GHG emissions associated with major pipelines), the Board is of the view that it should also consider indirect GHG emissions in its NEB Act public interest determination for each of the Projects. In considering such indirect GHG emissions, the Board will focus on the quantification of incremental upstream and incremental downstream GHG emissions, as well as incremental emissions resulting from third-party electricity generation.

4:00

So there you have it, Madam Speaker. That was the statement issued by the National Energy Board on August 23 of last year saying that it was going to force TransCanada to take responsibility for notional increases in GHGs associated with the pipeline. That means that for the oil that is produced in Alberta, regulated according to our exclusive jurisdiction, somehow the pipeline company had to take responsibility for that even though the pipeline didn't burn the emissions. By the way, what is this notion of an incremental assessment of downstream emissions? What is that all about? Why should the pipeline company be regulated based on the consumption of the energy shipped through it by the end-user? Bombardier, the construction of whose airplanes we Albertans subsidize through our federal taxes, isn't forced to go through a regulation or an assessment of its incremental GHG emissions that are spewed out of the airplanes that burn hydrocarbon-based energy.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Quebec government, incidentally, shortly after this decision by the NEB, cut the ribbon on a new cement factory in Gaspésie with a \$400 million government subsidy. Now, that's the business of the government of Quebec. They're free to engage in corporate welfare if they want. But one has to wonder whether the \$9 billion

in equalization benefits received by the government of Quebec gave them the fiscal capacity to finance the \$400 million subsidy for the cement factory, which will, when fully operational, have a carbon footprint of some 2 million metric tonnes per year, more than most of our Alberta oil sands developments. And guess what, Madam Speaker? That cement factory was exempted from environmental review and exempted from any assessment or regulation of its carbon output.

So we get to subsidize – we're required through our federal tax dollars to subsidize – cement factories and airplane factories that produce massive carbon emissions. They're not regulated for that, but the federal government through its regulator was forcing a great Alberta company, TransCanada PipeLines, to be regulated on the basis of emissions for energy that it does not consume. So the energy consumers are exempted even though we subsidized them, but the energy shippers are hit by these new federal regulations. That is why on September 7 of last year Russ Girling, president and chief executive officer of TransCanada, suspended the Energy East application – I'd be happy to table this, Madam Speaker – and I quote: due to the significant changes to the regulatory process introduced by the National Energy Board. Unquote.

Now, let me just circle back and make sure that we're on the same page here, Madam Speaker. In question period the Premier said that the NEB had nothing to do with the cancellation of Energy East, but the project proponent, TransCanada, said that they cancelled Energy East because of the National Energy Board's regulatory decision. I have enormous respect for our Premier, and I know that she would never – I mean this sincerely – deliberately mislead this place. But I would ask her staff, who may be observing this – is her Energy minister here? I would ask her minister to brief the Premier on the actual statement made by TransCanada saying that, quote, due to the significant changes to the regulatory process introduced by the National Energy Board, TransCanada is suspending the Energy East application. There you are. So what happened?

Now, Madam Speaker, should we be surprised by this? When the NEB said that the federal government's stated interest in assessing upstream GHG emissions associated with major pipelines – when they said that that's why they did this, they were giving us a little bit of a clue. They were telling us that they had been compelled by their bosses in Ottawa to change the rules of the game after TransCanada had spent, I gather, upwards of a billion on this project.

And who would be calling the shots in that federal government? Well, I've got to say that I know the Prime Minister – he was my critic in opposition for a couple of years – and based on my experience, let's just put it this way: I'm skeptical that he understood the details.

Madam Speaker, let me say that perhaps the former executive director of the World Wildlife Fund Canada, Gerry Butts, is the person who pushed this policy onto the National Energy Board that killed Energy East and, I believe, with it the prospect of any major pipeline application proceeding in the future. This, by the way, was made worse by the announcement of the federal government a month ago on the new pipeline assessment process.

Madam Speaker, let me introduce to the House this individual, Gerry Butts. He is the principal secretary to the Prime Minister. He is described as the most powerful and influential person in Ottawa. Mr. Butts was once giving a speech, I think in 2012, not long ago, just five or six years ago, in Calgary – courageously, in Calgary – and he unencumbered himself of his real views. When asked on the question of Northern Gateway, "Do you have an alternate pipeline route that you'd like to propose . . ."

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, it's customary to address your remarks through the Speaker; it's also helpful to *Hansard*. If you turn away from the microphone, they can't hear what you're saying.

Please proceed.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have to unlearn bad habits from the federal House. I will always accept your correction.

Madam Speaker, Mr. Butts was asked: did he have an alternate pipeline route to propose? He said: "No. No alternate pipeline route. I want to propose an alternate economy, with no hydrocarbon-based energy." This is a man who's arrived at the right hand of the Prime Minister with an ideological zeal to, to quote the Prime Minister, his boss, phase out the oil sands and keep it in the ground.

It is time that we as Albertans called a spade a spade. This federal government is not an ally of Alberta's energy industry, and, Madam Speaker, I contend that Albertans understand that. They see this for what it is, and that's why in the most recent public opinion poll Mr. Trudeau's government was polling at 11 per cent in Alberta. After the national energy program – the Government House Leader is old enough to remember this – his father's party, the Liberal Party of Canada, won 23 per cent of the popular vote, and Justin Trudeau, an enemy of our energy industry and our future prosperity, is at half that level. So who's kidding who here?

That is why I urge our provincial government to understand. Yes, of course they have to work with the Prime Minister and his government – I understand that – but, Madam Speaker, they must not make the mistake of becoming apologists for this government in Ottawa that vetoed Northern Gateway, that did precisely nothing to protest Barack Obama's vetoing of Keystone XL, that has killed indirectly, according to both the National Energy Board and TransCanada PipeLines Limited, the Energy East project, and which now is doing precious nothing to ensure the construction of the last remaining coastal pipeline proposal, the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain expansion.

Let me turn my attention to that project, Madam Speaker, because it represents, as the hon. the Premier has said, a multibillion-dollar investment, thousands of direct jobs, and potentially hundreds of billions of dollars in value to the Canadian economy, not just the Alberta economy.

4:10

Now, Madam Speaker, let's be clear. This is not a brand new pipeline. Trans Mountain has been in the ground and safely operating for over six decades, for over half a century, fuelling the economy of British Columbia's Lower Mainland, without a single major environmental incident or problem, for six decades, producing indirect economic and fiscal benefits for First Nations along the pipeline route, which is why every First Nation in the immediate proximity of the Trans Mountain pipeline supports its expansion until you get to the coast.

Madam Speaker, if it weren't for that pipeline, how would our friends in British Columbia have run a modern economy for the past six decades? I mean, their cars are not fuelled by pixie dust or good wishes, you know. Their buses and trucks and their industrial basins in the Lower Mainland are fuelled and have been for over half a century by Alberta oil, and for six decades oil tankers – heaven forbid – have safely and regularly exited the port of Burnaby, the Burrard Inlet, and the port of Vancouver to global markets.

Incidentally, not all of the energy consumed in the Lower Mainland comes from Alberta. A growing portion has come from U.S. refineries in Washington state. Madam Speaker, you know where that oil comes from? Tankers, oil tankers that come down the west coast, our Pacific coast, safely, without concern, year after

year, delivering the energy that fuels British Columbia's economy together with Alberta oil.

Moreover, Madam Speaker, Kinder Morgan has already built approximately half of the expanded pipeline. It was already approved several years ago and built without controversy. Most people don't even understand this either, I think, in British Columbia. So this application merely is to complete that project.

Now, this project went through the most rigorous environmental assessment on Earth for a pipeline, through the National Energy Board. All of the opponents had an opportunity to raise their objections and their concerns. The issues around, you know, what happens in the hypothetical scenario of a bitumen spill: all of that has been studied scientifically. The evidence was presented, and the National Energy Board approved this pipeline expansion with conditions, a decision subsequently ratified by the federal Governor in Council. That was done over a year ago.

Now, Madam Speaker, as I said, I broadly appreciate the approach being taken by the Premier in advocating for the pipeline today. I do, however, have to register a reservation that Alberta's NDP government was too late to the party. Shortly after the federal approval of the Trans Mountain expansion our Premier, who can be a very effective advocate, went to Vancouver and issued a press release that she was going to be fighting for Trans Mountain. I thought: that's great; we're going to see our Premier stand up and explain the importance of this and how it's environmentally safe and the benefits for British Columbians and all Canadians. Guess what happened? On that visit, just over a year ago, she had some private meetings at a hotel in Vancouver. She did not give a single interview or deliver a single speech, but she did meet with her NDP counterpart, the then opposition leader and now Premier, John Horgan, who left the meeting and said that our Premier did not try to persuade him – did not try to persuade him – to support Trans Mountain.

Madam Speaker, a year has flown by. The clock is ticking. Kinder Morgan, the project proponent, has spent, I suspect, hundreds of millions of dollars patiently waiting for the rule of law to work. Recently Kinder Morgan's parent company in the United States said that given the uncertainty around this project, they will not be making any major capital expenditures on building a pipeline until that uncertainty is resolved. The opponents of that pipeline, the opponents of Canada's energy industry: many of them are foreign funded, like, for example, Tides Canada. It has received some \$40 million in foreign money over the course of the past decade alone. They are banking on that uncertainty. That is their strategy, to create more uncertainty. Their strategy is death by delay.

It is the same strategy as the B.C. New Democrats, as the NDP mayor of Vancouver, as the NDP mayor of Burnaby, as – oh, I think there's a bit of a trend here, right? – their friends in the B.C. Green Party. Their strategy: death by delay, a thousand little cuts, a regulatory consultation here, a court challenge there, a protest over here, an illegal protest over here. Yes, it's almost like they read the foreword to that Greenpeace book about civil disobedience, that was co-written by our environment minister, Madam Speaker. An action a day: that's what we're seeing.

The Deputy Speaker: A point of order? Go ahead, Government House Leader.

Point of Order Factual Accuracy

Mr. Mason: Madam Speaker, the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition is misrepresenting the situation with respect to the

minister of environment. She did not co-write any book with respect to that matter, so I think that the hon. member should correct his historical record that he's trying to place before this Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. First of all, I would point out that the hon. Government House Leader did not even provide a citation, so at this point I think we may as well go forward. But to be clear, this is a matter of debate. The Government House Leader knows that. If – if – anybody is confused about who wrote the foreword to that book or not, the hon. environment minister's name is on that foreword. I mean, quite frankly, it can't be any more clear than that. Without a doubt, the Government House Leader knows this is a matter of debate, and he's just interrupting the Official Opposition leader's speech before this House. He should stop that behaviour, and we should continue on.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the point of order?

Mr. Nixon: What's the citation?

Mr. Mason: Standing Order 23(h), (i), and (j).

The Deputy Speaker: Standing Order 23(h), (i), and (j). I will give the hon. Government House Leader the benefit of the doubt on the citation. I think we understood what it was.

Do you wish to comment on the point of order?

Mr. Kenney: No.

The Deputy Speaker: No.

I just would like to really caution the House to be careful. At times, yes, it is a difference in how we understand things, but we have to be careful, when we make a statement, that we can back it up with accurate facts. That helps to keep the tone of the House civil and respectful.

Go ahead, hon. member.

Debate Continued

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Speaking of NDP environment ministers, her counterpart in British Columbia, it was recently disclosed, spent an evening – I think it was on Hornby Island or one of those places – hanging out with a so-called hive of environmental activists, all of them devoted to shutting down this pipeline and our energy industry. This has all been reported. Documents have been leaked from that group. They were talking about organizing swarms, they called it – their word, not mine: swarms – of these organizations to engage in lawbreaking protests.

Let me be clear, Madam Speaker. I am an advocate of freedom of speech and absolutely support lawful protest. It's a necessary part of our democracy. But these are people talking about planning and executing the blocking of trucks trying to enter the Kinder Morgan work site in Burnaby or trying to create an illegal marine cordon around the Kinder Morgan site. These are the same people that created an illegal camp on Burnaby mountain last year in flagrant violation of a court order, seeking successfully to delay seismic work related to the Trans Mountain pipeline. These are the people that the B.C. New Democrat environment minister is hanging out with. Let's not pretend that there's good faith going on here. We're talking about a minister of the Crown knowingly collaborating with people talking about breaking the law to attack this province's economy. This is unacceptable.

4:20

That is one of the many reasons, Madam Speaker, why I have called, since day one of the NDP government in British Columbia, for a serious fight-back strategy, because the NDP came to office there on a promise to use every tool in the tool box to stop Trans Mountain. Like, it's not as though they were ambiguous about this. I was quite intrigued recently to hear our Premier say that she didn't understand the degree of opposition that would be coming from the New Democrats in British Columbia. How could they have been more clear? Do you think they would have had the support of the Green Party in this B.C. coalition if it weren't for a sotto voce commitment to do everything possible to stop the Trans Mountain pipeline? The B.C. New Democrats have been refreshingly transparent about their motives and intentions. Regrettably, for most of the past nine months our government has been, to be kind, naive and passive in response to that hostility.

Let's just be clear. Constitutional law 101: interprovincial pipelines are the exclusive regulatory jurisdiction of the federal government. Nobody should really dispute this. What we have in the Horgan government in Victoria is a pretense that they can somehow manufacture regulations or pass statutes to interfere with that federal regulation, and they cannot. This is black and white in constitutional law, Madam Speaker. But they don't care if they're going to win in court or not. What they're trying to do is death by delay. It's to create enough uncertainty, with the protesters that they're talking to over here and the NDP government in Burnaby refusing to grant permits for construction here and NGOs taking the project to court over here, all of this together, a co-ordinated strategy to say to the investors in Kinder Morgan that this thing is just too uncertain. Now, heaven forbid it ever comes to that, but that's exactly their strategy.

That is why we advocated tough action from the get-go, from last July, the coming to power of the British Columbia New Democrat government. Even then, Madam Speaker, since last July I have articulated a fight-back strategy. I have said, first of all, that we should be calling upon the federal government to invoke the declaratory power under section 92(10)(c) of the Constitution Act to obviate any dilatory measures by the British Columbia government.

Secondly, I said that we should prepare an entire suite of potential economic reprisals, saying that if they start a trade war, they'll have to learn that Alberta will finish it. I talked, Madam Speaker, last summer about symbolic measures like perhaps not buying B.C. wine through the ALCB or not entering into future contracts for the purchase of B.C. hydroelectricity from their Crown corporation.

I talked about doing an assessment of all of British Columbia's major exports to and through Alberta and suggested that perhaps, you know, if they're going to pretend they have the constitutional authority to block this pipeline, we could assert a constitutional authority to impose tariffs on some of those products or maybe stop some of them for rigorous safety inspections. I know that my hon. colleague from Drumheller would be happy to volunteer to engage in some of those safety inspections at the border – sometimes I find he can be very slow moving when needs be – because he knows something about running stuff across the border, let me tell you, Madam Speaker. I've also raised the following question: why would we allow British Columbia to ship its natural gas through pipelines in Alberta to U.S. markets toll-free if they block, effectively, the shipment of our oil to British Columbia and global markets?

Finally, since last July I said that if push comes to shove, if absolutely necessary, we must have as an ultimate remedy what I call the Loughheed strategy. In 1981 Premier Peter Lougheed

announced in this place that Alberta would reduce its production and shipment of oil to the rest of the country, forcing a significant increase in consumer prices, forcing the federal government of Pierre Trudeau to come to the table and renegotiate better terms around the infamous national energy program. Now, when he did so, Madam Speaker, he was acting as a true visionary and a statesman. I guarantee you that Premier Lougheed – I'm sure his phone in this building rang off the hook, with energy executives in Calgary saying: "Peter, what are you doing? You're killing my share prices over here. You're undermining the short-term financial interest of my company." But Premier Peter Lougheed understood that the role of a Premier is to defend the vital strategic economic interests of the province and its economy and not somebody's short-term shareholder value. So he did the right thing. He showed us the pattern.

That is why I have explicitly advocated that we publicly announce our willingness to follow that approach in this dispute with the New Democrats in Victoria, but when I did so, Madam Speaker, guess what? This Premier mocked and ridiculed me. It's true. [interjections] I know. Say it ain't so, but it's true. I was shocked – shocked – to hear the hon. the Premier suggest that I was acting like, quote, Donald Trump, that I wanted to build a wall around Alberta and make B.C. pay for it, by adopting exactly the same policy that she announced in the throne speech last Thursday. You know, she accused me of having a temper tantrum, said that a temper tantrum by the opposition leader wasn't going to build a pipeline, for advocating exactly the same policy that she adopted five days ago.

Well, that's fine. You know, Madam Speaker, that's okay. I understand that the NDP didn't want to really get into a serious fight with their brothers and sisters in the British Columbia New Democrats. I understood there was a degree of professional and partisan courtesy here. I understand that they would have preferred that this whole thing would be like one of those World Wrestling Federation matches, one of those choreographed fights. That's what we saw going on for several months there.

But, lo and behold, they had a conversion on the road to election day, Madam Speaker. They called this by-election down in Calgary-Lougheed, and they ran a great, qualified candidate. The Premier and half their cabinet went down there. They talked tough, and they called me all sorts of names. Oh, no: the NDP vote fell in half. Oh, ouch: the newest political party in Canada, the United Conservatives, won the largest number of votes ever cast for a single candidate in Alberta by-election history, and that was with a weak candidate. [laughter] You're not supposed to laugh.

So here's the thing. They're looking at this, and they're looking at public opinion, and they realize: my goodness, maybe we actually have to drop the pro wrestling antics and demonstrate to our New Democrat friends in British Columbia that Alberta means business. I commend them for doing so, Madam Speaker. You know, I think it was Ralph Waldo Emerson who said that a foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of a little mind, so I'm glad that the New Democrats are not being foolishly consistent about this, that they've demonstrated an openness of mind, a willingness to take good advice. I hope sincerely that this is the beginning of a pattern, their willingness to take good advice.

When in the throne speech the other day Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor said that the government is prepared to replicate what Peter Lougheed did in 1981 – thank you and full commendation to the Premier and the government for hearing the message. But it is not enough, Madam Speaker, because when they were in the pro wrestling part of this, their fake dispute with Victoria, the Premier brought in, I thought, a pretty good starting point – it was an attention-getter – and that was the de facto boycott

of B.C. wines. Like the Premier, I enjoy and I certainly understand – like the Government House Leader, I enjoy a good British Columbia Chardonnay although I'm more of a beer man myself. But, you know, B.C. wine is a great Canadian product. We all appreciate it, and we love our friends and family over in British Columbia. But we had to get John Horgan's attention somehow. That was, I thought, a sensible first step but symbolic, to demonstrate that we were going to represent our interests.

4:30

But here's the problem, Madam Speaker. It was hardly proportionate. Albertans buy about \$70 million of B.C. wine per annum, and we sell them billions of dollars of oil, and we're hoping through Trans Mountain to sell the world hundreds of billions of dollars of oil. So it was not in any way proportionate, but it was a symbolic attention-getter. Regrettably, the government dropped even that measure when Premier Horgan said that he would take his proposed regulations on Alberta bitumen shipments to a judicial reference.

Now, in my judgment, that was a transparent delay tactic, Madam Speaker. We already know what the law is on this. By the way, the last time that a British Columbia government did a court reference, it took nearly four years to be finally resolved at the Supreme Court of Canada. It was on the polygamy reference. Now, admittedly, that started at trial court and then went to the B.C. Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court of Canada. But we don't know. I think it's possible that Premier Horgan will start at the B.C. trial court and then, if he doesn't like the answer, go the B.C. appeals court and the Supreme Court. This could take years for that reference to come to a resolution.

Secondly, I have to ask why our Premier did not insist – because let's be honest; we're all grown-ups here, Madam Speaker. We all know that our Premier's chief of staff was John Horgan's chief of staff. So we all know that there were phone calls happening and . . . [interjections] Is that not true? The last one. Okay. The connections are so tight that I get confused. We all know they're buddies, and we all know that they were talking to Victoria as well they should. There should be back channel conversations. There's nothing wrong with that. But I wish that our Premier had said to her friend John Horgan: "Listen, John. Okay. We understand you're going to make this reference, but in Alberta we have to be part of drafting the question. We want to make sure that it's a fair, balanced, neutral question, that it's not stacked in B.C.'s favour." She apparently didn't do that. She has given or the Premier of B.C. is taking the full discretion to write his own question, which can help to create a certain outcome.

If you don't believe me, Madam Speaker, just look at the court reference done by Premier Lougheed back in the early 1980s on the shipment of Alberta gas and on the taxation question. He wrote some very loaded questions and got the answers he wanted from the Alberta appeals court. So I think it was a tactical mistake to give John Horgan a blank cheque on the reference, but it was, in my judgment, a strategic mistake to back away from the wine boycott because now the B.C. government can say: well, they're not really all that serious over in Alberta.

So, Madam Speaker, you know, all of these comments are to say that we are prepared in the Official Opposition to support our Premier and this government in whatever measures they take that strongly defend our interests – I think all Albertans are prepared to do that – but we continue to have questions about the seriousness of this government. We are glad that they've accepted as their policy suggestions that we have been making for the better part of a year, but we want to see those ideas turned into actual policy.

That is why, again, we call upon the government to encourage the federal government to declare Trans Mountain as being in the national interest under section 92 of the Constitution. It is also why we call upon the Alberta government to demand that Ottawa, in its new statutory package around pipeline regulation, exclude any assessment of up- or downstream carbon emissions by the new regulator, the son of the National Energy Board, the Canada energy regulator. We ask that the federal government remove the temptation to get into the regulation of upstream production, which is our exclusive constitutional jurisdiction, and not repeat the catastrophic decision of the NEB with respect to up- and downstream emissions. If the government takes measures like that, Madam Speaker, we will fully support this government and this Premier. All of us are in this together as Albertans. This is about our vital economic interests.

I will close with this. Madam Speaker, our quarrel is not with ordinary British Columbians. The polling indicates consistently that a plurality of British Columbians support the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion and environmentally responsible resource development. Our quarrel is with an ideological government in Victoria that is doing everything it can to attack our vital economic interests, Canada's prosperity, and the economic union promised in the Constitution.

This is not just about Alberta; this is about what kind of country we live in. I believe this is the only Legislative Assembly in Canada that proudly displays the flags of all 10 of our provinces and all three of our territories. Madam Speaker, that is a reflection of our patriotism as Albertans. We are proud to have shared hundreds of billions of dollars of wealth created in Alberta with our fellow Canadians across the country. We are generous and are proud to have shared some of our wealth when times have been good here but bad elsewhere. But in recent years the opposite has been true. As we continue to contribute to the rest of the federation through equalization, through the entire system of federal transfers, hundreds of thousands of Albertans have been out of work. Thousands of people have lost their businesses and their homes, their dreams, and their life savings.

We all know Albertans who have gone through personal and family crises as the human consequence of this. I met people going through adversity every day on the road, putting 150,000 kilometres on my pickup, going to over 900 events in communities across the province, people barely hanging on. It is our responsibility collectively, on both sides of this place, to speak and to fight for those proud, hard-working Alberta women and men who ask for nothing more than a fair chance. They ask for nothing more than opportunity. They ask for nothing more than basic fairness in this federation. They acknowledge that our province and our previous governments, as this government, have been generous with the rest of Canada. Now it is the time for us as Albertans to ask Canadians from coast to coast to stand up and to say: "We embrace a future of prosperity. We embrace a world where Canada, with the highest human rights, environmental, and labour standards, plays a growing role in global energy markets so that the world can be less dependent on conflict regimes."

Madam Speaker, this is the cause for Canada. It is time that all of us put aside to the greatest extent possible our partisan differences, our regional differences to come together in the defence of our country's future prosperity and to demonstrate that we will not relent in that fight for our future.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Clark: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. My apologies to my colleagues in the House and to those watching that, unfortunately, standing orders will not allow me to speak for the same length of time as the Leader of the Official Opposition and the Premier. I know that you would love to hear me for the better part of an hour, but unfortunately my time here is limited, so I will dive into my ...

Mr. Mason: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Point of order.

Point of Order Speaking Order

Mr. Mason: Madam Speaker, it is customary in this House that on bills and other matters like motions we alternate between the government and the opposition in the speaking order.

4:40

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak?

Mr. Clark: If I could cite Standing Order 16, I believe, on a member rising to speak, which says, "Every Member desiring to speak is to rise in his or her place and address the Speaker." And Standing Order 17: "When 2 or more Members rise to speak, the Speaker calls on the Member who, in the Speaker's opinion, first rose in his or her place."

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to comment on this point of order?

Seeing none, it is absolutely the Speaker's decision who they choose to recognize to speak, and it so happens that the only individual I saw standing to speak was the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Debate Continued

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'll continue. I appreciate that. Speaking about Government Motion 2, am I upset with the B.C. government's repeated attempts to block the lawfully approved Kinder Morgan pipeline? Of course I am. I'm a proud Albertan, and I will always stand up for the best interests of my home province.

I can also tell you that my constituents are angry not only with the attempts of B.C. to block the lawful construction of the Kinder Morgan pipeline but also about the failure of Energy East and of Northern Gateway and all of the barriers big and small that have been put in the way of the development of Alberta's energy industry. I can tell you that I've had many conversations with my constituents, most recently this Friday, a constituency day, in a coffee shop in my constituency, where it was made abundantly clear to me that my constituents are very upset with the repeated attempts to block lawful access for Alberta's natural resources to global markets. It's especially frustrating when our neighbours to the south continue to grow their energy production and steal Alberta's market share while supporting many of the protests that have stalled energy development in our province.

Now, we all know about the story of growing energy production in Texas and North Dakota. The growth in shale oil has made the U.S. a net exporter of crude. But a constituent pointed me to the extent of urban drilling in one of the most densely populated locations in the United States. Do you want to guess where that is? Los Angeles, California. Over the past 125 years L.A. has produced 9 billion barrels of oil and still today pumps 12 per cent of

California's oil, with nearly 80,000 people working directly or indirectly in that industry. There's a refinery, the El Segundo refinery, that is the state's largest, processing 269,000 barrels of oil a day. The Wilmington oil field in L.A. has over 1,200 wells right on the coast of Long Beach. There are many other producing wells all throughout greater Los Angeles and some even in beautiful Beverly Hills.

In 2015 a California government report showed that many grades of California crude have substantially higher carbon intensity than Alberta oil sands crude and, in some cases, twice as much. Some blends of other country's crude, Venezuela and Nigeria in particular, are three or even four times as carbon intense as Alberta's crude.

So why do I bring all of this up? Because compared to what happens in the United States in one of the most dense urban areas of the country where there is substantial oil production, for our neighbours in British Columbia to attempt to block a single pipeline, which is a twinning of an existing pipeline, it would be laughable if it wasn't so tragic and frustrating. It's frustrating to my constituents, Madam Speaker, and it is incredibly frustrating to me.

What is just as frustrating is to witness the ham-fisted way that Alberta's NDP have made the case for pipelines. Yes, we know there is economic benefit from pipelines. Alberta, by a recent report, loses \$7.2 billion a year as a result of lack of market access. The federal government loses a direct \$800 million a year. Private investment is constrained by \$5.3 billion a year. The overall cost to Canada's GDP from lack of market of access is \$15.6 billion a year. That is a substantial, substantial amount of money.

In addition to the economic benefit, we know that the science is rock solid, that pipelines are by far the safest way to transport Canada's products to market. This includes those double-hull tankers that use not only the latest GPS technology but also pilot ships to ensure they safely navigate the inner harbours on the way to open ocean. By the way, in the 62 years – 62 years – that tankers have been transporting crude oil from the Vancouver port, there have been zero incidents. That's zero incidents of tankers spilling, absolutely none, in all the years since 1956, when GPS wasn't even science fiction.

But in addition to the safety and the economic benefits of pipelines, there is a strong environmental case to be made. This government has let our province down because they haven't told British Columbians that we share their desire to address climate change. Alberta's and B.C.'s interests are and should be aligned. British Columbians should know that Albertans share their desire to reduce carbon emissions, or at least some of us on this side of the House share their desire to reduce carbon emissions, which is exactly what the Kinder Morgan pipeline expansion will do. How? Alberta innovators, including government, academia, industry, and more, are working to reduce carbon emissions from oil sands. The Clean Resource Innovation Network, which includes COSIA and many others, is finding ways to reduce and maybe even remove carbon from Alberta's oil sands from extraction to end use. How many people in B.C. know about the carbon Xprize? It's a \$20 million incentive to move new and emerging CO₂ technologies from the lab to real-world demonstration. To translate: Alberta is leading the charge to a low-carbon future.

If we apply some of the economic gains realized from attracting global prices for a product that's still in demand – we've heard repeatedly today and we know that even with the emergence of electric vehicles, global energy oil demand will continue to grow. We know that if we can attract global prices for that product – economists have said that there is a strong case to be made for investing the revenues that we will derive from the legitimate, safe,

and legal economic activity of producing oil and gas in this province – if we invest some of that in reducing carbon emissions, we will have tremendous environmental and tremendous economic benefit. These investments would not only reduce carbon emissions from hydrocarbon production and use but would allow Alberta entrepreneurs to do what Alberta entrepreneurs do best: to create the companies and technologies to address a problem the world is grappling with, to attract capital to our province, to diversify our economy, to innovate and create those technologies that we can sell to the rest of the world.

Now, the crude shipped through the Kinder Morgan expansion will also displace higher carbon crude produced in places like Venezuela and Nigeria, and I can promise you that neither of those countries' environmental or social standards are anywhere near Alberta's. Let me be absolutely clear. Alberta's energy industry has the most socially and environmentally responsible energy production in the entire world. Our regulator is second to none anywhere in the world. We export our regulatory expertise around the world. The world is trying to produce oil and gas in the same way that Alberta does, in the safe and socially responsible manner. Having worked in that industry, I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that I have seen it first-hand. It's absolutely true. That is the story that we need to be telling our neighbours in British Columbia and telling the world.

But in addition to making this case to British Columbians, we need to ensure that Ottawa steps up. This is a project that has been approved after thorough vetting by one of the if not the very best energy regulators in the world. The pipeline is safe, it is in the public interest, and it absolutely must be built. The federal government must step up and aggressively send that message to B.C. And the Alberta government needs to step up and aggressively send that message to Ottawa, that Ottawa needs to invoke section 92(10)(c) of the Constitution, that this is a project in the general interest of our country. While it is okay, as this motion says, to urge the federal government to take action – and I will give this government credit for some what I would call gentle nudging of Ottawa – they have pushed, but they haven't pushed nearly hard enough. The NDP needs to be very specific about what they want Ottawa to do. They should declare loudly that Ottawa should employ their powers under the Constitution to declare this Kinder Morgan pipeline a project in the general interest.

4:50

In the end the Alberta Party caucus will likely support this motion. We look forward to seeing the amendments that come forward. We do think that there are some areas and opportunities for improvement. But it's not nearly good enough for the Premier to talk about just the fact that there is a carbon tax in an attempt to gain social licence for building that pipeline. It is not enough for this Premier or this government to simply make the economic case for pipelines. And it is not enough for this government simply to threaten another trade war. Alberta's and B.C.'s interests are much more closely aligned than we think. It is up to this government to make that case and to ensure that the Kinder Morgan pipeline is built.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I'll recognize the hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased today to rise in support of this motion to support the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion and to call on the federal government to live up

to its responsibility to support the pipeline that it has approved. You know, I've spoken before in this Assembly about the personal, deep roots I have with the energy sector. Many of my family members have worked and continue to work within the sector. I've also bragged many times about where I live in Alberta, which is northwest Alberta, which is currently a growing centre for oil and gas activity. Many of my constituents in Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley work in the industry, as do neighbouring constituents. This is not a phenomenon confined to the Alberta side of the border, either. A lot of folks on the B.C. side of the border also work in this sector.

People in my area travel back and forth. It's something that's been going on for many, many years, and it's something that people mostly take for granted up my way. In northwest Alberta we don't have differences with our neighbours on the B.C. side of the border. We share common economic interests and a common understanding of the value that the oil and gas sector brings to the well-being of our communities. So make no mistake. This is not a dispute between the people of Alberta and the people of B.C. This is a disagreement between governments about the best way to develop our economy and protect our environment.

Here in Alberta we're protecting our environment and the future of our economy through an ambitious, nation-leading climate leadership plan. It's a plan that phases out coal-fired electricity by 2030. It's a plan that helps households, businesses, farms, communities, and not-for-profits reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and their costs through new energy efficiency programming. It's a plan that already has made history for achieving the lowest prices for renewable generated electricity, and it's a plan that has placed a hard cap on oil sands emissions. That plan helped to secure the federal government approval for the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion and for line 3. That plan is the reason why we have a pipeline approval to defend at all. That plan is our answer to those who claim that Trans Mountain will increase greenhouse gas emissions. Simply put, Madam Speaker, it won't. Alberta now has a hard cap on emissions from the oil sands. We've given industry the time and room to innovate, to develop new technologies that will enable them to reduce their carbon footprint, but there is a cap in Alberta beyond which the oil sands emissions cannot exceed.

We know the Trans Mountain expansion won't increase greenhouse gas emissions, but what are the benefits? Why is our government so determined to get this pipeline built to tidewater? The answer, Madam Speaker, is very simple. Our biggest market historically has been the U.S. For decades Alberta has been able to sell its oil to our neighbours to the south and make a bit of a tidy profit. Today, however, the U.S. is not just our biggest customer; it is our biggest competitor. In recent years U.S. oil production has skyrocketed, and Americans are now energy self-sufficient. The result? Alberta producers are now selling our resources at a discount. It is estimated that through the course of 2018 the gap between the average U.S. price and the average western Canadian price will average out at more than \$21 a barrel. Imagine the impact of that price differential on one Canadian energy company, particularly on players that have already been ravaged by the oil price shock of recent years. Imagine how much harder that lower oil price is making it for many operators to stay competitive, maintain production, and keep people working. Now imagine the impact of that across the entire industry and the damage that it is doing to our Canadian economy. It's certainly not small.

Indeed, in a recent study by Scotiabank, which has been referred to a couple of times today, the cost alone in 2018 could be more than \$10 billion. Madam Speaker, a loss of that magnitude will inevitably impact jobs and incomes for working families. A loss of

that magnitude will make its impact felt in government revenues that support public services like health care, education, social programs, and environmental protections. The same study suggests that the price differential may ease somewhat as more oil finds its way onto the rail system, but there are economic costs to that scenario as well as oil competing with other products such as agricultural products on our rail system. And, of course, there are safety concerns with transporting more oil by rail.

Madam Speaker, no government that cares about working families, as this government does, could fail to act. In the Speech from the Throne on Thursday our government made it very clear just how far we will go to defend Alberta's right to get a fair price for our resources. As I've said, the single biggest threat to our competitiveness is the current lack of Canadian pipeline capacity to global markets. The Trans Mountain pipeline expansion project will go a long way to solving this problem, and our government has been clear from day one that we will do whatever it takes to get it built.

When the government of B.C. tried to overstep its constitutional authority and regulate something it has no right to regulate, our Premier and our government stepped up. We shut down talks on expanding electricity trade, banned B.C. wines from Alberta shelves, and brought together a task force, Madam Speaker, of experts and notable Canadians to provide us with the best advice. Those measures were effective in getting British Columbia to back away from the illegal point in their plan and effective in making sure that all Canadians knew our resolve.

But in the face of continued threats we need to be prepared to take further steps to protect our workers and protect our industry, and if that means invoking legislation similar to the bold action taken by Premier Peter Lougheed when our energy industry was under attack in the past, we will not hesitate. Let me be perfectly clear, Madam Speaker. Our government understands that taking such action, even if absolutely necessary, could have consequences for our energy sector. We sincerely hope it doesn't come to this. Make no mistake. Our government has no desire to take this step, but it's important that B.C. and the country know that we will do whatever it takes to make sure our constitutional rights are respected as partners in Confederation. If we are forced to take this step, we will not do it lightly, and we will do it with open lines of communication with all our energy stakeholders.

Madam Speaker, one of the most gratifying parts of our work on Trans Mountain has been the support we've received from Albertans from all walks of life, people like the members of the Market Access Task Force, who I want to thank for their incredible work. We're talking about people like Frank McKenna, Anne McClellan, Jim Carter, Peter Hogg, Peter Tertzakian, Trevor Tombe, Ginny Flood, and Janet Annesley. Every one of them is making an enormous contribution to Canada, and I want to thank them all for the work they have done. I also want to thank members of Building Trades of Alberta for their presence here today, representing the thousands of working men and women who work every day in our sector in jobs that are hard, demanding, and crucial to the well-being of Alberta's economy and to the Canadian economy.

I want to note some of their words of support, a quote from Terry Parker, executive director of Building Trades of Alberta.

The Trans Mountain Expansion is a project that would not only benefit many skilled trades workers . . . but also would encourage additional investment in Alberta, to the benefit of all of us . . . We support the work of the Alberta Government standing up for the people of Canada. It is critical that all our provinces – all citizens of Canada – recognize that for Canada to prosper, we must work together.

There are many others, Madam Speaker, but I want to continue because I have some other good words to say.

I also want to acknowledge and thank the indigenous leaders who have been in attendance today, upon whose traditional territory this Legislature meets. I want to thank them as well for their participation in this fight and for their words of encouragement to me and my colleagues. You know, Madam Speaker, there's a tendency sometimes in debates like these for some people to speak on behalf of indigenous people instead of respecting that they have their own diverse voices and can speak very well for themselves.

5:00

I want to provide a quote from Chief Ronald Kreutzer from the Fort McMurray First Nation.

The Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain Pipeline is essential to the viability of the economic engine of Canada, the Alberta Oil sands [and First Nations]. Fort McMurray #468 First Nation relies heavily on the responsible development of the Oilsands to provide the necessary economics to be a self-sufficient Nation for the next seven generations.

We have another quote, from Chief Arthur Rain of the Paul First Nation, who wrote:

Kinder Morgan and its representatives have been engaging Paul First Nation leaders and membership for several years. Through these years we have worked hard to develop a relationship of deep trust and mutual benefit.

Finally, Madam Speaker, I want to thank the many leaders from the energy industry with whom I work every day and I've gotten to know over the past three years, many of whom my staff and I have spoken to in recent days.

You know, my government colleagues and I take very seriously the responsibility to this industry and the working women and men that this industry employs. We know the decisions that we take have direct bearing on their future and the ability of hundreds of thousands of Canadians to make ends meet. It has shaped our work implementing the climate leadership plan, a plan which brought the approval, as I mentioned, of Kinder Morgan as well as line 3. It has motivated our plan to provide leadership to support energy diversification in the form of partial upgrading of our bitumen, more petrochemical development, and better access to the natural gas liquids that our industry needs to grow. Our goal, Madam Speaker, is to foster a more resilient economy and a recovery that is built to last.

Finally, it has underpinned our determination to fight for better market access and to get our resources to new markets, to close the gap between the price we are forced to accept for our resources and the price we deserve. It is why we do not take lightly our decision to provide ourselves with all the tools we deem necessary to defend our industry and to defend our province's right to get a better price for our resources.

We know that if we were to act precipitously, we run the risk of inflicting short-term pain on an industry and on a group of workers that have already suffered more than their fair share in recent years. That is why I'm so gratified, Madam Speaker, by the many words of encouragement that I have received from industry leaders in recent days. People have told me repeatedly that while they worry about the short-term consequences for themselves and their workers, we do need to step up and take this step if necessary.

People like Mark Scholz from the Canadian Association of Oilwell Drilling Contractors has stated publicly: we are very supportive of the Premier; she has shown some incredible leadership on this file. End quote.

Mark is just one of the people showing his support and solidarity in the gallery here today. We are joined by others: Ben Brunnen from CAPP, Elizabeth Aquin from PSAC, Bill Clapperton from CNRL, Julie Woo from Canadian Natural Resources, Keri Scobie from Imperial Oil, and Scott Wenger from Suncor. And there are

others who have spoken on our behalf to the media or stand ready to do so if called upon today.

I am gratified by the trust that so many have put in us, trusting that we will not act precipitously; trusting that we will not take action simply to grandstand but only when it is truly necessary; trusting that as we understand that our actions have real consequences for real people, we must be measured, mature, and responsible as well as firm and decisive. Madam Speaker, it is an honour to be the beneficiary of that level of trust, and I know that my colleagues and I strive to be worthy of it every day.

Albertans from all walks of life are unified and united: workers, community leaders, many indigenous leaders, industry. They stand together in calling for fairness, in calling for respect for the rule of law and the constitutional authority of the federal government, in calling for Alberta's right to defend our workers, to defend our economy and our right to get a better price for our energy.

Madam Speaker, Albertans stand united. The members of this Assembly should stand united as well. I urge my colleagues in the Legislature to show that unity here today and to support this motion unanimously.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to thank and commend the hon. minister for her remarks and agree with much of what she has said. I have a question, though. One of the reasons that Trans Mountain has become so important, that the stakes are so high, is because of the failure of other coastal pipelines, including Energy East. Given that TransCanada pulled its application on Energy East because of the NEB's decision to get into the regulation of up- and downstream carbon emissions, will the hon. Minister of Energy join with me in calling on the federal government to prevent the regulator from looking at the issue of up- or downstream carbon emissions in future pipeline applications?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. In fact, I think I'm on record for letters we have transmitted giving our feedback on the process with the NEB on the overreach. I can say from my conversations with TransCanada that their decision was also based on financial reasons.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am very interested to hear the minister speak for a moment about the indigenous representations with regard to the Trans Mountain pipeline.

I also want to take a moment to acknowledge the presence here of Chief Billy Morin from the Enoch reserve, who's been very interested in this conversation that we have been engaged in this afternoon.

I also want to take a moment to just ask a question of the minister. I know that while the pipeline is the focus of our conversation this afternoon, there's been a very clear message to us from the indigenous community, which I would like to relate and have the minister reflect on, and that is, simply, that moccasins come in pairs. While we are speaking of the pipeline and the importance of the jobs and the economic benefits that come from these kinds of endeavours in this province and in this country, the First Nations communities have consistently been behind and have asked to be participants in and have clearly indicated to me their desire to have the pipeline move ahead.

They've also indicated that their support for that kind of pipeline has been very much contingent upon the fact that we are also doing the other thing, wearing the other moccasin, and that is that we have a climate leadership plan that is taking care of the environment. What they are consistently saying to me is: we want to participate in all that is good in Alberta and benefit from the economic goodness that comes from our natural resources; we also need to make sure that we pass on an environment to our children and our grandchildren that will allow them to live their lives fully and in the traditional manner, which requires that the environment be taken care of. So they have very clearly tied the success we have had with the climate leadership initiative and particularly the indigenous climate leadership initiative to their support for projects such as the Trans Mountain pipeline.

You know, I'd just like to acknowledge that right now there are 124 projects under the climate leadership initiative that are going through the process – 38 of them are already in the process of being built, and the rest of them are in the process of being okayed – that demonstrate the indigenous community's firm commitment to the climate leadership initiative. So they are there saying: we want to work on the pipeline; we want the pipeline to benefit all Albertans. They are simultaneously saying, "We want to ensure that we have a good environment," and that requires that we have a climate leadership plan that is based on our carbon levy.

I would like to ask the minister if she sees how the indigenous community sees the intertwining of these two projects and whether or not she as the Minister of Energy supports the indigenous community in their requests for both the pipeline and the climate leadership initiative.

5:10

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the motion? Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you for recognizing me today on this important motion. I'd like to start off first by reiterating what the hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition stated so clearly in his speech this afternoon, and that is that the United Conservative caucus in this House generally supports this motion. We support the need to stand up for this pipeline going to the Pacific coast through the province of B.C. In fact, Madam Speaker, as you well know, we have stood in this House over and over and over raising concerns on this issue and, in fact, articulating concerns on the lack of action from the government that is across from me today. So today, first of all, I celebrate the fact that this NDP government finally seems to be moving on this important file. It's disappointing for me, though, that it has taken this long for us to get to this point.

Madam Speaker, I am today going to move an amendment on this important motion to make it stronger, to make it clearer that the federal government has a responsibility to use its powers to step in, to get the government to agree with us that their Trudeau allies in Ottawa have to stand up and do the right thing to make sure that this pipeline gets built.

Now, Madam Speaker, we have talked about this in this House for a long time. We have talked about this in question period and in debates, and over and over and over members across the way, members of the government, have stood up and guaranteed that this pipeline would be built, guaranteed that there would be no problems going forward, have belittled and made fun of in some ways the opposition many times for even raising this important issue in this House. Something changed magically over the last few days. I was excited to sit in the Chamber and listen to the throne speech from the Lieutenant Governor and finally see some language in there that

shows clearly that we will start to take steps to stand up for this great province.

You know, before he was a member of this place, I had the privilege of campaigning across much of the province with the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed as he campaigned for the leadership of this party. I can tell you that at every stop along the way this issue was discussed. It is probably one of the most important issues that we heard from people across the province on, and every time the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed took the podium, he spoke about this issue. He spoke about this issue.

In fact, if you want to hear some of the things that he said along the way, you could probably read sections of the government's throne speech because they took a lot of his comments across the way. They saw the light. The problem, Madam Speaker, though, is that it took this government too long to get there. My constituents and the people of Alberta don't have time for this government to continue to take six months or a year or longer to get to the right decision, which is to protect them.

Across my constituency of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre people are out of work. The economy has still been tough. Things are rough still. You know, a good friend of mine in Rimbey, Shawn Hatala, a great, great guy, has been out of work. I talked to him on the way up here on Sunday night. He's been out of work for over a year, looking to get back to work. Shawn does not have time for this government to take six months or a year every time to see the light.

So we are going to move an amendment to the motion today that will help us to hopefully see that through. As such, I have the appropriate copies for the pages, and I will wait for you to tell me I can continue, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: We'll refer to this as amendment A1. Go ahead and continue speaking to it, hon. member.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Madam Speaker. My amendment is to move that Government Motion 2 be amended (a) in the first recital by striking out "the government of Alberta's fight on behalf of Albertans' interests" and substituting "the efforts by the government of Alberta to fight on behalf of Albertans' interests" and (b) in the second recital (i) by striking out "continue to" and (ii) by adding "including putting before Parliament a declaration that the pipeline is in the national interest pursuant to section 92(10)(c) of the Constitution Act, 1867" after "construction."

Madam Speaker, I move this amendment for the reasons already articulated by the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition in the House today to make it clear that we want to support this government's efforts. It has taken a long time for the government to finally put serious efforts forward on this important issue, but this side of the House, as opposition, and, I hope, the whole House will support the government's efforts to advocate for and to fight on behalf of Albertans to get this pipeline built.

The second portion makes it clear that we expect this government and this House to make a clear statement to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and the federal Liberal Party up there in Ottawa that it is their responsibility to do something, that no longer will we accept paper approval of this project. It's time for the Prime Minister to stand up and finish what he promised the Premier and what the Premier, in turn, promised this House would happen, and that is that we would get this pipeline built. As long as the government continues to avoid that issue, to avoid the confrontation and to avoid standing up for this province with the federal government and insisting that Justin Trudeau take concrete action to get this pipeline built, we may still be here in six or seven months. This is important, Madam Speaker.

I will tell you that the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed – I'm just getting used to not being able to say his name in the House because it was said so much last time that we were here – said on November 10, 2017: well, in 1982 Peter Lougheed shut off the taps of Alberta oil and gas to central Canada to get the attention of the federal government on national energy policy; you know, perhaps we should consider doing the same thing with respect to current shipments of oil throughout the Kinder Morgan pipeline, that existed for 60 years and that fuels much of the Lower Mainland economy; B.C. needs to understand that its economy is partly dependent on Alberta oil and gas, and if they want to violate the rule of law and violate free trade in Canada, there will be consequences.

Now, Madam Speaker, what did the Premier say in response to Mr. Kenney? I quote: I think that some of the suggestions that have come from Mr. Kenney are a very isolationist view of how Alberta should engage with the rest of the country; you know, I honestly won't be surprised if he's essentially saying that what we should do is build a wall around Alberta; I wouldn't be surprised if tomorrow he comes out demanding that B.C. pay for it, and then the next day he'll come out and wonder why it is that we can't get a pipeline built. Madam Speaker, that was the response from the Premier to the then candidate for Leader of the Official Opposition.

This Premier is now doing the exact same thing that the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed advocated at that time. How can Albertans trust this government? What has changed? There's no answer to that. I'm glad it's changed. But we need them to go all the way because the people in my constituency, the people across Alberta cannot afford anymore for this government to take forever to make solid decisions on behalf of this province.

You know, we've been promised by this government that as a result of the carbon tax we'd be gaining social licence, that it would be okay, that pipelines would go to the coast in the future because we brought in this carbon tax. It was okay for the people across Alberta to pay significant amounts of tax out of their hard-earned income because that's what they're going to get. Here are the facts. I disagree with that completely, but at least this government could have delivered on that promise. Madam Speaker, my constituents have been paying the carbon tax for a couple of years now – in fact, it was just raised in January by 50 per cent, I believe – and still no pipeline is being built.

In question period today I asked the environment minister about my constituents, about some of the social agencies that work in my constituency. In fact, I referred to the aquaplex, which is a swimming pool that a nonprofit organization runs inside the community of Sundre so our children and other people can utilize the swimming pool, you know, to recreate. A very important issue. She responded, in turn, by talking about a seniors' centre that was in danger of shutting down rather than talking about the aquaplex, which was fine, and seemed to indicate that now everything was going to be okay, that they're finally reaching out to that seniors' centre to get them some funding.

5:20

Well, here are the facts, Madam Speaker. The Leader of the Official Opposition and I were visiting the seniors' centre just a few short weeks ago. Do you know what they got back from the government? They were told: "Have a fundraiser to pay for your carbon tax. Raise the rates on your fixed-income seniors to pay for your carbon tax." That's the social safety net of my community, a small seniors' centre that helps the people that built our community recreate, that gives them a place to go in their senior years to be able to enjoy a great place. In fact, when the hon. leader and I were there, they were trying to teach us how to dance. I have to say, Madam Speaker, that it's pretty hard to teach a guy with size 16 feet how to

dance, so I don't think I did very good at it, and I think the leader actually beat me at darts.

The point is that this government told that seniors' centre: "Take all this pain. We'll get you a pipeline built." The reality is that no matter what, we will not get social licence to work on this issue. It's been proven. It's time for the government to walk away from that.

It's time for the government to take concrete action, demand that the federal government stand up. Madam Speaker, you have heard me talk in this Chamber, in questions to the ministers and to the Premier across the way, about paper approval from Justin Trudeau. We can see what paper approval from the Premier's ally Justin Trudeau is worth. We see what it is worth right now. It ain't worth the paper it's printed on. It ain't worth nothing. It is time for the Premier and her ministers to call up the federal Liberals and say: "You must do this. This is in the national interest of our country. Actually do what you said that you would do."

By amending this motion, we're giving an opportunity to the government, who has now given us an opportunity – and we appreciate it – to be able to show that we support them on the importance of this pipeline, to show that they are truly serious about this motion, that their change of heart that has happened in the last 72 hours or in the last week or so on this important issue is true and that they support a simple amendment, a very simple amendment, that will then allow this whole House to be able to send a clear message to B.C. that this is not acceptable and also to the federal government that it is not acceptable for them to continue to provide paper approval, to say one thing when they're in Edmonton and to say another thing when they're on the other side of the country. That is completely not acceptable.

I hope that the government will have a serious look at this amendment. I will say, Madam Speaker, for the record that we did reach out to the government in advance on this amendment. In fact, I met with the hon. Government House Leader just before I headed home for the weekend, so this is not an amendment that has just been put on the floor as a surprise. We are negotiating in good faith. We do hope that the government does what they said that they would do with this motion, which was to work with this entire Assembly to make sure that we have a solid motion that this House can send to this country that makes it clear where we stand and that we will not accept this behaviour anymore and that there will be consequences if it continues.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, just before I recognize the hon. minister, a reminder, hon. member, that even when quoting, we don't use names.

The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Interestingly enough, that includes mentioning your own name in the House, which has happened.

I do want to thank the hon. House leader of the Official Opposition for his amendment and for his comments. I think that they're very, very interesting, and I'm going to talk about those specifically a bit later. I want to correct an impression that the Leader of the Official Opposition and his House leader have been leaving with the public and with members of the House. I think it was the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition who suggested that somehow we've had a conversion on the road to Damascus on this issue. The Opposition House Leader just said, you know, that we're recent converts to this. Madam Speaker, I don't think anything could be further from the truth, and I want to take a moment to try and set the record straight with respect to that.

The government established the climate leadership plan, and it's generally recognized as one of the foremost plans to deal with climate change. Now, the opposition has of course dealt just with what they like to call the job-killing carbon tax, but that, of course, is just one component of a much broader program to help Alberta reduce its emissions to make significant contributions to that issue. The opposition seems to forget, when it talks about the job-killing carbon tax, that, in fact, climate change and carbon emissions are a real and existential problem in the world that the world as a whole is trying to come to grips with. I think that it's important to recognize that it's not a trivial matter. Whether a carbon tax, at whatever level, is in there or not, the point is that we need to take some real action to deal with climate change, and the opposition tends to just ignore that fact and gloss over it.

As a result of the climate leadership plan, the federal government in November 2016 approved the Trans Mountain pipeline. That was November 2016. That's well, well over a year ago, Madam Speaker. We worked very hard, this government worked very hard with the federal government not just on the climate change plan but to secure approval for the pipeline. We were hard at work almost from the outset of this government's term in order to not only deal with the important question of climate change but also to secure support for the pipeline.

Now, the Leader of the Official Opposition has suggested that we haven't really followed through on that, but when the British Columbia government and British Columbia municipalities brought forward actions to challenge and to delay the Trans Mountain pipeline, the government of Alberta stepped up and intervened and actively defended that. We were not idle, Madam Speaker, as they would like to suggest. We have had a consistent policy of aggressively defending Alberta's interests.

When the B.C. government undertook unconstitutional means to try and delay the pipeline, we also responded very strongly and appropriately by cancelling negotiations for power agreements with respect to the site C dam and then eliminating B.C. wine from the listings from the current gaming control board. When we took that action, Madam Speaker, the results were effective. The results were extremely effective in the fact that the B.C. government withdrew its contentious extralegal attack on Alberta's industry. Only then did the Premier suspend the wine boycott.

Now, the Opposition House Leader suggested also in his remarks that, in fact, it was only after the climate leadership plan was adopted that the Northern Gateway pipeline was cancelled. He's suggesting in that that it was our climate leadership plan that in some way led to the demise of the pipeline through to Kitimat, the Northern Gateway. But, you know, the facts couldn't be more different. In fact, it was the actions of the federal government, of whom the Leader of the Official Opposition was a key member, that led to the cancellation of that project by the courts.

I can tell you a little bit about what the courts had to say about the federal government's work with respect to the Northern Gateway pipeline. The Federal Court of Appeal overturned Enbridge's controversial Northern Gateway project after finding that Ottawa failed to properly consult the First Nations affected by the pipeline. "We [find] that Canada offered only a brief, hurried and inadequate opportunity... to exchange and discuss information and to dialogue." It goes on to say: "It would have taken Canada little time and little organizational effort to engage in meaningful dialogue on these and other subjects of prime importance to Aboriginal peoples. But this did not happen."

5:30

The Court of Appeal ruling says that the standard for consultation doesn't have to be perfection but whether reasonable efforts to

inform and consult were made. The judges found that the federal government had not met that standard. This is again a quote from the ruling.

The inadequacies – more than just a handful and more than mere imperfections – left entire subjects of central interest to the affected First Nations, sometimes subjects affecting their subsistence and well-being, entirely ignored. Many impacts of the Project – some identified in the Report of the Joint Review Panel, some not – were left undisclosed, undiscussed and unconsidered.

For the Leader of the Official Opposition to attempt to suggest that this government's climate change policy was responsible for the cancellation of the Northern Gateway project is beyond stretching the truth, Madam Speaker. It is, in fact, very contrary, directly contrary, to the actual facts that it was the negligence and neglect of the federal government, of which he was a member, that resulted in the courts cancelling that project. If that is the standard of veracity that we can expect from the Leader of the Official Opposition, then I am very, very worried indeed for the future of politics in our province.

Now, the other claim, equally dubious in my view, is that we are somehow now just following behind the UCP on this issue. Well, I don't think that that's any more accurate than the rest, Madam Speaker. While the Premier was touring Canada, speaking to the Calgary Chamber of commerce, speaking in Toronto, speaking to the Vancouver board of trade, building a national consensus on the Trans Mountain pipeline, we had the Leader of the Official Opposition, newly elected, having yet to take a seat in the House, sabre rattling and making bellicose threats to the British Columbia government and to the people of British Columbia.

That's not what we have done. What we have done is move deliberately and judiciously. When legal challenges were launched, we responded legally. When extraconstitutional threats were made, we responded appropriately and effectively. That's the difference between being in government and being a responsible government and being in opposition and having the luxury of just saying whatever it is you want.

Now, Madam Speaker, I spent a lot of time in opposition. The Leader of the Official Opposition spent a lot of time in government, but I think he's going to spend a lot of time in opposition. I know that being in opposition is ever so much easier than governing a province. That's one of the first things I learned after the last election. I want to suggest to all hon. members over there that, yes, you can say whatever you want in opposition, but you may in fact do harm. You may in fact worsen the situation. I suggest that's exactly what's been happening, and that's what the Premier has been talking about. There's a difference between taking appropriate action when it is time to do so, when you have exhausted your other options, your other tools, and making empty threats. That's the difference, I think, between this Premier and that Leader of the Official Opposition.

Now, let us deal a little bit with the amendment that we've seen from the Official Opposition. They propose to do a couple of things; first of all, not to support the government's fight but to support efforts by the government to fight. In other words, they're suggesting that what the government has been doing may not be very effective. Madam Speaker, that is where we fundamentally disagree. This government has been extremely effective in defending Alberta's interests and is going to continue to do so and has sent clear signals to British Columbia and across the country that we're going to continue to do so. So that part, I think, just weakens it. It suggests that the government has been remiss, and I don't agree with that for one moment.

Then there's this interesting thing that they've included as part of their amendment that says: including declaring the pipeline in the national interest by use of section 92(10)(c) of the Constitution. Now, that's a very interesting thing. I know that Senator Black from Calgary has introduced something in the Senate along the same lines, but I think we should take a close look at what that section actually says. Section 92 says, "In each Province the Legislature may exclusively make Laws in relation to Matters coming within the Classes of Subjects next hereinafter enumerated; that is to say," blah, blah, blah. But section (10) of that says, "Local Works and Undertakings other than such as are of the following Classes." And (10)(c), which this amendment specifically refers to, says, "Such Works as, although wholly situate within the Province, are before or after their Execution declared by the Parliament of Canada to be for the general Advantage of Canada or for the Advantage of Two or more of the Provinces."

Now, there's the thing, Madam Speaker. This clause is intended to be used to exert federal authority in a case of national interest in something that is entirely within a province, because sometimes things within provincial jurisdiction may be in the national interest. That's what the clause is there to do. But in regard to interprovincial matters such as pipelines the government clearly has the constitutional authority to act. It does not need this clause, nor does this clause apply to interprovincial matters such as pipelines.

The opposition wants us to pass this so that they can look like, you know, they're really toughening up the positions, but in fact they're introducing an amendment that invokes an entirely irrelevant section of the Constitution and pretending that that somehow adds something to the debate. It doesn't, Madam Speaker.

For those reasons, there's no reason for this House to support that part of their amendment either because it clearly refers to things entirely within provincial jurisdiction. Every Albertan knows already that this is a matter of interprovincial trade and is clearly within the jurisdiction of the federal government. We don't need this. In fact, it may muddy the waters, so I think that the House should reject it.

Just in conclusion, Madam Speaker, this government has worked very hard to protect the jobs and the security of Albertans, and we're going to continue to do so.

The Deputy Speaker: Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), the hon. Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Nixon: Madam Speaker, not on debate, but the table officers asked me to point out on my amendment that I would like to request that this amendment be voted in three separate votes, those being part (a), part (b)(i), and, finally, part (b)(ii).

My colleague would like to speak under 29(2)(a), I believe.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate that. I was interested to hear the Government House Leader's comments. He covered quite a bit of ground, and I'm not sure I can really comment to him on everything in the five minutes allotted, but I'm going to start. I have to say that he spent some time talking about being effective. Well, I would say to the hon. Government House Leader, through you, of course, that the definition of effective is getting other people to do things that need to be done and things that you say need to be done.

I would submit to you, Madam Speaker, that the hon. Premier and Government House Leader were largely sitting on their hands on these issues until the Leader of the Official Opposition became a factor and made his views known. Suddenly the government's entire focus shifted based on that, including the throne speech.

Broad sections of it could have been written by this side of the House and, in particular, our leader.

Now, I would submit that if there is any definition of being effective, that is it, when you, being the leader of a party in the minority in a Legislature, can get the government to do a whole range of things that they absolutely were sitting on their hands about and refused to do until you showed up on the scene, and suddenly they're spending all of their time trying to look as if they were the Leader of the Official Opposition by copying all the things that they had made fun of ever so recently, beginning with the idea of the legal challenge.

5:40

Now, in fact, Madam Speaker, I'll say that the government themselves can't quite get their story straight. The Premier today had said of the idea of raising section 92(10)(c) that the government already has that power, so it's not necessary. Now the Government House Leader has said that, in fact, the section won't be used. So the government, I would suggest, probably needs to have a huddle and get on the same page. The Government House Leader and the Premier aren't even on the same page, let alone all the other private members on the government side.

The other thing, too, is that we and our leader have been quite supportive, frankly, of the Premier and the government when they have done the things we've suggested, getting B.C.'s attention. We were even supportive of the Premier and the government when they put on the wine ban. In fact, we kind of agreed with the Premier and continue to agree that that got the B.C. government's attention. We're a little more disappointed that they folded their tent after about a week and left the impression – I know it's not exactly a week. Somebody will quibble over whether it was two weeks or one. Nonetheless, they folded their tent and left the people of B.C. and, in particular, the government of B.C. to have the impression that Alberta has nailed it in, they're all done, and they're not interested anymore.

What you have here is a government pretending – pretending – to have cared about this issue but that really only woke up from the blissful slumber after the Leader of the Official Opposition started speaking publicly about this, even from the time before he was the Leader of the Official Opposition. So I think it rings pretty hollow to me when the Government House Leader is trying to leave the impression that they actually were making an impression and working hard. I would add as additional evidence to that the fact that when the Premier a year ago went to see the person who's now the Premier of British Columbia, that person, now Premier Horgan, made it clear to the media – you don't have to take my word for it. He told the media that the Premier didn't even press him on the pipeline issue. So when the Government House Leader is trying to say that they're not, that they haven't been converted on the road to trying to get re-elected, I think no one will believe that because the evidence is all to the contrary. All to the contrary.

Further, it is true that, frankly, the government's friend Prime Minister Trudeau was part of killing Energy East through the National Energy Board. I don't think there's any doubt about that. This is the same Prime Minister that in one breath – of course, I would caution the government to be careful about whom they make friends with because they can't . . . [Mr. McIver's speaking time expired]

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Again, I'd like to reiterate what the Leader of the Opposition said earlier and

commend the government on moving forward with this. I think that's something that we can all agree on.

It's interesting because when I think back to when the Minister of Energy and I both started out on this, we were both starting at a sort of similar level with – I can't speak for her but for myself, anyway – quite a limited understanding of just what an immense resource we have in this province. The language around how we are perceived, whether that's globally or within our province or within our country, requires some teeth. It requires people who truly believe in resources and understand the privilege that we have in this province in bringing those resources forward, especially the amazingly incredible manner in which we do it, in the responsible way that we develop resources here.

I think back to that time as a new MLA and the way that the energy industry just sort of opened up their arms and educated me in understanding what was important. It became very clear to me at that point in time that Alberta needed people to take that stance and bring forward all of the positive things that were already being done in previous governments and then things that would come forward in this government as well but, mostly, just understand Albertans and the mentality here and the fabric of who we are in this province. We are job creators, not governments but actually people, the industry. That's the fabric of who we are in this province.

If you talk to anybody on the street at any time – and I wear my I love Alberta oil sands T-shirt pretty much everywhere I go. Believe me; I've gotten into some interesting conversations as a result of that. But the more important thing about it, Madam Speaker, is actually having that conversation. I think, to the credit of our House leader on this side, that's what he's talking about when talking about strengthening this bill and strengthening the language that's in there. It's not just about saying it. It's about saying it and meaning it and feeling it and putting it across in a way that everybody around you is inspired by what you're actually doing here, not the rhetoric, not the stuff that we hear all the time. It's about actually feeling at a visceral level the privilege of what we have in this province. I mean, the Leader of the Opposition said it very, very well.

One of the things that you have to think about is that carbon leakage aspect. One of the things that continuously doesn't get spoken about in any meaningful way and that needs to be continued is that no matter what we do here – no matter what we do – there is so much more oil that is going to be produced and other products in the world that will provide for other countries what it is that we can already do way better than anybody else. Nobody can dispute that in this House.

Truthfully, I remember when I was first starting out in understanding the industry and trying to figure out sort of what was going on. Everywhere we went, when we were talking with people who were trying to understand what the government was doing, all we heard were negative things about our resources. I can attest to that. Honestly, since I've been in this House, we've done nothing, on this side anyway, except to try and promote the industry. And it came up against one attack after another: you're a climate denier; you're this; you're that, whatever names could be called to people that actually were standing up for resource development in this province. Really?

I have a very, very difficult time believing that all of a sudden the government has just made a turn. I mean, I'm grateful. I hope it continues. I would love nothing more than to support that. But the language needs to be inspirational. It needs to alter the way that – I mean, when the minister of environmental change was in Paris the first and the second time, I don't recall seeing anything in the news where she actually stood up and talked to people that were in Europe saying that we are the tar sands, that we're dirty oil. There

were no articles coming from the minister on that side or Minister McKenna, for that matter, saying what great producers we are here, that people in the world should be taking a leaf out of our book, that they should be looking at what we're doing here. Not one.

I looked because I thought by the second or third time that if people in the government actually believed that we in this province are the best at what we do in the world, the language would have changed. But no. All of the articles were saying that we're still the dirty tar sands, that we're these massive producers. Okay. Yes, we are carbon intensive. Nobody is suggesting the latter. However, if you actually want to learn how to do this right, we are the best. We should be using that language, especially when it comes to B.C.

I mean, what I found interesting is that there was another piece that came out where they were saying something about the Leader of the Official Opposition, that somehow the way that he was speaking was going to cause issues with investment here and that's because he was anti climate plan or something along those lines and that we shouldn't be looking at suing the federal government because it would cost too much money for Albertans. Yet the government had no problem doing that with PPAs, no problem suing themselves, no problem suing Enmax or anybody else to the tune of \$2.6 billion but isn't willing to at least look at it from a different perspective and see what constitutional rights we have with respect to the federal government. I find that extremely frustrating.

5:50

I can understand the difficulty. You know, the government is catching all sorts of grief – right? – on the carbon tax, that they didn't campaign on, to rebate, to not rebate, free light bulbs. Then the Prime Minister told them that within their plan, pipeline expansion was possible. Really? On one hand, the provincial government is saying that it's interprovincial trade, and then on the other hand, they're saying that it's federal jurisdiction. My understanding is that it's federal jurisdiction. The things that are happening with B.C. are being empowered not only by the federal government but by inaction from the government before that.

Again, I love the fact that we're making this turn. This is fantastic. I fully support the motion and fully support making it stronger because the B.C. government now stands in the way. On top of that, we have the likes of Tzeporah Berman and Karen Mahon, who were hand-picked by that minister to be on the oil sands advisory panel, who are now actively campaigning against pipelines – actively – and the Alberta taxpayer paid for those two to be on that panel. So we haven't bought social licence.

To tell you the truth, Madam Speaker, my understanding of social licence was that the NEB or whatever arm's-length group that was involved in this particular situation – social licence is actually working with the groups that are impacted by disturbance. For example, in Trans Mountain pipeline there's a small percentage – I think it's 11 per cent disturbance – that is changing, because the pipeline is already there. They're doubling it. I think there's about – I'm not sure if my numbers are correct – 11 per cent disturbance. My understanding of social licence was and always has been that folks that are along the pipeline, anybody that's going to be impacted, no matter who you are, whether you're a farmer, First Nations, or anybody else, has to be able to be, by the NEB, constantly in contact, updated on changes, made sure that they understand. Those are social licence things. Those are actually ingrained or were ingrained in the NEB previous to this situation.

My understanding is that it was already there. I didn't think it was something we had to purchase or bargain for. I think the words, the term, the sentence has been misused. We already had a process that was extremely, extremely well rounded and thoughtful. Yes, there

have been mistakes made – I have no doubt about that – but that was not a reason for cancellation. That was a reason to look at it and see how we could do better. At least, that was my understanding. That's what social licence was supposed to deliver. When mistakes have been made, that's the whole point. That's why it exists.

You know, Tzepporah Berman made an interesting comment. She said: we need pipelines for a climate plan is like saying we are selling cigarettes to people to get them to stop smoking. It's an interesting conflation – isn't it? – comparing basically the prosperity of Canada, who we are, down to cigarette smoking. I mean, doesn't that tell you something about the people that we've engaged to come into our province to work on the oil sands advisory panel? Then they go back out into the world and fight with this kind of language. I mean, where is ours? Where is ours? That's why this legislation needs a little bit more teeth, in my opinion, for whatever it's worth.

Senator David Tkachuk had a recent article that he was speaking in, and he said that British Columbians think they can kill pipelines because they know Ottawa doesn't care. Why is that, do you think? Why do you think Ottawa doesn't care? If that's the truth. The language isn't there to inspire, to see what is actually possible here about prosperity because nobody is speaking up for that. Are we that risk averse that we're not willing to take a stand and step forward and, you know, take a little bit of it? I know. I realize it's difficult, especially when you've sold a climate action plan as being the reason to get social licence, to get pipelines and that it's not working out as you had planned. Madam Speaker, I understand that. I think anybody would have difficulty with that.

Having said that, you have to take a step back and understand: what is it that we're actually trying to accomplish here? We're trying to make sure that those of us who have the privilege of being in here are speaking on behalf of Albertans, and Albertans – we all know this; we all have the privilege of speaking to them all the time – love this province. They come from all over the world to work in this province and not for any particular – there are a lot of different jobs. There are a lot of different things that spin off as a result of energy jobs, mostly because we had the opportunity to provide them with that, with a life, a way of life that is second to none.

You know, it's interesting. When we talk about the National Energy Board and the Trans Mountain pipeline, did you know, Madam Speaker, that the project had a 29-month review from the National Energy Board? In fact, they actually said that the pipeline was in the public interest. Even more interesting is that it has an environmental assessment certificate already done. It's worth about \$7.4 billion just as it is.

I mean, I think we can all agree in here that B.C. is being reckless.

The thing is that when a province or anybody, for that matter, feels empowered to move forward and feels like they have the upper hand, they're going to do that. They're going against this approved process. That's, again, something that we can all agree on in here. Kudos to the Premier for standing up. That was great to see.

Here's an interesting thing. We've got ballooning deficits, and as we know, we're losing investment to the United States because it's a much more efficient and better place for people to invest in right now. So how do we make it better here? Well, for one thing, we have to be the biggest proponents of this industry. We have to be the ones that – everything that you show, that goes forward is this tremendous amount of pride in our industry, not just saying it, but really, really believing it.

As the minister had said earlier, so much advancement has been made. The industry is doing a phenomenal job, and Albertans do hold them accountable. If there's anybody in here who truly believes that anybody, industry or otherwise, does not care about their earth, air, and water, I challenge you to talk to anybody in this province. The families that work in these areas send their kids to school right down the street from where these projects are. Please don't tell me, Madam Speaker, that they don't care about their earth, air, and water. That's completely disrespectful and should never be said out loud.

You know, we have the deficit. Did you know that in the first 20 years of the Trans Mountain pipeline's opportunities we could generate \$18.5 billion in fiscal benefits? This is coming from the Senator. Just to be fair, too, the pipeline has passed and surpassed all regulatory pieces. Again, can you imagine – just to give an example, like, we have, potentially, Trudeau doing a tanker ban on the west coast, another thing that I think we need our government to stand up and expressly say: that is not okay.

The Deputy Speaker: Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate that. I just wanted to talk to the hon. member. She talked about social licence. I'm interested if she would agree that when the government promised social licence and the Premier of B.C. is fighting against them on this pipeline and the Prime Minister of Canada essentially has caused, through the National Energy Board, Energy East to get cancelled – would you not agree that the government has been pulled over . . .

The Deputy Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt, hon. member, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(2) the House stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday morning, March 13, 2018

Day 3

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (UCP),
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Anderson, Hon. Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (NDP)
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (UCP)
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Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (NDP)
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (NDP)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (NDP)
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP),
Alberta Party Opposition House Leader
Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawkwood (NDP)
Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (NDP)
Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP)
Cortes-Vargas, Estefania, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (NDP),
Government Whip
Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (UCP)
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (NDP)
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (NDP)
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)
Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (NDP)
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP)
Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP),
Deputy Government House Leader
Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (Ind)
Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (NDP)
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (AP)
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (NDP),
Deputy Government House Leader
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Official Opposition Deputy Whip
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Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (UCP)
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Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)
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Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (NDP)
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (UCP)
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (UCP)
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (NDP),
Deputy Government Whip
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)
Vacant, Fort McMurray-Conklin
Vacant, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake

Party standings:

New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 25 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent: 1 Vacant: 2

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Goehring	Nixon
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Kazim	

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Luff	

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Dang	McPherson
Fraser	Nielsen
Hanson	Rosendahl
Kazim	Woollard
Kleinsteuber	Vacant
Loewen	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

10 a.m.

Tuesday, March 13, 2018

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Deputy Speaker: Morning.

Let us reflect. Let's think of the great strength and courage of all Albertans across this province. During difficult times we need to have confidence that strength will be found from within ourselves and those around us. Let us welcome small acts of kindness and recognize that small acts will make a huge difference.

Please be seated.

Orders of the Day

Government Motions

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

[Government Motion 3 carried]

4. Ms Ganley moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly resolve itself into Committee of Supply, when called, to consider supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

[Government Motion 4 carried]

Transmittal of Estimates

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

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I received messages from Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, which I now transmit to you.

The Sergeant-at-Arms: Order!

The Deputy Speaker: The supplementary supply message reads as follows. The Lieutenant Governor transmits supplementary supply estimates of certain sums required for the service of the province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2018, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

The interim supply message reads as follows. The Lieutenant Governor transmits interim supply estimates of certain sums required for the service of the province and of certain sums required from the lottery fund for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2019, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

Please be seated.

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

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I have received certain messages, and I now wish to table the 2017-18 supplementary supply estimates. When supplementary estimates are tabled, section 4(5) of the Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act requires an update to the consolidated fiscal plan to be tabled. Accordingly, I wish to table the 2017-18 third-quarter fiscal update, which serves as the updated fiscal plan. The quarterly fiscal plan provides the framework for additional spending authority for the Legislative Assembly and for the government.

Madam Speaker, these supplementary supply estimates will provide additional spending to the Legislative Assembly and the 10 government departments. When passed, the estimates will authorize an approximate increase of \$720,000 to the office of the Child and Youth Advocate, \$1.5 billion in expense funding, and \$35.7 million in financial transactions funding for the government. Of this funding, the highest single expense is the reprofiling of \$800 million for the municipal sustainability initiative. These estimates will also authorize the transfer of \$49.7 million, with a net transfer of \$41.5 million, from expense vote to capital investment in the ministries of Education and Economic Development and Trade as previously approved.

In addition, I now wish to table the 2018-19 interim supply estimates. These interim supply estimates will provide spending authority to the Legislative Assembly and to the government for the period of April 1, 2018, to May 31, 2018. This interim funding authority will ensure continuity in the business of the province while the Legislature takes the time necessary to discuss, debate, and enact the full funding required for government business for the 2018-19 fiscal year. When passed, these interim supply estimates will authorize approximate spending of \$29 million for the Legislative Assembly, \$7.7 billion in expense funding, \$559 million in capital investment funding, \$160 million in financial transaction funding for the government, and \$240 million for the transfer from the lottery fund to the general revenue fund.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Government Motions

(continued)

5. Ms Ganley moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:
Be it resolved that the message from Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, the 2017-18 supplementary supply estimates for the general revenue fund, and all matters connected therewith be referred to Committee of Supply.

[Government Motion 5 carried]

6. Ms Ganley moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:
Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 61(2) the Committee of Supply shall be called to consider the 2017-18 supplementary supply estimates for the general revenue fund for six hours, three hours on Wednesday, March 14, 2018, beginning at 3 p.m. and three hours on Thursday, March 15, 2018, beginning at 9 a.m.

[Government Motion 6 carried]

7. Ms Ganley moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:
Be it resolved that the message from Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, the 2018-19 interim supply estimates, and all matters connected therewith be referred to Committee of Supply.

[Government Motion 7 carried]

8. Ms Ganley moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:
Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 61(2) the Committee of Supply shall be called to consider the 2018-19 interim supply estimates for three hours on Wednesday, March 14, 2018, beginning at 9 a.m.

[Government Motion 8 carried]

10:10 Evening Sitting on March 19, 2018

9. Ms Ganley moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:
Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 4(1) the

Assembly shall meet in the evening on Monday, March 19, 2018, for consideration of government business.

[Government Motion 9 carried]

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

Morning Sitting Cancellation

10. Ms Ganley moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:
Be it resolved that, notwithstanding Standing Order 3(1), the morning sitting of the Assembly on Wednesday, March 21, 2018, be cancelled.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. By way of explanation I should indicate that on the morning of March 21 the AAMD and C is hosting the ministerial forum. To facilitate greater participation, we are proposing that there not be a morning sitting on that date.

[Government Motion 10 carried]

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

Morning Sitting Cancellation

11. Ms Ganley moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:
Be it resolved that, notwithstanding Standing Order 3(1), the morning sitting of the Assembly on Tuesday, May 8, 2018, be cancelled.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As you know, the office of the Speaker hosts the annual event MLA for a Day to give students the opportunity to experience what it's like to be an MLA. That event is traditionally held overlapping the first Tuesday in May. I understand that participants make use of this Chamber during the event, so for that reason we have cancelled the morning sitting on that date in previous sessions, and we propose to do the same this May.

[Government Motion 11 carried]

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

Auditor General Appointment

12. Ms Ganley moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly concur in the report of the Select Special Auditor General Search Committee tabled on December 21, 2017, Sessional Paper 732/2017, and recommend to the Lieutenant Governor in Council that W. Doug Wylie be appointed as Auditor General for the province of Alberta for a term of eight years, effective April 29, 2018.

Ms Ganley: Thank you once again. As stated in the motion, the Select Special Auditor General Search Committee – say that five times fast – completed a thorough hiring process in December and recommended that Mr. Doug Wylie be appointed as Alberta's Auditor General. Mr. Wylie has been in the office of the Auditor General for 28 years. For the past 14 years he has worked as the Assistant Auditor General. He has a wealth of relevant knowledge and experience, which he would bring to his new role. I encourage all members to support this appointment.

As well, I would like to thank our outgoing Auditor General for his service. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Any hon. members wishing to speak to this motion? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak on the motion, Motion 12, before the House to adopt the recommendations of the Select Special Auditor General Search Committee in appointing the next Auditor General of Alberta. As a member of the committee I had the opportunity to be involved in this critical process to set a future course of this important institution, which serves to hold government to account and makes sure taxpayers get the value for their money. I think this is all important. I think that's all that every MLA is looking to achieve.

Madam Speaker, the independent office that has been led by the Auditor General helps to give Albertans and the members of the Legislature a perspective that is insulated from partisanship of politics and the spin of government. They do immense work to help sort through a web of government bureaucracy and keep the government accountable for its decisions.

As we move on to select a new leader for this important role, I believe that it is worthwhile to stop and acknowledge the exceptional work that has been done by the current holder of the office for a better part of a decade. Merwan Saher is and has been for some time an extremely dedicated public servant, a true Albertan.

I have to say that he started his career in the Auditor General's office in 1980. Mr. Saher has given almost 40 years of service to the people of Alberta and over the last eight years has done so as the Auditor General of Alberta. As the job of the Auditor General's office is to keep the government accountable and steward the hard-earned tax dollars of Albertans, I would wager, Madam Speaker, that over his impressive career Albertans have saved substantial sums of money by Mr. Saher's dedicated work. As an elected representative of Albertans I would like to thank the Auditor General for what he has done for the betterment of our great province.

Now, looking forward, we must make sure that the quality work of the Auditor General's office continues to go on. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to say with confidence that the people of Alberta have yet another dedicated person ready to serve them. After advertising the position, receiving many from both in and outside of Alberta, and conducting interviews, our committee concluded that the best person to become the next Auditor General of Alberta was Doug Wylie. Like his predecessor, Mr. Wylie has a long track record of public service for the province of Alberta. For the last 28 years – 28 years, Madam Speaker – he has been a part of the team of the Auditor General's office, being a Deputy Auditor General for half the time. His experience and effectiveness in the role leave him well prepared to take on this daunting challenge that's before him. He will now lead this team that does such incredible work for the people of our great province.

Madam Speaker, I just want to conclude by reiterating the importance of this role and this office to the people of Alberta. As a member of the opposition it is our job to hold the government to account, and we do that to the best of our ability in the Legislature. But accountability and efficiency in government take more than just opposition. The Auditor General has a critical role as a nonpartisan third party in ensuring the prudent management of fiscal resources in government departments.

I would like to say once more: thank you. Thank you very much, Mr. Saher, for the incredible service that you have done for the great province of Alberta. I would like to add my congratulations and best

wishes to Doug Wylie as he carries on with the important duties entrusted to the Auditor General's office of Alberta. It is for this reason I am pleased to support this motion. Thank you for putting this forward. I look forward to seeing what Mr. Wylie does for Alberta.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other hon. members wishing to speak to the motion? The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak in favour of this motion. It was my privilege also to be a member of the Select Special Auditor General Search Committee. I think the committee has done good work and worked well together, so I fully endorse this motion and the appointment of W. Doug Wylie to the position of Auditor General.

Madam Speaker, I also rise to pay tribute to the soon-to-be-retiring Auditor General, Merwan Saher. According to his official biography Merwan became a member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales in 1972 and a member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Alberta in 1982. His career as a legislative auditor began with the office of the Auditor General in 1980, where he engaged in various roles. Throughout his professional journey within the office Merwan's devotion to improving the Alberta public service has grown unceasingly, fuelling his decision to dedicate his career to the province. Merwan Saher was appointed Auditor General of Alberta in April 2010, and in 2012 he was made a fellow of the Chartered Accountants of Alberta.

10:20

Merwan has shown an unwavering commitment to helping government managers wisely use the funds and resources that have been entrusted to them over almost four decades. I can attest to the seriousness that some departments treat the findings of the Auditor General's reports. The best public service managers launch tiger teams and special temporary work units to fix problems in short order so they don't happen again. The role of the Auditor General, of course, is to improve all the processes and procedures that are in these departments. I feel that he has been able to bring light and bring also an awareness in these departments so that they recognize the importance of the recommendations and the importance to Albertans in ensuring that Albertans are getting the best value for the dollars that are being spent.

Merwan has delivered at least 26 office of the Auditor General reports, and in a place filled with so much partisanship, Merwan is truly a light of nonpartisanship, overseeing the government's finances and processes no matter who is in power and delivering the same fearless recommendations.

With that, I'd like to recognize the retiring Merwan Saher. Also, again I repeat my full endorsement of the work that the committee has done and fully recommend the appointment of W. Doug Wylie to the position of Auditor General.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the motion?

Seeing none, the hon. Deputy Government House Leader to close debate.

Then we'll call the vote.

[Government Motion 12 carried]

Consideration of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech

Ms Sweet moved, seconded by Mr. Malkinson, that an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows.

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

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

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

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Madam Speaker and to the members of this Assembly, for the opportunity to respond to the Speech from the Throne. It is such an honour to be able to debate on the throne speech. I'd like to thank Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor for her thoughtful and passionate words about our province and for laying the groundwork of this, the Fourth Session of the 29th Legislature of the province of Alberta. I am humbled and deeply honoured to rise today.

On International Women's Day we celebrated the success of women here in Alberta and around the world. We celebrated our daughters, who represented the future of our province; we celebrated our mothers, who are the backbone of our economy and our communities; and we celebrated our grandmothers, whose wisdom and perseverance in creating a more just and equitable world helped lay the foundation for the progressive Alberta we all love.

Madam Speaker, I am so proud of how far we have come. I am proud that in the heartland of this great country Albertans have elected a government where the majority of ministers are women. I am proud that in this Legislature half the government caucus is represented by women, and I am proud that we established a government with a Status of Women ministry at its core, a ministry that ensures every single day that we are doing our part in government to advance the place of women in our society.

Madam Speaker, as Albertans know, symbols matter. Symbolic figures like the Famous Five help us tell the story of the progress in our society, but as history has shown, for real progress to be made, symbolic rhetoric must be matched with concrete actions.

That is why our government, the government that Alberta put their trust in, took real action. We are raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour because we know that it is disproportionately helping low-income women. We established the Alberta child benefit because we know that it will help lower income families reach their full potential. We took the first steps towards advancing affordable and accessible child care so that more mothers can take advantage of our economic opportunities.

Madam Speaker, the good news is that economic opportunities for women and for all Albertans are looking up. After the toughest recession in generations, brought on by historic drops in oil prices, Alberta is back in the saddle. Almost 90,000 Albertans have found a new full-time job over the last year. Wages are up, our economy is diversifying, and Alberta is once again the leader in the country for economic growth, growth and opportunity that is being shared by all and not just a few at the top. The choices that our government has made were the right ones, and the plan we enacted to protect core public services like health care and education while stimulating job creation is working. I see the evidence in my constituency of Edmonton-Manning.

Every year I collaborate with Women Building Futures when planning my annual job fair. Since 1998 Women Building Futures has been preparing women for career success in industries where we have been historically underrepresented. Their work is critical in creating new economic opportunities for women.

Women Building Futures shared a success story with me recently that really hit home. Last year a woman came to our annual job fair with her sister. She was there, as siblings often are, to lend her support. She wasn't looking for a new job let alone a new career, but she had some time, connected with Women Building Futures, and had a conversation. She ended up enrolling in their journeywoman start program, an integrated job-training program that is offered in conjunction with the province of Alberta. She graduated at the top of her class. And today she's building her own future in the trades, with a new career, a new job, and endless opportunities. It is experience like this that will tell the story not only of our economic recovery but of how our government is working day in and day out to ensure that all women can succeed in today's Alberta.

Madam Speaker, I'd like to take a few minutes to talk about this job fair. It was held over the weekend in Edmonton-Manning. It was bigger than last year but also smaller. Sounds confusing, but let me explain. This year I collaborated with more employers. Quite simply, there were more employers looking to hire. Over 50 businesses, some large and some small, came together to try and fill 500 vacancies across a broad range of sectors. While the number of jobs available increased, I am so very pleased to report that the number of job seekers decreased, and for the first time I had employers hiring people right on the spot.

Nothing is more gratifying than sharing in the experience of one of my constituents finding new economic opportunities and a new job, the smiles on their faces, the look in their eyes. It is replicating the experience across this great province that is at the heart of the work of this government. We know that stories like this are happening with increased frequency. We see it in the job numbers. We see it in the take-home pay numbers. We see it in the economic projection after projection that says that Alberta will lead this country in economic growth year after year after year. More importantly, I'm seeing it in my constituency and in the stories my constituents are telling me and at my annual job fair, where more and more Albertans are finding work and securing their future.

Madam Speaker, as I said earlier, this government resolutely committed to providing economic opportunities for all Albertans. Alberta is the economic engine of this country, and when our engine is humming Alberta's success, our country succeeds. As we all know, Albertans are down-to-earth, practical people. They know that today and into the future our energy industry will continue to provide good quality, mortgage-paying jobs. They know that getting a pipeline to tidewater is an economic and social imperative. And they know that they have a government that will use every tool at its disposal to get energy products to market and to get the pipeline built.

Let's be clear. We will get the Trans Mountain pipeline built. We will do whatever it takes. This government has already succeeded where others said that we would fail. We did what many thought was impossible in today's climate. Under the leadership of Premier Notley we had the federal government declare that a pipeline was in the national interest, and we had the federal government grant regulatory approval for a pipeline to tidewater. This was a historic step for our province, for our energy industry, and for all Albertans. Now we are taking action on the next step in this two-step dance. Under the leadership of Premier Notley we are working strategically in concert with our partners to get this pipeline built.

While the city of Burnaby tried to block our pipeline in court, we intervened. Albertans as practical people supported this move. When the government of British Columbia tried to overstep its constitutional authority and regulate something it has no right to regulate, we intervened. Albertans as practical people supported this move. They supported our Premier when she shut down talks about electricity sales from British Columbia, deals worth potentially \$500 million to them. They supported the Premier when she shut the door on B.C. wine in order to get B.C. to back down on the infamous point 5. Under the leadership of our Premier the measures our government introduced were effective in getting B.C. to back away from the illegal and unconstitutional part of their plan.

When I talk to my constituents, they are proud of this government and proud of our Premier. They see what I see. They see a bold leader and a champion for our energy industry. They see a strategically sophisticated thinker who has delivered on regulatory approval and is working day in and day out on their behalf to get the pipeline built, and they see a government who is determined to do whatever it takes to stand up and make sure Albertans are respected on the national stage.

10:30

Let me say this to my fellow Albertans. Thank you for your vocal support over these past two months. From east to west and north to south you've had our backs. It's because of you and the strength of your voices that your government has been successful. And know this. Just as you've had our backs, we'll have yours. We'll get this pipeline built by pulling together as Albertans always do. Finally, know this. Your government will not back down. This project is in the national interest. This project is essential to our future prosperity, and this project will get built.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning, I just want to confirm that you are moving the motion.

Ms Sweet: Yes, Madam Speaker. My apologies.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It is a pleasure to be here this morning. You know, each spring your government outlines a plan for the future of Albertans through the presentation of a throne speech. The throne speech is a way for us to reaffirm our values as a society, and it sets the broad strokes of a government's legislative agenda. Previous throne speeches and budgets have outlined our commitment to affordable child care, to protected leave to care for a sick child, and to a \$15 minimum wage for Alberta workers.

During the worst economic downturn since the dust bowl of the 1930s we promised to have Albertans' backs, and we did just that. We've protected our health care and education. We've invested in green energy, public transit, and the long-promised and much-needed projects like the Calgary cancer centre. Those decisions ensured that many Albertans did not lose their jobs and that many others got back to work. Over 90,000 new jobs were created, and today there are more jobs than ever before in our province's history.

I am so proud of the choices our government made during the downturn and the choice to have Albertans' backs all across this province, but even though Alberta is once again leading Canada's economy, important work remains to be done. The recovery has not yet touched all of my constituents. That is why I'm proud to be part of a government that is putting people first. I'm proud to be part of a government where every decision made about how every dollar is

being raised, saved, and invested is being done with one goal: to make life better for all Albertans.

As I move my comments to the current throne speech, I think it's best to review how we got here. I came up with my response to the throne speech while working on my car, which is, strangely, where I'm at my most relaxed, as some of you may know. That car is a good metaphor for where we are at currently. My car is as old as the previous PC government, and just like the previous PC government, it contains 44 years of questionable compromises, quick fixes, and just plain weird add-ons that don't work well together anymore. That's why I fixed it up, upgrading some things with new, modern parts, adding speed and efficiency, and in other areas returning it to stock. I suppose one could say that this is a good analogy for politics here in Alberta. The UCP is really just the same rusted, barely functioning, sputtering car that the PCs were, except that somebody pried off the PC logo and slapped a UCP one in its place. Albertans rejected that tired car. It wasn't working for them.

To govern by putting people first is not about putting new paint on an old car and saying: "There. All done." It's about rebuilding that car piece by piece. That is what Albertans elected us to do, and that is what we see in this throne speech. We will diversify our electricity sector and lay the groundwork for a more stable electrical system by introducing legislation to create a capacity market, a new, modern capacity market that will enable us to get new, low-cost electrical supply that Albertans will need to power our long-term prosperity. The old model relied on squeezing consumers to attract investors. The new model will attract investors through stability and reliability.

Madam Speaker, in other areas our government is taking our best ideas from the past such as diversifying our economy. I know you've heard that one before, except this time we are actually doing it. The Energy Diversification Act will support the commercialization of partial upgrading of our bitumen. It will increase the number of refineries that can accept our energy resources and will create good jobs for Albertans and for residents of Calgary-Currie. This is important work, and it is work that Albertans are depending on us to get right. When I meet people on their doorsteps and verandas or chat with commuters on C-Train platforms or at community events, those in Calgary-Currie appreciate that work, too.

Members opposite like to clamour that we are out of touch with Albertans – tell me if you've heard that one before – but that it is not what I am hearing in Calgary-Currie. People want a car that works and one that works when you need it most. That means addressing inequality and taking action on climate change. And in a riding where over 20 per cent of families work in oil and gas, that means investing in diversifying our energy economy.

I met many seniors and parents at the doors. I met a mother of a daughter who is on AISH. She learned about the work I did on Henson trust, and she was very hopeful that the meaningful changes I brought forward will be taken up by this government, changes that will be made to safeguard her daughter's future. She knows that this government is looking out for her and that we will not leave the most vulnerable behind.

Last November the Minister of Seniors and Housing and I visited Spruce Cliff Downs, an affordable housing for seniors in Calgary-Currie. With Marlys Jordan, CEO of Calgary Heritage and Housing, and Graham MacDonald, the facilities manager, we identified a need for unit replacements. Just last week as part of a \$1.4 million investment in affordable housing to build and renovate housing units across the province, Spruce Cliff Downs was successful in securing \$250,000 to work with this government to make lives better for senior citizens in this townhouse complex.

This funding complements work already done in Calgary-Currie. Just last year I had the opportunity to open a 26-unit affordable housing redevelopment which will help families stabilize their finances, live in a safe place, and build their lives for themselves and those they love. Just on the other side of the street from my riding, at the base of 45th Street, 160 new affordable housing units are just months away from completion, when they'll be occupied by Calgarians in need. This is putting people first.

In Calgary-Currie we have many young families, and I frequently hear about the struggles families face in balancing child care and working needs. Last year a mother in Rosscarrock, another neighbourhood in my riding, told me she paid \$65 a day for child care and was forced to decide whether she could afford to go back to work and place her child in care. She could not. Studies show that she is not alone. I also met with a father living in Killarney, a more affluent area of my riding, who said that he can afford child care while he knows many of his neighbours cannot. What he particularly liked about our pilot project was that we had thought out well-rounded solutions to child care that work for everyone. He's a shift worker, and he has always had trouble finding child care that extends beyond 6 p.m. He said that he was happy to contribute to an affordable child care that works for all and is happy that we are exploring new child care initiatives.

Young families across Calgary-Currie welcome Alberta's new \$25-a-day daycare, and this throne speech promises that it will expand this year. This is great news. Affordable child care is the most effective way to tackle the gender wage gap, but it is also effective at creating jobs, good jobs for students like those at Mount Royal University who are training to become professionals in early learning and child and youth care programs. Alberta's \$25-a-day early learning and child care centres are making life more affordable for the people of Calgary-Currie, and I want to see even more of them.

We are not neglecting education either. Where past governments announced school after school only to announce the same school four years later, we have taken action by actually building the schools we have promised. A novel concept, I know. We have newly built or substantially modernized 128 schools since election.

10:40

For too long Alberta governments – I'm going to stick with my car analogy here – sputtered along with the check climate change light on. In 2015 we campaigned on taking concrete action on climate change, and we have. We struck a committee with leading experts, resulting in recommendations on how to address climate change, and that work has begun to yield results. The carbon levy has resulted in rebates to families and businesses and community organizations like Richmond Knob Hill Community Association in my riding, which used that money to install solar panels to offset costs.

Over 150,000 Albertans have taken advantage of the energy efficiency program. There has been record investment in renewable energy, resulting in new and innovative ways to diversify our traditional energy industry. One innovation that was recently announced by Gen III Oil Corp is the construction of a \$90 million, 2,800 barrels per day re-refinery. This will be the first re-refinery on the prairies and just the third in Canada. Many of you probably drove by this project on the way here; it's in Bowden.

I was pleased to host Calgary-Currie resident George Davidson, who is the president of Gen III Oil Corporation, as one of my throne speech guests. We will now have a place right here in Alberta where we can recycle used oil and have it turned into new products, and I personally look forward to giving him some used oil as one of the first feedstocks for that project. But we cannot diversify a ghost

town. Calgary-Currie residents understand that you cannot have one foot on the gas and the other on the brake. This is not about the environment and the economy but how they work together, and getting a pipeline to tidewater is an important part of Alberta's diversification plans for a lower carbon future.

Downtown Calgary is headquarters to several pipeline companies, including Inter Pipeline and Pembina, both recent recipients of newly announced royalty credits under Alberta's petrochemical diversification program. Inter Pipeline is building a \$1.85 billion propane dehydrogenation facility near Fort Saskatchewan, and Pembina has a proposed propane-to-plastics facility. Employees of these pipeline companies and employees of their oil-producing businesses as well as engineers and everyone involved in the construction and operation of these plants are partners in Calgary-Currie or employees that live in Calgary-Currie. Calgary-Currie will benefit from these investments.

As we work to diversify the markets our energy resources can access via pipeline, we are also adding value to our resources right here at home and laying the groundwork for new renewable energy jobs and an electricity system with more stable prices.

In 2015 Albertans rejected that unreliable car – I love my car analogies – and they replaced it with a government that works for them. Since 2015 I go out door-knocking as much as I can. Prior to the election I thought my local MLA was too absent, someone who only liked to be with like-minded people – I was a mechanic; I moved into sales before the election – and I thought this was wrong. That is why I've been to events filled with supporters and others filled with people that have a concern. Face to face and on occasion in my face I chat with all of my constituents to hear their perspective and what matters to them most.

Just this weekend, Madam Speaker, when I was out door-knocking, I met a man, a lifelong conservative, who could not imagine how anyone could stand up stronger for our province than our Premier. I thanked him and told him about the future outlined in the throne speech, a future where Albertans work together, where they have each other's backs. He, like so many others in Calgary-Currie, see this recovery, that things can be done differently and that good things happen when governments proudly put people first.

I am truly proud of this exciting throne speech. That is why I sought to be an MLA representing the people of Calgary-Currie. The people of Calgary-Currie are energy workers, parents, students, seniors, immigrants, and we all share in this tremendous love for this province and want to see each other succeed, to be educated, and to be healthy. We want each other to have good jobs, and we know that it is important to support pipelines to tidewater while maintaining our environmental integrity. We know that energy jobs are what grow our city, and we know that supporting the arts is just as critical to a well-balanced livelihood and community.

We are also learning that this government's initiatives are resonating with Albertans. They are seeing that progressive values are Albertan values and that they can peacefully coexist with an economic recovery. We are forging the path to prosperity without sacrificing Albertans along the way.

I have truly enjoyed all the relationships I've built with various community organizations and businesses in Calgary-Currie. People know that they can come to my office or give me a call any time, and if they are too busy in their lives to come to my office, I will find them at the doors. Calgary-Currie wants a representative government to fight for them, and this throne speech makes it clear that this is exactly what they'll get.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, could I just confirm that you are seconding the motion to accept the throne speech?

Mr. Malkinson: That is correct, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

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

Mr. Cooper: Why, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure today to rise to speak about the throne speech. Very clearly, if you've listened to the government members this morning, there are two very different Albertas that are currently taking place here across our province, one that the government wants you to believe and one that's filled with constituents like the ones in Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, that I hear from on a very regular basis. They certainly see the world very differently than the government would like to have you believe.

I do rise to respond to the government's Speech from the Throne. As you've heard from the Leader of the Official Opposition, they say that replicating what someone has done is the sincerest form of flattery, and I can only imagine how flattered the Leader of the Opposition must be by this government. Last week their speech swung from reading talking points from the Member for Calgary-Lougheed to making further announcements of risky ideological policy. It was something else to see. I know, Madam Speaker, that I spent a good portion of the summer speaking about the future of Alberta and how the best days of Alberta are ahead and that there are many great things to come.

Madam Speaker, one thing that I know to be true is that that's because of the people of Alberta, not because of the government of Alberta. It was so interesting to hear the government's throne speech speak about those days ahead. I really, firmly believe that the best days are ahead of us, but it isn't going to be because this government continues their reckless track record. It's going to be because of everyday Albertans that are committed to moving this province forward.

You know, Madam Speaker, the role of the opposition is to ensure that voices of everyday Albertans are being elevated and represented here in the Chamber. For the sake of Albertans I desperately wish that the government's sunny-skies optimism outlined in the Speech from the Throne was truthful. I wish that I had constituents lining up at my office to tell me about the amazing new job that they have, how they felt supported by this government during the economic downturn and recession. I wish that I had food banks coming to the office and saying, "We're ready to close our doors," that they're seeing such a decline in the need for service, that they've had so few people knocking on their door asking for their services. But that's just not the case. I wish that I had industry telling me that the government was creating an environment where they wanted to create and invest billions of dollars in Alberta, but those folks aren't coming to the office in Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

10:50

There are a lot of things that the government talked about in their throne speech that I desperately want to believe were true for the sake of Albertans. Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, that is just not the case. Just recently I've been meeting with service providers and nonprofits, who have spoken very frankly about the devastation and destruction that this government has done and the pressures that their legislation and policies have put them under, the type of pressures that come from government regulation and changing the rules that will add significant burden and cost to their service providers. I think specifically about major legislation changes to

labour laws that literally will be costing nonprofits \$50,000, \$100,000, \$200,000, where they're going to have to dramatically reduce services because of this government.

You know, in the throne speech we heard a lot of buzzwords like "diversification," "economic development," and "predictable funding" to disguise the fact that despite their best efforts Alberta is still struggling as we go further into debt every single day just to keep the lights on. Madam Speaker, there are currently 165,000 unemployed Albertans. Last month alone 10,500 jobs were lost, and not included in that statistic are the Albertans who've given up looking for work. Even the lucky Albertans who've been able to find employment have not been able to find jobs that pay them the same type of wages comparable to what they were making prior to this NDP government.

The problem is that the government has piled on taxes, regulatory burden, red tape, labour changes, a minimum wage hike on top of an already spiralling economy. The government's job was to do no harm, and they did an incredible amount of harm. Investment fled the province in unprecedented numbers for more stable markets. According to the CFIB 92 per cent of business owners are not confident that this government is committed to improving the business climate. We've seen countless businesses go under, losing valuable jobs and crippling small businesses, which are the backbone of the economy.

Madam Speaker, I've spoken to small-business owners, and they are resilient. They have the entrepreneurial spirit that is built into the very core fabric of Alberta. But, unfortunately, they continue to see a government that works against them. These people are not able to absorb the ballooning costs of the minimum wage, the carbon tax, mandatory statutory holiday and overtime pay, particularly in the nonprofit sector, along with the increasingly complicated red tape that they must wade through. This government is truly crushing Alberta business with their death-by-a-thousand-cuts tactics.

It's not just small businesses and medium-sized businesses that are struggling financially. Our province is facing a fiscal crisis that this government seems intent to ignore, but it is their own creating that has created this fiscal crisis. They frame their out-of-control spending in light of the investment that they're making in Alberta, all while racking up billions of dollars of debt. The government talks about returning to balance as if the additional \$45 billion that they've borrowed since coming to office is just going to be found in the couch cushions or something like that.

You know, the NDP stated in their speech that they "did not rest idle or turn [their] backs on the day-to-day needs of people and families," yet those same families, Madam Speaker, have less money in their pockets, they have fewer economic prospects, and they have less access to quality health care and education as billions of dollars disappear into the bloated bureaucracy. Those same families have seen Alberta's credit downgraded six times since the NDP took office. This means that we are borrowing more and we are seeing our liability of borrowing costs go up. This is clearly not the best path forward.

This Speech from the Throne addressed a number of issues, including rural crime. While I was pleased to see the government finally acknowledge this significant problem facing rural Alberta, I am and have been disappointed that it took so long. The United Conservative Party caucus had been calling for this issue to be addressed over 12 months ago. Rural crime is up by over a hundred per cent in many counties all across our province. Our amazing first responders have been doing everything within their power to protect rural residents, but with the economy in a free fall crime has continued to rise.

Last fall the United Conservative Party caucus invited dozens of rural Albertans to share their stories with the Assembly and give a face to these shocking statistics, but when we called upon the government to take emergency action to protect these Albertans, their calls were brushed aside as if we were making things up as hundreds and hundreds of impacted Albertans looked on, whether it be at home or in the Chamber galleries.

Madam Speaker, we have seen this time and time again, whether it is on the issue of pipelines, where the Premier has poked fun at the opposition and the Leader of the Opposition, or whether she has made all sorts of outlandish comments about the direction that we believe should be taken, only to be a convert in recent weeks to the importance of what we have been saying and now taking many of the same steps that we have been calling for. I hope that in that respect we will see a continued trend because if there's one thing I can assure you, it's that the United Conservative Party wants to make sure that Alberta is the best place to live, work, and raise a family, that Alberta is the best place for business to invest, that Alberta is the best place for the strongest outcomes in education, that Alberta is the best place for women to have success, that Alberta is the best place for the prospect of jobs and a growing economy.

One of the ways that I believe we can get there is for the government to continue to respond to the calls of the Official Opposition. When the government has heeded our advice, that is when the government has done its best work, and I encourage them to continue to do that.

Madam Speaker, as I said, I would love to take the government's throne speech at face value. I want to believe that the hard times for the people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills and right across this province are over, but unfortunately we cannot bring this into existence by sheer force alone. It is going to take some tough decisions, some discipline and sacrifice, and it's been unfortunate to see that up to this point the government certainly has been unwilling to do that.

What I do know is that Albertans have been making those sacrifices, that Albertans have been leading by example, that Albertans have been pressing forward against all odds. They've seen all levels of government, in particular the provincial and the federal governments and the Trudeau-Notley carbon taxes . . .

Mr. McIver: You can't say names.

Mr. Cooper: I will be happy to withdraw my reference to the Premier.

. . . the NDP government and their extremely close relationship to Prime Minister Trudeau. All of the times that the Prime Minister has failed to defend our interests, we have not seen the response from this NDP that Albertans expect. It's my hope that over the next coming days and weeks we will see actual action from this government. Led by the Leader of the Official Opposition and the good work that he has done in his short time as leader, I look forward to what we can do over the coming days and months to really provide strong leadership for this province.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek.

11:00

Ms Woollard: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm very pleased today to have the opportunity to respond to the Speech from the Throne. We all heard the inspiring words of the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, Lois Mitchell, in which she described Alberta's priorities

and how the government of Alberta will help each and every one of us. The people in my wonderful constituency of Edmonton-Mill Creek tell me at every opportunity that they're happy to live in such a vibrant and growing area of Alberta and that they look to our government to create new jobs which will benefit their families and to maintain and support the schools, hospitals, and social supports which are essential for our communities to keep prospering.

The dramatic collapse of the global price of oil had a serious negative impact on many of the constituents of Edmonton-Mill Creek and, of course, people all across Alberta. Many of my constituents work and have worked in the oil and gas sector, and the downturn in the fossil fuel industry really hit many people hard. As well, the impact that the lower global price of oil had on not just our oil and gas sector but on all sectors created ripple effects that affected many more people than just those directly involved.

But these are resilient and resourceful people, as all Albertans are, who realize that when one door closes, another one opens. Thus, the message from the throne speech that our government is going to focus on creating jobs in a more diversified economy was very welcomed. Thousands of new spaces will be created in our postsecondary institutions that will be dedicated to technology. As well, a second round of the new petrochemical diversification program will create new jobs and attract new investments. Work is being done with industry to incentivize investment in new straddle plants and the commercialization of partial upgrading, which has the potential to significantly improve getting our bitumen to market. I had the privilege of visiting a plant in northern Alberta near Christina Lake in which they're engaging in research to partially upgrade bitumen, and it's fascinating. The process is ongoing in a number of areas and shows great potential.

Speaking of bitumen, our government is determined to do everything in its power to get our pipelines built to carry our resources to the Canadian coast. As I've said, all our innovations are helping in this endeavour.

Two other measures to help energy consumers is to establish a capacity market to give people more stability in electricity prices and to continue to support the development and implementation of renewable energy, which will create jobs and diversify our electricity mix. The construction industry, another industry that's so important in Alberta and which has been affected in Alberta, is now definitely on the upswing and is creating housing and employment for people all over Alberta, especially in Edmonton-Mill Creek. The construction industry is one of the sectors that is so important to keeping our communities growing and thriving.

A project in Mill Creek that I found very interesting is an innovative development which is a collaboration between a private building company and Capital Region Housing. They're creating a mixed market price and subsidized-unit building, a couple of buildings, actually. Residents who start off in a subsidized unit will not have to move if or when their circumstances change and they no longer require subsidized housing. They'll be able to stay in their unit with just a transition to a market-based rental agreement. It provides a lot more stability for people. Another thing that's so important is that people get the financial support they need. They're able to live in a modern apartment unit. It's close to transit. It's within walking distance of parks, schools, and stores, and they're able to live there with other people and not have stigmatization about being on income supports. It's a really fantastic arrangement. Housing supports of this kind also really help support people upgrading their education, so if they want to be able to qualify for employment in order to be able to achieve their goals and support themselves, this helps to make that possible. Mixed accommodation allows people to be able to receive rental supports without being

labelled. That's one of the many propositions, one of the many endeavours going on to help Albertans.

The increases also in minimum wages have had a really solid and positive impact on improving people's lives. Many people, especially people I meet – I meet them all the time – who are newly arrived in the country and the community: they start off with minimum wage jobs to support themselves and their families as they improve their language skills, they learn the customs of their new home country, and they try to figure out what their long-term employment goals will be. Many newcomers to our province have professional qualifications or training from their homeland, and they need to spend time learning how to gain equivalent qualifications in their new home.

For instance, as an example, the other day I met with a person who was trained as a pharmacist in their home country. They may need to work in Alberta at a minimum wage job until they're able to get their credentials evaluated, upgrade equivalencies if need be, and write equivalency exams, all at which time will help them gain the confidence and the ability to work in their profession. I met a couple of people in various fields like pharmacy who are now working in small, rural communities who are more than happy to work in very outlying areas that, you know, a lot of people maybe who grew up in the big cities are not so keen to do, and they're providing a valuable service in all areas.

This is in addition to the many other minimum wage workers who benefit from wage increases, people in the community who are tiding themselves over until they have more lucrative employment, people who have started off their working life or who are working toward their postsecondary education. These kinds of jobs are invaluable. Research from other areas which have raised the minimum wage as we are doing shows that having a higher minimum wage allows workers to have a better quality of life and more discretionary income, which gets spent in the community. This small measure to improve people's lives can make a huge difference in how they succeed in the long run.

People in my constituency have also expressed great appreciation for what our government has done and plans to continue doing in our education system. Parents are very happy with the new schools that are being built, not just promised but built, and the education that their children are receiving. As we all know, the education of our children and youth is vital to ensuring that we have a well-educated and well-prepared workforce in the future. Our children today are our teachers, doctors, scientists, and politicians of tomorrow.

Another important measure to support members of our community is to ensure that they feel safe and secure in their neighbourhoods. Our government is providing additional initiatives to combat crime and to help keep families and property safe.

Health care, mental health care, and addictions treatment are also important to Edmonton-Mill Creek. The planning for the new southwest hospital is very welcome news for people in the southeast and southwest of Edmonton. This will be the first new hospital built in Edmonton in the last 30 years, and with the Grey Nuns hospital in southeast Edmonton already seeing or treating twice the number of patients per year as it was designed to do, this new hospital is sorely needed.

In all of our services which our citizens rely on – health care, schools, postsecondary facilities, and all of our social services – it is absolutely essential that we have trained nurses, doctors, teachers, and all front-line staff to keep our society functioning and our citizens' needs addressed. Every day I am asked what agencies provide programs to help people entering or progressing through the workforce and how they can access the services available.

11:10

It's clear that Albertans want an economy that's resilient to energy price swings. That is why we're focusing on building on our strengths in construction, in the agriculture and forestry sectors, in clean tech, partnering with tourism, and leveraging what we are already doing well. Our government has addressed and acknowledged the current economic climate within the province, within Canada, and the challenges we are experiencing in maximizing our resource sector through getting our pipelines built to carry our products. We're looking at opportunities to partner with the private sector and the job creators to ensure that we're acting in a supportive way, that we're laying the right foundations to encourage economic growth.

Madam Speaker, I am optimistic that our economy is moving in the right direction, that we have chosen wisely in deciding to build and create in the midst of a downturn rather than slashing and burning to save money, and that we have a plan to get back to balance now that the corner has been turned. With the outlook brighter and the spring approaching, we can all look ahead with anticipation to great things for Alberta and for all Albertans.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I've spoken on the other throne speeches over the years, and I like to as a practice actually go through the throne speech and more or less discuss how relevant it is to my constituency and how it's relevant to Alberta and whether or not I agree with parts of it. Now, this throne speech is 15 pages long and it's double spaced and it's more or less very general, I would say, in the fact that it's announcing already-made announcements. Now, I don't see important groups in here, and I can be corrected if I'm wrong, but farmers and seniors should be very specifically mentioned in here. I don't see them in this speech, and that's disappointing.

Starting on page 1, we've got International Women's Day. I have to say that the one thing that I take pride in is my mother. I think we all have a mother that raised us to have those qualities and the morals that we all bring forward to this House. You know, I had the opportunity to have my mother sitting right behind me on the floor during the throne speech. Just remarkable that I had that opportunity. You know what also made this great? It was her birthday. Now, isn't that something that's remarkable that lined up? On International Women's Day I had my mother sitting on the floor in the House during the throne speech. I have to say that this was truly a memorable thing for me and my family. You know what? I plan on passing on the morals and the values that my mother passed on to me to my two little daughters, Amelia and Charlotte.

This actually is something that I would hope this Assembly can agree on. This is quoted from the throne speech. "Women's rights are human rights, and your government celebrates them." I wholeheartedly agree with this. I think that this is a great opening.

Moving on, Saluting Alberta's Heroes is the second part of this. Again, I can't say enough when it comes to our local heroes, and this speech actually acknowledges our local heroes. When it comes to the fact that we have EMS, RCMP, peace officers, firefighters, and our military all contributing to our safety, this is something that needs to be clearly laid out as important to each and every one of us in this House. Again, when it comes to opening, I think that this throne speech did a great job with International Women's Day, and

I also believe that acknowledging our local heroes is an incredible part to be put in by our government.

However, it follows this up with Ensuring Canadian Tidewater Access for Alberta Energy. I believe that we've had some very confusing messages coming from this government when it comes to trying to get to tidewater. Now, I went and searched last night to try to find one NDP government, whether it's federal or provincial, that supports pipelines besides Alberta's NDP. You know what? I will tell you that I was unable to find one that said that they support it. This is where I'm saying that we've got conflicting messages from the NDP Party. We have an entire group that is acknowledging that they see pipelines as a problem, where Alberta needs to get its energy resources to tidewater. It is indisputable. It's a constitutional right. And we need to be pressing this.

Why am I saying that it's confusing? Well, you know, we have a Premier that picks winners and losers when it comes to pipelines. She outright said that she's taking a hands-off approach when it comes to Keystone and Energy East. She is quoted before the 2015 election as saying that. This is disappointing. And you know what? In the end, the pipeline that she was betting against, we see the United States moving towards, and the one that she is potentially saying that she'd like to see go forward, which is Keystone, her own NDP allies and Trudeau government are pushing to shut down. It's truly shameful.

Now, I have to say, in going through this, that we're seeing that this Premier has got a tough message. She's saying that what we need is to start to send a message, more or less. Her plan, which I wholeheartedly agreed with, was to start with B.C. wine. Send a subtle message saying that we're serious. After a week and a half or two weeks she buckles. Buckles. Shameful. We needed to keep the pressure on. You don't just say, "We did a very insignificant move" and not follow it up with actual action.

What we did see in this throne speech is her saying, "We shut down talks about electricity sales to British Columbia, talks that could have meant up to \$500 million per year for them." It is unbelievable that Alberta, which has the largest energy resources in all of Canada, is negotiating to buy power. I do not understand how this works. Why is it that we are even looking at that? We're moving too fast with this radical government.

Now, when it comes to energy, you would think that we would at least be sufficient for ourselves. When we need to go outside of Alberta to get energy to be able to support the direction this government is going in, it shows that we have a problem, and it needs to be resolved. On the PPA agreements, the power purchase agreements, the government went in and unilaterally shut them down. And you know what ends up happening? We end up making massive payouts to these companies that are affected by the decisions that this government has been making. Whether it's the carbon tax, the fact that they're phasing out our coal, it continues to accumulate to a point where it is unsustainable to make energy in this province. So we're seeing that we need to go out of our province to make it.

One thing didn't occur to me until I was talking with one of my local farmers. He is buying coal right now to heat his farm. It is clear that this government does not like coal though I have to say that it appears to be an energy source that has proven to be cheap, efficient, and for the most part clean. But what he's saying is that the farmer right over the border, in Saskatchewan – right over the border, in Saskatchewan – is buying that same coal. He's buying coal from Alberta: no carbon tax. So he cannot compete with the farmer just over the border because we're selling our energy cheaper. That is unbelievable. This is carbon leakage. Carbon leakage. This is an example that is happening within my constituency.

11:20

Now, I'd like to talk about a member's statement that was put forward by Calgary-Klein. He made some compelling arguments, and we'll start off with a part here.

Instead of arguing at the level of insult, let's look at some facts.

The first is the Prime Minister of Canada's announcement where he publicly stated that Kinder Morgan and line 3 could not have been approved without the leadership of Alberta's Premier and Alberta's climate leadership plan. If the opposition wants to claim that the Prime Minister is lying, that is their choice.

I am telling you now that Prime Minister Trudeau is not doing enough. It is clear that he needs to be called to account, and this government is not doing what it needs to do.

To move on,

support from powerful political and business leaders did not come about because we used childish insults. This support came about because we, working as a conscientious and informed government, recognized some fundamental realities. Albertans know that a strong economy and a clean environment go hand in hand. Opposition to pipelines is real. We must engage with those who oppose pipelines in order to achieve lasting results. The benefits of pipelines, both economically and environmentally, are substantial. We must educate and inform everyone of that reality.

Clear. Again, a lot of this I agree with. I don't disagree with a lot of that. I will say that when we come to defending our resources, though, there is no way that we are ever going to convince some of these groups. There is no way to do that. And you know what? The B.C. NDP and the Trudeau Liberals are those two groups. That means that we actually have to take action.

I've spent a lot of time on pipelines – I've probably eaten up more than I should have because I've got to get through a lot on this thing – but I will say that when it comes to pipelines, Bonnyville-Cold Lake is really being impacted in a terrible way right now. Right now our oil companies are unable to bring the economics forward because they can't get the darn oil out of the province.

Choices Made during the Downturn is the next one. This is where the government more or less says that the choices that they've made have made things better. I will tell you that when it comes to 2019-20, we're looking at a \$70 billion debt. Seventy billion dollars: this is a stunning number. You know what? This is the government's own number. This isn't something that comes from the opposition. This is actually from the government. It is Alberta Finance that put this number out.

Now, what we've got in the last second-quarter update, the 2017-2018 second-quarter update – and I know a third-quarter update has come out – is a billion dollars of interest that we're going to be paying. That is twice the amount that we're spending on our entire spending for Justice. That's remarkable. In rural Alberta right now we're crying out to the government: "Please, help us with this rural crime, this property crime that we've got in northeastern Alberta. Bonnyville-Cold Lake has a problem, where we're seeing a substantial increase in rural crime. What are you doing about it?" What I can tell you is that as we continue to raise our debt in an irresponsible manner, we will continue to see less and less funds going to these important things like education, health, and our police forces. This is disappointing, that we are actually saying that the decisions that they've made are helping Albertans. I can't disagree enough. It's clear that it's not.

One thing that they've got is Things Are Looking Up. "Almost 90,000 people have found a new full-time job over the last year." Well, that sounds good, but when we actually look at the facts, the facts are that there are 165,300 unemployed Albertans, and 26,000 more than when the government took office are unemployed. This is from Statistics Canada. Again, this is not something that the

opposition has driven. Last month we had 10,500 full-time jobs that were lost – last month – and the youth unemployment rate is 13.1 per cent. This is the highest outside of Atlantic Canada. Now, I have say that if that's making Alberta look better or things are looking up, I would disagree. I think we need to be better and more responsible when it comes to ensuring that investment flows in. I'll tell you that as long as there's instability within our government when it comes to decision-making, we're not going to see that investment.

All right. Let's move on to Diversifying Our Economy, and they've actually got Diversifying Our Energy Sector. Now, I would say that every Albertan would love to see diversification. I can't see that anybody would want to say: well, you can't bring manufacturing into our province because – you know what? – we don't believe in that. So to say that we're going to diversify, I would say that we need to do it responsibly. Especially when it comes to taxpayer dollars, we need to ensure . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other speakers? The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I move that we adjourn debate on this issue.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 1 Energy Diversification Act

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise in the House to table Bill 1, the Energy Diversification Act, for second reading.

Bill 1 is legislation to realize a vision of Alberta, a vision of a more diversified energy industry that is a vital part of a healthy and more diversified economy, an economy that provides good jobs for people, growing industries for our communities, and exciting new products for export.

As the Member for Calgary-Klein I am honoured to speak to Bill 1 in the company of my colleagues from Edmonton-Manning and Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater. We're from different parts of our province – Calgary, Edmonton, and rural Alberta – but the three of us share an understanding of what Bill 1 will mean for our constituents and to people in cities, towns, and communities across the province. There are three components to Bill 1. I will look at how the bill will renew the petrochemical diversification program, my colleague from Edmonton-Manning will explain how Bill 1 supports the commercialization of partial bitumen upgrading, and my colleague for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater will speak to a new petrochemical feedstock infrastructure program made possible by Bill 1.

Before we get into the details, it's important to look at the context of this bill. Madam Speaker, Bill 1 is part of a long, proud history in this province of innovation in our energy sector. For generations Alberta's oil and gas resources have been a pillar of our economy and our enviable quality of life, and for generations Albertans have looked to their government to stand up for their energy resources and industries.

Peter Lougheed stood up for Alberta's interests and our right to get full value for our natural resources. His vision spurred the

development of our petrochemical industry. His vision spurred the development of Alberta's oil sands. Peter Lougheed understood that Alberta's resources were a blessing and an opportunity, one that Alberta could not afford to squander. He believed that it wasn't enough to get value in the upstream side of the sector. He believed that Albertans were smart enough, innovative enough, and creative enough to take our province's nonrenewable resources and add value to them right here in the province. In short, he believed in Albertans.

But as we saw from the recent economic downturn, Peter Lougheed's vision of a more diversified economy was never fully realized. We are still not getting full value for our resources, and we are still too vulnerable to world oil prices and to decisions made elsewhere. Part of the reason for that vulnerability is, of course, the land lock – hence, the need for new pipeline capacity – and part of the reason is also that we're not doing enough to add value to our resources here at home. Things are looking up in Alberta, Madam Speaker. Our economy is recovering, but we need to do all we can to ensure that this time the economic recovery is built for the long haul and that Alberta's dream of economic diversification becomes a reality.

11:30

Diversification does not mean leaving Alberta's traditional leadership in oil and gas behind. Instead, Bill 1 builds on this traditional economic strength to make it even stronger, and it does this by providing the authority to create three new programs that will help Alberta get full value from energy resources and multiply the benefits right across the province.

Components of natural gas that are feedstocks for a wide range of products will drive new facility construction, find new markets, and create new jobs. Oil sands bitumen will be attractive to more refineries and will pass through pipelines with need for less diluent. Energy will have an even stronger role in a more diversified Alberta economy.

As I said, I will focus on how Bill 1 extends and expands the highly successful petrochemicals diversification program. This program targeted propane and methane upgrading and already has resulted in two major projects that will establish Canada's first propane-based value chain right here in Alberta. Bill 1 will extend the program to draw even more investment into petrochemical processing, and it will expand the program by adding ethane as a recoverable natural gas feedstock. It will foster investment in additional petrochemical processing, and ultimately it will further diversify Alberta's energy sector by focusing on creating new petrochemical value chains.

Of course, we are not the only jurisdiction in the world to understand the economic benefits of petrochemical investment. Alberta is facing stiff competition from jurisdictions around the world. Without the necessary leadership in government, Alberta won't be as competitive as we need to be. An extended and expanded petrochemicals diversification program will help Alberta remain competitive. Processing natural gas feedstocks will increase the value of our raw resources and help Alberta get the most out of them in the form of investment capital, jobs, increased economic activity, new revenue from taxes, and more exports.

The components of natural gas form the ingredients that are the building blocks for products that enable modern life. These include plastics, antifreeze, fertilizer, fabrics, toys, and much more, Madam Speaker. As the world population grows, so does the demand for these products. The Chemistry Industry Association of Canada estimates that Alberta's chemical industry exports are already valued at \$8.2 billion. This new round of the petrochemicals diversification program will help that grow.

The first round of the program was very successful. It attracted 16 applications, representing \$20 billion in private investment. We expect the second round of the program to see similar results. The resulting petrochemical manufacturing facilities will create thousands of construction jobs and hundreds more operational jobs, and that is good news for Alberta workers and their families.

The Chemistry Industry Association estimates direct employment in Alberta's chemical sector at more than 7,500 people. That's half the population of Canmore. That's a lot of jobs. The average salary is estimated at more than \$90,000 per year. That supports a good standard of living. Expanding petrochemical processing will add even more good-paying jobs. Those are all very good reasons to support Bill 1.

Madam Speaker, I encourage all members of the Assembly to examine Bill 1, the Energy Diversification Act. Consider all of the benefits of expanding the petrochemicals diversification program. See for yourselves how this bill will build even stronger energy and petrochemical industries by getting more value out of our natural resources. I am confident that you'll agree that Bill 1 is a crucial step in helping to build what we all want for Alberta, a more stable, more diversified, more prosperous economy for Albertans and a recovery that is built to last.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I would like to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Government Motions

(continued)

Trans Mountain Pipeline

2. Ms Notley moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly support the government of Alberta's fight on behalf of Albertans' interests to ensure the lawfully approved Trans Mountain pipeline expansion is built, and be it further resolved that the Legislative Assembly call for the federal government to continue to take all necessary legal steps in support of the pipeline's construction, and be it further resolved that the Legislative Assembly reaffirm its support for the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion as a key component of Alberta's energy future.

Mr. Nixon moved that the motion be amended as follows:

(a) in the first recital by striking out "the government of Alberta's fight on behalf of Albertans' interests" and substituting "the efforts by the government of Alberta to fight on behalf of Albertans' interests"; (b) in the second recital (i) by striking out "continue to" and (ii) by adding "including putting before Parliament a declaration that the pipeline is in the national interests pursuant to section 92(10)(c) of the Constitution Act, 1867" after "construction."

[Debate adjourned on the amendment March 12]

The Deputy Speaker: Any speakers wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak on the amendment put forward by my colleague from Sundre and area. It's an important one because the government's motion is one that is certainly not everything that we hoped it would be. The point is that what is important and has been seen as important is that the fight for pipelines is important, and it's certainly one that we on the UCP side of the House support.

Let me say this. When the government has actually been in support of the pipelines, we have been with the government, cheering for them, supporting them, being their biggest allies in the world, and we certainly hope that we see more of that from the government in the future.

Now, Madam Speaker, it's important to remember that we actually need to put our hearts into this. The government needs to put their hearts into it, and we all need to put our hearts into it. I think that for the government's sake, they were very fortunate that the Leader of the Official Opposition came on the scene, because that was truly, truly the point in time where the government started to pay attention to this issue, truly the point in time where the government, I believe perhaps initially out of fear for their own political futures, decided to make some efforts here.

But I am prepared to take the government at their word today when they say that they're in support of the pipeline. When they do that, I support them one hundred per cent and the UCP Party supports them one hundred per cent because the pipeline itself is going to be core to the long-term health of our province. It's going to be core to providing a future for all of our children and our grandchildren, and it's going to be core to the financial health of the government of this province and, along with that, the ability of this province to provide the services that Albertans both need and demand, rightly need and rightly demand: a good health care system, a good education system, strong social services, good infrastructure.

All of this depends upon a private sector that is vibrant, that is successful, that is profitable and includes as many Albertans as possible. Of course, the profitable part matters severely because, of course, the profitability is what a lot of the government's taxes are based on, so we should be cheering for businesses, big and small, to be profitable. The pipeline and the government's efforts to get it are potentially going to be at the heart of that. If successful, it will certainly be at the heart of that in the future. Even if not successful, the part of the industry that will go ahead without additional pipeline capacity will still for decades to come be at the core of the Alberta government's ability to provide schools, roads, hospitals, social services, the education system, the entire social safety net, and supports for our citizens.

But Albertans have never really been shrinking violets about the way they make a living. Albertans have always and continue today to act bigger than our population would indicate, to act bigger than our geography would indicate, to act bigger than what our people can consume. Because of this, Albertans create not just more energy than we could possibly consume but more agricultural products, more forestry, and indeed provide more tourism than we could possibly consume. So when the government's efforts are to support additional pipeline capacity, we're with them. We are with them.

11:40

The amendment from the hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre actually strikes out "the government of Alberta's fight on behalf of Albertans' interests" and substitutes "the efforts by the government of Alberta to fight on behalf of Albertans' interests" because we actually think the government's fight could be a lot stronger than it has been. We support the fight such as they put it forward. We're with them. We're looking for more.

Certainly, I was disappointed – and I believe I'm not the only one of my colleagues – when the government folded their tent on the wine ban after just a week or two. In my view, it left the impression about the government of Alberta that this government's heart was not really in it. I believe that's the prevailing sentiment as a result

of the government folding their tent and backing down on that. The Premier and the government say no. Let me say this, Madam Speaker: I would like to believe that. My level of belief will be largely influenced by either the action or the lack of action that the government takes in the future, but we would like the government to take more action. We would like to be there cheering them on, to be partners with them in it, to support them, to continue to cheer for the success of Alberta by cheering for the success of the Alberta government being part of getting this pipeline built. That is indeed what that first part of the amendment truly says.

Now, Madam Speaker, moving on to part (b), it says: by striking out "continue to." To me, that's a statement that the government could do more, and I believe the government could do more. We want them to do more than continue to. We want them to expand their efforts. We want them to make it clear to all Albertans that their heart is truly in this effort, that they're truly putting their shoulder to the wheel, that they truly want this to happen.

Part of that, in my mind, means convincing the NDP's political partners, which is the British Columbia NDP. They are the same party, so I don't think I'm casting any aspersions by saying that they're partners. That's just a fact that I think we all accept in this House. If anybody should be able to get the NDP's partners to come around to a place of reason, it ought to be their partners, the Alberta NDP. It seems logical to me. I'd be surprised if even any of the government members argue with me on that because it is, after all, the same happy family.

Furthermore, we'd like to see stronger efforts by the Premier and the government pushing the federal government and their best friend Justin Trudeau to actually live up to his responsibilities and get this done. Our leader has put the idea of court action, of having a referendum on the table. I would like to see the government follow our leader's lead farther than they already have. They certainly indicated in the throne speech that they're following the direct path that our leader has suggested that Alberta go, and I'm grateful that they have been moved by those arguments. I appreciate that it took them a little while to come around to that. It was fairly recently that the Premier was actually outwardly making fun of those efforts, but in fairness to the Premier, she's come around to adopting it to such an extent that many of the ideas first put forth by the Leader of the Official Opposition became very much the centrepiece of the government's throne speech very few days ago.

So there's hope, and we want to encourage the government along the lines of that hope. We want to help them. We want to be part of the solution. We want to provide more ideas together because we believe, as I believe the government believes, that if we go to Justin Trudeau as the government of Alberta, as a united front and if indeed we can present that united front to the people of Alberta, I think more of them will be believers that we are committed to getting this done. That indeed should actually help the cause. That indeed should help the Prime Minister to know we're not going away. That should indeed help the Prime Minister and encourage him to get off his hands, to spend some time in Canada, and to actually work with what I believe is the biggest economic issue facing this country.

Why is it the biggest economic issue? Because it affects what I think is, if not the biggest, one of the biggest cash registers that the federal government rings, the revenue that comes from Alberta through transfer payments and other taxes and fees and payments. The Prime Minister needs to actually do the job of a Prime Minister, not the job of a movie star, not the job of a celebrity, not the job of someone who's on *Dancing with the Stars*. He needs to do the job of the Prime Minister of this great country and stand up for and enforce one of the main tenets that holds this Confederation together through the Constitution, the right for each province to sell

their goods without interference from the other provinces. It's not a one-way street or a two-way street. Depending on how you do the math, it could be a 13-way street or a several hundred ways street, but the fact is that the Prime Minister has to enforce that right, that main tenet, that core part of the country of Canada that he is sworn to protect and look after. He needs to actually get down to the business of protecting and looking after this country because he has been missing in action.

He, I believe, is hoping this goes away, which, unfortunately, will be to Alberta's detriment because I think the only way it's going to go away is if the shareholders of Kinder Morgan say: we cannot put up with any more monthly losses because the federal government will not enforce the ability for us to get the pipeline built. That risk exists. The Prime Minister needs to actually decide that – you know what? – actions do speak louder than words. Right now the Prime Minister actually needs to act because the Prime Minister's actions now say that he doesn't care. The Prime Minister's actions, which are none, now say that he's hoping this goes away. The Prime Minister's actions now say that he doesn't have the courage to take a side when a side needs to be taken. It says that he doesn't have the courage to lead when leadership needs to be provided for the country that he decided to lead and got elected to lead. He is the rightful Prime Minister and leader of this country, and he is letting this country down big time.

We would be happy to join with the government in delivering that message louder and clearer to the Prime Minister and his government, that we have noticed and that Albertans have noticed. It's not just the people in this Chamber; 4.3 million or 4.4 million Albertans, whatever the number is today, have noticed that this Prime Minister has left them laying in the dust, unattended to by the person most responsible to attend to us.

The risk for the rest of Canada is that if the Prime Minister will let one province drown, choke to death, not be able to make a living because he wouldn't live up to his responsibilities, then the other provinces and territories ought to be saying to themselves at the various Legislatures around the country: we could be next. They actually ought to have Alberta's back because I would surely hate to see – no one wants this. Nobody even wanted the wine ban. But the fact is that we had to get the government's attention, and we supported the Premier a hundred per cent in getting the government of B.C.'s attention. Nobody really wants to stop drinking B.C.'s wine. We just had to get their attention. We also don't want to necessarily stop driving cars that are built

in Ontario. We don't necessarily want to stop eating agricultural products from Quebec, eating fish, seafood products from eastern Canada or western Canada. Every province has things that they produce and sell to the rest of the country, and we are all healthier when we share.

So, Madam Speaker, as I close, I would move to adjourn debate with your permission.

11:50

The Deputy Speaker: I'll allow that motion even though your time was up.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion to adjourn debate lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:51 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Gotfried	McIver	Smith
Hanson	Panda	Strankman
Loewen	Pitt	van Dijken

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Gray	Nielsen
Babcock	Hinkley	Payne
Carlier	Hoffman	Phillips
Carson	Horne	Piquette
Connolly	Larivee	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Loyola	Sabir
Dach	Luff	Schreiner
Dang	Malkinson	Sigurdson
Eggen	Mason	Sucha
Fitzpatrick	McKittrick	Turner
Ganley	Miller	Westhead
Goehring	Miranda	Woollard

Totals:	For – 9	Against – 36
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[Motion to adjourn debate lost]

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 4(2.1) the House stands adjourned until 1:30 this afternoon.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12:08 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, March 13, 2018

Day 3

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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

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

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

Party standings:

New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 25 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent: 1 Vacant: 2

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Shaye Anderson	Minister of Municipal Affairs
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David Eggen	Minister of Education
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Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
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Irfan Sabir	Minister of Community and Social Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

Parliamentary Secretaries

Jessica Littlewood	Economic Development and Trade for Small Business
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STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

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Loewen	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, March 13, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Hon. members, good afternoon. Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

Cortes-Vargas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Strathcona Christian academy. They're here visiting the Legislature on their grade 6 trip. They're accompanied, of course, by their teacher, Alison Collins, and their many parent chaperones: Nick, Krista, Nicole, and Tracey. I would just ask the Legislature to greet them with the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislature students from Pembina Valley Christian School. The students are accompanied by their teacher, Janalyn Toews, along with their chaperones, Verle Unruh and Barry Esau. I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise on behalf of the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville to introduce 56 students from the Win Ferguson school. They are accompanied by teachers Ms Sheila Storey, Mrs. Sarah Burgess, Mrs. Cathy Ord, and their chaperones: Mrs. Carilyn Afaganis, Ms Corrie Sidam, and Ms Chrissy MacQuarrie. I would ask if they would all rise now and receive the warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Do you have another visitor, hon. minister?

Mr. S. Anderson: I do. Not a school group.

The Speaker: Proceed, then.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today and introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly Carmen Wyton, Wendy Jabusch, and Patrick Shaver from Building Industry and Land Development Alberta, otherwise known as BILD. BILD represents over 1,700 businesses, which, in turn, employ over 180,000 people across our province. I will have the pleasure of speaking at the reception this evening at the Federal Building.

Carmen Wyton is the CEO of BILD, and she is currently chair of the Canadian Society of Association Executives Edmonton and founder of the Women's Health Coalition of Alberta. She has served as a community member on several municipal and provincial government boards, most recently as the chair of the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

Wendy Jabusch is chair of BILD Alberta. Wendy has worked in all facets of the residential construction industry and is currently the senior vice-president of Edmonton homes at Brookfield Residential,

which is one of North America's leading land developers and builders.

Patrick Shaver began his career in the land development industry over 25 years ago and has held positions with the city of Edmonton, Enbridge Pipelines, and was a project manager for the aquatic centre for the Sydney 2000 Summer Olympic Games.

Also attending question period today with BILD Alberta representatives is Thomas Djurfors, who is an executive director in the public safety division of Municipal Affairs. They work closely with BILD and myself. I'm happy that Thomas is here with them in collaboration.

I would ask all of them, who are seated in our members' gallery, to stand and please be recognized by the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This afternoon I have two introductions. First, it's with great pleasure that I get to introduce the German choir Liederkrantz. Twenty-nine choirs world-wide gathered in Riva del Garda, Italy, for a four-day music festival and competition. On the final night of the festival the judges presented their evaluations to all the performing choirs in the 3,500-seat sanctuary of San Giovanni Catholic church, and it was Liederkrantz, from Edmonton, Alberta, that gleaned the highest marks from the judges in the seniors' category and were awarded the gold prize. This trip and event was a rewarding experience for the Liederkrantz choir members and their followers who travelled with them. This trip was made possible by the financial assistance of the AGLC. Liederkrantz, by their efforts, have demonstrated to the world the diversity and the cultural richness of the province of Alberta, and the moniker Edmonton, the City of Champions has once again been confirmed. I would ask all the members of the choir to please rise and receive the warm greetings of the House.

The Speaker: Welcome. Allow me to say danke schön.

Mr. Feehan: I have one more.

The Speaker: One more, hon. minister.

Mr. Feehan: A much more personal introduction, this second introduction, because I'd like to introduce the person who is the most responsible of anyone in the world for my being here today, and that is my mother. My mother has been my – Kay Feehan. I should mention her name, I guess. Kay Feehan has been my great protector and teacher and most devoted person behind my campaigns, donating to the maximum in the last year, I just want to point out, and has provided me with all the emotional support that I could possibly ask for. Accompanying her today is Father Albert Sterzer from St. Joseph parish in Grande Prairie, who is a long-time family friend. I'd ask them both to rise and receive the warm greetings of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome to you.

Hon. members, I think I missed a school group. The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, M. le Président. C'est avec fierté que je me lève à la Chambre aujourd'hui pour introduire the students from the very new and beautiful Lois E. Hole elementary school. I would get them to rise. They're with their teacher, Mat Knoll, and their chaperones, Keri-Ann Berga and Leila Devlin. Please join me in extending the welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a real treat to be able to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Clare Lazzer and her students from CDI College north campus legal studies program. My office and CDI College have worked together on numerous events such as the upcoming massagathon on May 25. If the students collect over \$1,000 in donations for SCARS, I will once again find myself in the dunk tank to help raise more money for this great cause. At this time I would ask my guests to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you a group of U of A pharmacy students joining us during Pharmacy Awareness Month. Alberta's pharmacists provide excellent front-line health care to Albertans every day, from medication advice to annual flu shots. We appreciate the important role pharmacists play in our health care system, and I hope my colleagues were able to stop by the heart health clinic downstairs to get their blood pressure checked, particularly in advance of QP. I now ask Jody Johnson, Sean Hanson, and Hannah Kaliel to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

With your permission, I would like to just take a moment to congratulate one of our table officers, Stephanie LeBlanc, who has recently been appointed as Senior Parliamentary Counsel. This year marks Stephanie's 10th anniversary with the Legislative Assembly Office. I think I heard that number of 10 years recently. She was hired as a legal research officer in 2008 and joined the table as Parliamentary Counsel the next year. Stephanie was born and raised in Regina and graduated with a bachelor of law with great distinction from the University of Saskatchewan in 2006, winning the Law Society of Saskatchewan silver medal in her graduating class. Stephanie plays a significant role in the office of Parliamentary Counsel, and many of you will be very familiar with her excellent work, her sound advice, and her pleasant demeanour. Stephanie continues to take on increased responsibility with that office, all while raising two young daughters with her husband. I'd ask, hon. members, if you would please join me in congratulating Stephanie on becoming Senior Parliamentary Counsel.

1:40

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

Agricultural Safety Week

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize Canadian Ag Safety Week and would like to commend the organizers for this year's theme of Supporting Seniors. Farming is more than a job; it's a way of life. Our government took action to make that life better for farm and ranch workers by guaranteeing basic workplace protections so that if they get hurt at work, their families will know that they'll be taken care of.

The proof is in the statistics. Since legislation was introduced, an additional 2,478 farms and ranches now have no-fault insurance coverage. That translates to 8,041 more farm and ranch workers who now have robust workplace protections. That's a lot of rural Albertans that members opposite would leave vulnerable to legal battles and lost income in the event of farm accidents.

However, as essential as WCB coverage may be, it is, of course, much better to prevent farm accidents from happening in the first place. Including farm and ranch workers under basic health and safety rules is critical to this effort, and so are the continued ongoing safety education efforts made by our ag societies and producer associations. This year's focus on seniors is well founded. Fatality rates from farm accidents are consistently higher for adults aged 60 and over, with a fatality rate of 22 per cent.

This is something I've seen for myself. In the last several years I've had two dear friends killed in farming accidents. In May 2014 a beef producer from Colinton was killed by one of his own bulls. In September of 2015 a grain farmer from Newbrook was killed in a silo accident. Both men were in their 70s when they passed away. These men worked hard to support their families and their communities all their lives. Their premature demise is a loss to all. Let us lose no more. Therefore, let us all work together to ensure that our farming Albertans, especially our seniors, have long and healthy lives on the farm and can pass on their hard-won knowledge and skills to the next generation. They deserve no less.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Troy Black

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Troy Black was the only child of Patricia Nelson, the former MLA for Calgary-Foothills, an accomplished former minister. Troy died tragically last month in Mexico, where he was enjoying a vacation with his wife, Lindsay, whom he loved dearly. Troy was only 34.

I knew Troy when he was the president of the local PC association in Calgary-Foothills. When we formed the new UCP constituency association, Troy was easily one of the most enthusiastic board members, and I was thrilled when he stepped up to lead our policy committee. I was so proud to have Troy as a key member of our team.

Troy was influenced not only by his mother but also by his grandparents. They taught Troy to live by the motto to thine own self be true. If you are true to yourself, then you'll be true to the world.

At Troy's memorial service his cousin John told us that Troy married the love of his life, his true soulmate, Lindsay, whom he met in grade 3. Troy's cousin John also said that Troy was his mom's best friend. They can split the atom, but if there ever was an indelible, unbreakable bond in the universe, it was the love between Pat and Troy. I can't even imagine the emotional grief that Pat and Lindsay are facing every day. When someone dies unexpectedly, it makes us all reflect upon our own relationships and how we should cherish every moment with our loved ones and make every day count.

Troy Black, you'll be missed, and you will always be loved.

Thank you.

Sexual Assault Services in Lethbridge

Ms Fitzpatrick: Mr. Speaker, as we begin the spring sitting, we must never forget that we are here for the people in our constituencies. As we speak, there are people in our communities dealing with serious challenges. There is a huge need in Lethbridge for programs and facilities dealing with sexual assault, child abuse and sexual assault, and domestic violence, which includes sexual assault. The services we have are bursting at the seams and are unable to address all of the needs. There are an incredible number of good people working on each of these areas, and there are a number of common issues they all face.

We all know that a solution is critical. Perhaps a solution can be found by collaboration and joint utilization of some resources and facilities. Lethbridge is a city that does collaboration very well. I believe it is by working together that we can build a more supportive community for survivors of these types of assault. The challenges faced by those providing services are immense, and we must continue to look at improvements in how those services can be delivered.

That is why the government's announcement last week to provide an additional \$8.1 million for sexual assault services and supports is so important. The government is helping, dedicated and passionate people are working together, and we need to continue to do that. We need to continue to listen as survivors come forward, we need to believe them, and we need to ensure that they get the support they need and deserve. Let no one forget that people striving to make life better for all Albertans are active in every corner of this province. We must do our part to fully support their initiatives, especially within my city of Lethbridge and across Alberta.

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

Immigrants to Alberta

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is a land of opportunity. Roughly 1 in 6 Albertans were born outside of Canada, and hundreds of thousands were born elsewhere in Canada and chose to move to Alberta with the promise of economic opportunity. Personally, I moved here in early 2000 from India and made Alberta my home. Go to Stampede or Eskimos home games when they're playing the Roughriders, and you'll see many, many Albertans originally from Saskatchewan. Doves of British Columbians moved to Alberta after the NDP formed government in the 1990s. Canadians from every corner of our country have ended up in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, over a million Albertans were born outside our borders. More than a few of us in this Chamber are included in that group. Our rapid growth has been fuelled in part by people flocking to our great province, which is why it is so discouraging to hear some in the NDP and their supporters suddenly argue that those of us who are not born here somehow are, quote, less Albertan, unquote, or not qualified to serve on behalf of Albertans. Some Albertans were fortunate enough to be born here. Many others, including myself, are Albertans of choice because this is the best place to work, live, and raise a family. Every single one of us is an Albertan.

Now, I have no doubt that our Premier is a proud Albertan. I never alleged that she is less of an Albertan just because she spent a few years working for the NDP in British Columbia in the 1990s. While we respectfully disagree with the Premier on policy, we don't doubt her devotion to her province. Albertans are concerned about the future of their province. They want to hear serious debate of the issues, not crude nativist smears.

As we embark on a new era of civility and decorum in this House, I encourage all members to uphold the highest ideals of Alberta, the land of opportunity. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

Carbon Levy Increase

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. How high will they go? When the NDP introduced their job-killing carbon tax originally, the one they didn't mention in the last election, it was at \$20 a tonne.

Then they raised it by 50 per cent at the beginning of this year. They've told us that they're going to raise it by another 67 per cent. Why? Because Justin Trudeau wants them to. But the Premier has left the door open to even further increases, saying that effective carbon pricing acknowledges that as time progresses, it needs to go up. So what's the NDP's real carbon tax price? How high will they go?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

1:50

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What we will do is exactly what we announced just a few months after we got elected, when our government made the decision to finally, after years and years and years of ambivalence and delay and failed action, actually do something about the challenge of climate change that faces all Albertans. The folks over there want to kill this climate change plan. They don't want to go ahead with the green line in Calgary. They don't want to go ahead with an LRT in Edmonton. They don't want renewable energy, but Albertans do, and that's what we'll deliver.

Mr. Kenney: Well, I'm going to give that another shot, Mr. Speaker, simply because the Premier didn't even try to answer a pretty direct question, so here it is. She's committed to raising her carbon tax by another 67 per cent, from \$30 a barrel to \$50 a barrel, but she's also left the door clearly open to further increases above that. Now, the so-called experts on carbon pricing, like her own expert Professor Tombe, say that it has to be at least \$200 a tonne to meet global climate targets. Environment Canada says \$300 a tonne. Does the NDP have a ceiling on how high they are prepared to go with their carbon tax? Albertans deserve to know.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, as I did in fact answer, we have laid out our plan. It goes over several years, I think about 10 years at this point. You know, I think that's not unreasonable. But when it comes to matters of climate levies or taxes generally, it is really quite interesting because what the members opposite want to do is give a \$700 million tax break to the top 1 per cent of Albertans, so what about that? It's rich. Those folks over there want to give them a tax break. We're going to stand with all Albertans on this side of the House.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Kenney: Yes. Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Now, I'll give it a third shot here to see if the Premier would like to give Albertans any transparency on the NDP's ultimate intentions with respect to a carbon tax. You've got Environment Canada saying that it has to be \$300 a tonne to meet Canada's climate targets. Professor Tombe, her adviser, is saying that it has to be at least \$200 a tonne. It's currently \$30 a tonne. So given that the NDP was not forthcoming with Albertans about the carbon tax at all before the last election, could they be forthcoming now? At what price is she prepared to impose a carbon tax on Albertans?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, I actually believe that I've answered that question now twice, so I think that's good.

What I will say is that the members opposite need to back away from their position of climate denial, their position of walking away from the climate leadership plan, the instability that creates in the nonrenewable energy sector as well as the energy sector, and the instability it creates for people in Calgary and Edmonton who are

looking forward to finally getting the support that they need for public transit, that hasn't been there for so many years. We need to move forward with this, we need to stop making people scared of things that don't really exist, and we need to get the job done.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member.

Mr. Kenney: . . . we're not climate deniers; we're climate tax deniers. For the third time the Premier didn't answer the question.

The Speaker: Hon. member, please proceed. Thank you.

Pipeline Approval and Construction

Mr. Kenney: Now, it's interesting that for months she told Albertans that we had to punish consumers, making it more expensive to heat their homes and fill up their gas tanks in order to get this so-called social licence from her New Democrat allies in British Columbia. Well, that hasn't worked out. In fact, the other day the Premier said: quite honestly, I don't know that B.C. would care one way or another if we scrapped the carbon tax. If that's the case, Mr. Speaker, then why did they choose to punish Alberta consumers with this multibillion-dollar carbon tax?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, first of all, the climate leadership plan secured the approval of the pipeline from the federal government. I know the members opposite hate that little fact. It was not something that they were very happy about. It was a very inconvenient fact for them, but in fact that is the fact. The other thing that the member opposite fails to recall is that 60 per cent of Alberta households actually receive a rebate, so the fact of the matter is that the carbon levy is designed to reduce emissions and also give the vast majority of Albertans a rebate. It's a win all around.

Mr. Kenney: On pipelines, Mr. Speaker, yesterday I was a bit surprised to hear the Premier say that the outcome with respect to Energy East had nothing to do with the National Energy Board's decision, but TransCanada actually suspended Energy East on September 7, saying that they did so "due to the significant changes to the regulatory process introduced by the NEB", specifically forcing them to get into up- and downstream emissions. Why has the Premier and this government never objected to the National Energy Board's intrusion into our jurisdiction over regulating the production of oil and gas?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I said yesterday, in fact, our government, our Minister of Energy, and subsequently me, specifically articulated that the proposed plan of the NEB, which has not been put into effect yet, to look at downstream emissions when considering the appropriateness of projects was incorrect, that it was inappropriate. We might as well do the same kind of analysis for the auto industry in Ontario. No one was interested in doing that, so why would they do that for the energy industry? It makes no sense. That point is something that we made very clear on behalf of the energy industry, on behalf of Albertans, and we'll continue to do that.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the Premier and I agree on the question of downstream emissions being inappropriate for the National Energy Board, but she avoided the question again. Why did she not object to the National Energy Board getting into the business of upstream emissions, which is clearly this province's exclusive regulatory jurisdiction thanks to Peter Lougheed's success in getting section 92A in the Constitution Act? Now, every Alberta Premier has jealously defended this critical jurisdiction. Will she join with her predecessors in defending provincial jurisdiction over the production of oil and gas and telling the federal government to get their nose out of our jurisdiction?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, when it comes to defending Alberta's oil and gas against Ottawa or other people in Ontario, our government has worked very hard on it. Ministers all along here and other members have been across this country standing up for pipelines, going into rooms filled with environmentalists, going into Montreal, talking to workers about how important the pipelines are. Meanwhile, the member opposite was in Toronto last weekend speaking to Conservatives, and he didn't mention the word "pipeline" once. You know what? I think we all need to come together to stand up for our pipelines and our energy industry here in Alberta.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I didn't have to pitch . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Kenney: . . . Conservatives who already support the pipeline to do so. I was celebrating the fact that Ontario Conservatives join us in opposing the Trudeau carbon tax, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Third main question.

Energy Policies and Social Licence

Mr. Kenney: Perhaps this Premier instead could go to her federal New Democrats, her B.C. New Democrats, the New Democrat mayor of Burnaby, the New Democrat mayor of Vancouver, New Democrats all across the country who have supported the Leap Manifesto, who want to keep it in the ground, and who have been attacking our energy industry. If she wants to talk about partisan friends, why can she not persuade her own fellow New Democrats from coast to coast to support our energy industry?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The fact of the matter is that I think that the rubber hits the road when you go into rooms where you're promoting a position that's not popular. That is exactly what this government has done on behalf of the people of Alberta across this country – in Vancouver, in Toronto, in Montreal, all across the country – because we know it is the right thing for working people. If the member opposite can't even go into a friendly room and utter the word "pipeline," how can we expect him to stand up for us at all? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I proudly do so all across the country, including in Toronto last week at an event with cultural communities.

When Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain was approved, this Premier went to Vancouver, had some private meetings, talked to

John Horgan, her former NDP colleague with whom she worked in the Legislature, and he came out of that meeting and said that she did not even try to persuade him to support Trans Mountain. Mr. Speaker, supposedly the carbon tax was going to persuade the antienergy NDP across the country. It hasn't happened, so will she admit the carbon tax social licence thing is a total failure?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, what I will do is talk about how hard our government has worked to position our province as a sustainable, progressive, forward-looking energy producer on a worldwide stage. We have succeeded on that, and we are succeeding every day as we diversify our energy industry more and more. We also got approval for a pipeline to tidewater from the federal government that isn't them. I know it's very hard for the member opposite to deal with that, but that's a whole different story. The reality is that the pipeline will get built.

2:00

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, yesterday I asked the Energy minister: how much is the secret deal with Enmax in the legal settlement that was signed last week? This government through its carbon tax created panic in the energy markets, they made a bad situation worse with their ham-fisted legal manoeuvres, and now they've signed a secret settlement. Albertans deserve to know: how much is the damage? How much did NDP incompetence cost taxpayers in this secret settlement?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What we can say is that we had to take action to stand up on behalf of Alberta consumers as a result of some very bad deals made many years ago by the member opposite's predecessors. That being said, I will say that the resolution with Enmax will have no impact on taxpayers. Absolutely none. What it will do is that it will allow us to work together with Enmax to accelerate the good work that we've already been doing to restructure our energy system, to protect consumers from price spikes, and to support renewables going forward, and Albertans deserve no less.

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

Coal Strategy

Ms McPherson: The health and environmental benefits of phasing out coal-generated power are undeniable. However, there are concerns. The government is eliminating carbon emissions from coal by shuttering Alberta's thermal coal industry, which will affect thousands of workers on top of thousands of oil and gas energy jobs that are now gone forever according to ATB economist Todd Hirsch. To the Premier: could you please quantify the return on the government's investment in phasing out coal in terms of net jobs affected, revenue, and carbon emissions?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, 12 of Alberta's 18 coal plants were in fact scheduled for phase-out under the regulations of the previous federal government, of which the Leader of the Opposition was a part, but there was no plan for coal-to-gas conversion regulations or any plan for workers. When we took office, we noticed that that was a glaring absence, so now there is a \$40 million transition package for affected workers. There are also coal-to-gas conversion regulatory changes.

Ms McPherson: The coal community transition fund and the coal workforce transition program were promised to help Albertans and communities survive the government's energy policies, yet coal communities continue to worry about their future. According to StatsCan unemployment in Alberta has increased from 144,000 people in May 2015 to 165,000 in February 2018. What specific jobs do you expect coal workers to retrain for, and how have you partnered with local communities to ensure workers have all required supports?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Interestingly, it was our government that negotiated coal-to-gas conversions under federal law, something that, certainly, Conservatives couldn't be bothered to do when they had the chance, so that is part of the workforce. Another part of the workforce is looking at opportunities in renewables. We've had very productive conversations, which we will continue to have, with Hanna and the Special Areas Board around opportunities in those communities, and the renewable energy program will be delivering jobs to southeast Alberta as well.

Ms McPherson: The AER estimates that there are 91 billion tonnes of coal resources at a suitable depth for mining. There are an additional 2 trillion tonnes of coal at depth in the Alberta plains that may be suited for coal-bed methane exploration, for example. Alberta now produces less than 30 million tonnes of coal per year. There must be some way for Albertans to profit from this vast natural resource. To the Premier: what progress can you report on developing an Alberta coal innovation cluster comparable to our food and wireless clusters?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, Alberta does have a number of metallurgical coal interests and will continue to develop those. Of course, coal-bed methane and extraction of natural gas in that way is an undertaking that's been happening for some time in southeast Alberta, delivering good jobs to communities there. The fact of the matter is that burning thermal coal results in a tremendous amount of pollutants and air quality concerns. That is one of the reasons why it's being phased out in addition to the greenhouse gas emissions it generates.

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

Supervised Drug Consumption Sites

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I hear a lot of noise from certain individuals in the House about how supervised consumption sites are a blight on our communities, so I personally visited the site of the Sheldon Chumir centre near my riding. It was clean, well run, and nondescript. My question is for the Associate Minister of Health. What measures have we taken to address this crisis, and what has informed those measures?

The Speaker: The hon. associate minister.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the Member for Calgary-Currie for the question. In addition to the supervised consumption services offered at the Sheldon Chumir centre in Calgary, we've also opened a supervised consumption service in Lethbridge which has been supporting patients for nearly two weeks and has already saved many lives. Additionally, when we learned of a tragic spike in overdoses in the community of Stand

Off, AHS was able to act within days to set up a mobile overdose prevention site in the community to help save lives.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know it's very important that we rely on the expert knowledge of those who are experts in these areas rather than knee-jerk judgments on those in need of supports. Who have we consulted for solutions regarding treatment?

The Speaker: The hon. associate minister.

Ms Payne: Thank you. Our approach is guided by the Opioid Emergency Response Commission, which draws on the expertise of physicians, researchers, law enforcement, front-line workers, and people with lived experience. We know that ideology should never come before people's lives, and for anyone to suggest otherwise and argue that we should deny medical, life-saving care to Albertans struggling with substance use is unacceptable. The Lethbridge chief of police has said that we can't arrest our way out of this crisis, and he's right. That's why our comprehensive approach includes harm reduction, wraparound health care services, education, and enforcement.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
Second supplemental.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Elaine Hyshka from the University of Alberta's School of Public Health says that supervised consumption sites are also critical for connecting people with treatment and health care. To the same minister: what would the impact of closing down these services or reducing these services be?

Ms Payne: Mr. Speaker, without supervised consumption services Albertans would be at an even higher risk of overdose and death. In the first three months since supervised consumption was open at the Sheldon Chumir centre, there have been more than 90 overdose reversals. That's 90 lives saved because Calgarians had medical supervision and support, 90 Albertans with the opportunity to take the next steps into primary care, supportive housing, employment, and treatment, all of which they can be connected to through this service. We believe in keeping Albertans alive so that they can make another decision tomorrow, and we stand with families in doing that.

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

Dr. Starke: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to welcome the Justice minister back and congratulate her and her husband on the safe arrival of Wren.

Rural Crime Prevention

Dr. Starke: While we're all happy for the minister, concerns over rural crime continue to grow. After months of brushing off this issue and insisting that everything possible is being done, the government finally took some action last week and announced that they're going to hire an additional 39 RCMP officers and 40 support staff. Now, while that's encouraging, that response is so anemic that it's like taking a water pistol to a four-alarm fire. To the minister. There are 113 RCMP detachments in Alberta. Which lucky 39 get boots on the ground?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the very important question. We've heard from Albertans throughout the province that they are concerned about rural crime moving forward, and that's why we've taken action. We were able to work in concert with the RCMP, asking them: what do you need in order to help address this? In addition to those boots on the ground, I think one of the fantastic things about this plan is that it allows front-line officers who already exist to spend more time on the front lines doing that important work.

Dr. Starke: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that the minister has also announced funding to hire up to an additional 10 Crown prosecutors and given that the Crown Attorneys' Association has pointed out the challenges of recruiting prosecutors to serve in rural offices and that these offices see a high level of turnover, with 21 prosecutors leaving in the past 12 months, and given that the Crown prosecutors in Edmonton average 800 files each while those in the St. Paul regional office are handling upwards of 2,000 each, what measures will the minister take to reduce the turnover among rural Crown prosecutors and address the discrepancy in caseload between urban and rural offices?

2:10

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member is correct. There are some concerns with file caseloads in rural areas. That's why we've taken action. One of those things that we've committed to is to increase the number of rural Crown prosecutors. We thank the association very much for working with us and for making that case to us, and we'll be moving forward in concert with them.

Mr. Speaker, the member is correct. We do have some turnover of some professionals in those areas, and we will continue working with the association on strategies to ensure that we have appropriate resources in place.

Dr. Starke: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that the government's announcement of 39 new officers for Alberta's 113 RCMP detachments means one additional officer for every third detachment and given that faced with a similar rural crime issue, last year the government of Saskatchewan responded by putting 258 additional officers, an average of over two per detachment, into rural crime enforcement, to the minister: why is our government's response to this pressing issue so pusillanimous when compared to that of our neighbours to the east?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This government is proud to continue supporting rural policing and policing throughout the province. This province provides more to municipalities to support them in policing than any other western province, and we're very proud to do that. But we know there are still concerns, and that's why we're taking action moving forward.

I think it's important to note that it isn't just about putting those new officers in place. It's also about using strategic intelligence, leveraging those resources we already have in place, and ensuring that we have civilian officers to take some of the paperwork off the plates of our front-line officers so they can be visible in the communities, because that's what we're hearing they need.

Electricity Power Purchase Arrangement Lawsuit Settlement

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, just a few moments ago, in response to a question from the Leader of the Official Opposition in regard to PPAs, the Premier blamed the previous government when the opposition leader was asking about how much the secret deal with Enmax was going to cost. The problem with that is that Gary Reynolds, the former Balancing Pool president, said that the government of Alberta trying to put blame on past governments is completely ridiculous because it was specifically their action in increasing the carbon tax in 2015 that created this whole mess. Enough games, enough blame. How much is this secret agreement costing the Alberta taxpayer?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, there is no question for any Albertan who ever opened an electricity bill for the last 15 years that there was a mess to clean up – and it was a Conservative mess – when it came to electricity deregulation. This settlement has no impact on Alberta taxpayers. It's an arrangement between the two parties. It is time to move forward, as we are, with Enmax on a number of different initiatives related to renewables and efficiency and as we are with Capital Power as well, who also settled this matter. Now they are moving forward with a massive new investment in renewables.

Mr. Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, again blaming the previous government.

Given that Gary Reynolds, the former Balancing Pool president, said – and I quote – that the NDP's legal action has actually cost consumers hundreds of millions of dollars because that legal action forestalled the Balancing Pool from terminating the PPAs much earlier than this, again, Mr. Speaker, the question is very simple. To the environment minister: how much is this secret agreement with Enmax costing the taxpayers of Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once more, this settlement has no impact on Alberta taxpayers, so it is time to move forward. It is certainly the case that this government will not take lessons from Conservatives. Their deregulation schemes on electricity left people on a price roller coaster. We are building a stable electricity market. Prices are capped. Predictability is being restored.

Thank you.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, it's embarrassing to watch this government over and over not answer questions.

Given that this decision, from this government's incompetence and inability to manage the situation, has resulted in a significant lawsuit being settled and given that the government will not present that to us despite the fact that it will become public at some point, one has to ask on behalf of the constituents of Alberta: what is this government hiding, what is the amount, and what is the cost to Alberta taxpayers as a result of this secret agreement with Enmax? A simple number, please, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This settlement has no impact on Alberta taxpayers. It's a settlement between the two parties. Certainly, it contains a number of commercial considerations

for Enmax, as did the settlements with Capital Power and with AltaGas.

You know, the fact of the matter is that the Conservatives don't have Albertans' best interests in mind. We entered into these actions in order to protect consumers. We will continue to do so, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, what we won't return to is the price roller coaster the Conservatives put Albertans on for over a decade.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-West.

Rural Crime Prevention (continued)

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After trying for months and months and months to get this NDP government to even hear the desperation of rural Albertans about the shocking amount of crime that is occurring on a daily basis in their communities, this government finally acknowledged it last week, but what did we get? Smoke and mirrors. So let's get specific. The RCMP is already understaffed, not even close to meeting their minimum staffing requirements. That's one of the reasons for this crisis. Minister, how long before the new officers will be working to protect rural Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Well, I think that working with the RCMP, we've managed to come forward with a strategy. That strategy includes seven prongs. It includes new boots on the ground. It includes new civilian staff. It includes new crime reduction units. One of those crime reduction units, that was piloted in central Alberta, is already having an effect. So I think that this is what the experts are telling us we need to do, and that's how we're going to move forward.

Thank you.

Mr. Ellis: Face it, Mr. Speaker. Smoke and mirrors. So please allow me to explain. Given that the RCMP has a time-consuming process with multiple levels of planning and approvals at the federal level and then recruitment and training and strategic deployment for those officers and given that it's not like there are recruits in depot just waiting for assignments in Alberta, Minister, realistically, when will rural Albertans see these officers in their communities?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. Well, we've been hearing from rural Albertans that this is something they needed, and that's why we decided to move forward with concrete action. Unlike the opposition, who said that they need over a year to develop a plan around rural crime, we think that rural Albertans can't wait, and that's why we've moved forward with a plan right now. Those crime reduction units are already in the process of being formed, and we're ready to move forward. The RCMP and many rural politicians are very excited.

Mr. Ellis: We identified this issue a year ago, Minister.

Given that the Alberta MP for Lakeland has a motion coming before Parliament directing that the standing committee on public safety undertake a comprehensive review of rural crime in Canada and given that Alberta urgently needs this study as it will allow us to understand the resource challenges our provincial police, the

RCMP, are facing, Minister, will you commit to endorsing this motion today for the good of Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the member has noted, I know that the Official Opposition feels that this issue needs more study. We've been hearing from rural Albertans throughout the province that the time for study has passed. They need action now, and that's why this government is moving forward. That's why we've committed to taking action. We have a seven-point plan, unlike our opponents, who have chosen to say that they need a year to come up with a plan. Rural Albertans don't have time to wait.

Privacy Commissioner Investigation

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, this government is incapable of being transparent with Albertans, whether it's hiding the costs of their lawsuits or refusing to be honest with the details. Last fall, when the Official Opposition brought to light political interference by the Premier's former chief of staff, the government denied any wrongdoing despite evidence in their own e-mails which raised many red flags. Does this government still believe that there was no wrongdoing or political interference?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We certainly welcome the commissioner's investigations, and our officials will be co-operating fully. We take Albertans' right of access to information very seriously. That's why we've turned around times for FOIP requests and we've proactively shared more information with the public than ever before. Since day one we've been working to make government more open, transparent, and accountable to Albertans. In fact, we're the first government in Alberta's history to post the salaries and contracts of all Premier and minister office staff.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, given that this is another new investigation, I recently received a letter from the Privacy Commissioner that states, "Considering the serious allegations that have been raised by the UCP . . . and my own concerns, I have decided to conduct an investigation," and given that oral hearings like this have not been done in Alberta for decades, to the Premier: are you still confident in your chief of staff's actions on your behalf, that they did not break the law?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, absolutely. We're fully prepared, and all of our officials will be co-operating fully with the commissioner's investigation in this. We do without doubt take access to information very seriously. To be clear, the FOIP Act does allow third parties named in a request to review information before it's released. It would be inappropriate to comment further on the matter as it is under investigation at this time.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

2:20

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the confidence that the government has shown in the former chief of staff's actions and given that this government has made all sorts of claims about how they are the most open, the most transparent, and the most accountable government that the world has ever seen, will they

commit today to Albertans that they will ask the Privacy Commissioner to hold Mr. Heaney's hearing in public?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the member for echoing the fact that we do consider ourselves absolutely to be very open, very transparent, and we do take Albertans' access to information very seriously. I will certainly take the member's suggestion under consideration as we go forward, and we'll continue to be one of the most transparent, open governments in Alberta's history.

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

Seniors' Facility Resident and Family Councils

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The passage of Bill 22, the Resident and Family Councils Act, last year was welcomed by the many residents living in seniors' accommodation in Edmonton-Whitemud. The Bill 22 preamble says that the government "recognizes that a residential facility is the home of its residents, and . . . residents should be involved in matters that affect their daily lives." To the Minister of Health, who sponsored this legislation: please update this House on progress in implementing the councils across Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question, which we know matters to residents and their families throughout this province. Today over 70 per cent of our facilities have some type of council in place, supporting residents in having a voice and ensuring that it's heard in their care. We've been working with operators, support agencies, health care providers, residents, their family members, and members of the PDD community to help us develop the tools to implement these councils where they don't exist and to improve them where they're needed. This spring we'll be releasing a tool kit to help this work be done in further detail.

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Minister. This reflects what I've heard from my constituents who are residents or who have family members living in a residential facility. Given that in Edmonton-Whitemud there are several examples of life lease residential facilities and that many have instituted councils but that there are life lease facilities that have resisted instituting councils and given that life lease facility residents should be involved in matters that affect their quality of life, will it be possible to extend the regulations of Bill 22 to cover all life lease facilities in the province?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the MLA for my great-aunt Alma, who happens to be one of these residents living in one of these buildings. He certainly has been a strong advocate for the residents in this specific type of facility, and since he brought this to my attention, my officials have been working with Service Alberta to look at potential possibilities for residents living outside of supportive living facilities who also see the value of these councils. We look forward to working with the member and both of our offices to develop an effective solution to support residents in life lease situations.

Dr. Turner: Thank you very much, Minister. What recourse does a resident of a residential facility have if he or she believes that the operator is not meeting its obligations under Bill 22?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. To a resident or a family member who feels that an operator isn't acting in a council's function in the way outlined in Bill 22, please reach out to Alberta Health. We'll connect them with a complaints officer. They're listed on the website, but you can call my office or directly to the Alberta Health main switchboard, and a complaints officer would be the best place to direct that. Also, I want to assure everyone that when health inspectors are in these facilities on a regular basis, in these people's homes, they are going to be monitoring that as well. We want to ensure that every Albertan living in a facility where they receive care has a voice and feels like a true partner in their home, and that includes having resident and family councils.

Carbon Levy and Rural Education Costs

Mrs. Aheer: Last week in Edmonton trustees from Chestermere-Rocky View and across the province met at the Rural Education Symposium. They had questions about the impacts of the NDP's carbon tax on their bottom line. They were met with rhetoric from the Deputy Premier about light bulbs and solar panels. Minister, what is your government actually doing to help these schools struggling to absorb the impacts of your disastrous policies, or are these just concerns that the Premier says don't really exist?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. I was also at the Rural Education Symposium. In fact, I was chairing it. We had a number of very good questions from rural school boards across the province in regard to the carbon levy and education around this as well. We had lots of interesting stories of how people have been working hard to help to educate their kids about the importance of fighting climate change and the way by which they can do that with practical additions to their school, to their curriculum, and so forth. Certainly, it was a very worthwhile . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
First supplemental.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't think that answered my question. I'll try a different one.

Given that small cities like Chestermere are seeing huge increased costs for school buses due to the carbon tax – maybe that's part of the educational piece – and given that my trustees asked for answers about the \$306,000 tax grab after they were told that their schools were not meant to be impacted and that it would take time to address the issue, Mr. Speaker, how long are our schools supposed to struggle until the government figures this out and scraps this brutal tax?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, there are a number of energy efficiency investments that this province has made and continues to make. We've been working in partnership with school boards, who have talked to us about a number of different initiatives that we can undertake as a province. I certainly will have more to say about that tomorrow, in fact. As for school funding, we have ensured that school boards receive stable and

predictable funding. What would not help is a 20 per cent across-the-board cut. What would not help is leaving classrooms without the resources they need. What does help is ensuring that . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mrs. Aheer: Mr. Speaker, what does not help is telling families that light bulbs and solar panels are going to help their problems with carbon taxes.

In fact, rural schools right now are seeing a decline in students, but their operating costs are skyrocketing due to the carbon tax. Given that the per-student funding is declining due to fewer students and massive hikes due to this cash grab, I would really like to understand how this government is going to reconcile disastrous policies with the real people that they're impacting every single day.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, it's very important for us to talk about carbon and climate change in the schools. In fact, that's the very heart of where this conversation should lie because not only is it important for students – they need to and want to know about the effects of climate change and building a more diverse economy – but, also, it's their future generation that will be more impacted by these very climate change issues. Certainly, I'm working with school boards every step of the way. What's not helpful is when you hear inflamed rhetoric like that when, in fact, we are having civilized conversations between school boards and ourselves about finding solutions.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Carbon Levy and Northern Albertans

Mr. Loewen: From the start the carbon tax has always particularly disadvantaged rural and northern Albertans. The tax on gasoline, diesel, and natural gas is far more costly when there are longer distances to drive as part of everyday life and temperatures tend to be colder. Despite the intent of the government's carbon tax, my constituents in Grande Prairie-Smoky won't stop heating their homes in the winter to reduce emissions and they won't quit their jobs so that they don't have to drive. They're just being forced to pay more to do it. Why does the government think it's fair to disproportionately punish rural and northern Albertans with their carbon tax?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, two-thirds of Albertans receive a rebate on the carbon levy. If you're a couple who makes less than \$95,000, you're getting a \$450 rebate. If you have two children, you'll get \$540. We also have a number of different energy efficiency programs in place, the total of which added up to about \$300 million worth of energy savings for Albertans in the first eight months of those programs. It's really quite interesting and amazing what can happen when you actually take on the issue of energy efficiency and . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Loewen: Given that that didn't answer any questions about how it affects northern Albertans and given how out of touch this government is with the needs of northern Albertans and given that this government's previous response to carbon tax concerns was that Albertans should consider, quote, taking a bus or walk and

given that these are simply not options for many rural Albertans, why does this government insist on making it more expensive to make ends meet for those living in rural Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, there are 32 indigenous communities across this province who are now undertaking renewables and energy efficiency programs to save their communities money. There are hundreds of farmers that have availed themselves of the energy efficiency and renewables programs. There are several municipalities, hundreds of projects across the province, and nonprofits as well who are availing themselves of energy efficiency. That's creating good jobs. It's putting people back to work when they need it the most. It's also saving Albertans money on energy, and they can redirect those funds to other things.

Thank you.

2:30

Mr. Loewen: Given that the MLA for Peace River said this about fuel costs in northern Alberta:

at any given time we pay on average 20 cents more per litre than the rest of the province. Not only does that impact our personal travel costs, but the increased costs of transporting goods and services are passed on to us in higher prices for everything,

and the carbon tax will only add to these costs and this out-of-touch government's suggestion was to change the car you have, which is unrealistic on northern rural roads, and given that the carbon tax has not attained the fabled social licence for pipelines, why won't the NDP government make life better for Albertans and cancel the carbon tax?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, there are so many interesting success stories. For example, the Westerner Exposition society in Red Deer received \$16,000 to replace old light fixtures. Their assistant general manager has indicated that they're going to save money on their electricity bill and also install new fixtures. The Calgary Rotary Challenger park received an \$8,000 rebate, and they have indicated: most importantly, in the long term we will save large amounts of money. The Crowchild Twin Arena Association received an \$18,000 rebate for a number of fixture changes. The Calgary Urban Project Society received . . .

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

Economic Indicators

Mr. Barnes: Last month the Minister of Finance published the government's fiscal update. According to the minister it was rainbows, full steam ahead. He said, quote: this third-quarter report shows a solid rebound; Alberta continues to improve. Not so fast, say businesses. The president and CEO of Edmonton's Chamber of Commerce says, quote: some might say the tide has turned, that we're on our way back to prosperity, but that's not what I hear; things on the ground appear to be still as much a struggle as ever. To the Minister of Finance: who's telling the truth, you or the Edmonton chamber?

Mr. Ceci: What I can clearly tell the member opposite is that our economy is looking up. Jobs are up, and the deficit is down \$1.4 billion. Our plan is working, Mr. Speaker. The economy is growing in this province again. We're the fastest growing economy in

Canada. Drilling is up, retail sales are up, manufacturing is up. More than 90,000 full-time jobs returned to this province in 2017.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, given that Alberta businesses have faced nothing but tax increases from this government, something that this side of the House warned the government would result in lower tax revenue, it is not hard to see why Alberta businesses are not buying this government's rosy talk. Given that despite this government increasing our corporate taxes by 20 per cent, corporate tax revenue has actually fallen by 22 and a half per cent as this economy declines, to the minister: will you admit that your government's tax-and-spend policy has failed and commit to reducing taxes, reducing regulatory burden so Alberta businesses can prosper . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Mr. Ceci: You know whose tax policy has failed? It's the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. What we won't do is to take advice from that side or the province of Saskatchewan, that increased taxes on new construction 6 per cent. Our economy grew by 4.5 per cent. Saskatchewan's is lagging. They want to go down that road? Go. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order, please. Order.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, also, given that as of January 1 the United States has reduced their corporate taxes by 40 per cent, from 35 to 21 per cent, and given that Alberta has seen its tax competitiveness drop drastically since this government took office, from most competitive in North America to 15th, and that, more importantly, Alberta has fallen behind every single large oil-producing state in the United States, to the minister: if this government's plan is working so well, why do job creators keep leaving?

The Speaker: The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I believe that the premise of the hon. member's question is patently false. There are a number of indicators that economists have said – this isn't coming from the government of Alberta; this is coming from the Conference Board of Canada, RBC, TD Bank. Alberta led the country in 2017 in economic growth with 4.5 per cent. This year, 2018, we are poised to lead the country for a second time. There are a number of significant investments, including Suncor's announcement of their massive, multibillion-dollar investment here in our province. Because of our PDP program we have a \$4.5 billion investment by Inter Pipeline. Amazon is here, Google DeepMind is here, Cavendish Farms are . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Carbon Levy and Postsecondary Education Costs

Mr. W. Anderson: Mr. Speaker, the effects of this government's disastrous policies on communities across the province have been devastating. When this government brought in its carbon tax, little thought was given to the effect it would have on postsecondary institutions. With the tuition freeze going into its fourth year, institutions are being forced to look at their books and make cuts. Now they're forced to turn over millions of dollars to the government for a carbon tax they were never consulted on nor benefit from. To the Minister of Advanced Education or whomever is representing him today: when will you admit that these policies will eventually damage the institutions' ability to provide quality education here in Alberta?

The Speaker: Hon. minister, go ahead.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, in the first instance, stable and predictable funding to our postsecondary institutions, just as to our health care system or to our education system or to the many, many municipalities or community services, has been job one as we have ensured that we have moved Alberta out of the recession. As we invest in energy efficiency, that's also creating thousands of new jobs. Of course, there are a number of investments that are also happening in the postsecondary sector, but job one for this government was stability and not making reckless cuts during the recession.

Mr. W. Anderson: Mr. Speaker, given that institutions have increased the tuition rates for international students to off-load their operational costs, eventually this could affect all students and future foreign students and future enrolment. Is this how you expect these institutions to offset the disastrous effects of the NDP carbon tax?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. You know, institutions in advanced education have been working very hard in close concert with our government to look for solutions to reduce carbon emissions. There's a lot of research that's going into this very area as well. Postsecondary institutions are meant to lead not just in terms of education but in terms of advancing and diversifying the economy, and that's exactly what our advanced education institutions are doing in regard to carbon. We're very proud of the partnership they're providing to work with us.

The Speaker: Second supplemental question.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the carbon tax on postsecondary institutions is really a tax on taxpayers' dollars, public funds which are allocated to these institutions are being clawed back through the NDP carbon tax. Can the minister then explain: why is this government taxing these institutions' operational dollars?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, these sorts of questions display a misunderstanding of exactly part of why the carbon levy is in place, which is to provide efficiencies. When you look at public institutions and the literally hundreds of buildings and energy uses that you have in postsecondary institutions across our province, they're making ways by which we can provide efficiencies in those same places and actually save money over time. It's important that postsecondary institutions participate in the carbon levy, and we're looking for ways in which this can be a constructive process that can be both educational . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Educational Curriculum Review

Ms Fitzpatrick: Mr. Speaker, as you know, our government has been dedicated to ensuring that students in Alberta are receiving high-quality education. We know that students in Alberta are some of the highest academic performers in the country and that we have one of the best education systems in Canada. This is due to our talented teachers and our emphasis on a common-sense curriculum. Can the minister provide some information on the curriculum review?

The Speaker: The Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, the curriculum process has been very interesting, and we have engaged literally tens of thousands of parents, students, teachers, and so forth in working on the six different core areas and all subject areas, too. In fact, we had a response of more than 40,000 people to surveys, and we're building a curriculum that will focus on and emphasize language, mathematics, critical thinking and help to have our young students participate constructively in a more diverse economy here in the future.

Thank you.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know that Alberta's economy is dependent on important, technologically driven industries like the oil and gas sector. We also know that more students are interested in science, technology, engineering, and math and that our students perform very well in these areas. Computer coding is becoming more popular and plays an important role in industry development. Within the curriculum review would the minister identify what role computer coding will play?

2:40

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you for the question, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we've been engaging with postsecondary institutions and teachers and schools across the province and looking at other jurisdictions and how they're using computer coding as an integral part of not just that very process but the critical thinking skills that go along with that, the math, the science, the social studies, and so forth. Yes, definitely, we are looking for these contributions, contributions from industry: the energy industry, forest industry, agriculture, the financial sector. This is one of the biggest, probably, engagement processes to build a sound curriculum for the future that's ever taken place here in the province.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is committed to ensuring that students are prepared for our diversifying economy. Career and technology studies programs play an important role in preparing students for a variety of careers. We also know that there have been exciting transformations in the career and technology studies programs across the province. Can the Minister of Education tell me about some of the CTS programs that he has visited in the last year?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks so much for the question. We have many creative and innovative school boards around the province who are taking full advantage of expanding the scope of CTS programming here in the province of Alberta. I just want to thank the Lethbridge Chamber of Commerce and the colleges there for helping to work with school boards in Lethbridge in regard to building dual-credit programming. We put in a five-year stable funding formula, that is really catching fire across the province, for dual credit, where kids are able to go and take high school courses but also get credit for colleges. This opens the door for lots . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Hon. members, in 30 seconds we will continue with Members' Statements.

Members' Statements (continued)

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

Friends of Confederation Creek

Mr. Coolahan: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to give the Assembly an update on a member's statement that I did last April on the Rally in the Valley, a gathering of Highland Park residents and other citizens concerned with a proposed high-rise development on a former nine-hole golf course.

Since then the community group Friends of Confederation Creek was formed. They work to preserve, protect, and restore Confederation Creek in the Highland Park golf course. Many members live in the area. Some have for decades, and they have seen the valley change. They understand this complex environment and that it's a natural drainage area for several small creeks and prone to flooding. This group has put in hundreds of hours of volunteer work going through and documenting what they find in old city maps and records as well as documenting what's occurring in the valley on a regular basis.

Mr. Speaker, a drainage study was recently completed, and it concluded that the valley is a natural drainage area for several creeks and that it may be difficult for some areas to be developed. So the update really should be that the community did its homework, and they were right. While the results of the study have created new challenges, there's now a better understanding of the area.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy to share this truly great example of community engagement that reached out to work with all levels of government. They are proof of why input from the local level is invaluable to all levels of government.

Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to thank the Friends of Confederation Creek for all the work they've done. It's given me and many others a better understanding of what the area was built on and that this just might be a rare opportunity to unvault a new type of development.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Carbon Levy

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This Legislature has been entrusted by the people of this province with overseeing and managing the economic and social resources of this province and to do so in such a fashion as to meet the needs and the desires of the people that we represent.

I received a phone call the other day from a constituent. He was having a hard time understanding the actions of this government with respect to the implementation of the carbon tax. He made several telling points. Firstly, he correctly identified the nature of the carbon tax when he called it a selective sales tax. A sales tax is a tax on just about every product that is sold. Since every product and service that is produced is the result of some expenditure of carbon, it is reasonable to conclude that the carbon tax is a sales tax by any other name.

Why do we have this carbon sales tax? Well, to appease Prime Minister Trudeau and to purchase the social licence necessary for the federal government to approve and push forward pipeline access to coastal waters. Well, we can see how much social licence a carbon

tax has provided for the people of Alberta, just a lot of pain for Albertans. How much pain? Well, this constituent drew my attention to the gas bill that he received and to the budget line on his gas bill that revealed that the small gas co-operative he purchases his gas from paid \$89,688 in carbon tax, \$89,688 that he and his fellow gas consumers paid, \$89,688 that could have been spent by consumers at the local restaurant, grocery, or liquor store before they closed their doors in his small community over this last year. Now these constituents have to drive to Drayton Valley to buy groceries or to celebrate a special occasion, increasing – you guessed it – their carbon footprint because of our infamous carbon tax.

This government passed the carbon tax over and above the objections of the majority of Albertans, and now it is the majority of Albertans that are suffering.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the Government House Leader's objections to our leader citing the minister of environment's role in Mike Hudema's book, *An Action a Day Keeps Global Capitalism Away*, I'd like to table excerpts from the book. In one quote, referring to the minister, Hudema says, "It would not have been possible to put this book together without her. She pushed me to write it, edited my work, and contributed to its content . . . I owe her a heavy debt."

The Speaker: Let's table it.

Orders of the Day

Government Motions

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Trans Mountain Pipeline

2. Ms Notley moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly support the government of Alberta's fight on behalf of Albertans' interests to ensure the lawfully approved Trans Mountain pipeline expansion is built, and be it further resolved that the Legislative Assembly call for the federal government to continue to take all necessary legal steps in support of the pipeline's construction, and be it further resolved that the Legislative Assembly reaffirm its support for the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion as a key component of Alberta's energy future.

Mr. Nixon moved that the motion be amended as follows:

(a) in the first recital by striking out "the government of Alberta's fight on behalf of Albertans' interests" and substituting "the efforts by the government of Alberta to fight on behalf of Albertans' interests"; (b) in the second recital (i) by striking out "continue to" and (ii) by adding "including putting before Parliament a declaration that the pipeline is in the national interests pursuant to section 92(10)(c) of the Constitution Act, 1867" after "construction."

[Debate adjourned on the amendment March 13]

The Deputy Speaker: Any other speakers wishing to speak to the amendment to Motion 2? The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Certainly, it gives me great pleasure to rise and speak to the proposed amendment to Government Motion 2. As the Leader of the Opposition has made clear, our UCP caucus supports the government's efforts to stand up for this lawfully approved Trans Mountain pipeline expansion. I mean, how could we do anything else? After all, in the very beginning, when the Premier bragged that the shovels would be in the ground shortly, we offered the best wishes that this would in fact start quickly. But we also knew that hurdles would arise because we see this happen on a regular basis. The NDP should have also known that protests would pop up because, you know, many of their own supporters in Alberta, including some in this Chamber, have expressed opposition to any kind of action that would allow for the economic expansion of Alberta's oil sands.

But let's leave that aside for the moment. Like I said, we expected to see opposition in British Columbia to this crucial pipeline expansion, and we warned the Premier and her colleagues on the government benches not to take its progress for granted. Nevertheless, they did, and once again we saw that if firm action by the federal government and our provincial government did not occur, the pipeline could go sideways.

2:50

That's exactly what happened when the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed offered well-intentioned advice in August. He suggested: take a firm stand, and do not let B.C. play games. He said: do not let the Prime Minister off the hook; do not let Albertans down. This past August, of course, the now Member for Calgary-Lougheed, as I stated, said, "If the government of British Columbia purposely undermines the rule of law and our ability to safely export products from Alberta, then there will be repercussions." "Trade is a two-way street." I'll repeat that last part because it is so very, very important. "Trade is a two-way street."

The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed went on to say, and I quote: if I were the Premier and the government of British Columbia were blocking one of our prime exports, we would find ways to respond in kind that would be an economic response. Unquote.

What kind of response did he get for that common-sense advice? Dismissive mocking, ridicule. The Premier called our now leader, quote, an isolationist, unquote, and insisted that he was building a wall around Alberta. Then just two weeks later the Premier assured Albertans that, quote: the B.C. government has stopped talking about stopping the pipeline, and instead they're talking about ensuring that it meets high standards. Unquote. Well, that sounds positive, doesn't it? Except that it wasn't. B.C. had plenty of ideas up its sleeve to delay, delay, and further delay, with hopes of scuttling the pipeline no matter how long that takes. Frankly, for them, the longer the better.

What was the end result of the government's, quote, everything is fine, unquote, tactic? Well, the Premier finally took the advice of our now leader to impose some trade consequences. What did our leader do in response? Did he mock the Premier? Did he criticize her? No. He supported her. He supported her position so strongly that he even lamented the moment when she took the wine boycott off. He encouraged her to stay the course and be firm. This is the position of the United Conservative Party. We applaud the government when it is doing well on behalf of Albertans, and that is all we continue to ask when it comes to this motion.

We do wish, however, to strengthen it together with all members of this Chamber. Our House leader has proposed two amendments that strengthen it. The Premier has bowed to our leader's advice a few times already when the Trans Mountain pipeline has faced repeated barriers from British Columbia, and now we are asking

that this government take his advice again. He has clearly proven that he knows what Albertans need to do, and we all appreciate the Premier following his recommendations.

That brings us to a key element of the amendment; that is, the addition of this clause to the motion: including declaring the pipeline in the national interest by using section 92(10)(c) of the Constitution. Clearly, this is critical. How so? Well, let's parse it out, Madam Speaker. Is there any question that this pipeline is in the national interest? Even the Prime Minister, who is not normally deemed a friend of Alberta, has made that statement. Although we disagree with the Prime Minister on very many policy fronts, we certainly support that one. We display this nonpartisan support because it is in the best interest of Albertans to do so. Today we are asking the NDP to do so as well when it comes to strengthening this motion.

We are not challenging the NDP's belief that this job-creating project is in the best interests of Canada and the Maritimes and Ontario and Quebec and western Canada and British Columbia, but it is time to see and hear it, not just for us but for all Albertans. Supporting the amendment to this motion will allow all residents in this province to see that this whole House is on the side of Alberta. The Premier has taken our leader's advice in the past, and we are hoping she does so again.

The second part of the amendment, which includes "[declaring] that the pipeline is in the national interest," involves the use of section 92(10)(c) of the Constitution. By now, thanks to, of course, the Member for Calgary-Lougheed, every single member of this Chamber knows what this section is, which is something that in the past may have eluded some members of this Chamber. All we are trying to do through this amendment is to get the Prime Minister to use it. Is that too much to ask when a province is obstructing a project that is in the national interest? It can't be too much to ask because that is the reason the clause exists in the first place, Madam Speaker.

We are asking this government not to reject our leader's well-intentioned, well-reasoned advice just because we are on different sides of the House. On this issue we are together, in solidarity. Let's show Albertans that we can work in their best interests because it's the right thing to do, Madam Speaker.

Thank you for this time.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other speakers to the amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm going to stand today and I'm going to do something that I think doesn't often happen in this Assembly, something that I think that, as I've talked to constituents and I've talked to Albertans, they say that they'd like their elected leaders do a lot more often, and that's admit when we're wrong. Yesterday I was talking a lot about the declaratory power and speaking in favour of the Official Opposition's amendment to invoke section 92(10)(c) and encourage or ask the federal government to use their declaratory power.

After the Leader of the Official Opposition very kindly quoted me in a tweet, I got into a long and fascinating discussion with some folks on Twitter, and one of those people on Twitter is a noted constitutional law expert at the University of Ottawa, Carissima Mathen, vice-dean academic. Now, I had done some research before I made my comments yesterday, which I hope we would all do, and I actually had seen Professor Mathen quoted on 92(10)(c), from an article midway through 2017, and implying that, in fact,

this would help move the Kinder Morgan pipeline forward, that the federal government could in fact use this declaratory power.

But then I did some further research, prompted by some comments and questions that were asked of me on Twitter, and it was Professor Mathen herself who responded that, in fact, the declaratory power in this case is not relevant. Not being a lawyer and having never gone to law school, let alone being in any way the constitutional expert that Professor Mathen is, I can assure you that she's absolutely right and that I am incorrect. That also makes the Official Opposition and the Member for Calgary-Lougheed incorrect in their assessment of how 92(10)(c) could be used.

In doing my research, Professor Mathen was on a radio show, Rob Breakenridge's show, I think it was last week, and I just want to read out a few of the quotes from her on this particular point. Quote: when you actually look at how our Constitution works, it's a redundant move in talking about using that declaratory power. She goes on to say, quote: it would be highly disruptive; it is more of a rhetorical tool than something that has present-day, real legal utility. She then says that the federal government has exclusive authority over the projects that cross provincial boundaries.

This whole situation reminds me of that famous quote erroneously attributed to John Maynard Keynes: when my information changes, I change my mind. In this case the information has changed. I know I have changed my mind on this particular point. As an evidence-based party the Alberta Party believes that when you find new information, it's only the responsible thing to do to acknowledge that, put that on the record, and change your view on a particular point.

3:00

Having said all of that, I do still support the other aspects of the amendments brought forward by the Official Opposition, and I do still believe that our provincial government should push harder to ensure that the federal government pushes this project forward with more force and enthusiasm and applies their existing legal rights to ensure that projects that cross provincial boundaries, that are within legitimate federal jurisdiction, do in fact go ahead. So let my correction of my understanding of what federal powers are not be mistaken in any way for weakening our resolve on the importance of building the Kinder Morgan pipeline. It is absolutely in not only the urgent public interest of the province of Alberta; it is in the urgent national interest that we build this pipeline, that we get Alberta's products to market, and that we do so in a way that is environmentally beneficial, that is as safe as possible.

Pipelines, especially modern pipelines, and shipping, especially modern shipping, are incredibly safe. Incredibly safe. If this government, as I was saying yesterday, had made more of a case to align Alberta's interests with the interests of British Columbia – in fact, I believe our interests are aligned with the interests of British Columbia. We care in this House about ensuring that British Columbia and Canada's coastline is safe.

I did my university education on the west coast, on Vancouver Island, and it reminds me of two stories. One, it is a gorgeous, remarkable, beautiful place. Any of us who have been to the coastline of British Columbia, I promise you, not a single one of us wants to see that coastline fouled with any sort of effluent, any sort of accident from any oil tanker. I can assure you that if I felt that was in any way a risk and a remote possibility, then I wouldn't be supporting the expansion of Kinder Morgan, but I do because I believe that the methods for shipping crude oil to market, for which there is still a substantial demand, are absolutely fundamentally safe.

I have to say that back in – it was a long, long time ago, Madam Speaker – the early 1990s, which some in this House, more on this than that side, would remember, we were protesting. We were

protesting, as good university students who cared about our environment did then and still do now, the fact that the city of Victoria dumped raw sewage into the Pacific Ocean. It was an outrage in 1992 and – you know what? – it's still an outrage in 2018 because they still do it. It actually defies belief that that is still something that goes on in that province. So I think that our friends in British Columbia ought to look in their own backyard if they want to tackle a pressing and urgent environmental issue that relates to their coastline. I would encourage them, please, to work on cleaning that up. It just stuns me that that happened so many years ago and happens to this very day.

So I will be supporting the first two of the three amendments brought forward by the Official Opposition. I will not be supporting the third because I think that it's important that we do continue to press the federal government to act in Alberta's and Canada's interests, to use the lawful powers that they have to put forward a strong case to British Columbia and to all Canadians, the importance of this pipeline not just from an economic perspective but from an environmental perspective as well.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Under 29(2)(a)?

Mr. Mason: Yes, please, Madam Speaker. Well, I want to thank the hon. member for admitting his mistake and talking a little bit about the leading constitutional expert who has weighed in to suggest that this particular clause, section 92(10)(c) of the Constitution, is redundant in this case.

I will just add another authority to that argument. This person says that local works and undertakings such as of the following classes, that are wholly situated within the province, are before or after their execution declared by the Parliament of Canada to be to the general advantage of Canada or to the advantage of two or more provinces. The authority went on to say:

This clause is intended to be used to exert federal authority in a case of national interest in something that is entirely within a province, because sometimes things within provincial jurisdiction may [also] be in the national interest. That's what the clause is there to do. But in regard to interprovincial matters such as pipelines the government clearly has the constitutional authority to act. It does not need this clause, nor does this clause apply to interprovincial matters such as pipelines.

That authority stood in this place yesterday and made those comments, hon. member.

Mr. Clark: That authority wouldn't have been you by chance, would it?

As I was talking about with my hon. colleague here, *Hansard* is forever, so it's important what we say here. Yes, I will acknowledge, of course, that it's there in black and white. While I absolutely trust the hon. Government House Leader, Madam Speaker, I trust but I verify, so I have gone out and I have made sure that in fact his words were true. You know what? Rare as it may be, it turns out he's right, so we'll acknowledge that fact.

Again, using this as an opportunity to remind us all why we're here and the importance of this particular motion is absolutely vital. While we can have a little fun with each other catching one another out when we're not correct on something, it is absolutely urgent that we remember why we're debating this motion. That is to ensure that a lawful piece of infrastructure that is to the benefit of our entire nation is absolutely safe, that it in fact has a strong environmental benefit in terms of displacing higher carbon crude from sources of crude like Nigeria and Venezuela – in fact, by building the Kinder Morgan, we will help reduce global carbon emissions. I'm happy to stand here and say that because I know it to be true. We will support

the research and development that's already under way in Alberta's remarkably responsible and innovative oil and gas sector, which is actively working today to not only reduce carbon emissions from oil sands production but outright decarbonize the barrel from production to end use.

That's a big goal. That's Alberta's moon shot, Madam Speaker. That is the kind of work that's going on in this province. That is the kind of work that is going to be supported by the building of the Kinder Morgan pipeline. Far from it being something that we should be ashamed or embarrassed of; it is something that we ought to be in this province fiercely proud of. That is something I'd like to hear our federal government say.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to use Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other speakers to the amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak to the amendment to the government motion. Like our leader mentioned before, our caucus is broadly in support of the motion, but our intention of moving this amendment is to strengthen the government motion. Now I'm hearing that there is some legal opinion about 92(10)(c). I have to do a little bit more research on that in the next couple of hours.

In the meantime, Madam Speaker, I would like to focus on the big picture that our hon. Leader of the Official Opposition eloquently explained to all of us yesterday. Alberta is sitting on a resource of \$11 trillion, which is a God-given gift. Some people want to leave it in the ground, but if we get our act together, like the Premier asked for yesterday, and if we act as one nation and leverage that resource for the benefit of all Canadians – Albertans and Canadians are counting on us to get to that point.

3:10

To talk about how we got here, I just want to take us back in time. Kinder Morgan got the approval for Trans Mountain almost 18 months ago. They received the paper approval 18 months ago and, as in the Official Opposition, have been saying: time is money. Time is of the essence. We can't lose time. Let's get these shovels in the ground. We raised that consistently in this House, and we have been asking the Premier to champion the construction. For over a year every time we asked about that, we were mocked, and they said, "We got two pipelines approved; we got two pipelines approved," the front line there. Every day that's how they answered for any question we asked about the construction delays, about the legal issues, about the blockades. The answer was: we got two pipelines approved.

We wasted precious time in not acting on this file in the interest of Albertans and Canadians. What's the result of that? Every single day of delay is costing \$70 million to \$90 million in revenues for Kinder Morgan. Their president, Ian Anderson, is very clear about that. He said that the company is watching and that they don't want to invest any more into this project unless they're crystal clear about getting the full approval, and they wanted the Prime Minister and the Premiers to remove the blockades because the ground realities are different. Here we can sit and talk. I was there on the weekend in Vancouver to support and show my solidarity with the couple of hundred Canadians that wanted this pipeline to be built. Who are they fighting against? There were 5,000 more protesters there who don't want this pipeline. They just want it not built. They want to leave it in the ground. No amount of persuasion, facts, science:

doesn't matter. They are very clear about that. They say leave it in the ground. Those are the types of people we are dealing with here.

All of us have been acting in good faith so far. I know why the Premier and the cabinet haven't done enough when we were insisting. You know, paper approval doesn't mean anything. There has to be a start date, middle date, end date, and this construction schedule is not working. What are you doing? How are you helping that? They kept mocking: no, no; we got two pipelines approved.

In that one year we heard so many other reports. The Premier herself quoted the Bank of Nova Scotia's report recently: lack of pipelines is costing \$15.6 billion a year, which is almost \$43 million a day. That money could have been used for schools, hospitals, for everything we wanted, infrastructure projects, but we were not taken seriously. Our leader, the new leader, has been saying that you have to be proactive. We can't wait. We can't dither on this. The Prime Minister, his point is: "Okay. We approved. We finished our job. Now, B.C. and Alberta, you sort it out. You fight it out." We kept saying: no; only federal government has the jurisdiction.

That's why we brought in this amendment, 92(10)(c). Now, I heard what the Government House Leader has to say and the Member for Calgary-Elbow has to say. We'll go and find out. But that's one person, one constitutional expert. Albertans and Canadians want to hear how it can be done, not how it can't be done.

When we are dealing with the government in British Columbia – at all levels of the B.C. government that happens to be NDP. It's an NDP mayor in Vancouver. It's an NDP mayor in Burnaby. It's an NDP Premier and an NDP federal leader. Those are the people who are saying that, you know, for them to survive as the B.C. government, because they signed a deal with the Green Party – three members of the Green Party, three legislators, are controlling the balance of power there. Our Premier and the cabinet here are naive enough to think that, oh, John Horgan will actually agree and give them social licence. They should have come to Vancouver over the weekend. They would have seen 5,000 people saying: no matter what, we won't let it get built.

Those are the kinds of eco radicals we are dealing with, and in good faith this cabinet brings in people like Tzeporah Berman and Karen Mahon and gives them positions on the oil sands advisory council. The result is delay. Just delay. That's why we are frustrated. We are asking them to use every tool available to clear the roadblocks of this project.

The money we are talking about here is big, Madam Premier, \$11 trillion of assets. If we leverage that asset and develop the oil sands in an environmentally responsible manner, we can work for the benefit of all Canadians. Like our leader said yesterday, that \$1 trillion debt we have together as all governments in Canada can be cleared. We can be debt free. Canada can be debt free. Albertans are not selfish. We have been sharing our prosperity with all Canadians.

We don't have time here. People are looking for jobs. There were some in this House that we introduced. A few hundred people looking for work showed up last year, and they're all still looking for work, because I know those people. I used to work with them. I see them in Calgary, in Edmonton, in Fort McMurray, and they're saying: we're still looking for work. They don't have time.

The Premier is saying: oh, okay; 92(10)(c) is irrelevant. But, come to that, if our talks in good faith continue to fail after six months, we come back to that. That's what they have been doing. When the Leader of the Official Opposition said, "Act tough; convey to B.C. that there will be consequences," he was mocked. In that process we lost more than a year doing nothing. If we rely on this Prime Minister, nothing gets done. Nothing gets done, Madam Speaker.

He happened to be in India two weeks ago. We all know he came back empty handed. Within a week the President of France was in India, and he could go and sign \$16 billion worth of deals with India. Countries like India, China – the Prime Minister was also in China. He couldn't get that trade deal with China. He just came back empty handed because he went there to lecture them on labour standards and other stuff, which for their country – I mean, they look at what's good for them. So that is the Prime Minister who happens to be leading on this file and who happens to be the close ally of this Premier, and both of them are not able to get anything done.

We are here saying, "We are with you, and these are the tools you can use," but they don't want to do that. Albertans don't have time. Canadians don't have time. People looking for jobs don't have time. Time is money. Every day of inaction is costing Canadians billions of dollars. That's why we asked for this amendment to be included, to strengthen the government's motion. It's up to them whether they accept it or not.

3:20

Yesterday the Premier was saying that we all should act together and send one message. Then why can't she accept the suggestions from us? She has been doing that. The throne speech reflects our input. Whether she gives us credit or not, we don't care. As long as something good is done for Alberta, we are happy. Whether she acknowledges our contribution or not, we are not worried about it. But don't reject good ideas or delay and come back after six months: okay; we'll do this. That six months is another billion, 2 billion, 3 billion dollars of money we could use for development activities in Alberta.

That's where we are at with this government motion. We'd like to support it, but we want our amendments to be considered and not to be rejected just based on ideology or political opposition. Don't do that. You did it enough. That's why investments are fleeing. If she wants to send that positive message to investors, then she has to work with the opposition and act timely. We are very grateful that they have accepted our suggestions and included some of our suggestions in the throne speech, and we are hoping that good common sense prevails here and that they'll take our suggestion of these amendments.

I strongly ask the Government House Leader to take the opinion of other legal experts, not just one. There may be ways to use that, and that's why I actually started a petition together with our local MP asking Albertans to sign that petition so that the Prime Minister can use it. If not 92(10)(c), he'll find something else. But once we express our will that we want him to act and not dither and not let this project die, he should get that message. That's why we started that petition. That's why we are asking this amendment to be considered. Don't tell how not to do it. Tell Albertans how you can do it.

People don't have patience. People don't have confidence in this government now. Those protests: I mean, if you trace them back, there are some people in this House who wrote – today our Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky actually tabled a document. The minister of environment contributed to a book which is telling those protestors how to blockade things. Those protestors are getting oxygen from the front lines of this House.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, this was very interesting. I'd love to hear some more about that specific document that he's referring to.

Mr. Panda: Thank you. I'm talking about a book written by Mike Hudema, who is very active with Greenpeace, and the minister of environment has contributed to this book. I don't want to waste my time speaking about that, but I can give a copy of this to you and to other members in this House. They can read that. But the point I'm trying to make is that we can't wait. We have to do something about this. We have to rise above partisan politics here, and if this Premier is serious about taking all opposition together with her on this fight, we are here to work with her.

We don't need any more proof of what we are saying. There is a lady I met, Madam Speaker, in Vancouver. Her name is Vivian Krause, a very patriotic Canadian. She has been doing great research work in digging up information on how foreign funds are coming here to help these environmental activists who simply want to leave it in the ground.

You know, if you say, "Okay; there is 1 and a half billion dollars to protect the coastlines," they say: "No. It doesn't matter. We don't want that." You tell them: "Okay, We'll ensure that there won't be any spillage. If there is something, we have all these backup plans." You give them evidence, you give them reports that that's how it will be handled, and they say: "No. We don't want that oil to come out. We want it to be left in the ground." They're very determined about that. No amount of logic, reason, science, fact is going to help.

That's why the federal government, which has the jurisdiction, has to, you know, invoke that 92(10)(c) and then implement that. Otherwise, this Premier will be dreaming that her ally in Ottawa will do something. He'll say that, yeah, he will do it, but then another year will pass by, and Canada will be losing billions.

Madam Speaker, you know, like our leader said yesterday, the international demand for fossil fuels is growing. There is a demand, so when there is a demand, there will be a supply. If we are not supplying, someone else will supply. Or, if we are producing, CAPP is saying that our production here will grow from 4 million to 5 and a half million, so an additional 1 and a half million barrels will get to the markets. Maybe we'll ship it by trains, which is not safe. Is that what the opponents want? Do they want a reliable, safe pipeline system to bring prosperity to Canadians and Albertans, or do they want us to use whatever means it takes and grow the emissions? Supply will be met with demand from other countries, which don't have the same human rights or environmental standards. If that's not what we want, then we should make sure that we build this pipeline.

This pipeline, Madam Speaker, is only adding 600,000 more barrels, but there is a gap of 1 and a half million barrels of pipeline capacity, so that means that we have to build another pipeline to the east or west or south. Sending to the south doesn't make sense because we are selling at a \$30 discount per barrel, so that means that we are to ship it either east or west to fill that differential, to not lose money on the differential. That means we have to build another pipeline. This pipeline, if and when it is built, is only for 600,000 barrels, but we need another million barrels of capacity on the pipelines, so that's why this government motion is really important. That's why we're all excited about it, but we want our amendments to be considered.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour to speak to the amendment to Government Motion 2. I think that yesterday the Government House Leader spoke for all members on this side of the House about the significant concerns that we have about parts of the opposition's amendment, particularly with the

first part, (a), in which it wants to change the wording to essentially say that this government has not been fighting for pipelines. Nothing could be further from the truth.

However, I will indicate that we are prepared to support one part of their amendment, that being the request that the phrase “continue to” be struck out as it relates to the federal government’s use of all necessary legal steps to see the pipeline built. You know, what’s needed is for the federal government to use those tools. As outlined by the Premier, you know, in sponsoring this motion, we want to send a clear and unified message to the country that Albertans are united in our resolve to get this pipeline built, and to that end we can support the second part of the amendment, specifically being part (b)(i).

3:30

I’ll speak a bit mostly about, right now, why we’re not going to support the rest of the amendment. Quickly on part (b)(ii), the House leader spoke to that just shortly before, and that it’s really not necessary to put that in there is the gist of that.

You know, it has become clear over the last day and a half that we are unanimous in this Assembly that getting the Trans Mountain pipeline built is a critical project for Alberta’s energy sector. All Albertans and, in turn, all Canadians will benefit from a new pipeline to the west coast. Of course, this debate is good to have. It allows us to come together, share our ideas, make amendments, and ensure that we can get on the same page and, ultimately, get this pipeline built.

At this stage of the process, Madam Speaker, what’s required is to have the B.C. government recognize the importance of this pipeline to the economies of both provinces and all of Canada. We need the B.C. government to honour the fact that this pipeline was approved and its Premier to recognize that pipeline approval is federal jurisdiction.

We also need the federal government to send a strong message to them as well. In November 2016 Ottawa approved the Trans Mountain pipeline. This was a major step forward, but more work needs to be done to get the pipeline built. As outlined by the Premier, the federal government already has the legal power to assert that this project gets done, which was approved in the national interest and should be carried out in the national interest. Ultimately, Madam Speaker, we need the B.C. government to stop delaying construction.

Madam Speaker, I just want to go back to what I said earlier about the fact that getting a pipeline built is a process. As much as I said that we’re all in agreement in this Assembly on the criticality of the Trans Mountain pipeline, what I think the opposition is forgetting is the fact that the only reason we’re here debating next steps as to when to get shovels in the ground is that we passed the first hurdle, which was getting federal approval. We would not have got that approval without having the best climate leadership plan in the country.

We would not be at this stage in the process if the opposition had its way. It’s that simple. In the opposition’s world view, which is void of a climate leadership plan, which drives innovation and efficiency in both traditional oil and gas and in the renewables sector, we’re not standing here talking about shovels in the ground. No, Madam Speaker. We would still be trying to convince the federal government of the need for a pipeline, and we’d have no answers to questions like “What are you doing to reduce emissions?” or “What are your targets for renewables on the grid?”

It really is because of this government’s foresight, because of this government’s working with the energy sector on policy, climate leadership, royalties, renewables that we have approval for the pipeline that we are debating here today. What’s more, Madam

Speaker, British Columbia should take notice of the fact that we do have a robust climate leadership plan, and it should be a factor in their decision to stop delaying construction. Now, the opposition can jeer at the idea of social licence, but – make no mistake – the climate leadership plan is a necessary component of getting this pipeline built, and this government knew this from the start.

You know what else this government understood, Madam Speaker? This government knew that action against man-made climate change is simply the right thing to do. It’s the right thing to do for our children and our grandchildren’s future, and it’s the right thing for the longevity of the energy sector, driving efficiencies and research and development into other areas like renewables.

With that said, Madam Speaker, with this government setting the stage with strong economic and environmental arguments, with this government’s use of diplomacy with both the federal and provincial governments, with Premier Notley using the B.C. wine ban to demonstrate . . .

An Hon. Member: Name.

Mr. Coolahan: Pardon me.

. . . to the B.C. government that she is focused and determined to get this pipeline built, and with the Premier’s continued focus on this file, I am optimistic. I am optimistic that the Trans Mountain pipeline will be built.

And when it is, the opposition must understand that it never stood a chance under its watch. Modern pipeline construction is complicated. People are demanding responsible energy development and responsible pipeline construction. Purchasers of energy are demanding the same. This is what this government and my colleagues on this side of the Assembly understand, and this is something that the opposition is missing. It comes down to the fact that we believe that we can have a thriving energy sector and a robust climate leadership plan. In fact, we believe it is necessary.

Madam Speaker, I don’t believe that getting the Trans Mountain pipeline should be a partisan issue because it benefits the entire country. We all benefit from this pipeline. With that said, you know, the opposition continually bets against Alberta on getting the Trans Mountain pipeline built. They see victory in pipeline construction being delayed. They put ideology and misinformation ahead of success for the province.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the fact that the opposition continually suggests that members of the government caucus are anti-energy. Nothing is further from the truth. The opposition mistakes a call for sustainable, responsible energy development as anti-energy. But this is what the world wants, and the world has taken notice. In fact, with that being said, it’s the opposition that is anti-energy. It’s the opposition that doesn’t understand the modern energy industry. As such, it does nothing for success in getting this pipeline built when the opposition falsely accuses this caucus of being anti-energy. It does nothing for the success of getting the pipeline built.

Madam Speaker, knowing what’s available at this stage of the process to get shovels in the ground is extremely important. I’m grateful that we have a Premier that people view as tough, tough but not scary, at least not scary in the sense that she’s not trying to drag the energy industry back 30 years, not scary in the sense that people fear that economic and social progress will cease to continue to move forward under her watch. We’ve seen the Premier’s resolve on the pipeline file. We’ve seen the caucus’s resolve on the pipeline file. Getting the Trans Mountain pipeline built is necessary, and it requires a delicate balance of environmental action and progress and a steely resolve. Alberta has the right Premier to get the job done.

You know, when the city of Burnaby tried to block the Kinder Morgan pipeline in court, we intervened. When the B.C. government tried to overstep its authority and regulate something it had no right to regulate, we stood up. We shut down talks about electricity sales to B.C. that could have been up to \$500 million per year for them, and we banned B.C. wine from Alberta shelves and brought together a task force to provide us with the best advice.

I've had many conversations with my constituents in Calgary-Klein over the past few months, Madam Speaker, and they know that we're focused on their priorities, like fighting to get this long-overdue pipeline to the coast built. We refuse to let anyone turn their backs on hard-working people in our energy sector. On this side of the House we're fighting for pipelines and hard-working Albertans, and we're not going cheer for Alberta to fail because of narrow political interests. We're focused on creating good jobs in a diversified energy economy. Unlike members opposite, we are not going to settle for the same old boom-and-bust policies that hurt working families.

In closing, Madam Speaker, I would just like to say that I am in full support of this pipeline and in full support of the Premier's approach to getting this pipeline built. I have the utmost confidence that every decision the Premier has made to date and every decision she makes going forward is in the best interest of Alberta's energy industry and will lead to getting this pipeline built. The Premier and Alberta's energy industry have my full support, as does section b(i) of this amendment.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

3:40

The Deputy Speaker: Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), no questions or comments?

Then I will recognize the hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you, members, for your comments to date on the motion before us. I want to thank the government for bringing forward a motion that should be able, I hope, to garner the unanimous consent of all members in this House. It is important that we send a strong, unified message to the rest of the country and to pipeline opponents in particular that Albertans, regardless of partisan stripe or the ideological bickering that can take place in this place, can put those differences aside and stand together for the common good of all Albertans. I want to thank members of the opposition who have been putting forward pretty much just this idea for some time now. But thank you to the government for bringing it forward as the first item of business that we have here.

Just a few days ago – or perhaps it was a week ago – there was a rally of Canadians, primarily British Columbians but, I think, some Albertans, too, in Vancouver standing up for the Kinder Morgan pipeline and the development of our resources. I know that the Member for Calgary-Foothills was there. The vast majority of Canadians support responsible resource development, including the vast majority of Canadians along the proposed pipeline route.

But the enemies of this pipeline are intractable. Some of the key activists against it, including Elizabeth May, the federal Green Party leader, have said that they're willing to go to prison to stop this by illegal means. That is disturbing. Regardless of what party is in power federally or provincially in any of the provinces, I've always had a sneaking suspicion that it might take armed security along the route of this pipeline to get it built because we're not having a debate simply about the legality, the pros and cons of pipelines anymore. There is no social licence to buy. There is no

level of responsible resource development or pipeline safety measures that will bring most of these opponents onside. They are stiffening their resistance; they are not softening it.

I'm going to stay away from the conversation about how successful or not I think the carbon tax and its related plan have been in earning social licence – it's a debate for perhaps another day – because I want us to be able to put the province first here, put party and ideology aside, and try to come to a consensus all 87 members of this House support.

I'm speaking in favour of the opposition's series of amendments to the government's motion, and I think that if the government will accept them, I would certainly be in favour of the motion. The first amendment, part one, I think, is the most important. All members of this House, I trust, support the Kinder Morgan pipeline and fighting to get our resources to market, but we don't all necessarily agree on the means, on how that's been done. I would find very little, until very recently at least, in the government's approach to fighting for pipelines that I would agree with, that I think is the best way forward. I don't doubt that the government is sincere in how it has fought, at least in its own mind, to get this pipeline built. I believe they are sincere in their intentions. I just think: woefully wrong.

But it would be incorrect to ask all members of this House in goodwill to unanimously support a motion saying that we support this government's approach to this fight. We all have different approaches. There is a variety of parties in this House, and to varying degrees we might agree or disagree with the government's approach. But I think we all agree, every member of this House, on the ends which we are trying to achieve, getting our products to tidewater to get fair prices for Albertans' own natural resources. We agree with the ends, but we don't agree with the means. That is why I think this motion should focus on the ends, on what we are trying to achieve, what we are trying to do, not how we're trying to do it because even within different parties I'm sure there is some dissension. I'm sure there is some dissension in the NDP, some differences of opinion about how hard the government should be fighting for this or not. I'm sure there are differences of opinion within the UCP about how aggressive the government should be or not. There are going to be differences of opinion about how we achieve this, and those are all fair debates to have. I'll have my own position, and you will all have yours.

I think that the first part of this amendment is about making sure we are focusing on the ends, getting access to tidewater for our products, and not the means of it. If the government would accept that part of the amendment, this motion would earn my own support. I very much hope that I will be able to support it. The government has already said it will agree to section 2, which is a relatively minor amendment.

Section 3 is about strengthening the wording of the motion regarding invoking section 92(10)(c) of the Constitution Act, 1867. I'll listen to members here about how necessary or not or redundant or not that particular declaratory power is in this debate, but I'm of the opinion that we should be throwing the kitchen sink at getting a pipeline to tidewater. It is hopefully not a necessary power, but it may become a necessary power, especially when we are dealing with many actors in this debate who are willing to take extralegal means to block pipelines, be that chaining themselves to fences or trees or whatever other measures they might want to take. But it is important that the federal government use every tool at its disposal, and if the federal government needs to throw the kitchen sink at it, we should support them in that. I'll be happy to listen to other members as they quote constitutional scholars about the necessity of that particular section or not.

For me the most important part of this amendment is part 1, to make this a nonpartisan, nonideological issue, not to make this about trying to obtain post facto the support and endorsement of MLAs in other parties to approve of the government's own handling of this fight. I think it would be a bit of a stretch to say that this side of the House is broadly in support of how the government has handled it so far, but if they are willing to deal in a spirit of goodwill and make this about how we go forward, not the particular ideological or partisan approach of the government in power or the party in opposition, if we make this just about the ends we are trying to achieve, I think it would say a lot about this government, that they are growing into the role and that they're willing to reach across the aisle to work with members of all stripes on one of those rare occasions where we can come together unanimously to support something for the good of all Albertans.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), any questions or comments?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek on the amendment.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, it's clear that today much has already been said by my colleagues and other members of the House, really, on behalf of hard-working Albertans. But I do find it interesting that we actually are having to have to debate this motion and what I think is a reasonable and well-reasoned amendment which supports a project which is essential to our future, probably the most essential thing that we've come across in our short but rich history, namely the Kinder Morgan pipeline expansion. Is there any question that we as accountable Members of this Legislative Assembly need to act swiftly and without hesitation arguably with the strongest mandate from an overwhelming majority of hard-working Albertans? There is no debate on that self-evident truth.

We've been saying this for months, but we have sadly been greeted by tone-deaf ears on many occasions when it comes to acting without hesitation, equivocation, or delay on behalf of Albertans who we represent. I am glad we are moving towards this today and over the coming days as we debate this amendment and the motion itself. But let's be clear. Our leader, the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed, proposed – no; he pleaded – with the Premier in early February that we take the threat from this government's B.C. comrades seriously, reconvene the Legislature, and debate a motion with a similar intent to this one. Madam Speaker, that was more than a month ago.

3:50

Since then we have been stuck at a green-and-orange roadblock, thinking we have a social licence while being told by envioradical gatekeepers that our licence is being regarded as little better than a learner's permit. At that time, the Premier's chief spokesperson stated, "On the face of this, there doesn't seem to be a lot of value in recalling the Legislature to debate an issue we all appear to agree on." She followed that up with the following tweet, which again I'm quoting verbatim: "We don't need to have a debate to work together. This isn't a partisan issue, we all agree on this."

Madam Speaker, it's encouraging that the government has changed their tune and decided to have this debate after all. I think it's important to all members to come together and show the intransigent B.C. NDP that our province and our people are united in our desire to get this pipeline built for the benefit of all Canadians. This arguably is one of the few issues in this Assembly where we have broad agreement, but it is still important to have the

conversations on the record lest we forget and veer from our steadfast position that access to tidewater is indeed our constitutional right.

Overall I think the motion at hand was a positive step, albeit over a month late, and a good starting point, but I believe – no; I know – there is room for improvement, hence the amendments brought forward by my colleague the hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre to strengthen this amendment and ensure there is absolutely no mistake in its attempt and the clarity around the desired outcome. I do not believe that asking the federal government to take all legal steps in support of the pipeline construction goes far enough. We need to make a very specific request of the federal government and the Prime Minister to do what Albertans expect them to do, not just on our behalf but in defence of a strong, vibrant, and prosperous Confederation, the country we all know and love.

The federal government is clearly not doing everything within their power at the current moment to make sure this pipeline gets built. It's pretty clear to all of us here. Their resolve appears vague, conciliatory with those already stating their intent to defy the law and lacking in balance with respect to our proven track record of world-leading environmental stewardship and responsible resource development.

As we see foreign-funded eco radicals, if you will, inside and outside the B.C. Legislature and local governments continue to plot the demise of not only the Kinder Morgan pipeline but any future pipeline projects, the Prime Minister and his cabinet continue to dither with respect to their constitutional authority. Indeed, I would suggest that the Prime Minister – sorry – that Trudeau Sr. would be appalled at the lack of clarity and resolve in his own offspring given his own fierce defence of clear delineation of constitutional authority and jurisdiction. We are getting none of that clarity nor any sense of urgency from this government's ally and compatriot in Ottawa in spite of what would appear to be common belief in the power of social licence.

This Assembly here now, today, needs to make an explicit and direct request of the federal government in order to ensure that they respond and respond with a sense of urgency and clarity, with meaningful and concrete action. The government needs to follow up with dogged determination in what is, guess what, the Year of the Dog – maybe the stubborn earth dog, of which I happen to be one – with the Prime Minister and his government to continue to push them to step up and do their job on behalf of Canadians from coast to coast, who stand to benefit from well-reasoned and responsible resource development.

I know this may be hard for this government, having been hesitant to criticize Justin Trudeau and his cabinet and playing along at every step with his regional favoritism, hypocrisy, and all-pain, no-gain environmental policies, but the self-evident truth known all too well by generations of Albertans is that the Trudeau Liberals have failed Alberta again and again when it comes to the energy sector and pipelines. For two generations, in fact. We need to demand the transparency of due process and constitutional accountability now, today, with solidarity from Albertans of all political stripes and from all walks of life.

Madam Speaker, the Trudeau Liberals failed on Northern Gateway, blocking approval for a pipeline, which has now led numerous aboriginal communities in northern British Columbia to consider court action against the federal government for rejecting that project. The federal government failed Alberta and all of Canada on Energy East by having the NEB rescope the review to include downstream emissions in spite of ignoring similar or even more blatant downstream emitters in the heart of central Canada. The federal government will again fail Alberta if they do not step

up without hesitation or delay and use their declarative authority under this country's Constitution.

Asking the federal government to continue to take all necessary legal steps in support of the pipeline construction does not go far enough, hence our amendments. It does not go far enough because I do not believe that the federal government is currently taking all the necessary legal steps to support pipeline construction. Far from it. You can't continue to do something if you aren't doing it well or diligently in the first place – that's pretty clear – and we need to ensure that clarity in this motion.

The second and more important reason, which I've previously touched on, is that when we are talking about the Trudeau Liberals, words are not enough. In fact, I apply a deep discount to them virtually every day. Talk is cheap, as they say. The PM can play the game and give good stump speeches while he is in Alberta, but that simply isn't good enough. Alberta needs actions, not words.

Our leader has been very clear on this issue, and I would suggest that we have not heard the last of his impassioned plea, indeed his battle cry, in defence of our province and the people we fiercely represent as patriotic Canadians and proud Albertans. On August 12, 2017, he stated, and I quote: "So we need to send a very clear message to Premier Horgan and the British Columbia NDP that Alberta will not take this lying down. We will stand up and defend our legal rights, our economic interests. This is about more than merely some pipeline. This is about whether or not Canada is a country governed by the rule of law and whether or not we are an economic union."

Again on September 28, 2017, he stated, and I quote: "If the government, the NDP B.C. government, violates the rule of law and the economic union of Canada through dilatory measures that stop the construction of the approved Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain pipeline, there must be repercussions. There must be consequences, and there's a whole range of possible consequences, one of which, I think perhaps the strongest consequence, would be to say that we would stop signing permits for the shipment of oil and gas through the current Trans Mountain pipeline, which fuels much of the economy of the lower mainland."

He followed up these comments once again on November 10, 2017, with the following, and I quote: "Well, in 1982 Peter Lougheed shut off the taps of Alberta oil and gas to central Canada to get the attention of the federal government on the national energy policy. You know, perhaps we should consider doing the same thing with respect to the current shipment of oil through the current Kinder Morgan pipeline, that's existed for 60 years and that fuels much of the lower mainland economy. B.C. needs to understand that its economy is partly dependent on Alberta oil and gas, and if they want to violate the rule of law and violate free trade in Canada, there will be consequences."

Yet, Madam Speaker, the Premier stated on December 3, 2017, and I quote again: "I think that some of the suggestions that have come from Mr. Kenney are a very isolationist view of how Alberta should engage with the rest of the country. You know, I honestly wouldn't be surprised if he's essentially saying that what we should do is build a wall around Alberta. I wouldn't be surprised if tomorrow he comes out demanding that B.C. pays for it, and then the next day he'll come out and wonder why it is that we can't get the pipeline built."

Well, Madam Speaker, the Premier seemed very dismissive of escalating action, of using decisive measures against the government in British Columbia just a few short months ago, yet in the Speech from the Throne, delivered so eloquently by Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, Lois Mitchell, the government stated, "In the past when workers in our energy industry were attacked and when the resources we own were threatened, Premier Peter

Lougheed took bold action. Your government has been clear: every option is on the table." Apparently, if you list turning off the taps as a retaliatory option in December as a Conservative, you're promoting Trump-ish protectionism, but if you promote the same idea in March as a New Democrat, you are standing up for Alberta's interests. A curious, self-serving juxtaposition indeed. However, at the end of the day, we have a broad consensus from all parties in this House around the intent of this motion. I would suggest to the members opposite that our friendly amendment does indeed strengthen the motion and deserves not only due consideration but your vote of support. Albertans are counting on it, and anything less will reflect on your judgment or perhaps resolve to address this challenge to the livelihood of all Albertans without equivocation.

4:00

As I've already stated, the Prime Minister and his government have, at best, tepidly supported Alberta's energy sector, jobs, and the proven engine of our national economy. We need to make a clear request, we need to be specific, and we need to ask for – no; we need to demand – concrete and deliverable action. Doing so will provide the federal government with ample opportunity to back up their words to prove to all Canadians that it is not just empty rhetoric and to ensure this pipeline gets built.

Madam Speaker, in closing, I would encourage all members of this Assembly to support the amendment to the motion put forward by my hon. colleague. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other speakers to the amendment? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate this opportunity to speak about pipelines as they actually are very true to my heart. Pipelines mean jobs for me, plain and simple. People are out of work in my constituency right now, and it comes down to the fact that we can't get the oil out. Literally, it is that simple.

What I have to say is that we have to look at the track record here. I have to say that the NDP government has been repeatedly saying that our federal Conservatives have not put out pipelines. I see that they've stopped that, but to be sure to put this on the record because this is important, the Kinder Morgan anchor loop was completed in 2008, the Enbridge Clipper was completed in 2010, the TransCanada Keystone was completed in 2010, and the Enbridge line 9B reversal was completed in 2015. Together these projects provide 1.25 million barrels per day of additional capacity for western Canada. It's very impressive.

Let's look at the track record of the federal Liberals, and let's look at the track record of our provincial NDP here. I'm going to paraphrase; I don't have the Blues in front of me. We've got the Member for Calgary-Klein: a pipeline would never have had the chance to be built under the opposition. I adamantly disagree with that. I believe that we would be right now fighting for four pipelines, not one. Four pipelines. We have Energy East, that the Trudeau government shut down. We have Northern Gateway. I credit our Premier, the Premier of the province of Alberta, for shutting that one down, Northern Gateway. Keystone XL was another one that the Premier, in my opinion, was planning on shutting down. But you know what? It is actually the one that is moving forward the quickest. Ironical that we have a pro-pipeline government down in the United States right now trying to make sure energy gets to markets. It's good for everybody.

The Kinder Morgan pipeline: for sure it's clear that this is our last hope of seeing something move out of here from this NDP government. So I understand that they actually want to see this. I

don't believe that every one of the members across the aisle wants to see pipelines fail, but I will say – and, again, I brought this up earlier – that when you look at NDP governments across Canada, I am certain that you're probably going to find that most or all of them except for Alberta are actually advocating against us, which is why we're getting some strange messaging, which was why I think that the Trudeau Liberals don't seem to really care about the direction we're going in.

Now, I have to say that my colleague from Calgary-Hays on June 1, 2017, asked the question: "Do you now regret opposing Northern Gateway, and do you have any real plan to get Kinder Morgan's shovels in the ground?" This is a question that he asked last year, last summer.

The response from the Premier was:

Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What I don't plan to do is to talk down the chances for Alberta's growth, talk down the fact that Alberta is actually a great place to invest, try to discourage people from coming here by telling them the sky is falling when it's really not, all the kinds of politically motivated things that we see from those guys over there and those guys over there. They are so interested in their own political success that all they want to do is to see economic failure for Albertans.

That wasn't even the question. That's the problem. The fearmongering isn't coming from our side. What we actually are seeing is a reasonable question from Calgary-Hays, saying: what are you doing to get shovels in the ground? And we're hearing: it's because of the opposition. That's the strangest answer I've ever heard.

Let's go on. Fort McMurray-Conklin on November 4, 2015, so going back a little further: "Energy East will only be viable if this Premier can convince the NDP Premier in Manitoba to stop trying to shut it down." What we've got here is the question: "When is she going to stop fighting against Alberta jobs and start fighting for pipelines?" That's from the Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin.

Now, the answer here was:

I took an approach of working collaboratively and respectfully with our colleagues across the country. In so doing, we got them to agree to the Canadian energy strategy. Temper tantrums were not a way to get our colleagues across the country to agree to the Canadian energy strategy. A collaborative effort was required, and that's what we did.

You know what? We saw the results. That pipeline was cancelled. That's clear. So social licence was very successful in that example.

Now, what I've got here is another example from one of my other colleagues. The question is – oh; sorry. I will put the date on it for *Hansard*. I don't have the date. I'll get the date to *Hansard*. "Your public confidence is admirable, but can you confidently say today that the Trans Mountain pipeline is any closer to being built than the Northern Gateway ever was?"

The Energy minister said:

You know, we continue to do the work we've done, and so does Kinder Morgan with Trans Mountain. As we speak, they are in B.C. talking. We continue with our relationships, as we've done. These relationships and this adult way of dealing with pipelines has gotten us not just one but two approvals. It's also been our climate leadership plan that got us those approvals as well, and we're going to continue that good work.

It doesn't seem that everybody else has got the message. What it does seem is that the only thing the NDP have been good at is demonizing the opposition, and that is all the opposition on the other side. Instead of working with us like they should have been, they continue to rail at us, saying that we're fearmongering. You know what? We've seen pipelines continually put down, and now we have a government that's worried about getting re-elected, so

they're suddenly starting to ramp things up to see if they can get back into government.

Now, let's go to May 25, 2017. This was back in the summer again. This was an answer that was put forward by our Energy minister. The Member for Calgary-Foothills put this question forward. "Why is the NDP government working with the anti-Alberta organizations like Tides and radical activists like Karen Mahon and Tzeporah Berman, who are clearly on the take from people who would ruin Alberta?"

The response from the Energy minister was: "You know, this side of the House has taken a different approach because, we know, for far too long the other side wanted to go full John Wayne and pull everybody against each other."

4:10

I don't say that this answer is wholesome because, in the end, challenging the government and saying, "Why were we paying people to oppose our own pipelines?" – it seems to be an insane option for this province.

Now, let's go on to Calgary-Foothills:

By now you probably might have heard that the Petroleum Services Association of Canada, PSAC, lambasted our Premier and our Prime Minister for not standing up for the oil and gas industry.

The PSAC president said, quote, it's totally irresponsible that Canada is not getting its oil and gas to tidewater, to other parts of the world. Mr. Speaker, this is just common sense. Karen Mahon in her petroleum-made kayaks should have been out protesting the city of Victoria, not Kinder Morgan, for dumping untreated sewage into [our] ocean.

This was on November 1, 2017.

You know, I can go on and on with these examples, but we have limited time. I will say that what we needed has been a clear message from both opposition and government. This entire three years that you've been in government you have failed us. Now it's time to start to back up something. This motion is a good thing. We should accept this motion.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), the hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Now, I heard the hon. member say that he lays the responsibility for the cancellation of the Northern Gateway pipeline directly at our Premier's feet. I don't know if he was with us yesterday when this was debated, but I want to know from the hon. member, given that the Northern Gateway pipeline was cancelled by the Federal Court of Appeal, who in their ruling overturned the project after finding that Ottawa, that is to say the previous federal government, of which his leader was a leading member, failed to properly consult with First Nations affected by the pipeline. It said in the ruling that

inadequacies – more than just a handful and more than mere imperfections – left entire subjects of central interest to the affected First Nations, sometimes subjects affecting their subsistence and well-being, entirely ignored. Many impacts of the Project – some identified in the Report of the Joint Review Panel, some not – were left undisclosed, undiscussed and unconsidered.

Given that the Northern Gateway pipeline was cancelled by the Federal Court of Appeal because of inadequacies and failures on the part of the previous federal government, of which his leader was a key member, will the member stand and apologize for blaming the cancellation of that pipeline on our Premier?

Mr. Cyr: With the Kinder Morgan we went and got intervenor status. Now, I'm not wholly familiar with that case, but I will say, though, that if we had gone through the same process with the Northern Gateway that we're going through with the Kinder Morgan right now, would that have changed? I'm going to say that we didn't start ramping this up until you realized that you were going to get no pipelines through. Let's just say that the federal Liberals changed the game plan or the rules halfway through that pipeline, like most pipelines, and it's shameful to see that we have co-operation from our Premier, the Premier of Alberta, who is an NDP leader, actually working with the federal Liberals to shut down that pipeline. I've got no apology for that.

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

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm really pleased to be able to be here to speak on behalf of this amendment not only for Canadians, because I believe there are jobs that are going to be brought across this country because of this, but for Albertans and for the people in my riding. Hardisty has got this nexus of pipelines that are sitting that deliver oil across this country right from there.

I find it encouraging that we are here to debate a government motion that asks the Legislative Assembly to support Alberta's fight on behalf of Albertans' interest to ensure that a lawfully approved Trans Mountain pipeline expansion is built, to also call for the federal government to continue to take all necessary legal steps in support of pipeline construction, and to reaffirm our support as a Legislature for the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion. I think the government would agree with all those points because that came right out of the initial motion.

I as well as my colleagues have been supportive of this expansion of the Trans Mountain pipeline since day one, and we have been clear about our support for that expansion. While I certainly support any efforts by the government to accomplish this by standing up for this much-needed project, I really believe that this motion can be better, and this amendment helps make this motion better. Why do we need to make this better? It's simple. As Albertans we are leaving billions – that's billions – of dollars on the table that could go directly into our economy. But let me be clear here, too. We are not just leaving dollars on the table for Albertans alone; our resources could create prosperity again across all of the country, not just Alberta. We could have done so much more if we didn't have so much opposition from both the federal Liberal government and the B.C. NDP Party.

I want to go on. I want to agree with my colleague from Calgary-Foothills when he says that we need to do everything that we can to be able to put everything that we can, all that ammunition, to the government to be able to get this thing processed. Simply, the federal Liberal government can do more, and they aren't doing everything within their power. The federal Liberal government can end this debate right now by using the declarative authority under the Constitution. This project is in the national interest. As I said before, there are monies that can be obtained or, you know, seen, realized throughout this whole nation because of manufacturing and services across the country. If the federal government used section 92(10)(c) of the Constitution and declared that this is in the national interest, then we would have it done. We'd have a pipeline.

Why hasn't the carbon tax social licence worked as promised? Yesterday the Premier stated during a question from the Leader of the Opposition:

You know, at the end of the day, we're not going to take lessons, although from the leader of the UCP, on our energy future. We had Conservatives in Ottawa, we had Conservatives in Edmonton, and we had conservatives in Victoria for nine years, and they couldn't get a pipeline built... No pipeline, no diversification. They had their chance, and they blew it. That won't happen again. We will get that pipeline built.

Well, I hate to break it to you – I know another member had to break that news to you – that during our leader's tenure in Ottawa four pipelines were actually built. Four of them. The Kinder Morgan anchor loop was completed in 2008, the Enbridge Clipper was completed in 2010, the TransCanada Keystone was completed in 2010, and the Enbridge line 9B reversal was completed in 2015, all built under the Conservative government.

So it seems that what we are left with is a statement from B.C. and a carbon tax that, frankly, has hurt businesses throughout my riding of Battle River-Wainwright. I've recently talked to an owner – this was just about 10 days ago – who has a gravel- and grain-hauling business. He told me that this tax has increased costs to him by about \$100,000 per month. That's \$100,000 per month, the carbon tax. That's about \$1.2 million a year. That's outrageous. This is money that could be going back into the economy, the local economy in this small community, but it's not. It's going to the carbon tax, and it's going directly to different green agendas that this NDP government is wanting to put up. Tire shops, too, are at a standstill compared to a couple of years ago because of slow activity in the oil field. And the list goes on.

4:20

The thing about oil is that we all get what the market will bear. We don't get any more than what the market will bear. Unfortunately, right now we have to take the western Canadian select price, not the WTI, or the west Texas intermediate. More carbon tax just makes it harder for companies to compete. Their bottom line is being shrunk. Companies are, frankly, moving south of the border, where there are fewer costs, less regulation. They can see that there's less profit here in Alberta each day. Therefore, it is more imperative than ever to get this product to tidewater – that's what we're trying to do here – so that we can realize a higher price for this product, not the western Canadian select price.

How to make life better? Scrap the carbon tax for one thing. We have not changed a single pipeline opponent's opinion because of the carbon tax. No jurisdiction is saying, "Yes, let's do business right away" because it's been legislated. Why are Albertans strapped with this tax that only, frankly, drives business away and is, frankly, counterproductive?

Madam Speaker, we needed to make this motion stronger. It's clear that the federal government isn't doing everything within their power. We can make it known to the rest of Canada that Alberta elected officials stand united in their desire to get this pipeline built. After all, it was our leader who wrote the Premier asking for this debate to happen last month, and we were rebuffed. There is simply no logical reason for the government not to get onboard and support our motion. If they agree that the feds have the authority to declare this project essential to Canada's interests, then why not lend their voice to this motion? Where's the downside?

We are blessed to be here in the province of Alberta, that has the third-largest oil reserve in the world, but if we can't get our product to market, we can't realize our potential. My colleague from Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre's motion may help do just that. I encourage all the members of this House to support this motion in a united purpose and go forward.

Thank you.

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

Seeing none, are there any further speakers to the amendment? The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to the government motion to really express a united voice on the part of Albertans to get the pipeline done. We need to do that. I speak clearly in support of the motion and also in support of the amendment. I think it's quite obvious that we are going to support on this side of the House the efforts to stand up for the Trans Mountain project, and it's something that we absolutely need to do. Albertans know exactly where we stand on this issue. Our leader, Jason Kenney, has been very clear on it, stated it over and over again, as have we, and we will continue to support the motion towards getting the pipeline built. I do think we can make it slightly better, and that's why we've introduced the amendment. I think the important thing is that we make this motion as effective as possible and get it done as quickly as we possibly can.

Albertans, particularly the Albertans in my riding, Lacombe-Ponoka, have been waiting far too long for the opportunity for us to get our energy to market and to be able to have the jobs and the economic benefits that will come with that. Quite frankly, it benefits all Canadians. It benefits all of Canada. Alberta oil and gas is the most innovative, the cleanest there is in the world. Right in Lacombe-Ponoka we have one of the largest secondary oil and gas industries, at NOVA Chemicals, manufacturing ethane and polyethylene. They also create green energy at that plant through cogeneration, capturing lost heat and turning it into electricity. The energy that comes out of Alberta and the energy products that come out of Alberta are actually extremely clean, much cleaner than in most other places in the world. We need to be careful that we don't basically shut down Alberta oil and gas and then have the rest of Canada using, really, energy that comes from other places that are not environmentally conscious, that are not socially conscious, that in fact are very dark in many different kinds of ways.

Also, I think people need to know that the east side of my riding, actually, is the area where carbon sequestration is going to be happening, coming out of the Alberta Industrial Heartland area, pumping carbon back down into the ground as one of the by-products of the production of oil and gas products. That happens right in the gas field on the east side of my riding because the geology is extremely beneficial for it. The pipeline will take carbon from some of the manufacturing process and pump it right straight back into the ground, where it came from, and will in fact reduce the carbon emissions from that particular part of it to zero. We need to be conscious of the fact that Alberta oil is not all about creating greenhouse gases. It's also about finding ways to mitigate greenhouse gases and finding ways to produce oil and gas and oil and gas products in ways that are beneficial to the rest of Canadians.

I should say that, really, it is Alberta oil that provides the quality of life that many Canadians enjoy. In fact, protesters themselves use the very oil that they protest. I find that extremely disconcerting. I've always said to people, you know, that it's extremely easy to shut down the oil and gas industry permanently if we really want to. Any group of people that would actually take this seriously could put an end to this industry very quickly, and that would be to just stop using it. But everybody wants to be able to fly. Everybody wants to drive. Everybody wants to heat their houses. Everybody wants to use the plastics, their clothing, their houses, their cars. You know, protesters need to show us how to stop using it if they think it's that bad. I just struggle with the cognitive dissonance of protesting the delivery of oil but accepting the uses of that same oil every single, solitary day, even on the days of protest.

I call on the citizens of British Columbia to challenge the false logic and the false messaging of extremist environmentalists

against Alberta oil and gas. All of Canada benefits not just from the products but also from the wealth that's generated through this in the form of – what's the word? I can't even say it – transfer payments to the rest of Canada, to all of those areas that don't have this wealth. They get some of the cash benefit of this. We need to somehow get the messaging right on this. We don't have to destroy our country in order to receive the benefits of a modern economy. We don't need to punish our nonprofits, our agricultural industries.

Last week I spoke at a gas co-op in my riding. I was really disconcerted to hear that that gas co-op in the last 10 months, January to October, not even including the cold winter weather that we've had, had to collect from the people of my riding, the hard-working, ordinary people of just the eastern side of my riding, \$750,000 in carbon tax. That came out of their pockets, out of their lifestyle, and that's just the natural gas to heat their homes. It doesn't count the increased cost of driving in rural areas, of agricultural uses, the increased costs of products, and all the rest of it. I think we need to find ways to do things in a more positive and forthright manner that are actually beneficial and not punitive to our people and to our country.

I would like to see us accept the amendment that has been put forward. We need to call on the federal government. I realize that there's some difference of opinion and debate with regard to section 92(10)(c) of the Constitution. You know what? Whatever it takes, let's just get it done. If Parliament has the jurisdiction already, well, then, act on it. And that's the challenge. I mean, the Prime Minister has stated that they believe the pipeline to be in the national interest of Canada. Well, then, do something to effect that belief. Take some action to actually cause it to happen. We need to challenge the federal government to act upon what they say, to take action. We need to make this motion as strong as we possibly can so that they get that message.

I truly believe that the Liberals could end this debate now rather than stand by silently. So I call on the Liberal government of Canada to actually resolve this in the Canadian national interest, for the benefit of all Canadians both in terms of product and in terms of the money that it produces for all of Canada. I implore all of us. Let's do the very best we can. Let's get this thing done. Let's do what needs to be done and move on with it.

Thank you very much.

4:30

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other speakers to the amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my honour to rise to support the amendments as proposed by the Opposition House Leader to Government Motion 2. Like everyone in the UCP caucus, I'm pleased to speak to the government's motion calling upon the Legislative Assembly to fully support the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion. Of course, we support the government's fight because (a) it is in the best interest of Alberta and Canada and, second, taking up the fight was the idea of our leader. Until the Member for Calgary-Lougheed started pushing our NDP government to fight with all its effort for this pipeline, you would hardly have known the pipeline was in any peril, despite B.C.'s clear plan to obstruct it. Now the government has come onboard to battle, and we are happy to do so to support government.

After all, this discussion itself is something our leader urged a month ago. At that time, the Premier dismissed it as unnecessary, and although she has come full circle to seeing its benefits today, we're not placing any barriers in its way because we offer full support. As our leader said last August, quote: we need to send a

very clear message to Premier Horgan and the British Columbia NDP that Alberta will not take this lying down; we will stand up to defend our legal right, our economic interest. Unquote. This is an opportunity to send that message to the British Columbia NDP and the federal government. The message is important for B.C., who is playing games, that those games must end. The message is important to all Canadians, because it is important to the prosperity of our whole nation and it is important to the prosperity of future generations of this country.

It has taken quite a while to get this NDP government to this point. Two months ago the Premier said, quote: they want us to act like tough guys, threatening a trade war with B.C.; it would be amusing if it wasn't so bad. Unquote. Six weeks later she imposed a boycott on B.C. wine, which our leader supported, and now we're here today supporting this motion but asking that it first be strengthened. Since the Premier has taken our leader's advice, since she decided to acknowledge that Alberta had to play hardball with a province that wasn't respecting the rule of law in Canada, we are hoping she will take his advice on ways to strengthen this motion as well.

A key way to make this motion particularly relevant is to add the clause "including . . . a declaration that the pipeline is in the national interest" by the use of section 92(10)(c) of the Constitution. This clause is aimed at the Prime Minister, who confirms that the Trans Mountain pipeline is in the nation's interest but refuses to invoke the clause that puts an end to B.C.'s manoeuvring to delay the project with the hope that Kinder Morgan walks away from it. This is a smokescreen for not wanting to act as the leader of a country should when its country's economic future is placed at risk.

Our NDP government has been shy about criticizing Justin Trudeau and his Liberal government. We're confident they'll get over it when they see that Albertans do not want them to pander to Ottawa. Alberta has a fine heritage of standing up to the federal government when it wasn't looking out for all provinces fairly. The example that always comes top of mind is Peter Lougheed standing up to Pierre Trudeau and his national energy program, and we have discussed that many times in this House.

Our leader said in September, quote: I think we need our Premier to stand up to these attacks on our economic union and free trade and the rule of law the same way that Peter Lougheed stood up to Pierre Trudeau back in the 1980s. Unquote. Almost 40 years later we need that kind of leadership again. That's why our leader suggested a debate like this a month ago, and that's why we're supporting this motion today. But we're asking the NDP government to add this critical clause. Think about how powerful it would be if every member of this Legislative Assembly urged our Prime Minister to use this clause in order to support this pipeline expansion. It would put an end to B.C.'s delaying manoeuvres on this project. Investors who have been waiting to see if Alberta can get a pipeline to tidewater will obtain the confidence that they need to announce projects, building upon our resource industry, which has been damaged so badly in the last few years.

Fifteen thousand pipeline construction jobs will become a reality. The 37,000 direct and indirect jobs created by the project will be a go. Alberta will reset itself as a leader in Canada, a position we have lost in recent years. There is absolutely no reason to reject this amendment and, I think, every reason to support this amendment. We hope we're not disappointed after discussing Government Motion 2 for two days under the spotlight that Albertans have turned on our House as we deal with a question so important to the future of our province and the future of our country. This is the time for the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to display that we can set aside partisanship and political theatre for the common good of our

province. After all, we are asking the same of our country, so we're compelled to do so. That's why we're adding this amendment. We will not give up, for at every stage of this discussion the NDP has mocked us and rejected us at every turn, only to suddenly change course.

We have all known the record of this NDP government and that some of the caucus members of the government haven't been in favour of development of resources in this province. It's in public display. I am going to give a couple of examples. This is our hon. Education minister from November 1, 2008. Quote: balance of mind and balance of body starts by doing the right thing, and I say that doing the right thing means that we have no new approvals for tar sand projects. This is what our hon. Education minister said on November 1, 2008.

We have also seen the pictures of the hon. Member for Calgary-East holding the no more dirty oil sign. We have also seen the pictures of the Premier attending the antipipeline, anti oil and gas rallies. I mean, this is the stigma. This is the reputation of this NDP government pertaining to resource development. I think that by supporting this amendment, the government can actually truly prove that they do believe in resource development, that they do believe in the development of our oil and gas industry.

Madam Speaker, I ask that, hopefully, by supporting this amendment, this government and this Premier and the caucus members on the government side will restore the position they claim, that they do believe in resource development and fighting for our province and our country's resource development.

Thank you very much. I hope all the members of this House support this amendment.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

4:40

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any further speakers to the amendment? The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am pleased and honoured to rise today and speak in favour of the amendment to strengthen and improve the government's motion. The issue is not whether I or anyone else in the UCP caucus supports the government's efforts to stand up for the Trans Mountain pipeline project. We not only support the government; we want them to be doing even more. I'm very, very appreciative of my colleagues who for the last hour or two have expressed many of the strong, strong reasons that we need our government to do even more, that we need to ensure that British Columbia and the rest of Canada gets a clear, unequivocal message of how important this pipeline is not only to just Alberta but, of course, to British Columbia and to all of Canada.

You know, I want to take just a couple of minutes and go back to who we are supporting. Madam Speaker, I had an oil and gas guy in my office about three or four days ago whose company is still going, barely going, and he told me that because of the drop in work, because of the decline in activity, he has not taken a wage from his company for three or four years. Can you imagine?

I was watching my youngest son play basketball in Brooks the other day, and a group of young men came in. They were in a good mood. They were positive. They were joking. They were friendly. They were a nice fellowship to witness. They kind of sat down in front of me, and I could hear them talking about how they had just got back to work, so I leaned in, Madam Speaker, and I said: "That's great. Good to hear that you guys are working. Whereabouts around Brooks are you working?" Unfortunately, the answer came back Saskatchewan. They had to travel great distances to find some work.

I think of many of my friends that are in the oil and gas business who tell me that although they've gone a year longer without work, they're grateful now to be working for 60 per cent of what they used to make or the ones that have lost their houses or had to move on.

You know, that's where I want to turn to next. Who are we doing this for? Why do we need B.C.? Why do we need Trudeau? Why do we need the government of Canada to ensure that this happens? My colleagues spoke at great length about how Alberta in Canada is the best producer in the whole world environmentally and socially.

I just saw on the Internet – it was by an Alberta economist – that only 55 per cent of young men in Alberta, 15 to 24 years old, are even working. Can you imagine the price they're paying for this radical environmental – this competitive battle that we've lost to get our good oil and gas to tidewater? That is something like 100,000 young men in Alberta who want to work and can't find work. Women with a higher degree are, unfortunately, unemployed as well, but this article stated that it wasn't as bad for young women. Of course, Madam Speaker, I'm concerned about all Albertans that want to find work and cannot find the type of work they want when they want it and at the highest amount of pay they can get. So to the Prime Minister of Canada, the ceremonial Prime Minister of Canada: this is what we're fighting for. To the Premier of British Columbia: young men, young women, young people everywhere are unable to find the work that they're looking for.

You know, the *Medicine Hat News* had a headline a week ago that still shocks me, that 18 properties over four years hadn't paid their property taxes. I remember talking to a city councillor three or four years ago who assured me that the number then was zero. So, my goodness, if that many properties haven't paid their property taxes in four years, how many haven't in one, two, or three? How many haven't been making their mortgage payments? How much of this kind of thing, Madam Speaker, is affecting the quality of Albertans' lives, their mental health, their ability to provide for their families, their ability to take care of their communities and their neighbours?

Madam Speaker, this is what we're fighting for, and it's back to what so many of my hon. colleagues have said: Alberta, bar none, is the best producer, the best producer environmentally and socially, in a world that's going to be demanding more and more barrels of oil every day. As we get cleaner, as we get more efficient, the demand for the product increases. It is our opportunity and our obligation to provide this to the rest of the world.

Look at how far offside our politicians have gotten it everywhere in Canada. We've heard about big cities in Canada dumping raw sewage into the precious waters with little regard. We know that Ontario and Quebec buy something like 800,000 barrels of oil a day from Saudi Arabia or Venezuela. Of course, our hon. leader has talked about those two regimes; many others have talked about those two regimes. We have turned this world upside down. We have done what is not the best. We have done what is not right for the environment, for young workers, and for the Canadian economy.

Now I want to talk a little bit about where we're at. I had breakfast with 30 Cypress-Medicine Hatters last Saturday, and I would say to the government, my colleagues across the floor, that they have a credibility problem. Many, many Albertans do not believe that their heart is in this fight, do not believe that they are really here to advocate for Albertans, to advocate for our oil and gas industry and get the pipelines we need.

I'm amazed that our Premier backed down on the wine embargo so quickly. I'm amazed that she backed down with a little bit of a promise although I believe that Premier Horgan has done nothing. Well, actually, Madam Speaker, that is not true. Premier Horgan

went a step further; he taxed Albertans that own property in recreation areas that might be vacant. So our Premier fired a shot, then she retracted it, and the Premier of B.C. is now taxing Albertans even further. When I had breakfast with 30 Cypress-Medicine Hatters, it's no wonder that they don't believe that this government has their backs, that this government really believes in pipelines. Premier Notley's weak attempt at the wine embargo absolutely supports that.

Madam Speaker, you know what was so refreshing about these 30 people, too? We all took a minute or so, talking about what we'd like to see happen in this dispute with British Columbia to get the pipeline. They were all very, very concerned about their family members, their community members, other Albertans that couldn't find work at the maximum wage or the best opportunity they could. But, you know, Albertans being the wonderful people that they are, they were also concerned about anybody in British Columbia that might get affected inadvertently as well by what needs to be done. The genuine concern that Albertans have for all Canadians and the people of B.C. was so refreshing.

But, Madam Speaker, don't get me wrong. The people of Alberta, the people of Cypress-Medicine Hat want the Trans Mountain pipeline. They want our ceremonial Prime Minister to get to work. They want our government to get to work and make this happen. They want to do what needs to be done to make sure that Albertans can work, that Albertans can work to their full productivity, and that we can enjoy access to markets. Make no mistake that that was their overriding concern.

4:50

Madam Speaker, I said it earlier: I was disappointed to see the Premier and her NDP government fold at the first sign of pressure, you know, from the B.C. NDP and their Green Party allies. We know that their goal is to delay this, delay this, delay this until Kinder Morgan finally takes – jeez, I don't even know what it is – their \$3 billion or \$4 billion or \$5 billion and invests it elsewhere along with those many good jobs that go with it. They're saying that the B.C. NDP agreed to take their plan to regulate and restrict the flow of diluted bitumen to the courts, but besides that, nothing has changed. The NDP B.C. Premier said that he would be using every single tool available for him to fight the Trans Mountain pipeline. Every single tool. That's kind of a coincidence because that was the phrase that the hon. minister of environment used when she wrote her foreword in *An Action a Day Keeps Global Capitalism Away*. I digress.

I just want to take a moment to point out that the B.C. government hasn't actually referred anything to the courts yet. They are still formulating the exact question to ask the court. A court delay is going to take three, four, or five, maybe 10 years, Madam Speaker. It's no wonder that Cypress-Medicine Hatters know how disingenuous this government is and know how important this fight is.

But back to my point. The B.C. NDP have not moved an inch from opposing the pipeline. They oppose the pipeline. In fact, not a single person or group that opposes the pipeline has moved to become a pipeline proponent, as our hon. leader pointed out the other day, in spite of us paying \$2 billion a year in carbon tax.

It doesn't sound like this government was successful in convincing the B.C. Premier to accept that his actions are illegal or unconstitutional, nor does it sound like he's agreed to stop the obvious delay tactics specifically designed to disrupt the Trans Mountain pipeline. Madam Speaker, this government needs to show Albertans that they truly are in this fight, that they truly will do everything possible to get this pipeline so that men and women in Alberta can get back to work. That's why I'm supporting it.

Madam Speaker, thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any further speakers to the amendment?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

Mr. Mason: Madam Speaker, if I may.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: I would like to move that we shorten the bells to one minute for amendments to the government motion only.

[Unanimous consent granted]

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A1 (a) lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:54 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Gotfried	Pitt
Barnes	Hunter	Schneider
Clark	Kenney	Smith
Cooper	Loewen	Starke
Cyr	McIver	Strankman
Drysdale	Nixon	Taylor
Ellis	Orr	van Dijken
Fraser	Panda	Yao
Gill		

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Ganley	Miranda
Babcock	Goehring	Nielsen
Bilous	Gray	Payne
Carlier	Hinkley	Piquette
Carson	Hoffman	Renaud
Ceci	Horne	Rosendahl
Connolly	Jansen	Sabir
Coolahan	Kazim	Schreiner
Cortes-Vargas	Larivee	Sigurdson
Dach	Loyola	Sucha
Dang	Luff	Sweet
Drever	Malkinson	Turner
Eggen	Mason	Westhead
Feehan	McKitrick	Woollard
Fitzpatrick	Miller	

Totals: For – 25 Against – 44

[Motion on amendment A1 (a) lost]

The Deputy Speaker: We'll proceed to the vote on amendment A1 (b)(i).

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A1 (b)(i) carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:59 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Gill	Orr
Anderson, S.	Goehring	Panda

Babcock	Gotfried	Payne
Barnes	Gray	Piquette
Bilous	Hinkley	Pitt
Carlier	Hoffman	Renaud
Carson	Horne	Rosendahl
Ceci	Hunter	Sabir
Clark	Jansen	Schneider
Connolly	Kazim	Schreiner
Coolahan	Kenney	Sigurdson
Cooper	Larivee	Smith
Cortes-Vargas	Loewen	Starke
Cyr	Loyola	Stier
Dach	Luff	Strankman
Dang	Malkinson	Sucha
Drever	Mason	Sweet
Drysdale	McIver	Taylor
Eggen	McKitrick	Turner
Ellis	Miller	van Dijken
Feehan	Miranda	Westhead
Fitzpatrick	Nielsen	Woollard
Fraser	Nixon	Yao
Ganley		

Totals: For – 70 Against – 0

[Motion on amendment A1 (b)(i) carried unanimously]

The Deputy Speaker: The final vote, on amendment A1 (b)(ii).

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A1 (b)(ii) lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:05 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hunter	Schneider
Barnes	Kenney	Smith
Cooper	Loewen	Stier
Cyr	McIver	Strankman
Drysdale	Nixon	Taylor
Ellis	Orr	van Dijken
Gill	Panda	Yao
Gotfried	Pitt	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Fraser	Miranda
Babcock	Ganley	Nielsen
Bilous	Goehring	Payne
Carlier	Gray	Piquette
Carson	Hinkley	Renaud
Ceci	Hoffman	Rosendahl
Clark	Horne	Sabir
Connolly	Jansen	Schreiner
Coolahan	Kazim	Sigurdson
Cortes-Vargas	Larivee	Starke
Dach	Loyola	Sucha
Dang	Luff	Sweet
Drever	Malkinson	Turner
Eggen	Mason	Westhead
Feehan	McKitrick	Woollard
Fitzpatrick	Miller	

Totals: For – 23 Against – 47

[Motion on amendment A1 (b)(ii) lost]

The Deputy Speaker: We are now back on the main motion. Any speakers to this? The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

5:10

Ms Luff: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have stood in opposition to new pipelines in the past. Maybe you've seen the picture. It's not a great one. I'm wearing a hat, and while I enjoy a good hat from time to time, I'm not really a hat person. It was downtown in 2011. I stood in front of the Harry Hays Building in downtown Calgary to protest the expansion of Keystone XL.

I was there for several reasons, reasons that a picture does not adequately explain. I felt that the government at the time was not doing enough to diversify the economy and that they were relying too heavily on the oil and gas industry and that this was doing irreparable damage to our economy long term. At the time, the government in 2011 was also not actively endeavouring to reduce Alberta's carbon emissions. They were not adequately protecting Alberta's greatest resources: our land, our water, and our air. I felt that shipping more raw bitumen to the United States so that it could be refined there and sold back to us was not in the best interests of Albertans.

I wasn't confident that the government at the time was spending the money from our oil boom wisely. How could we have a such a successful, profitable oil and gas industry but still have such a fragile economy, susceptible to booms and busts, busts that saw and still see Albertans from all over the province hurting? With oil above \$100 a barrel and talk of expanding pipelines, why were teachers being told that they might not have jobs next year? Why were we not building schools? Why were we not contributing to our heritage savings fund? Other jurisdictions have been famously documented as navigating these same waters with much greater success. When Alberta was booming, why weren't profits being directed towards innovation and diversification across multiple industries?

I do not regret protesting a pipeline expansion in 2011. A pipeline in 2011 would not have created the jobs and the path that we need now. A pipeline in 2011 would have contributed more to the past government's inability to harness the power and economic force that a pipeline has the potential to be. A pipeline in 2011 would only have amplified the past government's propensity to spend money by providing tax cuts to their friends so that the rich could get richer. So I do not regret my actions in 2011. I stand by my actions at that time and in those circumstances.

But circumstances have changed. It's not 2011 anymore. Alberta voted to get rid of that government, and I can tell you that this government will utilize this pipeline to benefit all Albertans, not just those at the top; that this government will work towards a more creative, innovative, and diversified economy; that this government has a climate leadership plan that addresses carbon emissions and air pollution.

The opposition quickly points fingers and blames our government for the recession we've just been through, but our government has had to face down the economic reality of what former governments left us and create a plan that ensures that Alberta does become a leader in innovation, diversification, and that we do it with creativity and Alberta grit. There are people who ask me: "Why more oil? Why are you pushing this pipeline so hard? This isn't what I was expecting from an NDP government." They say, "Haven't you protested pipelines?" They say that I've flip-flopped, that I'm being political.

But I'm a science teacher, and I've always prided myself on basing my decisions on the best facts that I have before me. I'm here today, and I can tell you that I've toured refineries, in situ sites, and university labs. I've read countless studies and heard economic

reports, and I can tell you without reservation that the Alberta oil industry is working continuously to take carbon out of the barrel.

I also know that the oil industry has been integral to the foundation of Alberta, and denying this would be ill informed and unenlightened. Here today, in 2018, we are in a position to work with the oil and gas industry, with universities, and with entrepreneurs to bring about the changes that we all seek, to create an economy that will provide the future that we want. I know now that protesting pipelines is not an effective way to reduce carbon emissions. Fewer gas-powered cars would reduce emissions. Better technology reduces emissions. More public transit; more green energy – solar, wind, wave, thermal – more energy efficient homes, offices, and businesses; more local food production; more local production of goods, period; less deforestation: these are things that will lead to a lower carbon economy.

In 2018 I stand having educated myself, and I know that pipelines are not the enemy. In Alberta this pipeline is needed so that we can continue building the diverse, innovative, multifaceted economy that we require for the prosperity of future generations. If anything can be seen as an enemy, it has been past governments' inability to adjust to new challenges, challenges that we can face and overcome together.

We can't remain fixed. We can't have one path. We have to be flexible, and we have to develop. I'm not fixed. Every day I challenge myself to learn more, to be more open, to try to more fully understand our difficulties. I am proud that our NDP government has not remained fixed in our strategies, that we strive to improve and rise up to meet the challenges that Alberta faces. I got involved in politics because I wanted a government that based its decisions on facts and the situation currently in front of them, one that took all factors into consideration, and I am confident that this NDP government is doing exactly that.

As a legislator I often ask myself if the policies that I am voting on will hold up for my children. We cannot deny that Alberta needs to diversify, to innovate. The energy industry is the backbone of our economy, but that doesn't mean that we shouldn't be making every effort to expand and lift Alberta into a future of all possibilities, a future with better public transit, more renewable energy, and more energy products being made in Alberta. To do this, we need the ability to sell our oil now. We need to be able to sell it without a steep discount and to support our industry in its ongoing quest to lower emissions. There's no question that this pipeline will help us get there.

For me, this issue boils down to three questions. First, will this pipeline mean that we as Albertans and as Canadians are better off in 20 years? Second, do the benefits outweigh the risks? And, most important, is it what the majority of my constituents want? The answer to all three of these questions is a resounding yes, so I am happy to support this motion.

Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I will recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'll make a few preliminary comments, and then I have an amendment to put forward to the Legislature. It's a very important issue, that we're all appropriately spending a lot of time and energy on.

I want to be clear that I think our oil sands have provided unparalleled opportunity and economic returns to Albertans, jobs for citizens across this country. It's been the engine of our economy, and technological advances with environmental demands have

reduced the emissions per barrel of oil as we move from 2.5 million barrels a day to almost 4 million barrels per day in the coming years. It's clear that the Kinder Morgan pipeline passes all the tests of our current federal energy panel and our own Alberta Energy Regulator, and the federal government clearly has constitutional power to act across provincial lines in the national public interest.

But it's also clear to Albertans that in relation to the oil sands resource this government has a constitutional requirement to act in the long-term public interest, not just short-term economic interests. We must develop the resource but not at any cost. On behalf of Albertans and Canadians let us (a) be more transparent about the benefits and the risks to taxpayers, (b) ensure that these largely foreign-owned corporations pay fully for pollution and reclamation costs, and (c) report regularly on our commitments to climate change, holding ourselves accountable as the largest emitter of greenhouse gases in the country.

Let's talk first, then, about the benefits. The focus of this discussion has been entirely one sided, focused only on the benefits without the acknowledgement that we are taking risks whenever we develop heavy oil and transport it. We therefore have a duty to all citizens to provide a balanced, triple-bottom-line business case.

Recently the Parkland Institute reported that the claim of \$18.5 billion in economic benefits should be seen in the context of a 20-year period, translating to \$925 million annually for this pipeline, split between Alberta, Ottawa, and B.C. So let's be clear about the full accounting of the benefits. As the institute also pointed out, the revenue, fiscal benefits, and job numbers are premised on production levels that appear to go far beyond what will be allowed under our provincial emissions cap for oil sands production.

5:20

I think the Alberta public and the Canadian public will add their support to Alberta's call if we are much more transparent about both the benefits and the risks. Kinder Morgan as recently as August 2017 said that the total number of construction jobs for the project would be 2,500 per year for two years, not the 15,000 that were claimed in the media. Our credibility, as we deserve as the most responsible energy producer, also depends fundamentally on providing accurate information on both benefits and risks.

To address some of the risks – the principle is well supported across the political spectrum; I think there's no one in the House that doesn't believe that the polluter should pay. We now see growing interest among corporations in releasing their responsibilities as a result of the Redwater decision, and this government along with the federal government has loaned significant funds to oil and gas companies to particularly clean up orphan wells.

This is a concern, I think, that is doubly there for the oil sands, where a \$21 billion cleanup is estimated to be required in the context of 4 per cent of that amount being set aside for cleanup today. It's also important to recognize and for Albertans to realize that only 1 per cent of the oil sands has been reclaimed so far. So I think we have to acknowledge the potential for a real hand-off to the public purse, and we have to start reporting on that in a more robust way to Albertans. The 2015 Auditor General report identified in relation to the mine tailings issues, quote: inflated asset measures, unrecognized development costs, and overestimation of the mine life. End quote. Albertans deserve to know full, detailed liability disclosure, and they need to know, as I asked yesterday in this House, what the government is going to do to ensure full financial security if they really plan to honour their commitment to the polluter-pays principle.

In this context we need to remember what's happened elsewhere in Canada. The tar ponds in Sydney, the Yellowknife Giant mine:

both of those left to the public purse. I'm not saying that this will happen, but I'm saying that a prudent government acting in the public interest has to be more serious about reporting every year to Albertans both the benefits and the risks.

Our First Nations interests are, thankfully, being much more addressed by this government, and I applaud them for their making a priority around First Nations treaty rights and including them in a lot of the consultations that have failed in the past to be appropriately done. They have health interests and concerns which we haven't fully characterized in the research yet. First Nations have reported higher incidence of a number of illnesses that still need to be researched in relation to ongoing oil sands development.

In relation to greenhouse gas monitoring and climate change, the fundamental question in relation to the government's clear commitment to climate change, I applaud them again as the government that has done more on climate change than any government since I entered the Legislature. I want to go on record as saying that I support the carbon levy. It's the price of using our atmosphere to dump carbon.

Let's get real about the seriousness of climate change across this planet. We are not suffering from climate change. Too many Albertans welcome warming here. That's part of the reason Alberta has been able to get away with much slower progress on reducing our carbon emissions. Our commitment in the Paris accord is to reduce by 2 per cent per year. The best information I can get – and I was asking the minister yesterday why we're not getting more timely information on greenhouse gas emissions – is that we're increasing 2 per cent per year in our carbon emissions. It's not 4 per cent, which was the previous decade, so we've reduced the percentage of increase. But let's face it. A 2 per cent increase every year is not going to get us to reductions in 2030.

How do we, in fact, reduce greenhouse gases by expanding the oil sands? We have other fossil fuel options that we need to consider as Albertans, thinking about not just this next election cycle or this next four-year period but long into the future. This government has yet to consult Albertans meaningfully, with full-cost accounting, on how Albertans want to see this critical resource developed over the coming years based on a balance of economic, social, and environmental values. As in the past, it appears that the political needs and industry pressure are still determining the pace and scale of our development of the oil sands. To quote Peter Lougheed: treat Albertans as the owners of our resource. End quote. To respect this is to provide Albertans with all the dimensions of the benefits and risks of our resource.

In relation to the recent Parkland report, they indicate that the big five oil sands producers have only one way, really, to reduce their total emissions. Because they have not been able to absolutely reduce emissions, they have reduced emissions relatively per barrel of oil.

Mark Jaccard of Simon Fraser University, a widely respected consultant on climate change, consultant to national and provincial governments over the last 15 years, asserts that, quote, if you freeze emissions today on the oil sands, it will still be extremely difficult to hit the Paris target.

It's puzzling that Albertans do not hear annual updates on our net GHG emissions, as we do on other key indicators for the oil sands, given the climate's significance to our health, our economy, and our environment. We have abundant local experiences of extreme weather and disasters. Our Paris commitment, again, is to reduce by 2 per cent per year, especially since Alberta contributes almost 50 per cent to the national greenhouse gas inventory.

In short, I'm asking this Legislature on behalf of present and future generations to be more conscientious about reporting the true benefits, costs, and long-term liabilities that current and future

generations will bear as we grow the oil sands. I'm asking for full-cost accounting that relates to annual GHG emissions, annual industry reclamation liabilities, and public consultations on the future of the oil sands.

In this spirit I move the following amendment:

And be it further resolved that the Legislative Assembly seek to address public concerns about increasing bitumen production and pipeline transport by urging the government of Alberta to report each year, in the government annual report, on Alberta's oil sands region through a transparent, full-cost accounting framework that includes reclamation liabilities and estimated greenhouse gas emissions from the region.

I'll circulate that, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: This will be known as amendment A2.
Go ahead, hon. member.

Dr. Swann: I think it speaks for itself, Madam Speaker. We are an energy-producing province. Both the population in other provinces and, I think, citizens of Alberta have expected that they're getting the full information needed to make good decisions about our environment and our social impacts from oil sands development.

5:30

Yes, it's been overplayed to the extreme on both sides, with some people reviling the pipelines and the oil sands and other people saying: there's no problem with the oil sands, and there's no problem with pipelines. There's some balance there in the middle that I think we could get to, both in terms of our own credibility with our population and with other provinces, not even to mention the international community with respect to our commitment to climate change.

I dare say that it's been difficult in this province to get as serious about climate change as it requires. If we can't show leadership on climate change, with all the technology and all the wealth and all the good science here, where on the planet can we start to really show the importance of this triple bottom line that we talk about but that somehow escapes us with each successive administration as we desperately need the money and we desperately need the credibility now on the environment?

Finding that middle ground: I think this government is closer than any government I've been with to finding that balance. But this amendment would help to build that credibility, that we are not closing our minds, closing our eyes to the facts around some of the benefits and the risks in, particularly, two areas, climate and oil sands liability, that is very substantial, looking at the Auditor General's report.

I'll take my seat and look forward to the debate. Thanks, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and I want to thank the hon. member for his amendment. This goes a little far afield, in my view, from the focus and intention of the main motion. Although I'm a little surprised, it has been approved by Parliamentary Counsel.

The hon. member raises a couple of important things that should be benchmarked. The first is reclamation liabilities and greenhouse gas emissions for the region. Now, the hon. member provided the amendment to me yesterday, which I appreciate, and I did send it over to the Minister of Environment and Parks for her review. She informed me that these issues are already captured and provided in the climate leadership progress report and in the tailings management framework. Since they are already recorded and

reported, Madam Speaker, I don't believe that the amendment is necessary and would be advising members not to support it.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

Hon. Members: Question.

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

The Deputy Speaker: We're back on the main motion.

Dr. Swann: I'd like to have a standing vote, Madam Speaker.
[interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: The rules say three.

The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Dr. Starke: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to bring forward comments on this motion, which I broadly support. I think that it is very clear, within the confines of this Assembly, that the members here support and understand the need for market access, pipeline capacity to be increased such that our products can get to market.

There was one phrase that the Premier gave in her introductory comments that really sort of struck me, and that is that we should speak and debate not as partisans but as citizens. I actually really like that. I think that's something we have to do more often in this Chamber. So for now, notwithstanding some of the comments I've heard from both sides, I'm going to set aside some of the things that we regularly hear from that side, which, quite frankly – and we heard it during the course of this debate as well, you know, things like, “Well, we cut the small-business tax.” But only after we dragged you kicking and screaming to cut the small-business tax, after all four parties on this side said that you should and the Finance minister insisted that it couldn't be done, then you cut the small-business tax.

I won't go into the constant refrain from over there about the failure to diversify Alberta's economy because, in point of fact, Alberta has the most diversified economy in the nation. That was correctly pointed out by the Member for Calgary-Elbow. What we don't have – actually, the Member for Calgary-Elbow has been correct in this, and the Government House Leader has pointed this out – is adequate diversification of revenue to the government. That is true, and we see that very clearly with the quarterly updates that show that not only is nonrenewable resource revenue down, but, associated with that, corporate income tax revenue, personal income tax revenue are also down because so much economic activity in Alberta is driven by oil and gas.

You know, we'll even set aside – and it was interesting to hear the Member for Calgary-East speak – past opposition to pipelines because it is well known that members on the other side have been opposed to pipelines in the past. It is also well known that they've claimed that pipelines do nothing but export jobs to other jurisdictions. We'll set those things aside because it sounds like the other side, if they haven't had a conversion on the road to Damascus, has had a pipeline epiphany.

Madam Speaker, the government is discovering the challenge of governing. It means making difficult decisions, and it means sometimes making decisions that alienate people who once were your base. They're discovering that challenge. It's taken a while, but they're discovering that.

So let's speak as citizens, not as partisans. You know, two great citizens of this province were privileged to be Premiers of this

province. It's been interesting to hear the name of one of them invoked so frequently during the course of this debate, and that's Premier Peter Lougheed. As was said in a recent article in the *Journal*, as the last Progressive Conservative in captivity I'm rather proud that Mr. Lougheed's memory and his vision are being invoked so many times. In fact, recently one of his sons said, "That the left, right & centre in Alberta still find aspects of his vision, values & leadership appealing would make him quite happy, for that was his objective, [to] build an open, inclusive, pragmatic & moderate party that appeals to a broad base of Albertans across the political spectrum."

An Hon. Member: Here we are.

Dr. Starke: No, you're not even close. Don't even try.

Madam Speaker, the truth of the matter is that regardless of who wins the next election – we've had so many people invoking and we've had all parties invoking Peter Lougheed – it seems that Peter Lougheed's vision will live on, and that gives me great heart.

Mr. Lougheed's vision was important because – and the Member for Calgary-Mountain View just mentioned one of his six basic tenets, that I think have stood the test of time. It's important that we keep those tenets in mind: the first, behave like an owner; second, collect your fair share; the third, save for a rainy day; the fourth, add value; the fifth, go slow; the sixth, practise statecraft. Those basic fundamentals were the fundamentals of Peter Lougheed. Now, we can have a discussion, we can have an argument that at times there has been a departure from those basic tenets, but the truth of the matter is, Madam Speaker, that those tenets have served Alberta well in the past. I think we would do well to look at them on a regular basis in the future as opposed to treating some of the things that Mr. Lougheed did as a buffet and just picking and choosing the items that you happen to like and that fit your ideology.

Now, I have to say that the talk that's been brought up of turning off the taps I have found a little bit amusing. Things have changed since Premier Lougheed's time, and it has been well documented that while it may be politically expedient to stand up and say, "We're just going to do what Premier Lougheed did," the truth of the matter is – and it's been made very clear by a number of academics – that it's not simply that easy to do. There is a complex allocation system for how pipeline space is allocated. It's not simply a matter of shutting off the taps. The province of Alberta does not own the pipeline. The province of Alberta does not control all of the resources flowing through that pipeline. We have to make sure that we understand what effects that would have on our reputation as a secure supplier of energy to our customers.

5:40

That reputation has already taken a severe hit under this administration because of their inconsistencies with regard to how they deal with the energy industry. While they can trumpet the support they've received from large oil companies, I can tell you that overall, especially among small and medium-sized producers, by which the oil industry in this province was largely built, those producers are certainly not in favour of much of what this government has done.

You know, my concern is: are we leveraging alternatives? Are we developing any sort of a plan B in doing this? I see no evidence of that. I haven't seen that the advisory force, the task force of 19 experts that was appointed, has come up with any alternatives. I haven't seen the government look at: well, what happens if the pipeline doesn't get built? They've put absolutely all their faith that, either through the actions of the Prime Minister – and I have very

little faith that he will act on our behalf because it's not politically expedient for him to do so. I think that if we hold our breath and wait for this Prime Minister to act on behalf of Albertans, we might get anoxic in a real big hurry.

Madam Speaker, I think it's critically important that we look at alternatives, including other proposals like the pipeline that is being proposed that largely has ownership and equity and the approval of First Nations and indigenous peoples along its entire route. There is a proposal there, yet this government hasn't even given those folks the time of day.

There's another proposal to build a rail line from northern Alberta to Alaska, the port of Valdez. You, Madam Speaker, attended a conference with me on that, and you know, as a northern Albertan, that that causes considerable excitement in northern Alberta because of what it would do for market access for products from northern Alberta, not just bitumen, which would be shipped in heated railcars not requiring diluent. Get this: they would be powered by electrical batteries that would be charged by wind turbines along the route. You want to talk innovation? You want to talk forward thinking? You should take a look at that project. But, no, that hasn't been given any attention by this government. Instead, the only project that we're pinning all our hopes on is the Kinder Morgan expansion, and we know that that expansion is encountering significant opposition.

Madam Speaker, I do support this motion. I support the efforts that the government has been making, but I also want to remind the government that many of their actions have not been consistent as far as support of our industry. While I am glad that they have come around and while I am glad that they are learning what it takes to govern and the complexities of governing, I think that it's important that we as an Assembly stand together, that we unanimously pass this motion, and I would urge all members in the Assembly to vote in favour of said motion.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any further speakers to the motion? The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am not going to talk about Peter Lougheed, but I'm going to be speaking about my constituency and the Industrial Heartland, that I share with the MLAs for Strathcona-Sherwood Park, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater, and Edmonton-Manning. This area is not only the area for the Industrial Heartland, but it's also where the Strathcona industrial area is located.

Pipelines and the oil and gas industry are a large, if not the major contribution to the economy of these constituencies. These constituencies are home to workers who work in all aspects of the oil and gas sector, from building the pipelines to maintaining them, to monitoring the flow of oil, to the numerous trades that build the plants that upgrade the oil and gas, to the trades that work in the plants, and to many who work in extracting in the oil and gas fields, commuting back to their homes in many communities in Alberta. For those of you who use Baseline to commute to points east, you will know the importance of this sector in this region. Many pipelines begin or start there. The safety and environmental standards of the industries in the region are exemplary, and the leadership of the industries work hard to mitigate environmental damage and carbon emissions.

The Trans Mountain pipeline will start in this area and move east just past my constituency office. This pipeline is important to the people I talk to every day. This pipeline is crucial for everyone in

Alberta. As we all know, we need more pipelines to ship our oil for good value to tidewater. Even if there are currently projects to reduce the need for diluent to transport bitumen and partially upgrade the bitumen in Alberta, as was recently announced, we still need more capacity in existing pipelines.

Madam Speaker, the motion is clear in asking the federal government to continue to take all necessary legal steps in support of the pipeline's construction. It is also clear that the Premier has been working with the federal government to ensure that there is clarity on the importance of the pipeline to Alberta and the economy of Canada.

Just as a reminder, we are here in the provincial Legislative Assembly, and we are not in the House of Commons, as sometimes I think I hear. We are here to support Alberta industries and workers. We are here to affirm our commitment to the Trans Mountain pipeline and to the process that gave permission for its construction. We are here to affirm the work of Alberta companies, what they're doing, and their strong environmental record. We are here to boast about the innovative technology of Alberta companies that make pipelines safer.

Madam Speaker, my constituents and those of many of us in this House are ready to work on the pipeline. The industries here are ready to provide the materials and tools to build the pipelines. Les résidents de ma circonscription sont prêts à travailler sur le pipeline. Je suis prête à appuyer la première ministre et à voter pour.

I would urge all members of the Assembly to vote for the motion and support the Premier in ensuring the Trans Mountain pipeline is built. Merci.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any further speakers to the motion?

Are you ready for the question?

[The voice vote indicated that Government Motion 2 as amended carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:48 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Gill	Orr
Anderson, W.	Goehring	Panda
Babcock	Gotfried	Payne
Barnes	Hinkley	Piquette
Bilous	Hoffman	Pitt
Carlier	Horne	Renaud
Carson	Hunter	Rosendahl
Ceci	Jansen	Sabir
Clark	Kazim	Schneider
Connolly	Kenney	Schreiner
Coolahan	Larivee	Smith
Cooper	Loewen	Starke
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Stier
Cyr	Luff	Strankman
Dach	Malkinson	Sucha
Dang	Mason	Swann
Drever	McIver	Sweet
Drysdale	McKittrick	Taylor
Eggen	Miller	Turner
Ellis	Miranda	van Dijken
Feehan	Nielsen	Westhead
Fitzpatrick	Nixon	Woollard
Fraser	Notley	Yao
Ganley		

Totals: For – 70 Against – 0

[Government Motion 2 as amended carried unanimously]

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 4(2) the House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6:05 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday morning, March 14, 2018

Day 4

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (UCP),
Deputy Leader of the Official Opposition
Anderson, Hon. Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (NDP)
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (UCP)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (NDP)
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Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (NDP)
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (NDP)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (NDP)
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP),
Alberta Party Opposition House Leader
Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawkwood (NDP)
Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (NDP)
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Cortes-Vargas, Estefania, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (NDP),
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Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (UCP)
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (NDP)
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (NDP)
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)
Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (NDP)
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP)
Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP),
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Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (AP)
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (NDP),
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Official Opposition Deputy Whip
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Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (UCP)
Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (NDP)
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)
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Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)
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Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)
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Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (NDP),
Deputy Government Whip
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)
Vacant, Fort McMurray-Conklin
Vacant, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake

Party standings:

New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 25 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent: 1 Vacant: 2

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Wednesday, March 14, 2018

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Deputy Speaker: Good morning.

Let us reflect. May each member of the Legislature have a strong and abiding sense of the great responsibilities that are laid upon us, and may we always work to gain a deep and thorough understanding of the needs and the hopes of the families and the constituents that we serve.

Please be seated.

Orders of the Day Committee of Supply

The Chair: I'd like to call Committee of Supply to order.

Hon. members, before we commence this morning's consideration of interim supply, I'd like to review briefly the standing orders governing the speaking rotation. As provided for in Standing Order 59.02 the rotation in Standing Order 59.01(6) is deemed to apply, which is as follows. First,

- (a) the Minister, or the member of Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may make opening comments not to exceed 10 minutes,
- (b) for the hour that follows, members of the Official Opposition and the Minister, or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may speak,
- (c) for the next 20 minutes, the members of the third party . . . and the Minister or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may speak, . . .
- (d.1) for the next 20 minutes, the members of any other party represented in the Assembly or any independent Members and the Minister, or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may speak,
- (e) for the next 20 minutes, private members of the Government caucus and the Minister or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may speak, and
- (f) for the time remaining, to the extent possible, the rotation outlined in clauses (b) to (e) shall apply with the speaking time set at 5 minutes as provided in Standing Order 59.02(1)(c).

During the first rotation speaking times are limited to 10 minutes, and once the first rotation is complete, speaking times are reduced to five minutes. Provided that the chair has been notified, a minister and a private member may combine their speaking times, with both taking and yielding the floor during the combined period. Finally, as provided for in Government Motion 8, approved by the Assembly yesterday, the time allotted for consideration is three hours.

Interim Supply Estimates 2018-19 General Revenue Fund and Lottery Fund

The Chair: The Committee of Supply has under consideration the 2018-19 interim supply estimates. I'll now recognize the hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance to move the estimates.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Good morning, both sides of the House. I'd like to move 2018-19 interim supply

estimates for the Legislative Assembly and general revenue fund. When passed, these interim supply estimates will authorize approximate spending of \$29 million for the Legislative Assembly, \$7.7 billion in expense funding, \$559 million in capital investment funding, \$160 million in financial transactions funding for the government, and \$240 million for the transfer from the lottery fund to the general revenue fund.

These interim supply estimates provide funding authorization that will allow the normal business of the province to continue until the full 2018-19 estimates are approved before the end of May. These estimates also follow through on specific commitments this government has made to the people of Alberta and take into account the different timing of payments that exist across various ministries.

This simply means that ministries do not pay out the same amount of money each month. Advanced Education, for instance, makes up-front payments to postsecondary institutions so they are not forced to borrow. This is to say that it would be inaccurate to simply multiply these two months' totals by six and conclude that this will be the annual budget for a specific ministry. All of that will, of course, be revealed when Budget 2018 is tabled in eight short days.

I've spoken at length about our government's commitment to support and protect vital public services and programs. Our commitment to that is no better demonstrated than our previous funding increase to FCSS prevention across this province and the introduction of the Alberta child benefit.

It's important to remember that even during the worst of the recession Alberta's population never stopped growing. This means that we needed to step up and support Albertans receiving funding through various statutory and other programs. This is a commitment we made when the recession first hit, and it is a commitment we will continue to uphold as our government works hard to ensure the economic recovery reaches all Albertans and is one to last.

It is undeniable that things are looking up in this province. At our recent third-quarter update we said that Alberta's economy grew by 4.5 per cent in 2017. Average weekly wages are up. Manufacturing is up. Retail sales are up. Alberta added nearly 90,000 full-time jobs in 2017. That is undeniable. The trend is looking up. It was truly the year that Alberta turned the corner. And we cut the deficit by \$1.4 billion as well.

We all recognize that the strengthening recovery has not been felt by each and every Albertan. That means there's still much that needs to be done. Budget 2018 will continue that work to ensure all Albertans feel the recovery and strengthening economy.

Before we open discussion, I want to be clear that our government has done significant work to carefully find savings, and we've done so while continuing to support and protect vital public services that Albertans rely on and built together. Steps taken to date include limiting departmental discretionary spending; cutting salaries and eliminating perks and bonuses like golf club memberships for the highest paid executives of Alberta's agencies, boards, and commissions; negotiating practical agreements with public-sector unions such as the Alberta Teachers' Association and the United Nurses of Alberta. Thank you to both of those. There's ongoing hiring restraint for the core public service in spite of additional programs and services being needed by Albertans. We're consolidating various corporate services such as communications and IT, and things that are back of house are being organized.

We continue to be focused on taking measured steps to contain costs and reducing the deficit gradually as the economy recovers. Our plan is working. At the same time we will remain focused on the priorities of Albertans. Collectively we want to make sure that our kids have good schools and that our loved ones get the care they need when they need it. We know that there are tough decisions

ahead of us, but they will be made with an overarching priority that the quality of our public services should not be dependent on the world price of oil.

Madam Chair, these estimates will be fully debated when the budget documents are tables. Approval of interim supply estimates pending the release and approval of the budget will allow this Assembly the time it needs to review and debate those plans.

I thank you for your time.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat. Did you want to split your speaking time with the minister?

Mr. Barnes: Is it okay to go back and forth, Minister?

The Chair: Go ahead, then.

9:10

Mr. Barnes: Okay. Thank you very, very much, and thanks to the minister for his opening comments. Large parts of the world view – of course, I see differently. Alberta having the highest unemployment rate outside of Atlantic Canada, Calgary having the second highest unemployment rate of major metros in all of Canada, behind only St. John's, is a position that I thought we'd never see ourselves in in Alberta. In talking to some financial experts last week who follow the government of Alberta, once we got past the six credit downgrades, we had trouble deciding if Alberta a year from now, counting all of our liabilities on the books and pensions and unfunded, was going to be between \$85 billion and \$105 billion. My goodness, the legacy that we're leaving to the next generation is astronomical.

I guess I want to start my questions today, hon. minister, with the process. In the opposition and around Alberta your government has been criticized for being secretive at times, for having, you know, things behind closed doors and not fully transparent to Albertans. Of course, as you said in your opening remarks, part of this two-month interim supply will include annual expenses. Some of it will be on the monthly prorated. With us just receiving this yesterday and us having three hours to debate this and discuss it, it's going to be very, very hard to get to the details.

As far as I know, the year-end of the fiscal year has always been March 31. My first question is why the government didn't prepare its budget earlier, in February, so we could skip this part. We could have full transparency for all Albertans without an interim supply and a budget that instead of two weeks from now we'll be debating – we could have done this sooner and skipped this part.

Thank you.

Mr. Ceci: Well, thank you very, very much for the question. You know, maybe I'll start first by addressing some of the initial comments that were made by the member opposite regarding the unemployment rate in this province and other things like that. Yes, Alberta has been through the worst recession in a generation. It has meant that many, many, many people have been let go from their jobs, jobs that they thought would never change in their lifetimes. But then the oil crisis came and the drop in the world price of oil. I can remember it went down to \$26 a barrel in January '16, I think. Twenty-six dollars a barrel. That changed the world, frankly. Many companies both in Calgary and throughout the province took the opportunity to address their challenges by letting go of their staff. Many people found themselves for the first time in the unemployment line. That was a sad time in this province.

Our economy contracted in 2016 and 2015 by 3.5 per cent. I don't remember times like that and certainly not as a Finance minister. That is not the kind of situation you want to walk into, but we did as a government. We didn't cause it. Again, it meant that many

people were not able to find work because, frankly, the contraction of our economy meant that other businesses besides the oil and gas sector were affected as well. People didn't have the disposable income they usually have. They, the businesses, needed to get through that time, and they did by the means they chose. We as a government said that we would have the backs of Albertans.

This leads into the second part of the question, with regard to the way of this government and the plan that we rolled out, which was to continue to provide the necessary supports that Albertans require, especially in a downturn, especially when they're worried about their families, especially when they don't have incomes. So our statutory programs – the income support programs, the government in partnership with the federal government's statutory programs, EI – spiked in terms of the demand for those, but this side of the House chose not to increase the waiting times, increase the lineups for statutory programs. We said: "We are going to have the backs of Albertans. If we need to borrow money, we're going to do it for that purpose." It's a good investment, Madam Chair. We invested in Albertans and continue to provide them a quality of life that, frankly, they would have been challenged to have on their own. So the borrowing was necessary.

The investments in capital were necessary, and for that you need to borrow. That is by both sides of the House seen as an okay thing to do if you're borrowing for capital, so we did. We borrowed for capital, and we invested in the building of bridges and roads and health facilities and completed schools, and that kept people working, Madam Chair. That kept private-sector companies working. That kept them having people on the job, 10,000 jobs per year annually, as a result of our investment in the capital program the government of Alberta brought in. You can talk to financial experts, but you need to be able to be balanced in what was achieved in all of that borrowing. You need to be able to say that, you know, more people weren't on the unemployment line, more people weren't destitute as a result of our investments, as a result of our maintenance of programs and services, statutory and otherwise, for Albertans.

With regard to "Why doesn't this government just table a budget early enough? It's eight days from now. Then we wouldn't need interim supply," Madam Chair, our government has been taking the time to consult Albertans, to hear their thoughts and ideas about building our economy, an economy built to last in this province, and on our path to balance. Many, many people, of course, on that side, on this side are interested and want to know, so we're taking that time to build that plan, a thoughtful plan, and roll it out on March 22, a plan that will endeavour to ensure that our province has an economy that's built to last and moves further off the boom-and-bust roller coaster.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Barnes: Okay. Minister, we're being asked to approve over 8 and a half billion dollars with only a dozen pages of detail and less than 24 hours to read and prepare. It brings me back to the Q3 update about two weeks ago, when a similar amount of time was all that was afforded. Two transactions, or two financial items, in that Q3 update: one, your government had taken \$711 million of taxpayers' money for the Balancing Pool and PPAs to cover your climate leadership plan, billions of dollars of expenses, and with the climate leadership plan, in that Q3 update, there was \$323 million of grants, grants without the specific detail as to who those went to. You know, Minister, once again I'm standing here without, never mind full information, hardly any information. My question to you: with everything in interim supply and the expenses, do you have any idea how much of those expenses are related to either the

collection of the carbon tax, payment of the carbon tax, or special grants through the climate leadership plan?

Thank you.

Mr. Ceci: You know, the specific information with regard to the climate leadership plan – I don't see the minister here, but I know that that minister will be available when estimates occur and when our budget is tabled – those specific questions about, "How much does it cost for the climate leadership plan and levies to be administered?" can be probably answered more directly by that minister.

9:20

But I can tell you that in my own department there is I think it's in the neighbourhood of a couple of million dollars that are expended on the administration of that climate leadership plan. I can get more specific information and have that for when we do estimates and I sit down and talk with members of the opposition and members on this side specifically about my own budget and my own department. Those monies in my department, of course, are part of a contract we have with CRA to administer it on behalf of the government of Alberta.

The specifics I have for what is before you today: I think I did share what those details are about in terms of interim supply estimates. I mentioned that there was about \$30 million for expenditures within the Legislative Assembly, different offices. There's \$7.7 billion in expenses, and those are across the 21 departments of government. There is about \$600 million in capital investments across those 18 departments. There's about \$160 million – I can give you the exact numbers, but I'll round them for purposes of clarity – in financial transactions across 12 departments and then \$240 million for the transfer from the lottery fund to the general revenue fund to address the needs of government.

When you look at the interim supply before us today – and I caution against multiplying by six because that's not actually how the departments have come forward with their interim supply estimates – I said that many are front-ending in terms of expenses. They have to put out to PSIs or other places.

We have this document before us today. We have this document that will allow us to work for two more months. But in the meantime we will table the budget on the 22nd, we'll debate it fully, and questions such as those posed by the member opposite will be clear in terms of the discussions that the ministers have with those committees, that they're in front of later in the month.

Thank you.

Mr. Barnes: Madam Chair, this year's interim supply requests 1 per cent less funding for expense amounts compared to what we saw in last year's interim supply. As the minister just said, we're not comparing apples to apples because we can't times by six. Some expenses are in there that are annual, and some aren't, so it's a very inaccurate comparison.

But what it reminds me of is what I read yesterday. An economist had put out that Calgary's wage levels are back to 2005-2006. When I go around the rest of Alberta, it's hard not to find somebody that's only making 60 or 65 per cent of what they used to make. Back to the Q3 update, where every time this government has raised taxes, our tax rate, from 10 points to as high as 15 for personal and the 20 per cent tax increase we put on our corporations, has only resulted in this government collecting significantly less revenue. Of course, that's because of the income and wealth that they've destroyed. I'm looking at a 1 per cent reduction at a time that Calgarians are back 12 or 13 years in their wage level.

And then I'm wondering, when I look at interim supply – and I would hope that the minister could expand on this. Interim supply is requesting 40 per cent less funding for capital investment compared to last year's interim supply. You know, we've seen around Alberta that, other than announcements, this government has barely been able to do anything more than complete what was announced by previous governments. Here we're seeing 40 per cent less funding. So have we significantly cut our need for infrastructure? Will all the projects you promised Albertans be built on time? How do you explain this amazing decrease in capital investment?

Compassionate belt-tightening: many of us on this side of the House have talked considerably about our 20 per cent per capita spending over other provinces, over British Columbia. You're suggesting a 1 per cent drop, but what we saw in the Q3 update: every time you found a dollar to save, you spent it as fast as it came in.

Minister, what are your plans for capital investment? What are your plans for the interim supply? Is it legitimately a 1 per cent cut? You're going to find 1 cent out of every dollar: that's what your plan is to get Alberta back to a balanced budget? Perhaps that explains why you've had six credit downgrades. Anyway, if you could address those two things, I'd appreciate it.

The Chair: The minister.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Just with regard to infrastructure I can tell you that in Q3 the capital plan is expected to be on budget at \$9.2 billion for 2017-2018. Now, that's a lot of investment across Alberta, and that's not fully just government of Alberta projects. That's with the SUCH sector as well, the schools, universities, hospitals, and colleges. There really is a great deal of investment in '17-18.

That's following through on David Dodge's recommendations. The former Bank of Canada governor visited with us in the summer of 2015, and he helped us lay out a plan to essentially ride this recession through and, as I said in my first response to this member, to ensure that Alberta smoothed out the recession as much as it could. We used public-sector dollars to help do that because the private sector was not investing. The private sector was experiencing difficulties, laying people off, stopping, turning down the tap on their private-sector investment in oil sands and other energy and other kinds of investments. So this government boldly went into that area and said: we're going to try and mitigate this recession as much as possible. We had a plan that increased the previous government's capital plan by 15 per cent, and that 15 per cent – and I mentioned it earlier – allowed 10,000 more individuals to have annual employment. That 15 per cent over the previous government's capital plan helped out a lot.

The second part of Mr. Dodge's plan was to ensure that there was, you know, a pause, a reflection. Once you're through the recession and starting into recovery, then you need to focus your time on making sure your capital plan is readjusted. In Budget 2018 – you'll have to wait for that – you'll see what our numbers are there.

But I don't think that you can read the kinds of things that you've read into the tea leaves of these interim supply estimates, that there will be a 1 per cent reduction in anything. We are focused on cost containment, Madam Chair. We found \$750 million in cost containment or savings this year, and we did that through a number of things that I talked about earlier: working with the public-sector unions to come in with practical arrangements for contracts, ensuring that discretionary spending of ministries or departments was reduced 10 per cent. We brought that across the agencies,

boards, and commissions, and we asked them for 10 per cent reductions in their discretionary spending as well, and we were able to achieve that.

Madam Chair, on the capital side we helped Albertans out. We helped Alberta out. Going forward, the second part of the capital plan that was laid out by Mr. Dodge was: now take a look at rightsizing your capital plan. You'll find out more about that in Budget 2018 in just eight days.

One thing I'd like to bring up . . .

9:30

The Chair: We've come to the end of the first 20-minute set. Do you have another speaker?

Mr. Barnes: Could I go again for 20?

The Chair: Do you want to take the next 20-minute segment?

Mr. Barnes: Please.

The Chair: And you still want to do it back and forth?

Mr. Barnes: Please.

The Chair: All right. Go ahead.

Mr. Barnes: Yeah. When you get back up, you can go again on that.

I want to talk about your capital borrowing and the interest costs. I was disappointed in your Q3 update, that you had \$500 million that you had set up as a reserve in case oil prices were low, and then you didn't spend it, so you claimed it as a saving. I don't know how not spending or not using it is a saving, but so be it. I was mostly disappointed that you didn't show the 5 and a half billion dollars of capital borrowing that you had done to show your true deficit number. Like the bondholders, like the bond-rating companies that have criticized you every time, that have criticized you considerably for not having a plan to get back to balance, I'm disappointed that you don't share your capital numbers and you don't seem to have a plan to repay the capital borrowing at all. Is this debt going to be on Albertans' books forever? Is this debt going to be on the backs of our future generations forever and ever and ever? I'd like to hear what your plan is.

When it comes to interim supply, capital investments, do you have any plan to repay that money just in what you're borrowing for this two-month period? Minister, the \$1.4 billion of interest that Alberta taxpayers are paying this year: I see parts of that sprinkled throughout financial transactions. Of course, financial transactions can include more than just the interest costs. Again, I'd like your best guess, an assessment as to what you think your six downgrades have cost Albertans in higher interest, what you think they're going to cost Albertans over the next year, you know, over the next five or 10 years. Minister, do we have a plan to repay capital debt, never mind the \$50 billion of operating that you've put on our credit card? How much is this extra interest going to cost us over the next few years?

Thank you.

Mr. Ceci: Thanks. To conclude the earlier question that I was in the middle of just before the stoppage, I just want to say that I'm really proud of the work that the different departments and ministers have done with regard to the capital and making sure that the capital gets built in a timely fashion, that the projects get built in a timely fashion. You know, when this government took over from the previous government, there were a number of outstanding promises that hadn't been followed up on, that no shovels were in the ground

around, and one of the first things we did was that we reorganized that area to make sure that if announcements were being made, they were quickly followed up with shovels in the ground and execution and completion. Hundreds of schools are now completed in our term of office. We are working on major infrastructure projects throughout the province that were long promised and little delivered by the previous government.

Madam Chair, the percentage of completion of capital budget to capital projects and expenditure of money is now at the industry average, where previously it was lower and, frankly, wasn't good enough. We put time and attention through our various ministers, Infrastructure minister, to bring that average up to an industry average of completion. So that's a really good thing.

I just want to go back to something that the previous speaker talked about in terms of taxation. Just to correct the record, we have not raised taxes repeatedly. We have brought in a progressive tax regime like every other province, territory, and the federal government have. We brought that in soon after getting elected, in June of 2015, and it is no different. It is the same kind or on the low end of all of the provinces, territories, and the federal government.

The previous government had, frankly, a disastrous tax regime identified for Albertans, and it went too long in this province and left us in a bad situation when we took over government. And on the corporate side, Madam Chair – that was on the personal side. On the corporate side the speaker talked about 20 per cent taxes for corporations. That's not correct. It went from 10 per cent to 12 per cent, again, which is among the low end of corporate taxation of provinces, territories, and in the country. So we just did what was necessary. We did what was right on the tax side. Frankly, it was one of the proudest days of my Finance minister career when we were able to eliminate the flat tax in this province because it didn't make sense. It didn't make sense. It was good for those who had a lot and very bad for those who had little.

Madam Chair, just getting back to the next set of questions with regard to the plan to balance, I had mentioned in my speech that, yes, there is a plan to balance, and this individual and all Albertans will see that plan to balance when budget is released in eight days. I can tell you that this province relative to all other provinces has very, very low net debt to GDP. Our ratio will be the lowest net debt to GDP amongst all the provinces, and that will still be the case when we return to balance in 2023.

Now, on the cost of borrowing – that was asked of me, Madam Chair – I'd like to put that in perspective as well. Ontario spends 8 cents of every dollar on borrowing costs. Their total amount of borrowing at this point in time, their debt, is \$141 billion. That's Ontario. Alberta is less than a third of that. Our borrowing cost is 2.5 cents on every dollar, so when you see that number in our budget or you multiply by what's here, remember that only 2.5 cents of every dollar goes to facilitate that borrowing whereas other provinces are as high as 8 cents. We are never going to get there. B.C. is 5 cents per dollar, and Saskatchewan is above us, at 2.6 cents.

Madam Chair, we have a sound fiscal plan. We have excellent public servants who are managing all of that. We have a focus on investing in this province so that we can leverage the recovery that's happening, and we will continue to move forward with that plan because it is working. The opposition, I think, are driven far too much by listening to credit-rating agencies. Of the credit-rating agencies that I've talked to, one of them suggested that \$3.5 billion needed to be cut from the budget or that taxes needed to be raised in that amount, and I said no to both of those things. I said no because cutting \$3.5 billion out of our budget would have a direct effect on the employment of hundreds and hundreds and perhaps thousands of people. It would reverberate through our economy,

and our unemployment, which was talked about earlier and which is coming down, would just rise as a result of that.

So the government of Alberta said: we will take on the debt; we will keep this province going to ensure that the quality of life Albertans have come to believe and trust in remains strong and present.

Thank you.

9:40

Mr. Barnes: Okay. I guess, Minister, I'm hoping for a little quicker back and forth as I move into more specifics. I guess my last thought on that is two things. You know, I understand you took over when Alberta was \$7 billion to the good in net assets, and here we are three years later \$50 billion to the negative. It's an amazing turnaround, sir, and I think that's what the bond-rating companies are most concerned about.

I guess the other thing that I feel the need to say is that our dear late colleague Manmeet Bhullar – I thought the world of him, and I don't think I'll ever forget the day that he stood up here and warned you that raising our personal tax rates was going to lead to a drastic drop in our income tax collected. I guess I would ask that – you know, Albertans have spoken. Albertans have put a lot of information out there. You can continue to ignore it, but future generations are at stake here.

Let's move to health care. Your interim allocation is \$3.8 billion, capital investments of \$31 million, financial transactions of \$12 million, a total of \$3.8 billion. Expenses are the balance of that. I'm wondering, Minister: have you done an analysis on how much extra the carbon tax is costing our health care operators, how much the cost of operating the ministry has gone up due to legislated increases in statutory holiday pay, proportional increases in wages paid due to minimum wage increases and overtime pay? This will be reflected in a higher budget with, again, levels of bureaucracy eating up funding that should be going to front-line workers in our health care system. Minister, have you done an analysis of what the carbon tax and your government's labour changes have done to cost our taxpayers money in health care?

Thank you.

Mr. Ceci: I think I'll try and quickly answer to facilitate some back and forth. With regard to health care, as was identified in the interim supply estimates, the totals here for expense, which means to keep the hospitals running, people employed, is \$3,746,000,000 roughly, then on the capital investment side about \$32 million, and on the financial transactions about \$12 million, 12 and a half million dollars.

Madam Chair, the breakdown that is here rolls up everything. The kinds of additional costs that may be contemplated from the other side are all rolled up in here. The breakdown could probably be best addressed by the Health minister. I know this has been a question from the other side for the short while we've been back. You know, what are the costs of the carbon levy, how much in administration cost is there? All I can say is that the carbon levy is – and this is not just me saying this. This is people with much higher positions than me saying that the carbon levy and the carbon leadership plan in this province led to the approval of two pipelines in this country. They will get built, and they will allow us to get oil to tidewater, which will be to the benefit of the entire nation. In terms of Alberta it will be a benefit as well.

The minimum wage increase that was talked about, you know, frankly – and I don't have statistics in front of me, but I can tell you that I think every person who works in a hospital setting is probably getting a better wage than minimum wage. So I don't believe that that is a relevant kind of concern to bring forward at this point in

time, and I don't believe the changes to the minimum wage, which will be \$15 this October, Madam Chair, and allow people to live in greater dignity than they previously could – under the previous government the minimum wage was, I think, in the \$10 range in this province, and you can't live on \$10. We know that. I haven't done that myself for many, many decades, but many people were forced to do that under the previous government. We're trying to make that wage the proper wage for people. I don't believe it's relevant for a modern hospital setting in this province at this time.

Mr. Barnes: Okay. Again, I'd appreciate it if you'd stick to the question, sir. It's interesting that, you know, I talked about corporate taxes being raised from 10 to 12 per cent, and I was told that that wasn't a 20 per cent increase. We've also talked about the unemployment and how that relates. Let's move on.

I want to talk about health care some more. In my time as Health critic and my time sitting in here, hon. Minister, I think that the three things that I've heard that would help us get more value out of our health system more than anything are reducing levels of bureaucracy, Albertans having more access to allied health professionals other than doctors, improved services and reduced costs, and better electronic health records. So I'm wondering, very simply: is any of this \$3.9 billion that you're asking for over the next two months going towards reducing bureaucracy? Is any of it going to improving access for Albertans to other allied health professionals? And is any of it going to ensure that someday Albertans have full interactive electronic health records? I'd appreciate three quick answers.

Thank you.

Mr. Ceci: You know, he asked me to answer. I guess I can take as long as I want to do that. I don't think he can make me sit down.

Just to be serious about all of this for a second, I am so proud of the work being done by the Minister of Health and the Associate Minister of Health. The reason I'm proud about all of that is because, you know, when this side took government in May of 2015, Health, frankly, was on an unsustainable operational growth track. It was growing 6 per cent a year. Frankly, it is the largest portion of the budget, and it's, obviously, in the interim supply estimates the largest number there in terms of that expenditure. It's about 42 per cent of the operational expenditures of government on an annual basis – 42 per cent – Madam Chair. When we took over, we said: this is not sustainable.

At the same time the federal government was changing the Canada Health Act in terms of the transfer payments coming to provinces, and they were saying that that was being reduced from 6 to 3 per cent annually. The transfer increases would be 3 per cent, so frankly this side had to look at it and reboot. We had to say: "Something has to be different. We have to do things differently." These ministers under the direction of the Premier have reduced that operational spending growth from the 6 per cent it was at annually because it was eating the lunches of all other ministries here. We've reduced that to under 4 per cent, and our goal is even less than that. That's a really important thing.

This speaker has put it in the area of, you know, reducing the bureaucrats involved. I know that that's their constant fixation. There are bureaucrats out there who are getting too much. Well, frankly, the other side put that organization in place. We didn't do that. We've been reducing the operational spending, working with the Alberta Health Services Board, making sure we get good value for money. We're doing that.

The plan is to have electronic health records as well, to start to share that information amongst, frankly, the thousands of different places in the health system that have records that don't talk to each

other effectively. We started that work, and allied health professionals and the ministers are very focused.

9:50

The Chair: We are at the end of the second 20-minute segment. We can continue with the next 20 minutes.

Mr. Barnes: Yeah. Now, for this next 20 minutes can I just do 10 and then give the minister 10?

The Chair: That's fine.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you.

Okay. I want to talk first of all about Justice and the interim supply around that. Last year's requested interim amount for Justice and Solicitor General was \$254 million, whereas this year, Minister, it is \$286 million. I'm going to ask you to explain that \$32 million increase. Of course, I want to know if any of that is to fight rural crime.

You know, in Alberta, where the same perpetrators come back to the same summer village or the same rural area weekly, I'm told by a solid businessperson in a community that he catches somebody shoplifting every day, phones the police, and the police say: "We're not coming. There are not enough resources for Crown prosecutors or judges, and there's no point to this." It seems like rural Alberta again has drawn the short straw in terms of rural Crown prosecutors with caseloads in the 2,000 vicinity. Of course, how can justice and the protection of citizens be proper? Rural crime has reached epidemic proportions. What in your interim supply amounts are addressing this urgent issue? You have a \$32 million increase. We have a rural crime problem. We have a problem starting to spread into our cities. You're three years into your mandate, sir, and it's getting worse.

Again, of course, I know that you mentioned funding police officers. Okay. How does that address the problem if there are not enough people training to fill these vacancies? How does that address the problem if Crown prosecutors are overloaded? How does that address the problem of what I hear is the waste and the inefficiencies in the system, monies that could be put right to the front lines, right to the edge where we could do some work? I'd appreciate your explaining what that extra \$32 million increase is for and what it's doing for rural crime.

Minister, I then want to turn to interim supply, Agriculture and Forestry questions. One of the highest expense asks for interim supply is in Agriculture and Forestry. Out of the almost \$319 million requested over the short term for expenses, how much is going toward wildfire management expenses? How much is going to help our rural citizens that had horrific incidents, horrific events? Of course, your government has been slow to respond, and I wonder if there's an answer in there finally for still some of the people in Fort McMurray and the good families of southeastern Alberta.

How much of this interim supply will be for preparing for next year? How much of it will be to make sure that we can reduce the impacts of this? Would the interim supply ask be lower if this department actually provided a budget estimate for wildfire management instead of using the money out of the emergency disaster fund? It's always amazed me that as a government, you as a Finance minister, under budget for disaster instead of taking a three- or a five-year average so that the taxpayers, the citizens of Alberta, know what the true cost is.

What is your largest expense in Agriculture and Forestry? Over the next two months where is this \$320 million going to go?

We've talked about how Calgary is the second-highest city in Canada in terms of the unemployment rate. Edmonton is the fourth highest. My goodness, sir, the only area of Canada that is higher

than rural Alberta is Atlantic Canada. Is any of this money – any of this money – going to help them, whether it's for some necessary infrastructure or transportation projects, something that we can have a long-term focus on, or is it going to be in bureaucracy? Is it going to be in carbon tax? Is it going to be in extra hidden costs of labour changes and carbon tax? My goodness. You know, it's painful when you hear so many rural charities talk about how the carbon tax and these changes may force them out of being able to do the goodwill work that they've done for their neighbours for tens and tens of years.

I do see that there are approximately two and a half million dollars in capital investment in Agriculture and Forestry. Where is that capital investment headed? Is it going to be a physical asset? Again, will it be helping a particular community, or is it more of a provincial asset, a provincial spend?

Let's focus on the financial transaction line item in Agriculture and Forestry. What exactly does that \$219,000 cover in financial transactions? I've asked you two or three times about the increase in our interest costs to the taxpayers of Alberta because of our six downgrades. You seem to prefer an answer as to how we have a race to the bottom, how your government took over a province of Alberta for the citizens of Alberta that was to the net good by \$7 billion in assets and how you've changed that to \$50 billion in just three short years. And again, Minister, I've heard estimates from \$85 to \$105 billion, where just a year from now you may end up. That's a financial record that Ontario and Kathleen Wynne may be proud of, but it's not a financial record that the people in the coffee shops of Alberta are proud of.

If you could and if you'd care to, I would appreciate your answering how much our downgrades in credit have cost us and where that may lead us over the next year, where that may lead us over the next five or 10 years. I think the bond agencies are asking for an answer. They would like to know. Certainly, Albertans would like to know what it's going to cost us as well.

Madam Chair, I'd like to go back again to the first part, Treasury Board and Finance. We're showing interim expenses of \$33 million, financial transactions of \$604,000. Again, Minister, if you could take some time and explain to me the interest and the debt costs in the financial transactions under Treasury Board and Finance, I would appreciate it.

You talked about our current debt to GDP. Again, your plan appears to be unlimited. Please, if you could just succinctly let me know: what is our current debt to GDP and what was it the day your government was elected?

How much of your interim supply budget is also going to risk management and insurance? It's very, very important to protect future generations.

The interim supply is also allocating around \$900,000 towards capital investment and financial transaction for Treasury Board and Finance. Can you please indicate the background of where that money is being spent?

10:00

You know, there's been quite a bit in the news about concern for communities that straddle the Alberta-Saskatchewan border. Of course, your government has found itself in a trade battle with Saskatchewan and a pipeline battle with British Columbia in the last little while. But I want to talk a bit about the carbon tax, the Alberta-Saskatchewan border and the impact of the carbon tax, in particular. For years in Medicine Hat and Cypress-Medicine Hat people from Saskatchewan, when they were coming to visit, would sneak across the border on gas fumes, just barely making it to Walsh, Irvine, or Medicine Hat to fill up their tanks in Alberta, where they could save a bit of money. Well, hon. minister, the opposite is happening now.

People are going to Saskatchewan. They're waiting till they're in Maple Creek or Swift Current before they fill their gas tanks, back to the carbon leakage example of the unintended consequences of your climate leadership.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to correct the record on so many things that were brought up by the previous speaker, you know, this government has put in place a strategy to assist the city of Lloydminster. Is it Lloydminster or Lloydminster?

Some Hon. Members: Lloydminster.

Mr. Ceci: Okay. That place, Madam Chair.

We put in a strategy to help the businesses in that community because, frankly, there was leakage. I think it was talked about that way. People were going across to the Saskatchewan side, and we didn't want the businesses on the Alberta side to be necessarily challenged around all of that. But, frankly, the same sorts of problems weren't identified in Medicine Hat, as was talked about just now. So we addressed where those issues are real, and we have a plan in place where it's necessary. Of course, you know that the government of Saskatchewan raised taxes, so we're finding less of a call on that program we put in place to help the folks, the businesses out in Lloyd.

Madam Chair, I just want to correct one other thing that keeps getting incorrectly talked about, and that is the net assets of the province of Alberta. The estimate is that this year, at the end of March, we will have \$27 billion in net assets. Of course, that's when you add the capital, all the things that are owned by the province, on top of the net financial assets. When you do that, you know that we're in a positive position. We are the strongest province in terms of balance sheets. This is a problem other Finance ministers would love to have in this country. We are in good shape.

I will say just with regard to some of the questions on Justice that members opposite know that just earlier this week or at the end of last week there was additional investment in addressing rural crime. That investment is \$10 million, and I have every confidence that we will continue in Budget 2018, which will come up in eight days, talking about our commitment to address the rural crime issues in this province. We are focused on it, Madam Chair. We are working with stakeholders and agencies throughout the province to ensure that we work collaboratively and do the right things as are identified by the people who have their boots on the ground and know what will be effective and work.

What won't be effective and work, Madam Chair, is when people like members opposite stand up and all they talk about are situations that have not gone well. If they don't focus on how we're going to improve things and how we can work together and only are naysayers and say that things are bad and they're getting worse and they're getting worse – that's not how you address problems. You address them clearly by seeing what the issue is, trying something, analyzing whether that effort was of any use at all or how it could be made better, and then going back at it and adapting your approach. I really wish the members opposite would take that problem-solving approach as opposed to complaining about problems all the time.

Madam Chair, Agriculture and Forestry. I can tell you that Agriculture and Forestry makes significant upfront payments to the AFSC, or the Agriculture Financial Services Corporation, and the irrigation rehabilitation programs. So the amounts that are identified in the interim supply estimates are very much to keep those agencies working. Obviously, the second one, the irrigation

rehabilitation program, receives applications and makes decisions about investing those monies to ensure that we have the best agricultural growing situation possible for our agribusinesses out there.

Madam Chair, the other area of Agriculture and Forestry that was talked about significantly is wildfire preparedness. You know, I don't perceive that there's been a wholesale change from the previous government's approach to all of this. The same sorts of processes in working with municipalities and counties and districts are still in place in terms of their preparedness for wildfires and the government's support of all of them. The Flat Top mountain recommendations – I think that was the report that had to do with the Slave Lake fire – are what we are as a government focused on making sure get fulfilled.

I'm extremely proud of the work that first responders do every year to address and prepare for wildfires that may happen or once they do happen. I'm proud of the government's response to all of those areas. In 2017-18, Madam Chair, just to put some context around this, the base operating budget for wildfire management was almost \$133 million. That covers all the preparatory work that's necessary, including training, opening air tanker bases, and hiring seasonal employees to get ready for all of that. We have also more than tripled the FireSmart initiatives funding, increasing funding to that area by \$11 million in this year alone.

Actually, it was called the Flat Top Complex Review, not Flat Top mountain report, but all 21 of the recommendations in that report have been fully implemented at this time. We've focused a lot on that, and we'll continue to do so to ensure that all Albertans, particularly those who are concerned about wildfires, have a greater sense that their government is prepared for every eventuality.

With regard to other questions that were brought up about unemployment in rural areas of Alberta, I just want to remind members of the House that this side of the House is focused on a coal community transition strategy. Certainly, those people who were professionals and employed in coal communities with regard to the removal of coal: we are focused on helping them transition to alternative employment or training or education.

You know, the other thing that was raised was around charities in rural areas and additional costs. One thing we did immediately with Budget 2015 is that we raised the FCSS amount \$25 million, from \$76 million to \$101 million, because FCSS communities, over 300 of them across the province, were asking for that. The previous government was deaf to their call. They did not address it. We addressed it. We have now, with our fourth budget, put an additional hundred million dollars where there wouldn't have been that money to social supports throughout the province to allow them to better address the needs in those rural and other communities around Alberta.

10:10

Madam Chair, the situation with regard to our plan and who we're working for is clear. We're working for regular Albertans. We're not working for the richest Albertans, whom that side treated as insiders and friends all the time. We're focused on making sure that all Albertans who have good, mortgage-paying jobs or want to get them have that opportunity to better themselves. We're focused in Treasury Board and Finance on that. We're focused in Agriculture and Forestry on that. We're focused to make sure that those Albertans who put in a good day's work have the ability to rely on programs and services they helped build. So I'm less focused on the credit-rating agencies than that member is. I'm focused on what Albertans' priorities are.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

This brings us to the next segment, with the third party. Hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow, did you wish to go back and forth with the minister or do a 10 and 10?

Mr. Clark: I would like very much to go back and forth with the minister, with his kind indulgence. I'll open with a couple of general comments. I know each of you, as I do, pays very close attention to standing orders. I know that as we prepare for session, like me, you read through your standing orders. So it'll come as no surprise when you read Standing Order 3(4)(a) that the Legislative Assembly of Alberta is meant to come back "the second Tuesday in February." One of the reasons for that, Madam Chair, of course, is so that the government is not required to bring in interim supply because the budget would have ample time to be introduced, debated, and passed in time for the end of the fiscal year, which every year, without fail, like it or not, comes on the 31st of March.

This interim supply is interesting in that it's not just one month. We're not just going to the 30th of April; we're going to the 31st of May. While that may be spun as just some sort of a technical thing – "Don't worry about it," the minister may say – well, you know, every single time, of course, this government has brought in a budget, in fact, we've had to bring in interim supply. It is certainly a rich tradition that the government they replaced also followed.

I can tell you that from speaking with folks within various departments in the government, it introduces real challenges for them to plan because it's unclear exactly what their budget is going to be. If you can imagine that you need to plan your activities from the 1st of April 2018 through the 31st of March 2019, not knowing specifically what your budget is going to be until the 22nd of March, that eight-, nine-day window is probably not sufficient for ministries to really, truly understand exactly what their roles are going to be in the next year. So I am disappointed that here we are yet again debating interim supply.

As I get into my specific questions about line items within interim supply, I just want to make a couple of brief comments here to the minister. While I do appreciate that it is not a straight line and simply, you know, multiplying by six, there are differences year over year. Places like Education, places like Advanced Education, of course, have a substantial variation in spending through the year. I respect and understand that. But there is so little information in the interim supply. It's one line: Advanced Education, expense \$469 million. There's virtually, in fact, no information about exactly what is included within it.

At least when we look at our supplementary supply, which we have the opportunity to debate this afternoon – and I am enthusiastic and excited about having an opportunity to ask some questions about that as well – there are at least a couple of lines of information of what exactly that money is going to be used for. So I am frustrated that interim supply traditionally has such limited information. The lack of transparency there is startling.

It does provide the opportunity for the government, perhaps, to embed and hide some spending increases, some overspending, and there's an awful lot of overspending to hide. When we look at the third-quarter fiscal update, issued just scant weeks ago, there's an extra \$1.032 billion of spending in the current fiscal year, in fiscal '17-18. There's an extra \$464 million over budget in operating expenses, \$427 million in general capital grant overspending, and \$323 million in climate leadership plan capital grant overspending. We throw around these numbers. It's a billion dollars here, a billion dollars there. It's \$464 million. That is a tremendous, a remarkable, a startling amount of money, Madam Chair. With that preface, I will move into asking the minister some questions, and apologies if some of this may be a bit of an overlap with my hon. colleague who's gone before me.

I'll start alphabetically. We'll start at Agriculture and Forestry. Now, I understand a lot of these increased expenditures this year relate to wildfire remediation, and I appreciate that, but of course the wildfire was in 2016, and this is the 2017-18 budget. My question to the minister is: could you just comment on where this \$318 million specifically is going to be spent on the expense side and on why it is that we're finding ourselves in Ag and Forestry so grossly over budget in this fiscal year?

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of our government. You know, there was certainly a lot to unpack there, so I'll take the chance to respond to a number of them. I think there are certainly a number of reoccurring themes here in terms of some of the challenges, most of it bringing up things that are not new to this Legislature, not new processes whatsoever.

In terms of the budget being introduced in March, it's very traditional within this House to have the budget introduced at that time because of the way that our particular revenue stream is attached to oil and gas. In terms of the impact on staff decision-making and the difficulty of doing that, our government has certainly functioned quite well for decades in terms of functioning with the budget being introduced in March. They certainly have enough information on where we're going to be able to be quite confident and comfortable with moving forward and doing the work that they do every day.

Let me just take a moment to say thank you to all of those who work so hard on behalf of all Albertans in all of our departments across the government of Alberta. They work tremendously hard every day to make sure that we are able to deliver the services that they need in order to ensure that their families have all of the services and supports that they need to move forward. Thanks to all those staff. I certainly know that there are always challenges in terms of the direction the government and the Legislature bring to them, but they do an amazing job each and every year in working within the structure, that has been in place for a very, very long time.

Also, in regard to the limited information on interim supply, again, we have absolutely nothing to hide on this, Madam Chair, as is typical in terms of doing this. It's been every year that we go through this process and do it, and in just eight days, in just barely over a week, every member of this House will have a chance to see the full budget introduced, with an opportunity for all of us to have a very fulsome conversation on that. I know that I myself and all of my colleagues are looking forward to talking about what we plan to do this year in terms of moving forward in the new budget year, in terms of ensuring that not only do we continue to meet the needs of Alberta families and communities across this province but also that we've worked very hard in terms of ensuring that as we do so, we take every opportunity to do so in a fiscally responsible way. So we're very much looking forward to sharing that in just eight days.

Another point brought up by the member is on details around advancing the grant funding for the MSI funding. Again, Madam Chair, this is nothing unusual. It's been done in the past numerous times, and again there's nothing hidden in it, nothing bizarre. It's just something that's been done by others such as ourselves.

In terms of Agriculture and Forestry I wanted to clarify a misunderstanding there, that the upfront grant payments are to AFSC in order to support them, in order to do the payouts that they need to do through their program.

Hopefully, that was a good start to answering the member's questions. I know that we are all quite excited, as always, to continue to answer your questions and make sure that we are as open and transparent as possible to help yourselves and Albertans understand the direction that we're moving forward in in terms of supporting Albertans and making sure that we do so in the most fiscally responsible way possible.

10:20

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Minister, for the answers to those questions. As always seems to happen, time flies, so I'll jump ahead here.

One of the areas I wanted to ask about – and, again, I appreciate that it is not always entirely valid when looking at an interim supply to simply multiply a number by the number of months. However, for health care, I would think that probably health care – I can understand where Infrastructure, Transportation, and Education type areas would have substantial seasonal variation in terms of when the dollars go out the door, but demand for health care in this province, I can imagine, is generally very steady and stable.

When I do my quick calculations on the expense side of Health and multiply by six the \$3.746 billion that are planned to be spent in the two months here of interim supply, I get \$22.476 billion, and when I look at last year's budget, the existing budget, we get \$21.406 billion. That's a 5 per cent increase.

I look forward to the minister enlightening us as to how exactly that represents bending the cost curve in health care, where Albertans have, I think, a reasonable expectation that spending roughly 46, 47 per cent of our budget in one area would perhaps be an opportunity to find some savings without impacting front-line services. It's an area where I, of course, will voice my great disappointment in this government for not finding more ways of delivering high-quality health care services, which I know we do in this province, and doing so in a way that is more cost constrained. I look forward to hearing the answer on how it is that Health seems to have gone up so much.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Chair. This is one of those situations in which somehow looking at the math and doing that multiplication just doesn't work. I certainly know that from my experience in working with women who were in labour, the same thing happened. In early labour they would be, like, "Okay; I've been in labour 12 hours, and I'm only at three centimetres" and think that they were going to be in labour for hours and hours and hours more after that. I told them: "You know, you can't do it that way. That's not the way the system works and not the way our bodies work." And this is very similar.

Sometimes, you know, you can look at things at face value and just do a simple multiplication, times six, and make assumptions that are in complete error. Just as those women in labour were not going to be in labour for three or four days based on the math that they were doing, nor can you say that interim supply in any way is representative of what we're going to spend by multiplying by six.

Just like in other ministries, Madam Chair, there are many upfront grants that Health has to provide. Health has an incredible responsibility in terms of ensuring that they meet the health care needs of those right across this province. I'm incredibly proud of our Minister of Health and our Associate Minister of Health and the work they're doing along with all of those incredible front-line providers and all their supporters in terms of providing health care.

But we also have many partnerships with organizations right across this province who work alongside Alberta Health Services

and the ministry in order to deliver services, and those partnerships require many grants right at the front of the year. We're really thankful for their work and once again just want to acknowledge how we work together to provide the best care we can to Albertans and will continue to move the bar on this and continue to make sure that we deliver the very best health care to Albertans that we can. But, Madam Chair, we're certainly not doing that with a budget that would be multiplied by six based on what is on the line of interim supply.

Mr. Clark: Well, thank you again to the minister, and thank you for your great work helping women in labour. I think this process may be just as painful as being in labour, but unfortunately the outcome isn't nearly as happy at the end.

Again, I do want to dig a little deeper into this whole question of health care. I appreciate the argument that we can't and shouldn't simply take this number and multiply it by six. However, what I'd like to understand is why, when I look at this \$3.746 billion for two months of operations of health care – that will be for April and May, which is the next fiscal year – and then I multiply that by six to count for 12 months, if I was to take those two months, calculate that, multiply that by six, I'd come up with a number that's almost \$22.5 billion. When I compare that to what was spent in this fiscal year, '17-18, that's a 5 per cent increase. That's the math that we have here in front of us.

What I'd like to know from the minister – again, I don't deny for one second that the people in our health care system are remarkable people and do tremendous work, and I want to be very clear about that. What I'd like to know specifically, though, is: what is different about health care spending in April and May that would make those numbers that much higher? When we see the budget in eight days' time, will we expect to see a 5 per cent increase in health care spending? If that's the case, what is already a pretty unlikely scenario of finding a way to balance the budget by 2023 gets pretty much impossible if that's going to be our cost curve. It may be bending the cost curve, but unfortunately it's bending it up, so that would be a real challenge. I'd like some very specific details on what exactly happens in health care spending in April and May that would put these numbers so far out of whack.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Chair. Certainly, in my role as a nurse previously – no more reference to women in labour – what I can say is that it was incredibly difficult because previously what we saw in terms of health care spending was an absolute yo-yo. It just depended on the given thoughts of the government in that particular year what we might be getting. I never knew if I was going to have more colleagues or fewer colleagues that I got to work with, depending on the particular whims of that government.

You know, Madam Chair, we're committed not only to more stable funding than that, but also the outcome of that yo-yoing was, you know, an average increase in health care spending that was 6 per cent. Certainly, that has been an unsustainable outcome for the health system in this province, that has been a long-standing pattern, and we're very committed as a government to bending that cost curve. Absolutely, I would say that we are going to bend that cost curve, and absolutely our commitment to Albertans is that we do recognize the need to move forward in a fiscally responsible way and to ensure that we keep those increases within reason.

Again I will say how proud I am of the Minister of Health and the Associate Minister of Health and all of the staff for coming up with the very best solutions to move forward and doing so in a way that allows us to actually continue to enhance the health and well-

being of Albertans and the work that we provide to them but also for ensuring that we find efficiencies around that.

Again, you know, the Minister of Finance was working with finance offices right across government to forecast the requirements for each department. These are based on their expected costs, what commitments they had, and the timing of payments in the two-month period. Absolutely, in no way can it be projected that expenses would be based on six times what it is for two months, and I think that has been stated very clearly, that multiplying this two-month period by six months is not going to be reflective of the budget.

Once again, in only eight days the full, entire budget will be available for everyone to look at and to be able to comment on and to have long and prolonged conversations about as we go into estimates and answer all of the very specific questions for the members who choose to have those questions answered.

Again, I'm very proud of the work we're doing to bend that cost curve as we move forward, and I'm looking forward to seeing the fruits of our continued support for the health and well-being of Albertans and looking forward to having those conversations on the budget just next week.

Mr. Clark: Well, budget day, Madam Chair, is one of my favourite days of the year. It ranks right up there with Christmas. It is finance-nerd heaven, so we look forward to continuing that conversation. I am disappointed that we didn't hear much in the way of specifics, so I remain skeptical, frankly, that this government has any desire or ability, more importantly, to rein in spending in a responsible way. To be very clear, when we're talking about reining in spending, we're not talking about massive front-line cuts. When I talk to my constituents, I find it very difficult to believe that in a \$21.4 billion health care system, soon to be a \$22.5 billion health care system, we can't find some reasonable and responsible savings that do not impact front-line services.

10:30

In my final 30 seconds I will ask the Minister of Children's Services perhaps also to comment on Community and Social Services. It appears that our spending again has gone up quite substantially in that area. Is there something specific about April and May in terms of timing of payments that would cause that, or in fact is there increased service being delivered that has caused this cost increase?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Chair. Once again I just want to state that each department submitted their requirements based on what their expected costs and commitments and timing of payments would be, and Community and Social Services is no different in that. We all have different expectations throughout the year. There's not an even disbursing of funds.

The Chair: We're now moving into the next segment, where any independent members would have an opportunity to ask questions.

It appears that that's not the case, so we will move on to any members from the government caucus if there are any who wish to ask questions. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Loyola: Thank you, Madam Chair. I really appreciate this opportunity to ask some questions.

The Chair: Did you wish to go back and forth?

Loyola: Yes, Madam Chair. I'll go back and forth with the minister. A lot of comments have been made in the House this morning

regarding credit ratings and the debt. One of the things that perhaps some of the members from the other side don't know – maybe even some of the members on this side don't know – is that I've been studying karate for the last nine years. You didn't know that about me, eh?

Mr. Ceci: I did know that.

Loyola: Oh, you did know that about me.

Mr. Ceci: You're looking good.

Loyola: Thank you, sir. Thank you. I appreciate that.

Now, you may ask: why is he bringing this up, right? Well, I bring it up because I was at my last karate class, and my sensei is, like: "Rod, why don't you hang out for a little bit here after class?" So we were hanging out, and, no word of a lie, the first words that came out of his mouth were: "Rod, I remember the Klein years. I remember the Klein years. My dad lost his job. I had just graduated from university. I couldn't find a job." He had a bachelor of science, he told me. He remembers at that time, during the Klein years, when the Conservative government of the time had cut so many programs in this province and people couldn't get access to the services that they needed because there were no front-line workers to actually help provide that service. That's what he remembers from the Conservative government of the time, when they chose to cut, cut, cut, cut, cut, as he put it to me.

Now, he's, like: "Rod, whatever your government does . . ."

Mr. Clark: Name.

The Chair: Hon. member, just a reminder that we don't speak names in the House, even your own name.

Loyola: He was, like, Sempei – because that's the title that's given to a green and a blue and a brown belt in karate, just so you guys know. I'm trying to keep this jovial. I'm trying to keep it jovial. He's like, "Sempei" – he actually said "Rod." He said: "I don't want us to go back to those times. I don't want us to go back to the times when it was hard for people to access services and when people were putting the budget before the actual needs of the people of Alberta."

Now, I understand that we don't want to go into major, major debt. We don't want to. I understand. And you know what? I know that our Finance minister has a good plan to get us back to balance, but that path to balance should not be sacrificing the people of this province. Never forget that the people who elected us to be in this House elected us so that we can make the best decisions in their interests and make sure that we're helping them when times are tough. That's the kind of government that we've chosen to be. When times are tough here in this province, we're going to make sure that we stand with Albertans.

We chose not to cut. Yeah, it's going to take us a little bit longer to get back to balance, but we chose not to cut because we don't want to sacrifice on behalf of the people of Alberta. We know they have it tough. But, you know, the good thing is that things are starting to change. The economic recovery is well on path. We're doing well. As the minister has said in this House before, housing starts are up, we have more drilling than we had before, manufacturing is up, and retail sales are up. Now, I know that not every Albertan is feeling the positive impact of this recovery yet, but going back to the words of my sensei, he was, like: it would have been a lot worse if you guys would have cut and cut and cut and cut the programs in this province so that people didn't have the services.

Now, the other thing that I want to mention is the fact that a lot of the problem during the Klein years was the infrastructure debt,

lack of hospitals, lack of schools. Like, I mean, how many schools were promised and promised and promised to communities? In my constituency alone since we've been elected, we've built four new schools. When I go door-knocking in my constituency, people open the door, and they recognize me: Rod. Sorry. MLA. They really say Rod.

Point of Order

Referring to a Member by Name

Mr. Clark: Point of order. You have warned this member today. There are very, very clear parliamentary traditions that we don't use names, and cute as he may think it is, it is enormously disrespectful to this Chamber and to you for him to keep doing this. This is serious business. I understand that he's making a point, and that's fine. There are rules that have been established over centuries of how we conduct business in this Chamber, and I would ask that this member follow those rules.

The Chair: Another reminder.

Loyola: Madam Chair, I respectfully apologize to the House. I will stop using names. I was just trying to be jovial, but, you know, okay.

Debate Continued

Loyola: Anyways, I go out door-knocking in my constituency. People recognize me, and they say: "You know what, MLA? We thank you for those four new schools that have been built inside this constituency since your government has been elected."

Now, that infrastructure debt weighs – it weighs and it weighs and it weighs – down on the people of this province, and that's what perhaps the members across the way don't realize. You know, they like to talk about the debt as if it was the personal debt of every individual in this province. It's not. They like to frame it that way, and I get it. That supports their opinion, and it supports their world view, and it supports their ideology, right? I get it. But that's not the way that the average Albertan sees it, the parent that wants their child to go to a school in their neighbourhood or even one across town that has, like, a special program that they want. They want that school. They need that school. They don't need it 20 years from now; they need it now.

10:40

The people in the constituency of Edmonton-Ellerslie, who started moving into that constituency more than 15 years ago, were promised. They were told by the developers, by the city. They were told by many people: yeah, they're going to be building a school right across from where you live, right here in this open space. They were being told that because they were being promised those schools by the past Conservative government. The sign was there, right in the field. It was there: future home of the new school. I don't know what they used to put on the signs. Whatever. It was something like that. The signs were up, but every time that constituent would walk by, walking their dog or maybe walking to the park, they would see the sign. Years would pass. No school.

When this government came on, we decided that we were going to fulfill our word and make sure to start investing in infrastructure projects so that we could get those schools built, we could get those hospitals built, and we could get those highways built because that's what the people of Alberta need. I want to give this opportunity to the Finance minister to talk to us a little bit more about that infrastructure spend and how important that is for Albertans.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to focus a little bit on Q3 and what I reported in terms of the deficit reduction. It blends in with what the MLA from Edmonton-Ellerslie was touching on. Just a few short weeks ago I said that the forecast deficit would be \$9.1 billion, a \$1.4 billion decrease from budget. It's lower. That forecast for the deficit is much lower as a result of the significant cost-containment efforts and constraints on costs and improved revenues that have happened in this province, specifically the revenues in higher nonrenewable resource revenues, and increased investment income. On the cost-containment side there has been significant work. It's not on the kinds of things that the member was putting a priority on. It's not on infrastructure investment. The cost containment that you're able to see as a result of the focused work this government is doing is on negotiating practical agreements with public-sector unions such as ATA and UNA and others that are in the queue.

Madam Chair, the previous government did a lot of individual negotiating. We've been able to take a government approach to negotiations and wrap them up into a more strategic, holistic – a comprehensive approach is what I'm trying to say. The previous government's efforts were all over the place, and it resulted in a noncomprehensive focus on negotiating practical agreements. We're changing that and seeing good results.

We've extended, Madam Chair, management salary freezes in the public sector along with a hiring restraint across public services. As people here know, for this Chamber and our political staff and others, almost immediately when the new government took over, there was a freeze on salaries for political staff and the elected for the entire term, and that won't change. We have a hiring restraint across the public service and a focus on hiring front-line jobs only, and that's having some significant positive effect. Consolidating across corporate services is helping out as well.

Madam Chair, in my much younger years, I took tae kwon do, and I was a yellow belt with a green stripe. The name that they gave me was Weakling. No, it wasn't, Madam Chair. But I did take that, and I know the discipline, I understand the discipline that the MLA for Edmonton-Ellerslie is talking about, the discipline of being focused on what your goals are and moving towards those little by little.

I can say that our goal is to get back to balance. We are moving towards that goal, and the good results of the decrease in the deficit in Q3 show how that can happen, Madam Chair, by the work this government is undertaking across cost containment and really focusing on diversifying our economy. That doesn't take place right away. Diversification takes time, but we're working on it. We're focused on it. We're not just riding the boom and bust and hoping to God that oil goes up to a hundred dollars again because it's not going there in the medium term, in the long term. What people in the know talk about: they talk about lower for longer, so we have to come up with a plan that realizes that reality and works with it.

We, of course, remain among the highest rated in the country with regard to credit ratings. We are carefully and prudently finding savings across the public services, but we will not sacrifice things like health care, things like education, that are priorities for the member back there. What we heard from credit-rating agencies was that we have to cut billions out of our budget or raise taxes by billions to keep our credit rates the same, and frankly we don't think that's the right approach. We know we're coming back. We know that with greater recovery, with that flowing in and more and more people feeling it, there will be more disposable income. There will be higher wages. There will be better jobs in the future for Albertans. Frankly, more Albertans are employed today than were

in 2014, and they're employed today because they're graduating from schools. They're looking for work. They're finding work.

Often talked about is the quality of that employment. Madam Chair, it is no surprise to anyone that the recession has had the effect of dampening numbers of people in workplaces and their wages, but that is changing. That is changing. Our plan is working. We are leaders in the country, with the growth of our GDP being at 4.5 per cent last year, in 2017, and it will lead the country. Along with a couple of other provinces we'll be leaders again in 2018. You only have to look next door to Saskatchewan to see how the choices they made are having a negative impact on their province. Their growth in 2017 was 1.3 per cent. They sacrificed the hopes and dreams of many in Saskatchewan as a result of the choices they made, particularly around education, because it is challenging for people to get into postsecondary.

We're going to continue to support good jobs in this province, Madam Chair. A diverse economy will result as a result of the investments we're making. In Budget 2017 you saw that already with things like the petrochemical diversification program 1, which we have announced, and you'll see more work done on all of that in Budget 2018. We are focused on addressing the waste that was in the system, the waste, frankly, left behind by that side, the waste that was indicative in the high salaries and the exorbitant perks of some of the highest paid public servants in the country. We're addressing that, but you can't immediately address it.

Our plan is that those things are changing under our plan. We are going to make sure that people who are in public service positions are remunerated, are compensated, are benefited to the same levels as the public service or less than industry. The benchmarks, frankly, that the other side put in place for many of those agencies, boards, and commissions were related to the private sector, and that's just wrong, Madam Chair. We have taken pains to redress that through a number of our actions, and we're going to continue to do so.

10:50

The Chair: The Hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much, Chair. It's a pleasure to stand up and talk budgets. You know, as I mentioned, I'll start off by saying that unlike the two members that spoke before me, I do not have any background in the martial arts.

Loyola: Not yet.

Mr. Malkinson: Not yet. So there are going to be no martial arts metaphors in my questions here to the minister.

When I go out in the riding in Calgary-Currie, you know, I like to go and talk to my constituents. Not every single one of my constituents had a chance to come out and talk to me during the election, so I go to them and meet them where they are. Just recently, actually, I was at an event in my riding, that was a charity event hosted by members of the local community. A large portion of them were restaurant and small-business owners. I had a chance to go through the room throughout the day for this charity event, which was for a good cause, and be able to, you know, chat to them about some of their thoughts and what's going on. Some of them said to me, you know, the complaint that we often hear from the opposition: oh, minimum wage is going to make my business disappear, and doom and gloom will follow. So I, then, of course . . .

The Chair: We are now finished with the rotation of 20-minute blocks. We're now into 10-minute segments, where speaking time is limited to five minutes each or is shared. We will go back to the Official Opposition.

Mr. McIver: Okay. Madam Chair, I would like to share the time with the minister if that's okay.

The Chair: All right.

Mr. McIver: All right. May I begin?

The Chair: Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. McIver: Okay. Madam Chair, I'm going to actually bring things back to where I think this is meant to be, which is . . .

The Chair: Hon. member, you do need to stand when you're speaking.

Mr. McIver: I will. Thank you.

I want to bring things back to where they're meant to be, which is a comparison of the first two months of the year coming up with the first two months of last year. I'm just going to ask the minister straightforward questions. To be clear, Madam Chair, I'm not asking him about any year other than a comparison of the first two months of this year to last. So if the minister goes other places, I am going to respectfully ask you to cut him off. Otherwise, he's not answering my question if he comments on other periods of time.

To the Finance Minister. Minister, you put this report out, and there's not a lot of information, but I'm going to respectfully ask you about the information that's there. It talks about Advanced Education. You want \$469 million for expenses. What is the difference in money that you're going to spend between the year coming up and the first two months of last year? What are you going to spend more on and what less on, please?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you. In Advanced Education these are payments to postsecondary institutions up front . . .

Mr. McIver: Madam Chair, I didn't ask him what the category was; I asked him what he's going to spend more or less on.

The Chair: Hon. member, there is no rule as to what he has to say. He can speak to whatever he chooses as long as it's within the guidelines of the discussion that we're having.

Go ahead.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you, Madam Chair.

As I was trying to say, in Advanced Education these are payments to postsecondary institutions upfront so they aren't forced to do any borrowing. Frankly, the member is saying: compare what last year's interim supply was to this year's interim supply, and tell me what the differences are. I'm not going to do that, Madam Chair. I don't think there's any point in doing that. What the point is is that these two months of interim supply are to ensure that the normal course of business, whether it's for Advanced Education or any government department, can be carried out as we take the time necessary to debate the budget, which will come up in the Committee of Supply process in a few short days.

Madam Chair, my staff has . . .

Mr. McIver: Madam Chair, he's not answering the question.

The Chair: Hon. member.

Mr. McIver: We were going back and forth.

The Chair: Hon. member.

Mr. McIver: Madam Chair, he's demonstrated that he doesn't know what he's talking about, so he should actually let me ask a different question.

The Chair: Hon. member, he can speak to whatever he chooses to speak to. He cannot be obligated to answer your specific question. That's simply the way this House works. You should know that and be aware of that, correct?

Mr. McIver: Oh, I'm happy to point out that the minister doesn't know his own portfolio.

The Chair: Go ahead, hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to reiterate that my staff have worked with finance officials across government to forecast what the requirements are. That works the same way for Advanced Education. So based on their expected costs for the first two months, their commitments, the timing of payments that they are required to undertake over the first two-month period of the year are calculated: totally rolled up, that's \$8.7 billion.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like the minister to explain for any of the categories – I'm going to make it as easy as possible on the minister to demonstrate that he actually knows anything about what he's being paid to do. Pick one, Minister; I'll leave it up to you. For any of the ministries, since you're asking for money for the first two months of the upcoming fiscal year, can you tell me for any ministry where you're spending less money than the first two months of last year or more money than the first two months of last year? Any one. I'm making it as easy on the minister as I possibly can to show that he knows his job.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. The information that the member is asking for can best be understood with the full budget before us in eight days. In eight days he will be able to track every ministry he wants to track and see what the difference is in their expenditures. I've indicated that there are two months identified in this interim supply. It can't be multiplied by six. You can't compare this interim supply figure with last year's interim supply figure. It doesn't work that way. That's the answer.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. McIver: Thank you. I didn't ask him to multiply by six. I asked him to take the two months of money he's asking for, and I asked him to say what was different. The minister demonstrated . . .

Mr. Ceci: Yes. I answered.

Mr. McIver: While he was interrupting me, he demonstrated that he doesn't know his job. So, Madam Chair, I will ask the minister another question based on the minister's opening remarks.

He spent some time talking about how he cut golf club memberships from agencies, boards, and commissions. I'm not arguing with him. My question for the minister is a simple one that only takes a number answer if the minister knows his file. The question is: what's the total number of the value of the golf club memberships, and what is that as a percentage of the government costs for agencies, boards, and commissions, please?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. You know, it's interesting that the member wants to go down the road of exorbitant kinds of salaries, benefits for leaders of agencies, boards, and commissions that this government put in place because it's not a good record. It's not a responsible way of doing business, but they did it, and they did it to benefit their insiders and friends and people who benefited from knowing them as a 44-year government that was in place. I have said before and used the number of \$33 million that have been eliminated from agencies, boards, and commissions over a three-year period as a result of the work this government has done.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. McIver: Thank you. The minister didn't answer the question: what's that as a percentage of the total cost of the agencies, boards, and commissions? So he demonstrated again that he doesn't know his job.

But we'll move on to the next thing, and we're going to continue to try to make it easy for the minister to just once show that he knows his job because so far he has demonstrated quite the opposite. Let's talk about things that the minister has talked about, and let's talk about how the decision should not depend upon the world price of oil. In these two-month estimates – and this was his remark, so I'm only asking him to expand on what he opened the door to. What's different in the first two months' estimates compared to the first two months of last year's estimates that is less dependent on the world price of oil?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you. Again, I want to say that I don't think it's relevant to talk about last year's estimates. We're talking about this year's estimates. They're here before this House and can be debated. I'm endeavouring to do just that with the member opposite, who seems to be focused on last year.

11:00

I can tell you that the world price of oil for the fiscal year to date, which for the 2017 budget will end in just a few short weeks, will average \$54, Madam Chair. We started the year out in Budget 2017, back in April 2017, saying that it would be \$55 a barrel. That was the average that we understood from the private-sector people, and the method of calculating that is well known by the Energy ministry individuals. So they identified, we accepted, and we put \$55 in our Budget 2017.

That changed drastically during the year. At Q1 we changed that to \$49 a barrel. We were going along, tracking at \$49 a barrel, but then the world price of oil went up again. We raised our forecast to be \$54 for the entire fiscal year 2017, and, Madam Chair, we are very close to reaching that with two more weeks to go and the price of oil now being about \$61.23 per barrel.

Madam Chair, Budget 2018 will have a new forecast for oil in it. That will come up, and we'll share that in eight days.

Mr. McIver: Thank you.

The minister, after promising that he now was going to make decisions not depending on the world price of oil, just talked entirely about how his budget is dependent upon the world price of oil, again demonstrating that he doesn't actually know his job. So I'm going to make it easy on the minister again. Every question has been easy so far. Every time he hasn't been able to answer it. He said that he's going to create an economy built to last. What is different about the first two months of this year compared to the

first two months of last year, which is what we're talking about here, that is going to create an economy built to last, Minister?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you. Well, the important things we've done are to make sure that schools are invested in, both at the postsecondary level and the elementary level, that there are schools there for people to go to, that there's training for people to go to. With education, with training, people can get better employment. They can do better for themselves and their families.

The other important investments we've made, of course, are into health care. So for an individual, that really is an economy built to last, if you have health care there and you know you can count on it.

Additionally, we have been focused on value-added parts of . . .

The Chair: We'll now rotate to the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow. Did you wish to share your 10 minutes?

Mr. Clark: I would like very much to go back and forth with the minister if I may. Thank you very much.

I just want to offer a few comments on a few of the points that the minister has made. You know, we've been here long enough – it's going on three years now – so we start to hear themes emerge and the same words repeated over and over again, and those words over time unfortunately seem to lose meaning.

What this government seems so blindly adherent to is this whole idea that if there's any effort made to apply any fiscal discipline, any fiscal restraint, especially on the expense side of the ledger, that only could possibly mean massive front-line service cuts, that either we have a benevolent government that will look out for people, or we have some draconian situation where we're throwing children out into the streets and not building a single school in this province. That just is simply not the reality. Not only is it possible but it is absolutely necessary for a government to apply a little bit of fiscal discipline, a little bit of restraint in terms of the monies that are spent within government, all the while expecting Alberta's tremendous public service to continue delivering those services.

I've heard the minister say a couple of times – and this will be the first question I ask – that within agencies, boards, and commissions they have found \$33 million in savings from constraining executive pay from the ABC review, and that's great. I applaud them for this. Can the minister tell me, please, what percentage of reduction that results in to the overall deficit for the province of Alberta?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. You know, the first thing I want to speak to is the fiscal discipline question. The fiscal discipline of this side of the House is stronger than on that side. We only have to look at the operational growth year on year that the previous government had. I can tell you that some years there were spikes up to 10 per cent in operational growth, and there were dips down to 6 per cent, and there were spikes back up to 10 per cent. This side of the House has bent that cost curve, when you wrap up all of operations, significantly. It's exhibited in the Health minister's portfolio, where it was 6 per cent per year growth on the operational side, and now it's in the 4 or under 4 range, and we have goals for lower than that.

Madam Chair, the previous budget, Budget 2017, has a graph here that identifies the bending of the operational costs that we have kind of been part of. It's in the 3 to 3.5 to 4.2 range, and we are going to undertake even more discipline in that regard to make it

even lower. That is how we'll get back to balance. That is how we'll address the deficit. We will have our expenditures under population plus CPI growth in this province. There are \$750 million in real constraints or savings that we have brought into Budget 2017. There is more we need to do. We know that.

The percentages that the member is looking for I don't have at my fingertips, but I can certainly work those up.

Mr. Clark: Well, happily, I've done that quick calculus, and it turns out that \$33 million of savings over your new \$9.1 billion deficit is, in fact, 0.0036 per cent. It's what one would call nonmaterial in the financial world. So while it's something, I think that's clearly not enough.

The \$750 million number you just threw out is a new one. I've never heard that number before. What I do know is that, looking at the third-quarter fiscal update, there's a billion dollars more in spending in fiscal '17-18 than was planned a scant nine months ago by this government in their very own budget. If all you did was stick to your own budget, that \$9.1 billion deficit would be \$8.1 billion. And that, Madam Chair, is material.

Back to health care. The minister had talked about constraining spending and also had talked about the behaviour of previous governments. I absolutely agree with him that previous governments, of which I was certainly never a part, never aspired to be, and never would be, quite deservedly were kicked to the curb. The party was so bad, it doesn't exist anymore. There's absolutely no doubt that the behaviour and poor fiscal management of the previous government were, frankly, not good either, but that doesn't excuse the approach that this government has taken. In fact, it gave even more of an opportunity for this government to show that it is possible – I can tell you that I know it's possible – to find reasonable savings within the public service.

I just wanted to ask – the largest budget line item here is health care. It looks like it's going to exceed \$22 billion next year. We'll see exactly what that turns out to be in eight days' time. But the minister talked about a 4 per cent year-over-year spending growth. Well, that still exceeds inflation plus population growth and will result, without question, in a very difficult time in balancing the budget because on the revenue side of the equation this government's entire plan seems to be to cross their fingers and hope the price of oil goes up. That's what happened in the third quarter, finally, and we realized some benefit from that. While I certainly will never cheer against Alberta, I think we would all agree that relying on nonrenewable resource revenues as the only way of saving our budget is not a responsible thing to do. It's also exactly what the previous government did, to their great detriment and to the detriment of the people of Alberta.

So I will ask the minister why, for the single-largest line item in the provincial budget and indeed in this interim supply document, Health, it is, in fact, acceptable for it to grow at 4 per cent year over year. Again, if you can enlighten us, to my questions previous, on how it is that we're going to constrain that when it looks like the first one-sixth of next year would result in spending levels that, if they're sustained over the remaining 10 months of the year, would be a 5 per cent increase in Health spending rather than the 4 per cent that you talk about or perhaps even less? When you look at inflation plus population growth, it's certainly less than 4 per cent.

11:10

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. You know, I cautioned all members – and this one has heard the caution from the Minister of Children's Services – not to do simple math and times

by six because that's not how the work was done to identify the interim supply estimates. The two-month period that we are identifying here, I want to underline, ensures that there's going to be time for a healthy debate around Budget 2018 and passing the appropriation act. Leaving a healthy margin of time to get important work done is deliberate and prudent in the planning on the government's part. When Budget 2018 is tabled on the 22nd of March, the Assembly will have the opportunity to discuss and debate the full budget. Once that process is completed, we'll bring the appropriation act into the Assembly that will provide for the full-year costs of the government expenses, operations.

Back in Budget 2017, the current budget that we're working with, there was an operating expense budget increase of 3.2 per cent for the '17-18 year in the Ministry of Health. Madam Chair, we have a work-in-progress with regard to Health in particular. There is great work being done to bend the cost curve in that area. I know the minister wants to reduce the operational expenditures, and she's working with the board of AHS to make that happen. I said about 4 per cent. I didn't say 4 per cent; I said about. These are numbers that are known off the top of the head of the relevant minister, for sure.

I want to say that there's good work being done in the area of pharmacies in terms of savings in generic drugs, in terms of savings and operational best practices, in terms of more efficient ways of delivering health services that are all having the impact of reducing the operational growth of that area.

Mr. Clark: All right. Looking at the clock here, I realize we've got about 10 seconds left, so I think I will just cede that time.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: We will now go back to the government caucus if any members wish to speak. For the 10-minute segment, do you wish to share that with the minister, hon. member?

Mr. Malkinson: I do wish to share. Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

The Chair: All right. Go ahead, hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much, Chair. You know, I go out and I chat with my constituents in my riding. Just recently I was at a charity event with a bunch of business owners, and I was chatting with them about what our government is doing. As business owners, of course, they definitely care about what the economy is doing. So I chatted with them, and they said to me, you know, some of the things that perhaps could be talking points coming from the opposition, that the minimum wage, for example, is going to cause doom and gloom. But I chatted with them. I said, "Hey, how is business going for you?" and it's, like: "Business is up. We're seeing more sales." They feel like they've seen the bottom of this recession. With the minimum wage, like any business, I mean, they would prefer to have fewer costs than more, but they are going through with it.

At that same event, actually, there was a member from the party opposite who was a candidate who was running for the nomination of the UCP who was there as well. It was interesting because this person was, you know, pretty much following me around this entire event. It was interesting for these business owners, who sort of got to talk about two different visions of what Alberta looks like going forward. One of them was going along and saying: "Well, you know, we'd lower the minimum wage. There are better ways to help the single mom than the minimum wage." Of course, I am a strong proponent that the right way forward with that is minimum wage combined with us investing in things like \$25-a-day daycare and

such is the way to help those Albertans who are most in need, to help businesses forward. Because when those who are most in need have extra money in their pocket, they tend to spend that money locally in the economy.

If you give a tax break to those who are most well off amongst us, you know, that money doesn't tend to end up at the local pub if somebody is making over \$125,000 a year of taxable income. For those of you who don't know how tax brackets work, taxable income would be the amount of money that is taxable minus your about \$18,000 basic personal tax amount. Realistically, in order for an individual in the riding of Calgary-Currie to hit that extra tax bracket that we introduced – and I think we rightfully and meaningfully introduced a progressive tax here in Alberta – you've got to be making about \$140,000 a year.

Now, the opposition has quite clearly said that they want to return to a flat tax. For that individual who is now making over \$140,000 year, to give them a tax break, the question I was proposing to these business owners was: "If we're giving that to somebody who is coming into your restaurant, who's making \$140,000-plus a year, are they going to buy an extra beer when they get a large tax break? Is that individual going to come in and buy the two-piece fish and chips versus the one?" These business owners kind of looked at me, you know, and went: "Well, highly likely no. I mean, a person who is making \$140,000 a year who is coming into my bar, for example, can only eat so much fish and chips and can only drink so much beer, and it's quite likely that they are already buying the amount of beer or fish and chips that one would buy when they come into the restaurant."

I talked to them again and said: "Okay. If you have a customer that comes into your restaurant who is currently making minimum wage or very near to it, you know, and if they have a bit of extra money in their pocket, do you think that when they do, they might buy an extra beer, might buy the two-piece fish and chips instead of the one when they have that bit of extra money in their pocket? Or perhaps they buy the same special they always do but come in multiple more times during the month. Do you think that would be a likely outcome of that individual having a little bit more money in their pocket?" And they said: "Yeah. That would make sense."

The Chair: Hon. member, you've reached the maximum of the five-minute speaking time.

The next five minutes will be for the minister to respond.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I think I'd like to address a little bit of what was talked about, the programs of this government, particularly the focus around wages. The focus on wages is seminal. You know, it was something that started many other provinces to do the same thing. We can see to our west in B.C. that they're talking about now getting to, I believe, \$15 an hour, maybe shortly after the government of Alberta hits that. Ontario is talking about the same thing. It won't be very long before the entire country is readjusting what they believe is appropriate and right for people to make in minimum wages in this country. We know that in the United States it's also a focus. Many states have brought in legislation for the same thing.

Madam Chair, that's just one piece of the puzzle. The other piece of the puzzle, of course, is around ensuring that every dollar is appropriately valued in the government of Alberta and that there is quality or value for money with every tax dollar that's garnered. I can tell you that the focus on bringing down the deficit is paramount on this side of the House. The focus on containing costs is paramount on this side of the House. We're not reliant on or waiting for the world price of oil to go back up; we're doing what we can. We're managing where we can as a government.

11:20

I can just maybe say that the figures I talked about earlier, the amounts that I talked about earlier and the amounts that come out of these things – I want to specifically say that we are freezing salaries until September 2019 for all non-union and management across the public service. Since it was imposed in April of 2016, that freeze has saved \$29 million per year in the APS alone. That's just for the APS. I believe it's about 27,000 or 29,000 workers in the APS. We have an ongoing hiring restraint in the APS as well, which has saved \$204 million since the beginning of 2015, Madam Chair.

We have reduced health care costs by a hundred million dollars over three years by lowering generic drug prices, plus \$28 million from the operational best practices review. That was in 2017-18.

And this was asked specifically by somebody. We've cut the salaries and eliminated bonuses for the highest paid executives in Alberta's agencies, boards, and commissions, saving nearly \$16 million annually. Those folks are still working for those ABCs. They're still providing great service to Albertans, but frankly the previous government was offside with what remuneration should be for the highest paid executives in the ABCs. We've reviewed public agencies, boards, and commissions. There were 301 when we took over government, Madam Chair. There are now 263 ABCs that provide great service in this province, but we've saved \$33 million over three years by consolidating or eliminating or downsizing those numbers of agencies, boards, and commissions.

I talked about the consolidation and transformation of government corporate services such as communications, IT, finance, and HR, saving \$15 million to \$20 million annually once fully implemented while achieving better results, Madam Chair.

Another thing we did was that we went back to every department, 21 ministries, and we went back to all of the agencies, boards, and commissions, and said that because we are in a constraint period of time, you have to give up a portion of your discretionary spending and make sure that we are spending properly. Late in the year we went back to them and said: 10 per cent reductions for discretionary spending for 2017-18, saving \$8 million.

The Chair: Hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake, you have five minutes and five minutes. Do you wish to combine your time with the minister?

Mr. Cyr: Absolutely. If he's willing. Thank you.

Minister, I have been patiently sitting and waiting to hear some answers from you and your office, and what I've heard repeatedly is that we can't use this three-page document in front of us in any way, shape, or form to substantiate the spending that we're about to approve, \$8 billion. Do you agree with that statement? Yes or no, sir.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you. I said that you had to be cautious about multiplying by six and figuring that that was the extent of that ministry's budget in 2018. You have to be cautious. It's not a direct line multiplication.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you for that answer. Now, you were saying that we can't compare this interim supply with past interim supplies for the two-month period. Yes or no? Is that correct, minister?

Mr. Ceci: I think I explained myself on this. I'm not comparing interim supply to interim supply. I think you can see this interim supply as an approximation of the budget that will be before us in eight days.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Chair. Now, I'd like to look at the first page, support to the Legislative Assembly. I went and checked past interim supplies. I know you just said that you can't compare them, but I wanted to take a reasonable opportunity to look at this. In 2015-2016 we had \$20,460,000 for support to the Legislative Assembly. In 2016-2017 we had \$21 million. In 2017-2018 we had \$20,597,000 in interim supply. This year we're putting forward \$13,528,000. Now, what we're looking at here is a 34 per cent decrease. It's been stable, sir. I would suggest that in this case – \$20 million, \$20 million, \$20 million, \$13 million – suddenly it looks like something is happening there, sir. Are you planning on firing 34 per cent from our Legislative Assembly support, sir? Yes or no?

Mr. Ceci: You've gone down the road of comparing previous interim supplies and figuring that there is some chicanery going on here. That's not true. LAO will continue to provide the support to the Legislative Assembly they've always provided.

Mr. Cyr: Well, sir, this is distressing to hear, that again we actually don't have an answer.

Let's actually move on to the next one here, which is the office of the Chief Electoral Officer. In 2015-2016 we had \$1,264,000. In 2016-2017 we had \$1.2 million. In 2017-2018 we had \$1.264 million. In 2018-2019, sir, it's \$6.5 million. That is a 415 per cent increase for this office. Now, I understand that we've brought in some new rules, but would you not be able to explain exactly how it is that this increased by 415 per cent, sir?

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Madam Chair. You know what I think is particularly rich about this conversation this morning? And I use the term "rich" ironically. What I think is particularly rich about this conversation is the sheer outrage of my friends on the other side of the aisle waxing on and on about their fiscal conservatism in the face of what they see as rampant spending when I am still trying to carve through an infrastructure demand list in my office that topped \$2 billion, with a "b". It would appear to me that the outrage fomented on the other side of the aisle seems only in reference to our budget and not to their infrastructure demands for their constituencies. Perhaps – and this is just a suggestion – if you really want to embrace the fiscal conservatism in yourselves, you might want to start by taking a look at your infrastructure demands and maybe saying: there are probably some things I can do without.

Mr. Cyr: I'd like to thank the hon. minister. She does bring up some valid points.

But I will go back to the interim supply bill, which is what we're discussing right at this point. I would argue that comparing interim supply to interim supply over the years is a valid way of looking at how we're doing. Now, obviously, it's clear that we have no ability to compare these years, in the mind of the minister, and that's, in my opinion, shameful.

Let's talk about Justice and Solicitor General. I see that, for instance, capital investment in 2017-2018 was \$742,000. Now, what we've got in this year, 2018-2019: it goes up to \$2,742,000. They added \$2 million, just a round number, to this line item. Sir, this is almost tripling or more than tripling this line item. What capital items are happening in this time period that weren't happening last year? That's a reasonable request to ask.

11:30

Mr. Ceci: The response will be something that you can spend countless minutes on when we have the full budget before us and you go into estimates and meet with the minister directly. That

minister will be able to tell you about their expenditures on the specific capital items that are of concern to you. I can tell you that this two-month ask is to ensure that the normal course of government business continues and is carried out, and it gives this Assembly the necessary time to discuss and debate the full Budget 2018 through the Committee of Supply.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you. I'd like to discuss Service Alberta in this, going back to the fact that we should be able to use prior interim supply bills to be able to track exactly how we're doing our spending and calculations. In 2016-2017 we had an ask of it looks like \$52,530,000. In 2017-2018 for expenses we've got \$55,532,000. In 2018-2019 we see \$78,500,000, Minister. That's a 41 per cent increase in expenses for that two-month period. We can see a stable line here of about \$55 million. How is it that we can't explain this increase of 41 per cent through these statements? I would like an answer to that.

Mr. Ceci: You know, if the full two-month supply is not needed – and in many cases it won't be; they've given themselves some cushion – it will roll into the subsequent part of the year. Madam Chair, we are giving ourselves a cushion so that we can deal with the expenses. Really, this is not something you want to multiply by six, and I think I've given that caution to several people on the other side. You want to understand that we are going to be coming forward with a full budget in eight days, and it will have the full amount for every ministry. It'll explain the relative goals of those ministries and what they're trying to achieve in the business plans. That information will all be available for all members of this House. It will also have the full amount that is necessary to address the expenditures in that ministry.

Madam Chair, there is nothing that's here that hasn't been in previous interim supplies. I would caution that you not compare previous interim supplies from last year and the year before and the year before.

The Chair: That brings us to the end of that segment.

We'll return to the government caucus should there be any members wishing to ask questions. Hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, do you wish to share the 10 minutes or just take five minutes each?

Mr. Malkinson: We'll share. Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

You know, I was listening to the debate, and I was wondering if the hon. Minister of Finance could explain how, if you're taking a very small segment of time with budgeting – I think of my Visa bill. If my bank said, "MLA for Calgary-Currie, how's your financial situation?" based on my Visa bill of March last year and my Visa bill of March this year, if one was to look at it, you know, one would see that my Visa bill of March this year is about 90 per cent lower than my Visa bill of March last year. The reason for that is that I had a very large planned expense in March of last year. I'm a car guy. I bought a transmission. They're kind of expensive. As a result, my Visa bill is way lower this year. If you only looked at that one small segment of time – could the hon. minister perhaps mention why it is important that we look at the full year and the full-year budget plan as opposed to single, small points of time, which seems to be what the opposition has been suggesting?

An Hon. Member: In case we buy a transmission.

Mr. Malkinson: In case we buy a transmission.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much. Yeah, I'm trying to caution: you know, don't look at this interim supply and compare it to '17's and '16's and '15's. If you remember, in '15 I think we had four months or five months of interim supply. Those aren't valid comparisons, and it's not valid, anyway, to do it. What's valid is to look at the budget, the audited financial statements of the budget. This June you can compare our results with the previous June, and you can compare those results with the previous June. Look at those things as opposed to these interim supplies and making calculations on them.

If you look at the budgets overall, you will see something like, you know, that operating expense increases in the '16-17 year were 3.9 per cent. This year they're going to be it looks like 2.2 per cent. In the first year of our government it was 2.7 per cent. Those are the numbers you should be looking at as opposed to interim supply and multiplying by six and comparing them with previous years.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. You know, going back to the theme earlier of chatting with constituents, I often talk with the constituents at the door about the importance of infrastructure spending and the decisions we made during the recession to keep people working.

Now, oftentimes constituents in my riding ask me whether our infrastructure spending is going to result in new schools in Calgary-Currie. You know, oddly, I say to them quite proudly that, in fact, it won't, but what it will result in is brand new schools in the area surrounding my riding, including new schools and modernizations in the neighbouring ridings of Calgary-West and Calgary-Elbow. Those important investments mean that the students that were overcrowding in the schools in Calgary-Currie and creating issues – I can think of one school in particular where students were actually being taught in a converted courtyard – are now having their school populations return to more normal rates, where each student is in their own classroom, and they're not having to use excess space as classrooms. What that means is that that allows students to learn in a proper learning environment, and that is good for the constituents of Calgary-Currie.

My question to the minister. As we go through, we heard, in fact, actually, from the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat early on talking about overall spending, and we heard the number of going back to B.C.'s level, which for us would be a 20 per cent reduction. I'm wondering. To the hon. minister: just in our interim supply, you know, in the short period of time we have, what would a 20 per cent reduction look like if we were to take the advice of that hon. member, and how would it affect families like, perhaps, the ones in Calgary-Currie?

Mr. Ceci: Well, you know, thankfully, we have not gone down that road. We have believed, frankly, that Albertans are worth it in terms of the programs and services they've come to rely on, support, and grown to enjoy. Frankly, the investment in those programs and services is to the benefit of our province and its long-term fiscal health as well as health generally. Going down the road of austerity is one we chose not to undertake from the start of this government. We didn't campaign on it, and we were able to be successful, with 54 MLAs being elected to this House to represent the views of Albertans. Austerity is something they rejected. They rejected the previous government because of, frankly, its scandals and its ability to not address the needs of Albertans over time.

11:40

They supported the continued progress in this province that was borne out when this government came in. We have been progressive in terms of things like taxes, investments in the capital plan, and support for addressing the social needs of Albertans through the myriad of new ways that have come to this province as a result of looking at the evidence around health care and the support of people with special needs and treatment needs.

Frankly, I think that this new view that has been brought to government has been a healthy thing because we've been able to say: austerity does not work. When you take the approach that we've undertaken, your economy grows faster than in those provinces that have taken the austerity approach, Madam Chair. We're not going back to those bad times that were present. We're going forward, and Albertans are following.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. You know, we were talking a bit about infrastructure and making sure that we were making the right choices. When we talk about those choices, in Calgary-Currie one of the things that I'm so lucky to have is that I actually have several C-Train transit stops that are right there in my riding. But many parts of Calgary and other major cities in Alberta, in fact, don't have those opportunities for transit. My question to the Minister of Infrastructure would be: with the upcoming budget, what would it look like if we started cutting back? I know that there's a massive infrastructure deficit, particularly when it comes to items of transit. What would a reduction, which is what the opposition seems to be suggesting, look like for Albertans in our major cities?

Ms Jansen: I'd like to thank the member for the question. You know, when we talk about infrastructure in this province, one of the great things that the Premier did in 2015 was to follow the advice of David Dodge. The advice was to build during the lean years in infrastructure. That was critically important, and we can see now the fruits of that thinking. What we have seen now is that we did the largest infrastructure infusion in the province's history, almost \$30 billion, and that not only built critical infrastructure that we were starved for in this province, but it put lots and lots of people to work on some very good and meaningful projects.

Fast-forward a couple of years, and your question takes me back to a conversation I had a couple of days ago, when I circled back with David Dodge and had a conversation with him. I said: "So we're going forward now. We've talked extensively about the need to ensure that we are building in the lean years, and now our economy is improving." In fact, as the Minister of Finance has stated before, our GDP numbers in Alberta are fantastic.

The Chair: That concludes that 10-minute segment.

We will return to the Official Opposition. Do you wish five minutes and five minutes, or would you like to share your time?

Mr. Gotfried: If I can go back and forth with the minister, that would be preferable. Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: So share the time?

Mr. Gotfried: Yes, share the time.

The Chair: Okay. The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the minister for being here to answer some of our questions. There's

one question that I'd like to ask that we've had a little bit of a challenge having answered in this House. It does relate to the interim supply estimates. The first one I'd like to ask is: is there any consideration within the interim supply estimates with respect to the legal obligations and financial obligations for the Enmax deal? We can go back and forth.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Is he going to sit down?

Mr. Gotfried: Oh. Sorry.

Mr. Ceci: I wasn't sure he was done because he kept standing.

The Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General has put forward, roughly, their needs for the first two months though you have to remember that those are based on front-ending some payments, bringing forward some payments in advance of when they would occur normally during the year or paying them off early, so that specific question needs to go to the Justice minister. I'm not part of the deliberations on the aspects of that part of their budget. Their budget is coming forward in eight days, and you'll be able to, through estimates, ask the minister that directly.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Minister, for the non answer yet again, but we'll move on.

With respect to Economic Development and Trade, we all know, of course, that Economic Development and Trade is an extremely important investment for us and one which we hope is highly leveraged on behalf of Albertans. We see that there's just over 59 and a half million dollars being allocated in the interim supply estimates. I've got a few questions, and I would ask in advance if you would answer them succinctly and as directly as you possibly can. The first one would be: could you explain to us what specific investment-attraction initiatives will be undertaken during these two months that require this funding?

Mr. Ceci: The person who can explain succinctly and will during estimates is the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. My staff worked with officials in every ministry, as I've said, to forecast what their requirements are, and for each department, Madam Chair, based on their expected costs, commitments, and timing of payments for the two-month period, that is calculated here at \$8.7 billion.

Mr. Gotfried: Well, Minister, surely you must have some details to actually be able to approve and present this interim supply budget, so I'm going to ask another question. How much of this requested funding will be directed towards rural Alberta and, maybe even more specifically, to regional economic development alliances within this budget? Again, I'm certain that you've had a chance to look at some of the more detailed aspects of this before bringing this forward to this House.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Yeah. You know, what you're kind of asking about is the budget. In eight days the ministers of each department will be in front of estimates and answer all of these questions fulsomely. I'm not going to reveal the budget to you or anybody here today. What I am telling you is that the financial officials in each of the departments have put forward this interim supply request, which we have rolled up. The rollup is \$8.7 billion, Madam Chair. That will help us get through and have the opportunity to fulsomely talk about each of those expenditures that this individual and others on that side are interested in. I can tell you that there is \$7.7 billion in expense amounts rolled up in each department, and about \$600

million of that is in capital investments across 18 departments. I can't tell you what each of those capital investments is. They're asking for that. That's the responsibility of the ministers. What I can tell you is that this interim supply gets us through till we have a fulsome discussion on budget, which will start in eight days.

Mr. Gottfried: Thank you, Minister, but respectfully we're talking about the requested funding here, which we're discussing today, interim supply estimates, not the budget. We're talking about the allocation of the monies that you're requesting from us today. Specifically, you know, I think, again, we're looking for some detail here, that you've actually taken the time to take a look at what we're requesting. This is in the billions of dollars, Minister.

I'm going to ask another specific question. Is any of this funding being allocated specifically to the impacted coal mining towns? Again, I'm talking about the requested funding over the coming two months.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I hesitate to sound repetitive, but I can tell you that, for instance, you know, Agriculture and Forestry makes upfront grant payments to a significant number of agencies through the Agriculture Financial Services Corporation. I can't tell you what each of those investments of AFSC is about, but I can tell you that the ministry believes that they need this much for the two-month period, and that's what's being provided.

11:50

Now, the minister will be able to provide specific information in terms of this example. That'll be at estimates. It won't be here today. What we're here today to say is that \$8.7 billion gives us a cushion to be able to present the budget in as fulsome a way as members opposite need it to be presented, and we will do that in a very few short eight days.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Gottfried: Thank you again to the minister, but I didn't actually ask about AFSC. Surprisingly, I got some answers on AFSC, but not on what I was asking about, and it seems that we're not going to get it. We're short on specifics here. We're asking for information on billions of dollars of interim supply estimates funding, and there's an opportunity here actually to, I think, share some of this information with Albertans in a transparent manner and . . .

Mr. Ceci: It was an extensive example.

Mr. Gottfried: I'm speaking here, Minister.

. . . an opportunity, I think, for you to show your diligence in terms of requesting this funding from Albertans.

I'm going to ask another specific question here. How much of this funding will be allocated to the international offices of the Alberta government?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. The budget information, as this individual knows, is locked down until budget is presented. There are sanctions for anybody who breaks those rules, and I don't want those to occur to anybody in my position. We will share, can share, and intend to share. Whether it's about the international trade offices or AFSC or any other ministry and their capital plans, that information is part of Budget 2018, like it's

been part of Budget 2017 and '16 and '15 before it. We have given ourselves two months of running room with regard to the expenditures here so that that side can ask as many questions in the estimates as they want to pose and bring forward as many amendments that they choose to. We're doing the regular, good work of governments now and before us to present interim supply and to get on with the business of running programs and services for Albertans.

Mr. Gottfried: Thank you, Minister. Again, respectfully, you've come up with a number here which is to run the business of government, and we understand that that needs to be done until we get the budgets. You've been presented with some numbers by your ministries which I'm sure are realistic and based on some budgeted numbers. We're not asking to see the budget for the full fiscal year. We're asking to see some justification. I think that this interim supply questioning opportunity is for us to ask questions on behalf of Albertans on the allocation of this interim supply.

I'm going to ask again: how much of the funding will be allocated toward export development and promotion? Again, I'm sure that your ministries have got to come up with a certain amount of detail in terms of providing information to you to develop these interim supply estimates, which we are then trying to find out a bit more detail about so that we can justify that expenditure on behalf of Albertans.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Let me give it a try. The interim supply is normally allocated in roughly the same proportion as the previous budget in order to continue operations of the government until a new budget is introduced and debated and approved. I understand the wish in opposition to try and winkle out a little bit of information about what the next budget is going to . . . [interjection] Winkle out. Look it up, hon. member.

The Chair: That concludes that 10-minute segment.

The next round would go to the government side. Well, we've just run out the clock. I was going to say that we had almost one minute, but we don't.

Pursuant to Standing Order 4(3) the committee will now rise and report progress.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

Ms Luff: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of Supply has had under consideration the 2018-19 interim supply estimates for the fiscal period from April 1, 2018, to May 31, 2018. The committee reports progress thereon and requests leave to sit again.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report? Say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Any opposed? So ordered.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Speaker. At this time I'd like to move that we adjourn until we return to this House at 1:30 this afternoon.

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

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, March 14, 2018

Day 4

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 14, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Good afternoon, members. Please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe that we have, seated in your gallery, a friend and former colleague of mine, Shannon Stubbs, Member of Parliament for Lakeland and the Official Opposition critic for Natural Resources, who has done a brilliant job fighting for Albertans with respect to the Vegreville immigration centre, our natural resources, and now on the criminal justice issue in rural Alberta. We welcome her to the House.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. S. Anderson: M. le Président, c'est avec fierté que je me lève à la Chambre aujourd'hui pour introduire l'école Corinthia Park school. These students – I believe there are about 60 of them – are accompanied by teachers Mme Nicole Côté, Mme Elizabeth Creurer, Mrs. Pamela Sims, Miss Kaylee Rattray, Mrs. Sharon Sereda, and by chaperones Mrs. Penny Matthews, Mr. Dean Matthews, and Mr. Jeff Fox. I would ask them all to rise right now, and if we could give them the warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

You were doing well on the pronunciation for the first sentence. Then it got a little complicated.

The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you Woodbridge Farms elementary school. This school has a wonderful community garden, and I'd like to compliment the students on their knowledge of provincial politics. The students are with their teachers, Antonia Triska and Garth Baker, and their chaperones, Judy Andrekson and Shelley McElveen. I would like them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly members of the town of Morinville seniors. They are here in the gallery to take in question period as part of a seniors' tour of the Legislature Building and the grounds. Hopefully, later I will be able to take a photo with them. I introduce to you – and as I call out your names, please rise – Ms Rosie Badura, Mrs. Janet MacDonald, Mrs. Vivian Rousseau, Miss Karen Wotherspoon, Mrs. Mary Benson, Mrs. Evelyn Briton, Mrs. Irene Grant, Mrs. Margaret Short, Mrs. Jennifer Berry, and Mrs. Moira Murdoch. Please extend to them the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour and pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly our newest addition to the Airdrie city council, Ms

Tina Petrow. Tina Petrow was just recently elected. She is a mom, she is an entrepreneur, and she is a long-time community volunteer. Would you please greet her with the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions today. First, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly Kaitlin Gareau. Kaitlin is a bachelor of social work student from Grant MacEwan University, and she is currently doing her field placement in my constituency office. Kaitlin has previous work experience with inner-city crisis relief work and is passionate about helping Albertans. I'd ask that she please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. minister.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to be a social worker myself and honoured to have colleagues from the Alberta College of Social Workers join us here today in the Assembly. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly Henna Khawja, MSW, RSW, a clinical social worker, and director at the Islamic Family and Social Services Association; Matthew MacIntosh, BSW, RSW, a social worker at Alberta Health Services; and George Jason, whom I've known for many years. It's so wonderful that he could join us here today. He's a retired social worker with an MSW, and he's chair of the Alberta College of Social Workers Social Action/Social Justice Interest Group, Edmonton. I'd ask my colleagues to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. minister, just to note that I was advised yesterday that the Saskatchewan Legislature elected a Speaker who is another social worker.

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

Ms McPherson: My guests have not arrived yet, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions. First, I introduce members who are here because they're part of the provincial critical care strategic clinical network, seniors' health SCN, and the provincial ICU delirium team. They're here today to recognize World Delirium Awareness Day and raise awareness about delirium and build understanding about its impacts. The SCNs are leading the standardized approach to prevention and management in all settings, a key action in achieving the vision and outcome of Alberta's dementia strategy and action plan. I now ask Barbara O'Neill, senior provincial director; Dr. Jim Silvius, senior medical director, seniors' health SCN; and the other members of their team to please rise and receive our warm welcome.

The Speaker: You have a second introduction?

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The second is a group who are volunteers and members of the Kidney Foundation of Canada, northern Alberta and Territories branch. March is National Kidney Month, which is an important opportunity to raise awareness of how to prevent kidney disease and promote early detection as well as

access to care. The support and compassion of dedicated volunteers like our guests in the gallery today help make life better not only for those affected by kidney disease but also their families and their friends. I'd ask that Flavia Robles, executive director, and Manuel Escoto, communications and special projects co-ordinator, as well as members of the Kidney Foundation, including two recipients and one aspiring recipient and their moms, please rise and receive the warm welcome of our Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly guests here to mark national Dietitians Day, which is today, and Nutrition Month. Every March we celebrate Nutrition Month across Canada, which is an important opportunity to raise awareness about good nutrition and the importance of a balanced diet. It is also an opportunity to recognize the important role that dietitians play in the health care system as front-line providers. I would ask that my guests rise as I say their names and remain standing: Doug Cook, Jody Brudler, Karen Boyd, Colinda Hunter, and Sarah Morland. I'd ask my fellow members to please extend them the traditional warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly distinguished members of the social work profession. As you can tell, we are sharing these introductions throughout our colleagues today, so I'll ask our guests to rise as we call your names. Our guests are here with the Alberta College of Social Workers, and we thank all of them for the work that they do to make life better for Alberta families.

First, I'd like to introduce Lynn Labrecque King, Alberta College of Social Workers executive director and registrar; Megan Mierau, generalist with Children's Services; BSW student Christina Foreman with MacEwan University; and Christina's field instructor, Carola Johnson-Vervoorst, MacEwan University, field instructor with Norwood Child & Family Resource Centre. There are a few other people that will be recognized by my colleagues, but I ask all members to join me in giving these folks the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

1:40

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Further to my colleague's introductions it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you some more social workers: Ajay Pandhi, the ACSW council's vice-president; Sadia Sameeullah; Fozia Yusuf, a BSW student with the University of Calgary; and Fozia's instructor, Zakhiiyya Bhaidani, a University of Calgary field instructor with the primary care network. I ask my guests to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

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

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly three constituents of mine from the crown jewel of the Cowboy Trail,

Sundre, Alberta. The first is His Worship Terry Leslie, the mayor of Sundre, and along with him Councillor Cheri Funke and CEO Linda Nelson. I'd like to ask them all to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Are there any other guests, hon. members? The Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would be remiss if we neglected to introduce, sitting to the left of our MP, Shannon Stubbs, a newly elected councillor for the town of Vegreville, Ms Tina Warawa. Please give her a warm welcome.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Members' Statements

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

Federal Energy Policies

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In documents recently released by the federal government as a result of an access to information request, we've seen some disturbing news for the oil and gas industry. While our domestic energy industry has had countless regulations, reviews, and burdensome taxes piled on, it seems that foreign oil has been getting a free pass. According to the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, who made a recent reference request, Ottawa has been holding Canadian oil to a higher standard than foreign oil that is being imported into Canada.

It further went on to make the observation: by putting up roadblocks in front of Canadian oil companies, governments are literally losing out on billions of lost tax dollars, and the federal governments are often too much in the practice of obstructing trade to our open markets within the country; nowhere is it more apparent than in the oil and gas sector; in the name of environmental protection we see governments holding back our ethically produced domestic products and giving more free passes to foreign oil producers, often benefiting dictators and despots.

Mr. Speaker, it is time that governments in our country started standing up for Canada, for our job creators, and for the hard-working people across this great nation. We need more than just words and empty rhetoric from this government here and in Ottawa. We need action to support Canadian energy and defend the economic union that previous generations worked so hard to build.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Social Work Week

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a social worker and the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees' chapter chair for Edmonton and area human services workers before I was elected, I am so proud to stand here today, joined by guests representing our profession, to celebrate the important contributions of social workers and to recognize Social Work Week.

Social Work Week was from March 4 to March 10, 2018, and it was an opportunity for us to celebrate the vital contributions of social workers to our society through events, film screenings, and more, including a light-up of the Legislature in magenta. The Alberta College of Social Workers has over 7,000 members. Although the college specifically recognizes registered social workers during the week, the government of Alberta also

recognizes those who work alongside registered social workers in the ministries of Children's Services, Community and Social Services, and others.

Bringing Change to Life was the theme for Social Work Week 2018. It is an ideal which social workers and their colleagues embody every day. These professionals help Albertans navigate life's challenges and work towards healthier lives. I encourage all members to continue to recognize the value of social workers throughout the year. Social workers support Albertans in many different areas, including disability services, employment services, income support, and child intervention. Their professionalism, compassion, and commitment to others is truly bringing change to life.

On behalf of the government of Alberta I sincerely thank social workers and those who work alongside them for their contributions in such an important and complex field. Please join me in recognizing all those who work in the social work field every day.

Thank you.

Rural Crime Prevention

Mr. Schneider: Mr. Speaker, it's no secret that Albertans are completely fed up with the spike in rural crime. The Official Opposition has been bringing this to the government's attention for months. Very little action has been taken by the government save one: the government rejected our request for an emergency debate on the matter last fall. Months later the government released news about additional funding for RCMP, support staff, and more prosecutors to possibly help alleviate some of the backlog in response times and court delays. It's a good first step, but these measures will take time, time to hire and train these people and get these resources where they are needed the most.

The problem that rural Albertans are facing is now, and the need is immediate. The speed of implementation is a real issue. Already I've heard from ex-members of law enforcement that have offered to return to the ranks to help fill the shortfall, and they were refused. Imagine that. If there is a pool of ex-cops and prosecutors that could step right into the breach and provide meaningful help until more assets are trained and deployed, why wouldn't we be hiring them on this program? It appears like a common-sense approach to take, but unfortunately these days common sense ain't so common.

I recently held a town hall with concerned citizens, the RCMP, and rural crime watch representatives. The anger and fear and frustration is very real. These people want action. These problems are not new; they are just becoming more and more commonplace. People are being victimized over and over again. Insurance costs are skyrocketing or it's being cancelled altogether due to repeated claims. People are becoming educated in protecting their property, but they continue to be victimized due to distances away from law enforcement. Response times are slow. The criminals know that, and they take full advantage of it.

One more thing needs to be said here. Of all the dozens of rural crime town halls that my colleagues have held all across Alberta, not one NDP government member has darkened the doors. Rural Albertans know that government is responsible for providing safety to its citizens. Does this NDP government realize that?

Support Motion 167. Thank you. [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

Calgary Southwest Ring Road

Ms Kazim: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud today to stand and speak about the southwest Calgary ring road. This project has been

under consideration since 2003. The technical review of the project took eight years. In 2013 the Tsuut'ina Nation agreed to transfer lands to complete the project, and we are forever grateful to these friends and neighbours for working in partnership with us.

Mr. Speaker, we know that a major construction project like the Calgary southwest ring road cannot be undertaken without causing inconvenience for people who live in the area. There were many concerns raised by my constituents about the construction, and I have spent a lot of time working with them and with government to address those concerns.

In particular, I was able to stand by my word and advocate for a citizens' group about protecting Beaver Pond, or wetland 6. As a result of the active participation of my constituents and my continuous advocacy, the Minister of Environment and Parks carefully considered the recommendations and signed a ministerial order directing Alberta Transportation and KGL Constructors to undertake additional protection of wetlands disturbed by the construction of the southwest Calgary ring road.

Further community engagement has taken place through community meetings and presentations, some of which I have attended. These sessions are an opportunity for residents and stakeholders to ask questions about the construction process.

I want to thank Alberta Transportation and the construction partners for providing ongoing information regarding plans, traffic changes, and environmental considerations. I know that the proponents are striving to continue to provide adequate and up-to-date information. I will continue to have an open door for constituents who have concerns, and I want to thank everyone for their continued engagement. It is by hearing your feedback and incorporating the issues raised into the planning process that we can make this process better for everybody.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Respectfully, Members, I'd just like to remind you: please don't use names while we're in discussions in debate, and I would urge all of you to direct your comments through the chair.

1:50

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

Carbon Levy Rate

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When will the NDP government raise its carbon tax by 67 per cent?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact, our government was very clear well over a year ago that we will sign on to the federal government's pan-Canadian framework with the approval of the Trans Mountain pipeline. Now, obviously, approval means nothing if it's not constructed. So, as always, we've been very clear that we will not move forward on the federal government's proposals until we see that that construction is fully under way and that approval is given meaning. That continues to be our position as it has been our position all along.

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, how does the Premier define "construction under way"? The Premier is well aware . . .

The Speaker: Hon member, excuse me.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the Premier is well aware . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, if you'd direct your comments respectfully through the chair, I'd appreciate that.

Thank you.

Mr. Nixon: Point of order.

The Speaker: Noted.

Hon. member, please proceed.

Mr. Kenney: I apologize, Mr. Speaker. I thought I was directing them through the chair.

Mr. Speaker, given that the opponents of our energy industry have committed themselves to doing everything possible to stop that pipeline, is it the position of the Premier that she will not raise the carbon tax by 67 per cent unless and until Alberta oil actually moves through that pipeline?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think it is reasonable for us to evaluate the outcome of the federal Court of Appeal decision and the degree and the state of play with respect to the pipeline's construction. The additional carbon levy planned by the federal government is not expected to come into play until 2021, and by then, we expect that the pipeline will be well into construction and that it will be fully clear to everybody that it will be completed. But we will certainly keep an eye on it because there is no question that the two were always connected, and they will stay connected.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the NDP's own adviser, Professor Leach, says that for the carbon tax to achieve the federal government's target, it would require a price of at least \$200 a tonne. Environment Canada says that it would require a price of at least \$300 a tonne. Does the Premier agree with these estimates, and if so, is it her ultimate policy intention to raise the carbon tax to between \$200 and \$300 per metric tonne?

Ms Notley: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, I must say that it's this kind of Chicken Little behaviour that we have actually grown rather used to from members opposite. I'm surprised to see that coming from the new leader, quite frankly. It's right up there with the stuff we saw yesterday with the alleged claims around the sales tax. But the facts are that our government has committed to a carbon levy, that went up to \$30 per tonne as of January. The facts are as well that we linked the movement with respect to the federal government to the \$40 and then the \$50 in connection with the successful completion of the Trans Mountain pipeline, and that's where we'll go.

Mr. Kenney: Well, there's a fundamental problem here, Mr. Speaker, because the NDP pitched Albertans on this punitive carbon tax for (a) social licence for pipelines, which does not exist. Trudeau cancelled Northern Gateway and killed Energy East. The B.C. New Democrats are doing everything they can to kill Trans Mountain. And Barack Obama vetoed Keystone XL. The other reason, they claim, is to help the environment, but the environment department says that it has to be 10 times higher than it currently is to meet the environmental objective. So what's the point of forcing seniors to turn down the heat at home in the middle of winter with their carbon tax?

Ms Notley: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker. I'm not actually particularly interested in relitigating the carbon levy, the question of whether climate change is real, and the fact that we need to act on it. I appreciate that the member opposite has many people in his

caucus who do question whether it is real, but over here we do not, and we know we need to act. That's why we brought in a world-leading, a continent-leading climate leadership plan that is reducing emissions on a number of fronts, supporting working families while we do it, helping to phase out coal, increasing renewable energy, and supporting our nonrenewable sector as they diversify and develop additional technologies. It's a good plan.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, polling consistently suggests that about two-thirds of Albertans oppose the NDP carbon tax, yet the Premier and her government seem to insult those people all the time by calling them names. They simply understand what the environmentalists understand, which is that a carbon tax doesn't make any appreciable difference in terms of greenhouse gas emissions unless it is \$200 to \$300 a tonne. This is the fakery of the NDP's carbon tax argument. So my question is: given that Environment Canada says that it has to be \$300 a tonne to meet the global climate targets, how high is the Premier prepared to go? It's a fair question. Why won't she answer it?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What our government will not do is turn back the clock, and what our government will not do is pretend that climate change is not a problem, and what we will not do is leave Alberta vulnerable to the changes in the energy economy that are coming, the way the previous government did. We will not do that because Albertans deserve a government that will lead for the future, and that's exactly what we are doing by taking action to combat climate change here in Alberta.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, here's the problem with the Premier's refusal to answer that question. Instead of reading what sounds like a press release written by Gerry Butts and Justin Trudeau, why doesn't she tell us how high she's prepared to raise the carbon tax? This is an issue because the NDP went through their last campaign without ever uttering the words "carbon tax" or "carbon levy." It didn't appear in their platform. They sprung it on taxpayers just months later. So we're asking the very legitimate question. Given that they hid their carbon tax agenda in the last election, what are they hiding from Alberta taxpayers in terms of their long-term intentions to raise the carbon tax? The Premier herself has said that it will have to go up. The question is: by how much?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, I've been fairly clear going out I believe six or seven years, and I think that's quite reasonable. I would suggest, however, that the member opposite needs to talk to people in his city that he theoretically represents with respect to what his position would be on the green line. Or he should talk to the people of Edmonton in terms of what his position is on the valley line. Or he should talk to those many, many new investors flocking to Alberta with respect to the incredible growth in renewable energy. The fact of the matter is that we are making great progress on a number of efforts to reduce our emissions. It's about time, it's long overdue, and we are very proud of that record.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, perhaps the Premier is not aware, but as a federal minister I announced a billion and a half dollars for the green line two years before the NDP got around to matching that. I'm glad they finally did.

Pipeline Approval and Construction

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, what I take from all of this is that Justin Trudeau is in charge of Alberta energy and environment policy. After all, Justin Trudeau got the National Energy Board to do his dirty work by invading Alberta jurisdiction over the regulation of upstream emissions, something protected in the Constitution by Peter Lougheed in 1981. Why has this Premier not objected to that violation of our jurisdiction?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, there are times, really, that I think the member opposite is missing Ottawa just a little bit more than is healthy for the debate here.

However, what I will say is that when it comes to supporting Alberta's energy industry and getting the pipeline built to tidewater, we absolutely believe that the federal government needs to step up and support the decision that it made in the national interest to get that pipeline built. Our government will not hesitate to do whatever is necessary to push the federal government to stand up for Albertans and for all Canadians because we know that's what the pipeline represents, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, for months the Premier and her government mocked and ridiculed me for suggesting that we get tough with the B.C. New Democrats on their threats to attack our economy and violate our Constitution, but finally they've come around – I guess it's a conversion on the road to election day – talking about being prepared to turn off the taps. Now we learn they're also prepared to follow our advice with respect to B.C. gas that moves through Alberta. So will they take our advice on one other point? Since they're taking all of our ideas – we appreciate it – will they also take our idea and just scrap the tax?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, what I will say is that, actually, this conversation is not about the member opposite at all. What it's about is Albertans and standing up for Albertans and doing whatever is necessary, whenever necessary to strategically ensure that we get the job done, that we are closer to securing than any other government in the history of this province has been. I am proud of it. We will keep pushing, and we will get the pipeline built.

2:00

The Speaker: Hon. member, I believe you have another supplemental.

Mr. Kenney: I'll take as many as you want to give me, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Or leave them out.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, we've just learned from federal documents that the federal government has zero regulations in place to assess carbon emissions from foreign oil imports, yet they shut down Energy East by imposing a regulatory mandate through the National Energy Board. Peter Lougheed fought and won for us to protect that regulatory authority. Why won't the Premier simply stand up and agree with me that it's outrageous that Justin Trudeau invaded our jurisdiction by getting the NEB into the business of upstream emissions?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, we know that putting a cap on emissions from the oil sands is a critical element in the argument to many, many people who have come to support our position with respect to getting this pipeline to tidewater. People in industry understand that as well as environmentalists. That's why people in industry supported it. We are not going to then turn around and undercut

them, as the member opposite would have us do, as he's busily researching what Justin Trudeau is doing. We're going to continue fighting for this pipeline. We're going to get it built, and I certainly hope that the member opposite will join us in celebrating when we do.

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

Electricity Power Purchase Arrangement Lawsuit Settlement

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The NDP's handling of power purchase arrangements may be the single greatest scandal of this government's short tenure, and that is saying something. Their ham-fisted mismanagement of this file has cost Albertans over a billion dollars, but yesterday the Minister of Environment and Parks said repeatedly that the resolution with Enmax will have "no impact" on taxpayers. This seems to defy logic. Maybe the Premier can help us out. To the Premier: can you confirm that this settlement will actually cost Albertans zero dollars in any way?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated yesterday, we can confirm very clearly that the resolution reached with Enmax will have no impact on taxpayers. In addition, what I can also confirm is that it allows us, as I said before, to accelerate the work that had already been under way between our government and many of our power producers to work together in the restructuring of our energy industry to provide greater stability, greater price certainty for consumers, and greater opportunity to attract investors and, ultimately, also to move towards renewable energy. We're very pleased with the outcome.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Clark: Well, Mr. Speaker, it is simply not true that this agreement does not cost taxpayers. It does. The reported transfer of carbon credits in exchange for an equivalent payment to Enmax appears to be essentially a net zero transaction at best, or maybe it's a massive payout at worst. We simply don't know. It's also been reported that this dispute cost Albertans \$70 million a month. That means over the 19 months of this needless lawsuit, Albertans are \$1.3 billion poorer. Again to the Premier: what was the point of going to court and settling for nothing while the Balancing Pool, which is backstopped by Alberta taxpayers, bled \$1.3 billion?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the member opposite knows, when we originally took this matter to court, it was because we were concerned about a clause that the previous government had negotiated inappropriately, we would suggest, behind closed doors, with representatives from Enron at the time, that hurt consumers. We are glad that we have been able to come to a resolution with all of the various parties and to move forward with what was a long overdue restructuring of our electricity system to, again, as I said, provide certainty, to provide investor certainty, and to provide stability . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Clark: Well, Mr. Speaker, perhaps the poor outcome for Albertans is the result of the legal counsel the NDP chose. Long-time B.C. New Democrat Joe Arvai was hired to stickhandle the

PPA lawsuit on behalf of Albertans. Now, if that name rings a bell, it's because the very same Joe Arvay was just hired by B.C. Premier John Horgan to fight against the Kinder Morgan pipeline in court. To the Premier: will you call on your good friend Mr. Arvay and ask him to do just as good a job for the B.C. NDP as he did for Albertans?

Ms Notley: Well, you know, I think that probably I will forgo that particular option, but what I will do, Mr. Speaker, is to talk about the incredible legal team that we have assembled on behalf of Albertans in our fight to get this pipeline built. In every legal skirmish that has occurred so far, we have stood up for Albertans. The ones we've got decisions on so far, we've won, and since then we've added the pre-eminent Peter Hogg to our task force, the Canadian leader in constitutional law. We will continue to do what's best for Albertans. We will represent them in every forum, exactly what they expect their government to do for them.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

Rural Crime Prevention

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a member of this Legislature for rural Alberta, I see first-hand the way rural crime is impacting my constituents, so I was pleased to see this government taking action to combat rural crime by investing \$10 million in new resources. I am particularly concerned about how vulnerable rural Albertans are to property crimes. To the Minister of Justice: how will this new funding impact Albertans who are concerned that their property may be damaged or stolen?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. We've heard from rural Albertans all over the province about their concerns around this issue. In particular, I'd like to thank the member for bringing it to my attention repeatedly. You know, this funding will be sure to put boots on the ground as we move forward. We're ensuring that we're using GPS technology better to ensure that we're tracking both vehicles and farm equipment, which I think will increase our rates very much, and we're increasing co-ordination between peace officers and police officers, which will allow us to leverage all those eyes and ears.

Mr. Piquette: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, far too often our officers and RCMP get stuck doing paperwork when they should be out protecting our communities. What are you doing to ensure that officers spend less time at a desk and more time out protecting our communities?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. That's one of the main components of our plan moving forward. We had the opportunity to speak to the RCMP about this in detail because, after all, they are the experts on this file. They told us that one of the things that would help them out the most is to ensure that their officers are able to get out into communities and not be pulled back into the detachment to do paperwork, so we're hiring some civilian staff to take some of that burden off those RCMP officers. I think this will help visibility greatly, which is something we've been hearing about from Albertans all over the province.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the most important parts of addressing rural crime is ensuring that offenders are brought before a judge. What are you doing in this strategy to ensure that criminal prosecutions happen in a timely way?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We're very proud to say that part of our plan to address rural crime includes hiring more prosecutors to work in those rural areas. They've had higher caseloads than prosecutors in other areas, so we're working with those prosecutors to ensure that we're able to get them the resources they need. There's no point in catching criminals if we can't also prosecute them and ensure that they're brought to justice.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Electricity Power Purchase Arrangement Lawsuit Settlement (continued)

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This NDP government's mismanagement of power purchase agreements cost the Balancing Pool over \$70 million a month, over \$800 million in a year. The government this week repeatedly refused to say how much their settlement with Enmax is costing Albertans. Yesterday when asked, the Premier claimed: "The resolution with Enmax will have no impact on taxpayers. Absolutely none." The question is that we know taxpayers already paid \$800 million for NDP mismanagement. How much more will we pay in legal fees?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, as has been said, we're very pleased that we've completed the agreement with Enmax. It's a fair agreement for them; it's a fair agreement for Albertans. Again, as has been said many times, it has no impact on Albertans.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. Mr. Speaker, given that the government is responsible for the Balancing Pool and given that all Albertans use electricity and will be on the hook for Balancing Pool losses, the \$800 million we spoke about arising from the NDP government's mismanagement, and given that the government's reckless policy decisions and legal entanglement resulted in an \$800 million bill to date to the taxpayer, to the minister: will Albertans pay for those losses on their electricity bills – yes or no, very clearly – and if not, who is paying?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. As was clearly stated in the news release and previously, this agreement involves carbon credits as an offset to a payment to Enmax, which, again, is a company that belongs to the taxpayers of Calgary. This agreement is also going to help us move forward in our electricity transition. It's going to help us meet our greenhouse gas commitments. Again, it has no impact on Albertans. It's a fair agreement for Enmax. It's a fair agreement for Alberta.

2:10

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, this sounds like a fairy tale for Albertans. Given that last year the government hired a Vancouver lawyer on a sole-source contract with a \$500,000 retainer to handle this file and

given that Albertans are on the hook for this government's policy decisions, especially the Balancing Pool, the question to the minister is: how many tens or hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars have Albertans lost on this secret deal arising from this NDP government's mismanagement?

The Speaker: The Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, when we talk about secret deals, this is all about a secret backroom deal that was from a previous Conservative government, and it did not stand up for the interests of Albertans. It's interesting that what was that government continues to stand up for business and not for Albertans. It's also interesting that they're now the new defenders of coal transition when, in fact, their leader was in Ottawa and was part of the government that came up with the coal transition, something they had no plan for, something they did not tell Albertans about, and they didn't figure out how they were ever going to pay for it.

The Speaker: Hon. members, it's been so nice to hear what's being said in this room for the last three days. I do hope that continues.

Carbon Levy Increase

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, given that the Finance minister is a fan of telling Albertans that everything is rosy and that things are looking up, up, up, given that unemployment in Calgary is up, up, up to 7.9 per cent, the second highest in Canada, youth unemployment is up, up, up to 13.1 per cent, the highest outside of Atlantic Canada, business closures in Calgary are up, up, up the last two years at over 2,000 per year yet this government continues to force these struggling Albertans to pay the carbon tax on their heating bills, at the gas pump, and at the grocery store, to the Minister of Finance: why is your government continuing to punish Albertans who have yet to experience any recovery in their financial situation by pushing the carbon tax up . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
The Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, you don't have to take my word for it. Take the Conference Board of Canada's word for it, RBC's word for it, CIBC's word for it, and that of other financial institutions, including ATB. They all say that our economy grew the fastest in the country last year, and they project that we are going to lead again this year.

Mr. McIver: Given that I'd believe unemployed Albertans long before I'd believe this minister, Mr. Speaker, and given that the chamber of commerce, whom I would believe first, has stated that Alberta's carbon levy is imposing thousands of dollars of costs on Calgary's small and medium-sized business and given that I'd take the word of 92,000 payroll job owners in Alberta that lost them in 2017, before the recession, and given that 2,000-plus businesses close per year – and I take their word – again to the minister: why won't the government scrap the carbon tax and other overhead costs for Calgary small-business job creators? Would you take their word for it, please?

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to point out to the member that Calgary is the fastest-growing city GDP-wise in

the prairies this year and is forecast to be the fastest-growing city in the country next year.

Calgary Economic Development beat their targets and has attracted and supported the expansion of over 90 companies that have created over 5,000 jobs in 2017 alone. Compared to a year ago, Calgary created over 20,000 new full-time jobs. Mr. Speaker, we are working in concert with the city of Calgary, Calgary Economic Development, standing up for businesses, attracting new businesses through our government's initiatives, something that the opposition would clearly not do.

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, given that the minister's stats are less impressive when you consider how many jobs were lost during the first year or two of this government's reign of terror* and given that Alberta lost over 10,000 full-time jobs last month and given that the government's own website claims that the carbon tax's economic impact needs to be offset by improved market access but given that the carbon tax has blatantly failed to get any new pipelines completed or even get the social licence, to the minister: why are Albertans, including unemployed Albertans, still on the hook for the job-killing, spirit-breaking carbon tax?

Mr. Ceci: Mr. Speaker, we know that not all Albertans are feeling the economic recovery. That's why we're continuing with our plan, which supports those who do not feel the recovery yet. We're investing in income supports. We're working with the federal government around EI. We're putting money into transitional supports. What else – what else – can we do? We're going to do it. We're not going to cut the carbon levy, because it has led to the approval of pipelines. We're going down the road we're going down, which is the fastest growing road in this province and this country.

Social Service Delivery

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, we can all agree that those who care for Alberta's vulnerable deserve our support. In this House we should acknowledge them as the front-line heroes that they are, which is why I was so frustrated to learn that these tremendous Albertans were not consulted on the recent legislative changes that have severely impacted their ability to care for those with developmental disabilities. The NDP's labour legislation means that these selfless Albertans are on the hook for up to \$250,000 a year in additional costs. These organizations now face the impossible choice of cutting services or closing their doors. Why did the NDP government not consult its front-line . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
The Minister of Labour.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was very proud last year to be able to bring forward updates to workplace legislation that had been left stagnant for decades. We made a point of consulting with all Albertans and reached out to organizations, both through industry associations, service agencies, and Albertans themselves, who responded to a series of feedback surveys and other items. Making sure that we have fair working conditions for all Albertans, making sure that our workplace standards protect our Albertan citizens is very important. I'm very proud of the work our government did.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, it's not just the changes to the labour laws that have severely hindered our heroic front-line service providers. Given that this government has layered on the carbon tax, two minimum wage increases, and additional labour changes

*See page 117, right column, paragraph 10

to overtime and given that these service providers simply cannot pass the costs along, again to the minister of community services. Your options are to cut services to the disabled, run deficits, or close the doors: what do you suggest these service providers do?

The Speaker: The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. Our record is very clear. We have worked with disability sectors on all issues that matter to that community. Let's talk about the supports intensity scale imposed by that side. We repealed it. The safety standards regulation imposed by that side: we consulted them, repealed it. Last year we worked with them on minimum wage and all those issues. We addressed them, and we will do so going forward as well.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, given that this minister's record is implementing a carbon tax and other labour legislation that has created a budget crisis for countless front-line agencies and given that this government has shown a pattern of implementing its ideological policies without consulting and given that this is impacting vulnerable Albertans or those that care for them, my question is: did they even think through the implications of this policy, or were they just hoping that our hard-working front-line service providers would make the tough choices for them?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. Our government is protecting and improving the supports that Albertans rely on. Just take the PDD program. In two and a half years we have increased it by almost \$100 million; the AISH program, around \$100 million. If we were to take advice from them and reduce the supports by 20 per cent to make it equal to B.C., just in AISH alone every individual would lose \$500 every month. Albertans opposed those kind of cuts, and we stand with Albertans.

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

Rural Crime Prevention (continued)

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We identified rural crime as a crisis over a year before this government made any attempt to even acknowledge it was a problem, last fall even requested an emergency debate, and the government opposed. Last week the government finally announced funding for new police officer positions, but this is all smoke and mirrors. Counties have been putting up their own money but still can't find officers to fill the vacancies. Minister, I asked you twice yesterday, and I shall ask again today: on what specific date will these new RCMP officers that you promised actually be protecting our citizens?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We know this issue is critical to all rural Albertans. We've been hearing from people across the province. That's why we worked in concert with the RCMP to come up with a plan that's their action plan, that will help support rural Albertans, that's supported by municipal councillors in those areas. They stood with us. These RCMP officers will not only put more boots on the ground, but the civilian officers will allow the RCMP officers we already have to get out on the ground and to do more work. Our

strategic intelligence sharing will help them to target prolific offenders.

2:20

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that one reason that crime is out of control is that property crimes aren't taken seriously and that repeat and multiple offenders are not remanded in custody despite long criminal records and serious criminal charges and given that these offenders are simply being released to continue preying upon vulnerable residents and that, as a result, public trust in the justice system has been eroded, Minister, will you commit today to calling your federal counterpart and working to end the revolving door that allows criminals to repeatedly victimize Albertans? Yes or no?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We're absolutely committed to ensuring that every Albertan feels safe in their home. That's why we're working with the RCMP, who, after all, are the experts, to ensure that the things we're doing are the things that will maximize the safety of Albertans. Certainly, we've heard very positive feedback with respect to our GPS tracking programs that will target property crimes. In addition, we've already been getting results with our intelligence-led policing in central Alberta, where it was piloted. This allows us to target prolific offenders, who are responsible for a huge proportion of that property crime.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that not a single member of this cabinet, rural MLAs, or, most shockingly actually, the minister herself has attended any of these rural crime town halls to speak to victims and given that your announcement was just another knee-jerk reaction to a crisis you tried to ignore for as long as you could and given that if the government had actually consulted with stakeholders, it would know that just throwing money at a problem isn't going to solve it, Minister, when will your government start taking this matter seriously, and when are you actually going to talk to the victims of these crimes?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, nothing could be further from the truth. We've been hearing from Albertans all over the province on this issue. We've been hearing from our MLAs on this issue. My colleagues have been out talking to Albertans on this issue. We're also working with the RCMP to ensure that we have a plan to strategically target these individuals so that we can make moves on safety. This isn't about throwing money at the problem. This is about ensuring that we're leveraging eyes and ears through rural crime watch associations, through peace officers, and through intelligence-led policing to ensure that we're doing our best to target those prolific offenders that are preying on Albertans.

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

Highway 15 Twinning

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Highway 15 is a vital corridor for our oil and gas sector as well as our agriculture producers to move equipment and goods. It's also an artery that serves thousands of workers. To the Minister of Transportation.

You announced budget funding to finish twinning highway 15 into Fort Saskatchewan and to finish twinning the highway 15 bridge. You identified it as a priority in the 2015 capital budget. Could you please provide us an update for the residents of Fort Saskatchewan and Alberta, which it serves?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the hon. member for her question and for her advocacy on this issue. The existing highway 15 bridge is very severely over capacity. Vehicles cross the highway 15 bridge more than 23,000 times a day, and congestion is a serious issue, especially during peak periods. Design on twinning the bridge has begun. Construction is expected to get under way in 2019, with completion of the highway twinning expected in 2022.

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Minister.

The tragic news of the loss of a young woman was for Albertans, of course, an incredibly tragic thing to hear. She was only 17, and she passed just across the highway 15 bridge from Fort Saskatchewan. Now, we have been fighting for these improvements for decades. It's something that I'm clearly passionate about, as are the residents of the entire area where I live. To the minister: what are we going to do to make sure that safety is improved in this area?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, our hearts go out to the family of the young victim on the road. The member well knows, because she's been involved in getting the work done to twin that highway, that that bridge will be significantly safer. I expect that that work will continue until we've completed the bridge in 2022. That will very, very significantly improve safety on the bridge, as the member well knows.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the significant investment that this represents in the heartland region and in the safety of our communities, how will the improvements to highway 15 also support working families?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, the twinning project will create hundreds of jobs in the area throughout the construction process and indirectly in surrounding communities. It also supports our government's economic diversification initiative, that will see two petrochemical facilities built in Sturgeon and Strathcona counties. It will also improve drive-times for local commuters and support economic development in Alberta by improving the connection between Fort Saskatchewan, Sturgeon county, the city of Edmonton, and the Industrial Heartland.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Petrochemicals Diversification Program

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last session I asked the Energy minister whether she'd consider doing another round of the petrochemicals diversification program. Now, I'm not going to go as far as the Leader of the Official Opposition and say that she took my idea, but it's nice to see. However, we need to make sure that these programs are delivering value for Albertans when we're using

government money. Since the minister has opened a second round of this program, I hope that that decision was evidence based. To the Minister of Energy: what measurables were collected in the first round to make sure that this program was an effective use of taxpayer dollars, and are you confident this program delivered value for Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for that question. Absolutely, we talked, through the EDAC report, to many Albertans, and they saw the value of the PDP 1 program, the petrochemicals diversification program. The way it works is that there's up to \$500 million in royalty credits offered, but the catch is that the project has to be completed and operational before any of those can be redeemed. In the meantime we get municipal taxes; we get provincial taxes, federal taxes. People are working and communities are flourishing because of these projects.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you for that, Minister.

Given that the minister is confident this program is delivering value to Alberta taxpayers and given the positive response from businesses involved in the petrochemicals diversification and given that Alberta could benefit from further diversification in other areas other than oil and gas, to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade: is your department working with Energy to replicate this type of model in other places in our economy?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll thank the member for the question. The answer is absolutely. Our Department of Economic Development and Trade has basically been tasked with making it easier to do business in the province. That's supporting our own entrepreneurs and our sectors like energy, but, as well, we introduced a year and a half ago two different tax credits that are sector-wide, that will support entrepreneurs and businesses in Alberta. The investor tax credit gives Albertans the opportunity to invest in companies in their own backyard, helping them to scale up, hire more people, and grow. Then our capital investment tax credit is a great incentive to encourage investment in Alberta today, which is going to create jobs and help to diversify our economy.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Fraser: Given that the government may enjoy reannouncing this program every year for the benefit of photo ops and convenient Bill 1 material, it makes it unpredictable. If we're trying to promote innovation and diversification, we need to create stability, investment confidence, and not tie important programs to our political whims. To the Minister of Energy: will you consider making this petrochemical investment an ongoing program so that companies looking to invest have more certainty going forward?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we got a lot of good ideas from the EDAC recommendations, and we're acting on early ones. We saw the success of PDP 1, and we've announced PDP 2.0. We're also going to be working with companies who want to look at partial upgrading and also feedstock because this is a holistic plan, because we want a recovery and sustainability that are built to last in Alberta.

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

Carbon Levy and Seniors

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Small-town Alberta is hurting from the NDP's carbon tax. Community volunteers are having trouble paying the tax, and what does this government tell them? Apply for grants to retrofit their facilities, which they can barely afford to keep open since this government imposed the carbon tax. In other words, pay loads of money to save some. Now, Minister, is this the best you can offer when they're struggling to keep the lights on in these facilities?

2:30

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll thank the member for the question. You know, we created a made-in-Alberta plan that's making sure that we have a system that works for Albertans. Through our climate leadership plan and through the carbon levy 60 per cent of Alberta households are receiving a rebate. We also cut the small-business tax rate by a third. Alberta now has the second-lowest small-business tax rate in the country. I will add that Albertans still pay the lowest taxes in the country. It's about \$8.7 billion less than what they would pay in Saskatchewan, the members opposite's best friends. As far as what Albertans are getting . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Gill: Given that a specific example of a facility facing serious hardship is the seniors' centre in Sundre, where hard-working volunteers are doing everything they can do, Mr. Speaker, to keep a much-needed community facility operating, and given that their carbon tax bills are tipping them near closure and this government's solution is to lecture them about reducing their costs through retrofitting, which they cannot afford, Minister, why does this government think that their carbon tax cash grab is more important than the work of these valuable nonprofit organizations?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll thank the member for the question. We're making life better by protecting front-line care and making life more affordable for seniors in Alberta. Approximately 260,000 seniors in our province are eligible to receive up to \$300 annually for the carbon levy rebate. We've also provided a \$500,000 grant to the four largest housing management bodies to conduct energy efficiency audits on provincially owned units. We are encouraging and providing supports for seniors and not-for-profits to reduce their energy consumption, which has the lifelong . . .

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

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that another example of this unfair carbon tax comes from the minister of seniors, who has quietly clawed back the rebates from seniors living in subsidized housing, and given that the minister made this move because the NDP's carbon tax is forcing housing providers to cut services for seniors in their facilities to pay their carbon tax bills, Minister, where will it end, and are you just going to keep taking money away from our seniors, or will you do the right thing and just cut this tax?

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

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. As my hon. colleague just said, 260,000 seniors are receiving up to \$300 on the carbon levy rebate. We've given \$800 million in seniors' benefits, actually, over the last two years to seniors. We're absolutely investing in seniors in our province so that they can live in dignity, and we've got their backs. We're supporting them all the way.

Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker.

Ranchers' Water Access

Mr. Barnes: At Christmas Alberta Environment and Parks sent letters to some farmers and ranchers advising them that water applications submitted over 16 years ago were being rejected and water access related to these applications revoked. Southeast generational ranchers Aaron and Rebecca Brower received such a letter. They were told that their application, filed 16 years earlier, was being closed and traditional water access cancelled. To the Minister: under whose authority were these essential licences cancelled?

The Speaker: The hon. minister of agriculture.

Mr. Carlier: And forestry.

The Speaker: And forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member for this very important question. I know full well the importance, obviously, of water to the ranching community. My family are ranchers just across the border in Saskatchewan, a very similar topography, a very similar climate. It's a dry climate. Water is obviously essential to their operations. The minister of environment has been clear in talking to those ranchers. Both she and I regret terribly that those letters were ever sent out. They were sent out in error. The minister of environment has been very clear that we're making sure that not a single rancher in Alberta will be stripped of their water access.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, after weeks of pressure the Minister of Environment and Parks finally released a statement assuring ranchers that their right to water access will be granted, but given that the minister failed to clarify that their water licences would be reinstated and she did not provide assurances that the original applications' priority would be based on their application prior to the 2001 deadline, again, Minister, will you guarantee the reinstatement of all these traditional water applications and that the priority of these applications will be based on their original submission date of 2001?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to restate that not a single rancher in Alberta is going to be stripped of their access to water. It's obviously essential to their operations. You can't raise cattle without water. Many of these ranchers use that same water for their own household use, so it's obviously very important. The Minister of Environment and Parks has been very clear in instructing her officials that they're to sit down with every rancher in that area to ensure that their processes are respected and that their access to water will continue.

Mr. Barnes: What a shame these terrifying letters went out right at Christmas.

Given that a local rancher was left without critical water access for his livestock and family because of repeated bungling by this NDP government and given that with the stroke of an NDP bureaucrat's pen the existence of a ranch that has been in continuous operation for over a century is now threatened, Minister, has anyone actually been held accountable for this ridiculous boondoggle, and what steps have you taken to ensure this isn't going to happen to hard-working Albertans everywhere again?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. You know, the Minister of Environment and Parks has been clear. You can understand that she was extremely disappointed that this situation ever arose. Obviously, water access for ranchers is vitally important. We're going to continue working with them. I'll continue working with my colleagues at Environment and Parks to ensure that water access for these ranchers will be maintained. For sure, I can guarantee that. I'll also continue working with the ranchers in that area for their historic use of the water as we go forward.

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

Electricity Power Purchase Arrangement Lawsuit Settlement (continued)

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I was speaking in this very House about a PPA settlement resulting from this government's mismanagement. The environment minister said, "This settlement has no impact on Alberta taxpayers. It's a settlement between the two parties." Let's be clear. Those two parties are Enmax and the Balancing Pool. Given that the Alberta Balancing Pool is backed and guaranteed by this very government and since this government only has money from the taxpayers, it seems like an erroneous statement. To the Minister of Finance: is this a Balancing Pool problem that we have to pay for later?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let's review some of the issues here. Just over a year ago we took action to protect Alberta families. You know, again, I talked about the backroom deals that started all this way back when in the Conservative government. We've settled – and I'm pleased to say that the last one with Enmax was settled – with the companies, and we've provided loans to the Balancing Pool. If we had not acted, consumers would be facing much higher charges, but thanks to our actions next year their costs will be 78 per cent below what they would have been had we not acted.

The Speaker: Thank you.
First supplemental.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this government is ultimately responsible for the Balancing Pool and given the hidden bill for this settlement will end up being paid by the Alberta government, how much money are Albertans expected to pay on bailing out this NDP boondoggle?

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Again, our priority is standing up for Albertans, Mr. Speaker. You know, we've stopped unfair electricity charges that would have resulted from the backroom, insider deals from the previous government. Our government is taking action for regular

Albertans to deal with price spikes. Our Conservative opposition here continues to stand up for this backroom deal, that was bad for Albertans. We negotiated with the companies. We gave the Balancing Pool a loan. They're still continuing to defend the backroom deals that were not good for Albertans. We know what side we're on.

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

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the government has been fighting a legal battle on this issue of power purchase agreements since 2015 and given that in this settlement the government has all but admitted that they were wrong and it is their fault, how many taxpayer dollars were wasted? Again, will you admit that the Balancing Pool will end up being paid for by your ministry, Minister of Finance?

The Speaker: The Minister of Energy.

2:40

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I want to say, for I'm not sure how many times now, that the deal that was struck between Enmax and this government was fair for both sides. It was fair for Enmax, fair for us, and it's fair for Albertans. As clearly stated in the news release and as clearly stated here, it involved carbon credits that offset the payments to the company. This agreement will help us move on in our electricity transition and fix a broken system.

Carbon Levy Increase (continued)

The Speaker: Hon. members, as has been requested, the Member for Calgary-Hays would like to clarify a matter.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During my question I used the word "terror." Somewhere between my brain and my mouth I meant to say the word "error." I was incorrect to characterize the government that way. I apologize to the government unreservedly. I apologize to everybody in this House and to all Albertans. There's no excuse, and I will be more careful in the future.*

The Speaker: Hon. members, in 30 seconds we'll proceed with Members' Statements.

Members' Statements (continued)

Schoolchildren's Transportation

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, this NDP government's policies are hurting Airdrie families and families all across the province. One example is how this government changed the rules when it comes to busing children to school. That was Bill 1 last session, and then, of course, there's a massive carbon tax, which also affects busing. The Rocky View school board is currently facing a \$1 million revenue shortfall for student transportation, but of course the students need to still go to school somehow. So what does a school board do?

Well, Rocky View schools has taken the initiative to engage in extensive consultation with parents about how to handle this problem created by the NDP government. They held public meetings in Airdrie, Cochrane, and Chestermere, made presentations at school council meetings, and asked parents and staff to review various options through an online survey. Some options include transferring funds from instruction to transportation; increasing bus ride times, meaning some rural students may be riding on the bus for up to three hours each day; changing schools' start and finish times in

*See page 113, right column, paragraph 3

order to accommodate more bus runs; and reducing the number of school days. I have been impressed by the way the school board has been handling this issue in working with parents and staff to decide next steps. Perhaps the NDP could take some lessons from them on how to do proper consultation. But the trade-offs in this case are, unfortunately, very significant, and families have this NDP government to thank.

It is time for a government that consults with Albertans and puts families first rather than an ideological agenda. Albertans deserve a government that actually studies the impact that their policies will have on families and communities. I hear many complaints from residents about the very policies this NDP government has the audacity to tell them are good for them. People know when something isn't working. Mr. Speaker, this NDP government is out of touch and needs to stop making life harder for Albertans.

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

Economic Diversification and the Future Economy

Mr. Carson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A shift is currently under way in the global economy. Artificial intelligence and innovation will drive the economies of the future, and we must ensure that our province has an opportunity to lead in the research and development of these industries. Companies like Google DeepMind here in Edmonton give us a small glimpse of what's on the horizon. In only four hours their AlphaZero program was able to teach itself how to play chess and beat the reigning AI program, Stockfish, 28 to 0. There are many breakthrough stories like this one happening throughout the industry, and they will have major implications for our local economy if we don't play a part in it.

In order to keep Alberta competitive, one year ago our government introduced the Alberta investor tax credit and the capital investment tax credit. Before our government introduced the AITC and CITC programs, high-tech companies faced challenges and barriers starting up and investing in our province. For far too long Conservative governments put all of their eggs into one basket, and when the global price of oil inevitably declined, not only did workers lose their jobs, but our government also lost the ability to support the important programs our communities depend on.

The results of these tax credits speak for themselves. To date the CITC has conditionally provided \$60 million in tax credits, stimulating more than \$1 billion in capital projects for manufacturing, processing, and tourism infrastructure. The vast majority of jobs created from these programs are full-time, and each dollar provided generates upwards of \$2 in provincial taxes. Whether these funds are being accessed by companies like Google's DeepMind or Canadian-owned and -operated Aurora Cannabis, we can be incredibly proud that people are looking to Alberta to expand their operations because of these new tax credits.

I'm proud to be part of a government that is creating new opportunities within our communities and truly building a diversified economy for the future.

Thank you.

Presenting Petitions

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

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have three pages that were incidentally omitted from my previous petition, related to calling on the government of Alberta to enable

written protocols for all species on which restrictions on rehabilitation or fostering [animals] are placed under the ... Wildlife Rehabilitation Permits, so that orphaned and injured animals may be assisted.

I'd like to add those to the previous petition.

Thank you.

Introduction of Bills

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

Bill 2

Growth and Diversification Act

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise today and introduce Bill 2, the Growth and Diversification Act.

This bill will enable government to reinforce two successful tax credit programs that have already spurred innovation, diversification, and job creation in our province. Mr. Speaker, we want to see this trend continue. This bill would create a new interactive digital media tax credit to ensure the growth of the digital media industry, a burgeoning sector that has great growth potential here in Alberta. Combined, these actions will encourage investment in new products, services, and capital projects, and these tax credits offer increased opportunities for more economic activity, diversification, and growth. This legislation would also include support for 3,000 tech spaces in postsecondary institutions across Alberta and new scholarships to help grow a future high-tech workforce.

We know that investment is a key driver of growth and diversification and investment in Alberta businesses and in our future workforce. This proposed bill will ensure that government continues to promote economic diversification and support employers and entrepreneurs in creating jobs and encouraging high-tech training opportunities here in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, furthermore, this being a money bill, Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of the bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

[Motion carried; Bill 2 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Highwood.

Bill 201

Employment Standards (Firefighter Leave) Amendment Act, 2018

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured today to rise and request leave to introduce Bill 201, the Employment Standards (Firefighter Leave) Amendment Act, 2018.

I'd like to thank Parliamentary Counsel. I'd also like to thank the many fire chiefs around the province and in my constituency who consulted with us. This bill proposes to amend the Employment Standards Code to protect part-time, casual, volunteer firefighters from loss of employment because they are or have become a part-time firefighter. Currently employers can and in some cases have terminated employment for missed time due to fulfilling duties as a part-time firefighter. I'm hoping that my colleagues will take the time to consider this bill and will see fit to support this bill as it advances through the House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 201 read a first time]

2:50 **Tabling Returns and Reports**

Mr. Cyr: Mr. Speaker, I rise to table a press release and federal ATIP documents obtained through the Canadian Taxpayers Federation that show that the Canadian government does not force the upstream and downstream emissions test on foreign oil imported into Canada, therefore discriminating against Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the appropriate number of copies of a document referred to by the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition in a speech yesterday in regard to the National Energy Board, clearly showing that upstream and downstream emissions played a significant role in the stopping of Energy East.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I referenced something in my question today. It's an article from CBC News entitled Calgary's Economic Growth Will Slow to 2.5% this Year, Predicts Conference Board of Canada.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I believe that we had a point of order today. The House leader for the Official Opposition.

Point of Order Remarks Off the Record

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on 23(h), (i), and (j) today. It has been awhile since we've had a point of order during question period in this Assembly, and unfortunately today we have to end that track record.

You know, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Official Opposition has done a great job – two major things he's changed that I never thought I would see in my time in this place. The first is to bring significant decorum to this Assembly, which I think is to his credit, and the second is to get the government to fight for pipelines.

Today while the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills was asking a question of the Minister of Community and Social Services, the postsecondary minister, a minister of this government, heckled to him: you hate disabled people. We saw the chief opposition whip today rise and apologize to this Chamber for mistakenly saying one word inside his question. It is ludicrous that this government continues this behaviour. It is unbecoming of a minister of the Crown to act like this in this place. He should stand up from his seat right now and withdraw and apologize for that comment.

I encourage the government, through you, Mr. Speaker, to stop this behaviour and to start taking the business of this Legislative Assembly seriously and to stop playing games because Albertans have had enough of it. It's inappropriate for a minister of the Crown to act that way.

The Speaker: The Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I obviously didn't hear the comment, although I'm sitting right in front. But I have had the opportunity to confer with the Minister of Advanced Education, and he indicates that that's not what he said, so that's, I guess, that.

The Speaker: Any other members?

Regretfully, I did not hear the comment being made. I would just use this as an opportunity to remind all of us, however, that comments such as this, if they, in fact, do happen on occasion, you be conscious of the consequence of that and show respect not only to the other members but to the House and to the people of Alberta.

I want to thank all of you for the tone and tenor. As we all know, in this – it's certainly my experience – it's not just the words; it is sometimes the visual connections that have an impact on us.

With respect to this particular point of order I wasn't able to hear the comment nor see, but again I use this as an opportunity to remind all members.

Orders of the Day Committee of Supply

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: I'd like to call the Committee of Supply to order.

Hon. members, before we commence this afternoon's consideration of supplementary supply, I would like to review, briefly, the standing orders governing the speaking rotation. As provided for in Standing Order 59.02, the rotation outlined in Standing Order 59.01(6) is deemed to apply, which is as follows:

- (a) the Minister, or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may make opening comments not to exceed 10 minutes,
- (b) for the hour that follows, members of the Official Opposition and the Minister, or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may speak,
- (c) for the next 20 minutes, the members of the third party, if any, and the Minister or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may speak,
- (d.1) for the next 20 minutes, the members of any other party represented in the Assembly or any independent Members and the Minister, or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may speak,
- (e) for the next 20 minutes, private members of the Government caucus and the Minister or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may speak, and
- (f) for the time remaining, to the extent possible, the rotation outlined in clauses (b) to (e) shall apply with the speaking times set at 5 minutes as provided in Standing Order 59.02(1)(c).

During the first rotation speaking times are limited to 10 minutes. Once the first rotation is complete, speaking times are reduced to five minutes. Provided that the chair has been notified, a minister and a private member may combine their speaking time, with both taking and yielding the floor during the combined period.

Finally, as provided for in Government Motion 6, approved by the Assembly March 13, 2018, the time allotted for consideration is six hours, three hours this afternoon and three hours tomorrow morning.

Supplementary Supply Estimates 2017-18 General Revenue Fund

The Deputy Chair: I will now recognize the hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General to move the estimates.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I would like to move the 2017-18 supplementary estimates for the general revenue fund. If passed, the estimates will authorize an approximate increase of \$720,000 in voted amounts for the office of the Child

and Youth Advocate, \$1.5 billion in voted expense funding, \$35.7 million in voted capital financial transactions for the government. The estimates are consistent with the fiscal plan as presented in the 2017-18 third-quarter fiscal update and will authorize increases and transfers to the office of the Child and Youth Advocate and for the following 10 departments: Agriculture and Forestry, Children's Services, Community and Social Services, Culture and Tourism, Education, Indigenous Relations, Justice and Solicitor General, Labour, Municipal Affairs, and Status of Women.

The ministers responsible for these departments and I will be pleased to answer questions from all members of the Assembly. Madam Chair, these supplemental estimates represent the finalization of our budgets. As we've worked through the recession, that we're now beginning to come out of, obviously some Albertans have needed some increases in support. I think that at this time it's critical that we continue to invest in services for those people, including health care and education, because people still get sick and children still need an education regardless of whether we're in a downturn.

I'm very proud of those actions that we've taken. With that, off we go.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any members wishing to speak from the Official Opposition? The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Okay. Thank you, Madam Chair. For our 20 minutes is it okay to go back and forth, hon. minister?

The Deputy Chair: Hon. minister, you're okay with going back and forth?

Ms Ganley: Yes.

The Deputy Chair: Please proceed.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you. Respectfully, I will keep my questions as succinct and to the point as I can, and I would hope you have the opportunity to do the same with your answers. I guess I'll just, you know, quickly stand up and say that when we're spending \$55 billion a year, it's disheartening to be standing here looking at an increase of over a billion and a half dollars, that wasn't budgeted. It's a big number, of course. It's a burden on the next generation. It's a burden on our economy.

3:00

But I want to start with page 2, near the top of the page, the financial transactions amount to be voted under section 3 of the appropriation act. We have a number, 35 and a half million dollars. Of course, one of the big components of financial transactions is debt and interest. Is the minister able to tell me how much of this is interest payments that the government didn't foresee last spring when they tabled their budget, and does any of this increase in interest have anything to do with the downgrades in credit?

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. That number, as I understand it, is made up of multiple different components. I don't have before me all of the different components, so I'll have to undertake to get back to the member on that one.

Mr. Barnes: Okay. Thank you.

Yeah. That's our concern, of course. We agree wholeheartedly to take care of Albertans that are in need and a temporary hand up where it's needed. We just want to make sure that the enrichment of bondholders in New York and Switzerland is not at the expense of everyday Albertans.

Madam Minister, I want to talk about the Education capital investment transfer next. On page 38 of the supplementary supply document it notes that 31 and a half million dollars will be transferred to capital investment from expense for infrastructure maintenance and renewal of school facilities. I would like to ask you, please, as kind of a three-part question: how many school facilities will be maintained or renewed with this money, could you please provide a list of the facilities for which you need this money, and is the transfer of any of this money related to the damage of any school because of a natural disaster? Of course, the terrible fires we've had may have had an effect. So if you could do that, I'd appreciate it.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you so much, and thank you so much for the question. The infrastructure supply is for all of the school boards. It's allotted to them based on enrolment and so forth. This is a movement of money for regular infrastructure maintenance for schools as they follow through with those normal procedures, right? It could be for painting. It could be for putting on a new roof. It could be for new furnaces and so forth. This is directed to all school boards, and they make their choices about how they make the infrastructure maintenance and renewal decisions based on each of their individual schools.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you for that. I was Infrastructure critic in 2012-2013. One of the things I remember: the government had a list rating the condition of schools, what kind of condition they were in. Unfortunately, once or twice a school that was rated good, if I remember right, ended up with a serious problem that not only affected the taxpayer but, more importantly, affected the quality of the education for the students. With respect, Mr. Minister, I'd like to ask you about your feelings on how accurate you think the school index of condition may be and what we've done in the last year to ensure it's as accurate as possible.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you very much. Yeah, it's very important, especially when we consider that we have almost 200 new school projects on the go, that we have a proper system in place to ensure that timely maintenance is being conducted on schools, because of course if you reach a point where, let's say, you're not working on the roof, then you end up, you know, with this domino effect of a structure being compromised. School boards do conduct their own maintenance procedures and so forth, but we also have, through our department, people to conduct evaluations on schools as well.

Yeah, I recognize your concern. Of course, if you don't have timely maintenance or if it's not being spent on those little things, then you end up with a big thing that costs considerably more money. You know, I think we definitely compensate school boards adequately in terms of infrastructure supply and maintenance, and we also entertain extraordinary circumstances for more extensive modernizations. Those are the ones that go into our actual capital projects, which can often be a school being rebuilt, right? When you see a major modernization, then the school is, like, as good as new when it comes through.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Okay. Thank you, Madam Chair. Line item 2.3 lists that the government is transferring 31 and a half million, as mentioned in this line item, to line 3.1 under capital investment, yet in line item 2.3 you are asking for an increase of \$4 million. So the government is transferring out and transferring in. Can you explain how you are transferring money from this line item while also requesting additional funding?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Yeah. Well, thank you for that. What happens is that infrastructure supply and maintenance money is transferred as a matter of course, and we do it on a sort of go-forward basis. The additional monies are for extraordinary circumstances that have come forward in regard to the maintenance bills that schools have had. You know, I can tell you that globally, Madam Chair, through supplementary supply we're asking for an additional \$18 million. That is to cover an increase in enrolment in our schools here in the province of Alberta. We saw that enrolment in our school authorities increased by 2.2 per cent compared to the budget percentage, which was 1.8 per cent. That additional increase of .4 per cent represents the entirety of the extra money that we require for operations. Materials and maintenance are part of that operational budget, so it can pretty much globally explain the individual line items that have made adjustments here in supplementary supply.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you for taking me there. That was where my next question was headed.

I understand \$13 million is to address the increased student enrolment in public and separate schools, with the remaining \$5 million to address increased student enrolment for private schools and early childhood service operators. Okay. Wonderful. For the \$13 million being directed to address the increased student enrolment for public and separate schools, could you please tell me how many more students enrolled in the public and separate system beyond your initial estimates? To what point do you need this additional money? How many additional students are there? How much is being allocated to Edmonton public and Edmonton Catholic? How much is being allocated to Calgary public and Calgary Catholic? How much is going to urban schools across Alberta, how much is going to rural schools across Alberta, and please tell me: do your enrolment patterns indicate if there is a movement of students from rural schools to urban schools?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Yeah. Well, thank you for that. Globally, again, like I said, the supplementary supply request from my ministry is to meet the increase in enrolment that we've seen after we did our September 30 count of students here in the province of Alberta. Like I said, we saw an increase of 2.2 per cent in our enrolment from the budget estimate of 1.8 per cent, and that all breaks out individually according to enrolment in individual school boards.

Certainly, we can supply you the information around where the net increase is. I don't have that right at my fingertips. I mean, we can say generally that we're seeing net migration from other provinces and from other countries and from other regions in Alberta into suburban areas, number one – right? – so you see sort of the areas around Calgary and Edmonton and, well, Grande Prairie themselves, Lethbridge to some extent, Red Deer to some extent. Then, of course, you can see the reflection of enrolment, by dollars, to the public schools and to the private schools.

In terms of the actual numbers I would be happy to break those out for you and supply those for you. Thank you.

3:10

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, and thank you, Minister. I appreciate that. I would really like to get my hands on those numbers, and I'm sure our Education critic would as well.

Madam Chair, \$5 million has been allocated to address increased student enrolment for private schools and early childhood service operators, with \$1 million going to private schools and \$4 million going to private early childhood service operators, I believe. How much did enrolment numbers increase with the private school system? Were these students previously enrolled in the public system, and how much of this money is being allocated to urban-based private schools versus rural-based private schools? Do you have any idea what those numbers are now, and would you comment, please?

The Deputy Chair: The Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you. Yes. Of course, by percentage you can see a general trend by the fact that we were allocating more money to accredited private schools and to early childhood services as well. Definitely, you can see that there's an increase there. In terms of the actual numbers I can certainly supply those for the hon. member.

Again, I find it encouraging in a way, because by seeing our enrolment continue to grow in the province of Alberta, we're seeing people making an investment to have children, to settle in and have a family, and to make that stake in our cities and towns and rural areas here in the province of Alberta. I mean, I think it's a great sign of hope and optimism. Certainly, even though we've experienced an economic downturn, people are still moving to this province and settling in, having families, and so forth. You know, when they do that, that ensures the long-term stability and diversity of our economy, and indeed, of course, then we have to make sure we educate those kids so that they can contribute to the future prosperity and quality of life for everybody here in the province.

Yeah. I mean, we made sacrifices in other areas to make sure that we're funding for enrolment here in the province of Alberta for our schools. It wasn't an easy thing to do, by any means, but I think it's worth it. We're seeing a continued reflection, starting to turn the corner on the economy, and certainly, like I say, families are making the decision to settle in and buy a house and have kids and go to school. You can't beat that.

Thank you very much.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Barnes: Are you able to provide a figure on how much of this money is being allocated to faith-based schools, and how many of our new children are being enrolled in facilities operated by private early childhood service operators? So faith-based and private early childhood service operators: do you have any numbers, please?

Mr. Eggen: Well, certainly, it's possible to do so. I think it's very important for us perhaps at this juncture to just remind people that we are continuing with funding for all of these different forms of schools. We have many different choices for education here in the province of Alberta. We have our public education. We have separate schools, Catholic education. We have charter schools. We have private schools, home schooling, and francophone as well. For

each of those choices, the enrolment is growing, and in each of those we are funding as we have.

It's important to have stability. It's important to make sure that we use all the capacity that we have available to us, Madam Chair, because as this growth continues year by year, in some places we'll see even as high as 5 or 6 per cent growth in certain school boards around the province. You know, we need to make sure that we have all the capacity, all of the different forms of education available to us to make sure that there are spaces for kids. We have done that, and we are doing it again here in this budget, as you can see, with supplementary supply, disbursing the funds appropriately as the enrolment grows in each of those different choices and different places.

So, yeah, we can find that individual information for the hon. member. It's a good juncture and a good point in the session here to just remind people about those things.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you. Mr. Minister, I talk to Albertans everywhere that are very, very concerned about the deficit and the debt and the cost of the interest. You know, you're back asking for \$21 million over last year's budget. Was there any attempt to reallocate hard-earned tax dollars within your department? Was there any attempt for savings or other mechanisms rather than coming back to the taxpayer?

The Deputy Chair: The Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Yes. I would say in this Chamber and to all Albertans that the investment in individual children's education is absolutely worth that investment, every single dollar, and to suggest in any way that you can make cuts – 20 per cent cuts, 15 per cent cuts, or whatever – to our education system here in the province of Alberta without critically damaging the quality of education that we provide and we demand for our children is absolutely incorrect. It's misleading, it's spurious, and it is damaging as well. You can't on one side have all of those things that you asked for and then also look for ways by which you can cut those same things. I mean, it's not only illogical, but it defies common sense. It defies gravity, and it makes – I wanted to put that [inaudible]. Just kidding.

You know, we know there are more kids coming to our schools – right? – tens of thousands more kids, and we're going to make sure that we educate them in the best possible way. Yes, of course, we always look for savings. We always look for ways by which we can save money in education, and we've been successful at doing so. It's just like when you have your road. You want to get across the river. You want to build a bridge across that river. It's not like you can sort of compromise and say, "We're going to go, like, three-quarters of the way" or "We're going to just make it out of Popsicle sticks" or whatever. You need to build that thing. When I have tens of thousands of new kids coming to our schools, we have to build that edifice that will educate those kids in the best possible way. There's no compromise, and that's not what we would want. That's not what Albertans would want, and the parents of those children certainly wouldn't want that as well.

I stand by our supplementary supply. It's a reflection of the increase in enrolment in our schools in the province of Alberta. That's a fact. I think it's something we should all be proud of, and I humbly ask for that difference in order to educate kids in schools in our province.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Madam Chair. I and our caucus, too, are all about and are fully in agreement on getting as many scarce resources as possible to the classrooms to help our kids, help our teachers, help people that work hard to do such a good job of providing our education. But that brings me to two things. That brings me to the carbon tax. Numerous rural boards across Alberta are complaining about the burden of the carbon tax, the burden it is placing on their transportation budgets, transportation budgets that, you know, I will note that in rural Alberta have had a decrease in funding of \$3 million before the burden of the carbon tax. We're taking dollars from the classroom. We're taking dollars from the students. We're taking dollars from professional development. It's a mystery, the opposites of how these two things conflict and contradict each other. Could you please explain how you are underspending your transportation budget and you're imposing the carbon tax, and many of our school boards, especially in smaller communities, are struggling?

The Deputy Chair: The Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Yes. Absolutely. We just had, for example, Madam Chair, a rural education symposium here last week, and it was great. We had more than 350 people show up for a number of days talking about challenges and opportunities for rural school boards here and across the province. It was very informative and very useful, and lots of people had some very, I think, innovative and creative ideas for us to ensure that we have equity for education for students and schools and school boards across the province no matter where they are located. Of course, that's a challenge, right? You have some schools and school boards that are . . .

3:20

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

Your first 20 minutes have expired. We are now on to our second set of 20 minutes. Is it the same member that would like to ask questions?

Mr. Barnes: Yes, if I could, please.

Minister, do you want to finish your answer?

Mr. Eggen: Yeah. Great. Thanks. I was just getting going.

The issue around student transportation, say, for example: we know that the formula and the way by which we pay for student transportation needs to be modified for rural areas. You have some school boards that run school runs every day of thousands of kilometres, and, yes, you do have kids riding very long distances.

You know, we need to find ways to innovate. I mean, I have through Bill 28, as you may recall in the last session, asked, compelled school boards to look for ways by which they can co-operate between school systems so that you can share bus routes and so forth. We've looked and are looking for ways by which we can improve rural transportation, and I certainly know there's lots of room for improvement. Absolutely. Part of that, of course, is to make sure as a base that you fund each of these programs and fund through our main budget and supplementary estimates to meet the needs of enrolment. We know that as well in rural school boards sometimes the enrolment is declining. So, again, we certainly do need to entertain a way by which we can change that funding so that we can have equity between school boards and each school in the province regardless of its geographic location and so forth.

I do recognize those things, and it's important. I certainly heard it loud and clear at the rural symposium. You know, it's important always to have an intelligent and balanced and realistic

conversation about these things as well, and school boards know that the importance of having education around climate change and having students engaging in those things is an important part of an education here in this province in 2018. So it's not as though you just take those things out, but certainly we're looking for ways by which we can assist school boards. I mean, we just had an announcement today from Municipal Affairs that it's going to be moving, I think, \$15 million to established schools to apply for a solar panel program. I already put in place a \$50 million solar panel program for new schools in the province as well. I mean, this is just an example of how you can use innovation.

Of course, we just talked about my infrastructure supply and maintenance bill. Schools are moving on changing their lights to LED, they're changing their heating systems, changing windows, and we will continue looking for ways by which we can do that. You save money, you reduce your carbon footprint, and you provide an education opportunity for children. All of those things are positive, Madam Chair. I recognize that we have to keep moving on these things. It's not as though we've solved the problem, but with constructive engagement such as I had experienced at the rural education symposium here last week, it makes me know and feel that we are heading down the right path and that we have school boards and parents and students and so forth working together with us in a constructive way to achieve all of those goals.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you for that, Mr. Minister, and I sure respect your answers. School boards, though, that are already running big deficits and are further going in the hole because of the carbon tax: it didn't sound like there was anything specific there about where they can balance this year's budget, where they can provide better service to their students. Again, it's a problem in rural Alberta, and I would hope that reallocation of assets would have an opportunity to help our rural students more.

Mr. Minister, the Auditor General came out a short time ago, and remembering what he said as best I can, basically the initiative to reduce class size has been a failure. All the money directed at this has not led to a reduction in class size, and now in line item 2.5 I see you list a decrease in funding required for the class size initiative of \$1.7 million. Given the Auditor General's report, which indicated that the Ministry of Education has consistently failed to meet class size objectives, can you explain how underspending this line item would decrease class sizes in Alberta's classrooms? Minister, have you given up? Is class size the wrong thing to be talking about for all these years? Was any progress made? Please explain the \$1.7 million reduction to what appears to be front-line teachers and workers.

The Deputy Chair: The Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. Certainly, the Auditor General's report on the class size initiative line item was informative and constructive and useful, and my department and ministry are working to ensure that we meet all of the recommendations of the Auditor General in regard to the class size initiative. It's important that we have transparency and we have ways by which we can show demonstrable progress in improving the condition in the classroom for students, for teachers, and for the community at large. Each of the recommendations that the Auditor General had put forward in regard to the reduction of class sizes: we are certainly moving on those immediately and most rigorously as well.

Yes, certainly, improving classroom conditions in general and looking at class sizes as a means by which to do so is something that is front and centre for our government. You know, it's important that we have laid down this foundational work during an economic downturn in the last couple of years to ensure that we've held the line on the condition of classrooms to the teaching conditions in classrooms. Indeed, we've started to see some demonstrable progress, I think, that's reflected in the fact that part of the collective agreement that our teachers here in the province of Alberta signed included a fund, a \$75 million fund, to improve classroom conditions, to be worked on between teachers and school boards with specific goals in mind: working on improving math and communication skills, critical thinking skills, and so forth.

I mean, I can start to see where in the last couple of years we held the line to ensure that, you know, we funded for enrolment, that we had these different funding mechanisms in place over the last couple of years so that we have solid ground by which we can stand on to move forward on reducing class size and improving classroom conditions in general. I've been working very hard to make sure that we can not just look at the status quo but make demonstrable improvements in these regards over the next number of years.

The specific line item, the change in the class size initiative around this supplementary estimate: I will get back to you to give you some more specific information as to the variation of \$1.7 million down, but it is in no way a reflection of us not standing by this very important initiative and goal, which is to improve classroom conditions, to reduce class sizes, and to continue to produce some of the best education here in the province of Alberta that you can find anywhere in Canada or, I dare say, the world.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, hon. minister. I appreciate your time and your answers.

I want to switch gears to Children's Services. We're voting on an incredible 113 and a half million dollars, almost a 10 per cent increase from the budgeted amount. Madam Chair, through you to the minister: you're requesting an additional \$113.5 million in supplementary funding. What costs has the government come up with in the last year that you were not able to predict and budget for accordingly? We're almost 10 per cent up here.

3:30

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think it's important to note that I was always taught not to leave free money on the table, so certainly we were happy to welcome funding from the government of Canada for the early learning and child care centre framework in Alberta. That amounts to \$45.6 million, which is close to half of that number in terms of that. I'm happy to work with the federal government in order to deliver on that.

Madam Chair, certainly here in Alberta we're very proud of having a young population, and that continues. We continue to see significant growth in the number of children and youth, which directly impacts a number of the services and supports that my ministry provides to children and families, so the reality is that the demand for some of our programs increases as we support families to get back on their feet and overcome the stresses associated with challenging economic times. Through supplementary funds we can keep stable funding in place so that we can continue to meet the needs of Alberta's children and families and continue to invest in the future of our province. We work closely with our partners to make sure that all children grow up in a safe environment.

In most cases the funds will be used to address caseload pressures. Caseloads are not just numbers on a balance sheet but

real people, real children in real families that we need to support to ensure that they have the best possible outcomes. Caseload pressures are as follows: \$31.4 million for child intervention services, \$5.3 million for supports for permanency, and \$10.2 million for foster care supports.

Additionally, supplementary estimates for Children's Services, as I spoke, include the federal government transfer, which will allow us to invest in affordable quality child care, and we are also investing \$4.85 million in child care accreditation to address growth pressures.

Certainly, in terms of child intervention, I think every member of this House is aware and has had it brought to mind that every child, regardless of whose care they are in, deserves to grow up in a safe, loving, nurturing environment, and in order for our children's future to be bright, we need to invest in the opportunities that allow children to thrive. So under child intervention we've invested a total of \$31.4 million.

Children's Services, Madam Chair, has engaged in multiple practice initiatives to support staff to work with children and families in different ways with a goal of supporting families to keep their children safe at home. Our investment includes \$1 million for family enhancement services to provide early wraparound services to families to ensure that children stay with their families and do not enter into care. This means investing in services like conflict resolution, parental skill development, counselling, or providing in-home support workers to help parents be at their best.

We've also invested \$3 million in support in financial agreements to provide young adults who were formerly in care the support that they need for a successful transition to adulthood. Madam Chair, as the parent of an 18-year-old I can confidently tell you that when children become adults, they still need a lot of support and guidance. This additional investment has been used to address caseload growth driven by two factors, extending eligibility from 22 to 24 years of age and automatically enrolling youth when they turn 18.

We've invested an additional \$11.2 million in child protection to provide supports for the most complex cases. Increases in child protection costs are being driven by two factors. The first is a growing number of children and youth receiving services overall. Madam Chair, the second is the greater complexity of cases where children require specialized placements that can provide intensive mental health support and treatment, behavioural therapy, and drug addiction treatment.

We are also developing training for staff and caregivers that will create greater understanding of indigenous culture and historical trauma and child development, helping them to better support children and families. The reality is that when you have caseload growth, you must invest in additional front-line staff to support service delivery in a timely fashion. As a result, \$10.2 million was invested to address the salary pressure to meet the needs of the families that we serve.

In order to support equitable access to postsecondary education for children and youth in care, our government has invested \$6.2 million in registered education savings plans. This addresses a liability related to the ministry's obligation as a parent to these children and also means that we can capture available federal and provincial RESP grants for children in care.

Under child intervention there is also a \$200,000 reduction for approved in-year administrative savings.

In regard to supports for permanency the \$5.3 million in funding will address caseload growth in the supports for permanency program, which provides supports for adoptive parents and private guardians of children who've been in permanent care. Every child deserves to grow up in a healthy, loving environment that supports

their healthy development and prepares them for a bright future, and we recognize that many children who've been in care require additional support even after leaving care. This program provides much-needed supports for caregivers to meet their children's needs, whether through ongoing counselling, respite, or supports to maintain cultural connections.

The Deputy Chair: I just want you to be aware that you had agreed to go back and forth with the member.

Ms Larivee: Yeah.

The Deputy Chair: Okay.

Ms Larivee: That's absolutely fine. It was a very broad question, Madam Chair, basically addressing every single factor of what we're doing within this, so I felt that I was answering that very broad question by giving some details in terms of what we were doing. Certainly, if the member has an additional question, I'm happy to save some details around supports for permanency and foster care support and other important components of our budget for future questions.

Mr. Barnes: Well, thank you. I absolutely agree. Families and children are of paramount importance, and it's paramount that we have the supports there for them. Hey, I too have an 18-year-old. It's special watching them grow up and get on their own, for sure.

But I want to talk about what your department hasn't done. The House is still waiting to hear the final recommendations of the Ministerial Panel on Child Intervention. We talked about a whopping \$113 million extra. Okay. Thanks to the federal government for \$45 million more, that you people immediately spent. Are the staffing costs associated with finishing the work on the Ministerial Panel on Child Intervention, that we're waiting for, part of the remainder of that \$60 million, \$65 million given that this work was extended following the first panel meeting in January? Minister, second to that, if it is not within the supplementary budget and isn't being absorbed by the department, what other important work is not being completed by that staff while they focus on the final recommendations? Again, I'll ask you to be as brief as you can, please.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm thankful, again, to all the members of the panel for the work that they have done. Certainly, the member has spoken to the representatives from his side of the House at the table. Through the process of the panel it was decided, first of all, to extend that work because of the importance of the work, and that was certainly a consensus in terms of the direction of the House, but also the consensus of the panel was to have the final recommendations sent to the expert panel members in order to revise those recommendations.

I'm thankful that those recommendations were shared with the expert members. The experts have been working diligently, along with support from ministry staff, in order to make sure that they are what we would call SMART – I think we're all kind of familiar with that – specific, measurable, you know, details such as that. I'm thankful for the work of the expert panel members in doing that, and I certainly look forward to receiving the recommendations after they are done that work.

There's been a high priority in providing all the support needed to the panel throughout this whole entire process, but as we have not received those recommendations yet, the results of the recommendations are not reflected in this. Certainly, within the

ministry we have utilized the resources that we already have to provide the support needed to the panel and to the panel members to make sure that we can move forward as quickly as possible on this.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Okay. Thank you, Madam Chair. We have heard from community not-for-profits and we've heard from child and family service providers that their budgets are being heavily impacted by the layering effects of the carbon tax, statutory holiday pay, overtime pay, the minimum wage increase. The layers of burden, many of them have called them. Their expenses have continued to balloon due to external factors that have forced many of them, unfortunately, to cut their services, run deficits, or even close their doors. Will any – any – of this additional 113 and a half million dollars that your department is requesting be directed to help these good agencies offset their costs?

3:40

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Chair. We have an incredibly valuable relationship with a number of agencies that provide care to Albertan children and Albertan families in need, and I'm so thankful for the incredible work that they do.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

We are now at the last 20 minutes for the Official Opposition. Would you like to continue to go back and forth, or what would you like to do, hon. member?

Mr. Barnes: I'll continue to go back and forth.

The Deputy Chair: With the Minister of Children's Services?

Mr. Barnes: Yeah. Okay.

The Deputy Chair: Please go ahead.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you. Next question. On page 22 of the supplementary supply estimates document you state that you have found cost savings of \$375,000 that have been "made available from lower than budgeted expense in other programs." Could you please elaborate on which programs these cost savings have been found in and if you will be adjusting your budget for these programs for the upcoming budget? Where specifically will these funds be redirected? Can you please comment on any other cost savings your department found or any other cost savings and more effective measurements and techniques you tried to implement?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will certainly be happy to answer those questions. The ministry proposed and Treasury Board approved \$200,000 in administrative savings and a decrease of \$175,000 from the capital grant budget. Within that, child care program planning and delivery was \$100,000, and early intervention services for children and youth was \$100,000. Child care subsidy and support: that's the capital grant of \$175,000. Again, these savings were in addition to the \$200,000 included in child intervention services.

Certainly, while we do feel the need, absolutely, to ensure that every child, again, has all the care that they need to grow up in a safe, loving, nurturing environment, we understand very much the responsibility within the department to find every saving possible

to ensure that the dollars that we are spending are on the services that need to happen for those children and that we do everything we can to conserve dollars for that very important work. That was certainly the drive behind finding these administrative types of savings.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Minister. I appreciate that answer.

On page 22 of the supplementary supply estimates document you requested \$47 million in additional funds "to address higher caseloads and increases in cost-per-case." I'm wondering: what are the factors that have caused such a drastic increase in caseloads? Why has the cost per case increased so dramatically? Why were these factors not considered just a short 11 months ago, when you submitted your budget last year? Forty-seven million dollars, Madam Minister.

The Deputy Chair: The Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Chair. Once again, you know, I'm really glad to see that Alberta continues to be full of new, young Albertans ready to grow and thrive and meet their potential, but that means that the growing number of children and youth in this province require an additional investment in terms of supporting them in situations in which their families and those children need support. Again, we've had a substantial increase in the number of children that need care.

Also, you know, the complexity of the children and families entering into the child intervention system varies in any given year, and it's certainly not something that we can predict with absolute accuracy in terms of what those families are going to need. On a case-by-case basis we work with those families and with those children to do what we need to wrap around them to provide the care and the support and the encouragement and the resources to make sure that they have the very best chance of staying together and succeeding and to ensure the very best outcome for those children.

I'm very proud of the work that our front-line staff in Children's Services continue to do in identifying those needs and working with those families and making sure that they have the support they need in order to have the very best possible outcomes. That's certainly what we're seeing reflected in this increase in the budget.

The Deputy Chair: The Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to talk a little bit more about the \$45 million that the federal government did provide for a child care subsidy and supports for early learning and child care centres, fully offset by a transfer from the federal government under the multilateral early learning and child care framework, I understand.

I have three questions. Is this a one-time payment or a funding commitment that will continue? Was this commitment from the federal government granted to Alberta before or after you presented your last budget? You cite that this money will be used to support the delivery of early learning and child care systems that reflect local and regional needs. What programs specifically are being implemented to ensure that Albertans are treated equally and treated fairly? Of course, I'm wondering if this program will have an impact on provincial taxpayers and on the provincial budget going forward.

The Deputy Chair: The Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm really thankful that the federal government has worked with us and identified that

affordable child care is an incredible priority for all of us for many reasons: in the interest of the children, in the interest of their parents, and in the interest of our economy. With that, just this fall, so well after the budget was presented and debated, we finally signed off on a bilateral agreement with the federal government in which we were allocated \$45.6 million for this year. And it's not just for this year. That agreement is for three years that we would have that funding. Certainly, the commitment within the framework is to a 10-year span, in which we can renegotiate that. We're looking forward to continue to work on that. Of course, I would have loved to have seen more, and I hope that they continue to recognize the investment in that as we go forward, but it's certainly a great start.

I've spent a lot of time visiting the 22 centres, talking to parents and child care professionals, and at every centre I visit, I hear tremendous stories about the value to moms who have been able to get back to work and, importantly, to families to have the dollars that they need in their pockets to spend on their families. Madam Chair, that's what's happening. Those dollars are actually translating for these families, who desperately need those dollars, into spending them on their children here in this province and contributing to the economy in being able to get back to work. It's stories like hearing parents cry tears of relief and joy because they can afford to pay their rent, food, and pay for child care that continue to motivate me to work toward universal, affordable, quality child care in Alberta.

Certainly, with those dollars we're going to expand our early learning and child care centre pilots to about approximately 78 new ELCCs across the province, and I'm excited to see that that will create up to 4,500 additional child care spaces. I'm looking forward, again, to expanding that pilot right across the province and making that universal access and showcasing what that can look like to Alberta families and making sure they, again, have the dollars that they need and access to that quality child care that we know will make life better for their children and their families.

Mr. Barnes: Are any of the costs to the programs outlined in the supplementary budget a result of your government's policies such as the carbon tax, the labour law change to overtime and statutory holidays, or the minimum wage increase? Again, Madam Minister, you know, asking for an extra \$113 million is a huge number in spite of some assistance from the federal government, and I'm wondering how much of the extra cost relates to your government's policies on the carbon tax, overtime, and the minimum wage.

The Deputy Chair: The Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, there are substantial caseload pressures, which are the primary drive behind the increased need for funding. Examples include our investment of \$10.2 million for foster care support, which is, again, addressing the caseload growth pressures. Foster and kinship caregivers, we know, are amazing individuals who step up to offer temporary, safe, stable housing, demonstrating the best of Alberta in terms of showing what community really means. I'm particularly proud that, compared to last year, there's been a 15 per cent increase in the number of children and youth placed in kinship care rather than foster care.

I think we need to make sure, as we go forward, that we provide the resources to our foster parents and to their support. We need to continue to provide resources to supports for permanency. We need to continue to provide resources within the child intervention system to invest in our families, to invest in our children, to make sure that despite the challenging economic circumstances we've

found ourselves in – thank goodness everything is moving up, up, and up according to the Minister of Finance – we've been able to provide the support needed to the families during those challenging times and to invest in Albertans and invest in those positive outcomes.

Those caseload growth pressures are the primary drive for this, Madam Chair, and that is the reason why we are coming back for supplementary estimates.

3:50

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you, Madam Minister. I want to switch gears to the \$3.3 million increase being asked for in supplementary supply estimates for Labour. I'm wondering: what specifically are the reasons that an additional \$3.3 million is being required for workforce strategies? What was missed in the earlier budget, and what is this necessary for?

The number strikes me, interestingly. I saw a report the other day that the increase in the minimum wage, you know, will cost Alberta 10,000 to 20,000 jobs. I've talked to many greenhouses, I've talked to many small businesses that have reduced their hiring because of the labour changes, because of the increase in the minimum wage, because of the increase in the carbon tax. Unfortunately, you can bet that some other employers, whether not-for-profit, government, or private, will be forced to pay less, hire fewer people, provide fewer hours.

Of course, in Alberta we have the good fortune of a lot of great people. We have the good fortune of a lot of commodities, but the one thing that is true about a commodity market is that you end up being a price taker, not able to sometimes do more than just be the most efficient producer and competitor that you can be.

Ms Hoffman: Take your product to tidewater.

Mr. Barnes: That would help a lot, wouldn't it?

I guess what I'm concerned about: we've seen \$700,000 in this ministry not spent. It was not spent, and it is now transferred from skills and training support, where, I think we all agree, huge improvements in the workforce and quality of life and opportunities for all Albertans can be made. We're seeing a situation where our unemployment rates – we've heard several times in the House just today and yesterday how Alberta's unemployment rate is second only to Atlantic Canada's. How incomprehensible, amazingly so, so sad that Calgary and Edmonton are numbers 2 and 4 in all of Canada for big metros and their high unemployment rates.

I saw that the U of C economist put out yesterday that Calgary's wage rates are back to 2005-2006 levels. Ten years is a long time ago. It's hard to make ends meet when you're a family and supporting a community. I'd like to ask one of the ministers: are you at least targeting this extra almost \$4 million to do a full impact study on the effects that your government's layer of burden has had on our job providers and our employees?

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. The \$3.3 million in additional expense for the Department of Labour is to address skills training in Alberta. As we know, when we go through an economic downturn like this, it's very important that we're able to provide additional skills training to individuals.

Madam Chair, as everyone in this House will be aware, as the economy develops and as we all move forward as a province,

sometimes individuals need to retrain themselves in order to maintain their ability to get into that labour market. This funding is required to address skills training for Alberta's unemployed, marginally employed, and underrepresented groups in the workforce. The request is fully offset by the federal government's expansion of the new labour market development agreement and the new workforce development agreement. Additional funding will primarily be invested in Labour's transition to employment service program, among others, which provides unemployed individuals one-on-one services that facilitate employment. These services include job matching, short-term training courses, and equipment required for the job.

To reiterate, the intention here is that it will be fully offset by federal funding, but I think it's worth taking a moment to note that these sorts of programs are absolutely critical, particularly at times like these, to ensure that individuals are able to get into the workforce and to maintain full employment. I think that it's certainly of value to us on this side of the House and, I would hope, to everyone in the House that we can get individuals into the workforce at this time, when the economy is starting to turn a corner and starting to take an upswing again. I think it's important to ensure that those values and benefits, with the economy as it continues to grow, are shared by all Albertans, Madam Chair. I think it's absolutely critical that people who work full-time not have to stop at the food bank on their way home to feed their children.

You know, in addition to changes we've made to protect the most vulnerable and to ensure that everyone has access to a decent income, ensuring that people who have been out of work have the ability, as the economy grows and as the economy comes back, to retool their skills and be able to get back into that economy so that they have the opportunity to benefit from it is a great program, and we're very proud of it.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Minister.

The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Okay. Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you, Madam Minister. I guess that just in the last couple of minutes I want to go back to the overall presentation of the supplementary supply estimates. Asking for a billion and a half dollars with a day's notice: you know, it's incredible sometimes how the government of Alberta has functioned. I want to just make sure, though – in the Q3 update I was probably surprised the most by two things. Number one is that your government had a \$500 million cushion, that if oil prices were low, you were going to have this reserve transferred to cushion the total deficit amount. Of course, when oil prices ended up recovering a bit to \$60, that didn't seem like it was necessary. I would just like some assurances from a minister somewhere over there that nowhere in the 2017-2018 supplementary supply estimates are there any contingency plans for transferring any reserves, whether they're nominal or real or not, that may impact on these numbers.

The other concern I still have from the presentation of the Q3 update last week and the budgeting is the total absence of the amount of money that's being borrowed for capital funding, you know, the total amount of the 9 billion to 9 and a half billion dollar deficit that your government is running up this year for operating expenses. Again, we've talked about putting the groceries on the credit card. That's what your government is doing. But you were quiet – you were absolutely silent – on the fact that another 5 and a half billion dollars of capital investment was being borrowed without a payback plan, without full recognition of the interest and the cost on future generations.

Of course, now, when we're looking through the 2017-2018 supplementary supply estimates, we see parts where capital has had, as I was talking about to the Minister of Education, an impact on renovations and repairs and \$31 million that just a year ago was not allocated.

I guess, again, to the government. You know, we've seen you accumulate \$50 billion in debt in just three short years, a reversal of our net financial position of almost \$60 billion in just three years. Now I'm seeing – let's get the exact number here – a financial transactions amount to be voted on of almost \$36 million. Of course, I'd asked that question earlier, and I appreciate the hon. minister's promise to get the answer to me, but again a lot of Albertans have expressed great, great concern to me that your government doesn't have a plan to get our operating budget back in balance and that your government doesn't have a plan to repay these billions and billions of dollars in capital debt.

Now we're seeing here, you know, some side of – I don't know – 2 per cent, 2 and a half per cent of the budget, \$36 million, that could be going to front-line workers, that could be left in the pockets of Albertans. Are we going to have to be dealing with this down the road? Are we not going to have a plan to ensure that we are able to repay this? Hon. minister, if you don't mind, I just want to ensure that you have no plans for transferring reserves, nominal or otherwise, to cover any of this increased spending of a billion and a half dollars.

4:00

Ms Ganley: That covered a lot of different things. I'll try to cover all of them as we go forward.

The hon. member made reference to the cushion we put in the budget to deal with the volatility of oil prices. I think, Madam Chair, that that's a very reasonable step for the government to take. Certainly we make our forecasts on . . .

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

We are now moving on to the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

You have 20 minutes combined. Would you like to go back and forth?

Mr. Clark: I would like, with the kind indulgence of the minister, to go back and forth if that's all right, if we can do that. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Chair: Which minister would you like to address first so I can make sure?

Mr. Clark: Gosh, that's a great question. You know what? I will address my questions first to the Deputy Premier, just a couple if I may.

The Deputy Chair: Okay. Deputy Premier, you're welcome to go back and forth. You're fine with that?

Ms Hoffman: I don't have any supplementary estimates.

The Deputy Chair: Yes, you do. Apparently you have questions today.

Hon. member, please go ahead with your questions.

Ms Hoffman: It's her. I'm not asking for any money.

Mr. Clark: Sure. I'm happy to address it to whichever member of Executive Council would like to respond. I do actually have a question about Health at one point.

I'll just open by saying a couple of things, Madam Chair. If you don't mind, I'll take a few moments here at the beginning. Also, my

colleague from Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill will take a good portion of our allotted 20-minute time. I'll just start with some general comments and can certainly happily address my questions to the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General if she would so like to answer.

Here we are being asked to approve spending of a billion and a half dollars with scarcely 24 hours of notice. I think that that level of lack of transparency in terms of the spending that this government undertakes is frustrating to me and it is frustrating to Albertans. We often will need supplementary supply, of course, for some minor in-year corrections. I would understand that. But when you look at the third-quarter fiscal update, when the government brings in an additional \$2 billion of revenue but finds an additional \$1 billion of money to spend, it is tremendously frustrating for Albertans to see. Some of that, I will acknowledge, perhaps would come from student enrolment growth and things that I think Albertans would support. But there are many other areas where Albertans would expect any additional spending to be offset by reasonable efficiencies.

More to the point, this is a budget that is set every year, and we find that scant months after that budget is established, it's blown out of the water with this government seemingly being unable to find any meaningful ways of constraining spending. I would not look at the past budget as being what one would consider to be fiscally responsible. But even at that it gets overspent. This has happened every single year that we've been here. This government seems to have a chronic problem, which, unfortunately, seems just as bad or even worse than previous governments.

As we look at the remarkable amount of money that we're being asked to approve here on the first page of the supplementary supply estimates, what I want to ask the minister is: have all of the new or revised programs, initiatives, policy changes, et cetera, that have driven the requested increase been publicly announced? Can you please detail, if they have not yet been publicly announced, which specific unannounced programs this supplementary supply, in any of these ministries, is intended to fund?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I will seek guidance from you because I am happy to run through every single program that this is intended to fund as the member has asked me to do, but that will likely take us to the end of our 20 minutes. If you would like an answer to that question I'm happy to provide it, but you've literally asked me to comment on every single program in here. I'll do it if you want.

Mr. Clark: Why don't we limit ourselves to any unannounced programs, if you could tell us which amounts of funding here, that we're being asked to approve, relate to any programs that have not yet been announced.

Ms Ganley: Well, again, we have various ministers answering for various ministries. I'm happy to run through each and every program, and those ministers will be aware of whether or not those have been announced. I mean, if you want me to answer that question, I can launch right in. All right. I would propose to go alphabetically. The first one I have up is Agriculture and Forestry.

If you wouldn't mind running through your supplemental estimates and which programs those are and when they were announced.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. I mean, really what I'm asking is: the funding here that we're being asked to approve, is it all related to programs that have already been announced, that are out there publicly announced, or is there subsequent funding? I'm thinking of Justice, for example. There's a \$10 million announcement that's happened in-year for RCMP funding; that's an example of something that I presume is embedded in these supplementary supply estimates. But are there things coming that we haven't been told about yet but that are embedded? Obviously, if they haven't been announced, as much I would love to hear you announce them here today, are there things coming from any ministry that we haven't been told about yet, or are we only approving dollars for programs that have already been publicly announced, or are there some other gems coming in the next short while, before the end of the fiscal year?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Again, that question translates over hundreds of programs. I'm happy to run through each of the programs. I can't tell you off the top of my head which ones have been announced, but if you'd like me to list them, I can start with my ministry if that's more appropriate.

Our supplementary fund is required to address several things, including spending pressures faced by the ministry. Specifically, they include \$18.9 million for the RCMP contract, to address compensation increases. What that has to do with is the fact that the federal minister has announced that in the interim, while we are awaiting potential unionization with respect to the RCMP, there is an increase in the salaries for those RCMP officers. So for the province's portion of that, which represents the PPSA, which covers rural Alberta and urbans less than 5,000, that amounts to \$18.9 million, and that includes both back pay and current compensation.

Another \$8.2 million is for Legal Aid caseload services. That's just related to an increase in demand.

Another \$3.2 million relates to the Justices of the Peace Compensation Commission. That's required by the Supreme Court, and that's how those compensations are determined. That committee had its outcome fairly recently, so that's one of the things that's in there.

There is \$3.9 million for supplies and services, which supports the sheriff's branch commercial vehicle enforcement and correctional services.

There's \$1.1 million for the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services grant. Part of that money is coming from Justice; part of it will come from Community and Social Services and, I believe, from Health as well. That announcement, I think, was actually last week.

An Hon. Member: On Wednesday.

Ms Ganley: It was on Wednesday, I'm told. So that's that.

And \$0.9 million is for the biology casework analysis agreement for policing. What that is is that when we take biological samples, they are sent to a lab. There was a 10-year deal in which the federal government's costs increased, but they didn't charge the provinces any more. That deal has elapsed, so now the province is paying increased costs year over year for the processing of those samples.

Then \$0.8 million is for the municipal police assistance grants. Once we get the total numbers on populations in from municipalities, those grants are based on population, so those go up. That is the Justice supply.

I hear that my colleague the Minister of Economic Development and Trade is happy to talk about his programs, and I'm sure all my other colleagues are.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow I believe has some clarifying questions.

Mr. Clark: Thank you. I think that's probably covered off that question, so we'll move on to the next one, then.

This part I'm a little curious about. The Q3 fiscal update showed that Health is expected to be \$58 million over budget in-year for operating expenses, but we don't see any supplementary supply for Health. I'm curious how that all hangs together, what internal funds Health is finding that are happening without a transfer, how they're able to do that without seeing that show up here in supplementary supply.

4:10

Ms Ganley: Madam Chair, what I believe is before us in this instance is the supplementary supply estimates, so I have answers to those questions.

The Deputy Chair: To clarify, I believe the member has actually asked a question related to supplementary supply. If he wants to clarify it again, he can.

Mr. Clark: That's fine. I think what I'll do is end my questions here and hand my remaining time over to the Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Chair. I was hoping to ask a question of the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, but I can move on to Children's Services and go back if that's okay.

The Deputy Chair: If that is what you'd like to do, please go ahead.

Ms McPherson: Sure. Okay. I'm unsure if the first question actually applies to Children's Services. It has to do with the office of the Child and Youth Advocate. No? Okay. I'll move on from there. Thank you.

My first question. On page 22 what were the main sources of the higher caseloads and cost per case? What has changed in the way that child intervention supports for permanency and foster care support are delivered?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, thanks to an increasing number of children, we did have increasing caseloads in terms of that, but we are, as I stated, working with children and families in different ways, so that certainly increases the complexity of practice when the focus is on keeping a family together and providing those supports in order to keep a child safely at home. We're certainly investing money in terms of wrapping services around families in order to make sure that children don't come into care, if at all possible that they can stay safely in their homes. That means, again, investing in kinds of services: parental skill development, counselling, providing in-home support workers, conflict resolution. In terms of making all those things happen and in terms of being able to deliver that kind of care with an increasing caseload, we needed some additional staff as well in terms of

making that happen, so that would certainly be in regard to child intervention.

In regard to supports for permanency it is, again, strictly related to caseload growth. Children who have been in care oftentimes need additional support even after leaving care, so that's what supports for permanency is about. We want to make sure that we do continue to support those children and youth in order to have the very best future, including supporting young adults to transition to adulthood. Part of the reason why that caseload growth was increased was because eligibility was extended from 22 to 24 years, and we've also moved to automatically enrolling youth when they turn 18.

Lastly, the complexity of care for children has increased. The more we can keep the simpler cases in-home, the more it means that the cases that actually do come into care oftentimes are the most complex. Again, we have a growing number of children and youth, but the complexity of cases where there's very specialized placement that children need – that might include intensive mental health support and treatment or behavioural therapy or drug addiction treatment and making sure that staff have all the training that they need and caregivers have the training they need to understand indigenous culture, to understand historical trauma in child development and really provide the very best care, so a lot of care driven that way. Then, again, some caseload growth pressures for children placed in temporary foster and kinship homes as well is what drove an additional investment of \$10.2 million into foster care support.

Hopefully, that answered the member's questions, and I will continue to hopefully answer her questions to the best of my ability.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

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

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the minister for the answers. Also, near the bottom of page 22 there is \$16.5 million, roughly, for encumbrance from higher than anticipated caseloads in child intervention. I'm wondering what the sources are for that increased demand. Is any of that as a result of the first round of the child intervention panel recommendations?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Chair. To be clear, in '17-18 the Children's Services budget was reduced by \$16.557 million due to overspending in the previous year. So in order to meet the obligations of the ministry, Treasury Board has approved \$16.557 million to cover that encumbrance and restore the budget. Obviously, there were some pressures from last year that we needed to recognize and deal with, that we realized at the end of the year. That broke down to child intervention services receiving an additional \$8.2 million, supports for permanency an additional \$1.8 million, foster care an additional \$5 million, child care program planning and delivery receiving \$557,000, and early intervention services for children and youth receiving \$1 million.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thanks to the minister. On page 24, item 3 under capital grants originally allocated \$250,000; \$175,000 in child care grants appear to be allocated but not issued. Of the \$175,000 granted, where did that go?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Chair. Certainly, we're very proud of the work that we have been doing. In terms of providing support for a child care subsidy and supports, part of that, thankfully, is the \$45.6 million, as I said, going to early learning and child care centres in terms of that and also the need to continue to support accreditation growth as well within child care subsidy and supports. We do provide a certain amount of support to various child care facilities throughout the year, and certainly there can be some variations in terms of what that support looks like. So we did decrease \$175,000 from the capital grant budget as a result of a variation in that amount.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

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

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Chair. If I could just go back to Agriculture and Forestry, I'd love to ask a question about that.

The Deputy Chair: Go ahead.

Ms McPherson: Great. Thanks. On page 18 the supplementary amount of \$1,050,000 is requested to provide funding for wildfire aircraft inventory related to an encumbrance in 2016-2017. I'm wondering if this is due to extra use charges during the Fort McMurray fires and if this is equipment that's leased rather than owned.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Madam Chair and to the member for the question. I think I want to congratulate the member. I believe that's the very first question ever asked of me by a member of the Alberta Party. I'm just saying. Yeah, that's a really good question. We all, of course, remember the wildfire season of 2016, where we had the Horse River fire, which devastated Fort McMurray. It's also important to note that the wildfire season in 2015 was actually even worse. We burned more trees, more timber in 2015.

The member is absolutely correct. The aircraft that we had helping support, you know, fighting those wildfires in those two years were used extensively, and because of such, the parts that were available to repair those vehicles, that were in storage, had been used. This is now replenishing the stock of those parts. Parts are on hand. Aircraft, as I'm sure you understand, is not like my old truck, where if there's a squeak in it, I'll just wait till it breaks. You can't let that happen in aircraft. So this is being able to restock the supply, those parts for those aircraft. It's important in keeping these aircraft up.

You know, I find it interesting that even with all that snow on the ground, we've had seven wildfires already this year, right? So the aircraft are going to be needed as we start to dry up in the spring. It's making sure that the aircraft are there, ready for our women and men in the field to be able to do the good work they do that protects our communities.

4:20

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Minister.

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

Ms McPherson: Thank you very much. I do understand that wildfire season starts in March. I'm just wondering if the minister can let us know if the planes are leased or owned by the province.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thanks. These are the four aircraft that the government does own. We do have other aircraft and companies

that are on contract, but these are the four aircraft that the government does own.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you. I believe I'm almost out of time, so I'll let my questions rest now.

Thanks.

The Deputy Chair: Are there any other members wishing to speak from the Alberta Party?

Seeing none, I will now move on to the government side of the House. The government members have 20 minutes. Hon. Member for Calgary-Hawkwood, would you like to go back and forth, or would you like to take 10 minutes?

Connolly: No, I'd like to go back and forth if that's all right.

The Deputy Chair: Okay. Please go ahead.

Connolly: Thank you very much. I'd like to start off with some questions to the Minister of Education if that's all right. I'm very happy to see that we're keeping up with enrolment through the supplementary supply. I know that's been a problem in the past. I know that for many of us, it was one of the reasons that we ran with the NDP because I know the previous government was planning to not keep up with enrolment and refused to keep up with enrolment and for several decades wouldn't keep up with enrolment, which is why we had fewer resources in the classroom, which is why we had overcrowded classrooms, and which is why we have a huge deficit of teachers in the system.

I'm really proud to see that this minister has been able to build probably more new schools than any previous Minister of Education, at least in the past couple of decades. In fact, I've been at two school openings just in the past few months. One was in the Minister of Infrastructure's riding, right beside mine, l'école du Nouveau-Monde. I was so happy to see that we're finally building francophone schools as well. I know some of this money for supplementary supply and for the school facilities' infrastructure will be going to help our francophone schools.

A lot of the time in the past when schools were no longer needed by the CBE or by Calgary Catholic – I can only talk about Calgary in particular – those schools were then given to the francophone board instead of them having been able to build their own schools. This led to the francophone board having to pay a lot more for upkeep of these old buildings, having to pay a bit more for resources, and having a lack of resources compared to other school boards. So I'm really happy to see that we're finally putting money not only into the francophone board but into all school boards to make sure that they have the proper resources that they need. That's really something that the minister's supplementary supply will do, so I'm very happy to see that.

I'm also happy – once again when we talk about new schools, building new schools is the best way to lower class sizes. Like I've said many times, when I was in high school – obviously, in junior high and elementary school it was a similar story – I think it was in grade 11 or grade 10 that if everyone showed up to my English class, which was about 40 kids, there weren't enough desks for everyone, so we actually had to have one kid sit on the floor. If you were the last one to show up that day after everyone showed up, you would have to sit on the floor and do your work there. That's even with the teacher's desk. So a kid was in the teacher's desk, somebody had to sit on the floor, and we still did not have enough.

Mr. Eggen: Was that you, Michael?

Connolly: No. Luckily, I was always early. Thank God.

It's important to know that this was how our school system was and sometimes still is because a lot of times we don't have those resources. But we were able to build, I believe, 173 new schools in the past three years or finish 173 schools in the past three years. I'm incredibly proud of the work that our Minister of Education has been able to do for this province. Like has been said previously, right before we were elected, we had empty lots with big signs saying: new school will be built here. Those lots remained empty for years and years and years. So we are finally getting those schools, that were promised decades ago, built today, and we couldn't be prouder of the Minister of Education.

I was just recently at a few schools in my riding. I was at St. Rita, which is in Ranchlands, which is near my constituency office. We were able to give them a grant to improve their learning commons. A lot of my elementary schools, especially in Hawkwood and Ranchlands and Silver Springs, which are older neighbourhoods, are trying to improve their libraries, to build more learning commons, to have what a lot of them call a makerspace, where kids get to go and actually build things. They're so proud of that, but they need a little bit of extra funding. So I'm really proud that we're making sure that those schools have the funding that they need, whether that be through the Minister of Culture and Tourism, where that grant came from, or from the Minister of Education, because these schools do need upkeep and they are really putting forward incredibly gifted students.

I was just at another school in Silver Springs – it's called W.O. Mitchell – which, again, is a much older school, built in about the '70s. That school needed drastic upkeep because it was an older school. Now it contains the Spanish bilingual program, which, again, is an incredible program that we have in Calgary. We also have the German bilingual program. We have several languages that are in our ridings. I know that in the Member for Calgary-Bow's riding there is a German school, Bowcroft, that we were able to visit.

W.O. Mitchell I was just able to visit because I was giving them a grant. The minister of environment's office and the climate change office were able to give out 10 grants of up to \$1,000 for students to improve their school, community, or Alberta in general through technology to improve their carbon output, whether that be in the school or, again, in the community. At W.O. Mitchell I was so proud to see what they were doing. It was a group of fourth graders. Only 10 of these grants, I believe, were given out across the province, and my riding actually got four of them, so I'm really proud of the work that the students in my riding have been able to do.

At W.O. Mitchell they have compost bins that don't really work, so they're going to reuse the compost bins to create a garden, and with the grant I believe they're going to buy or create new compost bins so that they can use that to fuel the garden. With the garden they're going to grow vegetables, which they're then going to use to create a stew to feed to seniors in the neighbourhood.

That's directly because the Minister of Education is seeing that we have these old schools that can be reused. It's directly in this supplementary supply that we're making sure that these old schools are still able to be used, still making sure that these schools are able to run properly, and making sure that we don't forget the students that are already at these older schools. A lot of my schools, again, have been there since the 1970s and so need refurbishment every so often or else they can't really work.

If the Minister of Education wants to explain a little bit about how we're keeping up with enrolment, how we're making sure that these

older schools are being modernized, and how building new schools is helping us move forward in Education.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the member for his comments and questions. Yes, it's sort of an interesting process where for each of the budgets that I've built for Education, we've seen the enrolment into our schools here in the province of Alberta grow past our expectations. Again, as I mentioned before, I think this is a sign of hope and optimism not just for families making choices around building families and having kids and so forth, but it's a good sign for our economy as well. Let's not forget that Alberta has the youngest population in the country and the most driven as well in the country, so we're seeing quite remarkable growth in certain areas of the province. This supplementary supply request to have the \$18 million is a reflection of that.

4:30

We saw remarkable growth, and we're meeting, Madam Chair, the physical needs and human resource needs for that growth as well. Just to give some numbers from this fall, we opened 53 new or modernized schools, which more than 36,000 students were attending. The scale of it is quite remarkable. We've hired more than 1,100 teachers as well to go along with this. Of course, you can't open a school without all of the custodians and the secretaries and the support staff that you need to make a school go.

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

It's a reflection, I think, of Albertans' commitment to education. We know that overwhelmingly Albertans want and are willing to make a commitment to our education even during tough economic times. Certainly, we made sacrifices in other areas in this government. I'm very proud of how this caucus, our cabinet, and our Premier said that we will make sure that we will invest in those children's education regardless of, you know, how it might be a bit of a difficult economic exercise to make it happen. As we move out of an economic recession, now here we are with all of these new physical resources available to us, new schools in the places where we need them. We will continue to build those schools and supply the teachers and support that are necessary along the way.

I think, hopefully, that Albertans learned an important lesson, which is that you must plan for the future. Planning for the future includes making investments in infrastructure and making investments in our children so that they have the very best education to move forward and to contribute and prosper here in the province of Alberta in whatever they may choose to do with their lives in the future. So, yeah, this supplementary supply is a reflection in a smaller way of our larger commitment to K to 12 education here in the province of Alberta, and I'm really proud of it, quite frankly.

You know, the infrastructure maintenance and renewal element of this: it's interesting to see that sort of highlighted because, again, we're working on ways to ensure that school boards are spending the money on infrastructure renewal and maintenance at every step of the way. They do a great job. I don't deny it. We want to make sure, especially with all of that new inventory of hundreds of new schools, that for the next 50 years we're spending at the right time on the right maintenance so that we get the maximum benefit from each of those schools along the way. That's part of what we're doing, moving that infrastructure maintenance and renewal funding into capital to ensure that it's tied more to the actual physical buildings and the maintenance that they require.

Thanks very much. I mean, I'm sure that all of you have attended new school openings here in the last number of months. I can tell you that it's one thing to see the beautiful buildings that are there – we've put in lots of features that enhance learning and so forth – but it's more the sense of community, that sense of a focal point for young families to be proud of, not just to go to school in but to have community events in, community league and sporting events and so forth. It's just a real source of pride for, I think, each individual community, and cumulatively there's a sense of pride for all of us as Albertans demonstrating that to our children and to their learning.

Thank you.

The Acting Chair: The Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's a pleasure to be able to get up and ask some questions here. You know, I'm going to be honest. My knowledge of agriculture is not that great compared to some of the members in this room. However, I do know that members from the opposition make it seem like they're the only ones that represent rural communities in this House. But, of course, we know that's not true. We have a number of representatives here from the governing party that represent rural communities.

I'm specifically wanting to get up and ask this question of the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry simply because I've heard that he's done a number of town hall meetings throughout the province where he's been able to go and actually talk to a lot of the farmers who at one time were outside on the steps of the Legislature. He's been able to give them correct information about some of the programs that we've been doing. He's an incredibly knowledgeable and experienced individual, and he's been able to talk to a lot of these farmers about how our government is doing great things to help a lot of these farmers all across the province. Of course, this is an opportunity for me to learn from a colleague.

One of the things that I find absolutely fascinating is that, unlike other jurisdictions throughout our great land, we have the Agriculture Financial Services Corporation, and it's a really important aspect in the work of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, of course. I see that here in the supplementary supply estimates there is a request of \$56.8 million, and that's specifically for the provincial share of AgriStability indemnities and AgriInsurance premiums. I'm hoping that the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry can go into a little bit of depth on why that money is specifically needed, how that money goes to help farmers all around the province of Alberta.

The Acting Chair: The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Chair and to the member for the very good question. He's right. There is, you know, \$53.4 million of AgriStability indemnities. I'll just touch on that for now. AgriStability: I think you could talk to probably just about any producer in Alberta, any producer in the country, and they would tell you it's a program that works okay. It doesn't work great at times, but it works okay.

The program itself is funded 60 per cent by the government of Canada and 40 per cent by the province, and it is used for those times where there are large crashes in the price of a commodity. Part of the program as well: this is actually to cover losses, for the most part, for a lot of our producers. But a big part of this is for the cattle industry, where the ranchers lost – I think there was a large crash in the price of beef in 2016. It was about a 30 per cent decrease at that time. We haven't seen a decrease like that since the BSE scares of 2003, so that was a really big hit on our industry. How the

programs works, then, is that it takes about a year or so for those claims to be ready from the government of Canada, the government of Alberta. So that's basically what that is for.

Interesting to note – I think it's a good time to bring that up now – on the AgriStability portion of the program is that at the federal-provincial-territorial ministers of agriculture conference in St. John's, Newfoundland, last year we made a decision to tweak that to make it a little bit better for our producers here in Alberta and, frankly, across the country, so that's what we have done. The whole business risk management suite of programs that is administered, as the member has said, through the Agriculture Financial Services Corporation is currently going through a review, looking to see what more we can do to tweak those good programs and perhaps make them even better.

The AgriInsurance you see there at \$3.4 million. I think you could probably talk to any farmer in Alberta and realize that that's actually not a very big amount. We had a pretty wet fall in 2016. It went over, you know, to a fairly wet spring in 2017. But the year as a whole was a pretty good, solid average year last year. We had some dry conditions in the south, other than the 1.7 million acres of irrigated land that we have in southern Alberta, which did very well with the good heat and the good moisture and the good reservoir capacity that we have in our irrigation system. They actually did fairly well, but there were some dry conditions.

4:40

Also interesting to note, Member, is that, especially with cereal crops, when you have fairly dry conditions, the quality of the grains can actually be increased. There is often a higher protein content for those crops where we maybe didn't see the quantity, but the quality can be very good. So we had that. As well, we had very, very few hailstorm claims last year. It wasn't a very big hail season. We'll see what this year has to offer.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Otherwise, that \$3.4 million in AgriInsurance went to cover those claims for those severely dry conditions that we've seen in southern Alberta. Like they say, God willing and if the creek don't rise, hopefully we'll have a good year this year.

Loyola: I believe I have around 30 seconds left, Madam Chair. I'll just cede my time, and I'll keep asking questions next turn.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

We will now move back to the Official Opposition. The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Stier: Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: You have 10 minutes. Would you like to go back and forth?

Mr. Stier: Yes, please. If the Minister of Children's Services would be so kind, that would be great.

The Deputy Chair: Minister, you're willing to go back and forth? Please proceed.

Mr. Stier: Thank you. Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you, Minister, for the co-operation. I'm assuming you would be responding today to Municipal Affairs questions, which are going to be my focus. Without further ado, I'd like to proceed if possible. Madam Chair, the problem is that I recognize that this person probably is the likely person to respond to those questions from what I observe in the House today.

I'd like to start with AEMA, if I could, Minister or Ministers. You know, the Alberta Emergency Management Agency is part of Municipal Affairs, and they provide assistance to municipalities and their citizens when there are huge disasters. I was certainly witness to those many times in my life, whether it was the flood in '13 in High River or the Kenow fire this year in the Pincher Creek region and Waterton park. That kind of funding is normally called DRP funding, I believe, and it's normally budgeted, from my years of experience here, at roughly around \$200,000 because it's hard to predict a year in advance, which normally happens every year, what's going to happen.

I noted that on page 56, line 9, there's a figure of \$18.6 million here this time around. I suspect – and perhaps correct me if I'm wrong – that it's probably as a result of the fires that have been experienced this year, but it may be other outstanding files on other things. Would the minister be able to comment on what that \$18.6 million represents? Either one is fine to answer.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Chair. As far as I understand, the conversation that we had was that Municipal Affairs was on the agenda for tomorrow to have questions asked about it. So while that's the case, I certainly can take a few moments to speak about this based on my previous experience within Municipal Affairs.

The member would be correct that the disaster recovery program is not something that we can predict, Madam Chair. Obviously, each year one never knows, you know, what kind of disasters might occur, but there are typically a number of things that happen across the province. I mean, obviously, the fires in southern Alberta are an example of a large-scale disaster that we were all very much aware of. However, there are unexpected events that challenge the emergency capacity of municipalities that happen on a much smaller scale across the province as well.

I certainly think that the Minister of Municipal Affairs would be happy to speak to that during his allotted time. I am sure that he would be happy to provide you with more details at a future time as well in terms of doing that. Glad that we can always provide support to municipalities in terms of disaster management.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Stier: Thank you, Madam Chair. I apologize to the minister. There seems to have been some miscommunication because it was our understanding that there would be someone on this file here this afternoon.

Anyway, if I could proceed, MSI is a topic that is well known within the municipal world. You know, the website says that the municipal sustainability initiative, or MSI, "helps support local infrastructure priorities and [helps] build strong, safe and resilient communities." It's the usual statements that are there every year, I think. We saw at one point \$1.18 billion in MSI capital on the website, for 2017, and the estimate seems to be pegged at \$1.65 billion. That's page 56, line 4. Regarding the additional \$800 million that seems to be in there, I'm wondering if anyone knows what that additional \$800 million was for. Was it unexpected? Stuff like that for that portion, please.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Madam Chair and to the member for the question. You know, it's important to ensure that municipalities have the funds they crucially need to maintain their infrastructure

for the citizens of Alberta. We heard from the Minister of Infrastructure this morning about how this government initiated the largest infrastructure build in the history of this province. That is going to go a long way in not only fulfilling the infrastructure deficit that was left with us by the previous government but also a long way to stimulate the economy, to have people, both contractors and the workers that work for the contractors, back to work. It went a long way.

This is part of that. This will not be an overall increase to MSI funding levels, but it will most certainly help municipalities with cash flow to assist them with those priority projects that they have on the go. This will, you know, get them an opportunity to put shovels in the ground. We're hoping for some warmer weather here. The snow will melt, and it'll dry up enough to get at some of those projects.

This isn't, you know, completely unusual. This was very similar to what happened in 2015 with the previous Conservative government. It's important to a municipality, it's important for the infrastructure builds, and, as we heard earlier, it's an important priority to Albertans. I think it's a very palpable question.

As well, the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association is meeting this week to talk about their concerns with some of our other ministers, the Minister of Economic Development and Trade and the Minister of Municipal Affairs, to ensure that their voices are heard by this government on a lot of their issues and, of course, without a doubt, on their infrastructure needs, infrastructure builds as we progress throughout the year.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Stier: Thank you. Time allotment left, please, Madam Chair?

The Deputy Chair: Two minutes and 57 seconds.

Mr. Stier: Okay. I guess a quick one if I could. As the minister is aware, MSI was originally created in 2007, expired in 10 years. We're entering our second year after the deadline. I'm wondering. This \$800 million we're just talking about now: is some of it being directed to developing the new plan, that is apparently in the works, for MSI? Can we have any comments on that, please?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Madam Chair and the member. This additional funding is going to be allocated in the 2017-2018 budget. Obviously, I can't comment, you know, on the future of that budget. We're going to be hearing from the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board here next week on what that budget necessarily will be. But it's important to note that this isn't an overall increase and will be allocated in the 2017-2018 budget. More information on the MSI funding, obviously, will be announced as well in the budget. But I do want to thank the member for his interest and for his questions.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: You still have a minute and 45.

Mr. Stier: Okay. Thank you. All right. So I guess we don't really know what that \$800 million was destined for, being used for exactly, but thank you for the response.

There was an additional \$4 million being spent at one time on the Wood Buffalo fire. Was it reported in this budget or a portion of this supplementary as well? Is some of that remaining Wood Buffalo being taken care of with this \$800 million?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.
4:50

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Member. That's a really important question. I'm not sure about, you know, that number, if that was included in one of the recommendations from the three reports that came out: one commissioned by the Department of Agriculture and Forestry, one commissioned by Municipal Affairs, and one by the municipality itself. Though I can't answer that question directly, it did speak to the need to make sure that we are listening to the needs of municipalities, whether Wood Buffalo or across the province. The needs in Wood Buffalo are somewhat unique, obviously, to take into consideration the tragedy they went through last year. A lot of that money, whether it's in Wood Buffalo or across the province, is to make sure that they have the infrastructure they need. In Wood Buffalo I would venture to guess a lot of that will be to do with being even more prepared. Even though we did avoid any direct loss and tragedy in that wildfire, we did lose a lot of structures.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Minister. Thank you, Member.

We will now move on to the government side. Hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, you have 10 minutes. Would you like to go back and forth?

Loyola: Yes. Back and forth, please, Madam Chair. My questions will be directed to our new mother, the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General. I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate the minister, of course, on the birth of her child. I want to say how fantastic it is that all of our ministers who have had children – when they bring them into the House, you can see the faces. Well, I'm looking that way, so I tend to see the faces on that side of the room and how they all just light up when a baby comes into the room. I think it's wonderful. It gets us kind of working more amicably together, perhaps, when babies come in. I think that we need more women and more babies and especially nothing stopping more women in this House so that they can be here and help us make these really important decisions like the decisions of the Ministry of Justice.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General – you know, I've had a few cases where people come to my office in the constituency looking for a request for legal aid, and I know that she has an amount here in the supplementary supply estimates dedicated to that. I'm hoping that she can go into a little bit more detail on that particular program and the money that she requires for that.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm very happy to discuss this topic. And thank you very much to the member for the question. It's a topic that's near and dear to my heart. Legal aid, obviously, provides funding for individuals who are unable to access the legal system by any other means. It's a program which I think most participants in the justice system would agree has been underfunded for a number of years. The demand on that program has obviously increased because it's based on financial eligibility guidelines, so if an individual falls within those guidelines, they have access to the program. What that means is that if they find themselves accused of a crime, we are required to cover a certificate for that individual.

Of course, as people have had some lower incomes and there have been a few more people who haven't been working, the demand on that program has increased quite considerably. The

increase that this government has put into that program has been over – with this, it's even more than 25 per cent, probably closer to 30 per cent. That's to ensure that during this time of economic vulnerability, those individuals who previously were working and find themselves unable to work have access to that program, and I think that's pretty critical.

A lot of this is defence against actions of the state, and I think sometimes people don't understand how important that is. When someone stands accused of a crime, they haven't yet been convicted of that crime, and I think it's important that they are allowed to make full answer in defence. Ultimately, the system is intended to get to the meat of the matter, and I think it's important that those individuals have access to counsel.

Another really important thing that legal aid does is that it provides access to counsel in a lot of family law matters. One of the reasons I think that is so important is because there can be a significant imbalance in power between one parent and the other parent. In addition, they can provide access to counsel for children in custody dispute matters, which is often very important. That imbalance in power means that when Legal Aid is able to step in for the parent who has less access to resources, I think that creates just sort of a fairer society overall, and it ensures that everyone is able to meet their obligations.

Really, in this case the increase to legal aid is a result of the fact that in order to continue paying for the services that we had committed to Albertans, we needed a little bit more funds to pay for those services. I think that at this time of economic vulnerability, it's important to keep that commitment.

Thank you very much.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Loyola: Thank you once again, Madam Chair. One of the things that, you know – one of the misunderstandings, perhaps I'll say, and one of the stereotypes that tends to exist out there because of the 44 years of Conservative rule in this province is that somehow the NDP are antibusiness. Of course, that stereotype and misunderstanding is promulgated by members of the other side of the House. Of course, nothing could be further from the truth, so I really wanted to give the opportunity to our Minister of Economic Development and Trade, who's doing an amazing job, specifically with – for me, whenever I'm out in the community, I talk about the Alberta export expansion program, the way that we're working with farmers and agriculture to add value to the agricultural products here in the province and, of course, innovation.

I see here on page 34 that there's a transfer amount of \$10 million that's going to be put towards the Alberta carbon conversion technology centre. This is an incredible innovation that's being supported here in our province, and I want the minister to comment on that and give us more details about it.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and I'll thank the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie for the question. I'm quite excited about this. This is a partnership between the province of Alberta, the private sector, and the federal government, so what this is technically, as far as on paper, is a transfer from the expense category over to the capital investment category. The \$10 million that we've delivered through Alberta Innovates is for this facility, the carbon conversion technology centre. This was a partnership, like I said, between industry through COSIA, Canada's Oil Sands Innovation Alliance, the federal government, and Xprize.

What this facility does is that it's attached to the Shepard natural gas facility in Calgary. What they are doing is taking carbon dioxide emissions and turning it into useful products, so taking what was a by-product or a waste product or a leftover and converting it into useful products. One company, that was one of the quarter-finalists, is taking that and injecting it into cement, and what it actually does is that it makes cement about 30 per cent stronger. It's actually less expensive because you can think of it as a bit of a filler. It makes the cement greener. We're not just sequestering carbon; we're now turning it into a useful product.

There are a number of other companies that are in there commercializing their ideas. They've already been tested in a lab. This facility helps them to commercialize it and bring it to market. We are very excited to partner with industry. Here's a great example of an investment that not only aligns with our climate leadership plan but has the potential to deliver significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, diversifying our economy, creating new jobs, so we were quite excited when I made that announcement in March of last year. It was a little over 12 months ago – or exactly 12 months ago; pardon me – that we announced this facility. Obviously, it's up and running, and I'm quite excited at the opportunities.

5:00

This is another prime example of innovation that is going on in Alberta in our oil and gas sector, our energy sector, that will continue to ensure that Alberta is a world leader when it comes to the environment and the economy and our energy sector. So we're very proud to be partnering with those companies and other orders of government.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Loyola: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, once again. I see that I probably have about 30 seconds left. I want to congratulate the Minister of Economic Development and Trade on this incredible innovation that's happening right here in the province. It's projects like these that are going to help create a sustainable economy with great, mortgage-paying jobs here in the province. I look forward to more projects like this here in the province, that our government can participate in.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak on the Official Opposition side? The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to go back and forth with the minister of agriculture if I could.

The Deputy Chair: Okay. You have 10 minutes.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you. If it's okay with the minister, I'd like to go doing that. Madam Chair, I'll be splitting my time at some point with my compatriot who is the critic for forestry, so I'll be going strictly on the agricultural side of it for now.

Under this ask of \$257,223,000 in addition to the little over \$4.5 million made available from lower than budgeted expenses elsewhere in the ministry, it's incumbent on us to find out what that money is for. Minister, I see that \$56,881,000 is needed to fill a gap in the department's grant to Agriculture Financial Services. As you know, that corporation has in the past been somewhat beleaguered on the management side of things, so I was wanting to know if that

is the province's share for AgriStability and AgriInsurance, since the last time around you were \$35.5 million short. That's about \$90 million dollars over the last few seasons that you've underbudgeted on that line item, and I was wondering if you could give me some background as to why the low budgeting and what those reasons might be.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Madam Chair and the member for the question. As I'm sure the member is aware, you know, you can't predict what Mother Nature might do in any given year. You can somewhat predict what the markets might be doing.

I'll split this answer a little bit. A large chunk of that supplementary estimate of \$56.8 million, \$53.4 million, is earmarked for AgriStability. AgriStability was going to be implemented a lot because of the reduction in commodity prices for beef in the year 2016. Many people realize that the price for beef did go down quite a bit that year. We saw about a 30 per cent decrease. We haven't seen a decrease like that since 2003 or so, the BSE scare. It was a hit to our producers. It wasn't easy to predict, so it wasn't included in the budget.

This has been going on for over 10 years now, how we do budgets in Agriculture and Forestry. We have a base budget that supplies the ability to run the base programs, to keep the lights on, if you will, but we can't predict necessarily how the year is going to be. In AgriStability we couldn't predict necessarily that the market was going to take a crash. That's why we have to come back for supplementary estimates, to ask for the money to be able to pay our obligation around AgriStability.

It's also important to note that AgriStability is 60 per cent federal government and 40 per cent provincial. This is our share to ensure that the AgriStability program does what it's designed to do, and that's to pay out those programs. As I'm sure the member would agree, you know, that AgriStability needs a little bit of tweaking. We did have the ability to do some of that tweaking last year. It'll take shape now with the new Canadian agricultural partnership program and with AFSC.

Now, the second half was AgriInsurance, and that's actually, you know, a fairly low amount as compared to other years: \$3.4 million. We had, as I've answered previously, a fairly good, average year last year in agriculture. We had some really good crops, you know, in northern Alberta. We had some fair crops in central Alberta. For the unirrigated acres in southern Alberta it was a fairly dry year. The irrigated acres because of the heat in the year did actually really well. We had, you know, about 60 or so specialty crops grown in southern Alberta, and I think that's amazing: 1.7 million acres of irrigated land in southern Alberta. They always have pretty good water. We had some good snow packs, as we do this year, so I'm looking forward to some good years there.

To summarize, we can't predict necessarily what the weather is going to do, how it's going shape up. This is how budgets have worked for over 10 years now. You know, look for the base funding, and unless nothing happens, unless there are no hail claims, unless everything is perfect in our total 50 million acres of agricultural land in Alberta, it's going to happen where there are going to be hail problems, a crash in commodity prices in whatever commodity that might be, or, like we saw last year, dry conditions.

Thank you.

Mr. Strankman: Thanks, Mr. Minister. I was able to attend yesterday at the supply management function with you and visited with – and I'll give absolute and great kudos to one of your staffers

– Mr. Dave Burdek. He's well versed in this. Could you tell me some of the lessons that have been learned from the unharvested crop disaster, if you have some ideas as to how time and money could be saved? As you know, the funding to the producers needs to be timely.

The Deputy Chair: The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Madam Chair, and to the member for the question. It is a very good question. Without a doubt, when we had those unharvested acres, we hadn't seen that many unharvested acres for about 50 years. It wasn't a situation that AFSC or our producers or the province or, frankly, anybody was used to in our collective memory. There were some lessons learned there without a doubt. We had an ability to direct AFSC to have a look at how they're doing inspections for those unharvested acres. They had the ability to speed up that process a bit and the ability to do a bit less sampling so that process would be speeded up. That was still going to be a judgment call of the inspectors. We need to trust in the training and the ability and the experience of our inspectors when they go out, you know, to make some of those judgment calls.

Without a doubt, we did learn some lessons there from, like I say, an incident that's only happened twice in 50 years. You know, the programs are there. The programs are robust. In many ways the AgriInsurance programs that we have with AFSC are the envy of the country, perhaps the envy of the continent. I have got a lot of confidence in how the programs are running, but whatever we can learn – sometimes those experiences are hard-luck experiences, as we had with unharvested acres because of extreme, wet conditions. If we can learn something from that to make our systems that much better, then we should take advantage of that. Sometimes those are hard lessons to learn after something happens.

It's hard to predict, again, what weather might do. Here's a weather event that was highly unusual. It is a bit of a reactive process, where we're learning something that's happened. Again, it's so hard to predict, next to impossible to predict, what exactly weather is going to do. But we did learn some lessons there and hope that they're incorporated in AFSC and that we don't anytime soon have that many unharvested acres in the province.

Mr. Strankman: Thanks, Minister. Last year there was \$25,503,000 for the department's grant to AFSC's agriculture income support program, and you've touched briefly on some of that. The question this year is that you're asking for another \$53,430,000 for income support. In previous years this is used, as you've discussed, for things like low beef prices, the bovine TB program. Could you itemize what this large amount is for in this case? In such years of the bovine TB issue, which was a good part in the southern part of the riding of Drumheller-Stettler, the federal government actually rebated the province back a substantial part of the AgriStability money, or there was a cost share. If you could go into that, please. Could you also advise if you're expecting any sort of rebate from the federal jurisdiction this year?

5:10

The Deputy Chair: The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Chair. I'm always looking for money from the feds, Member, but there are two different programs here. I want to address that first. There's AgriStability and AgriRecovery. It was the AgriRecovery program that took place with the bovine tuberculosis crisis that we had, and that's a different program. There are different parameters that have to be met for AgriRecovery to take place. It was AgriRecovery that you were mentioning, not

AgriStability, that actually kicked in to assist our producers with the bovine tuberculosis programs that we had there.

You know, of special note to the producers down there that had this bovine tuberculosis issue: I want to thank them, the producers, the municipalities, and, frankly, the federal government and our own government for the quick response they had. I've heard from producers down there that they were extremely appreciative even though this was in many ways a tragedy, where many have lost their entire herds.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Minister.

We will now return to the government side. You have 10 minutes. Would you like to go back and forth, hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie?

Loyola: Yes, thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to turn my questions once again to the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General. But before I ask her a question, I just wanted to actually thank a number of my colleagues here from the government benches. Last weekend we joined a number of women and supporters of the Me Too movement out on the steps of the Legislature. I wanted to bring attention to that gathering, that rally, and the fact that a lot of the speakers at that rally were incredibly grateful for the amount of money that went to help with sexual assault here in the province of Alberta and in building more awareness around that and what we need to do. I think that it's very important for every member of this House to become more informed about the Me Too movement and – I've said this before in this House – especially me myself as a cisgendered male to acknowledge how I can be a better ally to women, especially those who are survivors of sexual assault, and how we can do better. We can do better in this province.

I'm really glad to see that a specific amount of money has gone to the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services, the grant specifically, in order to help a lot of those organizations, and I'm hoping that the Minister of Justice can elaborate on her feelings about why this is so important and why we need to continue to fund and create awareness around the issue.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, and thank you for the very important question. This, of course, voted supply amount is going to fall into Justice as well as Community and Social Services, a couple of other ministries. I think this initiative was ultimately spearheaded by the Minister of Status of Women, and I think this is a fantastic initiative. Obviously, the rise of the Me Too movement and a number of other factors have sort of combined to create a situation where women are finally feeling comfortable coming forward and sharing their stories. I think that that's just fantastic.

As a result of that, though, the demand for counselling services throughout the province has massively increased, and I think, on the one hand, that's really, really good because it means that people are going forward and they're seeking the help that they need in order to deal with their feelings and in order to deal with often the very traumatic things that have happened to them. But because there was such an increased demand for counselling, we were hearing from AASAS and their partners. That's the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services. Many of their members were having a lot of trouble meeting the need for counselling, so the wait times for folks to be able to get into that sort of counselling were getting quite lengthy.

Of course, as we all know, when someone is dealing with a traumatic issue like that, when they have the tenacity and the ability to come forward and to discuss that, it's important to deal with that

trauma right away. Those wait times, we thought, were not acceptable, so we were able to provide this grant and to support that community organization in delivering these services to women throughout the province. We're very excited to have been able to do that, and we really hope that that's able to help many survivors.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

Loyola: I want to thank the minister for that answer. I think it's really important that we continue to do our very best, all members of this House, to continue doing what we can to create more awareness around the issue.

I'd like to turn my questions now to the Minister of Community and Social Services, a good friend of mine. I cannot tell you the number of people who come into my constituency office on a regular basis that get services from this ministry. It's not necessarily a bad thing. It's just demonstrating that we have this incredible ministry that provides services. I know that it's stretched in terms of funding, but hopefully that will change as the recovery grows and the tax base grows as more people get more jobs with this recovery coming on and, of course, also by the fact that we have the \$25-a-day daycare program, which means that more women will be able to get into the workforce as well and will also increase the tax base here in the province of Alberta.

To the Minister of Community and Social Services. I know that the economy is looking up, but we also know that there's a lot more work to do. We also need to ensure that no one gets left behind. How is your ministry protecting services that Albertans rely on?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Member, for the question. It's a quite broad question, so I can talk about all my supplementary estimates, I think, in answer to this question. What we have done in this estimate is that we have added \$239 million to support the services that we provide. Essentially, we were faced with the choice that either we stand with Albertans and provide the services they need or we turn our backs. But we stood with Albertans, and we have pretty much strengthened and improved all services that Albertans depend on; for instance, employment and income support. We have seen a huge increase in the number of Albertans seeking those supports, so we were able to provide additional funding there to support the staff and to support Albertans who are seeking those supports.

Similarly, with the assured income for handicapped people, the AISH program, there were a number of individuals who were seeking those supports, and our caseload was a bit higher than usual, so we added \$23 million to make sure that anybody who is qualified to get AISH gets the support that they need.

Persons with developmental disabilities program. That's another important program. It's designed to include individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities. We added \$46 million to make sure that Albertans with intellectual disabilities get the support they need and they deserve.

5:20

In terms of family supports for children with disabilities, we added \$19 million to make sure that families are getting the supports they need with their loved ones who have intellectual disabilities.

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

We also added \$5.1 million to community supports and family safety programs, line item 6, and I just want to touch on that a little

bit. As the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General mentioned, we've worked with the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services from pretty much the day we became government. First, we provided them \$800,000 to support an award-winning campaign, the I Believe You campaign, essentially to raise awareness about how to respond to survivors when they do seek out support and do disclose. They need and deserve to be believed. That campaign, coupled with other social media campaigns like Me Too, encouraged many survivors to come forward, and in 2016 we saw that increase in counselling wait times and for supports for sexual assault survivors. At that point we provided \$1.6 million to specifically address the caseload counselling wait times. Then in the fall the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services asked for \$8.1 million.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

We now revert to the Official Opposition. Member for Little Bow, would you like to share your time with the minister?

Mr. Schneider: If the minister is agreeable with that, back and forth.

As my colleague from Drumheller-Stettler mentioned already, this year the supplementary supply for Ag and Forestry is \$257,223,000 in addition to \$4.5 million made available from lower than budgeted expenses elsewhere in your ministry. Because I don't have very much time, I'll just ask some pretty pointed questions. Where did the \$86,000 in savings come from that you mention in the supplementary supply description?

The Acting Chair: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Chair. I would make a small suggestion that there was a little bit of noise from my side of the House and I couldn't quite hear the question, but I know he's talking about wildfires, the budgeting. You know, last year we had, for lack of a better term, a fairly lesser fire season than we've seen in the past. There were only 1,231 wildfires in 2017, 49,000 hectares. It sounds like a lot, but when you compare that to previous years – we, of course, remember the Horse River wildfire in and around Fort McMurray, that devastated Fort McMurray. That was only one of the extreme fire events that we actually had that year.

On wildfire preparedness, \$38 million more was spent in 2016 than in 2017. Actually, 2015 was a bigger year than we saw when we had the Fort McMurray fire, so there were more forest fires, more wildland fires in 2015 than 2016. Last year we were showing a little bit less of a wildfire season. But how do we do budgets? We can't predict wildfires, obviously. There's a base budget that will go a long way to supplying the crews with what they need: recruitment, getting equipment ready, putting the lights on, and getting ready for the fire season. Then, as the fire season progresses, we're able to find out and then know the actual costs of fighting those wildfires.

Mr. Schneider: Is any of the money that's being asked for through supplementary supply earmarked to improve communications between all facets of the fire response agencies? I think, as we've all seen, we do have a problem there.

The Acting Chair: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Chair, and thank you to the member. Even though that's a really good question, that would probably be a better question addressed to Municipal Affairs.

Having said that, I know that even with the wildfires that we had in southwestern Alberta last year that came out of the national park,

there were issues around communication. I think there's an ability, an opportunity for all levels of government within Alberta to be able to increase that. This funding doesn't necessarily go to address that. Those were actually some of the recommendations that came out of the Horse River wildfire as well. The three commissioned reports, that were commissioned by all three levels of government, you know, made similar recommendations. This budget won't necessarily address that. Like I say, that probably would be a question that would be best asked of Municipal Affairs.

This supplementary estimate funding will go a long way to pay for those expenses that were for fighting those wildfires. These are a breakdown for anything from, you know, extra wages and benefits to supplies and services to contract services to aircraft parts, everything that has to go towards making sure that we're ready to do what our women and men in the wildland fire service do, and that's protect their communities, protect Alberta, and protect lives, industry as well. They do good work, and this obviously is going to be funds available for them to continue that good work.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Mr. Minister. So no point in me asking questions about communications?

Mr. Carlier: You can ask.

Mr. Schneider: Do I understand that Municipal Affairs takes care of the communications for forestry?

Mr. Carlier: No. Without a doubt, you know, there are communication systems within forestry as well. Sorry, Member; I think you're wondering about the co-ordination between them. The co-ordination between the different levels of government, whether it's provincial or municipal governments or the emergency services, frankly: you know, that is being looked at through Justice and Municipal Affairs. We would have, I suspect, a say in that to make sure that Agriculture and Forestry is part of that co-ordination. It hasn't necessarily been focused as coming out of this ministry but others.

Mr. Schneider: There's a business called Viking Air down in Calgary. Now, they have purchased from Bombardier a piece of equipment called a Super Scooper. We won't rhyme anything with that, but this is a piece of equipment that has been fantastic, sold all over the world, to scoop water up for firefighting. Now, I understand that their board of directors has put forward questions to go out and sell the Super Scoopers to anybody that can stand to take one. I just wonder if your ministry had talked to Viking Air of Calgary about this newer technology.

The Acting Chair: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Chair. Thank you to the member. Yeah, I'm aware of this company that is making these Super Scoopers, a somewhat unfortunate name, maybe, in some respects. It is something that this government supports. Important to note, though – you know, I'm not trying to anticipate your additional questions, Member – that the government of Alberta owns four air tankers. Other air tankers or aircraft that are needed to fight wildfires are on a contract basis. This is a Calgary-based company. I would encourage those contractors, if they're looking to retrofit or perhaps buy new equipment, to look at this company. It's a great Alberta product. I can't dictate that they should, but I'm hoping that they would consider it.

The Acting Chair: The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Chair. We own four tankers; we lease the rest. Is that a good hybrid, cross, mix? Is it better to own some and lease some? I mean, has your ministry done any kind of analysis as to leasing them all or owning them all? Just a question.

The Acting Chair: The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Member. You know, that's actually a fascinating question. I think that it has worked well in the past. I don't anticipate that there's anything to be fixed to make it work better. We have the ability with crossjurisdictional agreements, both within Canada and to the United States and even around the world, for resources of either human power or equipment to make sure that we have the necessary resources to fight our wildfires and, as well, to help out our neighbours in their wildfire-fighting seasons.

5:30

As we saw and as I noted, last year Alberta had a fairly – not a very big wildfire season. We didn't have a large number of wildfires. B.C. unfortunately did, right? So we had the ability to assist them. That assistance was mostly in the form of people power, not so much resources. But those contractors as well have the ability to go across boundaries. Also, we do contract people power as well, you know, boots on the ground. Some of those are contract crews. Some of them are crews that are on standby; others are not. Crews that are not strictly on standby will have the ability as well that if there's a wildfire season that's worse, like we saw last year in B.C., they're able to go across the border and do what they're trained to do and, frankly, make some money doing it. That's worked well. It's a bit of a comparison to our contractors as well. Even though our contractors are under contract to ensure the safety and well-being of Albertans, if our season is low, they do have an ability to go across the border and assist our neighbours across the continent.

I think that currently the system is working well or is working like it should be working, but I would welcome any suggestions, you know, like if the province of Alberta should be buying more aircraft. That might not necessarily be a bad idea.

Thank you.

The Acting Chair: The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: I think I've got 30 seconds, so I might only get the question in. Being that we're talking about B.C. and the fires that they had, has your ministry developed any new strategies to combat the pine beetle problem within forestry so that we don't experience those devastating fires that British Columbia experienced with dead and unharvestable wood, strictly a pine beetle issue? I just wondered if the ministry of forestry had done any more work . . .

The Acting Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie. Would you like to share your time with the minister?

Loyola: Yes, I will share time with the Minister of Community and Social Services, Mr. Chair. It's along the same vein as I was asking the Minister of Justice in terms of the monies provided for the Sexual Assault Centre and creating awareness around that. I believe it is in the \$5.1 million for family and community safety that monies from this ministry have also been allocated, but I'm not a hundred per cent sure on all the details of that. To the minister of community services: I'm hoping that you can provide some more detail on some of the grant funding provided through your ministry for this particular issue.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Member. As I was discussing earlier, we have worked with the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services from day one. Initially we provided them a grant of \$800,000 for the I Believe You campaign, then \$1.6 million for counselling wait times. Then last fall, when we met – the Minister of Justice, Status of Women, and my ministry – we were all working with them on a business plan, and they presented a business plan of \$8.1 million for all three ministers. We did provide them \$4.1 million in operational funding, and that was an ask above and beyond what we already provided them. So we funded their entire business case, and \$5.1 million was the share that Community and Social Services provided out of that \$8.1 million in funding.

Our hope is that this funding will go a long way in responding to the survivors who are coming forward and providing them with the supports they need, crisis support and counselling support. The funding that was provided by Justice and Solicitor General will go to facilitating survivors in court processes. If they choose to pursue those matters in the courts, then that funding will support them with the court process. That increase of \$5.1 million in the community supports grant is exclusively for the business case that the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services provided us.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Loyola: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. I notice here, too, that there are two line items dedicated to persons with disabilities and the supports that are provided for them. I'm fairly familiar with the supports provided for adults in the province. Could you go into a little bit more detail about the difference in the supports for children with disabilities and what your ministry is providing for them, Minister?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Chair, and thank you to the member for the question. As you mentioned, the persons with developmental disabilities program, the PDD program, provides supports to adult Albertans with disabilities, and as the name suggests, the family support for children with disabilities program provides supports to families who have children with disabilities. Supplementary funding is needed to address the caseload growth in this area, and we are asking for \$19.8 million. This year the family support for children with disabilities caseload is projected to grow by 10.7 per cent, nearly 12,500 people. There are many reasons for that, I guess, more awareness about the programs that government is providing and more families seeking those supports for their loved ones.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Loyola: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd now like to go back and forth with the Minister of Children's Services if she doesn't mind, just to ask her a couple of questions there. I'm going to start with a relatively broad question. I couldn't imagine not following through with the amount requested. I believe it's \$46.9 million for child intervention to address the higher caseloads. To the minister: what would happen if we chose not to fund this? What detrimental effect would that have?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the member for the very important question. I think it's, again, important to recognize that caseloads are not numbers on a balance sheet. They're really about real people, real Albertans, real children in real families that absolutely need the supports that we provide in order to have the very best outcome. Those children, those families count on us to ensure that the supports we provide are there to keep their children's future bright and to invest in those opportunities for those children to thrive.

Certainly, some of the important work that we're doing is providing those wraparound services to families to help ensure that children stay with their families and don't enter into care. Certainly, what would be put into jeopardy by not providing those services, Madam Chair, would be that we actually would start to see an increase again in children in care. There's been important work done within Children's Services and with the staff, with tremendous commitment of our front-line staff, to wraparound families to keep children safe in their families, in their homes instead of the disruption of having to apprehend them and bring them into care.

5:40

We've seen a reduction in the number of children being brought into care, which, certainly, evidence shows is incredibly important to the children of this province. We want to be able to continue that. We want to be able to provide support to those families. We want to provide the services that they need to help parents to be at their very best and to keep those families together. Certainly, without this investment, we would be seeing children not getting the support they needed, families not getting the support they needed. Instead of being held together, families would be torn apart, and instead of children having all the opportunities they need to grow and thrive, they might not even be receiving the supports that they need in order to be able to move forward.

I'm really thankful for the support of everyone in this House to recognize the value of quality child intervention services. This government will continue to be committed to supporting the work that our committed front-line workers do to provide every child who comes into their care and every family that comes into their care with the support they need in order to have those good outcomes.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Loyola: Thank you once again, Madam Chair. Our government is working really hard to make life more affordable for Alberta families, and of course this ministry specifically has a lot to do with that. I'm hoping, Minister, that you can go into a little bit more detail on how the funds provided through your ministry ensure support for Alberta's children and youth.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the member for the question. We have a wide variety of services that we provide. We've talked about child intervention quite a bit, you know, and talked with other members of this House about supports for permanency and about providing supports for adoptive parents and private guardians to be able to support the children to the best of their ability with that additional support as well as helping those young adults who have been in care successfully transition to adulthood. So some amazing work is happening there.

I think one of the things that a lot of Albertans are excited about is the work that we're doing around supporting access to quality

early learning and child care programs. Certainly, there's a lot of evidence to show that investing in those early years, investing in those years when we know, as evidence shows, that brain development is so important – that early childhood development sets the framework and the baseline from which children can grow into their full potential. Investments in those times have, certainly, a return that's greatly multiplied over time.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Minister.

We'll now return to the Official Opposition side. The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

The Deputy Chair: Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Chestermere is a great place but a long way from Sundre. A very different elevation, Madam Chair.

Mrs. Aheer: Is it the golden jewel?

Mr. Nixon: Yeah. Exactly.

The Deputy Chair: You have 10 minutes. Would you like to go back and forth?

Mr. Nixon: I'd like to go back and forth with the Justice minister if possible, Madam Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Please go ahead.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to start off with the \$18.9 million that the Justice minister is asking for in supplementary supply, that's stated for the RCMP. Her department, you will know, recently announced a \$10 million investment in RCMP officers and Crown prosecutors, \$8 million for RCMP officers and \$2 million for Crown prosecutors. My curiosity is up as I look at this number to know if any of this number will be going towards paying for part of that investment in the short term to get officers into our communities. The reason I would ask is that the reality – and I think that if the Justice minister has taken any time to come and talk to any of our communities, and I'm not sure she has, but if she has, she will have heard from the RCMP and from the detachments that they do not have enough officers in the depot in Saskatchewan to be able to fill positions at all, right now anyway.

In fact, Madam Chair, right now Lacombe county, which I have the privilege of representing, Red Deer county, which I have the privilege of representing, Ponoka county, which I have the privilege of representing, Mountain View county, which I have the privilege of representing, and Clearwater county, which I have the privilege of representing, are all going forward with investing their ratepayers' money in police officers in their community. Lacombe county and Red Deer county in particular have now been waiting upwards of two years to get an officer because of that investment. If this amount of money that I'm talking about right now in supplementary supply is being invested into the government's promise to be able to put boots on the ground in our communities, the question then becomes: how is that possible? If we can't get an officer with a two-year wait, how is the government going to be able to get officers in the period of time between now and when the budget comes down? You know, it begs the further question, Madam Chair, of how the government is going to follow through on their promise when there are no officers in the community. That is one of the first questions that I'd be curious to hear about.

I'm also interested in the \$810,000 amount that's for the municipal policing grant. The same question: will that go to helping

communities that are investing in officers or in administration staff? That's another issue. Again, if the minister has taken some time to talk to communities, I'm sure that she has heard that there's a need to invest in administration staff to be able to get our existing officers out actually working in the field and not in the office doing paperwork. And if that amount is being invested into those, will it be prioritized for rural communities, that are receiving an epidemic proportion of crime, as you know, Madam Chair?

I know that just recently, it seems, the government is starting to come around to recognizing what is taking place in rural Alberta, so I suspect that maybe they are looking at that with supplementary supply. Of course, the last time that we talked about this in great detail in this Chamber, the government denied that that epidemic was happening inside our communities and, in fact, denied an emergency debate, so maybe they have chosen not to put that in supplementary supply. But based on their announcements in the last few days, I find that interesting.

The other question I have is: in what ways is any of this supplementary supply by this ministry being used to deal with the unique problem that we're facing in rural Alberta communities in regard to crime? I think this minister has indicated in the press lately and in answers to questions inside this Chamber that the government is finally taking this issue seriously. The proof will be in the pudding, so to speak, Madam Chair. But we're excited to see at least that, you know, again, like with so many issues that we've talked about in this Chamber, we lead. The government is finally following.

The people back home in my communities right now don't have time anymore to wait. The people that are facing home invasions and constant victimization from crimes don't have time to wait, the people that are waiting on this Justice minister to pick up the phone – maybe she'll use some of supplemental supply to do that – to call the federal Justice minister and start lobbying for Criminal Code reform to make sure people in my communities aren't being convicted 51 times and then coming back and revictimizing people in our communities. [interjection] The hon. Member for West Yellowhead may think that's funny, but I can assure you that people in my community do not.

My first set of questions to the minister. What in the supplementary supply is she using for that rural crime problem? And will she use any of it to finally come and visit and talk to the rural people that are being impacted by crime in central Alberta, or will she continue to stay in Edmonton and not talk to us?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. There was a bunch of stuff going on in those questions. I'm going to try to address them in roughly the order in which they were posed. Obviously, we've been hearing from rural Albertans about their concerns, and we take those concerns very, very seriously. That's why we announced funding for a strategy to address what's going on in rural Alberta.

I'd like to note that since the member seems to editorialize, I'll feel free to do so as well. I'd like to note that when his leader was asked in Olds just recently about what their plan was, he said that they needed a year to develop their policy. I agree with the member. I think that the time for action is now, and that's why we're taking action right now.

With respect to this \$18.9 million to address the RCMP contract, that's actually a number that relates to a slightly different thing although, interestingly, quite related to the issue that he identified. We've heard from a number of communities as well that there are

concerns with being able to recruit and retain RCMP officers in certain areas. One of the reasons for that is, as the member will no doubt be aware, there was a Supreme Court ruling a couple of years ago that the RCMP were permitted to bargain collectively, so they have been in the process of attempting to pick a representative in order to do that. That process continues to be ongoing.

In the interim the federal minister – I can't remember his exact title – of public safety or public security had allowed an increase in the salaries of RCMP officers, and in part that was intended to address the fact that they're having trouble retaining people because while this process of waiting for the collective bargaining to work itself out goes on, those officers were not receiving any increases, so that had created that problem. As a result, he approved a certain number of increases over a couple of different years, and some of them are retroactive. So this \$18.9 million is actually going to address that contract. Because the province contracts through the PPSA and we pay for policing for rural communities and for communities with 5,000 people or fewer, unlike other municipalities, this is our portion of that. Because the salaries of those officers have increased and there's some back pay that results from that, this number is going to pay directly to those front-line officers, so that's a contract piece there.

5:50

The \$0.8 million for municipal police assistance grants: that requires a little bit of explanation. Alberta is actually, I'm very proud to say, a province that invests more into policing than any of our western neighbours. The way we do that is twofold. For rural municipalities and urbans under 5,000 the province pays for policing subject, of course, as the member has noted, to the fact that they can contract for additional officers by paying for those officers. For other urban centres they pay for their policing, and the province supports them in three ways. We support them through police officer grants, returned fine revenues, and municipal police assistance grants, which is noted here.

In this case the increase relates to the fact that those municipal police assistance grants are based on population, so because the final population numbers came in a little bit higher, essentially there's a little bit more money that's owed to those municipalities to support them in paying for policing. That's what's going on there.

The member also asked a question about civilian staff. That isn't represented here, but in the announcement we made with respect to the RCMP, that's exactly what we're doing. Part of that will be to hire 40 civilian staff. Some of them will be placed in crime reduction units doing intelligence-led policing, and some of them will be placed, 23 of them, in a special unit that will allow RCMP officers to call in and make certain reports. As the member will no doubt be aware, sometimes the uplinks in the cars, the ability of the officer to put their report on those uplinks from the cars, aren't able to make it. The result is that those RCMP officers have to drive from wherever the crime was committed back all the way to their detachments, and sometimes that's quite a long distance, as the member is no doubt aware.

Those civilian employees will enable the officers to phone in certain very basic reports and have civilian employees do that data input, and then those officers are able to stay in their communities. We've certainly heard from those communities that one of their big concerns is about visibility.

I think that answers all of the questions. I tried to write them all down. Thank you very much.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I will point out one thing in response to the minister. Our leader, as she pointed out, was referring to a year, but what he was referring to was that if we are fortunate enough to replace this government in a year, we would finally have to take action because the government has chosen until now not to take action. You know, it begs the question from hearing the monologue from the minister: what has taken her so long as the Minister of Justice to take action despite being warned by rural Albertans for over a year that this was taking place? For over a year to leave rural Alberta completely abandoned while being victimized is a real shame.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

We will now return to the government side. Are there any other members wishing to speak? Hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, you have one minute to go back and forth if you would like.

Mr. Malkinson: Oh, wow. Thank you, Chair. I was wondering. There is an amount in estimates for Economic Development and Trade regarding the Alberta carbon conversion technology centre. I wonder if the minister could tell us about what that's for.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister for Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and I'll thank the member for the question. Essentially, what we're doing here is transferring \$10 million from the expense category over to the capital investment category. This isn't an increase, and the funding was required to address the capital investment for the building of the facility. This is a partnership between the private sector, the government of Alberta, partnering as well with the federal government to essentially turn carbon dioxide emissions into useful and usable products. It is an incredible story which I look forward to telling the House more about at my next opportunity.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie. Oh. I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(3) the committee shall now rise and report progress.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

Ms Luff: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Committee of Supply has had under consideration the supplementary supply estimates for the fiscal year ending 2017-18, reports progress thereon, and requests leave to sit again.

The Acting Speaker: Having heard the report, all those in favour, please say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed, please say no. So ordered.
The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Given the time and the progress we've made today, I move that we call it 6 o'clock and adjourn until 9 tomorrow morning.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:56 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday morning, March 15, 2018

Day 5

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Thursday, March 15, 2018

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Prayers

The Acting Speaker: Good morning.

Let us each pray or reflect in our own way. Hon. members, time is precious. Let us use our time as public servants dedicating ourselves to achieving our common goals and working towards the betterment of our great province. Let us remember that strength and success are accomplished by working together. Listening, understanding, and respecting one another's views can open up new possibilities and new opportunities. Amen.

Please be seated.

Orders of the Day Committee of Supply

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: Good morning. I'd like to call the Committee of Supply to order.

Hon. members, before we commence this morning's consideration of supplementary supply, I would like to remind members where the committee left off in the rotation. When the Committee of Supply reported progress yesterday, there were three hours and two minutes remaining for consideration of supplementary supply pursuant to Government Motion 6, agreed to on March 13, 2018, and members from the government had nine minutes remaining in the rotation, to be followed by members of the Official Opposition.

The rotation in Standing Order 59.01(6), which was outlined yesterday, is deemed to apply, and

for the time remaining, to the extent possible, the rotation outlined in clauses (b) to (e) shall apply with the speaking times set at 5 minutes [at one time] as provided in Standing Order 59.02(1)(c).

The rotation will then repeat for any time remaining. Speaking times are now limited to five minutes; however, provided that the chair has been notified, a minister and a private member may combine their speaking time with both taking and yielding the floor during the combined 10-minute period.

Finally, at the conclusion of six hours of consideration, including the two hours and 58 minutes taken yesterday, or earlier if no members are wishing to speak, the Committee of Supply shall vote on the supplementary supply estimates.

Supplementary Supply Estimates 2017-18 General Revenue Fund

The Deputy Chair: Are there any members wishing to speak from the government side? Hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, would you like to go back and forth?

Loyola: Yes, Madam Chair. I'd like to go back and forth with the Minister of Community and Social Services, please.

The Deputy Chair: Minister, are you in agreement?
Please go ahead.

Loyola: Thank you, Madam Chair. Good morning to all. As always, it's a pleasure to be here in the House with all of you.

Minister, I'm looking over the supplementary supply estimate request, and I see here that you have \$26 million for income support to people with barriers to full employment due to increased demand for financial benefits. I'm hoping that you can go into a little bit more detail about this line item and perhaps even give us a few case scenarios of people in the community that you may know that require funds from this particular line item.

Mr. Sabir: Which line item?

Loyola: It's the \$26 million for income support to people with barriers to full employment, Minister.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Member, for the question. As you can see, the employment and income support programs are divided into two broad categories. One is: expected to work. The other one is: barriers to full employment. In general, the expected to work category includes those individuals who are temporarily out of work and are expected to get back to work, I guess, in a shorter period of time while barriers to full employment are those individuals who have multiple barriers other than just market conditions. They may have some educational barriers in terms of their abilities, different kinds of barriers. We have seen that caseload go up as well because the market conditions are tough. It's difficult for these individuals to get back into the market to get a job. In order to deal with that increased demand, we're adding this money so that we can provide for those individuals.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Loyola: Thank you, Madam Chair. I know that the last couple of years have been really tough. I've had a few constituents of mine that have actually come into the office, of course, requiring help with income support. To the minister: could you describe a little bit about how the process is for these constituents of mine to actually engage with your office, how it is that they go about applying for this, and the benefits of this program to these people?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Member. We do have Alberta Supports and Alberta Works centres throughout our province, and the locations are available online. You can look into what will be the closest office for whoever is looking for the benefits. An Alberta Supports centre will be able to assess their eligibility and provide them with all the benefits that they may be eligible for. Other than that, I believe that my office's information is also available online. For the most part they're administered by Alberta Supports and Alberta Works centres, and we do have Alberta Supports and Alberta Works centres throughout our province. There is an emergency hotline as well, which supports them after hours if there is some emergency. They can also help provide those benefits.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Loyola: Yeah. I see that we have the Minister of Status of Women here in the House this morning, and I just wanted to ask her a few questions if she doesn't mind. First, before I launch into that, I just want to say how proud I am of our government and the fact that we

have established this Ministry of Status of Women. When I'm out door-knocking in the community, when I'm out meeting people, people are so incredibly proud of what this government has done and specifically with the introduction of gender plus analysis in all of the legislation that we're bringing forward here in the province.

I have to say that the programs encouraging women to get more involved in the political sphere, no matter what level of government, have been inspirational to so many women. I have to say that in my neck of the woods in southeast Edmonton and not just in Edmonton-Ellerslie but, you know, in Edmonton-Mill Woods as well as Edmonton-Mill Creek, really, I can personally see it myself with the number of women who have come forward in order to really engage in the political process.

I also had the benefit of meeting with the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues, that ran an entire program specifically trying to welcome and engage racialized women, who normally have a lot more barriers, I would say, to participating in the democratic process here in this country and all over the country, no matter at what level. I was so incredibly encouraged to see that funds from the Ministry of Status of Women were provided to the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues for that particular program. When I sat down and visited with these women, there were women from Africa; for example, there was a young woman from Nigeria who was incredibly involved in the last municipal election. She didn't run herself because she didn't feel ready, but she was very involved with one of the campaigns for one of the city councillors. She used that opportunity to really learn what the process was like. She was encouraged because of the program coming through Status of Women.

9:10

Of course, there was a young woman from the Philippines. There were a couple of young indigenous women sitting around the table. Let me tell you, it was probably the best hour and a half that I've spent in such a long time, being given the opportunity. Now, of course, the Minister of Status of Women asked me to sit in on that meeting on her behalf. But let me tell you, as a man we sometimes don't get to see what all those barriers are for women and especially racialized women here in this country when it comes to running for office. Having the opportunity to sit there for an hour and a half and listen to the stories of these women was really enlightening for me. I know we're doing good work, but we still have more work to do, obviously.

Now, to the Minister of Status of Women: I see here in the supplementary estimate requested for the Ministry of Status of Women that you have \$675,000 for the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services, and yesterday we were talking at great length . . .

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

We are now moving over to the Official Opposition. Hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, would you like to go back and forth, or would you like to take five minutes?

Mr. Cooper: I would like to go back and forth if it's okay with the minister.

The Deputy Chair: The Minister of Community and Social Services. You are in agreement? Yes?

Hon. member, please proceed.

Mr. Cooper: Excellent. Thank you so much, Chair. It's a pleasure to be here this morning and a pleasure to see the minister joining us. I look forward to some exciting back and forth while we discuss some very important matters.

I think I would just like to start by asking the minister, you know: in the supplementary supply it's a pretty substantial number for your department, in excess of \$239 million. I'm wondering if you can just briefly – I hope that you'll be brief because I do have a number of questions that I'd like to discuss with you this morning – give us a bit of a sense generally about why a lot of the \$239 million costs weren't anticipated. Obviously, you're asking for additional monies here in the supplementary supply. If you can give us a bit of an overview as to – I understand that they are here – what they are. Why did you get your budget wrong by \$240 million?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thanks, Member, for the question. You can see what the numbers are there, but due to the downturn in the economy there were caseload increases which were not predicted. It's human behaviour involved as well when you're making those predictions. At the same time, I guess we were committed to providing the supports which are needed. Once somebody qualifies for these programs – these are statutorily mandated programs – we have to provide those benefits. We did our best based on the estimates, the advice I received from the department from previous years' averages, but we have seen the commodity prices such as oil going down having an impact on our economy. It was the worst, I guess, downturn in 40 years, so maybe it was not possible to predict everything with absolute precision, but one thing that Albertans were sure of was that government will stand with them when they need those supports. This addition reflects that commitment that government stands with those who are in need of these services.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I must admit that I'm a little bit perplexed. I hear the Finance minister every day telling us that everything is rosy and up, up, up, yet I hear the minister of community services telling us that his budget was devastated to the tune of \$230 million because of how negative the impacts of the economy have been. It's a little bit perplexing to understand how both are true, but I guess I will continue.

I'd like to drill down a little bit deeper into the exact numbers that we're speaking of. On page 26 of the supplementary supply estimates document it states that you needed an additional \$13.3 million for salaries, wages, and employee benefits. Can you elaborate on the factors that came to be that required such an additional amount? How many people was that? What is the percentage of service demand increase that required an additional \$13 million?

The Deputy Chair: The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Member, for the question. I described what was happening in the past year, and when the Finance minister says that things are looking up, certainly things are looking up. We have seen 90,000 full-time jobs in the last year, we have seen the economy growing by 4.5 per cent, we have seen average weekly wages go up, we have seen manufacturing go up, we have seen housing starts go up, we have seen exports go up, we have seen motor vehicle sales go up, we have seen business incorporation go up, we have seen retail sales go up, and we have seen restaurant receipts go up. So things are looking up, and we are

hoping that with the economy improving, we will see some easing of those pressures.

But back to your question. When we saw oil prices going down, the economy was hit hard. The caseload in income support almost doubled, and that \$13.3 million for salaries, wages, and employee benefits was reflective of that increase in the demand. Daytime calls, for instance, to our income support contact centres increased 200 per cent, from 10,000 to almost 30,000 in 2017-18. The Alberta Supports contact centres are getting 29,000 calls per month, which is 10 per cent more than what it was in '16-17.

Also, the ministry opened 22 new Alberta Supports centres in '16-17 and 12 more in '17-18, so we added more Alberta Supports centres as well so that Albertans, regardless of where they live in the province, have access to the services, have access to qualified staff so they can reach out to government programs and services.

The Deputy Chair: The Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Chair. I guess I have a couple of additional questions with respect to the economy being up or down or service requirements being up or down. If, in fact, it is a direct result of a down economy and if, in fact, the Finance minister is to be believed that everything is up, up, up, can we anticipate a \$13.3 million reduction in the budget next year because, clearly, there's going to be a significant reduction in the need for services? If everything you've said this morning and everything the Finance minister has said is true, then the caseload is going to be dropping off dramatically over the next number of months because the recovery has been fully felt, according to the Finance minister.

My question is two-fold. One, should we anticipate a decrease in services over the next quarter or two, and if not, when can we anticipate to see a reduction in the expenditures? I just heard you say that you're opening a whole bunch more, but in fact if the economy is recovering and that was the need, why do we need to be opening those? I'm not saying that we don't. It's possible that we do. But why do we need to if, in fact, the Finance minister is to be believed?

The Deputy Chair: The Minister of Community and Social Services.

9:20

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Member, for the question. First, why we are opening more centres. We are converting the existing Alberta Works centres, which were mostly dealing with the benefits that are available through Community and Social Services, while, in moving towards Alberta Supports centres, there will be 34 different benefits available not just from CSS but from other ministries as well. For instance, if somebody needs something relating to Children's Services, child benefit, seniors' benefit, those kind of things, it will provide a full suite of services. We need those to make sure that Albertans get the supports they need.

Second thing, while we see a dramatic reduction in caseload, we are seeing that that line is flattening. The thing is that when things go down, these are individuals who are let go right away. When things start picking up, the market picks up labour based on their skills and qualifications, and there is a lag when they get back into the market. But we are hoping that with the economy growing, we will see a reduction in caseload and a reduction in that line expense.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: I will provide some time in the next set of questions for you to answer, but I'll ask it now. On page 26 of supplementary supply estimates you request an additional \$39.5 million for income support to people expected to work or working due to increased demand for financial benefits. Based on the Alberta office of statistics on income support caseload that's updated February 6 of 2018, the income support caseload has continually and steadily climbed since 2014-15. Given this relatively predictable trend, why didn't your ministry budget for these services accordingly prior?

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

We will now go to the government side. Are there any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the Minister of Status of Women . . .

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, sorry to interrupt. Are you going back and forth?

Ms Renaud: Sure.

The Deputy Chair: Is that okay, Minister?

Ms McLean: We could do that.

The Deputy Chair: Okay. Please go ahead.

Ms Renaud: I understand that the Ministry of Status of Women uses a really amazing tool, an analytic tool, gender-based analysis plus, to assess how diverse groups experience policy, programs, and initiatives. I'm wondering if you could elaborate on the specific things we're doing to support gender equality within your ministry and the activities we're supporting.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Status of Women.

Ms McLean: Thank you, and thank you to the member for the question. Status of Women has three priority areas. These are to reduce violence against women and girls, to improve economic outcomes for women in Alberta, and to get more women into leadership roles, and that includes leadership like political office, seats at decision-making tables like boards and commissions, CEO positions. That's some of the work that I've been really focused on in particular, given the recent downturn, in an effort to ensure that women are part of the recovery and that they have the opportunities equivalent to their male counterparts and to take advantage of the opportunities as they're starting to grow.

To that end we asked the Alberta Securities Commission along with the Minister of Finance to adopt, disclose, or explain the rules which were adopted, a policy that was adopted in Ontario and that has been shown to incrementally increase the number of women on corporate boards. We also know that it wasn't enough to be doing that outside of government. We had to look at ourselves as well and how government was performing with respect to our appointments on our boards as agencies, boards, and commissions are responsible for the majority of the spending of the public purse, when we look at the AHS board and how large that budget is, for example.

We took a look at what our own numbers were and discovered that under the previous government, under the Tories, only a third of those seats were held by women. This was likely due to a gender-washing, which essentially means that there was not an effort to look at desegregated data or to look at the impacts that are disproportionate often of programs and policies on women and girls and how societal norms, et cetera, disproportionately affect women and girls. So knowing that and taking a conscious effort in having

that gendered lens, we reviewed our policies and our procedures for recruitment to our agencies, boards, and commissions. We made it more transparent.

We looked at the wording of different postings. The wording is very important for these kinds of postings, whether it's a job or an appointment, because typically women will self-select out of positions if they see words that they don't identify with, like "leadership." Unless you expressly define what that means or can mean in the context, women will often self-select out. Also, women, we know, psychologically tend to not apply for a job until they are overqualified for it whereas men will apply for a job based on their perceived potential, of their own perceptions.

So we changed that entire process, and as a result we are now at over 50 per cent of those seats on our agencies, boards, and commissions being held by women. That goes to show what can happen when you apply that gendered lens, the GBA-plus analysis. It helps to identify who benefits and who is left behind and then allows you the room and knowledge to mitigate for those impacts. That's what we've done on the leadership piece, and it shows real, concrete impacts.

So often I hear comments. We were just at the United Nations, and we were discussing impacts on rural women and girls across the world. Obviously, my focus was particularly with a lens to rural women and girls in Alberta. It was unfortunate to hear from some more conservatively minded individuals this perspective that for some reason women need to be, quote, qualified whereas for men that same standard does not apply when it comes to leadership positions. We've seen that play out time and time again in this province. So it's important that when we say words like "qualified," we actually define what that means and that those metrics are evenly applied. So often it's used as a way to say that women aren't good enough and that that's why, even though they make up 50 per cent of the population, there are legitimate reasons to not fill those positions.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. minister, you have spoken for five minutes. If we could allow the member to ask a second question.

The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Sure. Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm so happy that we are using this tool to ensure that the policies that we make and the programs that we support and the initiatives we encourage are indeed accessible to everybody. People might not know that GBA-plus is a lens for race, ethnicity, religion, age, mental and physical disability.

Now, I was, of course, like most people, thrilled to hear about the additional funding for the sexual assault centres and funding to address counselling wait-lists, and that is particularly important, I think we've all seen. You'd have to be asleep most days not to notice that more and more women are emboldened to disclose. They're feeling safer, and they're talking about workplace harassment, abuse, assault. We're hearing it from all over. I think we're at a turning point. We aren't going to go back, and I'm incredibly thankful for that. Unfortunately, not everybody is at the same place. Some people still excuse that behaviour because they were young or they didn't know any better, but I think that this government is clearly drawing a line about what is acceptable and what is not.

In my previous work and in my work on the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities one of the lenses that we apply is disability. In particular, we know that women with disabilities face a very high likelihood of being abused at some point in their lives. Domestic violence is a very real problem for them as well, as is access to counselling. Many, many women with

disabilities have additional barriers to counselling, not just financial or time but physical accessibility. I'm wondering if the minister could expand on this a little bit and tell us about how this analysis is going to support women with disabilities as well as women that are feeling strong enough and supported enough to come forward and disclose.

9:30

Ms McLean: Thank you for the questions. I'll note, particularly in light of the Me Too movement and the number of women that are coming forward of all stripes and socioeconomic backgrounds, that these are very important questions. These are very important topics, that we should all be listening to very carefully, paying heightened attention to. You know, certainly, while my friends in the opposition – the opposition whip, I'm sure, has important considerations. I would encourage him to listen to the question even though that has not been my observation.

To that end, I would love to take the opportunity to talk about how the additional funding for AASAS, which is historic and very important in this province, is something that has never been done in this situation before. In fact, I'm informed that across the country, the funding that has been provided to AASAS, the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services, is the most funding that any province has provided to rape crisis centres. When we talk about the most funding, in the scope of government we're still talking about small dollars, \$8.1 million. I would certainly encourage the deputy Leader of the Official Opposition to pay attention to this point as well.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. minister, we are now past your time.

We will go to the Official Opposition. Hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, will you continue to go back and forth with the Minister of Community and Social Services?

Mr. Cooper: Please.

The Deputy Chair: Minister, you're okay with that?

Mr. Sabir: Sure. Please.

The Deputy Chair: Please proceed.

Mr. Cooper: Just prior to the end of our time I asked a question specifically related to the fact that there has been a steady trend of increase in need for services. Given that this relatively predictable trend with respect to income support for those expected to work has been consistent over a long period of time, why did your ministry not budget accordingly for these services?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you. As we were talking earlier, you indicated that this caseload was increasing from 2014-15, and that was the time when we saw a decrease in the commodity prices and the kind of decrease we saw in oil prices, that was unprecedented, and a downturn we haven't seen in 40 years. What we were doing – we were absolutely committed to making sure that Albertans got the supports they needed, but sometimes it was impossible to predict those numbers with absolute certainty because the caseload was increasing at an unprecedented rate due to the unprecedented drop in the price of oil. More people were asking for money. However, whether it was forecasted with certainty or not, Albertans were certain of one thing, that they would get the supports they needed. Government will stand with them when they need those supports.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Yes. You did not just miss it by a little; you missed by \$40 million at a time when, if you believe the Finance minister, everything is coming back up, up, up. The caseload must be just dropping off at breakneck speed if the Finance minister is to be believed.

On page 26 of the supplementary supply estimates document you note that an additional \$26 million is required for income support to people with barriers to full employment due to increased demand for financial benefits. Now, it's my understanding that for Albertans to qualify for income supports due to barriers to full-time benefits, they must have a combination of the following factors: persistent mental or physical impairment; lack of formal employment, social skills, work history; age; et cetera. Can you explain why the number for this line item has grown since your previous budget and what the factors were that led to this increase?

The Deputy Chair: The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Member, for the question. You indicated the factors for barriers to full employment. This is a line item that is not directly tied with the unemployment rate. Rather, we have seen, historically, a steady increase. Over the period of the last year there was, I guess, more caseload growth. Again, it's a statutory program. When Albertans show up at any Alberta Supports centre or reach out to the Community and Social Services ministry, once they qualify and fall into the criteria you explained, they get the benefits that they are entitled to.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd just like to ask a couple of quick questions here with respect to supply and some comments the minister has made in the past and whether or not there'll be implications for this in any line items in supply. Minister, we understand that you had no intention of a PDD review until just a few months ago. I believe it was January 19 when the PDD review was announced. As such, it could not have possibly been budgeted for in the previous year. Does the work being done on the PDD review that was announced in January fall under any supplementary supply line item?

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Member, for the important question. With respect to this program, in the last two and a half years we have done a number of things. We have always been open to working with the community on all issues that matter to them. For instance, when I became minister, the first issue I heard was the safety standards regulation, so I worked with the community. More than 2,000 Albertans participated in that consultation, and we repealed that regulation, that was not liked by anyone, actually, across the province.

Coming out of that recommendation report were almost 11 recommendations, and a PDD review was one of them. But there were other recommendations that could have been implemented in the short term, where the community can benefit right away, so we worked on a number of recommendations. Other than that, we also repealed the supports intensity scale.

When I was touring around the province last year, there was still a desire that we can learn from this review, that the community can benefit from this review, and we agreed to that. At this point we are

consulting with the community with respect to the scope and process of the review, and the department is absorbing those costs. Once that process and scope is set out, we will see how we will support that review, and we will certainly provide what it takes to do that review in a meaningful way.

Mr. Cooper: Surely you will agree that there are some significant costs for a review of this size and magnitude. What I hear you saying is that you have so much buffer room in all of your other budgets that you can absorb all of those costs into the work that the department is already doing, or you're spending money on the PDD review that is either unbudgeted or not in the supplementary supply line items. Can you help me better understand which one of those two things is what's actually happening: you have tons of extra space and, as such, you can travel around the province and put the foundation in for what is a very important review, or you're spending money outside of what should be in a supply line item?

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Member. I think that's not what I said, that you heard. What I said is that it's a two-phase review process. In the first phase we are gathering input and feedback from individuals, families, advocates, service providers with respect to the scope and process of the review. At that point, once we have that feedback, we will determine what the scope of the review is and the process we will take, and we will have a better idea of what it will cost to do that review.

The fundamental thing that I want to point out in this review is that it's different from previous reviews done by accountants. We are working with the community from day one because we believe in the slogan Nothing about Us without Us. From step 1 to the end we will work with them and include them in the most meaningful way possible so that they decide about their services, their future, how to improve this program.

9:40

The Deputy Chair: The Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Chair. Last spring the House voted unanimously to create a disability advocate, and we have heard very little on this matter since then. Does the position fall under any budget line that's now in your supplementary supply, as it clearly would have been difficult to budget prior given that the vote was only last spring to have this? At times during that debate we had heard that the costs may be as high as \$900,000. I'm curious to know exactly the status of the disability advocate. Is there a line item in your supplementary supply that will cover the costs of that? If there are no resources currently being spent on the office, is that because it hasn't been created yet? Are there any financial resources in your supplementary supply budget allocated to the recruitment of this position? Can you give us some sense of why we haven't heard anything, the actual costs, and why they're not included in supplementary supply if they aren't? Or if they are, please give some indication as such.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Member, for the important question. Yes, last session we created the disability advocate. I'm very proud to stand with a government that, within less than two years in office, was able to create the first disability advocate Alberta will ever have. With respect to that office it's not about just hiring one individual; it was about setting up a whole support office within the ministry. Then we reached out to . . .

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

We will now go to the Member for Calgary-South East for the Alberta Party.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, would you like to go back and forth for your 10 minutes?

Mr. Fraser: Yes, please.

The Deputy Chair: Okay. Minister, is there agreement?

Mr. Fraser: Community and Social Services.

The Deputy Chair: Minister? Yeah.

Please go ahead.

Mr. Fraser: Minister, on page 26 the \$81.4 million in unexpected expenses for employment and income supports suggests that Alberta is not experiencing the strong economic recovery that you've been boasting about. How many Albertans were served by this increase and from what parts of Alberta? Can you please explain why you did not take into account these increased demands?

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Member, for the question. I think these numbers reflect those who received services from income support programs. As I said, it was the worst downturn that Alberta has seen in 40 years. It was an unprecedented downturn due to the decrease in the price of oil and other commodities. Out of this, \$39 million is for those who are expected to work. Due to that increased caseload, we will provide those services with that. At this point there are 34,200 people, which is a 65 per cent increase from '15-16 in this caseload growth. And \$26 million out of that \$81 million is for barriers to full employment.

But we are seeing improvement in the job situation and the economy. Our economy grew by 4.5 per cent, the fastest across this country, and we have seen jobs coming back. Like, 90,000 jobs were added just last year. Our GDP growth is up. Wages are up. But what happens when we see these improvements is that there is always a lag in terms of people getting off this caseload and getting back into the market. So we will see a little bit of a lag, but we are seeing the flattening of the line, and we are hoping that this year we will see a decrease in this number and fewer people needing those supports.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Mr. Fraser: Thanks. One additional question on this particular issue. You're talking about the growth within the province, particularly that there may be more people here trying to find some economic gains and/or employment. How many people from out of province were approved through AISH in this last little bit, that would maybe explain some of these increases?

The Deputy Chair: The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you. AISH provides benefits to Albertans who are ordinarily resident. When somebody is a permanent resident or citizen and is ordinarily resident in Alberta, it will provide that benefit to those Albertans. So whoever received AISH benefits in the last year was qualified under the existing criteria, which is enshrined in our law. We don't provide benefits to somebody who is sitting outside the province. You have to be a permanent resident

or citizen and ordinarily resident in the province in order to apply and qualify for this benefit. Does that answer your question?

Mr. Fraser: Let me clarify. Perhaps it's people that came here, that were on AISH in other provinces, that became ordinary citizens of this province, that could not receive work or could not receive employment through your programs. Was that anticipated? And are there any measures that you're looking at in terms of people that come from out of province that are already on social assistance, that have been approved by those provinces and that come here now looking for, maybe, employment through our programs and do not receive it? That, then, maybe explains part of this increase.

The Deputy Chair: The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Chair. I don't know if I'm following the question, but every province has a different program and different statutory or regulatory requirements in order to qualify for those benefits. The AISH program sets those requirements in the AISH Act and regulations. You know, one of the qualifications is that you need to be ordinarily resident in order to qualify for that.

If you are asking whether there is some influx from outside of Alberta on these programs, I was looking at some numbers from 2012-13, when there was an increase of \$400 in the AISH program. If you see the caseload growth during that time, it was still not a huge jump out of the ordinary, that people started planning their move to Alberta around that benefit. There was still a steady growth in that program. This time around we haven't seen that kind of thing, that somebody is moving from out of province just to get AISH.

People qualify when they have disabilities, and if they meet that criteria, we will provide this benefit because it's a statutory benefit.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Madam Chair. Could you please explain the \$23.5 million in AISH caseload growth? How many individuals does that represent? Are there differences in the severity of these individual cases in terms of their conditions or financial needs compared to the pre-existing caseloads? Similarly, the \$43.8 million in PDD caseload growth and \$19.8 million in family support for children with disabilities.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Member. With respect to AISH, the \$23.5 million, that was required to accommodate higher than expected caseload growth. The caseload is projected to grow by 6.7 per cent in 2017-18, and the total number will be around 58,800 individuals. That caseload growth is a bit higher than what we have seen before.

In terms of if there is a difference between what they get, AISH is in fact guaranteed, if I can put it that way. It's a guaranteed income program. It makes sure that your income from all sources doesn't fall below a certain limit, the legislated limit of \$1,588. Sometimes when the economy goes down, people who have some part-time employment might lose that, and the government will have an obligation to make sure their income doesn't fall below \$1,588. Sometimes that also increases the cost per case. In general, I guess, the program is to ensure that everyone who is on this caseload gets \$1,588 minimum from this program from all sources. There are certain incomes that are exempt, nonexempt, partially exempt, so there are some exemptions available to them if they have some employment income, that kind of thing.

9:50

With respect to PDD funding it's \$40 million higher than what we asked for initially – the caseload is projected to grow by 4.1 per cent, to more than 11,900 individuals – \$3 million of that was used to support the minimum wage increase and to accommodate the agencies with more overnight staffing and those kinds of services, and \$2.4 million for career and employment services for persons with developmental disabilities was offset by a grant from the federal government. So that makes a total of \$46 million that we increased for PDD.

Similarly, in FSCD we have seen a significant caseload growth; that is, 10.7 per cent, making the caseload almost 12,500. That's why we added \$19.8 million. I guess there were many factors at play: increased awareness among parents about these services, better diagnostics, technologies, and research.

In all of that, we can say that these are statutorily mandated programs. When Albertans qualify, government has an obligation to provide those benefits. During these tough times, certainly, these programs were more needed. We make sure that Albertans get the support they need.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Mr. Fraser: Minister, you mentioned when you were speaking about PDD – and perhaps this is in some of the other questions that I've asked – the unanticipated. Are you saying that you guys did not anticipate your own increase to minimum wage, that that's why? When you initially funded this, you knew all along that minimum wage was going to be increased, yet you couldn't budget for that, and this is why we're where we're at?

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

We'll now move on to the government side. Are there any members wishing to speak? Hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert, would you like to go back and forth?

Mr. Horne: Please. With the Minister of Indigenous Relations.

The Deputy Chair: Minister, you're in agreement?

Mr. Feehan: Yes.

The Deputy Chair: Okay. Please go ahead.

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Chair, and thank you to the minister for agreeing to go back and forth in sharing our time today. Now, of course, I think we can all agree in this House that the work of Indigenous Relations is so incredibly important, especially as we gather today on Treaty 6 lands and we acknowledge all of the challenges facing many of our indigenous people both on-reserve and in our urban communities.

Now, Minister, I notice that there's fairly little in the supplementary supply directly in relation to your ministry, and I wanted to commend you on that careful management of your budget. I did notice that there were some transactions with the climate office. You know, I've heard a lot of positive feedback in terms of that from my communities. As well, being a member of the Métis Nation, I've also heard a lot of comments from that community. I was hoping to get a little bit more insight, perhaps, on what work your ministry has been doing on climate change in relation to our indigenous peoples and how these are really helping communities right across the province, how much interest there is, and what the challenges are for indigenous communities accessing those funds.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you very much, and thank you to the member for the question. The climate leadership initiative has been a very important part of the work that we're doing with the indigenous community and, in many ways, is reflective of our ongoing commitment to the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. I can explain that in a couple of different ways. One is that one of the commitments that we have made is that whenever Alberta does well, we should be ensuring that all members of the province do well. That includes the indigenous population within this province. As such, we have been working with the community to look at ways in which they can participate in the climate leadership initiative. Thanks very much to the carbon levy that has been put together in this province for the last couple of years, we've been able to have money dedicated particularly to what we refer to as the indigenous climate leadership initiative. In the past year that totalled approximately \$35 million.

The decision was made to do two things, and we've been working with the indigenous community on those two things. The first was to describe seven programs that would allow the First Nations to participate in the actual care of the environment, reducing the carbon footprint. I think it's very important that we recognize that the indigenous people in this province have in fact been the caretakers of the environment in this province forever, frankly, however long back that goes. They have done so diligently and in such an incredibly good way that they've been able to pass on the environment from generation to generation and teach the next generation how they are to deal with the environment in a way that's positive.

When we put together the carbon levy and, subsequently, these programs, they were very excited about the programs. They were very excited about the philosophy of taking care of our Earth. In fact, they very often have commented to me that the very fact that we put together such an extensive program, starting with the carbon levy, has really allowed them to be supportive of a lot of the other work that we're doing in this province such as the building of the pipelines to the coast. I know that sometimes you read in the media that we are somehow violating indigenous rights by building a pipeline, but they've made it very clear that moccasins come in pairs. That means that while you're building the economy, while you're creating jobs, which, of course, are very much desired in the indigenous community, opportunities for employment, you're also taking care of the environment.

I can tell you that the social licence that we're looking for around the pipeline debate is clearly and absolutely reflected in the responses of the indigenous community, who tell us that without taking care of the environment, they could not be in favour of the work in the oil and gas industry. The fact that we are doing both together makes it responsible, reasonable, and consistent with the philosophy that you pass things on to your next generation in a positive way.

Coming from the carbon levy, we were able to design seven programs. The seven programs run the gamut that starts with the ability for communities to educate themselves and their chief and councils or the Métis settlements chairs and councils on all of the aspects they need to understand in order to participate in this new economy that we're building in this province and in order to be able to educate their communities about the programs that are available but also about the need to move forward and how we've designed the process to move forward.

In addition, we've designed programs that allow them to take immediate action such as the solar panel program, which allows communities to put solar panels up on any of their buildings. Now,

of course, you may know that many communities are a bit ahead of us on this one, communities such as Montana, communities such as Louis Bull, that are already putting up solar panels on some of their public buildings. So we went to them and we learned from them. We are very excited about the leadership that they have shown to us, and we thank them for that leadership. We have used that knowledge that they have to move ahead in terms of the design of our programs. Initially we ran a pilot program in the fall of 2016 in which they were able to put up solar panels and we were to look at the design of the program and look at how that worked.

The second program that we . . .

The Deputy Chair: Hon. minister, you have hit your five minutes.

If we could have a question asked back to the minister, please. The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

10:00

Mr. Horne: Yes. Thank you, Chair. Now, Minister, there was one point or one transaction in here that I did take note of, and that is in relation to the Siksika Nation and some money for the repairing and rebuilding of flood-impacted homes in their community. I noticed that it was previously budgeted in 2016-17, but it lapsed due to the timing of some cash requirements. Of course, you know, housing, especially on our reserves, is a very important issue and one that, unfortunately, we haven't paid as much attention to historically. So I'm happy to see that that is something that we are addressing, but I was hoping to get a bit more information on why it lapsed and what we're looking at moving forward.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you very much for the question. As you indicated, housing is an extremely important aspect of all of our lives, and unfortunately in the floods of 2014 many people lost their homes, particularly the three Stoney communities and, of course, Siksika. Hundreds of homes, indeed, were lost and replaced. Fortunately, we were able to make some arrangements for building in all of those communities fairly efficiently. For the Stoney tribes it has been completed. All of those homes are built. We in fact have been able to extend a small piece to one of the Stoney tribes to add six additional homes recently, so it's been a very successful program, and we're wrapping that up very nicely.

The reason why we are bringing money forward from the 2016-17 budget now in the supplementary reading is largely for Siksika First Nation because the timing of the build in Siksika has been a little bit different. As a result, we're simply now asking for money which was previously budgeted for this very purpose and just bringing forward dollars that have already been booked against our books, our liabilities, and are now reducing our liabilities. So the \$31,923,000 will now be brought forward in order to complete the final . . .

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Minister.

We will now return to the Official Opposition side. The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Madam Chair. My questions will be regarding Agriculture and Forestry, and I will ask the Minister of Municipal Affairs if that's all right. I'd go back and forth with him if that's all right with the minister.

The Deputy Chair: Minister, are you in agreement to go back and forth?

Mr. S. Anderson: Yeah. That's fine.

The Deputy Chair: Okay. Please go ahead.

Mr. Schneider: This year the supplementary supply for Ag and Forestry is \$257,223,000 in addition to the \$4.5 million made available from lower than budgeted expenses elsewhere in the ministry. Where my colleague left off yesterday is where I'm going to pick it up at. The Suffield fire last year caused a great amount of damage to special area farmers and ranchers. I think Municipal Affairs probably has a little bit to do with this anyway. Is any of the money within the Ag and Forestry supplementary supply earmarked for those interest-free loans that were announced last year?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you. I appreciate the opportunity to speak on behalf of the minister in question. As you know, the wildfire budget is variable every year and dependent on the experiences of any particular year in terms of our decision-making. Each year we look at the particular costs that arrive at the particular time. Any of the particular expenditures, some of which you've identified, that have arrived in this year will be included in the supplementary budget. The costs vary from year to year depending on their nature, and the extraordinary wildfires in this particular year have resulted in this particular increase. I can tell you that as bills come in from that particular fire in that location, they will be paid for out of the budget that is available, including the supplementary budget.

Mr. Schneider: Is any other funding for either the Suffield or Waterton area fires being topped up? Same kind of a question: would Waterton be involved in the same supplementary supply, the bills for that particular fire as well?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you. If you are asking about Waterton directly related to the fighting of the wildfire, the answer would be yes. It would be included in the wildfire budget in order to pay whatever bills come out of this year's activities.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Okay. Thank you. Do we have any indication – I mean, I think it's probably provincial, on the federal thing – on when these ranchers will be fully compensated? I remember there was a bunch of cattle that died, a bunch of land that burned, et cetera. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you very much. The process for compensation when these events occur has been well established and has been used in this province for a period of time. It really does depend on when farmers are able to detail and outline the losses that they've incurred and provide the information necessary. So it's simply a matter of process. My understanding is that the process has been moving on at a good pace and that farmers can anticipate, you know, payment or compensation in the same time frame that they would typically experience it for other kinds of disasters that they have had to apply for in the past, whether it be hail and crop or other things that they typically look for in this area.

The Deputy Chair: The Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you. Just while we're over there in the southeast portion of the province, I wondered if there have been any programs developed to compensate or provide for special area

leaseholders whose prairie grass and rangeland was burned up during the fire. Have there been any programs developed to compensate those folks?

Mr. Feehan: I know that the minister involved has been working very closely with the people who are affected by the wildfires. In this particular case the supplementary budget is looking primarily at the fighting of the fires itself. I will direct that question for further detail to the minister involved and seek that he provide you with information.

The Deputy Chair: The Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you. I guess while we're at it, you may have to ask the minister this as well. I wonder if they will also get grazing access on other Crown parcels, those folks?

The Deputy Chair: The Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you. Again, I will defer the question to the minister. But I do know that these kinds of negotiations are fairly commonplace, and I would expect that these decisions will be made in the usual pattern that they are made whenever there are events of this nature.

Mr. Schneider: Has agriculture or Municipal Affairs, I guess, worked with Environment and Parks to work on an elk management plan to compensate for the loss of elk habitat caused by the fire? I mean, I think we started with a couple of hundred elk here several years ago, and I think, as we all know – we all determine that there are different numbers there – because of the fire there's been a loss of some of their elk habitat, and I wondered if there's been an elk management plan of some kind. Either one of you guys might know that.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you very much. I know that oftentimes multiple ministries are required to deal with these kinds of issues, and I assure you that they are in constant communication with each other about this. Of course, in the event with elk this is a common experience that animals move their grazing habits, not only for wildfires but for a variety of other activities, reasons over the years. Environment and Parks is quite used to the fact that there are changes that occur and that they need to respond in new ways. I know that the indigenous community – I'm happy to speak to that – are out there in the field very often. We are working with them to look at ways in which we can co-manage these sorts of issues so that their wisdom, that they have from being there every day and seeing what's happening in the field, can be routinely used in government. So I anticipate that all of these people working together will develop plans moving forward in a good way that not only includes farmers and ranchers but also includes the indigenous community, which I think is a bonus for us all.

10:10

The Deputy Chair: The Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you. I guess in the same vein – and I don't know if this has been spoken about yet in cabinet – I wondered if there will be an increase in elk tags or a lengthening of the season for the Suffield hunt this year. We're all aware, like I said, that there is a rather large number of elk down in that area, and farmers are always complaining about them being in their haystacks and such. If we now have a habitat that is less than it was before the fire in

Suffield last year, I just wondered if any discussion had taken place within cabinet about lengthening that hunt that you spoke about or actually adding a few more tags possibly.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you very much. Environment and Parks, of course, works with the best information provided to them by scientists, who can tell us about the need to cull animals at different times or to provide different levels of tags depending on the needs in the community. As I said, we are working with indigenous communities to try to increase, you know, the roundness of our information with regard to these things. I anticipate that those scientists and those community members who have that knowledge will be consulted on this and that the usual procedures for determining the ebb and flow of how many tags are allotted each year will be entered into.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you. I'll just switch gears a little bit, but I'm staying with agriculture. AgriStability. Is there any idea of what the breakdown of AgriStability is, and are there any changes coming on the horizon as far as that program is concerned?

Mr. Feehan: Again, I'm afraid we'll have to defer some of that, you know, future forecasting to the minister when he is available. I will pass on the information to him about your request.

The Deputy Chair: The member.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Madam Chair. So I guess we might as well pass on this one, too. Is there a reserve fund of sorts when issues such as bovine tuberculosis, for instance, or BSE break out, which happened in '03? Is there any reserve of sorts within the ministry when these kinds of issues or breakouts happen?

The Deputy Chair: The Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you. Well, I do know that as part of the business plan each year there is a risk management . . .

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. members.

Are there any members wishing to speak from the Alberta Party? The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to go back again to the Minister of Community and Social Services and share my time. Is that okay?

The Deputy Chair: Please proceed.

Mr. Fraser: Okay. I just wanted to go back; we got cut off there. You had said that, you know, part of the \$43.8 million increase for PDD caseloads was due to minimum wage. Again, I just wanted you to answer the question. If you knew there were minimum wage increases coming in your department, how come you were unable to budget for that in the last budget? If you could explain that.

Mr. Sabir: Yeah. I did mention that there was \$3 million to support that increase. That increase came in October. Yes, we worked with our providers to make sure they had the supports. But that's not the major part of this line; \$46.2 million was the total supplementary funding. For the most part that was due to the higher than expected

caseload growth. It went to support individuals who need those supports to be successful and to be included in the community.

We have worked with individuals with disabilities on many different issues; for instance, the supports intensity scale. We reviewed it and repealed it. Safety standard regulation: we reviewed it and repealed it. We worked on a new contract and planned it with them for almost a year. As we have done in all other cases, it's our commitment to this community that we will not impose solutions on them. Rather, we will work with them on all issues that matter to them. Sometimes those issues change. Sometimes those individual goals change. Sometimes a service provider's philosophy of providing services changes. So all those things do sometimes cause unexpected expenses that cannot always be predicted and provided for in the budget. As I said earlier, our commitment is that we fully believe that Nothing about Us without Us, their slogan, and on all issues we will work with them to make sure that Albertans with intellectual disabilities have the supports they need.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Madam Chair. Again to the same minister. We talk about the increase of caseloads and unexpected or unintended consequences. Is a part of that that more people unable to obtain jobs under PDD attribute to this increase? Perhaps companies that once could afford it, because of minimum wage and other initiatives that this government has imposed, are turning away more people with PDD, and that is attributing to this particular increase?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you. I guess, let me put this program a little bit in context. This program provides from a few hours of respite services to intensive 24/7 care, with staffing 24/7 and everything in between. On that spectrum disabilities vary, individual goals vary, service providers vary, their philosophy of providing services varies. In all, this program is designed to promote social inclusion of those through various services.

When it comes to employment, it will depend on the individual's goal, if the individual has identified employment as a goal. There are four main categories within the PDD program. Home support will be, for the most part, provided to almost 80 per cent of individuals who are on PDD caseloads. They will receive those services. That's about the staffing supports at home that help them with their daily living. There is one stream of service, which is employment support. Another one is community access. If some individual will identify employment as their goal, then the program area will support them to pursue those goals, help them train, help them find employment. So it depends on the individual's goals. For the most part, this program caters to the needs of individuals. At the planning stage when they are approved, there is a specific plan that identifies their goals of this program in collaboration with the individual, their family, their providers. It's a collaborative process. Depending on the goal of the individual, if somebody has identified employment as their goal, the program area will provide that employment.

In over two and a half years we have added almost \$100 million to this program to make sure that individuals get the supports they need. It's not a defined benefit like AISH, for instance, which is a defined benefit in that you get \$1,588 from all sources, and your income cannot fall below that level. But for a person with the developmental disability program it's not a defined benefit. You will get the supports you need, and that will depend on your identified needs and identified goals.

Thank you.

Mr. Fraser: Again, in those identified goals for those folks that employment is important and, like you said, not a defined benefit – so assuming that that one particular individual who gains employment would not likely need more support. If that's the case, are you measuring things like minimum wage in your department, as you mentioned before, an unintended consequence that you were unable to budget for? How many people that are coming into your department now that normally could seek employment in some of these institutions are being turned away because of the minimum wage increase, and is your department looking at that?

Mr. Sabir: I think that with respect to minimum wage, I would say that we believe that all Albertans who are working have the right to a fair wage. They have the right to a fair wage so that they can put food on the table, they can have a roof over their head. Increasing the minimum wage certainly ensures that. Within our province there are more than 300,000 people who earn below \$15. Out of that, an overwhelming majority, two-thirds of them, are women, often with children. When it comes to minimum wage, it certainly supports those women, it certainly supports to create a more fair society, and it certainly supports the government position that we believe that Albertans needs to be paid fairly.

10:20

In terms of minimum wage it has nothing to do with this program. These are individuals who have different kinds of abilities. Depending on their abilities, when they identify employment as their goal, we provide them training supports and all we can do to help them secure the jobs. If you're suggesting that by minimum wage somehow nobody is hiring them, that's not the case. We have seen a job increase of 90,000 full-time jobs in Alberta after the minimum wage increase just over the period of last year. Yes, there is more work that needs to be done, but we are seeing that things are improving.

Our economy is adding more jobs despite that minimum wage increase, and overall we are seeing that our GDP has a positive growth. Our economic growth rate is 4.5 per cent, the fastest in Canada. Our retail sales are up. Our exports are up. Every indicator that needs to be up is up in our economy. We are seeing positive signs, and that will have a positive effect on all of our programs. For instance, hopefully we will see a decrease in our income support expected to work caseload. When the economy grows, I think we all benefit.

Mr. Fraser: Minister, I would agree with that. The question was: because of the minimum wage increase, are more people that normally would be able to be employed through your department being displaced in other areas? That was the question. You're the one who raised the issue that you overspent because of minimum wage, so you brought that question into this House based on your answers. My question again: how many persons with disabilities are being displaced because they can't find employment from these employers that normally would employ? You're the one who said that perhaps these people – that's why you've had the increase. Can you explain that, and are you measuring that?

Mr. Sabir: I think that out of \$46 million, \$3 million was provided to support the service providers with their staffing requirements, mostly those who have overnight staffing. I know you are more interested in that \$3 million, but there is another \$43 million that is going to those individuals who need those supports. The bulk of that money that we added went to address the caseload.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Minister. Your time is up.

We will now go to the government side. Are there any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to go back and forth with the Minister of Culture and Tourism if that's okay with him.

The Deputy Chair: Minister, are you agreeing?

Miranda: Yes.

The Deputy Chair: Please proceed.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Madam Chair. We know that Alberta has one of the most vibrant and diverse arts and culture communities in Canada and that without a strong arts and culture program, we wouldn't have a strong province.

[Mr. Dang in the chair]

Minister, I understand that you introduced a new grant to support the screen-based production sector, which includes film, television, and digital media. I understand that this is replacing the Alberta production grant. Can you please tell me why you are asking for additional funds for this program?

The Acting Chair: The hon. Minister of Culture and Tourism.

Miranda: Thank you. Thank you, Member, for the question. Strengthening and stabilizing Alberta's vibrant film and TV industry is part of our government's plan to support and create good jobs, grow our economy, and, of course, diversify it as well, thereby making people's lives better. The previous government had designed a bottomless grant program with very little financial accountability measures, and it was often oversubscribed. It left the province and the government, in fact, scrambling to keep up with the demand, and what we've done is that we've fixed that.

The screen-based production grant replaced the Alberta production grant, the previous one, to better reflect today's industry and introduce new funding criteria with specific application intake dates, for example, and stricter financial controls to our grant program. The new program was introduced on October 25 of last year. We made these changes to ensure that we are investing Albertans' money wisely. We introduced more robust criteria, as I mentioned, a more rigorous evaluation to ensure that we have the greatest benefit in terms of economic and cultural returns to the province. It will provide more incentives to productions that use Alberta crews and infrastructure like the Calgary Film Centre, for example, to ensure that all of the money that we're investing stays in the province.

As you may recall, there was a report from the Auditor General. We fully accept the recommendations of the Auditor General as we found that they coincide with what we had found in our evaluation of the grant process. It gave us an opportunity to deliver insight as well into what we had suspected was going on with the grant. As a result of these new grants, we have included elements such as clarifying the guidelines, more effective communication of the program guidelines being made to the grant recipients and other stakeholders, and enhancing the monitoring of these grants as well as developing a structured risk assessment framework.

Thank you.

Ms Goehring: No more questions.

The Acting Chair: No more questions.

Is there a member from the government side who wishes to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Chair. I would like to address my questions to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, and we can go back and forth.

The Acting Chair: Minister, go ahead. [interjections]

Dr. Turner: All right. Actually, I'll withdraw.

The Acting Chair: Is there anybody else from the government side who would like to ask questions? No? All right.

Members from the Official Opposition, is there anyone who would like to ask some questions? The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will touch on forestry this time, the Ag and Forestry ministry. This time we'll touch a little bit on forestry. Now, yesterday I asked the minister of ag about a communications question.

The Acting Chair: Hon. member, would you like to go back and forth with this question?

Mr. Schneider: If I could. That's what we did here a few minutes ago, if that's okay.

Yesterday, when I asked the minister about some communications issues with regard to, well, several fires, actually, and I asked about communications, he suggested that I would have to speak with the minister or ask questions of the Minister of Municipal Affairs. So you'll have to help me here, Mr. Chair, because I'm not sure. I'll just punt it out there and see who wants to take a shot.

We have already determined that there's \$257,223,000 in the ask for supplementary supply along with the \$4.5 million that was made available from lower than budgeted expenses in the Ministry of Ag and Forestry. Just a question: is any of this money earmarked to improve communications between all facets of fire response agencies? I think, as we all know, we've heard out of reports that come after those fires that we do have a communications issue between all the players.

The Acting Chair: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Yeah. That is Municipal Affairs. Yes. There are a few different things that we're working on. AFRCS is the actual radio system that's being rolled out across the province that actually helped quite a bit in Fort Mac. We were able to bring radios up there to get everybody onside to try to communicate a lot clearer. We've taken recommendations from KPMG, from the report at Fort Mac, from the Kenow fire, one of the recommendations that we've actually implemented already. AEMA was already in the midst of implementing a lot of these, to be honest, because after every disaster we look at what's gone on and what's happened. Our communications are key.

When you look at Kenow in particular, we had Municipal Affairs, you had Environment and Parks, you had the federal jurisdictions, you had First Nations. You had all kinds of different people involved with that, right? So we had the information out there. You know, even though people have the information, sometimes, yes, the communication isn't quite as good as we would like it. Right now we are rolling out – well, we do have programs for education and for municipalities, in fact, in our Alberta Emergency Management Agency already. We have field officers that are working with municipalities on a constant basis on making sure they have that information on how to communicate.

10:30

We also have what's called incident command and then unified command, which is trying to make sure that everybody is on the

same page as far as communication, that everybody knows their roles and responsibilities: who takes charge when, who calls the evacuations. You know, it was clear on our side, but it is something important for us to make sure we roll out. We are communicating with municipalities on an ongoing basis on that.

We also just did an emergency exercise, which the POC, the Provincial Operations Centre, does every year. This one was actually simulating a wildfire up around the Grande Prairie region, in the county where it would come into an urban area, and we did identify some things there to make sure that those municipalities understood their roles and responsibilities.

Communication is a huge one for us, but it's already in Alberta Emergency Management Agency in what they do already.

The Acting Chair: The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I wonder if I could get you to just expand a little bit on this AFRRCs, this new communication that you talked about. I think there was a press release shortly after the Fort McMurray fire that talked about a warehouse in Edmonton where some advanced communications devices had been somehow left or were not ready to go to work, maybe, during the Horse River fire. I guess, a question is if this was part of this AFRRCs. Were any of these new communications devices deployed during the Suffield or Kenow fires?

Thank you.

The Acting Chair: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you. I don't know what particular article you're speaking of, but when I talk about the AFRRCs radio, we did have some with AEMA that we could roll out and bring that are mobile, so we did bring them up there, and it did assist because sometimes, depending on the jurisdiction, the different types of radio frequencies and the radios they're using are different across first responders. There are a lot of folks out there that have had the AFRRCs rollout. You know, it's an expensive system. A lot of RCMP are getting involved. A lot of fire departments now have it. I can't remember the percentage. I'd have to get the percentage that have rolled out already across the province, but it's a pretty decent amount right now.

I don't know that article in particular that you're speaking of, but we did have communications come up there. In fact, once we were able to get them up there, it helped out quite a bit in those fires. You know, I'd have to get the particulars on Kenow. There are some folks, like I say, across the province that have AFRRCs, but we have people on the ground as well in those situations, our field officers with municipalities and with First Nations, so that they can all communicate back and forth, too. With Kenow they were all in an operations centre that was pretty tight and they were all pretty close to each other, but still in those extreme situations trying to get some of that communication is a bit tough at times, obviously, with everything that's happening, and people are stressed.

But any of those particulars, if you want to get some questions to me, I can get some more detail for you. That's no problem.

The Acting Chair: The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate that from the minister.

I'm just going to change gears a little bit. I spoke to the minister about this before. Given that early season fires are more common in old growth areas, obviously, like Fort McMurray rather than areas close to mountains, basically in the foothills, that tend to be at the later end of the fire season, a question that I've had is: I wonder if

some of the expense for fighting some of these bigger fires could have been alleviated, I mean, if the tankers had been closer to those areas that are more prone. We had tankers, I believe, sitting at Hinton and Edson in the foothills of Alberta 85 kilometres from each other, when – you know, I'm not blaming anybody for anything. I'm just asking a question. Did anything that we learned from the Horse River fire lead us to believe that we should tend to have our firefighting tankers closer to the old growth areas of the forest that tend to be the ones that burn the most? I think I got that spit out right.

The Acting Chair: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you. Are you talking about tankers like the ones on the ground or the air?

Mr. Schneider: Yeah.

Mr. S. Anderson: Okay. Sorry. I wanted to clarify with you. Like I said before, after every disaster we do look at, you know, what's happened, logistically where everything is across the province. I was up in High Level and talking to the folks up there. It depends on some of the airports as well that are capable of taking some of these big tankers. That is actually a pretty big consideration, to be honest with you. We do look at that after every disaster to try to figure out where we should have these tankers. I mean, you look at Alberta, and it's a massive expanse of land. Obviously, with the grass fires, any of the old growth fires it is a little tough to, you know, try to figure out what's going to happen every year. You do the best you can. But when it comes to the air tankers, a lot of it does come down to the airports that can actually handle the size and the weight of those guys. Yeah. So that's really what a fair amount of that is based on.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Minister.
The Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the minister. I'll switch it up again. I'm going to just ask if the ministry has developed any new strategies to combat the pine beetle problem within forestry so that we don't experience the devastating fires that happened in British Columbia there last summer, with all the dead and unharvestable wood, a lot of which, as we know, is all caused by the pine beetle devastation. Just wondered if the ministry had come up with any ideas how we could tackle some of this.

Thanks.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you very much for the question. Of course, you're quite aware that we've been working across provinces and with scientists on this particular problem. I know the University of Alberta has been doing some extensive research in this area. I do not have anything new to report at this time, but we do anticipate that, you know, work will be ongoing, and we will employ the best information to come up with the best decisions as we move forward.

Thank you.

Mr. Schneider: I guess a quick question, and I'm not advocating this at all: would select clear-cutting be a solution? [Mr. Schneider's speaking time expired] Next time.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Member.

On the government side are there any members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, back to the Official Opposition side. Are there any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to turn to Culture and Tourism, and if it's okay with the minister, I'll go back and forth.

The Deputy Chair: Minister, you're in agreement?
Please continue.

Mr. Orr: Okay. Thank you very much. The ministry has already asked for 35 per cent operating expense budget up front on the interim supply, and it leaves me a little bit puzzled why in addition to that we're needing an additional \$22 million to supplement last year's budget. I just wondered if you could give me sort of an overall view of what that \$22 million supplemental will be for.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Culture and Tourism.

Miranda: Thank you. We have asked for the additional \$21 million: \$5 million for public access programming support to the National Music Centre so that they can provide programming, basically, to Albertans, and this is going to allow us to do that; \$5 million will be going towards putting the money aside for a \$5 million contribution to a potential bid by the city of Calgary for the 2026 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games, if that actually goes ahead. It is tentative on whether we actually are able to reach an agreement with all levels of government. In addition to that, we have expanded the Alberta production grant, as I had mentioned earlier. The new Alberta production grant has obligations and will allow us to invest an additional \$14,900,000.

10:40

The Deputy Chair: The Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you very much, Minister. That helps.

The piece for the National Music Centre, then: obviously, that's come up since budgeted last fall. I just wonder if you could give us a few details in terms of why they have that need and why it wouldn't have gone into the budget for the next year. I'm going to assume that you've already committed to it or spent it in this current rotation.

The Deputy Chair: The Minister of Culture and Tourism.

Miranda: Thank you. As you know, the National Music Centre is providing cutting-edge performance facilities and an extensive collection of memorabilia, historic facts in addition to being the storage house of Canada's musical memories. The government of Alberta has indeed invested in the National Music Centre to create access to these world-class facilities to help artists from across the province and around the world to develop their talents here. The investment itself will generate new jobs and economic opportunities in Calgary and create an entry point for visitors to become more familiar with the many unique destination opportunities in the province. Along with the city of Calgary and the government of Canada we have provided money for the project so that all Albertans and, indeed, all Canadians can benefit from this.

The capital fund has already been allocated, but there was a need for programming. Otherwise, you would have a facility and would not have enough programming in it. So we have through the OIP, the other initiatives program, provided the \$5 million in funding to ensure that we have programs in place to facilitate all the fantastic work that they're doing.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Minister. I've actually been through the facility. It's an amazing place. They do amazing things. It is a very cool place. I'm a little bit surprised, though, that they would not

have anticipated that operating expenditure and it wouldn't have been put in the original budget for the year. I guess my question is: why the unexpected need for the additional operating piece? Maybe the real question there: is that related to or partly due to the economy, a decline in visitor attendance and revenues generated?

Miranda: Thank you. There was an agreement that had been entered into between the government of Alberta, the government of Canada, and the city of Calgary, and it was always envisioned that there would be funding provided for programming once the capital project was done. Some of the programming that had been envisioned had not at the time of the budget been provided to us. The details had not been provided. So through discussions we understand that these new needs for programming emerged, and opportunities to provide these experiences and this unique programming for Calgarians, Albertans, really, emerged as a perfectly good, reasonable thing to invest in in order to promote the cultural aspect of the National Music Centre and allow for additional programming to be, I guess, set up in this new facility.

The Deputy Chair: Member, go ahead.

Mr. Orr: Thank you. I'd like to move on now and talk about I guess I'll say the past Alberta production grant since we've now moved to a new one. I guess my question relates to the department's lack of a timely response to deal with the issues. In fact, it seems that they weren't raised until the Auditor General raised them. Yet there's been a systemic overspending way back, to my knowledge, as early as 2013 and maybe before that. I just wonder if you've been able to truly pinpoint the reason for that overspending and why it's been systemic consistently for at least the last five years, not just once or twice.

Miranda: Thank you for that question. Indeed, as reported by the Auditor General, the way that it was set up, basically, was as a bottomless grant program. The financial accountability measures that should have been part of the program in the first place were not really there. There was a lot of discretionary ability left up to the ministry.

Now, the work that we did in order to arrive at this new program was initiated long before the Auditor General's report ever came out. As you might recall, we introduced a new program very close to around the same time as the Auditor General released their report. The reason for that is because we needed to first understand what the needs of the industry were and understand where the problems could potentially impede growth in the industry and, in fact, scare some of the investments away from the province. So we did stakeholder meetings. We have evaluated the program itself. We have done an extensive analysis of the different kinds of projects.

The industry itself has also changed. What initially was supposed to be a cultural aspect, the artistic side of it, became a more commercialized industry. Now we've started exporting shows, whereas before it had been mostly short films, you know, students from postsecondary education accessing this program as they had graduated to kind of get their names known. The program itself, to be fair, evolved from being mostly a cultural program to support screen-based production, to include a cultural and a commercial line.

Now, like I said, the stakeholder engagement that we did revealed to us that there was a need for us to, one, explain that we needed to have these controls and these measures and explain to them why they needed to be so that we could actually meet the objectives and stay within our budget. Otherwise, we would continue with this trend that had been set by the previous government of basically going back every year and asking for more money. We didn't want

to do that. At the same time we needed to engage with these stakeholders so that they could understand where we were going, understand what the needs were. This new program now, for example, still has a cap of \$5 million, but they're able to apply for an additional \$2.5 million if they are using infrastructure such as the Calgary Film Centre and are ensuring that we're exporting Alberta as a province.

Any time that we have, you know, this geography, that we are so blessed to have, it does provide an incentive for tourism opportunities as well. Put together, we now have fixed the problems, and we have consulted with the Auditor General, who agrees. We agree absolutely with their findings because they actually confirmed what we ourselves had determined. The time that it took to answer the question more concisely, the reason that it took time from when we first found out about this problem to implement a new program, was the length of time that it took to engage with the stakeholders and come up with a solution that worked for government and the industry to ensure that we can continue growing the sector itself.

I have seen now that these new programs have created a new sense of . . .

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any members from the government side wishing to speak?

Seeing none, are there any members from the Official Opposition wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Madam Chair. If I may, I'll just continue with where we were, maybe one last question on the old Alberta production grant. As we've already noted, there has been a continual overspend for the last five years: \$5 million, \$6 million, \$5 million, \$9 million, \$5 million. Yet I do commend the ministry, in spite of that happening in that one particular aspect of it, for managing to keep your overall budget within budget and actually making up the overspend from other aspects of your ministry. I understand that it was a bottomless pit in the way it was structured, but the discretionary part, I guess, is what I want to kind of try and focus on.

The department did have some discretion there. I kind of wonder if there wasn't sort of a deliberate intent – and I'm not meaning this in a malicious way, but I'm meaning it in the direction of favouring a particular industry – to actually continue to grow that grant portion, even though it was over budget, until you had time to figure it out. I mean, to be over budget five years in a row and yet stay within the overall ministry approved budget says to me that it wasn't accidental or it wasn't something that the department wasn't aware of. It was a deliberate discretionary choice. I just wonder if you could comment on that for me to help me understand that.

The Deputy Chair: The Minister of Culture and Tourism.

Miranda: Thank you. To understand, again, I think we really need to look at the history and how this evolved. As I was explaining, it went from being really a program for artistic expression, supporting a very small sector in the province at the time, to then becoming a much more lucrative production sector. Now you had *Interstellar*, you know, *Brokeback Mountain* being filmed here. We had all kinds of TV shows and movies being filmed in the province.

10:50

So there was absolutely a desire to grow this industry. We have seen what it looks like in places like B.C. and Ontario, which, you know, are the jurisdictions that have the largest amount of production. We have seen the entrance to the market of companies

like Amazon and Netflix right now also entering into production, Apple TV as well. All these different things provided for a good investment. There was a good return on the money that we were investing, and it made sense. Unfortunately, the way that the program itself was created was that, in essence, as long as anybody with a program met the minimum criteria, they could apply, and they would be almost guaranteed to receive the funds.

In the regulations themselves there was no way for the minister to turn these down, right? The program was not built with those. So what I have done now is ensured that once I have reached the maximum of this particular budget line, then I can turn – and this is the reason why I explained it to the industry. I needed to have their buy-in on this so that they understood that if we reached that limit, I would not be going over that, and they would be okay with that. Of course, the industry continues to grow. It's something that we have to look at in the future and see how we can support this because there is a lot of potential to grow it to be the size of what it is in Vancouver or in Toronto, for example, where there are many studios using the facilities and increasing it.

I want to ensure that you also know that within the new criteria, like, we've clarified the requirements for the program, and we have communicated these to our stakeholders, of course, but we have enhanced monitoring of the grant so that it's ongoing every quarter. We're going to be able to see how much money is still left before we go into the next intake program. Then the structured risk assessment framework that I have referred to, basically ensuring that – one of the challenges was that when a production company came in and filmed, for example, season 1 of any particular show, usually they did that with a numbered company and not necessarily a name, so there was no continuity. Some of these grants that the Auditor General was referring to were companies that would basically come into the province, form a numbered company, dissolve, and then in season 2 would start up a new company with a new number.

So in order for us to have that continuity – the program regulations did not require that kind of monitoring, which is one of the reasons why some of these other companies were able to get funding sometimes. I think it was a few years back, anyways. From my perspective, having all of these elements built into this program and having the buy-in, especially from the industry, we're not in fact causing any kind of uncertainty but are actually having a little bit of an ongoing relationship with them so that they know what the limits and the limitations and the caps are. We're also able to ourselves monitor ongoing this budget, now that the program is set up as a quarterly intake, before the new intake period starts so that we can manage the cash flow and not get into the same situation because I don't think it's appropriate.

The reason why we've asked for the additional funding is because . . .

The Deputy Chair: Hon. minister, you have spoken for five minutes, so we will revert to a question from the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you. One last question in this area, and then I'll move on. Am I to assume that none of the supplemental funding, then, will go towards some of the other cultural industries: Alberta book publishers, Alberta magazines, and Alberta audio production companies as well? There's nothing for them? Related to that question, I guess, then, is that – I mean, they get 2 and a half million dollars combined. There's \$45 million for the new screen-based productions. It seems like a very heavy overweighting. You know, I'm pretty sure that book publishers in particular – well, I guess, quite frankly the others as well – have as much as 70 per cent of

their industry revenue coming from export sales. Is there sort of an overweighting or an imbalance with regard to these other cultural industries?

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The Minister of Culture and Tourism.

Miranda: Thank you for the question. You know, when I look at this specific grant, I'm looking at an industry that, number one, like I mentioned before, helps with tourism because we're having the province itself being the backdrop for many of these films. The other thing, of course, is that it induces expenditures in places like hotels and food for the crews and the lumber that it takes to build these sets. So there are a lot of other pieces that putting money into this particular industry actually incents, which is the reason why it has become such a lucrative sector in other jurisdictions.

Now, with respect to the other cultural industries, there is absolutely room to grow, and there are absolutely a lot of different things that we can be doing like the screen-based production grant.

At this time this was the biggest expenditure that I had, one that I needed to bring under control, and absolutely my focus was to make sure that I worked with the industry to get it right so that we would not cause any panic and that we would continue to have a steady flow of productions coming into the province and incenting new productions coming to the province.

I know the Minister of Economic Development and Trade has turned his mind – and I have now as well – to digital media, for example. We also, as in the previous budget, you might know, introduced a tax credit for postproduction, which also helps in all of this.

Now, the thing about screen-based production that also needs to be kept in mind is that it is not just about the filming and the actors. There are also writers, screenwriters. There are all kinds of artistic work and artistic endeavour that go into it. So even though it doesn't necessarily go into, let's say, the book publisher profession or editors or what have you, there are still aspects of those cultural industries that benefit from having a screen-based production.

The other thing, of course, is that the scale of these productions is in the \$45 million to \$50 million range for one season, for example, and that's why they qualify for these \$5 million grants. The investment that they make and the money that they bring into the province creates a very good return on that investment, similar to other cultural industries.

You know, it is a reflection of the economic times that we are looking at all of the opportunities to continue to promote this side of our economy, and I will be having further discussions with the industry to see how we can support them as we go.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any members from the government side wishing to speak?

Seeing none, are there any other members from the Official Opposition that would like to speak? The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

Mr. Taylor: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. I have my questions, and they're going to be for the Minister of Municipal Affairs if I could. If we could go back and forth, I would appreciate that.

The Deputy Chair: Minister, you're in agreement?

Mr. S. Anderson: Okay. Back and forth.

Mr. Taylor: Municipal Affairs is important to everybody here, it seems like. These are really good questions, and I'm pleased to be

able to ask these questions to you. According to the supplementary estimates \$15 million was made available from lower than expected expense in other programs. Can you please provide details on what programs were underspent? There's another part to this question. I'll just finish it off so that you have both parts to it. Why wasn't this money spent as originally intended in Budget 2017?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you very much, Chair. Thank you to the member for the question. Actually, I'd like to get the details for you, if you wouldn't mind, so that I could give you the particulars on that. I don't actually have those in front of me, but I'd be more than happy to do that, to get you exactly what you're looking for. I just don't have that in front of me.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Minister.

The hon. member.

Mr. Taylor: Okay. Thank you for that. I look forward to getting those answers to see where that money has actually gone and how it's being spent, which programs didn't quite make it.

11:00

According to the Alberta Emergency Management Agency's website "disaster recovery programs," often referred to as DRPs, "provide financial assistance for municipalities and their citizens who incur uninsurable loss and damage as a result of a disastrous event." A state of local emergency does not have to be declared in order for costs to be eligible to receive DRP funding. The DRP is administered by the AEMA, which is an agency under the authority of Alberta Municipal Affairs. My understanding is that DRP is budgeted for every year, an amount totalling \$200,000, and then once the year is over and we know exactly how much we have spent, it is requested through supplementary supply, all of that. All that being said, is \$18.67 million expected to cover all of the expected liabilities associated with the DRP for the 2017-18 fiscal year?

The Deputy Chair: The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Chair. Yes, we do, you know, a base budget, obviously, for disaster relief, but as everybody knows, with the changing world that we're in, more and more disasters are more and more extreme. To be honest, actually, in Alberta we have a lot of smaller disasters, which fall under the DRP, that we don't get funding for from the feds because we don't meet the threshold. You can prepare as much as you want and you can have the funding available as a base, but going forward, the federal government has changed what they fund us, so a lot of times we don't hit those thresholds.

A lot of this funding is because of that, because we've had emergencies come up. I mean, climate change is affecting all of us – more floods, more fires – and you can only prepare as best you can, right? So that's to cover a lot of those. You know, the DRP comes in from individual property owners. They come to their municipality, they make their applications, and the municipalities come to us with those requests. Each year is unique, and there are fewer or more requests, depending on the disasters that have happened. Quite frankly, we know that there are more and more, and we expect that to happen again this year, but we prepare as best we can.

That's basically what that is, paying out for disasters. You've got what happened in Fort Mac, obviously, some of the wildfire disaster recovery assistance programs, so that's where that falls. Inevitably,

with climate change, it's going to get worse and worse, and we will have to be paying out more, unfortunately, and working with the Insurance Bureau of Canada on a lot of this as well. They're very far ahead on where they are with climate change, so they can bring forward programs that will help as well. It's kind of, I would say, a team effort all across the board.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Madam Chair. I can't recall exactly, but \$18.7 million is lower than in the past if I'm not mistaken. Is the amount outlined here, the total expected DRP for 2017-2018, lower than for 2016-17?

Mr. S. Anderson: Sorry. Is that lower than what's in here right now?

Mr. Taylor: Yeah. Is the amount outlined here the total expected DRP for the 2017-18 year?

Mr. S. Anderson: Yes. It's what we have put in here because of what we've had come forward. There is lag time, obviously, on a lot of these requests that come forward, so this is what we have to pay for what we've received, what has happened, and anticipation. Like I said, we can prepare as much as we can going forward, but we have to wait until these disaster relief programs are applied for. I'm not sure what's going to happen through this season coming up, but we will have to, you know, wait and see, and then those applications will come in. In the future I can't guess what it's going to be, but this is to pay for all the things that have been going on and the things that we have received relief requests for already.

Mr. Taylor: I'm just kind of curious because I'm watching the snowpack that's happening across Alberta. I mean, it's everywhere. We're getting quite a bit more snowpack right now. As we're speaking, it's snowing quite heavily, and some of the members that have to go south to Calgary, et cetera, may have trouble with the roads. Because you've seen more snow this year than we've had in previous years, are you anticipating something for this budget with the snowpack and the possible consequences that could come with flooding?

Mr. S. Anderson: Well, like I said, we do try to prepare as much as we can. There is a big snowpack this year. I mean, some people like it because they know it's going to give us a lot more water than last year. Obviously, we didn't get much snow last year, which was unfortunate, you know. It is something we always try to prepare for, but like I said, this money here is paying for – there is a bit of lag time with disaster relief funding, so it all goes on what we received from municipalities around the province. We will have, again, our base funding, and then we will have to re-evaluate as circumstances change. It's something that we have to adapt to as well, so we will be ready for everything as best we can, but it depends on kind of how the season unfolds, to be honest with you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Taylor: You alluded to the fact and were talking about the federal government and that funds would come from the federal government but that it's kind of hard to determine which funds are coming, how much funding is going to be coming. I guess it's based on the size of the event that's occurring. That is what I think you were alluding to. How much of this DRP money that we've had is expected to be refunded by the federal government in the end?

The Deputy Chair: The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Chair. As I said, a lot of what these have been are smaller ones, smaller disasters that weren't funded by the feds. These ones are all from us. That's why that money was requested, because it didn't fall under what the feds were giving us. Fort Mac, for an example, was a massive disaster, so that triggered the criteria and the circumstances where the feds would jump in. Because we've had all these small ones – they are big to us, but on a federal level they don't see it as such even though they add up to a massive amount of money for us – they don't jump in and assist us. It's all up to us to do that.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you. Going to another part, which is, I guess, near and dear to all the hearts of the municipalities, the MSI, you read as per the MSI website that "the Municipal Sustainability Initiative . . ." – the MSI; I'll stick with that; I'll tongue twist myself on that one a few times – ". . . helps support local infrastructure priorities and build strong, safe and resilient communities." Again, according to the MSI website 2017 saw \$1.18 billion in MSI capital. According to the supplementary supply estimate it appears that MSI funding is pegged at \$1.65 billion due in large part to the additional MSI . . . [A timer sounded] I guess I'm timed out. I'll finish that later.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Member.

Are there any members from the government side wishing to speak?

Seeing none, are there any members from the Official Opposition side wishing to speak? The Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

Mr. Taylor: Do you want me to start the question again?

Mr. S. Anderson: Did you have a little bit left?

Mr. Taylor: Yeah, I still have a little bit of the question left.

Mr. S. Anderson: Okay.

Mr. Taylor: MSI funding is pegged at \$1.65 billion – that was what I was at – due in large part to the additional MSI funding of \$800 million included in supplementary supply. Was this additional \$800 million unexpected?

The Deputy Chair: The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you. You know, I like to joke around sometimes with my municipalities. When they ask about MSI, I say: oh, what's that? They sometimes look a little scared. MSI, obviously, is the biggest grant that Municipal Affairs gives out, \$1.2 billion. We are by far the most generous and largest funder in Canada for that. Through the downturn we made sure that the funding was there for municipalities because infrastructure is important. You know, water and waste water, though some people might not notice it and it's not sexy, is unbelievably important, so we wanted to make sure that the money was there, and we've continued to do that. It's important to me as a resident of this province but also as Municipal Affairs minister. We have 342 municipalities that we have to take care of.

Continuing and going forward, with the \$800 million that you were speaking of, as we recover, we want to make sure that our municipalities have what they need to fund their core infrastructure projects. You know, in going around the province this summer, we're in the largest infrastructure build in the history of Alberta, but it's still not enough. We're playing catch-up from a massive social and physical infrastructure debt that was left, and no matter what

we do right now and how much money we put in, it's still going to be awhile till we catch up with the roads and hospitals and bridges and so on.

11:10

The \$800 million that's being added to the MSI in the 2017-18 fiscal year, which the municipalities will receive in the 2018 calendar year, along with the other allocations approved in the upcoming provincial budget are to that goal, to make sure that we have core funding for them. It's not an increase in overall MSI levels, but it's going to give the municipalities the flexibility to continue with these massive projects that we have right now that they're trying to play catch-up on. It's just a way for us to give ongoing support and make sure that the money is there for them. That's really what it is.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Minister.

Can municipalities expect to see \$1.6 billion directed to MSI in the coming budget, or was this a one-time bonus?

Mr. S. Anderson: It would be nice if we all got a bonus of that. No. Basically, what it is: this \$800 million, like I said, is coming forward, but you'll see in the budget on March 22 the other details for MSI that are going to be there. Obviously, you know, in this province we were tightening our belts, and that's something we all have to look at across ministries. The details will be coming forward. One of my promises that I made when I was at AUMA yesterday with the mayors is to make sure that we work on MSI and work on this program going forward to find something that's sustainable, that's predictable, and that's long term, making sure that we consult with the AUMA, the AAMD and C, Edmonton, and Calgary. I'll be doing that going forward. In the budget you will see this \$800 million, but you will also see the finer details of what's coming out. I can't actually speak of that yet until after the budget comes out.

Mr. Taylor: So they've had additional monies that have been distributed. Can you tell me when the additional MSI money was distributed to municipalities?

Mr. S. Anderson: Normally they do their budgets – right? – in the fall, and then into our budget cycle is when we look at when it's going to be distributed. We'll have more information on this one after the budget. They'll be finding out pretty soon about what it is. I can't give you an exact time on that. Sorry about that, Member.

Mr. Taylor: This might be another question that might be difficult for you to answer right off the bat, but I'll give it a shot and see what you can do with it. Can you please provide us with the amounts being allocated to each municipality? I know that municipalities in my riding would love to know that, especially ahead of time, because they have their budgets that they have to do. Doggone it, if they can see that ahead of time, it's a lot easier to do budgeting.

The Deputy Chair: The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Chair. For sure, I totally understand where you're coming from. You know, like I said, the MSI originally was supposed to be a short-term program. My promise to them was to say: I want to make sure that this is long term so that right in the middle of your budget cycle you don't have what you've feared for ages, that it's going to be cut overnight and it's gone. That's not happening. I'm going to work on that and have been working on that very hard to find wins for my municipalities.

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

I can't tell you the exact allocation because what's happening is going to be in the budget, but I will tell you that, you know, we still use the same formula, which is 48 per cent according to population as listed in the 2017 Municipal Affairs population list, 48 per cent allocated according to the 2017 education tax requisitions, and 4 per cent allocated according to road length as listed in the 2016 statistical information return.

I want to make sure that we have something stable going forward and try to legislate something for them because obviously right now, as I said, it's pretty unpredictable. They're kind of at the whim of the winds right now, so I want to make sure that they have that stable, predictable funding. They'll find out more after the budget.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Madam Chair. I have another question, just because you kind of brought it up, and it goes towards that same idea. Because we know that this MSI agreement is set to expire here – it actually probably expired, I think, a couple of years ago, and the government agreed to extend the agreement for a further couple of years, which is good – is any money being allocated in supplementary supply towards developing an MSI replacement?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Chair. It did expire last year, so it goes till 2019. The reason why I extended it a little bit longer is because, one, I was a fairly new minister when it happened but also because we were in the middle of the MGA, which is obviously the second-biggest piece of legislation in Alberta. We'll be working together with them on something going forward to make sure that they have stable, predictable funding in this program, but that's within our ministry already. It's not something that we have to have supplementary supply for. That's within our ministry. We're working on that type of thing already, so it's not to do with that.

Mr. Taylor: My question kind of is: do you have another 10- or 20-year plan that you're setting up? Will it be MSI, or will it be something else?

Mr. S. Anderson: We don't have a set time frame on it right now. We're going to be sitting down, as I said, with the AUMA, the AAMD and C, Edmonton, and Calgary and figuring out with our stakeholders what's going to work best for them. You know, some stakeholders like the formula of MSI; they think it works well for them. Some others think that it maybe could be adjusted. I don't want to predict what's going to happen there because it is going to be all about the consultation with these folks and understanding what they think is going to work best for them and for me to be able to facilitate that. I wish I had a crystal ball for you and I could tell you, but I'm not sure yet because we're going to be working with everybody on the ground.

I know that that's something that I pride myself on at Municipal Affairs, our consultation. I want to make sure that we do as much as we can with people and as often as we can. We'll know going forward, working on it with the people, what it's going to look like.

Mr. Taylor: We've talked about additional MSI funding that's been going on. Has any of the additional MSI funding been directed at MSI operating?

Mr. S. Anderson: No. It's strictly capital.

Mr. Taylor: Okay. If I understand things correctly, a cost incurred related to a disaster is allocated to the budget year in which the disaster occurred. Is that correct?

Mr. S. Anderson: Yes. That's what the supplementary supply is for, because of this, 2017-18.

Mr. Taylor: Can you explain what the additional \$4 million is being spent on in relation to the 2016 Wood Buffalo wildfire?

Mr. S. Anderson: I don't have the actual specific details for you, the particulars of it. I can get some more information on that for you to give you a little more particular info. Yeah, like I said, it's still paying off a lot of the things that have happened, obviously, through the fire, but I'd have to get those exact details for you.

The Chair: That moves us into the next segment. Are there any government members who wish to ask any questions?

Seeing none, the opposition. Do you have any further members who wish to speak? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you very much. I have a few questions for the Minister of Status of Women. If it's okay with the minister, I'd like to just sort of pose a few questions, and then if we could go back and forth, that would be lovely.

The Chair: Sure.

Mrs. Aheer: Yeah? Okay. I just, first of all, wanted to thank the Minister of Status of Women for bringing attention to the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services. I know we're only dealing with a small amount of money right now by comparison, the \$675,000 that is with respect to the wait times and the crisis of wait times. I would challenge anybody in this House to say if they don't know somebody who's been impacted by sexual assault. Obviously, every single one of us knows somebody, and if we haven't had that conversation, I'm fairly certain that in conversations with other people those would be made very clear, especially with the Me Too movement and many, many courageous women coming forward.

11:20

A couple of the things that I wanted to ask about are with respect to – I'll put my four questions out there first, and then I'll have a few follow-ups. Why is the funding being asked for from this supplementary supply instead of your last year's budget? I was just curious, especially with the crisis in wait times. I'm just curious about why it's going about it that way, especially, I mean, as they're struggling with the counselling services.

The other question I have with respect to that: is that going to be a regular funding piece, or is this just sort of a one-time thing? The \$675,000: is that going to be a sustainable funding piece?

The other piece that I wanted to ask is if the minister could elaborate on how that's going to work with the wait times, the process, specifically as it's related to programs within the Ministry of Status of Women, with protecting women and girls. I realize that we have a broad spectrum of people that are in this crisis that are waiting for these wait times, but is there anything directed specifically with regard to female genital mutilation or honour beatings or anything like that? These are specific parts of the portfolio that we share. I want to understand if some pieces of that are going to also be included in this.

How will you be measuring your success with the wait times? Are you going to be able to provide the House with updates as to

how this crisis is being averted through these dollars? I'm hoping that we'll be able to see that that happens.

Maybe I'll give the minister a few moments to answer a couple of those questions, and then I'll have some follow-ups. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Ms McLean: Thank you, Chair. In your follow-up I would request that you repeat the first question because I didn't hear the stem of it.

With respect to the funding year over year, first of all, I'd like to provide a clarification. Status of Women does not provide program funding for anything. This is a flow through of Status of Women according to some budgetary accounting principles. It is going to be funded through the Community and Social Services department, so they will be the administrators of the grant, and the funds will actually be coming from them despite the fact that there's a number showing a flow through on our budget. That is because we do not provide programming whatsoever to anyone. We have a granting arm that is for small-dollar seed money for projects across the province.

I will do my best with the information that I have from Community and Social Services to answer your questions. The wait times issue is something, certainly, that I can speak to. The wait times for getting counselling at these crisis centres, which is a portion of what these funds will be going to, is currently in some geographic areas around eight to nine months. That is a significant period of time for someone in a crisis situation to be faced with and is incredibly discouraging.

We know that this is a priority. It's been a priority for our government, which is why when AASAS presented us with their business case for \$8.1 million, as a government we decided to fully fund that. It is our understanding from the service providers that this will reduce wait times to the two-week window, which is their ideal, but in some circumstances or geographic locations it may be a little bit longer. Their ideal time frame is to be able to provide counselling services within two weeks, and that's after an initial crisis counselling.

The funds are through a grant. There will be ongoing dollars. There's an initial influx of dollars. Again, you would have to follow up with Community and Social Services for additional details given that it's coming through them, but my understanding is that there will be year-after-year funding and that there is a commitment in the agreement with AASAS to do that.

In terms of measuring metrics, this is not a government-run service. It is through front-line service providers, but we are providing support. They will be the ones tracking metrics. Again, you would have to follow up with Community and Social Services to see what requirements have been provided in terms of the grant as we are not the administrators of the grant and are not able to provide that level of detail of information.

In terms of what it is being used for, it will address seven underserved regions of the province identified by AASAS. Some of these regions currently have limited or no specialized supports, including High Level, High Prairie, Peavine, Rainbow Lake, Fort Vermilion, Fort Chipewyan, Fort MacKay, Janvier, Wabasca, Slave Lake, Athabasca, Hinton, Jasper, Edson, Bonnyville, Cold Lake, St. Paul, Lac La Biche, Canmore, Banff, Lake Louise, Lethbridge, Cardston, Taber, Pincher Creek as well as the urban municipalities where there are currently service offerings.

My information from CSS is that it will provide funding for 15 full-time employees in addition to one provincial co-ordinator, who will work closely with each region to build capacity and mentor staff. Each region would have one full-time regional co-ordinator, who

would work with several stakeholders to identify service needs, service capacity, potential partners, raise public awareness, and educate the community, as well as one full-time system navigator or educator, who would work with survivors to access existing services.

The goal of this funding, as mentioned, is to ensure that every Albertan survivor, no matter their location, is supported. In light of the I Believe You campaign and the Me Too campaign we have seen large numbers of women coming forward to seek support services.

The Chair: Hon. minister, I hate to interrupt, but you've reached your maximum of five minutes.

Ms McLean: Thank you.

The Chair: Go ahead, hon. member.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you, Minister. I'll ask you my first question again just for clarity. Let me make sure I'm saying this correctly. You've asked for this funding. Now, you'll have to clear this up for me. You're saying that this is flow through, that the funding that is being asked for in supplementary supply didn't come from last year's budget. That's what I'm wondering, why it didn't come from last year's budget and why it's being asked for in supplementary supply, especially given the crisis. I was wondering if you could explain that to me. Maybe it's as a result of the flow through. You might have explained that already, but just in case that's a different answer, if you could explain that, that would be great.

Also, you had mentioned that you don't do program funding. Can you explain what you mean by that? If I also understand correctly, Minister, you were saying that these are all grants. They're small grants that come out of the Ministry of Status of Women for various things. It will just help to understand this. You've explained that the \$675,000 is a flow through. I understand that. However, with respect to wait times in some areas – I don't mean to just direct it back to wait times. I understand that those dollars are specifically going towards helping with that, but we are in the portfolio of Status of Women and protecting women and girls. I'm just curious. If you don't have program funding – maybe that's just not for this; maybe you have other program funding. If you can explain that.

Also with regard to FGM and honour beatings . . .

The Chair: That brings us to the end of that segment.

We will move back to the government side if there are any private members here who wish to question the minister.

Seeing none, we will return to the Official Opposition, still at the 10-minute rotation if there are any who wish. The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Good. Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for the opportunity to speak to supplementary estimates as presented this week. I must say that I shake my head in dismay that here we are two weeks away from the fiscal year-end, and the government is looking for more money to finish off the fiscal year.

Albertans do not necessarily believe the NDP when it says that the worst of the recession is behind us. Two weeks ago the Finance minister was all smiles and happy – happy days are here again – with the third-quarter report, reporting that the deficit is down \$1.4 billion. But we have to recognize that, you know, the real deficit is only down \$900 million.

11:30

The Finance minister did have the opportunity to exercise his option with regard to the risk adjustment. The risk adjustment was

essentially money that wasn't earmarked to be spent; it was there to protect in case of unforeseen revenue problems or such. That \$500 million risk adjustment removed shows that we are at a \$900 million reduction of deficit. Now the government, through the supplementary supply, is looking for another 1 and a half billion dollars to finish off the year, 1 and half billion dollars over budgeted expenses for fiscal 2017-18.

The Chair: Hon. member, I neglected to ask you if you wanted to share your time back and forth or if you just wanted to go five minutes.

Mr. van Dijken: Well, we'll share time back and forth. That'll work.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. van Dijken: I believe that it's an insult to Albertans to try and play them down for not recognizing that this government continues to have spending out of control and fails to get their spending under control. All Albertans realize that this extra spending is going to be debt financing. You know, the guys on Wall Street and Bay Street think this is just fine because Alberta Capital Finance will need to go to them. They issue bonds, and they get sold on the market. That keeps them active, but Albertans are not very happy about it.

Then we also have to recognize that credit-rating agencies look at this and they consider, again, that we're in a period of reducing the deficit. But with the realization that the government is needing supplementary supply at a point in time when revenues are up over \$2 billion, the rating agencies must think: what is this government up to, and why can't they get their spending under control? Then we take the risk of the credit rating taking a hit, and interest rates on those bonds go up.

I implore the government to continue to work on their spending constraints and ensure that the money is being spent efficiently and effectively. Then we may be able to get on a path to balance in the future. I know that's what the United Conservative Official Opposition is focused on, you know, the priorities of hard-working Alberta families. I also recognize that the NDP's Treasury Board voted to spend more money or move money around. They've done a number of those things, 37 times this year, and here it is now, the request to vote that money.

I do have a few questions with regard to some of the money being allocated in the supplementary supply. I'm needing some clarification as to why the decisions were made the way they were. The first question I would have is about the \$800 million in MSI grants being loaded into the supplementary supply instead of into interim supply for the following fiscal year. I guess my question is: why was the decision made to put it in this? Was the money already spent? What does that leave us to expect in next year's MSI funding if we're now throwing \$800 million into this year's grant program?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Chair. Thank you for the question. You know, as I said before, there was a massive infrastructure debt in this province left to us. When the opposition member speaks about priorities of Albertans, I'm not sure if he realizes that schools and roads and bridges and hospitals are priorities of Albertans.

I had the opportunity to go around the province this last year of being a minister, a year and a bit. Everywhere I go, there is a priority. Some of them are bridges. You know who crosses bridges? Farmers, ranchers, oil and gas folks that keep this province running. So when they ask us for money, where does the opposition think it comes from? Not magical fairies like they say. This comes from a

real place. This comes from a spot where we go to pay for the priorities that Albertans ask us for, to make sure that that's built to keep this province going, that \$800 million in MSI. I'd like him to go to my municipalities, 342 municipalities across this province, and say: we're going to cut all that funding so that you can't build all the things you need in your communities. That's not what we're going to do over here, Madam Chair.

There is massive growth going on around this province right now. I had the opportunity to be up in Grande Prairie a few weeks back and see all the growth that was going on up there. That is hard on the bridges. It's hard on the roads. It's hard on the communities. We just heard yesterday from some folks in Olds about thousands of jobs that are going to be coming up down there. Look at Cavendish coming in. Look at all the things that are happening around the EIA and all the building that's going on around highway 19 and around there, all the exports, all the cargo. We have to pay for that, and people want us to. Those are Albertans' priorities.

Making sure that that money is in the budget for these municipalities when they need it for their core infrastructure projects is number one for me. I want to make sure that I take care of my municipalities. I will continue to do that, and that's why we're doing this right now. There will be more details coming forward in the budget about MSI, as I said to one of the other members. We'll be working with AAMD and C and AUMA and Edmonton and Calgary and looking at a more sustainable, long-term, predictable funding model that's going to work for everybody and that will make sure we grow this province not just now but into the future.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Madam Chair. The minister fails to recognize the direction of my question. I would like to see, possibly, if he'd answer the question. I guess the question is that in planning and in going into a fiscal year, there are projects that are identified and needs that are identified, yet this minister decides throughout the year to all of a sudden pretty much double his MSI funding. My question is: was that not foreseen before? Are these surprise expenses? Or did the minister fail to actually do proper budgeting when we voted the budget in 2017-2018 at the time? We take a look at where now the minister is deciding that he has to just about double his MSI funding. Why was that decision made through the year as opposed to making it when the budget was actually developed?

I believe that proper budgeting would allow us to let the municipalities know ahead of time what they can do or what's going to be coming their way. Now we see this unexpected increase, so that just leaves it in the municipalities' minds that: "Well, I guess maybe the minister is going to make a political decision at the time. We don't know." But if the proper budgeting is done ahead of time, maybe they can feel confident that the minister knows what he's doing. At the end of the day, the question is: why is that grant money showing up here in supplementary supply? Has the construction already started, or is this money that could have easily been put into the next budget here and recognized in the 2018 construction year?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Well, thank you. To the member opposite: I make decisions based on facts. I don't have a crystal ball to look at the future. What I do is that I listen to my municipalities when they come forward with projects and core infrastructure projects that they need.

The Chair: That brings us to the end of that 10-minute segment.

Any government members wishing to ask questions?

Seeing none, we will return to the Official Opposition. The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just have one question for the Minister of Status of Women.

The Chair: And again you want to go back and forth?

Mrs. Aheer: Yeah. Just the one question and then she can take the rest. I just want to understand what programs or availability of funds there are within the portfolio to deal with female genital mutilation, honour beatings, and honour killings. This is a major crisis for our women and girls, and I'd like to know what's being done within Status of Women.

11:40

Ms McLean: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to take the opportunity as it's clear to me that, despite our lengthy estimates conversations in the past, for some reason this is not clear. Status of Women is not what you'd call a programming ministry like Community and Social Services, which runs programs out of their ministry. They come up with things that they do to serve the public good, things like the AISH program. There's no third-party organization that is out there in the world running that program, that we give money to. That is a government-run program. So when I say programs and services, that's what I mean.

We have a granting arm that has small dollars. It has its own particular requirements for applying to. If a community organization has a project that falls within one of our mandate areas, they are welcome to apply under that fund, which is budgeted at \$500,000 a year. Sometimes through cost savings we have a little bit more money if we haven't hired a position, et cetera, so sometimes that goes up a little bit. But those are the dollars that come out of Status of Women. We are not a programming ministry, as I've articulated, in the way that Community and Social Services is.

I welcome community organizations with all different perspectives, all different ideals, all different policies and programs and creative strategies to solve a number of issues that face women and girls in this province. Frankly, those organizations are often best suited to know what the issues are facing women and girls in Alberta. I can tell you from our first and the last granting round that we had – for our second one the applications are now closed, and we're reviewing those applications. We had some fantastic applications with a variety of different solutions to combatting the number of barriers and issues that women and girls face, including issues around violence against women and girls in the province.

We rely on community organizations to come up with solutions and applications to solve the various problems that you've alluded to. The way that Status of Women is built – and we've had these conversations, again I'll reiterate, at estimates in quite a lot of length and detail – is that we are largely an internal organization of government, an internal department that provides support to other government ministries, advice through the GBA plus lens in order to be able to ensure that our policies and programs GOA-wide, within other departments, have that lens on them and that any programs and policies take into account how they impact women and girls, how they may disproportionately impact certain populations. As the Member for St. Albert mentioned, it's not just limited to a gender analysis. It will identify if a particular race, socioeconomic class, age group is being left behind or particularly benefiting. That gives us the opportunity to know where the gaps are that we may need to mitigate for.

That is the essential core work of what Status of Women does within government. We have, certainly, opportunities to partner with agencies and organizations that have policies or programs that fall within the mandate that we can participate in but that, for some reason, fall outside of the scope of our granting program. I hope that answers your query around what I mean when I say that we're not a programming or services industry by way of comparison to CSS.

What we are doing to combat violence against women and girls: our efforts are numerous. Like I mentioned, we've got a number of granting programs that assist with this. But one of the latest things that we've done, that I'm happy to provide some more information on because I ran out of time to do that, is our \$8.1 million, government-wide investment that is really due to the application of the GBA plus lens.

When you ask why this wasn't in last year's budget, the answer is simple. AASAS had their business case prepared at a particular point and time in the fiscal year and came to us after our last budget was already completed. When they came to us with this, we knew that this was a priority for us, that it was a priority for Alberta women and Alberta girls, and it was essential that the government ensure that women and girls have these sexual assault services. So even though it was outside last year's budget, we made this a priority, to find funding to be able to fund AASAS so that they could enhance counselling services with the goal of cutting wait times for counselling; expanding immediate crisis services, including over the phone, walk-in, or at the hospital; increasing outreach and education . . .

The Chair: Hon. minister, once again you've run out of time.

Ms McLean: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Did you have any further questions, Chestermere-Rocky View?

Mrs. Aheer: Yes. Again, you didn't answer my question about female genital mutilation specifically. You're saying that you don't run programs. But I want to understand: how is it that female genital mutilation, an extreme, abhorrent act against our young girls, is not within the scope of Status of Women to be dealing with or at least within some aspect of the scope of how you deal with the other ministries? If you could please answer the question with respect to that and why the language on that particular horrific act is not within Status of Women. Protecting girls, domestic violence: it falls under all the categories which I understand Status of Women to stand for.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Ms McLean: Thank you. I certainly take umbrage with the member's characterization that Status of Women does not play a role in those policy decisions. I also take umbrage with the suggestion that I said anything to that effect. I think that it's incumbent upon members opposite to ensure that when they're characterizing the words of government, they're not doing it in a way to mislead the public, which I think may have been the effect of the words expressed by the member opposite. So I will caution the member that we need to make sure, when we're talking about women and girls, that we are not doing more harm than good, particularly when we're talking about use of language and words.

I'm happy to give additional information to the member about our gender-based analysis plus. Issues around women's health fall within the Department of Health specifically. So when we're talking about a variety of matters on women's health, including mutilation, these issues directly fall within the Ministry of Health.

However, they receive gender-based analysis plus support and training from our ministry in order to be able to assess the needs of Albertans and their own policy decisions and perspectives. I certainly encourage the member opposite, if she has detailed questions about the government's position on that, to ask it of the ministry that is ultimately responsible for it.

Our role in this is to provide support, advice, analysis, and research to the departments responsible, whether it's mutilation, whether it is violence against women and girls in other forms, whether it's sexual harassment, whether it's economic empowerment, whether it is indigenous women and girls as that primarily falls under the Department of Indigenous Relations. We provide support. Just like with the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, we are cosupporting on that on the government side with Indigenous Relations, but we do not lead it. That is the structure of Status of Women and how we operate with respect to all areas.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you. Just so I understand correctly, Status of Women provides support. The medical pieces with regard to that are quite well known, but I'm wondering about the supports, Minister.

11:50

The Chair: We've reached the end of that 10-minute segment, so there won't be the opportunity to respond on that.

Going back to the government side?

Any on the Official Opposition? Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. van Dijken: Yeah. Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm going to continue questioning with regard to the MSI grant funding changes in supplementary supply. Earlier on the minister discussed making decisions based on facts. At the end of the day, the question was about understanding proper planning and due diligence in budgeting, so we need to ensure that that's highlighted. If he was not prepared to borrow the money last spring, why is he prepared to borrow the money this spring?

Mr. S. Anderson: A good question. Simply because things change over time; they don't stay static. Municipalities come forward with different projects that they have, and I'm there to support them.

The Chair: Hon. member, any further questions?

Mr. van Dijken: No further questions.

The Chair: Are there any further questions? No?

You're ready to proceed to the question?

All right. As there are no further members who wish to speak, I shall put the following questions.

Vote on Supplementary Supply Estimates 2017-18 General Revenue Fund

Agreed to:

Office of the Child and Youth Advocate

\$720,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

Agreed to:

Agriculture and Forestry

Expense \$257,223,000
Financial Transactions \$1,050,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

Agreed to:
Children's Services
Expense \$113,532,000

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

Agreed to:
Community and Social Services
Expense \$239,251,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

Agreed to:
Culture and Tourism
Expense \$21,650,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

Agreed to:
Education
Expense \$18,000,000
Financial Transactions \$2,722,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

Agreed to:
Indigenous Relations
Financial Transactions \$31,923,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

Agreed to:
Justice and Solicitor General
Expense \$37,012,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

Agreed to:
Labour
Expense \$3,300,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Municipal Affairs
Expense \$809,076,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Status of Women
Expense \$626,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

Agreed to:
Economic Development and Trade
Transfer from Expense to Capital Investment \$10,000,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

Agreed to:
Education
Transfer from Expense to Capital Investment \$31,500,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Service Alberta
Transfer from Capital Investment to Expense \$7,200,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Service Alberta
Transfer from Expense to Financial Transactions \$1,000,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

The Committee of Supply shall now rise and report.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

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

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again. The following resolutions relating to the 2017-18 supplementary supply estimates for the general revenue fund for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2018, have been approved.

Legislative Assembly, office of the Child and Youth Advocate: \$720,000.

Agriculture and Forestry: expense, \$257,223,000; financial transactions, \$1,050,000.

Children's Services: expense, \$113,532,000.

Community and Social Services: expense, \$239,251,000.

Culture and Tourism: expense, \$21,650,000.

Education: expense, \$18,000,000; financial transactions, \$2,722,000.

Indigenous Relations: financial transactions, \$31,923,000.

Justice and Solicitor General: expense, \$37,012,000.

Labour: expense, \$3,300,000.

Municipal Affairs: expense, \$809,076,000.

Status of Women: expense, \$626,000.

The Committee of Supply has also approved the following amounts to be transferred:

Transfer from the Economic Development and Trade expense vote to the Economic Development and Trade capital investment vote, \$10,000,000.

Transfer from the Education expense vote to the Education capital investment vote, \$31,500,000.

Transfer from the Service Alberta capital investment vote to the Service Alberta expense vote, \$7,200,000.

Transfer from the Service Alberta expense vote to the Service Alberta financial transactions vote, \$1,000,000.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Any opposed? So ordered.

I wish to advise the hon. members that Standing Order 61(3) provides that upon the Assembly concurring in the report by the Committee of Supply, it immediately reverts to Introduction of Bills for introduction of the appropriation bill.

Introduction of Bills

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Bill 4

Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2018

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 4, Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2018. This being a money bill, Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to this Assembly.

[Motion carried; Bill 4 read a first time]

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, pursuant to Standing Order 4(2.1) the Assembly now stands adjourned until 1:30 this afternoon.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, March 15, 2018

Day 5

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (UCP),
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Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (NDP)
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Dang	McPherson
Fraser	Nielsen
Hanson	Rosendahl
Kazim	Woollard
Kleinsteuber	Vacant
Loewen	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, March 15, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Please be seated.

Statement by the Speaker

Mr. Speaker's MLA for a Day Program

The Speaker: Hon. members, as you know, the Legislative Assembly is hosting Mr. Speaker's MLA for a Day, which will be held May 6 to 8, 2018, at the Alberta Legislature. There is only one week left to apply to the program. This is an opportunity for all high school students from all corners of our province – for those of us who are from corners, it's really important to say that – from all of our constituencies to learn about what we do here and about the role of active citizens of our democracy. I would ask, hon. members, that you remind your high schools that this three-day program is fully supported by the Legislative Assembly Office, so there's no cost to the students whatsoever. Transportation and accommodation details will be arranged by our visitor services office.

The application form is available on the Assembly website until March 23. I urge you to support MLA for a Day by promoting student participation from your constituency and also through your personal involvement in the program.

Thank you.

Introduction of Visitors

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

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure and an honour today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly the Hon. Naggayi Nabilah Sempala, the Member of Parliament for the Kampala woman constituency in the Republic of Uganda. Ms Sempala has served as an elected leader at both a local government and a national level for many years. She's also an active community leader and human rights activist. As the women's representative for the Kampala district she's a fierce advocate for women's and children's rights. And her family is here in Edmonton. I would ask that the Hon. Naggayi Nabilah Sempala now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Ms Jabbour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour today to introduce a group. They won't actually be here until 2 p.m., but I'm going to introduce them now and note that they will be arriving soon. It's the Alberta Girls' Parliament. They come every year to visit us and to learn about the legislative process. It's just wonderful to see so many young women who are keen on pursuing a career in politics and leadership. Accompanying the 36 girls are co-ordinator Mrs. Edie Jubenville, Ms Shannon Jaeger, Miss Julie Kitz, and Mrs. Gultaj Kara. I'd like to give them the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: I believe, hon. member, those guests – I just received a note – are going to be here in a few minutes.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to introduce the members of the Education Advisory Committee. This provincial committee offers expertise to the visitor services office in their development of educational programming and represents different perspectives on teaching from across Alberta. With us today are Corvin Uhrbach, social studies consultant with Wolf Creek public schools and lead social studies teacher, Alberta Distance Learning; Wally Diefenthaler, who teaches secondary social studies students at the University of Alberta; Dr. Carla Peck from the University of Alberta's Faculty of Education; Justine Light, English language instructor in the English Language School at the University of Alberta and project manager of learning English with the CBC. I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

We have a school group present from Fort Saskatchewan.

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to introduce to you and through you Lamont elementary school. We have students accompanied by their teachers – Tami Rickert, Tammy Marks, Cheryl Moser – and by chaperones Stak Porter, Pat Taylor, Erin Gowing, Kami Moncrief, Jodie Derksen, Kim Dickinson, and Crystal Weleschuk. They have been baking paska and also painting pysanka, so they are getting ready for the Easter season coming up. I want to ask the whole Chamber to welcome them with the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour and a pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly the wonderful staff and students and chaperones of George McDougall high school in Airdrie. I am a graduate of George McDougall high school. Go Mustangs. It's great to have you guys here today accompanied by – and please rise as I say your name – teachers Ms Lesley-Anne Petcoff, Mrs. Scarlett Yakachuk and chaperones Mrs. Lianna Smith, Mrs. Franca Broughton, and Ms Dee-Anne Weisser. Students, will you rise as well and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other school groups?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured today to introduce to you and through you to all members of our Assembly two distinguished guests from the Royal Canadian Navy. Visiting from Esquimalt, B.C., is Commodore Marta Mulkins. Commodore Mulkins is the commander of Canada's naval reserve, which includes 24 naval reserve divisions and approximately 3,200 officers and sailors across Canada, including HMCS *Tecumseh* in Calgary and HMCS *Nonsuch* in Edmonton. Accompanying Commodore Mulkins is Commander Frank van Staalduinen, commanding officer of HMCS *Nonsuch*, Edmonton's naval reserve division. Commander van Staalduinen serves part-time and, when not in uniform, is a perfusionist at the Mazankowski Alberta Heart Institute.

Last week we observed International Women's Day. Commodore Mulkins was the very first woman to command a Canadian warship, HMCS *Kingston*, from 2003 to 2005. Since her appointment as commander of the naval reserve in 2015 Commodore Mulkins has been serving in a full-time capacity

overseeing the transformation of the naval reserve roles and missions as part of the modernized Royal Canadian Navy.

I'm also pleased to welcome members of the Edmonton Naval Community Committee here to meet with Commodore Mulkins.

I would invite all of my guests to rise, and I request that all members join me in welcoming these distinguished guests to our Legislature.

The Speaker: Welcome, and thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour and privilege to introduce to you and through you Greta Gerstner from the Strategic Alliance for Alberta Students with Learning Challenges and Ellie Shuster, executive director of the Learning Disabilities Association of Alberta. These two outstanding Albertans have been very active in spreading a message and education on some of the seemingly impossible battles our children face when it comes to having a learning challenge in our school system. I want to thank them for their efforts, and I ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In honour of Social Work Week in Alberta it's my privilege to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two social workers working in the department I have the honour to represent, Seniors and Housing, Tashia Swampy and Crystal Thompson. Tashia is a single mom like me and a First Nations woman from Samson Cree Nation. She incorporates her identity and way of life with conventional education to live her childhood dream of being a social worker. Crystal is a Cree woman from Alexander First Nation. She has worked extensively with urban indigenous people and has won awards for her leadership. Both today are wearing the beautiful ribbon skirts. I just want to thank them so much for their service. Would they both please stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

1:40

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you very much. It is my honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of this House two very special guests who are constituents of the fine constituency of Calgary-West. First of all, Mr. Gordon Olsen is the chair of the Calgary Zoo board of trustees, and he reminds all members, including and especially you, Mr. Speaker, to come and visit the giant pandas starting in May. Mr. Olsen is also a member of the Calgary Saddledome Foundation, amongst other volunteer activities. He is accompanied today by his daughter Marie. Of course, the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed will recall Marie from his time in Parliament as she worked as a page in the House of Commons while she was attending the University of Ottawa. My guests are seated in the public gallery, and I ask them to please stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce the family and friends of Sana Ayesha Ghani, who tragically passed away earlier this winter. Sana Ayesha Ghani was a dedicated teacher, devoted to her students and work at Cadotte Lake. I will speak more on Ms Ghani's impact and legacy later today. Here today, though, are Sana's father, Mr. Mohamed Ghani; Sana's brother Mustafa

Ghani; Bassam Fares, executive director of the Muslim Association of Canada Rahma mosque; Dr. Amin of the Muslim Association of Canada Rahma mosque, imam; Eldon Okanee, principal of Cadotte Lake school; and Sana's friend Summer Dominguez, teacher and assistant at Cadotte Lake school. I ask my guests to now rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today in recognition of acupuncturists and the service that they provide to Albertans every day. Alberta was the first province to regulate the profession, in 1988, and over the past three decades it has experienced substantial growth. Acupuncturists across our province make contributions to the health and wellness of Albertans for many conditions. Of interest, maybe, to the folks in this Assembly: it includes stress and pain management. I now ask Ling Duan, Lowell Ask, Paul Hu, and other members of the College and Association of Acupuncturists to please rise and receive the warm welcome of our Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of this House Frank and Lynne Hickey, who are originally from Saskatchewan. They came to Calgary almost 40 years ago and raised their four children in Alberta. Frank is a mortgage broker and past president of the Alberta Mortgage Brokers Association. Frank has a 40-year history as a stellar volunteer in the federal and provincial conservative movements, including managing countless winning campaigns, some of them against me. I can't tell you how relieved I am to now have him on my side. Lynne has happily supported Frank in all of his exploits. She's a successful businesswoman in her own right, operating Lynne's Window Treatments. I would ask that they please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my wonderful honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly someone that needs no introduction. Donna Kennedy-Glans is a lawyer, businesswoman, published author, former provincial cabinet minister, and founder of Bridges Social Development. During her extremely successful tenure in the energy industry Donna worked as a lawyer and negotiator at TransCanada and later as a corporate executive at Nexen, where she was their first female vice-president. I had the great pleasure to sit with her at both the caucus and the cabinet table during her term in office. What a lot of people don't know is that while we didn't know each other, we grew up about five miles apart in southern Ontario and both spent some summers working in the tobacco fields. I would ask Donna now to stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Members' Statements

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

Sana Ayesha Ghani

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to share the story of an incredible young woman and constituent. Sana Ayesha Ghani

was a teacher of grades 6 and 7 in Cadotte Lake in northern Alberta on the Woodland Cree First Nation. With the assistance of Reconciliation in Solidarity Edmonton she helped her students publish a book of their own stories. Sana asked me if the Premier would provide a message to be printed in the book, and the Premier came through in a matter of days. A few weeks later Sana called me once more to ask if it would be possible to have the mayor of Edmonton meet with her students. We met, and Mayor Iveson spent a half-hour with us inside city hall, where two boys from Ms Ghani's class performed a traditional dance. Sana Ghani was the kind of woman who got things done.

Soon I was given a copy of *Traditional X: Stories from the Rez*, the storybook created by Ms Ghani and her students. In the preface, she wrote:

[The students] began asking me questions, sharing their insights. And one of [the] boys asked me, "Ms Ghani, you say you want us to change the world. But how do we do that if we're just sitting in the classroom, writing in our journals?" This was one of the most exciting challenges I've received . . . They needed to share their stories with people beyond their community . . . And so this project began.

This project was a great accomplishment which demonstrated to students that their lives were important and that they could tell their stories to the world.

Tragically, earlier this winter Sana Ghani, aged 29, was killed in a motor vehicle collision while driving from Cadotte Lake to see her family in Edmonton. Her loss is still raw. Her vision, dedication, and love for her students will be sorely missed. By sharing the stories of her students, she brought together the diverse communities of the Woodland Cree First Nation, where she taught; the Rahma mosque, where she worshipped; and now the Legislative Assembly, where we honour her memory by donating a copy of *Traditional X: Stories from the Rez* to the Legislature Library.

I'm tremendously grateful for the privilege of knowing Sana Ayesha Ghani. Thank you.

Energy Efficiency Programs in Rural Alberta

Mr. Strankman: Mr. Speaker, last week a constituent of mine described his frustration with the green slush fund program brought in by this government. I will highlight some of his concerns here. This family lives in Stettler and signed up for Alberta's energy efficiency residential program almost a year ago. Finally, in January a contractor came and changed out a few light bulbs for a more efficient style.

The homeowner's wife asked about the smart thermostat replacement, which was the overwhelming factor in their decision to sign up for this program. This constituent felt that this was a great idea, even noting that these thermostats were expensive, at \$100 to \$200 apiece. They were told that they would get a call in three to four weeks. Eight weeks later a call was finally received with an update on their request. The caller informed them that they would not be getting this thermostat because it wasn't worth the installer's time to come out from distant Red Deer. They didn't have enough HVAC-certified installers to warrant one coming out until more people signed up in the area, which wasn't likely in the near future. Now, Stettler and area do have some HVAC-certified companies. My constituent would love to know: why can't one of these local professionals install it and send the government the bill?

Mr. Speaker, this family has waited nine months to be told that because they are from rural Alberta, they simply aren't a priority. They believe that it appears that their rural tax dollars are being spent on people in urban areas, who largely voted NDP in the last election; they seemed to take priority. He expressed his frustration

by wondering if those of them living in small towns in the country aren't worth the time because they aren't important enough to a politically governing party. Is this another example of a primarily urban party completely alienating rural Alberta by design, or is this Alberta energy efficiency residential program another flawed piece of legislation that picks winners and losers from other hard-working Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Alberta Party

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's something happening in Alberta politics, something positive. The Alberta Party is growing its membership and just elected a leader in one of the most civil races in modern memory. The reason for this is simple. Albertans want to see politics done different. Too much of our political discourse has become about what people don't want. Don't like the government? Vote for this party. Don't trust the opposition? Vote for that party. It's time to offer Albertans a choice that they can vote for rather than just something against. That's what the Alberta Party is offering to Albertans, something to vote for. Our promise to Albertans is to treat our opponents with respect, argue against policies and not people, admit when we get it wrong, and base our decisions on evidence instead of partisanship.

1:50

Alberta is a dynamic, growing province, and our political leadership needs to reflect just that. We can't become trapped by the old ways of doing things just because that's the way we've always done it. Instead, we're asking Albertans to be a part of a conversation with us, and it will be a conversation because we're here to offer our ideas as well. The time has come for our province to be bold, to look at new ways of delivering services, new ways of providing for everyday Albertans. We need government to start treating Albertans as partners, not bystanders. We will ensure that Alberta has a place where you are given every chance to succeed, and we will take care of those who need it. That's our vision, and we'll keep talking about our vision because we believe in what we're offering to Albertans.

Our caucus will continue to offer constructive, measured criticism of the government that focuses on facts and policy. We'll keep working to make sure that Albertans who want a pragmatic, centrist, and inclusive option have a voice in this Legislature. There are some who want Albertans to not have a choice by limiting their options to bad or worse. From now until 2019 we're going to show Albertans that you don't have to settle. You can ask more of your elected representatives, you can choose based on your hopes, not your fears, and, most of all, you can vote for what you support and not what you oppose.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

Carbon Levy and Pipeline Approvals

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the hon. the Premier said that she would not impose her pending 67 per cent increase of the NDP carbon tax unless construction begins on the Trans Mountain pipeline, but she just imposed a 50 per cent increase of that tax after Justin Trudeau cancelled Energy East through the National Energy Board. Why should we believe her when she says that she's not going to increase it until construction

is started, when she already did increase it without construction on Trans Mountain?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, again, our government has always been clear that we brought in Alberta's climate leadership plan, which had the imposition of a levy, first in January of 2016 and again in January of 2017, on the basis of the work that we did here in Alberta with Alberta industry, with Alberta communities, with Alberta environmental groups. That plan was independent. The issue subsequently around additional levies is definitely linked to the pipeline, and our government, as I've said before, will not move forward until we get the pipeline.

Mr. Kenney: Let me get this straight. Justin Trudeau killed Northern Gateway, that had been approved. He killed Energy East through the National Energy Board. He's doing precious nothing to get Trans Mountain built. But this Premier gave him the 50 per cent increase in the carbon tax that he wanted. Mr. Speaker, why is her close ally Justin Trudeau writing Alberta's tax policy?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's the member opposite that's not listening. What's happening is that Albertans are writing their own policy to combat climate change.

I believe, quite frankly, that it is time for the member opposite to come clear on his own position on that matter. Yesterday he said, and I quote: there's a legitimate range of perspectives about exactly to what degree anthropogenic causes are behind climate change. It sounds like bafflegab. Albertans deserve to know: does the member opposite believe that human activity is causing climate change? Yes or no? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, like two-thirds of Albertans, I am a carbon tax skeptic. Of course, there's climate change. I've never denied that.

What the Premier said yesterday is that she, quote, doesn't really want to relitigate the carbon tax. Well, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, Albertans are going to relitigate that at the next election. Today I'll be tabling – oh, anticipation. Would the government agree that Albertans should not suffer a further increase in this punitive carbon tax without being able to have their say in a referendum?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I've already said very clearly is that moving forward with additional hikes to the carbon levy will depend on the Trans Mountain pipeline, as I've said many times over the last year and a half.

But, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite did not answer the question. People are concerned about this issue. His Finance critic funded a climate-denying film and attended an event called Climate Dogma Exposed, and he's still on the front bench. The fact of the matter is that Albertans need to know: does the member opposite believe that human activity is the primary cause of climate change? Yes or no?

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

Federal Energy Policies

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, Environment Canada says that it's going to cost at least \$300 per metric tonne in order for a carbon tax to achieve the federal government's greenhouse gas emissions. Her own adviser Professor Leach says: at least \$200 a tonne. My question for the Premier is: does she agree with these estimates that to meet global greenhouse gas emission targets would require a price of between \$200 and \$300 a tonne? Does she agree?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What I agree is that we need to take action to stop human-caused climate change. You know, I just cannot engage in a conversation about the best strategies to do that with someone who will not answer the question, yes or no, "Does he believe that human activity is the primary cause of climate change?"

Mr. Kenney: I see the hon. the Premier, Mr. Speaker, is once again auditioning to be opposition leader. We'd invite her to try to answer the question.

Here's another one since she won't answer that. Does she agree that the regulation of the production of oil and gas is an exclusive provincial jurisdiction under section 92A(2) of the Constitution?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, we've already had this conversation, and indeed this is a matter that we'll have an opportunity to discuss much further when we bring in our legislation to move forward on the control of supply, the strategic control of supply of oil and gas, further to the conversation that we had in our throne speech. The fact of the matter is that the issue of controlling emissions is something that matters to all Canadians. Putting a cap on emissions matters to all Canadians, and it should even matter to those people who have yet to determine or to advise whether they believe that climate change is significantly or primarily caused by human activity.

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, that wasn't exactly a skill-testing question, so I'll answer it for the Premier. Yes, section 92A of the Constitution says that the regulation of the production of oil and gas is a provincial jurisdiction. The follow-up, then, is: why did this government do nothing to object to the federal government intruding into that hard-won provincial jurisdiction, won by Peter Lougheed in 1982, when the National Energy Board killed Energy East by getting into the regulation of upstream emissions? Why did they surrender this hard-fought provincial jurisdiction?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, I completely reject the underlying presumptions that began that question. Nonetheless, what I will say is that the federal government does actually have an obligation to act in the environmental sphere to some degree. That's why they have a climate change plan, something that the member opposite pretty much ignored when they were in government. I'm wondering why that was because the fact of the matter is that, still, the member opposite has failed to address the fact that his front-bench Finance critic has funded conspiracy theory films combatting the notion of climate change, and he's failed to answer the question.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Actually, I think I take from decoding that very opaque answer that the Premier doesn't think it's exclusive provincial jurisdiction, and that's why she surrendered this area to the federal government. She's the first Premier, this is the first government in our history to do so.

Rural Crime Prevention

Mr. Kenney: To change subjects, Mr. Speaker, yesterday the government could not answer the question about when additional RCMP positions will actually be staffed, when those RCMP officers will arrive in Alberta, so I'd like to give the government another opportunity to tell us: when will those positions be filled? When will those officers and those boots be on the ground here in Alberta?

The Speaker: The Justice minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We know that all Albertans are very concerned about this issue and about ensuring that our plan to combat rural crime is put in place as quickly as possible. The RCMP has already begun recruitment to those positions. The RCMP has already begun moving officers into those strategic crime-fighting units. So some of that work has already begun. As with any large organization, there's a certain amount of turnover that will be ongoing for a certain period of time. But that work is already under way because we know, unlike the opposition would say, Albertans can't wait to address this issue.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, Albertans are waiting. Some municipalities have been waiting for upwards of two years for funded positions to be filled by the RCMP. This government has done nothing to raise that, nor have they raised any objections to the federal Liberals, their close allies, repealing tough-on-crime laws. Now, we have the situation once again of a revolving door, Mr. Speaker, of serious repeat offenders getting back on the streets to reoffend, to create new victims in Alberta. Will the NDP government join us in calling on the federal government to restore those tough-on-crime laws to stop the revolving door?

2:00

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I honest to goodness think that the member opposite thinks he's running to be Prime Minister, not Premier, and – who knows? – maybe ultimately that's his plan. What I will say is that we are focused on doing the job here in Alberta. It's not easy when the members opposite actually vote down supplementary estimates for Justice, which were geared towards paying the salaries of more RCMP officers, a mere hour and a half ago. I don't know if you guys talk to each other between these acts. Nonetheless, our Justice minister is working very hard to make sure that we have more resources in rural communities and everywhere else to combat crime, and she will continue that good work.

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm running partly so that we have a provincial government that actually stands up and defends this province from bad policies coming from Ottawa, including the repeal of tough-on-crime laws by their friends the Trudeau Liberals and every one of those repeals supported by their federal wing, the federal NDP. So will the Premier take the opportunity to ask her federal friends in the NDP and Liberal Party to restore tough-on-crime laws and mandatory minimum prison sentences for serious, repeat violent offenders to keep Albertans safe and to stop the revolving door of the justice system?

Mr. Nixon: Point of order.

The Speaker: Point of order noted.

The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, you know, those decisions are made in the federal sphere. In the provincial sphere we fund policing, and we work with the RCMP to ensure that there is the best allocation of those policing resources. Let me say that it is not helpful when the budget is pressed because of additional funding required for the RCMP as a result of decisions that are made with respect to their salaries when the members opposite don't stand up to support that. We are focused on ensuring that there are resources, and you will see there are additional resources coming in the budget to keep Albertans safe.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Education Concerns

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Education is an issue that affects all Albertans, and we're all responsible for ensuring that our next generation has access to quality education that respects the diversity and the unique needs of its students. As legislators we must be sure we're respecting the role and decision-making of parents and local school authorities. For example, the Calgary board of education recently released its list of capital and infrastructure priorities, and that list is informed by real-time, on-the-ground expertise at our local school authorities. To the Minister of Education: will you commit to following the most current capital plan as requested and laid out by the Calgary board of education?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for that question. Yes, it's very important to respect the local decision-making powers and the authority and the intelligence on the ground that school boards allow us. Certainly, I work closely with them. Today I was meeting with Lakeland school division here, just this morning, and they gave me lots of very good information that I will directly use in decision-making in the future. The same goes with the Calgary board of education and all the other 61 school boards around the province.

Mr. Fraser: I recently had the pleasure of speaking with an organization who was pushing to do more to address and identify potential early childhood learning challenges. What they were addressing is an increasingly important issue. The issue has grown to an extent that at the Calgary board of education the cost of providing appropriate programming for special needs, indigenous, and ESL students exceeds the funding provided by the province by \$80 million. To the same minister: will the minister commit to fully funding these programs or at the very least commit to pushing for more early childhood screening?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, developing literacy skills at an early age is absolutely essential, and we're certainly seeing more expertise with teachers, that we encourage to use screening tools at an early age so that we can get the extra help that those students need. You know, certainly, the advocacy of such individuals as Greta Gerstner, whom we have here this afternoon, I appreciate very much. This sort of work directly with parents and with advocacy groups, with postsecondary institutions helps us to strengthen our education system.

Mr. Fraser: Well, we need to be responsive to experts, from teachers to counsellors and administrators. The most important voice we need to listen to for most children is their parents. The safety of a child is paramount, but as much as possible we need to keep parents informed and involved in what's happening to their children at school. The concerns of parents should be included at every level of our education system. To the same minister: how is Education working to ensure that conversations are happening between parents, educators, advocacy groups, school boards, and your department?

The Speaker: The hon. minister

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we've been working very hard to work with parent councils and school councils across the province. We've never seen such strong representation in the history of these organizations as we do right now in Alberta. We get a lot of good information that way. I encourage individual schools and boards and my department to work with these parent councils every step of the way. It's very important to have that conversation, to have that interaction so that not only are we giving the information on where a student is at any given point in time, but we're actually building and strengthening community and a sense of ownership of education for all Albertans.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

Sexual Assault and Harassment Services

Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Women all over the world have been galvanized by the #metoo and #timesup movements to address sexual assault and harassment. In Canada sexual violence is the only crime that has not declined. Reporting to police has also increased in both Edmonton and Calgary by 13 per cent and 25 per cent respectively. To the Status of Women minister: what is being done to support survivors of sexual assault and harassment?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Status of Women and Service Alberta.

Ms McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Every Albertan deserves to live free from sexual harassment and assault. In recent months we have seen more and more courageous survivors, most of whom are women who stepped forward to share their accounts of sexual harassment and assault. To those survivors I want to say: we have heard you; we believe you; we stand with you. That's why we are taking action to support all survivors with a historic \$8.1 million investment to the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services. These significant new dollars will go directly to more counselling, more crisis support, and more help navigating the police and court systems so that survivors who bravely step forward have the vital help they need close to home.

We know there's so much more to do but I'm proud to say . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

First supplemental.

Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. According to AASAS, Alberta sexual assault centres have experienced a 53 per cent increase in counselling clients since 2016. How will the funding address this?

Ms McLean: Thank you, Member, for the question. Every survivor deserves to be supported. With this increased funding sexual assault centres will have enhanced counselling services, with a goal to cut

the wait times for counselling. This funding will expand immediate crisis services so that more survivors have immediate access. There will also be increased front-line supports in seven underserved communities in rural Alberta. All of this will help address the increased demand in sexual assault services across the province.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand that the funding will increase supports for survivors of sexual violence. To the Minister of Status of Women: how else is the government tackling gender-based violence?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member. Although sexual violence can happen to anyone, the vast majority of survivors are women. It is a crime of power and control rooted in gender inequality. Supporting survivors is one way to make life safer for women and girls in Alberta. That's why I was so disappointed to hear that none of the members opposite voted in support of the additional funding this morning for sexual assault survivors. In fact, one such member, the Member for Calgary-Hays, voiced his opposition to that funding.

Our government is taking concrete steps not only to make life safer for women and girls in Alberta but to make it better and fairer, too.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Abortion Rights and Freedom of Speech and Assembly

Mr. Fildebrandt: Mr. Speaker, when faced with the painful decision of whether or not to have an abortion, some women have been confronted by protestors when entering clinics. I agree with the Premier that the behaviour by these protestors is most inappropriate, not compassionate, and probably hurting their own cause. They are nonetheless exercising their fundamental rights to freedom of speech and assembly. Can the Premier assure this House that any legislation brought forward will not impede the Charter rights of Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. We are working to ensure that we fund health care services for Albertans where and when they need them, and of course that includes women who choose to access abortion services being able to access those important health care services. We know that members of the Official Opposition have previously advocated to defund health services for women. We feel that this is the wrong move, and that's one of the reasons why we're standing up to make sure that they have their rights protected, their access protected, and their choice protected.

2:10

Mr. Fildebrandt: I agree that these women should be protected, but I'm concerned about Charter rights here. Under existing law it is illegal for all kinds of protestors except for striking workers to impede the lawful entrance of people to a property. We have laws that make intimidation, harassment, and stalking illegal. Does the government not agree that the deficiencies in this area should be addressed through the Criminal Code more broadly and not a law limiting the civil liberties of a small, targeted group of people?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the member for the important question. It is a fact that there have been times when women have had their access impeded because of people exercising their rights. It's important that we ensure that the women who are accessing their options are able to do so in a safe way without threats or intimidation. Of course, other jurisdictions have seen extreme measures and have had to respond with increasing legislation. This is one of the options that we are considering, and we look forward to ensuring that all women can access their health care without fear of intimidation or inability to access such.

Mr. Fildebrandt: I largely agree with the minister, but I want us to strike an appropriate balance here. The law that the government is considering ostensibly targets only a small group of protestors, but it will curtail the liberty of every man and woman if they agree with them or not. As the saying goes: I might disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it. The Charter does not defend free speech and assembly that we agree with; it defends free speech and assembly that we do not agree with. Does the government not agree that we either all have free speech or we have none at all?

Ms Hoffman: We absolutely believe that it's important for people to be able to access the public health care services when they need them. We also understand that it's important for people to have abilities to make their opinions heard and the right to be able to say those. I am deeply concerned that there are members of this House, including those in the Conservative party, who have been taken over by antichoice organizations, whose goal is to legislate women's rights back, not forward. That's not okay.

An Hon. Member: Shame

Ms Hoffman: That is shameful.

It's 2018. Alberta women don't want the UCP leader to take their rights back to the 1950s. They deserve respect, and they will get that from this government.

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

Carbon Levy

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this week the Minister of Education responded to my question about the impact of the carbon tax and what is happening in my riding with rhetoric about what this government is doing to teach kids in Alberta about climate change. A well-rounded education is critical for students, so I would hope that the curriculum would also highlight the real and devastating impacts of poor initiatives like the carbon tax and what that can do to our economy. Can the minister assure me that our kids are getting a full picture and not just the portion that fits this government's ideology?

The Speaker: The hon. Education minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we are engaged in a very important process, which is to develop new curriculum, some of which subject areas are more than 30 years old. We are engaging literally tens of thousands of Albertans in this process. You know, one concern I have is that members opposite are trying to politicize this important curricular process, and by doing so, they diminish not only the integrity of the process, the people who are actually writing these things, but the information that gets to kids as well. So, you know, asking things and talking

about things like that is actually what we're striving not to do. It is to make sure that we have an evidence-based, scientific . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mrs. Aheer: Well, Mr. Speaker, the government asserts tremendous influence over our children's education, and given that our children are the future of this province and given that the information that they learn in the schools shapes their perceptions, can the government please tell me if the curriculum being taught to our children in the schools reflects a balanced perspective, one that weighs environmental stewardship with the economy, the devastation of poorly thought out ideas like the carbon tax, and also the concern over the carbon tax? Or is the concern over the carbon tax, like the Premier said, quote, creating concerns that really don't exist?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, once again, it's very important to have an evidence-based, scientific approach to curriculum to defend against the very sort of accusations that are coming across from the member opposite here right now, which is to take an issue, politicize it, and then somehow twist it around from here out into the public. I mean, I find that shameful, I find that regressive, and that's not the way we run our education system.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you. Well, speaking of politicization, this government should think about what they've done with that with respect to pipelines.

Mr. Speaker, amazing volunteers for the food bank who drive to collect donations and support those in need use fuel and are being punished by this carbon tax. Given that this has been devastating for our not-for-profit sector and given that the need for these charitable organizations is growing, again, I ask the government: do they understand the effect their carbon tax has had on the ability for regular, everyday Albertans to give back to the communities that they live in, or are they satisfied to promote ideology that penalizes wonderful Albertans who are helping their neighbours?

The Speaker: The Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we have started from day one to create an Alberta-made carbon plan, a climate leadership plan, which included carbon pricing. Right now our GDP growth is up. It'll be up again in 2018. Ninety thousand new jobs have been created. When we talk about education, as a former educator I fully support that we teach about climate change in our schools. But I also support and have asked the minister many times: let's educate about our energy industry and how one isn't exclusive of the other.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Rural Crime Prevention (continued)

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, tonight in Airdrie MP Blake Richards and I are hosting a town hall to discuss the very serious problem we are experiencing in Alberta. This is not the first of its kind. Members of the Official Opposition have been participating in well-attended town halls all across this province. Local law enforcement officers, victims, and residents have been coming together in an effort to find

solutions so that families can once again feel safe. I often get asked why no one from the NDP government is attending these events. Minister, what reason would you like to give desperate Albertans tonight as to why this government does not come out to listen to them?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We have been listening to Albertans. That's why we've taken action on this issue. We've been hearing from Albertans throughout the province, we've been hearing from their municipal leaders, and we've been hearing from the RCMP on this issue, and we absolutely believe that this is an issue that demands action. That is why, unlike the opposition, who would like to continue to study this issue, we have taken action, because people deserve to feel safe in their homes.

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, given that the Official Opposition called an emergency debate on rural crime last year and given that only now, this month, the NDP government has finally acknowledged that there is a problem that requires some action and given that announcing funding for more officers is just a first step – it doesn't actually mean that there have been any recruits or new boots on the ground – Minister, when desperate Albertans ask me how long it will be before there are actually new officers in their communities, what answer can I give them? And I'd like a date.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That recruitment is already under way, so those officers are already coming into our province even as we speak. We've been dealing with the RCMP on this issue for quite a while. When asked what their plan was, the Leader of the Official Opposition indicated that they needed a year to study the issue. We don't think that that is the appropriate response. We think that rural Albertans deserve action right now.

Thank you.

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, I did ask for a date, and I didn't hear one.

Given that yesterday I sat down with MP Shannon Stubbs and several colleagues to discuss her motion in the House of Commons to tackle this complicated issue, rural crime, and given that this motion calls for an assessment to be done of rural crime rates and trends, of resources and partnerships with other levels of government and given that all levels of government need to work together to address this crisis, Minister, are you working with your federal counterparts, and do you support Ms Stubbs' motion? Yes or no?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What we think and what we have been hearing from Albertans throughout the province is that they need action now. They don't need months of people sitting around and talking and more study. What they need is for people to take action on this issue. These individuals don't feel safe in their homes, and that's why this government is taking action to address that issue. What certainly doesn't help is the Official Opposition voting against the funds that would go to pay those RCMP officers to ensure that we can keep them working on the front lines.

2:20

Mr. Nixon: When I was Leader of the Opposition in this Assembly, I moved an emergency debate motion. The Minister of Justice spoke against that motion; so did the Government House Leader.

The fact is that the opposition has been bringing this issue forward for two years, has been advocating strongly to make sure it's fixed on behalf of our neighbours who are being victimized, while this government has sat on their hands. My question, Mr. Speaker, through you to the Justice minister, is: what has taken you so long to get into the game?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, we think this is an issue that requires action. We've been hearing from Albertans, and that's why this government is taking action. The Official Opposition votes against funding that issue. The Official Opposition is in favour of spending a year studying it. The Official Opposition would like a motion in Ottawa to sit around and talk about whether this is something we should take action on. We think Albertans deserve better. They deserve action now, and that's why we've taken it.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, given that we've been asking this minister and this government to take action for two years and given that they have not until just recently and given that they stood against a motion in this Assembly to stand up for rural Albertans on rural crime and given that the minister has not come once to central Alberta to talk to the victims of rural crime, to attend any one of our town halls, how can she continue to stand inside this House and say that she's taking this issue seriously? When will she bring concrete, real action into place to deal with the epidemic of rural crime in central Alberta, not paper action, not fake announcements but actual action? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I certainly think that those RCMP officers who are moving into those crime reduction units, that have been proven effective through a pilot project in central Alberta, would feel that it's a little unfair to say that they aren't real action. Absolutely, they're real action. Ensuring that officers can focus their time on the front lines, where rural Albertans have asked us to have them more visible, is absolutely concrete action. It's action that's absolutely necessary, and that's why we're moving forward with our plan. This plan will ensure that RCMP officers can spend more time in their communities. It will ensure that there are more RCMP officers on the front line. We think that this will be a very effective strategy.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, given that the RCMP themselves say that they cannot fill these positions for upwards of two years and given that most counties that have been trying to fill these positions themselves, because the government would not help them, have not been able to fill them for two years, what is the minister going to do for rural Albertans right now who are being victimized every day in our communities, who have asked this government for help? The minister knows she cannot fill those positions in any reasonable time. What will she do right now, today, for the people that are being robbed in our communities?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, what we will do is take concrete action to address the issue. What we will do is vote in favour of funding that concrete action to address the issue. What we will do is say that it is time to act, not time to sit around

and consider our policies, not time to sit around and consider motions about whether this is an issue that needs to be addressed. These people need action right away, and that's what this government is doing.

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

School Busing Regulations

Mr. Carson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During the debates on Bill 28 the Minister of Education explained that the 2.4-kilometre requirement for receiving busing services to local schools would be reviewed in the regulations. I've had many conversations with members of my community of Westview Village who are concerned that the criteria only recognize the distance from the entrance of the community when there is a kilometre difference from the front to the back.

Mr. Nixon: Point of order.

Mr. Carson: Can the minister tell us if examples like this will be taken into consideration during the regulations?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for that question. When we were looking at reforming the walk limit for kids taking buses, the 2.4-kilometre walk limit really stood out as a challenge, a problem. It's been many years in the making. We took action on this. This whole issue that the hon. member is now bringing up in relation to walking into complexes and so forth: I'm very glad that he is bringing up this issue, because this is exactly what we need to do to make sure that we build the right regulation so that kids are safe, they're getting to school, and they're getting a bus in a timely manner.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Carson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: will there be opportunities for communities like Westview Village to receive special exemptions in the future?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, by opening this up here with Bill 28, I've received a lot of very favourable response from school boards and parents and so forth. They know that that 2.4-kilometre walk limit just wasn't working, right? That's like from here to the hockey arena, for example. I'm not sure how many hon. members would walk that distance. So for young kids we're looking for ways to build a system that is more reasonable, that's safer, and that is in a more timely manner. Certainly, we can include individual submissions around people walking into complexes and so forth, perhaps using Google Maps or . . .

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

Mr. Carson: Thank you. Can the minister explain why these regulations were necessary in the first place and when we can expect the new regulations to be implemented?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As everyone knows, we had Bill 28 in here in the fall. We're starting consultations immediately, quite extensive ones, throughout the province so that

we can have something in place over this next year and so that we have it for 2019.

Thank you.

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

Indian Tariffs on Pulse Crops

Mr. Gottfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over 6,000 hard-working Alberta farmers make their living growing pulses. In November India introduced a 50 per cent tariff on dry peas and a 30 per cent tariff on chickpeas and lentils. The chickpea tariff was raised to 40 per cent in early February and inexplicably hiked to 60 per cent after Justin Trudeau's disastrous trip. The agriculture minister was in India just three weeks ago, where he attended the 2018 Pulses Conclave in New Delhi. To the minister: what specific reductions in these tariffs did you discuss with Indian officials, and how is Alberta lobbying to reduce or eliminate these stifling barriers to trade?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the very good question, a very important question. Indeed, I was in India. I had an opportunity to talk with government officials and industry officials. I was a keynote speaker at the Pulses Conclave, where I talked to not just Indian processors and growers, importers, exporters but actually to people that grow pulses from around the world. You know, tariffs are affecting growers and exporters and importers around the world, not just Canada. It is a measure that has taken place because of the bumper crop they had in India, and it has political overtones as well, as 60 per cent of the population in India are farmers. Without a doubt, I had an opportunity to talk to many people about this.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Gottfried: Mr. Speaker, given that Alberta's agricultural trade with India was worth approximately \$82 million last year and given that the Trudeau Liberals have failed Albertans on pipelines, on carbon tax, and now they're failing Albertans on agriculture and given that Justin Trudeau embarrassed the entire country in India while also alienating their government with his conspiracy theories and frivolity, to the minister of economic development: has your government bothered to raise these concerning issues and negative outcomes with the Trudeau government, and if so, how?

The Speaker: The hon. minister of agriculture.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. You know, as Minister of Agriculture and Forestry I'm in constant talks. Very often I'm in contact with the Canadian minister of agriculture talking about these very important issues and with India, you know, for sure. We also have some issues with our good cousins to the south around their trading practices of late. We have opportunity right around the world to expand our markets, to be able to make sure that the world gets an opportunity to enjoy the good products we grow here. That work continues.

Mr. Gottfried: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure he has a pulse on the lobbying here.

Given that Alberta's international trade office should be lobbying the Indian government night and day to reduce or eliminate these tariffs in support of our agricultural producers and given that India is projected to be the world's fastest-growing large economy for the rest of the decade, again to the minister: at your direction has the

New Delhi office done an assessment of how these hiked tariffs affect Alberta farmers, and what have you specifically instructed your ministerial staff to do in their defence?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. The member is right. India is poised to be the third-largest economy in the world here in a few years. I found it fascinating as agriculture minister that my first trip to India last year was the first one by an agriculture minister ever from the province of Alberta; this year was the second one ever from the province of Alberta. I also had the opportunity to meet with officials in the state of West Bengal, which was the first time that anybody from the government of Alberta has ever visited that state. Without a doubt, we understand the importance India will have and understand that India will continue being a very important part. We'll continue doing that great work, making sure our products get . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

2:30 Carbon Levy and Health Care Costs

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, the carbon tax has spread its wings and reached every corner of the province. In Health particularly the departments have had to consider one of two options: decrease the life-saving services they provide or have taxpayers spend more of their hard-earned cash on something that will not improve Albertans' standard of care. To the Minister of Health: how much is the carbon tax costing Alberta Health and AHS in their operations, and how much of a decrease in the standard of care can we expect?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. We are very proud to be taking action on climate change not only so we can get those pipelines built, which is important, but so we can get the revenue from getting our product to that tidewater. That revenue helps support things like quality public health care, quality education. Instead of talking about 20 per cent cuts across the board, we're talking about getting top dollar for Alberta products so we can invest that in the people of this province, including health care and education.

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, ambulance services spent over \$18 million more than they were budgeted, and given how stretched ambulance services have been across Alberta, can the Health minister explain how much of this money is being spent on the carbon tax and how much is increasing life-saving front-line services and accessibility for all Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The reason why we put that money forward is to make sure that EMS is there when and where you need it. I have to wonder if the member opposite as a former EMS member – I commend him for all of his service in that area – agrees with the leader of his party, who's been pushing for 20 per cent cuts, who thinks we should be going after health care, including those front-line workers. I don't think so, but I'd really like to know. Do you stand with your leader, or do you stand with the front-line paramedics of this province? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, the Health minister should read the Auditor General's report on the duplication of bureaucracy.

Given that the government plans to raise the carbon tax to \$50 a tonne, which will increase costs for heating and operating of hospitals, ambulances, the prices of disposable equipment, diagnostic imaging, and the list goes on, has the Ministry of Health performed an analysis on the new carbon tax increases and how that will affect the health care of Albertans?

Ms Hoffman: I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that when we launched our climate leadership plan, I was so proud that we were standing with industry, who knows that this will be good for them, the jobs that they employ, that we were standing with health care professionals, who know that the coal phase-out is the right thing to do for our environment. We were standing with working people from across this province, and we continue to stand with them. When B.C. tried to move up with their illegal blockades and slow down the process, it was working people from across this country who said, "That is wrong; we need to stand up together," including those who were working in health care. They're doing their part. We're doing our part. It's time that we got our product to tidewater so that we can all move forward with having a strong economy, diversified markets, and an even better health care system tomorrow than we do have today.

Ministers' AAMDC and AUMA Convention Participation

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, as you are aware, today Edmonton is joined by AUMA members from across this great province. It is a time when municipal leaders can engage in open dialogue with their provincial counterparts. It's an integral part and tool used to keep the communication link between municipalities and their provincial representatives robust and meaningful. Can a member of this government tell us how many municipalities were denied an audience with ministers during this conference?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the interesting question. We are certainly happy to engage in opportunities. I was proud to be a part of one of the panels yesterday and continue. There were some folks who asked for meetings, and we are very happy to arrange for those. It doesn't need to be just the three days here in Edmonton. Our front bench and all caucus members are travelling this province all the time and in cars because we sold the planes that the members opposite abused. We are throughout the province making sure that we're engaging with folks in their communities, and we're happy to arrange for those over the phone if they can't be done in person.

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, last year during AAMD and C the minister of environment demanded that I leave a public breakout session and given that the excuse of her chief of staff was, and I quote, so that she could be open with those in the room, and given that I had not asked any questions nor had I caused any reason for her not to be open with those people that she represented, will the minister be blocking me or any other opposition members this year when we attend AUMA and AAMD and C?

Mr. S. Anderson: Mr. Speaker, we won't be blocking anybody: media, opposition members, our members, or anybody. We are open and transparent. We have a great relationship with AUMA and AAMD and C. In fact, every time I meet with them, they tell us how many different ministers they've met with, how open we are, how it's never been like this before in the history of their organizations.

I am happy to have those open relationships where people can text me and ask me questions all the time. We'd be happy to have you guys whenever you guys want. [interjection]

The Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to know that we will no longer be blocked from these open sessions.

Mr. Speaker, given that this government has proclaimed over and over again about how they are going to be transparent and open, will this NDP government assure the opposition members that they will no longer be blocking any of us, no MLAs from this opposition, from AAMD and C or AUMA sessions?

Mr. S. Anderson: Mr. Speaker, I'd like the opposition members to actually understand that AUMA and AAMD and C are their own organizations and can do what they would like. We work with them hand in hand and in partnership. So if you would like to come to these sessions, discuss it with them, but we are always open to that, we always have been, and we always will be.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Agricultural Society Funding

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Three and a half months ago I was pleased to hear the minister of economic development confirm that ag societies enrich the lives of rural Albertans, yet midway through the fiscal year the government abruptly withheld their operating funds, putting their community facilities and programs at risk. To the agriculture minister: will you please ask the President of Treasury Board not to play the same kinds of games with the funding for ag societies this year?

The Speaker: The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. You know, I do believe I have a very good relationship with the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board. Having said that, I'm also having good relationships with ag societies right across this province. I understand the value that they have running curling rinks, Boys & Girls Clubs, 4-H clubs, curling rinks. Yes, I do like curling. I've met with ag societies in Whitecourt, Darwell, Sangudo, Alberta Beach. That's in my own district, across the province. I understand their importance and will continue to visit them and understand more about what they do.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we know it's Treasury Board and Finance that ultimately decides the level of operating funding that ag societies will receive in the coming year and given that ag societies need to have confidence that they can keep their facilities' lights on year-round, to the President of Treasury Board: as we've never heard why ag society funding was suddenly put in jeopardy last fall, would you please tell us now?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. As a government, as a minister, all this front bench and behind me as well understands fully the importance ag society is to the basic cultural fabric of rural Alberta, how important they are in maintaining halls. I was just this last year at a hall that celebrated its 80th anniversary. You know, these organizations are important

to rural Alberta, continue to be the lifeblood of these small communities, and we'll continue to support them.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that last year ag societies were surprised to learn that even with the funding earmarked for them in the 2017-18 budget, this government almost cut it midstream and given that the ag societies' operating year will be almost half done before they see the amount allocated to them in this year's budget, to the Finance minister: can they at least count on the number in next week's budget and not be left in the lurch like last year?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member as well. Last year I was very pleased to be able to apply this funding to these organizations, their full funding. Those cheques went out to the ag societies at the beginning of October. Like I've said already, I understand the importance of this. I'm sure the member knows that the Minister of Finance, you know, would have a say in it if I let anything leak from the budget that will be released next week. What I can tell the member and tell Albertans is: let's wait for next week, when the budget is dropped.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek.

2:40

Support for Vulnerable Albertans

Ms Woollard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Ensuring that people in need such as the homeless, the hard to house, and those living with a disability are well supported is challenging. This is especially true for young people who may find themselves without a support structure when they leave the school system. To the Minister of Community and Social Services: how are we making sure that vulnerable Albertans are not slipping through the cracks?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. Our government is committed to making sure that Albertans have access to the housing and support they need. Instead of making reckless cuts, we are investing \$184 million to combat homelessness across this province. To ensure that Albertans with disabilities have the support they need, we have increased funding to AISH by \$103 million and to PDD by \$98 million. We have also increased FCSS funding by \$25 million to support community-based programming. We also added ambient community supports.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
First supplemental.

Ms Woollard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: what are we doing to ensure that these Albertans are able to find a home in an inclusive environment?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. We believe that every Albertan deserves a safe place to live with access to the supports they need for meaningful engagement and success in their communities. For instance, last year we implemented guidelines for LGBTQ youth housing and

shelters to support the youth homelessness initiative and to support inclusion. We also repealed the PDD safety standard, which was treating persons with developmental disabilities differently than other Albertans. The community told us that . . .

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

Ms Woollard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans with limited finances may also face challenges finding housing. To the Minister of Seniors and Housing: how is our government supporting affordable housing for people who may have trouble paying for their housing?

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

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you. Our government believes that everyone should have access to a safe and affordable home. Last year I launched the province's first affordable housing strategy. As part of this strategy we're creating over 4,100 homes for Albertans through our \$1.2 billion investment. The previous government spent years neglecting housing, leaving \$1 billion in outstanding repairs and maintenance. Now they want to impose a reckless plan that would give big tax giveaways to those at the top and cut the supports that vulnerable Albertans depend on. We see a better way. We're standing with working people and protecting the public services they count on. Affordable housing is . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Hon. members, in 30 seconds we'll continue with Members' Statements.

Members' Statements (continued)

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

WinSport

Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise before you in recognition of our spectacular Olympic athletes and the world-class athletic facility in Calgary and in my riding of Calgary-Bow, WinSport. At the recent Olympic Winter Games in Pyeongchang 23 of Canada's 29 medals were won by athletes that have trained or competed at WinSport facilities at Canada Olympic Park. Forty-four of Canada's 55-member Paralympic team have also trained or competed at WinSport.

Mr. Speaker, it's been 30 years since Calgary hosted the 1988 Olympic Winter Games, a world-class event that Calgarians and Albertans are proud of to this day. WinSport's Canada Olympic Park hosted ski jumping and many other spectacular winter sports in the 1988 Olympics and has since become a multipurpose facility enjoyed by Calgarians year-round. Over 1.2 million people visit WinSport every year, and I'm very proud to have this organization and facility in my backyard. As a Calgarian who was born in the year of the 1988 Winter Olympics, I have witnessed the incredible value that this not-for-profit community organization brings to Calgary, Alberta, Canada, and to our athletes.

Mr. Speaker, two of the women from Team Canada's women's hockey team lived in Bowness and trained at WinSport. I'll always remember the day when I ran into women's hockey gold medalist Hayley Wickenheiser at my favourite local coffee shop, Cadence Coffee in Bowness.

I know that we are all incredibly proud of the athletes that showcased Alberta's legacy of athletic success on the world stage

in Pyeongchang. We thank them for their commitment and their determination. I also want to thank WinSport for their continued support for athletes of all ages and levels.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

Gay-straight Alliance in Spruce Grove

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am truly honoured to rise today and share with you and the Assembly the incredible work growing in Spruce Grove. In January a new after school GSA was formed. The Spruce Grove GSA is run by the Spruce Grove Youth Action Committee. Their mission is to come together to provide an accepting environment for LGBTQ youth and their allies.

Together they empower youth to support other youth and provide resources and encouragement so that youth can make informed decisions. Youth of all sexual and gender identities are celebrated and supported. Among their goals are to bring together awareness within our community of LGBTQ minorities, to promote self-esteem and integration of youth, and to provide a safe space for interaction with peers and for peer support. In the three months that they've been open, the Spruce Grove GSA has doubled in size and includes kids from six schools in the Parkland school division and from both Stony Plain and Spruce Grove.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to see this work in my community. I was so incredibly proud to attend the opening of this GSA. While I am a cisgendered man in a committed heterosexual relationship, there was a point in my life where I wasn't so sure about all that. I felt alone, different, and unsure of my own identity. I am so happy to see that, going forward, youth in communities across this province will have access to loving, safe, supportive communities regardless of who they are and who they love. Further, following the passing of Bill 24, youth have the right to share who they are with who they want, when they want.

I want to thank everyone who has organized or participated in a GSA for making the world a better place, and I want to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to share some of the great work in my community.

Chronic Wasting Disease

Dr. Swann: Mr. Speaker, we learned nothing from the BSE crisis. Mad cow disease, an incurable and rapidly fatal infectious prion disease of the brain, devastated our cattle industry 15 years ago at roughly a cost of \$10 billion in lost markets. Conventional wisdom at the time assured us that this could not be transmitted to humans. This proved wrong, and variant CJD cost over 200 human lives.

CWD, chronic wasting disease, is a similar, decades-old prion disease which began in deer and elk farms and is now growing across western Canada in the wild. It is spread easily from body fluids, not only from eating the meat, across the deer family, with weak and inconsistent provincial and federal control measures. Both game farming and wildlife management are provincial issues, but the federal food inspection agency, CFIA, sets the standards for meat safety and just last year relaxed the regulations for controlling this disease.

Paul Glover, the CFIA director, wrote the following: since 2010 CWD has spread and become firmly established in wild cervids in Saskatchewan and Alberta and cannot be eradicated with the tools currently available. End quote. This highlights the failure of co-operation between federal and provincial governments in control measures.

Recent U of C studies on CWD showed that it can be transmitted to experimental monkeys after they eat the flesh of infected deer. This is mobilizing the wildlife and hunting community, especially indigenous communities who depend on wild game. It's also the agricultural community's worst nightmare. We know that a significant number of infected deer and elk are consumed without being properly tested.

Dr. Neil Cashman, a noted neurobiologist and prion scientist from UBC, recently said, quote, we appear to be waiting till CWD is found in humans, end quote, before taking serious action on control and elimination of the disease.

This provincial government is negligent. We have learned nothing from . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

2:50 Introduction of Bills

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

Bill 202 Alberta Taxpayer Protection (Carbon Tax Referendum) Amendment Act, 2018

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill, being the Alberta Taxpayer Protection (Carbon Tax Referendum) Amendment Act, 2018.

It proposes to expand the requirement for a referendum prior to the imposition of a sales tax to include a potential carbon tax and to also require a referendum of the Alberta people before the current carbon tax can be increased.

[Motion carried; Bill 202 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite copies of the TD Economics provincial economic forecast released today. In the forecast it shows that Alberta's GDP has led the country in growth in 2017, '18, and '19. It shows that jobs are up, GDP is up, housing starts are up, and while it's true that many have not felt the recovery, Alberta's economy is looking up regardless of what the UCP would want Alberta to believe.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I believe we are at points of order, with two, in fact, to deal with.

Point of Order Remarks Off the Record

Mr. Nixon: Can I rise, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: Yes, please.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing me. I rise on 23(h), (i), and (j). In question period today the Finance minister heckled and said to the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition comments in regard to whether or not he was a real Albertan and whether or not he was from this province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I don't know your status and where you have come from. I certainly think you are an Albertan. You are the Speaker of the Assembly, and you are definitely an Albertan. I was born in this province, in Calgary. I'm a born and raised Albertan, proud to be from this province. My friend the hon. Member for

Calgary-Greenway immigrated to this province, and he most certainly is an Albertan. I'm sure that you would agree with me.

In regard to the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed he has lived in this great province for 27 years. He served this great province inside the House of Commons for almost two decades, is a member of the Privy Council of Canada, has served as a cabinet minister, has served his province with great integrity. The idea that the NDP, led by a minister of the Crown, would continue to question the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed's, the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition in this Assembly, status as a member, as a citizen of this province is insulting, and I think you would agree, Mr. Speaker.

It is certainly likely to create disorder in this House. It is right now. As I'm trying to explain to you the situation of the point of order, the NDP are still heckling us. This is just like yesterday. It's unfortunate that this continues, Mr. Speaker.

I think that you would agree with me that whether you are like the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed, an almost three-decade resident of this province, or like me, a lifetime resident of this province, or like the Filipino community in Sundre, who work with us in our sawmills, have moved there and have only lived here for a few months, and that the Member for Calgary-Lougheed and I visited with just recently, we are just as much Albertans.

So I would ask, then, Mr. Speaker, that you rule that this should not continue in this House, that the Finance minister do the right thing – stand up, apologize, and withdraw his comments – and that the NDP stop doing this on a daily basis.

The Speaker: Hon. member, are there particular citations that you may have?

Mr. Nixon: As I said when I rose, Mr. Speaker, I rise on 23(h), (i), and (j), particularly language to cause disorder in this House.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This is interesting, the tactics that are being followed by the UCP since their new leader has joined us, with his protestations of decorum and, you know, civility in the House. For the second time the Opposition House Leader has risen in his place and made accusations about statements that were not on the record that have allegedly come from members of our government.

Mr. Speaker, just yesterday the Official Opposition House Leader stood up and accused the Minister of Advanced Education of heckling, saying to the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills: you hate disabled people. That was yesterday. Now today the same Official Opposition House Leader is accusing the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board of accusing the Leader of the Official Opposition of not being an Albertan.

Now, yesterday we dealt with the accusation that was levelled against the Advanced Education minister, who denied saying it. Other people sitting very close to him didn't hear him say it. It was amazing, then, that in the Official Opposition, across the benches, they did hear him say this. Today, Mr. Speaker, we have the same situation, where the Minister of Finance denies saying what the House leader opposite is accusing him of. Nobody around him – and I sit very close to him – heard him say any such thing. It is amazing, again, that on the other side of the House they hear these things.

Mr. Speaker, clearly this is a tactic, a new tactic, of the Official Opposition, under the leadership of the current, new leader, that they have to attempt to suggest that members of the government have said things that they have not said. I would call on the Official Opposition to cease and desist from this disreputable tactic because

our hon. members and ministers here have said no such thing. It is high time that the Official Opposition stopped playing games and got down to business.

The Speaker: Would any other member like to speak to the point of order?

Mr. McIver: I'm going to speak to the point of order and the hon. Government House Leader. Mr. Speaker, the tactics are on the government side. Making these personal insults repeatedly and then denying them is the tactic. It's disreputable to this House, it's not becoming of a minister of the Crown, and I would suggest that the government ministers cease and desist and that the hon. Government House Leader take it upon himself to instruct the ministers and members of cabinet to stop doing what they have begun doing.

The Speaker: To the Opposition House Leader. I don't have the benefit of the Blues for the matter that you're speaking to. I actually thought there was another issue that you may have been raising a point of order about. Do you have access to the place, the reference in the *Hansard* Blues where this statement was made?

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I don't have access to the Blues. You would have more up-to-date information on what *Hansard* may or may not have caught, but I don't have access to the Blues.

3:00

The Speaker: Hon. members, I think we've been doing reasonably well in here in the last four days. It seems to me, though, that this point, again, might be very similar to the one that I ruled on yesterday in that I never heard this comment being made. There seems to be a suggestion by the Government House Leader that the comments were not made. As is the common practice, as has always been a consistent practice, if I do not see or do not hear the allegation being made, it would seem to be difficult to rule on the matter. Therefore, I would rule in this particular situation that there is no point of order.

Opposition House Leader, I think you had a second point of order, is that right?

Mr. Nixon: I already withdrew it.

Orders of the Day Committee of Supply

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

The Chair: I'd like to call the Committee of Supply to order.

Interim Supply Estimates 2018-19 General Revenue Fund and Lottery Fund

The Chair: Hon. members, before we commence this afternoon's consideration of interim supply, I'd like to remind you where the committee left off. There are eight minutes of consideration remaining. When progress was reported yesterday, we had completed a rotation with members of the Official Opposition, so we will now proceed to members of the third party should any be interested in speaking.

If that is not the case, then we can go to any independent members should they be interested in speaking.

Seeing none, we will return to the government side. Are there any government members who would like to participate?

Seeing none, the rotation will now return to the Official Opposition. Do you have any members wishing to ask questions? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will ask the government Finance minister about the interim supply. Are there any details specific to any ministry that he can share with the House where something more or less is going to be spent this year than in the same period of time in the last fiscal year? Since he's asking for all this money, I thought he might share a little more information than has been shared thus far about what indeed he intends to spend more or less money on.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much. You know, this has been a challenging time period for Albertans, particularly in the area of income supports, Madam Chair. We have had the backs of Albertans this entire time. We know that the recession has been problematic for many, many people and their families. The government of Alberta, though, has desired to make sure that they get through that challenging time in the best way possible. Now those better times are in Alberta, but there is a lag with regard to people's incomes, frankly. Many lost their jobs. Tens of thousands of Albertans suffered as a result of the world price of oil dropping significantly, so Albertans were no different than other oil-producing provinces. They suffered greatly, and throughout that, we have made sure that Albertans who have needed income supports got them. It has meant that we have had to change some processes, improve processes, particularly in that area.

The kinds of things that were done differently there were as a result of the great number of people coming out for income supports, having a 24-hour answer line, a line that people could call and get information about income supports. We extended the amount of time that offices were open so that many people could get there. Many come from, of course, rural areas, and they need to find their closest location, so we extended times both on the early hours and the late hours so that people could access supports they needed for themselves and their families. We also increased the number of front-line staff so that those services could be delivered in as quick a way as possible for Albertans. All of those things were done, Madam Chair, so that people could get through this recession.

The lag: of course, we saw that in terms of personal income taxes as well. Because people didn't have as much money – they'd lost work and had income supports sometimes to supplement that lost employment salary – it meant that they didn't have as much personal income to be taxed. Just as we saw a lag in that, we're seeing an increase, frankly, in the amount of money being spent in the area of income supports.

Madam Chair, that's one significant responsibility that this government has undertaken. That's one commitment that this side has made sure that we've fulfilled. I would suspect that the other side would want to do the same things. I don't think they're necessarily heartless in that regard. But, you know, the focus we had, to make sure that people didn't suffer through this recession, was important, was something we made sure happened. That was a significant amount of money that we have made accessible to people who required it.

I will gladly answer other parts of questions should they be posed to me, but that's one area I know that was a commitment that we wanted to make sure happened.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Minister, for the answer. I appreciate that. Listen, I know that the minister is sincere about these things and he wants to do these things, so I won't say that the government is

treating this like the lowest priority because they're not. That's the first thing they would stop doing. I don't believe the minister would do that. But, Madam Chair, you have to, you know, appreciate that when we wonder on this side if that's the thing they're not going to do, then that would be the lowest possible thing, so I don't think they would stop doing that first. This is an area where we agree them, that people in need need to be looked after.

I guess we're of the opinion that they should find something not as severe, as high and necessary a priority as what the minister just described to stop doing but to find something less important to stop doing. What he just pointed out was one of the things that we'd never want the government to stop doing, looking at Albertans in need, when we're a little bit troubled that the government couldn't have chosen to look at all the other things government does and find something less important than what the minister just described.

3:10

I've known the minister for a long time, and I know he cares very much about the issues that he was just talking about. I don't think for a second that the government would stop looking after those people. I don't. But I would hope that the government would find something less sensitive, less important, less urgent to the people of Alberta that they could stop doing so that they don't have to ask for more money with two weeks left in the year.

You'll have to just forgive us if we're just a little bit skeptical. Again, to be clear, I don't think I would accuse the government of stopping looking after the people in need. I would suggest and on our side we would suggest to the government that with two weeks left that they look for things less urgent to do less of and to redirect those monies to the urgent areas that the minister just described. I think all members of this House can agree that people that are in urgent need have to be looked after. They indeed can't wait two weeks. You know, there are some Albertans in certain situations that can wait two weeks for this service or that service, but the people, if I understood well, that the minister just described are amongst the people that cannot wait two weeks.

I hope that the government can forgive us on this side of the House for thinking that with two weeks left in the year and the massive amount of money that the government is asking for to get through the last two weeks that they can probably make better decisions. With all due respect, we have to remember, too, that they passed a budget in this House, and what we're dealing with is the government's mistakes, where they didn't get it right. To be clear, it's a big budget. We don't expect it to be perfect, but when it becomes clear at the end of the year that they're not perfect and they need more money as a result of them being inaccurate in what they estimated and what they thought and what they believed they would need, they shouldn't expect Albertans to pick up . . .

Vote on Interim Supply Estimates 2018-19 General Revenue Fund and Lottery Fund

The Chair: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays, but pursuant to Government Motion 8, agreed to on March 13, 2018, the allotted time of three hours has elapsed. I must now put the following questions.

Agreed to:
Support to the Legislative Assembly: \$13,528,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

Agreed to:
Office of the Auditor General \$4,200,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

Agreed to:
Office of the Ombudsman \$ 715,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

Agreed to:
Office of the Chief Electoral Officer \$6,504,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

Agreed to:
Office of the Ethics Commissioner \$161,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

Agreed to:
Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner \$1,153,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Office of the Child and Youth Advocate \$2,571,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Office of the Public Interest Commissioner \$192,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Office of the Election Commissioner \$396,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:	
Advanced Education	
Expense	\$469,320,000
Capital Investment	\$106,400,000
Financial Transactions	\$80,750,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

Agreed to:	
Agriculture and Forestry	
Expense	\$318,625,000
Capital Investment	\$2,458,000
Financial Transactions	\$219,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:	
Children's Services	
Expense	\$241,208,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:	
Community and Social Services	
Expense	\$654,814,000
Capital Investment	\$91,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:	
Culture and Tourism	
Expense	\$116,993,000
Capital Investment	\$340,000
Financial Transactions	\$152,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:	
Economic Development and Trade	
Expense	\$59,453,000
Capital Investment	\$436,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:	
Education	
Expense	\$786,700,000
Capital Investment	\$12,100,000
Financial Transactions	\$2,853,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:	
Energy	
Expense	\$43,759,000
Capital Investment	\$150,000
Financial Transactions	\$11,200,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:	
Environment and Parks	
Expense	\$143,959,000
Capital Investment	\$15,622,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:	
Executive Council	
Expense	\$3,113,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:	
Health	
Expense	\$3,745,994,000
Capital Investment	\$31,972,000
Financial Transactions	\$12,392,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:	
Indigenous Relations	
Expense	\$40,600,000
Capital Investment	\$4,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:	
Infrastructure	
Expense	\$110,000,000
Capital Investment	\$185,000,000
Financial Transactions	\$6,750,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

Agreed to:	
Justice and Solicitor General	
Expense	\$286,439,000
Capital Investment	\$2,742,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

3:20

Agreed to:	
Labour	
Expense	\$38,415,000
Capital Investment	\$317,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:	
Municipal Affairs	
Expense	\$271,477,000
Capital Investment	\$1,143,000
Financial Transactions	\$24,815,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:	
Seniors and Housing	
Expense	\$71,422,000
Financial Transactions	\$2,450,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:	
Service Alberta	
Expense	\$78,500,000
Capital Investment	\$16,900,000
Financial Transactions	\$1,700,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:	
Status of Women	
Expense	\$1,140,000
Capital Investment	\$8,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:	
Transportation	
Expense	\$201,821,000
Capital Investment	\$183,181,000
Financial Transactions	\$16,326,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:	
Treasury Board and Finance	
Expense	\$33,726,000
Capital Investment	\$380,000
Finance Transactions	\$604,000
Transfer from the Lottery Fund	\$239,907,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

The Committee of Supply shall now rise and report.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

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

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.

The following resolutions relating to the 2018-19 interim supply estimates for the general revenue fund and the lottery fund for the fiscal period from April 1, 2018, to May 31, 2018, have been approved.

Support to the Legislative Assembly, \$13,528,000; office of the Auditor General, \$4,200,000; office of the Ombudsman, \$715,000; office of the Chief Electoral Officer, \$6,504,000; office of the Ethics Commissioner, \$161,000; office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, \$1,153,000; office of the Child and Youth Advocate, \$2,571,000; office of the Public Interest Commissioner, \$192,000; office of the Election Commissioner, \$396,000.

Advanced Education: expense, \$469,320,000; capital investment, \$106,400,000; financial transactions, \$80,750,000.

Agriculture and Forestry: expense, \$318,625,000; capital investment, \$2,458,000; financial transactions, \$219,000.

Children's Services: expense, \$241,208,000.

Community and Social Services: expense, \$654,814,000; capital investment, \$91,000.

Culture and Tourism: expense, \$116,993,000; capital investment, \$340,000; financial transactions, \$152,000.

Economic Development and Trade: expense, \$59,453,000; capital investment, \$436,000.

Education: expense, \$786,700,000; capital investment, \$12,100,000; financial transactions, \$2,853,000.

Energy: expense, \$43,759,000; capital investment, \$150,000; financial transactions, \$11,200,000.

Environment and Parks: expense, \$143,959,000; capital investment, \$15,622,000.

Executive Council: expense, \$3,113,000.

Health: expense, \$3,745,994,000; capital investment, \$31,972,000; financial transactions, \$12,392,000.

Indigenous Relations: expense, \$40,600,000; capital investment, \$4,000.

Infrastructure: expense, \$110,000,000; capital investment, \$185,000,000; financial transactions, \$6,750,000.

Justice and Solicitor General: expense, \$286,439,000; capital investment, \$2,742,000.

Labour: expense, \$38,415,000; capital investment, \$317,000.

Municipal Affairs: expense, \$271,477,000; capital investment, \$1,143,000; financial transactions, \$24,815,000.

Seniors and Housing: expense, \$71,422,000; financial transactions, \$2,450,000.

Service Alberta: expense, \$78,500,000; capital investment, \$16,900,000; financial transactions, \$1,700,000.

Status of Women: expense, \$1,140,000; capital investment, \$8,000.

Transportation: expense, \$201,821,000; capital investment, \$183,181,000; financial transactions, \$16,326,000.

Treasury Board and Finance: expense, \$33,726,000; capital investment, \$380,000; financial transactions, \$604,000; and transfer from the lottery fund, \$239,907,000.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report? Say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

I wish to advise the Assembly that according to Standing Order 61(3) upon the Assembly concurring in the report by the Committee of Supply, the Assembly will immediately revert to Introduction of Bills for introduction of the appropriation bill.

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

Introduction of Bills

(reversion)

Bill 3

Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2018

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 3, the Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2018. This being a money bill, Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor has been informed of the contents of this bill and recommends the same to this Assembly.

[Motion carried; Bill 3 read a first time]

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

Bill 1

Energy Diversification Act

[Adjourned debate March 13: Mr. Coolahan]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein. You still have time left.

Mr. Coolahan: I will cede my time to my counterpart. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise in this House to speak to Bill 1, the Energy Diversification Act. My colleague from Calgary-Klein spoke about the vision behind Bill 1. That vision is to diversify our energy industry as part of a diverse and growing economy, to provide good jobs for people and families, growing industries for our communities, and exciting new projects for export.

3:30

I will add to his overview by pointing out that Bill 1 acts directly on the recommendations from Alberta's Energy Diversification Advisory Committee. Our Premier appointed the committee because even after decades of development the people of this province are still not getting full value for our energy resources. The advisory committee brought together leaders from industry, training, labour, and indigenous business. Their recommendations are based on in-depth consultation with both industry and nonindustry interests. Bill 1 is the first step in acting on visions for our economy outlined in that report.

My colleague from Calgary-Klein already explained how Bill 1 will extend and expand the petrochemicals diversification program. I will look at other components of Bill 1; that is, partial bitumen upgrading. As components go, it's a huge one. The topic is already familiar to this House. Late last month our Premier hosted a news conference to thank the Energy Diversification Advisory Committee for its work and at the same time announced support for the full-scale commercialization of partial bitumen upgrading technology in Alberta. That support could reach up to a billion dollars in investment over the next eight years. Bill 1 creates a mechanism to make good on that commitment. Bill 1 provides the authority to create a new Alberta program to enable large-scale partial bitumen upgrading technologies by lowering the risk associated with their commercialization.

What is partial bitumen upgrading? Bitumen is thick, also solid. It needs to be diluted before it can move through a pipeline. Partial bitumen upgrading is an innovative process that reduces the thickness of oil sands bitumen so that it can flow through pipelines more easily and effectively without having to be diluted. That saves on the cost of the diluent. Because the bitumen won't need to be diluted, partial upgrading will allow more bitumen to move through the existing and future pipelines. This means we can get greater use of the safest, most efficient, and greenest way to transport our bitumen.

Another thing. Bitumen that goes to market without upgrading or refining faces significant discounts because of the higher processing costs at the other end. Partial upgrading will improve the quality of the product, and that will increase the number of refineries that are able to process it economically. So partial upgrading will help to reduce the oil price differential that is costing us billions of dollars every single year, and it will create a much bigger market for our product.

There will also be a cost to kick-start partial bitumen upgrading. The \$1 billion that was talked about is what's likely to be needed to bring the five commercial-scale projects into production. Bill 1 authorizes that investment in a variety of ways, including grants, loan guarantees, royalty credits, and equity ownership. That support is expected to leverage about \$5 billion in private capital

investments. In turn, those projects are expected to create about 4,500 direct jobs per year. Also, hundreds of millions of dollars will come back to the government as revenue.

Let me say that those jobs and those services make such a difference in people's lives. In my work as the MLA for Edmonton-Manning I've knocked on thousands of doors and met with hundreds of families. Many of my constituents are still looking for work or working more than one low-paying job to make ends meet, and even those who have a job are worried about what happens if there's another hiccup in the price of oil. They're tired of the boom-and-bust roller coaster, Madam Speaker. They're tired of waiting for the other shoe to drop. They want stability. They want certainty. In short, they want an economic recovery that is built to last. So, to me, any endeavour that creates jobs and generates revenue is about much more than statistics. It is about how people live, support their families, and make their lives better. When we say that the partial bitumen upgrading will help Albertans get better value for their oil sands resources, I see the measure of that value in the prosperity of our communities and in good jobs and services for families.

In short, the provision under Bill 1 for partial bitumen upgrading will attract billions in investment and create thousands of Alberta jobs. The bill will make the oil sands even more competitive by reducing costs, increasing pipeline capacity, and creating new market opportunities. This bill will unlock the full potential of the oil sands to contribute to Alberta's economy and quality of life. I think those are very good reasons to support Bill 1, and I urge my colleagues in this Assembly to do the same.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 1, the Energy Diversification Act, put forward by the hon. Minister of Energy. There is a lot going on in this bill, yet there is also a whole lot of nothing. Almost everything in this Bill 1 can be achieved already through other statutes and the minister's authority vested in the Government Organization Act.

The real substance of Bill 1 is not in the bill, but it's out there in the trio of press releases from Alberta Energy over the past two weeks and the report from the Energy Diversification Advisory Committee, a report called the EDAC report. Bill 1 is a nice piece of window dressing, and it gets everyone excited that the NDP is going to put Albertans back to work after three years of them being in office. The prize is beautiful, and, yes, Alberta has very cheap feedstock to supply diversification of the petrochemical industry, but Alberta faces a 10 to 20 per cent premium on capital. It's expensive to build here, and the EDAC report does say so.

I see that the minister is announcing programs offering up to \$800 million in loan guarantees for partial upgrading, which is an experimental technology. I see another \$500 million in loan guarantees for straddle plants to collect the ethane needed for the petrochemical plants. Instead of offering the money, the minister could have ordered the industry to do the ethane extraction without compensation, just as Trudeau is doing with the methane leak regulations. With these announcements I start asking myself: if the government needs to cosign the loans, has the market already spoken and said no to Alberta?

Madam Speaker, let's review the litany of activities the NDP government has done to scare away capital and shake investor confidence in Alberta. I just want to talk about how we got here. First, we had the royalty review, done at the start of the downturn, encouraging capital flight and spooking the oil and gas industry. Despite the downturn, the royalty review did much to convince corporate Calgary to hold on to their capital for another year. And

when the results of the review were released and we found out that all was well, just as the Official Opposition had said before, and only a few tweaks around the fringes would be done, there was a huge sigh of relief from the industry, but there was also anger that the NDP had contributed to spiking a construction and drilling season.

Then we had Bill 2, An Act to Restore Fairness to Public Revenue. This is where the Minister of Finance raised corporate income taxes from 10 per cent to 12 per cent and personal income taxes went on a tiered system and went up for many people. Tell me: who wants to invest where the taxes just got higher?

Next was the infamous Bill 6, the Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act, igniting a rural revolt against this NDP government. Bill 6 would make farming and ranching more expensive, attacking the family farmers and ranchers and pitting the Hutterian Brethren against those who choose not to live in a religious community. People had to give up their private, superior insurance for farm workers in order to take on the more expensive, with less benefits, WCB's. Who wants to invest in agriculture and start a farm if the government treats you this way?

Somewhere in there, the NDP raised the carbon tax and started the coal phase-out, ignoring the advice from the public service and triggering the mass dump of the power purchase agreements, PPAs. Who wants to be held to a contract where you lose money? Not a single businessperson. Ask one of my constituents who's a business owner. He and his wife are business owners. They came here to hear the debate on Bill 1. No one in business wants to lose money, but somehow in NDP land it's okay to lose money supplying electricity for the masses.

3:40

This one act alone is costing the taxpayers hundreds of millions if not billions of dollars in order to backstop the purchasing pool. It's crazy, Madam Speaker. The NDP come to the table filled with good intentions, trying to drive the power prices lower only to find out that the prices can't go lower because the stuff costs money. So they saddled the taxpayers with the bill and tried to hide the misdeeds from the electricity bills as long as possible.

We could talk about Bill 20 now, Madam Speaker, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act, but I think the Auditor General's report from February 22, 2018, shows just what kind of a boondoggle this slush fund of spending on all things green really is. The only good thing to come out of this is the funding for the green line in Calgary, which the city of Calgary overpromised and underdelivered by only building half the distance but at the full cost of the entire line.

How else has the market said no to Alberta, Madam Speaker? Let's invite radical Tzeponah Berman and Karen Mahon to mess around with the oil sands industry. That was all about Bill 25, the Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act. In comes the 100-megatonne cap on oil sands production, and exactly as the Official Opposition predicted would happen, the exodus from the industry was on. The multinationals left. Companies like Shell, Statoil, ConocoPhillips, Chevron, Total, Murphy, Marathon all left, and we ended up consolidating the industry under CNRL, Suncor, and Cenovus.

The NDP saint, Tommy Douglas, would be proud of our Premier for kicking the multinationals out and making the Athabasca oil sands all Canadian. That's what he wanted, and he said so in a speech from the late 1970s. But the markets spoke. The consolidation of the oil sands meant layoffs, and downtown Calgary was decimated, with office vacancy rates soaring over 30 per cent in some of the most prime real estate anywhere in the country.

But the NDP wasn't done yet. They brought in Bill 27, the Renewable Electricity Act, and Bill 34, the Electric Utilities

Amendment Act, 2016. Both bills did a lot to mess up our electricity system in order to force added renewable electricity onto the province. We have over 16,000 megawatts of installed generating capacity in Alberta, and we are now using roughly 10,000 megawatts. Why do we need more? The NDP set a target of 30 per cent renewables, and 30 per cent renewables makes the electrical grid unstable. We can't guarantee the electricity because the grid would be unstable. But you know what, Madam Speaker? Saint David Suzuki would be very proud of this NDP's actions.

There was no protection for the landowners in bills 27 or 34. If a wind farm wanted to set up and got landowner permission and then went bankrupt, the landowner is left to clean all that steel and concrete. That's bad, Madam Speaker. Not only that, Bill 27 will force the construction of new electrical transmission lines all over Alberta to collect all that wind- and solar-generated electricity. The cost of those transmission lines will be paid by the ratepayers and guarantee the transmission line company a 9 per cent rate of return per annum. No wonder Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway bought AltaLink. The law as written is a licence to print money.

Madam Speaker, the NDP knows how to send market signals. Yes, indeed, they know: "Come and invest here. Look, we have the capital investment tax credit and the Alberta investment tax credit. If you fill out all the paperwork and navigate the red tape on a first-come, first-served basis, you might get a tax credit, but we won't tell the members of this Assembly, the elected officials in this House, who is getting the tax credits in budget estimates." I asked those questions, Madam Speaker, and the NDP government said that, no, they can't give me that information. Instead, the NDP will have a press release and a photo op for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade with the lucky recipients of our tax credits. They won't tell the members of this Assembly because they are not allowed to know who gets the free money. So there you go. A litany of market signals that the NDP has sent to the whole world, and the market's response has been to bypass Alberta.

Now we have Bill 1 here, that is essentially saying to the market: "Please, please come back. We have the grants and loans and handouts for you to show that we are not all that bad." We pray that those grants and loans and guarantees are enough to cover the existing reality of the high capital costs, high labour costs, and lower productivity in the winter. We hope it is enough to cover the bad NDP boondoggle policies that chased the investors away from the market in the first place.

Bill 1 may be a charm offensive, but we can do better, Madam Speaker, and we will do better. We'll try and make Bill 1 better while we wait for a change in government.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

Mr. Coolahan: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Just a quick question and an observation. The Member for Calgary-Foothills talks a lot about the rear view of what's been happening, and we're trying to move forward with this bill. Inter Pipeline and the chemistry association during that announcement certainly didn't feel like looking back. They wanted to move forward. I would just like to ask the member under 29(2)(a) what his plans would be for diversifying our economy.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Calgary-Klein for asking me that question. Yes, we did meet with those stakeholders, the Chemistry Industry Association

and others, who have told us – and I'm guessing they told NDP members exactly the same thing, too. I asked them: "Hey, you're coming and telling us all these things. Have you told the government also the same thing?" Every one of the stakeholders I met: yes. But the government chose not to listen or not to act on their suggestions.

What they asked, Madam Speaker, was to look at the big picture, the big picture being that Alberta is the third-largest province in petroleum resources. They say that we have to diversify the economy. We get that. Alberta has been on diversification because agriculture and forestry and tourism are all contributing to our GDP. At the same time, the energy sector, which has been the bread and butter of not only Alberta but the whole of Canada, needs to be built on its strengths, not to be undermined. That's what this government did. Ever since they came into power, that's what they did. That's why all those multinationals left. If the member heard me saying . . . [interjections] It does.

Also, the Finance minister, who is actually heckling me, yesterday at about 11:30 a.m., if you look at the Blues, instead of asking questions of this side of the House, was answering, saying: oh, in 2015 we got the mandate; we got 54 MLAs, so we got a licence to do whatever we want. If that is the mandate he's taken ever since – there were three by-elections. He knows the results. I don't want to go into that. There are two more by-elections coming very soon. If Albertans are giving them the mandate, we will see what mandate they'll get. If they want to run on their record . . . [interjection] At least, they should start listening to Albertans now.

3:50

What the industry stakeholders were saying is to look at the big picture, that we are sitting on \$11 trillion of resources. Let's leverage that for the benefit of all Canadians. Because of your government policies, they are chasing the investments away. That's the big picture. If all those multinationals wouldn't have left, we would still have job opportunities for Albertans here. If we had those hundred thousand Albertans working here, they would have paid taxes. Then we wouldn't have the deficit in the budget because we would have gotten an additional \$5 billion in revenue.

Instead of doing that, they're doing these Band-Aids of giving grants and loan guarantees and all these unsustainable policies. They're not admitting the flaws in their policies and not addressing them. They still have another 14 months to go. They have time on their side. If they really want to listen to the stakeholders and Albertans and the voters in the last three by-elections and the upcoming two by-elections, if they get the message, then they will act in the interest of Alberta and Canada. But if that is not their motto, if they're just there one time, if that's their one-time life opportunity won and done, then they'll take us on this path, which is what my stakeholders were telling me, including the Chemistry Industry Association.

If that is the path they're on, God help Alberta. But we won't let them do it.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: We're not doing 29(2)(a)?

The Deputy Speaker: We have no more time for 29(2)(a). That time has expired.

Mr. Mason: Oh. Thanks very much.

Well, Madam Speaker, I understand that there's some bad weather in Calgary and parts of southern Alberta, and a number of

MLAs on both sides of the House have requested an early adjournment to allow them to get home for the weekend. Therefore, I move that we adjourn until 1:30 Monday afternoon.

I would like to wish all members of the House a safe journey this weekend.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. minister, before we can do that, we have to adjourn debate on the bill that's under discussion.

Mr. Mason: Oh. I thought I had said that. First, I'll move that we adjourn debate on the bill.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Deputy Speaker: And on the motion by the Government House Leader to adjourn.

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

Bill Status Report for the 29th Legislature - 4th Session (2018)

Activity to Thursday, March 15, 2018

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

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

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

Bill 1 — Energy Diversification Act (McCuaig-Boyd)

First Reading — 6 (*Mar. 8, 2018 aft., passed*), 184-87 (*Mar. 15, 2018*)

Second Reading — 50-51 (*Mar. 13, 2018 morn.*), (*Mar. 15, 2018 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 2 — Growth and Diversification Act (\$) (Bilous)

First Reading — 118 (*Mar. 14, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 3 — Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2018 (\$) (Ceci)

First Reading — 184 (*Mar. 15, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 4 — Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2018 (\$) (Ceci)

First Reading — 165 (*Mar. 15, 2018 morn., passed*)

Bill 201 — Employment Standards (Firefighter Leave) Amendment Act, 2018 (W. Anderson)

First Reading — 118 (*Mar. 14, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 202 — Alberta Taxpayer Protection (Carbon Tax Referendum) Amendment Act, 2018 (Kenney)

First Reading — 179 (*Mar. 15, 2018 aft., passed*)

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, March 19, 2018

Day 6

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (UCP),
Deputy Leader of the Official Opposition
Anderson, Hon. Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (NDP)
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (UCP)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (NDP)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (NDP)
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (NDP)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (NDP)
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP),
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Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawkwood (NDP)
Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (NDP)
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Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)
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Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP)
Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP),
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Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)
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Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (UCP)
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Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)
Vacant, Fort McMurray-Conklin
Vacant, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake

Party standings:

New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 25 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent: 1 Vacant: 2

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Loewen	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, March 19, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Hon. members, I hope you noticed that it was very springlike last week, largely as a result of the warmth and welcome of this House, I'm sure. So as the snow came, I would hope that you'll bring that warmth back so the snow will know its day has passed.

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon, hon. members.

Please bow your heads. Let us reflect as we commence proceedings today in this Assembly. Let us contemplate our opportunity to once again work together to find a way in which our collective efforts will make our world and our province better. As we move forward, let us also reflect on all the families who have shared the burdens of public life.

As is our custom, hon. members, we pay tribute to members and former members of the Assembly who have recently passed away.

Mrs. Mary Jean LeMessurier
June 12, 1929, to March 11, 2018

The Speaker: Mrs. Mary Jean LeMessurier was elected as the Progressive Conservative Member for Edmonton-Centre on March 14, 1979, and on March 23 of that year was named to the cabinet as the minister responsible for culture, a position she held for two terms of service. In 1984 Mary LeMessurier – we're working on the French and the English – became the first woman inducted into the honorary Kainai chieftainship of the Kainai Blood Tribe. In 1986 she was appointed Alberta's agent general in the United Kingdom and in Europe. Among the honours she received were the establishment of the Mary LeMessurier award for the study of history through the Canadian centennial scholarship fund and being appointed a member of the Order of Canada in 1998. Mrs. LeMessurier passed away on March 11, 2018, at the age of 88.

In a moment of silent reflection I would ask that you remember Mrs. LeMessurier as you may have known her.

Hon. members, please join me in the singing of *O Canada* led by Mr. R.J. Chambers in the language of your choice.

Hon. Members:

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

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: Hon. members, with our admiration, respect, and gratitude to the members of the families who shared the burdens of public life and public service, today I would like to welcome the members of the LeMessurier family who are present in the Speaker's gallery. Please rise as I call your name and remain

standing until all have been introduced: Tim LeMessurier, son of Mrs. LeMessurier; her daughters, Willa Jamieson and Jil Lee; and her daughter-in-law, Tammy Banting. Please receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Introduction of Guests

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a group of incredibly bright, intelligent students from the Belvedere elementary school in my riding of Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. They are here all week for the School at the Legislature program, which, I must say, is an incredible program. I love the fact that another one of my schools is taking advantage of this program. I've heard nothing but positive things about it, a tribute to the folks running it. They're accompanied by two of their teachers, Shannah Calp and Lona Ani, along with a chaperone, Gesenia Gonzalez. I'd ask them all to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you. M. le Président, c'est avec fierté que je me lève à la Chambre aujourd'hui pour introduire the students of l'école Father Jan. The students are accompanied by their teacher, Natalie Jurick, along with their chaperones, Tim Dakin, Sherlyne Javier, and Sarah Moellenbeck. I would ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other school groups today?

The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm honoured to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly four outstanding educators. Frank Durante, Patricia Makowski, and Norman Martin are recent recipients of Canada's outstanding principals award for 2018, and they're joined by Superintendent Mark Rawlek. Principals and superintendents play an important part in supporting students to achieve their dreams, and today I would like to have them stand, please, and receive the warm welcome of the Legislature.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today the Minister of Community and Social Services will be introducing Bill 5, An Act to Strengthen Financial Security for Persons with Disabilities. This bill will build on the work I did as the MLA for Calgary-Currie in bringing forward Bill 201, to allow AISH recipients and their families to have the ability to save for their future. I'd like to introduce a bunch of people who were very helpful in the consultations. Those would be Joan Lee, CEO of Vecova Centre for Disability Services and Research; Gordon VanderLeek of VanderLeek Law, who was very helpful with my consultations on the original bill; and Tina Trigg, who is a family member, and this bill will help make life better for her and her disabled daughter. I ask all these members to rise, and I ask all members of the House to join me in giving these esteemed guests the traditional warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

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

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two central Alberta constituents, friends of mine. The first is His Worship Mike Yargeau, the mayor of Penhold. I'd ask that he stand up. Along with him is a councillor for Penhold, Mike Walsh, one of the few people in central Alberta that can actually look me in the eye. That's because he's really, really tall. Stand on up, Mike. I'd ask that they receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

1:40

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I will be introducing Bill 5, An Act to Strengthen Financial Security for Persons with Disabilities. In the House today are families who will be better able to provide for their own children if this act passes. They're here today with advocates and workers who have helped to call attention to the need for this change. I'm pleased to ask the following families and advocates to rise as I call their names: Kathryn Burke; Donna Desjardins from Inclusion St. Paul; Bruce Uditsky, CEO of Inclusion Alberta; Braden Mole; and Frances Urtasun. I ask all members to please join me in giving these guests the warm traditional welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House a group of individuals from northwestern Alberta. If you could stand as I call your names: Cameron Cardinal, councillor for Mackenzie county; Duffy Driedger, councillor for Mackenzie county; Carol Gabriel, Mackenzie county; Josh Knelsen, councillor for Mackenzie county; Ernie Peters, councillor for Mackenzie county; Jacque Bateman, councillor for Mackenzie county and also northwest Species at Risk vice-chair; Amber Bean, councillor and member of northwest Species at Risk also; Eric Jorgensen, councillor, Mackenzie county, Northwest Species at Risk Committee member; Her Worship Crystal McAteer, mayor of High Level, committee member of Northwest Species at Risk; Byron Peters, deputy manager, Mackenzie county administration, lead for Northwest Species at Risk; Kathleen Rukavina, producer, Long Sleeve Productions; Terry Ungarian, reeve, county of Northern Lights; Lisa Wardley, deputy reeve, Mackenzie county, Northwest Species at Risk chair; and Len Racher, CAO, Mackenzie county. If we could please give them the warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. Member for St. Albert, do you have a guest?

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today the Minister of Community and Social Services will be introducing Bill 5, An Act to Strengthen Financial Security for Persons with Disabilities. If the act passes, some Albertans will be better able to provide for their futures and their families' futures. We have in the House today families who will be directly affected and the advocates who have worked hard to bring this issue forward. I'm pleased to ask the following to rise as I call their names: Shyla Masse, Lesley Tabler, and Sherwin Tabler. I ask that all members join me in giving these esteemed guests the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a dear friend of mine, Robert Nygaard. Robert is a councillor and volunteer firefighter for Big Lakes county, in Faust. He is in town for AAMD and C. I owe a lot to Robert for all of his support. He's a key volunteer on the Lesser Slave Lake NDP constituency association. With that, I ask Robert to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of our Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Mauri Stiff. Mauri, please rise. Mauri is a constituent in Airdrie, and she's here today to witness all the fun that we have. Please give her the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Members' Statements

LGBTQ2S Rights

Connolly: Mr. Speaker, this evening the University of Alberta is holding a panel – I'll be attending along with the Minister of Culture and Tourism – on the Supreme Court of Canada's historic Vriend decision. The Chancellor's Forum features speakers on how only 20 years ago the Supreme Court unanimously ruled it was wrong to fire Delwin Vriend because of his sexual orientation.

The leader of the UCP was an MP at the time. In fact, he was my MP. He often spoke about his extreme views on LGBTQ2S rights. He said he didn't support the Vriend decision. He called on Alberta MLAs to fight the Supreme Court's ruling because it was, quote, a virus. A virus, Mr. Speaker. It's hard to fathom why he called LGBTQ2S rights a virus, but I bet he wasn't talking about the flu.

The Vriend decision was a historic moment, when Alberta's LGBTQ2S community won their rights. I now sit as a proud member of this Assembly, but I now also sit across from that same former MP. He caused harm when he fought so hard against the most basic rights of myself, other members of this Assembly, and the entire LGBTQ2S community. Frankly, I don't know how to feel about that. Should I feel good that after 13 years as my MP fighting against my rights that we now serve as equals in the Legislature? Or should I feel angry that Canada still has politicians who believe that LGBTQ2S community members are lesser citizens for who we love and how we identify? What pains me most is that he may not even realize how much harm he caused for so many by fighting against our human rights for decades.

But I want to give him a chance to state why he thought it was okay to fire a person for being gay, and I welcome him to apologize to Alberta's LGBTQ2S community for his degrading comments. In fact, I welcome him to join me at tonight's public event and make that apology, just as I welcome the progress we've made as a province and as a government to protect the rights of LGBTQ2S people and to put people first.

Caribou Range Plans

Mr. Loewen: While the government is trying to show that it is defending industry in Alberta by its present position on the Trans Mountain pipeline, Alberta industries are also concerned about caribou plans that could negatively affect them. As with the pipeline

issue and carbon taxes, we need this NDP government to stand up for Albertans.

When the Trudeau government does nothing to exert its authority on pipelines and, in fact, cancels them, this government says nothing to its Ottawa friends. When Trudeau says, “Carbon tax,” the NDP ask: how high? Now the federal government says, “Make plans for caribou,” and the NDP jumps to create parks and shut down industry. What’s worse is that they’re trying to do even more than the federal government is requesting. All of this is driven by their ideology of antipipeline, pro tax, and create parks at any cost. There has already been a massive loss of investment in Alberta due to this government, and this ideology will only further the losses until they start trying to make life better for Albertans by supporting and defending Albertans’ rights.

This government’s response to the caribou issue has been wrought with controversy and lack of meaningful consultation. This has caused a lot of anxiety in the communities who rely on resources from the caribou ranges. The province lacks regional plans in most of these areas but is determined to create protected areas with little information on what will and will not happen in these areas. The NDP government also lacks species management plans, begging the question: how can you make such a dramatic change to wildlife management when you have no plans? Some scientists are saying that even if all the recommendations are implemented, the chance of success in creating sustainable caribou populations is about 60 per cent.

This is alarming; 13.4 million hectares, 23 per cent of Alberta, is considered caribou range. We need a plan that will allow both industry to work and caribou to be preserved. It should not be about creating parks and protected areas in order to live up to some arbitrary 17 per cent committed to by the federal government. This should be about the people and the communities, who are more than willing to work with government to create suitable, realistic, and common-sense plans.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Rural Crime Prevention

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government prides itself on social policy, but there is no quality of life when people are not safe. The core of social policy is enshrined in the Charter: “Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof.”

A citizen’s basic right of safety and security must be protected, yet rural Albertans have been and are daily denied this right because of the failure and lack of action of this government’s social and criminal justice policies. This government constantly talks about rural Alberta needing to feel safe, yet criminals are now routinely, repeatedly, and repetitiously targeting rural communities for the most part unopposed.

Police response times are 30 minutes to several hours, so there is effectively no restraining force. If police do arrive, they may not exceed speed limits to chase these attackers, who race away laughing without consequence. Police are understaffed and overwhelmed with paperwork, so they can only deal with the most serious issues, and property crimes are mostly ignored by force of necessity.

When police do apprehend an individual, Crown prosecutors are ordered by the minister to triage the charge, so often the case just gets dropped. Police officers have expressed their frustration with spending a morning preparing documents and then having the Crown tell them that the case will be dropped.

1:50

Only the most serious cases are given the restricted resources of police, prosecutors, judges, and courts. When a case does go to a judge, the majority of offenders are simply released onto the streets again within hours and return to victimizing citizens. The majority of cases are committed by prolific repeat offenders.

This is a complete failure of social justice and fundamental social policy, that innocent citizens are preyed upon multiple times over by the same criminal elements, and the system de facto permits it. The system protects the rights of criminals, who, in turn, abuse the rights of innocent people. The system is thereby complicit in the victimization of its own citizens, and this is a monstrous failure of social policy.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of Her Majesty’s Official Opposition.

Provincial Response to Pipeline Opposition.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On the weekend Tzeporah Berman participated in an illegal protest in Burnaby to block the Kinder Morgan pipeline. This individual was appointed by the NDP to co-chair their oil sands advisory group. Will the Premier now admit that it was a mistake to give Ms Berman the credibility of that position, somebody who is willing to facilitate in breaking the law to stop pipelines?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the member knows, we’ve long since had Ms Berman leave that role. As we know, since then she’s taken a position with which we do not agree, which is very much on the edge, I would suggest. Frankly, though, what I would also suggest is that positions on the edge are not helpful. So whether you are chaining yourself to things out in B.C. or denying climate change here in Alberta across the aisle, either version doesn’t help get the pipeline built. Our position of dealing with both issues will get the pipeline built.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the problem is that this was a perfect demonstration of the NDP’s lack of judgment, to have appointed somebody who is willing to break the law in their hostility to our energy industry.

The NDP has failed to – the federal NDP has come out in favour of the Leap Manifesto, keep it in the ground. The B.C. NDP is doing everything they can to block our pipelines, NDP mayors in Vancouver and Burnaby. Can the Premier identify a single political party or organization that’s moved from no to yes on pipelines as a result of her carbon tax?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Interestingly, there was a poll out this weekend in B.C. which showed that support for the pipeline is growing and that opposition against the pipeline is dropping down.

I’d like to take this opportunity right now, actually, to offer my thanks to our minister of environment, who was in the Lower Mainland over the last few days making reasonable, calm, environmental, progressive, sustainable arguments in favour of the

pipelines, speaking to people on open-line shows and standing up for a reasonable approach to getting the pipeline built, Mr. Speaker. That's the way we're going to get this done, and my thanks go to my minister of environment.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the question was whether the Premier could identify a single party, mayor, organization that's moved from no to yes on pipelines as a result of the carbon tax, and let the record show that she could not identify one because there aren't any.

Will the Premier admit that her own federal party, her B.C. cousins, the NDP mayors in British Columbia, all of the environmental organizations, if anything, have ramped up their opposition to our biggest job creator since the NDP carbon tax came in? Will she admit that the whole social licence gambit is a complete and utter failure?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact, what I will suggest is that based on the commentary of the people who are making these decisions, which include the federal government, we have taken the right path to get this pipeline built and that denying that climate change is primarily caused by human activity is not the way to get this pipeline built and that allowing people to take that approach is not the way to get this pipeline built. So it's a darn good thing that people on this side are taking action.

The Speaker: Second major question.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, let the record show that all evidence to the contrary, the NDP still thinks their social licence scam is working. It's not.

Carbon Levy and Pipeline Approvals

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, last year the Premier went to Vancouver ostensibly to promote the Trans Mountain pipeline. She met with her NDP counterpart John Horgan, the now Premier. After that meeting he came out and talked to the media, and he said that our Premier, quotes, had no intention of persuading him, close quotes, to support the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion. I'd like to ask the Premier: were his words accurate? Did she not in fact have any intention of persuading John Horgan to support Trans Mountain?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, as I've said already, we are very pleased to see that the opposition against the pipeline, according to polls, is in fact decreasing, and we're going to continue the good work that we are doing to make sure that that happens. One thing I can say for sure is that we will not win the hearts and minds of the people of British Columbia by pretending that climate change is not caused by human activity. The evidence shows – let the record show – that the member opposite has still not declared that he believes human activity is causing climate change.

Mr. Kenney: I have said that, Mr. Speaker. The Premier is going to get a lot of chances to ask questions after the next election.

Let the record show that she will not contradict John Horgan's characterization of her failure to persuade him.

Mr. Speaker, I have a simple question for the Premier. By how much will the Alberta carbon tax reduce greenhouse gas emissions?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our climate leadership plan as a whole will reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It'll flatten the curve and bring Alberta towards meeting Canada's overall climate goals in terms of the actual megatonnes. I'll let the minister of environment get into that.

We know that the carbon levy is a key part of that strategy, Mr. Speaker, and we know that another thing that it is a key part of is the green line, the LRT in Edmonton, renewable energy, and the just transition away from coal. All those things come as a result of the carbon levy, all those things the member opposite would abandon.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I funded a billion and a half dollars for the green line without a federal carbon tax.

Now, the Premier, let the record show, does not even have an estimate of how much the NDP carbon tax is supposed to lower carbon emissions because the government doesn't have an estimate.

Let me ask a different question. At what level does the Premier or the government believe a carbon tax has to be established in order to achieve the Paris climate targets? What is the level? Does she agree with \$300 a tonne by Environment Canada? Does she believe it should be \$200 a tonne, Professor Leach's recommendation? Or do they have another number? What's the level to achieve the Paris targets?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have, of course, a \$30-per-tonne carbon levy on an economy-wide basis and a system of output-based allocations to control foreign competitiveness. That was part of the recommendations from Dr. Leach and the climate leadership plan, which also contains the projections around greenhouse gas emissions.

Market-based mechanisms are enabled in article 6 of the Paris agreement, Mr. Speaker, and it is widely acknowledged that carbon pricing is the most efficient and market-friendly way to achieve greenhouse gas emission abatement.

The Speaker: Third main question.

Mr. Kenney: I thank the hon. minister for her non answer, Mr. Speaker. I can only infer that the NDP agrees with Environment Canada that you need a \$300 tax in order to achieve the Paris commitments.

Caribou Range Plans

Mr. Kenney: On a different matter, Mr. Speaker, people in northern Alberta are deeply concerned about a threat to the forestry industry and many other job-creating industries as a result of the government's plans with respect to caribou range plans, which could potentially take as much as half of the land in northern Alberta out of economic use. I'd like to ask the government if it will commit to a full socioeconomic assessment prior to proceeding with any caribou range plan.

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The fact of the matter is that members of our cabinet as well as members of our caucus have held numerous stakeholder meetings with people who, we are hearing very clearly, are concerned about the caribou plan. That's why we put it out for consultation. I'm sure the member opposite will be happy to know that just today a letter was sent to the federal government wherein we indicated that we would not be

moving forward on the strategy until there was a full socioeconomic study and until we were able to work out a plan with the federal government where they would join with us in helping mitigate any problems that would arise.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Kenney: I thank the Premier very much for that answer and that commitment, Mr. Speaker. Can she further commit that the government will make an estimate of the impact on jobs in the Alberta economy as the result of any potential range plan?

2:00

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think it kind of goes without saying that that is part of the socioeconomic assessment that the ministers have indicated to the federal government that we want to see completed, so that's exactly the kind of work that we will do. We will also work with the federal government to have them come alongside us in terms of looking at the support that would be needed to ameliorate any changes that would occur. That's the information that was sent by our ministers to the federal government today.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, people in central Alberta share some of these concerns. Can the Premier commit that land will not be removed from economic use in central Alberta and the west country without a full social and economic consultation and study?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, this morning the Minister of Energy and I did write a letter to the federal government indicating that we were suspending some aspects of caribou range planning pending the socioeconomic analysis that the Premier spoke of earlier. What I will say is that the federal Species at Risk Act is an extremely inflexible instrument that has already had negative economic consequences in the southeast, as you well know, for the sage grouse. It is unfortunate that while the hon. member opposite was in government, he did not stand up for Alberta and get that act changed, but we are going to do our best to make sure that we protect jobs on this.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The Member for Calgary-South East.

Emergency Medical Services

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've spoken to this Legislature numerous times about the need to empower our front-line health care workers. Paramedics and nurse practitioners are highly talented and well educated about providing appropriate care, but they're denied the authority to make decisions well within their expertise without the supervision of a doctor. This prevents them from using their best judgement about who does and who doesn't need acute emergency medical treatment. Allowing these professionals more flexibility will lead to shorter emergency wait times, better patient outcomes for Albertans, and save money. To the Minister of Health: when will you allow these qualified medical professionals to practise to their full scope of abilities?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. I was very proud to work to

make sure that we brought paramedics under the Health Professions Act, something that I know paramedics have been waiting many, many years for under previous governments, and that was something that I think moved us along that path. We recently, just a couple of weeks ago, expanded the community paramedicine program again to ensure that paramedics are working as close to where patients are and have the ability to not be seen as experts who are there to transfer but as experts who are there to also deliver exceptional front-line care. We continue to work with registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, and other allied health professionals to ensure that we are finding ways to move forward in supporting their scope of practice.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Fraser: Allowing for more discretion in treatment options is important, and we want to get people out of the emergency departments. It's equally important that they be given the appropriate resources to do their jobs. Under this government EMS funding has been unreliable at best. Recent increases barely covered the last NDP cuts to EMS funding. To make matters worse, call volume is at an all-time high. With the next provincial budget coming out this week, EMS are understandably nervous about the direction that this government is headed. To the same minister: will you finally commit to the level of funding that EMS needs to properly do their job, or can they expect more surprise cuts?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, thank you so much for the question. Under the former government, of which the member was a member and his new leader was the Health minister, right before the last election they were proposing \$1 billion of cuts to health care, which we know would have impacted front-line EMS workers. What we've been able to do is reverse those cuts, provide stable, reliable growth to Alberta Health Services and their budget in turn, and ensure that we have abilities to make sure that while numbers are up, certainly, response times aren't. We look forward to being able to present the budget later this week, and I look forward to finding out if the member will stand with front-line paramedics or sit with the Official Opposition and cuts.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Fraser: Mr. Speaker, this minister should tell the truth. Those cuts were to management and not front-line staff.

Minister, I get it. Your health care is complex, and you have a difficult job. However, you have the power to make improvements immediately. I'm hearing from paramedics that their situations are getting worse: long waits in hospitals, not enough ambulances, putting more strain on our EMS workers. Since you have the ability to resolve both of these issues, the fact that we're talking about this again is troubling, to say the least. Minister, you're the final authority on health care. You need to take responsibility and fix these things. Will you take responsibility, and will you fix it?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. I'm so proud to have the responsibility to reverse the cuts that were coming from the member opposite and his then government. You couldn't find a billion dollars' worth of cuts if you fired every manager all across western Canada. This would have had devastating impacts on the people of Alberta. The people of Alberta spoke up, and they made sure that they elected a government that would protect front-line

care, protect their workers, and I'm proud to do just that and find ways to improve it at the same time. We are doing it. We're proud to as government. Feel free to continue to sit with the opposition for deep cuts instead of standing with the front lines that you used to serve with.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I'm waiting to feel the warm winds of spring in here.

Caribou Range Plans (continued)

Ms Jabbour: To the minister of environment: my constituents are very worried about the proposed caribou range plan and how it will impact our economy and people in the north. Many believe the rumour that our government plans to turn the north into a park. As you know, I've been strongly advocating on this with your department since day one, which is why you visited High Level last August to meet with industry stakeholders, municipal government, and indigenous groups, something we greatly appreciated. Can you update us on what you learned from these sessions, how that has informed the process, and where things are at now?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to acknowledge the hon. member for her hard work on this file and her efforts to advocate for her constituents and for northern Albertans across the province. In my meetings in High Level I heard many community and industry concerns about the impacts of range planning, and that is why we undertook a robust approach to public consultation. Certainly, we've listened to the results of those public consultations, which is why we are suspending consideration of conservation lands and some aspects of range planning pending a full socioeconomic analysis.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Jabbour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry: like me, you represent a constituency where logging and forestry operations support families and communities. I know that stable and secure access to fibre is vital to the ongoing prosperity of our forest communities. What is our government doing to ensure that the forest industry continues to thrive in our province given the issues surrounding fibre access and caribou range planning?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and the member for the question. Forestry is a critical sector of our economy. Over 15,000 hard-working Albertans work in forestry, and the industry is a key economic driver in at least 70 Alberta communities. In my own constituency the forest industry is a key economic driver that supports families, communities, and prosperity. I've spoken to hundreds of constituents who are concerned about the impact that the caribou range plans might have on their livelihoods and their communities. These folks want a balance. They want to preserve the caribou and protect Alberta's forest industry and the community it supports. That's why we have made the decision to defer planning until we're able to understand the impacts on forestry and how we can support those communities.

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

Ms Jabbour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Energy: we've faced this issue together as neighbours. You've been hearing the same community concerns, and I know that you are with me in advocating for a strong northern Alberta. Can you tell our constituents what you have done about what you've been hearing?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely. As a northern MLA and as Minister of Energy I've talked to lots of Albertans, many up my way who do share concerns that the caribou range plan could have an effect on the communities. I share our government's belief that Albertans deserve a realistic caribou plan that protects jobs and the economy. As our economy recovers right now, it isn't the time to put in policies that are going to affect our economics. We're securing our economic recovery. We're slowing down, you know, the . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Emergency Medical Services (continued)

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. EMS response times continue to be at or near crisis levels, especially in Calgary and Edmonton. Red alerts where no ambulances are available are virtually a daily occurrence, adding risks not only to the lives of Albertans but also to the beleaguered paramedics. The latest data available from AHS indicates that EMS staff's median wait time of one hour transferring between EMS and nurses is equivalent to just over \$20 million in salaries lost each year. To the minister: given years of frustration what are you doing to reduce the number of red alerts?

2:10

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. We are incredibly proud of the work that paramedics do every day in responding to the call on the front lines, and we are also very proud of the fact that when somebody calls 911, they know that emergency responders in our province are the best and the best equipped to serve them. Expanding the community paramedicine program very recently is one tangible example of reducing transfer times. When we have the ability to serve somebody where they are rather than transferring them, that certainly goes a long way. And we look forward to continuing to find ways to invest in initiatives like the power stretcher program; 350 ambulances are to be equipped with those by the end of this . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Dr. Swann: Madam Minister, we're talking about red alerts, and we're talking about wasted time in the ER. What is causing the unreasonable wait times, or should we say waste times, in our ERs?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the member for the very important question. Certainly, nobody wants to be waiting in the hallways. They want to be providing care on the front lines, and I've heard that loud and clear from our EMS providers. One of the biggest reasons why they are in those positions today is because under previous governments there was failure to build the infrastructure so that patients could be admitted and receive the

proper care in a timely fashion. Usually it's that they're waiting for a bed somewhere in a hospital because for decades we saw the now Official Opposition, when they were in government, neglect to fund the critical infrastructure for the province of Alberta. That's why I'm so proud that we're moving forward with Grande Prairie, with south Edmonton, with Calgary cancer.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Dr. Swann: Minister, AHS appears to be paralyzed on this issue. What are you doing to reduce the 650,000 hours per year paramedics spend in ER waiting for the nurses to take their patients?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Again, it goes back to ensuring that there is the space and the staff to be able to serve and to ensure those safe transfers of patients. Making sure that there is a new hospital being built in Grande Prairie, the one that opened recently in High Prairie, the one that opened recently in Edson, the one that we're building in southwest Edmonton, the Calgary cancer hospital, and ensuring that that critical infrastructure that was so necessary to the province and to the front lines to be able to have somewhere to ensure that their patients can receive safe care is a big piece. The other piece is making sure that people can work to their scope of practice, including the paramedicine program, that is ensuring that patients who don't need to be transferred and waiting in a hallway certainly aren't doing that.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Caribou Range Plans (continued)

Mr. Loewen: The NDP government's caribou draft plan in response to the federal government's species at risk regulation is causing substantial concerns by affected industry and communities. Already there is reforestation of seismic lines taking place before consultation is finished. Rumours of knocking down 10-foot trees to plant seedlings are circulating. Presently the cost of reforestation is about \$16,000 per kilometre. Knowing that reforestation can happen naturally and that 150,000 of the 250,000 kilometres of seismic lines could cost \$2 billion, do you think that this is money well spent regardless of who is paying for it?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we've held numerous stakeholder meetings on the topic of range planning, and we have listened to communities. As a result, we have written to the federal government to ask for three things. We have asked them to partner with us on a socioeconomic impact study, we have asked them to really step up in terms of an infusion of federal funds to restore habitat, and we are asking for them to listen to us as we will bring a delegation to Ottawa to discuss these matters with them. I'll have more to update the House on in supplementals.

Mr. Loewen: Given that the minister just said today that she suspended the parks from further consultation, not cancelled but suspended, and given that the minister has also agreed to do a socioeconomic impact study and went to the feds about that and now I hear, too, that she's asking for federal funds, I guess my question is: what took so long, and what have you done to represent

Albertans by lobbying the federal government on the 65 per cent undisturbed requirements?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll take the 65 per cent clarity question out of that whole basket of questions. That is, in fact, the requirement under the Species at Risk Act, that the plans articulate over a period of decades. We're talking decades here for a 50-year plan, the restoration of habitat. That is why companies have worked with us on those long-term restoration plans, whether it's the forestry companies or oil and gas companies. In fact, I just met with Encana yesterday on this matter. There are a lot of really good ideas out there. There are a lot of firms who want to work with us on this and make sure that we hold off that federal . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Loewen: Given that the moratoriums on timber harvest are already causing job losses, contrary to the promise the minister has made, and given that these moratoriums have caused overharvest in some areas, breaking their own regulations, how much longer do Albertans have to suffer from these moratoriums before the proper plan is in place, that protects jobs?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we are recovering from the largest economic downturn in the history of the province, and that's why we've made it very clear to the federal government that caribou range plans need to have the requisite amount of flexibility. We have also heard concerns from communities, and that's why we're suspending consideration of conservation lands. We will not sacrifice jobs of hard-working Albertans. As for tenure, we continue to work with those companies – Weyerhaeuser, West Fraser, and others – to find solutions. Certainly, those firms are in a solution space with us.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are common-sense people, and they want common-sense solutions. If left to them, we would have a caribou recovery plan that is practical and effective in areas where it makes sense. Instead, we have a government that trumpets economic diversification on one hand and on the other hand plans to unnecessarily sterilize large swaths of forest. To the minister of economic development: can you please explain how shutting down sustainable forestry enterprises creates jobs?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, I've answered the question a few times now, but let me say it once more for the folks in the back. We have, in fact, written to the federal government announcing that we are suspending consideration of conservation lands recommended in the caribou task force report and some aspects of range planning pending a socioeconomic analysis. We will redouble our efforts to work with industry to develop solutions that avoid the imposition of an environmental protection order. Certainly, that Species at Risk Act is a very inflexible instrument, and that's why it is really unfortunate that the Member for Calgary-Lougheed didn't fix it when he had the chance.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Banff and Jasper national parks could not sustain caribou herds despite a thoroughly protected habitat and given that 52,000 square kilometres, almost one-third of the caribou range in northwestern Alberta, is already protected, Minister, how much land are you willing to sterilize for a species that could not survive in parks with pristine wilderness and absolutely no industrial activity?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is not true that oil and gas companies and forestry companies are looking at this as a zero sum. Many have come to us with very substantive and practical solutions, and they are actually making those real on the ground. That's because they, too, understand the risk of a protection order. We understand that as a province, having heard from communities, we need more time to get this strategy right. Certainly, over the last two years we've gained a strong understanding of the health of the herds and the science and what measures need to be taken to reach the requirements under the Species at Risk Act. That's the message that we will be taking to Ottawa as well as the other measures that we've asked Ottawa to consider.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that problems multiply when we try to rebalance nature such as the protections that have resulted in expanding grizzly numbers in northwestern Alberta and given that this government plans to create pens for moms and calves but grizzlies will have no problem digging under the fence to get at the trapped animals, Minister, is the caribou management plan an effective one, or will it simply rub out the forestry sector and the caribou as well?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am not going to engage in amateur wildlife biology right now. We have proceeded in terms of understanding the health of the herds, we are proceeding based on science and evidence, and we are asking the federal government for assistance in this matter. That's why we will be going to Ottawa with a united voice from Alberta, that's why we've asked for their assistance with a socioeconomic study, and that is why we have suspended some aspects of caribou range planning. We have heard loud and clear from the communities in the northern ridings. The members for Peace River, Whitecourt-St. Anne, and Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley have been advocating for their constituents as well.

Thank you.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Peace River recently stated that the government's caribou plan would not result in any job losses or negative impacts to the economy and that the government would not be creating any park spaces, but when the minister's caribou plan was released, it so severely restricted 1.6 million hectares of land, it may as well be a park. Job losses are inevitable. To the minister. Only one can be telling the truth, the hon. Member for Peace River or the minister. Who is it?

2:20

Ms Phillips: Well, how unfortunate, indeed, for this stream of questions, Mr. Speaker, that were essentially answered in the first set by the Premier. Look, you know, we have suspended some aspects of caribou range planning, and we're looking for some assistance from the federal government, as I have indicated now several times. We're also suspending consideration of conservation

lands in the north. The hon. member knows very well the results from the emergency protection order that came in for the sage grouse for his own constituents in southeast Alberta. It's probably time for him to have some hard questions of his leader, who did nothing for nine years to fix that problem.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, despite being frozen out of government consultations, the northwest Species at Risk Committee conducted extensive stakeholder consultations. They drafted an extensive report outlining specific ways to effectively protect the caribou without harming the local economy, yet the minister has failed to meaningfully engage the northwest Species at Risk Committee. To the minister: why has the government refused to involve them when they've come up with common-sense solutions for the caribou and that's exactly what is needed?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The perspectives of municipalities and others were incorporated into the draft plans. Having said that, we are just starting to see the economy looking up, and now is not the time to proceed without a full socioeconomic impact assessment, that we can only do with federal assistance. We need more clarity from the federal government in terms of what kinds of resources they want to put towards this particular project, and that is why I am suspending some aspects of caribou range planning as a result.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, to say that the local response to the government's draft caribou plan was not positively received would be a huge understatement. Response to the plan has been overwhelmingly negative, but when asked, the minister offers feeble assurances that the local feedback is being considered by her government. To the same minister: how has the feedback received from local stakeholders been incorporated, specifically included in your government's caribou protection plan?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. The president and CEO of the Alberta Forest Products Association says, "It is encouraging that the Government of Alberta has engaged with stakeholders to hear our ideas and work together to conserve caribou." We will continue consulting with all the stakeholders, the local and industry leaders. In doing so, I want to be crystal clear that we are committed to the protection of the caribou herds but not at the expense of jobs or communities.

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

North Saskatchewan Land-use Plan Consultation

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the past several months the minister of environment's staff have been having secret, invite-only meetings inside my constituency about the possible closure of land, similar to what she did in the Castle. Despite requests from stakeholder groups, municipalities, and even the media this minister has refused to consult the people in my community about potential job losses, economic impacts, and the recreational impact to my community, that has one of the greatest backyards in the world. So my question is: why is this minister avoiding people that do not have her world view, and will she start to have a conversation with our community finally?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we have released the regional advisory council's advice on the development of the North Saskatchewan regional plan. That regional advisory council was appointed by the party that the hon. member now sits in, and we are consulting with the public on that advice. There couldn't be a more open and robust public consultation process than regional planning. It's set out in law how we undertake that. It's important work, and all Albertans are welcome to give their feedback. The process is structured that way.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, that's not what I asked. Given that this minister still will not come and talk to this community, given that she will dispatch her deputy minister only to talk with outside interest groups, some of them from outside of our province, the question is very, very simple: will the minister consult with our community, or will she continue to only talk to foreign influence groups that are pushing an agenda inside our constituency? Will she come and talk to the people of Rocky Mountain House and Sundre about the future of the Bighorn, or will she continue to hide in Edmonton from the people of Alberta?

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I in fact met with the Alberta Outfitters Association last week. They are the member's own constituents. They were here to discuss with me some problem solving and some ways that we can work together in parks and on public land. I met with the mayor of Rocky Mountain House a couple of weeks ago and discussed the economic development and tourism opportunities that are available through the regional advisory council's advice. I would encourage the member to spend less time on conspiracy theories and more time on providing his reactions back to his own party's regional advisory council.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, conspiracy theories? The minister just stood up in this House and said that she met with the mayor of Rocky Mountain House. I know the mayor of Rocky Mountain House. This minister has not met with the mayor of Rocky Mountain House about this issue or the town of Rocky Mountain House, the county of Clearwater, the media inside Clearwater, the town of Sundre, the county of Mountain View. This minister has met with nobody in regard to this issue, including West Fraser and anybody that has significant demand of or importance in this area. So will the minister meet with this community? Yes or no? Stop dodging the question. Stand up and answer it. We're tired of it.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're asking all Albertans to provide their feedback on the North Saskatchewan Regional Advisory Council's report, which we have released publicly. That process takes into account a large amount of stakeholder consultation, which we are committed to doing. It's not just municipalities although they are important. It's tourism operators, it's the private sector, it's the city of Edmonton who depend on the west country for their water supply. This is a very busy landscape, the North Saskatchewan regional plan, and that's why we're going to take the time to get it right.

Thank you.

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

Rural Crime Prevention

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government committed \$10 million to address rural crime. Some welcome expanding crime reduction units and starting a paperwork processing centre, and others like Red Deer county councillor and Alberta rural crime watch director Jean Bota want more work on issues surrounding crime. She said: let's look into the layers; we can't police our way out of the situation. To the Minister of Justice: is the government engaging with affected stakeholders in public, up front, or has the government decided the details based on selective engagement? Is public engagement at the bottom of the list?

The Speaker: The hon. Justice minister and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact, we've been hearing about this issue from municipalities, from rural Albertans, from the RCMP, from people across this province for quite a while now, and that's why we think that it's time to act. We're absolutely open to hearing from people about their concerns. In fact, I just had an excellent meeting with a number of municipal leaders as well as some members of the opposition that I think was very productive on this issue. We think it was time to act, and that's why we've taken the actions we did, but we're still open to hearing feedback from everyone.

Ms McPherson: Given that the government hasn't explained how the \$8 million to hire 39 RCMP officers and 40 civilian staff and the \$2 million for up to 10 additional Crown prosecutors will achieve measurable results that address underlying issues and given that preventing the issues that lead people to turn to crime to feed their drug habits has been proven to be more cost effective, again to the Minister. Albertans want to know. Where are human services, health, and community-based wraparound supports in your plan to address the problem?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, this is only one part of our plan. In fact, I've had multiple conversations with multiple different people around this. In fact, our police partners keep telling us that many of these issues can't simply be enforced out. That's why our government is absolutely committed to continuing funding to front-line health care services, to continuing to invest in mental health supports. That's why we have continued that funding throughout government to social services, to health, to all sorts of departments. We know that it's more effective that way. I hope the hon. member will support the budget, that does just that.

Ms McPherson: Given that experienced Crown prosecutors are needed to address the backlog of rural crime cases and given that the government's March 6 job posting for a chief Crown prosecutor in Wetaskiwin will cost Albertans over \$180,000 a year and given that Crown prosecutors are hired at \$100,000 to \$180,000 per year, again to the Justice minister: which experienced Crown prosecutors can you hire for \$100,000? If you're not hiring experienced Crown prosecutors, which senior Crown prosecutors do you plan to relocate to train junior prosecutors in rural Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We've certainly heard from Albertans across the province that it's not enough simply to apprehend the criminals. We also need to have

prosecutors in place. That's why we're working to increase that complement across the province.

2:30

Certainly, we've been working with the Crown prosecutors' association. They do have some concerns about the wage freeze that's been in place, and we're having those conversations ongoing. I think it's important that we're able to compensate these professionals in such a way that they're able to perform their functions. So we will continue to have those conversations, and we'll continue to ensure that they are available for the people of Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Caribou Range Plans (continued)

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When it comes to actual policy measures of this government, in the past they've shown little regard for the impacts on communities. Now they have put together a draft caribou protection plan without meaningful consultation to truly understand the impacts that any plan would have on working families and industry. To the Minister of Environment and Parks: can you give working families the assurance that your caribou protection plan won't put thousands out of work?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we have held numerous stakeholder meetings. They have been attended by hundreds of Albertans who are concerned about caribou range plans, and that's why we've listened. The whole point of putting out a draft plan is to hear from people, and we have heard from people in northern Alberta. That is why we are suspending some aspects of caribou range planning and suspending consideration of the conservation lands.

I also want to say very clearly that we are redoubling our efforts to work with industry to develop solutions. We'll be having meetings with industry representatives as we go forward, but there is no question that we need to make sure that we guard against the imposition of a federal . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
First supplemental.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this minister committed to a balanced approach, protecting both caribou and jobs, and is coming now a little late with a new plan and given that she has no clear understanding of the wide-ranging impacts, including job losses, that would come from restricting a significant portion of the region's land because she has not completed the socioeconomic impact study previously, will the minister commit today to providing her department the resources it needs to complete the proper consultation before they finalize their caribou protection plan?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact, I've written to the federal government this morning to ask for their assistance with the socioeconomic analysis, and we will be suspending some aspects of caribou range planning pending the outcome of that analysis.

Over the last two years we have gained a better, more science-based understanding of the health of the herd and the measures that need to be taken to fulfill the very stringent requirements of the Species at Risk Act. It is unfortunate that we were left with such an

inflexible legacy by the Harper government and the Member for Calgary-Lougheed, who did nothing to stand up for Alberta when he had the chance.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am looking forward to what aspects of the plan will be changed.

To the same minister: will the government adjust their caribou protection plans if it is found that working families will be negatively impacted by these plans in any way?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we are recovering from the largest economic downturn in the history of the province. We've made it clear to the federal government that now is not the time to impede that recovery. We will conduct those socioeconomic impact analyses on the federal requirements. We are also asking the federal government to make a substantial investment in terms of what will be required in order to reach that 65 per cent habitat requirement over a period of decades.

I really want to acknowledge the work that the hon. Member for Peace River has done on this file and her efforts to keep it at the forefront . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Schneider: Mr. Speaker, there are numerous concerns over the Alberta draft caribou range plan that this government recently submitted to the federal government. One such concern that is being raised is over the idea of the possibility of designating protected areas, that would limit forestry across Alberta. Minister, this caribou plan could cost the northwest region \$90 billion in potential resource revenue. As such, the minister says that she's heard from Albertans, so I guess my question is: has your ministry completed any economic analysis on what the possible closure would cost the Alberta economy in northern areas that may be closed to forestry activities, and does that cost include any compensation to companies that harvest in those areas?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the forestry companies and energy companies and communities understand full well the risk of an emergency order. Certainly, southern Albertans, for which the hon. member also is an MLA, understand the negative consequences of an emergency order like we saw with the sage grouse. We want to avoid that situation, and so do the forestry companies and so do the oil and gas companies. That's why we are ensuring that we are doing a full socioeconomic analysis, but we're also asking the federal government to really come to the table in terms of their investments. Until we see that, we have suspended some aspects . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Schneider: That answer doesn't provide any certainty to the forestry industry, Mr. Speaker.

Given that the caribou herd that once lived in Banff national park was wiped out in a freak avalanche decades ago and given that this government worked with the federal government to recently reintroduce bison, a species that has been absent from the park for a century, Minister, why was there no mention of a plan to repopulate the Banff caribou herd, a herd that did exist in a national park area with no development or industrial projects?

The Speaker: The Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The reason why the province of Alberta has not engaged in caribou recovery in a national park is because the Constitution is the thing. That's the answer to that question.

The fact of the matter is that an emergency order is not in Albertans' best interests, but neither, too, is a plan that doesn't accurately balance the need to make sure that we have economic growth and jobs. That is why we have asked for a more fulsome socioeconomic analysis and paused some aspects of range planning pending that analysis, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Schneider: Well, I wonder why this government is picking winners and losers with wildlife.

Mr. Speaker, given that several herds have their ranges primarily in protected areas – for example, the A La Pêche herd has substantial areas within the parks already – and given that the majority of the caribou mountain herd's territory is already in protected areas, Minister, exactly how are more protected lands going to help increase the caribou herd population in Alberta when the herd in Banff national park was already so vulnerable that an avalanche was able to wipe that herd out?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The risk of an emergency order is real, and that is why, for example, companies like EnCana and Jupiter Resources and others have been working really productively with us in the Little Smoky-A La Pêche area. There is a tremendous amount of economic potential in the tight oil and the rich gas plays in that area, but there are also some really good ideas around road sharing and infrastructure sharing and so on. Companies have really stepped up to the plate on that, and we will continue to work productively with them on those suggestions. They know the risk of an emergency order. It's really too bad that other members of this House . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Presently this government's wildlife species plans are old or nonexistent. Plans for important interrelated species that affect caribou, like moose, do not exist. Mule deer plans are from 1989; black bear plans from 1993; and wolves, the key species interacting with caribou, 1991. Minister, how can you claim to be making science-based decisions for caribou when management plans for those interrelated species are decades old, even nonexistent?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Thank you Mr. Speaker. The reason why there are no range plans required under legislation for species that are not at risk is because they're not at risk. So black bear and moose: those populations are stable. In fact, they are not listed. We are required to file range plans with the federal government under the requirements of the federal Species at Risk Act. This is not a choice. That is the law of the land.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the front bench and the backbench: given that this current range management plan for Little Smoky-A La Pêche caribou herds includes government poisoning of moose carcasses and aerial wolf kills in order to save

that caribou herd and given that your submission to the federal government is over 200 pages long but there is barely any mention of predator control beyond talk of expanding this into other regions, Minister, has there been any research encouraging local trappers and First Nations people to help manage the population of wolves instead of your present culling methods? If not, why is this not detailed in the interactive plan?

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

Ms Phillips: The short answer, Mr. Speaker, is yes. We are involving the AWN in those predator control programs, and there are a number of things that Environment and Parks has undertaken for some years in order to protect this federally listed species. Those are requirements under the act to maintain the health of the herds, about which we know a lot more after two years of careful work on this file.

2:40

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Given that a Quebec study showed that bears have a large effect on caribou calf mortality and, obviously, we have a lot of bears in the caribou ranges here in Alberta and given that biologists say that there has been little studied about predators other than wolves and their effects on caribou and given that the effects of bear predation in your plan is almost nonexistent, Minister, if your plan is science-based, where is the science on caribou calf mortality from bears?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Range planning is a very complex process. There are about 15 ranges that I have to plan for, and they're multi-year initiatives. That is why we have asked the federal government for some assistance on this matter in terms of ability to know more about the health of the herds, more about predation, and so on. There's a robust amount of monitoring and science, in fact, that is being undertaken by our department, and that will continue at least under this government, that values science.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Members' Statements (continued)

The Speaker: Hon. members, we will proceed with Members' Statements in 30 seconds.

Hon. members, my apologies to the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs. I missed you in the first roster, but please proceed.

Lorelei Beaumaris Community League

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to rise today to honour Lorelei Beaumaris Community League and their accomplishments in the fantastic constituency of Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Lorelei Beaumaris is a vibrant, diverse, and fun community league with a wide range of programming for all ages and a dedicated team of volunteers who understand the value in community engagement. This also happens to be my community league. Dance classes, soccer, preschool ice skating, and free community events are all ways that Lorelei Beaumaris offers opportunities for families. The soccer programs for children and youth, managed by volunteers, have been a great success year after

year. This past indoor season the under-10 girls' team won gold in the city of Edmonton finals, and the under-12 boys' team won gold in the intercities. Congratulations to both teams and the volunteers who coached, organized, and mentored all of these youngsters to gold.

This past fall our government awarded a CFEP grant to Lorelei Beaumaris for \$64,409. That grant went to renovations of the community outdoor ice rink. As a result of dedicated volunteers, specifically a father-daughter duo, this rink won the first on the rink award two years in a row from the Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues. Together we celebrated the grant and the award just a few weeks ago. I had the heartwarming experience of helping an excited three-year-old named Maggie learn to skate for the first time. It's these moments, like with Maggie, that you can see and feel the benefit when a government invests in communities and when people invest in each other.

Thank you to the volunteers who plan and host events all year long, who spend countless hours and effort to support families. Your government thanks you for all that you do and for all that you continue to do.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

Rural Crime Prevention Funding

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was so disappointed to see the UCP vote against funding to combat rural crime.

Before I was elected as the MLA for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater, I was an insurance agent in Athabasca and Boyle. I've worked with too many people who were dealing with the aftermath of thefts and break-ins, something I've also experienced first-hand. There are stories from every corner of this province of people and families being affected by rural crime. We can see that in some places the problem is getting worse.

It requires real action, something never seen while the Conservatives were in office. I was proud to see our government stand up and vote to provide law enforcement with the tools and resources that they need to combat crime. I was proud of the real steps that our government has taken to make life safer for rural Albertans. I was proud to see that our government is making public safety a real priority, but that priority, it seems, is not shared by the Official Opposition. Instead of standing with our rural communities and our law enforcement officials, they chose to vote against the funding needed by law enforcement to keep our communities safe.

The Leader of the Opposition tells rural Albertans that regardless of the cost something needs to be done and that he'd support more funds to fight crime. However, rather than voting to support our rural communities, his caucus chose to vote down these resources. They chose to vote against law enforcement and against services to support people impacted by crime. Albertans expect their elected officials to walk the talk when it comes to public safety and fighting crime. Through their actions the UCP showed that they have the wrong priorities when it comes to rural Alberta. I am proud to be part of a government that has the backs of rural Albertans and is investing in the resources to tackle these challenges head-on.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I'd just like to remind the House that during Members' Statements it's been a long practice here that we do not make comments, good or bad, when the members' statements are being made. I ask you to continue to remind yourselves of that.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Carbon Levy and Pipeline Approvals

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week I was amused by the media report where the Government House Leader said: not wanting to raise the carbon tax means a lack of commitment to the environment. What was he thinking? Let's take a look. Sure, the NDP has attempted to buy favour with voters by offering them free light bulbs and shower heads. They're trying to buy favour with Albertans' own dollars. So far Albertans are not giving them the favour they're buying. The government itself has been forced to admit that they won't meet their own emission targets despite their carbon tax and other punitive policies. The problem is that that's where the good stuff ends and the negatives to the carbon tax just get started.

Andrew Leach, an architect of the NDP's plan, points out that an Alberta-only or Canada-only carbon tax will lead to carbon leakage; in other words, the transfer of emissions from Alberta to other places without carbon tax and with low standards, be it Saudi Arabia, Venezuela, or Russia. Mr. Speaker, 759,000 barrels of foreign oil come into Canada each day. The NDP and Trudeau Liberal policies make Alberta product less affordable, further promoting offshore oil imports.

To make matters worse, the NDP's allies, the Trudeau Liberals, have enacted a new approvals process that now means companies won't even try to build new oil and gas projects in western Canada, yet they never target auto plants in Ontario or cement plants in Quebec.

It's not just the emissions that move elsewhere in the world. Well-paying jobs move along with them. We've already seen drilling rigs cross the border to Texas and North Dakota, with companies noting that it's unlikely they'll ever return. So it seems that the NDP's environmental plan really only increases exports of investments, jobs, and economic activity to other jurisdictions.

When the NDP asks, "What's your plan?" the easiest place to start is by undoing the considerable damage they have done, with Bill 1, Carbon Tax Repeal Act. From there we can return to a thoughtful conversation on how to protect the environment for the whole world's children and grandchildren, starting with those right here in Alberta.

Presenting Petitions

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

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased on behalf of some 8,000 Albertans to table a series of petitions raising the concerns about the planned caribou range plans, asking for a comprehensive socioeconomic assessment to be made before the government proceeds with such plans, and calling for the government not to set aside additional parkland in this process. I'm honoured on behalf of these Albertans to present these petitions.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Bill 5

An Act to Strengthen Financial Security for Persons with Disabilities

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce and move first reading of Bill 5, An Act to Strengthen Financial Security for Persons with Disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, all Albertans should be able to plan for their children's future. This legislation amends the AISH Act and the AISH general regulation so Albertans can establish trusts for family members and loved ones who are receiving AISH benefits without affecting their AISH eligibility. This legislation continues this government's work to improve the quality of life for Albertans with disabilities.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 5 read a first time]

2:50 **Tabling Returns and Reports**

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

Mr. Carson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of Investment Intentions of Canadian Entrepreneurs by the Business Development Bank of Canada. In the report it states that 73 per cent of small and mid-sized businesses plan on investing in their business in 2018 and that the average investment amount per business in Alberta is \$330,000, the highest across Canada.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Ms Jabbour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am so pleased to table today the requisite copies of a letter from the ministries of Environment, Agriculture and Forestry, and Energy to the federal government showing our government's commitment to supporting jobs, communities, and our economy, stating our decision to suspend consideration of conservation lands recommended in the caribou task force pending the outcome of a socioeconomic impact study.

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

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of an excerpt from the Conference Board of Canada's Metropolitan Outlook. In this excerpt it shows that Calgary and Edmonton are leading the prairies in terms of GDP growth and that in 2019, just like 2017, Calgary will lead the country in GDP growth. This report shows that things are looking up in Calgary.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the Hon. Mr. S. Anderson, Minister of Municipal Affairs, pursuant to the Government Organization Act the Alberta Boilers Safety Association annual report 2017.

On behalf of the hon. Ms Ganley, Minister of Justice and Solicitor General, responses to questions raised by Mrs. Pitt, Member for Airdrie, Mrs. Aheer, Member for Chestermere-Rocky View, Ms Miller, Member for Red Deer-South, and Mr. Ellis, Member for Calgary-West, on April 3, 2017, and April 4, 2017, Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General 2017-18 main estimates debate; and response to Written Question 18, asked for by Mr. Ellis on November 27, 2017; namely,

in each of the calendar years from 2013 to 2016 what was the average completion time for a death investigation and what was the longest time spent completing a death investigation at the office of the Chief Medical Examiner?

Orders of the Day

Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 201

Employment Standards (Firefighter Leave) Amendment Act, 2018

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Highwood.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm very pleased today to rise to speak to my private member's bill, Bill 201, Employment Standards (Firefighter Leave) Amendment Act, 2018.

Bill 201 proposes to amend the Employment Standards Code to protect part-time, casual, or volunteer firefighters from loss of employment because they are or have become a part-time firefighter. Currently employers can and in some cases have terminated employment for missed time due to fulfilling duties as a part-time firefighter. The need for this bill was brought to my attention early on in my tenure, and I heard over and over again from fire chiefs around Alberta and those in the field that this important piece of legislation was needed to protect the employment of those who risk their lives for our communities on a daily basis.

I'd been an MLA for less than six months when I received a phone call from a young man from southern Alberta. He had been a volunteer firefighter for one of the municipal districts in my constituency. I say "had been" because his regular, full-time employer had recently given him an ultimatum. Quote: quit your job or quit firefighting, because as long as you work here, you aren't a firefighter. End of quote. Now, my initial thought was that there had to be some protection in Alberta's labour legislation preventing termination based on an individual's participation as a volunteer firefighter. How wrong I was. Alberta had no protection for volunteer or part-time firefighters.

In Alberta emergency services are stretched so thin in rural Alberta that rural Alberta routinely experiences code reds. If that is the case, why would we refuse job protection for those who volunteer or work part-time as an emergency first responder? It was at that moment I decided that something needed to be changed.

These part-time and volunteer firefighters not only respond to fires but everything from medical emergencies, chemical spills, and traffic collisions, most often in the rural communities that they serve, but these rural communities cannot feasibly afford to staff the fire halls with full-time firefighters. They have to rely on part-time and volunteers to meet these sometimes life-threatening emergencies.

Now, since the recession hit, it has been made very hard and is harder for these fire halls to keep their volunteers. An article was written up in Global News called Answering the Call: Who Pays the Cost of Dwindling Volunteer Numbers? It stated that volunteer fire departments were struggling to get residents to sign up. The mayor of Parkland county said that they needed 40 volunteers to become members of a new, state-of-the-art fire hall that opened in the Acheson industrial area. Ironically, he said that when the spots were not filled, they'd have to look into a full-time contingent, and the cost would be over \$6.5 million. Municipalities are struggling to hire full-time firefighters. He said, "That burden is then assumed by the business community here as well as residents in the benefiting area."

Also, in the same article the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association said, and I quote: when people don't sign up, it also results in longer response times; a long-term problem is that residents in communities will be eventually relying on services in other communities, which will ultimately come at a price. End of quote. That was the chief of the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association.

In May 2017 in a CBC article, Volunteer Firefighters Harder to Recruit and Retain During Alberta's Downturn, Chief Says, it talks about how volunteers make up more than 80 per cent of Alberta's firefighters, and this explains how the economic downturn has hit recruitment and retention hard, especially in smaller communities. An example of that is Rocky View county losing about 16 per cent of its volunteers each year. According to the fire chief, "We'll do our training and then we'll print out our roster sheet and we'll already start losing people."

Many fire halls in rural Alberta cannot hire full-time firefighters, and they are finding it hard to fill rosters with volunteer, casual, and part-time firefighters. The inability to fill these rosters is due to many scrambling to find regular work and knowing that these struggling business owners will not hire those who cause staffing disruptions.

The real problem is that if you can't fill the roster, you can't fight the fire, and you can't save lives, which leads us back to the reason I decided to designate my private member's bill for firefighter leave. I was surprised and disappointed to discover that volunteer firefighters can lose their jobs for responding to emergencies. I realize that businesses are doing what they can during this economic downturn, and that's why I've included in the amendment that the leave would be unpaid.

3:00

The purpose of my bill, Madam Speaker, is not to add another regulatory burden to the business but to help protect not only the firefighters but the communities where these firefighters work and live. These are primarily rural communities, not urban communities, not urban settings. Nobody from the urban centres volunteers in the rural centres. This is all about rural Alberta. Businesses in the community will ultimately pay the price in higher taxes if fire halls need to be filled with full-time firefighters.

My hope is simple, that this bill will close that loophole and prevent anyone who volunteers their time, their energy to protect their communities from having to worry whether they have a job to come back to. My hope is that all members in this House today will support Bill 201 and give the real heroes of our communities their support, that they so graciously deserve.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, can I just confirm that you are moving second reading of Bill 201?

Mr. W. Anderson: That's correct, yes.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Madam Speaker. An eminently sensible bill: I don't think anybody who cares about emergency response can fault the intent here. I guess the question I would have is – and I should be aware of this – are EMS not, in some cases, volunteers in some areas of Alberta? I don't know the answer to that, but if that is the case – and I believe it is – that there are some EMS programs that are staffed by volunteers, who work as they're needed, then would the member consider a friendly amendment at some point that would include volunteer EMS people? They're all in the same boat, and they're all critically important to serving a community.

Those are just some comments and questions. I'll certainly be supporting the bill, but I think it would be stronger if we included volunteer EMS as well.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. member for St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Lac La Biche.

The Deputy Speaker: Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: You know, the one that's disappearing. Everybody should know that one by now.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's an absolute pleasure to get up and speak to Bill 201, to protect our volunteer firefighters and temporary fire workers. You know, I want to start by thanking the firefighters in the province for all that they do, both in their duties as first responders and first on the scene to save lives in events or emergencies, in their roles combatting fires and keeping our communities safe but also for all the volunteer work that they do in our communities. I know a lot of them, especially in the St. Paul area. These guys: you see them out working for the ag society; you see them out working for the Lions. They're everywhere in the community, and they're the folks that make our communities better. The braveness and altruism that a person must possess to put the safety of their community above themselves are irrefutably noble.

Now, we can talk about all the volunteer firefighters from all over Alberta that left their families, ran up to the front lines in Fort McMurray during the fires and also in southern Alberta during, you know, last fall, when we had the fires in southern Alberta. Especially up in the Fort McMurray area they didn't realize the long-term health effects it could have on them. A lot of these guys left their jobs, and their employers supported them in that act. I think that most employers in Alberta will actually support this bill as well. There may be the odd one that doesn't, but I think most of them realize that these guys are out there protecting. It could be their house that's on fire when they get called out, Madam Speaker. So these employers know that, especially in small communities, we depend on our volunteer fire departments.

It's disappointing, actually, to see that the bravest among us do not have job security under the current legislation. We hope to change that here today. If somebody undertakes a socially beneficial task but does not have the security of knowing that they'll have a job to come back to, they feel dissuaded in assuming this role. I can attest that I had employees that worked for me in my previous role in the oil field. I knew that, you know, three or four guys on some of my crews often would get called out, especially in the springtime, when the grass fires were rampant and that. It was just something that we accepted and expected would happen, and we just made sure that everybody covered up those gaps. I think, again, that you're going to see a lot of support for this provincially.

Since there's no legislation that guarantees job security for these firefighters, they typically opt to stick to their job, and that has caused the number of people enrolling to be a firefighter on a casual, part-time basis to drop. I'm actually surprised when I realize that this legislation isn't there protecting these guys, too. We've all seen photographs of the volunteer fire department in St. Paul or Ashmont or in our small communities. You know, some of these have 24, 25, 30 volunteer firefighters. These guys are doing that without any protection for their jobs, that their families depend on, which is really surprising, that they would even put that in front for their communities.

When the number of people becoming volunteer, part-time, or casual firefighters is low, fire departments are obligated to hire more full-time positions, which can be very costly and really is not

an economic reality for most of our small towns. They depend on their volunteer fire departments. If someone is willing to provide this community-enhancing service for free but is dissuaded by the possibility of job loss, the cost of full-time firefighters must be absorbed by the fire hall and then relayed back to the community it serves. Again, most of our small communities just can't sustain that type of reality. Full-time firefighter-filled rosters weigh heavy on the costs of the community they benefit. Especially in a rural town the costs can at times be so major and disproportionate to what they would be in urban centres that full-time staffed fire halls are not sustainable.

Let's not forget that especially up in – I want to speak specifically for the area that I represent. We have volunteer fire departments in towns like Wandering River, St. Paul, Smoky Lake, where these guys respond to accidents, highway accidents on some of the busiest and potentially most dangerous highways in the province. You know, everybody talks about PTSD. I'm sure that some of these guys are going to suffer from that in the future as well. So we really need to do whatever we can as a government to protect even the full-time jobs of these guys so that we can continue to recruit. As per this bill, firefighters need job security. They need to know that their job will be waiting for them when they get back from serving their community.

I was saddened to hear that there were currently no job protections in this area, but we can't allow employers to hold it against them if they must leave from time to time to fight fires or respond to emergencies. We want to know that if ever we are caught in a sort of emergency situation, first responders are fully staffed and able to be on the scene as soon as possible because every minute counts. We only have to put ourselves in the situation where one of our loved ones is in a car accident and we have our ambulances in Edmonton or somewhere out of the area and it takes them a long time to respond. Our volunteer firefighters are very often the very first people on site.

Furthermore, not only should we be protecting our goodwill firefighters from being fired from a job they hold because they must go and fight fires; we also must ensure that a prospective employer cannot discriminate towards a potential hire with the knowledge of this person being a part-time firefighter. I'm very disheartened to hear of accounts where a person was told to give up their part-time role as a firefighter or be terminated from their job. This is not the message that we want to send. We do not want to dissuade anyone from filling the fire hall rosters and being on hand to attend emergencies as they arise. I haven't personally heard of anybody – or nobody has come forward to me – stating that they were refused employment or fired for just cause for this, but I will be looking into it. I'll be talking to my local firefighters and just find out how they feel. But I really do believe that most of our employers are behind this.

This bill will serve both firefighters, who deserve the right to protect employment, and also fire halls that benefit immensely from volunteer and part-time firefighters on their roster, especially those that cannot afford full-time ones. In particular, rural towns depend the most on volunteer, part-time, and casual firefighters as it would be too costly for them to hire a full roster of firefighters.

An article was published in 2014. This article, entitled *Answering the Call: Who Pays the Cost of Dwindling Volunteer Numbers*, indicated that volunteer fire departments were having trouble getting residents to sign up. In particular, the mayor of Parkland county, Rod Shaigec, specifies that they needed 40 volunteers in order to become members of a brand new, state-of-the-art fire hall that had opened in the industrial area. He continued to say that when spots are not filled, they are forced to look into a full-time contingent, hiking the cost to upwards of \$6.5 million. He then goes

on: "That burden is then assumed by the business community here as well as residents in the benefiting area." Everybody has to pay; taxes go up.

The Alberta Fire Chiefs Association stated that when people do not sign up, it results in longer response times. Again, I'd just like to remind you that we're not just talking about grass fires and house fires here. These guys get called out to all kinds of emergencies. Specifically, like I said, they're protecting our highways in a lot of these small towns around St. Paul, Wandering River, and Bonnyville as well.

3:10

I think it's clear that volunteer, casual, and part-time firefighters are a considerable asset in our communities, that must be supported. We should not by any means be dissuading them from supporting our fire departments for fear of losing employment or not being able to find employment in the first place. I sincerely hope that this bill will close that loophole so that firefighters will not have to worry about whether or not they have a job to come back to.

Due to uncertain economic conditions volunteer firefighter numbers have been dwindling in rural communities. In the face of an economic downturn people would rather cling to the security of their jobs than risk losing them by having to leave from time to time to respond to fires or other emergencies. I believe that that could be a cause of dwindling numbers for sure, especially when you don't want to risk that you're the guy that's going to be first on the layoff list if you're, you know, running away to a fire once a week or once every two weeks.

Due to the lack of legislation to mandate job security, there is a disincentive to signing up for this position causing these decreasing numbers. We need to end this time of uncertainty for those who are selflessly helping our community and implement legislation to help them feel secure about going to volunteer to save lives and keep us safe. With this bill we will ensure that those who are already enrolled as volunteer, part-time, or casual firefighters no longer have to dread getting a dispatch call for fear of leaving work and how that will portray them to their employer. It will also have a beneficial effect on the enrolment of new firefighters, who will not be painted with the harsh title of unhireable if they're proud to be a supporter of the designation of firefighter.

I will support this bill with the same tenacity that a volunteer firefighter has shown in protecting his community. In closing, I encourage all members of this Assembly to support this bill put forth by my hon. colleague, and I again salute all of the volunteer, temporary, and part-time firefighters in Alberta.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you very much for recognizing me today. I rise today in support of Bill 201, the private member's bill from the hon. Member for Highwood. I think that, first, I'd like to commend the member for bringing forward this piece of legislation to this House. I think it's important that we recognize the importance of our volunteer firefighters in communities like where I come from and where you come from, Madam Speaker. I know that in Sundre, Rocky Mountain House, and Rimbey and everywhere in between, we are one hundred per cent serviced by volunteer firefighters. Our communities could not afford anything different.

It's not just responding to fires, as the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills said. Our firefighters deal with significant things, including medical emergencies. We are at a time right now where we see, under this government, unprecedented red alerts with the EMS situation, and unfortunately right now in rural Alberta our

volunteer firefighters are the ones who have to pick up the slack, as a result of that, when people have car accidents or are facing a medical emergency, sometimes in very remote places. If it wasn't for our volunteer firefighters, we would not be able to service those populations.

Madam Speaker, as you know, I used to live in a very, very remote place, running a backcountry facility that was located on the Forestry Trunk Road of the Red Deer River, about 45 minutes to an hour of gravel away from pavement, with only about three or four neighbours most of the year. Then all of a sudden, on a long weekend 60,000 Calgarians and Edmontonians and people from Red Deer would come and join us in our backyard. As you can imagine, 60,000 people arriving in a remote location like that can result in all sorts of interesting circumstances. If it wasn't for our volunteer firefighters in Sundre and Rocky Mountain House and everywhere in between, we would not be able to handle it. You know, everything from significant injuries, quad accidents, carbon monoxide poisoning, drinking and driving, car accidents, those types of things: you name it; they have to go out and deal with those situations.

I drive, like you do, Madam Speaker, across a very large constituency on a daily basis. The reality is that if I have a car accident or anybody else in my constituency has a car accident, the first people that will be there to help them are volunteer firefighters.

Now, the nature of being a volunteer firefighter means that you have to have some sort of other income source to be able to provide for your family or your livelihood. You're giving of your time to be able to come and help people that are in sometimes very dire circumstances and often putting yourself in danger to be able to respond to help those people. The idea behind the hon. member's bill is to make sure that people that are putting their time forward and volunteering in those capacities do not end up in situations where they may lose their employment or they have to be nervous about responding to fires.

We also saw the incredible circumstances, the very upsetting and tough to watch circumstances that took place in Fort McMurray a while back, and while they would have had paid departments around Fort McMurray, many of our volunteer departments all across the province answered that call to quickly go and help that community through that.

You know, the idea of a wildfire is something that communities that I live in worry about every year. Pretty shortly here, first, we'll start worrying about floods, Madam Speaker, and then right after that we'll be worrying about fires, and if it wasn't for our volunteer firefighters in the community, able to respond fast to those situations, we would lose lots more property, even including whole towns. I mean, I think the last big fire I can think about that we fought in our community was the big fight to save the hamlet of Nordegg, the historical community west of Rocky Mountain House, and almost all of that was fought by volunteers on the ground at first before we could get professional firefighters out to help them.

Interestingly enough, the facility that I used to run, Madam Speaker, that was far away, burned down about 10 years ago now. There was a fire. We woke up in the middle of the night. As you can imagine, an hour away from pavement and probably about an hour and 45 minutes from the nearest town, you're a long way from help. The first people that arrived were volunteers locally within the community, and volunteers further abroad within the community came and helped us put our facility out of fire. While we could not save the main lodge, we were able to save the rest of the facility as a result of those hard-working volunteers that answered the call that day. All of those firefighters would have had jobs that day that they

had to depart from when their pagers rang, and they had to answer the call and drive out to Mountain Aire Lodge to try to save us.

I can think of some other situations similar to that. You know, I spent a night with some volunteer firefighters and volunteer paramedics, interestingly enough. We do have those in our communities from Caroline, which has a whole volunteer EMS department. A 15-year-old girl had broken her neck while on a quad trip. She was from Calgary, and she was in a bad accident. We couldn't get a helicopter to her that evening because of weather, and those volunteers spent the evening on the side of a mountain giving medical treatment to this young lady, who ended up walking and made a full recovery, thankfully. Again, those were volunteers. I think all of us would agree that we would not want to see them lose their employment or end up in a situation that is negative towards their future career aspects because they have chosen to risk their lives to come and help us in our community.

I'm interested in what the government's response will be to this legislation. I think that in general I would suspect that this government has already indicated that they would not want to see people lose their jobs for many different, important aspects. I would think that they would add "volunteering in your community to be an emergency services professional" to that list of reasons that you should not lose your job.

Despite the fact that these individuals are volunteers, I also think it's important to recognize that they are professional firefighters. They go through a tremendous amount of training and give up a tremendous amount of their personal time beyond just volunteering to answer emergency calls and go through the training. In fact, the hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright is a volunteer firefighter. I commend him for his service, and I'm always interested to hear the training that they're going through. I know that my friend the hon. Member for Airdrie decided to join some of her fire department the other day to go through that training and found out how, really, it's not that easy, Madam Speaker. Despite the fact that they probably don't have coveralls in my size, I also don't think I could keep up with them.

It's important to recognize that not only are they answering that pager call and then going into, you know, significantly dangerous circumstances sometimes, whether icy road conditions to go help people in a car accident, remote locations for search and rescue operations for people that have been hurt, or, of course, fighting fires inside rural communities – some of these fires are very, very big, Madam Speaker. I think that given the community that you come from, you've probably seen some forest fires up close and personal. It's a pretty scary thing for our firefighters when they have to go respond to that.

A common one that we get in our community is that it starts in the grasslands and moves really, really fast across our ranch communities, and volunteer firefighters, before the government firefighters can arrive, are the ones that manage to keep it in control and at least save property and livestock and animals. Of course, we know we lost an amazing volunteer firefighter in southern Alberta just last year fighting a fire, so I think we can all recognize the importance of volunteer firefighters in our community and recognize the contribution that they make to our community both in the risk to themselves as well as the significant time commitment to be able to complete that job.

3:20

Now, I was surprised and disappointed to discover that volunteer firefighters can lose their jobs for responding to emergencies. I had no idea that that was a possibility or a real thing until the hon. member brought forward his legislation and began to discuss that with me. I think most of my constituents would be surprised that

the people that we depend on on a daily basis for emergency situations could be in a spot where they could lose their career or their job because they chose to respond to that pager call.

You know, Madam Speaker, it is scary for us, yourself and myself and others in this Chamber and across Alberta that live in remote rural communities, to think about what would happen if one day nobody responds to that pager call. If nobody responds to that call to come and help somebody, it would be devastating and, I think, in some ways would change rural lifestyle significantly and to a point where we may not be able to live with that.

It's not just a rural Alberta situation. Though we live in these communities that depend on volunteer firefighters on a daily basis and members on both sides of the House live in those communities, it's actually a very big urban issue as well because the large majority of the emergency calls from my communities, nonfire calls but a large majority of car accident calls or backcountry rescue calls, those type of things, are for people from the large cities coming in and enjoying our communities.

I think many people who depart from Calgary or Edmonton on a weekend to go camping in a place like, you know, Rocky Mountain House or Sundre or Drayton Valley or west of those types of places or out by Athabasca in the north or in Peace Country, where you're from, Madam Speaker, would probably just automatically think that there's a service there that would be able to come and get them if they get into trouble because that's what they're used to in their communities. They come from communities with professional, full-time firefighters, that are on the payroll for the cities or the municipalities that they live in, and they probably don't really know until they have gotten themselves into a situation where they needed our firefighters to help and also when they realized that those were volunteers . . .

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Mr. Rosendahl: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today to speak about this important bill. This bill proposes to amend the Employment Standards Code to protect part-time, casual, volunteer firefighters from loss of employment because they have to become a part-time firefighter, and there are other aspects of this that I'd like to add to later on in my speech.

I want to thank the member opposite for the thoughtful idea of working on this issue and for the important opportunity it provides to talk about workplaces, community, and volunteerism. I know all about volunteerism because of the hours that I've volunteered for many organizations in the community I live in. We can all agree that firefighters are the foundations of our communities, whether we're talking about Fort McMurray or all the way down to Fort Macleod or whether I'm talking about firefighters in Edson, Hinton, Jasper, or Grande Cache, and we can agree that it is an important aspect of our communities.

When it comes to protections for workers, we are on the side of everyday Albertans, and we're working every day to make life better. That's why, for example, we've taken steps to introduce two major pieces of legislation last year that finally brought the Alberta workplace laws into the 21st century, because they lagged behind the rest of the country for many years. It's something that we did, and I'm very proud of the effort that we did to do that. We did this to make sure Alberta workers are being protected and for family-friendly workplaces that are safe, healthy, and dignified.

Now, when it comes to the private member's bill, it certainly touches an important aspect of our emergency services, the ones that we do well to honour – voluntary, part-time, and casual labour – and we all know that because of the firefighters that volunteer and that kind of thing. By working with all our partners in municipalities

– local emergency management offices, employer associations, and unions – we can make sure we are supporting a vibrant and sustainable volunteer and part-time firefighter service.

I know that quite well because, being on the executive for the local union for many years, one of our aspects on our committee was looking after the part-time firefighters that existed in the mill. Some of these employees also volunteered for firefighting service in the community. Sometimes it was difficult for these employees to get excused from their duties at the job because you can't always just stop and leave a job unattended, especially in an operating environment like the mill. It did create issues from time to time, especially on emergency things and like that. I know that full well for what I'm going to talk about in my speech.

The other aspect that this doesn't really look at is the value of search and rescue. Search and rescue falls in the same category as the firefighters because we worked with them on search issues, especially if it involved children. You needed to be there when the RCMP called you. I'm a search and rescuer, have been for many years. I've gone through extensive training on this and these kinds of things to assist. This is the same issue that really needs to be looked at for all emergency responders because we all do those things. We volunteer to cover for those issues. Especially when a child has gone missing, you want to be on top of it immediately. That's where, when a call goes out, you're there as soon as you can or immediately to help organize the search that is needed.

Also, the other aspect of it: it's not only children; it's, as our people age, the Alzheimer's. They just wander away from the homes or their houses or whatever, and they get lost. That's where it's important, when I'm talking about the fact that it should be included in emergency services that are provided by search and rescue, because those organizations are invaluable when it comes to finding lost people or whatever. In some cases we've been called out at all times of the night. That's why we have to have our packs and everything ready to go at a moment's notice. As soon as the call comes in, you grab your packs, your search and rescue gear, and you're out the door. It's important when we're talking about these issues that maybe we might consider those things.

The issue that we need to move forward on this: it's important that we have to work with employers. We don't want employers taking steps to not employ part-time or casual firefighters – we don't want that to happen – because of the potential cost to their business in accommodating sudden or undefined leaves. That wouldn't work. We all know it doesn't work and that kind of thing. We don't want to encourage employers to do this.

It's also not a rural versus urban question. That's something that we've really got to look at. It's an Alberta question that we've got to look at. We need to work with all of our partners, like I said: municipalities, counties, local fire halls, the fire chiefs, the firefighter unions. Of course, me being with search and rescue, we had to work with the RCMP. Of course, quite often we worked in conjunction with the fire department on some of their rescue efforts as well because we had the experience in some of the issues, and they relied on our experience and know-how when we went out on searches and these kind of things. It's important that we do this, and we want to make sure that whatever we're doing with this bill, we get it right. That's the important aspect of it.

3:30

I also want to thank all the firefighters in our region and our search and rescue personnel that stand up every day and put their lives in jeopardy for whatever things that we do. I think it's important as the Member for West Yellowhead that I acknowledge the time and tasks that it takes them for their training and everything

else to do that. I really want to thank them for all the work that they do.

I also want to thank the member for the good work he's done in Highwood, and I look forward to continued discussion about this important issue. I really think, like I said, that we should look at all our emergency services, emergency personnel, that put their lives out there doing whether it's firefighting or search and rescue or these kinds of things. I really think that we should look at that.

Other than that, that's all I have to say on this at this point. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's really an honour to be here to be able to speak on Bill 201. Thank you to the Member for Highwood on bringing this forward. This is a very important bill. It's so important.

I'm a volunteer firefighter. Well, I was a volunteer firefighter. I stepped down from that position just recently as a result of my heart incident. You know, like I say, it's an honour to have been part of the volunteer fire department. In Wainwright that volunteer fire department, Madam Speaker, has been around for 110 years, so people time after time after time have donated their time, their efforts to be able to volunteer, just to be able to keep our communities safe and be able to work in amongst the community and make sure that their friends, their neighbours, people travelling through are safe. This is a super important bill, in my opinion, that this member brought forward. So, like I said, I'm pleased to be able to speak on it.

You know, it takes a lot of good people willing to give of their time to be able to make a fire department work. It's not just when the tones go off. That's what you see. We often will have our radios on, tones go off, and we're going out the door. Tones are going off, and I don't even know often what we're going to. I'm already driving, and we're almost to the fire hall – sometimes we're at the fire hall – before we actually know what we're going to. But they hear the call, and they're off, and they're going.

Now, having volunteer firefighters able to do that and able to secure that is so important, being able to make sure that they're not going to have a chance to lose their job because they heard that call, they heard the tone, and they took off. You know, these are people that are willing to go into danger. They're going into the fire as opposed to everybody else, who's running away from it.

The danger could be a fire. It could be a car accident. It could be anything. Again, the Member for West Yellowhead talked about search and rescue. That's a primary function for us as well, to train for that and to be able to take care of search and rescue.

Often, Madam Speaker, what you'll see is that we'll have a car accident, and people become disoriented. It's 20, 30, 40 below – we've seen this many times – and they've wandered off. We don't know where they are, so we have to do a search. We have to find out where that person is. Or people have taken off, they've gone into the backcountry, and they've gotten lost. They have no idea where they are. They're able to get a message back to us that they're lost, but now we've got to find them. They've said that they know they went down towards the Battle River and they headed towards the west. That's all we've got to go with, so we do a search and rescue from that.

That's a very important point that the Member for West Yellowhead brings up, that that is one of the functions of volunteer firefighters. We train. We train for that. Every Tuesday we do training, and it's from 7 o'clock till usually 9, 10 o'clock at night. We're training for any variety of different things, whether it be

putting out fires, extinguishing fires, whether it be tearing off the roof of a car using the jaws of life to extricate somebody from an accident. It might be just doing ladder work, going up a ladder, using tools up on the ladder. There are so many things that we do.

But it takes more than just great people; it takes a great community. The great communities that we have, you know, in Wainwright, Edgerton, Irma, they all realize that this is something that's a necessary part. I think everybody in our communities has been touched by somebody in a fire department. They know the accident that's happened, and there were these people in their community that were helping them out and keeping them safe, and they stand behind them.

But not always do you find that happening, that people are standing behind it. When I first wanted to join the fire department, that was back in about 1980. That's quite a long time ago. I know that people are doing the math. I wanted to join the fire department, but way back then I was a baker. They said: "No. You can't join the fire department. We don't want you leaving this area, perhaps causing a fire to be able to put out a fire. There's no way." I would understand that I couldn't leave during that time, but there are other times in the bakery that, yeah, we're not making anything that has anything to do with a fire. This is kind of a protection. It would be able to enable our communities to have that staff that we need.

Recruitment and retention is a huge issue for our fire chiefs, being able to find people to be able to go on to it and then train them and then to retain them. That's really difficult. That's one of the biggest challenges that is out there for the fire chiefs at this time.

Another issue that I want to bring up. If we had to go to a full-time fire department, well, most of these communities would not be able to afford it. The volunteer, part-time makes this so it's affordable. You cannot take a community of, say, 500 people that you would have in somewhere like Edgerton and be able to say that we need to have that staffed 24/7 with firefighters and make it happen. It just wouldn't work. The cost to hire full-time is just too prohibitive. Frankly, we need to have the volunteers, and we need to make sure they have the mechanisms and the tools to be able to be hired and to be able to be retained.

This bill, in my opinion, maintains a good balance. First, the employees need to be employed by the employer for at least 90 days – that's what the bill says – so it's not like you're just going on to the fire department. There are 90 days of this. They've looked at that. They've addressed the issue. He has to be employed. This bill, you know, does not require the employer to have to pay for the occasional unpaid leave. When he leaves, you don't have to pay for that, so he's finding a good balance between the employer and the employee. When that guy – person. I shouldn't say "guy" because it could be a man or a woman going out to that fire. In our fire hall there's a very good mix of both of them. When they leave to do that job, they don't have to pay that person at that work, but they will be paid as a volunteer firefighter at that point. It strikes a really good balance in my opinion. We need to look at that and be able to appreciate the thought that's gone into this.

You know, when you look at this: what do we do in the fire department to make someone's bad day a little bit better? That's what we're trying to do as volunteer firefighters. We know that we're going out to an incident, we know that there's something bad that's happened, and we're trying to make that bad day better. We can't always do that. We've had days on the fire department – and it was a clear day. There was nothing that you would find exceptional about it. It wasn't a cold day. It wasn't icy. It wasn't anything. But we had three fatalities in the town of Wainwright area one right after the other, almost simultaneously. It was just like bang, bang, bang. There were three different fatalities.

We were able to get enough volunteers to be able to come out to look after that. Well, we had to leave the first scene. We made sure the scene was secured. It was a fatality. We're not helping that person anymore, but we're going to try to help the family and control the traffic and the incident that's there. But there was another call out. There was another, you know, head-on collision. We had to be called out to that. And there was another one. It was a fatality. Again, it was a third one on a day that you wouldn't expect it. It was a clear midday, no reason. These things happen, but it takes a lot of people, a lot of volunteers to be able to look after three fatalities in the town of Wainwright.

3:40

We're looking at about 6,500 people in our town, so we have about 30 volunteer firefighters at any given time. Typically speaking, you're going to get about a dozen people that are able to come out to a call. People are out of town. You know, they're doing something that they can't even hear what's going on. They've had to put their radio aside.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my privilege and pleasure to rise this afternoon to speak to Bill 201, Employment Standards (Firefighter Leave) Amendment Act, 2018. I have to say that I'm very sympathetic to the content of this private member's bill, and the member is to be commended for bringing this forward.

I have to say that I'm also one of the members who was unaware that volunteer firefighters did not in fact have this leave protection already in place, which is, you know, a bit surprising. I mean, this is something that – I talk to volunteer firefighters in my riding all the time, and it wasn't something that had been brought up with me. I have to say that I'm quite happy to see this idea going forward.

I don't think it's possible to overstate the importance of volunteer firefighters to rural Alberta. I know that members previously have made some very good comments, you know, that it's a lot more than just firefighting. I'm actually not too sure about the Canadian statistics. I know that in the United States a full 70 per cent of firefighting calls are nonfire related in origin, so I'm thinking that our numbers are probably pretty similar. Of course, without firefighters responding to search and rescue, responding to highway and road accidents, we'd be in a real bind.

I mean, this is something that we actually found out several years back when along highway 63, a big part of it that I represent, we had actually firefighters in my home, you know, where I'm actually from originally, Plamondon, who got so burnt out by constantly having to respond to terrible accidents along 63 that they and the Wandering River fire department said that they would no longer reply to roadside accidents. As a consequence, there had to be brought in a special unit to deal with that. When the other members are talking about just how prohibitively costly it would be to shift to an all-professional service if you had volunteers not stepping forward, I mean, I've seen that kind of impact quite close up.

Now, I also got a chance to see just how critical volunteer firefighters are for supporting the efforts of our full-time paid firefighters. I think other members have alluded to that some volunteer firefighters actually did go out to McMurray to combat that fire. As a matter of fact, my constituency assistant's husband was one of those members as well as people from Boyle, where I live, and from all across the region. But more than that, I mean, if members can recollect just how dry that spring was and how close we were to a perfect storm, if we hadn't had our volunteer

firefighters out putting out fires like the Opal natural area, you know, all the little sparks that could have created large fires right across northern Alberta, we'd have had a much bigger issue at play. I think we could have lost a lot more than Fort McMurray that spring. So it's absolutely critical.

I mean, there's another aspect to providing fire protection for people in rural Alberta. As I alluded to in my member's statement earlier today, I was an insurance agent for some years in the Athabasca and Boyle areas. As anyone who has gone to insure a farm or rural residence is aware, you know, the distance from a fire hall is pretty important for determining not only what your rates are going to be but, in fact, determining these days whether you can find insurance at all. Of course, if you can't actually get fire insurance, you can't generally get a mortgage and build in the first place, so it's not only critical for health, safety, and well-being, but it's also critical, I guess, for economic development as well. So that's a lot of responsibility that we have riding on the shoulders of not too many individuals.

I know that I live, actually, just about half a block down from the Boyle hospital, where we have the STARS air ambulance. It's one of the places where it will stop and then stabilize patients, you know, before they get airlifted out to larger hospitals. You hear that copter going and it's, like, minus 40 below and it's 3 o'clock in the morning when you can hear that coming in, and you just have to think about the sacrifice of those individuals that maybe work the next day, maybe worked all day that day, and they've got to get out of bed, drag themselves out, and go out and deal with tragedies that most of us almost would never see in our lives. Or they've got to respond to put out a fire, and sometimes they get there in time and sometimes they don't.

It's a heck of a sacrifice for people that have to find other ways to make a living, and I think that it's far too much of a sacrifice to then have these same individuals potentially worry about whether they're going to have employment when they get back. You know, I think that's too much of a sacrifice for society to ask of these individuals. At the very least, there should be some protections for them so that when they're out protecting us, they're not going to face repercussions when they get home or potentially lose out on opportunities that otherwise they should have. I think that's a very important reason why some type of protection needs to be in place for this.

Now, one thing I would have to say, though, in looking over the bill, is that I think the intent is excellent. However, this isn't something that I've actually had an opportunity to talk to people in my riding about. I haven't had a chance to talk to the fire chiefs that I know on just how this is going to work in practice. I think, you know, that like so many things that come before the House, sometimes the devil can be a bit in the details. I really hope that we can get this bill right because our volunteer firefighters definitely deserve to be protected, and by protecting them, of course, we're protecting ourselves.

You know, it goes even further beyond that. I mean, who'd want to become a volunteer firefighter if this is what you're risking? Now, to the great credit of so many people across this province, people have been standing up, but I do know that it's not getting any easier to fill some of the rosters of these local fire departments. I have heard of situations where there have been delays caused by the fact that some of these departments have been undermanned. I'm sorry; "understaffed" would probably be the correct word for that. If it's already becoming an issue recruiting people to serve on these volunteer firefighting departments, if there's anything we can do to make that role more attractive and less of a potential sacrifice, I think it's definitely something that we should look at.

Like I said, you know, I'm concerned about a few of the details, but I'm definitely completely in support of the principle behind this private member's bill. Once again, I'd like to commend the member for bringing this to the House for discussion today.

With that, I would like to rest my comments. Thank you for your time.

3:50

The Deputy Speaker: Any other hon. members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my pleasure today to rise to speak about my colleague's thoughtful bill to support our firefighters. In my past life I worked 14 years for the Fort McMurray fire department. I had the honour of responding to emergencies alongside an amazing crew of people over all those years as we tended to emergent situations.

Firefighters risk themselves to ensure the safety of the community they serve. The job they do every day along with other emergency services is the reason that we are all here today not looking over our shoulders, worried about certain issues, certain emergencies. That is why I support this bill. Being a firefighter is already such an imperative role in our world, and those who take it on as a volunteer for the sheer value that it would provide support to the public and to their communities deserve our utmost respect. Firefighters have a counterintuitive job, running towards the flames rather than away while carrying 50 pounds of gear, with not a flicker of hesitation.

You know, this leads me to describe how disappointed and frustrated I am to hear about some of these issues that do affect volunteer firefighters. I was fortunate. I was a professional firefighter, Madam Speaker. I got paid to do my job. I did my shift, and I was done. Volunteer firefighters are in their communities – yes, mainly in smaller communities – and they're on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It is disappointing to learn that they don't have any job protection should they actually leave their job to perform this role of a volunteer.

I have to reaffirm that this bill isn't just beneficial to those members who would volunteer as firefighters, but it is beneficial to the communities they volunteer in. Quite honestly, these volunteers should not have to worry about coming back to a job and then finding out that they have lost that job. An employer should not be able to hold it against them if they leave from time to time as the need arises for their services.

Also, I'm really surprised and I find it very unacceptable that firefighters or volunteers might be discriminated against when they're applying for a job. It would be very disconcerting to find out that an employer would not be open to hiring someone who's a volunteer for their local fire department because of the thought that he might miss that person for one to two hours in a day, possibly more.

Consequently, this continued shortage of volunteer firefighters does disturb me. We need to do everything we can to encourage this, and people have to understand that firefighting is a more difficult job than people think. Whether you're a volunteer or professional, as with any job you have to learn the nuances. You have to be educated in that profession. You need to understand that firefighting is not just about putting water on fire. Even volunteers get the very same training that professional firefighters do, whether it's fighting a fire or extricating a victim from a car accident. You know, the basic course that firefighters receive here in Alberta and across North America is collectively called firefighting 1001. It's made up of theoretical things like building construction, dangerous goods, pump operation, basic rescue, and also just learning about other very specialized equipment.

Building construction is a very interesting course in this profession. Our construction methods and engineering standards have provided us with very strong homes that can withstand our very extreme weather. You know, if you think about it, only in the northern hemisphere do people have homes that are built to withstand 40 degrees below and 40 degrees above zero. Our homes are designed to retain heat and to be somewhat sturdy. We can thank, you know, advances in engineering and our building code for doing this.

Again, there's a lot of education that's required in this, especially for a firefighter. We have to recognize that they're not going to run blindly into a home. They need some education. This education takes a lot of time. There's a lot of time invested in becoming a volunteer. They have to assess the amount of the structure that's on fire, as an example. They need to try and understand the construction of that home. They need to anticipate whether those floor joists have five minutes of stability left or 15 minutes.

Personally, I'm not a fan of any of these new floor joist systems. When I say new, I mean that for the last 20 years they've gone with these I-beams, and they're very fragile. They're made up of chipboard and glue. They last not very long, which is very disconcerting.

Firefighters need to gauge the intensity and the risk factor when they enter a building. Once they enter that building – again, this is that additional training that these volunteers get – they go into a building blind. You cannot see a thing. Not one thing. You are walking blind. Your only hope is to feel a wall and step in front of you very carefully and work your way through that entire building when you're trying to search and rescue, trying to find somebody in that building. It is a very difficult and awkward position, but we do it. These people, volunteers and professionals, overcome certain fears, whether it's claustrophobia or a general fear of dying, in order to provide this public service.

This training requires a lot of money and time. It is good that we have a society where people are willing to volunteer for this role in their communities because, quite frankly and with all due respect to our rural areas, there is little economic sense in supporting a full-time fire service. It is very expensive.

Don't get me wrong. We have to also understand that we have fire departments for a reason, and it's not just for the fact that we can have lower insurance rates. Insurance, you say? Yes. Fire departments do have an influence on insurance. So the next time that you're filling out your home insurance policy, pay particular attention to the questions that ask how far away the nearest fire hall is from your home or business. Notice the question about where the closest fire hydrant is to your home, as an example.

Madam Speaker, we have to remember that we have emergency services because when we are in trouble and when we need help, we have evolved to knowing that we can call 911, one number, and get help regardless of the emergency, whether we need something that reflects the law and we require police or we require someone because of a medical emergency, we're going to ask the EMS and paramedics to arrive, or in the cases, in particular, that we're referring to here, disasters like a home fire or a car accident, some issue where people require rescue. We recognize the need to have a system in place that we can count on to alleviate the emergencies that we're in. We'll never know when we'll get into a car accident or slip and fall or have armed bandits sneak into our property to steal. Again, fire departments are part of this system alongside police and EMS.

Now, things like EMS and police are actually more justifiable in small and more sparsely populated areas as they are able to function with very few people. An ambulance only needs two people, at minimum a couple of EMTs, maybe a paramedic in there. Police,

for better or for worse, can get by with one constable and one response unit. Ideally, though, we don't like them to work alone, but that is the harsh reality of our policing.

Fire departments are different. They are organizations that require a lot of people working in unison to achieve its goal. For instance, on your typical house fire you'll have at least one overall commanding officer. He is running the firefighting. He's making sure all his crews are doing their appropriate duties. He might have some assistance in that area. If he sends two people into that fire, whether it's to rescue or to extinguish, he needs to have two people outside, fully geared, ready to go in case they fall. Those are our safety requirements. For every two in, we need two people out.

Not only that, but you're going to have two guys on the roof. They're going to be ventilating that roof. That means they're going to cut a hole in that roof. That's to allow a lot of that smoke to escape to help that visibility as well as that heat to escape so that the rest of the house is less likely to have those prime conditions for a fire.

You also have firefighters who are operating that fire truck, that pump truck. Now, those are amazing feats of engineering, those million-dollar fire trucks. They take that big diesel engine, and when you shift it into pump, it shifts from turning wheels on a fire truck into turning the pump so that they can push vast amounts of water.

4:00

You'll have firefighters spraying water on these surrounding structures as well, so not only is the house that is on fire the main target of their response, but the fire department response crew also has to worry about the surrounding buildings. We don't want that fire to spread.

The point is that there are so many other duties involved, and it requires a lot of manpower – sorry; people power – to extinguish a fire safely. That is why it is so noble to see in our smaller communities a group who is willing to volunteer.

The Deputy Speaker: Other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to talk about Bill 201, the Employment Standards (Firefighter Leave) Amendment Act, 2018. It's a really great idea that's come forward from the member.

We did extensive consultation about employment standards and labour legislation last year to look at how the laws were impacting a wide range of industries, employers, nonprofits, health care, and some of that work would have been done around looking at employment legislation and as to how it applies to fire services.

Of course, we know that we have 14,000 part-time, full-time, and casual firefighters in the province, and 80 per cent, fully 80 per cent, of them are volunteers, and 8 per cent of them are women. You know, the idea of how it used to look, just a team of men going to battle fires: the face of that is changing. I know that when I made the visit to the Beaver Emergency Services Commission in Tofield, they have two there, and I know that when I go to visit, whether it's in Vegreville or Fort Saskatchewan or in Bruderheim, they all have female members of their services.

I know that in visiting with these volunteers and hired firefighters, recruitment is always an issue. When I went to look at what resources were online, I see that there is a document that is almost 140 pages that is laid out to help local fire services figure out how to address that: how to bring more people on, how to bring new people on, how to fill the positions that they have.

In Tofield, that I referred to, the Beaver Emergency Services Commission has 34 spaces, and right now I think that they have 31

or 32 that are staffed up. For them, it speaks to the kind of work that they've been doing ongoing and the culture around it, but there are many small municipalities where it's proven far more challenging for, I'm sure, a variety of circumstances.

If you just look at the letters that it suggests in this package of material that the service could send to your family to give a bit of information on what you're taking on, you're going to see that your family member is probably going to miss some birthdays, miss some anniversaries, miss visits from in-laws. You know, these impacts are very real. People get called at any hour, day or night, and they have to go out to things like major car collisions. They are often there to control fires, to control the damage that might be happening to a broader area, to clean up environmental spills. They're tasked with, really, not just an important job but a critical job, and that's why we try to do our best to have policy that supports these brave men and women to be able to go out and do something very phenomenal that not all of us have the guts or the gumption to do.

The impacts that this can have on people that join can be wide ranging, so it's important that when we have amendments to the WCB, we're looking at how we best support these people, whether it's making sure that they have PTSD coverage, making sure that we make changes like we saw this year that will cover ovarian and cervical cancer that a firefighter incurs because of exposure in this job. It reduced the maximum exposure period – that used to have to be 20 years for male firefighters – down to 10 years for them to receive compensation. These brave people come into contact with all sorts of carcinogens that are in buildings, in farm buildings, in vehicles. Even just grass fires are quite dangerous.

Making sure that they're well trained is a huge part of it. I had the opportunity last week, as I mentioned, to go to Tofield and spend a Thursday night with the service there and got a bit of a snapshot. You know, I did everything that I could do with them, suited up for the evening, but it was definitely not the same as for the people that go faithfully to those practices every Thursday night.

You know, it's a really great idea. It's thoughtful to think about how we best support these volunteers staying in these positions. As I was saying before, there are some small municipalities that are quite challenged with making sure that their rosters are full. I know that from going to the Bruderheim dinner that recognized these men and women. The awards that they hand out for lengths of service: they're handing out awards for shorter times because it's harder to keep people long term. They have to meet the sort of one-year point that will make that person more successful in staying long term. It's like: once they cross this time period threshold, it becomes much easier to keep them on staff. But they have to feel like they're a part of the team for that initial period, so it means, you know, making sure that on a regular basis the fire service is recognizing their efforts.

I know that firefighters are absolutely the foundation of communities. They are more than just teams of people that get together and fund raise with barbecues and a lot of pancake breakfasts, as my experience has wonderfully been. I've never eaten so many pancakes and barbecues in my life. It's going and making sure that we're connected with these people. You know, they are just always giving back to their community. It doesn't matter what it is. They're incredible volunteers.

You know, in my own constituency I represent fire services in Vegreville, Tofield, Chipman, Mundare, Andrew, Bruderheim, Strathcona county, the Lamont county regional fire service, Fort Saskatchewan. They step up to the plate whenever they have the opportunity to. In Fort Saskatchewan they had the opportunity to help support, at the Legion, people that were coming out of the Fort McMurray wildfires. I know that, as was mentioned before, there

are volunteer services that actually sent members up to Fort McMurray to help fight. In Fort Saskatchewan we had five people that were able to go and support the efforts there and do their part.

You know, as I was saying, we do need to make sure that these workplaces are safe, healthy, that we properly respect the work that they take on. That's why we were updating legislation last year. Of course, when it comes to this private member's bill, it touches on something that is incredibly important across the province. I've met a lot of members that volunteer in rural Alberta, and it's that voluntary, part-time, casual labour, people that are able to support their communities, that make their communities safe, make their communities vibrant. It's very true. This is a huge, important piece when it comes to economic viability.

4:10

You know, the issue that I'm experiencing here is that there wasn't enough consultation. I spoke to the Beaver emergency services, and I asked them who I should be talking to on this, and they said: the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association. Apparently, they are going to be working on this as a policy piece, on how to better support volunteers becoming engaged. That work hasn't been done yet. I would like to see more consultation with our associations that represent our really important men and women that do this, and that's why I have a referral motion.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, your time was just about done, but I will allow you to table that motion. Do you move the motion?

Mrs. Littlewood: Yeah.

The Deputy Speaker: You won't have any more time to speak to it, but you can certainly move the motion, and then we can discuss it.

This will be known as referral motion 1. I'll just give a moment for the pages to distribute this so that all members will have an opportunity to read it.

Any hon. members wishing to speak to the referral motion? The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Strankman: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's interesting that we would be placed in this position. I find it quite, I would say, unusual, a piece of legislation that is responsible, in my humble opinion, for supporting a profession – I guess they wouldn't necessarily call it a profession but a job – that's filled by Albertans supporting their local people, local community people, local support. I have personal examples of how this would be brought forward, and I think the timeliness of this Assembly could have been proceeded with, unlike in the case of this amendment that we have in front of us.

The member opposite moves that the motion for second reading of Bill 201, Employment Standards (Firefighter Leave) Amendment Act, 2018, be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 201, Employment Standards (Firefighter Leave) Amendment Act, 2018, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

Madam Speaker, the Economic Future Committee fills an important role, but they have a significant agenda in front of them, and I find it frustrating that the government seeks to create more meetings, more bureaucracy. Certainly, a previous government found themselves in a great deal of water above boiling when they were supposedly reimbursed for meetings that they never even attended. Those situations have changed now.

Madam Speaker, I personally support the bill as previously worded – I simply find it awkward at very best – to continue forward with the short work that we could do in this Chamber, and now we're going to be extending it to some other committee and hearing and such. There has been no mention even of the timing of how this would be brought forward to Alberta's Economic Future Committee. It's awkward timing, so I'm fully with question as to why the government would do this.

In my own personal case these part-time firefighters fill an important role, and there are local incidents where these people provide a valuable service. Yes, the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo has commented that in the cases where there are professional people forward to fulfill these roles in rural areas and in many areas throughout the province, some 80 per cent of Alberta is actually protected, Madam Speaker, by volunteer firefighters.

It's an ironic situation that we find ourselves in, that we have to go to a committee. How long will it take? The government has made no comment of when this committee might even hear this resolution. Madam Speaker, it seems that for whatever reason the government is trying to bury, deflect, delay, sidetrack – and it may be a sidetrack down a dead-end track – hearing interesting information that would support and protect Albertans on a daily basis.

One of the things that came to mind was the recent situation that happened within 10 miles of my home, where the high school principal with five children in his house was responded to at 5:30 in the morning with the carbon monoxide overdosing going on, and it was only through the presentation of a carbon monoxide detector that these people were saved. There would have been a serious need for extensive mental counselling if those people would have come into this gentleman's home with as many as seven dead people if the local firefighters wouldn't have been able to respond and help them.

This is an important situation. When, figuratively, lightning or an event like that strikes near to your home, near to your heart, near to the potential need that this government seems to be deflecting by just referring it to committee, Madam Speaker, it's unusual. I don't understand why they find it entirely necessary to create these deflective actions. They've done that with other motions, and I'm speaking from personal experience. We're talking about referring it to a committee, which is somewhere, again, in a figurative world of never-never land. This is an important situation. Some of the members of the government have actually spoken in favour of this, and I don't understand why they think it has to be referred to a committee.

Madam Speaker, I'll rest for now, and if there are other speakers that want to speak to this, I'd be happy to listen to their arguments to you. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

Cortes-Vargas: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's obviously an issue that a lot of members in this House are very passionate about, why we all want to make sure that we're supporting our part-time firefighters and ensuring that they're doing an excellent job for our communities. I think we've heard countless speeches today about how they are doing that, the incredibly powerful role they make in our communities, the economic impact that they can have.

But I think that when we talk about amendments like this and when we talk about the need to do this, it also comes down to the fact that it is incredibly important, as it was during employment standards, to consult with the associations of firefighters which this would impact. I think that's where we come back down to in

introducing an amendment to a committee. When we contact folks, representatives from the firefighters association, and they haven't heard and had the chance to provide input into this, that's a concern.

4:20

I think that more so than characterizing it as, you know, putting it to the side or trying to really bury this under some committee referral, it is to really acknowledge that this government is and has been committed to speaking with firefighters, the associations, the part-time volunteers, and to making sure that they are part of this process. In fact, it's because we've been talking to them that we know that it's a complicated process and it's important to strike the right balance. Of course, I would put to the members that if we were to put forward a situation where a full-time firefighter was also a part-time firefighter, what occurs in that situation? If you haven't worked out those kinds of loopholes, which are likely to happen, especially in small communities where they volunteer in addition to the work that they do full-time, we need to make sure how we're going to address those issues. That is why it's important to take it to committee.

Of course, when you talk about the crossjurisdictional, where people have put this in place, Alberta Labour was able to confirm that this hasn't been done in other places. I think that, at the end of the day, we need to make sure that we are taking a careful approach when it comes to this bill.

I think that members on both sides truly acknowledge the work. I know that I myself have met with the Strathcona county firefighters, who do an incredible job, who not only have come to meet one on one with MLAs, but they have preparation for how the legislation that they're hoping to change would impact them, the benefits. I think that they want to be part of the process because they were during the employment standards. I want to be able to go back to the firefighters in Strathcona county, to know that they had provided me with information, to be able to have the conversation about what this impact would be for them. I know that many other members in this Legislature would have the same opportunity.

I also acknowledge that the member proposing the bill did so with good intentions. It is with those same good intentions that we want to make sure that we are moving on this issue carefully and respectfully to those involved, to support our communities, to support the very important work that we need to have of fire safety in our areas. I'm hoping that all of my colleagues will support my call and the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville's call to make sure that we strike this right balance, to continue working with our partners in municipalities, local emergency management offices, employer associations and unions, and that we can make sure that we are supporting a vibrant and sustainable volunteer part-time firefighter service.

I think, for those reasons, this amendment actually is incredibly important. It's something that demonstrates that this government and the members in this House have continuously been willing to work with the opposition to make sure that we move forward on this. I also know that in those conversations the members opposite might hear what the main concerns of firefighters are and what a lot of the associations have been talking about.

Just from initial reactions – I'll be happy to table this afterwards. In some local community newspapers there was definitely a quote: "If the legislation comes into place, it's out of our hands, but what we can control is maintaining a good relationship with that employer. If that's a good relationship, there won't be any issues. Locally, if some issues could be solved with maintaining good relationships with the parties, employers, firefighter departments" – I think that's from the fire chief. It just talks about the fact that you need to work out how this is going to look and how that's going

to impact those very associations and those members that are volunteering their time. I think that's a legitimate reason to bring that to committee, to have those conversations, and to make sure that the member is actually talking to those folks.

I mean, I remember that during the employment standards a lot of the firefighters came to the Legislature and met with numerous MLAs, and they told us: you know, one of our top issues is around our pensions. They met with the opposition at that time. They met, and they were told that for them they're actually not in favour of the movement that they are advocating for when it comes to pensions, that they would take those away. I think when it comes to that, the members on the opposite side have to actually go to the firefighters and talk to them about their wholesale issues and not just pick and choose which ones they will be supportive of. In doing so, we can actually demonstrate that we're willing to work with the many people involved in doing this.

I also acknowledge that it's difficult as a private member to do a comprehensive consultation across the province on an issue that impacts so many. I mean, you have limitations as a private member, but I also think that for that very reason it shouldn't be taken that this is something that we want to sweep under the rug at all.

I think it's been very much said by the members that have spoken from this side of the House, Madam Speaker, that this is an issue of importance for all of us and that we will work towards finding the right balance. I think, you know, I mean, that's probably why the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville ran out of time, because she wanted to cover so many of the items that are important to take into account.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I look forward to the rest of the debate on this.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak to the amendment on Bill 201. There are many times in the cut and thrust of debate that we can sometimes use referral amendments to deal with the problems that are in a bill. That's why we have committees, and that's why we use referral amendments to send bills that perhaps have some problems with them to that committee to do some honest investigation of what those problems are and how we can make that bill better and come back with recommendations that will allow a bill to become better. That is not what is happening today. I am not confronted with a bill in Bill 201, Employment Standards (Firefighter Leave) Amendment Act, 2018, that has any significant problems here. This referral motion is nothing more or less than an attempt by the government of the day to try and sidetrack a very, very good bill for the people of Alberta.

Madam Speaker, I remember being eight years old and probably for the first time in my life understanding the importance of the fire service. We had just returned from Ontario back to Saskatchewan. We were going back to see my family in Shaunavon, Saskatchewan, for the first time, and a fire broke out on a neighbour's property just less than half a mile down from my aunt and uncle's place. I can remember going there and seeing the barn, with all of their equipment and with animals being put in danger and with the farmer wondering how they were going to recover from this fire, and at eight years old it really made an impact on me just how important the firefighting services are to the people in our communities.

We have just spent time listening to members from both sides of this Legislature explain the benefits of this bill, and I have not yet heard a convincing reason for why we would take what is obviously a good bill and sidetrack it by placing it before this amendment, a referral to committee. This bill, Madam Speaker, has clearly

identified the issues for why this bill is needed. Bill 201 has identified that we need to protect part-time, casual, and volunteer firefighters from a loss of employment due to their volunteer firefighting.

Madam Speaker, if there's one thing that government is supposed to do for its people, it's supposed to be able to bring us together in community and be able to protect us and safeguard ourselves. This bill does exactly that. It is helping the government of the day to help safeguard and protect our people and help them to live in community. Why would that be needed to be referred to a committee? We are simply doing the job that we have been elected to do. It makes no sense to this MLA that we would sidetrack a good private member's bill by referring it to committee, especially when we've even heard on both sides of the House today the benefits of this bill. If we are here to protect and to safeguard the people of Alberta and to provide them with a legislative basis to do so, then this bill fits that criteria.

4:30

Volunteer firefighters are critical for safeguarding and protecting the communities that are in my constituency, Madam Speaker. I am unaware of any of the communities in my constituency that are not dependent upon volunteer firefighters. They are a necessary part of being able to protect the safety and safeguard the community which I am a part of.

Madam Speaker, there could be many reasons why you would send a bill to referral. I just don't see how any of them apply to this bill. I know that we've seen that there's been evidence brought before this House this afternoon that talks about the need for an ability to protect the firefighters that are choosing to volunteer, the people that are choosing to be volunteer firefighters. We know that there are municipal levels of government that are struggling to find volunteer firefighters. Why would we sidetrack this piece of legislation when we could be addressing the needs that have already been identified by the municipalities for more volunteer firefighters and when we could support them in that through this piece of legislation? It mystifies me why the government would choose to do this.

We know that when we have volunteer firefighters, Madam Speaker, those spots are now not filled by full-time contingents; rather, they're filled by volunteer firefighters. That actually saves the communities considerable money because if we have volunteer firefighters and full contingents of volunteer firefighters, those small communities in my constituency don't have to depend upon other communities for their fire service. It's important for the people in my constituency to have volunteer firefighters.

In fact, in Alberta in May 2017 in a CBC article entitled *Volunteer Firefighters Harder to Recruit and Retain During Alberta's Downturn*, one of the individuals in that article states that "volunteers make up . . . 80 per cent of Alberta's firefighters." How is it, then, that we cannot come together in this Legislature for a bill that is obviously so very good for the people of Alberta and support it when 80 per cent of our firefighters are volunteers? Madam Speaker, until just recently I've heard nothing but support for this bill, and that's as it should be. When I look at the importance that these people, these volunteer community members bring to the table, it's incredible that we wouldn't support that.

Madam Speaker, I can remember coming home from school one day to see all of a sudden one of the houses just literally half a block away burning. If it had not been for the members of the Drayton Valley fire department, not only that house but many others would have been in danger. How can we refer this to committee when we should be supporting these individuals through a bill like this?

Madam Speaker, I had the privilege of going to Thorsby just about two months ago to be part of the ceremony where they were handing out long-term service awards for volunteer firefighters. It shows you that we've got, you know, people that have devoted their lives. Some of these individuals were getting 10- and 15- and 20-year service awards, yet at the same time these volunteer fire departments are having a hard time keeping people. The ones that have been around for a long time are not going to be around for very much longer. Eventually we all get to the point where we have to move on. It's important for us to support legislation like this, that allows for people to have the capacity to volunteer as firefighters.

Madam Speaker, we often will refer to committee for all sorts of reasons. We might refer a bill to committee because it has a large expenditure of capital and we want to make sure that that capital expenditure is actually good for the economy of Alberta or for that industry in Alberta. I see nowhere in this bill where we're going to be expending huge amounts of capital. That cannot be the reason why we're referring this to committee. Sometimes we'll refer something to committee because we need more information; we need to be able to see how it will serve the needs of the community. This bill has been very forthright and very easily understood by everybody in this Legislature as to how it's going to serve the interests of the community.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the referral amendment? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Now, I've met with many firefighters in southern Alberta and, certainly, in Lethbridge in both formal and informal settings, so I'm going to begin by saying thank you to the member representing Highwood for bringing this private member's bill forward. I'm also going to thank the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville for bringing forward the amendment. I'm going to get to my support after I share a little with you. I feel I must rise to support the bill and the amendment, and I'll do so by sharing an event in which I participated.

In early October 2017 I was part of a tour of different sport and tourist venues with the selection committee for the 2022 Can-Am Police-Fire Games. There were a multitude of conversations that happened over that weekend, but the most powerful was when I had a conversation with a firefighter from Cardston county, who was in the heart of the Kenow fire. As part of the tour we visited Waterton national park and saw the damage that the Kenow fire had done. We also saw the damage that didn't occur.

This firefighter shared with me that he and another firefighter worked on the pumper truck, which was sitting halfway up the hill to the Prince of Wales Hotel, a historic site. The water was being pumped from Waterton Lake by the first pump up to the pumper truck, where additional pressure was applied so that the water would go up the hill to the two ladder trucks, which were on top of the hill on either side of the hotel. He told me that they were working on the truck when the fire advanced to within 50 feet of them. His voice cracked with emotion as he shared that the crew on the water pump could move into the lake if the fire went in that direction, the firefighters on top of the hill on the ladder trucks could go over the top of the hill and into the lake if the fire went to them, but he and his partner had nowhere to go. They couldn't go over the hill because the fire was all around them. They knew that they would die if the fire advanced to their truck. I have to say that I couldn't hold back the tears as he shared that story with me.

We drove around the entire community. Not one home or business was lost. The only building destroyed was the tourist information centre, which was at the entry to the community or the

outskirts of the community. He shared with me the work that was done by the team prior to the fire's arrival in the community. The entire community was surrounded by hoses 50 feet back from the buildings on the perimeter. The hoses and sprayers soaked all of the perimeter buildings and the forests behind the perimeter in that 50-foot barrier and into the centre of town.

4:40

He also shared with me that when the fire was roaring across the grass fields towards Cardston county – as the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo had said, normally with a grass fire they surround it – they had to run into it because it was the only way to stop it. They all knew that they were probably running to their deaths. Fortunately, they didn't die. I asked how all of the firefighters were dealing with PTSD following this experience. He said that it was very difficult and that because you thought you were running into your own death, it came back at you many times. He said that that happens with many fires but in particular with this one because they were literally running across the fields where the fire was roaring at them. He said that therapists were available to everyone involved immediately following the fire and as needed as time goes by.

Since September 11, 2001, I've become very aware of the risk front-line responders – full-time, part-time, and volunteer – face in these situations. Every day, every instance a firefighter knows that when he or she answers a call, they may not come home at the end of their shift or the event, yet they still go forward and do this job to protect us, our families, and our homes. There aren't any words that truly express my gratitude to every firefighter in this province, especially those that volunteer. My local firefighters receive my thanks every time I see them, every time I hear a siren passing me. In fact, I do something tangible. At Christmastime I provide the four fire stations with homemade cookies to just give them a little of my thank you. My supporting this bill is another concrete way that I can acknowledge what you do and say thank you. To every volunteer: thank you for stepping up. I know this bill will be truly meaningful for each of you.

Now, having said that, I will tell you that I worked in corrections for 32 and a half years. I was a union rep during that time. When I saw "firefighter leave," it immediately kicked in a couple of things in my brain because I know that if things aren't properly written to address every conceivable possibility, somebody is going to say, "No, it doesn't say that exactly," and that firefighter is going to lose their job. I do not want that to happen.

I totally understand how important firefighters are to every community in this province, and if I'm going to put something forward and support it, it's got to be the best. I think sending it to committee so that we can do further work on this to make sure nobody can turn around and say, "No, I'm not doing this for you because you're volunteer staff" – I absolutely have to make sure this is right because I respect and appreciate every single firefighter in this province and every volunteer who steps up to do that job.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak about this referral motion for Bill 201, and I'd like to start off by thanking the MLA for Highwood for bringing forward this bill. It's really an important bill, and I think it helps to recognize the importance of volunteer firefighters in small communities.

I wanted to talk a little bit about the culture in small towns. We are from a similar area. I grew up in Sexsmith, Alberta. When we moved there, there were 300 people. Sexsmith is, well, probably now about a 12-minute drive from Grande Prairie, but at the time it was about a 15-minute drive. If something were to catch on fire, say, somebody's garage or their home, to rely on the paid firefighters, the fire department in Grande Prairie, would mean that people's homes, their property, their lives would be at much greater risk, to have to wait that long for the fire department from the nearest large community to arrive. So we relied on volunteer firefighters. There were a lot of instances, especially in the summer, grass fires and that sort of thing, where the volunteer fire department in Sexsmith would help. They helped their neighbours. You would have a problem, and your neighbours would show up to help you.

I think of a recent example in Sexsmith. In 2015 one of the grain elevators – they only had a few left – caught fire. It took eight fire departments, so a number of volunteer fire departments from around the area, to come and put the fire out. I remember that when I was a kid, we had a grain elevator go up as well. You can see one of those from many, many, many miles away. It has a huge impact on a community. Everybody is up in the middle of the night when there's a fire at a grain elevator. It just really focuses how important it is to have a volunteer firefighting department in your community and how valuable it is to have those people.

This bill certainly acknowledges that by protecting volunteer firefighters, ensuring that they're able to get the training that they need when they need it and not compromise their employment at the same. It does a really good job of showing how important volunteer firefighters are to small communities and how important their skills are to the community as well.

As far as the referral motion I'm not in favour of the referral at this time. I don't think that's the best use of committee time. There are definitely a number of stakeholders that are waiting to speak with the committee, and this bill is pretty straightforward. It's not a money bill. There isn't a lot of due diligence required that hasn't already been undertaken. For those reasons, I will not be supporting the referral motion.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to this referral motion. You know, for me, when I look at the original bill and this referral motion, I'm saddened because this bill was proposing to assist casual or volunteer firefighters with the potential of loss of employment for the good work that they do, which, to me, is not even a backhanded reward for protecting our communities.

You know, I've been lucky enough. I've lived in urban areas most of my life. I've been, in fact, several blocks away from fire halls almost my entire life, and I can tell you the security that that feeling gives me, knowing that those firefighters can arrive at my house literally within a matter of a few short minutes. I can't imagine somebody in a rural area not having the support of at least a volunteer firefighting crew that can be there.

This is about safety for our families, this is about security, and this is about being able to sleep at night, Madam Speaker, about being able to count on those people in the community that are giving of themselves in a way which is very much akin to, I think, military service, the reserve. I don't think anybody would argue against letting somebody who is going to defend our country or defend peace, as the case may be, do their reserve duty. I used to work with some individuals who were with the British military. These were

senior executives with the company who every year did their military reserve service, without question from that company. This bill was meant to protect those individuals and allow them to do their duty as well without the fear of losing their jobs or the fear of not getting a job, which is possibly the case for many of these individuals now.

4:50

Madam Speaker, I have another concern, too. I think we're in a position now – we are elected by our constituents to represent them, to make good decisions, to ensure that the decisions we make are in the best interests of our constituents, of the people of Alberta, of the communities of Alberta. I think the opportunity is there for us to do so, but I have other concerns with respect to this referral. I very much enjoy and respect the work that we are able to do on committees. We do it. I think we all work hard. I think most of us try to bring nonpartisanship to those. But I have concerns. I sat on the committee and continue to sit on this committee that this bill is being referred to, and it concerns me because we spent 18 months for a one-paragraph recommendation, that probably will go nowhere, and we did not . . .

The Deputy Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member, but pursuant to Standing Order 8(7)(a)(i), which provides for up to five minutes for the sponsor of a private member's public bill to close debate, I would like to provide the hon. Member for Highwood the opportunity. I should also add that even though we are on an amendment and will be voting on the amendment, it is still common practice to allow the member to close debate.

Go ahead, hon. Member for Highwood.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for recognizing me and for the opportunity to close this debate. Make it right; make it right; make it right. That's what I've heard from the other side. Let me just tell you folks on the other side that we introduced this bill in 2016, two years ago. It sat on the Order Paper. Yeah, it was a prorogued government, but it sat there. Nobody said a thing. Make it right.

Now it's 2018. The only thing we changed was the title. I get this common discussion, mixing urban and rural. Are you putting a division between urban and rural firefighters? Come on. Urban firefighters are union folks. We know that. Rural firefighters are not. We understand that.

Referring this bill to committee is what I'm absolutely opposed to. Referring it to committee will not help volunteer or part-time firefighters. It's going to go back to an anemic committee, it's going to sit there, and it's going to die on the Order Paper. We know that's the intent. Come on. Let's make it right. The right thing to do is to work with rural, part-time, volunteer firefighters. No, they're not union folks. I apologize for that. But let me tell you right now that they're dedicated, they're committed, and they're personal friends of mine.

And we did consult with numbers of fire chiefs. I said it in my opening statement. Several fire chiefs and firefighters in the rural constituencies were spoken to, not the urbans. I've spoken to the urban folks as well. They have other issues. Yeah, they've got pension issues. Yeah, they've got other issues, but they're not rural firefighters. They're not volunteer firefighters. They're full-time firefighters.

The financial burden on the municipalities to hire full-time firefighters is going to almost bankrupt them because we all know that municipalities cannot run deficit budgets. Now, where are they going to get the money from? They're going to take it from

infrastructure, from everything else that's required to build and hold those municipalities in perpetuity. You cannot put that burden on them. This is just about rural volunteer firefighters. Make it right. Do the right thing. Do not send this to committee.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: We will now be voting on the referral motion to Bill 201 as proposed by the hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment REF1 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:54 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Babcock	Goehring	Miller
Bilous	Gray	Miranda
Carlier	Hinkley	Nielsen
Carson	Hoffman	Piquette
Connolly	Horne	Renaud
Coolahan	Larivee	Rosendahl
Cortes-Vargas	Littlewood	Schmidt
Dach	Loyola	Schreiner
Dang	Luff	Shepherd
Drever	Malkinson	Sigurdson
Eggen	Mason	Sweet
Fitzpatrick	McCuaig-Boyd	Turner
Ganley	McKittrick	Woollard

5:10

Against the motion:

Anderson, W.	Kenney	Smith
Cooper	Loewen	Starke
Drysdale	McIver	Stier
Ellis	McPherson	Strankman
Gill	Nixon	Taylor
Gotfried	Pitt	van Dijken
Hanson	Schneider	

Totals: For – 39 Against – 20

[Motion on amendment REF1 carried]

Motions Other than Government Motions

Amendments to Standing Orders

501. Mr. W. Anderson moved:

Be it resolved that the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta be amended by renumbering Standing Order 52.04 as Standing Order 52.04(1) and by adding the following after suborder (1):

(2) Suborder (1) does not prevent a Legislative Policy Committee from undertaking a hearing or inquiry during the same period of time that a matter stands referred to the Committee by the Assembly if the hearing or inquiry does not interfere with the work of the Committee on the matter referred to it.

Mr. W. Anderson: Madam Speaker, I'm most pleased today to rise in this House and speak to and introduce Motion 501. The issue that surrounds this motion is most concerning for a lot of Albertans, and

I felt compelled by my colleagues to bring this issue, that isn't a new one, forward to this Assembly for debate.

This motion is being introduced today because current rules stipulated in the standing orders of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta simply do not allow for any activities to be undertaken by a legislative policy committee other than the specific task assigned to it even if there's ample time between the meetings dealing with the assigned task.

Madam Speaker, this is one more avenue that can be taken and resolved today for members of this Assembly to improve consultations with stakeholders, to help committee members craft thoughtful changes to legislation and policy. There have been groups that have been waiting for years to give timely feedback on bills and policies that directly affect their lives. In some cases these stakeholder groups have been trying to get invited to a committee to present for well over two years. This is just not acceptable. Albertans deserve better. We must and can do better. As my colleagues can attest to, this has been an area that can certainly be improved upon.

This issue, however, is not a new one. It's one that has been going on for years. UCP members have brought this forward to committee multiple times. The government continues to block this essential change. The committee sometimes does not meet for up to three months at a time waiting for the next phase and review to happen, and it is not able to meet because the standing orders do not grant them so. It's not as though these meetings would be held in vain. Government is voted in by the people. We shouldn't just hear from these people every four years; we should be giving them spaces and time to come in and meet with us throughout the year. These people have a right to share their input with the government. They are, after all, the ones who help us legislators do our job in the most efficient and effective manner. If we are supposed to represent them properly, then it only makes sense that we hear them.

Our simple request today is that we change the standing orders to allow committees to hold additional meetings in between other important committee business so that Albertans can be given a voice at the table. We have a government that refuses to consult with Albertans. This lack of consultation has just shown the people of Alberta that their views do not matter to the NDP. When the NDP continue to block committees' important work, our caucus will stand up and fight for Albertans.

I implore all members of this House to stand up for Albertans today, stop wasting precious time, and allow these groups into the committees to present their case. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the motion? The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to stand up and speak in support of Motion 501, a motion that's near and dear to my heart. I sit on the Resource Stewardship Committee and have for the last two and a half years. You'd think that a committee called Resource Stewardship in Alberta, being that our major industries are oil and gas, would be a very important committee, but in the two and a half years that I've sat on that committee, we've never been able to address one issue with regard to the oil and gas industry. Given the very recent caribou issue that's forefront in northern Alberta and western Alberta, we haven't been able to discuss that at all. Our committee has had their hands tied by the standing orders. We've made numerous attempts to have that changed and have the committee agree with us. As a matter of fact, just this last January 25 I put a motion forward in committee to have this addressed. Again, I think that was the third time that we put that

motion forward trying to get this addressed, and it was shot down again.

The frustrating part is that there are times when we were doing the Lobbyists Act review that we were waiting for reports from the Ethics Commissioner. She was given a four-month time span to come up with her report and do her investigation. During that time our committee could not have a meeting with AAMD and C, who have been trying to get a meeting with us for two and a half years.

These are the things. It seems very frustrating that, you know, even in the interim, while we wait for reports that we know are going to take months to have put forward, an important committee like Resource Stewardship can't actually deal with any of the important issues regarding oil and gas, especially in the midst of a downturn. I mean, every time that the government side gets a chance during question period, they always refer to the worst downturn in the economy in Alberta history. Resource Stewardship, one of the most important committees that we have to deal with these issues, can't even talk about issues that are going to stall things, like the caribou issue.

Now, the response that we got from the members opposite, and specifically the Member for Edmonton-Decore, who seems to be quite vocal on this, is that it is a matter of inconvenience or something. Well, to me, during that time it was probably far more inconvenient for anybody out in a rural riding like myself to come into Edmonton for a committee meeting. I don't see why it would be inconvenient for the Member for Edmonton-Decore to drive across town to attend a meeting. We've had plenty of opportunities where we could have had the AAMD and C.

One of the other responses that we got after I gave my motion in January was: well, we've just had the AAMD and C meeting, and, you know, there was a forum held with all the ministers present, and everybody had a chance at that time to present to the government. Well, if you've ever been to one of those – and I'm sure you have, Madam Speaker – there's a lineup at the microphones. They're only given an hour to ask questions. Each member, mayor, councillor has a chance to ask a question. There's a red light that stops them at 30 seconds, and then the government takes as much time as they want to answer. Calling that an opportunity for consultation is a bit of a joke, I think. It's far better to have the people that are concerned with that particular issue from the AAMD and C. I'm sure that they would send a committee to our committee with some pretty specific asks and concerns that we could deal with at that time.

The same goes, I believe, for the recycle group in Alberta that's been trying to get a hold of us and come and talk to committee, the Resource Stewardship Committee, specifically. They've been denied for two and a half years as well.

Referring things like the Lobbyists Act review: I think that possibly there should have been a special committee struck for that rather than putting that onto the Resource Stewardship Committee, so that we could get some important work done. I'm sure that there are people in the House here that have specific interests in the Lobbyists Act that weren't on the Resource Stewardship Committee at the time and weren't able to have their input into it. I think that rather than saddling our standing committees with some of these assignments, we should strike special committees, especially when we're dealing with issues like the Lobbyists Act review that have to be done in a certain period of time, that take up a whole year.

Now, I believe we're on the third assignment since I started with that committee, which is going to take us up until November of this year, where again from now until November 29, I believe it is, we won't be able to speak to anybody else in Alberta about anything other than the assigned task that we're on.

5:20

So that is why I'm supporting Motion 501. I don't understand the government's reluctance to move along our committees and allow us to work on some important things that Albertans want us to talk about. We're here for a reason. We've got, you know, 12 months of the year that we can be meeting in committee. Even while we're in session, there are evening sessions that we could be holding and having special committee meetings with some of these people. We've got the AAMD and C in town this week, and we could be holding a special committee meeting with them tonight. It wouldn't be that hard. All the committee members are here in town. The folks who are in town: it would be convenient for them. They're already in Edmonton. So why couldn't we do that? Unfortunately, we're not allowed to because we have an assignment and the standing orders prevent us from fulfilling that.

I know that some of the members opposite that sit on the committee are very reluctant to move this forward, but I would hope that they would see the advantage of actually letting our committees do what they're supposed to be doing and maybe referring some of these special assignments to a special committee.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the motion? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I wasn't sure I was fast enough. I'll start again this afternoon by thanking the Member for Highwood for bringing forward this motion. I think it's a really practical motion, and it could be really useful to us. We have been dealing with a lot of legislation in a number of the standing committees rather than dealing with stakeholders and the issues that are concerning the different committees. What has been happening is that stakeholders end up having to meet either with individual members of committees or with caucuses from the committees, and we aren't getting the benefit of the conversations that happen within those discrete areas. We don't hear what questions other members of the committee are asking the stakeholders, we don't hear what the answers are, and I think it takes away from the multipartisan approach of a standing committee and turns it into a partisan activity.

Special committees, as was mentioned earlier, can be struck if we do need to address issues directly. I think that that's a really useful tool, and we should take more advantage of it. For these reasons, I will be supporting the motion.

Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak to Motion 501. A motion gives an indication as to the direction that the Legislature would like to adopt on a particular issue, and today we bring before you in Motion 501 a motion that asks the Legislature to consider amending the standing orders. Now, each of us as MLAs received this little book, and we get updates to it all the time. It's called the *Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta*. As we take a look at these standing orders, they outline for us how this Legislature is supposed to work.

We are looking at a motion today that asks us to change the way our legislative policy committees will function. We're asking that suborder (1) does not prevent a Legislative Policy Committee from undertaking a hearing or inquiry during the same period of time that a matter stands referred to the Committee by the Assembly if the hearing or inquiry does not interfere with the work of the Committee on the matter referred to it.

Madam Speaker, we're going to stand today and ask that this Legislative Assembly consider changing the current rules that are stipulated there to allow them to undertake any activities that they may deem important in between the tasks that have been referred to them. Madam Speaker, this would make our committees more efficient, and I would support this motion.

Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the comments that we've heard so far. Clearly, there is a good case to be made that we need to take a closer look at changing the standing orders to allow for further committee-initiated reviews. I would note that there is a standing committee of the Legislature, that being the Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing Committee, whose mandate is expressly to review proposed standing orders. I believe that that committee is the appropriate venue for the discussion of this proposal to take place.

For that reason, I have an amendment that I would like to put forward, and I have the requisite number of copies. If I may read the amendment while they're being delivered. Thank you.

Ms Fitzpatrick to move that Motion 501 be amended by adding the following after "be it resolved":

that the following proposed amendment to the *Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta* be referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing for review and that the committee submit its report to the Assembly on or before June 19, 2018.

As I said, Madam Speaker, I agree with the intent behind this motion. Committees already have the ability when no matter has been referred to them to initiate their own reviews, as the Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill has identified. I think it's fair to say that there are times when despite a matter being referred to a committee, that committee could still do other work without impacting that review; for example, while the committee is awaiting public feedback or while Parliamentary Counsel is doing their research. I do think it is vital that we do need to maintain the primacy of business referred to the committees by the House as a whole.

I appreciate that the motion explicitly maintains that a hearing or inquiry must not interfere with the matter referred to it. I appreciate and support that wording. However, I do believe there needs to be significant discussion about what this would look like. Would it mean thorough studies taking place in parallel with what has been referred by the Assembly? Does it mean squeezing in a meeting with stakeholders every time the committee has a gap of a few weeks between meetings? Does it mean inviting lobbyists in to present to committees on matters other than what the committee is studying? These are just a few of the questions that spring to mind when I review the proposed change.

I urge all members to support my amendment, which would see those questions and potentially others discussed by the appropriate committee in due course. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Members wishing to speak to the referral amendment? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm disappointed in this amendment. I'm a little bit shocked at the behaviour that we've seen and the process that we've seen from government members today in regard to private members' business before this place. We've seen now two issues that we've been dealing with today be sent off to a committee. The problem with that – I don't have to tell you –

is that the members across the way will only send things to committee when they don't want to deal with them. They send them off to committees that don't meet so that they will essentially eventually die on the Order Paper and not have their day in front of this Assembly.

Just a few moments ago we saw the members across the way do the exact same thing they're trying to do now to a bill that would have protected volunteer firefighters across this province. Now we see them coming forward with an amendment to send this to a committee that has not met in almost two and a half years. In fact, it's famously called the no-meet committee, unfortunately, Madam Speaker, because of some of the behaviour that we've seen with that committee in the past as far as members being compensated to be part of a committee that never meets. We have fortunately dealt with that, but the fact is that this committee still does not meet, has not since late 2015, early 2016. Prior to that, they hadn't met in several years.

5:30

Again, every time that this government has taken a private member's piece of business and sent it to a committee, it has never come back to this place. Never. As soon as this government sees a reasonable amendment or motion that they know politically, back home in their constituencies or for certain members of the NDP, is going to cause them trouble, they then send it off to committee so they can look at the reporters and say: oh, we just sent it off to committee. They know darn well, Madam Speaker, that this motion will never ever be debated at a committee, and it certainly will not make it back to this place.

The problem with that and why we are so frustrated by that is that we see things like the carbon tax, that has a negative impact on Albertans all across this province, that is impacting families, charities, municipalities, everybody in a negative way, and we on this side say, "Hey, we've got to make sure that we get this right; can we send this to committee?" And they won't do it.

Bill 6, one of the worst pieces of legislation we've ever seen come from this Chamber, the 29th Legislature. Again, this side of the House begged for it to go to a committee for a serious conversation, but, no, it doesn't go. What goes is legislation from this side of the House, private members' business that this government does not want to face their constituents in voting down. Instead, they're trying to take a politically expedient path by sending it to committee.

Another great example was a private member's bill brought forward by the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler, which he brought forward to make sure we could take the biggest money out of politics, which is government money during elections, taxpayer dollars that the government has access to. This government – and there was a lot of press at the time – decided to send it off to a committee. Madam Speaker, this House still has not seen that, in over three years, come back to this place.

This is a tactic by this government to stop legislation or motions that they find politically troubling for them, that they don't want to vote for but that they don't want to tell their constituents that they did not vote for. It is ridiculous, it's unacceptable, and it has to be called out, Madam Speaker. To send a motion to a committee that does not meet – and everybody in this Assembly knows that this issue will never be discussed in that committee – is ridiculous and appalling. Let's just be very, very clear on what's happening here.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Loyola: Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, it's no surprise that the members opposite like to create their own facts, eh? They

like to spin things and, like, make it seem like what's true is not true and what's not true is true perhaps. The member opposite from Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre just got up in this very House and said that the so-called, quote, unquote, no-meet committee has never met in the past two years. Do you want to know a fact? This committee, Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing, which the Member for Lethbridge-East has the privilege of chairing, actually did meet. [interjections] Yeah. Like, the members across like to laugh at the fact that, oh, they've been caught trying to twist the facts, right? Actually, the last time that the committee did meet was on November 24, 2015, and we were discussing morning sittings, right? This committee is dedicated to doing the work of this Legislature when called upon.

Now, one of the things that I wanted to share, being the chair of the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship, is that another way that the members opposite like to distort the facts is that they like to say that, well, we didn't want to meet with stakeholders, when it was expressed multiple times in committee that it was the standing orders that kept us from having to deal with any other business. Now, the standing orders are the rules of this Legislature. They're the rules that dictate what committees can do, when they do it, how they do it. That's what the standing orders are for. But, you know, what do you expect from libertarians? They want to deregulate as much as they can, take away the rules of this and that. They'd rather just not have any rules whatsoever. They wouldn't even want government to exist perhaps, which is kind of ironic since they want to become the government. God forbid that that should be the case. Madam Speaker, it's so important that we have rules.

Now, you know, I have the privilege of working out with the fine members of the Legislative Assembly security almost every morning in the Legislature gym downstairs. They're fine, upstanding individuals. They follow the rules, they're members of integrity, and they know what their job is and how they serve this Legislature. They know better than anybody else, just as much as we should know, that they have to follow the rules, right? I mean, after all, that's what rules were invented for. Now, I understand – I understand – that sometimes you don't like the rules, but rather than break the rules, you should work to see if you can change them.

You know, let me just share with you, Madam Speaker, that this is an approach that I take with my children because I don't like to be a dictator in my house. I don't like to tell my children what they have to do and when they have to do it, but that's the role and responsibility of a parent. However, I also tell my children that if you don't like a rule or you don't like a decision that I've made, then use your words and make an argument to suggest an alternative. Stick with the rules, or work to change the rules, but don't break the rules.

What better way to help change the rules than to send this very motion, Motion 501, to the committee that's actually responsible for reviewing the standing orders of this very House. Now, the members across the way are saying: oh, the government just wants to kill the motion, doesn't want it to come back to the House. But that's the responsibility of this committee. That's what it was set up to do. Now, you'd think that the members across the way would encourage actually sending something to committee for greater review so that we could actually do the job of what that committee is called to do. I mean, after all, it's right in the name of the committee, Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing.

Madam Speaker, I also wanted to state that, you know, members across the way are saying that stakeholders don't have the opportunity to share what their feelings are and what they'd like to see with this government. Of course, I can speak for the ministers here. They try to be as accessible as they possibly can to all

stakeholders, including those of the AAMD and C. They try to get to those meetings, be there, listen, and do as much as they can. Stakeholders also have the opportunity to have meetings with MLAs and to share their perspectives. Of course, we private members of the government caucus do our due diligence, and we are very responsible, and we communicate the opinions of those stakeholders to our ministers whenever we can.

Now, I hear the members across the way just laughing it up. They think that this is the biggest joke ever, but of course the biggest joke is the fact that they like to twist the facts. Now, I would venture that it's just as important to them to make sure that we hear from stakeholders. I don't deny that. It's very important. I've even made the argument as the chair of the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship: let's get the business out of the way, that we need to do, so that we can meet with stakeholders and get that job done.

Madam Speaker, like I said, I find it very important that we pass this amendment to Motion 501, that we send this to the committee that actually has the responsibility for doing such things, the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing. I hope that all members in this House will vote in favour of this amendment.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

5:40

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, you just can't make this stuff up. You really just can't make this stuff up, the irony of this government taking a private member's motion, a motion about encouraging committees to be able to do more work, and – what do they do? – they make a motion to send it to committee. Now, honestly, you can't make this stuff up. I can't even believe that we're here discussing this, to be honest. Now, what's interesting, too, is that this committee that they want to send it to won't be able to do any other work other than this until it's done, which was the point of the motion, to allow committees to do more than one thing.

I know that the member opposite there from Edmonton-Ellerslie says – well, you know, it's like a gotcha moment, where he said that they actually did meet. They actually did, two and a half years ago. They actually did meet. It was a great aha moment for him, I know. But two and a half years ago was the last time they met, and now the government is deciding to send this to the committee that hasn't met for two and a half years, that now will not be able to do any other work until it's done this unless, of course, they pass this. But they're not going to pass it. They're obviously dead set on sending it to committee.

Now, I know they're sending it to committee and saying, "Well, this needs to be discussed in committee," but, Madam Speaker, we've been discussing it in committee for over a year. That's what we've been doing. We've been discussing this. Every time this committee meets, we discuss this. We say: come on; let's be realistic here. The committees are hopefully made up of intelligent enough people to be able to decide whether they can take on another task or not. I would hope that we have people on the committee that could make that decision for themselves, not that it has to be hidden in the standing orders, that they're not able to make that decision for themselves. I really believe that the committees can make that decision for themselves. They have to be qualified enough to make that decision.

Now we'll get on to distorting the facts, that the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie talked about. He accused us of saying that they didn't want to meet. Well, we give them every opportunity to meet.

I think we tried to pass three different motions, actually, maybe even four, to allow us to meet with these groups, and every single one was voted down except for the last one, that the chair called out of order, which probably wasn't out of order because we started a new session. He claimed that since we'd already discussed it, it couldn't be discussed again. But when you start a new session, then that should restart that, too.

Now, he said that the standing orders, speaking of distorting facts, kept us from meeting. We couldn't meet because of the standing orders. Well, Madam Speaker, I made a motion, that was in order – legal counsel agreed and approved that it was in order – that we could meet with those groups by forming a working group or a subcommittee. You know what happened? The government members voted it down. That was fair within the standing orders. So when the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie gets up and says, "Oh, no; the standing orders said that we couldn't do it," no, that's not correct. The standing orders said that we could. I made the motion, it was in order, it was approved by legal counsel, and they voted it down. So when he talks about twisting facts, I guess that's pot, kettle, black right there.

So this is simple. This is very simple. You pass this motion allowing committees to make the decision for themselves on the work that they do. Now, when the work comes from the Legislature here, then obviously that takes precedence. The members of the committee can make that decision.

Now, I went through and figured it out. In the last year we'd met in that committee five times, for a total of 12 and a half hours. That isn't being overworked as a committee member. But, obviously, the government felt that they were being overworked because they voted it down. They keep putting this off.

The groups that wanted to meet with us. The Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties, elected representatives, directly in the communities that we represent. They're here in town this week. How great it would have been while they're in town to meet with them. But nope, can't do that.

The Independent Power Producers Society of Alberta. I would say that this government seems to be concerned about power all the time, power generation and distribution, all these different things. You'd think that they would want to meet with them. I would like to meet with them if for no other reason than they want to meet with us.

The Alberta Used Oil Management Association, another organization that wanted to meet: they might have something very important to discuss with us, but unfortunately we'll never know.

The Beverage Container Management Board is another group that wants to meet with us.

The Alberta Recycling Management Authority. Recycling: what's wrong with that?

Why can't we meet with these people? Some of their concerns could be timely, and by delaying two and a half years to talk to them, to listen to them, all of a sudden their issues are gone, or they've already passed, and we've given them no opportunity to express their concerns to us.

Madam Speaker, we spend lots of time in committee waiting – waiting for reports, waiting for the next meeting to come up, waiting for all the different things that we do in committee – and during those times when we're waiting, there are other things we could be doing. Again, this is as simple as dirt, to be able to meet with a couple of groups like this. It would take us a couple of hours, and we'd have that opportunity. Those people would know that they were listened to. We'd be able to understand their concerns, and we could carry on.

Again, Madam Speaker, I just don't understand. I can't believe that we're sitting here discussing committee work, and it's going to

be sent to committee. This government only does this when they want to kill something. This is about consultation. This is about listening. This is about meeting with groups that have concerns.

Obviously, this government has failed in consultation. Bill 6: classic example of no consultation. Carbon tax: no consultation. It wasn't mentioned in the election campaign.

Caribou issues. There was a group here today in the Legislature. They wanted to be listened to. They don't feel like they've been listened to. They don't feel like they've been consulted. This is what this is about. This is how we could keep from having this reoccurrence of concerns about consultation.

The Castle: again, no consultation. Lots of different issues here that could be taken care of if we just took a little time to meet with these groups when they wanted to meet with us.

Now, I know that they've come up with some pretty feeble excuses on why they didn't want to work with this during committee. They've had lots of time to think about this, the government side. We've given them plenty of time. We've been talking about this for over a year. These groups have been waiting for two and a half years to actually be able to talk to us. I can't believe that with all the time this government has had to think about it, the only thing that they can come up with is to send it to committee. I find it just absolutely appalling. I can't believe that we're at this point. Again, you can't make this stuff up.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

5:50

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to get up and speak in favour of referring this to committee. I think this would be something that our colleague from Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills would be very much in support of since I know that he has gone on at length in this House about the importance of committee work, that it's vital to democracy.

The Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky actually talked previously quite a bit about how AAMDC is coming up this week and how important it would be to meet with the various organizations that are up here for that meeting, you know, made the point that we would actually be out there. As Members of the Legislative Assembly I'm imagining that we will all be attending that.

Now, in some ways I feel like he actually made a point for us on this one in that as MLAs we are all going to be out there. We are going to be out there talking with those individuals, you know, talking with the power producers. On his suggestion that we could have a committee meeting to do that, the only time that one would be able to do that would be after hours when the House isn't sitting, which means that we would be having meetings starting at 7, 8, 9 o'clock at night. That perhaps might not be the most convenient time for that when we could be where they are already, at these meetings. So I appreciate the member for making our point on that one.

Now, I'm also a member of the Resource Stewardship Committee. I've made the point multiple times when these suggestions were brought forward in committee that the standing orders as they exist currently are very clear that while there is a matter from the Assembly referred to the committee, that takes priority and that is the subject that we are talking about.

You know, when I spoke to that motion at the time in committee, I made the point that the proper place to bring that forward is here, so I actually thank the member for taking our advice on that one and actually bringing it forward here in the House where we can address it. Except it's got one little more step to go, and that is for it to be discussed in the committee whose job it is to make these sorts of decisions. I think, perhaps ironically,

that the standing orders as they exist currently would require that committee to meet and talk about this subject. After due consideration, the standing orders could be modified as necessary based on the concerns that come up with that. So I'm glad that, you know, this has moved forward to the correct place where it can be properly addressed.

I hope that when it goes to the committee of privileges and elections and printing, I believe, that it does get due consideration. I always want to make sure that if this motion to change the standing orders is to go forward, it is used appropriately and not used to filibuster, you know, the things that have been referred to committee. Often when bills are referred to committee, they have a set timeline to them that is put there by this Assembly. So I'd hate to see that that would be used as a way to filibuster.

As I mentioned previously, to say that we're refusing to consult with Albertans is, of course, absolute hogwash. You know, I only have to look so far as my colleague who brought forward his private member's bill on daylight saving time, which actually went through the committee process, and how many people came forward to him before he brought that bill forward and how many people came forward and talked to him in committee and how that report came forward to this Assembly. That, hon. members, was a lot of consultation.

I think even of my own private member's bill, Bill 211, which unfortunately did not pass due to the House being prorogued, and I think of the consultation I did on that bill. I did two consultations in Edmonton, two in Calgary, one in Lethbridge, and one in Medicine Hat to make sure that I got a fulsome understanding. I didn't do that through committee. I went out and did that through my ability to do that as a private member MLA, as we all have the ability to do. So to say that committee is the only place where we can do consultation is absolutely ridiculous. Committee is, I think, for certain things a great place to do that, and I think the standing orders as they exist, you know, reflect that.

When committees take their own initiative to explore a topic on their own, it's usually on a specific issue as opposed to meeting with a specific stakeholder. If the topic that we're going to look at, for example, is recycling, well, we would want to make sure that we have all the information available to us and invite all stakeholders, not just one industry group but other industry groups and stakeholders and local community members that would have an opinion on that particular subject. I think that's appropriate when you have an overall subject.

You know, I note for the Lobbyists Act in Resource Stewardship, which is the committee that this was brought forward in, we had meetings in 2017 on January 12, February 21, June 14, July 4. We also met on the Property Rights Advocate on October 10 and on the Conflicts of Interest Act on November 29. Those are meetings of the Resource Stewardship Committee right there. Of course, one could say: "All right. Well, I guess there is a gap in March there." I think the opposition is sometimes being a little enthusiastic in their interpretation of the truth in that there is, you know, nothing else that's going on.

Mr. Nixon: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Go ahead, hon. member.

Point of Order Parliamentary Language

Mr. Nixon: Madam Speaker, I could have point-of-ordered this several times in the last few minutes by rising on 23(h), (i), and (j), certainly, language that will cause disorder in this House. Repeatedly we've seen government members across the way today

imply that members on this side of the House are not telling the truth or are playing fast and loose with the truth. The member just said similar comments, in fact.

It does nothing to help the debate in this place, Madam Speaker. It is certainly against the tradition of this place, and I would ask that you caution members to not continue to do that.

Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the point of order? Hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, do you wish to speak to it?

Mr. Malkinson: I think I can take this opportunity, if it would be suitable to the House, to rephrase my last comment.

The Deputy Speaker: I would caution members. We've had rulings before from the Speaker that we don't use language that implies not telling the truth on either side.

Continue.

Debate Continued

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. To say, you know, that there is nothing happening in those gaps of time, I

think one ought to remember that we're in this Chamber doing work, just like we are doing right now, discussing bills that are coming forward. Personally, I'm very much looking forward to discussing Bill 5, introduced just today, because that particular bill, of course, is very similar in spirit to my private member's bill. I'm happy to bring that forward, and I'm looking forward to the debate on that particular bill.

On the committee meetings, in 2016 there were 88 committee meetings, by my count. In 2017 there were over a hundred of them; I stopped counting at that point. In 2018 so far my count is that there have been 12 committee meetings since January, and of course we are not even done March yet, Madam Speaker.

I think, you know, that the correct place for this to go forward is to the privileges and elections committee, where we have the time to weigh the pros and cons of this particular suggestion in the correct committee to do that. The standing orders as they currently exist would, of course, require that committee to do that.

The Deputy Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member, but pursuant to the standing orders the House stands adjourned until 7:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday evening, March 19, 2018

Day 6

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (UCP),
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Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (UCP)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (NDP)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (NDP)
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (NDP)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (NDP)
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Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)
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Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)
Vacant, Fort McMurray-Conklin
Vacant, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake

Party standings:

New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 25 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent: 1 Vacant: 2

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Monday, March 19, 2018

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: Good evening, everyone. Please be seated.

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

Bill 3

Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2018

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

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to move second reading of Bill 3, Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2018.

The act will provide funding authority to the offices of the Legislative Assembly and to the government for the period of April 1, 2018, to May 31, 2018, inclusive. Two months, Madam Speaker. The approval of this act will provide the funds necessary to continue the business of the province while the Assembly takes the time necessary to prepare, present, review, and debate the government's 2018-19 budget plans.

I respectfully urge my colleagues on both sides of this House to support this bill. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to second reading? The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I look at Bill 3, Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2018, and I'm surprised that the government thinks that we could even have a discussion on it. Actually, I'm not surprised at all. We're working with a few solitary, isolated figures, and that's it. Not very much detail in this bill, as with all the other bills this government presents. This government is asking us to write them a blank cheque for the first two months of the fiscal year, from April 1, 2018, to May 31, 2018. That's one-sixth of a year. The Minister of Finance and Treasury comes to the Legislature seeking permission to spend millions of dollars, and we have only the sketchiest of information.

Now, members are offered an opportunity to ask the minister about these very large monetary requests, but do we get an answer? I don't know. It's up to the members to decide. I don't think we got the answer that Albertans are looking for. Let me quote from last Thursday's *Hansard* when the Member for Calgary-Hays asked the Minister of Finance about interim supply. The member asked:

Are there any details specific to any ministry that he can share with the House where something more or less is going to be spent this year than in the same period of time in the last fiscal year? Since he's asking for all this money, I thought he might share a little more information than has been shared thus far about what indeed he intends to spend more or less money on.

The minister responded with no details, just vague comments, certainly not any figures or details at all. He did repeat his well-worn mantra of having Albertans' backs. I think that's the mantra they try to play every time we ask them any questions. But, Madam Speaker, we do not see a government taking care of people's backs. I don't want to get into that detail; otherwise, we'll run out of time here. We can talk about the carbon tax. We can talk about Bill 6, but I'd rather stick to this bill.

We see a government focused on pushing through its ideological agenda, the NDP world view. The agenda is not making lives easier. The carbon tax, again, as I said, is a good example of that. Alberta still has a shockingly high unemployment rate. Calgary alone: 7.9 per cent unemployment rate, the second-highest of any large city in Canada. Families are having a hard time making ends meet. I agree with the minister claiming that it's coming down because the unemployed people are probably moving out of this province to other jurisdictions to find jobs.

Small businesses are collapsing under the weight of this government's ideological legislation, which includes, as I said earlier, Bill 6, minimum wage, and that despised carbon tax. Just how high is the carbon tax going to go? Our leader asks the hon. Premier every day, and we still have to hear the answer: up, up, up. The Member for Calgary-Lougheed, as I said, has pointedly asked the Premier, but no answer.

On top of this issue, we have an NDP government saddling future generations with crushing debt. Those generations are going to look back on us and wonder why we let it get out of hand, why we let it go so far, like, billions of dollars of debt. Then we have this interim supply bill that is asking for billions of dollars with no accounting of where it's going to go. I guess that's how this government operates: no accountability to Albertans.

Madam Speaker, taking care of taxpayers' money is a sacred task for legislators. We come to this House and ask questions and are looking for answers to help guide us. As my colleague the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat asked the Finance minister during the period when members on this side of the House are offered an opportunity to pose questions to the government: Minister, we're being asked to approve over 8 and a half billion dollars with only a dozen pages of details and less than 24 hours to read and prepare. He, too, received a vague comment. The Finance minister, in answer to the question about whether any expenses related to the carbon tax, responded:

I can tell you that in my own department there is I think it's in the neighbourhood of a couple of million dollars that are expended on the administration of that climate leadership plan. I can get more specific information and have that for when we do estimates and I sit down and talk with members of the opposition and members on this side specifically about my own budget and my own department.

That wasn't helpful at all.

Mr. Ceci: But it's accurate.

Mr. Gill: He applauds it.

It's a couple of million, when he's coming to the Legislature asking for \$8.5 billion, and the only information we received on those kinds of massive funds is a dozen pages. We thought we might get details when questioning the ministers in this Chamber, which is what we thought is supposed to occur. We were not enlightened at all but were not surprised at the same time. Why did this government not prepare the budget prior so that we can consider this in its entirety? By the way, we also asked this question, Madam Speaker, and didn't get the answer, as usual.

The government asks a lot of us, Madam Speaker. It's requesting billions of dollars and not accounting for it. So what I hope they consider tonight is that when they do this, they are asking a lot of taxpayers where the taxpayers want this money to go. Of course, we have seen how much taxpayers count to them; they are simply there to supply the money. I mean, like, we have all seen the latest polling results. That's why this government's polling results are low, because this government does not believe in respecting taxpayers' money.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Loyola: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. What a wonderful evening it is – isn't it? – to be here in the House discussing interim supply. I'm just loving every moment of it. What I love most is the way that our hon. members and friends from across the way like to characterize the work of this government. You know, it's like, oh, you'd imagine that the sky is falling, right? Well, I am so proud of what this government has done in just the last three years.

I remember being a university student, and every year my tuition would just go up and up and up and up and up, right? You know, coming from a good, working-class home – my parents didn't have all the money that perhaps other families do – it was a challenge. They used to work really hard. I'm really proud of my parents. They both had full-time jobs, and on top of having two full-time jobs, we would also clean, provide janitorial services at night. For 17 years that's all my parents did.

7:40

When I was old enough I would go help them because I'd see how hard they were working. When I think back to the times when, you know, my mom and dad would get home around 5 o'clock, I usually would have something prepared to help them out. I'd have something cooking on the kitchen range just so that I could help out around the house. They'd sit for about an hour. They'd have their meal, they'd have enough time for a quick coffee, and they were back out the door again.

It surprises me because, you know, a lot of the times the members from across the way – I'm not going to say all of them – like to characterize us as perhaps being too privileged or lazy or, I don't know, as if we don't work hard as well, as if we don't know what it's like to put in a hard day's work, because according to them only people who own businesses know that kind of hard work. There are a lot of working people in this province who may not be business owners, but they know how to work just as hard. Some of them have two jobs, three jobs, little contracts on the side to help them make it to the end of the month.

I know that so many – so many – constituents that live in my riding are new Canadians. You know, one of the things that they tell me constantly is: we came to this country so that our kids could have a better future. Some of them are working those two, three jobs, contracts on the side so that they can send their children to postsecondary institutions in this province. You can bet – you can absolutely bet – that this tuition freeze is helping out those families, making life more affordable for these new families, these new Canadians who came here and are doing the very best to contribute to this society, to this province.

I know so many of them. They come and see me at my constituency office or I see them in the community or when I'm knocking on doors. You know, I go door-knocking in my constituency, and I'm happy to say that I'm at that stage now where people open the door and they're like: hey, Rod. Oh. Sorry. I forgot that I'm not allowed to mention my name in the House.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member.

Loyola: It was a mistake.

The Acting Speaker: It's parliamentary practice in this House that we do not use names, nor do we mock the parliamentary practice. So if you could be respectful of the practice and continue and stay on the bill, please.

Loyola: My apologies, Madam Speaker. It was a sincere mistake. I didn't mean it. I didn't mean it. I actually caught myself after I said it, and I apologized.

We've frozen tuition specifically to help these families. And not just new Canadians: there are a lot of people in this province who are benefiting from such a decision. We're trying our best to make life more affordable for all Albertans with the decisions that we are making.

You know, just the other day I was asking the Minister of Children's Services what it would be like if we weren't to fund the programs that she has the responsibility for. I don't even want to imagine what that would be like. Imagine if we had to stop helping people on AISH or income support because this interim supply bill wouldn't pass.

You know, the other thing that I'm extremely proud of is Economic Development and Trade and the fact that in the last year we put forward two tax credits – two tax credits – that we could help Alberta businesses with, the capital investment tax credit and the Alberta investor tax credit, making sure that we were supporting small and medium-sized businesses here in this province, making sure that in this difficult economic time we're at least doing a small piece to help get us back to recovery, help get us on that right path and the minister of development and trade doing his very best to get out there and connect with as many people as possible so that we can encourage and get more investment here in the province of Alberta.

Education, funding for enrolment: the minister has done his absolute best in a very difficult time. Yeah, we weren't able to reduce school fees by the entire amount, but we did what we could in this economic context so that we could make life more affordable for those families.

You know, I was very happy. Perhaps the best thing, especially in my riding, has been the fact that we've been able to build four new schools – four new schools – since being elected. Four new schools have been built in the constituency of Edmonton-Ellerslie. Those families are incredibly happy because there was such incredible pressure on the existing schools there, on Ellerslie Campus and Michael Strembitsky. The names of the schools: I'm not joshing.

Let me tell you that families were coming up to me and telling me how difficult it was, the fact that they lived so close to the school, yet there was such an enormous amount of pressure before these other schools opened that they couldn't take their kids to that particular school. That was after years and years and years of promises that the schools would be built. I mean, people were moving into the neighbourhood, and they were being told: yeah, a new school is going to be built right across the way here for you. They waited, and they waited, and they waited.

Right now I'm just going to put in a plug to the Minister of Education. Hopefully he can communicate to the Infrastructure minister that now what I would really love is a high school in Edmonton-Ellerslie. We've gotten quite a few schools, but now it'd be lovely to get a new high school for Edmonton public. The other thing that I'm extremely proud of is the fact that we've updated the labour laws in this province. We've come a long way. To be quite honest, we're just doing what other jurisdictions across this great country have done in terms of bringing up our labour law to that extent.

The other thing is increasing the minimum wage for those same people who are working two or sometimes even three jobs. It's well known that if you put money in the pockets of those people, they're going to go out and spend it in this economy so that things can get better instead of it sitting in a bank account somewhere, in savings, which is also good, too. Don't get me wrong. But it's important that

people have the money so that they can make ends meet by the end of the month.

7:50

Madam Speaker, one of the other things that I'm incredibly proud that this government has done, of course, is the creation of the Ministry of Status of Women. What incredible work has been done so far in this province in the Ministry of Status of Women – thank you very much to the minister, who's championed that – in terms of our funding for sexual assault centres here in the province of Alberta, that we're doing everything that we possibly can to respond to the rights of women and campaigns like Me Too and doing our very best in order to move this province along.

Another important part, of course, is the savings that have been made within the agencies, boards, and commissions. Now, I don't know about other members in this House, but I was incredibly surprised to know that we were funding – well, not “we” like ourselves but the taxpayers of this province – golf memberships for the people who were in these positions and also the fact that it wasn't a transparent process in order to actually sit on one of these agencies, boards, and commissions, that people were just being named. Friends of friends of the government were just being named. Now it's a different process, and every opportunity that I have, I go out there and I tell my constituents about the fact that now it's a more transparent and fair process and that you can actually apply to be part of the agencies, boards, and commissions, that we're trying to increase diversity on these agencies, boards, and commissions. More women, more people who are ethnically diverse that also call this province home now have the opportunity to apply to these agencies, boards, and commissions.

I think that it's incredibly important that we continue the work that we're doing because, of course, there's so much more work to do. Don't get me wrong. We can continue doing more work. I mean, trying to reduce school fees a little more, doing our very best to make sure that that dollar in the pocket of each Albertan goes a little bit further: at the end of the day, that's what we're trying to do here.

In terms of infrastructure – I'm going to go back to that for a bit and just talk about the fact that building hospitals, the cancer institute . . .

Connolly: Centre.

Loyola: The cancer centre. Pardon me. I'm confusing it with the one here in Edmonton.

. . . the cancer centre in Calgary, the new hospital in southwest Edmonton. That's going to also help the people from my constituency of Edmonton-Ellerslie, less stress on the Grey Nuns hospital, all of this is going to . . .

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any comments or questions under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Absolutely. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate being recognized today. I was interested in – I was listening, anyway, to the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie's speech and to him talking a lot about some of the things that he was proud of or indicated that he felt the governing party that he belongs to did. One thing I noticed that he left out was the talk about the carbon tax, well, the fact that his party never told Albertans about this carbon tax that they brought through when they campaigned. In fact, this was a surprise tax that they put in place on everything after not telling the good people of Alberta what they intended on doing with them, something that Albertans, you know, if polling is to be believed, over two-thirds of them, are upset about.

What was interesting was talk about all the things he was happy about. You know, in my community, Madam Speaker, we have a seniors' centre, the West Country seniors' centre. Right now it's been in the news a lot lately. Some of them came and visited me not too long ago with tears in their eyes, particularly Ray Sharp, who's one of the board members there. He's worked very, very hard to put together that seniors' centre, a place for our seniors, who built our community, to be able to come and recreate.

Ray's wife has some medical conditions that don't allow them to travel more. In fact, she can only be out of the home for a couple of hours at most, and then he has to return her home. Ray has dedicated this time to keeping care of his spouse of many decades.

He came with tears in his eyes, talking about how there was a good chance that this West Country seniors' centre, that is so important to them and to people all across the community, may have to close the doors. He was very upset about it. We talked about this, of course, at a press conference. He'd been calling the Premier's office over and over and over. The response he got back from the issue management people of this government was: go and have a fundraiser to pay for your carbon tax. Go and have a fundraiser to pay for your carbon tax. They told that to senior citizens in our community, who are just trying to take care of each other and have somewhere to recreate. Go and have a fundraiser to pay for our carbon tax. That's shameful, Madam Speaker. That's shameful.

I noticed that nobody in the government is standing up to talk about that, to talk about the serious consequences and punishment that they're putting on our communities. They talked about AISH. What about the AISH recipients who are paying a carbon tax right now? Further to that, what about the nonprofits that are the social safety net of our communities right now, that are having trouble keeping their doors open because of this government's carbon tax? I noticed they didn't talk about how proud they were of that. I certainly hope they weren't. [interjections] You know, the government is heckling me right now, Madam Speaker. It's not funny.

We've got Meals on Wheels, a very important thing, I'm assuming, across the province. [interjections] The hon. Municipal Affairs minister is heckling, too. I hope he gets up and shares some of his thoughts later. Here is a government that brought forward a tax that is punishing people, that is damaging our social safety net, and that has the ridiculous audacity to stand up inside this House and say that they're proud of the carbon tax and what they have done but ignores . . . [interjection] The minister of postsecondary is heckling away. He's probably one of the ones who told the senior citizens to hold the fundraiser, the way he's acting right now.

Mr. Schmidt: You want to take the money, probably, and give it to billionaires. How's that?

Mr. Nixon: He says that I want to take money from seniors and give it to billionaires. No, Madam Speaker. This government is the one that is taking money from the seniors in my community. I am the one who is coming to this House and bringing it up. The hon. postsecondary minister's government is the one who's calling those senior citizens and telling them to hold a fundraiser to pay for his ridiculous carbon tax. That's what's happening right now. But when they stand up and they talk about it, they don't talk about it at all. They don't want to hear about the damage that they're doing to our communities.

I was talking to people from Athabasca the other day, when I was up in Two Hills. They were talking about how much their heating bill has gone up and how upset they were with their representation for not standing up in this House and defending them because

Albertans are not proud of what this government has done. They're disappointed in what this government has done.

I would like to hear the hon. member speak more about that, address the fact that his government's answer to the seniors in my community on this important issue is to raise the rates on fixed-income seniors. This is the place that they have to go recreate, and this government's answer is: go hold a fundraiser to pay for our carbon tax, or raise the rates on fixed-income seniors. This is the place that they can go recreate in our community.

As you can see, Madam Speaker, they're getting upset as we raise it today because this is the part that they don't want to talk about. They don't want to talk about the negative impact that their policies are having on people. They don't want to talk about the impact that their carbon tax is having on people in this province. They want to stand here and talk about all the things they're proud of but forget about the damage that they're doing. Now, Madam Speaker, I cannot imagine . . .

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, just before we continue with the debate, I just want to remind everyone that we are on the debate for interim supply. I've allowed the dialogue to drift on both sides, and I think I've been fair now. If we could please go back to Bill 3, appropriations for supply.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It took every fibre of my being not to call a point of order in the last couple of speeches. I decided that I would allow you to run the show here. But I appreciate your comments, and I will restrain my comments here to Bill 3. I very much appreciate the opportunity to speak to this bill although I have to say that I wish I didn't have to. I wish we didn't have to be here because we don't have to be here.

8:00

There's a reason that the standing orders have us starting the spring sitting of the Legislature at the beginning of February. Standing orders have us come in on the second Tuesday of February, and that is to allow the government time to come in and get, quite literally, the House in order and put a budget before Albertans in time for us to get past the 31st of March, which is barely eight days away by the time the budget drops, and not have to bring in interim supply.

Notwithstanding the fact that we spent a scintillating three hours in Committee of Supply and had an opportunity to quiz the minister on the specifics of exactly what happens in interim supply, the lack of detail makes it very difficult for us to make comparisons. We recognize, of course, that not everything in the government operates in a perfect, linear, 12-month calendar. There are fluctuations in funding requirements at different times of the year, so we wouldn't expect to take a ministry's budget from last year, divide it by 12, and for the couple of months multiply again by two to come up with a number in terms of what we would expect to see in each department for interim supply. We've had some answers to what those allocations are here that are being requested in Bill 3, but there's a lot of information that's left out in the open.

When you do a year-over-year comparison from the last interim supply to this one, there are some differences, and that is cause for concern. It leads us to wonder if the government is trying to find ways of fudging this a little bit, finding ways to add a little bit of spending that may not otherwise have seen the light of day. It is quite challenging to do that when you don't have the opportunity to go into an estimates process and the very detailed process that we're about to go through here. Of course, that won't happen until eight days before the end of the fiscal year.

The challenge that that presents for the departments is that it makes it very challenging for them to plan, not knowing exactly what their budget is going to be until eight days before the end of the fiscal year. Even then, of course, there's always the possibility that things will change in the debate process although that doesn't seem to happen nearly as often as I might like, much as those of us on this side of the House will try. It does make it very difficult for departments to plan when fully one-sixth of their year goes by before they have their new budget formalized and in place. It is a tremendous challenge for the departments, and I know that from talking with people in a variety of different departments. They tell me that they would certainly prefer clarity and a budget sometime in the month of February, which is why standing orders are what they say they are.

This government loves to run down the prior government and all the terrible things they did and to say how this government is undoing all of that damage. Well, that government would do this quite often as well, and this is something, frankly, that I, unfortunately, see this current government emulating far, far, far too often. It's unnecessary, and it doesn't make for ease of planning within the departments.

Planning matters and governance matters. I would hope that those of us in this Chamber are here because we've a passion for governing our province well. Unfortunately, when we have to continually bring in interim supply, it does not represent good governance practice because it doesn't follow the standing orders.

It does also get in the way of other important business that I would hope government would be setting about tackling. How do we create more and more sustainable, full-time jobs in this province? How do we attract back that capital that's gone away from this province and doesn't seem to be coming back, certainly not in the oil and gas sector? I can tell you from talking with many of my constituents recently that there are grave concerns about companies moving capital out of this province. They look forward to hoping to have a new government in place after the next election that will help attract capital back into this province, not eliminating the carbon tax, as our colleagues here to my right would do, but fixing the carbon tax.

There are flaws within the carbon tax system. The Alberta Party very much believes that a carbon tax is an economically efficient way of reducing emissions. From the way this government has implemented that, though, I'm not confident and convinced it actually achieves those outcomes.

Of course, planning proper infrastructure builds — schools, everything from flood protection infrastructure to hospitals to roads and bridges and those kinds of things — and actually making sure that those projects are executed on time and that the dollars actually get out the door to get that work done.

Making our health care system sustainable. I was having some interesting conversations at an event earlier this evening with a variety of different stakeholders from an economics background, from a health care governance perspective just on what it's going to take to make our health care system sustainable. Unfortunately, I don't see enough creative thinking from this government. What I see is a lot of narrow thinking in terms of how things need to happen. I don't see the substantial change required that's going to change the structural cost problem we have in our health care system. One way we're going to do that, of course, is by unlocking the wonderful people who are within the system and working on the front lines in a variety of different aspects every single day.

It makes it very challenging to support interim supply. I understand that without it the government ceases to operate, and of course I don't think any of us want to see that. This government has put us in a position where we have no choice but to pass this

legislation just simply to keep things going when there's a perfectly reasonable way of this government doing that, and that is to come back to this House far sooner, bring a budget in time so we can debate and pass that before the end of the fiscal year, which is how the system is set up and is meant to be.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? Comments or questions?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for . . .

Mr. Hanson: Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, ma'am, the now defunct constituency of Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

I just want to talk briefly on a couple of issues, specifically Education. I was going to stick to Education and Municipal Affairs, but the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie kind of prompted me to comment on Advanced Education as well because he talked about freezing tuitions. Now, I see in the paper today that the Advanced Education minister is in an argument with the University of Alberta board of governors and the president over what they've seen as necessary cuts and an increase in the budget to student residences. It's fine to say that you're freezing tuitions, but these institutions still have to survive, and they have to find ways to do it.

Now, getting back to Education and Municipal Affairs specifically, I know that the government doesn't want to talk about it – and possibly the Member for Calgary-Elbow doesn't want to talk about it either – but the carbon tax is a very big part of what they do in Education and Municipal Affairs. Interestingly enough, I was just at a bit of a luncheon on Thursday evening, sitting with a bunch of school boards from all over the province. I was at a table with some folks from Hinton and area, up in the Jasper area. We were talking about it, and, you know, they were talking about different ways that they could cut costs in their budgets and try and cover some of these costs, the ever-increasing costs to them.

I suggested that there was a way that we could cut some costs that would benefit all the school boards in Alberta. It wouldn't discriminate against rural or urban school boards. One of the trustees asked me, "Well, what was that?" I said, "Well, we could make you exempt from the carbon tax." Well, the Member for Sherwood Park was sitting at the table, and she jumped up and said, "We're not here to talk about carbon tax." But, believe me, everybody in that room wanted to talk about carbon tax. You were the only ones that didn't want to talk about carbon tax.

Postsecondary and school boards: they want to talk about carbon tax. That's all part of their budget, which is part of this budget. My question is: how much of this interim supply goes to cover that? You know, I understand why they want to call it a levy, because if you didn't call it a levy, they wouldn't be able to tax school boards and municipalities. But how much of the money is the province putting in? We're basically taxing our own tax dollars or pulling out of our own tax dollars to pay for this carbon tax, which doesn't make a lot of sense.

8:10

I've got a meeting on Friday with a whole lot of very angry bus drivers from my community. They're going to come into my office and talk to me about carbon tax and how it's affecting them and what they can do. They used to have a program where, if fuel prices reached a certain level, they would get a rebate back from the province, but now on top of that, they're paying a carbon tax. That is a very big concern, so I ask the question: how much of the Education budget goes directly back into school boards paying into the carbon

tax? Do you think it's fair that we're penalizing some of these school boards that are already struggling with falling ranks? You know, does the government think it's fair that we not exempt them?

The Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre was talking about seniors and Meals on Wheels. We talked about that when they first introduced the carbon tax, about exempting some of these folks, and we never got any response, other than no, from the government. Do you really think it's fair that we're penalizing all of these groups to cover your green slush fund?

Another thing that I heard with regard to Municipal Affairs was on the MSI funding, and I heard it on the radio. The Minister of Transportation was on the radio. He was talking about how they're going to tie a portion of the MSI funding to green energy projects, so basically you would possibly not get that funding. I'd like some clarity on that.

Mr. S. Anderson: It's facts and information.

Mr. Hanson: The Municipal Affairs minister is laughing about it, but I did hear it from the Transportation minister's mouth on 630 CHED, so I'd like some clarification on that. Is there something in the MSI funding model that is tying it to green energy projects? It would be interesting to know. I know that a lot of the municipalities in my area are interested to know that as well.

Again, really, I know that the government doesn't like talking about the carbon tax. They try to avoid it at every possibility, but those groups – and I know that the AAMD and C is going on this week. I would encourage the Municipal Affairs minister to stand up and listen to what these folks are saying about how the carbon tax is affecting everything that they do. You know, it's a tax on taxpayer dollars, which doesn't make any sense. It's like taking money out of their pockets, and they're very frustrated with it. They're trying their best to make ends meet in a tough situation. We talk about the situation in Alberta.

I do agree with the Member for Calgary-Elbow that we're talking about this bill because we didn't come back to the House soon enough and get the budget out in a timely fashion. We could be avoiding a lot of this discussion over that. I do look forward to budget estimates, though, and, you know, specifically picking apart some of these things. I hope that a lot of the questions are surrounding the carbon tax so that we can actually get some words in *Hansard* from the government when they're forced to answer our questions in estimates.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Any other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Mr. S. Anderson: Just a clarification for the member; that's all. The MSI has zero to do with the carbon levy. I think what you might be referring to is the grant that I announced the other day to the AUMA, which is \$54 million from the climate leadership plan for the Municipal Climate Change Action Centre, which goes to programs that support municipalities across the province with renewable energy, community generation, municipal fleet greening, and community infrastructure. I think that's what you were referring to, so that's what that was.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. member under 29(2)(a)?

Mr. Hanson: Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you for the clarification. I may have misheard, but I thought it was tied to MSI. I'd have to look back at the transcript from CHED and see if that is actually what he said.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Yeah, I would like to just take a few minutes and talk about the interim supply bill. You know, I guess I was looking at things like Children's Services. Of course, I know the people on the other side want to talk about how heartless we are over here and that we don't want to see money spent on things like Children's Services and everything, and nothing could be farther from the truth. But what I do want to point out is things like the carbon tax and its effect on nonprofits. There are lots of nonprofits doing very good work in their communities, and of course this carbon tax has added costs onto all of them.

Another thing I wanted to point out is that I had kind of an interesting conversation the other day with a young lady that worked with Big Brothers Big Sisters. Of course, in their fundraising and different things that they do, she sometimes works late evenings and different things like that. Of course, her preference would be to be able to take time off in lieu of the time she worked extra. But with the recent labour legislation, of course, that opportunity isn't there anymore. Now Big Brothers Big Sisters has to pay time and a half on her extra time. I think it's one of the things that we brought up at the time. We asked the government to consider this a little bit more as far as how the labour legislation affected people's rights to choose how they wanted to be paid. Of course, this is a first-hand situation where this labour legislation is costing a nonprofit organization money that neither of them would want. I mean, the employee didn't want it to happen, and neither did Big Brothers Big Sisters.

Now, when we look at the interim supply here, this is billions of dollars. I mean, I think that sometimes we sit in this Legislature and we look at billions of dollars and we think: ah, whatever. I mean, I think we get somewhat numb to these big figures. But I think that Albertans aren't quite that numb to these numbers. I think that when they see us spending billions of dollars and talking about, you know, a few hundred million here, a few hundred million there, whatever, I think they have a reason to be suspicious as far as why we're spending the money and where this money is going, because this is their money; it's not our money. It's their money, that we're entrusted to spend, and we have to spend that wisely. Of course, there are lots of good programs that the government spends money on, there's no doubt. But there are obviously places where things could be changed and, I think, money could be redirected to better places.

The Minister of Advanced Education was heckling about a few things to do with his ministry. You know, we look at the cost of the carbon tax on these universities and colleges and how that affects them, the freeze on tuition and everything. I think these organizations are having a tougher and tougher time all the time making ends meet and trying to figure out how to adjust their budgets for things like the carbon tax and other legislation that this government brings forward.

Now, because of this government and the massive amount of money that it's spending and the massive amount of debt that it's racking up and the interest costs and everything, I think that creates a lack of trust, that Albertans have, that their money is being spent properly. I think Albertans are smart enough to know that when you have, you know, such a large budget, there has to be room for some savings and there have to be things where money could be shifted from one thing. It's all about priorities and where the money should be spent. We know that families in Alberta are hurting. We know

that small business is hurting. We know that a lot of these things that are taking place in this Legislature, the bills that are being passed here, the things that are being brought forward by this government, aren't making life better for Albertans. It's making it worse.

Now, we have problems here, of course, like that we've lost a lot of investment in Alberta. These investment dollars: it isn't like they just didn't get spent; they just got spent elsewhere. You know, when people have investment money, despite the nature of the term, they want a return on that money. It's an investment. They're not just coming to Alberta to give it away or taking it to Saskatchewan and giving it away. They're investing it, and they expect to have a return on that. Of course, if the return is greater somewhere else, then that's where that money is going to go. So we need to be conscious that money can be transported easily, that it can be moved to different jurisdictions very easily. That's why we have to be careful as we make decisions here in Alberta that we need to be competitive with the rest of the world.

Now, again I do want to say that there are some great things that the government does and that the government spends money on, but we just need to be a little more conscious, I think, of where this money is being spent and redirect it to the places where it's needed most. I just want to leave that, I guess, at this point and just remind everybody that, you know, again, these hundreds of millions of dollars that we look at in these budgets: it's not just money; it's Albertans' money, and we were elected to be responsible for it.

Thank you.

8:20

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, I will now call on the hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance to close debate.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you. Yes. After hearing numerous points of view with regard to interim supply, I do want to remind everyone – and I think it's been said several times – that the budget will be presented on Thursday of this week at about 3 p.m. I will have the opportunity then to make a budget speech, and then every member of the House will receive copies of the budget to pore through, and as they look at all of the important directions and numbers in the budget and the programs that are getting funded, they'll be able to better track the various issues that they have identified as concerns. Soon, in estimates, we will have the opportunity as ministers and members of this House to go through that budget in detail with respect to ministries. I look forward to that opportunity with respect to Treasury Board and Finance, and I know my other colleagues do the same.

Thank you very much for the opportunity, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

[Motion carried; Bill 3 read a second time]

Bill 4

Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2018

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

Mr. Ceci: Thank you again, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to move second reading of Bill 4, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2018.

The supplementary amounts provided in this bill reflect the fiscal picture outlined in the third-quarter fiscal update released on February 28. These amounts are necessary for the government to conduct business and fulfill its commitments for the current fiscal year. The additional amounts mainly relate to support for the municipal sustainability initiative, wildfire disaster recovery and emergency assistance, child intervention, child care subsidy and supports, persons with disabilities and assured income for the severely handicapped, employment and income support, the provincial share of the agricultural insurance premium and indemnities, compensation increases for Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the justices of the peace, and the Alberta production grants.

I respectfully urge my colleagues in this House to support this bill, and I thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for letting me address this supplementary supply bill here. The government, as we are well aware in this House, over the last three years has passed three budgets, all of them with deficits, significant deficits. Budgets that this government has passed have racked up an accumulated debt that is into the billions of dollars. This government is shortly, as the hon. Minister of Finance just finished saying, going to be passing a budget. It's going to be coming to us this Thursday.

Mr. Ceci: Not passing, introducing.

Mr. Smith: Introducing. Thank you.

While I am not necessarily a prophet, I do predict that there's going to be another deficit, to the tune of billions of dollars, in this coming budget. I believe that by the next general election, we could probably have somewhere around a \$50 billion debt, that this province is going to have to address and deal with.

Madam Speaker, now we have the government coming to us with a supplementary supply request to cover additional costs, costs that are going to be added already to a deficit-driven, mismanaged budget. The government is asking Albertans to come to the table once again. As a member of the opposition we will not be supporting this government in the way that they spend the hard-earned tax dollars of everyday Albertans. It's hard to support a supplementary supply bill that asks for even more money, that will create even more debt, that will continue to spend our children's inheritance.

Madam Speaker, my decision is not built on any one program or set of asks in this supplementary supply bill. Rather, my concerns are for how this government has approached the entire economy, the spending of the government, and this supplementary supply ask. There are some requests in this supplementary bill that are reasonable and on an individual basis would have had my support, but when the supplementary bill is taken as a whole and when I consider its entirety, it will not have my support. When the government has so badly mismanaged the economy, when they've passed bill after bill and regulation after regulation that has negatively impacted the citizens of Alberta, I know that my constituents would not want to see me support an additional ask for money from this government.

It may have been different if the government had been willing to listen to the opposition and to the people in my constituency. If they had been willing to, for instance, admit their mistake and realize that the carbon tax had not purchased any social licence, was not going to have any real environmental effect, if they had been willing

to listen and perhaps revisit the carbon tax, if they had been willing to more strongly support the Trans Mountain pipeline, if they had been willing to reduce taxes and the taxation burden on Albertans, or if they had been willing to bring back an Alberta advantage, then perhaps our economy could have sustained an additional ask for money. But this government hasn't listened to the people of this province, and I will have to vote against this supplementary supply bill.

8:30

Now, as the shadow minister for Education in the United Conservative Party I had the opportunity to make sure that the minister received questions with regard to Education and his asks on the supplementary supply bill. I believe that the answers to many of the questions that were asked of the minister about why he would need additional monies in this supplementary supply bill were insufficient for me to support his requests.

We asked why the minister would transfer \$31.5 million from operational funding into capital investment. The minister responded that the \$31.5 million would go to painting and new roofs and new furnaces, and I have no doubt that's exactly where that money would go to. But he did not answer why his budget was \$31.5 million off. We see by the minister's own admission that the student population across Alberta is growing, yet we are taking \$31.5 million out of operational. I guess this also begs the question: why was his budget so off on maintenance and renewal?

The government rates school conditions. I believe the Department of Infrastructure has an index that they use to ensure that the schools are appropriately maintained. Since the minister is asking for more money for maintenance and renewal, one of the questions we were wondering was: well, what does that say about the school evaluation index? The minister in his answer admitted that the Department of Infrastructure conducts evaluations and that local school boards do as well, and he pointed out in our questioning that school boards are adequately compensated in terms of infrastructure supply and maintenance. If they're adequately supplied with infrastructure and maintenance, then why is he coming back and asking for more money? So we still have no real explanation for why the minister needs to put an additional \$31.5 million into infrastructure maintenance and renewal.

While the minister asks to transfer \$31.5 million from budget line 2.3 to budget line 3.1, he also asks in supplementary supply that \$4 million would be transferred back into line 2.3. So he's taking money out, and then he's transferring money back in. When asked why he would transfer money out only to put some of it back in, the minister referred to extraordinary circumstances. He did not bother to explain what those extraordinary circumstances were, so as taxpayers we're left wondering why he would do this, which once again provides very little clarity as to why this supplementary bill needs additional monies.

In the supplementary bill the minister decreased funding by \$3 million from the Education transportation budget and another \$1.7 million in funding for the small class size initiative. It left us wondering: how does reducing the transportation budget by \$3 million while at the same time burdening school boards with a carbon tax benefit education? It just doesn't seem to make sense. Taking out \$3 million from the Education transportation budget with no clear plan as to how you're actually going to address the shortfalls in transportation that the schools boards are facing is not, I would argue, going to improve education.

Taking \$1.7 million out of funding for the small class size initiative without a clear plan for actually addressing the Auditor General's concerns regarding the use of that small class size initiative and the fact that we have never met our targets: how is

that going to improve education? The minister even admitted in this House that he was not sure why he was reducing small class size funding by \$1.7 million and that he would have to get back to the Legislature about that.

In conclusion, it is for these reasons that I will not be supporting the supplementary supply bill. The budgetary decisions of this government over the past three years have placed the Alberta economy in danger. This supplementary supply bill does not move us off the path of continuing debt and deficit. The opposition did not receive convincing answers to our questions as to why the government needed the monies outlined in this supplementary supply bill, Madam Speaker, so this MLA will not be voting in support of this supplementary supply bill.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to get up here and speak to this bill. You know, we often hear a lot about opposition saying that – we've heard it before – they don't want to vote in support of this. They don't feel that there are enough details in it, keeping in mind, of course, that this is just purely to provide the government with two months of spending until we are able to pass the budget, where we will be able to thoroughly expand and thoroughly explore all the various spending levels in this particular budget.

I want to comment. The opposition often says, you know, that they want us to spend 20 per cent less. I think back to just this weekend when I visited Alberta Health Services, actually. I went and saw some doctors and OTs there in regard to my grandfather. Those hard-working individuals who work to help Albertans when they are in need of medical assistance, whatever that could be, those doctors and nurses and OTs and the various other specialists work very hard in order to make those hospitals as inviting as possible. I saw them putting up the display of the Easter Bunny. Where I was in particular there were children coming there to visit some of their grandparents. Some of those grandparents, being near the end of their lives, perhaps aren't doing too well.

I think of if we were to do 20 per cent less in those hospitals. Would that mean that there's going to be no free time for, you know, the nurses or the doctors or the OTs to take a spare second to liven up the hospital a little bit for those that need to be there, that there would be no Easter Bunny during Easter? I don't know. But I think it's important that we think about what those sorts of cuts would mean, what those cuts would mean to teachers, what those cuts would mean to policing in this province, which seems to be a bit of the topic du jour.

You know, often I hear noise from the back about the carbon levy. I remember that when we first brought that out, my grandmother did ask me about that. My grandmother and my grandfather live in a 1961 house with a 1961 furnace with 1961 windows and with 1961 insulation. It's probably nearing one of the worst-case possible scenarios when it comes to energy efficiency. Plus they also have three deep-freezers. My grandparents are from the Depression, and they enjoy not wasting any food.

8:40

So my grandparents asked me about the carbon levy. Of course, they remember that we promised to address climate change as part of our platform, which we did. We went out, had a group of experts

come back to us with what the best recommendation was on how to address climate change. Everyone agreed that the carbon levy economy-wide was the best way to do that, but of course we did provide rebates to individuals such as my grandparents who might be adversely affected.

Now, of course, my grandparents have many opportunities to take advantage of programs for more efficient furnaces and windows and light bulbs and such, to take advantage of, you know, the carbon levy and the rebates that it provides. I thought I would calculate it out. I asked my grandma: what was your biggest hydro bill in the last two years? Then I took that bill, and I extrapolated it for 12 months.

After the carbon rebate, assuming that they used the most amount of gas and electricity they'd ever used in a two-year period in that one month and having expanded it out for the whole year, do you know how much extra they would have paid, assuming they used that much power for the whole year? Of course, as we know, thankfully, here in Alberta winter does not last all year, although it sometimes feels like it does. It would have cost them somewhere in the neighbourhood of about \$150, which works out to a little bit more than 10 bucks a month, again assuming that winter lasted all year, which of course it doesn't. You know, my grandparents' response to that was: that's pretty much the price of a teen burger combo now at A&W, and we're not too concerned about it.

I think of the good work that we do here, you know. I think of my colleagues in the front bench, think of the hon. Minister of Community and Social Services, who's doing great work in regard to helping those on AISH and persons with disabilities.

I think of our hon. Minister of Status of Women, who's doing great work to encourage more women to run for office through the Ask Her campaign. Maybe it's just bias because I'm in politics, but I always like to see more people from more backgrounds involved in politics.

Of course, we have our Minister of Seniors and Housing, who's been doing great work in my riding, in particular. The riding of Calgary-Currie has a lot of government-subsidized seniors' homes and low-income housing that are definitely in need of some repair, and our minister has been stepping up to that. Passing interim supply helps that good work to continue.

Of course, our Minister of Advanced Education has frozen tuition fees, something that is – I surround Mount Royal University on two sides. Many of those students are constituents of mine, in my riding, as are many of the faculty and staff there, who appreciate a lot of the good work that our minister is doing.

Of course, we have our Minister of Transportation, who has repeatedly said in this House that the ring road in Calgary will get built and it will get built on time. Again, considering that that road goes around the riding of Calgary-Currie, that is going to be a key infrastructure project to help the constituents of Calgary-Currie and the citizens of Calgary get around. Same goes with our transit projects, the green line and other transit projects right across this province.

Of course, we have our Minister of Energy, who has gone out and proven that we can produce renewable energy in this province at a price that is cheaper than anyone else has seen in Canada, and we have made the commitment to make sure that our indigenous friends are a part of that.

When I go to the doors in Calgary-Currie, there are always two issues that come up. One is the \$25-a-day child care. I'm so proud of our Minister of Children's Services in getting that done. You wouldn't believe how many people ask me about that and how important it is to them that we are moving forward with that project. I am looking forward to having the first one of those open up in my riding.

The other thing they ask about, which is probably most relevant to today's conversation, is that somebody always asks me a question about the economy and the budget and how we are on the way back to balance. So for the hon. Minister of Finance: we have a plan to get back to balance by '23-24, and I'm so looking forward, when our next budget comes up, to being able to see that plan. because I know we have been taking concrete steps to reduce costs but at the same time spend money in the services that matter most to Albertans and to help the constituents and citizens of Alberta through this downturn.

Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to the supplementary supply bill this evening. You know, I believe that other members of the loyal opposition have stated that supplementary supply bills can really be considered as overspending bills or lack-of-planning bills, which is really of no surprise to those of us on this side of the House. All of the funding in this bill is required because the government didn't commit enough funding at budget time last year. Let's hope that they can get it right this year although many of us are worried about what that's going to look like. These are among the reasons that I won't be supporting this bill as we move forward.

I understand that things come up during the year sometimes because of natural disasters or other acts beyond our control, but these things are under our control, the spending and supplementary budgets that we're being asked for now. So, yes, I understand there's the odd time that this makes sense and is justifiable, not just bad planning and potentially mismanagement. I would suggest that the lack of management skills is coming to roost with us here.

However, looking through the document, I can't help but think that the government could have done a better job at this time last year in committing the funding where it was needed even if that spending appeared to be fiscally irresponsible. I know that this is basically a series of four-letter words on the government side, but someone, anyone in the government could have made a tough decision and said: "You know what? We signed off on this budget. We told Albertans that we would spend X number of dollars. We made that commitment to the people. Therefore, we'll not spend more than that during the current fiscal year. We will not layer more debt on the shoulders of hard-working Albertans."

But, Madam Speaker, that's not what we're here to discuss; we're here to discuss this bill, supplementary supply. We could have heard: we are going to make a few tough decisions and stay within our allocated budget. You know why? Because the average person on the street understands what it means to have only a certain amount of money to work with in their daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly budgets. Every operating business that I talk to knows what it means to stay within their budget. Otherwise, they're not in business anymore.

Mr. S. Anderson: Do they have to deal with disasters?

Mr. Gotfried: Yeah. Businesses have to deal with disasters, too.

You might want to go on vacation this year as an individual or as a family, but if you don't budget properly, if you don't spend your money responsibly and demonstrate some restraint in other areas, it's just not going to happen. You have to make those decisions. You have to make tough decisions as an individual, as a family, as a business. That's what Albertans are being forced to do in this tough economy, where one member of the household is unemployed or

underemployed or their wages have been cut or their salaries have been cut or their opportunity to make money has been cut because of their business struggling. They understand what it means to tighten their belt and to ensure that they live within their budget. If this government were in that situation, they'd book the trip anyways, stay at an all-inclusive, and party like it's 1999 because, hey, someone else, in fact someone else's kids, will just pay for it later. Maybe another government that understands how unsustainable such behaviour is might actually be on the horizon.

This government has had not just one but three budgets to demonstrate a commitment to restraint in spending, and have we seen it? No, we have not seen it. We have not seen it. We've seen mounting deficits and mounting debt. Three times this government has failed not only our current population, but they've put in jeopardy future Albertans as well. Unborn Albertans will bear the burden of the debt that they're generating on the shoulders of unborn Albertans. How responsible is that?

The level of spending, as demonstrated by the supplementary supply bill, is just completely unsustainable in most Albertans' real world. Austerity, strangely, has gone from being not a nine-letter word but a four-letter word. It seems like government is going out of its way to rise to the challenge of how much money they can spend in any given year and then pile it on the next year and pile it on the next year and pile it on the next year until we end up with \$71 billion in debt.

8:50

Yet even with all that money ostensibly stimulating the economy, real Albertans continue to struggle. For example, there are 26,000 more unemployed Albertans than there were when this government took office. In February alone the province lost 10,500 full-time jobs. Calgary's unemployment is the second highest in the country among major cities, and Edmonton is tied for third. The CEO of the Edmonton chamber says that difficult times are not behind us and that things on the ground are still struggling as much as ever. Yet we hear other stories from that side of the House. Every time we come into this place and ask the government, "Why? Why are you spending so much money? How can you not find any efficiencies?" we're not asking for front-line cuts. We've never asked for that. Everybody always says: 20 per cent front-line cuts. No. We are asking for efficiencies, Madam Speaker. We hear: why do you continuously need supplementary . . .

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, can I just interject? Sorry. My apologies.

Just a reminder to all of the members in the House that we're in second reading; we're not in Committee of the Whole. If you could please keep the tone down – the walking around, the turning around of the chairs, all of that – and listen to the speaker, I'd appreciate it.

Thank you.

Please continue.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Albertans expect a reasonable level of responsibility and accountability when it comes to government spending and government debt, the spending of their hard-earned tax dollars, while the government continues to choose not to listen to the overwhelming majority of Albertans when they say that they're getting it wrong on the economy, when they say that they're getting it wrong on debt and borrowing. I know that the people of Calgary-Fish Creek, whom I represent, the overwhelming majority of them, want me to come to this Chamber and advocate on their behalf because they understand the long-term ramifications of irresponsible, out-of-control spending. That's what we're facing here from this government.

They understand that by the end of the NDP's term we will be spending billions of dollars a year on interest alone, bigger than most of the budgets. That's \$385 per month for a family of four for them to pay that back, and that's for 25 years. That's 300 payments of \$385 a year to pay back what this government is putting them in debt for. Every time the government doesn't follow their own budget and they come back to this Assembly to add to that pile of debt, there are consequences for Albertans. The government would have us believe that there are no consequences, that they have no other choice, that the money never stops, that more and more debt is okay, and that you can just create a new tax or reach deeper into the pockets of hard-working Albertans to pay for whatever spendthrift idea crosses your mind. Wrong, Madam Speaker.

Well, unfortunately for them and for all Albertans who will now have to pay for this ever-mounting pile of debt, there are consequences. Government does not operate in a vacuum. Government debt is taxpayers' debt. The financial decisions made by the government through the Minister of Finance have real-world consequences which will be borne out for a generation, perhaps longer, perhaps two generations, for us to pay that back. The consequences aren't felt today when you keep pushing the inevitable down the road, but how long can you continue to write cheques, Minister, in bold red ink without having to at least think of the long-term and potentially financially catastrophic consequences? It's unfortunate that this NDP government is choosing not to acknowledge those consequences, the consequences that will be borne, again, by future generations of Albertans. Is this robbing from Peter to pay Peter, or is this robbing from Peter's unborn grandson to pay Peter? Patently irresponsible, Madam Speaker.

Of course, the government members will go to their usual talking points about whatever spending restraint is brought up. I'm sure there are a number that members are scrawling down now so that they can pop up and tell the opposition how we don't support this and we don't support that, how we don't support the carbon tax, which is true, or that we must not like health care and we must not like education. Well, we do, and we like it to be sustainable, and we like the spending to be done in a way which is efficient and that we can get to the front lines. That's what we believe in, Madam Speaker. To support them, I would say that, you know, I will support the supplementary supply for the government when you go through every dollar of every line item in the budget and say, "Yes, that was the most efficient way to spend the money to improve the lives of Albertans," when anyone in the government can sit down and say that hard-earned taxpayer dollars are not being wasted, that there is no redundant bureaucracy, no doubling up of efforts, no inefficiencies and no waste, and that we have true accountability to the people of Alberta.

Madam Speaker, I hate to tell you this, but that just isn't the case today. It's clear that the only way that Alberta's finances will move back towards balance is with a change where austerity is not a four-letter word; it's a nine-letter word. We would spend more money efficiently, effectively, and with accountability to everyday Albertans, yes, those Albertans, the ones who lack job security because of poor economic fundamentals, investment-repelling policies, overtaxation, and the burden of overreaching regulations. Oh, and did I mention the carbon tax? It's been mentioned a few times. That is on the backs of Albertans, hard-working Albertans.

Spending is spiralling out of control. We need a change in the way we do things while still delivering a high and perhaps higher level of service. Government resources are not infinite. No. No matter how hard this government tries to make it seem like they are,

we must pay for that. We must pay for what we consume. We must develop sustainability and public finance over the long term but not so long that we punt the debt ball down the field for future generations, Minister. Everyday Albertans are struggling no matter how many strained smiles the Finance minister puts on during his media forays, which I'm sure we'll see later this week. We need to focus on those people, their children, their grandchildren, why we are here and whom we must face with confidence that we have done the best that we can do each and every day. We need to create a fiscally responsible situation today and tomorrow for our province that does not sacrifice the future in order to pay for reckless decisions and out-of-control spending.

Supplementary supply is another perfect example of this government's inability to make any sort of spending decision that doesn't involve writing a cheque, as I said earlier, all written with bright red ink. Or maybe that's changed to orange ink. But you get the picture. [interjection] It's kind of like red, isn't it?

For the past three years we've seen an enormous deficit, unrestrained spending, and mounting debt, only to come back in March to watch the government vote themselves even more money for that same fiscal year. The people that I represent can't do that in their homes, Minister. Madam Speaker, the businesses that I represent can't do that in their businesses, or they would quickly be out of business, and we'd have more bankruptcies in this province. So why does this government think it's okay? That is a question for all Albertans to ask, but today I will be voting against second reading.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just want to take a couple of minutes. I have some things that I don't think I've heard yet tonight. I, too, will be voting against the supplementary supply bill. Fifty-six billion dollars this year and no plan to pay it back. No plan to pay back the 9 and a half billion, 10 billion dollars that we're putting on our kids' credit card just to cover our operating expenses. Again, I've said it before. I can't imagine. When we've seen this government raise personal taxes, corporate taxes, and then actual total revenues fall by 15 or 20 per cent, their plan is not working. A plan without a plan to pay back the operating portion is a huge disaster for credit ratings and for our kids and grandkids.

Madam Speaker, it applies to our capital borrowing as well. You know, the debate in this House used to be, through some of the Klein years and the '90s, when infrastructure money was paid for on an annual basis, and into the 2000s: do we borrow for capital? Well, my goodness, we have a plan now that doesn't even plan on paying back the capital debt that is borrowed, never mind – never mind – the operating debt.

I look at where we may be a year down the road. When I was talking to some financial experts about a week ago and said that my fear was that by the time we consider this minister's borrowing for operating, borrowing for capital, funded and unfunded pension liabilities, we could be \$85 billion in the hole just a year from now, the experts told me that I might be below by \$20 billion. When we think of the state of our economy, when we look at the layers and layers of burden that this government has added, when we look at the private investment they've driven away, it's going to be a tough job for our good job providers and our commodity producers. It's going to be a tough job to dig out of this hole. So, as my hon. colleague from Calgary-Fish Creek

just said, for us to stand up here and give the hon. Minister of Finance a blank cheque is ludicrous.

9:00

I sometimes get frustrated when the government crows a bit about saving here and there. I want to talk about two clear instances where the savings weren't there. I think of when the government decided that public ownership was where it was at for laundry in the capital region. Our estimates, Madam Speaker, were that that cost the taxpayer \$200 million. This side of the House believes totally in emergency response, money for fire-related costs, funding for sexual assault victims' services, money for additional police. When we see our government make a decision that appears to be based on ideology, not what is best value for hard-earned tax dollars, it's forcing a wealth creator to work harder, to give up more of their freedom of choice, or maybe, as the chairman of EnCana just did on the weekend, decide to leave our jurisdiction.

I think of one a little bit more local. The Medicine Hat diagnostic lab was the most efficient laboratory, I believe, in all of Alberta: a wonderful owner, wonderful employees, wonderful service, second-floor premises. You could have run in and out of there in five minutes. Madam Speaker, the importance of that is that it freed up our time to do our lives, our work, our time with our family, those kinds of things. This NDP government announced about a year and a half, two years ago that they were moving it to the mall area, the high-rent area, completely renovating a new place, and, of course, changing the employee structures from non-union to union. Here we are later, where I have no idea how much the costs have increased, but it's got to be 5 or so million dollars a year. When I talk to the people of Medicine Hat and Cypress-Medicine Hat and they tell me that what used to take five or six minutes to get a procedure done now takes 35 or 40 minutes in spite of good front-line workers, it's a lose-lose.

Madam Speaker, what I guess hurts me the most, deep down, is that when this was first announced, even though, just looking at it from the outside, it was clear that it was going to be a move to a much, much higher cost structure, I did everything I could to bite my tongue, and I just asked for the business plan. I said: "Okay. Prove to me, Alberta Health Services, that this is the right move." It took a year to get the business plan. Parts of the business plan were only two months old, meaning that this decision was another decision on ideology, not with respect for the taxpayer.

Madam Speaker, we take these dollars, these hard-earned tax dollars, that add up. You know, they don't add up to more dollars. What they add up to is more policemen, more funding for sexual assault victims, more funding for our families and communities. That's exactly what they add up to, and it's a shame that this government hasn't paid attention to it.

In the quarter 3 update last week was the \$771 million that this Finance minister, this government had taken to pay the first part of the Balancing Pool and the power purchase agreements. My goodness, \$771 million divided by – I don't know; what does a policeman make? – \$100,000, \$120,000 a year: how much of that money could have gone to help communities? How much of that could have gone to sexual assault victims' services?

Madam Speaker, we're not going to stand up here and give this hon. Finance minister a blank cheque to put our kids and grandkids a hundred billion in debt, to only look for efficiencies when it might suit them politically, and to continue to kill jobs and investment in Alberta.

Madam Speaker, before I sit down, I'd like to encourage the hon. minister and the government to have a little more transparency when they put these numbers out. Again, I think back to the Q3 update, to the \$500 million that they had, a nominal reserve, I think

it was, in case oil prices fell, and that he needed to transfer what we have left of savings to cover his high spending. When the government didn't do that, it got played as if it was a saving, an efficiency. No, it wasn't. It was just not the use of a nominal account.

Madam Speaker, it's time that we call a spade a spade. Let's say what the true direction of Albertans' money is and where it's going. That comes to nominal accounts. It comes to when we're going to pay our operating spending back. I hope that in the next year we see something from this government that legitimately comes up with a plan to start paying back the 5 and a half billion dollars plus of capital borrowing, yes, last year and the billions and billions of dollars of capital borrowing that this government has put on our economy's back.

Madam Speaker, in closing, you know, I can't accept that in three years this government needs to come back to us and ask for another I think it was a billion and a half dollars in supplement. My goodness, what's that? About 3 per cent, I guess, of our savings. A billion and a half dollars: what could we do with that? What could we do with that money if we'd left it with our hard workers, with Albertan families and communities? What could they do to create jobs and grow their opportunities and choices?

Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to say that I will be voting against this government's request to put us deeper in debt. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, I will now call on the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance to close debate.

Mr. Ceci: Well, seeing that we have had a robust debate on this portion of tonight's work, Madam Speaker, the supplementary supply, of course, provides us – and when I say "us," I mean all of government and the services that government delivers notionally in Agriculture and Forestry, Children's Services, et cetera, et cetera. It provides that support so that that can continue.

At Q3 I stood up and talked about a number of these things, and I also talked about the reduction in the deficit this year of \$1.4 billion, Madam Speaker. That is excellent work by those same departments that require some additional funding to get the job done. For instance – and I know that the Minister of Community and Social Services has talked about this – those monies are to ensure that the statutory services that are in law for Albertans, namely in income supports and in other programs, are provided. To not provide that level of support for people would have been, frankly, wrong because they're a statutory service. Albertans should not be feeling like they shouldn't come forward and request the support of their government when they need it.

When I was a social worker many years ago, Madam Speaker, I can remember talking to many people who said, "You know, I need support, but I'm embarrassed to go and ask the government for it." I said: "You know, you have paid taxes. You have helped build this province. This is statutory, and it is your right to go forward and request the support and to expect the support." The Minister of Community and Social Services fulfilled that obligation that he has to Albertans with this additional supplementary supply, and that goes down the line in terms of other kinds of expenditures that are here.

9:10

As somebody on this side said, I'm very honoured to continue to stand up and represent the views of this government with regard to finance matters and government supports and government services

because those are in the interests of Albertans. Those have the backs of Albertans. Those supports are what Albertans have elected us to continue to do, and we'll continue doing that now and in the future, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

[Motion carried; Bill 4 read a second time]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Speaker. At this time, given the wonderful progress that we've made this evening, I'd like to move that we adjourn until 10 o'clock tomorrow morning.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 9:11 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday morning, March 20, 2018

Day 7

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Jessica Littlewood	Economic Development and Trade for Small Business
Annie McKittrick	Education

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Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

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Babcock	Malkinson
Dang	McPherson
Fraser	Nielsen
Hanson	Rosendahl
Kazim	Woollard
Kleinsteuber	Vacant
Loewen	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

10 a.m.

Tuesday, March 20, 2018

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Deputy Speaker: Bonjour, mes amis.

On this International Francophonie Day may we consider and celebrate the mosaic of cultures and languages that make Alberta and Canada the remarkable community that we have the honour to serve.

Please be seated.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

Bill 1

Energy Diversification Act

[Adjourned debate March 15: Mr. Mason]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise in the House this morning to add my own comments to the debate on Bill 1, the Energy Diversification Act. My colleagues from Calgary-Klein and Edmonton-Manning have outlined good reasons for supporting this legislation: adding ethane to a second round of the petrochemical diversification program and supporting partial bitumen upgrading. As they have both pointed out, Bill 1 has three components that act on the recommendations of the Energy Diversification Advisory Committee. I would like to speak to that third component.

The third area for energy diversification under Bill 1 has a long name, petrochemical feedstock infrastructure, so I'll break it down. The petrochemical industry relies on natural gas liquids. These liquids are mostly ethane and propane. They are called feedstocks because they're the building blocks for other products, products that make our modern life possible. From plastic in kids' toys to fabrics, from antifreeze and fertilizers to cellphone cases. That's the petrochemical feedstock part.

The infrastructure part is how feedstocks are collected. Mostly that's through straddle plants or reprocessing facilities on major natural gas pipelines. Straddle plants extract certain natural gas liquids, including ethane, from the transmission pipelines, and then they ship them to other processing or manufacturing plants. Bigger supplies of natural gas liquids are essential for industry to build and operate world-class petrochemical processing facilities right here in Alberta.

Bill 1 provides the authority to create a petrochemical feedstock infrastructure program to encourage construction of new extraction facilities that will provide new supplies of feedstocks for a growing petrochemical sector in Alberta. The program will provide incentives to attract investments into needed infrastructure such as fuel extraction, straddle plant construction, and fractionation or separation plants.

You see, Madam Speaker, a lot of ethane in our natural gas pipelines is not being recovered, and it needs to be recovered to add new world-scale manufacturing plants here in Alberta, to debottleneck the system, and to avoid sending all that ethane down the pipeline for others to recover and process and extract value

from. The new program under Bill 1 will help companies to build new ethane recovery infrastructure and grow Alberta's ethane processing industry. Bill 1 authorizes grants and loan guarantees up to \$500 million to help make this happen, and it also authorizes the Ministry of Energy, subject to the approval of cabinet, to direct the Alberta Petroleum Marketing Commission to use its financial tools to implement the program. That's a lot of support for a good purpose.

All of this dovetails very nicely with adding ethane to the petrochemical diversification program. My colleague from Calgary-Klein explained how Bill 1 expands that program to attract more petrochemical processing to Alberta. Building the infrastructure that recovers the feedstocks to be processed will be a major factor in building those petrochemical processing facilities. Long-time, stable, and competitive feedstock security is a major concern when industry is thinking about investing in petrochemical processing. Bill 1 is truly a strategic step to realize a more diverse energy industry.

Like my colleague from Edmonton-Manning, I also bring to this debate a personal understanding of the benefits of more feedstock infrastructure. I grew up mostly on a farm near Plamondon, Alberta, not too many years ago, and one of the individuals that I looked up to when I was growing up was my uncle Romeo. Now, my uncle Romeo was the oldest son of my grandparents. He had seven children, all born on the farm. He'd made a promise to his father that he would stay and work on the farm until their youngest child went to university, and he kept that promise. When he was about 32 years old, the youngest child of my grandparents started at the U of A. So he packed up his family, and he moved to Edmonton, and he became a worker for Celanese Canada.

Now, Celanese Canada was a huge petrochemical and chemical and fibre plant that was just on the other side of the river. It's out of Clareview. It actually was set up to take advantage of Alberta's feedstock. Ethane was one of the main components that they worked with. This provided stable, high-quality employment for him, that, you know, he was able to raise a family on.

When I graduated from high school in the late '80s, it was during the bottom of that bust. I mean, those were the bad years, you know, the last couple years of the Getty government and then the austerity under Klein. In the oil patch there was no work to be found. There was, really, almost no work to be found anywhere. The only decent opportunity I was able to find, because my uncle was working at Celanese, was to be able to get on there. That's actually how I got through school myself, working as a summer student for Celanese Canada, making cellulose acetate, which is, you know, a derivative from natural gas feedstock.

What's so important about that and why I relate that story is because this kind of explains why these types of projects are so important. When oil prices and natural gas prices are down, that's when petrochemical and chemical processing tends to be up. By investing in natural gas feedstock infrastructure, what we're doing is providing a supply for a robust Alberta petrochemical industry that can help ensure that, you know, when the next bust happens – it's always cyclical – we have some countercyclical elements of our economy to be able to keep those well-paying jobs, raise families, and go to school.

I think that this type of project is critical. It's in fact one of the main reasons that I put my name in as a candidate in 2015, my great frustration that the previous government had left us in a situation where we could go bust the way that we did. I mean, this is also something that I think has a lot of resonance in the communities that I represent. Of course, I represent a big chunk of the Industrial Heartland, and they're very strong proponents of this type of

infrastructure, for obvious reasons, and so are the communities that surround the Industrial Heartland.

You know, the previous administration didn't do everything wrong. I mean, one of the far-sighted projects that they brought forward was the North West partnership. That's really kept a lot of people employed that otherwise would not find work.

Of course, we have other great news coming out of there because of our own government initiatives. That's the Inter Pipeline, which is going ahead, and then we've got Pembina, that looks like it's going ahead. Then, you know, with any luck, there'll be a lot more projects going ahead there, too. This is also, of course, a critical part of the puzzle and something that's very welcome.

What does it mean? It means jobs that often do more than grow a community. They're jobs that can help a community survive by keeping the next generation closer to home, attracting new workers and their families, providing much-needed jobs to indigenous workers from nearby First Nations or Métis settlements. You know, for me and for many Albertans the best benefits will be local and personal. It means, you know, that my family members and my friends and the people that I care about will find decent employment.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, I'm proud to stand in support of Bill 1. I'm excited by the vision of a growing petrochemical processing industry fuelled by a strong feedstock supply. I'm even more excited by the benefits to communities and families at the local level. I believe that when they consider the benefits to Albertans and to the communities they represent, my colleagues will share in my excitement. It's what Albertans want.

Thank you.

10:10

The Deputy Speaker: Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), questions or comments?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Good morning. It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 1, the Energy Diversification Act, an act to diversify energy in Alberta. It's interesting that we're here today proposing all sorts of various goodies here in Alberta to offer to various corporations in Alberta in an effort to diversify our economy. The irony, that we are here handing out goodies to incentivize companies to invest here, is spectacular. There's an argument to be made, a very strong argument, that many Albertans share, that the reason why we're trying to incentivize to bring investment back to Alberta is because the NDP government has scared it away in the first place.

The economic damage caused by this NDP government is so significant that we find ourselves in a situation where we need to beg people to come back and invest here, but we can't do that without stability, Madam Speaker. We can't do that, and we've seen that very clearly with this pipeline struggle. Industry has recognized in many cases that this isn't a stable place to invest their money. You could listen to any investor, and they will tell you that they are pulling out of oil in Alberta. Why? Because it's not stable. It will not offer proper return on investment.

We find ourselves here, this government, trying to throw whatever they can in an effort to bring some jobs back to Alberta. I hope it works. I really do. My heart is quite saddened, listening to my constituents in Airdrie talk about job losses, now into two, three years of job loss. Madam Speaker, they can't find a replacement. They can't access the programs that this government says are there to upgrade their skills or change markets or, you know, that type of thing. It's simply not there.

I think there are a lot of things in Bill 1, the Energy Diversification Act, that are interesting, Madam Speaker. There are

some good things. You know, there's use of a mix of incentives to encourage the petrochemical industry to establish new long-term facilities and to grow in Alberta. Well, while I recognize that this is good, I still point out that we shouldn't have to be in this situation in the first place. There are challenges in this bill that need to be further investigated and expert witnesses brought in. I would certainly like to hear from this government's Energy Diversification Advisory Committee, that has reported back to the government that this is necessary. I would be curious to know . . . [interjection] Sorry. It's my floor right now, Minister. Thank you.

Madam Speaker, while I continue with my time on this floor, talking about the damaging policies that this NDP government has put forward to scare investment away, now we are here with Bill 1, an act to diversify in an effort to try and bring them back. I hope it works. I really do.

I have some concerns about loan guarantees, some concerns about equity investment and grants. I have some concerns that these projects will even get shovels in the ground, Madam Speaker. We've seen that with the pipeline. We don't have shovels in the ground. Why? This government has done a very good job of scaring them away, actively supporting protestors against this pipeline in various parts of this province.

So we find ourselves with Bill 1, an act to diversify our energy industry, because investment has been scared away in many other areas by many members of this government, and right from the top, Madam Speaker. Investment is not stable in Alberta because of the NDP government. I can assure you that members of the Official Opposition will help aid this province during the reign of this government in doing what we can to help Albertans, to get them back to work so that they can take care of their families, so that they can buy groceries.

You know, it's sad they're going to pay more for these groceries thanks to the carbon tax in this province, Madam Speaker. I mean, any companies that they're going to attract here through this Energy Diversification Act are also certainly going to be paying the carbon tax, and that would need to be addressed. That will be a factor as to whether or not the money that the government will give them is enough in the first place to actually make money in this province. They're not coming here for government handouts that are not stable and not proper in the first place. But there's a case to be made that this bill should certainly be referred to a committee for further study.

With that, I would like to move an amendment. [interjection] Madam Speaker, I've been informed that it just became spring.

Would you like me to wait?

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

This will be known as referral amendment 1.

Go ahead, hon. member.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Madam Speaker, I will read it into the record. I move that the motion for second reading of Bill 1, Energy Diversification Act, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 1, Energy Diversification Act, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

Madam Speaker, this should be a very simple amendment for the government to vote for because just yesterday – I've been informed 17 hours ago – this government moved two amendments, on a motion and a private member's bill, to refer to committee. It was very important that there was further study done. And, I must say, a very simple motion they had to refer to a standing committee. The

irony in this is just absolutely fantastic. The government takes issue with very, very tiny, little, simple motions. I get that it's hard and very difficult. I get that. Albertans understand that it's hard for this government to do the right thing, too. However, work needs to get done. It needs to be proper and it needs to be right and there needs to be an opportunity for members of this Assembly, all members of this Assembly, to hear from expert witnesses, hear testimony, to hear from the NDP government's Energy Diversification Advisory Committee on the creation of this.

Surely, Madam Speaker, after the speeches that the government members made yesterday over the importance of referring to committee and proper consultation and all the things that they find very difficult, they would the very next day have no problem supporting the opposition's amendment to refer to committee so that things get done properly. I do this out of concern for the government because they have a history of not consulting with Albertans and moving ahead with very risky ideological policies that put Albertans at risk, and I know the government does not want to put Albertans at risk. I really don't believe that they do. So I think that there would be no issue with members of this Assembly supporting an amendment to refer to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship. There should be no problem with ensuring that Albertans are being put first in the legislation of the government.

10:20

I'm concerned with Bill 1 in its effort to be a Band-Aid solution to the very real problems in this province. We know that for the past several years this NDP government has done almost everything possible to drive investment away. I don't know if Bill 1 is enough to get anything back, but I could be wrong. I could be very wrong. This is the kind of work that can be done in a committee, in an all-member committee, where we can all hear. I bet you, Madam Speaker, that most of the government members, the backbench, has not even heard from this government's Energy Diversification Advisory Committee or any other stakeholders that would be impacted by this legislation. Or perhaps, maybe, some of their friends are already lined up at the trough, and they'll be benefiting from this. [interjections] But I could be wrong. I could be very, very wrong. It sounds like industry has lined up here. [interjections]

I think if the government and the ministers who are speaking right now over me would like to put their money where their mouth is, they would prove it in committee. Perhaps if they would have moved the motion yesterday to study more than one thing in committee, we'd be really efficient in getting this thing done. But this government isn't interested in what Albertans have to say, Madam Speaker. This government isn't interested in respecting the constituents in opposition members' ridings. This government has a hard time with consulting Albertans and doing the right thing.

Madam Speaker, myself and my colleagues will always stand up for Albertans. We will always fight so that they are heard, that their voices are brought forward, and that this government listens. The members of the Official Opposition in the United Conservative Party have Albertans' backs. They know it, and they will put their money where their mouth is in 2019 at the polls, where it matters and when it matters, and this party and its members will take Alberta back. We will give it back to the people of Alberta. It will be prosperous. Families will be healthy. Families will be happy. Families will be working. There will be no carbon tax. Life will be more affordable, and life will be less hard because we've ousted this NDP government.

With that, I urge all members of this Assembly to vote for this referral amendment, do the right thing, bring the voices of Albertans forward. Let's debate this and hear expert testimony in committee.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

An Hon. Member: We're not speaking to the amendment?

The Deputy Speaker: Under 29(2)(a) first.

No questions or comments?

Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?
Calgary-Klein.

Mr. Coolahan: Yeah. Thank you, Madam Speaker. That was interesting.

Okay. About this amendment, I mean, really I think that the Member for Airdrie made it clear that this isn't actually a serious amendment, the referral amendment. It's actually just sort of a petulant display of tit-for-tat on the fact that we referred one of their motions to committee. I think the member has an issue understanding the fact that this bill is actually round 2 of the petrochemical diversification program. Round 1 was extremely successful – extremely successful – and we want to continue on that success. We want to enhance that success.

The assertion that nobody has spoken to experts or the diversification committee is false. Actually, after the throne speech I spoke with the diversification committee, and what they said to me was: make sure that when you're talking about this bill, you add the fact that it was us along with industry that came up with everything in this bill, together. So it wasn't just the government putting this together or the committee at all.

If you don't want to believe the merits of this bill and why we should be moving forward, how about we listen to some of the industry experts? I was actually at the press conference at which these people spoke, and I'll give you a couple of quotes here, Madam Speaker.

Bob Masterson, CEO, Chemistry Industry Association of Canada, says:

This is an incredibly courageous move on the part of the Alberta government. We believe that governments at all levels in Canada need to work with industry to compete for new chemistry sector investments. To do nothing means that some other jurisdiction will use our energy resources as feedstock to create value. Taking a balanced approach to share risk and secure new investments here in Alberta will create wealth and opportunity for Albertans. It's the right thing to do.

I think we're on the right side, Madam Speaker.

David Chappell, senior vice-president of Inter Pipeline, said:

We are pleased that another round of this program has been announced because the incentives it provides, combined with abundant low-cost feedstock, place Alberta among the top locations to construct world-scale petrochemical facilities. Investments like Inter Pipeline's Heartland Petrochemical Complex will support strong communities and Albertans for many years to come.

Finally, Rod Frank, the mayor of Strathcona county, said:

We applaud the government for its decision to support more value-added processing. We know this will help drive major firms toward investing in our region, bringing new opportunities and benefits to the people of Strathcona County and communities around the Industrial Heartland.

Madam Speaker, I just want to say that I'm going to take the advice of these experts and the advice of the diversification committee. This government and this side of the House is not going to delay moving this forward, delay more investment in Alberta, by referring this to committee. It just doesn't make any sense. Let's read the bill, let's understand how successful the first round of this has been, and let's move this forward.

With that said, I will not be supporting this referral amendment. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Under 29(2)(a)? The Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. That was interesting. It's interesting that this government is touting, bragging about their big corporate friends and the money that they are giving to them. You know what? That's the difference between this NDP government and the United Conservative Party: myself and my colleagues have the backs of Albertans. We care about the people, not the big money and the corporations. This government loves to parade around with their big corporations, not the people.

Where were the people? Where was one quote from a regular, average, everyday Albertan? Where was one quote from an unemployed – and there are many of them – average, everyday Albertan? I heard crickets from this government when it comes to talking about actual everyday Albertans, Madam Speaker, but when it comes to big corporations, these guys are hand in hand on stage, taking pictures every chance they get.

I don't know about you, Madam Speaker, but I know that Albertans are interested in what's going to support their families, what's going to allow them to buy their overpriced, carbon-taxed groceries, thanks to this NDP government, at the grocery store, not running around with their big corporate buddies in an effort – or maybe an "I'm sorry." I think it's an "I'm sorry," maybe. Maybe that could be the attempt. "I'm sorry for really, really messing things up the last couple of years, but I've got some grant money you can have now if you'll stand on stage and take a picture with me." I suspect that's how things are working, and Albertans are smarter than that, absolutely smarter than that. I don't think that the average, everyday Albertan is getting duped by this NDP government, but I think that's something we could figure out in committee, maybe.

10:30

I think we should bring in these corporations that the government likes to hold hands with. Let's ask them what this means for Alberta families, what this means for Alberta jobs. That's not what anybody in the government has said anything about yet. We've been talking about big corporations that this government likes to partner with.

An Hon. Member: My case in point.

Mrs. Pitt: Sorry. Give money to.

They considered success in a previous piece of legislation by the amount of money they actually gave out. That's insanity, that you're successful because you gave money to corporations.

Well, you know what? My constituents in Airdrie are not going to be happy to hear that, Madam Speaker, my constituents who are selling their homes, moving into a rental property to pay rent just to get by because there are no jobs, no good, mortgage-paying jobs. This government doesn't care about those people. This government doesn't care at all, and it's very evident by this debate. I'm saddened – I'm saddened – that the government of the day has the backs of big business, big corporations, and not the backs of Albertans. It's unfortunate. It's more than unfortunate.

Again, like I said before, there is hope. There is hope in the 2019 election when we wipe this NDP government from this government and replace it with a government that has the backs of Albertans. I hope that the rest of this debate will be focused more on Albertans than the friends of the NDP government because that's the debate that should be taking place in this Assembly. It's about Albertans. It's about moms and dads. It's about kids. It's about grandmas and grandpas. It's about Jane and Joe and Sue and Bobby. It's about

being able to pay for hockey, Madam Speaker. It's about being able to pay for swimming lessons. It's about being able to afford to get them there as well. It's about being able to afford to give to the food bank for those that really are less fortunate. Unfortunately, food bank rates are at an all-time high in this province, an all-time high, thanks to this . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to discuss this amendment put forward by my colleague from Airdrie. Now, this amendment, which asks the Legislature to refer this bill to committee, is another in, well, I guess I would say, a long line of bills that probably should have been referred to committee. It's a good idea, seeing how eager the government is to send things to committee as of late. So the timing on this couldn't be better.

Now, this bill sets out certain goals that the government certainly believes in, and in order for this bill to achieve the goals that it sets out, it really should be sent to committee for scrutiny. As seems to be typical practice of this government and its legislation, this particular bill runs true to form of either being purposely vague or being an omnibus bill. I think we can safely say that this is not an omnibus bill, so we default to what else it could be, and that is that this bill seems to be a little bit vague. It's a robust eight pages long. To be perfectly honest, Madam Speaker, this bill reminds me of what a minister of the province of Alberta's job description might look like. It is veiled in under 10 pages but is known as the Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act.

A good portion of this bill, quite frankly, appears to be mostly redundant, as the Government Organization Act already gives ministers the ability to create programs. Let's just see here. I believe I have a preamble to what the Government Organization Act actually allows the minister to do. The Government Organization Act provides for the establishment of government departments, including the designation of ministers, the appointment of deputy ministers, the hiring of staff, procurement of expert services, and the formation of boards, committees, or councils to advise on and/or carry out matters under the minister's administration. The act also addresses matters such as the delegation of powers and duties, the development and delivery of programs and services, the formation of agreements, collection of fees, provision of grants, and acquisition and disposition of property. Ministry specific powers, duties, and functions are outlined in the accompanying schedules of the act.

Clearly, a minister can create programs, create services, create agreements, et cetera, et cetera, as outlined in the Government Organization Act. The point is, once again, that there seems to be some redundancy here with Bill 1.

Now, that being said, I yield to the fact that there is some substance here. It's merely a question of what that substance amounts to. Since industry met behind closed doors with the EDAC, or the Energy Diversification Advisory Committee, it's clearly nearly impossible to say what industry and government talked about during those meetings, when, in what we could consider collectively, they came up with the framework for this bill.

That, as it turns out, is an important aspect to the amendment that we have put forward here today, the amendment to refer this bill to the appropriate legislative committee. Now, that would give the committee the opportunity to have a conversation with this Energy Diversification Advisory Committee so that we could all hear about the decision that was made. The committee members could ask questions of the advisory committee, could ask questions of that committee about if they believe that the bill as presented covers the

discussions that they had with government. The committee could also ask if there were discussions about ideas that could have also been added to Bill 1 but were not included in the bill.

It's, for lack of a better term, a bit of a consultation that includes members from all facets of this Assembly. The public, too, would likely be interested in being involved and have questions along with opposition parties of every stripe and would benefit from the insight and thought processes that led the consulting industries to believe that this is a good bill. That, Madam Speaker, is what this amendment is all about. It gives the opportunity to explore and ask questions that the government may or may not have thought to ask or discuss during their meetings.

After all, Members, we are accountable to the public. I think my colleague from Airdrie made that clear. I note, thus, under section 4(1) of this bill that it states: "The Minister shall annually, and more frequently if the Premier directs, report to the Executive Council on the Minister's progress in establishing and implementing any programs under section 2." Anyway, I guess, if the public disagrees with the direction that this bill takes us, we will see that determined in about 18 months.

I would like to touch on one of the main aspects that this bill hopes to achieve, that being potential investment in partial upgrading of our resources. Now, I have to admit that the cynic in me wonders if this bill is nothing more than a plan B of sorts, you know, in case the government's much-touted and trumpeted social licence ideology fails. What if this social licence, that we hear about on a regular basis, fails to produce the actual completion of the pipeline or pipelines? Pipelines that have been completed under the federal government, that this government doesn't like to hear about, are the Kinder Morgan anchor loop; the Enbridge Clipper, that was completed in 2010; the TransCanada Keystone, which was completed in 2010; the Enbridge line 9B reversal, which was completed in 2015. Hopefully, to be perfectly honest, the cynic in me is wrong and this diversification is a roaring success.

You know what? With a downturned economy, Alberta could use some of that kind of language. But like I've said already and my colleagues will also say as well, I'm sure, I and many Albertans would feel more confident if we could ask industry what they think through a referral to the standing committee as in the amendment that my colleague from Airdrie has made.

10:40

I think it would be fair to say that there are some outstanding questions on this bill that need to be asked. For instance, does partial upgrading in fact increase the price per barrel of Alberta oil by \$10 to \$15? Does partial upgrading free up pipeline capacity since diluent is no longer needed to make the round trip? I guess the question here would be: why are we considering investing in partial upgrading in order to free up pipeline space when perhaps the discussion should be about investing in full refining instead? That seems to be an important aspect here as there are questions about what the actual economic benefits will be.

The Alberta Chambers of Commerce, however, has a number of concerns. First, the chamber states: "The full mechanics and economic modelling for the announced funding are not fully understood at this time. We do not know which recommendations made by the advisory committee to the Alberta government have been adopted." Bingo. The Alberta chamber feels that it cannot see the good or bad implications of this announcement for Alberta business and the provincial economy without complete information and understanding of the implications of the announcement. It's a message that we try to give here on a regular basis, right back to consultations in 2015 on Bill 6. We ask for economic impact studies

of every kind of bill that passes through this House, and now the Alberta chamber is stating the same kinds of things.

The comment made by the Alberta chamber adds more credibility to the fact that this bill should be sent to committee. The chamber states that it is "not aware of any economic analysis that conclusively demonstrates . . . greater economic benefit to Alberta as a result of refining here."

The chamber is also blaming "the cost environment [as] the primary reason private investment has not invested in upgrading and refining capacity" in Alberta already. They go on by suggesting that

the cost environment in this province continues to become less competitive as a result of layering costs arising at all levels of government, the provincial government included. These costs take form in regulatory complexity and regulatory delays, cost of labour and labour regulation, and taxes.

The words of the Alberta chamber.

Another reason for this bill to be sent to the appropriate committee is that the chamber raises a lot of good points. How would members of this Assembly ever know if those good points were ever raised in discussions between government and the EDAC? Members of a committee could be asking those types of questions so that Albertans could understand that what is being proposed here is good for all of us.

Not of less consequence is another comment by the chamber.

Limited pipeline capacity is the number one barrier to securing full value for Alberta and Canada's natural resources. That means securing Albertan's future is best achieved by building transportation infrastructure. Furthermore, for taxpayers, building pipeline infrastructure is the most effective and fiscally prudent approach to energy economic development because business takes all the risk.

What a great comment.

Even a noted economist cautioned that the citation of a University of Calgary study estimates the impact of partial upgrading could be worth up to \$22 billion in GDP growth for Alberta over a period of 20 years; however, that economist prefers to refer to a lower number, somewhere in the region of \$9 billion, which removes the economically induced effects instead. So here we go again: economists that are on opposite sides of whether or not upgrading, partial or not, is of any value to the economy.

Another additional factor to consider is how the newly launched U.S. tax reform bill changes what we know or what we think we know. This change that has occurred south of the border now means that Alberta is no longer the most competitive jurisdiction before incentives are even factored in.

Low natural gas prices have spurred the petrochemical industry globally. The first wave of investment in North America totalled \$240 billion Canadian, with 62 per cent foreign direct investment. Canada's share, however, was only 2 per cent, not the historic 10 per cent. That was due to co-ordinated and comprehensive investment attraction programs offered throughout the United States in the order of 10 to 15 per cent of the capital cost of projects. According to IHS Markit, Alberta has been the most competitive jurisdiction for the petrochemical sector. This has been eroded by incentives in other jurisdictions now.

Despite having the lowest feedstock costs and the low-tax environment, the market spoke, and Alberta and Canada have lost their historic share of petrochemical developments for a variety of reasons, including no incentives to counteract the high labour and capital costs; lower productivity due to winter, which we cannot avoid; regulatory complexity delays; labour relations; in other words, red tape. I have a member, that sits just in front of me, from Cardston-Taber-Warner, that has been on this red tape file for two

years and pushing and pushing and asking questions of the government to reduce that complexity, and it goes unnoticed.

Taxes, of course. The U.S. tax reform bill now means that Alberta is no longer the most competitive jurisdiction before incentives are even factored in. These are long-term global projects, with highly skilled, well-paying jobs, that are being lured to Texas, Louisiana, and Pennsylvania and not Alberta because of investment incentives in place in those states like performance-based grants for land and/or infrastructure improvements, job training and facilities, industrial tax exemptions, modernization tax credits, payroll rebates, performance-based incentives, and on and on. These are incentives that are being offered across an invisible line, that are making a big difference in the industry itself in North America. The United States is proving that they are interested in business coming and doing business in their country.

That's something that we've lost. We need to try and . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

Mr. Taylor: Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, I was really enjoying the speech from our Member for Little Bow, that came as a result of our Member for Airdrie bringing this forth, this amendment. I felt like he had some more thoughts that he would like to be able to share. He just didn't have time to finish, and I wonder if he would be able to finish these thoughts.

The Deputy Speaker: The Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the Member for Battle River-Wainwright, or whatever it's going to become.

Yes. As I was saying, the United States is proving that they are interested in business coming and doing business in their country, something that we've lost here. I mean, a lot of this can be blamed on the Trudeau Liberals as well. There are a lot of changes being made that actually add red tape, and as I was saying about my colleague from Cardston-Taber-Warner, red tape in any country is certainly – certainly, regulation is required. We have as good a regulation here in Alberta regarding environment as there is. Adding a regulation and taking one away, one for one, has always been a good idea. I know there are places in this country that actually remove two for every one that's added.

An Hon. Member: Quebec and B.C.

Mr. Schneider: Quebec and B.C., I guess.

The fact that the States is incentivising business to come is a reality in what we face in this global economy, Madam Speaker.

While I reiterate that I hope sincerely that the goals of this bill are achieved as, obviously, any benefit that could help spur industry and job creation, quite frankly, in this province would be considered a good thing, I can't help but wonder, given the last almost three years of this government's guidance, whether these goals are actually achievable.

10:50

That, again, is why I believe it is so important that we now make sure that we get this right, I guess, and refer this bill to the proper standing committee for some more study, ask questions of government, ask questions of industry, the EDAC, find out what those discussions were. You know, there's always a chance that there could be ways to improve this bill. That's what our ultimate goal here always is, to try to make the bill as palatable as possible for all Albertans because clearly there's a lot at stake here.

We can look at each other's sources of economic numbers with regard to how many jobs have been displaced in Alberta, about how policies have driven business out of Alberta rather than into the fold, I guess. We've heard the Alberta chambers suggest that complications to business are unknown because they aren't aware of any economic study to tackle that question.

We can again consider the voice of business in Alberta, which is the Alberta chambers, that talked about limited pipeline capacity being the number one barrier to securing full value for Alberta's and, quite frankly, for Canada's natural resources. That means that securing Alberta's future is best achieved by building transportation infrastructure. Furthermore, for taxpayers, building pipeline infrastructure is the most effective, according to the chamber, and fiscally prudent approach to energy economic development because business takes all the risk.

We need this bill to get to committee so that a bunch of other great questions and a bunch of other great ideas that are out there, that this bill raises can be looked at more closely on behalf of all Albertans so that every member that represents every political stripe on the committee is represented and can ask those questions and, hopefully, move forward with – maybe the bill is exactly where it should be. That's always a consideration. It's just that as we stand here today, I've just named what the one organization called Alberta chambers – and that's kind of the voice of small business in the province – sees as a problem here.

I think that's all I wanted to talk about. Thank you, Madam Chair. I encourage all members . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Amendment?

An Hon. Member: On the referral.

Dr. Swann: Oh, no. I'm speaking to the bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak to the amendment on Bill 1, the Energy Diversification Act – and I believe it is a good amendment – to send Bill 1 to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship. We know that industry has been speaking to the government through the Energy Diversification Advisory Committee, who has come up with 36 recommendations. Why not give industry the opportunity to come before the Legislature and tell us, through committee, why Bill 1 is so important to them and why the programs the minister is announcing are essential to the growth of the economy and the future of Alberta? I do believe that it's important that all members of this Assembly are fully informed on the decisions being made here, and having the opportunity to witness through committee and hear from stakeholders in committee would give us that understanding.

You know, the implications of this bill are not small. There's a potential of \$2 billion in play here in grants and loan guarantees, so I think it's important that we recognize the size of the commitments that are being taken here and that we fully understand the direction that this minister and the Executive Council would like to go. You know, I don't know about you, Madam Speaker, but \$2 billion to me is a lot of money, and I don't take that lightly.

So I want to hear from industry, the natural gas industry and particularly those who are involved in the different fields at play, the Duvernay and the Montney, and to understand why they need

programs such as this to actually move into a diversification model and why we aren't already stripping the liquids out of the gas before shipping to Chicago. Is it crucial that this type of a program come forward in order to get that work started and continue to evolve our energy industry? I would like to hear that from industry and get an understanding of that. I want to hear from industry and why they need those grants and loan guarantees to construct straddle plants needed to strip the liquids.

Bringing industry into committee ensures that we can eliminate any biases from the decision-making. Currently we're faced with a bill that would allow the minister to proceed with loan guarantees and grants. It does puzzle me a little bit, why we are strapped, why the minister or Executive Council is not able to move forward tax credits. That's probably a logistics thing, but the fact that the minister and Executive Council can move forward with grants – I would like some clarification on how we're going to ensure that bias is left out of the equation and that we are moving forward with the best projects for all Albertans.

After all, Madam Speaker, as much as myself, members of the UCP would like to meet with, say, Alberta Federation of Labour on important matters, do we really trust the agenda of its president and the co-chair of the Energy Diversification Advisory Committee, who is known to be an NDP operative? I think everybody here could recognize that there are concerns from this side of the House with regard to the co-chair on that committee in that there could be some bias there. I believe that by bringing it to committee with some industry witness there, we could possibly remove some of that concern of bias in the decision-making. And doing that, sending Bill 1 to committee, then helps to restore trust in the process, I believe.

But it's not only the upstream oil and gas that is of concern here. We have the petrochemical industry, who is very much chomping at the bit to get all that cheap and plentiful feedstock to their plastic plants. You know, I was able to, during our break, partake in the Industrial Heartland Association's annual stakeholder engagement session, where they report to the community, essentially, the projects that are being proposed, the updates on how things are going in the heartland. We also had an opportunity, as many of the government members – the MLAs were also invited for some elected-official engagement and went on a bus tour. I felt that that was very good engagement and helped me to learn more about the different stages of where things are at in the Industrial Heartland, part of where some of these projects will exist.

The Member for Calgary-Klein talked about the first round of these programs being very successful. What I did learn is that I believe it was Inter Pipeline has projects started. We drove right past there with the bus, a project that I believe is going to be good for the continued evolution of the energy industry within Alberta. In my view, that project may have gone forward without the incentives. It may not have. They came to a final investment decision because they were at that stage in their project development. The other project: the way I understand it right now is that that final investment decision will be made later on in the year. So we don't know exactly where the success of these programs really is until many years later.

11:00

You know, there are parts of Bill 1 that I fully endorse. There are other parts that I have concerns with, so I think that it is important that we are able to digest some of that through committee work and ensure that we are being very responsible with the resources that Albertans have entrusted to us and that we do the fiscally proper thing on ensuring that we are, from my standpoint, not just allowing our Executive Council to make these decisions for us and trusting them but that we get more information for ourselves.

I spoke about Inter Pipeline. Inter Pipeline does believe that with their production of polypropylene products, they have a chance to change the global market and that it will change the fundamental nature of the plastics market. What we quite possibly are going to see here is that other parts of industry will come to Alberta, primarily for the low feedstock costs. That's one thing we did learn with the engagement sessions. What is bringing investment to Alberta right now is the low feedstock price. We also learned in the Alberta's Industrial Heartland Association's stakeholder annual report that that's not enough, that there is concern over the tax regime that's within Canada as opposed to the North American market at this time. There was a gentleman there that showed very effectively how that tax differential made a significant difference on the return to investment and tipped the scales in favour of the United States market at this time. Those types of decisions, those final investment decisions: they're long-range decisions, but they do take into account what's happening currently in each of the marketplaces.

We have low feedstock costs in Alberta. There's no doubt about it. The world recognizes that, but they also recognize that we also have winter here. Low productivity in winter is a concern with capital builds. The other concern – and I know the chamber of commerce has spoken to this – is the fact that we have significant complexity to our regulatory regimes and to some of the approvals that need to be sought and the timelines that it takes to get those approvals in place.

We talk about Inter Pipeline, recognizing that there's a potential to change the fundamental nature of the plastics market across the globe and that the world could rush to Alberta. With the cheap feedstock, there's also potential that other industries will be coming here, and we can look at the manufacturing of maybe car parts in Nisku or what can start to evolve from these types of projects. It's only left up to the imagination. Then we have to ensure that the infrastructure is in place to allow that economy to actually thrive with proper transportation, whether that's pipeline, rails, marine, road, air travel, and ensure that that's all there.

For many MLAs Bill 1 and also the announcement from the minister are possibly the first time they have heard of the partial upgrading technology, and I believe that if we move this into committee, we could learn more about that. We are asked to make an informed decision. The experts have not come in to actually explain what it is and how it works and the benefits of why the investment community, Wall Street, Bay Street, and so on are not able to get the money for it and get some understanding of why the loan guarantees are a necessity of Bill 1 and how that can – is this necessary to overcome that hurdle, or is this something that is not necessary and that would not put an extra liability on the bottom line of our balance sheet?

Let's get MEG Energy also in here to tell us the values and virtues of partial upgrading, and let's learn how it is different from full upgrading to synthetic crude or to western Canadian select, whichever. Maybe industry can tell us about only doing partial upgrading instead of full refining to the final product. There's, you know, much debate about the potential of full refining in Alberta. It's very important that we fully understand as legislators here that if we are going to get involved with directing private investment, let's say, incentivizing private investment, we fully understand the implications of those decisions so that we can have a better understanding of the consequences of those decisions.

I understand that the cost of capital in Alberta is higher, absolutely. That possibly gives us an explanation of the higher cost of public construction. But the question is: why? We need to get a good understanding of that. Is it the regulatory red tape, or is it the transportation of the steel? Is it the low productivity and high cost

of our labour? Is it winter? Yes, winter does have an effect. Will these programs give the support needed to overcome that cost differential? The only people that are able to tell us that are the investors themselves.

Like I said before, you know, we can't consider success of a program based on uptake and applications. The success of a program is going to come many years down the road. But we as legislators are required to try and make the decisions that will allow us to stay as competitive as possible in the global market without overreach.

We also need to hear from diluent shippers and producers and how this will impact them, if it is going to change their operations in the industry. We should be concerned for their business viability also and how that will affect it because that is a consequence of the decisions being made here. When we take public funds to incentivize a competitor, which would be partially upgrading and removing the need for diluent, we have made a decision here that's going to significantly impact that investor's decision-making and his past decision-making.

The Deputy Speaker: Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Yeah. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity. I was interested in what the hon. member said, but I wanted to ask him to reflect on a few other things. For example, in the bill itself and the discussion around the bill what's missing for me is the evidence that the government has made the effort to know what's gone on in the past for diversification. For example, during this session – not this session but, rather, this term of office; the session just started a week ago – we've tabled documents. One chart comes to mind particularly, one that talks about Alberta's economy in 2004 – the size of Alberta's economy back then was in the neighbourhood of \$60 billion – and the fact that back then, when Alberta's economy, GDP, was about \$60 billion, the oil and gas industry occupied about one-third of that. So by those rough numbers the oil and gas industry was about \$20 billion and the rest of Alberta's economy was about \$40 billion.

On the document that was tabled in the House, it shows that Alberta's gross domestic product 10 years later, in 2014, was in the neighbourhood of \$660 billion and that oil and gas had dropped to 25 per cent of that total. Again, backing up the math as best I can standing on my feet here, you figure that at a quarter of that \$660 billion, the oil and gas industry, then, had grown from about \$20 billion to something over \$160 billion in those 10 years. Of course, Madam Speaker, that really indicates that there was diversification, probably, even within the oil and gas industry.

11:10

If you look at the rest of Alberta's economy – and I know that the government likes to say that nothing happened before 2015 – the fact is that on diversification of Alberta's economy, the non oil and gas part of Alberta's economy back in 2004 was in the neighbourhood of \$40 billion. Using the numbers that I described earlier, it means that the non oil and gas part of the economy was somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$500 billion, just short of that or just around that. In other words, Alberta's economy outside of oil and gas had grown from about \$40 billion to about \$500 billion during those 10 years, which, of course, included a dramatic amount of diversification.

Now, I know that the government doesn't want to understand that, they don't want to believe that, and they don't want to agree with that because they like to tell Albertans that there wasn't any diversification before they earned the right to be government, but

the fact is that there was a tremendous amount of diversification that had happened before the current people in charge of the government had arrived as people in charge of the government. Of course, since then they have done their best to undo that good work by driving 35-plus billion dollars of investment outside of Alberta and, really, undoing the horsepower that actually drives diversification, because nothing makes diversification easier than when money is flowing like water and there are different businesses in all sectors of the economy making money. A lot of it is spinoff from oil and gas, surely, but it actually provided a lot of horsepower for other industries, of course, and a lot of diversification that took place.

When we're thinking about this amendment, I want to know how the hon. member feels about these really important aspects not being discussed and potentially being ignored by the government and about the value of discussion in committee, where we actually talk about these things and actually talk about different industries. The \$500 billion from 2014: obviously, it's a little bit different now. Certainly, some elements are probably smaller since this government arrived, with all the investment that they've driven out, but the fact is that there are probably some areas that have survived as well. You know, before we start offering the incentives and the subsidies, I think it would be, in my view, better if we actually took some time to demonstrate that we had a better understanding.

As the hon. member speaking said, there are certainly good projects coming forward, the Inter Pipeline project to take the liquids out of the natural gas and create plastics and other things. Of course, under this government's time in office that will actually be harder to do because energy costs have gone up because of the carbon tax, and that will actually make it harder for people to buy the energy to melt the polypropylene and to make plastic products. That will actually make it harder for diversification.

Nonetheless, the government indicates they're making an effort through this bill, so I just wonder, to the hon. member that was speaking, you know, whether he thought . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Madam Speaker. In general I think there's strong support for diversifying our economy. We would argue in the Liberal caucus that there is a fundamental redesign, though, needed in our tax system to actually provide the incentives so that we have sustained change in our economic diversity.

These subsidies will provide less sustained and less viable and more risky stimulus. One of the areas that we have advocated for some time was a carbon levy that's revenue neutral, thereby shifting taxes that would enable the province to reduce its revenues from personal and corporate income taxes but would stimulate, again, more of the economy. This is something that taxpayers really care about and, relative to lowering corporate taxes, would encourage economic diversification more organically instead of the interventionist approach, which doubles down on corporate subsidies.

We need to challenge in the same way the Energy Diversification Act on the grounds that this act is largely unnecessary. As everyone knows, the minister can implement such policy measures at any time and indeed did so prior to the bill being tabled. There was a list of about six different kinds of programs to be established, with some specific, such as the petrochemicals diversification program, and some general, to increase access to capital. If the intent is to compel the Energy minister to establish certain energy diversification programs, I'm unclear why this would be necessary, again, since the minister is already doing this.

Bill 1 is also silent on a timeline for when the Energy minister is supposed to establish certain energy diversification programs, without specifying that this would be immediate or soon or as soon as practicable. The minister's obligation to establish programs really ends up being an open-ended one. Suddenly the requirement that "the Minister shall establish programs" starts to sound a lot more like the minister may establish programs without a timeline. The simple fact is that the government already can and will establish programs that it considers priorities and not because a statute of its own creation says that it has to. The standing legislative authority is provided in section 8 of the Government Organization Act, which deals with ministerial powers and states very clearly that "a Minister may establish or operate any programs and services the Minister considers desirable in order to carry out matters under the Minister's administration."

It's also worth pointing out that the Energy Diversification Act wasn't required for the government to make its first announcement of \$500 million in royalty credits for the petrochemical diversification program back in February 2016. Yet now Albertans are being told that such visionary legislation is needed to launch a second round of the petrochemical diversification program. This is another example where the government has chosen to extend a program, for example the summer temporary employment program, and this they did by simply renewing funding for it, without the need for a massive theatrical production.

It's interesting that the former leader of the NDP was quoted in the 2015 provincial election declaring in relation to the Sturgeon refinery: "I think it's a mistake to get directly involved in loan guarantees and government financing of private projects," which is a complete reversal of where they are now. This was from the *Calgary Herald* of April 2015. In the case of the Sturgeon refinery we know that the government's decision to backstop the project was largely a political one made by a very small number of bureaucrats and Edmonton region Conservative MLAs. In reality, the decision and any future ones that involve energy diversification should be evidence based and guided by truly independent expert opinion. That's hard to come by under these kinds of political influences.

This brings us to the recommendations of the Energy Diversification Advisory Committee. Was that committee co-chaired by the Alberta Federation of Labour president, a close ally of the NDP and vocal supporter of more government-backed value grants, loan guarantees, royalty credits, and equity investments? Was that advice political, or was it expert? How do we distinguish between the two?

It's interesting that the preamble of the Energy Diversification Act includes a kind of disclaimer that essentially says: the Energy Diversification Advisory Committee told us to invest more public money in energy subsidies, so that's what we're doing, but don't blame us if it goes wrong.

In 2018 the University of Calgary School of Public Policy revealed that Alberta already spends more than any other province in Canada on business subsidies, which, of course, includes all those financial tools – grants, loan guarantees, tax credits – that the NDP felt compelled to re-endorse the use of in the Energy Diversification Act. If Alberta's per person subsidies to business are already the highest, wouldn't that suggest that the province is already making considerable use of these financial tools even without the Energy Diversification Act being enforced?

11:20

Again, the School of Public Policy reported, "Alberta also stands out by having the least transparent public reporting of business subsidies." That lack of transparency persists under this new Energy Diversification Act and actually seems to become more

entrenched through section 4. Section 4(1) requires the Energy minister to annually report directly to the Executive Council on progress made in establishing and implementing programs that enhance economic growth and energy diversification. Section 4(2) requires the Alberta Petroleum Marketing Commission to annually report directly to the Energy minister on any projects supported by the commission. Why are the Energy minister and the Alberta Petroleum Marketing Commission not being required to report to the Legislature? This looks a lot like secrecy or at least a lack of transparency.

The Auditor General has also raised concerns about the lack of information available to taxpayers to be able to assess the risks and rewards of government involvement in energy diversification. Most Albertans would be surprised to learn that the Alberta Petroleum Marketing Commission doesn't prepare a business plan or make its annual report public. Why is this, and why aren't these glaring deficiencies being addressed in the Energy Diversification Act?

Bill 1 also borrows a bit from the Redford government's Bill 34, Building New Petroleum Markets Act, which was passed in the fall of 2013 but never proclaimed. It does so by stating that the Energy minister may direct the Alberta Petroleum Marketing Commission to use any financial tools available to the commission and to the Petroleum Marketing Act. Well, the NDP obviously believe that this needed to be formalized.

We know that the Alberta Petroleum Marketing Commission is already accountable to and receives policy direction from the Minister of Energy in alignment with government policy. For example, even without the Energy Diversification Act we know that the former PC government was firmly in control of the Alberta Petroleum Marketing Commission's financial involvement in the Sturgeon refinery. The Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act also requires the commission to make all reasonable efforts to fulfill its mandate in alignment with government priorities. It's also required to participate with the Energy minister in setting its long-term objectives and short-term targets.

I'm not sure, Madam Speaker, what would be accomplished by referring what is essentially a fait accompli to committee. It's clear that this government has already embarked on and intends to continue with significant subsidies to the industry at the same time as they're talking about diversifying, so I will not be supporting the amendment.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other speakers to the amendment? The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my privilege to rise today and speak to Bill 1, the Energy Diversification Act, and particularly to the referral motion on the floor, which is what we're discussing at the moment. I guess the reason for the urgency of referral is, in fact, that the outcomes of the bill are quite unclear. As has already been discussed all morning long here, there are lots of concerns, lots of potential issues, and while the bill may have great intentions and may be trying to accomplish some positive results for Albertans, the actual achievement of that clearly is in question.

If industry needs anything, it needs clarity of policy, and this does not give that. It is clear in some respects that – I mean, the intentions here are positive in that, you know, it's intended to diversify our petrochemical industry. It's intended to try and improve our pipeline capacity. It's intended to include First Nations and Métis groups in employment and some of those kinds of things, but there are also a lot of issues, as has been talked about.

As has been mentioned earlier by the members from across the aisle here, the question of success is not clear either. Is success just handing out money? Are we successful if we hand out so many millions of dollars? And in the process who do we benefit? I find it reasonably interesting that people who are beneficiaries of massive handouts of money would stand up in praise of a bill. Why wouldn't they? But, really, are these handouts benefiting regular Alberta taxpayers, or are they benefiting shareholders? The definition of success here is clearly unclear. Today I really think we need to realize that while there are some pros, potentially, to the bill, we don't really know what success is going to look like.

Tragically, over the last three years we've had an NDP government that has repeatedly brought in harmful fundamental policies to our economy that have had the very clear effect of driving investors out of our province. In essence, the policies that they've brought forward, the fundamental economic policies, have told investors that they were, quite frankly, better off investing somewhere else. Everything has been done to make sure that they receive that message. Now, three years later, we're beginning to see some of the results of that, some of the harm that those policies have caused. It kind of looks like we're trying to just create a bandage here for the problem. That's what the bill is, a Band-Aid.

Albertans find it hard to trust the ideas pushed forward by this government. They can parade guys up who they hand out money to on a stage and get them to give all kinds of praise and good statements to it, but who do regular Albertans want to trust? They're not being listened to. The Alberta government's policies have made Albertans' lives harder, not better, and it's no wonder. This government deceived Albertans about their intentions when they ran their last election campaign. They implemented the largest tax increase in Alberta's history. They openly mocked anybody who wants to challenge their tax-and-spend regime. The impact has been negative both on the lives and the businesses of Albertans across our province. Since the 2015 election this government has enacted a suite of policies that serve only their ideological agenda and not the best interests of everyday Alberta families.

Albertans just don't believe that the worst of the recession is somehow behind them. Just because spring has arrived this morning, it doesn't mean that spring has arrived economically for our province or for the people of our province. The reality is that there are tens of thousands of families across our province still struggling to make ends meet, and that's true in the energy industry directly. It's also true in many of the spinoff industries. The Hotel & Lodging Association has been very clear about the fact that while only the mountain parks are prospering, the rest of the province is struggling. A slight uptick maybe in room usage, but a decrease in room rates able to be charged, so the benefit is muted.

Home sales are struggling across the province. I met with some of the major home builders just recently. Restaurants are saying the same thing. There may be a little bit of increase in demand, but the reality is that the increased costs of carbon tax and labour legislation and wage legislation and all these other things have really put them in a very, very difficult place. The industry, to quote them, is not healthy.

The government would like to legislate this new bill. In reality it's a conundrum because in one respect it offers insufficient guarantees and grants to draw the much-needed investment back to Alberta, considering the massive size of investments that are needed. On the other hand, it's going to be a significant cost to Alberta taxpayers, and Alberta taxpayers are going to pay the burden for it. What they really need to do is fix the problems they created in the first place. They'd be better off repealing many of those harmful policies instead of choosing a Band-Aid or an interventionist approach to try and somehow create a few winners

who will stand on a stage with them, yet the rest of the province struggles and languishes and experiences difficulties.

We have huge concerns about a government that's deeply in debt, spending \$800 million in loan guarantees for partial upgrading, another \$500 million in guarantees for feedstock infrastructure programs, and another \$200 million in grants for partial upgrading. These are huge expenses to come out of the taxpayers' dollar for people that are already struggling.

The challenge is that some of it is still quite experimental, and the economic studies to justify the whole thing haven't happened yet. Commercial-scale partial upgrading is actually a bit of an unknown. I mean, do we put 50 per cent into the cost of upgrading partially and get back 10 per cent of the benefit? How is that going to be helpful at all? Financial markets don't like risk, and we don't know what the risk here really is yet.

We can't afford a Band-Aid to try and make things look better for this government as they're coming up to an election. Really, the government should have listened to common-sense solutions before pushing forward all of their ideological agenda. It would have prevented the investors, many investors, from leaving.

11:30

We could possibly support some of these efforts of diversifying the economy and support growing our petrochemical centre, but when the government is consistently implementing these kind of ideological policies that hurt the economy overall, hurt Alberta employment, hurt Alberta families, we have to take a stand and challenge the impacts of some of that sort of stuff.

Madam Speaker, this is clearly a political exercise more than anything else, meant to distract from the NDP's record. In less than three years this government has increased Alberta's debt by \$45 million, and then just last December, days before Christmas holidays, when everybody was distracted, they quietly authorized a staggering \$37 billion in borrowing. Then just last week supplemental supply. They made a budget, a huge deficit budget, yet they still needed more, another billion and a half dollars on top of that that they didn't account for. Right now Alberta is spending a billion dollars a year just on the interest payments. That's a horrendous loss of resources and benefits and services to Alberta's people.

Unfortunately for Albertans, this bill is just an attempt to cover up some of their previous ideological agenda. This legislation will enable the minister to use any financial tools available, and I stress the word "any." Albertans should be very conscious of that and very careful. They are essentially saying that they can do without limits whatever they want here. It reminds me of the beginning of this term where, first of all, they raised the debt ceiling, then they immediately removed the debt ceiling, and then they immediately plunged us into an endless process of deficits and debt, which has not yet stopped growing and, by this act, will continue to grow. Therefore, it does need to go to committee and to be talked about.

These programs are questionable at best when we start handing out credits and grants and free money and gifts all over the place. A huge piece of this legislation which is a cause of concern for me is that there's no real accountability here. The government just reports to itself. Nothing is made public. This is public money. By democratic principle the public should have the opportunity to have clear reporting. Just to allow the minister and the Premier and the Executive Council to do this is dark corporate money, Madam Speaker. It needs to be transparent, and it should be publicly reported. To not report it is shameful. It's a pattern and a practice that should not be used in this day and age. The people of Alberta have a right to be consulted. They deserve to have a report because

it's their money that's being contributed to this. I think that needs to happen.

I'd like to talk a little bit about the petrochemical diversification program if I could. The first two rounds, of course, were out there. The claim is that they created 4,000 new construction jobs and 200 full-time operating jobs. That's interesting because last month alone the province reports that we lost 10,500 full-time jobs in this province. We have a negative net loss of 6,500 jobs, and these interventionist government programs to a few select individuals so that they have a good story to go to the electorate with just simply don't solve the problem systemically across the province for all the people of our province. It's just not appropriate.

I'd like to share a little story with you of the consequences, the real, personal-life-experience consequences of some of these kinds of interventionist policies. I received an e-mail the other day from a person in central Alberta who is concerned. He says this:

I think you should know that the new 2018 employment standards have hurt not helped my employment situation.

Here's an Albertan who has actually been hurt by some of this government's policy.

He says:

I am a serviceperson (journeyman tradesman) . . .

He works actually for a kitchen cabinet company.

[I've] always had a flex time agreement whereby I would bank hours and take them off when convenient and helpful.

I mean, everybody has to go to the dentist or take their kids somewhere or one of the many things that are just life.

He said:

The old rate was hour for hour.

And that benefited both: I could take time off, my employer was happy with it, and nothing was lost.

The new standards changed that rate to one hour equal to one-and-a-half hours. This moved me beyond what the company and industry can afford to pay so I have now lost all overtime and extra hours. I now lose pay when [I have to take] time off.

This has not benefited this particular individual.

He goes on and says:

The thought might be [that] the company could just pay more.

I mean, I know; it's the evil corporate guys. They always have money, right?

But we are in a highly competitive industry [where] the profit [level] has been at or below zero for a few years. Much of our competition is either . . .

Get this.

. . . out of province or out of country.

Do you know where most cabinets in this province come from these days? They come from either the U.S. or China. Many of them are shipped in and installed here. You're competing on an international market.

He says:

So they do not have the recently added burden of the carbon tax.

And I could add labour legislation and a bunch of other things.

So we are already at a cost disadvantage and there is simply no room for more input costs like [jacking up] overtime wage rates.

Because of the competitive nature of the industry there is also no room to pass [it] on to [consumers].

He goes on and says:

[The] government may have intended this move to be helpful to working people,

Now, listen to this. I found this really enlightening.

but while intentions may be nice, they are really irrelevant in the final outcome.

The final outcome is that this guy is losing money because of the realities of that bill.

He says:

Incidentally, because the company is not realizing a return on their investment,

which is profit,

the reduction in the business tax is also [quite] irrelevant.

His final statement is:

I write only with the hope that in the future policies will actually help instead of hurt.

Here's a guy from central Alberta who has been hurt by this government's policies. We've had endless numbers of these policies that have actually hurt our economy, hurt families, hurt individual workers, and they're speaking up about it. This government cannot tell us that their policies systemically and generally across this province have been helpful or have benefited Albertans, because this one right here is very clear that it has not been, and he has suffered the consequences of it.

These policies are in fact hurting families and hurting businesses. Calgary currently has the second-highest unemployment rate in Canada amongst major cities. Edmonton is tied for third place. These are indications of the fact that things are not going well for our Alberta citizens.

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

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I move that we adjourn debate on this matter.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 2

Growth and Diversification Act

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my honour to rise today and speak to Bill 2, the Growth and Diversification Act.

Bill 2, Madam Speaker, would enable the continued success of two of our tax credit programs, the investor tax credit and the capital investment tax credit. I can tell you that already these two tax credits, from when we first rolled them out, have resulted in thousands of jobs, in hundreds of millions of dollars of investment on the investor tax credit side. On the capital investment tax credit side we have conditionally approved in the first two rounds of intake about \$62 million worth of tax credits that are leveraging \$1.2 billion worth of investment. I can tell you that companies not only here in Alberta but around the globe are even more interested in investing in our province. They are doing exactly what they were designed to do, and that is to spur investment right now while our economy is recovering. They are part of the reason that our economy has recovered at the pace that it has, and despite the gloom and doom that the opposition spout about, I can tell you that last year Alberta led the country in growth, at 4.5 per cent, and that – guess what? – Alberta is on track to lead the country this year again in growth.

In the past year the economy has created over 90,000 full-time jobs. These are new full-time jobs, Madam Speaker, and most of them are in the private sector. Once again, I know the opposition likes to talk about, you know, that these jobs are all created through the public sector, which couldn't be further from the truth.

11:40

The other thing that the tax credits have done and why I'm so proud to be sponsoring this bill is that they will continue to help diversify our economy. These tax credits are programs that have existed in other provinces, in some provinces for decades. For example, the investor tax credit has existed in the province of British Columbia since 1985, Madam Speaker. Companies, entrepreneurs, businesses have asked government after government, PC governments, to introduce these tax credits to help diversify the economy. Previous PC governments wouldn't give them the time of day, said, "No, no, no; we don't need to do this." That's part of the reason that our economy is so reliant on a single sector.

We listened to our entrepreneurs around the province. They asked for these programs. We took the best practices from other jurisdictions, designed a made-in-Alberta tax credit program to support our companies. There are a number of incredible success stories of companies that have taken advantage of this program, and I'm quite excited that we are building on our success. Through Bill 2 we will continue to diversify the economy.

Now, for those members that maybe are a little less familiar with our two different tax credit programs, the investor tax credit is a 30 per cent refundable tax credit for eligible companies. They simply register. They get the green light that they can go out and, as they're raising capital, issue tax credits, 30 per cent tax credits that, again, have helped companies scale up.

In Alberta, Madam Speaker, we have a number of different programs delivered through entities like Alberta Innovates that really are designed to help our start-ups. There are a number of incredible incubators and supports, whether it's through TEC Edmonton, Startup Calgary, and our regional innovation networks around the province that support our start-ups. One of the areas that we heard from companies that they could use more support is when they are in that scale-up stage. They've already used, you know, friends' and family's money; they've used their savings. Now they need to scale up. That's exactly what the investor tax credit does. It allows Albertans to invest in companies in their own backyard and helps derisk some of their investment.

The other aspect of the investor tax credit that I very much appreciate is the fact that it is sector-wide. This doesn't just apply to one sector or another. This is open to companies in all sectors. We've heard from a number of companies that have received the investor tax credit who have said: you have helped Alberta companies be even more competitive with our other jurisdictions, our neighbouring provinces. Again, what we've done is encouraged Albertans to invest in companies within the province.

The capital investment tax credit, again, has allowed for a significant amount of investment to occur. Right now we've seen and heard of many different companies that are investing at the moment. One of them, a successful candidate of the capital investment tax credit, is Aurora Cannabis. They are constructing a state-of-the-art cannabis manufacturing facility that's 800,000 square feet. It's probably one of the largest in the world that they are constructing, that essentially will be a facility that will manufacture cannabis here in Edmonton that will then be distributed internationally. Aurora Cannabis signed an agreement with the government of Italy. They have agreements with the government of Germany. And all of the manufacturing is taking place here in Edmonton out at the International Airport. That facility will employ up to 330 people when it's finished construction. These are good-paying, long-term jobs, Madam Speaker.

As well, Seven Generations up in Grande Prairie was another successful applicant of the second intake. They've been

conditionally approved, and they are building a natural gas processing facility in the Montney-Kakwa River area, creating about 150 construction jobs and dozens of direct permanent jobs once it's operational.

You know, it's very encouraging to see, Madam Speaker, the number of applicants, the uptake that these programs have secured. There is a real desire and interest. We see that the programs are working, which is the reason that our government is continuing to work with industry to diversify the economy.

Despite what the opposition says, there is a role for government to play. I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that when I talk to companies around the province and internationally, they recognize that there is a role for government to play. What we are doing through these programs is levelling the playing field between Alberta and other jurisdictions. Despite how the opposition may frame it, I can tell you that there are programs like this that exist in other jurisdictions, and because Alberta has not had these programs previous to our government, it left Alberta and Albertans at a competitive disadvantage. So what we've done is levelled the playing field.

In Bill 2 as well we have introduced the interactive digital media tax credit, which I'm very, very excited about. As you know, Madam Speaker, Edmonton and Alberta are home to a company called BioWare, an incredibly renowned digital media gaming company, that has been asking, again, government after government for a program that will help level the playing field. I can tell you that the provinces of British Columbia and Quebec have significant programs to support their digital media sector. Alberta has not, and because of it we've lost a lot of our talent. We have incredible postsecondary institutions here in the province of Alberta. We have incredible graduates that come through our programs. Unfortunately, a lot of companies haven't stayed in Alberta because, again, they can receive support in other provinces.

Through Bill 2 we'll have an interactive digital media tax credit program, Madam Speaker, that will offer a 25 per cent refundable tax credit on eligible salaries and wages of employees of IDM companies. They've told us over and over again that their biggest cost is labour. Again, these are very well-paid jobs and positions. These are permanent full-time jobs that, again, are good mortgage-paying jobs. We want to encourage companies to stay in Alberta. We want to encourage companies to start up here in the province. Standing with me as we introduced this program, should Bill 2 pass through this House, were a number of companies with BioWare, like Beamdog and others, that have said, you know, that they are thrilled that the government has listened to industry.

This is one of the ways that we are diversifying our economy. I can tell you that in the 1990s there was only a handful of studios that existed here in the province of Alberta. We now have 55 studios around the province. We want to see them continue to grow.

There are approximately 540 full-time workers in this sector at the moment. We know that this tax credit will help companies grow even faster. But I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that the salary that the average worker at these interactive digital media companies earns is about \$70,000. That's a very, very good wage. We, again, want to see more Albertans have the opportunity to work at these companies, to start their own company. I can tell you that the digital media sector contributes between \$50 million to \$80 million to Alberta's GDP. We know that that can continue to grow.

With this bill, a number of tools that we are introducing or continuing will help us continue to diversify the economy. My hope is that it will be supported by all members of this House in that, you know, our government has made it clear that we stand with business. We are playing our role in supporting them. Those are the job creators, Madam Speaker. Feedback has been very, very

positive on our programs. Again, I'm proud of the work that our government has done, our MLAs have done, going out and engaging with the business community throughout the province, who has said: "These programs are exactly what we need. Please continue them." We've listened, and we're doing just that.

Again I encourage all members to support this bill. Our government is not only talking about diversifying the economy; it is through actions like Bill 2 that we are supporting diversification of our economy and our businesses. I'm proud of the work that we're doing. Again I encourage all members to support Bill 2 and to continue to support the economic recovery that we are seeing around the province.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

11:50

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to speak about Bill 2, our second economic investment tool that we have proposed this session. We have here poised a bill that will help stimulate investment and growth across the province. This bill grows off two highly successful tax credit programs, the capital investment tax credit and Alberta investor tax credit, to ensure that companies with the potential to grow have support available for investment attraction to our province.

The new interactive digital media tax credit would encourage the growth of the digital media industry through a 25 per cent tax credit for eligible labour costs and includes support for 3,000 tech spaces in our postsecondary institutions across the province for the next five years. New scholarships would help grow a future of a much more high-tech workforce. Currently in Alberta we do have the youngest, best educated workforce in the country, so we are very proud to be able to continue to support that.

The bill would also include provisions to allow for more work on unmanned aerial systems research, which would of course open the door to new technologies and sector growth. We had the opportunity, with the Minister of Economic Development and Trade and the Minister of Municipal Affairs, to visit Aerium Analytics, which is headquartered in Leduc, near the Edmonton International Airport. We can see that Alberta has players that are already finding success in this industry. They have been able to produce drones that are part of a wildlife management system that includes habitat relocation, pyrotechnics. What this is is a live falcon that actually comes in to assist in helping to keep airport runways safe. Each one of these is hand painted to look real and lifelike, is able to circle the airport and keep other birds away. The program also provides jobs that are controlled by workers from their station. So it creates new jobs in a new sector that helps support local economic development.

Of course, the capital investment tax credit and the Alberta investment tax credit programs have helped stimulate the economy, together incenting more than a billion dollars to be invested right here in Alberta. Of course, that investment is the key driver of growth and diversification, which we need to continuously strengthen in Alberta for attraction process.

The government learned from the Amazon bid that there are areas for improvement if we are to continue to attract big investment. If we can really capitalize on these two very successful tax credit programs, we can continue to send those signals to investors that Alberta remains open for business for the long haul.

With the Alberta investment tax credit we see that \$30 million in tax credits has helped secure \$100 million in investment. Also, investing \$60 million in tax credits through the capital investment

tax credit has been able to stimulate more than a billion dollars in capital projects between manufacturing, processing, and tourism infrastructure within the province of Alberta. Of course, as we see our economy start to improve and recover, we need to make sure that we continue these programs that help support our job creators in the private sector.

Of course, there is incredible opportunity in the sectors for women and other underrepresented groups because we do see that there is so much potential to help incent companies to better engage these workforces in the province. We're doing that through enhancing those tax credits. So if someone has the majority of their board of directors and their CEO made up of members of underrepresented groups, then we know that they are not only showing a commitment to inclusion and diversity in their business, but also we know how that helps create better, more financially stable businesses. We know that the inclusivity and making sure that we are bringing in more women – when we look at Fortune 500 companies, those with the highest representation of women on those boards significantly outperform other businesses that have the lowest percentages of women on those boards, so we know that it actually just makes good business sense to incent companies that will identify and hire those women to come and be a part of it.

I like the quote of Arlene Dickinson. I'll have to paraphrase it, but she tweeted something along the lines that capable women are not unicorns. It's just a matter of finding those women and knowing that they're talented, they're capable, and they can help be a part of Alberta's economy. Of course, that is what truly represents good governance on these boards, bringing in people with diverse experiences and having companies that actually represent what Alberta looks like.

Part of the bill that we're talking about here is the interactive digital media tax credit program. It would offer a tax credit on eligible labour expenditures to companies that develop interactive digital media products in Alberta. These eligible expenditures would apply to technical and creative staff costs. We know that this is important because we have been disadvantaged compared to other jurisdictions in Canada and the United States where they offer similar programs. When the talent here gets to a certain ability to develop or be involved with these industries, we lose them to other jurisdictions where they have been able to grow beyond what we have been able to do here in Alberta. While these companies are amazing, they would actually be able to not only retain but attract the best talent.

We see that Alberta has been doing a really good job of growing our knowledge economy. We see that Google selected the University of Alberta for its DeepMind project. It's a small industry there right now, that is developing, but we know it has incredible potential. It allows us to leverage companies that are interested in doing high-tech things, whether it's in food processing or manufacturing. We need to have these incredibly well-educated and talented people within Alberta to grow that economy here.

We also know how important that diversification is to growing our knowledge economy. We know that our natural resources are absolutely a strength of ours. We are showing that commitment through Bill 1. We know that that will be a part of our economy going forward, but we have to be able to look towards the future and see how we continue to compete across multiple sectors as opposed to just one sector.

I think it's also good to talk about how we can support good Internet connectivity when we look at how this is going to roll out because, of course, to have good digital media talent, we have to look across the province. So this, coupled with how we develop Internet connectivity in rural Alberta, I think, will be really important to work together.

We know that the growth has been incredible. Back in the '90s there were just a few studios, and now there are 55. They employ 540 full-time workers. They make an average of \$71,300, so these are good family-supporting jobs, and the industry contributes between \$50 million and \$80 million to our GDP. We have been talking to these stakeholders, and they've been advocating for a long time because they know that we have been unfortunately disadvantaged compared to places like San Francisco and Quebec and Ontario, where we have been losing some of our best talent. So

through this program we will be able to, as a province, through a policy, be able to better support these industries.

With that . . .

The Deputy Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(2.1) the House stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, March 20, 2018

Day 7

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Carson	Miller
Fildebrandt	Nielsen
Gotfried	Panda
Hunter	Renaud
Littlewood	Turner
Luff	

Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola
Deputy Chair: Mr. Drysdale

Babcock	Malkinson
Dang	McPherson
Fraser	Nielsen
Hanson	Rosendahl
Kazim	Woollard
Kleinsteinuber	Vacant
Loewen	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, March 20, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

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

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a real pleasure for me to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislature three classes from St. Mary elementary school in the riding of Edmonton-Whitemud. It's actually quite close to my constituency office in Riverbend Square. The students are accompanied by their teachers, Mr. Richard Harris, Mrs. Olga Dos Santos, Ms Nancy McNeill, and Mrs. Jennifer Hudon, and also their chaperones, Ms Luiza Klebek, Mrs. Jill Davis, and Mrs. Kristina Givens. I'd ask them to rise – I think they're spread throughout the gallery – and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the school group from Muriel Martin school. The students today are accompanied by their teachers, Mrs. Jody Bialowas and Mrs. Heather McDonald, and they are accompanied by parents – I'm sorry; I'm going to butcher this – Mr. Justin Douzich and Mrs. Kira Douzich. I would ask them all to rise today and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other school groups?

Seeing none, the hon. Minister of Culture and Tourism.

Miranda: Merci, M. le Président. Je suis heureux de présenter à vous et aux membres de cette Assemblée des représentants de la Francophonie albertaine. Ces personnes sont ici aujourd'hui pour célébrer la 30e Journée internationale de la Francophonie et le premier Mois de la Francophonie albertaine. Aujourd'hui nous accueillons des représentants de la communauté qui appuient et qui favorisent la promotion et le développement des communautés d'expression française à l'Alberta. Grâce à leur travail et à leur dévouement, appuyés par de nombreux Albertains, notre province est accueillante et inclusive.

Je vous présente donc M. Marc Arnal et Mme Marie-Laure Polydore, membres du conseil d'administration de l'Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta; et Mme Isabelle Laurin, directrice générale. Se joignant à eux aujourd'hui sont des conseillers et des administrateurs scolaires des quatre conseils scolaires francophones de la province, M. Étienne Alary et Mme Malorie Aubé, conseillers du Conseil scolaire Centre-Nord; et M. Donald Michaud, directeur exécutif de la Fédération des conseils scolaires francophones de l'Alberta. Et finalement, je souhaite souligner la présence de ma merveilleuse équipe du Secrétariat francophone au ministère de la Culture et du Tourisme. Je souhaite à nos invités de belles célébrations et leur demande de se lever afin de recevoir les souhaits de bienvenue traditionnels de l'Assemblée.

Merci.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly members of the board of the Sixties Scoop Indigenous Society of Alberta, or SSISA. Over the past few months SSISA leaders and members partnered with Minister Feehan and myself to engage with '60s scoop survivors across the province on what a meaningful government apology should look like. Today I'm honoured to introduce from SSISA Adam North Peigan, the president; Sharon Gladue-Paskimin, vice-president; Sandra Relling, treasurer; Kathy Hamelin, director; Lena Wildman, director; Lew Jobs, director; and Orlando Alexis, director. The SSISA board members are joined today by Shelbi Relling, Petra Jobs, and Shandan LaMarche. I ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly Ellie Shuster and Greta Gerstner. You know that there's nothing I like doing more than talking about educational issues in Alberta today with fellow educators. Today I had the pleasure of meeting Ellie and Greta, who represent the Strategic Alliance for Alberta Students with Learning Challenges. They were advocating for students with learning challenges by ensuring that there is appropriate teacher training, mandatory early screening for learning and developmental challenges, and the appropriate supports for students. This is an amazing group, and I would ask them to stand and the Members of this Legislative Assembly to give them the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly my constituent Elisabeth Bourdouleix and her brother David and her parents, Shirley and Xavier. Elisabeth is a sixth-grade student at l'école la Mission, one of two francophone schools in my constituency of St. Albert. It is my honour to welcome her here today to learn about the work we do as provincial representatives. I ask Elisabeth and her entire family to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour today for me to introduce Meg Ohsada, an artist based in Calgary who resides in Canmore. She's not only a celebrated artist but also an award-winning athlete representing Canada at the Special Olympics as a figure skater. Meg's work entitled *Three Sisters* is a beautiful representation of the famed mountain range, with felted wool, that is currently on display at the Alberta Hong Kong office as part of the Indefinite Arts Centre tour of east Asia, which I'll speak more about in my member's statement. Meg is joined by her parents, Noriko and Kaoru, as well as J.S. Ryu, CEO of the Indefinite Arts Centre. I'd ask my guests to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ms McKittrick: M. le Président, it is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you Mr. Rob Sproule, co-owner of Salisbury Greenhouse. Rob is joined by his wife, Megan Hahn, and their children Aidan and Brynn Sproule. Salisbury Greenhouse is a third-generation family business that has served Sherwood Park since 1965. Rob has been instrumental in developing the school garden project, which assists schools in establishing schoolyard gardens. Thank you, Rob and Salisbury Greenhouse, for demonstrating that, truly, gardening is all about community. I look forward to spring gardening soon, too. I will ask Rob, Megan, Aidan, and Brynn to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.
Oh, I'm sorry. Another introduction?

Ms McKittrick: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I should have mentioned.

Mr. Speaker, it's also my pleasure to introduce to you and through you guests from the Wecan Food Basket Society: the program manager, Suzanne Rigsby; the board chair, Sacha Deelstra; and the vice-chair, Paige Nelson. For 25 years the Wecan Food Basket Society has given people the opportunity to purchase nutritious food at an affordable price through their food basket program. Wecan has 25 locations throughout Edmonton and surrounding area. Their vision, that every person has the right to enough food to live a good and healthy life, has significantly helped to address the issue of food security in our communities. I thank Wecan for their great work and ask them to now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.
The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce guests from the University of Alberta Faculty of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, who are joining us during Pharmacist Awareness Month. We value the significant innovation and contributions made by pharmacy professionals to the health and wellness of Albertans. I now ask that Dr. Neal Davies, Dr. Ravina Sanghera, Jody Shkrobot, and Andrew MacIsaac, who are seated in the public gallery, please rise and receive the warm welcome of our Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.
Hon. members, are there any other guest introductions? The Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Ross Ford, the reeve of the county of Warner, in my riding. Ross is a strong advocate for reasonable species-at-risk legislation. I'd like him to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

1:40 Members' Statements

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

Journée Internationale de la Francophonie

Connolly: Merci, M. le Président. C'est avec une immense fierté que je suis ici aujourd'hui pour célébrer la Journée internationale de la Francophonie. Plus tôt ce mois-ci notre gouvernement a proclamé le mois de mars Mois de la Francophonie albertaine. Cette proclamation réaffirme l'engagement de notre gouvernement de

favoriser la reconnaissance de l'histoire, des réussites, et des contributions des Albertains d'expression française.

Les Albertains et les Albertaines d'expression française ont de quoi célébrer cette année, en commençant par l'adoption de la première politique en matière de Francophonie de l'Alberta et l'établissement d'un conseil consultatif en matière de Francophonie. Avant cette adoption l'Alberta était la seule province, avec une autre province, à n'avoir aucune politique à l'appui de la communauté de langue officielle, et nous sommes fiers d'avoir remédié à des années de négligence. Et, M. le Président, il aura fallu plus de 30 ans pour que le drapeau franco-albertain devienne un emblème officiel de la province d'Alberta. En fait, les populations d'expression française de l'Alberta sont parmi les plus nombreuses et les plus diverses au pays, en plus d'y connaître l'une des croissances les plus rapides.

De toute l'histoire de l'Alberta aucun autre gouvernement n'a compté autant de ministres et de députés qui parlent français.

À titre de vice-président de la section de l'Alberta de l'Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie, je parle d'expérience en réitérant la présence grandissante du fait français en Alberta, au pays et même dans le monde entier. Je ressens une grande fierté quand je vois que l'énergie ne cesse d'augmenter au sein de la Francophonie de Calgary et de toute la province, et je remercie le ministre de l'Éducation d'avoir autorisé, après des années d'inaction, la construction de nouvelles écoles francophones, qui garantissent à notre communauté sa place en Alberta.

Je suis fier aujourd'hui d'affirmer que nous continuerons d'appuyer nos communautés franco-albertaines.

Merci.

[Translation] Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with incredible pride that I stand today to celebrate Journée internationale de la Francophonie. Earlier this month our government proclaimed March as le Mois de la Francophonie Albertaine. This proclamation fulfills our government's commitment to improve recognition of French-speaking Albertans' history, achievements, and contributions.

French-speaking Albertans have much to celebrate this year, starting with Alberta's first French policy and the establishment of a Francophonie advisory council. Up until now Alberta was one of only two provinces without a policy supporting the official language community, a legacy of neglect that we are proud to correct. And, Mr. Speaker, it took over 30 years for the Franco-Albertan flag to become an official emblem of the province of Alberta. In fact, Alberta has one of the largest, fastest growing, and culturally diverse French-speaking populations in the country.

Our government has more ministers and MLAs who speak French than any other government in the history of Alberta.

As vice-president of the Alberta section of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie, APF, I can speak from personal experience about the growing French-speaking presence in Alberta, across our country, and even the world. I am incredibly proud of the growing strength of our Francophonie in Calgary and across Alberta, and I have to thank the Minister of Education for finally building, after years of neglect, new francophone schools, which secures our community's place in Alberta.

Today I stand proudly and say we will always stand with our Franco-Albertan communities. [As submitted]

Ryan McBeath

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, it is with a very, very heavy heart today that I rise to say a few words about a young man of such promise who lost his life one week ago. Only a senior at the Olds high school, in many ways Ryan McBeath was Alberta's son. An honours student,

a friend to everyone he met, Ryan genuinely brought joy to those around him. A promising young player, Ryan played most of his midget hockey in Red Deer, ultimately playing triple-A midget with the Optimist Chiefs, and was an associate player for the AJHL Drumheller Dragons. Praised by his teammates for his physical and mental toughness, Ryan was a leader on and off the ice.

Our community, our region, and our province have all lost a great young man of outstanding character, who always tried to play his game and live his life in the right way. Ryan's loss is not fair, and looking for reasons is senseless and can only provide cold comfort. Far better to remember this young man, how he lit up the lives of so many, and do our best to live up to his memory.

It is my hope that we can use this tragic event to each love our families and care for our community a little more. I ask that each of you take a moment to reflect on the impact of Ryan's life and say a prayer for those who loved him and who feel his loss so deeply. To the Minister of Education, who was Ryan's cousin: know that all of us in this House are with you today as you mourn the loss of this special young man.

On behalf of our community I want to thank the Red Deer Rebels, Don Cherry, all of Ryan's friends and teammates, the Olds high school, and everyone who continues to help us remember one of the best that our province has had.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

School Nutrition Programs

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. March is Nutrition Month. As parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Education I have visited school nutrition program sites throughout the province. Hungry students cannot concentrate on learning. This program is a universal program which every student can access.

After a successful pilot the government expanded the program to include all 62 school authorities for the 2017-2018 school year. Each board receives funding to support the delivery of nutrition programs tailored to their school communities, feeding students and modelling nutrition best practices. Each program is as unique as the schools and communities in which they are located. This government investment, in partnership with communities, is making a difference in the health and learning outcomes of children, in nurturing a greater awareness of food security in our communities, and in the challenges faced by many to put healthy food on their tables.

Strathcona county family and community services, through the parent link centre, is a community partner with Wecan Food Basket Society. Every month Wecan provides members with fresh meat, fresh fruit, and a variety of fresh vegetables for a flat rate of \$25. They continue to provide individuals and families who are struggling come month-end with enough healthy food to make it to the end of the month. This year they are celebrating their 25th anniversary.

Salisbury Greenhouse, under the leadership of Rob Sproule, who I introduced earlier, has worked with many of our local schools to develop vegetable gardens and teach children about growing their own food. This program has been a success, and it's expanding to most schools in partnership with Strathcona county's urban agriculture strategy. Woodbridge Farms school is a great example of how they have incorporated their community garden into the curriculum. Thank you to Salisbury Greenhouse for your commitment to healthy eating and education for our students.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate how community leadership and provincial support from the Ministry of Education for nutrition

programs is giving students the opportunity to learn about healthy eating.

Thank you.

Government Energy Policies

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, when I have discussions with Albertans about this NDP government, they often tell me that they have a hard time understanding or even believing what the NDP stand for. Frankly, I don't blame them. I have a hard time keeping track of their latest public stance as well. One would almost think, by listening to the Premier of late, that they have seen the light about the UCP's positions and ideas and are ready to get onboard.

Let's take pipelines for an example, Mr. Speaker. Members of the NDP have in the past been found at pipeline protests. That's a fact that Albertans haven't forgotten. Even the Premier on at least one occasion found herself amongst these antipipeline activists. Now, one year before the next election, we see a complete 180-degree change in their attitude. The NDP caucus is so excited to share their new-found support for pipelines that they have taken to texting hundreds of thousands of Albertans to spread the good news.

Mr. Speaker, if you're having a hard time following their flip-flops, just think of how confused Albertans are. Even when it comes to resource development more broadly, Albertans have a lot of conflicting information coming at them. On the one hand, the Premier tells people that she is a champion for our industry and that she is doing them a great favour by buying them social licence through saddling them with the unpopular carbon tax. On the other hand, their own Alberta NDP constitution, which you can find on their website, under appendix C states: "Meeting human material needs must not use more of Earth's resources than can be renewed within each generation." If the NDP's pipeline protestations haven't got Albertans scratching their heads, this statement in their constitution surely must.

Mr. Speaker, if the NDP want Albertans to believe they have really changed the way they feel about Alberta's oil and gas industry, they may want to change their constitution to reflect their new New Democratic Party position.

Indefinite Arts Centre

Mr. Westhead: Mr. Speaker, the Indefinite Arts Centre is Canada's oldest and largest disability arts organization. This organization serves more than 300 artists living with developmental disabilities who come to the centre to create incredible works of art with the support of the centre's dedicated staff and volunteers. The centre was recently given a grant by the ministry of community services so that they can expand their hours and give artists increased studio time.

On January 17 Indefinite Arts held its Launchpad event at the Dialog design gallery in Calgary, where artwork was on display from more than 30 artists. Seeing their work first-hand isn't just meant to change the way we think about people living with developmental disabilities; it's also meant to reignite a sense of pride in our province, knowing that the government of Alberta and indeed all Albertans play a critical role in supporting organizations like Indefinite Arts Centre.

Mr. Speaker, you'll be pleased to know that the works of those 30 artists featured at the Launchpad event have recently made their way to Asia in order to showcase a whole new side of Alberta on the global stage. Those works of art had their opening last week and are currently on display at the Alberta Hong Kong office thanks to support received from the consulate general of Canada in Hong

Kong, the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, and the Alberta Foundation for the Arts. With the art created at the Indefinite Arts Centre eventually making its way to Seoul, Korea, for display at the national disability arts and culture centre, Alberta will be showcased not only as a great place for trade and investment but also as a place embodying inclusivity, diversity, and creativity.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask all members of this House to join me in congratulating J.S. Ryu, the CEO of Indefinite Arts Centre, their entire team of staff and volunteers, and, most importantly, the artists like Meg Ohsada, whose works will be proudly representing Alberta in Asia this year.

1:50

Oral Question Period

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

Carbon Levy Rate

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At various times the hon. the Premier has said that she will proceed with a 67 per cent increase in Alberta's carbon tax if a pipeline is approved or if construction begins or if construction is completed or if oil moves through that pipeline, so I'm here to ask today: what's her position today? What is the necessary condition for her to increase her carbon tax by 67 per cent?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What I've said quite consistently since before the Kinder Morgan pipeline was approved by the federal government and since then is that when the federal government came out with the pan-Canadian framework, Alberta would support it in return for ensuring that the pipeline is completed. Now, to be clear, it may well be that the pan-Canadian framework will come into effect while the pipeline is still well in construction, and we'll certainly give that some consideration then. The issue is that the two go together, and we will ensure . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Kenney: Will the Premier commit to not raising the carbon tax above \$50 a tonne under any condition?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What I've said many times is that looking forward at least six years at this point, we have absolutely no plan to go above \$50. Indeed, we would not even get to that point if, again, as I say, we don't see the Kinder Morgan pipeline well into construction, with everyone clearly understanding that it's going to be complete, something that I actually do think is going to happen. That's the position that we've taken. It's the same position we've taken all along. The two go together. The climate change leadership plan and the pipeline go together. That's why we're going to get it built.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, in the Premier's view, a carbon tax has to be how high in order to achieve Paris greenhouse gas emission targets?

Ms Notley: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, I think what's really important here is that the member opposite ought to stop reaching out to reports that have nothing to do with this government in order to fearmonger and in order, quite frankly, to distract the attention of Albertans from the fact that he can't even get folks in his caucus to agree that human-caused climate change is real. I suppose that part

of the reason for that is that we can't get the leader himself to say the words that human-caused climate change is real. The fact of the matter is that our plan is going to reduce emissions. We are proud of that, we are making progress, and we're going to keep doing it.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Kenney: Once again, human-caused climate change is real. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Provincial Fiscal Policies

Mr. Kenney: What's not real is that we don't have a Premier, Mr. Speaker, who's actually willing to answer straightforward, factual questions. So let me try. I think this is maybe the sixth or seventh time. Does the government of Alberta have a position about how high a carbon tax has to be in order to achieve global greenhouse gas emission targets? Is she accusing Environment Canada of being fearmongers? Do they agree with Environment Canada that it has to be \$300 a tonne? Do they agree with their own adviser, Professor Leach, that it has to be \$200 a tonne? These are not unreasonable questions. It would be nice if the Premier tried to answer them.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What we agree with is the plan that we have implemented thus far because we have made a decision that we in Alberta are going to do our part as Canadians to bring down emissions. As a result of the climate leadership plan that this government brought in, we will see emissions reduced from a business-as-usual case of well over 310 megatonnes down to around 225 megatonnes by 2030. What we see there is real change, real improvements, something that had been long overdue under the leadership of the previous Conservative government not only in Alberta but . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Kenney: Yet again she refuses to answer, Mr. Speaker.

Today the Finance minister donned his virtual reality goggles to prepare for his virtual reality budget, which he says is going to be balanced by 2023. Does that projection of balance include the 67 per cent increase in revenues from the carbon tax?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, what we know is that we have said very definitively to Albertans that we will lay out a path to balance that they can look at and they can evaluate, unlike the members opposite, who can only talk about things like a \$700 million tax cut for the top 1 per cent without ever talking to Albertans about what they'd cut to achieve that. We will lay out our path to balance on Thursday, and I suggest that the member stay tuned.

Mr. Kenney: So for the record the government is refusing to rule out a carbon tax increase in their fiscal plan, Mr. Speaker.

On the latter point the Premier talks about how this government raised personal and business taxes as well as property taxes. Is the Premier aware that three years later – three years later – revenues from personal income and business taxes are down even though they've raised the rate? Will she admit that this is a fiscal failure of her government?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, what I will do is say that as a government we have a responsibility to look at all the evidence and to understand that sometimes more than one factor contributes to certain outcomes. In this case what we had was a precipitous drop in the price of oil and the largest recession in a couple of generations and a number of people who lost their jobs. Absolutely, income tax and corporate tax went down because we were in a recession. Thanks to the decisions of this government, we are now coming out of it. Things are looking up, jobs are up, income is up, exports are up, and . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Provincial Fiscal Policies and Energy Policies

Mr. Kenney: What's up, Mr. Speaker, since the NDP came to office, is unemployment. What's up are business bankruptcies. What's up are taxes. What's up is the debt, which is on track to being quadrupled, nearly a billion dollars a month that they are borrowing.

But the question for the Premier is this. She says that we're just the passive victims of commodity prices. Will she acknowledge that investment in oil and gas all around the world is up, partly driven by investment that has fled Alberta?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, absolutely under no circumstances will I acknowledge such a thing. In fact, what I will do is say that our government has the backs of Albertans and that we are coming out of this recession and that, in fact, we have managed to recover about 90,000 jobs. We know we have more to do. That has been our commitment from the very outset. What we won't do is cut our way to success. We will not give a tax break to the top 1 per cent of friends and insiders and somehow claim that that is the path to economic recovery because what the evidence shows is that it is not.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, what the evidence shows is that they raised personal income taxes and taxes on employers and that revenues are down from those sources, one of the reasons that they've been mortgaging our future with the quadrupling of our debt, projected by the bond-rating agencies' six credit downgrades.

Mr. Speaker, the question is this. Does the government absolutely commit that it will not raise the carbon tax as part of its fiscal plan?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, what I've said is that the member opposite can stay tuned for the budget on Thursday. Of course, you know, we know full well that at this point we plan to go along with the federal plan, which does involve an increase of \$40, then to \$50 in 2021, so that's not news. What I will say, though, is that the member opposite – when you look at those folks, those 100,000-plus people who lost their jobs a couple of years ago, if you had gone to them and said that our answer is to give those who are still employed, making lots and lots of money, a billion-dollar tax break, I'm pretty sure . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Premier said that Tzeporah Berman, her hand-picked co-chair of the oil sands advisory group, only came out with views that were opposed to our energy industry after her appointment. It was a great shock to the NDP, even though the same person said in 2011 that we need to shut down the tar sands and that our oil sands feel like Mordor,

another word for hell. So will the Premier admit that it was just a big mistake? Her environment minister is now blaming the energy companies for appointing Tzeporah Berman, who is now supporting law-breaking activity to stop the pipeline. Can they just admit that it was a bad call?

2:00

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, what I can admit is that the climate leadership plan has put us closer to building a pipeline than ever, and what I can admit is that while I understand that the member opposite thinks he can make hay by waving the white flag and predicting the demise of the pipeline – and probably he's inclined to do that because after 10 years in Ottawa he couldn't get a pipeline built – the fact of the matter is that the climate leadership plan is part of an overall strategy that this government embarked upon to get a pipeline built to tidewater. We are closer than ever. I hope that the member opposite will celebrate the success when it happens.

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

Carbon Levy and Greenhouse Gas Emission Reduction

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When I door-knock in my constituency or pretty much anywhere all around Alberta, the issue I hear more about than any other is the carbon tax, and when the Alberta Party's new leader, Stephen Mandel, travels the province, the same thing happens. Now, most Albertans agree with the need for action on climate change, and so does the Alberta Party, but there's confusion about the connection between the way this government's carbon tax is structured and actual emission reductions. To the Premier: what specific metrics do you have that show the connection between your carbon tax and actual CO₂ emission reductions?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, what we have are the projections through our climate leadership plan, which show that we are likely to see reductions in emissions from business as usual at around 320 megatonnes to roughly 225 megatonnes by 2030. That will happen through a number of different strategies. The implementation of a carbon tax or a carbon levy, which, of course, is something that most experts believe brings about behavioural change that results in a reduction in emissions, combined with the additional incentives that we are applying to renewable energy and to innovation is how we . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

First supplemental.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, unlike the Official Opposition, the Alberta Party believes that climate change is real, it is human caused, and it is a problem that we must innovate our way out of. But, having said that, the Albertans I talk with tell me they don't understand that connection between increasing their home, farm, and business heating bills and solving climate change. Again to the Premier: what percentage reduction of natural gas demand for home heating, businesses, farms, and not-for-profits do you expect as a result of your carbon tax?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, most experts in the field will outline that there are a number of features to any program that is designed to reduce emissions. One of them, through a carbon levy, through a carbon tax, is to slowly bring about

change in people's behaviours, whether they are individuals or otherwise. Now, as the member opposite knows, 60 per cent of Alberta households actually get a rebate, so in fact they can come out ahead if they are able to make the changes that we talked about. In addition, that money is going towards efforts to reduce emissions, whether it be through efficiency, through renewable energy, through innovation, and we know that that . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Clark: So if they get a rebate, they're not going to consume less, so we don't produce less carbon, so your plan has no effect. But here's the challenge. Total consumer and commercial demand only makes up about 13 per cent of natural gas use in Alberta, so it's important to fish where the fish are, and the carbon-emitting fish are not in the home heating pond. They're not with commercial users or farms or the many not-for-profits, who have been unfairly targeted by this government. To the Premier: given that your carbon tax won't have the stated effect of actually reducing carbon emissions, will you commit to eliminating the carbon tax on home heating, small businesses, farms, and not-for-profits?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What I will commit to do is to carry on with the climate leadership plan, that was developed in consultation with industry leaders, with communities, with indigenous communities, with environmentalists, because as a whole this package is designed to reduce emissions across the economy, across the full sector. Some have more to contribute than others, but it doesn't mean that everyone doesn't have something to contribute. We have implemented it in a way that supports families, supports communities, brings down emissions, and innovates and actually ultimately generates more economic growth, and we're proud of that.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.
The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

Red Deer College

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On March 1, after a very long, 25-year struggle, our government announced that Red Deer College is finally on the road to degree-granting status, ensuring that students will no longer have to uproot their lives to complete their education. This announcement means that students and their families will no longer have the financial and emotional burden of leaving the community that they are a part of. Would the minister be able to elaborate on the process that RDC and the province will embark on and maybe give a time frame for this exciting transformation?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank my hon. friend for her advocacy on behalf of the community of Red Deer in helping make this happen. Our government is committed to ensuring that every Albertan has access to affordable, high-quality education regardless of their location in the province. Many Albertans go to RDC to fulfill their dreams, and that's why I'm very proud to support this initiative to give it degree-granting status. But becoming a university takes time, and we know that offering additional degree programs doesn't happen overnight. That's why our government is going to work with Red Deer College and the Campus Alberta Quality Council to make sure that the degrees that they offer meet the needs of the local community.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is something that Red Deer has been waiting for for many, many years. When will they be able to start offering degree programs?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. We are still very early in the process, but we are committed to making sure that Red Deer College goes down this path to degree-granting status. We're working to make sure that all of our colleges and universities have the resources they need, and that's why we've provided annual 2 per cent increases in their operating grants every year along with additional backfill funding to support the tuition freeze. Our opponents, on the other hand, would of course make significant cuts to universities and colleges to pay for their billion-dollar tax break for wealthy individuals and corporations. We're not going to let that happen. We're going to make life better for students.

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

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government recently announced that it intends to provide funding for postsecondary programs in the tech sector. Will this funding be available for RDC?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for that question as well. I was very pleased to announce with the Minister of Economic Development and Trade our \$43 million investment in the creation of 3,000 new tech spaces in universities and colleges all across the province. This is a really exciting initiative that will support the development of the high-tech sector here in Alberta. We are also going to seek the advice of experts on how we should allocate those monies and where those spaces should be created, and I look forward to engaging in that process and supporting students in receiving the high-tech education that Albertans need.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Pharmacy Funding Framework

Dr. Starke: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In a recent poll 95 per cent of Albertans said that pharmacists were the most accessible health care professionals. Now, Alberta's 5,000 pharmacists are trusted front-line health care professionals in every sense of the word, and that's why it's baffling to understand why Alberta Health forced the provincial Pharmacists' Association, the RxA, to sign a nondisclosure agreement during recent negotiations on a new pharmacy funding framework. To the Health minister: for a government that prides itself on openness and transparency, why was it necessary to muzzle trusted front-line professionals with a gag order?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. We respect that negotiations happen at the table, and like is the case with all organizations that we're negotiating with, including unionized groups, what we asked for is: before you communicate with your members, please let us know what you'll be saying. That is standard practice, and we're proud to

continue that. We're also proud of the fact that we came up with an agreement that sees a 4.3 per cent increase, which is very reasonable, to ensure that we have access for drugs across Alberta and that we're making sure that that results in the best outcomes for patients.

Dr. Starke: Well, Mr. Speaker, that's certainly not what the pharmacy association has told me. Given that the pharmacists administered over 50 per cent of the flu vaccinations in Alberta last year and given that Alberta Health has failed to meet its own vaccination targets for the past three years and given that the new funding framework cuts the fee paid to pharmacists for administering flu vaccine to a level where it is no longer economically viable for them to provide this service, to the minister: in the interest of public health will you at least consider restoring the previous fee paid to pharmacists for administering flu vaccinations?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I understand that the formula was reached in the past with the previous government, which the member was a part of, and that fee was 50 per cent higher than the next-highest jurisdiction in Canada. So what we've done is that we've brought that fee in line to still be the highest in Canada but not to be an outlier by 50 per cent. We did that in partnership with pharmacists, the RxA, and I'm really proud of the fact that we came to a good outcome there.

2:10

Dr. Starke: Well, you did it behind closed doors under a gag order. Given that pharmacists are taxpayers, too, and they support effective measures to reduce health care spending, provided that it does not harm patient care, and given that the RxA provided the government's hired third-party negotiator with over 40 recommendations for cost savings, none of which were incorporated into the final agreement, to the minister: why did your hired-gun negotiator ignore the recommendations of Alberta pharmacists?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What we did is that we sat down at the table in a respectful way with our budget, which has, as you'll see from last year's budget, a 4.3 per cent increase, and we said that these 12 per cent increases that were reached because of policies under the former government are not fair to Albertans, they're not fair to patients, and we need to find a way to be more sustainable. What we did is that we sat down with both parties and agreed on a formula that will get us there. I understand that perhaps the member opposite wants to defend policies that saw skyrocketing costs at the cost of patient outcomes, but on this side of the House we're always going to put patients first, and we're going to do so in a sustainable way.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Oil Sands Advisory Group Former Co-chair

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On May 4, 2017, the Deputy Premier stated:

We brought people to the table who traditionally have been adversarial, and instead we got good results, which includes two pipelines. I'm not going to apologize for getting good results for Alberta.

Will the Deputy Premier now admit that having Ms Berman on the panel didn't result in two pipelines and, in fact, resulted in her own appointee fighting against pipelines and fighting against Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the reminder that we have, because of this government on this side instead of a Conservative government here and a Conservative government in Ottawa, actually gotten approvals. We've gotten two significant approvals that are important for our economy. Construction has already started on line 3 – it's well under way – and we absolutely are moving forward on Kinder Morgan. We will not stop at anything that is in our way. We're going to keep moving forward, keep getting good outcomes for Albertans, and that includes getting our product to tidewater, something that the Official Opposition's leader failed to do over many years in Ottawa.

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, I'm asking specifically about the government-appointed woman who is currently fighting our pipelines, right now, as we speak.

On May 4, 2017, again, the Deputy Premier said:

Ms Berman has been effective in working with a number of industry leaders. A number of people joined the table and got good results for Alberta, including two pipelines, and we're going to make sure that we continue to get good access to international markets, which helps Albertans.

What happened?

Ms Hoffman: What happened is a trip down memory lane. We got two pipeline approvals, Mr. Speaker. Two. Line 3 is well under construction, getting our product to the east. Kinder Morgan has had the approvals. We're moving forward. We're not going to stop any time soon because we need to make sure that we get our product to tidewater, something that this province has deserved. We have everything in this province except for a coastline, and that's why we need to work collaboratively to make sure we can get our products to that coastline so that we can get the very best price and so that everybody in Alberta has the opportunity to benefit from the prosperity that we have here. That's why I'm so proud that we have both of those pipelines approved. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order, please.

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, we've got police officers right now on the ground getting injured by protesters in B.C., one of which happens to be Ms Berman. Will the government admit it was a mistake to put Ms Berman on the panel in the first place?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, what I will admit is that we brought forward a climate leadership plan shortly after taking government, one that had been ignored by the previous government, that had 44 years to do so. We had a Conservative government in Ottawa for many years that failed to act in a way that could ensure that we got the kinds of approvals that brought us forward to getting Kinder Morgan approved. So what I will admit is that on this side of the House we came up with a plan. Our plan got approvals. We've already got one pipeline well under construction, and the other one will be forthcoming. This side gets results; that side complains.

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

Carbon Levy Rate (continued)

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In November 2016 the Premier said in relation to her government's carbon tax, quote: we have never outlined that \$30 was where it was going to stop; people who talk about effective carbon pricing acknowledge that as time

progresses, it needs to go up. Unquote. Premier, just how effective do you plan to make your carbon tax?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, our price on carbon is at \$30 per tonne, which is where the price on carbon in British Columbia has been for some time. The federal government has announced their intention to bring in a federal price on carbon. So Alberta had a choice. We could move forward with a plan that worked for Albertans and that resulted last year in Canada's fastest economic growth and this year in Canada's fastest economic growth. We could take that plan, or we could take a plan made by Mr. Trudeau in the Prime Minister's office. We chose a made-in-Alberta solution.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Premier has said that she had no choice but to introduce a carbon tax because a federally imposed one was coming down the pike anyway so we had best create our own made-in-Alberta version and given that the Premier is now saying, "That plan was independent. The issue subsequently around additional levies is definitely linked to the pipeline," Premier, why did you ally yourself with the Trudeau Liberals and burden Albertans with an unnecessary tax when your Ottawa friends have done nothing to ensure the building of this pipeline?

The Speaker: The hon. minister of environment.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the pipeline was approved with specific reference to the climate leadership plan. But it's also really important to note that a federally imposed carbon-pricing framework would not serve Alberta, so we got to work right away. We rolled up our sleeves, we worked with industry on a system of output-based allocations for our large emitters and an economy-wide price that works for all Albertans. We are seeing record economic growth in terms of setting the pace for the country. We're seeing diversification as well.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Gill: Mr. Speaker, the environment minister must be talking about some other province's economic growth because it's not happening here.

Given that the NDP's besties, as we know, Karen Mahon and Tzeporah Berman are protesting against pipelines and that today the environment minister said on the radio that the oil and gas industry wanted these two protestors on the advisory committee, Premier, since your government has failed completely to obtain a pipeline, will you tell Albertans the truth now, that the carbon tax had nothing to do with the pipeline and that your social licence, your carbon tax have completely failed?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, the situation we inherited, the dead end that previous Conservative governments both federally and provincially drove us into, was one where we couldn't get our products to tidewater, and we were having nonstarter conversations on Alberta's climate record. That's why oil companies engaged with environmental groups far before our government took office, companies like Suncor and Shell, CNRL, Cenovus, Conoco, and had those conversations on how to get out from that dead end that certainly Mr. Harper's government had

driven us into and 44 years of provincial Conservative governments had driven us into. We are the government that pulled us out of that dead end.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Carbon Levy and Education Costs

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. School boards across Alberta have voiced serious concerns about the carbon tax. The Rocky View school division recently wrote a public letter to parents stating that they anticipate having a \$1 million shortfall in the transportation budget. This school division pays \$360,000 per year in carbon tax alone. They've become so desperate that they are considering transferring funds out of the classroom to cover the transportation budget shortfall. To the Minister of Education: can you explain how transferring money out of the classroom to cover the cost of the carbon tax will improve educational outcomes for our children?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, I have been engaged in constructive conversations with the Rocky View school board in regard to transportation, in regard to their very fast-growing student enrolment population. You know, we built six new schools in the Rocky View district here in the last couple of years – I'm very proud of that – and it's indicative of the investment that we have made in Rocky View and right across the province, more than \$790 million, more money than would have been invested if the Conservative government was to have taken the government in the last election.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess no answer there. I'll try again.

Given that the High Prairie school division recently stated that they would pay roughly \$62,000 in carbon tax at the initial \$20-per-tonne price and given that this cost increased by \$31,000 because of the increase in the price of the carbon tax, which the board chair described as being comparable to the cost of hiring an additional teacher, again to the minister: can the minister explain how having fewer teachers in the classroom is a positive step forward for rural education?

2:20

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said before, we have made significant investments in school boards in regard to enrolment, in regard to capital expenditure, and in regard to transportation as well. We had transportation on our list. We had it as part of the bill in the last session, to review the long outdated transportation formulas and so forth. We're working hard, and we're making investments using the carbon money to invest in infrastructure in schools, to make them more efficient, to save money, and to provide education opportunities for students around climate change.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that the minister told school boards in the fall of 2016, "You will not be left in a deficit position as part of the climate leadership plan," and given that he went on to say of the carbon tax, "We will work to ensure

that you are first in line for the money from the funds,” and given that the carbon tax is causing transportation and budgetary shortfalls for school boards across Alberta and given that the minister is pulling \$3 million out of the transportation budget, again to the minister: will you go back to the drawing board, sit down with school boards, and figure out a way to stop handcuffing their budgets with your inane . . .

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, I have had constructive engagements with all of our school boards. We work together to find solutions in order to move students to school in a safe manner, to ensure that there are teachers in the classroom, and that we make those capital investments in schools. What is not constructive is when certain people from the members opposite use this same information to try to promote themselves, to try to use this as a political wedge issue, and to not represent the information and the situation as it really is in our fine school system.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Trampoline Safety Standards

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year a resident of my riding suffered an injury while attending a local trampoline park. A tragic injury led this young man to suffer a broken neck, resulting in paralysis from the chest down. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: what standards are currently in place to protect the safety of consumers?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member for the question. I know she is a fierce advocate for her constituents and has been on this issue. Currently the international standard is set out by the American society for testing and materials. Alberta is a member of this body and contributes on proposals to organizations. The government is working with the Safety Codes Council, industry, and safety systems experts to determine the appropriateness of government regulation in this industry. The government of Alberta is committed to the protection and safety of Albertan consumers.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: how are the standards developed?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned, the American society for testing and materials, the international safety standards organization, has developed standards for trampoline parks operating in North America. The elevating devices and amusement rides administrator represents Alberta on ASTM standard committees and provides regular input on development of standards created for the amusement ride industry. The safety of Albertans, obviously, is a top priority for our government. I was deeply concerned to hear of this accident and accidents like this, and we will continue to work to explore solutions.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: as I know this issue affects not only Sherwood Park but everywhere

throughout the province, what steps are you and the ministry taking to address the concerns?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. The ASTM recently released an updated standard for trampoline parks, in early 2018, and the government is working with the Safety Codes Council to review it with industry and safety system experts. I've also instructed my department to explore other potential regulatory solutions and my legal department to examine the potential precedent such a solution would entail across other muscular propulsion activities. I encourage all Albertans involved in extreme sports or any sports to take appropriate precautions and be aware of the risks involved in those activities.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Carbon Levy Rebates for Seniors

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When this government rolled out carbon tax rebate cheques, they bragged about how the money would be used to help those less fortunate like seniors. Low-income seniors living in subsidized housing pay 30 per cent of their gross income for rent. Revenue Canada does not consider these rebates as income, yet we have been told that the minister of seniors very quietly decided to allow the government housing foundations to include these rebates as seniors' income for rent calculation purposes, forcing seniors to pay higher rent. To the minister of seniors: is that really so?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we're making life better by protecting front-line care and making life more affordable for seniors in Alberta as part of our overall investment in affordable housing and in seniors' services. We've got 260,000 seniors eligible to receive up to \$300 annually from the carbon levy rebate. We've also provided a \$500,000 grant to the four largest housing management bodies to conduct energy efficiency audits on provincially owned affordable housing units. We're continuing to work for seniors, not against them.

Mr. Orr: So seniors' rent is included, and they do pay higher rent.

Given that the government has committed to the federal carbon tax scheme, which would see a further 67 per cent increase to the carbon tax and, we assume, a proportionate increase to seniors' rent, funding carbon tax, really, on the backs of low-income seniors, has the government bothered to do any analysis whatsoever on how this will impact seniors in our province?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, rather than having a federally designed carbon-pricing system imposed on us, as the Leader of the Official Opposition would prefer given that he spends a lot of time thinking about Ottawa, I prefer to have a made-in-Alberta solution. That's why we have the seniors' rebates that we do and the rebates for all low- and middle-income Albertans, and that's why we are investing in things like energy efficiency retrofits and so on. We'll have more to say about that with respect to seniors' programs as we go ahead.

Mr. Orr: Wow. What a dodge.

To the minister of seniors again. Since we know that this tax affects everything that low-income seniors buy, from gas in their cars to groceries at the store, how could you as minister use this rebate to force a carbon tax increase in rent from an already low-income senior who depends on subsidies, especially after they spent their lives building this province from the ground up?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, low- and middle-income Albertans, two-thirds of Albertans, in fact, are eligible for a rebate, \$300 per individual and more for couples.

In addition to that, this government protected more than \$800 million in seniors' benefits over the last two years. Those are seniors' benefits that would have been on the chopping block had the members opposite been making decisions, Mr. Speaker, and that's because they'd have to do those cuts in order to pay for tax cuts for their wealthy friends.

Provincial Renewable Energy Contracts

Mr. Cooper: This government has made a complete and utter mess of the entire electricity system. It all started with a rash and ideological decision to make changes that forced companies like Enmax and Capital Power to turn back their power purchase agreements. This was allowed because of a change-in-law clause that the government knew about or should have known about. To the minister. You're currently signing multiyear, multi hundred million dollar contracts for renewable energy. Is there a change-in-law clause in any of those contracts? Yes or no?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, certainly, we have taken action over backroom deals, that were made many years ago by the previous Conservative government, to protect Albertans. In the deregulation we saw price spikes, which we have taken action against so that customers can see a reliable electricity system and predictable bills.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, it sounds to me like the minister wasn't a hundred per cent sure, so I'll give her another opportunity to answer the very simple question. Is there a change-in-law clause in the renewable contracts? Yes or no? Or is the minister unsure?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, as we transition to 30 per cent renewables by 2030, we are working hard to protect Alberta families from price spikes, which we've seen in previous decades. You know, we struck deals with our power companies in the transition. We are transitioning towards fair bills, a reliable system, and sustainability in our system as well.

2:30

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, given that this minister made a decision that cost Albertans well over \$800 million based upon a change-in-law clause, the question is very simple. Is there a change-in-law clause in the renewable contracts that she is currently signing? Yes or no?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's interesting that our Conservative opposition here is defending a backroom deal that was made many decades ago regarding a change in law that was

done in the backrooms and was in favour of the businesses rather than regular Albertans. I'm pleased to say that we've struck the last deal with Enmax. It's fair to Enmax, it's fair to our province, and it's fair to Albertans. It has no impact on Albertans. You know, as I've mentioned many times, these are deals that are good for Albertans. It's interesting that our opposition continues to defend backroom deals.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

International Cargo and Passenger Air Service

Mr. Gottfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Attracting and retaining international passenger and cargo flights is an integral part of supporting international market access for Alberta. If you can't get your product to market, you have no market at all. To the Minister of Transportation. Key international cargo and passenger flights provide lift to our growing economy. What are you and your department specifically doing to attract and retain these key trade links?

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

Mr. Bilous: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There are a number of initiatives that our government has undertaken, including partnering with our two airports, Edmonton International Airport and YYC. They participated on previous trade missions. We're working in lockstep with them as they continue to attract not only companies but also attract those crucial cargo flights. As the member accurately points out, we need to get our products to tidewater, and our government has been very proactive on this and will continue to work with our businesses to increase their market access to markets around the world. We have 12 international offices, and I'm very proud of the work that we're doing with industry.

Mr. Gottfried: Mr. Speaker, given that China is obviously a key market for a variety of Alberta products and given that the minister of economic development has been to China numerous times and must understand the importance of retaining current international flights and given that it has been brought to my attention that both Air China Cargo and Cathay Pacific Cargo are experiencing challenges, to the minister: could you please provide an update on the status of these flights and what you and your government are doing to retain them?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned earlier, there are a number of things that our government is doing working with our airports to support the expansion of flights. Under our government we've seen a number of new flights, both passenger and cargo. We continue to work closely with Edmonton International, which is where the Air China Cargo flights are coming out of. I can tell you that it is absolutely critical that we get our products to market. On that front both the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry and the Minister of Energy and I myself have participated in trade missions in order to expand critical trade, and because of it, exports are up.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Gottfried: Mr. Speaker, given that as of Saturday the twice-weekly Cathay Pacific Cargo flight, carrying 135,000 kilograms of

payload per flight from Alberta to Hong Kong, will be cancelled and given that the three-times-weekly Air China Cargo flight, carrying 101,000 kilograms of payload per flight from Alberta to Shanghai, has been suspended and given that neither Economic Development nor Transportation had any contact with at least one of these carriers over the last three years, again to the minister: how can you say you're supporting key trade links when it seems nobody is minding the store?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The premise of the member's question is false. I can tell you again that our government has been working very closely with our airports that work directly with the airlines. We've also had conversations with the airlines in order to look at ways to enhance our cargo service. We will continue to support our businesses and to support our airports in their endeavour to ensure that our businesses are getting their products to the international market. I'm proud of the work that we've done, and I wish the members opposite would be as well.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Psychiatric Hospital Beds in St. Paul

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I had such good luck pressuring the Health minister for the Lac La Biche dialysis unit that I thought I would try again. The St. Therese health centre in St. Paul was designated as a psychiatric hub for a large portion of northeastern Alberta by AHS. To the minister: are you aware of the significant stress this has put on health care delivery in my community of St. Paul as well as added costs incurred by AHS for transportation, accommodation, and the hiring of contract security to supervise patients because they cannot access beds in the psychiatric unit?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. I've been really proud of some of the investments we've made in his riding. Very recently we opened a new dialysis unit in Lac La Biche, for example, which we know is really good news for northeastern Alberta.

I'd be happy to discuss this matter with him and see if there's something that we can do to address the concerns that he might raise or gather more information that might be helpful in his understanding of the situation as well.

Mr. Hanson: Given, Mr. Speaker, that of the 20 available beds in the psychiatric unit only half of them are being utilized and given that the ER department is often unable to deal with other patients because it is acting as a holding area while waiting for a bed to open, Minister, surely even you must be able to find efficiencies in a \$20 billion budget to open existing beds and help alleviate the stress that this lack of beds is having on health care delivery in our community?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We have been effective at finding a number of different efficiencies and using them to invest in communities, including communities in the member's own riding, like the investment of that important dialysis unit, which expands

capacity and other opportunities. On this side of the House we believe in public health care. We believe in investing in communities that we know require these services and that are major employers in these communities as well. We're proud to protect and defend public health care. I look forward to opportunities to discuss that in estimates because I'm confident that while the member asks for increased resources today, tomorrow he'll be asking for cuts.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you. Given, Mr. Speaker, that I've made personal requests for a meeting with the minister's office to address this matter and given that a letter was sent to the minister signed by virtually every physician and psychiatrist at the hospital stating their real concerns for patient safety, to the minister: why have you not responded to this crisis situation in St. Paul, and when will you meet with us to address the important issue of public safety?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. As I said in my first response, I'm happy to take some time to meet with the member and discuss this matter more fully with him and with the right staff in the room to support that. As you might imagine, I have a very full calendar. I'm proud to have it that way. This afternoon I'll be meeting with a number of municipalities from AAMD and C; actually, I think it's called RMA now. Of course, I'd be very happy to take the time to meet with the member. This is standard practice in my office. I think we've done it in the past, and I'm happy to do it again.

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

Misericordia Hospital Emergency Room Capital Plan

Mr. Carson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In Budget 2016 our government committed capital investments for the Misericordia over four years to improve care for patients accessing the emergency department. This funding is long overdue as more than 51,000 patients visited the Mis emergency in 2015-16, double the capacity of the 48-year-old facility. Construction of the new department is set to begin by late 2018 after the project scope and competitive bid process are finished. Can the Minister of Health please update the House on where we are in the process and if construction will begin on time?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. Alberta has the fastest growing economy in Canada, as we know, and things are looking up in Alberta and in our capital city. Growth means more pressure on our older hospital facilities, made worse by years of neglect and budget cuts under previous governments. Albertans can't wait for important services and infrastructure. That's why our government is making investments that matter. Planning and design are well under way, and I would like to thank this specific member for his advocacy in this area.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Carson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister please share with the House how this investment will improve the care for those in my community and communities across this province?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It means shorter wait times and better access to care for patients across Edmonton and northern Alberta. This is the first major investment in the Misericordia's emergency department in nearly three decades. It's shameful how Conservatives operated in Alberta. When times were bad, they cut services for Albertans; when times were good, they cut taxes for the richest of their friends. This government is different. This government is protecting the services that Albertans count on.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Carson: Thank you. Can the Minister of Health reassure the community that these improvements to the emergency department will not interrupt the services that people require while the Misericordia is under construction?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Misericordia hospital is absolutely critical to the emergency room services that we provide in Edmonton and to folks from northern Alberta as well. About 50,000 Alberta patients go to that emergency room every single year. While we make improvements, that won't change. The new emergency department will be built strategically to minimize disruptions. Patients will still get the highest quality of care without compromising ambulance access or the needs of the front-line staff who are there.

Unlike Conservative governments, who knew how to cut, we're building for the future, strengthening the care Albertans rely on, not cutting. We're building.

Provincial Renewable Energy Contracts

(continued)

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, this government has made a complete and utter mess of the electricity system. Estimates range between \$800 million and \$2 billion that they have cost Alberta taxpayers because of their mismanagement of the PPA agreements, including a change-in-law clause. To the minister of Environment or Energy. The question is simple. Is there a change-in-law clause in your renewable contracts? Yes or no?

2:40

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, there is a change-of-law clause. It is a well-drafted commercial change of law that is proportional to whatever change in law that the government has made. So if there's a tiny change, there will be a tiny change in cost. This is what the clause should have looked like way back when the Conservatives made their backroom deals decades ago.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, let me get this straight. Given that you claimed that you didn't know about the change-in-law clause previously and now you're writing them into your contracts and you have used this as an excuse to cost Albertans billions of dollars, will you now admit that you were wrong previously when you cost Albertans \$800 million because of a change-of-law clause contract?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I will admit is that decades ago the previous government got it wrong. They did not do a proper change-of-law clause. What happened was that losses that were accumulating before the change in law were

allowed to be accounted for, so a tiny change in law made the government responsible for huge losses that were there before. What we've done is that we've properly written it into these where a small change in law, small accounting for losses.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, it wasn't a tiny change in law. It was a massive ideological change that this government implemented on the PPAs. I find it very interesting that the minister says that they were backroom deals that they didn't know about, yet today they are including a change-in-law clause in the very contracts that they're signing. My question is very simple. Will the minister now admit that they were wrong and cost Albertans over a billion dollars because of their lack of knowledge of the change-in-law clause then?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. What I will admit is that his colleagues, who he continues to sit with, negotiated contracts that had clauses in them that were totally unfair to consumers. What I will admit is that this side of the House makes sure that we stand up for the people of this province. That's why we worked to address this, that's why we reached fair settlements with all of the impacted parties, and that's why moving forward, we have fair clauses that acknowledge that if there's a small change in law, there'll be small changes in accounting, unlike what the members opposite did, which was to create a giant loophole that put all of the risk back on the people of Alberta. That wasn't fair. That wasn't just. This side fights for justice and for the people of this province.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I've received some suggestions that there may be tweeting out of the Legislature, and I would just use this opportunity to remind all of you that that's not been an acceptable practice.

I would also give you 30 seconds before we go to the next member's statement.

Members' Statements

(continued)

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

Journée Internationale de la Francophonie

Mr. Kenney: Merci, M. le Président. En tant que je suis chef de l'opposition officielle et leader du parti conservateur uni, je tiens à marquer et à célébrer la Journée internationale de la Francophonie aujourd'hui. Je vous salue d'avoir organisé une réception là-dessus, M. le Président. Je suis désolé que je l'ai raté.

M. le Président, la première langue européenne parlée au Canada était le français. C'était la première langue européenne parlée dans les Territoires du Nord-Ouest et ici en Alberta. La communauté francophone depuis notre début en tant que province, en tant que pays était centrale dans notre identité et notre histoire. On peut voir les noms qui nous entourent: Grandin, juste à côté d'ici, ici à Edmonton, fondé par l'évêque Grandin; St. Albert, St. Paul, Falher, toutes ces communautés qui étaient historiques, les communautés fondatrices de l'Alberta, fondées par les francophones, y compris notre communauté métis, évidemment.

Mais nous avons vécu l'élargissement de cette communauté avec l'immigration. J'étais très fier, en tant que ministre d'immigration, d'avoir le plan d'action pour renforcer les communautés francophones en situation minoritaire, et je suis très fier de ceux et celles qui sont venus en Alberta avec leur capacité francophone,

comme mes amis, par exemple, Roger Fodjo, un ressortissant camerounais, un romancier, écrivain, un homme d'un grand intellect; mon ami Dicky Dikamba, un ressortissant congolais, qui a organisé le travail acharné des bénévoles pour la communauté franco-africaine ici en Alberta. Nous avons des milliers de familles qui envoient leurs enfants aux écoles francophones d'immersion pour continuer cette grande tradition.

Alors, à tous les francophones de l'Alberta, je vous salue célébrez cette journée.

[Translation] Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As Leader of the Official Opposition and the United Conservative Party I would like to mark and celebrate International Francophonie Day. I salute you for organizing a reception downstairs, Mr. Speaker, and I'm very sorry to have missed it.

Mr. Speaker, the first European language spoken in Canada was French. It was the first European language spoken in the Northwest Territories and here in Alberta. And, Mr. Speaker, since our beginnings as a province and as a country the francophone community has been central to our identity and our history. We can see in the names that surround us: Grandin here in Edmonton, founded by Bishop Grandin; St. Albert, St. Paul, Falher: all of these communities have been historic, founding communities of Alberta, founded by francophones, including, of course, our Métis communities.

But we have also seen the growth of the francophone community with immigration. I was very proud as minister of immigration to have had an action plan to reinforce minority francophone communities, and I was very proud of those who came to Alberta with their ability to speak French, like some of my friends: for example, Roger Fodjo, an immigrant from Cameroon, a novelist, writer, a man of great intellect; my friend Dicky Dikamba, a Congolese immigrant who is a relentless volunteer organizer for the Franco-African community here in Alberta. We have thousands of families who send their children to francophone and French immersion schools to continue this great tradition.

So to all of Alberta's francophones, I salute you and celebrate this day with you. [As submitted]

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Notices of Motions

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

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give notice pursuant to Standing Order 15(2) that at the appropriate time I will be rising on a point of privilege regarding the deliberate misleading statements made yesterday by the Minister of Environment and Parks. I have the appropriate number of copies of the letter that was provided to your office by the required time this morning.

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Mr. Ceci: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of an excerpt from the Bank of Montreal's provincial economic outlook. In the outlook it states that Alberta is leading the prairies in GDP growth, job growth, housing starts, and has the lowest percentage of debt to GDP in 2017. It shows, as I said, that we have the lowest net debt to GDP in all of Canada. Things are looking up in Alberta.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of the two documents from Momentum, a Calgary nonprofit that works to help those living in poverty learn the skills they need to get out of poverty and stay there. These documents demonstrate that nonprofits like Momentum already engage in sustainable practices by looking at three key factors when purchasing resources: environmental, social, and economic sustainability. Nonprofits in Alberta are leading the way in sustainability and not, as the opposition says, suffering because of government policies which promote sustainability.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of an excerpt from ATB Financial's economic and research team, titled It's Taking Longer to Find Work in Alberta. An expert: unemployment last year "was the highest it has been since . . . 1976."

The Speaker: The Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite copies of many letters addressed to the Minister of Health. I recently was at a sold-out fundraiser, Time is Muscle, which is to say that time without treatment equals critical loss of heart muscle, in Alberta's central health region. Doctors have revealed that 35 lives a year are lost or irreversible heart damage occurs in patients waiting for or travelling in ambulances to receive heart therapies that should occur within minutes in Red Deer. Millions are spent on transportation that should fund life-saving care. So we hope that she will read at least one of these letters and that soon this crisis will be resolved because it is a matter of grave concern.

2:50

The Clerk: Tablings to the Clerk.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I referenced today during question period . . .

The Speaker: I'm sorry. I was looking at my note. I think this is not the time, hon. member. If you have a tabling, if you could do that tomorrow. Thank you.

Hon. members, I believe we had a point of privilege raised by the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Privilege

Misleading the House

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak to a point of privilege. As you know, points of privilege should not be taken or entered into lightly. Points of privilege are a serious matter, and it's unfortunate that we have to address this issue today in this Chamber. But it needs to be addressed, as do many other serious matters that we address inside this Chamber on a daily basis.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I want to make, first, a number of references and then point to a number of facts that will lead to my belief that the Minister of Environment and Parks and MLA for Lethbridge-West misled this House yesterday, March 19, 2018, and, in fact, made misleading statements in this Assembly.

With respect to privilege and issues of contempt, you will find in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, 2017, chapter 3, page 82, where it speaks of breaches of privilege, a list

of a number of those breaches, one of which says – and I'll spare you, Mr. Speaker, reading all of them; this is the one that I think we are talking about today – “deliberately attempting to mislead the House or a committee (by way of statement, evidence, or petition).”

Mr. Speaker, you will also find, in *Erskine May's Parliamentary Practice*, 24th edition, page 254, section 15, under Misconduct of Members or Officers, under the heading Members Deliberately Misleading the House, the following: “The Commons may treat the making of a deliberately misleading statement as a contempt.”

Mr. Speaker, as was indicated in my notice of breach of privilege, which, I might add, met the requirements of providing the appropriate written notice, as laid out in Standing Order 15(2):

A Member wishing to raise a [point] of privilege shall give written notice containing a brief statement . . .

as I did, Mr. Speaker,

. . . to the Speaker and, if practicable, to any person whose conduct may be called into question, at least 2 hours before the opening of the afternoon sitting,

you will notice that the written notice that I provided was stamped by your office at 11:12 a.m., providing more than two hours' notice.

Mr. Speaker, on March 19, 2018, yesterday, the Minister of Environment and Parks, in response to a question from myself, said the following:

I met with the mayor of Rocky Mountain House a couple of weeks ago and discussed the economic development and tourism opportunities that are available through the regional advisory council's advice. I would encourage the member to spend less time on conspiracy theories and more time on providing his reactions back to his own party's regional advisory council.

The minister clearly stated that she had a meeting with Her Worship Ms Tammy Burke, the mayor of the town of Rocky Mountain House.

But last night we found out from the mayor of Rocky Mountain House that there was no such meeting. At no time was there any such meeting. To be clear on that, Mr. Speaker, there was no meeting with the mayor. At no time, I should say, had the mayor actually met with the minister in regard to the Bighorn backcountry, which is what the question was about, or met with the minister about economic opportunities that the minister referred to in her answer. The mayor and the minister have not had a meeting. The mayor did inform us – and I will table an e-mail from the mayor confirming this – that she did once see the minister in a hospitality suite at a reception in Edmonton on March 5. However, Her Worship was clear that there was no meeting, just a brief, “light conversation,” that is common in a hospitality suite.

As such, the statements from the minister, the statements that the minister made in this House, are clearly in contempt of this House. It seems that there has been no meeting, that no meeting took place, again, in regard to the Bighorn backcountry, which was the content of the question being debated yesterday, or in regard to economic development, that the minister refers to in her response. The fact is, Mr. Speaker, to be clear, that the mayor of Rocky Mountain House and the minister did not have a meeting. The minister of environment showed contempt for this Assembly because she chose to answer a question by referring to a meeting that did not take place, thereby misleading this Assembly.

Just as highlighted in *Erskine May* – again, in March the minister said in her response to a question in the House the following. Sorry. I jumped spots on you, Mr. Speaker. As *Erskine May's Treatise on the Law, Privileges, Proceedings and Usage of Parliament*, 24th edition, page 254, states with respect to the United Kingdom, “The Commons may treat the making of a deliberately misleading statement as a contempt.” It is a three-part test for that to happen. First, as articulated by the former Clerk of the New Zealand House

of the Assembly, David McGee – for those following along at home, it can be found in the third edition of this book, *Parliamentary Practice in New Zealand*, on pages 653 to 654. The three parts of the test are as follows: one, it must be proven that the statement was misleading; two, it must be established that the member making the statement knew at the time that the statement was incorrect; and three, that in making the statement the member intended to mislead the House.

Let me address the first part of the test first, Mr. Speaker. As confirmed by Her Worship Tammy Burke, the mayor of Rocky Mountain House, no such meeting took place, which certainly confirms that the first test is met. The minister stating that a meeting took place that did not take place is clearly misleading this Assembly. The minister or the Government House Leader may try to argue that speaking briefly in a crowded, noisy room at a public function for a brief moment is a meeting. I would argue that that is ridiculous and further proves misleading of this House if that is the assertion. To argue that you would say that every time you or I say “hi” or have brief, idle chit-chat anywhere is a meeting is ridiculous. In fact, as I said, I think that would show that there was more intent to mislead this House. Last night and tonight MLAs will be at hospitality suites for AAMDC. One of us briefly saying “hi” and shaking hands and speaking for a few brief moments to someone is not a meeting. Clearly, attempting to pass such in this Assembly is misleading. Mayor Burke described this brief encounter as, I quote, light conversation at best.

In regard to the second and third test, the second test is that it must be established that a member knew it was a misleading statement and, three, that in making the statement the member intended to mislead the House. The fact is established by Mayor Burke that there was never a meeting. The minister of environment knows that there was no meeting, and by stating that a meeting happened that did not in fact happen, the minister clearly knew her statement was misleading.

But what is more alarming, Mr. Speaker, is that in my second supplemental to this question I challenged the minister on the fact that there was no meeting with the mayor, because I knew there was not, clearly saying the following:

The minister just stood up in this House and said that she met with the mayor of Rocky Mountain House. I know the mayor of Rocky Mountain House. This minister has not met with the mayor of Rocky Mountain House about this issue or the town of Rocky Mountain House.

The minister at that point could have risen and acknowledged that that meeting never took place, that maybe she was mistaken. She could have withdrawn her comments. Instead, she chose to let the misleading comments stand, deliberately and knowingly allowed her misleading comments to stand on the record in this House. At that point the minister knew that she had misled the House and clearly confirmed that she had deliberately and knowingly misled the House as she attempted to avoid answering a serious question that was being asked in this Chamber.

Mr. Speaker, the community I represent was very upset to hear the minister's statements. Immediately, the mayor began receiving phone calls about the situation from very confused residents. The mayor, of course, had to confirm that no such meeting had taken place. Clearly, utilizing the mayor's name – a brief encounter in a public place with brief moments of light conversation, as described by the mayor of Rocky Mountain House, is not a meeting, and saying such to this House rather than answering the question is deliberately misleading the House to avoid the issue and is a breach of privilege of the members of this Assembly.

Also, Mr. Speaker, it does a great disservice to Her Worship Mayor Burke and her constituents. While Mayor Burke is not a

member of this Assembly and the question is not about the impact on Mayor Burke as far as a point of privilege, at the very least the mayor is owed an apology from this minister, and the community of Rocky Mountain House and the community of Clearwater county are owed an apology for this minister's behaviour. I will stress that both those communities have been trying to get a meeting with the minister for a long time and would be happy to meet for real at any time.

Mr. Speaker, I will close with this. It's very clear to me and I hope it is clear to you that the minister of environment, a minister of the Crown, misled this Assembly while attempting to deflect a question in question period. By misleading this Assembly, she has misled Albertans. As such, it is my hope that you, too, will find the same, that a *prima facie* breach of privilege has occurred.

I'm also willing to move that this matter be referred to the appropriate standing committee. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

3:00

The Speaker: Hon. member, I was taking notes. What was the third point out of New Zealand that you raised?

Mr. Nixon: One second, Mr. Speaker. You can find it in the third edition of Speaker McGee's book, *Parliamentary Practice in New Zealand*, on pages 653 and 654.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Regarding this matter of privilege, having just heard the allegation and the details now, we'd like time to review and to make our case tomorrow.

The Speaker: I'll defer the matter until tomorrow.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

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

Bill 3

Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2018

The Chair: Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to stand and speak today on interim supply. You know, we're being asked to approve billions of dollars in spending, and the government has provided us with little information or context. It's like asking us to sign a blank cheque and give it to them. This government is chronically underprepared, and it results in less transparency and accountability to Alberta taxpayers.

[Mr. Dach in the chair]

When we asked really good questions that sought more specific information about where interim supply money was actually being spent, the Finance minister and the rest of Executive Council stonewalled or outright failed to provide any specific information. Unacceptable for members to be told they need to wait until the budget is announced on Thursday before they'll find out where this

money is going to be spent. We're talking about interim supply now, remember. This Legislature is being asked to provide this government with a cheque for \$8.5 billion without knowing where any of this money is going.

You know, the minister sitting here said: just support the government. He asked the opposition just to support the government in interim supply. That's what we were supposed to do. Well, I wonder, if things go a different way and the minister is sitting in opposition next year, if he'll just support the government when they come in with interim supply and don't answer any questions. If the government would have been prepared, they would have had the budget done on time. We wouldn't need this interim supply as well.

The minister was asked by my colleague – you know, he said that the business tax was increased from 10 to 12 per cent, which resulted in a 20 per cent increase to this business tax. The minister said: well, that's not 20 per cent. So if from 10 per cent to 12 per cent isn't 20 per cent, I wish the minister would tell us exactly what percentage increase that would be. According to my calculations it's 20 per cent, so maybe the minister can get us that answer.

Since it seems we can't get answers to questions or aren't even supposed to ask them, then maybe I'll just stand up here and make comments like the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie did, who obviously doesn't understand budgeting and the infrastructure and the building process in this province. He brags about all the new schools that were built in his constituency. Well, I can you tell that it was no thanks to them. He scoffs at the signs that we put up with nothing behind them, Mr. Chair, but, you know, behind every one of those signs today there's a new school.

You know, the process is that Infrastructure gets direction from Education on where the new schools will be built. They can't start designing, doing the testing, applying for development permits until Education says: this is where you're going to build the next school. Once that's been decided by Education, then Infrastructure has a job to do the soil testing, to get the development permits, to design it, get it tender ready, and that takes sometimes a couple of years. In some cities it takes a year to get a development permit, Mr. Chair.

But it wouldn't be fair to all of a sudden not tell a community that there's a school going there, keep it a secret until you start building it, because sometimes, Mr. Chair, people with young kids are looking to move to a community, and if they see that, well, there's no school there, they're not going to move there. But if they've got a one-year-old and see there's a sign that a new school is going up, they'll be happy to move there. Plus, young families in a community with no school might tend to move away, but if there's a sign up saying that there's a new school coming in two years, they'll be fine with staying.

The previous government built 250 new schools. So far this government has announced 30 schools and hasn't built one. They've made 30 announcements and haven't built any, so for him to stand up and say, "I got these schools built in my constituency" is truly not right, Mr. Chair. Not one new school has been announced and built and opened by this government, but there were lots that these members liked to cut the ribbon for and take the credit for that were started and budgeted by the previous government.

Same as hospitals. Lots of new hospitals being opened, like in High Prairie, Edson, Grande Prairie, Medicine Hat. They were all projects that were started by the previous government. There's a new hospital announced in Edmonton, and, you know, that's a good thing for Edmonton, but when they announced the hospital, they didn't even have a site, so they couldn't put up a sign, Mr. Chair. But they announced it. Now they do have a site, and they do have a sign up. Amazing. They criticized us for that, and now they're doing the same thing. The other part is that they put the sign up, but they

still don't have the project budgeted for. They put, you know, \$300 million in the budget, but we know that hospital is going to cost way more than that.

To criticize the way we did things in the past and then do the same thing but worse is a little bit rich, but good for Edmonton for getting a hospital. But just so the people in Edmonton know, the regional hospital being built in Grande Prairie services the whole northwest region. Well, all the people coming to that new hospital, Mr. Chair, used to come to Edmonton, so building a new hospital in Grande Prairie has freed up a lot of spaces in Edmonton. That's something that people don't always think about. Good for Edmonton for getting a new hospital, but the Grande Prairie one helps the residents of Edmonton as well.

You know, a good announcement today from the Minister of Municipal Affairs on behalf of the agriculture minister about funding the ag societies, a three-year commitment to funding that. That was done at the new rural municipalities association. I'm not sure what they're going to call their acronym, whether it's ARMA or just RMA. That was a good announcement and something we've been asking the government for. But when I asked the question last week, the Finance minister said, "Well, we can't tell you what's in the budget," yet today he announced that he hasn't announced the budget yet, so I thought that was a little strange as well.

3:10

You know, we're supposed to get up here and talk about the interim supply, but we're not supposed to ask questions or get any answers. I could go on about why there's \$200 million less in the Transportation budget in this interim than last year, but we won't get an answer, and I don't expect to. Maybe it's not a fair question, but we're supposed to be here to debate the interim supply. I'm supposed to get up and speak about it, so that's what I'm doing. When other people get up and speak and make statements that aren't necessarily friendly with the facts, I've got to get up and make statements that might correct them. So if we're not allowed to get answers to our questions, I just wanted to clear up a few of the misconceptions in this House.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other hon. members that wish to speak? The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you for your comments in regard to the interim supply. I have just a couple of things that I think need to be perhaps filled out or corrected.

As the Education minister, of course, we were moving forward on schools that were approved to be built. I found out very quickly that the financing was not in place to build those schools so we needed to scramble. We needed to make some adjustments because the previous government failed to build schools for a long time, for a generation, and then they announced a flurry of schools just before the last election. You know, as we said, we had some signs sitting in fields, and then the sign would fall down, and there's still no school there. We went ahead and built those schools, but the first thing I had to do was actually move capital into the budget to actually build those schools. Quite frankly, between that deficit, that capital that wasn't there and the government's admission that they were not going to fund for enrolment, Education was sitting on the edge of a precipice, Mr. Chair, a precipice that would not allow schools to be built, that would not allow spaces to be available for a fast-growing population. It would have been chaos.

I mean, Albertans made a choice around that. I think education was a big part of the choice they made in the last election. The

people spoke, and you have a fine, fine government here now, who is making life better for Albertans, investing in education, making sure we got those schools built. You know, that's it. That's what happened.

Certainly, interim supply is an interesting thing because, of course, you have movement during the course of the year. In Education the movement that we saw was an increase in enrolment from 1.8 per cent to 2.2 per cent. That differential was the sum total of our interim supply that we're asking here for the Legislature to consider. Again, respectfully to the Education critic across the way last night talking about maintenance money, an adjustment that I made was that I moved that maintenance money from operating to capital. This was part of a way by which I could compel boards to make sure that they were spending money that was meant for infrastructure maintenance and so forth on infrastructure. That was the sum total of that part of our interim supply for Education. In fact, it was exactly no change in the budget that we debated and voted on last year.

So the sum total of my interim supply was to cover off the increase in enrolments in the schools across our province, which, again, is indicative of a sense of hope and optimism. You know, we're seeing more families moving to Alberta, and we're seeing lots of those families having children, right? There's no better sort of a way of indicating the health of an economy than for people to be having children and, you know, filling up our schools and buying houses and laying down roots and building a future for themselves and for their kids. So I'm pretty happy about that. Yeah. We've got a long way to go – right? – to the recovery from the economic downturn, but I certainly can see signs of optimism in Education, and I'm very proud of that.

Thank you.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti. Way up there.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I didn't want to turn this into a debate with the Education minister. I thought it was a Finance debate, but that's good. I don't have the numbers, you know, in front of me for the years back. When we budgeted for those schools, it was a five-year budget, and the money was in there. But I do know that in the second year of this government they transferred a hundred million dollars out of capital. The minister said that he had too much money in the capital build plan, and he transferred it out. So I find it a little funny, his statement today. I can go back and look a couple of years, and I think I can confirm that number. So when he said that they had to transfer it in, when he transferred it out: we might have to debate that at another time because I'm not prepared.

I will give the minister credit. You know, he talks about growth in his schools. The growth he's seeing today is nothing compared to what we saw five and eight years ago at 8 per cent growth. That's why we needed to build all those schools, because Alberta was growing way faster than it is today. But I will give the minister credit – we started those schools, and lots of them were built and open before this government came along – for finishing them all and opening them. There are some great new schools in the province today because of the stuff we started and he finished. I'll thank him for finishing them; they're good schools. Our students in Alberta will enjoy them for many years to come. I don't know; we'll have to wait until after Thursday, I guess, but hopefully there are announcements in the budget that this government will announce more new schools in the future as well because there are still more to be built, Mr. Chair.

Thank you.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there other hon. members wishing to speak to Bill 3? Thank you. The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I rise to speak to Bill 3, Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2018. I thank the hon. Minister of Treasury Board and Finance for bringing Bill 3 forward.

Before I make formal comments on this Bill 3, it was interesting. I was following the back and forth between my hon. colleague from Grande Prairie-Wapiti and the Education minister. My colleague identified the issue of when people are taking credit for the work the other government did before but not even giving them due credit. Still, the member is very fair in giving credit to the Education minister where it is due for finishing the projects. I think we'll add value to the debate here if we actually be fair to each other.

On one hand the minister said: "Oh, we got the mandate. People spoke." But in this House, you know, they keep blaming the previous government, saying, "Oh, those are the ones who are responsible." You've had the mandate for three years now. You're into the mandate of the third year. What did you do to fix all those things? People in Calgary-Foothills sometimes ask me those questions. "Why do they keep blaming the previous government? Why don't they do their job?" I just wanted to make that point, Mr. Chair.

Also, coming back to Bill 3, the hon. Finance minister has exposed himself with respect to the government of Alberta's budgeting process by presenting Bill 3. The fact that we need an interim supply bill means that the Department of Finance is behind the eight ball by a month or two. The budgeting process is out of kilter and out of synchronization with the rest of the fiscal year, so we need to get it back on track.

3:20

The Legislative Assembly is being asked to approve billions in spending, and the government provided us with no information or context in the Committee of Supply. It just goes to show that the government is chronically underprepared. Being unprepared results in less transparency and accountability for Alberta's taxpayers, Mr. Chair, and we have that here. We don't have the details of the interim spending. We'll only see that when the main budget estimates are tabled with the main budget.

When we ask really good questions, like my colleague said before, that sought more specific information about where interim supply money was actually being spent, the Finance minister and the rest of Executive Council stonewalled those questions or outright failed to provide any specific information. I guess that's why they call it question period, not answer period, Mr. Chair. Albertans see that on television and streaming online, and they don't like it.

Albertans told the UCP Official Opposition that they didn't like the decorum, so we fixed that. Ever since we've had this new leader of our party, he asked us to maintain the decorum of the House. We heard that, and we implemented that. Now if we could just get the government to answer the questions with real answers, not stonewalling, or with a commitment to get back to members with real answers, we'd really appreciate that and Albertans will appreciate that.

It's unacceptable for the members to be told that they need to wait until the budget is announced on Thursday before they find out where the money is going. Again, like the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti said, another contradiction in this House is that when we ask, they say, "Stay tuned till Thursday," and in the meantime, I mean, they go outside to make announcements about funding for some scheme or another scheme. We're the elected representatives

of Albertans, and I don't see why the government can't share the information with us in this House, in this temple of democracy.

Even then, when one gets into the budget estimates and all the fancy titles that program funding is hidden under, I think we can do better with the transparency. Wouldn't it be something if we had an interactive estimates online where one could click the estimates line item and drill down to lower levels to see what is in it and drill down all the way to the invoices and receipts level, Mr. Chair? That would be true transparency. We would be the most transparent of all.

Now, the interim estimates as presented are only supposed to be for about a two-month period. If the total spending in this two months is \$8.5 billion, the full 12 months is shaping up to be in the vicinity of \$51 billion. This would be down by \$5 billion from the third-quarter update on expenses of \$55,947,000,000. But for our purposes we are talking about \$7.717 billion roughly in expenses and \$559,244,000 in capital and \$160,211,000 in financial transactions in Bill 3. I suspect that the minister is front-loading some money here to get it out the door for grants and such, but at the end of the day the Legislature is being asked to provide this government with a cheque for 8 and a half billion dollars without knowing where any of that money is going to be spent.

In terms of revenue we only know that \$239,907,000 in funding from the lottery fund is being transferred to the general revenue fund, and we don't know where the rest of the revenue, which is approximately \$8.25 billion, is coming from for this other than it is coming from the general revenue fund.

With respect to the \$43,759,000 in expense for Alberta Energy, given that this represents 20.9 per cent of last year's entire budget, if this is for two months of operations, it looks like the minister is foreshadowing a 25.6 per cent increase in the overall expense budget for 2018-19, Mr. Chair.

Now, last week the government announced the coal community transition fund, supporting 12 projects in 17 communities across the province with about \$5 million. Is this money in Bill 3, or is it in Budget 2017-18, or is it contained in Bill 4? We don't know, Mr. Chair. What I do know is that the NDP is going to fund work to expand economic hubs, including agribusiness, transportation and high-tech industries, tourism development, strategic planning, and feasibility studies to help communities diversify and expand their local economies. Nor do we know how much of the expense will be used to cover the cost of selling oil and operating the Alberta Petroleum Marketing Commission.

Mr. Chair, we need a real budget, not an interim supply. I know we'll have to wait till Thursday, but I ask the Minister of Treasury Board and Finance to get his department's act together and use some common sense so that the budget can be presented and debated, examined, and scrutinized on time before the end of the fiscal year.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 3? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Why, thank you, Mr. Chair. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 3, Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2018, in Committee of the Whole. It's a pleasure to be here with you this afternoon. I hope that the minister understands that a bill that requests the approval of \$8.5 billion in spending is a rather difficult bill when the bill provides less detail than a family's weekly shopping list. At least with the list we would know how much of each thing to buy.

The truly unfortunate thing about this bill is that it's totally unnecessary. Had this government convened the Legislature as per

Standing Order 3(4)(a), which states, “for the Spring Sitting commencing on the second Tuesday in February and concluding no later than the first Thursday in June,” had the government just done the bare minimum that the standing orders require, we would have had plenty of time to debate the budget prior to the end of the fiscal year 2017-2018 on March 31, just a couple of weeks from today, eliminating the need for any sort of discussion around interim supply, be it supplementary or interim supply.

This government could have provided the maximum amount of transparency for the dollars it spends, but instead it took the option that allowed for the minimum level of transparency. I know that the government is getting very, very, very good at doing things that provide the minimum level of transparency. In fact, you’ll know, Mr. Chair, that we have seen at basically every turn the government providing the lowest level of transparency possible, whether it’s them impeding the ability of outside groups to present at committee, which would increase transparency; whether it’s utilizing tools like interim supply, that don’t provide the same robust transparency; whether it’s impeding important legislation that could go to committee as well.

3:30

We have seen time and time again this government have a lack of respect for transparency, particularly, Mr. Chair, you’ll know, around the area of access to information. This government is putting together a horrible track record on access to information. A horrible track record. In fact, there are three or four investigations currently at the Privacy Commissioner’s office. The use of this tool is a continuing and ongoing challenge that the government will have if it continues to not do what’s right and not provide the most fulsome forms of transparency possible.

As I just mentioned, the government is seeking the approval for billions of dollars in spending, and they provided members a full six pages of information on what programs the money is being spent on. In fact, the department-specific information, if you can call that specific, was only three pages. Now, I will concede – hooray – that members did get three hours last week in the Committee of Supply, when we had the opportunity to ask ministers and the rest of Executive Council questions about all of these monies and where they were being spent. Unfortunately, for all of the questions we asked, we didn’t get much in the way of answers from Executive Council members.

I thought the questions that members of the Official Opposition and some of my fellow colleagues on this side of the House asked were, in fact, good questions, questions that deserved substantive answers. When it was asked of the Finance minister if he had any idea how much of the interim supply was related to either collection of the carbon tax, payment of the carbon tax, or special grants through the climate leadership plan, he said: those types of specific questions can be answered at budget estimates. One of the challenges, Mr. Chair, that obviously you will observe, is that that same Finance minister was requesting the approval for billions of dollars and essentially asking the Official Opposition to: hold your questions and ask those later, but I’d like to spend the money now. I’m not sure if he’s aware or not, but that’s not how this process is supposed to work.

When my colleague for Cypress-Medicine Hat asked the Finance minister what his specific plans were for capital funding outlined in interim supply, what projects they were going to, and did the amount of money being asked for equate to 16 per cent of the yearly amount, the minister’s response was: the government is on track to spend \$9.2 billion on capital in 2017-18. To give the minister credit, that is at least a bit more specific an answer. Too bad it had nothing to do with the budget for 2018-2019, or, as I refer to it, the matter at hand.

When the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat asked the minister how much interest is going to the cost of servicing all the debt that he’s currently racking up and how much all that extra interest is going to cost the province over the next few years, the minister didn’t answer any of his questions. Instead, he attempted to convince members that increasing corporate taxes from 10 up to 12 per cent wasn’t the same as a 20 per cent increase in corporate taxes. In fact, he thunderously proclaimed that one of his proudest days as Finance minister was when he eliminated the flat tax and increased taxes on Albertans. There were so, so many questions that were not answered, or there wasn’t time to have them answered.

Alberta has the highest unemployment rate outside of Atlantic Canada, and tens of thousands of families across our province are struggling to make ends meet. Instead of having their backs, this NDP government focused on implementing ideological agendas and making the cost of everything more expensive. Not only is this NDP government saddling our children and grandchildren with massive debt, but do they think that the money will ever be paid back? These are the types of questions that ought to be asked.

We need to respect taxpayer dollars carefully and consider priorities, yet we see this government doing the exact opposite of that. How much of this money is being spent to cover the increase in the carbon tax specifically on fuel to the provincial government? Every layer of government is paying the carbon tax. How much exactly is it costing, and how is that reflected in their supply requests? These are the types of questions that should be answered, yet the government chooses and continually chooses to not do that. How much of the budget is for the collection of the carbon tax? Again, no answer from the Minister of Finance.

What is the current debt to GDP? It should be a very simple question to answer, yet unfortunately we did not receive that from this minister. Can the minister please provide a breakdown on how much of the interim supply budget is going towards risk management and insurance? I think that is a very, very, very reasonable question that he should provide a response for, and I hope that he will provide that response in writing in the very near future.

Mr. Chair, interim supply is allocating around \$900,000 towards capital investments and financial transactions. I’m hoping, through you to the minister, he can please provide some background on what exactly that money is being spent on specifically.

The Automobile Insurance Rate Board does a lot of important work in terms of regulating automobile insurance premiums for private vehicles. How much of the interim supply has been allocated to the AIRB?

I hope that the Minister of Finance will be able to provide the answers to those questions in the very, very near future.

Mr. Chair, it is a little bit frustrating to continually see this government move in the wrong direction with respect to supply requirements, with respect to interim requirements. It’s my hope that, moving forward, they will be much more respectful of the standing orders and provide more robust debate at the appropriate times in the future.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there other members wishing to speak to Bill 3? The Member for Calgary-Currie has the floor.

Mr. Malkinson: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. It is a pleasure to get up and chat on this interim supply. You know, interim supply, despite some characterizations to the contrary, is quite a common part of the Westminster system of parliament, and it is quite common here in the Legislature. By necessity, of course, it is just purely to allow the Ministry of Finance to keep paying our

doctors and nurses and our police and all of the other government services while we finish passing the budget. Of course, the spending that is going to be coming forward in the 2018-19 budget will be introduced on Thursday, where all members of this House will have ample opportunity to see where all that money is going forward.

You know, on suggestions that for our interim supply we need to be able to have an interactive website or app set up where we can drill down to descriptions, right down to the receipt level, as suggested a little while ago, I think perhaps it would be impractical although with technology anything is possible. Considering how much noise we get in regard to spending, I'm not sure if that is something that would be a worthwhile endeavour at this time.

3:40

To the interim supply itself. You know, it's \$29 million for the Legislative Assembly; \$7.7 billion in expenses – and that amount is, of course, across all 21 departments – \$559 million in capital investments across all 18 departments; \$160 million in financial transaction amounts across 12 departments; and \$240 million for transfer from the lottery fund to general revenue.

You know, as had been mentioned previously by the Minister of Finance himself, certain ministries have expenses that go right out at the beginning of the year, so to look at these interim supply amounts and multiply them by the remainder of the year would not at all be accurate. It is purely to keep everything running for an additional two months.

Now, to say that we're here and haven't been able to answer questions in in-depth detail on our upcoming budget: of course, that opportunity will be just two days from now, on Thursday, March 22. Of course, several ministers throughout the course of debate have gotten up and spoken and answered specific questions. Our Minister of Education did that just recently, a couple of minutes ago.

You know, it's been a very interesting day for debate in general. I find it interesting that this, I think, is one of the first days that I've ever been accused of not standing up for Albertans but somehow being a shill for big business, which, of course, I take exception to because this interim supply contains measures to help those Albertans, which we are all here to do, things like keeping our \$25-a-day daycare program moving along, things like providing money for policing in this province, something that I know is very important to many Albertans in this province and, as well, very important to many members opposite, things like making sure that schools have the teachers they need during that time. So to say that we're not standing up for Albertans who are struggling at the moment is something I take exception to.

Also included in interim supply, through the Ministry of Community and Social Services, of course, there would be monies to help those Albertans who are at this point still out there looking for jobs. And things are looking up, of course. There are 90,000 new jobs, manufacturing is up, unemployment is down, and new car sales are up. All those measures that one would say are, you know, an example of the economy improving I am onboard with.

It is interesting. We often, you know, hear from the opposition that there's not enough detail. Well, I note that for Bill 4 the opposition actually had a chance to vote for more officers to help fight rural crime, had a chance to vote for sexual assault centres but chose at that time to not do that. Of course, again, our budget, when it comes out on Thursday, will fully explain all of our various initiatives that we have coming forward for the next year. It's interesting that when there's even just a little bit of detail in supplementary estimates, they chose to vote against those things that I had been hearing often about in the news in January and February and chose to vote against them at the earliest possible

opportunity, which is something that doesn't make sense to me. I find it so odd, going back to what the Member for Airdrie was saying previously, that on one day I am in the pocket of big business and the next day not doing enough to support them. That is something that is, of course, quite interesting.

When it comes to schools, I remember, being in Public Accounts, that there's an Auditor General's report – the exact month I don't have off the top of my head – where it actually specifically talked about how the previous government announced previous schools. The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti was quite correct that there were many schools announced, but the Auditor General found that there was no plan to fund them at all. Of course, the Auditor General specializes in getting to the root of process in these sorts of things. I would trust his opinion in that.

We have been clear as a government that we will fund the new schools and the modernization of schools that Albertans need so that an Albertan who's got children that need an education have a place for their children to go in the public school system. I know that right around my riding of Calgary-Currie I have gone to a brand new school opening, personally, I've gone to a school modernization, and I've also gone to the opening of a charter school, actually, around my riding.

What's that doing? You know, someone may ask: why am I talking about schools that aren't built in my riding? Well, my riding is a much older area of Calgary, so it has a large amount of schools that were built in the '50s and '60s. Many of those schools are overcrowded precisely because, really, there have been no schools in the area built since then. As Calgary has expanded out and my riding went from being on the outskirts of Calgary to, you know, arguably inner city, all those students from those outer areas were having to come into the schools in my area. By having these new schools and modernizations built around my riding, that is relieving pressure on the schools in my riding.

I've already seen it from tours of the schools that I did in February, that the population in those schools is going down. Libraries are no longer being used for classrooms. Libraries are being used for their intended purpose, as libraries. The same thing goes for music rooms, which are being used for music as opposed to a permanent classroom, which allows schools, I think, to function better and, you know, allows for a better educational experience for our children.

In closing, I want to mention that I am fully in support of interim supply. It is a very common practice in the Legislature just to get us through to when we pass the budget. Of course, we will have ample opportunity to duly explore all of the programs and all of the ministries when we do estimates in our various committees.

In fact, I am quite looking forward to that. I think Albertans will be very impressed with what they see in the upcoming budget and, in particular, on our path to balance numbers because that is something that I do get asked about at the door. The residents of Calgary-Currie are always very excited to hear about the work we are doing to keep our costs under control. Albertans do remember the wild cost swings. When oil prices were high and the economy was growing, previous governments continued to run deficits even at \$90-a-barrel oil. Mr. Chair, at \$90-a-barrel oil they couldn't balance the budget.

Between 2010 and 2014, for example, oil prices averaged \$90 a barrel, the economy grew by more than 5 per cent per year, royalty revenues averaged \$9.3 billion a year. Yet during this time the previous government ran deficits in all but one year. Since then, of course, due to the dramatic drop in the price of oil, we had a choice. We could either dramatically cut back on the services that Albertans depend on, or we could take the advice of leading economists like David Dodge and invest in Albertans.

Let me go back to those schools. Those schools and modernizations that we chose to actually fund and make sure they got built, each one of those schools was providing much-needed jobs during the downturn for tradespeople all across this province. That expands out into the economy because that means the individual who is supplying the doors, supplying the electrical components, the lights, the roofing, the cement for the foundation, the operators of the excavators: all of that is good, much-needed jobs in a downturn. You know, economists agree that the choices we made are allowing us to come out of this recession stronger and sooner than we otherwise would have if we hadn't made those choices.

3:50

This interim supply is just a very small part of that, to get us through to when we can talk about our budget on March 22, where we will show our path to balance, which I think Albertans will be quite impressed with, to see that we have been keeping costs under control while focusing on the things that make life better for Albertans: things like \$25-a-day daycare, things like funding for sexual assault centres, things like police, things like investment in our oil and gas industry as well as helping to diversify our economy and, of course, in education, to make sure that if there is a student entering Alberta's education system, the full funding that that student needs is there. The funding that that student gets shouldn't depend on whatever the price of oil happens to be that quarter. That's not something we believe in, that's not something I believe in, and I don't think that's something Albertans believe in.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate you recognizing me and giving me this opportunity to talk on Bill 3. You know, there are lots of things to be concerned about with this, but I'm going to ever so briefly take us back to the basics.

If you look at our Standing Orders on page 2 – you know, if some members of the House are like me, sometimes if you're reading a book before you go to sleep, you fall asleep. Your head hits the book, and you wake up with your face in the book, without having read much of it. But even if that happened to the government, I would have hoped they would have gotten to page 2 before their head hit the book. This is one of the things that it says on page 2 – it says a lot of things – under (4)(a): “the Spring Sitting commencing on the second Tuesday in February and concluding no later than the first Thursday in June.” Now, it also says: unless the government decides differently. Clearly, the government decided differently.

My point is not that the government did something wrong. My point is that under the normal fashion of operating this place and a normal government, which I don't really think we've had for the last three years, had they started on the second Tuesday in February, then they would have been in this House a lot sooner, perhaps been working on their budget a lot sooner, perhaps knew what the heck they were doing a lot sooner, perhaps be able to explain it to Albertans a lot more fully, having done the work over the Christmas break that they should have been doing.

I think it demonstrated very clearly what they weren't doing. They demonstrated it, to start with, by starting to meet in this important Chamber at such a late date, which I think is a pretty strong indication that the government didn't have their act together and did not know what they were doing and were in no position to explain it decently to Albertans. Of course, that extends to what actually happens in the Chamber. Again, as some of my colleagues

have said here, the government is basically asking for an \$8.5 billion blank cheque from Albertans, and they think it's just fine to not give them any information.

Now, I was here for three hours of estimates on that, and it was three hours of my life I'll never get back. To be clear, Mr. Chair, I think the work we do in this Chamber is extremely important and can be extremely valuable to Albertans. Albertans are owed a good performance by all of us in this House. But I'll tell you what we did not get from the Finance minister was a good performance. We had members from the opposition asking very reasonable questions, “What are you going to do with the 8 and a half billion dollars?” He didn't give any information. He kept making inane responses, “Well, you can't multiply it by four.” Okay. Good. We got that. Nobody is asking you to multiply it by four.

I mean, I'll tell you what. I recall what I did. I heard several of my colleagues asking the minister very reasonable questions about health care, education, social services, transportation, infrastructure and getting nowhere. I even went to the extent of saying to the minister: “Well, let's just pick a ministry. What are you going to do more or less than last year?” He said, “Well, I can't say.” Well, can't say or won't say, I'm not sure. But he didn't say. So I remember that I said, “Minister, I'm going to make this as easy on you as I possibly can.” I said to the Finance minister, “You're the person in charge of \$54 billion, \$55 billion, \$59 billion, whatever.”

I don't know if they're sure what they are going to put in the budget at the end of this week. We'll find out Thursday. But if you're the person in charge of 50-odd billion dollars, perhaps you should have a clue of where one or two of those 50-odd billion dollars are going. Right, Mr. Chair? It seems reasonable, wouldn't you say? I thought so. The Finance minister and President of Treasury Board was unable to articulate a single thing that a single dollar out of the eight and a half billion dollars was going to go to.

With all due respect, Mr. Chair, it's okay – you know what? – if the minister wants to disrespect me. He shouldn't disrespect anybody, but if he wants to disrespect the opposition, that's one thing. But the fact is that he's not getting the eight and a half billion dollars from the opposition. He's getting it from Albertans, which means he's disrespecting Albertans. This government is disrespecting Albertans. To waltz in here several weeks late, compared to the standing orders, not prepared, ask for eight and a half billion dollars to get started on the next year, and be able to give next to zero details about what they're going to do with it: that is as disrespectful to the 4.3 million, 4.4 million Albertans as anything that I can think of.

Now, Mr. Chair, I don't know what your household is like, but in my home if I was going to say to my wife, “I want to take out of our bank account a quarter of the money that we're going to spend this next year,” she might say, “What are you going to spend it on?” You know what? I think that would be a reasonable question for her to ask. I think I would rightly and properly owe her an answer. And if I were to say, “Well, none of your business; just trust me, it's going to be good,” I'm pretty sure I wouldn't get anywhere near any bank card, bank machine, chequebook, anything where I could spend a quarter of our family's annual income without an explanation of what I was going to spend it on.

Yet that is what this government is demanding that 4.3 million, 4.4 million Albertans do. They take a quarter of the year's budget and say: “Give it to me. Trust us. We're really good people. You know, you don't need to trouble yourself with the dirty little topic of money.” That's what this government has said to Albertans. The problem is that it's not the government's money. There's no such thing as government money. It's Albertans' money.

So when you think of that, that is as disrespectful, as arrogant, as thoughtless – I don't know – with an air superiority that is really hard to imagine. Now, I get it. Listen, this is not the first or the last government to have supplementary supply. That in itself, on its own, is not necessarily the biggest problem in the world. The biggest problem in the world is that they want a blank cheque for eight and a half billion dollars, and they're completing disrespecting all Albertans that are actually paying that money. I can't imagine anything much less respectful than that or much more disrespectful than that, if you prefer, Mr. Chair. Yet that is what this government boldly went forth and did, and it is boldly going forth and still doing that today.

That government and these ministers get asked very polite questions: "What are you going to do with the money, folks? You know, reality check. It's not actually your money. You're spending it on behalf of Albertans." The government boldly said, "None of your business." They just said, "We don't have to tell you, and we're not going to."

Now, I appreciate that the Finance minister shouldn't have to know where every nickel is going. I didn't ask him to know where every nickel is going, and I don't recall any other member of this House asking him to remember where every nickel is going. Somewhere in his ministry he has to have it written down. But, for goodness' sake, you would hope that he would have an idea where a few of the nickels were going.

For goodness' sake, you know, if the minister was the least bit respectful and caring about the feelings and how hard Albertans work to earn the money that the government takes from them, you would hope that he might have a few shining examples of bold new government initiatives that were going to be good for Albertans, something that he could brag about, something that he would hope Albertans would be proud of. But the minister didn't offer up even a crumb. We could make the assumption that there's not a single thing he's going to do that he could be proud of. We could make the assumption there's not a single thing that he's going to do that Albertans would like. I don't know.

4:00

I certainly don't believe that the government is going to do everything wrong. They've been a pretty poor government, but they haven't done everything wrong. The kids are getting educated and hospitals are open and social services are getting delivered, so they're doing some things right.

But this is an example of where they let their true feelings about Albertans show, where the cabinet, in particular, and all members on the government side should be ashamed of the fact that they're asking Albertans to write a blank cheque for 8 and half billion dollars, and they're not telling them hardly a single thing about what they're going to do with the money. That is something I just cannot get past, and I think there are a lot of Albertans that can't get past it. Now, we're going to find out Thursday what's in the budget, and I'm sure that we're going to hear a lot of talk about how great it is.

I'll tell you how disrespectful it is. The Finance minister went out today and put on some virtual reality glasses and trotted around and talked about things that he might do. Well, why didn't he actually tell us in this House about his virtual reality things that he talked about today? That would have been at least respectable. I don't know whether that's contempt of the House or not, when you know the answer to a question and you choose not to answer it, because whatever he said today, he obviously knew when he was asked questions about what you know you are going to do, and he chose not to even share that. Even the government's own party members should be offended by the fact that the minister wouldn't share with them in this House what he was going to do, though he shared it

outside of the House today, even though he's asking for an \$8.5 billion blank cheque. It's despicable, but there it is.

The government shouldn't be surprised if they don't get support from the opposition on this incredibly disrespectful, incredibly bold, incredibly late to the party, incredibly lack of details, incredibly rude, disrespectful request for an 8 and a half billion dollar blank cheque from Albertans. I'm sure they won't be surprised when they don't get my support for it, and I'm sure they won't be surprised when they don't get support from the opposition for it. Those Albertans watching at home: it's your money. They're asking you for 8 and half billion dollars, and they haven't told you anything about what they're going to spend it on. Disgraceful.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there other members wishing to speak? We have the hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane recognized.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just have a questions for the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays. You know, I hear that he's disappointed with the approach that our government is taking in terms of the interim supply, but I just wonder if he could enlighten the House about how often, when he was in government, his party used the same tool.

Mr. McIver: Well, I thank the hon. member for the question. I would say that most years if not every year we had supplementary supply, and I said in my remarks, hon. member, that supplementary supply isn't the biggest crime in the world. It's not the biggest problem, and I stand by that. I'm not a big fan of it. When I was in government, we had supplementary supply. I wasn't a big fan of it then; I'm not a big fan of it now. But to answer your question directly, something that your minister never did for me, respectfully, we did it, too. It's a tool to get you by the year.

Now, you know what? I would say that if there was a time that previous governments didn't give any detail on it, then they deserve that criticism, too. I would think that we gave more. I don't actually – you know what? It's four years ago. I just flat don't remember, okay? But not giving details about billions of dollars, not any details – you know what? There are things the government could do. They could say . . .

An Hon. Member: How convenient.

Mr. McIver: No, it is convenient. The hon. member there, that doesn't have the floor, is chirping. He says, "How convenient." I say: yes, it is. How convenient. That's my complaint. The Finance minister chose something really convenient, really disrespectful towards Albertans. That is exactly the road he went down, and it was wrong. It was wrong, and it will always be wrong when that happens.

You know what? I'll try to help him out here for the next year that he comes forward with supplementary supply. He could say: well, there are some construction projects we want to get started on early because we don't know how long the construction season is. He could have said: the opposition have been complaining about lack of service in some area of health care, education, or social services, and we don't want to wait because we've talked about improving the service there, and we don't want people to wait for that. There are probably a thousand and one examples of things that the minister could have said, and he chose to say none of those things.

I hope I answered the question for the hon. member. I think it was a straight-up question. I tried to give you a straight-up answer. Again, I'm not a big fan of supplementary supply. I think it's always going to be around. I hope I'm never a fan of it. If we get where we

want to go in a year and a half and we end up being in government again, I wouldn't be surprised if there is supplementary supply. But you can hold me to the fact that if we ask for supplementary supply, should we be fortunate enough – I don't know whether we will or not because you don't know what Albertans will decide – ever to be in government, I would hope we give more respectful answers than the ones we received this week, full stop.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there other hon. members wishing to speak to Bill 3?

Hearing none, are you ready for the question?

[The clauses of Bill 3 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Let's move on.

Bill 4

Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2018

The Acting Chair: Are there members wishing to speak to Bill 4? The hon. Member for Highwood.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I rise today to speak to Bill 4, Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2018. This government is going to spend \$1.5 billion in the next two weeks to top up their already heavily loaded 2017-18 budget. I can't say that this surprises me. We've not seen this government even try to minimize their spending one iota. They want us just to sign off on a huge cheque without having to justify the big spend. Now, we know that some of this money is needed, and we would obviously agree with fire-related costs, emergency response, funding for sexual assault victims' services, and, of course, most obvious, additional police. However, they have lumped all of that together with us agreeing with their tax-and-spend policies, which we cannot justify, especially when there are no details to go along with the big ask.

Last week we spent over six hours in this House asking the government questions about what exactly they would be spending the money on. All we got was no answers. The government used the airtime to stonewall and deflect our questions. Instead of sounding like a government in charge, they deflect much of their answers.

With the amount of debt that this province is incurring, we will now be making over \$1 billion in payments annually, interest-only payments. Alberta's debt is projected to reach \$70 billion by 2019-2020. Yet this government wants us to sign away on the dotted line and give them an additional \$1.5 billion. We will have no hand in the economic destruction of this province. The Fraser Institute said, "Provincial debt service costs in Alberta are rising quickly every year, placing a bigger and bigger burden on Albertan taxpayers." We cannot support this.

4:10

Did you know, Mr. Chair, that in 2019-2020 debt-servicing costs will exceed \$500 per Albertan, more than double what they were in 2016-2017? That's just not right. In less than three years this government has increased Alberta's debt by \$45 billion. Alberta has had six credit downgrades since this government took office, and I truly hope we're not heading for another one. The taxpayers in this

province cannot afford it, and in a high-risk scenario accumulated deficits could be much higher than the predicted \$38 billion over the next three years, which is \$11.7 billion more than this government forecasted.

After last week spending several hours asking questions in this House, we know as much about supplementary supply today as we did before we even started asking our questions. This is truly due to this government's refusal to answer any of our questions. The government really could have reduced the need for this supplementary supply if they would have included the known costs in the annual budget, but that did not happen, so here we are today.

According to the Minister of Finance it was considered his proudest day as Finance minister when he raised taxes on Albertans. He said, "Frankly, it was one of the proudest days of my Finance minister career when we were able to eliminate the flat tax in this province because it didn't make sense." Really? Is it because it didn't bring in the revenue stream that would be needed when this government went into billions of dollars of debt?

Despite the massive increase in taxes since this government took office in 2015 and further increases to come, government revenue from income and corporate taxes are both lower than when this government took office. Doesn't this signal something to this government? Are they analyzing where their problems might be occurring, or are they just going to forge ahead with their disastrous economic ideology?

Well, without being able to take a peek at the financial books, I can tell you where the problem is. The problem is government spending. This government has a spending problem. If Albertans ran their household budgets like this government does theirs, they'd be in massive debt, and in quick order they'd lose their homes, cars, and credit. No one runs a budget this way. Yet the government wants us to sign off on something that should have been dealt with last year. We need to address the issue of this increasing debt and deficit.

Out of good consciousness I can't support this supply bill. Where is the compassion? Where's the belt-tightening this government has talked a lot about lately. Where is it? We need to do more than just talk the talk. We need to walk the walk. You need to walk the walk. Albertans know the difference. They do not see through this talk. Polls have shown that Albertans are losing their confidence in this government. It's what I've also been hearing in my constituency. UCP MLAs have been warning this government about their spending habits since day one. Unfortunately, the government has doubled down on their spending, with no plan to get the province's budgetary house in order. By the end of their term Albertans will be in debt over \$70 billion, with some estimating it could be closer to \$90 billion. How? How does a government spend that much money in such a short period of time? We can't and I can't support this. With no plan for dealing with the areas where we see a tremendous amount of spending, I won't and my colleagues won't support this.

The government raised the alarm when we didn't support them with our votes, but let's just take an issue such as rural crime. How is this a surprise to government? It wasn't a surprise to us. The UCP members have been raising this issue of rural crime for well over a year. Why didn't you address this in the budget last year? Why didn't you listen when we wanted an emergency debate? No, there has been no active listening coming from this government, only reactive spending. The United Conservatives have been talking about this issue for years, but this government denied there was even an issue. I find it ironic that this is the year they finally want to play catch-up. We have supported additional police officers in rural Alberta for years. You want more money? How about answering Albertans about when they can expect these officers that

they promised? Why are you refusing to answer questions from Albertans but expecting them to open up their wallets?

We all stand here in the House representing the constituents from all the different parts of the province. I have been a voice for my constituents and so have my colleagues. This government refuses to listen to the many voices of this province when they refuse to hear us.

UCP MLAs have been to many town halls filled with concerned and outraged citizens, real victims of crime. This government and the MLAs can't be bothered to come out and listen to any of these folks – the stories, the heartache, the loss – but you all stand there with your hands out. I feel sorry for any rural Albertan having to live through this ordeal and to know that it could take over a year for help to arrive. It's simply not good enough. It is true that it could be a minimum of 1.5 years at the earliest for additional officers to arrive. That's preposterous. These communities are under siege now. They need help today.

We can't cut the government a blank cheque when they refuse to answer our questions. That would be unwise of us given this government's history. I and my colleagues are opposed to adding more debt to taxpayers when they should have been taken care of a lot earlier.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there other hon. members wishing to speak to Bill 4? The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you for recognizing me, Mr. Chair. I just want to start off by commenting on what we are really debating here. We're debating more than \$1.5 billion in spending that the NDP did not properly budget for, \$1.5 billion that they dropped on this Legislature a week ago, expecting a rubber-stamp, allocating only six hours of debate in Committee of Supply. That is one hour of legislative scrutiny for every quarter billion dollars of taxpayers' dollars, Alberta taxpayers' dollars, money that is on top of the multimillion-dollar deficit that this government already burdened Albertans with this fiscal year, all this with very little, limited information from the government and no substantive answers even given during the limited time allocated that we received.

Government ministers tell us not to worry, that we will have access to more information when we get to estimates in a few weeks. Simply, the government is asking us to just trust them. I'm sorry to say, Mr. Chair, but the government, especially when it comes to budgetary matters, has not earned that trust or that level of trust from the opposition, from constituents, or from Albertans at large.

Mr. Chair, there is a reason why this supply bill is separate from the budget for the fiscal year. It deals with matters from the current fiscal year, matters which have not yet gained legislative consent and deserve their own independent scrutiny. This is an important debate. It is important to our province and important to its people. This is not something to be rubber-stamped. It is something to be debated wholeheartedly, as is consistent with the duties of this House and its members.

Mr. Chair, I would like to narrow it down to a few specific topics here and dig a little deeper into their spending. On revenue according to the Finance minister his proudest day as Finance minister was when he raised taxes on Albertans. I'm going to quote it. I know it was just quoted, but it's important that Albertans hear this because I don't think that they agree. The Minister of Finance says, "Frankly, it was one of the proudest days of my Finance minister career when we were able to eliminate the flat tax in this province because it didn't make sense." Despite taxes being raised,

government revenues from income and corporate taxes are both lower than when this government took office. The problem is that government has a spending problem, which supplementary supply completely fails to address.

On the debt this government fails to address the issue of increasing debt and deficit. This government is talking a lot about compassionate belt-tightening. It's interesting, though, Mr. Chair, that I didn't hear those words in the throne speech, so I'm not sure whether or not this is going to be a quick, compassionate belt-tightening or whether or not it's actually going to be for the remainder of the time that the government is in session. By the end of their term the debt is going to be anywhere between \$70 billion and \$94 billion for Albertans. What's interesting is that as UCP MLAs we've been warning this government about their spending habits since day one. Unfortunately, just to note, Mr. Chair, so have credit agencies.

4:20

Unfortunately, the government has doubled down on their spending with no plan to get the province's budgetary house in order. With no plan of dealing with the areas where we see a tremendous amount of spending, we prudently need to oppose supplementary supply.

Mr. Chair, I would also like to address the issue of rural crime in relation to this bill. I just want to say that I am glad that finally after months of ignorance and denial, this government has stopped denying the existence of the rural crime crisis. The opposition and Albertans have been trying to get this issue addressed for too long. For too long Albertans have been victimized at an alarming rate while their government buried its head in the sand.

That said, Mr. Chair, I was shocked at the audacity of the NDP to attack us on this issue. Let's be clear. We don't oppose measures to address rural crime. We oppose the reckless spending habits of this NDP government. Regardless, I want to lay out the facts on this issue. Rural crime should not have been a surprise to this government. We have been warning them for a long time. Opposition members have been raising the issue of rural crime for over a year. If the government was serious about addressing this issue of rural crime, they would have addressed it in last year's budget. United Conservatives have been calling for action for years while the NDP denied that the rural crime crisis even existed. It's clear that the NDP is now scrambling and playing catch-up on this issue.

Obviously, Mr. Chair, UCP supports additional police officers for rural Alberta. However, the NDP has repeatedly refused to answer when Albertans can expect these new officers in their communities. In fact, some have stated that it could be a minimum of 1.5 years, or one and a half years, at the very earliest before any officers arrive. This does little to help communities under the siege that they are under today.

The NDP should not expect the opposition to cut a blank cheque, and I don't think that they would be willing to cut a blank cheque if they were here in our seats. They shouldn't expect us to cut the blank cheque for their spending when they refuse to provide answers to legitimate questions. There's a reason why standing orders offer us the opportunity to be able to go into Committee of Supply, because this is a House of 87 members, and 87 members have the opportunity to be able to scrutinize and to vet the spending decisions, especially the spending decisions of any government. It's unfortunate that when we take a look at the interim supply estimates, we are given very little information that we can go on.

The NDP should not expect the opposition to sit back while we're dealing with Albertans' hard-earned money, especially during this time, Mr. Chair, when I've had the opportunity of being able to chat

with many people in my riding who say that it's just very difficult, that they're really struggling, that they just need a break. There have been a lot of things that have come down, a lot of changes that have been made by this government. I have no doubt from speaking with many of my colleagues in the NDP that the intentions were the best intentions. The problem is that the government is not – they'd get an A if it was for intentions, but it's outcomes that we have to be able to grade the government on, and unfortunately the outcomes that we see have been devastating to Albertans and to families, especially in Calgary, where we have some of the highest unemployment rates, especially amongst young people, who have a 13.1 per cent unemployment rate.

These numbers don't speak to the actual individuals, Mr. Chair. They don't talk about how many thousands of young people are out of work, and it's interesting because on this issue alone, I specifically as the Labour critic had the opportunity of sitting down with two separate Labour ministers and talking to them about the plethora of studies that have been done. This isn't the first time that we've gone down this idea of increasing minimum wage. It's been done in other places, and as I showed the ministers, actually let them see, both of them, what the outcomes in these other jurisdictions were, the answer that I was given – and it was very sad that I got this answer – was: "We're not going to do an economic impact study. We're going to assess as we go." The sad thing about that is that if you assess as you go, well, at some point you're going to find out what those numbers are. We now know that it's 13.1 per cent unemployment.

If that minimum wage goes up again, there is also going to be a material effect on young people. We're already seeing that the unemployment amongst young people is skyrocketing. How much higher does it have to go before the minister says: "We now have the evidence. We need to stop. We need to stop adding onto the burden for these young people." These are our future, Mr. Chair. These are the people who we rely on to provide a wonderful Alberta and to be able to give them the kind of Alberta that we had the privilege of growing up in.

I know that the NDP, the members opposite, often say that it's been disastrous over the last 44 years. Well, I can say as one Albertan that Alberta has been good to my family. It's been good to me. It's provided me with opportunities that I don't believe I could have received anywhere else. And I've had the opportunity to be able to talk to many people who have come to this province not from just other parts of Canada but from other places in the world. They've come here because there's opportunity. They've come here because there are opportunities to start a business, a small business. Remember that entrepreneurs are the lifeblood of any successful economy, so having the opportunity of being able to come here and potentially being able to start a business and being able to provide a phenomenal life for your children, for your wife, for your husband, these are the types of things that we should be striving for.

Yet, unfortunately, what we've seen with the policies, with the legislation that's come from this NDP government is anything but that. It's taken our once-prosperous Alberta to a place that most people are questioning whether they want to stay, and that's sad to hear when I talk to people. They talk about how they'd come here from Saskatchewan and tried to get rid of the NDP or they'd come here from B.C. to try to get away from the NDP, and then they come here and they say: I can't believe that we actually now have the NDP in Alberta. So these are the concerns that I have. These are kind of some of the macroconcerns that I have.

But in terms of this bill, Bill 4, we're in a situation where, Mr. Chair, in taking a look at this, I cannot in good conscience support a bill that is so lacking in detail and so lacking in the kind of

transparency that this government has said many times that they want to provide. I oppose this bill because Albertans expect fiscal responsibility. I oppose this bill because Albertans deserve legislative scrutiny. I oppose this bill because my constituents elected me to hold this government to account, not to rubber-stamp its ideological agenda and endless deficit spending.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane has the floor.

Mr. Westhead: Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I just have a question for the hon. member or perhaps any member from the opposition. The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner referred to his leader and his party's preference to return to a flat tax, a flat income tax structure, and I just wanted to perhaps point out and ask for a reaction that there have been studies showing that in Alberta under Conservative rule for the previous 40 years with the flat tax, or for a significant portion of those 40 years with the flat tax, Alberta's inequality level in terms of income inequality was the highest in Canada.

You know, places like the International Monetary Fund, which isn't traditionally known as being a progressively minded organization, point out that high income inequality is bad for economic growth and bad for GDP growth, so the IMF says to focus on the poor and the middle class for the highest growth. So I just wonder, you know, with a proposal to return to a flat tax, going against the advice of institutions like the International Monetary Fund, how the member might respond to that, also just keeping in mind that every single province in Canada has a progressive income tax structure, including the government of Canada, I just wonder what the member's response to those questions might be.

4:30

The Acting Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for . . .

Mr. Hunter: Cardston-Taber-Warner, Mr. Chair.

The Acting Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you for recognizing me. I appreciate the Member for Banff-Cochrane's question. However, I actually never said anything about the flat tax, so I'm not sure where he's actually coming up with that. I don't have the benefit of the Blues, but I can say that I actually did not say anything about the flat tax in my speech. I appreciate his question, but I'm not sure exactly how to answer that.

I will say, though, that we are in the process of having a policy debate in our party, and I look forward to a robust debate about the information. I think that it's important for Albertans to know. I appreciate his comments, but I think that he's going to have to wait, just as we have to wait until Thursday for the budget.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there other hon. members wishing to speak to Bill 4? I see and recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's always a pleasure to get up in this House and speak with you all. I wanted to address the supplementary supply. Perhaps just to get started here, I want to talk about transparency. You know, the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner was talking about how there's no transparency, but when you actually look at the supplementary supply estimates, it couldn't be there in more detail. For example, in Agriculture and Forestry: \$204,914,000 to go to wildfire disaster/emergency assistance to

provide for wildfire management; \$56 million and change for the department's grant to the Agriculture Financial Services Corporation for the provincial share of AgriStability indemnities and AgriInsurance premiums. It's all written right there.

I'll remind the House that the members across the way actually voted against every estimate as we were going through second reading. They actually voted against providing these monies. Some of the members are getting up and saying: "Well, we support this. We support this." Well, then why did you vote against it?

You know, there were amounts in there for the municipal sustainability initiative. I mentioned wildfire disaster recovery and emergency assistance; monies allocated for child intervention and childcare subsidies and supports; persons with disability and assured income for the severely handicapped; employment and income support; the provincial share of, as I already mentioned, AgriInsurance premiums and indemnities; compensation increase for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and justices of the peace; and rural crime. These members across the way actually voted against all of this in second reading.

Now, it's really important that we understand that this is so that we can provide services for Albertans. That's what all these programs here are for, to provide services for Albertans. That's our job as government. You know, I already mentioned how the members across the way, in their libertarian way, would much rather we not have government. Right? Less government, fewer regulations.

Going back to the flat tax, you know, that my hon. colleague here mentioned, the fact is that the flat tax was actually contributing to inequality here in the province of Alberta, less money in the hands of your average Albertan. Having greater inequality actually does not help business. It actually makes it worse in the province.

Now, so many times the members across the way talk about how the government is just asking for a blank cheque. A blank cheque. Well, I would venture to guess – well, I would state that it's not a blank cheque. It's all written right here exactly what that money is going to be used for, the services that are going to be provided to each and every Albertan. It's the exact opposite of a blank cheque.

What we don't know, though, are the contributions that were made to the campaign for leadership of the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. That's what we don't know because he refuses to disclose those amounts that were contributed to that campaign. To this day we don't know. It's the exact opposite of what we're doing here, making sure that we're providing services for Albertans.

Now, so many times the members across the way like to remind us: this is not your money; it's Albertans' money. Exactly. It is Albertans' money. It's their tax dollars that are going to provide these very important services that they will benefit from. Whether that's Agriculture and Forestry or Children's Services or whether it be Culture and Tourism, whatever the case may be, it's all written right here. The exact opposite of a blank cheque.

You know, so many times the members from across the way talk about the public debt as if it were the personal debt of each and every Albertan. In my opinion, that's quite misleading because this is public debt, which is not the exact same thing as personal debt. When you go out there and you tell Albertans, "Oh, yeah, you're going to have \$5,000 of debt because of the decisions that are being made by this government," in my opinion, you're misleading them. Now, I want to ask you: how many people here . . .

Mr. Carson: Mortgages.

Loyola: Exactly. You know exactly where I'm going, my friend.

How many people would actually have all the money in their hand, or let's just say in their bank account, to buy a home before they actually moved into it? Now, I don't know many Albertans, especially hard-working Albertans who, you know, maybe have two or even three jobs, who have all that money in the bank before they can actually buy a house and actually move into it. Thank goodness we have these financial instruments called mortgages.

Ms Renaud: That is radical.

Loyola: A radical, radical idea. Sounds like an ideological thing, yes, indeed.

Now, for those of you who aren't clear on this – no, I'm not going to go there. I know that each and every one of us in this House knows what a mortgage is, an incredibly important financial instrument that provides the citizens of this great land with the opportunity to be able to purchase a house and pay for that house as they go. Now, I don't know many people who have the \$300,000 or \$350,000 or even half a million dollars up front to actually buy a house right off the bat. I don't know many people like that. I don't think I've ever met someone like that in my life. Well, at least, I don't know. Maybe.

All I know is that I didn't have that kind of money when I got my house, and I'm still paying my mortgage. I've probably got another eight years to go on my mortgage, but at least I have a roof over my head the same way that other Albertans do that have taken advantage of this very important financial instrument so that they can actually live inside a house with a roof over their head, a place to call home, where they can raise their children and make sure that that family has the security that they need to be contributing citizens of this fine province.

4:40

That's what we're supposed to be here to do, help those individuals so that they can get the services that they need. Whether it be these children going to schools – you know, thanks to the Minister of Education for clearing up some of the misunderstandings from the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

By the way, Mr. Chair, I happen to know that "wapiti" is a Cree word. It's a Cree word.

Ms Renaud: For flat tax.

Loyola: It doesn't stand for a flat tax. It's actually a Cree word that means white rump. You know, knowing the sense of humour of my Cree friends, I don't think that they were just talking about the four-legged animals.

You know, sometimes the members opposite like to get up and think that they're schooling us as if we don't know, as if we're not Albertans, as if we don't know what it's like to function in this economy. I'll remind all the members of this House, especially those on the other side, that for the first time in a very long time in the history of this province we have a pretty good diverse group of people on this side of the House. People were social workers, nurses, right? We have people who participated in unions, students, young people, seniors, older people. We've got a pretty good diverse crew over here on this side of the House . . .

The Acting Chair: Hon. member, if I may, I'll interject for a moment. I've exercised a fair bit of discretion. If you could relate your arguments back to Bill 4, come full circle, I'd appreciate that.

Loyola: I'm getting there, sir. I'm getting there, sir.

The Acting Chair: Thank you.

Loyola: I will come full circle.

The Acting Chair: Resume.

Loyola: The reason why I bring that up, Mr. Chair, is because this diverse group on this side of the House also have lived the experience of being a citizen of this province and participating in this economy. They also understand what it's like to actually participate and sometimes be on the giving side of some of the programs and services that are provided by the ministries of this fine government. For that reason, we understand that the amounts denoted here in supplementary supply estimates, which are clear as day, as transparent as can be, the exact opposite of a blank cheque, are going to provide services for the people of Alberta, Albertan taxpayer money dedicated to the services that Albertans need. The exact opposite of a blank cheque.

Again I want to remind all the members of this House that during second reading the members opposite actually voted against all of these things. I want to go through that list again because they're so important, Mr. Chair. The municipal sustainability initiative: they voted no. The wildfire disaster recovery and emergency assistance: they voted no. Child intervention, child care subsidy and supports: they voted no. Persons with disabilities and assured income for the severely handicapped: you guessed it; they voted no. Employment and income supports: they voted no. The provincial share of AgriInsurance premiums and indemnities: they voted no. I believe that those are going to help the rural constituents that many of them represent. Compensation increases for Royal Canadian Mounted Police and justices of the peace. They voted no, Mr. Chair. As well, Alberta production grants. And they voted no. It's hard for me to understand. They get up in this House, and they say: "Well, it's Alberta taxpayer dollars. It's not your money." So then why are they voting no for Albertans' money to go back to help Albertans?

Mr. Chair, I think it's time for all Albertans to really understand that government, unlike the members across, who would rather have less government and less regulation, which would lead to less safety . . . [interjection] Look at them laugh. They laugh when I say that it's going to lead to less safety because that's the way they look at it. That's their world view, their ideological view. They would prefer that there be less government. You know, they always lob across words onto this side of the House, saying that we're the ideological ones, that we make decisions based on ideology.

An Hon. Member: How much time left on the clock there?

Loyola: Don't worry. I've got enough time.

They like to claim that we're the ideological ones, but, Mr. Chair, I would say that they're the ideological ones, trying to put their ideological world view on all Albertans, when we know full well that the amounts being requested in the supplementary supply estimates are Alberta taxpayer dollars that are going back to help the Albertans that actually need it.

With that, I'll end, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

I recognize the hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm not even really sure what that was, but back to supplementary supply, which the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie was attempting to discuss, I think. I think that's what he was trying to talk about. I'd like to explore the mortgage debt analogy that the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie spent a considerable portion of time discussing in the Chamber today. It was quite interesting, but I don't know where he was going

with it, to be honest. Let's talk about another little bit of economics. Let's talk about some debt. He seemed to indicate that nobody on this side of the House has ever had a mortgage. I don't know if that's true. I know I certainly had a mortgage.

Loyola: How is this relevant?

Mr. Nixon: How it's relevant is that I'm responding to the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, Mr. Chair, who you gave a tremendous amount of latitude as he spoke about the mortgage situation. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, if you'd like to rise again and speak, I'm sure we would listen with riveting attention again.

Mr. Chair, I would ask that the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie yield the floor. It's my turn now. I listened quietly while he presented. [interjections] I know the government is struggling to allow me to speak, Mr. Chair, but it's my right to speak in this Chamber on behalf of my constituents, and it's your responsibility to make sure that they allow me to speak.

The Acting Chair: Hon. members, the hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre has the floor.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Where I was going with this is that the mortgage analogy of borrowing money to be able to buy an asset, I think, is what the hon. member was referring to. He used a household analogy, which is fair. Actually, I think that the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays used a similar analogy earlier this afternoon. The problem with this point from the member is that he's forgetting about the incredible amount of debt and borrowing against my children's and my grandchildren's future that this government is undertaking.

4:50

Now, if you want to talk about household debt, if you have a mortgage for a few hundred thousand dollars for a family to purchase a home but then you continue to come home week after week, Mr. Chair, and you and your spouse or your partner determine that you're going to continue to borrow more money, hundreds of thousands of dollars every month over and over and over until it becomes millions or, in the case of this government, billions and eventually a hundred billion dollars, there are going to be significant consequences eventually to that because you're not going to be able to afford to make the payments. The interest is going to become a tremendous burden on your household. That's what's happening with this government.

We see it already happening right now. They're going to be between \$90 billion and a \$100 billion in debt in 2019, the next time that they go and face the boss, the people of Alberta, at the ballot box, and they're going to have to explain that level of debt. But the consequence of that debt is what generations of Albertans will be paying. Sadly, these members across the way will be long gone, and Albertans for generations will be paying the consequences as a result of these members' actions. They don't want to talk about that.

This was the point earlier from the Member for Calgary-Hays. They continue to come to this Chamber and ask for a blank cheque. Again, if you want to use a household mortgage example, if I come home every weekend from this place and my spouse is telling me, "Hey, we're going to continue to borrow more money and borrow more money and borrow more money," I certainly hope at some point she would say: "Whoa. What's going on here? We can't borrow money forever." You know, the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays did a great job talking about the blank cheque and the similar situation, which is what this government continues to ask for, with minimal details. They just say: "Hey. We'll bring in this. Give us this money. Just trust us. Everything is going to be okay."

What makes it worse, though, when you take it out of the personal analogy to somebody's house, as the member tried to do, is that this is about Albertans' money. It's not about his money. It's not about my money. It's not about the money of the people in this Chamber, though we are Albertans and do contribute through our tax base. It's about Albertans' money that they're spending. Not only are they going to be facing – unborn Albertans right now will be paying the consequences of this government's action. Albertans now are having their money spent.

The other issue that the hon. member raised is rural crime. What's interesting about the rural crime issue are a couple of things. The first is that this government for almost two years did absolutely nothing on the rural crime file while across the province people were being victimized and abused from every corner of this province, particularly in rural Alberta, particularly in central Alberta, where I'm from. Members have come and said over and over and over: "Hey. This has to get fixed. We have people who are being robbed. We have people that are being hurt and are scared in their homes, people whose acreages have been robbed four, five times, people – Mr. Chair, this is really interesting and sad – who have been robbed by the same person, even though that person has been convicted and then returned and robbed them.

Now, when I was Leader of the Opposition in this place, I brought forward an emergency debate motion that this government voted against or pushed so that it could not go to a vote, stood up against it. They didn't care about rural Alberta. The only time they started to care about rural Alberta, Mr. Chair, was when their poll numbers started to plummet, and now we see a government in mad panic. That's fine. I get it. They're trying to adjust the message, which is fine, but they have to be factual, which is that they have not stood up for Alberta on this issue for two years.

Now, the question is: can they do it now? I certainly hope that we will finally get to see this government start to make some improvements on that issue. The problem, though, is that nobody on that side of the aisle – nobody on that side of the aisle – has taken the time to come to town halls that are happening all across this province, to sit in those halls, to talk to constituents that are being robbed. I've had over a dozen with my Members of Parliament in my communities. At all those halls have been Members of Parliament, myself, municipal politicians, and local police officers, as well as senior police officers in the province of Alberta. What has been missing is government members. Not one government member at any of those halls, certainly not the minister, talking to the people that are being victimized right now.

If they had come to the hall, and this is why this is relevant to what we're discussing today, Mr. Chair, they would realize that one of the big issues – there are many issues when it comes to rural crime. It's not just a staffing issue. Staffing is part of it. One of the big issues, particularly when it comes to staffing, is that there are no officers coming out of the depot to fill these positions. There are no officers. Red Deer county, which I have the privilege of representing in this Chamber, and Lacombe county, which I also have the privilege of representing in this Chamber, have both been trying to spend their own money to buy officers. They went forward. They said that they've put it in their budget. They've earmarked some money for this issue. Two years have gone by: still no officers because there are no officers to fill it.

One of the great questions on this announcement is: where are those officers going to come from? Second, are they going to come from other areas of the province? Are we going to now make a situation worse in certain detachments because we have to pull those officers out and put them into a detachment? Very legitimate questions that should be asked, but this government won't go talk to the communities, so they're not able to ask.

The other thing they have not addressed at all when it comes to rural crime – I don't see anything in here about this emergency issue that we're seeing across rural Alberta – is this. Our police officers are being forced to play catch-and-release, which is fine when it comes to fishing. I'm an avid angler, Mr. Chair, as you know. Catch-and-release fishing is great, but it's not good when it comes to criminals. I've got officers all across rural Alberta, all across my communities right now who are catching criminals and bringing them to court. Those criminals are being convicted, and they're right back on the street revictimizing my community; 51 times is a story that I heard the other day, 51 times that somebody was convicted and back out robbing people in my communities.

The Justice minister has not picked up the phone once to call the federal Justice minister to say what is going on. This government has shown no plan on how to make property crime a serious issue in this province, how to stand up and make it a serious criminal issue with serious consequences if you're going to be robbing our farms. Instead, they want to stand up while debating interim supply and act like they're experts when it comes to a certain issue, and this is what concerns us, which is why we're asking questions about this interim supply that's in front of us. Clearly, from what they're saying, they have absolutely no clue. They have no clue.

Now, I resent it because we've seen it so much from this government. The communities that I represent in this place have seen it so much from this government. They come here and they act like they know what they're talking about. But they do not know what they're talking about. It started with Bill 6. How do we know that they know what they're talking about right now? That is why we come and we ask questions in this place. Instead, what we have is a government member standing up inside this place over and over and over talking about flat tax, which nobody has talked about. It's certainly not in interim supply. Talking about their ideological beliefs or what they believe that I believe, et cetera, is fine. It's interesting to listen to even though factually they're wrong more often than not. But how can we trust them when they're asking us to vote for this?

It is our responsibility – we're talking about billions of dollars, Mr. Chair – to come here and ask what is going on. When the government stands up and shows such a fundamental misunderstanding of something like rural crime and tries to act like they're experts on it despite the fact they haven't talked to anybody – they stay in Edmonton because they don't want to go out and talk to their constituents any more. I don't know why. I suspect it's not pleasant. I don't know what's going on. Maybe Albertans are frustrated in their ridings like they are in mine. But to stand up in this House and act like you know what you're talking about when clearly you do not – how are you going to fill those officer positions? How is that going to happen? What are you doing about fixing the Criminal Code? What are you doing?

Ms McLean: That's federal.

Mr. Nixon: The hon. Minister of Service Alberta said that that's federal. You know what, Mr. Chair? The minister needs to get on the phone with the federal minister right now and say: our constituents are being victimized, and we need this changed. They shouldn't sit in this House and laugh about it. They should stand up and . . .

The Acting Chair: Hon. member, may I ask you to stay a little closer to the topic at hand, Bill 4. It goes both ways.

Mr. Nixon: Exactly, Mr. Chair. I think that's fair.

It's unfortunate that the government has participated in that. I am talking about the funding that is in this bill. The member across the

way who is presenting on behalf of the government has presented himself as knowing about the facts that are associated with this funding, but he does not know about what it. He has just proven it. What he's saying is not true. I withdraw that, Mr. Chair. What he's saying is misrepresenting the facts or shows his misunderstanding of what is taking place. [interjection] You know, the Minister of Education is telling me to sit down. Again, Mr. Chair, I have the floor, not the minister.

Well, the minister may not want to or like to hear about what is going on or want to continue to make things up. That's disappointing. They've stood in this House repeatedly today and passed off that this document we're here to debate today has to do with these issues, but then when we stand up and we ask them questions, within minutes it falls apart. [interjections] Again, the Minister of Education is struggling because he wants us just to accept what they're saying, but it's not true.

An Hon. Member: That makes no sense.

Mr. Nixon: See, they say that it doesn't make sense. Well, Mr. Chair, if they took time to come and talk to some people in the community hall instead of sitting here in the Legislature underneath the dome, talk to real people that have been impacted, they'd find out very quickly that what they're saying is not the facts that are on the ground. They are not the facts. [interjection] The Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater is now upset. I was in his constituency on Saturday talking to people that have been robbed. They've been very clear that this is not true. I'm talking about the funding on this, which is what they were talking about. His constituents were extraordinarily clear how disappointed they are in this government and in him directly on how they've handled this issue. He does not understand this rural crime issue. He does not understand this rural crime issue. He does not.

5:00

Now, Mr. Chair, although they want to come and make this part of this debate, the funding – we keep asking: where is it? – it's not. You can't get officers in two years, so you're certainly not going to get them in the next few days before the budget is tabled. That's impossible. You would know that if you went out and talked to people. You would know that our detachments are operating under significant reduced percentages of officers already because so many are on leave for legitimate reasons – maternity, stress leave, et cetera – that is now compounding the issue of stress because they're short-handed. So we have a serious personnel problem.

The Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie wants to stand up and continue to attempt to say that he understands the rural crime issue. His facts are wrong. His facts are wrong. You can't get the officers in that time. He's not dealing with a revolving door inside the courts. No comment on how we're going to deal with the judiciary. No comment on how we're going to deal with large, spread-out detachments. No comment on how we're going to deal with the changing dynamic of the criminal element in our communities, which is now transient and working across our communities. It's not, you know, little . . .

Mr. Piquette: That's what the crime reduction units are for.

Mr. Nixon: I think the hon. member just heckled to me, "That's what harm reduction is for," but that's not what harm reduction is for. That's a different issue. I'll tell you what's harm reduction on this issue, Mr. Chair. It would be to have people that continue to rob our farms go to jail for stealing our property. That would be harm reduction.

The Acting Chair: Hon. member, we're rambling on a lot of different topics here. I wish we could stay on the central issue, Bill 4. This is the second time I've had to remind you.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Chair, fair. Back to Bill 4 and, specifically, what it may or may not fund.

The Acting Chair: So we'll stick to the matters at hand, and Bill 4 is the argument that we're speaking on.

Mr. Nixon: Well, what I'm speaking about, Mr. Chair, is directly on the comments that Edmonton-Ellerslie provided to us in regard to Bill 4, where he indicated all these crime issues that were being dealt with. I just listed a whole bunch of issues, and that's not being dealt with inside this bill. So the question is: what is being dealt with inside this bill if that's not what's being dealt with inside this bill? The hon. member should not stand up in this House and continue to say that those are the issues that are being dealt with in Bill 4 if they're not the issues that are being dealt with in Bill 4.

In closing, Mr. Chair, it's disappointing to continue to see a government bring forward a request for blank cheques repeatedly, not wanting to give out solid information on what's happening, taking issues from elsewhere and then trying to put them on the bill, but clearly, once you start to talk to them, they don't have a clue what they're talking about. They're just adding to it, pretending like they're champions with this bill, that this bill is now a champion for rural Alberta when it's not – this is about the bill – standing in this Chamber repeatedly talking about, you know, how they're going to deal with the rural crime issue though the bill has nothing to do with rural crime and they don't know how to deal with the issue. When we look at Bill 4, Mr. Chair, it has nothing to do with what the hon. member is referring to when we ask him questions.

Instead, what the government should do is stand up and actually talk about what Bill 4 actually has to do with, not continue to stand in this Chamber and tell us that it has to do with something that it does not. It's very counterproductive, very, very disappointing to continue to see the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie do that. I would also challenge him, Mr. Chair, to take some time to actually talk to some Albertans that are being impacted by rural crime and to talk to some police officers to see if their bill, Bill 4, actually will be addressing any of the issues.

Mr. Piquette: Have you talked to any RCMP officers?

Mr. Nixon: Again, I mean, I don't know why the hon. member from Athabasca is so upset. I've been in his constituency. They're worried about the same thing that I'm worried about. I gave a speech there on Saturday, and all the questions and answers were about confusion about what the government is doing on this file, that they have now presented to say that that's what they're dealing with here. If that's what they're dealing with here, how are you dealing with it? You say that you're dealing with rural crime in this bill. How are you dealing with it? How are you dealing with the RCMP officer shortages? How are you dealing with the problems we have with the judiciary? How are you dealing with the capacity issues that we have in courthouses? How are you dealing with the fact that property crime is not taken seriously in our communities? How are you dealing with the fact of the drug issues that we're seeing that are causing crime in our communities? And the list goes on and on.

So if that's what this bill is about, the question to the government is: how does this bill address all of those issues? At this point they've shown no evidence of that. They've shown no evidence of that in this bill.

Mrs. Littlewood: Harm reduction, health.

Mr. Nixon: The Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville just heckled at me that it's got, again, to do with harm reduction. In Nordegg, where the store is getting robbed every week, the harm reduction techniques this government is looking at in Calgary and Edmonton are not going to help the people in Nordegg.

That, again, shows me, Mr. Chair, that this government doesn't even know what this bill is. The members that are sitting here debating it don't even know what this bill is. They want to pass themselves off as experts and say that this bill is bringing in harm reduction – I don't see anywhere in here about harm reduction, but if that's their argument, then let's look at that – and that that will somehow address crime west of Rocky Mountain House or in Ponoka county. It's gotten so bad now in Lacombe county and Ponoka county that citizens have to work together to patrol around the clock to protect their properties and to protect their neighbours. Could you explain to me how that bill will deal with that issue between now and when the budget is tabled on Thursday?

It is a ridiculous argument that the hon. member keeps making. He can make it, but he should at least make sure that he understands the full rural crime issue. Police officers are just a start; they're one small part of it. There are no police officers in the depot to fill those positions. It's the RCMP that say that. It comes up at every town hall. I hope that the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie will come. I think there's another one coming up next week, during the constituency break, around Rocky Mountain House. He's welcome to come and visit us in Rocky Mountain House and hear from the people that are concerned about this issue. It would be enlightening for him, I'm sure, and would help him in the future when he's talking about bills to not bring something to a bill that has absolutely nothing to do with the bill.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there other hon. members who wish to speak to Bill 4?

Are you ready for the question?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

[The clauses of Bill 4 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Acting Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Chair: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Chair. At this time I'd like to move that the committee rise and report.

The Acting Chair: Hon. member, did you mean to say to rise and report bills 3 and 4?

Ms Larivee: Yes, to rise and report bills 3 and 4.

The Acting Chair: Thank you.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Dach in the chair]

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

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bills: Bill 3 and Bill 4.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

5:10 **Consideration of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech**

Ms Sweet moved, seconded by Mr. Malkinson, that an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows.

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

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

[Adjourned debate March 13: Ms Ganley]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Mr. Rosendahl: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to address my response to the Speech from the Throne. I'm honoured to rise today in the traditional territory of Treaty 6 peoples. I would also like to acknowledge that this land is important to the Métis nations of Alberta.

Along with other Albertans, elected members of this Legislature, and the members of my NDP caucus, I have been considering commitments made by our government in Thursday's Speech from the Throne. I was very pleased and impressed by pledges made to the women of this province and our government's decision to make choices that were in the best interests of families during the downturn. A century ago Alberta was the first province in Canada to elect women to its Legislature. Today we enjoy the most women in cabinet positions and in a provincial caucus in Canadian history. Our government continues to recognize the contributions that all women make to families and communities across Alberta. We are working hard to ensure that women feel safe at home and at work everywhere in this province. Our government takes this very seriously.

Our government faced very difficult challenges when we first came into office. Oil prices were at an all-time low. Schools, hospitals, seniors' facilities, roads, bridges had been neglected and allowed to fall into disrepair under the previous government. In response we expanded and upgraded the Grande Cache high school, which now has an enhanced trades training facility, which would have been left from the previous government. We also completed new facilities for high school and French immersion in Jasper, complete with solar panels on the roof to help with greening the economy and greening for the school.

We completed the new hospital and are building a new medical clinic and a new seniors' facility in Edson. AHS purchased the Mountain View seniors' home from the Good Samaritan Society and brought long-term care back to Hinton, which was missing for many, many years, the only community in West Yellowhead that didn't have it. We have built and renovated library facilities for Jasper and Grande Cache. Our government has funded upgrades to water treatment, sewage management systems in Grande Cache, Marlboro, Edson, Yellowhead county, Hinton, and Jasper.

Our commitment to developing and repairing infrastructure during the downturn was a very good idea because costs were lower than during the boom times. It was a great investment and proved very worth while in West Yellowhead. This work created and maintained employment and business income during a most challenging economic time, supporting families and communities dealing with unemployment and economic hardship. I can relate that to the community of Grande Cache. I am proud to be part of a government that put the needs of Alberta families first and successfully took on the task of prudently managing our economy and resources towards stable economic growth.

As the Lieutenant Governor noted, things are continuing to look up. Several successful free-enterprise banks agree, and here's what they're saying. Regarding Alberta's economy, RBC's December 2017 economic outlook report states: "We expect key economic sectors such as energy and capital investment to reach a more sustainable 'cruising speed' after their initial post-recession blast-off in 2017." Great news. RBC also states: "We project slightly faster growth in employment in 2018 (1.2%) compared to 2017 (1.0%) as the recovery spreads to more [sections] of the economy."

TD Canada in their provincial economic report *Walking Tall* into 2018 says, "Alberta is in the midst of a sharp rebound after contracting by 3.7% in each of the last two years." TD also stated: "Strength has been fairly widespread across industries, with manufacturing, retail, housing, and exports all gaining momentum."

Given these realities I'm very confused as to why the Leader of the Official Opposition continues to claim that our government is driving economic activity out of Alberta. I'm totally confused why they keep pushing that idea. I am happy that our government will continue to work to diversify our economy, especially in the energy sector, most notably by committing unequivocally to ensuring Canadian tidewater access for Alberta energy through the construction of the Kinder Morgan pipeline. Our Premier has stated that she will go as far as Peter Lougheed did when he faced a similar threat in the '80s. It's quite a commitment. The Kinder Morgan pipeline will be built.

This pipeline will pass through West Yellowhead and ensure unprecedented economic benefits for my constituents. Many construction jobs will be created. Businesses across West Yellowhead will enjoy the tremendous economic benefits. Moving our energy resources to tidewater will result in us receiving fairer prices for our products, putting more money into the pockets of Albertans, ensuring long-term economic viability for all communities. It will promote higher levels of investment by industry and support diversification of our energy sector, which has been ignored for many years. As the Lieutenant Governor noted, we will be forging a path to balanced budgets and a way forward that avoids our province's boom-and-bust history and wild swings in government spending that create so much uncertainty for Albertans.

I am proud that our government has worked and will continue to work to expand and diversify our economy on all fronts, including electricity, energy, manufacturing, tourism, technology, and many other sectors. I'll give you some examples in West Yellowhead: \$200 million worth of upgrades to highway 40, which is long overdue. What about the replacement of the blue bridge, which has been requested for years and ignored by the previous government? This bridge will improve access to Grande Cache and area for energy, forestry, and tourism industries. That old blue bridge has been there forever.

5:20

Coal transition funding assists workers and communities with expanding their economic options as we move towards a greener

economy. Turning Point Generation, a private, for-profit enterprise, for example, is spending \$20 million to build a green power storage facility near Hinton, a great economic benefit, a great issue for greening the economy because of this project.

Here's another one. The town of Hinton has partnered with the province and private, for-profit industry to develop a groundbreaking geothermal energy project in their area. This will utilize abandoned and orphaned oil wells to access thermal energy which lies close to the surface in the region and is expected to bring construction jobs, to save money to heat buildings, with the possibility of growing food, of greenhouses, and another possibility of producing electrical energy.

Loyola: And what's wrong with that?

Mr. Rosendahl: Yeah. What's wrong with that?

Our government is committed to diversification through expanding education and training, business development, and working to improve equality for all Albertans. We're supporting Grande Prairie Regional College with transitioning to university degree granting status and setting up a local campus in Grande Cache, which will help the people in Grande Cache to get degrees and other university training. Hinton will see a full social work degree program come to West Yellowhead in September 2019, which I've been pushing for with GPRC. I personally worked with Grande Prairie Regional College to bring a dual credit entry-level trades training program to Edson in 2017 and class 1 driver training in Grande Cache to help the residents up there when they got laid off from the mines so that they could seek additional training to look for other work.

To support the forest industry, we have committed extensive resources and are partnering with the town of Hinton to contain the mountain pine beetle, which is now in our area and which is a serious problem for our forestry sector.

We're also seeing the development of a new coal mine – oh, but we hate coal, right? – a brand new mine opening up east of Hinton, Cline energy. I just saw huge pieces of equipment that were taken up to the mine last week. But we don't like coal, really.

We're working hard also to promote tourism and other non energy related options; for example, developing access to the dinosaur tracks up in Grande Cache. How many people even know that we have dinosaur tracks up in Grande Cache? It's a huge tourism opportunity that we can be taking advantage of.

We have also made many commitments and contributions to nonprofit, community-supporting organizations across West Yellowhead.

We have been working hard to create a balance between protecting the environment, caribou populations, and the needs of industry. Jobs are important in our area, especially in the forestry sector and oil and gas, work in that area where the caribou are.

We have committed to make government work for Albertans. We continue to honour our commitments to all Albertans, including those who are marginalized and vulnerable. We have committed to protecting Albertans from crime, especially in rural areas. We know that we've got lots of work to do on that, but we continue to work on that.

Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Under 29(2)(a)?

Mr. Sucha: I think the Member for West Yellowhead has some other insightful comments that he would like to share about his constituency and some of the benefits that he's been seeing.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Mr. Rosendahl: Well, thank you. I do have a few more, for sure. The other thing is that we continue to work with indigenous peoples and all Albertans, like we said, to address the inequality and combat also the opioid crisis that exists in our area. We've got to really work hard on this. We are committed to bringing a safe injection site to Edson, which the Leader of the Official Opposition disagrees with, but we're promoting this because it will help reduce crime and save lives. As the Lieutenant Governor said in the throne speech, "This recovery is proving things can be done differently and that good things happen when governments proudly stand [up] on the side of working Albertans." I am proud that our government is committed to working together and looking to the future with optimism.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

I'll recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was a wonderful speech.

Mr. Sucha: It's 29(2)(a).

Mr. Gill: Oh, is it 29(2)(a)? Sorry. I will sit down.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Under 29(2)(a), any hon. members wishing to speak?

All right. Other hon. members wishing to speak?

Now I'll recognize the Member for Calgary-Greenway.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to provide a response to the Speech from the Throne. I would like to point out two statements from the Speech from the Throne and to specifically discuss these two points. "When government fails to work for people, inequality rises." The members on the other side of the Chamber may be surprised to learn that, actually, we also agree with that statement that when government fails to work for people, inequality rises. Yes, we do agree. However, I question how much the government agrees with this statement. This is their own.

Let me explain why I ask this. This government has taken an incredibly big step – it's a big one – to introduce a carbon tax. That is the opposite of the people's mandate. Two-thirds of Albertans do not want this carbon tax, so why do we still have that? If we go back to that quotation, it is clear that this unfair carbon tax creates inequality. As the UCP critic for Seniors and Housing I will point to some of the serious problems the carbon tax is creating for our seniors, the seniors who helped to build this province. Now those seniors are facing challenges because of this carbon tax imposed by this socialist government.

Here's an inexcusable example that relates to those rebates that this NDP government boasts about every time seniors and the carbon tax are mentioned together. Mr. Speaker, the minister of seniors signed a ministerial order in July that claws back a portion of rebates for seniors living in subsidized housing. How is that, like, fair to seniors? Is that creating equality or inequality? Maybe the government can answer that. The most vulnerable seniors are seeing that these rebates are being clawed back. These are the fine folks who helped build this awesome province. The clawback is occurring because seniors have to declare the rebate as income, and their rent is based on their income.

5:30

Mr. Speaker, when the NDP trumpet their carbon tax rebates, I believe it is important for Albertans to know that the government is

giving and taking at the same time. How is it creating equality? By the way, it is not just seniors facing this clawback. Other Albertans, like single mothers, have to declare income, too.

This move by the Minister of Seniors and Housing was done so quietly. No doubt the minister would have preferred not to shed light on this ministerial order she signed. They claim to shed light on every other single thing. Why not discuss this with Albertans when she signed this ministerial order to claw this back from seniors?

Interestingly, Mr. Speaker, this year's Speech from the Throne does not even mention the carbon levy – let me use the NDP word here; I'm sorry – the rebate, but last year's did. I'll quote: "All the while, carbon levy rebates will continue going right to the bank accounts of two-thirds of Alberta households." Rebates are going, quote, right back to the accounts of Albertans, unquote, but it's not staying in their accounts because the government is clawing it back. I don't understand. Like, what is this government trying to claim here? [interjections] Well, let's depart from that point now. I see the heckling started on the other side because it's a bit of a sensitive topic for the government side because they didn't campaign on the carbon tax in the 2015 election.

Let's depart from that point and look at the other inequalities created by the carbon tax that the government no longer wants to talk about. I'll just mention a couple, rural residents and small businesses. Our hon. House leader talked at great length today about the seriousness of crime in rural areas. Rural residents were told – and I still can't believe this – that if they want to avoid the effect of the carbon tax, they should simply take a bus. Like, seriously? Who would say something like this to a resident who's never seen transit on their gravel driveways, range roads? It was coming not from a backbencher, the usual hecklers; it was coming from the Premier herself. That is even more disturbing, disrespecting of rural residents. This statement still echoes in the ears of rural Albertans. Let me tell you that they will remember that whenever the next election is held. They will.

As for small business, no talk about it. They have been crushed by a cascade of legislation, costs associated with it. The carbon tax is one of many unfair impositions. Yet – I repeat – the carbon tax, which continues to resonate through our economy and hurts individuals, including seniors and rural residents, was not mentioned in this year's Speech from the Throne. Perhaps this NDP believes that if it stops acknowledging its presence, probably Albertans will forget about it. I don't think so. That's wrong.

Mr. Speaker, let them continue to think that way if they wish. We in the UCP will continue to address it in this Chamber and when we go to our constituents across this province. And in a little more than a year, when people have a mandate, they will address that issue. We will not stop fighting on behalf of them because this is not the right thing to do. Perhaps the tax isn't mentioned because the NDP realizes that really there's no need for it. It has damaged them politically, so now let's not talk about it. The Premier still hasn't answered the Leader of the Official Opposition on how high she wants to go, because we've all seen that it hasn't brought us any pipelines.

Every time in QP the government side stands up – and last session, like, we were almost getting tired of seeing two fingers and two pipelines. Every question has the answer, "We got two pipelines approved." We see that Tzaporah Berman and Karen Mahon, the same people this government appointed, are protesting in Burnaby. It has brought them no pipeline. This government wanted Albertans to think that the carbon tax equals pipelines, but that'll never happen. The environment foundation: it doesn't exist.

Mr. Speaker, I'm curious. The NDP mentioned the carbon tax in the last two throne speeches but not this one. I don't know. The

other one that didn't include a carbon tax plan and all the great things that it was going to do for Alberta was the first one, in June 2015. I wasn't here at that time. I don't remember that. It seems that we have come full circle now. This government is kind of, like, realizing how out of touch they are from average Albertans, that their socialist ideology, NDP world view is actually kind of, like, getting push-back, so maybe we need to stop hiding stuff. That's why the minister of seniors, when she signs a ministerial order to claw back from seniors, does not announce it to the public. That's why the Speech from the Throne this year does not have a carbon tax or levy, whatever you want to call it, sir.

We have one more Speech from the Throne from this government. Will it announce that it is going to be \$50 per tonne, the carbon tax? Is it going to go that high? I don't know. Why didn't the government disclose this in the throne speech?

Or will the government actually take advice from the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed, our leader, and then, you know, just scrap the tax? So far they have been following advice, when we talk about the wine ban and taking the repercussion approach. Our leader has said that if B.C. does not work with us, there will be serious consequences. At that time, the Premier said: this member wants to build a wall around Alberta, and hopefully he probably also wants B.C. to pay for it. That was her stand, but now she wants to talk about the same thing. Hopefully, the government and the Premier herself will listen to our leader and maybe cut the carbon tax, but that is a question for another time.

Thank you very much for this opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there other hon. members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?
The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think I might have heard the hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway say that rural crime wasn't mentioned in the throne speech. I want to give him an opportunity to correct the record because it was actually mentioned in the throne speech, and I will read an excerpt just to refresh his memory. It says:

Across Alberta, from our rural communities to our urban centres, every Albertan deserves to feel safe. Today in Alberta, especially in rural areas, people are concerned for the safety of their homes, their property, and the well-being of those they love. That must change.

Your government invests more than half a billion dollars annually into police services across the province. Our police officers serve and protect Albertans with a bravery and dedication that is unmatched.

I just wanted to make sure that the member knew and give him an opportunity, if he wanted to, to correct his remarks.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I did mention the impact of the carbon tax on rural Albertans. I didn't say that rural Albertans were not mentioned in the throne speech.

An Hon. Member: Rural crime.

5:40

Mr. Gill: Rural crime. No, no. I just meant the carbon tax impact on that and then how the Official Opposition House Leader talked about rural crime. That was the comment on that.

Again, my comment was on how the Premier wanted rural Albertans to take a bus, like, if you're being impacted by the carbon tax, just take a bus. That was what I was saying. And another: the environment minister said that if you want to contribute to lowering greenhouse gas emissions, maybe eat less meat. But I didn't talk

about that. I mean, like, we're talking about taking freedom away here. You know, *Fortis et Liber*, strong and free: Mr. Speaker, that is the coat of arms of our province. We're telling people to take the bus. We're telling Albertans who built this amazing province to eat less meat, take a bus. What kind of a province are we creating for our future generation?

Hopefully, I answered the hon. member's question. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Under 29(2)(a), are there other hon. members wishing to speak?

The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm actually going to respond to the Speech from the Throne, unlike the previous speaker. I cannot really figure out how the speech was a response to the throne speech. It was a rant against his favourite subject, which is the carbon levy. It really wasn't a response to the Speech from the Throne. It wasn't something that would really inspire me as an Albertan to figure out that things are happening in Alberta that are good for Albertans.

I am actually going to respond to the throne speech because I think it was a really good throne speech. The Lieutenant Governor read it and recognized the work that Albertans from all corners of the province are doing. We all know that the Lieutenant Governor is very dedicated to recognizing the volunteerism that makes our Alberta communities great and attractive to all parts of Canada and the world. The previous member who spoke and I share something in common. We actually chose to come to Canada and to make our home in Alberta because we know the values that Albertans have and what a great place Alberta is.

The work the government is doing, as highlighted by the Speech from the Throne, which is the real purpose of the Speech from the Throne, is to ensure Canadian tidewater access for Alberta's natural resources. That is very important to my constituency and to my fellow Industrial Heartland MLAs. Actually, I would hope that every single one of the 85 MLAs in this Assembly also thinks that access to tidewater for our oil and gas is very, very important. It is at the heart of our ability to ensure all the services that we enjoy, from the preschools to postsecondary education, the hospitals and community-based health care, the roads and bridges in all of our constituencies, the emergency services, support for Albertans who need income assistance, who need counselling and affordable housing.

The Trans Mountain pipeline is also crucial to those seniors which the hon. member mentioned. Without the Trans Mountain pipeline we cannot build the long-term care, the assisted living, or the lodges that our seniors need. The constituents that I have spoken to have really appreciated and supported the throne speech's strong language on defending all workers and remaining vigilant that there are no roadblocks to getting this pipeline built.

The government's support for diversification of the petrochemical industry has already borne fruit in the Industrial Heartland and in the area around Red Deer, and I'm hoping that it will bear fruit in the Grande Prairie area, too. We all know that Inter Pipeline has started to build its facility. The building of the Inter Pipeline facility will ensure that many workers are kept employed over the next few years and will, of course, also add value to our economy by processing the feedstock into value-added products.

Mr. Speaker, I personally find it so depressing when members of the opposition are constantly refusing to accept the factual information that the Alberta economy is doing much better and that we're on the path towards recovery. We know that the recovery is not affecting everyone equally, in the same way. But the

government's focus on economic diversification will mean that in the years to come a great variety of employment opportunities will be available to all Albertans and there will be opportunities for retraining.

One group of workers that I really admire is the oil and gas workers who have formed Iron and Earth. Knowing that they needed to explore employment in the renewable energy sector, they are creating new employment opportunities for themselves. If you don't know this organization, I would really urge you to find out more about them. This is one example of how Albertans are embracing the energy diversification opportunities available in the renewable energy sector.

The government's leadership on the need to diversify Alberta's economy is recognized world-wide. Provinces and countries which have not diversified their economy have stagnant GDPs and find it hard to find employment opportunities for all of their population. The government has recognized that diversification requires a diversity of tools, including the capital investment tax credit, job creation in new industries, and investment in postsecondary education for these industries. What I appreciate so much about the Speech from the Throne and the work of the government is that the government has realized it's not one simple solution, but it has to be a whole panel of solutions to be able to restart the economy and to ensure employment for everyone.

As parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Education I have been able to see first-hand how important the investment in schools and education is to rural and urban Albertans. Young people are the greatest resource to communities, and investment in their education and well-being is an investment in the future of our communities and the entire economy of Alberta. That's why the investment in infrastructure for schools has been so important to the future of the economy of Alberta.

Last month I visited Greenshields, near High Prairie. This small community worked hard to put together the resources to build a public separate school, community theatre, fitness, and ice arena together in one building with many multi-use spaces. This is the kind of infrastructure investment that will benefit students, seniors, families, and businesses in Greenshields and the surrounding areas for generations to come. The investment in education, infrastructure, and classroom improvement is and will continue to benefit Albertans. Mr. Speaker, this is the kind of investment that the Speech from the Throne speaks about.

The throne speech reminds us all of the work the government has done to put regular people first. Long-standing executive perks and insider excess has been eliminated. Salaries for executive and board members have been reduced, and this is an ongoing exercise, as the Minister of Advanced Education has been speaking about the excess salaries in universities. Unions and corporate donations have been eliminated from the political donation area, and the Lobbyists Act will be reformed in the coming session.

Mr. Speaker, I am so personally grateful for the work that the government is doing on the opioid crisis. Guided by the emergency response commission made up of a diverse group of Albertans, the government is continuing to initiate addiction programs, including the proposed safe injection sites. I am so thankful that the government chose to put an opioid treatment program in the Strathcona community hospital. Addictions affect all parts of Alberta, and the government has recognized the need in rural Alberta. I am dismayed when I hear members of the opposition speak against the harm reduction approach of the government and the innovative programs offered such as safe injection sites, needle exchanges, and the prescription of alcohol to treat alcohol addiction at the Royal Alex hospital.

We all come to our role as MLAs from various backgrounds. Mine has included working with communities to create programs to support these addictions, and I know that it's never easy to create the right programs in the right places to meet those with addictions. I just want to commend the government for taking this issue seriously and using a diversity of approaches in different communities. I hope not to hear any more negative comments from the opposition.

5:50

Mr. Speaker, I hope that all Albertans will read the Speech from the Throne and see the optimism in the economic recovery, opportunities for diversification and new jobs, investment in education, addressing of inequality, and unwavering commitment to the Trans Mountain pipeline. I think we as MLAs have to demonstrate to Albertans that we are optimistic, that we really believe in the work that the government is doing, that we believe in the work that our industries are doing, our nonprofits and so on. It's really our role to be optimistic and to try to work hard. It is not our role to be constantly putting things down and to be so depressing about what's happening in Alberta.

There are so many good things happening here. You can just come to my riding and see what's happening in the Industrial Heartland. Mr. Speaker, the pipeline we talk about every day is actually starting in Sherwood Park. Maybe some of you didn't know that. The Trans Mountain pipeline starts in my riding, so I have a lot at stake with it. It will actually pass close to my constituency office, in the utility corridor that runs by my office. For me, I am optimistic that I will look and see the construction from my office windows.

I urge every member of this House to be optimistic and to work hard to ensure that the program the government has proposed in the Speech from the Throne becomes a reality.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Any questions, comments under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I was so intrigued by the member's speech in response to the Speech from the Throne. I was so intrigued as well that she added that the new pipeline is actually going to start right in her riding. I'm hoping that she could comment on that, the importance of the fact that the pipeline is starting in her riding and what that means to the constituents of her fine riding. I'm also hoping that if she doesn't mind – I know that she has dedicated an enormous amount of time and effort to NGOs, working with several NGOs throughout her life. If she could comment on both those things, I would really appreciate it.

Thank you.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, hon. member. Yeah, I actually would like to speak maybe a little bit more about the role that NGOs are playing around sustainability. Today I tabled documents from an organization in Calgary called Momentum. Momentum has been leading this work with nonprofit organizations in terms of ensuring that our nonprofit organizations are also becoming very sustainable, that they do not use a lot of paper, that they use renewable energy, that they source locally and so on. It's really a passion of mine.

I've heard too many negative comments from the members opposite about our nonprofit organizations. For me, nonprofit organizations are actually leaders in our community. I would like to really encourage everyone in this House to work with our nonprofits to ensure that they become sustainable not only in their environmental practices but also in their economic sustainability. I

do want to encourage you to read the information that I've tabled today from Momentum and to share that with your own nonprofits.

You know, I think we all know the area around Baseline. It's an area that I actually share with the Minister of Advanced Education. We can see the refineries. The Imperial refinery, which is in my riding, is actually one of the oldest urban refineries. Then we have the Suncor refinery. We probably have all seen the big tanks that contain the oil. We see a lot of not only the refineries but the shops that produce a lot of the material that is being used in the refineries. We actually also have in our riding AltaSteel, which is a company that takes the steel that has been used and melts it down and constructs new rebar.

I would urge all members to not only explore the riding but to also see the part that I love the best about Baseline Road, the pipeline bridge. I don't know how many of the members have seen the pipeline bridge, but I believe this is where the new Trans Mountain pipeline is going to go, from one side of Baseline to the other. That's why I'm so passionate and I'm so thankful for the work that the government is doing to ensure that our oil and gas get to tidewater.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Under 29(2)(a), any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Yao: Thank you so much. I would like a 29(2)(a) to the hon. Member for Sherwood Park. You mentioned that you like social profits and nonprofits. When I was the seniors critic a few years ago, I met with a large group of nonprofits that were specific to seniors, and they told me they met with a member from the government side. It was the Member for Sherwood Park that they actually met. The comment they made to me that was made by

possibly yourself, and I would like you to confirm these comments . . .

An Hon. Member: Does this have to do with the throne speech?

Mr. Yao: Well, it certainly has to do with her comments that she just made right now.

The comments made by these nonprofits were that they were told that this government does not like nonprofits because they take away union jobs. Yes. So I'd like you to confirm that for me. I got this information from the nonprofits, including some very established people. I would like to know that. I would like to understand why you would make such comments to such a group. They did confirm for me that it was the Member for Sherwood Park that said that. I would love to hear about your explanation that you gave these nonprofits, these groups that are focused on providing services to seniors.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Bilous: I appreciate the title, but I'm no longer the Deputy Government House Leader. The discussion on the Speech from the Throne responses have been very, very interesting, and I move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this time I'd like to move that we adjourn the House for the evening until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:57 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, March 21, 2018

Day 8

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 21, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let each of us reflect or pray, each in our own way. On this World Down Syndrome Day let us reflect on the amazing progress that has been achieved already in improving the lives of those who live with the syndrome every day. At the same time we have much work ahead of us in combating stigma and other issues that those same people – our friends, our neighbours, our loved ones – still face. Let our deliberations today aim to make their lives and indeed our community and province better than before.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and through you the wonderful students of Wes Hosford elementary school. Today they are with their teachers, Dr. Ingrid Manchier, Ms Kristin Budney, Ms Tanya Landiak, Mrs. Jill Desmond, and Mr. Rich Henderson. I was really delighted to see that they actually also had a student teacher from the U of A with them. They are also here with their chaperones, Brendan Nimmon, Robyn Karch, Mrs. Vici McTavish, Mrs. Carrie Hohl, and Mrs. Vanessa Wilson. I would ask that everyone give them the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Peace River.

Ms Jabbour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two school groups today that I'd like to introduce to you and through you. First of all, there are 15 students here from the Spruce View Mennonite school accompanied by their teachers, Mr. Stadel, Anita Martin, and Mr. Galen and Mr. Helbeat. If they could please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ms Jabbour: The second one – and I should have mentioned that these are from Innisfail-Sylvan Lake. There are 30 students from the Spruce View school. They are accompanied by their teacher, Miss Michelle Long, student teacher Mr. Colby Reimer, and Helen Morgan, Shallen Sundsten, Brenda Murdoch, Mandy Betk, and Emma Spencer-Cook. If they could all rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other school groups today?

Seeing and hearing none, the hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Mrs. Schreiner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all the members of the Assembly Morris Flewwelling and his wife, Hazel Flewwelling. Mr. Flewwelling served for many years as a Red Deer city councillor and later as mayor of Red Deer. He received the Alberta Order of Excellence in 2014 in recognition of his significant contributions to our community. Mr. Flewwelling is currently the

chair of the board of governors for Red Deer College. I will speak more about Red Deer College later today. I'd ask the Flewwellings to now rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions today. First, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you Portia Clark, Gareth Hampshire, and their children Yasmin and Jarvis. They are seated in the public gallery, and I'd ask that they rise while I introduce them. Gareth and Portia have been fixtures with CBC Edmonton for many years. Portia was the host of CBC *Radio Active* while Gareth has shown a knack for finding unheard voices in his reporting. They are moving with their children to Halifax, where Portia began her career with CBC and where she'll cohost CBC Radio's *Information Morning*. Please join me in welcoming them to the Assembly and wishing them well on their next adventure in Nova Scotia.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, I do have a second introduction. It is an honour to introduce guests from the Weehelp Foundation, located in the constituency of Edmonton-Glenora, who are seated in the members' gallery. Weehelp collects items throughout the year and hosts pop-up kids shops each fall and spring at affordable prices, with all proceeds from the events donated to the Stollery Children's Hospital Foundation and other charities. Last year they donated over \$80,000. The next pop-up event takes place April 28. I'd ask that Andrea Peyton, the CEO and founder, along with volunteers Patrick and Taryn please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of our Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly my new constituency assistant Dan Thompson. Dan brings over a decade of hospitality experience to my office, which can be translated to the experience that my constituents receive every day. I'd ask that he please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to introduce a few guests today who work and study in the field of community health. Debbie Lynam is a social work student at MacEwan University, currently observing her placement at Friends of Medicare under the instruction of Sandra Azocar, their executive director, who also joins us today. Sam Akinsiku is a graduate of environmental public health from Concordia University and currently a student of community support work at NorQuest College. Alyssa Pretty is a recent graduate of the University of Alberta's women's and gender studies program. Earlier this year she took on the role of communications and administrator officer at Friends of Medicare. I thank my guests for the important work and advocacy they do, and I'd ask them now to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to introduce to you and to all members of the Assembly some of the happiest people in the city of Grande Prairie, the Grande Prairie College board of governors and senior leadership team. You know, I was in Grande Prairie a few weeks ago to announce that Grande Prairie Regional College is on the path to becoming a university. These people will be instrumental to the college's success as they complete the work to make that dream a reality. I'd ask the attendees to please rise as I say your name. We've got with us Natalia Reiman, board chair; Don Gnatiuk, future constituent of mine and current president; Blaine Badiuk, board member and president of the students' association. We also have board members Scott Roessler, Nan Bartlett, Jane Manning, Chantal Fontaine, Pattie Pavlov, Mary Ann Eckstrom, Lorne Radbourne, Laurie Nock, Gordon Pellerin, and members of the leadership team Susan Bangrove, Angela Logan, Carmen Haakstad, Mark Evans, and Kazem Mashkournia. I'd ask the members of the Assembly to please give them a warm welcome.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Ryan Smith, a friend of mine from sunny southern Alberta. He is a newly minted councillor at Vulcan county, my alma mater. He's in town attending the Rural Municipalities of Alberta convention over at the Shaw. This gentleman also served as my legacy Wildrose CA board chair. I'd ask Ryan to please rise and accept the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise today to introduce to you and through you two members from the diverse constituency of Drumheller-Stettler, the first being Mr. Nathan Horner and the second being Mr. Kyle Toporchak. They're two wonderful young gentlemen who are going to be taking over operations in rural Alberta, and my respect goes to them. Would they please receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Service Alberta and of Status of Women.

Ms McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Esmahan Razavi, who is my new ministerial adviser for Status of Women. She is with us here today in the gallery. She is instrumental in women's rights in her own right. She cofounded Ask Her in Calgary. She's part of organizing the women's march and ran herself for municipal council. She's a great contribution to our ministry, and I look forward to working with her for a long time. If I can have her rise, please, to appropriately embarrass her, and I'd ask you all to give her the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

1:40

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Rural Crime

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. One of the biggest concerns for all Albertans lately is rural crime. That's why we as opposition as well as many Albertans were disappointed when this NDP government refused to hold a debate on the issue when we proposed it in the fall session. This continues to be a huge issue in rural Alberta, and it's getting worse as thieves become more and more brazen.

I'd like to talk to you about a recent incident in the Lac La Biche area that happened to Shawn and Bonnie McDonald. Mr. Speaker, you may remember them as I have spoken about them in the House before. They own Black Scorpion Contracting, which was one of the companies who, at their own expense, toured highways 881 and 63 during the Fort McMurray evacuation, providing gas and diesel and support to many of the evacuees. On March 14 in broad daylight and on camera, I might add, Shawn's truck was stolen from his yard. Just hours later the truck was found, but unfortunately the contents, including their son Sid's hockey equipment, were not recovered. Sid was scheduled to play in provincials in Rocky Mountain House the very next day.

One of Shawn's employees, Elson Walker, contacted Lac La Biche Sporting Goods owners Albert and Teri Moghrabi and told them about the situation. They immediately got Elson to pick up Sid from school, brought him to their shop, and completely outfitted him so that he could play in the provincials. This is what happens in our rural communities when things go wrong; we make them right. I wasn't surprised when I heard of the generosity and fast action of Albert and Teri. They care about their community, and this is why we need to continue to support our local businesses.

I do have a message for the thugs that continually harass our rural residents. You will not wear us down or break our community spirit. We'll do what it takes to change our justice system to make sure that these repeat offenders get put away where they belong.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to recognize the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. The United Nations' 2018 theme is Promoting Tolerance, Inclusion, Unity and Respect for Diversity in the Context of Combating Racial Discrimination.

Yet racism, xenophobia, and intolerance are problems prevalent in all societies. News sources from around the world have been reporting increases in racially motivated hate crimes and a rise in organized hate groups. In Europe we've seen the rise of far-right movements protesting against immigrants and a march in Poland that was reported as one of the largest gatherings of far-right activists in Europe in recent years. In the United States we've seen right-wing racist groups become emboldened in numbers and in their actions.

And we are not immune from this right here, Mr. Speaker. In Canada last January we witnessed with horror the fatal shooting of six men in a Quebec mosque, and 17 children were left without fathers. In Alberta we have our own emboldened groups disseminating a public message of intolerance and division. In June of last year a group called the Worldwide Coalition Against Islam demonstrated in Calgary, and members of that same group showed up outside a Red Deer school in May to wave banners and spread misinformation.

Mr. Speaker, while we can take some comfort that in both of these cases Albertans stood firm and did not let the hate-mongers sway their commitment to their fellow humans, we must at the same time register some alarm that these events are happening in Alberta at all. Free speech is a cherished right; spreading hatred is not. We must be ever conscious of the difference between these two.

As a father of mixed race children who are beginning to ask tough questions, I tell them that we must be vigilant against those who use race and religion as political tools to sow division and hatred. We must be determined to continue the work of eliminating racial discrimination forever.

Entrepreneurship

Mr. Gotfried: Mr. Speaker, we live in an amazing province. Alberta, the province where I was born, the province I love, is blessed with an enviable abundance of natural resources. From flowing pastures and forests to fertile agricultural land and majestic scenery, from rich mineral deposits to the hidden bounty of Earth's energy, oil and gas, we have been handed an opportunity to not only do well but to do good.

I've seen Albertans' unique and indomitable spirit, which harkens back to our pioneer roots: strong, determined, resilient, compassionate. That is who we are. But I also see another kind of spirit: smart, innovative, ambitious, risk takers. Yes, an entrepreneurial spirit, which I often refer to as agripreneurial, in honour of the strong foundations built by agrarian pioneers, a spirit not driven by government intervention nor policy but through determination, the quest for a better life, health, and education for family and community and the compassion and generosity which naturally comes from so many of those blessed to create abundance and wealth through their focus, determination, and hard work. That is the spirit of Alberta which I love. In my lifetime I have seen this spirit in action, creating endless opportunity, facing adversity with optimism and resolve, pulling together to seek – no, seize – our place in the global village in which we live, developing our rich resources in a responsible manner which benefits ourselves, our neighbours, our fellow Canadians, and our planet. That is who we are.

But today, Mr. Speaker, we face new challenges and, sadly, a new form of abundance, driven by ideology and the policies that follow it, in our political realm, the abundance of crippling debt, the burden of overtaxation, the shackles of overreaching regulation, which threaten our spirit and our way of life. I do not take this challenge, this threat to opportunity and the prosperity of future generations lightly and, to that end, will stand steadfast today and in the days ahead against a tax on the spirit of Alberta, which I hold so close to my heart.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Red Deer College Degree-granting Status

Mrs. Schreiner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On March 1 the people of Red Deer and central Alberta were thrilled to hear that Red Deer College was being given the opportunity to become a university. Red Deer College has been providing comprehensive educational programming to central Alberta for over 50 years. The college plays a critical role in the city of Red Deer and in central Alberta. University status for Red Deer College will provide our students with the opportunity to reap the rewards of higher education. It empowers students to attain their educational goals and fuels our economy with the knowledge and skills attained by the students.

Mr. Speaker, this announcement means more than just better educational opportunities. This announcement means that students will not have to uproot their lives to pursue their educational aspirations. It also means that they can pursue those dreams with less cost by being able to study close to home. In conjunction with the present tuition freeze, our government is making life much better for Albertans.

Degree granting provides greater options and opportunity for students all over Alberta. A greater variety of educational programs enhances options and places Red Deer in a strong position to embrace economic growth. Alberta's third-largest city will gain a competitive advantage with a highly educated population.

Mr. Speaker, Red Deer College also has the ability to draw athletic talent from across Canada. Further investment in the state-of-the-art Gary W. Harris Canada Games Centre will support programming with in-class and practicum experiences. It will also serve the health and well-being of the students and citizens of Red Deer alike.

I'd like to thank the Premier and the Minister of Advanced Education for sharing March 1 with myself and the Member for Red Deer-South. It was an important day for Red Deer, and we will continue to grow and embrace the vision of a strong and proud Alberta.

Thank you.

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

Rural Crime Prevention

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to set a few things straight about the crime epidemic that has been plaguing rural communities across the province for the better part of two years. For two years my United Conservative colleagues and I have been warning this government about the escalating crisis, and for two years the NDP have brushed these warnings off as fearmongering. Last fall we welcomed more than a hundred victims to this gallery, who looked on as this government refused an emergency debate on the dramatic escalation of crime rates in the communities.

Finally, the Justice minister announced funding to begin to address the issue a few weeks ago, including funding 39 new RCMP officers. On the surface this is welcome news, but what the minister has failed to acknowledge is that there is a national shortage of RCMP officers and that the wait for reinforcements will take years. Nonetheless, she continues to give countless rural Albertans false hope. These officers are not coming, Mr. Speaker, not today, not tomorrow, not next week or next month. We'll be lucky if we see them on the ground in our communities within two years. If the minister intends to shuffle officers to her crime units from existing detachments, I fear that that will make things even worse for our already understaffed detachments.

We've also got a very serious issue with the revolving door in our justice system, that allows offenders to be arrested, convicted, and then immediately released, free to rob the same people again. This is an issue the recent NDP announcement does not address. For this government to sit back and pretend like they have solved the problem is misleading and shameful. The Albertans who have been victimized over and over again deserve more than disingenuous lip service. The people in my constituency who have been robbed and victimized repeatedly, often by the same people, deserve more than cheap talk from a minister who can't even be bothered to take the time to meet with them.

It's clear to everyone but the NDP, Mr. Speaker, that when it comes to rural crime, this NDP government has absolutely no idea what they are doing.

1:50

Oral Question Period

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

Provincial Response to Pipeline Opposition

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. About a month ago the NDP government in Victoria announced another delay tactic to try to stop Trans Mountain pipeline, a reference to the courts. They still haven't come forward with the question, and it means yet more uncertainty. That is exactly their goal. This Premier responded by surrendering, by ending the B.C. wine boycott. In Victoria their response was yet more regulations, yet more uncertainty. My question to the Premier is: does she regret having surrendered in the face of yet more delay tactics by her NDP friends in B.C.?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for that question. Of course, I would characterize the history somewhat differently. Our government worked very hard to get the federal government to approve this pipeline, and we are working very hard to make sure it gets built. When we saw a change in tactic from the B.C. government in January, with point 5, we reacted very quickly, very strategically, very effectively, and we said: pull point 5, or the wine ban stays. They pulled point 5. We stood up for Albertans, and we will not stop standing up for Albertans.

Mr. Kenney: The problem is, Mr. Speaker, yet more delays, yet more uncertainty, and after that, they introduced more draft regulations that will impose additional costs and jeopardize the pipeline. Now, my question for the Premier is: why did she not insist on playing a role, on being consulted in framing the question that the B.C. government will be putting to the courts in its reference case? Why has she given her NDP ally John Horgan a blank slate in framing a question that will obviously be tilted against the interests of Alberta and our economy?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What we will do and what we have done is to stand up for Albertans and stand up for this pipeline in every legal forum where it becomes necessary. That's what we've done up until now, and up until now we've been successful on every occasion. Our government does not have the ability to tell another government how to create a question. What we can do is work with the federal government to ensure that they enforce their jurisdiction, as I believe they will do. They made the decision, it is their authority to make the decision, and they did something those guys could not.

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, I guess what we've just heard there is that they didn't even try to have input on the B.C. reference.

Now, she talks about the federal government. Mr. Speaker, the federal government could solve this right now in removing the delay tactic of the B.C. reference by doing its own federal reference to the Supreme Court of Canada, because as far as we know, B.C. might go to the trial court, the appeals court, the Supreme Court. It could take a couple of years. We don't have time. I'm sure the Premier agrees with that, so will she join with me in calling on the Prime Minister, under section 53 of the Supreme Court Act, to get ahead of B.C. and make a reference directly to the Supreme Court of Canada?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, in fact, we have been engaging with our legal counsel about what the best strategy is going forward, and we will do whatever we can to make sure that we support this project as effectively as possible. We have looked at a number of different legal strategies, not the least of which is the one that the member opposite raises, but our priority is to not actually add additional uncertainty to the issue or additional opportunities for it to be delayed, which, ultimately, is where we think that particular strategy might end up. We'll keep a very firm eye on it. We've got excellent legal counsel, and we will stand ...

The Speaker: Second main question.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the last time the B.C. government did a court reference, it took over two years to be resolved. It had to go to three levels of court. Her NDP allies in Victoria are absolutely clear – they have been from day one – that they will use every tool available to stop Alberta's energy, to harm our vital economic interests. So why is this Premier being so passive in the face of this attack by her NDP friends? Why does she not call on the Prime Minister either to declare the pipeline as being in the national interest under the Constitution or go directly to the Supreme Court to stop the British Columbia New Democrats' delay tactics?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, when I think of the word "passive," what I think about is being in Ottawa for nine years when there was a Conservative government in Ottawa, in Edmonton, and in Victoria and not getting a pipeline built. That's my idea of passive. Quite honestly, what is not passive is standing up for Albertans strategically, setting out very clearly what needs to happen, eliminating point 5, and getting that result. That's exactly what we did, and since then we have made it very clear that we will stand up for Albertans exactly as we need to. There will be legislation coming forward on exactly that point.

Mr. Kenney: Legislation apparently based on what we asked the government to do eight months ago, Mr. Speaker, but better late than never.

Now, she says that she got a deal out of her NDP friend John Horgan, with whom she used to work in the last NDP government in B.C., but, Mr. Speaker, just a couple of weeks after she surrendered on the wine boycott, guess what happened? The NDP in B.C. brought in yet more draft regulations, creating yet more uncertainty. Is the way she measures success on this more and more delay coming from her NDP allies in Victoria?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, the way I measure success on this is not sitting in office for nine years and getting no outcome. That is the measure of success that those folks over there seem to think is the way to go. I appreciate that they are a bit nervous. They're a bit traumatized perhaps by their own failure over the course of that nine years. But in two and a half years in government we have an approved pipeline as a result of our climate leadership plan, we have the federal government committed to getting it done, and we are waiting for a Federal Court of Appeal decision. That is the only delay in place right now. The pipeline will be built.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the Premier can repeat that nonsense as much as she wants. She knows that four pipelines were built under the previous federal Conservative government, increasing shipments of oil by 1.8 million barrels per day, and that a coastal pipeline was approved, that was subsequently vetoed by her close friend and ally Justin Trudeau after she introduced her job-killing carbon tax, the same Prime Minister who killed Energy East, the same Prime Minister who is doing nothing to get the Trans

Mountain pipeline built. I've asked her this before. Who has moved from no to yes on pipelines as a result of the NDP carbon tax?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, what we know is that we have a pipeline approved as part of the overall climate leadership plan and the pan-Canadian framework. The members opposite actually want to jeopardize that pipeline in the interest of serving their climate-denying ideological agenda. That is not something that we are going to do. We are going to push forward. And by the way, the Gateway pipeline was actually cancelled by the courts because of the elbows-up bullying tactics used by the members opposite. That's not going to happen here because we understand that there are multiple obligations. We are meeting all of those, and the pipeline will be built.

Carbon Levy

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, about two-thirds of Albertans consistently say that they oppose the NDP's carbon tax. My question is: why does the Premier keep calling them names? Why does she call all of those Albertans, quote, climate deniers? I happen to disagree with the Premier on the efficacy of carbon taxes. We don't need to call each other names if we have a policy disagreement. So I'd like to ask the Premier: would she please stop the name-calling, and would she please listen with respect to the two-thirds of Albertans who say that punishing consumers, telling seniors to turn the heat down at home in the middle of a cold winter is not an environmental ...

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, fearmongering is not an environmental policy either. The member opposite understands that 60 per cent of Alberta households have received rebates in order to ensure that, in any case, they come out ahead.

Moreover, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite has yet to stand up in this House and say that he believes that human activity is the primary cause of climate change, so I will continue to characterize that failure exactly as I have been because all Canadians need a government that will act to combat climate change, and that's what they have ...

2:00

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, if the belief that carbon taxes can solve climate change is true, then why is the Premier not advocating for the \$300 carbon tax advocated by Environment Canada, the \$200 carbon tax advocated by her adviser Professor Leach? See, she is completely torn by a fundamental contradiction in her argument. She says that carbon taxes can help stop climate change, but she's unwilling to be honest with Albertans about the only price point that will make that happen. Why doesn't she just tell people the truth that ...

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Interestingly, the Harper government signed on to the same targets for carbon emission reduction as the Trudeau government, and the \$300-a-tonne price to get you there was actually information that was in front of the Harper government. So the question that I have is: were they planning a \$300-a-tonne carbon tax, or were they lying when they said that they would hit those targets, or were they planning to fail just like they did on pipelines? [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. members.

Mr. Kenney: Doubling pipeline capacity is anything but a failure, Mr. Speaker. What we have from this Premier is a record of failure, a carbon tax that has punished ordinary Albertans, a Premier who's told people to take the bus to work when many of them simply have to drive; they can't drive less to work. Seniors can only turn the heat down by so much at home. That's exactly why the Conservative government was not going to punish consumers and hard-working people with a punitive consumer tax on energy. I ask the Premier yet again: can she identify one environmental organization that has gone from no to yes on pipelines as a result of the carbon tax?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I can identify a federal government that has approved the pipeline to tidewater and done the work that needs to be done to ensure that the decision is upheld by the courts as a result of the work that this government did on climate leadership as part of a national plan for combatting climate change. Pipeline plus climate change fighting go together. The member opposite wants to turn his back on fighting climate change, and he wants to jeopardize the pipeline as a result. Albertans and Canadians deserve better.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Government and Alberta Party Fiscal Policies

Mr. Clark: Why, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today the Alberta Party caucus tabled our fourth shadow budget. Now, we believe the role of opposition is not just to oppose the government but to propose ideas and tell Albertans what we would do differently. One of those ideas is to ensure we prepare our province for an uncertain future. The Alberta Party would increase investments in education. We would support social innovation in the not-for-profit sector and beyond. We'd commit \$100 million annually to an innovation strategy. We'd also make investments in justice, culture, and social services. To the Premier: can we expect to see significant investments in these areas, and at the same time will you find meaningful savings in health ...

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question and for presenting their proposed plan, which, I have to point out, had a billion-dollar reduction to health care investment, had increased revenue in the line item that I believe said fees and taxes. It sounds like the recycled, failed health care premium that Albertans rejected in the last election. That sounds like the scary politics that were proposed right before 2015 that Albertans rejected. On this side of the House we're protecting health, we're protecting education, and we aren't bringing in regressive taxation that taxes people for wanting health care services.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government assumes that the only way to save money in health care is by cutting on the front lines, and that is absolutely not true.

Another core value of the Alberta Party, Mr. Speaker, and of Albertans is fiscal responsibility, which is why I was surprised to hear the Minister of Finance say yesterday that his only hope of

balancing the budget is for the price of oil to go up. Now, hope is not a strategy. To the Premier: what is your energy price forecast, and why have you doubled down on keeping Alberta on the resource revenue roller coaster?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The reality is that we will be introducing the budget tomorrow, and I look forward to hearing the member's comments with respect to the budget tomorrow.

You know, you can't have it both ways. The fact of the matter is that you either protect your health care and your education services, or you go back to the old way of making regular working people pay for the failure to diversify that happened over years and years and years of Conservative governments. We are not going to do that. We will have Albertans' backs. At the same time, we will protect their services, and we will bring the budget to balance.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Clark: Well, Mr. Speaker, that balance, I suspect, relies on unrealistic resource revenue forecasts. We'll have to see.

Unlike my colleagues to the right, I will never cheer against Alberta, which is why the Alberta Party wants to see the Kinder Morgan pipeline built. But pegging Alberta's entire budget to a project that is at risk of failure or, at the very least, delay is incredibly risky. The Alberta Party's shadow budget uses far more conservative revenue forecasts than the NDP's, but it still balances in four years. To the Premier: do you have a contingency plan if the Kinder Morgan pipeline is delayed or, heaven forbid, cancelled?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, the member opposite will see the budget numbers tomorrow when the Minister of Finance introduces that budget. Under our leadership we have long since taken the position of introducing risk adjustments into every budget to allow for the inevitable ups and downs of commodity prices and the other kinds of things that could impact what we receive from our revenue. In every case that has allowed us to meet our targets or in many cases exceed our targets since coming into government, and we will continue that record.

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

Red Deer Regional Hospital

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As central Albertans my colleague from Red Deer-North and I share the concerns of our constituents about services and wait times at the Red Deer regional hospital. Red Deer regional hospital is now the fourth-busiest medical facility in the province, serving over 400,000 central Albertans, and is in dire need of expansion and a cardiac catheterization lab. To the Minister of Health: how are we ensuring that the Red Deer regional hospital can meet the care needs of central Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for her question as well as to both members from Red Deer for their advocacy on behalf of the people of Red Deer. Important work is happening in central Alberta and Red Deer, including the development of a cardiac care roadmap, a long-term central zone health care plan to address the needs of the region, and a refresh of

the needs assessment for the hospital. AHS expects to complete this work in the coming months, and I'll be happy to update those.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Central Alberta's population has grown exponentially over the years, but investment by previous governments has not kept pace, placing a burden on infrastructure, medical staff, and patients alike. Can the minister reassure this House that quality health services in Red Deer will be available as our community continues to grow?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Facing the worst recession in decades, we had a choice: reckless cuts that would make life worse or protecting the health care that Alberta families need. Our government believes that all Albertans deserve access to high-quality public health care. We added community paramedic teams in Red Deer last month so that people can get care in-home instead of in the hospital. We're building a new eight-bed youth addictions facility, and at the hospital we've added a new state-of-the-art MRI and new labour and delivery operating rooms. We look forward to talking about the next plans in the months to come.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As central Alberta continues to grow, so too does its need for more complex care. While I'm thankful that this government has made investments in the hospital, I've heard from my community and from doctors that there is still significant need. To the minister: what plans are in place to expand the hospital in Red Deer?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again to the member for the question. We are looking forward to the completion of the three AHS plans I mentioned in my previous answer. We don't know yet what the recommendations will be, but we do know that Red Deer needs health capital investments such as upgrades to the medical device reprocessing units that were neglected by the previous government over decades. We also know that once a needs assessment is complete, there will need to be a business case. We've heard from the community, the doctors, and of course our local MLAs, and we will have more to say in the coming days.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie.

2:10 Oil Sands Advisory Group Former Co-chair

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I asked the environment minister and the Deputy Premier a series of questions about their close personal relationship with Ms Berman. Following that, in an interview the environment minister said that Ms Berman was appointed to the oil sands advisory panel at the request of industry, specifically CAPP. Minister, do you still stand by that statement?

The Speaker: The Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, the founding president of CAPP, Dave Collyer, was part of that initial process that began, as I understand it, in 2014 to find ways to get us out of the dead end that the government that the Leader of the Official Opposition sat in and successive Conservative governments here

had driven us into. So there was certainly a presence from the founding president of CAPP in addition to ConocoPhillips and Cenovus and other Suncor employees.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
First supplemental.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure I heard the answer there. Specifically, I would like to know if the minister can answer: does she still support the statement that she said in an interview yesterday that CAPP had recommended Ms Berman to sit on the oil sands advisory group? Yes or no?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the founding president of the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers was in conversations with environmental groups from the very beginning, much before our government came to power, and indeed was looking for ways to make the conversation more productive because government had done such a terrible job of managing the reputational risk to Alberta's energy industry and, in fact, investor certainty for Alberta's energy industry. That's why the largest members of the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers – Suncor, CNRL, Cenovus, and others . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, I think that's NDP for no.

We need to shut down the tar sands; we need to move away from the development of oil: these are Ms Berman's own words.

Given, Mr. Speaker, that this environment minister has yet to actually say that having and hiring, appointing Tzeponah Berman and Ms Mahon to the oil sands advisory group was a bad idea, perhaps I'll give an opportunity for her to do so now. Minister, do you admit that having Ms Berman on the oil sands advisory group did nothing for Alberta, got us nowhere on pipelines, and will you admit that it was a bad idea to have her appointed?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I will admit is that the work of the oil sands advisory group, which concluded some months ago, provided us advice in a multilateral sort of way, from indigenous peoples, from northern communities, from energy companies, and from environmental groups. That 100-megatonne limit was part of the reason why we got the pipeline approvals. There were very robust indigenous voices on that group as well. I noticed that the hon. member is not at all interested in talking about that ever.

You know, Mr. Speaker, the record speaks for itself. We got this . . .

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

Just a friendly reminder to be cautious about no preambles in the supplementary questions.

Carbon Levy and Economic Competitiveness

Mr. Loewen: Recently the Deputy Minister of Climate Change confirmed what we all knew, that the carbon tax is harming the competitiveness of Alberta's industries and companies. Every NDP politician has been denying it, swearing it isn't true, but it is. They even have a name for it: the carbon competitiveness incentive program. Can the minister please tell Albertans the truth on the cost to Alberta industry and companies of the carbon tax in regard to loss of competitiveness?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, it's hard to find some competitiveness effects in an economy that is poised to lead the country in economic growth this year as well as last year. That is because our climate leadership plan is a carefully calibrated plan to control for any competitiveness effects in an economy that is very much outward facing and is very much trade exposed. That's why we undertook the carbon competitiveness incentives and the carbon competitiveness regulations, to replace the old system from the member's own party that was in place and to incent a green and clean development.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Loewen: Given that in that meeting the deputy minister did say that they're continuing some of those old programs but given that during the same discussion the deputy minister said that there was no sign of investment avoiding Alberta because of the carbon tax, can the minister explain to Albertans how she can be bailing out existing Alberta companies and industries that are suffering because of the carbon tax, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, expect new companies to invest in Alberta knowing they can only be competitive with taxpayer-funded incentives?

Ms Phillips: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, last week I was at the Globe sustainable business forum, where I met with a number of Canadian clean tech entrepreneurs. Most of them, the ones that I met with, were in Alberta because things are looking up and people are looking for ways to solve problems; \$1.4 billion worth of investments and incentives and loan guarantees in order to make that happen out of the carbon competitiveness incentive regulation is helping to kick-start all of those new businesses and all that new employment and that optimism and those opportunities. But as for energy good news, we've got Chevron increasing spending in the oil patch, we've got JACOS celebrating a \$2 billion expansion, we've got Suncor filing an application for a massive new . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Loewen: Given that there seems to be a lot of kick to industry and not so much start and given that the government has implemented a damaging carbon tax on Albertans and sold it to us on the premise of rebates, free light bulbs and given that corporations are having problems being competitive in the marketplace and need government incentives to stay in business and that there are no measurable benefits to the environment, will the minister just admit that the carbon tax has been a colossal failure and cancel the tax?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Suncor took its first steps to set up two cogeneration units at its oil sands base plant recently, in addition to their application for a massive new oil sands project that could create hundreds of good jobs and billions of new investment in Alberta. Earnings are up in the oil patch. Investment is up about 60 per cent in conventional. Drilling is up, 64 per cent more wells drilled than last year. Here's what the CEO of Suncor thinks. I heard that these are companies that are at the trough yesterday from the Member for Airdrie. He said, "Bold, ambitious action is required by all of us to effectively tackle . . . climate change."

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Provincial Fiscal Policies

Mr. Barnes: Many Alberta children, including my own, receive a weekly allowance in exchange for completing chores around the house. Having an allowance teaches kids the value of work, and even more importantly it teaches them the value of saving and living within one's means. Sadly, the latest NDP fiscal update showed that these lessons have not been learned: devastating unemployment, more spending, and \$9 billion more on the next generation's credit card. To the Finance minister: when will you start applying these practical, common-sense ideas to Alberta's budget?

Mr. Ceci: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, at Q3 I was able to report to Albertans that the economy is looking up, jobs are up, and the deficit was down by \$1.4 billion. So it really goes to show that the plan is working. On the other side, the plan would be to give tax breaks to the highest earners in this province for \$700 million. The rest of us would have to pay for that with fewer programs and services. That won't work. Our economy is growing. We're doing the job on this side.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, tomorrow Alberta families will learn how much they have to pay for this minister's reckless spending. Given that when this government was elected, Alberta had little debt and no interest payments and that after just a single term they will saddle Alberta children with a \$70 billion bill – annual interest is already \$1.5 billion – to the minister: will you please take off your rose-coloured, virtual reality goggles and start dealing with Alberta's debt disaster so our kids can once again enjoy the Alberta advantage?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, we saw a shadow budget from the AP over there. We saw one from the independent member. In four years we've not seen one from this group on this side. You know, there's a good reason for that. They don't want to show what their destructive policies would mean for Albertans. It would mean \$700 million going to the wealthiest people in this province. The rest of us would pay for it. Let's not go down that road. Saskatchewan has an austerity budget. They want to go there. Well, they can go there.

2:20

Mr. Barnes: Given that the Finance minister can't stand on his record and given that the Finance minister has a spending problem and is now relying on the completion of a stalled pipeline as the foundation of his plan to balance – talk about putting all your eggs in one basket, Mr. Speaker – and given that even the most optimistic don't predict the Trans Mountain will be completed before 2020, to the minister: when will you acknowledge that your plan to diversify the economy continues to be a complete failure and begin taking real steps towards balancing the budget and protecting our and our children's future?

Mr. Ceci: You know, Mr. Speaker, it's really disappointing talk about diversifying the economy. It's disappointing to hear the Conservatives talk down the start-up and tech sector in this province. Whether it's the virtual reality world or the real world, the Conservatives have no plan at all. Theirs doesn't exist in any world in terms of supporting the economy. We'll present a budget tomorrow. That budget will continue to have the backs of Albertans. It'll continue to make life cheaper for Albertans, more affordable for Albertans, and we will show how it will . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Carbon Levy and Nonprofit Organizations

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, Reverend Todd MacDonald and the Sunde ministry provide a significant amount of support and social services for our community, including things like food hampers, emergency shelter, and chaplain services for those in palliative care. The list goes on and on. He's asked me to ask the Premier the following question: can the NDP afford to pick up the community services we provide when we shut down as a result of the carbon tax? What costs more, the government providing the services that we supply or cutting nonprofits some slack on the NDP's carbon tax? Will the Premier answer Reverend MacDonald's question?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. Our government is working to make life better for Albertans by protecting and improving the things that make a difference in their lives, and we will continue to do so. In just the last two and a half years we have added \$103 million to the PDD program, almost \$100 million to the AISH program. If we were to take advice from that side, they suggest that we cut \$500 from every AISH cheque to make it equal to what B.C. is paying. We will not do that.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, that's not what I asked.

Given that Reverend MacDonald and the ministry provide a significant amount of social services for our community and have asked a simple question before this House today, what will the government do to make sure that they continue to help these nonprofits put the social safety net in our community? Charities are facing a perfect storm in our community right now: increased demand because of the economic downturn under this NDP government and a decrease in donations to provide the services. Instead of dodging the question, Mr. Speaker, could the Premier stand up and answer Reverend MacDonald's question? Can this government afford to pick up the slack that will come if these organizations shut because of the carbon tax this . . .

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are many Albertans, including Reverend MacDonald, who are doing amazing work in their communities. To support that work, we have added \$25 million to the family and community support services program, FCSS, and we have provided almost \$29 million in grants from the family and community support program to support the work these incredible individuals are doing in their communities. We will continue to work with our community partners to make sure Albertans have the support they need in their communities.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, these people in these communities don't want to hear about how many light bulbs this government has bought. They want to hear what this government is going to do, because they're seeing a significant decrease in their ability to provide services to our communities. One charity in my community has seen 7 per cent of their total budget go towards the carbon tax, and this Premier's issues management team – and the Premier's laughing about it right now – told them to fund raise to pay for the

carbon tax. The question is very simple. Will the Premier apologize for her people telling the seniors in my community that, or is it now the policy of her government that our seniors should fund raise to pay for their carbon tax?

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

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, seniors built this province, and we want them to retire in dignity and have the supports they need. Like, 260,000 seniors will be receiving up to \$300 from the levy rebate, which is a significant amount. We've invested over \$3 billion in seniors' programs plus \$1.2 billion in our capital plan for affordable housing. We're making a significant difference. We have their backs.

Forest Management

Mr. Westhead: Mr. Speaker, the constituency of Banff-Cochrane has a diverse economy based on tourism, cement, ranching, and forestry, among others. Everyone agrees that these industries provide good jobs and have literally built the homes, roads, and bridges that we need as Alberta has grown. But time and time again, when a timber harvest is set to begin like the ones in the Ghost valley, Highwood pass, and now the Mustang hills, constituents express serious concerns and don't feel they've been adequately consulted. To the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry: what are you doing to address my constituents' concerns?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. As you know, forestry is an important industry in our province. A balanced approach is taken when we're developing harvesting plans to ensure that we're supporting the economy and companies operate sustainably. That being said, I have heard those concerns from constituents across the province and from the MLA, and our office has taken action. We've asked the company to redraw their operating plans to take into consideration a new site for building a bridge, for harvest layouts as well. We're taking action, making sure that those constituents' concerns are heard.

The Speaker: Thank you.
First supplemental.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that no one denies that forestry plays an important role in our economy, what assurance can you provide to my constituents that Alberta's forests are being managed in the best interest of the public in a way that is environmentally sustainable?

The Speaker: The hon. minister of forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With this government Albertans can count on us having a balanced, fair approach to business and sustainability. We recognize that there is a diversity of value in the landscape, and we take this seriously. Our government has shown its leadership on balancing sustainability and the creation of economic opportunities for the province today. It's worth noting that Canada and Alberta have the most sustainable forest practices in the world. We'll continue working with industry so that that maintains. We're responsive to the concerns of Albertans when it comes to ensuring that harvesting is done in a safe and sustainable manner.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: given that Spray Lake Sawmills has made significant investments in equipment and therefore has a vested interest in the future health and sustainability of Alberta's forests, what assurances can you provide to them that they can continue to operate in a manner that will be acceptable to the public?

Mr. Carlier: Mr. Speaker, we work very closely with forestry companies to ensure that they have access to business opportunities while clearly understanding the expectations government and Albertans have for their operations. We know that forestry companies make long-term investments in their operations, and our procedures reflect this. We are very clear. Long-term process on tenure, operating standards, and reforestation here in Alberta: our staff works very hard to ensure that companies maintain these high standards, and the industry is very open to being able to make changes where they have to to satisfy those standards.

Postsecondary Education Concerns

Mr. Fraser: My colleague mentioned earlier that the Alberta Party caucus shadow budget was released today. That shadow budget talks about the need to support the growth of our postsecondary institutions. They need to be able to teach students the necessary skills to succeed in a changing economy. This includes the skills being taught in certificate programs at colleges and technical schools, and those are often a better option for students and employers. To the Minister of Advanced Education: with the number of colleges transitioning to universities, what are the plans in place to ensure that students can still choose certificate programs over degree programs?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank the hon. member for the question. Of course, I was very pleased to announce our government's investment of \$43 million over the next five years to create 3,000 spaces in programs just like the ones that the member mentioned. If he's genuinely supportive of that initiative, I anticipate that he and his party will support the budget once it's released. It includes those expansions. Of course, we are committed to promoting opportunities in higher education all across the province. That's why we're working with Grande Prairie Regional College and Red Deer College to offer a wider array of programs for students in those areas, and I look forward to continuing that work.

Mr. Fraser: Given that reforming Alberta's postsecondary institutions to meet the demands of a changing economy requires the government to work in close partnership with those institutions and given that it would be difficult to work in close partnership with someone that you accused of lining their own pockets at the expense of students and given that your government often states that they believe in negotiating wages at the bargaining table, to the same minister: why are you attacking public servant decisions and salaries in public and in media, and what does that mean for the future work with the University of Alberta?

2:30

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, I continue to meet with representatives from the University of Alberta to continue to do the good work that that institution is doing on behalf of Alberta students. You know, that member sat in the government

caucus and let executive compensation balloon out of control. Postsecondary presidents are the highest paid in the country because of the actions of his current leader and the former government. It's time for that to end. Our government is finally taking action on something that they failed to do.

Mr. Fraser: Given that the current president of the U of A, David Turpin, negotiated his contract in good faith and given that Dr. Turpin likely attracts more talent and funding than he draws in salary and given that the estimated structural deficit of the U of A, driven in part by this government's tuition fees, is \$14 million, far greater than the amount the minister claims Dr. Turpin is lining his pockets with, to the same minister: why are you lashing out at Dr. Turpin for your decisions, and should other postsecondary presidents expect similar treatment?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to remind the hon. member that Dr. Turpin actually negotiated his contract with the board of governors that was appointed by that member's government. They have a terrible record of letting executive compensation balloon out of control. The people of Alberta have had enough. They do not want to see their students pay more in tuition to make sure that we have the highest paid presidents in the entire country. It's time that our government takes action to rein in executive compensation. We've done that with other agencies, boards, and commissions. We're going to be doing that very soon with postsecondary institutions.

The Speaker: I'd just encourage members again to direct your comments through the chair and avoid making specific figurative references to other members.

The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Kenney: For the record, Mr. Speaker, that's not members on this side of the House.

Oil Sands Advisory Group Former Co-chair (continued)

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, given that the minister of the environment said last week that Tzeporah Berman was there as co-chair of the oil sands advisory group because the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers invited her, will the minister confirm that the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers invited Ms Berman to the government committee to which she was appointed?

The Speaker: The hon. minister of environment.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I will confirm is, of course, that we were approached in the fall of 2015 by a number of companies, including the founding president of the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, with a set of discussion points around how to repair Alberta's reputational damage and the investor uncertainty that had been created by the Harper government and by 40 years of Conservative government in this province, that really let our environmental reputation languish. That is what I will confirm.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, what's languishing is that minister's credibility.

The founding president of CAPP, incidentally, given that he was Mr. Gerry Protti, Mr. Speaker, a former official, is not the organization, so I will give the minister the opportunity to stop

languishing and to actually answer a direct question directly and factually. Did the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers invite Ms Berman to be co-chair of the oil sands advisory group, and if not, why did this minister claim otherwise?

Ms Phillips: Mr. Speaker, the initiative was co-led by one Dave Collyer, who had a number of roles within the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, and we'll gladly table that information afterwards.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, something I don't understand about this government is why they can't take responsibility when they make mistakes. Given that Ms Berman, before her appointment, called for the elimination of the largest industry and job creator in this province, given that she is now participating in illegal protests, including protests that yesterday resulted in the injury of three RCMP officers, given that this minister has now uttered mistruths to the public about CAPP's involvement in this nomination, why can't they just admit that Tzeporah Berman's appointment was a big mistake?

Mr. Mason: Point of order.

The Speaker: Point of order noted.

The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let's talk about big mistakes. How about riding roughshod over indigenous people's rights to be consulted, resulting in a pipeline failure and a failure to get that pipeline to tidewater? That's actually what happened from the government that that member sat in, and now that same member goes out and insults indigenous peoples by threatening to cancel their climate leadership initiative programs and by insulting the chief of the Blood Tribe in my own area. That's a failure.

The Speaker: I would again ask that you not make physical gestures across the House. I don't think it's helpful to the place.

Government Spending **Decorum and Civility in the Assembly**

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Premier has often proselytized about UCP members wanting to return to the ideas of the 1990s. She has said of our leader: the 1990s are calling; they want their ideas back. Well, I remember the 1990s, and there were some pretty fantastic ideas like balancing the budgets, getting out of debt, reducing the tax burden on hard-working families, and getting the government out of the way of wealth-creating private enterprises. To the Premier: does she oppose these common-sense ideas?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I also remember the 1990s. I remember my dad, a school principal in rural Alberta, having to lay off front-line workers. I remember my dad, a school principal, going with a custodian and unscrewing light bulbs in that school. I remember hospitals being blown up by wrecking balls in downtown Calgary. I remember hospitals in Edmonton, in my now riding of Edmonton-Glenora, being shut down and sitting there to languish. I remember the '90s, too. Albertans had a chance to vote in 2015. They voted for a government that would take a different path, that would stand up for the people of this province.

Mr. Hunter: Given, Mr. Speaker, that I would like to remind the Premier of the late 1980s, when governments at that time got us into serious debt and also injected taxpayers' dollars into diversifying

the economy, and given that when the smoke settled, the Alberta taxpayer was left with \$2.4 billion in boondoggles and given that this government's new diversification strategy is eerily reminiscent of the 1980s strategy, are the NDP concerned that the 1980s are calling them and want their ideas back?

Mr. Ceci: Let's fast-forward, Mr. Speaker, to 2017. Ninety-thousand jobs were created in this province. GDP growth of 4.5 per cent led the nation in this country. Small-business confidence is up. Manufacturing is up. Housing starts are up. Why don't you get with the present and stop looking at the past? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Hunter: The minister forgets to say that debt is up every time he says that.

Mr. Speaker, given that many of the NDP MLAs have commented on how much they appreciate the new level of civility and decorum shown by this side of the House since our new leader took office and given that that civility is the classy thing to do, whether you're in the '80s, '90s, or in 2018, through you to the Premier: are you willing to instruct your caucus to raise the level of decorum, as our leader has, so that we can focus on debating this government's deplorable financial records versus slinging insults and heckles? I think that Albertans deserve that much.

The Speaker: I want to just advise, you know, that the supplementaries are intended to be to the original question. The supplementaries encourage that.

The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I remember the '80s, I remember the '90s, and I do enjoy the tone that's being set by having Conservatives in the opposition instead of in the government. We're happy to have that maintained and to have that continue as we move forward. We are very proud of our record standing up for the people of Alberta. Feel free to sit there nice and quietly while we do the job of governing this province and taking care of what matters to working families.

2:40

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

Calgary Southwest Ring Road Construction Concerns

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The southwest ring road is a major project with significant impacts on the quality of life of nearby residents. My constituents in east Discovery Ridge, The Slopes, and Springbank Hill noticed early on that the plans for the multilane freeway did not include sound attenuation, but they were thankful when the Minister of Transportation agreed that they deserved safety and sight and sound barriers. Minister, respectfully, do you still agree with the residents' concerns?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, you know, we have worked hard to mitigate the impacts of the construction of the ring road. The construction of the ring road and its alignment were determined in an agreement that was signed with the Tsuut'ina by the previous government and the hon. member's colleague. Unfortunately, it passes quite closely to some residential neighbourhoods. We've been working very hard to mitigate the dust and the sound and other nuisance effects of construction, much of which is, unfortunately, inevitable given the . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

First supplemental.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that the department maps and detailed plans displayed at recent open houses indicate that the province has no intention of building a sound barrier for the neighbourhoods I just mentioned and given that the department staff at these open houses confirmed that the anticipated barrier is not part of the design for the project – Minister, the residents had the utmost confidence that the final plans would reflect your direction for the sound attenuation – are you aware that this important quality-of-life feature is not included in the most recent designs?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. member for the question. As I said, we've been working hard to make sure that we mitigate the impacts of construction, which is very close to these populated areas.

With respect to further sound mitigation I'm always open to have further conversations with MLAs. Certainly, MLAs on this side of the House have been very strong advocates on behalf of their communities, and I've also met with some of the opposition MLAs with respect to some of their constituents' concerns, and I'm going to continue to do that, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Minister, I certainly do appreciate the meetings that I have had with you, but given that residents of Calgary-West have had years of distress over the construction plans and that they are really disappointed, to say the least, about this latest turn of events and given that they deserve a direct answer, with all due respect and on behalf of the constituents of Calgary-West will you please provide firm direction to your department to include sound, safety, and sight attenuation for these neighbourhoods?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll remind the hon. member that the alignment was established by his colleague two seats over when he was the Minister of Transportation, and we're working hard within those constraints to protect those communities. I'm going to be continuing to be open to talk to representatives of those communities and to do whatever possible we can to mitigate sound and dust effects of the construction.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we'll go to Members' Statements in 30 seconds.

Members' Statements

(continued)

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

Climate Change

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I think I heard the Leader of the Opposition finally say that human-caused climate change is real. After weeks of uncertainty and after repeatedly being asked by our Premier to make his position clear, his response on this issue is so refreshing and, no doubt, is a relief to Albertans all across the province. I can't help but wonder: if he did say it, has he

given some clarity to the rest of his caucus? For example, how is the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat feeling?

Mr. McIver: Point of order.

Mr. Sucha: Will he still be allowed to take his colleagues out for dinner with climate deniers? I'm sure that the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon is relieved. He has long since made it clear that he understands the science of climate change and supports the reduction of emissions. Well, what about the Member for Drumheller-Stettler? Does he still think that markings on rocks in Drumheller mean that climate change isn't real?

Mr. Speaker, carbon dioxide levels in the air are at their highest level in 650,000 years, 17 of the 18 warmest years on record have happened since 2001, in 2012 arctic summer sea ice shrank to its lowest extent on record, and satellite data shows that the Earth's polar ice sheets are losing mass. The fact of the matter is that companies from Suncor to Staples recognize the science of climate change, and if we want to remain a competitive jurisdiction, we must have policies in place that will address this problem.

Perhaps the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka enjoys the warm days in the dead of winter, Mr. Speaker, but I, for one, hope to hear the Leader of the Opposition say again that climate change is real and that it is caused by human activity.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake, I believe you have two.

Mr. Cyr: I do. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts I am pleased to table five copies of the 2016 report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, covering its work during 13 committee meetings for the period from January to December of 2016, during the First Session and Second Session of the 29th Legislature.

I am also pleased to table five copies of the 2017 report of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, covering its work from January to December of 2017.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to highlight the ambitious meeting schedule of the committee during this period. Twenty committee meetings were held in 2017, during the Second Session and Third Session of the 29th Legislature. This is the greatest number of Public Accounts Committee meetings held in a calendar year during the last decade. I want to recognize the hard work and commitment of the deputy chair, the committee members both past and present, as well as the LAO, the caucus staff, and those who provided support to the committee.

These reports will be posted to the external committee website, and copies are also available through the committee offices.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite five copies of the Alberta Party Caucus Shadow Budget 2018, a document that balances in four years while making increased investments in education, justice, social services, and innovation.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today is a day with a lot of alternative budgets around here. I rise today to table five

copies of my Alternative Budget 2018-2019, balancing Alberta's operating budget by the date that the government committed to in 2019-20 and balancing the overall consolidated budget by 2020-21, including a 5 per cent rollback for all core government employees, including every member of this House.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the requisite number of copies of an article out of the *Edmonton Journal* that I referenced yesterday when I was doing some of my questions.

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

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have eight letters I'd like to table from pharmacists within my constituency. This one here is from Mandy Davey. I just want to quickly quote from her. "Stop the wastage in the system and let us help. We are a phone call away."

Curtis Conrad is quoted as saying, "These are my concerns with the proposed pharmacy funding framework. Once again, I applaud the effort in reducing healthcare spending, however cutting front line services is not the answer to saving healthcare dollars."

We've got Paul Tellier. "The highlights are 6 different cuts to the profession, some of which have good logic behind them that we do not take exception with, especially in the current economic state of the Province."

I have Peter Davey. "We are here to help."

Paige Shiller: "Stop the wastage in the system and let us help."

I have Denis Lavoie. "Alberta Health's new proposed pharmacy funding has a number of drastic cuts which [will] significantly impact [the] ability to deliver care."

Carter Wagner goes on to say, "Alberta is in the middle of an Opioid Crisis. Pharmacists are stepping up to the plate and providing comprehensive opioid assessments in an effort to prevent addiction."

The last one is Tanis Bremer. "We are the most accessible health care professionals providing the best care for Albertans."

Thank you.

2:50

The Speaker: Any others, hon. members?

Hon. members, I believe we had at least one point of order today. The Government House Leader had raised a point of order.

Ms Ganley: I apologize, Mr. Speaker. We will withdraw that point of order.

The Speaker: Thank you.

I believe that the Member for Calgary-Hays had a point of order. Hon. member, if I might, I would just advise that in the future when you raise a point of order in Members' Statements, I've suggested you wait until the end of the two minutes and then raise it.

Go ahead.

Point of Order Members' Statements

Mr. McIver: Thank you, and I'll compliment you on that, Mr. Speaker. I completely agree with that. I think all members, as you've acknowledged yourself many times, deserve to be able to give their members' statements uninterrupted. I did my best to call the point of order without interrupting, and I would compliment you on doing your part by not interrupting while acknowledging the point of order.

Having said that, under sections 23(h), (i), and (j), imputing false or unavowed motives to another member, abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder, and making allegations against another member, you yourself, Mr. Speaker – and you'll have to forgive me. At least I hope you will because I don't have the Blues available to me because it was just about two minutes ago. But the member chose to make several suggestions against other members, referring to them using terms that you've said yourself are not appropriate in this House, things like "climate change denier" against our leader and other members of this House that he mentioned.

You know what, Mr. Speaker? I think it's fair game for members to stand up and say that the other side is wrong on every policy and that they're wrong about everything in the world. In this House I think that's appropriate debate, but I think we've agreed as a House and I think you've ruled that using a member's statement to make personal attacks is not appropriate, and I would hope you would call the member to account for so doing.

Let me also say, Mr. Speaker, that we're largely at your mercy because I don't expect we'll ever be perfect. We're committed to raising the level of decorum in the House, so we are not likely to respond in kind. We're kind of depending upon you to uphold that standard of not using members' statements as personal attacks but rather as policy attacks.

The Speaker: The Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Sorry. I apologize. I don't have the benefit of the Blues, but I do have some understanding of what the member had said. I'm failing to see where there was any allegation made against a person. It is a policy to decide to deny the existence of human-caused climate change or to decide that we ought not to do anything about it. That's not, I think, a personal decision; it's a policy decision, much like we make policy decisions on this side of the House to do something about climate change. So I'm failing to see where this is a point of order.

I certainly do understand that the members are probably not happy to hear our members, you know, calling out things that they've said in the past. Ultimately, Mr. Speaker, it is the policy of this government that climate change is real, that humans are in a large part responsible for climate change; therefore, we ought to do something about it because it is a real threat that faces the population. Obviously, that's not a policy shared by the other side of the House, but to say that that's a personal attack is incorrect.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I think, as noted by both members, we're all at a disadvantage in timing. We don't have the Blues in front of us. I am advised, though, that members have stated several rulings on this in the past, that you ought not to use members' statements for personal attacks against other members. Since I don't have the Blues, nor do you, I will simply use this as an opportunity or reminder that past precedent and practice has in fact directed that you stay away from any personal attacks. If they were made, let's just use this as a reminder that it's not going to happen again.

I think we also have a point of privilege to deal with. The Government House Leader.

Privilege Misleading the House

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising to address the purported matter of privilege raised by the Official Opposition House Leader yesterday. The facts, as I understand them, are these. The complaint of the Official Opposition relates to comments made by the Minister of Environment and Parks on

Monday in question period. At that time the minister was accused by the Official Opposition House Leader of not consulting with the public regarding regional planning in the member's constituency. In response to these allegations the minister stated, "I met with the mayor of Rocky Mountain House a couple of weeks ago and discussed the economic development and tourism opportunities that are available through the regional advisory council's advice."

I'm advised by the minister that on March 5 she hosted an event coinciding with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change conference in Edmonton. The mayor of Rocky Mountain House, Tammy Burke, attended the minister's event. I understand that upon seeing the mayor, the minister took the opportunity to tell Mayor Burke about the impending release of the North Saskatchewan Regional Advisory Council recommendations for the area, which have subsequently been released and are open for public comment. I'm advised that they spoke for about 10 minutes at this event.

Now, yesterday the hon. House leader for the Official Opposition raised a purported matter of privilege indicating that he had received a communication from the mayor indicating there was no such meeting, just a brief, light conversation. It's clear that a formal meeting on this matter between the minister and the mayor did not take place, but that is not what the minister had claimed. Members opposite and the mayor are entitled to say that the minister's discussion at the minister's event did not constitute a formal meeting. They are entitled to argue that it did not constitute adequate consultation on the issue. But, Mr. Speaker, that is a matter of debate, not a matter impacting the privileges of a member, nor does it come close to being contempt of the House, which has been alleged.

What constitutes misleading the House? Allegations of misleading the House are very serious, as has been discussed in this Assembly many times. Page 85 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, sets out the following requirements for someone to be found to have misled the House.

One, it must be proven that the statement was misleading; two, it must be established that the Member making the statement knew at the time that the statement was incorrect; and three, that in making the statement, the Member intended to mislead the House.

Mr. Speaker, rulings by yourself as well as your predecessors on December 12, 2016, November 20, 2014, November 24, 2011, and November 7, 2007, have all applied the same test based on these three elements, and it's clear that these conditions have not been met.

To review, it must be proven that the statement was misleading. Mr. Speaker, I would submit that the statement was not misleading. It was a statement of fact. The fact that the minister and the mayor spoke at this event is not in dispute. The minister did not state that there had been a meeting out in Rocky Mountain House on the matter, nor did she imply that there had been a thorough discussion or a consultation involving officials. She merely stated that she had met with the mayor, and this issue had come up.

Secondly, it must be established that the member making the statement knew it was incorrect. Again, the minister knew that she had in fact seen this individual at an event and raised the matter. She knew this for a fact because she was one of the participants, Mr. Speaker.

3:00

Thirdly, the guidelines state that the member must have intended to mislead the House. In fact, the minister of environment had no such intention. She was merely updating the House about a discussion that took place.

In terms of a dispute over the facts Speaker Zwozdesky made a ruling on March 12, 2014, on a purported matter of privilege that I believe is relevant here. At that time he indicated:

Frequently we'll find that one member sees an event or an activity or a statement one way, hears it one way, and another members hears it and interprets it in a different way... quite often it's really a disagreement on facts or a matter of interpretation.

Similarly, *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules & Forms*, citation 494, on page 151 states:

It has been formally ruled by Speakers that statements by Members respecting themselves and particularly within their own knowledge must be accepted... On rare occasions this may result in the House having to accept two contradictory accounts of the same incident.

That is clearly what has happened here. The minister states that she discussed a matter with an important stakeholder when they met. There is no attempt to dispute the fact that this discussion took place. The minister in good faith has stated that this took place. What is being disputed here is whether or not this constitutes a meeting. There may be differences of opinion as to whether this meeting was a meeting. There may be legitimate differences of opinion as to whether this meeting or nonmeeting was sufficient consultation on the matter being discussed. Those are legitimate differences of opinion, but they do not constitute a contempt of the House. They merely constitute what Speaker Zwozdesky called "a matter of interpretation" and what *Beauchesne's* calls "two contradictory accounts of the same incident."

Rulings in other jurisdictions, Mr. Speaker, are relevant. In conclusion, I'd like to reference a ruling by former Ontario Speaker Carr in June 2002, which was cited by Speaker Zwozdesky in a ruling he made on November 20, 2014. In that ruling the Speaker stated:

The threshold for finding a prima facie case of contempt against a member of the Legislature on the basis of deliberately misleading the House is therefore set quite high and is very uncommon. It must involve a proved finding of an overt attempt to intentionally mislead the Legislature. In the absence of an admission from the member accused of the conduct, or of tangible confirmation of the conduct independently proved, a Speaker must assume that no honourable member would engage in such behaviour or that, at most, inconsistent statements were the result of inadvertence or honest mistake.

I believe that what was stated by Speaker Carr is directly applicable to this case. For such a matter to actually constitute contempt, there must be an overt attempt to intentionally mislead. That did not happen here. Mr. Speaker, what we have is simply a difference on the meaning of the word "meeting." What did happen is a genuine disagreement over how extensive a particular discussion was. In the Official Opposition's argument yesterday they likened the discussion to briefly saying "hi" and shaking hands and to idle chit-chat. The minister's view is that the conversation was more than that.

I understand that the opposition would like to make the argument that not enough consultation took place. That, Mr. Speaker, is a legitimate point of debate, which members opposite have every right to make. In fact, I understand that the minister herself spoke with the mayor at lunch today and clarified the concerns around this important issue. However, that simply does not constitute a matter of privilege or contempt.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

You'd like to speak to the matter?

Mr. McIver: Yes, I would.

The Speaker: Is there something substantive in the comments?

Mr. McIver: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What's substantive actually references what the hon. Government House Leader said just now. He actually acknowledged there was no meeting and tried to suggest that the minister had only said that they'd met when, in fact, the minister was quite clear. The hon. Opposition House Leader was chastising the minister, as is appropriate in question period, about not making the effort to contact the municipality. The minister, to defend, I suppose, her embarrassment on having not done so, said: I had a meeting with that mayor...

The Speaker: Hon. member, something more substantive. I've heard that on both sides already. Is there something, a precedent, that you could speak to?

Mr. McIver: I just think if you look at the two arguments, it'll be quite clear to you which argument is credible, and the government's side is not, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Nixon: I have information, Mr. Speaker...

The Speaker: Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, since you have already spoken to the matter, I cannot allow you to speak to it.

Is there a point of order you want to make?

Mr. Mason: It's not point of order, Mr. Speaker. I would hope that we wouldn't allow endless debate. The normal practice is that one person stands, makes their purported privilege, the other side responds, if other parties want to participate, but it shouldn't be a back and forth, in my view.

The Speaker: That's the reason, Government House Leader, why I asked for something substantive.

I will plan to make a ruling on this matter tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Bill 2

Growth and Diversification Act

[Debate adjourned March 20: Mrs. Littlewood speaking]

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill in second reading? The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to Bill 2, Growth and Diversification Act. This government and this minister are continually looking for ways to position themselves as the great diversifiers because, of course, before we had an NDP government, every single Albertan worked in oil and gas and the economy was a hundred per cent focused on one industry and the Alberta advantage was just some odd fantasy dreamed up by Conservative spin doctors. But funny how almost every Albertan knew what it, and by that I mean the Alberta advantage, meant to them. It meant something different to almost every Albertan, but it did mean something.

Ignoring, of course, that from 1986 to 2016 Alberta's GDP grew from \$59.6 billion to \$314.9 billion and that during those 30 years oil and gas and mining decreased as a percentage of total GDP from 23.2 per cent to 17 per cent and that without oil and gas Alberta still represents the third-largest economy by GDP in Canada, ahead of British Columbia – Alberta was able to grow in part because previous governments worked extremely hard to make Alberta the most business-friendly environment in Canada and perhaps in North America and one of the few debt-free jurisdictions in the world. Corporate tax rates were reduced, personal income tax rates were reduced, yet the economy continued to grow and the tax base with it.

Just yesterday we heard the minister of economic development say that “because Alberta has not had these programs previous to our government, it left Alberta and Albertans at a competitive disadvantage. So what we've done is levelled the playing field.” Minister, this is curious to me as, if I recall correctly, in 2013-2014 Alberta created fully 87 per cent of all of the new jobs in Canada, in fact 82,300 new jobs, and all of that with a supposed competitive disadvantage and an unlevel playing field. I think that unlevel playing field was once called the Alberta advantage, but so I digress.

Alberta had the highest median wages in the country, not the highest mean, the highest median, indicating that the data was not being skewed because of a select few who were making an inordinate amount of money. A growing economy isn't all that valuable if everyday, hard-working, work-seeking Albertans are unemployed and if we cannot generate the wealth and thereby the tax revenues to balance our budgets without reaching deeper and deeper into the pockets of hard-working Albertans. Kind of like what we have right now, where the Minister of Finance says that things are looking up, up, up while Calgary has the second-highest unemployment in Canada among major cities, and Edmonton is tied for third.

Madam Speaker, as Edmonton is fully represented by government MLAs and hence might be considered a stronghold, I would just like to read a quick quote from the CEO of the Edmonton chamber of commerce. I quote: “Some might say the tide has turned, that we're on our way back to prosperity, but has it? Are the difficult times truly behind us? That's not what I hear. Things on the ground appear to be still as much of a struggle as ever. The news people read gives them hope and encouragement, but as a bottom line impact there's another story.” Unquote. Not exactly what we hear from the Minister of Finance, is it? Green shoots and sunny ways, indeed.

3:10

So the government has decided that to turn the tides, they will introduce Bill 2, the Growth and Diversification Act. This bill builds on Bill 30, Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act, which introduced two tax credits, the Alberta investor tax credit and the capital investment tax credit. During the debate on Bill 30 members of the opposition continuously told the minister the scope of the AITC was too narrow and would result in reduced uptake. Well, lo and behold, if you go on the government website as of March 20, you will see that roughly 5 per cent of the money designated for the AITC program remains unallocated, almost as if the scope could have or should have been expanded, not to narrowly pick winners and losers that align with a specific world view.

As a whole I think both Bill 30 and Bill 2 are focusing on the trees at the expense of nurturing a mighty forest. Both bills are basically applying what I would call a Band-Aid to a critical injury or perhaps throwing candy at us after taking away our plate of meat and potatoes. Madam Speaker, choose your own metaphor. They

all paint a picture of trying to undo a failure of economic, regulatory, and fiscal fundamentals. We wouldn't even need programs like this if this government had not so severely damaged Alberta's attractiveness for business and investment and business and investor confidence.

Madam Speaker, the University of Calgary School of Public Policy issues a number of excellent publications throughout the year. One of my recent and personal favourites is an October 2017 paper co-published by former Saskatchewan NDP Finance minister Dr. Janice MacKinnon. In this paper they highlight the importance of real economic growth as a key factor in reducing government deficits, growing the economic pie, as it were, instead of trying to find new ways to slice it in many different ways and to reach deeper into those slices. They state that to grow the economy, you need to consider important factors like the right tax mix and the creation of a positive environment for investment.

First, they briefly looked at the Saskatchewan NDP of the 1990s. To spur economic growth, this incarnation of the NDP abandoned traditional NDP policy, which supports raising taxes on businesses and high-income earners in the name of tax fairness. However, as this paper notes, raising corporate and personal income taxes discouraged investment and economic development. In the interests of being pragmatic and doing what is best for the citizens of their province at that time, the Romanow government, perhaps counterintuitive to their ideology, actually lowered business taxes, royalties, and reduced income taxes for high-income earners. This led to economic growth and eventually balanced budgets.

MacKinnon then contrasts this approach with the approach taken by the Alberta NDP. They state:

In contrast, the Alberta NDP has raised taxes for larger businesses and high-income earners, increased environmental and other regulations, imposed a carbon tax, significantly increased the minimum wage and has run large deficits, raising the prospect of future tax increases to balance the budget. Taken as a package, the message to potential investors is that doing business in Alberta is becoming more difficult and more expensive. Hence, changing some of these measures and creating a more investment climate would promote more economic growth and enhance government revenue.

My favourite line from that paragraph is: “Taken as a package, the message to potential investors is that doing business in Alberta is becoming more difficult and more expensive.”

That is the crux of this issue and the issue with the government bringing in legislation like Bill 1, Bill 2, and Bill 30. The government has gone out of its way to erode the Alberta advantage. They have introduced cost after cost after cost, and they wonder why the Minister of Finance's talking points and debt tolerance are so different than the experiences and priorities of everyday, hard-working Albertans. If the government had not implemented all of their negative policies in the first place – dare I mention the all pain and no gain carbon tax – there would be no argument, no justification nor need for programs like these because Alberta would have no hurdles or issues attracting and retaining investment or worries about competitiveness in all market sectors and industries, including capital markets. If you drill 20 holes into a bucketful of water and then plug them with one, two, or even three – plug those holes, your economic bucket is not going to hold a whole lot of water. That is essentially what this government has done. They took a bad situation and made it worse. Now they're turning around and pretending like everything is rosy and that these Band-Aid, candy-like, hole-plugging programs will save Alberta and attract back the investment we truly need for robust and sustainable economic recovery. Those arguments and your bucket, Minister, do not hold water.

Madam Speaker, what Alberta needs is to recommit to becoming the most business- and investor-friendly jurisdiction in North America. We need to get back to making sure that the world knows that Alberta is open and looking for business and welcomes new investment and that we respect investors, the risks that they take, the jobs they create, and that we do not jealously covet the profits they might earn. Unfortunately, this government has demonstrated little promise in this area. Sadly, I think we will be seeing the impact of that negligence, the product of a misguided NDP world view, for years to come. Again, these Band-Aid, candy-like programs are simply not good enough. The NDP world view, quite frankly, is failing Albertans, and it is quite clearly failing Alberta business when it is clear that our economy requires large-scale, fundamental, and some might say ideological change to get Alberta back on track for a bright, prosperous, and sustainable future.

With that, Madam Speaker, I move to adjourn debate. Thank you.

[Motion carried]

Government Bills and Orders

Third Reading

Bill 3

Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2018

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my privilege today on behalf of the hon. Minister of Finance and Treasury Board to rise and move third reading of Bill 3, the Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2018.

This interim supply bill will ensure that the normal course of government business can be carried out for the first two months of the 2018-19 fiscal year as the Assembly takes the necessary time to discuss and debate Budget 2018 through the Committee of Supply process. By passing this interim supply bill, we are ensuring that government can continue to fund the programs, services, and infrastructure Albertans rely on as Alberta begins a new fiscal year on April 1. The full details of the budget will be presented tomorrow, March 22, and the estimates will be fully debated in the Legislature in the coming weeks.

In the meantime, Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board I encourage my colleagues on both sides of the House to support this bill.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Do any other members wish to speak in third reading? The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Very good. Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's indeed always my honour to stand in this House and speak and today to speak to Bill 3, the Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2018, a whopping five pages – a whopping five pages – that ask this Legislature to vote in favour of defraying certain charges and expenses of the Legislative Assembly and the public service of Alberta, charges and expenses of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta that were not otherwise provided during the fiscal year ending March 31, 2019.

Just let me see here for a minute. How many numbers have we got? Let's start with schedule 1, Legislative Assembly. It looks like \$29,420,000. Now, of course, that's like a lottery win to just about anybody on the planet. Things start to get a little vague after we are able to read that number of \$29,420,000 under the heading of legislative supply.

Turn the page on this – I hate to say large bill, but the numbers in it are large. If we turn to page 3 of the five, we see a breakdown of

what the money is actually going for. But wait. There is quite a bit of money under this heading. I believe there are nine – yes, nine – headings, but they're just headings, basically, with a number that follows behind.

3:20

Let's look here at the very first heading under Legislative Assembly, support to the Legislative Assembly. That's what it says, Madam Speaker: support to the Legislative Assembly, \$13,528,000. That is where most of this \$29,420,000 under the heading Legislative Assembly goes. Now, if I were to want to take a shot at what that \$13 million is going to, I wonder what I would refer to. What document, which I certainly don't have, tells me what the \$13,528,000 to the Legislative Assembly is actually for? You know, I don't know. We're doing some work over at the Federal Building. I don't know if we're doing a facelift on the Legislature Building. Maybe the Federal Building is considered a part of the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Mason: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Schneider: I could be corrected on that. You know, I can't quite throw a rock from here and hit it.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, we have a point of order.

Go ahead, hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm not certain of my point of order, so I certainly stand to be corrected. It is my understanding that support to the Legislative Assembly is actually determined in the Members' Services Committee. It has been delegated to the Members' Services Committee directly and is not normally debated in the House. Now, what I'm not sure of is whether this applies as well to interim supply. In the past in opposition I was ruled out of order by the Speaker for attempting to debate support to the Legislative Assembly precisely because that has been specifically delegated to the Members' Services Committee. I guess I'm asking more for direction than making a definitive point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: I don't have the exact answer to that at the moment, but I suspect that you're on the right track. Perhaps, let's hear a little more.

Did you wish to speak to that?

Mr. Nixon: Yeah. I would like to respond to that, Madam Speaker. While the hon. Government House Leader may or may not have a point – I don't know the answer – he himself indicated as he rose that he doesn't even know if he has a point of order. Of course, with due respect to you, Madam Speaker, you've indicated that you don't know if there's a point of order. I'm not hearing anything from the table officers that we pay to let us know if there's a point of order. So I am a little troubled about the instruction to a member of the Legislature to not continue a line of questioning to the government during interim supply or supplementary supply debates on a hypothetical rule that may or may not exist.

Madam Speaker, with due respect, I think that the member should be allowed to continue unless we confirm that that in fact is true.

The Deputy Speaker: My sense on this one is that it's the nature of what you were discussing. You weren't really directing specific questions to the government, looking for answers. You were more articulating what your thoughts were on this. I guess, be careful that we're not put in that position where you're actually questioning some expenses that maybe are more appropriately dealt with in Members' Services.

Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. Schneider: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. That certainly is something that I wasn't aware of, and I appreciate the hon. Government House Leader bringing that forward. I guess in response: I can't ask a question in this House on what support to the Legislative Assembly is about?

The Deputy Speaker: Just to clarify, hon. member, I don't believe that's the direction that the Government House Leader was going in with that, but there is a past precedent regarding asking questions in the House about matters that are under the purview of the Members' Services Committee. I believe that's where the issue lies.

Mr. Schneider: Okay. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I won't ask any questions about it. Basically, I guess I did ask a question of where the money came from. Okay. Fair enough.

I guess I can't ask these questions. All the things that I was going to bring up, Madam Chair, that talked about, you know, that maybe we were going to hire security: that's just something that weighed in the back of my mind. Or maybe the rugs needed replacing, you know, something like that. All that sounds a little ridiculous, admittedly. But, folks, I guess we have a committee that understands what the money that goes to the Legislative Assembly means. I guess a question I have is: would the backbenchers of the NDP government have any idea what that means? Would they have any idea what the \$13,528,000 is to be spent on, or would only the committee members?

I mean, when the NDP government has a caucus meeting – like, let's talk about the last caucus meeting before interim supply was presented in this House. Were all the members on the other side of the House given a binder explaining what this amount of money was for in this very first item under Legislative Assembly, and did it kind of say where the dollars were split up and where they were heading? I guess that binder wasn't available to this side of the House. I'm sure that it wasn't available to the members sitting where I could hit them. These guys didn't receive anything that says where that money is being spent.

I guess the point here is that the government, Madam Speaker, has asked this House to approve Bill 3, a bill that at the end of the day is asking us to approve a supply of money from Albertans to cover shortfalls in the budget that this same government put forward in March of last year, a bill that is asking this House to approve somewhere north of \$8.5 billion, basically, with not enough information, certainly, in this five-page document to appease, well, I guess something like a grade 6 accounting class. No context, not one word of context that would tend to give a hint as to what the millions and millions of dollars that are sprinkled throughout these pages are being sent to, some 30 headings on these five pages. Well, maybe the front row knows. Maybe the front row was involved in knowing all those numbers.

Anyway, I guess the point here is that it's grossly apparent that this government is chronically underprepared. Chronically underprepared. What that invariably leads to is a government that is less transparent and accountable to Albertans. Albertans: remember those folks? They're the ones that pay the freight around here. Try to remember who those folks are. They're the ones that are asking where all this money is going, this \$8.5 billion.

I mean, I'm just not sure how to answer that for the councillors, all the councillors over at Rural Municipalities of Alberta this morning. How do I tell those folks that were asking me this morning where the government is spending \$8.5 billion, based on what's in this document of five pages? You see, Madam Speaker, those councillors and their CAOs that were also present over there today are from all over rural Alberta. Those folks are family members and family people, too, just like all of us in the House here. They have

children that they are just trying to get through high school or elementary or junior high school or university, the point being that they have children that at some point in the future will be having children themselves who will be faced with the kind of reckless spending that this government has imposed on Alberta. Our children's children will be trying to pay down the debt that this government has incurred.

When interim supply was introduced in this building, it was the morning of March 13. On the morning of March 14 we started debate. As you know, Madam Speaker, I think my colleagues did a pretty good job. They asked some pretty good questions of the Finance minister, considering that they had 24 hours to prepare to ask the Finance minister about an \$8.5 billion expense with, really, no information whatsoever, a five-page document that the best accountant in town would have trouble deciphering because there's no information other than a huge 10-digit number that most calculators won't even recognize.

3:30

Madam Speaker, my colleagues that asked those, well, what I would consider pretty good questions even though they had no information to work from were stonewalled at every turn. I guess that's the best, most appropriate comment I can make. When my colleagues asked really good questions that sought more specific information about where interim supply was actually being spent, the Finance minister and the rest of Executive Council – I mean, seriously, if they could actually find another member of Executive Council to answer a specific question – basically did the same thing. My colleagues were stonewalled by those that were attempting to answer the serious questions that they were putting forward, well-thought-out questions, even though they were only given 24 hours. They were stonewalled, or Executive Council members just plain failed to provide any specific information on the questions that were being asked.

You know, Madam Speaker, it really is unacceptable for the members of this House to be told that they will have to wait until the budget is announced on Thursday before they can actually find out where the money is going. It seems like that is backwards, in my line of thinking. You know what that is? That's politics. Politics is getting in the way of legitimate questions to the Finance minister and/or Executive Council on behalf of – remember the folks that actually pay for the stuff around here? – Albertans, on behalf of those folks.

With little or no information to substantiate or describe or explain the numbers in this five-page document that would hardly make a good paper airplane, this Legislature is being asked to provide this out-of-control spending with not quite a blank cheque but a cheque for \$8.5 billion without having the foggiest idea of where the money is going. Madam Speaker, there isn't enough information here to even begin to suggest what the money is for, and \$8.5 billion is no insignificant amount of money, as we all know.

Even when we had the opportunity to ask questions during interim supply debate, all we got were generalities, lots of "Wait for the budget" and "That will be answered in the budget." Heck, you know, between interim supply and supplementary supply questioning, we'd be lucky if the minister in charge of that ministry was around to answer the question, not that any of the answers, to be perfectly honest, were in any way forthcoming.

But \$8.5 billion being asked for over and above is very telling, very telling indeed. I guess the question would be: how is it that this government can't get somewhere near what they budgeted prior? Being \$8.5 billion short is no small number. Don't get me wrong; I understand that governments before have done the same thing. We've heard the folks from the other side say over and over that

they've got Albertans' backs and that they're going to do a better job with accounting. I guess that if this government had been prepared with a budget on time, interim supply wouldn't have been required.

Now, it was my understanding – and I'm always prepared to be corrected – when I got here in 2015 that in normal years the fiscal year-end of government was March 31. I'll repeat that. If the government had been prepared well in advance of that March 31 deadline, it's unlikely that we would be having this meeting at all. Estimates would have been within a week of being completed by now. Certainly, we would have come back to the House earlier than we tend to, and who would have an issue with that? I mean, we're getting paid to come to work. I'm sure we'd all be prepared to come to work. Or, once again, is it that this government is underprepared by such a huge margin that getting the budget, let alone bills – they sometimes are delivered to our desks still warm – actually done on time is a hurdle too high to jump?

That kind of gets back to the root of the problem. Why do we need interim supply? I know why the government says that we need interim supply: because we need to keep the lights on and pay the bills and keep the front-line staff working and collecting paycheques. Once again, if we had determined that we should come back to the House early, probably sometime in February, and had the budget and estimates passed in March – well, you get my point. It's feasible. It seems common sense, but as I said last week, I think, here in the House, Madam Speaker, common sense just ain't so common any more.

Madam Speaker, it's unlikely that most average, common-sense Albertans, that see a 10-digit number as something that is just about incomprehensible, would continue to support a government whose spending is so remarkably out of control. Every budget since this government took office has been extreme. Albertans have been watching for nearly three years now, and folks that didn't used to worry about such stuff, people that walk up and down Main Street, Alberta, and that we run into, are asking us questions all the time. Albertans are worried about their and their children's children's future. This government is putting those futures at risk, and I think that's wrong, and so do those average, everyday Albertans that walk up and down Main Street, Alberta.

That being said, I appreciate the opportunity to stand in the House and speak today. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill in third reading?

Hon. Government House Leader, on behalf of the President of Treasury Board do you wish to close debate?

Mr. Mason: No.

[Motion carried; Bill 3 read a third time]

Bill 4

Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2018

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. On behalf of the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board it's my privilege to rise today and move third reading of Bill 4, Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2018.

The Deputy Speaker: Any members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my honour to speak to Bill 4, Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2018. It's a bill that does concern me, with the abilities of this government to be able to properly budget and set priorities for the coming year and be prepared for what their priorities and what Albertans' priorities should be for the fiscal year that is before us. So we take a look at the budget process in the previous year or the current year, that we're in, that we're just finishing up, and here we are.

We're seeing a government that wishes to increase spending by approximately 1 and a half billion dollars, and we have to ask: why? Is there a good reason? I would suggest that on a few files there were some unexpected expenses, but also I would suggest that on the vast majority of it, it was decisions made by this government to increase spending, it kind of looks like, because there was more revenue available to spend.

I find it interesting that on my ride home to my constituency on Thursday last week the media was contacting me and needing to get a better understanding of why the Official Opposition decided to vote against certain items within this supplementary supply. I believe that what needs to be recognized is that the Official Opposition is voting against the ability for this government to ensure that they keep their spending under control. It's very important that they recognize, before a budget year starts, that priorities have to be set at that time and not that all of a sudden, because there's extra money available, they're going to spend some more money.

3:40

The media was asking me relative to the spin that one of the other MLAs in my region was putting forward, the fact that the Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater put into the local paper an article with regard to rural crime. As part of that, his comment was: "So you can imagine how surprised I was when on March 15 every UCP member in the House voted against \$37 million in much-needed funding that would help fight rural crime all across the province."

What surprises me, Madam Speaker, is the fact that rural crime was highlighted well over a year ago, close to two years ago as a significant concern, so the priority should have been there already. Yet this government failed to recognize that that was a priority and failed to fully recognize the need to put in place what is necessary to help alleviate some of the difficulties we're faced with in our rural crime.

It's also concerning to my constituents. You can imagine how surprised my constituents were when a couple of years ago we had a government that said that there were not enough resources to put into more judges at that time. My constituents were incredibly surprised when this government set their priorities to spend \$10 million on advertising for the carbon tax, for their climate leadership plan. My constituents thought that that was a complete waste of money and that it would have been much better spent on some of the priorities that this government needs to focus on, and that is enforcement of the rule of law. You can also see that that was wasteful spending.

But we also see a government that is going down a road, in certain aspects, of inefficient spending. When the Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater is highlighting that there was \$37 million needed in an ask from Justice and Solicitor General for increased spending for rural crime and he's surprised that we voted against that, we also recognize and my constituents recognize that this government has wasted or spent inefficiently \$200 million on AHS laundry/delivery services. Madam Chair, \$200 million, \$200 million that could have been spent on other priorities. But their ideology decided that it was time to remove a privately held

contract and move that in-house, so they decided to spend \$200 million extra on laundry.

For the Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater to think that the UCP was voting against \$37 million to help fight rural crime is a spin that I believe all Albertans see through. All Albertans recognize that this government has been in the practice of not only wasteful spending but also inefficient spending, and when they do a budget – and the budget is coming down tomorrow – we have to ensure that the priorities of this government are recognized at this time and that we don't have to be faced with a situation where now the government is requesting another 1 and a half billion dollars of spending.

I would suggest that this government has a spending problem, and when we start to see several requests throughout the year for increased spending for many of the departments, then it does become a concern that they were not able to properly budget at the beginning of the year. I would encourage them to do better this time – and, hopefully, they will do better – so that when we do see revenues in excess of \$2 billion higher than expected, this government doesn't find themselves wanting to spend it.

The Finance minister said this morning at RMA that money was put towards MSI funding. Why? Because they recognized that it's necessary funding. But at the same time, was that not recognized last spring when the budget was developed? Why was there all of a sudden a change of heart that now we just about double MSI funding? Is it because we can, because there was increased revenue? Yes, I would suggest the Finance minister led us to believe that this morning. The minister said that because we had the capacity to increase funding, they decided to. But it's all borrowed money. The capacity was the same last spring as what the capacity is today. It's all borrowed money because this government is running a colossal deficit.

The decision to spend \$800 million more in MSI funding was a decision based on: well, we had the financing in place, so let's use it. Is that wise fiscal prudence? I don't get to see all the numbers, but I would suggest that when you're out on a budget item by just about half of what you're going to spend on it now, \$800 million, that's a significant miss on the ability to budget properly. Albertans expect governments, when they put a budget in, to try their level best to follow their budget and not to just make decisions on the fly because they had capacity.

You know, Madam Speaker, opposition members have been raising the issue of rural crime for over a year. It was known last spring when the budget was put down that this was a serious problem, and the government decided not to recognize it at that time. It does give me some comfort that they've now recognized it. I hope they've recognized it for what it is because in a country and a western, developed society that is able to enjoy peace and security from rule of law and protection from others, not only protection from other citizens but also protection from government, rule of law enforcement is critical to ensure that our citizens feel that they are safe to enjoy life in Alberta. It is one of the highest priorities, I would suggest, of any government in this land.

Obviously, UCP supports additional police officers for rural Alberta; however, the NDP has repeatedly refused to answer when Albertans can expect to see these new officers in their communities. I believe it may be some time. At RMA this morning there was also concern on the backlog, that we don't have the officers in place that are being fully funded, so there's a whole other discussion to be had there. But we have to ensure that our citizens can feel that their safety and their ability to feel safe at home is a high priority of any government.

Supplementary supply is riddled with spending that we absolutely cannot support because I do believe that departments need to live

within their means. If we get into situations where departments can easily move from living within their means, then, really, what confidence do we have that this government will live within their means and protect the fiscal well-being of this province and of Albertans? This government proves that they are not protecting taxpayer resources in a manner that gives Albertans the impression that this government really cares for fiscal responsibility.

3:50

The problem is that this government has a spending problem, which supplementary supply completely fails to address. The deficit went down from \$10.4 billion to \$9.1 billion, so what does the NDP plan to do? They have decided to spend 1 and a half billion dollars more than originally planned. You know, we saw where revenues were up well over \$2 billion, and now because revenues are up they decide that: well, we're going to spend 1 and a half billion dollars more. But your capacity to spend wasn't any greater because you're in a position where you have to borrow the 1 and a half billion dollars that you propose to spend. That doesn't make Albertans feel any better. The people that are feeling good about this are the guys on Bay Street, the guys on Wall Street, the guys that we've got to go to to finance this kind of a spending habit. I believe that government can do better.

I have concerns when MSI funding all of a sudden doubles, and it begs the question: what changed? The only thing I can come up with is that revenues went up. So we're in a position to now spend more? I suspect that the money isn't even going to be able to be spent by the end of the year. So are we playing games now with Albertans and putting in place what the government wants to put in place as spending into this fiscal year? Can the money even be out the door by the end of the fiscal year?

I don't know those answers. Only the government knows those answers. I would suggest that, yes, the government has to sleep at night, too, so probably best not to be playing games with Albertans, especially on sums of money such as this, large, large sums of money. Most Albertans, I would say probably 99 per cent of Albertans, have very little understanding or can really get a good feeling of the size of that amount of money, 1 and a half billion dollars, can't even imagine what that feels like.

But the other thing it also does do is that when we see that a government proposes to spend a certain amount and then now moves into discretionary spending and decides to spend more, it makes credit agencies reassess the ability of the company, the government, to do proper budgeting, that they can feel confident that the board of directors, the government in this case, that this company is under good management and that they can and they know how to stick within their means and they know how to budget properly. Credit agencies look at this and they say: "Wow, I don't know if I can trust that. I'm not sure that this is good, sound planning." Do we put ourselves at risk of another credit downgrade?

Now, thankfully, my critic department, Infrastructure, is not asking to spend more money this fiscal year. I'm thankful for that. That says to me that they're living within their means, and that's a good sign. But 37 times departments went to Treasury Board asking for more money last year. Some examples: Agriculture and Forestry went back seven times; Labour, four times; Service Alberta, four times; Transportation, four times; Municipal Affairs, three times; Environment and Parks, three times; Culture and Tourism, twice; Justice and Solicitor General, twice; Advanced Education, once; Seniors and Housing, once.

Economic Development and Trade wants to transfer \$10 million from the expense vote to the capital investment vote for a capital grant to Alberta Innovates Corporation for the Alberta carbon conversion technology centre. It sounds like possibly a good idea. I

heard about this place down near Calgary that's going to pull CO₂ right out of the air. But I question whether or not this is a sound investment based on a company in Squamish, B.C., called Carbon Engineering, which already is doing much the same thing, maybe even the same thing that we're spending the \$10 million on. This side of the House and Albertans would like to know, need to know: is this \$10 million being directed in a way that we can feel confident that it's not lining the pockets of government friends? I suspect that will be a question in estimates. Is that wise spending?

Incorporated in 2009 and privately owned, Carbon Engineering is funded by private investors, some of them well-known names: Bill Gates, Murray Edwards. Most people in this place would recognize those names. Carbon Engineering grew from academic work conducted on carbon management technologies by Professor David Keith's research group at the University of Calgary and also Carnegie Mellon University.

So this technology has been invested in, and possibly we can see where Alberta Innovates is seeing research going in another direction, and that might be helpful. But, you know, I'm thinking that Albertans would like to know if that's a good investment. Otherwise, why are we investing in technology that has already been invested in and proven? That wouldn't make sense.

United Conservatives are talking about common-sense solutions to problems that Albertans face. We are committed to defending Alberta. We are committed to defending its industries against a host of ideological policies from not only the Alberta NDP but also from its cousins, the British Columbia NDP, and their close friends in federal government in Ottawa that threaten our long-term prosperity. This is a significant concern of many Albertans, that our industry is being threatened by ideological governments that are closely aligned with our NDP government here.

All of this spending from supplementary supply means that the government fails to address the issue of increasing debt and deficit. As I said, Madam Speaker, the 1 and a half billion dollars, every dollar, is borrowed money. We've been borrowing money for probably the last few months because we haven't been able to bring in enough. The realization that this growing debt is a concern . . .

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

Mr. Cyr: I've heard extensively about this government's inability to spend responsibly, but I'd like to hear more about the growing debt that this government is putting onto our children and our children's children for generations to come. I would love to hear more on that.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, 29(2)(a) doesn't apply. You'd be speaking directly to the bill. The member's speaking time has expired.

Mr. Cyr: I apologize. I thought it was 29(2)(a), and I believe I spoke on this one already.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you. I'd like to speak a bit about the debt that our kids and our grandkids and future generations are going to have, never mind the clogging of our economy for our job providers, our wealth creators and how that's going to reduce our competitiveness, you know, in our economy.

My goodness, three years with this government and we're already at \$50 billion of debt, estimated to be at least \$71 billion, Madam Speaker, in just another year. It seems like every time they find a little bit of saving, it gets spent and more, more again.

I think back to when Canadians had to face some tougher times, you know, a few years ago and when Albertans had to face some tougher times a few years ago and how Albertans were willing to bear down and pull their weight and make things happen. But it wasn't easy. It wasn't easy to have to have those hard-earned tax dollars go to pay interest and go to pay debt.

4:00

You know, I look at the \$1.5 billion that this government just borrowed for supplementary supply, and – what a coincidence – this government also spent \$1.5 billion in interest last year, interest that, of course, we've heard many times, just goes to pay the rich, pay bondholders in New York and Switzerland and around the world. The big concern with debt, of course, is that that's what it is at the end of the day, the poor and the middle class just paying the rich. So that concerns me greatly.

I wonder at this government's way out of this because I think back to what we just saw, Madam Speaker, in the Q3 update, where even this government, who drastically raised personal income tax rates, who raised corporate tax rates 20 per cent at the same time that major competitors of our commodity markets are reducing their taxes 40 per cent – and what happened? You know, you like to think that when a store raises its prices, it actually has more revenue. You like to think that when a government raises their tax rates, it could actually maybe go to reduce the deficit or provide some policemen for rural crime or something to make Albertans' lives better.

But, Madam Speaker, the exact opposite happened. In the last quarter, personal income tax revenue was down \$322 million from what they budgeted. Corporate tax revenue was down \$66 million from what they budgeted. We have a situation where revenues are down and expenses are up and spending is up, so when this government comes to us and asks us to write a blank cheque for interim supply because they didn't get their budget done on time and now for supplementary supply because they overspent by a billion and a half dollars . . .

Mr. Gill: How much?

Mr. Barnes: A billion and a half dollars.

Mr. Gill: Is that a "b" or an "m"?

Mr. Barnes: It's with a "b," a big "b," a capital "b."

Unfortunately for our kids and our grandkids and our economy, they're the ones that will have to endure this, and what a problem that'll be down the road as this money has to go to interest instead of to services.

Another problem, though, that I have with the supplementary supply is what it doesn't talk about. My hon. colleague from Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock talked about the MSI and how there's an astonishing \$800 million for our municipal partners, municipal partners that have many needs and are faced with the economic slowdown, that this government has managed. They're looking at, you know, linear taxation being re-evaluated and brought down, which, as the value of those assets falls because of the layers and layers of burden that this government has added to our good industries – it probably only makes sense that these companies come back and look for a fairer taxation level. But at the end of the day, it comes out of Albertans, and it comes out of the services that can be provided.

I wasn't clear myself on the answer that the minister gave today. The question was clear: is this \$800 million that you're using for MSI a shell game? Is it just borrowing the money in this year's budget to put into next year's to make it look like the deficit will be lower next year? I didn't hear a clear answer from the ministers. I'm

very, very much looking forward to estimates, when we have the chance to see if this \$800 million is, in fact, a shell game to make it look to Albertans like they do have a plan to, you know, get closer to balance, although the reality is – you know, for Albertans, thank goodness that the Official Opposition is here to ensure that money, hard-earned tax dollars, money taken from job creators, is spent as efficiently and effectively as it can be. I look forward to the actual budget. I look forward to the estimates. I look forward to getting answers on what is really happening with that \$800 million of MSI, that we really had one day to research and look at before it hit our desks.

But while we're talking about \$800 million, the other thing that this government doesn't like to talk about and which was in the Q3 update is \$771 million that was put into the budget, put into our expenses to pay the cost of their failure on the Balancing Pool and the power purchase agreements . . .

Mr. Nixon: Secret agreements.

Mr. Barnes: Secret agreements.

. . . money, Madam Speaker, that is coming directly out of Alberta families, directly out of Alberta communities all around Alberta, money that with a little bit of foresight, with a little bit of oversight, with a little bit of acumen, with a desire to ensure that Alberta's competitive advantage of low-priced electric generation was maintained – instead, this government, for ideological reasons, threw all of that away, threw it away in a way that, again, our communities, our kids, and our grandkids are going to have to pay.

What I'm surprised I didn't see in the supplementary supply that was in the Q3 update: I think I have a number of \$230 million from the climate leadership plan in surprise grants.

Madam Speaker, I guess what I'm talking about is transparency and the failing grade that this government has earned on this one. We have a situation where MSI money looks like it's part of a shell game. Even though, in my six years in here, I and others have stood up many times and said, "Let's budget properly for floods, for wildfires, for natural disasters," no government has listened to that. Of course, the money still has to come from the taxpayer or be paid back by our kids and our grandkids. Shame on not being transparent and open to the Albertan taxpayers as to what that's going to cost.

I'm dismayed at how this was presented, with a day's notice. I'm dismayed that in the Q3 update we had a \$9 billion deficit but no mention of the \$5 billion borrowed for capital funding. Obviously, the taxpayer, the future generations of Albertans cannot pick and choose what debt they pay back and which debt they don't pay back.

Madam Speaker, I will close with the burdens, the layers of rules and regulations that this government has put on our economy, our wealth providers, our job creators, on their opportunity to work hard, to build Alberta families and communities. They're faced with a 20 per cent higher tax. They're faced with a provincial tax that can be as much as 50 per cent higher now. What this government is seeing is a failure to generate more revenue from these huge increases.

So the prudent thing to do would be to address your spending. The prudent thing would be to look for savings and efficiencies. Instead, this government has put our kids and our grandkids approximately \$71 billion in debt in just four short years, a number that is per capita easily – easily – I think, or even not per capita, Canada's biggest provincial deficit by miles right now. It's a burden that our kids and our grandkids don't deserve. It's a burden that only together, through the skills and the quality of our good people in the commodity markets, whether it's oil and gas, forestry, or agriculture, we'll be able to get out of.

Madam Speaker, I am pleased and proud to be voting against this government's big-spending ways, and I will ask all of my colleagues to do the same.

The Deputy Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) now comes into effect if there are any questions or comments.

Seeing none, are there any other members who wish to speak to the bill?

Hon. Members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: You're ready for the question?

Hon. Government House Leader, do you wish to close debate?

[Motion carried; Bill 4 read a third time]

4:10

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

(continued)

Bill 1

Energy Diversification Act

Mrs. Pitt moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 1, Energy Diversification Act, be amended by striking out all the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 1, Energy Diversification Act, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

[Adjourned debate on the amendment March 20: Ms Ganley]

The Deputy Speaker: Any members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate this opportunity to get up and speak on Bill 1. Now, this bill is regarding energy diversification. I always like to see exactly the intent the government has got when it comes to their bills, so I like to go to the press releases. The press release I'll be referencing is Investing in a Diversified Energy Future. It was released on March 8, 2018. Now, the first paragraph here is: "New initiatives would create thousands of jobs, attract billions of dollars in private investment and secure Alberta's energy future through diversification and innovation, under legislation introduced today." That's very impressive. Getting into the fact that I believe that this legislation should be referred to committee, I will go through this press release as well as some of the other things to show the importance of making sure that we get this right.

Now, with the fact that this is the second round of money that's being put out, my big question is: did the first round work? I don't think that's unreasonable, and I don't think it's unreasonable to see if the committee can investigate that and come up with whether or not the first tranche of funding worked as had been anticipated. Do we just take the government's word that it's hugely successful and everybody is happy? Or do we actually do our jobs and look at something as important as making sure that we diversify our economy?

Now, I'd like to talk about a quote that the Minister of Energy put forward: "We're taking bold steps to help the energy industry innovate and diversify. These measures are not one-off fixes – they're part of our made-in-Alberta plan for a more diversified and resilient economy that's built to last . . . no Albertan is left behind." That's very impressive. We've got a long-term plan, it sounds like, that we're going to be putting forward with these things. So why

wouldn't we want our MLAs to be able to make sure that they get input to be able to make sure that the viability of Alberta moves forward?

Now what I'm going to go on to is the throne speech. We've talked a little bit about the press release, but I think that the throne speech is something that actually sets the direction here. On page 6 of the throne speech, under the heading *Diversifying Our Economy*, the first line is:

Albertans want off the resource royalty roller-coaster.

If that is the case – and I would say that nobody wants to see our economy tied to oil and gas royalties – then why wouldn't we want our Resource Stewardship Committee discussing the best way to get off this roller coaster?

What happens here, to move further down under this point, is that it says:

The first bill will focus on diversification within the energy sector. As we work to diversify the markets our energy resources can access via pipeline, we will also do more to add value to our resources right here at home.

That's Bill 1.

Bill 2:

The second bill will focus on diversification across [the] economy.

And

The third bill will focus on laying the groundwork for new renewable energy jobs and an [energy] system [that has] more stable prices.

So we've got a minister or ministries that are putting forward bills that are saying that our goal here is to diversify. It is so important that they've come up with three separate bills to do that. Why cannot our government accept the fact that we really need to move something this important to committee? I don't think this is unreasonable, especially with the fact that we are looking at this government's inability to be able to consult with its stakeholders.

Now, what I'd like to start off with here is to show that the government hasn't been perfect in its rollout of past diversification bills. There's a Bill 1, coincidentally, from 2016-2017, the *Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act*. This was put forward by the Minister of Economic Development and Trade and was arguably one of the largest failures that this government has put forward. Now, it was in the end so much of a failure that we don't even see the Economic Development and Trade minister in this first bill announcement. This announcement is only done by the Energy minister.

We've already had something move forward that flopped, so we're trying it again. The first time, I believe, it flopped because they didn't use committees to actually identify how to get this right. We need to go back to basics. We need to start using these committees as they were designed for, not throwing through legislation that is arguably just as important. But what we need to start doing is saying that if this is the keynote of the Premier's vision for the province, why is she not including all the Alberta MLAs in this vision?

Now, I'm going to read the preamble for the other Bill 1, just parts of it because I don't want to go through the whole bill.

Whereas Albertans desire a prosperous and vibrant economy that offers employment opportunities for Albertans of different skills and backgrounds;

Whereas all areas of Alberta, from rural communities and indigenous communities to the largest cities, will benefit from a stronger and more diversified economy;

Whereas the Government is committed to supporting working people and their families and supporting businesses in their efforts to create and retain jobs and to diversify the products and services Albertans sell and the markets Albertans sell into;

Whereas by harnessing the opportunity for diversification and investment, Albertans can realize additional jobs and benefits from Alberta's many resources; and

Then this last one:

Whereas accessing additional markets will give Alberta exporters and manufacturers more opportunities, choice and certainty.

That was the preamble from Bill 1 from 2016-2017. I'm going to read you Bill 1 right here:

Whereas Alberta's bitumen production can realize better overall value for upstream producers through large-scale partial upgrading technologies;

Whereas Alberta will benefit from a stronger and more diversified economy if it takes full advantage of the opportunities its hydrocarbon feedstock provides to create value-added processing and the production of secondary and tertiary non-energy products.

You'll find that these statements from both of these bills are very close to each other. One is, overall, saying that we need to manage our entire economy for Alberta. One is being very focused on saying that we need to address some of the upgrading that we're doing here. Both are saying that they're out to diversify the economy.

You know what? I do believe that the NDP are looking to diversify the economy, but we're spending a lot of money doing it, which is why it is so important that we get this right. We've heard from the minister already, saying that this is a long-term vision. Well, let's get everybody onboard with this vision. I don't believe that's unreasonable to say.

4:20

I want to go into the panel that has been set up by the minister. Now, this panel was the Energy Diversification Advisory Committee. What we ended up doing was that we created a committee to start to review the best ways to create diversification in Alberta. Now, we ended up with some committee members – and I would like to thank the committee members for their hard work. You can see that this 167-page report they did had a lot of thought put into it. I do understand that there are concerns when it comes to the members themselves, but again giving some, I guess, leeway to the government, I do believe that they're trying to find ways.

When I looked through the report, what I saw was that this committee met a total of six days. We've got March 13 and 14, March 28 and 29, May 2, and June 12. Six days. Then we've got one-on-one meetings with the stakeholders. Now, my curiosity in all of this is: who met with these stakeholders? Was it the committee members, or did we have government officials? Now, again, this is why it is so important that this get referred to a committee. We need to know these intricate facts that are coming forward.

We have two committees which, I would argue, would fit in this, the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future and the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship. You can't tell me that one of these two committees could not find the best route to go. We've got billions and billions of dollars on the line when it comes to making sure this gets done right.

According to the Alberta Industrial Heartland Association there is a potential for \$30 billion in new capital investment in the heartland by 2030 with potential infrastructure, a skilled work force, and government support. This is the press release again. We're talking billions and billions of dollars, which is why I talked to my colleagues across the aisle. It's important that we get this right. We don't know if the first tranche of actual investment worked. We should look at it and make sure this is the right direction. You know what? If it worked, I will give credit to the government.

The first time Bill 1 flopped. But you know what? The fact that they're willing to go to industry and say, "What works for you?" and actually seeing that result that we're hoping for is a win for all Albertans, and that includes the opposition.

I would like to move on, and I'd like to say that what we're seeing here, it appears, is an exercise of this government trying to distract from their current record. Now, what we've seen with this government is that right now they're trying to deflect us from the current size of our deficit. We've heard about this. What's problematic about this is that if we put billions and billions of dollars forward to these projects potentially through government guarantees and tax credits, we are putting our children on the hook for a ton of money.

The whole function of our government is to make sure that we discuss everything that goes through this House, especially when it comes to large sums of money or protecting our citizens or making sure that in the end we always are debating what's important to Albertans. But right now it appears that we're ramming legislation through this Legislature on one committee who met six times with it looks like multiple different businesses, which is good. I have to say that this is a step up from what we saw from Bill 6.

What we're looking to do here is say: let's review this report. We have 36 recommendations. Why not sit down? It could be that the Minister of Energy may have chosen the wrong direction to follow in this report, but we'll never know because in the end it was not debated. What we're looking at here is a report that – I looked at the PDF date on it, and it appears that the report was put out in February 2018. Now, if I'm incorrect, then the government can feel free to correct me, but that shows that we've had a very small amount of time. Now, I do know the government had it probably before it was released.

The Deputy Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a). Any questions or comments? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just wanted to make a few comments about what my colleague here is saying around the referral. I'm hearing a couple of different things from him. One would be that there's a concern that we haven't done enough consultation, so I would just like to, you know, put out to the hon. member that these are some of the different places that we have consulted with.

First, we had the Energy Diversification Advisory Committee, that was responsible for the overviewing and writing of the report. They consulted with Cenovus Energy, Dow Chemical, NOVA Chemicals, Suncor, Inter Pipeline, Mega Energy, the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, the Chemistry Industry Association of Canada, Methanex, Seven Generations Energy, Shell Canada, Sherritt, ARC Financial, AltaGas, Imperial Oil, capital region board, the MD of Greenview. There's a list that goes on and on about the different organizations that were consulted with in regard to making sure that we were actually looking at what potentials we had.

The other thing that I also find really interesting is that over the last few years since we've been elected, the Official Opposition has continuously said that we don't support the oil and gas industry, that we haven't been having conversations with anybody about the oil and gas industry, and, you know, that it's the driver of the province. Well, they're absolutely right. The oil and gas industry is the driver of the province. We acknowledge that. We are working with them. This is a very clear sign to investors in Alberta, to investors across the world that we are extremely serious about looking at the oil and gas industry, not in the context of how it exists today but in the context of how we can look at diversifying it so that

we can get even more production and even more value out of our industries.

It's interesting because on one hand they're saying that we're not listening to Albertans, yet when we respond with a bill that is very clearly listening to what Albertans have been telling us, then they say: well, you haven't consulted enough.

Although they could send it back to a committee, although I don't support that because I find it interesting – I mean, I would be very curious to find out from the hon. member who he feels that we've missed talking to, who he sees outside of this list that he feels is more important than talking to everyday Albertans, than talking to our constituents. We all door-knock in our party. We are all out there talking to people. I represent the heartland, so I'm talking to people that are working in the heartland all the time about different options that we can do. So I'm not quite sure what piece we're missing here.

The other component that I think the hon. member also was speaking about was, you know, the money that's being spent. Let's be clear. There has been an offer put out by the government to provide some investment dollars. The commitment around those investment dollars is very clear, that the product has to be built and that the product has to be in production before any dollars will leave the province. Like, the government is not giving any money until they can actually prove that these industries are viable. There's that piece.

There's also the piece of the fact that the opposition says that we are driving industry out of the province because we're not incentivizing enough, and then we come forward and say, "Well, we're going to incentivize so that we can keep industry here and give them a very clear message that we want them to build in Alberta." They say, "Well, don't do that." But the reality of it is that anywhere internationally, whether it be the United States in Louisiana and Texas, whether it be overseas, every single government is supporting the oil and gas industry in their upfront development costs. It's the reality of it. We are competing right now with Texas and Louisiana, the United States, our biggest competitor. They are subsidizing and supporting their industry to build new refineries, to build new industry, to build new manufacturing, and now the opposition is saying: well, let's refer it; let's stall it; we don't want this bill to go forward; we want more consultation. What it really sounds like to me is that they just want to refer it so that they can stall us out because heaven forbid that the NDP, the new diversification party, actually has a good plan, that makes sense, that's going to get us what Albertans need.

4:30

I think it's time that we all just look at what we're doing, recognize that this is in the best interest of all Albertans, get this bill passed, and stop talking about referrals. Let's actually start diversifying because that's what we should be doing. That's what's going to bring revenue into this province. I would love to hear from the hon. member on who he thinks we've missed.

Mr. Cyr: I would make a correction. I think it's the new debt party. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other hon. members to speak? The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today on Bill 1 and the amendment. I absolutely support the referral amendment to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship. This is absolutely the place to discuss this bill, this is absolutely the place to make this bill as good as it can be, and this is absolutely

the place to ensure that all Albertans have their chance to come forward to be heard.

Madam Speaker, I think back to my time on the Resource Stewardship Committee in 2012 and 2013. Two of the interesting proposals that we looked at were high-speed rail and the opportunity for an alternative of more electric generation ideas, run of the river principally, in three Alberta rivers. My goodness, I was very pleased. I was very impressed with the process. All kinds of experts came in that understood those two dynamics and had an opportunity to talk to both sides, the government and the opposition. Through us and through the transparency and how that gets put out to all Albertans, it was really an ideal opportunity for them to speak to all Albertans. It gave an opportunity for a report to be written. It gave an opportunity for everybody to have a second thought and to have their input.

At the end of the day, you know, we're transferring hard-earned tax dollars, taken from a family, taken from a productive individual, and giving that to another participant in the economy. It's crucial that everybody has their say and that everybody has the opportunity to ensure that if this is going to happen, it is happening in the best way forward.

I'm always surprised at how it works in Alberta. Although I'm not very familiar with it directly, my understanding is that in Ottawa, in our Parliament, almost every bill goes to a standing committee. There are a couple of permanent standing committees. Instead of Committee of the Whole, in Parliament everything goes to a standing committee, where Canadians – experts, people with a vested interest, people with the best ideas – have an opportunity to come forward. Why in the world wouldn't we do that, Madam Speaker? Why in the world wouldn't we look at the opportunity and put the call out there to hear from all Albertans, especially when it comes to energy diversification?

Madam Speaker, we have seen so many jurisdictions get this wrong. We have seen so many jurisdictions burden families, their communities, and individuals with utility rates that have to be subsidized by the taxpayer, adding hugely to the deficit, a similar position that the Alberta NDP has put us in here. We have heard horror stories of utility rates going through the roof. We've heard of people in Europe, my goodness, seniors that have to make a choice between heat or eat, as I've heard it described. Here's our opportunity to ensure that we explore all the good ideas, all the best options for Alberta going forward. Again, this government, based on their ideological belief that they somehow know better than 4.1 million Albertans, people that spend their whole careers, all their time, in industry, in business, understanding how these things work, is not wanting to talk about it.

I'll also say that I don't know that the first one worked very well. Some information I saw showed that not all the money was picked up. Perhaps this government would have been a lot smarter, a lot further ahead, Madam Speaker, to have put that bill to the standing committee, where good ideas could have come out and made it happen. I talked to people that wanted to be part of that but weren't because they felt there were other problems, other roadblocks in the way of doing business in Alberta. How good would this be if at our Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship we got to hear from some of these people what the other reasons were that Alberta wasn't on the favoured list?

Of course, we've heard and talked about how prior to this government being elected, Alberta was the most favourable jurisdiction for oil and gas. It potentially led to a diversification of the economy by 40 per cent. We've all read recently, Madam Speaker, where we're 15th in North America just amongst the oil and gas producing jurisdictions, never mind all the other jurisdictions, the ones that don't provide that. Wouldn't it be good

to hear what this government did well, what this government could have improved on, what our last government did well, and what our last government could have improved on from those Albertans that live it, those Albertans that every time this government does something, it changes their ability to make a living, to care for their families, to send somebody to university or to take a holiday? Who better to hear from about what might be the best thing going forward?

You know, I heard a question earlier about: we have to provide these incentives; we have to do this to stay competitive. Madam Speaker, I do hear that a little bit when I'm out talking to constituents and wealth and job providers, but mostly what I hear is that what we have to change is all the damage that this government has done to our economy, all the damage they've done. The number one thing I hear about the most is the tax increase, increasing corporate taxes 20 per cent. You don't have to look very far or very hard to read that corporate tax increases are so easy to pass down to consumers and families. So good work. You just raised the cost of living for all Albertans, and you drove business out.

Somebody was telling me at the new Rural Municipalities yesterday about a project that somebody wanted to do in Texas, something to do with oil and gas – it was quite technical – and it took 24 hours to get approval. Twenty-four hours. Everything I've heard about in Alberta is two to four years. Everything I've heard about in our neighbouring province, a neighbouring competitor in this case, Saskatchewan, is around a week. I also understand that Saskatchewan and B.C. both took definite, direct action to reduce regulatory red tape and make it so that safe, environmentally responsible job and wealth producers could do business on a timely basis. Madam Speaker, that is maybe the number one thing we have to do to bring back investment.

If we talk about investment for a sec, we heard the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers mentioned earlier today in question period. I wasn't there, so this is a little bit of second-hand knowledge, but I understand they made a presentation showing how oil and gas investment in Alberta has declined by 40 per cent since this NDP government was elected. Forty per cent is just a number, but that's probably 50,000 or 60,000 jobs, Madam Speaker. That's probably why the people in Cypress-Medicine Hat and around Alberta are only making 60 per cent of what they used to earn, working hard in the middle of winter, 10 miles from the Arctic Circle, all those things that we all value so much. At the same time that we've dropped 40 per cent, oil and gas investment is up in America 70 per cent. So what is the difference?

If we destroy billions and billions of dollars of investment and value and we throw a billion dollars at it and we're not doing it in the right way, Madam Speaker, I would suggest to you that we're not earning our salaries. We're not doing the best job for our constituents. What a shame that is. Of course, every four years we have the opportunity to be held accountable by our constituents.

4:40

I hear time and time again how that hundred megatonne cap on oil sands production has let oil and gas companies turn back oil sands leases bigger than the province of Prince Edward Island. My goodness, maybe we just haven't got that right. Of course, at different times oil and gas companies paid millions of dollars for those leases. It makes me wonder – what has to change in our rules and regulations; what has to change in our taxation system? – that somebody would walk away from \$10 million, \$20 million, \$40 million because the economic environment has changed so much. Madam Speaker, these are the very kinds of things that the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship could hear about and could

maybe make a suggestion to this government on a better way to bring back jobs and bring back wealth producers.

Second to the 20 per cent increase in corporate tax, the number one thing I hear about is the carbon tax, one of the reasons that people are not prepared to invest in Alberta, not prepared to create jobs and create wealth. Madam Speaker, it's layered into every bit of our costs. We live in a wonderful, great big province, you know, but I've heard that everything that gets manufactured or touched here on average gets transported five times. If there's a carbon tax five times layered in and marked up 6, 8, 12, or 20 per cent every time, my goodness, how much longer before our families and communities will be facing even more hardship?

Madam Speaker, these are the very things that the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship should be hearing about, should have the opportunity to at the very least make sure that the NDP corporate welfare is directed to where it's going to do the most good.

The other thing I really liked about the time that I was on the Resource Stewardship Committee was how Albertans were able to be engaged. While I was on that committee as one of the opposition members – I think there were 10 or 11 of us – I received a number of e-mails from around Alberta, you know, the pros and cons of why people wanted us to look at high-speed rail, the pros and cons of why people thought we should look for more hydro opportunities. At the end of the day, when we're here as Albertans' representatives, it's an ideal way for us to take an extra two or three months and get it right. I think that in getting it right, that is where it starts. Let's involve and engage as many Albertans as possible.

I'm so grateful to represent Cypress-Medicine Hat, but probably my greatest joy is that you never know where the good ideas are going to come from. I can't count the number of, you know, young people that I bump into that say something to me that, holy smokes, would be a wonderful idea. Or I'm just out knocking on doors or I'm at a social event, and somebody will come forward with an idea that can really make Alberta better for our families and communities and really give all Albertans an opportunity to be more involved. Again, if we put this out, if we invite experts, if we invite Albertans, if we invite everyone who has an interest, an idea, and some expertise to be involved, this will make this bill better, not just better for the NDP, but it will make it better for all Albertans. At the end of the day, of course, that is why we're here.

Madam Speaker, let's not lose sight of the fact that we are blessed with the job of stewardship of Albertans' tax dollars. The top tax rate now – by the time we add the NDP 15 per cent provincial tax to the federal tax of 33 per cent, some of our people are paying 48 per cent of their income to income tax. At the very least – at the very least – we owe it to them to magnify that money so as many social programs are available and are as widespread as possible.

Of course, with Rural Municipalities here today, it's always a reminder of the challenges that people outside of metro Alberta have. The quality of life is fantastic, the independence is well loved and wanted, but it's hard to provide services. It's hard to do things in a cost-effective way. That's even more reason why we have to give these good Albertans the opportunity to come forward, the opportunity for them to be involved in how their money is being spent, the opportunity for them to be involved in the future of Alberta, and the opportunity for them to be involved in diversifying this economy.

Madam Speaker, I absolutely cheer for this economy to diversify. I absolutely cheer for more opportunities for all Albertans. I was reading a few months back about how something like 300,000 . . . [Mr. Barnes' speaking time expired]

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to support my UCP colleague's motion to refer Bill 1, the Energy Diversification Act, to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship, where in-depth consultation can occur with experts. Let me start by indicating our caucus's support for diversifying Alberta's economy and expanding our petrochemical sector as a means to do so. You know, as this NDP is learning, there are no quick fixes for diversifying. That's one of the reasons we need to scrutinize Bill 1 carefully.

This bill is proposing to use a mixture of incentives, also called taxpayers' money, to encourage the petrochemical industry to develop in Alberta. The NDP has claimed for years that it is doing wonderful things for Alberta's petrochemical industry, but this bill is its first effort to do so in three years. In the meantime it drove business out of Alberta with, you know, a 20 per cent tax hike, added rules and regulations, and, of course, the carbon tax, all of which had been mentioned by my colleague from Cypress-Medicine Hat. Have investors, Madam Speaker, swarmed to Alberta when other jurisdictions are lowering taxes, cutting red tape, and refusing to impose a carbon tax? Of course not. But having said that, we in the UCP don't want to reject this bill out of hand. Perhaps it has some value, but until we actually run it by, you know, the various businesses that it's aimed at, we just can't know.

So I support sending this bill to a committee for a full review. The Resource Stewardship Committee can invite stakeholders – in other words, those companies wanting to invest in Alberta – to discuss, you know, what kind of support they are looking for to invest right here in Alberta. Now, that all-party committee can consult with stakeholders to determine if the direction set by the proposed legislation offers a common-sense approach that will work for them. Why serve up hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayer funds before understanding if there are simpler, more basic ways of encouraging economic diversification and development? Let's get in a room with members from all parties, compare notes from our constituencies, and meet with the developers that we are wanting to help.

Alberta's economic development has been stymied for three years, you know, since 2015, because approval processes just appear to be dragging on and on and on. Now, there are easy fixes. We can get everyone in a room to discuss publicly what works best for their industry and, quite frankly, Madam Speaker, just get it done. That's how you really do economic development. We would like to see companies lined up to come to Alberta, for it to be the land of opportunity. They just need a common-sense regulatory environment, infrastructure that will sustain their projects, and fast government processes. These are the things that are out of their hands but are in the hands of government. Since government has not listened to them, let's use the committee forum in order to do this.

4:50

Now, the standing committees and legislative policy committees have proven their worth time and time again. We in the UCP want to use them more to connect with Albertans and to help inform government about the most efficient ways to move forward. This bill, for the reasons I have already outlined, is a perfect example of one that contains concepts we need to run by the affected industries first.

Since I'm talking about the value of committees, if we're going to refer Bill 1 to Resource Stewardship, we have to unfetter the committee to allow it to take as many consultations as it wants to do. Our UCP members have been urging the NDP to allow our committee to perform other tasks. The Legislative Assembly has sent them a piece of legislation, of course, for them to review currently. When we're doing these reviews, we often wait for weeks for the public to provide submissions and then for presentations to be co-ordinated. Now, during those times the UCP members have been seeking the ability to continue to meet with many stakeholders, which, of course, is very, very important. We're sending in requests to the chair to speak with the committee. We'd also like to initiate our own consultations on issues pertinent to the committee.

Let me provide an example. The Resource Stewardship Committee has a lineup of six organizations, some of which have now been waiting for three years, Madam Speaker, to meet with its members. Our UCP members have made motions in committee to create working groups to meet with these patient stakeholders. These motions, sadly, have been rejected. We have even made a motion to change the standing orders to allow the committee to perform other business when the Legislative Assembly has handed it a task, because committees can and should be able to multitask, but the NDP members of the committee vote it down, sadly, each and every time.

So let me stress that they're voting against meeting with Albertans. In supporting this referral motion for Bill 1, I just want to take the opportunity to note the importance of changing the standing orders to allow the committee to work on as many different tasks as it wishes while also performing the work that the Legislative Assembly is requesting it to do. The NDP members of committees are using the standing orders, sadly, as an excuse not to meet and won't even let us set up working groups in order to meet.

Madam Speaker, we're stymied. At the last Resource Stewardship meeting the chair immediately shut down our UCP member and would not even entertain his motion. It is time that we free up the committees to truly work on behalf of Albertans, as they did prior to 2015. Let's send Bill 1 to committee because this government is going down a path that industry can help with and correct if we do consult and consult properly. Let's change the standing orders to avoid the NDP, you know, hampering the Members of the Legislative Assembly in listening to Albertans just because the government wants to take its own route on every issue.

Madam Speaker, to get back to the motion to refer Bill 1 to committee, let's not lose this opportunity to take the right steps for Alberta, for the very businesses we want to affect. I, of course, encourage all Members of this Legislative Assembly to support this referral motion.

Thank you for your time.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have to say that that was a very interesting discussion and reasoning that my honoured colleague brought forward. You know, when it comes to making sure that our committees are run appropriately, I have to say that if something is truly not working correctly, then it needs to be addressed. I think that's where my honoured colleague is really trying to go to here.

What we're seeing here in this specific case, though, is that this is a good example of a bill that should move forward to committee. This is a good example of changing the – I'm going to use it again from the throne speech: "Albertans want off the resource royalty

roller coaster." I would say that many Albertans would agree with that statement in the throne speech. Why wouldn't we want to make sure we get this right, make sure that we have the experts in place to ensure that we're able to fully review this legislation? I understand, again, that when it comes to our government, they're hesitant to move things to committee because that could potentially mean that it changes the bill from what the intended results would be. But if this bill is not a good bill, then it should be identified within that process, and if you go back to my honoured colleague, he is very clearly stating that right now that process doesn't seem to be meeting the needs of Albertans that are trying to get in front of that committee.

Now, I would say that we've got a government that appears to put committees together with no intent to actually involve MLAs for their feedback on exactly the best route to go. We've got to remember that the energy resource committee, the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship, is a nonpartisan committee, like all of our committees are. It's us working together. When the government makes it sound like we're there to stall or take other means to be able to prevent this bill from moving forward, that simply is not the case. What we're doing is that we're trying to move forward a clear idea of direction for this province. Yes – you know what? – our committee can only sit so many times, so we have to prioritize, but if this isn't a priority, then why is it Bill 1? Why is it clearly being labelled as a priority in the throne speech?

It's not unreasonable to say that we need to bring this legislation to a committee. We need to review it. We need to go through the consultation process to make sure that it is done fully. We need to bring experts in to make sure that this has been done correctly – that means sitting with stakeholders – and then ensure that it is done right. You know what? In doing something right for the long term – we're talking 20, 30 years – it is important to get it right. That means that, in the end, we're all involved with that process. Again, nonpartisan. Nonpartisan.

When the government is saying that they are not looking to refer this to committee, that is very disappointing, and to infer that the opposition is not interested in diversifying our economy is also an error on their part. I don't believe that the intent of any one of my colleagues would be to say that we don't want to see diversity in Alberta as well. I think that there are a lot of opportunities we can do and make sure that we hit those opportunities right so that we don't have to go back and correct it or where it costs billions of dollars, like what's happened with the Balancing Pool, where the government went in and made changes. They implemented a carbon tax.

In the end, what we've seen here is massive amounts of money going out to corporations because the government didn't understand all of the interconnections that came with that. That would have come out... [The time limit for questions and comments expired]

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

5:00

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my honour to rise today and speak on my colleague's motion to refer Bill 1, the Energy Diversification Act, to the committee. Once again with this NDP government – let me rephrase it. My hon. colleague from Edmonton-Manning said "new diversification party." I think let's go back to the reality; it's like a nondevelopment party, in my humble opinion, but anyway, that's a discussion for another day.

Once again with this NDP government bill we always get, like, this mixed bag of legislation. We don't truly understand what are

the ramifications of this bill without going into details with this bill. We do know that this bill includes hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayers' money. That for sure we do know. This bill uses a variety of incentives with the goal of diversifying Alberta's petrochemical industry and other industries. Should these incentives prove successful, we could see boosted industrial development around Alberta. Alberta's Industrial Heartland northeast of Edmonton, Red Deer, Medicine Hat, and Grande Prairie could benefit. That's certainly a lofty goal, but only if they're successful.

We're not saying that we should not do this. We're just trying to say: let's look into the bill. Again, we do need time to delve into the details of this legislation. Even more importantly, the members of this House need to have the confidence that the companies at which these incentives are aimed actually want and need these incentives. Those are, of course, two different things, Madam Speaker. I mean, needing them to spur investment is one consideration, and wanting them is another one. We have seen the track record of this government when it comes to consultation: Bill 6, minimum wage, and the list can go on. But I want to stick to this bill right now.

When we're talking about hundreds of millions of dollars, I think as legislators we need to make sure that, you know, we take some responsibility for taxpayers' money. We need to make sure that they will do what this government wants them to do, which is what the whole ultimate goal of this bill is, to diversify the economy. As we all know, this government has a terrible track record of understanding the needs of the businesses. In fact, it has made great and alarmingly successful attempts to push business out of Alberta. We've seen that, like, almost approximately close to \$40 billion in investment has fled this province because of this government's policies.

This hasn't been lost on Albertans. The NDP is heralding Bill 1 as a piece of legislation that will counter its poor record. All of a sudden this government wants to be the champion of this province after, like, \$40 billion has fled this province yet has made clear to investors that their money is not welcome here. I don't know. That's the sense that this government is sending to investors around the world. I know my colleague from Edmonton-Manning is thinking it's funny, but it's not. You know, the contradictions are baffling, hon. member, and if they are baffling to Albertans, you can imagine how much confidence the investors can have in these statements made by this government. In fact, these incentives are spread over the next eight years. Then you really have to see if this bill is actually window dressing.

We're not saying that it is window dressing. I think the government is trying to make an attempt, but it is going to take more scrutiny to determine whether it actually builds a worthwhile foundation for more petrochemical investments. If that's the goal, surely the NDP doesn't mind waiting a few months as the Resource Stewardship Committee reviews it. After all, the NDP has already waited three years before trotting it out despite all the talks about diversification during that time. The government waited three years. Why can't we send it to the committee for a few months and let them involve the stakeholders, let them engage all the industries and see if this is a good thing for Albertans or not?

It is quite ironic that it has a new-found interest in attracting investment. Once again, in this province where we used to attract investors from all around the world, they have left this province. It is because of this government's poor policies. When this government was elected, Madam Speaker, and they immediately hiked corporate taxes, investors simply crossed Alberta off their list, just like, "Not interested," and went wherever it was an investment-friendly zone to them. So when the NDP brings forward a bill in the third year of its mandate and holds it up as the answer

to diversification, we are wondering if it is window dressing. What is the real intent of this government? If the NDP's track record was better at keeping and attracting businesses, this bill would have been another matter, right? That would have been another matter, but we've all seen the track record of this government with investment and businesses. That's why we're wondering, like: what is going on here?

Another problem we have with this government is that it loves throwing money around. Our province has, like, a \$10 billion deficit. Actually, sorry, it's going to be – what? – \$9.998 billion or something tomorrow. We'll find out. That's a little bit better. Now the government is keen to spend \$200 million in grants for partial upgrading and \$500 million in loan guarantees for feedstock and infrastructure. And there's more. It's topping it off with \$800 million in loan guarantees for partial upgrading. So far we're at \$1.5 billion. Those aren't large figures to this NDP government because when you're used to \$10 billion, \$11 billion – I don't know even know – by the time this government is done, \$70 billion, \$80 billion, \$100 billion. I don't know the deficit. This \$1.5 billion is nothing for this government, but it is a lot of money for the Alberta taxpayers. Is it a good use of taxpayers' money? That's a good question, and I think the stakeholders need to be at the table to answer that question promptly and accurately, if this is a good use of the taxpayers' money. Perhaps we will find out that this is a good approach by the government.

Right now we have this complex bill before us, and for all the reasons I mentioned, I think it needs some more discussion. I think the members on this side of the House, everybody is working in good faith, saying: let's send this bill to committee. I've personally seen us regardless of what party we represent put aside the partisan environment that is obviously on full display in the House. When we're working in committee, we tend to work together and come to good conclusions. The committee can reach out to stakeholders, as I said, Madam Speaker.

5:10

I think it's a good approach to send this bill to a committee. Yes, it does take time but not a lot of time for the scope of things that we're looking at. Like, this government took three years to get to this level, and now all of a sudden a few months is too much time. In my humble opinion it will get the right results. I think it's worth while. The results are very good when the committee is tasked with reviewing legislation. There's no doubt in my mind, Madam Speaker, that this kind of methodical review needs to occur with this Bill 1. Another reason for sending this bill to committee is that the inexperienced NDP government has a poor track record of creating legislation that has unintended consequences.

Madam Speaker, we had Bill 201 by my hon. colleague from Highwood. It was Bill 201, Employment Standards (Firefighter Leave) Amendment Act, 2018, which the hon. Member for West Yellowhead spoke on from the government side, the hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville spoke on from the government side, and the hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater spoke on from that side.

I have a copy of the *Hansard* right now, March 19, 2018, page 207. I was just searching it while I was here. This is from the hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater, and this is their explanation of why the government wanted to send this important bill to the committee.

Now, one thing I would have to say, though, in looking over the bill, is that I think the intent is excellent. However, this isn't something that I've actually had an opportunity to talk to people in my riding about. I haven't had a chance to talk to the fire chiefs that I know on just how this is going to work in practice. I think,

you know, that like so many things that come before the House, sometimes the devil can be a bit in the details.

The Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater, basically, is justifying why we need to send Bill 201 to the committee for bigger engagement.

If the government can take a stand on that bill, Bill 201, which is a very important bill alongside this bill as well – I think they're both important – to send it to committee for a fulsome consultation, I'm just wondering: what is the problem with sending this bill to the committee? Why are there two different standards? When the opposition members bring a bill, it needs to go to committee, which will never see the day, but when it's a government bill, then it needs to be pushed right away. I think it's a double standard.

Let's pause, legislators from all sides. Let's do the right thing while we're all here to represent our constituents, represent Albertans, over 4 million people, and investors and send this bill to committee so that we can have a fulsome discussion. Hopefully, this is the best thing the NDP has ever discovered. We will find out.

I hope that we can get the support on this thing. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other speakers wishing to address the amendment?

Seeing none, are you ready for the vote?

[Motion on amendment REF1 lost]

The Deputy Speaker: We're back on the main bill. Any further speakers? The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I move that we adjourn debate on Bill 1 at this time.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Consideration of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech

Ms Sweet moved, seconded by Mr. Malkinson, that an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows.

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

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

[Adjourned debate March 20: Mr. Bilous]

The Deputy Speaker: Any members wishing to speak to this? The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

Ms Kazim: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my honour to rise today in the Assembly to respond to the Speech from the Throne as the Member for the amazing constituency of Calgary-Glenmore. The word "Glenmore" is derived from a Gaelic word, "mór gleann," which means big valley in English, and my name, Anam, is a Gaelic term for soul. Therefore, I'm pleased to say that it is my honour to be the anam mór gleann, soul of the big valley, by being the MLA for Calgary-Glenmore.

Madam Speaker, Calgary-Glenmore is a vibrant constituency that consists of highly active and engaged community members, leaders, and associations. It is known for its beautiful parks,

landmarks, churches, synagogues, highly reputable schools, long-term care facilities, and seniors' homes.

The uniqueness of this riding is evident when we look at the Glenmore reservoir. The reservoir is a source of drinking water for Calgarians and also connects various parks of the constituency with each other, namely: Heritage Park, the only living history museum in Canada to represent the western culture; North Glenmore park; South Glenmore park; and Weaselhead/Glenmore preservation park, which is one of the three designated natural parks in Calgary. I'm especially proud of the recently opened Variety park in my constituency as it is an inclusive park for people with disabilities, the only park of its kind in Calgary. I advocated strongly for this park, which was able to open due to the strong support of our government and community members. In addition, the Glenmore reservoir connects the Calgary Canoe Club and the Calgary sailing club, which is run by people with disabilities.

I'm also very proud of our government's southwest Calgary ring road project that not only reduces commuters' time but also helps further strengthen and connect our communities to one another.

The other important places that offer services to our constituents and many other Calgarians on an everyday basis include the Rockyview hospital, Calgary Jewish Centre, SouthWest Communities Resource Centre, and the community associations of Braeside, Cedarbrae, Chinook Park, Kelvin Grove and Eagle Ridge, Haysboro, Oakridge, Palliser, Bayview and Pump Hill, Lakeview, and North Glenmore Park.

In our riding we have a variety of excellent schools that give parents a choice in education for their children. For example, there are Calgary board of education public schools, Calgary Catholic public schools, charter schools, private schools, and home schools.

In the Speech from the Throne Her Honour talked about all the work that's ahead of this government, and I'm pleased to be able to play a part in this. As mentioned by Her Honour, when our government was first elected, we inherited an economy in free fall. The boom had ended, and the bust had just begun. But this bust was unlike others that had come before, different not only for its severity but in how we chose to respond by working to make life better and putting the priorities of regular people first. We did not rest idle or turn our backs on the day-to-day needs of people and families.

After years of overcrowding, hundreds of new schools have either been built or are under construction. More will be announced this year. Furthermore, we introduced a new school nutrition program to help kids get a good, healthy meal to start the day. This year that program will expand. I'm proud to step up today to support our government's initiatives to ensure our children have access to the best education in schools of their choice.

Another factor that makes our constituency so special is the fact that it borders on the Tsuut'ina Nation reserve. There has been a continuous engagement between the Tsuut'ina Nation people and the residents of Calgary-Glenmore. In the Speech from the Throne Her Honour mentioned that when our government was first elected, we made a government-wide commitment to make sure that the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples was respected in all policy deliberations.

Our government is working to keep that promise, and it is paying dividends. Initiatives such as affordable housing for indigenous people living off-reserve, the climate leadership plan, the renewable energy program, the curriculum review, work to better protect children in care, and more have all been strengthened because we engaged with indigenous people and their interests in a constructive and practical dialogue. The government will also take action in response to the child intervention panel so that we can do more to help vulnerable children and to reduce the number of indigenous children in government care.

5:20

Madam Speaker, when there is balance, there is fairness, and when there is fairness, there is success. Calgary-Glenmore is a perfect example of this balance, and I'm honoured that I have the opportunity to bring my constituents' voices to this Assembly every day. Fairness is also at the heart of our government, and the Speech from the Throne highlighted this commitment. As Her Honour mentioned, when government fails to work for people, inequality rises. Since coming to office, our government has ensured that Alberta makes progress in building a fairer province.

Our government understands that the people who work across our public sector are integral to the services Albertans rely on. We have already reached practical agreements, with no raises and better job stability, with many labour partners, including teachers and nurses, and a tentative agreement has been reached with our allied health professionals such as paramedics, lab technologists, and X-ray technologists. We have also extended the pay freeze that covers all government managers for two more years while also expanding its reach.

At the same time our government is committed to making sure that taxes on people and businesses remain the lowest in Canada. Building on our work to reduce exorbitant salaries in government agencies, boards, and commissions, work that has seen salaries cut significantly, with some executives seeing their salaries cut to the tune of hundreds of thousands of dollars a year, we will now focus on our postsecondary institutions. We owe it to our students to ensure that funding for education goes where it belongs, the classroom.

Madam Speaker, I'm very proud to stand up for my constituents and work with our government to protect continued funding for our schools, hospitals, and the services on which Albertans rely. Those times are gone when the poor and the most vulnerable have been left behind in recoveries of the past. In this time of economic recovery our government makes sure that this recovery works for everyone. Therefore, our government is working hard to make sure that every Albertan can live to their fullest potential by supporting our most vulnerable neighbours through improving income support programs. In addition, a review of the persons with developmental disabilities program is being conducted to determine how best to support persons living with disabilities.

Madam Speaker, families, children, and seniors are at the centre of Calgary-Glenmore, and I'm proud that our government has made the well-being of children, families, and seniors as the centre for our government as well. In the Speech from the Throne Her Honour talked about the fact that hundreds of thousands of families have received financial support through the Alberta child benefit and the enhanced Alberta family employment tax credit. Further, more affordable housing for people has been built and better supports for seniors have been introduced. Our government also pioneered a new, affordable, high-quality child care program so that the paycheques of new parents go further. I'm looking forward to working with our government to expand that program this year.

I am very proud to be a voice for the residents who work day and night for the success and sustainability of the communities in Calgary-Glenmore. As a resident of Calgary-Glenmore I want the best for my neighbours. I want to ensure that my constituents are employed with good jobs, that can support their families, and enjoy the quality of life that makes Alberta the best place to live in. I'm looking forward to participating in the steps our government will be taking to further diversify our economy and build a more resilient future. As more workers are finding more jobs in manufacturing, tourism, and renewable energy and our economy is looking up, now is the time to help more Albertans find jobs in new areas of opportunity.

There will be three bills aimed at diversifying our economy, with the first bill focusing on the diversification of the energy sector. This will help diversify the markets our energy resources can access via pipeline. We will also do more to add value to our resources right here at home.

Madam Speaker, in conclusion, community building is my passion, and I will continue working hard to strengthen communities in Calgary-Glenmore. The word "community" can be seen as the combination of communication and unity because, to me, the key to a strong community is communication and unity. As such, I will ensure that my constituents are continuously engaged and involved in this process to build the best vision for our constituency and communities.

Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) allows for five minutes of questions and comments.

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to be able to rise and speak in this House in response to the Speech from the Throne, which, with all due respect, really appears more than anything else to be a government trying to position themselves for the next election. I assume some of that probably comes from the reality that recent polls show Albertans expressing a significant amount of distrust for this government. They have no faith in this government's ability to stand up for them or their interests. As a matter of fact, I think a recent ThinkHQ poll revealed that 55 per cent of Albertans feel that the NDP has had a negative impact on their life since taking office.

However, whatever their motivation underneath may be for this throne speech, let's look at some of the details. I will say that I'm pleased and thankful to see that a throne speech delivered on International Women's Day gave credit and recognition to the women of our province and indeed to the world. I truly believe that the women of our communities should be celebrated and acknowledged and cherished for all that they do because many of them do really make a sincere and strong contribution to our province, to our communities, and to our lives. I just really want to take the opportunity also to express my own personal appreciation and thank you to all the women of our communities.

I would like to take a minute also to look at the portion of our throne speech that refers to the need for Alberta energy to get to Canadian tidewater. This has been an important issue and a bone of contention for many Albertans, who look with confusion, quite frankly, at the flip-flop that this NDP government has demonstrated. Leading up to and in the beginning of this NDP government's tenure, they were adamantly opposed, quite frankly, to the oil and gas sector as a way to build prosperity in this province. They wanted anything and everything but that and looked for every opportunity to disparage the oil and gas industry, the wealth that it produced, as somehow something that was tainted and, actually, the people that contribute to it.

However, in the throne speech, after months of sitting idle on the Trans Mountain pipeline, all of a sudden now they've come out and they speak about their new, united conviction that a new pipeline to a Canadian coast is a must, has to be built, and how the land lock must end. It sort of sounds like something out of a Conservative playbook, but let it be. Let it be. I'm glad to see that they now agree with us and have stated in the throne speech that billions of dollars have in fact been wasted and lost, that thousands of good, mortgage-paying jobs have been tossed out the window, that money that should have been in the pockets of hard-working Albertans – actually, the phrase in the throne speech was "Canadians." But,

really, it's Albertans that earned that for the benefit of the rest of Canadians. In fact, all that wealth has made its way where? South of our border, to our competitors.

Indeed, I find it fascinatingly interesting that the *Globe and Mail* has pointed out just recently that there are thousands and thousands of U.S. lobby dollars spent to shut down Canada's economy and prosperity, \$40 million in fact to hundreds of enviropolitical activists who shut down Canada's economy, who disparage our industry and our product and the people who produce it and, in fact, have brought a great deal of loss to the Canadian economy.

5:30

But it isn't just the lack of NDP support for the pipeline that has sent business south of the border; it has been NDP erroneous ideological policies that have also hurt business growth and sent investors out of this province by the billions. Minimum wage has hurt businesses, the carbon tax, labour compliance laws, WCB's lack of clarity. All of these things and multiple other reasons have contributed to investors picking up and leaving or, worse, going out of business. There are many restaurants in this province that have gone out of business.

The sunflower seed plant in southern Alberta finally had enough, closed up shop. Where did they go? They moved their operation to the U.S. and set up, and they're going to continue the same thing in the U.S., where the environments are better. In my riding, when I first came to office, Rahr Malting was looking at doing a major, major expansion here in Alberta to produce brewing malt. Because of endless regulatory compliance issues, their company finally decided to forget it. They went to the U.S. and set up a whole new plant there, and they're producing it in the U.S. We grow the best barley. The production should be here. But, no, now our barley is going to get shipped south of the border, and they'll produce it there. Not to mention all of the oil and gas companies, the oil and gas service companies, the oil and gas manufacturing companies who have closed up shop or have been severely curtailed, laid off hundreds and hundreds of people. There are literally acres of industrial shops and warehousing in the Red Deer region that are closed and empty because of the policies of this government.

Regarding the dispute with British Columbia, which has triggered an attack on Alberta's jobs, this should have been dealt with immediately. This is why Albertans need a government that will stand up for their jobs, for their economy, for their prosperity, and for their future.

I'm actually glad there's at least an opposition that stands up and speaks. The United Conservatives have been offering common-sense solutions to everyday Albertans and to the real problems that we've got. They're actually interested in common-sense, real solutions. We're committed to defending Alberta and its industries against a host of ideological policies not only from this Alberta NDP but from their cousins in British Columbia and then also from their friends in Ottawa, who have threatened our long-term viability. Not only that; our prosperity and, in fact, the honour of what Alberta produces as a product and a service enriches Canada. We have governments that are more interested in virtue signalling than in providing good jobs for people and taking care of them and providing the kinds of fundamental, system-wide policies that allow industry to prosper and to grow.

The statement that this government has been vigilant in defending workers is just simply not accurate, and Albertans know that. To date very little has really been done. Albertans can only hope that the talk is going to be more than just talk. I will say, though, that time is ticking, and the Alberta NDP should really have taken up UCP's calls for these things and come back to the House early in February for an emergency debate on these issues, with

what's happening in B.C. Perhaps we could have even had this resolved by now if we had done that.

There's been a considerable amount of confusion also of late regarding the plan to balance the budget depending on pipeline construction. That's like gazing into a crystal ball. This government early in its tenure was so against using resource money to employ Albertans, and now it's done a complete one-eighty. It's no wonder Albertans are confused. Under the section where you discuss how things are looking up so great and so wonderfully, there are a lot of Albertans that find that very hard to believe, a lot of Albertans who are very confused by that kind of language. They struggle in their own reality to see that actually happening.

The speech talks about new jobs, yet we still have over 165,000 unemployed Albertans, 26,000 more than when this government took office. Last month alone 10,500 jobs were lost and replaced by part-time gains and low-paying jobs that don't really pay the mortgages. There are currently nearly 43,000 unemployed youth in Alberta. The youth unemployment rate is 13.1 per cent, the highest outside of Atlantic Canada. There were 92,000 fewer payroll jobs in Alberta at the end of 2017 than there were before the recession came. Calgary currently has the second-highest unemployment rate in Canada's major cities, and this government tells us that everything is looking up and beautiful. This government doesn't acknowledge that Edmonton is currently tied for the third-highest unemployment among Canada's major cities. People are making less money. They've got fewer job prospects. Things are not going well at the personal level for many of these people who've had to take much lower paying jobs.

Then if you still want to think that Albertans should believe that the tough times are behind us, the reality is that 73 per cent of businesses surveyed have repeated that their costs have increased due to the carbon tax and all kinds of other things. They're actually predicting about 60,000 fewer jobs by 2019 due to the increase in minimum wages across the country and, as I've said, the carbon tax and labour compliance and some of these other things.

The tourism industry is reporting that it's struggling. The government wants to tell us that it's all up and beautiful. Well, except for the mountain parks, which are the only bright spot in this province right now, the tourism industry is down. The Hotel & Lodging Association has been very clear about the fact that their room rental rates are down with the increased costs. We have figures from them that indicate that the carbon tax levy on room rates impacts them by about \$300 a year. That's \$30,000 that they're paying for a 100-room hotel just on that. They're saying, quite truthfully, that the industry is not healthy, that they're not actually making money, and that things are not looking good for them.

I just had a conversation last week with a major high-density housing builder in Calgary. They're struggling. They're hardly able to sell a house at what it costs them to build it, and they're selling very, very few houses because things are not up. Jobs, housing, tourism, hotel and lodging, restaurants, and construction. Also, I know guys who were making lots of money in construction who are actually trying to build furniture in their garages now to survive. You know what? The government wants to say that things are looking up, looking up, looking up. Well, we're so far down the hole at the moment with these policies that it's going to be a long ways up.

Albertans themselves are not convinced that the tough times are all behind us. They're not thrilled about where we're at, and they're still struggling. What we should be talking about in this province is that we really need to continue to work hard, we need to dig down deep, and we need to do what Albertans do when things are tough and make things better. To just sort of try and present some fairy

tale that everything is getting better and all is well: just not true. C.D. Howe Institute said that the NDP plan to boost the province's minimum wage will probably lead to a loss of 25,000 jobs long term. This is a stark reality. Things are not necessarily looking up, and we can't pretend that Albertans don't realize this reality.

I don't dispute that we would all like to see things looking up. I think the members on the opposite side want to see things looking up, but that's not the reality we're at yet. We may get there at some point, but the truth is that we are not actually there yet. To try and somehow just keep saying it enough times and hope it's actually going to come into existence isn't being very realistic. I really believe that this government does want to do what's best. What I dispute is that the government's disastrous ideologies are not working, ideologies for which they did not have a mandate, no matter how much they want to try and say that they did. Most people didn't know what was coming.

I believe also that all of the members on the other side of the House are starting to actually believe that these disastrous ideologies aren't working; otherwise, why the flip-flop, the complete 180 a year before the general election? Or is it just electioneering? Why is it that I can go through the Speech from the Throne and pick out multiple places where it sounds just like they came out of a Conservative handbook? Very strange indeed. Electioneering. It's a sign of a desperate government that's willing to say anything to try and get re-elected.

5:40

As much as the stark reality of this economy stares us in the face, I think it's time that we begin to actually look at the future with

some realism, with some real confidence instead of fairy dust and determine to build a more resilient economy, one that puts us back on the path to economic security, one that builds fundamental and systemic policies instead of picking select businesses to have as bragging points. The reality is that Albertans are looking for better days and hoping for it, but they're not going to find it with this government, and this throne speech won't be able to deliver it to them in the end.

Once again, with all due respect, as I read through the throne speech, I just see an NDP government positioning themselves for the next election instead of listening to real . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, the hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Yes. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you again, Madam Speaker. I want to thank all participants for the excellent debate we've had this afternoon and move that we adjourn the House until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:42 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday morning, March 22, 2018

Day 9

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (UCP),
Deputy Leader of the Official Opposition
Anderson, Hon. Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (NDP)
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (UCP)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (NDP)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
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Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (NDP)
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Payne, Hon. Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (NDP)
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (NDP)
Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (NDP)
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (UCP),
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)
Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (NDP)
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP)
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)
Schneider, David A., Little Bow (UCP)
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (NDP)
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (NDP)
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (NDP)
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (UCP)
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (UCP)
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (NDP),
Deputy Government Whip
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)
Vacant, Fort McMurray-Conklin
Vacant, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake

Party standings:

New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 25 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent: 1 Vacant: 2

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Counsel	<i>Alberta Hansard</i>	
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel		

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Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
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Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
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Irfan Sabir	Minister of Community and Social Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
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Parliamentary Secretaries

Jessica Littlewood	Economic Development and Trade for Small Business
Annie McKittrick	Education

STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Mr. Coolahan
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Cyr	McKitrick
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Ellis	

Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

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Connolly	Schneider
Coolahan	Schreiner
Dach	Starke
Fitzpatrick	Taylor
Gotfried	

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Goehring
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Drever	Miller
Ellis	Orr
Hinkley	Renaud
Horne	Shepherd
Luff	Swann
McKitrick	Yao
McPherson	

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

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Gill	van Dijken
Horne	Woollard
Kleinsteinuber	

Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

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Luff	Schreiner
McIver	

Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms Kazim
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Anderson, W.	Orr
Babcock	Rosendahl
Drever	Stier
Drysdale	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kleinsteinuber	Taylor
McKitrick	

Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	Miller
Cooper	Nielsen
Goehring	Nixon
Gotfried	Pitt
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

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Gotfried	Panda
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Littlewood	Turner
Luff	

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Thursday, March 22, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good morning.

Let each of us reflect or pray and take the time to understand and prioritize our duties in order that we can properly fulfill the requests of our constituents and indeed all Albertans who count on our dedication, our service. Let us listen. Let us try to understand before being understood.

Please be seated.

Privilege

Misleading the House

The Speaker: Well, hon. members, as I indicated yesterday in the House, I intend to rule on the purported question of privilege raised by the Official Opposition House Leader on Tuesday, March 20, 2018.

With respect to the formalities of the purported question of privilege my office received notice from the Official Opposition House Leader on March 20, 2018, at 11:12 a.m. of his intention to raise a question of privilege under Standing Order 15. The member has satisfied the requirement in Standing Order 15(2) for notice to be given to the Speaker at least two hours before the opening of the sitting. The notice did not, however, contain many specifics, and in the future I would respectfully request members to include more details of their question of privilege in the written notice. By doing so, we might well be more efficient in the utilization of this Assembly's valuable time. I would note that the debate on this matter occurred on March 20 and 21, and the arguments can be found on pages 259-261 and pages 293-294 of *Alberta Hansard* for those dates respectively.

As to the facts of the matter before us today, the Official Opposition's purported question of privilege has to do with an alleged deliberately misleading statement that the Minister of Environment and Parks made on March 19, 2018, in the Assembly. Specifically, in a question period exchange the Official Opposition House Leader asked whether the Minister of Environment and Parks will "come and talk to the people of Rocky Mountain House and Sundre about the future of the Bighorn." The Minister of Environment and Parks responded to the question that "I met with the mayor of Rocky Mountain House a couple of weeks ago and discussed the economic development and tourism opportunities that are available through the regional advisory council's advice." This exchange can be found on page 197 of the March 19, 2018, edition of *Alberta Hansard*.

Hon. members, this is not the first time during the 29th Legislature that a purported question of privilege concerning an allegation of deliberately misleading the Assembly has been raised. I ruled on a similar matter on December 12, 2016. As members may recall, a question of privilege raising these types of allegations is a very serious matter. Such a question purports that a member has made a statement to deliberately mislead the Assembly and, as such, is treated as a possible contempt of the Assembly.

One authority treating these matters as possible contempts is *Erskine May's Treatise on The Law, Privileges, Proceedings and Usage of Parliament*, 24th edition, as discussed on page 254. Another is the third edition of the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* on page 85.

The second aspect to note regarding purported contempts of this nature is that there is a test for deliberately misleading the Assembly. This three-part test was referenced on Tuesday in the Official Opposition House Leader's arguments which are available on page 260 of *Alberta Hansard* for that day.

The test was devised by the former Clerk of the New Zealand House of Assembly, David McGee. An explanation of it can be found in the third edition of his book, *Parliamentary Practice in New Zealand*, on pages 653 to 654. Quoting McGee, there are three elements to be established when it is alleged that a member is in contempt by reason of a statement that the member has made: the statement must in fact have been misleading, it must be established that the member making this statement knew at the time that the statement was made that it was incorrect, and in making it, the member must have intended to mislead the House.

Hon. members, as I noted in my ruling of December 12, 2016, which may be found on pages 2508 to 2509 in *Alberta Hansard*, I would like to point out that the three-part test is very difficult to meet. In his arguments on Tuesday the Official Opposition House Leader stated that the Minister of Environment and Parks did not, as she had stated, meet with the mayor of Rocky Mountain House. Instead, he alleged that the minister encountered the mayor in passing in a hospitality suite in Edmonton. He further claimed that this did not constitute a formal meeting, and as such the remarks of the minister "showed contempt for this Assembly because she chose to answer a question by referring to a meeting that did not take place, thereby misleading this Assembly." These comments can be found on page 260 of the March 20 edition of *Alberta Hansard*.

The Government House Leader in his submissions noted that he was advised that the Minister of Environment and Parks met with the mayor of Rocky Mountain House for about 10 minutes at an event coinciding with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change conference in Edmonton. He further claimed that there is no dispute as to whether a discussion between the two individuals took place. Rather, there is a difference of opinion as to whether or not this encounter between the minister and the mayor was indeed a meeting. He argued that: "There may be legitimate differences of opinion as to whether this meeting or nonmeeting was sufficient consultation on the matter being discussed. Those are legitimate differences of opinion, but they do not constitute a contempt of the House." You may find those arguments and the various authorities and precedents that the Government House Leader referenced on pages 293 and 294 of yesterday's *Alberta Hansard*.

Considering the facts of this situation and applying the McGee test to the matter at hand, it would be very difficult to conclude that the minister's statement about a meeting was in fact deliberately misleading. The minister claimed that she met with the mayor of Rocky Mountain House while the Official Opposition House Leader stated that although the minister and the mayor did encounter each other, they did not in fact have a meeting regarding economic development as the minister indicated in her response.

9:10

This situation is similar to the one facing Speaker Kowalski on November 24, 2003. In that instance Speaker Kowalski concluded that the then Minister of Infrastructure's response left "considerable room for subjective interpretation and ambiguity." Speaker Kowalski relied upon a reference that is now found on page 516 of the third edition *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*.

In most instances, when a point of order or a question of privilege has been raised in . . . response to an oral question, the Speaker has ruled that the matter is a disagreement among Members over the facts surrounding the issue. As such, these matters are more a

question of debate and do not constitute a breach of the rules or of privilege.

Members may find Speaker Kowalski's ruling on pages 1803 and 1804 of *Alberta Hansard* for November 24, 2003.

Paragraph 494 on page 151 of *Beauchesne* holds that "it has been formerly ruled by Speakers that statements by Members respecting themselves and particularly within their own knowledge must be accepted."

Hon. members, the matter before the Assembly today also involves a disagreement among members as to the facts. The question of what an interaction must be in order to qualify as a meeting is subjective. It's not a matter for the Speaker to adjudicate. Accordingly, because this is simply a disagreement as to the facts, I find there is no *prima facie* question of privilege, and this concludes the matter.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 2 Growth and Diversification Act

[Adjourned debate March 21: Mr. Gotfried]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: Good morning, hon. members.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills, followed by the Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 2, Growth and Diversification Act. Here we go again. We have come full circle on AITC, the Alberta investor tax credit, and CITC, capital investment tax credit. Now we also have an interactive digital media tax credit, IDMTC. Too many acronyms.

This new tax credit would provide a 25 per cent tax credit on eligible salaries and wages with an additional credit being available for companies who hire employees from underrepresented groups. Wow. Maybe my East Indian friends living in Silicon Valley, who are facing H-1B visa issues in the U.S.A., might move to Alberta, Madam Speaker. I wish so. Currently there are roughly 50 interactive digital media studios in Alberta, with approximately 500 full-time employees. These employees earn over \$70,000 per year on average, and the industry contributes roughly \$80 million to Alberta's annual GDP.

Madam Speaker, I do question the wisdom of targeting this sector. If Alberta is lagging behind B.C. and Quebec in terms of developing our digital media sectors because we have not previously had a tax credit, how are we going to catch up if we implement a similar program and are already so far behind? Overall on tax credits other provinces such as B.C., Manitoba, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia have found success with some version of a small-business venture capital tax credit. Tax credits can be good stimulus, too, if they are not too onerous on the red tape. According to the government the CITC has already stimulated more than \$1 billion in capital projects for manufacturing, processing, and tourism infrastructure.

With respect to the AITC it remains a first-come, first-served funding pool. As of March 16, 2018, there was still \$1.397 million approximately in unallocated money, roughly 5 per cent of the total initial amount, Madam Speaker. We know that AITC was supposed to be \$90 million over two years and that it was later changed to

three years and that now it offers a 20 per cent tax credit to investors. According to the minister last year at estimates:

For the AITC as of March 31 of 2017 there were 126 eligible business corporations, two venture capital corporations. By sector 87 per cent were research, development, and commercialization of proprietary technology and products and processes.

I would like to get a formal update on those numbers one year later.

The Minister of Economic Development and Trade further went on to say last year:

I do need to say that we don't release the names of the companies that are receiving these funds. They're not posted.

That's on page EF-666, Alberta's Economic Future, April 10, 2017, in *Hansard*, Madam Speaker.

But just one month ago, on February 21, 2018, the same minister put out a press release.

Tax Credits Spurs Growth in Northern Alberta.

Alberta's north will see new jobs and business expansion with support from the Capital Investment Tax Credit (CITC) . . .

Seven Generations Energy, a liquids-rich natural gas developer, received conditional approval of a \$5-million tax credit to build a natural gas processing facility in the Montney Kakwa River area. The project will create about 150 construction jobs and dozens of direct permanent jobs once operational.

The minister went back on his words here, Madam Speaker. He said before that he cannot release the names, but then he did a campaign-style announcement on the same subject which he said is supposed to be confidential. The minister went back on his word here, and he ran a press release announcing who got the tax credit. He went on in the press release – I want to quote this.

New projects include building a cannabis manufacturing and processing facility, a skydiving facility, a craft brewery and tap room, a biofuel facility and a glass factory. Expansion projects include upgrades at a precision machining shop, a trailer manufacturer, a metal manufacturing plant and pulp mills.

In small communities people know who these businesses are, Madam Speaker. The minister was not going to reveal who got the money, but now he has. He wouldn't tell me or the public a year ago, but now he is telling everyone. So Albertans suspect that the NDP minister is picking winners and losers. Why not give industry the opportunity to come before the Legislature themselves and tell us why this wonderful Bill 2 and the AITC and CITC are so important to them?

9:20

In that light, Madam Speaker, I would like to move an amendment. I move that the motion for second reading of Bill 2, Growth and Diversification Act, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 2, Growth and Diversification Act, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

I have the requisite copies, that I'm passing on to the page. I'll wait for you to call me to speak again.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. If you could just wait until I have a copy of the amendment.

Hon. member, your amendment will be referred to as RA1. Please continue.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The reason I am moving this amendment is that in parliaments around the world bills get referred to committees all the time. I should know that because when I went to the Mother of Parliaments in London, U.K., that's what I learned about.

If the grants are so important to the recipients, we should let them come here and tell us why the programs the ministry is expanding are essential to grow the economy and the future of Alberta. Coming to the committee will allow the members to ask important questions of the department on the bill, questions like: why wasn't recommendation 7.4 of the Energy Diversification Advisory Committee included in Bill 2? That particular recommendation, 7.4, reads, "Seek the permanent extension of the existing accelerated capital cost allowance for manufacturers such as the petrochemical industry to provide certainty to those interested in investing in the downstream."

Madam Speaker, as you know, the United States is going to eat our lunch on this particular business. The Trump budget cut allows an accelerated capital cost allowance, and some say it is more powerful than a corporate tax cut. So there is merit in referring this to the standing committee.

Not very long ago in this House, actually this week, the Member for Lethbridge-East spoke. I'm just looking at the *Hansard* from March 19. The member said:

Clearly, there is a good case to be made that we need to take a closer look at changing the standing orders to allow for further committee-initiated reviews. I would note that there is a standing committee of the Legislature, that being the Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing Committee, whose mandate is expressly to review proposed standing orders. I believe that that committee is the appropriate venue for the discussion of this proposal to take place.

For that reason, I have an amendment that I would like to put forward.

That's how that particular Motion 501 was referred to a standing committee, Madam Speaker. If that argument was true two days ago, it's still true now, today, and tomorrow.

This particular bill that we are talking about, Bill 2 – there was a lot of talk in the throne speech. If this government truly believes that it's an important bill, we have to actually strengthen the bill. That's why I moved this amendment.

Madam Speaker, I look forward to the debate on this amendment, and I also look forward to the discussion in the committee.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak to the referral amendment? Oh, 29(2)(a) first. Sorry.

Now is there anybody wishing to speak to the referral amendment? The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak, of course, against this amendment. You know, it's important that the government get on with the agenda of managing the affairs of the province, and, of course, sending this bill to committee would certainly interfere with that.

You know, it's interesting that the member opposite for Calgary-Foothills implies that sending this bill to committee will in fact enhance the work of this Legislature. But it's interesting that when his leader, his current leader, was a cabinet minister in Ottawa, he and the Harper government, of course, wrote a 200-page manual on how to use committees to obstruct the work of the House of Commons. I don't know if the members opposite, of course, have a similar document available to them now. I would anticipate that many of them probably wouldn't have the attention span to read a 200-page document.

Mr. McIver: Point of order, Madam Speaker. I'm sorry to have to call this.

The Acting Speaker: Point of order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Point of Order

Language Creating Disorder

Mr. McIver: Thank you. Madam Speaker, under 23(h), (i), and (j). I appreciate that the hon. minister considers himself a comedian, but the fact is that insulting the intelligence of other members of the House, I think, really falls directly under words that would disrupt the order in the House, "imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member," and I think it pretty much qualifies as "abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder." I would respectfully ask you to insist that the minister withdraw those remarks.

The Acting Speaker: The Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Yes, Madam Speaker. I've been feeling a little feisty this week, and I realize that I perhaps got a little too excited in my previous comments. I withdraw and apologize to the members opposite. However...

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, thank you. Just a reminder. Today's a great day; it's budget day. So if we could just keep the tone of the House down and have a respectful debate, that would be appreciated. Please continue.

Debate Continued

Mr. Schmidt: Madam Speaker, my point stands, though, that the work of diversifying the economy of Alberta is urgent. You know, later this afternoon we're going to hear the Minister of Finance deliver the budget speech. We're all eagerly anticipating that. In that speech I'm certain that the Minister of Finance will probably talk about the importance of building an economic recovery that will last, an economic recovery that serves the needs of working people.

We've been through the worst economic downturn in a generation, and we know that things are starting to look up. We've created 90,000 new jobs, and every economic indicator that can go up is up, Madam Speaker. But we also know that there's more work to do, that not everybody in Alberta is feeling the positive effects of this economic recovery. That's what this bill is intended to do. That's why I think it's not wise to refer this bill to committee, because there are thousands and thousands of people out there in Alberta who are still not feeling the effects of the economic recovery. It's important that the government get on with building a recovery that will last, that brings up everybody, all regular Albertans. We cannot afford to spend time in committee deliberating whether or not the proposals brought forward here will be good for the people of Alberta because we know that it'll be good for the people of Alberta. The people of Alberta can't wait for this Legislature to continue its deliberations. The people of Alberta want this government to take action, and that's what we're doing by bringing forward this bill. So I encourage all of our members to vote down this amendment to refer this bill to committee.

I want to go on, Madam Speaker, if I can for a moment, to just outline some of the points of this bill that require this Legislature to deal with this urgently so we can get on with building an economic recovery that's built to last.

9:30

One of the first things that the member opposite noted is that we provide supports for a digital media tax credit similar to Quebec. Quebec, of course, has a burgeoning video game industry. Now, Madam Speaker, this may come as a surprise to you. I know that I don't look like the kind of person who would play video games, but

I do. I have been an enthusiastic player of video games ever since the age of four or five, and I know that the Member for Edmonton-Decore is also an eager video game player.

A number of the video games, of course, that I've enjoyed over the previous few years have been built right here in Edmonton by a studio that many are familiar with called BioWare. BioWare, of course, has created a number of video games that have been tremendously popular and tremendously fun to play. I have spent many hours playing *Dragon Age: Origins*, which was a tremendous video game. I spent many, many, many hours playing the *Mass Effect* trilogy, Madam Speaker, and I just want to put it on record that I thought the ending of *Mass Effect 3* was just fine.

Madam Speaker, just to go a little bit deeper into the catalogue of BioWare games, people who have been playing video games for a while will remember, of course, that BioWare also created the *Knights of the Old Republic* series of video games, which were a classic and probably the best *Star Wars* video games that have ever been made. No *Star Wars* game since has really come close to capturing the essence of the *Star Wars* universe quite like the *Knights of the Old Republic* video games. But my personal favourite BioWare game was one that didn't receive a lot of commercial success. It was a video game called *Jade Empire*. It was created for the Xbox, and it was really BioWare's take on a kung fu movie.

I see, Madam Speaker, that you are eagerly anticipating me to speak to the amendment. Trust me; I will get there. Let me just say that *Jade Empire*, of course, came out in 2004, I believe. It's been 14 years. I'm still eagerly anticipating a sequel. Maybe this digital media tax credit will spur the people of BioWare on to create that sequel. I can only hope because that was, of course, by far my favourite BioWare video game, and I've been waiting for the sequel for a number of years.

But the digital media tax credit is not the only piece of this legislation that must be passed urgently so that we can continue to build an economic recovery that is built to last. You know, this act includes a number of proposed changes that directly impact the postsecondary system in our province in a very exciting and positive way. This legislation includes supports for 3,000 new tech spaces in Alberta's postsecondary system that will increase educational access for learners across our province. Our goal is to spread the 3,000 new spaces to a number of institutions from across the province, meaning that this program will support accessibility and educational growth in urban and rural areas.

Madam Speaker, it's our intent to fund 200 of these spaces during the upcoming 2018-2019 academic year if this bill passes the Legislature. That's one of the reasons that I urge our members to vote down this amendment to send it to committee, because time is of the essence. We need to do the work of identifying the 200 spaces that will be created for the upcoming 2018-2019 academic year. Of course, we know that committees don't work quickly enough to get this work done so that these spaces will be in place for the 2018-2019 academic year.

In addition to those 200 spaces for the next academic year, an additional 550 spaces will be made available in the 2019-2020 school year, with 750 spaces being added each of the following three years, meaning that by 2022-23 all 3,000 new tech spaces will be available to students in Alberta. This bolsters our existing strong programming in the tech sector currently being offered by our province's postsecondary institutions.

When the Minister of Economic Development and Trade and I made this announcement at NAIT, Erin Wilson, a recent graduate of the NAIT instrumentation technology program, who is currently at NAIT training for the mechatronic skills competition, said: I

believe it's very important for students to have access to a diverse range of programs to build and update their skills; this program will create more opportunities for students like me to train and grow and hopefully improve the economy.

We've also heard from industries across the province, and we know that access to a highly skilled talent pool is one of the determining factors that high tech firms consider before making investment decisions. Zachary Fritze, the CEO of Promethean Labs, said at this same announcement: new technology brings global opportunities closer together, and they affect every sector of our economy; Promethean Labs uses satellite imagery to help agricultural companies be more efficient; here from our head offices in Edmonton we bring our technology to the world; we need to support students locally to help prepare for the incredible job opportunities in tech in Alberta, right here; that will help us ensure that our province continues to be a global leader today and tomorrow.

Madam Speaker, we also made a similar announcement in Calgary, and at that announcement Mary Moran, the CEO of Calgary Economic Development corporation, said: this proposed expansion of tech spaces at postsecondary institutions is fantastic; I'm very impressed on how quickly the government moved on this. I want to emphasize that. She said: I'm very impressed on how quickly the government moved on this.

Of course, this referral amendment that the Member for Calgary-Foothills has made would severely disappoint Ms Moran and the Calgary Economic Development corporation and prove that perhaps government isn't as nimble as the people of Alberta would like it to be. I don't understand why the Member for Calgary-Foothills insists on bogging down the work of the Legislature by sending everything to committee.

But anyway, Ms Moran went on to say: Calgary Economic Development corporation was very vocal about the gap that Alberta has in the tech talent post-Amazon; we want to help them in conjunction with postsecondaries, and they've done a great job of responding; this is needed both short- and long-term; they're taking long-term vision in how they can adjust the economy; we are really behind the eight ball in high tech; in terms of software engineers we're behind the rest of the country; we have to get caught up because we are a centre for industries, whether it's energy, transportation or logistics or agriculture, and we don't have the talent to support the digitization of these industries; Alberta's assets in terms of ensuring that tech graduates stay here are our quality of life, our high cost of living, Rocky Mountain playground; safe communities are a big lure for people that want to work here.

I'm sure that she meant to say "our low cost of living," Madam Speaker. Vancouver and Toronto are having difficulty retaining people because housing is too expensive, commutes are tough, housing is tough.

We're committed to technology and digitization of our sectors and showing talent that this is a destination. This won't happen overnight, but it will happen. That will happen, Madam Speaker, unless this Legislature decides to send this to committee and delay the passage of this bill and make Albertans continue to wait for tech talent that we could have right now instead of dithering about this in committee. The Growth and Diversification Act will take unprecedented steps to increase our existing talent pool so that our province can support local start-ups and established tech giants. We know that additional spaces are needed to keep pace with the demands of the new economic reality, and we know that our postsecondary graduates are highly skilled and coveted by businesses across North America. So this bill would be a win for students, a win for industry, and a win for our provincial economic future.

9:40

To ensure that our graduates are entering the workforce as quickly as possible, the initial 200 spaces may potentially be supplemented by the delivery of a number of short-term skill development opportunities. Potential areas in which short-term skill training may occur include 3-D modelling, new media design, predictive analytics, and industrial network cybersecurity. If implemented, these skill development programs could help Albertans, particularly those with existing credentials, to acquire tech-related skills to aid in the transition to permanent employment.

Additional programs could be developed in areas such as information and communication technologies, clean and renewable technology, artificial intelligence, and quantum computing. In addition to increasing access to tech programming, we will also be adding supports to ensure that education remains affordable. New scholarships will be created by this legislation to encourage students to join the high-tech workforce that will sustain our province's economy now and in the future.

Together with the advice of our government partners, including Indigenous Relations, Status of Women, Community and Social Services, we will work to ensure that underrepresented groups, including women, have access to exciting, future-focused career training. A portion of these new scholarships will be focused on women interested in entering tech-related training programs. As with the 3,000 additional spaces, the scholarships will be rolled out over a five-year period.

Madam Speaker, again, providing these urgent and desperately needed financial supports for our students just highlights the urgent nature of this bill and reinforces the fact that we shouldn't vote to send this to committee, that we should deal with this legislation right here today in the Legislature.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you so much, Madam Speaker. The minister's speech was interesting. Time is of the essence, he said. Time is of the essence to ensure various things. More particularly, the message I heard loud and clear from the minister was: future creations of video games coming right out of here in Edmonton so that he can play them. That's loud and clear the message.

But I really heard, Madam Speaker, and what I'd like, probably, some further clarification on is his comment: time is of the essence. There's no time to study this. There's no time to bring in witnesses and ask what they think or give suggestions on perhaps how to strengthen this piece of legislation.

But time is not of the essence for this minister and his government when it comes to firefighter leave. Time is not of the essence when it comes to supporting a motion to do more than one thing in committee, which he also touched on, saying that committees already have lots of stuff on the go. It's interesting, Madam Speaker, that this government doesn't support being expedient in any other area other than things on their own agenda, and it's disturbing that they don't appreciate that there are constituents in constituencies other than their own that would like to have a say, that would like to have an impact on the legislation that will be imposed on them by this government. This government continually barrels through with their ideological agenda without consultation.

They consistently get in trouble from the public over these matters, like Bill 6. With Bill 6 having been one of the first pieces of legislation that really got them into trouble in regard to consultation, you would think that this government would have learned a lesson, Madam Speaker. That's clearly not what's

happened on bills 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, prorogued back one, two, three, four and so on and so forth. That's clearly what's happening here with Bill 2, the Growth and Diversification Act, that is meant to in essence encourage other sectors to invest and participate in the Alberta economy, probably because one of our major industries has been so poorly damaged by this NDP government's policies.

I commend efforts to diversify, Madam Speaker. That's not what this is about. This is about the Minister of Advanced Education specifically citing that time is of the essence. He refused to support an amendment to refer this bill to committee for future study but, on the other hand, won't support a motion to actually make committees more expedient. It's, like, I think, to the average person not going to make sense. It doesn't make sense.

Furthermore, they're not interested in being expedient in assisting firefighters in our province, especially the volunteer ones, guys that put their lives in their own hands to help out their communities very cheaply.

Madam Speaker, time is of the essence. Time is of the essence to remove this government. Time is of the essence to bring back investment to Alberta without government handouts. Time is of the essence to refer this bill to committee and have it properly studied. I want to hear from the NDP's friends as to how much this bill is needed. Who's going to benefit and why from this piece of legislation? What is the impact on Alberta families of this piece of legislation? That's what I want to hear.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the referral amendment? The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to be able to rise and speak in favour of this referral motion. I rise to speak to my colleague's referral motion on Bill 2, the Growth and Diversification Act. This bill is yet another example of the classic NDP world view and misguided economic philosophies that we've seen for many years now. This government and their ideological allies believe that every problem arising in economics and society can be solved with the meddling hands of government.

Madam Speaker, I can tell you that I support growth and I support diversification, but I'm not sure that this bill will effectively promote either. For the almost three years that we've seen this government in action, what we've seen is the exact opposite of what this bill claims to promote. What does promote growth? I would argue that it's lower taxes, less regulation, and a government which doesn't treat wealth-creating private enterprise like the enemy. How about diversification? I would posit that diversification will only come when innovators and entrepreneurs have access to capital.

It is well apparent that much of what this government has done, in fact, has sent both domestic and international investors fleeing for other jurisdictions. In fact, Madam Speaker, \$36 billion in the first two years has fled this province according to the Conference Board of Canada. With Alberta business reeling from the destructive policies of the NDP, what have they decided to do? Grace us with yet another government program to try and reverse some of the damage that they have caused. Are you friend or foe to Albertans if you first create the problem then seek to remedy it?

Madam Speaker, I would encourage the government, if they truly want growth and diversification, to reverse their antigrowth and antidiversification policies: scrap the carbon tax, for one; reverse their 20 per cent increase in corporate tax; and remove the shackles of regulation that they have placed on free enterprise in this province. Albertans have already suffered the consequences of NDP legislation that was not completely thought through.

Let's support this referral amendment and let the committee process try and make some improvements and get our professionals and people who understand these industries into a room to talk about what the best practices are. A fulsome vetting process would be the second-best approach. The best approach would be an economic impact study, which never seems to get done by this government.

9:50

Madam Speaker, I would also point out that this isn't the NDP's first shot at this. In 2016 they passed the Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act, and while that legislation may have its merits, it certainly hasn't performed the economic miracles that the NDP might have expected it to.

A large part of this bill rests on support for industry through tax credits. Tax credits can incent economic activity, but I would question whether they will come anywhere close to making up for the disincentives created by the NDP's other policies. Boutique tax credits have rarely ever been shown to outperform across-the-board tax reductions. I would also question the wisdom of the sector-specific credits that this bill extols. When we start handing out favours to specific people in specific industries, we start picking winners and losers. Just look to the east, to Quebec, to see what has happened with Bombardier for many, many years.

Madam Speaker, if you want diversification, you should let the market decide which areas to diversify in, not the government. Market has the best ability to be able to identify what is a growth industry and what isn't. We have a huge industry, we have a huge economy, especially in first-world countries, and Alberta certainly fits that model. These market forces are so difficult to predict that even people who have studied it for years have a difficult time in doing that and getting it right. If you want to use tax credits, then let's have them available to all sectors, not those that the front bench opposite us happens to grace with their favour on any particular day.

Foreseeing the potential problems with these types of tax credits doesn't require a crystal ball; it only requires time and thought. Let's take the time to consult and weigh this legislation a little more before proceeding. We can do that by referring it to committee now.

We also need to look back at the way tax credit programs have performed in Alberta in the past. Were the objectives of the past legislation met? Did the relief get to those who needed it the most? What kind of returns did we see? Before we utilize the power of government, we should see if these industries can attract private capital and succeed on their own. There was a day not too long ago in this province when the Alberta advantage gave our companies a leg up against those in other jurisdictions. I hope, along with Albertans, that this government hasn't completely removed that unique support.

Some other points that I'd like to point out, Madam Speaker, are that the AITC is a first-come, first-served funding pool. As of March 16, 2018, there was still almost \$1.4 million of unallocated money left in there, roughly 5 per cent of the total amount. Because the budget has not been released, the total funding being committed to the IDMTCC has not been reported, so we need to give this time to be able to actually find out from that budget what that report will say. If Alberta is lagging behind B.C. and Quebec in terms of developing our capital media sectors because we have not previously had a tax credit, how are we going to catch up if we implement a similar program and are already so far behind?

One thing that we found that this government has a lot of support for is these superclusters. The federal government is also in support of these superclusters. What they've realized is that there are certain areas that have their natural advantages over other areas. Like, for instance, in my riding Taber has actually been granted one of the

superclusters' funding for that area to be able to do a beta test for a supercluster. Anyways, we have a lot of high-heat units down in that area, and it's a natural fit for being able to have this supercluster down there. The problem, Madam Speaker, is that if you were to try to apply that to, say, Fort McMurray, they don't have the heat units up there, obviously, and it just wouldn't work. What we've seen is that certain areas have their natural advantages, so it makes sense for those areas to start growing and diversifying in those areas.

However, for us to say "Quebec is doing it" or "B.C. is doing it" is not really a fulsome way of looking at the whole picture of this because it doesn't really indicate whether or not we have the natural ability to be able to compete with Quebec or B.C. Just because other provinces offer these incentives doesn't mean that we have to. Alberta has a history of success in taking our own approach to the economy.

I think that rather than saying that we don't like that approach – and I've heard the members opposite say that we've messed up for 44 years. I would have to say that a lot of them have moved to this province because of the opportunities that they were given, and for them to say that is completely disingenuous, Madam Speaker. I hope that just because something is being done in another jurisdiction doesn't mean that we have to follow suit and do it here. We might be behind the eight ball on that. That doesn't mean that we have to keep on doing it.

I think that Albertans are a little concerned about how disingenuous the NDP sound when they only send opposition motions and bills to committee and refuse to do their own.

I think it was a little telling when I heard the Minister of Advanced Education just minutes ago say, Madam Speaker, and I quote: we know this bill will be good for all Albertans. Now, the question that I have. I don't know what crystal ball the Minister of Advanced Education has, but we constantly ask: have you done an economic impact study? What we are constantly told is: no, we have not.

I had an opportunity to speak to the Minister of Labour a couple of times, talk about this exact issue. One of the things that she said to me that also I found very interesting was: we have not done an economic impact study, but we will assess as we go. Those were her words. The problem is, Madam Speaker, that the value of an economic impact study is that it provides us with an opportunity to be able to figure out: what are the pros and what are the cons of any piece of legislation that is brought forward that will be binding on Albertans and binding on our wealth creators and entrepreneurs in this province? You know, unfortunately, I don't understand why this government has not implemented that very important tool, an economic impact study. They have refused to do that.

Because of that, some of the things that I've heard people around Alberta say in describing this government are: a government of unintended consequences. Look, I'm not trying to be rude. I'm just telling you what I've heard people say, and this is not an attempt on my part to be glib in any way. But I think we need to take a look at what people are saying, especially if you're in the government right now. You need to say: "Okay. Well, why are they saying that? Why are they saying that this is a government of unintended consequences?"

I think the reason why is because when you have a policy come forward – when I talked to the Minister of Labour about this issue of minimum wage and she was set, dead set, on making sure we get to \$15 minimum wage, I asked her. I said: have you done an economic impact study? She said: no; we're going to assess as we go. I gave her the studies, Madam Speaker, about other jurisdictions that have actually increased minimum wage quickly, and the studies are pretty clear that for every 10 per cent you increase the minimum

wage, you actually increase unemployment anywhere between 4 to 8 per cent amongst young people. The studies are actually – look, these are not studies where people just say: you know, this is what I think is going to happen. This is actually looking back on what they've done.

So how do we know whether or not it's a good policy or a bad policy? Well, we can now look back and take a look at what's happened. We are now sitting at 13.1 per cent unemployment rate amongst young people in this province. At what point are we going to be in a situation where this government says, "Enough is enough; we need to stop punishing our young people"? The reason why I point this out is because right now we're speaking, Madam Speaker, about taking this legislation, sending it to committee, properly vetting it, and hoping to be able to get the proper iteration that would be good for all Albertans.

10:00

Now, when the minister, I believe with good intentions, said that he believes – no, he didn't say that he believes. He said: we know this bill will be good for all Albertans. I believe he thinks that. I believe that he actually believes that. The problem is that he doesn't know, and unless he actually did and their government actually did an economic impact study, Madam Speaker, I don't know how they would know. Even an economic impact study will only give you the best direction going forward. I have to say that I am deeply concerned – deeply concerned – that this government refuses to do economic impact studies. They refuse to consult in a proper, fulsome way with the people who are in the industries, that have been there for 10, 20, 30, 40 years in these industries, that know best, rather than actually saying that they know best.

There's a level of arrogance when people say, "We know best," rather than saying: "We need to ask the people of Alberta. We need to ask the people in these industries. We need to ask the people who are in the trenches." Once we do that, we can get a great discussion. We can have a great opportunity to be able to figure out, really, what will be best for Albertans.

I have no doubt that, you know, if the NDP were graded by intentions, they would get A's. I don't have any doubt that they have the best of intentions. But, Madam Speaker, this government is not being graded on their intentions; they're being graded on the outcomes. They're being graded on how well they do for Albertans. To tell you the truth, the evidence is not looking so good for them at this point.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I really appreciate my colleague reasoning very reasonably with the government benches here to support this motion. I really appreciate that. He has very, very, very valid points about the big picture, so he's not just looking at this bill, but he also said how we can actually help Albertans to get back to work. He said that he did some work with the Labour minister and gave them input on the impact of minimum wage policy and other labour policy amendments. I really appreciate that.

Now, I would like to ask him to also talk about the hesitancy on the side of the NDP here, why they can't support this referral motion and how they can justify the referral of Bill 201. If you can share your thoughts on that, I would appreciate it.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate my colleague for the question. I think it's a very important question because it strikes at the heart of the issue here, and that is that, unfortunately, we've seen for almost three years now with this government a propensity to believe that they are right when it comes to reshaping Alberta. You know, we've heard it many times where they believe that there has been a real travesty that's happened in Alberta for the last 44 years and that it's their responsibility to set things straight. Now, I appreciate that they may think that and believe that. I would even be willing to accept it if the outcomes showed it. So far, though, all we've seen in the last three years is a fleeing from this province of foreign investment.

Remember, Madam Speaker, that when they talk about how, you know, we did so bad or so wrong in this province during the '90s, there was a 10-year period, actually, during the '90s – I think it started around '93 – where there was more foreign investment that came into Alberta than Ontario and Quebec combined. Because of that what happened was the trickle-down effect. That foreign investment that came in: we had small businesses that were able to start because of that. We had more jobs, obviously, because of that. We had almost the size of Lethbridge moving into this province every year. That kind of growth is a good thing. And you know what? To tell you the truth, this has been a great blessing to me and my family and something that I'm very grateful for. We used to call that the Alberta advantage.

Madam Speaker, I have to say that their approach to reshaping Alberta and saying that Alberta had it wrong for the last 44 years: I don't see the evidence to show that. I see instead people from all over Canada and all over the world coming here because of the many opportunities that Alberta provided for them. To change that and to say, "We know a better approach," I'd like to know: what is the evidence? Where is the example in other jurisdictions that you're pulling that from? If it's, you know, coming from Bernie Sanders's ideas, I don't think that's going to work because he hasn't proved it can work.

Wherever they are bringing their ideas from, I think that they need to bring forward the evidence. If it's corporate welfare, we've tried that in this province. It cost us \$2.4 billion in the past, Albertans' taxpayer dollars going down the drain. That's money we had to pay back. It was difficult for us to do that.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the referral amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Yes, I do rise to speak to the referral amendment. I'm going to speak against referring this particular bill because while I don't think it's perfect, I think that it's important that we get on with it and ensure that we don't send the wrong signal to investors who would seek to create jobs in our province, who would seek to make investments in our province. I think that even the government would acknowledge it's been a very difficult time when it comes to attracting investment capital in this province. I think they bear some pretty clear responsibility for creating uncertainty, for putting roadblocks in the way of investment, for all the changes big and small that have driven capital out of Alberta. Those are true things that have happened. At the same time, I think that, broadly speaking, the provisions that are contained within Bill 2 are to be lauded, and I think that the investor tax credit, in particular, is one that deserves an opportunity to go ahead and to continue to evolve as this bill does.

Again, we in the Alberta Party caucus do have some concerns, which we will raise through the course of debate. We may bring

some amendments once we find ourselves in committee. But as it stands now, I think we would rather see this bill move forward and move into the committee phase, and we can have a more detailed discussion on specific clauses and aspects of the bill at that time.

I think what the minister had talked about is worth noting. When you have feedback from organizations like Calgary Economic Development that are in support of these sorts of initiatives, when you have Amazon not choosing Alberta primarily because we did not have enough tech talent in this province, I think it's a wake-up call. I think it's sobering. I think we all feel very strongly about what our province has to offer in terms of quality of life, in terms of cost of living, and in terms of the talented people who we have in this province.

Unfortunately, the talented people that we have are not the right sort of talent. We have a lot of engineers, and I hope that we continue to have a lot of engineers. I think we need to grow that number and improve our focus on the STEM areas. This bill has provisions that, I think, if done properly, will help us get there.

10:10

I do have concerns about the timeliness of some of these things, in particular the 3,000 new technical training spaces. If we're to play this forward, what I see from the bill is that of the 3,000 seats we'll have 200 new ones in the first year, 550 in year '19-20, and then 750 new seats over the next three years. Now, I realize we can't just flick a switch, create new seats, and have 3,000 software engineers roaming the streets of Edmonton, Calgary, and rural Alberta within a couple of years. However, I do question the timing, and I do think that there should be a sense of urgency here, especially because this is not creating new seats in new programs in every case; it's simply adding seats to existing programs in many cases.

I think there is a real opportunity and, frankly, a missed opportunity here for the minister and for the government to move more quickly to create new seats in the shorter term. Of course, once you've created that training spot, the students still need to complete the training. They then need to get working, and they need to gain some experience. I think that when Amazon is talking about hiring 50,000 software engineers and related professionals – and we're far short in terms of our numbers – realistically, this plan would have us not get there for another decade. I think that when we're talking about referring it to committee and slowing things down, as the UCP would do, frankly, we need to go the other way. I think we need to move more quickly, and we need to find our way to creating the right sorts of skill sets and doing that in very short order, Madam Speaker.

As we talk specifically about the CITC and the AITC, the capital investment tax credit and the Alberta investor tax credit, what I'd like to see from the minister – perhaps we can hear it through debate at some point – is some report on what we learned from evaluating the first iteration of this, not just pure numbers in terms of how many dollars have gone out the door but which jobs have been created, what kind of return have those companies generated, what sorts of companies have in fact produced jobs as a result of these tax credits. Now, I recognize that it's a year and that except in rare circumstances we're not going to see massive returns in short order, but I would think that that would be something that the ministry is doing. I imagine it is something they're doing; if they're not, they certainly should be. But that's something I think they should be bringing before the Legislature.

On the interactive digital media tax credit, again, it's something that I think is interesting if Alberta wants to be in this sector. One of the questions I have is about the definition under section 1(d) of

an interactive digital media product. What I'm curious about is whether that definition of an interactive digital media product,

(iii) is capable of presenting information in at least 2 of the following forms:

- (A) text;
- (B) sound;
- (C) images,

includes services. Are we only talking about software products, or are we talking about services, things like Facebook or Netflix? Would this help nascent companies, which could turn into the next Facebook or Netflix? Would it help those sorts of companies? Again, those are questions that I hope to see answers to as we move forward, and I hope we'll move quickly as we go forward here.

Just another, I guess perhaps, point on the unmanned aerial systems. While I absolutely support and I think there is some real potential and some already very interesting things happening in southern Alberta with unmanned aerial systems research, much of what we are challenged by is actually not provincial jurisdiction but federal transportation jurisdiction, federal regulatory jurisdiction. What I'm actually curious about is: what problem does this bill solve that we currently have? What hindrance exists that this legislation would seek to remove? Again, I'm quite curious to hear from the minister. Do we even need this section, or is it something symbolic so that the government can trumpet the fact that they purportedly are doing something when, in fact, it may not even be necessary? We've seen some of that, you may be surprised to hear, in my opinion, here with Bill 1 as well.

Finally, as we talk about the scholarship piece, which falls under the technical training provisions, again, I'm a big, big supporter of that. What I'm surprised to see, though, is actually what's not there. There seems to be a lack of an explicit focus on women and underrepresented people in STEM programs. It's not embedded in that aspect of the legislation where we have the diversity and inclusion enhancement program, which is included in the investor tax credit and the digital media tax credit. That is something, again, that I would like to hear from the government, whether they envision including diversity provisions within the scholarship because, frankly, that's a great challenge. There is, I will say, a tremendously, deeply unfortunate and, in my view, unacceptable lack of diversity in particular within the STEM disciplines.

I'll even tell you a story. My 13-soon-to-be-14-year-old daughter was offered an opportunity to do some mentorship work, women in STEM. She actually said to my wife, who is so accomplished that she has more letters after her name than she has in her name, quite a remarkable professional woman in STEM herself: "But, Mom, there are so few women in science and math. Should I even bother going down this path?" It hit me – right? – because, boy, my daughter does take after my wife. She's very good in school, very focused, and she enjoys the STEM disciplines. That was a very sobering moment. There is such a lack of diversity. She's interested in computer programming. She's decided that she's going to teach herself Python over spring break. I'm just going to stand here and talk about my daughter. That's actually kind of fun. That's something I'm awfully proud of. She would be deeply embarrassed that I'm doing this right now, but *Hansard* is forever, so too bad, sweetie. I'm very proud of both of my girls.

As we look at expanding scholarship opportunities, I think it's very, very important that we have explicit support for women, for indigenous peoples, for minorities of all kinds, for people of lower income, for people who don't ordinarily take advantage of or participate in this, not from lack of ability but from lack of opportunity. So I think that would be something that I'd love to hear from the minister, from the government as to whether or not that has been contemplated here. If it hasn't been, I can assure you that

I'll bring forward some amendments during committee to make sure that it is

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Under 29(2)(a), the Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise, of course, under 29(2)(a) to offer some comments on the previous speaker's remarks. Certainly, first of all, let me commend the Member for Calgary-Elbow for stating that he would vote against this. I appreciate very much the fact that he recognizes how important it is that we get on with the work of diversifying the economy and building a recovery that's built to last and built to work for regular Albertans and that he recognizes the importance of this legislation in accomplishing just that. He did pose some questions that I'd like to hopefully answer in my remarks, particularly around the allocation of the tech spaces.

One of the things that I didn't get the opportunity to speak to in my remarks because of the time limits is the fact that the bill will create a talent advisory committee. We will strike a panel of experts who are working in postsecondary education, in high-technology industries to provide the best advice to the government on how to allocate these programs so that by 2022-23 we will have wisely allocated the 3,000 tech spaces that we're proposing to create, so that we achieve the maximum benefit from supporting the development of high-tech industries in this province and support people who want to go back to school or go to school in the first place, I suppose, and be trained to work in this high-tech sector. I hope the creation of this talent advisory committee will of course allay some of the member's concerns about how the government will be allocating these spaces.

With respect to the creation of the scholarships, of course, as I noted in my remarks, Madam Speaker, as you'll well remember, some of the money that we are setting aside for scholarships will in fact be targeted to underrepresented groups such as women. Our government believes strongly in gender equality, of course, which is demonstrated by the fact that we have near gender equality in our caucus, a remarkable achievement in the history of Alberta electoral democracy. You know, we continue to support gender equality through a number of initiatives, and we will continue to do that work with setting aside some financial aid for women who want to pursue education and work in the STEM sectors.

10:20

You know, what I would note, what I did find interesting in the comments, which should be concerning to the people of Alberta, Madam Speaker, is that, of course, the member is supportive of the government's initiatives to create 3,000 tech spaces and scholarships that support people who want to pursue this kind of education, particularly people from backgrounds who are underrepresented in the tech spaces, but I had a quick review of the Alberta Party shadow budget, and it's interesting that the members opposite put not one additional dollar in the Advanced Education line – not one – which is remarkable. Isn't it remarkable that somebody who says that he would support the creation of 3,000 new tech spaces, who says that he would support the creation of scholarships to help people from underrepresented demographics to pursue education and work in the tech sector – that as soon as he's asked whether or not that support extends to actually spending money on creating those things, the answer is no. It's remarkable.

I'm curious to know how the member thinks that he can support the creation of 3,000 new tech spaces and \$7 million worth of scholarships if he's not going to put any money into it. You know,

I know that postsecondary institutions do the good work of educating people, but they don't do it for free, Madam Speaker. Students who want to pursue this kind of education need financial aid to pursue this kind of education, and we need the money in the budget to do this.

Of course, we've announced through Bill 2 that we will put money in the budget, and I would encourage the member opposite to actually put his money where his mouth is and develop a shadow budget that shows financially his support for these positions.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Speaker's Ruling

Question-and-Comment Period

The Acting Speaker: I just want to remind all members of the House, before we move on, around 29(2)(a). It is comments and questions, but as you all know from past rulings, typically you leave time for the person to be able to respond to the questions. So I would just encourage all of you as you are speaking under 29(2)(a) that if you are asking and commenting towards the speaker, you stay relevant to what they have spoken about and as well give them time to respond to whatever it is that you are commenting on.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the referral amendment? The hon. Member for Highwood.

Debate Continued

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I wish to speak to Bill 2, Growth and Diversification Act, which I believe should be referred to committee to be looked at further to possibly conduct an economic study and look at the repercussions of this bill. I think we all agree on both sides of the House that the economy is not doing very well and that this Growth and Diversification Act is an attempt by the government to stimulate the economy and get Albertans working again. I do believe that this government's heart is in the right place and that they want to see Albertans succeed, and while they may be trying to accomplish that through bills and regulations and through using corrective measures, much more work needs to be done. There's a huge concern across the province regarding employment, and while these measures may be good ones, we also know that many Albertans have given up looking for work while some others, who may have been fortunate enough to have found a job, are working for less money than they've previously earned.

This bill does not seek to address the current and future labour shortages in the tech sector, one that is near and dear to my heart. I worked in the IT industry for well over 30 years. I was afforded a comfortable living because of the industry. I got a chance to advance my education, I worked in other countries, and it provided me the opportunity to travel and, moreover, to build a business and build shareholder value for my investors and, of course, to create employment for several Albertans.

Part of the bill seeks to increase job activity in digital media production. While I'm all for investing in the future of the province, there has to be a balance created first. Creating sector-specific tax credits is all fine and dandy, but when there are other policies that have been implemented to hurt businesses in Alberta, we have to wonder why those policies aren't being looked at first. While this bill shows the government's goodwill, the truth of the matter is that we need to work towards getting back the Alberta advantage. However, as the government looks at implementing Bill 2, how will it help when increased labour costs, followed by the carbon tax and other recent labour policy decisions, have had a detrimental impact on our already economically weakened economy?

The UCP is very concerned about the job loss in Alberta that's been caused by this NDP's policies. We're worried about the future of our children and our grandchildren. We're worried about how these policies will affect young Albertans. But without rescinding other hurtful ideological policies, implanting a tax credit will only offer somewhat of a Band-Aid solution, perhaps only temporarily. If the economy isn't nursed back to health with care, the consequences of this bill, potentially the only purpose, could distort the market or encourage tax credit subsidy dependence. Unfortunately, while I can see the government's intent to make things better and give them credit for trying, these tax credits will not be able to offset the damaging fiscal regulatory tax policies that government has already introduced. These policies, as I mentioned before, undermine competitiveness in the attractiveness of investment capital.

In November 2016 the NDP introduced Bill 30, Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act, which they passed that December, and it came into effect in January of 2017. Two tax credits were brought in, the Alberta investor tax credit and the capital investment tax credit. The Alberta investor tax credit has a budget of \$90 million over three years and offers a 30 per cent tax credit to investors who provide venture capital to Alberta companies with fewer than 100 employees in specific areas such as IT, clean technology, interactive digital media, game productions, postproduction visual effects, and digital animation sectors. Bill 2 will essentially be an addition to this tax credit by providing an additional 5 per cent to investors who meet certain inclusivity and diversity requirements.

However, on the government website it states that almost \$1.4 million is still available this year even though the fiscal year ends in just a few weeks. This says one of two things, that the government's anticipated uptake on this credit was too narrow or too sector specific or that the credit was not effectively or efficiently distributed to investors. Either way, something needs to be adjusted to improve success.

I'm not quite sure if the government is bringing in Bill 2 to try and fix or alleviate some of those problems, but it would sure be nice to see an economic analysis done or some statistics on how well the program actually worked. Since they've not already released those details, I'm sure that it will not achieve what they expected.

The capital investment tax credit has a budget of \$70 million over two years and offers a 10 per cent nonrefundable tax credit of up to \$5 million. This was for businesses who make an eligible capital investment of \$1 million or more. These companies must be involved in manufacturing, processing, or tourism infrastructure. The government claims that this tax credit stimulated more than \$1 billion in capital projects throughout Alberta.

Bill 2 creates the digital media tax credit, and even though it is clear that the credit will provide 25 per cent on eligible salaries and wages and an additional credit being applied for companies who hire employees from underrepresented groups, we still will not know what the government's funding commitment will be until the budget details are released here this afternoon.

This bill was created to initiate and address current and projected labour shortages for computer and information technology professionals – software designers, programmers, and developers – and will add 3,000 new tech spaces in postsecondary institutions over the next five years. While that may be a positive step, my question is: is this really enough? When I say that, I don't mean financially. I mean that with all the other hurtful ideological policies that this government has also put in place, will this bill and others be enough to bring back the Alberta advantage? Further study of these things really needs to be undertaken.

Madam Speaker, Albertans do not know the answer to that question. They want the disastrous government policies repealed. They really need jobs today, not 10 years in the future. We need to do more than just what this bill offers. In the last three years we've known that the current NDP policies have not helped Alberta. While they may be trying to accomplish that through bills and regulations and through using corrective measures, on which more work needs to be done, there is a huge concern across the province regarding employment. While these measures may be good ones, we also know that many Albertans need employment today. Our caucus will do the very best to make sure that happens in short order.

10:30

Now, just as a bit of an aside, I listened to the minister talk about his expertise in video game playing, or what I call alternate reality. This is the real world. These are real dollars. These are real people. Albertans know there are consequences in a real world. My colleagues and I, with all sincerity, see the government's intent to correct the economy, but what we need is not to rush through legislation just to make a correction but to take a good look at Alberta's economic problems as a whole. I therefore believe that this bill should be referred to committee to do the good work for Albertans. Our caucus is committed to do their best to make sure that that happens in quick order.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the referral amendment? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise this morning. I've been listening intently to the debate. It has been riveting, to say the least, and it's a pleasure to be able to speak to the referral this morning.

You know, we've heard a number of interesting things, particularly from the Minister of Advanced Education, around anything from our attention span to the importance of utilizing the processes that are available to members of the Assembly to be informed about decisions that the Assembly makes. Now, I understand he made some allegations about those processes being a slowing down or a clogging up of the Assembly, but nothing could be further from the truth with respect to Bill 2 and the desire to have the appropriate information for members on this side of the Assembly. Just because a bill goes to committee doesn't mean it needs to go there forever.

Now, I know that the government has a habit of sending off pieces of legislation that they don't like, particularly from private members. They go to committee forever, and they wind up dying there. Sometimes they get brought back to life because the government has made a poor political choice, so they reincarnate a piece of legislation, and then they send it back to committee to kill it again. But that's not how it has to work. I know that the government has used committee to make it work like that, but the committee process can be utilized to make legislation as strong as possible.

Now, we saw just two days ago the government send a motion to committee because it needed more study. This particular motion would have had very little in the way of costs to the taxpayer. It would have perhaps increased the number of times that a committee would meet in a year, but it may not have, in fact, in that the groups that would like to come to the committee

could have potentially tagged onto other meetings, and there may have been a zero impact.

What I can tell you is that there is no way that there would be millions and millions and millions of dollars associated with the cost of that motion. The government decided: we need more study; we need more study of this motion. My sense is, Madam Speaker, that the reason why they wanted more study is because the Official Opposition proposed the idea and it was a politically expedient way for them to deal with that particular motion so as not to have to vote against the use of committees.

Here before us today we have a referral motion that is looking to refer a piece of legislation to committee. That committee would be able to meet expediently and before the end of this session quite likely make a recommendation back to the House and would be able to accomplish all of the glorious goals that the minister of postsecondary claims that Bill 2 is going to deliver on.

Now, with respect to content of Bill 2 I might just add that there are a number of very, very positive things in this particular bill. I would say that while I have not fully decided if, in fact, I support the legislation or if I will be voting against the legislation, what I am certain of is that I would like to be able to get a much better understanding of how Bill 2 will be applied and hear from stakeholders and experts, both on the pro and con sides of this particular issue, so that we as a Chamber would be able to make the best available decision in front of us.

As I said, it's quite possible that I will be supporting Bill 2, but I have yet to make my mind up. Unfortunately, in the current context what we have is the minister of postsecondary telling us that everything is awesome and that everything is good when you're part of the government. But we don't have the opportunity to hear from others with respect to: what exactly will this bill do, and how will it be applied?

Now, if there's one thing I can assure you of, Madam Speaker, it's that I don't want to be a part of the minister of postsecondary's team. I will acknowledge that from time to time I might support an idea that he would propose, but on balance that happens less often than more often. It is possible that with respect to Bill 2 we will be happy to support it, but I wouldn't say that we're there yet.

One of the reasons why we're not there and I'm not there is this government's track record on the economy. We all know that Bill 2 has some lofty goals with respect to diversifying the economy, but we also all know that this government has a terrible, terrible, terrible track record on managing the economy. If you speak to CFIB, they will tell you that 92 per cent of business owners are not confident that the Alberta government is committed to improving the business climate.

I can tell you this. When I speak to the outstanding constituents of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills and business owners in that region, one of their significant concerns is around the way this government has handled the economy. Any time that the government proposes legislation like we see before us today, I think that we should all have pause.

You know, Bill 2 has a number of concerns around it with respect to the scope and: have we struck the right balance? I'm not saying that we haven't, but I'm also not a hundred per cent convinced that we have. This particular tax credit and the scope to which it reaches could use some further discussion to make sure that we have in fact done that.

One thing that I do know when I have spoken with industry, particularly with respect to Bill 1 – and I understand that we're debating Bill 2 here – and reached out to some industry folks: their first and foremost goal is to have an economic environment, a regulatory environment, and a government that understands that the best way for the government to diversify the economy, to strengthen

the economy is to create the environment for those that do the job creating to do what they do best.

What we've seen is the government create a disaster in the economy and now, trying to put tax credits and other pieces back together, to be, like: "Hey, look, everybody. Everything is okay, and we're actually putting this back together." Yet we are here in many respects because of their lack of fundamentals on the economy.

10:40

The government, in this case for Bill 1 and Bill 2, is ultimately going to be engaged in the process of picking winners and losers, and they're going to be picking and playing favourites with different sectors of the economy. Some will benefit, and others will not. Any time that we have the government doing that, it poses significant risk to the taxpayer. It poses significant risk to the way that our economy can recover, and it poses risk with respect to the actual costs to the taxpayer.

Now, I also want to be clear that I think it's important that our technology sector is growing. I think it's important that many areas of our economy are growing. But are government incentives the best way to do that? That ultimately is the question that we need to be asking ourselves. Making our province more appealing for investment for our tech sector is great, but is incentivizing them or offering tax credits the best way that we can make the environment for our tech sector grow? Is it the best path to do that?

You know, there was a time not that long ago when Alberta was thriving, when Alberta was the envy of the world to invest in. At that time Alberta had the highest median wage in the country. People from across Canada and literally around the world flocked to Alberta for the quality of life, that was unparalleled. The question I have for you, Madam Speaker, is: did they come here for government programs, or did they come here because of the opportunity that existed because of a growing economy?

I think that if you asked the vast majority of those Albertans, it was not because the government was incentivizing business or the economy, but it was because our economy was growing, and opportunity was on the increase. We had a business climate that encouraged investment of private dollars from all around the world, and Alberta was a solid place to invest, a safe bet for return on investment. Now we have a government that is needing to incentivize when what we really need is a government that's going to provide a structure for that activity to flourish again.

That's, again, why the referral is so important. We need to have the facts around: is this the best path forward or not? I know that some of my other colleagues have highlighted the fact that this particular tax credit was not fully utilized on its first go-around. Now, I'll be the first to acknowledge that the vast majority of the tax credit certainly has been utilized, but there is approximately \$1.4 million that's still available. Committee would be a great place for us to be able to discuss whether or not the government has the scope correct, whether or not the amounts are correct instead of just listening to the Minister of Advanced Education saying that everything is A-okay, to actually find out if the costs that Alberta taxpayers are going to incur because of this credit are in fact going to do exactly what they claim.

Since the NDP has come to power, they have horribly mismanaged the economy. Alberta business owners and investors – you know, it comes as no surprise to folks on this side of the House and should come as no surprise to them as well that the vast majority of the constituents in Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills that I speak to feel attacked by the government, particularly with respect to the way that they have imposed the carbon tax; increased income tax, personal tax, corporate tax; increased the

regulatory burden; increased, too, a number of challenges in the labour market with respect to major, significant changes in how businesses interact with that piece of legislation and the costs that have been incurred.

At one point in time we had the opposite of that. I know that the good people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills really feel like this government is imposing death by a thousand cuts. Perhaps each single item in isolation is not the end of the world, but when you pile up that big, big pile of damage that has been imposed by the NDP, the people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills are feeling that.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would also like to thank my hon. colleague from Olds-Didsbury . . .

An Hon. Member: Three Hills.

Mr. Panda: Three Hills?

Mr. Cooper: Yeah. Don't forget Three Hills.

Mr. Panda: Yeah. The second-best riding after Calgary-Foothills.

I really thank him for standing up to speak in support of my referral amendment, and I want him to continue sharing his thoughts with us on the big picture and on the economic impacts of this government's risky ideological policies. It seems that his constituents are feeling the same way as Calgary-Foothills residents, so I would ask my hon. colleague to talk about the rise in unemployment and debt and deficit and so on.

Mr. Cooper: Why, thank you to my colleague from Calgary-Foothills. I was so engaged in the previous remarks that I actually had some more to add, so I'm glad that you've offered me the opportunity.

You know, I think, as I speak to constituents in Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills and, in fact, around the province that not only have so many of them been directly hurt and their businesses impacted – the government has created an inhospitable investment environment so that investors and business owners are almost feeling a little bit bitten, if you will, by this government – but while they show some sense that they can see now the government recognizing that they've made a mess of it and that they're trying to do something in the form of Bill 1 and Bill 2, et cetera, it's almost like they're concerned to stick their hand back through the fence, afraid that the government is going to lash out at them again. They're apprehensive about this government having control of a \$52 billion economy. We've continued to see this concern that the folks on the front lines have with respect to the direction that the economy is going.

You know, it's almost like this, Madam Speaker. The government is trying to undo a lot of the damage that they have created in the economy and the investment climate. I would suggest that perhaps this legislation wouldn't be necessary if the government hadn't done its best to get us in such a bad spot in the first place. While the resilience of Albertans remains strong and while I believe that the best years for our economy are ahead of us, it's not because of that government and some of the projects that they are trying to implement. It's because of the mom-and-pop shops, small-business owners that have tightened their belt, that have done their very best through a very difficult time, in spite of the government, to make sure that when the investment climate is right again, they will be there to support the families.

10:50

They will continue to be the job creators that they have been, and the entrepreneurial spirit of Alberta will remain in spite of the fact that the government has done its very best to destroy the playing field. And now we've heard the minister talk about trying to level the playing field. It's a playing field that they tilted in the wrong direction and are now just trying to get back to level. What Albertans are hoping for is a government that puts the playing field back in their favour, not in the favour of a select few but in the favour of creating an investment climate and an economic framework that puts Albertans first.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the referral amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to speak to Bill 2, the Growth and Diversification Act, which indeed carries a lot of important principles. Nobody can disagree with the kinds of efforts that this represents.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, I just want to clarify that you know we're on the referral amendment, not the bill itself.

Dr. Swann: Yes. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Okay. Just clarifying. Thank you.

Dr. Swann: Sorry. I meant the referral amendment. I would like to speak to that after making some preliminary comments about what we have seen so far, which suggests that, once again, we're going to provide subsidies to business rather than look at alternative methods of stimulating the economy. In other words, we're still picking winners and losers in this province.

There are other ways to stimulate. Frankly, a lot of my colleagues and constituents are concerned that further distortion in the market doesn't promote more investment in Alberta. It creates the sense that there is a lack of competition, that there is a lack of equity in terms of companies' abilities to compete on a level playing field. That's the bottom line.

Efforts are there, but the question is: what's the impact? It's more and more of a concern the more money we see going out the door and the higher the debt load is getting to be in this province.

Just to summarize, there are three different paths of this bill. Schedule 1, which is the lion's share of the bill, proposes to enact the interactive digital media tax credit to create new media activity, with a 25 per cent refundable tax credit on eligible salary and wages as well as an additional 5 per cent credit if they hire employees from underrepresented groups.

Schedule 2 proposes to amend the Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act to include a diversity and inclusion component whereby investors that are eligible to receive the Alberta investor tax credit are also eligible to receive an additional 5 per cent credit in the same way. Currently the AITC offers a 30 per cent tax credit to Alberta investors who provide venture capital to small Alberta businesses substantially engaged in tourism, research, development of interactive digital media, postproduction visual effects, and digital animation.

Schedule 3 proposes to amend the Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act by inserting certain instructions for the Minister of Advanced Education relative to technology education. It indicates, for example, that the minister shall

- (a) take steps to increase the number of seats in new and existing technology-related post-secondary programs by 3000 over the next 5 years,

- (b) consult with interested parties, including industry, post-secondary . . . Alberta Innovates and organized labour to develop . . . a strategy to allocate those 3000 seats, and
- (c) take steps to establish new scholarships or awards to support learning.

Well, this is all very good on the surface of it, but the concern, again, that we have is that this is, arguably, omnibus legislation that cobbles together various proposals and initiatives from at least two different ministries, some of which are required to be given force by legislation but others that are clearly not, all brought together under the rubric of economic diversification.

Again, around business subsidies, this appears now to be the second one aimed at the digital media industry after the Alberta investor tax credit. For a government that claims to support diversification, there's not a whole lot of diversification in the way these business subsidies are handed out. Certainly, some industries are getting more favourable treatment than others, and this is a concern.

The bill also establishes or adds a 5 per cent diversity and inclusion incentive to certain tax credit programs. An intriguing idea, to be sure, and I hope it leads to positive change. We all want to see more diversity in our industry. Tiny as this is, it may have some impact, and I give credit for that effort. Again, though, the initiative strikes me as being more about promoting diversity and inclusion than diversification of the economy, especially when one understands that businesses are looking for certainty, clarity, equal opportunity, and a level playing field.

The January 2018 report from the University of Calgary School of Public Policy noted that Alberta has the dubious distinction of having the least transparent public reporting when it comes to business subsidies. Another area that this government needs to improve on is more transparency about where the subsidies are going and what the impacts of those subsidies are.

Lastly, if we're going to be looking at these issues, schedule 3 reads more like a mandate letter from one of Alberta's late Conservative Premiers to his ministers and seems totally out of place. If creating tech training spaces is a government priority, which it should be, why do we need to use legislation to instruct the minister to, quote, take steps towards creating spaces for establishing scholarships? This is already in motion. It's Bill 1, the Energy Diversification Act, which is currently before the Legislature, again, using showpiece legislation to compel a minister to do something that's already being done.

When previous governments increased spaces for postsecondary students, this has typically been given effect by announcing an increase in provincial funding as part of the budget. While the government has already signalled that 200 new tech spots are set to be filled in the next year, this will happen as a result of the budget and not Bill 2. Bill 2 could actually be defeated, and these tech training spaces, of course, would go ahead. It's hard not to view this bill as little more than a pre-election promotional message masquerading as legislation, something that we are seeing much more frequently now from this government, treating legislation as another media platform to disseminate information on its initiatives.

There are not a lot of concrete issues that Bill 2 actually does in regard to technology training in postsecondary programs, although to listen to the March 14 news conference, you'd think the bill was quite prescriptive and quite expansive. For example, Albertans were told that Bill 2 will establish a talent advisory council on technology to advise government on the creation or expansion of specific programs. It's also suggested that Bill 2 extends the Alberta investor tax credit and the capital investment tax credit. It's also suggested that Bill 2 specifically includes a scholarship program worth \$7 million over five years. Lastly, Albertans were told that

Bill 2 specifically includes \$43 million over five years to fund 3,000 new tech training spaces.

Other than pledging to fund 3,000 new tech training spaces over five years, none of these proposals or dollar figures are what we will be debating in this House. While the government may in fact be planning to do all these things at some point, they aren't actually being given effect by Bill 2. It's a bit disappointing that the government is portraying it in this way.

I also find it a bit rich that the NDP is now trying to make political hay out of extending the Alberta investor tax credit and the capital investment tax credit when, in the case of the former, which was announced back in spring 2016, program changes and application processing delays have seen the rollout move at a snail's pace. I'd suggest that what's being referred to as a program extension may in fact be a failure to launch, with unallocated funds simply being pushed further down the road for more political gain. I suspect there may have been similar challenges with getting the capital investment tax credit off the ground. I actually wrote to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade about these delays, but I don't believe I've received a reply.

Lastly, the Minister of Economic Development and Trade has tried to suggest that the trade missions to Silicon Valley are behind Albertans' bid to produce more graduates for the tech sector. Let's be honest. Calgary's failed bid to entice Amazon to build its second headquarters in Calgary and concrete actions being taken by jurisdictions such as Ontario and B.C. were the wake-up call. Amazon reportedly told Calgary officials that it didn't make the 20-city short list because of a significant gap in the local tech talent pool. It's encouraging that the government is at least taking steps to remedy this, but we'll have to wait and see how this all plays out.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Dr. Swann: Could I adjourn debate?

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, you move to adjourn debate?

Dr. Swann: I move to adjourn debate. Thanks.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

11:00 **Consideration of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech**

Ms Sweet moved, seconded by Mr. Malkinson, that an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows.

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

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

[Adjourned debate March 21: Mr. Mason]

The Acting Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-West, followed by Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I just want to stand up, of course, and make a few comments in regard to the Speech from the Throne. I certainly believe it was appropriate, you know, on International Women's Day that we recognize the wonderful opportunities and people that have come forward to

really bring gender parity to the forefront. One of those who was in this Chamber whom I did not see recognized – however, certainly, I possibly could be mistaken, and if so, I'm sure it was an oversight on the government's part – was Senator Betty Unger. She was in the Chamber; she was on the floor.

For those that do not know, she lives here in Edmonton. She is a Senator. She was the first woman in Canadian history to be elected as a Senate nominee and appointed to the Senate by the Prime Minister. I certainly had an opportunity to speak to her after the event, and you know, we had a very wonderful and engaging conversation. She's currently dealing with marijuana legislation in the Senate in Ottawa, and hopefully I was able to assist her by providing some insight from my experience as a former law enforcement officer. Of course, she has experience as a registered nurse, and obviously there is, you know, certainly a positive relationship typically between law enforcement and nurses.

Madam Speaker, you know, the Speech from the Throne has a section called Protecting Albertans from Crime. I just want to note that it states: "Today in Alberta, especially in rural areas, people are concerned for the safety of their homes, their property, and the well-being of those they love. That must change." Well, I could not agree more with that statement. However, the frustration is: why did the NDP wait so long to even acknowledge that this crisis is occurring in rural Alberta? You know, this is a crisis that has been identified at least on this side of the House, an issue that we've tried to raise for quite some time. In November the UCP took serious measures, hosting busloads of people from all over rural Alberta to this House. The galleries were full of concerned residents, and every member acted as their voice inside this Chamber.

You know, we brought forward that motion for an emergency debate, and sadly, to the shock of the residents who were here, that debate was voted down. It made me think, to put this really in perspective for folks to understand, of one fellow that was a victim of crime who was interviewed by a media outlet. We're not talking about victims of crime as it pertains to thefts or property damage. In some of these cases we're talking about serious, violent home invasions where individuals inside their residence, law-abiding citizens, are being victimized to the point where they are receiving grievous bodily harm and sometimes situations where those scars, although external, leave an internal scar as well.

You know, I can tell you that this is a crime epidemic that really is no different than the fentanyl crisis and requires a co-ordinated response that involves a multitude of different agencies to come together and recognize that all levels of the justice system, whether it be the judiciary, whether it be our Crown, whether it be our law enforcement community, have to work together in order to solve this problem.

Now, let's take a look. The minister, of course, recently made an announcement regarding some funding for some officers, 39 officers, boots on the ground, as she put it. Sadly, by her own admission, there's no indication of when or even if those RCMP will be able to come out into the communities, when they will be coming from Depot. I think people need to understand that a request for police officers, especially from the RCMP, is a process. This is not something that is very easy. You don't just make a request, and there are 39 officers sitting in Depot in Regina waiting to be dispersed and ready to go to Alberta. There's an application process. This application process is time consuming. Again, an individual just doesn't show up at an RCMP station and request a form to get hired and then are hired within two weeks. Sometimes that process can take anywhere from six months to a year before that person is even accepted as an applicant. It's a rigorous, rigorous process with checks and balances, with investigations on who those individuals are. Polygraph tests: that's another thing.

Throughout Canada if they can get enough people to form a class, then those individuals go to Depot. Well, that's another six months, Madam Speaker, six months worth of training. Hopefully, some of those individuals have completed it. The goal, of course, is to successfully get them all passed, but that's not always the case. Let's just take, for instance, that it is the case that all of them pass. Then there's a process in place in Ottawa as to where those individuals will be then dispersed throughout Canada.

Sadly, the RCMP are facing a significant shortfall, Madam Speaker – we're talking 20 to 30 per cent – to reach their minimum staffing levels. Now we're talking about: okay, let's say that we get a handful of those officers. Well, those officers, once they reach the detachments, will take another six months at minimum before they are possibly ready to go out on their own. They're going to have to be trained with a senior officer. I can tell you from experience that for a police officer to really, truly feel comfortable riding on their own and being able to handle any and all calls that come their way can take as much as five years. Wow.

When we add the time from the initial application, assuming everything goes well, all the way through to them reaching the detachments, possibly in Alberta, hopefully in Alberta, we're talking about two or two and a half years. Some of my sources within the RCMP have indicated that that could be even longer, and that's concerning. That's deeply concerning.

11:10

You know, we talk about the police officers, and we talk about the tactics. Well, let's talk a little bit about these officers, who are going to be pillaged, from what I can tell, from other detachments that are already feeling the shortfall within their communities. One of the tactics that was mentioned was bait car and tracking. Madam Speaker, that's a tactic; it's not a solution. When I was in the Calgary Police Service, we did bait cars. I can tell you from experience that there was limited success, sometimes no success, quite frankly. Certainly, to sound off as though this is a solution to the problem, I think, is really giving people what I would call false hope.

Another piece of information that the minister had indicated was the sharing of information with Alberta Sheriffs and fish and wildlife and commercial vehicle enforcement. My question, when I heard that, was: is that not done now? Are they not communicating right now? I can tell you that in order to have any successful operation, you must be able to communicate.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The funding: the minister mentioned \$8 million for the 39 new officers. Well, \$8 million on top of \$500 billion: the math on that, Madam Speaker, is 1.6 per cent. That's a drop in the bucket when dealing with a crisis of this magnitude. You know, that reminds me of 2004, when I was a law enforcement officer, a young constable, and I was on what is now known as the Red Mile. It's actually world famously known as the Red Mile. I remember being one of a team of six officers and a sergeant, so there were seven of us. The Flames were doing, obviously, very well at that time, and we had heard that there was going to be a mass exodus out of the Saddledome, that they were going to come down 17th Avenue, which is in Calgary, which is now, again, as I mentioned, known as the Red Mile. I remember the six of us on the street and our sergeant saying to us: keep them all on the sidewalks. Twenty-thousand people, six police officers. Keep them all on the sidewalks: unreasonable, completely unreasonable. That's why I'm talking to the 1.6 per cent of \$500 billion. It's just not enough.

We learned from that though. We learned to prepare. We put processes in place, and we put the necessary resources in place.

Then when 2006 occurred and the Flames were doing well again, we were prepared to have the thousands and thousands and thousands of people hit the streets, and we had the necessary resources in place because the issue was identified to us and we formulated a plan, a successful plan, a plan that has been recognized not only in Alberta but throughout Canada on how to properly prepare for events. That's something that the Calgary Police Service is very proud of. They did that with the G8, another major incident that had no issues whatsoever because of the proper preparation.

Going back to this, when the government was aware that rural crime was starting to become an issue, there needed to be proper communication, there needed to be proper planning, and they needed to get the necessary resources in place working with all of the law enforcement communities throughout this province in order to execute a plan, not some smoke-and-mirrors plan where there's false hope given to residents that these 39 police officers are going to be magically showing up in their communities. That's, quite frankly, Madam Speaker, just not reasonable. This is a very negligible amount, and I really do hope that these detachments have an opportunity to at least, at the minimum, get their minimum staffing requirements.

Do you know that when rural crime was first identified, Madam Speaker, the minister was telling rural municipalities that they have the ability to get money and get more police officers themselves? Yes, they can, but as I already indicated to you, they're not even meeting the minimum staffing requirements. Even if a municipality did find the money and they were able to give it to the RCMP, the likelihood of them getting an officer was slim to none, as I already explained to you what the process is. In fact, some of my sources . . .

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. The hon. Member for Calgary-West was actually just about to give us some more insights, which I think are valuable in this case because I'm not sure how many other members of the Chamber actually have the inside experience and knowledge about what happens with the police services. So I would like him to complete what I thought was winding up to be an important point, please.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Calgary-Hays. What I wanted to continue to say – and, you know, I really hope that my sources are incorrect on this, but I sadly believe that they're not. We're talking about a period of seven, seven and a half years if a municipality decides to give the RCMP some extra money in hopes of getting a police officer. We're talking about that long a period of time.

Quite frankly, that's why – that's why – we need to start looking in Alberta at other alternative means in a co-ordinated effort. Although the RCMP have rolled out a number of tactics in order to deal with this, what I did not hear from them is the relationship that they would be having with their other law enforcement community members; as an example, Edmonton Police Service, Calgary Police Service, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, our sheriffs department. I haven't really heard anybody even talk about the sheriffs department. There are many things that this minister can do, quite frankly, with the stroke of a pen in order to ensure that we properly and more effectively use our sheriffs within this province, that I have not heard anybody mention.

Now, I will say this. It is also vitally important to ensure that those individuals are up to a certain training standard. I mean, I will give you an example, Madam Speaker. Although I have the great honour to be in this House representing the wonderful people of Calgary-West, I am a fully trained police officer and can, if I had the opportunity, choose to go back and perform the duties as a police officer at any time. I can tell you that, you know, many of our sheriffs are retired from other jurisdictions. They are fully qualified and capable of performing the duties of a police officer. Those individuals need to be identified and recognized, and they certainly can have the opportunities to further assist in working with other law enforcement officers in order to help in a crisis which is currently facing the people of this province.

You know, I just want to say as well that this is an epidemic that has grown and, I would say, kind of raged on, that is putting our rural communities in a situation now where they are starting to have diminishment in what I call the public trust. The public trust, I can tell you, is really what law enforcement has in order to have an effective and efficient police service.

11:20

Let me give you an example, Madam Speaker. When I was a constable in the Calgary Police Service, I can tell you that there were many complaints that would come that, in my opinion as a young rookie, seemed rather, let's say, nebulous. Then as I evolved and I grew and I learned and certainly had the fortune to become a supervisor in the Calgary Police Service, as a sergeant I realized that what the Calgary Police Service had was public trust. They had a 96 to 97 per cent approval rating, and that was because the people of that city knew that if there was a problem, they could call the police, that they will attend, and that they would deal with the issue in a timely and efficient manner.

That is the issue that we're seeing in rural Alberta right now, the diminishment of public trust. I believe, from the people that I have spoken to in rural Alberta, there is massive concern that when they call the police . . .

The Deputy Speaker: I'll call on the hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, and good morning, Madam Speaker. I'm thrilled to stand here and reply to the Speech from the Throne. As I open up, I would be remiss to not, like many other members here, reflect on the fact that we did this on International Women's Day. So I would like to open up by recognizing some amazing women in my constituency.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

The St. Mary's University women's basketball team, a team that in its first year, in 2013, had only won one game, a team who, despite a couple of seasons of heartbreaking losses in the final game of the tournament, went on to win the ACAC women's basketball tournament, crowning St. Mary's with its first-ever provincial championship: I always admire watching these women play and sharing this with my kids. I think that here in Alberta we could do more to support collegial sports since in many instances the pace and intensity outmatch that of professional play.

Now, many people throw around the term "David versus Goliath," but I prefer the little engine that could, because this team, despite everything, being one of the most underfunded universities, not having its own gym, kept chugging along and never gave up. When push came to shove, they dominated the matches they played. Having spoken with some of the parents who were there at some of the games – I ran into them at the

Calgary International Airport just last weekend – they said that the team played phenomenally in the nationals. They didn't bring home the big championship, but it was setting them up for more consecutive years of success.

This really does parallel well with the work that St. Mary's does in collaboration with its indigenous community. Their First Nations, Métis, Inuit initiatives focus on relationship-building first and allow their program to meet the needs of First Nations students. This led to the hosting of the truth and reconciliation synopsis on campus and has really led to a lot of other postsecondary institutions coming to them and seeking advice from St. Mary's, being a leader in this field.

Now, their work with First Nations complements our government's commitment to our First Nations. We continue to maintain meaningful dialogue to work with our First Nations through our diversification of our economy. As mentioned in the throne speech, through constructive and practical dialogue we will continue with our nations through a renewable energy program, curriculum review, and improvements to our child intervention system. In the past year I've been humbled, similar to yourself, Madam Speaker, to be involved in the child intervention review. The dialogue we had with stakeholders taught me a tremendous amount, and it showed the urgency to do things better and work towards ending the cycle of trauma.

During the throne speech event we saw a lot of Alberta's historical context. I'm sure someone at home could have played a drinking game around the number of times in this House that we mentioned Peter Lougheed, so allow me to mention him a few more times and encourage people at home to drink a bit more Alberta craft beer.

Our expansion of the petrochemicals diversification program has helped many people in Calgary-Shaw get back to work. The Fluor office in Sundance recently was contracted to engineer some of the projects during the first round of the project. Their contributions have helped us diversify our economy and leverage our natural resources. As we develop our resources, we need to recognize global and world trends. Right now there is a need for sustainable oil products, that Alberta can provide, but we need to look to the future. I can tell you, as the Member for Calgary-Currie mentioned his cars earlier in the response to the throne speech, that my Mazda5 does burn a lot less fuel than my parents' K-car did. So investing in processing and value-add will allow long-term jobs for the people of Alberta and allow us to continue developing our alternative resources.

I want to reflect on another vision that Lougheed had for Calgary-Shaw, which was Fish Creek park and the development of Fish Creek park, which since its creation has seen, unfortunately, quite a bit of neglect from the previous government over the last quarter of a century. Our government is now reinvesting in the infrastructure deficit that was left behind, by restoring structures, improving pathway networks, tackling invasive weeds. While there is more to do, our government has committed to this park. We will continue to do it with the tremendous support that we receive from the Friends of Fish Creek, who do a tremendous amount to advocate for that area.

Now, the Friends of Fish Creek have provided us with a tremendous amount of support in the area by providing educational programming that benefits the people of my area in south Calgary. Many of the programs also promote self-awareness, an awareness of nature and culture. The Friends have been very helpful during developments in my constituency, which we saw a couple of years ago during a contentious natural gas pipeline that ATCO was developing. One of the feedbacks that they provided to the project managers during this construction allowed us to find ways to

replant natural grassland species and actually renew the park. As we move towards the southwest ring road development and its interjection with Fish Creek park, the Friends of Fish Creek are going to be a valuable resource as we look to renew the land and regrow that area.

Madam Speaker, right now in Alberta I see two visions. I see one that is the UCP's vision, which we can see reflected in the province of Saskatchewan, which has failed to create growth in their economy. Now, you don't have to take my word for this. We can look at RBC's report, which I can table later today. In March it can be seen that Alberta led the country in job-creation growth in all the oil-producing jurisdictions while at the same time Saskatchewan saw a 2 per cent decrease in its economy. Manufacturing and retail sales are up here in Alberta while Saskatchewan declines or stays flat, all this while we're bending the curve on spending, charting a path to balance, freezing many government departments' hiring and spending.

To add a few more numbers to this equation, Alberta saw a 10 per cent increase in wholesale trade while Saskatchewan saw a decline of 3 per cent. While the opposition may speak praise of this government, that is running a deficit while it has gone ahead and raised the PST, cut public services people depended on, and is layered in scandal, we will stand up here as this government for Alberta jobs and the services that people rely on.

Now, at least every week, Madam Speaker, I find myself at Cardel Rec centre, which is in my riding. I'm either there attending meetings, attending events, or simply just taking my kids to the library. Sometimes when I'm there, I set up a table, and I just talk with people and constituents. While I'm here, I've heard from a lot of people about how the economy is shifting and how we're starting to see people getting back to work. While I recognize that we're not out of the woods just yet, things are improving.

Now, one of the times when I was at Cardel Rec, I was actually talking to someone while I was grabbing a coffee at the coffee stand. He said that it feels like, for the first time, the government of Alberta has his back. He is a 31-year-old service worker who's earning minimum wage. You know, I get it. It's easy when you're in this dome or when you're in an ivory tower to not recognize what it is like to try to get by with so little, but you know what? We're a government with so much diversity, who really engages with their constituents.

You know what? I'm reminded of this every time I door-knock in communities like Shawnessy or Midnapore and I hear from people at the door who say that this is the first time they've heard from a politician when it's not an election year. I'm sure I can see a lot of head-nodding from my colleagues on the government bench here, so I think they all hear it, too. We're here to get our feedback, we're here to hear from Albertans, and we're not here just to pander for votes.

Now, one thing that you cannot miss when you're at Cardel Rec centre, Madam Speaker, is how full the high school there is. Both high schools in my riding, Bishop O'Byrne and Centennial, do so much with such limited space, and I do have to thank the teachers for what they do to maintain it and keep it going. The fact of the matter is that our government is listening to Albertans, and we're following through on our plans to build new schools, which is why I'm excited that next year we'll be opening up a new school in Legacy, which will directly have an impact on students in my riding and the entire south end of Calgary. In fact, we have over a dozen projects in south Calgary alone, projects like roof replacements and new schools throughout my area. Now, the difference between us and what we've seen in the past is that we don't just announce it; we actually get it done.

11:30

I've heard commentary about maintaining a sense of decorum in this House, and I'm hopeful that this type of respect can be found. I want to make comments about some criticism that I received from the former Member for Calgary-Lougheed about me mentioning pro wrestling in this House last spring. You know, now that I have the forum to go deeper into the context, I will use that opportunity because I was quite disappointed about the criticisms that were made. The reason why is because last May at the Backlash pay-per-view – oh, and by the way, happy Rusev Day for those watching at home – we saw Jinder Mahal win the WWE title. This was the first time that a Calgarian had done so since Bret the Hitman Hart. I was excited to see this not only as a wrestling fan, which I am – I'll admit I am – but also as a person who grew up in northeast Calgary.

You see, Mahal, whose parents are of Indian descent and who is Sikh, became the first world champion in the WWE of this descent. Early in his career he trained with many greats in the Calgary area, including the late Bad News Allen and Gerry Morrow. He cut his teeth in Stampede Wrestling and the Prairie Wrestling Alliance before he entered his stint in the WWE. After being released, he worked hard to achieve a remarkable physique, which led to his eventual and inevitable win.

Since his win the thing that's been really amazing and something I'm really proud of him for is that he's used this platform to inform people and dispel myths about the Sikh culture. You know what? To be honest, I'll call it as it is. The wrestling fan base are not ones that have the means to necessarily inform themselves about the Sikh culture, so sometimes biases do develop. He's really used this to relate to fans through podcasts or interviews and just talk about the culture and history, which I found remarkable.

You know what? I do have to say that if there's anything I'm going to be known for, it's that speech that I made during that time because it garnered nearly 40,000 views on YouTube and was reported by news outlets in four different countries, including Mexico, Great Britain, and even on CBS Sports. It was quite funny because I got directly messaged by a lot of fans in the Calgary area and from abroad who actually said: you know, it's really neat because someone from this government is just like me and gets what I'm talking about.

You know what? I'm proud of the pro wrestling history. It's something that has existed in the Calgary area for almost 70 years, and it's a shame that sometimes people ridicule it because there was a time when there were only two things that people could tell you about Calgary. Those were that we hosted the Olympics and that's where Bret the Hitman Hart is from.

In the last year we've also seen another Calgarian, Natalya Neidhart, who comes from that family, win the women's championship as well, which led to a lot more equality in women's wrestling and the removal of a lot of the biases that used to exist there.

Now, I really want to also take this opportunity to reflect on how my riding is going to change in the 2019 election. It will gain communities like Silverado, Legacy, Chaparral, and Walden. To all those residents in the area: I want to reiterate that your NDP government has your back. We have maintained the MSI program, that the city of Calgary leveraged for projects like the 162nd interchange. We are opening up dozens of schools to make sure that your kids can go to school near their homes. In the meantime, while you wait for those schools, we're removing the busing fees that you have to pay because there is no school in your area. We're also taking a lot of feedback into a lot of mitigation around projects, including the construction of the ring road, and we've learned a lot from the past as that develops. I would like to also use this

opportunity to thank my colleague from Calgary-Bow, who has been advocating for this immensely as well.

To the residents of south Calgary: we're working to build jobs, diversify the economy, and we're going to do this while maintaining the lowest tax rate in Canada, without giving handouts to the richest 1 per cent, as proposed by the opposition through their flat tax.

Now, I also want to use this opportunity because today I received an e-mail from the Calgary Highlanders, who recently had their Highland Ball. I recognize this because Her Honour is a strong supporter of the Calgary Highlanders and our military history here in Calgary. I want to thank the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs, who is the liaison for the province of Alberta to the Canadian military, for coming down and attending. It was a very successful event. They drew a lot of attendance; a lot of people went and supported them. I really enjoyed the parallels because as the grandson of a Calgary Highlander it was remarkable to see this legacy continuing, this part of our history that we continue to maintain and to encourage. It's just remarkable to have an opportunity to share that history in this House as well.

With that, Madam Speaker, I'm proud of the work our government has accomplished and the work that we continue to move towards doing.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

Ms Luff: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm very pleased to be able to serve on the delegation to the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region with the Member for Calgary-Shaw. I know he's been doing a lot of work lately with regard to working for our economy here in Alberta in terms of the NAFTA file. I was just wondering if he could perhaps expand on a little bit of the work that we've been doing through the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region to ensure that Alberta, you know, still has access to export markets.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I thank the hon. member for the question. I first want to take this opportunity to really recognize the hard work that the Member for Calgary-East is doing on this file. You know, there's a lot of stuff that we do to advocate for our province and our economic growth that may not see the light of cameras. We may not be necessarily waving the flag to the public, but we're doing the work. She's been doing a tremendous amount of work to get our products to market, to advocate for pipeline development and getting our resources to market. I want to thank her for her hard diligence on this because she's been holding a firm line and holding the entire organization accountable.

The one thing that has been great to see is that through some of our leadership that we have been doing, that I've been doing as the vice-president of the organization and the member has been doing with the delegation, we've been trying to work with all the partners from the five U.S. states as well as the Canadian provinces to have a united front on NAFTA and to really talk about how as a region we all actually benefit from this. Exports and imports are moving constantly across the border, and before product is even in its finished state, it has potentially moved across the border a few times. So there is a lot at risk if we were to eliminate what is currently in place. We do recognize as an organization that any policy does deserve to be renewed and that the IT sector wasn't as big as it was when we originally signed on to NAFTA. From this

forum last November we were able to get the entire organization to agree as a united front to encourage Washington to take a stance that recognizes the interdependencies that the entire region has.

Then when the steel and aluminum tariffs were being proposed and we didn't know where we would land with the tariff policy, we urgently reached out to the organization. We got the president, who is Senator Arnie Roblan from Oregon, and myself to issue a letter to President Trump recommending and encouraging him to exempt Canada from the tariffs on steel and aluminium. I was really excited that two days after we issued that letter to Washington, they did exempt our country from the steel and aluminum tariffs.

You know, it's really the commitment that a lot of our government members make to advocate for resource development and advocate for well-paid jobs. It's what New Democrats do. At the end of the day, we're going to continue to support our resources, we're going to continue to advocate for the jobs that are here, and we're going to continue to work collaboratively with trade partners from across the world and continue to maintain all the good relationships that we have because it's how we're going to continue to benefit. I think that some of this hard work that we started doing is why, as I alluded to before, we're leading in a lot of our manufacturing sectors, we're leading in our exports, our agricultural sector continues to grow tremendously. We continue to leverage new technology and new products that are available to us.

11:40

You know, I'm really proud whenever I go and hear about new, exciting things like pulses and how we're leveraging some of the new technology around refining canola and how we're able to start exporting a lot more of our beef to Asian markets. They're things that, you know, I never necessarily thought I would dabble in. Even looking at my previous life, which was as a grandson of a Slovakian who settled on a farm in Innisfail, it's neat to see that this continues to be an area that we develop immensely and see it really drive our provincial economic growth.

With that being said, there are a lot of exciting things that continue to happen. We continue to work hard to diversify our economy and create more jobs. We recognize that we're not out of the woods just yet and that we have to do this in a very calculated, systematic way that will ensure that a recession like this never happens again here in Alberta.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to rise and speak in response to the Speech from the Throne. It's my greatest honour and privilege to represent the residents of Calgary-Foothills, the hard-working people of Calgary-Foothills. What I hear from the residents of my constituency is that the throne speech covered some very important points, but it also was silent on other important, long-term goals of this province and the direction we are going to take. I'll speak to that in my speech.

Before I start, I would like to pay homage to the great NDP luminary and former federal NDP leader, the late David Lewis. David Lewis was born in present-day Belarus and grew up during the Bolshevik Revolution and during the Russian Civil War and the Polish-Soviet War. David's son Stephen Lewis rose in prominence as the leader of the NDP Official Opposition in Ontario. Stephen Lewis's son is Avi Lewis. You might have seen him on the CBC or Al Jazeera. Avi is married to journalist and author Naomi Klein.

Canada's NDP royal family is known for being signatories to the infamous Leap Manifesto. Tzeporah Berman is a signatory; so is

David Suzuki. But I don't want to talk about the document or the signatories. I want to talk about David Lewis and the gift he gave us: free market, Reagan- and Rogernomics, titles that we continue to use today. At a speech in Pictou county, Nova Scotia, in August 1972 he criticized the government of Nova Scotia for giving grants and loans to Michelin Tire and Scott paper, Madam Speaker. David Lewis called those businesses corporate welfare bums. The name has stuck ever since.

When governments go handing out grants, loans, loan guarantees, equity positions to subsidize business and industry, it's the practice of handing out corporate welfare. David Lewis would be ashamed of today's Alberta NDP, Madam Speaker. This is no longer the NDP of David Lewis. While David Lewis would be ashamed, Tommy Douglas would be very proud because he wanted all the multinationals to be kicked out of Canada. This provincial NDP is very successful in doing so. Look at Shell, Chevron, ConocoPhillips, Total. All those multinationals left Alberta because of the economic policies of this government.

The previous speaker, my friend from Calgary-Shaw, talked about the importance of having good relations with neighbours, and then he went on to attack the Saskatchewan government. I don't know how we are going to, you know, maintain good relations and get the results we are looking for while at the same time attacking a neighbour who is our trusted friend in fighting for pipelines and market access. I don't get that. If he wants to comment on that, he should look at the recent polls. Scott Moe is still the most popular Premier in this country, and you can contrast that to our Premier. I'll leave it there, Madam Speaker.

This throne speech is riddled with allusions to corporate welfare. Corporate welfare is one of the factors affecting how we can balance the budget. It is ironic that this NDP government is factoring in the Trans Mountain expansion project to balance their budget. After railing against pipelines in opposition, the NDP have come to realize that pipelines create wealth. The previous speaker also mentioned how he and his colleagues are working on market access. I really thank them for doing that. I appreciate that. Although they are late to the game, it's the right thing to do, and Albertans appreciate that. These pipelines move the product that give us the royalties to help pay for health and education, teachers and nurses, and even the NDP buses to rural Alberta, where the market has failed.

The NDP Deputy Premier talked about how we are exporting 99 per cent of our oil production to our one-and-only customer south of the border, the U.S.A., and we get told by the NDP and the left-wing academics that the carbon tax won't affect our competitiveness. Really? We're only shipping to one customer south of the border, and we are talking about competitiveness here. Down in the United States of America they rejected the Paris climate agreement. The U.S.A. doesn't care about our carbon tax. They're our only customer. They don't care about our carbon tax. And here we go; we have a carbon tax. [interjection] Yeah. I'm coming to that. We'll talk about other countries, but in the meantime our only customer, who is receiving 99 per cent of our product as per the Deputy Premier, doesn't have a carbon tax, so us imposing a carbon tax is not helping industry here.

Then we needed the pipeline to ship the product to China and India, but China, Russia, and India don't have carbon taxes either. The U.S.A. now has an accelerated capital cost element, and some say that it is more powerful than a corporate tax cut.

Madam Speaker, as you know, I immigrated to Canada from India to fulfill my economic dream because Canada is an energy superpower. But upon arrival I realized that the NDP and their fellow travellers just want to leave \$11 trillion worth of natural resources in the ground instead of improving life for themselves.

Talk to Jagmeet Singh. He'll tell you. Your own leader will tell you that he wants to leave the resource in the ground. Your own colleagues in B.C. even, whether it's the Premier of B.C. or the mayor of Vancouver or the mayor of Burnaby, or the NDP in Manitoba: talk to them and see if you can convince them to support these pipelines.

11:50

I was so amazed when I heard that Canada was the energy superpower, so I came here to realize my economic dreams, but once I landed here, my dreams were shattered after watching all these NDP fellow travellers blockading the pipelines every single day, to the extent that they are now even harming the security people in B.C. The police were hurt by these radical environmental activists. That is so sad, Madam Speaker. Something is fundamentally wrong with this in our country if we cannot get our resources to tidewater for global export. It's a lack of common sense. That's what I call a lack of common sense.

A multimillion-dollar effort known as the Tar Sands Campaign has literally stifled our pipelines. The goal is to landlock Russian and Canadian oil so that it cannot reach overseas markets for higher prices. It was launched in 2008 by the Rockefeller brothers and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. It has nothing to do with climate change or saving the environment. The campaign uses those environmentalists as stooges to accomplish the goal of ensuring that cheap oil moves south. That's what's happening, Madam Speaker. We are subsidizing. We are shipping our oil at a \$30 discount, and the U.S. is exporting their oil at market price.

The Tar Sands Campaign through the Tides Foundation has made at least 400 payments worth \$36 million to more than a hundred organizations in Canada, the U.S., and Europe. This is a very serious problem, Madam Speaker, and the throne speech didn't mention a word about it. None of the front-benchers in this House talked about that. By sullyng our product through an information war with selective and sometimes blatantly false facts, shaking investor confidence, the industry is curtailed by the big American interests. That's what we are doing unknowingly. I don't think my NDP friends realize that what they're doing is actually helping the U.S.A.; it's not helping Canada. By blockading pipelines, they are actually helping the U.S.A.

False facts like the Alberta oil sands impact an area of the size of England or Florida – that is false. The truth is that the oil sands impact less than 1 per cent of the boreal forest. That is the truth, and it was not mentioned in the throne speech, Madam Speaker. The success of the campaign hinges on its ability to get air and media. The folks up in the press gallery: when the eco radicals pull a stunt, they don't report it. It's a cry for attention to keep cheap oil moving to the U.S.A. Alberta and Canada are subsidizing America. Who ever thought Uncle Sam would be a corporate welfare bum?

In Ottawa the wise old Senators support new pipelines. They get it, but we don't get it here. We moved an amendment to the government motion to support this government, to strengthen the motion by asking them to use 92(10)(c). This government rejected that whereas on Tuesday, March 20, the Senate of Canada unanimously adopted a motion introduced by Conservative Senator

Richard Neufeld urging the Prime Minister to bring the full weight and power of his office to ensure that the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain expansion project gets completed on schedule. With its adoption, Conservatives, Liberals, independents, and nonaffiliated Senators have united their voices in asking that the Prime Minister and the government ensure that the expansion is completed on time and that this commitment be conveyed to the governments of British Columbia and Alberta in a manner that leaves no doubt as to the federal government's determination to see the project become fully operational within the present timeline. That was the release from Senator Neufeld's office, Madam Speaker.

Even if and when Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain expansion gets built, we still need an additional million barrels of pipeline space per day based on CAPP's forecast, Madam Speaker. CAPP says that we are short 1 and a half million barrels. I'm optimistic that when Trans Mountain gets built, we'll still be short another million barrels of pipeline capacity. That was not addressed in the throne speech. The throne speech did not address that, and there was some news yesterday that . . .

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I was riveted by the hon. member's comments and would like to hear the remainder of it if he would be willing to.

The Acting Speaker: Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yesterday there were some news articles about celebrating this Trans Mountain pipeline. When the first barrel of oil is flowing in that expansion project, we will all celebrate together with the Premier, but we have some more work to do on that project. The throne speech is silent on any firm action. If the pipeline is delayed and if we have economic difficulties, how do we still balance the budget? It doesn't talk about that.

Now, already the Finance minister is finding an excuse for not balancing the budget. He can blame it on the B.C. NDP and the NDP mayor of Vancouver and the NDP mayor of Burnaby and the federal NDP leader for not being able to balance the budget, which is not good.

In this throne speech we did get a handful of programs espousing development and a plan B for pipelines, but some of them come out to being nothing but corporate welfare, Madam Speaker. That's why I talked about the Lewis family and former NDP leader. This corporate welfarism is the right idea, but those are the wrong tools to be used now.

Madam Speaker, thank you for the time to . . .

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt you, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(2.1) the Assembly will now stand adjourned until 1:30 this afternoon.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12 p.m.]

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The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, March 22, 2018

Day 9

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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

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

Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (UCP)
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)
Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (NDP)
Malkinson, Brian, Calgary-Currie (NDP)
Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),
Government House Leader
McCuaig-Boyd, Hon. Margaret,
Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (NDP)
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Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (NDP)
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Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)
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Official Opposition House Leader
Notley, Hon. Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),
Premier
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (UCP)
Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (UCP)
Payne, Hon. Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (NDP)
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (NDP)
Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (NDP)
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (UCP),
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)
Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (NDP)
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP)
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)
Schneider, David A., Little Bow (UCP)
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (NDP)
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (NDP)
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (NDP)
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (UCP)
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (UCP)
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (NDP),
Deputy Government Whip
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)
Vacant, Fort McMurray-Conklin
Vacant, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake

Party standings:

New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 25 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent: 1 Vacant: 2

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Shannon Dean, Law Clerk and Director of
House Services
Stephanie LeBlanc, Senior Parliamentary
Counsel
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel

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Committee Services
Nancy Robert, Research Officer
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Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
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Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
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STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

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Cyr	McKitrick
Dang	Turner
Ellis	

Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

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Connolly	Schneider
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Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

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Aheer	Littlewood
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Kleinsteuber	

Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

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Anderson, W.	Orr
Babcock	Rosendahl
Drever	Stier
Drysdale	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
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Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	Miller
Cooper	Nielsen
Goehring	Nixon
Gotfried	Pitt
Hanson	van Dijken
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Standing Committee on Public Accounts

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Barnes	Malkinson
Carson	Miller
Fildebrandt	Nielsen
Gotfried	Panda
Hunter	Renaud
Littlewood	Turner
Luff	

Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

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Babcock	Malkinson
Dang	McPherson
Fraser	Nielsen
Hanson	Rosendahl
Kazim	Woollard
Kleinsteuber	Vacant
Loewen	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, March 22, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

I'm just curious if anybody in the Assembly has bought a new pair of shoes today.

We have a very busy day, so I'd ask you to keep your introductions concise and descriptions of tablings brief.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

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

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure if the students from Webber Academy are here; I was told that they would be in later. But while I have this moment, I'd certainly like to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Legislature the students from Webber Academy, located in the fine constituency of Calgary-West. They are accompanied by their teachers, Mrs. Valerie Ellard, Ms Jennifer Harriman, and Mr. Steve McMurdo. I'd like everybody to give them the warm welcome of this Assembly, if not now, when they do arrive.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to introduce to you and through you to Members of the Legislative Assembly the staff of the Alberta Teachers' Association, who are joining us today as a professional development opportunity to learn a bit more about the work of the provincial government. If we can give them the traditional welcome of the Legislature, I would appreciate it.

Thank you.

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

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour and privilege to introduce to you and through you to all the members of this Assembly 112 students from Michael Strembitsky school in the riding of Edmonton-Ellerslie. They're joined by their teachers, Tanya Boyko, Peter Utivlugt, Kelly Boudreau, and Lynnell Gagnon, as well as their parent chaperones, Daisy Rai, Eric Chi, Maninderjit Sauger, and Samar Al-Hajjaj. Please give them the warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other school groups today?

Seeing and hearing none, the hon. Member for Peace River.

Ms Jabbour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to the Assembly three of your special guests, who are currently sitting in your gallery. I'll ask them to rise and remain standing when I call their name. First of all, Perry Deering is the president of the Medicine Hat & District Chamber of Commerce. Along with his wife, Chris Deering, Perry runs his family business, Deerview Meats, in Cypress county. His wife, Chris Deering, is not here yet. Sarah MacKenzie is the first vice-president of the Medicine Hat chamber of commerce, who has worked at family-owned, Medicine Hat-based MacKenzie Eye Care along with organizing a number of local community-building and volunteer initiatives. Lisa Kowalchuk is a long-time

executive director of the chamber of commerce, who – I don't think anyone will disagree – has been a linchpin of that organization and a true advocate for southeastern Albertans. Please give these three members the warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ms Jabbour: I have another introduction, Mr. Speaker. The other introduction is a guest of mine. Sylvia Johnson is the president of the region 6 Métis Nation of Alberta, who's travelled from Peace River to be with us today. I'm not sure if she's in the gallery yet, but please give her a warm welcome.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore, I understand you have three introductions.

Mr. Nielsen: Yes, with your permission. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly an amazing woman, Colleen Chapman. Colleen Chapman is the president and founder of the Friends of Church Street, past president of the British Columbia Bereavement Helpline, and volunteer co-ordinator for the *Boyle McCauley News*. Today she's involved in many projects in the Edmonton inner city, including supporting truth and reconciliation initiatives. Thank you so much for rising. If we could please extend to her the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

It's also a pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a very special group of guests. My member's statement today will speak about the student conference that my constituency office assisted Balwin school in organizing for the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. We had numerous guest speakers, and I'm pleased to introduce many of them attending here today: Chevi Rabbit; Bean Gill; Paula Kirman; Katherine Swampy; Beatrice Ghettaba; trustee and board chair, Michelle Draper; and Wati Rahmat, representing Mona Ismaeil. If you could all please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly. Thank you, again.

It's also a pleasure to rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Principal Christina Jones, Assistant Principal Andy Connelly, and the leadership team who assisted in making yesterday's event a huge success: Kelsey Kindred, Sarah Ferrante, Chanelle Cluett-Alstad, and Ann Gariano. I would ask you all to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce two leaders from the business community in the Bow Valley. I'd ask my guests to rise and remain standing as I call their names. Casey Peirce is the executive director of the Association for Mountain Parks Protection and Enjoyment. Casey and AMPPE advocate for a balance between sustainable tourism, ecological integrity, and a positive visitor experience in Canada's Rocky Mountain parks. Brian McClure is the founding president of the Bow Valley Chamber of Commerce, that recently celebrated its first anniversary. The chamber is off to a great start thanks to his leadership along with the founding executive board and its members. I'd ask my colleagues to extend to my guests the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: My guests are not yet in, Mr. Speaker. If I could possibly get up later.

The Speaker: Are there any other guests, hon. members? The Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly Mr. Gerry Steinke and Mrs. Karen Becker. Both of them are representatives of the Public School Boards' Association of Alberta, but more importantly they're fast becoming friends. Karen is a trustee with the Wetaskiwin school division and has actually baked doughnuts for my constituency cup basketball tournament, that I have in my constituency. Gerry is the father of Nathan Steinke, a former legislative co-ordinator for the Wildrose Party. Could you please give them the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Any other introductions? The Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour today to introduce two people that are with the Grande Prairie Regional College. Of course, they're still glowing over the recent announcement of the degree-granting status. Obviously, thanks to the Minister of Advanced Education and the government for doing that. If you could please rise as I say your name. Mark Evans is director of communications, and Carmen Haakstad is the vice-president of external relations. If we could please give them the warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Are your guests here now?

Dr. Swann: They have arrived, Mr. Speaker. It's my great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the House our passionate, articulate, and fearless leader in the Alberta Liberal Party, David Khan. I'll ask him to stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly, and with him Nicolaas Jansen, vice-president of policy for the Alberta Liberal Party, a bright and generous volunteer with a master's in public policy from the University of Calgary.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Diabetes Fundraiser in Peace River Constituency

Ms Jabbour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The people in my constituency truly exemplify the spirit of innovation and drive, creating wonderful events that are not only good for the community but also a lot of fun.

I was able to participate in one such event earlier this month when I was invited to help judge High Level's first ever Battle of the Bands: A Tribute to Merle Haggard. The range of talent was truly impressive, with musicians competing for over \$7,000 in prize money. These included Fort Vermilion's Tamarackin', Twangin' Country from John D'Or, Calvin and Taryn from La Crête, Vanishing Breed from the Northwest Territories, and Wayne Lambert and Smokin' Country, comprised of players from across northern Alberta.

1:40

Once the formal judging was done, the fun truly began. All the musicians, including one of the judges, took to the stage to back up Calvin and Taryn's sweet harmonies. Soon we were enjoying acrobatic fiddle antics and audience members performing impromptu jigs. Everyone was having a great time, but that enjoyment was only a small part of what this was all about.

Val Courtoreille, a dedicated community organizer, spearheaded this initiative on behalf of the Team Diabetes Fort Vermilion fundraiser for Diabetes Canada. Given that statistics indicate that 70 per cent of indigenous women are at risk for developing diabetes, this fundraiser is incredibly important to the north.

Another of Val's projects is the Northern Alberta Fiddling and Jigging Championships, which will showcase the Ivan Flett Memorial Dancers and Ryan Keplin this year on May 5 in Fort Vermilion. Val started this to revive traditional dance and music and to encourage tourism to the north. I've had the honour of participating as judge support every year since its inception. Community youth are given jigging classes, and talented dancers and fiddlers travel from afar for this wonderful event.

Our next Battle of the Bands: A Tribute to Merle Haggard competition is set for June 2, with Merle Haggard's sons Ben and Noel confirmed for the main event. Join us for a lot of fun and to support a great cause.

Of course, Val doesn't do this all alone. She has a team of volunteers who readily give their time and energy to help make these events successful and memorable. Thank you to all of you. You all make our community a great place to live, work, and play.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Agricultural Society Funding

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With all the uncertainty around crops, weather, moisture, drought, grain cars, and such as of late it came as a pleasant surprise that this government isn't going to cause Alberta's ag societies further grief this year. It's been announced that our seven regional and 283 primary agricultural societies will receive stable funding in an announcement earlier this week. After being left with nothing but uncertainty around funding last year, our agricultural societies can depend on predictable funding and budget accordingly. That's good news.

But it's not all sunshine and good times for those societies, Mr. Speaker. We live in a world where the myth of social licence has brought us a punitive carbon tax. That means that it costs more to heat community halls, run curling rinks and rec centres, and it means severely increased costs to run the ice plant at the local hockey rink, many of which are funded by your local ag society. That means that funding levels, although fairly consistent over the years, just won't pay the same amount of the power bills, buy the same amount of supplies, and pay to keep the water flowing and the heat on.

That's because this government has chosen once again to raise their tax on everything to \$30 a tonne. That means our ag societies have to make do with less because this government's ideological experiment didn't factor in how much this actually harms nonprofits. This also means those services provided to our rural communities may offer less, be available less often, and cost more to the end-user. And it's going to get worse as this government has tied themselves into Trudeau's Liberal scheme to raise the carbon tax a further 67 per cent, to \$50 per tonne, meaning these organizations will soon have even less to work with, all of this

simply because this government sees this punitive tax as buying us access to tidewater.

Most Albertans live in the real world, Mr. Speaker, not some virtual one, where social licence may buy you something.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Budget 2018

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today is budget day in Alberta, and we'll get some insight into what the government's priorities are. There's a lot of pomp and circumstance around budget day. There are traditions like the Finance minister's new shoes. There are endless scrums and interviews about what the budget means or who got left out or what the big numbers are. But eventually the cameras leave, ministers and MLAs go home, and tomorrow will just be the day after budget day.

What we need to remember is that for Albertans every day is budget day. One way or another the financial plan that the government puts out will affect every one of us every day of the year: a line in the budget for carbon tax revenue and what it means for Alberta families, funding for AISH and income supports, and how much money someone has to house and feed themselves for the month. Borrowing money might mean the government can deliver much-needed services today, but it also means that the next generation will be responsible for the services we use. All this is to say that a budget is a collection of choices, and those choices impact the lives and livelihoods of everyone in Alberta.

In the coming weeks we'll be sitting down to go over estimates. We'll be asking specific questions about what the government is funding and what it means for Albertans. For many this will be the only time that they'll have to put a voice to the questions directly to the government. We need to treat that process with the appropriate respect. If we go into committees with the intent of scoring political points or the intent to obscure answers to legitimate questions behind layers of bureaucracy, we're doing a disservice to Albertans. This is an opportunity to represent our constituents, to find out what this budget means for them, beyond the talking points.

Our caucus didn't release a shadow budget because we thought we could solve all of Alberta's problems. We did it because we wanted to engage Albertans in a conversation about choices that matter the most. We won't stop talking to Albertans because we just put out that document, just like I hope the government will listen to the opposition's concerns out of respect for those that we represent. Today is for speeches and interviews and traditions, but for Albertans every day is budget day.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Energy Industry Diversification

Cortes-Vargas: Mr. Speaker, in Strathcona county a lot of hard-working and highly skilled Albertans lost their jobs during the downturn that resulted from the oil price shock of 2014. These hard-working Albertans tell me they're tired of the boom-and-bust cycle. They want and deserve stability and security, just as Peter Lougheed envisioned when he began the process of diversifying Alberta's energy sector decades ago. They want this current recovery to be built to last.

Since being elected in 2015, I have been a vocal voice for expansion of initiatives like the petrochemicals diversification program. Our government's recent actions to diversify our energy sector were welcomed by industry leaders and families in the Industrial Heartland: supporting commercialization of additional partial upgrading for more refineries and increasing the capacities

of our current and future pipelines; incentives to help petrochemical facilities upgrade raw resources into higher value products; and the second round of our already successful petrochemicals diversification program.

That's why I don't understand why the Leader of the Opposition is so opposed to energy diversification. He claims that the government shouldn't be supporting winners and losers. On this side of the House we don't need to take any lessons about picking winners and losers from folks who, when they were in government, awarded their favours to people that they had on their speed-dial.

The truth is that right now we're losing out to Texas, Pennsylvania, and Louisiana, and they're winning the hunt for investors. If the Leader of the Opposition has his way, they will go on winning. Members on this side of the House are picking Albertans, Alberta workers and Alberta families, to win, and we will keep picking Albertans to win each and every time.

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

Balwin School Student Conference on Racism

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's disheartening that Alberta, too, has seen its own incidents of racism, Islamophobia, and homophobia since I was elected in 2015. I have zero tolerance for any form of discrimination in my riding.

Yesterday was the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Together with Balwin school we organized a student conference to inspire the students to make a difference in the world and combat racism. The students from Balwin school were joined by students from Belvedere school to listen to numerous guest speakers, that included all of the guests that I introduced today as well, including folks like the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, Bashir Mohamed, the Member for Edmonton-Centre, Jasdeep Panesar, Japman Bajaj, and Seada Karalic. It was a wonderful day of embracing our diversity and celebrating all of our differences.

It was such an honour to be a part of this very special day. I would like to commend Balwin school for being an exemplary model in celebrating the diversity found within their school and making every student feel special, cherished, and loved. I would also like to give a special thank you to everyone who made this day special, because together we can eliminate racism and discrimination once and for all.

Oral Question Period

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

Oil Sands Advisory Group Former Co-chair

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, a few days ago on 630 CHED the environment minister said that Tzeponah Berman was put on the NDP's oil sands advisory group as co-chair because CAPP invited her. We have repeatedly asked in this Chamber if that is, in fact, true. This time, though, because the environment minister continues to dodge it, I will ask the Premier. Is it true that Tzeponah Berman was put on the advisory panel for the oil sands by you because CAPP requested it? Yes or no?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member is making reference to my remarks from a radio interview in which I could have been clearer. It is true that a group of individuals, including

Ms Berman, came forward to government with a proposal on the emissions cap. Among those individuals was the past president of the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers. Our government has no current relationship with Ms Berman, and her position on energy infrastructure is not only irrelevant; it is wrong.

1:50

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, this environment minister continues to try to muddy the waters. The fact is that at the radio station she said that Tzepporah Berman, an individual who compared our oil sands to Mordor, an individual who said that the oil sands should be shut, was put on the advisory panel by the NDP at the request of CAPP, not a former president of CAPP, not somebody who's formerly been associated with CAPP but on behalf of CAPP. Is it true, or is it similar to meetings with the mayor of Rocky Mountain House?

The Speaker: Hon. member, there's been a ruling in the House on that matter.

The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, a group of individuals, including Ms Berman, came forward to government with a proposal on the emissions cap, in 2015. Among those individuals were a number of companies and the past president of the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers. We find Ms Berman's comments on Alberta's need for extra pipeline infrastructure and a replacement of the current TMX line to be offensive, and we also believe that her comments are an insult to the hard-working men and women of this province.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, clearly, this government continues to want to blame other people for their mistakes. They will not address whether the statements of the environment minister are, in fact, factual from the other day on the radio. But what is true, for sure, is that at the end of the day it's the NDP who appointed this individual to their oil sands advisory group, an individual who compared the oil sands to Mordor, who said that oil is destroying our democracy. Will this Premier and this NDP government stop blaming other people for their mistakes? Will they stand up and recognize that they made a terrible mistake by putting this individual on the oil sands advisory group and apologize to Albertans for that decision?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have been very clear for some months on this issue. Of course, the oil sands advisory group's work has now concluded, and the work around the emissions cap, the legislation, has passed, and we are now moving on. Our government's plan to reduce emissions and make meaningful progress on climate change got us federal approval of two pipelines, and we will not stop until, certainly, the TMX project is moving and shovels are in the ground and Albertans are getting access to tidewater.

The Speaker: Second main question.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the NDP may now claim that they disagree with Tzepporah Berman's position now that she's left the advisory group, but that begs the question: did the NDP agree with her before they appointed her to the group? She said in 2011, and I quote: we need to shut down the tar sands; we need to move away from the development of oil. In 2013 she said that oil is corroding our democracy. Did the Premier agree with her statements back then? If not, why did she put her on the advisory group? Or is she embarrassed now about that decision, and that's why her

environment minister is now on the radio trying to blame CAPP for that decision?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, in 2015 a group of individuals, including Ms Berman, came forward to government with a proposal on the emissions cap as part of the consultations on the climate leadership plan. There were a number of companies among those individuals, and the past president of CAPP, Dave Collyer, was among them as well. Our government has no current relationship with Ms Berman. Certainly, the climate leadership plan: that group of individuals contributed to it, and it did result in the approval of two pipelines.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, this government does have a relationship with Ms Berman. They put her on their oil sands advisory group. They now want to move away from that. I don't blame them given the things that she has said. The fact is that this government has a relationship with an environmental activist that is now illegally protesting against a pipeline that we're trying to get built, and this government, because they're ashamed of that fact – and they should be ashamed of that fact – is now going on the radio and attempting to blame CAPP for it. Again, will the minister or the Premier stand up and apologize for the ridiculous decision to put Tzepporah on their oil sands advisory group?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government has no current relationship with Ms Berman, and of course the oil sands advisory group has concluded their work. Part of that work was, of course, the passing of the Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act. Certainly, our government's plan to reduce emissions and make meaningful progress on climate change has resulted in moving the Alberta economy forward, with the approval of two pipelines, but it also put forward to Canadians a credible climate leadership plan that is substantive and that grows the economy while taking seriously the matter of climate change and protecting . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the environment minister continues to stand up in this House and try to avoid her relationship with Tzepporah Berman. That is ridiculous, and Albertans are not falling for it. The question that has been asked over and over in this Chamber in the last couple of days: is what the environment minister said on the radio about CAPP true? Yes or no? She refuses to answer that question. We're not talking about former presidents of CAPP. We're not talking about people that may have met her in a hospitality suite. We want to know if CAPP asked to have Ms Berman on that panel, yes or no, because that is what the environment minister has said on the radio. Is it true, or is it not true?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A group of individuals, including Ms Berman, came forward to government with a proposal on the oil sands emissions limit, which is why she was on the oil sands emissions limit. Among those individuals was the past president of CAPP and a number of companies.

Mr. Speaker, the only reason I can see that the members opposite are fixated on this issue is because they have no plan to address climate change, and in fact they can't even get a handle on the science. The Finance critic for that party even financed a climate

change denying film. He promotes climate change denying books on social media. I certainly wouldn't want him managing my books.

The Speaker: Third main question.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, this environment minister wrote an introduction to a book, *An Action a Day Keeps Global Capitalism Away*, that talks about taking illegal action to protest inside of this province.

But we'll digress from that. Here is the fact. They put Ms Berman on their panel, an individual who said that we need to shut down the tar sands, that we need to move away from the development of oil, that oil is corroding our democracy, an individual that is in B.C. right now illegally protesting a pipeline that we're trying to get built, at protests, by the way, Mr. Speaker, that have seen RCMP officers hurt. This minister went on the radio and said that CAPP is the one that wanted her on this panel. Yes or no?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, Ms Berman's comments are offensive to the hard-working women and men of this province and to all Canadians because this project is certainly in the national interest.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member across the way seems to want to take a trip down memory lane. Might I remind that party that trips down memory lane often end in a lake of fire. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, that is one of the most desperate displays I've ever seen from this government. This government is so desperate that they will dig in on anything to do but answer the question.

The question, Mr. Speaker, is so simple. This minister said on the radio that CAPP asked to have Ms Berman put on the oil advisory council. Did that happen or not? You can't get any more simple than that question. Now, I get why they want to avoid it, because they want the public not to remember that they put this individual on the panel. But this minister said that on the radio. Is it true, or is it not true?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member is making reference to my remarks from a radio interview in which I could have been clearer. A group of individuals, including Ms Berman, came forward to government with a proposal on the emissions cap. Among those individuals were a number of companies and the past president of the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the minister. She was very clear on the radio. She said that CAPP asked for Ms Berman to be part of the oil advisory council. That is the question. The minister does not want to answer the question. It is embarrassing that a minister of the Crown would continue to stand up in this House and mislead Albertans this way. Is it true that CAPP asked for Ms Berman to be on this panel? Yes or no? Stop hiding from Albertans, and tell the truth in this Assembly.

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, let's take a trip down memory lane. The government put together the oil

sands advisory group, which put forward a proposal, which informed our climate leadership plan, which led to the federal approval of two pipelines. I'm very proud of the work that our government has done and our minister of environment has done in securing a pipeline approval, something that the Leader of the Opposition couldn't do when he was in Ottawa for 20 years.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Emergency Medical Services Funding

Mr. Fraser: Mr. Speaker, on Monday I questioned the Minister of Health on whether or not she would finally commit to properly funding EMS and support paramedics. The minister responded by pointing her finger to anyone she could, claiming that a four-year-old budget that was never passed in this House was the source of the current struggles for EMS workers. I imagine that if that were the case, the minister would have no trouble addressing that shortfall within the three, soon to be four budgets that she's been present for. To the Minister of Health: do you believe that three years as Minister of Health has been long enough to address this funding issue for EMS, or will front-line workers continue to have to wait?

2:00

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm incredibly proud to stand in this House and defend our government's record, which included stopping the drastic cuts that were proposed by that member's party when they were in government. In a few short minutes we'll be able to discuss the budget in great detail. I can tell you that what we have done is brought forward stability in terms of health care funding. What we have done is brought forward stability in terms of leadership for Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services, things that the members opposite failed to do because they don't believe in public health care. On this side of the House we do. We protect our front lines, and we protect the Albertans who rely on those services.

Mr. Fraser: Well, Mr. Speaker, let's go down memory lane. Last year that minister cut EMS by \$17.5 million. When you talk to paramedics today, things are getting worse. In fact, they've gone to CBC, and a CBC article revealed that the call volume is up since 2012 by 20 per cent, and the number of paramedics increased only by 3.4 per cent. I'll gladly admit that our previous government didn't get it right in three of the last six years, but this minister has been at the helm for the last three years. To the minister: will you take any responsibility at all for the shortfall?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am very proud of the fact that response times haven't gone up, that we have found ways to increase front-line service providers, and that we continue to do that. We'll be happy to talk about this year's budget in just a few minutes. Let's again remember what happened under the then government, oh, of which the leader of that party was the Health minister. They brought forward a proposed billion-dollar cut. They brought forward a proposed health care tax. Even in their proposal for this year's upcoming shadow budget they're proposing those same failed solutions. You can't cut a billion dollars from health care, bring in a new tax, and expect things to get better. On this side of the House we're standing up for Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-South East. Second supplemental.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I honestly believe that the minister has the best interest of Albertans at heart and that this oversight in funding for EMS is simply a mistake. But it's a mistake that puts lives at risk, so I feel compelled to stand up and continue to question her about this issue. It's been identified, the solutions are within the minister's purview, and the need is only growing. Regardless of how we got here, we need to start moving forward to ensure that Albertans have access to life-saving emergency care. To the same minister: if you won't take responsibility, will you at least take some action?

Ms Hoffman: I'm proud to do both, Mr. Speaker. We've taken responsibility for reversing the cuts that were proposed by Mr. Mandel, the leader of the party that's asking the very question. We've taken action on making sure that we protect front-line services throughout our province, including expanding capital, including expanding EMS services. We took action on putting the paramedics under the Health Professions Act, something that the member opposite appears to have attempted to do and that was not done when he was in government but that we did on this side very shortly after taking government. We've taken action on bringing in power structures. In a few short minutes we'll have an opportunity to take action on discussing our vision, including our budget, including that for EMS in this province, and we'll see . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Tourism in Banff-Cochrane Constituency

Mr. Westhead: Mr. Speaker, Banff-Cochrane is home to the rolling foothills and the majestic Rocky Mountains, some of Alberta's most iconic scenery. The region attracts millions of tourists each year who enjoy four-season recreation and excellent hospitality. To the Minister of Culture and Tourism: what strategies are being developed to leverage the incredible tourism assets found in the Banff-Cochrane constituency?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Culture and Tourism.

Miranda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Travel Alberta works with tourism partners like Banff/Lake Louise Tourism to leverage marketing opportunities through the co-operative marketing program, to develop new as well as to enhance existing tourism product experiences. This year's program, held in Banff from March 5 to 8, was on developing new winter and year-round experiences to increase visitation in the shoulder season. Through the visitor services innovation fund with the Banff/Lake Louise Tourism Bureau we have offered mobile social media counselling to provide visitors with convenient trip-planning services, resulting in a 35 per cent . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
First supplemental.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that the Stoney Nakoda First Nation is eager to see an expansion of indigenous tourism in Alberta, do you have a strategy to help them accomplish this?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Miranda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud that our ministry was the first provincial government to provide a \$100,000 grant to establish an indigenous tourism association in Alberta. We know that indigenous people in Alberta have inspiring stories to tell. They can offer authentic educational experiences that visitors are looking

for, creating good-paying jobs in indigenous communities. We're going to continue working with the Stoney Nakoda First Nation to explore opportunities, to attract investments, and to expand tourism products and experiences in the area.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: given that there are ample opportunities to expand and diversify the tourism sector through sport-related activities such as mountain biking and ecotourism, what actions are being taken to help fill up hotel rooms during shoulder seasons?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Miranda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're working on a nature-based tourism action plan to help identify key opportunities and strategies to diversify Alberta's nature-based tourism experiences and attractions. Also, the tourism entrepreneur start-up seminars currently being offered throughout the province will provide a strong foundation, with expert knowledge and business fundamentals to help those interested in exploring opportunities in this very exciting industry.

Thank you.

Electric Power System

Mr. Panda: It is clear that this NDP government has mismanaged electricity and that Albertans are stuck with the bill. Enmax transferred the carbon credits to the Balancing Pool and received \$5 million in the settlement over the PPA agreements. This PPA scandal is costing us up to \$2 billion. To the minister: why did you hide these numbers last week? The \$2 billion would have brought the green line LRT to suburban Calgary without any carbon tax.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. You know, just over a year ago we took action to protect Alberta families, and I'm pleased to say that we've settled all PPA disputes with companies and provided a loan, as was mentioned, to the Balancing Pool. If we had not acted, customers would have seen great spikes in their bills. In fact, in the next coming while their bills will be 78 per cent below what they would have been had we not taken action.

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, given that Enmax lost \$30.3 million last year and given that the third-quarter financial report of the NDP government showed borrowing of \$650 million for the Balancing Pool, why is the NDP government denying dividends to Calgarians, who own Enmax, and saddling Alberta taxpayers with a multibillion-dollar burden for the NDP's mismanagement?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we're pleased to have concluded the agreement with Enmax. As was stated many times last week on that agreement, there is no impact on Albertans. It was very clearly stated. It was a question of turning in carbon credits for an offset. The company clearly does belong to Calgary. This agreement is good for Enmax, it's good for the owners of Enmax, and it's good for our province.

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, given the record price of 3.7 cents for a kilowatt hour set in round 1 of the renewable electricity program

auctions and since rounds 2 and 3 are under way, will the minister admit that the record prices do not include the price to build new transmission lines all over Alberta or the cost to build the backup natural gas plants? Why is your NDP hiding the real cost to consumers and taxpayers?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yeah. We were very pleased to get record-setting prices in our first REP auction, 3.7 cents. You know, Alberta is blessed with a fairly robust system. The projects that were chosen are right near the line, and there will be no extra costs for that because that's the way we planned it, and that's the way it's going to be.

Carillion Highway Maintenance Contract

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, given that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta meeting yesterday heard from the minister that the company Carillion has a contract to maintain 43 per cent of Alberta's highways and is in receivership and given that the government of Alberta will pay \$8.9 million on behalf of Carillion to make sure they have items like sand and gravel, which are important, in stock to keep the highways maintained, to the Minister of Transportation: is it legal for the government to pay the expenses of one of the winners of the road maintenance tenders while others that won the tenders don't get that support? And even if it is legal, is it fair to the other contractors?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. I appreciate his concern for all of the other companies, but the fact of the matter is that Carillion's parent company is in receivership, and they're losing money on these contracts. In order to make sure that they can pay their suppliers and continue to get things like sand, gravel, and other supplies, fuel, and be able to pay their workers and keep our highways clear and safe until the end of winter, it is important that we support that company's operations. The alternative . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

2:10

Mr. McIver: The fairness question went unanswered.

Given that the minister told the large room of RMA attendees yesterday that the \$8.9 million, as he said, is to get us to the end of April and given that April can be a high snowfall month, which makes our highways an important safety issue – it makes sense – to the Minister of Transportation: what are you doing to make sure that the standards of care provided by this company in receivership will not go downhill during this important time, putting Albertans' safety at risk?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Well, thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. That's precisely what we have done. We've ensured that we keep the suppliers and the employees whole, that the company is able to continue its operations. I might suggest that the contracts awarded to Carillion took place when that member was the Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: The contracts are not in question, Mr. Speaker.

Given that it's unfair to companies maintaining Alberta's highways without Alberta financing to now be competing with a company who banks at the government of Alberta and given that

Albertans should know that the safety of their highways is in the hands of a company that can afford to operate, to the minister: in order to have Alberta's roads looked after by a viable company in the future, on what date will you or your ministry put out the next tender for the 43 per cent of roads now under the care of Carillion, and if you do not know the answer today, will you tell us on what date you will inform the House?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, there are a variety of contracts that have been established under the previous government for the maintenance of our highways, and in fact they expire at different times. In this particular case there are a number of options that we're considering in order to deal with the areas that Carillion has bid on, which, I might add, is about 43 per cent of the roads in the province. They are certainly the largest operator. We are working on contingency plans. I want to assure the House and all Albertans that we are going to ensure that our highways are safely maintained during winter, summer, all year-round. That's our obligation. We take it very seriously.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The Member for Calgary-West.

Justice System

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government knows that an accused must stand before a justice of the peace within 24 hours of their arrest, which is now the sole responsibility of Crown prosecutors. Yet we now know that judges are dropping charges and letting accused offenders walk free because Alberta Justice is not meeting this critical time limit. Minister, you cut funding for prosecutors in your very first budget and left 35 positions vacant and, in doing so, you put Albertans at risk. Did you not consider the serious consequences that might occur?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, it was our government who acted on the recommendations of the committee, after the tragic death of Constable Wynn, to look into our bail system in order to move it forward. It was our government that advanced the funding to allow those Crown prosecutors to be in courtrooms to start to move the system forward. It's our government that's been investing in both RCMP and Crown prosecutors, and we'll have more to say about that in the future. We take our responsibilities very seriously.

Mr. Ellis: Let's be clear, Mr. Speaker. It was that minister and that government that cut the Crown's budget by \$5 million in 2015-2016, and now we're playing the catch-up game. Given that rural Albertans are expressing great concern about the revolving door that is setting offenders free to continue preying upon vulnerable citizens and stealing their vehicles, ATVs, tractors, and the list goes on and on and on, Minister: what are you doing to fix this problem?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and to the member for what is really a very important question. We all know that the Jordan ruling was a massive change in law. That resulted in us having to rethink the way we were doing business. In order to ensure that we're able to meet those timelines, this government advanced funding to a number of areas in Justice. We continue to monitor the situation and continue to work with all of our partners

throughout the system to see where those pressures continue to evolve, to keep moving forward. This is a government with a history of investments in front-line services and ensuring we provide the services that Albertans need, and we will continue to do that.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister likes to avoid responsibility by claiming issues lie in the federal realm and given that because it is the responsibility of the provinces to create an efficient bail hearing process and the minister has a clear role to play in closing the revolving door that is instilling fear in law-abiding citizens, Minister, you have a responsibility to protect the citizens of this province. When will you start protecting the victims?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we believe we have a responsibility to the citizens of this province. That's why we've taken the step of investing throughout law enforcement. I was very interested to see that the members opposite were not interested in supporting those investments in the supplementary supply. We will continue to make those investments. Our seven-point plan allows more RCMP officers not only to be in the field but takes those RCMP officers out of the back offices and puts them on the front lines so that they can continue to assist in ensuring that we are catching those perpetrators.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Carbon Levy Rebate for Seniors

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Tuesday I asked the minister of seniors some questions that were not answered but dodged, so today I will be tabling a ministerial order in which the minister of seniors very quietly decided to allow the government housing foundations to include carbon tax as a portion of seniors' income for rent calculation purposes, forcing some of the poorest in society to pay higher rent. But, curiously, seniors who receive direct-to-tenant rent supplements are exempted from including carbon tax rebates for rent calculation purposes. Minister, please explain that.

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

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we know that our climate leadership plan is working. We know that approximately 260,000 seniors are eligible for up to \$300 annually for the carbon levy rebate. We continue to invest in seniors, make sure that they're well taken care of in this province, and we're very proud of our record.

Mr. Orr: Seniors don't consider an increase to their rent helping them out.

Anyway, given that we will see a further 67 per cent hike to the carbon tax and given that seniors who live in these government-subsidized facilities are there because they are very low income, often due to no fault of their own, how do you suppose these low-income seniors will make it once this increase comes into effect? I can't really imagine the implications well.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We certainly worked very closely with the housing management bodies

across the province. We have over 100 housing management bodies that provide affordable housing. We have a significant investment. We gave them \$88 million this year to do energy upgrades, things to help them in that regard. We know that the opposition would be cutting billions of dollars from that budget. We inherited a billion dollars in deferred maintenance, outstanding maintenance, so that wouldn't be taken care of. We are investing and supporting seniors in our province.

Mr. Orr: If the seniors pay for it.

I will ask again, Minister. Since we know that the carbon tax affects everything that low-income seniors buy, from gas in their car to groceries at the store, how could you, Minister, use this rebate to force a carbon tax driven increase in rent for an already low-income senior who depends on subsidies, especially after they've spent their life building this province from the ground up?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we know that seniors built this province and deserve to retire in dignity. That's why we invest significantly in seniors' programs. We've increased the Alberta seniors' benefit. We invest significantly in affordable housing. Right now we have 62 projects under way in this province. Our government absolutely has seniors' backs. We support them. That government would be cutting significantly from their programs.

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

New Edmonton Hospital

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituency of Edmonton-South West is one of the fastest growing communities in the province, and as this community grows, so too does our need for services like schools and hospitals. That's why I was pleased to stand with the Premier and Minister of Health to announce over \$400 million to fund a new hospital in the constituency. But with the urgency of this facility, to the Minister of Infrastructure: what is being done to ensure that the project will be delivered on time?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an exciting project. Hospital projects like the Edmonton hospital are particularly complex, so it's very important that in the planning stages of a project like this, extensive work is done to meet the desired outcome. Of course, the significant outcome of the planning stage is that we deliver a project that's on time and on budget. Right now our efforts are diligently focused on the Edmonton hospital. The project team is working very hard on this to adhere to the work schedule, and the timeline is on time right now.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for the update. To the same minister: when can my constituents actually expect the design phase and the construction phases to be completed?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member. I know he's very excited, as are we all, about this project coming down the pike. You know, as we move forward on this, we anticipate that the design concepts will start in about 2019, with the

design work getting under way in 2020. We expect the initial site work to begin in 2020 as well, and a completion date on this very complex build is going to be 2026.

2:20

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, major projects like this can involve noise and traffic congestion both during and after construction and when the project is complete. To the Minister of Infrastructure again: what strategies are being taken to help mitigate or address these issues?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, one of the big issues that we have to deal with when we're doing a project this big and this complex is that it's going up oftentimes in a community that's fairly dense with population, with residential homes, and with businesses, and we take that into consideration in the project planning. Take, for instance, the Calgary cancer centre. One of the great things that was done in the planning of the cancer centre was that specific sites were set up where workers could go and park at those sites. Shuttle buses would then take people over to the site to do the work. There are a lot of mitigation efforts done in terms of making sure that there is as little disruption as possible.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Pharmacy Funding Framework

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've heard a substantial amount of feedback on the new pharmacy agreements that the government is implementing. Pharmacists entered discussions with Alberta Health and Blue Cross, fully anticipating a collaborative and open approach. The government delayed discussions when they chose to hire a third-party negotiator and allowed only a few members of the Pharmacists' Association to negotiate, and they had to sign nondisclosure agreements. How is this an open and transparent government?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We were very clear at the beginning, when we formed government, that we weren't going to move forward with 12 per cent increases like we'd seen in some years, but we also weren't going to move forward with deep cuts. Instead, we've brought forward stability. We've brought forward a proposal, that we sat down with RxA to negotiate, that saw a 4.3 per cent increase rather than the 12 per cent that was negotiated under the former government, of which the member is a caucus member now. What we found was that we came up with a solution that protects the front-line services, the people of this province, and comes up with reasonable increases. We think 4 per cent is reasonable, we think 12 per cent isn't, and we think the opposition's proposals for deep cuts are also unreasonable.

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, one thing that stood out about this agreement was the rejection of a proposal by pharmacists to expand their capabilities. Pharmacists approached the government with 40 procedures that they could perform for Albertans and provide at a relative cost savings. Why did this government reject those proposals that the pharmacists provided to you?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, what we did is that we sat down at the table – just to clarify, if there was any confusion, the 4.3 per cent is for growth in that area, and that's reasonable. If there are new people that need new prescriptions, we have growth to fund that. What we did is that we sat down at the table and we said: this is what we can afford; help us come up with a formula to get there. Instead of going from being 50 per cent higher than the next highest jurisdiction for flu immunization, we went to being tied for the highest. I think a number of those changes were done in partnership with the RxA, and they came up with a formula that is going to help us achieve these realistic budget targets for growth but at the same time will be sustainable for the . . .

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, Alberta Health has committed to reinvest at least half of the underbudget savings that will result from this agreement in mutually agreed upon pharmacy services. To the Health minister: what exactly are these services, and what do you do with the other 50 per cent?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What we have done is to come up with a proposal that will see an increase, obviously, with respect to demand and the needs in the area without moving forward with an unsustainable growth model. We have reduced the level of increase because we think it's important for us to have sustainability for all of us in the province of Alberta. What we are doing is finding ways to increase access for the citizens of the province as well and reduce their expenses and keep money in their own pockets. For example, I had seniors reach out to me – I imagine that some of the other members may have as well – saying that they had to get prescriptions refilled daily or weekly. Instead, now it's only twice a month, reducing the copay.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mental Health Services for Children

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, according to statistics from AHS the success rate for mental health services for children has steadily fallen under this NDP government. In 2015, when they took office, only 1 in 10 children were not offered an appointment for mental health services within 30 days. Two years later nearly 4 in 10 children are not able to access the treatment that they need within 30 days. Can the minister please explain to parents waiting for these services why their vulnerable children cannot get the care they need?

The Speaker: The hon. Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Our government knows how important it is, when Albertans reach out for help, for them to get that help as quickly as they can and close to their communities. That's why we funded new counselling supports for survivors of sexual and physical abuse such as the Zebra Child Protection Centre, opened the new Rutherford mental health clinic for children and youth in Edmonton and surrounding areas, and we're building a new eight-bed youth detox facility in Red Deer. This is among our many actions that we are taking across the province to help support children and their families.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, given that investment has increased yet outcomes have decreased and that this ministry consistently produces poor results despite increases in spending, to the minister:

would you please update this House on why the nearly 4 in 10 children who are suffering from mental health issues cannot get the timely services that they deserve?

The Speaker: The Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we inherited a system where mental health was underfunded and not really given the importance that it deserved, which is why one of the first actions our government took was to commission the Valuing Mental Health review, and we've been moving forward on implementing the recommendations from that. We've been working in partnership with communities across the province, including with school boards, to make sure that there's access to supports in schools and working on capacity building and resiliency in classrooms as well as communities from the top of our province to the southern borders. We know that it's important to reach out to children . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, the outcomes have gotten worse under this minister. All we ever get are talking points around the right health care in the right place at the right time. My question is simple. When can the nearly 4 in 10 Alberta children suffering from mental health challenges expect to have the right health care in the right place at the right time? Under this minister they don't have any of it, and it's gotten worse, not better.

Ms Payne: Mr. Speaker, working under the leadership of the Valuing Mental Health: Next Steps and the advisory group, which has representatives from the northern part of our province to the southern, we are working to expand those supports for children. We have supported mental health initiatives in 85 communities across the province, from Fort Chip down to Milk River. These guys keep talking about wanting to have billions of dollars of cuts to health care. That's not going to lead to enhanced supports for children and youth who are struggling with mental health. That'll lead to longer wait times, fewer services, and more children at risk.

Mackenzie County Gas Supply Disruption

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, during an extremely cold spell this winter a state of emergency was declared in Mackenzie county due to low natural gas pressure in the lines of the Northern Lights Gas Co-op. Apparently, the distribution line is too small and runs to a dead end, leaving hundreds of residents without heat. The population is growing, economic development is limited because of a restricted natural gas supply, and there is a fear of a year-round natural gas shortage. What steps has the NDP government taken to ensure that this emergency never happens again?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll take the first part. Yeah, in that situation it was very unfortunately in cold weather. It happened in one of the natural gas co-ops, and one of the things in my looking into the issue – and I'll let my colleague minister explain. Over the years no one had looked at decommissioning, when the event would come that there was decommissioning, and that's been happening now. I've been in touch with a couple of the councillors in Mackenzie county to look at how we can work with that, and I have also said that I'll be working with my colleague the Minister of Ag and Forestry to look at solutions for this problem.

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, given the representatives of Northern Lights Gas Co-op and Mackenzie county have met with the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, looking for a solution to ensure that the homes are heated and industries remain open next winter, will the NDP government ensure that a solution will be found and the gas co-op will not miss the construction season over administrative minutiae and bureaucratic red tape, which would put the lives of residents at risk again next winter?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the very good question. It's important to note that there are a couple issues here. The gas field that's currently supplying a lot of these residences and communities is getting dry, and the other one is aging infrastructure in the pipelines. There are a couple issues here. We're talking to those communities, talking to the Federation of Alberta Gas Co-ops as well to ensure that we have a plan in place to ensure that those communities, those residences have the necessary natural gas they need to heat their homes, working with Energy and my department colleagues, ministry colleagues, you know, right across the front bench here to ensure that we do have a plan and that those residences have the gas they need.

2:30

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, given that the processing industry in parts of Mackenzie county has to shut down during low gas pressure situations and given the concern in Mackenzie county that the NDP government in Edmonton is not looking out for their interests when presented with things like the caribou range plan, will this government continue to treat Mackenzie county as an abandoned territory, a territory larger than the province of New Brunswick, or will this government partner with Mackenzie county to help sustain their industries and communities and to promote economic development throughout their region?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you. I can just touch on a couple of things. Actually, I would say that it's more of a crossministry. There are 342 municipalities in this province, and we're concerned about every single one of them. Safety is paramount. The Alberta Emergency Management Agency, who are under Municipal Affairs, took it upon themselves to pump in extra gas to Mackenzie. I've also been in contact with them. I was up in La Crête and in High Level a few months back and had a conversation, and I did it recently as well. We will always be concerned about safety. Whenever these things happen, we will take action immediately or as quickly as possible.

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

Affordable Housing

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This NDP government's best friend in Ottawa, Mr. Trudeau, has announced a 10-year plan for a \$40 billion national housing strategy. On a per capita basis Alberta should receive \$4 billion of that total amount; however, the stakeholders I've been talking to are saying that we're only getting approximately \$560 million from that amount. Minister, since we all know that Justin Trudeau will not stand up for Albertans and our resource industry, will you at least ask him to be fair and provide us with the share our citizens deserve on this important issue?

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

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, our government is committed to making sure Albertans have the affordable housing we need, and we work with our federal partners regarding that. There is a bilateral agreement that we're beginning negotiations on very soon, and we absolutely will advocate for Albertans although here in Alberta we already are doing a significant amount, \$1.2 billion in investments, which is creating 62 new projects across the province. We're doing a lot in Alberta already.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the stakeholders I'm talking to would like to see this government resurrect Alberta's support of the supportive living initiative program, which saw the government partner with the private industry to efficiently and cost-effectively build affordable accommodations for seniors and given that this public-private model not only proved efficient at addressing the pent-up demand for accommodations, it also used taxpayers' money cost-effectively, Minister, was your decision to end this successful public-private partnership made for fiscal reasons, or was it simply to support your NDP world view?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I do encourage the member to ask members of his own caucus who were part of that process. I can tell you that when I sat down and reviewed those contracts with officials, they weren't based on what was in the best interest of even the folks living in these communities. Having a retrofitted hotel serving takeout food from the restaurant next door is not the quality care that I would expect for anyone that I loved who was requiring these services. So we sat down. We very carefully reviewed the contracts. We found ways to improve the level of care where it was needed and to work with the providers to get the best outcomes for those projects.

I'm really proud that they're moving forward. We're on track to open many of them this quarter, and last quarter we . . .

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

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the NDP is intending to move to a purely public model and that the minister said that they want the best outcome, let me share some numbers that Albertans understand. Given that Willow Square in Fort Mac, which is fully public, will cost Albertans \$763,000 per unit and that Bridgeland in Calgary, also fully public, will cost \$650,000 per unit and given that under the former public-private program the average cost per unit was \$65,000, can the minister please tell me: if you truly believe in serving Albertans, why won't you maintain public-private . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under the former government we know that the pendulum swung very far towards proposing projects that were only in the interest of their friends and insiders. We know that it's important to have balance. We know that it's important to have seniors as the focus. We are going to continue to move forward with the projects that we announced, many of which were through partnerships, including private industry as well as nonprofits, as well as moving forward with some public projects.

I know that the idea of having choice, including public options, isn't something that they support, but we think that it's important to have all options, Mr. Speaker. We're going to continue to move forward protecting the people of this province and building . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Condominium Property Regulations

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. More and more Albertans, including my constituents, are choosing to live in condos. What's the government doing to protect condo owners?

The Speaker: The Minister of Service Alberta and of Status of Women.

Ms McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for his question. This government cares about everyday Albertans, and we believe Albertans deserve to be protected when they make a purchase, especially when it's as important as buying a home. I'm proud to say that on January 1 the new phase of the condo regulations came into effect. These new protections will provide more information for buyers at time of purchase, give the option to cancel a contract if a unit doesn't look like what they were promised, and protect Albertans' money when they're putting deposits into a trust.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand that these new regulations relate mostly to buying a condo, something that I had experience with, over 800 transactions in my 30-year career. However, once a condo is purchased, people still continue to live in them. I'm wondering: what's the government doing to make life better for Albertans living in the condos once the transaction is over and to improve the day-to-day operations of condo boards?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are wrapping up consultations on the second phase of regulations, that will address living in a condo, including condo governance. This past summer we invited Albertans to open houses that we held across the province so that they could tell us how we could improve condo living for them. Based on what we heard, we launched an online survey to continue this important conversation. Finally, we have followed this up with targeted stakeholder meetings to obtain further feedback. We're confident that the final regulations will reflect what we've heard from Albertans and make life better for condo owners.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, despite the proposed regulations to make living in a condo better, I've heard from my constituents that conflicts have arisen between condo owners and their condo boards. Currently the only recourse for the two parties is through the courts. What is the government doing to allow Albertans a lower cost alternative to court action?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As part of the third phase of regulations we are also consulting on a dispute resolution mechanism for Albertans, including the determination of the tribunal's

jurisdiction and structure. Albertans want and need a more efficient, less expensive way to resolve condominium disputes than having to proceed through the court system. The dispute tribunal is intended to provide them with that alternative.

Oil Sands Advisory Group Former Co-chair (continued)

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, is it true, the statement that the environment minister made on the radio that CAPP asked for Tzaporah Berman to be appointed to the oil sands advisory group? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order, please.

The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member is making reference to my remarks from a radio interview in which I could have been clearer. A group of individuals, including Ms Berman, came forward to government with a proposal on the emissions cap. Among those individuals and representatives from some companies was the past president of the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers. Our government has no current relationship with Ms Berman, and her position on energy infrastructure is not only irrelevant; it is also wrong.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the minister was crystal clear.

I'll try it a different way. Is it false, what the minister said on the radio, that CAPP asked for Tzaporah Berman to be appointed to the oil sands advisory group?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the oil sands advisory group has concluded its work. They provided us advice on a 100-megatonne cap on oil sands emissions. The legislation has since passed, to take effect in terms of how we manage our oil sands emissions going forward. Of course, this cap was proposed to us by a group of individuals, including Ms Berman, who came forward to government with that proposal.

Mr. Nixon: Was the minister of environment's statement on the radio the other day true, that CAPP requested that Tzaporah Berman be put on the advisory group? Yes or no?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, a group of individuals, including Ms Berman, came forward to government with a proposal on the emissions cap. Part of that group were a number of companies. The past president of CAPP indeed was part of it. It is quite possible that I could have been clearer, but what is also clear is that Ms Berman's views on energy infrastructure that is in the national interest are not only irrelevant, but they are wrong. This line of questioning has become somewhat repetitive.

2:40

Members' Statements (continued)

Pharmacy Funding Framework

Dr. Starke: Mr. Speaker, Alberta pharmacists are trusted and highly skilled. In many communities the pharmacist is the only health care professional that has remained constant. Ninety-five per cent of Albertans named their pharmacist as the most accessible health care professional. Their close connection and dedication to

their patients and their ability to identify and prevent health problems saves our system hundreds of millions of dollars every year.

But pharmacists don't just save money; pharmacists save lives. That's why it's incredible how this government has treated this group of trusted professionals. The pharmacy association was forced to sign a nondisclosure agreement during negotiations on a new funding agreement. Now, we're being told that this is standard practice, but it's funny that the Alberta Medical Association sends regular updates to its doctors when their funding framework is being discussed. Maybe this government thinks pharmacists can't be trusted.

Pharmacists with advanced prescribing authority provide enhanced patient care and have been compensated accordingly. The new framework eliminates that. Pharmacists administered over 50 per cent of the flu vaccinations in Alberta last year. The new framework cuts that fee, and some pharmacists will be unable to provide the service. How many more cases of flu will that result in, and what will that cost? And starting next year, Alberta Health will withhold at least 10 per cent of fees payable to pharmacists and only pay it out if they meet their budget targets. Now, they call that risk sharing. Pharmacists call it: using my income to backstop Alberta Health. Maybe the money is needed to pay for unionized laundry services or the government's new superlab.

Pharmacists came to the table with over 40 proposals to cut health care costs. Alberta Health accepted none of them. Mr. Speaker, all Albertans, including pharmacists, want to curb health care costs, but the first principle of medicine is: do no harm. This framework will seriously harm the financial viability of pharmacists and put their patients' health in jeopardy. That's not what I call making life better for Albertans.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

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

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund it is my pleasure to table five copies of the report covering the committee's activities in 2017. This report fulfills the requirements of Standing Order 55 and section 6(4)(c) of the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act. This report will be posted on the Assembly's website, and copies are also available at the committee's office.

Thank you.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The Government House Leader and Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to give oral notice of a motion for the Order Paper, that motion being: "Be it resolved that the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices be authorized to meet during the consideration of the 2018-19 main estimates."

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Dr. Starke: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This time I would like to table a petition that was presented to me just about an hour and a half ago signed by over 150 Albertans protesting the government's cuts to pharmacy through the new pharmacy framework.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings to present today. The first is a copy of a ministerial order from the Department of Seniors and Housing outlining the change to rent calculation and carbon tax rebates.

The second one is copies of many letters addressed to the Premier regarding the fact that time lost without heart treatment equals irreparable heart muscle loss and death for up to 35 central Alberta region patients annually. Central region patients receive a lower standard of care in relation to the Calgary region, which receives up to 20 times more funding per capita.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising to table the requisite five copies of the schedule for consideration of main estimates. I can indicate that pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(3) consultation with House leaders on this schedule has taken place.

In addition, in accordance with Standing Order 59.01(5)(b) I am advising the House that government business is scheduled for consideration on the afternoon of April 4 as well as the afternoon of April 10. I have the estimates here.

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

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier today in my response to the Speech from the Throne I made contrast of our plan to that of the UCP by referencing this RBC economic outlook report, which I am tabling the requisite five copies of. This shows that our numbers are up while currently Saskatchewan's are down.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we have achieved the target ahead of time. We'd like to move to Orders of the Day, and in order to allow adequate time to prepare for the Budget Address by the hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance this afternoon, the House is recessed until 3:15 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned from 2:46 p.m. to 3:15 p.m.]

The Sergeant-at-Arms: Order!

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Orders of the Day

Transmittal of Estimates

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

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I've received certain messages from Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, which I now transmit to you.

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

The Speaker: The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required by the offices of the Legislative Assembly for the service of the province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2019, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required by the government for the service of the province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2019, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

Please be seated.

Mr. Ceci: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the 2018-19 offices of the Legislative Assembly estimates as well as the 2018-19 government estimates. In addition, I also wish to table the 2018-21 government of Alberta strategic plan and the Budget 2018 ministry business plans.

Government Motions

Budget Address

13. Mr. Ceci moved:

Be it resolved that the Assembly approve in general the business plans and fiscal policies of the government.

Mr. Ceci: Mr. Speaker, I now wish to table the government's Budget 2018 fiscal plan.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present Budget 2018. Before I begin, I would like to acknowledge that we are gathered here on the traditional territory of Treaty 6. I would also like to acknowledge the Métis people of Alberta, who share a deep connection to this land.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is based on extensive consultations with Albertans, and it reflects their priorities. I want to thank Albertans for their constructive and thoughtful input.

Alberta's economy is coming out of the worst recession in generations. When the global price of oil collapsed and the recession hit, we had a choice: cut or build. We chose to build. In making that choice, we focused on the priorities of regular people and families, creating badly needed jobs, building our province for the future, making life more affordable for people, and protecting the schools, hospitals, and public services all Albertans rely on. That plan is working. Today in Alberta things are looking up. Jobs are up, 90,000 last year, Alberta's economy is growing faster than any province in Canada, and the budget deficit is coming down. Though we have come a long way from the recession's low point, there's still much more to do.

3:20

Mr. Speaker, that's what Budget 2018 is all about, making sure this recovery is built to last and built for working Albertans. Budget 2018 is built on three pillars: first, controlling costs to stay on a path to balance; second, investing in jobs and diversification; and third, protecting public services and supporting Albertans.

To set the context, let me begin by looking more closely at the economic recovery under way in Alberta. Mr. Speaker, in 2017 Alberta's economic rebound surpassed expectations. Real GDP grew an estimated 4.5 per cent, with nearly every sector expanding. Exports increased by nearly 30 per cent on rising oil production and an expanded manufacturing base. Housing starts grew by 20 per cent. Retail sales expanded by 7.5 per cent. Rig activity jumped 66 per cent, and the labour market strengthened throughout the year.

Not only that, Mr. Speaker. Alberta also outperformed the rest of the country on a number of key economic metrics: the highest per capita GDP, the highest average weekly earnings, and the highest employment rate in the country. An improving economy supports an improving fiscal picture. We are forecasting a \$1.5 billion reduction from the deficit forecast at last year's budget, to \$8.8 billion. This forecast is based on an economic growth projection of 2.7 per cent and an oil price of \$59. These forecasts are in line with those of the private sector. In short, following a very difficult recession in Alberta, today jobs are up, the deficit is coming down, and our economy continues to grow.

With that economic momentum we can continue on our path to balance by 2023. For too long Alberta has been locked in a cycle of boom-and-bust spending that tracked the price of nonrenewable

resource revenues. Earlier this decade when oil prices were high and the economy was growing, the budget remained unbalanced, and savings were not put aside for the future. Between 2010-11 and 2014-15, for example, oil prices averaged \$90 a barrel while the economy grew more than 5 per cent per year, more than double the national average, yet over this period the government ran deficits in all but one fiscal year. Boom-and-bust spending was inefficient and unstable.

Upon taking office, our government set out to fix this. We embarked upon a thoughtful and strategic plan to smooth out the wild spending swings that characterized budgeting in Alberta. First, we restored progressive taxation, asking the top 7 per cent of income earners to pay a little more to support health care and education; second, we raised the general corporate tax rate by 2 percentage points to 12 per cent; and third, we implemented an economy-wide price on carbon. With Alberta's economy in recession, every dollar raised through the carbon price was reinvested in the economy in rebates, infrastructure investments, and initiatives to lower greenhouse gas emissions and improve energy efficiency. Even with those changes Albertans and Alberta businesses pay at least \$11.2 billion less in taxes than they would in any other province. Mr. Speaker, Alberta's tax advantage is secure.

Today, with the private sector gaining momentum, these important and long-overdue tax reforms will help reduce our overreliance on nonrenewable resource revenue. Revenues from corporate and personal income taxes are forecast to grow by as much as \$1.2 billion, with the amount increasing over time as our economy grows. Moreover, as our economy relies less on government stimulus, additional carbon revenue will help contribute to an improving bottom line. Beginning in 2021, additional revenue resulting from the federally imposed carbon price tied to the construction of the Trans Mountain pipeline will be used to support vital public services as the province stays on track to balance the budget by 2023. Mr. Speaker, this is an important step in the direction of stable, predictable budgeting, that this province needs.

But to succeed, it must be joined by other measures to keep spending growth down to stable and manageable levels. First among these is the government's ongoing efforts to eliminate waste and find efficiencies without compromising core public services. It's no secret that by 2015 many spending priorities had become severely distorted. The sky palace, a few hundred metres from here, is only one of the most high-profile examples of this. Less well known were the golf club memberships handed out to highly paid executives in an ever-growing alphabet soup of agencies, boards, and commissions. The same goes for annual government hospitality bills.

Mr. Speaker, from the beginning the government has worked to tackle this legacy and bring down costs. We eliminated perks such as golf club memberships. We slashed travel and hospitality expenses. We introduced sunshine laws to open up the books on public salaries. We eliminated or consolidated 26 agencies, boards, and commissions, and we slashed exorbitant salaries at those agencies, boards, and commissions, with some executives seeing their salaries cut by hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Mr. Speaker, in Budget 2018 that work continues. This year we are extending our salary review to postsecondary executives and school superintendents. We are keeping tight control over discretionary spending, with restrictions on travel, conferences, and hospitality, and we are consolidating services such as communications, information technology, finances, and human resources. This work is important not only for the money it saves but also for the trust it builds. To work effectively, government

must demonstrate that the money it spends is spent efficiently and on things that matter to everyday families.

Mr. Speaker, an effective government is also one that responds quickly in a economic crisis. When the oil price collapse hit, tens of thousands of Albertans were thrown out of work. On taking office, the government took the advice of the former Bank of Canada governor David Dodge and injected stimulus into the economy by dramatically increasing spending on infrastructure, developing a capital plan that led the country in investment. This made economic and fiscal sense. Interest rates were low, the economy was depressed, and Albertans needed work. As a result of the government's infrastructure investments, tens of thousands of jobs were created and supported, and Alberta will have the modern, economic, and social infrastructure we need to compete and win in the global economy and build strong communities.

Today, with our economy growing and the private sector creating jobs, we continue to follow Mr. Dodge's advice. It is time to rein back capital spending to more normal levels. Last year's capital plan budgeted \$29.5 billion over four years. This year's capital plan returns to more normal levels of spending, \$26.6 billion over five years, and makes good on previous promises while promoting growth through strategic infrastructure investments. Reductions are being achieved by extending capital grants across the five years of the capital plan. Capital project cash flows are being closely managed to reduce borrowing costs.

3:30

Mr. Speaker, Budget 2018's measures to scale back capital expenditures are joined by the government's ongoing efforts to manage public service compensation in the interests of all Albertans. Alberta's public servants work hard each and every day to make life better for people and to protect Albertans. The government has already reached practical agreements with no raises and better job stability with many labour partners, including teachers and nurses, and a tentative agreement has been reached with our allied health professionals such as paramedics, lab technologists, and X-ray technologists. As negotiations in other sectors advance, we will continue to take the same practical approach that values our public service providers and recognizes the province's fiscal realities.

In addition, Budget 2018 continues the freeze on salaries for non-union staff across the public sector until September 2019, and it keeps the growth in the public service flat, with new hires focused on front-line service delivery.

Mr. Speaker, taken together, these steps will keep Alberta's economy growing and on a path to balance by 2023 without reckless measures that would hurt families and harm the recovery. Budget 2018's path to balance is supported by realistic and achievable spending and the revenue targets built on the best available private-sector forecasts in oil and economic growth, and it is leading towards a stronger and more secure future.

To balance our budget and stabilize our finances, we must continue to diversify our economy and create good jobs for Albertans. This is a top priority of Albertans, and it is a top priority of this government. While 2.3 million Albertans today have work, with more people working in Alberta than at any point in our history, the economic recovery has not reached each and every household. An economic recovery that fails to reach every Albertan is no recovery at all.

The economic recovery must keep going, our economy must keep growing, and more jobs must be created. To do that, we must move on all fronts. We must get top dollar for the energy resources we export. We must get more value out of our energy products here at home. We must support new and emerging industries. We must

continue to diversify our agricultural markets and build on our growing strength in agrifoods. And we must make sure that Albertans have the training and skills they need to get the jobs of tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker, we have secured the approval of critical energy infrastructure projects such as the Keystone XL pipeline, Enbridge's line 3 replacement, and Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain pipeline expansion. We backed Keystone XL with a commitment of 50,000 barrels a day for 20 years, construction on line 3 has begun, and we are leading the fight to build the Trans Mountain pipeline with the full support of this Chamber. We will continue to make sure that construction on the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion begins without undue delay and that our constitutional rights are respected as partners in Confederation. When complete, these pipelines will provide critical market access as oil sands production rises and emissions remain capped, supporting new investments and jobs. The addition of these pipelines is forecast to lift Alberta's GDP by about 1.5 per cent to 2 per cent by 2023. As our economy grows with diversified export markets, we will continue to work with our energy industry partners to diversify our energy sector, encouraging more value-added production.

Mr. Speaker, Budget 2018 begins our commitment to a new round of investments in the petrochemical diversification program along with partial upgrading and the petrochemical feedstock program. These investments will support up to \$13 billion in new investment. More importantly, these programs will create good jobs, continue to help diversify our energy sector, and allow us as Albertans and owners of this resource to generate more wealth and value here at home.

Mr. Speaker, beyond our energy sector, Budget 2018 helps businesses hire and grow and helps students train for the jobs of tomorrow. The Alberta investor tax credit and the capital investment tax credit will be extended to help even more businesses grow and attract investment. The new interactive digital media tax credit will make Alberta a more competitive place for our growing and exciting interactive digital media industry.

To make sure Albertans can get the skills they need for good careers in our growing technology sector, we are creating 3,000 new postsecondary technology spaces and a new scholarship program to support technology and other emerging sectors. Budget 2018 provides \$6 million to begin investing in 3,000 new technology-related postsecondary program seats, which will grow to \$43 million per year by 2022-2023.

Mr. Speaker, these training and diversification measures will take place in the context of an economy that has already benefited from major capital investments during the height of the downturn. Hundreds of new schools are either built or being built. A new cancer centre is being built in Calgary, and a new hospital is being planned in south Edmonton. The construction of the green line in Calgary is the single largest public infrastructure project in that city's history, and it will create tens of thousands of jobs. Across Alberta highways are being made better and safer, bridges are being built and strengthened, and new infrastructure is making it easier for people to get around in our growing province, all the while creating thousands of good jobs.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans have been very clear: bring the budget back to balance while protecting the things that matter to ordinary people. Albertans deserve a balanced plan for a secure future, one that carefully and responsibly controls costs while protecting vital public services. From day one we resisted the call to respond to the oil price collapse by making deep cuts to hospitals and schools. Instead, we made sure Albertans would have the services they need when they need them.

Budget 2018 takes that same approach. I'm proud that we have built hundreds of new schools for our kids and for future generations. These investments create good construction jobs in the short term and modern spaces for our kids to grow and learn in the long term. Mr. Speaker, in Budget 2018 nearly \$400 million will be allocated to build more badly needed new schools for our children. This budget includes 20 new schools, including support for new schools that will primarily serve indigenous students. These new schools are backstopped by our commitment to continue funding enrolment growth, which will add 600 new teachers and 300 new support workers to Alberta's classrooms.

This year we will also expand our school nutrition program. When the school nutrition program began, it helped make sure 5,000 young Albertans got a healthy meal while at school. This year that program expands to 30,000 students – 30,000 students – helping more kids across our province focus on their studies and not their hunger.

3:40

Mr. Speaker, people come to our colleges and universities in search of better lives. A well-funded postsecondary system is vital to making sure our province can help people get skills and keep people working here in Alberta. For Albertans who decide to get trades training or pursue a degree at a growing number of degree-granting institutions in Alberta, we are in their corner. In addition to thousands of new spaces in technology as well as dedicated new scholarships, funding for postsecondary education will remain stable and predictable with an increase of 2 per cent over the last year and an additional \$17 million to support the tuition freeze.

More indigenous people will be able to get the skills they need to build the futures they want with more support for indigenous training providers and targeted financial supports for learners. With Grande Prairie Regional College and Red Deer College beginning the work to become degree-granting institutions, people in northwest and central Alberta will be able to get a degree closer to their homes and families.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans depend on getting quality health care when they need it. Spending on health care will increase this year by 3 per cent. In addition to making sure our front-line health professionals have the stable, predictable funding they need to care for Albertans, these funds will also increase support to combat the opioid crisis, increase support to combat substance use, and increase support for mental health.

Mr. Speaker, as we protect and support our schools and hospitals, we will do more to help keep children and families safe. Support for child protection will increase. With a \$60 million increase over last year's budget, more than \$800 million has been allocated this year toward strengthening the child intervention system. These funds support the work of the all-party committee and will deliver both prevention and intervention programs to help keep young Albertans safe.

Mr. Speaker, to better help working families emerge from the downturn, we will continue to make their lives more affordable. This year more new moms will have an easier time joining the workforce, and more young families will benefit from affordable child care. We are expanding upon and learning from our \$25-per-day child care pilot program. This year we will create an additional 4,500 affordable child care spaces across Alberta.

More needs to be done to bring affordable child care within reach of more families, and we are committed to continuing this important work. At the same time the Alberta child benefit will continue to make life more affordable by providing direct financial assistance to lower income families, and the Alberta family employment tax

credit will continue to help low- and middle-income families make ends meet.

From the day this government took office, through recession, and now into recovery, we have strengthened and improved supports that make life better and more affordable for families. In making sure this economic recovery is built to last and built for ordinary people, we must make sure that more families emerge from the downturn stronger and more secure. This budget helps families do exactly that.

Mr. Speaker, Budget 2018 also makes communities and families across this province safer. When it comes to crime, especially in rural areas, we have heard the concerns of Albertans loud and clear. That's why we are taking action to ensure that they feel safe in their communities. Together with the RCMP we launched a new rural crime strategy. This strategy put more boots on the ground in rural areas by expanding the RCMP's rural crime reduction units, which focus on putting thieves behind bars. We are adding new supports to keep more police in their communities rather than sitting behind their desks.

We are hiring more Crown prosecutors focused on rural crime, hiring additional intelligence co-ordinators to track offenders, utilizing GPS technology to catch thieves in the act, and supporting citizen-led crime watch and patrol groups. That work will be bolstered by the new police officers funded by this budget. All Albertans should feel secure at home, from our biggest cities to our smallest towns, and we will keep supporting our police.

Women in Alberta should also feel secure. Sadly, that is not always the case. Too many women do not have the supports and services they need to come forward and find help after an assault. For that reason, we are significantly increasing support to help survivors of assault. More than \$11 million will be provided to the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services to expand counselling and crisis support.

Mr. Speaker, affordable housing is a key building block to security and stability for people and families. More needs to be done to improve existing facilities, build new ones, and help seniors and families with this most basic of needs, a warm, safe place to call home. We will continue to make sure that our affordable housing units contribute to healthy lives and healthy communities.

This budget also increases funding for seniors' housing so more of our neighbours can live with dignity and safety, and it commits to building new affordable housing across Alberta. In Calgary, Edmonton, Fort Saskatchewan, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Red Deer, Slave Lake, and Whitecourt we will build roughly 400 new units. These will be good new homes for seniors, youth in need of security, people with disabilities, and people prone to periods of homelessness. As our population ages and grows, the need for affordable housing grows, too, and this budget continues our commitment.

Mr. Speaker, during the recession we stood by our municipalities to make sure they could continue to deliver high-quality services for their residents. As we dial back our capital spending to reduce our debt burden and reduce our borrowing costs, the government will make changes to the municipal sustainability initiative, and small reductions will be made to other municipal grants. Alberta's transfers to municipalities will remain above the national average. As we bring our budget into balance and as the expiry of MSI

approaches in the fiscal year 2021-22, funding arrangements with municipalities will be reviewed.

Through the city charter discussions we have been working with Alberta's two largest cities on a long-term revenue-sharing formula that will support their continued growth and recognizes the unique opportunities and challenges they face. In addition, the government recognizes the invaluable contributions that cities, towns, and counties of all sizes have on the quality of life of Albertans and on economic diversification opportunities they create. New funding arrangement discussions will begin with municipalities large and small. Pending those agreements, the government will aim to make legislative changes this year to have a new system operational by the time MSI is set to expire.

Building on the \$3 billion we have already committed in LRT funding, we will also work with Edmonton and Calgary to establish a long-term provincial transit investment plan that will support growth in the cities and the surrounding communities.

3:50

Mr. Speaker, Alberta's best days are ahead of us, not behind us. As we come out of this recession and keep our province on a responsible path to a balanced budget, we do so surrounded by new signs of hope and determination. Albertans are united behind our efforts to get a new Canadian pipeline built to the Canadian coast. Our kids are getting high-quality education in great public schools. Our loved ones are getting world-class health care in modern hospitals. Our streets are safer, with more police and new supports to fight crime. More education and training will mean more Albertans have the skills they need to get good jobs. More affordable housing is helping more people put roofs over their heads and new dreams within their reach. More kids are getting nutritious meals at school. More jobs are being created, and more Albertans are working than ever before.

When the recession hit, we made the choice to put the priorities of ordinary people first. We are going to keep putting ordinary people first. To those Albertans who have yet to experience the recovery, who are counting on us to do more, we will stand up for them, together, always. We are going to keep fighting to make sure that this economic recovery is built for working people and built to last.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. That was a lot to unpack. In the coming weeks I fully anticipate a lot of debate in this Assembly, but for the time being, I would suggest that we adjourn debate, and therefore I will move such.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the hon. Treasurer for his great speech and move that we adjourn the House until 10 a.m. on April 3.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 3:53 p.m. to Tuesday, April 3, at 10 a.m.]

Bill Status Report for the 29th Legislature - 4th Session (2018)

Activity to Thursday, March 22, 2018

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

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

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

Bill 1 — Energy Diversification Act (McCuaig-Boyd)

First Reading — 6 (*Mar. 8, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 50-51 (*Mar. 13, 2018 morn.*), 184-87 (*Mar. 15, 2018 aft.*), 233-43 (*Mar. 20, 2018 morn.*), 301-08 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 2 — Growth and Diversification Act (\$) (Bilous)

First Reading — 118 (*Mar. 14, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 243-46 (*Mar. 20, 2018 morn.*), 294-96 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft.*), 314-25 (*Mar. 22, 2018 morn., adjourned on amendment*)

Bill 3 — Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2018 (\$) (Ceci)

First Reading — 184 (*Mar. 15, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 221-26 (*Mar. 19, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 261-68 (*Mar. 20, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 296-98 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 4 — Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2018 (\$) (Ceci)

First Reading — 165 (*Mar. 15, 2018 morn., passed*)

Second Reading — 226-32 (*Mar. 19, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 268-75 (*Mar. 20, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 298-301 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 5 — An Act to Strengthen Financial Security for Persons with Disabilities (Sabir)

First Reading — 200-201 (*Mar. 19, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 201 — Employment Standards (Firefighter Leave) Amendment Act, 2018 (W. Anderson)

First Reading — 118 (*Mar. 14, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 201-14 (*Mar. 19, 2018 aft., referred to Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future*)

Bill 202 — Alberta Taxpayer Protection (Carbon Tax Referendum) Amendment Act, 2018 (Kenney)

First Reading — 179 (*Mar. 15, 2018 aft., passed*)

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday morning, April 3, 2018

Day 10

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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

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Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (NDP)
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Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (NDP)
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Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)
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Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)
Vacant, Fort McMurray-Conklin
Vacant, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake

Party standings:

New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 25 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent: 1 Vacant: 2

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Fraser	Nielsen
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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

10 a.m.

Tuesday, April 3, 2018

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Prayers

The Acting Speaker: Good morning.

Let us reflect and pray, each in our own way. As we return from time with our families and loved ones in various corners of our province, let their support and patience inspire us to continue to have diligent compassion in our work as elected representatives. Amen.

Please be seated.

Orders of the Day Government Motions

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

14. Ms Ganley moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:
Be it resolved that the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices be authorized to meet during the consideration of the 2018-19 main estimates.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. By way of explanation I can indicate that on March 22 the chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices made a formal request that the committee be authorized to meet during consideration of estimates this spring. Similar requests have been made and granted several times in recent years, most recently last year by the Select Special Ombudsman and Public Interest Commissioner Search Committee.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
Are there any other members wishing to speak to the motion?

[Government Motion 14 carried]

Provincial Fiscal Policies

13. Mr. Ceci moved:
Be it resolved that the Assembly approve in general the business plans and fiscal policies of the government.

[Adjourned debate March 22: Mr. Nixon]

The Acting Speaker: Are there any members wishing to speak? The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. And to you and all members of the House, I hope that all members had a good constituency week and a joyful Easter holiday as well.

Madam Speaker, I rise to speak to the budget speech of the hon. Minister of Finance tabled just before we last broke 10 days ago. For decades Alberta has been the engine of Canada's prosperity. For decades we have had the highest incomes, the lowest unemployment, the lowest debt, the best fiscal position in the country. In fact, it was not long ago when we had zero net debt as a province. We celebrated that in 1994, when the former Premier, the late hon. Ralph Klein, stood up and announced that Alberta had paid off all that we owed. That's important to this province because this

is, I believe, the only province in Canada that actually defaulted on its debt – that's part of our history – during the crisis of the Great Depression. So Albertans have always understood the danger of debt until this government, which in this NDP budget is dragging Alberta deep into a sea of debt, of red ink, with no end in sight.

Madam Speaker, when the NDP came to office in the spring of 2015, Alberta's total liabilities, our total debt, stood at some \$13 billion. The week before last the hon. Finance minister announced a plan to increase that debt to nearly \$100 billion by the end of his fiscal plan; to be precise, \$96 billion. But that, first of all, was hidden. That figure appears nowhere in the budget documents.

I remember going in to read the budget in an embargoed lock-up prior to the minister's speech, and the very first question I asked of staff and officials was: "What are the total liabilities? What's the total debt?" We had to get out our calculators, Madam Speaker. In fact, it was the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat who had already done some advance calculating. He had figured out what the cumulative deficits were to be plus the capital borrowing through to the year 2023, and his number was confirmed by officials, a number that the Finance minister tried to hide from this Assembly and from Albertans, a \$96 billion number. The most important number in the budget was hidden in it. Talk about hidden agendas.

That \$96 billion itself is predicated on the rosier of scenarios. The government would have us believe that this is all predicated on, amongst other things, the Trans Mountain pipeline being built. To be clear, we certainly hope that happens, Madam Speaker, but it's a year behind schedule, and the New Democrats in British Columbia, the New Democrat government there, the New Democrat mayor of Vancouver, the New Democrat mayor of Burnaby, the New Democrat mayor of Coquitlam, the federal New Democrats, all of them are doing everything they can to stop that pipeline from actually being built. So to actually budget on such a high level of uncertainty is at best imprudent and at worst reckless. Ninety-six billion dollars means that we as Albertans will be spending billions of dollars enriching bankers and bondholders rather than funding public services. That's the consequence of debt, enriching bankers and bondholders in Zurich and Tokyo, in Toronto and New York rather than building schools and hospitals here in Alberta.

Now, the NDP started with a \$13 billion debt, or they inherited a \$13 billion debt, I should say. They've run massive deficits ever since, borrowing on average nearly a billion dollars every month. There is virtually no change in this budget, with a projected deficit of \$9 billion, Madam Speaker, so we're borrowing \$800 million, \$850 million a month. We're going to those bankers to borrow that money with a commitment to pay it back down the line plus interest, interest that is nonnegotiable.

Madam Speaker, this has led already to \$56 billion in debt today. We've gone from \$13 billion to \$56 billion in debt. This means that we are now paying \$1.92 billion in interest payments at \$56 billion in debt. By the way, the reckless fiscal mismanagement of the NDP has led now to six credit downgrades. Now, I know that whenever this happens, the Finance minister bristles. I think he once ran off down to Toronto to plead with the Dominion Bond Rating Service agency and Standard & Poor's and the other bond-rating agencies, "Please don't downgrade us," but they promptly did so. About two weeks after he left his meetings in Toronto, they sized up what he had said, they sized up the fiscal credibility of this NDP government, and they said that there is none. There is no credible plan to get back to balance, and six credit downgrades have followed.

Now, I know that many of my friends opposite think: oh, those are just bad people in Toronto and New York who don't understand

how compassionate we are. No, Madam Speaker. These are hard-nosed financial experts. They aren't motivated by sentiment or politics. They simply analyze numbers. That's all they are. They're objective analysts of numbers, and the numbers that they have seen from this government in the last three years tell them that there is zero credibility in the fiscal plans of the NDP; hence, six credit downgrades.

Now, these downgrades are not some abstraction. It's not some notional, like, reputational problem. This has real, hard, concrete, real-life consequences for the lives of Albertans. Why? Each time that our credit is downgraded – guess what? – we have to pay more in interest on that debt, and we're borrowing money to pay interest on that debt. It's the vicious cycle of debt. It's something that Albertans understand but apparently this government doesn't. Six credit downgrades. Fifty-six billion dollars in debt. A \$9 billion deficit. Headed to endless deficits and by the end of their fiscal plan a \$96 billion debt with – get this, Madam Speaker – over \$3.7 billion in projected debt interest payments.

10:10

Now, let's put this in a little bit of context in terms of what we are spending on debt interest. The current debt interest bill of this government, \$1.921 billion – that's how much we spend every year – is enough to build 98 new schools based on \$393 million per school or to build one new major hospital at least. The huge new Calgary south campus hospital was a \$1.3 billion capital expenditure, less than we spend on interest this year, \$600 million less. It would be enough to pay the salaries of 33,000 teachers or enough to hire 25,000 nurses, based on average salaries.

Madam Speaker, as it is, this government is spending more to enrich bankers through interest payments than we spend on 19 of the 23 government departments. Only four government departments spend more than this Finance minister's interest bill. So I would appeal to the hon. ministers opposite, as they struggle to provide public services and to make challenging fiscal decisions, to think about the consequences of this overspending, of this massive borrowing, of this growing debt interest burden. It means that for 19 of the 23 ministers their departmental budgets are less than the payments that we make to bankers and bondholders in Zurich, Toronto, and New York.

Now, Madam Speaker, you know, this is not consistent with the best traditions of the prairie New Democrats. I grew up in Saskatchewan like many Albertans, and I remember Tommy Douglas, who ran consistently balanced budgets. You know why? Because he understood that it was immoral to spend money that belongs to future generations without their consent, to engage in massive intergenerational transfers of wealth, particularly in good times, and he also understood that it was immoral to enrich bankers and bondholders rather than focus public resources on social programs. That's why Tommy Douglas and, after him, Roy Romanow made difficult decisions to manage their spending, to be efficient, even to be parsimonious when times required it. Former Premier Roy Romanow made tough decisions to reduce overall government spending in Saskatchewan, to stop the downward cycle into debt because they understood the consequences of that. Sadly, the New Democrats opposite are completely disconnected from that tradition of responsibility of fiscal management of the prairie New Democrats.

Madam Speaker, this budget, because of the massive new borrowing and no credible plan to restore fiscal balance, has already resulted in warning signals coming from the credit-rating agencies. In fact, the Dominion Bond Rating Service essentially said that this budget shows no plan to restore fiscal balance. Why is this happening? The NDP has raised tax rates, so presumably they're

getting a lot more revenue. Oh, but that's not true. It's not happening. They raised taxes on job creators and businesses. The NDP, motivated by its ideology of resentment and its philosophy of punishing entrepreneurs, raised taxes on businesses. They also raised taxes on incomes, and guess what's happened? For every one of the last three years revenues generated by business and income taxes have declined. Higher rates, lower revenues. Higher business tax rates, lower business tax revenues. Higher income tax rates, lower income tax revenues.

A message to my New Democrat colleagues opposite, Madam Speaker: when they get excited about their class warfare rhetoric, when they say, "We're soaking the rich; we're taking it to those evil, job-creating businesses," when they really get their socialist spirits up about the social justice of taxing more wealth creators and job creators, they should reflect for a moment and realize that they're actually generating less revenue.

Why? In part, because they've done what the left always does. They have attacked the wealth-creating capacity of the economy, and people have responded. What New Democrats do not seem to understand is that capital money is fluid. People are not forced to reside in Alberta, and high net worth individuals, many of them, have relocated their residences outside of this province because, between the increase in tax rates imposed by the New Democrats concurrent with the tax increases of their close ally Justin Trudeau in 2015, we've ended up taking the highest marginal income tax rate in Alberta from 38 per cent to 49 per cent, a massive increase in the overall burden. And guess what, Madam Speaker? People respond to disincentives. When governments disincentivize working, saving, and investing, people tend to do less of it.

That's why so much capital has been relocated outside of Alberta, not just personal income taxes but business taxes as well. In the past 18 months alone, we have seen an estimated \$35 billion of capital pulled out of the oil and gas sector in Alberta alone, redeployed to the oil and gas sector in other parts of the world at the same global prices, money that's no longer being taxed in Alberta, no longer producing jobs or wealth.

Now, Madam Speaker, why, then, a \$9 billion deficit? Why, then, a government that's moving debt from \$13 billion to nearly \$100 billion, interest payments from \$1.3 billion in 2015 to \$3.7 billion in 2023? Why? Why is this happening? Well, Madam Speaker, it's not happening because of inadequate revenues. The government has raised the tax rates. It's happening primarily because this government is incapable of managing their expenditures. In fact, government spending is up by 16 per cent since the NDP came to office, faster than the rate of growth in inflation, population, or the economy itself.

If, according to Professor Trevor Tombe at the University of Calgary and others, the government had simply decided not to cut spending but not to increase it, to effectively freeze spending at 2015 levels, which were, by the way, already the highest – by far, the highest – per capita program spending of any provincial government in Canada, the highest level of spending in our fiscal history by orders of magnitude, if they had maintained that extraordinarily, historically and relatively, high level of spending, we would be at a balanced budget next year, Madam Speaker. If they were simply to freeze spending now and we were to get reasonable rates of economic growth, 2 or 3 per cent, they would have a balanced budget by 2022-23, but they're not doing that either. They're continuing to increase spending faster than inflation, faster than the rate of growth in our economy and, in so doing, diving us deeper and deeper and deeper into debt that we have to repay with interest.

Oh, I forgot. It's true that they did raise rates on income and business taxes and had revenues decline, but baked into this budget

is a continuation of the largest tax hike in Alberta history. In the 2015 election campaign, Madam Speaker, the NDP ran on a platform. I actually have it on my desk right here, handily. It's an important reference guide. They ran on a platform which enumerated – let me count – five tax increases, seven tax adjustments altogether, a couple of reductions like the health care levy, but four tax increases.

10:20

I'll read these into the record, Madam Speaker, for your edification. Remove health care levy. Remove user fees: commendable. Restore charitable tax credit: good call. Personal income tax increase: we've already covered that. Corporate tax increase: we've discussed how revenues have come down. They were projecting they would go up every year; they've gone down. Delinquent corporate tax collection: well, that's a good one, but revenues have gone down. It hasn't worked. Railway fuel adjustment tax: that was just a \$10 million item.

Did anybody hear anything about a carbon tax here, a carbon levy? Madam Speaker, this is page 24. This is the appendix of the NDP platform, entitled Leadership for What Matters, published by the New Democrat Party in the last campaign. I cannot find the words "carbon tax." In fact, to cure my insomnia, I read the whole platform, all 24 pages, a lot of pictures. I couldn't find a single reference to carbon tax or carbon levy or consumer tax or energy consumption or energy tax or de facto consumption – zero reference, zero allusion – and five, six months later the government announced the largest tax increase in Alberta history, the multibillion-dollar carbon tax.

Now, Madam Speaker, you know, sometimes I'm accused of being naive. You can try to believe the best about people, that they're telling you the truth and they're being transparent and all that, right? You want to. In politics I think that's important for the sake of civility, that we give each other a bit of credit. I might be sometimes naive, but I'm not really that stupid. I don't know about my colleagues here, but I don't think there's a single person in Alberta, least of all the hon. the Premier and her front bench, who didn't understand that they were going to impose a carbon tax. That was essential in their plan. They hid it. It was the biggest hidden agenda in Alberta political history.

Now, Madam Speaker, when I came to this place and started participating in question period for the first time, three weeks ago, I wanted to follow up on this big NDP hidden agenda, so I asked the hon. the Premier in question period when the NDP planned to raise their job-killing carbon tax from \$30 to \$50 a tonne, because the government has announced their intention of doing so.

By the way – get this – do you know the reason why they've said they were going to increase the carbon tax, Madam Speaker? Do you know why? Because Justin Trudeau asked them to – you can't make this up – because Justin Trudeau in Ottawa told them that they're not punishing Alberta consumers enough, that they're not making it expensive enough for seniors to heat their homes when it's 30 below outside, that it's not punishing working Albertans for getting in their cars and trucks and driving to work. Justin Trudeau said, "We've got to punish them more," and our Premier said, "Yes, Prime Minister; I'll do what you tell us to." The history of Alberta Premiers is one of standing up for and fighting for the interests of working men and women in Alberta. Now, for the first time, arguably, in our history we have a government who thinks their job is to say, "Ready, aye, ready" when Justin Trudeau gives them orders. He ordered them to raise their carbon tax by 50 per cent.

But I've got a theory about this, Madam Speaker. Why was the government, the NDP, so eager to please Justin Trudeau when he asked them to raise their job-killing carbon tax by 67 per cent, from

\$30 to \$50 a tonne? I'll tell you why. Because they really want to. It's about more government control. It's about more government money, taking more out of the pockets of taxpayers that they can spend.

You see, here is the fundamental difference between members of the Official Opposition and members of the government. We believe, like, I think, most Albertans, that an ordinary, average working Albertan, that a senior on a fixed income, that a homemaker or an entrepreneur knows better how to spend an extra buck than a bunch of politicians and bureaucrats. That's the fundamental difference when you get right down to it, Madam Speaker, and that's why they're more than happy to have the cover, the political cover, of Justin Trudeau's carbon tax proposal to raise it by 67 per cent.

I apologize, Madam Speaker; I caught a cold over the weekend.

Madam Speaker, I asked the Premier when they plan to raise the carbon tax by 67 per cent, and she stood in her place opposite and gave an answer I was actually pretty impressed with. I commended her for the answer. She said that she would not raise it until the Kinder Morgan pipeline was constructed. That's an improvement because before she gave a blank cheque to Justin Trudeau. She said that she'd raise it regardless. Then after that she changed her condition and said that she'd raise it if Kinder Morgan was approved. It was approved. Then she changed it to say: if construction begins. I think before she said: if construction ends. I don't know. Her position keeps changing, but somehow, notionally she has tied the carbon tax increase to the construction of Kinder Morgan. I thought that was great.

But imagine my surprise, Madam Speaker, when I opened the budget 10 days ago, two weeks ago, only to find that the carbon tax increase is baked into the budget, the 67 per cent. They're already planning how to spend that money. The \$97 billion debt, the \$3.7 billion in interest payments: that's predicated on a 67 per cent increase in the carbon tax, that they never mentioned to Albertans, which, as recently as two weeks ago, they denied their intention to raise without conditions. Those conditions, to be clear, have evaporated in the Finance minister's budget. There is no mention of any conditionality for the 67 per cent increase in the carbon tax, no tying it to any pipelines. It's just the blank cheque that their friend and ally Justin Trudeau asked for.

What does this mean?

Mr. Nixon: How high will they go?

Mr. Kenney: How high, indeed, because the Premier has said, as I've quoted many times, that the carbon tax will continue to have to increase.

You know why? Let's cut the obfuscation here, to be polite, to use a parliamentary word here. Let's just be blunt. Let's call a spade a spade, Madam Speaker. What is going on here is that the NDP understands what the fans and supporters of carbon taxes understand, which is that you don't get anywhere in any measurable or meaningful reduction of CO₂ output or greenhouse gas output as a result of a \$20 or \$30 or even \$50 carbon tax.

I know that to be true, Madam Speaker, because I've asked the government: by how much will CO₂ emissions be reduced as a result of the carbon tax? They cannot, they will not answer the question because the answer is zero measurable reduction because the experts who support carbon taxes say that the price has to be at least \$200 per tonne. That's Professor Leach at the University of Alberta, who wrote their carbon tax plan. He says: \$200 per tonne plus a lot of other measures. Environment Canada is closer to the consensus on this point when they say that it has to be \$300 a tonne.

Madam Speaker, I know that members opposite love getting on their moral high horse and pretending that they're, quote, saving the planet with their \$30 carbon tax when they know perfectly well that the only way they can have a snowball's chance in Hades of achieving the Paris convention climate targets on greenhouse gas emissions for Canada through a carbon tax would be a 1,000 per cent increase in the tax, at least a 1,000 per cent increase in the tax.

10:30

That's what they believe, Madam Speaker, in their ideological, socialist heart of hearts, that that's a good thing. It's more government control of the economy. It's more of us telling people to change how they live their lives, as the Premier did when she suggested that people take the bus more often to work. I don't know about you, Madam Speaker, but there are very few Albertans I know who are able to take a bus in Chestermere or in Rocky Mountain House or in most of Calgary. Sure, people use public transit when it's convenient, but to live a modern life in a cold northern economy, guess what? I know it's a terrible thing, but people have to drive cars.

The Premier says: take the bus, and change the way you live your lives, and if you don't do it, we're going to punish you with a punitive tax, a tax based on the consumption of energy in a cold northern, modern economy. Madam Speaker, they love the idea. So let's cut the nonsense here. What's really going on? It's called the frog in the pot. You take a frog and drop it into a pot of cold water – he likes the cold water – and you gradually turn that up to lukewarm. It's a little more comfortable. He's getting relaxed. You turn it up from lukewarm to a very low simmer, and he doesn't quite notice. Then simmer goes to warm, and the warm goes to boiling. Before you know it, Madam Speaker, you've got a boiled frog. But if you drop a frog in a pot of boiling water, he jumps right out. The boiling point is \$200 or \$300 a tonne. The cold water was \$20 a tonne.

Madam Speaker, this is incrementalism. That's all it is. They and their close ally Justin Trudeau and his Liberal government are trying incrementally to get Canadians used to a punitive tax on their consumption of energy so that they didn't notice, really, when it went from \$20 to \$30 a tonne on January 1, a 50 per cent increase three months ago. They're hoping that they won't notice when it goes from \$30 to \$40 a tonne, baked into this budget, and that they won't really notice when it goes from \$40 to \$50 a tonne and then from \$50 to \$80 and from \$80 to eventually \$200. Let's be absolutely clear. It would be nice.

You know, Madam Speaker, I understand the NDP's concern about climate change. I, too, am concerned about climate change. But if they were sincere in their concern, in their belief that carbon taxes could mitigate climate change, then they'd be honest with themselves and with Albertans. They'd be honest. Let's have an honest debate about this and say, as the NDP should say because they believe this, that we need a carbon tax of \$200 or \$300 a tonne. There's only one reason they won't, because they know Albertans would laugh in their faces.

Two and a half years after the NDP announced their carbon tax intentions, every single poll on the issue indicates that a supermajority of Albertans are resolutely opposed to the job-killing carbon tax, on average about 67 per cent. That's even after the NDP has spent millions of our tax dollars telling Albertans why it's in their interests to spend more in taxes to government for the energy they consume. Sixty-seven per cent, on average, opposed. Even in the environment minister's own riding, where she's lectured people for two and a half years about the need to be punished for consuming energy in a cold climate, the vast majority oppose the carbon tax. That, Madam Speaker, was at a carbon tax rate of \$20 a

tonne. Imagine where Albertans will be at \$50 a tonne. Imagine if the NDP was honest with Albertans and said: we need a \$250-, \$300-per-tonne carbon tax.

Madam Speaker, what really disturbs me is not just the negative economic impact of this huge tax, which has prolonged and deepened one of the longest recessions in Alberta history, but it's the fundamental mendacity, the dishonesty at the heart of the NDP's management of this issue.

The Premier said on April 15, 2016, here at the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce that "every penny raised by the carbon levy will be rebated back to Albertans or put back to work for our economy in new economic initiatives." You know, I have great respect for our Premier, Madam Speaker. I think she is an intelligent, committed, and capable leader. I respect her personally. I respect her office. I respect her so much that I'm going to quote that again. "Every penny raised by the carbon levy will be rebated back to Albertans or put back to work for our economy in new economic initiatives." Oh, I've got another quote from the hon. the Premier, from November 24, 2015, the *Globe and Mail*. The situation is the carbon tax. "This is not a situation where we're going to apply it against the deficit, for instance, to maintain current operations, or anything like that." Understandable commitments. That's what they've been saying since the day they announced it.

But, Madam Speaker, they have now admitted it, not formally in the budget documents but yet again as a hidden agenda. The Finance minister and the Premier were forced to come clean with Albertans, in questioning from the media on budget day, that this is no longer true, that every incremental dollar raised through their higher carbon tax will go to general government spending, to the NDP slush fund, to whatever they want. Zero additional rebates for the incremental revenues. Zero spending notionally tied to environmental or green initiatives. Sorry, folks. No more free shower heads or light bulbs or faucets. They're not going to raise a dime more to hire a company from Ontario to come in and change our light bulbs. Probably a good thing.

Madam Speaker, that additional revenue, from \$30 to \$50 a tonne, which they're now blaming on their buddy Justin Trudeau – it's hilarious. They're calling it the Trudeau tax. That additional tax rate will generate revenue. One hundred per cent of it will go to general government revenues and not go back to Albertans for rebates or to work for our economy. The carbon tax itself, the biggest whopper – is that parliamentary? – in Alberta political history, is now compounded by yet more mendacity, yet more falsehood from this government to Albertans. So we will end up paying more.

What does this budget come down to? More debt and more taxes, higher debt and higher taxes. Now, only the NDP thinks that the path to prosperity is paved with higher debt and taxes. Economic history tells us otherwise, Madam Speaker. One of the things that concerns me about this budget and the rhetoric surrounding it is this notion that happy times are here again. The Finance minister keeps telling us that we're on fire with a great huge recovery and that Albertans are back on track when first of all he has never taken responsibility for his high-tax policies, the massive additional red tape and regulatory burden of this government, massive new labour costs, massive new costs for entrepreneurs, all of which poured fuel onto the flames of the recession.

You know, Madam Speaker, when you're in a recession, what's technically happened? Technically you're in at least two quarters of negative economic growth. When I grew up in rural Saskatchewan, one of the lessons I learned is that when you're in a hole, stop digging. But what did the NDP do in this economic trough? They got out their shovels and kept digging. They made the hole deeper. They deepened and prolonged the recession.

10:40

Now, I know, Madam Speaker, they like to blame international commodity prices. They claim that we are the hapless victims of global commodity prices. Well, the truth is this. The global price for oil is bouncing around \$62 a barrel right now. That is an historic high. I mean, not an absolute high, but it's higher than the average throughout our modern history, substantially higher than the average. In fact, the Klein government in the 1990s eliminated the largest provincial deficit in Canada, went on to eliminate the debt, brought in a flat tax, presided over the highest levels of growth, the highest incomes, and the lowest levels of unemployment in Canada, averaging about \$20 a barrel for oil. In one of those years oil was down as low as \$11 per barrel.

We have been through fluctuations in commodity prices before, and obviously – obviously – when there's a downturn in those prices, they do affect incoming revenues, and they do affect the treasury. Madam Speaker, when that happens, the challenge for the government is to adopt policies that incentivize investment and growth, not punish those things. But this government raised income taxes, raised business taxes, and imposed the largest tax increase in Alberta history, the multibillion-dollar, job-killing carbon tax. They raised labour costs, they imposed massive new regulatory mandates on business, and now we've seen the flight of tens of billions of dollars of capital from Alberta.

The Finance minister says that it's all wonderful out there. Tell that, Madam Speaker, to the 175,000 Albertans who are on the unemployment lines. Tell that to the tens of thousands who have left the labour market and have given up looking for work altogether. Tell that to the tens of thousands of Albertans who have left our province, many of them, I know, immigrants who chose Alberta as the land of opportunity, only to come here to face unemployment or underemployment and who have since left for greener pastures. Tell that to the tens of thousands of small-business owners who have lost their businesses and often with them their life savings, their hopes, and their dreams. Tell that to Albertans who are working for less. You know, amongst some of the people who have gained employment in the past year, many are working for substantially less than they did before. They've gone from good, high-paying, often six-figure jobs to unreliable piecemeal or contract work at much lower levels of income. That is the economic reality in Alberta today, a reality made worse by this government's policies.

There was no effort in this budget to restore fiscal health to our province. There was no effort to restore investor confidence, which has been so dramatically lost. There was no effort to constrain spending. Oh, and by the way, Madam Speaker, I expected that. In the fall the Premier said that there would be – I think it was her phrase – compassionate cuts or compassionate restraint.

Mr. Panda: Belt-tightening.

Mr. Kenney: Compassionate belt-tightening.

Well, I've tightened my belt a couple of notches lately, Madam Speaker, and I was expecting to see the government do the same. I was getting ready for the belt-tightening season. It turns out that they're letting it out another notch. They're not tightening. They had to go and buy a new belt, a bigger one, because their spending is going up by another 16 per cent under this fiscal plan, faster than inflation, faster than population growth, faster than the economy.

Madam Speaker, what happened? What happened to the Premier's promise? Perhaps in this debate one of the members opposite could give this one a shot. Why did the Premier tell us that a hundred per cent of carbon tax revenues would go to rebates and so-called green spending when that's not true? Why did the Premier

say that there would be belt-tightening, i.e. reduced expenditures in this budget, when they're actually increasing spending? Why did the NDP – oh, I forgot to mention this. In this platform that I quoted from earlier it says: fiscal year 2018-19. This is the NDP platform. It says under total deficit or surplus for this fiscal year: a surplus of \$25 million. Now they think balanced budgets are a terrible thing, but when they sought the votes of Albertans, when they went door-knocking, when they dropped off this brochure, Madam Speaker, they said: "We're committed to fiscal responsibility. We believe in balanced budgets. You vote for us, and we'll give you a \$25 million surplus in fiscal year 2018-19." Instead, a \$9 billion deficit.

Now, before I'm done, could I ask one of my colleagues to get out their calculator and figure out by what percentage are they off? A \$25 million surplus but a \$9 billion deficit: the math is so big. I don't know, Madam Speaker, but it's a lot. They're off by \$9 billion. That's not a little whoopsy. That's not a Justin Trudeau eensy, teensy, weensy, little deficit. I know the Finance minister is going to stand up and he's going to tell us that the only option to all of this reckless borrowing, reckless debt is ...

Mr. Nixon: The iPhone won't do it.

Mr. Kenney: What is it you've got? The calculator is not big enough, Madam Speaker, to figure out the percentage difference, and with all the discovery math these guys don't know their math anymore. It's making me hoarse just talking about this.

Madam Speaker, I know the Finance minister is going to tell us that the only option, the only way to keep their promise is, they will say, reckless cuts to front-line services. Of course, I think sometimes New Democrats repeat that line in their sleep.

In fact, Madam Speaker, we want to talk about how irresponsible they can be. The day after the budget, on March 23, the Premier's director of communications, Ms Oates, tweeted the following. "There is a very quick way to deal with debt. Blow up all our hospitals & schools or raise everyone's taxes through the roof." Honestly, I'm not making that up. I'd be happy to table that. I don't think it's been deleted.

The spokesperson for the hon. the Premier says that the only alternative to the government's violation of its election commitment, the only alternative to a \$96 billion debt, the only alternative to a 67 per cent increase in the carbon tax, the only alternative is to "blow up all our hospitals & schools," not just some of them, Madam Speaker. You know, it's remarkable. The NDP fiscal apocalypse is getting worse and worse by the day.

When I was running for this seat in the Legislature back in December in Calgary-Lougheed, my NDP opponent, a very esteemed physician, a good man, a great candidate, said – presumably it was Ms Oates who suggested this brilliant talking point to him – that I wanted to shut down every hospital in the province. Now they've expanded that, Madam Speaker. In the space of three months we've gone from shutting down just every hospital to every hospital and every school, and we've gone from shutting them down to blowing them up.

When I read this quote, I thought of that great skit with John Candy and Eugene Levy on *SCTV*, a celebrity farm blow-up. You know, that's what this is turning into. It's like a *SCTV* episode over there, Madam Speaker. How do they expect anybody to take them seriously?

Madam Speaker, here's a news flash for my New Democrat colleagues opposite. Yes, it is possible to restrain spending without blowing up every school and hospital. If the government had simply kept spending increases at zero in the past three years, we'd be, basically, at a balanced budget now without closing a single school or hospital. If the government were to freeze spending now without

closing, let alone blowing up, a school or hospital, they'd be at a balanced budget a year before they propose without unrealistic revenue growth presumptions and without their 67 per cent increase in the job-killing carbon tax. So it's 360 . . . [interjection] Oh, wow. Okay. I got the number. Congratulations. Somebody here knows how to work a calculator. Is it the Member for Calgary-Hays that did that? I want to give him credit.

10:50

An Hon. Member: In case I get it wrong, yes.

Mr. Kenney: It turns out, Madam Speaker, that a \$9 billion deficit this year is 360 times larger than the \$25 million surplus that the NDP committed to. Oh, and, by the way, I know what they're going to say, that when they presented this \$25 million surplus – this is the one they ran on; this is the one they told Albertans about when they asked for their votes; this is why they're sitting in this Chamber, in part – the economy was already in the tank. We'd already seen the huge plummet in energy prices. The previous PC government had already recognized that. This was not a surprise. So the NDP commitment, a \$25 million surplus this year, was made with eyes wide open.

All that's happened since then, Madam Speaker – and, really, you have to ask yourself: why did the Premier prepare us for belt-tightening? In fact, let me offer people a little insight into politics. When a head of government begins talking like that, it's called prepositioning. It's getting the public ready for some difficult decisions. That's what's called prepositioning. That was the deliberate message of the government in the fall, but it didn't happen in the budget. What happened between compassionate belt-tightening and a hundred billion dollar debt?

I'll tell you what happened, Madam Speaker. The NDP cabinet met, and undoubtedly the public service brought forward various options on spending restraint, and the NDP cabinet couldn't say yes to any of it. This is a classic example of a failure of leadership.

Now, Madam Speaker, at similar times Tommy Douglas and his Saskatchewan NDP cabinet and Roy Romanow and his Saskatchewan NDP cabinet rose to the occasion. They made difficult decisions. They kept or got their province out of deficit. That's not happening anymore. That's not happening with this government.

So here we have the NDP that's 360-fold off of their surplus projection for the current fiscal year, taking us from \$13 billion to \$96 billion in debt, from \$1.2 billion to \$3.7 billion in interest payments, already spending more in interest than all but four of the government departments.

Let me pause there to say that I wonder if the New Democrats, Madam Speaker, always, you know, proud of their class warfare, their egalitarianism, their passionate desire to stick it to the wealthy and redistribute wealth: are they proud that they're enriching bankers and bondholders in Toronto, New York, and Zurich? Does that make them really happy? Is that social justice, to take money from low-income taxpayers, to punish seniors for heating their homes when it's 30 below outside in order to send a growing portion of that money to billionaire bankers? Is that why they ran for public office? Is that why they became New Democrats? Is that why they're social democrats? Is that why they believe in egalitarianism and wealth redistribution, so they could be in government to tax the poor and give to the rich through debt interest payments? That's exactly what they're doing.

Madam Speaker, this is the consequence of a government that was – let's be honest – unprepared to govern from day one. This is the consequence of a government that has an inability to make difficult choices. This is a consequence of a government that

believes that wealth can be redistributed without that wealth being created in the first place. This is a consequence of a government that believes that it can tax and borrow and regulate its way to prosperity.

Their recent policy on corporate welfare for a hand-picked number of companies: they've decided to give a billion dollars to hand-picked energy companies after nearly \$40 billion has left that industry in Alberta to go to that industry in other parts of the world at the same global prices. Madam Speaker, their doing so reminds me of what Ronald Reagan said socialists always do. He said that their attitude is at first to tax it; and if it keeps moving, regulate it; and if it stops moving, subsidize it. That in three lines sums up the economic philosophy of the NDP.

Madam Speaker, I'll just close by saying that while this budget is a fiscal disaster for Albertans, while we will have to work for years and years to come to get ourselves out of the hole into which they have dug us, while we will have to reignite Alberta's economy and restore investor confidence to re-create this province as the job-creating engine of Canada, while all of those things are true, I think that the most disturbing aspect of this budget is the deep dishonesty within it: their failure to be forthcoming with Albertans about the \$100 billion debt and their failure to be forthcoming about the 67 per cent increase in the carbon tax, whose imposition they denied from day one, 100 per cent of which incremental revenues go to the government's bottom line.

Well, Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Official Opposition and I believe on behalf of the vast majority of Albertans, we reject this government's reckless mortgaging of our future. We reject this government's deepening of an investment crisis in this province. We reject this government's denial of the economic pain being felt by hundreds of thousands of ordinary Albertans every day. We ourselves will work every day over the course of the next year to present Albertans with a fully costed and credible fiscal and economic plan to reignite our economy and to renew the Alberta advantage.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's with great intentness and great reverence that I rise to speak because as one of the members in this Chamber who's lived for almost 65 years close to the social gospel experiment known as Saskatchewan and living in Alberta, I want to abuse the Member for Calgary-Lougheed's vocal chords a little more to give some examples of the unintended consequences. He should well know, being a former resident of Saskatchewan, the advantages of the Alberta environment, the Alberta advantage, where we have allowed ourselves to come from chains to freedom whereas Saskatchewan sought the example of taking freedom to chains and only now have 1.1 million people where in Alberta we have north of 4 million people. I'd ask the Member for Calgary-Lougheed to please expound on that.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, just hesitate.

Hon. member, yes?

Mr. Westhead: Point of order there, Madam Speaker. It's my understanding that there's no 29(2)(a) on the second speaker after . . .

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, I appreciate that, but the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition is actually the third speaker on this.

Mr. Nixon: I was the second speaker.

The Acting Speaker: He does have 29(2)(a).

Mr. Nixon: I'll send you some standing orders later.

The Acting Speaker: I will now return.

I apologize, hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler. Were you finished?

Mr. Strankman: Absolutely, Madam Speaker. If the member would respond. Thank you.

Mr. Kenney: Well, I thank my hon. colleague from the Drumheller-Stettler constituency for the question and his service. Madam Speaker, the member raises a very prescient historical comparison. In 1944, when the CCF came to office in Saskatchewan, the headquarters of western Canada's oil and gas industry were located in Regina.

11:00

Mr. Nixon: And the insurance industry.

Mr. Kenney: And the insurance industry in western Canada. Regina was the Calgary of that time. Saskatchewan had a population of about a million, and Alberta about half of that at that time, after the Depression and after the war. But then the CCF, the parent party of the NDP, came to office. They raised business taxes. They raised personal taxes. They fiddled with the royalties. They created investor uncertainty. They massively increased the regulatory burden. They massively increased labour costs. They imposed massive new red tape. As one those corporate headquarters of the western Canadian oil and gas industries and financial services sectors picked up and moved west to Calgary.

Two provinces have followed different policy approaches for the following six decades. Alberta ended up with over four million people and Saskatchewan with still a million. Six decades of economic and demographic stagnation in one place; six decades of dynamic economic and demographic and social growth in the other. That is the difference that policy makes. It's, frankly, the difference that politics makes. But even in that Saskatchewan, where they drove investors and hard workers and entrepreneurs and talented young people out of the province, even they understood the importance of balanced budgets, unlike this crowd over here.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to thank the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed for opening our eyes when he looked at the platform of the NDP in the last election, which I didn't pay attention to, and many Albertans probably didn't, otherwise the result would have been different. But since this government came to power, every single day in this House we were told that they're making life better for Albertans. Every single day they say that. On the other hand, you know, constituents in Calgary-Foothills are telling me that they can't afford life under this NDP government.

Like you mentioned, many people like me chose Alberta because it was debt free. That's the reason that I left Mumbai and came here. But now we are saddled with a potentially \$96 billion debt. After your speech I observed that all this front bench left. They can't take those facts anymore.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, if you could refrain from referencing whether individuals are in the House.

Mr. Panda: Okay. Thank you. I withdraw that. But I'm saying that the facts sometimes are tough for people to listen to and observe and appreciate, but I'd like to ...

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The time is now up on 29(2)(a).

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion carried]

Consideration of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech

Ms Sweet moved, seconded by Mr. Malkinson, that an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows.

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

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

[Debate adjourned March 22]

The Acting Speaker: Are there any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to reply to the Speech from the Throne for the Fourth Session of the 29th Legislature, delivered by Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor. Last week's Speech from the Throne was very meaningful to me on International Women's Day, delivered by a Lieutenant Governor who is a woman to an Alberta Legislature with the largest number of elected women, a gender-balanced cabinet, and, of course, a Premier who is a woman.

I would like to share a quote from the throne speech. "Women's rights are human rights, and your government celebrates them." A powerful statement but not without action. Since 2015 our government has taken many bold steps, and one of the first was creating the Status of Women ministry.

Let's contrast that bold and progressive action with what we know about the new leader of the UCP. While the leader of the UCP was PM Harper's lieutenant, he helped to erode women's equality in Canada by weakening organizations that could have and would have challenged attacks on women's reproductive rights, pay equity, and child care. The Harper government, which included the new leader of the UCP, systematically shut down 12 of 16 regional status of women offices, eliminated the court challenges program, and abandoned an agreement on universal health care.

I was not surprised to see zero positive reaction from the UCP when the throne speech celebrated women or when they voted against funding for sexual assault services across the province. It's clear who sets the tone over there, and the person setting that tone was a leader in a federal government that systematically turned the clock back on gender equality.

The World Economic Forum gender gap index ranked Canada seventh in 2004, and we fell to 30th in 2015. That means that under the Conservatives gender equality in Canada fell by 23 positions. While our government is choosing to support affordable child care and has invested resources to expand shelter spaces, sexual assault services, counselling, and crisis services for women, the track

record of the Leader of the Opposition is to systematically erode equality for women in Canada.

I've worked in Alberta all of my adult life and have raised both of my children here. Throughout that time Alberta was under the thumb of the Conservative Party, 44 years, to be exact. You know the drill: boom, bust. When oil prices were high, it was a spending free-for-all. When the bubble burst, we faced devastating cuts, that are still felt today, and massive infrastructure deficits. In St. Albert we continue to try and play catch-up by building schools that the Conservatives only announced with huge signs and ribbon-cutting ceremonies. The Sturgeon hospital finally received the needed funds for a boiler that should have been funded years ago.

Until 2015 I managed a nonprofit, created to support people with disabilities, enabling them to live their lives in the community. I think I became keenly interested in oil prices during that time. Why, you might ask? Because we knew that when the oil prices dropped, it meant cuts, clawbacks, and transformations that were not meant to address progressive growth. Changes were just cost savings. That's how it was. The opposition leader can tell you – he is quite a historical revisionist – his little story, but that was not the reality in Alberta.

I am so grateful that our government chose not to turn their backs on the day-to-day needs of families and people in Alberta. Listening to the sound advice of David Dodge, the former governor of the Bank of Canada, we invested in infrastructure and put people to work. Any pragmatic person knows that investing in infrastructure when costs are lower and unemployment is higher makes sense. Any sensible person knows that cutting essential services like education, health care, and disability supports while people are already struggling does not make sense. We've always known that.

I wasn't surprised that the UCP and their new boss didn't like the throne speech. Ask yourself why. Although we cannot know for sure how they would have managed the recession we were hit with, we can guess based on the Leader of the Opposition's record in Ottawa. The Leader of the Opposition believes himself to be an economic saviour. I think he engages in fantasy economics. There's a reason that he won't show you a concrete plan: he can't.

Under Harper our country's real GDP grew barely enough to keep up with population growth. He doesn't tell you that, though, when he gives you the history lesson. Under Harper and the Member of Calgary-Lougheed our country had the worst job-creation record since 1946. Our job-creation rate under his leadership was slower than the rate of population growth.

Let's be clear. The 2015 recession was under Harper's watch. Many people have suggested that the only reason the oil price slump could tip the entire country into a recession was because our economy had so little momentum in the first place. Over the many years that the Member for Calgary-Lougheed was in Ottawa and in power, his government ran a string of six deficit budgets. Six. Then we entered a recession.

To quote from the throne speech: "When government fails to work for people, inequality rises." This has to include all people as defined by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This document is important to Albertans and Canadians.

11:10

I know one person in this Chamber that appears to disagree with the human rights as defined in our Charter. The leader of the UCP, then minister for immigration, wanted to force women who chose to wear a niqab not to do so during citizenship ceremonies. The federal Court of Appeal sided with the previous lower court ruling that struck down government policy banning face covering during a citizenship ceremony. The leader of the UCP also shut down family reunification immigration for two years. He apparently

needs an English-to-English translation of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

While organizations, businesses, and governments around the world are finding ways to support women making Me Too disclosures of sexual harassment and misconduct, here in Alberta we have a new political party that promotes a man who chose – keyword "chose" – not to protect a woman who disclosed sexual harassment but to fire her. According to the new leader of the UCP he was young, so that's okay. He was promoted and made House leader. That's okay. That is the kind of behaviour that has perpetuated and condoned systemic sexual harassment in the workplace.

I'm not surprised the UCP and their new leader didn't appreciate the tone and commitment expressed in the throne speech. It doesn't match their values. Religious freedoms seem only to extend to people who believe the same as they do. Women's rights are human rights, and our government will work to protect them and preserve access.

We know that the single greatest challenge facing our world is the reality of man-made climate change. Thousands of scientists, leaders in their field, agree that we must control and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The cost of doing nothing is astronomical. The leader of the UCP would rather spend his time on Twitter attacking doctors at the university, scientists. The Leader of the Opposition believes that climate change is simply a natural phenomenon, and he is worried about the indoctrination of our children in school when it comes to climate change. It's called science.

They say that the best predictor of the future is the past. Let's have a look at the Leader of the Opposition's actions related to science and climate change. Under his government's watch research programs monitoring climate change and ocean habitats were terminated. Under his government's watch thousands of scientists were dismissed, and the majority of the department of fisheries and oceans library was closed. Muzzling government scientists was the norm. Here's an example. Based on the government's direction the Environment Canada media office granted zero interviews after their team published a paper in 2011 concluding that a two-degree increase in global temperature was unavoidable by 2100.

I am grateful to live in a province that saw fit to elect a progressive government, one that believes in the human rights of all people, one that takes action to address climate change while protecting our province's resources and jobs. I'm grateful to live in a province that has a progressive government focused on a prosperous and inclusive future.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I listened to the member's response to the throne speech, and what I noticed – and this is my question to the member – is that the member spent a lot of time talking about previous federal governments and not what her government would be doing. She spent a lot of time talking about things that she seems to have disagreed on with the former Prime Minister Mr. Harper. I think she's got some of her facts mistaken, but that would be a matter of debate.

What was interesting to me, Madam Speaker, was that the member never rose and talked about the fact that she belongs to a government that has brought in a carbon tax that they did not campaign on, that now has a Premier and a Premier's office who

has told constituents in my constituency to fund raise to pay for their carbon tax, senior citizens that are on a fixed income to fund raise to pay for their carbon tax. The leader of her party has told my constituents to take a bus, not bothering to realize that there are no buses in our communities. She's called my constituents Chicken Little in the past.

Now we see over the constituency break, Madam Speaker, that this government is allowing seniors to have their carbon tax rebates taken away from them because the organizations and the housing that keeps care of them, of course, have increased costs as a result of the carbon tax. Those seniors now can't even depend on the limited carbon tax rebates that this government was providing. I notice the member won't stand up and talk about that.

Another interesting thing, Madam Speaker. The member never talked about the attack that this government has sustained on rural Alberta, particularly the agriculture community. You know, Bill 6, for example, and the brutal way that farmers and ranchers were treated in this province by this government: the member did not speak about that. Also, in regard to the throne speech the word "agriculture" was only used once in the entire speech. I notice the member doesn't want to talk about the fact that our second-largest industry doesn't even seem to be on the radar of this government.

She wants to continue to talk about the former Prime Minister inside this House. I find that disappointing. I'm a little bit interested in how the member can continue to stand up and attack other levels of government that aren't even in power right now and continue to gloss over . . . [interjections] You can see they're excited about it. They don't want to talk about their record but continue to gloss over the nonstop attack on everyday Albertans by this government. I mean, the hon. member is waving her hands around. I'm not sure what she's trying to say to me, Madam Speaker, but I'm sure she'll have a chance in a moment.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members.

Mr. Nixon: Thanks, Madam Speaker. I do have the floor.

I notice that the hon. member does not want to talk about the damage that her government's policies are doing to Albertans. Now, if I was a member of that government, that's probably what I would want to do, too. I probably would not want to stand up in this House and talk about my record, because their record is nondefendable. They cannot defend their record. This is a government that has told seniors to fund raise to pay for their carbon tax, has completely ignored fixed-income seniors.

We've talked lots about the Sundre West Country Centre in this House. It's interesting that over the constituency break the Premier's office reached out to them yet again – because I keep bringing this issue up in the House – and suggested that they spend \$15,000 doing an energy assessment on their building. Fifteen thousand dollars. They can't afford to pay the carbon tax right now, and the government's new suggestion is to come up with another \$15,000. I don't know. Maybe they're supposed to fund raise for that.

If the hon. member wants to talk about the throne speech and her government's record, she should start to talk about her government's record. But she won't talk about her government's record; she'll talk about Stephen Harper and the federal Conservatives. Now, I'm a federal Conservative. I'm pretty proud of the federal Conservative record, but it's irrelevant to this conversation about this government's throne speech. [interjection] It's not relevant. They're heckling "debt" at me now, Madam Speaker. This government took it from \$13 billion to now \$100 billion in debt. I don't think they should heckle about that.

Mr. Westhead: I don't think it's \$100 billion in debt.

Mr. Nixon: No, you're right; \$96 billion is where they'll be at. I should have been more clear, Madam Speaker. It's \$96 billion.

I notice that the hon. member never stood up and talked about the fact that her government told Albertans that they would not use the carbon tax for general revenue, that they would make sure that the revenue from the carbon tax would go back to Albertans. Now we find out that hidden inside their budget is a carbon tax that is being put into general revenue just like the carbon tax that that hon. member went door-knocking in her riding on and never told anybody that that was coming.

Speaker's Ruling

Question-and-comment Period

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Just a reminder to all members of the House that 29(2)(a) is comments and questions, which means you should be able to provide time for an answer to a question. [interjections] Hon. members, we have done past practice in this House. I have reminded this House on more than one occasion that there must be time for a response from the individual that you are speaking to under 29(2)(a). It is in *Hansard*. I can pull the reference for you if you would like.

Debate Continued

The Acting Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to speak to the government's Speech from the Throne. The constituents of Cardston-Taber-Warner elected me to make sure that their voices are heard in this Legislature, and I can tell you that they have strong feelings about this NDP government's agenda. The NDP government is, frankly, out of touch with the ordinary women and men of this province, and the agenda they have set out is yet further proof of this.

11:20

Since the Member for Calgary-Lougheed took his seat as Leader of the Official Opposition, this government has spent much time rewriting their positions to be more in line with what we have been saying and what he has been saying for the past months. Madam Speaker, when this government does come out with an idea of its own, it reeks of the out-of-touch, big-government philosophy that Albertans have clearly rejected. If this government ever understood what Albertans wanted, they have surely lost touch with that now.

If there is one clear example of this, it is the way the NDP have responded to the rural crime crisis. When we asked for an emergency debate last November, this government shot it down. With the gallery seats filled with victims of rural crime, this government's priorities were so out of sync with reality that they couldn't even take the time to meet with Albertans who had been repeatedly victimized and were calling for action, while our members have been meeting with Albertans all across the province on this issue. And even though the NDP have finally acknowledged that there is a serious problem, they are scarcely found at town hall meetings hearing the concerns of residents and front-line law enforcement officers. Madam Speaker, maybe if they showed up to listen to ordinary Albertans, they would have some idea of what they want and expect to see from their government.

They promised some extra officers and have promised new prosecutors, but they have yet to present a substantive plan on how to make these promises come to reality. Let us hope for the sake of rural Albertans that they have a plan beyond their announcement that they

intend to do something on this issue. Given this government's track record I am hardly optimistic.

Madam Speaker, the throne speech talked a lot about ensuring Canadian tidewater access for Alberta energy. I'm happy to talk about that subject at this point. Let's start with a Tzeponah Berman discussion. As we begin our conversation about getting Alberta's energy to tidewater, she plays an integral role in this. Tzeponah Berman is a radical environmental activist. Her anti-Alberta activism is a matter on record, yet in 2016 this radical environmentalist was appointed as co-chair of the Alberta NDP government's oil sands advisory group. This group was tasked with making recommendations on implementing the new climate leadership plan, reviewing impacts of oil sands operations, and proposing climate recommendations for the future. This government likes to lecture Albertans on what they call a world-leading climate plan. Let's be honest. By appointing Ms Berman, they sent a radical signal right off the bat that the only thing that we would be leading the world that is on track, the resource sector, that is the lifeblood of this province's economy, is down the drain.

Now, despite that Ms Berman has moved on to other things, going from enabling the damaging policies of the NDP to enabling the constitutional violations of the B.C. NDP and the illegal protest of radicals bent on the destruction of our job-creating industry, this government keeps telling Albertans to trust their plan for pipelines. They keep telling us that if we continue to place burdens on our industry, we will attain social licence. But, Madam Speaker, there is not a single environmentalist or left-wing politician that has been convinced by the actions of this government, not a single group that has come from the no to the yes on pipelines save for perhaps the hon. members across the way. But are they?

Now, I've said this before in this House. I had the opportunity, dealing with my insomnia, to read through the NDP's constitution. This is the Alberta NDP's constitution, not the federal's, just to be clear. [interjection] Yes. There probably isn't a difference. This is very interesting because constantly they have said that Ms Berman does not speak for the NDP, but what we find within their own constitution – it was right at the end, under appendix C, for your reading enjoyment. I'm just going to read a couple of things in here because we need to bring this into context. First of all, it says:

Socialism is essentially the application of democracy to the economy. Economic democracy, i.e. democratic socialism . . .

And here the NDP uses "economic democracy" and "democratic socialism" synonymously.

. . . assures production to supply the needs of all people.

It's very, very important to remember that. They believe that they can assure production to supply the needs of all people. I'm sure you've read in other books, in other records that same kind of concept. But we won't talk about that here at this point.

The market economy produces transnational corporations, who give private profit priority over public interest, social justice and workplace democracy.

It goes on to say:

Economic democracy demands a co-operative rather than a competitive system.

Now, you read through this stuff – and I'm going to carry on with this – and you begin to realize where the NDP are coming from. You have to read it to be able to believe it. I can honestly tell you, as I've talked to many people in my riding, that they don't believe this. They don't adhere to these kinds of principles and beliefs, and they think they're counterproductive to being able to create growth and prosperity for their families.

I want to read to you something that I think will put into perspective Ms Berman's actions, because they cannot keep on saying that Ms Berman does not represent an NDP ideology. In

reality she epitomizes it, and you'll realize why once I read this. It says:

Ecological Sustainability must permeate all economic and social policy. Meeting human material needs must not use more of Earth's resources than can be renewed within each generation.

I have no idea how the members opposite got here today. I hope that they walked or that they actually rode a bike because their own constitution, their own beliefs do not believe that they should be using nonrenewable resources.

Now, Madam Speaker, this statement says that we should not use oil or gas because, certainly, they cannot be renewed within each generation. They are adequately named nonrenewables for that reason. This is why everywhere I go in this province, I hear Albertans telling me that they don't believe the NDP when they say that they are fighting for the oil and gas workers of this province. Again, I've brought this up a few times, and I have actually yet to hear one of the NDP MLAs stand up and explain to me how this works with even the presentation that they have now, which is that they are advocates for the oil and gas sector in this province.

Now, this government keeps telling Albertans to trust their plan for pipelines. They keep telling us that if we continue to place burdens on our industry, we will attain social licence, but I can't imagine that if they really believe the constitution, that they probably helped write, they would be advocates for pipelines in all directions.

Madam Speaker, in this province we are extraordinarily blessed. Every other province in this country and every other country on this Earth would only wish to have the abundance of energy resources that we find here in Alberta. I'm not sure that everyone here appreciates how blessed we are. We have in this province the third-largest oil reserves anywhere in the world. We have an opportunity to be among the most prosperous societies in history, and unlike the other major oil producers of the world, this wealth is accompanied by the rule of law and freedom for every individual.

Madam Speaker, if this government seeks to set a new direction in this throne speech, then let them take the opportunity to unburden our industry and empower the market to unleash the productive potential of our province. We on this side of the House appreciate that the government has said that they will take a hard line with B.C. when it comes to obstructing the rule of law and ignoring the Constitution. We only hope that these are not just words but an actual commitment that will be backed up with action.

That said, this government needs to do more. They need to realize that the Trudeau Liberals in Ottawa are not friends of this province or this industry. The Premier must demand that the federal government take action to enforce the approved construction of the Trans Mountain pipeline. The time for going along to get along with Prime Minister Trudeau needs to be over. It is time to make sure that Alberta's voice is heard in the Confederation. The people of Alberta deserve as much, and frankly the economic success of our country demands it.

Madam Speaker, there is more that must be addressed here. The throne speech tries to paint a rosy picture, but Albertans see an entirely different reality. Calgary has one of the highest unemployment rates outside of the Maritimes. Many people across the province have exhausted their benefits in a futile bid to find employment. Across professions and across industries too many people have been let down by this government, too many people have had to give up, and too many people have lost sight of the dream that once was Alberta. Those who are employed, in many cases, have had to settle for a stopgap job out of their field and for considerably less pay just to keep themselves afloat. These aren't long-term solutions, and they aren't solutions that are making life better for Albertans.

11:30

Last night I had the opportunity of going to a restaurant. I had an opportunity to talk to the owner of the restaurant. He was actually from the oil and gas industry – he was an engineer – and he had gotten out of the oil and gas industry because he felt that the government was not supportive of it. He felt that there was no future for him in that industry anymore, so he had bought a restaurant, hoping to be able to try to make something for him and for his family. As I talked to him – he had spent many, many years going to university to become an engineer. That was his love. It was something that he enjoyed doing, yet he was in a position where he was forced into doing something else in order to be able to make ends meet for his family in a province that has the third-largest resources, oil and gas resources, in the world. We have an engineer that's being forced to do something else. If that is the definition of diversification, then I don't think Albertans want to have anything to do with it.

What they want is to have good-paying jobs. They want to be able to go to university and be able to provide for their families and for their prosperity. This is what I heard as I listened to this gentleman speak. Regular Albertans want this government to stop overburdening them with unnecessary taxes like the job-killing NDP carbon tax. They want jobs that will pay the mortgage. They want their towns to be vibrant communities. They want a government that doesn't pick winners and losers. They want a government that doesn't scare off investment coming into the province through ideological, socialist policies. Madam Speaker, I know that this is what regular Albertans want because it is what I hear every single day from the good people of Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Madam Speaker, this government talks a lot about diversification. In fact, they seem to be announcing a new government program or initiative at every corner. Well, I know that what I am about to say doesn't fit with the NDP ideological agenda, but it is the straight truth. Government programs, higher taxes, and multibillion-dollar deficits will not diversify our economy, full stop. It is the wealth and investment generated by our existing industries that will provide new opportunities in emerging sectors. It is the dollars created by the private sector that will fuel the economy of tomorrow.

Now, when I talk to people, I talk to people about what an economy is and about what our society in Alberta is like, and I talk to them about the analogy between the heart and head. The heart of a society is the wraparound services that the good people of Alberta are more than willing to be able to provide for each other. This is the heart. This is the schools and the health and the policing and the fire and the ambulance and all of the social programs that we've provided to be able to help when people are down, when they're out, to be able to help lift them, and to be able to help give them a sense of decency. The head part is the ability to be able to provide those services. The head part is the ability to be able to have entrepreneurs be able to create wealth, because you cannot spend the money unless you create it first, and this is what this government seems to have missed out on.

Conservatives understand that oil and gas is not what just makes up Alberta. They understand that there is more than just oil and gas, but they do know that it's a big part of our economy. If the government wants to spur investment and diversification, it needs to take yet another page from the playbook of the United Conservative Party: empower the free markets, support entrepreneurs and job creators by lowering taxes, cutting red tape, and getting the government out of the place that it does not belong.

Speaker's Ruling Question-and-comment Period

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Just before we move on to 29(2)(a), I'd like to clarify my comments from before. I have a few references that we can look back at to discuss the fact that we need to have comments and questions, which means comments plus questions, and allow the member to respond. On March 24, 2011, the hon. Speaker Kowalski referenced during the debate:

I think before we go on, I... want to remind the member, like the hon. Government House Leader has correctly said, that the five minutes for comments and questions are about the bill. And be concise so that other members can participate.

From November 21, 2012, by the hon. Speaker Zwozdesky:

I just want you to know. But 29(2)(a) was put in for a... good purpose, and I want to just ask you to consider what the real spirit of 29(2)(a) was for subsequent speakers after this one.

From November 21, 2012, by the hon. Speaker Zwozdesky:

The point I [am] trying to make is that Standing Order 29(2)(a) is usually reserved for short snappers back one way and the other. I realize this is a complex issue, and there's nothing the Speaker can do – you have the floor; you can speak the full five minutes if you want – but let's... keep in mind what the spirit of the debate aspect was when 29(2)(a) was... brought in. It's a unique feature of this Assembly.

From November 21, 2012, again, the hon. Speaker Zwozdesky:

[Please] review the purpose of 29(2)(a), with no reflection on the answer just given or the previous question. One person stands and asks a question. It takes 20, 30 seconds maybe, and then the person answering gets up and consumes the rest of the time.

I also did a ruling on March 22, 2018.

[Just reminding] all members of the House, before we move on, around 29(2)(a). It is comments and questions, but as you all know from past rulings, typically you leave time for the person to be able to respond to the questions.

I would like to clarify for all members that 29(2)(a) is for comments and questions, to allow the other person to respond.

The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you for clarifying. Certainly, I don't want to run out the clock like the previous speaker under 29(2)(a) did.

Debate Continued

Ms Renaud: But I will ask a question to the member who just spoke to the Speech from the Throne. One of the things I enjoyed about the Speech from the Throne was the references to the need to work on inclusion and that "inclusion" is an action word. It takes actual work and it takes legislation and it takes investment to make it happen. To the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner. I know that in the news over the last little while the city of Taber, I believe, has struggled with people vandalizing the pride flag. I think that it was at a municipal building. The first one was burned or stolen. I'm not sure. The second one was stolen. I know that a number of your constituents and others around Alberta wanted to know online or even in this House: why is it that you wouldn't say something about that or work with the city to ensure that all members, all citizens of that city felt safe and valued and included? I wonder if you could speak to that.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?
The hon. Member for Calgary-Hawkwood.

Connolly: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I wanted to go on a little bit on what the Member for St. Albert was talking about. I was actually at the first Taber pride flag raising last year. I would say that it was very emotional to be at the first flag raising in Taber and to see the constituents of the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner talk about how they needed support from both their local government, the provincial government, the federal government, and all their representatives. I was sad to see that at the time of the flag raising there was also a municipal council meeting going on, but one of the councillors was able to come out briefly to say a couple of words. I was there, able to support the Taber equality society as an MLA even though I had to drive about two, three hours down to Taber.

I was very disappointed that the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner was not present. I don't know if he was busy that day or if he wasn't in town or if he was stuck in Edmonton. But I was really proud to be there to stand with his community and to show that no matter who you are in this province, you're respected by this side of the House, by this government, and this party. I don't know what the UCP stands for. I don't know what the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner stands for, but I don't think he stands with his constituents when it comes to this exact moment. I hope to see him this summer when the Taber equality society raises their pride flag above the provincial building in Taber. I hope to see him there.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

11:40

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise under 29(2)(a) and address the member's comments on the throne speech. Now, the member made reference to a co-operative rather than competitive system of business, and I think that's an important comparison and an important distinction. I would ask the hon. member, for the people in your riding of Cardston-Taber-Warner, when you address them or if you've talked to them about this difference, for your opinion on which method of business seems to serve your constituents better in terms of being able to look after their families, in terms of being able to have jobs, and even in terms of generating tax revenue for local, municipal, and federal governments to provide much-needed public services, infrastructure, social services, all those types of things, because I think that was an important issue that the hon. member raised. I would invite him to talk about that difference between a co-operative rather than competitive system of business.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It was a very good question that was asked. It was a question that was talking specifically about the throne speech. [interjection]

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member.

Please go ahead.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you. This is something that goes back to maybe some comments that were made by our hon. leader. He was talking about the difference between Saskatchewan and Alberta, and one of the differences – I was talking to some of the MLAs from Saskatchewan. They were talking about the potash in Saskatchewan.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the throne speech?

The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

Bill 5

An Act to Strengthen Financial Security for Persons with Disabilities

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of Bill 5, An Act to Strengthen Financial Security for Persons with Disabilities.

Madam Speaker, all Albertans should be able to plan for their children's future. This legislation amends the AISH Act and the AISH general regulation so Albertans can establish trusts for family members and loved ones who are receiving AISH benefits without affecting their AISH eligibility.

The AISH program, assured income for the severely handicapped, provides financial and health-related benefits to support almost 60,000 adults with a disability. AISH benefits help people with their daily needs and with living as independently as possible. This program is about much more than a monthly living allowance. AISH includes significant benefits, including health benefits, that cover the cost of dental, optical, and prescription drugs as well as covering some of the costs of child care. Madam Speaker, AISH provides the support people need on a daily basis to live meaningful and engaged lives.

AISH should not prevent Albertans from saving for their future. People with disabilities should have the same opportunity for financial stability as other Albertans, and many Albertans have told us that. People across the province reached out to us and said that Albertans with disabilities should have equal access to financial security, and we are listening and taking action. Under Bill 5 Albertans will be better able to plan for their children's future. They can help ensure that their children or loved ones are taken care of. This legislation will ensure that people with disabilities have access to funds for continued care and quality of life. It will ensure that people remain eligible for the AISH program without having to deplete their trusts, and AISH clients will have time to invest unexpected payments such as an inheritance in an exempt asset without losing their benefits.

For decades the previous government's regressive policies were designed to keep people off AISH. We are working to ensure Albertans have clear access to the supports they need. We have invested \$188 million in the AISH program and are working to create a shorter, simpler, and more accessible application form, developing user-friendly how-to guides to help Albertans apply for AISH, and setting clear standards to ensure the program works for Albertans.

Our government believes in the power of collaboration. Last year our colleague the MLA for Calgary-Currie met with self-advocates and families of people with disabilities and heard their concerns. In response, he championed changes to the AISH Act with a private member's bill introduced last fall. His bill did not make it to final reading, but he highlighted the importance of the issue and a lack of fairness in the system that needs to be corrected.

He was supported by Inclusion Alberta, an organization that advocates on behalf of children and adults with developmental disabilities. Inclusion Alberta started a petition, and our

government heard from more than 3,400 Albertans asking for changes to the AISH Act. We are taking action. As the Minister of Community and Social Services I am honoured to say that Albertans are at the heart of all of our ministry's programs, and with Bill 5 we are putting Albertans first.

Alberta is one of the few jurisdictions that doesn't have explicit exemptions for trusts for people with disabilities. Under the current legislation an AISH recipient could lose their eligibility as the result of an inheritance. This is not right. As I said earlier, all Albertans want to have peace of mind and ensure that their children or loved ones are taken care of no matter their financial situation. They want to have the option to leave behind their personal financial resources and other assets, the things they have worked for throughout their lives, to support the standard of living of a loved one with a disability and to be able to do so when unexpected costs or expenses arise. Most importantly, they want to be able to do this without jeopardizing their loved one's eligibility for the AISH program.

We heard from Albertans loud and clear on this issue, and we are taking action. Two changes are proposed in this bill. First, Bill 5 amends the AISH Act to ensure that trusts are exempt as an asset when determining eligibility for the AISH program. Secondly, there will now be a one-year grace period, if someone receives a large payment such as an inheritance, to invest the payment into an exempt asset. This grace period will allow time to make a thoughtful decision and plan for their future. People will now have time to seek advice and make good choices about how to invest their assets, and parents and guardians will be able to make thoughtful decisions and plan for the long-term care of their children and loved ones who have disabilities. AISH recipients will not have to deplete their trusts to continue to receive benefits.

Discretionary trusts were allowed until the previous government prohibited them in the 1990s. This was a significant penalty on families and individuals looking to prepare for their future. With this legislation families can now help provide for the long-term care of a loved one. These changes allow more flexibility to plan for the future while remaining accountable. Bill 5 will allow for the exemption of discretionary and nondiscretionary trusts as an asset in which an applicant, client, or cohabiting partner is a beneficiary. Should the bill pass, a client will be able to be a beneficiary of a trust of any value, in addition to the current \$100,000 nonexempt asset limit, without affecting their eligibility for the AISH program.

11:50

Bill 5 also includes an amendment that will temporarily exempt as an asset payments that are not considered income by the AISH program and a one-year grace period to place those funds into an exempt asset. This could include an inheritance or gifts. The grace period ensures AISH recipients will not be penalized and potentially lose AISH eligibility if they receive a lump-sum payment that puts them over the \$100,000 nonexempt asset limit, and it provides the time for people and their families to make long-term financial plans without pressure that they will become ineligible for the AISH program in the meantime. Community and Social Services will advise Albertans affected by this change to consult professional estate planners and legal experts for advice and direction on how to make the best choice to plan for their long-term needs.

Madam Speaker, Bill 5 is about fairness, and our government has committed to protect vulnerable Albertans and ensure they are treated fairly. I'm committed to ensuring that people who receive support from the AISH program have the best system possible to meet their needs. For this to happen, we need to ensure that more emphasis is on being fair to all Albertans and especially to people who receive our services.

As I mentioned earlier, we are committed to making real changes that will help improve the lives of Albertans with disabilities and their families. We are taking significant action, including moving forward on the first advocate for persons with disabilities in Alberta's history, which we will begin recruitment for this spring. We have made changes to the service dog regulation to increase access for persons with disabilities. We have stopped previous government policies that the community felt were regressive and disrespectful, including the persons with developmental disabilities safety standard and the supports intensity scale.

We are currently engaged with the community to work on a review of the PDD program. We have increased funding to PDD and AISH to ensure Albertans get the supports they need. We have released the AISH action plan to make AISH more user friendly and accessible instead of trying to keep Albertans off the program, like the previous government did. We have worked openly and collaboratively with self-advocates, families, workers, and service providers, and we have heard loud and clear from the community: Nothing about Us without Us. We have and will continue to honour this and work with the community to make improvements together.

Bill 5 is an important step forward. We have garnered support from a wide array of stakeholders, including those 3,400 Albertans who signed Inclusion Alberta's petition: Frances Harley, mother of a disabled daughter; Joan Lee, CEO of the Vecova Centre for Disability Services and Research; Bruce Uditsky, father of a son with disabilities and head of Inclusion Alberta; Lesley and Sherwin Tabler; Donna Desjardins of Inclusion St. Paul; Tina Trigg, mother of a disabled daughter and board member with Inclusion Alberta.

Madam Speaker, Bill 5 will make life better for Albertans and will help ensure that Albertans with disabilities are treated fairly, and it will support families that are planning for their children's future. I want to thank all of the self-advocates, families, and the staff that advocated for these important changes. I encourage all members of the Assembly to support this important bill.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 5 this morning with the limited time that we have left before we rise here at noon, but I will try to make the most of the time that we have available as we speak to Bill 5 and some of the important things that the minister has outlined. It's a pleasure to rise today and speak in favour of Bill 5, An Act to Strengthen Financial Security for Persons with Disabilities. [interjection] It's okay. You can go ahead if you want.

It's not all that often that in this Chamber we find such common cause, but I think that we've done that with Bill 5. It has been said that teamwork makes the dream work, and I think that we will be able to support such a valuable piece of legislation with respect to people with disabilities in our province.

In fact, Madam Speaker, this piece of legislation is long overdue. It's a long-overdue measure to ensure that Albertans living with disabilities are not unfairly penalized for inheriting assets or other gifts from family members, folks who would like to have some sense of peace of mind when it comes to caring for the needs of their loved ones without any concern or fear of having their AISH benefits clawed back.

All members of this Assembly, regardless of their political stripe, recognize the amazing contribution that individuals with disabilities make to our great province, and they also recognize that the government does have a role in caring for those vulnerable

populations. Persons with disabilities should not be given fewer financial protections than those without disabilities in terms of inheritance, and parents leaving their children their hard-earned money should not have to worry about those funds being clawed back and, in fact, those funds creating harm to their child as they may risk losing their much-needed AISH support.

I want to take just a brief moment to commend my colleague from across the aisle, the Member for Calgary-Currie, for originally bringing this legislation forward in his private member's bill. I know that he worked incredibly hard on outreach on portions of this legislation as well as on outreach to all members of the Assembly to try and see that piece of legislation passed in its previous form. I know that I have personally heard from many stakeholders that have been advocating for this issue and about the great deal of time that they've spent trying to get this particular issue across the line. I'm pleased that it's finally being addressed.

Now, there are a number of situations inside this piece of legislation that I think require some additional discussion and more robust debate. I don't think that we're going to have time for that this morning. However, I hope that throughout other stages of the legislation we will be able to address some of those things, in particular around some of the issues with respect to discretionary trusts and nondiscretionary trusts and if the government has addressed some of the potential concerns that we have heard from

stakeholders, particularly around nondiscretionary trusts. Some of the issues that can be found in the legislation with respect to what will be exempt and what won't be exempt, the assets and how that would be applied to assets, I think will be important for some further discussion.

As well, perhaps we should be asking ourselves if there are areas where people receiving AISH supports can receive some income from work that they might require and if they should in fact be able to benefit from the trust on a monthly basis or not. I think it's an important discussion that we have here in this Chamber.

I look forward to continuing to support this legislation. In that support, it does mean that we need to ask some important questions and about some checks and balances, making sure that they're in place. But, on balance, I think that this is a step that's long overdue, and I look forward to supporting it. I look forward to hearing from the minister on some of the questions that we have as we continue the debate, but in the name of time for this morning I'll be happy to keep my remarks to this point now.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Hon. members, pursuant to Standing Order 4(2.1) the Assembly will now stand adjourned until 1:30 this afternoon.

[The Assembly adjourned at 11:59 a.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, April 3, 2018

Day 10

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, April 3, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Hon. members, ladies and gentlemen, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Mr. R.J. Chambers. I would invite all to participate in the language of your choice.

Hon. Members:

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

The Speaker: Thank you. Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

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

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to all the members of the House I'm very pleased to stand today and introduce 38 students from the wonderful school of Meyokumin in Edmonton-Ellerslie. They're accompanied by their teachers, Brianna Orchin and Kristine Anderson, as well as their chaperone, Seema Saini. I would like them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you students and teachers and chaperones of Fort Saskatchewan elementary school. They're accompanied by Mrs. Alanna Lutz, Ms Bartsch, Mrs. Laura Simpson, Mrs. Carol Kaehn, and Miss C.J. Barnes. I would like to thank them for the opportunity to visit with them at school just a few short weeks ago. We talked a lot about provincial politics and, I'm sure to their most benefit, how to convince others – probably, namely, their teachers and parents – of your arguments. Thank you so much for joining us here at the Legislature. I would ask everyone to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other school groups today?

Seeing and hearing none, the Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege to introduce to you today and through you to all members of this Assembly three constituents of mine who also happen to be good friends of my colleague the Minister of Environment and Parks: Erika, Katarina, and Matthew Holden. Matthew works for Community and Social Services and lives in Widewater, just outside of Slave Lake, on an acreage with his family. He's joined today by Erika, a grade 6 student who has a big role in her upcoming school play at E.G. Wahlstrom. Erika wants to be a vet, so she spends a lot of time caring for her family's animals. Matthew is also joined by Katarina, a grade 8 student at Roland Michener, who

travelled to Fort McMurray this winter to compete in the Alberta Games as a wrestler. Katarina is also active in her school's band and GSA. Like me and my family, the Holdens love spending their time enjoying the great outdoors, skiing and hiking around Lesser Slave Lake. I now ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Mr. Mark Jones. Mark has served Red Deer in so many ways. He recently retired from the Red Deer public school division after a 34-year career there. He was a board chair of city parks and rec, past VP of Red Deer Minor Hockey, is the current president of the Red Deer Tennis Club, and also sits on the Alberta Motor Association board. Mark is now the CEO of the Central Alberta Child Advocacy Centre, which works with many partners to support children, youth, and families impacted by sexual abuse, physical abuse, and neglect. I thank the Central Alberta Child Advocacy Centre for the critical work they do and ask Mr. Jones to now rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Health and Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize our province's oncology nurses and the specialized care that they provide to Albertans every day. Today is Oncology Nursing Day. These nurses are a critical part of our health care system, and we value the work they do to provide quality, person-centred care. I am grateful to the more than 1,000 registered nurses, including nurse practitioners, who work in oncology and cancer care units across this province for providing information, compassion, and care to Albertans when they need it most. I'd like to invite Linda Watson, president of the Canadian Association of Nurses in Oncology, along with Elysa, Janice, Jennifer, Nanette, Karina, Nicole, Bronwen, Anna, and Louise to please rise and receive our warm welcome and our appreciation.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you key members, partners, and volunteers of Autism Edmonton in recognition of world autism day. Thanks to organizations like Autism Edmonton, Albertans living with autism as well as their friends and family have a place to get vital information and resources to help them recognize and understand autism. Autism Edmonton also offers empathetic support and help to understand the unique and often complex situations faced by people affected by autism. I encourage all Albertans to educate themselves and those around them about autism so that we can accept and normalize autism in our communities. I would ask David Jardine, president, along with the other Autism Edmonton advocates to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Joining us today are leaders from Alberta's largest student advocacy groups, the Alberta Students' Executive Council and the Council of Alberta University

Students. I've had the pleasure of working with some of these folks for a couple of years now, achieving meaningful progress on issues like freezing tuition and student mental health funding, and I look forward to working with the incoming executive in the coming year. My guests are – and I will apologize in advance for any errors or omissions in the names – Ian Lee, Nicholas Newnes, Alex Dimopoulos, Rachel Moerschfelder, Doris Car, Naomi Pela, Alysson Torres-Gillett, Laura Hebert, Marlene Morin, Brenda Needham, Kayla Gale, Garrett Koehler, Daniel Caine, Reed Larsen, Conner Peta, Parvin Sedighi, Stephanie Nedoshytko, Marina Banister, Branden Cave, Puncham Judge, Shifrah Gadamsetti, Aria Burrell, and Hailey Babb. I ask that my guests please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Great. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was just on my way to send you a note to ask you if I can rise and introduce two guests to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, two incredibly hard-working women who I'm very, very proud of. One is my sister Elysa Meek, who is an oncology nurse, as well as my cousin Linda Watson, who is the president of the Canadian association. I'm thrilled to have them join us here today. I'd ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased today to introduce to you and through you to everybody in this Assembly two people that are very close to my heart, my son Christopher Carlier and his wife, Amanda McArthur, from Regina, Saskatchewan, where Christopher is a 10-year employee of GasBuddy and Mandy is a music teacher in the public school system. I'll ask them now to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Are there any other guests today, hon. members? The Member for Calgary-Klein.

1:40

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two Mount Royal University students dedicated to keeping GSAs, climate change, and a strong economic recovery on the provincial agenda. Olga Barceló is the president of the Mount Royal New Democrats, and Henry Wearmouth is the vice-president external of the Mount Royal New Democrats. I ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House a very active and ambitious and vocal person in the Grande Prairie-Wapiti constituency. I'd like to introduce to you Maurissa Hietland. If she could stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

Members' Statements

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

Central Alberta Child Advocacy Centre

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I am honoured to speak about the Central Alberta Child Advocacy Centre in Red Deer. The CACAC is a not-for-profit organization that works in partnership with the central region child services, Alberta Health Services, Alberta Justice, Alberta Education, and the RCMP to better serve children, youth, and families impacted by sexual abuse and the most serious and complex cases of physical abuse and neglect. Because CACAC works collaboratively with such partners, they are able to achieve greater results than anybody could on their own. They're able to combine expertise in investigation, treatment, prevention, education, and research to provide an integrated approach wrapping around children and always working in the best interest of the child.

The CACAC opened its doors November 29, 2017, and has since then triaged over 90 cases with their multidisciplinary team and completed 60 forensic child interviews. In a collaborative effort 28 criminal charges have been laid in 16 different files. In 60 per cent of the cases the primary type of abuse has been sexual abuse, 20 per cent physical abuse, and 20 per cent has been neglect, sexualized behaviours, drug endangerment, and sexual exploitation; 70 per cent of offenders are interfamilial or are related to the child. While the highest number of case files have been children in the 10- to 13-year range, the youngest victim has been a one-year-old child.

The CACAC currently serves five zones, ranging from Clearwater county in the west to the Saskatchewan border and from as far north as Drayton Valley and Vermilion to down past Drumheller, serving a population of over 332,000 Alberta children. I would like to thank them . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

Conservative Government Achievements

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When the NDP speak in this House or in public, they like to point out the 44 years of Conservative governance as having done nothing for our province. It is unfortunate that they insist on making those comments because in doing so, they are disrespecting the legacies of fine Premiers like Ralph Klein and Peter Lougheed. Since the NDP insist on taking this tack, I would like to highlight some of the things that Conservatives have accomplished to make Alberta the envy of the world.

Hundreds of thousands of immigrants who come here from other parts of the world have benefited from the Conservative legacy. Let's start with the fact that Alberta still has no sales tax. That reality, Mr. Speaker, is thanks to 44 years of Conservative service to the people of Alberta.

Let's specifically look at the debt-free legacy left by Premier Klein and, on top of that, hundreds of billions of dollars contributed in equalization payments to Ottawa during that period.

We all remember when Premier Lougheed stood against the federal Liberal government for their attack on our resources, and now this NDP government has made the Trudeau Liberals their allies, when Justin Trudeau is not only sitting on his hands while B.C. attempts to block the Trans Mountain pipeline, Mr. Speaker; he destroyed Northern Gateway and Energy East.

Now, let's look at this NDP government, Alberta under this NDP government. In only three years they've imposed a carbon tax, the largest tax increase in the history of Alberta, without talking to Albertans; \$96 billion of debt; raised personal and corporate taxes; chased almost \$40 billion of investment out of this province; increased unemployment; disrespected our farmers, small-business

owners, job creators; and told Albertans to take the bus and eat less meat if they are not happy with their climate leadership plan.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Easter

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to take a moment today to speak about Easter and what Easter means for many Albertans. As we know, in the Christian tradition Easter is the celebration of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. For many across Alberta, Easter brings the renewal of faith and hope as they celebrate the season according to their own particular beliefs and traditions.

I have fond memories of our family celebrating Easter egg hunts and visits with my grandparents in northwest Calgary, where we would break and then feast on traditional Ukrainian babka, or Easter bread. Like so many families in Alberta, my grandparents came from the culture where the beautiful pysanka was born, and they shared that tradition with me here in Canada.

This past weekend I had the opportunity to celebrate Easter in new ways, Mr. Speaker, with families across Calgary-Currie. All of these families were celebrating peace, friendship, and joy as well as the return of spring. Community associations across Currie, like the one in Richmond and Knob Hill, held an extravagant Easter egg hunt for Calgarians of all ages. Later this week the Bankview community gardeners will gather to swap seeds and to share stories about the glory of having their hands in the dirt, their heads in the sun, and their hearts filled with nature, assuming, of course, the snow melts by then.

While out speaking with Calgarians on Holy Thursday, Mr. Speaker, I met with a family who arrived from Syria not long ago, who, like my family years before, came to this place seeking opportunity. While I was unable to break Easter bread with them, they welcomed me into their home, shared with me their own traditions, and fed me some very delicious pastries, that I enjoyed very much.

Wherever you found yourself, I hope everyone had a healthy and happy Easter. As we say in my baba and gido's home, Christ is risen. Khrystos voskres

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Carbon Levy

Mr. Cyr: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on an issue of great concern for my constituents of Bonnyville-Cold Lake. In the budget recently introduced by the NDP government, we received confirmation of a NDP plan to follow the lead of the Trudeau Liberals and increase their already burdensome carbon tax from \$30 to \$50 per tonne. That's a 67 per cent increase, an admission of more punitive taxes coming from this NDP government.

From the beginning, since the NDP announced this job-killing tax, that wasn't mentioned anywhere in their 2015 election platform, they promised Albertans that it would not be just another revenue-generating tool. The NDP told Albertans that a hundred per cent of the revenue from the carbon tax would either go to rebates to Albertans or to the environmental initiatives, yet it seems like they forgot to mention a caveat on this. The fact is, Mr. Speaker, that with the release of the 2018 budget, it was revealed that future revenues generated by the carbon tax will be going to general revenues – that's truly shameful – to plug the out-of-control spending that led to a deficit currently sitting at \$8.8 billion.

What does that mean? It means no help for struggling Albertans. Seniors who live on fixed incomes will be among the hardest hit by this carbon tax. The NDP will be taking billions more out of the pockets of Alberta families, who are trying to make up for this fiscal mess that they, the NDP, have created. Mr. Speaker, Albertans cannot afford to bail out the NDP for the consequences of their reckless ideological agenda. It's time for the NDP to get onside with Alberta families, stand up to Justin Trudeau, and repeal the carbon tax.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The official Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

Carbon Levy Rate

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and Happy Easter to you. Two weeks ago I asked the Premier when she was going to raise the NDP carbon tax by 67 per cent, and she said: not until we get a pipeline. But in her budget she baked in the 67 per cent increase in the carbon tax. Why did she change her mind? Why is she proceeding with the 67 per cent hike in the carbon tax when times are tough and Albertans need tax relief, not higher taxes?

1:50

Ms Notley: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, I think it's very interesting. Our budget, that we were very proud to introduce a couple of weeks ago, is focused on building a recovery to last. Now, the member opposite is out there telling Albertans that he can cut taxes, that he can balance the budget, and that he can do so without hurting front-line services. The member is lost in a storm of fairy dust. He is either deeply, deeply misinformed or purposely misinforming, and my question to the member opposite is really: which is it?

Mr. Kenney: For the record, Mr. Speaker, the NDP ran on a platform that did not mention a carbon tax. Five months later they introduced it, the biggest tax hike in the province's history. They then announced plans to raise it by 67 per cent because Justin Trudeau told them to, but then they said that they wouldn't without a pipeline. Now it's baked into the budget. Why can't they get their facts straight? Why are they going to proceed with a 67 per cent increase in the carbon tax even though they said that they wouldn't without a pipeline? There is no Trans Mountain pipeline. Why the 67 per cent increase in the carbon tax in this budget?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The fact of the matter is that notwithstanding how much the member opposite wished it wasn't so, that pipeline has been approved. You know what? Just a week and a half ago we won in court again. Fourteen cases out of 14 cases we have won in the courts. We are winning. We are going to win. We are not going to bet against Albertans, and the member opposite should stop doing that, too.

Mr. Kenney: This is remarkable, Mr. Speaker. The Premier can't make up her mind. At first it was a blank cheque for her ally Justin Trudeau to raise the carbon tax by 67 per cent. Then she said: well, only if a pipeline is approved. Then she said: only if construction begins. Then she said: only if construction is completed. Now all of those conditions are out the window. Could she point to the page in the budget speech, in the budget documents which says that there's

any condition on the 67 per cent increase? Why is she giving Justin Trudeau another blank cheque to raise taxes on ordinary Albertans?

Ms Notley: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, I'm wondering if the member opposite could point to any page in his shadow budget. Oh, wait. No, he can't because the member opposite and the Official Opposition are the first ever to never introduce a shadow budget. But what we do know is that you can't have it all. You can't give a tax break to the rich. You can't balance the budget. You can't not affect front-line services that Albertans rely on. It can't be done, and sooner or later he's going to have to come clean to Albertans on what his plan actually is.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, she'll have plenty of chances to ask questions a little over a year from now, but now I'd recommend that the Premier try to answer them.

Budget 2018

Mr. Kenney: Here's another question Albertans want to know. This Premier said that every penny raised by the carbon tax would be rebated back to Albertans or put back to work in our economy in new economic initiatives, but now the government has admitted that that's no longer true. For every incremental penny raised by their 67 per cent hike in the carbon tax, one hundred per cent will go into the NDP slush fund to spend on whatever they want, with no rebates, no fake green spending. Why did the Premier break her word to Albertans?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, what I have always been very clear on is the climate leadership plan which our government brought in. The additional levy that comes from the federal government will be reinvested to support Albertans. It will support our hospitals. It will support our schools. It will support our justice system. It will support making life better for Albertans while we adopt a reasonable path to balance which, at the end of the day, will make sure that Alberta moves forward in a progressive way.

Mr. Kenney: There you have it, Mr. Speaker. They said all along that every penny would go back into rebates and for so-called green initiatives. Now the government is admitting that it's just going into the general revenue fund. They're admitting – won't the Premier just stand up and be honest with Albertans? – that it's just another tax. It's a sales tax by another name. It's a tax on every bit of energy that Albertans consume in a cold and modern economy. Why won't the Premier just admit that this 67 per cent hike in the carbon tax is needed just to prevent the deficit and debt from going even higher?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What I will say to Albertans is that when we reach our path to balance in 2023, when we reach balance, we will still enjoy an \$11 billion per capita tax advantage over the next lowest taxed province in the country, so we are absolutely protecting that. At the same time, we are continuing to invest in hospitals, we are continuing to invest in schools, and we are continuing to ensure that Albertans have a government that has their backs, not a government that's jumping on their backs, trying to make them the . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I have here the platform on which the NDP ran in the last election. It committed to three deficits and a

balanced budget – in fact, a surplus – this year. Altogether they promised Albertans \$11 billion in new borrowing and then surpluses. Instead, they are delivering \$83 billion in additional borrowing, headed for a debt of nearly \$100 billion. Why did the NDP so catastrophically break their word to Albertans? Why are they planning to increase debt by \$83 billion more than they promised?

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

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I'm not going to take fiscal management lessons from the member opposite. When they were in Ottawa, they introduced six straight deficit budgets. One year their deficit was \$56 billion – \$56 billion – and they added \$145 billion to the national debt before they left office. You know what? The fact of the matter is that we are charting a responsible course to balance while supporting Albertans, while supporting our hospitals, while supporting our schools, while supporting our kids and our seniors, and we won't stop.

The Speaker: Please proceed.

Provincial Debt

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, after over a century of history Alberta had an accumulated debt of \$13 billion when the NDP came to office. It's now \$56 billion, and it's headed towards \$100 billion. I'm only asking the government to hold themselves to their own standard, not someone else's standard. Their standard this year was a \$25 million surplus. Instead, we've got a \$9 billion deficit. Their standard was \$11 billion in new debt. Instead, we've got \$83 billion in new debt. Will the Premier just admit that they've made a mess of the province's finances?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, what I will admit is that we took over this province from a government that had left the province unprepared to deal with the devastating drop in the price of oil, one that went far lower than people were projecting in April 2015.

The other thing is that by 2023 we will still have the best balance sheet in the country, and to get there, we will not have laid off the 3,600 or so teachers that the member opposite suggested just this morning that he would like to lay off. By the way, that's exactly what would happen if we had to freeze our finances the way he suggested.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Kenney: Well, here we go, Mr. Speaker. The Premier's communications director said last week that we would have to, quote, blow up every school and hospital in the province to balance the budget. This is from the government that said that they were going to have compassionate belt-tightening. Instead, we continue to have the most inefficient provincial government in Canada. My question is this. Is the Premier proud of the fact that her government is now spending more on interest payments to bankers and bondholders than in 19 of the 23 Alberta government departments?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, here's what I'm proud of. You know, this morning the member opposite said that what we should have done was freeze spending in 2015. What I'm telling the members opposite is that that would mean there would be 3,600 fewer teachers and teachers' assistants in the province of Alberta today. I am very, very proud that those 3,600 teachers and teachers' assistants are in our schools today teaching our kids and giving

them the opportunities that they need to build a strong future. Those are the kinds of choices our government is making.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the NDP's choice is to encumber those kids with \$100 billion of debt that they're going to have to pay off with higher taxes in the future, in the meanwhile enriching bankers and bondholders as we're now spending \$2 billion on interest. Under their plan, that's going up to \$3.7 billion, more than we spend on 19 of 23 departments. Is this what the NDP dreamed of, enriching bankers and bondholders with tax dollars rather than investing in public services?

2:00

Ms Notley: What I don't dream of, Mr. Speaker, is giving the richest 1 per cent of Albertans a \$700 million tax gift. I'm absolutely not planning on doing that, not planning on taking 3,600 teachers out of our schools, not planning on cancelling the Tom Baker centre, not planning on cancelling the green line because – you know what? – we have Albertans' backs. We are moving forward, and that's exactly what we are going to do.

Pharmacy Funding Framework

Mr. Fraser: Mr. Speaker, I've said many times in this House that we need to address the rising health care costs if we're ever going to get the budget to balance. When I raise these concerns in the House, the government is quick to point the finger and accuses us of wanting to cut funding for front-line services. It appears as if the government is trying to divert attention away from the fact that their own fiscal plan is beginning to have a direct impact on front-line services. The most recent budget saw this government cut funding to Alberta pharmacists by \$150 million. Would the minister agree that this is a direct cut to front-line services, or does she not consider the work of pharmacists a crucial front-line service?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I find it very rich that the member opposite, when they have their own shadow budget proposing a billion dollars' worth of cuts, proposing increases in fees and user costs – it sounds like the rejected health care levy that was proposed by his leader when he was the Health minister in the last election. At the same time what we're doing is that we are increasing pharmacy by a reasonable rate of increase, which is 4.3 per cent, to cover the fact that there is inflation, to cover the fact that there are new people going on new medications. We've got balance on this side. On that side all they've got are old, recycled ideas of deep cuts from the 1990s.

Mr. Fraser: One thing we often suggest to the government is that instead of cutting funding for the front line, as the minister has done, savings can be found through efficiencies. The government likes to laugh at that, but the issue is that the pharmacists provide a good example of what we're referring to. One service that the government is cutting funding for is paying pharmacists to provide flu shots. Lowering the incentive for pharmacists to provide flu shots means that more shots will be given by doctors, and a flu shot given by a doctor is about four times more expensive. To the same minister: how does paying doctors more money to deliver the same number of flu shots save the province money at all?

Ms Hoffman: Well, my question to the member opposite and, rather, his leader, Mr. Mandel, who was the Health minister, is: how does it make sense that we pay 50 per cent higher than the next-highest jurisdiction? I don't think that's fair. We sat down with

pharmacists, and we said: we want a fair plan that ensures that patients still have good access. We're still going to be paying the highest in the country. We're just going to be tied instead of being 50 per cent higher than the next highest in the country, Mr. Speaker. I think that's fair and reasonable. I have to say that cutting a billion dollars from the front-line workers of health care or, at a time when fentanyl was on the rise, your leader turning down \$1.4 million of funding, no strings attached, from the federal government to address the fentanyl crisis: that is irresponsible.

Mr. Fraser: Mr. Speaker, pharmacists are well trained, highly educated medical professionals, and we rely on pharmacists to know all the effects of medications, to warn of the potential dangers of mixing drugs. They provide advice and consultation for people struggling with mental health, addictions, and the treatment of chronic conditions, and they are often the medical professional that people see the most often. Pharmacists are saying that the government's proposed cuts would put patients at risk by limiting their access to these types of services. To the same minister: why are you choosing to cut funding in these areas that will directly impact Albertans' health and well-being?

Ms Hoffman: Well, once again, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is dreaming in technicolour. We have a 4.3 per cent increase to that line item. It's important to us that that goes towards patients and ensuring that they can continue to access important services. We're proud that we've worked to reach an agreement, a collaborative agreement, at 4.3 per cent. Under the watch of that member's now leader, the former Health minister, we saw 12 per cent increases to that finance line item. That's irresponsible. That's not in the best interests of Albertans. Conservatives let things balloon, and then they pushed deep, drastic cuts, saying that they had to. On this side of the House we work with people to develop sustainable, reliable front-line care.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Business Link Support for Immigrant Entrepreneurs

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many new Canadians find that they face barriers in finding employment, so they opt to open their own businesses, but when they do, they often face challenges of language and culture in trying to navigate our systems. Business Link received funding in the past, but the previous government chose not to renew it. They received funding to develop and operate pilot programs to support immigrant entrepreneurs. One of these focused on creating multilingual guidebooks that offered plain-language information on starting a business, marketing, financing, and business planning. To the Minister of Economic Development and Trade: has your ministry given any thought to working with Business Link to update and make these documents available again?

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's small businesses have a bigger impact per capita than any business anywhere in Canada. In addition to providing hundreds of thousands of jobs to Albertans, they inject about a hundred billion dollars into our hometowns and our communities. Now, we are collaborating with Business Link to provide in-person access to business advisors along with phone, e-mail, and webinar materials. I can tell you that we're always looking at ways to support our

business community even more, and we want to ensure that new Canadians also have those supports.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that studies show that entrepreneurs that receive mentorship from those with more experience have greater success in attracting investment and expanding their businesses, increasing revenue and their employment impact, and given that Business Link also pioneered a successful pilot program which provided culturally sensitive mentorship for new Canadian entrepreneurs, to the same minister: has your ministry considered investing and providing those kinds of supports?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I can tell the member – and I appreciate and thank him for his question – is that we doubled funding for a very popular tech development program through Alberta Innovates. There are a number of supports that we've rolled out to support businesses, including partnering with BDC, Business Development Bank of Canada, so that entrepreneurs can launch more start-ups and innovate and expand. What I can tell you is that the previous government ended the funding specific to the Business Link program that the member is talking about. Our government brought back the self-employment training for entrepreneurs that the previous government cut and that the current opposition would cut.

I can tell you that I commit to working with new Canadians as entrepreneurs.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Second supplemental.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. I do appreciate the work that you've done. Given that after I met with representatives from Business Link and brought them to meet with your chief of staff, they submitted a proposal to your office to revive both of these programs that I mentioned at a cost of only \$150,000 per year, to the minister: are you willing to consider providing just this small investment to help new Canadian entrepreneurs truly thrive?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll thank the member for his advocacy on this. I can tell you that we know that the dollar amount may be fairly small, but it has a significant impact on businesses and helps them grow and become more successful. I can tell you and all members of the House that the proposal the member is referring to I find very interesting and very promising. I will be looking at it and going through it to see if there is an opportunity for our government to continue to support entrepreneurs, especially new Canadians, who, we know, are very, very innovative and want to get their businesses up off the ground.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Pharmacy Funding Framework (continued)

Dr. Starke: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last month Alberta Health pulled out its metaphorical mortar and pestle and proceeded to grind the pharmacy profession. Now, while this NDP government likes to brag about how it has preserved front-line public services, when it comes to community pharmacies, that boast rings hollow.

The recent pharmacy funding agreement includes cuts that will jeopardize the health of vulnerable inner-city residents, that were provided through the award-winning ACE, adherence and community engagement, program. To the minister: why have you approved a framework that will harm some of Alberta's most vulnerable citizens?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I certainly want to say that our government values the role that pharmacists play in supporting the health care needs of Albertans, and under this new framework Alberta pharmacists continue to be compensated at a rate higher than their counterparts in other provinces. We think that that's appropriate, and we think that the Alberta Pharmacists' Association stepped up to the plate, worked with us to find a way that we can see that 4.3 per cent increase go towards volume increases in the number of medications as well as population increases. That's where the increase should be going. We think that it's important to look at other jurisdictions and find ways to be efficient, and that's exactly what we did.

Dr. Starke: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that every decision made by government must be analyzed in terms of the full economic impact and given that Alberta Health's many highly capable bureaucrats must have projected and provided this minister an increased overall health care cost estimate caused by withdrawing these critical pharmacy services, to the minister: what was that number? How much will health care costs increase because of the cuts to front-line services caused by the new pharmacy funding framework?

Ms Hoffman: Again, I want to thank pharmacists for working with us to keep costs down and making sure that they're sustainable for future generations. The association recognizes the current fiscal environment in our province, the need to reduce the growth of the health care system spending, and that the 12 per cent increase, or in excess of that, that was reached under that member's former government was not fair or reasonable or sustainable in the long term. So what we did was that we sat down and said that we want to make costs more affordable for Albertans, which includes reducing the number of times they need to fill prescriptions so that over a thousand seniors in Alberta are going to be saving more than \$100 in their own pockets. That's because of work that this side of the table did.

2:10

Dr. Starke: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that the increase in overall pharmaceutical cost has much more to do with the increased cost of the drugs and not the druggists and given that award-winning programs like ACE cut ER visits by an estimated 60 per cent, saving countless dollars more than the small amount that this program costs, to the minister. I want to believe that you had no idea that the new framework would have this effect. Will you agree to meet with the ACE program pharmacists to discuss restoring funding to this vital community health program?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My Health officials have already met with ACE, and we will continue to work with them. We are, of course, keen to make sure that we find ways to continue to grow opportunities for people to receive care as close to home as possible.

Dr. Starke: You've given the same talking points for years.

Ms Hoffman: I respect the question. I wish the member asking it would respect the fact that I'm answering it appropriately and saying that we're going to continue to work with them and give them an opportunity to work with us. I will treat you with respect and would like you to do the same for all Albertans, including those who are accessing these services, Mr. Speaker.

Provincial Debt
(continued)

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, this government's wild spending ways have resulted in the province racking up a debt topping \$55 billion this year, ballooning to a staggering \$96 billion by 2023. The cost of servicing the debt: \$3.7 billion a year. This year alone we will spend \$1.9 billion on interest. That is \$1.9 billion that could have been used for front-line services or left with families and their communities. Minister, when there are so many more important priorities, why is your government jeopardizing the future of our children in favour of lining the pockets of bankers and Bay Street?

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

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, it was mentioned earlier that Alberta has the best balance sheet and the lowest net debt to GDP ratio in the country, and it will be that way when we balance in 2023. Just at the end of November I stood up and said that our deficit was being reduced by \$1.4 billion because of the hard work of this side in finding agreements that are better for our labour partners and us, finding people who want to continue to serve Albertans in the best possible way. We're doing it.

Mr. Barnes: Tripling that net debt ratio in just three years is nothing to be proud of.

Given that the minister is a prolific spender and is jeopardizing the future prosperity of the next generation and risking today's economy and given that this government's tax increases have actually produced less revenue and that our minister and our kids are now at the beck and call of bankers and bondholders and given that this government's borrowing not only crowds out private-sector investment in jobs but risks Alberta's future, Minister, when will you stop the reckless spending, stop handicapping our job creators, and focus on balancing the budget?

Mr. Ceci: Mr. Speaker, I'm incredibly proud of the work of this side of the Chamber. That side I'm not so sure about. I can tell you that we're carefully and prudently reducing the deficits. We're making sure that the reckless spending that was left for us by that side comes down. We have cut salaries and eliminated bonuses for the highest paid executives of agencies, boards, and commissions. That side wants to give a \$700 million tax break to the richest 1 per cent in this province. We're not going to let that happen. We're going to continue to prudently bring down . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, given that this government is on track to leave nothing but a legacy of debt, crippling interest payments, and lost opportunity, it is no wonder that Albertans are losing confidence and Alberta families are worried about our future. Given that the greatest legacy one can leave Alberta is to leave it better than they found it and given that the province's books are a catastrophic failure, turning \$13 billion of debt to \$55 billion, headed to \$96 billion before you balance, Minister, aren't you ashamed of your legacy?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, what that side refuses to look at is where the economy is now. Jobs are up in this province, 90,000 mostly in the private sector, as a result of the work of this side. Growth is up, and GDP growth is up by 4.5 per cent. I don't hear that from that side. They're wishing Alberta fails. We're going to continue to stand up for Albertans. Manufacturing is up, restaurant receipts are up, wages are up. I heard from the Leader of the Opposition that wages are abysmal in this province. We're leading the nation in average weekly wages, and we're going to continue to do so because of the work of this side.

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, over the past week I listened to and spoke with many Albertans, and I can tell you that they are not happy with this NDP budget. In their platform the NDP promised a \$25 million surplus by this year. Instead, their five-year plan is to increase our province's debt by a massive 638 per cent of what it was when they formed government. This is shameful. We're talking \$96 billion in debt, and this government is proud of themselves. Minister, Albertans want to know how far in debt this province will go before you finally see it as an intolerable level of debt.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Budget 2018 has many things this province continues to need, and it's an economic recovery we're supporting to make sure it lasts. You know, if that side had its way, we would not have 20 new school projects scheduled to start this year. We would not have the 4,900 construction jobs that come with those school projects. We would have hospital and care facilities that would not get built, and our seniors and others would go wanting. We are doing things like the Calgary green line, the valley line LRT, the Edmonton and Calgary ring roads, and the Peace bridge . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, given that it's still years from now when this government finally plans to balance a budget and that that means spending \$3.7 million a year in interest payments to bondholders and foreign bankers – that's more than the budgets of most government departments, and how many schools is that? – and given that this NDP government's budget does not show an actual plan on how to pay down the debt, Minister, do you have any plan in place to start paying down the debt that will be saddling our children, my children, who deserve at least the same or better opportunities to succeed in life?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we do have a Path to Balance section in this budget, and by 2023 we can do that without firing thousands of people that that side wants to put out of work. We're going to continue to clean up the Conservative waste and carefully find spending control. That side: some years it was 10 per cent operational spending year over year. We are working to get off the resource revenue roller coaster. That side wants to keep us on that by buying tickets on that roller coaster. You know, we have economic recovery going on in this province; that side does not want it to happen.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, given that this government wants to get off the resource roller coaster, yet their budget depends on the pipeline

actually getting built – Albertans deserve a government who can properly manage the province's finances for years to come, and this NDP government is certainly not that – and given that this government's policy choices have made things worse for Albertans and our economy, Minister, we surely hope that the Trans Mountain pipeline will get built, but if it doesn't, how much more debt are you going to put our province into? Surely, please tell me you've considered this.

Mr. Ceci: Mr. Speaker, you know, our path to balance carefully considers everything, and it also considers bringing in 24-hour health care in Airdrie. It also considers new schools in the Airdrie region. We're doing that because we don't want to leave Albertans without health care and education, something that that side doesn't really seem to care about because they want to keep budgets at zero per cent, which is a cut. Those things wouldn't happen in Airdrie.

Economic Competitiveness

Mr. Gottfried: Mr. Speaker, I've just spent the last 10 days diligently consulting my constituents. The message I heard over and over again is that Albertans aren't buying the minister's unbelievable up, up, up, and they are done, done, done with your burdensome and irresponsible debt, and they want you out, out, out along with your job-killing carbon tax. To the Finance minister: can you come clean and admit to Albertans that your debt-loading, tax-burdening policies and fiscal mismanagement are making us and them uncompetitive in the global economy?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, I disagree with the premise of the member's question, that Alberta is uncompetitive. We've seen some historic investments in cities like Lethbridge with Cavendish Farms. We've attracted Amazon to the province. Google opened their first-ever AI lab outside of Europe here in Edmonton. There are an incredible number of great examples of companies that are moving here, relocating to Alberta. They know that we are the lowest taxed jurisdiction in Canada. We have the youngest, smartest workforce. We have incredible postsecondary institutions and a number of strengths to build on. Despite what the opposition says, I'm very proud of our province and the businesses that are here.

2:20

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Gottfried: Mr. Speaker, that bucket has too many holes in it, 34.8 billion, in fact.

Given that roughly 300,000 barrels of environmentally insensitive, foreign-conflict crude, exempt, no less, from upstream and downstream emissions, are coming into Canada per day and given the abject failure of your social licence in winning over hypocritical eco activists and politicians and even your friends and allies in B.C. and central Canada, to the Finance minister: when will you admit that your misguided social licence croquet and all economic pain, no environmental gain carbon tax has failed Albertans miserably?

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think the member is confusing our government with his own leader, who spent 20 years in Ottawa and got zero pipelines to tidewater. I'm very proud of the work that our Premier and our government have done. We've introduced a very strong climate leadership plan, that

has led to the approval of two pipelines, and we've heard the Premier say over and over again that our government will do whatever it takes to get the Trans Mountain pipeline built. Guess what, Mr. Speaker? Mark my words.

Mr. Gottfried: Mr. Speaker, we'll leave the confusion and insults to the other side.

Given that the Premier and her environment minister's social licence in concert with the tepid support from their federal Liberal friends has failed in both influencing their B.C. NDP comrades and in aggressively upholding the Constitution and given that Albertans were promised that the route to carbon salvation was social licence and the highly punitive and now de facto provincial sales tax, to the Premier: how will you explain to Albertans, Alberta businesses, their laid off employees, seniors and nonprofits that they have taken an economic hit for nought and that your costly ideological experiment has failed?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, our government has done more in three years than the previous government did in 44. Line 3 is under construction, Keystone XL has its commercial arrangements done so they can proceed, and Trans Mountain is progressing. We're battling a thousand right now in the courts, with 14 out of 14 court cases that we've won. We're going to continue to fight for that pipeline, and as my colleague said, mark our words. That pipeline will be built.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

School Construction

Mr. Hinkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After decades of neglect by the previous government, our government promised to actually build more than 200 badly needed schools across the province. The previous government announced the number of schools election after election but had no plan to build them. Our government did fund them and is building them. To the Minister of Education: how many of these 200 schools have been completed?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. Certainly, I think it's incumbent upon our society in general and even during an economic downturn to ensure that we build the infrastructure for children here in the province of Alberta, so we've done so since 2015. We have completed 144 projects across the province and certainly made sure that we had the financing in place to get the job done. For so long the previous government would put up a sign that said: future school. The sign would fall down: no school. We've built 144 so far.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Hinkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Budget 2018 announced 20 schools, including Chester Ronning school in Camrose, and we had several hundred parents out for that announcement last week. To the same minister: how are these projects supporting communities and school boards across the province?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, it was great to be in Camrose last week for the announcement of the new Chester Ronning school. We can see that it's not just going to be a

school with walls and bricks and mortar, but the spirit of the community was so evident. A lot of people came there. They went to school there themselves. Their kids were going there. They taught for a career there. Now right across the field there'll be a brand new, beautiful school, not just for learning but as a community centre and as a source of pride for the city of Camrose.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Hinkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The new schools announced this year are a step in the right direction, but we realize there is still more work to be done. To the same minister: what plans are in place to ensure that we continue to build much-needed schools across the province?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you. Certainly, Mr. Speaker, the job isn't done by any means. We have a lot of catch-up in terms of building new schools, modernizations, and so forth. We have lots of enrolment pressures across the province that we need to address every step of the way. For those schools that perhaps are still on the drawing board or where they don't know what school boards are looking for, make sure that you bring the case forward to us, and we will entertain it. Ultimately, our children's future and their education are paramount to our government and to a prosperous future for all.

Thank you.

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

Budget 2018 (continued)

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past week I spent time door-knocking in my constituency, and I met a senior who had a very clear view of this government's budget. His name? His name was Rick Mercer, and he assures me that he is the original Rick Mercer. This Rick Mercer also had something to rant about. I asked him what he would like me to ask the government on his behalf. He told me: tell them to stop spending money they don't have. So on behalf of Mr. Mercer I ask the Minister of Finance: what do you have to say to him and all other Albertans who are justifiably upset with this budget and your lack of any effort to find any sort of savings anywhere in this government?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to Mr. Mercer through our member over there. You know, we have found savings. In this year, the 2017 budget, \$750 million were culled out of the budget, and we are not going to spend those monies again. I asked for discretionary spending back from all of the departments. I reduced the salaries of agencies, boards, and commissions' executives. I froze salaries of government employees that are management and non-union, and we're looking for practical agreements with our labour partners.

Mr. Clark: Well, Mr. Speaker, this budget is incredibly short on details, and the details we do have are based on some pretty optimistic assumptions. Given that no less an authority than noted economist Trevor Tombe said that the Alberta Party shadow budget was far more credible than this government's own plan to balance, my question, again, to the Minister of Finance: why should we believe you, and what happens if you're wrong?

Mr. Ceci: Mr. Speaker, you know, there are some additional validators that I'd like to just bring up for a second. Scotiabank, for instance, says that the deficit elimination detail and Alberta's efforts to slow its net financial debt accumulated are both encouraging. On the capital side, Trina Hurdman from the Calgary board of education says, "We are grateful for this funding to create these new learning spaces." Additionally, on the operation programs, Scott Nye of BioWare says: the budget levels the playing field for us. There are many validators here.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Clark: Well, Mr. Speaker, look, while I sincerely hope the Kinder Morgan pipeline is built, there is absolutely no question that it is at risk, just like every single one of the assumptions this government has made on its plan to balance. Given that Enbridge's line 3 is not a sure thing and given that oil prices are nowhere near guaranteed to meet your estimates and given that corporate and personal taxes are not likely to grow 40 per cent and given that this budget relies on you actually sticking to your budget plans, unlike you have done through every budget so far – that is a lot of if – to the Minister of Finance: have you completed a detailed analysis of what happens if any one or, heaven forbid, all ...

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Ms Hoffman: The member opposite keeps hoping that Alberta will fail. On this side of the House we are using the results that have proven to be effective. The Minister of Energy has toured line 3; it is well under construction. She's right that the approvals are all in line for things going south, and going west, they're also in line, Mr. Speaker. We're going to use the best evidence we have to make the best decisions. The evidence all shows that Alberta wins a thousand per cent of the time on Kinder Morgan. We're going to win a thousand per cent of the time on getting that line built, and that's why it's in our budget. On this side of the House we use evidence and we bet on Alberta, and you can bet that we're going to get that pipeline built. [interjection]

The Speaker: Hon. member. You can almost hear the Easter Bunny sneaking around.

Electric Power Prices

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, this morning my office called the Alberta electricity Market Surveillance Administrator. Will the Minister of Energy confirm or deny that there is an active investigation by the Market Surveillance Administrator against the NDP government due to the government's manipulation of electricity prices?

2:30

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the hon. member across the way understands that when there's an active investigation going on in any matter, it would be inappropriate for us to comment.

Mr. Panda: Given, Mr. Speaker, that the Independent Power Producers Society of Alberta filed a complaint against the Balancing Pool in August because it believes that the Balancing Pool is in contravention of the Electric Utilities Act and is affecting the efficiency of the Alberta electricity market, can the minister confirm or deny that the NDP government is ordering the Balancing Pool to manipulate electricity prices?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I've said many times that we're focused on the priorities of regular Albertans, like ensuring that electricity bills are affordable. That's why back almost a year ago we capped energy bills, to protect families and businesses from any spikes, something that we experienced for many years previous. We told Albertans that we have their backs. Since electricity prices were deregulated under the Conservatives, Albertans have been exposed to a price roller coaster, and that's something that we're working on.

Mr. Panda: Given that the NDP is planning for higher electricity prices with this \$74 million subsidy this year due to generating stations being mothballed and given that the Market Surveillance Administrator agrees with the industrial power consumers association that this action runs against the public interest, why does the NDP insist on playing a shell game with the ratepayers and taxpayers, who are the same people, about the real cost of the changes to the electricity system?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the Conservatives all along have had the wrong priorities. They'd like to take us back to tax cuts for the rich and insider deals that cost Albertans hundreds of millions of dollars. The Conservatives again want to cut taxes; we want to make life affordable for everyday Albertans. They want to keep doing and standing up for insider deals. We've capped electricity energy bills to protect Albertans from those price spikes. Their deregulation policies caused the roller coaster that I mentioned. We're working on that to make bills stable, more affordable, and more predictable.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Long-term Care Beds

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Increasing numbers of seniors just waiting for long-term care now fill 18 per cent of acute-care hospital beds. For Q1 AHS reported 765 acute-care beds held seniors waiting 51-plus days for long-term care spaces. Such mismanagement means that acute-care beds are unavailable for those who really need them. When is this government going to free up hospital beds and save money by providing affordable alternate level of care options for seniors?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud of the fact that on this side of the House we're working to make sure that we have 2,000 public long-term care spaces available to the people of this province, ensuring that Albertans can make sure that they can access the care they need when they need it. In terms of freeing up hospital spaces, they talked last week about how great the '90s were. Well, I remember the '90s. You freed up a lot of spaces by blowing up hospitals. I don't think that that was the right move by the opposition, what they're proposing then. On this side of the House we're going to continue to make sure that we build appropriate supports for people throughout our province and take care of them instead of moving for drastic cuts that would result in things like blowing up hospitals.

Mr. Orr: Blowing up anything is inappropriate language.

Since AHS is already developing an enhancing care in the community plan that will emphasize person-centred care and address gaps and opportunities in residential continuing care and given that small neighbourhood personal care homes already exist and fit this model perfectly, when will this government deliver on the plan for accommodation and alternate level of care delivery by local and neighbourhood seniors' homes?

Ms Hoffman: Well, what was wrong, Mr. Speaker, was actually blowing up a hospital. If you don't remember, it was the Calgary General, and there are definitely plumes of smoke videos that you can see. That was what was wrong.

On this side of the House we've protected important front-line acute-care services, and we're continuing to expand other care in other parts of the community, including a significant increase to home care to keep people home, safer in their own environments, and of course continuing to build much-needed long-term care and continuing care spaces, including in the former Leader of the Official Opposition's riding of Fort McMurray-Conklin. We think it's important for people to have opportunities to age in the communities they helped build.

Mr. Orr: Given that a constituent's father does not need 24-hour nursing but an alternate level of dementia care and given that D., a senior herself on limited income, spends a lot of money and time, an hour and a half driving several times a week, just to help care for her father because there are no suitable facilities locally, will this government incorporate small neighbourhood personal care homes into the plan for enhanced care in the community?

Ms Hoffman: Well, we certainly are continuing to build a number of dementia care spaces, including the one that will be opening soon in Red Deer county, not far off the highway, just to the west, as well as ones that we're opening in Bridgeland and other parts throughout the province. We think it's important to have the care that people need where and when they need it. That's why we've expanded home-care services, that's why we're expanding opportunities for long-term care and dementia care supports, as were mentioned, and that's why on this side of the House we presented a budget that will do that. We'll see what the members opposite do with that budget. I have a feeling that they're going to say one thing today and vote another thing tomorrow.

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

Deerfoot Trail

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The good people of Calgary-Hays and one-third of Albertans that live in Calgary depend on Deerfoot Trail to go to work and to shop and to go home after working and shopping every day. I appreciate – I do – that the Transportation minister has been working with the city of Calgary on a study to determine which improvements are needed for Deerfoot Trail. To the Transportation minister. The study, I believe, is due to be completed in 2019. Is it complete now, or at what date in the future – and I appreciate that it's not 2019 yet – can Calgarians expect to see that final report?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Well, thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I will undertake on behalf of the member and his question to find out exactly when that study is going to be ready, and I'll let him and the House know. But I want to assure him and all Calgarians that we are certainly

taking a serious look at the Deerfoot. We understand the congestion that's there, and we understand that it needs work, but we need to make sure that we have all of the information so that we can make good decisions on behalf of Calgarians and his constituents.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the short-term interim report includes five recommendations, which are out now, and given that there is reported to be no funding at this date to build these five improvements and will not be at least until the land needed to do so is identified and costed out, again to the Transportation minister: on what day do you plan to complete this costing out so that you can then start to decide which improvements are a priority for the government and which ones will have to wait? What date, please?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker. It may come as no surprise to the hon. member that we haven't calculated the precise date on which we will have this information, but I will make sure that when we meet again, I have that information for the hon. member, and I can provide it to him and to the House.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm grateful for the first two answers.

Another little piece of information that the good folks of Calgary-Hays and the rest of Calgary would like is: given that there has been a plan to improve the Anderson Road to Southland Drive portion of Deerfoot Trail for some time now and given that that intersection is perhaps the least expensive to improve and will probably or possibly provide one of the largest benefits per dollar to Calgary commuters as a result of that improvement, can the minister commit to giving that intersection extra attention when he considers the future plans for Deerfoot Trail since it . . .

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Well, thank you very much for the question. I'm not quite sure how he defines extra attention. Does he mean, you know, just reading more carefully, or does he mean more money? But in seriousness, Mr. Speaker, it's important that when we have intersections between city roads, as he knows as a former minister, and provincial highways, it is a joint effort and that conversations need to take place with the city of Calgary and that we need to determine their priorities as well.

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

Agricultural Society Funding

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is home to almost 300 agricultural societies, being supported by more than 65,000 volunteers. Now, last year we heard loud and clear from ag societies, including in places like Lamont, Mundare, Bruderheim, that they didn't know when their government grants were coming or how much they would be for. Of course, part of this is due to the fact that previous governments never ensured that there was stable, predictable funding. To the minister of agriculture: how are you ensuring that ag societies have that stable, predictable funding into the future?

2:40

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Our government has supported the good work that agricultural societies do. While rural Alberta went through one of its most protracted recessions in years, we supported these community organizations. We know that through the hard work of their volunteers, they help to make rural Alberta the rich place that it is. Recognizing this, we are pleased to fund them through the agricultural societies program.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you. Given that ag societies, of course, provide support for critical infrastructure like curling rinks and hockey rinks and that, of course, it creates the support also for this committed group of great volunteers, can the same minister let us know how this longer term funding will allow societies to plan for the future so that they can do that good work and provide great places for people to live in rural Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I was pleased to announce during the recent RMA annual meeting that our government will be providing three years of stable, predictable funding to ag societies. This is a departure from previous years of funding, where ag societies would have to wait to see what they received. For many smaller ag societies this waiting can be a hindrance to sustainable planning. This government values the hard work of our nonprofit organizations, and we do not believe in reckless cuts that would leave them vulnerable.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that agricultural societies provide support for things like Alberta Open Farm Days, local food, and farm safety education, can we also find out from the minister how else you can support the sport and cultural activities that are also provided by agricultural societies in our communities?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Our ag societies are responsible for a wide variety of programming in their communities, from after school activities like skating and baseball to large events that bring neighbours together to celebrate rural Alberta's heritage. These activities are not only fun but help maintain the overall strength and welfare of rural communities. As mentioned previously, we as a government believe in policies and programs that put communities and families first.

Members' Statements

(continued)

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

Support for Immigrants

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Immigrants: they get the job done. That's a sentiment from *The Hamilton Mixtape* and one that I absolutely know to be true. In my time as an MLA it's been my honour to meet, connect, and work with so many communities of people who've come from around the world to build their lives here, just as my father and my mother's family did. They've helped make our province what it is today, and they'll be a driving force in shaping its future.

That's why I've been proud to join them in celebrating so many important moments for their communities at dozens of events with the African and Caribbean communities, celebrations for the Lunar New Year, Filipino and Greek independence days, Vaisakhi parades, Ramadan feasts, oplatek, Hanukkah, and many more. That's why I've been proud to stand by, support, and recognize the many organizations serving and supporting new Canadians in my constituency like Action for Healthy Communities, CANAVUA, the Somali Canadian Women and Children Association, the Africa Centre, OSCAR, IFSSA, SCERDO, the Fukienese Association of Alberta, the diversity centre, and the race and economic equality centre, to name only a few.

I'm also proud, Mr. Speaker, that our government has taken real action to support these communities. We've supported and multiplied their work by providing stable, predictable funding for public services, restoring STEP, and increasing funding for FCSS; funded 40 daycare spaces at the Africa Centre to support new Canadian families at \$25 per day; committed to building a permanent home for l'école À la Découverte, a francophone school that serves mainly new Canadian families; worked to improve diversity and representation on agencies, boards, and commissions; provided funding to support training and mentorship for new Canadian women to become community and political leaders. I've been personally advocating to secure funding to restore Business Link's immigrant entrepreneur support programs, which, though successful, were shuttered by the previous government.

Our commitment to Alberta's cultural communities goes beyond simply showing up to take a photo. We're taking concrete action to support, benefit, and empower them as residents of Alberta and members of their communities so that we can all work together to make life better for all Albertans.

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

Rural Crime Prevention

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The verdict is in. This NDP government does not (a) recognize a crisis when it's occurring and (b) care to address it in a timely or meaningful manner. That's likely why they try to pretend everything is just fine until they can no longer ignore it.

Fentanyl was the first crisis and a deadly one. The NDP were told plenty of times that they needed to deal with it before it got out of control. Its first reaction was to ignore it. Then too many people were dying, so suddenly they reacted. What did they do? They distributed naloxone kits to pharmacies because the NDP had no clue how to help an addict.

Their initial reaction to the opioid crisis was purely reactionary, and now so is their response to rural crime. Mr. Speaker, this crisis did not creep up. There were plenty of stats that confirmed this. If the NDP members were in touch with rural Alberta, they would have known about it. But even when rural residents flooded into this Chamber last fall to plead for government action, the benches on that side were silent. So the epidemic raged on, and it grew.

Then three weeks ago we had a superficial announcement that was going to fix this crisis: 39 officers, which we now know are simply going to be posts from already understaffed detachments, and 10 Crown prosecutors, who don't even come close to replacing the 20 who have recently left. That is not just reactionary, Mr. Speaker; it is smoke and mirrors. Citizens of rural Alberta no longer feel safe in their homes, and this is unacceptable. Public safety and security should be first and foremost on the mind of any government.

Mr. Speaker, our UCP caucus has brought this issue to the forefront for one reason. We want to ensure rural residents can once

again sleep easily at night, and if this NDP government will not do it, then we will.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. S. Anderson: No. I have a bill.

The Speaker: Municipal Affairs. Sorry.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that the Minister of Finance and I look very similar. I know it's tough sometimes. I'm a little younger though.

Bill 8

Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2018

Mr. S. Anderson: Mr. Speaker, it's an honour to rise to table for first reading Bill 8, the Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2018.

In the past 10 years Alberta has seen an increasing number of severe natural disasters, which brought significant impacts on personal lives and property. Unfortunately, we expect this trend to continue, and we all need to be better prepared for these types of devastating disasters.

In the face of these challenges Albertans have consistently pulled together to respond. Our municipalities have shown incredible leadership, and our first responders have demonstrated expertise and bravery. We have learned from each of these disasters and recognized that there are changes to our legislation we can make to ensure we are all prepared for the disasters we will continue to face.

Mr. Speaker, I am tabling this bill today so that hon. members and stakeholders will have a chance to review the legislation. My ministry will be seeking feedback from municipalities, law enforcement agencies, first responders, First Nations, and Métis over the next few months on the bill and on development of a municipal regulation. The intent is to hold debate on this bill until we return to the Legislature in the fall session with any amendments needed to reflect this input and to debate the bill.

Our government is committed to making Albertans' lives better. Bill 8 will result in a safer, more prepared and resilient Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 8 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today on behalf of the Leader of the Opposition. The first tabling is in regard to a document he referred to in his speech this morning, which is the NDP's 2015 campaign document, which clearly shows that there was no carbon tax in it as well as that at this time we would be at a \$25 million surplus, not a \$9 billion deficit.

The second tabling, Mr. Speaker, is another document that the Leader of the Opposition referred to this morning in his speech, which was a *Globe and Mail* article from November 24, 2015, in which the Premier was quoted as saying that none of the carbon tax would be used for general revenue to pay down debt, which we now know is where the carbon tax went.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table five copies of the Automobile Insurance Rate Board's 2017 annual report for the year ended December 31, 2017.

The 2017 annual report of the Automobile Insurance Rate Board was prepared under the board's direction and must be tabled in accordance with the Insurance Act, Mr. Speaker. As an independent body the rate board regulates rating programs of automobile insurers doing business in Alberta, with the goal of ensuring that insurance for automobiles is fair, accessible, and affordable to Albertans. The annual report provides a concise description of the rate board, its roles and responsibilities, its accomplishments for the year, and five years of statistics.

2:50

This is the third full year that the rate board has operated under the Enhancing Consumer Protection in Auto Insurance Act, which came into force July 2014. This legislation expanded the rate board's responsibility from the regulation of basic automobile insurance coverage to include the regulation of additional automobile insurance coverage and the provision of consumer education.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Any other tablings?

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, I rise to table two news stories. The first story is from MarketWatch, that indicates the electric car company Tesla is just four months away from bankruptcy. The second story is from Zero Hedge, showing that bonds for Tesla are now rated riskier than investing in Ukraine.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I have one tabling this afternoon. I rise to table five copies of Perspectives on Climate Change Action in Canada: A Collaborative Report from Auditors General, March 2018.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Acting Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Ms Gray, Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal, pursuant to the Land Surveyors Act the Alberta Land Surveyors' Association report of proceedings of the 108th annual general meeting, April 20 and 22, 2017, and proceedings of a special general meeting, September 27, 2017.

On behalf of the hon. Ms Hoffman, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, pursuant to Standing Order 53(2), a letter, undated, from the hon. Ms Hoffman, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, to Mr. Cyr, chair, Standing Committee on Public Accounts, responding to the report respecting Better Healthcare for Albertans, a report by the office of the Auditor General of Alberta, May 2017, 29th Legislature, Third Session, October 2017.

The Speaker: Hon. members, the daily Routine is now concluded. Pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(5)(b) the House stands adjourned until tomorrow afternoon at 1:30.

The legislative policy committees will convene this afternoon and tomorrow morning for consideration of the main estimates. This afternoon Resource Stewardship will consider the estimates for Indigenous Relations in the Parkland Room, and Families and Communities will consider the estimates for Justice and Solicitor General in the Rocky Mountain Room. Tomorrow morning Resource Stewardship will consider the estimates for Treasury Board and Finance in the Rocky Mountain Room, and Families and Communities will consider the estimates for Seniors and Housing in the Parkland Room.

The House stands adjourned.

[The Assembly adjourned at 2:53 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(5)(b)]

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Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, April 4, 2018

Day 11

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (UCP)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (NDP)
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Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (NDP),
Deputy Government Whip
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)
Vacant, Fort McMurray-Conklin
Vacant, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake

Party standings:

New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 25 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent: 1 Vacant: 2

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, April 4, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Chair: Good afternoon.

Let us each reflect. Let us each work together to create a province where we produce food in a world where many walk in hunger, for hope in a world where many walk in fear, and for friends in a world where many walk alone.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

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

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's really my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the students, 49 in the public gallery and 47 in the members' gallery, from Simons Valley school in Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill. I'd like them to rise, and I'd also like to read out the teachers and chaperones that are here today with them: Andrew Cull, Laurie Reeve, Colleen Nabata, Charlene Mudry, Vanessa Blyth, Charlene Buenting, Michelle Kenney, Jana Blake, Maria Pullen, Jenna Watts, Angela Shaw, Zoey Jachdeva, and Chad Watts. I've had the pleasure of visiting the school on a number of occasions. They always have lots of really great questions about the Legislature. I'd like us all to extend the warm welcome to our guests.

The Speaker: Hon. members, are there any other school groups?

Seeing and hearing none, the Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to stand and introduce to you and through you three active members of the Edmonton-Mill Woods constituency: Bhavna Ashta, Yogesh Ashta, and Yash Sharma. Mr. Sharma is well known for his strong community work within my constituency of Edmonton-Mill Woods and is a local business owner.

I'd also like to introduce Manjula Sachdev, who is the cousin of Mr. Sharma and is visiting from India. I wish you all a wonderful and, hopefully, warmer visit in our beautiful province of Alberta. Thank you for coming to visit us in the Legislature Building. I'd like to ask all my guests to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Ms Alison Poste. Alison is an emergency response professional who takes a very keen interest in yesterday's introduction of Bill 8. She's also very active in her community and very committed to the democratic process, having run in the last fall's municipal election in ward 4, as well as being co-organizer of the Edmonton's women's march. If I could ask Alison to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce the parents of one of my political staff, Pam and Rob Hoben. Pam and Rob are visiting Alberta all the way from Grand Bay-Westfield, New Brunswick. Pam is a nurse at the Saint John regional hospital, and Rob is retired. They're here visiting their son John, who works in my office as one of my ministerial assistants. During their visit they'll be travelling all over our beautiful province. Please join me in welcoming them to Alberta by giving them the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Mrs. Schreiner: Mr. Speaker, I have two sets of introductions this afternoon. It is my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all the members of the Assembly several guests today. Here representing the Central Alberta Economic Partnership are Executive Director Kim Worthington; Kim's son and chief of staff, Alex Worthington; and CAEP's administrative assistant, Vanessa Mariani. CAEP, now celebrating its 20th anniversary, supports regional collaboration and was a pilot project from which the regional economic development alliance grew. REDA serves in empowering member communities to advance sustainable regional economic development at the local level. They do important work all across our province. I ask my guests to now rise and receive the traditional welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Please continue.

Mrs. Schreiner: Mr. Speaker, I wish to introduce my sister Cindy Bourk. Cindy has been my confidante and best friend and one of my greatest supporters. There is no greater strength than that of your family, and I'm so thankful and deeply indebted to her for her ability to always be in my corner. I ask the House to please give Cindy the traditional warm welcome of the House.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Dawson Rowe and Tania Denroche-Rowe. Dawson is a high school student from Airdrie who just completed the Ride of the Mustang, raising money for kids with cancer in and around our area. He is a staunch Conservative, here to witness the proceedings of the House today. Please greet them with the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the House the incoming student executives here on behalf of the Council of Alberta University Students. I had the pleasure of meeting with them yesterday to talk about various issues from affordability to student employment and mental health supports on campus. They're seated in the public gallery, and I'd ask them to rise when I call their name: Mount Royal University President-elect Andrew Nguyen and Vice-president external elect Amanda LeBlanc; from the University of Lethbridge Students' Union, President-elect Laura Bryan and VP external elect Victoria Schindler; from the University of Calgary Students' Union, President-elect Sagar Grewal; and finally, from the Student's Association of

MacEwan University, VP external elect Andrew Bieman. Let's give them the warm welcome of the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Jenny Nguyen. She's a fourth-year accounting student at the U of A participating in the tri-level internship, where she interns with all three orders of government: federal, provincial, and municipal. She's completing her provincial internship with Economic Development and Trade's finance and admin branch. She plans to pursue her master's in accounting upon completion of her degree and expressed appreciation and enjoyment for her opportunity with my ministry. I'd ask her to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Health and Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you two incredibly strong women from the Kensington clinic in Calgary. I ask that they rise as I introduce them. They are Celia Posyniak and Jennifer Berard. Kensington clinic focuses on providing reproductive health services to women, trans, and nonbinary folks, including essential abortion services. Celia, the executive director, started that clinic almost 30 years ago and has dedicated her life to ensuring that women have choice and access to the medical services that they need. Jennifer is an administrative assistant, and her work focuses on ensuring that women feel supported and safe. Please join me, colleagues, in showing our support and gratitude and welcoming our guests.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce a group of advocates with the Canadian Cancer Society Alberta-Northwest Territories division. April is Daffodil Month, a time to focus attention on advocacy, life-saving research, education, and support for people living with cancer and to honour those who have passed away by wearing a daffodil. The daffodil has come to be seen as a symbol of strength and courage in the fight against cancer. The support and compassion of dedicated volunteers like our guests means so much not only to those affected by cancer but also their families and friends. I'd ask that Chelsea Draeger, executive director, along with Alexa, Haley, Charlotte, Maya, Palwasha, Chu Yang, Lorelee, Rhianna, Christine, Oksana, Pamela, Angeline, and Dr. Mercer please rise and receive the warm welcome and appreciation of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

1:40

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Grande Prairie Regional Agricultural and Exhibition Society

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In February Evergreen Park once again hosted the Growing the North Conference, the largest economic development convention in a region that also takes in northeastern B.C. The park is able to host the Growing the North because it is home to the Entrec Centre, the biggest full-

featured exhibition complex north of Edmonton. The centre is just one of many amenities at Evergreen Park, which also offers banquet halls, concert venues, agriculture and energy sector services, agriculture pavilions, equestrian amenities, a fairground, a casino, and one of the best race tracks in the country.

Mr. Speaker, many of my colleagues may be surprised to learn that this bustling cultural, recreational, and business hub is operated by our local agricultural society. The Grande Prairie Regional Agricultural and Exhibition Society was founded in 1910, and that year it held its first farm fair and rodeo. Since then, decades of volunteer boards have evolved Evergreen Park into a world-class venue which attracts half a million visitors a year while still retaining its traditional agricultural and community-based roots. The economic spinoffs to our region are immense, with a 2014 study estimating the park's financial impact at an amazing \$43 million a year.

Mr. Speaker, just like the rest of Alberta's 300 agricultural societies, Grande Prairie relies on provincial funding for a firm fiscal foundation from which to launch its operations. The society's only request is that the province continue providing the stable and predictable base funding it has long appreciated, and it will continue to spin it into much greater value for its community, the region, and Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

Refugee Rights Day

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. April 4 marks Refugee Rights Day in Canada. This day commemorates the historic 1985 Singh decision, which changed the fate of many refugees seeking asylum.

Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms protects everyone's right to justice when life, liberty, and security of the person are at stake. This entitles refugee claimants to an oral hearing in accordance with the principles of international law and fundamental justice.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to say that our country is and has long been a destination for refugees fleeing all sorts of injustice. Refugees have come to Canada fleeing religious and racial persecution, revolution, and war from Yugoslavia, Chile, Thailand, Syria, and many, many other countries. In our province wonderful groups like Refugee Alberta help newcomers to our country who land here. Recently Syrians fled their country, and many have settled here with great success, starting businesses, getting involved in the community, and enrolling their children in our schools. This is a record I'm sure all Canadians can be proud of.

However, I'm not so sure when it comes to the record of the leader of the Conservative Party. He tweeted about one refugee's "perfect, unaccented English" as if speaking with an accent is somehow shameful. He stripped refugee claimants' access to life-saving health care, creating an outcry from medical professionals across the country. Taken with concerns surrounding how the member handled the temporary foreign worker program, this is deeply concerning. The member opposite has a history of working to undo our country's great reputation.

Mr. Speaker, it is my hope that all Albertans will take this day to reflect on how we can be more welcoming to those fleeing injustice and how we can work to strengthen our just, caring society.

Thank you.

United Conservative Party

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, in less than a month Albertans from across the province will come to Red Deer to participate in the

founding convention of the United Conservative Party of Alberta. While many of the attendees are long-time politicals, there is a steadily growing number of political neophytes. Let's call them Average Albertan.

Since the NDP took power, Average Albertan has seen their income tax increased, their business tax increased, a carbon tax introduced and increased. They have seen red tape and bureaucratic interference increase exponentially, and they just don't feel as optimistic as they once did. Average Albertan is tired of seeing more and more businesses shuttered and their proprietors move across the border, where they're taxed less.

The Alberta advantage isn't what it used to be. Here's what Suncor said in February: we're having to look at Canada quite hard; the cumulative impact of regulation and higher taxation in other jurisdictions is making Canada a more difficult jurisdiction to allocate capital in. Here's what ATB Financial's chief economist said last month: people are making less money, and job prospects are still there, but they're at lower-paying opportunities.

When a guy in a blue pickup arrived in town talking about uniting common-sense and free-market Albertans, average Albertans found themselves more and more interested in what he had to say. Soon enough average Albertans bought a membership, were attending meetings, found themselves elected to their local CA board, and even submitted a couple of policy proposals on reducing red tape and bringing back the Alberta advantage, all of that to say that an unprecedented number of Albertans from all stripes and backgrounds will be gathering in Red Deer from May 4 to 6 and forging a new way forward, one where all Albertans can be successful and included.

We invite all Albertans to get involved, come to Red Deer, and share their ideas on building strong families and communities. Albertans everywhere want Alberta to be a leading partner in a Canada that works, a province that protects the financial future of the next generation, and an economy where all Albertans can succeed.

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

Daffodil Month

Ms Woollard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first memory of Daffodil Month with the Canadian Cancer Society was many years ago when as a teenager I volunteered to distribute daffodils to shoppers in the old downtown farmers' market in Edmonton. I knew we were collecting money for a good cause, but I really had no understanding of cancer and its impact. It wasn't until a dearly loved uncle was diagnosed with and finally succumbed to lung cancer that I realized the terrible impact and damage cancer inflicts on people suffering from the disease and those near them. Since that time I've learned more about cancer prevention, treatment, and research and the Canadian Cancer Society.

After my uncle's death I learned that many cancers can be prevented, that early diagnosis can be a lifesaver, and that a diagnosis of cancer need not be a death sentence. The outlook for those diagnosed with cancer has improved because of a number of factors, the most important of which was the establishment of the Canadian Cancer Society in 1935. Over time support for cancer research through the Canadian Cancer Society has grown, and it now supports thousands of researchers through the administration of more than \$1 billion in cancer research funding.

Over the past 85 years incredible progress has been made in the fight for life. The Canadian Cancer Society is a national community-based organization whose mission is the eradication of cancer and the enhancement of the quality of life of people living

with the disease. Its vision is to create a world where no Canadian fears cancer. This organization has made an immense difference in many Canadians' lives, and their work through supporting research will continue to impact Canadians' lives into the future.

Daffodil Month is a time to remember what can be accomplished when people work together to achieve goals.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Partial Upgrading of Oil Sands Bitumen

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill 1, the Energy Diversification Act, is based on the recommendations from the Energy Diversification Advisory Committee to expand Alberta's downstream oil and gas sector. Among them is a plan to increase partial upgrading of oil sands bitumen here in Alberta. Partial upgrading will increase the value of that bitumen being shipped through pipelines like the expanded Trans Mountain pipeline or in 60,000-barrel unit trains leaving from the oil-to-rail terminal near Bruderheim in Alberta's heartland. It's going to help Alberta's bitumen producers to get a better price for their products, and it's going to help Albertans to extract more value from the resources that we own through increased jobs, economic activity, and tax revenues to support important public services like health care and education.

Recently I toured the oil-to-rail terminal at Bruderheim and learned a lot about the potential to massively increase value for Albertans by applying made-in-Alberta technology to bitumen and other heavy oils before being loaded into the Kinder Morgan pipeline or onto unit trains. Partial upgrading will increase the capacity of the pipeline by at least a third and would markedly reduce the need for dilbit. In addition to lowering shipping and refinery costs, partial upgrading would also mitigate some of the environmental concerns that come with dilbit. It would remove insoluble substances in the bitumen such as asphaltenes, which lead to reduced flow in the pipeline and which complicate rail car filling and emptying. The asphaltenes can further be processed into paving material, shingles, and waterproof coatings, among others.

1:50

These are just some of the exciting Alberta technologies that the Energy Diversification Act will foster. Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud to be part of a government which promotes adding value to our resources here at home and creating good, family-supporting jobs for Albertans while doing everything possible to protect the environment and our future prosperity.

Oral Question Period

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

Government Spending

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP MLA for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater said, "We dropped our 2018 budget last week. It's looking pretty balanced." He goes on to say that the NDP budget was "able to curb spending more or less." This is a budget that has seen a 16 per cent increase in spending under this NDP government, has an \$8.8 billion deficit in it, and is well on its way to a hundred billion dollars in debt. If this is curbing spending, I'd hate to see what's not. When are the Premier and the NDP ready to take spending seriously?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our budget is focused on supporting families, it is focused on continuing to invest in our health care and our education system, and it's focused on continuing the good work that it has already achieved in terms of stimulating economic growth: over 90,000 jobs just last year, exports up, manufacturing up, retail sales up. These are things that happen when you invest in Albertans rather than making them pay for the mistakes of the past. We will not do that.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, what this budget is focused on is giving bankers money. Debt servicing this year alone will be \$1.921 billion, which is more than 19 government departments' total expenditures. Debt servicing between 2018 and 2024 will be \$17.63 billion. That could help a lot of families, a lot of constituents of mine and yours. Again, will the Premier stop dodging the question and stand up and tell us: how high? How up, up, up will she go? When will she get spending and debt in control in our province?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. One of the things I was very proud about with respect to the budget that we delivered was that we did something that no other government has ever done, which is that we actually mapped out a seven-year plan going forward. No other government has ever provided that much detail. That's in contrast to the Official Opposition, which also, unlike previous Official Oppositions, hasn't bothered to ever introduce a shadow budget or, in fact, describe to Albertans what they would do differently. In fact, we are moving forward with a reasonable, stable, thoughtful path to balance in 2023 while preserving those important services that Albertans rely on and continuing our work . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, proud of the NDP's budget? This NDP government projected that they would be in surplus right now. Now we find out that four years from now they're going to be a hundred billion dollars in debt. I certainly wouldn't be proud of that. The question, then, is this. It's going to be a 646 per cent increase to the debt under this NDP government. Are the Premier and the NDP proud of that?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What, as I said, we are proud of are the 20 new schools that were announced in this year's budget, moving to ensure that our kids are actually learning in safe and modern places; the continued investment in health care; the 1,400 new long-term care spaces; you know, investments in places like the area of the MLA for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, where we're seeing additional investments in health care, which, of course, the member opposite has long asked for. We're very proud . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.
Second main question.

Carbon Levy and Seniors

Mr. Nixon: Well, I'm glad the Premier brought up Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. We have a seniors' centre inside Sundre, which has been discussed in this place many times, and the Premier's office told those seniors to go fund raise to pay for their

carbon tax, told those fixed-income seniors to raise their rates to be able to attend their seniors' centre. I have repeatedly asked her: is it the position of your government that seniors fund raise to pay for your carbon tax?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is the position of our government that we have invested in seniors' services quite significantly over the course of the last two and three years. We've moved forward on our election commitment to open more long-term care beds. We have provided grants through Energy Efficiency Alberta to nonprofit organizations. We have provided rebates through the climate leadership plan. Pretty much every senior is eligible for them, so many seniors actually come out ahead. At the same time, we are continuing to have the backs of Albertans as we move forward on a responsible path to balance.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, under this government we're now seeing carbon tax rebates being clawed back 30 per cent on seniors – 30 per cent – and then when asked about it, this government's minister for seniors says: that's okay; they still have 70 per cent. You've got the Premier's office telling my seniors to fund raise to pay for the carbon tax and now taking away 30 per cent of the rebate. Again, is it the position of your government that seniors should fund raise to pay for your carbon tax? Yes or no?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, as I've said, it's the position of our government that we need to continue to fund those services that support seniors, that support their health care, support their accommodations, and support the many services that they receive each and every day through the government of Alberta. Were we to embark upon the path that the members opposite suggest, where we give a \$700 million tax cut to the top 1 per cent, claim that we can balance the budget, and then mislead people about whether or not that would have any impact on front-line services, the people that would be among those hurt the most would be seniors. We won't let that happen.

Mr. Nixon: Well, let's talk about misleading. This NDP government misled Albertans. They campaigned without telling anybody about a carbon tax that they were going to bring in. They told Albertans that the carbon tax would not be used for general revenue and for operations. But what happened? We now know from the budget that it is. Misleading Albertans? It's pretty clear who's misleading Albertans. Again to the Premier: is it your position that seniors should fund raise to pay for the carbon tax? Yes or no? It's the third time we're asking it.

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the things that I think we do need to be very honest with Albertans about and that I think the members opposite should start doing, to go back to the point that I was just making, is that you cannot give a \$700 million tax cut to the top 1 per cent, cancel the carbon levy, balance the budget, and not impact front-line services. That is not true. They are not being clear with Albertans about the consequences of their ill-prepared plan that they won't actually come clean to Albertans about, and quite honestly it is time for them . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, what is clear is that this government told seniors in my community to fund raise to pay for the carbon tax. This government, this Premier's own office, said that and, in fact, told the seniors in that community that there was no money available for them and that maybe their centre would just have to shut. These are seniors in our community that won't be able to go to the centre. The Premier has not apologized for that statement. I'm assuming that maybe that's true. Is it the government's position that seniors should fund raise for the carbon tax? Are you going to continue to watch seniors' carbon tax rebates be clawed back under your watch? If you're willing to throw seniors under the bus, who else are you willing to throw under the bus?

The Speaker: Hon. member, I was in error. That was your third main question. I identified it as second supplemental.

The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On this side of the House, the government side, we stand up for everyday Albertans. That's why we are so proud to have a track record of investing in students when they show up to school, investing in health care where it's much needed. For example, we worked to ensure that long-term care beds were available in Sundre, and the mayor said: thank you for this shining example of how government should work with Albertans; this is a successful story for our community that I'm very proud of; I want you to be able to share in that pride because without you it wouldn't have been possible. That's because we have a government that's investing in the people of this province.

Mr. Nixon: Well, I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that the mayor of Sundre was extremely disappointed that this government told seniors in his town to fund raise for the carbon tax. While the Deputy Premier just rose in this House and tried to divert from the question, the question is very simple. Is it the NDP government's position that seniors should fund raise to pay for their carbon tax? Yes or no?

Ms Hoffman: No, Mr. Speaker. That's why we have a rebate that's sent out to Albertans who make less than a certain value in terms of income. That's why we made sure that about two-thirds of Alberta families get this rebate. Most seniors are eligible for it. We think it's important for them to have the ability to be able to live in their community, including lodges, and for those lodges to be in good working order. That's why we're also investing in lodge programs and other types of supportive living and community-based care options. We stand up for the people of this province. We're not pushing for deep, ideological cuts that would leave them out in the cold.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thanks for finally giving us an answer. Hopefully, the government will apologize to the seniors of Sundre for telling them to fund raise for their carbon tax.

Now, the Deputy Premier brings up the rebate. That's an interesting thing. Under this government's watch we now know that seniors in Alberta are having their rebates reduced by 30 per cent, and all the minister of seniors will say is: ah, it's okay; they've got another 70 per cent. Well, Mr. Speaker, it's not okay. When will this government start really standing up for seniors and stop playing games in this Assembly?

Ms Hoffman: We're incredibly proud to stand up for seniors every day in this government, Mr. Speaker. That's why we've made sure that if you have a certain level of income that is below a threshold, you're eligible for this rebate, and that's why two-thirds of Albertans

actually do receive this rebate. It's not a barrier to accessing supportive living types of accommodations. That's why we're incredibly proud that we continue to put this money in the pockets of Albertans. We also acknowledge that lodges do have some costs that they need to address and that they do take a portion to ensure that they can have efficient operations as well. We're proud of the fact that we're sending rebates to constituents throughout the province, including the town of Sundre.

The Speaker: Thank you.

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

2:00

School Design and Construction

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. North-central Calgary has lacked robust middle and high school infrastructure for a while now, and that means thousands of students must travel outside of their communities for their education. Schools with integrated community centres, libraries, recreation and child care facilities represent sustainable investments to support vibrant communities now and in the future. To the Premier: how many of the schools that were recently announced will be designed with community and complementary activities in mind?

Ms Jansen: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, you know, one of the great things we have in our Infrastructure department is a wonderful group of people who design schools. I have a chance to work with them on a pretty regular basis, and they really are amazing people. They're creative, they're inclusive, and they spend a lot of time talking to educators about what should go into a successful school build. I'm very confident that when the opportunity comes for us to build a school, whether it is an elementary, a middle school, or a high school, we take into account the needs of the community, we're nimble about the design, and all the way through the process we take the community into . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

First supplemental.

Ms McPherson: Thank you. Evanston is one of the fastest growing communities in Calgary and has been for five years. Elementary schools like Kenneth D. Taylor are core schools for 300 students, with 300 more in portables, which can be moved to another school when they aren't needed any longer. The government's budget cuts funding for modular classrooms from \$50 million to \$25 million next year to zero for all of the following years. To the Premier: what's the plan to ensure that diverse and growing communities like Evanston continue to have flexibility as their populations change?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, you know, when we talk about the need for schools, we're talking about infrastructure, and when we talk about infrastructure, we're talking about something that you can't build based on buttons. You need money for it. It's amazing to me that the folks across the aisle consistently stand up and tell us to do some compassionate belt-tightening except when it comes to an infrastructure project in their area. Now, I'm absolutely willing to sit down and talk to anyone about an infrastructure project they want to talk about, but I'll tell you that it takes an investment. That's what we're doing right now in our budget.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Ms McPherson: Evanston has a Catholic elementary school and a CBE elementary school, which both opened in 2016 and still don't

have playgrounds. The community has long identified a need for a CBE middle school. This is at the top of the CBE priority list, yet the recently announced schools included an additional Catholic elementary school for the community. Can the Premier explain why this decision was made? It seems at odds with the community's demographics and needs.

Ms Jansen: Well, you know what, Mr. Speaker? I am delighted to have a sit-down with the hon. member and have a conversation about how she can support us in making sure that we show our public support for the infrastructure build in this province. In 2015 the Premier announced a capital plan that was almost \$30 billion. That's transformational infrastructure for this province. As we go forward, we're continuing to build that. But you know what? You have to support us in that build and not complain when you feel that the bill is too high. It doesn't work both ways.

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

Calgary Winter Olympics Bid

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Over the past few days out at the doors in Calgary-Currie or on the phone I've heard and spoken with constituents who are expressing concerns over the Olympics in Calgary. Whether they are for or against it, they have a shared opinion that there must be a plebiscite on the Olympics. If we do have a plebiscite – to the hon. Minister of Culture and Tourism: will you support an Olympic bid if Calgary does not have a plebiscite first?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Culture and Tourism.

Miranda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Our government committed \$10 million to explore a bid, but we have been very clear that any additional dollars above the \$10 million to submit an official bid must include meaningful public engagement, including a plebiscite to assess public support for an official bid.

Thank you.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that you've met with IOC officials, what have they told you about reusing our older infrastructure for a possible Olympics?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Miranda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I met with IOC and COC officials, and they have told me that their vision includes one where we use existing infrastructure in order to keep the costs down. We're going to continue having conversations with our partners, both in the federal government and the city, going forward.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: if a bid is not successful, what will happen to the current Olympic facilities that would have received an upgrade from a successful bid?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Miranda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Calgarians and Albertans are very fortunate to still have the use of infrastructure, facilities, the legacy of the '88 Games. In fact, 31 out of the 57 medals won in the

last Olympics were from athletes who trained here in the province. We want to ensure that Calgarians and Albertans still have use of and access to the facility, and that's why our government invested \$10 million to refurbish the sliding track at WinSport.

Thank you.

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

Hospital Emergency Room Wait Times

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The colossal waste of EMS time spent in the emergency room waiting to transfer their patients, roughly 650,000 hours out of service in 2016, will not be solved by more ambulances and more paramedics. This is a hospital ER problem, and Alberta Health Services' negligence is costing over \$20 million per year just in salaries. It puts patients and communities at risk. But hospitals now have a standard in the United Kingdom, a transfer time of 15 minutes, one-quarter of our median transfer time. To the minister: given that more ambulances and staff will not solve this risky and wasteful practice, what is AHS going to do to solve the ER wait for transfers?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The member is right about one thing, and that is that there is a problem with capacity in many of our hospitals. That's one of the reasons why we're working to expand the community and paramedicine program, so that paramedics don't always need to bring patients who don't need to be in a hospital to a hospital. That's why we're expanding the number of long-term care beds and other types of acute infrastructure, including the Calgary cancer hospital, in municipalities where we know that there is a backlog and that people are waiting in hospital rather than in the community in a more appropriate setting or in an acute-care setting. That's also why we are working to expand community-based health care and making sure that people can get care in places other than emergency rooms.

Dr. Swann: Mr. Speaker, the United Kingdom and Israel have solved the problem. In a few minutes they transfer patients, because they have staff there and they have space there, to the nurses on the wards to take care of, in the hallway if they need to be. Why do they have to stay in emergency rooms and depend on these EMS workers that should be out on the road serving other people?

Ms Hoffman: A fair question, Mr. Speaker, and one that I asked. The answer simply is that for years there was an infrastructure deficit in this province caused by the previous government that failed to build the adequate space, including long-term care, supportive living, and acute-care spaces, in various places throughout our province. I don't want to simply move people from one stretcher to another stretcher. We need to make sure that we have people in the appropriate places, that the folks who are in hospital in acute-care settings that shouldn't be there have somewhere safe to live that's appropriate, whether that be home-based care through home care that we've expanded or through long-term care. That certainly is one of the big areas of priority and a big area of action for this government.

Dr. Swann: Will the minister resolve to learn from these other countries' ER solutions and make sure that we end hallway waits within this year? Yes or no?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. If it was possible to cut them by a quarter within one year, we certainly would be very eager to do that. We have looked at those models in other jurisdictions. One of the big changes is that they've expanded community-based health care, which our government has taken as a very serious initiative. They've also got the appropriate number of spaces in other care facilities so that those beds that have acute-care patients in them that don't want to be there and that aren't supposed to be there have somewhere else to be. It takes time to build long-term care, supportive living, and expand home care, but those are certainly priorities and pillars of this government rather than deep cuts that are being proposed by the Official Opposition.

Carbon Levy Economic Impact

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, despite the government's own rhetoric, here is what Albertans have received in return for the \$96 billion in debt and a 67 per cent increase in the carbon tax. First, the percentage of unemployed Albertans who are out of work for over a year has doubled, going from 8 per cent to 16 per cent, and the average number of weeks Albertans were unemployed last year was the highest it has been since 1976. To the minister: instead of unprecedented levels of debt and making life more expensive with the carbon tax, why won't your government recognize the full, costly, and devastating impacts of the carbon tax and scrap it?

2:10

Mr. Ceci: You know, Mr. Speaker, the whole story is that the GDP in this province grew 4.5 per cent last year. It is poised to lead the nation again this year and the year after that. I don't know where the hon. member gets his information, but clearly jobs are up in this province, GDP growth is up, small-business confidence is up, wages are up, et cetera, et cetera, including the communities of Edmonton and Calgary. Calgary is the fastest growing, GDP-wise, prairie city this year and next year. Things are looking up.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Barnes: Just go talk to Albertans. Given that this government gives with one hand while taking even more with the other and given that when I speak with Alberta businesses and entrepreneurs, what they really want from this government isn't subsidies but is to scrap the carbon tax, reduce unnecessary regulations, balance the budget, and return the Alberta advantage and given that the Calgary Chamber of commerce reports that 73 per cent of businesses surveyed reported that their costs will increase due to the carbon tax, again to the minister: will you finally start listening to our province's job and wealth creators and scrap your economy-shrinking carbon tax?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, Alberta led the country in GDP growth in 2017 and again in 2018, we have created 90,000 new full-time jobs, and certainly we have moved forward with pipeline approvals that have certainly laid the foundation for an economic recovery in our energy sector. Of course, we got those pipeline approvals because of the climate leadership plan. Certainly, we are moving forward. The economy is moving forward. We do not think that you go forward by looking in the rear-view mirror. That's an awfully dangerous way to drive down the road.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, given that those numbers are from our own ATB and given that the government's priority is to diversify

the economy and given that the government is now 16 per cent more reliant on nonrenewable resource revenue than when they took office – this despite racking up \$96 billion in debt and costing \$3.7 billion in annual interest – to the minister: did your well-intentioned plan to diversify the economy fail, or was it just a hypocritical ploy to take more taxes from families, communities, and local Alberta businesses?

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know what? I'm proud of the tax credits that our government introduced to help diversify this economy, and I want to remind the members opposite that Bill 30 passed unanimously in this House a little over a year ago. Our capital investment tax credit has leveraged \$1.2 billion worth of investments in the province. But what I can't wait to hear is to see the member explain to his leader that he supports our plan and not his leader's plan, which calls for the end of these tax credits.

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

Environment and Parks Minister's Meetings

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask the minister responsible for climate change if she knows a gentleman called Mr. Dan Woynillowicz, if you know him, and if she met him during her recent visit to Vancouver.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order, please.

Hon. member, I'm not sure exactly where your question was going. Is it intended to address the government policy question rather than just the name of an individual that a member may or may not know?

Mr. Panda: It is, Mr. Speaker. Can you reset the time? I'll ask it again.

The Speaker: I'm not sure I will, no. Would you keep going?

Mr. Panda: Okay. My question is to the minister of climate change. A few weeks ago she met a gentleman called Dan Woynillowicz in Vancouver. My question is if she talked about . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. You get two more supplementals. You get an opportunity to – Minister, anybody?

Ms Phillips: Well, that extended question-and-answer period led me to go through my mental Rolodex. I do believe that I have met such an individual in my life. I meet a lot of people, Mr. Speaker, and certainly I met a lot of people at Globe in Vancouver. It was a very productive time in terms of discussions with the Vancouver business community, the clean tech sector, and others.

The Speaker: First supplemental, hon. member.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will address her mental remembrance by submitting the evidence from her own Twitter account.

But my question is whether the minister knows that Mr. Woynillowicz was involved in an infamous 2008 Rockefeller Brothers Foundation project between wealthy U.S. foundations and Canadian activists to land lock Canada's oil sands?

The Speaker: Hon member, I'm going to let you go. Please be seated if I could ask. I listened to the question, and I'm trying to ask

if you have a question related to government policy rather than a name association process. If other ministers would like to respond to the question, please proceed, but I don't think, hon. members, that this is – again I remind you that it's addressing government policy that this issue is rather than name association.

Mr. Nixon: Point of order.

The Speaker: Point of order noted.

Ms Phillips: Okay. We're truly through the looking glass now, Mr. Speaker. I meet a lot of people in the run of a day. There are a lot of Canadians out there, and I have met many of them. I don't know where we're going with this, but it sounds like we're heading down the road of a ridiculous drive-by smear of an individual, and I'm just not going to dignify it.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I will give you one last opportunity to focus on policy if you could.

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, given the Government House Leader's defence of the issue surrounding the minister's meeting with the mayor of Rocky Mountain House – this would count as a meeting, whether she remembers mentally or not – and given the NDP's disastrous appointment of Karen Mahon and Tzeporah Berman and given her close association with Greenpeace, does the minister feel that it is appropriate to meet with individuals that helped conspire to sabotage our energy sector?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Ms Phillips: Mr. Speaker, I believe that we are talking about a number of folks that I ran into and talked to at the Globe sustainable business forum, including the Vancouver board of trade, including the B.C. Chamber of Commerce, including a number of other individuals in the business community. I met with a number of companies as well, went to a women's luncheon. Perhaps that is objectionable to the hon. member. I met a lot of folks at Globe. I'm not going to apologize for that.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

School Construction Priorities

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Minister, the fiscal mismanagement of this government is well known, and it's led to some very, very difficult choices like who will get dollars to build schools, and, well, there has been zero accountability to my community. Given that Chestermere's existing schools will be at 107 per cent capacity by 2020 – the fact is that we're the second fastest growing city in the country – and given that the people of Chestermere are fully aware of this government's fiscal mismanagement and given that every dollar that these schools have is eroded by the carbon tax, could the minister please elaborate on the criteria that were used to pick the schools that have been given the go-ahead?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, it's perplexing that my friends across the aisle spend so much time talking about reducing spending while at the same time presenting me with a long list of infrastructure demands. It has actually already topped \$2

billion, billion with a "b." So I appreciate a conversation ... [interjections]

Well, there's your new tone, Mr. Speaker.

2:20

The Speaker: The day started out so nicely. Every day is a surprise. I'm going to say to go to your first supplemental.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What's perplexing is that I actually wasn't asking about spending. I was asking about the criteria that allows infrastructure projects to go forward. There's a huge difference, just in case you're curious.

Given that we're heading towards a \$96 billion deficit and given that this government now has limited dollars and given that the government is spending \$2 billion a year in debt repayment service costs alone instead of building much-needed infrastructure, how can the minister justify spending billions of taxpayer dollars on debt repayment instead of much-needed schools?

Ms Jansen: Well, Mr. Speaker, I am curious, so I, in fact, would ask a question of the member. If you are so concerned about infrastructure in your community, sit down and work with me and support our infrastructure plan instead of complaining every time we want to build something. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Second supplemental.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you. Well, it would be helpful if the government could admit that it is their fiscal mismanagement that has actually left communities like mine without the needed schools and portables and expansions. And when you're on this side of the House, you can ask me all the questions that you want. I can't wait.

Given that Chestermere-Rocky View families have been directly impacted by this government's 67 per cent increase in carbon tax and \$2 billion a year in debt repayment – it's a whole lot of schools, Minister, and it's a whole lot of teachers – and given that these wasted dollars could be spent instead on needed infrastructure, what does the minister ...

The Speaker: Thank you.

I would ask that the volume of responses stay lower. I am having difficulty hearing the question. I'm not exactly sure where it was.

Ms Jansen: Well, I'd like to thank the member for pointing out that I'm not on that side of the House, and you know why? I'm not on that side of the House because they're not too fond of progressives, people who actually want to build infrastructure. Now I'm on this side of the House, and that's what we get to do. So who's in the better position? I think it's me.

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

Calgary Southwest Ring Road Construction Concerns

Mr. Sucha: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Spring is here – well, sort of – and we're about to enter the thick of construction season and further development of the Calgary southwest ring road. After attending the most recent open house about this project, I have some questions I would like to ask, that came from some stakeholders in my area. Now, I know the Member for Calgary-Bow has been a strong advocate for mitigating the impacts of dust from the project to neighbouring residents by bringing these issues to the minister's attention. To follow up, to the Minister of Transportation: what is being done to ensure that the air quality in the summer is safe and

not disruptive for the quality of life of people living near the project?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

Ms Jansen: Why, thank you. It's nice to stand up again in the House. We've applied strict controls on our contractor who is operating the gravel operation in that area, including the installation of tarps, sprinklers, dust suppressants to the crushing operation. We've had some wonderful advocacy in that area on this particular issue. Construction is a nuisance. We find that all the time in Infrastructure and in Transportation. The result can be noise and dust issues. However, all efforts are being made to minimize the construction-related impacts to the work that's being undertaken right now in the transportation utility corridor.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that another issue is around light pollution – the astronomy community has indicated that certain filters can block out specific light temperatures while others cannot – to the same minister: what is being done to ensure that light pollution from the street lights is not an issue and that the kelvin level is set so that the colour can be filtered out using telescopes for recreational or scientific purposes?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, there's a lot of thought that's been put into this. In fact, lower temperature LED lights are being used to minimize the amount of blue light in the area. Light is going to be directed downward on the highway from 15-metre poles. Those are going to be used to minimize the spread of the light. Cut-off fixtures are going to be used to minimize light spillage and reduce glare, and there's no high-mast lighting along highway 22X. That's going to help us avoid light flooding.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that concerns are being raised around the interaction with wildlife, to the same minister: what is being done to reduce the impacts on wildlife to ensure the park areas around the road are at their most pristine conditions?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Jansen: I thank the member. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the section of the southwest Calgary ring road where the road crosses the park area, the bridges have been designed with wildlife passages. That was really important in that area. We have a substantial amount of wildlife, and I'm glad the member is concerned about that. Wildlife fencing is being installed to guide the wildlife to these crossings. No recreational pathway is going to be completed in that area, further separating the wildlife from human interaction. Along the wildlife crossing our contractors are installing native trees, grasses, shrubs, providing cover for animals who are crossing the road. And Alberta Environment and Parks compliance . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The Member for Airdrie.

Carbon Levy Rebate and Seniors' Expenses

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier is on the record saying that every penny raised by the carbon levy will be rebated back to Albertans. However, we know that seniors in Alberta will

have to fork over 30 per cent of their carbon tax rebates just to pay their rent. Given that the minister is fine with it because they still have 70 per cent left over, how much of the carbon tax rebates can be taken from our seniors before this minister thinks it's a problem?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our government is very proud of the work that we have been doing to support seniors in this province, everything from our affordable housing strategies to continuing to make investments, including making sure that our seniors are able to be part of the 60 per cent of Albertans who get a carbon levy rebate, making sure that we are able to take action on climate change and rebate to 60 per cent of Albertans an amount that helps them cover those costs and move forward our province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Pitt: Well, Mr. Speaker, only 70 per cent of the carbon tax rebates given by this government are being left in seniors' pockets while 30 per cent is leaving them, and this government doesn't care. My question is: has this government done an impact assessment of the 67 per cent increase in the carbon tax rebate on our senior citizens?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Approximately 260,000 seniors are eligible to receive up to \$300 annually from the carbon levy rebate. We also protected the seniors' benefit so that seniors have up to \$280 a month when they really need it. Of course, the Conservatives would cut the seniors' benefit, making life harder for low-income seniors.

We continue to work for seniors. We protected more than \$800 million in seniors' benefits over the last two years. We're very proud of that, Mr. Speaker, and we will continue to work with seniors to make life more affordable.

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, this government can pretend to care about seniors and social programs all day long, but Bernice Westfall, an AISH recipient from Edmonton, says, and I quote: what are we supposed to do; we're not going to be eating very healthy; I'll tell you that much; I don't think the government thought this through properly. Will this government at the very least admit that their carbon tax is punishing seniors in our province?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are also investing in energy efficiency audits for housing management bodies. We're strengthening public services that seniors count on. We're ensuring that AISH benefits are there for those who need it. We're working to make life better for everyday families. Contrast that with the folks across the way who would give tax cuts to their wealthy friends and make low-income seniors pay for it.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Highwood.

Health Services Procurement Process

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For democracy and government institutions to function, there must be trust, trust from those who are elected to serve and trust from those who assist in delivering public services. Alberta Health Services – and I quote from their website – “is Canada's first and largest provincially, fully-integrated health system.” A big part of delivering those services is achieved by securing high-quality suppliers through a

public procurement process. My question is to the Minister of Health. Can she explain to the House Alberta Health Services' legal and policy obligations as to how it ensures that 22 billion of public dollars is managed to the highest standards of fairness, openness, transparency, and accountability?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I'd be very happy to table AHS's legal frameworks that they have in that regard, and I will do that either later on today or tomorrow.

But I do want to say that on this side of the House we absolutely believe in public health care. We want to ensure that it's here for this generation and for future generations. We know that the Conservatives have attempted it before, and a month from now we'll hear about their new plans to privatize health care. On this side of the House we're making sure that we have efficient, effective public delivery. We'll just wait and see, Mr. Speaker. I have a feeling they're going to be pushing big cuts and big privatization.

2:30

Mr. W. Anderson: My second question is to the Minister of Health given that she has the authority to overturn a procurement award either through the application of policy or otherwise made by Alberta Health Services. If not, how was she able to stop the DynaLife award in its tracks?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There were certainly opinions that were done. I think the member is asking about a lab process that was under way when government changed. We were very clear in the platform that we were going to end experiments in privatization, that we were going to work to protect and promote public health care. I'm incredibly proud that we did that and that we've moved forward with plans and that a site has been secured for a new public lab right here in the city of Edmonton.

Mr. W. Anderson: Well, my third question is to the same minister. If established Alberta Health Services had breached its policies by running a procurement which did not meet those standards, what would she do about it?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of the fact that we have a good, collaborative working relationship and that we are continuing to develop effective ways to invest in and protect public health care. Again, I'll be happy to table those guiding documents. I'm confident that they're on their website, but I'll be very happy to present them in this House to all members. If the member has a specific concern he'd like to raise, I'd welcome him to do so. In question period we try really hard not to deal with hypotheticals. We talk about government policy, and I'll tell you that I know the opposition's policy on health care. It's deep cuts. They've proven it in the past. They'll be arguing for it again at their convention, and they argue for these deep cuts and privatization every day in this House.

Physician Locum Services in Rural Alberta

Mr. Schneider: Mr. Speaker, in the town of Vulcan there are currently just five doctors that are practising at the local clinic. Only three are available to provide full, on-call coverage for the emergency room on weekends. One of them only covers ER during the week, and the other, who lives 50 miles away, doesn't cover those shifts

at all. The community has requested several times for locum coverage due to the lack of ER coverage. Minister, the community would like to know if the criteria for locum services can be based on the number of physicians available to be on call rather than simply based on how many physicians practise in that community.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I do work with AHS to ensure that they have the appropriate coverage for their hospitals, but I'll be happy to raise that question yet again on behalf of the member. We do certainly welcome people to work throughout the province, including a variety of locum opportunities. One of the things that I love about rural health care is that most of the rural practitioners live in those communities, they're part of them, and they step up to the call to help one another, including covering times, whether it's a bake sale at the school or covering important emergency room times at the hospital. Again, if there's a specific question about this that you'd like to follow up on, I'd be happy to do that outside of this House.

Mr. Schneider: Well, given that on-call emergency coverage from a doctor 50 miles away is not a possible solution to this critical emergency coverage and given that three doctors cannot possibly provide the coverage on weekends, especially if any of them are on vacation or away for other reasons, and given that in this current situation a doctor taking a few days off has to pay a locum out of his pocket for coverage, Minister, will you consider a change in the criteria for locum services based on the availability of doctors that cover emergency services rather than how many doctors just practise at the community centre?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you from my background, being trained as a teacher, that if teachers want to take time off that isn't part of the scheduled year, they do pay for their own substitutes. There isn't such a thing as being able to take additional time. I understand the question that's being asked and will certainly look into it.

Again, the previous question was about being prudent with spending. We do have a significant budget, and we're proud of the work that we do to protect public health care. Now you're asking me to spend more money. Your colleague was asking me to spend less. It would be really nice if you guys figured out what day of the week it was and what you were going to call on us to do in terms of government policy.

Mr. Schneider: I call that a cop-out, Mr. Speaker.

I guess I'll make this very clear. They have five doctors. One lives 50 miles away and doesn't cover emergency services. One doesn't cover emergency services on the weekend because he's over 55. Minister, why is this arbitrary cap on locum services so inflexible that common-sense solutions can't simply be dealt with by the government directing AHS and the AMA to work together with rural doctors so they will know how many shifts local doctors can and will cover in their local ERs, thus ensuring that the AMA will know with certainty how many locums, if any, are required?

Ms Hoffman: Well, Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we're proud to provide stable, predictable funding to health care. That includes making sure that we have the right practitioners. We've worked with RPAP to expand their mandate so that it's looking at additional health practitioners in addition to physicians. We're going to keep doing this work with local communities to make sure

that we have the right care in the right place and by protecting the services that Albertans count on.

I can tell you that you can't cut your way out of having staffing shortfalls. The members opposite are constantly calling on us to have deep cuts, to go back to 2015 spending limits. The other parties are talking about billions of dollars of cuts as well. You can't do that and increase access.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Fish Populations in Northeastern Alberta

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Fishing is an integral part of the way of life in northern Alberta. In recent years many Alberta anglers have rightly become concerned about the closure and restrictions on our lakes and streams. For my constituents this is a serious issue. With the 2018 fishing regulations recently released, confirming the further expansion of closures and restrictions, to the minister of environment: will you commit today to directing your ministry to create a plan to fully reopen our lakes in northeastern Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member is quite right that fishing and angling opportunities both in tourism and for local economic development are very, very important to northern communities, as they are throughout the province. That is why we take a science-based approach to population numbers and study what the recommendations are going to be every year for a number of fish species and so on that may be subject to angling in any given year. We have seen a recovery in some walleye populations, and we have also seen an expansion of those . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
First supplemental.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that one of the main concerns driving closures of our lakes and streams is the maintenance of healthy fish populations and given that the Cold Lake fish hatchery has been a source of fish stocks for lakes across Alberta since 1984, will the minister consider stocking our struggling northeast lakes with walleye from the Cold Lake fish hatchery?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we review our fishing regulations every year for opportunities just like the hon. member flags for us here, and we're certainly willing to take those suggestions onboard. There are a number of folks who have brought us suggestions around walleye populations. What I will say to the hon. member is that what we didn't do this year was close stream angling opportunities in about four or five different areas. Instead, we're going to focus on habitat restoration and recovery because we don't believe that anglers should have to pay for 40 years of mismanagement of the fisheries.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Second supplemental.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Instead of closing streams, you closed lakes.

Given, Mr. Speaker, that cormorants are devastating Alberta fish populations and given that over a thousand residents of Alberta have petitioned the government to address the cormorant problem

within northeastern Alberta and given that the province has engaged in targeted culling of cormorants in the past, will the minister deem the invasive species a pest to protect Alberta fisheries?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I will commit to doing is taking a science-based approach to our fisheries management. I will commit to ensuring that we have stable, predictable funding for our fish and wildlife officers, for our conservation officers, for our operations staff, for our local regional staff, who are out there every day doing the hard work of protecting the environment and making sure there is something to fish and something to hunt. Drastic ideological cuts will not help and, in fact, will hurt the communities that the hon. member purports to represent.

The Speaker: We are at Calgary-Hawkwood.

Correctional Worker Safety

Connolly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A few months ago I had the eye-opening experience of visiting the Calgary Remand Centre with the Minister of Labour. When we asked corrections officers what their one ask of government would be, they exclaimed that they needed a full-body scanner. To the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General: is there any plan to expand the full-body scanner pilot program to include the Calgary Remand Centre in order to ensure the safety of my constituents?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for raising this very important issue. We were proud to announce a pilot project to use a body scanner in the Edmonton Remand Centre and to determine how effective that scanner would be in contributing to overall safety. I don't want to speak before the results are announced, but it seems to be having a very good impact. We'll continue monitoring that closely and looking to see whether that's a tool that ought to be utilized in other places.

Thank you.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Connolly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that I have heard from numerous constituents in my riding about the need to protect workers from potential exposure to opioids and given that this is especially true for front-line workers like corrections workers, to the same minister: what protections are in place for workers who may be exposed to dangerous opioids like fentanyl and carfentanyl?

2:40

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for another important question. One of our priorities across government is to ensure that all workers can go to work and return home safely. In correctional facilities AHS health care staff are on-site and equipped with naloxone. Corrections officers are also trained in detecting fentanyl and other illicit substances. They have a number of tools available to them, including thorough examination for weapons and other items that pose a safety risk as well as opiate drug screening, drug dogs, and searches. The health of those workers . . .

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

Connolly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister.

Now to the Minister of Labour: what has been done to ensure that Alberta's correctional officers are supported in their workplaces and supported once they retire?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I enjoyed the opportunity to speak with correctional officers with the member asking the questions. Every Albertan has the right to go to work and come home healthy and safe at the end of the day. The safety of staff, inmates, and visitors is paramount in our correctional centres. Our government has always stood with our front-line workers, including peace officers, and we will continue to have their backs. That's why last session we passed legislation to ensure that we have safer workplaces, and we made sure correctional officers will have presumptive coverage for PTSD. Unlike the members opposite, we know that having their backs means investing in supports rather than making big cuts to front-line services.

Members' Statements (continued)

The Speaker: Hon. members, I'll just apologize to the member. There was a disconnect in terms of the script.

The hon. Member for Highwood.

Okotoks Water Supply

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. An urgent issue affecting the residents of Okotoks, that has been brought up and postponed time and time again due to this government's inefficiency, is the challenge of a devastating water shortage in the community. Since 2015 municipal representatives and I have urged this government to collaborate to help fix the shortage of water that has only been precipitated by the rapid and dramatic growth in the community over the past decade.

We've sent letters and brought up critical issues in this House year after year. The prebudget water pipeline proposal that was required was sent to the Premier, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Municipal Affairs, and the Minister of Transportation. This project has been shovel ready for almost three years now, but due to the inactivity and denial of this government our community is unable to move forward with critical infrastructure projects. An inability to attract investors or encourage and establish businesses is in essence stifling the growth of my community.

This government has been aware since 2002 that the town of Okotoks has taken very aggressive environmental action pertaining to conservation and the management of their water resources. They also know that due to their efforts, they've been recognized by various agencies and associations. Just recently Okotoks town received the prestigious FCM sustainable communities award, but it seems these environmental stewards have not been recognized for their efforts and have had repeated barriers presented to them each and every time from this government. This government is playing games by changing the rules and moving the goal posts. They haven't recognized this community for their efforts to comply with this government's wish list.

This government has received sufficient funding for exactly these types of water projects from their federal counterparts, yet these funds have not yet been allocated from the federal clean water and wastewater fund. This government is obligated to provide Okotoks with the resources they not only deserve but desperately need.

Mr. Speaker, I'm wondering if this government understands that water is still deemed a necessity to life.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise, and on behalf of my colleague the hon. Minister of Health I would like to give oral notice of a bill for the Order Paper, that bill being Bill 9, Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act.

Thank you.

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table a current story from the *Financial Post* that shows that renewable energy companies, despite supposedly favourable Canadian taxes, subsidies, and incentives, are divesting their Canadian investments and moving south of the border to invest in the U.S.A. due to tax reforms undertaken by that country. I have the required copies.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to table some petitions from pharmacists across the province petitioning the government to reinvest at least 50 per cent of savings anticipated from the generic drug cost reductions resulting from the five-year agreement recently negotiated between the Pan-Canadian Pharmaceutical Alliance and the Canadian Generic Pharmaceutical Association into front-line pharmacy services and programs to ensure the delivery of better health care for Albertans.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three tablings. One of them is a tweet and photograph of the minister of environment taken on March 14, 2018, meeting with Dan Woynillowicz, one of the global conspirators against Alberta's pipelines and refineries, who has done his part to ensure Alberta's oil remains landlocked.

The second tabling, Mr. Speaker, is a document entitled The Tar Sands Campaign, produced by Michael Northrop, program officer of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, July 2008. On page 25 commences the slides of Dan Woynillowicz, who worked at the Pembina Institute in July 2008, calling to stop pipelines and refineries, and met with the Minister of Environment and Parks last month in Vancouver and conspired against Alberta's energy sector.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of a document outlining the brutal cuts made to staff, long-term care during the Klein years in response to the UCP members questioning this government's long-term care commitment.

Thank you.

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

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have an e-mail from a constituent that he asked me to pass on, and he has some advice for the government on how to deal with their current negotiations with British Columbia on trying to get the pipeline approved.

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

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table this petition that I received into my office. It's specifically asking the minister of environment to review the policy of using tags or shutting down lakes altogether. It's very disappointing to see that there is no apparent science-based approach being used to do that.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Calgary-Foothills, you have another?

Mr. Panda: Yeah. That is the third tabling, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the sections of the Government House Leader's defence of the minister of environment that pertain to the definition of what is a meeting, as taken from *Hansard* on March 21, 2018, in reference to a point of privilege over whether or not . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, you don't have to read the whole thing. That matter has already been dealt with in this House. Please give it so that it can be distributed.

The hon. Member for Highwood.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to table the requisite number of copies of the Alberta Health Services procurement policies regarding the DynaLife decision.

The Speaker: Are there any other tablings?

I believe we had at least three points of order. The deputy government – no; the Opposition House Leader.

Point of Order

Restrictions on Oral Questions

Mr. Nixon: Yeah, not the Government House Leader although very soon I hope we're on that side of the House so that we can get some better decorum. [interjections] I know, Mr. Speaker, it's disappointing. I think that's what we're going to talk about today.

The first point of order I rise on is 23(h), (j), and (i). It's in regard to an exchange that took place between the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills and the minister of environment, Mr. Speaker. The government at that time, I guess, appeared to have not liked the line of questioning that was being raised, like they are right now, the deputy whip. [interjection] I do have the floor. Thank you.

2:50

The Speaker: Yes, you do.

Mr. Nixon: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

They began to try to shout down the member while you were trying to decide if the question was relevant to government policy.

Let's first talk about whether it's relevant to government policy. The individual whom the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills brought up in that question – he has now tabled the documents – certainly has extreme views towards the oil sands, which would fall definitely under government policy. But putting that aside, the question itself – and I have it in front of me, Mr. Speaker – talks about the oil sands, about policies in regard to land locking the oil sands, which the individual the Environment minister was meeting with has stated that he believes in. The next supplemental after that talked about Tzaporah Berman, Karen Mahon, who were appointed

to the oil sands advisory group by the NDP government, certainly something to do with government policy. So, one, I would contend that it was government policy, but, second, we continue to see that the government, particularly the further we go into this sitting – I don't know if it's the polling numbers; I don't know what it is – continues to try to shout down our members as they ask questions.

It's one thing for you to make a ruling, Mr. Speaker. See, that's an example right now of that happening. It's disappointing. You are making a ruling and interacting with the Member for Calgary-Foothills, and they're yelling things.

I'm going to give you a couple of examples. We're going to talk about this in another point of order shortly, too, the minister of postsecondary yelling at the Member for Calgary-Foothills: are you dumb, are you stupid, did you come to work prepared? It's not helpful, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. member, let's speak to the point of order.

Mr. Nixon: I'm speaking to the point of order. So my point of order is, Mr. Speaker, that, one, it was government policy unless the oil sands are not part of this province now and unless the NDP oil sands advisory group is not part of the government. Lastly, if you would have the government stop abusing and victimizing our members.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. members.

The Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm almost not really sure what to say in response to this one. Let's begin with the collateral attack on things said by the Minister of Advanced Education, which were, incidentally, not said. I have the benefit of sitting directly in front of the member. I don't know if they're talking about today or yesterday or sometime 17 years ago, but that's certainly not what's at issue. I'm not really sure what this game is that they're playing in terms of putting things on the record.

The hon. member was speaking just now, and someone may have shifted or coughed or something, and he's referring to it as shouting down our members, Mr. Speaker. He's trying to essentially take advantage of the fact that the microphones fail to pick up other things that are going on in the room by creating things that were never said. You know, I think the members are probably glad that the microphones don't pick up those matters because certainly some of the things they were saying . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, to the point of order.

Ms Ganley: Well, I think, Mr. Speaker, that when they rise and launch a series of collateral attacks that have nothing to do with the point of order, I'm entitled to at least respond to those, and in this case this has been a persistent course of action on their part.

But to get to the point of order, essentially the member is asking whether the minister met someone. Well, possibly she did, Mr. Speaker. I was out door-knocking on Sunday. I met many people. I don't happen to remember every single one of their names off the top of my head, and it's not in any way relevant to government policy that I spoke with someone. In fact, I think it's probably a good thing that our ministers get out of this place and go out there into the province, into the country, especially at a time when we're trying to convince other members of the country to allow us to put a pipeline to tidewater because it's absolutely critical. I think it really behooves us to go out and meet with people, and I don't think that it has the first thing to do with government policy.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Hon. member, you have something substantive to the point of order additionally to mention?

Mr. Clark: I think it would be a welcome change to say that in fact I do, Mr. Speaker. I'd appreciate a few moments.

The Speaker: I will be waiting with bated breath. It must have some substance to it.

Mr. Clark: I do. I'm going to start where I think every good point of order should start with, and that's a citation from *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules & Forms*, sixth edition, section 410(6). I'm going to argue, frankly, in favour of the point of order and the point I believe somewhere in there that I think the Opposition House Leader was trying to make. In talking about the conditions and precedents for Oral Question Period, section 410(6) says, "The greatest possible freedom should be given to Members consistent with the other rules and practices." I think in this case we then look at section 410(10), "The subject matter of questions must be within the collective responsibility of the Government or the individual responsibilities of Ministers."

Now, I think that, perhaps, is where the dispute arises on this one, as to whether or not a meeting the minister may or may not have had with a particular stakeholder in British Columbia is relevant to her portfolio. I would argue that it is given what I understand of the person the minister apparently met with, who has a very strong opinion about a matter that is important to this province, that is within the purview of her ministry of environment. I do think it is within the realm of public interest that Albertans know whether or not the minister met with that person, and perhaps Albertans could draw their own conclusions about what that means one way or the other.

I do think that in this case the question is relevant, and I would just supplement my point by referring to *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition. Page 507 really just repeats – I'll start with 508, actually, really just repeating the point that members should be given the greatest possible freedom in putting questions forward. Page 507, I suppose, is a good reminder to all of us that Oral Question Period is "often an intense time, [and members] should be on [their] best possible behaviour." I would suggest that that maybe extends to arguments around points of order on occasion. Mr. Speaker, I think in this case I believe the member's question was in order, and I would argue in favour of this point of order.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, let me just firstly read a copy of the Blues.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask the minister responsible for climate change if she knows a gentleman called Mr. Dan Woynillowicz, if you know him and if she met him during her recent visit to Vancouver.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker . . .
Order, please.

Hon. member, I'm not sure exactly where your question was going. Is it intended to address the government policy question rather than just the name of an individual that a member may or may not know?

I think that at that stage there were a number of exchanges, but let me just say that the record shows that the member was given a chance to explain. His two supplemental points, supplemental questions afterward allowed for the member and for that matter the government to respond to the question. I was having great difficulty with both the supplementals to determine whether or not the matter

was addressed to government policy. In that regard, the responses I heard – and I did give the opportunity. I don't believe in this instance it was a point of order. Therefore, I urge you, hon. member, when you are framing the question, I think you need to get it more focused on whether or not the policy matter is at stake rather than whom members met at a certain event.

I think we have a second point of order. The Opposition House Leader.

Point of Clarification

Mr. Nixon: I'd like to go on 13(2), Mr. Speaker, and ask: is a meeting with a minister and somebody related to government policy relevant to government policy?

3:00

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Sure, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to speak to this. Obviously, that would be dependent on the circumstances. [interjections] But I think that this time that we have in question period is a chance for all members to hold the government to account, and even though I am in government, I think that that's . . .

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect . . .

Mr. Clark: This is 13(2).

Ms Ganley: Sorry. Did you want a response?

The Speaker: Please proceed.

Ms Ganley: Okay. I think the point is that this is a chance for members to hold the government to account in terms of their policies and procedures, not a chance to catch ministers out, to say that you were walking down the street or you went to an event and someone came up and said hi. That's not relevant to government policy, Mr. Speaker. The fact that our ministers are out in public is a good thing.

The Speaker: Is there new information that's going to be added to this very complex public policy matter that we are dealing with here?

Mr. McIver: Yes, Mr. Speaker. The new information is that the hon. Opposition House Leader made a question to you under 13(2), that the Speaker shall explain, and rather than the Speaker explaining, the Speaker had the Deputy Government House Leader explain. I guess that leads me to ask the question: why did you ask the Deputy Government House Leader to answer when it was your turn to answer?

The Speaker: Well, hon. member, I determined, maybe incorrectly, that the point that was being raised by the Opposition House Leader was, in fact, his second point of order, so that was a disconnect. I thought that's where you were going.

Notwithstanding that, hon. member, though, under 13(2), as I understand it and as we've discussed many times before, I answered your question on the first point of order, and that explanation stands. So there has been a ruling. I've made it. To have another one seems redundant.

Are we now at your second point of order?

Mr. Nixon: Sure.

The Speaker: Great.

Point of Order Remarks Off the Record

Mr. Nixon: I rise under 23(h), (i), and (j), particularly “uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder.” Now, Mr. Speaker, I would like to refer to two other pieces of *Hansard* that I think will help you with what I have to raise. They’re very brief.

The first is from November 8, 2017, page 1833, in which you say, Mr. Speaker:

On another related matter, I would like to remind members to give respect to all members by not just allowing questions to be asked but also to be responded to without interruption. Earlier this week there was an inordinate amount of heckling directed towards the Minister of Infrastructure. I reviewed the incident, and while I did not intervene at the time, I certainly will intervene in the future if that kind of behaviour persists and is continued.

The next day, Mr. Speaker, November 9, 2017, on page 1864 of *Hansard*, you did intervene, and I agreed with you. You said:

Hon. members, you may remember – I believe it was yesterday – that I reminded you that in any event where one single member in this House was victimized by a group and not treated with respect, I’m going to call and name some people. So please respect each other and just don’t as a massive group in any way detract them from their job

or not allow them to do what they are supposed to do in this place, whether they’re government or opposition. You said that, Mr. Speaker.

Now, when the hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View was asking her questions today, Mr. Speaker, the government, way overboard, was trying to yell her down. I’ll give you some specific examples.

The minister of postsecondary – and I want to stress, Mr. Speaker, that we’ve been here a few times on the minister of postsecondary, and the government in the past has just risen and said that that did not happen. I suspect that if that happens, you’re going to see member after member after member who watched this happen rise and say that. The minister, a minister of the Crown, said to the hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View: are you dumb, are you stupid, do you come to work prepared, and that is a dumb question. He got extremely aggressive, making hand gestures and those types of things. I don’t know what they meant, but it was inappropriate. The House then continued to try to yell her down as she tried to do her job in this place. It is totally inappropriate.

It’s certainly inappropriate for a minister of the Crown to continue to do this inside this Assembly. But, beyond that, Mr. Speaker, it’s disrupting this place, which is against the standing orders. It is time for the government to stop acting like this and to start acting appropriately in this Chamber. It’s embarrassing. It needs to stop, and the hon. member does not deserve it.

The Speaker: I’ve heard enough, hon. member. Please be seated.

Ms Ganley: Mr. Speaker, obviously, I’m not able to get information on this specific incident right now. Again, I would state that I would find it surprising that something could be heard across the House when I, sitting immediately in front of him, could not hear it. I also believe that the minister answering was the Minister of Infrastructure, which means that her microphone would have been directly beside the Minister of Advanced Education and presumably would have picked up such a thing.

Mr. Speaker, I mean, obviously, I’m not in a position to respond. I agree with the general principle that folks should be polite on both sides of the House. I do know that sometimes the temperature rises in this place. I didn’t hear the comment. I don’t know that the

comment was made. Their complaining that people are yelling things across the House while they’re yelling things across the House seems a little bit overboard. I didn’t hear it. I don’t know if you heard it. [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. members, please.

Continue. I couldn’t hear. Did you have an additional point?

Ms Ganley: No, Mr. Speaker. I think my additional point is that we’ve been around this bend several times. Perhaps if the members would let us know what the issue is when we could still try to resolve it, that would be more helpful than just making things up after the fact.

Mr. Nixon: Whoa, whoa, whoa. Mr. Speaker, the minister just called me a liar in this Chamber. It’s inappropriate.

The Speaker: Hon. member, when all is said and done – and I’ve said it many times, many, many times – in this Chamber it’s the responsibility of individual members, firstly, and secondly it’s with respect that the House provides for the Speaker in this institution to make the decision as to whether or not business is going to be addressed and if we can move on.

In this instance I did not hear nor did I see the statement that you allege was made. That’s just the way it is, hon. member. I did not see it.

Hon. member, would you please be seated for just a moment? Thank you.

In this case I see no point of order as well.

Hon. Member for Airdrie, did you have an additional new piece of information?

Mrs. Pitt: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I would like to say that I witnessed the hon. minister insult . . .

The Speaker: Good. Hon. member, I didn’t realize that was the . . .

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, may I . . .

The Speaker: Please be seated. Please be seated.

I made a ruling. The important part is that I didn’t hear it or see it. Decision closed. Done.

I would like to go back to the point made by the Opposition House Leader. It may well be wrapping up, but I’ll just tell you two things that I’ve noticed since we’ve returned. The first is that today there were a number of comments, either in debate or in Members’ Statements, that referred to individual members of this House, to the point that the Opposition House Leader addressed the November ruling. That still stands, as far as I’m concerned, and I think that you need to be looking at what you continue to do, making comments about individuals rather than policy matters.

There seems to be an escalation in the allegations and accusations about comments that are being made and that time may be being used to rehash, repeat, with some colourful language, in terms of the way and manner in which the allegation is made. I hope that that does not continue, and I would urge your side of the House to do the same.

I’m lost. Are we at point of order 3?

Point of Order Imputing Motives

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise under 23(h), (i), and (j) again, particularly under (i), “imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member,” as well as “makes allegations against another Member.” At the time I raised that point of order, the Minister of

Infrastructure, in response to the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View – this will definitely be in *Hansard* – said that the member provided a detailed list of infrastructure asks to the minister's office. That list was not asked for. That did not in fact take place, and by saying in question period to the member that they did something that they did not in fact do will certainly create disorder, certainly puts motives on that member that, quite frankly, just aren't true. It never happened, and I think the minister should withdraw and apologize for that comment.

3:10

The Speaker: Go ahead, hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't have the benefit of the Blues, but what I heard the minister say or what I recall the minister saying was that your side has submitted a list of asks, and that is true. Whether in question period, whether through meetings with ministers and municipal officials and members of the opposition, whether through letters written in, they have submitted a series of asks in terms of infrastructure projects. I think it's reasonable for the Minister of Infrastructure to point out that at the same time that they call for us to cut the Infrastructure budget, they also call for a number of projects, in this case I believe she said over \$2 billion worth. It was in reference to asks from all over that side of the House, and I think we can provide evidence of that if it's necessary.

The Speaker: I, too, have not had the opportunity of the Blues. I will read them, and I will make a ruling at a future time.

Orders of the Day

Consideration of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech

Ms Sweet moved, seconded by Mr. Malkinson, that an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows.

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

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

[Adjourned debate April 3: Mr. Westhead]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's an incredible honour and a privilege to respond to Her Honour's Speech from the Throne. I'd like to begin by thanking Her Honour for the emphasis that was placed on working with indigenous peoples. When our government was first elected, we made a commitment to make sure that the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples was respected in all policy deliberations. The government and I have been working hard to keep that promise in the spirit of trust and respect.

A strong province is built on strong relationships, and I'm proud of the relationships that I've built with the Stoney Nakoda people. I was honoured to have Chief Wesley of the Wesley Nation, Chief Dixon of the Bearspaw Nation, and Chief Young of the Chiniki Nation accompany me at the Legislature on the occasion of the Speech from the Throne. Just recently I was invited to attend and take part in the inauguration ceremony for the newly elected and

incumbent chiefs and councils for the Chiniki Nation in Morley. The ceremony was beautiful and powerfully moving. The singing, dancing, and drumming were mesmerizing and resonated with deep cultural meaning.

The Stoney Nakoda chiefs and councils have expressed interest in initiatives that were discussed in the Speech from the Throne such as the climate leadership plan, the renewable energy program, the curriculum review, and work to better protect children in care. Indeed, the next phase of the renewable energy program focuses on partnerships with indigenous communities such as the Chiniki Nation, and Chief Young attended the press conference for this announcement to show his support for and interest in the project.

Another way that we are taking steps to respect UNDRIP is to take action in response to the recommendations of the Ministerial Panel on Child Intervention, which I was proud to serve on. We can do more and we must do more to help vulnerable children and to reduce the number of indigenous children in government care. The child intervention panel heard from and visited indigenous communities across the province. Many of the stories shared with the panel were heartbreaking, but we also heard stories of hope. There is much for us to learn, more work to do, and a long road ahead as we walk the path of reconciliation together. We do these things not because they are easy but because they are hard. This challenge is one that we are willing to accept and one that we are unwilling to postpone.

Another challenge being taken on in the constituency of Banff-Cochrane is that of enhancing human coexistence with wildlife. The Rocky Mountains are not just one of Canada's most iconic landscapes; they are also home to some of Canada's most iconic wildlife such as grizzly bear, wolf, and elk. The abundant recreational opportunities and sheer beauty of the Bow valley means that increasingly more and more people are coexisting on the landscape with wildlife, which can lead to conflict situations.

Residents and visitors alike have a deep appreciation and respect for wildlife and their habitat. We put our garbage in bear-proof bins, set aside dedicated movement corridors and habitat patches, build wildlife overpasses and underpasses, and make seasonal area closures to give animals the space that they need during certain times of the year.

The Bow valley is a critical link among connected landscapes that support wildlife movement. It is imperative that we maintain these connections in light of the increasing human pressures. Thankfully, the Bow valley has experts working together to ensure that we can continue living in harmony with wildlife, experts like Jay Honeyman, a human wildlife conflict biologist with Alberta Environment and Parks, and Bill Hunt, the resource manager for Banff national park. They are part of a larger technical working group and round-table looking for solutions and improved co-operation between the three levels of government that have neighbouring jurisdictions in the Bow valley.

Of course, there is much wisdom to be gained from First Nations, who have coexisted with wildlife on these landscapes for thousands of years. One such way of assessing environmental conditions and generating data that can be used to inform conservation plans is through cultural monitoring. Cultural monitoring offers a means of integrating traditional ecological knowledge into the identification of priority areas for conservation and restoration in a manner that recognizes various environmental factors while also considering local knowledge and perspectives.

While Banff-Cochrane is proud of its history and heritage, people here are also forward looking. The announcement in Her Honour's speech that the government will help support job creation in digital industries with a new digital industries tax credit was welcome news. Both the Bow Valley Chamber of Commerce and the town

of Cochrane are looking to support innovation and to attract knowledge and learning-based technology professionals. The digital industries tax credit act referred to in the Speech from the Throne would create thousands of new spaces in our postsecondary institutions dedicated to technology that will help the Bow Valley chamber and the town of Cochrane achieve their goals. I'm proud to support this proposed investment that will enable more Albertans to get the education and training that they need to secure good jobs in this growing sector that will also help our economy continue to diversify.

I'd like to begin concluding my response to the Speech from the Throne by applauding the commitment that was made to undertake major initiatives to help families keep property safe, especially in rural areas. Everyone deserves to feel safe in their homes and in their communities. This government has a track record of supporting police services. Each year, since our first budget in 2015, more than half a billion dollars have been invested into policing, including over 1,500 officers in rural Alberta. We maintained and even increased funding for policing during one of the province's worst recessions. In 2016 additional funding was provided to Alberta law enforcement response teams, also known as ALERT. ALERT is a key part of an integrated, province-wide team that crosses local and regional boundaries. They conduct joint investigations with local police services to help combat criminal activity and co-ordinate intelligence sharing, keeping local police informed about serious and emerging threats in communities.

More recently the commitment made in the Speech from the Throne to take further action to address rural crime was acted upon the following day when the Minister of Justice announced \$10 million towards hiring more RCMP officers, civilian staff, and Crown prosecutors. The announcement also included measures to ensure that police have the resources needed to address top priorities such as focusing on intelligence, sharing information to help police better identify and catch prolific offenders, and shifting some routine tasks to civilian workers so officers can spend more time patrolling and investigating in the community.

With help from our valued partners in the RCMP, the government has developed a detailed plan to protect rural Albertans and their property. While there's no single easy solution to fix rural crime, the strategy put several important tools in the crime-fighting tool box. In addition to these measures, we've made changes that allow officers to spend more time on the streets fighting crime, like eliminating arrest warrants for unpaid fines for minor, noncriminal offences.

3:20

Madam Speaker, we are taking action on rural crime. We are taking action on pipelines. We are taking action on the environment. We are taking action to diversify our energy sector, and we are taking action to engage in reconciliation.

As we have from the start, we will continue to create jobs, diversify our economy, and protect the health and education services on which families rely. Our task is to make sure that this recovery keeps working for working people, and that's what we are committed to do.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure today to give my response to the throne speech. First of all,

I do want to point out a few things that I thought were great. Having the Speech from the Throne take place on International Women's Day gave an opportunity to celebrate the great women in Alberta. As I wander the Legislature, I'm always impressed with the display of the Famous Five, the five women that worked so hard to make sure that women were considered persons. As we look at society today, it's hard to believe that this was ever an issue. It's also hard to imagine that in some parts of the world women are still treated horrifically. Hard to imagine, but it's still happening. We have so many women that have done so many great things and continue to do great things. As was said in the throne speech, "Women's rights are human rights."

It was also nice to recognize our first responders, those that put their lives on the line for us, run to the fire instead of away, sacrifice so much for our safety and security, and also their families, who worry each time they leave the safety of their home. We salute all of our first responders.

Now, we do have to give credit that the Premier has started to talk a good game on pipelines. Unfortunately, it's a little hard to fully trust what this government is saying. Let me take you back to 2015. The NDP was just elected, and the Premier was answering questions in this Legislature on pipelines. Here's a quote from June 17, 2015. "If we're going to make progress, we're going to do it by finally creating a record that we can be proud of." You see, that's the problem, and we've seen this attitude rear its head over and over again: "finally creating a record to be proud of." It was that same attitude that had the Premier call Albertans embarrassing cousins. The fact that there was no pride and, in fact, open disdain for an industry that is the best in the world in safety and environmentally, taking place in a country that has a higher social conscience in human rights than their competitors should be enough to be proud of. But no; they felt that they couldn't be proud of it. This is an industry that they now say they support.

On June 17, 2015, the Premier said, "I identified what most people in the industry already understand and have in fact confirmed to me, that the likelihood of the Northern Gateway pipeline being approved in the near future is not great." So here we have a Premier matter-of-factly saying that one of the pipelines to tidewater is not likely to happen. I think what's most important is how she reacted. What did she do regarding this devastating news? Absolutely nothing.

Now, the other day the Government House Leader stood in this House and talked about the federal court's decision in this regard. He quoted, "It would have taken Canada little time and little organizational effort to engage in meaningful dialogue on these and other subjects of prime importance to Aboriginal peoples. But this did not happen." So would the NDP support the little time and organizational effort to engage in meaningful dialogue with aboriginal peoples to get Northern Gateway back on track? Nope. They said and did nothing. Previously there was no talk or action on pipelines; now lots of talk but still no action. If they actually cared about getting our product to the coast, they would have shown concern over this, but instead, crickets.

The Government House Leader went on to say, "the actual facts that it was the negligence and neglect of the federal government, of which he was a member, that resulted in the courts cancelling that project." In classic form this government blames everyone else for any problems, but what did they do to try to remedy the situation? Nothing. Just to be clear, it was the NDP's friend Prime Minister Trudeau that cancelled Northern Gateway. Remember the tanker ban? That was implemented by Trudeau before Northern Gateway was cancelled. Does that look like a Prime Minister that wanted to help get our products to the coast? Not at all.

This government even helped to pass my motion to urge the provincial government “to request that the federal government not implement the moratorium on crude oil tanker traffic along British Columbia’s north coast and that it swiftly approve pipelines such as the Energy East, Trans Mountain, and Northern Gateway.” That was a motion to have this NDP government request the federal government to cancel the tanker ban and approve pipelines, including Northern Gateway and Energy East. But even with that commitment does the NDP look like a government that truly wants to get our products to the coast? Well, if so, they have a funny way of showing it, absolutely no support for that pipeline to the coast or against the Prime Minister that has been focused on destroying our opportunities to exercise our constitutional rights of getting our products to market.

Further along in this vein is the Premier’s comment, also in 2015, when she said, “I’m also quite interested in pursuing Energy East and working with industry.” Now, the company trying to build Energy East walked away, citing NEB regulation changes brought on by the Trudeau government. That was regarding the inclusion of upstream and downstream emissions. What was this government’s reaction? The Energy minister sent a letter, a letter suggesting that downstream emissions shouldn’t be included. What about upstream? What about something more than a letter? One might send a letter to one’s grandmother that lives far away, but a multibillion-dollar loss of opportunity to your constituents may warrant a little bit more. Just a little bit. But nope, nothing. If Albertans aren’t quite buying the rhetoric that this government actually supports pipelines, it’s no wonder.

I want to cover a little bit more that has Albertans not quite buying the integrity of this government when it says that it supports pipelines. We can start with the NDP’s Leap Manifesto, that calls for an end to all new pipelines. This document was supported at an NDP conference that took place right here in Edmonton. At that time the Alberta NDP could have removed itself from the federal party, but alas they did not, so they remained one and the same with the federal Leap Manifesto-supporting NDP.

Let’s talk about some of the NDP ministers and MLAs and their actions and comments. Let’s start with the Minister of Education. There are YouTube videos available online where he states, repeatedly I might add, that there should be no new approvals for, quote, tar sands, unquote. That doesn’t sound like a champion of the oil and gas sector to me.

Then we can talk about the seniors minister. Now, she took a little holiday to southern B.C. to campaign in the last federal election for an NDP candidate. Who is this candidate, you might ask? None other than Jacqui Gingras. In an *Edmonton Sun* article it says, “Gingras is an environmental extremist. Last year, she helped organize an anti-pipeline rally on behalf of LeadNow . . . LeadNow is opposed to every pipeline project currently proposed in Canada.”

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

That’s who the minister was backing for parliament. I wonder if she’s given Gingras a call to see if she will support the minister in her new-found love of pipelines. Mind you, I don’t know that the minister has publicly supported pipelines yet anyways.

Now we can move on to the Energy minister. Her chief of staff was the executive director of Leadnow. Now, in fairness to her, she said that she never knew him and that he was chosen by the Premier’s office.

Mr. Westhead: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, we have a point of order.

Point of Order Allegations against a Member

Mr. Westhead: I rise under 23(h), (i), and (j) and reference a ruling that Mr. Speaker made not half an hour ago indicating that we shouldn’t be engaging in personal attacks in the Chamber. This is exactly what this member is doing. Considering that the caution was made not very long ago in this Chamber and I believe the member heard the ruling, I would think that we should stop from engaging in these kind of personal attacks.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It’s a pleasure to rise on the point of order. I’m not sure if you have the benefit of seeing the ruling or the comments that the Member for Banff-Cochrane has made with respect to the ruling, but I think that if we had the benefit of the Blues, we would see that the Speaker was specifically referring to the use of members’ statements in the Chamber.

As you know, Madam Speaker, there has been some significant latitude used with respect to members’ statements. The Speaker was reminding the House about a trend that he may have observed in members’ statements becoming more targeted on certain members of the House, in my interpretation of the ruling, in particular from the government members directed towards the opposition. He reminded all members of the Assembly that perhaps during members’ statements we might refrain from such activity.

I think that in the to and fro of debate there will be consistent discussion around members’ statements that members of this House have made, particularly statements that members of the government have made, be it current or in the past. I think what we have here is a matter of debate.

Having said that, I think it’s reasonable for us all to consider the debate that we engage in, but I think it is very reasonable for members on both sides of the Chamber to discuss positions that members of the government or members of the opposition have held.

3:30

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the point of order?

As you’ve correctly noted, I don’t have the benefit of the Blues, so I can’t reference exactly what ruling the Speaker might have made a short time ago. However, the rules around members’ statements are more for respect. Each member has that opportunity to speak about an issue, and you don’t disrupt that. The rules are the same for any kind of dialogue going on in this House. We avoid personal attacks. We avoid saying things that will cause disruption to the Assembly and the decorum. I would encourage all members to please continue to be aware of that.

I believe that the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky was getting close to crossing the line, so I would caution him to be a little bit more careful about the difference between making a point based on policy and a point based on something that’s quite personal to a member.

Please continue.

Debate Continued

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Now, I was just talking about how the Premier had actually chosen the chief of staff for the Energy minister. I thought that maybe that wasn’t so surprising when we see pictures of the Premier at anti-oil and antitanker and antipipeline protests.

Now, I won't have time to get into the other anti-oil and antipipeline activists that this government has hired as senior staff, but how about the environment minister? She co-wrote the foreword to a radical environmental book called *An Action a Day Keeps Global Capitalism Away*.

Mr. Westhead: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, a point of order?

Point of Order

Allegations against a Member

Mr. Westhead: Yes. Madam Speaker, you just warned the member to be cautious. He seems to have a laundry list of personal attacks lined up here, so I wonder if the member might reconsider some of the things he's about to say in his speech.

Mr. Loewen: Obviously, the governing party here has a problem with facts being stated. I'm clearly stating facts. I think you could go on any given day in this House and look through the *Hansard* and find personal attacks on the Leader of the Official Opposition. I don't see what the problem is here. This is stuff that's been said in this House before. In fact, on this same quote that I used, there was a point of order called by the government side that they lost because it was a point of debate. That exact same statement.

So there's no point of order here. I should be able to continue on with my speech like I would like to do. They're obviously trying to run me out of time so that I can't say everything that I'd like to say, and that's appalling.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the point of order? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm a little confused why the deputy whip for the government is now calling these types of points of order. If you look through even today the comments in members' speeches, almost all of them refer to the Member for Calgary-Lougheed, the Leader of the Opposition, in very personal ways.

The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky is a hundred per cent correct. This is a matter of debate. This has already been ruled on in this place, and the government lost that point of order at that time. Clearly, the government deputy whip is trying to deliberately stop the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky from delivering his speech, and he should stop that.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the point of order?

I do have a reference here that I would like to refer to, *Beauchesne's* 481(f). Remarks about another member's integrity and honesty are never in order, so I would caution members to please be aware of the difference. It's one thing to reference a quote that's a reference of policy, but please be cautious that you are not moving into that line of questioning another member's honesty or integrity.

Please continue.

Debate Continued

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Now, I was talking about the environment minister, who co-wrote the foreword to a radical environmental book called *An Action a Day Keeps Global Capitalism Away*. What's interesting about this is that the Government House Leader called a point of order, that we just

referred to, on the Leader of the Opposition for merely mentioning this fact. A little sensitive about this, I guess.

Now, the minister claimed that she just helped with some grammar, but the author said this in the book: "It would not have been possible to put this book together without her. She pushed me to write it, edited my work, and contributed to its content . . . I owe her a heavy debt." There are two versions of a story there that I think we could kind of look at and come to our own decisions on.

This brings us to the Member for Calgary-East. Now, we've all see the picture of her with the sign that says: No More Dirty Oil. It was interesting to hear her comments on that situation just the other day. You'd think there would be an apology or some sort of regrets as this government tries to build the credibility of its pipeline support, but, no, no apology and no regrets. Now, that might be bizarre, but maybe even more bizarre is her excuse for doing it. She said, "A pipeline in 2011 would not have created the jobs." What? How does that even make sense? She goes on to talk about how poor the last government was and how great the present government is like it matters to the pipeline or to the jobs it creates or to the increased return for our products which government is in power. It's about what's best for Albertans no matter which government is in power.

She also said, "We need the ability to sell our oil now." Well, that's a really good point, but there's a problem. Because of anti-oil activists and obstructionists like her and her colleagues the pipeline didn't start being built in 2011. If it had, we would be selling our oil right now at a better rate than we are getting now. Let me say that again. If it hadn't been for the radical activists and obstructionists, you know, like the members on the government bench and their friends they campaigned for and their friends they hire with taxpayer money, we would have a pipeline now. We haven't started building it yet, and once we do, it'll take some time to get it done. I wish we could have had these people's support back then because, after all, we needed pipelines then. But just remember that these are the people that say that they support our oil and gas industry, unapologetic, anti-oil activists.

Now, this leads to the oil sands advisory group. The minister hand-picked two anti-oil activists to sit on the panel. Can you imagine choosing people that are extreme anti-oil activists "to provide advice on the implementation of the emissions limit as it relates to oil sands"? I can only imagine how much an anti-oil activist would like to be involved in capping our oil sands. Now that the advisory panel is finished, these activists are actively working at protesting the Trans Mountain pipeline as we speak. Sadly, three police officers were recently hurt at these protests. Come on, Premier. Albertans deserve better than that.

Now, the Premier said something interesting the other day when debating the pipeline motion. She said:

But the new B.C. government in coalition with the Green Party has now determined that it is willing to use any means necessary, including unconstitutional ones, to harass and delay the Trans Mountain pipeline.

Let's be clear. That's a change in their strategy.

Well, I'm not sure where the Premier has been for the last 10 months, but the B.C. NDP has been promising this all along. On May 4 the Canadian Press reported that Horgan will use "every tool in the toolbox," and, "There's a whole host of other legal remedies available to us and we'll be laying that out" to stop the pipeline.

On May 31 – that's after the election – CBC news reported that "B.C. Green Party leader Andrew Weaver and John Horgan of the NDP said their alliance dictates that once in government, they will immediately employ every tool to stop the expansion of the Kinder Morgan pipeline."

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?
The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I want to say thank you to my hon. colleague from Grande Prairie-Smoky for giving an important response to the Speech from the Throne. I would ask him if he could continue and please finish his speech pertaining to the government Speech from the Throne.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you. I just read the quote from the leader of the Green Party and John Horgan of the NDP and their alliance about doing everything they can to stop the Kinder Morgan pipeline.

Then on August 10, 2017, the B.C. minister of environment and climate change put out on their government website: "During the election, we promised to use every tool in our toolkit to fight for BC against Kinder Morgan's proposed heavy oil pipeline and tanker expansion." Well, to me it sounds like the B.C. NDP government has been very clear about its intentions, but unfortunately the Premier of Alberta wasn't listening.

Now, the Premier really should have been listening to John Horgan when she sat down with him. Afterwards Horgan said that it was just a meeting of two old friends and, quote: I had no intentions of being persuaded, and she had no intentions of persuading, end quote, on the pipeline issue. I would have hoped that the Premier, who purports to be such a stalwart supporter of pipelines, might have tried to persuade Horgan on the importance of a pipeline, but, alas, no such luck.

Of course, recently the Premier has publicly stated that their support for the Trudeau carbon tax was linked to the construction of the Kinder Morgan pipeline. But in reviewing her past comments, we find out that it is just not true. On October 3 in a *Calgary Herald* article she is quoted in regard to the federal carbon tax as saying, "We can't be talking about the sort of prices that got rolled out today until we get a commitment from this federal government that they're going to move on this fundamentally important economic piece that Albertans need."

Then on November 29, 2016, just six weeks later, the *National Observer* had an article entitled, quote, smiling Alberta Premier open to Trudeau's carbon tax after pipeline approvals. In the article it says:

Moments earlier, she shook Justin Trudeau's hand and thanked him on behalf of all Albertans for his leadership and "demonstrated commitment" to building the economy . . .

[She] explained that her government was now "well positioned" to support Trudeau's efforts to ramp up a tax or price on carbon pollution to \$50 per tonne by 2022.

They additionally quote the Premier as saying, "Prime Minister Trudeau is showing some extraordinary leadership today."

So when the Premier says that she linked the federal increase in the carbon tax to pipelines under construction, it's just not true. She sold out Albertans on the federal carbon taxes more than a year ago. They have even included these funds in their budget forecast. Clearly, when Trudeau says, "Tax," the Premier asks: how high?

3:40

Another thing we hear the Premier say quite often is that the previous federal and provincial governments couldn't get a pipeline built. Well, that's not true. The Kinder Morgan anchor loop, the Enbridge Clipper, the TransCanada Keystone, and the Enbridge line 9B: that's four pipelines built, not just approved but built. They increased oil flow by over a million barrels a day.

Now, during the NDP's and Liberals' time in government there were two pipelines approved and two pipelines cancelled, one of which was approved under the Conservative governments, only to be cancelled by the Liberals, and so far none built.

Please remember this very important point. The Trans Mountain pipeline is an expansion. There's an existing pipeline there. It has been operating safely for decades. This should be a no-brainer to improve. It's not a whole new corridor; it's just more pipe for increased flow. Also, the Enbridge line 3 that was approved is a replacement of an older existing line, again not a whole new pipeline, just a replacement of an existing line that will transport a higher volume, another no-brainer. To listen to the NDP, you'd think that they changed the world to get an expansion and a replacement. This should have been simple.

Now, the NDP sold us that the carbon tax would give us social licence to get pipelines built. This clearly has not happened because there has not been one anti-oil group or individual that has moved their position from antipipeline to pro pipeline due to the carbon tax. Not one.

They claim that Trudeau approved the Kinder Morgan because of the NDP climate leadership plan. Well, I don't buy it. Trudeau was looking for a way to sell his carbon tax to Canadians, so he linked the approval to the climate leadership plan. Of course, he mentioned the oil sands emissions caps as one of the reasons he approved the pipeline. That makes sense because he wants to phase out oil sands. What's sad is that the NDP is willing to sell out Albertans to get a pipeline. That is just wrong. There is a process to get pipelines approved, and that process doesn't include taxes and caps that punish people, businesses, nonprofits, schools, and families.

Now, I do need to make clear that it is good to see the Premier and the NDP government finally following the lead of us in opposition and fighting for pipelines. We were pleased to see the wine ban, even though it didn't go far enough. It should have just been the first step. We were disappointed when the Premier dropped the ban prematurely. It's clear that the B.C. NDP has yet to reduce its hostility to pipelines, so why would we back off?

Clearly, if any pipelines get built, it won't be because of this government's support; it will be in spite of its lack of support.

Speaker's Ruling Question-and-comment Period

The Deputy Speaker: Before we continue with the next speaker, I would just like to remind all hon. members of a ruling that was made yesterday here in the House by the Acting Speaker regarding the use of Standing Order 29(2)(a). We've given a great deal of latitude on this particular standing order in the past to allow members to continue on with their statement, but members are quite aware that there are time limits for debate. They know going into that how much time they're going to have, and to be continually using 29(2)(a) to simply extend your debating time isn't really within the spirit of 29(2)(a).

I'll just reference some of the past rulings on page 359 of *Hansard* from yesterday, where the Acting Speaker ruled on this, that the spirit is to be questions and comments to kind of encourage healthy debate in the House. While we're certainly not intending to move away from the traditions of the House dramatically at this point, I would really encourage hon. members to move more towards a genuine debate in a question-and-answer format in the use of 29(2)(a).

Thank you.

Debate Continued

The Deputy Speaker: The next speaker on this issue, the hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Mrs. Schreiner: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is with great honour that I stand today and respond to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's speech during the Fourth Session of the 29th Legislature. I am proud to recognize how the priorities of our government have made life better for people in Red Deer-North and all across Alberta.

It is fitting that our session opened on International Women's Day since women are so well represented in this Chamber. Outside of my Legislature office is our province's tribute to Alberta's Famous Five, and I cannot express my appreciation for their conviction. They are a testament to the power of citizens working together and how formidable that impact can be. Because of that, we sit today with a woman Premier and a cabinet that is over half made up of women.

Recently I had the pleasure of celebrating our women of influence with the Member for Calgary-Varsity. Celebrating the first provincial ministry of women was a thoughtful and moving experience. I am proud to stand with my government as we break down barriers and build equity. That, Madam Speaker, is what doing the right thing looks like.

Since 2015 we have witnessed one of the worst economic downturns in our province's history. This, in addition to natural disasters, has made the past few years a difficult period indeed, but Albertans are known for their adaptability and resilience. Madam Speaker, that resilience will only become stronger with economic diversification. While my response focuses on Red Deer, Red Deer is a corridor to both of our province's major centres. As a result, what's good for Red Deer supports our government's mandate of making life better for all Albertans.

Though we all come to this Legislature as individuals, what we have in common is the respect for sound governance. In 2015 the people of Alberta recognized that the antiquated ways of a tired government were not going to get us where we needed to go or where Albertans wanted to be.

In March of 2017 our government announced its support of a Red Deer regional justice centre, recognizing that the current model could not provide the service that Red Deerians and central Albertans required. This investment shows that we are hearing what Albertans are saying. We are meeting their needs through investment in the services that give them timely access to the legal services they need. In addition to this justice centre, I am proud to hear of our government's initiative to take action against rural crime. Our government made the right choice to respond to the call for more funding, investing 10 million new dollars into policing, which includes 39 new officer positions, 40 civilian staff, and 10 Crown prosecutors in rural Alberta.

Strong communities are a cornerstone of Alberta. With this in mind I wish to respectfully acknowledge and applaud the Premier and the Minister of Advanced Education for their recent announcement in support of Red Deer College pursuing degree-granting status. For 25-plus years Red Deer College has requested this status. Access to advanced education enhances economic growth by supporting the knowledge and skills needed in the workforce. On March 1, 2018, Red Deer and central Alberta knew that government was listening. No longer do those who seek advanced knowledge need to move away and leave their homes. They need not incur additional economic hardship to achieve their dreams. Our future leaders and entrepreneurs can remain in their home communities to obtain university education. This serves to

support education, families, and communities, and that, Madam Speaker, is what right looks like. Knowledge is an invaluable asset, and when we couple this opportunity with current tuition freezes, we can see how the government is empowering opportunity to flourish. When we empower Albertans, we strengthen our communities. That, fellow members, is what right looks like.

Any modern society also has its problems. Fellow members, I am saddened by the opioid crisis. I wish to extend my sincere condolences to all Albertan families impacted by this. While we attempt to address this alarming situation, I am proud that this government recognizes that addiction has no bias. Our opioid crisis affects everyone. It calls on all of us to open our minds to the trauma that those who are vulnerable to addiction experience and to open our hearts with empathy to those in need of support.

3:50

I am proud to be part of a government that recognizes that our future must include consideration for those suffering from addictions and social disadvantages. Recently our government has increased funding to assist in combating the crisis. Doctors, nurse practitioners, and primary care providers will have increased access to opioid dependency treatment in community clinics as well as overdose prevention training and naloxone kits for front-line workers.

My community of Red Deer is privileged to have our Safe Harbour and our government's investment in 20 medically supported detox beds. Since its opening in 2017 it has provided treatment to 130 clients, with 89 clients actively receiving treatment. There is no wait-list, and treatment can generally be initiated the same day as the first consultation with the addiction physician. I have so much gratitude for and pride in the work that Safe Harbour does and for the heroes in my community that embrace those who need help.

Our government is responding in other ways as well. Recently the Associate Minister of Health announced a major expansion of community paramedic supports. Mobile community paramedics respond on-site to seniors and other Albertans with chronic conditions, reducing the use of ambulance transport, acute-care beds, and hospital resources. This solution reinforces the importance of providing in-home care and specialized supports.

Friends, I am aware of the importance of Red Deer regional hospital's call for expansion. I am forever thankful for the additional services that serve to accommodate central Albertans in the interim and incredibly proud that these needs are at the forefront of our government's thoughts. In this respect, Red Deer has been incredibly fortunate.

Better primary and secondary education is also coming to Red Deer. This current school year brought the opening of St. Joseph high school in Red Deer-North. I recently had the privilege of hosting the Minister of Culture and Tourism at our newest addition. Its diverse scholastic opportunities and its open learning concept are truly unique. Attached to the high school is the Red Deer Royals field house. In 2019 this renowned marching band will celebrate their 50th anniversary. They have received provincial, national, international, and world titles.

Also within Red Deer-North, Fairview elementary was one of the schools chosen to pilot our province's nutrition program. We all know children learn better when they have the resources to reach their potential, and I am proud to see our government respond to the well-being of our youngest citizens.

Madam Speaker and fellow members, everything our government does is for the future of Alberta, and this includes the recently introduced Energy Diversification Act. As contenders in a global market we know that when times are great, we flourish, and when global times are bad, we suffer. We need to recognize past

trends and implement a strategy that decreases our susceptibility to the historic cycle of boom and bust.

In November 2014 Alberta fell upon tough economic times. We could not continue to make the same mistakes if we were going to strengthen our competitive advantage. As a province we need to accept that diversification enables change, and change is necessary to secure recovery and conquer tough times. Diversification is critically important for building an economy for the future. Throughout our mandate we stand firm that no Albertan is left behind. While we fight for new pipelines and better oil prices, it is important to seize the opportunity to diversify. We need not cower at change but embrace its opportunities.

When we look to the future, we must also consider our environment. We are in a position to harness diversification while providing strong environmental stewardship. This, fellow members, reframes our economic development holistically. That is what right looks like. Technology, research, development, and diversification are components of an equation that delivers economic and environmental balance. Our mandate to support environmental stewardship through our climate leadership plan also aligns with our commitment to the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. We cannot embrace our future without recognizing where we have been. Everyone deserves a clean environment. We are committed to engaging in dialogue and thoughtfulness for all stakeholders with shared consideration.

Madam Speaker and fellow members, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to respond to the mandate set out in our next session. I speak with firm conviction that our path is established clearly and with the best interests of all Albertans in mind.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I want to thank the Member for Red Deer-North for her comments and for speaking so eloquently and kindly about Red Deer and the city that it is. I think back to my earlier memories of Red Deer, going there with the school band, actually. The provincial competition was always in Red Deer. I played trumpet in both the jazz band and the concert band, and we went there every year for competitions. It was always fun to go to Red Deer. Of course, who can forget Gasoline Alley, travelling through Red Deer and having to stop for gas or a snack in Gasoline Alley. A great city. Like I say, I was happy to hear the Member for Red Deer-North talk so kindly about that great city.

I did make a couple of notes here. She talked about the government making life better. She talked about the worst economic downturn. In particular, she talked about the boom-and-bust cycle, so I just wanted to ask a question on that. It seems like this government has been talking a lot about this oil and gas roller coaster. The Finance minister has talked about that on a couple of occasions. The Member for Calgary-Currie talked about the resource roller coaster. And even the MLA from West Yellowhead talked about this boom-and-bust economy.

The Member for Red Deer-North talked about this boom and bust, but what I find interesting is that when the budget came out – and I'm just going to take a couple of quotes from a couple of different news articles. March 20, Michelle Bellefontaine, *CBC News*: "Balanced Budget Tied to Trans Mountain Completion, Alberta Finance Minister Says. Looking for pipeline development to help balance the books." They quote the Finance minister: "We've built those into the budget in anticipation that Trans Mountain expansion and [Enbridge] Line 3 will be operational."

Even Dean Bennett from the Canadian Press said, "Alberta to Rely on Expected Trans Mountain Revenue to Balance Budget. Finance Minister . . . says Alberta is banking on anticipated revenue from an expansion of the Trans Mountain oil pipeline to balance the budget within five years." Again the Finance minister is quoted: "We've built (the revenue) into [the] budget because that's what everybody believes will happen."

We have this situation where the government talks about getting us off this boom-and-bust cycle and getting us off this resource roller coaster, but then they come out with a budget that completely relies on the oil and gas sector to get us out. I'm not sure how the government can kind of ride both sides of the fence on this one and is able to say that they're going to get us off this roller coaster but then rely on this roller coaster to balance the budget.

4:00

Of course, it is kind of a bit of a gamble that this government is taking on these pipelines because we don't know that they're going to get built. We sure hope they do. We would hope that the government would support all the pipelines in all different directions, but they seem to be fairly selective in the ones they support and don't support, and then sometimes their support doesn't seem quite as strong as what we would like to see.

Also as far as getting us off of this roller coaster of oil and gas revenue, you know, the Speech from the Throne didn't mention agriculture once. I couldn't find the word "agriculture" once in there. The closest they got was talking about rural crime. Of course, that's incredibly important. In fact, it was so important that last November we wanted to have an emergency debate on it. The government argued against it, and it didn't happen.

Another thing to get us off of this boom-and-bust cycle, this oil and gas roller coaster that they talk about, that was missing was forestry, another huge industry in Alberta that's been threatened by the caribou issue and that sort of thing.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, were you planning on allowing any opportunity for the Member for Red Deer-North to respond?

Mr. Loewen: Yes. For sure. I would like to ask the member about that in particular as far as how we can go from this government talking about the oil and gas roller coaster and the boom-and-bust cycle and then not mentioning anything about agriculture, depending on the oil and gas sector to bail us out of the deficits, these massive deficits they've been getting us into, and also, you know, not mentioning anything about forestry and how important that is to our industry here. I guess that's my question for the member, to kind of give us a bit of an idea how the government can balance that in their minds as far as, on one hand, expecting all this money from oil and gas revenue and, on the other hand, not talking about the other important industries that we have in our province and how that affects the economy of Alberta. I think there seems to be some disparity there. I'd hope that the member could kind of clear that up and maybe give us an idea how that kind of balance works with this government as far as having that oil and gas roller coaster and talking about it with such disdain and then relying on it, on the other hand, and then of course not mentioning anything about it in the budget.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure today to rise and respond to the government's Speech from the Throne. I would like to take a moment to thank our amazing Lieutenant

Governor for her grace and her hard work. It's always amazing to have her in here and be able to participate.

I'd like to respond to this speech, Madam Speaker, as an everyday person, not as an MLA but a regular Albertan, the person that the government speaks about in their throne speech. I am a regular, everyday person, a mother and a wife, a business owner, and a fierce advocate for special needs. As a regular Albertan I see the very real and consequential actions of government and government policies, their words and their actions and how they impact the very people that they're here to represent.

I'd like to highlight a couple of examples from the throne speech that I thought were extremely thoughtful. It was very nice to hear about these things. I would like to thank the government and the Premier for their continued work to end executive perks and insider access. Madam Speaker, Alberta belongs to all of us, and a true democracy means that you cannot buy your seat at the table. Our taxpayer dollars should be directed to providing world-class services for the citizens of Alberta.

I also want to commend this government for their support for the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services and the amazing work that they have done to expand counselling support services. As we all know, Deb Tomlinson is an incredible human being. She's done so much to advocate on behalf of this particular group of people. I'm very proud to know her and the work that she's done and various groups that work with her. They all work so hard at these centres to provide for Albertans at their most vulnerable times and to offer preventative initiatives that they have developed. They're truly, truly remarkable human beings. I'm grateful to see that they will be better equipped to handle the influx of caseloads that we have. As we know, those have increased immensely in the last little while, especially with the economic downturn.

Sexual violence and harassment have absolutely no place in our society. It's important to say it in here, but it's an important statement to say wherever we go. The more that we say this statement, the more that it resonates, and the more that it matters. We all believe that, we all know that, but it's language that we just need to incorporate all the time. You wear it, and you live it, and you don't accept it. It's most important, I believe, that we continue to shine really bright lights into society and especially into these dark places so that society continues to understand how important it is.

Again, the government continually talks, and rightfully so, about the number of incredible women that they have on their side. We're a little bit smaller on our side but strong just as much. We very, very much appreciate the strong voice that comes from that and the importance of what that means and the impact it has on all of us and also the incredibly strong, wonderful men that we have surrounding us that support us through this and all people who have been impacted through sexual violence. Again, the more that the language is there, the more that it rolls off our tongues that we are not accepting of these things, the more that we lead by example. I'm very grateful for that.

These are important steps that will ensure a brighter future for all Albertans. Those highlights are truly important. Again, I'm extremely grateful.

But I do have to also point out some areas that I believe were not touched on or were touched on and I'm not quite sure I understand the government's point of view. One of those things and what is incredibly frustrating for me is for a government to tout that a recession is over. You know, I think every single person in this House has had people come through their offices with stories, unbelievably huge stories of pain and loss in various different aspects but especially with loss of jobs. You know, you can look at any smaller pieces of any larger puzzle independently and neglect to look at the overall picture, and you do not give a full story. That

is manipulative, blatantly manipulative. You have to be able to look at the full story.

It's not to say that there aren't things that can happen that are wonderful and that are helping the economy and all these things, but that is a pat on the back that Albertans deserve. That goes to the people of this province, those people that have been through the various roller coasters, the various things that happened in this province, whether that's fires or floods or a downturn in the economy or failures in crops or whatever it is that all of the people that we have the privilege of representing go through. That resiliency, Madam Speaker, goes to them. The policies that happen in this House have ripple effects and impact those people definitively.

You can't just say that a recession is over. I hear that all the time from this government, and I don't quite understand why that language is being used. I have constituents in my office, Madam Speaker, pretty consistently, desperately pleading for help, men and women that have been out of work for months, have applied for hundreds of jobs, and believe me; these are humble folks. They're looking for just about anything. They don't have EI, it's about to run out, and they're asking what they're supposed to do. If you could actually understand, Madam Speaker, the impact the words, "The recession is over," have on a group of people, thousands of people, that aren't there yet, that doesn't inspire that that change is going to be happening.

The Calgary Food Bank – and my husband is actually on the board of our food bank in Chestermere, and we've seen these numbers, too. The client numbers, I mean, have rarely been higher than in 2017, and the homeless shelter Inn from the Cold, in Calgary, said in November that they had been at capacity for nearly a year. Shelters and not-for-profits across Alberta are having to divert resources away from the vulnerable. Do you know why? Because of the carbon tax. Money that they would have had before, hundreds of thousands of dollars in some cases, is being diverted away from the help that they're able to give to vulnerable people. I mean, these folks are there to help these people. That's what they want to do, and money is being diverted away.

4:10

In fact, did you know, Madam Speaker, that these not-for-profits don't receive any rebates at all? So I'm curious. Are the homeless now supposed to start fundraising for the carbon tax as well? I'm curious because we have a group of people who are in desperate need. We have the people who are willing to provide that paying a carbon tax with zero exemptions and no rebates coming to these folks. These are the ones that help the people in this province. We can say from a government perspective all that we do, this side or the other. It's actually the people on the ground that do that work. They're the heroes of this story.

The interesting thing is that, you know, the government is touting jobs and job creation. There were 92,000 fewer payrolled jobs in Alberta at the end of 2017 than there were before the recession.

Mr. Nixon: Wow.

Mrs. Aheer: I know. It's really, actually, an unbelievable number. I mean, if you go into downtown – right? – it's really obvious. It's just empty. The whole concept of rush hour certainly doesn't exist the way that I understood it a few years ago. Then, 165,000-plus Albertans remain unemployed. That's 26,000 more people than when the NDP took office. So I really don't know how the government can in good conscience say that the recession is over, because as far as Albertans are concerned, we have a long way to go, Madam Speaker, a long way to go.

Really, this actually comes down to government policy, not government thinking that they know better than the average Albertan knows. Albertans are resilient. They know how to get through these things. They just need to have their government behind them.

The CEO of the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce had this to say on March 7, 2018: “Are the difficult times truly behind us? That’s not what I hear. Things on the ground appear to be still as much of a struggle as ever.” Literally, I can take that statement almost verbatim and implant that into my office, and even more so, not even just at my office, everywhere. All of us travel all over the province and meet people all the time. We’re all hearing this. There’s no way that I’m the only one that’s hearing this. We need to be very realistic about where we are, Madam Speaker, and have an honest discussion about how difficult it is for Albertans right now.

There’s something extremely gratifying about being in this position and being able to try and help people as much as possible, but the hardest days for me are when somebody comes through your doors and has these stories and you just don’t know what to do. It’s actually quite overwhelming.

There was another piece. I was a little shocked to realize that other than a brief reference to the PDD review, which has really been steeped in mystery – I mean, we don’t really know what’s happening with that – the government made absolutely no reference to people with disabilities. We are overspending by billions of dollars every year. We have a \$2 billion debt repayment every year, yet there’s simply no mention about providing opportunities for a very abled population. As a mother of a now young man, an amazingly able child – he’s driving, he’s working, he’s doing all of these incredible things. He deserves to have the opportunity in life that every other Albertan child and adult gets. He should be given the same access to postsecondary education, the workforce, but unfortunately organizations that facilitate these opportunities do not have the resources to do this.

This isn’t a spend request, just in case that’s what’s going to come. This is about the fact that this government is overspending more than inflation and more than the economy can keep up. This is not an issue of revenue. This is an issue of overspending, and we have a responsibility to make sure that every single person in this province is able to live and breathe in a meaningful way and live an independent and as fulfilled life as they can.

Another highlight from the speech I’d like to touch on and that’s very close to my heart is regarding rural crime. I think it was one of the members that was talking about this from the government side. I mean, these stories just make you want to cry. I attended several meetings on rural crime. I had the privilege of being with my MP, Martin Shields, for one of the ones that we did, and the stories were just unbelievable. I mean, some of them just make you want to curl up. It’s quite terrifying, actually, what some of these families have been through.

I would like to talk about the truth about this and why I question if the government is actually going to be able to follow through with this investment. It’s an investment of half a billion dollars annually into police services across the province. Okay. To look at it on paper, that looks really decent, but the government knows – they know – that there are not enough RCMP. They know that. There are not enough. The government knows that these dollars will not produce more officers. You can pretend on paper as much as you want. You could put that you are going to put \$4 billion into it. There are not enough RCMP officers, Madam Speaker.

The truth is that we have a national shortage. But instead of inspiring communities, coming up with other solutions for now before more innocent people, Madam Speaker, are robbed or worse, the government has falsely promised my rural families that they care when they know that we are years and years away from boots

on the ground. There are not enough RCMP officers to go around, and the government knows that. I would love to know how that promise is going to be fulfilled. You can say whatever you want on paper, but we know, everybody in this House knows, that we do not have enough RCMP officers in Canada. It’s a national shortage.

I would love that explained to me, how in my community, where people are being robbed – we have families that leave their children with their grandparents and are being robbed four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, 10 times a year on the same properties, all of their things stolen. They have to claim insurance. Then they have to pay for the insurance and the replacement of those things. They’re sitting in their houses cowering as people are coming onto their properties, stealing their things. There is no way that the RCMP can get there in time because there are not enough. Our front-line workers are working like crazy to try and help as much as they can. In rural areas we’re talking about large distances.

Where is our public trust? The truth is that the government knows this, Madam Speaker, and is promising the people of our constituencies, the rural folks, that somehow they’re magically going to have boots on the ground. We know that this isn’t possible. I would love to have an answer to that question.

Now, in terms of the economy I understand why the government might feel that the tides have turned and sunny skies are here.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane under Standing Order 29(2)(a).

Mr. Westhead: Yes. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I was listening to the member talk about the rural crime issue, and I hear her. I’ve heard my constituents say – you know, we share a border, actually. I share a border with the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View, and a lot of my constituents are experiencing the same problems as hers are. I hear that she’s concerned about not having RCMP officers hired in a reasonable amount of time, and that’s not an unreasonable thing to be concerned about.

You know, I have the same questions. It’s great to put money towards hiring officers, but having them actually be on the ground and doing the work that we want them to do is another part of the solution. I suppose that some of the ways that we’re trying to address that in the short term is also by hiring civilian officers who can file reports so that trained officers can be released from behind their desks and get out into the community and do the patrolling, so that they’re not stuck writing reports. Those are some short-term solutions in terms of getting boots on the ground.

But, you know, the member is right, and she identifies concerns with rural crime. What we did is that we spoke to the RCMP and the Crown prosecutors and asked them: what resources do you need to help start addressing this problem? The answer they gave us was: we need additional funding for more officers and for trying to get officers out from behind their desks so that they can be in the community. So the approach we’ve taken to try to address this problem is speaking directly to the police and asking them what their solution is. The member is now saying that she disagrees with what the RCMP are telling us the solution is.

I agree with the member’s concerns, and she raises some valid points, but I’ve yet to hear any solutions that they would provide. So I’d like to give the member some opportunity to tell us solutions rather than complaints.

4:20

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

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, and thank you to the member. It’s interesting that you should bring that up because I’ve also spoken

with our local RCMP. The interesting thing is that those solutions that you're referring to, the ones that you're talking about, actually came from the RCMP. That was a long consultation because we actually did consult. That is part of the solution. The one that you spoke about is one that we actually came up with on our side. [laughter] In fact, it came up from our side because we actually consulted.

I find this interesting, Madam Speaker, that they laugh when not a single NDP member in this House attended any single rural crime meeting that we put together. Everybody was invited. Not one. In fact, we were at all of them. We talked about them at a federal level, at a provincial level.

The member actually brings up a very valid point about bringing in local people to work with officers. That is an RCMP idea and initiative, one that worked. When I was a young kid, we had parents on patrol, we had local community patrols. We had all of these kinds of things that worked together with the local police to help.

One of the solutions, in fact, to the member, is actually to inspire public trust, to be able to inspire people to help out their communities, to actually layer it back into the community, to not take this approach from a top-ended level that somehow the government knows better about what's going on in these communities. Reach out to your communities; that's a solution. Talk to the RCMP; that's a solution. Attend our town halls; that's a solution.

We have families all over the place in these rural communities that have absolutely no idea how to move forward. Even still, if they are inspired to have ideas of how to work together, to bring together community as opposed to a government that provides divisive behaviour versus bringing communities together, that would provide a ton of solutions. Instead, the government makes false promises to our rural folks that somehow they're going to get boots on the ground. That's what was in the Speech from the Throne, not about any other solutions.

I can give you a ton of solutions, and – you know what? – I'm not taking credit for any of them. They came from the people that I represent who live it, breathe it, feel it, and are impacted every single day by what is going on. It is not my place to come up with solutions for people. I didn't live what they went through. These people have the absolute – it's a crisis. And I find it absolutely appalling that members of the government would feel that they can laugh because they think that – they didn't attend any of our town halls or any of the ones that were put on by any of these rural people.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and respond to the throne speech. There's a lot of content in this throne speech, and unfortunately with the little bit of time that I have in front of the Chamber, I can't cover it all. I do miss my time in the fall, serving as Leader of the Opposition, when I'd have a full 90 minutes. I'm sure you miss it, too, Madam Speaker, listening to me go on for 90 minutes. Instead, I have my 15 minutes.

The first thing I'd like to talk about. You know, the hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View spoke about this a bit. In the throne speech it talks about how everything is okay now. Lots of optimism, and the problems are fixed, and we're all hunky-dory and moving forward. The problem, Madam Speaker, is that when I talk to my constituents, they certainly don't feel that way, and when I talk to your constituents and constituents of the members across the way, they don't feel that way. I was in Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater a few weeks ago having a speech. They were frustrated. They didn't feel like it was going that way. Vegreville, Viking: I dropped by there, and I've been to Red Deer. They don't feel that everything is okay.

Probably the reason they don't feel everything is okay is that there are some numbers that show it's not. First off, there are 165,300 unemployed Albertans right now in this province, 26,000 more than when this government took office. It doesn't feel that good. In January 10,500 full-time jobs were lost in Alberta, not fixed, and 43,000 unemployed youth are in this province right now. There were 92,000 fewer payrolled jobs in Alberta at the end of 2017. Calgary currently has the second-highest unemployment rate in the country, at 7.9 per cent, and Edmonton is currently tied for the third-highest unemployment rate of any large city in this country.

ATB Financial's chief economist, Todd Hirsch, says that people are making less money, that job prospects are still there, but they're at lower paying opportunities.

The Edmonton Chamber of Commerce says: "Are the difficult times truly behind us? That's not what I hear. Things on the ground appear to be still as much of a struggle as ever."

From the Calgary Chamber of Commerce: "73% of businesses surveyed reported that their costs will increase due to the carbon levy."

The Bank of Canada says that there will be about 60,000 fewer jobs by 2019 directly as a result of the minimum wage increases across this country.

The list goes on and on.

Our constituents certainly don't feel like it's okay. And when they read that from this government and they hear that from this government, they feel like this government doesn't hear them. A lot of that is because this government doesn't talk to them. As you know, Madam Speaker, this government spends most of their time talking to themselves or within a bubble of people that have the NDP world view.

The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View did a great job just a few moments ago in her speech talking about this in the context of rural crime, which is also in the throne speech. The rural crime issue has been a big issue in rural Alberta for two years. Particularly, last year it increased significantly. Communities that I represent, counties that I represent: some of them have seen increases of 400, 500 per cent in their property crime rates. That's an epidemic. The police have been saying it's an epidemic.

I've been coming to this Chamber and saying for a long time on behalf of my constituents that there's a serious problem with rural crime, and so have my colleagues. For most of that time this government was silent on that issue. Even their rural members who knew that and were hearing that from their constituents sat there very silently and never advocated on their behalf.

We filled the galleries, Madam Speaker, with hundreds of people from all across this province, all across central Alberta in particular. They were the ones who came up, who travelled here to say to this government: hey, we have a serious problem. I moved to have an emergency debate in this House about that serious problem, and the government spoke against that emergency debate, to not grant it to them.

Now, something happened with this government over Christmas and over the break, particularly the last few weeks. I suggest to you, Madam Speaker, that it was probably the election of the Member for Calgary-Lougheed as Leader of the Official Opposition and the uniting of the Conservative Party and the fact that the NDP are still stuck in the high 20s in the polls and can't seem to go any higher than that. All of a sudden they realized: "We've got a big problem. We do have some rural Alberta seats. We need to try to hold them."

I don't know if that's possible based on stuff like Bill 6 and rural crime. I don't know. You may know better than me, Madam Speaker. I would suggest probably not. Rural Albertans, of which I

am one, will not forget that easy how we have been treated by this government for the last three and a half years.

But that's what changed over Christmas. Then all of a sudden the government comes back, and they say, "We're going to solve the problem; we're going to solve the problem; we're going to put in \$11 million," I believe it was, Madam Speaker, "towards the employment of some new officers and some Crown prosecutors." One of the issues for sure is a shortage of law enforcement officers and a shortage of Crown prosecutors. I will point out that that announcement doesn't even get the Crown prosecutors back up to the level that they were at before they were reduced.

You know, it's a step in the right direction – good for the government for finally taking it – but the problem is that when you then go and look at the announcement, all of those officers are coming from detachments across rural Alberta. They're being removed from those detachments, and they're being put into these other spots.

I represent detachments that are already under extreme stress, under capacity already, things like maternity leave, stress leave, reasonable reasons why officers are on stress leave. They're not back because of those reasons, and now they're going to see their colleagues be removed. A great example is the staff sergeant at Rocky Mountain House, a dear friend of mine, Mark Groves, who has been bumped and promoted up to try to deal with this rural crime issue in central Alberta. He's a great person for that job, but now we don't have Mark doing the work in Rocky Mountain House, one of the busiest detachments in this province.

I can expect, possibly, that we are going to continue to see the capacity and the stress issues and people having to go on leave because now there is even less capacity for these officers that are dealing with that. Now, the number one reason for that is because there are not enough officers in the depot. The RCMP do not have enough officers to fill that.

If this government had taken the time to go talk to anybody in Red Deer county, Lacombe county – those are big counties. Maybe call up the reeve and say: "Hey, what's going on? Your crime rates have been up. What's been going on?" You know what they'd tell you? They've been trying to hire RCMP officers. The money is there from the county. They themselves have been trying to solve this problem for the provincial government. They can't get the officers. One, two, three years go by, and they can't get the officers because there is nobody there.

So then the government wants to tell the public – and this is what the hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View I think was so upset about, and rightly upset about – that they've solved this problem. But they're misleading Albertans. They haven't solved the problem, and they haven't taken the time to talk to anybody that's experiencing this problem.

Back home over the constituency break another elderly man out at Rocky Mountain House – I know him – was robbed at his place and beaten and put in the hospital. This is a real problem. This is a serious problem. It is an epidemic, like I said it was when I first came to this Chamber. It is a serious issue, not consulted. Then they want my constituents and this side of the House to trust them, to trust that they've got this fixed. Well, how can we when they keep misleading us, when the government keeps misleading us?

4:30

You know, the carbon tax was also talked about in this throne speech. This is a tax on my constituents and your constituents that this government never campaigned on. In fact, they hid it from Albertans during their campaign. They hid it from Albertans when they door-knocked. They hid it during the debates when their leader was in the debates. They hid that carbon tax from the people of

Alberta. Then they brought in the largest tax increase in Alberta. Not a lot of trust there.

Then they said: "This is going to be the amount. We won't raise it." Then their ally and their good friend Justin Trudeau called them up, and they flew down to Ottawa and said: "What do you want, Justin? We're in. Whatever you need." And they raised that tax. Another promise broken.

Then the Premier – the Premier – says:

Every penny raised by the carbon levy will be rebated back to Albertans or put back to work for our economy in new... initiatives.

She's referring to the carbon tax here.

This is not a situation where we're going to apply it against the deficit, for instance, to maintain current operations, or anything like that.

Then we sit in this Chamber, Madam Speaker, and we read the budget, and we find out that that's exactly what they're doing. They've brought in a backdoor PST because they knew that in this province you have to have a referendum if you want to bring in a PST, and they knew that Albertans disagreed with their carbon tax. They know that Albertans disagree with the PST, and they didn't want to go back to the boss and say: can we bring in this tax? So they snuck it in and misled Albertans and told Albertans: we won't use it for general revenue. Now they're doing it. Trust? I don't think you can trust that.

Rebates. Let's talk about rebates. You've got a 67 per cent increase in the carbon tax in this budget, that was hidden in the budget – we're starting to see a bit of a pattern here – but it's been admitted to now by the Finance minister's office. Of that 67 per cent tax increase, is any of that going to rebates? No. There's no increase in rebates, totally against the promise that the Premier has made.

Now we find out that seniors living on fixed incomes are being charged 30 per cent of their carbon tax rebates to pay the rent. Now, they still have to pay carbon tax on everything because this is a tax on everything, as we know. It's a tax on the seniors' centre that they go recreate at. It's a tax on the swimming pool they participate in. It's a tax on every grocery that they buy. It's a tax on everything because everything comes by train or car in our society, so everything goes on fuel. They've lost 30 per cent. Then when the seniors say, "Whoa, whoa, whoa; this isn't fair," the hon. minister of seniors says: "That's okay. They've got 70 per cent left." Seventy per cent? First, you said that they were going to get all the rebate; now you're letting people take 30 per cent of their rebates.

Here we go. You've got a tax you never campaigned on, never told Albertans about. You hid it, tricked them, brought it in. Now you've got it. Then you tell them that it's going to stay at \$40. Now it's up to \$50. Now you've got a 67 per cent increase in the tax in the budget. Now you've got the tax being used for general revenue. Now you've got seniors losing their rebates after this government told seniors in my community to fund raise for the carbon tax, one of the most ridiculous things that I think anybody could ever say to seniors in our communities, that have built them.

They want us to trust them. That's what they're asking with this throne speech, but given that history just on the carbon tax alone, plus the lack of consultation on things like crime, a pattern of this government – I know you know, Madam Speaker, that this government does not consult outside of their inner circle. Bill 6 was a great example of that, and the list goes on and on. But they want us to trust them, give them a blank cheque: "It's okay. It's okay." Well, we can't. We can't, especially when you look at the fact that at \$50 for the carbon tax, the average Albertan's heating bill will be up \$250. That's significant. I can tell you that I know for sure that the members across the way are hearing from constituents about

their heating and electricity bills, and I bet you their constituents won't be very happy about spending \$250 on natural gas because of this government's cash grab on them.

But the government's own tax adviser says that the only way that you could actually get an impact on the environment is to raise the carbon tax to \$200. Now, if you've got this pattern of misleading Albertans by this government since the very first day they took office, since before they took office – they misled them while they were campaigning – how are we supposed to trust that they're not now going to raise this carbon tax to \$200, jump up everybody's gas bills, you know, \$1,000 plus? I don't think we could take their word for it. I know the constituents that I represent wouldn't take their word for it. Instead, they want to come talk about this throne speech.

The other part of this speech that I find humorous, sadly, is that there's a section in it called Path Back to Balance. Then we see this government bring forward a budget. A budget. This year this government predicted that we would be in surplus. Now we find out that this government's numbers, something we said would happen, are \$96 billion in debt over the next four years. Ninety-six billion dollars in debt.

This government has an \$8.8 billion deficit. They have raised spending by 16 per cent since the PC government was in power. They love to stand in this Chamber and say: "Well, we do it differently than the PCs. It's the PCs' fault." Well, look, I come from the former Wildrose legacy party, and I can point out some things the PC Party did wrong. But what I can tell you is this. This government raised things 16 per cent since they took over. They put in an \$8.8 billion deficit, and they got our province on track for one of the largest intergenerational thefts against our children, \$96 billion. When the PCs left office, they were under \$13 billion in debt. This government is getting close to two-thirds of the way there just in this year's deficit.

They want us to trust them. They want to blame other governments. In 2018-2019 the debt has increased by 321 per cent under this government's watch. They can't blame anybody else for that. Under their own projections, if they're still in office in 2021 – I hope they're not – it'll be a 500 per cent increase. By 2019, when that \$96 billion in debt arrives, it'll be a 646 per cent increase. A path to balance inside your throne speech? It's crazy, Madam Speaker.

The MLA for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater said in the *Smoky Lake Signal* on April 3: we dropped our 2018 budget last week; it's looking pretty balanced. He goes on to say that the NDP budget was able to curb spending more or less. A member of this government wants to go to his newspaper and say that a 16 per cent increase in spending is getting spending under control, that an \$8.8 billion deficit is getting things back to balance, that putting a budget before this Chamber that will see us go to \$100 billion in debt and see my grandchildren still having to pay for the mess that this government has created is a path back to balance. Well, it's not, Madam Speaker. It's ridiculous to even assert that.

But if the fact is that this government thinks that that is a path back to balance and that that is getting spending back in control, then we are in a lot of trouble. This government has no plan to get our fiscal house back in order. They will continue, it appears, with their budget, despite what they say inside their throne speech, to destroy our economy. They will continue to put debt on our children and our children's children, and they don't want to talk about the consequences of that. You know, we're looking at, between 2018-2019 and 2023-2024, under this government's projections, about \$17.63 billion in interest payments alone.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane under 29(2)(a).

Mr. Westhead: Yes, under 29(2)(a). Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre said just near the end of his speech there that – he claims that there are certain things that the government doesn't want to talk about. You know, I guess I'd like to ask him the same question, if there are things that he doesn't want to talk about. I know that there are quite a few good things happening in his constituency.

I know that there's a pipeline, for example, under construction. It just really strikes me as odd that a member like him doesn't talk about the good things. I mean, certainly, it's within his rights as a member to talk about the things he's concerned about, but I would think that he would also want to talk about the good things that happen in his community. It just strikes me as odd that, you know, he accuses us of not talking about certain things. Meanwhile he neglects to talk about certain things, too, like the pipeline that's under construction.

There was an announcement that was made just a few days ago that I would wonder if he would want to talk about or perhaps answer a question I've got for him. There was \$1.9 million from the federal and provincial governments that had gone towards the Mountain Rose Women's Shelter in Rocky Mountain House. This is funding that builds on our government's commitment to protect and support women and children that are affected by family violence. We're going to stand with survivors of violence. The new shelter is going to ensure that families have a safe and supportive place to live.

You know, the member doesn't like to talk about certain things, and I wonder if the reason he doesn't want to talk about things like a women's shelter is because of his own past, firing someone who came forward with concerns about sexual violence or sexual harassment. The member needs to look at his own behaviour and answer questions in his own mind and solve his own cognitive dissonance and help us understand why there are things like that that he doesn't want to talk about.

4:40

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker, for the question. First off, the Mountain Rose Women's Shelter is a great organization in Rocky Mountain House. I do a lot of fundraising with the women's shelter. I have a program based out of my office where we do baskets of hope, actually, for the ladies that are in the shelter. Often only toys are donated to the shelter for kids, so we focus with the community primarily on trying to make sure that we have Christmas for ladies that are in the shelter. In fact, the shelter auctions off a fishing trip with me every year, to come fishing on my boat, with the proceeds going to the women's shelter. A very big fan of that organization and the hard work that they're doing. I'm working hard with them personally to help them build their new building, and I thank the hon. member for bringing that up.

As for his other assertions, you know, trying to compare an organizational decision of a company that I owned, which was a mistake that the company made – we have apologized for that, and that situation was over a decade old – is kind ridiculous when his government called constituents inside my constituency and told fixed-income seniors to fund raise for the carbon tax, something that this government has never apologized for; when this government has ignored the swimming pool in Sundre when they say, "Hey, we may have to shut our doors"; when this government has ignored the AISH recipients inside my constituency who are crying out for help because of the damage the carbon tax is doing

to them and the fact that this government has taken no concrete action on PDD. It's pretty rich for that member to do that.

What's even worse is that I share a border with that member. In fact, not too far away from my ranch, right on the other side of the road, is the member's riding. He's never spoken to any of those constituents. He's never come and talked to them about Bill 6. When the agriculture industry was being affected, he didn't care, never left his office. My office had to help service all those constituents. Now, fortunately for them and for me, they'll be my constituents after the next election because of the boundary redraw, and they're very happy about that.

It's disappointing that this government wants to talk about the past and not about their actions now and that they still have not stood up in this House and apologized to the seniors of Sundre that they told to fund raise to pay for your ridiculous carbon tax.

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

Seeing none, I will recognize the Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and respond to Her Honour's Speech from the Throne. Over the last few years Alberta has experienced the longest and deepest recession in a generation. Our government had a choice: to slash programs and services that Albertans rely on and to follow through with the previous government's plans, which would have seen cuts to health care, schools without enough teachers to meet enrolment growth, the introduction of a hospital room waiting tax, and a continuation of a decades-long infrastructure deficit – our government chose a different path. We stabilized funding for education and health care, and we invested in infrastructure repairs and upgrades to ensure that our public infrastructure is around for generations to come. These are investments not just in our province's present but also in our future.

Nearly three years later the recovery is well under way, with 90,000 new jobs in 2017 and the fastest growing economy in the nation. As we've heard in this House, manufacturing is up, housing starts are up, exports are up, retail sales are up, and drilling activity is up. These are all good signs and good news for the people of Calgary-Acadia and indeed across Alberta. But we know that the recovery hasn't reached every household. We know that there is more work to be done.

Our government is committed to a recovery that is built to last and that focuses on all Albertans, one that supports the diversification of our economy and that builds on our strength and our ingenuity as Albertans, which is why I'm so very proud of our government's work to diversify and support new and growing industries in our province such as the digital industries tax credit and the creation of new seats in our postsecondary education system to support this program. By increasing access to digital media and tech education, Albertans will be able to train for great careers in this growing sector. It will also ensure that Alberta-based employers in this sector are able to grow their businesses with highly trained, talented people right here at home. Madam Speaker, this is a winning proposition all around.

Now, as a born-and-raised Albertan I know how much our oil and gas industry has contributed to our province's prosperity. Indeed, my family has benefited greatly from the industry as well. My father's career has been in oil and gas as an engineer. In fact, his career started in Calgary, when he and my mom moved here from Manitoba nearly 40 years ago. It's in fact their anniversary this spring, so I'd like to also take this moment to extend to my parents a happy 40th anniversary as Albertans. My youngest brother is also an engineer in the oil and gas sector, and I myself spent many years

in the industry. Throughout those years in the industry I learned a great deal not just about the industry but also specifically about pipelines and the importance of pipelines as a safe and efficient way to transport our product to the coast and indeed across our country.

These markets to the coast enable us to access markets around the world so that, truly, we can move away from selling our product to our greatest competitor. I would argue that one of the greatest challenges facing our economy is that we are selling our product at a discount to the United States. By not receiving the full value for our oil products, Albertans and indeed all Canadians are losing out. It's impacting resource royalty revenue. It's impacting job creators. It's having an impact on employment levels. Truly, this is something that impacts us not just here in Alberta but in communities in B.C., communities on our east coast, and across the country.

Madam Speaker, this land lock must end. The Trans Mountain pipeline has received the necessary approvals, and it is time that this pipeline be built, which is why I am proud to be part of the government that is working so hard to ensure that this pipeline is built. When necessary we even intervened in court, and we have won. We have stepped up when the B.C. government attempted to regulate something it had no right to regulate, and we will continue to do whatever it takes. We will not hesitate to invoke legislation to protect workers in our energy industry and the resources that we own, just as Premier Peter Lougheed did. Every option is on the table, and we will get this pipeline built.

Madam Speaker, I'd like to take a moment to speak about our government's work to address the opioid crisis. But before I begin, I want to start with a personal message to my fellow Albertans. To anyone who's listening, if you or a loved one is struggling with opioid abuse or opioid use, you are not alone. We have your back. Nearly two Albertans a day are dying from fentanyl-related overdoses. These are family members and friends from all corners of our province, from all walks of life. They leave behind grieving families and friends and deep holes in our communities. To all who have lost a loved one, know that we grieve with you. I am so deeply sorry for your loss. We will continue to do all that we can to save lives and prevent more overdoses.

To that end, we are investing in new primary care supports so that individuals and families can more easily access treatment and counselling in their home communities. A 9 and a half million dollar grant is increasing the ability of family physicians to respond to the opioid crisis. Making sure that we identify and open new treatment opportunities and harm reduction programs in all corners of our province is a priority. We've opened more opioid dependency treatment clinics, detox beds, and telehealth programs to reach all across our province and to serve an additional 3,500 patients each year. Receiving Suboxone or methadone treatment helps people to reach stability in their lives and to continue on their journey to recovery. It's been called the gold standard and a game changer for individuals living with a medical condition that is a substance-use disorder. We will be opening more clinics in other communities in Alberta in the weeks and months to come.

Nearly 50,000 naloxone kits have been distributed in communities across the province, and more than 3,300 overdose reversals have been voluntarily reported. Alberta's first supervised consumption services opened in Calgary in October. As of the end of February they've had close to 7,000 visits, and staff have reversed 119 overdoses. Alberta's harm reduction agency, ARCHES, opened its supervised consumption site in February, and staff there work with 90 to 100 clients every day. Supervised consumption services are now also open in Edmonton, including for in-patients at the Royal Alexandra hospital, a first in North America.

4:50

We worked closely with the Kainai First Nation to make sure that that community had the life-saving services provided by an overdose prevention site. We worked quickly to secure federal approval to deploy the trailer that had been used to provide temporary supervised consumption services at the Sheldon M. Chumir Health Centre in Calgary before the permanent service had opened there.

Our response has been and continues to be guided by the Minister's Opioid Emergency Response Commission, which includes public health leaders, law enforcement, community workers, and Albertans who've experienced this crisis first-hand. The Minister's Opioid Emergency Response Commission has made 26 recommendations as of February of 2018 and forms the basis of our co-ordinated response to this crisis. The first 12 of those recommendations were officially accepted by myself and publicly posted on the opioid website in late 2017, and the subsequent 14 recommendations have been accepted by myself and are expected to be publicly posted and released shortly, but all are in the process of being implemented.

Some of the successes over the past year include, as I noted, distributing over 50,000 naloxone kits, opening the first supervised consumption services in Calgary and gearing up for other locations in Edmonton and Lethbridge, and improving access to treatment by opening new clinics and programs in places like Grande Prairie, Fort McMurray, Sherwood Park, central Alberta, and via telehealth to all corners of our province. We've also enabled firefighters, police officers, and other emergency responders to inject naloxone. We've worked with First Nations and Métis partners to gather data, and we've established a new \$5 million grant program to fund indigenous communities to allow them to create and roll out opioid-related initiatives in their communities.

By the end of fiscal 2017 government had spent the total \$30 million allocated for recommendations made by the commission and approved by myself. While it will take time to see the number of deaths decrease, the commission is working closely with service providers and people with lived experience to save lives. We continue to work with the commission and our partners to build and strengthen actions to prevent opioid overdoses and provide appropriate supports and service options for those struggling with opioid use.

I often hear from members of the community about the importance of treatment and ensuring that the mental health supports that individuals need are available for them as they take steps forward in their recovery, which is why I was so proud to see the inclusion and the announcement of legislation that will be forthcoming from our government to ensure that there is safety and quality care in private treatment facilities. This is something that is long overdue, Madam Speaker, and I think really speaks to the former government's unwillingness to acknowledge that substance use is a medical health condition and requires a medical response.

In the months to come we'll continue to expand public treatment, continue to expand harm reduction, and continue to expand public education. By working together and treating this like the health crisis that it is, we can save lives and work to stop the devastation and the heartbreak that is caused by this crisis.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I was very pleased to hear of the hon. member's efforts with respect to safe consumption sites. Certainly, in the community that I represent, in Lethbridge, there is one such site as a result of the business community in my

city as well as mayor and council, front-line workers, the fire and EMS chief, the police chief, and others throughout the community and many advocates asking for this to be so.

So it was with great dismay that we saw the Leader of the Opposition come into our city and lecture our police chief, our fire and EMS chief, our business community, our mayor and council, our front-line health care workers on how they ought to be responding to this crisis. This site was some months and years in the making and certainly as a result of community action and community coming forward. Certainly, in Lethbridge many people, Madam Speaker, found that to be an insult, and it was a grave mistake on the part of the Leader of the Official Opposition to be so strident and ideological in his condemnation of this site in my city.

Madam Speaker, I'm wondering if the member can talk a little bit about what has happened since that site opened, how many lives have been saved, and any other details that she's heard from the community, and share those details with the House because in my view this is a great legacy of this hon. member, these safe consumption sites. They have saved lives, and we ought to be very, very proud of the work that she has done in the public interest in this province.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. associate minister.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Madam Speaker and to the member for the very important question. I really need to take a moment to commend the city of Lethbridge, their leadership at the council level as well as police, other first responders, the mayor, and the community agencies such as ARCHES, which have really come together to find local solutions to the opioid crisis in their community, drawing on their experience of their community.

You know, when I spoke with the chief of police, one of the comments he made was that we can't enforce our way out of this problem. Ultimately, in order to address the opioid crisis, we need to provide the supports that individuals need so that they may make their way from drug use through treatment when they are ready.

I, too, was dismayed by the Leader of the Opposition's comments. The fact of the matter is that you can't get well after you've died. We have lost far too many Albertans by pretending that substance use is a personal choice, that it's something people just decide that they're going to do. No one chooses substance use. No one chooses to put their life at risk in that way. In so many ways I think that the shame and the stigma that was evidenced by the member opposite's comments really worsens the problem in many ways.

I have heard from so many family members who've lost a loved one who said that they didn't know what to do to help their child, they didn't know where to turn, they felt shame that their child was struggling, and because there was no one to turn to, they ended up losing their child. My heart breaks for those families, Madam Speaker, especially because we know better now. We know that this is a public health concern. We know that there are safe and effective treatments, medical treatments, available.

That is why, Madam Speaker, it is so important for us to be expanding access to these treatments through primary care networks, through family doctors, and working to address some of that stigma that can still exist in parts of our communities. Every person in our province struggling with substance use deserves dignity and respect and a chance to make a choice for treatment another day.

That is why I am so proud of the work of supervised consumption services to be able to support people. Since the ARCHES site has opened in Lethbridge, we've seen between 90 and 100 people coming each and every day. These are individuals that would have been at risk of overdose. One of the really fantastic things, in my opinion, about supervised consumption services is not just that

there are medically trained professionals to intervene at the first sign of overdose . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wish to speak to this matter? The hon. Member for Howwood.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to respond to the throne speech that was given on the 8th of March. It's no doubt that members on the other side of the House have put a lot of effort into the preparation going into this session, and I want to acknowledge the hard work they've done. However, I'm still a little disappointed that many families in our province are still struggling under the weight of the recession and the added burdens this government has inflicted on them in recent years.

We were all relieved when we finally heard the measures the Premier and her caucus were going to make to get British Columbia to back away from their illegal point of their plan and effectively make sure that all Canadians knew their resolve. They stated in their Speech from the Throne that they "refuse to let anyone turn their backs on the thousands upon thousands of working people in our energy sector." They affirmed that they would "do whatever it takes" to get the pipeline built, but reality is that time is ticking, another year has gone by, and there's still no pipeline built.

5:00

Struggling families have not only been stifled with unemployment; they've been burdened with a huge tax that this government never campaigned on. I find it ironic that while they spoke about making sure that consumers have more predictable bills and that investors have more certainty, there's no mention of the huge carbon tax, that is hurting families, businesses, and investors, a tax they never campaigned on or spoke about in their throne speech, a tax that conveniently funnels more revenue to government coffers to spend on whatever government decides.

We've continually said over and over again that there is a scientific consensus that anthropogenic climate change is real, yet they try and shift the conversation and say that we're climate change deniers just because we do not believe in their tax. We're not pro carbon tax politicians, and the politicians on the other side of the House, who are, can't even tell us by how much the taxes will reduce emissions, nor did they dare to talk about it in their Speech from the Throne. As a matter of fact, in the recent budget the NDP admitted – and we knew that this was the case all along – that their carbon tax is simply about grabbing more tax revenue for the government.

It talked about how Albertans step up to defend one another and how, when they're down, we help each other. It sounds more like a pep talk to struggling families to step up to the plate and help each other out, without the devastating carbon tax. They have, after all, told our seniors to hold fundraisers to help pay for the carbon tax. They're worried that they will lose their recreational facilities due to the exorbitant costs.

They spoke about billions of dollars for schools, hospitals, and public services having actually evaporated and how thousands of good jobs have been tossed aside and how money that should be put in the pockets of working Canadians has been directed south of the border. These statements aren't inaccurate. They are. But where is this government to help keep the families and the struggling businesses? They've inflicted the economy with a huge so-called carbon tax, which is really a sales tax. If we're going to be honest, they've hurt the economy with their reckless and harmful policies and legislation.

Businesses have gone south of the border, and they've told us why. They've left due to huge increases that cut into their bottom line and have no choice but to move. Struggling businesses that

were hit recently by the recession don't need to be hit with a carbon tax. Minimum wage increases and new labour legislation are putting an unnecessary burden on businesses here in Alberta. The \$15-an-hour pledge for the minimum wage is not and was not addressing equality at all, like the NDP wants to portray, but instead increasing Albertans' wage so that the government gets more in the form of taxes. If that was what this government is really concerned about, they would increase the basic personal amount, which would help employers and employees alike without increasing everyone's tax.

Can I just emphasize right now that the new labour legislation that changed the Employment Standards Code affected small, medium, and large businesses in so many ways? Many of them already have implemented the carbon tax and the minimum wage increase, and they cannot make ends meet. The rules governing holiday pay, overtime, and vacation increased labour costs. These were drastic for some and, unfortunately, fatal for others. Employees that worked in restaurants and businesses that could not take another blow from the government ended up not only getting holiday, overtime, and vacation increases, but they've actually lost their jobs.

Layering small costs on top of small costs on top of small costs ends up being big costs that the businesses just can't keep up with. The government talks about how businesses have moved south of the border. Yes, they have, and for good reason. This province has lost billions of dollars in investment capital and will have, with that money moving south, a potential brain drain in the future.

The throne speech talks about choices that were made during the downturn and how the government did not rest idle or turn their backs on the day-to-day needs of people and families. Can I just say that if the people of Alberta truly felt in their hearts that this was the case, then the government should not have had to say that?

The speech spoke of a path back to balance and how once the budget was released, it would show this plan, but Albertans are having a hard time seeing any balance in the budget just dropped a few short days ago. The budget actually included more spending and included an \$8.8 billion deficit, that will lead to an overall \$93 billion deficit in five short years. I'm not sure how this budget will lead to a balanced budget in the future.

It's truly discouraging to hear that our province's debt load is currently at \$54.2 billion this year. In a province that was effectively debt free a short 14 years ago, this leaves us with interest payments on the debt of almost \$2 billion a year, and that number is supposed to climb to \$4 billion a year in the next few years. Let's hope we don't get another credit downgrade. This is unsustainable, and our children and grandchildren will not be afforded the lifestyle we are accustomed to if we leave this debt to them.

Also, saying that this government is committed to making sure taxes on people and businesses will remain the lowest in Canada is really not adequate. More needs to be done. Albertans will not be able to withstand the 67 per cent increase to the carbon tax that's coming and the sales tax in disguise. This government knows that. The budget does nothing to show the people of Alberta the NDP's commitment to that end.

Now, the throne speech talks about crime; to be exact, protecting Albertans from crime. Rural Albertans are concerned about their safety and protection of their homes. The speech says that this must change. And while I'm glad that the government has finally come to a conclusion after we've loudly raised the issue with them over the past few years, it's really bad in rural Alberta. This is where the change is needed. Let's not talk about this anymore; let's take some action. Let's see the initiatives you spoke about being implemented. This is not something that can wait any longer. Rural Albertans need to see boots on the ground. That's where they're needed most. You spoke about this, but this needs to be resolved. We need to look

at other measures to make sure rural Albertans and their properties are safe.

Now, I've had several town halls in my constituency, and this is what we've heard: we need to address the gaps in the current judicial system. Quite frankly, the amount of capital that's being allocated for the number of Crown prosecutors who are retiring and leaving right now: we're not even going to meet that demand, never mind adding more Crown prosecutors.

We need to review the resources for the RCMP. We need to review the centralized 911 system. We need to increase the resources for mental health treatment. We need to support designated crime reduction units and work closely with the rural crime watch.

Finally, to bring my speech to a close, I'd like to stress that no one in this Chamber cheers for Alberta to fail. We all work together in this opposition as Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. We'll do the best we can to continue robust debate and bring the truth to this Assembly.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any others wishing to speak to the Speech from the Throne? The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

Mr. Piquette: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my privilege to rise in the House today to respond to the Speech from the Throne. I think the member who just spoke mentioned this being about choices. That was the theme of the throne speech. I think the key kind of line from that is when the Lieutenant Governor – and I got it right this time, which is great – said, “The cumulative impact of making different choices is paying off.” I think that if we wanted to summarize maybe the leitmotif of our government, it's that.

Of course, we do have an NDP government in Alberta. In May 2015 the people of Alberta decided that they wanted to make a different choice. They'd been told for decades that – you know, the refrain was this person called TINA, right? I mean, our predecessors liked to talk about TINA all the time. TINA was one of Klein's favourite people. Of course, TINA refers to: there is no alternative. The message that Albertans had been told for many years was that there was only one party that could govern the province and that there was only one way of doing things. The sort of sad irony of that is that that way of doing things was pretty much the opposite of many other jurisdictions.

The kind of choices we made in the past would be – I guess you could characterize it as reverse Keynesianism. Classic Keynesianism is the idea that, you know, there are going to be boom-and-bust cycles, that that's something that comes with our free-market system. The government does have a very important role in evening that out, and they do that by spending more money, borrowing money, if necessary, during a downturn in order to keep the economy from continuing to sink, and then they start to work to restrain spending, carefully and responsibly, once the economy starts to recover.

In Alberta we tended to do it the opposite way. When the economy started tanking, the idea was: “Oh, well, what we need to do is cut spending. We need to slash infrastructure. We need to cut back on maintenance. We need to start laying off teachers. We need to start laying off nurses.” The refrain was: yes, you know, it's really unfortunate, it's too bad, but there is no alternative.

5:10

Now, of course, in the early spring of 2015, you know, Premier Prentice proposed his budget, which was very much framed that way, that we have no alternative, that we need to freeze or roll back

spending, and that we need to increase a whole bunch of user fees, things that even at the time they'd know would slow down critical sectors of our economy such as the real estate sector and the energy sector. It just sort of goes on. I think Albertans made a wise choice at that point and said: “We've had enough. We've given you guys 44 years, and this is the best that you can provide for us? This is what you're telling us?” I think that the last few years have shown that Albertans, despite what some of the opposition say, do know what they're about and that they made the right choice.

I think that where we are today as a province reflects that. We're leading the country in growth. We're the first out. Although there is a long way to go – and I think nobody here pretends otherwise – definitely all the numbers and all the indicators show that we are definitely on the right track.

One of the first rules – and I think one of the other members alluded to it, but maybe I'll take a different spin on it – is that when you're in a hole, the first thing you want to do is stop digging. Now, I mean, you could characterize that as “stop digging to spend resources,” but another way to look at “stop digging” is not to make things worse – that's sort of the first step, I think – and then to incent recovery. It's going to be a different type of recovery, based on different understandings.

You know, another choice that our predecessors made and that the new, rebranded incarnation is making is this misconception that the government really can't do anything to help diversify the economy, that you just have to leave these things up to the market and that the market always knows best. The problem with that is: what do you do when the market puts you in a way where you're dependent on just a few commodities and you don't have any recourse if they start to collapse?

I had one interesting discussion, just to give an idea of this sort of attitude. I won't mention who it is, but I did speak to a high-ranking member of the previous government. I asked him the question: how is it that you guys didn't have a ministry for economic development? Why didn't you have, you know, officials that are working directly on diversifying our economy? The response I got was sort of: well, we didn't need one. I mean, I'm not sure how far-sighted that was. We're not making that same mistake, so what we're choosing to do is that we're choosing to use the power of government to make investments happen where otherwise they wouldn't.

A key part of that – and I'm happy to see that referred to in the budget – is the petrochemicals diversification program. It's a wonderful program because, of course, if the projects don't go ahead, it doesn't cost the taxpayer a dime. In fact, the credits being provided are being paid for by property taxes and income taxes before it's even complete. I mean, it's an ideal program, and it managed to bring Alberta back into consideration for these types of projects. For many years people didn't think about Alberta for petrochemical diversification, and I'm happy to report that that has changed in a big way. I've spoken to companies and individuals from jurisdictions like Texas and other areas that are actively looking in Alberta. What's bringing them in? The wonderful work that they're seeing happening in the Industrial Heartland. Basically, now that we're going to be having a supply of polypropylene, that opens up a lot of doors for us, too.

That's a choice we made, and that's why people elect a government, to make these types of choices that are going to benefit people rather than pretending that they don't have a choice. There is an alternative, and I think that whatever else happens in the future, we've shown Albertans that there is another way of doing things. I think what it means is that in the future they're going to be a little bit harder to fool.

I'll talk about another thing where making choices would be – you know, we can go back to the last big recession or, of course, the Klein government, which our opposition tends to pump up, that this was a great thing. I mean, that was a choice about once again pretending there was no choice when there was, and the sad part is that in that situation it was done quite intentionally. Basically, the idea was that our deficit was totally out of control and that we had to hack spending or the province was going to go bankrupt.

Now, I'm sure some of the members remember an individual named Kevin Taft. At that time Kevin Taft blew the whistle on that approach. I don't know if I need to table this or not. He basically said that the fix is in, that the types of small cuts and, you know, the incremental approach that had been done by the Getty administration had slayed the deficit dragon and we did not have to have massive and brutal cuts.

You know, what about under Klein? They set that aside. Instead, they went to Albertans and they told Albertans: there is no alternative; we're going bankrupt; we need to slash and burn. Then, with that, came a lot of the other issues that we're dealing with to this day. So they used it as: "There is no alternative. We have to privatize services. We have to privatize Alberta Transportation. We have to privatize registries. We have to privatize liquor stores." Some of those changes maybe were good; some of those maybe we're starting to regret. But, I mean, it was done under them.

My suspicion is that if the opposition changes sides with us, you know, after the next election, it's going to be very much that narrative. I mean, right now they're basically claiming that they can do – well, let's just say that if they have a magic formula for how you can continue infrastructure spending, cut taxes, reduce the deficit, and do that with no impact to front-line services, I'd like to see that magic formula.

Now, of course, one thing is the *deus ex machina* that the Leader of the Opposition has proposed: well, we're just going to take the government to court over equalization payments. I don't know if they're still saying that because their messaging keeps changing. But I think they know very well that they're not going to succeed. Just as the Leader of the Opposition and the members of his caucus say: we're also going to repeal the carbon tax. You know, this is despite the understanding that is out there that this is something that the federal government can make provinces do.

Why would they say these things when they know that they can't do them? Because they want to be able to be all things to all people until after they get elected, and then guess what they're going to be saying? There is no alternative. Then they're going to be able to do the types of cuts, you know, the slash and burn. I mean, the last round of that: in a major way the province is still recovering from that.

So, you know, it's about choices. I mean, the other choice would be to – the opposition likes to talk about that we let rural Albertans down. We made a much different choice than they did in a similar situation, where we didn't download our deficit problems onto municipalities. We've maintained MSI funding. We've even advanced it.

You know, I kind of wish that the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre had kept – he quoted three lines, I think, or three words from an article in the *Smoky Lake Signal*, taken out of context, of course. That's just fine, but I wish that he'd kept on reading because at that same meeting the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills was present as well, so he could actually – the mayor of Smoky Lake was also at the meeting. And this is from the article: after his report, the town of Smoky Lake's mayor, Hank Holowaychuk, expressed his appreciation to the NDP government and to Piquette for looking at the rural crime issue, ensuring the stability of the MSI funding, and ensuring that the agricultural

societies have the funding they need as well, all positive moves; we appreciate you guys. That's what he said. He then goes on to mention a couple of infrastructure projects that all of us wanted to see, that he was disappointed that he didn't see them. But that was really the outcome of that meeting. That's really the type of reaction to the direction we're going in, reflecting the throne speech, reflecting the budget, that I'm seeing out there.

5:20

I mean, I guess the other choice, you know, the one that the Member for Banff-Cochrane alluded to, was to fund the rural crime initiative. I have to say that I'm really nonplussed. When I talk to RCMP staff sergeants and constables – actually, I spoke to an officer from Ardrossan just this morning – and ask them their opinion about the rural crime initiative, I get a very, very different interpretation of what it means than what the opposition is presenting here. What they tell me is that they think this is the way to go, that being able to bring in additional resources in problem situations to be able to nip that problem in the bud is, like, a solution that makes sense to them, that, as a matter of fact, providing more support for civilian staff so that they can be out in the community more, so that they can actually leverage existing resources makes perfect sense. They're excited about these crime reduction units.

I don't seem to hear much concern about recruitment into them. On the contrary, you know, this type of posting is going to be something that's going to be very attractive to ambitious RCMP officers because, of course, they get the opportunity to investigate. Now, that was our choice, and it was their choice.

Well, they keep criticizing us, but I've yet to hear any sort of rural crime strategy, well, at least one that has anything to do with the province. The last I heard, they were waiting a year before they would propose something. I don't think Albertans... [Mr. Piquette's speaking time expired] Oh, I guess I'm out of time.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, just a request to please table any articles you've quoted from.

Mr. Piquette: I understand.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner under 29(2)(a).

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I listened to the Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater, he was referencing an economist, John Maynard Keynes. It's interesting. I appreciate that he's read and studied past economic models, but the Keynesian economic model states that you buy your way out of your troughs, but as you get out of your recession, you save for the next one. And the reality is that we now have decades where we've been able to study these models, and unfortunately there's actually been very little evidence that any of the governments that follow a Keynesian economic model actually save during the good times. So to base the government's policies, to base the government's go-forward strategy on an economic model that has been proven to be ineffective in being able to accomplish the second part of that model, which is the saving for that rainy day when the economy goes into recession again, is folly.

Now, I get the idea, and I've heard many times from the government side that they had to make choices, that they had to choose whether or not they were going to tighten their belt or whether they were going to spend their way out. Again, every Keynesian economic strategist would say that that's the right approach. The problem is that the original strategy that the government had at this point – and they did recognize this right from the beginning, and I take my hat off to them for recognizing

the problem that we were facing. Right from the beginning their approach was that they would quickly inject quantitative easing, whatever they want to call it, into the economy in order to be able to try to pull us out of that recession quickly. At this point, based upon their strategy, their Keynesian economic strategy, they should be at a positive. This year should have been a positive figure. Then they would show positive figures going into the future, which would fulfill that second part of the Keynesian economic model, which is to always save for the next time that it goes into the trough.

I do have a question, and I'm going to let the member have the opportunity to respond. I want him to be able to help this side of the House understand if they do have a plan for being able to get to that point where they actually do pay off or start to pay down that debt that they've accumulated, which is to the tune of about \$96 billion from their own numbers.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Piquette: All right. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to answer the member's question. Now, we do have a path to balance. Of course, we can't predict the future. I mean, these are plans; these are guidelines. But we would be, you know, running a balanced budget by 2023, and then that would be the time.

Now, of course, there's another factor to this, which is that over time, as long as the economy keeps growing, the debt becomes smaller relative to the overall economy. I mean, we look at other jurisdictions that run debts. The United States has carried a national debt I think since the Civil War. They're maybe not in a good situation now, but when they were growing, it was not seen as a big issue because it was in small proportion to the overall economy.

Now, as we go into the future, you know, we're bringing spending into balance. The productive potential of the economy is increasing as well; therefore, we're getting more tax revenue. We've made some very, very conservative assumptions about this.

The other thing that can prevent – I know what his concern is, of course, because until recently he was a member of quite a different party. He was a member of a party that, in fact, you know, came up partly to concerns over the Progressive Conservatives. [The time limit for questions and comments expired] Oh. I wish I could. Next time.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the Speech from the Throne? The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As always, it's indeed an honour to be able to rise in this House and give my response to the Speech from the Throne. Every time I rise in this House, I feel privileged that I was elected to represent the constituency of Little Bow. Despite the privilege of being an MLA, I think of myself as a pretty regular guy. I like to work around the farm. I like to ride my off-highway vehicle out west. I like the occasional beer on a hot day just like the Finance minister. I like classic westerns. And I like spending time with my family. That's who I am, and that's who I like to be.

What I don't want to do is to become out of touch with where I came from. I don't want to succumb to what my colleague from Drumheller-Stettler often refers to as dome disease. That isn't who I want to be. If I get a chance on a Friday afternoon, I'll go down to the curling rink and shoot pool with the boys for two or three hours. It's a pretty good barometer of what's going on in Alberta, not near as formal as some would think it needs to be but a good barometer for me nonetheless.

Unfortunately, this malady, this dome disease, creeps up on you, and it can colour your thinking. I think that's what's happening to this government. It appears to this side of the House that the

government may be a little out of touch with Albertans, and they're starting to realize it now. We've seen more and more examples of this ever since the Member for Calgary-Lougheed took his place in the front row as the Leader of the Official Opposition. This government has spent a lot of time backtracking from their previous positions to be more in line with the views expressed by members from this side of the House. It may seem odd that a party of socialists could come around to conservative thinking, but I guess that when a party spends as much time talking about a former Conservative Premier as much as the present one does, well, I guess it's not that far of a reach. It kind of makes me wonder why they don't shout out about the virtues of any socialist leaders that they prefer in their speeches. But I digress, Madam Speaker.

5:30

My point here is that sometimes I can't help but wonder if this government truly understands what the average Albertan feels, what's important to them. I talk with them all the time, Madam Speaker. I attend council meetings. I talk to reeves. We have a group down in southern Alberta called the mayors and reeves of southwestern Alberta. I get to speak with mayors and reeves from all over the area, meet with other politicians. I talk to folks on Main Street, Alberta. I've held town halls. I've got to tell you that the feedback I've heard leads me to believe that this government has lost touch with the average Albertan.

Rural crime has been brought up in the House a lot of times today. It was a good portion of the throne speech, yet if it was such a priority of this government, why was it that when we asked for an emergency debate last November, this government shot it down, with the gallery seats full of victims of rural crime? You know, I understand that it may have been procedurally incorrect, but if the government was compassionate and actually felt that a discussion about rural crime could be something important, I think the House leaders could have met. Maybe the House leader from the government would have said: "Look, we've got a full slate for the next week. What about Tuesday next we give you some time, and we'll have a debate next week?" That would have made some sense. That would have been a compassionate government understanding the people that were in the gallery here that day.

Despite numerous town halls – and that's been said several times here today, too – held by both UCP members and Members of Parliament, they have more than ample time to do so. I keep hearing: why weren't we invited? Members opposite were asking why they weren't invited. Well, the members opposite are citizens of Alberta just like every other Albertan, just like everybody on this side of the House. We're free to come and go as we please. All of our town halls were sufficiently advertised, and anyone would have been welcome. Madam Speaker, I'm not going to go too far there, but I think that truly is being out of touch.

We've heard discussion from the Justice minister that they've promised some extra officers. If there's a plan on how they're going to roll this out, I'm afraid I haven't heard it. For the sake of those victims that were here today and the victims that I listened to in five town halls that I went to and the victims in all of rural Alberta that are feeling this kind of pain, I hope that it's a better plan than the one they rolled out when they alienated rural folks across the whole province with that ill-conceived Bill 6, the farm bill. They had to scramble a little to fix that one, and the residual damage is still being felt today. They just seem to have a certain disconnect, and that's what makes this throne speech so frustrating. It touts a list of objectives, but given this government's poor record of carry-through I can't help but be a little pessimistic.

Madam Speaker, the throne speech talked a lot about ensuring Canadian tidewater access for Alberta energy. There are certainly a

lot of things that we could talk about there if we start that discussion with Tzepporah Berman as we begin our conversation about getting Alberta's energy to tidewater. Tzepporah Berman is a radical environmental activist. Her exploits are well known. She's been connected with civil disobedience for nearly 30 years. In 2016 this radical environmentalist was appointed co-chair of the Alberta NDP government's oil sands advisory group. Right from the Alberta government's website I'd just like to quote what the group was intended to do.

Specifically, the group's primary focus was to:

- consider how to implement the 100 megatonne per year carbon emissions limit for the oil sands industry.
- develop durable, effective structures and processes to address local and regional environmental issues.

Examples being air, land, water, biodiversity, cumulative effects and such.

And to:

- provide advice to government on investing carbon price revenue in innovations to reduce further emissions intensity.

Basically, the board was charged with making recommendations on implementing the new climate leadership plan, reviewing cumulative impacts of oil sands operations, and designing climate recommendations for the pathway to 2015. Quite a board to appoint a radical environmentalist to.

It didn't last long, though. It became a bit of a problem for the Alberta government when Ms Berman made it clear that she supported British Columbia's newly minted NDP Party and its environmental thoughts. Everyone involved claimed that the Berman release from the OSAG was some kind of mutual agreement. I guess it really isn't important enough to talk about or worry about. At the end of the day, she left an organization that was to implement a plan of the Alberta government on behalf of Albertans so that she could get back to fighting and chaining herself to equipment and causing as much civil disobedience as humanly possible for a pipeline company and work against the Alberta government. And it's a pipeline company, as much as this Alberta government hates to admit it, that they need to get busy with a project that will see Alberta's energy delivered to British Columbia, to be sent off from there to world markets. That is just one of the issues with Alberta energy that this government just doesn't seem to have quite figured out.

When I got here in 2015, the new government was teetering on how to keep oil in the ground because it was dirty somehow, off base. To me, it is amazing how that message has changed in under three years as this government has found that without oil, we are just another province. Madam Speaker, every other province in this country would give an arm for what we have, an abundance of wealth near a small city called Fort McMurray, 3 trillion barrels of the stuff that dreams are made of. There are a lot of zeros in 3 trillion. There are a lot more zeros in the value of those 3 trillion barrels, a number that this government has now realized it is impossible to do without.

The wealth in the oil sands is not an easy portion of the gross domestic product to ignore. That's why an environment that encourages development of that monstrously huge resource that directly affects the economy of the entire country is so hard to ignore, so hard to ignore that a once leave-it-in-the-ground government has turned into a fight-for-Alberta government simply out of necessity. As Conservatives we appreciate this government helping themselves to the opposition's ideas because those ideas really do help Albertans. The only issue for the Alberta government now is that their ally and friend Ms Berman is helping or possibly leading the battle to make sure that our resource, that every other

province would bend over backwards for, never gets to tidewater. Ironic.

Oh, the government speaks about social licence and how that will get this Trans Mountain pipeline built. "Social licence," a term that their friend in Ottawa, Mr. Trudeau, embraced because Alberta went ahead and did what he was hoping to see go forward. But the funny thing is that their friend is what I would call missing in action on this file. If the friendly Mr. Trudeau is to be of some help to get this pipeline built so that oil from this province can get to world markets, he's going to have to hurry up because Albertans are going to be making a pretty big decision about their government's future in a very short time.

Now, another topic from the throne speech talked about how things are looking up. Well, I would like this government to tell that to the folks that are unemployed here in Alberta. Calgary has one of the highest unemployment rates outside of the Maritimes. Madam Speaker, many people have also come off the unemployment rolls for a number of reasons. They may have exhausted their benefits. In a futile bid to find employment, they may have been in a trade and hung out their own shingle in order to go into business for themselves, or they may have had to settle for a stopgap job out of their field for considerably less pay as a way to keep themselves afloat financially. These aren't long-term solutions.

5:40

The government actually said in their speech that "now that the economic recovery is here, we will keep our focus on the priorities of regular people." Well, from what I hear, what regular people want this government to do is stop overburdening them with unnecessary taxes like the never-ending, ever-growing carbon tax. They want mortgage-paying jobs. They want their towns to remain viable without fading into history due to some ideological slant the government takes. They want a government that doesn't choose winners and losers with our wildlife. They want a government that doesn't interfere with investment coming into the province by making the economic climate hostile. That's what regular folk want, and we know that because we talk to them.

Madam Speaker, it's no secret that ideology pushes the government's agenda. We heard it throughout the throne speech. Their plan to diversify the economy is rife with it. Just a sidebar, our economy has never been as diversified as it is right now. In fact, in 1986 Alberta's economic prosperity table showed that the economic diversity in that year had a total gross domestic product of \$59.6 billion. In 2016 that number skyrocketed to \$314.9 billion. In fact, the greatest portion of this economic diversification came from the previous Conservative governments. How can you expect economic growth when you align yourselves with only those sectors that coincide with and complement your ideology? Why do that at the expense of other sectors? When you hamper other sectors' growth at the expense of another's growth, it is near impossible, but that doesn't seem to bother.

Madam Speaker, this government talks about choices made during the downturn. Well, one of those choices, of course, was foisting the single largest tax on Alberta taxpayers that's ever happened in this province. That was the choice that this government made during the downturn. Imagine burdening a hurting company with a crippling tax that was nowhere in their election platform.

I came across a fellow from northern Alberta. Just a little anecdote here. Not every area has access to clean-burning, efficient natural gas. They just don't. Fortunately, technology has progressed so that furnaces that burn stoker coal were efficient enough to be a cost-effective way to heat homes, heat barns, outbuildings, et cetera. Well, Madam Speaker, some of those rural locations still

don't have natural gas options. Solar and wind don't have the efficiency or the ability . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Schneider: Just tell them to adjourn. They want to adjourn.

The Deputy Speaker: You can't adjourn under 29(2)(a).

Mr. Panda: Yeah. I was very closely following what the Member for Little Bow was saying in a very balanced, very civil manner. I would like him to tell me about the people in southern Alberta, south of Calgary, actually, in the area that you represent and the rest of the southern Alberta ridings. How are they feeling about this recent budget or the direction this government is taking? If you can share your thoughts, I'd appreciate it.

Mr. Schneider: Well, Madam Speaker, I was in the process of starting a story, and I'm going to finish it. As I was saying, some of these rural locations don't have natural gas options. Solar and wind don't have the efficiency to stop the gap; otherwise, they wouldn't need natural gas as a fallback. So they still use this coal.

One such operation, just a gentleman that sent us a copy of the bill that he paid, recently bought a load of coal to use on his farm. The cost of said coal was \$45 a tonne. The carbon tax on this was \$53.09 a tonne, and with the GST, which is the tax on the tax, the total was \$60.08. This resident paid over eight bucks more for a tonne of carbon tax than the price of his coal. Those are choices made during the downturn, Madam Speaker.

Average Albertans understand that fossil fuels are transitioning out, but this is cutting off your nose to spite your face. I guess there will always be other choices to be made, choices that will be made in 14 months, choices made in the next few months.

Now, I would be remiss if I didn't touch on the path back to balance, that portion of the throne speech. Would the average Albertan actually believe that a debt of \$42 billion, or about 9,800 bucks a person, is the path back to balance? I wonder. At this rate our children's children will be paying for this government's follies.

By now everyone has seen the media report stating that if Kinder Morgan pipeline is built, we – and by “we” I mean the government – believe that we can balance the budget in five years, which begs the question: what happened to getting off the royalty roller coaster if they're putting all of their financial eggs in the Trans Mountain pipeline?

Madam Speaker, this brings me full circle back to the malady of dome disease. Could it be that our government is so infected that it completely contradicts its previous positions almost on a weekly basis? Is this simply spending too much time under the dome in the halls of power, or is it a manifestation of a government that simply can't reconcile ideology over economy, a government that is completely out of step with the average Albertan?

That being said, Madam Speaker, I thank you for the time I have been allotted to speak. I'm going to adjourn debate if that's all right.

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

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the Speech from the Throne? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Mr. Drysdale: Madam Speaker, I'd like to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 2 Growth and Diversification Act

Mr. Panda moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 2, Growth and Diversification Act, be amended by deleting all the words after “that” and substituting the following:

Bill 2, Growth and Diversification Act, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

[Adjourned debate on the amendment March 22: Dr. Swann]

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Mr. Drysdale: The referral amendment?

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to support my UCP colleague's motion to refer Bill 2, Growth and Diversification Act, to the committee. This bill is proposing to use a mixture of incentives, also called taxpayers' money, to encourage diversification in Alberta's tech sector. I support sending this bill to committee for a full review because the committee can invite stakeholders to discuss whether this is the kind of support they are looking for. An all-party committee can spend time meeting with stakeholders affected by Bill 2 to determine if the direction set by the proposed legislation is the common-sense approach they are seeking. After all, the Alberta investor tax credit left \$1.4 million on the table. This might indicate that the government has had a lower-than-anticipated interest in this tax credit because it's narrow and sector specific. Another possibility is that the government has not been able to efficiently and effectively distribute this money to investors.

Clearly there are questions about this tax credit and how it is performing. Why serve up millions of dollars of taxpayers' funds before understanding if this sector needs this change to the tax credit? The AITC is only one of a suite of tax credits adjusted or introduced into Bill 2. Concern is that the government is playing favorites by seeking a focus of tax credits on relatively narrow sectors of industry. Is this the right approach for Alberta? This question is a very good reason to send Bill 2 to committee. Let's review the sector's needs before introducing tax credits or increasing and adjusting others.

Standing committees and legislative policy committees have proven their worth time and again. We in the UCP want to use them more to connect with Albertans and help inform government about the most effective way to move forward. Since I'm talking about the value of committees, if we're going to refer Bill 2 to Resource Stewardship, we have to unfetter the committee to allow it to take on as many consultations as it wants to.

5:50

Our UCP members have been pleading for many months to allow our committees to perform other tasks when the Legislative Assembly has sent them a piece of legislation to review. When we're doing these reviews, we often wait for weeks for the public to provide submissions and then for presentations to be co-ordinated. During those times UCP members have been seeking the ability to continue to meet with the many stakeholders who are sending requests to the chair to speak with the committee.

We would also like to initiate our own consultations on issues pertinent to the committee. Let me provide an example. The Resource Stewardship Committee has a lineup of six organizations, some who have now been waiting for three years to meet with us. We have made motions in committee to create working groups to meet with these patient stakeholders. These motions have been rejected. We have even made a motion to change the standing orders to allow a committee to perform other business when the Legislative Assembly has handed it a task because, Madam Speaker, committees can and should multitask. But the NDP members of the committee vote it down every time. Let me stress that they are voting against meeting with Albertans.

So in supporting this referral motion for Bill 2, I want to take the opportunity to note the importance of changing the standing orders to allow the committee to work on as many different tasks as it wishes while also performing the work that the Legislative Assembly is requesting of it. The NDP members of committees are using the standing orders as an excuse to not meet, and they won't even let us set up working groups that could do it. We were totally stymied at the last Resource Stewardship Committee meeting. The chair immediately shut down our UCP member and would not even entertain his motion. It is time to free up committees to truly work on behalf of Albertans, as they did prior to 2015.

Let's send Bill 2 to committee because this government is going down a path that the sector can help correct if we consult with it. And let's change the standing orders to avoid the NDP from hampering Members of the Legislative Assembly from listening to Albertans just because the government wants to take its own ideological route on every issue.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's always an honour to rise in this House and speak. Today we are talking about the referral motion on Bill 2, the Growth and Diversification Act. This bill has two points. It establishes a talent advisory council on technology to advise government on the creation or expansion of the new postsecondary tech spaces. The other one is that it introduces an interactive digital media tax credit to improve Alberta's national competitiveness in terms of attracting and developing skilled workers in that growing environment. It introduces the DMTC while reupping the Alberta investor tax credit and capital investment tax credit. It provides clarity for government, postsecondary institutions, and industry to co-ordinate investment and collaboration opportunities in the unmanned-vehicle system sector, like drones.

Other provinces, Madam Speaker, such as British Columbia, Manitoba, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia have found success with some version of a small-business venture capital tax credit. I think we need to have an opportunity to review their models to see if Alberta is aligned for the same success, if this bill would work in our province. Again, we can only do this if we have time to send this bill to committee and work in committee as research prepares a cross-jurisdictional report like when, you know, we recently

engaged with stakeholders, for example, on daylight saving time. So I think it would be a good idea to send this bill to committee.

Now, according to the government the CITC has already, Madam Speaker, stimulated more than \$1 billion in capital projects in manufacturing, processing, tourism infrastructure. If we send it to committee, committee can review that claim. We can't, I mean, take that number just on face value in this Chamber. We all see the argument, and we can talk about those things all day. The revenue from the carbon tax was supposed to be rebated, and now it's going to be going into general revenue. We can't take anything this government is saying, so I think it's important to send that to committee to discuss it.

That's why on this side of the House, Madam Speaker, the United Conservative Party has some questions about the economic policies of the sector-specific tax credits. Will they distort the market? Will they result in industries that are dependent on tax credits and subsidies? I mean, these are important questions, and on behalf of Albertans I think we need to do a thorough engagement and research. That's why it's important that we send this bill to a committee. Then we can find the answers to those important questions. If the sectors are having trouble attracting investment through traditional markets and investment channels, perhaps there are competing factors that are affecting that issue. The committee can review those issues in an in-depth discussion.

As you know, Madam Speaker, any time a tax credit is offered, we need to make sure that the companies who are set to receive it actually need it and that we're not doing it just for the sake of doing it so that we can, you know, make an announcement that we have given this money away. Are there any other channels that they can be using rather than relying on the government? We need to look into those things. The AITC has \$1.4 million left in the pool. It wasn't fully used. Why? Was it needed? All these questions need to be answered. It's important that we send Bill 2 to committee.

These are some of my arguments and reasons. I think that if we really explore these things and further discuss Bill 2 in committee, it'll have fruitful results. If the intent of the government is to actually diversify our economy, as they always say, then send this bill to committee. Let the committee do the research, and then the committee can advise this House on the outcome.

You know, hopefully, we'll get the support of all members to send this bill to committee. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other speakers to the amendment?

Are you ready for the question?

[Motion on amendment RA1 lost]

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 4(2) the House now stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m. The legislative policy committees will convene tomorrow morning for consideration of main estimates. Families and Communities will consider the estimates for Justice and Solicitor General in the Rocky Mountain Room, and Alberta's Economic Future will consider Advanced Education in the Parkland Room.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, April 5, 2018

Day 12

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (UCP),
Deputy Leader of the Official Opposition
Anderson, Hon. Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (NDP)
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (UCP)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (NDP)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (NDP)
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (NDP)
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Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)
Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (NDP)
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Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)
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Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (NDP)
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
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Vacant, Fort McMurray-Conklin
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Party standings:

New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 25 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent: 1 Vacant: 2

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Loewen	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, April 5, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Let us reflect or pray, each in our own way. Let us be ever mindful of our responsibility as elected officials. Give us the wisdom to serve for the common good of all Albertans, and help us to carry out our duties with respect and courtesy for all of our colleagues in the Assembly.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, it is my absolute pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly some exceptionally special guests. In the gallery today is a group of our own athletes who competed in the 2018 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games in Pyeongchang, South Korea. They inspired the nation, and they brought home a record number of medals.

As I read their names, I'd ask that each of these remarkable women and men please rise: Jack Leitch, gold and bronze medallist, para-alpine; Kurt Oatway, gold medallist, para-alpine; Kirk Schornstein, para-alpine; Alana Ramsay, bronze medallist, para-alpine; Derek Zaplotinsky, para-Nordic; Justin Kripps, gold medallist, bobsleigh; Melissa Lotholz, bobsleigh; Jesse Lumsden, bobsleigh; Alysia Rissling, bobsleigh; Seyi Smith, bobsleigh; Neville Wright, bobsleigh; Joanne Courtney, curling; John Morris, gold medallist, doubles curling; Karl Stollery, bronze medallist, men's hockey; Kimberley McRae, luge; Tristan Walker, silver medallist, luge; Brooke Apshkrum, luge; Barrett Martineau, skeleton; Kevin Boyer, skeleton – these skeleton people, Mr. Speaker, suggest that theirs is the safest sport ever; I don't buy it – Mackenzie Boyd-Clowes, ski jumping; Gilmore Junio, speed skating; Denny Morrison, speed skating; Keri Morrison, speed skating; Brady Leman, gold medallist, ski cross.

Mr. Speaker, these athletes, each and every one of them, inspired us, and each and every one of them made us deeply, deeply proud. I'd ask all of my colleagues here in the Assembly to rise and demonstrate that pride for all of them at this time. [Standing ovation]

The Speaker: Thank you.

I know that I speak for all of the Legislature and the representatives here: you made our province very proud. Thank you.

Hon. members, are there any school groups here today? Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Sorry, kids, but you probably won't get a standing ovation. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House 60 students from Glen Avon school in St. Paul along with their teachers, Ms Deschamps, Mrs. Karen Kendel, Miss Nickason, and chaperones Tracy Boulianne, Tannis Baerg, and Debbie Rak. If I could get the students and chaperones and teachers to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. Government House Leader, did you have a visitor?

Mr. Mason: I do, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much. It's a pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Mr. Ian Waddell. Mr. Waddell is a former parliamentarian of long standing. From 1979 to 1993 he served in the House of Commons representing the riding of Vancouver Kingsway and the riding of Port Moody-Coquitlam. He served as energy critic for the federal NDP caucus, and in that capacity he worked with both Premier Lougheed and Grant Notley and was a critic of the national energy program at that time. Later he served in the Legislature of British Columbia from 1996 to 2001, representing the riding of Vancouver-Fraserview, and served in two ministerial roles.

In addition to serving as a distinguished parliamentarian, many Canadians know Mr. Waddell as an author and a filmmaker. He divides his time now, Mr. Speaker, between Canada and Hollywood. He wrote a popular political mystery, *A Thirst to Die For*, and he is also well known in legal circles. He's a former Crown attorney, helped litigate the first class-action suit in Canadian history, and was a clarion voice for the creation of the International Criminal Court. Following his noted legal career, he was appointed Queen's Counsel in 2013.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Waddell is seated in your gallery, and I would ask that he now rise and that all members join me in welcoming him to our Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome. I trust that one of the chapters in your new book will not be representative of this institution.

Back to school groups if I might. The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you the fantastic students of Mills Haven school, which happens to be a German bilingual school. The students are with their teachers, Irene Kolomijchuk, Derek Zukiwsky, and their chaperones/parents Doreen Checknita, William Langford Bawn, April Caron, and Tanya Lawrence. I would ask all of the students and their chaperones and teachers to rise to receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my absolute honour and privilege today to introduce two truly amazing individuals, the inspired Shirley Penner, founder of Youth Singers of Calgary, and her wonderful husband, Don McLean. I will be speaking more about Shirley in my member's statement today. I'd also like to thank the Minister of Culture and Tourism for having some time for them today. We're truly grateful to you for that time. I would please ask my wonderful guests to rise and receive the warm and welcoming applause from this House.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all of our colleagues a wonderful student visiting today. Roslin McKechnie has joined us from Lethbridge on her last day of her senior practicum in social work. She has spent the last four months doing that senior practicum in my constituency office in Lethbridge-West and has been assisting many of my constituents. Roslin will be missed dearly when she leaves my office, but I do thank her for her service and congratulate her on joining the fine profession of social work, a profession that contributes to

making Albertans' lives better. Roslin, if you could please now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and to all members of this Chamber my constituent Nicole Imgrund. Ms Imgrund is a Canadian certified counsellor and founder-director of the River's Edge Counselling Centre in St. Albert. She is also the chair of FACT-Alberta, a group pursuing regulation and the development of the Alberta college of counselling therapists. Please join me in welcoming this dedicated advocate for quality, regulated counselling therapy.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

1:40

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the entire Assembly here today two fantastic women, Rohini Kaur Arora and Maninder Kaur Arora. Of course, Rohini is my constituency assistant, and let me say through you to her here today that I couldn't do the job that I do without having her incredible support. As well, Maninder is also a union leader who is visiting her daughter here from B.C. I'd ask both of them to please rise at this moment and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Mr. Speaker, my guests have not yet arrived.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Culture and Tourism.

Miranda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly staff and board members of the Alberta Sport Connection who did a fantastic job today of putting on the celebration for our Olympic and Paralympic athletes. I'd ask them to please rise, if possible, as I read their names: Scott Fraser, Tony Flores, Lloyd Bentz, Don Wilson, Tim Bjornson, David Hennig, Brandon Diprose. Alberta Sport Connection's vision is to make Alberta the premier sports delivery system in Canada. Through the support of our government, Alberta Sport Connection is proud to support a sport system where home-grown talent and athletes from all over Canada are able to live and train in our province using world-class facilities. I thank you all for the hard work you did in putting together this special day for our athletes and for the work that you do year-round to make life better for Albertans. I'd ask my colleagues to give them the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other guests? The hon. Minister of Health and Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce guests from Woman's Health Options here in Edmonton as well as Compass Centre for Sexual Wellness, also in Edmonton. I'd ask that they rise while I introduce them. Woman's Health Options provides abortion and reproductive health services, including counselling and birth control options. From there we have Kim Cholewa, executive director; joined by Laura McBride, who is a counsellor and social worker; as well as Dr. Ann Marie Long, who

is a physician. We also have joining us Erin Bilawchuk, who is the executive director of the Compass Centre. Their work focuses on providing pro-choice sexual health education, counselling services, and resources to ensure that women feel safe and supported in their choice. Please join me in welcoming and showing your gratitude to these front-line health care professionals.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

Carbon Levy

Ms Babcock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We hear a lot of negative hot air from the opposition about the climate leadership plan and the carbon levy. I just wanted to set the record straight because I, for one, am proud that Alberta is leading the rest of the country on the path to a more sustainable economy and a cleaner environment. The carbon levy is helping in so many ways to make that happen.

We're helping municipalities across the province with \$54 million to address climate change, with \$17.5 million specifically to reduce energy costs of community rinks, arenas, and swimming pools. We're helping the agricultural sector with \$81 million for solar panels, irrigation, and other energy efficiency programs. We're helping indigenous communities with \$35 million to support local renewable projects, energy efficiency audits, and training for jobs in a low-carbon economy.

We're helping everyday Albertans with energy efficiency programs, which have saved more than 420,000 gigajoules of energy so far, which is equal to heating over 3,500 homes. We're helping nonprofit and volunteer-based organizations conduct energy audits and create energy management plans with the nonprofit energy efficiency transition program, and we've provided \$795,000 to 106 nonprofit organizations for energy efficiency projects.

We're helping lower and middle-income families through the carbon levy rebates. Two-thirds of Albertans got a rebate on the carbon levy last year, and that rebate will continue in 2018. We're helping low-income single seniors in Alberta by providing them with a \$300 carbon levy rebate. We're helping small businesses by allocating \$40 million in carbon levy revenues toward a small-business tax reduction, and we're helping all future Albertans by ensuring that carbon funds are working towards a greener and healthier future for our children and grandchildren.

This government, Mr. Speaker, is showing the world how it's done.

Shirley Penner

Mrs. Aheer: Mr. Speaker, in 1985 Shirley Penner had the dream of giving young people a chance to express themselves on stage through music. She created Calgary's most comprehensive and exceptional performing arts program. In 2002 the Alberta ministry of learning formally acknowledged the Youth Singers curriculum by awarding it accreditation through the Calgary and area school boards. She became the first executive director of the Associated Manitoba Arts Festivals, and in 1980 she joined the staff of the provincial government's department of culture as the manager and was responsible for the development, implementation, and evaluation of cultural services for all regions in Manitoba.

She is a performer, a teacher, a director, a producer, and has worked in television. She received the YWCA woman of distinction award, was named a Paul Harris fellow by Rotary International, received the 2005 Alberta centennial outstanding citizen award, and

was awarded the Queen's diamond jubilee medal, and finally, the Alberta Order of Excellence in 2016.

She gives young people once-in-a-lifetime opportunities to showcase their talents across continents. I have personally travelled with her and her group, with my son as roadie, to China and Hawaii.

Shirley, your influence spans generations of families, and your dream to create a unique choral program where there's a place for anyone and everyone has impacted our family and thousands of others in ways that are very hard to express.

She inspires an army of volunteers that emulate the quality of the program and are invested in the program and work on everything from costumes to prop design. She has created a community that gives back to the community. She builds leaders and teachers and confident youth who feel ready to take on the world. The premise of the program is not just for the gifted but, rather, is a civilizing and humanizing force that makes a real, real difference in the world.

One thing, Shirley, that you said to me at Choralfest that resonates with me and stays with me is, quote: some people see obstacles as things that get in the way of opportunity. She sees opportunity in obstacles.

Thank you.

Emergency Medical Service Delays

Dr. Swann: Mr. Speaker, Alberta continues on the edge of a preventable emergency services disaster with precarious surge capacity in our EMS to respond to multiple casualties. Emergency response times are barely acceptable now in major urban areas only as a result of Herculean efforts and massive overtime by our dedicated paramedics in Alberta, with serious morale implications.

Our sympathies go out to the Morley families in a dramatic and tragic incident yesterday involving 15 people, including 10 children, in one house requiring assessment and evacuation to a medical facility. This incident illustrates just how close we are to the break point with our emergency response. Sources indicated a city-wide appeal was made to find five ambulances free to travel one hour out to Morley. This left the city vulnerable to any major crisis and highlights the fact that we cannot safely manage a major disaster.

The minister said yesterday, "It takes time to build long-term care, supportive living, and expand home care." I couldn't agree more, but these are longer term solutions. Alberta needs solutions to our critical EMS inefficiencies now, and a major immediate action would be ending ER hallway wait times. The 650,000 hours wasted annually in ER hallways can end tomorrow if this minister tells Alberta Health Services to reduce the standard transfer times in ER from one hour to 15 minutes. Tomorrow. They have done so in the U.K. and Israel. Only 5 per cent of transfers occur in Alberta within 15 minutes.

Currently AHS management has little incentive to do this as long as they can exploit EMS staff to continue to do the nurses' jobs in emergency. The priority is to get patients needing admission off EMS stretchers and onto hospital stretchers, up to the appropriate ward as necessary, to wait if necessary in their hallways, where they get specialized nursing attention, and free up the paramedics.

Get the critical EMS back on the road doing their life-saving work, with a bonus: save \$15 million to the health system a year. Madam Minister, in the interests of a safe disaster response, end EMS hallways now.

Oral Question Period

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

Carbon Levy Revenue and Rebates

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I apologize in advance for my voice.

Mr. Speaker, a question to the Premier: how much more revenue will be raised by the budget's 67 per cent increase in the carbon tax?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I certainly hope that the member opposite is feeling better. He does sound a little under the weather, I must say.

As the member knows, we are looking forward, and the exact numbers are in the budget documents, which we'll have a chance to go through. But there is no question that the additional levies that would be going forward in, I think, 2021 and forward are noted in our budget and will be invested in protecting things like our education and our health care and bringing us to a stable, prudent path to balance.

1:50

Mr. Kenney: The budget documents do not include that number, Mr. Speaker, which is why I asked. Unfortunately, the Premier doesn't have an answer.

Mr. Speaker, does the government's projection of a balanced budget in 2023 depend on higher revenues raised by the 67 per cent increase in the carbon tax?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As we've already articulated, our path to balance depends upon diverting some of the money from the federal increase in the levy towards the path to balance. That is something that we are going to do because, in so doing, we'll be able to reach that prudent state of balance in 2023 while ensuring that we protect our hospitals, our education, our teachers, our nurses, and those important services that Albertans rely on. We're glad that we've been able to reach that balance.

Mr. Kenney: To decode, the answer was that, yes, the balanced budget in 2023 depends on the 67 per cent increase in the carbon tax.

Mr. Speaker, will the government increase the carbon tax rebate when it increases the carbon tax by 67 per cent?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, we will be looking at that matter at that time, when that comes forward. That's still an issue that we are examining because, of course, we are talking about four years down the road at this point. At the same time, we are very proud to be in a position to be able to present to Albertans a thoughtful, reasonable six-year plan to bring the budget back into balance while protecting nurses, while protecting teachers, while protecting the kids in our classrooms, while ensuring that Albertans can continue to count on the services that are important to them and their families.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Second main question.

Mr. Kenney: The Premier says that she will look at it, but her Finance minister said that the budget does not include additional rebates. So, Mr. Speaker, which is it? Were the budget documents tabled two weeks ago inclusive of rebates or not?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The budget documents tabled two weeks ago talk about the budget for this year, and they also talk about the business plan, that goes out for three years, which is exactly what budget documents typically do. Our government went a step further than any government ever has in the past, and we provided high-level figures with respect to how we were going to bring the budget into balance by '23-24. This is in contrast to the opposition, which has yet to bring in a shadow budget, after three years of being here, and has yet to provide any explanation for how their path would ever be achieved.

Mr. Kenney: Does that projection of a balanced budget in 2023 include additional rebates to match the 67 per cent increase in the carbon tax or not? Does it include additional so-called targeted environmental spending or not?

Ms Notley: Again, Mr. Speaker, as I've outlined, because we are going out four years into the future, the level of specificity becomes a little bit harder to target. One of the reasons for that is because one of the key elements of the climate leadership plan and the carbon levy is to reduce emissions and to reduce carbon use. As that goes down, the amount of revenue that comes in may well go down as well as the cost that is experienced by individuals. At that time, we need to look at the appropriateness of adjusting the rebate, and that's what we will do when we are within 48 months of the time.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Kenney: So the government told Albertans that they have a plan for a balanced budget, but the Premier now tells us that they don't know how much spending is in that plan.

Since she raised carbon emissions, can the Premier tell us by how much the 67 per cent increase in the carbon tax will reduce carbon emissions?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, we know that there are a number of factors that are going to go towards reducing emissions as we move forward. Some of them are related specifically to the application of the carbon levy. Others are related to our ability to invest in a number of different things that will reduce emissions. Whether it's the hundreds of millions of dollars that we are partnering with industry on, for instance, to help them innovate, which we're very excited about, and bring down their emissions within the energy industry, whether it's with the renewal energy sector and being able to bring in the kind of amazing new investment we've seen, there are a number of different ways in which emissions will come down.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.
Third main question.

Carbon Levy and Emission Reduction

Mr. Kenney: By how much will carbon emissions be reduced as a result of the 67 per cent increase in the carbon tax?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, as I've said, there are a number of different factors that are in play and a number of different tools that are being used. We are making a global set of estimates, which have been, actually, reviewed by the Auditor General recently, who indicated that we had a pretty rigorous level of assumptions and research that went into the plan. As I said, we

are very proud as a government to be able to be in a position to have a number of different strategies that are focused on bringing Alberta's emissions down and doing our part to tackle climate change.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, by how much will carbon emissions be reduced as a result of the 67 per cent increase in the carbon tax?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, our climate leadership plan, as has been published many times over, will cut emissions drastically, a projected 30 per cent reduction by 2030. That's as a result of a number of different factors, including a coal phase-out, carbon pricing, a system of output-based allocations, and investments in clean tech. We may go as low as 222 megatonnes, and that will keep dropping, with respect to the investments and innovation. That's in stark contrast to the hon. member, who sat in a government, articulated the target, and then sat on their hands and did nothing to achieve it.

Mr. Kenney: So they tell Albertans that their carbon tax is going to save the planet, but they have no clue by how much it's supposed to reduce emissions.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier told me that she was imposing conditions before she would raise the carbon tax by 67 per cent. The condition was the completion of the Trans Mountain pipeline. Why did she remove that condition in her budget?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, in fact, we haven't done that, and I reject that characterization. What our budget does is that it bets on Albertans and it assumes that the pipeline that has been approved will ultimately be built. You know, it's interesting because the Leader of the Opposition spent 10 years in Ottawa – 10 years – and no pipeline. He had the ball; he fumbled. We are marching down the field. We're almost at the goal line. The member wants to throw in the towel. We will not. We will get the pipeline.

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

Alberta Health Services Letters to Clients

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today we learned about a very disturbing letter sent to a 15-year-old indigenous girl that used the words "treaty Indian" instead of her name. To the Premier: is this the only letter that has gone out with such an offensive name? If not, how many more are there, and have you contacted each of the recipients to apologize?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Let me begin by saying that I share the member's concern about this letter and about this incident. The language is completely inappropriate, and it is culturally offensive, and it should never have been used. Let me take this opportunity to offer my personal apologies to the person in question who received the letter. Should we discover that there are any others, that apology would be extended to them as well.

We take this incident extremely seriously. I understand that the Health minister along with Health Services is working very quickly to prevent it and also to move forward.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Madam Premier. I hope that you will undertake a thorough investigation and commit to informing the House of the results of that investigation as soon as possible.

Mr. Speaker, this is and should be a teaching moment. I'm glad to know the Premier and I agree that this should never have happened. While I commend her and her government for the steps they have taken towards reconciliation, very clearly, not enough has changed within all aspects of the provincial government. Again to the Premier: what specifically are you doing to ensure that this doesn't happen again anywhere else in the provincial government?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

2:00

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. I'm going to talk about Alberta Health Services specifically because this is where the incident happened. I, too, share my disappointment and frustration and anger that this person wasn't addressed with her name but rather with a title that has a deep historical legacy. Antiracism education is certainly an area of focus for our government, making sure that we break down the barriers, making sure that groups that already disproportionately access health care less frequently and have lower life expectancy should not feel that continued institutionalized racism impacts their ability to do so.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, privacy is of paramount importance, especially when dealing with health information. I'm concerned that this letter is not only grossly culturally insensitive, but if there are letters with confidential health information being sent to generic names rather than individual Albertans, there is the potential that this represents a significant breach of not only trust but of privacy. Earlier today I wrote to the Privacy Commissioner asking that she investigate to determine if there has in fact been a breach of the Health Information Act or any other relevant statute. To the Premier: will you support my request for this investigation? Will you ensure that the Privacy Commissioner receives the complete co-operation of any and all government . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. We certainly respect the Privacy Commissioner's range of scope in being able to identify the appropriate places for these investigations. Regardless of what she chooses to do, AHS has launched their own investigation into this matter and will do their part there, and certainly if the Privacy Commissioner chooses to do her investigation as well, we will very happily comply. Our goal is to make sure that we address what happened in this situation so that it never happens again.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Supports for Postsecondary Students

Ms Fitzpatrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I met with two representatives of the Council of Alberta University Students, CAUS, as they advocated on a number of issues. They spoke passionately about a number of initiatives they feel would make lives better for students. What is your ministry doing to make life

more affordable for students, and what action was taken in this year's budget on their priorities?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I want to thank CAUS for the work that they've been doing and for taking the time out of their lives to come and talk to us here at the Legislature. We're proud in our budget of 2018 to provide significant supports for students. That's why our budget has included a 2 per cent increase in operating grants for every university and college in the province as well as backfill funding to compensate for the continuation of the tuition freeze. This will ensure that our students continue to receive an affordable, high-quality education here in the province. Our tuition freeze will mean that the average student has saved over \$1,200 on the cost of a four-year degree. We expect to have more to say . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
First supplemental.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The CAUS representatives did tell me that they were thankful for the action this government has taken to provide ongoing mental health funding. They would like to see this funding increased to provide further benefits to students. Is this something that is possible down the road? To the same minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, Mr. Speaker, we're proud to have launched an initiative that is providing \$8 million a year for mental health supports on campuses across Alberta. This funding means that colleges and universities will be able to hire counsellors, community outreach social workers, and psychologists. It also supports mental health workshops, stress reduction events, and peer support programs. We're committed to making sure that students have the supports they need, and we are continually monitoring our programs to make sure they are meeting the needs of students. Of course, all of this funding would be at risk if the Official Opposition had their way. They want to pay for a billion-dollar tax cut to millionaires, which would make it impossible to fund . . .

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

Ms Fitzpatrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government has demonstrated a strong commitment to protecting front-line services and making sure that they're available where Albertans need them most. CAUS has advocated that more mental health supports be located on campus for students to have the fewest barriers to access. To the same minister: what are you doing to ensure this happens?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the funding that we've provided is already being used to create new initiatives and programs on campuses. When we rolled out this plan, we made sure that students would be very involved in the development and ongoing analysis of these programs. Beyond our commitment on campuses we're also working with AHS to make sure that there's a better integration of supports within our broader mental health system. Of course, the opposition doesn't like it when I raise this, but I will continue to do so. All of this is at risk if they had the opportunity to give away almost a billion dollars to millionaires and put this funding at risk.

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Carbon Levy Rate

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the budget includes projected increases in revenues from the 67 per cent increase in the carbon tax. As we've already established, that's the basis of the projected balanced budget in 2023. Can the Premier point me to any mention of conditions before that tax would be increased in the budget documents?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the province of Alberta has signed on to the pan-Canadian framework on clean growth some months ago on the condition that we would get pipeline approvals in place, and we got those pipeline approvals. Therefore, we have received \$150 million in federal investments in energy efficiency and lowering energy usage and lowering people's bills via those programs. The federal government is moving forward with legislation on the pan-Canadian framework.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Kenney: The question was to the Premier. It really dealt with the budget, not with the environment minister's responsibilities.

Let me restate it. Given that the balanced budget projected for 2023 is predicated on additional revenues coming from a 67 per cent increase in the carbon tax, where are the conditions attached to that? Is it not true that the balanced budget projection disappears without that 67 per cent increase in carbon tax revenues?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the federal government is bringing in carbon pricing across the country. The question, then, for Albertans becomes: do we have a made-in-Alberta plan that grows the economy while reducing our emissions, or do we have a plan imposed on us by Ottawa? I know that the hon. member has a great deal of affection for Ottawa and thinks longingly of his years there, but I am more interested in making sure we've got a made-in-Alberta plan in place that reduces our emissions, that grows our economy, that moves Alberta forward.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Kenney: Given that this government has a great deal of affection for Justin Trudeau, they signed a blank cheque and agreed to raise their carbon tax by 67 per cent. The question is: where are the conditions in this budget? Will the government recommit that it will not raise that additional revenue by hiking the carbon tax by 67 per cent unless a pipeline is completed? The question is not for the environment minister. It's for the Premier.

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What I will say is this. I would refer the member opposite to page 80 of the fiscal plan where, in fact, that's exactly what is included in that part of the fiscal plan. That being said, we talk about putting the path to balance at risk, and I'd just like to talk a moment about what really puts the path to balance at risk. What puts the path to balance at risk is cancelling the climate leadership plan and giving \$700 million away to Alberta's wealthiest citizens. That, in fact, blows about a \$5 billion hole in our attempt to get . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Kenney: Well, given that I'm looking at page 80 and there's no mention of conditions, I don't know what the Premier is talking about.

GST on the Carbon Levy

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the carbon tax is taxed by the federal goods and services tax. Does the provincial government agree with the taxation of the carbon tax?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would just read out from page 80. "The federally-imposed carbon price will increase carbon revenue based on federal approval of the Trans Mountain Expansion . . . and the federal government's commitment to its construction." I think that's awfully clear unless we want to get lost in debating the minutiae of language. I'm not sure. I think that's pretty clear. I would suggest that what our government has effectively done by embracing our climate leadership plan and moving forward is that we've gotten a pipeline built, and we will get . . .

The Speaker: Thank you.

2:10

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, given that the Premier did not answer the question, I'll ask it again. Does the government agree with the taxation of the carbon tax by the federal GST?

Ms Hoffman: Does the member opposite want to say why he spent 20 years in Ottawa, 10 in government, and did nothing to prevent that from happening, Mr. Speaker? That's what I'd like to know. On this side of the House we impact the things that we have the ability to change. That side of the House should have done it when they had a chance in Ottawa.

Mr. Kenney: I take it from that non answer that the government agrees with the application of the GST on the carbon tax.

My question is: is the carbon tax a good or a service?

Ms Hoffman: Climate change is real, Mr. Speaker, and on this side of this House we take that seriously. We know that we have to do something to get a pipeline built to tidewater. That's why we brought in a climate leadership plan that led to that exact approval. We got two approvals. Line 3 is well under construction. We keep winning every single appeal that gets put in our way on the way to the west coast. I wish we didn't have to win appeals every single time in this House. It's time to get onboard. The opposition should realize that this is a pipeline that is in the national interest and stand up to support this government in making it happen.

Provincial Debt-servicing Costs

Mr. Kenney: Given that the government didn't answer that question after three times, I'll ask a different question. How much does the government plan to spend on interest payments between now and 2023?

Ms Hoffman: My real question is: how much time are we going to spend debating the fact that the member opposite didn't do anything to prevent this from happening when he was in Ottawa and had the exact ability to prevent it from happening? We will certainly do everything in our capacity to lobby on behalf of Albertans, to make sure that we have a climate leadership plan that results in the pipelines that we have gotten approved and that we will get built, Mr. Speaker. I know that it's would've, could've, should've from the member opposite. I get it. You should've fixed this when you were in Ottawa. We're fixing things here in Alberta. I expect that

you will get onboard to stand up for Alberta and get our pipeline built.

Mr. Kenney: Given that apparently the audio system isn't working here, Mr. Speaker, I'll ask the question again, which had absolutely nothing to do with the non answer. How much does the government plan to spend on interest payments – I'll put that a different way – on debt interest costs between now and 2023? How much does the government plan to spend on debt interest costs between now and 2023?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, what we will do is service the debt in the same way any government would service the debt as long as the debt is in place. Now, the way to get rid of the debt is to balance the budget. The members opposite are suggesting to Albertans that they can give a \$700 million tax cut, protect services without any impact on Alberta families, and somehow get rid of the deficit early. That's the implicit thing here. It's not true. It just isn't true, and they need to start coming clean with Albertans about what their plan actually is.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I twice asked the government a very simple, factual question about their budget. I asked them how much they project to spend on interest costs in the next five years. The answer is \$18 billion. Does the Premier think that \$18 billion in interest payments to bankers is a good use of tax dollars?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, as I've said before, we inherited an economy that was ill prepared to deal with the fiscal situation, that was ill prepared to deal with the catastrophic drop in the price of oil. The members opposite would have had to deal with the same issues. The question is: how do you deal with that kind of crisis? Do you pile on? Do you cut more jobs? Do you jam kids into classrooms? Do you blow up hospitals? Or do you have Albertans' backs? We chose the latter. We are investing in Alberta. As a result, we've created 90,000 jobs. Manufacturing is up, exports are up, and so is . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.
We are at the third main.

Mr. Kenney: I infer from the non answer that the Premier believes that \$18 billion spent on interest payments is a good investment.

Mr. Speaker, we are currently spending nearly \$2 billion in interest payments. Can the Premier tell us how many of her government's departments spend less than that \$2 billion?

Ms Notley: Here's a different answer, Mr. Speaker, but it's on the same principle. When you look at some of the plans that the member opposite has talked about, say, for instance, "Let's emulate B.C.'s spending," well, if we were to do that, the kind of cuts that that would bring into effect would eliminate the Department of Justice. Just eliminated. No Department of Justice. That's what happens when you address these problems through a lens of reality and facts, and I would suggest that the member opposite ought to start doing the same.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, given that the Premier didn't answer the question, I'll answer it for her. The \$2 billion, the cost of interest this year, is more than the government spends on 19 of its 24 departments.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier told us before the budget that there was going to be belt-tightening. Why, then, did the budget increase spending and increase debt by over \$50 billion?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What we have done is work to carefully reduce the rate of spending, even as Alberta grows and pressures grow, and to do it in a thoughtful, strategic, intelligent way that protects families. We will not make arbitrary, massive cuts, for instance, to do what the member opposite suggested on Monday, to get rid of over 3,000 teachers and teachers' aides. On Monday that's what he suggested he would have done, and that's not all. Those are not the kinds of careful spending decisions that we will make. We'll carry on with the record we have so far.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I made no such suggestion.

Can the Premier point to anything in the budget that constitutes belt-tightening? Her phrase, not mine. She said that there would be belt-tightening in the budget. Where's the belt-tightening?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, on Monday, just to clarify, the member opposite suggested that what he wanted to do was to have spending frozen at 2015 levels. Since 2015, through funding enrolment growth – thank goodness – we've been able to add over 3,000 teachers and teachers' assistants to our schools. So that's where we get that from, and it wouldn't have happened if we followed his path.

With respect to careful decision-making, Mr. Speaker, what we've done is that we've cut massive salaries in agencies, boards, and commissions. We cancelled the golf club memberships. We've made sure that the sky palace type decisions that his friends brought into place aren't being made anymore.

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

Federal Infrastructure Funding

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that our government has committed to building the schools, hospitals, and rapid transit that Albertans rely on and given that the province this week signed a significant funding agreement with the federal government, can the Minister of Infrastructure tell us how much Alberta will be receiving over the next 10 years and the different streams of funding available?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member. [interjections] I'll wait for the heckling to go down.

Minister Sohi and I signed our ICIP agreement on Tuesday, \$3.39 billion over 10 years. Streams for this program include public transit infrastructure, green infrastructure, rural and northern communities, and culture, community, and recreation infrastructure. Each of those streams has different criteria with different cost-sharing percentages, and Alberta is investing nearly \$30 billion in this plan.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.
First supplemental.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that Edmonton-South West is one of the fastest growing areas in this province and given that public transit projects like the Heritage Valley park-and-ride are crucial to servicing this region and given that the city of Edmonton is an important partner to the province and the federal government, can the minister tell us specifically: what is Edmonton's

share for the public transit stream, and how was that amount determined?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Edmonton's share is over \$877 million. The amount is determined by ridership. The funds can be used for projects that will improve capacity, improve quality and safety, and improve access to public transit. I know that if the members on the other side of the aisle stop visiting, they may want to listen to that. Infrastructure, obviously, is pretty important to them, as it is to us.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for the answer. Given that I know that there are many community groups in my riding and area who would like to apply for this funding, can the minister inform the House how the application process will work and how we can make sure that that process is fair and transparent?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, more information can be found through infrastructure.alberta.ca. It's a great website to go to. The first three of the four streams have already begun, so you can certainly get your applications in. Of course, August 1 is the deadline for the first set of applications. For all those fans of infrastructure – and I know we have quite a few on the other side of the aisle – they may want to take that information down. Certainly, now with over \$3 billion in infrastructure requests from the opposition, I think that they might want to check out that website.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

2:20

Mental Health Services

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The impact of poor mental health on our citizens can't be overstated, and we need to adequately address mental health issues in this province for economic reasons, public health reasons, and simply because it's the right thing to do. We're coming up on a year since the Valuing Mental Health: Next Steps report was released, and it has been two years since the Mental Health Review Committee's report. To the Deputy Premier: how many of the 32 recommendations and 18 actions proposed by those two reports have been addressed?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. To date, for the 2017-18 fiscal year, we've granted \$35.8 million directly to AHS or community organizations to implement the recommendations of Valuing Mental Health, and earlier interventions, of course, were for children and youth, better access to mental health services and supports for those using substances, for new detox beds, and so forth. I'll be happy to table the exact number, but we are well on track. We've implemented a great deal, and there is still more to come.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the habits and practices that lead to good mental health are best taught in early life and given that young people and adolescents are especially

vulnerable to mental health issues and given that it can be harder for young people to access mental health supports in the same way that adults do, to the same minister: what is being done to ensure that young Albertans specifically are able to access the necessary mental health supports and services?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're making smart investments to support our children and youth. For example, we've funded new counselling supports for survivors of sexual and physical abuse, including the Zebra Child Protection Centre. In 2017 they supported over 1,600 children and youth. We opened a new Rutherford mental health clinic here in Edmonton for youth in Edmonton and the surrounding areas, which triples capacity for this region. We're building a new eight-bed youth facility in Red Deer. We've added new detox beds for children and youth in Calgary, which results in shorter wait times, and the list goes on. The need does as well, and that's why we won't let up. That's why we won't allow for the deep cuts that are being proposed by the members opposite.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Fraser: Given that the demand for mental health services and supports is only increasing and given that the people suffering from mental illness or trauma are often desperate for any offer of help at all and given that this desperation can often make them targets for unlicensed and unregulated counselling and mental health supports, a practice that could lead to even more long-term harm, to the same minister: will you assure this House that you will regulate mental health counsellors and mental health services so that Albertans know that they are receiving a high standard of care when they seek it?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. This is something that we've heard calls for. It's something that we are in the process of doing consultation on. We want to make sure that we get this right. There are a variety of different types of people who use the term "counsellor," whether it's a guidance counsellor in a school, a financial counsellor, emotional, psychological, social support, or a religious counsellor as well. We want to make sure that we do the right consultation with the community to get the right feedback and make the right decisions as we move forward, but I appreciate the vein in which the question is being asked.

Federal Impact Assessment Act

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the Trudeau government has brought forward a bill that will likely make it impossible to build major new pipelines. The Canadian Energy Pipeline Association says, quote: it is difficult to imagine a new major pipeline could be built in Canada under the Impact Assessment Act, Bill C-69. Does the Alberta government oppose the federal Bill C-69?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, our job is to stand up for Alberta and our industry by getting real results like, for example, pipeline approvals to tidewater.

With respect to the new impact assessment legislation, we have been in very close contact with the federal government. We've been ensuring that Alberta's perspective is heard at every turn. We have

made some changes to that legislation, for example around legislated timelines. We know there is more to do, and we're committed to doing it.

Mr. Kenney: Given the non answer, I will ask again. Does the government oppose or support the federal Impact Assessment Act, Bill C-69, as it currently stands?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are large pieces of that legislation that require more clarification from the federal government, and that's exactly what we've sought from them; for example, around what is meant by a preplanning phase and preconsultation.

Also, Mr. Speaker, we are quite adamant that we believe that our climate leadership plan should be recognized as sufficient for any evaluation of a climate change assessment within federally assessed projects. We have a number of other concerns as well around harmonization and so on.

Mr. Kenney: Given that the Canadian Energy Pipeline Association has said that Bill C-69 would make it difficult to imagine a new major pipeline being built in Canada, does the government agree with the Canadian Energy Pipeline Association and this assessment?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we're committed to working very closely with energy pipeline companies as well as other firms who are affected by this legislation. That is why, for example, we were very pleased to learn that in situ projects will not find themselves on a project list if they are covered by a climate leadership plan, that is to say a carbon pricing regime and an emissions cap, which puts Alberta at significant strategic advantage. That strategic advantage would not be there if it were not for the climate leadership plan, something that the member opposite opposes.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Second supplemental.

Mr. Kenney: Well, given yet another non answer, it's clear that the government does not oppose this bill, which the industry characterizes as the end of any future pipeline approvals and, by the way, Mr. Speaker, a massive violation of Alberta's jurisdiction. So my question for the government is: just what does it take for them to stand up to Justin Trudeau, to tell their close ally and friend that they will stop selling out this province to Justin Trudeau's anti energy industry agenda?

The Speaker: Hon. member, I was incorrect. That was a main question rather than a supplemental.

Minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The assertion is preposterous, that this province has not been advocating for Alberta's interests from the very beginning. The letter that I wrote initially, in response to the initial discussion document that came out in the summer of 2017, enumerated a number of concerns that Alberta had. Many of those concerns have been acted upon, as I indicated, not all of them, and that is why we continue to advocate.

Mr. Speaker, there are different ways of doing politics. I do not need to jump up and down, and I resent the idea that somehow we are not advocating for Alberta simply because we're not taking a belligerent . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, if there's a belligerent tone, it's not coming from this side of the House. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order, please.

Keep going.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Justin Trudeau vetoed Northern Gateway. He killed Energy East. He surrendered to Barack Obama on the veto of Trans Mountain. He's doing nothing to assert federal jurisdiction in the construction of Trans Mountain. According to this government he's forcing them to raise the carbon tax by 67 per cent, and now he's introduced a bill that will make future pipelines just about impossible to get approved. How is that alliance working out?

Ms Phillips: Well, Mr. Speaker, we have been in close contact with the Canadian Energy Pipeline Association, with other affected firms on this matter, and that is why the hon. Minister of Energy and I have been tracking this file from the very beginning in terms of the assessment of upstream greenhouse gas emissions, for example, and other matters that we find problematic within Bill C-69 and its potential associated regulations. That's why we continue to do this work.

Now, Conservative blustering left our province's most valuable resources landlocked for decades, Mr. Speaker. That is not . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, given that Justin Trudeau vetoed Northern Gateway, killed Energy East, surrendered on Keystone XL, and is doing nothing for the construction of Trans Mountain, why does the government now trust him on a pipeline bill that the industry says will make it impossible to get another pipeline built?

Ms Phillips: Mr. Speaker, the first line in the interview that I gave on this matter yesterday afternoon was, "We are by no means happy yet." We will continue to do the work to advocate on behalf of Alberta's interests. Those interests include pipeline approvals, that the hon. member could not get done in almost 20 years in Ottawa. It also means moving forward with the climate leadership plan so that we do not have one imposed on us by Ottawa, and it does mean that we ensure that we can get large projects built in a way that has appropriate timelines . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

2:30 Federal Equalization Payments

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, speaking of Ottawa, can the Finance minister point to any section in his budget which speaks to the need to reform equalization so that it is fair for Alberta?

Mr. Ceci: Well, Mr. Speaker, the member from the other side likes to talk about their work on the equalization format, but I can tell you that the Fraser Institute report – yes, the Fraser Institute – spells it out clearly. A rule change when he was in the federal cabinet actually hurt Alberta's economy just as we were in a downturn. The Conservatives did nothing to support Alberta with respect to equalization when he was there. He made the issue worse for Alberta.

Mr. Kenney: Well, given that that is yet another non answer, the minister would be interested to know, Mr. Speaker, that actually

during the tenure of the Harper government, federal transfers to Alberta more than doubled.

Mr. Speaker, let me ask the question again. Does the Finance minister share the concern of most Albertans that while times are tough here, we should not be, through our federal taxes, contributing over \$12 billion in equalization that benefits politicians who oppose our energy industry, that generates that wealth in the first place?

The Speaker: The Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, Alberta needs a better deal when it comes to equalization, so I raised that issue when I was down at the Finance ministers' meeting in December. At that meeting I also called for the unanimous support of a pipeline to tidewater as our resources are a critical source for the future of the equalization program in this country. We will continue to fight for Alberta's priorities at each and every turn.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, if reform of equalization is a priority for the NDP government, why is it not mentioned once in the budget?

Mr. Ceci: You know, Mr. Speaker, I point back to the Fraser Institute report, where that side, that individual had an opportunity to address the GDP growth rate rule imposed by the Harper government, and they did nothing. It gets worse. That rule will give Ontario a whopping \$1.3 billion and Quebec an extra \$433 million by 2020, so either his government intentionally made the issue worse, or they didn't know what they were doing.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

Hospital and Long-term Care Spaces

Ms Babcock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. WestView health centre in Stony Plain has some of the longest wait times in the greater Edmonton region. The facility averages 149 per cent at capacity, with 10 to 13 out of 23 acute-care beds occupied by people waiting to transition to long-term care. To the Minister of Health: what plans are in place to alleviate the pressure on facilities like WestView health centre?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This January I was pleased to have the opportunity to visit the WestView health centre with the member, and there, for example, I met many staff, including Roy, a dedicated member of the staff who happens to be the father of one of our pages, Jordan. He's incredibly proud of that, too. We also heard about some of the challenges that patients are facing. The government is committed to building 2,000 new long-term care spaces. We're on track to meet that goal, and we hope to share plans for building additional capacity beyond that very soon in this province.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Babcock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: what are the wait times to get into long-term care facilities and out of transition, and has that wait time increased or decreased in the past three years?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, we know that there are significant pressures on our hospitals while patients wait for placement in long-term care, but these are issues that have been in place for decades. For example, under the watch of Ralph Klein in the 1990s, which the members speak gleefully about, we lost 88 per cent of our

staffed long-term care beds in the province of Alberta, which, of course, has made this a very difficult situation for us to catch up on. We're working diligently to do so. That's why we're building 2,000 beds, and that's just the beginning.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Babcock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we know that people are healthier – physically, mentally, and emotionally – when they can transition into care in their own communities, how are we supporting that in rural communities like mine, where more long-term care and assisted living beds are required?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you. We are committed to helping Albertans lead healthy and safe lives in their homes and in their communities. That's why in Budget 2018 we're making significant increases in home care. We hope that all members of this House stand in support of increasing investment to keep their communities intact, their residents safe and at home. Last year we saw over 3,800 additional new clients served by home care. Unfortunately, the members opposite didn't vote for it then. Maybe they will this time, though, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Carbon Levy and School Transportation Costs

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On March 23 I met with a group of local school bus drivers in the St. Paul area. They expressed some very grave concerns about the ever-increasing effects of the NDP carbon tax on their livelihoods. These are the men and women that we entrust every day with our most precious cargo, our children. To the Minister of Education: is there any plan to help alleviate the extra cost this crippling carbon tax puts on these vital operators of our school busing system without simply passing the burden on to our already struggling school boards?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. Certainly, I've been working closely with all of our school boards here in the province, and rural school boards specifically, on ways that we can make our transportation systems more efficient and to ensure that they are properly funded as well. We know that the key way by which you can do that is to ensure that you have that base operating cost; in other words, make sacrifices in other areas to make sure that we're funding for enrolment in the province of Alberta for our kids. You know, that has resulted in about \$970 million, \$980 million more into school boards over the last three budgets that I've built, and I'm very proud of that fact.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, our bus drivers need help right now. Given that a bus driver picking up our children on a given route has no way of reducing the number of kilometres they drive or how many litres of fuel they burn while they're making the route, to the minister: was there any thought to how the ever-increasing NDP carbon tax would affect our school bus operators, especially since it will have a zero effect on GHG emissions?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, part of the whole concept behind the carbon levy is to make sure we realize savings so that you actually save money. When you do fix up, let's say, your insulation in your school and you save money, you're burning less power, right? When you are working with some bus routes and looking for ways by which to co-operate with the separate school system, the public school system, you can end up saving money as well as reducing carbon. So there's a whole universe of advantage to pursuing these things, and I think the vast majority . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Minister.
Second supplemental.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think I was talking about bus drivers.

Given, Mr. Speaker, that we have constantly requested a cost-benefit analysis with respect to this NDP carbon tax and given that this punitive tax has only negative effects on the men and women that transport our children, with no change to GHG emissions, Minister, will you do the right thing and simply scrap this ridiculous tax on our bus drivers and indeed on our entire education system?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. What we are doing is ensuring that we have higher efficiency in all of our public buildings over time, investing in higher efficiency windows and lights and so forth. I mean, I know that transportation is more challenging, but I'm working with individual school boards to make it happen. School boards recognize the value as well of helping to educate young people around carbon and the process of climate change. To make any denial in that regard goes against common sense, it goes against what children want for their future, for their education, and it goes against actually saving and helping to diversify our economy in the future.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Educational Curriculum Redesign Participants

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The largest curriculum rewrite in Alberta's history is currently ongoing. All parties must work to ensure that positive educational outcomes are the priority of this process. In order to achieve this success, the rewrite needs a balanced approach in order to develop our children into strong, critical thinkers. The minister has stated on numerous occasions that this balance will be achieved during this rewrite process. If this is true, could the minister provide the list of names of the university professors and the outside interest groups providing input into the rewrite? Please note: we are not looking for the names of teachers.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, the hon. member is correct. We are using literally hundreds of people working in our curriculum groups plus many, many other groups making presentations, including the energy industry, the banking industry in terms of financial literacy, computing – postsecondary institutions and industries associated with that as well – as well as working with our postsecondary institutions. It's one of the best canvassed and widest spread curriculum rewrites to help to build a stronger

curriculum for everybody, and I'm very proud of every step that we have taken.

2:40

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
First supplemental.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister seems to have taken the first small step towards doing what we were asking him to do and since he's provided a few names and interest groups today in the House, would the minister, in the name of transparency for the people of Alberta, publish the list of all of the other professors and interest groups who've been involved in the curriculum rewrite process to this point?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, I will always be in compliance with the law and so forth, but I will also be in compliance with the security and privacy of individuals who I will not see harassed by special-interest groups or members opposite who are very regularly using the sort of witch hunt sort of mentality of publishing and trying to shame people who are actually helping us to build curriculum. No, I won't do that, but I certainly will work for the benefit of our children.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not aware of anybody on this side of the House that has shamed anybody that's been involved in the process.

Given that the minister has repeatedly assured this House and the concerned parents across Alberta that the curriculum rewrite will be inclusive of all political philosophies and given that many continue to express their doubts that this is occurring, again to the minister: can you outline for all Albertans how the professors and the interest groups involved in the curriculum rewrite were selected, what criteria were used, and was there a specific focus on ensuring a broad range of philosophical representation amongst these groups and individuals?

Mr. Eggen: Again, Mr. Speaker, you can see exactly that this is a portrayal of my reluctance to subject individuals to this sort of witch hunt mentality that exists across the aisle and with other groups as well. We are working very closely with literally anybody. The door is wide open for people to make submissions. We had people interested in submissions around Arab culture and history just a couple of days ago, with certain groups. We're certainly working with people that are willing to be open and to represent all sides. This is not – the politicization is coming from that side.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Hon. members, I have a request for unanimous consent to introduce a guest.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests (continued)

The Speaker: The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a group of Albertans who have dedicated themselves to market development of Alberta's organic and local food systems from farm

to table. Consumer appetite for organic food and local food has grown considerably over the past several years and shows no signs of slowing down. We have with us Charles Newell, president and director of Organic Alberta, crop farmer and cattle rancher near Radway; Abbie Stein-MacLean, director of Organic Alberta; Jason Anderson, president of Alberta Farm Fresh Producers Association and producer from Kathy's Greenhouse, near Kitscoty; Jim Hill, producer from Hidden Valley Garden, near Sylvan Lake; and Gezinus Martens, Alberta Milk board member and dairy farmer near Calmar. I would ask them now to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Members' Statements

(continued)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Counselling Service Oversight

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In Alberta anyone can call themselves a counsellor. There are no regulations or oversight to regulate this profession in Alberta. Nicole Imgrund, my constituent and an advocate for regulated counselling, stated in a recent op-ed: it's estimated that there are more than 5,000 unregulated counsellors in Alberta. With an increased openness to talk about mental illness across Canada and a decrease in the stigma surrounding seeking help, more Albertans than ever are using therapists and counsellors. In fact, following the Me Too movement, support centres such as the Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton are seeing demand in counselling services up by 53 per cent. The SAIF Society in St. Albert is also being overwhelmed.

Unregulated counselling can and has led to harmful outcomes for people seeking help. Unprofessional biases lead to discrimination against a client based on sexual orientation, race, or other factors. Think about conversion therapy. Think about fake pregnancy counsellors. Other problems with unregulated counselling therapists may lead to abuse and exploitation, breach of privacy, unethical business practices, or a failure to recognize that a client is suicidal or has a serious mental illness.

FACT, the Federation of Associations of Counselling Therapists in Alberta, represents 14 professional counselling associations and has over 3,500 members. This very large and diverse group agrees that regulating counselling therapy cannot wait.

To date FACT-Alberta has developed a definition of counselling therapy, adopted an entry-to-practice competency profile, created a code of ethics to ensure a smooth implementation of the counselling therapy college. The only steps remaining are a consultation process, which is under way, and the passing of the legislation.

Nicole Imgrund from FACT and I have met with the Associate Minister of Health twice over the last year, and a great deal of work has taken place. We can prevent well-meaning but untrained people from providing counselling supports that may have negative consequences for Albertans by doing this. It's an important step towards valuing mental health.

Thank you.

The Speaker: My apologies to the Member for Edmonton-South West.

Traffic Congestion in Southwest Edmonton

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Imagine pouring a gallon of water through a straw. It takes a lot of patience and care. You have

to pour that water painstakingly slowly, waiting for it to carefully drip or else it's going to spill out everywhere. Now, that is the current traffic situation in my constituency. In the fastest growing part of Edmonton my constituents have to face this challenge every single day.

The 2017 INRIX global traffic scorecard, which ranks traffic congestion in cities across 38 countries, showed that Edmonton drivers spent about 5 per cent of their commute stuck in traffic. That amounts to an average of 14 hours per commuter per year in congestion during peak travel times, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you that I myself sometimes make up an entire hour of that in one day. The city of Edmonton's Urban Planning Committee reports that 6 per cent of Edmonton's arterial road intersections are operating below an acceptable level of service, so we see that there are real transportation issues.

Now, public transit is similarly lacking in this area, with very few bus routes available to take people where they need to go. That leads to angry parents rushing their children to school; upset commuters, who are running late for work; and stressed out drivers, who are not as productive in our society.

Mr. Speaker, the government's recent commitment to the Heritage Valley park-and-ride is much applauded and a significant investment in our area. However, the southwest portion of the Anthony Henday is still a massive point of congestion in my riding and areas around it. I know that other roads like Terwillegar Drive, which goes through my colleague's riding, are driven on by over 44,000 vehicles a day. That is an immense number of cars.

We need to continue to invest in the road system and work with our municipal and federal partners to be able to offer people transportation options such as rapid transit, buses, and trains. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I urge the government to commit to supporting transportation and improving the traffic situation in Edmonton-South West.

Federal-provincial Relations

Mr. Fildebrandt: The last time that a Trudeau was in power in Ottawa, the long-standing quasi-colonial attitude of the federal government to Alberta and the west began to boil over. Preston Manning and Stephen Harper constructively channelled our frustrations under the banner The West Wants In.

The election of an Alberta Prime Minister in 2006 saw some of the antiwestern injustices like the Wheat Board scrapped, but institutions and entrenched interests are hard to overcome. Equalization and other transfer programs continue to bleed Alberta dry of our hard-earned prosperity. The Senate remains unelected, unequal, and ineffective as ever. All four Atlantic provinces together have a combined population of 2.3 million, represented by 30 Senators. Alberta, with twice the population, has just six.

Albertans have always been willing to pay more than our fair share into Confederation out of love for our country and the understanding that, at the very least, we have the right to trade in an open and free fair market. But now this most simple condition for the existence of even a quasi-functional national state is questionable at best. Despite the NDP's well-meaning and honest efforts to bend over backwards to earn social licence for a pipeline, those who benefit from Alberta's economy continue to do everything possible to bite the hand that feeds. While I do believe that a change in both the federal and provincial governments will improve our situation, I fear that the deep institutional resistance towards Alberta's interests is becoming impossible to overcome.

In my constituency and across large swaths of our province Albertans, patriotic Canadians all, are beginning to lose hope. What were once whispers are fast becoming a demand for justice.

My colleagues, we are all proud Albertans and proud Canadians, but our relationship with the federal government is quickly becoming untenable. I ask that we stand together behind the old banner The West Wants In before some people want out.

An Hon. Member: You know that was pioneered by the CCF, right?

The Speaker: Hon. member.

2:50

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to give notice of a motion for the next Order Paper, that being:

Be it resolved that the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne be engrossed and presented to Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor by such members of the Assembly as are members of Executive Council.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Bill 7

Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act

Mr. Carlier: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise today and introduce Bill 7, the Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act.

This bill stems from our government's commitment to work with producers, retailers, and processors to eliminate barriers to local food production and marketing. It also builds on efforts by Alberta's organic food producers to address the regulatory gap for organic foods produced and marketed within Alberta.

Alberta agriculture is ready-made for innovation, diversification, and job creation. This sector was strong through the recession and will continue to grow as we build a recovery to last. Alberta is uniquely positioned to continue that growth, Mr. Speaker. There's been a tremendous increase in local food purchased through on-farm sales and through Alberta's unique farmers' market system, supported by world-class food and excellent programs and policies.

Bill 7 will provide the forum and foundation to continue Alberta agriculture's track record of success.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 7 read a first time]

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier and Minister of Health.

Bill 9

Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to request leave to introduce Bill 9, the Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act.

All Albertans should feel safe when accessing their health care services. That includes abortion services, which have been legal in this country for almost 50 years. This new act will ensure that women in Alberta can exercise this choice without fear of interference, bullying, threats, or intimidation. This legislation will also protect doctors and other service providers from harassment and scare tactics. All Albertans should feel safe when accessing any health care service, including abortion.

Introducing this bill is also a significant step in ensuring that health care providers feel safe when they do their jobs.

I look forward to the discussion and deliberation with my colleagues in the House on this very important issue. Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 9 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Bill 203

Long Term Care Information Act

Mrs. Schreiner: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to request leave to introduce Bill 203, the Long Term Care Information Act.

Mr. Speaker, I worked as a health care professional for years in long-term care. I saw with my own eyes the families and loved ones of seniors come through our doors asking for information about the facility. Everybody in Alberta deserves to have that information available to them in a format that is accessible and easily understandable. Bill 203, the Long Term Care Information Act, will provide them with that information. I have talked to long-term care providers and to those looking for long-term care.

I look forward to debating this bill with my colleagues in the House. Thank you for the opportunity.

[Motion carried; Bill 203 read a first time]

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

Bill 204

Land Statutes (Abolition of Adverse Possession) Amendment Act, 2018

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to beg leave of the House to introduce Bill 204, the Land Statutes (Abolition of Adverse Possession) Amendment Act, 2018.

This bill seeks to abolish adverse possession in Alberta, also known as squatters' rights. Alberta and Nova Scotia are the only provinces in Canada with legislation enabling claims of adverse possession. I believe this bill is a positive step for the protection of the rights of urban and rural landowners across Alberta.

I would also like to at this time give special thanks to Ken Allred, former MLA for St. Albert. Ken brought forward a private member's bill just before the 2012 election which would have abolished adverse possession. The bill passed first and second reading at that time but did not pass through the House before the election. Mr. Allred decided not to seek an additional term of office, and his bill died on the Order Paper.

I would like to thank Mr. Allred for his great work, tireless advocacy, and guidance on this issue, and I will be honoured to introduce him when he joins us during debate of this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 204 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

Mr. Piquette: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of an article from the *Smoky Lake Signal* on April 3 this year: MLA Says Alberta Is on the Right Track for Economic Rebound. I referred to it in my response to the throne speech yesterday.

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

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In reference to a point of order that was made yesterday, where it was alleged by the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre that an infrastructure list was not asked for and that it, in fact, did not take place, I table the requisite five copies of a letter that was addressed to all MLAs, including yourself and the member, on capital plan priorities, seeking information about priorities for Infrastructure by the Minister of Infrastructure.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you. I rise to table five copies of pages 80 and 84 of the Budget 2018 fiscal plan, and page 4 of my budget speech, which state that the federally imposed carbon price will increase based on the approval and construction of pipelines.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two documents to table, and I have the requisite number of copies. They are the AHS procurement policy documents titled Competitive Bid Processes and Corporate Contracting. These are available online; however, I did commit to tabling them in the House yesterday, and I'm proud to keep my word.

The Speaker: The Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Dr. Starke: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier today, during consideration of the main estimates of the Ministry of Advanced Education, I made reference to a letter from the Alberta Beef Producers to the Minister of Advanced Education calling for a review of the decision to defund the Western College of Veterinary Medicine in Saskatoon. I have five copies of that letter to be tabled.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you. I'm tabling today a document containing a petition on behalf of the Friends of Berwyn Autumn Lodge, containing about a thousand signatures and asking that the Autumn Lodge in Berwyn be kept open. The closing of the Autumn Lodge will displace some 40 seniors from their homes. They go on to say that similar lodges in the Peace Country built at the same time, on an identical footprint, are still being used. Obviously, the closure of the Berwyn Autumn Lodge will be, you know, economically disastrous to the community of Berwyn. It also hurts small rural communities.

3:00

The Speaker: Hon. members, I wish to advise that the Routine needs to end, and we need to move to Orders of the Day. We will proceed very soon.

Point of Order Imputing Motives

The Speaker: My apologies to the House. I indicated that I would make a decision concerning the point of order from yesterday. I know that you're really waiting, so I would like to address that at this point. I deferred my ruling at the time because, as I noted yesterday, I did not have an opportunity to see the Blues.

I have now reviewed *Alberta Hansard* from April 4, 2018. I would note that the point of order was raised during the question period exchange between the Member for Chestermere-Rocky

View and the Minister of Infrastructure, which can be found on page 384 of yesterday's issue of *Alberta Hansard*. In the exchange the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View commented on the government's fiscal management plan and its effect on the Infrastructure budget and specifically the need to build additional schools in the province. She asked in her main question about "the criteria that were used to pick the schools that have been given the go-ahead." The minister responded by stating, among other things, that "it's perplexing that my friends across the aisle spend so much time talking about reducing spending while at the same time presenting me with a long list of infrastructure demands."

The Official Opposition House Leader, who raised the point of order, alleges that during the exchange the minister imputed false and unavowed motives and made allegations against the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View when, in his words, the minister stated that "the member provided a detailed list of infrastructure asks to the minister's office." The Official Opposition House Leader contended – actually, the deputy House leader I think it was at the time – that that did not occur.

In her response to the point of order the Deputy Government House Leader argued that the Official Opposition has in the past requested in question period, in meetings, and through a variety of other methods that the government undertake a number of infrastructure projects. The arguments from both House leaders can be found on pages 391 to 392 of *Alberta Hansard* for April 4, 2018.

Hon. members, it is not uncommon that such disagreements arise between members as to the facts of the matter on one side as compared to the other. In this case there was a disagreement as to the facts, but there is no point of order.

This concludes the matter.

Orders of the Day

Consideration of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech

Ms Sweet moved, seconded by Mr. Malkinson, that an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows.

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

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

[Adjourned debate April 4: Mr. Drysdale]

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise and give a reply to the Speech from the Throne. Starting out, I suppose, with the positive, I was very pleased in the Speech from the Throne to see that many of the very best ideas in there originated on this side of the House. I'm very pleased to see that the government took at least some of that good advice that they've been receiving from our side of the House and pleased that they saw fit to put it into the throne speech.

Mr. Speaker, the throne speech is an important thing because it's the opportunity, typically, where the government sets the tone for the next session of the Legislative Assembly, and for approximately 4.3 million Albertans, I think, that should give them at least some signal of where the government is about to go. They are looking for a hopeful signal, particularly when one considers that there are, as of a Statistics Canada labour force survey in February 2018, 165,000

unemployed Albertans. That number would be 26,000 higher than when this government took office. The previous month there were 10,500 full-time jobs lost and replaced by part-time jobs in Alberta.

While it may not be true in every case, I think most members of this House and most Albertans would agree with me that there is a much higher chance of those jobs being mortgage-paying jobs when they're full-time than the chance of those being mortgage-paying jobs when they're part-time, so potentially there are as many as 10,500 more homes struggling after that month to pay their mortgage than there were before that month.

Indeed, there were nearly 43,000 unemployed youth in Alberta, and that, of course, is also according to the Statistics Canada labour force survey in 2018. The youth unemployment rate, at 13.1 per cent, is the highest in Canada outside of Atlantic Canada.

Now, Mr. Speaker, these are all statistics where Alberta used to lead the way. Clearly, something has changed. Indeed, there were 92,000 fewer payroll jobs in Alberta at the end of 2017 than there were before the recession. Again, not my numbers but, rather, those of the Statistics Canada survey of employment, payrolls, and hours.

Calgary currently, again according to the February 2018 Statistics Canada labour force survey, has the second-highest unemployment rate amongst Canada's major cities, at 7.9 per cent. You can only imagine why Calgarians are so very unhappy.

Mr. Speaker, the Calgary Chamber of commerce and many other Albertans that keep track of these things made their feelings known of how unhappy they are, yet I will say that there are things we are pleased with. We're pleased that the government took our side and decided to become supportive of pipelines. We appreciate that they took our side and decided to push our neighbouring government in B.C. Again, I would say to anyone listening that our quarrel has never been with the people of British Columbia but, rather, with their NDP government, that chooses to try to hobble the most important industries in Alberta.

So, Mr. Speaker, it wasn't all bad, but it surely could have been a lot better had this government taken more of the advice from this side of the House than that which they did indeed choose to take. While I'll say that I'm grateful for the advice they took from us, they didn't finish the job.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will thank you for this opportunity to reply to the Speech from the Throne, and I will take my seat.

The Speaker: Hon. members, any other questions or observations under 29(2)(a)?

The Leader of the Queen's Official Opposition.

3:10

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am honoured to rise for what is formally my maiden speech in this place in response to the address and reply to the Speech from the Throne.

Let my first formal words on the *Hansard* record here be those of gratitude: gratitude for the constituents who have invested in me their confidence as their representative in this Chamber; gratitude for those who helped with my election in Calgary-Lougheed last December, the volunteers and many hundreds of people who contributed and participated in the democratic process; respect, parenthetically, for my fellow candidates from other parties who offered themselves in that democratic process; gratitude, of course, for my family, all members of whom have, in one way or another, like for all of us, helped to shape me as a person and given me my passion for public service.

I think particularly of my paternal grandfather, Mart Kenney, who was Canada's best-known musician in the 1930s and '40s and, after that, was a household name as the leader of Canada's best-known big band and dance band. He was also a passionate Canadian

nationalist who really invested in me my own passion for public service.

Gratitude for one of the former deans of this place, our friend Dave Rodney, my predecessor as the member of this Assembly for Calgary-Lougheed, for his statesmanlike decision to give me an opportunity to seek election to the Legislature to serve in the capacity as Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. Members who know Dave know him to be a quintessential Albertan who personifies the hopefulness and optimism that has always characterized Alberta. I respect him greatly for his past public service and for having given me the opportunity to be the voice for the Official Opposition in this place.

Finally, gratitude for the members of my caucus and for the members of my party for having confided in me their trust to be leader of the new United Conservative Party and, consequently, Leader of the Official Opposition. Mr. Speaker, I am deeply grateful for that trust, and I will endeavour every day to discharge the serious obligations that come with this role in an honourable fashion.

Mr. Speaker, let me begin with words of profound esteem for this institution in which we are also privileged to serve. I join in that privilege now, and we should never forget. I counsel my fellow members as somebody with nearly two decades of parliamentary experience never to take for granted the privilege of walking into this place. I quoted the late Rt. Hon. John Diefenbaker in my farewell remarks in the House of Commons in September 2016. He said at the beginning of his long and storied parliamentary career: "When I first walked into this Chamber, I was humbled. I looked around at this Chamber, that looks like a cathedral, and wondered to myself: how in the world did I ever end up here?" And he said: "A few days later I looked around myself and said: how did the rest of them end up here?" I'm sure that will never happen.

As I speak about the institution, let me begin by speaking about the people who inhabit it, all of us who are custodians of this institution and the customs that it incarnates, this great tradition of ordered liberty, the customs of free people of which parliament and its constituent chambers are the safeguard. Mr. Speaker, we are debating now the address and reply to the Speech from the Throne, which some might regard as an anachronistic tradition but I regard as an essential symbolic reflection of our constitutional order, of our parliamentary democracy, of our constitutional monarchy.

I'm proud to sit in a Chamber where our gracious sovereign looks over us every day and where Her authority is symbolized in the Mace that is before us, in an Assembly which flies the proud flags of Canada and Alberta but also the Royal Union flag, which reminds us every day as we approach this building, as we enter this Chamber that we are entering not just a sterile room, not merely some debating Chamber but a living institution that has developed organically over centuries of struggle, an institution and values which we can never take for granted.

The history of the development of parliament, going back to the 14th century in England, is the gradual, halting, occasionally violent but usually peaceful and organic development of free people finding their voice. It is no coincidence that the root word of "parliament" from the Norman French is "parler." It is the place in which we speak. It is that Chamber that initially placed checks and balances on the royal prerogative of the Crown.

But what is unique and one of the reasons why the Westminster parliamentary tradition, in which we all participate here, became the first and the oldest democratic tradition in the world is because there was a brilliant, delicate balance between order and liberty, between authority and democratic representation. There is that dynamic tension in the historic development of parliament about which we should always be mindful.

The entire secular liturgy around the Speech from the Throne reminds us of that. As Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor enters the Chamber, she does so accompanied not only by our accomplished Sergeant-at-Arms but by other representatives of martial authority, by her aide-de-camp, by leading members of Her Majesty's Canadian Armed Forces, by leading members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, all of whom are here in a sense representing the executive authority of the Crown meeting with the people's representatives.

We should never regard these as anachronistic customs. They give living expression to 800 years of development of this institution. Let's remember that from time to time. I think one way in which we can give practical expression of our collective esteem for this institution and what it represents and, in turn, can demonstrate our respect for the constituents, the Albertans whom we represent in this place, is through a degree of civility in the way that we engage in our debates here.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I will of course frequently allude to my experience and privilege of serving in the Ottawa Parliament. Let me offer a mea culpa. There is no doubt – well, absolutely no doubt – that in my 19-some years in that place I said and did things that I regret, that were uncivil. I heckled. I made unnecessary noise. I'm sure I was a thorn in the side of your counterparts in the federal House of Commons from time to time. Mea maxima culpa.

However, I now find myself in the privileged position of serving as Leader of the Opposition in this place. That is why, upon meeting my colleagues here shortly after becoming elected to this Chamber, I proposed that we try to raise the tone, raise the bar of our comportment in this place. Even if it's not reciprocated, we can control at least our own actions, Mr. Speaker. I hope that in so doing, we have as a caucus decided to suspend the practice of thunderous desk thumping, which I think creates unnecessary disorder in this place and detracts from the quality of debate. As much as possible we have tried to suspend the custom of heckling.

3:20

Now, Mr. Speaker, I say these things knowing full well that parliamentary debate is not croquet. This is not a walk in the park on Sunday afternoon. This is where we resolve our differences peacefully but often in a spirited way. There should be clash. There should be occasionally partisanship as long as that partisanship isn't mindless. Partisanship simply means that we associate ourselves with other elected officials who broadly share our values, principles, and policies, to assert those in an organized and collective way. That's how our parliamentary system has developed. This is sometimes derided but, I think, something to be honoured and celebrated. Yes, this is a partisan institution, a place where there is and should be clash and occasional discord, but surely that clash and debate can happen in a broader context of civility, and the parameters for that civility are the institution itself and the customs that it incarnates.

I hope that we as the Official Opposition at least have been doing our best of late to demonstrate that respect for the institution and the people that we serve. As I've said, I am sure that I and perhaps even some of my colleagues here will do and say things in this place that we will regret, but at least we are trying to set for ourselves a higher standard. I do invite members of all parties to join with us in that effort. Nobody here is holier than thou, but we are all here. Regardless of our partisan affiliation, our political philosophy, or personal background, we are all here, ultimately, I hope, as humble servants of the people and of our sovereign. That is my commitment to you, Mr. Speaker, that as long as I stand in this place, I will try, at least, to respect the best traditions of this place.

Mr. Speaker, that leads me to some words about the province and the people whom we serve and the country to which we are so proud to belong. I note with pride that this is, I believe, the only Legislative Assembly in Canada out of the 14 Assemblies, including the federal Parliament, which displays all of the flags of the 10 provinces and three territories, a beautiful expression of the innate patriotism of Albertans.

In some places patriotism has gone out of fashion. There are some who suggest that to be patriotic is to be jingoistic, that there cannot be a healthy patriotism, that, rather, it immediately passes into jingoistic nationalism. I don't agree, Mr. Speaker. Patriotism simply means love of country, and I think that Albertans, perhaps because of the natural kind of unpretentiousness of Alberta people, are not afraid, are not ashamed to be proud as Canadians. Even when we believe that the federation sometimes is not working for our best interests, the response of most Albertans to that is to work to improve or perfect the federation rather than to undermine it or tear it apart. That impulse, that love for Canada, for the dream of Canada as a great land of opportunity is reflected in those flags that surround us here. I speak not just as an Albertan but as a Canadian first.

You know, Mr. Speaker, regrettably, in the give-and-take of partisan rhetoric, I've found in the past 18 months members of different parties attacking me because I was born in Ontario – heaven forbid – and raised in Saskatchewan before moving here to Edmonton, Alberta, when I was, I think, 22 years of age. I'm proud to have spent virtually my entire adult life in Alberta and over half of my life in this province.

But, Mr. Speaker, I am proud as well to have been born in and lived in other parts of Canada. You know, one of the most remarkable features of this province's political culture is how welcoming it is. I have rarely found traces of xenophobia amongst Albertans. To the contrary, this is a province that welcomes newcomers from every part of Canada and all around the world. The ethic of Alberta is simply this: we judge you not by where you came from, what your last name is, how you pray, or whom you love, but we judge you based on how you treat others, how hard you work, how you contribute to your community.

Mr. Speaker, if there is one word that can characterize the culture of this province, Alberta, it is "meritocracy." It is a province where we judge people by their merit, and that is why newcomers – and I love this. When I go through the Calgary Stampede parade, as I have 19 times as an MP, you see hundreds of thousands of people lining the streets and huge, I think disproportionate numbers of apparently new Canadians, Canadians by choice and not chance. It moves me when I go through that parade and I see little kids of African or Asian origin, Latin American origin, from all around the world, who are participating in that parade, wearing their cowboy hats and their little cowboy boots. They're eager, their families are eager to become Albertan, to identify with the symbols that are rooted in our history. That is how welcoming this place is.

We believe, Mr. Speaker, in the dream of unity in diversity. We Albertans don't believe that diversity is a strength in and of itself. We believe the strength lies in unity in our diversity, in sharing what's best about our cultural patrimonies and faiths and backgrounds in a true and authentic pluralism. That's how Alberta has always been.

In fact, let me reflect on our history, Mr. Speaker. I look at those families as I go through the Calgary Stampede parade. I'm often able to identify which countries of origin people are from and very often able to identify people who came to Canada as refugees. I know this because of my five-year experience as the federal minister of citizenship and immigration, during which time I was honoured to welcome over 1.2 million new permanent residents to Canada, including over 120,000 refugees to this country.

Mr. Speaker, as I said in my farewell speech to Parliament and as I will say now in my maiden speech in this Assembly, according to the McGill historian and former NDP candidate Desmond Morton, Canada has been built, quote, by the losers of history. Now, that's an odd thing to say, perhaps. It doesn't really feel right to think of ourselves that way, but let me develop what Professor Morton meant in his essay on Canada as the country built by the losers of history.

If you think about our history, our First Nations peoples who came to this often inhospitable environment tens of thousands of years ago and built communities in this place but who at the time of European contact lost a great deal and who suffered many indignities and injustices too numerous to recount. Those aboriginal people were in some sense the losers of history.

The French Canadians, les Canadiens français de la Nouvelle-France ont été les perdants de l'histoire. The new French Canadians who lost the French colony in 1759, at the Conquest, were, in a real sense, losers of history.

3:30

They were shortly followed by the United Empire Loyalists, who effectively founded English Canada. I'm proud to call some of my ancestors in their numbers. Those United Empire Loyalists were the losers, literally, of the American Revolution, Mr. Speaker. They were loyal to this Crown under which we serve, and they were willing to risk and lose all to maintain that fidelity to the institutions that we represent here. They came north. They came to Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario, Upper and Lower Canada as well, and they essentially founded English Canada. They were then followed by – let's be clear. They were refugees. They were refugees that had everything taken from them and had to start plowing virgin soil with nothing but a small land grant, living through the first years of terrible deprivation, with a high rate of mortality. These were the people that founded English Canada.

Then the Highland clearance Scots, whose parents and grandparents had lost in the Jacobite uprisings and lost their small farms with the Highland clearances of the 18th century, one of whose descendants was Sir John A. Macdonald, the great father of our country, those Highland clearance Scots that populated Cape Breton and other parts of Canada, whose descendants have moved west to Alberta: they, too, were losers of history.

Mid-19th century, the Irish famine émigrés, Mr. Speaker: when a third of the population of Ireland, between 1847 and 1854, died in the famine, a third emigrated, a third survived and stayed in Ireland. Of the third that emigrated, tens and tens of thousands came to Canada, and I'm proud to say that I am one of their descendants. My family name came to this country in a coffin ship. I believe that my great-great-grandmother is buried in the mass graves at the quarantine station on Grosse-Île, at the mouth of the St. Lawrence River. These were tough people. They were the losers of history, and they helped to found Canada. Their descendants find themselves, so many of them, here in Alberta. By the way, as members can see, I'm pleased to report that the Kenney family has since recovered from the famine.

Mr. Speaker, one could go on to the Mennonites, who fled pogroms and persecution in Ukraine and Russia, had been persecuted in western Europe before that, who came west – think of all sorts of communities in Alberta, from La Crête to Taber and everywhere in between, populated by those hard-working Mennonites, descendants of refugees – or the European Jews who escaped the pogroms before the Second World War, many of whom came from Belarus, Ukraine, and Russia, from the steppes of Europe, to become merchants in small towns in Alberta.

Think of the remarkable Chinese labourers, the bachelor labourers, who were brought over here to build the Canadian Pacific

railroad, with a high rate of mortality, often exploited, yet even though Canada wouldn't give them full citizenship, they still believed in the promise of this country. They planned and built their futures here. They spread out across every little town in the Canadian prairies, all throughout Alberta, and they started their small businesses, their restaurants, their laundromats, and their motels. Many of those families are still there 120 years later. In some sense, they were, originally, the losers of history, too.

You could think, of course, about the European or Jewish refugees who came after the war. You know, in Canada it's a great shame that we essentially had a none-is-too-many policy refusing the admission of European Jewish refugees during the Holocaust but, perhaps, in some small way redeemed ourselves by accepting the third-largest number of European Jewish refugees after the Shoah. Many of them I know, friends of mine, now in their 80s and 90s, who are amongst those survivors, losers of history.

One can think of the Hungarians of 1956, the anti-Soviet, anticommunist uprising – you know, one example: the entire forestry faculty of the university in Budapest was basically airlifted to Vancouver, became the faculty at the university; much of the forestry expertise in Alberta came from those individuals, losers of history, who all lost their homes, lost their freedom – the Czech refugees of 1968, right on down till today.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I can think of one man who I helped to come to Canada, named Lu De Cheng. Lu was at the Tiananmen Square protests in June 1989, in Beijing, and he was arrested and thrown into a laogai forced labour camp and tortured for the better part of a decade before escaping. He managed to get to Thailand. Members of the prodemocracy movement contacted me, and I helped Lu start his new life here in Canada.

Right down to the Middle Eastern refugees who have come here, many of them victims of the genocide of Daesh and other terrorist organizations – Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry for the long aside on our history, but it's important to remember who we are. The people that founded this province – the Ukrainians, who left, often, political oppression and hopelessness in their homeland to cross a vast ocean and then cross an enormous continent, then to plow virgin soil and live in mud huts for their first two or three years in a place with no stores, no supplies, no lumber – these people were heroes.

We stand on the shoulders of such heroes. Think of the Americans who came up from scrub farms in the American northern Midwest and settled much of southern Alberta. Think of the people like the family of my friend from Drumheller-Stettler, who got through the Depression and the drought in the special areas in the 1930s, when there was often nothing to eat but dust. These were tough people, resilient people. They did not give up. It didn't matter what nature threw at them or chance. I mean, Mr. Speaker, these are the people that built this province.

Here's my point. If we were to apply the current fashion of identity politics, of the politics of resentment to the history of all of these people, we would imagine that we are just a warring, squabbling series of factions, all with their historical grievances, all wanting to settle scores, all animated by bitterness and a desire to right history's wrongs. But no. Instead, all of these people decided to focus on the future; yes, to be proud about those who had gone before and the sacrifices that they had made, never to forget those things, including some terrible injustices, but never to become embittered or encumbered by those things.

Rather, they chose together to build a great country in the vision of Thomas D'Arcy McGee, the great martyr of Confederation, Mr. Speaker, who himself started as a Fenian rebel animated by bitterness towards the Crown under which we serve, yet he came to accept that in Canada we were building something remarkable in human history. We were building a place of fresh starts and new

beginnings, a place where it was possible to leave our ancient grievances outside of this country and to build it together, united in our diversity. In so doing, we, the descendants of these great people, have become the winners of history.

3:40

That's why I'm a proponent of a certain Canadian exceptionalism. I do believe there is something exceptional in the character of this country and, particularly, this province, which takes all of those experiences and then adds to it, like, a special entrepreneurial drive and work ethic. That's what I love so much about this province.

In fact, I myself as a 22-year-old had a good-salary job offer to go down and be a political staffer in Ottawa and then, at the same time, an offer to come up here and help start an organization more or less from scratch, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation in Alberta, the Alberta association of taxpayers at the time, in 1991. For some reason, maybe just because I was young and foolish, that idea of starting something, of not knowing where your next paycheque would come from, of putting it all on the line, appealed to me.

That is the draw of Alberta. That is why we have been, all through our history, a magnet for risk takers and entrepreneurs and hard workers and wealth creators. It's that belief in the creative power of human freedom. Mr. Speaker, it is no coincidence, as we enter those doors to this Assembly, that over them is written this province's motto, *Fortis et Liber*, strong and free, words beautifully taken from our national anthem, words that themselves perfectly reflect what I call this Canadian tradition of ordered liberty, strong and free. This, I believe, is the only province in Canada which includes freedom in its motto – and it's no coincidence – the land of big skies, of endless opportunity, where dreams can come true. That is the province of which we all are custodians. So I rededicate myself to that Alberta project of being a sign of hope for people all around the world.

Let me share with you, Mr. Speaker, a remarkable and true story, an Irish story. It would have been in 2012, I believe, when I was minister of citizenship and immigration. Members will recall that one of the most significant challenges in our economy at the time was labour shortages as our economy was supercharged. We had, effectively, full employment. Boy, wouldn't it be nice to have those days again. But employers were desperate, and the number one request I was getting in Alberta as the federal immigration minister was: we need more workers.

So I went to Ireland to attend and participate in something called the Working Abroad Expo, and I went there with several dozen Canadian employers, Edmonton Economic Development, Calgary Economic Development, and so forth. In fact, I think Alberta Health Services was there trying to recruit nurses. There were employers from Canada, United States, Australia, New Zealand, and elsewhere. At that time Ireland and Europe were still going through their financial crisis. In fact, I think that unemployment in Ireland at the time was 20 per cent. It was 40 per cent youth unemployment. There was, like, much of that through parts of Europe.

I will never forget it. At 9 a.m., as they opened the doors for the jobs expo, there were over 10,000 young Irish and other Europeans and people from, actually, all around the world that went around several city blocks. On that misty Irish morning I worked my way down that queue and tried to shake every hand, spent four or five hours going down that line because, Mr. Speaker, my formal agenda was to encourage them to come to Canada, but I must confess that I had a hidden agenda. It was to get them to come to Alberta.

As I went down the queue, I saw in the faces of so many of these young people who had been unemployed for two or three years a look of hopelessness and despair, which, sadly, have been too much of Ireland's history. I would say to them: which of the countries that are represented here do you think you might be interested in going

to? I was pretty pleased that about half of them said Canada. About half of them. We were beating Australia, with their beaches and their warm weather. That was pretty cool.

And then for those who said Canada, I went a little deeper. I said: now, do you know which part of Canada you might be interested in? Mr. Speaker, it sends a shiver up my spine to think of it every time. Again and again and again that morning I heard from those young Irish and others the same word: Alberta, Alberta, Alberta. They said this, people who had no relatives here, had never visited here, had no friends. It would be a hard place to find on a map, but the word "Alberta" represented for these young people hope, opportunity, and a new beginning.

This is not just a random place on a map. It is not a haphazard collection of people. It is an idea, an idea that has the power to animate hope amongst the hopeless halfway around the world. That is Alberta, Mr. Speaker, and that is why we all serve this province. Having said that, having said that we do have this special, exceptional – Canada is exceptional. I believe in world history for the reasons I've described, and I believe Alberta is exceptional within Canada for those reasons.

So, Mr. Speaker, what then motivates me personally in my public service? I'd like to cite words I offered when I began our Unite Alberta campaign on July 6, 2016. I talked about those newcomers who had come from every corner of the Earth to a land where dreams come true, and I said: that's what drew me to devote my life to public service, a passion constantly to renew Canada's promise as a land of opportunity so that every one of us, especially those who are least fortunate, can realize their God-given potential.

The greatness of Canada and of Alberta is not an accident of history. Every day people join our family, having left behind countries seized by corruption, poverty, and tyranny. Why, then, are we different? Why are we considered a model to the world in so many ways? It is not because, as Justin Trudeau claims, we are a, quote, postnational state with, quote, no core identity. It is not because we are simply a reflection of the world or, as Yann Martel, the novelist, said, *Hotel Canada*.

It is because we are the inheritors of a great tradition of ordered liberty based on the dignity of the human person, the inalienable dignity of the human person incarnated in certain institutions and customs like the rule of law, limited parliamentary government, and the sanctity of property and contract. From these have come the brilliant achievements of free markets, free enterprise, and democratic capitalism, of innovation and prosperity, all of which have harnessed human freedom to lift countless women and men out of poverty and despair, to realize the greatness of their potential.

I say these things because I want to start at the beginning. Far too often in politics we forget what we are about. We lose track of the first principles that animate us. So I say to you: these are my first principles. I am a conservative because I believe we have an obligation to transmit and renew these traditions of ordered liberty that have helped to make Canada the envy of the world.

Now, Mr. Speaker, with that as a statement of my philosophy about our country, province, and politics, let me then turn to more current challenges which we all face. I preface this by reiterating my respect for members of all parties, including the government. It is important to offer this condition because I do not want my criticism of the policies of the government to be taken as an *ad hominem* personal criticism of the people who make up the government.

3:50

Insofar as the hon. the Premier is my opposite in this Chamber, I would like the record to be clear about my highest esteem and respect for our Premier. When she has been sometimes viciously

attacked on social media and elsewhere, I have tried to remind people that we do not have an obligation to agree with our head of government, but she is our elected head of government, and we do have an obligation to respect her mandate and to respect her office and to respect her personally. And that, Mr. Speaker, applies to every minister of Executive Council and every Member of this Legislative Assembly. To reiterate what I said earlier about civility, I hope to be able to disagree without being disagreeable, for the differences to be predicated on policy and not people.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I am very conscious of this. It is my constitutional role as Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition to hold the government to account and to prepare an alternative government to the Lieutenant Governor should circumstances warrant it. That is a burden, a constitutional convention that falls on the Leader of the Opposition and the Official Opposition, and I'm serious about discharging that.

That is why, Mr. Speaker – let me just begin with this section of my remarks – I and so many others have worked so hard over the past 21 months to create one united, competent, credible alternative to the current government. Twenty months ago, when we launched this Unite Alberta campaign, we had two conservative parties in Alberta. The Progressive Conservative Party had a great legacy of having helped to build modern Alberta with inspired leaders like the great Alberta statesman the late Peter Lougheed, like the great Ralph Klein, a man of the people. I know friends opposite didn't agree with Premier Klein, many of his policies, but I think very few Albertans could deny that Ralph, as we all loved to call him, had a passion for the little guy and an innate sense of the common sense of common people.

Mr. Speaker, so much of modern Alberta developed through these and other leaders. They weren't perfect. Those governments made mistakes, and that's why we're in the opposition, some of those mistakes that were made in recent years. Some of those mistakes were also why we ended up with a division in the conservative movement in this province. This is no secret. We had two ostensibly conservative parties, the Progressive Conservatives and the Wildrose Party, which itself incarnated important Alberta values: a belief in fiscal responsibility, in democratic reform. While in its relatively brief existence some members of the Wildrose Party made mistakes as well, fundamentally I believe that the members of both parties were animated by a love for this province and a desire to serve her.

Unfortunately, the members of these two parties were locked in a war of attrition, much of it animated by bitterness and resentments that had developed over a decade of division. It was not only my observation, Mr. Speaker, but others' that as long as this war of attrition continued, we would be creating the potential conditions for a re-election of the current government. I respect the 40 per cent of the popular vote won by the New Democratic Party in the May 2015 election and the majority of members elected to this place as a result. I point out, however, that the combined vote of the Progressive Conservative and Wildrose parties in the same election was over 50 per cent of the vote.

My view, the view of so many of us, was that whatever differences those parties had between themselves, they paled in comparison to the differences that we shared with the New Democratic Party. It was our view that we had to find a way to overcome these differences, to heal the wounds, to start again, and to give a new beginning to democratic conservative politics in Alberta.

We went through a huge amount of heavy lifting. At first the Progressive Conservative Party decided in its leadership election just over a year ago to get on the path to unity. I want to thank the former members of the PC caucus who are in this United Conservative caucus for their leadership. It wasn't an easy or an

obvious thing to do, and they deserve great credit for being ahead of the parade, Mr. Speaker.

Then we negotiated a unity agreement. It was hard work. You need only ask these two gentlemen, Mr. Speaker. I appointed the Official Opposition whip, the Member for Calgary-Hays, as my primary representative on the negotiating committee, and our House leader, the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, was one of the principal Wildrose representatives. Look at them getting along here right now, the very picture of unity. Someday I will perhaps join with them in writing the history of what happened in those difficult negotiations. It was not a sure-run thing, by any means. A couple of times this thing was stuck in a ditch, and as one prairie politician once said, you don't shout "whoa" when you're stuck in a mudhole. That wasn't the Member for Drumheller-Stettler either.

So, Mr. Speaker, we got it done. We got the unity agreement done, and then we presented it to the members in a democratic exercise. This was not a top-down, elitist contrivance. It was an authentic reflection of a democratic will. We all had the courage to put it all on the line. Again, the outcome was not certain. Yet I am pleased to say that 95 per cent of the members of both of our legacy parties said yes to unity. They said yes to the future. They decided to focus on the future rather than getting stuck in the past. They said that our province is more important than any political party.

We did it, so thank you to my colleagues and, through them, to the 120,000 members that make up the newest political party in Canada. With that novelty comes a great deal of opportunity but also concomitant responsibility. That's why I have emphasized with all of our party members the importance of rising to that level. We'll begin doing some of this important democratic work at a founding convention on the first weekend of May in Red Deer, where our members will have their say on the initial policy direction of our party and so much other work to be done.

Mr. Speaker, I wanted to address this in my maiden speech because what we have done together is to make history. Every day, hon. colleagues, we continue to make history together. So let us never forget the lessons of a decade of division and what it has cost Alberta, and let us rededicate ourselves to the mission of renewing this province as that beacon of hope and opportunity and renewing the Alberta advantage.

Let me, then, turn to those imminent challenges, Mr. Speaker. Our province has recently gone through the longest and deepest recession since the Great Depression of the 1930s, and that was a doozy. This province went bankrupt, effectively, in 1934. Albertans are still suffering the consequences of this long and deep recession, at the height of which over 200,000 Albertans were unemployed. We had a 9 per cent unemployment rate. We had gone from consistently the lowest unemployment rate in Canada to the highest, outside of Atlantic Canada. We saw near-record levels of business bankruptcies and insolvencies. We saw tens of thousands of people leave the labour force altogether, just giving up looking for work, and tens of thousands of others who left the province. We had seven straight quarters of net out-migration, with more Canadians leaving Alberta than coming to it.

4:00

Mr. Speaker, in the last 20 months I've put 140,000 kilometres on my pickup going to over 900 events everywhere from High Level to Milk River and Manyberries to Rocky Mountain House. How many times have I been in Rocky? About six times? To the Member for Medicine Hat, I think it's about 12 times that I've been in the Hat. As I've gone around and just listened to Albertans, as I've done that – by the way, Winston Churchill reminded us that moral courage consists not just in speaking out but also in humbly

listening. We've done a lot of humble listening in the last 18 months. As I have done that, I have been moved again and again by the stories of despair being experienced by our fellow Albertans. I'll never forget.

I was going around in the Drumheller-Stettler constituency to three events one day, and there was a couple who followed me to each of the three events. They spent the whole day driving around listening to my speeches again and again. I wouldn't have done that for my speeches, I assure you. At the end of it, the third event, I went up to them. They were kind of shy, and they were standing at the back, and they were frankly looking like they'd been through some bitter times, you know. It kind of reminded me of one of those Johnny Cash songs, Mr. Speaker. It looked like they'd lived through one of those tough country music songs.

I went up to the husband and wife and said: why were you following me around all day? The wife broke down in tears. She said: "Well, Mr. Kenney, my husband was in the construction industry and lost his job. It was through his job that we were able to pay the bills to keep the farm going, but when we lost that income, we lost the farm. Now we're living in a trailer on our son's acreage. We're in our late fifties, and we've lost everything, and we feel like we have to start all over again like we're in our twenties. We're embarrassed to be dependent on our son." Breaking down in tears in front of me, they said: we just want to know that there's some hope that we're going to turn this thing around.

I think of the lady who approached me after a speech I gave in Calgary, who again came up to me – this happened a lot – and just broke down emotionally and she said: "Mr. Kenney, six months ago I lost my job. I've been looking for work ever since without any luck. The company that I worked for here moved to the States, and they said that this government's policies were part of the reason why." And she said, "Finally, just to put food on the table for my family, I had to take the same job I was doing when I was 18, an entry-level retail job, and I just feel ashamed and embarrassed." She broke down in tears in front of me.

When I think of the young man – many of my colleagues have heard this story. I was filling up my gas tank at the Esso station in Hardisty. Whose riding is Hardisty in? Battle River-Wainwright? You know the Esso station there. Mr. Speaker, I'm filling up, and this young man pulls up behind me in his pickup. He jumps out. He seemed to recognize me. He said, "Are you that Kenney guy?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "How long before you replace this government?" I said, "Well, hopefully, three years." He said, "That's not fast enough." I said, "Well, buddy, I'm going as fast as I can, but we don't decide when the election is." He said: "But, sir, you have to understand. This really matters. My dad lost his job two years ago, and he can't find any other work, and he's getting depressed now. I've never seen him like this before." Then the young fellow goes on to say, "Sir, I'm just 17, and I'm now the only paycheque for dad and mom and all four of my brothers and sisters, and the pressure and the stress is getting to me, too." And this young man started to break down in front of me.

Now, I think we all know that young man. Some of us may have been that young man or a young woman like him. We know that at any normal time in our history a 17-year-old oil field worker like that would be working hard and playing hard, that he couldn't pick me out of a police lineup, and he probably wouldn't know what government is doing. But, Mr. Speaker, all of a sudden this young man understood that politics has real-life consequences for him and his family, and he wants to do something about it.

These are the Albertans that I have met, and when they hear the government say, "Happy days are here again. It's all fine. There's some great recovery going on," it doesn't relate to their real, lived experience, Mr. Speaker. We still have 175,000 unemployed

Albertans and 40,000 who have left the labour market and stopped looking for work. Many of those who are technically working – I mean, this is supported by the data; it's not my opinion – are working part-time, piecemeal, and contract work, where they were in full-time, secure, high-paying, often six-figure jobs, and they're having a hard time making it. I just met with such a fellow in Drayton Valley the other day: a nice, young, I think 28-year-old oil field worker. He's working in Saskatchewan because there's no work for him here. He says: maybe I can get a day or two, but at least in Saskatchewan I can get regular work.

Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, it's not just workers who have left the province. Why are they leaving the province? Why do we have 9 per cent unemployment in Calgary, the highest of any city in the country? It is in part because tens of billions of dollars of capital have fled this province. Now, the government tells us every day that this happened simply because we are the passive victims of global commodity prices, that we can't do anything to help, that we have to surrender in the face of global commodity fluctuations. Nonsense. Our province has been through cycles and downturns before, but at least in the past we had governments that were trying to maintain and restore investor confidence rather than undermine and destroy it as has happened in the past three years.

Mr. Speaker, over \$36 billion has been taken out of Alberta's oil and gas sector alone in the past two years, redeployed to the same industry, oil and gas, in other parts of the world at the same global prices. It is not about price. Through most of our history – like right now global prices are \$62, and our effective export price to the U.S. is \$35. Those price points are high compared to most of our history. The Klein government balanced the budget at \$20 and then \$10 oil. Through most of our history we've had lower prices than this, but tens of billions of dollars have been relocated.

Take, for example, one of the majors – I think it was Exxon – who took billions out of the oil sands and then redeployed that capital to former Soviet Socialist Republic of Kazakhstan, one of the most corrupt economies in the world. What's wrong with this picture? Total, the French oil giant, divested themselves of a multibillion-dollar oil sands development, and then they redeployed that capital months later to gas fields in the Islamic Republic of Iran, a theocratic dictatorship that stones women accused of adultery and hangs gay men, Mr. Speaker. Is the world better off? You know what that means? That decision means that some guy, probably with a PhD, sitting in the Total headquarters in Paris did a global risk assessment and determined that Iran was a lower risk for Total's capital than the province of Alberta. This is what's happened to this province, every day.

Drilling activity was up dramatically in Saskatchewan while it was down in Alberta. You know, the oil field is booming in the Bakken in North Dakota, in Colorado, in the Permian basin in west Texas every day. Talented Albertans – we had this incredible brain drain. Why is all of this happening? Well, its not, obviously, about the same oil prices, the same gas prices. It's about policy. Alberta has fallen from being the 14th to the 44th most competitive jurisdiction in North America for upstream oil and gas investment, and it's just beginning.

4:10

Why? Because this government decided to pour fuel on the flames of a recession rather than trying to douse the flames. Mr. Speaker, we found ourselves in a hole of the recession. The first thing you do is that you stop digging when you're in a hole, but they dug deeper. They raised taxes on everything: higher income taxes, higher business taxes, higher provincial share of property taxes. They're helping Mr. Trudeau, their close ally. They just can't say no to Justin. They've never met a Trudeau policy they didn't love.

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

When the Liberal Prime Minister, who's polling at 11 per cent in Alberta right now, half of where his father was during the NEP – the NDP may not have figured it out, but Albertans sure have, that Justin Trudeau does not have our best interests at heart. When Justin Trudeau said, "I want to raise the CPP payroll tax to make it more expensive to hire people and create jobs," the NDP government said: "Oh, sure. Yeah. Okay." Then they imposed the largest tax increase in Alberta history, the multibillion-dollar, job-killing carbon tax, which they did not mention to Albertans in the last election. I keep it here on my desk every day, Mr. Speaker. It's the NDP platform, *Leadership for What Matters*, page 24, balancing the books. [interjections] Yeah, balancing the books. That was supposed to be this year, a \$25 million surplus. Whoops. They were only off by \$9 billion. That's 16,000 per cent. Is that right?

Some Hon. Members: It's 364 per cent.

Mr. Kenney: Three hundred and sixty-four.

Mr. Speaker, I read this, like, almost every day because I think I'm missing something. There are seven tax changes mentioned, not one mention of a carbon tax or a carbon levy or a save-the-planet tax or whatever they're calling it now. Zero. It was the biggest misrepresentation, mistruth – I'm looking for a parliamentary word – in Alberta political history. They imposed it five months later. They pretended: oh, we had never really thought about it; it was just kind of a new idea. And then they raised it by 50 per cent on January 1. Then Justin Trudeau comes along and says: "Yeah, I don't like your \$30 tax. I want it to be \$50. You should go 67 per cent higher."

Now, at any normal time in Alberta history an Alberta Premier would have said: "Hold on a second, Prime Minister. We're going through a tough time here. We've got a couple hundred thousand unemployed people. There's a total failure of investor confidence. You know, incomes are down and unemployment is up. No, no, Prime Minister. I'm sorry." A normal Alberta Premier would have said: "No. We're going to fight you on this." What did they say? They said, "Absolutely. We'll happily implement your 67 per cent increase in the carbon tax." Then the Premier goes on, as I've quoted her before, saying that they're open to raising it beyond that.

I said this the other day on the speech last week on the budget. We all know what it's about, Mr. Speaker. To give New Democrats their due, they really believe that they're saving the planet by forcing seniors to turn down the heat at home in Alberta when it's 30 below outside. They're so driven by that ideological zeal. We all know where that really leads us to. Professor Leach, who wrote their carbon tax, said: we need a price of \$200 a tonne to achieve Paris climate targeted goals. Environment Canada says: \$300 a tonne. And that's where they want to go.

This is just incrementalism. Like, who's kidding whom? Let's be grown-ups here. What's the point? As Andrew Coyne says in today's *National Post* of a punitive consumer tax that makes it more expensive for people to consume energy in a big, complex, industrialized, cold, northern economy: what's the point? When there's no elasticity, people don't stop driving to work. Carbon emissions are up in B.C. over where they were when they brought in that carbon tax. The Australians repealed their carbon tax because it didn't work, didn't reduce emissions, but it did hurt the economy. He says: what's the point? Go big or go home. Make it 300 bucks a tonne or stop hurting our economy.

Well, Mr. Speaker, on top of all of that – on top of all of that – massive new regulations, increased labour costs. What government raises labour costs by 50 per cent in the middle of a recession, when people are losing their jobs?

You know, I get a kick out of the NDP talking about evidence-based policy. Well, here's the economic evidence. According to a metastudy of all of the minimum wage increases in Canada in the past 40 years a 10-point increase in the minimum wage results on average in a 2 per cent reduction in employment for immigrants and youth. Why? Because they're the newest entrants to the labour market, the most marginal in the labour market.

What do you think a 50 per cent increase in the minimum wage results in? Well, according to the Bank of Canada 60,000 job losses across the country. According to the C.D. Howe Institute 25,000 job losses in Alberta. Think about how – oh, my goodness – when New Democrats get on their moral high horse and pretend they have a monopoly on compassion, and then because union bosses tell them to, they bring in a policy that according to the think tanks will kill 25,000 jobs for immigrants and youth. Where is the compassion for those who lost their jobs, Mr. Speaker? There is none. There's no regard.

The massive new regulations on everything: you know, their economic policy reminds me of how Ronald Reagan used to characterize socialist economics. "If it moves, tax it. If it keeps moving, regulate it. And if it stops moving, subsidize it." That's a billion dollars in corporate welfare for hand-picked companies in the energy sector after \$35 billion in capital has been pulled out and, by the way, an unnecessary royalty review that helped to fuel this investor uncertainty, and it goes on and on.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, our concern is not limited to the economy, but look at the fiscal catastrophe in what I think history will record as one of the worst budgets in Alberta history. The NDP was elected. All of the members opposite went to Albertans and said: vote for us, and we'll give you a \$25 million surplus in the 2018-19 fiscal year, this fiscal year, and we'll only increase the debt by about \$11 billion. That was the contract with Alberta voters in 2015; instead, a \$9 billion deficit and a plan for another \$40 billion in debt. Altogether they promised \$11 billion in debt, but we're going to end up with a debt of \$96 billion, nearly \$100 billion, based on absurdly optimistic projections; mortgaging the future, as I said in the budget speech; spending \$4 billion in interest payments, already at \$2 billion, more than 19 of the 23 government departments.

I asked the Premier today: does she think that spending \$17 billion in interest payments in the next four years is a good use of public money? And she couldn't even bring herself to say no. How far these Alberta New Democrats have strayed from the great tradition of Tommy Douglas, who, for all of his policy mistakes, balanced Saskatchewan's budget 17 times because as an intellectually honest social democrat Tommy understood that when you borrow money, you've got to pay it back, and to whom? The bankers. And where? Bankers in Toronto and in London and in Zurich and in New York. Tommy understood that there's no social justice in enriching bankers and that it therefore requires discipline, a discipline this government is completely incapable of demonstrating.

Not only is this a fiscal train wreck, Mr. Speaker, but we are profoundly concerned about the government's direction on so many other issues, including, for example, education. Albertans want to ensure that we have a quality education system that focuses on the transmission of critical knowledge and skills to young people to help ensure their success. What Albertans don't want is failed pedagogical facts or political agendas in the classroom. We are deeply concerned as well about the NDP unleashing their astroturf front groups to attack Alberta's wonderful tradition of school choice.

We hear all these speeches about diversity, but they are ideologically – it's NDP policy. It hasn't yet become government policy, but NDP policy is opposition to diversity in education. They

don't believe in pluralism in education. They believe in monism, only one way, government cookie-cutter schools whereas we believe that every child is unique, that families have different values and they have a prior right, as reflected in article 26(3) of the universal declaration of human rights, to choose the form of education that their children will receive. Well, we will defend that universal human right against the NDP's allies, Mr. Speaker.

4:20

So, Mr. Speaker, it will fall to us in the year ahead to present a compelling alternative to the economic disaster and the fiscal train wreck of this ill-prepared government, and we will do so deliberately and democratically. Some of our critics say: well, why don't you have a platform, an alternative budget, and so forth? We're not going to, like the NDP did in their platform, make stuff up on the back of a cocktail napkin. We're going to consult our own grassroots membership with a deliberate debate to set the basic policy direction of our party, and then we will consult broadly amongst Albertans of all backgrounds and walks of life to produce a comprehensive, positive, compelling, realistic, and affordable plan, blueprint, to reignite our economy, restore investor confidence, and renew the Alberta advantage.

I can, however, tell you that I think we have a consensus on some elements of that plan. It is our intention, Mr. Speaker, should we be honoured with the confidence of Albertans in the election scheduled for next spring, to call an extraordinary summer session of this Assembly, so I forewarn colleagues who are running for re-election to book off no summer holidays next summer. Okay. You can take Canada Day off, and that's it.

And should we have this opportunity to come to this place, we will begin systematically to repeal every damaging element of the NDP's economic agenda. Beginning with Bill 1, the carbon tax repeal act, we will put that job killer through the shredder. Mr. Speaker, within weeks if we should be honoured with the confidence of Albertans, we will repeal the legislation, the damaging aspects of Bill 6 that imposed massive costs on our farmers and agribusinesses and agrifood operators. We will repeal the regulations and the new laws imposed by this government as part of an endless accretion of higher costs on the entrepreneurial sector of Alberta's economy. We will move to demonstrate fiscal responsibility.

It's interesting. The NDP was saying last fall that I have a secret agenda, they claim, to cut government spending by 20 per cent. Now, just today the Premier is saying that I have a secret agenda to freeze government spending at zero cuts. Boy, that's quite a shift. But last week her communications director, her spokesperson said that the only way to balance Alberta's budget was, quote, to blow up every school and hospital. To Albertans who are watching this, Mr. Speaker, that's a preview of the election to come. As this government runs out of time, becomes increasingly desperate, we can expect the volume of that hyperbolic anger to reach ear decibel breaking levels.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans aren't going to rise to that bait. Albertans are too smart. They understand that we can exercise some reasonable fiscal discipline in the provincial government that spends more than any other in per capita terms by far. We are the most inefficient provincial government in Canada by a country mile, and this is not simply the fault of the NDP. Recent PC governments must share a part of the responsibility for that.

So, Mr. Speaker, we will demonstrate that commitment to fiscal responsibility. We will demonstrate an immediate commitment to lifting off of the wealth creators in our society the enormous accretion of job-killing regulations. We will eliminate that huge, massive new tax burden of the carbon tax, and we will do everything to send a message all across Canada and around the world that Alberta is open for business again and that this, once again, is that land of opportunity.

Why do we do this, Mr. Speaker? I'll close with this. We do this not because there's some great unique virtue just in having balanced budgets or allowing people to keep more of their own money. We do this because we understand that wealth cannot be redistributed unless that wealth is being created through people's hard work in the first place, that in order for us to have the means to be a generous society with proper funding for critical social programs like health care and education, we need that wealth to be generated in the first place. The NDP raised taxes on incomes and businesses but saw revenues go down. We need to reignite the creative power of this economy so that we have those resources and so that we are not wasting billions of tax dollars year after year enriching bank holders rather than investing in the future of this province.

The blueprint that we present, our vision of the renewal of the Alberta advantage, is designed not to achieve some abstract economic growth. What drives us, what motivates us is a passion to ensure true equality of opportunity for every member of Alberta society, especially those who live at the margins, especially those who have many disadvantages: for persons with disabilities who want to get into the workforce, for single moms who need that opportunity that they desire, for First Nations people who too often are excluded from prosperity in our economy, for low-income seniors who are having a hard time paying the bills as they go up with the carbon tax and the cost of heating their homes.

For all of those who are at the margins, what we will present is a vision, a credible plan of opportunity once again to restore Alberta as a province that is the beating heart of enterprise in Canada, the job-creation engine of this country's economy, that Alberta that animated those young people in Ireland I met five years ago to see this as the land of fresh starts and new beginnings, that Alberta that is, in the words of our province's motto, strong and free.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? The Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Time is short, and there's not enough time, unfortunately, for a full 29(2)(a), but keeping, of course, with parliamentary tradition, through you on behalf of the entire Assembly and certainly on behalf of the Official Opposition I'd like to congratulate the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed on his maiden speech before this Assembly.

Also through you to him, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Official Opposition we'd like to congratulate him on getting here. I'd like to say that you've got it all the way done, but I think, through you to him, that he has one more step to go. I'm looking forward to his maiden speech a little over a year from now as Premier of Alberta.

Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, pursuant to Standing Order 4(2) the House stands adjourned until Monday afternoon at 1:30.

[The Assembly adjourned at 4:28 p.m.]

Bill Status Report for the 29th Legislature - 4th Session (2018)

Activity to Thursday, April 5, 2018

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

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

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

Bill 1 — Energy Diversification Act (McCuaig-Boyd)

First Reading — 6 (*Mar. 8, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 50-51 (*Mar. 13, 2018 morn.*), 184-87 (*Mar. 15, 2018 aft.*), 233-43 (*Mar. 20, 2018 morn.*), 301-08 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 2 — Growth and Diversification Act (\$) (Bilous)

First Reading — 118 (*Mar. 14, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 243-46 (*Mar. 20, 2018 morn.*), 294-96 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft.*), 314-25 (*Mar. 22, 2018 morn.*), 411-12 (*Apr. 4, 2018 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 3 — Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2018 (\$) (Ceci)

First Reading — 184 (*Mar. 15, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 221-26 (*Mar. 19, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 261-68 (*Mar. 20, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 296-98 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 28, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force Mar. 28, 2018; SA 2018 c1]

Bill 4 — Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2018 (\$) (Ceci)

First Reading — 165 (*Mar. 15, 2018 morn., passed*)

Second Reading — 226-32 (*Mar. 19, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 268-75 (*Mar. 20, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 298-301 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 28, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force Mar. 28, 2018; SA 2018 c2]

Bill 5 — An Act to Strengthen Financial Security for Persons with Disabilities (Sabir)

First Reading — 200-201 (*Mar. 19, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 360-62 (*Apr. 3, 2018 morn., adjourned*)

Bill 7 — Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act (Carlier)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 8 — Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2018 (S. Anderson)

First Reading — 374 (*Apr. 3, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 9 — Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act (Hoffman)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 201 — Employment Standards (Firefighter Leave) Amendment Act, 2018 (W. Anderson)

First Reading — 118 (*Mar. 14, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 201-14 (*Mar. 19, 2018 aft., referred to Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future*)

Bill 202 — Alberta Taxpayer Protection (Carbon Tax Referendum) Amendment Act, 2018 (Kenney)

First Reading — 179 (*Mar. 15, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 203 — Long Term Care Information Act (Schreiner)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 204 — Land Statutes (Abolition of Adverse Possession) Amendment Act, 2018 (Gotfried)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, April 9, 2018

Day 13

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, April 9, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

I wonder if we could pray or contemplate, each in our own way. As our nation mourns the death of so many fellow Canadians, let each of us think about our loved ones, our children, our grandchildren, who may have all travelled on a bus to play the game they love. We share the crippling pain felt by the families affected by this tragedy. Let this incident yet again remind us about what is really important. Please may we observe a moment of silence.

Hon. members, ladies and gentlemen, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Mr. R.J. Chambers. I would invite all to participate in the language of their choice.

Hon. Members:

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

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

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

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today on behalf of my colleague the MLA for Edmonton-Riverview and Minister of Seniors and Housing to introduce to you and through you students from Malmo elementary school. They're accompanied today by their teacher, Theresa Bonar. I would ask them now to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise on behalf of the Member for St. Albert and introduce to you and through you 50 students and chaperones from Albert Lacombe school in St. Albert. The students today are accompanied by their teachers, Miss Leis, Miss Kaplar, and Mrs. Michael, along with their chaperones, Mrs. Shankaruk, Mrs. Carlson, and Mrs. Sylyski. If they could please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. members, any other school groups?

Seeing and hearing none, the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Mr. Hinkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly my constituency assistant, Niel Parker, and my outreach officer, Azure Johnson. We all know the vital role they play in serving the public, especially when we are not able to be in our offices. I admire their

dedication, professionalism, tact, and charm. Please welcome Niel and Azure with the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For more than 110 years Rotary International has taken action on sustainable projects. As Rotarians we're always working to better our world. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the members of the district 5370 Rotary board: Frank Reitz of Fort McMurray – please stand as I say your names – Kathy Strobl of the Whyte Avenue branch, and Laura Morie of Westlock. I ask you all to please stand and receive the warm applause of our Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Health and Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to recognize members of the Professional Association of Resident Physicians of Alberta seated in the members' gallery. Their association is often referred to as PARA. They are here annually to meet with elected officials. Today's focus will be on how a provincial pharmacare strategy would support the provision of excellent patient-centred care in the province of Alberta. I look forward to meeting with them later today. I now invite Dr. Michael Martyna, PARA president, as well as Dr. Michele Foster, vice-president leadership and engagement, along with staff and all members of PARA to rise and receive the warm welcome of our Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the entire Assembly three young-adult community organizers from Canadian Roots Exchange. Specifically, they're from the youth reconciliation initiative, a program that puts youth in a position of leadership with regard to reconciliation. They foster discussions between indigenous and nonindigenous youth about topics surrounding decolonization and reconciliation, when we create a more just province for all. I ask that they please rise as I call out their names: Aura Leddy, Brittany Whitford, and Hyungu Kang. I ask all members to provide them the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you visitors from a great business in my riding of Calgary-Acadia. I'll ask that they rise as I introduce them and remain standing: Abdulfatah Sabouni, Husny Hadry, Walid Balsha of Aleppo Savon; and Sam Nammoura and Saima Jamal of the Calgary Immigrant Support Society. Abdulfatah was forced to flee his home and family soap business in Syria a few years ago. Now he and his family call Calgary home. He and his business partners have created new jobs by bringing Aleppo Savon to Calgary with the same passion, ethical practices, tradition, and family pride to create wonderful soaps. I have to say that they are high-quality, excellent products. To the Aleppo Savon team: we love your products, and we look forward to watching your business grow. Please join me in extending the warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

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

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to the rest of the members of the Assembly Saima Jamal, an activist and inspirational humanitarian who's furthering her work by joining the Alberta Party caucus in the capacity of outreach officer, and her partner in the Calgary Immigrant Support Society, Sam Nammoura, who was recently a finalist in the immigrants of distinction awards in Calgary. I'd like everyone to please extend to them the warm welcome of the Assembly.

1:40

Ministerial Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Humboldt Broncos Bus Crash

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans and all Canadians are reeling from the horrific Humboldt Broncos crash, that claimed 15 lives. The pain of this loss is staggering. It transcends this Legislature, this province, and this country. It is far from just us who rise today to pay our respects and to mourn. It is a safe bet that the name "Humboldt Broncos" is being uttered in every coffee shop, community club, schoolyard, and place of worship across Alberta, Saskatchewan, and beyond because, really, there is not an Albertan who doesn't in some way see themselves and their loved ones in this tragedy. I know that I hug my kids tighter, and I'm sure that that goes for a lot of us. After all, our children, our families, and our communities are what unite all of us.

This is about families who have lost children and loved ones, and it's about communities who have lost bright young stars and dedicated leaders, and it is about the connections between kids, coaches, families, fans, and everyone who ever volunteered in their community. Those connections make us neighbours, they make us friends, and they make us Canadians. They fill us with pride, with hope, and with optimism. They bring us together now to hold one another and comfort one another in the face of tragedy, to lift one another up when the weight of that tragedy is upon us, and to remember forever and always the beautiful group of people that we lost.

We grieve for the 10 incredible young men who were at the beginning of their careers and their lives: Adam Herold, Conner Lukan, Evan Thomas, Jaxon Joseph, Jacob Leicht, Logan Boulet, Logan Hunter, Logan Schatz, Parker Tobin, Stephen Wack. They all ranged in age from 17 to 21, so young. That crash claimed their potential in sport, in their communities, and in achieving their ambitions and their dreams. It is a tragedy whose scope is beyond comprehension.

Just last week all members of this Chamber had the honour of meeting many of Alberta's Winter Olympians and the honour of congratulating them. They sat up in that gallery. We looked up to them and we applauded. Many of those athletes know well what it's like to be on a bus criss-crossing the prairies. It's an essential part of sport in Canada, and those Olympians were products of organizations like the Humboldt Broncos, organizations that cultivate and encourage the best of the best and strong, community-minded Canadians.

Members of this House today turn our attention to the communities of Slave Lake, Spruce Grove, Lethbridge, Peace River, Edmonton, Stony Plain, and, most tragically, St. Albert, each and every part of Alberta where the memories of those lost and the suffering of those injured is more than a name. It's a memory of a young boy growing up down the street, a smiling face at a local fair, a big brother that was looked up to. This loss reverberates in a million ways through all the lives touched by these bright, unforgettable lights.

We also grieve for the loss of Head Coach Darcy Haugan and Assistant Coach Mark Cross. Their leadership and their passion to inspire is now lost to this and future generations of hockey players, coaches, and community members. Darcy Haugan's hometown of Peace River is in mourning. We grieve for statistician Brody Hinz, a dedicated, loyal, and much-appreciated team volunteer and member. We grieve for Tyler Bieber, the Broncos' play-by-play broadcaster. He was 29, not much older than the players. We grieve for bus driver Glen Doerksen, a dedicated family man who is remembered by the women and men who transport our kids from game to game and tournament to tournament.

At yesterday's vigil in Humboldt, when the puck was supposed to be dropped, roses were dropped instead. Families, communities, hockey greats, and government representatives from all levels and all over the country came together, united in mourning and in remembrance. Sheldon Kennedy was at the vigil along with other survivors of the 1986 bus crash that took the lives of four members of the Swift Current Broncos and injured 24 others. It was a strong and welcome statement of solidarity. It was also a stark reminder that countless teams on countless buses travel our roads every year in pursuit of their sport. It is a core part of life on our prairies.

As we mourn those who were lost last week, we stand with the survivors: families, friends, and those who are recovering from injury. We thank and honour all the first responders and medical personnel, those who were on the horrific scene and those who are caring for the survivors and families now. When we see a glimpse of the crash scene, we are reminded of the level of responsibility and sacrifice that those first responders and medical professionals meet and take on on a daily basis and how, some days, they are faced with tragedies that stand out and will never be forgotten. We thank them, and we stand with them, and we will do all we can to comfort and support them through all of the sleepless nights that will surely follow.

Mr. Speaker, for everyone who has been touched by this tragedy, the grief it has generated will not dissipate any time soon. Let us remember that as this grief is processed over weeks, months, and years, we must be kind to one another, we must be compassionate, and we must be the best of who we are as neighbours, Albertans, and Canadians. To all of those struggling through this tragedy: if you need help, please ask for help. We are here for you. I know I speak for all Albertans and especially for everyone in this Assembly when I say that we share your pain, and we, of course, are committed to ensuring that we help in whatever way we can.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, first, let me thank the hon. the Premier for those beautiful and heartfelt words.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to join with the Premier and all members in expressing our profound sadness in the wake of Friday's tragedy involving the Humboldt Broncos junior hockey team. At times like these, words do not suffice. There is nothing that we can say adequately to express our grief for the loss of these 15 souls, our condolences to their families, and our solidarity with the community of Humboldt, the province of Saskatchewan, and the network of hometowns across the prairies that have lost one of their own. The outpouring of love and support that has come from across Canada and indeed around the world has, however, been nothing but astonishing, and I hope that it has brought all of those grieving this tremendous loss some small measure of comfort. We also, as the Premier has done, acknowledge the heroism of the police, paramedics, and medical personnel for their compassion and professionalism.

Mr. Speaker, I grew up in a small Saskatchewan junior hockey town, and I can tell you that in these towns the local team is the

heartbeat of the community. So often, cheering these boys on is what brings together friends and neighbours and creates a broader family, knits together a community. We cannot imagine how the community of Humboldt is suffering as it comes to grips with the bleak events of the last 72 hours.

Mr. Speaker, as the Premier has said, the team bus figures so prominently in our collective experience as Canadians and, I think, especially in remoter parts of our country: the prairies, northern Ontario, and elsewhere. All across the country, parents put their kids on buses just like the one that was carrying the Broncos to game 5 of the Saskatchewan Junior Hockey League semifinal series against the Nipawin Hawks. Generations of Canadian kids have grown up on these buses, travelling thousands of kilometres to get to the next game or the next competition or the next performance. I know that most members of this Chamber have spent significant amounts of time travelling vast distances on buses just like that. This is why this tragedy is so unspeakable and hits so close to home for so many Albertans. That bus could have been any bus on any highway, carrying any one of us.

1:50

But in the midst of such darkness and heartache, stories of hope have begun to emerge, like the news that Logan Boulet, a 21-year-old Broncos player from Lethbridge, had just recently signed his organ donor card and that this act of bravery will save the lives of at least six people.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to join the Premier in remembering the names of each of those who were lost and, with each of these names, to express our condolences to their loved ones: Darcy Haugan, Mark Cross, Brody Hinz, Tyler Bieber, Glen Doerksen, Parker Tobin, Logan Schatz, Jaxon Joseph, Adam Herold, Stephen Wack, Logan Hunter, Connor Lukan, Evan Thomas, Jacob Leicht, and Logan Boulet. Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and may light perpetual shine upon them.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, I would respectfully request unanimous consent from the House to allow a member from the Alberta Party to provide a response to the Premier's ministerial statement.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the Alberta Party.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, one of the ties that binds this nation together is the love and passion that we have for the game of hockey, but I would suggest that one of the strongest ties that binds this nation is how Canadians come together during a time of tragedy, as we saw these past 72 hours. It makes me extremely proud to be a Canadian, a former hockey player, a member in this Chamber. On behalf of the Alberta Party we want to send our deepest condolences to the families and the communities affected by this tragedy and to the Humboldt Broncos and our prayer for them, for these families and communities, that they would find peace and comfort during this time.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View. Was that a part – I'm just getting the note – of unanimous consent?

Mr. Mason: We didn't get a request, Mr. Speaker, but if the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View wishes to speak, I would request unanimous consent to allow him to do so.

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the Legislature. As a father and now a grandfather of a passionate 15-year-old hockey player I must express my deepest sympathies to these players, families, friends, and the community in this heartbreaking tragedy. The injury, loss of life, and grief caused by this crash cannot be expressed in words. I find myself, with many Canadians, struggling to process this profound loss of these great young men and their team staff.

However, amidst the sorrow there is a positive glimmer. Vast geography and separate lives have not dulled our empathy across this country and, in fact, across the world, for this tragedy. All Canadians and many around the world have expressed their support directly or indirectly for this tragedy and offered further support. As a nation we have not simply mourned the loss; we have risen to the occasion and provided support to victims and families. From fundraising campaigns to Canadians giving their airplane seats to grieving family members to Canadians opening their homes to those needing lodging, Canadians are doing all they can do.

For any Albertan – that is, most of us – struggling with the emotional response to this crash, let us reach out to one another, share the grief with friends, family, and, if necessary, a professional.

God bless us all.

The Speaker: I'll need to clarify from the table if the original motion included other members. I haven't had a chance to check that.

Mr. Mason: It was my intention, Mr. Speaker. Yes.

The Speaker: Anyone who wishes to speak?

Mr. Mason: No. Any one of the independents.

The Speaker: The Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Dr. Starke: Mr. Speaker, thank you, and thank you to my colleagues for affording me this opportunity to just add a few brief comments to what has already very eloquently been said by colleagues. Ever since first news broke Friday evening of this terrible tragedy on this lonely piece of Saskatchewan highway, I was reminded of the years that I coached speed skating, because while there's been a lot of talk about hockey this weekend and, certainly, we tend to focus on hockey, it's not just hockey. There are teams of speed skaters and volleyball players and bands and dancers and young people who travel the vast reaches of our country to pursue their dreams and their joys.

At the beginning of each speed skating season with my athletes, Mr. Speaker, I would always ask them the question: what's the thing you like most about speed skating? And the answer always came back the same: the bus trip. It had nothing to do with speed skating. It had to do with those hours that they spent on the one trip a year that our club chartered a bus to go to an out-of-town competition. It was those hours where those lifelong friendships were shared. Many times I clambered aboard that bus with the other athletes and said goodbye to parents who were leaving them, and there was always this trust. There was always this feeling that we would get there safely. Most of the time, the vast majority of the time, of course, that's exactly what happened, but tragically on Friday night that's not what happened.

Mr. Speaker, because we have that shared experience as Canadians, because so many of us have spent those hours on those buses with teams of athletes, with teams of artists, with teams of young people pursuing their dreams, that is why this is such a shared experience and why the collective grief over this experience has become so widespread and so profound. To all of the family

members of the Humboldt Broncos that were affected by this: my deepest condolences. And, of course, my thanks to the first responders for their professionalism and their courage in the face of such unspeakable horrors. As a country and as a nation, together with the community of Humboldt, we will heal going forward. That is part of our resolve as Canadians, and I have every confidence that we will remain Humboldt strong and strong for the Humboldt Broncos.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Federal Response to Pipeline Opposition

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, yesterday was a terrible day for Alberta's economy with the announcement of the suspension of the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain pipeline expansion. It is clear now that the Premier's close ally Prime Minister Trudeau has done nothing to ensure the construction of this pipeline and respect for the rule of law. Will the hon. Premier now join with me in calling on the federal government to invoke section 92(10)(c) of the Constitution to declare the Trans Mountain pipeline as being for the common advantage, thereby overriding any legal delay tactics by the government of British Columbia?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What we will do and have done is to call on the federal government to essentially follow the lead of Alberta. The federal government has greater authority, in fact, than Alberta, but ultimately the strategies that they can use fall into one of three buckets. They can put economic pressure, fiscal pressure, on the province of B.C. They can assert their jurisdiction either legislatively or through the courts. They can support investor certainty, as we talked about doing yesterday. All three of those will assist, and we are calling on . . .

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Kenney: I thank the Premier for her answer, but in terms of the federal government asserting its jurisdiction, that's precisely what I'm asking the Premier to agree with me on, to do so by the invocation of the national interest power under section 92(10)(c) of the Constitution. I wish you would be explicit about this. Will the Premier join me in calling on the federal government to get ahead of one of the B.C. delay tactics by, instead, having a direct federal reference to the Supreme Court of Canada on the matter that the B.C. Premier proposes to hold at the B.C. Court of Appeal?

2:00

Ms Notley: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, these are issues that have already been well under discussion with the federal government as well as the B.C. government as well as the proponent. That is, absolutely, one tool that could potentially add certainty to the matter. As I've said before, there are different tools, all of which are focused on ensuring certainty so that the investors move forward with construction, and we are going to continue to advocate that all of those tools be used and, in fact, that the work that is under way be accelerated.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, we've been proposing tools that the federal government could use that this government has refused to endorse.

Here's another one, Mr. Speaker. The Trudeau Liberals are punishing Saskatchewan because it refuses, in turn, to punish its citizens with a carbon tax. The federal government is withholding transfers from Saskatchewan as a result. Will the Premier join with me in calling on the federal government to withhold transfer payments from the Horgan NDP in Victoria unless they begin to respect the rule of law and the Constitution of Canada?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact, when it comes to the funds that would be transferred as a result of participation in the pan-Canadian framework, we've already made that request to the federal government, and I believe that it is under consideration. So that's fine.

As I've said before, there are a range of tools which the federal government needs to strategically deploy, many of which they are already working on. Our view – and I think we probably agree with the members opposite – is that those tools need to be accelerated, and we are going to do everything we can to make sure that they are, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Second main question.

Trans Mountain Pipeline Construction Suspension

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Premier has one of those tools in her own hand. The federal government says that they want Alberta to have this carbon tax that's hurting Alberta consumers, and the deal was that they'd get a pipeline built. They're doing precisely nothing to ensure that that happens. Will the Premier join with me in saying to Justin Trudeau that Alberta's carbon tax will be repealed unless he gets that pipeline built?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I have said before, our participation in the pan-Canadian framework, which essentially begins in 2021, is conditional on that pipeline being built, and the Prime Minister and the federal government are fully aware of that. But cancelling our climate leadership plan here in Alberta is not the path to getting the pipeline built. That, instead, is emulating the same failed tactics of the members opposite that didn't get a pipeline built for over a decade. We must demonstrate to all Canadians that we can build the economy and protect the environment.

Mr. Kenney: It doesn't matter how often she says it, it's still not true, Mr. Speaker. Four pipelines built would be 1.7 million additional barrels per day under the Harper government.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier spoke last night about the possibility of public participation in the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion to ensure its construction by reducing the risk for the shareholders, the risk of which is the result of a failure of governments in this Canada to ensure the rule of law. Will she join with me in stating that Alberta will not participate financially in that pipeline unless the federal government does so as well?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Yes. First of all, Mr. Speaker, just to be clear, because we need to start every question with a clarification, no pipeline to tidewater was completed under the previous Conservative government. Just to be clear there.

On the second issue, Mr. Speaker, what we will do is that we will do everything we can to get this pipeline built, and we will not put a desire to position ourselves against the federal government over and above the need to get the pipeline built. To be clear, we will do whatever it takes, and we will not box ourselves in in the way the member suggests.

Mr. Kenney: She's still giving her ally Justin Trudeau a blank cheque, Mr. Speaker, to weasel out of any meaningful action.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Premier declared victory. When the government of British Columbia brought in yet another delay tactic, she lifted our symbolic wine boycott on British Columbia, and just last week, based on one court decision of many to come, she did a victory lap. Why has the Premier repeatedly declared victory when, in fact, the enemies of our economic progress have succeeded in suspending the Kinder Morgan pipeline expansion?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, what we have not done is cheered for the pipeline to fail, and we will not do that. In fact, we will remain as determined as we always have been to get this pipeline built. The fact of the matter is that we have won 14 out of 14 cases, and I feel very confident that we will win more. But what we've also done is give notice that there will be significant economic consequences to the province of B.C. and potentially other parts of the country if this matter does not go forward. We will not back down before we get this pipeline built. We stand up for the interests of Albertans.

The Speaker: Third main question.

Provincial Response to Pipeline Opposition

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, let's be clear. This government has been fumbling the ball since day one. They gave Justin Trudeau his carbon tax without any actual commitment to action. They did nothing to protest the federal veto of Northern Gateway, which was approved by the last government. They did nothing to protest Trudeau's killing of Energy East. They did nothing to protest Barack Obama's veto of Keystone XL. When the B.C. NDP came to power with the promise to do everything to stop Trans Mountain, they criticized me for suggesting a fight-back strategy, and now we see nothing but more empty rhetoric. When are we going to see more than words? When will we see real, meaningful action from this Premier to fight for our province's vital economic interests?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, given the member opposite's record over 10 years of not getting a pipeline to tidewater, I think that, quite honestly, the accusation of words and nothing else, no action, is one that would actually be appropriately applied across the way. Words that are said more loudly, with more anger and more drama, don't actually change the situation one little bit. What does is the piece of legislation that we will be giving notice of this week, what does is the kind of engagement that we've already been involved in, and what does is the approval that's already under way. We will get this pipeline built.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, Albertans have lost confidence in this government's ability to actually defend our economic interests. This Premier mocked and ridiculed the suggestion of turning off the taps to B.C. last summer until making that her policy recently. This Premier imposed a wine boycott but then reversed it because she said that she'd won the war with her B.C. allies in the New Democrat government in Victoria. Even last week she said that there was a decisive victory even though Kinder Morgan has been warning about yesterday's decision for months. Why has the Premier been

so consistently wrong on this essential question about our economic future?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I said before, what our government has done is that we have worked to put economic pressure on B.C. We have done that through a number of strategies. We have succeeded in doing that, and we have clearly gotten their attention. I know the member opposite is unhappy to talk about it, but we have also won 14 out of 14 cases in front of the courts where Alberta has taken a very clear position. Now we have indicated, as a result of discussions that, frankly, have been under way for some time now, that we are prepared to provide support and security to investors to make sure that the job gets done.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, it's clear from that answer that this government still doesn't get it. It doesn't matter how many legal victories there are. The tactic, the strategy of the B.C. New Democrats, the New Democrats in Burnaby, the New Democrats in Vancouver, the New Democrats federally is death by delay. It is creating investor uncertainty, and that's what they got yesterday when the market spoke with the suspension of this project. Again, what specifically is this Premier calling on Justin Trudeau to do? Is she willing actually for the first time to stand up in this place and criticize him for his inaction?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, what would create investor uncertainty would be cancelling the climate leadership plan and the hundreds of millions of dollars and, indeed, billions of dollars that industry has made plans around. So just to be clear, if investor uncertainty is something the member opposite is worried about, he ought to stop creating it.

Now, that being said, what our government has done and will do and is very clear to the federal government about is that they must put economic pressure onto B.C., they must assert their jurisdiction either legislatively or judicially, and they must come to the table to reduce the risk for investors, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like most Albertans, I want to see this pipeline completed, but, Premier, here we are. Everyone has been warning you, but your government continued to boast about getting a pipeline to tidewater, and now we're two months away from the whole thing being scrapped.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

I know you're well intended, Premier, but intention without action is delusion. What is this government going to do different between now and May 31 to make sure that this pipeline doesn't get scrapped altogether?

2:10

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. First of all, let me just reiterate that what the government will not do is cheer for the pipeline's defeat by declaring it over, like the members opposite have done. Quite frankly, it is not over. We will get it done. As I've said before, what we are going to do here in Alberta is that we are going to exert economic and fiscal pressure, we are going to continue to assert the rights of the federal government in the courts, and we are going to support and reduce investor uncertainty.

The Deputy Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Without this pipeline the path to balance is gone before we even get finished with estimates and this government's fiscal credibility along with it. With that in mind, to the Premier. The Premier yesterday floated the idea that the province would buy an equity stake in the pipeline expansion and use that stake to make sure that the pipeline goes ahead. What assurances do Albertans have that any deal on the Trans Mountain project is in their interests and not your own political prospects?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm not sure where the member opposite has been, but I think that there's a clear consensus among everyone but, perhaps, the Alberta Party that the completion of this pipeline is in the best interests of all Canadians, not just Albertans but all Canadians, including British Columbians. It will create jobs, it will allow us to diversify our markets, it will build our economy, and it will ensure that we are a better place for more investment internationally. I think we are all quite clear on what the benefits are.

Mr. Fraser: Madam Speaker, for the record the Alberta Party caucus wants this project to be completed. We do believe that it's in the best interests of Albertans and Canadians. But, Premier, it comes down to leadership. Federally all we've seen is flash and no substance. Clearly, we haven't had a hundred per cent effective action from your government either because here we are. Your plan has Albertans on the hook once again for a pipeline that's supposedly in the national best interest. Will you call on the federal government to backstop this project with federal money so that they actually have some skin in the game?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I think the member opposite might want to begin backpedalling on the "supposedly in the national best interest" statement because I'm pretty sure most Albertans are going to be a bit troubled that he's not convinced that that is the case.

That being said, Madam Speaker, as I have said, we have already been very clear with the federal government. We've already been working with the federal government, and we will continue to do that on a number of fronts, including ensuring that instability and a lack of certainty are removed with respect to the investors in this pipeline.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

Oil and Gas Pipelines to the West Coast

Ms Kazim: Thank you, Madam Speaker. At community association events in my riding I heard from constituents who were concerned about pipeline approvals. One of the projects that constituents were concerned about was the Shell-Coastal GasLink project, which would export liquefied natural gas from the B.C. coast. Given that this project would allow natural gas producers in Alberta and B.C. to more readily access markets in Asia and around the world, to the Minister of Energy: does this government support the Coastal GasLink project?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, our government absolutely supports further development of liquefied

natural gas. In fact, our Energy Diversification Advisory Committee report underscored the benefits, not just to Alberta and B.C. but to Canada, of advancing LNG projects. The committee noted that methane would be a good source of supply, which is good for the Montney region up where I live. Ethane would be good here for petrochemical development, and LNG would be good for Alberta's economy in using up some of that gas. You know what else is good for our economy? A pipeline to tidewater.

The Deputy Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Kazim: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As part of the GasLink project the B.C. government has announced that LNG facilities would be exempt from their carbon levy. On the other hand, they adamantly oppose the expansion of the Trans Mountain pipeline. To the same minister: can you please comment on the B.C. government's discrepancy in their approach to carbon levies and Alberta tidewater access?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Again, we absolutely support the development of Canadian LNG resources, but what we don't support and will take action against is the environmental hypocrisy of B.C. speaking out of both sides of their mouth. In fact, they believe that they can develop resources which are good for Canada, but they stand against our Trans Mountain pipeline, and that's not acceptable. It's inconsistent and, frankly, very un-Canadian. You know, we are going to do what we need to do to get that pipeline built, and legislation we'll be introducing shortly will show . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Kazim: Thank you, Madam Speaker. To the same minister: how are we working to ensure that Alberta's oil and gas resources make it to market through projects like the Trans Mountain pipeline?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, we've made it clear from day one that we will get that pipeline built. Tens of thousands of jobs depend on it. Billions of dollars of investment depend on it. We need better schools and roads and hospitals, and that all depends on getting this pipeline built. We've already won 14 out of 14. We're batting a thousand in our court challenges with B.C. We're going to continue. We're following the path, certainly, that Peter Lougheed, our previous Premier, many years ago took when he was under attack in his government. We're going to be introducing legislation shortly which will inflict pain on British Columbia.

Provincial Response to Pipeline Opposition (continued)

Mr. Fildebrandt: Colleagues, the news last night of the impending cancellation of the Trans Mountain pipeline is a national disaster. It is a national disaster for sane economic policy, it is a national disaster for balanced economic and environmental stewardship, it is a national disaster for investor confidence, but most importantly, my friends, it is a disaster for national unity. We are being treated as a mere colony. If this pipeline does not get built, would the Premier agree that at this point the federal government has done more harm than good?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, I've made clear many times that we will get this pipeline built. We've won a series of challenges in the court, as I mentioned, 14 out of 14. We're battling a thousand. We continue to be confident that we will win future challenges should they exist. But we do agree that it's time the feds step up, and they need to defend Alberta as in the past they've defended Ontario with the auto sector and Quebec with the aerospace sector. Alberta energy companies need the feds, and we need them right now.

Mr. Fildebrandt: This is no longer about economics or even resource development. This is about our very ability to function as a normal, unified, first-world country. Even if this pipeline gets built, it will have come at the cost of Energy East and will have come after half a decade of costly lawsuits and investor uncertainty. It will now have to come at the cost of taxpayers having to take an equity stake in a project that just a week ago had all of the private-sector investment that it needed, and it will likely come at the cost of armed guards at work sites. Premier, at what point are we going to stop asking nicely?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I mentioned, we continue to fight in the courts, and soon we will be introducing legislation to limit resources being exported to B.C. They've made some decisions, and we're going to inflict pain on those economic decisions so they understand what they've done.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Albertans pay vastly more to the federal government than we get back, and in return too often all we receive for our contribution to Confederation is jealousy, scorn, and obstruction. If the federal government won't protect our ability to trade across provincial boundaries like a normal country, then many Albertans will ask themselves why they have a federal government at all. Premier, in the event that this pipeline does not get built, do you believe that it will be necessary to negotiate new constitutional protections for Alberta?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, Premier Horgan believes he can harass this project without economic consequences, but he's wrong. We're calling on the feds to stand up and stand up quickly. We are prepared to do, as we said, what it takes to get this pipeline built. If this means more tools or investments, we are going to be looking at that. One thing I want to say is: do not count Alberta out.

2:20

Mr. Panda: Madam Speaker, Kinder Morgan gave us precisely 52 days to remove the roadblocks for the construction of the Trans Mountain expansion. This means that our Premier's pending legislation to turn off the taps to B.C. must have greater impact than the B.C. wine ban. Will the Premier prioritize utilizing a hundred per cent of the existing Trans Mountain pipeline space by shipping bitumen instead of diesel and gasoline?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, as I mentioned, in the coming days we will be introducing legislation which will have much more detail on what we will be doing to restrict product going to B.C. We continue to be ready for any

further court challenges. We're working with companies. Never underestimate our resolve to get this pipeline built.

Mr. Panda: Given that the B.C. NDP openly campaigned last year on using every tool in their tool box to stop the Trans Mountain expansion, will our Minister of Energy prevent B.C.'s natural gas and coal from crossing the border into Alberta, denying B.C. the royalties, or will the Minister of Energy direct the Alberta Electric System Operator to halt all imports of electricity over the B.C. intertie? Which option are you going to use first?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As we've said many times, we're going to use every tool in our tool box to fight the decisions B.C. is making. As I mentioned, in the forthcoming days there will be legislation dropped – and I hope you will be supporting that – to restrict resources to B.C., to inflict economic pain upon them so that they realize what their decisions mean.

Mr. Panda: Madam Speaker, given the economic pain the minister is promising to cause to B.C. and given that section 136 of the Traffic Safety Act allows the inspection of all commercial vehicles, will the NDP government immediately enact full and thorough inspections of a hundred percent of B.C. commercial vehicles entering or exiting Alberta to ensure they're in full compliance with Alberta traffic safety laws?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I've said many times, we have an advisory committee that we're in discussions with on possibilities. Every decision we make will be weighed against benefit to Alberta, pain to B.C. At the end of the day, as I mentioned, there'll be more to come in the coming days about our legislation, but again, despite what we have in our tool box, we're calling on the federal government, who have a lot of tools in their tool box, to stand up and to stand up now.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Carbon Levy and Pipeline Approvals

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. This government claimed that their carbon tax would give us social licence for pipelines. I quote the Minister of Economic Development and Trade from two years ago. "We've . . . introduced the most robust climate leadership plan in the country that we will get the social licence to get pipelines approved and our product to tidewater." The Trans Mountain pipeline project is barely hanging on. Energy East and Northern Gateway have already been cancelled. Minister, will you finally admit that the carbon tax is not giving us social licence on pipelines?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister of environment.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I think that I will answer the question not in my own words but in the words of Ian Anderson, the president of Kinder Morgan pipelines, who said about the climate leadership plan: I think the Alberta climate change plan was a huge step forward; it was a huge benefit to me and us, and we've seen that on the ground.

Mrs. Pitt: Madam Speaker, Kinder Morgan was just quoted yesterday as cancelling future pipeline expenditures.

Regardless, given that the Minister of Finance claimed, and I quote, that the climate leadership plan that we have put forward is

far-reaching, that it will improve Alberta, that it will give us social licence, end quote, and given that this NDP government is out of touch with everyday Albertans and that their carbon tax is not improving Albertans' lives – it has made everything more expensive, and this government is still increasing the carbon tax – Minister, by your government's own admission your friend Justin Trudeau isn't doing enough for Trans Mountain, so when are you going to stop going along with their carbon tax?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister of environment.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. On carbon pricing, Ian Anderson, who is the president of Kinder Morgan pipelines, said:

We're encouraged to see this positive step forward and commend the hard work of all involved. The collaboration of industry, the Government of Alberta, First Nations leaders and environmental groups helps pave a path forward and provides important clarity to policy and direction for the entire industry.

It is Ian Anderson and Kinder Morgan with which the hon. member has a quarrel, not us.

Mrs. Pitt: Madam Speaker, there is a lot of confusion coming from the minister, because Kinder Morgan just yesterday said that they have suspended nonessential spending on the pipeline. I don't know what this minister is referring to.

Now, given also that Kinder Morgan pointed out today that there are other pipeline projects where it can invest money and efforts – but this project is vital to our province and our economy, and we need it to proceed – Minister, Albertans want to know when your carbon tax will give us certainty.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I refer the member back to the words of the representative from Kinder Morgan, who said that the climate leadership plan "provides important clarity to policy and direction for the entire industry." The fact of the matter is that this pipeline will be built, and it secured its approvals based on the existence of the climate leadership plan. Those approvals were not in place by the previous government, and that tidewater access has been secured through the existence of the climate plan.

Provincial Response to Pipeline Opposition (continued)

Mr. Nixon: Madam Speaker, the Energy minister said earlier today in response to a question that the NDP are batting a thousand on pipelines when, in fact, they are one hit away from losing this pipeline. That's a fact. Can the Energy minister stop using bad sports metaphors, stand up, and tell us the clear tools that she can use to help get this pipeline built and what tools she's going to use first and when she's going to use them to actually get this pipeline built?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, Albertans have told us to do whatever it takes to get the pipeline built, and that's exactly what we're doing. Frankly, we're calling on the federal government as well to do their part. We'll make, as I mentioned, B.C. feel the economic pain. We're introducing legislation in the coming days that will allow us to restrict product. We're fighting in court. Again, we have a perfect round, 14 out of 14 so far. In fact, the courts threw out the last attempt. They weren't even going to hear the arguments. We potentially could take a public position on the pipeline . . .

Mr. Nixon: Madam Speaker, this government is in denial. This pipeline was suspended. The work on this pipeline was suspended yesterday. The time for rhetoric is over. They're in denial. They need to stand up, tell us clearly what they're going to do to get this pipeline to work. Albertans: of course they want action taken. We've been talking about it in this Chamber. So what action is this government going to take right now to get this pipeline built?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, we're also calling on the federal government to do their part. They can do all of these things as well. They should impose economic pain on B.C. as well. They should be taking a lead in fighting in the courts, and they, too, can be investors in the Trans Mountain pipeline. We're calling on them to step up. They need to step up now, just as they did in previous times in Ontario and Quebec. It's now Alberta's turn, and they need to step up. They need to step up now.

Mr. Nixon: Madam Speaker, we've been telling the government forever that the federal government needs to stand up. The question, though, is: what is this provincial NDP government going to do to make the federal government stand up to the plate? Standing in this House over and over and saying the same thing is not going to help, so what will this minister do to make sure that her ally Justin Trudeau will take action to get this pipeline built?

Ms Hoffman: You know what, Madam Speaker? I wish that we didn't have to. We had 10 years with conservatives in this Chamber, 10 years with conservatives in Ottawa, and they failed to get a pipeline to tidewater. But you know what? On this side of the House we're working strategically. We will impose the natural consequences. You want to make life hard on Albertans? We can certainly do the same for British Columbians. We don't want to, but we're willing to do that, and because it's in the national interest we have the means to do so. That's why we'll be tabling a bill in the coming days, and we'll be very happy to discuss that and, hopefully, get unanimous support from this House to make sure we get this pipeline built. Don't you dare count Alberta out.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

2:30 Long-term Care Facility Construction in Wetaskiwin

Mr. Hinkley: Thank you, Madam Speaker. My constituency of Wetaskiwin-Camrose is quickly growing and, therefore, in need of various infrastructure projects. In 2015 our government committed funding for a long-term care facility in the constituency that had remained unfunded for decades under the previous government. Can the Minister of Health please provide my constituents with an update on the status of this facility?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I was very proud to announce funding for the Wetaskiwin project, which will bring badly needed dementia care spaces to the central zone. I'll be happy to stand with the member at the doors this summer when we open the facility. We see what happens when government prioritizes cuts over care. We had a choice. The members opposite keep calling for cuts. On this side of the House we're building. We're building safer communities and safer spaces for people living with dementia.

The Deputy Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Hinkley: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Again to the Minister of Health: can you please provide my constituents with details about this facility, which will help free up acute-care beds in the general hospital? How many beds are expected, and what services will be provided?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. The facility will have 82 dementia care spaces, supportive living for dementia, and there will also be additional suites for those who are living independently. This is one of the kinds of projects that enables couples to continue to stay together even when their care needs change. Full-time care and additional nursing support will be available to meet the needs of the residents, and it also has amenities in the home, including fresh food that will be prepared on-site. I'm very excited for this project and to bring this space to Wetaskiwin.

Mr. Hinkley: To the same minister: how will the community be made aware that this project is funded by taxpayers?

Ms Hoffman: When we approved the project, we committed funding of \$3.65 million through an ASLI grant, Madam Speaker. We are counting on the member to help us celebrate the good work in the community that this government is doing in partnership with him as a member of our government. Projects such as these are just the beginning of our government's plans to build 2,000 new long-term care and dementia spaces in the province. The members in the Official Opposition and other oppositions have no such plans. They plan to drastically cut services, returning to the days of Ralph Klein. We saw an 88 per cent reduction in the number of long-term care spaces. That's their plan: cuts. On this side we're building, and we're protecting our seniors.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Provincial Response to Pipeline Opposition (continued)

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Now, a few minutes ago the environment minister claimed that they're just so close to getting the pipeline built because of the carbon tax. Apparently, she was using last week's speaking notes because as of this weekend the company building it put tools down and said that it's over until either her government or the federal government does something. What's it going to be, or might it be both?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister of environment.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. We are doing three things. We are using our legal means, we are backing this pipeline and ensuring investor certainty, and we are introducing legislation in the coming days that will allow us to restrict our product. Now, I do not often agree with the members opposite, but on one thing we do, and that is that the federal government needs to step up. There have been a lot of words from the federal government, but they have the same tools as we have. They, in fact, have broader tools than we have, and it is time for them to use them.

The Deputy Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. McIver: Thank you. When they're desperate, they sound more like our leader.

Now, the Energy minister also said that she scored 14 goals, and I congratulate her for that. But I've got a news flash for that minister. Given that they're a goal behind at least because Kinder

Morgan decided to put tools down yesterday – they're not in the lead with 14 goals; the other team has got more – Minister, what are you going to do to change the score to get ahead so that we can get the shovels going again?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister of environment.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Madam Speaker. We are confident that we will continue to win in court, we are confident that we will be able to move forward with ensuring investor certainty, and we are confident that the people of British Columbia will listen when Alberta brings in legislation to restrict product. But it is time for the federal government to act. It is time for the federal government to stand up and ensure that we are acting as a nation, not a series of self-interested villages. It is time to get this pipeline built.

The Deputy Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Given that the minister is now taking our side more and more with every answer she gives and given that the Energy minister is behind even though she said that she scored 14 goals and given that we're where we are now because of the combination of the Alberta government and the federal government, that have sat where people sit rather than getting action on this pipeline, what will the government do to actually get the federal government moving? And please don't beg. Make it something serious.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I'll tell you what we won't do. We won't be taking leadership lessons from a caucus of people who are going to hide from a vote on women's reproductive rights. We will not do that. You know what else we won't do? We won't hide from taking climate action because that's what Albertans and Canadians expect. You know what else we won't do? Brutal and ideological cuts to front-line services. You know what we will do? We will ensure that the federal government steps up to get this pipeline built.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Provincial Spending

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. At Finance estimates we learned a few things. To paraphrase the minister, Alberta's government, not including Health and Education, is, quote, the smallest public service bureaucracy in the country. Unquote. Unfortunately, that's not how it works. When we look at the facts, Alberta has the most expensive public sector per capita outside of Newfoundland. To the minister: what is your plan to address Alberta's efficiency gap, or will you just continue to forget to include most of your own government in your calculations?

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much. I'm very happy to respond to the accusations by the member opposite by putting some facts on the table, and that includes: please refer to the CIHI data, which shows very clearly that Alberta does have the leanest in terms of supervisor to front-line worker ratios in our country. We, of course, want to find opportunities to continue to find more efficiencies, but

you can't fire every single person who is helping to run the system and expect it to get better; you can't blow up hospitals and expect the system to get better; you can't propose cuts that would hurt the people of Alberta and expect it to get better. On this side of the House we're protecting the front lines, and that is something we're very proud of.

Mr. Barnes: Given that the Minister of Finance says that a key component of his government's path to balance is controlling spending growth and given that the best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour – and that's where again this minister falls flat – and given that since taking office in 2015, the minister has tabled three budgets and has overspent his expense target by nearly a billion dollars on average each time, to the minister: why should Albertans trust you that this time you're serious about controlling your wild spending?

Mr. Ceci: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think they should trust me over the member over there. I've tabled four budgets, not three. So if you can't count the number of budgets and it's fewer than this hand, then you've got some issues. We have bent the cost curve on operational spending far better than that side did, and we're going to continue to do it going forward.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, a debt of \$96 billion by 2023. His legacy is a debt of \$96 billion by 2023. That will mean that every man, woman, and child in Alberta will each owe \$23,000, or put another way, each family of four will owe over a hundred thousand dollars and \$3,000 in annual interest expense. To the minister: \$96 billion in debt that you have no intention of paying back. Albertans are terrified. What kind of damage are you doing to our economy and to our children's future?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much. Well, the damage is 4.5 per cent GDP growth in Alberta in 2017, and we will lead, among the leaders in the nation, again in 2018 and 2019. You know, the debt I'm leaving is that 20 new schools in 2018 will be built; hospitals, the Calgary cancer centre, the new Edmonton hospital; transportation throughout the province. Those are pretty good things to leave Albertans for the future.

Power Purchase Arrangements and the Balancing Pool

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, in mid-March the Energy minister informed this House that there would be no impact to Albertans when asked about the cost of the power purchase agreements. Then on March 26 we learned in the NDP budget that the losses to the Balancing Pool are \$1.96 billion at least. That's the kind of impact that hurts Albertans around the supper table or families just trying to get their kids to soccer practice. To the Minister of Energy: why did you say one thing when your own budget documents reveal another? Which one is correct?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we are focused on changing a system of electricity in Alberta that was broken by the previous government many years ago under deregulation. We've committed to Albertans that we're going to replace our grid with 30 per cent renewable electricity by 2030. The remainder will be about 70 per cent natural gas. In this transition we've done a number of things to make sure that prices are stable and predictable and that we have a secure grid moving forward.

2:40

The Speaker: Let's try and contain the dialogue back and forth on each side.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, given that the minister had said that there would be no impact to taxpayers but now, in fact, we know that only part of the total loss to Albertans is \$1.96 billion, I have another question. What are the total losses, all the costs associated with this NDP-made debacle, including all legal fees, announcements, any other associated costs with this mess that the NDP has created?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the whole way that the Balancing Pool system worked, in fact, until we began to change it, was on spikes and unpredictability in the system. If we hadn't acted, consumers would be facing much higher charges on their bills because of backroom deals that were made many years ago by the previous governments. Instead, their charges are 78 per cent lower than what they would have been had we not acted. We're talking about an average of about . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, given that I asked about the total number of losses that this minister's decisions have cost Albertans and given that, clearly, the minister chose not to answer or doesn't know the answer, I wonder if someone in the government is willing to contact the Auditor General and ask for some assistance in this matter so that all Albertans can know the full cost and impact of their poor decision-making, or perhaps I should contact the Auditor General.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we took action to protect regular Albertans from price spikes, as I mentioned, which was a feature of the previous system. That side, the Conservative side, would go back to a broken system that continues to cost Albertans lots of money. That side, the Conservative side, continues to defend the backroom deals that were a feature of the deregulation. On this side we're not taking that. We're negotiating responsibly and giving the Balancing Pool the tools they need, and we're creating a system that's going to be stable and predictable for years to come.

Federal Response to Pipeline Opposition (continued)

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, a few minutes ago I asked the Premier if she would join with me on calling Prime Minister Trudeau to consider suspending certain transfers to the B.C. New Democrat government given their failure to respect the Constitution and the rule of law. I'd like to ask the Premier or the minister whether she has asked for transfers to be suspended simply with respect to the pan-Canadian climate framework or federal transfers to the B.C. government more generally?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. We certainly understand that British Columbia has a position. They have in turn created some uncertainty and challenges for this province, and in terms of natural consequences the natural consequence would be that we find ways

to do the same to them. We also call upon the federal government to find ways to ensure that the national interest is the priority. That, certainly, is one of the tools that we've discussed with them. We will continue to have respectful discussions with them, come up with the right action because we know that this project is in the national interest. The feds know it, and they need to act with us.

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, I guess I thank the minister for the non answer, but could somebody in the government please tell us whether they believe that the federal government should withhold transfers to the B.C. government to send a message about their violation of our Constitution: from transfers generally, from infrastructure transfers, or simply from the \$30 million involved in the pan-Canadian climate framework?

Ms Hoffman: I was happy to answer the question the first time, and I will again. Mr. Speaker, we have three different tools at our disposal. One is making sure that we take a public interest, should it come to that, in the pipeline. Two is making sure that we are interveners in fighting for this court case as we move forward. In 14 out of 14 court cases we have been successful. Three is about doing some reciprocal financial responsibilities on the province of British Columbia. All three of those tools are available to the government of Canada, and we call on them to consider using them as well.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, just two days ago the Trudeau government signed a \$4.1 billion agreement with the Horgan New Democrats for infrastructure funding notwithstanding the Victoria government's violation of our Constitution and the rule of law. Will this government join with me in asking the federal government to suspend that transfer unless and until B.C. actually respects the rule of law and our Constitution?

Ms Hoffman: We have talked about the tools that are at our disposal, Mr. Speaker. Those same tools on a different scale are also available to the federal government. We do call on the federal government and have called on the federal government to employ those tools as well. We know that this project is in the national interest. We know that it's in British Columbians' interest, Albertans' interest, and all of our interest. That's why, the federal government, we've called on them for months to step up, do the right thing, and take action on this. We will continue to do our part to get this pipeline built, and we call on the feds to do the same.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

Indigenous Offenders

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Across Canada and here in Alberta we know that indigenous incarceration rates are disproportionately high. To the Minister of Justice: how is this government working to proactively address the root causes of crime and support rehabilitation for indigenous inmates?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The member is correct. The number of indigenous people who are incarcerated in provincial facilities is disproportionately high. This is an issue which continues to exist across Canada. We know that this is a problem with complex drivers, and it requires a comprehensive and co-ordinated response across all levels of government. To help address this issue and ensure that offenders don't reoffend, we must ensure that we continue to fund adequate health supports, adequate housing supports, and many other supports throughout government.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When an indigenous person is convicted of an offence in our court system, to the same minister: what tools do the courts have to take into consideration the unique and historical circumstances during sentencing?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. One of the tools the courts have at their disposal are Gladue reports, which are an important resource that courts can draw on to consider the circumstances of an indigenous offender. I'm pleased to note that 91 per cent of our Gladue reports are completed within six weeks as allocated by the courts, and that number continues to go up.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: what culturally appropriate programs and supports are in correctional facilities for incarcerated indigenous people?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We have seven aboriginal program co-ordinators in Alberta who work in both adult and young offender centres. Some of those program topics include domestic violence, loss and grief, indigenous parenting, indigenous wellness, art programs, and cultural awareness. We also have spiritual ceremonies that are offered, including smudging, pipe ceremonies, elder one-on-one sessions, sweat lodge ceremonies, drumming, and healing talk circles. It's important that we continue to support these programs so that we can ensure that we're not seeing the recidivism rates.

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

Carbon Levy and Police Service Expenses

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Police services are dealing with a double fiscal hit with the legalization of marijuana and the perennial increases to the carbon tax. The minister has said that police need to be out on the streets and the roads of Alberta, yet increasing costs hamper that goal. While the province cannot stop the legalization of marijuana, it can stop collecting the carbon tax. Minister, are you not concerned about the way this tax is eroding the ability of police to protect Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the hon. member has noted, we aren't able to change the legalization of cannabis, but moving forward we continue to work with our police partners. Every time we've had conversations where they have asked us for tools to increase their efficiency, we have worked with them on that. Certainly, we've introduced a bill to ensure that rather than writing warrants for minor C-Train tickets, they're out on the roads. We have recently introduced funding to ensure that there are more civilian officers within the RCMP to get officers back out on the roads. We'll continue to do that work.

Mr. Ellis: Mr. Speaker, given that the carbon tax has added 6.7 cents to the cost of gas to fill the tanks of police vehicles and we do not know where those tax hikes are eventually going to end and given that out of necessity police have to run their vehicles for most

of their shifts if they are to be out on the roads protecting the public, Minister, your government is forcing police services to pay the carbon tax rather than hire more officers to respond to emergencies. Why are you letting this happen?

2:50

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We're obviously deeply committed to ensuring that we have RCMP officers and police officers in municipalities throughout our province. I might point out that if the hon. member is so concerned about costs going to police, perhaps their side ought not to have voted against the supplemental estimates that sent an additional \$18 million to the RCMP.

Mr. Ellis: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that a freedom of information request to the Calgary Police Service indicated that the carbon tax will cost \$422,000 in 2018 and given that that's the equivalent of three specialized detectives that the Calgary police would like to hire for their sex crimes unit, which has high caseloads currently, Minister, will you ask the Finance minister to exempt police services from this hurtful carbon tax so they can focus on protecting people rather than cutting budgets?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. One of the things that our police partners have been absolutely clear about is the fact that there are many problems facing Alberta society these days that cannot be solved with enforcement alone. As our understanding continues to move forward, our police partners have asked us to ensure that we're continuing to invest in housing supports, in mental health supports, in all sorts of supports that would be cut if the hon. members opposite were in government.

The Speaker: Hon. members, in 30 seconds we'll continue with Members' Statements.

Members' Statements

Vimy Ridge Day

Ms Goehring: Mr. Speaker, 101 years ago today Canadian Armed Forces waged Canada's most celebrated war victory, the Battle of Vimy Ridge. The capture of this German stronghold near Vimy, France, cost Canadians dearly; 3,598 lives were lost, and 7,000 were wounded.

In this defining battle the Canadian Corps distinguished themselves by employing state-of-the-art techniques, including donor-to-patient blood transfusions. It was the first time all four divisions fought together. They came to be regarded as an exceptional force by both Allied and German military commanders. Some 45,000 Albertans served overseas in World War I, the highest percentage of any province.

Among Albertans tending to the wounded during the First World War was a remarkable woman, Roberta MacAdams. She left her career as a dietitian in Alberta to join the war effort and became the Canadian Army Medical Corps' only dietitian. From the Ontario military hospital in Orpington, England, she oversaw the production of more than 6,000 meals per day for patients and staff.

While the war waged overseas, women claimed a victory in Alberta. In 1916 the Alberta equal suffrage act extended the vote to women. A year later the Alberta Military Representation Act passed. It gave Alberta soldiers and military nurses overseas a separate constituency.

After being convinced to run in the Alberta 1917 election, Roberta MacAdams won. She and Louise McKinney became Alberta's first elected women. MacAdams' World War I experience influenced her so deeply that her first piece of legislation was an Act to Incorporate the Great War Next-of-Kin Association.

Much has changed since that day on Vimy Ridge, but two characteristics remain the same. Our Canadian Armed Forces are distinguished world-wide, and inspired by pioneers like Roberta MacAdams, Albertans come together to care for each other.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Vimy Ridge Day

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to commemorate Vimy Ridge Day, which marks the beginning of the Battle of Vimy Ridge on April 9, 1917. On that day 101 years ago four divisions of Canadian soldiers coming together for the first time as a united fighting force were ordered to do something that no other allied force had accomplished in the First World War. They were ordered to take Vimy Ridge, and take Vimy they did, but not before 10,000 of their brothers in arms were killed or wounded in action. But that's not the real story of this battle. The real lessons of Vimy Ridge are about courage, honour, and resilience in the face of adversity.

Most of us here today were blessed to grow up far removed from the life-and-death struggles of war, but we know that battles come in many forms, and every generation faces new struggles. The ability to remain resilient in the face of adversity is not a gift; it is a skill, a skill that must be learned.

Today, on Vimy Ridge Day, I rise to offer my personal thanks to those who teach these vital life lessons, from the schools who participate in programs like No Stone Left Alone to the Royal Canadian Legion volunteers who organize Remembrance Day events, to the Vimy Foundation, whose mission is to preserve and promote Canada's First World War legacy, to all the Canadian Forces veterans who offer a personal perspective to today's youth.

When we embrace our veterans' legacy, we commit ourselves to ensuring our society remains strong and free. We do so confident in the knowledge that, when necessary, every single one of us is capable of summoning courage, living with honour, and acting with resilience in the face of great adversity. Time marches on, but to me there are no more important lessons we can pass on to the next generation.

On this Vimy Ridge Day let us rededicate ourselves to fulfilling that most sacred duty for the next 100 years. We will remember them.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Mr. Hinkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the U of A, Augustana campus in Camrose . . .

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I'd like to recognize the Government House Leader first.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would respectfully request unanimous consent of the House to continue with the Routine until it's concluded.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: I'm sorry, hon. member.

Reconciliation between Indigenous and Nonindigenous Peoples

Mr. Hinkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the U of A Augustana campus in Camrose and instructors Megan Caldwell, Daniel Sims, and Trina Harrison for offering the truth and reconciliation course building capacity for reconciliation. I was fortunate to be one of their students during the past year.

I am proud to say that our government is implementing many of the calls to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission which we studied. We recognize that the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples is the framework for reconciliation. We are committed to addressing the number of children in care. We are supporting and funding indigenous language programs. We are consulting thoroughly on matters pertaining to First Nations. We are revising the Alberta K to 12 curriculum to better reflect the history and legacy of indigenous peoples in this province.

This includes a major program of crosscultural teacher training. As an example of how well this can work, Ermineskin junior high in Maskwacis has hosted two schools, one from Lacombe and one from Camrose, for full-day cultural enrichment activities. STAR Catholic, one of my school divisions, has taken progressive actions supporting cultural sensitivity for teachers.

Throughout this past year our government has helped indigenous communities and organizations cut greenhouse gas emissions, reduce energy bills, and create jobs through our indigenous climate leadership programming. We have signed significant protocol agreements with the Treaty 8 First Nations and with the Blackfoot Confederacy.

Personally, I have a private member's bill in the works to fulfill call to action 17, "to enable residential school Survivors and their families to reclaim names changed [and taken away] by the residential school system," and acknowledge the indigenous languages of Alberta. This is an exciting time in Alberta's history for both indigenous and nonindigenous peoples. Together we can create our future. [Remarks in Cree]

Rotary District 5370

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, for more than 110 years Rotary's People of Action have used their passion, energy, and intelligence to take action on sustainable projects. From literacy and peace to water and health, they are always working to better our world. As we near the two-year anniversary of the wildfire that devastated Fort McMurray, we cannot reflect without acknowledging the contributions that individuals and organizations have made.

Rotary District 5370 encompasses most of central and northern Alberta as well as parts of Saskatchewan, B.C., and the Northwest Territories. Fort McMurray fire relief has become one of the largest fundraising projects in Rotary history. Donations poured in from all over Canada and the U.S. and as far away as the Caribbean and the United Kingdom. When all was said and done, the foundation had collected \$1 million for the relief fund that is providing much-needed programming to my community.

Charitable foundation president, past District Governor Julius Buski said it best: it's heartening to see such an outpouring of care and concern at a time of crisis. The Fort McMurray public school district was able to hire a mental health therapist to work with students recovering from the wildfires. Stepping Stones Youth Services was able to add an outreach worker to identify youth at risk on the streets. L'école St. Paul was able to replace all the library books destroyed during the fire.

3:00

Mr. Speaker, while we know all of the great work that Rotary International has done, the generosity shown to my community during this time of crisis bolstered my respect for Rotarians. We as Canadians can live in comfort knowing that we have caring and giving organizations such as Rotary in our neighbourhoods. On behalf of my community I'd like to thank the Rotary District 5370 Charitable Foundation and all those who contributed to the charity fund.

Thank you, and God bless.

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

UFA Centennial

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If you've driven anywhere in Alberta, you've likely seen a UFA, the big orange store awning, the sign, and the orange gas pumps. But when you step in the door, you see everything they do: ag retail business, oil and gas, seed sales, building and fencing supplies. Better yet, you meet folks like Darrin, who manages the Fort Saskatchewan location, has 31 years with UFA, and likely knows your name.

This April 13 marks the 100th year of the United Farmers of Alberta incorporation. With a history that long, they have had significant influence on our province, including at one time forming government. Early days of political work saw the UFA elect two of their female members to our Legislative Assembly: Louise McKinney in 1917 and in 1921 Irene Parlby, two of our Famous Five.

Mr. Speaker, in 1918 farmers and ranchers faced increasing operating costs due to politics, an oil boom, a land rush, and World War I. The UFA realized that the most effective way for co-operatives to purchase goods would be to act as a central purchaser. This meant that UFA needed to evolve from an advocacy group to a business. Alberta Premier Charles Stewart's administration introduced Bill 9, and on April 13, after receiving royal assent, the UFA was able to officially do business. Pooling orders, farmers and ranchers were able to negotiate prices and save money by purchasing the capacity of an entire railcar.

Mr. Speaker, there are few businesses still around that made up the foundation of Alberta, and it speaks volumes that they are co-operatives. In UFA's own words: "In a co-operative, members own, control and benefit from the co-operative." Jobs stay local, community investment of over a million dollars a year stays local, profits remain local, and decision-making is local, member owned and member driven because members get a vote. That is economic democracy, and a strong democracy is at the heart of a strong Alberta now and into the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Darcy Haugan

Mr. Cooper: From September 27, 1975, to April 6, 2018, was the time that Darcy Haugan, the former head coach of the Humboldt Broncos, had on Earth, 15,532 days, or 42 years, six months, and 10 days. Mr. Speaker, a life well lived. Though it ended in the most horrific and tragic of circumstances, it is the living that I know Darcy would want us to focus on, the dash between 1975 and 2018.

Darcy was a man of character and integrity, fuelled by his passion and faith in Jesus Christ and his love for his family. I was speaking with Darcy's sister last night and asked her: what are the things that you want the world to know about him? She said: he was a hero, not because of any single heroic act but because of the hundreds

and hundreds of daily selfless acts of putting the needs of others ahead of his own and encouraging them to be their best; he loved those boys that played for him so much, not just on the ice but off the ice as well. On the back of his pickup truck it read: character builds success. He lived that saying, Mr. Speaker, and today so many young men from all across our country live it as well because of Darcy Haugan.

Darcy loved his wife, Christina, and his boys, Carson, 12, and Jackson, 9. He led by example, displaying character in everything he did. Darcy's legacy will live on in the lives of those young boys. They are leaders in their own right. Friday night Carson prayed: Dear God, we don't know why this happened, but we're still going to trust you, and I know, God, that dad would want us to. Such wisdom.

Darcy Haugan: a life well lived. Darcy made the most of his dash, the 15,000-plus days that he had on Earth. I hope that we will use our dash to be just a little more like Darcy Haugan.

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices and in accordance with section 4(5) of the Election Act I would like to table five copies of the following report: Report of the Chief Electoral Officer on the December 14, 2017 By-election in Calgary-Lougheed. I would note that this report also includes a summary of the use of new equipment and procedures tested in the by-election and recommendations for legislative amendments. Electronic copies of this report will be provided to members.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 42 I'm rising to provide notice that at the appropriate time later this afternoon I intend on moving the following motion:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government of British Columbia to put the country first and to cease its attempts to harass the Kinder Morgan project. And be it further resolved that the Legislative Assembly support the government of Alberta's efforts to demand concrete steps from the federal government to enforce its decision that the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion is in the national interest and ensure it is constructed in a timely fashion.

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to provide notice that at the appropriate time I will move the following motion today:

Pursuant to Standing Order 30 be it resolved that the ordinary business of the Legislative Assembly be adjourned to discuss a matter of urgent public importance; namely, the need to discuss the failure to ensure the construction of the Trans Mountain expansion project given the recent announcement by Kinder Morgan to suspend nonessential spending on the pipeline until May 31, 2018.

I have the appropriate signed motion here for Your Honour.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Bill 6

Gaming and Liquor Statutes Amendment Act, 2018

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege for me to rise today and introduce first reading of Bill 6, amendments to the Gaming and Liquor Act.

Mr. Speaker, our province continues to prepare Alberta for legalized cannabis this summer by putting in place elements of a system that will keep the safety and security of Albertans at the forefront. These amendments build on legislation passed last fall. They are practical changes that will modernize the Gaming and Liquor Act and better prepare the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission for its expanded mandate that will include cannabis. We continue to work to establish a system with rules that effectively and clearly protect Albertans.

I ask that we move first reading of Bill 6. Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 6 read a first time]

Emergency Debate

The Speaker: Hon. members, I believe we have two notices on the table, one of them being under Standing Order 30, and one being under Standing Order 42.

I would call upon the Leader of the Official Opposition.

3:10 Trans Mountain Pipeline Construction Suspension

Mr. Kenney: Thank you. Pursuant to Standing Order 30(1) this morning at 9:15 I provided your office with written notice of this proposed emergency motion. As you know, in the sixth edition of *Beauchesne*, section 390, urgency means

"‘urgency of debate’, when the ordinary opportunities provided by the rules of the House do not permit the subject to be brought on early enough and the public interest demands that discussion take place immediately."

Mr. Speaker, I cannot think of a matter that this Chamber has dealt with in the last three years, if not in recent Alberta history, that is more urgently in the public interest.

The Trans Mountain pipeline expansion project itself directly represents a capital investment of \$7.4 billion, an estimated 15,000 construction jobs, and 37,000 direct and indirect and induced jobs per year of operations. But more than that, Mr. Speaker, given the federal veto of the Northern Gateway pipeline, given the federal government's successful effort to kill the proposed Energy East pipeline route through regulatory changes through the National Energy Board, and given the continued delays in the construction of the Keystone XL pipeline to the United States Gulf coast, we are now left with only one viable direct coastal pipeline, that proposed by Kinder Morgan, the Trans Mountain expansion.

Mr. Speaker, right now we as Canadians are exporting our crude oil to the American market at roughly \$35 per barrel. The Americans are exporting their crude to global markets at over \$60 a barrel. That differential represents over the long term potentially hundreds of billions of dollars of value for the Alberta economy and tens of billions of dollars of energy rents and other revenues for the Alberta treasury.

Just yesterday – yesterday – Kinder Morgan Canada announced the suspension of any nonessential spending on this project as they review it between now and May 31. This is eerily familiar to the decision of TransCanada PipeLines to suspend their application for Energy East on September 7 of 2017, which resulted in the subsequent October 2017 decision to cancel that project.

Mr. Speaker, if Kinder Morgan's concerns, its profound concerns, about the elevated risk for shareholders proves to be true, if they conclude that they cannot get . . .

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

The Speaker: Point of order.

Point of Order

Standing Order 30 Motions

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, with respect to the hon. member, Standing Order 30 permits debate on matters relative to the urgency of debate and not on the matter itself – that is section 30(2) of the standing orders – and I believe the hon. member is straying into debate on the matter he wishes to debate should this be accepted.

The Speaker: Hon. member, do you have another point of order?

Mr. Nixon: No. I'm responding to the point of order. The Government House Leader is in fact correct that it's important that we discuss the urgency when we're using Standing Order 30. Where I disagree with the Government House Leader is that the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition is discussing the urgency. He's clearly articulating the urgent need of this situation with this pipeline through B.C. and the actions, particularly of this weekend, in regard to Kinder Morgan having to stop construction on that project. That is the urgency. He's in the process of establishing that urgency. I see, Mr. Speaker, that you were listening to him eagerly, which I think is great. I think the Government House Leader should pay attention to the Leader of the Opposition, and he would understand the urgency of the problem if he did.

The Speaker: Well, hon. members, I do hope the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition will get to the matter soon. I tend to agree with the Government House Leader.

Please proceed, I will suggest, accordingly.

Debate Continued

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe I was addressing the urgency of the matter. The matter is so urgent that the hon. the Premier yesterday held an emergency news conference at 4:45 on a Sunday evening, cancelled her planned trip to New York City, and described this as an emergency herself. So I believe even the government – I don't believe. I know the government has publicly acknowledged that this is an emergent situation requiring the emergent attention of members of this place and action by relevant governments.

We are bringing this forward at the earliest opportunity following the emergency decision by Kinder Morgan, seeking an opportunity for all members to enter into debate on this issue. It is not only an emergency in terms of the time frame but could not be of more profound consequence for the Alberta economy and the public business with which we deal in this Assembly. Mr. Speaker, I submit to you that if this does not qualify as a subject matter for emergency debate under section 390 of *Beauchesne*, then nothing will ever qualify as a subject matter for emergency debate.

I submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that there is here a *prima facie* case that this motion deserves the emergency attention of the Legislative Assembly, and I hope that you will rule accordingly.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I'd like to address the question of whether or not this qualifies under Standing Order 30. First of all, I do believe that all members of the Assembly are in agreement that Kinder Morgan's statement yesterday was extremely regrettable, that it will have impacts that will be felt throughout the province and, indeed, the entire country. I agree that this is a very urgent matter that warrants significant discussion by members of this Chamber. So we are prepared to set aside regular business in order to debate the matter.

However, Mr. Speaker, I do not believe that Standing Order 30 is the most appropriate avenue. Today during Notices of Motions my colleague the hon. Minister of Energy provided notice of a government motion dealing with this matter. I strongly believe that a debate and, more importantly, a vote on this important matter is of significant consequence. As members know, no vote takes place at the conclusion of debate on a Standing Order 30 application.

To quote from *Beauchesne's*, paragraph 390:

"Urgency" within this rule does not apply to the matter itself, but means "urgency of debate" . . .

This is the most important part, I think, Mr. Speaker.

. . . when the ordinary opportunities provided by the rules of the House do not permit the subject to be brought on early enough and the public interest demands that discussion take place immediately."

House of Commons Procedure and Practice makes the point at page 693, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I'm going to need the quote, the first one, prior to the one you're about to mention.

Mr. Mason: Yes.

The Speaker: What was that number?

Mr. Mason: This is *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* at page 693, Mr. Speaker. It says:

The Standing Orders give . . . discretion to the Speaker in deciding if a matter should be brought before the House for urgent consideration, [and] certain criteria must be weighed. The Speaker determines whether a matter is related to a genuine emergency that could not be brought before the House within a reasonable time by other means.

That is a component – a key, essential component – of the definition of urgency of debate. Not only does it have to be an urgent matter; it has to be a matter for which there is no other opportunity that is afforded to discuss the matter.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would submit that my hon. colleague the Minister of Energy has introduced a government motion under Standing Order 42 that deals with this matter, in fact, in a way that I believe is more positive and will benefit the provincial position much more than the Standing Order 30 that has been suggested by the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition. Therefore, another opportunity to debate this matter has been afforded by the government in the notice of motion that we provided under Standing Order 42.

Mr. Speaker, it's my contention that because there is another avenue during which the matter can be debated – notably, the motion to which I have referred – this matter does not fit the procedural requirement to be considered under Standing Order 30, and I would respectfully request that you rule so.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

3:20

The Speaker: Hon. members, a Standing Order 30 application provides that "the Member may briefly state the arguments in favour of the request for leave and the Speaker may allow such debate as he . . . considers relevant to the question of urgency." It is the role

of the chair to rule on whether or not the request for leave is, in fact, in order, as both members have outlined. Hon. members, the chair is prepared to rule on whether the request for leave for this motion to proceed is in order under Standing Order 30(2).

The Leader of the Official Opposition has met the requirement for providing at least two hours' notice to the Speaker's office by providing the required notice at 9:14 this morning. The motion reads as follows:

Pursuant to Standing Order 30 be it resolved that the ordinary business of the Legislative Assembly be adjourned to discuss a matter of urgent public importance; namely, the need to discuss the failure to ensure the construction of the Trans Mountain expansion project given the recent announcement by Kinder Morgan to suspend nonessential spending on the pipeline until May 31, 2018.

The relevant parliamentary authorities on this subject are pages 695 to 704 of the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, and *Beauchesne's* 387 to 390.

We are now in the Fourth Session of this Legislature. Most if not all members have had the opportunity to hear previous applications under Standing Order 30. The role of the Speaker in dealing with these requests is to determine whether or not the member should be granted leave to move the member's motion to adjourn the ordinary business of the Assembly to discuss a matter of urgent public importance.

The oil and gas industry plays a vital role in Alberta's economy. Yesterday's announcement by Kinder Morgan presents another hurdle in the progress of the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion. Hon. Government House Leader, I recognize that, under Standing Order 42, in fact, it is the government's intention to bring the matter forward for discussion. The dilemma I have with the argument you're making, however, is that it is subject to a unanimous vote of the House, and that makes it difficult for me to agree with the points.

It seems to me that on this matter there's a general consensus about the importance of this matter, but in this particular instance I feel the need to proceed. It would be difficult to find that the request to adjourn the business today would not be in order given the importance of the oil and gas industry to Albertans and to the Alberta economy. Accordingly, the chair finds that the request for leave is in order.

In accordance with the procedure set out in Standing Order 30, members will now be given the opportunity to voice their support or opposition to the motion. The rules governing the procedure once the chair finds the request for leave to be in order are as follows. Standing Order 30 requires that the question be put to a vote of the Assembly. If there are any objections to the question, then the chair will ask those members who support the motion to rise in their places. If 15 or more members rise, the debate will proceed, and each member who wishes to speak will have 10 minutes to do so until all who wish to speak have done so or until the normal hour of adjournment. If at least five members rise but fewer than 15, the question of whether the member has leave to move adjournment of the ordinary business is put immediately, determined by division. If fewer members arise, the debate will not proceed.

Could I take one moment for the sake of the House and consult with the table officer.

Hon. members, shall the debate on the urgent matter proceed? All those in favour, please say aye.

Some Hon. Members: Aye.

The Speaker: Those opposed, please say no.

Some Hon. Members: No.

[Several members rose]

The Speaker: We exceed the 15 members, and I think we proceed to debate on the matter.

The opposition leader.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the wisdom of your ruling in this respect. What's my time limit here? Can I get clarity? I think the Clerk indicates 10.

The Speaker: Ten minutes.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you. It takes me 10 minutes to clear my throat. I'll do my best.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate your recognition of the urgency of this matter. As I said yesterday, Canada is broken if this pipeline project is killed. Canada was founded on the promise of an economic union. That was the motive reason behind Confederation 151 years ago. When the Fathers of Confederation from the founding four colonies gathered at Charlottetown and Quebec City, their primary, overriding goal was to create a free trade zone that would strike down economically destructive tariffs and barriers between the various colonies of British North America. Their dream, their vision became this great dominion in 1867 and then expanded with the creation of the other provinces, including Alberta in 1905.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

When this province was carved out of the Northwest Territories, it was with the promise for the hard-working, industrious people of Alberta – the merchants, the farmers, the miners, and the trappers – to benefit from the ability to sell their products throughout the Dominion of Canada. Essential in the agreement of Confederation was, under section 92, the definition of federal jurisdiction over interprovincial infrastructure, which was further clarified in subsequent amendments, which effectively means today that the federal government has unqualified jurisdictional authority over the regulation of interprovincial pipelines.

Now, Madam Speaker, we know that here in Alberta we are blessed to be the custodians of the world's third-largest accessible oil reserves. Those reserves, if they were to be commodified at current global Brent prices, would have a notional market value of over \$11 trillion. Eleven trillion dollars. For a country that has over \$1 trillion of cumulative public debt and unfunded liabilities, imagine what trillions of dollars of future wealth could do to help us maintain our standard of living, to pay for our future pension obligations, for our unfunded health obligations, for the quality of life that we dream of for future generations.

3:30

Madam Speaker, in recent decades the remarkably brilliant and innovative industry headquartered in Alberta which has turned that raw resource into wealth, into royalties, into jobs, into businesses, into vibrant communities has managed to increase our production of oil and gas by orders of magnitude. Just a few years ago we were producing merely roughly 800,000 barrels per day of Canadian crude. By next year we're on track, I believe, for 1.6 million barrels per day of production, and some projections have us on track with current capital investments and the current rate of exploration for some 3 million barrels per day within a few years. So that is more than a tripling of our production capacity. But that production is only valuable if we can sell it and if we can sell it to global markets at global prices. As I said earlier, less than 5 per cent of Canadian crude is exported to countries other than the United States.

Energy, by the way, Madam Speaker, is by far Canada's largest export product, by multiple orders, actually, Alberta's largest export product. Well, 95 per cent of that which is exported is exported to one buyer only, the United States, so we have what is

called a huge price discount. Now, some people have quantified this as costing us some \$20 million a day. Imagine if that situation should continue year upon year upon year. We would be stranding, we would be assuming an opportunity cost of eventually hundreds of billions of dollars, and the Alberta treasury would be losing tens of billions of dollars in potential revenue. That is why the market has for the past decade been pursuing possible coastal pipelines.

Now, there's been an expansion of continental pipelines within North America, as mentioned in question period, in the past 12 years. We've seen the permitting and completion of four major pipelines within Canada and North America, that did double our capacity to ship oil.

Then, Madam Speaker, Enbridge proposed the Northern Gateway pipeline to Kitimat, the B.C. northern coast, but that project, which was approved by the federal cabinet to which I belonged, was subsequently vetoed by the NDP's close ally Justin Trudeau. Then the same ally of the NDP, Prime Minister Trudeau, killed the Energy East pipeline, proposed by TCPL, which would have achieved the dream of energy independence for Canada. They did so by getting the National Energy Board to change the rules of the game midstream, as reflected in the August 23, 2017, interpretive bulletin of the National Energy Board requiring that TCPL assess its project based on up- and downstream emissions. Then, of course, there have been delays on the Keystone XL pipeline to the U.S. Gulf coast, primarily because of President Obama's seven-year delay and ultimate veto, which this government did not protest.

Madam Speaker, now we find ourselves in a situation where the only remaining approved pipeline that could be built in a reasonable period of time and get us a fair global price for our products is the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain pipeline expansion, but yesterday that company announced a suspension of future investments. Now, this should not come as news because on November 14 Kinder Morgan in an application to the NEB for an omnibus permit said that "faced with unreasonable regulatory risks due to a lack of clear processes to secure necessary permits . . . it may become untenable for Trans Mountain's shareholders . . . to proceed."

Then on December 4 Steven Kean, the CEO of Kinder Morgan, said, "Unfortunately, the scope and pace of the permits and approvals received does not allow for significant additional construction to begin." And then on February 7 Ian Anderson, the chair of Kinder Morgan, said: investor patience is a whole different matter; it's not lost on us that there are still obstacles. Then on February 21 Kimberly Dang from Kinder Morgan U.S. said: we're going to spend at a reduced level from a full-throttle push towards completion until we have more clarity and we're sure that we can compete with what we started. Then yesterday, Madam Speaker, Mr. Kean said: a company cannot litigate its way to an in-service pipeline.

So we've seen this coming. I've been predicting this, Madam Speaker. This is the result of the death-by-delay strategy of the New Democrats in B.C. — the New Democrats in Vancouver, the New Democrats in Coquitlam, the New Democrats in Burnaby — and their New Democrat allies on the political left across the country. Yesterday is exactly what they wanted.

We cannot let this stand, Madam Speaker, which is why for nine months I have been calling on this government to have a real fight-back strategy. To begin with, I called last July for symbolic measures like the wine boycott. I called for safety inspections of B.C. product passing through Alberta. I said that we should be prepared to consider tolling B.C. gas that goes through Alberta pipelines to U.S. markets if they seek to block this energy pipeline and violate that Constitution to which I refer. I've said that we should be prepared to do what Peter Lougheed did in 1980 in being

prepared to turn off the taps of the shipments of oil that currently fuel the Lower Mainland economy.

But the government first mocked and ridiculed every one of those suggestions, then reluctantly began rhetorically repeating this message, brought in a wine boycott, that they then promptly repealed when they declared victory even following a . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to speak about our most important industry and about our government's actions to deter attempts by the B.C. government to interfere with the Trans Mountain pipeline as well as our efforts to demand concrete steps from the federal government to enforce its decision on the project and to get this pipeline built.

You know, I'm always happy to talk about this industry. It's an industry I love very much. I say this both as the Energy minister, of course, but also as the MLA for Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley, which I am proud to represent. It's a region that is one of the heartbeats of Alberta's energy sector. I have many ties to this industry that run deep, including countless family members, friends, and neighbours who depend on this industry, and when I say neighbours, I really mean the people of northwestern Alberta, which also includes northeastern B.C. Many folks on the B.C. side of the border work in the sector in Alberta, on our side, and we have a common understanding of the value of oil and gas in our communities. That's yet another reason why the B.C. government's actions are so hypocritical. To oppose the growth of one of the province's energy sectors while trying to grow their own with LNG is particularly hypocritical.

That's why we're here, to have an important conversation about supporting this government's actions in this dispute with the B.C. government as well as our government's actions toward the federal government and to take concrete steps to ensure that the Trans Mountain pipeline project does get completed. We've been clear all along, Madam Speaker, and Albertans have been clear as well: this pipeline must get built. This is about tens of thousands of jobs for hard-working families, it's about billions of dollars in investment in our economy, and it's ultimately about having a better life, with better schools, roads, hospitals, which we owed a lot in previous times to our gas and oil sector.

We've come a long way. In fact, we've done more to promote pipelines and deliver results in three years than the Conservatives did in 44. Enbridge's line 3 pipeline is well under construction. Keystone XL has the commercial support to proceed, which took a major boost from our government and Premier Rachel Notley. Through our efforts on Trans Mountain we are closer than ever to breaking the land lock and finally getting top dollar for our resources in world markets. It's clear that our government has been fighting to get this long-overdue pipeline built and approved.

On the flip side, we have a Conservative leader that's more interested in grandstanding and promoting himself than getting pipelines built. This Conservative leader claims to be a pipeline champion, but where was his advocacy when he was in Ottawa? During his 20 years in the House of Commons he barely spoke about the projects he now takes credit for. He even had the audacity to go to Ottawa not too long ago and tell a room full of Doug Ford's friends that Ontario is the heart of Canada's economy. Would he tell that to hard-working people in the oil sands? What about the shale gas drillers up my way in the Peace Country? What about downtown Calgary? The heart of Canada's economy is right here in Alberta, and that's why our government will do whatever it takes

– whatever it takes – to support our industry and the hard-working people of this province.

3:40

When it comes to the legal disputes over this pipeline, I think Alberta will have a good shot at cracking the Blue Jays' lineup because we're batting a thousand so far, 14 out of 14 important and decisive legal challenges. The courts threw out B.C.'s last case without even hearing it, not to mention that the last time the B.C. government tried to overstep its legal and constitutional authority, we took bold action, and they backed down. When the city of Burnaby tried to block the Trans Mountain pipeline in court, we intervened, and we won, and we're confident we will continue to win. Let's not forget that if it wasn't for our climate leadership plan, there would be no approved pipeline to the coast to fight for.

But, that said, it's time for the federal government to step up. It's time for them to follow our lead. It's time for the federal government to defend Alberta. It's time for Ottawa to go to bat for working people of western Canada. During the auto crisis Ottawa intervened to help the workers in Ontario with concrete action. When the aerospace industry needed a bailout, Ottawa stepped in for those workers in Quebec and took concrete action. Now the energy industry needs the feds to have their back, and we call on them now to act: we need you to act, and we need you to act quickly and decisively. The federal approval of a pipeline project must be more than just the paper it's written on.

That's not all we have to say, Madam Speaker. To the west of us Premier Horgan believes he can harass the project without economic consequences for British Columbia. On that, he could not be more wrong. Albertans have told us to do whatever it takes to get this pipeline built, and we are doing just that. We will make B.C. feel the economic pain for its decisions. We're introducing legislation in the coming days that will allow us to restrict the flow of refined product into B.C. Invoking this would be similar to the bold action taken by Premier Peter Lougheed when our energy industry was under attack in the past. We are not hesitating to do this again if the B.C. government continues on its present course. It's important that B.C. and the country know that we will do whatever it takes to make sure our constitutional rights are respected as partners in our Confederation.

Further to that, Madam Speaker, we're prepared to do whatever it takes to get this pipeline built. You know, the B.C. government thinks they can harass investors and managers of Kinder Morgan. They think they can harass them into giving up and killing this project. They are wrong on that front as well. The Premier said it well yesterday: "The government of B.C. feels they can mess with Texas... [but] they cannot mess with Alberta." If we have to, Alberta is prepared to take a public position in this pipeline. That means Alberta is prepared to be an investor, and if we do take that step, I don't think we have to say that we will be a significantly more determined investor. Never count Alberta out.

I've been asked before if I'm angry. Am I disappointed that this project isn't completed yet? You know what the answer is, Madam Speaker? Above all, I am more determined than ever. This has done nothing but strengthen my resolve and the resolve of this government. We will get this pipeline built.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the Leader of the Official Opposition for bringing forward this motion today to give us an opportunity to speak on behalf of our

constituents on such an important issue, I would argue probably one of the most important issues that our province is facing right now.

It was interesting for me to hear the comments from the Energy minister just a few moments ago in talking about this motion and talking about the situation that's taking place with Kinder Morgan and pipelines in our province. I would submit to you, Madam Speaker, that the presentation by the hon. Energy minister is exactly the reason why we needed this emergency debate. It is pretty clear to me, in listening to the comments from the Energy minister today and also hearing similar comments in question period today, that this NDP government clearly has no clue what they are doing. They are in denial about the serious situation that we're facing. They continue to bring forward half measures at best, and I think that's even being generous, because I think they're not bringing forward any measures at all to be able to take this forward.

You know, the opposition – the Leader of the Opposition, opposition MLAs, and the opposition caucus as a whole – has been bringing forward this issue and the concern about where we could end up with this government for a couple of years, saying that, unfortunately, we thought that we were going to end up exactly where we ended up yesterday, with this project basically hanging on by a thread, and that the NDP colleagues of the members across the way were going to continue to kill this project by delaying it. Over and over we brought that forward, and all that happened for the first part of that was that we were ridiculed and made fun of by the NDP government, the Leader of the Opposition in particular but all of us. There are lists. There's not enough time to go through all the comments, Madam Speaker, but as you know, we have quoted those comments many times from the Premier and our NDP colleagues across the way essentially making fun of us or belittling us for saying that this was going to be a problem.

Then, Madam Speaker, we got through Christmastime and into the early new year, and the opposition started asking to be able to come back to the Legislature as soon as possible so that we could debate this very issue because we felt that it was a problem. In February Kinder Morgan indicated that this was the direction that they were going to end up in, that this is where they were probably going to end up having to be because there was no stability for their investors. They did that, I believe, on February 21. On February 22 the Premier then removed her symbolic wine ban, the day after Kinder Morgan first gave us a warning that this is where we were headed, and continued to ridicule the opposition for asking for an emergency debate in this place.

Then, all of a sudden, when we came back to this Chamber for the first time, in fact, the very first sitting day after the throne speech, this government finally brought forward a motion in this Assembly, a government motion asking for the unanimous support of this House to make a clear, symbolic symbol to the government in B.C. and the government in Ottawa that we won't accept this behaviour anymore. So they came drastically over to our side of the argument, which is great, and passed that motion, and then they did nothing.

We brought up an amendment at that time saying that this is not enough, that we need clear action. The members across the way voted that amendment down. They voted it down, brought forward a symbolic motion from this Assembly, and then did nothing else again for several weeks. At the time that I spoke on that amendment – I was the one who moved the amendment to the government motion, Madam Speaker – I said that Albertans can't afford to wait anymore, that it's not enough for us to pass this motion. I said that several weeks ago, that we have to take concrete action provincially and expect our federal government, in particular the Premier's close ally Justin Trudeau, to take action on this file. The government

voted down the amendment, left this place with a symbolic motion from all of us – I was happy to vote for it – and then did nothing.

Then we fast-forward to now, Madam Speaker, and we all saw Sunday afternoon the terrible news that this project is now hanging on by a thread, just like we predicted.

You know, the Energy minister and the Deputy Premier often stand up and say that we are rooting against this project. We're not rooting against this project; we're rooting for this project. But we're telling the government, because it's our job, that you have a problem. You have a problem, which means that Albertans have a problem, and we need to take action to be able to save this project. But they don't take any action. They continue to come back to this place. In fact, today they tried yet again to bring forward a motion that was symbolic and very, very similar to the last motion that was passed by this Chamber. They continue to ask this side of the House to give them a blank cheque on this issue though they have shown no capability and no serious action to be able to deal with it.

That's why this is an emergency. This government is in charge right now. They want to talk about the CPC pipeline record and spin that. That's ridiculous. What Albertans want to hear about right now is what this government is going to do right now. Throughout question period today ministers and the Premier stood up and said that they were going to use every tool in the tool box, and then when this side of the House asks simple questions about what those tools are, when they can expect those tools to be used, and how that will work, they just stand up and grandstand again and say that we'll use every tool in the tool box. Well, why would we as an opposition trust that? I would submit to you, Madam Speaker, that we would be irresponsible to continue to trust that given this government's actions on this file.

We know that the Premier in the past has met with the Premier of B.C. and that the Premier of B.C.'s own words are that the Premier of our province did not even try to persuade him on pipelines. We know that as early as yesterday the Premier was still saying compliments to Justin Trudeau, her close ally, on how he has handled this pipeline issue, still standing up for him despite the fact that he has completely abandoned what he said that he would do on this issue. He has refused to take concrete action as the Prime Minister of Canada to defend the constitutional rights of this province, he has refused to point out the national interest of this important project, all while this government sits there on their hands, over and over bringing symbolic motions to this place.

3:50

This is an emergency, Madam Speaker. Action must be taken now. It should have been taken months ago, when it was first brought up by people on this side of the House. The reality is, though, that that ship has sailed, so now the government must take action, not continue to come back to this place and tell us that they're going to use every tool in the tool box. What tools are they going to use? The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed has brought forward many concrete ideas. Sadly, that side of the House, the government side of the House, continues to disregard them and sometimes even makes fun of the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed for bringing forward those ideas. Well, at least he's bringing forward ideas. At least he's bringing forward concrete steps that we can take right now to stand up for our rights as a province, to stand up to Justin Trudeau in Ottawa, to stand up to the B.C. government and say: this is wrong, what you're doing.

Instead, what we're getting from our government, what Albertans are getting from the current government of the day are just words over and over and over. Last week in this Chamber ministers and the Premier stood up over and over and declared victory yet again for this pipeline. Victory for this pipeline. Then we went home to

our constituencies for the weekend, and we found out that there is no victory, Madam Speaker. There's no victory. In fact, we are almost about to lose this project. The Minister of Energy stood up in this House and had the nerve to say today that they're battling a thousand on this issue. They're losing on this issue. It would be comical if it wasn't for the consequences that are happening to Albertans as a result of the incompetence of this government on this file, to stand up in this House and continue to say that you have this under control when you don't, to stand up and say that you have declared victory when there is no victory.

Why will this government not take concrete action to stand up for this province? Why will they not go down to B.C. and say to their close NDP colleagues, whether it be to the Burnaby town council, the NDP mayor for Burnaby, the NDP government, the NDP opposition inside Ottawa, or their close, close ally Justin Trudeau – why will they not go and take concrete action against those governments for Alberta? Why will they continue to come to this place and say that everything's okay when it's not?

That's why this is an emergency. Albertans cannot afford for this government to continue to delay and delay and delay taking action on this important file. Albertans expect this government to do something about it. I can tell you that we hear about it every day. They expect this government to do it. They don't trust this government. You know, I don't care about the consequences to this government politically. I think this government politically has destroyed itself already. But I do care about the consequences for the people of Alberta.

With my last 30 seconds, Madam Speaker, I will call on the government to do the right thing, finally, for the people of Alberta, do what they were supposed to be doing the whole time: stand up for this pipeline, take concrete action on behalf of the people of Alberta, and make sure Justin Trudeau and Mr. Horgan inside B.C. know that this is unacceptable and that we as Albertans won't put up with it anymore.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister of environment.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this motion on this pressing matter that is indeed in the national interest. As has been indicated, there are several tools at Alberta's disposal. We can and we will make B.C. feel economic pain to reciprocate where they are hurting our economy and indeed their own economy and indeed the economy of all of Canada with this ongoing belligerence and harassment of a project that has been determined to be in the national interest. We will introduce a bill in the coming days that allows us more tools on that in order to restrict energy flows. There are other tools in our tool box, and unlike the tools of the province of British Columbia, ours are real.

That leads me to the second course of action that this province can and is taking, and that is asserting appropriate jurisdiction and asserting the national significance of this pipeline project in the courts and using other legal means to do so. As has been indicated, we have been successful in those assertions so far, and we will continue to make that case where appropriate, Madam Speaker.

Third, we will take a public position in this pipeline, Madam Speaker. We will invest in this project to give our industry confidence, and we will ensure that this pipeline gets built. We will not tie ourselves to the actions of other levels of government when it comes to making the appropriate investment to get this project built, because it is in Alberta's interest. Our government has determined that that is the right thing to do for the people of this province and indeed the people of Canada.

The fact of the matter is, Madam Speaker, that the federal government can and should do all of these things as well. They should impose economic pain on B.C., they should take the lead on fighting in the courts, and they, too, can invest in the Trans Mountain expansion project to ensure that the national interest is upheld. We continue to call on them to do so, and I for one am beginning to lose my patience. I believe that it is time for the federal government to stand up. I know that all of my colleagues on this side of the House share that view. It is time for western Canadian working people to benefit from the same kinds of interventions that the Ontario auto industry has benefited from, that the Quebec aerospace sector has benefited from. It is time for national leadership. Nothing else will do at this point. It's time for more than talk. It is time to in fact emulate the province of Alberta when it comes to action.

Our climate leadership plan will cut emissions drastically. We have taken action on climate leadership, Madam Speaker, a projected 30 per cent reduction by 2030, in a province where we were told for a generation that it could not be done, to take climate change seriously. This government took on the biggest challenge of our generation, and we will succeed. Ignoring climate change and letting emissions increase would have brought us above 300 megatonnes by 2030. That is despite the federal targets articulated by the government that the hon. member opposite, the Leader of the Opposition, sat in. He sat on his hands on climate change, just as he did on pipeline approvals. That is despite their targets, that they articulated but then did nothing to achieve. I am sensing a theme here with respect to the federal government. Instead, with our \$1.4 billion investment into innovation, recycling the funds from the climate leadership plan, investments that the members opposite would cancel, we may go as low as 222 megatonnes, and that will keep dropping.

Our carbon competitiveness regulation, that the members opposite have pledged to repeal, will cut emissions by 50 million tonnes by 2030. Our investments in energy efficiency, that the members opposite have pledged to repeal, have not only saved Albertans money; they've avoided 3 million tonnes of GHGs. Over the life of the products and programs that we've put in place already, Albertans are going to save \$300 million. That is money that the members opposite, the Conservatives opposite, with their lack of action on climate, would reach into Albertans' pockets and take from them.

Madam Speaker, we moved forward with the climate leadership plan because we knew that it would secure us market access for our products by securing us pipeline approvals in the first instance. Why was that so important to the people of this province? Because we were in the midst of a recession that hurt Alberta families. We were relying on one product, one market, one price. Successive Conservative governments, both federal and provincial, drove us into that economic dead end, and it ended up in so much suffering for families across this province, in resource communities and elsewhere.

With the pipeline approvals and the climate leadership plan we are finding ways to diversify the economy, Madam Speaker. We've got those pipeline approvals in place. We are also taking action on the petrochemicals diversification program, the partial upgrading program, the renewable energy program so that Alberta can be an energy province in every meaning of that word and we can get full value for our products across the value chain.

4:00

Madam Speaker, I made reference earlier to comments from Kinder Morgan on the subject of climate leadership. The fact of the matter is that the investor certainty that is provided by a thoughtful

and cautious carbon pricing framework is exactly what the industry in this province is looking for. On carbon pricing, for example, I will quote Kinder Morgan Canada president Ian Anderson.

We're encouraged to see this positive step forward and commend the hard work of all involved. The collaboration of industry, the Government of Alberta, First Nations leaders and environmental groups helps pave a path forward and provides important clarity to policy and direction for the entire industry.

Madam Speaker, it's exactly that kind of investor confidence that we have been able to achieve.

Who else understands that the environment and the economy go hand in hand? Certainly, the president of Kinder Morgan Canada does. Who else? Who else is actually doing something to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while growing our economy? Here are some names. Steve Williams, CEO of Suncor, in a statement when we made our climate leadership announcements:

Today we reach a milestone in ensuring Alberta's valuable resource is accompanied by leading carbon policy. It's time that Alberta is seen as a climate, energy and innovation leader.

Murray Edwards of CNRL: Alberta wins at today's announcement. This is November 22, 2015. It's a "significant step forward for Alberta" and for the industry. The Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers:

Alberta's Climate Leadership Plan provides direction that will allow the oil and natural gas industry to grow, further enhance its environmental performance... and is expected to improve market access to allow Canadian oil to reach more markets.

We agree, Madam Speaker. In this context the provincial government has taken action on climate leadership, on getting full value for our resources, on accessing markets. Our industry has taken leadership. All of those folks that are shipping bitumen in the Trans Mountain pipeline? Those are companies like Suncor and Cenovus, who have endorsed the climate leadership plan. They understand that environment and economy go hand in hand, and they also understand that action is needed, as we understand, and we agree. We agree that the national interest is in taking action on climate while also taking action on getting a better price for our energy products.

It is time for everyone else who has sat on their hands and not taken action. It is time for the federal government to step up. It is time for the folks across the way to finally admit that climate leadership goes together with accessing a better price for our existing energy resources and stop cheering for Alberta to fail and start cheering for the fact that the environment and the economy go together in the 21st century, and it's up to all Albertans to make that a reality.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, I share the frustrations of the members opposite. I am tired of words from the federal government, and they need to use the tools in their tool box. B.C. may believe that they can mess with investors in Texas, but they did not count on how tough this government is and, in particular, how tough the Premier of Alberta is. We will get this pipeline built, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to this very important issue, to speak for my constituents up in northeastern Alberta, you know, especially the oil and gas industry, Lac La Biche, St. Paul, Elk Point, even Glendon, Bonnyville, Cold Lake. We've got a lot of First Nations up there.

I was very interested in hearing how often the member opposite used the word "action" because I understand that the two books that

sit on Premier Horgan's desk are *An Action a Day* and the Leap Manifesto, so she may be helping him along to encourage the Horgan government in opposing this pipeline.

You know, when I talk about the folks up in northeastern Alberta, I'd like to talk about the taxpayer-funded advertisement that's on the radio lately about telling everybody how wonderful it is here in Alberta. Well, you're not talking to the folks up in my area. We could go and talk to companies like Shamrock Valley in Elk Point or Primco Dene or Seven Lakes or the Region One Aboriginal Business Association up in Lac La Biche. We've got people up there that are working for a lot less, those that are working. Companies are doing their best to redistribute jobs and cut back hours and job-share. Some companies are going to seven days on and seven days off so that they can run two full crews and give everybody at least a little bit of money to help them pay their bills.

You know, when oil prices first fell, the major oil companies up in the area – MEG Energy, Husky, CNRL, and Esso – all went out to their contractors and said: look, we need to tighten up our belts a little bit to get us through this recession. They took a number of cuts, those companies, and they had to pass it back on to the employees. This is why this pipeline is so important. We've seen the increase in oil and gas prices, especially oil, but we now have this bottleneck. It doesn't matter whether the price of oil gets up to \$70 a barrel. If you can't sell it, if you can't get it down the pipeline, it doesn't mean a whole lot. So we really do need this important pipeline. That's why this is an emergency all over, for this province especially but also for all of Canada.

Now, when the price of oil dropped, all these companies actually sat down at the table with CNRL, Esso, and Husky and said: okay; we're going to cut back our rates. Especially, I want to talk specifically about the fluid haulers. A lot of these guys are independents. There are a few bigger operators in the area, but a lot of the other ones are independents. They're at the stage right now where they are ready to hand their keys in because they can't make their payments. The rates have cut so low. The price of fuel has gone up. The carbon tax is kicking them in the butt as well, and they're having a hard time making ends meet.

Now, years back, when guys would get into this situation, some of the bigger players would, you know, quite happily buy out their trucks for them and take up their routes, put them on at an hourly rate just so that they wouldn't lose everything and they could keep on going. But the situation we're at now is that even the bigger players have cut back so much that they can't afford to buy out these smaller guys. They're coming to them hat in hand, saying: can you take over my truck and put me to work? And the guys are saying: "Sorry. We can't do it. We're actually cutting back on our trucks as well." We're in quite a bit of a different situation here.

That's why we really need to get rid of this bottleneck. We've got a lot of wells that are being shut in right now. Tank farms are at capacity. We need to get a lot more movement. I mean, it's going to be a while down the road getting this pipeline going and getting the oil flowing down, but we have to concentrate on pressuring not only the B.C. government but the federal government as well to step up and get this over.

I want to get back to, you know, our relationship with British Columbia. Years back when the pine beetle epidemic first hit, I don't recall whether Alberta shut our borders to B.C. lumber. I don't think so. I think we actually sent biologists over there to help them try and discover what the problem was and how to deal with it. So I'm really dismayed that this NDP government in British Columbia has taken this stance when it comes to our Alberta oil. We need to, again, work with the B.C. government and the federal government and get this blockade, which is basically what it is, a blockade to our industry, off the books.

We need to support our companies here in any way we can, and if that means quashing a ridiculous carbon tax to help them through this tough time, maybe that's what we need to do as a provincial government. We're always talking about what the federal government can do and what the B.C. government can do. What about what our own government can do? Stand up for our Alberta companies and cancel the carbon tax. That would really be helpful.

Like I said, in northeastern Alberta we've got a lot of companies, a lot of communities that depend on oil. We've got Cold Lake First Nation. We've got Métis settlements up there, Kikino, Buffalo Lake. They all have a lot of private companies that are working in the oil field. They all depend on it. I mentioned the Region One Aboriginal Business Association. I'm sure that if somebody from the government went and talked to them about how fluffy and wonderful things here in Alberta are, they're going to get a little bit different story than the advertisement that we hear on 630 CHED and other radio stations.

Again, do we want to get into a fight with British Columbia? Well, I wouldn't like to see that. I think it's probably going to come to that. You know, one of the things that we could do is ship in the oil lines. In the pipelines that we do have, we ship a combination of raw bitumen and refined products. Maybe we can just restrict that to raw bitumen. I know that between 50 and 60 per cent of the refined products that British Columbia uses come through that pipeline from Alberta, so that may be one way to penalize them if it comes to that. People have talked about stopping trucks at the border. Do we really want to see that happen? I don't think so, but I guess that's something that we could look at.

4:10

In the meantime I think we need to do whatever we can to support our industry here while this all takes place and comes to fruition and do whatever we can. Like I said, I think a really good place to start with that would be to cancel the carbon tax and give some of these folks a break.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I much appreciate the opportunity to talk about this very important matter before us here in the House, a matter that's not only important to us here but, of course, to people throughout the province of Alberta and indeed throughout the country of Canada. I think it is important that we make sure that we frame this conversation in a way that makes sense. In the beginning I think there are some things that we can agree on, and that is, first of all, that probably without exception in the House we all believe that the Kinder Morgan pipeline must get built. It must get built now, and it must get built with the full support of the country of Canada, including all of its provinces. We have a good starting place there.

In addition, we all agree that this government and the federal government must take action to ensure that happens, and indeed we are. We have introduced a motion into the House. We'll be introducing a new bill subsequently that will allow us to take new action in order to ensure that the province of British Columbia acts in accordance with the rule of law and acts as a member of this great country that we call Canada and not as an independent body that somehow is not attached to the rest of us. We know that we're taking strong action here in the province of Alberta, and we have already worked very well behind the scenes to ensure that things are in place for us to take the best action and have indicated that to the province of British Columbia.

We also, I think, agree that the federal government needs to step up. It is with surprise that I find myself agreeing with the members opposite in this House in my level of frustration with the federal government and their lack of what I would say is required leadership in order to move us on. We in this House are calling for the Prime Minister and the federal government ministers to step up, to take action, to be adamant, to be clear, and to enforce the rule of law in this country. So good starting place. Lots of stuff for us all to agree on.

But I'm also standing here as the Minister of Indigenous Relations, and I want to bring into this conversation a voice from the indigenous people in the province of Alberta. This is a place where, I'm afraid, we're going to diverge on this side of the House from the comments being made on the other side of the House. In fact, the previous speaker just made comments about quashing the carbon tax and, you know, going against the very thing that I think that we need to ensure that we are doing if we are truly to stand on firm ground when we demand and when we expect that the Kinder Morgan be built and be built for the betterment of all Canadians. That is something that I think you've heard me say in this House before, that the indigenous people are clearly behind the Kinder Morgan build.

In fact, I have a couple of letters that I'd like to read a few pieces from to reinforce that. For example, Chief Ron Kreutzer from Fort McMurray No. 468 First Nation says:

The Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain Pipeline is essential to the viability of the economic engine of Canada, the Alberta Oilsands. Fort McMurray #468 First Nation relies heavily on the responsible development of the Oilsands to provide the necessary economics to be a self-sufficient Nation for the next seven generations.

Clearly, this nation is in favour of the Kinder Morgan pipeline.

As well, I have a letter here – and I will submit these letters to the House when the opportunity arises – from Chief Arthur Rain, who is the chief of Paul Band First Nation, just west of the city of Edmonton, indicating:

Paul First Nation submits that the development of the Trans Mountain Expansion Project supports the sustainable growth of First Nation Communities who choose to engage and capitalize on the many benefits put forth by Kinder Morgan Canada Inc. as well as the multiple levels of government which support the project.

We as a Nation have assessed the environmental impact of this project and also share the concerns of our British Columbia First Nation Communities. That said, we are confident that Kinder Morgan Canada Inc. also shares our concerns and will work diligently to protect our environment and manage this project with minimal impact; after all it is their environment as well.

So, again, clearly in favour of the Kinder Morgan project. In fact, I've spoken to many chiefs around the province and have received widespread support, from as far north as I can go in this province to as far south as I can go, for the Kinder Morgan project. However, you'll notice the last line of Chief Arthur Rain's note. He said that he is confident that Kinder Morgan will take care of the environment, finishing his note with "after all it is their environment as well."

Thus, we are at the point where our side differs substantially from the opposition. The First Nations people remind me on a regular basis that moccasins come in pairs, that it makes no sense to have a moccasin on your left foot and then allow your right foot to drag through the snow or drag through the mud. You need to have a moccasin on each foot. As a result, any attempt to separate economic development such as the Kinder Morgan from responsible maintenance and care of the environment is foolishness. It's the

kind of foolishness that is demonstrated by a young child who slips on one shoe and then runs out into the backyard only to find himself knee deep in mud. This is the kind of foolishness that we need to address.

The only way for us to ensure that we are taking a morally responsible stance with regard to Kinder Morgan and to make sure that we are defending Kinder Morgan in the way it needs to be defended is to be able to stand in this House, to stand in this province, and to stand in this country and make the declaration that while we are in favour of the economic development potential not only for all of Alberta and all of Canada but, more specifically, for the indigenous communities in this province, we must do so from the moral position that we will not allow the building of the Kinder Morgan to become devastating to our environment, to put us in a place where we cannot care for the world that we intend to pass on to our children.

As a result, we have a number of other statements about how important it is that we have a carbon levy in this province, that we act in a responsible way to take care of the environment. Rather than getting rid of it in order to support Kinder Morgan, as was just previously suggested, the indigenous community is very clear that the only place that you can stand solidly in order to support Kinder Morgan is a place in which you are taking care of the environment and ensuring that you are wearing a moccasin on both feet.

For example, Grand Chief Rupert Meneen from Treaty 8 indicated that indigenous peoples are seeing the effects of climate change first-hand.

We need to address climate change right now and Alberta is making important strides towards addressing this pressing need. These programs are an important step in ensuring Indigenous peoples are involved in matters, like climate change, that directly affect our lives.

Full support for our carbon levy and for our indigenous climate leadership program that is funded wholly from the carbon levy. I'm afraid that Grand Chief Meneen will be in danger of losing all of his support for all of his environmental programs should the wishes of the opposition come forward and result in the cancellation of the carbon levy, a complete contradiction to what it is that the indigenous people are asking in this province.

4:20

Another interesting quote is from Audrey Poitras, the president of the Métis Nation of Alberta. She indicates:

We are pleased that Alberta is investing in Indigenous peoples to address climate change in our communities. The programs announced by Alberta today are one step in supporting those most impacted by climate change and setting the foundation for empowered communities leading climate-change initiatives.

You see how she very carefully ties two things together, that they consistently do in the indigenous community, economic development for empowering communities based on the full commitment to climate change initiatives that take care of the environment. This is the kind of complex, thoughtful, multigenerational thinking that comes out of the indigenous community naturally and routinely, and this is the kind of thinking that we need to ensure that we are invested in in this province in order to ensure that we can take a proper stance in committing ourselves to projects such as the Kinder Morgan.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. The Alberta Party supports pipelines. They are the safest, most environmentally responsible means of transporting oil. The Kinder Morgan pipeline

is good for Alberta, it is good for B.C., it is good for Canada, and it is good for the environment because by getting more Alberta crude to market, we displace more barrels of higher carbon crude that come from other jurisdictions, most notably Venezuela and Nigeria.

This is a fact that Alberta's NDP have not bothered to make known to our friends in British Columbia or to the rest of the world. It is one of the many, many, many ways that the Alberta NDP have let down the people of Alberta on this file and so many others, which is why the Alberta Party and I are incredibly frustrated. The NDP have been whistling past the graveyard while a vocal minority of people have started marshalling their forces against this project, and this goes back years. This is not a recent thing. This goes back years. This Alberta NDP government has done on the Kinder Morgan file what they do on everything else. They've crossed their fingers and simply hoped that everything goes well. Well, it hasn't gone well, Madam Speaker. It hasn't gone well.

When I think about the situation with Kinder Morgan, I think about what happens in other parts of this country. When Bombardier proposes to build a factory in Quebec to build airplanes or snowmobiles, well, no one says anything. The factory gets proposed, the factory gets built, and things go into production. When a car factory in southern Ontario is proposed, it is seen only as a good thing. Oh, but there probably is some federal and provincial subsidy money that ends up going to those factories as well. They're celebrated for the jobs they create, for the economic activity they're creating.

But what do the products in those factories consume? How do you make those products go? How do you make an airplane fly? How do you make a snowmobile go? What do you pour into the gas tank of a car? It's oil and gas. These are the things, this dissonance, this disconnect between the supply side, which is what we're focusing on here, and the demand side. It seems okay that we can build these things in eastern Canada, but the province that produces the oil and gas to make these things go: well, we're apparently the ones who are to blame for all the problems. That is not to mention the obvious and gross hypocrisy from provinces that would dump millions of litres of raw sewage off of Montreal or Victoria, who claim to care about the environment but will only fight against Alberta's projects, projects that are to the benefit of their neighbours and, clearly, in the national interest.

So it is profoundly frustrating, and it is shameful that Alberta's NDP have let it get to this point. It is on this government that we have been allowed to get to this point. It is on you. You could have done more. You should have done more, and you didn't, and here we are. Now they're proposing to backstop the pipeline with Alberta taxpayer dollars. Pretty remarkable. They don't seem to be very good negotiators because in any negotiation I've been in, the first thing you do is not to offer money. But here we are. We seem to be through the looking glass on this.

One school of thought is that one of the reasons the NDP may want to take an equity stake in this pipeline is to have standing in court to sue the government when the pipeline fails, to sue the government of B.C. for damages when the pipeline fails. Well, that presumes that the pipeline is going to fail. It makes me wonder if they know something that the rest of Alberta doesn't know.

If we're going to put Alberta taxpayer money into this project, we should absolutely demand that the federal government make an equal or greater investment in the project as well so that the federal government can finally, once and for all, put their money where their mouth is. All we've heard from the federal government are empty platitudes, words. No action, just words. I like the words that they're saying; I just don't believe them. We need the NDP government here in Alberta to stand up for the province of Alberta, to lean hard on the federal government to do their job to make sure

this pipeline gets built, and to, heaven forbid, actually follow the rule of law.

This project was vetted and reviewed over and over and over again. Stakeholders were consulted. Indigenous peoples were consulted all along the route. People have been consulted. The environmental impacts have been studied. The spill response has been considered for the coastal waters off of B.C. And I'll note that the pipeline, that's been in operation for 62 years, has had no spills in the Pacific Ocean. Those tankers have been travelling through those waters without GPS, without double-hulled tankers, without the technology that we have available to us today with no incidents. So the simple fact is that the risks to the marine environment in B.C. are negligible.

The people of British Columbia have been told that the risks are imminent, that the minute this pipeline goes into production, that's it for the fishery, that's it for tourism because disaster will abound. Well, it simply isn't true, Madam Speaker. It is simply not true. But this government has not been near forceful enough in making that factual case to the people in British Columbia, not talking about how we are aligned with the people of British Columbia in their desire to address climate change, that this pipeline will help address climate change by reducing the carbon footprint of crude oil that is consumed by the growing demand around the world. Those are the cases that need to be made.

You know, the minister of environment in her comments said that this project is in the national interest, but at the same time they won't compel the federal government. They won't lean on the federal government to ensure that if Alberta is going to be making an investment in the pipeline that the federal government makes an investment in the pipeline. Well, if this project is in the national interest, the federal government should also step up, put their money where their mouth is. Not just empty rhetoric: put their money where their mouth is and take a stake in this project.

It also raises another troubling question. Does this mean that any energy project in this province, of any size, is going to require government intervention, going to require a government investment? Well, maybe that's what this NDP government has wanted all along. Maybe they want the government to be investing in Crown corporations and developing oil and gas and not allowing the private sector to do what it does best, that is to invest, not creating an attractive investment plan, actively pushing away investment because they want a government-first model. Is that actually what's going on here? Because that is a substantial risk that I see. In the banking world they call it moral hazard. It's the too-big-to-fail problem. Why would private investors put their money up when the government is going to do it for them? That's a huge concern of mine, Madam Speaker.

Now, I believe that Alberta needs to do whatever is necessary to see this pipeline put into operation. Unfortunately, the NDP have put us as a province in a position where we may have no choice but to invest in this pipeline. If that's the way it needs to be, then so be it because it is absolutely in the interests of the province of Alberta to see this pipeline built.

Let me be as clear as I can be. The Alberta Party wants the Kinder Morgan pipeline to succeed because it is in the interests of not only the people of Alberta, but it's also in the financial interests of the people of British Columbia and in the interests of the environment and in the interests of our entire country. That is a case that has not been made strongly enough. The Alberta Party wants to see this pipeline succeed, but we also want to see the Alberta NDP stand up to the federal government and especially stand up to their comrades in the British Columbia NDP. They have not done enough to advocate for this pipeline. It must get built, but if it does eventually

get built, it will be done in spite of what the Alberta NDP have done, not because of.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

4:30

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. You know, here we are today with an emergency debate on “the need to discuss the failure to ensure the construction of the Trans Mountain expansion project.” Failure to ensure the construction of the Trans Mountain project: well, I disagree with that. We have taken concrete action to ensure that this project will go through. What are some of those actions? Fourteen out of 14 wins when it comes to court challenges. We’ve been willing to invest in the pipeline if needed. We have put down a hard cap when it comes to oil sands emissions, so we’re taking concrete environmental action to get this pipeline built. We’ve banned B.C. wine, and we have been clear that we are willing to do it again should it be needed. Our Premier as well has been clear that if B.C. continues to harass our projects, B.C. will feel economic pain. I would call that action.

When it comes to the environment, Madam Speaker, this new pipeline, the Trans Mountain pipeline, when built, will add 590,000 barrels per day of capacity to get our product to new markets in Asia and beyond. That works out to approximately 826 railcars a day. So to those in B.C. and elsewhere who would see this pipeline fail: how much extra emissions would those 826 railcars a day add to our air, that we all breathe? How would it be if those railcars have to go along the Fraser valley, hung off the side of mountains? How safe is that? That is not to say that I don’t trust the railways and their maintenance; I’m sure they’re very good at it. But the safer way to get our product to market is through this pipeline. Let me say that again. Pipelines are the safest option to get our oil to market.

Now, there are those who sell bottom-shelf books from Toronto: the opposition is secretly hoping that their views will win for political reasons. In fact, the former Wildrose even admitted that it was their worst-case political scenario if our pipelines got built to tidewater. These authors push an economic unicorn version of diversification that’s, frankly, snake oil, Madam Speaker. If I want snake oil, I’ll buy local from the local UCP office. You know, they take offence often when we call them out on this, when we say that killing the carbon tax would in fact hurt our options to get this pipeline built to market.

You know what? We do need diversity, but we cannot diversify a ghost town by shutting down our oil and gas industry overnight. That is not the way to move forward. That would put hundreds and thousands of Albertans out of work. That is not the way forward, and that is most definitely what we are not doing on this side of the House. To those who are concerned about the environment who say, “Hey, you should perhaps diversify the economy,” I say, “Have you not been paying attention?” We have diversified our economy and taken concrete steps to do that, in fact, Madam Speaker.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

With Bill 1 we had incentives for partial upgrading of our oil industry right here in Alberta, creating good, well-paying jobs for Albertans in Calgary and Edmonton and beyond. In fact, in our Bill 2 we had the Alberta investor tax credit to provide investment for Alberta businesses, whatever new and exciting innovation they may be working on. We had the capital investment tax credit, which, I know, Seven Generations Energy, which is based in Calgary, used for a new processing facility in the Montney-Kakwa River area. And, of course, there’s our new interactive digital media tax credit, which will allow us to be competitive with B.C. I have seen what

that tax credit has done in B.C. to encourage the new media industry, whether it comes to games, programming, or other such diversification and IT investments.

Then, of course, there are our green energy projects. You know, Madam Speaker, of course, we’re really good at building stuff here. I’ve seen, from when I sold diesel generators to oil and gas drilling rigs, the great work that those did. With green energy we have the cheapest renewable energy project price of anywhere in Canada, and that was thanks to the hard work of our Energy minister to do that. We’re going to be having another renewable energy auction in the near future, where I expect we will continue to see the cheapest prices for renewable energy of anywhere else in Canada, and that is because we are taking the right path forward. We are taking a bold path forward to diversify our economy and to diversify our energy sources here in Alberta. When we do that, Alberta wins, and we win with more jobs for Albertans.

You know, Madam Speaker, I deeply believe in our province and the people in it. I deeply believe in our ingenuity and the new and exciting technical advancements that those ingenious Albertans will come up with. Each rig, each service truck, railcar, wind plant, new valve, vessel, whether it be games, programming, and new tech, each of these means businesses and jobs for my constituents in Calgary-Currie, in Calgary, in Alberta, and beyond.

We’ve been clear that we need Ottawa to step up. An approval for a project in Canada must be worth more than the paper it is written on. You know, I often hear the criticism in the House today that we’ve done nothing. Particularly, the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre says that we’ve taken half measures. Well, I do not agree, Madam Speaker. The opposition likes to cheer against us, saying that investment is leaving this province. Again, I disagree. The constituents in Calgary-Currie see the expansions and the investments in the oil and gas sector right here: a \$2 billion expansion by JACOS; Cenovus and CNRL are increasing production. I could go on.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

But I want to talk about even a local company whose vice-president, George, is based and lives in Calgary-Currie. Gen III Oil company, for those of us who drive the QE II, is retrofitting the Bowden oil refinery to take recycled oil and turn it into new products. It’s only the third plant like that in Canada. While doing it, he is taking advantage of our investor tax credits right here in Alberta.

To conclude, Madam Speaker, we are taking concrete action. We have a perfect record when it comes to court challenges, 14 out of 14 wins. I say to the people of B.C. that we are willing to take a public position, increasing investor confidence in this pipeline, and we ask Prime Minister Trudeau and the federal government to do the same. Lastly, because here in Alberta the residents of Calgary-Currie, the residents of Calgary, and the residents of Alberta will not accept B.C. continuing to harass our economic interests, B.C. can be assured that if they should continue to do that, we will make B.C. feel economic pain.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

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

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I’m very honoured to be able to speak to this today. I have so many things I want to say. I’m going to start at one particular point. I want to speak about the national interest. There are so many things we can speak about national interest. We can speak about the dollars, we can speak about the essential nature of what this means for the national

interest in the hundreds of billions of dollars. For the average person you say the word “billion,” and it kind of flies over their heads; it certainly does over mine.

But if you look at it from the point of view of national interest, what does that mean? That means families and jobs and protecting the vulnerable and prosperity and national unity. That’s what pipelines represent for me. I look at it from the perspective of so many different things but also our responsibility for excellent resource development, something that we are proud of.

4:40

I think the most frustrating part of this discussion for me is that, you know, we’ve been at this for three years. I’m very, very happy to see the government MLAs get on board with this because I have all sorts of quotes all over here. I’ve been researching all day things that have been said in the past and all of that, and we can talk about that.

One of the things that resonates most with me, especially because this was just close to when we were first elected, having been a proud Albertan, having been born here: my father is in the oil and gas industry – he’s a chemical engineer – so I grew up with all these guys, wonderful, wonderful salt-of-the-earth people. I remember watching the Premier on TV calling us embarrassing cousins. I remember thinking to myself: who is she talking about? I thought, after that passed: okay, that’s not going to happen again. We know there have been lots of other things. There have been so many attacks on Albertans, direct attacks, direct attacks on one of my constituents, who owned Bears Den, direct attacks on, like, actual Albertans, people who are living in this province, making a living, creating jobs for people. And those are not just the only two times. I mean, it just keeps coming up again and again.

I need to reiterate something. When the climate action plan came out and the carbon tax, the Premier was on her way to the United Nations to talk about climate action plans. They needed to be ready. They needed to have something to present. But I think the worst part of that and the most frustrating thing for me is that never once in any of the discussions or anything that I read ever in those things did the Premier or the environment minister stand up for Alberta and say: “No, no, no. You can’t call us dirty oil. We are responsible resource developers in Canada. We’re the greenest and cleanest, the best by far. In fact, if you actually want to change the environmental footprint in the world, you should only be producing in Canada.” Where was that? I mean, I was newly elected at that point in time, and I understood that.

Where was the language going against the European Union and other countries that are actually oil developers that are actively working against our own industry, helping to keep us landlocked here? Where was our Premier at that time and our Minister of Energy and our minister of environment, saying: “Oh, no. Actually, Canada is the best in the world. You should be following our example.” Instead, I mean, heaven only knows how much prosperity we’ve lost by the delays in the pipelines and the cancellations of others.

But more than that, think about this, Madam Speaker. How much carbon leakage has happened? How much has been produced in other countries that don’t produce as ethically as we do, that don’t care about the environment as much as we do? That is a direct result of this government and their friends in Ottawa. They can take complete responsibility for that.

Where other governments may have faltered, where we have failed in the past is absolutely no reason for this government to be able to stand on their chairs and yell that we’re no good at what we do. You start with the argument of: we are the best, and how do we get better? You start with the argument that nobody else produces

better in the world than we do – ethically produces – and our quality of air and life and prosperity here, and then you go to what we can do better. You start with the fact that we have a population of people here who are tolerant and kind and loving and understanding and care about their environment. You start there, and then you go to what you can do better. These are the things that leadership does.

You do not take the people whom you represent and literally throw them under the bus in order to manifest a climate action plan that is ideologically driven and does not change the environmental footprint here in this province. It is not changing behaviour. It is not changing. Especially in our rural communities our folks still have to drive to work, they still have to drive their combines, they still have to do all of those things that are miles away compared to people who are in the cities. They’re just paying more for it.

I wanted to talk for a moment about one particular issue that’s been brought up, especially yesterday, about the public position. The minister of environment just went on the record saying: we are going to put public dollars into this, and we’re going to support this pipeline. Okay. Well, the interesting thing about that is: okay; because what choice do we have now? I’m curious how we got to that position when they’re privately funded. The pipeline companies were going to put all of that money there – \$8 billion, \$10 billion, whatever it was – with the go-ahead of government, with the acknowledgement of the First Nations, making sure that everybody was working together.

We had private-sector investment until yesterday. Yesterday everything changed, and now the government is saying: we’re going to rally, and we’re going to put public dollars in it. Well, I really don’t know what choice we have at this point to save this pipeline, and now guess who’s on the hook for that. The taxpayer.

Congratulations, folks. Congratulations. You just took something that was private sector, Madam Speaker, fully funded by the industry, and now you’ve put it on the backs of the taxpayer. And the taxpayer – do you know what? – they’re going to look at this, and they’re going to say: “We don’t have a choice. What else can we do?” It’s been fumbled so badly by the NDP and by the federal governments that now the only people that can save us are our taxpayers, who are already suffering, I might add.

I mean, if the pipeline can actually get built, that would be amazing, because at least these folks will see this return on their investment. But in the meantime there is a whole load of hurt that is already happening to our citizens, and now we expect them to ante up with dollars for pipelines that would have been funded outside of the public sector until yesterday. I would really love somebody to explain to me how that is a win on our side.

I’m going to be going back to my constituents and writing articles going: “Well, congratulations. You’re going to have a stake in the pipeline because you’ve got to buy it back now. In order to be able to get the prosperity that you deserve and that you own and that people have been fighting for for you, you have to now buy it back. Not only by social licence – no, no, no – and the carbon tax is not enough. Nope. Now you also have to put your tax dollars into it because the government messed up.”

How is that a success, Madam Speaker? I don’t get it, yet at the same time I’m completely handcuffed by the situation because personally I don’t know what else we can do. If we don’t invest at this point in time, they’re going to pull out. Do you blame them? As the leader has said, this is a death by a thousand delays.

Another thing I wanted to bring up is that we had Ms Berman and Ms Mahon on the oil sands advisory group. I was reading back into my notes, and I thought this was entirely compelling. I remember the Premier saying that Ms Mahon and Ms Berman were only brought onto the OSAG panel to just talk about the oil sands. But did you know, Madam Speaker, that they were fund raising against

pipelines while they were here? Not only that, they were fighting against site C, which, as I understand, may be a big factor in all of this because the government has been making deals for hydro. On top of that, while they were doing that, they were actively saying outside of this House that there was no reason for them to support . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Stony Plain, followed by Calgary-Mountain View.

Ms Babcock: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I come from a pipeline family. Growing up, I watched my dad work all across Canada making sure all Canadians could benefit from our Albertan products. We followed the TransCanada pipeline to Ontario. We learned about shutdowns at Sheerness, Genesee, and Fort McMurray. We watched pipelines being built, wrapped, and put in the ground as far north as Fort St. John in B.C.

Madam Speaker, I also remember the recession of the '80s and again in the '90s. The boom and the bust of the oil economy affected every Albertan, none more so than the families dependent on the industry: long wait times when I broke my arm, class sizes that just got bigger, and the incredible stress on families. This, of course, was not made any easier on these families by the devastating cuts to health care and education during the Klein years, when we as a province accumulated an 88,000 nurse deficit, which our health care system is still trying to recover from today.

My father lost his job in 2014 like many others in the oil patch because the previous government refused to put any serious thought into diversifying our economy, and despite having both federal and provincial Conservative governments for years, the pipelines the opposition is touting, not a single one gets our product to diversified markets.

4:50

Albertans will continue to stand united behind our oil and gas industry in the need to see a new pipeline that gets our Alberta products to the coast, which is long overdue, and the people I talked to in Stony Plain are tired of getting a discount price for our resources.

Madam Speaker, on November 3, 2017, I was invited to help officially open Wabamun Common in the village of Wabamun. Patrick Hanrahan from Kinder Morgan, Jack Latham, representing the Wabamun and district seniors' society, and I all joined Mayor Charlene Smylie for the ceremonial ribbon cutting. Mr. Hanrahan presented Mayor Smylie with a cheque for \$125,000 as part of the Trans Mountain pipeline legacy project, the Wabamun seniors also presented a cheque as part of their \$28,000 commitment to the project, and the remaining costs of about \$167,000 were being funded by a grant through the MSI funding.

Wabamun Common Project is a very exciting project for our community. It will tie our downtown core together and will improve the look and feel of the heart of Wabamun. It will be a welcome addition to our fabulous visitor amenities and it meets many of the goals put forward in the Municipal Development Plan (2010).

said Charlene Smylie, the mayor of the village of Wabamun.

Along with the removal of a number of overhead power lines and addition of trees and greenery, the Common will improve public parking and pedestrian access into our busy Senior Centre. The most exciting part is the addition of the public square which can host street musicians, artists and local events such as our Christmas Light Up. We greatly appreciate the funding support of Trans Mountain, the Wabamun Seniors Society, and the Province of Alberta.

Trans Mountain is supporting communities in my riding. They have contracted for a laydown yard in Enoch Cree Nation as well. This will help Enoch build a new light and medium industrial area, which will attract other industries to their space. The new jobs on the line support the local economy in many of my communities. Workers need hotels to sleep in and food to eat while they're away from their families. The Trans Mountain expansion project was proposed in response to requests from oil companies to help them reach new markets by expanding the capacity of North America's only pipeline with access to the west coast.

On this side of the House we will continue to fight for our pipelines, hard-working Albertans, and communities being supported, like those in Stony Plain. We know that the safest way to transport our product is through pipelines, the best way to access new markets is through pipelines, and the best way for our grain producers to be supported is for us to move our oil through pipelines, because, Madam Speaker, our grain producers need to move their products on the rail lines, and right now the capacity is being used for transportation of oil. So to support our farmers, one of our other top industries here in Alberta, we need to support our oil moving through Trans Mountain, and we're calling on the federal government to follow our lead.

The legislation that we will be introducing in the coming days will allow us to restrict product being shipped. We stand on our record with respect to the 14 out of 14 court cases we have won in regard to Trans Mountain, we will take a public position on the pipeline if necessary, we will invest in Trans Mountain to give our industry and investors confidence that this project will be built, but it's time the federal government steps up and defends Alberta and the working people here in western Canada in the way they have for other industries, like the Ontario auto industry and the aerospace sector in Quebec. The federal approval must be worth more than the paper it's written on. These shippers have made significant 15- and 20-year commitments that add up to roughly 80 per cent of the capacity of the expanded Trans Mountain pipeline.

Madam Speaker, our plan is working. There is so much good news in the energy industry. We're diversifying our energy economy, and we're creating good jobs. For example, Crescent Point Energy just announced that it's buying a huge stake in Alberta's east Duvernay, 142,000 hectares of drilling rights. They chose to invest here in Alberta because the climate we have enabled as a government gives them confidence in their investment.

ConocoPhillips is selling land in Texas and buying up thousands of acres of land in the Montney shale play here in northern Alberta. Suncor recently filed an application for a massive new oil sands project, that could create hundreds of good jobs and billions of dollars of new investment here in Alberta. Chevron is increasing spending in the oil patch, investing up to a billion dollars on the Duvernay shale basin. Cenovus and CNRL increased production last year. CNRL is now considering adding a 40,000-barrel-a-day expansion at Horizon. Last fall we celebrated a \$2 billion oil sands expansion project by JACOS, which means good jobs for Albertans. Things are looking up. Earnings are up, investment is up, and drilling is up here in Alberta.

Madam Speaker, I'd like to read from an article. I'll table this tomorrow. It's called *We're in Crisis Mode Now: Energy Sector Fears Investor Exodus as Trans Mountain Pipeline Stalls*.

Major Canadian oil companies fear an investor exodus as Kinder Morgan Inc. signals there are less risky pipeline projects it can invest in than the troubled \$7.4-billion Trans Mountain project through British Columbia.

Kinder Morgan Inc. announced late Sunday that it would suspend all non-essential work on the pipeline until the federal government intervenes in the spat that has pit B.C. against

Alberta and Saskatchewan. The company said it needs certainty the project will not face endless delays from B.C. in order to proceed and gave an end-of-May deadline.

The announcement immediately sent shockwaves through the domestic oilpatch.

"If we don't understand that we're in crisis mode now, we've got to get there pretty quickly," Canadian Energy Pipeline Association president and CEO Chris Bloomer said Monday of the pipeline fight.

Bloomer also repeated warnings from the Royal Bank of Canada last week that capital is fleeing Canada "in real time," and said reputational damage from this pipeline fight will only exacerbate the situation.

"The bottom line on the energy sector is that it relies on capital. These are huge projects that rely on being able to source, at a reasonable cost, capital. These companies need to have shareholders, they need to have lenders," Bloomer said.

Kinder Morgan Canada Ltd.'s shares fell 13 per cent on the Toronto Stock Exchange Monday to the news its parent company was pausing spending on the project and threatening to redeploy capital elsewhere. The S&P TSX Capped Energy Index fell 0.3 per cent on the day, taking its year-to-date decline to 5.4 per cent.

"We expect to continue investing but it has become clear that this particular investment may become untenable for a private party to undertake," Kinder Morgan Inc. president and CEO Steve Kean said on a conference call.

Kean said \$1.1 billion had been spent on the \$7.4 billion project to expand the delivery of crude oil from Alberta to the B.C. coast so far. The company had previously said it was spending \$30 million per month, but will now scale that spending back.

"We're going into a very high spend. We don't want to kick the can down the road until we have another \$2 billion in the project," Kean said.

Energy companies and industry groups warned the delays are hurting local companies.

"The project is critical to Canada and the future of its oil and gas industry, which contributes billions of dollars to the national economy each year and is one of the country's single largest job creators," Cenovus Energy Inc. president and CEO Alex Pourbaix said in a release.

"If the rule of law is not upheld and this project is allowed to fail, it will have a chilling effect on investment not just in British Columbia, but across the entire country," he said.

Oilsands producers like Cenovus signed up to ship oil through the expanded Trans Mountain pipeline and have struggled to attract investors because Canadian crude barrels trade at a discount to U.S. oil and because Canada's existing export pipelines are full.

The Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers forecasts Canadian oil production will grow from just under 4 million barrels per day to 5.1 million bpd by 2030, outstripping available pipeline capacity.

"We are already seeing . . ."

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, before we proceed with debate, I've had a number of requests to seek unanimous consent on a matter. I don't believe we have a precedent in this House for this matter. However, we still have another hour of debate and everybody feels a need to be energized. The situation is that we did not call Orders of the Day before proceeding into the emergency debate; therefore, we technically cannot bring coffee or soft drinks into the House unless by unanimous consent we choose to waive that process. [interjection] I can see that everybody really needs some coffee.

Mr. Mason: This is a matter of urgent and pressing concern.

The Deputy Speaker: Given that it's a matter of urgent and pressing concern, I will seek unanimous consent to waive that process. I will ask one question: is anyone opposed? All right.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Deputy Speaker: You may enjoy your coffee and soft drinks. The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

5:00

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Go ahead. Get your coffee, if you need it. You'll need it after you hear me. Popcorn, too.

The Liberal caucus has supported the need for this secondary pipeline to the west coast to enable Asian markets for our oil, but given the dimensions of this issue I feel compelled as maybe one of the senior people here to inject a note of caution in this debate, especially with the government's eager entry into financial partnership. When I hear words from the Premier, quote, that we will do whatever it takes to build this pipeline, end quote, I get worried. Pipelines are clearly the safest way to transmit fossil fuels. There will continue to be a need for fossil fuels for decades to come. The climate initiatives that this government has taken are indeed progress and allow some degree of acceptance across the planet as well as in Alberta for the continued development of the oil sands, but an important balance is needed to respect current and future generations with respect to jobs and the economy.

I also feel very strongly on the need for the federal government to step up and do its part here and not allow this to unravel into a serious division across this country that begins to fester on a number of different fronts quite apart from the oil and gas sector.

The minister and the Premier today have stated that this government will do whatever it takes to build this pipeline. End quote. This troubles me in a province where there is global uncertainty about the full costs of extracting bitumen. We already have close to \$60 billion of debt, where projected royalties are less than \$2 billion in the next year from bitumen, where there is indeed in this province a continuing growth of greenhouse gases despite a commitment to reduce greenhouse gases by 2 per cent each year. There are the increasing liabilities in the oil sands for cleanup costs, which this government says that it's negotiating with the companies to get a security deposit to ensure that Albertans will not be on the hook for the cleanup costs. So I'm calling for some caution in this enthusiastic proposal to jump on the pipeline bandwagon with what appears to be a blank cheque.

Anyone listening to the enthusiastic support on the other side would perhaps be forgiven for bringing up visions of the Gainers fiasco in the '80s, NovAtel, magnesium Canada in High River, the Lloydminster upgrader, tremendous costs to the public with no returns on the investment, all of which appeared to be good investments at the time, touting all the benefits, as this government continues to do, including, of course, the unspoken political benefits of getting this pipeline. The absolute dependency of this government on getting this pipeline through at the risk of losing the next election raises some questions about the ingenuity here. I must caution this government to become a little less zealous about using whatever public money is needed. Albertans must be consulted before taking on yet more debt.

Albertans deserve a full cost accounting of what we are currently doing in the oil sands. That was the nature of my amendment in the last debate, that we had a week or so ago. Pipelines, yes, but not at any cost. Surely, we have to think about long-term implications for not only the industry but our children and future generations.

Madam Speaker, I needed to raise those questions. I expect that if this government is going to make deals with pipeline companies,

they will be completely transparent with us in the Legislature and with Albertans in general, that we will understand the full risks, the nature of the relationship, the full costs, and that they will listen to Albertans about what risks they're prepared to take, considering all the uncertainties around this very important decision and the important national interests at stake here. Albertans deserve to be right at the table before any ratification of investments in pipelines, especially in relation to bitumen.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm really thankful for the opportunity to stand and speak on behalf of this caucus and why the Trans Mountain pipeline means so much. You know, I think that the members across the floor often like to imply that the members on this side of the House don't understand the industry, aren't a part of it, aren't impacted by it, and really aren't actually genuinely supportive of the Trans Mountain pipeline, so I wanted a chance to stand and make it clear that that is absolutely not so. Obviously, other members of this caucus have spoken passionately about their own connection to the industry, but I wanted to have the opportunity to do the same.

You know, first of all, just to talk in general about something that I think most of us all know but is worth reiterating, is how important the Trans Mountain pipeline is to this entire country. Madam Speaker, most people in B.C. understand that. It's really unfortunate that the leadership in B.C., Premier Horgan and his team, are making this choice given the fact that the people of B.C. understand how important this is to workers, how important it is for jobs for Canadians, how important it is for the Canadian economy.

But, Madam Speaker, this isn't just about all of Canada or even all of Alberta, to me. This means so much to the riding of Lesser Slave Lake. I mean, coming from the community that I do, the well-being of the communities that I serve is very deeply rooted in the well-being of the oil and gas industry. You know, the importance of the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion to the people that I represent can't be overstated. In fact, for years my own well-being and the well-being of my family financially was dependent upon the work of the service truck that was sitting in the driveway. I certainly have long had deep connections to that, as do many of my friends and my family and the people that I serve within the community.

Obviously, the number of jobs that the oil and gas industry brings to this province is tremendous. The number of dollars that it brings to our economy is tremendous. Getting this pipeline built is essential to ensuring the health and well-being of that industry. The billions of dollars that it will bring into the economy right across this country: those dollars will end up in the pockets of people like the people that I serve. It will make sure that they have jobs and make sure that they can continue to take care of their families. So, Madam Speaker, I'm tremendously passionate and invested in making sure that this pipeline expansion is successful because, truthfully, the oil and gas industry is the heart of the economy across this country.

Madam Speaker, it's not just for the jobs and the economy but also because it is the safest way to move oil, and I'm not the only one who has spoken about that in the House today. You know, I have a railway running not very far from my house, and I certainly would much prefer that grain run in those cars, grain that needs to leave farmers' fields and get to market, instead of oil having to be in those cars, not only because it's the best thing for the economy but also because I live in fear of what transporting oil in rail cars means and the safety issues that that poses to people in our

communities here across this province and within the province of B.C. Those are the messages that we've been sharing with the country, with the people in B.C. since having been elected and as we've talked about the importance of the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion.

I'm so proud of the leadership that Premier Notley has shown in this, and our own Minister of Energy as well, in terms of speaking up on behalf of the industry. Certainly, I think we all in this House know that Canadians in general have never understood how important the industry is to this entire country. I think there has been an opportunity to speak to that for a very, very long time. We've been busy doing it for the last three years, but there is a history far longer than three years as to why Canadians have not understood the importance of the oil industry to this country. Again, I've been very proud to watch as our Premier has spoken on behalf of the industry across this continent.

5:10

What I've not been proud to see is watching over and over again the opposition gleefully cheering for the demise of this pipeline expansion because it mattered enough to them politically that they were just hoping to see this side fail. Madam Speaker, instead, we will continue – continue – to invest in Albertans and continue to invest in doing everything we need to do to move this forward one victory at a time, moving steadily forward. You know, any kind of war is won one battle at a time, so we keep on, as opportunities come forward, continuing to fight for the pipeline on behalf of Albertans. We will continue to win. Albertans are counting on us to make sure that happens, and we will not let them down.

As has been made very clear, we will not hesitate to use every tool we have at our disposal to do so, obviously, including ensuring that we move forward with serious economic consequences for B.C. You know, Madam Speaker, as I said, the average person in B.C. wants this pipeline to happen as much as we do, but we need to make sure that the leadership of B.C. understands the full implications of the decisions that they are making right now and the choices that they are making.

We will do whatever it takes, including investing in the pipeline. Madam Speaker, the opposition would like to think that investing in that pipeline would be a bad thing, but I certainly see that if we had that opportunity, that would be an investment in Albertans, an investment in jobs, an investment in the economic future of this province and making sure that there was an investor in that who was deeply committed to the success going forward.

Madam Speaker, I've spoken about this government and the choices that we are making and will continue to make as we go forward. I think we are all very clear – but I will say it again – that it is time for the federal government to step up to the plate on this one. The working people of Alberta need them to defend Alberta, to defend the energy industry, to finally recognize and acknowledge and step up and tell all Canadians, the people of B.C. and right across this country, how essential the energy industry is to this whole country and how important the Trans Mountain expansion is to ensuring the viability of that industry.

You know, as our Premier said, the federal approval of this project must be worth more than the paper it's written on, Madam Speaker, so we are all calling on the federal government to prove just that, that it was not just a check mark on a piece of paper, that it was an approval of our federal government to support a project that is essential to the well-being of this country. It is time for the federal government to stand up for this country and for the economy of this country. This is not just about Alberta; it's about ensuring the well-being of all of us.

Regardless of the federal government and the steps that they take, we will continue to do whatever it takes. I think it has been stated very clearly, but I will say it again. This pipeline will be built.

The Deputy Speaker: I will recognize the hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Speaker, although I do look forward to hearing the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner very soon.

I want to thank all members on all sides of the House for their comments so far. I think that a lot of this debate has been mostly productive, but it's so easy to fall into the usual partisanship in this place. We have very different opinions. You know, I think the government is generally wrong about even the time of day, and they would tend to think the same about what I have to say, but there are a few things we have in common, and we should do our very best to focus on them. Not that I will entirely, but I will do my best.

Last week I had a sort of meet-and-greet for constituents in Strathmore at the Roadhouse, and I had some constituents I actually hadn't met before come up to me. The husband of this very young family works in the oil patch. He's the kind of guy that you could just tell is proud to be a part of the patch, and he kind of represents that ticket to a life that a lot of us here don't truly appreciate. The oil patch isn't just suits in downtown Calgary. It's young men and women, sometimes, who didn't come from a fortunate background, and this was their ticket up. All too often you see it blown on three snowmobiles and a Ford F-350, but it's their ticket forward. It's their ticket up the economic and social ladders. You could tell that he was just proud. He just has got no time for those who think that it's somehow wrong to be in the oil patch.

His wife – they've got a very young child, about four or five years old at most – stays at home, and she has a small business that she runs called Low Class Oil Trash. They make a lot of really interesting swag for people to wear from the oil patch and oil patch families. They made me a nice custom sweater. It was a really nice gift.

That's on the Strathmore side. In Brooks we've got OPHOP, Oil People Helping Oil People, a grassroots group of really good people who've tried to come together and find support for people, oil patch families, during the downturn. They're not as busy right now as they were before, which is great news, but they are oil country proud.

A lot of people look down on it. You know, some people, left-coast types, look down on it as evil. Some people even in Alberta might look down on it as beneath them. But this is the ticket up the economic and social ladders for so many people.

Now, people change their minds on issues, and I mean this genuinely. People on both sides of this House have changed their minds on issues since we were elected. I have changed my mind on some issues, I know that many members in the UCP have changed their minds on some issues, and I know that members of the government have changed their minds on some issues. That's a good thing. It demonstrates maturity. It demonstrates evolution. We stick to our principles. I still think you guys are nuts, but you've stuck generally to your principles on the values of the NDP.

But some of the NDP's positions on the oil sands and pipelines have changed, and that's a good thing. I actually commend you for that. I'm not going to rib you about it, and if some of you are looking at me – and I actually applaud you. This is a good thing. Now, I've changed my mind. Social issues have moved into the top hundred issues for me now. We evolve, and this is a good sign. Of course, we're going to rib each other if you've changed your mind. It's a fine line between a flip-flop and an honest change of perspective,

but I'm going to give members of the government side of the House here the benefit of the doubt and say that it was an honest change in perspective.

Now, the anti oil sands activists, though, people who have changed their minds, though, have wielded a double-edged sword. For a long time many people who were the against the sands and development and pipelines in Alberta said that Alberta had a bad environmental record, and they handed our opponents a tool. They handed them a sword to hurt us with. Even though opinions have changed, we're now getting the other side of the blade. It's a double-edged sword, and it's hurting us now, but we are all ostensibly on the same side.

I have to say that the minister who spoke just before me – I have to take issue with some things. You know, she said that the opposition wants the government to fail. I have to say that I believe, for the most part, in people's good intentions here. I don't believe that the NDP imposed the carbon tax as some evil socialist tax plan although there's a part of me that might think so. But, for the most part, I believe that it was a genuine effort on their part to win social licence from pipeline opponents. I believe it's failed. I believe it was always going to fail, but from their perspective I think it was a genuine attempt to win those folks over.

Just as I'm willing to accept your best of intentions on what was meant by that carbon tax to earn social licence, I'd ask that you would also accept that probably every member of the opposition, in all parties and independents, wants these pipelines to get built. We do not want the government to fail even if we think that your plan is not well thought out. We should accept the good intentions, and we should accept the best of intentions stated by people here. I think we would go some way in serving all of our constituents better if we did.

5:20

Now back to the part where I actually have to really criticize you, but I'll try to do it in the best, most constructive way possible. The carbon tax and the vast so-called climate leadership plan, with a host of regulations and new laws, were intended to win social licence. The Premier believed that only Nixon could go to China, and she was Nixon. Because she came largely from that movement – she had worked as a senior staffer for the B.C. NDP; she knew these people well; they were friends and colleagues, fellow-travellers in the NDP nationally – she believed that she could be Nixon going to China and win them over if she did these things. I genuinely believe that she thought she could. Maybe she still can. I really think the chances of that are becoming slim to none. She, I think, is in genuine shock and disappointment right now – and I feel for her – that her efforts to win social licence from fellow-travellers, at least from the past, have not worked.

What have the carbon tax and the whole array of new regulations and laws against our oil industry done? Global temperatures have changed by zero as a result. Radicals converted from antipipeline to pro pipeline: zero. Pipelines built to date: zero. Respect earned from opponents in other parts of the country: zero.

When Alberta entered Confederation, we didn't do so as the four original provinces. We were not one of the established colonies in British North America. We did not come as Upper or Lower Canada, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick. We did not have a chance to negotiate for the best possible deal. We came first from Rupert's Land into the North-Western Territory, and then we were constituted as a province. There was no negotiation with the federal government. We were simply granted status. We moved from an official colony to, effectively, a colony with a few Members of Parliament.

But in many ways I believe we are still treated as a colony. For one, we don't have the numbers to be the most electorally important

part of the country, but we are still the fourth-largest province and growing. We have 4 million people in this province but a Constitution which was designed to advantage the provinces that negotiated their way in: the four original provinces, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, and British Columbia. It advantages those provinces that negotiated their way into Confederation. With 4 million people, we have just six Senators. Atlantic Canada, with half our population, has 30. Now, that is an institutional problem with Alberta's place in Confederation. Any federation in the world, any real federation . . . [Mr. Fildebrandt's speaking time expired]

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: I'll recognize Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater, followed by Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my privilege to rise in the House today to give the viewpoint of Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater on this very, very important debate. In fact, I think this is debate that you're going to be finding in Canadian federalism textbooks for many, many years hence. [interjection] That's correct. So I'm speaking mindful of that, that one day someone might be writing their dissertation based on part of what we're saying today. We're speaking for the record.

But, of course, we're also speaking for something that's of critical importance to, I think, all of our constituents. This is something that definitely I've heard loud and clear from the residents of the riding that I have the privilege to represent. What's kind of unique about this is the level of consensus that I'm seeing, you know, from different people: from farmers, from ironworkers, from shopkeepers, and definitely from drivers, and the list goes on. How many times I've had people come up to me and let me know just how much they appreciate our Premier standing up for Alberta and give their best wishes to make sure that this happens: I mean, I could not but support this with such a level of concern and need for it.

Why do people see this as so important for Alberta? Well, I mean, I think that we're all aware that this has been a long-standing issue for our province, how to be able to develop and deal with the discount that we're forced to take on bitumen. It's ebbed and flowed, depending on global markets, but it's a problem that really hasn't resolved itself yet, and it's a problem that's only going to be getting worse with more and more American tight oil coming on stream. You know, the old model of shipping our bitumen south is just not going to work for us anymore unless we're willing to take this sort of deep discount.

What does that deep discount mean? Well, of course, it moves the profitability factor of new fields, which means we're going to be slowing down a lot of investment. There'll be a lot of stranded resources up there. Of course, what does it mean for us as a province in terms of, you know, money to support our health care, money to support our schools, money to keep our roads intact? And on it goes. I guess I don't want to belabour that point. I think we're all in agreement with that.

What do we have to do here? Well, somehow or other we need to get the B.C. government to wake up. They need to wake up, you know, to understand that actions have consequences and that one of those consequences is that if you're going to work to saw off the branch of the tree that you yourself happen to be sitting on, those consequences might end up being fairly drastic.

I think that sometimes some of the politicians in B.C. are suffering from a point of view kind of similar to what George Orwell talks about in *The Road to Wigan Pier*, which is a story that he wrote back in the interwar years, how a lot of British politicians at that point were very much hesitant to get involved in Europe.

There was a very, very strong pacifist movement. George Orwell made this quip. He called it one-eyed pacifism. One-eyed pacifism is a type of pacifism that a country can have when they have a really strong navy and they think that they're not going to be facing any negative consequences because of their action.

I think that there are too many in B.C. that have sort of a one-eyed environmentalism in the sense that they haven't really thought through the consequences their actions have. They haven't really looked closely at this pipeline. They believed the first story that they got about it – unfortunately, some of these stories went out quite a long time ago; as one of the other members alluded to, this isn't a new issue – and that was the story that it's dirty oil, that Alberta is an irresponsible producer, that we can't be trusted, and that as a consequence, you know, if they allow this expansion to go through, we're going to be poisoning their coastlines and probably laughing at it, too, right? I mean, that's just sort of the idea sort of in the background.

Of course, that's fundamentally untrue. It's never been true and even less so considering the robust climate action plan we put in place and all the other great work we've done to make Alberta even more of a global leader in safe oil. Sometimes people need to get a little reminder just to sort of help focus their thinking.

5:30

I think that it is time, you know, assuming that the federal government – and I'll talk about that a bit later – doesn't step in and step in in a big way, that we kind of give these people an idea that: yeah, actually, you are still pretty heavily implicated in the resource economy, and you are just as dependent on this resource as the rest of us. I think that if we take some actions that way, where they can see what the actual economic costs of decisions are, they might look at those decisions a little more carefully. I think that when they do so, they will see that, as many of the members have brought up already this afternoon, this is a very responsible project. In fact, there would be fewer risks involved for pollution than with the status quo. I mean, railcars as a way to transport bitumen are definitely not the preferred way to do it.

I've been recently reminded about that myself in that just this past fall we had a derailment in Sturgeon county of some of these tanker cars. You know, our rail lines go pretty close to neighbourhoods. I mean, there's a risk that's involved with that. It's a type of risk that we wouldn't be facing had we had more pipeline capacity, so that is definitely something that needs to be taken into account. I think that anything we can do to help people out there revisit their preconceptions and their misconceptions is all to the good.

Now, do I think that this is the preferred way to go about things? Of course not, and I think it was totally legitimate that, you know, we worked so hard to dispel a lot of those misconceptions previously. Hard we did work, and I think we did win a lot of goodwill in B.C. I think that in big parts of the community we have changed the conversation. There are responsible people across the country that have rethought our industry and are working in our favour.

I just want to go back for a moment to some of the comments that the Member for Calgary-Elbow made, where he criticized us for basically sitting on our hands and doing nothing in order to advance this project. I was a bit nonplussed by his statements because, of course, it's been very clear, you know, from the approval that if we hadn't actually put in a robust climate change plan, we wouldn't have the approval in the first place. We wouldn't even be having this discussion right now because the project would have long been dead in the water. So it's the actions we've taken to date that have brought us to where we are today, which is where we still have, I think, an excellent chance of getting this through. I'd say better than

that because I think we're going to make sure that this happens. This wouldn't have happened without a lot of the work that we've done. I think that should be important to put on the record.

Just speaking to the relevance of the federal government, I think that for the federal government it's about more than a pipeline. It's about more than the share of the resource revenue that they're going to be getting by this going through. I think it speaks to their fundamental relevance as a national government. I mean, the point of federalism is that we do have a central power that is able to actually resolve these types of situations for us. Otherwise, I mean, Confederation becomes pretty problematic, especially for provinces like Alberta, where we're landlocked and we desperately need to have access to coasts in order to succeed.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Madam Speaker, thank you for recognizing me and allowing me an opportunity to be able to stand in support of this motion by our hon. leader. The question that I have is: how did we get here? How did we get to this point where it's a five-alarm fire and now the government is scrambling? This is truly what's happening.

You know, as I looked at the last election, the Premier sells hope and change like nobody I've ever seen. You've got to take your hat off to her for winning that election. The problem is being able to actually deliver on that hope and change. The value of this whole concept of hope and change is: can you deliver? Can you actually deliver the goods and win the next election? Unfortunately, what we've seen, Madam Speaker, is anything but that. We've seen polling numbers completely dive for the NDP, and it's an indication that they are not delivering on the promises that they made to Albertans.

Now, in regard to this issue of Kinder Morgan I've been listening to a lot of talk, and I've heard from the government side the statement, "We will do whatever it takes to get this pipeline built" so many times that I've committed it to memory. I'm sure that the minister would agree that a laser-focused message from her and her members is critical, yet Albertans, pipeline companies, and investors see anything but a crystal clear message. The message, at best, is ambivalent.

I'm going to just give them a little hint – and I've given this hint before – that if they want to create a crystal clear message to investors, to Albertans, to people in B.C., to even the Prime Minister of Canada, they need to change their constitution. I'm once again going to submit this as a very important point for the NDP to be able to help everybody believe, because really what's at stake here is their credibility. Are they for a pipeline? Are they not for a pipeline? Are they for oil and gas? Aren't they for oil and gas?

Look, I've brought this up at least three times, so I haven't actually given them fair warning about this issue. Let me just read this to you again. This is found, again, in the Alberta NDP's constitution, appendix C. "Meeting human material needs must not use more of Earth's resources than can be renewed within each generation." The problem with that statement, Madam Speaker, is that it sends a message to anybody in the oil and gas sector that we are not open for business in Alberta, that we will not condone any kind of action that will burn fossil fuels. That's exactly what that says.

Now, if they were truly, as I'm going to quote once again the minister and many of the other people on that side have said: we will do whatever it takes to get this pipeline built – all they have to do, one very simple thing, is just to change that part of their constitution to clear up some of the misconceptions that, obviously,

that message is sending. But perhaps that's the reason why former people that they have appointed to government boards are now chaining themselves to pipeline projects in B.C. or being arrested in B.C.

This is, again, another very difficult thing for the NDP. This is the problem they're facing. They've tied the success of the climate action plan, its ability to buy social licence, to the success of building the Kinder Morgan pipeline. Now, because they've done that, over the past few weeks, as the reality of the situation has started to sink in, you can almost see a desperation on their faces because they have completely tied their success, of being able to sell to Albertans, because we're in an election year, Madam Speaker, that they are going to be able to provide jobs, get this economy roaring again, to the success of the Kinder Morgan pipeline being built. If it doesn't get built now, their whole credibility goes out the door, and now we're starting to see a complete panic on the other side that it's not going to happen.

Then we keep on hearing: we will get it built. Look, you can say those words – and I absolutely do hold that it could be built – but the words are not going to get it built. What's going to get it built is credibility by this government. That's what's going to get it built. But they've lost their credibility, and now they're trying to make up for that loss of credibility. We have investment – according to the Conference Board of Canada \$36 billion fled in the first two years of this government being in. Why did they do that? Why did they leave? They left because they don't trust that the NDP aren't going to change the rules. Unfortunately, the federal Liberal government is following suit, and this is why Energy East was cancelled.

5:40

When businesses come in to take a look at whether they want to invest in a jurisdiction, they go in and they say: these are the playing rules; as we play the game, we hope that the umpire is going to keep the rules the same. Unfortunately, the umpire has changed the rules, and we lost Energy East. We're in the same situation now. Because the NDP did not campaign on a carbon tax and because of the uncertainty that that has cast into the market, the markets have said: we're not investing here. This isn't the first time that this has happened in a province. We've seen the same thing happen in B.C. We've seen the same thing happen in Ontario. We've seen the same thing happen in every province that has given a chance to the NDP, Manitoba as well.

Now, it's good to see the NDP government finally starting to get animated about this, but it's an indictment against them because a true leader wouldn't have waited until it's a five-alarm fire before taking action. Once it's a five-alarm fire, the risk of burning down the house is very, very high, Madam Speaker. A true leader would have acted on the issue when it was a one-alarm fire, and they would have acted decisively. Unfortunately, rather than acting decisively, this government continued to belittle our leader about the ideas which they are now embracing, belittled the leader when it was actually time to get it done. Because of that, this thing has completely blown out of proportion to a five-alarm fire, and we're now in a situation where we're now talking about trade wars. We're now talking about corporate handouts.

This pipeline was going to be fully funded by the private sector. That's a great situation to be in. It's a complete hundred per cent benefit to Albertans and to the government, yet they've messed that up. Again, this is an issue of credibility, and because the credibility issue is in front of the electorate in the next election, the NDP is starting to panic.

The other point that needs to be pointed out: you know, I don't think the NDP actually recognizes the gravity of the situation. On the one hand, the NDP is going into an election, and they need to

get this built; on the other hand, the federal Liberals are also going into an election next year, and they don't feel like this is a vote-rich environment for them. I think that Justin Trudeau is sitting around 11 per cent in this province whereas they have a vote-rich opportunity in B.C. No wonder Justin Trudeau is sitting on his hands and not doing anything. This is a political issue for him.

But my recommendation to the government is that you need to take that off of the table. You need to make sure that the federal government realizes that the pain of losing this pipeline, the pain of actually hurting Alberta's economy, is going to be way worse than the pain of losing some of the fringe voters in B.C. This is the messaging that the NDP government needs to start saying and speaking ad nauseam so that the federal Liberals recognize that this is going to be a big problem for them. This isn't just a problem for B.C.; this is a problem for the federal Liberals as well.

Madam Speaker, I hope that this government is serious, that they have had a change of heart, and that they're willing to actually make solid, concrete action to get this done.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw, followed by Calgary-Hays.

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know what? I'm this bizarre person. I'm going to tell you why I'm this bizarre person. I'm this bizarre person because I'm one of the few people in this House who can say that he was born and raised Calgarian. I'm one of the few people, maybe one of the only people, who can say: I'm a second-generation Calgarian [interjections] Fourth, I guess. Anyways, I digress.

The thing that's unique about this is that not a lot of people have seen the evolution that has come of Calgary over that time. When my father was born, there were a little over 100,000 people living in that city. When I was born, there were a little over 600,000. We are now at 1.3 million and counting, and that success is driven by the success of our resource development and our petroleum producers.

Now, with that being said, I want to provide some clarity for the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner. I can tell you, you know, that my first campaign was in 1986. My mom was pregnant, with me in her womb, and I can tell you one thing, that she was a strong supporter of resource development, as are all the members of the NDP caucus here in this House. I can tell you another thing, that historically our party has been a strong supporter of resource development. My great-grandmother, who served on the Swift Current EDA within the Saskatchewan CCF, was a strong supporter of pipelines and resource development, as was my great-uncle, who served as an MLA with that party and was a strong supporter of sustainable resource development and pipelines in that province. I reiterate this point, that it is in our nature to do so, and to be frank, I would not sit here as a member of the Alberta NDP in this House if they did not support pipeline development.

Now, going back to 2015, I heard many things at the doorsteps. While I won't dig deep into them, whether they were schools, the cancer centre, the ring road, et cetera, one of the key things that I heard at the doorstep from many of my constituents was about supporting resource development, about supporting pipeline development because it is the bread and butter on which we live in Calgary. I heard many key points, but one of the things that I heard was the need to get Trans Mountain built, the means to get that pipeline done and get the deal started. And one of the key things I heard from a person who lived in Midnapore. This resident in Midnapore was very involved with an oil and gas company, and he said: the federal government has messed up the Northern Gateway

so much that I know that project is not going to move forward; that is why we need to build Trans Mountain.

Now, we have that focus. We have that focus to get that approval. To be frank, while I do hear some heckling coming from the opposition bench, and I will digress, the fact of the matter is – and there are a couple of things that I will speak of here. Obviously, it's the focus of my constituents, but the other thing is talking about the national interest. We see tremendous generosity that comes from our petroleum producers and our oil and gas companies, our engineering companies. I have the fortune of having the Fluor office in my constituency, and their success is one of those in which we see them give back to the community in tremendous ways. It was remarkable to see them at the Hull homes area to build a greenhouse for the youth that are currently residing in that area.

It's that sense of community. It's that sense that we see whenever the cards are down and we're dealing with each struggle, and one of the first to jump up is the oil and gas sector. I had tears rolling down my eyes when I heard the story of Suncor and how, at the end of the day, they were one of the first to jump up there and give their runway space, house people when we had the Fort McMurray fires. They're the ones who give back first, and it is important and it is in the national interest for us to take care of them because they were taking care of people from all walks of life, from all over this country. To be frank, we're very interdependent.

You know, I reflect on the stories that happened when we had the automotive industry crash. One of the things I heard that was remarkable was that Ford didn't take a bailout, but Ford didn't criticize those who did take the bailout. The reason why they didn't was because they realized how interdependent the automotive sector was because there were specific companies that made parts for cars for all three brands. They recognized that if one car company went out of business, that company that makes that part might suffer as well and they might not get the best demand.

The thing that we need to recognize as a country is that we have amazing technology based here in Alberta. We have amazing technology from across the country. We have amazing companies that do work in multiple sectors. I know many an individual who works for a tailings pond company. They do work in northern Alberta for the oil sands. But do you know where they also do work? They do it in British Columbia for mining. I can only envision that if they had struggles in the oil sand projects, if their work was starting to dry up, would they still have the capacity to do that tremendous work in northern B.C. in the most safe and sustainable way possible and do it with the most affordable mechanism while continuing to employ Canadians?

5:50

Now, I've been very fortunate in my life to have a chance to really travel across this country. When I was a student, I had the chance to go to Ottawa. One of the first things that was said to me when I was in Ontario studying in postsecondary was: "Why are you here? Alberta is the heart of Canada's economy. Everyone leaves Ontario to go and work in Alberta." Sadly, the one thing I said was, "Well, tuition is cheaper out here" – at the time it was; it's not anymore – "but I will be back." And I was back.

I've had the chance to be in many provinces. I've been to Manitoba and chatted with an individual who works for a real estate firm. That firm has property here in Calgary. They are dependent on the success of our oil and gas sector and on this pipeline being approved to be successful.

I met a person from Quebec, and between two beers we had a remarkable conversation. This individual used to be a sovereignist. He used to support separatism until one day he came to Alberta and saw how remarkable this province was and how open and

welcoming it was and how much he was able to succeed in his travels. He had only been back in Quebec for a couple of weeks, just to visit family, but he is one of those individuals that comes and supports our oil and gas sector.

The reality is – and the Premier has reiterated it – that every school, every hospital, every road can be attributed to the support that we give to our oil and gas sector because when it's successful, Canada is successful.

Now, I've had an opportunity to go to B.C. as well and talk to many individuals there. The fact of the matter is that the overall consensus that I'm getting from people in B.C. – I was in Victoria at the time – is that they support this pipeline development and that there are fringes out there that are working on misinformation and are really working hard to try to derail this. We right now are working against a strong voice, and we will continue to work hard to get this pipeline built. We have seen that with our court cases, with the 14 out of 14 that we have won.

The fact of the matter is that we need the federal government to step up. The fact of the matter is that we need them to utilize the tools that they have and their ability to get this pipeline built. The one thing that I want to continue to see, the one thing I want my kids to see, my constituents' kids to see is the ongoing growth and success of our resource development. It is what has made Calgary such an amazing city to live in. It is what has given me some amazing benefits. It is what made me successful when I was a business operator. It is what has made multiple members of my family successful as they have worked within that sector. You're hard-pressed to find anyone in this province, anyone, to be frank, in this country who doesn't owe the sustainable resource development that we have in this province for their success as well.

I feel very fortunate to be part of a government that has a strong focus, that has historically had a strong focus and history of supporting resource and pipeline development. As long as I sit in this chair and I stand in this place, I will continue to stand up for pipeline development, to stand up for diversification of our economy, and to stand up for my constituents and Albertans.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this emergency debate. I keep a clock in my phone. It's a countdown clock, and right now it says 413 days, 2 hours, 5 minutes, and 14 seconds, and that's until the next election. That's important. That's the next time Albertans get to choose a different government if they want to. I don't know who they're going to elect then, but here's what I do know. We don't have that long to wait to get a good effort to get this pipeline built. That I'm really sure of, which is why it's important to have this debate today to push the current government to actually do their job, take some action, push their very close personal friend Justin Trudeau to do his part to get something done.

You know what? I think maybe they're starting to wake up to that reality. We actually heard just a few minutes ago the Environment minister say, "I... am beginning to lose my patience." Well, Madam Speaker, the minister should have lost her patience months ago. Months ago. She should have finished losing her patience months ago, not just start to lose it today. That indeed is indicative of the lack of action and the lack of priority and the lack of urgency that this government is putting into getting this pipeline built.

You know, it's also a good thing that we've got the new leader of our party because the government is actually starting to wake up because of that. As he arrived, there's been a pattern. You know what? Our new leader makes a suggestion. The government dodges

and denies that it's a good idea. Then they move into ridiculing his idea, after which point they move into adopting the exact idea that he has proposed, trying to take credit for it and then sitting on their hands and hoping nobody notices. Then he comes up with another idea, and they start dodging and denying, moving into ridiculing, and then they go on to adopting the exact idea and trying to take credit for it, after which point they sit on their hands again, and nothing happens.

Now, they say that they are wanting to push the federal government, but they will not criticize Justin Trudeau. They won't. I wish they would stand up for Albertans instead. They will not criticize the one person that could actually make this go away by actually exerting the authority that the Prime Minister and the federal government have. And the Prime Minister has a majority. Our folks across the aisle will not say a word to offend that Prime Minister, although right now that would be doing their job. That would be the most important thing that they could do to get that person's attention that could actually get this pipeline built, yet our friends in the NDP government refuse to offend their good friend Justin Trudeau in favour of letting Albertans' most important economic issue, perhaps in the history of Alberta's existence, languish instead of offending their close personal friend. That is a big problem.

You know what? They have after the fact taken some of our leader's advice. They put the wine ban in place. Of course, they cancelled it at the very first opportunity. You know what? They've won some court hearings. I'll give them credit for that, 14 for 14. You heard them say it all day long today. But they will not realize they're losing. If you score 14 goals and the other team scores 15 or more, you're losing. They haven't got it through their heads. They're taking victory laps.

The other thing that finally, I think, helped them wake up is the fact that Kinder Morgan pretty much put this thing on life support on the weekend. Now they're waving their arms up. They're going to have an emergency cabinet meeting tomorrow. You know what? They should have had emergency cabinet meetings every week on this thing for months now. They haven't actually paid attention to what's going on.

You know what? Now they're actually talking about cutting off energy to B.C., something that our leader suggested a long time ago. Again, they went through the process: they dodged, they denied, they ridiculed, and now they're thinking about adopting it and taking credit for it.

Well, you know what, Madam Speaker? If they want to get re-elected in 413 days, 2 hours, 1 minute and 13 seconds, they should actually start adopting all of our leader's ideas because that will make them a lot harder to beat in the next election. You know, they might even have a chance if they would take more of our leader's ideas because those seem to be the only good ones that they've had so far, although they've done their very best to deny those ideas. When they finally come around to accepting them, Albertans then say: wow; they're doing a good job. And do you know what they force us to do? We say: wow; they got that one right.

My advice for the government in the 30 seconds or so I've got left is: "You know what? If you actually listened to more advice from our leader, stop denying it, do it in the first place, maybe Albertans would start to take this government seriously. Maybe we'll get a pipeline built before we've got to wait another 413 days for a new government, which is too long for Albertans. You shouldn't make them wait that long."

The Deputy Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt, hon. member, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(2) the House stands adjourned until tomorrow afternoon at 1:30.

Legislative policy committees will convene this evening and tomorrow morning for consideration of main estimates. This evening Resource Stewardship will consider the estimates for Energy in the Rocky Mountain Room, and Alberta's Economic Future will consider the estimates for Culture and Tourism in the Parkland Room.

Tomorrow morning Alberta's Economic Future will consider the estimates for Labour in the Parkland Room, and Resource Stewardship will again consider the estimates for Energy in the Rocky Mountain Room.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, April 10, 2018

Day 14

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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

Party standings:

New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 25 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent: 1 Vacant: 2

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Ellis	

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Kazim	Woollard
Kleinsteuber	Vacant
Loewen	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, April 10, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let us be grateful for that which unites us. Let us be understanding of that which sets us apart. Let us always be mindful that we are here to address and serve the needs of others first.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

Ms Jabbour: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce through you to the Assembly some special guests of yours that are seated in the Speaker's gallery who will be at a special screening of *Indian Horse* tonight at the Pehonan Theatre in the Edmonton Federal Building. The film *Indian Horse* is based on the book by the same name by Canadian author Richard Wagamese about the residential school experience in this country.

First, I'd like to introduce Edna Manitowabi, who plays a grandmother and elder in the film but who is also professor emeritus at Trent University, specializing in courses pertaining to indigenous culture and knowledge. As well, we have an Alberta actor from Frog Lake, Tristen Marty-Pahtaykan, who in addition to his role in *Indian Horse* has continued to develop his career on the national-international stage. Accompanying Tristen are his friends and family, Lyle Pahtaykan, Donald Cross, and Sharon Cross. I'd also like to introduce Carrie Wolfe, whose work with the Speaker's office made this screening tonight possible. I'd like to invite all of you to now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome, and thank you for coming.

The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a former constituent of mine, Mr. John Cowan. John lived in Alberta for 23 years and is currently working in the technology industry in Winnipeg. John is the oldest brother of one of our pages, Jordan Cowan, and is here today to see her in action. I would ask him to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly guests here today from the Canadian Obesity Network: Dr. Arya M. Sharma, scientific director; Dr. Ximena Ramos Salas, managing director; Marty Enokson, chair of the public engagement committee; and Alex Schwarzer, also on the public engagement committee. The Canadian Obesity Network is Canada's leading obesity organization and is made up of health care professionals, researchers, policy-makers, and people with an interest in obesity. I want to thank them for all of their work and ask them to now please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the House several members of the Health Sciences Association of Alberta. They work as individuals in a pivotal mental and physical health well-being role. It's my pleasure to introduce addiction counsellors Katie Borek and Sheri MacMillan – maybe they can stand while I introduce them so people can recognize them – child life specialist Melanie DeCillia, mental health therapist Scott MacDougall, residence counsellor Jackson Boikai, and mental health therapist Renata Logan. Please welcome them to the Legislature.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly Mr. Kris Barker. Kris is a resident of Edmonton-Gold Bar and a passionate Conservative. Mr. Barker has served our community and our country as a decorated soldier, having served for 12 years in our military, including three overseas tours in Bosnia and Afghanistan, where at one point he was injured on our behalf. I'm glad he's on our side and glad he could join us today. I would ask Corporal Barker, retired, to please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Children's Services and Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you some dedicated lab assistants and lab technologists, all of whom are members of the Health Sciences Association of Alberta. Laboratory services impact over 70 per cent of health care decisions. These health care professionals work around the clock to provide accurate and timely results vital to the medical care of Albertans. I'd ask Elvira, Neena, Rutchel, Ayed, Yvonne, Rosemary, Heather, and Shannon to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions this afternoon. It is my pleasure to introduce to you some more members from the Health Sciences Association of Alberta. HSAA represents roughly 25,000 caring health care professionals from across the province, working hard every day to keep all Albertans safe and healthy. We value your contribution and thank you for your service. I'd now ask Leanne, Nancy, Shannon, Neil, Donna, Nicole, Laurel, Sarah, Susan, and another Nicole to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ms Payne: For my second introduction I'd also like to introduce some of Alberta's dental hygienists during Oral Health Month. They educate and empower Albertans of all ages to take good care of their mouths, teeth, and gums to help benefit their overall physical and mental well-being. Thank you to all the dental hygienists who help us to keep our teeth and gums healthy and clean so we can enjoy a better smile and improved quality of life. I'd now invite Margo, Alysha, Jacqueline, Marthe, Kelly, and Paulette from the College of Registered Dental Hygienists of Alberta to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

Ms Luff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Mr. Ken Goosen of GlobalFest. GlobalFest is Calgary's second-largest festival, after Stampede, and brings thousands of people to my riding of Calgary-East every year for incredible fireworks displays and multicultural performances. GlobalFest also works throughout the year providing human rights education and arts programming in Calgary and around Alberta. If Mr. Goosen could rise and please receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Health and Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I have three introductions. The first is a group who are here from the Health Sciences Association of Alberta. We are committed to assisting EMS with resource issues through a greater emphasis on paramedic integration, community-based care, and reduced wait times for EMS crews in emergency rooms. These folks are certainly partners in making that work happen, so thank you for your advocacy and partnership in making life better for Albertans. I'd invite Nathaniel, Karli, Deanna, Brian, Michael, Jason, D.J., Marlys, and Shawn to rise and receive the warm welcome of our Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, my second of the three introductions today is Violet Kully and her family, who are seated in the members' gallery. I'd ask that Violet rise while I talk about her for a moment. She is turning 85 today. Show it off, Violet. She is a mother of three and baba to five. I have the pleasure of working with her favourite daughter-in-law, Tracy. She hails from the New Kiev, Mundare area, where she spent 73 years farmsteading. Violet has a huge heart and spent over 50 years of her life giving back to the community through volunteerism, contributing to local and provincial hospital auxiliaries, and has been a devoted volunteer, giving countless hours to those in need and visiting them in hospital. She's also the director and president of St. Basil's Ukrainian women's church league, and she rolls some of the best holubtsi there. I'd invite Violet – thank you for standing – and, please, your family as well to rise and receive the warm welcome of our Assembly.

1:40

My final introduction today, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you Kaelyn Anderson, who is seated in the members' gallery. Kaelyn as well please rise. You are a fierce young activist who's passionate about indigenous and women's rights. She comes from a political family on both sides. Her kokum was a member of Indian Rights for Indian Women, which fought for women to regain their treaty rights. She plans on doing gender studies and native studies at the University of Alberta. I'd invite her to receive the warm welcome of our Assembly.

The Speaker: Hon. members, any other guests today? The Minister of Labour.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members some members of the Health Sciences Association of Alberta executive board and staff. HSAA represents approximately 240 different health sciences disciplines, many of whom are obviously here in the House today. Through your hard work and commitment HSAA continues to support a large community of front-line workers, who provide essential services for all Albertans across the province. Thank you for your advocacy and your partnership. I would like to invite Mike,

Trudy, and Jerry to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Members' Statements

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

Obesity

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many people who know me have recognized that I've lost a considerable amount of weight over the last year. Legislature security staff joke with me that I'm one of very few MLAs to have actually lost weight being an MLA. We have a good laugh about it.

However, Mr. Speaker, obesity in Alberta is not a laughing matter. There are approximately 648,500 adults living with obesity in this province. Individuals with obesity experience weight bias and discrimination in a number of ways. This discrimination impacts the health and well-being of individuals with obesity beyond any physical obesity-related impairments that they may have. Sixty-three per cent of children with obesity face a higher risk of being bullied, 54 per cent of adults with obesity report being stigmatized in their workplace, and 64 per cent of adults with obesity report experiencing weight bias from health care professionals themselves.

The World Health Organization recognized obesity as a disease when it was established in 1948. However, the same cannot be said of all different orders of government in Canada. For example, anti obesity medications are not covered by provincial public drug benefit programs or any of the federal public drug benefit programs. The number of bariatric surgeries in Alberta has continued to rise steadily in the last six years. However, it's still the case that not everyone who is eligible for this surgery is able to access it.

Mr. Speaker, we can all agree that we need to focus on addressing this very important issue, and for that reason I invited staff and community members of the Canadian Obesity Network here today to the Legislature. I'm counting on all members of this Assembly to become informed on this issue and to meet with their constituents who have the experience of living with obesity. By working together we can help the many Albertans who need help on this matter.

Thank you.

Humboldt Broncos Bus Crash

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, it's with a heavy heart that I spend a few minutes talking about the tragedy in Saskatchewan. As we all know, late Friday night a bus carrying the Humboldt Broncos was involved in a horrific crash. Coaches, staff, and players lost their lives pursuing a dream they all shared.

As any western Canadian knows, it isn't uncommon for kids and parents to travel hundreds of kilometres to get to hockey games during the long winter season. Hockey is a sport that unites us, from peewee to the juniors to the NHL and the Olympics. Hockey brings us together like nothing else. It is a source of community, of national pride. For any of us here who have ever spent any time in a locker room or on those long bus trips to the next game, those are memories that remain indelible in our minds forever. You become as close as family to the players, to the coaches, and to the parents that you are fortunate enough to know as billets. Tragically, these young lives were taken away far too soon.

A community and a province now mourns. Humboldt is a small town, like so many others dotting the prairies, a farming community

that loves its junior team. This tragedy hits very close to home for me personally as a father, a volunteer firefighter, and someone who is deeply rooted in his community. Hopes and dreams ended in an instant on Friday night. Lives are forever shattered, and it will take time to heal the deep wounds. Mr. Speaker, I'm heartened by the outpouring of support from people across North America and beyond, from our own Premier to the Prime Minister to the President of the United States. We all share the community's grief. This week we are all Humboldt strong.

Thank you.

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

Holocaust Remembrance Day

Ms Kazim: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to recognize Yom ha-Shoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day, this year to be recognized on April 12. The Holocaust was one of the most shocking and horrible parts of our history as humanity, and to forget the suffering and death inflicted on the Jewish people would be dishonouring their memory. In commemorating Holocaust Remembrance Day, we remember not only those of the Jewish faith that died but the many others who died during that conflict because of their beliefs, race, disabilities, or sexual orientation.

We have to remember that the Holocaust did not begin with murder. It started with words, with a narrative of hatred that allowed the political leaders of the time to encourage their citizens to attack fellow citizens. Respect and tolerance are a nonnegotiable need for peaceful society today.

The Jewish community in Alberta is a vital and active part of our society. The countless contributions they have made to our communities, to our province, and to our way of life are known and appreciated by all of us. I have had the privilege of getting to know Holocaust survivors in my riding and listen to their personal stories. They are an inspiration for all of us. Holocaust Remembrance Day is being commemorated in my constituency at the Calgary Jewish Centre and Beth Tzedec synagogue.

By staying vigilant against racism, violence, hatred, and persecution, we honour those who suffered and were lost. May their memory live forever through our actions and thoughts, and may such a tragedy never be repeated.

Thank you.

Rural Emergency Medical Services

Mr. Stier: Mr. Speaker, over the years several significant reports have been conducted on the administrative and operational problems in the rural ambulance system, including that of the Health Quality Council of Alberta, the Rural Health Services Review Committee, the Association of Municipal Districts and Counties, the central Alberta municipalities group, and the southern paramedics that produced the suburban-rural EMS deployment review. Common operational problems in each report included repeated complaints of ambulances and paramedics needlessly being tied up for hours in emergency departments; critical time wasted on nonemergency, taxilike transfers; flexing of units into other communities, leaving no local coverage; units not being returned to their home regions; and faulty centralized dispatch protocols.

Despite years of the very same complaints these same issues continue to plague the system today. Rural residents, elected officials, EMS paramedics, and patients across Alberta continue to feel the impact and are extremely worried about this failed system. In fact, in the fall of 2017 a number of Alberta paramedics came to

the Legislature to seek remedies to these obvious operational problems, with no positive results.

Mr. Speaker, the solutions are known. These problems are easily fixed. It's time the minister admitted that resolving these operational problems is the very key to solving this broken ambulance system. It's time we discontinued holding ambulances and paramedics in our ERs and set up instead a proper receiving system. It's time to ensure we stop the practice, where possible, of using ambulances as taxis. For rural areas it's time to give our paramedics the resources they need, stop the practice of using rural ambulances for nonemergency transfers, and ensure that rural ambulances are released from emergency rooms within no more than an hour and that they are not flexed elsewhere but instead are mandatorily returned to their home regions.

These are the solutions that United Conservatives will continue to advocate for, Mr. Speaker. We will fight tirelessly to put Albertans first and fix these crucial ambulance problems once and for all.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Trans Mountain Pipeline Construction Suspension

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, why did the NDP government lift its wine boycott in British Columbia even after the New Democrat allies in Victoria doubled down in the fight against Kinder Morgan?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We temporarily lifted the wine ban because the government of British Columbia agreed with the terms that we set out with regard to controlling the product that was in our pipelines. We've made it very clear, the Premier has made it very clear that this is a temporary lift. We will continue to pressure.

We have three fronts that we're working on, Mr. Speaker. One, of course, is making sure that we protect the project, that needs to move forward in the national interest. If it comes to it, we will buy that pipeline and we will make sure that it gets built. Two, we're fighting in court, and we will continue to do so. Three, the people of British Columbia: the government of British Columbia has caused pain to Alberta families, and if we have to, we'll do the same in British Columbia.

1:50

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, if the government of British Columbia agreed that they didn't have jurisdiction to stop the pipeline, why did Kinder Morgan just suspend the pipeline? Yet again this NDP government got it completely wrong, fumbling the ball from the beginning.

Next question, Mr. Speaker. Why did the Premier declare victory on the Kinder Morgan pipeline last week after one legal decision with many more yet to come? Why did she declare victory when the pipeline is now on life-support?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, let me put the record very clear. The Premier has said that we will do whatever it takes to get this pipeline built. Don't count Alberta out. I know that the members opposite keep trying to do that. They keep trying to say that this is destined for failure, but it's not.

We have three fronts at our disposal. Those include the people of British Columbia. Their government has caused pain to Alberta

families. We can certainly do the same, and we've put a bill on the Order Paper that enables us to do that if it comes to that. We're fighting in court, and at every turn we have won. We also are willing to give industry that confidence. If it comes to it, we will buy this pipeline. We are moving forward, full stop. We call on the federal government to do the same.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, they're moving backward, full stop. Maybe the Deputy Premier didn't get the news release on Sunday, but the pipeline project has been suspended. Our critical economic future is hanging by a thread thanks in part to the incompetence of this government. I ask again: why did the Premier tell this House just a week ago today that there was a, quote, decisive victory in the fight for the pipeline just five days before it was put on life-support?

Ms Hoffman: Well, Mr. Speaker, 14 times we've gone to court, and 14 times we've won. Yes, the Houston investors have made a decision that they've announced will come into effect at the end of May. That definitely sends a really clear sign to the people of Canada that this project is at risk. That's why we will not back down. That's why we're investing and making sure that this pipeline goes forward. If it means that we have to buy the pipeline and we have to move it forward ourselves, we will because this matters to the people of Alberta more than the petty politics of the members of the opposition.

The Speaker: Second main question.

Provincial Response to Pipeline Opposition

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, it sounds more and more like the NDP is living on an alternative planet here. The pipeline was suspended on Sunday. These 14 so-called court victories are immaterial to the opponent's strategy of death by delay, of creating uncertainty, which led to Sunday's disastrous announcement. So what specifically, not general, vague talking points, specifically, is the government of Alberta calling on the federal government to do to ensure the construction of the Kinder Morgan pipeline?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I've said it before, and I'll say it again. We have three tools at our disposal. One is making the people of British Columbia feel the economic pain that their government is making the people of Alberta feel. We don't want to move forward with that. Of course, we want our pipeline to go forward, we want affordable gas prices for the people of British Columbia, but we certainly have the ability to slow down the taps. We will after we consider the bill on the Order Paper. If it comes to it, we will do that, and we would call on the federal government to support us in that. Two, we've gone to court. We've taken intervenor status. We call on the federal government to support us in that. Three, we will take a public interest. We will buy that pipeline if that's what it comes to, Mr. Speaker, and of course we call on the federal government to do that. They also have other tools at their disposal, including some financial implications to the people of British Columbia, and we compel them to use those as well.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Premier said that she has called on the federal government to withhold funding from B.C. for the pan-Canadian climate framework. That's a whopping \$30 million. But a week ago Justin Trudeau's Alberta Minister Sohi

signed a \$4.1 billion cheque for the Horgan New Democrats for infrastructure. Will this government agree with me that that money should be withheld from the B.C. government until the pipeline is built?

Ms Hoffman: We will defend Alberta and the working people of western Canada, Mr. Speaker. Now that the energy industry needs Ottawa to step up, we call on them to act. Of course, members opposite know a lot about Ottawa ragging the puck. Their leader sat in the House of Commons for about two decades and barely even mentioned the pipeline. The Harper government never came close to building a pipeline to tidewater. We are closer than we have ever been, and we will not relent. We will move forward on those three fronts and call on the federal government to join us.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, we're closer than we've ever been to the prospect of no pipeline, with their ally Justin Trudeau cancelling Northern Gateway and killing Energy East, surrendering to Barack Obama on Trans Mountain, and now doing precisely nothing on Trans Mountain. Again I ask: will the government call on Prime Minister Trudeau to withhold the \$4.1 billion in infrastructure payments to B.C. unless this \$7 billion of private infrastructure funding is allowed to complete the Kinder Morgan pipeline? Will they join with me in calling on the federal government to do that?

Ms Hoffman: I know that the member opposite wants to spend his time in Ottawa, or so it appears, because all of his actions here are called on Ottawa.

Mr. Speaker, we have three tools in Alberta's tool box, and we are using them. First, we have the ability to bring on some economic consequences to the people of British Columbia because they've done exactly that to the people of Alberta. Second, we are fighting in court, and every time we've gone to court, we have won on behalf of Albertans. Third, we will invest in the project if that's what it comes to. We call on the federal government to use those same tools. They have them. They have a lot of tools in their tool box. You had them when you were in Ottawa. I wish you would have used them then.

The Speaker: Third main question.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, apparently she didn't hear the president of Kinder Morgan say that the company cannot litigate its way to building a pipeline in the context of this uncertainty.

Federal Response to Pipeline Opposition

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, this government's strategy has been to hitch its wagon to Justin Trudeau and not question a single thing that the federal government has done. They haven't questioned cancelling Northern Gateway, killing Energy East, surrendering on Keystone, or Bill C-69, which will kill the prospect of any future pipeline approval. Will the government now join with me in asking the federal government to withdraw the antipipeline federal Bill C-69?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, we have tools within our means, and we are certainly using those. We call on the federal government to use them as well. We believe in the three fronts that we're fighting this on. Of course, court is one. We have to call on the courts to help us move forward through this legal process. We compel the federal government to join us in those calls in court. Two, we have economic implications that can be done to the government of

British Columbia and the people of British Columbia if it comes to that. We don't want to do that, but they have had the same implications on the people of Alberta. That's why we need to make sure that these tools are at our disposal. Three, Mr. Speaker, nothing will stand in our way. We need to get this pipeline built. The people of Alberta have told us that, and that's why we'll move forward with public investment if that's what it comes to.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
First supplemental.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a week ago the Trudeau government signed an agreement to transfer \$4.1 billion, discretionary dollars, to B.C.'s Horgan government for infrastructure. Does the Deputy Premier think that that reflects seriousness on the part of the Trudeau government to get Kinder Morgan built, or does she believe that the federal government should have made construction of the pipeline a condition of that infrastructure agreement with the Horgan government?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, in terms of what we're doing to move forward in getting this pipeline, because that needs to be our number one call, we're making sure that we're acting on these three fronts. Of course, later we will be introducing legislation that will enable us to increase the price at the pump if that's what it comes to. This is a natural consequence of impacting jobs in Alberta, hurting Alberta families. I don't think that if I lived in British Columbia and knew that that was coming down the road, I'd be very happy with my government for putting Alberta in a position where they had to do that. Of course, there are other financial measures that the federal government can take, and we call on them to consider doing that. We think it's important that the national interest move forward and that they be held to account.

Mr. Kenney: Turning off the taps, Mr. Speaker. That's a great idea. I wonder where they came up with that one.

Let me ask once again. The federal government just signed an agreement a few days ago to transfer 4 billion tax dollars to B.C. for infrastructure. This is not actually a difficult question. The government here says that they'll do anything to fight for this pipeline. Here's something: how about calling on the federal government to pull that money back until the pipeline is completed?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We certainly have called on the federal government to take financial measures to make sure that the British Columbia government knows that this is a serious project in the national interest. This isn't just about a project that's going to help Alberta families; it's going to help British Columbia families and families across our country. We certainly do call on the federal government to act on that front.

That isn't the only front, Mr. Speaker. We also call on them to make sure that they're supporting us in our legal actions as we move forward as well as working with us to make sure that if it takes public investment to make this project happen, they step up and join us. They have a number of tools at their disposal. But no matter what they do, this government will fight for that pipeline.

The Speaker: Thank you.

2:00 Pipeline Development

Mr. Fraser: Mr. Speaker, yesterday in estimates the Minister of Energy responded to questions about the future of Kinder Morgan

by saying that Alberta only needs two of the three major pipeline projects currently happening to get built. But let's be clear. The Trans Mountain expansion, the Enbridge line 3 expansion, and Keystone XL are all crucially important – and we believe that in the Alberta Party caucus – but only one of them connects to Canadian tidewater. To the Minister of Energy: why are you hedging your bets on pipeline construction now, or would you like to correct your comment?

The Speaker: The Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, I'll start, and perhaps my colleague the Minister of Finance will help me as well. When I made that comment about the two out of three pipelines, that's just really a mathematical exercise of the capacity, but it doesn't address the strategic focus which we have. We know that we need more markets in Asia, and we know that strategically the Trans Mountain pipeline is extremely important. So it's kind of two different things, but one is just on the capacity issue itself. We know that two out of three will work, but strategically we need Trans Mountain.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Fraser: Assuming the government is still committed to getting all three pipelines built, the exchange yesterday revealed something important. We have asked the government about what their backup plan is for a path to balance without the increased revenue from pipelines. They refused to answer but made it clear yesterday that at least they've considered the possibility of not all three projects getting completed. Clearly, you have an idea of what these pipelines are losing for your budget and the bottom line for Albertans. To the same minister: will you be open and transparent and share that information in this House?

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

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, I just have to turn to page 104 in our budget book, our fiscal plan. You can read there the importance of market access, and you can see where the pipelines and the capacities take away the oil and bitumen from Alberta and get it either to tidewater or down to the United States and the Gulf coast. Of course, our path to balance is not contingent upon the revenue from all of these pipelines, but we're confident they all will be built.

Mr. Fraser: The Premier and the Deputy Premier have talked about buying an equity stake in Trans Mountain. Today she said that if Kinder Morgan decided not to continue the project after May 31, she would have the province buy it outright, which is a good idea if there's a proper return on investment for Albertans. The problem is that we have no idea what the final price tag of that project is. To the Minister of Energy: how can your government commit to buying this pipeline when you don't even know the full cost, and if you do know, will you table that information in this House?

Ms Hoffman: What we know, Mr. Speaker, is that tens of thousands of jobs and millions of dollars of public interest are at stake if this project does not go forward. Albertans have been very clear: don't take no for an answer. That's what our Premier is doing. She's stepping up. She's making sure that we have the three fronts that we are fighting on: one, ensuring that British Columbia knows the impacts of saying no; two, making sure that we pursue this through the courts as a partner; and three, making sure that if it comes to

having a public stake in this so that we can push forward the way that investors should and could that we have the ability to do so.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

French Language and Francophone Education

Ms McKittrick: Merci, M. le Président. The federal government recently announced a new action plan on official languages. One of the key strategies is to support bilingualism through investing in second-language teacher recruitment strategies. I know from my discussion with Canadian Parents for French and many school trustees and administrators that there is a challenge in the ability to recruit French immersion and French as a second language teachers in Alberta, especially in rural areas. To the Minister of Education: how are you going to make sure that increased federal supports for French immersion and French as a second language teacher recruitment benefit all Albertans who want their children to access these learning opportunities regardless of . . .

The Speaker: Thank you.
The Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. Our government believes that every child in Alberta deserves a chance for success and a chance for francophone and French education regardless of where they live here in the province of Alberta, whether it's in a rural area or an urban area as well. We know as well that our francophone population here in the province has increased by more than 40 per cent in the last 20 years and that enrolment in francophone schools has gone up by more than 200 per cent during that same time. We're encouraged that the federal government is making an investment in francophone education across the country, and we just want to make sure that the federal government . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
First supplemental.

Ms McKittrick: Merci. The federal funding and action plan are helpful, but I was wondering: what action specifically is the Ministry of Education taking to support the desire of Albertan parents to have their children attend French immersion or FSL programs?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks for the question. We have more than 240,000 self-identified francophone people here in the province of Alberta. It's growing very quickly. We are building a new curriculum in all subject areas and in all grade levels, and we're doing that in both official languages simultaneously and working together very closely with the francophone community. Some of the curriculum in this province is more than 30 years old. It's way overdue for an update, and it's way overdue to do it in both of our official languages. We're working very hard together with francophones across the province to make this happen.

Ms McKittrick: Alberta's conseils francophones also benefit from federal action strategies. I know that the minister had some very tough decisions to make in the capital plan for new school projects, so the two new schools announced for the francophone school boards are an indication of the importance the minister places on them. Again to the Minister of Education: given your interests what

are you doing to ensure that Alberta students can access francophone education?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, we have worked very hard to ensure that we build schools. We have more than 200 school projects on the go across the province at this time. We've put more than a billion dollars into the education system that wouldn't have otherwise happened from the previous government. With these schools we are making sure that we meet the needs of francophone education and French immersion education every step of the way. It's a rapidly, exponentially growing part of our education and school population, and we will make sure that we meet the needs of francophone education here in the province of Alberta.

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

Recycling

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is a laggard in recycling, landfilling more tonnes per capita in this province than any other province in the country. Since China has notified the world that they'll no longer accept recyclables, it's urgent that we update our laws and further diversify our manufacturing economy and jobs. In other provinces there is provincially co-ordinated recycling, with costs borne by the industries that produce the packaging, called EPR, extended producer responsibility. To the minister: will you meet with the Recycling Council of Alberta and discuss the tremendous opportunities and environmental benefit of a more modern recycling program in Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member is quite right. There are a number of challenges associated with Alberta's recycling system as it is currently structured, and part of that has been amalgamating the Alberta Recycling Management Authority with the Used Oil Management Association so that we can get the governance right and we can make sure that we don't have too many agencies, boards, or commissions overseeing these matters.

As for the suggestion of extended producer responsibility, it's a good one. That is why, for example, we are consulting with the agricultural industry right now on an EPR model for agricultural plastics. I'll have more to say in the supplementals.

Dr. Swann: Mr. Speaker, it's been almost 10 years since this province committed in its environmental, Canada-wide action plan to EPR. Here we are 10 years later. It's policy that costs us nothing and brings up to \$70 million to this province. What gives, Madam Minister?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member is quite right. EPR is a good model. It is not the only model. We inherited a number of different structures and governances for recycling, so that's why in the first instance we're going to amalgamate those two associations and realize some efficiencies there. We're going to work with municipalities and hear from them. They have been writing to my office, and I think that's a good thing because it's a priority for them, too. We're going to make sure that we work with the Recycling Council. My office has met with them.

I'll assure the hon. member that I have a meeting with them I think in the coming week.

Dr. Swann: Mr. Speaker, Alberta is the only province west of Quebec that places the full costs, risks, and liabilities associated with curbside recycling on the municipalities and the ratepayers. When will you provide the leadership that's needed with the AUMA and RMA, who have called repeatedly for this EPR, extended producer responsibility? When?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the hon. member is quite right that Alberta is a laggard when it comes to other provinces and territories, and the hon. member is quite right that this does place a burden on municipalities and that the province does need to step up with a more fulsome framework. That's why we need to do a bit more consultation. That's why we've moved forward with the agricultural plastics. We'll have more to say throughout 2018.

Thank you.

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

2:10

Adoption Regulations

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Adoption is a gift that turns dreams into reality for adoptive parents, which is why I was so honoured to receive unanimous support for Bill 206, the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Adoption Advertising) Amendment Act, 2017. We all agreed that it was important for government to put into place regulations around having both parents registered with formal adoption agencies in order to protect kids, amongst other things. The government never gave a timeline, during or after the debate, for these regulations. Could the minister please update the House on this timeline?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the member for bringing forward her private member's bill. Adoptive families play a critical role in providing safe, loving, caring homes for so many children who need one. We work closely with communities and families to support adoption when it's in the best interest of a child, and we will be engaging with young people, families, adoptive parents, and organizations on the adoption process and looking for improvements.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you. Minister, given that families are waiting anxiously to see this process of adoption eased through Bill 206 by putting their profiles online and given that families right now are waiting approximately two to three years for a child and given that adoption rates are dropping and wait-lists are creeping up, why is the government stopping Albertans from completing their families by not completing these regulations?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are so thankful for the hundreds of families who step up for these kids and show us what community truly means. That means engaging with them, engaging with young people and with families and with organizations who are involved throughout the adoption process to talk about what needs to happen as we go forward and what improvement looks

like. Obviously, there are different thoughts on it, and we consider it very valuable always to do consultation and talk to Albertans about what they want to see as we make changes going forward.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you. Minister, given that adoption is an extraordinary gift to families that may not otherwise be able to have children and given that parents have been contacting my office, inquiring when Alberta is actually going to catch up to other provinces – we have jurisdictional information to share here with other provinces, Mr. Speaker – by allowing families to post their profiles online, Minister, when will you be proclaiming this legislation? Please explain the holdup.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I certainly can say that we share her commitment to ensuring that the adoption process gives both children and parents the best possible outcomes, which is why after further consultation with adoptive parents and stakeholders I will be happy to provide an update to the member.

The Speaker: Calgary-Hays.

Federal Impact Assessment Act

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are rallying in Calgary today to support our natural resources. Rather than show support, the federal Liberals have introduced Bill C-69. If this legislation is passed, the Canadian Energy Pipeline Association has said, "It is difficult to imagine that a new major pipeline could be built in Canada under the impact assessment act, much less attract energy investment to Canada." To the Minister of Energy: have you read Bill C-69, and are you unhappy enough with it and what's in it to have complained to the federal government about it, and when did you do that, please?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I have reviewed the draft legislation as I did the discussion papers that came out last summer. That is why last summer we wrote to the federal government. The hon. Minister of Energy and I wrote jointly, expressing our concerns with what was in that draft document. We have further communicated with the federal government around things like timelines, the preplanning stage, the project list, and the application of the Alberta climate leadership plan with respect to the strategic assessments. There are some specific things that we would like to see in that legislation, and we're hopeful we will see them.

The Speaker: Thank you.
The hon. member.

Mr. McIver: Thank you. I thank the minister for that answer.

Given that a report released yesterday by GMP FirstEnergy states, and I quote, we suspect we will see more oil sands divestitures from foreign companies in coming years, and given that we need this investment to fully develop our natural resources to provide jobs and fund services needed by Albertans, again to the minister: what is your government doing now to continue to fight off the damage that Bill C-69 will do?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is working closely to protect jobs today and for decades to come while ensuring that we have an appropriate environmental assessment process in place that instills both investor confidence and the confidence of Canadians. That is what that assessment process must grapple with at the federal level. We need to make sure as Albertans that it appropriately takes into account our regional planning exercises as well as the climate leadership plan, that the preplanning stage is accompanied by appropriate timelines. We got legislated timelines in the other pieces, and that was a victory on our part. There is more to do, and there's no question that we're doing it.

Mr. McIver: Well, now I have to thank the minister twice for those answers. Thank you, Minister.

Given the importance of the resource industry to Alberta's economy and given that Suncor's CEO recently said that other jurisdictions are doing much more to attract business and that Canada needs to also do much more to up its game, again to the minister: have you taken the advice of Suncor's CEO, and what will you do to raise our game?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. One of the things that we have done to repair our international reputation is that we brought in an oil sands emissions limit, something that the Suncor CEO supported. We have also brought in a climate leadership plan with a number of different aspects, something that the Suncor CEO stood on the stage with the Premier and me on November 22, 2015, and supported.

Now, there is more to do. There is no question. There's a role for the federal government in terms of getting their environmental assessment right, in terms of getting their navigable waters and other environmental protection legislation in terms of finding the right sweet spot. We are making sure that Alberta is represented . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Carbon Levy and Small-business Costs

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, it comes as no surprise that this government is not making lives better with their crippling carbon tax. In fact, things are tough for school boards, nonprofits, households, and especially small businesses. In Provost a local businessman, Pak Wong, was recently featured in the local paper. The article outlined that the business is now paying \$900 in carbon tax each month this year. To the Minister of Energy: why did your department fail to do a proper socioeconomic study on how this punitive tax is going to affect small businesses . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
The Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Certainly, on October 31, 2016, we did release an economic impact assessment of the climate leadership plan as well as pipeline approvals. That was before the federal approval. In addition, what we did was that we ensured that we cut small-business taxes by a third. We exempted upstream oil and gas from the carbon levy until 2023. We also brought in a number of different incentives around methane reduction . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Taylor: Given that this business chose natural gas as both an ecological and economical way to run a cogeneration system and

given that the carbon tax hike has added to his cost of producing electricity, Minister, this business did everything right and is still being punished through your government's crippling tax. How do you expect Mr. Wong and other job creators to survive and continue to support Alberta's economy?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, as I indicated, small-business taxes have been cut by a third. That's some \$40 million in carbon levy revenues that have gone towards the small-business tax reduction. We also exempted small and medium-sized Alberta oil and gas facilities from the carbon levy, saving both large and small oil and gas companies who operate those facilities more than \$2.5 billion over that period. We have phased in the carbon competitiveness incentive, and the large emitters will get \$400 million of savings in the first three years of those regulations. We've provided between \$1.5 billion and \$2 billion of free carbon offsets to companies investing in methane reduction technologies. And we've ensured that . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Taylor: The carbon tax hike of \$900 a month is greater than what he's getting in the business tax reduction.

Given that the recent increase to the minimum wage coupled with the increase in carbon tax have harmed this business's bottom line by approximately \$50,000 and given that he's already been forced to cut his business hours and given that these policies do nothing but harm small businesses, Minister, Mr. Wong would like to know: how do you think he's going to recover from those expenses and this major blow to his business?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would be pleased to follow up with the member and discuss his constituent's specific concerns at the conclusion of question period today.

2:20

Carbon Levy

Mr. Loewen: This government brought in the largest tax increase in Alberta's history, a tax increase that was not mentioned in their election campaign even though they produced budget forecasts but no mention of the income or expenditure of the carbon tax. This tax came in only months after the election. Can someone in government please come clean with Albertans, admit that they knew they were bringing in this tax during the election but would not tell Albertans, knowing that they would not have been elected if they had?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity to respond to the misdirection on the other side. What we did say in the election platform was that we took climate change seriously and that we would take meaningful action to address that. In the months very shortly following our election, it was very clear that we were facing an opportunity during a very difficult downturn where we had to make a decision. We could either cut and move forward with the same strategies that the electorate had rejected or we could move forward, doing things differently, protecting essential public health services, taking climate change really seriously rather than occasionally paying lip service and occasionally funding films that fight against it.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Loewen: Given, Mr. Speaker, that that is true misdirection when the Deputy Premier gets up and says that it was in their campaign literature but actually wasn't and given that the Premier was all too happy to shake Trudeau's hand and agree to increase the carbon tax and thanked him on behalf of Albertans for his leadership in this regard, showing that when Trudeau says, "Tax," the Premier asks, "How high?" and given that we now have learned that the Premier has broken her promise that the carbon tax would not be used for general revenue, will the Premier just admit that the carbon tax was all about tax and had nothing to do with carbon?

Ms Hoffman: We did say in the platform that we would take meaningful action to address climate change, Mr. Speaker, and we stand by that. It became very clear that the best way to do so was through market mechanisms, something that the members of the opposition in the past have been big advocates of. They, in fact, had brought forward a price on carbon for the heavy emitters previously. It just wasn't one that would cause meaningful change or action in the province of Alberta. We moved on that in a way that we would take the opportunity to have additional revenue to support Albertans, to make sure that 30 per cent of our energy comes from renewables by 2030 and that we get our pipeline approvals, which we've gotten. Now we need to get that pipeline built.

Mr. Loewen: Given that the Premier calls the economic downturn an opportunity and given that the government has talked a lot about the economic pain that it will inflict on B.C. over the pipeline dispute and given that this economic pain will be created by increasing the price at the pumps in B.C., why is increasing the price that B.C. pays at the pumps called economic pain and the carbon tax raising the price at the pumps for Albertans called making life better?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We brought forward a price on carbon as part of our comprehensive climate leadership plan, and it was that plan that got the federal approvals to get our pipeline to tidewater. Now, the federal approvals are definitely a step in the right direction, but they need to be worth more than the paper they're written on. That's why we're fighting on three fronts, and we call on the federal government to join us in doing the exact same thing. They have tools in their tool box that, certainly, we could really use in getting this pipeline to tidewater, and we call on the federal government to join us in that.

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

Cannabis Use in Affordable Housing

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The upcoming legalization of recreational cannabis use in Canada has prompted property managers to examine their policies about tenants' cannabis use for both recreational and medical purposes. One constituent who uses medical marijuana and is a Calgary Housing resident told me that the city of Calgary will prohibit pot use on their properties even for medical purposes. What will the Health minister do to ensure that my constituent can continue to receive quality-of-life benefits from medical marijuana in Calgary Housing?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We do know that as we move forward with the federal decision to legalize cannabis, there are a number of decisions that need to be made. A number of

people throughout the province live in communal buildings, whether they be apartments, whether they be supportive housing. As we move forward, we'll be having those conversations with those individuals. We have given the landlords the mechanism to be able to make those decisions for the safety of other folks in the building, but if the hon. member would like to follow up with the specific concerns of that constituent, myself or the Minister of Seniors and Housing would be happy to speak with her.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Ms McPherson: Thank you. I appreciate that.

Given that there are tens of thousands of Albertans who rely on accessible housing, at least some of whom also rely on medical marijuana to address health issues and, doubtless, many more who might consider medical marijuana with their health care providers, what direction can the ministers of Health and Municipal Affairs provide to ensure that Calgary Housing Company and other municipally owned housing providers do not force patients to choose between their health and their homes?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. As we know, there are a number of complicated issues that have been raised around this file, and this is just one of them. Municipal governments are another order of government. Ultimately we have given them the power that they requested to make decisions in a number of areas, and we're going to respect their ability to make those decisions.

In terms of provincial housing facilities, Mr. Speaker, obviously we'll have to have those conversations, but we do need to consider not only the health and safety of individuals using cannabis but the health and safety of other individuals who live in the building.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Ms McPherson: Given that there are tens of thousands of Albertans who rely on housing in senior communities, supportive living, and long-term care and who may benefit from medical marijuana, what are you doing to ensure that they can use medical cannabis when living in housing provided by nonprofits and other organizations that are funded at least in part by provincial and other public money?

Ms Ganley: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, as we move forward, we do know that there are a number of conversations to be had around this issue. Ultimately buildings that are owned by folks other than the province: those private property locations are free to make their own decisions, and we're going to respect those decisions. Certainly, I understand that the federal government will have more to say on the legalization of products other than smoked products, but there is a very delicate balance to be struck here. There is the health of the individuals who seek the use of medical cannabis, but also there's the health of other individuals who live in the building who may not want to be exposed to smoke.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Livingstone-Porcupine Hills Recreation Management Plan

Mr. Stier: Mr. Speaker, when the NDP announced the creation of the Castle provincial park in 2017, they promised off-highway vehicle, or OHV, users access to the Livingstone-Porcupine Hills area. Then just last month the minister released the Livingstone-Porcupine Hills draft plan, which appears to have eliminated

approximately 70 per cent of OHV trails. To the minister: how do you possibly expect the recreationists from the Castle combined with those already using the Livingstone-Porcupine Hills area to have proper use of facilities when the capacity has been so enormously reduced?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The member is quite right that when the Castle park was established, we found 1,800 stream crossings in that area, in the headwaters, where we have a number of species at risk, including some native trout, and 35 bridges for all those stream crossings. In the Porcupine Hills we found about 3,800 stream crossings. Clearly, we needed to undertake a planning exercise. There's no question about that. It was the member's own constituents who asked me for that planning exercise. I will never forget being at a town hall meeting – well, it was a community hall – with a whole bunch of people . . .

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

Mr. Stier: Mr. Speaker, given that the draft plan announcement last month was poorly communicated, in my opinion, and has only allowed public consultation now for 30 days for the Livingstone-Porcupine Hills plan and given that the minister eventually extended the consultation period for the Castle provincial park, to the minister: why won't you overturn this ill-advised decision and hold a full series of open houses for proper public input, just like the Castle at the end, with at least a 90-day consultation period?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I've been hearing from the hon. member's own constituents in the Porcupine Hills and in Livingstone. These are ranchers, these are people who have grazing lease permits, these are people who are private property owners, and they've asked us to undertake recreational planning. This has been years in the making. The member's own colleagues from the old legacy party, you know, studied this problem for a generation and did precisely nothing. It was his own constituents that begged us to get control over this. The runaway use of vacant public land was getting in the way of people's right to make a living, and that's not okay.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Stier: Well, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't sound like she wants to extend the limit.

Given that the latest plan for the Porcupine Hills would see OHV access reduced by nearly 70 per cent and given that there are only 30 days, less now today, the minister is once again failing to engage with Albertans. Will the minister admit that she made a mistake trying to bulldoze ahead with this ill-conceived plan before first consulting with the people being impacted?

Ms Phillips: Well, let me tell you about consultation, Mr. Speaker. Last summer I did a tour of the Porcupine Hills area with a number of the member's own constituents, and then I went into a community hall where there were about 50 people or more. I took my kids, in fact, and my kids devastated the snack table while I heard from his own constituents about how we needed more enforcement, better planning, and an actual thoughtful approach to recreation. It's his constituents that asked for this. I'm very confused as to why he doesn't want to represent them now.

2:30

Fisheries Management

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, families in my constituency will now have less access to fish for their families. On April 1 Dolberg Lake, a lake stocked with rainbow trout, changed from liberal harvest to quality harvest, essentially turning it into a trophy-only lake. The environment minister assures us that she understands the importance of fishing opportunities to communities. It should be expected, therefore, that if changes to the fisheries management objectives are being considered, the local community would have input into that decision. Minister, have you ensured that robust consultation with local stakeholders was performed before the regulations changed?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, fisheries decisions get changed every year because we monitor the populations and we make science-based decisions. We make those decisions based on the work of the regional staff, the folks who are out there every day protecting the environment and making sure that there is something to fish and something to hunt. Around here, on this side of the House, we take the best advice coming from those hard-working folks in Environment and Parks and make sure that our rural and northern communities have access to those kinds of great tourism and other economic development opportunities.

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, local families have relied on this lake for food and recreation for generations. They are now on the outside looking in. The lake has turned into a trophy lake. Given that the minister relies on a science-based approach to fisheries management and given that this change in the fisheries management objectives to quality harvest status would require extensive stakeholder engagement, will the minister reverse these regulations if it is shown that a robust consultation with local stakeholders was not properly performed to inform her science-based decision?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I guess I shouldn't be surprised that from across the way there's sneering when we say the words "science based." There has got to be something to fish, there has got to be something to hunt, and that's why year over year we update our fishing and hunting regulations to make sure that they are appropriately managing the populations. We have in fact expanded walleye opportunities in many lakes after decades of mismanagement from the member's own colleagues, who did nothing. We have seen a recovery in some of those populations, and we've expanded the opportunities. We'll continue to do so.

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, this is not a question with regard to population of fish in a lake. This is a lake stocked with rainbow trout.

Given that fish and wildlife officers are the individuals that Albertans rely on to patrol and enforce these regulations and given that these individuals are boots on the ground that can help inform the minister's decision and given that last week the minister said that she'd ensure stable, predictable funding for our fish and wildlife officers, could the minister please explain why this government has decided to close the Swan Hills fish and wildlife detachment, a detachment right in the centre of a very large fish and wildlife area?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I guess it's a spend day coming from the members opposite, that it's fine to cut the budget if it's somewhere else but not in their own areas. The

fact of the matter is that we have robust enforcement personnel across the province between park rangers, conservation officers, fish and wildlife, and others. We have in fact changed the way that we operate some of our enforcement on the ground to make it more responsive to the needs of municipalities and others who have begged us for action on this file, and we will continue to do that work.

DynaLife Medical Labs

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, recruitment processes must be fair, open, and transparent for vendors to trust the system. Albertans must have confidence they're receiving value for their tax dollars. Part of convincing vendors and Albertans that a procurement was done properly is hiring an independent fairness adviser to offer an opinion that the process was defensible. To the Minister of Health: expanding on our previous DynaLife tablings, given that the appeal panel disagreed with the AHS adviser, who said that the process was fair, should the government release the adviser's opinion since they are defending that the process was fair?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll be happy to get further details. I think the member is referring to the decision around the provincial lab system. [interjection] Thank you. Definitely, when we were elected, we made it very clear in our platform that we were going to end experiments in privatization in public health care. We're proud of the fact that we did that. We're proud of the fact that we're moving forward with a public lab here in Edmonton and that the members of the audience who are here from HSAA will be able to continue working in public health care rather than being privatized and outsourced, as the members opposite are proposing.

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, given that she's ultimately accountable for Alberta Health Services, to the minister: would she order them to release the fairness opinion upon which it was publicly relying to prove that the procurement was fair, and thus has waived any potential privilege, or is she powerless to do what is right in regard to that DynaLife contract?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of the fact that we took the opportunity, when we formed government, to act on the values that we ran on in that campaign, including moving forward on protecting these public jobs and public health care, something that we're incredibly proud of. After 50 years of medicare we're not going to let Conservatives across the aisle bully us into outsourcing and privatizing important public health services, including having the diagnostic tools we need for public professionals to be able to assess health care needs and for physicians and others to provide excellent public health care.

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, does the Minister of Health understand the inherent unfairness in Alberta Health Services saying that a process was fair yet refusing to order it to release an opinion that it touts as proving such fairness?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, does the opposition understand that this side of the House believes in and supports public health care? We think that it shouldn't be what's in your pocket that drives your health access; it should be your health needs. That's why we're incredibly proud to have a government that stood up instead of pushing for the deep cuts that members opposite are advocating for. We're building. We're building a public lab. We're building a Calgary cancer hospital. We're building in Fort McMurray, for

example, a long-term care facility that Conservatives promised and failed to fulfill. On this side of the House we're standing up, we're investing, and we're building the public health care services that we all deserve.

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

Emergency Medical Services

Mr. Nielsen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Front-line EMS workers are a critical part of Alberta's response to an emergency. I've heard recently from the Health Sciences Association of Alberta that they are concerned about having enough staff and resources to ensure that EMS personnel are on the scene when Albertans need them most. To the Minister of Health: how is Budget 2018 supporting our EMS first responders?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for his tireless advocacy for EMS and for the services that these members provide in our community. I want to celebrate the HSAA members who are here in the gallery today as well. Our government has heard their concerns, and we've acted. That's why we've budgeted \$456 million for ambulance services this year, an increase of \$23 million over what's forecasted for this current fiscal year. I certainly hope the members opposite will show some support for front-line service providers by voting for that budget.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is imperative that EMS workers are able to get to an emergency situation in a timely fashion. To the same minister: how will this funding help support EMS staff to respond quickly when there is an emergency?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. These new investments will go to support front-line services. Albertans will see more EMS stations, places to respond to emergencies, more ambulances on our roads, and more paramedics to staff them. The members opposite repeatedly ask about EMS supports in their individual communities while at the same time calling on us to make reckless cuts that would impact public health care. I'd ask them: which ambulances in your communities are you prepared to cut or leave people waiting? I'm not willing to do that.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: when can front-line EMS staff start to see these changes take place?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're working with Alberta Health Services to determine very specific locations for these investments. Last year EMS workers saw new power stretchers in AHS ambulances. This year they'll see mental health supports expanded as well as more front-line EMS services added. We know that when we make it easier for emergency workers to do their jobs, they make life better for Albertans by improving our health and safety. This government is doing that work, and we will always fight to improve and protect public health services. I'm proud that we're in government and have the ability to do so.

The Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

2:40

Health Minister's Remarks

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier today in question period the Deputy Premier referred to the economic downturn as an opportunity to bring in their ideological agenda, the same minister who referred to Albertans as sewer rats. Does she really think that 200,000 Albertans that have lost their jobs under this government's watch are just an economic opportunity?

The Speaker: Hon. member, do you really believe that the tone and substance of your question is going to contribute to better public dialogue in this place?

Mr. Nixon: Absolutely.

The Speaker: You do?

It was such a nice day, too, so quiet in here. Let's all avoid getting it warmed up again, please.

The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. When I said "opportunity," what I was referring to is the opportunity to either move with deep ideological cuts or the opportunity to build a better Alberta. When I did say that word, certainly, in the sentence, I can understand why you misconstrued what my intent was. Certainly, fanning the flames isn't my intent. My intent is to build a better Alberta, one that believes in and finds ways to support Alberta families, support public health care, support a good environment, and support good jobs for future generations.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the problem with this government is that they don't want to be accountable for what they say. They want to hide behind it. The minister did call my constituents sewer rats, but further to that, she did say that people who've lost their jobs in this province are an economic opportunity for her ideological agenda to bring in the carbon tax and the ridiculous climate change plan this government has brought forward. Will the minister stand up and apologize to the over 200,000 people who've lost their jobs under this government's watch? Yes or no?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member knows that I intended to do no such thing. I apologized immediately for the wrong choice of words, and rather than continuing to try to create slander and misconstrue my intent, I would ask that he accept that apology. I know he walked out of the House the first time I gave it because he didn't want to hear it, but I genuinely apologize for choosing the wrong words. That wasn't my intent. In no way was I referring to the people of Alberta. This was a long time ago. We are fighting to make sure we have a better Alberta, that we're standing up for the people of this province, that we're getting our pipeline to tidewater, and I'm proud of our record.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, we do accept the apology for calling Albertans sewer rats, but what we wanted today was a clear apology for saying that the 200,000-plus people that are out of work in this province under this government's watch are an economic opportunity for this government's ideological agenda. I will accept the minister's backhanded apology there for that, but in the future will this government start taking these issues seriously and start realizing that the things they say have an impact on the people of this province?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We are proud to have a strong record of standing up for the people of Alberta. We are proud that in the middle of a downturn, instead of cutting and making things worse by laying off nurses and teachers and lab techs and paramedics, we are building. We're building an Alberta that's protecting one another, that's getting us a pipeline to tidewater, and we will let nothing stop us in our tracks.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I've had a request for unanimous consent to introduce a late guest.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests

(continued)

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly a group of talented Agriculture and Forestry staff that have been working hard these past several months on Bill 7, Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act: Eileen Kotowich, Christine Anderson, Keri Sharpe, Shauna Johnston, Jaclyn Schmidt, and Stuart Elson. I would like to express my gratitude for the time and effort they have put into this bill. I would ask you all to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Members' Statements

(continued)

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

NDP and Pipeline Development

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've heard a lot of rhetoric from the opposition bench about the stance of the NDP on pipelines. It's obvious to me that they don't know their history and that they are sensationalizing the subject for political gain. So allow me to share a bit of our party's proud history.

Mr. Speaker, my great-great-uncle, Tom Bentley, was elected as a Saskatchewan CCF MLA in 1949. He worked with Tommy Douglas's government to help make life better for the people of Saskatchewan and Canada by developing social supports like medicare and was a strong proponent of resource development. In fact, it was the NDP that led the charge on resource development in Saskatchewan. The Douglas government was supportive and aided in pipeline and oil field development and protected land rights in the process.

I am proud to follow in the footsteps of my great-great-uncle by supporting important services that people rely on. Like my great-great-uncle and the NDP of the past, I will continue to stand up for Alberta jobs through the development of pipelines, including Trans Mountain, because it's in our party's nature to do so. Our government has done a tremendous amount of work with the industry to support an environment to ensure that when people buy our product, it is the cleanest one possible, by capping methane emissions and investing in renewables with partnership from our industry.

Failing to support projects like these and endorsing radical ideas like the Leap Manifesto could be devastating to our resource sector and could destroy well-paid jobs for Alberta workers. I believe my counterparts in the Saskatchewan NDP recognize that, and to them: thank you for supporting the fight for pipeline development.

And to the members of the B.C. NDP caucus, who I am sure speak the praise of Tommy Douglas regularly, I want you to rethink your position and to ask yourself: what would Tommy do? Mr. Speaker, it is at the heart of the NDP's history and policy to support sustainable and environmentally responsible resource development, and that includes pipelines, period.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Federal Energy Policies

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sometimes you just have to give your head a shake. Recently it came to light that the government of Canada has created an uneven playing field against Alberta and in favour of foreign oil importation. Presently eastern Canada imports around 600,000 barrels a day from foreign nations, primarily the United States and the dictatorship oil. Prime Minister Trudeau vetoed the Northern Gateway and killed the Energy East pipeline by changing the approval process to include upstream and downstream emissions, yet foreign oil is not held to these same standards.

The federal government has created an energy playing field that tilts towards countries like the United States, that sells us their energy products at world price while buying Alberta energy products at the western Canada discount price, roughly half the price. This makes even less sense when you consider that the Canadian Energy Research Institute has calculated that if imported oil was replaced with Alberta oil in the east, there would be a 6.2 per cent reduction in carbon dioxide emissions.

While these stringent pipeline regulations are unfairly placed on Alberta's oil, Quebec is able to open a cement factory that produces 2 million metric tonnes of CO₂ per year, more than most Alberta oil sands projects. Furthermore, the factory was exempt from any environmental review and is without regulation of its carbon emissions. This farcical fiasco of unfairness continues when we realize that Alberta, even though we've gone through a terrible recession, still continues to subsidize Quebec through equalization payments.

And now Kinder Morgan has suspended operations on the Trans Mountain line because of delaying tactics by radicals of the socialist, environmentalist, or liberal denomination determined to trap Alberta's valuable resources in the ground, hurting all Canadians. Like I said, sometimes you just have to give your head a shake.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

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

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices I'm pleased to table five copies of the committee's report recommending the appointment of Mr. Lorne Gibson as Election Commissioner for a five-year term. Copies of this report are available online through the committees branch.

Notices of Motions

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

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the appropriate time I intend to move the following motion pursuant to Standing Order 42:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to immediately take steps to repeal the carbon tax and withdraw its support for the pan-Canadian framework on clean growth and climate change given the failure of the government of Alberta and the federal government under Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's leadership to ensure the construction of the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain pipeline expansion.

I have the appropriate number of copies for the page, Mr. Speaker.

2:50 Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table five copies of an article called Bubble-Zone Freedom from *Liberty Magazine*, September 2000 edition. It quotes the member of the Official Opposition: "Despite Jason Kenney's attempts to shine a spotlight on what he calls 'the most gross systematic violation of any group's freedom of speech in Canada'," where he is referring to bubble zones.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

Ms Babcock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table a piece called 'We're in Crisis Mode Now': Energy Sector Fears Investor Exodus as Trans Mountain Pipeline Stalls, which I referenced yesterday during the emergency debate on Trans Mountain. It speaks of the oil and gas executive praising the Premier's "willingness to directly invest to see the project through, adding there's a business case for Alberta," and they call on Ottawa to take decisive action. I have the appropriate copies.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite number of copies of letters, that I referred to in my speech yesterday and during the emergency debate, from Paul First Nation and from the Fort McMurray First Nation as well as the government release that included the information from the Métis Nation of Alberta's Audrey Poitras and from Grand Chief Meneen which indicates the support for the pipeline as well as the support for the climate leadership initiative, which inevitably go together.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have five copies here of the Canadian Energy Pipeline Association submission to the Parliamentary Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development in regard to Bill C-69. I referred to it in my question today and furnished the minister with a copy.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to table five copies of a letter from Dale Wells, aged 79, called, My Autumn Lodge Experience. He says:

I moved into Autumn Lodge. I truly enjoyed life there and the area [and] friends that I got to know.

Then the lodge closure situation evolved and the decision to move elsewhere by October 15, 2017, or lose the moving "perks" that ... [were] offered.

He goes on to say:

I really do miss Berwyn and my friends. I truly do wish that I could move back to Autumn Lodge in Berwyn.

Signed: Mr. Dale Wells.

The Speaker: Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Dr. Starke: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. During the course of consideration of estimates for the Ministry of Culture and Tourism last night there was some confusion about who is receiving the minimum wage in Alberta. The minister stated that the majority of minimum wage earners are single mothers. I am going to table five copies of information from the Ministry of Labour that shows that, in fact, single parents with children constitute 18,200 of the 292,400 minimum wage earners in the province, or 6.2 per cent.

The Speaker: If the House would just give me a moment here.

Motions under Standing Order 42

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, a very brief statement.

Provincial Climate Change Strategy

Mr. Nixon:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to immediately take steps to repeal the carbon tax and withdraw its support for the pan-Canadian framework on clean growth and climate change given the failure of the government of Alberta and the federal government under Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's leadership to ensure the construction of the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain pipeline expansion.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The motion that I am moving I already read for the record when I gave notice of it, so I will not read it again. But to be clear, it has this Assembly calling on the government to remove the carbon tax and to withdraw support for the pan-Canadian framework on clean growth and climate change.

Mr. Speaker, the reason that we move this before this Assembly today is that it's clear, given the developments in the situation with Kinder Morgan, that the promise that the NDP government said in regard to bringing forward the carbon tax and joining that framework has not been completed. It is no way helping towards that end goal of that pipeline, and as such it's time for this government to stop punishing Albertans and to remove this ridiculous carbon tax.

The Speaker: Members of the Legislature, we require, I believe, unanimous consent to proceed with the request by the hon. member.

[Unanimous consent denied]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 5

An Act to Strengthen Financial Security for Persons with Disabilities

[Debate adjourned April 3]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to get up and speak on Bill 5. You know, I'd like to just take this quick moment to thank the independent members of this House who, during the course of my private member's bill, Bill 211, from our previous session, took the time to take my briefing on that particular bill and this bill here, which, of course, is sort of a direct descendant of that. Without any political hyperbole, I got an e-mail in my office literally every single day or a call or met somebody on the street when that private member's bill, Bill 211, failed last year, and those people were saying: "How can we get this bill done? Allowing Henson trusts is important to me. It's important to my family. We need to be able to get this done."

That is why I am so extremely happy and grateful that our Minister of Community and Social Services decided to take up the cause and introduce Bill 5, which builds on the work of my private member's bill. I would also like to thank the support of my colleagues in the caucus in order to get this bill to the stage where it's at right now. You know, I'm so happy that we have a Minister of Community and Social Services who listens, whether it was when we were dealing with PDD standard 8 – when the community came out and said that this was not the correct way to go, the minister listened – when it comes to the supports intensity scale and the fact that that needs to be eliminated. Again, I'm so proud to be part of a government and a ministry that listens to those concerns.

You know, even last week, Madam Speaker, we all got up and applauded the Paralympians who were in our gallery and put them up there and said: "Look at what you can do. Look at the great work and spirit of competitiveness." Throughout Alberta there are individuals who are persons with disabilities that also say: "Look what we can do. We are like you. We want to be out in the community with you."

That is something that this bill in a small part will help with because, frankly, those who are on AISH have this extra requirement when it comes to inheritances that no other province imposes on persons with disabilities, and that's something, Madam Speaker, that we needed to fix. It was a problem that I saw. It's a problem that members of my caucus saw, and it's a problem that our hon. Minister of Community and Social Services saw, so I was happy to be able to have this bill come forward.

We should talk a bit about the bill. You know, I went out and did consultations, which I've talked about at length before in this House, and from those consultations there were three key things that came out. The first part was to amend schedule 2 by removing section 1(4). What that did is that that allowed a director of AISH to, at his or her discretion, decide whether or not a trust or an inheritance would be or would not be considered part of an AISH recipient's total assets, which creates a massive amount of uncertainty for families, for relatives who would want to leave some money or some assets to a loved one who happens to be on AISH. That, Madam Speaker, is something that I, as somebody who's not on AISH, doesn't have to worry about should, say, for example, my parents pass away. That is fundamentally unfair, and that is something that the community said loud and clear that we needed to fix. This bill, Bill 5, fixes that, and I am extremely happy that that is in the bill.

The second of the three things that came out clearly in the consultation was that in order to have clarity, the amount of money that could potentially be in one of these trusts had no limit. However, when the money came out of that trust, it would be subject to the normal rules of AISH, which allows for flexibility going into the future for perhaps any future changes that may happen. It also allows you, Madam Speaker, to minimize abuses that might possibly happen in the system.

3:00

This was something that was the preferred way of the people we consulted that they would like to see this done. During the course of the consultations we heard from everyone. We heard from self-advocates, AISH recipients themselves as well as their parents, and as well from the accountants and lawyers who specialize in setting up these trusts and working with individuals in the AISH system.

Lastly, Madam Speaker, this is all fine and good if you have, for example, a parent or relative that passes away and that parent or relative has thought through that this money would go into a trust to help an individual on AISH. But, as we know, not everyone who is a recipient of AISH started off on AISH. You know, some people, whatever their disability or affliction may be, sometimes that comes up later in life due to medical issues or sometimes from an accident, which means that sometimes a parent or relative might have not had to think through the ins and outs of the AISH system when planning their estate.

The third part that came out during the consultations was, as they termed it in the consultations, a wills done badly clause. That is perhaps not the correct term we're using in the bill, but that is essentially what it is. What that says is that should an individual on AISH receive an inheritance or similar inheritancelike windfall, they have a full year to decide whether they want to take that asset just as it is and then have whatever adjustments to their AISH that comes with that or, if they so choose, are able to put it in a trust themselves to be able to use it to save for their future and to use it to make their life better. The key part of that is that they have the choice to plan for their financial future as best they can.

You know, I'd like to think thus far in the House that we're slowly moving towards support, at least at this stage of the bill, for Bill 5. As the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills had pointed out previously in debate, I think we have a bit of a common cause in this, Madam Speaker, to make sure that individuals on AISH and persons with disabilities are treated equitably. This part of the AISH legislation in particular perhaps comes from a different period in time, and that is why I'm so glad that, again, we have a minister and I'm part of a government that was willing to take action to correct this.

I'm just going to take a moment. I believe this question came up previously about what happens with these trusts. What happens if a trustee of the particular trust decides to go rogue, for example, Madam Speaker? In fact, that particular concern is well covered in trust law. Families fighting over trusts and inheritance is something that is as old as, you know, the legal profession, so it is a well-worn area of legislation. There are clear guidelines for trustees, whether that's a family member or friend or a trustee law firm that's doing it. There are very clear rules around that in other pieces of legislation. Although asked about it during the consultations, that particular point was not considered to be a concern during the consultation process.

Madam Speaker, I just want to end on a real positive note. This bill, as I mentioned earlier: there is not a day that's gone by where somebody doesn't e-mail my office or talk to me on the street that we need to get this done. This bill, Bill 5, will most definitely make life better for Albertans. It will help ensure that Albertans with disabilities are treated fairly and will support families that are planning for their children's future. I want to thank all of the self-advocates, families, staff that advocated for these important changes both to me during my private member's bill and in the past as well.

I encourage all members of this House to support this important bill at second reading, and I look forward to the continued debate and support of members in the House going forward on this particular bill.

With that, Madam Speaker, thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the member who just spoke. I, too, am very proud to be part of a government that is responding to the needs of Albertans. I, too, have had many constituents come to me with questions about when we were going to get to the point that we could protect families and disabled Albertans in this way.

My question to the member relates around some of the consultations that were done, one of which was well attended here in Edmonton in the Federal Building. At that consultation there was actually a lawyer who spoke about the benefits of this, and I wonder if the member could further expand upon what information he has received from the trust specialist lawyers.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, my apologies. I didn't realize you were speaking under 29(2)(a). I thought you were speaking directly to the bill.

Dr. Turner: It is at 29(2)(a).

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Then go ahead. We'll just back it up to 29(2)(a).

Go ahead.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for your indulgence on 29(2)(a). The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud is correct that we actually had two series of consultations in Edmonton as well as in Calgary, and I also went to smaller rural centres across Alberta, including Lethbridge and Medicine Hat, because I wanted to make sure that Albertans had a chance to bring forward their thoughts on this no matter where they lived.

Speaking to the member's question, what that particular lawyer said – Mr. VanderLeek, who was introduced in the House and was involved in consultations as well – is that because of the schedule 2, section 1(4), that was in the AISH regulation, where a director of AISH could decide or not decide whether a trust was included as an asset, it provided a large amount of uncertainty for him as a lawyer that would have to advise families who are trying to set up their estate to help the individual on AISH so that individual on AISH could either use those funds for when they eventually age out of the AISH system or be able to use those funds for perhaps a better medical appliance to help them, whether it be a power wheelchair or something else, or perhaps a little bit of extra care just to pay for maintenance for, you know, a car or their apartment or place of residence. Madam Speaker, it was so hard for him to do that because he could provide no certainty.

If you're a parent, after being able to have your child, the worst thing that you want to see for your child is that uncertainty. When you pass away, you want to know that they're going to continue to get the care that they need and deserve and will continue to be contributing members of society. As a parent you want to be able to leave behind whatever you can in your estate, no matter how big it is, to make sure that that goes to help your children. That is something, Madam Speaker, that you just couldn't do without these changes, and that was a problem.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I was really, really pleased to see that we're debating Bill 5, and I hope to see passage of the

legislation. I did want to know if my colleague from Calgary-Currie contemplates educating members of the Alberta Real Estate Association and the Alberta Mortgage Brokers Association on the fact that, should the bill pass, individuals who are on AISH will be able to therefore actually purchase a property and qualify using funds that come from the trust that was bequeathed to them. I know in my past experience as a real estate agent that I was able, after many, many months of negotiations with the assistance of a caregiver who was knowledgeable with the AISH regulations, to allow an individual client of mine to actually make a purchase while maintaining AISH payments. But it was really difficult, and many lenders were really unaware of the fact that this was a possibility, even though remote at that time.

3:10

With this legislation's anticipated and hopeful passage, I'm hoping that there might be an education piece so that members in the real estate industry, both members of the Alberta Real Estate Association, the realtors, as well as the mortgage lenders from Alberta Mortgage Brokers Association, will be aware of their abilities.

The Deputy Speaker: We're back on the main bill. The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just first want to take an opportunity to thank from the bottom of my heart the Member for Calgary-Currie. I was privileged enough to attend two of the open houses that he had in the consultation, and the member has just displayed excellent vision in terms of his consultation and going forward, and I actually learned a lot.

My youngest has just recently applied for AISH. With the information that the member had brought forward and all of the consultation and everything I learned at those things, I actually went into that meeting quite informed. So I want to thank you so much for that. The timing was ideal. But, also, the member, Madam Speaker, just went into it with such a great deal of passion and thought, very conscientious. There was a lot to learn. It's a very complex and convoluted set of rules and regulations. Again I wanted to commend you for your excellent work, and I'm very glad to see this bill come back again.

One of the things I wanted to also mention. As a parent when you're going through this, one of the things I was also going to mention maybe to the member, Madam Speaker, is that part of this could also be on – I'm not sure within the law where this would fit in – the education of wills in general. I'll talk a little bit more about your wills gone badly piece, which I think is aptly named, personally. I think it speaks to the public. I think it says exactly what happens there.

But when you go forward with a will and when you're doing trusts and all these things, again, it's extremely complex. There are a lot of very talented people that are able to help us through these things, but it's extremely emotional, and you're looking forward to a time when you're not going to be here and when you may not be able to help out. Especially when you have a child that is vulnerable or has a disability of any sort, you want to make sure that that person has the right people looking after them. Sometimes with the nondiscretionary funds or whatever, depending on the decision that you make with those things, the people that you're putting into place are equally as important as the fund itself. Again, I think the member did an excellent job of concluding those things and bringing that information for us, so thank you so much for that.

I just wanted to be clear. There have been a lot of questions, too, about how these trusts work and all of this, especially with regard

to AISH. We have a lot of issues with AISH in that money gets clawed back from AISH recipients for a lot of different things. Again to the member, you did a very good job of making sure that this wasn't going to happen. Sometimes CPP can claw back AISH. There are other things.

We have a person who works for us who is on AISH and then also gets his medication covered. Minimum wage, actually, believe it or not, bumped him up to a point where it actually clawed back either his medication or his AISH. He had to pick. There was no way that we could compensate at the work site for the amount that was being clawed back. Hopefully, those kinds of things are being dealt with. It's one of the consequences of these kinds of things, so I'm very grateful that the member took those kinds of things into consideration with this legislation. It was very thoughtful.

Trusts rarely serve as income, right? They are put there in order to – and like the member had mentioned, there are all sorts of things that happen in life, whether that's the purchase of a house, school. There are a lot of other things that these trusts can be used for in order to enhance the life of a person that is challenged with a disability of any sort. There are a lot of people who don't understand the difference between having that AISH payment and what that trust does, and there are a lot of questions about that. I get at least one or two a month, too, coming through and asking those questions. This legislation very nicely clarifies the difference between those trusts, how they're implemented, and the impact or lack of impact, hopefully, on AISH.

Of course, the member had already mentioned it as well, but I think it's worth saying again that we're one of the very last provinces in Canada to exempt trusts. It's important to understand that having those benefits revoked or clawed back due to inheritance could very much negatively impact the well-being but also the value that a person puts on themselves when they're receiving these funds. It's a part of being able to live independently, and for a lot of these folks that ability to live independently completely alters the way they see the world and see life. So this is really an important piece of that, and it's nice to see that this legislation will catch us up to where we need to be in terms of where we are in the country in financial protection.

Also, if you have two children or three children, the nice thing about this is that that trust fund can be specifically put towards a child with disabilities. So if there are concerns about all sorts of things that can happen when you pass away and dollars are being distributed and all those kinds of things, it's very protected to make sure that the child with disabilities and the child that may not have disabilities can have their dollars going the way that they need to.

Again, for the quality of life for a person that is challenged with disabilities, there is a lot more money. Like the member had mentioned, that could be a motorized wheelchair or that could be that you need ramps put in your home or that you have to live in a bungalow or that you have to have a person living with you for the rest of your life. These are really important things that allow families to be able to put money away to make sure that when we're not here to oversee that, those things are taken care of for our adult children.

I wanted to highlight the importance of the one-year grace period that the legislation put forward. My favourite term: the will was handled badly clause. This is an excellent part of this legislation because life is unpredictable, and this takes that into account. You know, in a perfect world all of us would have time to make sure our wills are intact and that we've done all of these things and can see the future and imagine what's going to happen. In the busy, busy world that we live in, you always think that you have more time and that you're always going to have the ability to do that. As we know, this doesn't always happen; therefore, we end up with situations

where money may not have been taken care of for our disabled family members. It's so important to ensure that for these recipients whose parents haven't had that opportunity or that forethought to plan for what happens after their death, there is time to navigate this complex legal maze and the financial system so that those inherited funds move into that exempt space, into the discretionary and nondiscretionary funds. It's a very thoughtful measure, extremely thoughtful. When you're in grief and you're navigating those waters, it just gives a little bit of time to breathe and figure out how to do this. Thank you so much to the member for doing that and for having the forethought to put that in there.

There's another thing, too, and the member may have mentioned this. There is a difference between discretionary and nondiscretionary, and there are a lot of questions that come up about this. Again, because it is quite convoluted, I think that along with the package of what comes along with this, we want to make sure that our families understand the difference. The Henson trusts, which is where this whole discussion started, are the discretionary trusts. The beneficiaries of discretionary trusts generally don't have any control over their assets or how they're actually distributed. It's a really, really important piece because there are people that may not have the capability of overseeing those trusts, so that appointed trustee is going to be one of the closest people to your heart, one of the most important people in your life as you move forward because that trustee will manage those funds and the assets for the beneficiaries and actually have full decision-making power.

Then for the nondiscretionary funds the trustee doesn't have full authority on how the trust assets are distributed or paid out. So in some cases the beneficiary may have partial control over distribution. Again, it might depend on whether that nondiscretionary fund kicks in when a person is 18 versus 24. I know that in ours we have it sort of progressive, as our adult children get older, based on their ability to see the world and understand finances and all these kind of things, the control over the distribution of those assets that are held in trust. In other cases the trustee is simply required to distribute the assets and income according to some predetermined instructions. Again, it's a very, very thoughtful and profound way to look at how you are putting the future together for your children.

3:20

I think my interpretation of nondiscretionary funds or trusts is correct. We just went through this process ourselves. I want to just make sure. There were one or two things we sort of bumped into going through the process, so I just wanted to bring those up. If a person, a young adult or an adult with cognitive disabilities, is on AISH and let's say that I was to die before I could stipulate the terms of that inheritance that I'm leaving that child or to establish that trust, is there a scenario where my child could be put in a position where they're the ones that are setting up that nondiscretionary fund? This is a question that came up in actual negotiations, so something to think about, I think, in the regulations. I'm not even sure if regulations is the correct place for that, Member, but something to think about. Then appointing the trustee and stipulating the terms for how that money should be spent, something that came up during our consultations, literal consultations because we were actually trying to figure out how it worked.

In the case where a beneficiary is physically disabled but has all of their mental faculties in place, this is very positive because in a lot of those cases those folks are completely as capable as their parents or whoever, when receiving that inheritance, of making financial decisions. But if there is a person that has limited capacity with those kinds of things, we just want to make sure that that individual is not going to be necessarily making the financial

decisions. Of course, this is up to the family in that situation, but it is a spot that I think may require a little bit of tweaking and understanding just because we do not want our family members being taken advantage of, obviously, when we're not here to oversee the situation.

I just want to make sure that there are specific measures put in place to recognize the special scenarios of somebody who may be cognitively disabled, that that is protected and that there is financial counsel in place for them for the future should they not be able to do that. I know that there are public guardians that the office can call on for a review to determine capacity; however, the concern is about the fact that if the individual doesn't have a support network, you know, they could really fall through the cracks here. Something to consider.

When we're talking to friends and family – of course, we have a network of friends and families that are dealing with these things all the time. This is about something that AISH workers could want to catch. We were informed that with AISH caseloads, it is highly unlikely that an AISH worker would have the capacity to intervene in these circumstances. Are we going to rely on kind outsiders to make those decisions? They might have the wherewithal and the knowledge and the assistance of the public guardian's office, but I'm just not sure that we want to leave that to chance.

The other issue that I had again is just a thought here. We were excited to find out about the new disability advocate. Would they be able to track that and intervene? Is that something that the advocate would possibly be able to participate in simply because the advocate would intervene with lawyers and accountants and all that kind of stuff? I'm just asking the question.

Then the other thing that I wanted to ask about is that this legislation of exempting trusts only applies to AISH legislation. We're all aware that AISH is monthly income. It's barely enough to live on, and AISH recipients need to stretch their dollars as a result. Many AISH recipients are also involved with various other social benefit programs – this is what I was talking about before – such as subsidized housing. Has the government considered the implications of limiting exemption trusts for the AISH program alone? If I'm receiving AISH and benefiting from another social benefit program and I receive an inheritance in the form of a trust or transfer and those funds go into that trust, I may keep my AISH thanks to this legislation, but if I'm no longer able to access those additional social benefit programs, I may still be negatively impacted. Just something that I'm wondering about because, again, trust funds aren't usually used to live off of. They're just for special circumstances.

The biggest question I have is about individuals who have already been rejected by the AISH program for receiving a trust in the past. We've had a couple of questions about this in our office, so that's why I'm asking. We know that applying for AISH can be a lengthy process. I mean, it's life altering for some people when they're rejected. What will happen to past applicants of AISH that have been denied access to the AISH program based on inheriting a trust? Will the government be contacting them to reapply? I don't know how that process is going to work. I haven't really been understanding what to say to the folks that have been calling me, so that's why I'm asking.

As I have said, I'm very pleased to support this legislation. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any others wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm quite pleased to make a few comments about Bill 5, An Act to Strengthen Financial Security for Persons with Disabilities. I applaud the Member for Calgary-Currie for his good work in this area. I've been meeting over the years with people like Bruce Uditsky of the disabilities group in Alberta – very passionate and articulate and effective leadership is provided to the disabled community – of course, the parent of a disabled child. He's taught me a lot about what's effective and what's not helpful for many of these folks.

This bill proposes to establish a trust of any value for the family member who's receiving AISH benefits without affecting their AISH eligibility. In practical terms the change means that an inheritance or financial gift placed in a properly prepared absolute discretionary trust is not the asset of the child and will not affect provincial benefits, as I understand it. To be clear, the treatment of trust income, however, is not changing, and this may affect the level of an AISH client's monthly living allowance, as has been discussed. Under the proposed changes disabled Albertans who receive an inheritance or a financial gift will be granted a one-year grace period to invest the money in an exempt asset like a trust fund or a registered disability savings plan.

The AISH program provides a living allowance of about \$1,588 a month, health benefits, and supplementary benefits to eligible adults with a permanent disability. Under current law Albertans with assets totalling more than \$100,000 are not eligible to receive AISH, although there are exemptions for such things as principal residence and a vehicle adapted to the persons with disabilities. AISH benefits end at 65, and that, of course, is the big reason and the need for this as well as the fact that when the parents of a disabled person die and are no longer there to support the individual, there is a clear need that would fall to the public purse if it was not there. There are close to 62,000 Albertans receiving AISH benefits, and the age, residency, and financial and medical situations are considered when determining eligibility.

It's clear to me that this is a step in the right direction and clear to many Albertans who need this help. It's those Albertans that most urgently need the government to also take the next step and index AISH payments. It's been several years now since AISH benefits were increased. The most common concern that I get expressed to me in my constituency when I meet with AISH folks is that this government hasn't at all indexed the AISH payment. That would go a long way to securing their stable livelihoods as well.

This allows us to do something that we haven't done before, and it's going to have a significant impact. I applaud the government for this change. It will not be without cost as more disabled Albertans will now be eligible for AISH benefits. We know that Budget 2018 is increasing the AISH program by \$62 million from the 2017-18 forecast to address expected caseload growth, so one question I had was: how much of that caseload growth is directly attributable to this legislation, and how much reflects population growth? In other words, how many disabled Albertans will this change actually impact? I haven't yet heard that discussed.

With those questions, Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to give my support to this in second reading and look forward to the final discussions and vote.

3:30

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek.

Ms Woollard: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I wanted to speak to Bill 5, An Act to Strengthen Financial Security for Persons with

Disabilities, because as I thought about it, I was thinking about the various people with various levels or areas of disability and why a bill like this would be important for them. AISH is a good support for people who are severely disabled, and it makes it possible for many people, people I know, to be able to live independently. But often it's just barely enough, and there's not that kind of financial security that you would often have if you were able to work and save for yourself. This is a way for parents to be able to provide some security, a foundation of knowing that they will have adequate resources to be taken care of as they go through life and after their parents pass on.

I was also thinking about people who become disabled not as children. Even there, having an inheritance, say, from a relative as they're older could really make a huge impact in a positive way in their life but not if it would interfere with them accessing AISH.

AISH is so valuable because it's a program that provides health benefits – dental, optical, prescription drugs – as well as many of the other costs of living. For a number of people I know with mobility issues due to some disability or other, all the mobility aids are vital. A friend of mine has a lift up her six steps, from the sidewalk to the front door, that was broken one time, and she was housebound for several weeks until it got repaired. There was no other option. Things like that can be expensive, and they're absolutely necessary, as are prescription drugs. I know someone with schizophrenia for whom the drugs are absolutely essential, and they're expensive. It's just something that on his own he would be hard pressed, if at all able, to afford. So you get a lot of instances.

Having that is important, but having the extras that are provided or would be made available by having income from a trust makes a huge difference. Again, I'm talking about people just because I know a number of people who are getting AISH support. A gentleman who became disabled in middle age is raising a teenaged child, and AISH is enough to keep them both alive and with a roof over their heads but not much else. So when the child, in grade 10, would like to go on a school trip, it's hard to find the money for that. In order to afford that, it would mean giving up something else which is most likely essential.

I think this is a very good bill. As was mentioned before, we are the last province in Canada, I believe, to have this exemption put into place for people who are living with disabilities. I think it's really important. It's so important for the people that will benefit from it and for the parents who will be able to make provision for their children while they're alive. I know a few people like that, too, and this is just something to really make life easier and less worrisome for them all.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, the hon. Minister of Community and Social Services to close debate.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to thank all the members that spoke today and shared their thoughts for their support of this legislation. I would also like to thank the cosponsor of this bill, the MLA for Calgary-Currie, for his commitment and work to bring forward these important changes.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Our government believes that Albertans with disabilities should have access to the same opportunities for stability as other Albertans and should be able to plan for their future. Self-advocates, families, and those receiving these benefits have told us that trusts are

important tools that make a positive difference in the quality of life of Albertans with disabilities and that these trusts shouldn't negatively impact an individual's eligibility for AISH. They also said that individuals need time to make financial decisions about an unanticipated inheritance or nonincome sum. We have listened to these voices, and we are taking action.

We want to reverse the wrong that was committed when the trusts were prohibited by the previous government in the 1990s. That is why this act exempts both discretionary and nondiscretionary trusts from the determination of AISH eligibility. It also provides a one-year grace period so that individuals have proper time to think through and make financial decisions that work for them. Through this and other actions we want the community to know that we are dedicated to working with them collaboratively, openly, and positively to make life better for Albertans with disabilities.

I look forward to a further discussion of this act in Committee of the Whole, where there will be a chance to discuss and address the specific issues that were raised by hon. members who spoke today.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 5 read a second time]

Government Motions

Provincial Fiscal Policies

13. Mr. Ceci moved:

Be it resolved that the Assembly approve in general the business plans and fiscal policies of the government.

[Adjourned debate April 3: Mr. Westhead]

The Acting Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak to the motion?

Seeing none, I will now call the question.

Oh, the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you for that extra look around the Chamber, especially, Madam Speaker. Fiscal plan and Budget 2018: five words come to mind right away. The first word is "debt," \$55 billion of debt today, headed towards \$96 billion before this Finance minister and this government even consider balancing a budget. That's \$96 billion of debt that our taxpayers have to pay off. Albertans have to accept fewer services and a burden on the next generation. And what a burden it is. It's a burden of \$1.9 billion this year, \$1.9 billion in interest, headed to \$3.7 billion of interest in 2023-2024 before this Finance minister, this government even try to balance a budget, even try to stop kicking the can down the road.

The next word I think of is "inefficiency." In just three short years this Finance minister and this government have increased spending 16 per cent at a time that 175,000 Albertans are unemployed, over 45,000 Albertans have left the workforce permanently. Maybe the stat that is frightening is, as an economist put out last week, that 45 per cent of young men between 15 and 24 years of age cannot find work. So when Albertans, as they always have, become strong again, efficient again, and get back to work, their reward will be paying off \$3.7 billion of interest annually and \$96 billion of debt.

3:40

The ineffectiveness, the next word, of so much of the government's spending: the number of constituents, Albertans, that come to my office and talk about waiting times in our health care, inability to access the government program that they want. When you couple that with the highest per capita government spending next to Newfoundland, it makes one shake their head.

Madam Speaker, what I really worry about, though, is this Finance minister's and this government's permanent disregard for the debt that they are putting on the backs of Albertans, for the debt that they are putting on our economy, and for the interest – the interest – that hard-working Albertans are going to have to pay off permanently, \$1.9 billion this year and \$3.7 billion by 2023. And it surprises me. When I talk to Albertans, Albertans know what interest is. It costs us services. It takes away our tax dollars, so we can spend less on our families and in our communities, and it's a transfer of wealth from everyday, average, hard-working families to rich bondholders, to rich corporations, to rich organizations.

At first it surprised me, coming from the NDP, but then I saw how they structured the carbon tax, and I realized it's no surprise. The past emissions tax had big corporations paying carbon tax or becoming environmentally better or becoming better at reducing their emissions. The big companies were the ones paying the carbon tax. Madam Speaker, now it's every Albertan. Every Albertan. When they pull up to the pumps and see that a litre of regular is \$1.25, they know that it's they who are pulling the burden of this government on their backs.

Madam Speaker, a good financial plan is a road map. It should be a map that shows us exactly the choices that we're making today, how they will affect our future. Well, the hon. Finance minister's road map shows a future of at least \$96 billion in debt, annual interest expenses of \$3.7 billion, a 67 per cent increase in carbon tax, following his ally Justin Trudeau, just to start covering some of the high per capita spending. Part of this budget even is all-in on our resource economy, counting on the Trans Mountain pipeline in later years to help balance the budget, making this government more reliant on nonrenewable resource revenues than in the past.

Madam Speaker, where this government really failed is in being unable to achieve its three highest priorities. It outlined those priorities as protecting public services, returning to balance, and diversifying the economy. Albertans know that the \$1.9 billion in annual interest, \$55 billion in debt just today mean that every single priority that we have for our families, for our communities, for our seniors, for our needs from government is going to be in jeopardy. That's \$1.9 billion. Every single Alberta family is deep in debt for what their government has done, but where this hits home to me is when you realize that \$1.9 billion is greater than something like 19 out of 24 of the government departments.

I get a lot of people in Cypress-Medicine Hat that are concerned about seniors and housing for seniors. When you see that this government is spending \$700 million on Seniors and Housing, approximately a third of what we're paying to bondholders around the world, it makes one fully aware of how interest is going to crowd out all of the other important priorities of Albertans and how this government's lack of ability to control spending, how this government's desire to transfer money from average, hard-working Albertans to rich bondholders is going to have severe consequences.

Madam Speaker, that's not all. I'm just reading today that next time the Bank of Canada meets, most business leaders in Canada are expecting yet another increase in interest rates. I believe that that'll be the third one in the last little while. Not as bad as the six credit downgrades that our Finance minister and the NDP government have had, but can you imagine, for every quarter, half-quarter, half-point or point increase in the interest rate, what this is going to do to the services that we all so much want to provide for Albertans or to that money that needs to be left in Albertans' pockets so we can take our families to movies, we can take our families on vacations, we can help our neighbours, and we can help our communities?

Madam Speaker, this government's addiction to debt and interest is going to crowd out so many of the things that are important to us.

At the same time, we've changed our utility market, where we're already paying over the 6.8-cent guaranteed cap. In the government budget I believe it was \$80 million for having the taxpayer subsidize the ratepayer, and here we are in the first month doing it. We saw the Finance minister come back and ask for an extra \$1.5 billion. His average three years in a row is \$1 billion that he's come back and asked for – he's been that far over budget – a billion dollars that we could leave with families and communities instead.

But can you imagine if the government miscalculated their capacity market and that \$80 million turns into \$300 million or \$1 billion? Madam Speaker, everywhere I go, people in the electricity generation business tell me that they're terrified that this government has exposed us so much to natural gas electricity generation. What if the cost of gas goes to six bucks? Can you imagine? Can you imagine if our Alberta families and communities get hit with that double whammy at the same time as these tax increases, at the same time as these exponentially growing interest and deficits? Albertans are strong, families and communities have been strong for over 100 years here, but this is a time of great concern.

Madam Speaker, we've also seen how this government and its big spending has destroyed investor confidence. Investors know that today's \$55 billion deficit, 2023's \$96 billion deficit is just a future tax on wealth creation, on job creation, and on the good, hard work that these people do and the risks that they take. I've seen numbers from \$30 billion to \$80 billion that this Finance minister and this NDP government have driven out of Alberta. Whatever number it is, that is tens of thousands of jobs, that is thousands of dollars of wealth, and that is thousands of dollars of opportunity for people to earn money to take care of their families and communities.

Madam Speaker, I'll say it again. This government's number one priority of protecting public services: they have been a disastrous failure at it. The interest cost is going to eat into every important priority of all Albertans: \$1.9 billion this year, somewhere around 2 and a half billion dollars next year, somewhere around \$3.7 billion just four years from now. That's before interest rates rise again, and that's before this Finance minister gets his credit downgraded again. This government, this Finance minister have jeopardized every single Alberta family.

3:50

Return to balance was the second top priority. Madam Speaker, we all know that words do not pay debt. What we've seen is a government and a Finance minister in three years add \$42 billion to the debt legacy of Alberta. They took it from \$13 billion to \$55 billion, headed to \$96 billion. If some of his assumptions happen – and we've seen from the past, with his inability to balance a budget, his willingness to go \$1 billion to \$1.5 billion over budget every year, that it will happen again – if this path continues, balance will not be seen. A permanent wall of debt of \$100 billion will forever rob our families and our kids of the services that we desire.

Madam Speaker, I also want to talk about the deficit and how it's presented. A good financial plan is clear. Well, this financial plan is not clear. Yes, this Finance minister and, yes, this government had to borrow \$8.8 billion on their credit card to pay for the groceries, to pay for this year's operating expenses. You have to look in greater detail, but what's in the budget is that they also borrowed \$6.4 billion – \$6.4 billion – for capital spending, a \$15.2 billion shortfall, an incredible number that some wealth creator, some job provider, some hard-working Alberta family has to pay someday.

Here I want to pause. Yes, it's important to get value for money. Yes, it's important to have a priority list so we all know when Albertans are going to get the roads and the infrastructure and the services that we all equally deserve. But the first sign of where

we're headed with interest robbing the priorities of all Albertans is that \$600 million cut to Transportation, \$600 million less. That will start to magnify. We'll start to see that throughout. As I mentioned, not only is interest approximately three times what we're spending on Seniors and Housing, but it's more interest than we're spending on the Justice and Solicitor General department, and, maybe most shamefully, we're paying \$400 million more in interest than we're paying for Children's Services next year.

I look at what this government has done and I look at where we're at today, and I wonder how in the world this government thinks that they're ever going to balance the budget and correct things. We've seen this government raise all tax rates: a 20 per cent corporate tax increase; increasing personal taxes; the carbon tax, the biggest hidden tax grab in Alberta history.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you. Madam Speaker, I do appreciate what this member has to say. I have to say that it is distressing to hear that the carbon tax is one of the biggest hidden taxes in Alberta's history. I would wonder if he can continue down that thought line and please explain how it is that this carbon tax is going to affect the average Albertan.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, hon. colleague. I think of my constituency first, my hard-working people that I'm very grateful to represent. Irrigation farmers come to me and say that it's costing them up to \$2,500 a month for their pivots just in carbon tax. It'll mean hiring fewer hired men. It'll mean fewer holidays for them and their family. It'll mean less ability to repair their balance sheets.

I think, you know, that in Medicine Hat we're about 40 miles from the Saskatchewan border. For years and years when my friends or relatives would visit me from Saskatchewan, they'd limp into Medicine Hat with a gas tank right on E, right on fumes because our gas was so much cheaper. They wanted to share in the Alberta advantage. And, hon. colleague, I'm embarrassed to say that now people are filling up in Maple Creek or Swift Current because it's quite a bit cheaper because of not having the carbon tax.

When the NDP government's own expert said that carbon leakage was going to move industries and move jobs to neighbouring jurisdictions that didn't have a carbon tax, he got that exactly right. He got the fact that investment is being scared out of Alberta. Everyday Albertans, working families are seeing first-hand how it is hard to make ends meet, how it is hard to have enough left over to send a child to university, to have a person in sports or dance, and they are doing what they can to make ends meet and keep the Alberta economy stronger.

You know, the other area where this government totally failed was in their third goal, diversifying the economy. The Premier stands up consistently about how they're going to diversify the economy away from nonrenewable resources. Of course, now we have this effort to get the Trans Mountain pipeline. I am certainly cheering as loud as I can, as all Albertans are, for her to be successful in this, but we can't forget that when she was first elected – I call it the apology tour – she ran around Canada, she ran around North America apologizing for the Alberta oil and gas industry, the industry that had provided billions and billions of dollars of wealth . . .

Mr. Cyr: Embarrassing cousins.

Mr. Barnes: Embarrassing cousins.

. . . thousands and tens of thousands of jobs, Madam Speaker, and had been such a great environmental producer in a strong, socially

conscious jurisdiction. We felt the need to apologize for it. Well, I have never apologized for our strong industry. It's amazing the value-added that our men and women in the oil and gas business can do at tremendous risk, tremendous cost, pulling oil or gas out of the ground, and what they can do with it in terms of value-added, all the way to running our cars, our homes, and the industries that it provides.

But let's not forget that now in this budget this government will be 16 per cent more reliant on nonrenewable resource revenue than we were before, another perfect example of how this government has failed. The stated goal was to diversify the economy. They ended up driving billions and billions of dollars of private investment out of Alberta. Investor confidence is at a low. Investor confidence is very, very shaken, driving tens of thousands of jobs out at the same time. As a result, here we are today more reliant as a percentage on nonrenewable resource revenue than we were before. Just another failure of this government.

Hon. colleagues, I'll sum this up. This Finance minister, this government had three stated goals . . .

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

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

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Budgets are about choices. They're never a simple exercise, but they tell Albertans what your values are. The values of the Alberta Party are very much in the spirit of not just simply opposing everything the government does reflexively because the government has done it but making sure to hold the government to account, which is an important job of opposition, not simply opposing for the sake of opposition but proposing ideas. That's a core value of the Alberta Party, and I think Albertans very much appreciate that style of politics. I think it's something that's been missing in this province for too long.

While I certainly will offer some critique of this government's budget, the first thing I'm going to do is that I'm going to talk not about what the government has done wrong; I'm going to talk about what the Alberta Party would do differently. How would we approach the fiscal challenges facing our province? How would we craft a budget that is going to be optimistic, that's going to speak to the opportunities that exist in our province? Make no mistake; there are tremendous opportunities in this province. Alberta is a remarkable place to live. We have the highest quality of life of almost anywhere in the world. We have some of if not the most innovative, entrepreneurial, caring, remarkable people anywhere in the world.

4:00

A lot of that strength comes from the diversity of this province, and that is something that we believe must be leveraged and tapped into, appreciated and celebrated, diversity of all kinds. We need to find pathways for indigenous people to participate much more fully in society and community, to address some of the terrible inequities that have happened through time, to realize the opportunity that comes from unlocking that talent that exists within indigenous communities, that exists within communities of new Canadians, that exists within communities of people who have been here for a long time. There are opportunities in this province that are not, unfortunately, being fully realized.

One of the first things the Alberta Party would do to recognize and realize those opportunities is that we would invest more in K to 12 education than this government's budget proposes to. That is a value that we hold dear, that we are going to educate a capable,

diverse workforce that is not only prepared for the 21st century but is going to create the 21st century, that is going to create the jobs of the future right here in Alberta.

The other thing the Alberta Party believes in is the power of "and." While we believe we can create the next economy right here in Alberta, we also believe that we can and should have a strong oil and gas sector in this province. Although the world is changing around us, we absolutely must get our products to tidewater. We absolutely must find a reasonable regulatory structure that ensures that Alberta develops our oil and gas properties, our oil and gas assets, responsibly, which we have always done in this province, but we do so in a way that has a minimum of red tape, that attracts investment back to Alberta, that does not see the capital fleeing to the United States and other jurisdictions as it has, that we create an attractive investment climate in this province, that we ensure that the people will be investing in Alberta, creating those jobs in Alberta, like we've done in this province for so long so successfully.

Other choices we need to make: the Alberta Party would find ways of ensuring our health care system is far more efficient and effective than it is. Our Health budget takes up nearly 50 per cent. Health spending in this province takes up nearly 50 per cent of every dollar spent in this province. That is far too high, and those costs continue to increase. We would find efficiencies within the public health care system by ensuring, first and foremost, that front-line personnel feel that they have a stake in making the system better. For too long it's been a top-down, closed culture that does not welcome innovation. One of the most important things we can do is reform AHS culture to make AHS more receptive to innovation in service delivery.

The Alberta Party believes too many patients are being treated in acute-care facilities when they would be far more comfortable in communities in more appropriate settings, and they would have better health outcomes. They would be closer to home, closer to their families, and it would save us money. That must be an imperative. There's far too much duplication and overlap between AHS and Alberta Health. That not only costs money to simply physically run, but it slows down the pace of change, the pace of innovation. It slows down adaptiveness and responsiveness, and the people that I talk with in the system are profoundly, incredibly frustrated. They have gone into health care because of the emphasis on that second word, "care." It's a caring profession. They want to make the system work. They have a stake in making the system work, but far too often they feel beaten down. They feel dismissed. They feel that they can't have the impact that they want, they can't bring the changes that they want because the system just simply holds them back. The duplication and overlap between AHS and Alberta Health has a big impact on that.

We would reform EMS dispatch to ensure that paramedics are not stuck in emerg waiting with a patient and that those paramedics are instead on the roads where we need them, providing the services that Albertans rely on, those remarkable people who are looking out for us in our most desperate times. They're not stuck in emerg, but they're out on the road doing the work that we need them to do.

The Alberta Party would review unfilled positions within AHS management structure and make sure that money is not being spent simply holding a position. We'd focus on wellness, on mental health, on long-term care, on chronic conditions like dementia. We would bring in a proper dementia strategy, not just some headlines and some rehashed announcements and reannouncements. We would genuinely and truly listen to people in communities, those with dementia, their loved ones and caregivers to make sure that we get it right on these important, important areas.

Speaking of another important area, AISH and PDD. The Alberta Party would not only index AISH payments to the cost of living;

we would make a one-time catch-up payment. AISH has not been increased in this province since 2012, and that is probably one of the most surprising and profoundly disappointing aspects of not just this budget but of all three previous budgets this NDP government. This government, that is supposedly there for the less fortunate, for the people who in our community we need to ensure that we are looking out for, they have let those people down. The most tangible example of that is the fact that AISH funding has not yet been increased, and I'm afraid that as we head into an election year, this is the kind of thing that we can expect to be made as part of an election platform.

I was always taught to do the right thing because it's the right thing to do. Increasing funding for AISH is the right thing to do. It was the right thing to do in 2015 and '16 and '17 and '18, and just because none of those years had an election in them, it didn't mean that you shouldn't have done that. That's one thing that the Alberta Party would do, catch up AISH funding and index it going forward.

We would focus on social innovation. We would partner with the not-for-profit sector and ensure that they are partners with the government in innovative and cost-effective service delivery. This is an area where we have a strong sense of volunteerism, we have a remarkably robust not-for-profit sector, and we have opportunities to innovate in how we make those services more efficient. The government should be using its role as funder to compel some efficiency within that system, within that structure.

There are multiple disconnected government agencies. Not-for-profits I talk with are profoundly frustrated at the stovepipes that happen. They work to specific granting envelopes, and even if those don't make a lot of sense, they do what they need to do to keep the lights on. We need a more flexible, more innovative funding model to ensure that not-for-profits can deliver the services that Albertans deserve.

Seniors' housing. You know, one of the most remarkable things I learned in the estimates process with Seniors and Housing was that the vaunted \$1.2 billion, five-year investment in affordable housing in Alberta has just kind of quietly become a seven-year investment. That's 40 per cent longer. How many Albertans will not be housed in affordable housing because this government has dragged its feet in rolling out what should be a compelling project? My guess is that they've done that because they want to take a government-first model and not work with not-for-profits, not work with private delivery agencies. There's no good reason to do that beyond pure ideology and a world view that says that you think that's a good idea. Well, it isn't. We had a model in this province that has worked incredibly well for a very long time, and this government has arbitrarily gone away from it, which has caused people to not be housed in affordable housing who badly, badly need that housing. Seniors' housing is another area where we have that similar problem.

We've talked about indigenous peoples. Through our work with the child intervention panel I know that there is some work going on there. There has been some increased funding and we very much applaud that, but we want to make sure that we are clear here in the Alberta Party that we absolutely support Jordan's principle. It should be the role of the provincial government to ensure that services are provided to children, services are provided to people who need those services when and where they need those services, and if there's a jurisdictional fight to be had, it is our job as the government to manage that on their behalf. Our job is to manage the complexity. If we need to go fight with Ottawa for funding, we fight with Ottawa for funding. We don't put that on the people of Alberta.

On the climate change file, making climate leadership work for Albertans is very important for the Alberta Party. We have been very clear that we believe in a properly executed carbon tax. We

think that can work. The Alberta Party believes that climate change is real. We believe it is human caused. We believe it is a problem that needs addressing. But we also see the opportunity in addressing climate change in this province. It is not simply a matter of having a few headlines, of creating a carbon tax, and then looking to our west and saying: "We have a carbon tax. May we please have a pipeline?" Clearly, that hasn't worked.

4:10

The purpose of having a carbon tax is to ensure that we have the resources we need to innovate. The purpose of that is to shift behaviour and ensure that we have created a framework where innovation can happen here in Alberta, and I firmly believe it will be Alberta companies and Alberta technologies that we will sell to the rest of the world. Here in Alberta we can solve the problems that our world has as it relates to climate change, and that creates market opportunity. Unfortunately, we have a government that's looked at it as a simple cash cow, as a source of revenue, and they've unfortunately, I think, really soured Albertans on what can and should be a very potent policy tool. We saw a group of economists just recently talk about how a well-structured carbon tax can work. We need to move it to revenue neutrality, not as a cash cow. These are the opportunities that exist on the climate change file, but unfortunately this government has let us down.

Now, I'm going to spend the last couple of minutes here that I have not just talking about what we would do differently. One of the great concerns I have with this particular budget the government has brought forward is that so much of the so-called path – and I don't know if *Hansard* will be able to capture my air quotes when I say "path to balance." My grave concern is that so much of that path to balance is based on ifs: if we get a Kinder Morgan pipeline built, if that pipeline is built on time; if we get Enbridge line 3, if that pipeline is built on time; if corporate income tax increases; if personal income tax increases by 40 per cent; if oil prices go to \$75; if we turn 3 and a half billion dollars of nonrenewable resource revenue into 10 and a half billion dollars of resource revenue; if this government actually sticks to their very own budget that they put out, which, by the way, you haven't to date at any time. That's an awful lot of ifs. I think I'm running out of fingers on two hands to count up the number of ifs. There's too much risk. Even if you actually achieve all of those things, we still find ourselves with \$96 billion in debt at the end of the day.

In the last minute I just want to read some questions, and perhaps I'll have an opportunity under 29(2)(a) to talk about some of what I heard at a budget town hall that I held in Calgary-Elbow here on the weekend. Just while we're talking about some of the challenges with the carbon tax, one of my constituents asked me to ask the government on her behalf – and I will do this now – how the carbon tax is allowed to be a tax on a tax, how it is that we're allowed to have GST charged on top of the carbon tax. This is a source of great frustration. This is someone who tells me that she doesn't mind action on climate change but had grave concerns about the way this particular government has rolled out the carbon tax. So on her behalf I ask that question to the government.

My concerns are that even if this government actually achieves all the things it says that it's going to do – and while I'm cheering for all those things to happen, I really have my doubts that they actually will – we'll still have \$96 billion in debt. Even if only one of those things goes wrong – and, by the way, as we've obviously seen here recently with Kinder Morgan, we already know that one of those risks has been realized – then we're looking at well in excess of a hundred billion dollars in debt. That is something we and our children are going to have to pay back. That leads to upwards of \$4 billion a year.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just want to acknowledge the Member for Calgary-Elbow for coming up with a shadow budget for four budgets in a row. He's done a remarkable amount of work, and it shows he knows this topic really well. I'm wondering if the member has any sense of what the impact of the shadow budget would be on future generations in contrast to the current budget as it's proposed.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I really appreciate that. You know, one of the things our shadow budget would do is that we would spend more money on capital investment than this government would propose to spend. When we have an infrastructure deficit in this province like we do, there are badly, badly needed schools, not just new schools but refurbishing existing schools; health care facilities, and not just large-scale hospitals although, of course, that's a huge part of it; seniors' facilities of all different levels to ensure that we can move people out of hospitals so they're in communities closer to home and in accommodation that's more appropriate for them and that we're saving the money that we need; that we're investing in affordable housing; that we're investing in transportation and infrastructure; that we're investing in transit; that we're investing in flood mitigation. These are things that matter very much to the people of Alberta. The way you do that, Madam Speaker, is you set your priorities, and you ensure that the operational side of spending doesn't get out of control, unfortunately, like this government has.

I will take this opportunity to ask some questions and just share some of the dozen or so comments that I asked my constituents to write down when we held a town hall in Calgary-Elbow this past Saturday. We had about 20 or so intrepid souls come out in the snow and sleet to talk about the budget. What struck me was the interest that that group of constituents had in ensuring sustained, high-quality, efficient, and effective public services. That was the message I heard loud and clear. Equally, they understood that to do that, we need to be able to pay the bills. They were willing to make sure that as long as the services that were provided were high quality and efficient and effective, they're willing to pay fair value for that.

Some of the questions. This, I think, ties to the shadow budget that we have brought in and to the question the member asked. Point 1 is to ensure a civil and respectful dialogue and climate in government. Well, that isn't always possible in this place, Madam Speaker. Politics has been known to break out in this place. But I do hope that a core value of the Alberta Party that we demonstrate is raising the level of debate, not just opposing for the sake of opposition but proposing ideas.

There was a desire for sustainable funding for schools and that we ensure that we maintain reasonable class sizes while addressing the increasing complexities of our student population with a specific focus on mental health. That's something we believe very much in. It's a very, very important area of emphasis for us.

A constituent felt it was very odd to have a carbon tax on schools, giving a school board a budget and then taking a portion of it back for a carbon tax, money that really should have gone to students. Should that not be exempt? Yes, in my opinion, it should be exempt, and it's an oversight and a shortcoming of the way this government has rolled out the carbon tax.

How can we speed up strengthening indigenous peoples so we're not continuing to waste the tremendous human potential in

indigenous communities? Again, a very, very thoughtful comment and something that I referenced earlier.

How do we not just provide health care services, but how do we catch up on wait times and address the health system backlog for better outcomes and long-term cost savings to the system? Invest now to catch up on that backlog. Make sure that those wait times are cut down.

How do we better educate industry about public and regulatory expectations so investors know what they're facing in a predictable way? Make sure that we reduce red tape and have clarity within the regulatory process of all kinds as a part of the grand bargain to make sure that we attract investors.

How are we reducing administration in health, education, and other areas to spend more money on the front lines? An absolutely essential question, especially in health care.

Someone asked about climate change. The question that was asked by my constituent: what percentage of climate change is due to anthropogenic activity? Of that, how much is discretionary?

Someone asked whether we would consider a PST. That was a question that was asked. The comment was that they were willing to pay fair value for high-quality public service.

How are we preparing young men for adulthood? How do we make sure that . . . [Mr. Clark's speaking time expired]

I ran out of time.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Hon. members, are there any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm happy to rise, and I would like to propose that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

4:20

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

(continued)

Bill 7

Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, forestry and agriculture.

Mr. Carlier: Either/or, Madam Speaker. Thank you very much. It is my pleasure today to move second reading of Bill 7, Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act.

I'm seeking the Assembly's support for a plan to help strengthen Alberta's local food industry. This legislation is an opportunity for our government to help the local food sector realize its full potential through a more focused and deliberate approach. Supporting sustainable growth in the local food sector includes leveraging existing programs to address barriers and strengthen the ability of local producers and processors to succeed, introducing legislation to raise the profile of the local food industry and strengthen consumer confidence, and exploring additional opportunities to address challenges. Alberta and Saskatchewan are currently the only provinces that have not implemented a local food strategy.

There are several key points in this legislation which directly reflect feedback we received from local food stakeholders through our engagement processes, including how local food should be defined, setting standards for organic food, designating a local food week, and creating a local food council.

Setting standards for organic local food means that we intend to adopt the Canadian organic standards. Organic producers who are

exporting internationally or even across provincial boundaries already have to comply with these standards to market organic food, so we are just levelling the playing field for all producers. Essentially, we are saying that in order to use the word “organic” to market your products, you have to have organic certification. Simple as that. This brings local producers in line with existing federal standards, so we are closing a regulatory gap and giving consumers consistent assurance of the expected standards the producer is meeting when consumers are purchasing any organic food products in Alberta.

The next initiative in this legislation, designating the third week of August as Alberta local food week, gives us an opportunity to celebrate and promote local food in our province. Local food week is a great fit with the established Open Farm Days initiative to really help build awareness and draw more attention to local food. Open Farm Days is an annual cross-ministry and industry partnership that celebrates local producers and gives Albertans a taste of where their food comes from and how it is produced. Farmers and ranchers invite their urban and rural neighbours to stop in for a visit to share stories, see demonstrations, and learn more about the farmers who grow their food. Some of Alberta’s most talented chefs in rural communities also host a memorable series of farm-to-table culinary events around the province using Alberta farm-fresh products. Open Farm Days is in its fifth year and has grown each year, reaching over 100 host farms with a total of 20,000 visitors last year. This summer we hope to celebrate Alberta’s inaugural local food week, and, of course, everyone is encouraged to join Alberta’s farmers and ranchers and chefs as producers open their gates on August 19 and 20 for this year’s Open Farm Days.

This act also establishes a local food council. This council will be representative of Alberta’s local food sector, including large, medium, and small producers and processors. They will provide advice and report on provincial policies, programs, pilot projects, or initiatives to support the continued growth and sustainability of Alberta’s local food sector, including potential barriers and challenges for local food producers and local food processors, specific challenges faced by small producers and processors, local food aggregation and distribution, how to increase consumer awareness and access to local food. This advisory board will provide fulsome guidance and a thorough report on the current state of local foods in Alberta as well as its challenges and the many opportunities in this sector.

Continuing to support the growth of this industry is an important step in achieving our government’s economic diversification and job creation goals. This legislation will help create opportunities to promote the local food industry, enhance consumer awareness and education, and reinforce consumer confidence. Food and beverage processing is one of the largest employers in our province’s manufacturing sector, with record sales of \$14.6 billion in 2016.

Consumer interest in and demand for local food continues to grow, making this an important market opportunity for rural sustainability and for Alberta producers and processors. In Alberta local food sales and direct-to-consumer channels such as farmers’ markets and farm retail have more than doubled since 2008 and exceeded \$1 billion last year. Alberta has a vibrant farmers’ market industry, with both public markets and more than 130 Alberta-approved farmers’ markets contributing more than \$850 million in 2017 to the growth and diversity of our provincial economy.

A great deal of innovation in food is coming from start-ups who are capitalizing on shifting consumer preferences. Our government already supports these efforts through policies, programs, grant funding, risk management programs, and research. For example, my ministry’s Leduc Food Processing Development Centre provides business incubation support as well as scientific support for recipe refinement and scale-up.

Initiatives such as the successful Alberta small brewers development program have also helped local craft breweries expand their businesses and invest in new product development. Agriculture and Forestry’s Explore Local program supports Alberta’s direct-to-consumer food producers and processors by delivering events, research, resource development, education, coaching, mentoring, and advocacy.

Alberta is the only province in Canada with a government-led approved farmers’ market program that serves as a valuable business incubator to provide business growth opportunities for community-based businesses to make, bake, or grow the products they sell. One of my favourite stories that has been a real success in Alberta is the Little Potato Company, those little bags of potatoes you can get at Safeway or Superstore. They were a farmer and daughter operation out of the back of a truck at a farmers’ market right here in Edmonton. They now employ more than a hundred people in the city of Edmonton and have expanded to the state of Idaho and the province of PEI as well.

Small and medium-sized businesses throughout the program can also access programs like the community and regional economic support, CARES, program, which can provide training for businesses entering the organic growing sector, improve agrifood processing capacity development, establish mentorship programs, encourage local spending and opportunities for value-added processing and manufacturing in Alberta.

In developing this draft legislation, we engaged with several other ministries and numerous external stakeholders to get feedback in the early stages of developing our proposal. I’m also thankful to the MLA for Strathcona-Sherwood Park for her hard work and input on this important initiative. We heard from people representing a broad cross-section of producers, processors, industry groups, indigenous peoples, and municipalities. All the feedback we have received to date was taken into consideration during the development of the proposed Supporting Alberta’s Local Food Sector Act. There are nearly limitless opportunities to build on this legislative platform and continue to celebrate and raise awareness of local foods in Alberta.

I look forward to our debate of this bill in the Legislature, and I anticipate it will spark some important and exciting conversation about local food amongst my colleagues here. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I’d like to move to adjourn debate on Bill 7.

[Motion to adjourn debate lost]

The Acting Speaker: Are there any other members that would like to speak? The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Strankman: Thanks, Madam Speaker. It’s an interesting day in the Chamber today. Thanks for the opportunity to speak to agriculture, one of my most favourite things, and also to speak to Bill 7 and expound on some of my thoughts. It’s very interesting. We’re talking about Supporting Alberta’s Local Food Sector Act. This bill has the primary focus to standardize the use of organic labelling and certification. This will ensure that any food products grown and produced here in Alberta will comply with current CFIA standards in labelling and certification. Currently there is no one threshold for products produced locally for sale within Alberta. This would strive to make a uniform minimum standard within Canada. Outside of Canada, in the U.S. they have a completely different standard than this, so that’s somewhat problematic.

4:30

I understand that the overall purpose of this act will be to encourage the development and success of the local food sector throughout the province and to regulate agriculture products that

are produced or processed in the province and marketed and sold as organic products, again, within Alberta. It is intended that this would be achieved primarily through three parts of this act, starting with establishing local organic standards, the creation of a local food week to coincide with Open Farm Days in August, and, finally, this act proposes to establish a local food council.

I will start off with the first part, establishing local organic standards. This, I guess, closes a loophole or a shortfall in existing legislation. As I understand, previous to this products sold within Alberta had no established common criteria for organic labelling or standards. However, if you exported these same products outside of Alberta, you had to comply with CFIA standards for labelling and certification. Going forward, the CFIA standards will have to be met within Alberta in order to use the term “certified organic” on these products. This puts us into the same standard as other jurisdictions. The hon. minister has talked about Saskatchewan, but I also believe that Quebec may have a weakness there. Now, that’s not necessarily a bad thing, to have a minimum standard. But let’s face it. If I was building bicycles in my garage, they would have to meet certain safety standards set out by the Canada Safety Council, and this appears to be much the same idea.

Now, all of this doesn’t mean that I may not have some concerns, though, and I hope that through debate and through questioning those can be alleviated. I have reached out to several producer groups about this issue, and I continue to wait for feedback. Concerns that have been raised to me are: is this in any way taxpayer funded? By that, I mean that if a local producer wants to get certified and is willing to comply with the process, will the cost be simply part of their business model and covered by said producer in its entirety, or is it entirely covered by the government? Do we know for sure how much this certification costs, and is there a fee continuing on after being certified and approved or associated with a certified organic label? Madam Speaker, the question also begs: how long does this process take, and is there an overbearing bureaucratic process involved?

I understand the heartfelt intent of this legislation, and we’ve dealt with this and discussed this in the Chamber before. These are important questions that some folks want answers to, and that’s part of this parliamentary process. Madam Speaker, as you well know, sometimes the devil is in the details, and wordage going forward is absolutely critical and important.

Speaking of these details, another small issue came up in the brief time we’ve had to consult about this bill with some stakeholders. It’s been brought to my attention that in the act, especially on page 4, under application, 3(a), it seems to have consequences, possibly unintended consequences, that far outreach what the bill is purported to be. This section talks about, in my interpretation, Madam Speaker, all agricultural products, and I would quote from the bill.

- 3 This Act applies to
 - (a) agricultural products produced or processed in the Province.

Now, that’s a wide-ranging commentary because we also have commercial production within the province. It does specifically talk about organic products produced or processed in the province. So, Madam Speaker, that’s somewhat a bone of contention. Given the mistakes that the government has made in the past on rural issues, I believe that it’s fair. I’m witnessing the minister making notes in that regard, and I think that’s fair. Whether we have a legitimate complaint or not, I think it’s our role, our duty, our responsibility to Albertans to get clarity on this.

Madam Speaker, why does an act that purports to be primarily about organic labelling and certification include subsections (a) and (b) which separate organic products and all others? Why would the distinction be needed? If it’s a needed distinction, I’d argue that

subsection (a) may not provide an accurate distinction. On our farm we grow and distribute products that go to commercial food use; i.e., a maltster. Now, those are commercial food products. Would we still, with that interpretation, need to be certified, need to be qualified to do this?

As a Conservative I always tend to focus on things like red tape, bureaucracy, and extra costs. This bill is no different. I can’t help but wonder why the need for the formation of a local food council to provide a report no later than 12 months after the establishment of said council “containing advice and recommendations regarding provincial policies, programs, pilot projects or initiatives to support the continued growth and sustainability of Alberta’s local food sector.” Madam Speaker, the market does that.

Now, on the upside, I find it refreshing that there is a drop-dead date to this council, and for that the minister is to be commended.

This government made it a priority to review ABCs in Alberta and find efficiencies, and again I commend the minister and the government for that. I have to ask: why couldn’t an existing group be tasked with this project? Why not use the Alberta Food Processors Association, for example? They handle commercial and organics. Why the need to create something else from scratch? Wouldn’t there be a more efficient and effective way of doing things? But, then, government funding seems to be unending. Wouldn’t it save the need for ministerial appointments? Was that explored or rejected? We have no understanding of whether it was or wasn’t. Why didn’t the minister commission a white paper? In previous governments the minister would go out and voluntarily seek public opinion to create a white paper of opinion from voluntary participants going forward. These are all legitimate questions that need to be answered, Madam Speaker.

As I mentioned earlier, the devil is in the details, and there are some details that are a bit troubling in their vagueness. Now, I already talked about section 3(a), and I need to point out an issue that arose from discussions amongst members about section 6(a), the certification program. This clause gives the minister extraordinary powers to establish “a certification program for agricultural products other than those certified as organic.” Madam Speaker, I just gave the example of our farm, where we deliver products to a human food-use facility. Could it be interpreted that we, too, would have to have a certification program because it’s going to a food-use facility? It’s not specifically defined in the terminology in the legislation presented to us. This is worrying.

For what reason does the minister need this power or the unelected regulator enforcers? Why are we discussing certification of nonorganic products in this bill purported to be about standardizing the Alberta regulations to coincide with federal CFIA ones? CFIA, Madam Speaker, is a high standard. I’ve been to facilities where people gather eggs in the small community of Nobleford, in southern Alberta. They voluntarily inspect the food that they receive and sell it as CFIA-qualified inspected.

Madam Speaker, I’m afraid that this is going to cause some issues with farmers. As a group this government hasn’t exactly endeared themselves to rural folk over their time in power, and I don’t think this clause will help that opinion. I stood in the Chamber during the debates over Bill 6, and I fully hold witness to that.

4:40

Will the minister be asking us to just trust that this clause won’t be used to bring in other standards on all agricultural products? That could be raised. Again, the devil is in the details. Are we going to be required to certify all the grain we grow? It’s not specifically written. I know some members have joked across the bow about the precursor to the Alberta Wheat Board. I know I would perceive that to be completely hilarious, but the wording doesn’t preclude that.

Does the certification include how many cattle or hogs are raised, or is this simply a clause used to enhance a standard marketing ploy, perhaps a made-in-Alberta standard? That is to be expounded upon.

Whatever the purpose, the vague way it's presented, the very obtuse language, makes us wonder what the end game is here. The wording is ambiguous, Madam Speaker. I understand that consultation takes time. I can't help but wonder. I would like to see a list of the groups that have been consulted. We've reached out to our own groups, including the beekeepers association of Alberta. I mean, we've got this bill, and the way this bill reads now makes me take a pause and really consider what the unintended consequences may be.

Madam Speaker, I look forward, with great respect, to learning the answers to my questions and those that are brought up by my colleagues because I see the minister studiously taking notes in regard to my questions. With that, I would close my comments for now, and we'll move forward as we go forward in further debate.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

Cortes-Vargas: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour to rise today on Bill 7. As the minister said and as members of this House know, the local food system in Alberta is extremely important to a lot of consumers, and it is also an important part of our economy. I think that's why we're here today to have this conversation. In a lot of ways it's a unique day to have a conversation about a regulation that is actually asked for by farmers. You know, it's not often that that happens.

I can definitely table these tomorrow, but I know I have letters here from Alberta milk producers that describe the gap as a regulatory gap. One of the impacts that they told me about and that you hear about is that you go through all of the certification of becoming organic, but then what happens is that you can't export the product because you have no certification that says it is that. It's because when that regulation went through on a federal level, it wasn't implemented in Alberta. So since 2009, Madam Speaker, they've been asking for us to bring in the ability for them to say: listen, if I do the work to have an organic farm, I want to be able to demonstrate that and I want it to be able to mean something when I export my products. I think that's what we're able to capture.

You know, I have letters that I'm happy to table as we go forward this week, Madam Speaker, from Alberta milk producers, the Egg Farmers of Alberta, Homegrown Foods, Highwood Crossing, the Organic Box. I think it's because they see the importance of reducing barriers in the capacity to export the amazing products that are being delivered in Alberta. That's one aspect of this bill, and I think that it shouldn't be confused with a different section of it.

This bill isn't solely about organics. It's talking about how to support the local food system in Alberta. The local food system in Alberta isn't solely comprised of the organic section. We all know that, so it shouldn't be confused as such. That's why the section noted by the previous speaker, who asked why it encompasses other folks outside of the organics, is because one section talks about how we can support local producers, processors, and farmers in connecting with consumers and how we can connect them with the ability to build a stronger local food system.

They just look at those issues, and they look at it over a reasonable timeline, which is a year, Madam Speaker. Not only that, it also describes the ability to have a council that has a broad spectrum of opinions from large, medium, and small producers. I think that there's an absolute value in that because it is hard to understand how to support the large spectrum.

I think that there is something even more so that becomes important – and I've had this conversation with many producers and supply management when they visit the Legislature, Madam Speaker – the ability and the importance of talking to consumers. I think that something we'll see growing over time is the interest that modern consumers have in where their food comes from.

One of the fears that I have is that people will make all of the decisions as to what food they will choose to eat and why because of some documentary on Netflix. A lot of the young generation that are informing themselves about local food and where your food is coming from are looking for that information, and they're maybe not finding it in the same place that we would have before. They go to the media streams and the information sites that they go to now, and a lot of those don't encompass what the Alberta food system is. I think that we miss out on something when we don't know the information applicable to the area that we are purchasing from.

I think that there is a great value, and I think that that's where the common cause is in this. Whether you're a small, medium, or large producer, your ability to create a connection and build consumer confidence is extremely beneficial. The government does have an ability to look at what the barriers are in being able to do that, to be aware, to be able to know what your competitive margins are.

I think that when we talk about that, that's why it's important to look at one section of it, meeting that regulatory gap, which is the fact that the organic certification wasn't happening in Alberta. Anyone could use the word "organic," and it basically can be used. There are a lot of examples within farmers' markets where people actually just started trying to verify it themselves and in a very informal sense started acting as their own regulators so that people coming to visit that farmers' market could verify that it was organic. That's not necessarily what you want to do. That doesn't build consumer confidence. Knowing that the word that is being used is expressing a very specific thing that consumers know is helpful.

Then the second section talks about how we can strengthen our Alberta food system. That's where it's broad, and it's meant to be broad because our food system is broad. We have small, medium, and large. It doesn't need to be focused on just one area in order for it to be effective. In fact, you don't want it to do that. I think that's where sometimes we go into conspiracy theories as to what that could possibly mean. But I think that when you look at the intention of what we're trying to achieve here, which is to look at the ways that we can build consumer confidence, support our networks, identify barriers, if it's for small producers, there might be different barriers than for the large ones. If we can identify those and leverage strengths within our community to help support them, that's something that can happen.

I think that an integral part of the role that government can play in strengthening one's economy is looking at that information, taking that all in, and moving that forward. I think that there is an important role that government has to play in allowing for a space to have further conversations. That's why I don't think that this conversation ends here. When we look forward, in fact, if the Legislature decides to pass this bill, Madam Speaker, you have 12 months to get feedback from a whole bunch of different groups, to have those conversations, and to be able to give a back and forth as to what is the best way that we can support our food system in Alberta. I think it's a conversation that transcends urban and rural, and I think it's an area of commonality that is extremely important because I have yet to meet families that don't think about the kinds of food that they eat.

4:50

I think that's something that Albertans are proud of. Albertans are very proud of the beef that we have here, of the best steaks that we have in Alberta. We need to continue to be proud of the various

things that we produce and to be able to connect Alberta Open Farm Days, the concept that has already been there, with the idea of how we can support and engage people on a local food system. It's kind of a natural merger of where we need to progress to. Why do we want these people coming together, and what are the strengths of local food? It's the relationship that people have with their farmers. That's what research will tell you over and over again. The strength in local food is that relationship with the farmer, that relationship to understand where your food is coming from.

As we move into a more urban environment, we also see the impacts of what the distance has on children. Kids in urban centres that haven't seen, you know, where their food comes from make those comments that are kind of funny but are really a sad statement of how disconnected we can get, like when they say, "Where does a carrot come from?" and then say: the grocery store. Right? We need to make sure that we're developing mechanisms to connect urban and rural.

One of the natural things that has always and for all of history joined us together is food. I think there's a very little group of people that would argue that food hasn't always been a way that we have come together. When we talk about farm days and when we talk about, "Let's expand that and make a way of looking at how we can bring together a local food week," that is a place of strength for this government but also for the community and also for the economy. It brings the capacity to have conversations that are not as easily related in reports.

I know I read a lot of information from the milk producers or the beef producers. There is a lot of really great information. A lot of times it happens in infographics. You know, I have access to it because I'm an MLA, because I talk to these folks, and because I have these conversations. But I know my friends that are interested in that information, that maybe are in university or working, when they start looking this information up, they don't know where to go. So I think that if we find places to bridge those connections, we really provide an avenue for Albertans to come together whether you're from an urban area or a rural area. I think that there are so many places we can benefit from.

I really believe that one of the best things that could have happened was a few years ago, when I stood up in this House and I talked to the Alberta Local Food Act, which was a different bill. I think it's very important to distinguish it as a different bill because it is. One of the major things that I had hoped to accomplish then was to have a conversation about local food, to have a conversation about how to move that forward. I think that since then – and I think that's why it's important to distinguish that this is a different bill than what that was – you have those conversations.

We're able to go out and talk to people about what can support small and medium and large producers, what can support the consumer that's interested in these things, what can support farmers' markets, what can support, you know, the supermarkets that are having an organic section, what can be put in place, and also talk about what is achievable within the fact that we're in fiscal restraint and that we can't just be able to put money in supporting all of these different programs. I think that this is where leveraging things that are already in place, broadening it, is something that is extremely important. I'm proud to know that the minister of agriculture took that on and had those conversations. It really means a lot to me, but I know that it means a lot to a lot of different people.

From the very start when this all started, I knew that local food is a conversation that's not going away. It's a conversation that will inevitably be part of our culture, and I think that's partly to do with the fact that we've never had so much information at our fingertips than we do now. Why would that be different when it comes to the food that we eat every day? Why would the consumer that gets to

review absolutely every product that you buy not want that kind of information about the food that they're bringing to their tables, to their kids? They provide so much effort on so many levels to make sure that they're going to the best schools. You're able to have an avenue to have these conversations about how we can support a changing generation in being interested and being interested in a productive way.

I think that's the distinguishing feature of when we get solely educated based on documentaries on Netflix about what the food system is versus actually getting together and talking to a farmer, visiting a farm, and seeing where that food comes from. It gives you a completely different experience. I think that's one goal that Albertans would be in line with of really having for their kids, having for their families, but also having for the food that they bring to the table. I think that's where we're going to have to continue having this conversation.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

I know that there's been a lot of work at the different levels of making sure that there are programs about what it's like to deliver the food to that table. There's a different experience based on whether you're a small producer, medium producer, or large producer, right? When you have the capacity to be a large producer, you also have the capacity to have a large market that you depend on in order to make sure that your farm is sustainable. The same isn't true for smaller ones. Whether one is the best or not, it's important to make sure that we're actively thinking about what the impacts are. I think that the minister of agriculture has taken leadership on being engaged on those issues, and I applaud him for his efforts in doing so. I think that it's something that we need to continue doing.

There are lots of volunteer groups, agricultural societies that incorporate into their sustainable programming things like being able to make sausages, you know, and people bring their products there. They have a commercial kitchen that they're able to rent out, and that's part of the thing that makes their agricultural society sustainable. When we talk about that, that is integrated into our food system. We should know what those impacts are. We should know what we can do to leverage those kinds of tools to not just support the producers but support local volunteer organizations, that are incredibly powerful, impacting our economy and our communities.

Madam Speaker, this is something that I think we can get a lot of similarities on.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? Go ahead, Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yes. I enjoyed the comments by the minister immensely – no; the Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park. [interjection] Well, soon maybe, or maybe not.

But the question to the member, you know, is about the literal interpretations of the legislation that we have in front of us. It says in here:

- (a) "agricultural product" means
 - (i) an animal, a plant or an animal and plant product,
 - (ii) a product, including any food or drink, wholly or partly derived from an animal or a plant.

Madam Speaker, it doesn't include a valuable sector, an organic food known as honey, because bees are not a plant or an animal.

Part of what my comment is, Madam Speaker, is that I'm able to sell my product directly to a maltster because of a freedom that was achieved in 2012 from legislation that was created in 1943. Part of the reason that we're able to have the freedom that we have now in

this country to have craft beers and microbreweries, north of 70 microbreweries in Alberta to my understanding, is because of the freedom that was created in 2012 from legislation that was created in 1943, federal legislation. That is why I may sound somewhat significant or distinct or trying to be as concise and as accurate as I can in the definition.

To the member opposite: could you explain to me how this legislation would relate to people who produce honey?

The Deputy Speaker: Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

Cortes-Vargas: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think that one of the interesting parts of any kind of local food discussion is the definition, and it is the part where absolutely every single local food discussion starts. It sometimes cannot even go anywhere else because people can't decide: well, you know, I produce it here, but maybe part of it goes to B.C. It's one of the reasons that it had to be brought. I think that there is definitely an intent here to make sure that we are looking at how we can support the food system, and we know that there are always limitations in the definitions of local food. That's always the case because in some instances you can define it as having to be produced, processed, and completely made in Alberta, but then you lose a big sector of the organization. Definitely, I know that it's been a discussion. I don't have the answer for the member as to specifically how it impacts honey.

5:00

What I do know is that our government is really committed to making sure that we are listening to those of you that are wanting to strengthen our local food system. That's why we're creating a council, to have to these discussions. It's not just a partisan conversation but an ability to have the discussions on an overall level. There are very few ways that you can try to bring in a definition that isn't at some point going to take someone out. I think that's part of the fact that you are trying to talk about your local food system, but you're also talking about the processors, you're also talking about the transportation routes, and you're also talking about the fact that they travel. You know, that's why I call it a system more than just the sector, because it's one that has to be worked on together.

One of the difficulties when it comes to researching the smaller ones is that you can't actually publish a lot of information about the smaller ones because it's too identifiable to know which farm you're talking about because there are probably only a few of them. It becomes harder to generalize that information and to make it into policy to support them. I think that's where we come into a strength of talking about the issue as a whole, to build a comprehensive kind of full-spectrum support of how we can step forward in this discussion.

One of the recommendations that I'm sure the council can explore is: do we need to encompass these different areas? I can actually clear that up. Part of the bill actually brings in a local food council, and that council is made up of folks from small, medium, and large producers. It's also processors. It's also the folks that run farmers' markets. It's a large spectrum of people, and I think they have the discussion as to how we can support these groups of people. I think that's where we talk about why the legislation talks to their mandate.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to Bill 7? The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a privilege today to stand and speak to second reading of Bill 7, Supporting Alberta's

Local Food Sector Act. At first blush a lot of folks maybe were thinking that this would be a rehash of Bill 202, that we had seen before, just under a similar name and similar title, but I am glad to see that it is not. But I do have some questions and I do have some concerns on how we proceed forward.

The Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park just alluded to the intent of the bill, to serve good, but we also have to recognize that there are risks in everything that we put forward, and interpretation can lead to different results from the intent. We try and produce legislation here that is as all-encompassing as possible and to take into consideration all possible results before we approve legislation and move forward with legislation.

You know, the bill is titled Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act, and I guess the one thing I would ask, then, is: what is the government's role in that? We have to ensure that government is doing what is necessary to serve their citizens in a way that does not interfere with the ability of the citizens, the industry, and others to continue to reap the rewards of their opportunity and continue to produce and process agricultural products meant for consumption in a way where they're able to produce it and process it in their specific manner, that would be able to be marketed to others.

You know, we look at Bill 7, and it's divided up into three main parts. The first part, part 1, is regarding local food. With that part, it's a recognition of Alberta local food week. I think that's good. That can't hurt. It's identifying the importance of local food and brings awareness to industry and producers and processors and retailers that are involved in local food, the food that we are able to consume as Albertans. So I don't see where that can potentially cause any unforeseen circumstances.

Then we move to the local food council, and when we start to move to the local food council, there's a need to get a full understanding of the intent of the council. It may be good, but we have to allow ourselves to recognize that there's potential for results that are unforeseen, that could create difficulty in our marketplace and could create difficulty for individuals to have opportunity and to be able to search out their opportunity.

I look under Local Food Council, that part of it. The council is to provide a report containing advice and recommendations regarding provincial policies, programs, pilot projects or initiatives to support the continued growth and sustainability of Alberta's local food sector, including the following matters:

- (a) potential barriers and challenges for local food producers . . .
- (b) local food aggregation and distribution;
- (c) risk management tools.

These are all good.

This is essentially where the minister is looking for a report, but then, at the end of the day, the report is left in the hands of the minister, for the minister to make regulations, and that's where it becomes concerning that the minister is then in ownership of the report. Are we sure that we're getting the outcomes from the report that are going to ensure that the government is involved in the role that the government is meant to be involved in, which is, in my opinion, to ensure that we have food product and agricultural product for consumption, to ensure that that's a safe product for consumption by Albertans?

One thing: 5(f) is "certification opportunities for local food producers and local food processors." I would have a little bit of difficulty with going along with the open-endedness of that. I'm trying to understand why they feel that those opportunities are possibly not there at this time.

The second part of the bill, organic agricultural products. The Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park mentioned that the dairy group was lobbying towards recognition of organic standards

within Alberta so that they can export their product. Well, the dairy industry cannot export their product regardless of the recognition of organic. The dairy industry is a supply-managed industry, so there is no opportunity for them to be able to export their product.

This type of certification that's being looked at here appears, to me, to run in line with CFIA certification. We have to ask ourselves: what is the industry, whether it's dairy or any other organic production, expecting government to actually take a position on here? Are they expecting government to be there to enforce the regulations that are put forward? When we take a look at organic foods compared to nonorganic foods, is it the government's role to decide whether one is safe and one is not safe? Yes, but if the government decides that they're both safe, then we look at the fact that we are able to allow production of those products without having to spend taxpayers' money to protect the brand of one product versus the brand of the other products.

5:10

We also have to be very careful. You know, we have it separated into two parts in this bill, local food and organic agricultural products. I believe the Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park was also on a couple of occasions not necessarily stumbling but mixing the two together as if they're one in the same. That would not be accurate, so I think we need to recognize that that is a risk also, where it's looked at as if this is a bill on local food, but it's definitely a bill on local food and the organic brand part of the food sector in Alberta.

You know, full disclosure here, Madam Speaker. I am a grain producer. I have in the past also been a beef and pork producer. I've been involved in agriculture all my life. I am glad to see a bill like this come forward and a recognition of the importance of agriculture within the province of Alberta and what it provides for the province of Alberta.

We are very fortunate, and it's described in the beginning of the bill here, in the preamble. The preamble recognizes that "a thriving local food sector continues to build on the strengths of the Province's agriculture and food industry, which includes a highly productive land base." We in Alberta and throughout Canada need to recognize the blessing that that is for not only us but for others throughout the world. That productive land base allows us to provide a diversity of crops, livestock, and other agricultural products. That land base is producing products that are far beyond the ability of Albertans to actually consume. Some of that product will be consumed here; some of the product will need to be exported.

You know, a lot of product that we currently consume as Albertans that's purchased at the local supermarket is locally produced. Is there a necessity to promote that? Possibly, but I think we also have to recognize that there's a critical point in time where there are supermarkets and individuals working together at this current time that are retailing local food through their systems and that have developed good relationships and have spent the time to do that. We want to ensure that we don't get in the way of them being able to do that.

As with many things in government, we have to recognize that we don't want to interfere with what's already a good thing. People have invested time and energy and dollars to develop the ability to market their product as a local product.

The Deputy Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt, hon. member, but pursuant to Standing Order 19(1)(c) we must move to the next order of business.

Hon. members, yesterday the vote pursuant to Standing Order 19(1)(c) was postponed due to the emergency debate. Therefore,

this afternoon I must put the question on the following motion for consideration of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's speech.

Consideration of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech

Ms Sweet moved, seconded by Mr. Malkinson, that an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows.

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

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

[Motion carried]

Government Motions (continued)

Address in Reply to Speech from the Throne

15. Ms Larivee moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:
Be it resolved that the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne be engrossed and presented to Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor by such members of the Assembly as are members of Executive Council.

The Deputy Speaker: This motion is debatable. Are there any members who wish to speak to this?

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader to close debate?

Ms Larivee: Yes.

[Government Motion 15 carried]

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, prior to moving to the next order of business, I've had a request for unanimous consent to revert to Introduction of Guests.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests (reversion)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

Drever: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you my sister and my niece Gwen. My sister is a devoted New Democrat and a fierce feminist, and she's also here to watch the debate on Bill 9. My niece Gwen is also a devoted New Democrat and is a Premier in training. I'd like to ask the members to give them the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Thank you.

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading (continued)

Bill 9 Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier and Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure today to rise to move second reading of Bill 9, Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act.

This legislation will help women in Alberta access abortion services without fear of interference, harassment, threats, or intimidation. It will also protect doctors and other service providers. Our goal is to stand with Alberta women to ensure that they feel safe when making health care choices. Madam Speaker, abortion has been legal in Canada since 1969 – that's nearly 50 years – and it's been nearly three decades since the Morgentaler decision was rendered by the Supreme Court of Canada. Generations of women have legally been allowed to access abortion procedures without restriction, but in Alberta the reality is that women who want to exercise their health care choice still face safety and privacy concerns. Let's be clear. This is not about freedom of speech. It's about ensuring that Albertans can access health services without being bullied.

The Kensington clinic, in Calgary, and the Woman's Health Options clinic, in Edmonton, have reported an increase in protestor activity. At Kensington they've reported a doubling of protestors just in this last year. The 40-day campaigns were organized to target women and staff each spring and fall. Last week I met with staff from both clinics. They talked about patients being physically blocked as they tried to enter the clinic. They talked about yelling so loud that it could be heard throughout the concrete building. They talked about protestors banging on car windows or blocking their doors so that patients couldn't exit their vehicles. They talked about patients so agitated that staff had to calm them down when they entered the building. They talked about patients who do not show up because they're too scared for their safety. It makes a difficult day even more difficult, one of the doctors told me.

One of the ironies here is that some of these women desperately want to be pregnant. For reasons beyond their control they haven't been able to carry healthy pregnancies to term. It adds insult to injury for these women to have to listen to strangers shouting at them.

The same doctor talked about her own unease outside her workplace. Every day she rushes to get in her vehicle and away. If she stays in the parking lot, she risks being watched, photographed, approached by a stranger hoping to intimidate her. Photography has become a new favourite bullying tactic in recent months. Staff tell me this. "Bullying" is the key word here because a bully preys on the fear of the unknown.

Madam Speaker, these clinics currently rely on court injunctions to keep protestors at bay. These injunctions were put in place years ago and have had to be repeatedly amended at the expense and time of these clinics. It's costly to go to court, and these injunctions have proven to be a very limiting tool. Even with injunctions, protestor activity is on the rise. Today's protestors know that consequences don't exist. Police simply ask them to leave. They may. They regularly come back the next day. Or they can leave before the police even arrive. Stronger measures are needed.

5:20

Bill 9 names this for what it is, a public health and safety issue. It demonstrates the government of Alberta's commitment to safe and timely health care and to removing barriers for vulnerable women. This legislation would be enforceable across Alberta. It would also be flexible. It could be used to protect pharmacies or the homes or offices of doctors or other service providers.

My cosponsor will talk you through more of the details, but I'll give you a basic overview of this bill. Access zones would be established around the Kensington clinic and Woman's Health Options. Inside these zones patients and staff would be free from

interference and harassment. They would be protected from being blocked, coerced, or threatened. Family and friends accompanying their loved ones would also be protected. Just imagine that someone you know makes this choice. You want to be there for them. You have to watch your daughter, your sister, your friend be called a murderer by a complete stranger.

The bill protects women and staff from unsolicited photos, videos, or other recordings inside the access zone and protects them from third parties distributing or using these photos or recordings. It protects doctors and service providers from worrying about whether protestors will target their neighbours and friends to try to bully them into not providing abortions.

This legislation includes fines and potential jail time. The need for real consequences is something we've heard repeatedly from these women. The penalties are meant as a significant deterrent, and it's my hope, Madam Speaker, that police never have to use these as a tool of enforcement.

I am proud to introduce this bill today because I believe that Alberta women should feel safe when making choices about their health care. We heard yesterday that the Leader of the Opposition does not agree. He does not believe the women who say that this is a problem. He doesn't believe those women. He does not believe that they are subjected to bullying and that the current injunctions that are in place are ineffective. He has clearly not been listening, Madam Speaker, not listening to the women who've publicly said that this is going to make a real difference in their lives, not listening to the other provinces, like Ontario, Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador, which took similar steps in recent months, not listening to British Columbia, who had to act on this almost two decades ago. I am disappointed but not surprised given the opposition leader's track record on women's choice.

But let's be clear. By failing to say yes, he is saying no, saying no to these women who are asking for some dignity, some respect, and some space to access their doctors' offices. By failing to say yes, he's turning a deaf ear to shouts of harassment and to bullying. By failing to say yes, members of the opposition can't simply change the channel. You can't opt out of this problem. It's not too late to consider a simple question before you here today. Are you going to stand up for women? Or another question: as a member of this Legislature, are you going to protect vulnerable people? This is about freedom from intimidation tactics that rely on shame and stigma as well as fear.

On this side of the House we're committed to standing up for Albertans, we're committed to saying no to bullies, and we are committed to helping Alberta women make their own choices about their own health care.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today on behalf of my colleagues and Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition to speak to Bill 9. I must admit that I'm rather saddened to be standing here today debating this piece of legislation. I'm disappointed to see my hon. colleagues on the government side of this House play such an obviously cynical political game with such a sensitive issue. I am disappointed to see this NDP government politicize and reignite a deeply divisive debate. As the *Edmonton Journal's* Paula Simons recently said during her podcast: it pains me to think we are going to make this into a political football. While this bill does not officially seek to reopen the abortion debate, it appears that the NDP is trying to do just that. Ironically, the NDP is trying to do exactly what they frequently accuse their opponents of.

Why have they done this, Madam Speaker? A desperate, floundering government in the final years of its mandate is trying to score a few cheap political points by painting the opposition and its supporters as fundamentally incompatible with women and women's rights. They have deliberately created a situation where personal views on deeply personal issues are publicly adjudicated, and those who fall on one side of the line are shamed by their own government. We have seen this time and time again from the NDP. You don't agree with the carbon tax or the climate leadership plan? Well, you must be a climate denier. You think the government should be doing more to control costs? You must want to blow up hospitals and fire all the teachers. You want to protect school choice and parental rights in education? Well, you must not care about vulnerable kids.

We recently saw the government's allies the Trudeau Liberals play a similarly cynical game with the summer jobs program, for which the federal government was rightly called out.

Now, if you don't agree with what many see as an attempt to curtail Albertans' right to free speech and peaceful assembly, the NDP say that you must condone the harassment and intimidation of vulnerable women. Madam Speaker, that's a ridiculous notion. Alberta is a diverse place, including diversity of opinion, and that's a really good thing. It is high time that this government dispensed with the false choices and straw-man arguments and started defending its policy decisions on their merits. Instead, we see the NDP working overtime to instill fear in Albertans because it knows that its failed economic agenda is deeply unpopular with voters. Shame on them. It's a desperate move by a desperate government. In fairness, though, I understand why the NDP doesn't want to discuss their \$97 billion debt or their failing energy strategy. I understand why the NDP is trying to distract Albertans from the current headlines.

Madam Speaker:

Everyone has the following fundamental freedoms:

- (a) freedom of conscience and religion;
- (b) freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression . . .
- (c) freedom of peaceful assembly; and
- (d) freedom of association.

Now, that's not my opinion. That's directly from the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, for those opposite who might not be aware.

However, we do not have the right to harass and intimidate others as we exercise those rights. We agree a hundred per cent with the Minister of Health when she says that the harassment and intimidation of vulnerable women are completely unacceptable. Harassment is already part of the Criminal Code of Canada. There are other parts of the world where this is more of a common phenomenon, which isn't to say that it hasn't happened at all in Alberta. Again from Paula Simons: I remember when there used to be really nasty protests outside of clinics; that hasn't happened in a very, very long time.

We've heard troubling anecdotes from staff at each of Alberta's two main clinics, and we agree that this behaviour is wrong and it should not be tolerated. That's why there are long-standing court injunctions in place to keep protestors at a distance. We expect the police to properly enforce the law. These court orders, combined with existing laws that prohibit harassment, have worked to keep this behaviour to a minimum for almost two decades.

Madam Speaker, any law that we pass in this Legislature must balance the objective that it is trying to achieve with the protection of our Charter rights and freedoms. We all have a responsibility as MLAs to defend the Charter rights of all Albertans, even those we disagree with. As a party rich with history of protest I truly hope that the government has considered these implications, but many have expressed concerns that the government has not. Yes, women

entering and exiting abortion clinics absolutely have a right to do so free of intimidation and harassment, but citizens also have a right to express peacefully their opinion as it relates to abortion, even if some don't want to hear it. Bill 9 impacts one's ability to do so. What's more, it offers no more protection than the existing court injunctions do today.

5:30

But like I said earlier, Madam Speaker, that wasn't really the intent of this bill. The intent all along has been to draw this side of the House into a debate on an incredibly contentious social issue and claim any opposition to their flawed legislation as sinister. The NDP is trying to pit Albertans against Albertans. Well, I will not take this bait. I will be abstaining from voting on Bill 9. I know that the reasons for being on one side of this issue or the other are complex and deeply personal, and it's not up to any of us to judge Albertans for their personal beliefs, especially if those beliefs are expressed peacefully and in accordance with the law.

In closing, Madam Speaker, let me leave you with this quote from Evelyn Beatrice Hall, who famously wrote: I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

Drever: Thank you, Madam Speaker. That was really hard to hear on my end. I am offended by these comments. I'm offended as a woman. Not only are these comments hurtful to me; they are hurtful to all women in this province. I believe that the Member for Airdrie should apologize to all women.

Madam Speaker, I'm here to talk about Bill 9, and I'm here to talk about why it is needed, why it is long overdue, and why our government is finally acting on this. This is a piece of legislation that has been ignored for the past 44 years. In fact, I actually arranged a tour of Kensington clinic in Calgary with government members here, and they said to me that staff were saying that we were the first government to ever step foot into that building, to even look and see what they do. You know, I was happy to go, and I found it really informative and educational. We had a really good discussion about what's needed and what our government can do to help. This was one of the things that they said: we need to expand the bubble zones so that women don't feel intimidated when they're accessing their legal right. It's not fair to these women, who are in a tough situation. No one wants to get an abortion, but sometimes it's needed, and it's not anyone else's business but their own.

You know, I am proud that our government went to that clinic and actually educated ourselves and did something. Now we are actually putting in change; we're doing something about it. That's why I'm so proud to be part of this government. Because we listen to Albertans. We don't make excuses like the Official Opposition, using freedom of speech to get out of it. I'm offended by that, Madam Speaker, and I wanted to get that on record.

I'm going to get to the bill now. I rise to speak to Bill 9, the Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act. This is an incredibly important piece of legislation. Doctors, staff, patients, families, and friends of people accessing abortion services have been speaking out about the harassment they face. As the Minister of Health has outlined, these concerns deserve a response, and I am proud to see this legislation, which enacts the most stringent consequences for those seeking to interfere with women's rights to access health care services.

Bill 9 establishes a 50-metre access zone around Kensington clinic in Calgary and Woman's Health Options in Edmonton. These access zones protect women and their families as well as staff,

doctors, and service providers from intimidation, interference, and harassment. No one can try to deter a patient from accessing abortion services or demand that a physician or service provider not provide or facilitate abortion services. The bill bans unsolicited photos, videos, or other recordings of patients, physicians, or service providers both inside and outside an access zone. To protect patients and staff, it would be illegal to use these kinds of photos or recordings to prevent someone from accessing or providing abortion services.

This legislation also protects patients and doctors outside of access zones in Calgary and Edmonton. Doctors and providers would be protected from being repeatedly approached, accompanied, or followed with the intent of convincing them not to provide abortions. That includes medical professionals already providing abortion services or those who may do so in the future. Threatening conduct against doctors and staff is out. It would also be illegal to harass a doctor's neighbour, friend, or family member to try to influence their willingness to provide abortion services. It would be illegal to repeatedly send unwanted communications via phone, mail, fax, or electronic means.

Finally, the legislation also includes potential protection for homes of doctors and service providers as well as offices or pharmacies. As pharmacists now can dispense Mifegymiso – sorry if I'm pronouncing that wrong – a drug used to perform medical abortions, we want to ensure that the legislation allows for future protections if they are needed. Through regulation, on a needed basis, a doctor's home could be protected by a 160-metre access zone. An office could be protected by a 20-metre access zone.

This bill also includes provisions dealing with injunctions, actions for damages, arrests, and the use of survey documents as evidence in court.

As the Minister of Health pointed out, these penalties are meant as a deterrent. For the first offence an individual could be fined up to \$5,000 or sentenced up to six months in jail or receive both a fine and jail time. Other offences: those fines increase up to \$10,000, one year in jail, or both a fine and imprisonment. Separate penalties for corporations are included because the distribution of images or recordings taken in the access zone might be carried out by a corporation. A corporation could be fined a maximum of \$25,000 for a first offence, which would increase up to \$100,000 for other offences. It is also possible to be prosecuted as an individual while acting for a corporation.

These are real consequences, with teeth, but they are equally balanced by the consideration for the Charter-protected rights to free speech that every Canadian has. We care about these very important rights, Madam Speaker, but they must be held in balance with each person's right to access health care without restriction or interference. I believe this legislation strikes that balance, and I urge all members of this Assembly to support this bill.

Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other speakers to the bill? My apologies. I was looking on the wrong side. The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

5:40

Ms McPherson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I understand that it would be difficult to see me on this side of the House right now.

I'm really proud to be able to stand and provide an opposition perspective on this particular bill. I think Bill 9 is an important bill,

I think Bill 9 is a necessary bill, and, if anything, I would urge the government to go even further with this bill.

This bill establishes a bubble zone, a safety zone of 50 metres, around the establishments that do provide abortion clinics and other reproductive health services to women. There are two right now in Alberta. We have one in Edmonton, Woman's Health Options, and we also have the Kensington clinic in Calgary. As the Member for Calgary-Bow was talking about, I also participated in the tour of that clinic. It was very concerning to me that people think that it's okay to try and prevent women from accessing legal health care. I can't imagine any other circumstance where people would think it was okay to protest somebody seeking health care. If I was going to go for a bypass, if anyone was going for a bypass, I don't think anyone would think it was okay to have protestors outside of the hospital saying: "No. I'm sorry. You can't have a bypass today. Think about what you're doing."

The bill also has provisions in it that prevent, essentially, institutionalized protests against abortion, which I think is really important. This goes further than other bills, and I think that that's a really smart move on the part of the government.

Things that I would like to see enhanced. I know it's not directly in this bill, but not all women in Alberta have equal access to reproductive health care, and not all women in Alberta have equal access to abortion services. I know that some of that has been improved with the introduction of the very difficult to pronounce medications that do help with this procedure. But it is, honestly, my sincere hope that at some time in the future every woman in Alberta who requires an abortion has the unfettered, unbullied, unintimidated access to be able to seek an abortion.

I also want to talk very briefly about the medical professionals who provide these services to women. These are people who are dedicated and incredibly caring. They care about women's health, they care about women's well-being, and they have respect for women. That's why they provide the services that they do. I know there are jobs that some people do, like firefighters or paramedics, where they understand that there are inherent risks to their lives in providing those services to our communities, but I don't think that doctors and nurses and other health care professionals who are providing health care, legal health care, to women should be afraid to go to work. They shouldn't be intimidated. They shouldn't be discouraged from providing legal health care to women.

Somebody earlier had talked about having deeply held personal beliefs that prevent them from taking certain actions. While I have a great deal of respect for people's deeply held beliefs, nobody has ever been compelled to have an abortion, to my knowledge, in Alberta. There may be some cases outside of the auspices of this particular legislation, but this is a health care procedure that women seek because for whatever reason they find it necessary. I had an abortion when I was a younger person. What I did was that I went and I talked to my doctor. Those are the only two people that should be involved in this conversation regardless of what anyone else's beliefs are.

I think that at the root of the protest against women seeking abortion services is a mistrust of women. I think that people don't believe that women are smart enough or empowered enough or deserving of being able to make decisions about their health care by themselves with their doctor. It's no one else's business. For these reasons, I am very happy to support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker and to the member for her comments. There were a few things that were said

by a previous speaker that I want to set the record straight on and take this opportunity. Feel free to elaborate, hon. member, in the time remaining.

Number one, this is not the same as the current injunctions that are in place. It's not the same for a few reasons. The current injunctions don't apply to public property like streets. They don't apply to the roads. They don't apply to the sidewalks. I've had women tell me that somebody will stand on the sidewalk, because the injunction doesn't apply to the sidewalk, right up against their car door, so they can't open their car door. Or they stand on the sidewalk, blocking the access so that women going to their doctors' appointments feel that they have to go through the mud puddle and the grass to get to their doctors' appointments.

These are the kinds of changes that this legislation will make to the physical space. It'll also be 50 metres, which is a greater space of protection than the injunctions. But the main thing that they said is that an injunction without any enforcement mechanism, without any teeth isn't worth the paper it's written on. So by actually giving some tools to law enforcement to actually be able to enforce the rules that are in place, rather than going and saying, "Please move on" – somebody may or may not move on, but there's nothing to compel them to respect that direction from the officer on future days.

I do want to say to the previous speaker that what was said doesn't reflect reality. I also certainly welcome the hon. member to respond to that.

One other thing I wanted to mention is that aggression is something that was mentioned by the women who've approached me, saying that they'll be with their spouse, going to get this procedure done. Their spouse feels really awful for them and is there to support them, and then they are called a murderer or a killer or, you know: it's not too late to change your mind. It actually creates greater aggression between the spouse, who's there to support their loved one, and the people who are on the streets yelling these things.

Your remarks with regard to both those factors would be appreciated. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Injunctions, I agree, aren't effective. They aren't doing the job. We've seen protestors escalate their behaviour. They are finding the boundaries of the injunction, and they're taking advantage of that. It is incumbent on a government to protect everybody. People who disagree with abortion procedures are certainly welcome to make their voice known in other ways, but to interfere with somebody who is seeking a legal health care procedure or advice even is unconscionable. For those reasons, that's why injunctions aren't enough.

I think aggression towards women, regardless of how that's expressed, during protesting against women who are seeking abortions is at the root of why people go out. It is a disdain for women, it is a disrespect for women that seems to motivate these kinds of actions. I can totally understand somebody not agreeing personally with seeking an abortion. I would say: please, don't ever seek an abortion; don't do that. I don't think anybody would ever compel them to.

Our country has decided that this is a legal procedure and that women are able to make these decisions on their own, of their own accord, and for these reasons, yeah, aggression should not play into them seeking that kind of a procedure.

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

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you for this opportunity to speak on this important legislation. Often this place gets called an echo chamber. I can't imagine why.

The member from the Official Opposition continued to ask us: "Why now? Why would you do this now? Why would you bring forward this legislation to protect women trying to get reproductive health care?" Well, why now? Because it wasn't done in the '70s or the '80s or the '90s or in 2000 or 2015. So it's time. It's overdue. It is long past due.

You know, it's kind of interesting to hear the new world view from across the way. If the view doesn't have the name Justin Trudeau or job-killing something, it just doesn't seem to fit.

5:50

But I'll tell you why I think this is so important. Just last summer – and I'd sort of forgotten that this was a problem because driving by a clinic or a place where women can obtain these services isn't on my normal route anymore. I drove by and actually saw a person being really loud and moving a sign around. I saw him going after a woman pushing a stroller. So I stopped, and it just clicked: oh, my gosh; this is where the clinic is. I pulled over and took a photograph of this. It was horrible. This woman was clearly trying to make her way into this clinic or to see a doctor or a provider. This person was holding this gross sign right in her face, and there was a baby in the stroller. Of course, people were driving by and watching this. I thought: this is so ridiculous. This is so ridiculous. Not to mention that people have died from the violence by the people who just don't agree with a woman's right, a woman's human right. They have killed physicians that do this procedure. They have vandalized and torched clinics that offer this procedure to women or support women in this way, and it just continues.

All we're trying to do here today is to say that it is not okay to harass and intimidate women as they exercise their absolute right to obtain health care. And what do we get accused of? We get accused of playing politics. That's baloney. That's absolute baloney. This is about: finally, we're getting to it. Finally. Just like so many other pieces of legislation, it's about: finally, we are getting to a place where we're having this conversation. It's not about what you believe or your religion. It is about protecting a woman's right to choose her health care and to get safe health care without abuse and intimidation, and it is not up to the provider of the clinic to pay the money, to spend the time to get an injunction. That's ridiculous.

A couple of years ago I had a little taste of what it was like to be the target of somebody's belief, thoughts about abortion, about women's reproductive rights. Maybe it was because I was on vacation and really relaxed and not following the whole Alberta Legislature Twitter feed. You know, it was right around the time the leader was running or had made his intentions clear to run, and one of my concerns following federal politics here in Alberta has been just the positions of different federal politicians around women's issues. That's something that has always been important to me.

So I asked a question about what his stance was and then proceeded to offer some personal information. If I could roll back time, I don't know that I would do that because the hate and the abuse and the threats and the most disgusting, vile things that came my way were just mind-boggling. Those were anonymous people that were safe behind a computer screen firing this disgustingness at me, and it just made me think about what that was like for that woman with the baby in a stroller, just pushing it to a clinic just trying to get some health care and that this man was able and

allowed to do what he did, where this wouldn't be allowed anywhere else.

That's why we're doing it. That's why we're finally, finally, finally doing it, and I am so pleased to be able to support it.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? Hon. member, under 29(2)(a)?

Ms Fitzpatrick: Not under 29(2)(a).

The Deputy Speaker: Any others under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Any other speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my honour to stand in support of this bill, a bill which at its essence I have fought for during my entire adult life. I see this bill from many perspectives but two in particular. The first is that every person in this province should know that they are safe, whether that's in going to work, whether that's in going to school, or whether that's in going to a clinic for medical attention.

Perhaps the following might give a graphic of the reality that women live, a double standard in which women have lived most of their lives, a reality which encouraged me to the activism on this issue. I might stand outside an adult entertainment business with a sign that berates men for their choices inside this establishment. However, to access this business, they actually don't have to go to that business and go through a gauntlet of protesters calling them perverts or sex addicts or something like that. However, a woman who is accessing a medical procedure to terminate a pregnancy or to get birth control for whatever reason has been and continues to be subjected to threats which are far worse from protesters, who are trying to impose their value system on them.

The second is from a perspective near and dear to my heart, and that is choice and bullying. In 1974, '75, and '76 I did not choose to be pregnant, but I was. Once I knew that I was pregnant, I took extra care of myself. I ate healthy, as I always did. I exercised, as I always did. I wanted those pregnancies to go to fruition. I did not

get to fruition on two of those pregnancies, not by my choice. Both of those pregnancies were finalized with a D&C after the fetus succumbed to the violent abuse from my ex-husband. A D&C is the same procedure as an abortion. The 1976 pregnancy was completed but with an awful lot of duress as I worried day in and day out whether my ex-husband would come home in a rage and attack me again. In fact, he did come home three and a half weeks before my daughter was born and he attacked me, so I worried in that three and a half weeks. I kept feeling my stomach for movement, to feel the heartbeat, and I worried that I was going to lose that baby as well.

When she was born and I knew she was okay, I had asked the doctor to do a tubal ligation, to tie my tubes. I could not do that without my ex-husband's permission. He gave that permission, but then he withdrew it at the last minute. Fortunately for me, that procedure was already completed. Those pregnancies were some 40 years ago, a different time, a time when women found themselves with no-choice pregnancies, and the only way to protect themselves was to seek a back-alley, unsafe termination of that pregnancy. I support this bill because I see the bullying, controlling, harassing behaviour being openly displayed against women seeking medical attention for termination of a pregnancy at clinics or against medical staff who perform medical procedures.

I am appalled that anyone would think that they have the right to impose their value system on another when they have no idea what it is or what's happened in this particular case or on this person who has to make a choice such as this. This is my body. This is my choice, nobody else's.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, pursuant to Standing Order 4(2) the Assembly stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

Pursuant to the 2018 main estimates schedule the Legislative Policy Committee on Families and Communities will convene tomorrow morning to consider the estimates of Health in the Rocky Mountain Room.

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:59 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, April 11, 2018

Day 15

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Coolahan	Schreiner
Dach	Starke
Fitzpatrick	Taylor
Gotfried	

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Goehring
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Miller
Ellis	Orr
Hinkley	Renaud
Horne	Shepherd
Luff	Swann
McKitrick	Yao
McPherson	

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Shepherd
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Aheer	Littlewood
Drever	Pitt
Gill	van Dijken
Horne	Woollard
Kleinsteinuber	

Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Wanner
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Cooper	Nixon
Dang	Piquette
Jabbour	Pitt
Luff	Schreiner
McIver	

Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms Kazim
Deputy Chair: Connolly

Anderson, W.	Orr
Babcock	Rosendahl
Drever	Stier
Drysdale	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kleinsteinuber	Taylor
McKitrick	

Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	Miller
Cooper	Nielsen
Goehring	Nixon
Gotfried	Pitt
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Cyr
Deputy Chair: Mr. Dach

Barnes	Malkinson
Carson	Miller
Fildebrandt	Nielsen
Gotfried	Panda
Hunter	Renaud
Littlewood	Turner
Luff	

Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola
Deputy Chair: Mr. Drysdale

Babcock	Malkinson
Dang	McPherson
Fraser	Nielsen
Hanson	Rosendahl
Kazim	Woollard
Kleinsteinuber	Vacant
Loewen	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, April 11, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let us reflect and/or pray, each in our own way. As we contemplate and prepare for our deliberations and debates, let us be mindful of the footprints we are creating today and in which others will walk tomorrow.

Statement by the Speaker

Mourning Victims of Humboldt Bus Crash

The Speaker: Hon. members, in keeping with the support Albertans are providing to those affected by the tragic bus crash involving the Humboldt Broncos and in recognition of our national grief, tomorrow, April 12, I will allow Members of the Legislative Assembly to wear sports jerseys of any type for the duration of the day's proceedings. As a statement of this Legislature's compassion, I would encourage each and every one of you to do so.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Ms Jabbour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on your behalf to introduce to all members of the Assembly Mr. Joe Versikaitis. Mr. Versikaitis is a photographer and portrait artist who concentrates mainly on the art of sport. His passion for revealing the intricate relationship between a person and their sport is evident in his highly acclaimed work. Born in Venezuela, Mr. Versikaitis moved to Alberta, where he studied at Medicine Hat College and later earned his degree in computer graphics and dynamic media in Calgary. Mr. Versikaitis now resides in Calgary with his wife, Michele. He is seated in your gallery, and I would ask him to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome, Joe.

The hon. Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you a group of advocates from the Parkinson Association of Alberta. Today is World Parkinson's Day, which is a time to raise awareness about the disease, to build understanding about its impacts, and to educate patients, caregivers, and professionals about the condition. I send a warm thank you to the Parkinson Association of Alberta for their work in supporting Albertans affected by Parkinson's and helping them live full and happy lives. I was pleased to meet with the delegation before the proceedings this afternoon and to hear a little bit about the latest research in Parkinson's. I would ask that John Petryshen, CEO of the association, along with other board members, staff, volunteers, and families please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Nielsen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a real pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members in the Assembly a very proud member of team Edmonton-Decore,

James Paull. James is a proud father of three wonderful children and is a long-time NDP supporter and a volunteer for several of my colleagues here in the House. He's also a local drag queen and an antique transit bus collector. I'm very proud to have him as a member of my team even though he is a Leafs fan. I would now ask James to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: I'm just wondering where you keep the buses.

Members' Statements

YWCA and SPCA in Banff-Cochrane

Mr. Westhead: Mr. Speaker, the constituency of Banff-Cochrane is full of people who are just as inspiring as the impressive landscapes that surround them. I recently attended two fundraising events for equally worthy causes. The YWCA Banff does incredibly important work helping women and families in the Bow Valley. A few weeks ago they held their annual VineArt gala fundraiser at the beautiful Fairmont Banff Springs Hotel. Proceeds from the event go towards maintaining the Bow Valley women's emergency shelter program. A recent funding announcement from our government means that they can hire a second full-time staffperson for their harmony project, which provides direct supports to victims of sexual violence.

Our government also helped cover the costs of renovating their bridge house project, a home for survivors who are prepared to transition from an emergency shelter to a supported, independent living arrangement. This project was made possible by the support of a wide cross-section of the Bow Valley community, including tradespeople and church officials at St. George-in-the-Pines.

While YWCA Banff provides essential supports to women and families, the Bow Valley SPCA provides supports to our furry family members. Last weekend I attended the SPCA's Paws 'n' Paints fundraising event at ArtsPlace in Canmore. Participants took part in art classes to paint animal statues and portraits and make clay pet bowls.

The Bow Valley SPCA provides the community with an adoption centre that follows a no-kill, no-cage philosophy. All dogs and cats are housed in rooms rather than cages or kennel runs. This reduces the stress of being housed in an adoption centre.

I'd like to thank YWCA Banff and the Bow Valley SPCA for the work they do every day providing such important services to the community. Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Decorum and Civility in the Assembly

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Abraham Lincoln was credited with saying, "Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power." As time passes and the landscape changes in the Alberta Legislature, my comprehension of Lincoln's statement has become clearer than ever.

When the United Conservative Party leader was recently elected, he was prepared to try and set a new standard for the Official Opposition in the Legislature. He did so with the intent of representing Albertans with dignity and respect. As members of the opposition it is our civic and moral obligation to every taxpayer in Alberta to question the government on their policies and actions to ensure that Albertans get the most from their representation. In that pursuit there are rules of engagement. These standing orders are intended to maintain decorum and civility in the Legislature as well as direct the proceedings in an orderly fashion.

A good friend once told me that bullies can present themselves in various fashions. Some are subtle, and others are not so subtle. We've all experienced forms of bullying throughout our lives both as children and adults. There is no place for this behaviour in this Legislature. This subject has justifiably been brought to the forefront in recent years in the political arena. As we've seen, there is a difference between respectfully presenting authority and condescendingly presenting authority in the course of debate.

Last week in the Legislature during question period the condescending presentation brought from the government towards the MLAs for Chestermere-Rocky View and Calgary-Foothills reached a new and disappointing low. The point is that this NDP government has the responsibility and honour to represent all Albertans, as do all members of the Legislature. We owe it to the Albertans that we represent to raise the level of discussion and debate to a respectfully productive level. The UCP caucus is committed to delivering on that responsibility and to showing Albertans that we have the dignified character to represent you in a manner . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, thank you.

The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Hinton Cougars

Mr. Rosendahl: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The cougar monument is the town of Hinton's 60th anniversary legacy project. Ever since the now iconic image of a cougar reclining on the Welcome to Hinton sign surfaced years ago, the cougar has become an unofficial mascot for the Hinton community.

In 2014 local resident and craftsman Roger Roy pitched the idea of making the cougar the official mascot by creating a statue in a public place. Roy searched out options for the cougar monument and found that the most fitting, considering he had long-standing ties to the timber industry, was a wood carving. One of the best purveyors of such carvings is Pioneer Log Homes, also known as the Timber Kings. The Timber Kings are famous for their log home builds around the world.

On October 27, 2017, while my staff and I watched, the cougar statue was installed at the Green Square. The arrival of the cougars in Hinton was then broadcast during an episode of *Timber Kings* on HGTV. The carved wood statue of a mother cougar and two kittens is set within a background meant to represent the Rocky Mountains. This monument is located in a place of pride near the Hinton tourist information centre on highway 16.

1:40

Visitors from all over the planet are stopping by. Politicians from across Alberta and other notable folks have begun stopping to have their pictures taken with our celebrated Hinton cats. These pictures are finding their way onto websites, Facebook pages, newspaper and magazine articles, and all over the World Wide Web.

So come to Hinton, and see our cougars when you're there. Thank you very much.

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

Official Opposition Leader's Educational Background

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to address some troubling behaviour. Recently the Member for Banff-Cochrane has been openly mocking the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition for — get this — not having completed a university degree. Yes, apparently this member thinks the hon. Leader of the Opposition is

underqualified for his position as a result, never mind that he's got over 20 years of experience in Parliament, including as minister for three federal departments, and that he's more knowledgeable on most subjects than any of us in this room.

Now, Mr. Speaker, a degree is admirable but not the only path to a successful career. Ask any LPN, rig hand, power engineer, welder, graphic designer, administrative professional, firefighter, or paramedic whether they are unqualified for the lack of a degree. In fact, I think most diploma and trade certificate holders would take offence at the member's suggestion that someone like the Member for Calgary-Lougheed deserves any less respect for not having a degree.

I myself did not pursue a university education, Mr. Speaker, yet I've had a successful career as a meat cutter, or butcher if you prefer, and then later in business before beginning my second career as an elected representative. I didn't need a degree to represent Calgarians on city council, the constituents of Calgary-Hays as their MLA, or Albertans as minister of Transportation or Infrastructure or Labour. To suggest that those of us who chose a different path are somehow second-class is unfair and arrogant.

Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the Member for Banff-Cochrane, when he made his comments, meant to smear the 80 per cent of Albertans without a university degree or just the Member for Calgary-Lougheed. There are many paths we can choose when it comes to our education that are all legitimate. To suggest that anyone who has chosen a path that doesn't include university is somehow less or unqualified in this House is not only wrong. It's offensive. But that is the level of contempt for everyday Albertans that we have sadly come to expect from the NDP.

Mr. Speaker, the member owes the Leader of the Official Opposition and, indeed, 80 per cent of all Albertans an apology.

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

Sikh Society of Calgary

Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The various communities in my riding of Calgary-Bow represent a diverse and vibrant population. The Sikh community has played a vital part in shaping the social, economic, and cultural fabric of Alberta. April is recognized as Sikh Heritage Month in Alberta. It is also significant as it marks the celebration of Vaisakhi. For Sikhs in Alberta and around the world it begins the new year and the start of a new harvest, and Vaisakhi honours the formation of the Khalsa and the birth of a code of conduct for Sikhs to live by.

Mr. Speaker, I highlight the Sikh community in my riding and, in particular, the Sikh Society of Calgary. The Sikh Society of Calgary has been a pillar of Sikhism in Calgary for over 40 years. As one of the first gurdwaras in Calgary the Sikh Society of Calgary is proud to be an active and steadfast institution promoting and practising the ideals of Sikhism. The Sikh Society of Calgary contributes to the cultural mosaic that is Alberta and promotes an attitude of integration, participation, and community service.

Mr. Speaker, the Sikh Society of Calgary has a rich and diverse history that has been shaped by the early settlers in Calgary since the early 1900s. The gurdwara was built in 1978 through the dedication and determination from the pioneer Sikhs in the Calgary area.

In participating in many events at the gurdwara, I have been heartened by their generosity not just to myself but to the wider community. Vaisakhi celebrates the fact that humans are given the spirit and opportunity to live lives of courage, sacrifice, and equality. I know that I can collectively say that we appreciate the

hard work of the Sikh community in helping to strengthen our province.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Provincial Fiscal Policies

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has suffered the worst recession in generations, and this NDP government must own it. Instead of providing stability and hope, they made the recession worse than it ever needed to be. How? By going down a path of risky ideological experiments, costing Albertans billions and saddling the next generation with massive debt.

From the start, in the midst of a recession, they imposed higher corporate taxes, higher personal income taxes, higher gas taxes, and even higher insurance taxes. Then on June 25, 2015, the environment minister proudly proclaimed an increase in the specified gas emitters regulation from \$15 to \$30 per tonne. As a result of this change, the power generators began to dump their power purchasing agreements. The decision to crank up the SGER is costing Albertans over \$2 billion. On top of that, the NDP's plan to shut down coal power early is costing Albertans another \$1.36 billion. Then in November 2015, while the Premier was campaigning in downtown Toronto, she announced that a carbon tax was on its way. It would have been nice if she would have told Albertans first. The largest tax increase in Alberta's history, and the NDP never even mentioned the carbon tax in their campaign platform. Their job-killing carbon tax is all economic pain with no environmental gain. It is just another tax directed at increased spending.

These reckless tax-and-spend policies have us on a path to \$96 billion worth of debt, have created instability and a loss of hope, and have driven over \$35 billion worth of investment away. Yes, Mr. Speaker, risky economic policies of this NDP government have made this the worst recession in generations, and they will own it in 2019 at the ballot box.

Thank you.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to provide notice that at the appropriate time I will be moving the following motion in accordance with Standing Order 42.

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government of Canada to delay its planned \$4.4 billion infrastructure funding award to the government of British Columbia until the B.C. government ceases its efforts to obstruct the Trans Mountain expansion project.

I have the appropriate copies for the page.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal.

Bill 11

Lobbyists Amendment Act, 2018

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce Bill 11, the Lobbyists Amendment Act, 2018.

Amendments to the Lobbyists Act will inspire more confidence in the policy-making process by lifting the veil on more lobbying

activity in Alberta. Albertans will have more access to information about what discussions are taking place because those being paid to influence government would need to register more of their activity. Lobbyists are currently required to provide information to the Ethics Commissioner of Alberta, who is responsible for maintaining and administering a registry of lobbyists that's publicly available. However, currently Alberta allows significant amounts of lobbying activities to go unreported. Our government is moving to change this. Albertans have a right to know who's trying to influence their opinion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 11 read a first time]

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Provincial Response to Pipeline Opposition

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It has been 316 days since the Green and NDP parties signed their agreement in British Columbia to use all tools to stop the Trans Mountain pipeline. It's been 267 days since the NDP was sworn into office. Why did it take this NDP government so long to respond with legislation threatening to turn off the taps to the Lower Mainland?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We're incredibly proud of the fact that we got the approvals on that pipeline very early in our mandate. Honestly, we thought the approvals were worth more than the paper they were written on. We thought that those approvals, which are very clearly in the national interest, meant that this pipeline would be moving forward very quickly. It seems that there have been a number of delay tactics exercised by colleagues to the west. We certainly have strategies that we can use to expedite it to move more quickly, and we are undertaking those on three fronts. I'll be happy to elaborate on those in future answers.

1:50

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, that begs the question: why did the government think that paper approval was sufficient given that their New Democrat counterparts in Victoria announced last summer, last July, that they would use every tool possible to stop Kinder Morgan? Why didn't they believe their own New Democrat friends over in Victoria?

Ms Hoffman: What we do believe is that the project, that's in the national interest, that got the federal approvals in the national interest, that very clearly demonstrates benefit to the economies of Canadians across this country, would be getting the full weight of the federal government. We can give all of our weight to this initiative. Pain is being inflicted on the families of Albertans by the B.C. government. We can certainly do the same to British Columbia although it isn't our first choice. We can go to court as intervenors. We've done that. We've won every time. We can continue to move forward with a public stake if that's so required. We call on the federal government to join us in that charge, Mr. Speaker, because this project is in the national interest, and you can't count Alberta out.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I'm a little concerned in that answer and some yesterday from the Deputy Premier that there's reference to pain on British Columbians or on British Columbia. Will she not agree with me that the majority of British Columbians support the

Trans Mountain pipeline expansion, support environmentally responsible resource development, and that our quarrel is not with ordinary British Columbians but with an irresponsible provincial government and that if we are seeking to impose consequences and sanctions, they're targeted on that government and not the people of B.C.?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll say that the government of B.C. has taken measures and sanctions that have certainly inflicted pain on the people of Alberta. Our job in the province of Alberta is to stand up for those everyday families. I'll tell you that if I was a British Columbian at the pump today in the Lower Mainland paying \$1.50, wondering what might happen to my gas prices because of the injustices that my government had been taking in British Columbia, I would certainly be appalled at that government. What we know is that the majority of British Columbians support this pipeline. It's time that their government got on board, our federal government got on board, and put their money where their mouth is.

The Speaker: Second main question.

Federal Response to Pipeline Opposition

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The federal government is negotiating the renewal of \$1.3 billion in job-training funding with the government of British Columbia. Will this government join with me in calling on the Trudeau government to withhold those \$1.3 billion in federal job-training funds unless and until the Trans Mountain expansion is complete?

Ms Hoffman: We have called on and will continue to call on the federal government to follow our province, Alberta's lead on the three fronts that we have to move forward in this very aggressive strategy, Mr. Speaker, because we won't stop until this pipeline gets built. As we've made clear, the people of British Columbia might see the same kinds of consequences because of the actions their government has taken on the people of Alberta. We certainly would not like to see that happen. We want to work together in the national interest, including getting our products, our good, Canadian products, to their refineries and upgraders in the Lower Mainland. But it can't stop there. We need to get this pipeline to tidewater. We need to expand our markets and stop having our major and only buyer being our only major competitor.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Mr. Kenney: Well, I appreciate all of that, Mr. Speaker, but perhaps the minister could try to actually answer the question. I'll restate it. Will the government join with me in calling on Ottawa to withhold the \$1.3 billion in discretionary federal job-training funding from the Victoria government unless and until the pipeline is built? Does this government agree with me that that should be used as a leverage point? Do they agree with that or not?

Ms Hoffman: I understand that the member opposite spent 20 years in Ottawa and knows what it's like to rag the puck, Mr. Speaker, but what we have are three very clear and strong tools that we can use to move this project forward. We have the ability to make sure that we control access to our products to the people of British Columbia. We have the ability to go to court, and we have as intervenors. We've done that 14 times. We've been successful, with 14 rulings in favour of Alberta. We can, if it's necessary, take a

public stake in this pipeline, potentially buy it outright, because this is in the national interest. We compel the federal government to join us in this. These three steps will make this happen and make it happen quickly.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, let the record show that this government does not support using leverage, actual, real leverage, against the New Democrats in Victoria. I don't know why she won't answer the question. The notion that their court strategy has been successful is rather obviously belied by the fact that the program was suspended on Sunday. The pipeline has been suspended. Will this government join with me in calling on the federal government to withhold the 4.1 billion federal dollars for B.C. infrastructure that were announced last week unless and until the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion is complete?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, the government of Alberta, this government of Alberta, will defend the people of Alberta and the working people of Canada on this pipeline initiative. Now it's time that industry needs Ottawa to step up as well. We call on them to act. Of course, the opposition leader never stepped up either; 20 years in Ottawa, zero pipelines to tidewater, yet he wants to be named MVP. I don't think so. We've got our approvals. Now we need to get our product to tidewater. We call on the federal government to help make that happen.

The Speaker: Third main question.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I'm genuinely confused by that response. The government is saying that it wants to do everything to fight for these pipelines. They want to put pressure on B.C. and call on Ottawa to act. Here we have a rather obvious direct point of leverage that could actually get the attention of the Horgan government, by Ottawa withholding the \$4 billion in infrastructure and/or the \$1 billion in job-training funds as real leverage. If the government is serious about its rhetorical commitment to this, why won't they join with us in calling on Ottawa to use that leverage and withhold those funds until the pipeline is done?

Ms Hoffman: When I was in education for a number of years, Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you that we talked about natural consequences. The natural consequence of not wanting our product to go to tidewater is the natural consequence that we might very well withhold that product from the members of the Lower Mainland. That's not something we want to do. We want to make sure that we have access to international markets and that we keep prices low in Alberta.

But I have to say: talking about withholding job-training funding from the people of B.C., too? Which is it, Mr. Speaker? Does the member opposite think that we shouldn't be hurting the people of B.C., the individuals, or that we should? I have to say that in his strategy I can't tell which way he's trying to move the ball, but on this side of the court we're trying to move it to the tidewater.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, my strategy was calling for Alberta to be prepared to turn off the taps last July, a strategy that this government mocked and ridiculed until they made it their own a few weeks ago. It took them nine months to do so.

Bill C-69, according to the energy industry, will make it effectively impossible to get approval for another major pipeline project ever again if it's passed. Does this government agree with us that the federal Liberals should withdraw Bill C-69, yet another Liberal attack on Canada's energy industry?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, I've been very clear that this side of the House believes that we need to stop at nothing to get our pipeline

built. The project means tens of thousands of jobs, billions of dollars to the economy, not to mention better public schools, better hospitals. There are three fronts that we are moving this forward on, and we take them very seriously. One is intervenor status, going to the courts. We've won 14 out of 14 times. Two is making sure that if the government of B.C. wants to keep inflicting pain on the people of Alberta, the natural consequence would be that the people of B.C. better get ready because their prices may go up as well. The third one, of course, is that if necessary we will take a public stake in this pipeline. I have to say that those are the three fronts we need to be fighting on.

Mr. Kenney: "Stop at nothing." Mr. Speaker, remember it was John Horgan who a little over a year ago, when he met with our Premier, said that she did not even try to persuade him to support the pipeline. It's this government that lifted its symbolic wine boycott. It's this government that will not support withholding federal transfers for infrastructure or job training as leverage. All that we hear are words. We don't see any actual, concrete actions. Doesn't the government understand that the only way we can get respect for the rule of law and defend our vital economic interests is through action? Will they support us in calling for the withholding of those federal funds?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to set the record straight. This side of the House acted immediately after forming government to bring forth a responsible climate leadership plan that resulted in getting two pipeline approvals. One of those is well under construction to the east, line 3, but that isn't enough. We need to make sure that we get Trans Mountain built to the west coast as well. So we are moving forward full speed ahead. We have three fronts that we're moving very aggressively on, and we call on the federal government to join us on that: make sure that the people of British Columbia know the kind of pain that their government is inflicting on the people of Alberta, and make sure that we have a public stake in this if that's what it takes, because this project is not to be negotiated.

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

Trans Mountain Pipeline Public Purchase Proposal

Mr. Clark: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have to say that it's nice to see the opposition benches so nice and full today.

Over the past few days the Premier has mused about buying a stake in the Kinder Morgan pipeline, up to the point of purchasing the entire project. The Deputy Premier has doubled down on that again today. I'm glad to see that the province is willing to do what it takes to move this important project forward, but I am concerned that the Premier has painted us into a corner. This morning federal Finance Minister Bill Morneau said that any talks about investment should be held behind closed doors. To the Premier: why have you been so open about your negotiating strategy? Are you worried that you have weakened our bargaining position?

2:00

Ms Hoffman: Not at all. We want to make it very clear that this project is in the national interest. Albertans want to make sure this project goes forward, and they want a government that's fully behind it, Mr. Speaker. Our message to the government of B.C. is that we will not back off. We are a determined – determined – investor, and we need to think like investors. We certainly do. We are the owners of these resources. We need to get them to tidewater,

we deserve the very best price, and we will not stop until that is the case.

Mr. Clark: Well, I'd sure love to play poker with this government, Mr. Speaker. I think it would turn out pretty well on this side.

My concern is that the government has jeopardized Alberta's negotiating position for the sake of a quick-win headline. Again, I am broadly supportive of doing whatever it takes to ensure that the Kinder Morgan expansion project is built, but I am genuinely worried that this government has overplayed their hand. To the Premier: is there any scenario where you will take a lesser stake, or are we boxed in already and committed to buying the entire project?

Ms Hoffman: I want to invite the hon. member to play poker with myself and the Labour minister. In fact, we'd be happy to take that call.

I have to say that the Trans Mountain pipeline is in Alberta's interest, and Alberta's government is acting in its interest. You know what? We're not going to let the investor board from Houston threaten our national interest and threaten our getting the very best price possible. We'll make sure that we do so in a respectful way, Mr. Speaker. But we've said: mark our words; this pipeline will get built. Mark our words: this pipeline will get built.

Mr. Clark: Mr. Speaker, the number one focus must be to get Alberta's products to Canadian tidewater, and the Kinder Morgan expansion is our last chance. As much as bringing the government of Alberta on as a, quote, more determined investor may help, it is useless if Ottawa doesn't also do their part, which they seem to be more than happy to do for Bombardier or for southern Ontario car plants. To the Premier: will you commit to investing in Kinder Morgan only if the federal government is also going to buy a stake?

Ms Hoffman: Well, that sounds like a proposal to box us in, Mr. Speaker. We certainly call on the federal government to join us on the three fronts, becoming a public investor, should it come to that. Buying the pipeline is, of course, one of those; the second one is joining us as intervenors in the court challenges, that are continuing to be successful for the government of Alberta; and three is making sure that the province of British Columbia knows the kind of pain they're inflicting on Alberta, by joining us and reciprocating that same behaviour on the people of British Columbia. While that isn't our primary hope – we hope to get the pipeline built – we need the federal government to be partners, and we call on them to do that.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Electricity Capacity Market System

Mr. Rosendahl: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is one of only two places in North America that still operates in an energy-only market for electricity, where power producers are paid based on fluctuating prices. I have heard from members opposite that moving from an energy-only to a capacity market for electricity will discourage investment from power producers. To the Minister of Energy: how is a shift to a capacity market encouraging investment in the energy sector?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we're focused on the right priorities for regular Albertans like ensuring that energy bills are affordable. Since electricity was deregulated under the Conservatives, Albertans have been exposed to a price spike roller coaster for a number of years, and our current market,

which was designed, is built on that volatility and discourages investment, in fact. We're fixing this with common-sense reforms, reducing those spikes and uncertainty, and we're building a system for now and for the future because that's what we do as a government. We have Albertans' backs.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Rosendahl: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. How will the shift to a capacity market affect the electricity bills of all Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, at every step of the way in this process to make a better electricity system, it's about making life affordable for Albertans. Our shift to a capacity market is to a system that'll be more reliable, more sustainable, and more predictable. Once it's fully implemented, in 2021, it's going to provide Albertans with more stable, predictable prices. A capacity market is a proven system. It's widely used in many jurisdictions. It does encourage competition, innovation, and private investment. The deregulation policies of the previous government were not helpful. This . . .

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

Mr. Rosendahl: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we know how price spikes and volatility affect prices on electricity bills for consumers, how will a capacity market protect Albertans from price spikes and volatility in the electricity market?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're focused on the priorities of regular Albertans, and we're focused on ensuring that energy bills are affordable. That's why we've capped the energy bills of families, small businesses, and farms from those price spikes. It's clear that this government has the backs of Albertans, something that backroom deals in the past did not for regular Albertans. Under our plan everyday Albertans are protected from the market crisis. Once it gets to 6.8, our cap comes in. This is about saving Albertan families money.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Trans Mountain Pipeline Alternatives

Dr. Starke: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are united in their support for the expansion of the Trans Mountain pipeline. Unfortunately, vocal and very active opponents of this project are creating great uncertainty, that jeopardizes the project moving forward. Now, while I do not doubt the sincerity of those who insist that this pipeline will be built – and I certainly hope they're right – even they must know that there is a risk that Kinder Morgan will shelve the project. To the Premier. Good business practice dictates that we have a plan B. Does the government have a plan B, and if so, what is it?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, when our country joined Confederation, many provinces said that we need to get a railway from coast to coast. That happened, and the same thing needs to happen with our product to tidewater. That's why we are moving on the three fronts to ensure that our pipeline to tidewater gets built, because we won't take no for an option. We need to be responsible. We need to act

like investors. Investors make sure that they have multiple buyers, and that's why we will take a public stake if it comes to that.

Dr. Starke: Well, Mr. Speaker, there's been a lot of talk about tools and tool boxes in recent days, but forgive me if I want to bring our focus back to the project at hand. If the Trans Mountain expansion is cancelled, all the tools in the world aren't going to revive it. Given that any prudent plan includes developing a contingency in the event that plan A runs into problems and given that a number of alternatives to Trans Mountain exist and that they could in fact provide us with leverage in our negotiations with B.C. and the federal government, to the Premier: what discussions have been held with the proponents of the Eagle Spirit pipeline?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the question. I'm going to stay on Trans Mountain, which I think was the thread of the first question and the supplementals that relate. What I do want to say is that the Premier is meeting this afternoon with the federal Finance minister. This is an important meeting for us, and it's important to all Canadians because this is a project in the national interest. Of course, there will be some cost if this does become public ownership or a public stake, but it has the ability to generate billions of dollars in public revenues for the people of this province, to get us the right price, and to make sure that the country has good access, a reliable port on Canadian tide to make sure that we can access those international markets.

Dr. Starke: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting that the minister mentioned railways because there are two other plan B proposals that offer intriguing advantages to both northern Alberta and Canada's northern territories, and they involve the construction of a railway from northern Alberta to Alaska. Given that the benefits of such a proposal include the capacity to transport not just bitumen but also agricultural, mineral, and forest products to Asian markets through the port of Valdez, Alaska, to the Premier: while the fate of Trans Mountain is in the hands of those seemingly unwilling or unable to help, will the government aggressively pursue alternatives like the G7G railway?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I have a whole division in my ministry on market access, that includes rail, pipelines, and that. The Minister of Economic Development and Trade and myself have met with the G7G folks. It's in its concept stage, but it's not out there that that's a possibility. Right now Trans Mountain is much further ahead. We can use both, but right now we have to focus our efforts on Trans Mountain as well. That pipeline will get built.

Provincial Fiscal Policies

Mr. Barnes: This government is responsible for our swiftly falling competitive tax advantage. According to a recent CBC news story, "Albertans . . . spend more than people in other provinces on fuel." The reason we pay so much for fuel? In a word: taxes. Alberta has the third-highest provincial fuel taxes in Canada, a staggering 19.7 cents per litre, and a 67 per cent NDP carbon tax increase looming. To the minister: are you proud of your record-setting tax increases?

2:10

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know what? I'm very proud of the work that the Finance minister has done

ensuring, in our budget, that not only are we protecting the public services that Albertans rely on; we're also staying focused on diversifying the economy, something the opposition doesn't believe in, as well as supporting our job creators while also outlining a path to balance. What I will say to the member opposite: Albertans pay \$11 billion less in taxes than the next lowest jurisdiction, their besties in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Barnes: Given that this Finance minister's goal is \$96 billion of permanent debt and given that interest payments will hit nearly \$3 billion by 2021 as per his three-year outlook, assuming no more credit downgrades, so much money that it could build every single highway, bridge, hospital, and school in the province that year, to the minister: do you truly believe that the path to balance involves sending twice as much money as the entire Justice ministry to line the pockets of Bay Street bankers?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I'll say a couple of things. Number one, the reason Alberta's economy is looking up and that we are moving into a recovery is because of a number of factors, two of those being the historic infrastructure build that our government decided to invest in at a time when infrastructure was sorely needed, because the previous governments failed to adequately invest in our schools, our hospitals, our roads, our bridges, and our trade corridors. The other reason is because of our climate leadership plan, which got the approval of the Trans Mountain pipeline. These pipelines will get built, and we're going to do whatever it takes.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, the largest tax hike in Alberta's history was supposed to get the province some much-needed social licence to build those pipelines. Given that Alberta families have paid the price for this through higher unemployment, underemployment, and price increases and given that zero value has been received after Albertans have paid dearly for social licence, would the Premier please ask her ally Justin Trudeau what his return policy is for this defective social licence, or is she prepared to double down on her managed decline of Alberta's economy?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll tell you one thing. Our government is not about to take advice from the Leader of the Official Opposition, who spent 20 years in Ottawa and got zero pipelines to tidewater. The other thing that I find very rich – and I'll enlighten the member opposite – is that in Ottawa the Leader of the Official Opposition, when he was part of the Harper government, ran six straight deficit budgets, a \$56 billion deficit in a single year. He added \$145 billion to the national debt. Now, he's no math wizard, so don't be fooled.

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, a growing number of Albertans are feeling totally let down by this government. Not one full-time job was created last month, yet the carbon tax is increasing. They are failing on the carbon tax, and they are failing on the budget. The NDP won't stand up to their friend Justin Trudeau, who took a personal day during the Kinder Morgan crisis, for Albertans. People are frustrated. They are outraged. Minister, you and your bestie Justin Trudeau created the problem. What are you going to do to fix it?

The Speaker: The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know what's interesting? The members opposite want to cut taxes for the top 1 per cent

earners in Alberta and at the same time still balance the budget and somehow not impact front-line services. His budget is either a storm of fairy dust – he's either deeply misinformed or intentionally misinforming. Which one is it?

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, this government isn't interested in helping anyone.

One thing has become all too clear . . .
said the Calgary Chamber of commerce recently,
. . . government policies are making it harder for them to succeed.
Governments are layering on costs, making it increasingly
difficult to run a healthy business.

Minister, will you at least recognize that your policies are damaging Alberta, and will you stop pursuing your very expensive ideological agenda?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I'll enlighten the member on is the fact that jobs are up in our province, 90,000 new full-time jobs, mostly in the private sector. Our growth is up, exports are up, manufacturing is up, wages are up, and housing starts are up. Now, having said all that, I've been travelling the province talking to chambers of commerce and small-business owners, and we recognize that not all of them have felt the economic recovery. That is why our government tabled a budget that is built on supporting the recovery so that it is built to last for future Albertans, future generations.

Mrs. Pitt: "They blew it," Mr. Speaker. Even though I agree with those words, they aren't my own. They are the words of economist Trevor Tombe in response to the NDP's disastrous budget. Now, given that this government is putting Albertans on the hook for more debt each and every day, less of their taxes are going towards services, and more of their taxes are going to service our debt and given that Albertans are hard-working and that they don't want any of their income to be going to bondholders and foreign bankers, would this NDP government stop kicking Albertans when they're down, stand up for us, scrap this ridiculous carbon tax, and give us some plan on how to get back to balance?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the members of the opposition would actually completely kill the Trans Mountain pipeline. They would kill our economic recovery with their ideological cuts all over the place. Our government is investing strategically in critical infrastructure, in public services. We're also supporting the job creators in this province. Our two tax credits that we introduced a year and a half ago are wildly successful, and \$60 million conditionally approved has leveraged \$1.2 billion of capital investment here in the province at a time when it's needed.

Federal Energy Policies

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, I have read the Minister of Energy's prior submission on Bill C-48, the Oil Tanker Moratorium Act. Most of that submission was spent arguing the science of naphtha and condensates and asking for the bill to be executed instead of opposing the tanker ban outright. Can we trust this Minister of Energy to stand up and protect Alberta families and jobs in the face of this ruinous Bill C-69 when she chose to try to make Bill C-48 less bad instead of opposing the tanker ban outright?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure if the question is about C-48 or C-69, but I will say that we are in constant contact with the federal government on a number of matters, and the lens with all of those is that we're standing up for Alberta and Alberta's industry interests, and that will always be. You're correct. I've written letters on a number of fronts, and we will continue to do so. My colleague the Minister of Environment and Parks and I are in regular contact because these matters span both our ministries.

Mr. Panda: Given, Mr. Speaker, that when I questioned the minister in estimates yesterday, she and her staff believed that they still had time to make a submission in opposition to Bill C-69 and given that the federal Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development's written submission deadline on C-69 was April 6, will the Minister of Energy join me in defending my submission on Bill C-69?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I've worked with a number of my industry colleagues and stakeholders such as CEPA, and I'm well aware of the issues. Again, my colleague the Minister of Environment and Parks and I have made submissions to the federal government on a number of fronts. Especially with this, we do understand that there are some issues, but at the same time we've been welcome to submit our information and our feedback, and that's what we've been doing. I am somewhat puzzled why you guys are so obsessed with the federal government and what they're doing. Maybe that's where you need to be instead of across the way. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Panda: We are not in bed with the Trudeau Liberals, for sure. Given, Mr. Speaker, that the federal Trudeau government will shake up the National Energy Board with Bill C-69 and given that the Canadian Energy Pipeline Association says that it is difficult to imagine that a new major pipeline could be built in Canada under C-69 and since the minister of environment said yesterday that she wrote her Trudeau friends last summer about specifics they want to see in C-69, will the minister outline those specifics and table her letters sent to Ottawa?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The first thing I'll say is that everyone, at least on this side of the House, knows that this minister doesn't have any friends.

Second of all, I believe we tabled that letter, and if we didn't, we'll table it afterwards, because we've been very clear on what we've been asking the federal government for on this particular piece of legislation.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

2:20 Agricultural Environmental Programs

Mr. Piquette: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. No one cares more about the environment than our agricultural producers, who are always looking to decrease their environmental impact. That's why I know that many were pleased to see this government expand its funding to the agricultural sector under the climate leadership plan by over \$80 million over the next four years. To the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry: what have we learned from the last round of funding that has prompted this expansion?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Yes, undoubtedly, we know that climate change is having a serious effect on our environment. This is leading to more extreme and unpredictable weather, and farmers are very vulnerable to that, which is why I'm proud we're taking action on climate change. I think we have learned just how necessary these programs are and how valuable they are to producers because they have been so highly subscribed to. Through the climate leadership fund we were able to top up the program again, by an additional \$21 million, to help farmers make their operations as efficient as possible.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that farmers are always looking to decrease their input costs, how will this money help save money for farmers?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. On-farm efficiency programs don't just help farmers, but they contribute to the fight against climate change. As an example, Susan and Evan Schuurman from Schuurman Dairy farm have said:

The energy-efficiency programs offered by the government gave us the incentive to move ahead with installing solar power on our operation . . . We have found that by investing in solar power we have been able to lower our dairy operation's power consumption by over 60 per cent.

Efficiency and sustainability from a business perspective has always been important for producers, and when I talk to producers across the province, they realize that.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that I've already heard from a number of interested constituents who would love to participate in this program, to the same minister: how can farmers apply for funding this time around?

Mr. Carlier: Mr. Speaker, I encourage all farmers interested in ensuring they have the most efficient systems possible and those interested in generating their own power to visit the Agriculture and Forestry programs and services web page. We have many programs to choose from. If any farmers have questions, they can speak with one of our department's experts at 310-FARM. This government believes in programming and a public service that supports communities and small businesses, not reckless cuts that would leave Albertans behind.

Rural Emergency Medical Services

Mr. Stier: Mr. Speaker, with the recent announcement of new funding to the AHS ambulance system, details regarding the key changes specific to rural operations have yet to be disclosed. Several key, obvious problems must be addressed. Enormous delays for paramedics in emergency departments is number one. Plus, nonemergency transfers, flexing of units into large cities, and faulty centralized dispatch all must be remedied immediately. To the Health minister: what changes, if any, to these problematic rural ambulance operations will be made with this new funding?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. It is certainly our priority to make sure that no matter where you are in this province, you have quality, timely access to emergency first responders. We are very proud of the fact that we're increasing EMS funding in this budget by \$23 million. I hope that the members opposite will support us in the budget that is going directly to front lines. AHS is developing their plan should our budget be approved, and then we'll be able to share that publicly with all Albertans and members of this House.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Stier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Rural Health Services Review Final Report clearly indicated that the rural EMS units must be treated differently in terms of hospital wait times and mandatorily released no later than one hour after arrival and given that the same report clearly indicated that these rural units should be returned to their home community directly rather than being flexed and diverted elsewhere to prevent coverage gaps in the local communities, to the minister: with the new funding, why can't these crucial rural operational problems be addressed now?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that those were some of the recommendations that were heard from folks in the community, and I certainly heard the member's statement yesterday in this House. I have to say that having hard and fast rules about being returned to community – I know no first responder who, when they got called to go to the terrible accident that was happening in Saskatchewan, would want to go back to their community instead of going and running to the call to help those young men who were dying on the side of the road. It's important that we increase funding, that we increase services, that we increase opportunities throughout this province, and that's why we're bringing forward a budget that does just that.

Mr. Stier: Mr. Speaker, given that that same rural health report clearly identified that rural EMS units and their highly trained paramedics' valuable time were being wasted when taxi-style nonemergency transfers, doctors' appointments, and transport duties were assigned to them and given that, instead, the obvious solution to that problem is to return to an auxiliary transport system for that need, Minister, with the new funding, why can't that crucial rural operational problem be addressed now?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Every year since we've been in government, we've increased the number of nonemergency transfer vehicles because that's the right thing to do. But it's also the right thing to do to make sure that we are increasing the opportunities for front-line paramedics as well through having more first responders available throughout this province. That's why we're bringing forward a budget that has a \$23 million increase, that's why we're expanding the community paramedicine program so that transfers don't need to happen unless they're actually required, and that's why we're increasing the number of long-term care and acute-care spaces in this province so that those patients have somewhere to be, instead of moving for deep ideological cuts, like the members of the opposition call on us to do every day.

Health Care outside Large Urban Centres

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, this government is investing in community paramedics. These paramedics will provide medications and

supplement other aspects of home care. In our two largest cities citizens can access the abundance of labs, diagnostic imaging, and specialists at a health or allied health facility in mere minutes. They have public transit, taxis, and Ubers available to all, not to mention a bunch of rural ambulances. To the Minister of Health: why did you choose to have this initiative in the two largest cities?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This program did start in the two largest centres in the province, and we've expanded it throughout the province. I'm sure the associate minister can elaborate on that in her subsequent responses. It's important that we have this service available throughout our province. We want to have it in a hub and spoke model, and that's why we have expanded it to communities, including Camrose, for example. We are very proud of the fact that it's going to reduce wait times, it's going to provide more prompt response, and it's going to mean that patients are getting the care in the right place.

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, nurse practitioner investment is also terrific as they do help supplement the existing professionals, ensuring citizens get timely support. The community of Vulcan is fighting for additional locum spaces to supplement their physician support. A nurse practitioner might have helped this community. Minister, why did you focus your nurse practitioner investment in the cities, where people have an abundance of physicians relative to the smaller cities?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We are very proud of the demonstration projects that are under way to make sure that we increase opportunities in primary care. We also have nurse practitioners throughout the province in a variety of other communities. We've actually just recently posted I think it's two for Wabasca, which is certainly not one of the largest communities in our province. We want to make sure that we have the right health experts throughout our province instead of moving forward with deep, drastic ideological cuts, like the members opposite propose, and privatization. We're investing in important front-line service providers, including nurse practitioners.

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, these initiatives would provide most benefit in areas where people don't have immediate access to health, as in communities that are not Edmonton and Calgary, and given that the plans released by the minister have a very urban focus, again, why aren't you putting more resources to the rural, where it will make a very big difference?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, it's so interesting. These guys will tell us that we need to cut, cut, cut, and then when they have a chance in question period, they'll pretend that that's not the case. They are always arguing for us to make deep, drastic cuts. I understand that they want to blow up hospitals in Edmonton and Calgary, like they did in the 1990s, but on this side of the House we're going to protect all Albertans. We're going to make sure we fund growth, we're going to keep communities stable, and we've proven that through the last three years, the last three budgets. You guys don't even have a draft budget.

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

Electricity Power Purchase Arrangements

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government's action of increasing the specified gas emitters carbon tax in 2015 made the

power purchase agreements more unprofitable, triggering the exit clause. Then the agreements fell into the Balancing Pool's lap, which forced them to pass it along to electricity consumers, which are everyday Albertans. Why does the NDP government continue to slag the Alberta Utilities Commission and Neil McCrank, the former head of the Energy and Utilities Board, and blame everything on the unfounded nefarious agreement for what is, in reality, NDP incompetence?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, just over a year ago we took action to protect Alberta families. We've settled the PPA disputes with all the companies, and we've provided a loan to the Balancing Pool. If we had not acted, consumers would be facing much higher charges on their bills because, again, it goes back to the backroom deals of the previous Conservative governments. Instead, because of our actions, average charges in the next year will be 78 per cent below what they would have been had we not acted.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you. Well, that's costing Albertans approximately \$73 million a month.

Given that according to documents filed in the Court of Queen's Bench, the province has said that the minister only became aware of the "or more unprofitable" after the fact – evidently it wasn't communicated to the ministers – and that when asked, the Deputy Premier said that they were not aware that raising the carbon tax could trigger the exit and that this information was not in their transition binders when there were elected – uh-oh – why did the minister not consult with the industry, when this "or more unprofitable" clause was widely known, before making the decision?

2:30

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, in pretty much everything we've done since we've taken government, we have consulted with industry. We've consulted with Albertans, environmental groups. We've gotten all kinds of input on the climate leadership plan, on the modernized royalty framework. We continue to do so all the time, and we absolutely got good advice along the way. We will continue to do that.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Minister, given that Bill 16, An Act to Cap Regulated Electricity Rates, allows the minister to change the rate of 6.8 cents, which is double what the actual rate is right now, without seeking the consent of the Legislature and given that the regulated rate option that is now set by the government used to be set by an independent body, the Alberta Utilities Commission, and given that the Calgary Chamber of commerce has said that the government's lawsuit sets a devastating precedent that will erode public trust, how, Minister, do you expect Albertans to have any confidence in this government given the mishandling of the PPAs?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, first of all, I would say that we are not setting the rate at 6.8 cents as the price for electricity. That is the cap that we have set should prices rise. To be clear, they are not there now, and if you're in a contract, you may pay less. It all goes back to the backroom deals that the

previous government made and completely destroyed our electricity system in doing so. We are going to 30 per cent renewables by 2030. The rest will be natural gas. We are changing our electricity market. We're encouraging investment. Our first reps proved that.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

DynaLife Medical Labs

Mr. W. Anderson: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to explore the DynaLife panel appeal decision we tabled last week to remind the House that the panel found that the decision by Alberta Health Services toward a \$3 billion lab services contract to provide it with no facilities in Alberta or Canada breached its duty of procedural fairness in the RFP process. The evaluation methodology and process raised doubt as to the validity of the award. Many aspects of the RFP process were not transparent, and there was an opportunity for bias and favouritism to influence the evaluation. To the Minister of Health: was she aware of these concerns regarding the DynaLife award, and did she consider them to be of a serious nature when she made her decision to cancel the award to the preferred proponent?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We made it very clear during the election campaign that what we weren't going to do was continue in experiments of privatization as the previous government had. As a result, we put a cease to the privatization of lab services for Edmonton and north. We thought it was important that we look at evidence and make a decision that would best serve the people of Alberta. I'm incredibly proud that we've moved forward with a public lab and that it will be built here in the city of Edmonton. This will mean good jobs for the people of this province, instead of privatizing and outsourcing them for people living elsewhere.

Mr. W. Anderson: Not the answer we were looking for, Mr. Speaker.

My second question to the Minister of Health: given that the minister cancelled the award, did she have concerns regarding the manner in which Alberta Health Services, her ministry, had conducted the procurement process?

Ms Hoffman: I understand it's not the answer you're looking for. The answer according to your leader and your policy manual, that's to be considered here in a couple of weeks, is more privatization, Mr. Speaker, more layoffs, more reductions, more two-tiered health care, American-style health care. That's not the answer that Albertans deserve. Albertans have made it clear in the past, and we are standing up for the public health care services in this province because what's in the bottom of your pocket shouldn't drive your access to health care. We all deserve quality health care. Your colleagues just asked me to invest more in rural Alberta. We're investing in the people of this province because we know it's important, and we're not going to be driven to privatization through your ongoing calls and efforts.

Mr. W. Anderson: May I remind the minister that our leader wasn't here when you cancelled the contract and let us know.

The third question is: if it was determined that Alberta Health Services demonstrated a pattern of such behaviour, what would you have really done?

Ms Hoffman: Well, the good thing is that we don't have to answer these kinds of hypothetical questions because the truth is that we took government on a platform that included stopping experiments

in privatization, which I know is what the members opposite are calling for. We stopped that privatization. We're investing in a public lab. We're protecting those workers. We're protecting Albertans' information. We're making sure that these important tests, which drive about 70 per cent of the decisions in the health care system, are done by the people of Alberta in a public model, and I couldn't be more proud of that.

School Equipment Funding

Ms Luff: Mr. Speaker, I'm passionate about equity in education. The fact is that many public schools rely on parent fundraising councils in order to buy things like Smart boards, new sports equipment, and furniture. Given that there is often a discrepancy in a school's ability to fund raise depending on where the school is located and the number of parents who have time for such endeavours, this can put some schools, like many in my riding, at a disadvantage. What is the ministry doing to ensure that all public schools have the same level of access to technology, supplies, and specialty teachers?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. We all know that our schools and our school systems have been underfunded for a very long time. That's why our government has put almost a billion dollars more into the system over the last three years than would have happened with the previous government. You know, that has resulted in at least 3,600 new positions in terms of teachers and support staff.

We also introduced, Mr. Speaker, the \$75 million classroom improvement fund. This is a way by which we can move and make decisions around improving the classroom conditions for students in all schools, in all school boards across the province. So we're going to continue to work hard on it and . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

First supplemental.

Ms Luff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that St. Peter school in Penbrooke has had to tear down its playground due to safety concerns and given that we are providing new schools with playground funding and given that no school should have to fund raise for a playground, what opportunities are available to finance this playground?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We knew, as we had more than 200 new school projects that we were involved in, that it was important to include some funding for school playgrounds with those new schools. It's a great time to do the levelling and do the process that's necessary to put a playground in place. So we have for new schools a \$250,000 grant. People can still fund raise to supplement that as well. And for established schools and school playground programs there is the Culture and Tourism community improvement grant that can be applied for, that can help to build and replace playgrounds.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Luff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that schools often rely on these CFEP grants to buy a litany of things from band uniforms to computers and given that these grants require matching funds, what is the department doing to reduce schools' reliance on these Culture and Tourism grants for things that many would consider essential?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we are aware that there's more work to do in regard to strengthening our public education system in schools. You know, we have more than 200 school projects that are being built in every corner of the province. As well, we reduced school fees considerably, more than \$54 million to reduce school fees both last year and again this year.

As well, we have introduced an exponential growth in our school nutrition program. We now are feeding more than 30,000 students every day with a nutritious meal across the province.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Federal Response to Pipeline Opposition (continued)

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, will the government agree with me, given that the provincial government has indicated a willingness to risk tax dollars to ensure investor certainty on the Trans Mountain pipeline, that we ought not do so unless the federal government also participates financially to ensure that Ottawa is fully committed and engaged, with skin in the game, so that it's not just Alberta taxpayers who are left holding the bag? Will they agree with me that Ottawa needs to match what Alberta might do to ensure the construction of the pipeline through a public investment?

Ms Hoffman: I have to say that we are not going to stop, Mr. Speaker. We're going to fight to get this pipeline, and we're not going to box ourselves in by putting forward demands like that. We thought that the Leader of the Official Opposition said that he supported the Premier in her call to make sure that this pipeline went forward, including public investment if that's what it came to. I know the people of Alberta, certainly, are saying that we can't stop at any cost. This is an important infrastructure project for the people of Alberta.

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, the reality is this. It's only the federal government that can use its constitutional authority to ensure the construction of the pipeline. I agree in principle and, regrettably, that we may need to financially backstop the investors, but given that the federal government has done nothing yet to ensure the construction of the pipeline, why does this government not use this as leverage and insist that they come to the table with dollars as well? Why are they prepared to take risks that Ottawa is not going to take to ensure the construction of the pipeline?

2:40

Ms Hoffman: Well, my biggest question is: why didn't the member opposite, when he was in Ottawa, take some investment or even some interest in this project, Mr. Speaker? Because I have to say that spending 20 years in Ottawa and failing to get our product to tidewater, to me, is mighty disappointing.

We've been stepping up at every step along the way, and we will continue to do so. We've been working at this for three years. It's time that we up some of the additional pressures and that Ottawa do the same. That's why we're calling on the three fronts, including them stepping up to support us with public investment. But, Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to say that we're going to sit back on our hands and let Justin Trudeau make decisions for the people of Alberta. This product is too important. This pipeline is too important to do that.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Kenney: Well, given that this government has done nothing to criticize Justin Trudeau's veto of Northern Gateway, his killing of Energy East, his surrender on Keystone, and his total inaction on Trans Mountain, why will this government not join with us in insisting that the federal government help clean up the mess that their inaction has created by helping to ensure the construction of this pipeline through its financial participation if necessary? Why do they keep giving a political pass to their close ally Justin Trudeau, Mr. Speaker?

Ms Hoffman: My allies are the people of Alberta, Mr. Speaker. I have to say that I will not stand down from standing up for them. I know that when the member was in Ottawa for two decades, he got an approval by ramming through and disrespecting the process that, certainly, was far different with the Trans Mountain pipeline than it was with Northern Gateway. I wish they would have done that properly. I wish they wouldn't have set that project up for failure. But you know what? On this side of the House we're committed to working through the appropriate channels. We have an approved pipeline. We have 14 appeals that we've won. It's time that the federal government stood up with us and made B.C. realize the impacts that they're having not just on the people of Alberta but all Canadians if they continue to delay.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Hon. members, if I might, I would just like to remind all of you that after question 5 in Oral Question Period, we have a practice and a standing order about the use of preambles. I would encourage you when you're asking supplemental questions after that time to avoid the preambles.

Tabling Returns and Reports

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, I rise to table five copies of the government of Alberta's submission to the federal Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities on Bill C-48, better known as the tanker ban, in which the Minister of Energy argues to make the bill less bad and calls for the bill to be executed.

My second submission, Mr. Speaker, is five copies of my submission to the federal Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities on Bill C-48, again, the same tanker ban, in which I diligently oppose the tanker ban on national constitutional grounds.

My third submission, Mr. Speaker, is five copies to the federal Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development on Bill C-69, An Act to enact the Impact Assessment Act and the Canadian Energy Regulator Act, to amend the Navigation Protection Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, in which I vigorously oppose this federal bill. I would invite the Minister of Energy and the Minister of Environment and Parks to also table their opposition to Bill C-69.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table five copies of the affidavit of Peter T. Sekulic to the Court of Queen's Bench of Alberta in Peace River under the applicant Northern Air Charter, with respondents Alberta Health Services and Can-West Corporate Air Charters.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand to table five copies of a letter received from Mr. Bill Rowe regarding the Berwyn Autumn Lodge. He says: "I am extremely disillusioned, disappointed, frustrated and angry since the announcement of the lodge closure . . . Because of the closure, my wife and I are separated after over 65 years of marriage." He goes on to say: "I was told that if I didn't like the situation that I should 'just leave'."

Thank you.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the hon. Ms Ganley, Minister of Justice and Solicitor General, pursuant to the Statutes Repeal Act a report, undated, entitled Alberta Justice and Solicitor General Statutes Repeal Act 2018 List.

Motions under Standing Order 42

The Speaker: The Opposition House Leader.

Provincial Advocacy to Federal Government on Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion Suspension

Mr. Nixon:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government of Canada to delay its planned \$4.1 billion infrastructure funding awarded to the government of British Columbia until the B.C. government ceases its efforts to obstruct the Trans Mountain expansion project.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on the motion that I gave notice that I would be moving earlier. I will be brief. I will give you a few facts that I think will help members as they determine how they will vote on this motion.

First, is that the Premier a few days ago indicated that her government may be open to asking the federal government to stop equalization payments or infrastructure funding going to B.C. till the Trans Mountain is done. Then under questioning from the Leader of the Opposition, it turned out that was probably primarily around the pan-Canadian framework, which is \$30 million, which is really just a drop in the bucket with the numbers that we're talking about.

So today the opposition is giving the government a chance to be able to stand up and say very clearly to Justin Trudeau that we expect him to take action, including stopping payments like this \$4.1 billion, until B.C. respects our constitutional rights and stops hindering Kinder Morgan from being able to put in that pipeline.

To be clear, Mr. Speaker, a vote against that is a vote for Justin Trudeau.

The Speaker: Having heard the motion, all in favour, please say aye. Those opposed, please say no.

Hon. members, the daily Routine is now concluded.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, a point of clarification. Did that motion carry or not? You didn't say anything.

The Speaker: I'm sorry. I indicated that the motion did not pass.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you.

[Unanimous consent denied]

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(5)(b) the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

The legislative policy committees will convene this afternoon and tomorrow morning for consideration of the main estimates. This afternoon Resource Stewardship will consider the estimates for Transportation in the Rocky Mountain Room, and Alberta's Economic Future will consider the estimates for Economic Development and Trade in the Parkland Room. Tomorrow morning

Alberta's Economic Future will again consider the estimates for Economic Development and Trade in the Rocky Mountain Room, and Families and Communities will consider the estimates for Service Alberta in the Parkland Room.

Now the House is adjourned.

[The Assembly adjourned at 2:48 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(5)(b)]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, April 12, 2018

Day 16

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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

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Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (NDP)
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New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 25 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent: 1 Vacant: 2

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, April 12, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

I wonder if we might pray or contemplate, each in our own way. Hon. members, I look in this Chamber today and see unity in support of our eastern neighbours in Saskatchewan. As a nation we call Canada we continue to mourn the loss of the woman and men of the Humboldt Broncos and have found ourselves holding loved ones closer this past week. As stories emerge of individual acts of heroism, I'd like to take this opportunity to encourage all of you to speak with your families and consider signing the universal donor card on the back of the Alberta personal health card. This action can lead to the utmost gift, the opportunity to live.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

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

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly three grade 6 classes from the great town of Rimbey, up in Ponoka county. I had the pleasure of visiting with all these grade 6 classes a couple of months back. I can tell you that they sure know their stuff. They even taught me a few lessons on parliamentary democracy, which I think is great. I would ask them all and their chaperones and their teachers to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

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

Mr. Cooper: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an absolute honour, pleasure, and joy today to rise and introduce some very bright, young up-and-comers. It won't be very long before one of them has my job, I'm sure. They are members of the Kneehill Christian School. There are 34 of the fine young constituents. They are accompanied by Miss Terri Miller. I invite them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Are there any other school groups today, hon. members?

Seeing and hearing none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you. I rise today on Yom ha-Shoah, or Holocaust Remembrance Day, to introduce three leaders in the Edmonton-McClung community who have worked to ensure that we never forget the enduring lessons of the Holocaust. I would like to extend my thoughts and prayers to everyone observing Yom ha-Shoah. Here today is Gillian Horowitz, whose diligence on the Edmonton Holocaust committee led to the memorial to the Holocaust which stands on the Legislature Grounds today. Rabbi Daniel Friedman and his wife, Rabbanit Batya Friedman, of the Beth Israel synagogue, who I will speak more about later today, are also in attendance in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. Accompanying them is my beloved chief of staff, Ashley MacInnis, without whom I would not be able to operate, who makes me look good every day. I'd ask them

all to please now rise and receive the warmest reception of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and to all members of this Assembly some of my long-term friends and supporters who are visiting the Assembly today. Harry and Jan Kuperus have lived in the Highlands area since 1992. I first met them when they came out to help the campaign in the by-election that first elected me, in 2000. We've been friends ever since. They've served on my constituency executive. They're both extremely active in the community, and they have five children and 11 grandchildren. Two of those grandchildren, Harrison and Jonathan Peebles, are with them today. I understand that Harrison will be attending Eastglen composite high school next year, and Jonathan will be attending Highlands junior high. In this way, the family's history in the area is going to continue. I'd now ask Harry and Jan and their grandsons Harrison and Jonathan to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of our Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Mrs. Schreiner: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly my daughter-in-law Jessica Schreiner. Like all members here, I could not do this job without the support of my family. Family is not just our personal cornerstone; it is that of our great province and our communities. It is my pleasure to acknowledge the tremendous joy that Jessica brings to our family each and every day. I ask that Jessica now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View, you had an invitation today?

Mrs. Aheer: Yes. Thank you. Sorry. Could you move on to the next one, Mr. Speaker? I'll just get myself organized.

The Speaker: Are you asking for unanimous consent?

Mrs. Aheer: Just give me two seconds.

The Speaker: I'm giving you two seconds.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you. I'm good. I can do this.

I would like to take a moment to introduce a very, very good friend of mine. He is a huge support for special needs, works with the hub and the Sinneave foundation. John Seigner, if you could please stand and receive the warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

Bill 9

Cortes-Vargas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that as legislators it is our privilege to represent our constituents and their concerns in this Legislature, which is why I've been fairly disappointed that my colleagues across the aisle have been hiding from an issue.

Let me start from the beginning. Earlier this week the Leader of the Official Opposition was very clear that he would be abstaining from a vote on the bubble-zone legislation, which should not come

as a surprise. In the past he has certainly been very vocal about what he thinks about women's right to choose. But he took it a step further. He said that the only reason that we would move forward on bubble-zone legislation that protects women is for political gain. It's cynical, it's shameful, but, worst of all, it demonstrates that the Leader of the Official Opposition and his caucus don't want to hear the concerns that Alberta women have raised. He's been very clear about how he feels about women's right to choose, so why wouldn't his caucus follow his lead? It's disappointing that the Official Opposition leader and his caucus refuse to listen to those concerns, that they are absent on this issue. Honestly, I'm embarrassed for them.

Let me tell you why we're introducing this legislation. The answer is simple. We need to stand up for Alberta women when they ask for help. Across the country and in other jurisdictions they're introducing bubble zones. We heard from clinics here in Alberta that protesting has nearly doubled this year, and so have threats of violence. We cannot wait for something terrible to happen to make this change. This is serious. That's why we're doing this now. So while they sit with their leader and ignore social issues, we'll be standing here with Alberta women.

The Speaker: Hon. members, let's think about the future.

The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Holocaust Remembrance Day

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Elie Wiesel, the great chronicler of the Holocaust, said:

Remembering is a noble and necessary act. The call of memory, the call to memory, reaches us from the very dawn of history. No commandment figures so frequently, so insistently, in the Bible. It is incumbent upon us to remember the good we have received, and the evil we have suffered.

Today, Mr. Speaker, the world remembers. We remember the evil suffered by the Jewish people in the Shoah, the effort by the Nazi regime to exterminate from the face of the Earth the European Jewish people in which some 6 million were brutally murdered, murdered in the Holocaust by bullets in eastern Europe at places like Babi Yar, leaving behind hundreds of unmarked graves with thousands, tens of thousands of victims of history's most pernicious and durable form of hatred, anti-Semitism; in industrial killing at places like Auschwitz and Birkenau, at Majdanek and Treblinka, at places like Theresienstadt, all through central Europe.

1:40

Mr. Speaker, the anti-Semitism that inspired the Holocaust developed over centuries of European history but reached a frenzy in the 1930s and '40s. Sadly, today we see the phenomenon of the new anti-Semitism even recently in Paris. A Holocaust survivor, one of the few who had been given refuge in Canada during the war, returned to France to live out her elder years in peace and was recently killed in a spasm of anti-Semitic violence.

So today we join with members of our Jewish community in remembering. As Wiesel said, "I belong to a generation that has often felt abandoned by God . . . yet, I believe that we must not give up."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Rural High-speed Internet

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is facing a digital divide, and the ability of people in rural areas to participate in the economy is becoming increasingly compromised by issues like

slow Internet or no connectivity. More and more services are only or primarily available online, more educational tools are available through the Internet, and more commerce occurs online every year. We're facing a real economic risk if we continue to allow Alberta to fall behind digitally. While rural communities know the importance of high-speed Internet connectivity, many are not well served, and some communities like Olds have established their own Internet services.

We don't succeed as a province until we all succeed, and for that reason I'm very excited to participate in the Digital Futures symposium on April 27 in Pincher Creek, where I'm looking forward to hearing more about the barriers and opportunities rural communities are facing and to talking about upcoming technologies like 5G, which will support applications like artificial intelligence and autonomous vehicles.

All areas of the province must be future ready, with the infrastructure required for these new technologies. We've seen connectivity propel the success of companies like Benevity, in Calgary, and BioWare, in Edmonton, and the positive economic benefits they bring to their communities.

Kids in cities and larger towns are able to do their homework online at home while many of their rural peers are limited to the times they are at school and equipment that's available. Many people in indigenous communities must drive far from home just to get a data signal.

I'm committed to every Albertan having equal access to opportunities that are enabled by having high-speed Internet access, and I look forward to tabling a private member's bill in support of this in the fall.

I invite all of my colleagues in the House to attend Digital Futures later this month.

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

Vaisakhi

Ms Woollard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A highlight of the year in Edmonton-Mill Creek and the rest of southeast Edmonton is Vaisakhi, a historical and religious festival in Sikhism and Hinduism. It's celebrated on April 14 in most places, but in Alberta it's celebrated on the May long weekend due to the fact that April weather in Alberta is very uncertain.

Vaisakhi marks the birth of the Khalsa way of living in the Sikh religion and commemorates the formation of the Khalsa panth of warriors under Guru Gobind Singh, in 1699. The previous guru was persecuted and executed for refusing to convert to Islam under the orders of the Mughal emperor. This triggered the coronation of the 10th guru of Sikhism and the historic formation of the Khalsa, both on Vaisakhi day.

It is also a spring festival, a spring harvest festival for the Sikhs, and an ancient festival of the Punjabis, marking the solar new year and celebrating the spring harvest. On Vaisakhi Sikh temples, or gurdwaras, are decorated, and Sikhs visit and bathe in lakes or rivers before visiting the local gurdwaras and community fairs.

A very important part of Vaisakhi is the Nagar Kirtan, or procession, with the southeast Edmonton procession being a fantastic and colourful event attended by so many people. They estimated it was 10,000 people last year in the procession.

Living in a city with so many diverse cultural and religious traditions and celebrations enriches us all. Taking part in or observing a Vaisakhi celebration is a joyous way to celebrate diversity and the freedom we all enjoy to worship in our own ways and to speak our own languages.

Happy Vaisakhi.

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

Jewish Community Leaders in Edmonton

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take the time today on Yom ha-Shoah Ve Hagevurah, Holocaust Remembrance Day, to honour a couple who have dedicated their lives to making their communities a better place. Rabbi Daniel Friedman and Rabbanit Batya Friedman have not only been spiritual leaders but community leaders for the last 16 years in Edmonton-McClung. Rabbanit Batya is the director of the Capital Region Interfaith Housing Initiative, an organization that strives to bring an end to homelessness in our city. She has served as the vice-president of the Jewish Federation of Edmonton. She has also run the Matan program for bat mitzvah girls and led women's educational programs. Rabbi Friedman, a recipient of the Alberta centennial medal for service to the community in 2006, is the past president of Edmonton Jewish Family Services and has served on the boards of two Hebrew schools in Edmonton. He is currently on the executive board of the Rabbinical Council of America.

It is of particular relevance as we observe Yom ha-Shoah that Rabbi Friedman was appointed by the government of Canada to chair the national holocaust development council. Its mandate was to have a monument in remembrance of the Holocaust erected on Parliament Hill in Ottawa. That goal was achieved last year, when the monument was erected.

The Friedmans will soon be leaving Beth Israel synagogue to take a post in London, England. Going with them on this next adventure are their five daughters, four of whom were born here in Edmonton. The entire family will be sorely missed.

Rabbi Friedman always knew he wanted to be a rabbi. During a family interview about his father's position with a synagogue in Sydney an eight-year-old Daniel proudly announced that he wanted to be the first rabbi on the moon when he grew up. While he may not be the first rabbi on the moon yet, he has left a lasting impression in our little corner of the world, in Edmonton-McClung, Edmonton, and the whole province.

Thank you very much for your service, and bon voyage.

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

Alberta Party Policies

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Legislature and I think politics as a whole is far too often all about either/or. Either you believe in building schools, or you believe in strong fiscal management. Either you want a strong health care system, or you want to eliminate the debt. You're either with us, or you're against us. Well, I don't like that word "or." In the Alberta Party we like to talk about "and": environmental protection and responsible energy development, innovation for the new economy and strong traditional industries, quality of life in rural communities and in big cities, opportunity for indigenous people and all Albertans in equal measure, addressing poverty and building a prosperous society, promoting Alberta's interests and building a strong nation.

But Albertans are being told they have to choose. That is not how we built this province. We didn't make Alberta the best place in the world to live by having to choose one over the other or by leaving people behind. We did it by building the most compassionate, innovative, entrepreneurial community in the world based on "and," and we can keep it that way. Albertans do not need to choose between left or right. We can have a strong economy, and we can

have a strong society. That is who Albertans are, and that is what the Alberta Party stands for.

Thank you.

Oral Question Period

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

Provincial Response to Pipeline Opposition

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, 49 days ago the Premier of British Columbia announced another delay tactic in his fight against the Trans Mountain pipeline, referring the matter yet again to court. Then our Premier declared victory, saying: today's decision by B.C. is an important step forward, a victory. With 49 days to go before the deadline for Kinder Morgan potentially to cancel the entire project, I have this question. Why did Alberta's NDP government declare victory in the face of yet another delay tactic by the B.C. government?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

1:50

Ms Hoffman: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the member is being a little creative in his timeline, but what I will tell you is that our government has been very clear, since the very beginning of our time in office, that we need to get a pipeline to tidewater. That's why we were so proud when we got those approvals from the federal government very shortly after we did form government. I have to say that we thought they were worth more than the paper they were written on. That's why our Premier is not relenting. That's why she won't back down, because we need the federal government and the entire nation to put their money where their mouth is and make sure we get our product to tidewater and act like owners.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I'm really confused by the government's position on this. Last summer the New Democrats and the Green Party in B.C. signed an agreement saying that they would use every tool available to stop the Trans Mountain pipeline. Didn't this government follow that development? Didn't they understand that that was the policy of the B.C. New Democrats as of last summer? If so, why did the Premier go to British Columbia and, according to John Horgan, not even try to persuade him to support the pipeline? Those are his words. Is he telling a lie? Why didn't the NDP here take the ...

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Ms Hoffman: Again, the member is being very creative with his recollection of history and the timelines that he's putting forward. We've been incredibly clear and steadfast in our commitment to get this pipeline built. We have three tools at our disposal that are certainly more effective than the delay tactics that people used in Ottawa once upon a time, that the member is very familiar with. We are putting economic pressure on the B.C. government by bringing forward legislation that will allow us to restrict the flow of our resources. We are fighting in court and have a perfect record on winning those fights. If necessary, we will invest in this project to ensure it moves ahead. Does the member support us in any of those actions? That's what's going to cause real pipeline development in this province.

Mr. Kenney: The government that has presided over the suspension of the Kinder Morgan pipeline, the cancellation of the Northern

Gateway pipeline, the killing of the Energy East pipeline, an American President trying to block the Keystone XL pipeline is going to give Albertans lessons on how to fight for pipelines? I don't think so, Mr. Speaker. The question is . . .

Mr. Mason: Point of order.

The Speaker: Point of order noted.

Mr. Kenney: They surrendered on their symbolic wine boycott 49 days ago. In light of these recent developments will they reinstitute at least that symbolic wine boycott? Will they bring it back?

Ms Hoffman: Well, we did temporarily lift the wine ban because we did get the terms met around not restricting the product that we had in our pipelines, Mr. Speaker. I have to say that I appreciate that the member opposite likes symbolism, but on this side we like action. We are putting economic pressures on the government of B.C. by bringing forward legislation that will allow us to restrict resources. If I were a person in the Lower Mainland filling up today at prices about \$1.50 at the pump, I'd be really nervous about what might happen if the B.C. government doesn't get out of the way and move forward on this national project in the national interest. We are fighting in court, we have a perfect record, and if necessary, as I've said, we'll take a public stake in this pipeline because we're not afraid, and we're not going to back down.

The Speaker: Second main question.

Federal Response to Pipeline Opposition

Mr. Kenney: The federal government, Mr. Speaker, has said that all options are on the table to ensure the construction of this pipeline, but then they subsequently took off the table the invocation of the declaratory power of the Constitution. They took off the table even the federal NDP's recommended court reference to the Supreme Court of Canada. They've taken off the table withholding any transfers, as we've recommended, from B.C. I don't know what's left on the table. Does this Alberta government agree with the positions taken by the Trudeau government to remove any leverage from the government of British Columbia in trying to get that pipeline built?

Ms Hoffman: Well, Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we are moving forward with strategies that will get results, and that's what we've gotten to date. We have never been as close to tidewater in our approval process and our court proceedings and in investment than we are today. But that's not good enough. I know the member spent 20 years in Ottawa and didn't get a pipeline to tidewater, but on this side of the House we're committed to this. We're going to make sure it happens. Feel free to talk about symbolic gestures, but on this side we're committed to action, and that pipeline will get built.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, withholding billions of dollars of discretionary federal transfers to Victoria is hardly symbolic. I can't imagine a stronger point of leverage.

Yesterday the NDP here defeated a motion brought forward by the Official Opposition calling on the federal government to withhold \$4.3 billion in infrastructure funds from Victoria until the pipeline is built. Today we'll be tabling a different motion, calling for the federal government to withhold \$1.3 billion of job-training funding from the Horgan government until the pipeline is built. Will this NDP government join with us in calling for the withholding of those job-training dollars?

Ms Hoffman: Well, maybe the member didn't hear his question yesterday. It's kind of ironic that he's asking the flip of it today. Yesterday, when we talked about the economic impact of us potentially limiting our flow of products to the west coast and it having economic impacts on the people of British Columbia, he said: no; why would you do that? Today he's asking us to cancel money to get them jobs, Mr. Speaker. I can't tell which side of his mouth he's speaking out of, but it's a good thing it doesn't matter. Our Premier is a very straight shooter. She's fighting for us, and she's going to make sure that this pipeline gets built.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the point is simply this. The government keeps giving us this heated rhetoric not being backed up by anything meaningful, with no meaningful leverage. Maybe they could explain to us: why would they actually oppose the suggestion of the federal government withholding discretionary dollars from Victoria until the pipeline is built? Why should they be able to get 4 billion federal tax dollars for infrastructure when they're blocking 7 billion private-sector dollars for this private-sector infrastructure project?

Ms Hoffman: Well, just to clarify, I didn't say that I actually opposed it. I said that you were speaking out of both sides of your mouth. You're telling us that we shouldn't restrict the flow of product because it could hurt B.C. families, but at the same time you're telling us we should cut their job money? Mr. Speaker, that doesn't make sense. What does make sense are our three plans, our three pillars that we're fighting on. The fronts are putting economic pressure on the B.C. government and the people of B.C., if it comes to that, to ensure our flow of resources; fighting in court, which we have been and have a perfect record on; and, of course, taking a public stake in this pipeline, if it comes to that, because this is in the public interest.

The Speaker: Third main question.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, they are opposed to it because they voted against it yesterday. They defeated this idea, like every other idea.

Surgery and Emergency Procedure Wait Times

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, a new report today from the Canadian Institute for Health Information indicates that wait times are up significantly in Alberta for cataract and joint replacement surgery. Now, that's notwithstanding the fact that Alberta has by far the highest per capita health expenditures in the country and that health spending has increased by 15 per cent in the past three years. Can the government explain, then, why wait times are up for these critical surgeries?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. I, too, am very concerned that not in all areas are we leading the country. We are in a number of them, including if you have a hip fracture, if you need radiation. These are good measures, and we're proud of the areas where we've made significant progress. We know that there are other areas where we lag and where we need to have increased investment. That's why we're putting \$40 million in increased funding specifically targeted at these types of wait times. I look forward to seeing if the members opposite will vote for that budget or if they'll call for deep cuts. I have a good idea which one it'll be, but time will tell.

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister seems to miss the point. The government of Alberta has increased the Health budget

by \$3 billion in the past three years, by 15 per cent. We have the highest per capita expenditures in the country, and Canada has one of the most expensive public systems in the world, yet wait times are increasing for joint surgery, for cataract surgery, and other procedures. My question is simply this. Why are we spending more but getting less?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much. I certainly welcome you to talk to your colleagues who were in power for 44 years while these trends took place. Maybe you were part of that government; it's hard to tell. But I can tell you that what we've done is different. What we've done is that we have reached really common-sense negotiations with nurses and allied health professionals that are giving stability to the people of this province. It does cost increased investment, investment in things like the Calgary cancer centre, the new Edmonton hospital, to ensure that we have the proper OR time and space to be able to do this. It costs front-line investment. We invest in the people of this province instead of proposing cuts. What do you think 20 per cent cuts would do to wait times?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Kenney: This is the problem with the NDP, Mr. Speaker. They think that health care should be measured by how much is spent rather than the outcomes and the wait times. The wait times are going up while they're spending more. It doesn't make much sense. Even in emergency departments wait times have continued to rise over the past few years according to the CIHI, with the length of stay increasing by 17 per cent from five years ago. Why are Albertans waiting longer in emergency wards when we're spending 15 per cent more on health care? Why?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Well, Mr. Speaker, thank you for the question. Again, the member continues to allude to these cuts that he's said very clearly in the past that he would be pushing for. Conservatives don't have a plan to improve wait times. The only thing they've publicly cared about is that they want to privatize and cut costs for everyday families. Well, it would actually increase costs significantly. I don't want to wait any longer than anyone else does in this province, but I certainly don't want your top 1 per cent to be able to jump to the front of the queue and for the rest of us to have to sit behind and wait. That's not public health care, that's not good for the people of this province, and we won't let that happen.

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

Infertility Treatment

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Fertility treatments are a necessary medical service that some Albertans rely on to grow their families. Alberta's only publicly operated fertility clinic, at the Royal Alexandra hospital, stopped offering non-insured services in February 2018, with patients sent to private clinics, but private clinics in Alberta have sent patients away for their race, their body type, and other backgrounds, often requiring public pressure to reverse their insensitive policies. To the Minister of Health: what assurances can you provide to patients of private clinics that they will not be refused for treatment for nonmedical reasons?

2:00

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, thank you to the member for the question and the opportunity to respond. Certainly, our heart goes

out to anyone who's struggling with infertility. We all know somebody who's been down that road. Like everyone who wants to have a family, we certainly send them our thoughts and our prayers. We are also covering the cost differential between the AHS clinic and the private during the transition of their choosing. There are two hours of access to mental health counsellors that we're providing as well, again, because of the mental anguish. If there are specifics about discrimination and racism, please raise them with me or with the College of Physicians & Surgeons. Certainly, that would be the most appropriate place.

Ms McPherson: With the range of private fertility clinics available in Alberta and the uneven distribution of insured and noninsured services throughout the province and the inconsistent and potentially confusing array of fertility-related treatments and services, with confusing fees that may or may not be covered by public and private insurance, again to the Minister of Health: what will you do to help patients navigate Alberta's increasingly complicated reproductive and fertility treatment landscape?

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much to the member for the question. We certainly have been working with all of the families who've been impacted by the noninsured services moving from a hospital to a community-based setting, and we are looking into some specific concerns that they've raised with us. Our office is available. There are also navigators with AHS that are helping individuals through these challenges. We certainly do share our sympathies with them as they struggle with this very difficult, very personal situation, Mr. Speaker.

Ms McPherson: The lack of accessible and affordable fertility treatments in Alberta has driven some families to seek sometimes poorly regulated services abroad, which can generate complications that have to be treated at a greater cost in Alberta. A 2014 report by the U of A estimated that funding well-regulated assisted reproductive technology in the province would result in net savings of up to \$179 million in health care costs over 18 years. Can you commit, Minister, to updating the 2014 report with respect to the potential cost savings from funding well-regulated treatments?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. While we currently don't provide IVF treatments, this is something that I know some jurisdictions have been looking at changing. I've been watching with great interest what's happening across our country. While I've seen some jurisdictions increase funding substantially and then claw it back, that to me would be the worst-case scenario. We want to work to develop a sustainable system, support those who are accessing the publicly insured services while working to reduce wait times. I'm happy to continue working on this issue with all women who aspire to be biological mothers in the province of Alberta.

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

Agricultural Programs

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was surprised to read in the draft foundational policy of the UCP that they want to end government subsidies to small businesses, including farms, and end government involvement in Crown corporations. To the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry: how do government subsidies to farms and Alberta Crown corporations in a competitive business market actually support Alberta's farmers and ranchers?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. AFSC is a tremendously useful institution for the province to support livestock and crop producers as well as food processors. Many agriculture businesses operate as for-profit corporations. Simply put, these two policies combined would mean the end of AFSC and the end of direct government support for incorporated producers, which represent over 7,000 farms in Alberta. Most of these are family-owned corporate farms.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the critical partnership that the government of Alberta has with farmers and producers, what would losing AFSC mean for Alberta's agriculture sector?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. When crops were unharvested due to heavy snow in late 2016, I was able to direct AFSC to streamline their inspection processes. That flexibility would be gone. I was also able to work with AFSC on interest-free loans to producers in the wake of the devastating grass fires in 2017, and AFSC was able to step up with loans to help small businesses in the wake of the Fort McMurray and Slave Lake fires. In short, getting rid of AFSC would hinder government's ability to make life better for Albertans.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta has long-established farms and producers that grow the food that we are thankful to put on our plates, if government were to adopt a policy that ended grants to incorporated farms, what impacts would that have on our farmers?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many of Alberta's producers are incorporated. This short-sighted policy would mean no grants to those farmers and ranchers, no grants to make their operations energy efficient, no grants to food processors to increase their competitiveness, no grants to help producers access international markets, no grants to small brewers to help diversify the economy, no grants to offset BSE surveillance costs, no grants to farmers with irrigation to help with efficiencies. Once again, these sorts of suggestions from the opposition reveal how out of touch they are with the needs of the economy and rural Alberta.

Federal Response to Pipeline Opposition (continued)

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the NDP government voted against a motion that would call on the federal government to stop sending billions of dollars in transfer payments for construction projects to B.C., some of those dollars from Albertans, until B.C. stops obstructing the Trans Mountain project. The government voted against it. The NDP continually say in this House that they agree that we have to get the federal government to take serious action on this file, but then when given a chance, they stand up and vote with Justin Trudeau every time. So which is it? Actually, on behalf of Albertans: why are you standing with Justin Trudeau and not the people of Alberta?

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know what? There is not a stronger champion for this pipeline than our Premier. She's been very, very vocal that this pipeline will get built. Now, we have been calling on the federal government for real action. We've been calling on the Prime Minister to stand up, to follow our Premier's lead, take action, and ensure that the Trans Mountain goes through. But I'll tell you this much. There is nothing that we will stop at in order to get this project built. It means tens of thousands of jobs, billions of dollars to the Canadian economy. This is in the national interest. This pipeline will be built.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, they're calling on the government, but they're not taking any action. When given a chance, they're voting with Justin Trudeau. Two days ago I moved a motion in this Assembly calling on this government not to raise the carbon tax by 67 per cent until Trudeau took action to make sure Trans Mountain would be built. The government stood and voted with Justin Trudeau again. Over and over the government says in this Assembly that they want the federal government to take action and that they're standing up for Albertans, but when given a chance by this side of the House, they vote with Justin Trudeau every time. Again, why are you standing with Justin Trudeau and not the people of Alberta?

Ms Hoffman: Last time I checked, we were in Alberta, not in Ottawa, Mr. Speaker. I know that the members opposite have a hard time with that. My question is: during the two decades that your leader was in Ottawa with those ideas that he's batting around now, did he sit on his hands, or did he try and fail at them? Which was it? I have to say that we're happy that today he seems to be standing with us in support of this pipeline. When he was in Ottawa for 20 years, did he fight and fail, or did he sit on his hands and do nothing?

The Speaker: Members, remember about the preambles. We're on question 6.

Please proceed.

Mr. Nixon: Well, this government has done nothing at all. They've done nothing. They continue to stand up here and, in fact, deflect now, Mr. Speaker, given that what the minister just did was deflect from the question I asked. Again, you voted with Justin Trudeau in this House twice. Why did you vote with Justin Trudeau and not stand up for the people of Alberta? Are you going to ask the federal government to take serious action to make sure that this pipeline gets built, or are you going to keep backing up your ally Justin Trudeau, with consequences for the people of Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll remind the member that we are in Edmonton, Alberta, not in Ottawa, so the Prime Minister doesn't actually sit in this House.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of concrete actions that our Premier and our government have taken to ensure that the Trans Mountain pipeline will be built. We will be bringing in legislation that'll allow us to restrict oil and gas that flows to British Columbia. We're fighting and winning in court. We're 14 out of 14. And our Premier has been clear that, if need be, we will invest in this pipeline in some form or another.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Carbon Levy and Pipeline Approvals

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are having a hard time believing that this government has their back. There have been multiple motions that the Official Opposition has moved in this House that will support pipelines, yet the government continues to stand with their bestie Justin Trudeau. Will any of the ministers stand up and please explain to Albertans why they don't have their backs?

2:10

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know what? As I travel the province and talk to Albertans, ordinary Albertans, workers, whether they're in the energy sector or any other sector, what they say is that they are proud that our Premier is standing up for Albertans. We're standing up for workers, and we're standing up for Canadians. I can tell you that we will not relent until this project goes through. The Premier has been very, very clear. We will see this pipeline get built.

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, given that this government increased the carbon tax by 67 per cent on all Albertans, Albertans aren't feeling like this government has their backs. Why won't this government stand up, take some real action, and scrap their 67 per cent hike in the carbon tax?

Mr. Bilous: Mr. Speaker, what the opposition is calling for would jeopardize the Trans Mountain pipeline. I thought they stood in favour of it. Now I'm confused. It sounds like they're opposed to it. The Prime Minister was very clear that part of the reason that it was approved – it needs to be approved federally – was because of our climate leadership plan. The two are linked. Because we've taken aggressive action to reduce our emissions, a plan that we came together with industry on, including indigenous leaders, it has led to the approval of the Trans Mountain pipeline. Our government will continue to have the backs of Albertans, and frankly we have the backs of Canadians by ensuring that this pipeline gets built.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mrs. Pitt: Hey, Mr. Speaker, breaking news: Kinder Morgan is backing out of the pipeline.

Mr. Speaker, will anybody please explain to me how the carbon tax got us any social licence and any pipelines approved?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I'll explain it again. How the process worked is that our government came up with a very robust climate leadership plan in consultation and working in lockstep with industry as well as indigenous leaders and environmental NGOs to ensure that our plan would take meaningful action but also demonstrate that the environment and the economy go hand in hand. We are the most responsible oil and gas energy producers in the world. We're very proud of that. We're proud of our sector. That climate leadership plan has led to the approval of the Trans Mountain pipeline, to where now we are fighting and will ensure that that pipeline gets built and will protect workers and jobs in this country.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
The Member for Calgary-Greenway.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. More than a thousand citizens gathered in Calgary on Tuesday to rally in support of the pipeline, and today Albertans will converge again on the Legislature Grounds. The Premier's teammates Tzeponah Berman, Karen Mahon, Jagmeet Singh, and their best friend, Justin Trudeau, are all on record to phase out our oil and gas industry here in Alberta. Why hasn't the Premier denounced her teammates who want to destroy our vital industry, and when will she admit that the appointment of Karen Mahon and Tzeponah Berman was a brutal and ideological mistake?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know what? With all due respect to the people that the hon. member just mentioned, their positions and their opinions are quite irrelevant. We are continuing to move forward with the construction of the Trans Mountain pipeline, supporting this industry, supporting our oil and gas sector, and supporting the tens of thousands of men and women that will work on the construction of this pipeline. That's who we're listening to. Albertans said to us: get the job done; get this pipeline built. Our Premier is showing real leadership, taking action, and we will get it built.

Mr. Gill: Given that this government put these people on the board and given that Albertans were assured that the carbon tax would buy Albertans social licence to build a pipeline but that it's clear that so-called social licence is an empty term and that we all know that this was just a disguised sales tax, when the Premier met the Finance minister yesterday to discuss the Trans Mountain expansion, did she tell him that the \$50 increase in the carbon tax hike is off the table given the news on the pipeline on Sunday, or is this NDP government still going to impose a 67 per cent hike in the carbon tax?

The Speaker: Hon. member, I've mentioned it twice now today. Please, in your next supplemental – and it'll apply to everybody else today – remember that after question 5 there are no preambles.

The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know what? We've been very clear. We've laid out our financial projections for our climate leadership plan for the next six years, and there is no consideration of a carbon price anywhere over \$50. The plan, I'll remind the hon. member, got us approval of two pipelines. Now, the opposition leader wants to go back to the model of the past, one where we didn't even come close to getting any new pipelines to tidewater. Then he went on national television this past weekend and said that it's fine to have an aspirational target and that you do your best. Well, doing your best isn't how you lead. I can tell you that leadership is what we're seeing in our Premier. We're very proud of her. Albertans are proud of her. Albertans stand behind her, and so do Canadians.

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

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Premier has admitted that she will hike the carbon tax according to the dictates of her best friend in Ottawa and given that a memo from Justin Trudeau's federal department of agriculture indicates that a \$50-per-tonne carbon tax will on average cost farmers \$3,700 a year, an amount which they say that they cannot absorb, Premier, with no social licence, no pipeline, and no good reason for this tax, how much more damage does it have to do to Albertans before your

government scraps this tax? [interjection] This is not a laughing matter, sir.

The Speaker: Hon. members. [interjections] Just calm it down, folks. Just calm it down.

The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Once again, our government worked very collectively with industry, environmental NGOs, and indigenous leaders to come up with our climate leadership plan, one that really is a model for the rest of the world, quite frankly. We're showing that industry and development and the economy go hand in hand with protecting the environment. These are two sides of the same coin. From that climate leadership plan, the Prime Minister and the federal government have approved the Trans Mountain pipeline. In fact, they approved two different pipelines. We're very proud of that fact. We are calling on the federal government to follow our Premier's lead, to take meaningful action and make sure this gets . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The Member for Calgary-West.

Police Release of Information on Serious Incidents

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. A Calgary police officer was shot last week by a person the police confronted after a spree of violent crimes. The man was found dead in a garage where he was hiding. Fortunately, the constable is recovering from his injuries, but curiously the Alberta Serious Incident Response Team, or ASIRT, has refused to release the name of the deceased man who shot him. Minister, these cases often involve repeat offenders. Do you believe Calgarians have a right to know if the deceased man was out on bail at the time of the shooting?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We believe that every Albertan deserves to be safe in their communities, and that's why we have worked with our partners, with the RCMP and have launched our strategy to tackle crime in our communities. We have put more boots on the ground, we have added resources, and we will continue to work with our partners to make sure that every Albertan is safe in their community.

Mr. Ellis: Mr. Speaker, this occurrence was in Calgary.

Given that ASIRT has refused to release the name of the shooter and that in making this decision, it cited an interprovincial agreement not to cause trauma to the deceased's family and given that in a contradictory twist the name of the officer shot was made public, Minister, why is ASIRT keeping the name of the deceased a secret? What about the emotional trauma of the police officer who was shot? What about his feelings and his family?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We certainly will release information that we're able to, protecting, obviously, public safety and following the legislation that's in place. Our thoughts are certainly with the officer who was injured and with everyone who goes to the front lines every day and responds to the call of duty and works to protect our communities. We will continue to invest in supporting those folks and giving as much information to the people of Alberta as we can within the parameters of the legislation.

The Speaker: No preamble.

Mr. Ellis: Mr. Speaker, given not knowing if the deceased man was a violent repeat offender out on bail and given that I have warned this minister and this government that there's a broken bail hearing system and that it is sending offenders back out to continue to commit crimes, eroding public trust – Minister, at this moment you're telling Albertans that it is more important to protect the offender, who shot a police officer, than to restore public trust in the system – will you do the right thing and release the deceased man's name?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our thoughts are with the family and loved ones of the deceased. That was an operational decision made by the police, and they make those decisions on a case-by-case basis. They're the experts. They're the people on the ground. We work with them and provide them the supports so that they are able to do their work, and we will keep supporting them.

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

2:20

Alberta Child Benefit

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that child poverty advocates are calling our new Alberta child benefit a game changer and given that many parents have recently received their latest instalment of their benefit payments, to the Minister of Children's Services: how is the Alberta child benefit making a real difference in the lives of children and their families across Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta child benefit is helping families afford winter clothes or to enrol their kids in extracurricular activities for sometimes the very first time. Families earning less than \$41,746 per year in net income are eligible to receive the benefit, and those child benefit payments are mailed or direct-deposited in as many as four instalments annually. The maximum annual benefit is \$1,114 for families with one child and up to \$2,785 for families with four or more children.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that our government wants as many families as possible to be able to access this critical support, to the Minister of Children's Services: what do eligible families have to do in order to receive this critical support?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government wants all eligible families to be able to access this life-changing support. In order to receive the Alberta child benefit, parents must file their income tax returns. This will automatically enrol eligible families for the child benefit as well as other supports that will make their lives better. Throughout this tax season I've been encouraging families across Alberta to file their tax returns, and I ask all my colleagues in the Assembly to let their constituents know about the Alberta child benefit and the tax filing requirement so that no family has to miss out on these amazing opportunities.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that many lower income families in my constituency of Edmonton-McClung may not have the resources to get professional help to file their taxes, to the Minister

of Children's Services once again: what can I tell my constituents who need a bit of help filing their returns in order to access financial supports?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Tax filing can be challenging, and professional assistance can be costly. That's why I'm so happy that lower income families can get access to free tax preparation clinics offered year-round by community organizations. The Canada Revenue Agency website has a list of where these clinics are offered in communities, large and small, across the province, and I encourage members to find out about free clinics in their communities and to let their constituents know about this service.

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

Trade with British Columbia

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I don't think it will come as a surprise to many members of this House that Alberta oil and gas is used for a lot more than just filling up your gas tank. There are plastics, petrochemicals, and, of course, asphalt for road building. My question today is for the Minister of Energy. The Burnaby refinery supplies more than just jet fuel to Vancouver airport and gasoline for Lower Mainland drivers. If Alberta restricts the flow of bitumen through the existing Kinder Morgan pipeline, will that also impact their supply of asphalt just in time for road construction season?

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. As he rightly pointed out, we use our oil and gas for a variety of different products, and often we add value, whether in this province or in other jurisdictions. So there are going to be a significant number of consequences should we pass legislation to enable us to turn off the taps. There could be consequences for other industries, outside of just filling up at the pumps.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll help the minister. In fact, the Burnaby refinery does produce asphalt, but it is the only such facility in British Columbia that does so.

Given that if they do run short of asphalt in B.C., which comes primarily from oil sands bitumen, they're going to have a tough time meeting their ambitious road-building targets and given that those plans include an expansion of the Trans-Canada highway near Vancouver and a whole lot more, again to the Minister of Energy: if we do restrict flow to the existing Kinder Morgan pipeline, will you also ensure that asphalt exports from Alberta to B.C. are restricted?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I appreciate the hon. member providing different ideas and opportunities on ways that, should we need to continue down this path, we can ensure the project goes forward and that there are real economic consequences for the people of British Columbia because of the position that their government has taken. That is a very interesting point and one which our government will consider.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that it is absolutely clear that trade benefits all provinces and given that B.C. relies on Alberta to ship products but that Alberta also relies on B.C., to the Premier: however this issue is resolved – and I genuinely and truly hope that it is resolved soon – what is your plan to reconcile with British Columbia to ensure that Canada remains a strong and united country?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for his point. I mean, you know, we'll recall in this House that the Premier stood up when she first introduced the wine ban and said that our task force and our government were looking for ways to impose some sanctions on British Columbia, and it was unfortunate that it was the people of British Columbia that would have to feel those sanctions. In the same way, we want, obviously, this pipeline, and we'll do everything we can to ensure that it is built. And it will get built. Moving beyond that, we are committed to building on our relationship. I'm committed to working with my counterparts to enhance trade corridors and ease the movement of goods and services.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Grain Rail Transportation Backlog

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Despite farmers doing what farmers do best, we are at a critical moment here in western Canada. Farmers have filled grain elevators to capacity and are struggling to get their grain to export. The shortage of grain car movement to west coast ports is critical. Bill C-49 is being debated in Ottawa. Minister, should Bill C-49 not pass fast enough to help this season, does your government or the AFSC have a plan in place to help farmers out should they find themselves in a financial shortfall this planting season?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. You know, he's very right that there's been a backlog in railcars being able to get our products to market, to the port, not just grain but lumber as well, and that is concerning. We've had conversations with the federal ministers concerning agriculture and transportation, about the amendments to the Canadian Transportation Act. Looking there, those amendments will go a long way. It had been held up by the Conservative Senators, but my understanding is that it has passed the Senate now. That's just going to be one tool in our tool box to be able to get past this season. My understanding is that we're a long ways from being able to . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Strankman: Given, Mr. Speaker, that over the past few years we have asked many times what Alberta is doing about the grain car shortage and given that our grain cars are nearing the end of their life cycle and given that there once was a time that the Alberta government favoured expanding railcar assets and supporting the expansion of shipping ports such as Port Moody and Prince Rupert, Minister, has your office pressured the Trudeau government to focus on all of Canada's resource industries? Have you communicated this to the Trudeau government?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again the member is quite right. Aging hopper cars right across the prairies are a fact, and we need to take, you know, some measures for this. I've had conversations with Minister Garneau and Minister MacAulay, in the federal government, on this issue as well as with the CEOs at CN and CP on what they're doing with their own car fleets. So, yeah, we need all levels of government and industry, not just rail but grain buyers as well, to come together to ensure that we have the hopper cars that we need going into the future.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this is not a new problem and given that four years ago, when the Conservatives were in power, that government ordered CN and CP to double their grain-hauling capacity or face strict fines, to the minister: has your government even bothered calling for a similar measure given the time-sensitive nature of this critical situation?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again the member is correct. That was, you know, a temporary measure that was put in by the previous federal government. What this federal government is doing is implementing a lot of those changes into the Canadian Transportation Act, the amendments to that, which is commonly known as Bill C-49. That is going to go a long way, I think.

But we have to keep in mind that, you know, what was perhaps a bumper year 10 years ago is going to be an average year 10 years from now. We're going to have increased production here in Alberta, and we're going to need that increased capacity. We'll continue working with industry and government to ensure that that continues, Mr. Speaker.

Government Procurement Process

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, under existing RFP rules, provisions exist to allow government to amend an already existing RFP for unanticipated issues or because the scope of the work has changed. However, there should be policies that prevent these provisions from being used to alter an RFP to a specific proponent's submission, policies that do not appear to have been in place in Medicine Hat and other constituencies. To the Minister of Service Alberta: please explain the policies that are already in place that prevent RFP changes to promote one proponent's submission over another's.

Ms McLean: Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, procurement is a complex matter within the government of Alberta. Part of the procurement policy sits within Service Alberta, and that's with respect to goods and services procurement. Procurement with respect to infrastructure projects, however, would sit under the Minister of Infrastructure. So I would certainly need more information from the member opposite in order to be able to give him specific information if he has a particular project in mind. He seems to have been alluding to something in Medicine Hat, so I would be happy to follow up with him.

2:30

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Minister.

Again to you, please: have you advised these other departments to avoid using similar provisions that may advance one proponent over another, and if not, will you do so?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to procurement there are robust rules in place, and there is a liability that attaches to all of our procurement processes. Whenever we go out to an RFP and we negotiate that process with bidders, there is a government liability should the government choose to do something that the member is suggesting, so that would not be in the best interests of government. No government department would receive legal advice to do that. In fact, we would receive legal advice not to.

Mr. Barnes: Given that fairness and taxpayer value are paramount, specifically to the Minister of Health: does Alberta Health Services include these types of provisions in their RFP proposals, and will you advise Alberta Health Services to stop using these types of provisions in their requests for proposals?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I believe the member is trying to assert that there was some wrongdoing. Certainly, there are oversights around fairness, and also the courts are another area that sometimes is considered. If this is the specific incident that he's talking about where the courts are involved, certainly it would be inappropriate for us to speak to their involvement and any decision until after that time. We respect that we have a responsibility to the public interest to ensure that we get the very best returns for the people of Alberta and have safe care for them as well.

Access-to-information Investigations

Mr. Cooper: In the first three years of this government's mandate we've seen them involved in a slew of controversies, leading to several high-profile investigations. They're under investigation for deleting e-mails about PPAs, under investigation about destroying visitor logs, deleting nearly a million e-mails. For high-profile political interference, Mr. Speaker, you'll know they've been found in contempt. To the Minister of Service Alberta: how do you justify the fact that your government is averaging more than one serious investigation every single year?

Ms McLean: Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, we believe that government should be open and transparent, and access to information is no exception to this. It's an important issue that we take very seriously. Certainly, there's always more work to do, and we inherited a system that did not necessarily have the best processes in place in order to ensure that a government can act efficiently and always in the best interests of Albertans. So we've taken action. We've improved turnaround times for FOIP requests. We're proactively sharing more information than government has ever before. We're streamlining processes and ensuring that we comply with all of the rules.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, given that they believe one thing and their actions are showing another, because they are currently under investigation for at least four serious challenges that they have created, and given that this government is clearly refusing to accept any ownership or responsibility, to the minister: are these acts of secrecy part of your government's policy like voice mode, or is this just current government practice?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I truly wish that the member opposite would ask me a specific question about government policy so that I could accurately address any concerns he may have. However, there appears to be just an intention to engage in some sort of vague smear campaign.

However, I will say that in terms of any accusations of wrongdoing we are more than happy and eager to comply with any investigations. There will be absolute co-operation from all government departments and officials, and we will be absolutely transparent with the public for all . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, given that these investigations require a lot of time and money to conduct and therefore are only held in the most serious of cases that require attention and given that we've seen the severity of these issues in B.C. and Ontario and given that a senior Liberal staffer in Ontario will be spending time in jail for the exact same things that this government is currently being investigated for, under deleting e-mails, how many more investigations can we expect to see from this government, and does the minister expect any of them to end in criminal charges?

Ms McLean: Thank you for that question. Mr. Speaker, I really wish that the member opposite would do appropriate research. If he had done so, he would know, as I do, that the circumstances in Ontario are extremely different from the circumstances for which we are being investigated here. We are excited to be co-operating fully with the OIPC. I would leave it to the OIPC to conduct her investigation and not to the member opposite as he wishes to be judge, jury, and executioner. Everyone here should really accept what the OIPC's process is, undergo that process. They're one to speak as Kenney is intent . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister. [interjections]
Order, please.

Hon. minister, there's a time slot here that we all live under. I try to enforce that.

Ms McLean: As if I'm the only one.

The Speaker: Hon. member, can I respectfully ask that you not speak back to me when I'm speaking, please? Do you agree? Is that a yes?

Ms McLean: Mr. Speaker, I absolutely am happy to do that. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.
The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

Health Care Wait Times

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Access to timely health services is a priority for Albertans in my constituency and for Albertans across the province. A new Canadian Institute for Health Information report came out today, which indicated that for some procedures wait times are improving while for other procedures wait times have been increasing. To the Minister of Health: what are you doing to address these increasing wait times?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. Albertans also tell me that they want government to reduce wait times in order to improve quality

of life. The member is right. We're among the best in the country and have the shortest waits for things like hip fracture repair, knee replacement, radiation therapy, and our stroke treatment centres are the best in Canada, among the fastest in the world. We need to make improvements in the other areas that were identified, and that's why Budget 2018 is investing \$40 million to increase opportunities and reduce wait times for hip and knee surgeries as well as cataract surgeries. We hope the opposition will vote for that budget.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This issue isn't just about investing more money in the health care system; it has to be about better strategies to reduce wait times. To the same minister: are you working on other strategies?

Ms Hoffman: I absolutely agree with the member. Our response to wait times needs to be comprehensive, and a response that includes additional investment is one pillar. Others are innovative strategies to reduce wait times, including centralized registries and allowing more to be done through primary care, with the support of education for those practitioners. As our population ages, we are seeing an increase in need for medical interventions. That's why we're making improvements to those wait-lists, reallocating OR time according to greatest need, and working with physicians around the Choosing Wisely campaign, that doctors brought forward to ensure that resources are used responsibly.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Some people think that adding more private medical clinics will help wait times as people who can pay more can jump the line. To the Minister of Health: would this help wait times for Albertans?

Ms Hoffman: Well, maybe for a very select few Albertans, Mr. Speaker. On this side of the House we believe that accessing health care shouldn't be based on how much money you have in the bottom of your pocket or your spending limit on your credit card. We think it should be based on medical need. We know that Conservatives want to make reckless cuts and privatize. Those would mean regular families with children and mortgages would have to wait longer for health care. We know they want to do this so they can give a tax giveaway to the top 1 per cent and put the burden on working families. That's wrong. We stand up for all Albertans and want to make sure that we reduce wait times for everyone.

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

Emergency Medical Services

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Scarily enough, since 11:17 this morning there's been a red alert for ambulances going on in Calgary. Even more scary, since 9 o'clock this morning in southern Alberta there's been a red alert call. Front-line dispatchers have told us that today they came in to work with seven serious calls on the screen and no ambulances to go. In fact, an ambulance was dispatched from Vulcan to go to Calgary to deal with a heart attack. We keep asking this minister what she's going to do to deal with the serious ambulance delays, that are costing people, sometimes, their lives. We'd like a serious answer right now on behalf of Albertans, please.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will certainly follow up with regard to the assertions that were made to ensure that we in my office are aware of the details. Usually red alerts are very short term, but nobody wants to be on a red alert for no matter of time. That's why we're investing in increased supports for front-line paramedics. That's why we've brought in this \$23 million over last year's forecast. We know that it's important to have increased front-line resources. Our front lines are fantastic, but we need to have more of them to be able to ensure that we have the right resources. I certainly urge members opposite to vote with us on the budget when it comes that time in the days to come.

2:40

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, we've been talking to this minister about this for over three years. Given that she still has not done anything like that on this issue and given that as a father, as a spouse, as a rural Albertan each day I live in fear that one of my family members may be in danger and no ambulance could come to them, will the minister stop telling us what she imaginarily thinks has happened and what she's actually going to do to get emergency services to our communities?

Ms Hoffman: What we've actually done, Mr. Speaker, is to reduce the use of ambulances doing interfacility transfers. We're building new long-term care beds to make up for the fact that 88 per cent of them were closed during the Ralph Klein cuts. We are encouraging crews to consolidate patients so that fewer crews are waiting in hospital emergency departments. We're expanding the community paramedicine program throughout Alberta, including central Alberta, and we're investing this \$23 million in more front-line services. All of this is what it takes to fix, certainly, the kinds of cuts and underfunding that we saw under Conservative governments.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, given that all the minister can do is to talk about 25 years ago and given that's not acceptable to the people of Alberta and given that that certainly doesn't help the people that are in danger right now that cannot get emergency services that this minister is responsible to provide them and given that firefighters, volunteer firefighters across rural Alberta are telling us that this is getting worse and worse and worse and that they're picking up most of the flak, again to the minister: not 25-years-ago policy or those types of discussions, what are you doing right now to get emergency services to the people of Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What we are doing is that we're increasing funding for EMS front-line responders. We're using ambulances more effectively to reduce interfacility transfers. We're building new long-term care spaces. And 25 years ago is relevant because the decisions you guys made 25 years ago to blow up the general hospital in Calgary, to close the Charles Camshell, in Edmonton, to cut rural services have lasting legacies. Closing those long-term care beds means that we have people sitting in hospital today that could have been in long-term care getting the appropriate care in community and we could move patients out of the emergency department. This is something that we are really proud to move forward to fix, and we are certainly fixing a number of Conservative problems that were left behind.

Notices of Motions

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

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to give notice pursuant to Standing Order 42 that at the appropriate time I will move the following motion.

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government of Canada to delay its planned \$1.3 billion funding to the government of British Columbia through federal labour market agreements until the B.C. government ceases its efforts to obstruct the Trans Mountain expansion project.

I have the appropriate copies for the pages.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Bill 10

An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today to table for first reading Bill 10, An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard directly from Albertans that they want to see more programs to help them make energy efficiency upgrades to their homes and their businesses. Many municipalities share government's commitment to advancing Alberta's climate leadership goals and are very keen to provide more options to Albertans to reduce emissions, save money, and help create more jobs in the green energy sector.

We've responded. Property assessed clean energy, or PACE, is a program that will enable municipalities to work with Energy Efficiency Alberta to fund clean energy upgrades to private property and then recover those costs from the property owner through property taxes. If passed, Bill 10 would enable municipalities to pass a PACE improvement tax bylaw. The intention is that Energy Efficiency Alberta will administer the program and work with lending institutions to secure agreements for financing. This program will help everyday Albertans make energy efficiency upgrades so they can save money and reduce emissions, and by making it more affordable for Albertans to make these improvements, this will help create green jobs and stimulate local economies.

This program is supported by Alberta's building industry, by our municipalities, and by Albertans. This government is committed to making life better for Albertans, and Bill 10 does that by helping them make energy efficiency upgrades so they can save money, reduce emissions, and support a diverse, clean energy economy in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to end by thanking all of the staff who are working on this game-changing legislation.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 10 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm tabling a document where an antichoice organization praises the UCP leader's impeccable antichoice voting record. Given that these are the friends that got him elected, it begs the question of what the opposition leader owes them. Perhaps it explains why he's avoiding the vote on Bill 9.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Dr. Starke: Mr. Speaker, thank you. Earlier today, during consideration of main estimates for the Ministry of Service Alberta, I made

reference to the Rural Economic Development Action Plan, which was prepared in 2014. I'd like to table five copies of that for the record.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have five copies of a petition put together by constituents in the Strathmore, Hussar, and Standard areas. I won't read the entire thing, but it's about the intersection of highway 840 and highway 564 in Wheatland county and is calling for improvements to infrastructure. This petition was put together before the Minister of Infrastructure – I suppose that job has changed around – before the government acted. These changes have been made, but I'm still tabling it out of respect for the constituents who put it together. This is a particularly important thing to me. My aunt almost lost her life and is still learning to walk again from a crash right in this area. Action was needed, action has been taken by the government, and I thank the government for their action on this issue.

The Speaker: Any other hon. members? Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two things that I want to table this afternoon. One is a letter to a constituent of mine from the Calgary Housing Company regarding their policy on cannabis and the changes in the legislation and what changes will or will not be made to their policies for residents when cannabis is legalized.

As well, five copies of the Calgary Housing Company's briefing note on their cannabis policy.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table a letter – and I have the appropriate five copies here – from a Mrs. Lena Williamson. She says:

The Berwyn Autumn Lodge should not be closed as there is no lodge replacing it . . . We have our names in the Fairview Lodge, and there were 4 names ahead of ours, so when will we get in?

She goes on to say:

The winter of 2016 there was \$100,000 [worth of] renovations done to this lodge, so it's like a new lodge . . . I love this lodge.

Thank you.

The Speaker: I believe we had a point of order today. The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to withdraw the point of order at this time.

Motions under Standing Order 42

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

Provincial Advocacy to Federal Government on Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion Suspension

Mr. Nixon:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government of Canada to delay its planned \$1.3 billion funding to the government of British Columbia through federal labour market

agreements until the B.C. government ceases its efforts to obstruct the Trans Mountain expansion project.

2:50

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move this motion forward because we had an emergency debate just a few short days ago and we still have not seen any clear action from this Assembly on this issue. This is an opportunity for this Assembly to do two things: one, send a strong message to Justin Trudeau that we expect him to take action and, second, a severe, significant consequence to B.C. if they continue to obstruct our pipeline.

If the government does not support it, again, they support Justin Trudeau and not Albertans.

The Speaker: Thank you.

[Unanimous consent denied]

Orders of the Day

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I have a couple of requests for unanimous consent from the Assembly that I would like to start with. The first one is to seek unanimous consent that the House adjourn today at 4 o'clock instead of 4:30. This is to enable members to attend the pipeline rally on the steps of our Legislature.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the members of the House for that support.

I'd like to also seek unanimous consent to proceed to consideration of Motion 17 on the Order Paper. This motion concerns committee memberships of the Assembly. If that's granted, I will move Motion 17.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Government Motions

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Committee Membership Changes

17. Mr. Mason moved:
Be it resolved that the membership of the Assembly's committees be replaced as follows:
 - A. on the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future that Mr. Horne replace Mr. Connolly, Ms Luff replace Mrs. Schreiner, and Ms McPherson replace Mr. Clark;
 - B. on the Standing Committee on Families and Communities that Ms Woollard replace Mr. Horne, Mr. Connolly replace Ms Luff, and Mr. Fraser replace Ms McPherson;
 - C. on the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship that Mrs. Schreiner replace Ms Woollard, Mr. Westhead replace Mr. Kleinstuber, Mr. Fildebrandt replace Ms

- McPherson, Mr. Clark replace Mr. Fraser, and Mr. Panda be appointed to the vacant position;
- D. on the Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund that Ms Luff replace Ms McKittrick and Ms McPherson replace Mr. Clark;
 - E. on the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices that Ms McKittrick replace Drever and Mr. Sucha replace Mr. Kleinsteuber;
 - F. on the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services that Drever replace Ms Luff, Mr. Westhead replace Ms Jabbour, and Ms Babcock replace Mrs. Schreiner;
 - G. on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts that Mr. Clark replace Mr. Fildebrandt.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. By way of explanation to the House I can indicate that this motion has been made due to changes in the Assembly. We have made attempts to accommodate members, and it has not always been possible. I believe the motion strikes the right balance between the needs of the various caucuses and independents, and for that reason I urge members to support it.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: This motion is debatable.

Any other members wishing to speak? I'll recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I think that most of what the hon. Government House Leader has said is correct. I will differ with him, though, on one point. Although the conversations around these committees did take place – and we in the Alberta Party caucus certainly have agreed with the vast majority of the committee changes and reshuffling – the Alberta Party caucus is a recognized third party in this Assembly, and as such we feel very strongly that we should be included on the Members' Services Committee. I would like to remind the Government House Leader of the time not so long ago when he and the now Premier sat in those two spots right there as a two-member caucus and had a seat on Members' Services.

It is very clear that the Members' Services Committee is a very important committee of this Assembly. Now, while nowhere is there any sort of ranking order of committee priority that I'm aware of, let's just have a clear understanding of what Members' Services is. It is not the no-meet committee. It is something that meets on a regular basis, chaired by the Speaker, that deals with the rules that govern our offices, our caucus offices, our constituency offices, budgets, and the like. It is an important committee that deals with those issues, standing order changes, those sorts of things, very important work. As a party with standing in this Assembly, it feels very odd to me that we've not been included.

I also should say that committee membership is not something that is granted out of the benevolence of government as a favour. It should follow some rules and some history and some precedent. So I would very much encourage the government to remember the time when they were a two-member caucus and were in fact included. I can't help but wonder. The fact that we have not been included perhaps has something to do with – even though I have not been a member of the Members' Services Committee, I have as a member of the Assembly had the opportunity to speak and present to that committee and on several occasions have used that committee and encouraged the members of that committee to bring motions and actually make some changes.

I can think of one of the very first things that I did as a member of this Assembly, pushed for changes to the way MLA living allowance reimbursements worked, to add those two important words, "up to," to allow us to claim less than the full amount of our living allowance should we, in fact, actually have charged less than that.

You'll recall that it's the Members' Services Committee that made the changes that prevent members from claiming their living allowance and then charging that back on Airbnb. That was the Members' Services Committee.

Most recently the Members' Services Committee tried, between the Official Opposition and government, to change what we are allowed to communicate out of our constituencies to make it far more partisan. Now, it was the Alberta Party caucus who noticed that little change in a committee report and raised that and encouraged members of the committee to make that change.

These are the sorts of things the Members' Services Committee does, and to have a member from the third-party opposition not on that committee and unable to move motions, unable to participate, frankly, Madam Speaker, is not, I think, in keeping with good parliamentary practice.

To that end, then, I have an amendment to move, Madam Speaker. I'll wait till you receive that at the table, and then I'll proceed.

The Deputy Speaker: This will be amendment A1.

Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I will read it, then. I move that Government Motion 17 be amended in part F by adding "Mr. Clark replace Mr. McIver," after "Mr. Westhead replace Ms Jabbour."

Very simply – and I'll just be brief – I've outlined the rationale for why I believe the Alberta Party caucus ought to be included on Members' Services. My rationale for the replacement that we have chosen is that it maintains the balance between the government and opposition members on this important committee.

I would very much encourage all members of the Assembly to support this amendment to Government Motion 17. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Government House Leader.

3:00

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Well, with regret, I can't support the amendment proposed by the hon. member. I will note that we have worked very hard to strike the right balance in terms of the members of the opposition. One of the things, of course, that's changed is the composition and the size of the opposition parties. It's not comparable to the situation to which the hon. member is referring.

I will say that we have proposed adding that hon. member to the Public Accounts Committee, which is a very important committee that deals with the financial accounts of the government as a whole. I'm sure that he's going to bring very valuable insight and make a great contribution to that committee, Madam Speaker.

But, on balance, I think that we've got to the point where we have it right, so I'd urge all hon. members not to support this amendment.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I will be brief. I also will not be supporting this amendment. While I do appreciate some

of the comments that the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow made, the reality, first of all, is as the Government House Leader pointed out, I think rightly, in comparing now to when he and the Premier were in a two-person caucus. There is a significantly different-sized opposition in the Assembly at this point. It's one of the largest, if not the largest, oppositions in the history of this province, which changes the equation.

Second, as the Government House Leader said, not everybody can get everything that they want every time. There are only so many committee spots that we can give out. You know, we would probably like some different things ourselves in the motion, but the reality is that we have to come up with some sort of a compromise that works for the Assembly. This is a compromise. The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow, that party, will have a member on PAC now, which is a big change.

As such, I would ask all of my colleagues to vote against this amendment, and hopefully we can get on with work today.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: You got it, Madam Speaker. I'm rising to speak in favour of this amendment. While it is difficult to try to replicate the entire composition of the Legislature on a committee basis, it is, in fact, impossible unless we have a pretty even number and a strict two-party system. We have two official parties here, one party that nearly achieves official party status, two independent members who sit as members of a party, and one independent member who is just that. It is impossible to replicate the composition of the Legislature entirely on committees, but we should do our very best. While the Alberta Party does not have official party status – normally we set that at four MLAs – I think they have achieved at least a critical mass enough that they probably deserve to have a voice on each of the committees, including an important one like the Members' Services Committee.

Let's remember that the role of committees is not simply to rubber-stamp everything that's happening in the Legislature. It is to actually get down to business and do work in a more informal setting – at least, we like to have it as a more informal setting – than this place. It's supposed to do the work and then bring what it does, its findings and its decisions, to the Legislature. So if you're going to cut out a significant portion, even just three MLAs from a committee, I think we diminish the ability of a committee to actually get down to the work it's supposed to do and the nitty-gritty.

I would echo that, you know, when the Government House Leader was a member of a caucus of two, he would certainly have taken issue with the idea of being excluded from any of the committees. I know that it was, until pretty recently, the tradition of the Official Opposition to stand up for the minority rights of members in the House and to make sure everybody had a voice.

I have other problems with the overall motion, not the amendment to this motion but the overall motion. I'll speak to the motion itself when we get back to the main motion, but I want to encourage members to support this amendment as it stands.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'll keep my comments brief. I think this is a really important committee. It is in charge of a lot of decisions about how things work for MLAs. And I would like to remark that size really doesn't matter. It's what you do with what you have on these committees. It's important to have representation on the committees.

For that reason, I would like to urge everyone in the House to vote in favour of this amendment.

The Deputy Speaker: I did neglect to offer Standing Order 29(2)(a) subsequent to the hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks, so I apologize.

Did anyone want to take advantage of 29(2)(a) for the Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I will take this opportunity to just offer a brief comment. Thank you to my colleague for making that comment. It does give me an opportunity just in terms of the principle of what we're dealing with here, in response to the Government House Leader, as a comment here under 29(2)(a), that while, yes, Public Accounts is an important committee, it's chalk and cheese. It's completely unrelated to the work of Members' Services. Members' Services is something that I think all recognized parties, of which the Alberta Party – I will correct my hon. colleague for Strathmore-Brooks but also thank him for his comments. We are a recognized party within this Assembly and should in fact be put on Members' Services. I think it's, obviously, an important thing. It's not mutually exclusive with membership on other committees.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, do you wish to respond?

Ms McPherson: No, thanks.

The Deputy Speaker: Any others wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Seeing none, I'll call the vote.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:06 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Clark	McPherson	Starke
Fildebrandt		

Against the motion:

Aheer	Gray	Panda
Anderson, S.	Hinkley	Payne
Anderson, W.	Hoffman	Renaud
Carlier	Horne	Rosendahl
Carson	Hunter	Sabir
Connolly	Kazim	Schmidt
Coolahan	Larivee	Schneider
Cortes-Vargas	Littlewood	Schreiner
Dach	Loyola	Shepherd
Dang	Luff	Sigurdson
Drever	Malkinson	Stier
Drysdale	Mason	Strankman
Eggen	McKittrick	Turner
Feehan	McLean	Westhead
Fitzpatrick	Nielsen	Woollard
Goehring	Nixon	

Totals:	For – 4	Against – 47
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[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

The Deputy Speaker: We are back on the main motion. Any members wishing to speak? Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would move that we adjourn debate on the motion for the time being and move on with the rest of our afternoon.

Thank you.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Provincial Fiscal Policies

13. Mr. Ceci moved:

Be it resolved that the Assembly approve in general the business plans and fiscal policies of the government.

[Adjourned debate April 10: Ms McPherson]

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill, do you wish to continue speaking? No.

Any other members wishing to speak to Motion 13? The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for recognizing me, and to members for their time. It's my annual privilege to speak to the government's Budget Address. It won't come as a great surprise to members that I won't be voting in favour of the budget. [interjections] They may be surprised and greatly disappointed, but I'd like to address why they're surprised and help them to understand why I've had this change of heart to not vote for the NDP's budget.

Now, in the 2015 election all the parties put forward what was supposed to be a costed plan for their platforms. I remember I was involved in the Wildrose budget process. I had taken quite a bit of pleasure in doing so. I had regularly put together alternative budgets when I was with the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, and it was not a terribly difficult task. You have to manage expectations and try to find a balance of things. The Wildrose put forward a plan. The Progressive Conservatives put forward a plan. The Liberals, I think, put forward a plan. The NDP put forward a plan, but we all recall that there was a billion-dollar rounding error in it. Now, these things can happen. A billion dollars is quite a bit – it's more than a coffee – but I suppose it can happen. They moved back, in the middle of the election, their balanced budget promise date from, I think, 2018 to 2019. They can confirm with me what their actual original promise was, but they ended up moving it back because they got something wrong.

Then immediately upon coming to power, they moved it back another year and then, a few months later, another year. Now they're finally stating that it's going to be some point in fiscal year '23-24 that they'll get back to balance. By that time, Alberta will have taken on, in a best-case scenario, \$96 billion of debt, in a very best-case scenario. That is based on oil prices going up from where they are. Perhaps we'll meet that target; perhaps we won't. But it requires oil prices to go up, gas prices to go up, other tax revenue to go up very significantly. It budgets in that the Trans Mountain pipeline will not just be built but be built on time. I'm sure all members in this House agree that that is something that is a very desirable goal, but it is not necessarily something that we can take to the bank right now. So they've built this on a lot of predications that in a best-case scenario we will have an accumulated debt of \$96 billion, and I think that is grossly irresponsible.

Now, the government has choices here. They can continue on the current path, or they can change a bit. Every government, every party has at least in theory a governing philosophy or an ideology

behind it, at least in some sense. You know, I think ideologies should be like sailing by the stars. They should be a guiding light to guide you, your set of principles, but if there is an island in the way, you might need to change course a bit. I'm a conservative. I'm a libertarian conservative. I have a set of principles. They are a constellation or a star I can steer my ship by, but if there is an island in the way or a bigger ship coming straight into me, I might be inclined to change course from time to time. Now, that's not unprincipled; that's just being pragmatic and reasonable. The other side, being blindly ideological, is steering your ship into the island because you don't think it should be there. Well, we are beached. We are beached, and we see no sign yet of any attempt to get off the reef.

Now, a day or two before the budget I released my 2018-2019 alternative budget plan. In large measure, you know, I sailed by my stars. I built on the alternative budgets that I did when I was with the Canadian Taxpayers Federation in the way I did it, in the approach. The basic principles behind it were that I don't want taxes to go up and I want spending to be controlled and to limit the size, scope, and role of the government. But there were changes in it. I made changes from the times when I was at the CTF, and I made changes from the times when I was in the Wildrose and UCP because circumstances change. If things get worse, sometimes harder measures are required. If things get better, sometimes you could account for that, too.

The plan that I've proposed took the government's own revenue projection numbers from their previous budget and adapted quarterly updates for it to give us a best estimate on the revenue side, but what I have proposed is that we balance the budget as defined by the NDP by 2019 and balance the full, consolidated deficit by 2020. You know, it's difficult how you account for deficits in this province. We've been debating that for a long time. There is more than one right way depending on what you're trying to measure, but at the end of the day, if we are spending more money than we're taking in, you're running a deficit.

3:30

The best general way to account for that is the change in net financial assets, how much money the government is worth on one side and how much debt and liability they have on the other. What to account in the assets and the liabilities is a subject of debate. Pension liabilities or heritage fund assets: these things are subject to debate. But the way it's done in the government's own accounting shows that we will continue to run a decline in our net financial assets. That is our net worth. We will continue to run a decline in our net financial assets infinitely, never ever getting to a balance.

I'll say, though, that even on the operational side, that the NDP has said will be balanced by 2023-24, they still haven't even shown how they're going to get there. They've given only a three-year plan. We used to have five years. We've seen our fiscal accountability legislation watered down repeatedly, beginning in the Stelmach and Redford eras, and now it's to the point where the government doesn't even have to show us how they will balance the budget. They gave a three-year plan, and then they said: another two years after that we'll get to a theoretical balance. They gave no numbers whatsoever.

Now, an economist from the University of Calgary, Trevor Tombe, said in his write-up on the NDP's budget that the alternative budget that I proposed had more detail on getting to a balanced budget "than the government's own numbers." That's outrageous. This thing is, with the cover, about – well, it's not numbered well, but it's not a big ... [interjection] Well, at least I didn't miscount a billion dollars. It's 25 pages plus the cover, but in it there is more

substantial detail on proposed spending plans than in the government's own budget.

The government's budget is filled with lots of fluff and words and promises and platitudes but not a lot of actual detail on their plans to achieve what they say that they are trying to do. When an economist says that a mere lonely independent member sitting in Siberia can produce a more detailed financial plan than the government, with a majority caucus, a cabinet, and a Finance department with hundreds of people working in it, then something is clearly wrong. Something is very clearly wrong. You're not showing anybody any plan about how you're trying to do this. You've moved back your balanced budget plan at least four to five times now.

Let's remember that you inherited a long-standing deficit. We've been running deficits since 2008-09. The initial deficit was perhaps understandable. There was a collapse in oil prices. We shouldn't have been in a deficit to begin with because spending had gone up unsustainably before that crash in oil prices, but a small temporary deficit was perhaps necessary. But governments repeatedly refused to take action, and they continued to kick the can down the road year after year after year, saying that it's something else's fault and that, you know, in just one more year we're going to get to balance. The Getty government did the same thing until someone finally took the issue seriously.

Now, I know that the NDP today are blaming health care problems on Ralph Klein. What Ralph Klein did in 1993 is about as relevant to Alberta today as Nero to Italy. You can't keep blaming someone from decades ago for any problems that are today's. Eventually you have to take responsibility and be the government. Perhaps you look forward to being opposition again. I don't know. But you are the government, and you have to take ownership of what you are doing. You are responsible for the finances of this province, and if you're not taking that seriously, you're not doing your most fundamental job.

This is going to have real consequences for people. We are going to be paying \$3 billion a year in interest payments, just interest payments. The fastest growing department of the government is debt, paying mere interest on the debt. And paying interest doesn't do anything; it doesn't accomplish anything. Paying interest on the debt will outweigh the vast majority of government departments. It's virtually impossible unless you – it's still outweighed by health care since health care is approaching 50 per cent of the budget. But short of health care and K to 12 education, paying interest on the debt will soon become the single largest department in the government. In Ontario it's already larger than the entire cost of the postsecondary education system.

We've seen what happens when governments don't take this seriously, and there's a reason for it. It's easy and politically rewarding to borrow money today from tomorrow to pay voters today. Money for nothing; votes for free. You can borrow from a future electorate . . .

Mr. Mason: And you end up in dire straits.

Mr. Fildebrandt: The government is in dire straits indeed.

You know, it is politically easy and convenient to borrow money from the future to give nice gifts to the voters of today because there's no pain today for borrowing. The pain comes tomorrow, and our children don't get to vote. There is a role for government borrowing at times for certain projects if they have a measurable earned financial return. In times of emergency, of major natural disasters or war, there is a role for government borrowing, but there is not a role for borrowing on a regular basis, year in, year out, without any plan to stop it.

Now, if members are looking to catch some sleep on the plane or Red Arrow on the way home, I'd encourage you to read a copy of

my alternative budget. It should put you down pretty quickly. Or maybe it'll wake you up. Maybe it'll let you know that it is possible.

I think that it is a positive exercise for oppositions to put forward alternative budgets. It's a debate I regularly had and lost when I was a part of the Official Opposition. There are reasons for not doing it. You don't get much attention. You just get criticized for it. Frankly, you have to change it every year because it's not a platform; it's something on an interim basis. So there are valid reasons for not doing it, and I can respect the Official Opposition for not doing it. But I think, on balance, it is still a positive exercise.

I think, most importantly, it's not just showing Albertans that we can do it; we are showing other members in this House that getting the budget balanced is not the end of the world. We've got the numbers right here to show it. We can get government expenditures under control. We can balance the operational budget in two years and the consolidated budget in three years without apocalypse befalling Alberta, and we've got the numbers right here to prove it.

I want to thank members for their time and for participating in this debate on all sides of the House. I'm sure I've converted you all, and you'll be voting against the budget now or accepting amendments to it. If you need a Finance minister, let me know.

I want to thank members for their time and for participating in the debates, and I look forward to debating this in more detail at the next stages. I move to adjourn.

Thank you.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

Bill 6

Gaming and Liquor Statutes Amendment Act, 2018

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Madam Speaker. On behalf of the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General I am pleased to move second reading of Bill 6, the Gaming and Liquor Statutes Amendment Act, 2018.

Madam Speaker, in April 2017 the federal government announced that cannabis would become legal across the country in the summer of 2018. That announcement spurred our government to begin developing a system for legal cannabis. We began by asking Albertans what our province's legal cannabis system should look like. We heard from over 60,000 Albertans. Albertans told us that they have four priorities for cannabis legislation. Those priorities are: keeping cannabis out of the hands of children and youth; protecting public health; promoting safety on roads, in workplaces, and in public spaces; and limiting the illegal cannabis market.

3:40

Madam Speaker, last November Members of the Legislative Assembly passed legislation that allowed us to begin putting elements of our legal cannabis system in place. That legislation granted authority to the AGLC to oversee our system, and it paved the way for us to begin preparing for the private, licensed retail sale of cannabis. Over the winter we worked with the AGLC and stakeholders to develop regulations for potential cannabis retailers. Those regulations were announced in February, and they provide clarity for potential cannabis retailers while ensuring our system is safe, secure, and effective.

Today I am seeking hon. members' support for Bill 6, amendments to the Gaming and Liquor Act, which continues to build on the work

that we've done to date. This legislation would bring further clarity to retailers and to the public about the use and sale of cannabis in Alberta. The proposed amendments would modernize the act as well as the AGLC to keep pace with a growing marketplace that includes legalized cannabis and an evolving liquor industry.

Madam Speaker, Bill 6 includes amendments that, if passed, would provide the AGLC board with the tools it requires to better regulate and enforce rules around cannabis. This includes prohibiting retailers from using names such as "pharmacy" or "medi" or any symbol that has a medical connotation. We want to avoid any linkage between the recreational cannabis market and the potential therapeutic effects of cannabis.

Bill 6 also brings better clarity to the rules around cannabis smoking and vaping. It would explicitly prohibit anyone from smoking or vaping cannabis inside any business or place, not just in cannabis retail outlets.

Madam Speaker, Bill 6 also proposes to strengthen the effectiveness of administrative fines for those who violate the Gaming and Liquor Act or the gaming and liquor regulation. Fines are an important tool in deterring contraventions, and we propose increasing the maximum fine from \$200,000 to \$1 million. This amount would give the AGLC the room that it needs to properly address serious infractions when necessary.

Bill 6 would also amend the act so that for minor ticketable provincial offences, the court could rely on evidence that a product is cannabis based on its packaging, labelling, or smell. This mirrors our current practice for alcohol and tobacco. This would apply to public consumption, youth possession, consumption in a vehicle, improper transport in a vehicle, and sales to a minor. This would eliminate the requirement to send the substance to a lab for testing. All other elements of an offence would still need to be proven if the ticket is challenged.

Madam Speaker, as I said, the legislation last fall gave the AGLC the authority to oversee the distribution and retail sale of cannabis in Alberta. This is no small undertaking. The inclusion of legal cannabis in the AGLC's mandate requires necessary resources and supports so its board can provide effective oversight and meet the high expectations of Albertans. Bill 6 reinforces support provided through past legislation, and it would create more capacity for the AGLC board to carry out its expanded mandate. This includes increasing the board's membership from seven to nine members and extending the maximum term for board members from nine years to 10 years. In addition, the bill would allow for temporary extensions of board appointments until a member can be reappointed or replaced, ensuring that there is no gap in capacity during transition periods.

Madam Speaker, while the legalization of cannabis was the impetus for developing this legislation, we also saw the opportunity to amend the Gaming and Liquor Act so that it will better reflect an evolving liquor industry. Two final amendments would bring the potential for new opportunities to Alberta's liquor retailers. The first would allow ferment on premises. This means the facility's licence for this purpose could provide consumers with ingredients, equipment, and guidance to make their own beer, wine, ciders, and coolers on-site and then take the finished products home to consume privately. The bill would also allow retailers to blend and infuse liquor products. This is a growing trend that involves infusing liquor with flavouring agents to create specialty drinks, infusing food with liquor, and creating house-aged liquor.

Madam Speaker, the legalization of cannabis represents a major shift for our province and our country. What's not changing are the priorities that were conveyed to us by Albertans.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I hope that members on both sides of this House will support this legislation. I would like to move that debate be adjourned.

Thank you.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 7

Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act

[Debate adjourned April 10: Mr. van Dijken speaking]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's always a pleasure to rise and debate the merits of these important bills such as Bill 7, Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act. You know, when our caucus first saw this bill, they were reminded of the failed Bill 202, the Alberta Local Food Act. Now, as far as the purposes of both acts go, indeed the wording and phrasing are a little different, but the bottom line of both bills was and is to encourage the development and success of a local food sector or to ensure a resilient, sustainable, and strong local food economy and agricultural land base in Alberta. The fact that Bill 202, the Alberta Local Food Act, a couple of years ago died on the Order Paper now means that, of course, we pore over all the words inside Bill 7, Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act. We do that because it really appears to myself and others that there are definitely similarities. That being said, we're dealing with a new bill, and that is what my comments will refer to.

Let's be honest. Local food is something farmers and rural Albertans understand. We understand it as it's part of our lifestyle and was long before it became trendy and niche. Farmers' markets and buying at the gate was a way of life long before it was urban trendy. It was just what it was.

Now, I've listened to what has been said in the House, to the speakers that have spoken to this bill, and I have to share some of those concerns with my colleagues. We've reached out to peers and producers, asking for their input on a bill dropped here on a Thursday and now debated just a few days later. I can only assume that the government has consulted broadly throughout the agricultural industry, with producers, commissions, manufacturers, and sector groups. I mean, I hope they have, because, of course, we have no way of determining that other than by doing some of that ourselves in the time we've been allotted. We hope to hear back yet on some more opinions as I'm sure the members across the aisle will understand if we do our own consultation. After all, as the late, great President Reagan was fond of saying, "Trust, but verify," and we are going to try to verify.

The trouble is that trust is earned, and it has been mentioned before by others that this government's record on consultation is a tad spotty when it comes to rural issues, not that local food is simply a rural issue. I mean that in this broad growing of crops and livestock kind of rural.

My colleague from Drumheller-Stettler has pointed out a few bothersome areas of this legislation that have been brought to our attention, and I think I'm going to continue in that vein as other issues are cropping up with me as well. I start with definitions of this act. For the purposes of this act

"agricultural product" means

(i) an animal, a plant or an animal and plant product.

As well, an agricultural product as far as this act is concerned is also

(ii) a product, including any food or drink, wholly or partly derived from an animal or a plant, [and]

- (iii) a product prescribed for the purpose of this Act as an agricultural product.

Now, the mumbo-jumbo that appears not just in this act but pretty much every act that crosses our desks leaves a lot of room for interpretation, which is why many portions of this act invite several questions and, in fairness, provide some answers as well. There's no question.

My first question arises with some of the definitions. I mean, I get that the agricultural product definition is going to be broad, but I wonder what the definition of "a product, including any food or drink, wholly or partly derived from an animal or a plant" actually means. Does this act include products that contain honey that are sold, organic or not? Will bees be subject to this act or just the food derived from bees? Does that include mead, which is actually a fermented product subject to AGLC standards?

I guess this would include milk, juice, eggs, bread, bacon, and fruit. Basically, my entire breakfast, organic or not, will fall under this act because, as we know, the minister under section 6(a) can make the certification of agricultural products other than organic ones. You know, certification would seem to most, I would surmise, that we will have local foods certified as per the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, those being foods that are sold within the province at markets or at farm gate, and that the local producer would have to become certified at his own expense. Now, I'm assuming that because it says nowhere in the act who pays for the certification of the producer.

3:50

All that seems to make some sense to me, but as I read on in this bill, under section 6 we see:

The Minister may make regulations

- (a) establishing a certification program for agricultural products other than those certified as organic products under Part 2 [of this act].

Yikes. That sentence alone tends to scare the devil out of me, let alone stakeholders. This portion of the bill needs a little explanation. This portion of the bill needs significant explanation, actually, which leads me down the road to the next question.

When I go through this act, I notice that under the definition of local food, it actually means "forest or freshwater food." Okay. Freshwater food makes sense, but forest, I'm afraid, doesn't. I'm guessing that there's not a huge market for organic wood shingles or organic Christmas trees, perhaps, but I digress.

People are actually contacting our offices and have concerns, and it's our job to see that these questions are answered and that we hold the government to account for their actions or inactions. That's our job over here, and we're going to continue to do it.

The stated purposes of this act are:

- (a) to encourage the development and success of a local food sector throughout the Province, and
- (b) to regulate agricultural products that are produced or processed in the Province and marketed and sold as organic products within the Province.

To reiterate what others have said about this bill before, why is the wording in certain clauses in this act so vague that it makes them open to such broad interpretation? Why, when (b) talks about organics, are all agricultural products included in this legislation? To what purpose is that?

To get the ball rolling here again, I'm going to move on to the local food councils. As per the bill:

5(1) The Minister shall, in accordance with section 7 of the Government Organization Act, establish a Local Food Council to provide a report containing advice and recommendations regarding provincial policies, programs, pilot projects or initiatives to

support the continued growth and sustainability of Alberta's local food sector.

Now, I applaud the minister for ensuring that the members which will be appointed to this council are to be representatives of Alberta's local food sector, including small producers and processors. That portion of the bill seems to make good sense, not that there aren't more portions of the bill that also make good sense. Don't get me wrong here. But that particular portion does give representation on this council to those that are actually involved in growing and taking and marketing food, whatever the definition of food may be.

Now, I guess this does ask another question. The current government has made as much hay as possible, certainly in the last year, with regard to dissolving agencies, boards, and commissions. Now, I'm not going to say either one way or another whether or not that was good or bad. It's not what this bill is about today. But it seems to me that after all of the hoopla about getting rid of ABCs, we've changed the word to "council," and that seems like it will cover off agencies, boards, and commissions with the use of a different word.

You know, a council, according to *Webster's*, is a body of persons specifically designated or selected to act in an advisory, administrative, or legislative capacity. For some of us in Alberta, changing the word from an agency, a board, for heaven's sake, or a commission to a council isn't necessarily anything different. There's really no difference here between those four words, but I guess it could conceivably be seen as a new word from what we have known for several years as three different words. But once again I do digress.

The food portion of this bill, as it relates to the newly formed council that will oversee risk management tools for local food producers and processors and attempt to provide increased access to local food, does at its best keep the public informed on local food in Alberta and provides certification opportunities for local food producers and local food processors. The part of this council is that it potentially will be dissolved, and a drop-dead date on when that will be dissolved is included. That, for me, was very good news. This so-called council won't be lounging around with not much to do for years and years as we've seen in the past, with the possibility of salaries getting out of hand.

But should I be so tickled? I wonder. Let's examine this for a minute. Section 5 of the bill, which talks about the local food council, has several subcategories, and I refer now to subcategories (4) and (5) of section 5. Section 5(4) states:

Not later than 12 months after a Council is established under subsection (1),

which refers to the Government Organization Act,

the Council must submit a final report to the Minister providing the advice and recommendations of the Council on the matters referred to in subsection (1),

which, once again, I've already talked about here. Now, that subsection is something that I laud and applaud. There is a definite end date for the council. I think we could all agree that that idea is a great move.

When I look down a little further, I see section 5(5), that reads:

The Council is dissolved on the date the Minister accepts the Council's report or such later date determined by the Minister.

Now, that's kind of where it falls off the rails for me. I understand that the minister has to keep a fairly tight rein on how long this council is able to exist in order to achieve the pieces of legislation laid out here. That makes perfect sense. But on one hand, the legislation says that the minister will dissolve the council no later than one year after it has been established; on the other hand, the

legislation gives the minister the ability to keep the council in place until said minister sees fit to dissolve the council.

I think, with all that said, Madam Speaker, I have raised enough questions here. I'd like to put forward an amendment if I may. I have the appropriate number of copies here, and I will wait for your approval before I proceed.

The Deputy Speaker: This will be referral motion RA1.

Mr. Schneider: I move that the motion for second reading of Bill 7, Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act, be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following: "Bill 7, Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future in accordance with Standing Order 74.2."

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod, on the amendment.

Mr. Stier: Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, this particular act that we've got now reminds me so much of the previous act that we had here a year and a half ago. I think it was Bill 202. In that bill, we saw an awful lot of ambiguity and things that we were really, really concerned about, and in this bill, too, we see a lot of wording that is almost exactly the same. I think that the Member for Little Bow has quite a large amount of information, that I don't have possession of at the moment to elaborate on. Certainly, when I read certain clauses of this bill, I saw that they were almost exactly the same in some areas as the one that we saw before. So I would . . .

The Deputy Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt, hon. member, but pursuant to the unanimous decision of the House earlier this afternoon to waive Standing Order 4(2), the House stands adjourned until Monday afternoon at 1:30.

[The Assembly adjourned at 3:59 p.m.]

Bill Status Report for the 29th Legislature - 4th Session (2018)

Activity to Thursday, April 12, 2018

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

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

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

Bill 1 — Energy Diversification Act (McCuaig-Boyd)

First Reading — 6 (*Mar. 8, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 50-51 (*Mar. 13, 2018 morn.*), 184-87 (*Mar. 15, 2018 aft.*), 233-43 (*Mar. 20, 2018 morn.*), 301-08 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 2 — Growth and Diversification Act (\$) (Bilous)

First Reading — 118 (*Mar. 14, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 243-46 (*Mar. 20, 2018 morn.*), 294-96 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft.*), 314-25 (*Mar. 22, 2018 morn.*), 411-12 (*Apr. 4, 2018 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 3 — Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2018 (\$) (Ceci)

First Reading — 184 (*Mar. 15, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 221-26 (*Mar. 19, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 261-68 (*Mar. 20, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 296-98 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 28, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force Mar. 28, 2018; SA 2018 c1]

Bill 4 — Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2018 (\$) (Ceci)

First Reading — 165 (*Mar. 15, 2018 morn., passed*)

Second Reading — 226-32 (*Mar. 19, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 268-75 (*Mar. 20, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 298-301 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 28, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force Mar. 28, 2018; SA 2018 c2]

Bill 5 — An Act to Strengthen Financial Security for Persons with Disabilities (Sabir)

First Reading — 200-201 (*Mar. 19, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 360-62 (*Apr. 3, 2018 morn.*), 482-87 (*Apr. 10, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 6 — Gaming and Liquor Statutes Amendment Act, 2018 (Ganley)

First Reading — 448 (*Apr. 9, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 533-34 (*Apr. 12, 2018 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 7 — Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act (Carlier)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 491-97 (*Apr. 10, 2018 aft.*), 534-36 (*Apr. 12, 2018 aft., adjourned on amendment*)

Bill 8 — Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2018 (S. Anderson)

First Reading — 374 (*Apr. 3, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 9 — Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act (Hoffman)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 497-502 (*Apr. 10, 2018 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 10 — An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements (S. Anderson)

First Reading — 528 (*Apr. 12, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 11 — Lobbyists Amendment Act, 2018 (Gray)

First Reading — 505 (*Apr. 11, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 201 — Employment Standards (Firefighter Leave) Amendment Act, 2018 (W. Anderson)

First Reading — 118 (*Mar. 14, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 201-14 (*Mar. 19, 2018 aft., referred to Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future*)

Bill 202 — Alberta Taxpayer Protection (Carbon Tax Referendum) Amendment Act, 2018 (Kenney)

First Reading — 179 (*Mar. 15, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 203 — Long Term Care Information Act (Schreiner)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 204 — Land Statutes (Abolition of Adverse Possession) Amendment Act, 2018 (Gotfried)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, April 16, 2018

Day 17

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, April 16, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Hon. members, let us, each in our own way, reflect or pray on our commonalities and not on our differences. Now more than ever it is time for collaborative work for the good of Alberta and of all of our nations. Let us let our deliberations today be guided by the reminder that we as Members of the Alberta Legislative Assembly have a responsibility to ensure that Albertans, our province, and indeed our nation must always succeed.

Hon. members, ladies and gentlemen, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Mr. R.J. Chambers.

Hon. Members:

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

The Speaker: Thank you. Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise in order to introduce to you and through you 21 wonderful students who are visiting us today from Garneau school, which is a very old and traditional and long-standing school in the city of Edmonton, in the heart of my riding. They are accompanied by their teachers, Miss Carly Bowman and Mrs. Kristine Peters, and also their chaperone, Mr. Zabaneh. I certainly hope that all members will join me as they rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 29 students from the Covenant Canadian Reformed School in Neerlandia. The students are accompanied by their teacher, Corlisa Pietersma, along with their chaperones, Karen Schouten, Marcia Van Grootheest, Benita Dejong, Sharlene Hamoen, Francine Schouten, Mel Hooimeyer, and Jelte Jagersma. I ask that they please rise and receive the warm and traditional welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Hon. members, are there any other school groups?
Seeing none, the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's very much my pleasure to introduce today three visitors: my brother Ervin Carlier from Val Marie, Saskatchewan, and his daughters, my nieces Jeanelle Carlier from Swift Current, Saskatchewan, and Carina Carlier-Sissons from Pincher Creek, Alberta. I would now like my guests to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Health and Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I have two introductions. It's my absolute pleasure to introduce to you and through you Dr. Ubaka Ogbogu, who is seated in the members' gallery along with his wife and two lovely daughters. Dr. Ogbogu recently has been appointed to the board of directors of the Health Quality Council of Alberta. He's currently an assistant professor with the faculties of Law and pharmacy, and he's a Katz research fellow in health law and science at the University of Alberta. Due to his passion and experience with health policy, we are excited to have him join the excellent HQCA team. To his daughters and wife: I should let you know that in his interview he spoke so much about how proud he is to be your dad and your husband. Please, colleagues, join me in extending the warm welcome. And to your entire family, please rise and receive our warm welcome.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

Ms Luff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly members of Nadia El-Dib's family. I am amazed at the strength of this family in the face of incredible tragedy, and I will be speaking more about Nadia today in my member's statement. If Sami El-Dib, Joumana El-Dib, Sali El-Dib, Racha El-Dib, and Jana El-Dib could rise and please receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Any other guests to introduce, hon. member?

Ms Hoffman: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In that cuteness I failed to conclude my second introduction. I am honoured to introduce guests from the Elves Special Needs Society, located in the constituency of Edmonton-Glenora, that I have the honour of representing. They're in the members' gallery. Elves is a well-established nonprofit offering one-of-a-kind service to individuals with disabilities here in the capital region since 1973, serving over 450 individuals and their families from the ages of two and a half and up. Elves has dedicated staff and supportive volunteers who provide a caring, inclusive environment. I now invite Vivienne Bartee, president; Barbara Tymchak Olafson; Mieczyslaw Pogonowski; Candace Scheuer; and Eva Glover to please rise and receive the warm welcome and the appreciation of our Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Members' Statements

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

Nadia El-Dib

Ms Luff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Your kindness has touched more people than you will ever know; you made everyone's day shine; thank you for teaching us the true meaning of strength; you will never know how much I will miss you: these are some of the comments from Nadia El-Dib's Facebook page. A beautiful, bubbly, and kind-hearted girl, Nadia was tragically murdered at just 22 years old on March 25 at the hands of a man whom she knew. This is an unspeakable tragedy, and I can't imagine the loss that her family must feel.

Speaking to her sister over the course of last week, the El-Dib family want Nadia to be remembered as the glue that held her family together, as someone who always had a smile on her face, and as a person who lived her life to the fullest. Nadia was well known for her skill with makeup and her incredible photos on social media. Makeup was something that came naturally to Nadia and something that she had a passion for. She was also just figuring out what she wanted to do with her life. She was in her second semester of a legal assistant diploma at SAIT and had dreams of going on to become a lawyer. One of four daughters, Nadia was close with her family. You can see in family photos and videos just how close the girls were and how much they loved each other.

Nadia's family wants to use her tragic story to bring awareness to the issue of violence against women. They encourage any woman who is in an abusive relationship to reach out for help, but they also want more people to talk about the precursors to violence. They want people to talk about what kind of behaviour isn't acceptable from a boyfriend or a man who is pursuing you. They want friends not to be bystanders but to speak up when they notice things that might be red flags. Nadia's death is a huge loss to her family and to her entire community. Hopefully, this tragedy can lead to the prevention of others like it in the future.

To Nadia's family, on behalf of our government I want to extend our sincerest and deepest condolences for the loss of Nadia, and I want you to know that your government stands with you in your efforts to end violence against women and to ensure that every Albertan can one day live free from the fear, threat, or experience of domestic violence.

Thank you.

1:40 Trans Mountain Pipeline Construction Suspension

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, Canada is in a constitutional and economic crisis over the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion. Today's Liberals in Ottawa are not the nation-building Liberals of C.D. Howe's time, when the TransCanada pipeline was built. But make no mistake. When you're in such a crisis, your reference document is the Constitution, not the Leap Manifesto.

It is the job of the Official Opposition to proactively identify solutions and offer the government constructive, practical, common-sense suggestions. The NDP and Trudeau Liberals reject our suggestions. When the B.C. NDP was sworn in, we called for consequences if they tried to obstruct the pipeline. The Alberta NDP ridiculed us, but then it became a possibility in the throne speech six months later. The NDP rejected our call for an emergency debate in February. Then the NDP ended the wine ban too early. From using the declaratory powers of section 92(10)(c) of the Constitution to withholding the billions of dollars in infrastructure funding, the best the Liberals and NDP came up with is: let's take an equity position.

Meet the NDP's world travellers: Tzaporah Berman and Karen Mahon, now illegally protesting the pipeline; and Gerald Butts, the PMO's principal secretary, previously with the World Wildlife Fund, part of the Rockefeller-backed campaign to land lock the oil sands. Nothing like manufacturing a crisis and then appearing to act as if to solve it. Is it a coincidence that this is happening in the lead-up to an election year?

The clock is ticking. There are 46 days left to clear the political hurdles to give certainty for Kinder Morgan. Make it happen, Premier.

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

Organ and Tissue Donation

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. All Albertans have been struck by the enormity of the tragedy suffered by the Humboldt Broncos team and the families of those injured and killed. Out of that tragedy have come many stories of selflessness and heroism. One story, that of Logan Boulet and family, has resounded around the world. Logan, born and raised in Lethbridge, had recently turned 21. He told his family that he wanted to be an organ donor and he'd signed his donor card. His parents and family honoured his wishes, and six organs were subsequently transplanted. Because of this act, many people are going to be helped. For instance, two Canadians will be able to get off dialysis and lead normal lives.

I want to pay tribute to the Boulet family for setting such a good example for all of us who may have to make the difficult decision to donate a loved one's organs. It's important to remember that the next of kin need to know and appreciate the intent of those who have signed. Logan and his parents have created a legacy which has prompted a massive increase in the signing of donor cards. Over last five days 13,500 Albertans have registered their intent to be organ donors. That's nearly a 10-fold increase.

I also want to recognize another Albertan family for their heroism. Revée Agyepong, 26, of Edmonton, is the first adult in Canada to be cured of sickle-cell anemia. The donor was her sister. Revée had been dealing with the complications from sickle-cell disease since early childhood. Through the efforts of my Edmonton hematology colleagues, the sickle-cell disease had been controlled with frequent transfusions. Now Revée needs no transfusions. The stem cell transplant was done by the Alberta bone marrow transplant program at the Tom Baker cancer centre in Calgary. This team has achieved a first in Canada and continues to provide Albertans with world-class stem cell transplants. The new Calgary cancer centre will incorporate that team.

Mr. Speaker, these events demonstrate the power of family, the benefits of science, and the value of working together to save lives and make life better.

Official Opposition and Government Policies

Mr. Schneider: Mr. Speaker, Oscar Wilde said that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, and if that is indeed accurate, we on this side of the aisle have been the recipient of plenty of flattery as of late. It started off with the leaders of the PC and Wildrose parties talking about how there needs to be a conversation about equalization in this country. We've made no bones about our desire to have a national conversation over this. Now media types and politicians of all stripes are echoing these sentiments.

Over here we've been beating the drum on the rural crime epidemic, holding town halls and having legitimate conversations about this time-sensitive topic. Despite turning us down for the last nine months, including holding an emergency debate, the government appears to have come around somewhat. Although they have yet to engage the public themselves, they are at least starting to engage with us. Lots more work to be done on this topic, Mr. Speaker, but at least they're getting to the starting line.

Now, I guess we should really be flattered over here with the fact that although we've been talking tough about the inaction of the federal Liberals, the constant and flagrant disobedience of the law by the B.C. NDP, and the foot-dragging and backtracking by our own government, it appears that concrete action may be forthcoming. A bill will soon be introduced to provide tough economic penalties with real consequences to the B.C. government, a bill that may turn off the taps to energy products to the west coast, which our leader has been calling for for quite some time. While the name could use

some work as Bill 12, Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act, doesn't exactly roll off the tongue, perhaps we can suggest it be called the Official Opposition Suggested This a Year Ago Act. It may actually sell better here in Alberta if this bill is what it was promised to be.

Thank you.

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

Henson Trusts for Persons with Disabilities

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I want to update the House on the efforts of so many to bring Henson trust legislation to Alberta. Prior to the dissolution of the last session I tabled Bill 211 to make life better for Albertans on AISH. Unfortunately, Bill 211 did not become law. While I was crushed by this, I soon discovered that I was not alone. No politician hyperbole here; truly, every single day for the last 16 weeks I have received e-mails, phone calls, and office visits from concerned brothers, loving sisters, frustrated fathers, and worried mothers from across this province. AISH recipients have come into my office and left me voice mails.

As Laura put it: this was a simple bill that would make a big difference; it would provide peace of mind. Calgarians Peter and Rose considered the Henson trust "essential legislation" that would allow adult children to live with the same dignity as other Canadians. Jon Chang, who has a neuromuscular developmental disability, wrote to tell me that at age 37 he's anxious about how he'll be able to live when he is 65. He and so many others wrote because they want to make this good bill a good law.

I shared these messages with the Minister of Community and Social Services and spoke with eternal optimism for so many whom I have a duty to speak for. "Please be my son's voice," implored Jordan's mother in an e-mail. That is why I am truly thankful to the Minister of Community and Social Services for recognizing and responding to these calls by introducing Bill 5, An Act to Strengthen Financial Security for Persons with Disabilities.

To all who have contacted me, hear this: we are getting it done. And to anyone whom I've ever spoken with – please excuse the car racing reference – we need to keep our foot on the gas; we need to keep moving forward. And to Laura and Glen, Judy, Beverley, Tim and Carol, and so many others who are counting on us to cross the finish line, be assured that we will get it passed.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Lacombe Generals and Allan Cup 2018 Hockey Championship

Mr. Orr: Mr. Speaker, hockey is Canadian, maybe the only thing we can agree upon in this House. Saturday night was the Allan Cup, the triple-A men's national hockey championship final game played in Rosetown, Saskatchewan. Speaking of Saskatchewan, may we never forget the tragedy of Humboldt. The Allan Cup was a game played between generals, the Lacombe Generals versus the Stoney Creek Generals from Ontario. The Lacombe Generals, or the Army, opened the scoring but ended the first period down 3-1. They roared back in the second to tie it up. Thirty-four seconds into the third they went ahead. But the Stoney Creek Generals answered with two more. In the last minute Lacombe pulled their tendy but to no avail. Stoney Creek hit the empty net twice to win 7-4.

Still, you have to celebrate the Lacombe Generals. Established in 1999 by five central Alberta guys, their goal was simply to provide a place for men to play competitively after juniors, but soon sponsors, volunteers, and fans started to rally around them. They play in the

five-team Chinook Hockey League. Winners of the provincial title move on to the larger Canadian national title, the Allan Cup. This team has amazing chemistry. The Lacombe Generals have won the Allan Cup three times, the Generals have been Allan Cup finalists six other times, and since 2008 they have been in the finals every year except two. This year we won the league championships, the Allan Cup west championship, and we won our provincials, states head coach Sean Robertson. In team points they have been first or second in the league every year since 2001. Lacombe is proud of you, our Generals.

Since 1909 the Allan Cup has been awarded to the top amateur team in Canada. Next year the Allan Cup will be hosted in Lacombe. See you there.

1:50

Oral Question Period

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

Federal-provincial Meeting on Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, on the weekend there was a meeting in Ottawa that got us no further, no closer to the construction of the Trans Mountain pipeline. Following that meeting, Premier Horgan said that when he asked Alberta's Premier what her intentions were about turning off the taps, she said, quote: their legislative session is very brief, and they were going to bring in enabling legislation, and they didn't necessarily think they were going to act on it. Why did the Premier say that she's going to bring in legislation but has no intention of acting on it? Why did she give away her hand even before playing it?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Yes. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Let me just begin by saying that Alberta is leading this fight, and we are very, very proud to be in that position. We are moving on all fronts, on economic fronts, legal fronts, and financial fronts. I would suggest that the member opposite not take his questions from the newspaper's recounting of someone else's recounting of someone else's recounting of what I said because, let me be perfectly clear, we were very clear with both the Prime Minister and with the government of B.C. that we will take whatever action is necessary to get this pipeline built.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I'm simply quoting her New Democrat friend Premier John Horgan, who said that this Premier indicated to him on the weekend that she does not necessarily think she's going to act on this legislation. Is Premier Horgan accurate in that remark, or are these comments attributed to him misleading?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What I said to Premier Horgan very clearly when we were in Ottawa was that while there may be some unfortunate consequential impacts on gas prices in the Lower Mainland as we move forward with respect to this bill, the actions of the B.C. government and the failure of this pipeline to get built costs Canada \$40 million a day; therefore, we cannot tolerate this delay any longer. For that reason Alberta is leading the fight, and we will get the pipeline built.

Mr. Kenney: For the record the Premier does not deny that she told John Horgan that this legislation is an empty threat. That would be part of a consistent record because back in December 2016, after

our Premier flew to Vancouver, she met with then opposition leader John Horgan ostensibly to discuss the Trans Mountain pipeline, after which Mr. Horgan said that, quote, she had no intention of persuading me. So, Mr. Speaker, is it not true that she talks tough about these things in public but then folds with her friend John Horgan in private?

Ms Notley: Oh, Mr. Speaker, things could just not be further from the truth. What I will say is that I'm not grandstanding just for the sake of creating political divisions and gathering votes. What I will say is that it is a critical time for Alberta and that all Albertans have to present a united front. And I will say, speaking of friends, that it was not helpful to have the Leader of the Official Opposition call the federal announcement of support for this pipeline, quote, unquote, disgusting. I would suggest that if the member opposite wants to help, he should talk to his Conservative cousins and get them onside with getting this pipeline built.

The Speaker: Second main question.

Mr. Kenney: For the record the Premier has never denied Premier Horgan's assertion that she had no intention of persuading him to support the pipeline in 2016. She does not deny his claim that she folded already on the public threat to turn off the taps. So, Mr. Speaker, let me ask the Premier this question. In her meeting with the Prime Minister and Premier Horgan on Sunday did she ask the federal government to withhold 5 and a half billion dollars of discretionary federal transfers for infrastructure and job training until the pipeline is built, and if not, why not?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, what we have done is that we have worked with the federal government. It is very clear that the federal government is now joining with Alberta to engage in very meaningful, formal discussions to ensure that investor risk is limited or eliminated, and I am confident that that will happen. Meanwhile, Mr. Speaker, the federal Conservatives, the Official Opposition, are calling that action on the part of the federal government, which has the authority to deal with this issue, disgusting. I say again to the member opposite: is he going to tell his federal Conservative cousins to stop it?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I'll have to remind the Premier that it's her friend and ally Justin Trudeau who got us in this mess by cancelling Northern Gateway, killing Energy East, surrendering to Obama on Keystone, and doing nothing in the past two years to ensure the construction of Trans Mountain. Now she seems eager to risk Alberta tax dollars on this project. Wouldn't it make more sense that the British Columbia government should be put in a place of risk by withholding those federal transfers? Why doesn't she join with us in insisting that B.C. have some skin in the game to ensure the protection of our Constitution and our country's economic interests?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Interestingly, what our government is doing is keeping our eye on the ball. There is one government that has the authority to make the decision, which did make the decision, and that is the federal government. We are working with that federal government to make sure that they assert their jurisdiction and get the pipeline built. On that front it does not help to have the federal Official Opposition attacking the federal government for saying that they will support the Kinder

Morgan pipeline no matter what. It is time for this fellow over here to get his friends in Ottawa to join with the rest of Canada and get the job done.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I can understand the Premier's desperate effort to spin this complete failure of a meeting yesterday, but the truth is this. Her B.C. New Democrat friends are saying that they are requiring nearly 1,200 provincial permits for Kinder Morgan to go forward, of which only 201 have been approved. What assurance did she receive from Premier Horgan that he will approve the other 1,000 outstanding permits immediately?

Ms Notley: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, someone is playing politics, and it's the member opposite because, of course, Kinder Morgan itself has said that they have no concerns about the rate at which the government in B.C. is issuing certificates. The member opposite fully knows that. Now, the fact of the matter is that the federal Conservatives are saying no to federal support for the TMX. The leader of the UCP is joining with Premier Horgan to call for a Supreme Court reference so that we can further delay the project. Meanwhile we've been leading the fight. The federal government is backing our position. The pipeline will be built, and I would suggest that the member opposite simply join with us in that work.

The Speaker: Third main question.

Provincial Response to Pipeline Opposition Calgary Board of Education Carbon Levy Costs

Mr. Kenney: Astoundingly, Mr. Speaker, the Premier just said that Kinder Morgan doesn't care about the pace of things. Then why did they suspend the project eight days ago? We have only 45 days left before they might cancel this project outright. The international financial community, Credit Suisse just said that they continue to regard the calculus as fraught and that there is no progress to resolving the legal challenges. What specifically did the Premier get from her counterpart John Horgan to eliminate the uncertainty that the federal government has created about this project?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you. I think you've got it confused there. Again, to be clear, what we know from Kinder Morgan is that the things that are causing uncertainty are the potential future legal actions that might occur; they are not the rate at which certificates are being issued. As I said before, the member opposite knows that. The federal government has the authority to move this pipeline along in a timely way that will reassure investors. The federal government is working on exactly that, Mr. Speaker. They are doing that because we have shown leadership. The pipeline will get built.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, on a different matter, we've learned that the Calgary board of education is looking at cutting full-day kindergarten to save a million dollars. It just so happens that the Calgary board of education is now spending a million dollars a year on the carbon tax. Is the Premier proud that her carbon tax is now forcing the school board to cut access to full-day kindergarten?

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

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, none of that adds up, but what I will say is this. First of all, what will not support full-day kindergarten or half-day kindergarten is putting more money into funding private schools. That's the first thing. We won't do it. Those folks over there are suggesting they will.

2:00

Another thing that would cut kindergarten classes, Mr. Speaker, would be freezing education funding at 2015 levels, which is exactly what the member opposite said that he wanted to do. We would never do something so short-sighted. We will continue to stand up for our kids, their classrooms, and their futures.

Mr. Kenney: The Premier questions the numbers I just offered, Mr. Speaker. Happy to table these documents.

According to Investing in the Future, the facilities report from the CBE, Calgary board of education, the NDP carbon tax is projected to cost that board a million dollars, and the administration has now proposed cutting a million dollars in spending on kindergarten. Does the Premier not understand that her carbon tax means less access to kindergarten in Calgary, and given that it hasn't gotten us social licence or a pipeline, will she join us in reconsidering the destructive impact of the carbon tax?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, that assertion is just ridiculous. The member opposite is reaching beyond all sense of logical debate or consideration here. To be clear, our government has raised education funding to keep up with enrolment funding year after year after year since we've been elected. This is in stark contrast to what their predecessors told Albertans they were going to do leading up to the last election, in stark contrast to what the member opposite just said two weeks ago that he would do if he had been in charge in 2015. Thank goodness, for those kindergarten classes, that we are the ones that are still here and still supporting them.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The Member for Calgary-South East.

Pharmacy Funding Framework

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The pipeline is crucial to this government and to this province, but at the same time properly investing in health care, equally the same in allied health care, will also do the same for our bottom line. I had a constituent who, being a pharmacist for the past 17 years, wrote to me to express her concern about the changes to pharmacy funding and how that would affect the treatment that she can offer. She mentioned that one patient said that without her help in smoking cessation, he would have just kept smoking and gone on and given up. To the Minister of Health: have you heard from pharmacists who are concerned about your budget cuts and how that will result in fewer smoking cessation sessions and create greater health care costs?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We certainly appreciate the role pharmacists have in supporting the health care needs of Albertans throughout our province. Under this new framework Alberta pharmacists continue to be compensated at rates higher than their counterparts in other provinces. Let's be clear. The only ones proposing cuts to health care are the members on the other side of this House. On this side of the House we're standing up with front-line workers, we're standing up with front-line Albertans, and we're making sure that we have sustainable growth so that they get the health care they need. We'll see what you do when we bring forward our budget for approval in a couple of weeks.

Mr. Fraser: Mr. Speaker, this minister is the one who just cut pharmacies by \$150 million.

The same pharmacist helped a man who was on antidepressant and anti-anxiety medication to slowly reduce and taper off his use.

The man had started the medication after losing his wife, and he thought he'd have to take them for the rest of his life. After working through the reduction plan with this pharmacist, he asked: why hasn't a doctor shown me this before? To the same minister: have you heard from pharmacists who are concerned that your budget cuts will result in less responsive treatment for patients?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, we sat down with the Alberta Pharmacists' Association, the RxA, and worked with them on a tool that helps us achieve savings year over year. But you know what? We're increasing the pharmacy budget by 4.3 per cent because we know that that's important in this province. Instead of proposing deep ideological cuts – I think some members of the opposition talked about 5 per cent across the board – on this side of the House we're working in a strategic way to keep patients as the focus. A 4.3 per cent increase to pharmacies to keep up with growth and increased needs: that's a responsible thing to do. I suspect that members opposite will hopefully join us in supporting our budget.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Fraser: Mr. Speaker, the minister cut front-line staff, pharmacists, by \$150 million.

Pharmacists are planning another rally this week to make their concerns heard about these budget cuts, like community pharmacists who wrote to me and said that they're concerned about the level of care they'll be able to provide their patients and that the patients will suffer because of it. They're also concerned that those cuts were made without their knowledge or consent. If you haven't heard from these concerned pharmacists, will you be at that rally? Will you take the time, listen to them, and work out a plan that's going to help to better patient care?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, I'm proud of the fact that during difficult economic times we decided on this side of the House to protect health care. We brought forward a 4.3 per cent increase to pharmacy services. It was important to us that that go towards the front lines, ensuring that patients have access to more pharmaceutical coverage, smaller copays, and other opportunities. What is true is that we have a 4.3 per cent increase to that line item. We wanted to be focused on patients, and we wanted to ensure that we get the best outcomes, and I'm proud that the RxA sat down with us at the table and helped us reach this reasonable compromise and position.

The Speaker: Hon. members, just for the record I did note a point of order from Calgary-Elbow two questions ago.

Edmonton-Mill Creek.

Long-term and Continuing Care Beds

Ms Woollard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A key election promise of our government in 2015 was to create 2,000 additional long-term care beds across the province. To the Associate Minister of Health: how much progress has the government made in achieving this goal, please?

The Speaker: The Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is committed to building 2,000 new long-term care and dementia beds, and we keep our promises. We're well on track to meet our target by 2019. We saw the addition of 800 new spaces last year, and we're investing \$49 million in Budget 2018 directly for continuing care beds.

Albertans have to be able to count on care when and where they need it, and our government will always make these services a priority.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Woollard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What are the continuing challenges to creating these sorely needed long-term beds as soon as possible?

The Speaker: The hon. associate minister.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The damage inflicted by Conservative government after Conservative government takes time to heal. We see what happens when they are in charge: firing masses of nurses, blowing up hospitals, and closing thousands of beds. Looking to the days of Ralph Klein is backward thinking, and our government is looking forward. We're investing in infrastructure, we are protecting services, and we will make sure that this economic recovery is built to last.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Woollard: Thank you once again. How will the associate minister and the ministry support public health care as the government moves toward achieving the goal of 2,000 long-term care spaces?

The Speaker: The hon. associate minister.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are the party of medicare, and I am so proud to be able to champion public health care each and every day. We have three major public projects on the way in Fort McMurray, in Edmonton, and in Calgary. We have plans to increase continuing care capacity beyond the 2,000 new beds, and we'll be making those announcements before long. I don't see any plans from the members opposite, just the same old strategy: cut, cut, cut.

Trans Mountain Pipeline Public Purchase Proposal

Mr. Fildebrandt: Less than two weeks ago Kinder Morgan had all of the private-sector investment necessary for the Trans Mountain pipeline. They needed no subsidies, no corporate welfare, nothing from government other than to do its simple duty of providing a stable regulatory framework and enforcing the rule of law. This government and its allies in Ottawa have failed at this, and now their answer is to spend billions of taxpayer dollars and buy the pipeline. Investment dollars are not the issue; government is the issue. Rather than put taxpayers on the hook for this government's failed social licence policy, why doesn't the Premier just tell the federal government to do its job?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I think there isn't a person in this room that doesn't understand how important the TMX pipeline is. It's thousands of jobs; it's billions in investment. On this side of the House we're doing what it takes to get that pipeline built. We didn't start the fight, but we're going to do whatever it takes to get this pipeline built. Failure is not an option on this side of the House.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Governments of all stripes have a poor track record at running businesses. This government's failure to read the power purchase agreements cost taxpayers \$2 billion to \$3 billion,

and now they want to buy a multibillion-dollar pipeline. I can see it now: the Minister of Environment sitting on the board of Kinder Morgan, the Minister of Energy participating in the annual shareholders' meeting, and the Minister of Finance pleading with creditors. Does this government really believe that it has the competency necessary to run a pipeline?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, every day that this pipeline is delayed, we're talking \$40 million in the Canadian economy that's being lost. We've taken action. We've tried to work with the British Columbia government. We're working with the federal government. We are working every day with industry. I met with industry on Friday to update them on what we're doing. As I said before, on this side of the House we're working every day, and we're going to get this pipeline built.

2:10

Mr. Fildebrandt: Ronald Reagan said: "If it moves, tax it. If it keeps moving, regulate it. And if it stops moving, subsidize it." Things were moving, so they brought in a carbon tax. Things kept moving, so they brought in an oil sands cap. Now things appear to be about to stop, so they want to subsidize it. After a carbon tax, excessive regulations, and now a desire to nationalize the pipeline, the advantages of the oil patch will increasingly only be enjoyed by friends of the government, like in Venezuela. Will this government cancel their plans to nationalize the pipeline?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, to be clear, this pipeline approval was achieved because of our climate leadership plan. Had we not had that plan, we wouldn't even be standing here talking about it today. Again, we have worked in every area we can to get this pipeline. We work with the companies. We work with the shippers. We work with the governments. We're working on all sides to get this done because it is too important to not get it done: \$40 million a day being lost, money left on the table because of the differential. We need that pipeline capacity, and we need it now.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I would remind each and every one again that after question 5 there is no preamble.

The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Federal-provincial Meeting on Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion (continued)

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Premier: given this weekend's meeting that failed to get us a pipeline to tidewater, did you point out the shocking hypocrisy of B.C.'s environmental record while Premier Horgan was lecturing Alberta on ours?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we've been clear all along, back to since we revealed our climate leadership plan, that that was going to be the key for development in the energy industry. You know, my energy stakeholders get this. They know that this is a global trend. Countries, businesses are going to price carbon. They're looking at carbon and how to be competitive. Our climate leadership plan got us that approval. It's going to get us that pipeline.

Mrs. Aheer: Let me try a question in a different way. Given that British Columbia was responsible for almost 40 per cent of the 120 million cubic metres of untreated sewage and runoff water that entered Canadian waterways in 2016 and given that Alaskans have asked the B.C. government to deal with the Tulsequah Chief Mine in northwest B.C., that is leaking acid waste water into one of the richest salmon runs in the region, did the Premier raise B.C.'s shocking – shocking – hypocrisy on the environmental file when she met with Premier Horgan this weekend?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To the specifics of the meeting, what I will say is that the Premier was very clear that we need to go forward on this pipeline approval. This approval has been given, and it needs to be worth more than the paper it was written on. She has made it very clear that she won't let other roadblocks be put up in our way. Certainly, I share in concern around raw sewage and Victoria. I know many British Columbians do. The solution, in our mind, is to make sure that we move forward with responsible environmental protections while getting our product to tidewater. We're going to keep moving forward in that direction.

Mrs. Aheer: As I understand it, Mr. Speaker, Premier Horgan is still blocking the pipeline. When we talk about the environmental piece, the excess runoff meets the sewer and gets untreated sewage flowing into the ocean waterways. B.C. dumps billions of litres of raw sewage into their waterways, and it's causing massive damage to the ocean. Did the Premier bother mentioning Calgary? The equivalent here is zero, because Calgary made the determination to separate stormwater and sewer water back in the 1960s. What did the Premier do to defend Alberta's environmental record?

Ms Hoffman: Every day the Premier defends Alberta's environmental record and works to make sure that we are all in a position where the world is excited to receive our products. Of course, we need to get that pipeline to tidewater to make that happen. That's why we're fighting day in and day out. That's why the Premier was in Toronto earlier in the week, that's why she was back in Ottawa on the weekend, and that's why we'll keep moving forward at all stops to make sure that this pipeline gets built. Nothing is going to count Alberta out. You can mark my words.

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

Police Release of Information on Serious Incidents

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week in this Chamber the minister of community services expressed condolences to the family of a deceased man who shot and seriously wounded a Calgary police officer. The minister did not mention one word of concern for the officer who was shot or for the officer who risked his life to save his colleague. As Mr. Kaminski, the Police Association president, said, the shooter is not a victim. He attempted to kill two police officers. To the Premier: can you please explain your minister's insensitive response?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. Of course, I would like to take this opportunity to express on behalf of the entire government our government's condolences for the officer in that incident. I do know that these are often very serious incidents, and we absolutely do

take them seriously moving forward. I know that our government supports these officers on the front line and the important work that they do every day.

Mr. Ellis: Mr. Speaker, given that ASIRT has chosen not to release the deceased shooter's name despite a violent crime spree that would have resulted in serious criminal charges had it not ended in the death of the shooter and given that ASIRT is hiding behind a policy to not cause trauma to the deceased's family without any regard for the traumatized officers and their families, Minister, why are you letting ASIRT keep the name of the deceased shooter a secret?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. I know that there is a lot of interest in these cases. It is ASIRT's policy and has been ASIRT's policy over a number of years to not release the names of people injured or killed in these incidents. I think that the important thing is that we make these decisions based on principle. There is an agreement between these independent investigative offices throughout the country, and they all have the same policy, but we're always happy to consider it.

Mr. Ellis: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that ASIRT appears to have free rein to provide whatever dribs of information it cares to share with the public even in a case where the public has a right to know if a dangerous repeat offender was free on Alberta streets and why, and given that ASIRT's veil of secrecy and the confounding statements made by the minister of community services have shaken the public trust in Alberta's justice system, Minister, will you put an end to this policy of secrecy and release the shooter's name today?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, these cases are very serious, and they do take a lot of public interest. That's why it's absolutely critical that ASIRT be able to complete an independent investigation into these matters so that we can maintain the confidence of the public in our law enforcement. That's why ASIRT does a very thorough job of ensuring that they aren't releasing any information that might prejudice a case, particularly when an investigation is ongoing, and I think the entire public has an interest in ensuring that that's the case.

The Speaker: Second main question.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's interesting that the minister mentioned an investigation. The minister said on the weekend that the Calgary shooter's name must be kept secret because, quote, we need to weigh the transparency against the risk that ultimately prejudices the case. Unquote.

Mr. Mason: Point of order.

Mr. Ellis: Minister, what case are you referring to, the case against the deceased shooter or the case against the police officer who was shot?

Ms Ganley: Mr. Speaker, again, in that interview what I was referring to was the need that we make decisions in the legal system on consistent rules and consistent principles and that those rules apply equally to everyone and to every case. ASIRT investigates very serious matters. As a result of that, there are instances in which

they don't release these names — those are most instances — and that is consistent with the policy across the jurisdictions. We're always willing to review our policies, but we do like to make decisions based on principle.

Mr. Ellis: Well, given that three years ago Constable Wynn was shot and killed at the St. Albert casino and that when it was learned that his killer Shawn Rehn was a repeat violent offender who was out on bail, it prompted a full review of the bail hearing system, the one that you challenged in court, and given that if ASIRT had been following the new naming process then, we would never have known about Shawn Rehn, Minister, do you now see why naming the deceased shooter is so important for the sake of public trust?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the reforms made to the system following the tragic death of Constable Wynn were absolutely sort of critical steps moving forward. The government did not challenge the decision in court. We were advised to go to the court and seek a ruling, and that's exactly what we did, and we have followed and abided by that ruling to ensure that we're making the necessary improvements to the system. Again, these cases garner a lot of attention. They are extremely important for the public, and that's why we need to make decisions based on principle in each case.

2:20

Mr. Ellis: Mr. Speaker, given that Albertans need assurance that there has not been another major failure in the bail hearing system and given that since ASIRT is keeping the shooter's name under wraps and that the public must now rely on the minister for assurance that the bail hearing process is capable of keeping dangerous offenders off the streets, Minister, it's now on you. For the maintenance of the public trust will you guarantee Albertans here today that the Calgary police shooter was not a violent repeat offender who was out on bail?

Ms Ganley: Mr. Speaker, ASIRT performs an incredibly important function. That function is necessary to maintain the public trust. They are an independent agency that investigates these matters. They work very closely with police services, and this system works incredibly well. I would say that it's the best in the country. I'm not going to interfere with their role. I think it's very important that they be permitted to be an independent investigator because, at the end of the day, it supports the legal system to have that public faith.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Commodity Rail Transportation Backlog

Mr. Rosendahl: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Market access for our products is one of the top priorities of this government. This is as true for agricultural products as it is for our nonrenewable resources. There were recent disruptions to the transportation system to get Alberta's wheat, canola, pulses, and other products to market via railways. To the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry: how is the minister ensuring that producers' concerns are heard?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. The member is correct in saying that grain movement by rail has been a challenge this year. My office has heard from concerned producers throughout Alberta on this issue, and we take it seriously. I spoke with CN and CP Rail as well as reached out to

my federal colleagues to discuss this concerning issue. There were some natural barriers that slowed things down earlier in the spring such as poor weather but also delay in Bill C-49 in the Senate, a bill that would benefit Canadian farmers.

The Speaker: The first supplemental.

Mr. Rosendahl: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What will this government do to ensure that this situation is avoided in the future?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Fortunately, our discussions with CN and CP have been productive. With the additional resources that have been applied to accelerate things along with improved weather conditions, the railways are returning to a more normal level of service in terms of crews and locomotives. We will continue to monitor the train transportation situation, advocate for the progress of Bill C-49, and communicate with CN and CP, the grain industry, and producer organizations going forward.

The Speaker: The second supplemental.

Mr. Rosendahl: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the minister: what are you hearing from your forestry stakeholders about their transportation issues; i.e., pulp and lumber?

Mr. Carlier: The grain transportation issue appears to be abating, Mr. Speaker, but I've heard from forestry stakeholders that the mills are having difficulties getting their products to customers. They're having to take extraordinary measures to avoid unplanned shutdowns. I've spoken to forestry companies and with the railroads. All have committed to working together to find solutions. This is something that I will continue to keep an eye on and continue to engage with the federal government.

Government Revenue Forecasts

Mr. Barnes: No one in Alberta wants the Trans Mountain pipeline to fail, but yesterday's meeting in Ottawa failed to secure anything. Environmental extremists continue to ignore the rule of law, NDP ally Justin Trudeau is on his way to Paris, and B.C.'s NDP Premier remains as resolute as ever. This pipeline has already seen its completion date pushed back a year, and the project could be soon abandoned, yet this government bet the farm in its budget that not only will the pipeline be built but that it will be completed by 2021. To the minister: how much debt will Albertans have if the pipeline is delayed and your budget is wrong?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the Trans Mountain expansion, as I've said, is an historic achievement. It's going to add tens of billions of dollars in investments and thousands of jobs not just here in Alberta but across Canada, and it's for that reason that we've been working so hard to get this expansion done. When we talk about our climate leadership plan, that's why we got the approval that we did, and we're working hard every day. At the end of the day, the only outcome that's good for Alberta is to get that pipeline done.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, given that the Premier and her government promised that none of the revenue from the carbon tax would be allocated to general revenue and given that on page 84 of the 2018 fiscal plan it states that "revenue . . . from the federally-imposed carbon [tax] . . . will be used" to cover Alberta's general

expenditures, we now know the government wasn't truthful. To the minister: if your government has given Trudeau notice that without a pipeline, there will be no further carbon tax increases, why have you accounted for the carbon tax revenue in last month's budget?

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

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We're not going to apologize on this side for making sure that funding is provided to protect the necessary supports and programs like hospitals and schools and services that Albertans require. In 2021, when the carbon levy changes as a result of the federal government, we will use those monies to close the deficit and to invest in the necessary services that Albertans require.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, given that Alberta has the second-highest per capita spending in the country and that under the NDP we are on track to accumulate \$96 billion in debt and given that even a short delay in completing the Trans Mountain will cause this government to miss its path by billions – billions – more and given that higher debt means more money going to Bay Street and not main street, to the minister: how high does Alberta's debt have to go before you begin to tackle your spending problem?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The only spending problem that exists is because that side left too many things undone. There's Conservative waste that we are cleaning up. We have cut salaries and eliminated bonuses for the highest paid executives, that that side put in place, saving \$33 million over three years. We've extended a salary freeze to management and non-unions. We have closed the deficit by reducing it by \$1.4 billion at the end of November. We're on track.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

School Board Finances

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Calgary board of education has announced that in order to make up a \$35.6 million shortfall for the 2018-2019 school year, they're considering cutting their full-day kindergarten program by one-third. The CBE has stated, quote: the carbon tax, increasing utility costs, and the costs of operating our new schools have not been funded. Minister, this is happening on your watch. Does cutting full-day kindergarten by 33 per cent in Calgary represent your commitment to funding education?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, our government believes that every child in Calgary and across Alberta deserves an education that prepares them for success in a fast-changing world, and that's why we've invested in more teachers, new schools, smaller class sizes, and additional learning supports for the students of Calgary. I just want to be clear. By fully funding for enrolment growth, we put tens of millions of dollars more into the CBE than would have been the case under the Conservative government. As well, the Minister of Education has been quite clear that the Calgary board of education should balance its budget without any impact on front-line staffing levels or classroom . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
First supplemental.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister has stated again today that the provincial funding is appropriate for enrolment increases and given that the CBE has stated that expenses are rising faster than funding and they are looking in every nook and every cranny for savings and given that the CBE has also been quite open about the financial burden the carbon tax has placed on their finances, there seems to be a disconnect between the minister and our largest school board. Again to the minister: who's telling the truth? You or the CBE?

Mr. Schmidt: Well, Mr. Speaker, let's talk about disconnect for a little bit. The member opposite is concerned about funding for education, but he's going around campaigning on a platform of tax cuts for millionaires and budget cuts in Education. That's a big disconnect that won't result in any more students getting education under their plan. Our government has invested millions of dollars in the Calgary board of education. The Calgary board of education has a pattern of predicting deficits and running budget surpluses at the end of the year. We'll be working closely with the Calgary board of education to make sure that they meet their budget commitments and don't impact front-line services.

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

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that school boards have been pushing the minister for a carbon tax exemption for two years but to no avail and given that the CBE pays over \$1 million in the carbon tax per year, money that would be better spent in the classroom, again to the minister: will you work to protect programs like full-day kindergarten without increasing your budget by exempting school boards from the carbon tax?

2:30

Mr. Schmidt: Well, Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the members opposite will promise to exempt the school boards of this province from the negative impacts of the cuts that they want to make to pay for millionaires' tax breaks. I don't think they are.

Our government is investing millions of dollars to fund for enrolment growth. We've hired thousands of teachers across the province. We've built hundreds of schools, the largest school build in the history of this province. No government has invested in education more than this government today, and we are very proud of our record of supporting students in this province.

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

Anti Energy Industry Advocacy in Alberta

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans expect their public universities to serve for the betterment of our province. Our universities have played a crucial role in the environmentally responsible development of our oil and gas resources for the benefit of all Albertans. Given this, it was surprising to find out that one of our most prestigious institutions plans on awarding an honorary degree to one of the most extreme voices against the economic interests of our province. Will the minister agree that David Suzuki should not be praised by taxpayer-funded universities?

Mr. Schmidt: Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for the question and the opportunity to explain to this entire House that the government has absolutely no control over what universities offer honorary degrees and who they offer them to. I personally don't necessarily agree with everything that David Suzuki says in public, but I do respect his right to say it. Of course, the members

opposite continue a campaign of smearing any opponents that they don't seem to agree with, a plan that resulted in zero pipelines to . . .

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

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this alarming inclusion of extreme voices has not been limited to our post-secondary institutions and given that Calgary parents were shocked to find out that David Suzuki was paid to lecture Calgary public teachers and given that Mr. Suzuki has a history of making extremely offensive comments, even likening the oil and gas industry to slavery, telling Evan Solomon that it's the same thing, will the Minister of Education agree that it is irresponsible to spread these unbalanced anti Alberta oil views amongst our teachers and students within Alberta?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Mr. Schmidt: Mr. Speaker, I remember a time in the distant past when the Conservatives were a party of defending free speech. In fact, they didn't have to agree with anything that anybody was saying, but they would at least defend the right of people to say it. It's very troubling to me that the Conservatives seem to be intent on continuing on their 10-year-long campaign of bullying anybody that they don't agree with, a plan that resulted in zero pipelines to tidewater being built and has only served to further divide the people of this country.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Hon. member, I wish to remind you that you've got to adjust the question to the government's policy rather than the perspective of some other party. So, please, focus that way.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that there is nothing free about a \$50,000 honorarium and given that we want to provide young Albertans with a balanced perspective on critical issues facing our province and encourage independent thinking, will the minister agree that the extreme views of activists like David Suzuki should not be endorsed by our taxpayer-funded institutions, and will he commit to providing opportunities for administrators and educators to be presented with information on the immense benefits that our environmentally responsible energy industry brings to Alberta?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, Mr. Speaker, there's a lot to unpack there. However, I do want to say that it's quite ironic that advocates, so-called champions, of independent thought all parade out of the Legislature when Bill 9 comes to the floor, apparently under the orders of their leader. They're not free to speak their minds at all. It's interesting to me that they demand that our students be taught independent critical thought yet fail to exercise their rights to independent critical thought when given the opportunity when Bill 9 is presented in the Legislature. Perhaps that will change in the future.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Beaverlodge Health Facility Capital Plan

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For 10 years I've been advocating for my Beaverlodge and west county constituents who desperately need a new health facility. We would all like to see this project move along. The project was in the budget for previous

years, and now it's not. It's not even on the unfunded list. To the Minister of Health: where is it today in your priorities?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I've had the opportunity to visit Beaverlodge and meet with many of the wonderful staff and community members who are part of the community, including Mrs. Doris McFarland, who was a registered nurse at the hospital for many years. I appreciate her ongoing, unwavering support to her community and to public health care. I have to say that it's pretty rich to have this question coming from the former minister responsible for Infrastructure because we know that it didn't get built when he was Minister of Infrastructure. We're continuing to work with the community and wanting to move this forward for all parts of this province. We know that there is infrastructure need in all communities, and we're happy to work with Beaverlodge to move this forward.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
First supplemental.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that in the last few years there was money in the budget for the design of rural health facilities and that included Beaverlodge and given that now those funds are no longer in your estimates at all, to the Minister of Infrastructure: how much money was spent, and is there anything to show for it?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We're continuing to work with the mayor and community leaders to make sure we have the right plan for community health care for Beaverlodge families. We know that there were many decades with Conservatives in power where health care cuts continued to be the message of the day, but that doesn't reflect our values. That's why we're working for stable, predictable health care for all Albertans through a public model and why we've been able to take some of the outcomes from that early investment in rural health facility design to help streamline processes moving forward.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Beaverlodge project turns up in the Health budget one year and then in Infrastructure the next and then disappears altogether and given that seeing ministers punt it back and forth like a football has made it impossible for the community to determine if there's any progress being made, can one of you please tell the people in my constituency, particularly those in the west county, about the future of the Beaverlodge health facility?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Just to reiterate. I believe it was the hon. member who just spoke who said in estimates last year: "I get it. That's been going on for years, and I'll take responsibility for that, too." We know that there are many needs in the community of Beaverlodge. I was really proud to meet with a number of the folks, including with the Minister of Infrastructure. We had a very productive meeting, made it very clear. Their number one concern, I have to say – and it's because of rumours that they heard under a former government – was that their hospital was going to close. I was proud to say that that is not the case, that we have renovations at the existing facility, including renovations to

address flood damage and replace the roof, a nurse on-call system, fire alarms, et cetera, and that we believe it's important for Beaverlodge to have a hospital.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Postsecondary Educational Finance

Loyola: Mr. Speaker, I'm proud of the work that the government has done to rein in spending at agencies, boards, and commissions while at the same time ensuring that compensation is fair and appropriate. I was pleased to see the Minister of Advanced Education's announcement last week of a plan to bring executive compensation at our universities and colleges in line with other jurisdictions in Canada. To the Minister of Advanced Education: how will this affect postsecondary institutions?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to take the opportunity to remind the member that it was the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board and me who made that announcement jointly. Our university and college presidents do critical work, but for too long their compensation packages were out of touch with the expectations of Albertans. Postsecondary compensation in Alberta was the highest in the country, and these changes will finally bring these salaries into line with those in the rest of Canada. This savings will mean more money in our classrooms and for our students.

Loyola: Mr. Speaker, before my role in the House I represented staff at the U of A, and I remember all too well the impacts of cuts made by the previous government. Given that students and staff of the university have been standing together to protest across-the-board cuts and major fee hikes proposed by the U of A budget, to the same minister: can you update the House on what action you have taken to address this?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's no secret that universities and colleges across the province are still trying to recover from brutal cuts that the Conservative government imposed on them a few years ago. Unlike the Conservatives, of course, our government believes that all Albertans deserve an affordable higher education. That's why we've increased funding to all institutions by 2 per cent as well as provided backfill funding in compensation for the tuition freeze. We expect that institutions will allocate these funds responsibly and prioritize the education of their students and support for staff and faculty. We will continue to work with the university to make sure that that happens.

2:40

Loyola: Mr. Speaker, students need predictability when they are planning for the cost of their degrees. To the same minister: what actions are you planning to address tuition, especially international student tuition?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member hits the nail on the head when he talks about predictability, and I'm very pleased to say that under our government that's exactly what students have been receiving. As part of Budget 2018 we're again providing another year of frozen tuition. That's four years of affordable higher education under our government. Finances should never be a barrier for anyone who wants to get an education, and

that's true no matter where you're from. We're not going to balance the budget on the backs of students. We're going to ensure that all students get the affordable, accessible higher education that they deserve, and that includes international students as well.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Bill 12

Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 12, Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act.

Our government is standing up for Alberta and for a healthy Canadian energy sector. The legislation I'm introducing today represents the next step in Alberta's fight to gain better market access and to gain better value for the resources that Albertans own. Mr. Speaker, the Canadian economy is losing out on millions of dollars because of the price differential from what we currently earn for our resources and what we ought to be earning, a gap that the Trans Mountain pipeline would help to address. That's money that should be supporting jobs, families, social programs, and funding our transition to a greener economy. Through Bill 12 we are ensuring that natural gas, crude oil, and refined fuels will only be exported from Alberta if that action is in the public interest of our province and of its citizens. This legislation will provide Alberta with flexibility and leverage to ensure that Albertans are getting the full return on the natural resources produced in our province. Bill 12 would also help to guarantee that there are adequate supplies and reserves of these products for Albertans now and into the future.

More specifically, the Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act will permit the Minister of Energy to require that a licence is obtained for the export of natural gas, crude oil, and refined fuels from Alberta at the minister's discretion. The minister would have the ability to set the terms and conditions of these licences, including but not limited to the point at which the licensee may export natural gas, crude oil, or refined fuels from Alberta; the method by which these products can be exported; limits on the exported quantities of these products; and the conditions under which the export of these products may be diverted, reduced, or interrupted.

The Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act is a crucial element in our plan to defend Alberta's workers, our economy, and our progress on climate action. With that, Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of Bill 12.

[Motion carried; Bill 12 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present five copies of letters from the Student Transportation Association of Alberta to the Minister of Transportation, where they've been trying to request meetings with him since May of 2016.

The Speaker: The Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table two sets of reports on behalf of the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

The first is a document from the Calgary board of education, that he referred to in question period, that clearly shows the astronomical costs of the carbon tax and the consequences to kindergarten education inside Calgary.

The second is another document that he referred to, which shows credit analysis showing that despite even federal government intervention, Trans Mountain expansion will be difficult to go forward.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table a document referenced in my answers to questions in question period earlier today. It is a joint statement from Canadian civilian oversight agencies on the release of names.

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, I rise to table five copies of the federal waste-water systems effluent regulations, registry of transitional authorizations, that shows that west Vancouver, Victoria, Tofino, Richmond, Nanaimo, Ladysmith, among others, are not meeting effluent quality standards but are trying to.

My other tabling, Mr. Speaker, is five copies of a map of the province of Quebec that shows that a hundred communities continue to dump raw sewage into the waterways of the province. Given that Quebec is now helping B.C. in its opposition to the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion, I found out that in 2015 more than 82.3 billion litres of raw sewage came from B.C., with the city of Victoria continuing to dump directly into the Juan de Fuca Strait because of NIMBY to a sewage treatment plant.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the hon. Ms Gray, Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal, pursuant to the Veterinary Profession Act the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association 2017 annual report.

The Speaker: I believe we have two points of order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Point of Order

Supplementary Questions

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll be brief. Referring to the order of questions in which the Leader of the Official Opposition asked his question, I'll start with a brief citation from *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules & Forms*, sixth edition, page 122, section 414. In speaking about supplementary questions, it says that "the extent to which supplementary questions may be asked is in the discretion of the Speaker."

You yourself, Mr. Speaker, made a ruling on the 7th of December 2016, *Alberta Hansard*, pages 2401 and 2402, referencing a ruling of Speaker Kowalski from May 12, 2004, page 1390 of *Hansard* of the day. Speaker Kowalski said, "Now, there's also a tradition we follow here that if an hon. member is recognized, they raise a first question and then they're allowed two supplementals. It has always been understood that supplementals must have something to do with the first question."

On March 30, '98, Speaker Kowalski ruled, on page 1200 of *Hansard*, that "there is a consistent rule that there should be some flow with the questions and they should be in a similar type of subject."

As you'll recall, the Leader of the Official Opposition – although I don't have the benefit of the Blues, I believe his third main question had something to do with pipelines, and his first supplemental even said something to the effect of, "now changing topic," about the Calgary board of education and something to do with kindergarten. Mr. Speaker, I imagine this perhaps could be from his experience in other Legislative Assemblies or Parliament, but that is not how we do things here in Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I won't repeat what the hon. member has said. I concur with his point of order. I would just draw your attention to the statement that says that the supplementaries ought not to have a preamble and the question should flow from the answer that was given to the first question. Obviously, if you're completely changing the subject in your second preamble, you're not adhering to that admonition. I'm referring to *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*. I know that apparently I have an outdated edition, so my precise page citation will not be correct, but that's generally what it says, Mr. Speaker.

2:50

The Speaker: I noted that one time before, hon. member, but I'm glad to see you've got up.

The hon. member.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would point out two things. First, in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition – I think that is the most current.

Mr. Mason: Second.

Mr. Nixon: Yeah. The Government House Leader is stuck on the second edition, but that's okay. He's probably still got the first edition back there, too.

Anyways, in chapter 11 on page 513 it says, under supplementary questions:

By definition, a supplementary question is meant to arise from the information given to the House by a Minister or Parliamentary Secretary in his or her response to the initial question. It is thus posed immediately following the response to an initial question. The same guidelines that apply to initial questions also apply to supplementary questions.

Speakers historically had used their discretion to insist that a supplementary question be on the same subject and as a general rule be asked of the same Minister. However, at the beginning of the Thirty-Sixth Parliament in 1997, Speaker Parent allowed the practice to be modified by not insisting that an additional question be, strictly speaking, supplementary to the main question. He indicated that he would find it acceptable for a party to split a round of questioning between two Members, with each one asking a different question to a different Minister. The practice remains in effect today.

Mr. Speaker, that's one thing that I would like to point out to you. But in addition to that, the argument from the third-party House leader and the Government House Leader is that the hon. Leader of the Opposition's questions were not relevant to the other questions that he asked in his order today. I would submit to you that the government is trying to have it both ways with that argument. [interjections] I know the Government House Leader really wants to chime in again, and maybe he can when I'm done, but for now I have the floor.

They, throughout all of their questions today, have referred to the climate action plan or the carbon tax as the reason that the pipeline is being built as a very relevant topic associated with pipelines, and the majority of the questions that were asked by the Leader of the Opposition today were in regard to pipelines, were in regard to consequences as a result of pipelines and the lack of action by this government on pipelines. I would submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that pointing out the lack of consequences to B.C. while at the same time the consequences to Alberta's schoolchildren, in this case, as a result of this government's failed carbon tax is very relevant.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

In this particular instance I agree that there is a point of order. Just to substantiate that, the first supplementary, I believe it was, started out with, "Mr. Speaker, on a different matter," and it seems to reinforce. I would also point out that the Parent ruling did use the phrase "strictly speaking." I know that in this House I do recall that the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow may have been exactly the victim of that last time, but I did rule on this matter in December 2016, and therefore I would respectfully ask that in the future we keep the supplementary questions related to the main question that any member may be asking.

I believe we have a second point of order. The Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I've reviewed my point of order and concluded that I do not in fact have a point of order, so I would like to withdraw it.

The Speaker: That is always nice to hear from you, hon. member.

Orders of the Day

Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Bill 202 Alberta Taxpayer Protection (Carbon Tax Referendum) Amendment Act, 2018

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of Bill 202, the Alberta Taxpayer Protection (Carbon Tax Referendum) Amendment Act, 2018.

Madam Speaker, as a young chap I used to work a lot in this building as head of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation 25 years ago. In fact, I helped to get the Alberta taxpayers association started, if memory serves me correctly, in 1991. At that time Alberta was facing a fiscal crisis not dissimilar to the one in which we are now engulfed. There were some people in this Legislature and outside of it who were suggesting that the way to deal with the then enormous deficit was through the imposition of a sales tax, and, of course, those voices continue to be heard today.

As head of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation at the time, on behalf of our members and, I think, the vast majority of Albertans, I launched a campaign to ask the that Legislature adopt a bill to be called the Taxpayer Protection Act to require that Albertans would get the final say on any prospective future sales tax. I got a very welcoming ear from the then Premier, the late Ralph Klein, and indeed his government accepted our idea in total and in 1995 adopted a statute that has ever since been on the books, the Alberta

Taxpayer Protection Act, which requires, Madam Speaker, that a referendum must be held before a broad-based consumption tax, a sales tax, can be introduced. It's a good thing, because I suspect we'd have a sales tax from this NDP government were it not for this requirement to go through Albertans first.

Let us be clear, Madam Speaker. Albertans have been consistently opposed to sales taxes. The most recent public opinion poll conducted by Mainstreet in January of 2015 indicated 73 per cent disapproval of a provincial sales tax in Alberta versus merely 9 per cent in favour. That's pretty consistent with public opinion polling on this over the recent decades. As any member who has ever observed this will recognize, PST has come to stand for political suicide tax in this province because Albertans pride themselves on having had this Alberta advantage, on having had lower taxes than other provinces, and having been PST free.

But, Madam Speaker, the NDP recognized this when they came to office in 2015, so they brought in what is in many respects a de facto sales tax by another name. They call it the carbon levy, but it is a tax on the consumption of energy. There is nothing that we consume, Madam Speaker, no service or no good that is not somehow produced or delivered with the use of energy. Whether it's going to the grocery store to buy our groceries: they've been shipped in. Those trucks have had to purchase diesel, which is subject to the carbon tax. Heating our homes: whether it is coal fired or gas fired, that energy, which produces about 90 per cent of the power on our grid on an average day, is subject to very high rates under the NDP carbon tax. If we go and buy a restaurant meal, the cost of heating the restaurant, of delivering the food to the restaurant and many other associated input costs are increased by the NDP carbon tax. And on and on and on.

I just mentioned in question period, Madam Speaker, the \$1 million cost increase imposed on the Calgary board of education as a result of the carbon tax, the consequence of which is that they are now looking at reducing their expenditures on full-day kindergarten by one-third.

The impact of this carbon tax has been real and widely felt. I recently visited with my hon. friend, the Official Opposition House Leader. The seniors' centre in his constituency, which is run completely by volunteers, has a modest budget of just \$18,000 per year, and they remarkably deliver fantastic programs to keep seniors active in this community notwithstanding their modest budget. But they're now spending 8 per cent of their annual budget on the NDP carbon tax, causing the volunteer directors of that organization to wonder whether they can keep the doors open and the lights on. When they called the Premier's office to raise concerns about this, they were told to do a fundraiser or to raise their membership fees from low-income seniors on fixed incomes. That's just one microcosm of the real-world impact of this carbon tax, Madam Speaker.

Given that impact and given the 23-year-long precedent of the Alberta Taxpayer Protection Act I have tabled this bill, which seeks to broaden the effect of the Alberta Taxpayer Protection Act to require a referendum before a carbon tax can be introduced in the future or before the rate of the current carbon tax can be increased.

3:00

Now, Madam Speaker, you might reasonably ask: well, since there is a carbon tax, why would we be talking about a referendum for the prospective introduction of one since it's currently a fait accompli? The answer, very simply, is that one of the key issues that Albertans will vote on at the next election is whether or not to eliminate the NDP carbon tax. The Official Opposition, the United Conservative Party, will in our platform be committed to the immediate repeal of the NDP carbon tax in its entirety. Unlike the

third and fourth parties in this place, we don't intend to replace the NDP carbon tax with a different carbon tax.

I must give the NDP credit, though. They do officially oppose the sales tax, unlike the third party, which supports both a carbon tax and a sales tax. So Albertans who want very high taxes will have a choice. They can choose between the NDP or the third party. I don't know where the Liberal Party will end up on this, but they tend to like high taxes. Voters will have a clear choice, Madam Speaker, and if they elect a majority of United Conservative MLAs, I hope and predict that in June 2019 in this Legislature we'll be adopting the carbon tax repeal act.

Now, heaven forbid, Madam Speaker, but at some point in the future beyond that, should a government try to pull an NDP hidden agenda on us again and impose a future carbon tax, they would then be barred from doing so without the consent of Albertans through a referendum should Bill 202 become law. That is why we are proposing this bill.

Also, it is to protect us from future increases because the government has been very clear about this. They introduced their carbon tax without the consent of Albertans, without having mentioned it in their platform. Incidentally, I keep in my desk their platform, Madam Speaker, and on page 24, in the appendix entitled, ironically, *Balancing the Books*, they projected in this current fiscal year a \$25 million surplus, when, in fact, we have an \$8 billion projected deficit. In this platform, on which the government members were elected, there are eight tax changes itemized in the appendix, none of which relate to a carbon tax or carbon levy or whatever euphemism you choose to apply to it. Yet five months later the government introduced the largest tax increase in Alberta history. Whoops. It just kind of somehow appeared out of the ether. They just somehow forgot to mention by far the largest tax increase in our history in this document. That was short-circuiting democracy, and we won't let that happen again. That's why I brought forward this bill.

Now, when they introduced that job-killing carbon tax, they did so at a price level of \$20 per metric tonne, that applies differently to different sources of fuel and energy, but the general rate is \$20 per metric tonne. Then on January 1 of this year, just 10 weeks ago, the government raised that by 50 per cent to \$30 per tonne. But they're not done yet because they've committed to raise it by another 67 per cent. Why? Because Justin Trudeau told them to, which is just about the worst reason I could imagine to do anything, Madam Speaker, let alone raise a tax. But they've committed to raise it by another 67 per cent. Not only have they committed to this in some rhetorical way; they've actually baked it into the budget. The budget projections, including the specious projection of a surplus in the year 2023, are conditional upon that 67 per cent increase in the NDP carbon tax with the associated increase in revenues.

They're not done even there, Madam Speaker, when they jack it up to 50 per cent, because as the Premier said on November 30, 2016: we have never outlined that \$30 was where it was going to stop; people who talk about effective carbon pricing acknowledge that as time progresses, it needs to go up. Quote, unquote. It needs to go up.

So, Madam Speaker, we know that's their intention. As I've said before, it's the frog-in-the-pot syndrome. They started with \$20. They get people used to the idea, without a referendum, without an electoral mandate, without mentioning it in the platform, then a 50 per cent increase, and then a 67 per cent increase. But it doesn't stop there. It's only beginning because their own hand-picked expert who helped to write the carbon tax plan, Professor Leach, has said that a carbon tax would have to be at least \$200 a tonne, in addition to other regulations and policies, in order to achieve a reduction of CO₂ emissions commensurate with the Paris climate conference

targets by 2030. And Environment Canada, the federal environment department, issued a memo in March 2017 saying that a carbon tax would need to be at least \$300 a tonne to achieve the Paris climate emissions targets by the year 2050.

I've made this point before, Madam Speaker, about the disingenuousness of the government's carbon tax policy. If they really believed that they were somehow saving the planet with this carbon tax, if they thought that this was really existential to the future of the planet and the global environment, then they would have the courage of their convictions. They'd just be honest with Albertans and say: "You know what? Everybody, one hundred per cent of the experts, agrees that a \$30 or a \$50 carbon tax does not make an appreciable difference in emissions." If it did, then emissions in British Columbia today would be lower than they were when the Liberal Party there imposed their carbon tax.

If a carbon tax in this range was effective, then it would have resulted in a reduction of emissions in Australia, but it didn't. In fact, they saw emissions increase but the economy and jobs hurt. As a result, the Liberal government in Australia repealed it.

Washington state voters, in the greenest U.S. state, had a chance to review all of these arguments, and they overwhelmingly vetoed a carbon tax when it was put to a referendum last November.

Madam Speaker, this bill merely seeks to give to Albertans the same right that Washington state voters had to determine whether or not to impose such a tax on themselves, and I suspect they would come to the same conclusion.

The French Socialists, Madam Speaker, philosophical fellow travellers of the NDP and, with the NDP, a member party of Socialist International: they, too, intended to introduce a carbon tax until they looked at the data and realized that it was all economic pain and no environmental gain. So the NDP's brothers and sisters in the French Socialist Party did a one-eighty on their intended carbon tax. Unfortunately, apparently the NDP here doesn't really believe in solidarity with their French Socialist brothers and sisters.

So, Madam Speaker, we have this carbon tax, this hidden agenda. It is a de facto consumption tax. Worse than that, it's actually a tax on tax because their friend and close ally Justin Trudeau imposes his GST on the NDP carbon tax. Maybe that's why he wants them to raise it by 67 per cent because he gets more GST revenue out of the higher, future NDP carbon tax.

Madam Speaker, I've asked the government repeatedly: how high will they go? You know, when do they intend to go to Professor Leach's \$200 carbon tax? When do they intend to deliver the Environment Canada preferred \$300 carbon tax? Of course they won't tell us, for the same reason they wouldn't tell Albertans about the \$30 carbon tax in the last election, because they know as well as I do that Albertans would say no. So I say: what are they afraid of? Why don't they support Bill 202 to allow Albertans to have the final say? The only possible grounds for opposition to this bill are fear of the judgment of the Alberta people. The only grounds on which you could oppose this bill are if you oppose the principle of democracy.

3:10

Now, this government had a chance to get a mandate from Albertans on the carbon tax in the last election, but they were afraid. They were afraid of being forthright and honest. That is the same reason why 24 years ago I lobbied the Klein government for a taxpayer protection act requiring a referendum prior to the introduction of a prospective sales tax, because I knew then what every member of this place knows now, in every party, that the government that introduces a sales tax would not be a government that runs on that promise. It would be a hidden agenda in the same way that the carbon tax was.

Madam Speaker, let me just add something. There was a new study that was just produced by a PhD student at the University of Calgary on the impact of carbon taxes on employment, in particular the impact of the British Columbia revenue-neutral carbon tax. Now, to be clear, that was introduced originally about a decade ago as a revenue-neutral carbon tax; there were commensurate offsetting reductions in B.C. income taxes. But the Alberta NDP carbon tax made no such pretense. It was not supposedly revenue neutral.

In any event, this study, which has been done in British Columbia, concludes the following, that the B.C. carbon tax “[increased] the unemployment rates of medium- and low-educated males by 1.4 and 2.4 percentage points respectively. The policy is implemented mainly at the expense of the low-educated.” Mainly at the expense of the low educated. This is a study by Chi Man Yip, published in the *Journal of Environmental Economics and Management*, On the Labor Market Consequences of Environmental Taxes.

Madam Speaker, the NDP, I think, call themselves a progressive party. I’d like to ask them: what’s progressive about adopting a policy has a particularly pernicious effect on employment for people with modest levels of education, for people at the bottom and the margins of the labour market? The NDP loves to talk about soaking the rich in tax policy. That’s not what the carbon tax is doing. It is a regressive tax that imposes proportionately the largest cost on the lowest income people. That’s why notionally they have a rebate, but that rebate is not helping the 2.4 per cent of young Alberta men with the lowest levels of education, because they lost their jobs and a little rebate cheque isn’t going to make up for no job. It’s not helping the Sundre seniors’ centre, and it’s not helping the Calgary kids who are going to lose their kindergarten because of the Calgary board of education. They don’t get a rebate.

I submit, Madam Speaker, that it is time for this Legislature to embrace the principle of democratic decision-making, as we have done with respect to sales taxes, that we ought to apply the same principle to carbon taxes by supporting this bill. If members vote against it, they will be sending a clear message to Albertans that they do not trust the common sense of ordinary Albertans when it comes to such a critical issue, but I am proud to say that the United Conservative Party will always trust Albertans to make such critical decisions.

I call on all members to support this bill. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It’s my pleasure to stand for a few moments to speak to Bill 202. I can tell you that I am very proud of everything our government has done over the last number of years in order to support two things at the same time, and those are to support both the environment and to support business in this community.

Our job is to stand up for Albertans and our industry by getting real results, and that includes a pipeline approval to tidewater, something that did not happen while the Leader of the Opposition was in a place to do exactly that thing, in Ottawa, for something like 10 years. Why didn’t he get that approval? They were afraid to do the work necessary in order to get things done. That’s one of the things that we are not afraid to do.

Sometimes the opposition reminds me a little bit of the people who can’t keep their eye on the goal line in order to achieve the outcome that they desire because it’s going to take a little bit too much effort. I’m very concerned that they want us to right now run away and give up when things get a little tough in the economy in

this province. You know, the fact that they want to throw out all of the work that’s been done to clean up the environment for the next generation because of their frustration about how hard it is to get things done in this province and sometimes in this country is amazing to me.

We’re very proud of the work that we’ve done to promote pipelines to tidewater, something that the Conservative government in this province failed to do over 44 years. Right now line 3 is under construction, Keystone XL has achieved commercial support to proceed, and we’re closer than ever to breaking our land lock with the Trans Mountain pipeline. We’re very happy to have introduced a bill into the House today that’s going to help us to ensure that we, unlike the opposition, can get the job done even though the job is hard. The Leader of the Opposition and his plan to cancel our climate leadership plan puts all of this at risk, including the great pipeline jobs that are out there and the public transit jobs that are being created all across this province using the carbon levy money.

As Minister of Indigenous Relations I really wanted to take a moment to talk about what it is that the opposition is suggesting doing. The opposition is suggesting taking money out of the hands and therefore out of the mouths of indigenous people all across this province. They have suggested that they are going to come in and that the very first thing they’re going to do is that they’re going to raid and attack the indigenous people in this province who have been using that carbon levy money to create new opportunities and to ensure that two things happen simultaneously. I know that that can be hard for the opposition, but you can achieve two outcomes at the same time if you’re willing to put in the effort and if you don’t give up at the first sign of trouble.

In the indigenous community they talk about that as a pair of moccasins, in which one moccasin is the environment, that we need to take care of and we need to be able to pass on to our children in a way that allows them to live sustainable lives, and the second moccasin is the employment that will provide for the economy today so that they can feed their children. One moccasin on one foot is ridiculous. You need to wear both moccasins at the same time if you’re going to take a journey and you’re going to achieve an outcome. That’s what it is that we have done by coupling together the indigenous climate leadership program, that comes from our carbon levy, and the support for the pipeline.

I can tell you that people in the indigenous community have said many times that they support what we are doing with regard to the carbon levy because they say that they have a respect for the Earth and a desire to pass on a clean environment, to tackle the pollution that’s put out there by carbon, to tackle the pollution that’s put out there by the coal plants, because they care about their children.

For example, Gerald Cunningham, the president of the Metis Settlements General Council, said:

Respect for the land is a fundamental value instilled in the Metis people from the day we are born. Our relationship to our land is unique and deeply spiritual – one that casts us as stewards of a great blessing bestowed by the creator. Our land is the beginning of everything. It feeds us, shelters us, clothes us, and in return, we honour it, we protect it, and we endeavor to leave it better than we found it for the next generation.

Madam Speaker, what Gerald Cunningham is telling us is that we cannot support jobs if we fail to protect the Earth, which is the basis of all that we do.

Yet the opposition is planning right now to take this money away from Gerald Cunningham, away from the Métis settlements, away from the Métis Nation of Alberta, away from the 48 First Nations in this province, who have all used this money to create a better world. In fact, just this last year over 124 projects went forward in indigenous communities, all of which will be stolen from them, just

like the land has been for many years in this country. They are going to steal that away from them again, repeating the degradation of our history with indigenous people. I can't believe that they're standing in the House to make those kinds of statements.

3:20

In fact, there are over 35 communities in this province that are putting up solar panels in this year alone. All of that – the workers that are learning to do the trade, the savings in the economy, the preservation of the Earth, and the reduction of pollution – is going to be stolen by this opposition from the very people who are the primary protectors of the land. I can't imagine: why would they make a decision to do that? Because they only have one thought in mind. The reason why they want to do that is because they have a group of friends, and those friends want to be able to reduce their taxes. It will save the 1 per cent at the very top of our economy \$700 million if they follow through with their plan. That's why they want to do it.

They get up and they talk about the effects of carbon levies on low-income people, yet they oppose raising the actual minimum wage for those low-income people. They talk about how we are going to affect the economy in this province, yet they are going to destroy and undercut the school system, the medical system, and the social system in this province, that support all of those low-income people and allow them to live dignified lives.

None of that matters. Only one thing matters. They only wear one moccasin. They cannot keep two things together. What we have now is a very ridiculous proposition that we are going to give up at the first sign of trouble and that we're going to run away from our commitment, that we're going to say: "Oh, the environment is not so important. We just really want to pursue the income that will be allotted to a very wealthy group of people, and that's what we're going to preserve."

I can tell you that on this side of the House we are not going to do that. We are going to build a strong economy. In fact, indeed we have built a strong economy. Last year we had the highest growth in the economy in the country. Last year we built 90,000 new jobs. What we are doing is successful, and they hate it. They hate it because it proves that the decisions that we made were the right decisions.

At the same time, we are also taking care of the people. We are providing the communities in which there is coal reduction the ability to work on developing new industries in their communities. We are allowing First Nations people, who have consistently struggled within our economy, the chance to develop new job skills, to save money on energy, to retrofit their homes, and, of course, ultimately to participate in the energy market in this province.

For the very first time we have a REP system coming forward requiring that First Nations have equity participation in electricity development in this province, the first time that that's happened. They never did that in the Conservative opposition. That totally depends on us having a carbon levy that allows equity participation and encourages indigenous participation.

I ask again: what does the opposition have against success in the indigenous community? I don't understand why they constantly want to undermine and thwart the success that has been built up by the indigenous people. When the Métis people and the First Nations people come to me, they say: Richard, do two things. I can tell you, it's very exciting.

An Hon. Member: Names.

Mr. Feehan: You're right. I apologize.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm honoured to rise today to speak to Bill 202, the Alberta Taxpayer Protection (Carbon Tax Referendum) Amendment Act, 2018, that's being put forward by my hon. colleague from Calgary-Lougheed.

Madam Speaker, "democracy" is made up of two Greek words: "dēmos," the people, and "kratia," to rule. The idea in a democracy is that the laws and the rules that bind us together as a community, those laws and those rules that we are expected to obey, the laws that we pass and that we make for this province, should be a reflection of the will of the people of Alberta.

Now, normally in this great province of Alberta we do not practise a direct form of democracy. We have chosen to instead have a representative form of democracy, where the MLAs are elected by their constituents and where those constituents expect that we will go into this Legislature, into this House, and that we will choose to support the vision and the ideas of the people that have elected us, that we will vote on legislation that is consistent with the views of those who have elected us.

We have general elections where political parties put forward platforms and where those platforms are expected to outline the party vision, the vision of where that party wants to go and be directed and where they would take us as a province should they become the government. In a representative form of democracy, Madam Speaker, sometimes the wheels can fall off the vehicle, or the government, so to speak. Sometimes representative democracies can actually be fairly undemocratic when a party makes a clear promise to the constituents and to the people in a general election and then they choose to break it or when they pass legislation that they did not campaign on or where the pieces of legislation that they bring before the House clearly do not represent the support and have the support of the people of the province.

Sometimes, Madam Speaker, the people of this province and the people of a democracy need protection from a government that has forgotten or chosen not to support the wishes of the people. This government has done some pretty unbelievable things in the province over the last three years, and it's damaged our province in the last few years. Their economic policies have led to unprecedented numbers in unemployment. They, through their policies, have created an economy and an economic milieu where investment has often chosen to flee the province, and they have consistently failed to consult with stakeholders, that have a right to have an impact on the legislation that is brought before this House. It's been clear time and time again, as they have brought legislation before this House, that they have failed to consult with stakeholders in any meaningful way.

Madam Speaker, we've seen over the last number of years a doubling of the percentage of the unemployed in Alberta. In 2015 it was at 7.8 per cent, or about 11,600 individuals, and today we're looking at somewhere around 15.6 per cent, or 30,300 individuals, that have been out of work for at least a year or more.

The NDP have failed to consult with Albertans. They failed to consult with Albertans during the election of 2015, when they made no mention of their disastrous carbon tax in their election campaign. Instead, I guess they thought they could save that announcement, that surprise, until they were safely in office. One can only come to the conclusion, Madam Speaker, that they did this because they knew that if they had brought this forward in the last election, they would not have stood a chance of being elected. If they had flaunted that fact, that upon entering office they were going to enter into a

carbon tax, the largest tax hike in Alberta history, this would have resulted in a clearly different result in the election of 2015.

Madam Speaker, the NDP's carbon tax: if it didn't break the law, it clearly violated the spirit of the Taxpayer Protection Act. Even though there is no mention of a carbon tax in the Alberta Taxpayer Protection Act, I think that we could say that in the spirit of that act, this has abrogated that act, clearly.

3:30

Madam Speaker, my colleague who has presented this private member's bill, Bill 202, would suggest that we officially add the carbon tax to Mr. Klein's original legislation to protect Albertans from a government that seeks to punish them with this hidden tax without first giving them the right to have their say. Sometimes the only way to restore the concept of the people ruling is to ensure that the government, through legislation, has to go back to the people in a referendum. Referendums allow the people to have the final say through a direct vote. It allows the people and the government, for that matter, to see if they actually have the support of the people on a particular policy. It allows the people to have the final decision as to whether they will support or whether they will reject a piece of legislation. In this case we would suggest that supporting Bill 202 will allow the members of the great society that we have here in Alberta the opportunity to have the final say, and in a democracy that is never a bad thing.

Madam Speaker, I believe that when Albertans are given the facts, they make wise choices. When given the opportunity to consider how a piece of legislation will impact them and whether it takes Alberta into a position that they can support, they do indeed vote in favour of those pieces of legislation. But I would suggest that history is clear that Albertans were not given the information, were unaware of the desires of this government and, therefore, should have the ability to have a say. Bill 202, which requires a referendum before any future carbon tax is hiked or will proceed, is a good thing for the people of Alberta to have a say on.

The NDP has already raised the carbon tax by 50 per cent. We know that they promise a further 67 per cent and that they're doing this, really, just to curry favour with our current Prime Minister. We know that this carbon tax is a tax on almost everything that we consume. It's linked to the carbon that is being produced, and it means that this carbon tax is, in fact, Madam Speaker, a consumption tax or, as some have called it, a backdoor provincial sales tax.

As we have seen over the last three years, Madam Speaker, no one is safe from this tax. This government has given no leeway. It's given no leeway for us to protect the vulnerable in our population or the nonprofits that serve those folks. Even as I stood up today in the House and asked if this government was prepared to provide an exemption for schools on the carbon tax, the answer was clear: no.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to stand to speak to Bill 202, Alberta Taxpayer Protection (Carbon Tax Referendum) Amendment Act, 2018. Bill 202 proposes to amend the Alberta Taxpayer Protection Act to require that a referendum be held and the result announced by the Chief Electoral Officer before a bill can be introduced which proposes to increase a carbon tax rate or impose a new or expanded carbon tax. It was Mr. Klein back in 1995 that brought in the Alberta Taxpayer Protection Act, that currently requires the province to hold a referendum and have the Chief Electoral Officer announce the

results before a bill can be introduced which seeks to impose a general provincial sales tax.

Given that there is controversy over the carbon tax across the province, it's quite understandable – in fact, perhaps close to 50 per cent of Albertans haven't supported the carbon tax – that for political purposes the UCP might jump on this as an opportunity, a political opportunity to divide and provoke a tax revolt. I find it disingenuous and difficult to embrace when we say that we believe in climate change and we are going to do things about climate change – and this government has done something about climate change, including a modest but graduating carbon tax that everyone, every business can prepare for and that indeed the federal government has said is essential to us moving in the right direction.

This is about changing behaviour, all of our behaviour since we are all responsible for the climate crisis that we are now in. One of the most significant shortcomings of the carbon tax is that it's hard to see how its purpose for changing behaviour is in fact going to do so when 60 per cent of Albertans get a rebate. One could question whether it's significant enough to incite behaviour change and reduce energy demand and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Indeed, we know from looking at our greenhouse gas numbers, at least up until the last two years, that they've been increasing by 1 to 2 per cent per year steadily, and it's hard to see any impact so far. But that's not a reason to stopping doing it; that's a reason to graduate it and increase it.

While we have supported the carbon tax, we've had real concerns in the Liberal caucus about where the money is going. That was the struggle that I had in supporting the carbon levy when it was brought in. Now I see that my concerns were realized with this fund now being used for all manner of things, including paying the Balancing Pool, when it was supposed to be used for green energy, energy efficiency, education in reducing our energy use.

Apart from that, though, the Alberta Liberals recognize that the Constitution grants the provinces broad taxation authority. That is what we elect governments for, and they were on pretty firm legal footing when it came to introducing the carbon levy in 2017. The same goes for future adjustments to the levy. In fact, under the new federal carbon pricing system, all provinces in Canada will be required to start introducing a price on carbon. Let's provide what the UCP says they want, some certainty for industry. Let's be clear. Let's not be jumping back and forth from one day, one year, one party to the next, saying that we will provide some certainty or that we won't. There is a degree of certainty now not only in Alberta but across the country that we're going to seriously take on, all of us, in terms of our behaviour around carbon fuels.

Albertans, Canadians in general want to see more serious commitment to climate change than they've seen in the past. Certainly, under the past Conservative government here in Alberta, the charge, I think, an intensity target of \$15 a tonne amounted to about \$2.50 per tonne of emissions in this province. No wonder it had no credibility and no impact.

To be clear, we do believe in putting a price on carbon. It's absolutely the right thing for Alberta and for Canada to show some leadership in the world. Of course, we don't produce the major emissions in the world, but we have a responsibility for leadership. The NDP approach to reducing emissions, quite frankly, is not entirely the program that we would favour, but it is a step. It's an important step. We need to be consistent about this carbon levy going into the future. Business wants certainty, and there is at least some clarity coming from both levels of government. I'm not eager to see the impacts of passing a bill like this, creating more uncertainty and certainly sending the wrong message to Canadians as well as the international community about our commitment to climate change.

3:40

From our perspective, the most credible case for having the carbon levy would be (a) to change behaviour, reduce energy consumption; and (b) to finance a truly revenue-neutral change in the tax mix that would enable the province to reduce personal and corporate taxes, to pay for some things that taxpayers care about and that, in terms of lowering taxes on businesses, would encourage economic diversification to happen much more organically instead of the current NDP interventionist approach, which is creating an unfair playing field and some degree of uncertainty in business subsidies, who gets it and who doesn't.

For all the UCP's lofty talk about the importance of direct democracy, Bill 202 is largely about inciting a tax revolt for partisan political gain. It's a kind of political gain for progressives in the same way that the UCP claims that the abortion bubble zone bill is a trap for Conservatives. Bill 202 is also about trying to bind the hands of the Alberta government and restrict its policy options, which I don't think is ever advisable and no government would accept, especially the UCP. It reduces the Legislature's flexibility in terms of dealing with the changing and evolving realities of our province. The government needs options to allow for timely and effective responses.

I'd remind the House that we've seen Alberta Conservatives previously claim that they were acting in defence of taxpayers by legislating balanced budgets only to have to embarrassingly repeal their own legislation when it became too restrictive and they, too, needed flexibility. So the legislation worked for them, at least politically, until one day it didn't work anymore.

In a way Bill 202 is also about trying to enshrine in legislation with some degree of permanence a key Conservative political principle, that being that low or limited taxation is an end in itself. There's an arrogance in assuming that Alberta is still best served by a single, narrow political approach from bygone days. The simple truth is that many Albertans are concerned about climate change and have become increasingly pragmatic in their approach due to the lack of progress, facts that appear to be lost on the UCP leader, presumably, from all his years in Ottawa.

The UCP has offered no real plan of its own to reduce greenhouse gas emissions other than to float the idea of bringing back the PC-era specified gas emitters regulation, SGER, a half measure, at best, that allowed absolute emissions to continue to increase, as a move that would only see others, large emitters really, pay a levy of sorts. The measure would no doubt find favour in at least some circles, but this, I suspect, would be partly true of those who don't acknowledge the threat of climate change or see themselves as a real part of the solution.

Again, this is consistent with what Environics has told us in their polling, and the UCP knows this, that people tend to support tax scenarios that see other people pay. What this ultimately comes down to is a choice. The UCP can either choose to do what's right for our planet, our children, our children's children or, like successive Conservative governments in this province that frittered away hundreds of billions of dollars in nonrenewable resource revenue, it can choose to do what's in its own narrow, short-term political interest. Sadly, this bill signals that the UCP has chosen the latter.

It has also pledged to repeal the carbon tax if elected. This threatens to set Alberta on yet another Conservative-manufactured collision course with the federal government, one that most legal experts say would be in vain. If the UCP leader believes that climate change is real or deserving of meaningful response, he has a funny way of showing it. Albertans are tired of the arrogance and the antics. They want to see real, broad-based action on climate.

The last point I'd make is that referendums are not without their problems and their costs, not the least of which is that not everyone takes the time to properly, objectively weigh the question at hand. This can sometimes lead to problematic outcomes, unintended consequences. But in terms of cost we know from the recent debate around eliminating daylight savings time that a referendum paired with a provincial election would cost somewhere between \$2 million and \$6 million dollars while holding a referendum on its own would cost nearly \$22 million. I think we need to be asking whether this is a good use of public funds, Madam Chair.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise in support of this private member's bill from the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed. I thank him for bringing it forward. I'd like to, with my brief time, focus most of my comments on some of the comments that I heard from the hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations, the MLA for Edmonton-Rutherford, earlier today. You know, I have to say that in watching that presentation, which was the government's official response, I guess, to the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed's bill, I was quite alarmed. I mean, it was extraordinarily, I would say, hysterical, had very little to actually do with the legislation that is in front of us. Madam Speaker, this is the problem that we see continually with this government and with members in the NDP, not wanting to look at a serious piece of legislation like this that will help Albertans.

You know, the other day the Premier of Saskatchewan tweeted out that a carbon tax does the following: increases the cost of everything for families, including gas, groceries, power, and heat; exports jobs and investment out of Canada to other countries. He says: a carbon tax does not reduce carbon emissions and remain revenue neutral.

The minister who gave that hysterical presentation just a few minutes ago in this Assembly . . .

Mr. Feehan: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker: A point of order called. The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Point of Order Insulting Language

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to address this. My point of order is with regard to 23(h), (i), and (j); that is, a comment that

- (h) makes allegations against another Member;
- (i) imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member; [or]
- (j) uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder.

I think it's fairly clear that the member's attempts to use an old-fashioned Freudian term to refer to my commentary is clearly outside the bounds of respectful discourse and betrays, you know, a desire to bring the repute of this House to a lower level. I think that he should be chastised for engaging in that kind of behaviour and asked to refrain from it in future.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, do you wish to respond?

Mr. Nixon: There's a lot to say but lots to do today with those comments. First of all, the hon. minister clearly doesn't want to be called out on the ridiculous things that he said in this Assembly. I

think that what he said was hysterical. That's the word that I would use to describe that. I would submit to you, Madam Speaker, that this is a matter of debate. If the minister wants to talk about decorum in this place, I suggest that he take some time later on this afternoon to read *Hansard* and re-examine his behaviour in his presentation and things he says about other members of this House.

With that said, Madam Speaker, I'd like to move on with my speech. If the minister could stop interrupting me, I would appreciate it.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

At this point there is no point of order, but I'd just remind the members of the House: if we can be cautious around what sort of language we use.

Please proceed.

Debate Continued

Mr. Nixon: Thank you. As I was saying, Madam Speaker, in response – this is what I think is important – this minister then said to the Premier of Saskatchewan, democratically elected by the people of Saskatchewan: man, oh, man; Trumpism is alive and well in Saskatchewan; when the Premier can't understand science, he prints demonstrably false statements and hopes to create public mistrust now. Sad.

Mr. Kenney: Who said that?

Mr. Nixon: That's the minister of indigenous affairs, the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

That is what I'm talking about, hysterical, to react that way when we're trying to have a discussion, whether with the Premier of Saskatchewan or with members of the House. The way that he acted during his speech, I would say, is hysterical, but I will move on past that because it's troubling the member.

The point is that all that minister wants to do and all that that side of the House wants to do on this important issue is to talk about issues that have nothing to do with the actual legislation we're talking about here, Bill 202. The minister talked about stealing land from indigenous people, projects that may happen in indigenous communities, that may or may not be happening. I don't know if they are. If they are, I'm sure that's great for those indigenous communities. But the point is, Madam Speaker, that if that has all taken place the way this minister submits, he should be happy to submit that to a referendum by the people of Alberta. He should be happy to pass this legislation to give the people of Alberta, including indigenous people, the right to choose whether or not they want this carbon tax.

I represent three reserves. I'm proud to represent three indigenous communities. I can tell you that when I communicate with those indigenous communities, they're not happy with this legislation or the fact that they have to pay a carbon tax. They're certainly not happy with the fact that this is a tax on everything.

But the biggest thing they're not happy with is that this government, when they campaigned, did not tell them that they were going to bring forward this carbon tax. They kept it hidden. As the Leader of the Opposition submitted in his presentation, the reason that they likely kept that hidden – and I agree with the Member for Calgary-Lougheed on this assertion – is because they knew that it was really just a backdoor PST and that if they went to the people of Alberta with that, the people of Alberta would categorically reject it, because that's simply what more than two-thirds of Albertans are already saying when they hear about the carbon tax.

3:50

I'll tell you what the indigenous communities and all my communities that I represent say when they talk about the carbon tax. First, they get very upset about their heating bills. They're upset about their gas bills. They're furious that this government then brought in a \$30 carbon tax, that they did not tell Albertans about. Then because Justin Trudeau, the close personal ally of this NDP government, asked them to, they raised it to \$50 without consulting Albertans, and then, hidden in this budget, they raise it another 67 per cent. If all the great things with the carbon tax are actually happening and Albertans truly want the carbon tax, this government should be happy to submit it to the people and show the opposition that this is actually what Albertans want. Prove us wrong. The only reason, Madam Speaker, that you would not want to go to the people of Alberta is because the government side of the House knows the opposition is right and that Albertans have categorically rejected this approach. They've categorically rejected it.

When the minister stands and talks about the projects the carbon tax may be buying for certain communities, he does not answer the questions and the points brought forward by the Official Opposition leader with this legislation on the damage that this carbon tax is doing to the social safety net of many places in this province. He ignores the fact, as the Member for Calgary-Lougheed presented, that the Sundre West Country Centre, which is still in danger of closing directly as a result of this NDP's tax – in fact, the social agencies within my communities have said repeatedly, over and over and over, that they are in danger of not being able to provide services to our communities, one hundred and ten per cent because of the carbon tax that this government brought in.

Now, maybe there are more – maybe there are more – Albertans that actually do want the carbon tax, but that's the point. Let's bring forward some legislation that will then let them have a choice. This is important, because while I believe that we will form the next government – and I want to be a hundred per cent clear that it is our intention in bill 1 to remove the job-killing carbon tax and to be able to provide relief to Albertans – the fact is that as we've already seen inside this House, the other parties, including the Liberal Party and the Alberta Party, want to bring in more than just a carbon tax. They want to bring in a provincial sales tax. We have a government here that hides the tax and wants to continue to increase the tax on Albertans.

So it's important that we make sure that the spirit of law that Premier Klein brought in as a result of the lobbying by the Member for Calgary-Lougheed or the good work that he did with the Taxpayers Federation is honoured because that is not what's happening. Now, certainly, 10 years ago or whenever we first brought in that legislation, we weren't talking about taxing air or carbon. That was just not part of the political equation at the time, so it makes sense to update that legislation to make sure that Albertans can have a say in the future. That's all that this legislation does.

If the minister of indigenous affairs actually feels that this carbon tax has accomplished so many great things for his community and for the people of Alberta, he would stand in this House and he would say: "I support this legislation. Let my constituents have a right to be able to decide if they want to be taxed this way." That's all this legislation does. Let the people of Alberta decide if they want this carbon tax. This government and that minister in particular, in my experience, forget who they work for. He doesn't work for the Premier. He doesn't work for the NDP. He works for the people of Edmonton-Rutherford and for the people of Alberta, and the people of Alberta want a say in whether they are taxed this way.

The people of Alberta are sick of paying this carbon tax on every product that they purchase in their daily lives. The kids inside the Calgary school board that are going to see their kindergarten classes be reduced directly as a result of this government's carbon tax want the carbon tax to go away and want to be able to go to kindergarten to the same level as the kids that were before. The swimming pools in our communities: that's actually one of the interesting nonprofits that have been hit the most inside of rural communities because they're all run by volunteers and people that raise money so that kids can go to those swimming pools. Their heating costs went up astronomically, and they're in danger of shutting. They want a referendum. They want to be able to tell this government that this is not acceptable.

This government rejecting and the NDP and its members standing up in this House and saying that there's something wrong with this legislation and indicating that they're going to vote against it – and if they do vote against it, let's be very clear what that means. They are voting against Albertans' – their boss and my boss – right to make a decision on whether or not they should pay a tax. That's it. That is the decision that is before this House, nothing else. If the government truly believes that this is the right way for Albertans to go, they should stand up, support it, and have Albertans show the United Conservative Party that we're actually wrong and that they want a carbon tax. The problem is that that's not what Albertans will say. The members across the way know that's not what they say.

I predict, through you, Madam Speaker, that they will continue through the afternoon to rise and say hysterical, irrelevant things because they have no argument as to why they've been putting this job-killing carbon tax on the people of Alberta. They have no argument for the attack that they've done on our social agencies inside our communities. They have no answers for the senior citizens who are being forced to pay this carbon tax on a fixed income. They have no answers for the seniors in my community that are calling me and telling me that they've had to turn down the heat as a result of their gas bills. They have no answers for the agriculture community on the direct increase in costs in getting their product to a market. They have no answer at all. That is why they continue to force this tax on Albertans, and that is why they're not supporting the Member for Calgary-Lougheed's legislation.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It gives me pleasure today to rise to speak to Bill 202, brought forward by the Leader of the Official Opposition. You know, like many members of this Legislature, I go door to door canvassing regularly in my riding of Edmonton-McClung, and I did so this week as well, yesterday, as a matter of fact, for three hours. I was in a fairly affluent area of the constituency. The constituency has a very mixed economic spectrum, from people who are well below the poverty line to those who are among the most affluent in the province. The neighbourhood that I happened to be door-knocking in yesterday afternoon was one that had homes in the \$500,000 to \$750,000 range, not individuals who would generally be eligible to receive the carbon levy rebate. I knocked on probably 40 or 50 doors and had good conversations with a number of people.

Madam Speaker, I'm not sure if you can guess how many people in that evening of door-knocking asked me for a referendum, but I'll let you know. It was exactly zero who asked me to go back to the Legislature and demand that a referendum be called to determine whether or not we should increase the carbon levy. I can't

imagine a more divisive instrument in our political world than a referendum.

I lived through, as many people in this House have done, referendums on existential matters at a federal level, where we were looking at the division of our country, the loss of Quebec from our country. I happened to be in Quebec for the 1980 referendum debate, the first one, in an immersion program for a month when the debate was taking place, and I can tell you that I had a more difficult experience politically in those formative years, looking at how divisive the debate was up in the community of Jonquière, Saguenay Lac-Saint-Jean, where the leader of the Liberal Party, Bourassa, where Premier Lévesque came. Indeed, Prime Minister Trudeau came to rally the troops in their own defence, in defence of their own arguments. The community was split very decisively. In that particular area the forces for the oui won by 75 per cent, and it was a very, very thunderous and deafening debate between family members across the streets and even within families, where you had divisions that were raised that really, to this day, live on.

So I'm not a big fan of referendums per se. I know that they may have their place in that type of a debate, where it's an existential question, but when we're talking about simply raising a carbon levy, something that's already in place, I really question whether or not that – well, I don't believe, in all honesty, that we should be looking at a question of a referendum to ask Albertans whether they approve of this or not because, as the Leader of the Official Opposition has already indicated in his remarks, Albertans, of course, always have the final say, and they will have the final say, and it will be in a kind of referendum. It will be in a general election. That's where the final say will happen.

I really look forward to that general election upcoming, when they will announce themselves, because I believe that the result that we'll find is one of support for the government policy and a carbon levy. You know, the question that Albertans have asked themselves repeatedly – and I think they've come to a very knowledgeable and expressed conclusion – is the question that I think, maybe, the opposition should perhaps ask themselves to implement as a referendum question. That question, Madam Speaker, is to ask Albertans: do you think climate change is primarily caused by human carbon footprint? Do you think climate change is real? The answer to that question, that you'll get throughout this province, is yes.

4:00

I think that the Official Opposition probably misses the mark on a lot of things right now. You know, God love them. If they want to continue on in that vein, far be it from me to get in the way of having them drive their little blue truck back in time with their transmission firmly placed in reverse. They should be careful. That driving with the rearview mirror is going to land you in a ditch. Going back in time, which is something that the Official Opposition seems to really want to do – as expressed by the Leader of the Official Opposition in an opinion piece that was asked of him in the *Edmonton Sun* sometime ago, his favourite superpower would be to choose to go back in time. Well, he's leading us back in time with these requests for referendums.

I'm not sure how far back in time the Leader of the Official Opposition would have us go. You know, back to the '90s, when shoot, shovel, and shut up was the order of the day or we were blowing up hospitals? Or perhaps back to the 1950s, when indeed we were going full speed ahead, not really caring about the environment, whether it happened to be in our energy consumption or in our agriculture. I can remember back as far as 1968, when I was shovelling coal in my grandfather's basement into a coal furnace. It wasn't too many years after that – it was about that time

– when they transitioned that house, that they built in 1947, to natural gas. Even back in that time, in my childhood, Madam Speaker, we recognized the benefits of transitioning to cleaner burning fossil fuels. I think that the Official Opposition is, as I said, really missing the boat when they try to explain to Albertans that the climate change program that we've implemented is going in the wrong direction.

There is a real reason that we've implemented a price on carbon, and that's because it works. But don't take my word for it. Take the word of Mr. Preston Manning, who indicates in this quote that for any economic activity, especially [with] the production of energy, we should identify its negative environmental impacts, devise measures to avoid, mitigate or adapt to those impacts, and include the costs of those measures in the price of the product. It's the idea behind using carbon pricing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

From, of all people, Preston Manning.

Now, I'm not sure if the Official Opposition leader is going to contest those comments made by Mr. Manning, but I'd be interested to hear how he responds to that defence of carbon pricing from one who would be described I think quite favourably as a leading light of the conservative right. From that perspective, I think that they should really think deeply about where they're going with their movement towards expecting that Albertans are going to back them on a referendum and expecting that Albertans will decide that pricing carbon is something that they shouldn't be doing.

I think that at the doors and the meetings that I have with constituents, almost nobody is questioning the reason for what we're doing. They realize that carbon levies, as has been expressed by other members of the Legislature opposite, are put in place to change behaviours, and that is a measure that is taken by governments the world over and, not only that, but by businesses. Businesses employ the same type of measures. They will increase or lower prices to change behaviours of their customers. Governments, when they do impose or remove taxes, are doing the same thing. I'm not sure why when a business will do this, it's somehow an effective tool, but when a government does impose a tax or reduce a tax, it's somehow a means of imposing their will on a free economy, which they believe should just be left alone to do as it sees fit.

For those reasons, I really believe that the blunt instrument of a referendum should be used only for really, seriously existential questions and that this divisive instrument is totally unnecessary. The referendum that I really look forward to, Madam Speaker, is the one that's going to take place during the next general election. I for one and, I'm sure, all other members on this side of the House join me in eager anticipation because I sure as heck can't wait for it.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

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

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a great honour for me to rise to speak to second reading of Bill 202, the Alberta Taxpayer Protection (Carbon Tax Referendum) Amendment Act, 2018, proposed by the Member for Calgary-Lougheed. Since the carbon tax was introduced, Albertans have rejected it from day one and not just because it was sprung on Albertan taxpayers without forewarning and not just because foisting an unnecessary financial burden on Albertans, who are already struggling, is wrong and not even because of the provincial government's capitulation to every ridiculous proposal of their best friend in Ottawa. In fact, there is so much wrong with this tax on every level imaginable that I could

go on for hours. Actually, I think all the members in opposition would love to go on on this bill for hours because this is rejected by Albertans on every single level.

Even after exploring all of these contradictory, disingenuous, and unfair aspects of the carbon tax, I still felt a deep-rooted despair that struck at my very core. I'm pleased to tell you that I've figured it out. The sponsor of Bill 202, the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed, underscored it in his brilliant maiden address to this Assembly last Thursday. Now, I'll mention the date for anyone who has yet to view his inspirational speech. It was April 5, and I believe he started at 3:10 p.m. and ran until the end of session at 4:30. At approximately 3:40 in his address the Leader of the Official Opposition quoted a phrase that has been dear to my heart from the first time I walked into this Chamber. That phrase is right above your chair, Madam Speaker, and is in our coat of arms: *Fortis et Liber*, strong and free. You have heard me talking about the coat of arms in this Chamber a lot of times. That is Alberta's motto.

You know, the forefathers of this province gave us that motto as a definition of this province and perhaps even as a challenge. Through the first 11 decades since our founding in 1905 legislators have kept Alberta strong and free, Madam Speaker, but I'm afraid that in the last three years, it hasn't been as strong and free. When this government imposes a tax without even consulting Albertans – close to 70 per cent of Albertans rejected this tax – how can they be free and strong?

If you want to point out the most glaring example of a government that's marching to drumbeats that only it can hear – and, of course, the drummer is their best friend Justin Trudeau – it is a carbon tax born in Ottawa and heavily welcomed by our socialist NDP government. Actually, I think, Madam Speaker, that the word “welcomed” is a very soft word for no sooner did Justin Trudeau say that a national carbon tax was on the horizon than did Alberta rush to put its own carbon tax in place. This was despite our economy sliding into a terrible recession. The government did not care about what the state of the economy was; they just wanted to, you know, move forward with their ideology.

In fact, you can likely say that the NDP's best friends in Ottawa provided them with an excuse and false credibility to introduce a tax plan, carefully hidden during their 2015 election campaign, because if this government had introduced this in their election campaign, the chances are that they probably would not have been here.

An Hon. Member: They wouldn't be here.

4:10

Mr. Gill: They wouldn't be here. Yes.

But they're wrong, Madam Speaker, for neither they nor their carbon tax have any credibility with the people who matter, Albertans, the people whom we all come here to serve. What we know is that this is a tax that Albertans rejected and that Albertans saw through from the beginning.

Now, let me address the importance of Bill 202, Madam Speaker, the carbon tax referendum act, and explain why I support it so strongly and, as a matter of fact, why all the members on this side would support it so strongly. First of all, I think I must thank the Member for Calgary-Lougheed for showing strong leadership in not only opposing the carbon tax but also in his fairness to doing so through this bill and actually setting an example by giving the authority and power to the people to make a decision, not us making a decision on their behalf when they rejected this carbon tax. This proposed legislation will give this NDP government an opportunity to hold a province-wide vote on the carbon tax.

Why would they accept this opportunity? Well, there are good reasons for doing so. They keep on telling us: "This is not a job-killing carbon tax. This is not an economy-damaging tax. It's not a big deal. Albertans can easily absorb it by making simple changes in their daily lives. Don't eat meat. Take a bus. These are simple changes they can make." That's what the government is saying. If the government is so proud of their mandate, let Albertans decide. I don't think it should be up for debate. The government should be championing this bill.

We, on the other hand, happen to believe that it is a job-killing carbon tax, that it is an economy-damaging and ideological tax. Albertans should not have to freeze in the dark to fulfill this NDP's and Justin Trudeau's ideological tax. That is accomplishing nothing except causing hardship for our citizens. You can see that we're on very different sides of this equation. Bill 202, however, gives the NDP a fair chance to prove that we are wrong. They can send this bill to a referendum. Maybe we are wrong. Let Albertans decide that.

Right now a referendum on the carbon tax, as you know, Madam Speaker, will take place in 2019. Otherwise, there's a general election, where our leader and all the members from the UCP have said that, clearly, we will repeal this carbon tax should Albertans give the UCP a mandate to serve them. But the NDP can pass Bill 202, invite the LG to call a referendum, and let Albertans vote on this carbon tax now. Then when it's defeated through a referendum – because, Madam Speaker, it will be; trust me – they can repeal it themselves and have an election that does not hinge on this hidden tax.

The Member for Calgary-Lougheed has been very clear about his plan for Alberta's carbon tax. It will vanish, and in quick order, after the next election. We all know that he has said that in public on many occasions.

Madam Speaker, this bill is actually doing a favour for this socialist NDP government, and of course it's doing a favour for the very people we are all here to serve, Albertans.

Actually, I would like to cover one more issue regarding this tax, and that is the NDP government's next step to take away the veil that the carbon tax is about carbon reduction. The minister of indigenous affairs was talking about how we don't care about the clean environment and how we're climate deniers.

[The Speaker in the chair]

We have asked in this House to give us the details on how much of a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions there has been after the implementation of this tax, and we have yet to see the numbers. There's no data about it. The people, the scientists, economists, professional people, have said on this very topic that in order to make any difference, the carbon tax has to be close to – what? – \$200, \$300 per tonne.

Mr. Mason: Is that what you want?

Mr. Gill: That's what you want, it seems like. Albertans don't even want this, Minister. You know that.

To answer your question, sir, why don't we put this to a referendum and let Albertans decide what they want? It's not about what we want. We don't want any tax.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again I'd just like to thank you for coming up to Lac La Biche on Friday. I hope you had a great time up there. It's a beautiful community. Thanks again.

It's an honour to rise and speak in support of Bill 202, the Alberta Taxpayer Protection (Carbon Tax Referendum) Amendment Act, 2018, brought forward by my hon. colleague from Calgary-Lougheed. You know, back in the 1990s the concept of taxing carbon, air, and everything else would have been laughable here in Alberta – and I think a lot of Albertans still think it's laughable – so much so that at that time Ralph Klein, in consideration of taxpayers, passed the Alberta Taxpayer Protection Act. He would ensure that Alberta does not impose a provincial sales tax on Albertans before a referendum is held and everyone's voice has a chance to be heard. As a matter of fact, a younger version of the Leader of the Opposition was president of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation at the time, and he helped this essential law get passed.

Of course, in the '90s no one was talking about a specific carbon tax, sort of like the NDP during the 2015 election campaign. Go figure. Since almost everything else we consume can be linked to carbon, it seems to me that it is, in fact, a tax on everything, or, in other words, a consumption tax. Not only is it in essence a consumption tax but also an ever-growing consumption tax, the largest tax hike in Alberta's history, in fact. By not mentioning it in their 2015 election platform, they managed to circumvent any consultation with Albertans and inflict this tax on families that are already struggling in the grips of what even the members opposite agree is the worst recession to hit us in a generation.

You know, last week I asked a very interesting question, that was pertinent to folks out in my constituency, regarding the carbon tax on school bus drivers. I pointed out that school bus drivers are hauling our very precious cargo every day, and the Minister of Education's answer to whether we could get an exemption for school bus drivers was: well, we're reinsulating schools, we're changing windows on schools, and we're going to save school boards all kinds of money. Never once in the three questions I asked – and I will be asking him again in the days coming forward to clarify – did he actually address the cost of the carbon tax on the school bus drivers. It's ever-increasing. Their insurance is increasing.

I did a very interesting video, that I'm going to have to send to the Transportation minister, on a five-mile bus ride that happened the day I was talking to those school bus drivers about their carbon tax. They were complaining about this one specific road, so I said: well, let's go for a ride. They had a 60-seat bus, and I went and sat in the back seat of that thing. I'll tell you what. I'm a pretty big guy, and I can't imagine being a 40- or 50-pound kid sitting in the back of that bus, because he'd have been bouncing off the roof. Man, it was quite scary, you know, the racket and the vibration on the bus. These are privately owned buses, Mr. Speaker, that these folks not only have to repair on their own but that they have to fuel and oil change and change springs on and all this kind of stuff. What I'm saying is that the carbon tax is just another added expense to them.

Just a couple of points here. The Canadian Taxpayers Federation said in the *Calgary Sun* on January 12 that 55 per cent of Albertans received no rebate cheque or that it was less than they paid in carbon taxes. The Canadian Taxpayers Federation in the *Calgary Sun* on January 12 also said that while the NDP claims a family of four will receive \$540 in rebates this year, government estimates show the carbon tax will cost the same family up to \$613 this year. It's still a negative impact. You have to be a low-income earner to qualify for this rebate, so even that \$100 could be a major hit to them.

By the same token here, in the *Globe and Mail* on January 21 the Laurier centre for economic research said that a significant hike to the carbon price is necessary to achieve emissions targets. A 10 per cent reduction in emissions over seven years would require a \$175-per-tonne levy. So the \$30 tax that we're hitting Albertans with is

absolutely doing nothing, and I think that's been reiterated by many other groups as well.

4:20

The NDP's carbon tax is in clear violation of the spirit in which the Taxpayer Protection Act was passed. Again I will mention that they did not include it in their campaign platform. There should be no pride in their managing to get a consumption tax passed without first going through the proper channels and without even asking Alberta families how it would affect them. We've often asked about the economic impact analysis that they've done, but they've never come forth with that because apparently there really isn't one or they don't like the information that it might share with us.

Bill 202, the Alberta taxpayer protection amendment act, will specifically add the carbon tax to the existing act to alleviate any chance that the NDP government or any future government can continue using a grey area as a loophole. Unlike the NDP, we've been very clear from the start: bill 1 of a United Conservative government will be focused on repealing the carbon tax. We see the real effects it is having on families, that are essentially being told to turn down the heat in this apparently never-ending winter. It seems to be snowing out there again today, so we're in the middle of April, and we're far from being out of it.

The NDP is desperately trying to avoid discussing their carbon tax, but voters will finally have their say in the spring of 2019. Although we're confident that Albertans will have their say at the polls this time around, we need to ensure their peace of mind for the future. Years from now we need to make sure that no government will force through a carbon tax without directly asking the voters first. We can't have a repeat of what has happened this time around with a surprise tax and then continuous tax increase after tax increase. A referendum will be mandatory before a provincial government can impose a carbon tax. This is why I'm so pleased to be speaking about Bill 202 today. We want to assure Albertans that they will not be seeing a surprise tax without having any input on the matter beforehand. We've already seen the NDP raise their carbon tax by 50 per cent. Where was the consultation on that? I don't recall any.

Mr. Strankman: Or the benefits.

Mr. Hanson: Or the benefits. Yes, exactly.

Now they promise to further increase the carbon tax by 67 per cent just because their friend Justin Trudeau has asked them to. We know that Justin Trudeau is planning on even further hiking the tax. These taxes are relentless in hitting families where it hurts, over and over, with each increase.

But, Mr. Speaker, this doesn't just affect families. The reason that we like to call it a tax and that the government likes to call it a levy is because if it was a tax, they wouldn't be able to pass that tax on to municipalities. I hear from school boards, municipal governments all over the province, seniors, native friendship centres. The Minister of Indigenous Relations talked about the effects of this bill somehow on solar panels on reserves. But, you know, you forget that there is also a cost to native friendship centres. I usually fill up at my local co-op store and gas bar in St. Paul, and a lot of times I'm standing in line with natives from either Saddle Lake or Kehewin or from the Métis settlements. They're standing there paying for the gas, just like I am. They're paying the tax, just like I am. There's no exemption there for them. They're not seeing the benefit of that.

You know, saying that this doesn't affect them or that they're going to have this wonderful windfall from solar panels – the minister and I have spoken numerous times in estimates and other

places regarding the road conditions. Is it going to be a comfort to the parents and council in Goodfish Lake or Saddle Lake this spring when the kids are missing school or they can't get water hauled to some of the residences because of the road conditions but they'll maybe have these nice, shiny solar panels on the council chamber building? It'll be small comfort to them, when you and I both agree that the very most important thing is education for those kids. [interjection] Yes. You're nodding. I'm happy to see that.

Not only that, but it affects food banks – you know, we've talked about trying to get exemptions for some of these folks – women's shelters, volunteer community organizations. Somebody talked earlier about swimming pools. Hockey rinks: everybody knows the importance of hockey to our small communities, as we found out with that horrific accident in Saskatchewan and how it affects those communities. A lot of our communities are centred around the rinks.

Actually, I was at a celebration on Saturday night for the CAP Arena in St. Paul, where they celebrated 35 years. That was a community initiative to get a second piece of ice for kids to practise on. You know, 10-year-old kids were having to show up at 5:30 in the morning for hockey practice before school, so the parents all got together and lobbied the government, lobbied the town and the county, and raised money . . . [Mr. Hanson's speaking time expired] That was a quick 20 minutes.

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

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know it's sort of traditional to say that it's my pleasure to stand up and talk about Bill 202, but in fact I'm really disappointed in the new Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition. Basically, this was a great opportunity. This was the first bill that he was bringing forward before this Legislature. I'm sorry to have to use this terminology, but it's really a waste of time. There are so many other things that we could have been talking about during this private members' business, and this is our time. The backbenchers and the opposition get the chance to actually talk about topics of importance to Albertans, particularly to the Albertans in their constituencies. We have had some brilliant private members' bills arising from the opposition, and several of those have actually been a boon to this province and have received the support of all members.

I think the first one that I can remember came from the Member for Calgary-West, the private member's bill dealing with getting some control on pill presses. All of us recognize that the addictions crisis, particularly the fentanyl crisis, is something that basically affects all Albertans. We need to do whatever we can, and this side recognized that that was a good idea coming from the MLA for Calgary-West.

His colleague the MLA for Chestermere-Rocky View also had a very good idea and spent a lot of time researching and consulting on and developing a bill that was really important. This was the adoption information bill; I don't have that name completely correct. I had several constituents who came to my office and said to me – and I won't use my name – “Make sure that this goes ahead because this is vitally important to us. We've been trying to get involved in adoption, and it is very important that we get this bill going ahead.” I am proud that I can say that I stood up and participated in the debate and participated in support of the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View, and I am very happy that that bill has been passed.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

The third bill that we all agreed to, that came from the opposition, to my recollection, was the bill from the MLA for Bonnyville-Cold

Lake, again a very important bill and, actually, a bill that has some resonance with what we're talking about today. It was the image-sharing bill. In case the opposition doesn't realize what was going on, this bill was looking at a situation where social media could be manipulated for ill ends by reprobates, that we needed to put a stop to. The Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake was particularly concerned about the sharing of intimate images. I mean, this goes back to how, say, referendums could be manipulated by people, reprobates that want to use social media in a very inappropriate way to influence an election.

4:30

I can tell you, for instance, just to give an example of how that might affect a referendum, to look at the Brexit situation. Look at what happened with Brexit. The leader of the Conservative Party in the House of Parliament of Great Britain thought that she – sorry, it was not a she; at the time it was a he – could call a referendum and sort of get a false approval for this Brexit. It turns out that nefarious conspirators in the social media world, maybe coming from a foreign source like Russia or actually more likely from an American source, from the same types of people that supported the election of the most recent President of the United States – but there are ways that Facebook and other social media can be manipulated, and in fact even the electoral process itself can be manipulated in a referendum.

I bring all this up because, again, it's a waste of time to discuss this. We have been elected in May 2015 to make laws. I can tell you that many of my constituents have told me that they're very happy that this government was elected in May 2015 and that in November 2015 presented our climate leadership plan because they are concerned about the climate, and they are convinced of the evidence that man is creating problems with the climate. This goes back 200 years. It's related to industrialization. It's a process that is scientifically proven despite the suggestions from some of the members of the opposition that the science isn't clear on this. There is absolutely no doubt that the industrialization and the burning of fossil fuels and other activities have led to excessive greenhouse gas emissions, and we as a world need to do something about this. So the Paris agreement was agreed to more than 20 years ago, and Canada is a signatory to that. We need to be doing our part here in Alberta to deal with that.

It is, in my estimation, a complete waste of time to be discussing this today. I would have hoped that the Leader of the Opposition could have come up with something that actually will help Albertans, will help them deal with the effects of climate change.

Madam Speaker, I've been here in this province for 42 years, and pretty well every year and sometimes more than once a year I go up into the national parks of this province and go to the glaciers at Lake Louise, and I drive the highway. I want to just spend a bit of time talking about Lake Louise – or the Columbia icefields are probably an even better example. Go to the Columbia icefields and go to the sort of headquarters there – it's on the other side of the road from the glacier – and you can actually see the signposts that have been put in along the distance, and it's now close to three kilometres, I believe, from the headquarters to the toe of the glacier. This, to me, is incontrovertible evidence that our climate is warming.

Just this past year, 2017, the Arctic Ocean has been open at Christmastime. Unheard of. It's happening. The last 10 years have seen, I think, seven of the hottest years on record, and it's going up. It's going up because of mankind producing too many greenhouse gases. Our carbon footprint is too large. We need to be doing something about this.

So the bill proposes to require a referendum if the carbon levy is to be increased, you know, or if we're going to respond to the federal government increasing the carbon levy, presumably it would

have to be approved by that. You know what? The opposition talks about our best friends in the federal government. In fact, the federal government is going to help us get the Kinder Morgan expansion done. They are stepping up.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

I will now call on the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I want to be very clear that the Alberta Party supports action on climate change. We believe that climate change is human caused. We believe it's a problem that needs to be addressed, but we do have great concern with the way that this particular government's carbon tax has been structured. We are supportive in the Alberta Party of a carbon tax in principle. I think that, done properly, it can work well, but this particular government's version of the carbon tax has not been done very well. As a result, they have taken what can be a very effective policy tool and, unfortunately, have caused many Albertans to find themselves opposed to this. Many Albertans that I talk with in my own constituency and elsewhere see nothing but downsides, see nothing but money going out of their pockets, and they don't see a tangible benefit from Alberta's carbon tax. That is what needs to be fixed. Having said that, Madam Speaker, I don't think that a referendum is the best way to go about fixing that.

What I find interesting is that the Leader of the Official Opposition has proposed a bill here which really backs Alberta into a corner. On the one hand, he's arguing that the federal government should use their legislative authority, constitutional authority to make sure that the Kinder Morgan pipeline goes ahead. I agree. We should ensure that the federal government does everything within its power, right up to the very edge of that power, to ensure that a project that has been federally approved and reviewed and is very clearly in the national interest moves ahead. I'm very much supportive of that. But, on the other hand, he proposes a bill that would allow an Alberta referendum to override, in essence, the federal taxation authority as it relates to the increases to the carbon tax going forward, and that to me seems not to add up.

I want to speak a little bit, though, about the concerns that we do have with the way that this carbon tax is structured. My concern is that it is really not an environmental policy. Any pretense of this being an environmental policy went out the window with this last budget, where money is clearly in the future going directly to general revenues without even the pretense of the – I think that "revenue recycling" is the code word they've used in current budgets. By definition, income and corporate taxes are revenue neutral because they all get, quote, unquote, recycled in Alberta. That is not the definition of revenue neutrality by any authority that I know of. I would suggest that this current carbon tax does contribute directly into general revenues, and what's absolutely certain is whatever, I would say, is a mythical path to balance relies heavily on future carbon tax revenues going into general revenues.

If we want to take action on climate change – sorry; just let me make one more point on that. The reason for the need for this government to put the carbon tax revenue into general revenues is because they've been unable to restrain themselves on the spending side in any meaningful way, and they've also been unable to grow the pie, to allow Alberta entrepreneurs to create an attractive investment climate to invest, to create jobs, to generate economic activity and increase tax revenue to allow us to pay for the things that matter in this province. That would be true of energy investments but is true also of broader investments as well. So if we want to take action on climate change, we'd better be ensuring that we're doing something that's effective.

4:40

Interestingly enough, this government finds itself in the position of being the single-largest carbon emitter in the province because now they own all the PPAs from the coal-fired plants that still exist. I'm fairly sure that when they were elected, they didn't anticipate that an NDP government would be Alberta's largest carbon emitter, but there you have it.

The Alberta Party is very much a believer, as I said last week in my member's statement, in that great word, "and." We believe we can have a strong energy sector, traditional hydrocarbon oil and gas sector, and we can have innovation and investment in environmental technologies. I think we should look at climate change and the challenge of overcoming climate change, the challenge of overcoming carbon emissions, as not something to be afraid of, not something to ignore, as the Official Opposition I think would do, but as something that is the single-greatest market opportunity in Albertans' lifetimes.

We have the entrepreneurs. We have the innovators, the technology folks, the scientists, the engineers, the welders, the tradespeople. We have the finance people to put the deals together. We have all of the ingredients to allow Alberta to thrive in a carbon-constrained world by creating the technologies of the future that Alberta entrepreneurs will sell to the rest of the world. A carbon tax can be an important part of that because it takes money and allows that investment in those green technologies. It can be Alberta entrepreneurs who drive this if we do it right.

I would argue that we can't do that without a carbon tax, but it has to be done properly. It shouldn't be scrapped; it should be fixed. How would we fix it? We would make it revenue neutral by cutting personal and corporate tax to offset the amount of money that comes in from the carbon tax. We would exempt not-for-profits. We would exempt schools and school boards. We would ensure that home heating is exempted as well. We would fix the rebate system to ensure that people who genuinely are disadvantaged by paying the carbon tax, people who really, truly have to make that choice between putting food on the table and paying their carbon tax would get a rebate. I would argue that is not two-thirds of Albertans, so I would suggest that fixing the rebate system is going to be a huge part of it. They need to make sure that the people who genuinely need help do actually get that help. We'd also ensure that investments are made in green technologies, in making sure that Alberta has an attractive investment climate.

I know that Albertans do want to take action on climate change because I hear from them all the time. The number one issue I hear from my constituents is about the carbon tax, but it's not that they necessarily want to scrap it entirely. They want to fix it. Albertans that I talk with understand the need to take action on climate change. They understand the importance of a carbon tax and doing that, but they want the carbon tax to be effective, not just simply another revenue-generating tool.

I would be very clear, Madam Speaker, that the Alberta Party will not be voting in favour of this bill because we feel that it doesn't address the core issue of fixing the carbon tax instead of simply repealing it. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. Member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gottfried: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you for the opportunity to rise today in support of Bill 202, Alberta taxpayer protection amendment act, as thoughtfully brought forward by the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

Madam Speaker, it's very clear that the NDP never campaigned on the carbon tax, the largest single tax hike in Alberta's history.

They never even mentioned it, in fact, not once in print or in campaigning during the 2015 election. Since pretty much everything we consume is linked in some way to the carbon tax – we've heard it from other members with respect to transportation, delivery of goods, a tax on virtually everything – it's clearly just a consumption tax and in not a very good disguise, quite frankly.

Madam Speaker, it was Ralph Klein who passed the Alberta Taxpayer Protection Act, which requires a referendum before any move to impose a provincial sales tax of any sort. In fact, it was a young Jason Kenney, as president of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, that helped the Klein government draft and pass this important law. The NDP's carbon tax clearly violated the spirit of the Taxpayer Protection Act, if not the law itself, but nobody was talking specifically about taxing carbon back in the mid-1990s, and as such the words "carbon tax" aren't currently listed in the law. I would argue it should be to protect the rights and best interests of Albertans.

It is indeed time to change that bill, Bill 202, to specifically add "carbon tax" to the Taxpayer Protection Act, again, to protect the rights and the taxation against Albertans.

We've been clear that bill 1 of the United Conservative government will be the carbon tax repeal act, possibly the summer of repeal, as has been mentioned. The commitment and resolve remain while the NDP continues to not want to have to disclose their fondness for the carbon tax back in the 2015 election. Their fondness obviously predated the passing of this carbon tax. In fact, still they didn't want to disclose that to the electors, to the voters of Alberta, and they desperately tried to avoid discussing that omission today. Voters will finally have their say in the spring of 2019, a de facto referendum, if you will.

The Albertans that I speak with do not share the NDP's fondness for such an insidiously disguised sales tax, but we also need to ensure that no future government of any stripe, even five, 10, or 15 years from now, can force a carbon tax, a sales tax in disguise, as it were, without first consulting Albertans directly. A referendum will be required before a provincial government can impose such a tax if we indeed support this bill.

Bill 202 also requires a referendum before any future carbon tax hike. The NDP has already raised its carbon tax by 50 per cent, Madam Speaker, and promises a further 67 per cent increase because Justin Trudeau asked them for it. And we know Justin Trudeau is planning even further carbon tax hikes beyond that. In fact, it is clear that when this government's political ally Justin Trudeau says, "Jump," the Alberta NDP rapidly respond with, "How high?" without ever thinking to consult hard-working Albertans, that it will most affect.

If the NDP is confident in public support for their carbon tax, the central policy of the climate leadership plan, they should have no problem putting the question directly to voters, Madam Speaker. Given their adamant claims of widespread support we see no reason why this government would not just acquiesce to it but would be keen to prove such bold and principle-laden claims to all Albertans.

Madam Speaker, this government has made the carbon tax and their quest for social licence the crowning jewel of their government despite the fact that they did not mention it once in their 2015 election platform. Did I mention that they did not mention it once during the 2015 election? They have made it key to their social licence strategy to secure approval for pipelines and the development, growth, and viability of our energy sector. How's that working for us today? We have not changed the mind of one opponent of the pipelines through this misguided social licence strategy, very clearly so, and it continues. We hear it in the news already today from the opponents, including Karen Mahon and Tzeporah Berman, who have not changed their mind one iota.

Given that the NDP have touted this legislation as a clear win for Alberta and something that all Albertans benefit from and should support, this misguided carbon tax, it stands to reason that they should be more than comfortable allowing Albertans to vote in a referendum for such taxes in the future. As I said already – and I'll say it again – the carbon tax is the largest tax hike in the history of Alberta, and it has had a devastating impact on everyday Albertans, many just trying to get by day to day, paycheque to paycheque.

So let's talk about the carbon tax and families. At \$30 a tonne the carbon tax will cost the typical Albertan household about \$667 per year, as reflected in University of Calgary energy economist Jennifer Winter's release, as quoted in the *Financial Post* on January 3, 2018. At \$50 per tonne the carbon tax will cost the typical Alberta household \$1,111 per year, also from economist Winter. These are big numbers; these are real numbers. This is the cost to them of after-tax costs, after all the other taxes that they pay, the cost to that household. Madam Speaker, I can tell you that that kind of money will keep a child in a sport. It will help to pay for clothing that they need. It will help to pay for additional school supplies or other activities that they may wish to do.

4:50

Madam Speaker, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation noticed that 55 per cent of Albertans received no rebate cheque or that it was less than they paid in carbon taxes. Revenue neutral, indeed. The Canadian Taxpayers Federation also reflects that while the NDP claims that a family of four will receive \$540 in rebates this year, government estimates show that the carbon tax will cost that same family up to \$613 per year. Who's paying for the cap?

The Laurier centre for economic research shared that significant hikes to carbon prices will be necessary to achieve emissions targets. We've heard that from the Member for Calgary-Lougheed many times. A 10 per cent reduction in emissions over seven years requires a \$175-per-tonne levy. Where is that going to come from, Madam Speaker?

The carbon tax has also unfairly attacked the organizations that support our province's most vulnerable. The Official Opposition of the day humbly put forward amendments that would have exempted not-for-profit organizations, but this government callously voted against those amendments. At a time when many Albertans are struggling, this government has unnecessarily taken dollars away from nonprofit organizations – I hear this every day – and from their front-line service providers. Those same funds could be going to feed, clothe, and support the vulnerable or those going through difficult times in many cases due to this government's disastrous, job-killing economic policies.

Let's talk about the carbon tax and the nonprofits. Ray Sharp from Sundre West Country said: the centre is emotionally, mentally, and physically the most wonderful thing for our seniors, but as a nonprofit organization we don't get any rebates; it's financially eating us up.

Leona Bennett, Sundre & District Aquaplex: we're really getting hit hard; it's not just us that are impacted; it's the community as a whole; our little organizations are what keep Sundre going, and without these facilities in the community we won't have a community; because of the carbon tax we had to increase our rates, but we couldn't increase them enough.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Under Standing Order 8(7)(a)(i), which provides up to five minutes for the sponsor of a private member's public bill to close debate, I'd like to invite the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition to close debate on Bill 202.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank all members who participated in the debate for having done so. It is my hope that members will demonstrate their respect for Albertans by voting in favour of this bill.

This bill, Madam Speaker, is not actually about the carbon tax, nor is it about sales taxes. The bill is not about the current NDP government's policy per se. The bill is about democracy. The bill is about whether or not members of this Legislature have the confidence to trust their constituents to make a decision on a matter of this nature. A bill like this perhaps would not be necessary if it weren't for the tendency of politicians to avoid difficult debates at election time. The NDP avoided such a difficult debate in the last provincial election by bringing forward a platform that was silent on the question of carbon taxes, only to introduce the largest tax increase in Alberta's history.

I've heard members opposite in the course of this debate celebrate the putative merits of their carbon tax. Funnily enough, they won't even call it a tax. That's how lacking they truly are in confidence. They come up with these absurd euphemisms that nobody accepts such as "a levy." One very peculiar speech opposite, Madam Speaker, somehow tried to tie this suggestion that Albertans should have a say on whether the tax should be increased to colonialism and aboriginal issues. That was special, but what Albertans want to know is why that particular minister is opposed to letting all Albertans, including aboriginal Albertans, have a say on whether or not to increase this tax. That was the issue, not desperate efforts to deter and deflect and deny.

I also heard suggestions from some members that the carbon tax is all about environmental policy and that it's essential to help us save the planet. Again, that really is disingenuous because the very same members know, if they're at all serious and honest about this, that all expert opinion, including that of the federal government, Professor Leach, all of the environmental organizations, indicates that the only way for a carbon tax to come anywhere close to achieving, for example, the Paris greenhouse gas emission targets would require a price that is in the range of 1,000 per cent higher than the current tax. This is not an opinion, Madam Speaker; this is an established consensus. I don't know why these members are denying the climate change consensus. Why are they deniers?

If they want to be truthful and honest with themselves and Albertans, they will accept the scientific consensus. I have. In this party we accept the scientific consensus on climate change, which says that the only way a tax or, if you want, euphemistically, a levy can achieve the desired reduction in greenhouse gas targets to actually make a demonstrable effect in global climate would be in the range of a 1,000 per cent increase. Why are they denying that, Madam Speaker? Why do they think that a 30 per cent or a \$30-a-tonne or a \$50-a-tonne tax is efficient? They know it's not, but they know that that is at the outer limits of the public's tolerance. In fact, it's beyond the public's tolerance, as demonstrated by every poll.

The hon. leader of the Liberal Party, for whom I have considerable respect, said that he thought that about half of Albertans accepted this tax. With respect, Madam Speaker, every single public opinion survey done on this question indicates that at least two-thirds of Albertans are opposed to the carbon tax even after the NDP has spent millions of tax dollars telling Albertans why it's good to punish them. And I'll tell you why Albertans don't buy it. It's because they know that punishing consumers is not an environmental strategy. They understand that forcing seniors to turn the heat down at home when it's 30 below outside, when it's snowing like it is right now, in late April, is not an environmental policy.

Madam Speaker, maybe I'm wrong about this. Maybe, actually, the government is right, and the majority of Albertans do support

their policy. Then let them decide. Let them have the say. That's the question. We can have a debate ad infinitum on the putative merits of a carbon tax, but the question is: who decides in that debate? I submit that that ought not be 87 members of this Chamber, let alone a few dozen members of the government benches. It ought to be millions of adult Albertans in whom – you know, I heard these arguments about how divisive referenda are. It's called democracy. A referendum is no more divisive than an election.

I call on members to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for second reading lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:58 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hanson	Panda
Anderson, W.	Hunter	Pitt
Cooper	Kenney	Schneider
Cyr	Loewen	Smith
Drysdale	McIver	Strankman
Gill	Nixon	Taylor
Gotfried	Orr	Yao

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Goehring	McLean
Babcock	Gray	Payne
Carlier	Hinkley	Renaud
Ceci	Hoffman	Rosendahl
Clark	Horne	Schmidt
Connolly	Jansen	Schreiner
Cortes-Vargas	Kazim	Shepherd
Dach	Littlewood	Sigurdson
Dang	Luff	Sucha
Feehan	Malkinson	Swann
Fitzpatrick	Mason	Turner
Fraser	McCuaig-Boyd	Westhead
Ganley	McKittrick	Woollard

Totals: For – 21 Against – 39

[Motion for second reading of Bill 202 lost]

Motions Other than Government Motions

Amendments to Standing Orders

501. Mr. W. Anderson moved:

Be it resolved that the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta be amended by renumbering Standing Order 52.04 as Standing Order 52.04(1) and by adding the following after suborder (1):

(2) Suborder (1) does not prevent a Legislative Policy Committee from undertaking a hearing or inquiry during the same period of time that a matter stands referred to the Committee by the Assembly if the hearing or inquiry does not interfere with the work of the Committee on the matter referred to it.

Ms Fitzpatrick moved that the motion be amended by adding the following after "Be it resolved":

that the following proposed amendment to the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta be referred to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections,

Standing Orders and Printing for review and that the committee submit its report to the Assembly on or before June 19, 2018:

[Debate adjourned on the amendment March 19: Mr. Malkinson speaking]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thanks, Madam Speaker. I suspect that if you seek it, you will find unanimous consent to move to one-minute bells.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Acting Speaker: Are there any members wishing to speak to the motion? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak in support of Motion 501, which recommends allowing a legislative policy committee to perform other work when the Legislative Assembly has provided it with a specific task. I do not support the amendment to send it to committee.

Madam Speaker, I want to thank the Member for Highwood for introducing this motion. Since the NDP took governance, our UCP experience in attempting to meet with stakeholders has been frustrating, to say the least. More importantly, it has been dismissive of stakeholders. For example, it's been almost three years now that the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship has been sitting on requests to present from the AAMD and C, now RMA; the Independent Power Producers Society of Alberta; the Alberta Used Oil Management Association; the Alberta Beverage Container Management Board; and the Alberta Recycling Management Authority.

Last fall, after our committee wrapped up its priority task, in October '17, the chair, who is the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, noted that the committee had now completed the tasks assigned to it by the Legislative Assembly. He then mentioned that a number of groups, namely the ones I listed above, had asked to make presentations to the committee. The Member for Calgary-Currie took time to run through the list and informed us that by now each group either would have had their concerns dealt with or they might have an issue that – and I quote from *Hansard* – "has been fixed or changed or is something that they don't need to bring through to this committee."

Madam Speaker, I was greatly surprised by these presumptions by a still novice member. In his defence, he and his ND colleagues may not understand the value that committees offer as a conduit to the Alberta Legislature because they have from the beginning blocked all attempts by opposition committee members to meet with the above stakeholders.

Madam Speaker, in October '17 the committee had just finished the task handed to it by the Assembly. The NDP members immediately tried to shut down any further work. Let me make this clear. The committee had a clear slate. All opposition members of the Resource Stewardship Committee then sought to return to the other important business we can do: consult with stakeholders about issues that affect resources in Alberta. The NDP would have none of it.

Besides meeting with stakeholders who reach out to us, Resource Stewardship should also be initiating our own consultations on many issues that affect Alberta's resource sector. Let's just look at a few of them. Our oil and gas sector has experienced many serious challenges in recent years; the caribou plan needs to meld with the

sustainable goals of our forestry industry; and agriculture always has specific issues to explore: getting grain to market, for instance.

I could go on and on, Madam Speaker, but I think now I'll give the floor to my colleague from Highwood to close debate. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

There is time remaining on the clock. Are there any other members wishing to speak before I call on the member to close?

Seeing none, I will now call on the hon. Member for Highwood to close debate.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Much appreciated. If everybody recalls, this motion was introduced because current rules, the standing orders of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, did not allow for any activities to be undertaken by a legislative policy committee other than the specific tasks assigned to it even if there is ample time between meetings dealing with assigned tasks. Now, really, this whole committee – all we wanted to do with this motion was to improve consultation with stakeholders, let Albertans have their voice. I mean, it's all about streamlining process. There have been several groups that have been waiting years to meet with this committee. That's not consultation with Albertans. That's not doing our job. I mean, just to give you some background here, stakeholder groups have been trying to get invited to a committee to present, and in some cases the wait has been over two years.

5:20

This has been an ongoing issue, one that took head in December of 2017, when the government blocked a motion to do meaningful work in the standing committee. The MLA for Grande Prairie-Smoky introduced a motion, but it was voted down. It was voted down on the grounds that the committee could not undertake any activities other than the tasks that had been assigned even if those activities would have helped accomplish the task. Streamlining process, cutting red tape: what a concept.

On November 29, 2017, the Resource Stewardship Committee met, and the MLA for Grande Prairie-Wapiti expressed his disappointment that previously the UCP had brought forward a motion directing the committee to meet with stakeholders that had been waiting, waiting, waiting. He expressed that they had not met from October 10 to November 28, a full month and a half, yet, due to the current standing orders, were not able to meet with any of these stakeholders. The MLA for Grande Prairie-Smoky spoke up and said: due to the current business the committee could possibly be tied up for one whole year. They motioned that the "committee set up a working group that can meet with these organizations." But guess what? It was defeated.

On January 25, 2018, government caucus committee members once again voted down the MLA for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills on a common-sense motion to allow the committee to meet with stakeholders to hear their concerns directly. His direct concern was the "lack of [availability] of the Resource . . . Committee to address any other issues." He thought that Resource Stewardship, a very, very important committee, had been tied up for two years between the Lobbyists Act review and the Conflicts of Interest Act review. His frustration – and he was frustrated – was that the committee would be tied up until November 29, and many groups and individuals who wanted to present to the committee would be forbidden to do so under the Conflicts of Interest Act review.

The stakeholder groups had been trying to get invited to the committee to present, but like I said before, for two years they'd been waiting. Now, we brought forward several amendments or

several proposals for several motions, but every time they got voted down. Committees sometimes don't sit for over three months at a time, but they're unable to call these groups due to the standing orders, that are outdated.

Now, we have to give Albertans their opportunity to speak, but I'm hoping that we'll vote against sending this back to committee. Isn't it a little ironic, sending this motion back to committee about the committees that are holding back meetings in the committees? I mean, it just seems ironic. You're just delaying the process once again. You have to give Albertans a chance. You have to listen to Albertans. This committee has to be functional and accountable to all Albertans. I'm asking you: vote against this amendment.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Now, we have an amendment on the floor, so I will be asking the question on the amendment.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:23 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hinkley	Payne
Babcock	Hoffman	Renaud
Carlier	Horne	Rosendahl
Connolly	Jansen	Schmidt
Cortes-Vargas	Kazim	Schreiner
Dach	Littlewood	Shepherd
Dang	Luff	Sigurdson
Feehan	Malkinson	Sucha
Fitzpatrick	Mason	Turner
Ganley	McCuaig-Boyd	Westhead
Goehring	McKittrick	Woollard
Gray	McLean	

Against the motion:

Aheer	Gotfried	Panda
Anderson, W.	Hanson	Pitt
Clark	Hunter	Schneider
Cooper	Kenney	Smith
Cyr	Loewen	Strankman
Drysdale	McIver	Swann
Fraser	Nixon	Yao
Gill		

Totals:	For – 35	Against – 22
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[Motion on amendment to Motion Other than Government Motion 501 carried]

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, pursuant to Standing Order 8(5) only one motion other than a government motion may be considered each Monday. Therefore, I will call upon the hon. Government House Leader to adjourn the Assembly.

Mr. Mason: Well, I can't do it, Madam Speaker, but I can propose it, and the Assembly can do it. I will propose that we adjourn until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

The Acting Speaker: Legislative policy committees will convene this evening and tomorrow morning for consideration of main

estimates. This evening Families and Communities will consider the estimates for Community and Social Services in the Rocky Mountain Room, and Alberta's Economic Future will consider the estimates for Infrastructure in the Parkland Room. Tomorrow

morning Alberta's Economic Future will consider the estimates for Agriculture and Forestry in the Rocky Mountain Room.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:29 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, April 17, 2018

Day 18

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (UCP),
Deputy Leader of the Official Opposition
Anderson, Hon. Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (NDP)
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (UCP)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (NDP)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (NDP)
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (NDP)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (NDP)
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP),
Alberta Party Opposition House Leader
Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawkwood (NDP)
Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (NDP)
Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP)
Cortes-Vargas, Estefania, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (NDP),
Government Whip
Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (UCP)
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (NDP)
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (NDP)
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)
Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (NDP)
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP)
Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP),
Deputy Government House Leader
Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (Ind)
Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (NDP)
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (AP)
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (NDP),
Deputy Government House Leader
Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (UCP),
Official Opposition Deputy Whip
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)
Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (UCP)
Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (NDP)
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)
Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (NDP)
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Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)
Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (NDP)
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Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),
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Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (NDP)
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Premier
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Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (UCP)
Payne, Hon. Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (NDP)
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (NDP)
Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (NDP)
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (UCP),
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Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)
Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (NDP)
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP)
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)
Schneider, David A., Little Bow (UCP)
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (NDP)
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (NDP)
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (NDP)
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (UCP)
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (UCP)
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (NDP),
Deputy Government Whip
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)
Vacant, Fort McMurray-Conklin
Vacant, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake

Party standings:

New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 25 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent: 1 Vacant: 2

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Sandra Jansen	Minister of Infrastructure
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Children's Services
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Luff	

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Fraser	Nielsen
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Kleinsteinuber	Vacant
Loewen	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, April 17, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let us pray or contemplate, each in our own way. Hon. members, on this 36th anniversary of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the 1982 Constitution Act may I ask that each of us reflect on how fortunate we are as Canadians to live in this wonderful country. In our deliberations today let us strive to protect the rights of all our children and grandchildren, all Albertans and Canadians to peace, order, and good government.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Ms Jabbour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you students who are here from Muriel Martin school in the constituency of Spruce Grove-St. Albert. These students are accompanied by their teachers, Abigail Lawrence and Michelle Kennett, and chaperones Nicole Toshack and Jennifer Conneely. I would ask that they please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Mr. Hinkley: Mr. Speaker, my group will not arrive until 2 o'clock. May I introduce them then?

The Speaker: We will test the House.

The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly four grade 6 classes from the Westlock elementary school. The students are accompanied by their teachers, Robert Weiss, Dan McDonald, Kate Schmidt, Maggie Courmoyer, Angie Bachand, Brock Pierce, and also their chaperones, Debbie Medcke, Michelle Holloway, Michelle Biggeman, and Adam Budgen. I would ask that they please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Are there any other school groups, hon. members?

Seeing and hearing none, the Minister of Infrastructure.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two sets of introductions. It's my absolute pleasure to rise and introduce to you and all members of the Assembly Janet Riopel, the president and CEO of the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce. Janet has devoted her volunteer time to various boards in the city of Edmonton. She is currently the chair of the Edmonton Oilers Community Foundation and sits on the advisory boards of the Edmonton airport and the Edmonton Community Foundation. Janet was honoured with the Queen's golden jubilee medal and has twice been named one of Alberta's 50 most influential people. I invite everyone to give her the warm welcome of this Assembly.

I have one more, Mr. Speaker. Secondly, I would love to be able to introduce to you now and to all members of the Assembly Guy Bridgeman, Brent Collingwood, and Alex Bonokoski of the River Valley Alliance. The River Valley Alliance is a not-for-profit corporation made up of seven municipal shareholders who are connected towards working on a world-class continuous and connected trail system along the North Saskatchewan River valley from Devon to Fort Saskatchewan. I invite them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Nielsen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is such a pleasure to be able to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly my guests from St. Michael's Health Group, which provides long-term care, supportive housing, and numerous programs and services to the seniors in our community. I have spent many occasions both at St. Michael's Long Term Care Centre and the Millennium Pavilion Seniors Lodge, and it's such a pleasure to see the great work that they do in Edmonton-Decore, which, I can say, is absolutely second to none. Joining us here today in the public gallery are John Kopeck, our somewhat new president and CEO; Kay Willekes, director, human resources; Géraldine Journeau, director of finance and IT; and Charmon Balcom, executive assistant. I would ask that they now please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you special guests from the Canadian Transplant Association, Alberta chapter. Next week marks National Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Week, which is an opportunity to build understanding about the impact that donors can make and to encourage all Albertans to register their consent to donate. Thank you to the Canadian Transplant Association for the tremendous work that they do in raising awareness and helping to support transplant recipients. I encourage all Albertans to register to donate and to talk to family and friends about your wishes. I invite Neil Folkins, membership director, along with other board members and volunteers, many of whom are transplant recipients, to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Members' Statements

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

Accessible Playground in Calgary-Klein

Mr. Coolahan: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to tell you about an amazing project soon to be completed in Calgary's greatest riding, Calgary-Klein. The Thorncliffe Greenview playground is being replaced by a new one which will be completely accessible in its design. The Playground Team, a subcommittee of the Thorncliffe Greenview Community Association, comprised of a group of dedicated volunteers, has been working tirelessly with a mandate of bringing together the resources needed to develop and build the new playground. They have also partnered with Variety – The Children's Charity of Alberta to raise funds for the project.

What does it mean to have an accessible playground? It means embracing all aspects of inclusion through the design, equipment,

parking facilities, and location. It means including innovative equipment like the Merry-Go-All and an assistive zip line. It means that every child will get a wider range of opportunities for play and interaction and will be able to participate fully in activities without the limitations imposed by physical barriers. This playground will create a place for all Calgarians to congregate, socialize, and play. It will be a place where community members from different backgrounds, ages, abilities, and economic levels unite.

We all know that playgrounds foster cognitive, creative, and social development and encourage healthy and active lifestyles, and that is why I am proud to say that our government has given a \$125,000 community facility enhancement program grant for this project. The old playground was both outdated and unsafe, with peeling paint and rusted metal structures. Our community truly needed a new playground.

I would specifically like to thank Maureen O'Brien and Amanda Ocampo for their amazing work on this project. It will be an honour to have this facility open up in Calgary-Klein, and I hope that many more will be built across the province.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Economic Indicators

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are tired of being lectured to by this NDP government and by their Trudeau Liberal allies in Ottawa. What I've been hearing from some of my constituents is that Albertans are losing hope that the economy will ever turn around, the hope that good, well-paying jobs will return. Some oil field workers got back on the job this winter but did so at a lower salary and with a fraction of the crew on the job.

Statistics Canada job numbers for Alberta in March 2018 show that zero full-time jobs were created. Yes, zero. Any new jobs were in part-time employment. Sixty-one hundred private-sector jobs were lost in March. ATB Financial's chief economist, Todd Hirsch, says that people are making less money and that job prospects are still here, but they're at lower paying opportunities. But the Finance minister claims that happy days are here again. At 6.3 per cent Alberta still has the highest unemployment rate outside of Atlantic Canada. Calgary has the third-highest unemployment rate of major Canadian cities, at 8.2 per cent. Who could have imagined saying that just a few years ago?

It just goes to show that the NDP government and their Trudeau Liberal allies' harmful policies and regulations are continuing to drive away investment while other energy-producing economies recovered long ago. From the royalty review to the coal phase-out, from higher personal and corporate taxes to higher electricity prices, chasing foreign companies from the oil sands, and the infamous carbon tax, the NDP wants to tell Albertans that things are just great again, but Albertans aren't feeling it. The proof is in the 2018 budget, a budget that was deadpanned by anyone in the know.

Janet Riopel, president of the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce, says: are the difficult times truly behind us; that's not what I hear; things on the ground appear to be still as much of a struggle as ever.

Clearly, this NDP government is deeply out of touch with everyday Albertans.

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

1:40 Father Albert Lacombe's Legacy

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One thing we sometimes take for granted in my constituency is the depth of history in the area. Many would be unaware that this community, 25 kilometres from

downtown Calgary, was once a town with a profound connection to an incredible man, Father Albert Lacombe. In his final years Father Lacombe settled in the town of Midnapore and while there, amongst many things, started St. Patrick's parish and set up a centre for orphaned kids and those with special needs before his passing in 1916. These items were overshadowed by many of his significant accomplishments, including the founding of St. Mary's school and mission, standing up for francophone rights, negotiating a deal between the CPR and the Blackfoot Chief Crowfoot, and the several parishes he opened throughout the province of Alberta.

Today his legacy can be seen throughout my riding. St. Patrick's parish's original building still stands as the Russian Orthodox church after it was relocated to Millrise in the '70s, when the space became too small. This church now provides goodwill to the community, including supporting Syrian refugees through the leadership of the current Father Andrew. St. Mary's University stands in place of the old orphanage, and the Father Lacombe centre and Providence seniors' home behind the university provide support for seniors transitioning with mobility and dementia challenges.

Mr. Speaker, last weekend the Father Lacombe foundation carried on his good work with their annual legacy dinner, which drew people in through its amazing popular cultural themes. Funds raised from this dinner will support the building of their new chapel and healing gardens at the seniors' centre, that will allow seniors to have a calming place to gather in their final years. I was pleased to be able to attend this dinner with my partner last weekend.

I want to thank the board of the foundation for their ongoing support to the community and ensuring that Father Lacombe's legacy never ends.

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

Official Opposition and Government Energy Policies

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is at a crucial crossroads at this time, and our province's future hinges on a critical piece of national infrastructure. It is time to put partisan differences aside and work together to secure our province's future not only for this project but also for what kind of message we want to send to global investors for future investments. It is very clear where our UCP caucus stands on this issue. The last thing we need is an impasse in the Legislature for the sake of political territory. There is no political territory when it comes to the development of our resources such as the Kinder Morgan pipeline.

I personally think it's great that the government members, including the Premier and the cabinet ministers, have come full circle from protesting against the pipelines in the past to now supporting the pipelines. I think they can also work more closely with the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed, who clearly has Alberta's best interest at heart and knows the path we all need to take. The Leader of the Official Opposition has been providing this NDP government with valuable advice and policy direction, which the government has been accepting. They never do immediately, Mr. Speaker, but a few weeks or a month after he makes a recommendation, they take the route he suggested. This is good. In fact, it's great for Alberta that the NDP is finally listening to our leader.

Mr. Speaker, now I ask the government to ask their best friend Justin Trudeau to do what our leader has been long calling for, to implement section 92(10)(c) and actually declare this project in the national interest, not just hold talks, and to tell Justin Trudeau to hold on to discretionary transfer payments to British Columbia. We all know that the NDP government and the federal leader, Justin Trudeau, all wanted to phase out our industry. If these people now believe otherwise, now is the time for them to show that to

Albertans. I encourage the NDP government, for the sake of Alberta's long-term success, to work together to construct not only the pipeline but also the path of success for future generations.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Canada

Connolly: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition believes that Canada is broken. I disagree. I along with most Canadians believe that we are a great country. There are broken countries in the world, nations that struggle with their human rights, who have little to no environmental protection and have an abysmal lack of labour standards. Canada is not one of those countries.

I am proud as an Albertan and as a Canadian to be working to grow a prosperous economy, to be protecting our human rights, and to be protecting our environment.

When the Leader of the Opposition says that we're broken, I have to wonder what he was doing for the last 10 years as a federal cabinet minister. Was he picking up the tools to build Canada, or was he bringing down the hammer on everyone who disagreed with him? I believe Canada is stronger than ever and that we will get through this. Our cultural mosaic makes us strong, and the diversity of opinion should be welcomed in a thriving democracy, not shunned. I wish the Leader of the Opposition would not so blithely dismiss the work of the many people who've built this country. I wish he would support the strong institutions we have built into our co-operative federalism, which include a strong court system that helps to defend our democracy.

We are working with governments across this country and with all Canadians to build this pipeline, to diversify the economy, to protect our environment, and to have each other's backs. The future of Canada is a bright one, where we will work together for the prosperity and success of every Canadian.

Ambulance Availability and Response Times

Mr. Loewen: The Grande Prairie ambulance service area is roughly 15,000 square kilometres in northwest Alberta. It has not only the largest city in northwest Alberta but also an incredible amount of agriculture, oil and gas, forestry roads, and work sites. This service includes hospital transfers, and at times it is normal staffing level to have only two ambulances available to service this area. This does not account for times when the ambulances are flexed out to other calls, and 25 per cent of the time there is no ambulance within 30 minutes of Grande Prairie.

Now, a stat call is an emergency call that comes in when there is no ambulance available. Quite often there is one stat call a day in the Grande Prairie service area, and once in the last three months there were five stat calls at once. These are alarming statistics. Also alarming is the dispatch system Optima, that selects the nearest available ambulance no matter where it is. Recently there was an ambulance dispatched from Cochrane to go to Fort McMurray, 750 kilometres away. Obviously, there are problems with this system.

Another issue is that the stats on ambulance wait times are calculated by comparing the time of call to the time of dispatch, which gives no real indication of how long a patient might wait. It only makes sense that the ambulance response time should be calculated by comparing the time of call to the arrival of ambulance to give an accurate assessment of the service provided.

The department sometimes suggests long wait times for ambulances are acceptable by the fact that often fire departments are dispatched at the same time and arrive quicker, but firefighters in rural Alberta are volunteers, and although excellent people, most do not have the training of paramedics and probably shouldn't be

subjected to the possible trauma of not being able to save a life that they are expected to. Many first responders are speaking out on these situations with concern.

As the issues have been ongoing and complaints come from across the province, this is an issue that needs to be dealt with as it has been getting worse rather than better. Is there not a better system for ambulance usage than what we have right now? I would hope so.

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've got five copies of an article that appeared in the *Financial Post*, by Gwyn Morgan, entitled Trudeau's Cynical Politics Caught Him in His Own Trans Mountain Trap.

Thank you.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The loyal Opposition House Leader.

Trans Mountain Pipeline Construction Suspension

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been 35 days since all parties in this Assembly passed a motion calling on the federal government, the B.C. government, and the Alberta government to take immediate action to get Trans Mountain built – 35 days – and still this government has not taken any concrete action on this file. We now know that we are 44 days away from the project being scrapped altogether. When will the NDP government tell Albertans about the steps that are being discussed with Ottawa to bring clarity to this project for Trans Mountain?

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, our government has been very clear that we have been pushing for and fighting for this pipeline since day one. The Premier has shown exemplary leadership on this. She has met with the Prime Minister, she has met with the Premier of British Columbia, and there is considerable progress. Having said that, we're going to continue to hold the federal government's feet to the fire until that pipeline is built, and we will have it built.

1:50

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, sadly, there's a lot of talk but no progress. The main goal has to be certainty. It's because of this NDP government and their Trudeau Liberal allies that we don't have certainty on this project in the first place. Kinder Morgan said on Sunday: "Our objectives are to obtain certainty with respect to the ability to construct through BC." I'm not looking for rhetoric from the minister across the way; I'm looking for an answer to the question. What is this government doing to provide the clarity that Kinder Morgan is looking for within those 44 days so that we can get this project built?

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I can provide perfect clarity for the hon. member. This government will do everything necessary to make sure that pipeline is built. Not everything can be shared with the public at the moment, and it would jeopardize the project to do so, which is perhaps exactly what the opposition wants.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, again vague answers.

It's incumbent on this government to immediately – there is no more time left – create certainty for Kinder Morgan's needs. We need to move past the empty rhetoric of this NDP government. When asked if the government investment that is being talked about would reduce risks sufficiently for Kinder Morgan, they said: no; we would be looking for, let me say, final clarity. What is this government doing right now to provide that final clarity for Kinder Morgan? Because what they're saying is that what you're doing right now is not working.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Well, thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll let Kinder Morgan speak for themselves, certainly not the hon. member opposite. But I can tell you that this government has said that it's prepared if necessary to take an equity position. That is also the position of the Leader of the Opposition, who also called on the federal government to take an equity position in this pipeline. Now, Andrew Scheer, the federal leader, has said: it's an idea that no one has supported. Does he speak for the United Conservative Party?

The Speaker: Second main question.

Bill 12

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the government finally followed the opposition's lead and introduced legislation to allow the Alberta government to turn off the taps to B.C. until they stop blocking the project. Really, they follow. However, B.C.'s Premier said that Alberta's NDP Premier told him that she did not think they were going to even act on that legislation. To be clear, our Premier told the B.C. Premier, who she's in intense negotiations with, that she did not plan to follow through on legislation she tabled in this House. What is the point of bringing forward legislation if our Premier is telling B.C.'s Premier that she's not even going to act on it?

Mr. Mason: Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member and the opposition should listen to what the Premier actually says in this place rather than third-hand accounts through the media on their friend over there, the Premier of British Columbia. I want to be absolutely clear that we will get this pipeline built. We do not want to use that bill, but it will be there in case we need to use it. If necessary, we will use it.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the Government House Leader is now insulting the media, trying to say that we work with Premier Horgan. His leader and the Premier of this province used to work with Premier Horgan. Nobody on this side of the House did.

Now, we know that in 2016 when the Premier met with Horgan, she did not even try to persuade him on pipelines. Now we're hearing from the B.C. Premier that she's telling him she doesn't even intend to act on this legislation. Is the Premier saying one thing to B.C. and saying a different thing to Albertans?

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, the question remains why the opposition is taking the word of the media reporting on what a Premier, with which we are having quite a bit of vigorous discussion in case he hasn't noticed, is saying. You know, he can put words in people's mouths better than anyone I know, except his leader perhaps, but quite frankly we've had enough of it. The Premier has been clear in this House and in public exactly on the position of the government of Alberta, which is to get that pipeline built.

Mr. Nixon: The facts are that the Alberta Premier has not been clear. There are vague answers. There are vague things that she says that she may or may not be doing. That's all she's saying. She's not being clear with Albertans. When we stand in this House and we ask clear, simple questions about what this government is going to do to get this pipeline built, they will not answer; they will deflect. They'll call their friend Horgan a liar, I guess, is what just happened there with the Government House Leader. That's disappointing. Again, Mr. Speaker, through you to the Government House Leader: what specific actions are you taking today to make sure this pipeline will be built in 44 days? Because you are running out of time, sir.

Mr. Mason: Well, thank you for that excellent question. Mr. Speaker, I can tell the Opposition House Leader exactly what we're going to do. What we've done is introduce Bill 12, Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act. This is a bill to make sure that that pipeline gets built, concrete action from a government that is on the ball and is going to get that pipeline built.

The Speaker: Third main question.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, this side of the House has been calling for something like Bill 12 for a very long time. In fact, when that minister was making fun of us for calling for that, we were. But I digress.

Carbon Levy and Pipeline Approvals

Mr. Nixon: This government across the way has still not taken any serious action against the federal government and their friend Justin Trudeau or against B.C. and Premier Horgan against the ridiculous attack on our resources that is happening right now. They have not. But they continue to punish everyday Albertans with their ridiculous carbon tax. Again, Mr. Speaker, through you to the Government House Leader: will you finally stop raising the carbon tax and punishing Albertans and start standing up to B.C. and Justin Trudeau?

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Well, thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, it's interesting that the hon. member is suggesting that we should cancel the climate leadership plan, which is exactly what the Prime Minister said was behind their approval of the Kinder Morgan pipeline. If they have their way and the climate leadership plan is gone, then federal support for the pipeline may well be gone, too. That would kill the pipeline. Maybe that's what they want.

Mr. Nixon: All this government has is paper approval from Justin Trudeau, which he has not acted on, and a couple of cancelled pipelines.

Meanwhile we see that the West Country seniors' centre in Sundre is back in the news today, having to go hat in hand to the town of Sundre to be able to keep their doors open because this Premier and this government told them to fund raise to pay for the carbon tax. Again, Mr. Speaker, why is this government continuing to punish seniors and other people in Alberta on this so-called social licence when it has been proven over and over that it is not working?

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, you know, the Prime Minister was clear at the time that the Kinder Morgan pipeline was approved that Alberta's climate leadership plan was a key element in his decision in favour of the pipeline. It continues to be fundamental to getting that pipeline built. Getting that pipeline

built is fundamental to Alberta's future prosperity, which the opposition would put in jeopardy.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has been clear. The Prime Minister has done nothing to get this pipeline built except sit on his hands. If this government is still depending on Justin Trudeau to get this project built, I would suggest that Albertans are very, very fearful of that answer.

Again to the minister. We now hear that school boards are having to reduce kindergarten programs and reduce teachers as a direct result of the carbon tax, that is not working to get this pipeline built. Is it your opinion that the school boards should spend money paying your carbon tax, or should they spend money hiring teachers to be able to teach our children?

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, the Opposition House Leader should well know that questions should not be soliciting an individual's opinion but be questions about government policy. Government policy is to pass Bill 12 in this Assembly to give us the tools to make sure that pipeline is built. Again, getting that pipeline finished is critical to Alberta's future prosperity and is important to our children, our seniors, and all Albertans going forward.

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

Public Service Pension Plans

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many long-term Alberta teachers, including some of my constituents, risk losing tens of thousands of dollars in earned pensions due to poor co-ordination between the Income Tax Act, the Teachers' Pension Plans Act, and regulations. For years governments have informally promised revised regulations that would remove uncertainty about when or if they should retire, but none have been delivered. When will the Minister of Finance fulfill the commitment to teachers so they can make retirement choices with certainty that their earned pensions will be protected?

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

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, all hard-working Albertans, including teachers, deserve to retire in dignity. The previous government shirked their responsibility on this file. They did not move forward on this file, and it is still with us today. I'm in discussions with the Minister of Education, and we are working on this.

Ms McPherson: The Alberta Teachers' Association claims that regulations to change the Income Tax Act caps would have impacts very small in relation to the value of the plan and would not result in increased liabilities for the two plan sponsors, the government and the ATA. The ATA also says that contributions from plan members would not need to increase if the regulation were to be fixed to resolve the ambiguity for over 600 teachers. When will the minister commit to making life better for these 600 long-serving public servants?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member has her facts correct in terms of implications on the Income Tax Act and the benefit it will have for that number of retired teachers. We

are, as I said, working on this, and we'll have something hopefully very shortly to return and talk to this House about and, obviously, those people who will benefit.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Finance minister is legislated as the sole trustee of the local authorities pension plan and the public service pension plan even though all other provinces use a joint worker-employer governance model. More than 300,000 Albertans in LAPP and PSPP deserve to decide how their pensions are run, with changes negotiated and agreed to by both sides. When will Alberta's public-sector workers and employers be in control of their own public pensions through joint governance?

Mr. Ceci: Well, let me set some context, Mr. Speaker. Of course, our pensions are doing well in this province, to the point where the employer contributions were reduced, saving our government money. We're committed to looking at this issue of joint governance. We're going to continue to work with our partners to ensure that their pension plans are well governed, and we'll have more to say on this in the near future.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

2:00 Petrochemicals Diversification Program

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As someone who has advocated for the petrochemicals diversification program, I'm gratified to see the uptake from industry and the projects it has incentivized. I know that Inter Pipeline has begun construction on their \$3.5 billion polypropylene production unit in the Industrial Heartland. To the Minister of Energy: could she update the House on progress at Inter Pipeline and other ongoing PDP projects?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we're focused on the right priorities for Albertans such as creating good jobs in a more diversified economy. This means getting Alberta off the boom-and-bust roller coaster we've been on for many, many years. The Inter Pipeline project is under construction, as the member notes, and at peak will have 2,000 people working on-site. That's not to mention all the procurement that is going on, and I can tell you that the company is making every effort to procure as much in Alberta as they can. It's well under way, and it's a great project for . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Minister.

That sounds encouraging, but what does it mean to my constituents in terms of direct jobs and other spinoffs? To the same minister: what is the total economic impact of projects announced to date, assuming all go forward?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, in addition to creating a new value chain which we do not have in Alberta, it's creating new markets, perhaps new manufacturing down the road. At the end of the day, when this project is built, it's going to be \$3.5 billion of private-sector investment. It will be thousands of jobs in construction, and it will employ approximately 180 full-time jobs. While it's being built, we're enjoying taxes in the

municipality and in the government. People are working. Again, it's a great project for Alberta, and it's history making.

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Minister.

Given that the Official Opposition is against these types of industrial incentive programs and given your own understanding of international competition for these types of projects, again to the Minister of Energy: would these welcome developments have happened without the assistance of the petrochemicals diversification program?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, when we looked at all these programs, we looked at the strengths we have here in Alberta, and absolutely resources are one of them. We have a skilled workforce, creative people. I can tell you that when I was down in Houston, we did learn that it's a competitive thing, and we need to find a way to get those investment decisions over the line. Indeed, Inter Pipeline has told me on more than one occasion that it was this very program that made the final investment decision go. We're following the same vision Premier Lougheed had many years ago, and we're very proud to do that, something the Conservatives ...

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister. Thank you.
The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Medical Examiner Positions in Calgary

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A grieving mother whose daughter died under suspicious circumstances in December 2016 called my office. She received a final death report 11 months later, unacceptable by any standard. Both the minister and the Chief Medical Examiner assured Albertans in 2017 that with two new pathologists they'd reduce the turnaround time for death reviews by 50 per cent. Not happening. Now four out of five pathologists in Calgary are leaving or have left, presumably for better pay and working conditions. Given that extra-trained forensic pathologists in this minister's ministry are paid well below trained general pathologists in the health system, what is the minister doing to rectify ...

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

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We're proud of the changes that we made to the office of the Chief Medical Examiner to ensure that they have enough staff to deal with the number of issues we've asked them to deal with. It's presently the case that we do have some staff turnover, which is normal in an organization. All of those individuals have private and personal reasons to leave. We have secured replacements for three of them already, and that will not have an impact on services. We will continue working with them to ensure that they have everything they need.

Dr. Swann: That's an incredible statement, Mr. Speaker, when four out of five, 80 per cent, of the MEs are leaving Calgary. It's not going to impact services? I'm already hearing that it is.

Given many years of instability in the Calgary ME's office and now the loss of four out of five pathologists, when are you going to pay them equitably?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Again, in Canada there are, according to the most recent data, 50 working, practising forensic pathologists. We have 10 of them here in Alberta. All of those individuals that have left the Calgary office have left for individual, private reasons. There are different considerations, and obviously they're inappropriate to discuss in this House. We have secured replacements for three of those individuals already. We're well under way on the hiring of the fourth, and we will absolutely continue to support that office to ensure that they have everything that they need.

Dr. Swann: Well, let me ask the minister: if you're a lawyer with two extra years of training, how long would you stay with a firm that was paying you 20 per cent less than a standard trained lawyer? How long would you stay in a firm?

The Speaker: Hon. member, you're identifying an interpretation of an individual minister. Is there a way that you could ...

Dr. Swann: She doesn't have to. She doesn't have to answer it if she doesn't want to. It's obvious what the answer is.

The Speaker: No, it's not quite that obvious, hon. member.
The Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First, I'd like to send my love to those at the Humboldt memorial in Edmonton today.

Economic Indicators

Mrs. Aheer: Mr. Speaker, the government is completely disconnected from real, everyday Albertans. Perhaps within the dome they've been able to convince themselves that their disastrous economic policies have resulted in economic recovery, but I can tell you that the average Albertan doesn't feel that way. Here's the real story. The Calgary Food Bank hasn't seen any decline in their needs for services, still distributing 5,000 baskets every month. To the Premier: are you expecting to improve the economy through the repetition of sunny-side messaging alone?

Mr. Mason: No, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Aheer: Mr. Speaker, given that the government has kicked Albertans and their businesses and not-for-profits when they're already down with a crippling carbon tax and labour changes that make it harder for small businesses to succeed in Alberta and given that the Airdrie Food Bank spokesperson stated that our numbers have stayed high – they're not going down – and the drop-in programs are increasing even more, how does the government justify their storytelling that our economy has recovered thanks to social licence and a carbon tax that is not really worth the paper it's written on?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, 90,000 new full-time jobs over the last year and the unemployment rate falling to the lowest in two years are something that is very real. However, our government recognizes that that recovery is not a true recovery unless it's shared by everyone. That's why we continue to invest in things like social services, to invest in education, to invest in child care and school nutrition programs. We know that these are all programs and services that the Conservatives across the way would cut in favour of financing a tax cut to the top 1 per cent. That's not our priority.

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

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, the UCP has been listening to Albertans – we hear from them every day – regular folks that are struggling to get by and have not seen the magical end of the recession that the government keeps referencing. Given that the not-for-profits in my riding of Chestermere-Rocky View have seen a \$5,000 increase due to the carbon tax alone – and that's actually not including fuel costs either – and given that new statistics show that the number of those receiving income supports who are Albertans who are ready to work but unable to due to the economic downturn has more than doubled over the past four years, how can the government honestly claim that the recession is over?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is absolutely committed to making sure that Albertans get the supports they need during these tough economic times. If we were to take advice from that side, who thinks that we should have frozen spending in 2015, many Albertans would not get the supports that they are getting from the income support program, AISH program, PDD program. They even suggested that we should reduce the spending levels to B.C.'s, which means another 20 per cent cut. It's threats coming from that side, that they're advocating for these . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
Calgary-West

Police Release of Information on Serious Incidents

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister continues to claim that naming the deceased man in the Calgary shootout with the police might prejudice the case when, in fact, police often identify offenders to seek information from the public to assist in their investigations. Minister, if public safety and trust can be furthered by releasing the man's identity, why would you hide behind the notion of prejudicing the case?

2:10

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member is absolutely correct. There are instances in which the case can be furthered by naming an individual who has been injured by the police or has been a victim of crime or any other number of things. In those instances, those agencies and ASIRT also are guided by their policies, which are consistent policies to ensure that we're all following the same rules. If that is the case, then they would make that decision, but it's not appropriate for me to intervene and make it for them.

Mr. Ellis: Let's talk about consistency, Mr. Speaker, given that two days after Constable Forget was injured in Calgary, a Mountie was wounded in a shootout near Evansburg, Alberta, and the shooter was also killed and given that that shooter's name was made public because police wanted citizens to know that the threat to the public safety was over. Minister, yesterday and just a moment ago you spoke at great length about consistency. Can you explain the inconsistency in the naming of the offenders only days apart?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, there is no inconsistency. It's absolutely the case that they follow and are

guided by principle. Sometimes the facts of a case are different, which means that the same principles applied to those different facts have a different result. In some cases, public safety is the overriding concern; in other cases, investigation of the matter is the overriding concern. We will always keep public safety front of mind, and we will always be guided by principle.

Thank you.

Mr. Ellis: Mr. Speaker, given that the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights Act includes a victim's right to information, including details about the offender's conditional release, and given that ASIRT does not name people killed or injured in incidents and that that practice is inconsistent with the federal bill of rights, Minister, why are you not also concerned about this inconsistency?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is absolutely the case that there are a number of different concerns that operate in this particular area. With respect to this policy it is, in fact, not only consistent within ASIRT, but it's consistent with all of the civilian oversight agencies across the country. They've put a lot of thought into these policies. They are flexible to deal with different circumstances and different cases. We're quite confident that they are making those decisions in the public interest.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Highway 40 and Grande Prairie Economic Development

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Two months ago the ministers of Energy and economic development attended the Growing the North Conference in Grande Prairie and spoke of the intensive energy development occurring south on highway 40. The minister of economic development acknowledged that, quote, industry moves very, very quickly, unquote, and infrastructure needs to be in place. Minister, can you please indicate why properly staged infrastructure is so important for economic development?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we know, for example, that up where both the member and I live, there's immense development happening in the energy industry, and we know that many of the roads up there were not made necessarily for that kind of activity. Certainly, the Minister of Economic Development and Trade and myself have been looking and working with other ministers to see how we can be ready for when that activity ramps up, as it is doing now.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Minister of Energy acknowledges that the Grande Prairie energy industry has experienced unanticipated explosive growth and given that the minister has also confirmed the importance of her government's need to, quote, do something, unquote, on highway 40, which has become a pinch point for industry, to the Energy minister: what do you mean by "doing something" on this dangerously overused highway?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. We recognize the importance of highway 40. It is a very key economic artery. It's important that it be improved in order to support the economic growth and to improve safety, quite frankly.

So we are widening 104 kilometres of highway between highway 16 and Grande Cache. It includes bridge and culvert improvements, a new bridge over the Berland River, new safety rest areas, intersection improvements, and passing lanes. There are many more. If the hon. member wants to come back to me, I can elaborate.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that two key ministries acknowledge the need for ensuring that infrastructure is in place to avoid restricting economic development in the Grande Prairie area and given that they confirm that the hazardous and restricted state of highway 40 is impeding economic growth and given that I thank the minister for securing the contract for engineering and design and tender ready for twinning, to the Transportation minister: will you put this on your priority list in next year's budget?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Well, thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I think the hon. member knows that that's a premature question, but it's very much on our radar. We've heard loud and clear from the communities along that highway and from the industries that use that road. We're paving 55 kilometres between the Kakwa River and the Canfor intersection, six kilometres between the Wapiti River and the city of Grande Prairie, and we're designing 18 more kilometres of twinning between Grande Prairie and the Norbord plant south of the Wapiti River.

There's more, Mr. Speaker. If he gets another question, he can ask me again.

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

Tax Policies and Economic Indicators

Ms Kazim: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Based on continuous engagement with my constituents I have been asked why the government employed progressive taxes, especially during the recession and downturn of the economy, when Albertans were losing jobs. To the Minister of Finance: how did the progressive tax help improve the economy of this province?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the questioner from Calgary-Glenmore. A progressive income tax is what exists federally in Canada as well as in every other provincial and territorial jurisdiction in this country. A progressive tax results in more stable revenue for government to fund important programs and services and build infrastructure like schools and hospitals that Albertans require.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Kazim: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What impact would a tax cut for the rich have on the bottom line of the government, and how would the majority of Albertans be affected by the tax cut?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Returning to a flat tax, as the Official Opposition is proposing, means that the richest 1 per cent in Alberta will see a \$700 million tax cut. The vast majority of Albertans will see no benefit at all but will pay for the tax cut through overcrowded classrooms and longer ER wait times. Returning to a

flax tax means taking services away from working people to benefit Alberta's wealthiest. Albertans deserve better than this half-baked idea.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Kazim: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta's economy is looking up, what factors and sources show the rise in the employment rate and boost in the economy?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you. The members opposite are in denial. They don't see any economic recovery at all. But let's lay out the facts. In 2017, Mr. Speaker, 90,000 full-time jobs were added, mainly in the private sector. Alberta led all provinces in GDP growth in 2017 at 4.5 per cent and will show a strong growth again in 2018-19. This is how we know we're seeing recovery built to last. The members opposite can keep their heads in the sand, but the truth is that things are looking up.

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

PDD Administrative Review

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The public fatality inquiry report into Betty Anne Gagnon's tragic death included several recommendations to improve outcomes for persons with development disabilities in rural communities. Recommendation 6 was to "review and ensure that there are adequate programs, including transportation for persons with developmental disabilities who live in rural areas." To the Minister of Community and Social Services: what has been done to start the review, and when will Albertans see improvements from the review?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. Betty Anne Gagnon died in horrible, horrible circumstances. My thoughts are with the family and those who are grieving Betty Anne's loss. Since 2009 we have made a number of changes that will ensure that we can avoid similar incidents from happening again. That will include changes in the file closure policy, changes in the transfer policy. We are also planning to launch a helpline where Albertans can report such incidents.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
First supplemental.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that yesterday the minister said that communication and co-ordination have improved by not requiring clients to reapply for services when they move, which is great, but that there's still more to do and given that the report notes that these changes do not address long waiting lists, lack of backup plans, lack of respite options, and lack of resources for service providers to plan, train, or offer services proactively, when will PDD services no longer be confusing and no longer require strong advocacy for vulnerable people to receive services?

2:20

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are absolutely committed to providing services to those who rely on these services, and that's why we have added \$150 million to this program. We have heard concerns with respect to access. That's why we are moving ahead with the review of the program, which will help us look at access to

this program, look at outcomes of this program, and look at engagement means, how we can better engage with the community, with individual advocates, and with service providers.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the report detailed numerous times that front-line workers, family members, and service providers had the chance to intervene in Betty Anne's case but, very tragically, did not, resulting in isolation and stress for her family caregivers beyond their capacity to cope, to the same minister: what are you doing to protect and improve services for Albertans with developmental disabilities and their caregivers regardless of whether they have formally requested services from your department?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me begin by saying that no Albertan, no one, should go through the circumstances that Betty Anne went through. There have been recent changes which ensure that families are part of the planning process, and risk identification is part of that planning process. At that point we can identify the risk and prioritize the needs. We will work with our community partners on all of these recommendations. As I said, some improvements have been made, but the review will be an opportunity . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Fisheries Management

Mr. Loewen: The recent release of the 2018 Alberta sport-fishing regulations has been received with significant disappointment. Increased restrictions have been added to over 100 lakes. The input from large numbers of Albertans has been ignored. This creates a loss of tourism and economic benefit, not to mention jobs. The result of 20 years of significant fish harvest restrictions with closed commercial fishing and significant restrictions on pike, walleye, and even whitefish is that Alberta is further reducing harvest and consumption of our fish. When will the minister admit the failure of fisheries management?

Ms Phillips: The time to have admitted failure was over 40 years of mismanagement of our fisheries resources by the party that the hon. member now sits in. We have invested significantly in recovering our fish populations, Mr. Speaker, to the point where we have opened eight lakes to walleye fishing this year, many of which had been closed since 1996. We have reopened those lakes, demonstrating the importance of conservation and sustainable harvesting. We are taking sound management of our lakes very, very seriously. We are a leader in fisheries management, and we are increasing funding for groups to rebuild those damaged waterways.

Mr. Loewen: Given that your department initiated the eastern slopes fishing closure and you had to back down, saying that the science wasn't strong enough to support the shutdown, and given that it's the same department that came up with the regulations that have drastically restricted fishing in over 100 lakes, how can you suggest that the science is any more solid with the lake restrictions than with the eastern slopes plan you cancelled?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Once again, we have an Official Opposition that does not waste an opportunity to sneer at science or at the public-sector workers and the public

servants that work very, very hard to protect our environment every day to make sure that there is something to fish and something to hunt and that we have a healthy environment with appropriate enforcement. I will leave that attitude to them. On this side of the House we're investing in things like whirling disease, native trout recovery, and, yes, we are seeing some rebound in some of our wildlife populations as a result of turning the page on the decades of mismanagement from his own party.

Mr. Loewen: Given that the buck stops with the minister when it comes to fisheries management and given that fishing is important economically and proper management of the resource could create many economic benefits such as tourism and commercial fisheries and given that the 2018 fishing regulations have completely ignored the public input showing that there was near unanimous support for slot-size harvest and shortened seasons for smaller lakes, both of which have been completely ignored, showing the consultation was a complete sham, why did you not listen to the people that you consulted with?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, on the northern pike and walleye species management frameworks we're engaging with Albertans for feedback on the draft framework and to move forward with the implementation and adjust some of those regulations. We're also investing significantly in whirling disease and native trout recovery, including habitat management. This is in stark contrast to the kind of ideological cuts that would be imposed on public-sector workers, who are working very, very hard every day to make science-based decisions and protect the environment in this province.

Government Procurement Process

Mr. W. Anderson: Mr. Speaker, to maintain the integrity of a procurement process that ensures best value for the taxpayer, pricing criteria must be clear, measurable, and consistent to enable comparison and provide proponents with sufficient direction to develop a submission. It should not include secret calculations or subjective elements, and conditional bids cannot be allowed. Doing otherwise may be fatal to the process. My first question is to the Minister of Service Alberta. Could she generally explain within the context of her ministry's procurement policies how it ensures RFP pricing provisions are fully disclosed to and understood by vendors to enable them to bid with confidence?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Service Alberta and of Status of Women.

Ms McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Certainly, it is the goal of all of our procurement efforts to ensure that there is a transparent process. In fact, this is something that is required by all of our vendors. So when we go through the procurement process, we have transparent criteria that we post publicly online. Then vendors can go onto the online posting and review. There is also opportunity to engage with government to answer questions if something is not clear to them, and afterwards there is also a process to contest if they believe that there has been something that's gone . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. W. Anderson: My second question is again to the Minister of Service Alberta. While I recognize that there may be exceptions,

would a proponent that submitted conditional pricing that offended the RFP provisions be disqualified?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Obviously, it's very, very important to all Alberta vendors and businesses that we have a robust procurement system. This is something that has been under review by our government as we have found contracts dating back over a decade where that has not been the case, and we have found some very, very questionable practices. So I'd be happy to get back to the member with further detail about our policy, how the rubber hits the road with respect to his exact question.

Mr. W. Anderson: Mr. Speaker, my third question is to the Minister of Health. If she was aware that Alberta Health Services had accepted a bid subject to conditional pricing that offended the RFP provisions, would she direct that bid to be disqualified? If not, why not?

The Speaker: The Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As has been answered in this House before, unsuccessful bidders have every right to bring their concerns forward through the courts or the New West Partnership. I understand that in the process that the hon. member opposite is referring to, this is currently occurring. Because it's still before the courts, I cannot comment any further.

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

Charter School Funding

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Charter schools are important for students who learn best in the tailored programs these schools offer. Charter schools are also publicly funded but are funded differently when it comes to inclusive education funding, such as the nutrition programs. That's harder to do with this government's carbon tax, which raises overhead expenses on all schools. Minister, do you think it's acceptable that schools spend more on keeping the lights on as a result of your carbon tax and less for programs that parents and teachers care about?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would answer that question with another question to the member opposite. I'm wondering if he thinks that it would be appropriate to cut funding to schools by 20 per cent or freeze levels at 2015 levels – we're not entirely sure because the members opposite won't come clean with their financial plans for the province of Alberta – and whether or not cutting taxes for millionaires would be an appropriate way to fund schools and these education programs that they seem to think are important.

Mr. Gill: Given that parents in northeast Calgary are upset because their kids can no longer take a yellow bus to their charter schools and given that one of my constituents wasn't pleased to be told that his 12-year-old child can take public transit rather than a school bus and given that the NDP are on public record always, for your information, Minister, opposed to choice in education and now lots of NDP supporters and special-interest groups want to get rid of choice in education, Minister, when was the last time you spoke to parents in northeast Calgary about the issue of transportation?

Mr. Schmidt: Well, Mr. Speaker, we are focused on the priorities of regular Albertans, like making sure that our kids have great schools and that they can get there safely. That's why we reversed cuts that the previous Conservative government planned to make, including cuts to student busing. In fact, we've increased our investment in student transportation by over \$20 million since taking office. If the members opposite had their way, they would cut tax breaks to millionaires, and all of our kids would be walking to school.

2:30

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Apparently, northeast Calgary is not part of Alberta.

Given that choice in education for northeast Calgary is not an important issue for this minister and given that the Premier, when she was in the opposition, called private and charter schools "havens of elitism" and that that shows the NDP's opposition to choice in education, Minister, is your government intentionally pushing parents to enrol their children in public schools, and if not, why have you not addressed these important issues in Calgary northeast?

Mr. Schmidt: Well, Mr. Speaker, our government has increased investment. We've funded for enrolment in every public school, including charter schools, in the province, and we're proud to continue to do so. Of course, the member opposite is concerned about choice. Here's the choice that Albertans will be facing in 2019. Do they want further enhancements for private schools and cuts to public schools, or do they want to invest in education for every Albertan regardless of the size of their wallet? I believe that the people of Alberta will make the choice that will benefit the most students, and that will be to continue to fund public education.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Government Policies and Economic Indicators

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Conference Board of Canada recently released their economic outlook. Fun fact: despite what the opposition would have you believe, it shows that Alberta's economy is among the leaders in growth in this country. Can the Minister of Finance explain what was done during the downturn to help Alberta's economy turn around so quickly?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the Calgary-Currie member as well. I can tell you what we didn't do. We didn't turn our backs on Albertans. We didn't make deep ideological cuts to programs and services just when many Albertans needed them most. The members opposite would try the same old failed austerity budget that led to thousands of teachers and nurses being fired and leaving this province. Instead, we chose to invest. We chose to build schools and hospitals and keep Albertans working. That choice is paying off.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the recent economic outlook report shows that Saskatchewan's economy is lagging behind and given that both provinces are dependent on resource revenue and that both provinces went through the same

economic downturn, can the Minister of Finance tell us what choices Saskatchewan made during that same period?

The Speaker: The Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan made the choice that the members opposite are still demanding. They cut services, like closing down transportation companies, cutting funding to libraries, and hiked taxes on new construction. In Saskatchewan jobs are stagnant, small-business confidence is down, and growth is lagging. Meanwhile here in Alberta things are looking up. More Albertans are working than ever before. Our economy is leading the country, and private investment is returning.

Mr. Malkinson: Well, Mr. Speaker, that's great news, that the economy is looking up. Obviously, more work needs to be done, of course, so my question to the Minister of Finance is: what are we doing to ensure that all Albertans fully feel this economic recovery?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. From the beginning our government chose to have the backs of Albertans through the worst recession in two generations. We invested in diversification like the petrochemicals diversification program, we invested in craft brewers and distillers, and we invested in infrastructure. The result is a more diversified economy with good, mortgage-paying jobs. This was a critical choice, but given Alberta's strong and broad-based recovery, it's clear we made the right decision. We have more work to do, but we'll make sure this recovery reaches every Albertan.

Public Service Size

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, given that in estimates the Finance minister, when asked if he thought the government was efficient, said yes and given that the public service here costs about 20 per cent more per citizen than it does in British Columbia and that when we asked the Finance minister, he said that the size of the public service was in the neighbourhood of 30,000 people in Alberta, does the Finance minister still contend and still agree with what he said in estimates, that that is about the size of the public service in Alberta?

Mr. Ceci: I think the member opposite is trying to pull a trick question, Mr. Speaker. There are about 27,000 direct employees of the government of Alberta. There are more than I think it's 270,000, 280,000 employees who receive government cheques. That's people who work in health care. That's people who work in education, in schools. That's people who work in advanced education. All of those people get monies through the government of Alberta, so there are many more public servants than there are Alberta public service direct government workers.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister actually agreed with what I said – so I don't know where the trick is – and given that he also said in estimates that the total number of people paid out of the public purse is actually north of 220,000 people, to the Finance minister: if the people that aren't in the 27,000, those in health care and education, are not public servants, who does he believe that they're serving?

Mr. Ceci: Mr. Speaker, people who are serving Albertans are public servants, I guess. We're making sure that we are treating all

public servants with the respect they need. We're making sure that they are well compensated, but we have some difficult challenges right now, so we're looking for common-sense agreements from all negotiated labour settlements, and that is happening as we speak.

Mr. McIver: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that the minister is as confusing in question period today as he was in estimates and given that he's not sure, it seems, whether the number of the public servants is 27,000, not including health care and education, or whether it's 220,000 – he's forgotten that number, but I'll help him out with that number; that does include health care and education – again I'll ask him: how many public servants are there, and if there are only 27,000, who do you think the hard-working Albertans in health care and education are serving?

Mr. Ceci: Mr. Speaker, this sounds like *Groundhog Day* all over again and the same question being asked and asked and asked. Public servants are hard working. They're doing the job that needs to be done for all Albertans. They are properly compensated, and on this side, this government, they have the respect of this government. That side tried to cancel pensions of public service workers. That side tried to bring in bills 9 and 10, and remember what happened out there as a result of that activity? You had to back down. We're respecting people and their work, and that will always happen from this side.

Provincial Response to Pipeline Opposition

Mr. Loewen: Tzaporah Berman and Karen Mahon have been protesting the pipeline in B.C. The other day the economic development minister said regarding Mahon and Berman, "With all due respect... their positions and their opinions are quite irrelevant." Well, Mr. Speaker, this begs the question: if their comments and opinions are irrelevant – and I agree – why did the Premier appoint them to the oil sands advisory group?

Mr. Mason: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to respond to that, to answer. This opposition keeps putting an awful lot of emphasis on a couple of people. Now, they had some specific expertise that was useful, but they sure as heck don't speak for this government. They don't speak for the people of Alberta. This government has been clear that we are going to get that pipeline built. We're going to do that despite the best efforts of the members opposite to try and bring in irrelevant points.

Mr. Loewen: Given that the Premier put them in charge of that oil sands advisory group and given that the NDP government has said over and over again that the Trans Mountain pipeline was approved because of the carbon tax, an approval that is worth nothing as they are now talking about inflicting pain on B.C. residents, buying into the pipeline, and a myriad of other initiatives and threats to get the pipeline built, how can you say that the carbon tax is getting the pipeline built when there are multiple initiatives and threats that have nothing to do with Alberta's climate change plan and carbon tax that are required to actually get the pipeline built?

The Speaker: The hon Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Clearly, what is going on here is a repetitive series of questions going back to, over and over again, the same questions that have very little to do with government policy. What government policy is is to put in place a climate leadership plan that led to the approval of two pipelines, something that the Conservatives could not get done for over a decade.

Mr. Loewen: Given that this government seems to be embarrassed with these answers – and that’s the only thing repetitive here, the answers – and given that the city of Victoria pumps raw sewage into the ocean, including the area of Victoria that is represented by the Green Party leader, and given that the Green Party leader has joined forces with the B.C. NDP to stop the Trans Mountain pipeline, does anyone else see the hypocrisy of these actions, and did the Premier raise this at the failed Sunday meeting with Prime Minister Trudeau and Premier Horgan?

2:40

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, it’s really unfortunate that the Official Opposition wastes perfectly good questions asking us to comment on political parties and individuals that live in other provinces. What’s important, I think, is this government’s actions, the bill that we’re bringing in to make sure that we have the levers to make sure the pipeline gets built, the fact that we are continuing to fight for that pipeline. Quite frankly, the Official Opposition is doing a very poor job, in my opinion, at defending the interests of Albertans and

is more interested in trying some sort of weird guilt by association. Well, it’s not going to work.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I believe the daily Routine is now completed.

Pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(5)(b) and the Budget 2018 main estimates schedule the House stands adjourned until tomorrow afternoon at 1:30. The legislative policy committees will convene this afternoon and tomorrow morning for consideration of the main estimates. This afternoon Resource Stewardship will consider the estimates for Environment and Parks in the Rocky Mountain Room, and Families and Communities will consider the estimates for Status of Women in the Parkland Room. Tomorrow morning Resource Stewardship will consider the estimates for Environment and Parks in the Rocky Mountain Room.

[The Assembly adjourned at 2:41 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(5)(b)]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, April 18, 2018

Day 19

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, April 18, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon, everyone. It's a beautiful day out there. It's about time.

Hon. members, let us each in our own way reflect or pray. As we come together today for another day of thoughtful and considered deliberation, let us acknowledge that today we gather on Treaty 6 territory, a traditional gathering place for diverse indigenous peoples, and we give thanks for the contributions they have made to our province. Let us affirm our common commitment to enhance the lives of all those who call Alberta home and continue the pursuit of the common good.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the ambassador of Germany to Canada, Her Excellency Sabine Sparwasser, as well as Mr. Harald Kuckertz, honorary consul of Germany in Edmonton, and Mr. Hubertus Liebrecht, honorary consul of Germany in Calgary. Her Excellency's visit has offered Alberta and Germany the opportunity to discuss how to build on our strong relationship. There's enormous potential for our two jurisdictions to expand bilateral trade and collaborate, especially with the Canada-EU comprehensive economic and trade agreement now provisionally applied. We look forward to working with Her Excellency to further develop and strengthen our relationship with Germany. I see that my guests have risen. I would now ask the Assembly to give them the traditional warm welcome.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Again the hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a number of incredibly sharp students that come from Overlanders elementary school in the riding of Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. The students are accompanied by Sherry Germain, Robin Murphy, Kayla Nabe as well as by a number of chaperones: Melissa Schneider, Tracy Allen, Tim Martinez, Chad and Shelley Forsberg. I'd now ask them all to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly and for us to greet them and welcome them to our building.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to stand and introduce to you and through you students from l'école Beauséjour. I apologize to the students. I have a choice of doing this

in English or French, and I'm going to choose English. With them are their teachers, Karen Levoir and Marilynne Blais, as well as chaperones Tracy Lord and Jason Bourassa. If they could all please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. It's my absolute privilege to introduce to you and through you the students, teachers, and chaperones from SouthPointe school in Fort Saskatchewan. We have 41 students with us here today with their teachers, Mr. Tyler Nyznyx, Mrs. Nikki Hammel, Mrs. Jordana Cohan, and chaperones Mr. Robert Marshall, Mr. Chris Smith, Mrs. Tracey Marshall, and Mrs. Jamie Nelson. SouthPointe school is the first school that has been built in Fort Saskatchewan in 35 years, for a city whose population has doubled, so I'm proud to introduce the first year of our students here in our Legislature today. I'd ask everyone to extend the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome

The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members a team from the University of Calgary who recently made an extraordinary achievement. DUO Collegare won a prestigious computer science competition called VHacks, which is a global hackathon competition organized by the Vatican to encourage interfaith dialogue and foster social inclusion across the globe. This talented team, coached by Dr. Bob Schulz and Megha Chopra, developed an innovative solution to the interfaith dialogue theme and won two awards against students from many of the world's best-known universities. You certainly made Alberta proud. Here today we have Sharon Wang, Raza Qazi, Eric Eidelberg, Sasha Ivanov. Francis Duahn is not here today. I thank the team for their contributions to making a peaceful difference in the world and ask them to now rise to receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome

The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my sincere pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the town of Whitecourt Youth Advisory Committee. Twelve members of the youth advisory committee are with us today, accompanied by Mayor Maryann Chichak and staff of the town. This group of young citizens works with the town council to ensure that the needs and voice of community youth is heard. They are responsible for promoting awareness of youth services and programs in their schools. I would like them now to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly guests from the Edmonton and Area Land Trust. This year the Edmonton and Area Land Trust celebrates its 10th anniversary of conserving natural areas. The trust has secured 12 natural areas, including Golden Ranches and Hicks in Strathcona county. Here today are the executive director, Pam Wight, and directors Alex Nagy and Douwe Vanderwel, who is joined today by his wife, Wendy. I thank my guests for their commitment to preserving

natural areas in our region and ask them to now rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour and a pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly two of Airdrie's newest residents, business owners Pamela Jarosz and Cody Fitzsimmons. Would you please rise. Pamela and Cody own Airdrie's first and only brewery, called Fitzsimmons Brewing, and they recently won an award, which is very rare for a first-year brewery, for East Lake Amber beer, which you can find on tap here in Edmonton at Beer Revolution. Give it a try. I highly recommend it. Please greet them with the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Service Alberta and of Status of Women.

Ms McLean: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a number of employees from Service Alberta. Later today I will be tabling legislation that will better protect utility consumers, and it's because of the very hard work of our exceptional ministry staff that I'm able to table that legislation. I want to say to them: thank you very much for all of your hard work on this important issue. I'd like to ask the team to rise as I call out individual names, and I'd ask all members of the House to please join me in welcoming my guests. I apologize in advance to any of them if I mispronounce their names. First up is Chris Hunt, the executive director of the Utilities Consumer Advocate – Chris, if you could rise; I can't see you behind the pole, but I'm sure you're there – with Naina Jairath, Nola Ruzycski, Jeff Morton, Eli Mirton-Tamakloe, Agatha Grochowski, Patrece Walker, and Laurel Van De Keere. If we could all please give them the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Health and Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce some members of the Alberta Health team who are here today. They're from the health information systems branch, and they are seated in the public gallery. April is Records and Information Management Month. Almost everything that is done in Health creates a record, and it's important to manage these records so that we can find important information when we need it. I'm proud to recognize the work that they do behind the scenes to support the health care system in making life better for Albertans. Now welcome Kim Wieringa, the ADM; Cathy Simpson, director, enterprise content management; and Jia Zhu, corporate records manager. Please stand and receive the warm welcome of our Assembly.

1:40

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

Mr. Dang: Thank you. It's my privilege today to rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly somebody who should be familiar to yourself, Mr. Speaker, David Draper. David used to be a page here in the Assembly, serving all the hon. members in this House. He's currently the vice-president of finance at Delta Upsilon, the same fraternity I attended while at the University of Alberta, and he is currently pursuing his political science degree. David is also a strong volunteer in my constituency association and

is here today because he misses watching what an NDP government can do. I see that he's risen, and I'd ask the members to please give him the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome, David.

Members' Statements

Taber

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, I'm sure you have heard that right now the people in and around Taber are battling Mother Nature's floods. Over a dozen families have lost the battle and have been evacuated to safety while overland flooding decimates their homes and land. Our hearts and prayers go out to them.

The residents of Taber and Taber county are strong, resilient folk who have in the past and will again rebuild. In the coming days and weeks you will see the community rallying around each other, helping selflessly and generously those who have been devastated. Mr. Speaker, these people have big hearts.

To illustrate this generosity, when I was first elected, in 2015, I was invited to attend a fundraiser for the TANGO Foundation, which stands for Taber Assisting Nations through Global Outreach. Started in 2013, this group of Taber physicians, eye surgeons, dentists, and construction workers has helped almost 8,500 people in third-world countries. Together they have donated almost \$4 million in goods and services. I've often wondered what builds such amazing and caring people. I believe in large measure it is their strong religious roots and their deep connection to the earth through farming.

Taber knows how to kick up their heels and have fun as well, Mr. Speaker. Cornfest, held in August, is the largest free family festival in western Canada, and if you haven't been yet, you need to put it on your bucket list and make sure you go. My favourite event is the corn-stuffing contest. It involves two people per team. One wears oversized coveralls. The other team member stuffs as much corn as possible into the coveralls of his teammate. The team with the most corn stuffed in a given time wins. There are lots of laughs and lots to eat.

Mr. Speaker, I could talk for hours about the residents of Taber, but time will not permit it. Let me just conclude by saying that if the world had more people like the people of Taber, it would be a better place indeed.

Bow River Basin Council

Mr. Westhead: The Bow River Basin Council was established in 1992 as an advisory body to Alberta Environment. The council's mandate is to pursue co-operative strategies for water management and environmental stewardship of the Bow River basin. In 2004 the BRBC was designated by Alberta Environment as the first watershed planning and advisory council in Alberta's water for life strategy. It serves as a multistakeholder nonprofit organization assessing watershed conditions and developing plans to address concerns.

The BRBC envisions a future in which the Bow River is recognized among the world's best-managed watersheds, with the highest water quality of any densely populated river basin in Canada. The council completed several Bow basin state-of-the-watershed assessments and is currently working on the Bow's watershed management plan. This plan will put a special focus on riparian zones, aquatic ecosystems, water quantity and quality, and the effects of land use on surface water and groundwater.

With the Bow River closed to additional surface licence applications, stakeholder co-operation and conservation are crucial. The council includes representation from urban and rural

municipalities, agriculture, recreation, industry, nonprofits, and First Nations peoples. The collaborative work of the BRBC represents value leveraging based on an in-kind value of donated expertise. This represents up to three times a project's actual financial costs or more.

As a result of the dedicated effort of its stakeholder members, the work of the BRBC has been recognized with both an Alberta Emerald award and the city of Calgary's environmental achievement award. I'm pleased to highlight the good work that the Bow River Basin Council does year after year to provide all those who rely on the basin with a well-managed watershed.

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

Provincial Fiscal Position

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP government is fond of comparing Alberta's financial position to that of other provinces. They constantly crow about how our net debt is better than one province's or how our taxes are lower than another's. When the opposition, supported by many responsible Alberta families, points out how much debt is being racked up by this government, how many jobs have been lost, how much investment has fled the province, the government always seems to fall back to the same old line: well, we're still better than some other provinces in some areas.

Alberta is the greatest among many great provinces in this great country. There was a time when that fact was so apparent that no one was even arguing the point. Alberta was that far out in front. Previous governments along with millions of hard-working Albertans worked tirelessly to keep Alberta that far ahead. A perfect example is Alberta's low tax rates, which the government likes to compare to other provinces'. Well, economists and business groups often point out how the NDP has eroded this advantage by hiking corporate and personal taxes, introducing a carbon tax, increasing the minimum wage, and introducing a variety of labour and other regulations, which have made Alberta a more difficult place in which to live, invest, do business, and create jobs.

Mr. Speaker, nonprofits, charities, businesses, seniors' homes, school boards, and, yes, families have made it clear that this government's policies are not making life better for them. Albertans expect and deserve better. We have been better. Since Alberta's founding in 1905 countless Albertans have worked to build this province into the best place to live, work, play, and raise a family. I just hope that in 2019 we get a government which is more interested in selling Alberta's strengths to the world instead of saying: well, we haven't quite fallen into second or third place yet. Albertans want and deserve better.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Edmonton and Area Land Trust

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Edmonton and Area Land Trust is a conservation nonprofit that is the only land trust in Alberta that focuses on the capital region. Their work is to conserve and steward our local natural areas. Securing these natural areas provides habitat for wildlife and strengthens the ecological resiliency of the region. It also provides recreational areas for residents and visitors alike and helps educate the public about the many benefits of conservation. The group also plays an important role in providing input into policy and educational development.

Two of their conservation lands, Golden Ranches and Hicks, are located just outside my constituency. The group is also involved in the Beaver Hills biosphere reserve, a UNESCO-designated reserve.

As the fastest growing region in Canada, having those protected natural areas in our region truly is a gift to be treasured. These land trusts are important in Alberta because they respond directly to the needs and values of local communities. They also provide a vehicle for landowners to donate their land or to register a caveat on their land to protect its important conservation values in perpetuity.

For the past 10 years this group has conserved 12 conservation areas, with the goal to acquire two more in 2018. Of the lands they are conserving and stewarding, six of these properties have been secured with the assistance of government funds from the Alberta land trust grant program. This program has been crucial to their success, demonstrating our government's commitment to being a partner in conservation. As well as the ongoing support of this government the Edmonton and Area Land Trust could not do the work they do without the support and stewardship of hundreds of volunteers, and this week is volunteer week.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank the Edmonton and Area Land Trust for their tireless and valuable work preserving natural areas in our region. I am proud to continue working with them to ensure our government's support of their important work. Congratulations to the Edmonton and Area Land Trust on celebrating their 10th anniversary in 2018.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Edgar Corbière

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On Sunday, April 15, Alberta lost a great man, Mr. Edgar Corbière. I've spoken before about the amazing accomplishments of this man. In 1999 Edgar saw six covered wagons being drawn by horses, and it gave him an idea. That idea initially was to have some fun using horses to do things the old way, cutting hay and road building. He decided they should at the same time raise some money to assist cancer victims undergoing treatment. That first year they raised \$3,500 and helped 12 families of patients receiving treatment.

Over the last 20 years Edgar's little idea has grown exponentially. The group has introduced new attractions like log sawing, a shingle mill, a blacksmith shop, cutting and threshing grain, homemade ice cream, and on and on. In August 2017, over the long weekend, Haying in the 30's raised \$262,000.

I have to mention that this entire organization is built on volunteers and donations, and every penny raised goes to support families of cancer victims. The many buildings and attractions are donated, and these are held by volunteers to add to the experience. I was told that one of Edgar's favourite things to do was to bring beer and doughnuts to the volunteers at the work bees.

1:50

The event is held every August long weekend near the community of Mallaig, about 20 minutes north of St. Paul, and I would encourage everyone to put that on their bucket list as well. This year celebrates 20 years of Edgar's vision.

I want to read a quick testimonial of Edgar's generosity.

Words don't seem to be enough to express my thanks for the cheque I received last fall. A person doesn't realize how costly those trips to Edmonton for treatment are until you start going every 3 weeks... It was greatly appreciated and I can't say enough what a great thing you are doing.

Edgar, your legacy will live on far into the future. You've inspired many in your family, your community, and our entire province. Thank you for your enormous contribution. You will be missed.

Oral Question Period

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

Provincial Response to Pipeline Opposition

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me begin with a belated expression of happy birthday to our Premier.

Now, Mr. Speaker, yesterday her counterpart in Victoria, Premier Horgan, told his Legislature that the Premier of Alberta has said that she does not want to proceed with that legislation, Bill 12, the turn-off-the-taps bill. Why did Premier Horgan say that?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, unlike the member opposite, I have absolutely never wavered on this issue. We will do whatever it takes to build Trans Mountain. Now, the member opposite is trying to use other people's quotes about other people's quotes about other people's quotes to attack my resolve, but his own cousins in Ottawa are calling a federal backstop for this project disgusting. So can the member explain why it was okay for Conservatives to pour billions of dollars into protecting Ontario's auto sector but with the energy industry it's disgusting?

Mr. Kenney: The Premier is back to auditioning for opposition leader, Mr. Speaker, and she'll get plenty of chances to ask questions in the future.

Mr. Speaker, the question I have is that the minister of the environment in British Columbia, a New Democrat, said yesterday in the Legislature that clearly Bill 12 is a bluff: they, Alberta, don't intend to use it. Why would he say that? Could it possibly be because this Premier told John Horgan last Sunday that she doesn't intend to use the bluff?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I've already said very clearly both publicly and as I articulated as to what I said privately, we will do whatever it takes to get this pipeline built. The country is fully aware of our resolve, and there is no question about that. But I would suggest that the member opposite ought not spend his time dining out on the opposition, aligning with the government of B.C., planning collective efforts to take the matter to court and delay it for months and months and years and years and instead stand squarely behind the efforts of our government to get this pipeline built.

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, weakness invites strength from your adversaries. That's what's happened. This government folded on the wine boycott, they declared victory a month ago, and now today John Horgan, the Premier of B.C., is announcing that he's going to the court after all, seeking to delay further this pipeline. So I'll ask this again. Why did the Premier initially mock and ridicule the idea of turning off the taps? Why did she fold on her wine boycott? Why did she tell the Premier of B.C. that all of this is just one big bluff?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, none of that stuff happened, so that's the answer to that question. The fact of the matter is that the member opposite simply can't get his story straight. First he said that he supported investing in the pipeline. Then he said: well, only if the feds support it. Then his big brother in Ottawa said: "Well, no. The feds supporting it would be disgusting." Then he said no and that he wants to take it to court. It is hardly surprising that these guys couldn't get it done when they had the chance. I suggest that

they support us instead of taking shots at us and support the leadership we are showing to get the job done.

The Speaker: Second main question.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, if the Premier really wants to talk about the positions of federal parties, I'm compelled to remind her that her federal party wants to shut down all the pipelines.

Police Release of Information on Serious Incidents

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, on March 27 Constable Jordan Forget was shot repeatedly in Calgary in the performance of his duties. On April 10 a knife-wielding man attacked another Calgary police officer. The government has refused to release the names of the assailants. Why is the government protecting the identities of these would-be cop killers?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, it's certainly the position of the government that we absolutely support our front-line officers. We've been willing to put our money where our mouth is on that multiple times. With respect to this issue ASIRT, who is an independent investigative body which is independent of government, has a policy, a policy which is consistent among such outfits across the country, so the government is not refusing to name the individuals.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, that minister is responsible for law enforcement in Alberta. She can't duck or dodge on this issue. The Calgary Police Association and the Alberta Federation of Police Associations have both called on the government to give transparency with the release of these names, which was the policy of that task force in the past. Let me repeat: why won't the Attorney General instruct ASIRT to release the identities of these two people who had tried to kill Calgary police officers in the line of duty?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, this is a matter which has an enormous amount of public interest, but a matter having a large amount of public interest is precisely the time at which it is important to allow independent investigative bodies to continue to be independent. I don't generally exercise operational jurisdiction over these agencies. We allow them to make their own decisions, and we think that that's very important in the interest of public transparency.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, last week in this Chamber the minister of social services said, "Our thoughts are with the family and loved ones of the deceased," the deceased being the person who tried to kill a Calgary police officer. That minister gave no expression of concern for the police officers who almost died in the line of duty, but he went out of his way to express condolences for the repeat criminals, the serious violent criminals. Why did he do that?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have been clear in this House on behalf of our government that our thoughts are absolutely with the officer and his family in this instance. We are absolutely aware that police officers put themselves in harm's way every day in order to protect us, that their families undergo having to worry about those individuals every day in order that the rest of

our families can be safe. Our thoughts are absolutely with those police officers.

The Speaker: Third main question.

Justice System Delays

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Court of Queen's Bench in Calgary stayed charges on Nick Chan, a notorious gang leader, including the charge of first-degree murder. A year ago the NDP government told us that they were going to triage cases before the courts to ensure that serious, violent offences were brought to trial, but now we see the release of gang leaders and alleged first-degree murderers. Why did the government let this happen?

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to begin, of course, by saying that I think that I join with all Albertans in expressing the fact that organized crime is a scourge on our communities, and we must do everything we can to stop it. We must support our law enforcement officers in the very complex work that is associated with investigating and prosecuting that kind of crime. In the case at hand we've just been advised that the matter has been appealed. As a result, with it being in front of the courts, we cannot speak to it specifically.

Mr. Kenney: I'm not asking the government to comment on the appeal, Mr. Speaker. I'm asking them to comment on their failure effectively to prioritize first-degree murder prosecutions, which are now being released by the courts.

Now, in March Provincial Court Justice Renée Cochard stayed several charges in a domestic violence case for the same reasons. The government told us that they were giving prosecutors the tools to focus on serious and violent crimes a year ago. Clearly, that hasn't happened. Why hasn't it happened? Why are we seeing serious, violent criminals released before they can be brought to justice?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

2:00

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, I as well would like to express our condolences to the families and communities who are awaiting justice in this particular circumstance. I'm very concerned about these issues of court timelines. This matter, as has been stated, is under appeal, so I can't speak specifically to the case. However, our government has been clear repeatedly with the federal government that we need to see the appointment of additional superior court justices. This current government has recognized the positions we created, so it's certainly a step ahead of their predecessors. But we do need . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the latter point is simply false. There were, I think, one or two Queen's Bench vacancies when the Liberals came to office. There are now 12. So much for the effectiveness of the provincial NDP in ensuring that we have a proper complement of judges, but that's not the issue.

The issue is that that Attorney General a year ago committed to prioritizing the prosecution of violent and repeat offenders, but violent and repeat offenders are being released. This is not a question for a particular case. It's a question of a policy failure. Why did the government fail to keep its word to bring to justice violent offenders?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think it's important to correct the record on this particular matter. There are currently that number of superior court vacancies. That is because this government and our predecessors created federal court positions, indicating that Alberta needed a higher number of superior court justices, that Mr. Harper's government . . .

An Hon. Member: Name.

Ms Ganley: . . . sorry, the former federal government refused to acknowledge. You know, the current government has acknowledged, and we are making progress.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Legal Aid

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. "Like a shackled and starving foster child locked in a filthy closet for years, the Legal Aid program is a neglected and degraded shadow of its true potential and is robbing poor and disadvantaged Albertans of their futures." That's what the president of the criminal defence lawyers association, Ian Savage, had to say about the current state of legal aid. He said that the government knows how to fix the issue but would rather direct their resources elsewhere. To the Minister of Justice: how is this anything other than a complete failure of your responsibility to provide legal aid to vulnerable Albertans?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, when our government took office from the government that that member opposite was a member of, Alberta had the lowest per capita funding for legal aid anywhere in the country, and there was a crisis, a profound level of crisis in legal aid. Since that time, in the face of the significant fiscal pressures that our government inherited from the previous government, we have increased legal aid funding by 40 per cent. That is significant because we know access to justice is fundamentally important.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Savage also said that the organization would stop their volunteer services until this government got their act together. Specifically, he referred to the government's most recent budget as a complete slap in the face. I asked the minister in estimates what her rationale was for not increasing the legal aid budget from their spending forecast from the previous year. To the same minister: now that you've driven defence lawyers to essentially quitting over lack of funding, perhaps you'd like to try again to justify holding your funding flat.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is absolutely the case that when we inherited this situation from the former government, of which that member was a member, we thought that legal aid was underfunded. That's why we have increased the funding to legal aid over the course of our tenure by 38 per cent. That is a larger increase than anything else in my budget has received, and it's certainly much better than members opposite would have done in the same situation.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In response to Mr. Savage's concerns – and, again, the concerns are so great that it caused the defence lawyers to withdraw their volunteer services from Legal

Aid – the minister said: they’ve been doing quite a good job, and obviously we’ve been able to increase their funding such that they’re able to keep up with the workload. Minister, there is clearly a complete disconnect between what you and the lawyers delivering these services are talking about. To the same minister: are you ignoring the problem, concealing the problem, or are you suggesting that these volunteers are liars?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. If anyone had ignored this problem, it was the former government, of which that member was a member. That’s why we have increased funding to legal aid by 38 per cent. That is a larger increase than any other area in my budget has seen. We certainly hope that when the time comes, the member opposite will continue to support that. We will continue to work with Legal Aid to ensure that they have adequate funding, as do all areas of the justice system.

Canadians’ Views on Oil and Gas Transportation

Mr. Westhead: Mr. Speaker, the Angus Reid Institute released a nation-wide opinion poll today regarding the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion. The poll demonstrated that two-thirds of Canadians say the B.C. government is wrong to try to block the pipeline. This represents a 10 percentage point increase since February. In addition, a majority of Canadians support the project, including a majority of British Columbians. To the Minister of Energy: what has the government done to be so successful in influencing the opinions of Canadians that this project is in the national interest?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I’m proud that our Premier has the highest approval rating amongst Canadian leaders for the work she’s done to continue to support this pipeline. It’s proof that results are happening. Overall support of the pipeline is increasing, up 10 per cent since February. We’ve always said that if we show that we have a credible climate leadership plan, that we have support, that this is in the national interest, and that we have leadership in our Premier, this would happen. This is proof. I know this isn’t what the opposition wants to see, that we were getting things done. But indeed people are moving towards . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
First supplemental.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that the Angus Reid poll also indicates that tanker traffic and a need for a visible and effective emergency response that people can have confidence in to protect Canada’s west coast is top of mind for Canadians, what assurances can you provide that this concern is being adequately addressed?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, this is an important issue. We’ve always said that B.C.’s Pacific coast is Canada’s coast. It belongs to all Canadians, not just B.C. Albertans are Canadians, and we take coastline safety very seriously. That’s why I’m pleased to note that with the approval of the Trans Mountain pipeline comes a \$1.5 billion investment by the federal government to look at improving the oceans protection plan. This will improve the spill responses and the marine safety, something

that is important to us all. I will note that there’s a total of 157 conditions . . .

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

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, to the same minister: given that the Angus Reid poll shows that a majority of Canadians, including a majority of British Columbians, agree that the B.C. government should give in and allow the pipeline to be built if Alberta cuts back on oil and gas exports and that cutting exports is one of the most likely consequences to occur, will the minister commit to using this tool if it becomes necessary?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we know that every day we wait, Albertans and Canadians are losing millions of dollars in revenue, to the tune of \$40 million a day. That’s money that can be used for roads, schools, social programs, all kinds of good things. I know the UCP wants to join in further delaying tactics like tying it up in court because it serves their political interests. Well, Albertans and Canadians are tired – tired – of political gamesmanship on this file. They want to see this matter get resolved. They want to see the pipeline built, and so do we. To be clear, this pipeline will get built.

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

Bill 12

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Now, this week the government introduced a bill that will allow the minister to control the flow of Alberta’s natural resources to maximize the return to Albertans. It’s a shame that it had to come to this, but here we are. Now, I understand that the industry is generally supportive of the bill, but I feel strongly that they should have assurances that the government will not retain the power to arbitrarily dictate to whom and how their products will be shipped and retain that power in perpetuity. To the Premier. This bill gives your government a huge amount of power. What controls will you put in place to ensure that if it is used, it will be used responsibly?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we took our time to get this bill right. There was consultation, legal advice, and we feel that this bill is going to be a great tool for us to use. The bill itself is an enabling bill, and it allows us to be very flexible, looking at different hydrocarbons as we move forward. Regulations will follow that will support that bill.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Clark: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given the extraordinary circumstances under which this bill is being introduced and given that the situation it seeks to rectify will hopefully be short lived, again to the Premier. When this bill comes up for debate, we intend to bring an amendment that will add a sunset clause in the form of a legislative review in two years’ time. That will be when we have a better understanding of whether the government still requires these broad powers. When we do introduce that amendment, Madam Minister, will you support it?

2:10

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I certainly look forward to debating the bill in this House. As was referenced, it's sad that we've gotten to this state. This isn't legislation that we're going to use lightly, but to be clear, we will use it if need be. We are more than determined; we are relentless that this pipeline is going to get built.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given the potentially significant impact on oil and gas producers and shippers if you do have to use these powers and given that these are Alberta companies that have been operating within the bounds of the law and have done nothing to warrant being used as pawns in this political game, once more to the Premier: will you commit to compensating any company who is disadvantaged by any action that you need to take under Bill 12?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I met last Friday with many stakeholders representing hundreds of companies in our industry. Again, we all agreed that it's too bad that we've gotten to this point, but we are united in the fact that something needs to be done. We certainly have broad support for what we're doing. I can quote Mark Scholz of the Canadian Association of Oilwell Drilling Contractors: I think it's very prudent and shows bold leadership on the part of the Premier, and it's certainly something we're supporting. PSAC: PSAC recognizes the Premier and the government of Alberta for standing up for Alberta's energy industry to ensure that the Trans Mountain . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Justice System Delays (continued)

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alleged Calgary gang leader Nick Chan was released from custody this week. He had been charged with first-degree murder, conspiracy, and directing a criminal organization. He was released because the trial had not taken place within a reasonable time. The triage protocol is not working. Minister, what are you doing so that violent criminals stop being released back into our communities, where our children are?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, of course, this case is of concern to the government, absolutely. We will continue to work on this issue. This case was in superior court. We do suffer from the lowest number of superior court justices per capita. That is a continual concern. I have written to my federal counterpart numerous times on this. I've written again to her just recently, and I'm happy to table that letter. In addition, we have a number of other strategies, which I'm sure I will get the opportunity to outline.

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, this is extremely serious. Mr. Chan would allegedly pay \$10,000 for successful hits on rival gangsters, and he is suspected of a triple murder in 2009. Given that this is not a case of being found not guilty – this is a case of running out of time; the courts are backlogged, and this minister has taken way too long to fix this – what is this minister going to do to fix this problem so that people can feel safe in our communities again?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely, this problem is of concern. That's why we've been advocating for more superior court justices. That's why we've been investing throughout the justice system. Certainly, we've taken steps with respect to this. We've taken steps to find efficiencies. We've also taken steps to add resources. I find it a little surprising that after singling out my budget to vote against the increases last year and again singling out to vote against the supplementary supply to support those things, the hon. member is able to stand up and accuse the government of not taking action.

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, just a little over a year ago the Justice minister said, "Things will not be lost as prosecutions merely because of timing, but prosecutors are empowered to make the decisions necessary to focus on serious and violent crimes." Clearly, that has failed. What is this minister going to do to instill confidence in our justice system for the people in this province?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we're extremely concerned about that. That's why, as I've said, we've been advocating with the federal government to get more superior court justices, we've been taking steps to ensure that our justice system is working efficiently, and we've also been making investments in our justice system to ensure that we're keeping on top of the resourcing. Resources are absolutely a component of this problem. This government has been investing while the opposition has been standing up to knock down those increases and to say that they're not worth it.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, what the Justice minister has said just now is manifestly untrue. The problem is that a year ago she committed to triaging serious, violent offenders in the criminal justice system through the prosecutorial service. She has failed to keep her word. We now have gang leaders suspected of triple homicide being released. Can the minister indicate: are there higher priority cases out there to which resources have been directed? Why a total failure in keeping her commitment to prioritize the prosecution of serious repeat offenders?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member
The hon. Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The prosecution service absolutely continues to work hard to prioritize those cases. There are a number of components to the justice system. The prosecution service is certainly one of them. Ensuring that we have a sufficient number of superior court justices is another one of them. In fact, Alberta became the jurisdiction with the lowest number of superior court justices, which had an impact in this particular case, under that member's government.

Mr. Kenney: Given that this minister seems more focused on covering for her ally Justin Trudeau than getting justice done, Mr. Speaker, and given that the Trudeau government has been in office for two and a half years and given that this minister a year ago said that she would prioritize the prosecution of serious repeat offenders, why has she so manifestly failed to keep her word?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, this is a problem that has occurred under the current federal government. We have absolutely been advocating for these justices. We are absolutely getting frustrated that they haven't been appointed. But

I think that in this instance there is a sufficient deficit in justices to go around. Certainly, the current federal government didn't do anything about it, but neither did the former federal government when that member was sitting around the cabinet table.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, given that the minister keeps trying to pass the buck and given that a year ago she said that she would prioritize the prosecution of serious repeat offenders, why was that commitment not respected with this particular case, a triple murderer and a gangland leader? Why is this kind of person getting off scot-free to go back into our communities when this minister said that people like that would face justice?

Ms Ganley: Mr. Speaker, we are absolutely concerned about this case. As I've said, it is presently under appeal, so I can't speak to the specifics. I will continue to say that we have advocated for more justices. We have brought forward a budget and multiple budgets that have invested in the justice system. We have brought forward changes to ensure that we're able to bring forward these serious and violent matters. The members opposite have spoken out against all of those things.

Mr. Bilous: They voted against them.

Ms Ganley: And they voted against all of those things. This government has a record of investing in the system, of making the necessary changes, and those folks have a record of criticizing.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Carbon Levy Economic Impact

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government is still trying to send a message to Albertans that the economy is in recovery and things are looking up, up, up, but for the average everyday Albertan and businesses this is just not their reality. Food banks in my riding say that this is not the case. One in Airdrie has said that the use has skyrocketed and that the demand has doubled and doubled again since 2012. When will you open your eyes and see that the carbon tax is hurting working families and nonprofits in this province? Why aren't you listening?

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know what? We know that not every small business and not-for-profit in the province has felt the recovery. We do know that Alberta led the country last year in growth, that we're on track to lead the country this year in economic growth, and that's because of our incredible, resilient, hard-working businesses that have weathered the downturn. Our government has provided a number of supports to support diversification and small businesses. We're continuing to invest in Albertans and in our communities, and we will continue to do so. I hope the members opposite will support our budget.

2:20

Mr. Orr: That's why people are lining up at food banks.

Given that there are huge unemployment issues as well and even working families all over the province are now not making enough to cover their bills due to the increased cost of heating their homes, increased cost to buy groceries, which are all necessities of life, and given, Minister, that children are going to bed hungry in this province, that is slowly being decimated by the costs of the carbon

tax, how can this government justify taking from the poorest in our society to line their own pockets?

Mr. Mason: Point of order.

The Speaker: Point of order noted.
The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government has committed to investing in this province, investing in the people in this province. There are a number of programs that we've rolled out to support families. When it comes to the carbon levy, two-thirds of Alberta families are receiving the rebate. We're investing in efficiencies, in businesses, in not-for-profits, in seniors' homes. Our government is investing in Alberta and Albertans. It's shameful that the members opposite one day will call for spending, the next day call for cutting. Our government has a path to balance. We're diversifying the economy, we're protecting public services, and we're proud of it.

Mr. Orr: Given that this government has already given the go-ahead to hike the carbon tax 67 per cent in the budget, is the government going to at least perform an economic impact study to see how these increases will affect families and food banks, to see if they will be able to afford to keep the lights on and continue feeding the province, or do they even care?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we released economic modelling on the topic of the federal proposal under the pan-Canadian framework in October of 2016 and in the context of pipeline approvals, which we then achieved, unlike the members opposite. The economy will grow in part because we have rebates going to two-thirds of Albertans. But here are other reasons why the economy will grow: because we have a child benefit that is going to 300,000 Albertans, because we have expanded school nutrition programs to 30,000 children, because we've increased the minimum wage. Sixty per cent of folks who earn it are women. That's what we're ...

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Southern Alberta Flooding

Ms Fitzpatrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our thoughts are with the families and businesses who are being affected by the flooding in southern Alberta and those people who are concerned about their property and that of municipalities and First Nations. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: what efforts are being taken to support municipalities and First Nations in their efforts to keep their communities safe?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. First off, I would like to say that I am thinking about the people from southern Albertan and actually have been in contact with multiple mayors down there about that. I'd also like to recognize the emergency management people down there, local officials on the ground, and the hundreds and hundreds of volunteers that are trying to protect lives and keep properties safe. We have field officers on the ground down there as we speak, and we are in contact hourly and providing assistance when needed and where needed at the request of the local municipalities.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Indigenous Relations: given that Siksika First Nation are under a state of local emergency and given that they are currently dealing with washed out roads, what assurances can you provide that the government is supporting in this emergency response?

The Speaker: The Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to say that I spoke with Chief Joe Weasel Child yesterday at Siksika Nation to discuss the circumstances on Siksika and, of course, to ensure that we are offering supports to the nation from our province. He was quite aware that our Emergency Management Agency team is already engaged, that supports have been offered from Transportation and from Environment and Parks as well. We're doing the right thing right now on a number of fronts. We're ensuring the safety of the people in the Siksika Nation.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Again thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: given that the weather will be getting warmer over the coming days and given that there are concerns that the warmer weather will mean that these communities could be dealing with more water, what are you doing to prepare?

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you to the member for the question. The Alberta Emergency Management Agency and Environment and Parks are working collaboratively to assist the communities with advice, with know-how, people, and equipment. Also, our Provincial Operations Centre is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Mr. Speaker, we're continuously monitoring the situation. We know we have to work with the local authorities down there, who are doing a fantastic job, by the way, and we will continue to work with them so we can adapt as the situation goes along.

Electricity System

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, with electricity prices getting more expensive as a result of the NDP's ideological actions like the accelerated coal phase-out, the PPA debacle, and the introduction of a capacity market, to the Minister of Energy: how many billions of dollars of public money has been burned by the NDP's electricity policy to date, and how much per year will it cost going forward? Minister, Albertans are watching. They want to know the real numbers, not rhetoric, and if you don't have the numbers, will you please commit to . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
The Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we have spent a lot of time in fixing a system that was broken for a number of years, relying on its volatility in order to even make money. We saw a situation where there was a lack of investment, so along with our climate leadership plan and going to 30 per cent renewables by 2030, we are fixing our system and doing a number of things. We're very confident. We're on schedule. Things are looking up, and we know that families can count on . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, given that I asked for the actual numbers and didn't get them, let me try again. Had the NDP not triggered

the power purchase agreement's cancellation clause and accelerated the coal phase-out, the minister would not have to create the capacity market. Will the Minister of Energy admit that without the capacity market our Whac-A-Mole electricity policy has made the grid unstable and unreliable?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, all along in this transition in our electricity system we have consulted everybody, a lot of stakeholders in electricity. We know that the current system we had when we came into government was one of two in all of North America, and it relied on volatility. We're moving to a more stable system, one where there are more predictable prices, 30 per cent renewables by 2030, and the capacity market is part of that. That's a system that's used in many systems throughout North America. It's a well-known, well-respected system, and investors like that part.

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, given that Keephills 3 and Genesee 3 are super critical coal-fired power plants with the lowest emissions of all coal plants and given that these coal-fired power plants could be made zero-emissions with carbon capture and storage technology, would the minister still order the shutdown of these coal-fired plants, putting families out of work, and creating uncertainty purely out of ideology, even if their emissions were zero?

Ms Phillips: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, in 2012 a certain government with a certain member around the cabinet table passed some regulations that phased out 12 of our 18 plants, and those phase-outs would have started in 2019. You know what the plan was to replace that generation? Zero. Goose egg. There was no plan to replace the generation. There was no plan for the workers or those communities. Now there is. We're phasing in renewables. We are making sure that we've got a coal transition worker fund of some \$40 million. We are finding ways to invest in communities through community generation and other projects, and now these guys want us to spend billions of dollars on an unproven technology? The answer is no.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Health Care Accessibility

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, I think we can all agree that Fort McMurray has given a lot to the province over the years. However, in return we've gotten smears, ostracism, and now medical insecurity. From orthopaedics to pediatrics to obstetrics the constituents of the municipality of Wood Buffalo had to travel to Edmonton to access these vital services over 22,000 times in 2017. Our only dialysis clinic runs three days a week, making constituents travel to Edmonton for treatment. Does the Minister of Health think that rural Albertans deserve reasonable access to proper health care?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Deputy Premier.
2:30

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm incredibly proud of the work we've done to protect the public health care system and to expand services throughout our province. We knew what was coming in 2015, and Albertans voted no for that. There were a billion dollars' worth of cuts to the public health care system. There was a health care premium that would have been a tax on families throughout our province. That was resoundingly rejected. We know that on this side of the House, we've brought forward

stability and we've brought forward reasonable agreements with our labour partners, that give that to the people of Alberta.

I look forward to finding out what the members opposite are going to do with our Health budget. I have a feeling that I know, but we'll see tomorrow.

Mr. Yao: Let's change gears here, Mr. Speaker. The Auditor General talks about the duplication of the bureaucracy. Administration is so deep that it actually impairs the system. In the estimates last year I asked you about the 10,000 employees that were hired by AHS over the last several years. You could only account for 1,500 of them being front line. [interjections] Through . . .

The Speaker: Keep going.

Mr. Nixon: Point of order.

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, you can throw a tennis ball down the halls of AHS administration here on any given Friday and not see anybody. There are salaried doctors seeing four patients a day. Has this minister done anything to lean up the bureaucracy so that patients in Calgary do not have to wait 10 months for a hip surgery and that kids in Edmonton do not have to wait . . .

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm so proud of the work that we've done on this side of the House to protect the front-line services that those members fight to cut every single day. You know what a billion dollars' worth of cuts would mean? It would mean longer wait times. It would mean fewer resources and less support. Instead, we have a government that's standing with the people of Alberta, that's expanding home-care services by 19 per cent in this budget alone because we want to support people in staying in their homes and doing so safely with the right support. We're building Willow Square, a long-needed facility in the member's own riding, because we know on this side of the House that Albertans deserve to live in the communities that they choose and to have the right health care supports. On that side of the House your colleagues keep advocating for us to privatize it. I know who's standing up for the people of . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

It seems to me, folks, that the tone is getting a little too escalated in here. You've got to calm down. Calm down.

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, if they looked at the CIHI reports, they'd see that they're failing in every regard.

Mr. Speaker, an elderly constituent approached me last week about how he wants to spend his golden years in Fort McMurray and that given that he now needs dialysis and can't access the three-day-a-week clinic in Fort McMurray, he must spend his days in Edmonton. Minister, despite your best efforts with carbon taxes to discourage people from driving fossil-fuelled vehicles, they are forced to drive to Edmonton for a treatment. Would you allow this clinic to be open for a few extra days in the week and allow them to stay within their community?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, we have a proven track record of standing up for the public health care system in this province and encouraging opportunities for us to make care closer to home. I'd certainly be happy to look into this specific instance just like we did in opening our dialysis clinic in Lac La Biche, something that the members opposite, when they were in government for many, many years, failed to do. They had people sitting on a bus out front. On

this side of the House we're investing in important public health care services, including those in Fort McMurray. I'm so proud of the work that we're doing there as well in maternal health and mental health, and the list goes on. Instead of deep cuts, you should be standing with us because we are working to protect services and expand them in Fort McMurray while your colleagues are calling for deep cuts and privatization.

Small-business Economic Indicators

Mr. Gotfried: Mr. Speaker, since the NDP took office, I frequently hear from struggling business owners about the oppressive cost burden, in many cases borne by them personally. From introducing and then increasing the carbon tax to rapidly increasing labour costs, small businesses have taken it on the chin. The government continually points to their small-business tax reduction as the offsetting solution. To the Minister of Finance: can you provide Albertans with any economic analysis indicating that the 1 per cent reduction in small-business tax compensates for the financial burden your government has heaped upon the small-business sector since . . .

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that the member speaks with small businesses, as do I and the Minister of Finance on a daily basis. We've been travelling the province, talking about our budget and how it is supporting businesses, investing in things like infrastructure that businesses need, improving quality of life, which, again, businesses are looking for, supports within their communities. Our budget also is continuing to diversify the economy and support the job creators through a number of initiatives, which I hope, from the member's question, he will be supporting as bills 1 and 2.

Mr. Gotfried: Mr. Speaker, supporting job creators is not what we're hearing.

Given the Canadian Federation of Independent Business found that 92 per cent of business owners lack confidence in this government's commitment to improving the business climate and given that according to the government's own labour force data Calgary's unemployment rate actually increased in March, again to the minister: how can you look Albertans in the eye and tell them things are up, up, up when it is clear to many out-of-work Albertans that the only thing up is the unemployment in our largest city?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That couldn't be further from the truth. There are a number of indicators, including jobs. There were 90,000 jobs created over the past year, the majority of those in the private sector. Our GDP is up. Manufacturing is up. Exports are up. Small-business confidence is up. The Business Development Bank of Canada says that small-business confidence is up in Alberta, with 35 per cent of small businesses looking to hire more staff and 73 per cent of them saying that they're investing in their business this year, in 2018. The other thing is that small businesses in Alberta have a greater economic impact than anywhere in the country. We're proud of our small businesses, and we'll continue to support them.

Mr. Gotfried: Mr. Speaker, the minister's own statistics don't bear this out.

Given that the CFIB's most recent business barometer indicates that Alberta's small-business optimism remains stagnant and is the

second lowest in the country and given the same report indicates that 18 per cent of small-business owners in Alberta are looking to cut back that staffing that he keeps referring to, again to the minister: entrepreneurs continue to lack confidence in your government, and almost 20 per cent plan to cut staff, so why do you continue to spin a completely different story to Albertans than is borne out by the statistics?

Mr. Bilous: Mr. Speaker, thank you to the member for the question. Again, the stats that I'm quoting are coming from third-party independents. Whether it's the Business Development Bank of Canada, TD Bank, Royal Bank, ATB, they're the ones that are giving us the indicators. We know that our exports are up. We know that restaurant receipts are up. Housing starts are up over 10 per cent. Business incorporations are up. Retail sales are up. I can tell you that Calgary is the fastest growing city on the prairies this year and will be the fastest growing city in the country next year. Compared to a year ago in Calgary, over 3,100 full-time jobs . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Water Act Enforcement

Mr. Hanson: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. On December 11 last year I asked the environment minister about a Water Act enforcement order that was issued in August on land adjacent to the town of St. Paul. At the time of my question the landowner was already noncompliant for three months, and it's now been seven months. Minister, you said in December that all those aspects of the Water Act have top priority. Spring is here. The flooding has started. Why has nothing been done to enforce this order?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will take the matter under advisement and undertake to provide the hon. member the specific information that he is inquiring about on the specific case after question period.
Thank you.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this minister has restricted or closed access to trails in Alberta's backcountry to prevent damage to natural water courses, Minister, why will you not enforce this order where a landowner has literally filled in over a kilometre of natural water course, resulting in runoff backing up into residences in town?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, I have committed to looking into the matter for the hon. member. If it is part of a regulatory proceeding, we will provide him with that information as well.

Mr. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, the minister has known about this for seven months, and I brought it to her attention in December.

Given that the town of St. Paul is facing an estimated \$130,000 in costs to try to prevent flooding into people's homes due to lack of action by your department – your department tried to stuff this issue back onto the town of St. Paul, Minister – why should the town and taxpayers have to pay for your negligence on this file?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will undertake to provide the hon. member and the House the information he has requested.

Thank you.

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

Flood Mitigation on the Bow River

Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've had several constituents from the community of Bowness approach me about their concerns related to flood mitigation and upstream mitigation on the Bow River. To the Minister of Environment and Parks: what is your ministry doing for upstream flood mitigation measures?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To date the province has committed \$91.8 million for 46 projects on flood mitigation on the Bow River through the community resilience program, the flood recovery erosion control program, and the watershed restoration program. It is crucially important that we continue to invest in Calgary as a response to the devastating events that we're coming up on the fifth anniversary of. That is why we have continued to make those robust investments in and with the city of Calgary to keep communities safe.

2:40

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What role does your ministry play in deciding how these funds will be allocated?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've committed to \$150 million over 10 years to bolster the city of Calgary's flood protection infrastructure, and we work with the city to determine the suitability of each project. The planning is done as part of a multiyear process to ensure that Calgary is flood protected. Planning is done in partnership with the city, but the city is ultimately the project manager and is responsible for the design and construction in consultation with their citizens.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that your ministry has been collaborating with the Bow River Working Group. Can you give an update to the House on the recommendations that they brought forward and how your ministry will be implementing them?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We released in August the Bow River water management project, that was produced by the Bow River Working Group, and there are a number of initiatives that have come out of that report: discussions with TransAlta, discussions with the irrigation districts, feasibility studies on increasing the drawdown rate at the Ghost reservoir, initiating feasibility studies for some of the long-term projects that we know we may have to invest in over the long term. In the coming days we'll have more to say on next steps, but one thing is clear: we are working and investing to keep the people of Calgary safe.

The Speaker: Hon. members, in 20 seconds we'll proceed with Members' Statements.

Members' Statements

(continued)

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

GoldenBucks Bakeshop in Edmonton-Meadowlark

Mr. Carson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This month I had the opportunity to meet with Edna and Evan Estigoy, owners of GoldenBucks Bakeshop, located in the La Perle community in Edmonton-Meadowlark. GoldenBucks Bakeshop specializes in Filipino baked goods. Their empanadas, yam cakes, and candies can be found at Save-On-Foods and Filipino markets across the city. They also sell some of their products from their recently opened storefront in La Perle, but their main focus is on distribution, with aspirations to sell their baked goods in stores all across Canada. They explained to me that they are already in talks with retailers in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Based on the quality of their products and ambitions to grow, I know it's just a matter of time before they expand to new markets.

GoldenBucks is a true Albertan success story. In 2016 owner Evan Estigoy was laid off from his career as a control systems engineer. Like many other Albertans, the Estigoys were faced with the challenge of supporting their family during the economic downturn. Edna and Evan turned to their Filipino heritage and their passion for baking and cooking for inspiration. In September of 2016 they became entrepreneurs and began producing and distributing their baked goods from a rental commercial kitchen with the little money that they had saved. By November of 2017 they had successfully grown their business and were able to open their own independent facility.

I'm proud of our government for supporting small businesses by dropping the tax rate by 33 per cent and introducing targeted tax credits to support investments.

It was a pleasure to sit down with the Estigoys this month to discuss some of the rewards and challenges of starting a small business here in Alberta. This is still the beginning for GoldenBucks, and I wish them all the success with their business here in Edmonton-Meadowlark. If you haven't already done so, I encourage you to stop by their storefront or pick up some empanadas the next time you're out grocery shopping.

Thank you.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The Official Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to give notice pursuant to Standing Order 42 that at the appropriate time I will move the following motion:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government not to proceed with any further increases to the carbon tax until Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain expansion project has completed construction and commenced commercial operations.

I have the appropriate copies.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I would like to give oral notice of a motion for tomorrow's Order Paper, the motion being:

Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 4(1) commencing May 1, 2018, the Assembly shall meet on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday evenings for consideration of government business for the duration of the Fourth Session of the 29th Legislature 2018 spring sitting unless the Government House Leader notifies the Assembly that there shall be no evening sitting that day by

providing notice under Notices of Motion in the daily Routine or at any time prior to 6 p.m.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Service Alberta and Minister of Status of Women.

Bill 14

An Act to Empower Utility Consumers

Ms McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce Bill 14, An Act to Empower Utility Consumers.

Mr. Speaker, since 2003 the UCA has a proven track record of helping to educate and mediate on behalf of Alberta's natural gas and electricity consumers. To build on this work and the work of the Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose from last session, I am introducing this bill to make several enhancements to the services provided by the UCA. These enhancements further our government's commitment to protecting utility consumers.

[Motion carried; Bill 14 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. The first tabling is a copy of the enforcement order that I referred to in my question to the minister.

The second one is a letter from Nick Clark, cofounder of Utility Network and Partners Inc. He starts out by complaining about the number of e-mails he's had from ministers of the Crown requesting donations to the NDP Party. His answer is no, and he goes on to further supplement that.

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, I rise to table page 2 of the executive summary of Alberta's Wholesale Electricity Market Transition Recommendation from the Alberta Electric System Operator, which proves that because of the coal phase-out and the increased reliance on intermittent renewables, the electricity system's reliability has been compromised, thus the need for a new market structure, ergo the capacity market.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Westhead: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the document to which I referred in my question to the Minister of Energy. That's the Angus Reid opinion poll that was released today showing that our Premier is leading the country as the most trusted leader on the pipeline issue and that the majority of Canadians support the project.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the most recent in a series of letters to the federal Justice minister as regards the appointment of superior court justices. I have the appropriate number of copies.

The Speaker: Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the appropriate number of copies of a report from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, Economics, in which their

business barometer shows the business barometer index as flat and the general state of business health trending downwards in 2018.

The second is a report of the Alberta government, Alberta Labour Force Statistics March, 2018, showing lower statistics in terms of labour force participation in March 2018 versus the prior month and the year prior and an increase in the unemployment rate from the previous month.

2:50

Tablings to the Clerk

The Acting Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the hon. Ms Ganley, Minister of Justice and Solicitor General, the Alberta Law Enforcement Review Board 2016 annual report.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I believe we had three points of order today, the first being by the Government House Leader.

Point of Order

Allegations against Members

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today, I don't have the exact time, but it was sometime close to 2:30, sometime after 2:30, the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka in his questions used the expression or something to the effect that the government is lining its own pockets. Now, that is an expression, according to the Cambridge dictionary, "to earn money using dishonest or illegal methods." Another definition: "to make money esp. by using dishonest, immoral, or illegal methods."

Perhaps he doesn't fully understand the meaning of it. He may, indeed, have just intended to say that the government is receiving revenues as a result of the carbon levy, and that would certainly be true. But in his choice of language, Mr. Speaker, he has suggested something dishonest and personal aggrandizement of members of the government, which is completely unacceptable. Under 23(h), (i) and (j) I would respectfully request that you rule that the hon. member is violating those sections of our standing orders and ask him to stand in this place and apologize.

The Speaker: The Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you often say in this place, context is everything. While the Government House Leader may present one interpretation of what that saying could mean, there are other interpretations of what that could mean.

Again, Mr. Speaker, the Government House Leader should let the other side speak. Now, I know he is struggling with that today, but I would ask that he would let me talk while I have the floor. The hon. member said, and I have his notes, "How can the government justify taking the poorest in society to line its own pockets?" or, as he has told me – I don't have the benefit of the Blues; you do – "their pockets?" It was either "their own pockets" or "their pockets," from the best of his recollection.

The fact is this. This is a matter of debate, Mr. Speaker. As has been raised in this House many times, the government's carbon tax is taking money away from some of the poorest people in our province. The member was pointing that out. That money, in turn, is then going to the government. That is the member's point. The carbon tax is taking away from the poor, and then it's going to the government.

As for the context, what the Government House Leader is doing is clearly a matter of debate.

The Speaker: Hon. members, context. I recall at least one and I think two in the last earlier sessions. There was a fairly serious

matter or point of order with respect to whether or not a comment made was aimed at an individual or at a group. In this particular instance I would say that there is no point of order. However, to the hon. member, as the Government House Leader has suggested, it may not have been your intention to reflect that, but I would urge you to be cautious, and that goes to all of the members. When we're using phrases such as that, how it's received by many people may not be intending the intention you made. In this particular instance I don't see a point of order, but nonetheless I would caution everyone.

I believe we have at least two other points of order from the Opposition House Leader.

Point of Order

Remarks Off the Record

Mr. Nixon: Points of order. Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first point of order that I raise, I rise on 23(h),(i) and (j), particularly language that will create disorder in this place. At the time that I raised the point of order, the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, I believe – I always get those two Fort McMurray ridings confused – was asking a question. The Minister of Environment and Parks at that point started to yell very aggressively and quite loudly at the hon. member, telling him to speak through the chair, that type of stuff, and continued to yell him down; something that happened throughout the day today by government members.

Mr. Speaker, at the time you, I believe rightly, stood up and called the House to order and tried to stop that behaviour. Now, it may have confused the government because you did not look at the government to tell them that they were making that noise; you looked at us. But at that point you did ask them to stop. Of course, there was no heckling at all from this side of the House, has not been all day. But we have a minister who continues to yell at our members, not allowing them to ask a question. They have a right to ask their questions in this Chamber. That's what they've been brought here to do. While I understand the government can't control their childish behaviour – we've well established that – we would ask that they would at least allow our members to be able to ask their questions and speak on behalf of their constituents in here, and we would ask you, Mr. Speaker, to protect their right to do so, as is the chair's responsibility.

Mr. Mason: Well, Mr. Speaker, I hardly know where to begin with this. The protestations of the opposition since their new leader has taken his seat are absolutely too much to be believed. The level of decorum in this House is just fine. It is not excessive. But those people over there, before this new strategy was employed – and that's what it is; this is a strategy of the opposition – were one of the loudest, most obnoxious oppositions that I've ever seen in this place for nearly three years. There were repeated interventions as female members of the government were heckled and almost shouted down. All of a sudden a new strategy by the new leader . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, get to the point of order.

Mr. Mason: Under (h), (i), and (j), Mr. Speaker, it's pretty clear. It's pretty clear to me that the new strategy is to reform the little rascals and turn them into the little angels, who are pointing across the aisle . . .

The Speaker: Get to the point of order that we're at.

Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Mason: . . . and putting words in the mouths of our members and pretending to have their feelings hurt, Mr. Speaker. It's a political strategy, not a point of order. That's my point.

The Speaker: Thank you.

I noticed Calgary-Foothills, and now I see Airdrie. Is there additional information?

Mrs. Pitt: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I would like to speak to this point of order and correct the hon. Government House Leader in further adding that there are particular members on the Official Opposition side of this House, more particularly the only two female members, that happen to continuously, actually, hear louder comments from the government side. Our members on this side of the House are feeling like they're not being protected, and they're not able to speak up for their constituents.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Hon. minister, is there something substantive you'd like to say?

Ms Ganley: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. I think I'd just like to add with respect to that particular point that the other day we had a series of these points of orders, where the members opposite were putting words in the mouths of our ministers, standing up and claiming to be victims, and then shouting me down as I attempted to speak. So I think that certainly this is going on all around the House, but I think the point here is that in this particular instance there is no point of order because the member was merely asking that comments be addressed through the chair.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

It seems that whenever I allow for additional members to speak to items, the distance from the point of order seems to increase. I do have the benefit of the Blues, which you may or may not have. It reads: "You could only account for 1,500 of them being front line [interjections]." That's what it is.

Hon. members, I tried to caution and advise, bring the House to where there was an exchange of comments across from one side to the other, but I did not hear specifically who was saying what. So, as has been in the past, I don't know how I'm expected to rule on a matter when I do not hear it. Again, folks, you folks can decide as to whether or not you want to continue, you know, exchanging in these kinds of discussions in time.

In this particular instance I'm not able to hear it, nor the comment, and there is no point of order.

There is, however, a – the Opposition House Leader.

Point of Clarification

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I rise on 13(2) and ask you to explain your ruling. Clearly, we were not yelling or heckling our own members while they were asking a question. The Blues do show that there was shouting down of the hon. member asking questions, unless it's the assertion of this House that we were heckling our own member so that he could not ask the question. You did call the House to order, and the question we have that we'd like you to explain is why you won't look at that side of the House when they continue to . . .

3:00

The Speaker: Hon. member, please. Please, hon. member. I advised you what I heard, and I could not identify a party. I think, hon. member, you need to accept that reasoning because I did not hear it. As to where I look, I look on both sides of this House.

Government House Leader, I'm not sure that you have anything else to add to this.

Mr. Mason: No. You dealt with it, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I can recall in this House when there was a considerable amount of exchange going on. I spoke to it over and over again with respect to volume, and that in no way needs to legitimize any comments that may have happened at this point in time. I submit that, firstly, the responsibility rests with all of the members. If tactics at one time or another change, I notice it on all sides with respect to that.

I have explained the reasoning, and I would therefore ask, hon. member, that you speak to your notice of motion.

Mr. Nixon: I've still got another point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: You've got another point of order?

Mr. Nixon: There were three called.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Point of Order Gestures

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on 23(h), (i), and (j), particularly abusive language or motions that would create disorder in the House. At the time that we called the point of order to defend our members, when, as you pointed out, the Blues show that there was a disruption in the House that you were trying to get control of, the Government House Leader, keeping in line with the immature actions of this NDP caucus in this House, then started to make motions with his eyes towards this side of the House, with his hands, that would indicate, you know, traditionally inside this House that we were crybabies or we were crying about the abuse that we were being subjected to by the minister of environment.

I would ask that he withdraw and apologize for those actions. He's better than that, and he needs to get control of the immature actions of his caucus and himself in this Assembly.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, nothing could be further from the truth. I did have something in my eye, and I did rub my eye. Obviously, the hon. member took that completely the wrong way and seems to suggest, in fact, that I was suggesting that he was a crybaby. I didn't say that or intend it, but if the shoe fits, maybe he should wear it.

Mr. Loewen: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I saw you. Please be seated.

If this Assembly is expecting that the Speaker will be responsible for the facial expressions and views across the House, I think you provide a challenge to me and to any Speaker which goes far beyond the capacity of an individual to control. I think it rests with all of you.

Opposition House Leader, I've heard your two points of order. I think you have a motion you're proceeding with under Standing Order 42. Is that right, hon. member?

Mr. Loewen: Point of order.

Point of Clarification

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I rise on 13(2) to get you to explain your ruling on why you continue to allow the opposition to be abused and stand up for the majority in this House.

The Speaker: I've explained it, hon. member. We're done on that issue. Finished.

Motions under Standing Order 42

The Speaker: Now, are you prepared to move your motion? Would you please proceed with that.

Trans Mountain Pipeline Construction Suspension

Mr. Nixon:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government not to proceed with any further increases to the carbon tax until Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain expansion project has completed construction and commenced commercial operations.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, we are 43 days, I believe, possibly 42 days, away from the Kinder Morgan imposed deadline on this Trans Mountain project. This government still has not taken any action on that. It still has the carbon tax, which they continue to raise and continue to punish everyday Albertans with in every sector, from veterans, seniors, schoolkids, on and on. They brutally and savagely punish them with this carbon tax and can't even get their social licence or their pipeline built. We believe that

they should suspend that at least until they can get their pipeline built and follow through on their promise to Albertans.

[Unanimous consent denied]

The Speaker: I believe the Routine for the day is complete.

Pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(5)(b) and the Budget 2018 main estimates schedule the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m. The legislative policy committees will convene this afternoon and tomorrow morning for consideration of the main estimates. This afternoon Families and Communities will consider the estimates for Education in the Parkland Room, and Alberta's Economic Future will consider the estimates for Executive Council in the Rocky Mountain Room. Tomorrow morning Resource Stewardship will consider the estimates for Municipal Affairs in the Rocky Mountain Room, and Families and Communities will consider the estimates for Children's Services in the Parkland Room.

[The Assembly adjourned at 3:06 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(5)(b)]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, April 19, 2018

Day 20

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Vacant, Fort McMurray-Conklin
Vacant, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake

Party standings:

New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 25 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent: 1 Vacant: 2

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Babcock	Loewen
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Fildebrandt	Panda
Hanson	Rosendahl
Kazim	Schreiner
Kleinsteinuber	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, April 19, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let each of us reflect or pray in our own way. As we enjoy a breath of fresh air provided by Mother Earth, go in peace, go safely to your homes and the communities you serve.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you four hard-working individuals with the Association of Science and Engineering Technology Professionals of Alberta. As I say your names, please rise: Barry Cavanaugh, Mat Steppan, Jennifer Bertrand, and Adam Campbell. This is Adam's first visit to the Legislature. He's ASET's recently elected council president and currently works as operations manager for water and waste-water utilities for the city of Lethbridge. Adam is from Okotoks and currently lives in Lethbridge with his wife and lovely two-year-old daughter. Thank you, Adam, for your commitment to the public service and for your contributions to ensure the safety and success of engineering professionals across Alberta. I'd like to invite everyone to please give them a warm welcome to our House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to rise and introduce to you and through you to this Assembly a team of individuals helping to ensure the long-lasting success of Alberta's electricity system. This team is from my department and has put in literally hundreds of hours in meetings and policy work, all to determine how best to design Alberta's new capacity market. This legislation, which I will be introducing later today, will go a long way to achieving a stable and reliable and affordable electricity system for Albertans. As I call their names, I would ask them to rise: Stacey Smythe, Mike Fulsom, David Stanford, Helaina Zyp, James Lin, Kaitlin Boyd, Kelly Tai, Kimberly Budd, Steven Flavel, Hossein Hatami, Brenda Hawkins, Zackary Merilovich, Madelene Belanger, Russel Andrews, and Robert Chow. I would personally like to thank these folks for the hard work they've done and ask the members to join me in welcoming them.

The Speaker: Hon. minister, your guests may not have arrived yet. The Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and to all members of this Assembly representatives of the Alberta graduate provincial advisory council, which I had the pleasure of having lunch with today as well as several meetings over the past year. I'd ask the representatives to please rise as I name them. With us today we've got Willem Klumpenhower. Mostafa Sakr I don't think came in. We have Lindsay McNena, Jamie Czerwinski, Shawn Ang, Babak Soltannia, Masoud Khademi,

and Nicole van Kuppeveld. I ask my colleagues here to please give them the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Minister of Health and Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to introduce some special guests who are joining us today to celebrate National Volunteer Week. They are seated in the members' gallery. These are specifically a group of very thoughtful and committed, passionate AHS volunteers and one volunteer co-ordinator. Volunteers are among the most devoted people in our health care system. Last year almost 15,000 individuals volunteered more than 1 million hours of service to the patients through Alberta Health Services. Whether it's greeting patients or helping them find their way, assembling patient blank charts, or knitting a baby's first blanket, these volunteers are an important part of our AHS team. I invite them to rise if they're able to or to wave otherwise – Ruth Smith Hill, Aaltje Fokkema, Ed Quao, Anne Christou, Max Li, Shakib Rahman, and Debbie Kennedy – to please receive the appreciation and warm welcome of our Assembly. And to your family members, please join us as well in rising and receiving our gratitude.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Jasleen Kaur Mann. She's a high school student and a constituent from Edmonton-Ellerslie. She's a dedicated volunteer who shows up regularly to the office, sometimes even unannounced. That's how eager she is to help. I couldn't ask for a better volunteer. So through you, Mr. Speaker, to Jasleen, thank you for your dedication, determination, for always getting the job done. I'm lucky to have you as a constituent and as a volunteer. I ask that we give her the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a very special day for me today. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly some of the VIPs in my life: my mother, Valerie Cote, who was, you know, contrary to what people might think, the first NDP member in our family and a great inspiration for me; my stepfather, Alvin Brockman, who is an all-around great guy, and it's wonderful to have him here; my sister, Andrea Piquette, who is a surprise guest for me today and is welcome. You know, it really means a lot to me that my family is able to be in the House today. They have been tremendously supportive, and I certainly wouldn't be anywhere close to this place without their help.

I would also like to introduce Vanessa Goodman and Tammy Forbes. Vanessa is the manager of external relations for the North West Redwater Partnership, which is the subject of my member's statement later today. With her is Tammy Forbes. She is the director of strategic communications for Women Building Futures, which is a key labour force contributor to the partnership. I see they've already risen, so I would be, you know, really thankful if all the members would give a very warm welcome to them.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is a tremendous honour to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Mark Taylor. Mark is the executive director of the Alberta Party, and he's here helping democracy happen, building constituency associations, and getting our fabulous volunteers ready for the upcoming election. I see that Mark has risen. I'd ask you all, please, to welcome Mark with the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Aileen Jang. She is a pharmacist here in town and a business owner. She is greatly concerned about some of the regulations going on, and she's one of the organizers of the protests across this province that are being led by the pharmacists. I'd ask the House to give her a great greeting.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Mr. Yao: As well, Mr. Speaker, to the House I'd like to introduce Chris Relph. Chris was from Bathurst, New Brunswick. He worked for the Fort McMurray fire department as an EMT firefighter. I got along very well with him because we're both from New Brunswick. His service is today – right now – in Fort McMurray, and I just wanted to say some kind words about him.

Thank you. I'm sorry for misappropriating the time of the House.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

Women's Equality

Ms Babcock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The reality is that women have the right to equality in Alberta, yet we still face barriers to equal treatment. Women not only had to fight for the right to vote, but they had to fight to get their sisters of colour that right, and they had to fight to get their indigenous sisters that right. They had to fight and still keep fighting so that legal health services are safe, protected, and free from harassment. We stand with our trans sisters, making sure that their rights are also protected.

The Equal Suffrage Statutory Law Amendment Act passed unanimously in Alberta on April 19, 1916, but it was a long fight to get there. Canadian women had been campaigning for better health care, working conditions, and against family violence. They also fought for reproductive choice and birth control. These brave women helped found political movements and brought new voices to politics. WHO states that the minimum number of women in decision-making bodies should be 30 per cent. In this House we see that – and maybe it's a good thing – 98 per cent of the women in this House sit on this side, so we have parity at the decision-making tables.

We need to continue working towards ending violence against women and girls, pay equity, getting more women in leadership positions, and increasing women's democratic participation. To do this, we need to see women from every walk of life in this Legislature and around every board table. We need all women to know their voices matter.

Most importantly, we need to let women tell us what they think the biggest women's issue is in Alberta. Women I have talked to have a large variety of issues that are important to them. For many mothers, especially single mothers, \$25-a-day daycare is their priority. For those women with a family accessible and affordable health care for their children and elderly parents is their priority.

For women of a lower socioeconomic status opportunities for equal pay is their priority. As a woman my biggest issue is my children's education. Women in Alberta are diverse and have diverse issues, and we cannot be painted with a single brush.

Mr. Speaker, the reality is that women have the right to equality in Alberta. Thank you.

1:40

Israel

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, 70 years ago today the ancient longings of the Jewish people were fulfilled with the creation of the Jewish democratic State of Israel, born out of the ashes of the Holocaust, born out of centuries of pogroms and persecution. The Jewish people carved out of an inhospitable terrain a new homeland, a homeland that has been assailed decade after decade, invaded on five occasions, facing existential threats every day, but a nation that has persevered in fidelity to the ancient Covenant of the Jewish people, a land that has been home to Jews making aliyah from Ethiopia, from Asia, from the former Soviet Union, a land that has been an example to the world, carved out of the desert, creating one of the most innovative and successful economies on earth, but, most importantly, a secure homeland for a people who today face the new anti-Semitism, violence across the world, sadly including here in Canada, which perpetuates the most ancient and pernicious form of hatred, that of anti-Semitism.

Mr. Speaker, in the anthem of Israel, Ha Tikvah, it says that our hope is not yet lost, the hope 2,000 years old, to be a free nation in our land, the land of Zion and Jerusalem. Today we join with the people of Israel and with all Jewish people in celebrating that land of Zion and Jerusalem. Israel is the answer to the Shoah, and the people of Israel live. That is the message of Israel. [Remarks in Hebrew]

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

Provincial Strategy on the Kinder Morgan Pipeline

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Choices. Every day we all make choices. A parent chooses how to raise their child, an MLA chooses how best to advocate for our constituents, and the government chooses how to react to the issues of the day. The government has information that the rest of us don't have. At times they need to keep sensitive discussions behind closed doors, and that needs to happen even when the opposition is making noise or the media is asking difficult questions. In those situations the government can choose to play to the crowd. They can choose to try to win the daily media cycle or win the next three hours on Twitter. They can choose to govern for the headlines and maybe generate a nice YouTube clip or a meme they can use for fundraising, which is exactly what the NDP have done when it comes to the Kinder Morgan expansion project. They've been caught focusing on politics and the short-term win instead of taking a long-term view.

When Kinder Morgan announced their May 31 deadline to decide whether their expansion project will continue, the government had a choice. They could work quietly to negotiate the best deal for Albertans, or they could go for that headline. To the detriment of our province they have chosen the latter. They told Kinder Morgan exactly what they would do and how far they would go. When the Premier called the Kinder Morgan expansion too big to fail and said that the government was willing to buy the whole thing, they put all of their cards on the table. It's like walking into a car dealership and saying: "Here's how much money I have. Now how much is that truck?" Well, guess what? It costs exactly the amount of money that you have.

The Kinder Morgan expansion should go ahead, but if Alberta does end up buying a stake or even the whole thing, there is absolutely no chance now that we're going to get the best deal for Albertans. It didn't have to be this way. If the NDP had chosen patience and focus instead of a quick political win, the pipeline would have a better chance of moving ahead and Albertans would get a better deal.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

Sturgeon Refinery Update

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to give an update on a project that I'm proud to have in my riding, the Sturgeon refinery. It is a good-news story. The refinery is now nearing completion. Nine out of 10 units are now in the commissioning phase. This past December the refinery produced its first diesel, and I was honoured to attend the celebration in Morinville along with my colleague the MLA for Sherwood Park. At the current stage of construction this refinery is able to process synthetic crude into diesel and other value-added products. Over 2 million barrels have been refined and shipped within western Canada already, and the refinery has started paying off.

The Sturgeon refinery is state of the art and a testament to Alberta ingenuity. It's the world's first refinery with integrated carbon capture and storage. At completion this refinery will capture 1.2 million tonnes of CO₂. The CO₂ is safely sequestered by injecting it into depleted geological formations deep beneath the Earth's surface. This is the equivalent of taking nearly 300,000 cars off our roads. The refinery also protects the environment by producing ultra low sulphur product with low carbon intensity.

From a peak of 8,000 workers to around 2,500 today this refinery has logged over 50 million hours of employment. During one of the worst downturns in recent memory this project has provided a decent income to thousands of Alberta families. Further, this refinery has stood out as a leader in ensuring an equitable and representative workforce through partnering with organizations such as Women Building Futures and working closely with First Nation communities. It is also known as a good neighbour by the farmers nearby and is a huge supporter of the local community.

Seventy-five per cent of Albertans want to see more refining done in this province. The Sturgeon refinery was the first new refinery built in years and was done with the novel funding arrangement that has made this project possible. The North West Redwater Partnership is to be commended for creating something successful and truly made in Alberta.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

National Day of Mourning

Ms Fitzpatrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. April 28, the National Day of Mourning, is the day Canada remembers and honours the workers who have died, been injured, or became ill due to their workplace. Every year health and safety committees and investigators look at these injuries, illnesses, and deaths. Recommendations to make changes in the workplace usually occur after any investigation so that these occurrences are not repeated and any other lives are not affected. This year we will not be in the Legislature on April 28, so I have chosen to do my statement today about the importance of this to each and every one of us.

I have always felt a deep connection to health and safety in the workplace perhaps because I worked in an environment with the

potential for danger for so many years. That danger could come from the work site, other staff, or the offenders. You might have heard over the last two years about two incidents of sexual harassment and sexual assault within two federal correctional facilities. These were incidents of workplace injuries, sexual assault, and sexual harassment which could have been prevented. These injuries have left at least three staffpersons, who were doing their jobs, damaged probably for their lifetimes. I will say again that they could have been prevented.

Taking action when a workplace is not safe is what the Day of Mourning is all about. We all hold a responsibility for making our workplaces safe. I speak about this because it is so important to remember those who have suffered, to push for change, and to keep on pushing until every person in every workplace is safe from preventable injury, illness, or death.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Health Ministry Communication with Clients

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sometimes when we are dealing and speaking about billion-dollar budgets, it can be easy to forget that the work that we do here is for the benefit of all Albertans. Looking through the budget doesn't help us connect to the people who need health care. It's not that this work isn't important. We need to ensure the sustainability of the whole system to help individuals, but we need to remember it's only one part of the story. The other part of the story is the Albertans who are facing serious illness. Albertans dealing with serious illness, whether it's their own illness or that of a friend or a family member, are incredibly brave. It's often a lonely journey, and whenever possible we should lend a hand and give them our compassion and understanding.

With that in mind I want to talk about some constituents of mine. Kira Palmer is the mother of her son Evan, who's been dealing with a rare disorder, spinal muscular atrophy, a disorder that is slowly taking Mrs. Palmer's son away from her. Mrs. Palmer along with other parents struggling with the same issue have been campaigning to get access to life-saving medication. I know the Minister of Health has been contacted by these folks, and to her credit and to the credit of her office they have responded, albeit through a form letter. The problem with a form letter, especially when dealing with such a heart-wrenching medical issue, is that it can make someone feel like they're stuck in a faceless system. A form letter doesn't make someone feel like they've been heard. For someone who is fighting for the life of their child, who just wants somebody else to understand the complexity and the nuance of what they are going through, a form letter isn't always appropriate.

1:50

Minister, this woman isn't asking for a miracle. She's asking for something much more human, something well within your power to give. She's asking for compassion, understanding, and a chance to be heard. I'm asking this minister to please meet with Mrs. Palmer. She's asking for half an hour of your time because that half an hour might mean a lifetime with her child.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Oral Question Period

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

Trans Mountain Pipeline Construction Suspension

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday at 4:30 in the afternoon the Premier told me at committee, "We are in a position

now where we are very close to being able to establish the certainty that is necessary” for the construction of the Trans Mountain pipeline. At exactly the same moment the president of Kinder Morgan Canada was telling his investors: it’s become clear that this particular investment may be untenable for a private party to undertake; the events of the last 10 days have confirmed those views. Why did the Premier get it so completely wrong?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I know that the member is desperately trying to cherry-pick quotes from here and there in order to create a semblance of failure that he can then celebrate. Heaven knows that he’s good at celebrating failure because his party has quite a long record of that on the matter of getting pipelines to tidewater.

That being said, what we know is this. Kinder Morgan said yesterday: we are actively engaged with the federal and Alberta governments, and those conversations will continue in good faith; nothing has changed in that regard. Nothing has changed, Mr. Speaker. We are working with Kinder Morgan and with Ottawa to get this pipeline built, and it will happen.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the question is about the Premier’s credibility. She’s been declaring victory on this from day one, doing a nonstop victory lap. In the face of another B.C. delay she pulled the wine boycott and said, quote: it’s a definitive victory. Yesterday Steve Kean, the president of Kinder Morgan, said on the issue of potential public investment: there are really two separate things; most of the investment is in British Columbia, where the government is in opposition to the project; that is an issue that, in our view, needs to be resolved. The question is: why did she get it so wrong? Why doesn’t she understand what the project proponent itself is saying?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, in fact, Kinder Morgan said exactly what they said on April 7: B.C.’s actions have put the project in jeopardy. This is not news. We are fully aware of that. That is why I have said that Alberta is prepared to take a public position. That is why we brought in Bill 12. That is why I flew to Ottawa and had some very detailed conversations last week with the Finance minister and then again on the weekend with the Prime Minister and again with the Finance minister. We are working very hard to get this pipeline built, and I believe that we will be successful.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, it seems that the Premier’s chief of staff was too busy posting videos of the opposition on Twitter to inform her that she was misleading a committee yesterday in saying that we were close to certainty when the company was saying exactly the opposite. How can Albertans take seriously this Premier’s observations about this critical issue, vital to our economic future, when she’s saying, “Don’t worry; be happy,” while the company is saying that the project may be untenable, and nothing has changed to improve its prospects of construction in the past 10 days? Why did they get it so completely wrong?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, as I’ve said before, Alberta is closer than ever to getting the pipeline built. Now, to be clear, if it was easy, there is a slim possibility that the members

opposite might have been able to succeed when they had eight years to get it done, not a huge possibility, but it is ever so slightly possible. Nonetheless, we are working very hard, and we will win this fight because we have the facts on our side. We have Canadians on our side. We have recent polling that shows that we have the majority of British Columbians on our side, even in the Lower Mainland. The only people not on our side are the UCP and their leader.

The Speaker: Second main question.

Mr. Kenney: Yeah, right, Mr. Speaker. The party that surrendered to Justin Trudeau’s veto of Northern Gateway, surrendered to his killing of Energy East, surrendered to Barack Obama’s veto of Keystone XL, and did absolutely nothing but attack us for suggesting a fight-back strategy against British Columbia for the past nine months – instead of attacking the opposition, why doesn’t she thank us for giving her the policy ideas that have now become government legislation?

Ms Notley: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, I’m sure that the member will be incredibly surprised to learn that this issue is actually not about him and that, in fact, our government has been working in a very determined fashion since well before his return to the Alberta political scene, a scene that he wasn’t actually on when he was in Ottawa, where he could have actually been fighting for pipelines but chose not to, but that’s a whole other issue. We’ve been working on this all along. We have been working with stakeholders across the board, industry experts, politicians from across the country, and ultimately we are convinced that we will get it done.

Mr. Kenney: You know, Mr. Speaker, it’s not about me; it’s about Alberta. Funnily enough, the NDP mentioned my name 209 times in the fall session of this place.

Mr. Speaker, the important thing is that they accepted our ideas after mocking and ridiculing them, and that’s fine. They’re welcome to good ideas, including the idea of being prepared to turn off the taps. Unfortunately, there’s one critical person who doesn’t believe that they’re serious about it. His name is John Horgan. He’s a New Democrat. He says that this Premier is bluffing. He says that she told him she has no intention of using the legislation. So why should we believe this Premier when the NDP in British Columbia doesn’t?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, while we’re in the business of counting up names and words in *Hansard*, I’ll just say that I’m pretty sure it wasn’t me that counted my own name. In any event, one thing that I did do was that I looked at how many times the word “pipeline” appeared in *Hansard* by the member opposite when he was actually a member of the government in Ottawa. You know what? Once. You know how often the word “Kinder Morgan” showed up? Maybe on the last day. I can’t remember; he might have been doing it then. The point is that when it comes to looking at *Hansard* and counting up words, what it shows is that someone wasn’t actually standing up for Alberta when they had the chance. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, while this Premier was standing at rallies with signs saying, “No pipelines, no tar sands, no oil,” I was standing up in Ottawa as part of a government that saw the construction of four pipelines that doubled shipping capacity in Canada, of which I am proud, but the real question is the Premier’s

credibility. Her British Columbia New Democrat allies are telling us that she is making a bluff on the threat to turn off the taps. What is the use of using that threat if the other side doesn't believe that it will be used, and why has she blown her credibility with the B.C. New Democrats on this issue?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will say that it is true that the level of credibility that I have with the B.C. New Democrats is very different than that of the member opposite. What I will also say, as I have said before in this House and in every other forum, is that the B.C. government knows full well that we brought in a piece of legislation that was designed to be used, that was designed to withstand legal scrutiny, that was designed to ensure that Alberta's interests are absolutely represented at absolutely the right strategic time, and we will not back down from doing the job when it becomes necessary.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.
Third main question.

Mental Health Services for Children

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, on another important subject, there's troubling new data about deteriorating access for mental health for Alberta children in particular. The Alberta Health Services third quarterly monitoring update indicates that the number of children who get access to mental health treatment within 30 days has declined from 82 per cent in 2014 to 67 per cent now even though the Premier said that improving the mental health and well-being of Alberta's children is a priority for the government. If it's a priority, why is access to that service deteriorating?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm really proud of the fact that we've actually increased access. We've increased services. For example, the Zebra Child Protection Centre: in 2017 we supported over 1,600 children and youth. We opened the Rutherford mental health clinic for children and youth in Edmonton and surrounding areas. We're building an eight-bed youth facility in Red Deer, and the list goes on. You know what? There is more to do, and that's why this side of the House is investing more in health care instead of pushing for rash cuts, because we know that we're headed in the right direction, but we know that there is more work to do, and we know that there are more families in need.

2:00

Mr. Kenney: This is one of the problems with the NDP, Mr. Speaker. They think that spending more results in better outcomes when the opposite is true in this instance. In 2014 in Edmonton 77 per cent of children got access to mental health services in 30 days or less. That's down to 45 per cent now, a 32 per cent drop since this government took office. They may be spending more money, but that money is not resulting in better services to children in need of mental health services. Why?

Ms Hoffman: Well, the truth is, Mr. Speaker, that we are increasing investment because we believe that these families deserve opportunities to access increased supports. Demand is also going up. I know the member says that we're doing worse, but we're actually doing more. There is increased need as well. That's why when the member says that we should be spending less, that if we spent less, we'd get better outcomes, he couldn't be further from the truth. We saw what happened when they moved forward with

drastic cuts in the 1990s, closing 88 per cent of long-term care beds. I am so relieved that he isn't in a position to be able to do that to the children and families of this province who count on us for mental health supports.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, it's this government's record that we're talking about. In Calgary in 2014 91 per cent of kids got access to mental health services in 30 days or less. That's now down to 74 per cent. It's down province-wide. The government said that this is a priority. Then why are fewer kids getting access to timely mental health services? Does the minister understand the concept of ministerial responsibility? Instead of blaming some government from 20 years ago, does she have the capacity to stand up and take responsibility for this decline in services and fix it?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think the first thing to make really clear, which the member opposite didn't quite seem to pick up on, is that the demand for these services has grown, which means that we have more work to do in order to provide services to meet that demand. We are committed to doing that. Beginning the analysis by saying that more money won't help but that privatization will is absolutely the wrong direction to go in. Beginning the analysis by suggesting that we keep funding at the same level it was at three years ago is absolutely the recipe for failure and the recipe for pain and suffering on the part of these kids and their families. Thank goodness that they won't get the chance to do that.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.
The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Trans Mountain Pipeline Construction Suspension (continued)

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the president of Kinder Morgan said that despite meetings between the Premiers and the Prime Minister nothing has changed in the past 10 days and that their project remains untenable. To the Premier: now what?

Ms Hoffman: Now what is that we're continuing to move forward on three fronts, Mr. Speaker, the fronts being that we are willing to take a public stake in this project. I wish the members of that party would say the same. This is so important. It's so important to the people of Alberta and of Canada that we can't threaten to have a board from Houston potentially impact our future. That's why we have taken this. We have also taken legal measures to be able to control the taps. If I were in the Lower Mainland filling up today at prices above \$1.50, I'd be really worried about what might happen when this bill is passed, if it has to come into play, if their government doesn't get out of the way and let us get our product to tidewater. That's what's happening. We're fighting for this project, and we won't back down.

Mr. Clark: Mr. Speaker, Kinder Morgan is legitimately concerned about their ability to get this project built in this political environment, but it is that very same political environment that the Premier may force Albertans into by potentially buying the entire Kinder Morgan pipeline. Again to the Premier: if we do buy into this project, what makes you think that your government will be able to succeed where Kinder Morgan, a company that does nothing but build and operate pipelines, looks like they may fail?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said to the member opposite when we were in estimates yesterday, there are certain parts of the conversations and the negotiations that are going on right now that need to stay at the table in order to make sure that we get the best outcome possible. Suffice to say that the question raised by the member opposite is one that we have already taken into consideration. As he knows, the federal government has already talked about moving forward with additional federal legislation in order to address some of those matters. We are very confident that we are putting together the capacity to make sure that the pipeline can move forward.

Mr. Clark: Well, Mr. Speaker, I sincerely wish things would stay confidential, because about 10 days ago, when news about the troubles with Kinder Morgan came out, the Premier, frankly, overreacted. She immediately talked about buying the entire project, to the point of purchasing the whole thing. She said: it is too big to fail. That very clearly jeopardized Alberta's negotiating position on this project. To the Premier: why did you negotiate in public? Is there any scenario where Alberta will take a lesser stake, or are we boxed in, already committed to buying the entire project?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, there are multiple scenarios that would not involve us buying the entire project. I can assure the member of that. But the fact that I outlined the fact that Alberta was now prepared to consider taking a public position in the pipeline if necessary was a message to B.C. that they were going to be dealing with a much more determined set of investors if they thought that that was the strategy that was going to work for them.

To the member's previous points, let me just say this. You know, you can't bargain well when you walk into a car dealership if you tell them how much money you're going to spend, but at the same time, if you never walk into the dealership, you will never buy the car.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Calgary-Shaw.

Foster and Kinship Care Supports

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While serving on the Ministerial Panel on Child Intervention, I learned that foster and kinship caregivers provide safe, loving, and caring homes to thousands of children who need them the most, and they deserve the supports due this life-changing work. To the Minister of Children's Services: what is our government doing to ensure foster and kinship caregivers have the resources they need to look after the children in their care?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are so thankful for foster and kinship caregivers, who step up for kids in need and show us what community truly means. That's why our government's 2018 budget provides an additional \$1.9 million for basic maintenance funding to support foster and kinship caregivers as well as those who have supports for permanency agreements. These supports help cover the day-to-day costs of raising a child in foster or kinship care as well as for potential adoptive or private guardianship families and supports for permanency caregivers.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we haven't seen these rates increase since 2014 and that foster and kinship caregivers have been advocating for these increases for some time, will the same minister update the House on what foster and kinship caregivers have been saying about these increases?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thousands of foster and kinship caregiver families across Alberta play a critical role in providing safe, loving, caring homes for so many children who need one. We share their commitment to ensuring that foster and kinship programs give both children and families the best possible outcomes. For too long caregivers weren't given the supports that they needed, and now the Conservatives, you know, want to potentially cut these supports and services just to give their rich friends a \$700 million tax giveaway. Unlike the Conservatives, our government has these families' backs and is proud to stand with them.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that foster and kinship parents are at the front lines providing the supports that children in care deserve, will the Minister of Children's Services update the Assembly on what other work the ministry is doing to support caregivers?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many of us know just how challenging it can be to raise kids, which is why I'm so humbled by what these families do. Their work is selfless but should never be thankless, and every parent and caregiver deserves a break. That's why our government has also doubled the amount of rest and respite days available to caregivers. We will continue to listen to caregivers and the Foster and Kinship Association and ensure they have the supports they need to care for kids in Alberta.

Budget 2018 Revenue Forecasts

Mr. Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, last month this government unveiled a budget that is dependent on the success of the Trans Mountain expansion project. At the time the Finance minister said that his revenue projections were based on the fact that he believed Trans Mountain would be built, but yesterday the Kinder Morgan CEO said that the Trans Mountain expansion is untenable. The question I have for the Finance minister is this. Can he tell us how Kinder Morgan's decision to suspend nonessential activities impacts his budget projections?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The budget that was tabled, Budget 2018: A Recovery Built to Last, talked about three lines in the future needing to be present or that will be present. Those are KXL, line 3, and Kinder Morgan. Whether they're Kinder Morgan and line 3 or line 3 and KXL, we have our path to balance assured.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the budget also shows that there is a 67 per cent increase to the carbon tax that was hidden within that budget, and since this government has indicated that that carbon tax increase is directly associated with putting in pipelines, if they remove that carbon tax because we don't get the pipeline, what will that do to the projections in the budget?

2:10

Mr. Ceci: Mr. Speaker, just with regard to the comment about being hidden in the budget, I want you and all members to know that the budget that we presented last year and this year are judged by I believe it's the Conference Board of Canada as being the highest grade in terms of transparency of financials reported in this country. We know with regard to the federal portion of the carbon levy that those will help offset the costs of programs and services Albertans need and will get us back to balance in 2023.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, given that this Finance minister soon expects us in this House to vote on his budget and given that this Finance minister presented a budget that is putting us on track to have \$96 billion in debt based on if Kinder Morgan manages to get Trans Mountain built, to the minister: if this pipeline is not built – and we sincerely hope this does not happen – how much debt will Albertans be facing in 2022?

Mr. Ceci: Mr. Speaker, of course, the other side keeps cheering that they don't want Kinder Morgan to be built and that they want the outcome to be negative for this province, but we are cheering for it to be built, and it will be built. The other part of the deficit and the debt is that we had a choice in this province. We could severely cut programs and services, like that side would do, and give tax breaks to friends. We won't do that. We're going to keep the programs and services strong and get back to balance in 2023.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Provincial Response to Pipeline Opposition

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. B.C.'s NDP government was always adamant about its intention to obstruct the Trans Mountain pipeline. Here in Alberta our caucus has long called for consequences if B.C. continued on this path, but the government chose to mock our calls instead of taking action sooner. Yesterday B.C. announced that it's moving forward on its court reference to further delay this project. To the Energy minister: why did your government wait so long to talk about consequences for B.C.'s obstructions?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, our government has taken strong leadership on this matter. Our Premier has been engaging people in many provinces, including British Columbia. She's been to Ottawa many times. She's talked to investors about the importance of this pipeline not just for Alberta but for all of Canada. Our Bill 12 that we've introduced is adding another tool in our tool box. I can assure members that we've got strong legal advice on this and that we are on strong ground on this matter.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that on February 22 this government chose to prematurely end its temporary wine boycott, meant to discourage the B.C. NDP from its pipeline obstruction, and given that the next day the B.C. government said that it was moving ahead with the court reference and specifically said that Alberta should take no comfort in this, to the Energy minister: what assurance can this government give that the next steps on this important file will get actual results, not a premature declaration of victory?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the court challenges are just an example of many roadblocks that have been set before us on this pipeline, and that's the reason that we introduced Bill 12 the other day. We are very serious about taking action should it be needed, and if there are continual roadblocks set before us, we will absolutely use that legislation.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the recent statements from Kinder Morgan, including yesterday's, indicate that they're still lacking much-needed certainty for this project and given that the Premier of British Columbia and his Attorney General have both said this week that they are not taking Alberta's Bill 12 seriously, what is the minister doing today to ensure that British Columbia stops its attempts to obstruct this project?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, if we weren't serious about Bill 12, I wouldn't have been in Calgary last Friday meeting with over a hundred energy stakeholders. I wouldn't have wasted their time on that. It might be that the British Columbia government is not taking it seriously, but I can assure you that British Columbians are, as are Canadians. Our support for this pipeline is up over 10 per cent just in a little over a month, and it will continue to rise. Make no mistake; this pipeline is going to be built.

Justice System Delays

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, Albertans need confidence that our justice system can hold violent criminals to account. Just this week we saw a gang leader accused of murder released onto the streets because of trial delays. The Justice minister promised to triage cases so that the most important ones would not be delayed. I'm not asking the Justice minister to comment on this particular case, but can the minister say not which cases but which type of cases got to court in the last year, on your watch, which were more urgent than a trial for first-degree murder?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. Of course, we are concerned about this matter, and this is why the Crown filed an appeal yesterday, so I won't talk about that.

But let's talk about the member opposite's record. The Leader of the Opposition sat in Ottawa for a decade and ignored those issues. In 2012 a *Herald* article said Ottawa Silent on Alberta Plea to Ease Judge Shortage, while on this side of the House the Justice minister has taken steps . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. McIver: Given that the minister doesn't want to answer this difficult question and given that the Minister of Justice has assured us that her triage protocol will prioritize serious and violent offences and given that charges of first-degree murder, conspiracy, and instructing a criminal organization were not triaged under this minister, to the Minister of Justice: how dare you say that your triage protocol is working when one of the most violent cases to come before the courts this year did not get the needed priority to avoid a judge calling the delay extreme and excessive?

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. As government we are absolutely committed to making sure that Albertans are safe in their communities and that their justice system is working for them. That is the reason we have hired 50 new Crown prosecutors. We are hiring 10 more. That is why we created 10 new judicial positions, so we can address this backlog, which was ignored by the previous government in Ottawa, which the member opposite was part of.

The Speaker: I would just caution both sides of the House with respect to a case currently in the court, but I think you'll be conscious of that, hon. member.

Mr. McIver: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, given that there was no justice, as the minister said, for the victims of the crimes that the court threw out this week and given that the Justice minister said last year that the triage protocol is explicit and it empowers prosecutors to make the decisions necessary to focus on violent crime and given that an accused charged with first-degree murder was released without a trial this week, again to the minister: as it is now clear that your actions from the last year have failed, what are you doing today to fix your own serious problem, which is to ensure that violent offenders stand trial before judges set them free for a lack of your timely process?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
I'm going to caution you again, hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will avoid commenting on that, but it's a serious matter. But we will talk about the record of the Conservative government in Ottawa, which was there for a decade and only created two positions. That certainly added to the backlog we are facing today due to the Jordan decision. On this side the Justice minister has worked hard on this issue from day one. We have created 10 positions, and we have constantly asked Ottawa to fill these positions so that Albertans can get the justice they deserve and they need.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Anticrime Initiatives

Mr. Nixon: It was very embarrassing to just watch what the minister did in those lines of questions on crime. Let's be very clear. The Leader of the Opposition in this House, when he was in Ottawa, passed over four dozen tough-on-crime laws during his time there. What has this minister done to pass laws to be tough on crime? I will tell you, Mr. Speaker, that over and over we have been to this Chamber on this issue while this government has sat on their hands. What have you done to be tough on crime inside this Legislature?

Ms Hoffman: What we've done, Mr. Speaker, is that we've increased resources for front lines. Instead of grandstanding and pointing fingers, we've actually worked with Ottawa. We've created a number of different judiciary positions that should have been filled when your leader was in Ottawa, but instead we'll work to get them filled today. What did happen when the leader was in Ottawa? The appointment of a justice, Robin Camp, who was single-handedly the judge who blamed a rape victim for not keeping her knees together. When asked if members from Alberta were involved in that, I have to say that Peter MacKay, the Justice minister at the time, said that the current leader of the UCP . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

2:20

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, what this government has done besides yell in this place is to actually freeze funding for police inside Drumheller and Calgary and other places for the next two years. They brought forward an announcement that, at its core, has just taken RCMP officers, that are already overwhelmed, out of their current detachments in our communities and put them somewhere else. This government has no idea how to handle this. Once and for all, what are you going to do to get tough on crime in our communities? We're sick of being abused. We don't want to hear your rhetoric. What's your plan? Your plan is not working. This week proves it.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have a budget that we've put forward that acknowledges that there is increased need in rural communities. We've also asked for justices to be appointed by the federal government. Again, the *Globe and Mail* interview: multiple people, including Peter MacKay, the former Justice minister, stated that the Leader of the Opposition, the UCP, here in Alberta, was the political minister for Alberta and that he personally signed off on the appointment of Judge Camp. That is a shame. That is an embarrassment, and I have to say as a woman that having somebody like that make a decision to tell me to keep my knees together if I were to be assaulted is shameful. That's not justice.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, this government passed the budget last year, and still nothing has changed, so passing the same type of stuff within their budget now is not going to change anything because the problem is that this government and these NDP members will not go talk to Albertans that are being impacted by these decisions. Instead, they want to stand up here dodging questions and go with pure rhetoric all the time. Again, what steps are you taking right now to be tough on crime besides yelling at the opposition? What's your plan? You are in government, not us. We'll be there soon. What's your plan right now?

Ms Hoffman: Let me give you two tangible actions that we've taken on this side of the House. One is that we brought forward additional funding to help fight rural crime. The members of the opposition voted against that. Two is that we brought forward funding to support the victims of sexual assault. The members opposite voted against it, Mr. Speaker. I guess we'll find out in a few short minutes what the members opposite will do with the increases to the Justice budget because on this side of the House we're standing up with Albertans, we're putting our money where our mouth is, and all they've got is a lot of mouth. [interjections]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

Municipal Funding

Ms Babcock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Municipalities in my riding, because I do listen to them all the time, were pleased to hear the announcement made during the budget speech of this government's intent to legislate the fiscal relationship with municipalities, fulfilling a decades-long ask by those municipalities. Given that our municipalities need the stability of a long-term commitment because they need to make three- to five-year plans, to the Minister of Municipal Affairs: how will this achieve that stable and predictable funding that those municipalities need?

Mr. S. Anderson: Serenity now, Mr. Speaker. All right. Let's talk about something really good. Our government is committed to

infrastructure for municipalities. I've listened to them, I know what they are looking for, and we want to have stable and predictable funding. We will aim to make legislative changes to have a new system operating by the time MSI expires. Legislating this fiscal relationship will allow municipalities to accomplish long-term municipal and regional financial planning to ensure stable delivery of the services and to accomplish key infrastructure builds that Albertans need.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Babcock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that municipalities have been asking for stable and predictable funding, for those of us who listen to them, for years, how will they be engaged in this new funding agreement?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. MSI will expire in 2021-22. The new funding arrangement discussions: we will begin with municipalities that will be large and small. We will engage with our municipal stakeholders such as AUMA and RMA over the spring and the summer, when it comes, to ensure that the municipalities have a say in the development of this legislative relationship. The relationship between the provinces and municipalities is evolving, so our funding arrangements must evolve with that. The municipalities have indicated they need something that is sure, that is stable, that is sustainable and allows them to plan for the long term, and that is what we are going to do.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Babcock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When we're talking to these municipalities and listening to them tell us what they need – to the same minister: when can these municipalities expect to see these upcoming changes?

Mr. S. Anderson: As I said, the MSI will expire in 2021-22. Following funding arrangement discussions this summer and pending those agreements, the government will aim to make legislative changes later in this year and to have a new system operational by the time MSI is set to expire. For many years we have maintained strong supports for municipalities. Mr. Speaker, I'm proud that our government continues to support municipalities, and I'm proud that municipalities all across this province, 340 municipalities, have stable funding right now. We will create a long-term legislative funding agreement with them.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

212th Avenue S.E. Interchange Project in Calgary

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Constituents in my riding of Calgary-South East are continuing to feel the pressure of rapid population growth. As I've stated in this House before, transportation infrastructure is desperately needed to keep those neighbourhoods connected to the rest of Calgary and grow the economy in Calgary-South East. One important part of that infrastructure is the 212 interchange. To the Minister of Transportation: can you let us know when the 212 interchange is expected to be completed and whether it is on schedule?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I was very pleased to be part of negotiations with the developer and the city of Calgary, and we came up with, I think, quite a creative funding arrangement where each partner contributed one-third towards that, and that has been signed. We announced that some months ago in Calgary. Design work is under way, and I'm hopeful that the project will be completed in the next couple of years.

Mr. Fraser: Rightly so, you stated that the funding for the 212 interchange was funded by partnerships between Brookfield, the city of Calgary, and your government and given that this may be the last budget presented before the next election and a possible change of government, to the same minister: has all the necessary provincial funding for this project been allocated for this year's budget?

Mr. Mason: Well, thank you very much for the question. Well, I am not anticipating a change in the government, Mr. Speaker – I have to say that right off the bat – but obviously the hon. member is concerned that if the UCP was to form the government, this arrangement and many other arrangements, not just for infrastructure but for health care, for education, for all sorts of services that Albertans need would be in jeopardy, and I think that in that he's absolutely right. We need in this government to work very hard for the trust of Albertans to make sure that that does not happen.

Mr. Fraser: Given the government's legislation prohibiting spending announcements during an election period and given that the next provincial election falls during budget and the start of next year's construction season and given the possibility of cost overruns on construction at the 212 interchange, to the same minister: what's being done this year to mitigate the risk of cost overruns resulting in delays in the completion of this project?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, we are very serious in the Department of Transportation to make sure that projects are delivered on time and on budget, and we take great efforts to scrutinize the course of planning, engineering, and construction to make sure that we have the best possible prices, that we have the best possible prices on tenders. We've been able to get some very good prices on tenders, as a matter of fact, by investing at a time when people are looking for work and companies were looking for contracts. We've been able to achieve significant cost savings in that. We're going to make sure this project is on time.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Physicians' Hearing Tribunal Decision

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week there was a disturbing report that an Edmonton-area doctor sexually assaulted a female patient and twice assaulted a nurse and has been allowed to be returned to work even though this individual has a recurring pattern of behaviour. The hearing tribunal said that his "proven conduct was very serious and repugnant for a member of the medical profession." To the minister: does she agree that this is outrageous, that this predator is allowed to continue practising as a doctor?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, and thank you to the member for the important question. I, too, am deeply concerned by this. I think that any woman going to a doctor's office should feel

confident that she's in good hands. Any woman working in a doctor's office should feel that way as well, Mr. Speaker. Immediately my office reached out to the College of Physicians & Surgeons to discuss this matter and our concern. We understand that there is legislation in Ontario to give greater teeth in response to this, and we're certainly considering that possibility along with other tools that we can do to ensure that anyone going to go a doctor's office has confidence that they're not being seen by somebody who has a history of assault.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
First supplemental.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is. It's truly distressing that a predator like this is allowed to continue working as a doctor.

Given that section 133(1) of the Health Professions Act states that the responsible college needs to provide their code of ethics for the minister to review, does the minister intend to raise this disturbing issue with the college responsible to ensure that this never happens again, and if so, when?

Ms Hoffman: Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, immediately after hearing about this specific case, we picked up the phone, reached out to the College of Physicians & Surgeons to find out how this could possibly happen and what we can do to ensure that it doesn't happen again. I have to say that I would expect, just like from my experience on the school board, when you send children to school, that you want to have every assurance that the people who are working with them are in a position of trust. It's the same when you're talking about people working in the health care system. We're working with the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta, and we began that process yesterday.

2:30

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I mean, given that this so-called doctor assaulted an 18-year-old woman during what was supposed to be a routine examination in 2013 and given that section 135.1(1) of the Health Professions Act states that the minister can actually give direction to the college after consulting with them "if in the opinion of the Minister it is in the public interest or if in the opinion of the Minister [there's] a direction [that] would provide for matters related to health, safety or quality assurance," to the minister: will you commit to working with the college to restore this trust and confidence in the system?

Ms Hoffman: Just to restate, Mr. Speaker, this process began yesterday. We reached out immediately to the College of Physicians & Surgeons and began these conversations. We do need to make sure that the college has the appropriate legislative authority to be able to act in a way that would give me and other women confidence in this province. I wish that those measures that other jurisdictions had taken had been considered by governments in the past, but we're here today. We're certainly looking at all of the tools that are available to us because we want to ensure that every patient going to a doctor feels safe and that the college itself has the tools to be able to ensure that.

Taber Flood Recovery and Mitigation

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, when the fires in Fort McMurray raged, emergency services from the MD of Taber were some of the first to answer the call for help. When the floods in High River and Calgary surged, residents of the MD of Taber rolled up their sleeves, put on

their rubber boots, and cleaned out flooded basement after flooded basement. To the minister. The MD of Taber is now in need of help. My ask is straightforward. Will you direct disaster recovery money to help them out when they come calling?

The Speaker: The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the important question. We all feel for the people in southern Alberta right now during the floods and are very sorry for what's happening. We have people on the ground that are helping right now. I'd just like to point out that the local officials on the ground are doing a fantastic job: the volunteers, the firefighters, everybody who's out there right now. We have said that we will give help whenever they need it. We have equipment on the ground right now. We have people on the ground. Disaster relief funding is a program. The disaster recovery program is something that comes after things are said and done here. We will work with the municipalities. In fact, I had some information yesterday . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, given that the MD of Taber did the right thing and was proactive in their efforts and given that they averted a major disaster by their quick response and given that 50 per cent of the roads in the MD have been affected by washouts, again I ask the minister: will you do the right thing and make sure that the MD of Taber receives proper funding through the DRP so that they are not left having to bear the burden of their mitigation efforts, that have saved the province tens of millions of dollars, for potential damage?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the member well knows – he should know how DRP works – it does come after people come to the municipality. They apply for that. We have special criteria that are in place. As I said, we will help when asked, and we have been helping when asked. Again, I do want to point out that they're doing some great work on the ground, public works down there, who have, you know, cleaned out ditches, dug big dugouts to hold water and that. They are doing some really good things down there. One of those things with the DRP is that we do have specific criteria for these disasters in place for a reason.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, given that three irrigation districts – the SMRID, the TID, and the BRID – proactively mitigated the loss of critical bridge and road infrastructure by quickly subcontracting 40 excavators to clear hazardous ice floes from the main irrigation canal and given that it was not their water problem to begin with, yet they still stepped up and did the right thing, and given that had they not subcontracted those excavators, the loss to critical infrastructure and loss to farming production this year would have been catastrophic, will the minister step up and, again, do the right thing and make sure that the DRP money to fix this problem is at hand?

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

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have been engaged crossministry, actually, down there. Alberta Environment and Parks has been working closely with the impacted communities down there. Alberta Transportation has been giving updates on road

closures. Provincial emergency social services has been engaged with local emergency social services with reception centres. Service Alberta has deployed 12 AFRRCs radios to support AEP's efforts in the Taber region and 12 radios to Taber for the local authorities. Pumps and hoses from the GOA provincial stockpile have also been sent to the region. As I said, when the DRP comes in, when the requests are there, we will evaluate.

Bill 12

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, we've heard the Premier declaring victory over the Trans Mountain on numerous occasions. Let's be clear. The opposition would like to see this pipeline built more than anyone in the province. However, we have heard that the NDP in British Columbia says that they do not expect that Alberta will use this legislation. What assurances can the House have that that, in fact, will take place?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we've been taking leadership on this matter for a couple of years. As roadblocks have appeared with respect to the Kinder Morgan pipeline, we introduced Bill 12 the other day, which is going to allow us the power to be strategically thoughtful in how we employ the exports from our province, the resources that Albertans own. As I mentioned in a previous question, I met with industry last week, on Friday. I would not have wasted their time were we not intending to use this legislation.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, given that we are about to rise and take a constituency break in just a few hours and given that Bill 12 has now been on the Order Paper for over a week and given that the B.C. NDP is saying that they don't expect this legislation to be used, why are we going to wait till the end of the month to even debate second reading of Bill 12?

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, that's an interesting question. You know, this is a very important piece of legislation, and we need to make sure that we've had it thoroughly discussed, that the public is aware of its contents. I think it's a very portentous piece of legislation. We, of course, do not want to use the powers in that bill, but we're prepared to do so if necessary because we're prepared to do what it takes to make sure that that pipeline is finished and completed as we have planned.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, given that this is a say one thing and do another government and that they've said that they've had a plan for months – and now he's saying: we want to make sure that we're heard on our plan, which, clearly, they haven't been speaking to anyone if they haven't been listening. They say that they have a plan, they say that they have legislation, and now they say that they need to wait. Which one is it? Do they have a plan or not?

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, we absolutely have a plan. Now, on the other side – you know, we've just seen the government of British Columbia make a reference to the Supreme Court with respect to the federal government's authority. The opposition is now saying: well, that's just going to delay things. We agree. So why was it that the leader of the Conservative opposition stood up and said that he wanted to go ahead with the reference? Was he also seeking to delay the pipeline along with his ally Premier Horgan?

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

Women's Equality

Ms Luff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The I Believe You, Me Too, and Time's Up movements have all demonstrated the consequences of women's absence from the decision-making table. When more women are in positions of leadership, culture changes. To the Status of Women minister: what is being done to advance women in leadership?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the hon. member for the question. Women in Alberta are strong, talented, and make incredible contributions to our province, but for too long women in our province have faced barriers to attaining leadership positions. We know that a diversity of ideas leads to better outcomes and better bottom lines for this province. This is why we asked the Alberta Securities Commission to adopt, disclose, or explain rules to help increase the number of women on corporate boards. That's why our government launched programs like the Ready for Her initiative, where we encourage women to run for office, and that's why we're also providing much-needed dollars through grant funding to empower local nonprofits to advance women in STEM fields and in business.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
First supplemental.

Ms Luff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For too long in Alberta women have been absent from public agencies, boards, and commissions. To the same minister: what has the government done to empower women to be present at the table?

2:40

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. The previous government did not make addressing women's representation on public agencies, boards, and commissions a priority. In 2015 women held only one-third of the seats on Alberta's public agencies, boards, and commissions. Our government changed the board recruitment process for Alberta's agencies by making it more transparent and easier for women to put their names forward to be leaders in our province. Today, under our government, women hold 53 per cent of these seats. It's only with deliberate action that we will see more women at that table. That's why we've also created a mentorship pilot project in Calgary for women looking to advance their careers.

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

Ms Luff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Owing to movements like Me Too, gender inequality is at the forefront of public consciousness. I hear very often about issues like child care, the gender pay gap, and sexual harassment. What is the ministry doing to tackle gender inequality on a broader level?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For too long women in our province have faced barriers to work, unequal pay, and high levels of domestic violence. That's why our government is taking concrete steps to make life better, fairer, and safer for women of Alberta. We're investing in affordable child care, helping more women to enter or stay in the workforce, increasing the minimum wage to

make real progress towards closing the gender pay gap, providing a historical amount of funding to sexual assault centres to support survivors, strengthening workplace protections against sexual harassment, creating the first-ever domestic violence leave that provides up to 10 days of protected job leave per year for employees by addressing the situation of domestic violence.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Presenting Petitions

The Speaker: The Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Yao: Thank you very much. I'm here to table a petition by the pharmacists from across the province, sir, if I may read it out loud:

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to reinvest at least 50% of any savings anticipated from generic drug cost reductions resulting from the 5-year agreement recently negotiated between the pan-Canadian Pharmaceutical Alliance and the Canadian Generic Pharmaceutical Association effective April 1st, 2018, into frontline pharmacy services and programs to ensure the delivery of better healthcare for Albertans and the sustainability and job security of the thousands of Albertans employed in pharmacies and drugstores across our province, including Alberta pharmacists who have a demonstrably positive impact on the healthcare outcomes of Albertans and do save the healthcare system money.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Bill 13

An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future. This being a money bill, Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor has been informed of the contents of this bill and recommends the same to the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, in November 2016 we committed to modernizing Alberta's electricity system to ensure that we continue to deliver reliable energy, attract investment, and prepare for a low-carbon future while all the time protecting Albertans from service problems and price swings that they have experienced under the existing system.

To continue moving forward with this transition, a number of changes must be made to various electricity-related acts and regulations. More specifically, if passed, this bill will enable the creation of a capacity market, increase investor confidence in Alberta's electricity system by providing policy and regulatory certainty, protect consumers when electric and natural gas service providers breach service quality and compliance standards, and provide more options to Albertans who want to generate their own electricity from renewable or alternative sources.

Thank you. I move first reading.

[Motion carried; Bill 13 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices I'm pleased to table five copies

of the following document: Putting Alberta's Financial Future in Focus, a commentary by the Auditor General April 2018. An electronic copy of this document will be provided to all members.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Highwood.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this week I was questioning the minister on conditional pricing and RFPs. I'd like to table the required number of copies for the House regarding an example of conditional pricing and an RFP response.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table five copies of an article from the CBC: 'Catastrophic' Overland Flooding Shuts Down Southern Alberta Highways, Threatens Taber Homes.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table a letter from Irene, who says: "As a former resident of the Autumn Lodge in Berwyn I am writing this letter in appreciation to the Friends of the Autumn Lodges many members. You came to our aid when we asked as our voices were not being heard after the devastating news came on July 7, 2017 that we were being evicted."

I also want to table an article entitled Flag at Autumn Lodge Lowered to Half-Mast. It says in here: "We're victims. We used to be senior citizens, but the way they've done it, we're victims." He felt that "lowering the flag to half-mast was an accurate symbol of the mood inside the Autumn Lodge."

Thank you.

Orders of the Day

Committee of Supply

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

The Chair: I'd like to call the Committee of Supply to order.

Hon. members, prior to beginning this afternoon, I will outline the process. The Committee of Supply will first call on the chairs of the legislative policy committees to report on their meetings with the various ministries under their mandate. No vote is required when these reports are presented pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(10).

The committee will then proceed to vote on the estimates of the offices of the Legislative Assembly. The estimates of five ministries will then be voted on separately pursuant to Standing Order 59.03(1)(b) and in accordance with notice provided by the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow on April 18, 2018. The final vote for the main estimates will consist of the remainder of the ministries not yet voted upon.

Finally, the chair would like to remind all hon. members of Standing Order 32(3.1), which provides that after the first division is called in Committee of Supply during the vote on the main estimates, the interval between division bells shall be reduced to one minute for any subsequent division.

Committee Reports

The Chair: I would now invite the chair of the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future to present the committee's report.

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Madam Chair. As chair of the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future and pursuant to Standing

Order 59.01(10) I'm pleased to report that the committee has reviewed the 2018-19 proposed estimates and business plans for the following ministries: the Ministry of Advanced Education, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, the Ministry of Executive Council, the Ministry of Infrastructure, the Ministry of Labour.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

I will now call on the chair of the Standing Committee on Families and Communities to present the committee's report.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Madam Chair. As chair of the Standing Committee on Families and Communities and pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(10) I am pleased to report that the committee has reviewed the 2018-19 proposed estimates and business plans for the following ministries: the Ministry of Children's Services, the Ministry of Community and Social Services, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General, the Ministry of Seniors and Housing, the Ministry of Service Alberta, and the Ministry of Status of Women.

Thank you.

2:50

The Chair: Thank you.

Now the chair of the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship.

Loyola: Thank you, Madam Chair. As chair of the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship and pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(10) I am pleased to report that the committee has reviewed the 2018-2019 proposed estimates and business plans for the following ministries: the Ministry of Energy, the Ministry of Environment and Parks, the Ministry of Indigenous Relations, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, the Ministry of Transportation, and the Ministry of Treasury Board and Finance.

Thank you.

Vote on Main Estimates 2018-19

The Chair: We shall now proceed to the vote on the 2018-2019 offices of the Legislative Assembly estimates. Pursuant to Standing Order 59.03(5), which requires that these estimates be decided without debate or amendment prior to the vote on the main estimates, I must now put the following question on all matters relating to the 2018-19 offices of the Legislative Assembly estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2019.

Agreed to:
Offices of the Legislative Assembly \$164,494,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

We will now proceed to the vote on the estimates of the five ministries which will be voted on separately pursuant to Standing Order 59.03(1)(b) and in accordance with notice provided by the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow on April 18, 2018.

On the 2018-19 estimates for the Ministry of Advanced Education, expense, \$2,810,299,000; capital investment, \$298,366,000; financial transactions, \$669,500,000, are you agreed?

[The voice vote did not indicate agreement]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 2:52 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For:

Anderson, S.	Gray	Piquette
Babcock	Hinkley	Renaud
Carlier	Hoffman	Rosendahl
Carson	Horne	Sabir
Ceci	Loyola	Schmidt
Clark	Luff	Schreiner
Cortes-Vargas	Malkinson	Shepherd
Dach	Mason	Sigurdson
Dang	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha
Drever	McKitrick	Sweet
Eggen	McLean	Turner
Fitzpatrick	Nielsen	Westhead
Fraser	Payne	Woollard
Goehring		

3:10

Against:

Aheer	Hunter	Pitt
Anderson, W.	Kenney	Schneider
Barnes	Loewen	Smith
Ellis	McIver	Strankman
Fildebrandt	Nixon	van Dijken
Gill	Orr	Yao
Hanson		

Totals: For – 40 Against – 19

[The Department of Advanced Education estimates were carried]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

On the 2018-19 estimates for the Ministry of Children's Services, expense, \$1,348,552,000, are you agreed?

[The voice vote did not indicate agreement]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:11 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For:

Anderson, S.	Gray	Piquette
Babcock	Hinkley	Renaud
Carlier	Hoffman	Rosendahl
Carson	Horne	Sabir
Ceci	Loyola	Schmidt
Clark	Luff	Schreiner
Cortes-Vargas	Malkinson	Shepherd
Dach	Mason	Sigurdson
Dang	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha
Drever	McKitrick	Sweet
Eggen	McLean	Turner
Fitzpatrick	Nielsen	Westhead

Fraser	Payne	Woollard
Goehring	Phillips	

Against:

Aheer	Hunter	Pitt
Anderson, W.	Kenney	Schneider
Barnes	Loewen	Smith
Ellis	McIver	Strankman
Fildebrandt	Nixon	van Dijken
Gill	Orr	Yao
Hanson		

Totals:	For – 41	Against – 19
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[The Department of Children's Services estimates were carried]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

On the 2018-19 estimates for the Ministry of Education, expense, \$4,822,460,000; capital investment, \$116,345,000; financial transactions, \$15,034,000, are you agreed?

[The voice vote did not indicate agreement]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:17 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For:		
Anderson, S.	Goehring	Phillips
Babcock	Gray	Piquette
Carlier	Hinkley	Renaud
Carson	Hoffman	Rosendahl
Ceci	Horne	Sabir
Clark	Loyola	Schmidt
Cortes-Vargas	Luff	Schreiner
Dach	Malkinson	Shepherd
Dang	Mason	Sigurdson
Drever	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha
Eggen	McKitrick	Sweet
Feehan	McLean	Turner
Fitzpatrick	Nielsen	Westhead
Fraser	Payne	Woollard

3:20

Against:

Aheer	Hanson	Pitt
Anderson, W.	Hunter	Schneider
Barnes	Kenney	Smith
Ellis	Loewen	Strankman
Fildebrandt	McIver	van Dijken
Gill	Nixon	Yao

Totals:	For – 42	Against – 18
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[The Department of Education estimates were carried]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

On the 2018-19 estimates for the Ministry of Health, expense \$20,696,101,000; capital investment, \$191,447,000; financial transactions, \$74,200,000, are you agreed?

[The voice vote did not indicate agreement]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:22 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For:		
Anderson, S.	Gray	Piquette
Babcock	Hinkley	Renaud
Carlier	Hoffman	Rosendahl
Carson	Horne	Sabir
Ceci	Loyola	Schmidt
Cortes-Vargas	Luff	Schreiner
Dach	Malkinson	Shepherd
Dang	Mason	Sigurdson
Drever	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha
Eggen	McKitrick	Sweet
Feehan	McLean	Turner
Fitzpatrick	Nielsen	Westhead
Fraser	Payne	Woollard
Goehring	Phillips	

Against:

Aheer	Hanson	Pitt
Anderson, W.	Hunter	Schneider
Barnes	Kenney	Smith
Clark	Loewen	Strankman
Ellis	McIver	van Dijken
Fildebrandt	Nixon	Yao
Gill	Orr	

Totals:	For – 41	Against – 20
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[The Department of Health estimates were carried]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

On the 2018-19 estimates for the Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General, expense, \$1,391,988,000; capital investment, \$9,932,000, are you agreed?

[The voice vote did not indicate agreement]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:27 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For:		
Anderson, S.	Goehring	Phillips
Babcock	Gray	Piquette
Carlier	Hinkley	Renaud
Carson	Hoffman	Rosendahl
Ceci	Horne	Sabir
Clark	Loyola	Schmidt
Cortes-Vargas	Luff	Schreiner
Dach	Malkinson	Shepherd
Dang	Mason	Sigurdson

Drever	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha
Eggen	McKittrick	Sweet
Feehan	McLean	Turner
Fitzpatrick	Nielsen	Westhead
Fraser	Payne	Woollard

3:30

Against:		
Anderson, W.	Kenney	Schneider
Barnes	Loewen	Smith
Ellis	McIver	Strankman
Fildebrandt	Nixon	van Dijken
Gill	Orr	Yao
Hanson		

Totals:	For – 42	Against – 16
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[The Department of Justice and Solicitor General estimates were carried]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

We shall now proceed to the final votes on the main estimates. Those members in favour of the remaining resolutions for the 2018-19 government estimates for the general revenue fund and lottery fund for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2019, please say aye.

[The voice vote did not indicate agreement]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:32 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For:		
Anderson, S.	Hinkley	Piquette
Babcock	Hoffman	Renaud
Carlier	Horne	Rosendahl
Carson	Loyola	Sabir
Ceci	Luff	Schmidt
Cortes-Vargas	Malkinson	Schreiner
Dach	Mason	Shepherd
Dang	McCuaig-Boyd	Sigurdson
Drever	McKittrick	Sucha
Eggen	McLean	Sweet
Feehan	Nielsen	Turner
Fitzpatrick	Payne	Westhead
Goehring	Phillips	Woollard
Gray		

Against:		
Anderson, W.	Gill	Orr
Barnes	Hanson	Schneider
Clark	Kenney	Smith
Ellis	Loewen	Strankman
Fildebrandt	McIver	van Dijken
Fraser	Nixon	Yao

Totals:	For – 40	Against – 18
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[The estimates of the general revenue fund and lottery fund were carried]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

I will now invite the hon. Acting Deputy Government House Leader to move that the committee rise and report the 2018-19 offices of the Legislative Assembly estimates and the 2018-19 government estimates for the general revenue fund and lottery fund.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, it's my pleasure to move that the committee now rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

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

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions relating to the 2018-19 offices of the Legislative Assembly estimates and the 2018-19 government estimates for the general revenue fund and lottery fund, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.

The following resolutions for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2019, have been approved.

Offices of the Legislative Assembly: support to the Legislative Assembly, \$67,639,000; office of the Auditor General, \$27,834,000; office of the Ombudsman, \$4,291,000; office of the Chief Electoral Officer, \$38,949,000; office of the Ethics Commissioner, \$970,000; office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, \$6,916,000; office of the Child and Youth Advocate, \$15,425,000; office of the Public Interest Commissioner, \$1,149,000; office of the Election Commissioner, \$1,321,000.

Government main estimates.

Advanced Education: expense, \$2,810,299,000; capital investment, \$298,366,000; financial transactions, \$669,500,000.

Agriculture and Forestry: expense, \$773,547,000; capital investment, \$14,705,000; financial transactions, \$1,310,000.

Children's Services: expense, \$1,348,552,000.

Community and Social Services: expense, \$3,713,582,000; capital investment, \$547,000.

Culture and Tourism: expense, \$360,713,000; capital investment, \$2,041,000; financial transactions, \$909,000.

3:40

Economic Development and Trade: expense, \$356,009,000; capital investment, \$2,615,000.

Education: expense, \$4,822,460,000; capital investment, \$116,345,000; financial transactions, \$15,034,000.

Energy: expense, \$262,029,000; capital investment, \$899,000; financial transactions, \$67,063,000.

Environment and Parks: expense, \$751,430,000; capital investment, \$63,394,000; financial transactions, \$100,000.

Executive Council: expense, \$18,642,000.

Health: expense, \$20,696,101,000; capital investment, \$191,447,000; financial transactions, \$74,200,000.

Indigenous Relations: expense, \$243,478,000; capital investment, \$25,000.

Infrastructure: expense, \$547,902,000; capital investment, \$1,494,970,000; financial transactions, \$40,496,000.

Justice and Solicitor General: expense, \$1,391,988,000; capital investment, \$9,932,000.

Labour: expense, \$230,030,000; capital investment, \$1,900,000.

Municipal Affairs: expense, \$1,116,499,000; capital investment, \$5,911,000; financial transactions, \$148,595,000.

Seniors and Housing: expense, \$554,698,000; capital investment, \$182,947,000; financial transactions, \$19,700,000.

Service Alberta: expense, \$468,697,000; capital investment, \$101,132,000; financial transactions, \$10,150,000.

Status of Women: expense, \$6,830,000; capital investment, \$50,000.

Transportation: expense, \$1,210,896,000; capital investment, \$1,099,105,000; financial transactions, \$97,957,000.

Treasury Board and Finance: expense, \$201,953,000; capital investment, \$2,273,000; financial transactions, \$3,617,000; transfer from the lottery fund, \$1,439,443,000.

Madam Speaker, that concludes my report.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

I would like to alert hon. members pursuant to Standing Order 59.03(7) that following the Committee of Supply's report on the main estimates, the Assembly immediately reverts to Introduction of Bills for the introduction of the appropriation bill.

Introduction of Bills

(reversion)

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

Bill 15 Appropriation Act, 2018

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 15, the Appropriation Act, 2018. This being a money bill, Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:44 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Goehring	Payne
Babcock	Gray	Piquette
Carlier	Hinkley	Renaud
Carson	Hoffman	Rosendahl
Ceci	Horne	Sabir
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Schmidt
Dach	Luff	Schreiner
Dang	Malkinson	Sigurdson
Drever	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha
Eggen	McKittrick	Turner
Feehan	McLean	Westhead
Fitzpatrick	Nielsen	Woollard

4:00

Against the motion:

Anderson, W.	Hanson	Schneider
Barnes	Kenney	Smith
Clark	Loewen	Strankman

Fildebrandt	McIver	van Dijken
Gill	Nixon	Yao
Totals:	For – 36	Against – 15

[Motion carried; Bill 15 read a first time]

Government Motions

Evening Sitzings

20. Mr. Carlier moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:
Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 4(1), commencing May 1, 2018, the Assembly shall meet on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday evenings for consideration of government business for the duration of the Fourth Session of the 29th Legislature 2018 spring sitting unless the Government House Leader notifies the Assembly that there shall be no evening sitting that day by providing notice under Notices of Motions in the daily Routine or at any time prior to 6 p.m.

[Government Motion 20 carried]

Committee Membership Changes

17. Mr. Mason moved:
Be it resolved that the membership of the Assembly's committees be replaced as follows:
- A. on the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future that Mr. Horne replace MLA Connolly, Ms Luff replace Mrs. Schreiner, and Ms McPherson replace Mr. Clark;
 - B. on the Standing Committee on Families and Communities that Ms Woollard replace Mr. Horne, MLA Connolly replace Ms Luff, and Mr. Fraser replace Ms McPherson;
 - C. on the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship that Mrs. Schreiner replace Ms Woollard, Mr. Westhead replace Mr. Kleinsteuber, Mr. Fildebrandt replace Ms McPherson, Mr. Clark replace Mr. Fraser, and Mr. Panda be appointed to the vacant position;
 - D. on the Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund that Ms Luff replace Ms McKittrick and Ms McPherson replace Mr. Clark;
 - E. on the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices that Ms McKittrick replace MLA Drever and Mr. Sucha replace Mr. Kleinsteuber;
 - F. on the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services that MLA Drever replace Ms Luff, Mr. Westhead replace Ms Jabbour, and Ms Babcock replace Mrs. Schreiner;
 - G. on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts that Mr. Clark replace Mr. Fildebrandt.

[Adjourned debate April 12: Mr. Nixon]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

Cortes-Vargas: Thank you. It's an honour to rise today. I would like to move forward an amendment. I know that after we presented the motion, there were a few other changes and tweaks we just wanted to be able to make to make sure that the right changes were made in the subcommittee in addition to the membership changes. Madam Speaker, I will give this to be handed out, and then I'll read it out.

The Deputy Speaker: Go ahead, hon. member.

Cortes-Vargas: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I apologize to the members in the Legislature that are so diligently reading along as I read this out. Part A is amended by striking out “MLA Connolly, Ms Luff replace”. Part B is amended by striking out “, MLA Connolly replace Ms Luff,”. Part C is amended by striking out “Mr. Westhead replace Mr. Kleinsteuber,”. Part E is amended by striking out “and Mr. Sucha replace Mr. Kleinsteuber”. And the following is added after part F.

(1) On the subcommittee established by the Standing Committee on Members’ Services on October 25, 2016, that Ms Babcock replace Ms Luff, MLA Cortes-Vargas replace Ms Jabbour, and that MLA Cortes-Vargas replace Ms Jabbour as chair of the subcommittee subject to any subsequent changes in membership made by a motion of the committee.

Madam Speaker, it was clear to us on the day it was presented that we missed a few other items, and I propose to you that these should cover all of them and that we move forward with the great work of this Legislature.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any others wishing to speak to amendment A2?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

[Motion on amendment A2 carried]

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to Motion 17? The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have an amendment to put forward. I’ll distribute it to members right now. It’s a relatively simple amendment. I can speak to it now while it’s being distributed.

The Deputy Speaker: Just one moment.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Okay.

The Deputy Speaker: Do you have the original, hon. member? We need an original.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Oh. Right here.

The Deputy Speaker: Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I’m putting forward this amendment, that Government Motion 17 be amended in part G by striking out “Mr. Fildebrandt” and substituting “Mr. Carson”.

What the government has done here is decide to remove my membership from the Public Accounts Committee. I might say, in all modesty, that I think I serve pretty well on the Public Accounts Committee. I understand it inside and out. I chaired the Public Accounts Committee for about a year and a half and have served on it since the founding of this Legislature. I would dare to say that I’m possibly the only member of this House who actually followed the Public Accounts Committee before being elected because I think it’s that exciting of a business to do. Maybe Mr. Westhead did if he in his spare time would sit at home and watch Alberta Leg. online, Assembly Online. Maybe he did, too. I’m glad that he shares my enthusiasm for the good work of Public Accounts.

It’s a great committee, and it’s one of the more regularly meeting ones here. It does very important business of analyzing Auditor General’s reports, any reports of departments. I think I make a great contribution to it. The government has proposed to move me to Alberta’s Economic Future Committee, I believe, but I think my

membership on any particular committee would definitely make the greatest contribution possible on Public Accounts, continuing the work I’ve done there. I would hope that my being removed is not that I’ve been doing too good of a job, but it’s just trying to reflect party balances in the Legislature.

What I’ve done here is propose that rather than my being removed – I do support the addition of Mr. Clark to the committee to reflect the Alberta Party’s numbers here, but what I’ve tried to do is maintain the relative balance of parties as much as they can be in the committee system, allotting for, you know, the way we try to fit independents and the smaller parties into our committee system. This still leaves the government with a very clear and, I might say, unhealthy majority on the committee. They still have clear control of it. It doesn’t change the chairmanship or the deputy chairmanship of the committee. It doesn’t change the overall general balance of party representation, but it allows me to continue the work I’ve done there.

Now, it’s nothing against Mr. Carson.

An Hon. Member: Names.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Well, sorry. I’m speaking to the amendment. Sorry.

The hon. member: it’s nothing against him in particular. If the government members were open to this amendment, they could make it any one of their members. I picked him, really, just out of alphabetical order. It’s nothing personal. I actually really like you. You’re a nice guy. If the government members were open to this, I would be willing to entertain a friendly amendment to this to make it any one of the government members. I’m sure you all don’t find the Public Accounts Committee as riveting and exciting as I do. Many of you do, but I’m sure maybe one of you – maybe one of you – would rather go to a different committee. Maybe the Member for St. Albert would volunteer. She raised her hand.

4:10

Anyway, if government members are willing to entertain this, it could be the member of the government caucus that I’ve proposed, again, nothing personal, or it could be anyone from that committee to volunteer.

I ask that members give this due consideration so that I can continue to serve my constituents and Albertans as best as I can in my capacity on the Public Accounts Committee.

The Deputy Speaker: Under Standing Order 29(2)(a) any questions or comments?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to amendment A3?

[Motion on amendment A3 lost]

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to Motion 17? Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

[Government Motion 17 as amended carried]

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 10

An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. We’re here to debate the merits of Bill 10, An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements. Our climate leadership plan is made in Alberta to

diversify our economy, create jobs, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. From home improvement rebates and incentives to install solar power to programs to improve energy efficiency on farms, we have a lot of ways to help homeowners, businesses, nonprofits, and farmers save money while reducing emissions. These programs have a big uptake and have been working well, but we can do more.

On this side of the House we know the importance of taking action on climate change. We are doing just that today by adding another tool to our toolbox in climate leadership programs. This new opportunity is properly assessed clean energy, or PACE. PACE is a program that will enable municipalities to work with Energy Efficiency Alberta to fund energy efficiency or renewable energy improvements to private property and then recover those costs through the owners' property taxes. From solar panels and high-efficiency heating and cooling systems to insulation in windows and doors, there are many options for improvements.

I've travelled a lot around Alberta and have toured many amazing energy efficiency buildings and projects, and I've seen first-hand how committed municipalities are to climate leadership. The cities of Edmonton and Calgary and our rural and urban municipal associations are very interested in PACE. They've asked for PACE enabling legislation, and we're listening. They want the ability to provide a PACE program as another option and incentive for their residents to make clean energy improvements. Many Albertans have told us that they want more programs like PACE in their communities so that they can reduce energy use and save money.

An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements will empower our municipal partners to take a larger role in advancing Alberta's climate leadership goals. Through this legislation municipalities will be able to pass a bylaw to offer a PACE program to their residents. The property owner will then be able to sign an agreement with their municipality in which the municipality works with Energy Efficiency Alberta to pay for the installation of the clean energy upgrade. It then recovers the cost through the owners' property tax bill over a number of years. It's as simple as that.

Of course, we know folks are interested in making energy efficiency upgrades, but the cost of running a business or raising a family can sometimes get in the way, making energy efficiency less of a priority. But with PACE it will be more affordable for Albertans because they will be able to pay for it over time with lower interest rates instead of paying for the whole cost up front or taking out a loan on their own. This is a win-win for homeowners, residential building owners, farmers, and businesses, who will ultimately save money and do the right thing for the environment.

What also excites me is that a program like PACE will lead to more jobs in Alberta's clean energy sector. We need a lot of skilled tradespeople and technicians to make these types of upgrades and retrofits, so enabling PACE is a huge opportunity to stimulate our economy, especially in rural areas.

On that note, I want to make it clear that PACE is not just for the big cities. We see PACE as a program that can be successful in any municipality, which is why the bill proposes that any municipal borrowing used to fund a PACE program will not count against a municipality's debt limit, and we plan to consult with municipalities and other stakeholders to get their input on PACE program design. The intention is that Energy Efficiency Alberta will administer the program and work with lending institutions to secure agreements for financing. This will help support municipalities who choose to pass PACE bylaws and make it easy for them to implement this program.

This government is committed to making life better for Albertans. This legislation is just one more example of Alberta taking the lead on energy efficiency and renewable energy. This bill will make it

easier and more affordable for Albertans to make clean energy improvements that will protect their pocketbooks while reducing emissions, creating jobs, and stimulating our economy.

With that, Madam Speaker, I move that debate be adjourned.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 11

Lobbyists Amendment Act, 2018

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Labour.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's a privilege to move second reading of Bill 11, the Lobbyists Amendment Act, 2018.

For too long under previous governments decisions were often made out of the public view and in backrooms, away from the scrutiny of everyday Albertans. For decades Albertans had to simply get used to outrageous backroom deals that took pocketbooks and not the people into consideration. That meant decisions were not often being made in the best interests of ordinary folks, and instead these decisions only served to make things easier for those Conservative insiders and those at the very top who were lobbying for those changes. That's why from day one our government has worked to renew democracy for Albertans. The legislative improvements we're proposing will further those principles of open government and inspire more confidence in the policy-making process of our province.

Under the act lobbyists are currently required to provide information in returns to the Ethics Commissioner of Alberta and the lobbyist registrar, who is responsible for maintaining and administering a registry of lobbyists, that is publicly available. Our amendments to the Lobbyists Act would ensure that Albertans would have access to more information about what discussions are taking place because those being paid to influence government would need to register more of their activity. Albertans deserve better, and that's why I'm very proud of the work our government has done to move forward on our commitment to restore democracy in Alberta. This act was reviewed by the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship, and I have taken their recommendations very seriously in bringing forward this amendment and this legislation.

As things stand, people who lobby government on behalf of their employer or business only have to register this activity after 100 hours of lobbying in a year. To put this into perspective, 100 hours is 25 four-hour games of golf. It's 50 two-hour dinners. It's 3,000 two-minute-long phone calls. A lot can happen in 100 hours. Proposed amendments would lower this threshold to 50 hours, and it would now include any preparation time in addition to any time a lobbyist spends meeting with a public office holder. The requirement for lobbyists to declare which departments are being lobbied and on which subjects remains. Lobbying is not a dirty word, but Albertans have the right to know who is being paid with the intent to influence our government's decisions.

The amendment proposed here to the Lobbyists Act would also restrict lobbyists from giving money, gifts, or other items that would place a public office holder in a conflict of interest. These rules will match the existing conflict-of-interest standards that govern the conduct for all public office holders. For example, the Conflicts of Interest Act, which is currently being reviewed by a standing committee, says that an MLA may not in most cases accept gifts or benefits that exceed \$200 or tickets or invitations to events from one source that exceed \$400. Employees of the public service may not accept fees, gifts, or other benefits other than tokens

exchanged as part of protocol. Lastly, according to an order in council, members of the Premier's and ministers' staff will follow the same rules as elected MLAs and shall not accept fees, gifts, or benefits exceeding \$200. We are proposing to ensure that the Lobbyists Act reflects these standards by prohibiting lobbyists from offering fees, gifts, or benefits the acceptance of which would contravene the existing Conflicts of Interest Act.

4:20

The bill would also prohibit contingency fee payment arrangements. Some clients currently only pay consultant lobbyists if their lobbying efforts are successful. This is known as a contingency fee payment arrangement. As the legislation stands, it's possible for consultant lobbyists to take the position that they do not have to register because they have not received payment yet. This change will better clarify that any lobbying activity conducted by a consultant lobbyist must be registered. This will inspire more public confidence in the way lobbying is conducted.

Additionally, the new legislation would close off another avenue that may be used to sidestep reporting requirements. Right now the act doesn't require lobbying activity to be reported if the lobbyist was proactively contacted by a public office holder or if the lobbyist is responding to a form of request for comment. We are proposing a change that would improve accountability by ensuring that lobbying activity is reported regardless of who initiated it.

I do want to be clear. These amendments are not intended in any way to prevent Albertans from contacting or engaging with public office holders on topics that matter to us. Our government values, appreciates, and relies on the input and feedback of Albertans. This is why nonprofits and those volunteering their time to advocate will remain exempt and not be required to register. As well, we have excluded members of committees or task forces established by government. They would not be considered lobbyists. The act already provides that a person who is paid to advise the government also cannot lobby the government on the same subject.

Another amendment that I think makes sense. The Ethics Commissioner has previously issued an advisory bulletin stating that grassroots communication can be considered lobbying. Grassroots communication is when someone appeals to the public to get people to pressure the government to endorse a particular opinion. As interpretation of this act is within the Ethics Commissioner's jurisdiction, a proposed amendment would include grassroots communication in the definition of lobbying. We're proposing this clarification because we want to ensure that lobbyists understand what activity is included in the definition of lobbying. Again, this does not stop everyday Albertans from being politically active or trying to convince their neighbours of one position or another. It also doesn't stop lobbyists from being paid to try to sway public opinion. What it does do and what the sum total of these changes is doing is to lift the veil of secrecy around many activities, require those activities to be done transparently, in the light of day, for all Albertans to see.

We've also clarified that communication between an organization and its members, officers, or employees or between a person in partnership and their shareholders, partners, officers, or employees will not be considered lobbying. We'd also like to be able to keep our list of prescribed provincial entities up to date through ministerial order rather than through the regulation, where it is now. Currently it is out of date.

We would also like to propose an exemption to include indigenous elders in the exemptions that currently exist for government departments; those appointed to boards, committees, or councils; employees, officers, directors, or members of public agencies; and prescribed provincial entities. As is already the case for public servants at other levels of government, they are not considered lobbyists. Neither are members or employees of indigenous governing bodies. In their traditional capacity indigenous elders are very much public servants in their communities. They are representing their people. Our government honours and acknowledges this practice, so we've expanded the exemption to include indigenous elders.

We would also like to ask lobbyists to state, where possible, in advance the end date of their lobbying activities as a way of keeping our registry up to date.

Finally, the act currently requires lobbyists to report the name of any government department or agency that funds their client or organization. It also requires lobbyists to include the amount of the funding. However, the act does not specify what time period, and that has caused confusion. We are suggesting an amendment where the act would clarify that lobbyists are meant to report on the period of 12 months prior to the filing of the return.

This is a quick overview of some of the many items that I hope to discuss with the House as we look into Bill 11. Our proposed amendments would not only clarify the legislation but provide a much-needed boost to transparency. Albertans do have a right to know who is trying to influence their government. When people have confidence in the way government and lobbyists are working and the way decisions are made, that's when we can all do our best work. So I would encourage all Members of the Legislative Assembly to support Bill 11, and I am looking forward to debating this bill with my hon. colleagues in the future.

With that, Madam Speaker, and with constituency break just around the corner, I would like to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Acting Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Considering the time on the clock and the good work that we did today, I'd like to move that we adjourn until April 30 at 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 4:25 p.m. to Monday, April 30, at 1:30 p.m.]

Bill Status Report for the 29th Legislature - 4th Session (2018)

Activity to Thursday, April 19, 2018

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

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

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

Bill 1 — Energy Diversification Act (McCuaig-Boyd)

First Reading — 6 (*Mar. 8, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 50-51 (*Mar. 13, 2018 morn.*), 184-87 (*Mar. 15, 2018 aft.*), 233-43 (*Mar. 20, 2018 morn.*), 301-08 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 2 — Growth and Diversification Act (\$) (Bilous)

First Reading — 118 (*Mar. 14, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 243-46 (*Mar. 20, 2018 morn.*), 294-96 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft.*), 314-25 (*Mar. 22, 2018 morn.*), 411-12 (*Apr. 4, 2018 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 3 — Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2018 (\$) (Ceci)

First Reading — 184 (*Mar. 15, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 221-26 (*Mar. 19, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 261-68 (*Mar. 20, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 296-98 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 28, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force Mar. 28, 2018; SA 2018 c1]

Bill 4 — Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2018 (\$) (Ceci)

First Reading — 165 (*Mar. 15, 2018 morn., passed*)

Second Reading — 226-32 (*Mar. 19, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 268-75 (*Mar. 20, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 298-301 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 28, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force Mar. 28, 2018; SA 2018 c2]

Bill 5 — An Act to Strengthen Financial Security for Persons with Disabilities (Sabir)

First Reading — 200-201 (*Mar. 19, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 360-62 (*Apr. 3, 2018 morn.*), 482-87 (*Apr. 10, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 6 — Gaming and Liquor Statutes Amendment Act, 2018 (Ganley)

First Reading — 448 (*Apr. 9, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 533-34 (*Apr. 12, 2018 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 7 — Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act (Carlier)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 491-97 (*Apr. 10, 2018 aft.*), 534-36 (*Apr. 12, 2018 aft., adjourned on amendment*)

Bill 8 — Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2018 (S. Anderson)

First Reading — 374 (*Apr. 3, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 9 — Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act (Hoffman)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 497-502 (*Apr. 10, 2018 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 10 — An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements (S. Anderson)

First Reading — 528 (*Apr. 12, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 611-12 (*Apr. 19, 2018 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 11 — Lobbyists Amendment Act, 2018 (Gray)

First Reading — 505 (*Apr. 11, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 612-13 (*Apr. 19, 2018 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 12 — Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act (McCuaig-Boyd)

First Reading — 547 (*Apr. 16, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 13 — An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future (\$) (McCuaig-Boyd)

First Reading — 606 (*Apr. 19, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 14 — An Act to Empower Utility Consumers (McLean)

First Reading — 590 (*Apr. 18, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 15 — Appropriation Act, 2018 (\$) (Ceci)

First Reading — 610 (*Apr. 19, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Bill 201 — Employment Standards (Firefighter Leave) Amendment Act, 2018 (W. Anderson)

First Reading — 118 (*Mar. 14, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 201-14 (*Mar. 19, 2018 aft., referred to Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future*)

Bill 202 — Alberta Taxpayer Protection (Carbon Tax Referendum) Amendment Act, 2018 (Kenney)

First Reading — 179 (*Mar. 15, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 549-63 (*Apr. 16, 2018 aft., defeated on division*)

Bill 203 — Long Term Care Information Act (Schreiner)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 204 — Land Statutes (Abolition of Adverse Possession) Amendment Act, 2018 (Gottfried)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, April 30, 2018

Day 21

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Party standings:

New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 25 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent Conservative: 1 Vacant: 2

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, April 30, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Hon. members, let us each in our own way pray or reflect about the rich contributions immigrants and refugees have brought to our nation and to our province. They inspire all of us with confidence in our collective future.

Hon. members, ladies and gentlemen, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Mr. R.J. Chambers. I would invite all to participate in the language of their choice.

Hon. Members:

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

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 31 students from Eleanor Hall school. They are actually here for a week of School at the Legislature. They are with their teachers, Albert Perreault and Chris Lantz, and chaperones Audrey Degner, who is the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit liaison, and Lori Borduzak and Jim Laughy. I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other school groups?

Seeing and hearing none, the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Mr. Speaker, it gives me the greatest pleasure to introduce to you and to the House my second visiting grandson from Calgary, Kiel Archuleta. He's artistic, he's athletic, and he has a real passion for the environment. I look forward to many years of working with him as he prepares for the Legislature in 2028. Please welcome him.

Beside him—I don't think I've ever introduced my chief executive, Carmen Remenda. She's been with the Liberal caucus for 25? Thirteen, yes. I knew it was close. Thank you, Carmen. Let's all give her a warm welcome.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I understand that when you're having so much fun, the time seems to race.

The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, thank you. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to the House several representatives of Alberta's vibrant Vietnamese community joining us to mark Journey to

Freedom Day, including Dong Tran, a representative of the Canadian Vietnamese association; Xuân Thạch Nguyễn, president of the Calgary Vietnamese association; Chí Hiếu Trần, president of the Calgary Vietnamese Veterans Immigrants Aid Association; Lily Le, president of the Edmonton Viets Association; Van Ut Ngo, president of the Edmonton Vietnamese veterans' society; and Amy Duong, the vice-president of the Edmonton Viets Association, together with several dozen members of the community. I invite all members to give them a warm welcome to the Chamber.

The Speaker: Welcome.

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

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today to introduce to you three guests that I have here seated in your gallery today. The first is my little brother Tyler, who's one of the few people in this world that can look me in the eye. I'm glad to have him walking around the Legislature today because it makes me feel like I'm almost normal height for a change. I'd ask that he stand up. With him is my other little brother, Daniel, one of the funniest guys I know, and I will ask him to stand up. Up here chaperoning and no stranger to you, of course, is my dad, Pat Nixon. I can tell you that with these two guys in town it's a good thing he's up here keeping an eye on them. I'd ask that they receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

Cortes-Vargas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly some of our fantastic ND caucus staff. Here today we have a few groups. From the leg. services staff we have Jodi Learn, Nicholas Diaz, Andrew Douglas, Eric Rice, Emily Springer. During the legislative sitting I very lovingly refer to them as the leg. warriors because that's what it feels like when you start getting into night sittings. Their support is incredibly important to us. Alongside them are also two new caucus staff members who we are happy to have with us, and they are Sidney Sadik, finance and HR officer, and Keith Thomson, our new outreach assistant. I would like them now to rise and to receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly guests who are here today from the Alberta Common Ground Alliance, including representatives from Alberta One-Call, ATCO Gas, the Federation of Alberta Gas Co-ops, the Association of Science and Engineering Technology Professionals of Alberta, Canadian Energy Pipeline Association, Telus communications, Alberta Roadbuilders & Heavy Construction Association, and the Alberta Public Works Association. April is national dig safe awareness month. The Alberta Common Ground Alliance is reminding all Albertans to visit clickbeforeyoudig.com before any digging project, no matter how big or how small. I will speak more on this later today. Now I'd like to ask my guests to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In honour of the 22nd annual National Day of Mourning, that took place this past

Saturday, I am pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly leaders from two local organizations that champion the cause of worker safety.

First I'd like to welcome the new president of the Edmonton & District Labour Council, Mr. Greg Mady, and the EDLC labour programs co-ordinator, Perri Garvin. The EDLC has a long history of raising awareness about workplace safety through ongoing advocacy to advance the economic and social welfare of workers and their families. They organize the annual National Day of Mourning event at Grant Notley park, which recognizes those workers killed and injured at work and recommit to working towards ending workplace deaths and injuries.

I'd also like to welcome Chris LaBossiere, the CEO and cofounder of the Edmonton-based education technology company Yardstick and proud resident of Edmonton-Centre, with the business located on 104 Street, as well as the executive assistant, Sue Broderick. Just a few weeks ago Yardstick launched a new homegrown technology, LearnerVerified, which responds to the global problem of e-learner fraud, which puts workers and the general public at risk. LearnerVerified is a moderate solution that uses facial detection and biometric data to authenticate e-learners. Yardstick anticipates that it will help to significantly reduce workplace injuries and fatalities around the world.

I see that all of my guests have risen, and I'd ask now that we provide them with the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Education.

1:40

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly leaders of the Edmonton Sikh community. Harpreet Singh Gill, Pal Singh Purewal, Gurcharn Singh Sangha, Harjinder Singh Gill, Culzar Singh Nirman, Charanjit Singh Dakha, Maghar Singh Ubhi, Surinder Singh Hoonjan, Navtej Singh Brar, Avtar Singh Gill, Zora Singh Jhaji, and Ranjit Singh Powar have all demonstrated a commitment to fostering inclusion and celebrating diversity both within their communities and the province as a whole.

Our government knows that different cultures make our province stronger, as evidenced today throughout our Legislature galleries. We are very proud to recognize April as Sikh Heritage Month. I would like to acknowledge the many contributions of the Sikh community to Alberta. We know we will work very closely together to foster inclusion and a better place for ourselves and for our children.

I would ask them all to rise – they already have – and receive the very warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise today and introduce to you and through you Mr. Jason Gold. Jason is one of the bravest people I've ever met. Jason has been here before; I know he's going to be here again. In addition to being a member of the Alberta Party provincial board of directors, one of the many things that Jason did to contribute and make his community a better place was a tremendous amount of work in support of people who were displaced by the Fort McMurray wildfire. Jason, if I could ask you, please, to rise and receive the warm, warm welcome of the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Any other guests today? The Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise today to introduce to you and through you Mrs. Kate Potter from Sexsmith. She's from the constituency of Grande Prairie-Smoky. She's a strong, intelligent, hard-working, and lovely conservative woman, and she's here to enjoy the Legislature today. Kate, if you could stand and accept the warm greetings of this House.

The Speaker: The hon. Member from Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce to you and through you a constituent of mine. He's a young advocate for an organization known as Grassroots Alberta. His name is Josh Andrus. If he'd please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly. Josh is also the newly minted protege of the founder of the Taxpayers Federation, Mr. Kevin Avram. Josh, please receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

National Day of Mourning

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Saturday, April 28, the Calgary & District Labour Council hosted a memorial service at the city of Calgary's workers' memorial for the National Day of Mourning, commemorating workers killed, injured, or made ill by workplace hazards. We took the time to honour and remember the 166 workers taken from us too early. We know these people as our co-workers, colleagues, community members, family, and friends. Any death in the workplace is one too many.

Mr. Speaker, to honour her late husband, Darlena Upton courageously shared online how she lost Myles to a workplace accident. An eight-foot trench collapsed on him while he was repairing a broken line for watering livestock. Only 47 years old, Myles was known in his rural community as a kind man, a hard worker, and a devoted husband and father. He is missed every day. We remember Albertans like Myles who have lost their lives, who have been injured on the job, and we renew our commitment to improving health and safety in the workplace.

I'm proud to be part of a government that has passed An Act to Protect the Health and Well-being of Working Albertans, the first significant update to Alberta's occupational health and safety laws in over 40 years. Taking effect June 1, 2018, these new laws give Albertans the same rights as other Canadians when it comes to workplace health and safety. These changes mean stronger rights and protections for everyday Albertans, including the right to know about hazards, the right to participate, and the right to refuse unsafe work without fear or recrimination. Joint workplace health and safety committees will ensure that work-site parties are sitting down to discuss health and safety in the workplace and will collaboratively find ways to address any issues.

Our government has the backs of families, and these changes make a real difference for everyday working people across the province and are making lives better.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Journey to Freedom Day

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today is Journey to Freedom Day. It marks the fall of Saigon on April 30, 1975, when

the democratic South Vietnamese republic fell to the communist north, causing widespread persecution of the opponents of the regime, some 60,000 of whom were executed, some 1 million of whom were put into communist re-education camps. An estimated 165,000 people died as a result of this political violence following the fall of Saigon.

These events led to a mass emigration of Indochinese refugees on the high seas in Southeast Asia between 1976 and 1983, during which time it is estimated that as many as a quarter of a million lost their lives as a result of marine accidents and piracy. Thankfully, many millions did reach shore, Mr. Speaker, and initially were housed in UN camps. Canada opened its arms with great generosity, receiving some 60,000 of the Indochinese boat people in the first few years and another 100,000 in the years to follow. Indeed, as minister of immigration I was honoured to partner with Canada's Vietnamese community to welcome hundreds of the stranded boat people from the Philippines, Cambodia, and Thailand to join us here in Canada.

To those representatives of our Vietnamese community in the gallery and to the entire community: we salute them for their remarkable story of courage, of heroism, of tenacity, and of fidelity. They have never given up the dream of freedom and respect for human rights for all of the people of Vietnam, and on this Journey to Freedom Day we join them in that aspiration.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

Dig Safe Month

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Every year thousands of buried facilities are accidentally damaged by digging activities. Services are interrupted in nearly every case, and incidents put our workers, our communities, and our environment at risk. Recently a number of communities have been impacted by incidents involving severed underground lines. In my own constituency the town of Athabasca lost nearly all telecommunications services for a full day. This affects many communities across the province. In 2016 there were 4,305 of these incidents, of varying severity, across the province.

Societal cost research shows that over \$350 million in damage is caused every year in Alberta due to damage to underground infrastructure. Average societal cost of a single incident is estimated at more than \$80,000. These incidents put a strain on emergency services, require expensive repairs, and result in lost business during service outages.

April is national dig safe awareness month, and many hon. members are sporting the Dig Safe pin here today. The Alberta Common Ground Alliance is reminding all Albertans to visit clickbeforeyoudig.com before any digging project, no matter how big or how small, even when digging a garden or putting a fence in your backyard. Clicking before you dig is a free service. Not clicking before you dig could cost everything.

This year they have also partnered with the Canadian Football Hall of Fame and the Grey Cup to raise awareness of these issues. Just as football teams have their own playbooks to guide them on the field, the Alberta Common Ground Alliance promotes a safe-digging playbook for excavating around buried utilities. Not to stretch the football analogy too much, Mr. Speaker, but whether we're going deep on the football field or into the ground, safety should always come first.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Alberta Summer Games 2018 in Grande Prairie

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In a few months Grande Prairie will host the 2018 Alberta Summer Games. It's been 18 years since our community last had that honour, and everyone is excited about it. Close to 3,000 of Alberta's best young athletes and top officials will participate in the multisport competition from July 19 to 22. A variety of athletic pursuits are on the agenda, from soccer and football to mountain biking, kayaking, track and field, swimming, and many more. The games will also provide athletes with opportunities to forge friendships because that is an important part of youthful development.

While the competitions are the focal point, the games' cohosts, the city of Grande Prairie and the county of Grande Prairie, hope that the 5,000 to 7,000 people expected to visit for the games have the opportunity to discover the region's cultural and outdoor offerings. Allow me to point out that the logo for the 2018 Alberta Summer Games includes a dinosaur. That's because we are home to the world-class Philip J. Currie museum, which is located near a rich fossil bed.

1:50

Mr. Speaker, the people are proud to host the 2018 Summer Games and to showcase our region, but a lasting legacy will result as well because the games will generate funds that will go towards projects and funding for our sporting communities. There is no one more proud, and I would like to highlight that 2,000 residents will be volunteering their time to ensure the games are a success.

Mr. Speaker, hosting is a valued part of our culture in Grande Prairie. I invite everyone to come and see how well we do it.

Thank you.

Oral Question Period

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

Federal Carbon Pricing

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week the government of Saskatchewan filed a reference at the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal challenging, effectively, the constitutionality of the federal government's threats to impose a federal carbon tax on provinces. While the Saskatchewan government is defending its taxpayers from Justin Trudeau, our NDP government surrendered and agreed to raise their carbon tax by 67 per cent. My question is: will this government join the government of Saskatchewan in challenging the Trudeau tax?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What we have indicated that we will do is to move forward with the climate leadership plan, as we put forward in November 2015, because our view is that we need to take seriously our responsibility to address climate change while still working to build our energy industry and to support the good work that they are doing to become more sustainable and to lower their emissions per barrel. That's the work that we've started, that's the work that is paying dividends, and that is the work that we will do.

Mr. Kenney: The Premier says that it is paying dividends.

With the cancellation of Northern Gateway by Trudeau, his killing of Energy East, his surrender on Keystone XL, and his doing precisely nothing to ensure the construction of Trans Mountain, Mr. Speaker, that begs the question: why is the government of

Saskatchewan defending its taxpayers from a threatened federal tax on this consumption of energy when our provincial government is instead abetting this tax-hiking agenda of the Trudeau Liberals?

Ms Notley: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, in fact, what we are doing is that we are working very carefully and very aggressively and with great rigour to get a pipeline to tidewater. This is a pipeline that has been approved as a result of the overall work that this government has done on the climate leadership plan. This is a pipeline that has been approved and that will get built, unlike what happened under the watch of the member opposite and his former boss, where not one pipeline was built to tidewater. We will get the job done. We will not fail like the members opposite.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, speaking of pipelines, I've discovered that in 2015 the Premier, who was then the NDP leader, said that she was opposed to the Northern Gateway pipeline. She's admitted that she was opposed to the Keystone XL pipeline. Her federal party, of which the NDP is legally a part, opposed the Keystone XL and the Trans Mountain and the Northern Gateway pipelines. I'd like to ask the Premier: does she regret her opposition to Northern Gateway, which is part of the reason that we now find ourselves stuck with only one potential coastal pipeline?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, when it comes to Northern Gateway, it was actually the incompetence and the failure of the previous Conservative federal government to do the job right. That is the fundamental reason for why that pipeline failed.

With respect to Keystone our government just a few months ago announced that we would support the Keystone construction going forward by committing barrels to it. We've actually put our money where our mouth is, and the thing is going forward. Finally, as I've said before, our government has done nothing but work to get the Trans Mountain built, and we will get it done, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Second main question.

Carbon Levy and Pipeline Development

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the reason why we are now so dependent on this one remaining project, Trans Mountain, is because of the cancellation of Northern Gateway, the federal government killing Energy East. In April 2015 – she can try to pass the buck if she wants – the Harper government approved the Northern Gateway pipeline, on which she said in April 2015 that, quote: Gateway is not the right decision. She also said that she was opposed to Keystone XL. Will the Premier now rise and admit that she got it wrong in opposing Northern Gateway and Keystone XL?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Interestingly, what happened with respect to Northern Gateway is that the courts ultimately said that Gateway was not the right decision because the members opposite failed to consult appropriately or respectfully with the people that it was impacting.

In addition, as I've said very clearly, our government has put significant money behind Keystone to make sure that it gets built. That was a decision that was taken by our government. As well, our government has done nothing but advocate for Trans Mountain, and that is why this time it will get built.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the Premier has told us various times that she will not raise her carbon tax by 67 per cent unless Trans Mountain is completed. I'd like to ask if that is still the policy of the NDP. I ask because on April 18, before we rose, we brought forward a motion, to the Chamber here, saying that the government would not proceed with any further increases to the carbon tax until Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain expansion project has completed construction and commenced commercial operations. The NDP refused to allow that to go to a vote. Why? Is that still their position? Why did they vote against their own position?

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

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What we have indicated very clearly and as I've said all along, our support for the pan-Canadian framework was incumbent upon the Trans Mountain pipeline being successfully commenced and all of the objections to it removed so that it is very clear that it is under way and that it's going to be built. That continues to be our view. We actually believe that we are very close to getting it done, much closer than the member opposite would like. I would suggest that the member opposite work with us because support is growing and success . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Kenney: Okay. We'll give this another shot, Mr. Speaker. Will the Premier then join with us and, I would hope, all parties in adopting a motion indicating that Alberta will not raise its carbon tax by 67 per cent unless and until the Trans Mountain pipeline is built?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think I've really answered that question several times already and indeed did that at the very outset, when we worked with the federal government with respect to the pan-Canadian framework about a year and a half ago. Our position remains the same.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I think the member opposite needs to focus on supporting the growth in support of this pipeline rather than taking potshots from the side. I appreciate that he's very familiar with failure on this issue. We are getting very close to success, though, and I would suggest that he start contributing to it rather than trying to detract from it.

The Speaker: Third main question.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, a motion that is based on the government's policy is not a potshot. That is constructive. We'll bring it forward again, with the expectation of support.

Alberta Energy Regulator Application Timelines

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, with respect to our energy industry Imperial Oil has announced that it will be making no further major investments in Alberta's economy in part because of endless delays on projects. In particular, they've been waiting now four and a half years for approval on their Aspen oil sands project, using cutting-edge technology that shrinks the carbon footprint of bitumen extraction. Why is it taking four and a half years for the government of Alberta to give a green light to a \$2 billion job-creating investment?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, the project that the member opposite is referring to is in fact subject to the review of the Alberta Energy Regulator, an organization that, in fact, was created under the watch of the members opposite when they were in government, that is still staffed by the folks that the members opposite put in place. But you know what? We have been working with the AER to help them find ways to work faster while at the same time maintaining the breadth and depth of the review that they are doing because they are contributing to ensuring that our energy industry is the most sustainable and responsible in the world, and we'll continue that work.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, there's not going to be much of an energy industry if it takes us several years to approve projects such as this, waiting for \$2 billion to flow into the economy to create jobs. I understand that the AER is a separate regulatory body, and I respect their independence, but the system doesn't seem to be working. Will the Premier agree with me that just in principle four and a half years is too long to get to a yes or a no on a \$2 billion job-creating investment, and shouldn't we fix that system if it's not working?

2:00

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, in fact, as I just indicated, our Minister of Energy has been working with the AER to find ways to streamline the process and make sure that things can go faster while at the same time maintaining the level of rigorous review and responsibility that has helped position Alberta's energy industry as one of the most responsible in the world, and that's something that we are very proud of.

But while we're in the business of quoting energy CEOs, here's one that I'd like to go with. Quote: I would tell you that the support we have received from the current federal government – that support would not have been evident a few years ago under the previous one.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, does the Premier understand that the four-and-a-half-year delay on the \$2 billion proposed investment by Imperial is just illustrative of a much deeper problem? Does she understand that we have lost tens of billions of dollars of capital from our oil and gas sector going to oil and gas elsewhere around the world, including the United States? What is her plan to attract that capital back to Canada? What is her plan to cut red tape and to speed up the approvals process to move at the speed of business?

Ms Notley: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, I know that the member opposite loves to lecture and explain things to people, but for his benefit we are fully aware of all the things that he just said. As a result of that, we have been doing nothing but working on finding ways to attract investment to Alberta's energy industry, up to and including working very, very hard to get our pipeline capacity increased and to get the pipeline to tidewater and to undo the nine or 10 years of failure that Albertans were subjected to because of a Conservative federal government and a Conservative provincial government.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Nonrenewable Resource Revenue

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently in the news there has been speculation about how oil prices could be driven higher by

the reductions in OPEC production, decreasing production in Venezuela, and political instability elsewhere in the world. Some are forecasting that oil could even go as high as a hundred dollars, and that price differential will go down as demand begins to exceed supply. However, getting that value requires access to export markets. To the Premier: with all the delays in getting pipelines approved and built, is Alberta going to be in a position to take advantage if prices for oil head higher?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite outlined something that I think most Albertans are incredibly aware of, which is, of course, that we have a problem with pipeline capacity. We need to have more pipeline capacity. That's why we're very pleased that with the federal government we've had line 3 approved and also the Trans Mountain pipeline approved. Of course, as I've said before, our government is working with TCPL to support their work on getting Keystone done. We understand that pipeline capacity needs to be increased. We are working on every front to ensure that that can happen because we understand that all Albertans and all Canadians benefit from a healthy energy industry.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Previous fiscal updates have shown that when this government gets unexpected resource revenue, it tends to spend that money before Albertans even find out about it. Last year's Q3 update saw the government collect an extra billion dollars over budget in royalties and then shovel it out the door just as fast as it came in. In the face of mounting debt and deficit, that could be seen as irresponsible. To the Minister of Finance: will you stick to the spending outlined in your budget and commit any unexpected resource revenue windfall to reducing the debt so that future generations don't get burdened with debt?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much. Q3 brought good news to the province here, Mr. Speaker. We were able to prepay \$800 million to municipalities so that they could better address the important infrastructure needs and keep Albertans working. We certainly understand that if the price of oil goes up, there will be potentially some benefit to Albertans – that's a good thing – but we will stick to our budget. We're committed to making sure we deliver the best value for Albertans.

Mr. Fraser: While everyone in this House would be happy to see energy prices return to a healthy level, we need to be doing more to reduce government reliance on resource revenue. Recently the outgoing Auditor General suggested that Alberta would benefit from long-term financial planning as a part of introducing more certainty and predictability to government spending and revenue collection, which is especially relevant given how optimistic your budget's long-term projections were. To the same minister: will you detail some actual plans for getting us off the resource roller coaster and release some realistic long-term financial projections?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, the AG's report reinforces our position that Albertans need to get off the resource revenue roller coaster. The previous government spent recklessly and cut drastically, depending on the price of oil that day. We're doing the job to balance the approach so that we can support

working families in this province and continue to drive the economy forward, as it did in 2017 at 4.5 per cent GDP growth.

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

Supports for Seniors and Caregivers

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My riding of Calgary-Currie is a growing and diverse neighbourhood and is home to many different generations of Calgarians, including seniors. To the Minister of Seniors and Housing: what are you doing to support seniors and their caregivers?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Labour.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much to the member for the question. Seniors are vibrant members of our province, and we are committed to supporting them. It was my pleasure to join that member in Calgary-Currie last year to talk to some of the seniors living in the constituency. We know that seniors would like to age in their communities, close to loved ones. One of our core programs, the Alberta seniors' benefit, provided financial assistance to more than 150,000 seniors last year. That's just one of the many examples of our government committing to protect vital public services for working people.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I know our government is committed to supporting seniors and has made a significant investment in programs to support them. However, my constituents want to know specifically what we are doing to support seniors in our community. To the same minister: what are we doing to help seniors in Calgary-Currie?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Again, having the opportunity to visit Calgary-Currie and talk with seniors there meant quite a lot to me. The Minister of Seniors and Housing has also done the same, and that is why earlier this year we were pleased to announce that our government is investing \$250,000 in planning funding for Spruce Cliff Downs. Last year the minister toured this facility, and the Member for Calgary-Currie strongly advocated for the need for new units. This investment shows our government's commitment to protecting public services.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As our economy recovers, many seniors and their families in my riding are still having trouble making ends meet. Seniors are especially vulnerable. To the same minister: how are you ensuring that vulnerable seniors are not left behind?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our government invested more than \$3 billion in seniors' programs just last year. We are supporting seniors to access up to \$40,000 for home repairs through the seniors home adaptation and repair program. Our opposition's reckless plan would give big tax giveaways to those at the top and cut the support seniors depend on. Our plan is focused on Albertans' priorities: jobs, affordability, and protecting public services.

MLA Compensation and the Provincial Budget

Mr. Fildebrandt: As MLAs we have a lot of priorities and policies that we need to balance, but perhaps the most fundamental duty of any legislative body is to oversee the management of our public finances. At its most basic, if a government can't balance its budget at least once a decade, we're not doing our jobs. To focus our collective minds on the task, I'm proposing that we cut all MLA pay by 5 per cent until the budget is balanced. Can the Premier support this?

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, this matter refers to an item that is on the Order Paper for later today, and it is therefore out of order.

The Speaker: I believe that the hon. Government House Leader may be correct on that matter.

Is there another subject matter that you wish to direct to the government, to cabinet?

Mr. Fildebrandt: Mr. Speaker, I understand why the government might not want to answer the question, but I'm not referring to any motion on the Order Paper.

The Speaker: No, no.

Mr. Fildebrandt: I'm not referring to a bill. I'm not referring to . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, I'm going to pass to the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Electricity Regulated Rate Cap

Mrs. Aheer: Mr. Speaker, with the return of money-losing power purchase agreements to the Balancing Pool after this government hiked the province's carbon tax on heavy emitters and the Balancing Pool's finances crumbled to the tune of close to \$2 billion – we don't even know what those updated numbers are – and given that in the deregulated market consumers are protected from volatility, can the government please explain how a 6.8 cent cap, which is actually more than double what Albertans pay right now for electricity, is supposedly going to protect consumers?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, 2001, 2002, 2006, 2007, 2013: those were all years when the pool price of electricity was more than \$100 per megawatt hour. Here's the common denominator: Conservative government. Today we are at about a third of that. The reality is that Albertans have been exposed to an electricity price roller coaster. We've taken them off that ride, and we're fixing a broken system with common-sense reforms that will reduce price spikes and uncertainty.

2:10

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, everything that this government is doing now is actually ensuring that the taxpayer is on the hook for all of the risk while the companies that they choose reap all of the rewards. With respect to that, given that the Minister of Energy has extraordinary powers to bring renewables online and the related infrastructure without consulting consumers or the Legislature and given that this could cost anywhere from \$800 million to \$2.5 billion just in transmission upgrades and given that the ratepayer and the taxpayer are the same person, can the minister please explain to Albertans what this cost is going to be for the average Alberta family?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said, 2001, 2002, 2006, 2007, 2013: those are the reasons that we're fixing a broken system that was given to us by the Conservative government. As we move to a more stable and affordable system, we've capped energy bills to protect families and businesses from rate spikes. Our government is on the side of regular Albertans. I'm not sure why they aren't.

Mrs. Aheer: Mr. Speaker, the minister had actually said that Albertans are responding to the costs that are rising on their bills and asking questions, rightfully, and the minister also said that the government's actual focus is on developing a clean grid, and that's not even with consulting Albertans. When will the government take responsibility for the fact that the government's mismanagement of this file will ultimately take way more money out of the pockets of Albertans despite the smoke and mirrors that she's using to disguise the costs resulting from these NDP policies?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One correction on that question: we have consulted. We've consulted with Albertans, we've consulted with industry, we've consulted with environment groups as we come together with this plan. The Conservatives over there seem to want to keep defending insider deals that cost Albertans thousands and millions of dollars. We are acting by capping and protecting Albertans from price spikes. The deregulation caused the roller-coaster ride that we have been on. We're fixing that. We're implementing common-sense reforms and reducing uncertainty. Again, we're on the side of Albertans. I'm not sure why they aren't.

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

Police Release of Information on Serious Incidents

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta lacks consistent rules for naming perpetrators of serious crimes and victims of homicide, and the result is a confused and possibly misinformed public. ASIRT's decision to withhold the name of a man killed in a shootout with police because protecting his family was more important than the public disclosure has highlighted a serious issue. Minister, why do you insist on sweeping this under the carpet? This is not going to go away.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think we've been clear on this issue several times. This is a decision and a policy that were put in place by ASIRT. ASIRT is an independent organization, and they have to be able to operate independently and exercise their decision-making independently of government. It is the case that their policy is consistent with those policies across the country, and that is, I think, a very reasonable position for them to take.

Mr. Ellis: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that the minister keeps insisting that ASIRT is independent and given that ASIRT was created to ensure that police are not investigating other police and that ASIRT is supposed to answer to the director of law enforcement, also known as your deputy minister, Minister, is ASIRT a force unto itself, or will you admit that it falls under your authority, or are you just not in charge of your ministry?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Well, in the Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General there are a number of things that need to operate independently. ASIRT is under the ministry – they're there to perform an important function – but it is important that they are able to perform that function based on where the evidence leads them and not where political direction leads them. There are a number of things under my ministry that are in the same position. For instance, Crown prosecutors also are permitted to exercise jurisdiction.

Mr. Ellis: Mr. Speaker, given that a year ago the minister said that it's important to have consistency when it comes to naming homicide victims and given that she also said that she would work with the Alberta police chiefs to develop a consistent naming policy yet we still see some police services naming homicide victims one day and not the next day, Minister, how can Albertans have faith in our justice system when police and ASIRT are allowed to arbitrarily and randomly conceal names from the public?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The member is right. It is important to have consistency across the province. That's why I asked the Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police to come together to create a consistent policy. Police chiefs have done that due diligence. They consulted with the Privacy Commissioner as well as victims of crime, and they adopted a new standard that was released in August.

Thank you.

Carbon Levy and Seniors' Expenses

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, 42 per cent of Albertans are finding it difficult to cover their monthly expenses. That problem gets even worse for our fixed-income seniors, who are living on a fixed income in our community. Now, what does this government do? They bring in a carbon tax that raises the cost of everything. They bring in a rebate that they give to seniors, but then they turn around and claw back 30 per cent of that rebate just to seniors in our communities. My question is: is it this government's policy to continue to allow seniors to be disproportionately punished by this ideological tax?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Labour.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Making sure that we support our seniors is a high priority for our government, and that means making sure that while we diversify the economy and invest in energy efficiency, seniors also have the resources that they need. I'm so proud that at a time when the opposition was advocating for slashing public services, including the health care that our seniors deserve and the education that their grandkids rely on, we are investing more than ever in seniors' lodges, the Alberta seniors' benefit, and the carbon levy rebate. Last year there was more than \$3 billion in services for seniors.

Thank you.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, given that the minister can just look at her notes and go off canned answers – they're saying that they're standing up for seniors in our communities? That is one of the most ridiculous things I've ever heard. The fact is that they're allowing 30 per cent of seniors' carbon tax rebates to be clawed back. They're making them have to pay stuff. This is a government that

told seniors in my community to fund raise to pay for the carbon tax. Again, is it this government's policy to make seniors disproportionately pay for the carbon tax? Yes or no?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we're making life better by protecting front-line care and making life affordable for seniors in this province. Approximately 260,000 seniors are eligible to receive up to \$300 annually for the carbon levy rebate. We've also provided \$500,000 in grants to the four largest housing management bodies to conduct energy efficiency audits. We continue to work for seniors, not against them. We've protected more than \$800 million in seniors' benefits over the last two years.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, given that all this government has done is actually raise the carbon tax by 67 per cent at a time that 70 per cent of Albertans are feeling that their economic situation is getting worse – that's all this government has done. The Premier indicated that if Trans Mountain was not built, we as a province would not see the carbon tax go up by 67 per cent. I moved a motion that the Premier and her colleagues voted against. I will move it again just shortly. Will this government support that motion? Yes or no?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for allowing me to talk about the pipeline. With the lack of capacity that we're experiencing going to the coast, \$40 million a day into the Canadian economy is being lost. That's money that we could be using to help seniors. It could be helping to build hospitals, schools, other social programs, rural crime, you name it. That's money that's being left on the table. We're fighting very hard on this side of the House for that pipeline. The opposition needs to join us.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

High School Construction in St. Albert

Mr. Horne: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. St. Albert is a community that has been growing consistently, and that growth has put many pressures on our infrastructure. In particular, our school system has seen a 30 per cent growth in K to 9 enrolment over the past five years. Now, in that time we have seen several K to 6 and K to 9 schools built. This demographic wave is soon to put that same pressure on our high schools. St. Albert has been advocating for more high school space for several years now. I was very pleased to see that through Budget 2018 Paul Kane high school will be replaced. To the Minister of Education . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

2:20

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I got the general idea of the question. We're very happy to announce that Paul Kane high school will be a part of the 20 school projects that we announced during our budget this year. Certainly, the hon. member is correct that this is one of the areas. Suburban, metro Edmonton is one of the highest areas of growth. Building a replacement school in St. Albert was long overdue. The previous government ignored this need for many, many years. Now we're building a new replacement school, 1,500 spaces in a beautiful location in St. Albert. Very proud of that.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Paul Kane high school has been a centrepiece for the community for many decades now. To the same minister: why replace Paul Kane when a modernization and expansion could prove more cost-effective?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we always defer to the needs of school boards. It's good to have local government as part of that decision-making process. Certainly, it was important because of the advanced state of disrepair at Paul Kane and how it was ignored by the previous government. It's past that point where you can actually do that modernization. It gives us a chance to upgrade CTS and other modern equipment and computer processes, to build a school that is going to have reduced energy use, increased energy savings, and it's just a great way by which we can contribute to the city of St. Albert.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Second supplemental.

Mr. Horne: Thank you. Now, Paul Kane is only a piece of the space crunch that our schools will be facing. Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: how does Bellerose composite high school fit into the St. Albert space solution?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, again, we deferred to the decision-making processes of school boards to make determinations, and we like to help to satisfy what needs they see. Certainly, there are a lot of needs not just in St. Albert but right across the province. We are now in the midst of more than 200 school projects across the province of Alberta. It's something that we should all be very proud of. Our economy is growing, and our young population is growing as well. We have the youngest population in the country, and we have to make sure that we have schools and teachers for each of those kids to make sure that they have the best start in their lives.

Provincial Debt-servicing Costs

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, for decades Albertans benefited from Conservative governments not having to siphon substantial sums of tax dollars to pay interest, and Albertans received lower taxes and more services instead. In contrast, this government will be spending \$2 billion to pay the cost of this government's massive debt increases this year and \$3.7 billion annual interest by only 2023. To the minister: why do you prioritize Bay Street bankers to the detriment of Alberta families and Alberta communities?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you what our priority is. Our priority is standing up for regular Alberta families. That's why we stopped the opposition, whose plan was to lay off tons of nurses and teachers, a billion dollars in cuts to health care. The Leader of the Opposition is talking, in local weekly newspapers and so forth, that 20 per cent cuts seem realistic. That's not realistic. It's not realistic that you can say that you're going to protect health care and cut billions of dollars. The math doesn't add up. You know what? It's time that you guys came clean with Albertans.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, given that in 2015 Alberta's NDP chose to follow the past example of former Ontario NDP Premier Bob Rae over the financial cliff and given that both governments destroyed wealth, killed jobs, accumulated debt, and ballooned bureaucracy and that families and communities have suffered from reckless

fiscal mismanagement by paying interest instead of receiving services and that the term “Rae days” is now synonymous with failed government policy and a government in trouble, to the minister again: why are hurting Alberta families and communities with your losing playbook?

The Speaker: The Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, you know, the Leader of the Opposition, when he was in government – let’s just look at this whole thing about who’s hurting Canadians. When the Leader of the Opposition was in Ottawa: six straight deficit budgets, \$58 billion deficit in just one year alone. He added, that government added \$145 billion to our national debt, and they paid \$309 billion in interest rates. Why don’t they talk about that? There is nothing we can learn from that side except going down the wrong road. We’re not going to do it. We’re going to continue to support Albertans. We’re going to continue to invest in this province.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Barnes: Given that in the years since he was Ontario’s Premier, Bob Rae has reflected and changed his view – “As I grow older, I have had to discard some ideas and policies because they no longer make sense. This strikes me as entirely healthy. I would invite others to do the same” – to the minister: why, then, are you planning \$96 billion in debt, \$4 billion in annual interest, and destroying job-creating investment when another big government, a former NDP leader, now knows how wrong this is?

The Speaker: The Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you. You know, let’s fast-forward to today, Mr. Speaker, or even look at last year: 90,000 full-time jobs over the past year were added in this province, most of them in the private sector. We know that not all Albertans are feeling that yet, but they are starting to feel it. We are continuing to support good jobs. We’re continuing to build a diverse economy, where the Conservatives want to take us back to the future and continue to invest in boondoggles that don’t help this province. They had situations in place where salaries were excessive, perks were there. We’ve changed all that. We’re cutting their waste.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon minister.

Carbon Levy Revenue Utilization

Mr. Loewen: When the climate leadership plan was first announced, the Premier and the environment minister promised that the carbon tax would be revenue neutral. It didn’t take long before we found out the truth, that it wasn’t revenue neutral at all. Why did this NDP government try to deceive Albertans with something they knew was not true?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, our climate leadership plan got us two pipeline approvals, Trans Mountain and line 3. We are doing this in the best interests of not just Albertans but of Canadians. Our plan will cut emissions drastically, a projected 30 per cent reduction by 2030. We’ve capped oil sands emissions at 100 megatonnes. To do all that, we’re reinvesting back into industry as well as helping everyday Albertans manage their costs.

Mr. Loewen: Given that after the government backtracked on the revenue-neutral aspect of the carbon tax, they said that every dollar of the carbon tax would be recycled right here in Alberta and given that it didn’t take long for an Ontario company to be hired with the carbon tax dollars to install light bulbs, which the government admits sent carbon tax dollars to Ontario, showing that the recycled-dollars-in-Alberta promise was also not true, when will this government just come clean and tell the truth about the carbon tax, that it’s just a tax and it’s not making life better for Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we’re supporting good jobs in a diversified economy. We’re investing \$1.4 billion in innovation projects. All that is funded by the climate leadership plan: \$440 million for oil sands innovation to help companies increase production and reduce emissions while adjusting to the improved rules for large emitters; \$225 million for innovation projects across sectors that support research, commercialization, and investment in new technologies that reduce emissions; \$240 million for industrial energy efficiency projects that help companies reduce emissions.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Loewen: Given that the government talks about how their good friend Justin Trudeau approved the Trans Mountain pipeline because of the carbon tax and given that approval appears to be not worth the paper it’s printed on and given that this government has had to resort to wine boycotts, to threats of inflicting financial pain on B.C. residents, and even offering to pay for the pipeline in an attempt to get the pipeline through, this is ultimate proof that the social licence sale job on Albertans is just as much a sham as the rest of the promises this government has made on the carbon tax. So, please, will you quit inflicting pain on Albertans and scrap the tax?

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

The Speaker: Point of order noted.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Not sure what the question was there, but I’ll continue: \$63 million in grants for bioenergy projects, including biodiesel and ethanol; \$400 million in loan guarantees to support investment in efficiency in renewable energy measures. When we talk about small business, we’ve reduced the taxes for small business. That’s created 90,000 new jobs in the last year. Our opposition continues to want to rail against the federal government, to rail against the plan, but we know the plan is working. We are caring for our seniors. We are taking climate leadership seriously.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Federal Response to Pipeline Opposition

Mr. McIver: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, a recent poll commissioned by CBC indicates that pipelines are top of mind for Albertans. Janet Brown, who conducted the poll for CBC, stated that many people in the province believe that “the future of the economy depends on the ability to build pipelines,” yet this government can’t bring themselves to support our leader in calling for the suspension of federal discretionary transfer payments to B.C. for as long as they oppose the Kinder Morgan pipeline. To the Minister of Energy: why do you not support cutting off these discretionary transfer payments?

2:30

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we're working hard since day one to get the approval for pipelines, which we did back in November 2016 because of our climate leadership plan. We're fighting every day to get our natural resources to tidewater because we know that's the number one competitive advantage that gives our industry what they need. At the end of the day, there's only one outcome for this province, and that's to get Trans Mountain built.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we wouldn't be in this mess if the government had stood up for Northern Gateway when they had a chance and the federal government hadn't killed Energy East by meddling with the NEB and given that the only actions this government has taken to date were to adopt suggestions put forward by our leader months ago, suggestions the government initially dismissed out of hand, to the minister: instead of following months behind, why don't you catch up with our leader in calling for the federal government to suspend discretionary transfer payments to B.C. until they stop their objections to the pipeline? Are you not tired of catching up?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, it was our climate leadership plan that got the two pipeline approvals, and it's our climate leadership plan that's going to get it. You know, the Conservative leader did not do a thing when he was in Ottawa to get any pipeline to any tidewater. Let's be clear about that. We are working very hard on this side of the House to get that pipeline built, and – make no mistake – it is going to be built.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this government has presided over two pipeline cancellations and given that one participant from the CBC survey stated, "It's all been talk and there hasn't been any action," and given that Premier Horgan has openly stated that he doesn't believe Alberta will actually turn off the taps and has stated that the Alberta Premier told him that she wouldn't use the legislation, again to the Energy minister. B.C. doesn't believe you'll take action. Albertans don't believe you'll take action. You haven't done anything yet. What proof can you offer Albertans today that you will ever take action?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I know that the member opposite is used to governments making promises and not following through on them or governments claiming grandiose plans and spending many years in Ottawa failing to get a product to tidewater, but on this side of the House we set our path, we set our mind very clearly on this outcome. That's why we brought forward a climate leadership plan that resulted in two approvals. That's why we won't back down. That's why we brought forward Bill 12, why we want to ensure that we have every tool absolutely necessary. Mark my words: that pipeline will get built, and we invite you to the party when it does.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Flood Recovery and Mitigation

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Rosedeer Hotel and Last Chance Saloon in Wayne, Alberta has been a fixture in the Rosebud valley since 1913 and has survived numerous high-water events over the last century. The flooding occurring in the last few weeks was a close call, and other than some damage to the grounds behind this historic business, they are confident that they will be ready to return to business after a bit of hard work. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: what programs, if any, are being made available to businesses and landowners impacted by recent overland flooding?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Obviously, we all know that there are a lot of people dealing with flooding across the province right now, and particularly up north there are some ice jams that are happening. We have people on the ground in a lot of communities across the province. Alberta Emergency Management has field operations people out there, and Environment and Parks has folks out there. We do have some programs through us in Municipal Affairs, which are the disaster relief programs, which come after. They take assessments on what has happened and what goes forward. We're looking forward to continuing to work with municipalities and understanding what they might need going forward.

Mr. Strankman: Again, Mr. Speaker, given that my colleague from Grande Prairie has asked this question during budget estimates and given that despite updating her answers previously and given that flood mapping should be a priority in light of our history, Minister, in estimates in 2016 the assistant deputy minister of Environment and Parks stated that there was no update to the 70 per cent completion rate of flood mapping but there were new studies of priority river systems being done. Now, given that we are in 2018, I think it's fair to ask: what is the current completed acreage?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the member for the question. Yes, there is updated flood mapping going on through Environment and Parks. As technology is involved, it's getting more intense, and there are more and more extreme events going on across the province, so there are a lot more factors to take under consideration. We are doing that, and we'll continue making sure that we get it done right the first time.

Mr. Strankman: Mr. Speaker, it's a given that flood mapping will be a living document and sometimes land and waterways change, and given that this is a complex and costly process involving both provincial and municipal governments, Minister, what steps has your department undertaken or has your department laid out objectives to further achieve a higher level than 70 per cent of Alberta's flood mapping being completed? I am sure that many affected Albertans would like to know.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you. To the particular question that the member has: I appreciate that. Whatever details he would like, we could get specifically from Environment and Parks, but I know that we have been working with folks on the ground across the province. As I said, we have been adapting as technology has changed, and we will continue to do that. We would be happy to get particulars for the member.

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

Postsecondary Education Concerns

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The demand to attend postsecondary has always been high in Calgary, but with the downturn and the price of oil, the need is greater to help diversify our economy. There is a strong criticism that for many years Calgary did not receive adequate funding for postsecondaries compared to regions like Edmonton. To the Minister of Advanced Education: what is being done to ensure that funding to postsecondaries is fair and equitable?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for his question. We know that the recession was a difficult period for Calgarians and that many sought to upgrade their skills during that time. That's why our government has been proud to increase funding for our universities and colleges every year that we've been in government. These increases are ensuring that postsecondary education remains accessible and affordable, and without this funding, students would have been left out in the cold with crumbling classrooms and sky-high tuition. If the Conservatives ever get the chance, they'll cut postsecondary funding sharply just to give tax cuts to millionaires and billionaires and make postsecondary education out of reach for many Alberta families.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Sucha: Thank you. Given that past Conservative governments generally provided roller-coaster funding that was disruptive to student life and that semesters do not resolve around a fiscal calendar like governments do, what are you doing to provide stable, predictable funding?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again to the member for that question. We've heard from students that being able to plan ahead for costs is just as important as the tuition freeze has been. As I stated previously, we've been proud to increase funding every year. Our increases have meant a 2 per cent increase to the operating grant of every university and college, keeping pace with cost growth and protecting equality. In Budget 2018 we were also proud to provide backfill funding to compensate for the tuition freeze on top of the 2 per cent increases to the operating grants. This has meant an additional \$100 million in operating funding just in Calgary alone. This funding has been clear and consistent, making it easier for both our institutions and . . .

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

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we hear concerns related to the equity of funding for certain universities and given that there are concerns about postsecondary universities' performance measures, to the same minister: what is being done to ensure that postsecondaries perform properly with our valued tax dollars?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Thanks again, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member for that very insightful question. We've seen the impact of not funding schools properly, and students and institutions are still

suffering from the cuts of the past. Our government has been clear that we expect that the funding that we provide is being best used to the benefit of students and in keeping their education affordable. I've been meeting with students, staff, and the postsecondary boards regularly, and we will continue working with everyone in the postsecondary sector to ensure that this is exactly what happens. We know that stable and predictable funding is so important to our postsecondary institutions and our students, and that's exactly what . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

University of Alberta Honorary Degree Awards

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, we all recognize that the Senate of the University of Alberta is independent in its decisions to grant honorary degrees, but I would like to know if the government would join with the Official Opposition and a growing number of Albertans in expressing concern about the honour being granted to Dr. David Suzuki, who says that human beings are an invasive species, that immigration is disgusting and crazy and should be stopped, who says that the oil sands are the moral equivalent of slavery, who says that economics is the product of brain damage, and who says that Alberta's major employer should be shut down immediately. Does the government share my concern about the honorary doctorate being granted to such an individual?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, I share concerns about some of the statements that Dr. Suzuki has made in the past. However, I'm also very deeply concerned about freedom of speech on campuses, something that the members opposite have expressed as a priority in their upcoming policy platform. I'd ask the member opposite to explain to the House why freedom of speech should be extended only to anti-abortion activist groups and the likes of Jordan Peterson and not to David Suzuki. [interjections]

2:40

The Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, freedom of speech and David Suzuki don't normally fit into the same sentence because he usually charges \$50,000 for a speech. That's anything but free. And the same David Suzuki, who the minister is now defending, has called for his political opponents to be imprisoned. He said that former Prime Minister Harper should be thrown in jail because he didn't agree with Dr. Suzuki on shutting down Canada's energy industry. Again I'll ask the government: do they agree with the decision of the University of Alberta Senate in this respect? Dr. Suzuki is free to say anything he wants anywhere he wants. It's not about speech. It's about giving him the honorary degree.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
The Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the hon. Leader of the Opposition is in an uncomfortable position because he wants it both ways. He wants to be a champion of free speech, yet he doesn't want somebody like David Suzuki to receive an honorary degree from the University of Alberta. Our position is quite consistent. We're champions of freedom of speech. We are also champions of academic integrity, and that's why, regardless of what our opinions of David Suzuki are, we're going to allow the university – we have no say in what the university is going to do,

and we're defending the right of the University of Alberta to continue . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, this is not a complicated question. It has nothing to do with speech. Nobody is seeking to inhibit Dr. Suzuki's speech. What we're seeking to do is to question the wisdom . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kenney: What we're seeking to do – I'm sorry. They're certainly not circumscribed in their heckling, Mr. Speaker.

What we're seeking to do is to question the wisdom of granting a high honour to a man who says that immigration is disgusting and crazy and should be stopped, who wants his political opponents thrown in jail, who says that our oil sands are like slavery and economics is like brain damage. Why can't the minister just stand up and say: we completely disagree with David Suzuki, and he shouldn't get . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, Mr. Speaker, of course, I have said already that I wouldn't necessarily be the first to give Dr. Suzuki an honorary degree. The decision is not mine to make, though. The decision is the University of Alberta's to make, and it's very concerning to me that somebody who is applying for the job of Premier of Alberta is threatening, intimidating, and harassing an independent institution into reversing a decision that is well within its purview to make.

Mr. Nixon: Point of order.

The Speaker: Point of order.

Hon. members, in 30 seconds we will continue with Members' Statements.

Members' Statements

(continued)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Red Deer Community Activities

Mrs. Schreiner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As usual, I stand to sing the praises of my great constituency of Red Deer-North. Today, however, I want to talk about what we can do to give back to the great people and the great communities we were elected to represent.

We know that Albertans have a strong sense of community and family. I am constantly astounded by how much people do for those who are suffering. My calendar is filled with walks and other events that work to raise money for those whose health is affected by diseases. As a former health care worker this community passion for health care strikes a very personal chord. Whether I am walking for Alzheimer's, juvenile diabetes, cancer, or multiple sclerosis, I am always in awe of the people walking beside me. Survivors, family members, and friends all share their time and their conviction that research will someday end or lessen the suffering. There are children, parents, and grandparents present to support their loved ones and to reinforce the importance of living every day for one purpose, an even better tomorrow for everyone.

But it does not stop there. Sponsors step up to the call of their community and support both the causes and the people participating. Volunteers step up who give of their time because of

their conviction that people working together can achieve anything. The encouragement and support from everyone involved is tangible. It is a feeling that everyone who participates can experience and relish. Whatever the cause, I urge all of you to stand together with your communities and help them fight the battle or heal the scars that these conditions have left.

Mr. Speaker, I am so proud to be able to give back if even a little to the community of Red Deer, that elected me, and which is so very active in its fight for a better life for all.

Thank you.

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

Service Alberta and Status of Women Minister's Remarks

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher once said that "if they attack one personally, it means they have not a single political argument left." Usually when we hear baseless political attacks from the NDP anger machine, we can take those words and ignore the attacks for the nonsense they are.

Last week, however, we saw some comments on Twitter from the Minister of Service Alberta and Status of Women that undoubtedly crossed the line and that cannot be ignored. The minister made accusations that implied that the conservative movement in our province and in our country was somehow responsible for the rising tide of anti-Semitism. Mr. Speaker, this was a slander of millions of regular Canadians who have voted for Canadian conservative parties, parties which have been leaders in the world in supporting the Jewish people and in combatting the unacceptable hatred of anti-Semitism.

Mr. Speaker, this is not an issue to be used as a cheap political attack. It is an immensely serious issue that we should be working together to solve. The minister owes an apology to those she slandered, and frankly she owes an apology to the Jewish community for using this serious topic as a tool for a partisan attack against Canadian conservatives.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Presenting Petitions

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Yao: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present a petition from a pharmacist regarding the new funding framework for pharmacists if I might read it out.

We, the undersigned . . . hereby petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to reinvest at least 50% of any savings anticipated from generic drug cost reductions resulting from the 5-year agreement recently negotiated between the pan-Canadian Pharmaceutical Alliance and the Canadian Generic Pharmaceutical Association effective April 1st, 2018, into frontline pharmacy services and programs to ensure the delivery of better healthcare for Albertans and the sustainability and job security of the thousands of Albertans employed in pharmacies and drugstores across our province.

Thank you.

Notices of Motions

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

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the appropriate time I intend to move the following motion pursuant to Standing Order 42.

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to recognize April 30 each year as Journey to Freedom Day in commemoration of the more than 60,000 Vietnamese refugees who came to Canada in search of freedom and prosperity, following the fall of Saigon and the end of the Vietnam War in 1975, and be it further resolved that the Legislative Assembly recognize the valuable contributions of Alberta's Vietnamese community to our province.

The Speaker: The Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give notice pursuant to Standing Order 42 that at the appropriate time I will move the following motion.

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government not to proceed with any further increases to the carbon tax until Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain expansion project has completed construction and commenced commercial operations.

I have the appropriate copies for the pages.

2:50

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the hon. Mr. Feehan, Minister of Indigenous Relations, pursuant to the Metis Settlements Act Metis Settlements Appeal Tribunal annual report 2017.

The Speaker: I believe, hon. members, that there were three points of order, the first one being from the Government House Leader rebutting comments concerning, at the time, Grande Prairie-Smoky, I believe.

Mr. Mason: I'd like to withdraw that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I will also withdraw mine. There are some people in the gallery waiting for the next business, and I think we should proceed.

The Speaker: Thank you.

I believe that there's a point of order by the Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Point of Order Anticipation Points of Order

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My point of order is referring to a matter raised by the Government House Leader in question period during my question today. I will begin by referring to the *House of Commons Procedure* on the role of the Speaker during question period and then points of order and questions of privilege during question period.

The Speaker has implicit discretion and authority to rule out of order any question posed during Question Period if satisfied that it is in contravention of House rules of order, decorum and procedure.

It goes on from there, but I'll go to points of order and questions of privilege raised during question period.

Generally, points of order or questions of privilege are not entertained during Question Period. In his 1975 statement concerning the conduct of Question Period, Speaker Jerome indicated that any points of order or questions of privilege arising out of the proceedings of Question Period should be raised at the

end of Question Period. Despite this directive, there have been instances of points of order or questions of privilege being raised during Question Period, but they have been deferred, at the request of the Chair, until after Question Period. However, if a situation arises during Question Period that the Speaker believes to be sufficiently serious to require immediate consideration, for example unparliamentary language, then the matter is addressed at that time.

Mr. Speaker, the Government House Leader in response to a question I posed – I believe he didn't cite a section, but if I may anticipate, he was referring to anticipation in section 23(e) of the Standing Orders, which says that a question may not be asked if it "anticipates, contrary to good parliamentary practice, any matter already on the Order Paper or on notice for consideration on that day." Now, if the minister wasn't listening too closely, he may have actually had a point, but I was not referring specifically to any motion or bill on the Order Paper. My question was of a general nature. Surely, it involves a topic matter, but previous rulings by yourself and many, many other Speakers have generally allowed some latitude as long as we're not referring to specific bills or specific motions on the Order Paper.

I will very quickly refer you to the exact wording of what I said today, and you can judge for yourself if it includes specifically referring to a bill or a motion. I will go right to the end of it, to the question. "To focus our collective minds on the task, I'm proposing that we cut all MLA pay by 5 per cent until the budget is balanced. Can the Premier support this?"

Now, I am proposing things. I have proposed an alternative budget. I've proposed a number of ideas in my time in the Legislature here, and I am proposing this. I'm not referring to a specific motion, I'm not referring to a specific bill, so I would believe that any ruling on anticipation would not be proper if applied in this case.

It's also important to note that points of order are not to be dealt with during question period unless they are of a "sufficiently serious" nature. I don't believe that any unparliamentary language was used. I don't believe the question even created disorder. I think people were rather polite and restrained during it. So I don't believe that the matter should have been dealt with at that time. The Government House Leader was free to raise a point of order, but it would have been appropriately dealt with afterwards. But because it was effectively a point of order posed as an answer to a question, I did not have the ability to argue a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

This was effectively a backdoor point of order that should not have been ruled on at that time without proper debate as we're having now. So I would request that the Government House Leader's intervention be ruled out of order, that it was essentially a backdoor point of order that should not have been dealt with at that specific time, and that I have my question rotation returned to me for tomorrow's Routine orders.

Mr. Mason: Oh, Mr. Speaker, where to begin? Well, let's start with the first point, which is that the hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks is arguing that the point of order was made at the wrong time in the Routine. Now, normally you stand up and register your point of order, and it's dealt with at the end of question period. But he put a question to the government that was clearly out of order because it was on the Order Paper. In my answer – and it was an answer, not a formal point of order – I simply stated that the question anticipated something already on the Order Paper and was out of order, and I sat down. I was prepared to stand up and respond to supplemental questions as well.

It is also wrong of the member to say that any time a point of order is made or a ruling of the chair that everybody has to have a

chance to stand up and debate the matter. That's not the case. You, Mr. Speaker, as the arbiter of the rules of this House, have every authority to make rulings without first asking for submissions, particularly when it's a matter of routine like whether questions are in or out of order. That's not normally something that you can deal with in the routine of dealing with it after question period. By then, of course, it's too late.

Now, there are a couple of other things, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member is suggesting that because he used the words that he was proposing it that he somehow escapes 13(2). No, that's not quite the right one. I'm sorry.

Some Hon. Members: Standing Order 23(e).

Mr. Mason: Let's see. Standing Order 23(e), which I'll just repeat, Mr. Speaker:

A Member will be called to order by the Speaker if, in the Speaker's opinion, that Member

(e) anticipates, contrary to good parliamentary practice, any matter already on the Order Paper or on notice for consideration on that day.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what he did. He referred to a matter that was on the Order Paper. The fact that he used the word "proposing" and didn't specifically name his bill is completely irrelevant. He is still in violation of that rule.

Now, a couple of other points, Mr. Speaker. First of all, it's a responsibility of the member to stand up at the time the actual offence or purported offence occurred. This hon. member went out of the House, came back, and made his point of order at that time, so he quite literally missed his opportunity to make his point of order.

Most substantial, Mr. Speaker – I think this is the greatest thing that the hon. member is offending the rules by today, among many – is that if someone has a problem with the ruling of the Speaker, they have two options. They can stand up under Standing Order 13(2) and ask the Speaker to "explain the reasons for any decision on the request of a Member." The only other recourse, Mr. Speaker, if one disagrees with the Speaker, is to move a motion of nonconfidence, and of course that triggers an immediate vote. If the vote is in the positive, the Speaker is removed from his office and from the chair. Those are the options that we have in this Assembly.

3:00

In this particular case, Mr. Speaker, I think you acted quite correctly, in accordance with the rules, and I would respectfully request, on multiple grounds, that the hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks's point of order be ruled out of order.

I would request unanimous consent to continue with Orders of the Day, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

The Speaker: I'm still dealing with the point of order, I believe. Past practice has been that if we've done the Routine – so we're going to continue with the point of order, hon. member.

New information, hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow?

Mr. Clark: Yeah. I just want to add briefly. I was hoping perhaps that we'd have the Blues available to us. Unfortunately, this is the one piece of the Blues that is not quite available yet.

I just want to reiterate the hon. Government House Leader's point, that it's very, very clear, not just from the Standing Order of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta 23(e), that a member would be called to order by the Speaker if that member "anticipates, contrary to good parliamentary practice, any matter already on the Order Paper" – that's any matter already on the Order Paper, not just a bill – "or on notice for consideration on that day." Very clearly, this

matter is. When the member did ask about the 5 per cent, those words are right here in Motion 502, which is on today's Order Paper. No less an authority, of course, than *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules & Forms*, sixth edition, section 409(12): "Questions should not anticipate a debate scheduled for the day, but should be reserved for the debate."

I think that very clearly, Mr. Speaker, there is no point of order here, and I believe your ruling was correct. Thank you.

The Speaker: To the Member for Strathmore-Brooks, certainly that has been the practice and normally is the practice, that we would wait until the end. Now, it hasn't been that way, but generally I would say that the point that you're making is correct, that I would or any Speaker in past practice would wait until Oral Question Period is complete. However, in this situation, as several members have cited, under 23(e) it says, "A Member will be called to order," and I believe, as I think the Member for Calgary-Elbow indicated, it was related to a matter which is on the Order Paper today, Motion 502. At the time that's why I asked, hon. member, if you had another question in your supplemental that you may wish to address. But you chose not to opt that way, so I had a responsibility and a duty, in fact, as 23(e) suggests, to rule the question out of order. For closure, I ruled that it was a point of order, the comment made.

Motions under Standing Order 42

The Speaker: I believe we are at Standing Order 42. The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Journey to Freedom Day

[Unanimous consent granted]

Mr. Kenney moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to recognize April 30 each year as Journey to Freedom Day in commemoration of the more than 60,000 Vietnamese refugees who came to Canada in search of freedom and prosperity, following the fall of Saigon and the end of the Vietnam War in 1975. And be it further resolved that the Legislative Assembly recognize the valuable contributions of Alberta's Vietnamese community to our province.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank all members and all parties for their unanimous support for this motion, a motion that echoes a private member's bill which was adopted in the Senate and House of Commons of Canada and became the Journey to Freedom Day Act in 2015. I would like at the outset to acknowledge and thank Senator Thanh Hai Ngo for his leadership in this respect. He was the initial mover of the bill in the Senate which has become the Journey to Freedom Day Act. I'd like to thank Senator Ngo for having proposed to myself that the Alberta Legislature replicate this important historical recognition here in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, we all know that the Vietnamese war of the 1960s and '70s was a long, tragic, and bloody affair, which ultimately led to the loss of hundreds of thousands of lives both of combatants and of innocent women, men, and children. While we acknowledge the great suffering that occurred during the war, in adopting this motion, we also acknowledge what is often forgotten, which is the suffering that continued in the immediate aftermath of the war.

On this day in 1975 the southern Vietnamese republic fell to the communist north. Saigon fell. People will remember or will have seen archival images of Vietnamese in Saigon seeking desperately

to find any way out of the country. They had good reason to be afraid of the new communist regime that took total control of Vietnam at that point, Mr. Speaker, because it was a regime that had already been culpable of incalculable human rights violations. The people of South Vietnam had every reason to fear reprisals, repercussion, persecution, and violence as a result of their resistance to communist aggression. That's exactly what happened following the fall of Saigon on what is known as Black April Day in the Vietnamese community around the world, this day, April 30.

Mr. Speaker, in the days and years that followed, suspected enemies of the communist regime in Hanoi were rounded up. They were imprisoned. Some 65,000, it is estimated, were summarily executed. It is further estimated that some 1 million were put into communist re-education camps, particularly the senior members of the military of South Vietnam, the political leadership, intellectuals, the so-called bourgeoisie, small-business owners, and anyone who resisted the ideological agenda of the Hanoi government. A million people in re-education camps. Many of them never left those camps.

Others faced widespread political violence. There was a program of agricultural collectivization. We've seen that. Of course, history has seen similar programs of collectivization result in the violent persecution of small landowners throughout South Vietnam.

Further, Mr. Speaker, there was widespread religious persecution of several different faith communities, including many of the Buddhist community in South Vietnam as well as Protestants and Catholics and members of other faith communities who faced arrest and detention. Countless churches and temples were bulldozed and destroyed because these places of faith represented an imagined threat to the regime insofar as they did not succumb to the ideology of the government in Hanoi.

3:10

As a result of these and other acts of political repression, starting in late 1975 a wave of emigration began from Vietnam, including members of some ethnic – I should add, Mr. Speaker, that, of course, there was also persecution based on ethnic origin. We often refer to the Indochinese. Many of the ethnic Chinese living in Saigon and in South Vietnam were targeted because they were seen as the bourgeoisie, the ownership class. So an ideological obsession with class became focused on many of the Vietnamese of Chinese ethnic origin.

For all of these reasons, there began a huge wave of emigration. Of course, like in most communist regimes, borders were tightly controlled, and people could not freely leave of their own volition. Hard for us, I think, in our free society to imagine that, Mr. Speaker, to imagine being unable to get on a plane or a boat and just freely leave of your own volition. Exit from the country was tightly controlled, meaning that for people to leave that Indochinese peninsula required that in most instances they hire human smugglers or leave underground by darkness of night, you know, putting together their life savings to buy passage on often massively overcrowded vessels, large and small.

The momentum picked up, and by 1978, 1979 hundreds of thousands were leaving Vietnam. On the high seas in Southeast Asia they encountered terrible tragedy yet again – they'd been victims of violence in the war and then persecution following it and now on the high seas – as many of these vessels were massively overpopulated and sank and capsized in heavy seas. As I've said, it is estimated that some 250,000 people, Vietnamese refugees, lost their lives during the great emigration. Many also fell victim to pirates in Southeast Asia who threatened these refugees. Either they were to hand over everything they owned or had with them or they would be drowned in the sea. Mr. Speaker, those who survived found their way to beaches and shores from Malaysia to

Philippines, from Cambodia to Thailand and even as far away as Hong Kong.

Because of this humanitarian disaster the United Nations, particularly the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, worked with partner nations, including Canada, to begin to develop a resettlement program. At first, the boat people were placed into camps, and these were by no means ideal places. They were often very rough living, but at least it was dry land, and at least there was, in most instances, food and water and basic medical care although many more tragedies did occur in some of the informal camps where people were living illegally in countries in Southeast Asia. But the UN over time brought a framework of humanitarian care. UNICEF and the United Nations food program also provided important support.

Then began a large program of resettlement. Sadly, Mr. Speaker, the government of then Prime Minister Trudeau was approached by the UN in 1978 about becoming a major recipient of the Indochinese boat people, and the then government refused to do so, sadly echoing the none-is-too-many policy of Canada's approach towards European Jewish refugees before and during the Second World War.

But then there was an election, a change of government. The Progressive Conservative government of the Rt. Hon. Joe Clark took office, in which served a truly great and recently deceased Canadian, the Hon. Ron Atkey, who was appointed minister of citizenship and immigration in the Clark government. Ron Atkey realized that this was a moral test for Canada as to whether or not we would respond to the pleas for help from the Indochinese boat people and did so in a spectacular way. The public servants of citizenship and immigration Canada of that era, some of whom I know, deserve great credit for the way in which they sprang into action to set up a resettlement program that was really unprecedented in Canadian history. This also marked the birth of the privately sponsored refugee program where local community groups, typically faith communities, churches for example, across Canada came together and started raising funds to sponsor Vietnamese refugee families. For every individual who was sponsored by a private community organization, Minister Atkey agreed to match them with a government-assisted refugee. Over the course of about 18 months in 1979 and 1980 Canada welcomed to our country as permanent residents the initial 60,000 Vietnamese boat people.

There are communities all through Alberta who participated in this program, and I know that many who join us in the gallery today were the beneficiaries of that remarkable generosity. Not just our great cities of Edmonton and Calgary, Mr. Speaker, but little towns gathered together and held potluck suppers and quilting bees and 50-50 draws to raise a few thousand dollars to welcome a Vietnamese family to their small towns, small towns that might have had one hundred per cent Caucasian populations, that were eager to do everything they could at that time to welcome these people, many of whom did not speak English, were completely unfamiliar with this new country and particularly, I imagine, its cold winters at the beginning.

Mr. Speaker, it was the beginning of a love affair where these 60,000 Vietnamese boat people, later joined by another 100,000 over the years that followed before the end of the UN program in 1984, demonstrated their deep gratitude and love for this country, for the new beginning that it offered. I always say that Alberta is the land of fresh starts and new beginnings, and it was exactly that for several thousand of the 60,000 Indochinese boat people of that period.

Let us, with the passage of this motion, express gratitude to those communities, those families and individuals in Alberta who

welcomed thousands of Vietnamese boat people and in so doing provided hope to the hopeless and comfort and security to those who had been so gravely afflicted by that political persecution. The Journey to Freedom Act, adopted by the federal Parliament and replicated in part through today's motion, is really about that whole story. It's about that journey of people who struggled through great adversity and persecution, who would not give up, many of whom lost members of their families and lost everything, lost all of their property, their homes, their farms, their businesses, and in many cases their loved ones, yet they kept fighting to survive. That is the journey to freedom. It represents Canada as this beacon of freedom.

As I remarked in my maiden speech in this place some weeks ago, over the doors of this Chamber are inscribed the three words of Alberta's motto, *Fortis et Liber*. Strong and free. Well, Mr. Speaker, for the Vietnamese boat people freedom is not an empty word. Freedom is a dream that we can never take for granted. The Vietnamese refugees have shown through their remarkable contribution to Canada that we can never take for granted our freedom or our democracy and that freedom is never free and that the price of liberty is eternal vigilance.

3:20

While Canada was generous to those boat people, they in turn have repaid that generosity over and over again. One of the most beautiful ways in which I saw that generosity expressed was in working with the community as minister of citizenship and immigration between 2008 and 2013 to open the doors of Canada to several hundred of these stranded boat people, who had for one reason or another never gotten into the UN program. They were in the Philippines, Cambodia, Thailand, in small pockets. The UN shut down the program in 1984, and they were basically living in those Southeast Asian countries as illegal aliens, as unregistered, undocumented migrants. They didn't have access to citizenship or legal employment or any social support, and the Vietnamese community here did not forget about those left behind. They continued to raise their voices, asking Canada once again to open the doors to those left behind.

Unfortunately, the previous government when approached in 2005 refused to do so, but I was very honoured, when I heard about their plight in 2007 and '08, to create a special program at citizenship and immigration Canada. And we now have here in Alberta Vietnamese boat people from Cambodia, Thailand, and the Philippines. In fact, I visited some who were living underground in Thailand a few years ago. Mr. Speaker, the resettlement of those Southeast Asian Vietnamese refugees during my tenure did not cost Canadian taxpayers one cent. The community raised every dollar to welcome these people to Canada, paying it on. We thank the community for its sacrifice and leadership.

Mr. Speaker, we do not forget – we do not forget – as the members of the community and I wear, and many of us do, this emblem called the heritage freedom flag. The design and the colours go all the way back deep into Vietnamese history, back hundreds of years. This was the flag of the South Vietnam republic. As minister for multiculturalism in Canada I was proud to formally recognize this as the flag of the Vietnamese-Canadian community because it symbolizes their values and their belief in freedom, democracy, and human rights.

Let me close, Mr. Speaker, in remembering, as I proudly wear this emblem, as we do, that those are rights which are not enjoyed and cannot be taken for granted by the people of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam today. Let me quote from the Vietnam country summary of the human rights situation in Vietnam published by Amnesty International.

Arbitrary restrictions on the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly continued. A crackdown on dissent intensified, causing scores of activists to flee the country. Human rights defenders, peaceful political activists and religious followers were subjected to a range of human rights violations, including arbitrary detention, prosecution on national security and other vaguely worded charges in unfair trials, and long-term imprisonment. Prominent activists faced restrictions on movement and were subject to surveillance, harassment and violent assaults. Prisoners of conscience were tortured and otherwise ill-treated. Suspicious deaths in police custody were reported, and the death penalty was retained.

Let me now quote from the Human Rights Watch country summary on Vietnam.

Vietnam's human rights record remains dire in all areas. The Communist Party maintains a monopoly on political power and allows no challenge to its leadership. Basic rights, including freedom of speech, opinion, press, association, and religion, are restricted. Rights activists and bloggers face harassment, intimidation, physical assault, and imprisonment. Farmers continue to lose land to development projects without... compensation, and workers are not allowed to form independent unions. The police use torture and beatings to extract confessions. The criminal justice system lacks independence. State-run drug rehabilitation centres exploit detainees as laborers making goods for local markets and export. Nevertheless, increasing numbers of bloggers and activists have called publicly for democracy and greater freedoms.

In adopting this Journey to Freedom Day motion today, in remembering those who lives were lost between 1975 and 1982, in thanking Albertans and Canadians for opening our doors of hospitality and protection, as we do all of those things, let us not forget the estimated 160 political prisoners in Vietnam like Father Nguyen Van Ly, the Catholic priest who's been in jail for seven years for the crime of preaching independently and not succumbing to the abusive authority of the state. For all of them, Mr. Speaker, we speak for them today in calling for their freedom and celebrating the freedom of those who have joined us in Canada.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, before we begin, if you would like to have some refreshments in the House while this discussion is going on, feel free to get that.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's really my pleasure to rise today and be able to speak to this motion because this is a motion that really speaks to my family and my story as well because, like many in the gallery today, both of my parents were refugees from Vietnam.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

My father's family sold everything that they owned so that their two oldest sons could board a boat to Malaysia. They went in a convoy like many of the other families. Very fortunately, their boat wasn't attacked by pirates, but the other boat in the convoy was. That's a story that is very common among those who made it to the refugee camps in Malaysia and elsewhere, who made it eventually here to Canada.

Madam Speaker, I remember my father telling me that he thought he would drown as the storms raged on during his trip in the boats. He was under the decks and the water was rising and they had to tell everybody, "Bail; you have to help bail" because this was the reality for the refugees leaving Vietnam. They lost many of their friends and family as they made the trips.

My mother's family sent their eldest daughter in the same manner to come to Canada as a refugee so that she could work hard and make enough money to bring the rest of the family over. Now, I remember that aunt telling me that she was in Saigon as the tanks rolled through the gates. She went and watched it. She told my mother, her little sister: "Stay at home. It's too dangerous. You can't go out." My father later told me that bullet holes, as the Americans were retreating, appeared above his door in his bedroom, and he could see them when he woke up in the morning.

Madam Speaker, this is the story of so many refugees. These are the stories of people in the gallery. I want to say that my story happens to be a success story. It's the one that I'm able to tell and I'm able to remember and speak on. I look up in the gallery and see so many who took the same path. I look up and see so many other success stories of successful Vietnamese Canadians, successful refugees, who add to the success of our province. They're people who came to enrich their lives. They contribute greatly to our culture and our economy. They're our friends and our neighbours. They're our business owners.

Some of my family's lifelong friends continue to be Vietnamese Canadians, who care deeply about our country and are so proud of our heritage. So I'm proud to say that our family made it here to Canada. I'm proud to say that Vietnamese refugees contribute greatly to this province and to this country, and I'm proud to see that we were welcomed here and welcomed into this great nation with such open arms. Madam Speaker, it's very clear that Vietnamese refugees came with hopes and dreams for a better life. They came with hopes and dreams that Canada could offer them everything that they couldn't have, the freedoms here that we have every single day of our lives.

It's really my pleasure to be able to speak and encourage every single member of this House to vote in favour of this motion today. It's something that I think is important for Vietnamese refugees around Canada and around Alberta especially to be able to see and recognize that they are success stories. They are the ones who made it. We have rights and freedoms here that are amazing opportunities for us to be able to live and succeed in.

Once again, I urge all of my colleagues to vote in favour of this. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

Ms Luff: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm very happy to be able to stand and support this motion. This was certainly an event that happened many years before I was born, but I've had the opportunity to hear stories of many of my constituents who fled Vietnam in 1975 and in the years after. These are truly incredible stories and demonstrate the strength, courage, and determination of people who were forced to leave their homes against their will. As the MLA for Calgary-East I see the positive impacts of Vietnamese Canadians and the impacts that they have in our community every day.

3:30

Before I moved to Calgary, I had never had pho, but now I rarely go a week without it. My favourite restaurant for lunch is Mekong, which is close to my house and my office. It's affordable, friendly, and always delicious, and in east Calgary you're never far from a bowl of hot pho. There are at least 10 Vietnamese restaurants on International Avenue alone. My go-to tailor is Vietnamese. Hong reliably fixes my zippers, hems my pants, and patches elbows on my husband's favourite shirts. When my daughter needs a dress for a wedding or a party, we go to Jeannie's Boutique, where she can get something pink and sparkly and where they always recommend

a fantastic pair of matching shoes. These are just a few businesses that I go to frequently in east Calgary, and there are many more businesses like this all over Alberta, run by families of hard-working people, many of whom came here as refugees after the fall of Saigon or who were children of people who did.

When International Avenue started commissioning murals to represent the area's diverse cultures, a Vietnamese mural was one of the first ones. It was painted to show a scene of a Vietnamese flower market and celebrates the Vietnamese community in Calgary. The avenue is truly a hub for the Vietnamese community in Calgary, and I would encourage all of you to come visit.

I'm fortunate to have spent time with the Calgary Vietnamese Women's Association, who promote volunteerism and active participation of women in the community. Recently they worked to bring an art installation by a Vietnamese artist that she was unable to display in Vietnam. The installation was entitled *Pink Rules*, and it reflected on the way that gender rules can be oppressive to everyone in a society. This organization also puts on successful community events, including holiday parties and their upcoming Mother's Day lunch, which they are partnering with the Korean Women's Association for.

This is a community that left their home country with nothing, who fled under unimaginable circumstances that are just unimaginable to many of us who were born here in Canada. Many left family members behind, not knowing what would become of them, and through these incredibly difficult circumstances they built businesses, put down roots, and became an invaluable part of our community here in Canada. This is a community that can count among its members MLAs, MPs, Senators, artists, actors, scientists, and businesspeople, and they should be incredibly proud of their achievements. One of the great strengths of Canada is that we have consistently accepted people fleeing violence and persecution abroad, people who come seeking safety and freedom, and we are a greater country because of it.

I am very happy to support this motion to recognize April 30 as Journey to Freedom Day and to thank the Vietnamese community sincerely for the incredible contributions that they've made to Alberta and continue to make to Alberta every day.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my privilege to rise and speak in favour of this motion. I, too, have a very personal connection with this actually on two fronts.

I was just a kid at the time, but my uncle actually was one of the very first folks to sponsor a full Vietnamese family into his home. The older parents were there, and then they had a number of young children that came with them. He sponsored them and provided for them, gave them jobs, built a relationship that lasted and in which the children actually stayed in his home for about 10 years. He paid for their education, their university, got them established, set up, and today I know that one of them is an accountant doing very well. I would just say that the contribution that all of these Vietnamese people have made to Canada has been nothing but positive in my experience. I've seen them contribute in so many ways, in so many good ways. For me, it was an incredible lesson in what it means to be Canadian and what it means to care for other people, to look beyond our own personal, immediate concerns and to think about the desperate plight of others as well, and a great lesson for me also just growing up to see how they did that.

My second direct encounter was about 10 years ago. In one of the churches that I served here in central Alberta, they had a 30-year reunion. Prior to my time that church had actually sponsored three families, I believe it was. Almost all of them now live in Calgary.

It was such an important experience for them, the support and the friendship and the sponsorship, that 30 years later they wrote and asked if they could have a reunion back in that rural community church to meet those people, to share with them. We had a fantastic day. The Vietnamese folk that had come over as boat people were concerned and sharing that their children who had been born here and for whom it was, in a way, but a story – they wanted some of that history for them to be able to grasp that and understand that, so their reunion was important for them to meet the people that had sponsored them and provided for them and helped them get established. I just consider it a real privilege, the Vietnamese people that I know, and I'm very proud of the fact that Canadians have done what they have done to make this a reality.

I definitely stand in favour of the motion. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the motion?

Are you ready for the question?

[Motion carried]

The Deputy Speaker: On Standing Order 42 the hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Carbon Levy Increase Postponement

Mr. Nixon:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government not to proceed with any further increases to the carbon tax until Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain expansion project has completed construction and commenced commercial operations.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I'll be very brief. I move that simply – we already have once before, and it's been voted against by the government, but I move it now. As you know, in question period earlier today the Premier indicated yet again that the carbon tax will not be increasing if we can't get Kinder Morgan built. This gives the NDP an opportunity to prove to Albertans that that, in fact, is true. Yet again I will give them that opportunity to show that to this House.

[Unanimous consent denied]

Orders of the Day

Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 203

Long Term Care Information Act

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Mrs. Schreiner: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Today I am very proud to stand and speak to second reading of my private member's Bill 203, the Long Term Care Information Act.

Madam Speaker, there are more than 170 institutions in Alberta that offer long-term care. These facilities exist in nearly 100 communities across our great province. They serve close to 15,000 Alberta seniors. As Alberta's population ages, we know that we can expect these numbers to grow as well. It's expected that the number of seniors in this province will grow by 20 per cent by the year 2020. Meanwhile, the prevalence of dementia has increased by 21 per cent since 2010. We will all live with a growing population that needs long-term care, and of course there is a good chance that each of us or a loved one will need long-term care at some point in our

lives. It is our responsibility as legislators in this Chamber and as Albertans to help those in need. This bill will take an important step toward helping seniors and their families find the best long-term care solutions for them.

Madam Speaker, for many years I worked as a health care professional in long-term care facilities. I know how much the families of those living in the facilities cared about their loved ones. I witnessed it every day. I know how much effort they put into finding the best place for their loved ones to live. I also know that the decision about which facilities would best meet the needs of their loved ones is an important one and can often be a difficult one, especially considering these families are already going through a very difficult and stressful transition. I know how much effort these families put into finding the best place for their loved ones to live.

I also know that there were many times that we would have people walk through the door of our facility looking for more information. Sometimes they would be looking for very basic information like: how many beds are there in the facility? What would it cost for their loved ones to live there? Does the facility have room for their loved one? What kinds of services did the facility offer? How many health care professionals were there on site? It was heartbreaking to see families already dealing with the stress of supporting a loved one through a difficult transition into care also have to deal with the stress of making a special trip to our facility to find out basic information that could have been provided to them much more easily.

3:40

All the information these families were looking for should have been available to them elsewhere, Madam Speaker, but it was not. It was not possible for people to easily find out even the most basic information about long-term care in Alberta. I think that's a shame. It's a shame that we were not able to provide that information to the people who in many cases have dedicated their entire lives to living and working in Alberta, building this province into what it is today for us. When I started to think about this bill, I thought about all those people who came looking for information, and I started to do some of my own research and learned very interesting things about the kind of information out there about long-term care facilities in Alberta. I found that there were some facilities that had been closed for years but that were still listed as open online. I found that there was no online directory to provide all the basic information people needed to begin making their decisions.

I talked to my health care colleagues. I talked to the people in my community, friends, neighbours, and even my own family about what kind of information they wanted and needed to make up their minds about where their loved ones should live. Many of their experiences reflected what I had heard in the course of my own work as a health care professional.

We must keep in mind that while these facilities provide crucial medical care to residents based on needs determined by medical professionals, these facilities are not just hospitals and are not just there to provide medical care. These facilities are home to almost 15,000 Alberta seniors. Everyone deserves to feel comfortable and happy in their own home.

Just like those of us living in our own homes have chosen specifically where we want to live based on a wide variety of factors, so too do long-term care residents have a wide variety of factors influencing what makes them comfortable living in care. Some will feel happier and more comfortable in larger facilities that offer a wider variety of activities and services while some will feel happier and more comfortable in a smaller facility. For others, knowing whether there are specialized services like foot care or salon care available on-site will make all the difference for them.

To each their own. Some will feel happier paying additional fees for higher levels of services while others may not be in a position to afford additional services.

What I heard from my health care colleagues confirmed what I knew from my own experience and, really, what common sense tells us. Decisions about long-term care are made not just with medical care in mind but with a person's unique personality and needs in mind. We should make these decisions as easy as possible for Albertans.

With this information in hand I held consultations with a range of stakeholders. Madam Speaker, in particular I want to mention that I was able to talk with a great number of resident and family councils, and they were so grateful for the work that our government had already done to empower them as advocates for their loved ones and were incredibly supportive of this bill, considering the challenges they had very recently had to endure to get their loved ones into the facilities that they were now calling home. I'll be happy to discuss those consultations more in my closing statements and in Committee of the Whole.

I look forward to debating this bill with my colleagues. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my pleasure today to rise to speak about the Long Term Care Information Act and the long-term care system in Alberta. I am optimistic to watch this system evolve into one where each individual has the ability to make their own fully informed decision on their own terms, where the government believes that a person is smart enough and self-preserving enough to be able to make the decision that is right for themselves.

That is why I believe that the concept of this bill is quite beneficial and a great direction in which to move the health care system. I commend the hon. member from across the way for suggesting such a bill. It demonstrates knowledge on her part from her previous life working in these facilities, and it identifies something key that perhaps might be missing or, at the very least, could be enhanced. To that effect, although I think there is great benefit in being able to make these fully informed decisions, I was struck with curiosity as to how many people are actually getting by right now.

Madam Speaker, I found two such sites on Alberta government websites that provide some such information. The first one is a document entitled List of Publicly Funded Designated Supportive Living Accommodations and Long-term Care Facilities on the open.alberta.ca website. Increasing access to information is vital for a properly functioning government. Again, I appreciate the intent of this bill, but again I wonder about the current sites in existence. The second site that we came across is on the Alberta Health website, and it was a searchable page with information on supportive and long-term care accommodations in Alberta, which is even broader than the mandate of this bill. So, with that, I wonder why this government doesn't simply redefine some of these websites that it has, clarify them, add some more information to them, enhance these sites, perhaps even whittle it down to one.

In a province with numerous outstanding recommendations by the Auditor General, where users of the long-term care system sit on wait-lists and those in facility living see a number of abuses, from being overcharged to exceeding their allotment of care, I was confused to see that the side of the issues that is being tackled by this bill has, in essence, supposedly been addressed by Alberta Health itself. Every improvement that helps Alberta families to

determine what is right for their loved ones is so imperative. As such, I also have such a hard time understanding why, if this was such a gap in our current system, the Ministry of Health didn't simply go ahead and do these things. With a more than \$20 billion budget it is unlikely that they didn't have the capacity to get this done without this bill mandating it. Was Alberta Health not willing to create the registry without legislation demanding it? It makes me wonder.

I want to focus on the issues that the private member's bill could have addressed in the area of long-term care. One of my constituents told me with a heavy heart of the terrible way her husband was treated in one of these facilities. When she came to visit the man that she had spent the majority of her life with, he was in a state of disarray. He was soiled, he was uncomfortable, and when she went to ask the staff attendants why they hadn't cleaned him up, she was told that her husband had exceeded his allotment of care. To me, that is shameful, Madam Speaker, that some of these facilities would limit the amount of time that they have to address certain patients, recognizing that they are wards of these facilities and need to be treated in the most noble fashion we can. These are seniors. These are the people that built our province, built our country, and here we have someone who has exceeded his allotment of care, and therefore they were not going to clean him up, the feces and the urine that were in his bed, that he was covered in, that slipped through his adult diaper.

3:50

I can honestly say that I have experienced such things when I was picking up patients from certain places to transport them from a facility far outside of town to Edmonton or Calgary or even to Red Deer, in particular when I was working in central Alberta. I had to go across all sorts of communities to pick up patients, and there was one, I remember, where they were in a similar state, and we had to clean them. We just cleaned them on the way to the hospital, but I remember thinking to myself, "Hey, I shouldn't have had to do that," but I did, obviously. I say that I shouldn't have had to do that because it should have been done already. This patient should have been cleaned up. This was 20 years ago, yet I remember quite vividly in my head when I was told of this particular incident. It's not uncommon.

Last year the Auditor General released a report stating that there are many outstanding recommendations in the long-term care system that have yet to be addressed. Two in particular that have still not been considered since they were pointed out by the Auditor General in October of 2014 were:

- develop a system to periodically verify that facilities provide residents with an adequate number and level of staff, every day of their operation [and]
- develop a system to periodically verify that facilities deliver the right care every day by implementing individual resident care plans and meeting basic needs of residents.

Basic needs of residents. Why does the Auditor General still mark these as unimplemented?

Why did a private member's bill not go to improving the quality of life of seniors in continuing care? Yes, access to information is important, and, yes, everyone should have their options laid out in front of them. That's why I was so relieved to see that the information was readily available on an Alberta Health website. If there is any missing information that should be included, I have a hard time seeing why it was not simply added and updated. What push-back could a private member have run into in order to decide that this needed to be legislated and that it could not have been completed in any other way?

The concept of allowing someone to make their own informed decision is one that I believe is in the best interest of all Albertans. It's the epitome of the freedoms that we have in this nation, this country. If an individual needs more personalized assistance in choosing a long-term care facility, an individual may call 811 and be redirected to a continuing care placement co-ordinator, but if they want their decision to be their own, I'm happy that they already have the ability to look online for facilities that suit their needs.

However, in terms of access to information a new online registry created under this bill will be equally as accessible as the current websites are. For someone who has trouble finding the current publicly available resources online, this bill does not go to addressing that issue. How would they find the new one? I guess the fear is, Madam Speaker, that the system could become too convoluted, which might be typical of government, recognizing that we have two very similar sites currently, government websites that provide this information, and that through this private member's bill possibly we'll have three such sites. Or I would certainly accept it if the people who work behind the scenes, who actually have to do these jobs, decided to do some cleaning up and streamlining and enhancing of these current sites and made sure that they have a lot of this data available.

And if I might address the fact that if a person is looking for accommodation of their own, for a hotel – and I am actually looking for a hotel in the good member's constituency right now, in the community of Red Deer. When I go online, there are a dozen sites, and on each site I can look at the facility. I can see an address. There is a map attached to that. I can see images of the facility. I can see the amenities that they have. I can see the type of food that they serve. I can see everything that the site has to offer. You know, the one site offers business services and an in-house restaurant. They explain the hours of all these amenities that they have. They even show, in some of these cases, some of the areas around these hotels and other accommodations that might be beneficial to choosing that particular hotel.

You can't help but wonder why government sites can't provide a lot of that same information. When I think of this bill and of the good Member for Red Deer-North's intent, of what she's trying to accomplish, it makes me wonder why they don't have that already. [Mr. Yao's speaking time expired] That's it? Ten?

The Deputy Speaker: You're out of time, hon. member.

Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is indeed a pleasure to stand and speak in support of this private member's bill, Bill 203, the long-term care transparency – it's actually the Long Term Care Information Act. I'm somewhat chagrined in making that mistake today since in discussing this in anticipation of today, we actually made that suggestion, that we change the name. I do want to express my appreciation to the Member for Red Deer-North for involving many of us with experience in health care as well as in social services in developing this bill. I think she's done a phenomenal job of creating something that is really going to be to the advantage of Albertans.

As we like to say and as our Premier likes to say, we're making life better for Albertans; in this case, Albertans that require long-term care. There are a lot of us, including probably me in the very near future. We need to make the information about long-term care accessible, transparent – I think that word applies there – and easy to access. I guess I'm being a bit redundant there. But we need to have a system that isn't out of date. I think the Member for Red Deer-North mentioned this in her opening speech, that much of the

information that is on the current government websites is out of date.

One of the strengths of this bill, in my opinion, is that it mandates that this information be updated at least every six months, hopefully more often, so that the information is current and people actually don't have to waste a lot of time at a very stressful period of their lives searching through a whole variety of things and maybe even, you know, affecting climate change by driving all over the province doing inspections on these sites.

I think the idea about having a one-stop shop for getting this information that can be relied on – and I think this is really key, that the information is reliable. The MLA for Red Deer-North did make this point in her comments, that the information needs to be verifiable – I guess that's the best way to put it – and it has to include information that is really useful to the families as well as perhaps to the individuals who are looking for long-term care about the costs, about what the sort of optional costs are, about the resident and family councils, how they work.

I think this was one of the things that was perhaps missed by the member opposite, that the Resident and Family Councils Act, which I'm really proud that this government brought forward last year, is designed to give residents and families the ability to be able to deal with issues such as were mentioned, about a person exceeding care. I think that's something that could be brought forward through the resident and family councils if they're functioning right. Those resident and family councils are going to be in public institutions; they're going to be in private institutions. I think this is something that's really important, that we need to have a common set of rules and information sharing involving not only Alberta Health Services or other governmentally related institutions but the many, the multitude of private institutions that provide this kind of service. You know, it is a pleasure to be part of this government, and that Resident and Family Councils Act was a signal achievement by this government. It was passed through Seniors and Housing. Sorry. That was passed through Health.

4:00

The Minister of Seniors and Housing also had an act – again, this was two years ago – called the Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act. This act is very complementary to private member's Bill 203, in my opinion. For an individual or a family that's trying to deal with an individual who's thinking about long-term care, they need to have all the options available to them. The seniors' housing adaptation and repair program gives these families a lot of leeway in terms of deciding whether or not it's more appropriate to stay in the home that they may have had for decades. Or should they move into an intermediate, transitional type of housing, or is it more appropriate to go into a supportive living or long-term care facility?

By having this option through the seniors' home adaptation and repair program to make modifications to the home to make it more livable, to make it safer, I think the family members feel more comfortable that the individual or the individuals involved can be safely left at home and cared for there, and the community often benefits from that sort of thing. I think this is really a nice, complementary thing.

Going back to this particular private member's bill, it is critical that we give people in this situation all the tools they need to make these decisions. These are very difficult decisions. Probably everybody in this Chamber is aware of and maybe even in their personal lives has been affected by this sort of decision: when do we move grandma into long-term care? Or sometimes it's a child, actually, or a person with a developmental disability that needs this sort of thing. Having through Health Link, which is what is being

suggested in this bill, an accessible, reliable, and verifiable source of information is very key.

Another current bill that I want to bring up that's going to add to this is the bill that the Minister of Municipal Affairs has proposed, in which families can get energy upgrades in their homes. Those could be used to keep individuals in their own homes for longer periods of time. I think that's another piece of this thing that's going very well.

You know, in summary, I think that this private member's bill is vitally important to increasing the quality of life for a lot of Albertans, and I'm very pleased to be providing support for it.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It really is an honour to rise today and speak to Bill 203, the Long Term Care Information Act. Our province was built on the backs of our seniors. Their hard work is the foundation of our great province, and we owe it to them to make any transition to long-term care as easy as possible.

Finding somewhere for an elderly or ailing relative to stay for long-term care can be really, really stressful. In the spring and summer of 2016 my own dad was very, very ill and in the hospital. He was not able to return home again. We weren't able to provide him with the kind of care that he needed at home. We were told by the social workers at the hospital that we would have to make a decision about what long-term care facility we would like to see him go to. We were given a pamphlet, and that was all the information that we got. It was really difficult to try and make a decision based on a booklet from the hospital.

For those reasons, I think the bill is a really, really great idea. I think it'll be very helpful during what can sometimes be a really stressful situation. Now, it's not always very stressful when somebody has to go into long-term care – you may have a lot of notice about it – but when that event happens, if it is something that you have to address under stressful circumstances, I can see having a navigator, a web navigator, like what's being proposed, as being very, very helpful in those circumstances.

I do have a few concerns about how the bill is written and about some of the information that's being included, and I'd like to make some suggestions about regulation that could include more information that would make it easier for decision-making during a stressful time. One of the things that I think could be really helpful to include is listing languages that staff are able to speak. For an elderly relative – I'll just use elderly as an example – going into care, if they don't speak English or they don't speak English fluently, it would make a huge difference to know that they're going to a long-term care facility where staff are on hand that speak the language that they understand. For any programs that are offered, what languages are those programs offered in? Again, for the same reasons, just for familiarity and being able to participate in any programming that's available.

Culturally or religiously appropriate meal choices: do they offer kosher or halal or vegetarian meals? This can mean a lot to somebody, especially when they're ill. There's a lot of stress in having to make food choices or dietary choices that aren't in alignment with what their beliefs are, and it can make a stressful situation even worse.

Do facilities have the space for cultural or religious ceremonies, pastoral care, and what faiths are able to be accommodated?

Something else that could be helpful is listing the average time from the application to a space being made available. I know that when my dad was in the hospital, we were told by the social worker to make our top three choices. Often what will happen is that the

first choice doesn't have any space available, so you have to go to your second choice. Understanding that gives a lot more context to the decision-making process, and I think it would be really very helpful in those circumstances to have that information.

Also, what community services are available close by? Are there recreation facilities? Is there a park close by so the family can get out and have a picnic with their relative? What churches are close by? That kind of information can really be helpful in the decision-making process.

I think a comprehensive assessment of the information that's going to be useful when people are making those decisions is imperative to the success of this kind of a site. I know from my own professional experience that in going live with any kind of information site, it is really imperative to understand exactly what the needs are. I think the member has done an excellent job of identifying a lot of the needs, but doing a more full evaluation I think would be really useful.

I believe this was alluded to earlier: advertising it, making sure that people understand that this sort of information is available and that it's easily accessible and that they can use it whenever they want to to help make a decision. I think that would go a long way to making the site a lot more successful.

Finally, I just want to acknowledge the member for her compassion and her knowledge. Her professional knowledge of this situation informed her choice to create this private member's bill. As private members we don't get a lot of opportunity to have much direct influence over legislation like this. I just want to let her know that I think she's done a really great job and that it's obvious she cares a great deal about the people that she worked with prior to becoming an MLA.

I'm happy to support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's indeed a pleasure to speak in support of this bill. You know, what I appreciate the most about being in this Assembly at the moment is that we all come from very different backgrounds, and we bring our backgrounds to our work in the Assembly. We bring the care and passion that we've had but also the experience and expertise. I think that this bill is just so perfect for my colleague from Red Deer-North because she has spent so much of her working life in this area. Her bill reflects not only her experience and expertise but her overwhelming compassion for seniors in long-term care.

4:10

The preamble of this bill says: "Whereas providing support to individuals who need long-term care is a priority for all Albertans." I really appreciate it when we talk about priority for all Albertans. The decision around long-term care doesn't involve only the seniors who may be going into long-term care, but it really also involves the family, the friends. So this bill is not only going to benefit seniors but also whole communities because a decision is, I think, all the time a family affair, and friends are involved.

The preamble continues: "Whereas providing information about options for long-term care in an easily understandable and accessible format is an essential component of supporting Albertans who need long-term care." You know, as MLAs I'm sure we all speak to our staff about the issues that are brought daily into our constituency offices. I know that in my own riding of Sherwood Park people phone my office all the time to try to get information about long-term care because they find the existing information confusing and not all in one place. This bill is also really going to help MLAs because our offices will have a place that is easily

accessible to all Albertans who have questions, and I really appreciate that. My office will be able to give out where the information is, and then they may be able to help the constituents with some of the other issues, knowing that they have accurate information on long-term care accessible and in one place.

The preamble continues: “Whereas enhancing transparency and accountability in the long-term care system will benefit all Albertans.” Our government has been bringing in a number of bills around transparency and accountability. I see this as a continuing of the government’s work to make sure that Albertans see what government is funding, always being transparent and accountable. I want to really thank first of all the MLA for Red Deer-North for understanding how important this was to the government, to make sure that the information is accurate.

One of the issues that I have dealt with a lot as a constituent is the fact that once you get into long-term care facilities, you never know what the cost of services will be. A couple of years ago I was helping an elderly gentleman whose wife was in a facility and who told me that he had to pay \$1,500 a month so that his wife would be able to have somebody bring her to the dining room and help her eat the food. I’m sure that when his wife went into this facility, he had no idea that this cost was going to be something that he was going to have to pay. So I really appreciate that this information will be accessible.

I also think that what the MLA has suggested about the operator’s name and the description of an operator – is it private, public, or not-for-profit, is this just one facility, is it linked to other facilities, how many residents live there, and what are the kinds of services and all the details of services? – is something which is going to be very important.

Then I was thinking about, you know, as someone who comes from a francophone community, how one of the things that the francophone community often asks me is: which long-term care facilities can they go to where staff speak French? So I really appreciate that this may be something which will be part of the details in this registry.

Then I think of dietary constraints. Will the long-term care be able to meet the needs of somebody who has a kosher diet or halal, as was talked about previously? Or they may have a preference in what they might like to eat.

Then I thought about what is happening as we’re seeing that we have many in our communities who’ve been in long-term same-sex relationships. How will that be accepted in a long-term care facility? I’m really hoping that those are the kinds of details which may be forthcoming in this online registry so that every single senior and their family members can see the information that they need to make the best decision for their loved one.

I’m actually facing this issue at the moment. I have a mother-in-law who’s 92, and it’s something that I’m going to be looking at in the near future. Because I know her so well, I know the kind of facility that I will want to put her in. I’m going to want to have a facility where there’s a lot of card playing. But I also know that she loves to cook, so I’m going to look for a facility where the residents, if they’re able, may have access to a kitchen so that she can continue cooking muffins and cookies because it’s something that gives her a lot of joy. It’s something that makes her feel that even though she’s frail and has limited ability, it’s something she can do to give back. I would hate for her to be in a facility where there is not any access to a kitchen so that she can continue while her health is still very good.

I think, again, these are the things which I’m hoping, that this registry will allow every single family member and friends to work with the senior to be able to make the decision. I think about how our government has really helped seniors. I mean, we’ve done a

number of programs to help seniors stay at home such as the SHARP program. We have the seniors’ benefit. We’re also increasing the number of long-term care beds that are available in the province. This bill will be part of the way that our government is helping seniors in our province make sure that as they age, they’re in the right place for them, that helps them keep their dignity and their ability to think, that they can continue their lifestyle, that they can have their loved ones near by.

One of the things that I particularly like about the bill is that it’s going to allow families who live far away to access information. Because as we know, in this day and age very few family members actually live next to where their seniors are. Like, they may be living in Ontario or they may be living on the other side of the world, but by having an online directory, it’ll make it easy for all family members to participate and to be able to be part of the decision-making for their loved one.

I would like to close by hoping that every single member of this House will support this bill, that they will see this as a valuable tool for seniors and family members to make the right choice about the institution that they will be in, and they will know that this bill comes from someone who has long-term experience in long-term care. I just know that this bill is the kind of bill that would help families and seniors.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Sorry. Which?

The Deputy Speaker: Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: My apologies to the Member for Calgary-Greenway, but I eagerly await his words.

I want to thank the Member for Red Deer-North for bringing this bill forward. My former assistant Cole Kander, who is running against her, won’t be too happy to hear that I’m supporting a bill from her, but I would chance to say that it’s probably a bill that you two would probably agree on, and I want to commend the member for bringing this forward. I know she’s got extensive experience in this field. We all come with different backgrounds to this place, and I think it’s a valuable addition to the different voices we have on this topic.

Also, I want to thank the Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park. It’s a constituency name which is often mixed up by multiple speakers in the House with Strathmore-Sherwood Park. I may disagree with how they redrew the boundaries, but that would be one particularly large constituency. But I really appreciate her remarks in particular. She worked in Bassano for some time. We often chat about her time in Bassano. Bassano is the centre of a major seniors’ care initiative that I’ll speak to in a few minutes.

4:20

You know, this bill is like most private members’ bills. They are required by the standing orders to be limited in their scope, so they’re very rarely revolutionary. And I don’t think this bill is revolutionary, but it is a small step in the right direction. It is going to provide valuable information to seniors and to the families of seniors seeking care for their elders. In particular I want to draw members’ attention to section 2(1)(j) and (k). They’ll provide the description of the accreditation status of the operator’s facility under the Nursing Homes Act or the Hospitals Act as the case may be. Subsection (k): “results of any inspections conducted under section 12 of the Nursing Homes Act or any investigations

conducted under section 27 of the Hospitals Act.” That is very important information for folks to have.

Our seniors’ care varies pretty widely across Alberta, even in my own constituency for seniors’ care facilities run by the very same company. In Brooks we have two AgeCare facilities, Sunrise Gardens and Orchard Manor. You know, there are great folks working there, but I hear no end of complaints about a lot of the care there, the quality of the food, or leaving seniors in their filth without being taken care of, falling out of bed and not being taken care of in a timely manner. I hear these complaints all the time. I visit both of these seniors’ care facilities. I try to do it at least twice a year, so four visits, two visits to each of the two facilities at Christmas and generally once in the summer, and I meet with my seniors.

You know, it’s difficult to tell what is a true, substantiated complaint and what is just someone saying what I would probably do if I was a senior. But I hear their complaints, and I hear it at these two AgeCare facilities, the two in Brooks. I hear a lot of complaints from constituents about the families, often the adult children of seniors in that care, and from the seniors themselves. In Strathmore the AgeCare facility there is Sagewood. It’s the exact same company, and I’ve rarely ever heard a complaint about it. It’s fantastic. I’m sure if I look hard enough, I will find complaints. Much of the business of our constituency assistants is listening to issues people have, and they certainly reach out to me.

You know, we’ve also got Meadowlark in Strathmore, which is more of an assisted living. You have your own home, and it’s more independent. There are a lot of different models here, and it’s important that we provide the information necessary to seniors and to the children of seniors looking after their parents so that they can make the most informed, best decision possible.

I referred to the Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park earlier and her time in Bassano, and I wanted to just take a moment to reflect on what’s going on with seniors’ care in Bassano for what’s approaching a decade but at least a solid five years of fundraising and organization. Folks at the Newell Foundation have been trying to raise money and put in place the infrastructure necessary to upgrade the Bassano hospital, to integrate it with an assisted living seniors’ project. It’s a not-for-profit. It would offer a wide range of different assisted living standards depending on how independent or not some seniors are.

The project was approved, and I commend the government for providing the funding for it, but there was a refusal on the government’s part to integrate it with the Bassano hospital, and it is a critical part of this project that it be integrated with the hospital. They could share services like meals and laundry. They would have ready access to care on the site, and it was a potentially really great and innovative not-for-profit model for seniors’ care in Alberta that may have provided an example for others to follow if it was successful. So I’d ask members opposite to reconsider the declined approval for integrating the Bassano seniors’ project with the Bassano hospital because that project simply is not going to move forward unless that integration is allowed to happen. It’s a nonideological issue. I can’t really see a left/right dichotomy here. It’s simply allowing a not-for-profit to be integrated with a hospital.

Nonetheless, this bill is still a positive step forward. It won’t directly address anything like the Bassano project, but it’s going to provide valuable information for Albertans and, as I said, seniors and their children to look for the best care possible. I do believe that a nongovernment centralized model that has for-profit and not-for-profit seniors’ care in Alberta is the best way to go, but if you’re going to have competition, for the market to function properly, you have to have information so that you can compare different products, compare different services. In some very small

communities there might not be a lot of options, but even in places the size of Strathmore, the size of Brooks, there’s at least more than one facility in most cases. So if people have this information, they can make a better, more informed decision in the marketplace of choices for seniors’ care.

I don’t need to add much more that members on both sides haven’t added already. Again I want to thank the Member for Red Deer-North for bringing this forward and encourage all members of the House to support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It’s about time that you noticed me. Thank you. I appreciate it. You know, it’s an honour to rise to speak to Bill 203, introduced by the Member for Red Deer-North. Caring for Alberta’s aging population is a sacred trust of the government, and I think that we should be working in good faith to care for our seniors. Bill 203 addresses long-term care, which falls under the Health ministry. The critic in the Official Opposition, the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, already spoke on it, and I’m also pleased to rise and address this bill in my position as the Official Opposition’s critic for Seniors and Housing as Alberta’s continuing care system is a continuum that straddles the Health and Seniors ministries.

Madam Speaker, let’s focus on the concept of this bill, which in reality is an idea that could easily occur with a simple direction from the Minister of Health. In other words, there is no need to create legislation that creates the database proposed in this bill. It is especially important to note that the information is already online. This bill would compile it in one online registry. Clearly, we’re not talking about reinventing the wheel, which is great, but we are talking about a direction to collect and compile it. If the intention of Bill 203 is to create an easily accessible and searchable database, I think it makes sense and that everybody would agree on it.

When families are at the point of seeking long-term care options for their loved ones, it can be a very stressful process. They are already in care. Alberta Health Services needs to be seeking to place them in care outside a hospital setting, so I think it could be a stressful process. Speakers before me have already spoken at length about that and their personal experiences. Why is that important, Madam Speaker? Because seniors who have been admitted to hospitals and are going to need a higher level of care in the future do not need it in an acute-care setting. I don’t think it’s good for them personally, and it’s using acute-care resources that could be going to Albertans who need to be admitted to hospitals for acute medical needs. For families, it’s particularly hard to see their loved one, who may have recovered from the medical situation that sent them to hospital – they often do not fully recover until they’re receiving long-term holistic care that they can receive in a more homelike setting.

4:30

Creating a one-site portal that provides this information I think is a worthy exercise, but it does sound like something the minister can do without the legislation. I think we know that the answer to that is yes, so I don’t know why Bill 203 is coming before this House. It is because, in my humble opinion, this is just not a priority for government, it seems like, taking care of long-term care for seniors.

How many department resources would it take? Perhaps the Member for Red Deer-North would be able to answer that question. It doesn’t seem like it would involve that much work if we’re going to address the issue with long-term care. As the seniors critic for the UCP I would welcome an opportunity to talk about this

government's admitted plan to move to an expensive public system. How expensive is the new strategy? We have been looking at fully public projects that are coming in at 10 times the cost of previous private-public partnerships just because the government wants to move ahead with their own ideology, not serve and respect the taxpayers' dollars. Madam Speaker, that is an incredible difference, 10 times. We can't just ignore that.

This NDP government's decision to abandon a cost-effective and efficient system for building seniors' facilities means that far fewer long-term care units will be built. With the amount of money that's gone into the two announcements, we could have built 10 times more facilities, and we still have to get those answers from the government, their rationale on why those facilities are costing 10 times more than the previous model, just for the sake of NDP ideology, in which only the government should build and operate and maintain infrastructure and provide services. The money will not stretch as far as it has in the past. Madam Speaker, the seniors need us to do that for them and their families, provide them, you know, with care and to respect the taxpayers' dollars.

Alberta's population of seniors is set to increase by 70 per cent in the next 13 years. If we really need to support seniors, Madam Speaker, and their families, maybe the government should also be thinking about going back to the partnership program and giving the explanation of why these new announcements are costing 10 times. A bill like this one deflects from that priority because, as I've said many times, the government just wants to move ahead with their own ideology, and that's basically what it is. But then it's easier to accomplish, and they deflect from the more urgent needs of long-term care.

Madam Speaker, once again we're seeing that this NDP government focuses on the smaller pieces while hoping that Albertans do not notice what they are doing. I mean, we were just looking at the video yesterday or maybe today on social media when the now Premier was speaking against Energy East, and now the whole government side thinks, like, that they're the biggest champion of pipelines. I mean, the hypocrisy is amazing here, right? If this government wants to ask Albertans their priorities with long-term care, they're likely to find them saying: please provide spaces to ensure that my parents have the care when they need it. They would just presume that the government was doing it in the most practical way possible, but the two announcements that we had from this government show otherwise. On one hand, we had a public investment that doubled the number of seniors' spaces, and now the NDP government is reducing those spaces to almost 10 times less. From a pragmatic point of view, it doesn't make any sense.

To wrap up, Madam Speaker, I don't think that Bill 203 is a piece of legislation that needs to come before this House. The Minister of Health can make that change without introducing this bill. The initiative is fine and can prove of value to Albertans acting as advocates for loved ones who need to find placement. But it's deflecting from a very real issue that the NDP is hoping will go under the radar, and that is, like, moving everything ahead in this province with the NDP ideology and the world view. The members on that side of the House think that that's gone under the radar, but, no, it hasn't. Albertans are seeing through it. I mean, CBC had the latest poll a couple of days ago.

Thank you.

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

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak about Bill 203, the long-term care

transparency act. I want to thank the MLA for Red Deer-North for bringing this forward in this Legislature.

As a fellow former health care aide it's something that is really close to my heart. I had the privilege of working at Good Samaritan in long-term care for three years. It's challenging work. I was talking to some people in our community the other day about, you know, what it means to be called to certain careers and certain work. Growing up in an area that had a lot of seniors, especially senior women, pursuing a health care job and working trying to give back to those people in a way that was meaningful for me was something that I really wanted to do. It's been a challenge to see wages for that come up over the last 10 years. I'm 35 now, but when I was working, it was from the time I was 19 to 22. I know that wages have come up over the years. At the time, after three years of work, I was making, I think, roughly \$12.50 an hour.

As I've shared before, it's tough work. It's back-breaking work. Unfortunately, there are a lot of WCB claims that come out of that line of work because you are working with a lot of people that need a high level of care, and a lot of that is with people that have lost their mobility over time. Part of that time was working with patients with physical frailty, and then the other part of that time was with patients that had dementia issues, you know, no less challenging. That work encompassed a great number of things: medication, meal assistance, bathing, toileting, getting ready in the morning, and getting ready for bed at night. We had other, of course, complements of staff that helped us do our job: the people that cooked in the kitchen, the people that served, our housekeeping crews, nurses, physio, recreation therapists. It's a lot of people that come together to give care for people that need it in our assisted living facilities, our lodges, our long-term care facilities.

It was actually really disheartening when we heard people from the Conservative Party here say that that wasn't a real job, that looked across the way and said that none of the people over here – you know, health care aides, nurses, social workers, teachers – had ever had a real job. I can say for certain that it certainly felt like I had a real job at the time when I was doing that heavy labour.

4:40

It's really important to know what these different facilities have to offer. I just went through the experience of finding my mother housing that is assisted living. She has mental health issues that, unfortunately, because of their nature have turned with age into a lot of physical mobility issues, you know, not knowing how to take her medication on time for many years. The home care that we added money to in our budget was incredibly useful. That was something that really created a big change in my mother's life: light housekeeping, helping her get into the shower, things that were very difficult for me and my siblings to come in from a dispersed area and come together to help her with. It's really good to invest in those things at home.

There's been a huge neglect of housing that hasn't been built in this province for years, a huge neglect of maintenance. I know from working at Good Samaritan that we had to be very careful when we would run water for baths because they were old pipes, so you didn't always get hot water. That facility doesn't even exist now. It's been torn down because it was not maintained over the life of the facility. In Lamont just recently we saw the building of a new lodge. Same thing: we needed an entire new lodge because the facility previous to it had had no substantial investment for decades. When you have to build from the ground up, putting that level of capital into it is huge. That's why it can be, you know, a good measure in the meantime to put a lot of money into home care so that people, while they're at home, can actually have a better quality of life.

You know, when the opposition calls for billions of dollars to be cut out of our budget and is asking us to balance the budget on the backs of these people, it's just incredulous. You can't say that we need to balance the budget but then, of course, ask for facilities to be built in these constituencies, facilities like Willow Square up in Wood Buffalo. It's going to be 144 spaces for people that need housing. You know what? I can't wait to see the information about all of these facilities up online so that families can actually see what is available. When someone doesn't even know if something is in their community or if they're going to have to send their family hours away to find appropriate housing, that's a really stressful time.

You know, just from my own experience, my mom didn't want to move into assisted living. It meant that she was going to lose a substantial amount of autonomy, being able to cook for herself when she could, picking up her own groceries, doing her own laundry, trying to do those things that gave her a feeling of empowerment and confidence. It was really hard to try and show her that there were really great things that could actually give her a greater quality of life in assisted living. She actually fell into this really awkward phase in her life. Because she was 63, she couldn't move somewhere that was for 65 or older. It was only because she has very complex mental health needs that she was able to qualify to go to Sprucewood Manor, and it was very difficult to get that information. It was very difficult on a family that has been doing our best to take care of her for more than 20 years. Just to find a place that could allow her to live on one level and not have to be isolated in her apartment half the time because her legs were too sore and her knees were too sore to be able to go up and down stairs – she was in a basement apartment at the time.

You know, it's small things like this that actually have massive, huge impacts, small policy changes that can actually have ripple effects into helping families take that piece of the burden off themselves. Now when I go to visit my mom, I don't have to spend hours cleaning her apartment and changing her bed and cleaning the rugs. I can actually go and focus on my time with her and spend time with her just talking about the activities that she's been doing, telling her about what's going on in my life. It's actually real quality time that doesn't have to have that extra level of stress.

You know, the cuts that this opposition wants would just have a massive, direct impact on building housing in this province and those front-line services. When I was working – it would have been between roughly the time of 2001 and 2004, so we would have been coming off about five to 10 years of massive, deep cuts. It's those things that are leading to some of those issues that we are trying to address: staffing levels, having buildings that are kept up, where do we have housing, and what's the quality of it? The fact that we can . . . [Mrs. Littlewood's speaking time expired]

Thank you very much.

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

Ms Woollard: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Along with the many other speakers here I rise to speak in support of Bill 203. It's been a long time coming, something like this, and I'm just so glad to have it here. A lot of us have parents who either are in or will soon be in long-term care facilities, and we know the challenges not just of finding an appropriate place where the support will be good and the care will be right for the person but finding it while we manage to keep our own lives afloat and we keep our jobs going.

I was a full-time teacher supporting my family, and my mother needed quite urgently to go from her assisted living placement, which was very suitable for her when she was younger, into something at a higher level of care. All of a sudden I was told, "Find

it now," but I didn't have the information. They were basically holding her in the hospital until we could find a place, and that was an extremely stressful situation. We found a place that I think was probably as good as we could get, but we didn't know many of the amenities that would be available and services that would be available. We had to figure those out as we went along. Luckily, the staff were very caring and were very amenable to talking with us and assuring us what they could do. It worked out fine, but to know all that ahead of time would have made the world of difference. The level of care that people need and the kind of care at different stages in their life varies so much that that information is wonderful.

My father was diagnosed with Alzheimer's, and all of a sudden I had to look at walking that tightrope that you do in wanting a facility where he would be able to have some independence and be able to do the things he enjoyed doing yet have the safety and security so that he wouldn't be off wandering through town and being lost, which did happen one time. We were just lucky it wasn't more often. Even a really good facility can occasionally let people slip through the cracks.

But you need the information. You need to know what is available, and you need to know what it costs. I've read horror stories of people going into a long-term care facility and then finding out that it's an extra couple of dollars a day to get walked to the dining room. I know about places like that, where the cost to have somebody oversee medication is another extra cost, where to have someone help a person put on the stockings, you know, for fluid retention is another cost, and so on and so on and so on. For a lot of people on a very fixed – very fixed – income, that makes it just about impossible. But what are they going to do? They do need the care.

4:50

As much as I really like the job that home care does, sometimes it is really hard to arrange to have consistent staff come in to do home care and to make sure that they're there at the right time. The right people at the right time on a regular basis can be difficult, and I think that's something we need to work on next. So when you've got this bill out of the way, we can work on getting the bugs out of that.

But for right now I think that this is a very good tool for seniors and for their families to be able to help make the transition into long-term care as smooth as possible. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 203, the Long Term Care Information Act. At first glance such a small bill should not cost a lot to carry out; in fact, it could probably be absorbed by our current in-year spending. I believe at this moment that the bill looks like it would have positive impacts, but we wait to hear back from some stakeholders. I've not had a whole lot of stakeholders rushing to call me, and I hear from other MLAs that they have not had a whole lot of feedback at this point yet with regard to Bill 203, but that might seem to indicate kind of a take-it-or-leave-it attitude in the sector about this bill.

One thing needs to be recognized: there already exists a list of long-term care facilities in Alberta. I believe that it can be improved, absolutely. It is unclear if the bill plans to use the same template as the existing list but with possibly more criteria. If so, what is the purpose of creating an entirely new registry as some of the information is readily available in a list format online at this point? The goal that this bill is trying to serve has already largely been completed, with this information already on the Alberta Health website. In short, it looks like Bill 203 may appear to be somewhat

redundant, but the web pages could be updated and, if needed, have some extra columns added for more information.

Alberta Health is capable of creating this website without legislation, I would suggest, and it is unlikely that within the massive Health budget there is no capacity to get this done without there being a bill mandating it. I'm sure that IT consultants, that are prevalent across government, would like another contract. Bill 203 has no clear plan for the functions of this website, whether it will be information only or a one-stop shop for registering with facilities, whether it will have any substantive differences between the existing websites, and what the purpose of creating a new one is over improving an existing one.

The UCP supports efforts to improve the long-term health care system and improve access to information. However, this bill does not represent a substantial solution to fundamental issues in the system. There could have been more useful initiatives in Bill 203 that would address some other issues, issues like wait times for tests and surgeries and placement in care. Instead, Bill 203 tinkers around the fringes but might show some promise. Issues like divorce by nursing home might be better able to be resolved with information like this out there. You know, no one wants mom in one home and dad in another home, possibly a hundred kilometres away, or grandpa and grandma, whichever the case may be. That's not a good situation, and it's not common sense.

Having information available to the person in need of this type of care is beneficial for the person to be able to make an informed decision about a facility rather than a facility being imposed by a continuing care placement co-ordinator. No one wants to be told where they will be forced to live. People like to be able to make the decision themselves along with their family. Even then senior citizens will balk and stammer at their children that, no, they will not go to a nursing home. They refuse to leave the home that they have lived in all these years and raised their family in, being surrounded by all their memories. It is a difficult stage in life for a lot, and it's important that families are able to work through it in a way that is going to create the least amount of anxiety and difficulty as they manoeuvre through that decision-making process.

Admission to a long-term care facility is based on need, and residents can begin the application process to long-term care by calling Health Link, a centralized government authority. One thing we can be sure about is that the population pyramid for Alberta shows that we are going to need a lot more continuing care and long-term care facilities in Alberta. As the baby boomers retire – and they are – long-term care is going to be a growth sector for some time to come, and all efforts to help the sector grow will be welcome.

Thank you for that, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and thank you very much to the Member for Red Deer-North for bringing forward this legislation today that we know will make life better for Albertans, make life better for Albertans who are themselves looking for placement in long-term care but also for family members in times that are often confusing and stressful, thinking about aging loved ones and their needs changing, whether it is that they're aging indeed or whether it's that they have a new chronic condition. It's trying to make life a little bit easier, a little bit clearer, and giving folks the right information to support themselves in making the right decision around their care.

I think there is nothing more important than supporting folks during difficult times of transition. I do sincerely want to express my appreciation to the Member for Red Deer-North for bringing up this initiative. It came from her own lived experience, helping people to

navigate these systems, and then saying: you know, it would be so much easier if the government had a really clear place on the website where all this information was available and accessible. I appreciate the expertise that she brings from her lived experience.

I also have to say that I am not shocked but that I am disappointed that the Member for Calgary-Greenway continues to lobby for private health care, saying that we're making bad decisions around having public builds in communities like Fort McMurray, where I am so proud that we're building the Willow Square long-term care facility. This facility has been needed there for decades. I've visited the folks who live in the current long-term care space that we have in the hospital, on the top floor. The staff there do an amazing job, but I can tell you that it makes a big difference to have access to outdoor space in your home. It makes a very big difference to have outdoor space. For the Member for Calgary-Greenway to say that this important public build – we are honouring the community's wishes and the wishes of his own Health critic when he said to us: we need to build at Willow Square. This is something where I think that if I were a member of that caucus, hearing attacks on this important public build, I would feel really disrespected. So I have to say to the people of Fort McMurray: we respect you.

To the member from Fort McMurray, who's been advocating for this project in spite of his own caucus colleagues who keep pushing back, saying that they should be building more private care facilities and not moving forward with these important public builds: we stand with the people of Fort McMurray. We're going to move forward on this project. We know it's the right thing to do even when the members opposite keep ragging on us to move forward with shutting down these important public investments. Ensuring that people have a clear record of what options are available to them and where in the province is a value that this side of the House shares with our caucus. We are very grateful that the MLA for Red Deer-North brought this bill forward to enable ease of access to information to support Albertans during this difficult time of transition.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for giving us the opportunity to debate this in a thoughtful way and to be able to move on this important initiative. Thank you again to the Member for Red Deer-North and to everyone who's ever worked in long-term care. We know that this is difficult work. We know that it is work that is valued, and we are proud to be a government that values and respects this. We're going to continue to work in ways that support Alberta families.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt, hon. member, but the time allotted for this part of business has now concluded.

5:00 Motions Other than Government Motions

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Members' Salaries

502. Mr. Fildebrandt moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services to reduce by 5 per cent the salaries payable to members of the Executive Council under section 1 of the Executive Council salaries order and the indemnity allowance and other allowances payable to Members of the Legislative Assembly under sections 1(a), 3(2), and 4 of the members' allowances order and to not approve any increases to these reduced salaries and allowances until such time as the Minister of Finance tables a balanced budget for that fiscal year in the Assembly.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my honour today to put forward Motion 502. Motion 502 calls for members of this House to ask the Standing Committee on Members' Services to reduce all MLA pay and indemnities by 5 per cent until the budget is balanced. We have been running deficits for more than a decade now, since 2008. In that time, our net financial assets have gone from healthy savings in the bank to a debt that is going to soon come to nearly a hundred billion dollars. Our net financial assets have declined by \$128 billion from the time that the former government went into deficit in 2008 until the current government proposes, theoretically, to balance the budget sometime in the next decade.

This motion here is to try and focus the mind. As legislators we all come at things from a different point of view in many cases. I'm sure members across have a pretty radically different idea of how we should balance the budget, but I do believe that most of them at least theoretically believe that the budget should be balanced at least once or twice every decade. And I will say that they didn't create the deficit – they inherited one – but they are responsible for it now. They are the government today, and it's time to move forward. Regardless of who the blame lies with, we have to do something about this. Continued deficits will put critical public services in jeopardy for future generations.

The purpose of this motion, cutting MLA pay by 5 per cent, is not designed to reduce MLA pay. It is designed to focus the mind, to get us focused on a particular task. It doesn't prescribe how they should balance the budget. I have my own idea, and I hope they have an idea. They have no idea. It doesn't prescribe how we should balance the budget – I think we would have different prescriptions about how to do it – but it is trying to get us to collectively take some ownership over the idea that our most fundamental role as legislators, not just as cabinet but as legislators, is to oversee public spending and finance responsibly.

Now, I've brought this forward in the spirit of nonpartisanship. I've not prescribed how we should balance the budget. It's not supposed to be a Conservative motion, a Liberal motion, a socialist motion. It is just trying to get us focused on the general task at hand. I'm not saying that MLAs are paid too much or too little, but I am saying that it is reasonable for us to have performance measures. Now, we do this in the public service already. In this government many of their own senior bureaucrats have pay at risk, which is essentially a kind of reverse bonus. You have your salary, that you're entitled to every year, but if they don't meet certain performance measures, then at least some of that salary is clawed back. A private member with no extra pay in this House currently receives a salary of \$127,296 a year. A 5 per cent rollback would bring that to \$120,931. The Premier has a salary of \$270,504. This would bring it down to \$256,978.

This would be a temporary rollback. I don't want to get into the business of how much an MLA should make. Should it be more? Should it be less? I believe that that is a decision that should be set by an independent body free of all of us, who obviously have an interest in that decision. It should be an independent body that makes the recommendation. That was attempted once, but then it became political again. It needs to be independent and arm's length from all parties. I don't believe it should be the Members' Services Committee setting what our pay is and everything else. It needs to be arm's length, but because it's not, I think it's reasonable for us to include pay at risk, performance measures for MLAs.

If we are seeing our net financial assets plummet by \$128 billion in just a little over a decade, that means we have to fix something. I don't want this to be simply tokenism, that we're just going to cut MLA pay and that's it and not do anything. I want this to be pay at risk, performance pay, designed to get us thinking about the critical task of balancing the budget.

Now, the NDP have put forward a plan. I don't mean to be too mean here – I would like their support – but their balanced budget plan has given no details about how they will get to a balanced budget by whatever date they're going by now. It might be 2024; I have a hard time keeping track. But if they are confident in their balanced budget plan, if they are confident that they will balance the budget by the date that they have set, then surely they should have no problem voting for a motion that would see MLA pay cut by 5 per cent temporarily. If they're confident in their balanced budget plan, they'll get that 5 per cent back relatively quickly.

Deficits cost regular people. They cost regular people by the need to cut government spending and social services as interest begins to crowd out real program spending. They hurt real people when we have to raise taxes on them to pay for the interest on the debt, let alone to pay back the principal of it. Deficits do hurt real people, so we need to take some ownership over that. To all parties, all members, regardless of what side you sit on, I believe that this is a reasonable proposition.

Now, the party whip notwithstanding, I do know that there are members on this side of the House, who I've spoken to privately in times past, who have supported this idea that MLAs should take a temporary pay cut until the budget is balanced. I know that among my former Wildrose colleagues, there were certainly a number who supported doing just that. I'm not sure what the party whip has ordered, but I do know that in their hearts some members do support that.

I shouldn't engage in speculation and conjecture, but I'll go ahead and do that anyway. I've been told that the House leaders of the three recognized parties in this House got together a long time ago and tried to just – they want this issue to go away: as few speakers as possible, that all the parties get together and just vote it down so it doesn't become an issue. I hope that that is not the case; I truly do. Please prove me wrong, that this is mere speculation and conjecture, that this is merely the grapevine around the Legislature or the living wall, that I think is costing us a fortune. I hope that this is not the case because I think this is an opportunity for members in all parties, like we did on the previous bill, from the Member for Red Deer-North, to set partisanship aside, to set ideology aside, and to try to do something for the greater good of Albertans, that we can show that we are in this together.

You know, people in the oil patch during the height of the downturn would have been grateful for a 5 per cent pay cut. So many of them just got a 100 per cent pay cut. Many of them had 30 per cent and 50 per cent pay cuts, and their salaries and wages in many cases have not recovered. So many Albertans would have been grateful for a 5 per cent pay cut after the unemployment and economic downturn that we have had.

We are going to be paying the bill for these deficits for decades to come. This is a chance for all of us to show that we are in it together, that this is not merely cutting MLA pay for the sake of it but that it is doing it with a measurable, targeted goal with a timeline. If members in all parties, with the various dates they're proposing to balance the budget by, are confident in their plans that they can follow through on it, then they should surely have the confidence to vote for this right now.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

5:10

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the motion?

Seeing none, the hon. member to close debate.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Well, speculation and conjecture are not always wrong. This is exactly what I was told would be the case, that,

unfortunately, too many people don't want this to be known. They don't want this to be an issue. I know that if I voted against cutting MLA pay by 5 per cent until the budget is balanced, I would have a hard time looking my constituents in the face.

I have been proud to vote largely as an independent long before I was an independent. I've defied the party whip many times. I'm very proud to be the MLA who has voted against the NDP more than any member of this House. It's a distinction I carry with pride in Strathmore-Brooks. But I am disappointed. I've never seen a private member's motion or a private member's bill with literally zero speakers other than the member proposing the motion.

Now, clearly, the House leaders must have been talking to each other. You know, we like to see parties working together across the aisle. We want to see bipartisanship, multipartisanship. There's a saying in Washington that when both parties agree on something, it means that both parties are screwing you.

I know there are members here who in their hearts support it, and I'm sure that some of the members not here very specifically support this. It is sad to see the whip of partisan politics stifling the ability of people to represent their constituents and their own conscience in the House. We know what happens in all parties, but it is sad seeing that it's outright collusion between the major parties in this House. I hope that their silence is just a sign that they agree with me and that we'll have unanimous consent, clearly, but I fear that that is simply not the case.

But I want to thank members for listening. I guess you get out to go to dinner early. Perhaps it's just that everybody is hungry, and that's why no one is standing to speak to this. I would ask, members, that if you're not willing to speak, you at least agree to a standing recorded vote and have your name recorded so that constituents, your constituents, know if you agree with this decision. Then you should be proud of this decision. You should be willing to stand by it when you ask them to re-elect you.

Madam Speaker, I'll close debate by thanking you and the members for their time. I hope that the silence is just a sign of the unanimous consent of the House to pass a motion calling on MLAs to take a 5 per cent temporary pay cut until the budget is balanced.

Thank you.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 502 lost]

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

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Just noting that we have accomplished a great deal of work today and noting the time, I would like to ask for adjournment of the House until 10 o'clock tomorrow morning.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:14 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday morning, May 1, 2018

Day 22

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

10 a.m.

Tuesday, May 1, 2018

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Deputy Speaker: Good morning.

Let us reflect. As we embark on our deliberations for the day, let us always remember that all of us here in this House are trying to make Alberta a better place. It is only by truly listening to each other's ideas, regardless of whether we agree, that we will represent our constituents effectively and progress towards a shared vision for a prosperous Alberta.

Please be seated.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 10

An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements

[Adjourned debate April 19: Mr. S. Anderson]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Stier: Good morning, everyone, and thanks, Madam Speaker. A pleasure to be here today to speak to Bill 10, which is An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements. It's a pleasure, again, to rise here today. Bill 10 is an act that enables municipalities to create what's being called the property assessed clean energy, or PACE, program. Essentially, it enables municipalities to pass a bylaw, I understand, where they provide a mechanism for property owners to finance affordable energy efficiency, renewable energy, and water conservation projects or upgrades to their property. It does this, apparently, by allowing repayment to be collected through property owners' municipal tax bills.

It's commonly assumed that one of the biggest barriers preventing a property owner from upgrading their property's energy efficiency is the large initial investment required. There are very few people that can afford to spend tens of thousands of dollars these days installing solar panels, converting to geothermal, replacing their existing windows, et cetera, or upgrading their insulation. Bill 10 attempts to address these challenges, providing a unique financing tool which allows property owners and developers a mechanism to finance these kinds of improvements and upgrades to their property through the new tax assessment mechanism. Therefore, the repayment comes through monies collected through the owner's municipal tax bill.

When the government first tabled Bill 10, I was cautiously optimistic, actually. However, once I began to dig deeper into the legislation, I began to have concerns with the legislation itself. To begin with, I have concerns that a lot of details are being left, as usual, to regulations. We've dealt with this in the House on many different bills over the years, and it continues to be a problem and is very problematic in this one as well.

Another concern I have is: what requirements are being placed on property owners when they sell a property with a PACE program charge on their property tax? Obviously, there needs to be a level of buyer beware if this is implemented, and anyone looking to purchase property should be expected to do their own due diligence, as they should, before purchasing in order to understand what

obligations they are taking ownership of. But PACE programs are still not very common, and it's unlikely that a majority of Albertans will know they even exist for some time, I expect. Unfortunately, there's nothing concrete in the legislation itself that addresses the issue of notifying prospective property owners that a property has a PACE property tax obligation. This absolutely needs to be addressed.

While it might seem that I have nothing but problems with the legislation, let me say this. I absolutely understand the government for keeping this legislation optional to municipalities. One of the concerns I heard from my friends in the Rural Municipalities association was that the legislation would create an obligation on the municipalities. Bill 10, in fact, does not mandate or force any municipality that doesn't want to participate in this venture so far. However, the legislation is enabling in nature. It allows municipalities the ability to ultimately decide if they want to institute a program or not. If a municipality decides that it isn't interested, from what we understand so far, it's up to the council to simply decide whether they wish to do nothing or carry on with business as usual.

If a municipality decides that offering a PACE program to its citizens is something worth while, however, their municipal council will be enabled through this legislation to pass a bylaw establishing the program in their municipality. Nothing is mandatory, therefore, as is clearly stated in their information briefings that we obtained, and we do appreciate that.

As a former councillor I remember how technical, tedious, and time consuming bylaws can be to draft. Having legal counsel review all of the minor details that have to be perfected before a bylaw can even be introduced is often very tedious and sobering. There is a real cost, not only in human capital but in fiscal capital as well, to municipalities when they seek to make such major changes to an existing system, particularly an assessment that's been there for decades.

While many bylaws are relatively straightforward – for example, the property tax bylaw that is being used today – this is the first time that something like this has come to the province, and the technical nature of the program itself is fairly complex. I have concerns that municipalities that are interested in establishing this program will have to spend an inordinate amount of time, energy, and funds to develop and create a proper working bylaw for this purpose.

While there is PACE legislation in a number of U.S. states according to the ministry, it is not clear how transferable an American-style PACE bylaw will be, if it is transferable at all. I understand that they modelled a lot of the things in this legislation from the country to the south, so it remains difficult for us to really understand how well it's working and what the pitfalls may be. While the government has verbally committed to supplying interested municipalities with a bylaw template, there's nothing in the legislation, actually, that ensures that that is the case or even that the bylaw template will actually be workable for all Alberta municipalities.

Something I heard from a number of municipalities, actually, specifically small and mid-sized cities and some of the rural and smaller urban centres, was a concern that Bill 10 would result in municipalities being tasked with administering their PACE program. Many of these municipalities are already stressed or at the breaking point in terms of capacity. There are very few municipalities, if any, that would be able to take on all the additional responsibilities required to administer such a program.

Now, the government has said, in fairness, that municipalities shouldn't be concerned since the administrator that's being proposed here may be – and the operative word "may" is in legislation everywhere; it's in here today – the Energy Efficiency

Alberta agency. Unfortunately, I've been through Bill 10 a couple of times, and I can't find absolutely anywhere in the legislation where it refers to the Energy Efficiency Alberta agency or describes any specific rules on administering the program except under part 7, section 390.9(h), which states:

The Minister may make regulations respecting clean energy improvements, including, without limitation, regulations . . .

- (h) respecting clean energy improvement programs, including the administration of clean energy improvement programs.

Furthermore, section 4(b) of Bill 10 would amend section 252 of the Municipal Government Act to include the following:

- (2) For the purposes of subsection (1), a borrowing made by a municipality to pay for costs associated with clean energy improvements as defined in Part 10, Division 6.1 does not count against the debt limit or debt service limit of the municipality.

If Bill 10 isn't going to leave municipalities on the hook for administering the program, why would they need to have the ability to borrow to pay for costs associated with the program? This does not seem to compute. It's a little bit confusing. Basically, the government is asking for members of the Legislature, in this case, to trust it. Unfortunately, this government over the course of its current mandate has given members of this Assembly precious few reasons to trust it to do what it says. I'm sorry, Madam Speaker, but I will believe it when I see it, not a second before that.

Moving to another of my concerns with Bill 10, which is that municipalities will be getting into the lending business, during our briefing for Bill 10 the government was adamant that, unlike the existing PACE programs in Halifax and Toronto, where two cities are responsible for not only administering the program but financing it as well, Alberta's proposed PACE program will be funded through private lenders, apparently. The Toronto and Halifax models see PACE funding taken from those cities' operating reserves, in fact. This means that the critical services the citizens of those cities depend on possibly could be going unfunded.

10:10

As I just mentioned, the government has told us that the proposed legislation being debated here today would see lending institutions as the financiers of the PACE program in Alberta. However, if we take a closer look through the legislation, it is anything but clear about who is actually responsible for the funding of the program.

Now, during the technical briefing that a lot of us attended, there was a slide presentation that indicated various things, but it certainly is not explicit in the bill itself. For example, referring to section 7 again, section 390.4(1) states:

A municipality and the owner of a property shall enter into a clean energy improvement agreement before a clean energy improvement is made to that property.

So they're talking about what kind of an agreement is necessary. Bill 10 doesn't say that the lending company and the property owner enter into an agreement; it says: the municipality and the property owner. It doesn't necessarily make it clear what we're talking about here. If anything, the legislation is stating, from what we can observe, that the municipality appears to be the lender.

Again in section 7, section 390.4(2) describes what a clean energy improvement really is, and I quote again:

A clean energy improvement agreement must, subject to the regulations . . .

- (c) indicate that the owner of the property will be liable to pay the clean energy improvement tax.

It also says that it has to

- (d) include the amount required to recover the costs of the clean energy improvement and the method of calculation used to determine that amount, [and]

- (e) state the period over which the amount required to recover the costs of the clean energy improvement will be paid.

Those terms I've just mentioned are commonly found in most lending agreements between a lender and a borrower. In fact, despite the government's insistence that municipalities are not responsible for lending, Bill 10, in fact, seems to state that they are. Unfortunately, once you have a chance to really dig down into the red meat of this legislation itself, it becomes apparent that Bill 10 is nothing more than an attempt to get government directly involved in a unique lending business for home improvement. There are already plenty of options for people who are interested in upgrading their property, including the CHIP home equity mortgages for seniors program and home improvement lines of credit in regular financial institutions.

I have a number of other concerns that I haven't had a chance to address today, including how this legislation will impact a property owner's ability to obtain a mortgage, concerning the likelihood of interest rates increasing, and the new, more onerous stress tests that have been imposed by the federal government.

To close, Madam Speaker, I simply have too many unanswered questions and concerns, and I'm unable to support this bill in the current form. Here we are at second reading, so I will be happy to hear what the members from the government side have to say regarding some of these concerns. Hopefully, during the Committee of the Whole process we'll be able to determine what is really behind this bill, what some of the answers are to the questions that I have just raised, and what kind of thoughts there are behind this legislation. As it is right now, we are not able to support this bill in its current form.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 10, An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements. We are aware this bill is a measure to enable bylaws for property assessed clean energy, or, as the acronym states, PACE. These bylaws will allow property owners to finance green energy improvements and tie the financing to their property taxes. Well, I can say that I wasn't entirely surprised to see yet another bill from this NDP government that expands powers of taxation. If you can count on this government for anything, you can count on it to find new and creative ways to increase taxes on everyday Albertans. I'm sure the government will tell us that this is an entirely voluntary program. It will tell us that we are overstating what this bill will do, and certainly they will tell Albertans that this is not a tax increase. So let's get this out of the way to begin with and be clear about what we are talking about.

On the face of it, what PACE will enable is for property owners to finance energy improvements such as solar panels and pay back the cost through increased property taxes. Now, it is true that this will be a voluntary program. It will be up to property owners to decide whether or not they want to make these improvements, and in that sense it is not mandatory. This financing program is already available, Madam Speaker. I believe that through Enmax you can actually have them install solar panels on your home – I think the cost is around \$30,000 – and they will then amortize the payment of those solar panels back through the utilities. In reality we have a market-driven force that is already offering these services to Albertans, yet the government has decided to get involved in this. Once again, when we see the government getting involved in a program where the market is already willing and capable and

there's already demand for it, I question what the motives for this intrusion in the market are.

Now, it is our responsibility as legislators to look a little deeper and consider what the longer term consequences of this program may be. In doing this, we need to realize the implications of the fact that the financing of these projects becomes tied to properties rather than to individuals. If it was the other way around, it wouldn't be an issue. Individuals could seek financing for these energy-related projects, and they would be responsible for the costs and responsibilities moving forward. However, given that the financing becomes tied to the properties, the decisions made by one individual or entity under this program will need to be borne by any future property owners through their taxes, property taxes, I might add.

This raises a whole host of potential problems that we need to be cognizant of. Perhaps the biggest issue is the impact on property affordability for Albertans. In the challenging economic circumstances that we face, too many Albertans are struggling to pay for basic necessities, and we need to be very careful with any legislation that will increase this burden. I'm sure that the government would agree that we want to be careful not to cause nonmarket increases to the cost of property and housing in Alberta.

We also want to make sure that we do not increase the tax burden on Albertans. According to the Fraser Institute the average Canadian already spends more on taxes than they do on food, housing, and other basic necessities combined. While there is a worthwhile discussion on the benefits of green energy improvements, we need to ask ourselves whether it is wise to place these interests ahead of the affordability of life for Albertans. Ultimately, it doesn't matter if you own property or if you rent it. It doesn't matter if it is commercial or residential property. When the government encourages these improvements, the costs are ultimately passed on to businesses and consumers.

Madam Speaker, if individuals want to make decisions on energy-related improvements or other property improvements, then they should do so within the scope of the free market. To my mind, the government should not be using programs like this to influence the free market and unencumbered choices of individuals or other entities.

Madam Speaker, I would also like to address some of the concerns here surrounding the nature and conditions of the financing of this bill. Normally when a person seeks out a loan, they approach a financial institution, which will look at a variety of factors to determine whether or not it makes sense to issue the loan. Under the auspices of this proposed legislation, traditional factors such as income and credit are not considered; rather, loan eligibility is based on property information. This raises the question of whether the government has considered issues surrounding solvency of these loans. As it stands, some people find themselves in financial situations where they are unable to pay their property tax bills. These people are often Albertans who are struggling financially. Is it fair or compassionate to offer financing to these people that they may be unable to pay in the future? I think the government should refrain from taking actions that would extend irresponsible financing for nonnecessities that may place further burden on vulnerable Albertans.

10:20

You may notice a theme developing here. I've raised concerns around market intervention, concerns surrounding negative impacts in relation to property affordability, concerns surrounding unconventional financing conditions. In keeping with this theme, I would like to address the proposed market restrictions that would apply to those who would choose to access this program. Specifically, people who would want to make improvements under

PACE would be restricted to doing so through government-approved installers. Now, Madam Speaker, if the purpose of this government is to stimulate growth in the economy and get Albertans back to work, they have to ask themselves: how much is the cost to the government, to other taxpayers in order for them to do that?

I have always been an advocate, Madam Speaker, for allowing the conditions in the market to be able to increase the size of your economy through natural and organic measures such as stimulating investment, incentivizing foreign investment to come in. In this situation this is a government program that when taken away, those jobs will be in jeopardy. So it is a short-term fix to a long-term problem, and I'm not in favour of that and never have been.

Now, if the government's intention is to ingrain efficiency in this program, then they are doing the right thing. Through this government approval process they are restricting the market and trying to pick winners and losers. This is definitely a common theme with this government. If we really wanted to encourage the increased adoption of green energy improvements, then we would let the market work and let the market decide who the most effective and efficient installers are. Instead, this is just another example of the government-knows-best ideology that plagues this NDP government and, in fact, hinders the adoption of the very improvements that the government has placed a priority on, namely jobs for Albertans.

Madam Speaker, this legislation is simply not adequate in its current form. It is poorly thought out, it needs drastic improvements, and it leaves far too much to regulation. We live in a time when solar photovoltaics are less expensive and more accessible than they have been at any given time in the past. As in this case, with numerous other energy efficiency improvements available to property owners, I believe that in the future, as we increase our ability to provide those photovoltaics, there will be a time when there will be a natural gravitation by the market forces to putting these things in. But at this point the cost comparatives do not incent regular Albertans to be able to move to this. Yet here this NDP government is stuck in the past, thinking the answer is yet another government program. The future is brought to us every day by the free market, whether the NDP recognizes it or not.

It is for this and all these reasons that I have mentioned above that I cannot and will not support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Highwood.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today in the House to speak on Bill 10, An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements. Bill 10 allows municipalities to pass a bylaw creating a property assessed clean energy program. A property assessed clean energy program allows homeowners to finance energy efficiency, renewable energy, water conservation projects, and upgrades to their property. This is done by allowing homeowners to repay this investment through their property taxes.

I think most reasonable people would love to have major upgrades to their homes and have it be done. Every homeowner has projects that need to be done, and I'm sure people would love to save money on their energy bill by pursuing green renovations. The question becomes: who pays for these renovations? Is it the government's responsibility to encourage homeowners to invest in certain capital projects or to regulate the market to allow these renovations to take place? As has been the case with this government, taxpayers have traditionally been on the hook to pay

for energy efficiency upgrades. For example, one can look at the residential no-charge energy savings program put forward by this government last year. This program wasted taxpayers' dollars on hiring contractors to install LED lights and low-flow shower heads in homes across the province. While the goals of this program were notable, taxpayer money was wasted, which pushed us further into debt.

While many homeowners did see the benefits of lower utility bills as the result of this program, one can see that the cost to taxpayers just wasn't worth it, which brings us to the bill that is before the House right now, Bill 10. Now, Bill 10 is a better bill than some proposals that we have seen from this government previously. For example, the risks of this project are no longer on the taxpayer but on the private lenders. However, too many questions remain for me to support this bill.

One such risk is that the property assessed clean energy programs do not have to provide the same disclosures to homeowners that traditional lenders have to provide. This would cause financial problems to the homeowners down the line if they ever get overextended on their financial obligations, and we know that too much debt on a home is just as bad as too much debt on a government. As I said earlier, in this economy, with this government burdening families with their tax grabs, household debt is slowly and steadily increasing. Do we really want to create a program that would encourage families to go further into debt?

Another such risk is that homeowners that have used property assessed clean energy programs to finance projects have had a much more difficult time when selling their homes. This means that homeowners may be stuck living in homes until a payout is reached. Regulations and consultations can be done with realtors to mitigate this problem, but we never see the results of those regulations prior to the bill being passed. How do we know in the future that there will not be a large group of people who can no longer sell their homes? What do we do then? What do they do?

Furthermore, one should acknowledge the concern with organizations that do not pay property taxes. How can they access the funds to make improvements to their buildings? One would think that energy efficient projects would be just as desirable for nonprofits as they would be for homeowners. In my riding there are many nonprofits and charities that do amazing work. However, they often have big capital needs that need to be taken care of. Nonprofits and charities also pay for water and electricity. I'm sure they would love to be able to take advantage of this program. However, they do not pay property taxes, so are they excluded from this program? How can they get capital to finance much-needed improvements?

I don't believe it's the government's job to try and direct you to buy green energy projects. The government's job is to set the conditions so that private citizens can prosper, something this government has failed to do. The government's role shouldn't be to encourage you to buy one product over another or to pick winners or losers. Homeowners should be the ones making the decisions on how they would like to upgrade their house, if at all, and the government needs to stay out of it and focus instead on growing the economy and creating jobs. They could start by removing the job-killing carbon tax that has been burdening Alberta families for years.

I think there are too many questions on this bill right now for me to be supportive of it. The government is telling us to trust them, that they will get the regulations right. They're saying to trust them, that it will all work out. How are we supposed to trust them? We don't know what the regulations are going to be before the bill passes. It's just a little too risky. This may not work out at all, but

what do we do then? The last three years haven't worked out when Albertans have trusted this government, so why would it work now?

In closing, Madam Speaker, I'll be voting against Bill 10. While the goals of this bill are notable, I believe it is an overreach by the government, with too many questions remaining unanswered. But I look forward to a rigorous debate and conversation that, hopefully, will be able to conclude and maybe teach us what they really mean with this bill.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to my hon. colleague from Highwood for his insight into the conversation on Bill 10, An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements. You know, the hon. Member for Highwood made some interesting comments there and raised some significant concerns, and I do hope that we'll hear some significant dialogue from members of the government side in regard to the sort of intent with this bill and, certainly, why current financial institutions are not enough and why government intervention is necessary at this point in time to further this project.

I know there are a number of questions that my hon. colleague has, particularly around affordability for those entering the housing market and what an improvement or additional increase in property tax would mean to those trying to access capital to purchase their first home. We know that there are a number of concerns around that already given income-testing increases and the high prices currently in our economy, housing prices. Certainly, we know that having this caveat on the title in particular would create more challenges, particularly for young people, for millennials, I would say, right now entering the housing market and having access to that capital. That would work against them.

10:30

I know that, you know, my hon. colleague has some significant questions surrounding that because we've all got younger people in our life. I certainly am very close to the millennial area, and that would be definitely a concern for those in and around my age group. The hon. Member for Highwood has children and nephews and nieces and those that are going to be facing these, as many people do in this room. There are some challenges around that, so I hope that my hon. colleague from Highwood will get some answers to his questions, particularly as to why current financial institutions and the ATB bank in particular aren't necessarily the way to do this. Maybe it is. Maybe this is the bank that the government is choosing to facilitate this loan program through. I'm not really quite sure what the plan is.

I know my hon. colleague has concerns around that for those that default on paying their property taxes. Is the municipality now responsible for that? Probably that's the case, and in turn that puts some burden on the taxpayer, increased burden on the taxpayer in particular. Solar panels are a movable asset, quite easily movable. If a mortgage was defaulted on and a bank were to take over and those solar panels were to go missing, what is the process for that? Who is responsible? Does the caveat on the title still exist for those upgrades, or does the municipality step in? Does the province step in? There are a lot of questions in particular surrounding that area that I think my hon. colleague would need some answers on.

I'm just wondering if my hon. colleague from Highwood has any additional comments or questions that maybe would help further clarify questions to the government in getting some of these answers that I know he so desperately seeks as well as other members in the United Conservative caucus. I hope that the

Member for Highwood would be willing to offer some additional comment in regard to that just to help facilitate this conversation and this debate here today.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Highwood.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, my colleague raises some interesting points. I mean, young families now who are just starting off – buying homes, getting mortgages – and putting themselves into a debt situation to start their futures, once again to try and take advantage of an opportunity, potentially could put themselves deeper into debt without their knowledge of it because it's going to be based on their assessment of their taxes. Again, their homes may not be marketable in the future, so there's another additional burden on these young people, and I hope my colleagues across the way will be able to explain what that means.

The Deputy Speaker: Any further speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, Bill 10, An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements, is something that I was very happy to see come forward. Both out in the community and in talking to many stakeholders in my community, their biggest concern with energy upgrades has always been access to capital. Two examples of this came to mind when I first saw the legislation. One is a bit more personal.

You know, my dad has been talking about trying to put solar panels on his house for about 15 years now, and every time he looks at it, he just hasn't been able to both make retirement work and also put solar panels on his roof. An act like this is one more tool to make that accessible for him. Indeed, I've heard those concerns echoed by many of my constituents when I'm out in the community and knocking on doors, everything from somebody needing to replace a furnace, that could potentially fall under here, or new windows. There are so many improvements that can become very cost prohibitive if you haven't had the opportunity to plan for it long term.

The other stakeholder that immediately came to mind was, of course, my local food bank. They've been talking about how to reduce their bills for quite a while. Their concern was that there are a lot of rebates, but they need the start-up capital. For an organization like the food bank to get that capital, that means that it's money that they have to take away from their operating services, so they've been very hesitant on pursuing a lot of energy efficiency things. Of course, they already have LEDs and some of the most efficient freezers they can find, but to tackle energy efficiency further, they really need to start looking at things like solar panels and a new heating system. So I was very happy to see this come forward.

Now, of course, this legislation will only impact property owners. I haven't had an opportunity to talk to my food bank yet to determine whether or not they own their property, but it is certainly within the capacity of a not-for-profit that does or for the property owner on behalf of the nonprofit to pursue those energy upgrades.

I was very happy to see this, and, you know, this is legislation that will see more investment in green jobs here in Alberta. Certainly, I know this is something that the electricians have been talking about quite a bit, and I've been hearing them wanting something a bit more for a number of years now, so I'm happy to see that we are now starting to look at how we can make it more accessible for all property owners to pursue these types of investments in their homes.

I was very happy to see that. Of course, this is something that the municipalities will have to make the decision on to pursue. You know, very soon I would hope that we will see several municipalities move forward with that.

You know, I think that this is a great piece of legislation. I think it empowers a lot of Albertans right across the province, and we'll really start to see the investments right across the income levels. I was happy to see that, and I hope everybody will support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I was listening intently to the Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert, and I just have a couple of questions that I'd like to ask him if he would be willing to answer. The first question. He said that this would make it more accessible. Well, we already have programs and already have the private market that are actually doing this. Enmax, as I said in my statements, has already offered the program for those people who want to buy in. My question is: is there a need for additional? Were there studies that were done? Was there an outcry or a demand by Albertans that this government received in order for them to be able to get this mandate to be able to move forward on this bill?

The second question I have. First of all, it's going to be downloaded onto municipalities, so they now become tax collectors for this type of a program, and they also become provincial government program deliverers. So this is a provincial government mandate that they are downloading onto the municipalities. The question that I have is: will they be compensated for this extended increase in scope and mandate?

If the Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert could answer those questions, it would be very helpful to this side.

The Deputy Speaker: Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

Mr. Horne: Yeah. Thank you. To address the first question, of course, all of the current programs are mostly rebates or things that you need start-up capital for. What this legislation does is provide the start-up capital for these improvements so that things like the food bank don't have to fund raise for years and take money away from things like their programming that they already have and so that they can, you know, reduce their costs so that more of their expenses can go directly to programming. The same, of course, can be said of residents and constituents.

10:40

On the second piece, of course, the municipalities are already collecting property tax. Funding under this legislation will be collected with property tax, so they're already doing that. My understanding is that the administration will be under the climate office. While I haven't heard anything from the minister on whether or not there will be any expected costs to the municipalities, I can't foresee too much of a massive shift in their current operations.

Mr. Hunter: I appreciate the answer. First of all, to my first question, my question was whether or not the market is sufficient, and you said that it wasn't sufficient because other organizations might have to do fundraising to be able to do this. In reality, Enmax will come into your organization or into your building, and they will amortize it through the payment of your utilities. I said that this is already the case.

Once again, if the member could give us clarity on this side – it would be very helpful – if there was a need by the public or by Albertans to be able to have this expanded scope of delivery. If you could answer that, that would be very, very helpful.

The Deputy Speaker: Any further comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's a privilege to rise to speak on Bill 10. I just want to make a few comments, address some of the questions that have been raised by some of my colleagues on this side, and also address something I think I heard from the other side as well.

Generally speaking, the Alberta Party caucus is supportive of renewable energy. We're supportive of programs and initiatives that make not just renewable energy but home energy efficiency improvements more affordable to Albertans. These, I think, should be seen generally as good things. Of course, we always have to be prudent and cautious in terms of how we go about implementing such programs, and with this particular bill I do have some questions. My general inclination and I think the general inclination of our caucus would be likely to support the bill, but again we do have a few questions and want to dig into a few things.

Just in terms of first principles and the fundamentals and basics of the bill I would note that what this bill does is simply enable municipalities to choose to pass a bylaw that would establish a property assessed clean energy program, or a PACE program. That does not compel any municipality to do so.

In terms of the question that was asked by Cardston-Taber-Warner about whether this is something that is a result of demand from Albertans or just something the government dreamed up all on its own, this is something, as I understand it, that is a result of consultation with municipalities, with home builders, with Albertans who have said, you know, that this is the kind of thing that they'd like to see. I take the government at their word that, in fact, municipalities are asking for this. This is not a unique program that is the first ever conceived of here in Alberta. In fact, we're by some measures a little bit late to the game on this and catching up in implementing such legislation.

In terms of impact on the municipalities themselves one of the things that I think is important to note in the bill is that Energy Efficiency Alberta could administer the program on behalf of a municipality if the municipality so chose. I think that's an area that smaller municipalities may find compelling. They may not find that they have the sufficient expertise internally or would choose to want to ramp that up, spend the money to do so. I'm pleased to see that.

You know, in terms of the model itself it's not unique. When my neighbours approached us and said, "We thought maybe it might be a nice idea to pave our back alley, make it asphalt instead of gravel, reduce the dust so that the kids have somewhere to play," we had the option to pay for that through our property tax over time as opposed to having a significant capital outlay in the beginning. We pay a small bit of interest in doing that, and it comes out of our property taxes every month. It also, I would strongly suggest, enhances the value of our home and all the homes on either side of the block. I look at this program as something quite similar.

I also would note that it isn't just solar. Eligible improvements under section 7 of the bill include, yes, solar power but also upgraded insulation, windows and doors, high-efficiency heating and cooling systems. It's more than just solar panels on the roof.

You know, one of the questions I believe it was the Member for Airdrie asked: "Well, let's say that there's a foreclosure, heaven forbid. What happens if the solar panels that were on the roof go mysteriously in the middle of the night?" Well, the same thing that would happen if someone were to foreclose on their home and decide to take fittings and fixtures that are part of the house. If you took all the interior doors with you when you foreclosed, I can assure you that the bank would not look upon that very favourably

and would come after you for that. I can only imagine that the same things would apply for solar panels or your upgraded windows or anything else. So I would say that that as an objection to this bill is a spurious one.

Speaking of the UCP, I would ask them: what is their plan for renewable energy? What is their plan as it relates to climate in any way, frankly, aside from doing their version of crossing their fingers and hoping it isn't really a problem? I would suggest that this is the sort of thing that as a government we ought to be considering: ways of reducing energy costs, reducing heat leakage from our homes in our 10-month winters that we seem to suffer here. Whatever we can do to insulate our buildings, both commercial and residential, in a more efficient and effective way should be seen as a good thing.

So to the degree this bill achieves that, I'm certainly quite interested in supporting these sorts of initiatives, in fact, if they do meet those objectives.

When I go and tackle a bill, the first thing I do is that I look for data. I look for the evidence. I found a very interesting study out of the United States done by the director of the Housing Finance Policy Centre at the Urban Institute and a senior financial methodologist at the same institution. They did a study and determined that after taking financing cost into account, the return on a PACE program for residential homeowners in the United States ranged from \$199 all the way up to \$8,882. In their words: "That is, the homeowner recovered more than their investment."

The other very interesting and noteworthy thing is if we think about, you know, what if we were to want to sell our house. Let's do a kitchen reno. Let's renovate the bathroom. That's going to increase the value of the house. They compared those types of renovations, other home improvements like kitchen and bathroom remodelling. Recent studies showed that the homeowner recovers only 60 per cent or so of that cost. The data that I'm seeing tells me that a PACE program is far superior to other renovations that homeowners would undertake, so it tells me there's likely to be a positive return on that investment.

The other thing I would say is that these types of programs, although they have existed in the United States for some time, are still relatively new, so mortgage lenders and homebuyers are just learning how exactly to value these sorts of things in the property market. What this study concludes is that perhaps there may be in fact increased value beyond what is currently understood, that it's more likely that this would go up than down in the future in terms of value. I think that's intuitive in the sense that if we were to ask, "Are homebuyers 10 years in the future more or less likely to want an energy efficient home? Are they more or less likely to want a home that already has solar panels installed and a means of paying for that through the property tax?" my gut feel tells me that it's more likely. This study would suggest the same thing.

I do have some questions, of course, devil in the details. When we have a bill that would put regulation as the first step – we'll write some regulation and let you know in the future – that always raises some questions for me. Municipal Affairs is particularly good at tabling bills, doing substantive consultation, and coming back and passing the legislation. That's what we're doing with Bill 8. I would wonder if that may have been a model they could have adopted for Bill 10. I would perhaps give them a pass on this if there is some urgency in seeing this move forward. We may not necessarily want to delay, so I could understand that.

10:50

The other concern I have is that when we're doing these sorts of things and we want to create a situation where Albertans use less electricity in particular and find some savings there, as this

government moves to a capacity market, less and less and less of Albertans' electricity bills will be the cost of energy, and more and more and more of those bills will be fixed for administrative charges, for transmission. The way the capacity market is being dressed up as transmission could mean that in fact there's really no incentive to shut the lights off because your electricity bill is going to be what it is. The cost of electricity has been capped at 6.8 cents, which is a shell game to Albertans. They see that number, but of course all of us as taxpayers will ultimately foot the bill for that. There's substantial concern there.

The question is: will we actually be in a situation in two and three and five years down the road where it even matters whether we have solar panels because the cost of electricity is so high that we're bumping up against that cap for the next four years? It really doesn't make a difference. That's a real, real concern that would be a potential unintended consequence – I hope unintended – of the changes that are going on in the electricity market but would actually serve to potentially undercut the value of a bill like this. Why would we bother installing solar panels when, frankly, it makes no difference in terms of our electricity bill and would make no difference in terms of the electricity generated on the grid and therefore would make no difference to carbon emissions?

The changes that this bill is bringing in and the opportunities that it presents do need to be seen holistically. Unfortunately, because of the real hash that this government has made of the electricity market generally, the good intentions of this bill and the good mechanics – this seems like something that really can work – may not actually serve the purpose that this government intends because of other mistakes they've made, because of other paths they've chosen that are, frankly, ill-advised and unnecessary. It's a shame because there are other ways of ramping down coal. There are other ways of putting more renewables on the grid. There are other ways of encouraging natural gas electricity generation that didn't involve literally \$1 billion or more of lost money to taxpayers, of additional money this government has had to borrow. It's a real shame. It didn't have to be that way, and here we are. I hope that that is not the case.

Given what we know now, I can tell you that the Alberta Party caucus is inclined to support the bill, but we certainly do have some questions.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's actually not a surprise to hear that the Alberta Party, a.k.a. the liberal party of Alberta, is deciding to support another government program. But you know what? He did actually bring up some very good points here.

One of the points that I thought was important to bring up – I don't know whether or not he could answer this question. Maybe members from the opposite side who have been quite quiet on this issue here today could stand and speak to this. The question that I have is: so solar panels are installed. They're now being collected by municipalities in terms of property taxes. If a house was sold and a person was to take those solar panels, because they can be removed fairly easily, who would then become the collector of that asset? Who would become the repossession agent in this situation? Would it be the municipalities? Would it be the Department of Municipal Affairs? Would it be third parties?

You know, these are the types of things that someone has a substantial investment, and those solar panels are now an investment and an asset. If someone was to actually take those and remove those from the home, now you have them taking an asset

that is supposed to be amortized over a 10-year period or however long it is. Who would be involved in making sure that that asset is reclaimed so that it isn't a writeoff on the government books? This is the question that I think we need some clarity on.

Now, I recognize that the member is not government, that he is in the third party – and I appreciate that – so I don't know whether or not he or the members opposite could answer this question. I think it's a pertinent question, that I'd love to see someone give us some answers on.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Clark: Well, lucky for all I'm not a lawyer, so I can't answer that question. Perhaps the one lawyer who I believe is in the House at the moment, the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General, could offer an opinion. I understand that this would be the sort of thing that is not likely to be on the plate for the municipality. If a mortgageholder defaults on that mortgage and then starts stripping things out of the house before they take off, I am quite certain the bank would come after them and chase them down. Banks don't tend to be gentle about that sort of thing.

You know, it's a fair question. I suspect that there is a process for that. Actually, if the minister would like to weigh in or if there's anyone on the government side who has some insight into how that would work, I do think it's a fair question, especially if there's potential risk for cost to taxpayers. I'm interested to know if the minister happens to have any insight as to how that may work.

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

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 10, An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements. I know our colleagues in the NDP have this campaign to push the green energy sector in every way possible, and there's nothing wrong about that, being green or believing in anthropogenic climate change like I do. Bill 10 is one of those excellent ways to help homeowners who want to be green afford to be greener. I bet there are hundreds if not thousands of Albertans who want to buy solar panels for their homes to generate electricity, heat their water, and heat their homes in winter.

Actually, a couple of years ago, Madam Speaker, when I visited my colleague the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View, I observed that there were solar panels on her rooftop. Like that, I have many friends who could afford to have those solar energy panels.

The NDP have made this so simple. Just apply to the property assessment clean energy program – the acronym here is PACE – to be run by your municipality. The municipality will get reimbursed through Energy Efficiency Alberta, who administers the program. Repay for those solar panels over time through your property taxes, which are administered by the municipality. In exchange you get a caveat placed on the home.

PACE seems to be supported by stakeholders, including Build Alberta, the Alberta Construction Association, and the Pembina Institute. It's not out of place to mention here, Madam Speaker, that our environment minister has good friends at the Pembina Institute. Former Ontario Liberal minister Glen Murray is the executive director there. If you recall, Glen was around the cabinet table when disastrous policies were brought into Ontario trying to force the green economy. He has a team of 44 people working for him at their think tank and a board of nine people.

The Rural Municipalities of Alberta are rather mute, though one could see large barn owners wanting something like this. The

Alberta Urban Municipalities Association had this to say: “This program will make it more affordable for Albertans to upgrade their properties without having to put money down, and gives municipalities another tool to make a positive environmental impact and help address climate change.” Did you hear that, Madam Speaker? No money down. What is this, some kind of furniture commercial for The Brick or Leon’s or easyhome? I don’t get it.

11:00

The NDP government introduced easy solar – no money down, 10 easy payments over 10 years – but there’s a real danger here of people getting overextended in the amounts they owe to get solar up and running on their homes. Albertans already have the highest gross personal debt per capita in all of Canada, and that is before we talk about the \$96 billion debt that the NDP will have created before 2023. People with PACE tax assessments have difficulty selling homes. Who wants to buy something with a caveat on it and still be paying out the solar installation? These are genuine concerns, Madam Speaker. I’m not trying to be critical here. I’m trying to be practical and ask reasonable questions, hoping they’ll make this bill better to get everyone to support it. But as it is presented today, there are so many concerns.

Maybe the solar installation is botched and the home leaks water – and the buyer and seller don’t know that – and there is massive mould growing up in the attic. That could be another possibility. Or maybe the solar gets installed, and the home seller walks away with all the equipment, leaving the new buyer with a bill and possible repairs.

Only government-approved installers get to work on these projects. That’s another problem, Madam Speaker. It means that Energy Efficiency Alberta is picking winners and losers again.

What about condo corporations? I see nothing here about them.

It’s very much buyer beware going into this PACE program, Madam Speaker. What about the financing? Is it coming out of the carbon tax? Someone has to answer that. Meanwhile we have debt piling up. That’s not common sense. I get that people want to install solar panels on their homes, but the reality is that solar panels remain expensive and out of reach for the vast majority of people. I can’t see the difference here between PACE and taking out a bank loan to do the job. They are both financing schemes, and ultimately it is the homeowner who pays.

Bill 10 is a niche boutique program for a small group of people who can afford it. Not everyone can afford it, Madam Speaker. This is not something that Martha and Henry want. Martha and Henry just want to make sure that they can be in the same continuing care centre together and not be divorced by nursing home. Martha and Henry want to make sure that their fixed incomes will pay the property taxes, the insurance, the utility bills, the groceries, and put gas in their truck. Martha and Henry won’t be running around out there installing PACE solar power on the roof of their house. It will be only the people who have a little more money than Martha and Henry, who could probably go to the bank and do it already. They may be already doing it.

With that, Madam Speaker, I would ask to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 11

Lobbyists Amendment Act, 2018

[Adjourned debate April 19: Ms Gray]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It’s a pleasure to rise and speak today to Bill 11, the Lobbyists Amendment Act, 2018. As you know, the more open, the more transparent a government can be, the better off the people are. Things that we can do to ensure that we have an open and transparent government are all steps in the right direction when it comes to being more accountable, being more accessible to the population that we serve.

Now, I think it’s interesting that we’ve seen the government introduce a number of pieces of legislation over the last couple of years to try to move the needle. Some of those things have been quite helpful, some of them not as helpful. Some of those things have required a lot of push-back from the opposition before the government chose to listen to the people, and I think that, on balance, there have been some positive steps. I think that the Lobbyists Amendment Act will be one of those things in the end. That’s not to say that everything within the Lobbyists Amendment Act is perfect. I think there are some unintended consequences of the Lobbyists Amendment Act that I hope to address this morning. I think it’s important that we have some fulsome discussion around those sorts of things so that we can do our very best to make sure that we get the best piece of legislation moving forward.

You know, accountability is absolutely essential to a healthy democracy. It’s so critical, and it’s critically important that as elected officials there are some checks and balances in place in our system to ensure that the interests of Albertans are always put before any sort of personal interest either of a politician or, in fact, a lobbyist. From time to time lobbyists get a bad rap, if you will, for the work that they do, but many of those individuals do very, very important work that actually helps to make our democracy stronger and more healthy. I know that they can be a great resource to folks inside this Chamber when it comes to understanding issues and sometimes quite quickly.

You’ll know, Madam Speaker, that this government has a very poor track record when it comes to sending pieces of legislation to committee so that the opposition and other members of the Assembly can get the sort of feedback directly from Albertans or directly from stakeholders. In many ways lobbyists actually play that role, under the current confines of our system, so that we can reach out to them, get information about a piece of legislation that specifically affects their industry. So they are an important part of the process.

Not all lobbyists are bad although there are some that aren’t ideal. That is exactly why we need to have things like Bill 11, the Lobbyists Amendment Act, so that we put the checks and balances in place for the safeguarding, most importantly, of Albertans. It’s for the protection of Albertans that we have legislation just like this, so I am, on balance, pleased to see it come forward. I’ve received some very good feedback from stakeholders as well as the office of the Ethics Commissioner.

Madam Speaker, you’ll know that this legislation in many ways comes to us twofold: one, the requirement to have the Lobbyists Act reviewed; and, two, through committee, where there were a number of recommendations that were made with respect to changes to the Lobbyists Act. So this particular piece of legislation has had some opportunity to have discussion. That’s not to say that there might not be reasons for additional discussion specific to the changes, but at this point it certainly has started off from the committee making some recommendations and from receiving input from the Ethics Commissioner.

11:10

I’d like to spend a little bit of time discussing the change in the reporting threshold for organizational lobbyists. As we know, this legislation will bring the threshold down from its current 100 hours

of meeting time to only 50 hours, which also will now include any preparation time that an organization may or may not take in order to get ready for the meeting hours. While I do agree that a set amount of time is important given that there is some significant confusion in other legislation in other jurisdictions – I use Nova Scotia as a bit of a case – when lobbying time is defined as 20 per cent of the time at work during a three-month period, it's very difficult for anyone to determine what that 20 per cent might be. So, on balance, I think that in having a set period of time like we see existing and like the recommendation being made of 50 hours, having very clear-cut guidelines is important.

Having said that, 50 hours when you're including prep time is certainly not a great deal of time for an organization. My concern, Madam Speaker, doesn't fall with the large organizations: the unions, the larger pro-business advocacy groups that are also considered to be lobbyists, or the professional lobbyists. My concern is with a lot of the smaller organizations that may only have one employee.

Specifically, I'm thinking of organizations that are part of a larger organization. A good example of this would be the Chambers of Commerce. The Chambers of Commerce provincially is a large organization. It has all of the capacity to deal with the lobbyists registry and the act and understanding all of the ins and outs of that. But there are literally hundreds, almost 200, I guess, much smaller and medium-sized chambers that maybe only have one or two employees. If they engage in the larger organization's efforts, you know, come to their annual general meeting, where there would be training and discussion around lobbying efforts, come to their political action committee – Political Action Day, I think it's called, where members will meet with them here in Edmonton – and now with any prep work that they did to get ready for those meetings, the 50 hours can come quite quickly for these smaller organizations.

As such, there is a fair amount of work in terms of semiannual returns and recording the activities as well as the information that they might communicate to their membership in the form of grassroots communication. So I have some reservations around this particular requirement in the legislation being moved from 100 hours down to 50 hours and then also adding the prep time.

Now, I recognize that the Ethics Commissioner has made this recommendation and that the office of the Ethics Commissioner is in support of limiting the hours to 50, but that's not to say that it's actually a great fit for smaller organizations. Perhaps the minister would consider a hybrid of options like: if you have one or fewer employees, you would be allowed to advocate on behalf of your organization up to 100 hours, and if you have three or more or whatever, then you would fall under the new legislation of 50 hours, including the prep time.

I look forward to discussing this particular matter further with the minister. As well, I wouldn't want to presuppose a decision of the Assembly, but my guess is that when this passes second reading, I look forward to passing an amendment around this as such.

I just want to highlight some concerns from the Alberta Chambers of Commerce that they have highlighted with respect to Bill 11. I think that it's fair to do so. I know that the minister has also heard these concerns as this was a letter that the Alberta Chambers of Commerce CCed me on and that is, as noted, to the minister. I'll be more than happy to table it in the House because I intend to provide some content from it.

The letter suggests that they represent over 25,000 Alberta employers in the province and that the Chambers of Commerce is writing to express some concerns regarding Bill 11.

The proposed changes to the reporting thresholds requiring registration with the Alberta Lobbyist Registration would have unintended consequences not in the public interest.

Reduction of the lobbying time threshold, from 100 to 50 hours, and the inclusion of "preparatory time" and "grassroots communication" as lobbying activities, would dramatically change the reporting requirements for many community-serving organizations. In turn, the proposed requirements would increase administrative burdens on organizations with limited staff resources, including local chambers.

Changes to the reporting requirements may force chambers to limit activities which benefit their local community by connecting government with constituents. Organizing traditional community activities like luncheons with elected officials is one important example [that may be affected]. Developing and circulating regular newsletters to local chamber members and community partners is another.

This is the grassroots communication portion that they have expressed some interest in.

Often, at the request of government, these communications include educational content and resources directed at the business audience.

It is essential that government engage with business at the local level. Grassroots communication is critical to that engagement. As such, in amending legislation, it is critical to avoid the creation of red tape that could unnecessarily limit healthy communication activities which support an informed and civically engaged public.

I think it's important that we heed some of the feedback from the Alberta Chambers of Commerce. Obviously, they represent an incredible number of employers as well as business members and also active community members. I think that it is very, very important that we strike the right balance between ensuring that lobbyists who have that as their main function are required to do all of the necessary reporting under the act and that smaller organizations, who may not actually have a paid lobbyist but have paid employees who do lobbying work, aren't actually limited in their ability to communicate with their membership. I think that by moving the definition of grassroots communication, we run the risk of having a chilling effect on those who want to engage in the political process but have some reservations about whether or not they'll be a lobbyist.

Now, for clarity's sake, the organization that is encouraging the grassroots communication is the one that's required to report the grassroots communication plan or efforts, not necessarily the individual. But, you know, I have significant reservations around moving the definition inside the act and, as such, having a chilling effect, where organizations may or may not be aware that they are engaging in an activity that should have been reported. You have smaller organizations who now have some reservation about that same sort of thing.

We need to be very, very, very cautious about how we engage with this 100 to 50 hours and make sure that we get that right. You know, I can think of some other examples of stakeholders, from my time as a member, who may be affected. I want to be clear that nonprofit organizations remain exempt, but I also am acutely aware of some of the confusion that can happen as a result of this legislation.

11:20

I think of individuals who have been engaged in grassroots communication personally because of an issue that has become important to them, whether it's advocating on behalf of a child, advocating on behalf of individuals with developmental disabilities, or whatever the case may be. They've wound up as a fierce advocate, and they are regularly trying to create change. I can think of one example, a constituent who, after discovering that their child had a disability, set up a support group, and that support group then

pooled resources, and those resources were then used to advocate on behalf of that organization.

My concern is that we put in legislation that may have a chilling effect on cases just like this, whether it's on behalf of a disabled child or it is inside the education system or the health system or several policy drivers where they felt the government wasn't serving them well, and that their engaging in grassroots communication would then somehow become a lobbying activity. We need to ensure, we need to go to great lengths to encourage people to engage in grassroots communication and speak up for issues that are important to them and make sure that we do everything we can to communicate exactly where the Lobbyists Act applies and where it doesn't. I can see many situations where people may believe that the Lobbyists Act applies because of the language that has been used inside the legislation specifically around grassroots communications and exactly what that means and does not mean.

We need to do what we can to encourage individuals to speak up, to speak out, particularly on issues where the government has been coming up short. You know, Albertans are the key part of the democratic process. This whole thing isn't about us; it's all about them. We need to make sure that the legislation that we pass has clear guidance, direction and does not have a chilling effect in any way, shape, or form or even the appearance of a chilling effect for those who want to engage in grassroots communications.

I also am concerned that from time to time other organizations that may have wanted to engage in grassroots communications but are concerned that the 50-hour threshold will then become an issue for them because of the people advocating on their behalf will then elect not to have some of those larger social media campaigns, letter-writing campaigns, whatever it may be, and then we'll actually have a net negative of people engaging in the process.

You know, I think that, specifically about the reporting and the biannual reporting and signing up to be a lobbyist in the lobbyists registry, it's often easy or easier for us when we engage in this process on a very regular basis. We get to know the system, and we understand how it works, but we can also forget that it's often overwhelming and confusing for those that don't have to engage in or think about it every day. That's particularly why I think of some of the smaller organizations. I think of, as I've mentioned, the chambers. I haven't mentioned them yet, but I think ag societies are a good example, and there are some organizations that are closely associated with ag societies who are not actually nonprofit, who would then fall under these guidelines and the act.

I think that, on balance, you know, larger ag societies – I think of the Calgary Stampede, that gets 12 million bucks a year or whatever the grant is, which is a significant amount of money. They have massive capacity to engage. But I think of the Acme ag society in the constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, and my concern is that this legislation may have a chilling effect.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As always, it's such a pleasure to stand in the Legislature, and I'm honoured to be able to rise and speak to Bill 11, the Lobbyists Amendment Act, 2018. I have to say that when I was first elected and put on the Resource Stewardship Committee, this was one of the first bills that came across our desk at that time. Fast-forward to this point now, where we're finally being able to deal with this, and it gives you an idea of the complexity of the bill, the complexity of the issues that came down from the office. It also gives you some idea of how difficult it is to be able to balance the desire of people to be able to get to

government and to be able to get to the opposition to be able to influence decision-making in this House, which is Alberta's house. We don't want to ever stop people from being able to access us and bring their concerns forward.

As my colleague has mentioned, the importance of democracy and accountability can't be underrated. We have such a privilege in living in a country where as representatives we are elected by our constituents to represent their interests in this Assembly, so we have a massive duty to them and to all our Albertan families. Our actions and choices in this place need to be representative of their interests and not our own, so our actions need to live up to the incredible amount of trust that is placed upon us, that voters gift us with.

I'm pleased that we have legislation such as the Conflicts of Interest Act and the Lobbyists Act, which aim to ensure that our actions in here are all above board and that those groups that are lobbying the government are also responsible and transparent with the information that is coming across our desks and the privilege of being able to influence government. When you think about other governments around the world where democracy isn't an option – you know, Russia and Libya and Cuba and Saudi Arabia – I feel so privileged to be able to stand in this Assembly and support measures that create a space where government is held up to the expectation of transparency and accountability.

With regard to the bill, Madam Speaker, there are a couple of legislative changes in the bill that I'd like to highlight. I think these are some very positive changes. The fact that consultant lobbyists will no longer be able to establish contingency fee payment arrangements is a really positive step. We know that the legislation currently allows for contingency payments as long as they are disclosed on the lobbyist's return, but the fact remains that the job of a lobbyist is to act as a facilitator and as an advocate on behalf of their clients. The desire, of course, is always to help push for strong public policy for the betterment of Albertans, and the fact that a lobbyist may only be paid for their time and hard work if they're successful at actually engaging with government and having government react in a way that moves forward their proposal I really think sends the wrong message.

I mean, I've been involved with a ton of different groups, especially with not-for-profits, and we want to make sure that the access to government is never just an elitist act. We're talking about people here who have a vested interest in a particular situation. There are a bazillion of them that come up, and we want to always make sure, for those that are being paid to bring those ideas forward, that all of that hard work, the research, the time, the outreach, and quite often bringing a perspective to government that we may not have had – I can honestly tell you that in my three-year journey here I've learned more about things from the people who have come into our offices to tell us about those particular things. You just never would have had access to the institutional knowledge that comes from those people, the anecdotal information and lived experience through all of those kinds of things. So it's absolutely imperative that they are in actuality being paid for their hard work and time and that that actually happens and not as a result of the outcome with government. It really sends the wrong message.

11:30

I'm also pleased that the current contingency fee arrangements will be grandfathered in for the next 24 months. I do realize that there are people already out there that are in the process of already working with government that could very easily be left high and dry as a result of legislation that doesn't grandfather them in. That's very thoughtful and is a really good piece of this legislation. I'm very grateful that that was done. I think the lobbyist groups will actually benefit from the change, but in the interim I think it's very

important that those who have already worked very hard to get a voice in with the government have that opportunity and the opportunity to get paid if things work out for them to their benefit.

Another measure that I was pleased to see was the addition of the indigenous elders that are recognized by their communities in the list of individuals that are actually exempted from the Lobbyists Act when acting in their official capacity. Elders in these communities serve as essential leadership for their roles in the communities, their prominence, their wisdom, the lived experience, the earned respect that an elder has within their own communities in order to receive that designation. There's consistency and balance and harmony and, again, history, historical spirituality, and institutional knowledge as well about particular nations. That is an imperative piece that shouldn't be penalized with paperwork. It's absolutely imperative to ensure that the voices of those populations are represented and that they're elevated and amplified to government. This change actually recognizes that leadership and the impact that those elders have on their communities, and it's absolutely something worth supporting. I'm very grateful that that has been put in there.

I think also that the implication of that First Nations piece may be worth the government looking at other cultures and other new Canadians and other groups like that as having the ability to have a similar designation as far as that goes. The great thing about speaking about elders in the communities is that it's actually a designated leadership position within those communities. If you're looking at new Canadians and other leadership roles within other communities, I think it might be worth the government actually taking a look at the legislation to see if that designation doesn't also need to be applied to other groups within those communities. Their lobbying is actually based on a cultural perspective and an understanding of what's happening within those cultures and the communities that are growing within those groups. I think it would be a very, very useful tool for government to have that designation potentially extend towards those groups.

I'm not sure how you would designate leadership within other cultures because it's not a specific designation, but it might be worth looking at it in the broader sense to see if there's something that we can't do in order to – whether that's maybe a religious leader or community leader. I'm not sure how that would work. It would have to be a broader definition. But I think this is a really good start in understanding how culture plays a part in lobbying government. I think it's a really good start, and I think it would be worth looking at it in a broader context.

I also want to highlight a change from an administrative standpoint that is incredibly important, Madam Speaker. Lobbyists will now be required to state in their return filings the end date of the lobbying project they are reporting on if possible. I would love to understand the definition of if possible. I think that's a very interesting position to put in a piece of legislation. Again, opening some interesting doors. I get it. Now, I don't know if it can be designated that, instead of if possible, extensions can maybe be asked for if they're not meeting their 30-day requirement or whatever that is. It might be something that the government wants to look at. That's a very broad opening, if possible. I don't know. How do you apply for if possible? I don't think it's really designated within the legislation. Just something to think about.

Currently lobbyists already have to state the start date for a lobbying project, obviously, and they're also reporting on or also required to inform the lobbyist registry, the office, when they will be completing or terminating a lobbying project within 30 days of doing so. So within that 30 days, is that the if possible? Does it go beyond that? Is it an extra 30 days? Is it a year? You know, what is it?

I think that for the office there needs to be some clarity, too. That's a tremendous amount of paperwork already, and then if you have this open-door policy of when you can end, I think that it could be very difficult for the office to be able to bring that all back together and make sure that all of their paperwork is in order. Again, we are dealing with some professionals, but we're also dealing with, you know, some smaller organizations. That could be a very broad definition, and I would suggest that maybe some regulations or some information regarding that be put in there.

The new legislation will help the office to monitor if lobbyists are complying with the notice of termination. If they don't know the end date of the lobbying project at the outset of their registration, that would be very, very difficult to monitor, I would suspect. If the lobbyist complied within the 30-day requirement to file a notice, there is a termination that comes to remove the registration from the active registry. So that compliance is the most important piece – right? – to ensure that the registry is up to date. I can't even imagine how many. It would be very, very difficult to track, update, organize, and get everybody to make sure that those registrations are terminated if the date of termination is left up to if possible. This is an issue of public access and transparency and accountability, and for the sake of all of those things I think that that might be worth while looking at to clarify it a little stronger.

I also support the change that will give the lobbyist registrar the authority to terminate the registration of a lobbyist if they fail to file a semiannual return to renew their registration, file particulars or changes to previous returns, or file their notice for the end of the lobbying activity. I think, again, you know, you want to simplify the process, for sure, to make sure that lobbying groups have access, but there do need to be some hard-and-fast rules as to how this job ends. I would also assume that in terms of the group that's lobbying as well, it's always better to know your start date and your end date. You get your work done. You have your process. I think that for government as well in terms of efficiency this is incredibly imperative.

It would be interesting actually to find out – I don't know if anybody can answer this for me – how many open-ended lobbyist groups we have right now that haven't filed for termination, to see what is necessary. Maybe it's not that big of a deal. Maybe they terminate fairly regularly, and that's why it's such an open-ended piece. If somebody could maybe give us some information on the numbers of that, I think it would be a very interesting look at how the lobbyists are terminating their registrations, how that works, if it's been fairly consistent, if they're following the times. I think that might be very helpful, again, in clarifying the legislation.

I think that we can all agree that the jobs of the lobbyist registrar and the office of the Ethics Commissioner are incredibly complex and difficult and that they are what play the essential role in transparency. It's very difficult to ask them to do this job properly if they have no recourse to enforce that mandate. Again, if there's information, you know, opposing that, showing that that's not necessary, I'd love to find out a little bit more about that.

There is one piece in here that I'm not quite sure that I understand, and that's that the office of the Ethics Commissioner has a recommendation for the registrar to be given the ability to issue interpretive bulletins and advisory opinions, Madam Speaker. It's not included in the legislation. The Ethics Commissioner already has the authority to do this, but feels that given the fact that the registrar regularly provides advice and opinions on the very, very complex and broad world of the Lobbyists Act, on interpretations of the act to the lobbyists as part of their duties, they should also be given the authority to use the bulletins and the advisory opinions. In a study of the crossjurisdictional pieces many other jurisdictions actually lean really heavily on these advisory

bulletins as important tools for providing clarity to lobbyists rather than creating new legislation.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

11:40

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Dr. Starke: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to speak on Bill 11 today with regard to amendments to the Lobbyists Act. I'd like to preface my comments by saying that in broad terms I support the notion of registration of lobbyists and that I think it is important for transparency of government that we know who has registered themselves to talk to whom within the government.

But I will also say that, in my view, the increasing role that lobbyists play in our democracy is in some ways a testament to a failure; that is, the notion that individuals or, for that matter, business entities or other entities indeed need to engage the services of lobbyist firms in order to open doors, in order to exert influence on decision-makers. The fact that there is a market and, in fact, quite a lucrative market for these organizations to exist to me exemplifies that there has been a failure at some level within our system whereby it is no longer possible for private individuals, for business entities, for nonprofit organizations, or for groups advocating a certain position on a certain issue – they now need to have other parties act on their behalf.

That being said, the reality of it is that we have these entities that exist within our democracy and that they do perform an important role. I agree with the comments made by my hon. colleague the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, stating that the activities of lobbyists should not necessarily by default be viewed as being in some ways bad or nefarious. The activities of lobbyists, in fact, are to provide sometimes a navigator, if you wish – maybe I shouldn't use that term specifically – to provide a person to help steer through the shoals of government, to open specific doors, to assist in getting face-to-face meetings with people that, you know, require the access to people who will make decisions. From that standpoint I think that the activities of lobbyists are – I don't even like to use the term "necessary evil" – a necessity within our current democracy.

But if we're going to have that, I think it is important that there be certain parameters in place to make sure that we can have a level of confidence that the activities of these lobbyists are such that we're not seeing undue influence being exerted. In that context, Madam Speaker, I'm a little disappointed in Bill 11 because despite the good work that was done by the Resource Stewardship Committee, despite the long and laborious review process, in my view there are still holes in this legislation. I will certainly be proposing amendments during committee stage that will try to make this legislation a little bit more robust, make it a little bit stronger, but there are still holes within the legislation.

Now, this government in the past has certainly prided itself on stating that it is advocating on behalf of open and transparent government and that it wants its legislation to represent the gold standard of legislation in Canada. Well, this particular legislation, although it is an improvement over the existing Lobbyists Act, at very best wins a bronze or maybe just an honourable mention, thank you for coming. It is a long way away from being the gold standard because, in fact, it falls short of many of the requirements within the federal lobbyist act, which requires much more stringent reporting on behalf of lobbyists, not just the start and the end date of their lobbying activities. Indeed, they must report on when meetings are held, who these meetings were with, and what the

broad-based subject matter was, and that information is accessible to the general public.

The current registration, which basically just says who is lobbying, whom they're going to lobby, and what the broad subject matter is, like I say, is a good start, but this legislation does not do anything to make that more robust. It includes some additional provisions, which have already been outlined by previous speakers, but it does not really go to the extent of the federal legislation, which is certainly, in my view, more stringent, more strict, and a better representation of what we should be aiming for if we are indeed aiming for the level of transparency that this government ascribes to.

One example where this legislation will fail – and it is an example I'm particularly familiar with, Madam Speaker – is the example of lobbying that is done on behalf of tobacco firms. Now, this legislation does nothing to solve a problem that is ongoing and that this government used to rail against when they sat over here in this corner, and in about a year's time they will be relegated to this corner once again. This government railed against the influence of big tobacco, against the former government with regard to issues like higher tobacco taxes and specific tobacco reduction initiatives.

Well, you know, it's sad, but the truth of the matter is that right now there are no fewer than four different firms and 10 different registered lobbyists representing big tobacco that have registered to meet with and to lobby various departments and divisions of this government, including the office of the Premier, the Minister of Health, Executive Council, Alberta Health Services, the Ministry of Treasury Board and Finance, the Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General, and the Legislative Assembly as a whole.

Now, people say: well, what's the problem? Well, the problem is that those lobbying activities are in direct contravention to a framework from the World Health Organization that Alberta and Canada have been signatory to since 2004. The framework convention for tobacco control is an international convention, an international treaty that Canada signed on to in 2004. It was one of the first international treaties of this type. Article 5, section 3 of that framework specifically enjoins government officials from having closed-door meetings with tobacco lobbyists. Yet we have 10 lobbyists, including, I might point out, one lobbyist who has very close ties to this government, who have filed the appropriate paperwork to allow them to lobby this government on issues, including tobacco reduction, including tobacco taxation.

While most of the groups are lobbying for a reduction in tobacco use, most of the people who are interested in preventative health care were encouraged by the early steps of this government, including adding menthol to the flavoured tobacco legislation, which was a positive step, and increasing tobacco taxes in their first budget, in October 2015. Since that time this government has done nothing to move the needle forward on tobacco reduction, on encouraging the reduction in tobacco use amongst our youth, and, in fact, is leaving unproclaimed large sections of pieces of legislation that would be very effective in reducing tobacco use, especially amongst vulnerable youth.

One has to ask the question: why? Why has all that momentum, all that hubris of the halcyon days, the early days of this government, ground to a halt? One must only surmise that it is because of the backdoor, behind-closed-door activities of lobbying firms who are well financed. Big tobacco has lots of money, and they have lots of vested interest in making sure that the measures to reduce tobacco use amongst Albertans – the single most effective measure that could be taken to reduce overall death and disease in this province is to reduce the use of a product that causes the death of 3,800 Albertans every single year, more than 10 per day. This

government has done nothing to act on legislation that has already been passed to reduce tobacco usage.

11:50

It's baffling, Madam Speaker, why that wouldn't happen. Not only would it reduce the pain and suffering associated with the negative effects on health by tobacco usage, but it's baffling that they wouldn't do it simply for no other reason than the fact that they are interested in bending the health cost curve, which I've yet to be convinced of. But if they are in fact interested in that objective, then why are they not going after the low-hanging fruit that is represented by a reduction in tobacco usage? One can only surmise that the reason they aren't is because big tobacco has been actively lobbying this government behind closed doors in direct contravention – in direct contravention – of the framework on tobacco control and has been influencing the government in that way. Bill 11 does absolutely nothing to stop that, absolutely nothing.

If this government is really interested in fixing the problems, if this government is truly interested in taking a look at what is deficient in current legislation and actually addressing it in an effective way, surely one of the things that should be included in this legislation is a clause, a section that specifically enjoins government from participating with lobbyists in contravention to a signed international convention or treaty. I looked through Bill 11 for that specific clause, and it isn't there. From that standpoint and from the standpoint that Bill 11 lacks a reference that would make it as robust as federal legislation that's already on the books and that requires lobbyists to log individual meetings with individual members, whether they are MLAs or senior members of the bureaucracy – that's not required in this piece of legislation. That is required under the federal legislation but not here.

More specifically, because of the failure of this legislation to address an activity that is not some theoretical activity, that isn't something that might happen, that in fact is happening, that this government refuses to take on, the issue of dealing with powerful lobbyists, you know, one would have to ask the question. We're involved right now in a \$10 billion lawsuit with big tobacco, trying to sue big tobacco, as are all nine other Canadian provinces, for health care costs that are a direct result of tobacco usage by our citizens. You know, one would have to ask: if we're involved in a legal case, why does big tobacco have four different firms and 10 different lobbyists registered to lobby? The people we're suing. That's one of those questions that I don't think has an answer, but it's certainly baffling as to why that would go on.

In addition, Madam Speaker, one would have to ask the question: why has this government been so inactive, so disappointingly inactive after its initial promising phases to actually do something positive about tobacco reduction? It's not like they had to come up with new legislation of their own. All they needed to do was proclaim the existing legislation, that has already been passed and is already on the books, yet they refuse to do it.

In addition, Madam Speaker, this government is not acting on legislation that has an expiry date. Some of these pieces of legislation, if they're not proclaimed within the next year, will in fact expire. Once again one asks: well, why are they waiting? These pieces of legislation were passed in most cases with all-party support within this place because the benefits of having measures to reduce tobacco use were widely recognized. For some reason influences on this government have stepped forward and stopped this government from its forward progress. And now that we're dealing with cannabis, of course, it seems that tobacco has taken a back burner position because of the urgency of bringing in cannabis legislation.

Madam Speaker, I am concerned that there are deficiencies in Bill 11. I will be raising amendments that I hope will be supported by the government side in order to address those deficiencies, but in its current form Bill 11 certainly has got significant problems. Though it's well intentioned, it does not meet the needs of Albertans.

The Deputy Speaker: Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), questions or comments?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

Ms Kazim: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise to speak to the second reading of Bill 11, Lobbyists Amendment Act, 2018. These changes capture something that Albertans have known about and been concerned about for far too long. For far too long powerful interest groups made backroom deals with the previous government, that were made for private interests, not for the public good. These deals weren't always made transparently, and that's why Albertans wanted change. That's why from day one our government has worked to renew democracy for Albertans.

Now, the Lobbyists Act, which came into force in 2009, allows Albertans to see which individuals and groups are seeking to influence government decision-makers and on what subjects. The act recognizes that lobbying public office holders is a legitimate activity but seeks to bring transparency to this activity. When we formed government, we promised to ensure that transparency, honesty, and fairness would be more than buzzwords for us, and we have been fulfilling that promise from day one with our historic reforms to the way that corporations and unions interact with the democratic process.

We are continuing in our commitment to the principles of transparency and openness by modernizing and updating the act. Our changes are informed by the work of the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship in its review of the act and the office of the Ethics Commissioner's recommendations. The all-party committee found the same thing we did, that there were a number of important changes that could be made in order to update our lobbying legislation and ensure that we had the same transparency measures that exist in other provinces.

The amended Lobbyists Act will restrict lobbyists from giving money, gifts, or other items that would place a public office holder in a conflict of interest. These rules would match the existing conflict-of-interest standards that govern the conduct of all public office holders. This is so important as it will ensure that the old backroom deals, the old gifts in exchange for influence will be prohibited. We believe in transparency, and we believe in good government. At the same time, we are ensuring that lobbyist legislation doesn't capture those that it is not meant to capture.

On another note, public servants in other levels of government are not considered lobbyists and neither are members and employees of indigenous governing bodies. We are proposing that indigenous elders acting in that capacity should not be considered lobbyists. This is in line with exemptions that currently exist as public servants in other levels of government are not considered lobbyists and neither are members and employees of indigenous governing bodies. In their traditional capacity indigenous elders are very much public servants in their communities as they represent their people, not personal, business, or financial interests. I'm very excited to ensure that we continue to learn from the wisdom of our elders and to ensure that they aren't inadvertently caught up in lobbying legislation.

I'm very pleased about our proposed changes to the threshold requirements. Organization lobbyists under the current act are required to register if they, combined with anyone else in their organization, lobby for a total of 100 hours in a year. That's a huge amount of time when you think about it. How many phone calls, how many golf games, how many meetings can you get in before hitting that 100-hour threshold? Our threshold was out of step with

other provinces' thresholds, and we are taking action to bring us in line to ensure greater transparency and openness.

The Deputy Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt, hon. member, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(2.1) the House stands adjourned until 1:30 this afternoon.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, May 1, 2018

Day 22

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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

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

Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (UCP)
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Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (NDP)
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Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),
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McCuaig-Boyd, Hon. Margaret,
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Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (NDP)
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Payne, Hon. Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (NDP)
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (NDP)
Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (NDP)
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (UCP),
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)
Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (NDP)
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP)
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)
Schneider, David A., Little Bow (UCP)
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (NDP)
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (NDP)
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (NDP)
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (UCP)
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (UCP)
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (NDP),
Deputy Government Whip
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)
Vacant, Fort McMurray-Conklin
Vacant, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake

Party standings:

New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 25 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent Conservative: 1 Vacant: 2

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, May 1, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

Statement by the Speaker

Flag of Alberta 50th Anniversary

The Speaker: Hon. members, 50 years ago, on May 1, 1968, Bill 94, An Act to Provide for a Flag of Alberta, was read a third time. Lieutenant Governor J.W. Grant MacEwan made a special visit to grant royal assent on the same day, and miniature flags were distributed to commemorate that historic occasion. Proclaimed in force on June 1, the flag act established our provincial flag as a blue flag with the shield of the armorial ensigns of the province centred thereon.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

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

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you the amazing students from Eastview middle school in the awesome constituency of Red Deer-South. With them are teachers Ross Christenson, Bob Rutz, and Michelle Dyck along with four chaperones. Could I ask you all to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly l'école Citadelle school in Legal in my constituency. There are 30 students with us today from grades 6 and 7 along with their principal, Lisa Magera; teachers Melanie Thibault and Christophe Page; and one chaperone, Annette Hammond. I would ask that they all please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other school groups today? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 66 grade 9 students from McKenzie Highlands middle school. Their group is led by Mr. Stuart Rieger. I would ask them now to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Nielsen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is such a pleasure to be able to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the Edmonton Police Service northeast division community crime management team. I had the honour of hosting a safety town hall meeting at Evansdale Community League last week with four of the members of this team. I would like to thank them and all of our EPS officers for being heroes and for keeping each of us safe each and every day. As I call your names, I would ask that you please rise and remain standing: Staff Sergeant David Goodkey, Sergeant Roger Bellerose, Sergeant Trudy Shafer,

Constable Terry Cassells, Constable Myles Stromner, Constable Rikan Farhat, Constable Lee Martin, and Constable Steve Den Boon. Thank you so much for what you do for us. I would ask that these amazing officers receive the traditional warm welcome and gratitude of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome, and thank you.

The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. I am honoured to rise today and introduce to you and through you representatives that have been working with endless determination to prevent and address sexual violence. Would you please rise as I call your names: Meloney Patterson, executive director of Voice of Albertans with Disabilities; Kathleen Quinn, executive director of the Centre to End All Sexual Exploitation; Judilonne Beebe, executive director of the Association of Communities against Abuse; Roohi Dodd, public educator at the Saffron Centre; and Muriel Stanley Venne, president and founder of the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women. I ask all members to extend the traditional warm welcome of our Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm also honoured to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly representatives of organizations working tirelessly to prevent and address sexual violence: Jill Green, counsellor at student affairs at Grant MacEwan University; Chrystal Ference, director of the Edmonton Sexual Assault Response Team; Elaine Sartison, program manager with the Edmonton Sexual Assault Response Team; Dr. Kristopher Wells, assistant professor, educational policy studies, Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta; Josephine Pallard, education program co-ordinator of Changing Together: A Centre for Immigrant Women; and Kimberly Clark, director, investigative partnerships and supports, Zebra Child Protection Centre. I'd ask that they would all rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is also my pleasure to introduce to you and through you other members of this group. I will begin with Patricia Arango, executive director of the Central Alberta Sexual Assault Support Centre in Red Deer; Debra Tomlinson, chief executive officer, and Cheryl Wallach, communications specialist, from the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services; Maria Sarcauga, programs co-ordinator of the Lloydminster Sexual Assault & Information Centre. I thank all of our stakeholder organizations who are here today for the essential work that they do to prevent and address sexual violence. I ask all my guests to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Hawkwood.

Connolly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise today to introduce several guests who work to prevent and address sexual violence. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Cari Ionson, sexual violence response and awareness

co-ordinator at Mount Royal University; Carrie McManus, director of programs for Sagesse; Bukurie Mino, associate director of settlement at the Centre for Newcomers; Liz Gibson, program manager of Reset Society of Calgary; Paula Telfer, manager of programs at the Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre. I ask them now to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Manal Alnajjar, executive director of the Indo-Canadian Women's Association, here for the proclamation of Sexual Violence Awareness Month. I would like to ask her to rise and please receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm here to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two outstanding constituents from Edmonton-Calder: Scott Harrison, who has lived in Edmonton-Calder since 2004 and is dedicated to supporting seniors and individuals with disabilities, and Richard Alderman, who was born in Calgary but now lives in Edmonton. For many years he was a professor at the University of Alberta with a passion for teaching, learning, and sports. I'd like to thank Scott and Richard for their contributions to both the cities of Calgary and Edmonton and ask them now to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Health and Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to recognize guests from the Schizophrenia Society of Alberta who I believe are seated in both galleries today. The Schizophrenia Society of Alberta works to increase awareness of the illness and reduce stigma. Their advocacy and fundraising efforts are vital to improving the lives of individuals and families affected by schizophrenia and psychosis. May 24 is World Schizophrenia Day, and I look forward to declaring this day in Alberta. I now invite Rubyann, Heather, Ciara, Tanya, Len, and Amy to please rise and receive our warm welcome and our appreciation.

The Speaker: Welcome.

1:40

Members' Statements

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

May Day

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to recognize to you and through you to everyone in the Chamber May Day. I'm honoured to rise today to acknowledge an important day for working people all across our province. Today marks International Workers' Day, or May Day as it is more commonly known, a day set aside each year to recognize and honour all of the work that the labour movement has done and continues to do for everyday working people and their families.

It is thanks to the labour movement that Albertans today all enjoy things such as an eight-hour workday, the weekend, overtime and vacation pay, basic safety standards, and the end of child labour. These are things that we often take for granted, but these are things that we have today because workers across the world fought and bled for these rights. Today I just want to thank the workers who fought for these changes and recognize the contributions they've made to our province. Our province and our country are better for it.

Today, on May Day, I'm incredibly proud to be part of a government that is continuing the work started by the labour movement and is committed to making life better for working people and their families each and every day. In just three short years our government has made the workplace more fair and family friendly. We've ensured that working people have the same protections as every other worker across the country. We've updated the workers' compensation system to ensure it provides the meaningful rehabilitation and fair compensation injured workers deserve. And we're ensuring that those Albertans who are working for minimum wage are being fairly compensated and no longer have to stop at the food bank on their way home to feed their families.

Mr. Speaker, our province was built by everyday working people, and it's because of them that Alberta is the prosperous place it is today. To the working people across the province: our government has your back, and we'll never stop fighting on your side.

Thank you.

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

Sexual Violence Awareness Month

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On January 10 in the Kathua Rasana village a little eight-year-old girl was taken from the world. Her death is a shame to humanity. Her little body was subjected to multiple rapes over many days. She was drugged, torn away from her family, and brutally murdered in a temple near her home. Her name is Asifa, and eight men – one retired government official, four police officers, and one minor – have been arrested at this time. The men planned the kidnapping for a month to scare and intimidate the nomadic herders of that area. Her family tried to get her back, but they were told that their little girl had run off and eloped.

This brutality on its own is more than enough to take our breath away, to make us pause and imagine for a moment the feeling of being helpless. The friends of these rapists protested that the men were innocent, and their lawyers gathered to protect them, but Southeast Asians of all religious backgrounds filled the streets demanding justice for Asifa. How do we rise above this horrific story as humans?

Today marks the beginning of Sexual Violence Awareness Month. As a woman born in Canada, a woman of Southeast Asian descent, I have a responsibility to speak out for my sisters, our daughters of Southeast Asians, and all victims who may not have a voice. We have a responsibility to stand up for them and to shine bright lights into these dark corners and say loudly: we will not stand for this, not in Canada, not in India, not anywhere.

We must continue to fight against sexual violence, honour beatings, honour killings, child marriage, female genital mutilation. We as a nation profess freedom. We must fight to teach what that freedom is, especially to our new Canadians, and protect new Canadian girls and women to make sure they understand their rights in this country. We as Canadians look at the heinous crimes like this one perpetuated against Asifa, and we think that we're immune. But it can happen here, and we saw this with our own little Serenity.

Let's fight for our sisters, for our daughters, for victims, and for survivors. We owe it to Asifa. We owe it to Serenity and to the women and girls everywhere.

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

Early Learning and Child Care Centres

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Wednesday I joined the Premier, the Minister of Children's Services, and several colleagues for an incredible announcement, the opening of 100 new early learning and child care centres that charge parents only \$25 per day. This is revolutionary for parents in our province.

This announcement took place in my constituency at Norquest College's 1000 Women Child Care Centre, and as we left the stage, I watched multiple women who work or have children in care there approach the Premier to thank her for this investment and tell her how much help it has given to them and to others.

When I arrived home, I saw many women on social media expressing the same, including a friend of mine who lives and works in Fort McMurray. She tagged me in a post saying: "It's insane how much of a huge difference this makes for families. We paid \$1,400 a month for quality child care and now pay about \$500. I know so many women that are forced to stay home with their children not because they want to but because they can't afford to pursue a career and a family." Several other women responded to her post with comments like, "It's about time" and "Wow; they should have had that years ago when we needed it."

Mr. Speaker, this is amazing, and it's part of our government's core commitment to making life better and more affordable for Alberta families. Through the Africa and Intercultural Child and Family Centre new Canadians are being empowered to upgrade their skills and education to pursue good careers here. Through the Bissell Centre low-income families are freed to increase their income. Across the province about 1,400 more people will be empowered to re-enter the workforce, contributing to our economy and improving their quality of life.

Mr. Speaker, this is what can happen when we work together through government for the common good, when we fight for Albertans, unlike the members opposite, who are focused on fighting for drastic cuts to finance massive tax giveaways for those who need it least. Thankfully, our government is listening to and on the side of women and families in Alberta as we fight to build a recovery and an economy that will last.

Government Services in Medicine Hat

Mr. Barnes: Since its founding by the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1883, Medicine Hat has been known by a number of different monikers, including the Gas City, the Hat, and Canada's sunniest city. Cypress-Medicine Hat is known as a place where your word is your bond, your family is your focal point, and community is always there to offer a hand up when you need it. Unfortunately, the government of Alberta has begun referring to my home as inconvenient and too far away.

Last week I met with a local entrepreneur who is working hard to get his business opened, but it sat dormant for two months waiting for an audit by Alberta Transportation. When he contacted Alberta Transportation about the delay, the person he spoke to told him that Medicine Hat is too inconvenient. It was only after sustained pressure that someone made the long, difficult trek from Calgary.

Sadly, this wasn't an isolated incident. Another local Medicine Hat group is working hard to get approval from the Minister of Community and Social Services for a service dog testing centre in

Medicine Hat so that people for whom travel to Calgary and Edmonton is actually difficult can have their dogs certified locally. Unfortunately, the minister's office and department officials have stopped replying to them altogether. It must be too inconvenient.

Yet another example of the NDP's disregard for Medicine Hat resulted in Medicine Hat losing critical investment to Louisiana when Methanex chose to expand their operations in the United States. Make no mistake. This is a result of the NDP government's big-spending, big-taxation ways, picking winners and losers in an escalating failed plan of corporate welfare. This government has ignored and largely forgotten Albertans' small and medium-sized centres as well as the rural areas of Cypress-Medicine Hat, where it is rumoured that even more services will soon be centralized. Instead of responsibly spending and responsibly taxing Albertans to encourage families and communities, this government has decided to leave rural Alberta and Medicine Hat in the dust by racking up billions in debt and billions in interest.

The United Conservative Party doesn't take anything for granted. An Albertan is an Albertan.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

First Responders

Mr. Westhead: This past week I had the honour of attending the 40th anniversary of the Redwood Meadows emergency services. The service has been staffed by dedicated, professional volunteers since the community was founded and has a rich history. During the dinner an emergency call was received, and it was incredible to watch these heroes spring into action at a moment's notice. It's an important reminder of what first responders across the province put on the line to keep our communities safe along with the sacrifices made by the family members and friends who support them. They never know when they'll be needed, yet they are always ready and always vigilant.

The draw of the mountains and the wilderness in the Banff-Cochrane constituency leads many adventure seekers off the beaten path and sometimes into harm's way. Emergency response in the backcountry provides a challenge, a challenge that skilled and talented first responders are well trained for. Just recently Canmore fire rescue's Deputy Chief Keri Martens and firefighter Mike Halprin successfully completed Canada Task Force 2's training boot camp and were selected to be part of Alberta's provincial disaster response team. This is an incredible accomplishment, and I'd like to extend my congratulations and thanks to them for their dedication.

Whether it's a helicopter high-angle rescue crew responding to a fallen hiker or a lookout observer scanning the forest for signs of wildfire, first responders help us rest easy knowing that they are watching out for us and that they are there for us in times of need.

To all the first responders in the Banff-Cochrane constituency and across the province: thank you for your dedication, thank you for your professionalism, and thank you for your perpetual vigilance in keeping our communities safe.

1:50

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

Pipeline Approvals

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is the Premier prepared to admit that the reason we now find ourselves and our economic future so dependent on the Trans Mountain pipeline is because the

other coastal pipelines, Energy East and Northern Gateway, were killed by her friend Justin Trudeau? Is she prepared to admit that if those projects were still viable, we wouldn't be so dependent on the Trans Mountain construction today?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, as we discussed yesterday, the challenges with the Gateway pipeline actually arise from the decisions taken by and the process of decision-making of the previous federal Conservative government. Even with Energy East it is quite clear that there were a number of regulatory problems with respect to that caused by federal governments, both the current and the previous, as a result of having to start the whole thing over again because of an inappropriate NEB set of appointments. Long story. What we know is that they failed. We will succeed.

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Premier bizarrely continues to make things up with respect to Energy East. It was cancelled . . . [interjections] The NDP are still heckling. The anger machine never stops over there. [interjections]

Mr. Speaker, if I might, Energy East was cancelled by TransCanada after the National Energy Board forced them to take into account up- and downstream carbon emissions, and the Premier still covers for that decision. You know why? Because she's unwilling to call out her ally Justin Trudeau on this or anything else. Why won't the Premier stand up and speak truth to power and criticize . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, what I'm doing is dealing with the matters that are before us at this point, and that is the active pipeline to tidewater that we are working with the federal government to get. I know it is very hard for the member opposite to accept that when that happens, it will be the first pipeline to tidewater in many decades, including the long period of time during which the federal Conservatives sat in Ottawa and the provincial Conservatives sat here and neither of them could get the job done. We will get the job done. We will stand up for Albertans, and we will get the job done.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, in April 2015 the Premier, the then NDP opposition leader, said that, quote, Northern Gateway is not the right decision. It wasn't until June of the next year that the Federal Court asked for additional consultations, and it wasn't until November 2016 that her close ally Justin Trudeau arbitrarily vetoed that project. Is the Premier willing to admit that she was wrong to lobby against the construction of the Northern Gateway pipeline, and, secondly, did she tell Justin Trudeau that Alberta would not object if he killed Northern Gateway?

The Speaker: Thank you.
The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What we did was that we talked to the federal government, right after they were elected, about the need to get a pipeline to tidewater. We said that we needed one of those pipelines to go west and that we would work with them to get one of those pipelines to go west. We are now working with them to get one of those pipelines to go west. We are very pleased because – guess what? – one of those pipelines is going to go west to tidewater, and Albertans will benefit, finally, as a result of that.

The Speaker: Second main question.

Carbon Levy and Pipeline Approvals

Mr. Kenney: Well, I think that's as close as we're going to get to an admission from the Premier that she told Justin Trudeau he could go ahead and veto Northern Gateway, that had already been approved, Mr. Speaker. She said that she wanted one pipeline to a coast. There were three projects, two of them killed by her ally Justin Trudeau. Her carbon tax didn't get either of those built. Is she willing now to admit that she was wrong to oppose Northern Gateway and to oppose Keystone XL and to surrender to Trudeau on Energy East?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the member's interpretation of that is completely incorrect. What I will say is that our government has been very clear that we support getting the Trans Mountain pipeline to the west coast because that's what our energy industry needs. We also worked with the federal government to get line 3 approved. We also committed 55,000 barrels to Keystone to get that pipeline going forward. We understand that increasing pipeline capacity is exactly what the energy industry needs. We are standing up for Albertans. I wish the member opposite would start doing the same.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, part of the deal with the NDP's punitive carbon tax was that if we just made seniors pay more to heat their homes in the winter and working people pay more to drive to work, somehow we would get all these pipelines built. Now the NDP is prepared to raise that carbon tax by 67 per cent. But get this. A report has been released from Ottawa indicating that the federal government wants to raise the carbon tax to \$75 a tonne, not just \$50 a tonne. That would increase gas prices by 18 cents a litre. Has the NDP made a secret deal with the Liberals to raise the carbon tax to \$75 a tonne?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is daydreaming and making things up. The answer is: absolutely not. Our view on this matter is exactly as we have said all along. We are proud to be able to make progress finally on combatting climate change. We absolutely know that that's something that everybody wants us to do and that those in the energy industry themselves understand needs to be done. We cannot pretend it's not there. We cannot deny the climate signs around it. So we are moving forward exactly as we have been very clear with Albertans on all along.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Kenney: I think we just heard the Premier say that the NDP does not intend to raise the carbon tax to \$75 a tonne, but how can we believe them given that they did not tell Albertans about the carbon tax in the first place in the last election, the biggest hidden agenda in Alberta political history? Given that they didn't tell the truth about their carbon tax . . . [interjections] They're heckling again, Mr. Speaker. They can't stand the truth. Given that they didn't tell Alberta voters the truth about the carbon tax, how can we believe them now when they say that they're not going to raise it to \$75 a tonne?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite really just needs to stop asking hypothetical, made-up questions. This is really getting quite ridiculous. You know, what we said very clearly was that we were going to take action to address climate change. What we did was that we took action to address climate change. We also said that

we would fight to get a pipeline to the west coast. What we are doing is fighting to get a pipeline to the west coast. This is what Albertans need. The member opposite should stop throwing stones from the side and get onboard to stand up for our province.

The Speaker: Third main question.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, we will get onboard and stand up for this province by repealing the NDP's carbon tax as the first act of a Conservative government, a carbon tax which they are now planning to raise by 67 per cent.

The Premier has told us that she won't intend to do that unless Trans Mountain is built. Yesterday we brought forward a motion asking for the Assembly to confirm the government's stated position – no increase in the carbon tax without construction of Trans Mountain – and the NDP wouldn't let it go to a vote. Why won't they reaffirm their position in a vote in this Chamber for no 67 per cent increase in the carbon tax . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know what? I have made my position on this matter absolutely clear on the record here as well as publicly in every possible setting. But you know what? I will not be lectured by a member of the Official Opposition who instructs his whole caucus to run away from this building when it is his job to talk about defending women's health. He won't talk about that, but he's trying to lecture me on parliamentary motions, on something where I've already taken a position publicly. Why won't he take a position publicly on that issue?

Mr. Kenney: Not only are we going to scrap their carbon tax, Mr. Speaker; we're going to stop the desk thumping and all the disrespect that we hear from the NDP caucus. [interjections] There they are, heckling again. The anger machine doesn't have an off button.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans want a government that will actually deliver a lower cost of living for them rather than making it more expensive for them to heat their homes and drive to work. But the NDP agrees with Justin Trudeau that we should continue increasing the carbon tax. Environment Canada says by a thousand per cent, to \$300 a tonne. Today the study says to \$75 a tonne. Given that they didn't tell the truth to Albertans in the last election, how can we believe their assurances now?

2:00

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have been very clear that we will move forward past the pricing which is in the climate leadership plan if and when we get full construction in place with respect to the Trans Mountain pipeline. We have also laid out a budget plan. I know it's hard for them to imagine because they haven't put down a draft budget or a shadow budget since they've been elected Official Opposition, an unprecedented dereliction of their obligation. Nonetheless, we've laid out a plan to 2024, and it does not include any of the things that the member opposite is throwing across the aisle just for fun.

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't think that Environment Canada did this study just for fun. They did it because they're dead serious about continuing to raise the carbon tax. The NDP's hand-picked adviser on the carbon tax, Professor Leach, says that it has

to go to at least \$200 a tonne to achieve the Paris targets. Environment Canada says \$300 a tonne. Now this latest report is an interim \$75 a tonne. You know, the Premier doesn't seem to understand. The NDP has a credibility problem here because they were not transparent with Albertans in the last election, so how can we believe them now when they say that they will not raise the carbon tax to \$75 or \$200 or \$300?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I've said, we've laid out a budget which takes us to 2022. Those folks can't even lay out an alternative budget for today. But when it comes to believing people and believing in credibility, how can we believe an Official Opposition that runs screaming from the Legislature when it is their job to debate a bill that speaks to protecting women's health? How can we trust them to ever show up for their job?

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

School Transportation and Bell Times

Mr. Clark: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This past Saturday in Calgary hundreds of parents gathered to express their frustration about changes to school transportation that came about as a result of this government's Bill 1. The Minister of Community and Social Services will tell you that that meeting got heated. Parents are justifiably upset with having to send in some cases their 10-year-old children on two city buses, a C-Train, and then across a busy street just to get to school when last year these same kids were on a yellow school bus. To the Minister of Education: what do you have to say to these parents?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. Certainly, we have been seeing lots of room for improvement around student transportation. That's why in fact we are consulting right now on transportation for busing right across the province of Alberta. We have put significant investments into reducing school fees, and we intend to carry on by making life more affordable and of better quality for our students and for our families by furthering those investments here in the immediate future.

Mr. Clark: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm very glad the minister mentioned that survey because I have heard from several parents in my constituency who took that survey. They feel the questions directed them to the answers the government wanted to hear and were frustrated that there were no questions about the impact the transportation changes have had on school bell times. I can tell you that a grades 5 to 9 school in my constituency starts their day at 9:10 in the morning, and the K to 4 feeder school that feeds into that school starts at 8:05. Many families have kids in both schools. It's a tremendous hardship. Again to the minister: why bother consulting parents when you already seem to know the answers?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps the hon. member should try actually filling out the survey themselves to see that it is a very useful way by which we can gather information to make better decisions about busing across the province. If you fail to do those things, if you just simply overstep the boundaries of where school boards are making decisions, then that's simply not democratic. We respect school boards in this province, we respect

the decision-making process, and we are making sure that we invest in public education to make life better for Alberta families.

Mr. Clark: Having an hour between the time your younger child and your older child has to start and then finish school is not exactly making life better, Mr. Speaker.

Many parents, Mr. Speaker, choose to put their children in alternative programs like French immersion or traditional learning or many others. These are the kids that have been impacted most by the transportation changes that came about as a result of Bill 1. Now, once more to the Minister of Education: Minister, will you reconsider these changes and end the discrimination against kids in alternative programs?

Mr. Eggen: Mr. Speaker, Bill 1 allowed us to put more than \$54 million, up to \$60 million, into Alberta families' pockets to make life more affordable. If anybody wants to argue against that, then certainly they are trying to extend the bounds of reality. What we are trying to do here is make sure that busing is reasonable, it's safe, and it's timely for students. School boards make those decisions, and we will support that with proper data from the survey that we're taking. People can take that survey up until June 15. We encourage everybody to do so, not discouraging as this member opposite is trying to do.

Thank you.

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

Economic Recovery Initiatives

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let's try a couple of questions here that are based in reality, unlike the first three questions.

Mr. Speaker, previous governments left Alberta workers vulnerable to fluctuations of world oil prices. Can the Minister of Economic Development and Trade tell us how this government responded to one of the deepest and longest recessions in Alberta history?

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for his very important question. Our government set into motion immediately when the economy was starting on its downturn because of the global collapse in the price of oil. We presented our plan, investing in infrastructure, in fact the most historic infrastructure investment the province of Alberta has ever seen. Part of the reason for that is because previous governments failed to adequately invest in critical infrastructure: roads, bridges, schools, hospitals. So our government invested in that. That's part of the reason that we see the economy starting to pick up. There are a number of other different tools that we've been using, and I'm happy to expound on them in the next response.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

First supplemental.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: how has our economy performed since we began undertaking these initiatives?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, what we have seen and what we do recognize, first of all, is that, you know, the economic

recovery that we're starting to experience in the province hasn't yet been felt by every small business and every business throughout the province. That's why our government is committed to continuing to support job creators, businesses, and entrepreneurs throughout the province through a variety of programs. I can tell you that our two tax credits that we introduced a couple of years ago in this House have been working very, very well. Our capital investment tax credit has leveraged more than a billion dollars of investment in projects, creating thousands of jobs right now, when Albertans need them, helping our companies to grow and expand.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Second supplemental.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The opposition has put forward their own ideas of how to manage the economy. Can the economic development minister tell us what their plan would mean for Alberta jobs and Alberta workers?

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

The Speaker: Point of order noted.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud of the plan that our government has put forward. I can tell you that economists have said to us that had we listened to the advice of the opposition, brought in an austerity budget, fired thousands of teachers and nurses, our economy would still be in a recession. We wouldn't be experiencing the recovery that we now are experiencing. We are focused on supporting job creators. We know that 90,000 new jobs have been created in the past year. We are on track to lead the country in economic growth once again this year. We led the country last year. We're going to continue supporting our job creators, and we're not going to be taking advice from the opposition.

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

Dental Services

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm still hearing many concerns about access to affordable dental services for low-income and vulnerable families, roughly 1 in 6 Albertans, many of whom develop complications and end up in the emergency room. A fee guide was introduced almost six months ago. It may or may not be doing anything because it's optional for dentists, especially given their high staff salaries and office expenses in Alberta. To the minister: how are you monitoring dental fees, and what indication do you have that the fee guide is making any difference to vulnerable and low income?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. Albertans told us very clearly that they were concerned about the high costs of dental services in the province, that under the former government the dental fee guide had been taken away 20 years ago, the only jurisdiction in Canada that didn't have one, and that, in turn, our fees were far higher than in any other jurisdiction in Canada. In other jurisdictions where they have a fee guide, about 90 per cent of the dentists' bill in line with that, and we of course took that into consideration when we brought a fee guide forward here in Alberta. For those who are low income, there are low-income benefit opportunities as well. If there are specific individuals you'd like us to follow up with, we'd be happy to.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Dr. Swann: Well, precisely, Mr. Speaker. There's been no substantial increase in the public health dental services for lower income Albertans. I don't mean low, low income. I mean medium to low, and the services are now straining to the breaking point, I'm hearing from cities that are providing these services. When will your ministry adequately fund these public health dental services?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

2:10

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much. I'm really proud of the dentistry programs we do have, including those in Edmonton's Boyle McCauley. Calgary has Chumir and CUPS and so forth. The Alex has a mobile bus that goes and works with – I met many families who receive those services, and those are continuing to be expanded as well, and we are also working to make sure that those Albertans who don't have coverage today have reasonable fees. That's why we brought in a fee guide. The other government removed it 20 years ago. Our fees skyrocketed, and we are working with the college of dentists to make sure that we get those in line and that they're fair and reasonable.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Dr. Swann: The Alberta Dental Association still does not require dentists to post their fees online. Will the minister take steps to ensure that all dentists post their fees online?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. The most useful tool that we have is being able to say: do you charge in line with the fee guide? I have to admit that I felt a little awkward doing that when I made my first dental appointment for this year because we didn't have a dental fee guide for 20 years, so it takes some time to get back into the practice. I'm proud to say that my dentist's office immediately said that yes, they did, and that they were proud to be able to do so. I've seen a lot of advertising where people advertise that they charge even below the fee guide, advertisements coming in my own mailbox, for example. Certainly, dentists have the ability to do that. We're making sure that Albertans have the tools through an abridged version to be able to exercise their rights as consumers as well.

Provincial Debt Repayment

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, the outgoing Auditor General released one final report prior to the end of his distinguished career as AG. Putting Alberta's Financial Future in Focus stresses the importance of long-term fiscal reporting for Alberta's fiscal future. On page 21 this report of the Auditor General stated that "a surplus of \$3 billion per year . . . for 25 years would be needed to pay off the debt expected to be accumulated by 2021." To the Minister of Finance: are you committed to 25 years of \$3 billion per year surpluses to pay off the debt that you have so recklessly accumulated?

Mr. Ceci: First of all, let me say congratulations, and I hope the AG has the best time in retirement. He served the government of Alberta and this Finance minister well for the time that I've been here. You know, Budget 2018: Mr. Speaker, for the first time ever we offered Albertans a six-year plan to carefully and prudently return to balance. That's what we are hearing, that that was important. We've

done that. It's in our budget this year, and it's something that we've put there and that side never did.

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, given that the minister just chose not to commit to that balance and given that if we go further into the future it would take surpluses of \$4 billion per year for 25 years in a row to pay off this debt this government has promised to accumulate by 2023 and given that a vast majority of Albertans are seriously concerned that this government is on track to rack up \$96 billion by 2023, again to the minister: what is the expected date that you will pay off entirely your forecasted debt of \$96 billion?

Mr. Ceci: Back to the AG's report that was just released, you know, that reinforces our position that Alberta needs to get off the resource revenue roller coaster. We are doing that, Mr. Speaker. We're diversifying the economy. We're taking a balanced approach to look across the sectors of this economy and building those up so that we're protecting programs and services for Albertans and working families. You know, the Conservatives: they would give tax cuts to their rich friends and blow a \$5 billion hole in the budget. That's not going to get us back to balance.

Mr. McIver: Given that the speaker has twice not committed to balancing the budget in the last two minutes, given that Albertans are seriously concerned about the government's lack of concern for the debt they are accumulating, and given that the hard-working people and families of this province expect and deserve a government with a realistic plan to pay back any and all provincial debt, to the minister: how can you expect any Albertan to take your financial plan seriously when you have no realistic plan to pay back nearly \$100 billion and you refuse to give one?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, that side couldn't balance a budget at \$100 a barrel. This side has struggled. We struggled with \$26 a barrel in January of 2016, and we are on track to balance in 2023. We're on track to make sure the programs and services Albertans require are solid and stable. That side would cut them all. That side would cut 20 per cent of the budget and fire thousands of teachers and nurses.

Electric Power System

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, yesterday in response to a question about electricity the Minister of Energy said, "our government is on the side of regular Albertans." I found this quite interesting given an article that I came across about electricity transmission in our province. This article states that transmission companies receive a guaranteed 8.75 per cent return on equity bills. My question to the government is whether they think these guaranteed returns to utility owners like billionaire Warren Buffett are truly taking the side of regular Albertans.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, the previous government left our electricity system in tatters. It was falling apart. They were jeopardizing the viability of all the major power producers in this province. We're fixing the problem, and we're guaranteeing that electricity prices will not go up in the way that they did in the past because that side, the Official Opposition, would have us go back to a deregulated system that would cause huge price spikes. We're going to make sure that that doesn't happen.

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, the only one that would actually agree with him is Warren Buffett.

Mr. Speaker, given that we have heard time and again this NDP government trying to shift the blame for some of these problems to others and given that Albertans elected us to this Legislature not to cast blame on the past but instead to address the issues of the present, will this government stop with the blame game, stop shirking its responsibility, and tell us how it intends to address escalating transmission costs for Albertans, seeing as they have seen a threefold increase in these transmission costs?

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, the transmission costs are a direct result of the massive building of transmission infrastructure by the previous government. Again the hon. member is attempting to shift the responsibility for his party's decisions when they were the government onto our government. We're the ones that are trying to fix the mess that they left Albertans, and that's what we're going to do.

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, given this NDP government's ambiguous agenda to force and accelerate the transition to green energy and given that the renewable generation sources like wind will require the construction of additional transmission lines, can the government tell us how much the ratepayer and taxpayer will have to pay owners like Warren Buffett in order for these construction projects to go forward?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, this government is committed to a transition to a substantial amount of electricity generated by renewable sources, and that's something the people of Alberta support. This hon. member keeps going on and on about all of the things that are allegedly wrong with the direction of this government, but in fact we're the ones that are moving the system forward. We're protecting prices for homeowners and for small business, and we're making sure that we have an electricity system that works for all Albertans whereas they would cause the collapse of the entire system, had we not stepped in.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Student Test Results Reporting

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a former educator I understand the complexity of assessing the trends of diploma exam results. However, I have a relatively simple question for the Minister of Education. Minister, do you believe that reporting the test scores and aggregate academic success of Alberta's various schools plays an important role in holding the entire system accountable to ensure that our children receive the best possible education?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you know, we are currently engaged in a substantial development and reform of the curriculum in all subject areas and all grade levels, and of course when you're building new curriculum, you need to make sure that you're building assessment. You can't use the old assessment with new curriculum. Certainly, it's important to have assessment that gives you the information in terms of surety and so forth, and we did that. And you know what? We're going to assess the system, and we're going to find that putting that investment into education that we did over these last three budgets will result in a better

education for all of our students while this side of the House voted against that same budget, that had actually invested in education.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
First supplemental.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the provincial executive council of the Alberta Teachers' Association has asked ATA members to reaffirm a resolution asking your department to instruct media on how they should be reporting the results from province-wide achievement tests and given that Thursday is World Press Freedom Day, again to the minister: if passed by their members, will you follow the ATA's directive and tell the Alberta media how to do their jobs?

Mr. Eggen: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, last time I looked, myself and this government work for the people of Alberta, and we work for the children of the people of Alberta. We make investments in education for those children of the people of Alberta, and we will continue to do so. Over these last three years we have put in budgets – I'm so proud of our caucus – that funded for enrolment, for increases in education because education is growing, while these guys will choose to make massive cuts, laying off teachers, leaving kids in the lurch. I think I know which side I'm going to choose.

2:20

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that all public entities should strive for the highest levels of openness and transparency and given that for parents in Alberta to have full faith in our education system, they need to have confidence that all partners in the system are committed to these ideals, again to the minister: do you think this is an appropriate ask for the ATA to make of your government?

Mr. Eggen: Well, you know, once again, Mr. Speaker, we are, in fact, the government of Alberta here in the province of Alberta, and we are doing a very fine job in building and strengthening education across this province. We have more than 200 school projects, the biggest infrastructure build in the history of this province, and we are making sure that we make the proper investments in education even during an economic downturn, making sacrifices in other areas to make sure our children get the very best education not just in this country but one of the very best education systems on the entire planet.

Carbon Policy Economic Impacts

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, during Economic Development and Trade's estimates I asked the minister if his department had completed an economic impact study prior to shutting down coal-fired electricity. The answer was obtuse, and he chose to deflect blame on the previous government. I would like to ask him again for the record if he or any of the government departments did an economic study of the impacts of shutting down coal-fired plants prior to enacting their crippling carbon tax.

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll thank the member for the question. Let's take a little stroll down memory lane. Back in 2012, when Stephen Harper was the Prime Minister of the country, the Leader of the Official Opposition was one of his

cabinet ministers. They brought forward regulations that would close 12 of 18 coal-fired facilities in Alberta. Guess what? They had no plan for a transition, no supports for the community members or workers, and no supports for the communities. I'm very proud of the work our government has done. We have the backs of workers and families and communities, and I'd be proud to expound on that answer shortly.

Mr. Taylor: It sounds like a stroll down fantasy lane. No answer.

Given that no study was undertaken by this government and given that simply blaming the previous federal government is just a cop-out to deflect from this government's short-sightedness, Minister, will you commit here and now that prior to the increases of punitive carbon tax, such as the 67 per cent increase proposed by Justin Trudeau, you will undertake a fulsome economic impact study and publicly release it?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud of the work that we've been doing with communities and workers. I'm proud of the work the Minister of Labour has done introducing a fund of \$40 million to help workers transition, whether that's transition to retirement, whether that's education or retraining, because the world is transitioning away from coal. We have laid out a plan very clearly to 2030 that provides the opportunity for our power companies to phase out coal or convert to natural gas. The reason that those plants are able to convert is because of the work that this government and the Minister of Environment and Parks have done, because the previous government wouldn't even allow . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Taylor: Well, we still have a massive PPA settlement to have to deal with.

Given that we now know that this government has plans to use any surplus money derived from their federal pal Justin Trudeau's punitive carbon tax to help pay down the debt this government has racked up, Minister, will this government finally admit that using money from consumers to pay down debt and to bankroll their green slush fund is simply a backdoor PST and in no way a levy, as they claim?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know what? I'm proud of our climate leadership plan, the fact that that plan has led to the approval of the Trans Mountain pipeline, that our government has worked diligently – and we'll ensure that that pipeline gets built. We've said it time and time again. The opposition has heard the Premier speak to this. The opposition would roll back our climate leadership plan, jeopardize this pipeline. It would throw away the green line in Calgary. I'd love for the Leader of the Opposition to explain that to the city of Calgary, that their green line will no longer be funded if they become government. I wonder what other projects would be cancelled around the province if the Official Opposition were ever government.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

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

Naloxone Kit Availability

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The AHS website says: "Naloxone kits are available free of charge to anyone at risk of opioid overdose . . . If you get a kit at a community walk-in clinic

or Pharmacy you do not need ID or a prescription." I've spoken to someone who last week had trouble getting a kit at one pharmacy that wanted ID and approval but had no problems at another pharmacy that didn't require these things. To the Minister of Health: what steps have been taken to ensure that all pharmacy staff across the province are trained to consistently issue naloxone kits without ID or prescription?

The Speaker: The hon. Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the very important question. I'm really proud of the work that our government has done to make naloxone kits free and available across the province through harm reduction agencies, through family medical practices, and through pharmacies. We are working with the College of Pharmacists in particular to make sure that the message is clear with their membership that any time that any Albertan walks in to a pharmacy and requests a kit, they are given one free of charge. It is up to that individual whether or not they wish to leave their name with the pharmacist, but those kits are available. I'd be happy to follow up with the member about the specifics.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Ms McPherson: Given that the purpose of supplying naloxone is to save lives and given that naloxone is proven to buy crucial minutes in the case of an opioid overdose, to the minister: what metrics are being collected to ensure that the naloxone program is saving as many people as possible from overdose, and how is the program ensuring that people aren't being excluded?

The Speaker: The associate minister.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I think the best way that we can make sure that people aren't excluded from access to naloxone kits is to make those free of charge and as widely available as possible. To date, we've given out more than 49,000 naloxone kits across the province. We're working with partners in the nightclub and entertainment industry on how they can support their staff and other workers in diverse industries who might be at risk of seeing someone who's at risk of an overdose so that there's that widespread accessibility of those kits across our province so that if they're needed in an emergency, they are available.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Ms McPherson: Given that thousands of people use public transit and services such as taxis and ride sharing every day and given that these modes of transportation can often be the way to get help in the case of an overdose, the question is: if the naloxone kit program is to have the intended effect of saving as many people as possible from dying of opioid overdose, will you work with local transit authorities and taxi commissions across Alberta to ensure that naloxone is available on trains, buses, and in taxis?

Ms Payne: Thank you to the member for the important question. That's a great suggestion. We are working on a number of fronts in that respect, and I'll make sure to raise it with the commission. But I would ask that the hon. member maybe raise the issue with the leader of her party, who, when he was Health minister, declined \$1.4 million in no-strings-attached grant funding from the federal government at a time when one Albertan a day was dying in the overdose crisis.

Southern Alberta Flooding

Mr. Schneider: Mr. Speaker, this year's flooding is not a new occurrence in southern Alberta. Now, several of my colleagues have had overland flooding in their constituencies, including First Nations land. In 2013 the Siksika Nation experienced some destructive flooding and spent upwards of \$4.5 million to fix needed roads and other infrastructure without reimbursement to date, and of course they're battling flooding now. What Chief Weasel Child asked me is: what has the Alberta minister of indigenous affairs done to help his band recoup those expenses from whichever federal agency is responsible? Sir, have you advocated for Siksika Nation in this regard?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We've been working very closely with Siksika band to ensure that the build that was required subsequent to the 2013 flood did proceed ahead. Unfortunately, the previous government made some terrible mistakes in terms of declaring that people could build back in the flood plain if they chose to do so, and that resulted in some delays in the move from the flood plain up onto the hill, which has now been completed. Now we are on track to fix something that they left broken.

Mr. Schneider: Given that numerous counties and MDs have now experienced spring overland flooding and given that many local states of emergency have been declared, I have a follow-up for the government ministers. Yesterday the Minister of Municipal Affairs stated, "We do have some programs through us in Municipal Affairs, which are the disaster relief programs, which come after." My municipalities have road and irrigation infrastructure and bridge destruction. Can you tell me or get back to me with what programs are available specifically, and are these all programs that reimburse for cleanup and repair costs after the fact?

2:30

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the very, very good question. You know, without a doubt, the unseasonably cold spring and the unseasonably warm temperatures – they got 50 per cent more snow than they usually get in southern Alberta – have caused some hardships for families and communities. We as a government recognize this, and we'll do whatever we can to ensure that the systems are in place, as they have been, to ensure that the assistance that they get will be there.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Schneider: I appreciate that, Minister.

Now, given that flooding claims can be a little dicey when it comes to homeowners dealing with insurance claims and given that dealing with insurance recovery can be a long and stressful process, Minister, what recourse do these community members have if their insurance is inadequate, nonexistent, or simply their claim is refused? What recourse do they have for an event for which they are not at fault and can't be reasonably expected to control?

Ms Hoffman: You know, I'll be really happy to get back to the member about specific questions around insurance, but I have to point out the fact that here we are standing in our Chamber, where they just voted mere days ago against a budget that allowed for increased investment in these areas to protect Alberta families. I have to point out the fact that I feel like the contrast couldn't be

more stark, Mr. Speaker. You guys need to decide which side of your mouth you want to speak out of because, really, nobody can understand what you're saying because you're not speaking straight with Albertans. Time is up. Tell us what your plan is, and tell us where you want to see the cuts so that you can increase these investments. I have a pretty good feeling it's teachers and nurses.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Motor Vehicle Registry System

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has the weakest vehicle registry system in Canada and the highest level of auto thefts. It is a system built on trust, where untrustworthy people steal, sell, and transfer autos illegally. This weak registry system promotes criminal activity. While people should act responsibly and lock their valuables, the government must do their part and protect the registry system. Minister, your part is to act responsibly and fix the registry rules. What is your plan, and when will we see it?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member for the question. Obviously, registry agents are very much on the agenda for Service Alberta. They play a very important role in delivering a wide array of services, and we are constantly looking at how to make that product better. It's an important part of the job we do, and we know that as we go into the future, we have that on our agenda while the Conservatives would just give tax breaks to their rich friends. Our priorities are helping to improve systems. Theirs are helping to give breaks to their friends.

Mr. Orr: Given that constituents in Lacombe-Ponoka are concerned that in Alberta no proof of ID is needed to buy or sell a vehicle – a simple handwritten bill of sale exchanged on the street or fabricated is all that's needed – and given that you can register a car with that and that no one confirms the VIN or verifies the vehicle even exists and given that criminals steal and sell vehicles to auto wreckers with false or even no ID, why is no proof of ID required to buy or sell a vehicle? Are you going to change that going forward, and if not, why not?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hope that what I'm hearing is not advocating for more red tape, but I'm assuming it isn't. Moving on, certainly always happy to take suggestions forward to Service Alberta, and we would be happy to make sure we look into the member's concerns.

Mr. Orr: It's advocating to clean up the criminal activity.

Given that scrapyards or auto wreckers are on the honour system to check the VIN of an auto to see if it is stolen before buying and demolishing it – the reported vehicle just disappears – and given that the police can't track it and given that a simple change to always require the VIN to be searched and recorded would help police, Minister, this requires your leadership. Will you require the VIN to be searched and recorded every time a vehicle is sold to a scrap dealer?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member. You know how we reduce crime? We don't vote against budgets to help deal with crime in this province. So I would say that if you're really intent on helping deal with crime, whether it's rural or

whether it has to do with vehicles, you would not vote down a budget to increase supports to those areas. Just a suggestion, Member.

Thank you.

Electric Power System Oversight

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, the NDP Whac-A-Mole electricity policies keep driving up power bills, and these changes are being done without key people in charge of key institutions. The watchdog, the Market Surveillance Administrator, still does not have a permanent head seven months after the last one left. Does the minister think that the government will get off the hook when mistakes are made implementing their ideological policies without the watchdog in place?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I take issue with the member's characterization of the government's policies. They're very practical policies. They're designed to make sure that we have reliable electricity prices, and those prices are capped to protect consumers, whether they're homeowners or small businesses. This government is in fact following a very, very sensible approach to electricity regulation.

With respect to the appointment of the oversight, Mr. Speaker, there is a process in place, and it is being followed.

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, given that the Balancing Pool's CEO, Bruce Roberts, left the same day we debated this year's Energy budget estimates and given that the power purchasing agreement debacle had also triggered the departure of the previous CEO and numerous board members, can the minister elaborate on why he can't keep the leadership of the Balancing Pool in place? Would it have something to do with the NDP government's political interference in voice mode?

Mr. Mason: Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member throws around allegations and conspiracy theories. You know, pretty soon I think we're going to be talking about whether or not aliens are driving up prices for the electricity system. In actual fact, the relationships that he's trying to forge between different events are in his own mind and don't represent the fact that the government is on the right track in making sure that we put our electricity system back on track and protect consumers. That's what we're doing.

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, given that the Alberta Electric System Operator has to prepare the provisional rules for the capacity market and given that the Alberta Utilities Commission has to adopt those provincial rules being prepared, to the Minister of Energy: does the pending retirement of Willie Grieve, chair of the Alberta Utilities Commission, impact the timelines for implementing the capacity market?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll be glad to look into this in a little more detail and get back to the member with some specifics, but I want to suggest to you that the government's program with electricity and implementing the capacity market does not depend on one individual. It's a government policy. It's being implemented by many, many very qualified professionals in our system. I don't expect that there will be any effect on the timelines.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Agriculture and Forestry Minister's Trade Mission to India

Mr. Rosendahl: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Every member on this side of the House understands the importance of trade missions. Building relationships is the way to open markets and building a diversified marketplace. To the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry: can you inform this Assembly of the goals of your most recent trade mission to India?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. This past winter I travelled to India in order to promote the high-quality products that Alberta produces and that India consumers value. The India market holds vast potential for Alberta agriculture, particularly in the areas of pulses, pork, and canola oil but also food processing, fibres, irrigation, and machinery. There may also be opportunities for Alberta's forestry sector as Meghalaya is a major grower of soft- and hardwoods and would benefit from Alberta's knowledge.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Rosendahl: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: were the goals of this mission accomplished?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. This mission has helped further establish Alberta as a significant producer of high-quality agriculture and agrifood products as well as a partner in research and technology. Alberta has renewed and expanded its MOU with Meghalaya to cover co-operation in all agriculture areas. The West Bengal government is interested in partnering with Alberta to develop their pork industry. Throughout Pulses Conclave as well as during meetings with state governments I was able to highlight Alberta's favourable investment climate and address issues of pulse tariffs and fumigation.

2:40

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Rosendahl: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: can you elaborate on the MOU and the incoming missions?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. The MOU will see the creation of the Meghalaya-Alberta centre of excellence for piggery, creation of a Meghalaya-Alberta agriculture working group, and the creation of a strategic plan to articulate and guide specific activities. The MOU also reinforces the relationship between the two regions, which will help identify existing trade barriers and advocate for a reduction to these barriers. As well, the MOU provides incentive for continuing targeted and focused reciprocal visits.

Members' Statements (continued)

Rural Crime Prevention

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, a few weeks back an incident occurred in the small rural community of Chauvin, Alberta. A group of

approximately six or so men and women were suspected of committing property theft throughout the small town. A group of citizens had noticed some suspicious activity near some vehicles at around 6:30 a.m. Using WhatsApp, members started relaying their suspicions throughout the town and calling the police.

Eventually the group was spotted again. They had succeeded in convincing a town local to give several of them a ride to Lloydminster. Noticing this, several dozen locals surrounded the vehicle, telling their oblivious friend to exit the vehicle and take out the keys as they had doubts that he would have ever reached Lloydminster. After several of the males inside tried to leave the vehicle and dump some of what they suspected were stolen items, they became aggressive and tried to get physical with the locals. When that proved futile, they returned to the warm vehicle, and when the police arrived, they were apprehended.

Mr. Speaker, we don't condone vigilantism. This type of scenario is likely going to play out more and more as our government dithers on this important issue. Although the police have described this as a textbook example of community involvement done right, it could have gone very, very wrong for the unsuspecting citizen. While everything went right in the instance, I can't help but wonder: what if? That scares me.

We all know that the UCP have been bringing up this issue over and over, holding town halls and asking for emergency debates dating back to last year. The government has done little to help the immediate situation and has accused us of fearmongering.

Mr. Speaker, it's time to make Alberta safe from those that would prey on them. Know that the courts and the cops can do little to deter them under the current situation.

Notices of Motions

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

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the appropriate time I intend to move the following motion pursuant to Standing Order 42.

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government of Alberta to intervene in the government of Saskatchewan's reference to the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal concerning the constitutionality of the proposed federal Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act and oppose the federal government's attempts to impose a carbon tax on provinces.

I have the appropriate copies for the pages.

The Clerk: Tabling Returns and Reports.

Tablings to the Clerk.

An Hon. Member: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: You're actually in the wrong place. You should have done that before. This is Tablings to the Clerk. I'll allow it today. I need to remind members, though, that in the Routine it should have been before this time. Tablings were called for. I'm going to allow it.

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: Calgary-Foothills, you have something to table. Is that correct?

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of a press release from HSBC bank, who announced on April 20, 2018, that they are withdrawing from financing coal-fired power plants

globally. In addition, HSBC has pledged to not provide financial services for "new offshore oil and gas projects in the Arctic" and "new greenfield oil sands projects."

Mr. Speaker, I also rise to table five copies of HSBC's energy policy, which further clarifies that HSBC will no longer be providing financing for oil sands mines in situ or new pipelines dedicated to the oil sands sector. Mr. Speaker, HSBC is the second global financial institution to attack Alberta . . .

The Speaker: Keep it as a surprise for them to read.

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, it's time for Albertans to boycott this bank. Thank you.

The Speaker: The Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you for the opportunity to be able to table this. I made reference to this article in my question, and so I wanted to make sure that I tabled it today. The article is entitled Why Warren Buffet Is One of the Very Few Making Money off Alberta's Mostly Unprofitable Electric System. I have all of the copies.

The Speaker: Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During my question today I made reference to page 21, where it says that a surplus of \$3 billion would be needed for 25 years to pay off the expected debt by 2021, and I'd just like to table that.

The Speaker: I'd just remind members again that it's Tabling Returns and Reports, if you'd in the future use it at the right location.

I believe we have a point of order. The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Point of Order

Questions outside Government Responsibility

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to start my point of order referencing the second supplemental question from the Member for Edmonton-Decore. I'm going to start with the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, 2017. On page 497 there's a very, I think, important quote from Speaker James Jerome. It says, "If the essence of Parliament is Government accountability, then surely the essence of accountability is the Question Period in the Canadian House of Commons."

Now, the reason I quote that, Mr. Speaker, is that the role of private members in this Assembly is to hold the government accountable. When I explain to my constituents what quote, unquote, government is, I explain that it's the front bench of the Assembly, and each of us as private members, whether we're on the government side or whether we're on the opposition side, has a solemn duty to hold government to account. Their job as private members on the government side is not to hold the Official Opposition to account.

Now, I have no great affinity for the policies of the Official Opposition such as they are. I don't know many of them yet, but we'll leave that aside for another day. Regardless of that, Mr. Speaker, I will quote a couple of things here from *Beauchesne's*. If we go to section 410, "In 1986 the Speaker put forth views in light of . . . recent conditions and precedents" of what question period ought to be and the role of oral questions, of course noting that "time is scarce," section 410(3); 410(5), "The primary purpose of the Question Period is the seeking of information and calling the Government to account," and 401(10), "The subject matter of

questions must be within the collective responsibility of the Government and the individual responsibilities of Ministers.”

If I turn now, again, to *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, page 508, in talking about the principles and guidelines for oral questions it says here, chapter 11, page 508, “While there may be other purposes and ambitions involved in Question Period, its primary purpose must be the seeking of information from government and calling the government to account for its actions.”

I certainly could go on, Mr. Speaker, but at this point you’ll remember two occasions that I can recall very fondly, I will add. On December 5, 2016, you made a ruling on page 2281 of *Alberta Hansard* and again on page 1613 of *Alberta Hansard*, October 30, 2017, when I raised this issue of puffball questions. At the time you cautioned the government because those questions strayed into the territory of, let’s call it, exuberant celebration of the wonderful things that government is alleged to have done.

2:50

While you found at that time that there was no point of order because you, I think, rightly, much as I find puffball questions to be disagreeable, said that, you know, we ought to have the greatest possible latitude in asking questions in this House. I would agree with that, but if I look at *Erskine May*, 24th edition on page 363, subheading 13 – and I do think this is probably the essential point here given the question that Edmonton-Decore asked – it says: “Questions are out of order if they relate to opposition party policies rather than to the Government’s responsibilities.”

The question that was asked as the second supplemental by Edmonton-Decore was: Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell us what dastardly things would happen as a result of this Official Opposition’s policies, should we all have the tremendous misfortune of having them as our government? Now, that may not be a direct quote because I do not have the Blues in front of me, but I would suggest that was broadly, thematically what the member was asking. I would ask, please, that you find there is a point of order and that the government backbench refrain from asking such questions in the future.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Member, to the last quote that you indicated, what was the source?

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The source is *Erskine May, Parliamentary Practice*, 24th edition, page 363, subheading 13: “Questions are out of order if they relate to opposition party policies rather than to the Government’s responsibilities.”

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member put a great deal of effort there in researching his point of order. He might have saved himself the trouble. I’m glad that he understands the difference between questions that he considers puffballs, which are requests for information from the government, and questions which attempt to hold the opposition to account, which are clearly not in order.

Accordingly, the second supplemental is:

The opposition has put forward their own ideas on how to manage the economy. Can the economic development minister tell us what their plan would mean for Alberta jobs and workers?

This is clearly attempting to get the minister to comment on the policy of the opposition and is not a request for information with respect to government policy. Therefore, I concede the point of

order, and I will undertake to discuss this with our members and the staff that support them.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. I, too, thought the member had made a good case.

Motions under Standing Order 42

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

Federal Carbon Pricing

Mr. Nixon: On the 42, Mr. Speaker? Okay. Thank you.

Very briefly, Mr. Speaker, the reason we moved this motion is that the Saskatchewan reference raises an important question, and that is: can the federal government selectively impose a tax on one province but not on another based on whether or not they like the province’s climate plan?

Canada has constitutional divisions of powers, as you know, and this is a question of jurisdiction. Alberta has had a proud history of standing up for provincial jurisdiction. Former Premier Lougheed stood up for Alberta and fought for section 92A of the Constitution, which says that the province “may exclusively make laws in relation to . . . development, conservation and management of non-renewable natural resources.”

Now the current federal government is trying to impose a job-killing carbon tax on provinces, one that will have serious economic consequences. Alberta’s government shouldn’t just rubber-stamp this raised carbon tax that Alberta is imposing on us. Alberta was once a leader in standing up for provincial jurisdiction, and Alberta should once again be a leader. I call on all members of this House to support this motion and make that clear.

[Unanimous consent denied]

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

Bill 6

Gaming and Liquor Statutes Amendment Act, 2018

[Adjourned debate April 12: Ms Goehring]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: Are there any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-West

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I’d like to rise to speak to the second reading of Bill 6, Gaming and Liquor Statutes Amendment Act. The media is reporting that the Alberta gaming and liquor and cannabis commission has received about 450 applications to open a marijuana retail store so far in the province of Alberta, and the applications, of course, are still coming.

Bill 6 is the second phase of the government’s attempt to ensure it has laws in place for the legalization of marijuana. It is, however, a bit of a hodgepodge, Madam Speaker. The bill was brought in to deal with this oversight and the use and retail of the soon to be legal recreational drug. It includes marketing restrictions and enforcement as well as provisions to assist the commission in order to handle higher caseloads of appeals. Now, Bill 6 also fills in some holes in the act introduced during the last session, and as legalization comes closer and also when it becomes a reality, there is little doubt that we may see the government introduce other

amendments to the statutes to fill more holes that may be discovered. We hope that does not mean the government is simply writing legislation as quickly as it can to get it on the table. This, of course, is a very complex issue, and due diligence needs to take place.

This government claims that its top concern is, of course, the safety of children and public health, but in reading Bill 6 it is clear that this is not entirely true because the NDP has chosen for the most part to align its public consumption rules with tobacco rather than alcohol. At this point when marijuana does become legal, people will be able to walk down the road smoking marijuana unless, of course, municipalities come into play and they invoke some bylaw. Now, I've said before that you cannot, of course, walk down the road with a beer, but certainly the NDP have created modest rules for public consumption in regard to marijuana. That's why so many municipalities are scrambling to consult with their citizens to pass bylaws with stronger restrictions.

Now, in the end we'll see a patchwork of consumption rules around the province, making it hard for citizens to know if they can or cannot consume marijuana in public in any given place depending on the location and jurisdiction that they may be in, whether it's parks or festivals, and that goes, again, to something I've been talking about for a while, which has to do with consistency. We're not seeing that consistency throughout the province. Clearly, from my perception, the NDP appears to be fine with this. We in the Alberta United Conservative caucus have been trying to highlight this problem for months, and the NDP certainly have not listened to the words that we've been saying.

Now, Bill 6 does contain some positive enforcement sections, most particularly allowing prosecution based on evidence that a substance had an odour of cannabis or appeared to be labelled or packaged as cannabis. This section aligns with the rules of liquor. It means that peace officers can determine the presence of marijuana without having to go through a lab test, which would clearly be time consuming and potentially costly. When the federal government legalizes edible cannabis products, allowing officers to identify it through packaging and smell, this, of course, will prove very, very important. The addition of this section is the common-sense amendment, likely inadvertently left out of last fall's Bill 26, and will be important when enforcing the minor ticketed offences of youth possessing cannabis in proper transport in a vehicle and consumption in public in the restricted places identified, of course, in Bill 26, Madam Speaker.

Now, I just mentioned youth possessing cannabis, and that brings me to a question about possessing marijuana in schools. Albertans aged 18 and over can possess up to 30 grams of marijuana on their person. As you know, Madam Speaker, I mean, there are many kids that are in high schools that are the age of 18, so what does that mean for the schools? Bill 26 prohibits smoking or vaping on school property, but it does not deal with possession, so students aged 18 will be able to possess the marijuana. That, of course, in my opinion, is a concern.

3:00

Now, perhaps it is the intention of the province to leave it up to the school boards to make rules about bringing marijuana to school. What about consuming medical marijuana on school grounds by students or even staff? Are schools also dealing with this on an individual basis? I'll put those questions out there and hope that at some point the minister will be able to address them. You know, if it's a hole in the act that needs to be plugged, this of course is the time to do it.

There's a lot more that I, of course, can address in regard to Bill 6. I want to take a few moments to point out that it addresses the

need to amend a number of other acts, including the Drug-endangered Children Act. Now, under that current provision of this act, children cannot be exposed to any kind of indoor grow operation. Well, when cannabis is legalized, Albertans are to be allowed to grow up to four plants in a household as per federal legislation. If Bill 6 doesn't adjust the Drug-endangered Children Act, we would have a strange contradiction in law, and of course we would have conflict. Still, it's curious that one day indoor marijuana grow ops are deemed a serious danger to children and the next they will be allowed up to four plants, at least four plants – this is how the act reads – whereas children exposed to illegal manufacturing of drugs, indoor cannabis grow operations, et cetera, are victims of abuse. Well, we'll see if there are any further changes to the wording of the act as marijuana becomes more prevalent in the homes.

Now, this is not a criticism, of course, of Bill 6. I'm just pointing out that society is changing and is evolving, and the federal government's decision is to legalize this controlled substance.

Now, Alberta United Conservatives will continue, of course, to monitor marijuana use in our province and deal with the concerns as we can. We cannot take for granted that the laws enacted today prior to legalization will take care of all the issues that may arise. While this government has told us its priorities are children and public health, we want to see those assurances reflected in legislation.

Statistics Canada has released new data as early as yesterday that noted that Albertans are already using cannabis. In fact, our medical use is the highest per capita in the country, just here in Alberta. It will be interesting to see if these figures are also reflected in recreational use when marijuana is legalized. We certainly need to prepare for it, and I think, judging by Bill 26 and Bill 6, that we're likely to see the government bringing forward more bills in the future sessions as well. This, of course, as you know, Madam Speaker, is a very fluid and ongoing process.

Now, I do not discourage this government from doing this. If it doesn't get it right the first time or misses some aspects that need provincial laws, at least it appears willing to go back and plug those holes. That's always a good thing, Madam Speaker. Of course, the Alberta United Conservatives take this issue very seriously, and for that reason we want to work with the government of Alberta to make sure that our province has a cannabis framework that works for all Albertans.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, for your time.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I was kind of hoping that maybe we could have some 29(2)(a), but I guess that's not appropriate at this time.

I rise today to give my thoughts on Bill 6. Madam Speaker, you might remember a previous version of Bill 6 that caused quite a lot of consternation in this Chamber and outside for some extended time, but we're here today to talk about the Gaming and Liquor Statutes Amendment Act, 2018. [interjection] Yes, I'm hearing some comments from the government side saying that this is a different Bill 6. I'm quite aware that it is a different Bill 6, just to reiterate that. Hopefully this legislation won't be as contentious as that. To the members opposite on the government side, they may remember the fact that there were 1,800 Albertans on the Legislature steps to comment on that. I don't hear any voices from those people out there today, so obviously there is not this contention.

This act seems to be designed to primarily deal with the shortcomings of previous legislation, of the previously described Bill 26, An Act to Control and Regulate Cannabis. It deals with some unrelated regulatory changes that also fall under the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission. I guess that I should refer to that entity as the Alberta gaming and liquor and cannabis commission as that is one of the proposed changes, a change that makes absolute sense as it leaves no uncertainty about what government entity has the power when it comes to cannabis legislation and enforcement.

There are other aspects of this Bill 6 that make sense to me as well, Madam Speaker. While I personally am quite content with a cold glass of a beverage brewed with the freedom that Alberta farmers have to sell their barley to the marketer of their choice unreined by former federal legislation, and the acronym of that will not pass my lips. Just for the members opposite to realize, there are some 73 small private enterprises of small craft breweries created in the province because of the freedom of certain federal legislation and some of us who made certain commitments to achieve that. I understand the frustration that some other establishments experience when it comes to some of the more archaic rules governing the sale or production of alcohol here in Alberta.

Since I've mentioned beer, I'd like to start with the changes that will allow some home brewers and winemakers to actually go outside of their homes to make product for their own consumption. Prior to this change it was strictly, as the name implied, homebrewed. In some cases, some people used that product for gas-line antifreeze, but others drank it. Under this act homebrew fans can finally go to commercial breweries and in collaboration with other home brewers batch brew using those premises' professional equipment as long as the product is for personal consumption and in no way sold commercially. This puts us in line with numerous other jurisdictions that already allow this. It has been a long sought-after change by numerous homebrew guilds and will be a welcome change.

Another aspect that has been in other jurisdictions and has been discussed by frustrated staff and patrons is the change that will allow for the alteration of liquor products. This will mean that fans of the cocktail movement will be allowed to consume infused and premade cocktails at their favourite licensed establishments. This allows bartenders the freedom to infuse liquor with other flavours, barrel age some quantities of liquor, and premake some popular cocktails such as pitchers of sangria for the upcoming patio season. Once again, this will bring Alberta in line with other Canadian provinces.

While I have discussed primarily the changes of two liquor regulations, I want to point out that this act also closes a loophole in previous legislation that wasn't made clear. That was the question of commercial establishments allowing for the on-site consumption of cannabis. It was asked several times if the new regulation would allow the set-up of cannabis bars or vaping bars for cannabis use. This act closes that bit of ambiguity and makes it clear that this is prohibited.

Madam Speaker, not everything in this act is, at least in my view and humble opinion, completely positive. I understand that while this act has no immediate plans to allow for government markups on cannabis similar to that provided for alcohol in Alberta, I've been told that currently the medical market for cannabis is about \$10 a gram. Much of the talked-about benefits of legalization was to get rid of the black market and illegal sales of cannabis. My concern is that should government use markup as a cash flow similar to that placed on alcohol, we run the risk of prices rising above a sustainable market price, leaving the black market as a viable alternative. Similarly, I wonder about the rise of

interprovincial trafficking. Out there where I live, within six miles of the social experiment known as Saskatchewan, there are lots of back roads and there are lots of areas where various culpable products transmit across the border. I find it easy to say that some people find the price prohibitive in Alberta, bringing product in from neighbouring jurisdictions due to price and running afoul of our laws simply as a matter of economics. I hope this has been considered and accounted for.

3:10

Another concern I need to raise is with the new AGLC board structure. It will increase the board's size from seven to nine members. Now, to me, at least, that indicates that taking on cannabis as well as liquor and gaming may prove onerous. I have to mention that this section of the act will also extend the time frame of board hearings from 60 to 120 days. As the AGLC is also the enforcement arm of this act, I have concerns that businesses that may or may not run afoul of cannabis and liquor and gaming laws will have to wait that much longer, double the time, in fact, to get a board hearing. Madam Speaker, that's a bit concerning, and I hope that this gets dealt with in a timely manner as justice delayed is justice denied.

Madam Speaker, I understand that this act will come into effect once the federal government enacts its legislation. While I may be tempted to fault the government for not foreseeing these problems with their previous act, I can acknowledge it's a changing reality with the impending federal laws so that it won't come as a surprise if subsequent governments are compelled to make other modifications and regulatory changes to account for the unforeseen or unintended consequences.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm happy to speak to this bill today. The bill put forth today, the Gaming and Liquor Statutes Amendment Act, 2018, brings some valuable additions to the existing act that regulates cannabis. As legalization of cannabis is approaching, we will be analyzing more of the gaps in our system and discussing with stakeholders about how these regulations are affecting them and if there have been any unforeseen effects. As every decision made in this Chamber has a long-reaching impact on Albertan workers, employers, and families, we have a duty to consider how every decision in which we have a hand will affect the safety of Albertans moving forward. As legislators it is our responsibility to seek the input of those who our decisions affect and dig deeper to consider how effective, efficient, and helpful these bills are. We must prioritize the safety of the public and the health of our children and always work with this in mind.

Bill 6 is consistent with laws that currently have been governing the consumption of alcohol and tobacco in cases of minor ticket offences thus far. This bill allows for peace officers to determine the presence of marijuana through smell or packaging when they come across it illegally in the possession of youth or illegally transporting it in a vehicle and having this evidence be permissible in courts without the need for lab testing. This beneficial amendment will help the court system. Rather than seeing it clogged with challenges to minor public consumption offences, it will free the system to serve rightfully and more effectively in the manner to which it was intended. This specific point falls in line

with the spirit of legalization, and that is to allow the court system the ability to focus more thoroughly on all nonminor marijuana related challenges.

However, Madam Speaker, this bill will continue to show us that the NDP have chosen to mirror their public consumption laws with tobacco rather than alcohol, and that forces me to ask: have they considered how mimicking the tobacco laws will affect the public health? I can't help but wonder if that's not a little bit short sighted. When marijuana becomes legal and the consumption begins to be widespread, it will be up to municipalities to put in place a bylaw to restrict public smoking. Have Albertans been consulted and consented to being exposed to marijuana smoke in parks or walking down the street? How will this affect the children or an asthmatic? Has this effect been considered, and if so, why is this bill not reflective of the restrictions necessary to ensure that no Albertan must jeopardize their health or their family well-being for the choices of others?

I might take into account the smoking laws around, well, public smoking. We have to understand that when someone smokes marijuana, the smoke that comes out of it, that is exhaled, still has qualities of that drug as it floats in the air, and people can receive those inebriating effects just by inhaling that smoke. For many people that is not their thing. It is not their desire to be inebriated, and we have to be careful of such things. By leaving a blank space in this respect, we will have a patchwork of bylaws across the province not consistent with one another, causing confusion for citizens. Again, each municipality is going to try to address these issues of this second-hand smoke in their own way. Not only this, but it will make enforcement a challenge with inconsistencies that police must try to follow. It begs the question of why this difficulty was not considered and if the consultations were done properly.

Madam Speaker, another point I'd like to touch on is the sale of the cannabis. This area was vague in the bill, and it has left me with some questions. As per the bill "the board may, in accordance with the regulations, issue a cannabis licence that authorizes the sale of cannabis in a location where things other than cannabis accessories or prescribed things are sold." Assuming this means that the sale of marijuana will be permitted in rural Alberta locations that are not stand-alone locations, it strikes me as uneven, inconsistent, and unfair that businesses in cities are not being allowed the same relaxed rules as rural Alberta. If cities must abide by stricter regulations when performing the same job than they would have to do in rural Alberta, are we relaxing any sort of rules for these vendors? I would be intrigued to hear why different parts of the same province are having different rules applied to them once again.

These inconsistencies across the province are consistent with your government. You know, your wait times in Calgary are 10 months for a hip surgery versus seven months in Edmonton versus Medicine Hat. They're all over the place. In one province we have so much diversity, and it makes you wonder why in a centralized model we don't have consistent wait times, where they take best practices. In this case it is the same thing. It's about ensuring that there are best practices right through the entire province and not putting the burden of creation of bylaws on these municipalities, who have to spend a lot of time and effort on this.

Furthermore, the enabling regulations for this subsection are contingent upon demand. If the demand is apparent in cities, will the regulations be implemented there?

Madam Speaker, it seems that multiple aspects of this bill have called for uneven distribution of legislation across the province, but in terms of bylaws and subsections being enacted in various parts of Alberta, although I support the notion of ensuring Albertans' health and safety with the upcoming legalization of marijuana, I

fear that the bill might create as many problems as it solves. We want this legislation to take a look at what the most common and imminent challenges will be and create effective solutions.

As such, I'm cautiously optimistic that we are on the right track, but we will need to keep a watchful eye on what comes up as legalization rolls out. It is inevitable that unforeseen obstacles will arise, and we will be closely listening to families, ensuring that they have their voices heard in the direction of their province.

Now, another topic I wish to touch upon, still following on sales, is the AGLC, the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission. Inherently there will be increase in workload for the board once marijuana is legalized. With this legislation we can see that they are preparing for an influx of additional work to oversee cannabis sales. Expanding its mandate is not without cost. It seems that the unforeseen costs of legalization are already piling up. The AGLC board will be increased from seven to nine members, and that's reasonable under the circumstances. However, the time frame for the board to hold hearings is also increasing quite dramatically, doubling from 60 to 100 hearings.

I suppose this is a mere indication of how much work they will be taking on with the legalized cannabis sales. It would be a challenge for the board to predict the incipient work upon the beginning of legislation, and we will be closely monitoring the level to which they are equipped to handle this unprecedented territory. I'm certain that as legislators we are prepared to adapt and mould the legislation to address the specific difficulties we see in our jurisdiction and not stick to a one-size-fits-all model. Nevertheless, we will be determining that as this legislation proceeds.

3:20

Madam Speaker, another section of this bill goes to reinforce its similarities with tobacco legislation. A previous bill, Bill 26, included a restriction on individuals smoking in businesses. However, that bill failed to implement anything regarding the responsibility of the business itself to prevent this from occurring. Bill 6 fixes this gap by placing the onus on the business, and with this bill the responsibility will be placed on the business to ensure that people are not allowed to smoke or vape on their premises. A beneficial section, it will ensure that enforcement of laws is understood and the responsibility of every party involved as well. This was an important change to make as it emphasizes that we must all stay vigilant to uphold the law.

Madam Speaker, part of the preparation to the upcoming legalization of cannabis is ensuring that our existing legislation is updated to reflect the upcoming needs of Albertans. I'm glad to see that this bill also updates some existing regulations to stay in tune with our province's new direction. One of the updated bills is the Drug-endangered Children Act. Whereas households will soon contain marijuana plants, this legislation has a provision that allows children to be in the same premises as where four cannabis plants are being grown. It means that any premises that has more than four cannabis plants is considered a grow op, and it's still considered an offence for a child to be in the presence of one.

Now, although this bill has included provisions to reflect upcoming legislation, I wonder if the safety of children was considered, especially in the case of young children, who like to get their hands on anything within reach. Does this clause have the potential to jeopardize their safety? We will need to look closely and to monitor the feedback not only from Albertan families on this but, again, also with law enforcement that will likely be involved if this amendment causes a situation to arise where a child's health and well-being go awry.

Bill 6 also contains a couple of additions unrelated to marijuana legalization. One of these that I believe will be interesting to see in

action is allowing you brews and establishments to alter liquor products. This could be in terms of premixing cocktails, adding flavouring, infusing food with liquor, and creating barrel-aged liquor. This surely will cause a lot of excitement in some sectors but also concern with ensuring the safety of the public. When mixing drinks there's a challenge in ensuring proper quality control. This could cause some worry in the public on the safety of the drinks themselves such as in respect to questionable alcohol content. However, this bill doesn't clarify that no retailer may alter marijuana products in the way that this bill allows for alcohol drinks to be altered.

Madam Speaker, I wonder about marijuana in schools. I wonder about how it coincides with the tobacco laws. If I understand correctly, I mean, a minor can have cigarettes on them – a teacher can't do anything about it – as long as they smoke these cigarettes off the grounds. But, you know, I can't help but wonder if kids are going to be bringing marijuana into the school with the intent of smoking it during lunchtime or something like that or, worse yet, even distributing it within the school. That's something that we have to consider, where we should be mimicking liquor laws, quite honestly. It is about consumption and possession, and that is something to consider for this government.

You know, I've read a lot of studies and you read a lot of the anecdotes, and there are a lot of people that think that they can, for example, operate a vehicle. My concern is still that a person is inebriated, and from my personal experiences as a paramedic I have great concerns around this. I mean, a lot of people say that marijuana is not nearly a harmful drug, and to their credit I've only done a couple of calls that dealt directly with marijuana. But it was the third call that really triggered me, that we have to address the lowest common denominator, Madam Speaker.

We had a fellow that came off night shift from whichever plant he worked at – this was several years ago now – and he was driving home. It looks like he might have ingested something. Whatever it was, he went off the road, and he sheared off a light standard, you know, the big light post on the side of the highway. I did not know a vehicle could take one of those down. I thought the vehicle would fold before the light standard did. But he took down the light post. It was one of the highway ones. It was a big one. Yeah, the guys saw that there was marijuana on the side seat. It's a pretty obvious conclusion that we can come to that he was inebriated from marijuana.

Again, when I hear all these people say that, yeah, these guys can drive, they can operate, they can do all sorts of things even while under the influence of marijuana, I have to go back to that one person that sheared a light standard. What if that wasn't a light standard? What if that was a sidewalk, and he went veering down it? We had a very bad experience in Toronto, where it was a deliberate action on their part, but there's nothing to say that someone couldn't experience that same event, where they're ingesting marijuana and then fall asleep, black out, whatever it is, lose his train of thought, and he's off the road.

Again, when we are looking at a lot of these laws and discussing these issues, we do have to address a lot of these things. I had someone say to me: well, Tany, how can you address the laws for that one single person?

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to just have the member kind of continue on there. It seemed like he was in the middle of, you know, his thoughts and comments. I thought it was

very interesting to bring a little more personal story to this bill and these actions, legalizing cannabis, and some of the dangers and the problems that we could see. I think it's good that we have some of those stories told so we can have that opportunity to reflect.

You know, legislation like this is necessary legislation. The federal government is passing this into legislation, passing into law that it will be legal, so we have to do something. As we go forward here, we need to have this open discussion with the government on Bill 6 and how it's going to affect people in Alberta and how it's going to affect how cannabis is distributed in Alberta and how it affects our families, our communities, and that sort of thing.

Yeah, I'd like to hear the member continue on.

Mr. Yao: Why, thank you, my good man. Madam Speaker, this is a serious issue, so we must discuss this thoroughly. Again, it is about that lowest common denominator, that person that can't handle their inebriation or takes it too far and operates machinery. They operate a vehicle, and they could hurt or impair somebody. It's sad that we have to address that one person, if you will, or that very few.

We have to recognize that all of our laws surround very few people that would actually commit such a thing, whether it was murder – I mean, in an ideal world no one here wants to murder each other, but there's always one. There's always one that would go over the edge and push those limits. That's why we have those laws, that someone cannot murder that other person. And we have to consider that when we are doing such laws that deal with inebriation and with marijuana consumption and how it's slightly differently from cigarettes and how it deals differently from alcohol.

Madam Speaker, I cautiously support this bill in filling the gaps that the upcoming legalization of marijuana will create. But I do want to reiterate that the lack of foresight has created a situation where municipalities will be forced to create bylaws, thus causing a patchwork of legal oversight that causes nothing but confusion for Albertans and difficulty for law enforcement.

Many communities here in this province are covered by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and they are going to encounter, going from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, where the laws might be slightly different based on the consumption of marijuana. The government could do the proper thing and make sure a lot of these laws are standardized and that this province, which is bringing this in, is leading the way in ensuring that municipalities don't have to invest more time and money than they have to and not recreate the wheel but allow some sort of standardized laws to be put in place.

3:30

There's still a lot of work to do, and we are off to a good foundation in terms of legal framework in anticipation of the legalization of cannabis. However, again, we do have to stay vigilant, we have to seek feedback, and we have to consult. You guys are learning consultation, and that is a good thing. Thank goodness you're taking lessons from us. We will continue to help you with that consultation.

Mr. Mason: What have you been smoking?

Mr. Yao: Oh, my goodness. The Minister of Transportation's accusations over here are really disappointing, Madam Speaker. He may think he's quick witted.

Again, we have to stay vigilant because of people who might take this a little bit lighter. It is a very serious issue. I truly recommend that all members of this House look into all these aspects and truly consider it and the implications of such things. I mean, the good news is that we can look internationally and see some places where

a lot of this has succeeded and there have been no major incidents. We consider Canberra in Australia. That's the capital city, so their Ottawa. They put a border around that city, made it its own state, and they legalized it many, many years ago in Canberra, Australia.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise to speak to Bill 6, Gaming and Liquor Statutes Amendment Act, 2018. As mentioned, it proposes to amend both An Act to Control and Regulate Cannabis, still awaiting proclamation, and the Gaming and Liquor Act to help prepare the province for the impending legalization of cannabis, coming sometime this year I think is all we can say, perhaps in the fall. The legislation builds on the two previous cannabis-related bills and An Act to Reduce Cannabis and Alcohol Impaired Driving. A large focus of this bill is on granting the renamed Alberta gaming, liquor, and cannabis commission new tools to oversee and enforce the province's fledgling cannabis market. The bill also proposes consequential amendments to the Conflicts of Interest Act, the Corrections Act, the Drug-endangered Children Act, the Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act, and the Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions Compensation Act.

The bill would prohibit cannabis retailers from naming themselves or employing signage, symbols, or graphics that are commonly associated with medicine, health, or pharmaceuticals, including, without limitation, the terms "pharmacy, dispensary, apothecary, drug store, medicine, medicinal, health, therapeutic or clinic." This is important, I think. These are not pharmacists that are dispensing this, they're not physicians necessarily, and it's important that people understand that this is not under the aegis of a health professional.

The act will empower the gaming, liquor, and cannabis commission to make policies respecting the advertising, display, and promotion of cannabis and cannabis accessories. It will also prohibit cannabis retailers or any employee or agent from altering in any way or permitting others to alter in any way cannabis that is offered for sale at licensed premises. The importance is obvious. Part of the problem today is that people don't know what they're buying. It may or may not be pure. It may or may not be the strength that is advertised or promoted by the individual pushing the drug. We're seeing already signs that in some cases it's cut with fentanyl and ending up with tragic results.

This act would also make it an offence for the owner or operator of a premise to allow smoking or vaping where it's expressly prohibited and currently anywhere that's not allowing smoking. This enables enforcement against the owner or operator of a premise similar to those existing for alcohol and tobacco. Eminently sensible. It also permits a court to rely on a law enforcement officer's ability to infer that a product is cannabis based on its packaging, labelling, and smell for the purposes of dealing with offences under the act, mirroring the current practice for alcohol and tobacco.

This act authorizes the Alberta gaming, liquor, and cannabis commission to destroy or dispose of or order cannabis retailers to destroy or dispose of cannabis that is returned or otherwise deemed unsaleable or unsafe.

Finally, under the Gaming and Liquor Act this enables bars to blend or infuse alcohol with flavouring to create store specialty drinks. Such drinks, however, cannot be infused with cannabis, appropriately. The combination of these two drugs is not well

researched. It's certainly expected to cause more impairment and should never be allowed.

The act also permits adults to make their own wine, cider, or beer up to a quantity permitted under the regulations in places licensed for that purpose or in the adult's own home.

It increases the maximum administrative fines for infraction of the Gaming and Liquor Act and regulations from \$200,000 to \$1 million.

Madam Speaker, it's estimated that approximately 250 private retail cannabis shops will be operating in Alberta after the federal government legalizes cannabis on or about July 1 of this year. You-brew operations currently exist in seven other provinces. The Alberta government has opted for private bricks and mortar cannabis stores and public online sales. About 60 Alberta communities have combined liquor-grocery stores, but provincial officials expect online sales to cover much of the cannabis demand in remote locations.

Budget 2018 projected a \$90 million loss to the provincial government over the next two years while the fledgling cannabis industry is set up in Alberta. I hope that reflects the fact that we're going to try to keep taxes as low as possible to undercut the black market. That's very appropriate and responsible, in my view. Let's find out how it works in the first two years and see what's possible in terms of return on investment. Hopefully, that return on investment will go into mental health and addictions support services. In 2021 the cannabis industry is estimated to generate a profit of about \$37 million, so not a big cash cow as some have anticipated.

As a physician I support the naming and branding restrictions that Bill 6 seeks to impose on recreational cannabis retailers. These licensees are clearly not pharmacists, and to allow them to suggest that they're offering anything in the way of health care and medicine would be outrageous and unacceptable.

I also support any and all efforts to make cannabis unattractive to young people. In keeping with the recommendations of the Canadian Paediatric Society and the Canadian Medical Association, anyone under the age of 25 is probably playing a risky game if they're using cannabis on a regular basis or even a semiregular basis. There's growing evidence that there's no safe dose of cannabis in a developing child's brain, a youth's brain, and it has all kinds of negative impacts where it's being used in the young, developing brain, not least of which is an addiction potential or, certainly, a dependency potential.

I still think that the government has missed the boat by establishing 18 years as the minimum age. I think there's lots of evidence that this is not safe under the age of 25. I would have preferred 21, as I've argued in this House. Recognizing that alcohol and tobacco are legal at 18, I think we could have made the cannabis legal age 21. For those majority of young people that try to follow the law, it would have delayed some young people's access to and use of the drug.

3:40

In relation to allowing the court to rely on a law enforcement officer's ability to infer that the product is cannabis, I think we have to rely on increasing investment and research to help define what impairment looks like, to help define what tests – whether it's a spit test, blood test, or behavioural measures – can be used to help us keep our streets safe and keep people driving heavy machinery or on the roads out of harm's way. I think it behooves, I guess, all of us as citizens to identify signs of impairment, to confront it, to refer it, and to indeed challenge those who might be impaired. And the definition of impairment means that people don't necessarily recognize they're impaired. If your senses are impaired, if your

mental functions are impaired, it by definition means that you're not necessarily able to identify that impairment by virtue of the impairment itself.

I'm very pleased to support this bill. I don't have any other particular amendments apart from those concerns I have about age. I dare say that while people complain that this is going too quickly, my strong argument is that it is high time we got this out of criminal hands, stopped the criminal convictions, standardized the doses so that people know what they're dealing with, treated it like alcohol and tobacco, which cause much more damage than cannabis in any of the research that I've read, and that indeed we come to grips with the rules around that, which we wouldn't necessarily do unless it was becoming legal. You set a date when it's going to become legal, and you work towards that. Everybody redoubles their efforts when they realize that the time is getting shorter and shorter, and we actually get serious attention to an issue that I think is long overdue in being attended to.

As many know, Canadian youth are the highest users of cannabis of any population, that I'm aware of, per capita. For whatever reason, Canadian youth are interested in and are using cannabis, and we need to have in place some good, strong guidelines, standards, limited advertising and promotion, and ensure that we do this as well as we can given that it has both positive and negative impacts.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd just like to speak today on Bill 6, the Gaming and Liquor Statutes Amendment Act, 2018. Obviously, it's a good thing to see Bill 6 because it closes some of the holes in Bill 26, and it amends the Gaming and Liquor Act. It does, you know, amend some of the other acts, too, in small ways. I guess in that respect, it's good to see this bill come forward to close some of those holes that were left in the last one, and it's good to see the government working to make sure that these things are done and that they are trying to fix things that maybe were missed in the first go-around.

Now, of course, this is kind of a companion piece to last fall's Bill 26, An Act to Control and Regulate Cannabis. Again, it's good to see this coming forward and getting some of these other things taken care of. There are still concerns, of course, with this bill. There are, obviously, some other concerns with, you know, the speed at which the federal government has been working on this. Of course, we would like to on this side of the House kind of keep monitoring how this implementation goes forward, how the legalization comes forward from the federal government, and how that is going to affect Albertans and stakeholders and the public at large.

Of course, paramount is public safety and the health of children. That needs to be our priority here as we look at these different things that come before us and how we can deal with them. It makes me think of the situation with impaired driving and how, when it comes to cannabis, there really hasn't been anything that's really solid as far as some way to test, you know, the driving on the street when the police stop a driver. That's obviously a big concern.

I remember reading in the past year that somebody had done a study on THC levels and how it affects impairment. It was interesting to see that in that particular study – of course, I'm sure there are lots of studies out there – the THC levels didn't necessarily match the impairment level. In fact, I remember that one was ahead of the other in kind of a curve going up, and then the other one

followed. When we look at things like that and think how complicated this is going to be for roadside testing and even testing once you get somebody to the police station and have lab work done, it's going to create a lot of problems until this gets all sorted out, especially if the main way that you would think that we'd be using to test it may not fully capture the actual impairment of the individual. When you see situations like that and studies like that, it makes you wonder if this was maybe done just a little too quickly without figuring out all the details first. That's probably one of my greatest concerns, how that's going to affect public safety, especially on the roads.

Now, one thing Bill 6 does do is allow police officers to determine the presence of marijuana through smell or packaging when they come upon people that are smoking it illegally or maybe youth possessing it or illegally transporting it or anything like that. That's similar to alcohol in similar situations as far as the peace officers having a little bit of an opportunity to use their discretion and determine what it looks like. If it looks like it, then it gives them the opportunity to investigate further, and this evidence will be acceptable in the courts without the need for lab testing. You know, I guess we have to have a certain amount of leeway for our officers and their discretion to deal with this as they come across it in the streets and in vehicles. This is consistent with the laws for alcohol, like I said, and in cases of minor ticketed offences.

Now, we do want to make sure that the courts don't get clogged with challenges to minor public consumption offences and stuff like that. I mean, obviously, all issues of criminality need to be dealt with, and they need to be dealt with properly, but we don't need to clog up our court system with things that just don't make sense to do so. Obviously, we have a situation in our court system right now where we seem to be running out of resources to take care of criminals. We've even seen recently where hardened criminals had to be let loose because we didn't have enough resources in our courts to take care of them properly or the resources were misguided or put in the wrong area. So there are problems there, and obviously with minor offences we need to make sure that they don't take up time that is better used on something else.

Probably one of the most controversial things to me – when I talk to people in my constituency about this, it's one of their biggest concerns, too – is that it only makes sense that cannabis is treated the same as tobacco as far as where it's smoked in buildings and close to entrances of buildings and that sort of thing, but the government has chosen not to make it the same as alcohol as far as public consumption and everything. I think that's one concern that I've heard in my constituency quite a bit.

This is about protecting public health and keeping our streets safe and our public areas safe. You know, it's not legal to walk down the streets or be in a park consuming alcohol, but of course now we have the situation here where it's legal to do so with marijuana. Obviously, if we treat it the same as alcohol when it comes to transporting it, driving under the influence, and that sort of thing, I would think it would make sense – like I say, one of the concerns that I've had expressed to me is that it would be treated the same as far as the public areas. I don't know if the public really expects that people can be in a playground, a public park, or whatever, using marijuana. The people that I've talked to have said that that doesn't make sense to them.

3:50

Of course, what that'll do is cause the municipalities to make their own rules in those regards, so it puts the onus on the municipality to do some of these things that with alcohol they don't have to. If you've got different municipalities across the province, you know, different MDs, counties, towns, cities, whatever, making

different rules for the consumption of marijuana in public places, then when Albertans travel to different places, they'll have to be guessing. I'm not sure how it'll be signed or whatever. It could be a little confusing to them to try to decide: "Okay. Am I allowed to do this, or am I not allowed to do this?" Or if they see somebody else doing it and they're from a community where that's not allowed, they're going to go over and say, "What are you doing?" and it could be perfectly legal there. You have a lot of situations that could happen when the onus on this is put on the municipalities to make rules.

Now, what it'll do is that with this kind of open consumption idea, it doesn't matter where Albertans go; they're going to be exposed to this everywhere. Again, it's not so with alcohol consumption. Many of the people that I talk to think it should be likewise with marijuana. Of course, by having kind of a patchwork of rules that different municipalities and towns and cities might have, it could be challenging for police to enforce, too. I mean, everybody will have an excuse. It's like: "Well, you know, I can do it in the other town. Why can't I do it in this town?"

Another thing that Bill 6 does is that it opens the door to permitting cannabis sales in existing businesses such as a separate section of a rural general store in communities too small to support a stand-alone cannabis store, which is similar to liquor sales. I guess the idea is to allow some form of retail sale for marijuana in rural Alberta rather than solely through online systems. When we get into this part of the bill, it just seems a little bit vague and maybe not quite clear to me. Anyway, I'll just read from it. It's on page 2 of the bill.

(3) Despite subsection (1)(b), the board may, in accordance with the regulations, issue a cannabis licence that authorizes the sale of cannabis in a location where things other than cannabis accessories or prescribed things are sold.

I don't know. That paragraph there just doesn't make sense to me as far as, you know: "a location where things other than cannabis accessories or prescribed things are sold." I don't know if there needs to be something cleared up there as far as making it clear how that actually works with the legislation. That's one of the issues that I see in here, too.

Now, it adds a section to place the onus on a business not to allow people to smoke or vape on their premises. Bill 26 included restrictions on people smoking in businesses, but it failed to include the responsibility of businesses, which is consistent with tobacco. So the onus is on the business to make sure that this doesn't happen on their premises.

Now, Bill 6 amends a number of other sections in other acts such as the Drug-endangered Children Act. What it says in there basically is that any premise with more than four plants is still considered a grow op, and it remains an offence to allow a child to be present in one. That's another section that's changed, and I think that's obviously a good idea to have that in place.

The AGLC board, which provides oversight to liquor and soon cannabis sales, is seeing an increase in its membership from seven to nine, and the time frame for the board to hold hearings is being doubled to 120 days from 60. Obviously, it's going to create a little more work for that board. That only makes sense that there'll be some more help with that. Like I say, this adds a whole new level to the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission as far as what they have to do. Obviously, this longer time frame gives an idea of the volume of work that the board is expecting due to legalized cannabis sales. There's going to be quite a bit more work.

Of course, this is yet another cost, you know, to society, the legalization of marijuana. I mean, the federal government is putting this through, and it's up to us as legislators in Alberta to deal with this. I think it's important that we work on this and, I guess, keep

the communications open on this. As Albertans see this come into effect and everything, they're going to have ideas. They're going to see things that they don't like or that they do like about the system. Hopefully, we can react to those things and make better legislation.

Now, Bill 6 did include a couple of things that were unrelated to marijuana legalization. One of them is allowing you brews and establishments to alter liquor products such as premixing batches of cocktails, adding flavouring, infusing food with liquor, and creating barrel-aged liquor. Of course, that has nothing to do with marijuana legislation, but it's been included in this bill, too. Another thing is that altering liquor products, you know, prompts some public and consumer safety concerns due to quality control, questionable alcohol content of premixed and blended products. Obviously, there are a few concerns that could happen because of allowing the you brews to alter liquor products, so hopefully the government will have some regulations and everything will be in place to have a bit of control on that.

This bill makes it clear that no retailer can alter marijuana products, which is good to have that clarification.

You know, it just seems like we have to keep working as legislators in Alberta on this situation. Again, the federal government is coming up with this. We have to deal with the regulations within Alberta and work with that.

Again, it seems like the biggest concern for me is the impaired driving and how the police are going to enforce that on the highways and be able to test for it and having something that we can have confidence in that that actually is working as far as when the police stop someone and they do a roadside test. You know, we need to have some confidence that what they're doing is working and that we know that when they do this roadside test, they'll be able to pull people off the road that are impaired, that are a danger to our streets and to our families on the highways. I think that's obviously one of the biggest concerns.

Then, of course, it seems like it might even be tough to properly gauge the impairment even once you bring somebody back to the station and have a proper test. Like I say, there are some studies out that would show that even a blood test may not be accurate as far as showing the effects of marijuana on the body and on the mind and on the ability of a person to drive and react properly in driving situations. With those kinds of difficulties it makes it tough to have confidence that we are going to be in a situation where the streets will be safe. Like I say, I just want to caution people on that.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak?

Mr. Nixon: Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the House for unanimous consent to revert quickly to introductions.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests (reversion)

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd just like to take the opportunity – and thank you to the House for your permission – to welcome Albert and Karen Kamps from my riding. Albert actually sits on the board of Alberta Milk and represents the dairy producers of Alberta. He just informed me a few minutes ago, too, that 12 per cent of the dairy production in the whole province is in my riding. I didn't know it was that much. I knew there was a lot of it. Anyway,

Albert and Karen also actually represent a large and very industrious Dutch community that lives in my riding as well. Welcome.

Also, I'd like to introduce my wife – she doesn't like me doing this, so I kind of snuck this in; I didn't tell her I was going to – my beautiful wife, who has stood by me for more years than I can count.

An Hon. Member: You should know.

Mr. Orr: I think it's 43.

If you could give them the warm welcome of the House. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Welcome.

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

Bill 6

Gaming and Liquor Statutes Amendment Act, 2018

(continued)

The Acting Speaker: Is there anybody else wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Perfect. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to get up and speak to Bill 6. It's a lot more fun speaking to this Bill 6 than the last Bill 6 although we did speak about Bill 6 for a long, long time and definitely got the attention of a lot of Albertans. Anyway, this is indeed just a very, very important bill.

4:00

You know, I understand the need to push this forward because it was kind of pushed onto us by the federal government, but my concern is that we're kind of pushing off a lot of the responsibility onto municipalities that may not be geared up right at the moment to do so.

I understand that the uptake of licensing around the Edmonton area especially has been quite active other than, I believe, only one application out of Sherwood Park. But the ones in Edmonton have been quite prolific, and my understanding is that the city of Edmonton council is right now looking at licensing fees. I think they're starting somewhere around \$8,100, but some speculation from the police is that the cost to the municipality might be upwards of, like, \$100,000, so it may be very difficult for them to recoup some of the extra costs.

Now, that being said, when it becomes legal, unless a municipality passes a bylaw restricting it, people can walk down the streets smoking a joint. That's, I guess, one of the biggest concerns that we hear – I don't know if you're hearing it here in Edmonton, but we definitely hear it out in rural Alberta – that, you know, you can't walk down the street with a beer in your hand, but you can walk down with a joint in your hand, so there's kind of that little bit of discrepancy. And a lot of people say that it stinks. I mean, even if it's illegal, you can still walk around and smell people smoking it, and you don't know whether there's a skunk in the area or someone smoking pot.

That being said, we were over in Amsterdam a couple of years ago, and, you know, it's been legal over there for quite a while. Of course, when you visit Amsterdam, you have to go to the old downtown and have a walk around there. There were quite a few of the coffee shops, as they call them, and we didn't see a lot of it spilling out onto the streets. Mostly people just stayed in there, so we really didn't see that much of an issue. Yeah, the odd partygoer sitting around at a coffee table out in the street was getting a little

rambunctious, but overall the people there didn't seem too concerned about it.

One of the things I'd like to just get some clarification on, though, is that when it comes to section 86 of the bill – let me just flip over to that. Just some clarification on it. I started making beer in Edmonton about 35 years ago, and at that time there were only two places around where you could buy beer- and winemaking supplies. Those were the old Army & Navy downtown and one private operator over on the south side. Now – I don't know how many – probably hundreds of different brew places around town supply them.

Some of the places I've gone into and talked to the owners. One of the concerns or questions that they have – and maybe we can address it in this bill if I can get clarification on it. Maybe it's already existing in here and covered; otherwise, possibly put an amendment forward during Committee of the Whole. Some of these operators that are supplying beer and wine have a lot of people walk into the store and say: "Well, you know, I live in an apartment, or I live in a condo, and I don't have a lot of room, but I'd sure like to get into making my own beer and wine. Is it possible to make it here at your facility?" I understand that in most of the other provinces we do have that. Anyway, the question is that a lot of these places do have room, and they have warehouses, and they would like to set up a place where people could come in, buy a wine kit, buy a beer kit, make their own product at their facility, pay an extra fee to the supplier, and then take their product home when it's all done. They'd have the experience of making their own beer and wine.

Section 86 says, "An adult may make wine, cider and beer, up to a quantity permitted under the regulations, in a premises licensed for that purpose or in the adult's residence." So my question is: does that clause open the door for, say, Wine-Kraft downtown to apply for a licence that they could make beer or wine on the premises and have people come in, buy a wine kit, and make it on their premises? It is something that a lot of these guys have asked for, so I'm hoping that if it's covered in that clause, I could get some clarification on that. Otherwise, I would possibly put an amendment forward, so if I could get some clarification, that would be great. I think it would be something that would be well accepted by a lot of the suppliers in town and in the province.

Now, the other question that I had. Some clarification again, because that section is a little bit vague. It says, "Despite subsection (1)(b), the board may, in accordance with the regulations, issue a cannabis licence that authorizes the sale of cannabis in a location where things other than cannabis accessories or prescribed things are sold." My understanding from previous discussions and debates in the House was that it was quite specific that a marijuana dispensary had to be a stand-alone facility. Now I'm seeing that this is kind of going the other way. I wonder exactly what the regulations and criteria are going to be for that, whether it's only for, like, a small-town, isolated little general store that could attach that onto it and doesn't sell liquor as well. Or is it liquor? Why would we be giving concessions when a lot of other places, liquor stores that would also like to be in the marijuana business can't do it, right? That's my understanding. So I'd just like a little bit more clarification exactly on what the regulations are going to be or the criteria around that so that businesses will have a better understanding of what their options are.

The bill also amends a number of sections under the act such as the Drug-endangered Children Act. The above-mentioned amendment allows children to be on premises where four cannabis plants are grown as per the new legalization laws. Now, there was a write-up in one of the papers just the other day about property values and resale and the damages to houses even with four plants if you're

increasing the moisture in the home. I don't know exactly what is entailed in that, whether it's due to hydroponics or what it is. Now, the concern there is access to kids. I mean, kids will tend to eat plants, little kids. We had to take our son in when he was just a toddler because he grabbed a piece of I think they called it dumb cane. It was a big, leafy plant, but it can actually paralyze your mouth and your throat. We had to bring him in, the poor little guy. They had to give him ipecac and make him throw up three or four times before they let us go home. So that is a concern with that section, that, you know, unless there are some restrictions on keeping it out of the reach of kids, it will be accessible to children.

That being said, if I could get clarification, I guess, on a couple of those areas: the brewery section and the home-growing and whether there are going to be some regulations there regarding small children and then the vagueness of that section where it allows cannabis to be sold in a location where things other than cannabis accessories or prescribed things are sold. Those would be my questions to the government. If we could get some clarification on those two issues, I'll be happy with that.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 6? The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank you for allowing me to rise and to speak to Bill 6, the Gaming and Liquor Statutes Amendment Act, 2018. We've heard some wise words today. We're well aware that this is a companion piece to last fall's Bill 26, An Act to Control and Regulate Cannabis. I will suggest that as we progress and we move through this piece of legislation, the United Conservative Party will be monitoring the implementation of the cannabis legislation. We'll be seeking feedback from stakeholders and from our constituents and from the public in general as we move forward. I have received feedback consistently since last fall on this issue of the legalization of marijuana and how we're going to deal with it in Alberta.

4:10

Madam Speaker, I can confidently say that I believe that everybody in this House wants to see the public safety and the health of our children become paramount in this piece of legislation and in the implementation of the marijuana laws as we go forward in this province.

Madam Speaker, I had an opportunity – that's not a word I want to use. I had the chance to work with a family in my constituency who were very concerned about their son and the mental health issues and the addiction issues that this young man was dealing with. They were convinced that this young man's addiction and his mental health issues could be drawn and a straight line could be made through the young man's dependency on marijuana and his addiction to marijuana. Unfortunately, over Easter this same young man, after battling with his own demons, took his own life. I met with the parents. I went to the funeral, and I met with the parents a week and a half later. They were convinced, after many years of struggling to deal with their son, that marijuana was the core of the problem.

I would echo the comments by many in this House that whatever legislation we pass, we're going to have to ensure that we deal with the dependency and the addiction issues that come with adding this drug as a legal substance to our society.

I would agree with many that have stood up and talked about the fact that marijuana, it would appear, is unsafe for anyone under the

age of 25 as we look at the brain development as we grow. Madam Speaker, I am very concerned about how we move forward and how we deal with schools and with the children in our schools. I believe that this is going to be an issue that I'll address in a few minutes.

Madam Speaker, Bill 6 allows peace officers to determine the presence of marijuana through smell or packaging so that they can begin to address people that are smoking illegally or address youth that are possessing marijuana illegally or the illegal transportation of the substance. That's a good thing. I'm glad to see that we're starting to fill in some of the gaps that were necessary to be addressed and that this piece of legislation starts to address that.

It's important that the evidence that is collected by peace officers is going to be acceptable in the courts, and Bill 6 helps us to take a step towards that. It is consistent with other ticketed offences that deal with minors and cases of minors having alcohol and tobacco, so I believe that this is a wise step and a good step. I believe that it's done in such a way that our court system isn't going to be clogged up with minor offences.

Bill 6 also reminds us, though, that the government mirrored the public consumption laws of tobacco and not alcohol when they addressed the legalization of marijuana and how we're going to address it. It does leave a question as to whether or not this allows us to be able to protect the public health. That is one of our duties as legislators.

It's clear that municipalities are now going to be taking on a new burden, that municipalities are going to be faced with the need to pass bylaws that can restrict where marijuana can be consumed, where it can be smoked, and where it can be sold. Albertans will by necessity be exposed to this on a much greater basis than we have in the past. As has already been said, while we cannot carry a beer down a public street and be consuming alcohol in public, we will be able to smoke on the public sidewalk. You will be able to smoke in your backyards, where it will become an issue for your neighbours. We will begin to have a patchwork of smoking laws and bylaws across this province as people go from community to community to community, which could be confusing. But that may be the best that we can do. It is going to be hard on our enforcement, our police officers and our peace officers.

Madam Speaker, in section 90.12 of Bill 6 it addresses cannabis sales. It opens the doors for permitting cannabis sales in existing businesses. I was driving to the Legislature today only to hear – and I believe I've got it right – that the establishment called the Second Cup is going to be opening up a place for the retail sale of cannabis. In rural areas where you might only have one general store in a community, now as you go into that general store, you will also be able to see and be able to purchase marijuana.

I'm glad to see that in this bill there is some consideration given to signage and to how we will advertise for the sale of marijuana, that any business signage must not use any term commonly associated with medicine or health or pharmaceuticals and that no licensee or employer or agent may alter in any way the cannabis that is offered for sale. I believe these are good, wise restrictions to be placed on business.

I want to spend just a minute or two on my concern with regard to schools. I have spoken with the RCMP in my constituency, across the constituency, and they have grave concerns about how schools and police are going to deal with the consumption and rather the possession of cannabis when it comes to schools. I have talked with educators, and I have had educators tell me that not one school board across this province is prepared for the legalization of marijuana and how to address the possession of marijuana in the schools. Not one.

I've even had, as of today, discussions with the Minister of Education, asking both in budget estimates and today: how are we

going to start to be prepared to deal with the fact that an 18-year-old student can legally purchase the substance? While they might have to smoke it off the school grounds, they have the capacity to bring it legally into the school. We have schools that go from K to 12, and when I sent my five-year-old son and my five-year-old daughter off to school, it was not with the expectation that they would be going to a place where marijuana would be possessed by the students around them. This is an issue that we're going to have to deal with.

I'm waiting as we go through this bill to see if the government has the capacity to address this huge concern. The police are concerned about it. The school boards openly admit that they are not prepared to deal with this. This falls on our plate. Because we have chosen to treat marijuana through the tobacco laws rather than through the alcohol laws, we have created a problem for the schools across this province. This falls on our shoulders. We have a duty and we have a responsibility to address this.

4:20

Dr. Swann: How do you suggest we proceed?

Mr. Smith: Well, I believe that we might want to consider referring it to a committee. We might want to consider asking the committee to do more legwork on this. Let's bring the school boards in. Let's bring the police in. Let's ask them: how can we best address this issue? I know that when I brought it up in budget estimates to the minister, he was a little surprised by it, yet we should be able to address it.

Now, if the government can come forward as we go through this bill and show me how we can wisely address this, then my concern will be abated. That's what this Legislature is supposed to be about at its best: the give and take of ideas, the capacity to listen and to work together. So if the government can come forward and show me as we go through this bill that we are going to be responsible in addressing this issue and this concern, that we can give guidance to municipalities and to school boards – remember, school boards can't make laws. The best that school boards can do is make policy. We need to give them some direction, and we need to give them the capacity to deal with this issue.

Madam Speaker, I am glad that I've had the opportunity to bring some of my concerns before the House, and I would move to adjourn debate on Bill 6.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 7

Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act

Mr. Schneider moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 7, Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 7, Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

[Debate adjourned on the amendment April 12: Mr. Stier speaking]

The Acting Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am happy to be able to stand and to speak to the amendment to Bill 7 and to the referral

motion on Bill 7, Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act. As we know in this House, a referral motion asks the Legislature to place a bill under discussion before a committee, and there are some very good reasons why we do that.

We ask the government and we ask the people in this Legislature to refer it to committee so that a bill can have broader and further discussion, so that the ideas of that bill can be placed before a committee and free up the valuable time that is in this Legislature to move on to other business and then to bring that bill back before the House once we've had further consideration of the pros and the cons, once we've had a chance to potentially call stakeholders to come before the committee to ensure that there's been a proper consultation with regard to the bill and to make sure that at the end of the day, ultimately, that bill, in this case Bill 7, Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act, actually serves the people of Alberta and that it does so in a way that moves our province forward.

Now, Madam Speaker, we understand that Bill 7 proposes that we would begin to develop and to encourage a successful local food sector throughout the province and that we would begin to regulate agricultural products that are produced or processed in the province and that will ultimately be marketed and sold as organic products within the province.

We understand that Bill 7 is three parts. It's got three parts. It's designed to support Alberta's local food producers. The first part establishes organic standards, that the local food produced in Alberta that wants to be labelled as organic must now meet the Canadian standards established by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency; the second part of this bill, Madam Speaker, deals with local food week and brings and allows this act to coincide with the Open Farm Days celebrations, that are usually held in the third week of August; and the third part establishes a local food council to help promote and to support local small producers. That might include groups like farmers' markets.

In Drayton Valley we have a farmers' market, and this might fall under that umbrella. The U-picks: I spent a wonderful night last summer going to a U-pick outside of Drayton Valley and getting all the saskatoons that we would need for the pies that I would love to be able to consume over the course of this past year. They would fall under this.

This Bill 7 moves towards starting to allow and to present the legislation that's going to be needed for the province of Alberta to have organic food products. Presently the province of Alberta has no standards for food to be called organic food. Any goods sold outside of Alberta or Canada would and have to meet standards set federally, standards that are set by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. Presently any food product that is labelled organic, including food for human consumption or livestock feed or seeds, all of that is regulated by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency standards ensure that organics or organically labelled products actually demonstrate that the organic claims are truthful, that they actually are organic, that they're not misleading, and that all of the commodity-specific requirements that need to be met have actually been met. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency oversees and monitors and enforces the requirements of the Canada organic regime.

Now, Bill 7 sets out regulations dealing with the standards of labelling, and it provides for regulatory offences, which will give teeth to the legislation.

Madam Speaker, when you go into something for the first time, you better make sure you've done your consultation. You better make sure that you have asked the people that are going to be most affected by this piece of legislation that indeed they are in support of this legislation. By sending this bill to committee, we can ensure

that the Alberta legislation and the potential regulations truly will harmonize with the federal standards that are set. We can study them. We can make sure that the people and the stakeholders that are involved have the capacity to agree with the bill as it moves forward, and it's going to be important to ensure that all regulatory pieces resulting from Bill 7 meet the criteria set out by the Canada Food Inspection Agency in order to be certified organic.

There has been some concern expressed that the certification process for identifying organically grown food could take up to three years, and for anyone involved in that business, that's got to be a concern. This committee would be the perfect place to ensure that we study this issue. We certainly do not want to proceed down a path that is going to stymie food production that Albertans obviously choose and desire. We do not want to burden them with a certification process that is too cumbersome for them to be able to actually move through and to be able to support Albertans with the food products that they obviously desire.

By sending and referring it to committee, this is the perfect opportunity to bring some of those stakeholders in to be able to get their input into the process of certification, how to best streamline that process for certification, and to be able to ensure that the food grown meets the CFIA and the Alberta standards without taking an inordinate period of time.

Now, Madam Speaker, I'm sure that we would all agree in this House and you would agree with me that there's actually a very significant demand for locally produced food and that that demand continues to grow in Alberta as more consumers become interested in knowing where their food comes from and how it's produced.

4:30

I can only speak to the buying patterns in my own family. For at least the last 30 years, since we've lived in Drayton Valley, we have always made the conscious decision to purchase our meat locally. We have always purchased our beef from a local farmer, we've always purchased our pork from a local farmer, and we've always purchased the lamb that we buy from a local farmer.

[Mr. Dach in the chair]

Just a month and a half ago I purchased from a local farmer out near Thorsby, a friend of mine, a man by the name of Vince Holwa. He was just in the process of slaughtering some hogs, and we purchased a complete hog from him, and now we have a freezer full of some amazing meat. Why did we do it that way? Not only do we want to support the local farmers in our community, and we have for 30 years, but we know what they put into the meat, we know how it's butchered, we know how it's prepared, we have a relationship with that farmer, and we believe that that provides us with a higher quality of meat. For my family it's never been an issue of whether that's more expensive or less expensive; it's a decision that we make because we understand that we want to buy locally.

Bill 7 moves that forward. Alberta's local food industry is a key part of our economy. Farmers' market and direct farm purchases exceeded \$1 billion in 2016. That shows you that there's a demand. According to a 2016 survey 92 per cent of Albertan households have bought local food from supermarkets and 80 per cent have bought local food from farmers' markets. We Albertans support the idea in many ways of buying local food products, and the number of Albertans spending more than \$1,000 per year at farmers' markets has doubled since 2008, so it's becoming a trend. It's clear that Albertans desire locally grown food, and often they choose to purchase locally grown food that is organic.

Referring Bill 7 to committee would allow local stakeholders and farmers to provide input into the bill to ensure that it meets their needs as well. We do not want any unintended consequences to

interfere with the production of locally grown food. We need to make sure that as we move forward on Bill 7, it actually has the intended consequences, the intended goals for which it is being put forward before this House.

This bill, Bill 7, chooses to establish a local food council to help promote and support small producers, local small producers. It establishes the council to provide a report no later than 12 months after establishment of said council "containing advice and recommendations regarding provincial policies, programs, pilot projects or initiatives to support the continued growth and sustainability of Alberta's local food sector."

Well, we have some questions on this side of the House. Who will be on that council? What stakeholders should be represented from Alberta's local food sector that would sit on that council? This is a great avenue for discussion, one that I believe the committee would be very well equipped to be able to have and one of the reasons why this Assembly should refer this bill to committee. What are the costs associated with this marketing council? Do we even need a marketing council? Is there perhaps not an existing group that could receive this task? These are the kinds of questions that we could be asking at the committee level, that would allow us to be able to ensure that Bill 7 is indeed the best piece of legislation that we can present to the people of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that this bill needs to be referred to committee. I believe that it needs to be studied and that the present government, while it is reviewing agencies and boards and commissions and has eliminated, and sometimes justly so, some of those agencies, boards, and commissions, we need to be very careful before we add another one in the establishment of the local food council. I'm not arguing that we don't need it. What I am saying is that before we create it, we must make sure that we actually do need it, and by referring it to committee, this would allow us the capacity to do so.

Bill 7 also has some concerning parts when we think about the scope and the power that Bill 7 is going to give to the minister and to the government. You know, I realize and I believe that all of us that serve in this Legislature do so out of a sense of duty and of public service, and I believe that all of us want to see what is best for Albertans. But I do believe that in a democracy we believe in this concept of limited power, that no one individual, no one government should have the capacity to ignore the will of the people or have an inordinate amount of power. Power must always be checked, must always be balanced.

Bill 7 gives power over all agricultural products produced or processed in Alberta. That's a lot of power. Bill 7 gives tremendous power to the minister under regulations, section 20(o). If I look at the bill here, Bill 7, Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act, it says:

Regulations

20 The Minister may make regulations, and if you go to the very last one:

(o) respecting any matter the Minister considers advisable for carrying out the intent and purposes of this Act.

That is an awful lot of power, and I'm not sure that it's needed. By referring it to committee, we could have that conversation. Maybe at the end of the day it is, but at least the committee would have the capacity to have the debate, to ask the people that are going to be actually affected by this piece of legislation whether or not they feel comfortable with that kind of power being provided to any minister.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any hon. members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?
Seeing none, the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you. Now, I just want to take some time today and speak on Bill 7. I think, you know, overall, Bill 7 should be lauded for its purpose, which is to support locally grown food. Obviously, that's something we would all like to see, more industry and more, I guess, local products being produced and being consumed by the people of Alberta. It helps having this part of the economy stay in Alberta, so I think that that part of this bill is really good.

Obviously, for the things that we can produce in our climate here, what we grow here is a great benefit, again, not just economically, but it does reduce the need for trucking across the country or across North America. Of course, that saves money, it saves the environment, it gives us fresher food, and we have a little better idea of what went into these products that are grown.

We know that when we buy local, we're buying from our neighbours and are directly supporting our local communities. These are the people that we see every day on the streets, that we meet at different functions in our communities, so it's nice to be able to support the people that we live and work with. Again, then we know where these things are produced. We can often drive by the field where some of these things were produced. We know what's going on there, and we can have confidence that what we're buying is good produce.

This demand for locally grown food is growing. You can see this by stopping at any farmers' market. I know I quite often go to the farmers' market and buy fresh produce there. I enjoy the fresh baking of course – that's always good – and saskatoon pies and fresh bread and buns and that sort of thing. One thing I do enjoy is a vegetable called kohlrabi. A lot of people maybe don't know what it is. It's an excellent vegetable that I can't often find in a grocery store, if ever. I grow it myself in the garden, and if I go to the farmers' market and they've got some good kohlrabi there, then I'm going to be buying it. It's something that I really enjoy, a nice, crunchy vegetable. It's something that grows well in our climate here. Again, the one place that I can consistently find it is in a farmers' market.

4:40

Of course, U-picks. You know, I have a cousin that has a U-pick strawberry farm. He does all sorts of vegetables and stuff like that, but he specializes in strawberries. He has raspberries, saskatoons, and has a good business there and employs quite a few people in the community, having that U-pick farm. Again, that's something that's getting more and more popular all the time. People enjoy going to these places and picking their own vegetables and berries right off the tree, right off the vines, or whatever, so that they know exactly what they're getting.

It's also interesting that when you go to the grocery store now, if you watch labels, you can find locally grown products. You can see the eggs that were produced locally. You can see the vegetables and that sort of thing that are grown locally, so it is good to see that locally grown product right in our grocery stores. It's an important part of our economy. In fact, reports show that it's over a billion dollars a year. I'd say that that's a lot of green right there, a billion dollars a year.

This bill, Bill 7, will do three main things. The first is establishing organic standards, and this will be done by creating Alberta standards that align with the Canadian standards that have been established by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. This could be advantageous for producers that export their products outside of Alberta or even Canada because if these purchasers from outside of

Canada, outside of Alberta know what the standards are, then they'll know if they want to purchase it or whatever. So there is some kind of benefit to having those standards.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

But one of my concerns is that the process of inspection and certification may be costly or burdensome for some producers. I'd be concerned that there'd be some producers that could easily qualify but either don't want to or can't take the time or energy or whatever to go through that process to have the inspection done and have the certification done. Of course, if people are in that situation, this bill could be negative to them because even though they fully qualify to the standards, they won't be able to use that label on their product. So I can see this being, you know, negative to some people that are in that situation, people that are living in farther out areas, where to have somebody come and inspect and go through that process is going to be burdensome. You know, I've heard that certification may take three years, so that'll put some of these producers at a disadvantage as they go through this lengthy process.

There's no information on the cost of certification. We don't know if that's going to be a cost to the producer or how that all works. There are a lot of questions, I guess, that need to be answered within this bill so that the producers can make the decision whether they would like to support a bill like this or not. Like I say, if there's any kind of cost, this could be, again, burdensome on producers.

Now, another thing this bill will do is to establish a local food week. This allows for promotion of locally grown produce during the same time period of other farm recognition days. I think it's always good to recognize our agriculture producers in our communities. I think they're a very important part of our community, of course. Again, when you look at any small community in Alberta, almost every one will have a farmers' market at least one day a week, where local people can go and buy produce from other local people that has been grown right there. I think it's good to have an opportunity to recognize the people that produce the food in our communities.

The third thing this bill will do is establish a local food council. Now, the details are kind of vague on this council. At first blush it sounds good, but without the details it's really hard to say. It would be nice to have the producers that would be affected by this bill involved in working out the details on it. The best opportunity for that would be in a committee setting so they could present to us as legislators and we could listen to their concerns and ideas directly. It would allow the direction of the bill and the regulation that follows to be guided by the people that will be directly affected. I think that's important.

I know we've seen many times this government push through legislation without proper consultation. Each of these times we've given the government the opportunity to put the brakes on and allow for further consultation and input. One of the ways to do that is to have this go to committee so that people can present to us directly. In the Legislature here people can't present to us, but in committees they can. That gives the opportunity for people that would be most likely affected by this legislation to come and directly have input to us. But it seems like when consultation is needed most, that is when this government kind of bulldozes ahead with their plans, and the government actually often suffers for it when they don't take that time to listen to their constituents and listen to the people that are most affected.

You know, that's what we want to do on this side. We want to be helpful. We want to make good legislation for the people. That's why we come through with these amendments like this, to give that opportunity to have more input, to make sure that we get the

legislation right from the start, because when we do consultation after a bill is presented, it's usually considered damage control, and when we do consultation before, that's the proper way to do consultation. Of course, at this point here we're in a situation where the bill is already on the table. We should have had more input before on this, but now we're past that opportunity, so now the opportunity we have is to take it to committee.

Some of these changes to some of these bills would be pretty minor changes, but the results could be big, and they could make a really big difference to Albertans. We need to take that into consideration, that even the smallest changes can make a big difference in people's lives.

Now, just further on this proposed council, it's a little disconcerting to see that the minister will be appointing the members of this council. It says here in the bill:

The Minister shall, in accordance with section 7 of the Government Organization Act, establish a Local Food Council to provide a report containing advice and recommendations regarding provincial policies, programs, pilot projects or initiatives to support the continued growth and sustainability of Alberta's local food sector, including the following matters.

These are the things that this council would be responsible for.

- (a) potential barriers and challenges for local food producers and local food processors, including specific challenges faced by small producers and processors;
- (b) local food aggregation and distribution;
- (c) risk management tools for local food producers and processors;
- (d) increasing access to local food;
- (e) consumer awareness of local food;
- (f) certification opportunities for local food producers and local food processors.

Again, those are some of the things that this council is going to be responsible for.

Like I say, I'm not sure that the minister appointing each of these people on this council is really the best way to go. I would think that there would be better ways to choose members of this council, by going to the groups that are already available, that are already in place right now, that are representing different parts of the agriculture economy, and getting them to propose people or put people on this council.

Again, we're not even sure if this council is necessary. Maybe if we had this consultation with the ag producers, they would say: "No, we don't need this. A lot of these things are taken care of in our local farmers' markets, bringing awareness and different things like that, you know. I mean, we can take care of this stuff, so why have this council that the minister appoints to oversee some of these things?" Again, those are some things that we could learn in committee if we had the opportunity to take this bill to committee.

Now, it says:

The Minister shall designate a chair of the Council.

So he's going to be appointing all the members, and then he's going to be appointing the chair, too. I'm not sure why, for instance, the members of the council couldn't appoint a chair themselves, but I guess the minister maybe wants to be involved as much as possible. Again, I'm not certain that that's necessary or even desired by the people in the industry.

Not later than 12 months after a Council is established under subsection (1), the Council must submit a final report to the Minister providing the advice and recommendations of the Council on the matters referred to in subsection (1).

It goes on to say:

The Council is dissolved on the date the Minister accepts the Council's report or such later date determined by the Minister.

So, again, just kind of some guidelines for this council that the minister would appoint and appoint the chair for, too.

Now, we get into this part where it comes into, I guess, kind of the regulations and enforcing regulations. I'm just going to jump ahead to section 12, where it says:

The Minister may, on terms and conditions specified by the Minister, designate any person or class of persons to act as an inspector for the purposes of this Act.

So what we have here is the minister determining who would be an inspector for the purposes of this act and designating any person or class of persons to act as an inspector. Again we have the minister making these decisions here and no real guideline for us to go by as far as passing this legislation, as far as, you know: what kind of qualifications is an inspector going to have?

4:50

I mean, it says here: "any person or class of persons to act as an inspector." I would think that people in the industry would probably have a pretty good idea of what kind of person they would want to have as an inspector. Again, if we had that opportunity in committee to listen to these people and understand what they want, they might have some really good ideas of what kind of person should be appointed to be on these councils.

I just want to go into the complaints part here, section 10:

A person may, in accordance with the regulations, make a complaint to the Minister regarding the advertising, labelling or offering for sale of an agricultural product that the person suspects is not certified in accordance with section 8.

Of course, that allows that any person could make a complaint to the minister on any of these issues.

It goes on to say in section 11:

On receipt of a complaint under section 10, an inspector must verify that the producer or processor of the agricultural product that is the subject of the complaint holds the appropriate certification in accordance with section 8.

Here again we have the inspector come into play. After the ministry gets the complaint, the inspector is sent out to verify what the complaint was.

It goes on in subsection (2) under section 11:

If the producer or processor of the agricultural product holds the appropriate certification, the inspector must notify the complainant of the producer's or processor's certification status and conclude the inspection.

Obviously, if the person is properly certified, then it ends there.

It goes on in subsection (3):

If the producer or processor of the agricultural product does not hold the appropriate certification, the inspector must conduct an investigation.

So all of a sudden we're getting to the point here where if the inspector feels that there's something wrong, then the investigation starts.

Now I'm going to jump to section 13 here. It says:

(1) On receipt of a complaint under section 10, an inspector may conduct an inspection or investigation to determine whether a person is complying with this Act, the regulations or an enforcement instrument.

(2) In conducting an inspection or investigation, an inspector may do one or more of the following:

- (a) subject to subsection (4), enter, at any reasonable time, any place, including any means of conveyance or transport, where an inspector has reason to believe that ...

Okay. Let's just look at that a little more carefully. When an investigation starts ...

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the referral amendment?

The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 15 Appropriation Act, 2018

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

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'll just begin here by saying thank you very much for the opportunity. It's my pleasure to move second reading of Bill 15, the Appropriation Act, 2018.

This act will provide funding authority to the offices of the Legislative Assembly and the government of Alberta for the 2018-19 fiscal year. The schedule to the act provides amounts that were presented in greater detail in the 2018-19 government and Legislative Assembly estimates tabled on March 22, 2018. These estimates were subsequently debated by standing committees and voted on in Committee of Supply.

Madam Speaker, after the worst recession in a generation our economy is recovering, and things are looking up. In fact, in 2017 Alberta led the country in economic growth, at 4.5 per cent. We saw 90,000 new, full-time jobs created, primarily in the private sector. With more than 2.3 million jobs now in this province, there are more Albertans working today than ever before in this province. Exports are up. Manufacturing is up. Housing starts are up. We're expecting to be near the top of economic growth in Canada once again in 2018.

That's all good news, but there is still a lot of work to do to make sure that each and every Albertan and business feels the positive effects of this recovery. That's why we continue to fight for new pipelines and better market access. In recent days this has been demonstrated through our government's Bill 12, Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act. Through Bill 12 we would ensure that the interests of Albertans are optimized before authorizing the exports of natural gas, crude oil, or refined fuels from this province. By maximizing the economic benefit of our natural resources, we are defending Alberta's workers, our provincial and national economies, and protecting the funding that is aiding our transition to a greener economy. We are committed to getting this pipeline built. Workers from every corner of our country would stand to benefit from this project, creating prosperity that makes all of Canada better through schools, hospitals, roads, transit, and ports.

This brings us back to Budget 2018: A Recovery Built to Last. This budget is built on three pillars: diversifying the economy by fighting for market access, adding value to our energy products, and supporting new and developing industries; the next pillar, protecting vital public services by making sure loved ones get the care they need, young people get the best education possible, and no one is left behind in this province; and the third and last pillar, returning to balance by investing public dollars where they are needed most, eliminating waste, and controlling spending to return to balanced budgets by 2023.

Madam Speaker, a growing and diverse economy benefits all Albertans. It supports job creation and helps move Alberta off the

resource revenue roller coaster. Budget 2018 includes a range of initiatives to add value to our energy products and support developing industry. We recognize that overreliance on energy revenue leads to boom-and-bust budgets, and Alberta is well positioned to build on our natural strength in the energy sector. Initiatives included in Budget 2018 will help to make the energy sector more resilient to this cycle and will boost provincial resource revenues. For example, this budget enhances the competitiveness of Alberta's oil sands industry with \$1 billion in loan guarantees and grants over eight years to support up to five new partial upgrading facilities. This plan represents up to \$5 billion in private investment and more than 4,000 jobs in construction.

Budget 2018 also includes \$500 million in royalty credits to initiate a second phase of the successful petrochemicals diversification program, or PDP, which will grow investment in Alberta-based natural gas processing. The intended outcome of the program is up to three world-scale petroleum facilities in Alberta, resulting in approximately \$6 billion worth of new investment and also the creation of approximately 4,000 construction jobs.

Finally, in terms of diversification within the energy sector Budget 2018 encourages the construction of new extraction facilities on major pipelines with \$500 million in loan guarantees and grants to the new petrochemical feedstock infrastructure program. These facilities recover natural gas liquids like ethane and propane that can then be used to manufacture a wide range of products, and like the other programs I just mentioned, they represent incredible economic opportunity for this province.

Going on, Budget 2018 does so much more than just diversify the energy industry. It takes concrete steps to help grow other sectors of the economy and create exciting new opportunities for investors, business leaders, and other entrepreneurs. The Alberta investor tax credit and the capital investment tax credit have already supported more than \$1 billion in private-sector capital projects, and this success will continue as Budget 2018 will provide \$60 million a year for these two programs through to 2021-2022. This funding will help foster new investment, encourage innovation, and accelerate growth and new industries.

5:00

In addition, our government is providing \$20 million a year by 2020-2021 for a new interactive digital media tax credit. This tax credit will make it easier for existing companies to bring on more employees and encourage Alberta entrepreneurs to launch new companies.

To help ensure that forward-looking, tech-focused Alberta businesses and entrepreneurs have access to a labour force that is prepared to fill the jobs of the future, Budget 2018 will create 3,000 new postsecondary technology spaces over the next five years. Budget 2018 also creates new scholarships to attract students in areas such as life sciences, clean tech, and health innovation. Drawing more great minds to our province and labour force and keeping more bright young Albertans here so we can continue to diversify and push our economic growth into new areas is an important aspect of ensuring our recovery is built to last.

I should also be clear about something Budget 2018 does not include. It does not include new taxes, and it's also contributing to Alberta's country-leading growth when we do not include new taxes. Our incredibly favourable tax system has attracted a great deal of economic activity to this province. Budget 2018 holds the small-business tax rate at 2 per cent, and we remain committed to an Alberta free of a provincial sales tax. Both factor into Alberta's tax advantage, with that growing to \$11.2 billion this year. This means that Alberta businesses and families would pay \$11.2 billion

more in taxes and carbon levies if they were in any other province in Canada.

The second pillar of Budget 2018 is protecting vital public services. Madam Speaker, during the economic downturn government supported Albertans by investing in health care, education, and social services and taking steps to make life more affordable for families. While some voices in our province called for massive cuts to Alberta's services that we all depend on, we have chosen a different path, one that provides stable funding of essential services while controlling spending growth. Budget 2018 includes several actions that protect the public services that Albertans rely on. This includes supporting the delivery of publicly funded health care with capital investments in high-quality health facilities such as the Calgary cancer centre and the new hospital in Edmonton. It includes shifting to better community-based care by adding hundreds of continuing care beds.

It also includes supporting the rapidly growing population of young Albertans by fully funding enrolment growth in the K to 12 education system and reducing school fees, keeping education more affordable by extending the postsecondary tuition freeze for now the third year, and helping working parents by creating an additional 4,500 affordable child care spaces through the early learning and child care development centre program and making life more affordable for lower and middle income working families with continued support for the country-leading Alberta child benefit and the Alberta family employment tax credit.

In addition, funding for our core capital plan in this province is \$26.6 billion over the next five years. While this funding is returning to normal historic levels after significant investments during the depths of the recession, we will continue to deliver on critical public infrastructure projects.

Just like businesses and investors need some level of certainty to plan for their future, so do Albertans. Through the actions I've just mentioned, Budget 2018 provides Albertans with this certainty. By providing stable funding growth, targeted below the growth in population plus inflation, Albertans will have the certainty that their kids will receive a great education, their loved ones will have access to top-quality medical care when they need it, and the most vulnerable in this province among us will have the supports they need when they need them. And it means accomplishing all of this while keeping growth in operations costs down while our population continues to grow. After all, if our recovery were based on hollowing out public services and leaving vulnerable Albertans behind, it would in fact be no recovery at all.

With regard to Budget 2018's third pillar, a return to balance, we are charting a course to balanced budgets by 2023. This has not been an easy task, Madam Speaker. The recession hit Alberta and Albertans hard, and revenues are not expected to surpass prerecession levels until 2019-20. Alberta's economic recovery and a growing population are certainly helping increase revenues, but these factors alone are not enough. A recovery built to last with a return to balance means finding savings as well. That's why through Budget 2018 our government is focusing tax dollars where they need to most: eliminating waste and controlling spending and finding efficiencies. We're managing public-sector compensation, which makes up over half of our annual operating budget, with practical collective agreements, salary freezes for non-union employees, and by keeping the size of Alberta's public service flat.

As the economy recovers, we're reducing government stimulus and returning capital spending to more normal levels while still taking on critical infrastructure projects. I'm incredibly proud of this plan because it protects the things that matter to Albertans while still taking a responsible fiscal approach. Even with the debt that

will be accumulated as we reach balanced budgets, Alberta is still projected to maintain the lowest net debt to GDP ratio in all of Canada.

Madam Speaker, to summarize, Budget 2018 helps ensure we are in the midst of a recovery that is built to last. We are taking steps to further the diversification of our economy while still protecting vital public services and charting a path to balance. Things are beginning to look up, and I expect 2018 to be the continuation of the broad-based economic growth we experienced last year. Budget 2018 maintains our commitment to support and protect the services that make a difference in the lives of all Albertans, and it is our pledge to return to balanced budgets but do so in a manner that supports Albertans by continuing to invest in health care, education, and social services.

I along with my government colleagues look forward to implementing Budget 2018 and continuing to make the lives of all Albertans better. I urge my colleagues and all members of the House to support this bill today.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any other speakers? The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and talk about the 2018-2019 budget and Bill 15 and the intent of the bill. Before I dive into the intent, I want to talk a little bit about the unfortunate situation that Alberta, Albertans, our next generation, and our economy find ourselves in. It starts with \$56 billion in debt. Just three years ago that number was \$13 billion. Today it's \$56 billion and \$1.9 billion in annual interest – \$1.9 billion in annual interest – making it Alberta's fifth-biggest line item in our expenditures, that the Alberta taxpayer has to pay, that Alberta families, communities, and citizens have to do without some level of services. That's \$1.9 billion in interest. Incredible. Incredible.

5:10

Because the second reading stage is about the intent of the bill, allow me to talk about our NDP government's three stated pillars and exactly how wrong this Finance minister and this government got it. Protecting public services is a stated goal. Madam Speaker, what has happened here is that this government and this Finance minister have put every important priority of Albertans, of Alberta families and Alberta communities, at risk. That risk is because of overspending. That risk is because of not looking for value. That risk is now the interest – the interest – that Alberta taxpayers have to pay to the rich, whether it's bondholders in Switzerland, New York, or Toronto. That's \$1.9 billion that is leaving our economy. It's leaving the pockets of middle-class, average Albertans and headed to the wealthy, that \$1.9 billion.

Let's compare this to Seniors and Housing. I mean, there's so much to love about Albertans, but one of the things that maybe makes me smile the most is that when I ask Albertans what's important to them, of course, it's helping those that need it, it's helping those that need a temporary hand up, but usually the first thing that Albertans say is that they want to help our seniors, the people that built our province, the people that made it possible for us to enjoy the standard of living that we do and the services that we do and all they've built. To me, the main comparison is \$700 million to Seniors and Housing in this budget; \$1.9 billion to rich bondholders in Toronto, New York, and Zurich. What a contrast. What a difference.

Of course, we know that this Finance minister has been the benefactor of six credit downgrades. So far this one has just almost had universal bad news and some issues from credit agencies of a serious miscalculation and serious errors. But we've seen interest rates bump up a little bit in the last two or three months. There are a lot of experts that are talking about half a point to three-quarters of a point, or from 25 to a 75 basis point increase in the next little while.

Madam Speaker, as this \$1.9 billion in interest increases by the \$7.9 billion that this Finance minister is planning on overspending by next year, not counting the \$6.4 billion in capital spending this year for our roads, our schools, and our hospitals, with \$5.9 billion for next year – in three budgets and three cycles we've seen this Finance minister and this government be over budget three times between a billion and a billion and a half dollars. We are going to be another \$17 billion, \$18 billion, or \$19 billion in debt at this time next year, and if interest rates are a bit higher, the projected debt-servicing costs: two and a half billion dollars. My goodness. Two and a half billion dollars. I maintain that that interest puts every single important priority that Albertans have in jeopardy. And what we've seen, to me, is that it looks like this government's plan is a permanent wall of debt.

We see we have an estimate in 2024 of a surplus of \$700 million. But, Madam Speaker, I want to remind you that in the government's campaign documents it was projected and was promised: a \$25 million surplus. That was promised this year. There is a huge difference between \$25 million in Albertans' bank account and \$8.8 billion and paying interest to rich bondholders around the world. The credibility of that number. Does he mean that number? This government, if they're successful and re-elected: do they really mean that?

I would suggest to you that when we look at the capital plan dropping from \$6.4 billion down to \$4.8 billion at the same time as this government talks about the Calgary cancer centre, which we need, and the Edmonton hospital, which looks like it's essential as well, how are they going to balance even more of their big spending promises without going deep on the backs of our kids and our grandkids and without putting every single important priority of Albertans in jeopardy? Pillar 1, protecting public services: this Finance minister, this government have done exactly the opposite and put them all at great risk.

Diversifying the economy. Sad news in Medicine Hat yesterday: Methanex, one of our great companies, one of our great job providers, announced that Louisiana in the United States is the place to be. Everywhere I go, when I talk to our wealth creators, our job providers in Alberta, they are terrified of this government's big spending, of the 20 per cent increase in corporate tax that this government has already delivered, of the huge increase in personal taxes, of a carbon tax that has greatly increased the cost of everything. They know that for their success, which in business, as we all know, isn't easy, which in all business takes tremendous skill and tremendous commitment, this government's reward will just be taking more and more and more of their hard-earned wealth.

That's why this recovery is not being felt. That's why, when I talk to Alberta families, Alberta communities, especially those that are focused on building our province in the private sector – Madam Speaker, too many are still working in northern B.C., too many are working in Saskatchewan, and too many are investing their money outside of Alberta. With this happening and with your goal being to diversify the economy and with the 20 per cent increase in Alberta corporate taxes having driven out so much of our business, exactly the opposite is happening. Again, like with protecting our public services, where the Finance minister and the government have done exactly the opposite, that's what they've done again.

You know, sometimes when you get talking to somebody who's in this every day, somebody who's working on the front lines, you hear it the most accurately. I was talking to my chartered accountant a short time ago, and he said to me that before this government raised corporate taxes 20 per cent, before they raised personal taxes from our 10 per cent flat tax to now 15 per cent on top of their ally Justice Trudeau's 33 per cent tax rate – it's actually 48 to 49 per cent that we're paying – it was rare that Albertans would come in and say: "Look at my tax planning. Make it as efficient as possible. Get my money out of Alberta." He said that that is a regular occurrence now, where Albertans are coming in and saying: "This government is not trying to find me value. This government doesn't care about me and my wealth-earning potential and the jobs I provide. Although I don't want to do this, look for some tax efficiency." Madam Speaker, this government has done more to hurt diversification of the economy than to help it.

Return to balance. I believe this government's plan is a permanent wall of debt. I think that if they're re-elected, \$96 billion will be on the low end. When I look at the numbers, in their first three years they've increased spending 16 per cent, and they're planning in the next five years on only increasing spending 16 per cent. I don't believe it. I don't think Albertans believe it. Albertans know it's time to start caring about how hard some people work to earn wealth and create jobs. The best proof I have of that was three years ago. When this government wanted to be elected, they said that by today we'd have a \$25 million surplus. Madam Speaker, \$8.8 billion in the hole is one long, long way from \$25 million to the good.

Madam Speaker, this Finance minister, this government have absolutely failed on all three of their pillars. They have done more to hurt diversifying the economy, they have jeopardized every single important priority of Albertans, and they have no intention of returning to balance. It's about a permanent wall of debt, a permanent wall of interest for our kids and our grandkids and our economy.

5:20

I want to talk about some of the other risks that this minister hasn't addressed. First of all, the interest rate risk. If rates go up half a point, if rates go up one point, if instead of borrowing at around 3 per cent, we start having to borrow at 4 per cent and we owe a hundred billion dollars, Madam Speaker, that's a billion dollars. What can we do with a billion dollars to help Albertans instead? What could we do if we left that billion dollars in Albertans' pockets so they could help their families, so they could help their friends, so they could help their communities? That is why this Finance minister and this government have put every single important priority at risk.

Credit downgrade. We've already seen six since this last budget and almost universal criticism of it and some other credit agencies talking about how bad it was. If we face more credit downgrades through this government's overspending, through this Finance minister's big plans of spending other people's money, through maybe a downturn in our economy, what is that going to do on the backs of our kids and our grandkids?

I want to talk about the utility risk. This government is headed towards a market of 70 per cent natural gas, 30 per cent renewables, but we all know that if you have a renewable, you have to have a backup. The sun doesn't always shine; the wind doesn't always blow. So it will pretty much be a hundred per cent natural gas market based on capacity.

Madam Speaker, we are enjoying historically low natural gas rates. Can you imagine if these rates double? Can you imagine what the Alberta taxpayer is going to have to subsidize the Alberta

ratepayer? There's a cap on our rates at 6.8 cents even though under the old system we were as low as 2.5, 2.7 cents. There is no cap on how much these people will go back to the taxpayer for, so how much of that risk is factored into this? If a budget is truly a plan of where we may be in the future, I am concerned. If we face an increase in the price of natural gas, if we face an increase in interest rates, if this Finance minister gets his seventh downgrade, can you imagine what that's going to do to our economy? Can you imagine what that's going to do on the backs of our children?

Madam Speaker, there's great risk, other risks, in this plan that this government and this Finance minister put forward. Even though it was told to Albertans that the carbon tax was revenue neutral, even though that was stretching the definition of revenue neutral in every possible, conceivable way, we're not even going there anymore. We have a government that now is admitting that by 2021 their 67 per cent increase in the carbon tax will be diverted to general revenues.

Keeping in line with their ally Justin Trudeau, keeping in line with a carbon tax that we've heard from around Alberta has been a hardship for seniors, for communities, for agriculture, for pharmaceuticals, for any utility user, Madam Speaker, the tax is going to be greatly increased, and that money is going to go into general revenue in 2021 so that this government can continue its high-spending ways without looking for value.

Another element of risk that this risky budget has baked in it is the Trans Mountain pipeline. I believe the numbers are 2021, 2022 where the increased revenues are based on additional revenues that might or might not be attributable to extra access for our good, our great oil and gas producers through more access to markets through the Trans Mountain pipeline.

Well, the May 31 deadline is looming large. There are no shovels in the ground. There is opposition, of course, in British Columbia even though, thank goodness, it seems like overwhelmingly the average British Columbian, the working families in British Columbia see all the benefits for Canada, see all the good reasons for this to happen.

You know, I'd be remiss if I didn't talk about the safety. When I was Energy critic a short time ago, some people in Calgary took me to a new company that has developed fibre optics that can go in the pipeline, on the pipeline, or within a metre of the pipeline that instantly – instantly – tell the operators about any changes in compression. It's amazing how good our producers are, amazing how safe we've made this industry, amazing that with all of these things happening, we're still looking at a situation with Justin Trudeau, the federal Liberals, the Leap Manifesto, the NDP in power here, the NDP in power in British Columbia, and a pipeline that costs us I think it's \$41 million a day. The lack of access, Madam Speaker, is costing all Canadians jobs, social programs, and those kinds of things, and those kinds of things are very important to us.

Madam Speaker, with this risky financial plan that this government, this Finance minister put forward, they are already counting this even though it's already greatly delayed. Of course, we hope very, very much that it happens. We hope it happens soon. But, again, if these things don't happen, we're looking at probably another credit downgrade. We are certainly looking at more debt, more interest costs, and less in services.

Madam Speaker, I just want to close. When I'm out talking to people in Cypress-Medicine Hat, when I'm out talking to Albertans, you know, one of the things that concerns them almost as much as \$1.9 billion in interest this year, \$56 billion of debt, and a government that has a desire to have a permanent wall of debt, where we'll pay interest to rich bondholders forever and ever, is the

fact that this government, this NDP government, never seems to look for value.

I'll just give you some examples. Everyone remembers the laundry situation here in Edmonton, where the desire to publicly own and publicly be involved in the delivery of an essential part of our health care maybe cost \$200 million.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

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

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate this opportunity to rise and speak on Bill 15. Now, the hon. Finance minister is looking for the House to sign on to his fiscal plan. I understand why, because that's his job, but he's had lots of opportunities to convince the opposition, people on this side of the House, that his plan is good, and he keeps rebuffing and ducking and diving with his words when we give him a chance to explain why we should support this fiscal plan.

As recently as today in question period a reference was made to the last Auditor General's report, where it said that by 2021 this Finance minister would have Albertans in so much debt that the Finance minister and his government would have to have a \$3 billion surplus for 25 years in a row in order to pay off the debt that was accumulated by then.

5:30

So I asked him what I thought was a pretty obvious question then, you know, the question being: "This is what the Auditor General said that you need to do. You say that you're going to balance the budget. Are you going to do it?" He had a perfect answer, to say yes, but he didn't say that. He talked about anything else he could think of. So I gave him a second chance. I said, "Well, if you can't commit to balancing the budget at that point, what about the promise you have made, balancing it in 2024, after you've got Albertans" – and remember, Madam Speaker. I know you know this. It's all Albertans.

But when I think of this, I think mostly of young Albertans because if this government was to stick around that long, I wouldn't live long enough for this government to pay off a substantial part of this debt if they would even get to dollar one. I figure I'm going to be dead in 30 years, but our children and grandchildren, who are going to have a lot more future than I do to be in Alberta, to think about, and to be concerned about, could end up in chains for 40, 50 years, paying off a debt that this government has put them in, that they will be unable to get out of if this government is given permission to go on that long. It's not criminal, but I wonder if it ought to be. Here's the sad thing about it. Twenty, 30 years from now young Albertans will be paying for 2018 light bulbs that the money was borrowed for. That is astounding.

Now, I understand the government's need to borrow for infrastructure. It makes sense. You know, to a certain degree, building infrastructure and paying it all off on the same day is really the opposite side of a wealth transfer. Everybody in 2018, for example, would pay for a road. People would drive on it for the next 20 years and not pay for it. So you know what? There is actually a case to be made, if you build something like a road or a school or a hospital, for paying for it over 20 years because you can really make the argument that the people paying for it over those 20 years are the same people that might get to have kids in that school, that might get to drive on that road, that might get to go to that hospital when they're sick. That makes sense.

But when you've got a government borrowing billions of dollars a year for the groceries, for operating expenses, they're going to

have Alberta's children paying for 20, 25 years for things that were bought and consumed in 2018, 2019, gone, either recycled or in the landfill, never to be seen again except for the payment that our children and grandchildren will be making for decades and decades and decades to come because of the financial mess, the deep financial hole, the financial abyss. This government and this Finance minister are driving our province off a cliff. It's so obvious. It's so obvious that Albertans are getting it. Albertans are getting it.

I know that the government likes to say: well, if you don't support our budget, you're against schools and roads and hospitals and social services. Nothing could be further from the truth. The fact is that we're against burdening future generations with massive amounts of debt for things that will be gone and consumed within the next year or two or three.

Let's even say that some of those light bulbs are 10-year light bulbs. Let's say that they're the best. Our young people, our children, and grandchildren, through their Alberta taxes, will be paying for those light bulbs 20 and 30 years from now. Let's just say that all those 10-year light bulbs can be fully recycled then, and I hope they can. Even then, under this government's guidance our children and grandchildren will be paying for those light bulbs, that have been in the landfill or have been recycled 20 or 30 years ago. There will be no light coming from those light bulbs anymore. By that time I'm not even sure whether the world will use light bulbs. We'll obviously need light. Who knows what the technology will be? But our children and grandchildren, under the leadership of this government and this minister, will be paying for things that are consumed right now 20 and 30 and, if this government is left in control, 40 years from now. Ridiculous.

Here's what I'll give the government credit for. They admit it. You know, these numbers that I'm talking about come out of the government's documents, the government's own documents. Their budget that they're so proud of, that they're looking to have the money approved for today, says that by 2024 they'll have us \$96 billion in debt. That's not something crazy – and it's crazy; it's crazy as can be. But it's not something crazy that I'm saying; it's something crazy that I read in the government's budget documents. To their credit, they're admitting how bad their plan is, how indefensible their plan is, yet they have the courage to come into this Chamber and ask us to support it. For us to support it would be a complete betrayal of Albertans' children, grandchildren, certainly anybody of low income that will suffer, paying for years on end for things that have been long consumed and long gone by this government without a decent, without any plan to pay it back.

Now here's where it gets worse. What they call a plan is not a plan at all. Their plan is to hope that no one figures this out and notices before the election next year, but, Madam Speaker, Albertans have caught on. I think the jig, as they say, is up. Albertans have figured out that the gang across the aisle, that is in government, can't shoot straight. They have no plan, and in fact the plan that they have won't balance. They'll need at least two pipelines to get this budget balanced, and they're putting all their eggs in the basket of Justin Trudeau, which, I've got say – now, there's a high-risk manoeuvre if ever I described one. You know what? To our Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, their very close ally, in lockstep with this government, with this Premier, with this cabinet – Justin Trudeau: they're in lockstep with that person.

Here's the problem. You know what? The government, to their credit – again I'll try to give credit where it's due – has taken some advice from our leader and brought forward some ideas that they borrowed from our leader, first after saying that his ideas wouldn't work, ridiculing them, making fun of them, and then waiting a couple of weeks and adopting them as if it was a brand new idea

that they cooked up in the NDP kitchen. But they're not even actually committing – at least they're saying that they're going to do that, which is good, except they're not actually taking any action. They had a temporary wine ban for B.C. That got the government's attention. That was our leader's idea long before they did it, and we actually praised them for that. But then they folded their tent three weeks later, or was it less than three weeks?

An Hon. Member: Less.

Mr. McIver: Less than three weeks.

They folded their tent in less than three weeks on the one good idea they did take action on. At the first sign of an excuse to go from doing something to doing nothing, they took that excuse, and they went straight to the speed of zero.

What have they done since? Well, they say that they've talked to some people. Very good. They've put Bill 12 on the table. Very good. They've said that – you know, after following our leader's lead, they talked about being tougher, about turning the taps off. This is all good except they haven't acted on it yet, but at least they say that they might. At least in here they say that they might. But the problem is that if they need these two pipelines to balance their budget – apparently, the Premier told the Premier of B.C.: oh, don't worry about that legislation; we're not going to do it. I guess that when it comes down to survival, even sometimes NDP teammates, it's everyone for themselves, so the Premier of B.C. is throwing our Premier under the bus, saying: didn't even try to convince me, promised me they wouldn't even take action, so we've got nothing to worry about in B.C., at least not from the current Alberta government, not from the NDP government.

They're certainly concerned about action should our leader be the Premier after the next election. We don't know whether that will happen or not. That's up to the voters. I don't know. If I could predict the future, Madam Speaker, I'd be a lot wealthier than I am today. Predicting the future is not my business, so we're certainly hoping to have our leader as the leader of Alberta after the next election, but of course we don't know whether that will be the case. I'm sure the Premier of B.C. is more worried about that.

5:40

My point is that the financial underpinnings in this budget are dependent on at least one pipeline, I think, probably two, and even if the federal government agrees to help finance this pipeline, how is it going to get built unless the Prime Minister, this NDP government's bestie, close personal friend, lockstep partner in all of this is, is willing to have the courage to push the protesters back to where they're legally protesting? Everybody in this House is in favour and supportive of legal protesting, but when you actually break the court order and stop people from doing the legitimate work that they ought to be doing, at that point you need some leadership from the Prime Minister to get the illegal protesters to stop delaying the work that is required to actually get the pipeline built. Without the courage to do that, I'm not sure if it matters who owns the pipeline – the government of Alberta, the government of Canada, some partnership between them, some private business – because if you can't actually stop people from chaining themselves to the heavy equipment, I don't think you're going to get anything built.

These people across the aisle know about chaining themselves to heavy equipment. Some of them carried signs in the past, cheering on those people that would chain themselves to heavy equipment, so they actually could teach me quite a bit about that. I'm sure they could teach me way more than I know about it. But I know enough

to know that this budget is underpinned by a partnership with Justin Trudeau, and that's just to get the first pipeline built.

The budget documents don't indicate how they could balance the budget if the pipeline does get built, so even if the best thing that could happen to this fiscal plan, something that we are certainly hoping for – if there's one thing that we definitely want this government, this Premier, this Finance minister to be right about, it's that that pipeline will get built. That's what we want. We don't want anything more than that. That's what Alberta needs. That's what Albertans want. That's what the Official Opposition wants, and I think that at this point it's even what the government has come around to wanting, so we're on the same page as them.

But here's the problem, Madam Speaker. Even if we continue to give suggestions to the government – and as I said, I give them credit. They've taken some of our leader's suggestions and promised to put them into action and at least given themselves a fighting chance of being successful. Let's just look at the best possible scenario, and if that happens, we can all high-five each other: congratulations, government. We'll be cheering you on. You got this done. This budget still won't balance the way this government is running it because they haven't a blessed clue on how to do it. They don't appreciate how expensive the debt is for Alberta families. They don't appreciate that the people they're hurting the most by driving jobs and investment out of Alberta are the people that they promised most to support, the single moms, the families of low . . .

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to speak on Bill 15. Appropriations: an issue that exercises all of us and should as it sets the tone for our financial future as well as the present, what we can do now and in the future, and what our families in the future can do. We talk about financial management, assets and liabilities, and the need for a balanced approach, a recognition that expenditures require sustainable revenues, and how those can be spent in the most constructive and sustainable way.

I've been influenced by the economist Paul Krugman, who is very much a supporter of countercyclical spending. When the economy is down, you spend, you borrow, you build, you keep people employed, you maintain services that people really very much need during an economic downturn. I recognize this government for valuing those principles.

In fact, as Dr. Trevor Tombe of the U of Calgary has indicated, debts are not all bad. We have to borrow to make provision for things and for people that are needed at the time, especially when we are looking at long-lasting investments such as, of course, our children, our institutions, education, health care, and so on, capital investments that are much needed and were badly neglected by the former PC Party, which left us, in fact, in a very vulnerable deficit position, if you want to talk about deficits. A pretense that we were balancing the budgets, but of course we weren't. We were racking up higher infrastructure deficits, maintenance deficits, social deficits, and environmental deficits, most profoundly in relation to our management of groundwater and surface water in some cases but also in relation to our climate change inaction under the former PC government.

At some level I support what this government has done in terms of borrowing, employing, diversifying, and moving us towards a clean energy future. I think they have been bold. I think they have been addressing the real issues of Albertans in a meaningful way. I think that while I may differ in the pace and scale of borrowing and

the pace of the infrastructure build-out, that might have been done in a little more paced fashion, I fundamentally believe that this has been the appropriate approach for Alberta at this time. It has protected both people and institutions. It has begun to address some of the climate change negligence, I would call it, by the previous administration, which increasingly appears hypocritical and disrespectful of decent public accountability for at least the last 15 years of their reign in terms of our management of institutions, services, and the revenue-expenditure balance.

Propagating fear and distrust is easy in politics. It's always been used to gain public attention. Sometimes it even gets support from people who don't watch the show too carefully and don't recognize that asking for increased spending on the one hand and then criticizing spending across the floor is such an easy game to play. Unfortunately, for the majority of Albertans, who don't watch this Legislature, it's easy to befuddle people and to bring them into a sense of uncertainty, distrust, and fear. Given the deficits left by the PCs on all these fronts – infrastructure; social, including housing and mental health; and environmental – the big holes had to be filled to some extent.

If there is one critique I have, it's the lack of careful, thoughtful ministry examination of their own portfolios, especially Health, in my view, which has a notorious overspending problem of waste, excessive executive salaries, excessive management. We're talking between 42 and 45 per cent of our budget today. I haven't seen any evidence that there are serious efforts to find efficiencies and to shift management priorities and focus increasingly on prevention and early intervention, that would not only save money but would actually reduce demands on the emergency room, which is inundated, on hospital beds, which are always over capacity, and reduce the morbidity and mortality rates, in fact, if we could get more money than 3 per cent of the Health budget into early intervention and prevention.

I guess I don't know. I will be looking at each of the particular portfolios to say whether I can support it, but I'm quite sure I won't be able to support the Health budget and the lack of serious attention to reform and improved efficiencies and effectiveness in our health care system. But in the main I find that the approach has been positive. It has been countercyclical spending, which I believe most international economists are now saying is appropriate at times like this and necessary to protect people and the long-term viability of our institutions.

5:50

My other addition, I guess, is: let's talk as adults here, an adult conversation, about revenue and talk about a PST, talk about a sales tax that will share the load of our need to reduce our dependency on borrowing and begin to pay our share in this generation so that we, in fact, do not leave major, significant spending on interest rates to our children and grandchildren. Let's talk reasonably and responsibly about a 1 or 2 per cent sales tax, that would bring in a consistent \$2 billion to \$3 billion a year, that everybody pays and that everybody shares in because we want to move towards balance. That is, to me, a responsible approach to the fact that we've had years and years of unsustainable financial management, and now we have gone gung-ho on institutional and service spending without a clear plan to start to address that in a responsible way, which has to include a PST.

I don't understand why in Alberta we have this allergic reaction to all paying our way. Yes, there need to be efficiencies and change, especially in the Health budget, but, yes, we also need a more reasonable revenue stream when we are the lowest taxing province in the country and we are the lowest in terms of, well, an absolute absence of any consumption tax, which is one of the fairest taxes

that I know to bring everyone into the picture and ensure that we all pay our share in terms of spending and the implications of that spending on our total financial capacity.

Those are some of the comments I have, Madam Speaker. Certainly, this government was left a mess. They have gone very quickly, very boldly. They have racked up a massive debt, that I think we all recognize. We want to see a more clear plan going forward. I think that includes the UCP opposition. Where's your plan? I haven't seen that. It's easy to criticize. Again, I hear a request for funding on this side and then criticism of funding. It strikes me as quite hypocritical to not even have an alternative plan except cut, cut, cut, I guess, which is what one is left with.

My plan is to start talking about a PST as the only viable and responsible way to face a future that otherwise is going to be, as we've all recognized, many years of debt servicing and uncertainty and questions about our viability. But given the fact that we have the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio in the country and we have the lowest taxes by billions, I think we have some margin to work with. We have some margin in terms of a sales tax and particularly a harmonized sales tax, which wouldn't cost us anything to administer, to fall into line with the rest of the country, start to pay our share in this generation, and, I guess, just be more honest – yeah, more honest – with ourselves and our children and our grandchildren about what needs to be done rather than the posturing and politicization of a situation that's increasingly serious and that none of us wants to leave to chance.

Debt servicing at 2 and a half billion dollars to 3 and a half billion dollars a year is not anything to laugh at. Let's all start working together on finding a common solution, which, to me, is staring us in the face but nobody wants to talk about and that everyone calls political suicide. Well, with all due respect, that's BS. We know that every province that has it has started to bring their finances into some kind of balance.

Those are my comments. I think that's why the Liberals are considered the centrist party. We see both sides of the issue. We want to see balanced, honest debate. We want to see reasonable thought about the longer term future, not just the next election. We want to see less fearmongering and more acknowledgement that we all are benefiting from the infrastructure build-out, the human services that are there, the maintenance of roads and bridges, the concerns that are being addressed with respect to emergency measures.

Let's try and minimize the politicization of a situation that is obviously not ideal since our oil prices have dropped through the floor. But let's be honest about how we got into this position and how we collectively can find a way out if we're prepared to have an adult conversation about revenue as well as more responsible management of our institutions, again, particularly the health care system, which has not been brought under reasonable control, from my perspective.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'll end there and potentially adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate lost]

The Acting Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak?

Mr. Nixon: Madam Speaker, I don't want to speak, but I would like to move for unanimous consent to move the bells to three minutes. I suspect that if you seek it, you will get it.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Acting Speaker: Hon. Minister of Treasury Board and Finance, would you like to close debate?

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. You know, there have been some interesting presentations and discussions here. I can just reiterate that the government of Alberta, this side of the House, is firmly committed to addressing the needs of Albertans today and in the future. We're doing that by providing good-quality services and programs, investing in the future, and diversifying our economy.

I'd like to close debate.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:58 p.m.]

[Three minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Bilous	Goehring	Payne
Carlier	Gray	Phillips
Carson	Hinkley	Piquette
Ceci	Horne	Renaud
Connolly	Kazim	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Kleinstauber	Sabir
Dach	Littlewood	Schmidt
Dang	Luff	Schreiner
Drever	Malkinson	Sucha
Eggen	Miller	Turner
Feehan	Miranda	Westhead
Fitzpatrick	Nielsen	Woollard
Ganley		

Against the motion:

Barnes	Loewen	Strankman
Cooper	McIver	Taylor
Gotfried	Nixon	van Dijken
Hanson	Schneider	Yao
Kenney	Smith	

Totals: For – 37 Against – 14

[Motion carried; Bill 15 read a second time]

The Acting Speaker: The Assembly will now stand adjourned until 7:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6:05 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday evening, May 1, 2018

Day 22

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (UCP),
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Anderson, Hon. Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (NDP)
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (UCP)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (NDP)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (NDP)
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (NDP)
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Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)
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Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (NDP)
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Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)
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Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)
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Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (NDP)
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (UCP)
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Vacant, Fort McMurray-Conklin
Vacant, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake

Party standings:

New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 25 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent Conservative: 1 Vacant: 2

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Gill	Pitt
Horne	van Dijken
Kleinsteinuber	Woollard
Littlewood	

Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Wanner
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Babcock	Nixon
Cooper	Piquette
Dang	Pitt
Drever	Westhead
McIver	

Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms Kazim
Deputy Chair: Connolly

Anderson, W.	Orr
Babcock	Rosendahl
Drever	Stier
Drysdale	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kleinsteinuber	Taylor
McKitrick	

Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	Miller
Cooper	Nielsen
Goehring	Nixon
Gotfried	Pitt
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Cyr
Deputy Chair: Mr. Dach

Barnes	Malkinson
Carson	Miller
Clark	Nielsen
Gotfried	Panda
Hunter	Renaud
Littlewood	Turner
Luff	

Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola
Deputy Chair: Mr. Drysdale

Babcock	Loewen
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Fildebrandt	Panda
Hanson	Rosendahl
Kazim	Schreiner
Kleinsteinuber	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, May 1, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Good evening. Please be seated.

Government Motions

Election Commissioner Appointment

16. Mr. Feehan moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly concur in the report of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices tabled on April 10, 2018, Sessional Paper 67/2018, and recommend to the Lieutenant Governor in Council that Mr. Lorne Gibson be appointed as Election Commissioner for a term of five years commencing May 15, 2018.

The Speaker: The Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At its April 5, 2018, meeting the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices passed a motion recommending that Mr. Lorne Gibson be appointed as this province's first Election Commissioner. I understand that Mr. Gibson has considerable experience and knowledge of elections and of election finance rules. He has previously served as Alberta's Chief Electoral Officer as well as having had a role in overseeing elections in other provinces and indeed outside of Canada.

I encourage all members to support this appointment. Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, anyone wish to speak to the resolution? The Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to speak to the motion that's before us. I'd like to start out with a quote from Senator Blanche Lincoln: voters must have faith in the electoral process for our democracy to succeed.

Mr. Speaker, on April 5, 2018, the NDP members of the Standing Committee on Leg. Offices voted to appoint an individual as Election Commissioner who did not have all-party support. I've been involved in a number of the search committees that we've put in place over the last couple of years, with a very good working relationship during search committee meetings, and we were able to come to unanimous support in all committees. But from the outset of this committee in December it became very apparent that the members from the governing party were prepared to move forward in a way that I would consider to be somewhat haphazard, a little bit reckless.

We have long been disappointed in how members of the government caucus chose to conduct themselves throughout the entire search process. It became evident at our first meeting, at the end of December, that government MLAs were determined to proceed in a reckless fashion by forcing the Legislative Assembly Office to compose a job posting and a position profile for a brand new position in less than 48 hours and then, on top of that, deciding to open the competition during the Christmas holidays, including a costly run of print advertisements that required an LAO employee to come into the office on their holidays to make certain deadlines despite the Official Opposition's strong advice that this would be a waste of money and put undue strain on our support staff.

You know, Mr. Speaker, in December it started to become very evident that the members of the Legislative Offices Committee were preparing to move forward in a very reckless manner from the fact that we were starting with a new position – a new job

description was necessary – and that even upon recommendation not to advertise during the holiday season for this position, the members of the governing party on that committee decided that, yeah, we will proceed in that manner.

Then in January the committee was asked to spend an additional \$20,000 for a second run of print advertisements because not enough applications had been received at that point, which is exactly what members from the Official Opposition had pointed out in our December meeting, that it would be a terrible time to advertise, during the Christmas holidays, during the Christmas break, and that we should probably ensure that we get job descriptions put together in a reasonable manner that gives the LAO the time necessary to do a proper job on that. But then we went ahead in January, and the committee needed to approve another \$20,000 for advertising because the first round was not effective.

We also took issue with being strong-armed by government MLAs who would declare that a consensus had been reached on issues in camera and would try to force votes with little to no discussion when we returned to the record. Perhaps it wasn't surprising that when it came time to select a candidate, instead of an openness to hear the concerns from the Official Opposition, government members used their majority to confirm a candidate who, while qualified – and I must reiterate that, Mr. Speaker. Official Opposition members on the committee did not feel that the individual was not qualified, but there were other outstanding issues that gave us pause for concern, and we felt that those issues were enough to cause question for Albertans on whether or not this was the right choice for Election Commissioner.

Government members used their majority to confirm a candidate who, while qualified, has a long and adversarial history with the Legislative Assembly here in Alberta. We felt there were a number of other strong, qualified candidates, yet the government members chose a candidate that did not have unanimous support of the committee. The selection of an Election Commissioner should not be a partisan exercise, and indeed there was an opportunity to confirm a consensus candidate. However, the government members of the committee have chosen to act in a partisan manner, which is certainly not in the best interests, I would say, of Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, it should concern all Albertans when a committee is charged with the search for the position of Election Commissioner, a new position within our electoral system. The position was established, essentially, through I believe it was Bill 32, An Act to Strengthen and Protect Democracy in Alberta. Yet when the search committee moves in this manner, it gives me great concern that we are possibly seeing a government working not necessarily in the best interests of democracy, accountability, transparency within our democratic system but moving in a somewhat reckless fashion to appoint an individual that appeared to be high on their radar right from the start.

I say again that I do not believe that any of the members from the Official Opposition that were members of the committee ever put into question this individual's ability and qualifications with regard to elections, but we did have concern with regard to the history of this individual and the government of Alberta. We see an individual here who, although having served as Chief Electoral Officer in the past in Alberta – committee members from all parties had concerns on the 2008 election and the performance of that election, and the individual was dismissed. The individual decided to sue the government, failed in successfully suing the government. So we have a situation here that there's a tarnished history that should concern all Albertans on whether or not this individual can move forward in a manner that is free from any stigma or baggage from past.

I believe that I will not be supporting this motion, as in committee. I was not in support of the motion to begin with.

7:40

I believe that all Members of the Legislative Assembly should take a close look at the process that was put in place and how it played out and possibly take a second look at: is this the right individual for the position of Election Commissioner, the right individual that would give confidence to all Albertans that we are in fact protecting and strengthening democracy in Alberta?

With that, I do have an amendment I would like to move at this time. Do you wish me to proceed, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: Yes.

Mr. van Dijken: I move that Government Motion 16 be amended by adding the following after “May 15, 2018”:

and be it further resolved that following the passage of this motion, the Election Commissioner’s salary be posted publicly on the website of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices.

Mr. Speaker, we did have considerable discussion within committee to look at the possibility of posting the salary publicly. If we take a look at the advertisement that was put forward – there was a range; I’m trying to find it here – we had a range advertised that would put this individual in a salary class that would qualify for the sunshine list.

Appointment will be made for a term . . . with provision for reappointment.

The salary for the position is \$152,818 to \$212,801.

I believe it’s important for Albertans to be able to see what the individuals that are hired for public positions are paid over and above what would be considered the limit on the sunshine list.

What’s interesting with this is that if we wait for the process to play out the way it traditionally would, Albertans will not be able to understand what the Election Commissioner position is being paid until June 2019. I think it’s prudent for this Assembly to disclose this information, and I think that if there’s nothing that the government is trying to hide with regard to this position, they would agree that it is prudent to disclose this information. It’s going to be public information in June 2019 regardless. I believe that it’s an important part of the information and that accountability and transparency of this government could be called into question if this is not disclosed at this time.

I would encourage all members to support this amendment motion, and I look forward to hearing more discussion on that possibility.

The Speaker: Hon. member, the amendment you proposed is, I believe, A1 and has been circulated.

Are there members who wish to speak to the amendment? The Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s a pleasure to rise today to speak to the amendment to Government Motion 16 moved by my colleague the hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock. This is a very important amendment that we have in front of us here today. This is an amendment about transparency in this House and to the public, specifically in regard to elections and the election system and the way that we police and investigate election law here in Alberta. I know that transparency is important to every single member of this House. I’ve heard it a number of times from members on the government side, repeatedly, over and over again, in many different circumstances, so I know that the government is certainly in support of a motion like this, that shows transparency to the people of this province.

The amendment reads that the new “Election Commissioner’s salary be posted publicly on the website” so that the public can see. This new position, of course, was created through a piece of

legislation that was passed in this House by the government members to create a redundant position, so to speak. Those are not necessarily my words, although I agree with them, but the words of the Chief Electoral Officer in this province, Mr. Speaker, who many hold in high regard, who has acted in an extremely ethical manner throughout the course of his career. When asked to present to the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices in regard to election investigations, he spoke very candidly and very honestly and actually had no issues handling current complaints that came into his office in regard to investigations.

So it’s interesting that we’re here in the first place, but we are, and this committee had undertaken a search process to hire and fill this new Election Commissioner position regardless of its redundancy. Here we are, and I think that in the interest of full disclosure to the public, it’s important that this salary, in accordance with other sunshine rules, be posted on the website.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, we’re only one year away – as we think, we are only one year away from the next general election. There’s lots of work to be done and lots of information to get out there by members of the government side. Of course, the Official Opposition is trying to get lots of information out to the people so they can make an informed decision when it comes to choosing their next government. The salaries, as most Albertans would agree, especially within quite a high range – I would argue that probably the top 1 per cent of citizens in this province make this kind of salary. The top 1 per cent. That’s just within the salary range that’s been publicly posted on the search on the website for this commissioner. So the top 1 per cent of Albertans make a salary like this. There’s quite a range, and I think that Albertans would more specifically be interested in how much the government members of this committee have agreed to pay this individual that sits in the Election Commissioner chair.

Like I’ve said before and like we’ve discussed before, this certainly is a matter of transparency. I know that members of the United Conservative caucus think that transparency is one of the most important things in our democratic system, and many Albertans would certainly agree with us, Mr. Speaker. That’s why this motion, put forward by my honourable colleague, is extremely important. Surely, the government would agree that, you know, this is not anything unusual in regard to any other independent office of the Legislature position. It’s not at all.

7:50

I don’t think the government wants to hide anything. Certainly, I know that it’s not the intent of this government to not be transparent. I don’t think this government wants to be sneaky. I don’t think they want to, you know, pull the wool over the voters’ eyes. I don’t think that’s the intent of this government, Mr. Speaker. So, surely, this would be an amendment to the government motion that would pass. In my heart of hearts – and I hope I’m safe to assume that in the government’s heart of hearts, they believe that a government should be transparent. This is exactly the kind of motion that they should move.

In closing, I would like to urge all members of this Assembly – the government side of the House, members of the Official Opposition, independent members, members of the third party – to vote in favour of transparency here today. It’s an easy thing to do, Mr. Speaker. I can’t possibly see any reason why any member would think that it wouldn’t be in the public’s best interest. After all, that’s what we’re here to do: act on behalf of the public, their best interest. It is an extremely interesting thing to know just how much the new Election Commissioner is to be paid, so let’s pass this motion unanimously. Let’s post the salary of the new Election Commissioner on the website and show and prove to the people of

Alberta that we in this Legislature are transparent and that we hold the interest of the public in such a high regard.

Again I urge you to pass this amendment to the motion. I will certainly be supporting it. Thank you.

The Speaker: Any questions under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Airdrie? Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that the Member for Airdrie is proud and respectful and responsible regarding the democratic process, and I know she was involved in this committee, so I'd like to have her further describe her heartfelt belief in the actual requirement that these people have to publicly disclose their wages and that they be responsible to the people that they serve.

Mrs. Pitt: Well, thank you to my hon. colleague from Drumheller-Stettler. You know, my thoughts are with the people in his constituency as they experience some flooding events in the area.

To answer the question that the members asks, in my experience in this role as the MLA representative of the people of Airdrie, I know that when I was sent here almost three years ago – in four days it actually is three years ago, Mr. Speaker – the people of Airdrie gave me a very clear mandate as I was talking to them, knocking on their doors, and they wanted the sun to shine. This is certainly an example of just that. There are so many people frustrated by the way in which the speed of government moves, so when presented with an opportunity, given the mandate that the people have given me in Airdrie to let the sun shine and to do it quickly, I for one will always jump at that opportunity. That is exactly the opportunity that is presented here today with this amendment to this government motion. I couldn't think of a better way to represent the people than by letting the sun shine and doing it quickly.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Any other questions under 29(2)(a)? The hon. member.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Not having had the benefit of sitting on the committee, I'd just like some clarification if possible. Let me get this straight. We've got an individual that was accused of something during the election. My understanding is that even the current Premier had issues in her riding during the 2008 election with this individual. The accusations were found to be serious enough that the government actually fired the individual.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I want to remind you that you're speaking to the amendment now.

Mr. Hanson: Yeah. I'm getting to that. I'm just trying to get clarification here because we're talking about the high rate of pay for an individual, and we want to post it.

So then the individual sues the government of Alberta unsuccessfully, and now the government members of the committee are all in favour of ramrodding and hiring this individual again for some reason, and we have to debate whether we want to disclose how much money we're going to pay this individual. I'm just a little shocked. Could you please clarify? Am I correct in what I was saying here?

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Pitt: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The candidate that we're referring to was not fired in 2008. He was actually not rehired by

the committee for numerous reasons, which I'm sure we'll get into during the course of this debate here this evening.

There are a number of curiousnesses around the appointment of this new Election Commissioner, certainly, but the government has an opportunity here today to help shed some light on this situation and an opportunity to show that they're not hiding anything. I don't think they are. I really don't think they are. I think they're going to vote in favour of this because it makes sense. It's common sense. The people in their ridings are certainly going to want to know, as many of their constituents . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The Member for Edmonton-Centre on amendment A1.

Mr. Shepherd: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the distinct honour of serving as the chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices, which means, then, that I also have the opportunity and the honour of serving on behalf of the people of Alberta as the chair of the select special search committees when we are conducting search processes for officers of the Legislature. I endeavour in that work to remain neutral, as the chair should, and I think all members of the committee have generally expressed that I have conducted myself in such a manner in this work.

Now, on this particular issue I've had the opportunity to chair three committees now: for the Ombudsman who was appointed last year; for the new Auditor General, who was just sworn in this week; and then, of course, for the Election Commissioner, Mr. Gibson, who we're discussing here tonight. In each of those processes we have followed the due process which is set out under legislation as to the disclosure of salary, that being that under legislation the legislated process is that after an individual has earned their salary, in the following year that salary is posted online and made available for disclosure to the people of Alberta. That is true for all individuals, Mr. Speaker, all public servants who are above the threshold that is set out on the sunshine list and are therefore required to have their salary disclosed. That is the appropriate practice. That is the practice that has occurred on the two previous search committees, and indeed I would suggest that is the appropriate practice which should take place here.

I say this, Mr. Speaker, as the chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices, where it is our due purpose to work with and to oversee the budgets and business plans of the officers of the Legislature and to indeed uphold the work that they do with the utmost respect, as it should be, on behalf of the Legislature and the people of Alberta. To suggest that in this situation because members of the opposition may have some discomfort with this particular candidate, for reasons which they have partially explained but that they have the opportunity to explain further if they wish tonight – those concerns do not to me suggest that there is any reason that we should be abrogating the due process set out in legislation, that is expected by all officers of our Legislature, indeed by all members of the public service to whom the sunshine list applies.

8:00

Should we choose to make an exception this evening, Mr. Speaker, and target this particular individual for reasons which the members opposite can only explain – to single him out for special treatment, indeed, I believe, would cast a chill and a pall over our other officers of the Legislature and our public service. Should they not have the expectation of the due process of the law? Should they not expect that members of this House would treat them with the due respect of their position and that they should be able to have the expectation that members of this House are not going to attempt to

circumvent or abrogate the law for whatever particular personal purpose they might have?

Indeed, as I look forward to having the opportunity to explain, there are things that have occurred in this House in the treatment of officers of the Legislature which have suggested that. Indeed, in my view, that is disturbing. It has been called out in the press. It was called out by members of this House who were in opposition at the time, including our Premier. Mr. Speaker, this motion that is before us, I dare say, approaches an insult to the officers of the Legislature.

We are not abrogating transparency. Our government is the one that brought forward the legislation which extended the sunshine list in this province. This was not something that occurred under the previous government, who instead appointed many people to agencies, boards, and commissions at salaries far above the range that is set out for Mr. Gibson – far above – almost approaching four times the amount. Those individuals were not particularly targeted. They also were afforded the due process of the law.

Setting aside any comment on the qualifications of Mr. Gibson, how anyone feels about his appointment, about whether or not people have any particular concerns, there is a due process that is in place. There is legislation that is in place. If members opposite feel that that legislation is inadequate, then by all means I suggest they may consider a private member's bill. Perhaps they would wish to include that as part of their party platform and can advocate for that at their policy conference this coming weekend.

But, Mr. Speaker, I do not believe it is appropriate in this context to try to introduce a motion that circumvents that law and indeed would treat our officers, our public servants with disrespect and call into question whether any future person who was hired above that threshold that is set out in the sunshine list could have trust that they would be afforded the due process of the expectation that legislation would be upheld on their behalf.

For that reason, Mr. Speaker, I will be voting against this amendment.

The Speaker: Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Edmonton-Centre? The Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I actually want to thank the Member for Edmonton-Centre. He did an absolutely spectacular job of chairing this committee. Things got very passionate at times, and he did an excellent job of keeping things under control. I want to thank you personally for your efforts and for the work that you did on this committee. It's no wonder that you've been used to chair other committees, because you did a great job.

I wanted to talk a little bit about due process versus law, for one thing. You're using those words interchangeably, Mr. Speaker, and I think that maybe that's something we need to talk about. If we're talking about due process, due process for us in this House is actually what we do for Albertans, not for people that we hire here, especially in this particular situation. This is a redundant position, a position that was not required, and it was specifically told to us in this Legislature that the position need not happen.

Now we have a person who's been hired in a position that is within the sunshine list, a position that the election officer said didn't need to happen, that he was completely capable of handling on his own. Now the government is choosing to spend taxpayer dollars on another person to do this job and questions why we're asking to have this dollar amount brought forward: because, first of all, as they know, we don't think that this position was necessary, with all due respect to Mr. Lorne Gibson, who's very qualified; also, because, actually, due process is here for Albertans. If we're asking you to look at it differently, the reason is because we believe

that due process needs to be looked at in terms of the people who are actually paying for us to be here. That's actually what matters, especially because this person that has been hired, Mr. Lorne Gibson, is going to be interacting with every single person who is working towards being in this Legislature and all of the families and volunteers and everybody else that may have issues with coming forward.

The reason why this amendment was brought forward was to make sure that we're doing exactly what we said to do. The whole reason that this person was supposedly hired was for transparency and accountability, but at the same time, due process is the reason for not having transparency and accountability. I'm confused. So I think maybe it's time to ask the question.

The Speaker: Your question is addressed to the Member for Edmonton-Centre?

Mrs. Aheer: Yes.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, I understand that the members feel that this position was not necessary. I understand that they did not want to see an Election Commissioner in the first place. They had the opportunity to raise those concerns when we debated Bill 32. They made those concerns quite clear, and indeed they had the opportunity to make those clear once again on the record when we discussed this at the committee.

But that is irrelevant, Mr. Speaker, to the motion that is in front of us. The motion that is front of us is attempting to circumvent and go around the tenets that are laid out in legislation about how the sunshine list in the province of Alberta operates. It has nothing to do with whether or not they like the candidate, with whether or not they feel that creating this position under Bill 32 was appropriate. That has nothing to do with whether or not the salary of the Election Commissioner should be made available before the time that it is duly appointed to be done under legislation, under the law.

Again, to choose to go around that and target this individual simply because they dislike the legislation which created his position, simply because they do not want this particular individual as the candidate to hold this position, to target him for that reason for exceptional targeting, to reveal his salary, to me, Mr. Speaker, seems highly inappropriate. That suggests to any future candidate that puts their name forward to be an officer of this Legislature that if members of this House, for whatever reason, decide that they don't like them, they can target them for an exception to the law. That is not a message I want to communicate to people who serve this House and, indeed, all.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

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

Mr. Cooper: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today and speak to amendment A1, moved by my colleague from the wonderful constituency of Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock. This is an amendment to get some additional transparency and openness around the salary of the Election Commissioner.

You know, I heard the Member for Edmonton-Centre, and I, too, would like to thank him for his work as the chair of the committee.

Having said that, I don't sit on the committee – Mr. Speaker, you would know that – but I have had the pleasure of hearing the debate this evening as well as having some discussion. I also had the opportunity to read the minority report from my colleagues about some of the things and the concerns that they highlighted in that, particularly around the process that took place with respect to this particular hiring.

8:10

I'd like to just point out to the Member for Edmonton-Centre, who aptly highlighted the fact that he's overseen three of these processes, that I know that there have certainly been some irregularities, or certainly the process took place at different speeds from the other hirings; for example, the Auditor General as well as the Ombudsman and others. I know that I had the opportunity to review some of the meeting dates in terms of the speed at which the government members on the committee were insistent on it happening. We actually heard the Minister of Transportation today talk about the appointment of the MSA, how it's been over seven months that that seat has been vacant. His response was needing to follow the process and making sure we take time to get it right. But, Mr. Speaker, you'll know that the legislation was rushed through this House, and then the government members got together and rushed this process to get to the result where we are today. So there have been a number of challenges around exactly how this has taken place.

The Member for Edmonton-Centre – and, again, I appreciate the good work that he's done on this as well as some of the other recruitment committees that he has overseen – talked about the fact that he, in fact, has done this three times now and that he has stayed independent in that process, and I also believe that he has. But one of the big differences between this process and the last process or the other processes – and, Mr. Speaker, you'll remember that we sat on a selection committee together where we selected the Clerk of this Assembly, and that was also done in a unanimous fashion.

But this is very different. This we see: the government members insisting on one thing and the opposition expressing some serious concern around the selection of that particular individual. Also, along the road, the process that was followed in terms of it was rushed, and it seemed very clear that there was a need to get this finished by a certain period of time. In fact, I asked the question here in the House about that, and they talked at some length about wanting to have it finished in the spring and that sort of thing.

Now we see a situation where the salary is not going to be disclosed, and we all know, Mr. Speaker, that, in fact, it will be disclosed at the end of next year. I heard the Member for Edmonton-Centre speak about how any future candidates will know that their salary is going to be released and that that will put a chill on the application process. Well, I couldn't disagree more because the reality is that the salary will be disclosed.

I think it's important that when we have the opportunity to provide as much information to the public as possible – and I also would submit that he's right in situations like this with respect to previous legislation. It should have been done like this in the first place. It doesn't preclude us from being able to do what we're asking to do today. While I understand that the chair would prefer that the normal process take place, it doesn't prevent us from doing this. All candidates that apply to be a legislative officer, you'll know, Mr. Speaker, are fully aware of the fact that their salary will be released, so this in turn would not have a chilling effect in any capacity. It also allows for openness and transparency, for all Albertans to know just exactly what that salary is.

Mr. Speaker, you'll know that I wasn't on the committee, so I don't know the salary that this particular individual is going to get, but what I am very, very, very interested to find out – and hopefully the members opposite will vote in favour of this amendment so that we can all find out sooner than later.

But what I'm very interested to find out is if, in fact, the Election Commissioner, who, you know, some would argue, isn't nearly as robust a position as the Chief Electoral Officer in terms of the total people that they oversee, the total number of tasks that they have to

accomplish – you'll know, Mr. Speaker, that the Election Commissioner has a very prescriptive role that is quite narrow in its scope and that the Chief Electoral Officer has a very broad role, that is very broad in scope. I'm very interested to find out – and hopefully that's this evening, but if not, then when the salary is released – if it will or will not, in fact, be higher than that of the Chief Electoral Officer. I look forward to having that information. I think that it's fair that Albertans would know those sorts of things in advance of that date that is so far away in the future.

These are the types of things that Albertans have come to expect of government. What we see is a say one thing, do another government from this NDP. They say that they want to be open and transparent, and then when they're provided the opportunity to be open and transparent, they duck and cover behind process. They use process when it's beneficial to them all sorts of times. We heard the Minister of Transportation say that they've taken seven months, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that there is an individual that's overseeing the market surveillance agency – I believe that's the name of it – that is heavily involved in the electricity industry, but fewer, I believe, than 90 days to rush this process through and make sure that the Election Commissioner is appointed. Now they're using process of a different form to hide behind releasing the salary number.

It is a very, very, very reasonable amendment. There are all sorts of good reasons for every member in the Assembly to vote in favour of this particular amendment, and I would encourage all members of the Assembly to do just that.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie under 29(2)(a).

Mr. Malkinson: That's correct, Mr. Speaker. It was great listening to the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, who, of course, you know, on the opposition benches is perhaps the strongest member when it comes to his understanding of the procedures in this House. I've heard him go many times toe to toe with our House leader, often unsuccessfully. But he has, I would say, probably about the best batting average of anyone.

He was going on and saying that this amendment is important, that there are serious concerns. Well, Mr. Speaker, I wonder what those serious concerns are. Is the reason that, you know, we need to know this wage right away because we're worried about the office budget for the new commissioner? Well, that's already been approved by the committee. Is he worried about it becoming public? Well, as my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Centre already explained earlier in debate in great detail, in fact there is legislation called the sunshine list that will have that information become public in its due time, like for all other officers of the Legislature whose wage is at a level that requires disclosure.

Now, he says, you know, that we are a say one thing, do another government. I disagree with that. I would say that we are a say one thing and do what we mean government. We passed, Mr. Speaker, Bill 32, which triggered the search committee, which was there to get big money out of politics, which was to ensure our elections were fair. We decided to pick a candidate, Mr. Gibson. With the debate that's gone on so far, it seems to be that individual members of the opposition are trying to make hay out of this issue, which is, frankly, contrary to any HR practice I have ever seen, whether in this House or whether in the private sector.

8:20

You know, the Member for Airdrie claims that disclosing a salary before the new officer is even in the position is somehow normal, that it's usual. I would say that it is, in fact, very unusual. I would say that the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, again, being one of the more knowledgeable members on parliamentary

procedure and how this House works, ought to know that, Mr. Speaker. He ought to know that.

So I disagree with this assertion that this amendment is needed, that it's required. I would say that this amendment is, I would perhaps suggest, of a purpose to attempt to cast shade over a new officer of the Legislature and is unnecessary and counter to the good parliamentary procedure of this House.

Mr. Gibson is well known throughout Canada for his expertise in elections. It is sought out by the government of Canada. He has been working with the conservative government of Saskatchewan over the last number of years. With that, I think his knowledge is truly – without a doubt he was the best person for the job. That is why a majority of the members on the committee voted to recommend Mr. Gibson.

I believe that this particular amendment is not helpful. I think we should vote on this. I will encourage all members of this House to vote against this amendment. It is against normal practice. It is not helpful to having Mr. Gibson start setting up the office, and it is unnecessary.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Cooper: I would like to publicly disclose the payment of \$20 for your generous comments.

The Speaker: Hon. members, every day is a surprise in here. That is the first one I've seen. I'm not sure if that's in order or not. [interjections] I didn't think it was. I'm sure you were jesting – right? – hon. member.

Mr. Cooper: Of course.

The Speaker: Of course.

Might I just remind all of you: it's not a science, but it is a bit of an art form. Standing Order 29(2)(a) is intended to address questions and additional enlightenment to the House rather than consuming all of the five minutes yourself. I urge you all to rethink that as we move forward.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of my colleague from Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills he apologizes for that. Although it was in jest, he didn't want to disrupt the dignity of the House. That's what I'll say about that although I will say that I'm sure that in the next election, when he puts on his brochure that he's the favourite UCP member as voted on by the NDP, that will not help his re-election prospects at all. I'm just saying. I thought it was appropriate to do that.

Mr. Speaker, as I understand it, Leg. Offices used to disclose at one point all of the salaries of the officers, but be that as it may, it's a little rich for the government members to talk the way they do. Listen, I don't have a beef with them taking great interest in talking about the salaries of the agencies, boards, and commissions. They did their very best to make political hay out of that with no regard for the individuals involved, and that's fine. Actually, I'm okay with that. I'm okay with that because that's part of their job in the same way it's part of our job to talk about the salaries of people that the taxpayers are paying for. It's the way it goes.

I also note that the minister of postsecondary didn't seem to have a problem with disclosing I think it was the salary of the president of the University of Alberta. I'm not sure that that was normal. Nonetheless, he did it, in my view, for political expediency at one point and, I think, irritated the individual whose salary he disclosed. But it's not about irritating people; it's about transparency, Mr. Speaker. It's about: if you're paying somebody's salary, especially

in a key position, you have the right to know how much salary you are paying for that person in the key position. It's fair ball.

I heard some comments from the Member for Edmonton-Centre about: it's the law. Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't disagree with him, but this is the place where we make the law. That's why we come here. That's what we do here. When you want to stop making law, then maybe you want to stop coming here, as I would say to any member.

It's a little rich for the government to go on at length time after time after time and on issue after issue after issue and claim to be in favour of transparency and be in favour of being open to disclosure and to all of a sudden, when it suits their – I don't know what their political purpose is. That's what's really funny. You would think that the folks on the other side would be lining up and jumping in front of each other to say: of course we'll let the taxpayers know what they're paying for the services of an independent officer of the Legislative Assembly. I believe that they know what all the other independent officers of the Assembly are making.

This is not really out of the realm of what's ordinary except that they seem to have some motive – and I don't know what it is – to not disclose this particular salary. It's very unusual that they're this emotional and this upset and this wound up – wound up, I would say – about protecting one piece of information when so many other similar pieces of information are already available. You know, I could tell also because even the Government House Leader can't wait to get on his feet. He's just been not quiet for two seconds while this has been going on though he hasn't yet been recognized by the chair, which is interesting. It tells me that we're on the right track in asking for this, Mr. Speaker, when we get the most accomplished and experienced members on the government side that can't contain themselves at all.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: I'm sorry. I can contain myself no longer, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member is making suggestions about what I'm saying in this House which are simply untrue. I'm just sitting here. I made, you know, one little comment, under my breath, I might add. He's just carrying on and simply being rather distant from the truth in this matter.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I wonder. I'm just looking. Do you have something in your eye?

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Point made. That was skilfully done.

I would say to you that when you have the most accomplished members of the other side of the House unable to contain themselves, it's a pretty good sign that as opposition we're on something that has made the government very uncomfortable in their skin. That's usually a sign that the government is second-guessing their own position on an issue. It's a good sign that the government is second-guessing their position on this issue because it's a position they ought to be uncomfortable with. It's a position against transparency. It's a position against openness. It's a position against what's in the taxpayers' interest. It's a position which is against what I believe is in the best interests of Albertans.

You know what, Mr. Speaker? If you had an employee, you would probably know about what you're paying them. If you had a big business and you had a thousand employees, you might not know what you're paying every one of them, but I can assure you that you would know pretty close what you're paying to your key employees in the key positions of influence. This is one of those situations where an employee is being considered to be hired in a

key position of influence. The government wants to hide the salary. It doesn't make sense. It's inconsistent with transparency. It's inconsistent with accountability. It's inconsistent with openness. It's inconsistent with everything the government claims – and "claims" is the key word – to support.

8:30

Of course, when it suits their purposes, they're very keen to jump up and disclose salaries of people on every agency, board, and commission, the University of Alberta, senior executives, you know, by the minister, but for some reason – for some reason – the government is so secretive and protective about this one number, which will become public at some point anyways. It really ought to cause the voters and the taxpayers of Alberta to say: what is it that the government is trying to hide? I don't know what it could be. It's a number.

Everybody deserves to get paid when they go to work. Nobody should be troubled that if this person gets hired, they get paid to go to work. It's the way the world works. I would submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that – well, I'd have to test my own resolve – many members of this House may not show up next week if they stopped getting paid. On the other hand, I give credit to members of this House, on all sides for the record, the government side and the opposition side, that many of us might actually show up next week because this is such a privileged place to be even if we didn't get paid.

However, what's interesting is that the government seems so reluctant to disclose this one particular number for this one particular key potential employee of the taxpayers. It really begs the question: why? It begs the question: why? It begs the question of why they get on their high horse and try to talk as if they're above the issue when this isn't an issue that you want to be above. This is an issue where, like the opposition, you want to be on the same level as the taxpayers and the citizens of Alberta, protecting their interests, not above them saying: "Oh, no; you couldn't possibly. This information is okay for us, but it's not okay for you." That's what the government is saying. The opposition is saying: "We're like you. We're like you, Albertans. We should all know that it's not a big deal." The government is saying: "No. We're above you. We're allowed to know, and you're not." It's inconsistent.

Now, the government can still save themselves at this point just by voting for this amendment, in which case the public might say: "Okay. The Member for Calgary-Hays might not have gotten it right. He might have been too hard on those nice government people in accusing them of being above the public and not giving the public information that they can have." But so far it hasn't happened. So far I haven't seen an indication that the government is prepared, as the opposition is, to be on the same level as Alberta taxpayers, as Alberta voters and say: you're potentially going to pay this person.

Listen, all work – first, let me say this, Mr. Speaker; it's important to say this – is valuable, all work has dignity, and all work matters. There's no such thing as unimportant work. In fairness to all of the public servants, I think it's more important for the public to know the salary of a key player in the civil service than it is for them to know the salary of every rank-and-file employee in every important job that matters to Alberta citizens that is out there. This is a different matter.

Mr. Speaker, it goes even beyond that. It goes to democracy. What is the salary of someone that may have a key role in major decisions that may decide the next election of Alberta? Now the issue gains great importance. The issue really comes to the confidence of Albertans in the democratic process, and that's really at the nub of what we're talking about here.

If you were actually talking about an individual that might have a role in deciding one or more seats in the next provincial election, the next time that the voters and taxpayers get to go to the polls in Alberta and decide who they want to lead their province, and the government is saying, "Oh, no; you can't have key information about those people that can make these decisions, that could turn one or more seats in the next election" – I don't know. I think that if I was an Albertan at home watching this, I'd say, "I'm uncomfortable with the government's position." In fact, I'm pretty sure I'd say, "I'm really comfortable with the opposition's position," because when I vote for somebody, I want it to be – listen, I'm not saying that it's going to happen, but I'm going to say that it gives confidence to the public that the interests that affect them will be dealt with in a balanced way when key pieces of information about key players are open to the public. Simple as that. I think that now we're talking at a level that all Albertans, from every walk of life, could understand and appreciate.

Actually, I think the government appreciates it while they're hearing this now, and I'm not sure that they thought about it in the way that I'm talking about it before now. Maybe they did. But I'm kind of hoping, Mr. Speaker, that they're thinking now, "Well, when I go back to my constituency on the weekend, I don't want people stopping me in the grocery store and in the park and wherever else I go," because we all get stopped everywhere we go, "and saying . . ."

Mr. Mason: Slow down.

Mr. McIver: There we go. The Government House Leader, Mr. Speaker, has got something in his eye again, I think.

I don't think that they want to be saying, "Why are you hiding a key piece of information about a key player that might have a key role in deciding some of the seats in the next election?" I'm thinking to myself that they might say: "I don't know. I might actually be prone to supporting a party that would share that information with me as opposed to a party that would hide that information from me."

But, Mr. Speaker, the government has this decision to make. The opposition has provided them a wonderful opportunity to say to the people of Alberta: "We're equal with you. We're not above you. We trust you to have key pieces of information about people that could affect how your vote is considered in the next election and who it's considered for." I would think that the government members might actually be more comfortable with their answer in the grocery store or at the park next weekend when they can say: "Yeah, I believe in transparency. It's not just something we said and then ignored. It's something we said and stood behind, and when the opposition brought this forward, of course we supported it. Of course we did. Of course we trust you to have this information, voters and members of the public of Alberta, because we are equal with you, not above you. We believe that you're entitled to this piece of information as much as we are because you have a direct interest. It potentially could affect you and your family, the decisions that this particular key player could make, and consequently we are okay with having transparency about that." I still remain hopeful that the government members will look at this and say, "Yes, we are equal to the voters, not above them, and we are going to support this amendment."

The Speaker: Any questions under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Calgary-Hays? The Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for kindly recognizing me. I'm sure that that's something you would afford the Government House Leader from time to time as well when he gets up to speak.

I just wanted to offer some points of clarification for the Member for Calgary-Hays. He mentioned me a couple of times, Mr. Speaker, and I'm very flattered that he's paying so much attention to me this evening. He suggested, perhaps, that I revealed the salary of the University of Alberta president for political purposes, and I have to just stand up and say how deeply offended I am that he would make such a suggestion. Far be it from me or anyone on this side to deal in public-sector salaries for purely political purposes. You know, normally I would ask the member to offer an apology for making such deeply offensive statements, but I know that they are often too busy asking me to apologize for the things that I say about them. So in the spirit of generosity – I'm letting the milk of human kindness flow through my veins here – we'll just call it even on that point.

8:40

But I do want to just remind the member opposite, because he seems to be so keen on promoting transparency, that in fact one of the reasons that he finds himself on the opposition benches today is because his government refused to offer that kind of transparency when offered the chance prior to 2015. In fact, the reason that the public knows the president of the University of Alberta's salary, among all of the other presidents' salaries, is because of legislation that this government passed. We extended the sunshine list to cover all public-sector employees in all agencies, boards, and commissions, something that the member opposite refused to do when he had the chance, when he was in government, Mr. Speaker. So, you know, it wasn't me who personally, secretly revealed the contract that the president of the University of Alberta had signed with the board of governors. It was legislation that let the sunshine in and let all of the people of Alberta know the salaries that every university president was taking.

Like I said, I will offer my forgiveness pre-emptively to the Member for Calgary-Hays so that he doesn't have to, you know, go through the process of apologizing to me for making suggestions that I would be revealing this information for political purposes.

The Speaker: Hon. member, you have used half the time already, so you're getting to my discussion earlier about 29(2)(a). I'm waiting with bated breath to hear you move.

Mr. Schmidt: Mr. Speaker, please forgive me. I'm a little bit clouded at this late hour. It's taking me longer than normal to get to my point.

I do have a question, Mr. Speaker, for the Member for Calgary-Hays, because he's very keen to know the salary that this official is going to be paid. I know that that party opposite is campaigning on tax cuts for rich people. They really love to give tax cuts to people who make, you know, salaries that are in the range that they're talking about. I'm wondering if the member opposite is so keen to learn this person's salary so that he knows whether or not they're going to be offering him a tax cut in the next election and if that would perhaps change the member's opinion, because I know that they really like rich people. They seem to have something against this particular person. I'd just like the member opposite to tell us, knowing that he is a rich person, that the parties opposite are particularly fond of favouring, if that would change his opinion of this particular . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, let's give the hon. member a chance to respond.

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, since the hon. minister was so gracious, far be it from me to be less than gracious at this point.

But I would say, as an answer, that unlike the hon. minister's party, we're interested in giving tax cuts to all Albertans, rich and

poor. Should we be blessed with the opportunity to be the government and Bill 1 ditches the carbon tax, every Albertan will get a tax cut, rich or poor, on that important day, and we can't wait to deliver on that promise. But we need to be humble. We need to work hard. We need to earn every vote. We need to actually earn the trust of Albertans. We should never take it for granted. [interjections] Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, I'm answering the hon. minister's question. So, yes, we will be happy to offer that tax cut to all Albertans, rich and poor.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Yao: Why, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to speak on the hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock's motion.

Mr. van Dijken: BMW.

Mr. Yao: BMW.

"Be it further resolved that following the passage of this motion, the Election Commissioner's salary be posted publicly on the website." Mr. Speaker, transparency and accountability: two words that are not in the New Democratic dictionary. I'm actually very concerned here because we have to look at what the question is, what is being asked. What is being asked for is the salary of a public servant being posted. Now, there is that technicality that he hasn't been paid for it yet, but I would question that. At any job people have an expectation as to what their salary is and should know it, especially if it is a salary that is paid for by taxpayers. Perhaps the public should know what they're paying and what they're paying for.

Mr. Speaker, believe it or not, your salary – and you are in one of the highest positions in the province of Alberta, sir. Your job is to herd cats. Your job is to make sure that all of these politicians toe the line and maintain a certain level of . . .

An Hon. Member: Decorum.

Mr. Yao: . . . decorum. Thank you for that.

So when you look at what we're asking . . .

The Speaker: I'm going to take that as a compliment.

Mr. Yao: Yes, sir. It is, absolutely.

But, I mean, in the scheme of things, we've got to think about what we're asking. We're asking for a salary to be disclosed so that the public knows. I wish there were some media here, and maybe they're listening. Maybe they could do a poll in one of their newspapers asking the question: should the Election Commissioner's salary be disclosed? Do you not think the public would like to know? I hope that if there are any media listening, they consider polling their readers, their viewers, all, and asking that question.

Furthermore, sir, I am surprised at the comments from the Member for Edmonton-Centre. He talks about the fact that it is a disturbing situation that we are asking for a salary to be disclosed, that it is insulting to somebody that the salary be disclosed, that it may not be appropriate practice to disclose the salary of this public servant who is an Election Commissioner, which, as has been expressed by my colleagues, is a new position. Someone mentioned it's redundant, like many of the members over there.

Mr. Speaker, there is a concern about transparency and accountability and about the salary being disclosed. It is about ensuring that everything is on the up and up, that everything is being treated fairly. It'd be surprising to find out after the salary is

disclosed that, say, perhaps he makes more than the Chief Electoral Officer – wouldn't that be something? – or is paid an outrageous sum of money, even above and beyond what the Premier makes. Wouldn't that be something? Hidden until June 2019, right after the election, well, the anticipated time of the election: it makes a person wonder what they are hiding and why.

Both sides talk about publishing salaries of public servants, and we all agree, because for everyone in here, our salaries are disclosed. Every single expense is scrutinized. We all have to go visit the Ethics Commissioner to ensure that even our personal dealings do not conflict with our government or legislated elected positions. That's why I am appalled – appalled – sir. I'm appalled that they wouldn't want to disclose this salary. You know, it's very disappointing. I had higher hopes for the group over here. For them to fight this one aspect of this bill, to disclose a salary, is disheartening to many out there.

I guess, in the end, sir, I think it would be appropriate practice to disclose his salary. His position is no more important than anyone else in this House and in the higher levels of government. It's disappointing. It's unfortunate, especially for a redundant position.

I know this government understands redundant positions because in, like, the Ministry of Health, as per the Auditor General, there is duplication of the administration at the highest levels. I wonder if the Health minister has spent time in the last three years taking a look at any of those positions that the Auditor General talked about and has looked at any of that duplication and if she has even considered some of the comments he made about how this duplication of bureaucracy at the highest levels of Alberta Health is actually impairing our health system. At the very least, you wonder if they couldn't eliminate some of that duplication of administration at the highest levels and route some of that money down to the front-line services. Certainly, that's how we would ensure there are front-line services.

Again, Mr. Speaker, this is disappointing. It truly is. We're asking for a salary to be disclosed, a single salary of a new position. When you put out the ads for this job, did you actually advertise a salary range in there? Did you demonstrate anything? If we know the range, why not identify how much exactly this person is being paid? How much was the deal that was settled upon, that this individual will get X number of dollars?

8:50

Mr. Malkinson: It'll be disclosed.

Mr. Yao: Yes, disclosed in June 2019, long after – well, ideally for them after – the next election, because I think that perhaps they feel the salary that this fellow is getting might be a detriment to the next election. That's all I can think of for why they would want to hide this. It's disappointing. If it's legislated, they also have the ability to repair that, to fix that, to ensure that this salary is disclosed.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I do express my concerns as to why they're fighting this, and I would be disappointed should they not vote in favour of this amendment provided by my hon. colleague, which is a reasonable amendment. It is just unfortunate, sir. It's very disappointing. I'm sure that the people of Alberta will see this and have the same questions as we do as to why they wouldn't disclose a single salary, yet we live in an environment where salaries are disclosed, where we talk about transparency and accountability.

With that, sir, I thank you for your time, and good luck.

The Speaker: Under 29(2)(a), the Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Malkinson: That is correct, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Five minutes.

Mr. Malkinson: Also correct, Mr. Speaker. Otherwise, I may be trading bills with the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Listening to the hon. member's comments, you know, there were definitely some names being called over there that we are redundant. The hon. member seems to be very confident that he is going to be on this side of the House, and I would perhaps suggest that my takeaway from that is that I should be investing in tinfoil stock.

Specifically, to provide an answer to some of the member's questions, yes, in fact, the Election Commissioner's wages will indeed be disclosed. He asked if the range is public, and yes, indeed, it is because there were ads that went out for it. You know, the hon. member did go on at length to say that this position is redundant. Bill 32 specifically created the Election Commissioner. The Chief Electoral Officer would be responsible for the administration of the electoral process, but the new Election Commissioner's job would be to ensure that our democracy runs smoothly, Mr. Speaker, both inside and outside of the election period. A similar system is already in place federally as well as in Manitoba and has been very successful in ensuring fairness and accountability in those jurisdictions.

My question for the hon. member. Ensuring electoral fairness, accountability, and to make sure that nothing nefarious is happening in our elections: how is that redundant? Mr. Speaker, that is my question for the member.

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, he just explained the role of the Chief Electoral Officer. Again, all those things are right in there. The Election Commissioner is a new position. It is redundant. You can look at the job description. It's pretty straightforward. I do understand, again, how this government would create this new position and enjoys building the bureaucracy. Again, when we look at the Ministry of Health, we see that duplication. We see that heavy administration.

It's just so unfortunate that they would not consider providing the salary of this. I mean, the question, sir, is: what are they hiding, why are they hiding it, and to what extent would they want to hide it till June 2019? They have the ability to ensure that this information is provided. They have the ability to ensure that the people of Alberta, citizens that are paying their salaries and that are paying the salary of this Election Commissioner, have comfort knowing that they're paying a fair price for this. It'd be interesting to find out afterwards if it was an outrageous salary. I'd be interested to see the backlash of it.

You know, maybe you're building this second position because you had no trust in the electoral process. Certainly, everyone wonders how the government got into place in the first place, don't they? I mean, maybe there was some suspicious stuff.

The Speaker: Careful. Careful. [interjections]

Keep it down, folks. Keep it down.

Mr. Yao: Why, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do appreciate when you shut down the government side once in a while there because their heckling is harsh, sir. Their heckling is harsh. All we hear is heckling from that side all the time. That's just their way, sir. I'm not going to fault them for it. It's just the way they are.

Now, back to transparency and accountability, sir. Again, what are they hiding? Why are they trying to discourage us, why are they trying to bully us over here from asking these questions about what the salary is? It is interesting. You know what? Ultimately, the citizens of Alberta will find out, and they'll understand, the sooner the better, the repercussions of holding something out from the people that pay you. Then, you know, there will be – there are always repercussions, sir. There are always repercussions.

Mr. Mason: A day of reckoning.

Mr. Yao: A day of reckoning, yes, sir. Minister of Transportation, I agree wholeheartedly. A day of reckoning.

The Speaker: The Member for Drayton Valley-Devon on amendment A1.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to be able to stand up and speak to amendment A1 from the hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock. I would like to get into a conversation that I had last night, that I think speaks to the amendment that's before us today. I had the opportunity to meet with five or six people last night in my constituency, all of them businesspeople. All of them were wondering how they were going to meet the taxation demands that are being placed on them. Prices are rising. Taxes are rising. Their companies have faced very hard times and difficult times over the last three years. One company has gone from a company of 40, 50 people down to literally a family of four or five individuals.

These are the people that are wondering how our tax dollars are being spent. They're suffering. So when we come in here and we do not take the finances of this province seriously, they get very frustrated. They're wondering why we cannot find the savings that are necessary to be able to balance budgets and to be able to live within our means. When we focus in on the issue that's being addressed here for amendment A1, they would want to know what this individual, this Election Commissioner, is going to be paid.

Part of the problem that I've heard tonight is that this committee that has recommended the appointment of this individual did not function in a fashion that was expected, I think, by either the people of Alberta or that the people of that committee should have expected. When we are appointing somebody to a position that's as important as an Election Commissioner, there should be a nonpartisan atmosphere and a co-operation amongst the members of that committee, and when that has not occurred, then the trust tends to be broken. When that trust is broken, then the opposition must do its job. The opposition must begin asking questions. The opposition must begin asking questions that maybe the government isn't going to feel comfortable with. Some of those questions will revolve around the salaries that we pay the individuals in government.

9:00

I'm sure this Election Commissioner is very qualified – I've heard people say that in the House today – but I also know that this individual is not without controversy and that one of the questions that the opposition has brought forward is: why would we be willing to spend significant amounts of taxpayers' dollars on an individual when there is some controversy behind that individual? So asking, I believe, for the salary of this individual prior to June 2019 is not an unreasonable thing.

I believe that everybody in this House must remember – and sometimes we have to be reminded – that our bosses are the people of Alberta. They're the ones that elect us. They're the ones that place their trust in us. We, I believe, quite wisely as a Legislature have made the decision that we will have a sunshine list, and we have placed ourselves on that sunshine list. I believe it's a good decision. I believe that we had all-party support with that decision. I also believe that because the people of Alberta are our bosses, they should have the right to know, when this individual is hired, what they are going to be paying this individual.

I don't buy the line that this will put a chill on the hiring of future bureaucrats into the government of Alberta. That doesn't sound

right to me, and here's why. Anybody that places their name into the realm of asking to be hired by the citizens of Alberta through their Legislature understands that their salary, assuming that it reaches the threshold, will be made public. Because they understand that before they ever place their hat in the ring, it will not be a shock to them, and it should not be an issue when it comes to the Election Commissioner.

We understand that in this Legislature we have a rare privilege of being able to make the rules and the laws of this province. We can decide in this Legislature whether we will publish the salary and expect that salary to be made known prior to the hiring of this individual. We have that capacity. I believe that the people of Alberta would support that, and I believe that if we came together in this House tonight in a nonpartisan fashion in support of this amendment, we would be doing the job that this committee obviously had a tough time doing. We are talking about a foundation stone in our province of Alberta. It's the democratic political system that we all support in this House. It must be run on a nonpartisan basis, where there is openness and transparency at every level.

I see, Mr. Speaker, that this amendment A1 is a reasonable amendment. It, I believe, respects the taxpayers of Alberta. It respects the voters of Alberta. It creates an openness and transparency that will provide confidence to the people of Alberta that with whoever is being hired, they are getting good value and fair value for their money. We know that this has created problems for governments all over this country and, in the past, in this province. When we find out that the people that are working on our behalf are receiving compensation that is not fair value, where they are being overcompensated – as a matter of fact, I'm sure that probably most of us, if we stay in this job long enough, will probably have somebody come up to us and say that we are overcompensated.

You know, I think that the process that we're going through here tonight is a valuable one, but I would hope that the government and the people on the government benches would be listening and considering the people of Alberta and their need and their desire to be able to be sure that the people that work on their behalf, the people that serve them, that an Election Commissioner, that is supposed to be serving the people of Alberta, is receiving fair compensation for the job that they will be performing.

I would ask that this House would consider supporting this amendment. I believe that it would be the first step in a process that has been far too partisan, that would become far easier for us to be able to explain to the people of Alberta if, when we meet in this House, we can do so beyond partisanship in a way that actually reflects the needs and the desires and the wishes of the people of this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Are there any questions under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon?

Seeing and hearing none, the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, it's always such a privilege to be able to rise and speak to, well, pretty much, I mean, anything. It's just a privilege to be here all the time. This is especially important.

The Speaker: You're not under 29(2)(a)?

Mrs. Aheer: No, sir. I'm talking to the amendment. Thank you.

I just wanted to say, Mr. Speaker, that I'm going to cover a few points that have already been covered, but I think it's worth while

saying it again. There have been many comments from the government with respect to the chilling effect of releasing the salary – I just can't imagine why – that it's highly inappropriate, that we're targeting Mr. Gibson, a whole bunch of different things along those lines.

I just wanted to read – and I will happily table this tomorrow – from the *StarMetro Edmonton*. Just to be clear, as we know, there was a range, so declaring the salary is really not that big a deal because, interestingly enough, the Election Commissioner is going to be somewhere within that range. This comes from this particular article. "The election commissioner, when appointed, could earn up to \$212,801 in annual salary for a period of five years." That's actually stated in the newspaper. It's no surprise. There's no chilling effect. There's transparency there, and it gives a fairly solid idea of where we might end up as a possibility at the top end. What is actually disclosed in that newspaper: that's the top salary for the most years. We're talking about a person who comes to us with a tremendous amount of baggage, to be truthful – not to say that he's not qualified; he certainly is – and potential stigma that actually will not rest with us. It will rest with the government.

To be clear, the part that I think is the most confusing, sir, is that this will be disclosed. There is pretty much a very, very strong idea of what that might be in a newspaper that's already been revealed, and truthfully the member's amendment gives the government the ability for full transparency before it's done. Talk about stepping above and beyond on behalf of Albertans. I mean, as you know, Mr. Speaker, in Bill 32 we adamantly opposed the appointment of this person. Adamantly, very vocally we did. So to the credit of the member, the member is giving the government, actually, the opportunity to clarify the need for this person to justify their salary to Albertans and especially when it was very clear on this side that this person, we felt – I mean, I'll read again from this article. We "questioned the need for an elections commissioner, arguing Chief Electoral Officer Glen Resler is more than capable of handling such investigations as part of his existing role." We didn't just make that up.

9:10

It's quite interesting to me that already in the newspaper – I mean, maybe the government already spoke with the folks in the media and gave them an understanding, which is interesting. If you're not going to disclose it to Albertans, how would the media get that? It's not like they're giving the range in there: "when appointed, could earn up to \$212,801 in annual salary for a period of five years."

Here's the interesting thing, Mr. Speaker. We're simply giving the government the opportunity to do the right thing. I understand that it's not the normal process. I understand that it's not the way things have been done before, but again this is a fairly controversial appointment. It's not like it was just something that happened, that a person was appointed. You know the most amazing part about this? We actually had an opportunity for consensus. Given that and given that there is an obvious concern here, an obvious concern for transparency and accountability, what a wonderful way for the government to start off on this, because this is their choice. This person is their designated person to take on this role. What a wonderful way to start it off.

Instead of using the processes, the reason, or that Mr. Gibson is being targeted or that there is a chill or that it is highly inappropriate, they would have the opportunity to be highly appropriate to remove all of the language from it and give the opportunity for Albertans to see the government be transparent with their hard-earned dollars. Remember that this is not our money. This is Albertans' money, and every Albertan who volunteers,

participates, tries to be elected, works in any capacity for any politician will be impacted by this person.

The truth is that if the government was willing to share that information, it might add some credibility to their decision. I think it was a wonderful opportunity, brought forward by the member, for the government to actually be able to do that. I don't know why that language is being used in a different way in order to cloud the idea of allowing people to know what that disclosure is, that dollar amount, when we all know that it will be disclosed eventually. It makes absolutely no sense to suggest that in any way that would change Mr. Gibson's decision to be here or come here. He's already made the decision. He knows what he's getting paid. He knows how long his term is for. I'm sure – I'm fairly certain – that he's probably told people. I'm sure they've asked.

Is he under the same rules and regulations? He's not allowed to disclose what he's making? Is he not allowed to tell anybody? Is he under those same rules? Does he have to follow that process, Mr. Speaker? I'm just curious, because that would be interesting. If he doesn't have to follow the process and isn't under the same rules and regulations, as was said by Edmonton-Centre, of the due process, are there any concerns or things that we need to be worried about should he disclose what he's doing?

We had just an amazing group of folks that applied for this position, and Mr. Gibson was definitely well qualified, no doubt, but for the government to be able to justify this decision for this person – you know, I wanted to bring up a couple of other things just to give you some ideas about why we were concerned on this side. The year that this happened, in 2008, it was the lowest voter turnout. It was deemed as being poorly organized. A couple of the things that were really major issues, Mr. Speaker, were around voter lists and polls. People did not know where to poll, and they were getting the wrong information as to where to vote, and on top of that, they weren't on voter lists. Every single constituency reported this back.

Now, my understanding is that for whatever reason that was part of this particular issue and part of the reason why Lorne Gibson did not have his contract renewed in the first place. It's interesting, because people will say that he was fired, that he was let go. None of those things, Mr. Speaker. In fact, he just didn't have his contract renewed. So he comes with that stigma. He comes with that baggage. Why not pass an amendment that begins with clarity . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, I'll just remind you: speak to the amendment. Keep to the amendment.

Mrs. Aheer: Yes, sir.

Why not acknowledge this amendment that gives credibility to the government, that has chosen a controversial figure, and start everything off on the right foot? Albertans are going to know. They're going to research. They're going to find out. They're not going to be pleased about this decision. I can guarantee you that if partisanship in any way shows its face in this, the government will wear that. So why not start off on the right foot, show transparency and accountability, show Albertans that you care about their hard-earned tax dollars? That is actually our responsibility up here. Give them the privilege of understanding what we are privileged to understand in here. Allow them to understand that the government feels that this is a necessary step in making sure – again, to quote from the article First Election Commissioner Tasked with Rooting out "Dark Money," that's his goal. That's one of the reasons he's being hired. If that is the goal of this government, if that's what they're wanting to do, why not use this member's amendment to start off on the right foot? If that's the reason, that would resonate with Albertans, I'm sure.

But they've chosen a person who has a history here, who has a history with previous governments. They're not willing to disclose what he makes, and then, on top of that, they say that we're targeting him. Well, no, we're not. We didn't agree with this appointment in the first place. We're not targeting any person. We're targeting the fact that the office exists at all, and therefore, based on that conclusion, we believe that Albertans also deserve to understand how much we are paying for a person that this side of the House did not believe was a necessary requirement, especially given the fact, Mr. Speaker, that Mr. Resler himself had said that he's quite capable of handling the work within his office.

Like I said, I'll happily table this tomorrow.

I believe sincerely that the most important thing that we can do as legislators, Mr. Speaker, is to provide Albertans with clarity and understanding about the decisions and the choices that we make. We've made it very clear that we're not thrilled with the decision that was made on this particular person, but the government can give back to Albertans by justifying their choice and letting Albertans know what the cost is for this person. There's going to need to be a justification for that as we go forward because this person will be hired soon.

Mr. Gibson will be coming on soon, and he will be performing his duties very soon, and Albertans are going to want to know how much he is being paid for this job. The member across the way had mentioned that we'd said that the government is redundant. No. We believe this position is redundant. If you're going to justify having this position and you're going to pay, potentially, as much as \$212,000, well, almost \$213,000 in annual salary for a five-year period, I think you owe that – because that's not a small amount of money.

9:20

If that is what the final decision is going to be by this government, I think you owe it to Albertans to let them know what they're getting, the value for their dollar, in a person that is going to be very involved with every part of the election campaigns at a very grassroots and in a lot of places, Mr. Speaker, a family level. A lot of us have our families, our aunts and uncles, brothers and sisters, and everybody working on our campaigns. I'm sure that everybody in this House has had the support of their family, and all of them will be scrutinized, potentially, by this person. So I think that, just with respect to that, they have a right to know how much he is being paid and that they are going to receive value for the dollars that they work so hard to give us to use in appropriate ways in this House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Any questions to the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View under 29(2)(a)?

Any other members who would like to speak to the amendment? The Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, I will not be supporting the amendment. It's very interesting that the entreaties that we get from the other side about behaving in a nonpartisan fashion seem to be comprised primarily of agreeing with the Official Opposition, and that is a nonpartisan move, but what they are doing is, of course, in their view, nonpartisan. But, quite frankly, there's a disagreement on this issue. It's clear that the Official Opposition has disagreement with the creation of this position, and they made that clear during the debate on the bill, but that's now the law of the land. And it's clear that they don't particularly want this particular individual in that position. They've made that clear. Nevertheless, the disclosure has been provided for under legislation, and it will be followed by – and the public will know in due course – what the salary is.* We're going to proceed

in accordance with the law and not in accordance with the whims of the Official Opposition, who are clearly operating out of a fit of pique at not getting their way with respect to this matter.

So, Mr. Speaker, you know, I think that we should not be supporting this motion. But as the hour grows late and we have other business to attend to, I am proposing that we adjourn debate on this government motion and move on to other business.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:23 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Feehan	Miller
Babcock	Fitzpatrick	Miranda
Bilous	Goehring	Payne
Carlier	Hinkley	Phillips
Carson	Hoffman	Piquette
Ceci	Horne	Rosendahl
Connolly	Kazim	Schmidt
Coolahan	Kleinstauber	Schreiner
Dach	Loyola	Shepherd
Dang	Luff	Sucha
Drever	Malkinson	Westhead
Eggen	Mason	Woollard

Against the motion:

Aheer	Loewen	Strankman
Gill	McIver	van Dijken
Gotfried	Pitt	Yao
Hanson	Smith	

Totals: For – 36 Against – 11

[Motion to adjourn debate on amendment A1 carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, I think we should call the bill.

9:40

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 2 Growth and Diversification Act

[Debate adjourned April 4]

The Speaker: The Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 2, the Growth and Diversification Act. This bill is yet another example of classic NDP economic philosophy. This government and their ideological allies believe that every problem arising in economics and society can be solved with the meddling hands of government. I can tell you that I support growth and I support diversification, but I'm not sure that this bill will effectively promote either. For the three years we have seen this government in action, what we have seen is the exact opposite of what this bill claims to promote.

Mr. Speaker, what promotes growth? I would argue that it is lower taxes, less regulation, and a government which doesn't treat wealth-creating private enterprise like the enemy.

*See page 879, right column, paragraph 2

How about diversification? I would suggest that diversification will only come when innovators and entrepreneurs have access to capital, and it is well apparent that much of what this government has done has sent both domestic and international investors fleeing for other jurisdictions. With Alberta business reeling from the destructive policies of the NDP, what have they decided to do? To grace us with yet another government program to try and reverse some of the damage that they have caused.

Mr. Speaker, I would encourage the government, if they truly want growth and diversification, to reverse their antigrowth and antidiversification policies, scrap the carbon tax, reverse their 20 per cent increase in corporate tax, and remove the shackles of regulation that they have placed on free enterprise in this province. Albertans have already suffered the consequences of NDP legislation that was not completely thought through. We look at the legislation that they've brought forward with electricity, how with the first bill dealing with electricity they've created the problem with the Balancing Pool, with companies turning back their contracts, that, of course, the government had to bail out. So we see time and time again this government meddling in business and with contracts that they know nothing about, creating more and more problems that they have to create more legislation to solve. Electricity was a classic example. Of course, their response to the contracts turning back was to sue Alberta companies, costing more money of taxpayers.

I'm worried that this legislation will be yet another example in this worrying trend. Mr. Speaker, I would also like to point out that this isn't the NDP's first shot at this. In 2016 they passed the Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act. While that legislation may have its merits, it certainly hasn't performed the economic miracles that the NDP might have expected it to.

Now, I do just want to take a brief moment in order to comment on something I think this bill gets right, the move to add 3,000 new tech spaces in Alberta postsecondary institutions. I think that is a correct one. In a modern economy the market demands new and changing skill sets, and it is important for our public universities to reflect the skills that are needed by Alberta employers.

Moving on and diving a little deeper into the details, I just want to spend some time to explore some of the ideas this legislation promotes in terms of tax credits. Mr. Speaker, Ronald Reagan has a famous saying on economic policies of the left-wing governments like this one: "If it moves, tax it. If it keeps moving, regulate it. And if it stops moving, subsidize it." He wasn't talking about Alberta's NDP, but if he was, it would have been entirely accurate. This NDP government came to power, and the first approach they took was to tax our industries to death. Between their increase in corporate taxes and their job-killing carbon taxes it was tantamount to an outright attack on the wealth creators of Alberta.

Now, we all know that Albertans and our businesses are resilient, and despite NDP tax increases Albertans kept working to better our province. Just as the saying goes, the regulations came in droves, from Bill 6 attacking farmers and ranchers to overbearing labour legislation on job creators to the premature shutdown of our coal communities. The NDP may have chosen orange as their official colour, but there is certainly no colour they like better than that of red tape or red ink.

Mr. Speaker, that brings me back to tax credits. After the NDP had launched their first bunch of tax increases and their second of overregulation, then they started to notice when our industry stopped moving. It is a shame they didn't notice before their policies contributed to the closure of thousands of businesses and elimination of hundreds of thousands of jobs. We warned this government about this legislation and the damaging effects it would have. We told them what would happen. We told them that there

would be downgrades to the economy and there would be job losses, there would be loss of investment in Alberta, but of course this government didn't listen. They kept on going ahead with their ideology and their plans to destroy our economy. They wouldn't listen to any common-sense ideas that we brought forward.

Now that that has all happened, the NDP has taken to subsidy by tax credit. Mr. Speaker, just as NDP policies have failed in the past, I have no more confidence that they won't fail now as well. A large part of this bill rests on support for industry through tax credits. Tax credits can incent economic activity, but I would question whether they will come anywhere close to making up for the disincentives created by the NDP's other policies. You see, the NDP bring about legislation that kills the economy, and then of course they try to bring in legislation to correct it, where if they had just left a lot of these things alone, we wouldn't have the problems that we have right now.

I would also question the wisdom of the sector-specific credits that this bill extols. When we start handing out favours to specific people and specific industries, we start picking winners and losers. Mr. Speaker, quite often government gets it wrong, and they pick losers. They put money into companies that couldn't make it on their own, and the only way to keep them going is to keep giving them subsidies. That isn't the best use of taxpayers' money.

If you want diversification, you should let the market decide which areas to diversify in, not the government. If you want to use tax credits, then let's have them available to a variety and range of sectors, not just those that the front bench opposite happens to grace with their favour on any particular day. This kind of narrow targeting has been the ongoing strategy of this government, and it is immensely unfair. Not only does it effectively penalize those in industries which do not receive support through tax credits, but it also serves to distort market allocations of investment and resources, something we know to produce the most effective and efficient economic activity in the vast majority of circumstances.

We also need to look back at the way tax credit programs have performed in Alberta in the past. Were the objectives of past legislation met? Did the relief get to those who needed it the most? What kind of returns did we see? Before we utilize the power of government, we should see if these industries can attract private capital and succeed on their own.

The point has been raised by the government that some of the tax credits addressed by this bill, particularly the digital media tax credit, these targeted tax credits, exist in other provinces, and Alberta needs to offer them in order to be competitive. Mr. Speaker, just because another province does something doesn't mean Alberta needs to follow suit. In fact, our province has a long history of going its own way. For decades this meant, because of our free-market policies, Alberta was not only the most competitive place to do business in Canada but one of the top places in North America and the world.

Mr. Speaker, you know, while I'm standing here talking and listening to some of the comments from the government side, I'm kind of reminded of the government's Bill 1. That was supposed to create jobs. Lots of money available; created one job, the job for the minister. He's the one that's beaking off the most right now. We'll let him keep talking, and we'll let the facts lay where they may, a complete failure, Bill 1. That's the minister's responsibility right there, so keep talking, Minister.

Meanwhile, Ontario and Quebec, which have policies similar to this, have seen fleeting investment and a poor business atmosphere for years. Now, the government certainly has a disconnect with the average Albertan, but I can guarantee that if you asked the people on the main streets of this province, they will take the Alberta way over the alternative.

9:50

Also, looking at the implementation of the Alberta investor tax credit, which was introduced last year and offers many similarities to what is being proposed, we can see that there were critical problems in that process. There are no assurances that this new tax credit would not run into the same troubles. We don't even have access to program and application details for this proposed credit, details that would be necessary to facilitate a proper and fulsome debate on it.

Mr. Speaker, there was a day not too long ago in this province when the Alberta advantage gave our companies a leg up against those in other jurisdictions. That is all that Albertans and our businesses want. They want a chance to make something without the government getting in the way. They want a fair playing field, a reasonable regime of limited taxation and regulation. They want to stop the outflow of investment dollars and talented people. They want, instead, to make sure the things leaving our borders are our economic products, whether it be oil and gas or anything else.

Mr. Speaker, we had a chance to discuss some of this in estimates, where we've seen this government's regulations stopping billions of dollars of investment coming into this province. Now you can hear the government members beaking off over there, talking and sniping, comments back and forth here, but obviously they can't understand the failure of what they've done. They don't understand the failure of their meddling in the electricity market. They don't understand how regulations are stopping business in Alberta.

Now, obviously, time and time again we've told this government: "Don't do this. Don't do that. It's going to hurt the economy." What do they do? They keep going that same direction. We've seen the same thing with pipelines, where we told them a long time ago and the B.C. government told them a long time ago that there were going to be problems with this. And what did they do? They did nothing. They sat on their hands and waited and waited and waited until it was too late. [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. member.

Keep going.

Mr. Loewen: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that.

This is the fundamental misunderstanding of the NDP when it comes to this kind of diversification legislation. In the period between 1985 and 2013, when Alberta was absent of socialist government, the energy sector as a percentage of GDP went from more than 36 per cent to less than 25 per cent. This wasn't a result of weakness in our energy industry, nor the result of diversification handouts or boutique tax credits; it was the result of a competitive marketplace and a government that generally knew how to keep its nose out of private industry.

So, Mr. Speaker, this government, again, doesn't seem to be able to understand how to diversify the economy. They don't understand that what industry wants, what companies want, what investors want is an opportunity to come into a jurisdiction and to be able to set up business in a reasonable amount of time, in a reasonable cost factor, and to be able to create wealth based on that. But this government seems to think that the only way that that will ever happen is if they take tax dollars from Albertans, for instance the carbon tax, and give it to people to come in to invest in Alberta.

But people have been investing in Alberta for years and years and years. Billions and billions of dollars of investment have come into Alberta from industries, from investors from all over the world. Why? Because they had an opportunity to make a return on their investment. They saw opportunities; they came in to invest. Why did billions of dollars flee Alberta in the last three years? Because

they saw this government in place creating a lack of opportunity for investment, uncertainty in the market. That kind of uncertainty drives away investment.

That's the problem with this government, Mr. Speaker. They continue down the same road that's failed. The NDP have failed in every province in Canada, and this government continues down the same road. That's the problem that we have in Alberta today, billions of dollars of lost investment.

We had a situation south of Grande Prairie where there was a group that had multibillion-dollar corporations that wanted to come in and set up shop south of Grande Prairie. Because of government regulation and not being able to respond quickly enough to these companies, they took their investment dollars and went elsewhere. They didn't just not spend the money. They just took the money and spent it somewhere else, where they didn't have to go through years and years of approval process and everything. These people, when they look at an opportunity to invest, they think of multiple things. They think of return on investment and how long before they get to that return of investment.

We have a situation right now with the pipeline, Mr. Speaker, where this company has spent over a billion dollars and spent four and a half years fighting to get to build a 7 and a half billion dollar pipeline. It's this regulation that binds these companies down. It costs them money, and pretty soon they walk. This is happening in Alberta right now.

The Speaker: Okay. Under 29(2)(a) a question to the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky. The Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to offer some comments on the statement that we heard from the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky. In fact, as one of the members of cabinet whose ministry is touched by this bill, I feel the need to dispel some of the myths and some of the points that the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky made.

In fact, the purpose, of course, of creating this legislation was to support the economic diversification here in Alberta. I think the need for that was really highlighted by Amazon's decision to not locate its second headquarters in Calgary. Certainly, we heard from Calgary Economic Development that it was a lack of tech talent and access to high-technology workers that was part of the reason that Amazon made that decision. It's interesting, Mr. Speaker, because I noticed that yesterday Amazon actually made a decision about where they're going to locate another headquarters. It turns out that it's in Vancouver, British Columbia. Now, our bill is actually modelled on similar measures that the British Columbia government took in enhancing tech-related education spaces in its postsecondary education system.

I'm very pleased that the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky actually supports that initiative. I just wish that he had actually voted for the budget that actually allows us to take action on that initiative. I find it troubling that we have this repeated pattern from the opposition. They say that they want to take action on something, but they refuse to actually put up the money to do that. We saw that with rural crime. We're seeing that now with the development of tech spaces in our postsecondary education system. Perhaps one day, you know, our opposition members will realize that in order for government to function and to do the good things that they want to do, we actually need to pay for it, and we can't actually pay for it by giving tax cuts to millionaires and billionaires like they want to do.

The repeated claim from the side opposite is that it's tax rates. Because we increased corporate taxes, because we increased personal

taxes, and because we implemented a carbon tax, we are scaring investment away, scaring it away to places like Vancouver, British Columbia. So while I was listening to the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky, I actually investigated what the tax rates in British Columbia happen to be. What is the carbon tax rate that they pay in British Columbia? Mr. Speaker, you would be surprised to know that it's \$30 a tonne, just like it is here in Alberta. My mind was blown. My mind was blown. You would also be surprised to hear what the provincial corporate tax rate in British Columbia is. It's 12 per cent, just like it is here in Alberta. And if you looked at personal income taxes, personal income taxes for people who earn more than \$90,000 a year are higher in British Columbia than they are here in Alberta. So it's really quite shocking to me that if the theory that the member opposite is proposing is that high taxes drive away investments, why did Vancouver end up being the second headquarters for Amazon?

I'd like the member opposite to address a couple of these issues. I'd like him to tell the House why he thinks that a \$30 carbon tax scares away investment in Alberta but attracts it to B.C. Why does he think a corporate tax rate of 12 per cent in Alberta scares away investment but attracts it to B.C.?

The Speaker: Let's give him an opportunity to answer that.

10:00

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd be happy to answer that question. The first thing he talked about was myths. I tell you what. Six credit downgrades: that's no myth. That's reality.

Now, Mr. Speaker, he likes to talk about Amazon. He picks one company that didn't come to Alberta and went to Vancouver instead, went to B.C. If you can't compete against B.C. with its high taxes, then there's obviously something wrong here in Alberta. I can tell you what's wrong. It's this government. [interjections] I did say very clearly that there were a myriad of reasons why companies won't set up here and why investment is fleeing Alberta. It's not always just taxes; it's regulations and what it takes to build and do business here in Alberta. This government has made it more expensive to do business here.

Now, we talked about how we didn't vote for a budget. [Mr. Loewen's speaking time expired]

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, I move that we adjourn debate.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion to adjourn debate carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:01 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Feehan	Miller
Babcock	Fitzpatrick	Miranda
Bilous	Goehring	Payne
Carlier	Hinkley	Phillips
Carson	Hoffman	Piquette
Ceci	Horne	Rosendahl
Connolly	Kazim	Schmidt
Coolahan	Kleinsteinuber	Schreiner
Dach	Loyola	Shepherd
Dang	Luff	Sucha
Drever	Malkinson	Westhead
Eggen	Mason	Woollard

Against the motion:

Gotfried	McIver	Strankman
Hanson	Pitt	Yao
Loewen	Smith	

Totals:	For – 36	Against – 8
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[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Speaker: The House stands adjourned until – no?

Some Hon. Members: Adjourned debate.

The Speaker: Adjourned debate. It's getting late.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You are anticipating my next move, so it is with some trepidation that I move that we adjourn the House until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 10:18 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday morning, May 2, 2018

Day 23

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (UCP),
Deputy Leader of the Official Opposition
Anderson, Hon. Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (NDP)
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (UCP)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (NDP)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (NDP)
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (NDP)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (NDP)
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP),
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Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawkwood (NDP)
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Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (NDP)
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Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)
Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (NDP)
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Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP),
Deputy Government House Leader
Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (IC)
Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (NDP)
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (AP)
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (NDP),
Deputy Government House Leader
Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (UCP),
Official Opposition Deputy Whip
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (UCP)
Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (NDP)
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)
Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (NDP)
Hunter, Grant R., Cardston-Taber-Warner (UCP)
Jansen, Hon. Sandra, Calgary-North West (NDP)
Kazim, Anam, Calgary-Glenmore (NDP)
Kenney, Hon. Jason, PC, Calgary-Lougheed (UCP),
Leader of the Official Opposition
Kleinstauber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (NDP)
Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (NDP),
Deputy Government House Leader
Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (NDP)

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

Party standings:

New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 25 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent Conservative: 1 Vacant: 2

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Shannon Dean, Law Clerk and Director of
House Services
Stephanie LeBlanc, Senior Parliamentary
Counsel
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel

Philip Massolin, Manager of Research and
Committee Services
Nancy Robert, Research Officer
Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of
Alberta Hansard

Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms
Chris Caughell, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms
Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Gareth Scott, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

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

Parliamentary Secretaries

Jessica Littlewood	Economic Development and Trade for Small Business
Annie McKittrick	Education

STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Mr. Coolahan
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	Luff
Dang	McPherson
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha
Deputy Chair: Mr. van Dijken

Carson	Littlewood
Connolly	McPherson
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schneider
Fitzpatrick	Starke
Gotfried	Taylor
Horne	

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Goehring
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Orr
Ellis	Renaud
Fraser	Shepherd
Hinkley	Swann
Luff	Woollard
McKitrick	Yao
Miller	

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Shepherd
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Aheer	McKitrick
Gill	Pitt
Horne	van Dijken
Kleinsteinuber	Woollard
Littlewood	

Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Wanner
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Babcock	Nixon
Cooper	Piquette
Dang	Pitt
Drever	Westhead
McIver	

Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms Kazim
Deputy Chair: Connolly

Anderson, W.	Orr
Babcock	Rosendahl
Drever	Stier
Drysdale	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kleinsteinuber	Taylor
McKitrick	

Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	Miller
Cooper	Nielsen
Goehring	Nixon
Gotfried	Pitt
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Cyr
Deputy Chair: Mr. Dach

Barnes	Malkinson
Carson	Miller
Clark	Nielsen
Gotfried	Panda
Hunter	Renaud
Littlewood	Turner
Luff	

Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola
Deputy Chair: Mr. Drysdale

Babcock	Loewen
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Fildebrandt	Panda
Hanson	Rosendahl
Kazim	Schreiner
Kleinsteinuber	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Wednesday, May 2, 2018

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Prayers

The Acting Speaker: Good morning.

Let us each reflect or pray in our own way. May we remember to be deliberate but thoughtful, meticulous but patient, and determined but clear-headed and evoke that respecting our differences and celebrating our diversity is what makes us stronger together.

Please be seated.

Orders of the Day

Government Motions

Election Commissioner Appointment

16. Mr. Mason moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly concur in the report of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices tabled on April 10, 2018, Sessional Paper 67/2018, and recommend to the Lieutenant Governor in Council that Mr. Lorne Gibson be appointed as Election Commissioner for a term of five years commencing May 15, 2018.

Mr. van Dijken moved that the motion be amended by adding the following after “May 15, 2018”:

and be it further resolved that following the passage of this motion the Election Commissioner’s salary be posted publicly on the website of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices.

[Adjourned debate on the amendment May 1: Mr. Mason]

The Acting Speaker: Are there any members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Now, we’re here this morning to talk about the amendment to bring just a little bit more transparency and clarity to this Motion 16, that we’re dealing with here. It was interesting listening yesterday to the linguistic gymnastics of the government when talking about this amendment that we brought forward. I just want to read out here from a news article. What we’re referring to is Bill 32. It says: the role was created with the passing of Bill 32 in December; the law’s stated goal is eliminating so-called dark money, election campaign contributions whose source isn’t made public. Now, the Member for Calgary-Currie was quoted in this same article. He says: he’s going to be tasked with setting up an office and enforcing new legislation helping to root out dark money, that has plagued our electoral process for too long.

Madam Speaker, when I see this issue of rooting out the dark money in politics, I see that we have an issue here where we want to bring this gentleman that’s been hired, his wages, onto the sunshine list and have that brought in immediately. I don’t know if anybody else fails to see the irony of the fellow that’s hired to root out dark money and a government fighting tooth and nail to keep from having him on the sunshine list immediately so that Albertans can see what this gentleman is going to be making. Honestly, you just can’t make this stuff up. We sit here in this Legislature and we debate lots of different things, some stuff good but some of it pretty senseless. When you think that the person that’s here that’s going to be hired to root out dark money can’t make it onto the sunshine

list, as we would like to see right now – it’s all about transparency and clarity.

If that’s the goal, then obviously this is a pretty simple process. This position was just created. We’ve heard how they went through this expensive job listing process. They did it through the Christmas holidays. They’ve done all sorts of things, you know, in order to get this position taken care of. Of course, now we have this person that the government has selected, and now we want to find out just a little bit of information about what this person is going to be making.

Another thing that was interesting in listening to the government talk about it: “It’s, like, you know, you guys just want to target him. This is all about targeting this one person that’s been hired.” Well, Madam Speaker, I don’t understand. I guess that they’re suggesting that we want to target him so we can find out how much he’s making. The government says that we’re going to learn this information in June 2019. Does that mean that between now and June 2019 the government is going to choose to target him to make it public how much he makes?

Of course, I guess that would call into question – this government has talked about how it brought forward all this legislation about extending the sunshine list, making it more open, extending it so that more people fall under the criteria of the sunshine list. Obviously, I guess, by their definition of targeting, the government has chosen to target thousands of people. But that’s not the case. They want to use these words like “target” when we’re talking about one person, but obviously this is a sunshine list of a large group of people, and we have this opportunity to learn what people are making from taxpayers’ money. I don’t understand how they can suggest that we’re targeting one person while the government is targeting thousands of people based on that definition. It has nothing to do with targeting people. It has to do with transparency and clarity, and that’s what the sunshine list does. There’s nothing wrong with that, and there’s no reason why we should have to wait. They hide behind: well, the rules are that we can’t find out for a year.

Well, Madam Speaker, that’s what we do here. We make rules. We make legislation. We make amendments. We come up with different things to bring transparency and clarity to the people of Alberta. I don’t understand how this government can sit here and fight against something that’s so clear and so plain and hide behind regulations and rules and stuff like that like we’re not here to make regulations and rules. That’s what we do here. That’s our job. So I don’t understand that.

Now, there were some comments yesterday. You know, we were talking about this position as redundant, but of course the government has suggested that this isn’t redundant, that this is a brand new position, that this is so great and everything. I just want to point out that here in the job posting that the government put out for this job, it says:

As Alberta’s first Election Commissioner, you will be responsible for ensuring compliance with, and enforcement of, certain obligations of entities regulated by the Election Act . . . In this capacity, the Election Commissioner will be responsible for fully investigating complaints, levying administrative penalties, issuing letters of reprimand, entering into compliance agreements, and recommending prosecutions.

As this position requires you to investigate potential wrongdoings by political entities including candidates, political parties, and third parties . . .

It’s very interesting to see this job description.

We have been suggesting that there’s some redundancy here. Even the Chief Electoral Officer has been suggesting that there’s redundancy here. But I want to look through this list here:

“investigating complaints, levying administrative penalties, issuing letters of reprimand, entering into compliance agreements, and recommending prosecutions.” Has this not been happening in Alberta for the last 30, 40 years? So this is something completely new, that actually now somebody is going to be investigating complaints and levying administrative penalties? I don’t think so, Madam Speaker. I think this has been going on.

In fact, if I look back to the duties of the Chief Electoral Officer, they are to monitor compliance of political entities, including political parties, candidates, constituency associations, and most recently third-party advertisers. Elections Alberta is assigned the responsibility for ensuring filing, examination, and public disclosure of financial documents submitted by political parties, constituency associations, and candidates. Another large part of the finance regulation is enforcing the legislation relating to the collection of contributions, investigating complaints of breaches of the act, and applying administrative penalties or consenting to prosecution if warranted.

Madam Speaker, it seems very clear here that these things were going on before this Election Commissioner idea came along. I think that’s pretty plain. But, of course, this government wants to make it sound like they’ve come up with some new and great idea that’s never been thought of before. Well, that’s simply not the case.

We have lots of different issues here with this. This is a simple amendment, very simple. We are going to know eventually how much this person has been paid. All we want is that we want Albertans to be able to know that now. How much is this person going to be paid? There’s nothing hidden or secretive or dark about asking for clarity and asking for the sunshine to shine in on this. That’s what we’re asking. It’s very simple. This government: of course, they do verbal backflips trying to figure out how to make this sound like they shouldn’t do this. But, realistically, Madam Speaker, this is what we do here in this place. We come up with ideas. We come up with legislation. We make laws. We make regulations. We do all of these things here, and we have an opportunity to provide some transparency and clarity, and this government is doing everything it can to stop that.

It’s not about targeting anybody. It has nothing to do with that. Otherwise, the whole sunshine list is targeting people. It isn’t targeting anybody. This is simply asking for transparency and clarity. That’s what the sunshine list does. We have this opportunity to do this, but this government obviously wants to hide something, and I don’t know why. Why would they bother trying to go through all this trouble to hide something from Albertans? I just don’t understand this.

9:10

Now, during this whole process – I mean, this person may be well qualified. I understand that there were some other well-qualified people, too, so I’m not sure how the decision was made or how the people on the committee decided which person to choose. But, obviously, the person that they chose is somebody that had sued the government in the past. Now, I’m trying to understand why anybody would hire somebody that sued you in the past and actually lost. It was a wrongful dismissal suit of some sort. They weren’t actually dismissed; their contract ran out. Then they decided to sue.

I’m trying to run this through my mind here. One of the first warning bells that would go off for me: if I was sitting there looking at a group of applicants and I was looking at one that had sued the organization that I represent, the government of Alberta and the people of Alberta – when somebody sues the government, they’re suing the people of Alberta, too – and lost, had no grounds for the lawsuit. And here we are hiring that person.

Now here we are, and all we’re asking for is some clarity and some sunshine to shine in on how much this person is going to make. Simple. And what do we get? Any kind of obstruction that the government can possibly throw up. Madam Speaker, it just doesn’t make any sense. I don’t understand why this government just doesn’t pass this amendment. If transparency and clarity were what this is all about, it should be no problem.

Now, this Election Commissioner position was just created, and it was created in Bill 32, An Act to Strengthen and Protect Democracy in Alberta. As much as that sounds like a glorious name for a bill, to strengthen and protect democracy, here we have an opportunity to strengthen and protect democracy right here in this House by bringing forward this amendment and passing this amendment that will provide transparency and clarity to this part of this process, which is on how much this person is going to get paid.

Now, again, this government talks about how they’ve extended the sunshine list and made it so great and so large and encompassed so many more people and that they have been bringing all this transparency to government, but when we ask for one little portion of extended transparency, this government is fighting it tooth and nail, and it doesn’t make sense. Again, it has nothing to do with targeting this person. It has everything to do with transparency and clarity, which is the point of this. Now, Madam Speaker, this government, of course, quite often says one thing and does another, and this is another fine example of that.

Another example would be the carbon tax, that, of course, they didn’t campaign on. I guess that in that case they didn’t say anything – they hid it from Albertans – and then, of course, did a different thing, which was introduce a carbon tax, the largest tax increase in Alberta history. This government has a long history of saying one thing and doing another. It would be interesting to go back and list all the different things that this government, the members of the NDP Party and the NDP MLAs, railed against before they were elected, railed against previously. All of a sudden, once they’re in government, they just walk into it and say: this is great; we’re just going to carry on. There’s a long history there of saying one thing and doing another, and this is just another example of that.

Madam Speaker, I don’t understand why we’re going into such extended debate on this. This is very simple. The government should just say, “Yes, we’re going to help pass this amendment,” and away we go. Simple. They can pass the bill if they want. They already passed this thing in committee. They’ve done all that work already. They’ve got the majority. They’ve got control of this. All they have to do is come onside and say: yes, we want to have a little more transparency and clarity. But if they don’t jump onto something like this, obviously transparency and clarity are not the primary goal of this government and obviously not a primary goal of Bill 32, An Act to Strengthen and Protect Democracy in Alberta.

Madam Speaker, as we go along here, I hope that the government will listen and take our advice and bring this forward to Albertans so that Albertans can look at it. That’s who judges this. That’s who judges the work that we do in this House, Albertans. I think that if the government was to sit back and look at the polls, they would probably realize that Albertans aren’t behind them. The vast majority of Albertans aren’t behind them. Obviously, I know they’re going to try to do as much as they can to change that around before the next election, but they’ve got a long hill to climb. This would be one of those first steps on that hill that they could climb to bring transparency and clarity and maybe try to gain back some of the trust that Albertans have lost in this government. It’s pretty clear what’s going on.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, when we start to talk about clarity and being able to understand what our public servants are making, I truly believe that this amendment is a good, wholesome amendment that's going forward. I would like to hear more about how you feel that this amendment will bring clarity and more accountability to government when it comes to public salaries.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much. Yes. Obviously, this whole process was brought about to strengthen and protect democracy in Alberta, and a part of democracy is informing the public of what the government is doing. In a democracy, if the people of Alberta don't know what the government is doing, then how can they decide whether they choose to support something or not? That's our job here, I believe. We're here to protect democracy. We're here to strengthen democracy. We're here to bring transparency and clarity.

I always say that if you want to make an informed decision about something, you need information. What's lacking here is this information. We've asked for this information to be brought forward so that the people of Alberta can see it, a very simple request. It's something that's going to happen eventually anyways. We're just going to speed up the process so that as we go into this new position, the people of Alberta have the information they need to decide if this is right or not. If they know how much this person is getting paid, if they know what this person's job description is, which is very much like, in fact almost identical to the Chief Electoral Officer's, then Albertans may decide the same thing, that they don't like this, and they'll have an opportunity to tell this government they don't like it. Unfortunately, what's going to happen is that if this is hidden, Albertans won't have the information to make an informed decision on this. I don't think that's right. I don't think that's what we're here for. I think we're here to bring the information forward.

In fact, that's what our goal is in opposition, to analyze what the government is doing, bring it forward to the people of Alberta, and then let them decide if the government is on the right track or the wrong track. Obviously, with the way the polls are right now, I think that the majority of Albertans feel that the government is on the wrong track, and that's very clear.

Like I say, this is a simple opportunity for the government to be transparent and clear as far as what is happening with this hiring, how much he's getting paid, what his job description is, and how it differentiates from the job of the Chief Electoral Officer. Once Albertans have all this information, they can decide what's right or wrong, and then the government can decide whether they want to follow what Albertans are saying about this. Other than that, the people are kept in the dark. You know, we're talking about dark money, taking the dark money out. Well, like, bring some sunshine to this money, then. Simple.

We can bring this forward – we can give the information to Albertans – so that Albertans can make a decision on what they think about this process, the portion of Bill 32 that brought in the Election Commissioner position, created this new job, ran through an expensive job listing process through the Christmas holidays, which didn't make any sense at all. You know, it appears that this government had a candidate in mind and that they were going to ram this through no matter what, and they're not going to tell any more information on this if possible. Like I say, this is a fellow that

sued the government, that sued the people of Alberta. That alone should have set off warning bells to the members of government that voted to have this person in place.

9:20

If transparency and clarity are the goal here, we need to have the full information, the full information that Albertans can have to make an informed decision. This is something that we can take care of here. Again, we seem to be going on to a bunch of different things. We can see that this position is redundant. We can see, written right here, what the job description of the Chief Electoral Officer is, and we can see what the job of the Election Commissioner position is. They're the same. There's no difference.

It isn't like we've been sitting here for years without anybody investigating any complaints or dealing with any of the issues around elections and election financing. We've had that job being done, so this isn't anything new.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

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

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my honour to rise and speak to the amendment brought by our colleague. I think it's an important amendment, especially when it's bringing transparency, taking the dark money out of politics. I think it sheds light on all those things that government always wanted to say and that they claim they do.

On the Alberta NDP's own website – I was actually searching right now – it says, "Moving Alberta Forward." Let me read it for you. I think it's very interesting, Madam Speaker. "The Alberta NDP is fighting to protect the things that matter to you and your family."

Mrs. Littlewood: Agreed.

Mr. Gill: Agreed. Thank you very much for heckling. If you agree, why would you not agree with my colleague and support his amendment? If you agree, then why would you not agree with transparency? Why would you not agree on this amendment? It's easier to put your head down and heckle.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, through the chair, please.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Sorry. I just had to answer that.

"The Alberta NDP is fighting to protect the things that matter to you and your family," but they will not protect this amendment. They will not protect, you know, having this individual's name added to the sunshine list before the next election.

I mean, the whole idea of Bill 32 is to take dark money out of politics. We have colleagues on this side of the House who spoke at length about the Chief Electoral Officer – Madam Speaker, I was on the search committee – on the public record, in front of the NDP members, and said that his office is totally capable of doing all the job description under Bill 32. So this position is redundant. If this government wants to take the dark money out of politics, let's support this amendment.

Every time we talk about salaries, the Finance minister and the front bench always brag about how they have changed the ABCs and, you know, brought more light to the sunshine list. You know, if that's the case, why can't we do it with this Election Commissioner? This government always claimed that they're making life better for Albertans and families, but, Madam Speaker, this office is going to cost \$1.5 million, maybe more, annually. We

never needed to create this office to begin with because, as the Chief Electoral Officer already said on the public record, his office was totally capable of handling every complaint and doing all the jobs.

It just bothers me. Like, why would we not support this simple amendment and make the salary available for Albertans, the very people we're trying to serve? Madam Speaker, we were all sworn in to do our jobs and to do our jobs to the best of our abilities on behalf of Albertans. By not supporting this simple amendment, what are we trying to hide from Albertans? Over 4 million people are looking to this House to do the best we can for them, yet the government wants to hide this information from Albertans. It just bothers me.

Like, I don't understand why we have hypocrisy here. At the same time, we're not surprised on this side of the House. We saw it with Bill 6. We saw it with the changes in the carbon tax. We saw it with the Finance minister. According to the 2015 election we would have been in surplus; yet we're on track to close to a \$200 billion deficit. We have seen this government misleading Albertans every step of the way where they can. So this doesn't come as a surprise to us. But at the same time, when the whole idea was that this bill was going to take the dark money out of politics, why are we not being transparent with Albertans? What are we trying to hide? What is this government trying to do? Is this some sort of, like, hidden agenda? I don't know. That's what we're trying to figure out. Why would this NDP government not support this simple amendment?

The Government House Leader spoke a little bit yesterday. Maybe he will stand up and give a rationale today, Madam Speaker, on why they will not support this simple amendment. We cannot get our heads wrapped around this simple amendment. This is, like, taking dark money out of politics? This is supposed to be this government's brainchild. So let's take dark money out of politics. Let's be transparent with Albertans. Let's show them where their tax dollars are going. I don't understand why we're not supporting this amendment. We've seen the redundancy of this office. We've seen the stigma that this candidate had. But that's not the point right now. The bill is there. The office has been established. The person has been hired. That's okay. I think we're well beyond that point, but now let's be transparent in that regard.

So I ask all the members of this Assembly – and I hope you're true to your constituents and not to your party ideology – to be honest with Albertans. Let's represent those who sent us here and support this amendment. Let's be transparent to Albertans, the taxpayers, who are paying every single one of our salaries here.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to respond to some of the questions and concerns that were brought forward by the Member for Calgary-Greenway, of course echoing some of the previous language and concerns that have been brought forward by other members of the opposition regarding this particular amendment.

Again, Madam Speaker, to be clear, we are not in this case as a government, on the government side, asking for any exception to the rules here. We are not asking for anything to be hidden. We are not asking for Mr. Gibson to be treated any differently than any previous individual who has been hired into the role of a legislative officer. Indeed, in this House on June 1, 2017, we introduced the motion to appoint Ms Marianne Ryan as the Ombudsman for the province of Alberta. No member of the opposition rose at that time

to introduce an amendment suggesting that Ms Ryan's salary needed to be revealed before June of this year though she was appointed and has been serving admirably in her role since her appointment last year and her swearing-in last July, which I had the honour of attending.

Likewise, on March 13, 2018, not that long ago – it should be within recent memory for all members of this House – we rose in this House and introduced the motion to bring Mr. Doug Wylie in as the new Auditor General. Mr. Wylie was sworn in this past Monday. No member of the opposition at that time rose to insist that there should be an amendment to ensure that Mr. Wylie's salary be made known to the people of Alberta before its due time as laid out under legislation in June of next year.

9:30

So when I hear members of the opposition, Madam Speaker, standing and claiming that there is no intent to target or to single out an individual, I have to ask, then, and perhaps I could ask this member: why is Mr. Gibson different from Ms Ryan or Mr. Wylie or any other officer of the Legislature that has been appointed through the due process in this place and has then been afforded, frankly, the protection of the law, which exists for specific purposes that were fully debated in this House before being enacted as legislation and which I do not recall hearing a member of the opposition speak against at that time?

Now, Madam Speaker, again we heard from the Member for Calgary-Greenway that he dislikes the fact that this position was created. He dislikes the fact that members of the government voted for this particular individual. This has been mentioned repeatedly by this member and other members opposite. My question then is: why does that continue to be brought up if that is not their reason for bringing forward this amendment? And if that is their reason for bringing forward this amendment, does that then not amount to targeting and singling out this specific individual for the reasons which they themselves have repeatedly outlined in this House?

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

There's still time under 29(2)(a). The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

Mr. Gill: Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the questions from the Member for Edmonton-Centre. You know, he did actually bring up a lot of good points about why this search committee is being treated, quote, unquote, differently – I'm paraphrasing – than the other two search committees that we all served on together. Very valid and very good point. You know why, Madam Speaker? Because the two search committees that we served on together, the search for the Ombudsman and the AG, the committee worked on an almost unanimous vote. We did not have a split. But in this particular case we had a division and split from the beginning. We had Glen Resler, the Chief Electoral Officer, who came on the public record in our committee and – let me repeat myself again – said that his office is totally capable of . . .

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have to say that this is a good amendment. When we start looking at ensuring that transparency and accountability are first and foremost in the Alberta government, I believe that this a good measure of saying: let's find out exactly where our independent offices sit. I don't think it's unreasonable that when we create a new office, there's transparency

in that process. Now, we have government members saying that we are targeting. Well, absolutely we need to acknowledge that this is a new office. We need to be making sure that when it is set up, it is completely transparent for Albertans to see that it is functioning at what we would expect.

Now, I do have to say that I reference the NDP platform more than I should, but it is good to see where they were sitting on the 2015 election. Inside of that platform there's a quote from the *Calgary Sun* editorial board, March 31, 2015.

This good dog/bad dog treatment of Alberta voters by the PCs is transparent, predictable and insulting. But then again, for a party that feels democracy belongs to politicians and is lent out to voters when it suits them, this should come as no surprise.

This is in the platform. This is a quote. It's got a nice picture of the Legislature. What we've got here is a government moving forward with a brand new office, trying to bring more accountability to the election process. This is a good dog/bad dog process. They are trying to go out there and say: we want to be more accountable. Well, the opposition wants the same thing. We want to make sure that Albertans have fair, accountable, transparent elections. There is no doubt in that, but we may differ on how to get there.

At this point we've had some contention when it comes to the search committee. For those that don't understand how these search committees work, I had the honour of sitting on the search committee for the Auditor General along with the member that had spoken previously. What happened was that we put out the advertisement saying that this is what we are looking for in an individual. Then we take those resumé or people that are interested in these positions. We take that. We compile that into a list. We have an independent group, normally somebody outside of the process, more or less rate these individuals. Then what happens is that we as a group sit down and discuss who it is that we feel best fits this.

Now, that doesn't mean that we always agree. That's not what I'm getting at. But when we rush the process as it appears that we have done with this search committee, that is problematic. What happens here is that we end up with potentially somebody that doesn't fit what Alberta needs. I'm sure this individual is very qualified, but could there have been somebody better? I have to say that my time on the Auditor General search committee was very productive, and I'm very thankful on how that went with the government. We worked hand in hand. I truly believe that they were trying to find the right person as our next Auditor General. We worked as a group. Does that mean we agreed in that committee on every single point? No. But we worked through those through compromise. That is a functioning, well-organized machine that I believe worked well. We ended up with an Auditor General who I truly believe is going to work well for the next eight years.

Getting back to the amendment, what we've got here is an individual that we have put forward a request for a salary of this individual. Now, I for one would like to know where they sit. From what I understand, what we've got here is an announcement date of June 2019. That seems to coincide with our fixed election date. What is it that the NDP or this government is hiding? Why is it that they need to have that announcement after the election? What is it that we cannot disclose to the public on a brand new office? That's the key here. This office did not exist until now. This is the difference. This is not targeting that individual. This is saying: let's make sure that this office is performing the way we hope; let's make sure the costs are in line; let's make sure that we end up with what intention the government had to move forward with.

Good dog/bad dog, going back to this article. What we've got here is a government that's bringing forward transparency

legislation to try to bring in accountability to the electoral process, but when it comes to transparency to the actual wages of this new commissioner, what we're seeing now is a lack of transparency. I believe that what we need to do is we need to make sure that Albertans know. This is important because in the end without transparency, especially within the electoral system, we have problems.

9:40

Now, I would like to mention that the opposition is given the opportunity if they disagree with the findings of the committee to do a minority report. We've been through three search committees – and they can correct me if I'm wrong – but the other two search committees that were done, neither of them had minority reports. This is an important fact. This is something we need to understand.

In the minority report what we've got here is – and I'd like to state this for the record:

It became evident at our first meeting at the end of December that the government MLAs were determined to proceed in a reckless fashion by forcing the Legislative Assembly Office to compose a job posting and position profile for a brand new position in less than 48 hours.

That's shameful. It appears that we're rushing the process on an incredibly important position. I encourage everybody to get out and read the minority report because this is important.

It is important to show that we have not followed the appropriate procedure in order to hire this individual. It could be that had we not rushed this, this individual could have been completely endorsed by all parties in that committee. But what happens here is that we ended up deciding that it appears that there was one individual in mind. What we've got here is an individual who has had legal proceedings against the government of Alberta. We have an individual that clearly has experience with the Alberta electoral process. We have to balance. What is it that he's bringing to this office? We've got some concerns, but we also have clear ability to show that he has the capabilities to fulfill this role. When we've got these individuals before us, we need to make sure that we take the appropriate time and not rush through this.

Moving on, what I've got here in the minority report is:

We have long been disappointed in how members of the government caucus chose to conduct themselves throughout the entire search process.

This is in the minority report, again.

Now, I didn't find that with the search committee that I was on, and you're going to find that many of the members that were on the Auditor General search committee and this search committee are very similar. So what's changed? This is a good question. One was a very functional committee that worked well, in my opinion. A second committee with many of the same members suddenly falls apart and we end up with minority reports. That seems really strange to me.

For a government that is claiming that they are completely transparent on this, I don't see that that is a fact, in my opinion. Let's disclose what this individual is being paid. Let's discuss whether that is appropriate to the position. Let's also remember that our Ethics Commissioner, who I have incredible respect for, does not have a full-time position.

We have to make the decision on if is this a full-time job, even. We have to discuss: is it appropriate that we have an individual that is being paid a wage at a potentially higher number than the advertised range here? I've got the job posting in front of me. The salary for the position is \$152,818 to \$212,801. We don't know if that individual is even within the range. This is where it's making sure that we have clarity on where they are sitting in this process. If we are giving them an entire full-time wage and they only have a

quarter-time job, that is problematic. In the end, we are all responsible to the taxpayer for ensuring that they get the best value for the money that they are paying into the Alberta government, especially when we are running almost a \$9 billion deficit.

It is important that, again, we go back to the fact that when it comes to salaries, in this case a brand new office, an office that is newly created, that position gets added immediately to the sunshine list because we have no idea where they're starting at. We have no idea where this office is going. We have no idea what the typical year for this office is. It appears that we're going towards an election year. So what happens here? Will we be creating an office that duplicates an already existing office, Elections Alberta? Will we continue to see that these two commissioners are struggling to find out whose territory they're in? Who makes that decision?

When we've got a commissioner from Elections Alberta showing concern with the fact that we're moving in this direction, that is problematic. The question here is: are we going to be taking functions that are already done by Elections Alberta and duplicating those same things within this new office? I don't believe it's unreasonable to ask that question because in the end if this is just a make-work project, I don't believe that is what Albertans are looking for. What we are looking for is accountability, transparency, and a well-run government. It is hard for us to be able to go forward with this and not understand what this individual, whoever is taking this job, is going to be paid.

So I am going to encourage the government. Why are we not putting this immediately on the sunshine list? This needs to be something that we consider. This is not something that is partisan because I truly believe that we have seen two successful committees before all agree on process. Yet when we get to this one here, it appears that the process doesn't seem to be meeting what the opposition was hoping for. I really will challenge the government here. When we start to go off the rails with process, it appears that we are no longer trying to get all-party discussion on these things. That's where these comments start coming in as it appears that the government is starting to ram things through.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the thoughts of the member that just spoke, and indeed I appreciated his participation in the process to find a new Auditor General. It was a pleasure to have him on the committee, and he made some excellent contributions. I think it is, in fact, a fantastic experience for any member of the Assembly that has the opportunity to be part of that process, to see how that works. Indeed, it's an honour to have that opportunity.

I did want to though address a couple of things that the member did bring up. He spoke about the fact that the Election Commissioner is not working full-time hours, and that, Madam Speaker, is true. She actually currently is working full-time hours, but that's on a temporary basis while she is currently setting up the new lobbyists registry and then will be returning to a portion of the full-time hours that she was earning earlier.

9:50

But I did want to clarify, in case there was any confusion with the comments that he was making, that no officer of the Legislature is ever paid a full-time salary for doing less than full-time work. If an officer of the Legislature is not working full-time – for example, say that they are at .7 or .8 – while they are given a particular salary

within their range, they would then earn .7 or .8 of that salary amount. So the Election Commissioner being hired at a full-time position, which is currently what was the will of the committee, therefore will earn the full amount of his salary. If his hours were to be reduced, the amount of the salary that was set would also be reduced according to the appropriate percentage. So I thought it was important to clarify that element for the record.

Now, I would also note that the member talked about the committee process being off the rails. Several times during the debate on this amendment, Madam Speaker, members opposite have pointed out that, well, the law may say one thing, but in this House we make the rules and we decide the regulations. Well, accordingly, in all fairness, that is also true of the committee. A majority of members of the committee determine what the process is and how quickly that process will happen.

So if it is appropriate for us to stand up in this House and say that, for the reasons that have been put forward by members opposite, it is a good reason to change the procedures that have happened for every other officer of this Legislature. Then equally so, Madam Speaker, if a majority of members of the committee wish to move in a different direction than they have in previous search committees for said officers, well, I suppose the same applies. As chair I act at the will of the committee, so if it's okay for a majority of members in this House to say that this officer of the Legislature should have his salary revealed before the due time set out in the legislation, then I suppose it was equally fair for a majority of members of that committee to decide that they wanted to move faster at some points than perhaps they had in previous search committees.

I can recognize again the concerns that were brought forward with that, and of course I am continuing with comments and questions as allowed under 29(2)(a), despite any complaints or concerns from across the aisle. I would just ask the member who had spoken if he feels, then, that if a majority of members in this House should have the ability to change the rules in this case, for reasons that they've put forward, whether or not one considers those reasons to be good, a majority of members of the search committee do not also have that same right regardless of anyone's opinion of whether that decision was appropriate or not.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you. I've got something like 30 seconds left. I have to say that whenever you've got a search committee, it comes down to compromise. It comes down to making sure that you have the appropriate time to be able to make those decisions. And you know what? Government does have the voting ability to be able to push through anything they want, but I don't believe I saw that with the Auditor General committee. I believe that we were able to have constructive conversations to be able to debate what was before us, and the people that were before us, they deserved that. Each and everyone of them took the time to put... [The time limit for questions and comments expired]

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

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

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'll try and be brief, of course, but I sort of just want to express my support to my colleague from Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock. You know, of course, he has the amendment here, which I will just read. "Be it further resolved

that following the passage of this motion the Election Commissioner's salary be posted publicly on the website of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices." I think that is a very reasonable amendment.

I certainly have listened to the arguments on both sides. I believe that transparency is something that is vital to the success of any organization. I believe that, especially when this particular individual is going to allegedly have a huge impact on the electoral process in what his job is supposed to entail. Certainly, of course, the people of Alberta, leading up to the election in 2019, I believe, need to know not only who this individual is but the transparency of what this individual is getting paid. I do not think that is anything that is unreasonable.

I think a few points have been brought up regarding the concern that this individual sued the people of Alberta. I think that is something that also is of significant concern. I'm sure, as has been indicated in this House, there were probably many qualified people. You know, that brings me to, I guess, a thought process which is: did this government possibly specifically want this individual to be in this position no matter what concerns may or may not have been brought up?

That brings me to something that, quite frankly, I was thinking of as I was listening to the debate going back and forth here. As many of you know, of course, I was with the police service, and part of my training was to be a trained observer and a professional witness when the time called. You know, I remember sitting over on that side, Madam Speaker, and I remember the colleagues that I used to work with, and I see a lot of similar faces. That has to do with something which is called confidence, I think. I think that might be the parliamentary term. Maybe overconfidence.

There are probably 60-plus unemployed individuals that I used to work with. I've listened here, and as I listen to my colleagues from Calgary-Greenway and Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock, I think back to the PCs. There were individuals that they wanted, too, that they wanted to force through as well, and they didn't care what the opposition had to say. The people of Alberta saw that. They saw through that. They recognized that, and now those individuals are no longer here. So I think the individuals on the government side really need to sit back internally and reflect as to what is going on here not only in this Legislature but what's going on here in Alberta.

We have an individual here. I think this is a very reasonable amendment. What is this individual getting paid? We can talk about what those previous – I mean, I'll just say this. I had an opportunity to work with the Member for Edmonton-Centre. You know what? I had a great time working with him. You know what? I thought he was very fair and reasonable. I thought that what we needed to accomplish, we got accomplished. But, again, it goes back to what I was saying before. Something from somewhere, somebody from higher up says: "No. We want this individual. We want that person. So I don't care what you have to do. We're going to force this person through whatever needs to happen." Again, this occurred under the PCs. Is this occurring here? I don't know, but it certainly brings to question what is going on here. Why do we not want to have the transparency to reveal what this person is making?

10:00

I think the other concern, Madam Speaker, has to do with what the Chief Electoral Officer was saying, which is: hey, I'm capable of doing this job. Well, then, why the duplication? Why? Like, you know, we sit here and listen to the Finance minister talk about him saving money, or he's trying to do this, and they did some stuff with the ABCs, yet they've just created a position which is duplicative of something that the Chief Electoral Officer already has the ability and capability of doing. Again it brings it into question, right? If the

people on the government side don't realize that the people of Alberta are watching this, then they're sorely mistaken because there are 60-plus unemployed PCs right now that are going, "Ah, the government is watching, and the people of Alberta are watching," right?

I seriously may suggest that the government may want to reconsider their position on this for the sake of transparency, you know, for the sake of public trust. What is the secrecy here? Why would we not be able to know what this individual is making? I think that any time you have secrecy, it brings into question public trust, and without public trust you're not going to have a government. I can tell you that right now from first-hand experience of the very short six months that I sat on that side. I think my friend from Cold Lake brought up a good point. June 2019, after the election: that's when this is going to be revealed. That again comes into question: why? Maybe it says that in the legislation, right? Again, this is a reasonable amendment that is being brought forward, to sit there and say: "Hey, why don't we just be transparent with the people of Alberta. We'll release the information on what this individual is making." I think that's fair. I think that is reasonable.

As I've indicated before, this person is going to be an integral part of the election process. It's not like this person will have a silent role to play in the upcoming year. From my understanding, this person is going to be involved in nomination processes, I believe – right? – as well as, you know, all processes that are eventually going to lead up to the 2019 election. So again we have some concerns, of course, in regard to that, right?

Look, I mean, this is really about being transparent with the people of Alberta, letting them know that the Chief Electoral Officer really had the ability to do this role as well. I'll be honest with you, Madam Speaker. I just really question: what is this position that is being created, especially when, again, the Chief Electoral Officer and the money that is being put into that department are capable of doing the exact same job?

I just want to say again that I certainly support my friend from Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock and his amendment that he's brought forward, and I certainly hope that everybody in this Chamber considers supporting this amendment as well.

Thank you very much for your time, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Calgary-West. I wanted to just ask a question, and I'll give a little bit of background. The government has been mentioning – I don't know – that there are some personal concerns here, I mean, to use the language of the Member for Edmonton-Centre, that we've singled out this particular person or that it's targeted or that it puts a chill on the ability to have discussions with people who are coming forward. I just wanted to say that I believe that I speak on behalf of our caucus that no matter who had been chosen for this position, I can guarantee that we would be asking in this same situation.

Specifically, you cited some very important pieces of historical things that have happened and the importance that we have to make sure that we relay information to the people of Alberta. It's one of the reasons that we're all here, right? I was wondering if you wouldn't mind speaking a little bit more to that, about the importance of – this wasn't a "who" decision. This is a "what," being the position itself, because as everyone knows in this House, we were not in favour of Bill 32 in any aspect.

The second piece, being that we have a responsibility, based on what our other member said, with respect to: this is a completely new office, so whatever processes might be there – we're not trying to break with process. This isn't part of the process; this is a new office.

Thirdly, we have a responsibility because we're concerned about redundancy, because Mr. Resler has told us that he's more than capable of handling this. If you could please speak to that a little bit with respect to why it is that we want this amendment to go forward.

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

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you. Certainly, thank you to the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View. You know, I mean, certainly, my friends who are on the committee are what I would say are the experts on this side as regards not only this particular amendment but, obviously, the process that went forward in regard to this – look, again, it goes back to transparency. Look, there have been, over the last, we'll call it – I'll talk about the history, okay? There is a reason why the Progressive Conservatives are no longer in government after a long, long period of time. There are many reasons. I'm sure we can cite various reasons. However, when we really start to look at it, prior to 2015 – I would almost suggest that it's probably the last eight to 10 years – we'll say that the overconfidence, the arrogance really started to take place. From my perspective – again, the trained observer, the professional witness – they weren't listening. They weren't listening to the people of Alberta. When you're not listening, you're losing.

Then we see that not only were they not listening to the people of Alberta, but you had this sense of secrecy and questions. You know, I remember talking to our beloved friend Mr. Bhullar, right? He would tell me something, and I'd be like: well, that's reasonable, but why did you guys not articulate it? That's what I am observing on this side, which is the lack of articulation and explanation to the people of Alberta if what you are saying is indeed reasonable. I'm sorry, but I'm watching some of the same consistencies that occurred in the last decade of the PC government, which sadly appear to be occurring here. This is, sadly, a prime example of that.

No, to me, it wouldn't have mattered who this individual was. First of all, I question why we have this entire new role. However, if that is the will that needed to be forced through, I would certainly be supporting, no matter who it is, how . . .

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Madam Speaker, thank you. Thank you very much. I rise today and offer my support to my hon. colleague from Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock's notice of amendment to Government Motion 16. It was moved that Government Motion 16 be amended by adding the following after "May 15, 2018":

and be it further resolved that following the passage of this motion the Election Commissioner's salary be posted publicly on the website of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices.

Excellent motion, excellent attempt to increase transparency for 4.11 million Albertans.

10:10

Before I delve into the reasons why I think this motion is essential and why I support it, I'd also like to have a bit of a shout-out to commend my four UCP colleagues that sat on this committee and took the time and the effort to put together their dissenting report. Of course, those are, again, the hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock, the hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway, the

hon. Member for Airdrie, and the hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View, that, again, took the time, the effort, the courage to put this out to all Albertans, to let them know where they thought the process could have been improved, where they thought that some missteps were made along the way in the overall essential, you know, direction.

But I want to come back, Madam Speaker: why more transparency? Why is it essential that we all – whether we're in government or family or business or friendships, why is more transparency essential? The top three things, to me, are: first of all, it builds trust; secondly, it increases engagement in education with others that are involved in a process with you; and of course it increases our ability to measure, to measure the effectiveness, to measure the efficiency, to see if this is taxpayer money well spent in this case.

Madam Speaker, first of all, I want to talk about building trust. Governments everywhere have seen what their fate is when they lose trust with their electorate, have seen what happens when they start to do things too fast, behind closed doors, without proper consultation, with pretend consultation, many of these things that we've especially heard of this government being guilty of, more in the last year than when they were first elected, but it's their direction, that they're taking.

I want to talk about the benefits of building trust for a second. Madam Speaker, I want to tell you a specific example. In Cypress-Medicine Hat, almost down in the southeast corner, is one of Alberta's most successful Hutterite colonies, the Elkwater Hutterite colony. I've had the opportunity to have a couple of tours of it, and it is absolutely amazing how excellent these family farms are, how productive they are, how good they are at raising cattle, raising crops, how good they are at being environmental stewards, and just the other things that they have done off their farming operations, from their own water to their own electricity to the continuous improvement that this colony exhibits. God rest his soul, but it was run by John, now by Dan and Reuben, who have capably – capably – carried it on.

I went out for breakfast about three years ago, and I had breakfast with the entire colony. I said to John: "What's the secret? How are you guys so darn good?" He said: "It's simple. Absolutely everybody in this room knows everything. Everyone in this room knows what our overall goals are, what things cost, what we've hedged. Everyone is entitled to have complete disclosure, complete transparency." Again, Madam Speaker, I'm so proud to know that Dan and Reuben have carried this on, and they are absolutely as successful in that business as a group of families can be.

I would say to the government: why not copy a winning formula? Why not reach out to 4.1 million Albertans? Obviously, the Official Opposition has highlighted some serious red flags with this committee, with this process, with timing. I'm going to touch on that. I guess, you know, it's come up that maybe it is a coincidence that the salary will be finally disclosed in June 2019, one to three months after the fixed election date. Why not just take that right out of people's minds and agree to this motion? We're going to know anyway. Let's build trust. Let's build trust, Madam Speaker, with 4.1 million Albertans.

Again, I know that I've heard that in the last year especially this government is stumbling even more with their consultation, with their desire to do that, but for the good of Alberta let's start somewhere. Let's build some trust, and let's put this number out, put it out as many, many other Albertans are on our sunshine list. Of course, my colleagues have talked at great length about the benefits of more direct transparency and sunshine.

Madam Speaker, in addition to building trust, the second main benefit I can think of is how it increases engagement and education.

Unfortunately, in the greatest province in Canada, in the greatest jurisdiction and place to live in the whole world, we have some challenges. I was talking to people the other day who need some help and need some training who can't get through to anybody in Edmonton. They're wondering if it's because of the six hours that Medicine Hat is away from Edmonton or if it's government policy or if it's big, inefficient government. These are the kinds of things that I have heard consistently for six years in my constituency office.

Madam Speaker, it's even worse. We've all FOIPed things on this side. Many Albertans have FOIPed things only to have 95 per cent of it come back blacked out. And the cost. The number of times that people have come to me with an item that if the information could have been made public, transparent, as the hon. colleague from Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock is trying to do here – if that information could have come forward, we could have really engaged and educated 4.1 million Albertans to make our programs stronger, to make it easier to help each other. An Albertan told me the other day about how they had to face a financial outlay of \$4,500 to get some FOIP information that our tax dollars were paying for anyway, that our tax dollars were generating anyway. The \$4,500 was a hardship, so they didn't do it. Maybe it's just as well because 95 per cent of it would have been redacted anyway. That's the world that 4.1 million Albertans are living in.

What this side is asking for is one little simple – what is it? – 13 or 14 months earlier presentation of a number that we're going to be paying. I'm sorry; the taxpayers of Alberta are going to be paying. We're just asking for a little transparency, a little earlier disclosure. Based on some of the controversies that my other colleagues have talked about, this increased engagement and education would go a long, long way to help Albertans feel that they're getting some value for their tax dollars.

The third reason that transparency is crucial is that it increases our ability to measure. As hon. colleagues from Bonnyville-Cold Lake and from Calgary have just stated, in these circumstances especially this is crucial. Madam Speaker, this is a brand new office, a brand new position. My goodness, when I first started to make myself more aware of this in the last few days, to become aware that our current Chief Electoral Officer indicated – I think he said that this position was redundant because he and his staff could do the work.

10:20

At a time that we're running an \$8.8 billion operating deficit, a \$16 billion capital deficit, at a time that we have gone in just three short years \$56 billion in debt, let's start to care and think about the poor taxpayer out there who's working hard for his family, his community, and the people of Alberta. Let's start to be able to measure if we're getting value for taking the money away from people and families, at least what we're doing with it. The only way to truly measure something is if we have the information. You can't manage something if you can't measure it, and you can't measure it if you don't have the information.

It is that simple, Madam Speaker. This government in just their third year is once again closing the door, shutting the door not on us but shutting the door on Albertans, the 4.1 million Albertans that we represent as the Official Opposition. Our job is to hold them accountable and to get this information out to those 4.1 million Albertans so that they can determine if this government is doing the right thing with our hard-earned tax dollars.

One of the maybe smaller things in the dissenting report, but it rings true with what I'm saying: my four colleagues talked about how the government committee members were in a hurry and right at Christmas rushed out the advertisements, requiring an LAO

employee to come into the office on their holidays to make certain deadlines despite the Official Opposition's strong advice that this would be a waste of time, but apparently this good employee, this good person, did it.

Then the majority on the committee, the NDP appointees, the NDP people on the committee – in January the committee was asked to spend an additional \$20,000 for a second run of print advertisements because not enough applicants had been received at that point. There's no such thing as just \$20,000, Madam Speaker. This is \$20,000 that could have helped an Albertan, could have been left with Alberta families and communities. Like here today, it's another example of this government not listening. It's another example of this government just in their third year deciding that they know best, deciding that in spite of the fact that the Chief Electoral Officer said that this position and this office were redundant. He could have done it with his people and saved more than \$20,000 and probably been way more effective. He's totally been an excellent government official, and he's totally right there with this stuff anyway.

No, no. This government charged ahead. I'm not sure of the reasons why. I hope it wasn't out of ideology. I hope it is for the right reasons, to make our systems better for Albertans. But, Madam Speaker, charge ahead, charge ahead. It has been adequately and eloquently explained by colleagues as to what the difference was with this hiring compared to earlier hirings where the committee agreed with the process, where the committee was, point number two, involved and engaged and were part of the process, where building the trust actually happened amongst all committee members, opposition and government.

Here we have a situation, Madam Speaker, where we've obviously gone off the track right from the start. At Christmastime there was obviously disagreement and discussion about the best way to do this, which wasn't listened to, costing time and \$20,000 of hard-earned money.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Under 29(2)(a) the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre. Go ahead, please.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciated the thoughts from the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat. As usual he shared many of his usual concerns, not in any way to suggest that any of them are not appropriate or not focused. Indeed, I hear the concerns of his constituents. I'm not sure all of them were necessarily relevant to the Election Commissioner, but that aside, one thing that the member did bring forward is that he expressed some concern that some might interpret the fact that the salary would be released along with all other salaries on the sunshine list, to be clear, in June of next year and that June of next year could in fact be just a few months after the next election. So there was concern. I'm sure the member was not making any accusations there, but he expressed concern that some may interpret that in a manner to suggest that that was the government's attempt to perhaps try to hide this particular salary until that time.

I guess my question to the member, then, Madam Speaker, would be: is the member suggesting that when, years ago, government brought forward legislation that set up the rules by which the sunshine list would operate and indeed set out the date under which salaries would be released, government was in fact considering and thinking about the fact that a couple of years hence it would be looking at creating a position of Election Commissioner, that the process would be ending at a particular time, that a particular individual would be selected, and that in fact we would then also need to time that with when the next election would be and therefore

set the revelation of all public salaries for the entire public service to coincidentally line up with that fact? That seems to me to be a bit of a conspiracy theory.

Now, of course, it's not dissimilar from the regular accusation that's lobbed and has indeed been brought up in the House today, so I think it's fair to comment on, that we somehow knew in 2015, when all polls were stating that it was going to be a rout for the provincial Conservatives, that we would somehow form a majority government and that in the process of navigating that election and taking on that new stress in planning and everything, we sat down and planned out exactly what we intended to do in terms of finding a climate leadership plan and therefore had a hidden plan to institute the carbon levy at a time when we were not even convinced, Madam Speaker, that we would be sitting on this side of the House.

Now, I can appreciate the use of a bit of hyperbole, Madam Speaker, to make a point. Indeed, there are arguments which members opposite can make if they wish in regard to why this salary should be revealed. But to that member I would ask if he is indeed positing such a conspiracy theory because, frankly, it strikes me as a bit ridiculous. Perhaps the member would prefer to stick with arguments that would stray a little more within the realm of credulity.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Sure. I'd love to respond and talk about it. Yeah. I just want to come back again to my four colleagues and their openness, their willingness to put out immediately at every step of the way the problems that they were having with the direction of the committee. The first sentence, Madam Speaker, in their dissenting report:

We have long been disappointed in how members of the government caucus chose to conduct themselves throughout the entire search process.

We have long been disappointed in how members of government caucus chose to conduct themselves throughout the entire search process.

It became evident at our first meeting at the end of December that government MLAs were determined to proceed in a reckless fashion by forcing the Legislative Assembly Office to compose a job posting and position profile for a brand new position in less than 48 hours.

We're going to set up an office that costs a million dollars, we're going to hire a person for between \$152,000 and \$212,000, and we're going to set the parameters for this in less than 48 hours? Well, it's no wonder that not a month later \$20,000 further had to be invested in the process, \$20,000 that perhaps . . . [The time limit for questions and comments expired]

Thank you.

10:30

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak to the current amendment before us with regard to Government Motion 16. The motion is with regard to the appointment of the Election Commissioner, which is a brand new office, a brand new position, and the amendment that we're proposing is simply that the salary for this new position would be posted publicly, a very simple little request.

In order to speak to this, Madam Speaker, I would like to actually refer back a couple of times here to the election platform of the NDP caucus and the letter that prefaced the whole thing by the person

who is now our Premier. It says, "We can clean up the Legislature in Edmonton to have honest and open government that isn't all about gaming our democracy." I think that the reality here is that we need to take a careful look at the motion that's before us and consider the amendment because I'm about to show that there are so many ways that this is a concern and should be a concern for the people of Alberta. It just really does smack of gaming our democracy in too many different ways.

First of all, I'd like to suggest that my first concern is that we have here an appointment without full support of the all-party committee. There was an all-party committee that met on this. There was not full agreement on that. In fact, there was actually a minority report that was provided. If the government was really concerned about making sure that they were respecting all committee reports, the government would look at the fact that there was not a unanimous presentation from that committee, that in fact there was strong enough concern about it that an actual minority report was presented.

I find that interesting because the NDP campaign platform talks about cleaning up the Legislature, and then a little bit farther down on page 8 I read that "we will respect the independence of all-party committees." There is an opportunity here for the government to fulfill their election platform that they "will respect the independence of all-party committees" rather than just taking the partisan side of those who tried to push it through. So we have the government here actually pushing this through when there was significant dissent expressed from the very beginning of the report and tabled in writing. I think that that's one of the concerns about this and why I'm going to suggest that it, in fact, is a bit about gaming the system. That's what's happening here.

Secondly, this is also a new office that's been created entirely in duplication of an existing office. I mean, the Chief Electoral Officer has been very clear publicly on the record that his office is already handling this responsibility. They're already doing it. They have the capability of doing it. It won't cost anything more substantially. So you have to ask: why are we creating an entirely new office to do something that's already being fully covered and adequately covered by government? I'm going to suggest that it's partly about gaming our democracy for political gain.

There is excessive cost, then, as well with regard to this whole thing. We have a government that has not been able to exercise spending discipline. They promised us in their campaign that by now we'd actually be in a surplus position. Instead, we're delivered another multibillion-dollar deficit, and then we have expending going on here that is kept in secret, that's not open to the public, that's not being reported, that is just literally cloaked in darkness because they don't want to reveal it until just after the next election. If that's not gaming our democracy, I don't know what is.

Why does this need to be kept secret? Why does it need to be hidden from the people of Alberta? I think Albertans have a reasonable request there that they should be able to know, particularly from a government with an inability to manage their spending: what is the secret cost of this one going to cost Albertans as taxpayers? It's certainly not open. It's entirely about gaming the system in ways that I think are inappropriate.

Then if you go down to page 8 again of the NDP campaign platform, section 2.4, they talk about the fact that "we will ensure the Chief Electoral Officer can effectively investigate breaches of the Act." Well, now, that's a great statement to make, and I have no problem with that except that I wonder why there's a problem. There haven't been issues with the Chief Electoral Officer not being able to investigate breaches of the act. In a way this is a bit of a straw man problem that they've put up so that they can solve it. If the issue is with the Chief Electoral Officer not being able to do his

job, well, then, why not empower him? Why not give him the extra resources? Why do we need to create a whole new office with a whole new position that has raised a lot of questions, that has created a lot of concerns? Why not just allow the Chief Electoral Officer to effectively investigate and do what he's been doing? As I said, it's an imagined problem in which they want to appear to fix something in their campaign platform so that they hope they'll get elected again. This is a feel-good thing that is all about a pre-election movement, and the costs of it are not going to be revealed until after the election. It really does appear to be gaming the system.

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

Then there's the issue of the fact that also in their election campaign platform, section 2.5, they claim they "will extend the sunshine list," but in this case they're not going to extend it. They're not going to make it public. They are going to keep it hidden. There are so many problems with this particular motion, and some of those, a lot of those, would be resolved by embracing the amendment that's on the table before us today. It would go a long way to establishing trust in the minds of Albertans and in the minds of the public. I think that if the NDP are concerned to try and win the next election by being open and transparent, as they claim they want to be, that would go a lot farther than ramming these kinds of things through in ways that are inappropriate.

We all know the last government went astray. It took them 44 years to go astray. It appears this government is going astray in the same way in less than three years. It's gaming the system for the next election in a very apparent kind of way. For a party that has wrapped itself in the cloak of honest and open government, transparency, cleaning up the Legislature, respecting all-party committees, this is really disappointing. It's really breaking the trust of Albertans. To be entrenched in this position when you have the opportunity to embrace an amendment that would really, really clear up a lot of the doubt and the suspicion and the questions – I find it extremely difficult to try and understand why they would continually resist this kind of a motion, that would actually create trust and open up transparency and honesty and openness.

I'm not going to rub salt in the wound. Albertans already feel that sting. I just want to say that this is a motion that would go a long way to support Albertans, to make things better for Albertans, to help them understand what the government is doing, and to create credibility and trust.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to my hon. colleague for the comments that he made. You know, we've had a lot of talk around transparency during this debate and the United Conservative Party's lack of understanding in regard to why the government is opposed to being transparent. There are so many questions to be raised from the government's opposition to such a simple amendment and providing that transparency.

What has changed in particular for this independent office of the Legislature is that it's new. This is something that's new to this province. This office hasn't existed before, and I think people would be very interested to have the full picture of what this office is intended to do. In addition to that, this is an officer that is very closely tied with elections in this province, obviously, and it would be in the public's best interest, which is what we are here to do and here to serve, to have that kind of information released prior to the next election.

10:40

I don't understand why the government is opposing such a very clear and easy way to transparency. It's not that hard. It's really not that hard. I think Albertans are going to be very disappointed to know that this government is not interested in transparency at all. It begs the question: what is this government hiding? What is this NDP government trying to hide by refusing to support an amendment that shows that they can be transparent? What is so difficult about that? Are they stacking the deck? Is that what's happening? Is this another piece that might make you believe that this government is taking steps to move things in their favour? Maybe. They could help disprove that theory here today by passing this amendment.

I wonder if my hon. colleague from Lacombe-Ponoka has any additional thoughts as to maybe why this government is choosing not to be transparent and what he thinks about this government stacking the deck.

The Acting Speaker: The Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yeah, you know, it really is baffling, quite frankly, and it really does smack of gaming the system here. We have a problem that isn't really a problem that all of a sudden needs a solution, but we're not willing to be public and transparent about the costs of that solution, that there was not all-party committee support for. These are all things that the current government has championed themselves to be protectors of, and suddenly now they aren't. It really is an issue of public trust. What is hidden here? What is not being told to the people of Alberta until after the next election? Trust is the essential element of government integrity, of government respect, and of the trust of the people for a government. Without trust the people will not follow.

I learned a long time ago in leadership that you can't lead by driving people – you can't herd cats – but you have to inspire and lead and win integrity, win trust, and invite people to follow you. But they're not going to follow you into the dark. They're not going to follow you when there are all kinds of murky questions about this whole process and why it's pushed forward. What's the urgency of it? What's the disagreement over it? Why can't simple matters of it be made public?

These are questions that raise a lot of doubt in people's minds, and I just really do believe that government needs to do better than that. This government could, should do better than that, and it's puzzling why they won't in this particular case. As I said earlier, I mean, all governments defeat themselves, unfortunately. That's the way it is. That's where I see a government motion like this going, with all these issues associated with and tied to it and all the problems that are surrounding it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing and hearing none, any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1?

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:44 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer

Ellis

Pitt

Barnes	Gill	Schneider
Cyr	Orr	van Dijken

11:00

Against the motion:

Carson	Hinkley	Phillips
Connolly	Horne	Piquette
Coolahan	Jansen	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Kazim	Rosendahl
Dach	Kleinstauber	Schmidt
Dang	Littlewood	Schreiner
Drever	Mason	Shepherd
Feehan	McLean	Sigurdson
Fitzpatrick	Miller	Sucha
Ganley	Miranda	Turner
Goehring	Nielsen	Westhead
Gray	Payne	

Totals:	For – 9	Against – 35
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[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

The Acting Speaker: We are now on the original motion. Are there any members wishing to speak to the motion? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mr. Mason: No, Madam Speaker, I am standing.

The Acting Speaker: Oh, the hon. Member for ...

Mr. Mason: Please, I would move that we adjourn debate.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. Government House Leader, what would you like to do?

Mr. Mason: I move that we adjourn debate.

The Acting Speaker: Having heard the motion by the hon. Government House Leader to adjourn debate, all those in favour, please say aye. Opposed?

Mrs. Pitt: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Sorry, Madam Speaker ...

The Acting Speaker: Oh. We have to finish the vote.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Acting Speaker: Now there is a point of order. The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Point of Order Speaking Order

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you. Madam Speaker, a point of order. The Member for Chestermere-Rocky View was recognized before the hon. House leader, so I would ask that – I don't know what the procedure is now, but the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View was recognized before the hon. House leader.

The Acting Speaker: Anything else? No?

Mrs. Pitt: No.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, I did recognize the Government House Leader. The vote occurred; therefore, the debate is adjourned.

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

Bill 14

An Act to Empower Utility Consumers

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Service Alberta and Status of Women.

Ms McLean: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to move second reading of Bill 14, An Act to Empower Utility Consumers.

The Utility Consumer Advocate, UCA, was established in 2003 and since that time has established a proven track record in educating Albertans and helping them navigate natural gas and electricity issues. The UCA also acts as a mediator, provides practical solutions, and, if needed, refers utility consumers to other departments or agencies for additional assistance where appropriate. In the last year the UCA assisted over 24,000 Albertans over the phone seeking information or assistance related to their electricity or natural gas services while over 194,000 visited the UCA website. Over 5,200 of the total calls received involved the UCA providing trained mediation services to deal with consumer, service, billing, or disconnection issues arising between Albertans and their utility provider.

Madam Speaker, this legislation contains a few key enhancements for consumers that build on the great work of the UCA, that I would like to discuss. First, the legislation extends the Utility Consumer Advocate's education and mediation mandate to include water in addition to electricity and natural gas utilities. As I mentioned, the UCA currently assists to resolve disputes between consumers and electricity and natural gas utility providers. However, the UCA does not have the mandate to become involved in water utility related matters at this time. We know that Alberta's water utility companies are well operated, well maintained, and very reliable. But sometimes consumers may occasionally find themselves in a dispute with their water utility company and need help, and it can be hard for a consumer to know the real cause or how to prove it when utilities are complex and the issues are so very technical.

Albertans have told us that this made them feel powerless, with nowhere to turn for help when a massive bill arrives, and their only options are to pay the bill or face disconnection. That's why I'm proud to say that this bill will empower Albertans by giving them a helping hand to resolve their billing issues. If passed, the bill would expand the mandate of the Alberta Utilities Consumer Advocate to create a one-stop shop for Albertans to resolve disputes with all their utility bills by increasing the UCA's role to include water, sewage, and drainage. Water customers would then be able to call the Utilities Consumer Advocate for help to resolve concerns regarding their water bills. This results in the consumer being put on more of an equal footing with the utility and reduces the stress of tackling these issues alone. In these cases, the UCA will act as a neutral third party, there to facilitate resolution between utilities and their consumers.

Madam Speaker, this bill will also strengthen the UCA in another important way. Building on the work by the Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose – and I would like to thank him very much for his work in this area last session – these new provisions will authorize the UCA to provide important sources of information to Alberta's power and natural gas consumers. Right now, when a

consumer calls the UCA's contact centre and asks for help in choosing a power or natural gas provider, the UCA can tell them about the rates and packages that various companies offer in their area, both on the regulated side or the contract side. In addition, the UCA also has information readily available on its website regarding the number of times it has been contacted by a customer of a certain company. This information comes in the form of mediation reports listing the type of call or complaint received by the UCA, by company, for the last month. These reports are updated regularly and are available on the UCA website.

If this bill is approved, the UCA would be able to provide Albertans with richer and more detailed information on the state of compliance of a power or natural gas company. If this bill is approved, the UCA would be able to collect and aggregate compliance information from places such as the Alberta Utilities Commission and the Market Surveillance Administrator. As a result, the UCA will be able to provide greater details about the company's overall compliance record, including the number of complaints the company has faced, the number of investigations conducted, and any administrative orders or penalties that the company has incurred. Madam Speaker, consumers will benefit from this type of information being available because this information will be far more user friendly as the UCA will be able to summarize, aggregate, and present the otherwise technical details in a clear and straightforward fashion.

Finally, this improved accountability and increased transparency will create a strong incentive for providers of electricity and natural gas to improve their practices. In the end, it will be utility consumers that benefit from increased competitiveness in the market and allowing them to make more informed decisions when selecting a provider.

In closing, I would like to thank our stakeholders for their important input on this bill. We consulted with the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, Rural Municipalities of Alberta, and various utility companies on this bill. They provided valuable insight into this bill. I'm confident this bill will empower utility consumers by giving them more support and information to make well-informed decisions.

I look forward to continued debate on Bill 14. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak on Bill 14, An Act to Empower Utility Consumers. I must say that when this bill was brought forward by the Minister of Service Alberta, I had a mixed reaction. I had, first, a sense of relief because I know that the everyday Albertans like the ones I have the privilege of representing in Bonnyville-Cold Lake are facing economic challenges, and when their cost of living continues to rise, even paying basic utilities like heat, electricity, and water can be an obstacle. Albertans undoubtedly need relief, and I hope that in some small way this bill might be able to provide some of those who are struggling to get by and suddenly find themselves facing an exorbitant utility bill.

But, Madam Speaker, I must say that I was somewhat surprised to see this move by the NDP. After three years of sitting in this place across from the government benches, it's often seemed that the other side has had little concern surrounding the rising utility costs that Alberta families have been seeing in the last few years. In fact, it has been a more common occurrence to see the NDP put forward legislation explicitly driving up utility costs for Albertans. I am glad

to see that the NDP have finally taken and allowed for a short hiatus to bring this bill forward and listen to Albertans' concerns.

11:10

That said, I think it is important to stress just briefly the wider situation that Albertans face when it comes to utilities. Let's take a quick look at natural gas. In May of 2015, when the government was elected, residential gas rates in the province averaged around \$2.25 per gigajoule. Fast-forward this to the spring of 2018. The price Albertans can expect to pay for their natural gas is more than \$1 more per gigajoule. Now, of course, we Albertans understand the nature of the fluctuating commodity prices, but there is a problem here. The market price of residential natural gas has actually fallen, not increased. So far this year the market price has consistently averaged below \$2 per gigajoule.

"But what's the \$1 increase?" you might ask. That isn't the market price. It is the NDP price, the distorted price that Albertans are now forced to pay by this government. At the current carbon tax rate of \$1.50 per gigajoule, nearly half the cost of the residential natural gas price is a tax. That is shameful. An Alberta family that may face a \$100 bill for natural gas prior to the other fees and charges is actually paying \$45 in carbon tax. And the NDP aren't done yet. We already know that they have a plan to increase this cost by another 67 per cent. Plus – who knows? – given the chance along with their ally Justin Trudeau, that could easily be doubled or tripled in the future.

Now, Madam Speaker, I know that up in the ivory towers of the Prime Minister and the Premier \$45 a month does not seem like a whole lot of money. But for those struggling Albertans who are trying to get by, that is groceries for the dinner table. It is birthday gifts for their sons and daughters. To the ordinary Albertan it has a real – a truly real – impact. While we consider this bill, one that purports to empower utility consumers, let's keep in mind the challenges that consumers face every day, challenges that this government has made worse time and time again.

Moving on here, I want to dive into this bill a little bit more and explore the historical and future role of the Utilities Consumer Advocate. Members may know that the Utilities Consumer Advocate was originally created during the tenure of Premier Ralph Klein in order to provide residential and small-business consumers the opportunities for education, advocacy, and mediation in regard to their electricity and natural gas bills. This, of course, left out the third major household utility, which is water. This is a gap that this bill is attempting to address. The Utilities Consumer Advocate is engaged in mediation thousands of times a year, in the last fiscal year served more than 22,000 Albertans who had issues with their natural gas and electricity bills. Frankly, to expand their role to cover water bills is a measure of just common sense.

I think it is particularly important to point out that this legislative change does not come out of a vacuum. It is a legislation that addresses real problems that Albertans have faced. Some of the most extreme examples have received media coverage as well. Something as simple as a leaky toilet can end up costing thousands of dollars to unaware consumers in additional water charges. For example, last November Global News reported that a single mother from Fort Saskatchewan faced nearly a \$2,700 water bill for a residence that normally would have averaged less than \$100 per month. While these are not situations that every Albertan will run into and while it is extreme, it is important that we provide tools for those who find themselves in this kind of situation. These issues have caused problems for municipalities, which are the level of government most directly involved and responsible for the water utilities.

The city of Calgary announced in the fall that it would forgive and be absorbing the cost of abnormally high water bills. Since then Calgary taxpayers have paid nearly a million dollars to cover the issue, with a further estimated annual cost of \$1.5 million going forward.

I am glad that the minister has decided to bring this legislation forward now to try and provide tools to address abnormally high water bills, but I am sure that Calgary taxpayers and consumers would have appreciated these measures back in the fall, when the city decided to take action. Dare I say that the minister and the government of Alberta might have had their priorities out of order when they put their attacks on Alberta veterinarians ahead of supporting utility consumers.

But, as I said, at least the government has come to address this issue now. It is also important to recognize that while providing mediation and investigation services to the consumers is an important part of the solution to the issue, education is a priority. According to Enmax 37 per cent of the abnormally high water bills are due to leaky toilets and 29 per cent are due to undetermined causes. Providing consumers with more information will help to make people aware of causes, that will hopefully contribute to reductions in wasted water going forward.

I would also like to briefly go over the new public reporting measures that are new to the UCA's powers, not only for water but for the electricity and natural gas utilities. These are also useful in providing the public further information. We see this bill allowing public reporting on customer services and complaints, on compliance and regulatory issues, and other enforcement. This is a measure that will help to increase transparency on disputes and related measures that may arise.

That said, this comes back to the overriding concern about the effect that this government's policies have on utility costs for consumers. The most important measure that consumers need is transparency on the true and total cost of government policies on their utility bills. Now, while we are never going to see the NDP give the UCA the power to hold government to account on their energy costs, we in the opposition will certainly fill that role.

I already spoke about the burdensome costs of natural gas, that have been precipitated by the carbon tax, but I have not had the chance to address the disastrous electricity policy of this government and the effects that it has had on its consumers. From the debacle of the PPA agreements, or power purchase agreements, to the shutdown of our newest and most efficient coal-fired generation plants to the government's imposition of the so-called green energy fund, the actions of this government will have long-term negative effects on electricity bills for the ordinary Albertan.

The scary thing is that they don't seem to be done yet. Undoubtedly, this is an attempt to transition to a capacity market, which will hit the wallets of our ratepayers. What have they done to try to smooth this over? They have built in taxpayer subsidy rates to cap and hide the true costs. When you look at our electricity bills in this respect, they have really done the opposite of providing openness and transparency to the consumers.

Madam Speaker, I do plan on supporting this bill because on this side of the House we support Alberta consumers. That said, I am deeply concerned that this is a tactic of the government, trying to say that they are standing up for consumers to distract them while they are simultaneously hitting the pocketbooks of the average Albertan with every opportunity they have.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

11:20

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Mr. Hinkley: Thank you, Madam Speaker. With Bill 14 we are making life more affordable for families by expanding the Utilities Consumer Advocate's free mediation services for water bills. Albertans told us that they have felt powerless when they were hit with unusually massive water bills and had nowhere to turn for help. We listened and are taking action by empowering consumers with free expert help that will mediate on their behalf and help them to resolve their water billing issues. The UCA has a proven track record for protecting natural gas and electricity consumers in Alberta and mediating on their behalf. Adding water, sewage, and drainage to their mandate makes it a one-stop shop for Albertans to resolve disputes with their utility bills.

We are also expanding the UCA's ability to report on how gas and electricity companies are performing so that Albertans can make informed choices when buying power or natural gas. Reporting would include quality of customer service, number of consumer complaints, details of investigations and penalties, and how well they are complying with laws and standards such as orders from regulators. We are beefing up the UCA's role in reporting so that Albertans can sign up for plans with confidence, knowing that their utility will serve them well.

My colleagues may remember that I introduced Bill 208 last session, pertaining more so to electricity and natural gas concerns. While the bill did not pass, I am pleased to see that its contents were not lost. The UCA already discloses valuable information that comes out of their mediation services related to common complaints. But with these amendments the UCA can provide information from a range of other sources to disseminate even better information to Alberta consumers, that will help make informed decisions. This information is already collected by various entities such as the Alberta Utilities Commission and the Market Surveillance Administrator. The information that the UCA will disseminate relates to consumer complaints, investigations, penalties, and compliance activities. For example, the UCA can now report on the performance of electricity, natural gas, and water utility providers and the state and level of compliance.

When compliance and service quality information is transparently available to the public, businesses have an incentive to improve their service and practices to retain customers and attract new ones. While much of this information is already publicly available, there is a difference between being available and accessible. Albertans lead busy lives, and much of this information is difficult to find. This makes it inconvenient to search out information from three or more separate sources when deciding on an electricity or natural gas provider. This is doubly true when the information is of a particularly technical nature. The UCA can solve these problems by collecting, aggregating, and explaining this information in a single, user-friendly location. This is great news for both consumers and utility providers, to provide the best and most competitive utility services for Albertans.

In closing, I'd like to offer my support for these amendments and to thank the hon. minister for ensuring that the contents of Bill 208 will not be forgotten. I do support this bill.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's always an honour to rise in this House to discuss a bill that is before us and affects all Albertans. This morning is no exception, of course. This morning we're talking about Bill 14, An Act to Empower Utility Consumers. Now, this bill purports to provide transparency by performance reporting of the activities of electricity and natural gas providers so that consumers can shop in confidence. To me, I guess this means that the Utilities Consumer Advocate will now have the ability to publicly report performance of power and natural gas utilities. This appears, on its face, to be a good thing for consumers, a great step to take.

Now, the Utilities Consumer Advocate was set up by the previous government, with a mandate to educate, advocate, and mediate for Alberta's residential, farm, and small-business electricity and natural gas consumers. As the minister stated in her introduction to this bill, she said something along the lines that the Utilities Consumer Advocate has a proven track record of helping to educate and mediate on behalf of Alberta's natural gas and electricity consumers. That is lofty praise, certainly, lofty praise from a government that continues to take shots at the previous government at every turn. But I digress. This bill will further impress that mandate to include water bills as part of services provided by the Utilities Consumer Advocate. These mediation services are a free service, which, given the huge increase in disputes, is probably a good thing, Madam Speaker.

I guess what this now does is set up a kind of catch-all, a one-stop shop for mediation utility disputes, which is great. But I wonder about the underlying cause of these issues and whether these reports will address these issues so they don't continue to plague ratepayers. I mean, let's be honest. This government championing the fight against spiking utilities seems to go somewhat sideways from what we've seen in the last three years. After three years of this government being in power, they have seemed determined to do nothing but raise the cost of utilities for all those Albertans. They increased the rate of decommissioning our efficient coal plants, causing uncertainty in coal communities across Alberta and, well, making life less affordable for Albertans with the green-scheme-induced carbon tax, a tax that I always take the chance to remind everyone that they did not campaign on in the election of 2015.

So you'll forgive me if I tend to be somewhat skeptical about aspects of this bill. After all, this is a government that was taken completely by surprise by the power purchase agreements, when companies exercised their rights to walk away, as this government has made these agreements clearly less profitable. Hardly the stuff to be made confident by, Madam Speaker.

I suppose it's more than welcomed that after three years of steady increases to the cost of living for Albertans, the NDP do appear to be taking notice of the concerns of Albertans in regard to skyrocketing utility bills. I really hope that the government did its homework this time and actually engaged in meaningful consultation with municipalities on this bill as this is an area primarily of municipal responsibility. Let's face it. Municipal government is the grassroots government of Alberta, and, in my opinion, if things were operating right, these municipalities would be considered partners of the government of Alberta.

Let's face it. The consultation record of the government, I suggest, could best be described as spotty. I really hope that by expanding the Utilities Consumer Advocate's mandate to provide consumers with the information and tools that they need to understand and manage their utility bills, that can only be a good thing, in my opinion.

The problem I see is that if the government is unwilling to address the rising cost of electricity and natural gas to ratepayers, then it's

kind of a moot point that they're willing to address concerns surrounding water bills. After all, the carbon tax on everything made these bills increase. You have to wonder where it will stop. Maybe if Albertans support what we're doing over here on this side of the House, this tax on everything will stop sometime in 2019. We will wait and see how that plays out.

Now, consumers, at the very least, will have the Utilities Consumer Advocate to check up on and report their findings on things like whether a company has a record or a history of complaints, whether their record is compliant with current laws, of course, and standards and, equally important, that there will be an established record of customer service performance. I think that's important.

11:30

I guess this will be sort of a Better Business Bureau of utility companies, Madam Speaker. While your options for utility companies may be limited by geography, at least now there will be a historic account of these companies', let's say, transgressions, should they have them, that is. This will at least give some background if mediation between a ratepayer and a utility company has to occur. Anything that helps the little guy cannot hurt. The little guy is who we're all kind of looking out for as we create legislation in this House. We hope that the average, everyday Albertan in downtown Alberta actually gets a little help now and then.

Speaking of that little guy, what I'd really like to see, Madam Speaker, is for this government to stop hurting that little guy, the everyday Albertan. Especially after the January 1 increase to the tax on everything, the Main Street, Alberta, fella is beginning to hurt, as are nonprofits, school boards, food banks, and the list goes on. We've talked about all those things in this House before. Some of these things, certainly, this side of the House believes should have an exemption on them so that they can continue.

I recall a lady from the Sundre aquaplex, who would be from the riding of my friend in the front row, saying something along the lines that their operation is really being hit hard. She kind of talked about that. She said that it's not just that particular organization that's being impacted, it's the community as a whole. She said: our little organizations are what keep Sundre going, and without these facilities in the community, we wouldn't have a community, but because of the carbon tax, we had to increase our rates, but we couldn't increase them as much as required to keep up with the cost of the tax because the people that would be paying that would also be paying the carbon tax as well. In their opinion, they could not double-dip those people.

I suppose that if this government really wanted to help utility companies, they would slash their carbon tax and put a little more money back into taxpayers' pockets. Now, the U of C energy economist Jennifer Winter recently wrote that a \$50-per-tonne carbon tax will cost a typical Alberta household \$1,111 per year. Before the government starts yelling about rebates and making life better for Albertans, Madam Speaker, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation has already determined that 55 per cent of Albertans received no rebate cheque or, if they did, it was less than what that particular person would have paid in carbon taxes. So \$1,100 is a lot of money and, certainly, money that the little guy that's walking down Main Street, Alberta, could use.

While the government members may shake their heads in disagreement on what I'm talking about, I'm going to have to again provide an example of what some of this government has brought on to folks. Let's again take the example of the landowner too far from a natural gas line to provide inexpensive gas to heat his home and his outbuildings. Places like this exist in this province. His cost-effective and efficient solution to this was to use a modern, coal-

burning furnace. They are still available. It would seem that that would solve the problem, but not so fast. The government indeed decided to accelerate the phase-out of coal and then added in a carbon tax to fund the green slush fund. This cost-effective solution now spirals out of control. Instead of an economic solution for this Albertan that has no access to natural gas, this taxpayer now pays \$53.09 a tonne in carbon tax on stoker coal that sells for \$45 a tonne. Well, now, that is simply outrageous.

If making life better for Albertans is to simply burden rural farmers and ranchers with an ever-increasing carbon tax, if that was this government's goal, well, I congratulate you on your achievement. Now, this isn't my opinion. Remember the federal briefing note from January of last year, the one that showed that the national carbon tax will cost farmers \$3,705 on average when implemented at \$50 per tonne? Given the nearly 50,000 farmers in Alberta that run upwards of \$180 million a year, give or take – \$180 million – that's money that could be put back into the economy instead of back into the great green slush fund. I mean, it's been proven and written about many times. Any money that a farmer or rancher actually earns goes back into the economy and turns over several times, that same amount of money.

I don't like to be a cynic. I really want to believe in this bill. I want to support it. It really could be a positive step that this legislation will allow the Utilities Consumer Advocate to provide public reports on power and natural gas utilities. That could provide a degree of accountability and consumer confidence in the utility market that ratepayers desperately need.

As mentioned, this act will also now provide an outlet, a means, I would say, to settle water bill disputes. It may not solve all the myriad of problems, but it is somewhere to start as consumers will finally have an outlet for water bill disputes. It won't help water rate disputes as those rates are set by municipalities, but it can address billing issues. So mark one down for the little guy in Alberta.

Now that I think about it, there is also the added benefit of using an existing entity to rectify these disputes. After all, why create another agency when you have publicly stated that you're trying to reduce the number of ABCs in the province? I only wish that this government took this approach with other pieces of legislation. No need to hire additional bodies to fulfill this expanded mandate. It would be great if government did more of this more often. After all, it seems that the only jobs this government ever creates are in the public sector, so this is indeed a nice change of pace.

I guess the major flaw I see in the bill is that this entity, the Utilities Consumer Advocate, can't compel the utility companies that may be offside to change. What I mean to say is that if a company is a chronic offender and the reports of the UCA prove that, what power does this entity have to order utility companies to get better, to improve customer service? It's not that I don't think that information isn't valuable. It's just that if enough complaints are borne out, I guess we have to rely on these reports coming from the government for them to take action. Hopefully, this will be the exception and not the rule. Hopefully, things bear out like the government has said and the vast number of cases will be mediated in such a fashion that ratepayers are saved from erroneous billing errors and save themselves money in the end. That would be what I'd like to see continue to happen.

Madam Speaker, while I may be able to get behind this legislation, I can't help but have a healthy dose of skepticism. That being said, I look forward to more debate in this House to solidify the position of the minister.

Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Mr. Rosendahl: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's always a pleasure to rise and comment in the House. I'd like to comment on Bill 14, An Act to Empower Utility Consumers. My colleagues have spoken about the ways in which the UCA, which is the Utilities Consumer Advocate, already assists Albertans with respect to their gas and electricity utility issues. I'd like to discuss, however, what these changes will mean to a typical Albertan. This bill ensures that Albertans with concerns about their water bill will have a new resource to access.

We're making life more affordable for families by expanding the Utilities Consumer Advocate's free mediation services to water bills. Albertans told us that they felt powerless when they were hit with unusually massive water bills and had nowhere else to turn. We listened, and we are taking action by empowering consumers with free expert help that will mediate on their behalf and help them resolve their water billing issues. The UCA already has a proven track record for protecting natural gas and electricity consumers in Alberta and mediating on their behalf on these issues. Adding water, sewage, and drainage to their mandate makes it a one-stop shop for Albertans to resolve disputes on utility bills.

11:40

As was stated already, the UCA was created in 2003. Sometimes disputes can arise, and disputes also can take on a life of their own, particularly when they have been going on for a long time. For example, prior to 2003 we had a gas company that went around in the community of Hinton and convinced consumers that they needed to lock their gas bills because the gas prices were going up. Many consumers ended up signing long-term contracts, locking their gas prices because of what they were convinced was going to happen with gas prices in the community. What happened was that they locked these in for five years at three to four times the going rate, and there was no way to get out of these contracts. It's unfortunate that this had occurred prior to 2003.

You can see how situations like that hurt consumers. This is why the involvement of the UCA is so important. As an impartial third party they can bring parties together and ultimately reach a fair resolution. I'd like to stress, however, that the UCA's assistance does not always end there. For example, many billing disputes or disconnections may result from nonpayment by the consumer. In this instance the UCA can also be a key link connecting an Albertan who is vulnerable or relies on services such as income support or programs through Alberta Works. Additionally, the UCA works directly with consumers and providers to prevent disconnection if that should occur and to help facilitate the reconnection of power or natural gas. From this, it's clear that the UCA can have a significant positive effect that extends well beyond a single dispute. This is another reason I'm pleased that more Albertans have access to the UCA.

Adding water to the UCA mandate is important. Put simply, there isn't a provincial organization in place that educates consumers about the water utilities. It helps them mediate water utility companies on issues such as unusually high water bills. With its experience and successful track record regarding mediating and educating consumers of natural gas and electricity, adding water utilities to the UCA's mandate is a natural fit. Plus, given that electricity, natural gas, and water comprise the three main utilities for most any home, it's practical to set up the UCA as a one-stop shop, as we already mentioned, to go to if they need help or information on all three.

Has there been demand? Yes. In the last year we've heard from Albertans that they want somewhere to go when they have an issue with their water bill. The UCA's contact centre received 179 calls relating to water issues, including billing, consumer service, disconnection, education, and metering. "Is 179 calls a lot?" is the question that can be asked. The UCA received roughly 25,000 calls for natural gas and electricity issues in the same time frame. We strongly believe that there are many other Albertans we haven't heard from simply because consumers don't routinely reach out to the UCA about water issues at this time.

The other issue that I want to bring forward is what's happening in the community of Hinton today, the fact that the community is going to be switching over to a new water system, and that concerns many of the residents. By the UCA looking after water issues, it will provide an opportunity for the residents to contact the advocate's office in the event that there may be disputes down the road.

I'm certainly in support of this, and I really think that this is something that the whole House needs to support. I've got to thank the minister for bringing this bill forward, and, like I said, I offer my full support for this bill.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I'll now recognize the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my privilege to rise today and speak to Bill 14, An Act to Empower Utility Consumers. This bill adds water as part of the free mediation service to the already existing gas and electricity services that the Utilities Commission provides, and it also increases the public reporting and performance of some of the utility providers as well.

I am pleased to speak in support of the bill. I think it is an important bill, and it's brought forward to expand the Utilities Consumer Advocate's ability to accomplish these tasks for these three areas of utilities, as I've said, both power and natural gas and now water as well. I think it will be helpful for many consumers. I think that the goal of the bill should be to be able to have a respectful and co-operative market system functioning well, and hopefully it will contribute to that.

I must express, though, that while I'm in support of the bill and in support of the concept, I am somewhat wary of the intent of the current bill, mainly with respect to the fact that the current government has not had a very good track record of empowering or mediating for Albertans and hasn't done much to advocate for them in terms of the extreme cost increases to two of the utilities that the commission will be looking at, power and natural gas. It's good to protect water consumers, which needed to be added to the list, but at the same time for the power and natural gas consumers, while they're on the list of those that the Utilities Consumer Advocate will be able to speak for, the increases that they've experienced have been extreme.

You know, I find it interesting in one respect to note that while the advocate has received 179 calls with respect to water, the calls with regard to electricity and natural gas are 22,790. You try to put that into perspective a little bit. There's a massive, massive disproportion there in terms of the urgency and importance. Now, maybe that will balance out in the future once consumers know that they can call about water. We'll see. On the other hand, maybe it reflects the fact that the real pain being felt by consumers is actually in the power and natural gas area. We'll have to watch and see where that goes.

I guess I'm wary of the intent of this bill even though I am supporting it. On first look the bill does seem to serve a good purpose, and I think it will serve a good purpose. The reasons for my wariness or my concern are largely with regard to the fact that in the last few years both our Premier and the Prime Minister have said that while they care about consumers, they are also advocates of carbon tax increases and increases in the price of that. Their primary stated goal is to increase the costs of carbon-based energy. They claim these actions will help Albertans and Canadians – and I quote – make better decisions. Wow. That sounds pretty coercive, quite frankly, to try and force behavioural change by economic pain. Where I come from, if you inflict pain on people in order to make them do things – that doesn't strike me as very appropriate in any world, quite frankly.

11:50

Both the Premier and the Prime Minister have stated that their goal is to increase the cost of carbon, and the intent is to force us to make better decisions. It's in the areas of power and natural gas, that are affected by carbon, that the advocate has received by far and away, many times over, the largest number of calls. Obviously, there is pain there for Albertans. They are expressing it, and they're frustrated by it. There needs to be better advocacy for them.

I am wary of the track record of a government whose purpose is to increase the prices of everything, quite frankly, and now comes forward with an act that's supposed to protect consumers from price increases and from unexpected jolts to their bills and unanticipated costs, that they didn't know were going to be happening to them.

There have been a growing number of complaints, though, with regard to water. I admit that. It's been in the media: Calgary, Fort Saskatchewan, even in my riding. The little community of Ponoka has had a huge number of concerns voiced and raised, to the point of consumers trying to initiate some kind of public action to try and get some results on it. Much of this, of course, has been caused in Alberta by the move by many municipalities to move from just a flat monthly fee for the consumption of water to the installation of meters that measure the amount of water actually consumed and billed based on that metered reading and the change. With that change and that measurement of consumption, some people have, as has already been said in this House, received exponentially exorbitant bills, that really are a challenge to them.

I do give credit to the town of Ponoka, though, to the management there, where they have adopted a policy, in light of all of this and, quite frankly, in light of some public action, of actually trying to notify consumers when their consumption all of a sudden seems to be going up because the kids left a hose on in the yard and it's running day after day or because there's a leak in the toilet. It's amazing how much water over a period of 24 hours and then days and weeks will flow through a leaking toilet. In many cases the challenge here is that the consumers themselves need to fix the leaks in their system, and it creates these incredible jolts to their family economy. The town of Ponoka has taken the position that as soon as they notice a significant increase in water consumption, they've actually been calling the consumer and advising them, warning them that their bill is going to be going up and that they need to take a serious look at why all of this water is flowing through their meter.

I think that's a great demonstration of how a utility provider or water provider could in fact make a difference. The installation of new meters that register this make it possible. I would hope that something like that is in the spirit of this bill, quite honestly. I think we need to avoid a confrontational model as much as possible and try and find positive solutions, and that's a great example of it, in my mind.

I think it is important that we understand these things and that consumers do have, when conflicts do arise, a neutral third party that can mediate, that can take action and, hopefully, make things better. But as I've said, to go after the utility providers when the government itself is actually the primary driver of utility costs on two out of the three utilities that we're talking about here, driving the cost themselves and with no accountability to government about this, when obviously the massive number of calls to the utility advocate are with regard to power and natural gas over water, I think it's a bit disingenuous, quite honestly. It's trying to look nice, trying to sound great in front of the consumers' eyes while at the same time driving up the price of power and natural gas in exorbitant ways.

I mean, I'm speaking about our nonprofits struggling under the weight of carbon tax increases and power bill increases that are going to be coming through changes in our electricity system. We don't see government standing up and championing the protection of those bill increases for those people with regard to those issues because they're the ones who drove the costs up themselves. They're the ones who have pushed these costs. Why don't we see a bill to protect consumers from excessive increases in power and gas bills driven by government here?

Schools are facing the same thing. Many schools, school districts in the province are actually to the point where they're cutting back front-line services. Their reserves are gone. In my riding the school board is cutting in half the number of coaches for disabled students, cutting in half the number of social workers because their costs are driven so high, and it has a lot to do with the carbon tax increases and all that goes with it.

The Alberta milk industry, the dairy producers, I learned just yesterday, have taken the effort of compiling the data of all their members across the province. It's costing them \$2 million a year to the industry to pay just the carbon tax alone, driven by government, with no consumer advocacy for their benefit. And now we're going to offer them a few cents, maybe protection for some water, while at the same time we drive up the costs of the other two utilities, that are far more significant and far more serious. I don't think Albertans are going to see the glory and the wonder of this when they stop and take a minute and think about it.

Prices on almost everything we consume have skyrocketed, and there's no advocate now to hold the government to account for the cost escalation that they have pushed. I don't see the government recalling any of their legislation or implementing any new legislation to help direct the economy in a more positive direction. I'm sorry, but I find it a bit insincere when government wants to appear like the good guy, the good woman, whatever, on one-third

of the three utilities that everybody has to pay. I just think that there's an imbalance here. You know, it's one thing to try and be the superhero of consumer protection, but I think what we're seeing here belongs more in comic books than in the Legislature.

Every day it seems like we get a new piece of legislation from this government that it's brought in over the last few years, and the intent has the direct effect of raising the cost of utilities for everyday Albertans, continually pushing the costs for them. The job-killing carbon tax, the early phase-out of coal: all these things have hurt Albertans across our province. Why aren't we standing up and protecting them from these much, much greater utility cost increases than the water ones?

That's not to depreciate the need to protect consumers with regard to their water utilities. As I've said, I fully support that, and I will vote for the bill. It has a good value to it, and it has a good benefit, but it's small comfort in face of some of the other realities that we are facing with regard to utility realities and the utility experience of consumers in this province.

As I've said, the Utilities Consumer Advocate is a good tool. This expansion of it will create a space where consumers can go to get help when water rates are not being abided by. There is a wealth of good information that they can access that will help them navigate the system, someone to help them work their way through it. I also would hope, though, as I suggested earlier, that it does create a respectful and co-operative marketplace, that also the advocate will in some cases need to advocate on behalf of the utilities, because truthfully not every consumer is a victim. Sometimes the consumers themselves are acting wrongly, and I hope that there's a balance there and a fair and equitable justification for both consumers and the utility providers. I think that's important in order for us to have a respectful and co-operative marketplace that creates trust, that will create a good delivery of service for people, and that it will be positive all around.

I would say, though, in closing, as has already been suggested, that there really are no teeth in this bill. There's no opportunity for any kind of enforcement. That might be something worth looking at, particularly for utility providers that develop a consistent and an ongoing record of challenges.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Pursuant to Standing Order 4(2.1) the Assembly will stand adjourned until 1:30 this afternoon.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, May 2, 2018

Day 23

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (NDP)
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (UCP),
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)
Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (NDP)
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP)
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)
Schneider, David A., Little Bow (UCP)
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (NDP)
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (NDP)
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (NDP)
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (UCP)
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (UCP)
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (NDP),
Deputy Government Whip
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)
Vacant, Fort McMurray-Conklin
Vacant, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake

Party standings:

New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 25 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent Conservative: 1 Vacant: 2

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Shannon Dean, Law Clerk and Director of	Committee Services	Chris Caughell, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms
House Services	Nancy Robert, Research Officer	Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Stephanie LeBlanc, Senior Parliamentary	Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of	Gareth Scott, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Counsel	<i>Alberta Hansard</i>	
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel		

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Sarah Hoffman	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health
Shaye Anderson	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
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Sandra Jansen	Minister of Infrastructure
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Children's Services
Brian Mason	Minister of Transportation
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Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Community and Social Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

Parliamentary Secretaries

Jessica Littlewood	Economic Development and Trade for Small Business
Annie McKittrick	Education

STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

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Chair: Mr. Coolahan
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	Luff
Dang	McPherson
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha
Deputy Chair: Mr. van Dijken

Carson	Littlewood
Connolly	McPherson
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schneider
Fitzpatrick	Starke
Gotfried	Taylor
Horne	

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Goehring
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Orr
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Fraser	Shepherd
Hinkley	Swann
Luff	Woollard
McKitrick	Yao
Miller	

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Shepherd
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Aheer	McKitrick
Gill	Pitt
Horne	van Dijken
Kleinsteinuber	Woollard
Littlewood	

Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Wanner
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Babcock	Nixon
Cooper	Piquette
Dang	Pitt
Drever	Westhead
McIver	

Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms Kazim
Deputy Chair: Connolly

Anderson, W.	Orr
Babcock	Rosendahl
Drever	Stier
Drysdale	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kleinsteinuber	Taylor
McKitrick	

Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	Miller
Cooper	Nielsen
Goehring	Nixon
Gotfried	Pitt
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Cyr
Deputy Chair: Mr. Dach

Barnes	Malkinson
Carson	Miller
Clark	Nielsen
Gotfried	Panda
Hunter	Renaud
Littlewood	Turner
Luff	

Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola
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Babcock	Loewen
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Fildebrandt	Panda
Hanson	Rosendahl
Kazim	Schreiner
Kleinsteinuber	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, May 2, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

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

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today to introduce to you several grade 6 school groups from River Valley school in my hometown of Sundre. There are a lot of them, I believe, on all sides of the gallery. They're here today with their teachers, Ms Jennifer Cheung, Mr. Marc Doucette, and Miss Sonja Logan, as well as their chaperones: Jason Spurrier, Nancy Svatos, Lacey Sewepegaham, Chris Hunter, Jenna Grant, Krista Saunders, Jason Sykes, Jim Harper, Shawn MacNeil, and Alison Butler. These are great kids from a great town. I enjoyed visiting with them the other day. Let me tell you that they are some of the best grade 6 classes in this province, and I'm glad to see them here at my work. I'd ask that they rise, all of them, and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. M. le Président, c'est avec fierté que je me lève dans cette Chambre aujourd'hui pour introduire the students from l'école Father Jan. They're accompanied by their teacher, Guylaine Lefebvre-Maunders, and their chaperones: Mr. Kelly Warawa, Mrs. Danette LeRoux, Mrs. Heidi Pisani, and Danielle Evanson. I'd ask them all to rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Are there any other school groups, hon. members?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly three distinguished guests from 1 Field Ambulance primary care clinic in Edmonton. Here today are Major Heath Robson, Jill Washington, and Beth Gallant-Loggie. Major Robson is a clinic manager of one of the largest Canadian Armed Forces primary care clinics and networks in the country, serving CAF members in Edmonton, Yellowknife, Suffield, and Calgary. Jill and Beth are social workers specializing in addiction counselling and recovery. They have developed the rapidly growing aftercare program, which looks to change the narrative around addiction and engage patients, friends, and the chain of command to become more positive, proactive actors in the recovery of members. I would now ask my guests to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly the chair of the Special Areas Board, Mr. Jordon Christianson. Jordon was born and raised in the small community of Oyen, which I've had the pleasure of visiting, in eastern Alberta, where his

family farmed and ranched south of town. He attended the University of Saskatchewan, where he received a bachelor of science degree in agriculture. In '99 Jordon began his career with the Special Areas Board as an agricultural fieldman in Consort and then moved to a field services administrator position, where he was responsible for the approval of industrial activities on public land in the special areas. From there he became the director of property administration, and in September 2015 Jordon was appointed chair of the Special Areas Board. But he still remains active on his family's farm. Between the Special Areas Board and the farm he continues to build relationships throughout the region while maintaining a strong connection to the land and its native prairie. Jordon is seated in the public gallery, and I ask that he stand and we all join to give him the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: What the minister didn't announce is that he's from southeastern Alberta. That's good.

The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two groups to recognize today. The first is patient advocates from the Edmonton patient support group for Bladder Cancer Canada, who are seated in the members' gallery. May is Bladder Cancer Awareness Month, a time to focus attention on advocacy, prevention, research, and, of course, a cure. They ask that you help spread the message far and wide by using #yellowhelps and perhaps describing how Bladder Cancer Canada has helped loved ones along the way. I also recognize that they're wearing a lot of yellow today. I invite Michele, Dick, Merv, Hildegard, Randy, Ruby, Reg, Bette, Scott, Gloria, and Tom to please rise and receive our warm welcome.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. The second introduction I have is the Scleroderma Society of Canada and the Pulmonary Hypertension Association of Canada, who are seated in the members' gallery. They work to improve quality of life for patients living with scleroderma and PAH through education and supports, research, and public awareness. Thank you for your advocacy and for your partnership. I invite Jeannette, Arnold, Margaret, Susan, Yvette, Gillian, Miaya, Kristy, Anna, Ruth, and Joanne to rise and receive the warm welcome of our House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Violence Prevention

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like all of us in this Chamber, I was horrified by the vicious attack that took place in Toronto last week and incredibly saddened at the senseless loss of 10 vibrant lives. It's hard to comprehend that such an act could take place in our country and on our streets. It's hard to understand the motivation of an individual to commit such a sick attack. Ten innocent lives taken and more injured. While the investigation is ongoing, it has already served to shine a light on a dark corner of the Internet where sad loners can fester and hatred grow. It turns my stomach to know that there is an entire online community of men who feed this rage.

Mr. Speaker, this must stop, and we must be part of the solution that puts an end to this scourge, which is why my United Conservative colleagues and I proudly support the government's

proclamation of May as Sexual Violence Awareness Month. It is clear that more can and should be done to address the attitudes that all too often excuse the alarming and dangerous behaviour that precedes sexual assault, domestic abuse, and violence against women. We must encourage a culture where this behaviour is noticed and addressed before violence occurs, not recognized after the fact.

My heart breaks for the eight women and two men who lost their lives on the corner of Yonge and Finch last week, 10 people who tragically found themselves in the wrong place at the wrong time, 10 human beings who each led unique lives filled with purpose and promise, 10 who are desperately missed by all who loved them. Let us keep them in our hearts as we work to stomp out violent hatred in all its forms.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Energy Industry and Trans Mountain Pipeline

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I stand to talk about the future of Alberta and the future of Alberta's energy industry. I know that a lot of people both inside and outside the province think that Alberta's energy industry is about big oil and gas projects and pipelines, but to me, Alberta's energy industry is about people.

It's about the thousands of workers in my constituency of Edmonton-Castle Downs and my family, who rely on the energy industry for good-paying jobs that help them support themselves and their families. It's about the 4.3 million people who live in Alberta who rely on government services like health care and education. It's about the thousands of people in our health care and education sectors who go to work every day to make life better for Albertans. It's about our children, who deserve a future where they can count on good jobs and educational opportunities. It's about their children and the people of Alberta for generations to come, who need to live in a province that is not only a leader in energy production but a leader in environmental protection and social justice.

Right now, Mr. Speaker, it's about the people all across western Canada who know that the right thing to do is to allow the Kinder Morgan expansion to proceed. The majority of people in both Alberta and B.C. are in support of the Kinder Morgan expansion. They know how important this project is to their future, and they are looking to our government and the federal government for leadership against those who would stop it.

That's why I am so proud of our government for putting forward Bill 12, Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act, because the fight isn't just about the energy industry in Alberta. The fight is about a future that looks greater and better for everyone in our country.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

British Columbia's Environmental Policies

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During all of the environmental preaching and pipeline bashing we have heard out of British Columbia's NDP government, one thing has left me truly baffled. While Albertans were made to feel guilty by their own NDP government for needing to drive to work and having to heat our homes in the winter, a B.C. mine is leaking acid waste into one of the richest salmon runs in the region and has been for over 60 years.

As Albertans were yearning for social licence with a carbon tax cherry on top, British Columbia's motto must have been Do as I Say, Not as I Do. In this ecological delusion they've demanded pristine environmental sanctity, all the while being responsible for about 40 per cent of the 120 million cubic metres of untreated sewage and runoff sewage that entered Canadian waterways in 2016.

1:40

The upcoming Kinder Morgan decision has left Alberta's workers waiting anxiously, with their hard hats in one hand and an uncompromising sense of hope in the other. They understand that with or without environmental policies, Calgarians cannot get by much longer with the third-highest unemployment rate amongst Canada's major cities and over 156,000 unemployed Albertans throughout the province. The green infrastructure that B.C. idealizes from their high horse cannot be built from a largely unemployed population. Moreover, the prevention of a pipeline leaves us little option but rail, risky, costly rail. Mr. Speaker, Warren Buffett had it right.

However, it seems to be out of sight, out of mind for Premier Horgan's pipeline protestors. They choose to protest Alberta's ethical oil while turning a blind eye on their own provincial capital dumping 145 billion litres of untreated sewage into the ocean. Hypocrisy at its finest.

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

University of Calgary Dinos

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With the end of the spring semester at the University of Calgary I'd like to take this time to reflect on the accomplishments of their varsity teams. In the 2017-18 academic year we saw the U of C Dinos make accomplishments like women's volleyball winning the Canada West championship for the first time since 2005, the men's cross-country team winning the Canada West championship for the first time since 2008, the women's rugby second straight Canada West title, the Dinos sweeping the Crowchild Classic hockey games at the Pengrowth Saddledome – sorry, MRU – the men's football team win its eighth Hardy Cup win in 10 years. I'll never forget the 59-yard field goal. And dozens of medals were won in cross-country, swimming, and wrestling.

But the largest underdog win came from the Dinos men's basketball team. After beating Brock and McGill in the U Sports Final 8 tournament, the Dinos entered the championship as the clear underdog compared to the large-statured Ryerson University. Dinos head coach Dan Vanhooren even mentioned that in looking at his players' physiques, you could confuse them for a soccer team. Despite that, with the game tied at 77 with nine seconds left, Dinos player Mambi Diawara scored the game-winning two-point shot to crown them their first national championship. This is the first time in eight years that Carleton University didn't win the big championship, a team that upset the Dinos just two years ago.

Following the tournament, players David Kapinga and Mambi Diawara would go on to represent Canada with a silver medal win in men's basketball at the Commonwealth Games just last April, and they would be joined by students like Jackson Payne and Allison Beveridge, who won medals in gymnastics and cycling, as well as alumni Erica Wiebe, who won gold in wrestling.

I'm sure I speak for all members in this Assembly, including the Member for Calgary-Varsity and Minister of Service Alberta and Status of Women, when I congratulate all Dinos athletic players on their amazing accomplishments this year.

Organ and Tissue Donation

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, last week was National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week, and it's meant to raise awareness about the critical need for more donors across the country. Approximately 4,500 Canadians are waiting for a life-saving organ transplant. The sad reality is that, on average, 250 Canadians die each year waiting for a transplant. Making that important decision to donate is the first step to saving lives.

Mr. Speaker, a couple of weeks ago I received an e-mail from a constituent saddened by the Humboldt tragedy. The event reminded him of the loss of his own son in 1987, also a junior hockey player. Fortunately, before his accident his son had signed the organ donor card and made the family aware of his wishes. His son's heart allowed another man to live for 28 more years. Then in 2006 my constituent's wife received a heart transplant, making them the only family they know of that have seen it both ways. My constituent and his wife, during her physio visits at the U of A hospital, saw a number of fine folks pass away because there were no donors.

The death of an 11-year-old boy put him on a speaking tour, wearing his hat as a Rotary president in the Peace Country. The Rotary was good enough to endorse his crusade. He spent three years and six figures of his own money to try and advance the cause. His goal was to achieve a national registry. My constituent informed me that it finally came to a vote last fall in Ottawa. The NDP and the Conservatives voted for it. Trudeau, however, whipped the Liberals to a no, and he still hasn't heard a rational reason from anyone as to why.

It strikes him that this would be an ideal time to revisit the issue, and a push from Alberta certainly could help. Albertans have a valuable role to play. Albertans are encouraged to join forces with health care providers, governments, and Canadian Blood Services to help us create a day when no one in Alberta dies waiting for a transplant.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Sustainable Economy

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since the start of the first Industrial Revolution in the mid 18th century, successive waves of invention have driven economic development. From whale oil to fossil fuels, the invention of water power, steam power, electrification, the internal combustion engine, the space age, and an increasingly digital world: all of these things drove societal change.

Today we find ourselves at the beginning of a sustainability revolution, a revolution that includes renewable energy, the restoration of ecosystems, zero-waste circular economic products, sustainable farming, biomimicry, and nanotechnology. History reveals that each time technology reaches maturity, it is subject to a period of adjustment before ultimately being replaced. History reveals that there are always people who fear and resist change. Scientists and academics all over the world have told us that if the world is to maintain and raise living standards while avoiding the worst impacts of climate change, resource depletion, and ecosystem degradation, economic change is vital.

We know we must work towards becoming a less carbon-intense society. We have to methodically co-ordinate, support, and fund transition to clean technology and energy. This takes time and the political will to do what is tough and right. It takes vision and leadership and the ability to bring changes like the carbon levy, one tool that helps change behaviour, the economy, and our future.

The leader of the UCP has really only just arrived at a place where he finally believes man-made climate change is a real threat to our future. He was a minister in a government that systematically muzzled scientists. It is clear he has no vision for a future that is sustainable and green, let alone the desire or political will to make the hard choices to get there. Who loses if he's allowed to take us backwards? Our children and their children.

Thank you.

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Highwood.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to table the required number of copies for the House regarding a confirmation of Transport Canada's CADORS report.

Oral Question Period

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

Bill 12 Implementation

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A question for the Premier: under what conditions would the Premier use the proposed power to restrict the shipment of Alberta oil to British Columbia?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have been very clear that once we get Bill 12 passed, we will do whatever is necessary to protect Alberta's interests, and we will strategically deploy our resources on the basis of the circumstances at the time to be absolutely firm in protecting Albertans' interests and getting that pipeline built. We know that we're making progress. Just today we've seen yet another poll to show that support for our pipeline is growing significantly in the province of British Columbia.

Mr. Kenney: Since the Premier didn't answer the question, I'll ask it a second time. Under what conditions would the Premier use the proposed power to restrict the shipment of Alberta oil to British Columbia? I'll repeat: under what conditions?

1:50

Ms Notley: As I've already said many, many times, Mr. Speaker, we will do what is necessary based on the best strategic decisions at the time. Previously the member opposite went around suggesting that perhaps we wouldn't do it. I've been very clear that we would do it if it was the thing that needed to be done, and this bill has been designed for us to use it in very short order. You know what isn't helpful? It's as if we're at a card game and the member opposite is standing behind me trying to signal our moves to our opposition in order to help them. This is not helpful. He should get on team Alberta and stop cheering for team B.C.

Mr. Kenney: I think we're starting to see a pattern here, Mr. Speaker. Actually, we have for weeks: a simple, very direct, straightforward policy question answered with a lot of partisan bombast and personal attacks. It's unfortunate. But since the Premier still hasn't tried to answer the question, I'll ask it a third time. It's really a very simple, straightforward, objective question about the government's policy, no partisan torque. Under what conditions would the government use the proposed power to restrict the shipment of Alberta oil to British Columbia?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, I mean, the bill itself is very clear. The purpose of the bill is to ensure that Albertans get the best value for the resources that we own, and we will strategically deploy our export of that product in a way to ensure that we get the best value for the resources that we own. That will depend on the circumstances at any given time. The bill is crafted in a way to make sure that we can do that quickly when necessary, but it is very much based on the circumstances at the time.

The Speaker: Second main question.

Mr. Kenney: I'll infer, Mr. Speaker, from the third failure of the Premier to answer a very simple question, that she doesn't know under what circumstances, that she's making this up as the government goes along.

Bill 12 Pipeline Approval

Mr. Kenney: Now, we're just 30 days away from the prospective cancellation of the pipeline according to Kinder Morgan, which said just last week that the project remains possibly untenable. Contractors working for Kinder Morgan are laying people off. They're scaling down. Unions are saying that the uncertainty has trickled down into people's lives. Mr. Speaker, is it the Premier's view that she won't use this power until after Kinder Morgan potentially cancels the pipeline?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That's absolutely not true, nor is the previous assertion that we don't know when we would use it true. However, we do retain the right to exercise these authorities in a strategic way that gets the pipeline built. Now, I appreciate that the member opposite doesn't have experience with that because he's never managed to get a pipeline built to tidewater, so in building on the same failure, perhaps that's what he wants to set us up for. That's not what will happen here. We are working very hard to get this pipeline built, and as I've said before, it will be built because we know that that is the job Albertans expect us to do.

Mr. Kenney: Did we see what just happened there again, Mr. Speaker? A very straightforward policy question, with a nonresponse, followed by a partisan attack. It's a very clear pattern.

Mr. Speaker, the question is this: what's the point of this purported power to restrict the shipment of Alberta oil to British Columbia if it's not used before the potential cancellation of the pipeline? What's the point of leverage that is not applied? Why has she brought forward this bill while Premier Horgan has gone back to court to further delay the pipeline? Where is the leverage?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Quite honestly, I think that a lot of it's already happened, but at the end of the day the stated purpose for the bill is outlined very clearly in the bill. It's interesting that the member opposite talks about the government of B.C. going to court because, of course, that's where he wanted to go. He wanted to send the whole matter to court, which, to be clear, was not a good idea. We are working very, very hard to get this pipeline built. We are in daily conversations with the people, ultimately, who have the authority to make it happen, much like the member opposite was part of a group like that some years ago who didn't make it happen.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Kenney: Well, another non answer, another partisan attack, Mr. Speaker. That's what happens when a head of government can't actually articulate or defend their own policy.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday, however, we did get a bit of an admission from the Premier that she surrendered to her close ally Justin Trudeau on the Northern Gateway pipeline when she told us that she insisted on one pipeline to a coast. Is that why Justin Trudeau felt there would be no push-back from the Alberta government if he vetoed the Northern Gateway pipeline and killed the Energy East pipeline? Will the Premier take some responsibility for that?

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, speaking of defending one's own policy and speaking of Northern Gateway, I think it's very interesting that we now have even better insight into why the member opposite and his federal government failed to get a pipeline built to tidewater. We learned that three years ago, when asked on national TV why he wouldn't stand up to defend the decision to support Northern Gateway, the member opposite said, and I quote: no particular project is a national priority. That's what the member opposite said about Northern Gateway. Now I'm starting to see what it looks like when you don't fight for your decisions, unlike what this government is doing every day. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Third main question.

Mr. Kenney: Another partisan attack, followed by desk thumping and heckling, Mr. Speaker. The anger machine doesn't know when to stop.

Physicians' Disciplinary Policies

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, on a different matter, when we were last sitting, the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View raised a very troubling case of a physician in Alberta who has been charged with sexual assault but was allowed to maintain his medical licence. The Minister of Health, quite rightly, undertook to raise this with the College of Physicians & Surgeons. I'm wondering if she could please update the House on what response she has received. And has the college decided to change their policy in this respect?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm deeply concerned by this. Women and all Albertans should feel safe while accessing medical care. Doctors are in a position of trust, and patients have a right to know if there have been disciplinary histories for those they've put their trust in. We've definitely raised this with the College of Physicians & Surgeons – we did that immediately – and I want to assure everyone that they today believe they require some additional tools to be able to keep Albertans safe. We're very keen to work with them on making sure that those are in their tool box as we move forward. Unfortunately, that wasn't done previously by the former government.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, can the minister clarify, please, whether or not the College of Physicians & Surgeons has agreed that they will withdraw licences to practise from physicians who are charged

with sexual assault or are under investigation for that kind of terrible crime?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Some governments are further ahead of us in their work in this regard. For example, Ontario recently took legislative steps to prevent sexual abuse by amending the Regulated Health Professions Act to expand the grounds for mandatory revocation of a medical licence. That hasn't been the case in other jurisdictions. But when I raised this as one step that we might be considering here in Alberta, the college said that they would certainly comply with us in making that the case were this House to adopt legislation that would enable them to do so. We're definitely working in close partnership to make sure that all Alberta women can feel safe when they're going to the doctor.

Mr. Kenney: I thank the hon. minister for the substantive answer, Mr. Speaker. I think the minister is telling us that the college will not do this unilaterally but requires legislation. Why could the college not take its own disciplinary action to withhold licences from physicians accused of sexual assault? Secondly, I can assure the minister that we would co-operate with the expeditious passage of any legislation granting the college that power.

Ms Hoffman: I'm excited to hear that the member is willing to show up and vote on a bill that is certainly important to women accessing health care services, Mr. Speaker. That is certainly good news. We are keen to work with the College of Physicians & Surgeons to address this. They have been willing partners.

It's good to hear that the member of the Official Opposition plans on showing up in this regard. Really, Mr. Speaker, I've heard the quote that 90 per cent of success is about showing up. As an Alberta woman I'm concerned about what the track record of that member has been, but I'm glad he plans on showing up for this vote.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Coal Community Transition Climate Leadership Plan

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government has said in the past that they would ensure that no single community would bear the brunt of the early phase-out of coal. That makes for a good sound bite, but it doesn't match the reality of the situation. The coal community transition fund is a good first step, but with some communities facing economic impacts in the hundreds of millions of dollars, it's barely a drop in the bucket. Coal communities are wondering: what comes next? To the Premier: will you commit to giving these communities all the support they need when it comes to transition?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We want coal communities to continue to be places where workers can earn a good living. It is a priority for us in this government, and that's why we are currently making sure that these workers have all the support that they need. You know, we're calling on the federal government as well to step up and pull their weight in supporting these communities. We've provided workers with direct funding to help bridge their income to re-employment or retirement. We are covering all the angles on this issue. Happy to work with the member if he has suggestions to help us going forward.

2:00

Mr. Fraser: Mr. Speaker, our caucus had the opportunity to speak with representatives from Parkland county. They laid out the difficulties that the coal phase-out poses for them, and it was pretty bleak. But they weren't there to complain; they were there to discuss solutions. They laid out several ways that the Parkland community could diversify and mitigate the loss of revenue. One piece was upgrading their highway infrastructure, a project that currently sits on the unfunded list. To the same minister: since your government accelerated the coal phase-out and pulled the rug out from under Parkland county, will you also accelerate their infrastructure funding and help them get back on their feet?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question and for his engagement with Parkland county. I, in fact, grew up in Parkland county, and we have engaged with that community. The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade, through his coal transition task force, engaged with that community and others, Hanna and elsewhere, to make sure that that \$40 million fund meets the immediate needs of workers. Now, of course, there are other community investments that we can make. For example, we are looking at our options around community power projects and how communities can avail themselves of that. Of course, there are infrastructure investments that we can and are making.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Fraser: Mr. Speaker, climate change is real, it's man-made, and it's a serious issue that we need to address. However, we need to make sure that any plan to address climate change doesn't leave Albertans in the lurch. Decisions like the coal phase-out, changes to electricity systems, and the carbon tax have real economic consequences, but there is little to no information available to the public about the total economic impact that this government's climate leadership plan has. To the same minister: will you commit to a detailed, Alberta-wide assessment of the economic impacts of the climate leadership plan whether they're positive or negative?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact, the climate progress report was posted on the Alberta Environment and Parks website in December 2017, which is a very detailed analysis of actions taken so far and actions that are planned for the future. One of those actions that we have taken is making sure that the federal government took action on coal-to-gas conversions for the communities that the hon. member has visited. The previous government did not allow for coal plants to convert to natural gas, which saves jobs and keeps those plants running for a lot of those workers that he's talking about. We got that job done.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Klein.

Aids to Daily Living Program

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta aids to daily living, or AADL, assists Albertans with long-term disabilities or chronic illnesses. The program's cost-sharing function plays an important role in ensuring that hearing aids, which can cost thousands of dollars, remain affordable. To the Minister of Health: can you please outline who is eligible for these benefits?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. We know that aids to daily living is a vital support to Albertans, which is why we've increased their funding by \$3.6 million in Budget 2018, something that I was proud that members of this side of the House, members of the government, voted to support. There are a number of groups who may be eligible for hearing aid benefits: children under 18, postsecondary students, seniors over 65, and low-income adults between the ages of 18 and 65 as well.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There has been a great deal of confusion surrounding AADL's eligibility criteria for supports for Albertans with hearing loss. Can you please clarify how this applies to adults between the ages of 18 and 24 and how these policies are being communicated to the public?

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much to the member for his advocacy on this issue and certainly for helping to share these messages. Adults between the ages of 18 and 24 who are enrolled in postsecondary or whose income is below a certain threshold qualify for AADL benefits if they don't already have access to other benefit plans. There is also a cost-share component which can be waived for low-income Albertans. Certainly, we are updating this information at every opportunity we get a chance to, but when other MLAs help spread the word, that's helpful, too.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Health again: given that AADL is a cost-share program and given that the current eligibility criteria for hearing aids excludes most Albertans aged 18 to 64, what is your ministry doing to provide other supports for those with hearing loss?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you. Making sure that people have the supports they need to lead healthy, dignified lives is a priority for our government, and we know it's a priority for Albertans who are in need. That's why we've increased funding for diagnostic care with allied health services. We will always protect the health care system. Unlike the opposition, who's lobbying for deep cuts that we know would lead to front-line layoffs and reduction of services, Mr. Speaker, this government, Alberta's NDP government, is fighting every day to make health care even better for the people of this province.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Methane Reduction Strategies

Dr. Starke: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Two weeks ago during estimates of Environment and Parks the deputy minister said this about the federal government's methane regulations: "If we left it to a bunch of pointy-headed, condo-dwelling, cappuccino-sucking Ottawa bureaucrats to come up with the methane rules, we're not going to like the results." Well, the federal regulations are out, and the deputy minister was right; we don't like the results. The federal minister has declared that their rules take precedence. What direction can our minister give to Alberta industry stakeholders who have been waiting months for clarity and are now faced with even more uncertainty?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is true that my deputy has a colourful way of expressing himself, but this is why the Alberta Energy Regulator has come out with their directive, which was a result of the Methane Reduction Oversight Committee, a multistakeholder group of Albertans who worked very, very hard on a difficult file, which is to achieve our methane reduction targets in a way that is less prescriptive and less costly to industry. We have published that directive. We published it ahead of the federal government, and it will be that directive that guides our work in our methane reduction strategies.

Dr. Starke: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that we are shaping up for yet another battle with Ottawa over these methane regulations, which are critically important both to our industry and to our efforts to make meaningful and measurable steps to limit greenhouse gas emissions, and given that Alberta and Ottawa's draft regulations are both coincidentally 124 pages long, but that's where the similarity ends, to the minister: could you provide Albertans with a concise summary of the key differences between the two sets of methane regulations?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll be pleased to follow up with the member because I do not think I can give a concise summary in 35 seconds. What I can say is that our regulation came about as a result of a multistakeholder process that involved a number of Albertans, Alberta companies, indigenous people, and others. It is less prescriptive than the federal regulation. It intends to get to the reduction target but in a way that is less costly for industry, and that was the way that we chose as the government because we understand that the industry wants to do the right thing but they want to do it in the most cost-effective way possible.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Dr. Starke: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that the federal regs developed by the aforementioned "pointy-headed, condo-dwelling, cappuccino-sucking Ottawa bureaucrats" have been endorsed by industry critics such as Environmental Defence and the David Suzuki Foundation and given that they are urging the federal government to supersede the made-in-Alberta methane regulations that were developed with Alberta stakeholders and given that this is yet another example of how the self-flagellation of our economy by the NDP carbon tax has failed to win over the vocal critics of our industry, to the minister: what specific measures are you taking now to ensure that our methane regulations will in fact take precedence in Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The action that we are taking is that the Alberta Energy Regulator has published their directive, and we will move forward on that basis. Some more action that we are taking, for example, is ensuring that we have clean tech funds available to companies who want to reduce their methane. We've published the methane reduction offset protocol, and we've got more funds to come for measuring and reporting for small firms. We're going to get this job done. We don't need the federal government to tell us how to do it. We'll have a made-in-Alberta plan.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Oral Question Period Questions and Responses

Mr. Kenney: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, a few minutes ago I asked a series of completely nonpartisan questions about a very important issue about sexual harassment conducted by physicians. I complimented the Minister of Health for her answer. I offered to co-operate with her. Her response was a highly partisan and personal attack. My question for the Premier is: does she think that is appropriate, and are her ministers encouraged to respond to nonpartisan, substantive policy questions with partisan and personal attacks?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you. I am very proud of the work that our government is doing to stand up for women, ensuring that when they go to a doctor's appointment they can do so safely, without bullying, harassment, or intimidation. Whether that's outside the office or inside the office, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't matter. Women in Alberta deserve to access health care safely. This side of the House is making that a priority. We certainly welcome the opposition to join us in that should they choose to, but I won't apologize for standing up for women. I will do it every day, and I will do my job and expect others to do theirs as well. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order, please. Order.

2:10

Mr. Kenney: The original question was about sexual harassment of women by physicians, this last question was about decorum and civility in this place, and what we're getting, Mr. Speaker, are yet more and increasingly loud partisan attacks. I'd like to ask any minister from the government, perhaps the House leader: is the NDP government committed as a general goal to respect for decorum and civility in this Assembly?

Mr. Mason: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. You know, I've been here since, well, long before the election, but since this opposition was elected, and the kind of attacks that I've seen from them, particularly on our women ministers, are all a matter of record. They've been put on the record a number of times. Now the new tactic of the new leader is to turn the little rascals into little angels and say: mom, mom, look at what they're doing over there. Quite frankly, it's a ploy, it's artificial, it's disingenuous, and it's not going to work.

Mr. Kenney: So for the record, Mr. Speaker, it's the view of the NDP government that decorum and civility in the Assembly is a ploy that they will not fall for? Is that the standard which they think Albertans expect of members of the Legislature on either side? Is the government willing to work with us, perhaps on revisions to the standing orders, to reduce the unnecessary noise in this place and to increase the mutual respect and civility of this as a democratic Chamber rather than a ping-pong match of insults and partisan attacks?

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's very clear that the civility and the decorum in this House are of great importance to all sides. But in terms of the partisan attacks that the member is crying crocodile tears over at the moment, one only has to look to the Twitter feed, the social media activities of that opposition leader to realize the full extent of nasty, partisan political attacks.

The Speaker: Calgary-Fish Creek.

Carbon Levy Economic Impact

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Not only is the carbon tax not making life better for Albertans, it is also making it more expensive for them to stay healthy and active by heaping significant costs on facilities like rec centres, arenas, and pools. These facilities are squeezed between reasonable recovery of the carbon tax and their commitment to the families they serve, themselves burdened by this punitive, all pain, no gain tax. To the minister of the environment: why burden these volunteer-managed, nonprofit facilities which contribute so much to the health and vibrancy of communities across Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have of course been investing in community-level infrastructure and in municipalities across the province with the largest capital investment in Alberta's history to build this province, to pull us out of the recession, and part of that was investing in a number of our community facilities. In addition to that, a few weeks ago the Minister of Municipal Affairs announced \$54 million for investments in arenas and pools and curling rinks and other community infrastructure, among some other projects, in order that folks can get in there and do those retrofits, put tradespeople to work, and . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Mr. Gotfried: Mr. Speaker, given that many Albertans are enriched by attending places of worship for the faith community of their choice and given that these faith communities compassionately give their time and money each and every day in support of struggling Albertans and given that the NDP's carbon tax cash grab and free light bulbs appear to be more important than meaningful, front-line contributions to making life better for Albertans, again to the minister: will you do the right thing in benefit of charities, nonprofits, and all Albertans and scrap the carbon tax?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let's talk about the faith community. Let's talk about the meeting I had with the Catholic Oblates on the subject of climate change and the Pope's encyclical. Let's talk about the faith round-table I had just down the road from the hon. member's riding in Calgary. Let's talk about McKillop United church in Lethbridge, that has made those investments in retrofits into their own church. The faith community understands our responsibility to one another and to future generations.

Mr. Gotfried: Mr. Speaker, given that small businesses in Calgary-Fish Creek continually bring up the carbon tax as a hindrance to hiring new staff, expanding operations, or in some cases their ability to just break even and given that even before the most recent hike the Calgary Chamber found that 73 per cent of businesses reported that their costs will increase due to the carbon tax, again to the minister: how can you say that you are making life better for Albertans when you keep making it harder and harder for locally owned and operated small businesses to make a humble living or to even simply survive your job-killing policies?

Ms Jansen: You know, Mr. Speaker, no matter how many times you repeat it, it doesn't make it a fact. If you want to talk about small-business confidence in Alberta – and I'm assuming that's where he wanted to go with this – the BDC says that small-business confidence is up: 35 per cent of small businesses are looking to hire

more staff in this province; 73 per cent say they will invest in their business in 2018. That speaks to me of a confidence in small business in Alberta. You're welcome.

The Speaker: If I could maybe just get some advice from the opposition with respect to the negotiated schedule. Was the intention that we would go to the list that I was provided with? Could you help clarify? Thank you.

University of Alberta Honorary Degree Awards

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Most of the country is baffled that the Alberta NDP is defending the University of Alberta's decision to give an honorary degree to a man who compares our oil and gas industry to slavery. It is the utmost disrespect not only to hard-working Albertans in that industry but to all Albertans. So, Minister, why doesn't the government agree with us that this individual should not be receiving an honorary degree?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question and for the opportunity to clarify my previous statements. I was clear every time that I've been asked on this matter that I don't agree with the University of Alberta's decision to award David Suzuki an honorary degree. I've also been quite clear that our government will defend the university's academic freedom in this and all cases and remind the member that this wasn't our decision to make in the first place. Our government, of course, has been focused on fighting for working Albertans by getting this pipeline built, something that the members opposite failed to do when they were in . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
First supplemental.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this Alberta NDP's caucus, members, cabinet ministers, including the Premier, have on the public record opposed our oil and gas industry and given that our oil and gas industry is one of the most ethically operated industries in the world, Minister, how can Albertans follow your answer and believe in your answer that you just gave me 10 seconds ago?

Mr. Schmidt: Let's talk about records for a minute, Mr. Speaker. On election night of the federal election in 2015, the member opposite was seen on TV saying: Trudeaumania, baby. So how can we believe anything that he says when it comes to credibility and anything that he says in support of what his party purports to believe in? Our government has been clear and consistent from day one that we intend to get this pipeline built to tidewater, and we will get it done.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I sensed at points in the last week that there were jovial emotions in the room. It seems, though, to be shifting a little bit, so I want to encourage the exchange about personal perspectives. We've seen some evidence of that today, but I know as hon. members you will all respect the principle that I'm addressing and will adjust accordingly.

I think we have a second supplemental.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that after enormous pressure from the Official Opposition we just rid ourselves of Tzeporah Berman and Karen Mahon, who, by the way, are now proudly protesting against the construction of the Kinder Morgan

pipeline, and given that this NDP government may have its eye on a new, like-minded adviser, maybe the minister can answer my question. Once Dr. Suzuki gets his honorary degree, will he become our oil sands adviser?

Mr. Schmidt: Mr. Speaker, you know, the Leader of the Official Opposition was just talking about decorum in this place. I think decorum includes asking reasonable questions about government policy and not creating tinfoil-hat conspiracy theories that are actually not worthy of answering or being asked in the first place in this House. So I ask the hon. members to actually act out what they purport to believe in, restore decorum to this House, and ask reasonable questions.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

2:20 Teachers' Association Resolution on News Media

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I asked the minister about a resolution the Alberta Teachers' Association executive council has asked the ATA members to reaffirm. This resolution asks the Department of Education to instruct media on how they should be reporting results from a province-wide achievement test. Now, perhaps I caught the minister off guard, and he thought I was asking about something else, because his answers had nothing to do with my question. To the minister: if passed by their members, will you follow the ATA's directive and tell the Alberta media how they should be doing their jobs?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, I heard the member's question loud and clear yesterday and said what I would say again here today. We are the government of Alberta here, and we make choices around how we govern and how we govern the Ministry of Education specifically. We use standardized testing, and we are building assessments in keeping with new curriculum. For both of those projects certainly we have lots of people with different opinions on how that might be achieved. I think the member opposite has an opinion on that, too. We take different things into consideration, but ultimately we take into consideration what is best for our children.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
First supplemental.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that, as I stated yesterday, for Alberta parents to have full faith in our education system, they need to know beyond a shadow of a doubt that all major partners are fully committed to openness and transparency and given that this directive seems to fly in the face of this ideal by essentially asking the government to tell media how they should be reporting on external data, again to the minister: just for clarity and one day before World Press Freedom Day do you feel this resolution represents an appropriate ask of your government by the ATA?

Mr. Eggen: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, obviously, we'd never tell the media how to do their job. They do a fine job here in the province of Alberta reporting on the news of the day. So I'm not exactly sure where the line of questioning is going here, but certainly what we do do is make sure that we invest in education properly. We make sure that we have the very best choices for our children, and we make sure that the public can see that and the

media reports on it, that they know that we have one of the best education systems in the country and, indeed, on the entire planet.

Mr. Smith: Mr. Speaker, given that parents across Alberta have the right to know how their school is performing compared to other schools and given that our caucus trusts parents to understand the complexity and the nuance involved in that aggregate data and given that I understand that the ATA is looking to protect teachers, again to the minister: do you side with parents and their right to access aggregate data as has been responsibly reported on for some time in Alberta, or do you side with the ATA in believing this information should be withheld?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
The Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, you know, we are working hard to build strong assessment protocols. I've made lots of reforms in regard to assessment. We're making lots of new curriculum, which we are informing and working with the public to do so. So to try to somehow attach some arcane thing that one group happened to have said, nothing to do with what we do as a government, is probably a little bit misleading and certainly not focused on what we're doing, which is improving education, making those investments. If he's interested in that, maybe he could have voted for the Education budget last week. That would have been . . .

The Speaker: Hon. members, lest I forget, I would like an opportunity at some point to discuss with the government House leaders – I'm assuming that I adjust the sequence of speakers accordingly, I trust.

I think we are at Calgary-Northern Hills.

Emergency Management

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This spring will mark the second year since wildfires threatened the communities of Wood Buffalo, including indigenous communities and beyond, in 2016. My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Based on the trend over the last decade and assuming there will be more weather-related disruptive events in store for us, how will the newly amended Emergency Management Act address the lessons learned and the recommendations given based on previous disasters?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Many of these updates are in response to post-incident assessments from previous disasters because it's important that we learn from each event and we can improve to respond to the next one. Just as an example, the KPMG report after the Wood Buffalo fires recommended a review of this legislative framework, and that is what we are currently doing. The main update to this act, to this creation of this, is the local authority emergency management regulation, or LAEMR, which we are working on with the emergency management community right now. This regulation will ensure that all municipalities across the province have clear direction on emergency management practices so they are better prepared to respond to disasters and keep Albertans safe.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we move into the spring and a possible emergency disaster response season across the

province, how are we better prepared to liaise with, co-ordinate with, and engage with valuable community partners in our emergency response to support Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. Field officers from the Alberta Emergency Management Agency and regional representatives of Alberta Environment and Parks have been on the ground in many communities across this province to provide advice and help during the recent floods. The government has also provided flood equipment and mitigation equipment to all communities that have requested support from the provincial stockpile, and these include pumps, hoses, temporary dams, sandbags, sandbagging machines, and generators. Alberta is a leader in emergency management because we understand the importance of preparation and mitigation, and we will continue to be a leader.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister. Given that the summer months lead to drier conditions, wildfire preparedness becomes essential to ensure the safety of Albertans. How has the ministry implemented lessons learned from past wildfires to ensure potential concerns coming into the season are addressed?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. Along with Ag and Forestry the Alberta Emergency Management Agency is always monitoring the wildfire situation across Alberta. We routinely assess potential concerns and connect with public safety partners every single day. We work with communities year-round, advising them on their emergency management plans and understanding their risks, and fund programs such as FireSmart to help communities. We know you can never be too prepared for disasters, so ongoing training and teamwork is crucial and essential. Collaboration is key in Municipal Affairs, and we will continue to connect with communities around the province.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Suffield Elk Herd and Grazing Land

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Suffield base fire near Bindloss saw almost 100,000 acres of grassland destroyed, putting even more pressure on the sensitive native grasslands to handle grazing for so many elk, so it's imperative now more than ever that definitive action be taken. To the environment minister: will your government have a concrete plan in place to deal with this out-of-control herd should these elk do extensive damage to surrounding ranchers' properties and crops?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The department does in fact already have a plan to reduce the size of the Suffield elk herd. As I understand it, the herd has been almost halved at this point in the last three or four years, and we will continue to take those management actions to ensure that that herd is compatible with the other uses for that land, including people's private property, fencing, and grazing dispositions.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Given that the population of elk was never supposed to exceed 800 animals and given that Environment and Parks has no definitive publicly released wildlife management plan to deal with this problem, Minister, given the loss of foraging opportunities for this herd and the possibility of increased damage to the surrounding private lands, are you planning on increasing the number of tags or lengthening the hunting season to ensure this problem does not spiral out of control?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll be pleased to have department officials share the management plan for the Suffield elk with the hon. member. There is a considerable plan that is shared every year with stakeholders and affected municipalities, landowners, grazing lease holders, and others. Having said that, the wildlife regulations, the hunting regulations are reviewed every year, and we are looking at exactly those kinds of tools that the hon. member raises with respect to landowner tags, hunting seasons, and so on.

2:30

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the environment minister has acknowledged that farmers and ranchers are responsible stewards of the land and given that the loss of grazing pastures due to a fire was caused by others' negligence and given that the loss of grazing land could cause unforeseen hardships for area farmers and ranchers, to the Minister of Municipal Affairs: are there any plans to allow grazing access to other Crown lands or provide some sort of program until such time as the burnt-up grasslands have recovered enough to sustain normal grazing?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We will take the hon. member's suggestions under advisement. Grazing lease policies and dispositions and so on are administered by the Department of Environment and Parks, and we would be pleased to engage with the landowners that have been affected, if they are in fact his constituents, and get him some answers on that matter. In the main the hon. member is right that we have acknowledged that grazing lease holders are an important part of environmental sustainability for the entire province.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

East Central Francophone School Principal

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Minister of Education, it has now been over 40 days that l'école du Sommet students and parents have been waiting for answers regarding the suspension/dismissal of their principal. The lack of information from your office only feeds the speculation and rumours and drives a wedge between the parents and their elected board. I have asked you previously to speak to these frustrated parents. Minister, do you have any information on the status of this situation?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. Certainly, we take this matter very seriously

and are monitoring the situation very closely. It's my understanding that the east central francophone board did send a letter to all parents at the beginning of last month to provide some information around the principal's absence. The same school board has engaged and has conducted a very thorough investigation in regard to the circumstances around the suspension. That's the status of the circumstances right now, and as you can imagine . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
First supplemental.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that there are less than two months left in the school year and parents and students are worried about falling grades due to the high stress levels in the school and given that parents are also concerned that students may have been taken off school property to be interviewed without parental consent, Minister, do you feel that this is a safe and nurturing environment for these students, and can you confirm or deny the parents' concerns that students have been taken off school property without consent, and did your department authorize this?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, it's very important to respect the process and the due procedure around the school board and its investigation in this particular matter. As I said, I know that they did and have been conducting an investigation around this particular HR matter, and I think that that process has been moving expeditiously considering the difficult circumstances. I recognize that it's caused a great deal of consternation. I am very concerned about that, and certainly we hope to see a conclusion to this situation.

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

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that parents have expressed their extreme frustration to your department and have in most cases not even received a reply, e-mail, or phone call, let alone any information regarding their concerns, Minister, are you aware that parents and students will be holding a demonstration at the francophone school board office in St. Paul tomorrow at 11:20? More importantly, why did it have to get to this stage, and when will you speak to these parents directly?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Yes. Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, it's very important in regard to a very sensitive HR matter that you follow procedure. This is the procedure that follows through the locally elected school boards, and they are the ones that are conducting the investigation. It's not Alberta Education, and that is the protocol and the procedure by which you proceed in these issues. I know that it's caused a great deal of consternation and problems in the community and at the school specifically, to which I am very sympathetic, and I hope for an expeditious resolution to the circumstance as soon as possible.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Government Procurement Process

Mr. W. Anderson: Mr. Speaker, it's absolutely critical that vendors accurately and clearly respond to RFP questions, no misrepresentations as to facts, capabilities, and resources. It's also critical that the procuring authority conduct due diligence of

proponent submissions to ensure that what is being represented is accurate. If it's determined during such due diligence or at a later date that there was misrepresentation that was material, the procuring authority must have and exercise the right to disqualify the proponent. My first question is to the Minister of Service Alberta. Could she generally explain within the context of her ministry's procurement policies whether material misrepresentations by vendors are addressed?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Service Alberta.

Ms McLean: Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely, our procurement policy is very robust. We have the best advice from our legal counsel throughout government, whether the procurement is being done within goods and services, within Service Alberta, or whether it's procurement that's being done within another department or the Department of Infrastructure. I'm happy to assure the member and get him additional information if he would like.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second question again is to the Minister of Service Alberta. Given that I recognize there may be exceptions, would a proponent that made a material misrepresentation that offended the RFP provisions be disqualified?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McLean: Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. Again, it would be situation to situation. The facts of a particular situation of procurement would need, obviously, to be reviewed to determine whether or not there had been material misrepresentation, at which point we would seek legal advice from our department. Wherever there is something that happens in a procurement where there are grounds for disqualification, then disqualification would occur.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My third question is to the Minister of Health. If she was aware that Alberta Health Services had accepted a bid which included material representation that offended the RFP provisions, would she direct that bid to be disqualified, and if not, why not?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much for the opportunity to answer a health question, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, I welcome the member to bring forward any particular concerns that he might have. I understand that he might be speaking to a case that's under a review process right now. If that's the case, certainly the review is under way, and that's the proper manner for these to be taken forward. We have every expectation that every dollar that's invested by the province of Alberta, whether directly or indirectly, is done so in a respectful and appropriate manner.

Spring Flooding

Mr. Schneider: Mr. Speaker, yesterday I asked a series of reasonable questions about flooding in the Little Bow riding and, frankly, I'm afraid I'm going to need some clarification for my constituents. Now, yesterday the Minister of Indigenous Affairs somewhat glossed over answering my question in order to take a shot at the previous government. Siksika Nation has suffered flooding this spring but suffered severe flooding in 2013. Minister,

I ask this reasonable question again. Have you advocated for the \$4.5 million outlay by the Siksika Nation for the 2013 flood to be reimbursed by the federal government?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. I know that we have been working very closely with the Siksika Nation to deal with the flooding issues, initially, of course, the flooding issues arising from the 2013 flood. We of course have agreed with them to allow them to be the general managers of the build on their community and have supported them completely in fulfilling that process. As they fulfill that process, funds are reimbursed by the federal government, which we support in any way that we possibly can.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that spring flooding is occurring throughout the province, not just in my riding, and given that these municipalities have already begun cleaning up and rebuilding important infrastructure, Minister of Municipal Affairs, what they want to know is whether their government is going to take this situation as seriously as it is out there and make their intentions known as to whether emergency funding will be forthcoming and when they can expect this news?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I've said in this House before that we've had people on the ground out there, our emergency management folks, Environment and Parks, helping and assisting not only with advice but supplies as well from the provincial stockpile. I was in Calgary yesterday and made an announcement about more funding. We will bring forward \$10 million to assist some of these municipalities, and we will be communicating with them and seeing where the highest priority is and go from there.

Mr. Schneider: Mr. Speaker, what has happened in Alberta has been somewhat devastating. Given that communities have called for a local state of emergency because of an event that they have little control over and given that several communities took expensive proactive actions to mitigate flood damage in their communities and given that when disaster strikes, these communities need to be confident that their government will be there for them, Minister, how many communities to date have declared local emergencies due to flooding this spring, and when can they expect to see meaningful programs for help?

2:40

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I know my phone and my e-mail and my alert app have been going pretty busy the last couple of weeks with all these states of emergency. They change daily, so I don't want to give you a number right now because I might be off by a couple. Some of the supports, as I said yesterday, the \$10 million we brought forward are for mitigation and proactive stockpile and things like that and also looking at how we can reimburse, how that's going to look. We are going to communicate with the municipalities. Then we do have the disaster relief program, which is something that happens after the events have happened...

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Orders of the Day
Government Bills and Orders
Second Reading

Bill 12
Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act

The Speaker: I recognize the Member for Calgary-Klein.

Mr. Coolahan: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of my colleague the Minister of Energy I ask leave to move second reading of Bill 12, Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act.

I will speak to the details of Bill 12 shortly. First, however, I would like to state how frustrating it is to have to table this bill at all. Alberta has been playing by the rules. This is not an action that anyone wants to take, and we do not take it lightly. This frustration is made ever more intense by the B.C. government's blatant hypocrisy, as it was recently announced that approval has been given to construct a new 13-kilometre underground pipeline to Vancouver International Airport that would supply aviation fuel from an upgraded marine terminal and adjacent fuel storage facility on the south arm of the Fraser River. In other words, when a project falls under their own jurisdiction, they seem to allow it. When it doesn't, as is the case with Trans Mountain, they oppose it.

The bottom line, Mr. Speaker: the B.C. government cannot continue to delay the Trans Mountain pipeline project without economic consequences. The B.C. government cannot continue to impact Alberta's economic recovery, and the B.C. government cannot continue to keep Albertans from jobs, jobs in construction and extraction, jobs in engineering and accounting, jobs for the people of Alberta and in my constituency in Calgary-Klein and — you know where else? — jobs in British Columbia. Recent polls show that the majority of British Columbians support the building of the Trans Mountain pipeline.

Through this bill we are standing up for Alberta and for a healthy Canadian energy sector, including the working women and men it employs. We're all aware of roadblocks that have resulted in delays to the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion, and we all know, too, why this project is essential to Canada's energy sector, but it does bear repeating. Historically the biggest customer for Alberta oil and gas has been the United States, but in recent years that has shifted dramatically. Today the United States is our biggest competitor. Because there is one buyer, the oil and gas resources that belong to all Albertans are being sold at a discounted price. This is not a responsible approach. As Albertans we deserve to get the best price for our resources.

That is why we need access to new markets. That is why our government supports the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion. We believe that Albertans deserve to get better value for the resources that we all own. This pipeline will help us do that. And it won't just benefit Alberta. As I said, Alberta's natural resources are owned by Alberta, but the truth is that the benefits derived from these resources are shared across the country. After all, Mr. Speaker, when Alberta works, Canada works. As such, pipeline capacity is of the utmost importance to everyone across our country. Without the market access created through the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion, the Canadian economy is losing \$40 million in revenue every day. Citizens from every part of our country will benefit from this project. It will generate revenues to support the services that Albertans and Canadian families need: schools, hospitals, roads, and transit.

Those revenues will also protect the funding that is aiding our transition to a greener economy. I think it's important to remind people of that, Mr. Speaker, since I know that there are people who believe that opposing the Trans Mountain pipeline means protecting the environment, but I ask them to consider the following. There is no meaningful progress on addressing climate change in Canada without Alberta's participation. Moreover, our Premier has stated that a climate change plan that leaves working people behind is not a viable plan, but through the made-in-Alberta climate leadership plan we are demonstrating how good jobs that support working families and environmental protection can and do go hand in hand. It's a plan that caps oil sand emissions, cuts methane emissions nearly in half, puts a price on carbon, and phases out coal-fired electricity while investing in renewables. It's also a plan that directly resulted in federal approval of new pipelines like the Trans Mountain expansion.

Mr. Speaker, it's worth noting that as Canadians learn more about Alberta's energy sector and about the work that has been done to make the industry more environmentally sustainable, support for the Trans Mountain pipeline is rising. Today a majority of Canadians, including 55 per cent of British Columbians, according to a recent poll, support Trans Mountain. That's in large part thanks to the hard work of our Premier and others in our government, who have been travelling across the country telling Alberta's story.

Unfortunately, the government of British Columbia still insists upon putting up roadblocks, which brings us to the need for Bill 12. Through the passing of Bill 12 we would ensure that the interests of Albertans are optimized before authorizing the export of natural gas, crude oil, or refined fuels from Alberta. This legislation would give the government authority to, if necessary, require any company exporting energy products from Alberta to acquire a licence.

At this point I'll go into a few specifics about what the legislation contains, starting with the licensing requirement. First, to be clear, companies would not be automatically required to apply for an export licence. They would only be required to do so if the Minister of Energy deems it necessary, and as per section 2(3) of the legislation the first step in this process is for the minister to determine whether requiring export licences is in the public interest. Criteria for this decision include establishing

- (a) whether adequate pipeline capacity exists to maximize the return on crude oil and diluted bitumen produced in Alberta,
- (b) whether adequate supplies and reserves of natural gas, crude oil and refined fuels will be available for Alberta's present and future needs.

Should the minister determine that such a decision would be in the interest of Albertans, she may then establish the terms and conditions of such a licence. These are outlined in section 4(2) of the legislation. The minister may deem any terms and conditions she deems appropriate. These conditions may include but would not be limited to

- (a) the point at which the licensee may export from Alberta any quantity of natural gas, crude oil or refined fuels;
- (b) the method by which [these resources] may be exported from Alberta;
- (c) the maximum quantities... that may be exported from Alberta during the interval or intervals set out in the licence;
- (d) the maximum daily quantities of natural gas, crude oil or refined fuels that may be exported from Alberta;
- (e) the conditions under which the export... of [these resources] may be diverted, reduced or interrupted;
- (f) the period for which the licence is operative.

In addition, the minister may impose different terms and conditions upon licensees for different types of refined fuels.

The Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act also outlines the steps that would be taken if anyone fails to comply with the

requirements of this act, any future regulations, or the terms or conditions of a licence. Companies could face fines of up to \$10 million a day for as long as the offence continues, and individuals could face fines of up to \$1 million a day. These details are included in section 7(2) of the legislation.

Along the same lines, the minister, as per section 8, “may make an order directing an operator to cease transporting natural gas, crude oil or refined fuels.” These operators include the holder of a pipeline licence under the Pipeline Act, the operator of a railway under the Railway (Alberta) Act, or the registered owner of a commercial vehicle under the Traffic Safety Act. Understandably, there will be specific questions about this legislation and how it will be implemented. Many of these answers will come through future regulations.

2:50

For example, if a company is ordered to acquire a licence for the export of applicable resources, details about the application process can be established via regulation. Potential future regulations may address but would not be limited to specifying other applicable fuels, applications for a licence or an amendment or renewal of a licence, fees for a licence or licence renewal, the terms or conditions to which licences are subject, and the method used for the measurement of natural gas, crude, or refined fuels.

The Preserving Canada’s Economic Prosperity Act would ensure that government has the tools in its tool belt that we need to protect the best interests of Albertans, including receiving the maximum value for our province’s natural energy resources and protecting the jobs and livelihoods of thousands of Albertans and Canadians. As I’ve stated, decisions about how best to utilize those tools have not been made.

Again, no companies would automatically be required through Bill 12 to acquire a licence to export natural gas, crude oil, or refined fuels. They would only be required to do so if ordered by the Minister of Energy. This legislation is about giving the minister more tools to get the pipeline built. Now, Mr. Speaker, I want to emphasize that the powers in this legislation should not be taken lightly.

Our government pledged to industry from day one that there would be no surprises, and we’ve been true to our word on that. If we use this legislation, again, there will be no surprises. We will be fair, we will be thoughtful, and we will be strategic. Let’s be clear here. This isn’t a step we want to take, but we will if it means long-term benefits for our industry, for our province, and for Canada.

We know we’re on the right side of this issue, Mr. Speaker, and that’s not just here in Alberta. That’s what people across the country think. As I said earlier, national polling shows that two-thirds of Canadians support construction of this pipeline. That’s an increase of 10 per cent support since February, so it’s clear that the work of this government and our Premier is winning Canadians over. We will win. We will get this pipeline built, and we’re asking every member of this Assembly to stand with us united to get the result we all want and that this country needs, a strong and stable energy industry for years to come. Together let’s get this job done.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 12, Preserving Canada’s Economic Prosperity Act. I would like to thank the hon. Minister of Energy for bringing this bill forward. The Leader of the Official Opposition and the MLA for Calgary-Lougheed has only been talking about this for seven months and

counting. Extraordinary times call for extraordinary measures, and Bill 12 has extraordinary measures.

Our fight is not against the hard-working people of British Columbia, but it’s a fight against NDP mayors and the NDP Premier and the NDP federal leader, Jagmeet Singh, and the NDP’s fellow-travellers like Tzeporah Berman, Karen Mahon, Greenpeace, the Tides Foundation, and their sugar daddies in the United States of America. It is unconscionable that a province would thumb its nose at the federal government and its neighbours over a matter which is exclusively federal jurisdiction. The federal government and the National Energy Board have approved this Trans Mountain pipeline expansion after a federal review. Mr. Speaker, the B.C. NDP is trying to pretend that they’re trying to save their coast. It’s not their coast; it is Canada’s coast.

British Columbia’s delay tactics, by taking the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain pipeline expansion to the courts, not only affect this pipeline investment but also affect investment in all areas of the economy. As you know, Mr. Speaker, capital is liquid, capital is global, and capital flows to the areas of least resistance. With that, it takes the talent also. The capital will take the talent away, so then that will result in a brain drain in Alberta and Canada.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 12 is a loaded economic weapon. Make no mistake. If the NDP government aims Bill 12 at British Columbia and pulls the trigger, there will be consequences. As we said, we support this bill, we asked for it, but at the same time, as the critic for Energy it’s my job to talk about some of these consequences and some of the risks and how we mitigate those risks. It’s up to the NDP governments of both Alberta and British Columbia to mitigate those risks and do it in such a way that it doesn’t hurt their residents.

With the refineries down for maintenance in Edmonton we know what higher prices for gasoline and diesel look like. As supplies decline, the price increases, over \$1.60 per litre in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. What would those prices look like if the supply through the Kinder Morgan pipeline were halted? One cannot snap their fingers and have tankers from Washington state or California show up on a moment’s notice to save British Columbia with cheap petroleum again. Is British Columbia prepared for \$2 or \$3 for a litre of gasoline? We’ll see.

Mr. Speaker, the United Conservative Party Official Opposition is prepared to help the NDP government. We’ll help you load this economic weapon by supporting Bill 12. But will the NDP government pull the trigger? Mr. Speaker, Albertans know how we got here. This Premier was radio silent when Energy East was killed, when Northern Gateway was killed, and when Keystone XL was vetoed by Obama. This Premier didn’t say one word. A couple of days ago, when the hon. opposition leader asked if she actually discussed it with the Prime Minister, she, I think reluctantly or by mistake, admitted that she chose one of the two projects to the west coast, which means that she was not in favour of Northern Gateway. Probably she told her good friend Justin Trudeau to kill that project. That’s why we’re asking the NDP: are you prepared to handle the consequences of using Bill 12 to penalize the government of British Columbia for its intransigence?

News reports say that the Alberta NDP is not going to act on Bill 12. News reports say that our Premier told B.C. Premier John Horgan and Saskatchewan Premier Scott Moe that she wasn’t going to act on Bill 12. If it is a fact, it’s a shame.

Industry is very skittish about Bill 12. If petroleum products are halted in provincial pipelines from accessing the Trans Mountain pipeline, industry will definitely demand compensation. Are you ready for that? Nonetheless, there is support for Bill 12 among the industry. I spoke to many of my stakeholders, and they said that they’re in support of this. The Explorers and Producers Association of Canada and the Petroleum Services Association of Canada are

supportive of Bill 12 to help resolve the impasse over the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain pipeline expansion.

If Bill 12 is used to stop petroleum access into British Columbia, Washington state may become an injured bystander. Although the government of Washington state was there to oppose the Trans Mountain pipeline together with his bestie John Horgan, he knows that the state of Washington will also face the collateral damage. Thirty-five per cent of the petroleum going to the five refineries in Washington state comes through the existing Trans Mountain pipeline. With Alaska's petroleum exports in decline, Alberta's exports to the west coast's PADD 5 are more important than ever.

3:00

Cutting off the flow of petroleum to an American state triggers NAFTA, Mr. Speaker. Experience has shown that when provinces cause NAFTA disputes, it's Ottawa who has to pay the bill, not Alberta, not the provinces. We are to make sure that the federal government pays that. Just look at Danny Williams in Newfoundland. He moved to penalize AbitibiBowater by expropriating a hydro dam and water rights. He accidentally expropriated the pulp mill, triggering NAFTA and forcing Ottawa to pay hundreds of millions in compensation.

What a poetic justice it would be, Mr. Speaker, if the federal government, who refuses to invoke section 92(10)(c) of the Constitution Act, 1867, to push the pipeline through, is instead slapped upside the face with a NAFTA challenge worth hundreds of millions of dollars. That might be the best use for the \$20 billion that Alberta sends to Ottawa each year and never gets back.

Section 92(10)(c) reads:

Such Works as, although wholly situate within the Province, are before or after their Execution declared by the Parliament of Canada to be for the general Advantage of Canada or for the Advantage of Two or more of the Provinces.

There you have it, Mr. Speaker. Ottawa could avoid a lot of problems by invoking this clause, 92(10)(c).

But they chose not to. Why? Because the Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, is on record calling for the phase-out of the oil sands. Trudeau's principal secretary, Gerald Butts, is a true believer in all this shut down the oil sands business. He's even hiring former employees of the Tides Foundation, the radical environmentalists who are funding the protesters in British Columbia.

Saskatchewan is incensed with British Columbia, too. They have brought in their own version of Bill 12. They call it Bill 126, An Act Respecting Energy Exports.

We live in a federation. We do so in a bargain called the Constitution Act, 1867. The division of powers is outlined in sections 91 and 92 of the Constitution. British Columbia did not join Canada until 1871. B.C.'s main demand to join the country was the construction of a wagon road across the mountains to connect the province to the east. Ottawa went one better and promised a railway, the Canadian Pacific Railway. Then they say the rest is history, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you so much.

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise in debate on Bill 12, the Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act, on behalf of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. I am delighted that the government has come forward with this legislation given that I've been calling for the measures included within it since last July. I did so because last July the New Democrat Party came to office in British Columbia with the support of the Green Party on a commitment, signed in their coalition government agreement, to, quote, use every tool in the tool box to prevent the

construction of the proposed Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain pipeline expansion project. The very existence of the current NDP government in Victoria is dependent on using every tool in the tool kit to prevent the construction of this pipeline.

I took the position that Alberta needed a fight-back strategy, that we needed to demonstrate that if the government of British Columbia were to prevent or delay or create uncertainty around the construction of Kinder Morgan, there would be very serious consequences. As I said at the time, if British Columbia's NDP government starts a trade war, Alberta must end it, and the NDP government in B.C. must understand that there will be very serious consequences should they proceed with their threatened blockage of this essential national infrastructure project.

Over the course of last summer, Mr. Speaker, I articulated in speeches, interviews, and opinion articles elements of what would constitute a fight-back strategy. First of all, I suggested that we begin with persuasion and diplomacy and, if such measures were not effective, that we should find high-profile but symbolic ways to demonstrate our resolve on the construction of this pipeline, including, I suggested, funnily enough, a boycott of B.C. wines.

Then I went on to suggest that perhaps we should find a way to conduct periodic safety inspections of B.C. goods being exported through Alberta to the rest of the country, based on the premise that if they would not allow Alberta to export its major product through west coast ports, we should protect our own environmental interests in the shipment of goods and services from British Columbia to the rest of the country. Indeed, I think that the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti has offered to be our chief customs inspector, at least up there in the Peace Country.

Mr. Speaker, I then went on to suggest that if British Columbia's NDP were to violate the Constitution by seeking to impede the construction of a federally approved infrastructure project, this pipeline – I asked: why would we allow British Columbia producers to ship their natural gas through pipelines in Alberta to U.S. markets toll-free? I suggested that perhaps a toll ought to be applied to those British Columbia natural gas exports that come through Alberta.

Finally, I suggested as early as last August that as an ultimate consequence we should consider replicating what Peter Lougheed did in 1980 in adopting legislation and regulations that allowed his government to constrain the shipment of Alberta crude to central Canada to protest the outrageous national energy program of Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Madam Speaker, in fact, I can quote myself. On September 20, 2017, at a United Conservative Party leadership forum I said the following:

If the B.C. government, through dilatory measures, stands in the way of the construction of the approved expansion of Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain, then there will be consequences. We need a premier who will make that clear to B.C. and Ottawa, like Peter Lougheed did in the early 1980s. The Mayor of Vancouver says he wants a carbon free economy by 2040. Maybe we should help give him a carbon free Vancouver by 2020.

I said further, for example, on October 27 on CBC national television:

If the B.C. government makes good on its threats to use dilatory means to block the construction of that approved pipeline, and in doing so violate the rule of law in Canada's economic union, I would make it clear that there would be consequences that we would consider [what Peter Lougheed did in the early 1980s by withholding permits for] the shipment of gas to Sarnia to bring the federal government to the table on the National Energy Program. We might have to consider a similar approach if the

B.C. government stands in the way of this wealth and job creating national infrastructure project.

Those are things I said last year, Madam Speaker.

Unfortunately, at the time our Premier mocked and ridiculed these ideas. She characterized these proposals, particularly the one for turning off the taps, as myself having a, quote, temper tantrum. She said that no pipeline will get built as a result of such a temper tantrum. She said that I was trying to build walls around Alberta, and at one point she said that I was imitating Donald Trump in seeking to build a wall around Alberta and make British Columbia pay for it for suggesting these ideas. So imagine my surprise, imagine my delight, the joyful serendipity of discovering the Premier standing up in late January of this year saying almost word for word what I have been saying since last July that she had mocked.

3:10

That's fine. There's no patent on a good idea, Madam Speaker. Anybody is welcome to borrow a good idea. That's what I always think. You know, the great former president Ronald Reagan, the man who won the Cold War, reignited the American economy, restored hope and pride to his nation, had on his desk in the Oval Office a plaque that said: anything can get done if you don't care who gets the credit. So in the spirit of the great Ronald Reagan let me say that I give full credit to the hon. the Premier for these brilliant ideas about a fight-back strategy. I claim none of the credit myself. In fact, I will even engage in the wilful ignorance of my New Democrat friends opposite in pretending that the opposition never suggested these ideas in the first place. Let's pretend none of those things were said, and we'll even pretend henceforth that the Premier did not mock and ridicule these ideas.

Madam Speaker, it is in that spirit of comity, of generosity of spirit that we enthusiastically support the Premier's trademark legislation of this session, Bill 12, because it is in the province's interest, and that's what matters, not who takes political credit for it, not who borrows which ideas, but whether or not we get the job done for this province.

Let me then speak to the principle at heart here, why this is so essential, why it so directly relates to our province's vital strategic economic interests. Madam Speaker, I've addressed this in the Chamber before, but we Albertans are so blessed to possess 10 per cent of the world's recoverable crude oil reserves. We have the third-largest recoverable reserves on the face of the Earth, and we are the fourth-largest producer in the world.

Now, I know there are members opposite and ideological fellow-travellers who in past years spent a lot of time on the steps of this Legislature at antienergy, anti-oil, antipipeline protests with signs that would say things like: no oil, no tar sands, no pipelines. I understand that there is a diversity of views on this and that that diversity is reflected. I mean, there are people in this province who believe that our having the third-largest oil reserves is not a blessing but a curse. Shockingly – shockingly – 25 per cent of Albertans consistently in the public opinion polls indicate that they are opposed to the Trans Mountain pipeline project, a quarter of the population. Madam Speaker, I'm delighted to report to you that none of them intend to vote for the United Conservative Party. I can't imagine which parties they support.

But what we do know is that there is substantial opposition to the energy industry in this province that comes, broadly speaking, from what I call the green left. Metaphorically, I call it the green left. It's like a watermelon. It's green on the outside but red on the inside. Those folks call it dirty oil. They call it the tar sands, right? They say: keep it in the ground. You know, some of them showed up at a

political convention here in Edmonton – it was March of 2016, I believe – the NDP's convention. They adopted a resolution proposed by a couple of – I'm trying to be charitable – very ideological figures from Toronto, Avi Lewis and his wife Naomi Klein. It's called the Leap Manifesto. The NDP at the convention here – and when I say the NDP, Madam Speaker, it's worth pointing out that the NDP is the NDP.

I have such a deep interest in the NDP that I actually have their constitution here on my desk. I won't bore members of the House, but it's interesting to find that the Alberta NDP is a constituent legal part of the Canadian NDP. It's one and the same. They're the same organization: same national leader, same national policies, same membership, same finances, same everything. The NDP came here in March, to Edmonton of all places. This is known as the City of Champions, but it's also known as the oil city, isn't it? The home of the Oilers. The NDP came to oil town, and they passed the Leap Manifesto resolution. They said: "Keep it in the ground. Keep it in the ground."

You know, one of the people who I suspect voted for that resolution is the NDP Premier of British Columbia, John Horgan, and I wouldn't be surprised if the NDP mayor of Vancouver, Gregor Robertson, voted here in oil town to keep it in the ground. I'm pretty sure that Derek Corrigan, the NDP mayor of Burnaby, was also there voting for the Leap Manifesto. Jagmeet Singh, the leader of the NDP, was there supporting the keep-it-in-the-ground Leap Manifesto, as did a majority of the delegates. I don't know. I think I'm starting to see a bit of a trend here. I think there's a pattern, Madam Speaker. It is true that, unfortunately, the majority of New Democrats in this country oppose the industry that is, in many ways, the beating heart of Alberta's economy.

You see, Madam Speaker, when I look at those oil reserves, like most Albertans, what I see is an invaluable asset that has a current notional market value at the current Brent prices of over \$11 trillion. That's \$11 trillion. When I look at the fact that this NDP government is on track for a hundred billion dollar debt and they're borrowing nearly a billion dollars a month, when I look at the estimate of approximately \$1.2 trillion in cumulative public debt and unfunded liabilities, unfunded health care and pension liabilities, when I look at those numbers, I realize how fortunate we are to have an asset which can help us to finance those debts, to hopefully pay off those debts and invest in the kind of quality of life and social programs, infrastructure, education, and health care that we hope for.

For me, Madam Speaker, I must confess that I have a hard time grasping the mentality of those on the political left in Canada. I really do. There's this term in psychology called cognitive dissonance. Cognitive dissonance means having the capacity to hold two contradictory propositions simultaneously, and it requires a bit of a mental trick. You've got to be able to sort of ignore one side of your mind while you're postulating another position. Well, I cannot think of a better example – they should probably teach this in psychology 101 – of the phenomenon of cognitive dissonance than the notion proposed by the left in Canada that we should always spend more on everything, more and more and more, because more spending, the left maintains, equals a higher standard of living in every instance. They hold that and maintain that.

You know what? I don't agree with the premise, but it's a defensible position. But at the same time, the same voices of the Canadian left say that we should shut down the industries which create the wealth to allow us to pay for those programs. This is a deep and irreconcilable contradiction in the political left in Canada. They want to stop producing the wealth, but they somehow want to pay for endless increases in government spending. Maybe it's

because I studied Aristotelian formal logic or something. The syllogisms just don't add up.

3:20

Madam Speaker, the point is this, that David Suzuki and NDP leader Jagmeet Singh and NDP Premier John Horgan and NDP Mayor Gregor Robertson and NDP Mayor Derek Corrigan and all of their fellow-travellers regard this \$11 trillion asset, most of which is located in the province of Alberta, as a problem and not a solution.

That is why starting about 10 years ago; it was actually 2008, the Rockefeller Brothers foundation – I mean, if you were to write a movie plot, this would be rejected for implausibility, Madam Speaker. The Rockefeller Brothers – by the way, they're a robber baron family that made their massive wealth in coal, oil, and gas – gathered a bunch of the green left organizations from Canada and the United States and around the world to what was called the Tar Sands Campaign conference in Manhattan, on the 80th floor of a luxury office tower, in 2008. Of course, all of these environmentalists flew in, presumably many of them first class and business class, and they undoubtedly stayed at five-star hotels in Manhattan and were wined and dined by Rockefeller Brothers. They spent three days together scheming on how to stop the development of Alberta's oil sands. The Rockefeller Brothers had brought to that meeting a number of prospective major donors.

By the way, how much time do I have?

Mr. Nixon: You've got up to 90 minutes.

Mr. Kenney: Okay. Well, that's where we're going, I think.

Madam Speaker, Rockefeller Brothers brought together major donors, including the Pew Charitable Trust, the MacArthur Foundation, Leadnow, the Tides Foundation U.S., Greenpeace Foundation, and other major foundations. They connected them to these activist groups. Basically, what they decided was this – and all of these documents, or many of these documents, are now in the public domain thanks, in part, to the diligent research of Vivian Krause, a brilliant woman who's been willing to tell truth to power in Vancouver, doing her independent research.

Essentially what they determined was this. They determined that they had zero chance of getting the other top energy producers in the world to turn off the taps and leave it in the ground. They determined that the socialist Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, with the largest reserves in the world, would not stop producing. It didn't matter. They realized they could send Elizabeth May down there to chain herself to a fence, and it wouldn't stop Venezuela from producing oil.

Then they realized, Madam Speaker, that they could go to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, with the second-largest reserves on Earth, and they could send David Suzuki to tell them that oil is slavery and that immigration is evil and that Stephen Harper should be thrown in jail. By the way, he never said that about the King of Saudi Arabia. He wants to throw Stephen Harper in jail but not the King of Saudi Arabia or the President of Venezuela. They realized that the campaign wouldn't have any effect in Saudi, and that's the second-largest producer.

They realized that if they went to the fourth-largest producer, Vladimir Putin's Russian Federation, it wouldn't turn out so well. In fact, they did. Madam Speaker, I don't do this often, but I've got to give credit to Greenpeace because Greenpeace actually sent some of their western European activists to an offshore Russian drilling platform in the Arctic sea, and they got a couple of their boats going around there. Vladimir Putin gets on the phone, dispatches the Russian navy, and the next thing you know, these people are in jail

for the better part of a year. You know, I give them credit, actually, for the courage of their convictions, but funnily enough, after they spent a year in a Putin jail, they didn't go back. They never went back to Russia. Not once. You know where they went? Here. They went to Canada.

That's the point. The green left organizations that gathered at the Rockefeller Brothers foundation in New York City in 2008 mapped out a strategy focusing on Canada and Alberta as the soft target, as the Boy Scout, as the pushover. They developed a multifaceted organic strategy of advocacy and activism, deeply well resourced, begun by the stigmatization of particularly Alberta's oil sands, which, of course, they called tar sands. Madam Speaker, they succeeded brilliantly. I must confess that they succeeded partly because of the passivity of Alberta's oil and energy companies, who took for granted public understanding and acceptance of the industry and didn't fight back. Frankly, previous Alberta governments need to take part of the responsibility for this, too. Alberta's government did not invest enough in public education about energy literacy. So through the ensuing decade they managed to convince many people in Canada and particularly those outside, in Europe and elsewhere, that the oil sands were the moral equivalent of big tobacco.

Madam Speaker, I recall that I was at a very interesting conference in Europe with heads of government, heads of state, major corporate leadership from around the world about four years ago in Copenhagen. I was speaking to – I'm not at liberty to identify the person, but this person would be one of the largest shareholders of Royal Dutch Shell. This individual was berating me about the environmental devastation of the Canadian tar sands, not even knowing that this person owned a good chunk of a \$4 billion investment in the oil sands. That's how effective the Rockefeller Brothers Tar Sands Campaign was in the defamation of this province and its most important wealth creator. That started with the campaign of delegitimization, of defamation, of stigmatization of the oil sands, but the strategy ultimately was to land lock this resource. Again, knowing they couldn't land lock Qatari or Iranian, Venezuelan, Saudi, or Russian oil, the strategy was to land lock Canadian oil.

I must confess that the strategy of the green left was brilliant. They understood better than I did, better than perhaps many of us did, how much support they had in Canadian politics. Much of that support is personified by the principal secretary to the Rt. Hon. the Prime Minister, a man named Gerry Butts. Mr. Butts, who many describe as the most powerful person in Ottawa, is, when his boss is out doing photo ops about his socks and selfies and so forth, making the policy decisions.

Mr. Butts was president of the World Wildlife Federation of Canada, an organization which he took from being a mainstream conservationist organization, you know, which had seniors sending them \$10 cheques from their pensions to save hapless seals and endangered species, and he turned that group into a completely hostile, ideological, antienergy, anti oil sands lobby group, in which position he came to Alberta five years ago, giving the presentation in Calgary as president of WWF Canada. That's the World Wildlife Federation, not the wrestling federation. He gave this presentation, and he was asked: "You don't seem to support any of these pipeline proposals. You don't seem to support Northern Gateway or Energy East or Keystone XL. Do you have a proposed alternative pipeline route?" Mr. Butts responded, saying: no, I don't support an alternative pipeline; I support an alternative economy with no oil and gas.

3:30

So when his boss, our brilliant Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, said that he wanted to, quote, phase out the oil sands, it wasn't a verbal lapse, Madam Speaker. It was policy. It was policy. These are the folks, by the way, that the NDP have lashed themselves to as inseparable political allies, the Trudeau-Butts Liberals, who are committed to phasing out the oil sands and who say that they do not support an alternative pipeline route. They want an alternative economy with no oil and gas.

Now, let me address the premise of, perhaps, Andrew Weaver, the leader of the B.C. Green Party, whose opposition is one of the reasons we have this bill before us. Let me address the fanaticism of Gerry Butts and Jagmeet Singh and the NDP and its Leap Manifesto. Their premise is that oil and gas emit carbon emissions and are therefore playing a major role in deleterious climate change effects, but what they don't tell us, Madam Speaker, is that according to the International Energy Agency there is projected to be a growing global demand for oil and gas through at least 2045, so for at least the next 25 years, the next generation or longer. They're only projecting that far. So far the actual consumption patterns support that projection, as my friend from Calgary-Foothills, an energy engineer, can confirm.

Madam Speaker, a few years ago there was this nonsense about peak oil. Well, it didn't happen. There's more oil and gas being produced, shipped, and consumed than ever before in human history. So the question then becomes: who will supply that growing demand? That's the question for Canada. The question is not whether there will be growing demand. The question is not whether that demand will be met. The question is: will that demand only be met by OPEC plus Russia, or will it be met increasingly by Canada? That's the question. It's a question that Gerry Butts and David Suzuki and Elizabeth May and John Horgan and the members opposite who used to go to antipipeline rallies refuse to ask themselves.

I don't know why that is. Maybe there's a tendency toward masochism. Maybe there's this notion that if we just punish ourselves, if we just assume a massive opportunity cost by forgiving hundreds of billions of dollars of future wealth, or, worse yet, if we impose one of these ridiculous carbon taxes and we punish people for heating their homes and driving to work and living normal lives in a cold, northern climate in an advanced modern economy, if we just engage in that economic masochism, somehow the gods will listen to us and will somehow ameliorate the global environment.

At the very least they seem to believe, Madam Speaker, that at least we can feel more virtuous about ourselves. We can feel better about ourselves while we allow Saudi Arabia, Iran, the emirate of Qatar, Venezuela, and Russia to profit from our stupidity. That's what it is. There is no virtue, I submit, in allowing the world's worst regimes to monopolize the growing global demand for hydrocarbons. There is vice in allowing that to happen, not virtue. Many of these regimes spread terror and conflict both at home and abroad, in their countries and around the world, fuelled by their energy wealth. Now, we can't stop them, but I'll tell you this. If we could go from essentially being a landlocked oil producer to actually selling a million or 2 million or 3 million barrels per day on global markets, yes, that would reduce global prices according to the law of supply and demand.

That means that the Iranian mullahs, who hang gay men and stone women accused of adultery, would have a lower price and less revenue for their terror machine. It means that the budget that they give to the al-Quds Force of the Iranian revolutionary guard to spread terrorism and blow up Jewish community centres around the world, for example – their nuclear program would have relatively

less funds. It means that Vladimir Putin would have less revenue available to support his invasion of Ukraine and his policy of destabilization in Syria and elsewhere, propping up the dictator Assad. It means that the Saudi kingdom would have relatively less revenue to support the spread of Wahhabist ideology around the world, which is a root cause of so much terror. It means that the corrupt socialist dictatorship in Venezuela would have less of an ability to oppress its people.

So, Madam Speaker, this is not just existential for our economy; it is a moral question for the world. That is why the time has come for Canadians of good faith to bind together finally with force to fight back against the tar sands campaign of the Rockefeller Brothers and their allies in the green left. It is time for us to say that enough is enough and that we will no longer tolerate the stigmatization and the defamation of a proud industry that has fuelled our prosperity, that has moved countless Canadians from poverty to prosperity, that has been the biggest engine of social mobility in Canada's modern economic history, our oil and gas industry, the production of which is done at the highest environmental, human rights, and labour standards on Earth.

It is time not, as our Premier did three years ago, to go to Toronto and say that we don't want to be, quote, the embarrassing cousins of Confederation but to say that we are proud of the work done by our women and men to build our prosperity in Alberta's energy industry. It is time to do that, and that is why I've advocated this fight-back strategy.

Now, Madam Speaker, I agree – so the context here, of course, is that the B.C. government has created massive uncertainty. You know, what we see here in B.C. right now is the local application of the tar sands campaign strategy, the leave it in the ground strategy. What is the strategy in B.C.? Well, it is highly co-ordinated and multifaceted. On the one hand, you have the NDP-Green government, that has required hundreds of provincial permits to be issued for the Trans Mountain expansion to proceed. You have a provincial government that's gone to court on three separate instances, most recently a reference about their putative jurisdictional authority to effectively veto the pipeline through dilatory environmental regulations. You have a string of NDP municipal governments refusing to grant permits and the case of the NDP in Burnaby refusing to pay for the legal costs of the RCMP enforcing the law.

Then you have the green left organizations engaged in civil disobedience trying to slow down the project. Even though you have virtually every First Nation on the pipeline route, in fact, every one from Sherwood Park to Burnaby supporting the project – I think there are two or three that have been approached by these various foundations, and they've lawyered up to litigate that to death. The strategy, as I've said, Madam Speaker, is death by delay.

3:40

Now, I've taken the strategy seriously from the get-go, and I've been concerned that it would work, that ultimately the prospect of the construction of the pipeline might still exist but the delays would become so serious that the project proponent, Kinder Morgan, would finally just walk away and say: "Basta. Enough. We've had enough. We're washing our hands of it." It seemed to be a great shock to our Premier, but it was not the least bit surprising to me or many observers that Kinder Morgan announced three weeks ago the suspension of any further major expenditures on the project pending a review, with a deadline of and possible cancellation on May 31, 30 days from today. Thirty days from today.

Unbelievably, the Premier's response was one of optimism. Now, by the way, I love – optimism is a great instinct, Madam Speaker.

We always want to be hopeful and wish for the best. But when you're a head of government, you've got to deal with reality, not things as you wish they would be but as they are. I was questioning the Premier at Public Accounts . . .

Mr. Nixon: Budget estimates.

Mr. Kenney: The budget estimates committee.

. . . 10 days ago, and I asked her about her views on the prospects of the construction of this project. She said that she was extremely optimistic, that she had never been more certain that Trans Mountain would be built. And while she said those words, the president of Kinder Morgan was on a call with investors saying that he continued to believe that the project may be untenable and that nothing that had happened in the previous 10 days had changed his view about that. He was referring implicitly to the emergency meeting with the Prime Minister, the Premier, and the NDP Premier John Horgan in Ottawa. He was referring to this NDP Premier's musings about buying out the project. The head of the company said that it remains apparently untenable.

Now, Madam Speaker, this then brings us back to Bill 12. The point of this bill, the point of the fight-back strategy is to make it clear in the minds of the NDP in Victoria that if they violate our Constitution, if they upend the economic union of Canada, which is the basic premise of Confederation, if they violate the rule of law and they attack Canada's vital economic interests, there will be serious consequences. That's essentially what this bill does. It grants extraordinary powers to the Minister of Energy to effectively withhold permits for the shipment of oil and gas out of Alberta.

Now, let me be clear. The United Conservative caucus does not endorse these extraordinary powers lightly. We had a very vigorous debate about this, discussion about this in our caucus, and I must tell you, Madam Speaker, that there are a lot of our members who are uneasy about the powers in this bill, as am I. To grant any government, let alone a government that believes in state ownership of the means of production as a fundamental premise, such extraordinary power over the free shipment of goods and services is contrary to our instincts in this party as a party that believes in markets and private property and respects the sanctity of contract. But we recognize that we are living through extraordinary times. We recognize that if this pipeline does not get built, there will be a massive long-term economic cost to this province, a cost of – I gather that the current estimate is that we're losing about \$12 billion a year.

Mr. Panda: Fifteen point six billion dollars; \$43 million dollars a day.

Mr. Kenney: We're losing \$43 million dollars a day underselling our oil because of our captivity to the U.S. market. If you rack that up over 10 or 20 years, we're talking hundreds of billions of dollars. That doesn't include the billions of revenue that are lost to the Alberta Crown.

But there's a bigger principle here, I say, Madam Speaker, about the rule of law, about the Constitution, and that is why we believe that this is a power that may have to be used. In B.C. now consumers are paying a buck 70 to fill up their gas tanks, the highest prices ever in North America, higher than during the Suez crisis or the OPEC crisis. This is shocking.

One of my favourite things, Madam Speaker, is when politicians on the left feign outrage at high gas prices. "This is a terrible thing. We've got to stop these high gas prices." That's the point of the carbon tax. That is their goal, to make gas prices higher.

I don't know, Madam Speaker, if you've ever seen that great movie *Casablanca*, with Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman. There's a great English actor, Claude Rains, who plays Captain Renault. Captain Renault comes in to Rick's American café and they're gambling away and he's been paid off by the Nazis. He blows his whistle. He says that he's shutting down the casino, and Humphrey Bogart walks up to Claude Rains and says, "Why? Why are you shutting down the casino?" and Claude Rains says, "Because it has come to my attention that there is gambling going on in this establishment," as the croupier arrives and says to Claude Rains, "Your winnings, sir." That's the NDP on the carbon tax. They're shocked that people have to pay more for gas prices, but that's exactly what they want.

But, Madam Speaker, here's the point. Perhaps if we turned off the taps, it wouldn't be a buck 70 a litre. It would be \$2.50 or \$3 or \$3.50 a litre, and perhaps ordinary, hard-working British Columbians would pick up the phone and call their NDP MLAs and say: "What have you done to our economy? What have you done to our standard of living?" Maybe even the green left that drives to the illegal protests in Burnaby would figure out that their Priuses are not fuelled by pixie dust but by Alberta crude oil.

So, Madam Speaker, that is essentially why we believe this threat is one worth making, but it has to be credible. What concerns me most is that this bill could just be – I hope this is not true – empty political theatre. Heaven forbid, but I've got to admit that since the Premier mocked and ridiculed this idea last year – she said that the idea was about building walls and having a temper tantrum and it was ridiculous – well, maybe that's why I'm not quite sure her heart is in this.

I hope I'm wrong, but if I'm wrong, then why is it that John Horgan came out of his meeting with our Premier in Ottawa 17 days ago saying that our Premier told John Horgan that she does not intend to use this power, that the bill is just being dropped because there's limited time in the Alberta Legislature? Why is it that the NDP in British Columbia – their environment minister, their energy minister, Andrew Weaver, the Green Party leader who's driving this oil-filled bus – why is it that they all say that this is an empty threat? What is the point of a threat if the people being threatened, the B.C. government, believe it is empty? The point is: nothing.

I asked the Premier today – I asked her three times because she wouldn't answer – under what circumstances she would use the powers included in Bill 12. She couldn't answer. I can only infer it's because she doesn't intend to. And what's the point if we seek to use these powers after May 31, after the possible cancellation of this project?

In conclusion, as my time is running out, Madam Speaker, we support this bill, but more importantly we support it on one condition. We'll propose a motion for a grandfather clause so that it's not a permanent power. We support it on the condition that the government makes it absolutely clear that it intends to use this power if the government of British Columbia continues its policy of obstructing our Constitution and attacking our vital economic interests.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hawkwood.

Connolly: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I have to say that it was interesting to hear the member opposite's speech. I have to say that it was thrilling. I'm kind of disappointed he didn't

take the full 90 minutes, but I appreciate the length at which he did speak. I just have a couple of comments on what he mentioned. A big part of his story was cognitive dissonance. I just wanted to touch on that for a moment because I'm not going to say the member opposite is the personification of cognitive dissonance, but it's close, quite frankly.

3:50

Now, I got into politics not just because the member opposite was my MP for just under 20 years, but I have to say that it was a big reason that I decided to get into politics. So I kind of want to thank him for that. But what I don't understand and what maybe the member opposite can help me with is how one can believe in so-called small government but at the same time think that the government needs to intervene whenever a woman wants to access basic health care such as an abortion. To me that seems like cognitive dissonance. The members opposite don't want to talk about access to women's health care such as abortions like you were elected to do in here, in Edmonton, but you're perfectly fine and happy to talk about it in Red Deer over the weekend, something that could be called a safe space.

Now, beyond that, which I believe qualifies as cognitive dissonance, is believing in small government, but if a small group of mature young adults wants to form a club which has been proven to save lives and to stop children and youth from committing suicide, that's something the government needs to stop according to the members opposite. That's something that the parents need to understand and know, that this child is part of a club because they need a safe space like the members opposite do in Red Deer when they talk about abortions because they can't do it in here.

Now, cognitive dissonance is also believing in small government, but if I want to marry the man that I love . . .

Mr. Nixon: Point of order.

Point of Order Relevance

The Acting Speaker: Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. Nixon: We're on 29(2)(a), Madam Speaker, and this member is right to ask a question. It should be relevant to the bill that we're discussing as everybody in this House knows, and I'd encourage the member to ask the question.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you. Just in response to the point of order, Madam Speaker, the Member for Calgary-Lougheed referred to cognitive dissonance in his speech. I believe the Member for Calgary-Hawkwood is discussing how he sees that as a contradiction, what the Member for Calgary-Lougheed talked about. It's relevant under 29(2)(a), making a comment about what he mentioned in his speech. I think the member was trying to make his point, and I'd appreciate if he has the opportunity to do so.

The Acting Speaker: At this point there is no point of order. However, I'd like to remind all members of the House if we could try to focus on the bill in front of us and the content of the bill and also a reminder that comments and questions are to be directed around the content of the bill and the comments that have been made. I've allowed a lot of leeway already today, but I would like us to refocus if we could and stick to the mandate of second reading, which is the content of the bill.

Hon. member, were you planning on continuing?

Debate Continued

Connolly: Yeah. I do have a question at the end, and I will get to it, I promise.

Just to continue where I was, cognitive dissonance is believing in small government, but if I want to marry the man that I love, the government should stop us because we can't possibly be part of a family like one of the policies that the UCP will be arguing about this weekend.

Mr. Nixon: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker: Point of order.

Point of Order Relevance

Mr. Nixon: The hon. member just disregarded every comment that you just made, Madam Speaker. We are not here to debate the policy of the United Conservative Party, which will be debated this weekend by our party, not inside this place by the members of our party. The member, as you said, should start to refer to the bill, stop playing these childish games, and I would ask that you would encourage him to do that.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, I will reiterate what I said. I think if we could please refrain from commenting on outside policy that has nothing to do with the bill. I would encourage you to please go back to the content of the bill and refrain from commenting further on anything outside of the content of the bill. If you have a question that you would like to direct to the hon. Official Opposition leader, please go ahead. If not, I will continue on to 29(2)(a) with another member.

Debate Continued

Connolly: Yeah. I do have a question, like I said. One would say that this bill could be considered large government because you're interfering with business. You're stopping them from going outside jurisdictions. You're interfering with putting their product into other markets, and that's partly what this bill does, which is large government. But you seem to love small government, so that would also seem to be cognitive dissonance. Why is small government good for certain things, but when it comes to gays or women or trans people or things like this bill . . .

Mr. Nixon: Point of order, Madam Speaker. [interjections]

Point of Order Relevance

Mr. Nixon: I can hear the government members heckling me while I speak during my point of order, Madam Speaker, but that's to the point. You've told this member, the Member for Calgary-Hawkwood, two times, I guess, now – this will be the third time – to stick to the relevance of the bill. The issues that he just raised, while they are important issues in this province, are not relevant to this bill. Again, can you please instruct the member to yield the floor if he can't follow the rules of this place?

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

Cortes-Vargas: Madam Speaker, out of definite respect for this debate but also to the member opposite, he has not cited any standing order.

Also, you have said to bring into context the context of the debate, which is what he did. It is general practice within this debate in this House for people to make comparison on the relativity of some issues to another. It is something that he did throughout his debate. It is something that he's doing now. Just because the topic that is being used as the contrast is something that the member opposite is uncomfortable with doesn't make it out of the scope of debate and putting it into contrast. He did ask a question in regard to the bill in front of us, and he did ask a question, but he framed it in such a way that the member opposite does not want to hear it. That's not something that he can choose. He cannot choose what the members on this side of the House choose to debate and how they need to frame their questions. That starts getting into a whole other conversation, and I don't think that's the point.

He did start referring to the bill. He did make that question, and that is exactly what you directed, Madam Speaker. You did mention in the beginning that you didn't have a point of order. You still stood up the second time to interrupt him. This is where we're going. He still has to be able to make a contrasting statement similar to what the members opposite have been doing all afternoon. I think we don't have a point of order here, but we do need to get back to debate, and they can't keep defining what we're allowed to say in this House.

The Acting Speaker: No. I'm not going to have any more comment. We've had a comment from the opposition side and a comment from government side.

Hon. Member for Calgary-Hawkwood, I will allow you to ask your question, and then we will move on with the debate, so if you can keep it short and ask your question to the hon. member so that someone else can continue under 29(2)(a), please.

Debate Continued

Connolly: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm excited to try a third time to get through my question because I'm really excited to hear the hon. member answer it. Why does he constantly believe in small government, but when it comes to certain things like this bill and like those other aspects that I mentioned, large government is completely fine and he's happy to have it roll on through?

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, do you wish to respond? Okay. Please.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Madam Speaker. First of all I'd like to apologize to the Chamber. I thought I had only 45 minutes. It turns out I had 90 minutes. I apologize for giving up the other 45 minutes.

I must confess that I'm not clear on the question. I would simply say that this is not a high school or university debate club. This is a Chamber dealing with important business, and Bill 12 has been characterized as the most important bill of the government's program. I would have expected a member of the government to appreciate the fact that the Official Opposition is supporting the government's bill in this respect, and perhaps it would be too much to ask that they actually also acknowledge our role in framing the bill by proposing the idea in the first place.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

I would like to now recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow, followed by the Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak on Bill 12, which is an important piece of legislation, without question. The Alberta Party and certainly myself very much support any effort to ensure that the

Kinder Morgan pipeline is built. Whatever it takes is what we need to do to make sure that Alberta's products can get to global markets and that we get a pipeline built to tidewater, so we are broadly and generally supportive of this bill.

4:00

I will say that it's a real shame that it has gotten to this point. It's unfortunate that the government has not pushed harder sooner to get the pipeline built and get the approvals, to ensure that their NDP colleagues in British Columbia were not more amenable to following the rule of law for a project that has been vetted and reviewed, probably the most thorough review of any project that I can certainly remember, a very comprehensive and professional review done by the National Energy Board. The project was deemed to be in the national interest, it was deemed to be safe, 157 conditions were placed on Kinder Morgan in the construction of the pipeline, and Canada's world-leading regulatory system was again on display. We have the best regulatory system in the entire world.

It is a shame that the province of British Columbia insists on throwing up legal roadblocks. If that means that we need to adjust, shall I say, how and where and when we ship our natural resources to perhaps send British Columbia a message that they should stop messing around with an approved project, then so be it. That is what, I guess, we'll have to do.

You know, the part that's always puzzled me about the way that this government has approached the pipeline file is that the province of Alberta and this government's goals should be aligned with the goals of British Columbia even before the NDP came into power in B.C. The Trans Mountain pipeline will have an environmental benefit. This is something that has not been, I think, really even discussed much at all by this government. They had just simply hoped that by having a carbon tax – they would cross their fingers and hope that everyone would give them the social licence to build a pipeline. Well, very clearly that's not happening.

But by building the Trans Mountain pipeline, Alberta crude will displace heavy crudes from Venezuela and Nigeria, countries that have, frankly, atrocious environmental track records. They have just terrible human rights records, certainly don't have anything near the regulatory rigour and oversight that we do. As a result, their crudes are on the market, and ours is not. As a result of their production methods, they're not investing hundreds of millions or billions of dollars of private capital in energy efficiency, in reducing the impact of carbon emissions coming from the production of oil sands oil, of bitumen from Alberta's oil sands.

We in this province are the most environmentally responsible, the most socially responsible, the most innovative oil and gas developing region in the entire world. That is something we ought to be absolutely proud of. Unfortunately, we had a government for years that was sleepwalking through the process, just kind of hoping that somehow everything was going to be okay. What they should have been doing was, early on, pushing very, very, very hard to ensure that this project was built and doing that by making the case not just government to government but to the people of British Columbia, making the case to the rest of the country for the benefit, not just the economic benefit – and make no mistake; there is a substantial economic benefit – to, yes, the province of Alberta but to the entire country, of building pipelines. Huge, huge benefits economically.

But there are, equally, environmental benefits to doing so that go far beyond the government's carbon tax. It is an absolute fact that by continuing to develop the oil sands, we will displace higher carbon sources of crude with Alberta crude. Companies that are developing technologies to reduce carbon emissions and reduce the impact of the development of the oil sands, including the impact on

fresh water, the impact on land use, on greatly reducing tailings – those technologies are applicable elsewhere in the world. As other countries try to reduce their carbon emissions, they will be using made-in-Alberta technologies to do so. Those technologies are going to be created in the pursuit of developing the oil sands.

That is, I think, aligned with what the people of British Columbia want, with what the people of Canada want. That is the case that should have been made by this government. They had a unique opportunity to do that because they as the NDP, I would think, should at least have some credibility on the environmental side, but unfortunately they're a little late to the game. None more fervent than the converted, I suppose, Madam Speaker. They're certainly hitting above their weight on this file now, and I suppose I'm relieved to see that they're doing that. That's good news. They are, I think, quite vigorously defending Alberta's interests now on the pipeline file, but I wish we could have said the same thing going back three years. Had we been able to say the same thing going back three years, I think that we would be in a much better position as it relates to the Kinder Morgan pipeline specifically but also other pipeline projects, Energy East in particular. So it is a shame that it has come to this.

This bill does grant the government extraordinary powers to arbitrarily and without any stated compensation simply dictate to a shipper where and to whom and how they can move their product. That is not something, I think, that would be an ordinary power that government has. As a result, when the time comes, we intend to move an amendment to add a sunset clause to this bill. This is not the sort of power that a government should have in perpetuity. It should expire at some point in the not-too-distant future. I'd certainly be happy to work with the government in determining what an appropriate time for that sunset clause is. I think that's something that would certainly make industry a lot happier as well, to know that this sort of power will not exist in perpetuity, you know, beyond the hopefully relatively short period of time it will take to actually get the Kinder Morgan pipeline built and operational. I think that's important.

Now, of course, a sunset clause doesn't mean that the bill necessarily goes away. What it means is that it will expire unless renewed by the Legislative Assembly. We as legislators would have the opportunity to renew the bill should we find at the time of the sunset clause or leading up to it that, in fact, it was necessary.

The other piece I would think there should be more clarity on is: what is the compensation plan should the government decide that they need to use this? This could potentially cost companies that have been operating in good faith, within the bounds of law, doing nothing more than plying their trade and moving Alberta's natural resources. There may be substantial financial impacts on those companies, and the government ought to look at compensation. I understand that the minister has indicated that she has had some discussions with industry on that. That's obviously a good thing. But I would have liked to have seen some sort of model shared with the Assembly, and I would make that ask now officially and formally and on the record, that the government do in fact give us some more insight, some more details in terms of what the compensation plan would be. That's something that is also a question that I would hope, as the debate rolls on, the government is able to provide for us.

The other question I have is: what impact would this have, should the government choose to exercise these powers, on agreements that shippers have with their suppliers, contractors, customers? They have a legal obligation to fulfill those contractual commitments to ship product, and if the government frustrates that, what happens? I actually don't know what the impact of that would be on those agreements. Does that put the company itself, the

shippers themselves offside with their contractual agreements that they have in place with their customers? Does that potentially expose them to, I guess, what we'd consider double jeopardy, where they're not allowed to ship the product, but they're contractually obligated to ship the product? Are they potentially opening themselves up to legal action or a compensation claim by their customers? I don't know the answer to that question. I would like the government to please weigh in on answers to those questions.

As I say, I think the sunset clause is an important aspect of this, and I do look forward very much to bringing that forward when we get a chance. I'm, again, profoundly disappointed that the government has allowed us to get to this point and allowed this file to languish for as long as they have. They have stepped up to the plate now. We're debating a bill that, hopefully, will help us get a pipeline built. We have the government now forcefully defending Alberta's interests, and I'm glad to see that, but I would have liked to have seen that a lot earlier so we wouldn't find ourselves in this position.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

4:10

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I'll now call on the Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It certainly has been a riveting debate. I listened intently to all of the issues and ideas that were raised by all of the members who spoke, some who were certainly more worthy of listening to than others, but it's always interesting to hear what's being said.

Of course, there's plenty more time to debate this topic in the very near future, and I look forward to the members opposite explaining, perhaps, why they failed on getting a pipeline to tidewater built. Since they're so keen to claim credit for this, maybe tell us why we're in this position in the first place, that we have to come to this. The Kinder Morgan expansion should have been built a long time ago, but the federal Conservatives, of course, failed in their duties to protect the interests of working Albertans and working Canadians, to get that pipeline built when they had the chance.

But now is not the time to continue that debate, Madam Speaker. We have other issues that are urgent and pressing in this House, and I believe that it's time that we get on to those. In that spirit, I move that we adjourn debate on this bill.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion to adjourn debate carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:12 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hoffman	Payne
Carson	Horne	Piquette
Connolly	Jansen	Renaud
Coolahan	Kazim	Rosendahl
Cortes-Vargas	Kleinstuber	Schmidt
Dach	Littlewood	Schreiner
Dang	Luff	Shepherd
Drever	Malkinson	Sigurdson
Eggen	Mason	Sucha
Feehan	McLean	Turner

Fitzpatrick	Miller	Westhead
Ganley	Miranda	Woollard
Hinkley	Nielsen	

Against the motion:

Aheer	Gill	Panda
Anderson, W.	Hunter	Stier
Drysdale	Nixon	Swann

Totals: For – 38 Against – 9

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 13

An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Service Alberta and Status of Women.

Ms McLean: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today on behalf of the Minister of Energy to move second reading of Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future.

Our Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future would make the necessary legislative changes to transition Alberta's electricity system to a more stable and reliable system that benefits both consumers and industry. In November 2016 we committed to modernizing Alberta's electricity system to ensure that we continue to deliver reliable energy, attract investment, and prepare for a low-carbon future while protecting Albertans from price volatility.

4:30

Through this bill we take several major steps towards fulfilling our promise to Albertans, including enabling the transition to a capacity market, providing for specified penalties for energy service providers that violate rules intended to protect consumers, enabling small-scale and community generation, and repairing policy around the disposition of regulated utility assets.

The legislation also allows our electric system actors to maintain existing and useful transmission policy elements by properly addressing them in regulation-making authority and cleans up after the spent provisions that were left over from the last market transition, when deregulation brought us price spikes and uncertainty.

When we first announced we would be modernizing Alberta's electricity system, we highlighted our plan to transition our energy-only market to a capacity market framework. This move was recommended by current and potential energy investors, external experts, consumer groups, and the Alberta Electric System Operator. A capacity market will ensure Albertans have safe, reliable, sustainable, and affordable electricity. It benefits both consumers and investors. It provides electricity consumers with greater price stability. It makes room for competition, innovation, and private investment while providing revenue certainty for investors.

We have been working with stakeholders to develop a best-in-class capacity market for Alberta. This legislation will enable our made-in-Alberta approach to a proven market system. Further, it will guarantee strong governance of the electricity system by ensuring the right checks and balances are in place to drive certainty and confidence in this new market. That, as you know, is incredibly important. Predictability and stability mean increased investment certainty.

The legislative amendments for a capacity market cover four broad themes. The first is to set the foundation for the capacity market and create the long-term policy certainty that investors need. For example, the Purposes section of the Electric Utilities Act has

been updated to enshrine three core principles of the capacity market: to ensure that a reliable supply of electricity is available at a reasonable cost to consumers; to operate in a way that is fair, efficient, and openly competitive; and to distribute the costs of procuring capacity among customers fairly and in a manner that incents economic efficiency.

The second theme creates the clear mandate and authorities for Alberta's electricity agencies and market participants. Amendments extend agency duties and responsibilities to include the capacity market. They update the duties of the Alberta Electric System Operator to include operating and managing the capacity market. They add review and approval for all capacity and energy market rules to the Alberta Utilities Commission's duties, and they extend the duties of the Market Surveillance Administrator to include surveillance of the capacity market.

A third area of focus is rules oversight. The proposed amendments in this legislation will enhance public interest oversight of the market rules development and approval process. This, too, will help promote stakeholder confidence in the new market system. Bill 13 requires all new or modified market rules to be reviewed and approved by the Alberta Utilities Commission. Under the new rules approval process the Alberta Electric System Operator will need to satisfy the commission. The market rules are in the public interest and, in the case of the capacity market, support reliability at reasonable costs to consumers.

These changes will align Alberta's market governance arrangements with best practices in capacity markets in other jurisdictions. Additionally, the amendments will enable a provisional process that will ensure all necessary rules are in place before the start of the first auction process.

The fourth and final theme is stakeholder participation. When we announced our move to a capacity market 18 months ago, we promised that the transition would be made in an open and transparent way, working with stakeholders throughout the process. Quite simply, open and transparent processes where industry, consumer, and stakeholder views are well represented is just good governance.

In recognition of this, two key changes enhance stakeholder involvement in Alberta's electricity rule development. First, consultations with market participants, other interested parties, and the Market Surveillance Administrator will be required when rules are developed. Second, the Alberta Electric System Operator will be required to establish a process for market participants and other interested parties to propose changes to all rules. To be clear, these are substantial enhancements to the existing processes in our electricity system and apply beyond just the new capacity market. They will bring more accountability and opportunity for input to Alberta's electricity system as a whole.

Madam Speaker, the capacity market is certainly not the only way that this legislation would improve the electricity system for Albertans. With this legislation, we are also addressing concerns about incorrect power bills and issues in customer service from electricity and natural gas service providers. An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future will protect Albertans from poor customer service. Bill 13 will hold electricity and natural gas service providers accountable for inappropriate business practices or breaches of customer service such as late or inaccurate bills. The Utilities Consumer Advocate receives thousands of complaints each year. Electricity and natural gas consumers are frustrated, and they have asked us to address their concerns.

Bill 13 does just that. It would provide the Alberta Utilities Commission with the ability to directly issue specified penalties to electric and natural gas service providers for particular breaches. The specified penalty is a financial penalty that is imposed directly

for infractions that are minor to the system as a whole but can be significant and distressing for consumers. These penalties can be compared to a speeding or traffic ticket, for example, for these companies. Currently the only enforcement tool that the commission has is its formal hearing process, which can be lengthy, onerous, and costly. That process does not work as well as it could for consumers. The commission will have the authority to develop the specified penalties rules in consultation with stakeholders to ensure that they are clear and that the penalties are fair.

This legislation would give the Alberta Utilities Commission the ability to issue fines of up to \$10,000 per infraction per day if necessary. This maximum penalty is severe, to be clear, and would only be imposed for very significant infractions, but it's important to know that the commission would have the legal ability to impose the level of penalty if appropriate. Should a penalty be issued, the commission would also have the authority to allocate the proceeds of the specified penalty back into the pockets of the affected consumers. By enabling these penalties, we would create better incentive for compliance with rules to protect electricity and natural gas consumers from experiencing poor customer service such as billing errors.

The amendments proposed in Bill 13 also support government's work around community generation. Amendments to the Electric Utilities Act would authorize the Minister of Energy to make regulations to enable small-scale and community generation, including their definition, development, connection, and operation. Albertans have told us that they want more options to generate their own electricity, and we're helping. We're taking action to make that happen. Small-scale and community generation will provide flexibility for communities or organizations that want to generate their own electricity from renewable or alternative sources such as solar and wind. This is very exciting stuff, Madam Speaker. This will allow Albertans to take a more active role in our province's electricity supply – they've been asking for this for decades – while creating more options for their own electricity choices, while at the same time attracting investment, creating jobs, and further strengthening our province's leadership position as a responsible energy producer.

Bill 13 also seeks to address a long-standing issue that has created uncertainty for investors and consumers for over a decade. This relates to how costs and benefits are allocated upon disposition of assets in the regulated utilities space. Bill 13 seeks to fill the gap left when a 2006 Supreme Court decision found that provincial legislation didn't provide the Alberta Utilities Commission with clear legal authority to allocate gains and losses.

4:40

Finally, Bill 13 also includes administrative amendments to continue the policies of the transmission deficiency regulation. This regulation will enable more efficient connections of industrial and commercial consumers to the transmission system. It was developed several years ago through a consensus-building process between utilities and consumers. Because the existing legislation failed to enable these policies for the long term, the policies would expire in 2019 without the amendments in Bill 13.

Madam Speaker, Bill 13 lays the groundwork for Alberta's electricity future and the province's long-term prosperity. It allows us to take the steps we need to fix the broken system that we inherited and to ensure that our electricity system works for Albertans well into the future. It will provide stability over volatility for electricity prices, simplicity over complexity in a changing market, and assurance over risk for investors.

I hope that all members will support me in moving forward and support our government in moving forward with Bill 13. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Minister. I just want to clarify that you are moving second reading on behalf of the Minister of Energy.

Ms McLean: I said that at the beginning. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Is there anybody else wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future. The actions of the NDP government have made electricity more expensive for Albertans, and Bill 13 will make the electricity even more expensive. After a series of Whac-A-Mole policies pulling on a thread and unraveling the whole tapestry, the NDP government have brought forward a bill in an attempt to try and put Humpty Dumpty back together again. The children's fable makes it out that Humpty Dumpty was an egg. All of Her Majesty's men and women in the cabinet, no matter how much superglue is used, will not put Humpty Dumpty back together again. Humpty Dumpty will never be the same, and the same is true for Alberta's electrical system. After Bill 13 the electricity market will never be the same.

How did we get to this place? The environment minister likes to talk about the government of Stephen Harper in Ottawa planning to shut down Alberta's coal-fired generating stations. That's true. Stephen Harper's government had a thoughtful plan to phase out coal-fired generation for 12 plants in Alberta by 2029. Some of those plants were at payout anyway and were older and going to be shut down or converted to natural gas anyway. It was a common-sense approach. Our associates in industry indicate that in the energy-only market it would still be possible to replace that baseload capacity that Ottawa mandated to phase out.

Along comes the NDP government with the idea of shutting down all of the coal-fired power plants. That is six more plants, Madam Speaker. Industry demanded compensation, and the NDP cost Albertans \$1.36 billion to shut these six coal plants early and likely convert them to natural gas. Some of these coal plants are practically brand new. Keephills 3 was supposed to run to 2061 and Genesee 3 to 2055. Coal conversion to natural gas is not as efficient as brand new combined-cycle natural gas power plants, so the NDP threw the electricity market into chaos.

There was also the nasty business of raising the carbon tax on large emitters, triggering the power purchase agreement dump to the Balancing Pool and the \$2 billion this cost the taxpayers and the resignation of the officials at the Balancing Pool. Madam Speaker, the NDP is trying to bring these major, major changes to the electricity market. At the time, of the key people heading these four institutions under this electricity department, two of them don't have the heads running those organizations, and then the third one is about to leave. Three out of the four institutions won't have the heads of those institutions at such a critical time.

But that's a story for another day, Madam Speaker. Yesterday the House leader thought that there was a conspiracy theory, and then he brought in aliens. He thought that aliens would walk around and take over. That's why we'll have that discussion some other day.

For today, though, we need to know: how is this baseload generation from coal going to get replaced in the energy-only market? The Alberta Electric System Operator, AESO, the body mandated by the legislation to connect generators with transmission to run the electricity market and keep adequate electricity flowing,

ran an analysis. The AESO found that the \$1,000 per megawatt hour cap on wholesale electricity prices would have to rise to \$5,000 per megawatt hour, which is equal to \$5 per kilowatt hour, to attract the investments needed to make the system reliable. In AESO's words: this might have been revenue sufficient, but it was not a revenue-certain option, and it would create too much volatility for consumers.

Who would want their power bills to be five times higher, Madam Speaker? I don't think you want that. I don't think I want it. Who wants their power bills to be \$40 one month and \$200 the next month, followed by maybe \$90 another month and then up to \$180 another month? People on a fixed income, the Marthas and the Henrys, cannot handle these wild market volatilities.

In addition, the NDP policy to push for more renewable electricity generation was identified as the one that would compromise the reliability of the electrical system. This was the AESO's finding in October 2016. So what does the NDP do in November 2016, Madam Speaker? They bring in Bill 27 and mandate 20 per cent renewables to provide electricity to Albertans. The NDP compromised the reliability of the electrical system. Then they had advice warning them that this would happen, and they did it anyway. That's truly scandalous. Not only is it scandalous; it is downright evil.

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

The NDP compromised the reliability of Alberta's electrical system with their drive for renewables. Now Alberta needs to attract the baseload to replace the coal-fired generating stations, and Alberta needs to attract the backup generation to supply electricity when the wind does not blow and when the sun does not shine.

Now, the NDP had several choices between what they could do. They could have done like many provinces and dropped the free market entirely and gone on a long-term contract basis. That was one option. This appears to be what the NDP has done for the renewable electricity program 1: wind generators that will be operating outside of the capacity market.

The NDP could have adopted cost-of-service regulations in a nonmarket structure, but the NDP chose a capacity market. Albertans pay for capacity now; it is just bundled in with their energy costs now. Under the new system generators will get two payments, a constant steady payment for capacity to produce electricity and a separate payment for the electricity they produce. But the devil will be in the details because the regulations and the market rules are not finalized.

Bill 13 is just a legislative framework to make this market happen. No one wants power plants that ratepayers are paying for to remain idle and not run, like they have in Ontario. No one wants the disaster that is Ontario's electrical system. While Bill 13 appears to be necessary, Bill 13 remains deeply flawed. I'm aware that the industry has been speaking with the minister and the Premier, demanding amendments. As Bill 13 now stands, companies could be under contract for capacity, receiving payments for that capacity, but the companies can then deny the provision of electricity. This has the effect of spiking the electricity prices, same as in Ontario, Mr. Speaker. This cannot be allowed. Paying for capacity and then denying electricity is simply wrong. We cannot wait for regulations or market rules to come in to fix this oversight.

4:50

Mr. Speaker, there are other parts of Bill 13 that do not deal with the capacity market, and the feedback from stakeholders is not positive, particularly with respect to implementing the 2006 Supreme of Court of Canada's Stores Block decision.

Due to those reasons, there will be opposition to Bill 13 from myself and my caucus colleagues. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to Bill 13? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future. The NDP have not learned any lessons about tinkering with Alberta's energy market. Each time it plays around with the system, it gets a jolt, and instead of leaving it alone, it insists on going in and trying to fix its most recent mess. Its intentions, it tells Albertans, are for their own good. Albertans just want them to let it be, but here we go again with Bill 13.

Let's go back to the beginning of this cascade of problems. It began with the carbon tax on heavy industrial emitters. The targets, of course, were the coal-fired generating plants. The carbon tax, which was a surprise to everyone, by the way, resulted in companies opting out of their power purchase agreements because the government had made them uncompetitive. The NDP feigned outrage that the companies were doing what they were legally allowed to do. Albertans were flabbergasted. They, too, had to pay this tax, and they understood that it could push a company out of the province.

Once the PPAs had been handed back to the Balancing Pool, the system was in precarious shape. It was costing the Balancing Pool up to \$70 million a month as electricity prices plummeted. In 2016 the pool lost an amazing \$2 billion. The government, now desperate, lent it hundreds of millions of dollars, and I'm sure you're not surprised to learn that consumers are on the hook for that money.

Mr. Speaker, I'll get to Bill 13, but before I can, we have more of a mess on the way before it rises into the picture. The NDP already knew that Alberta was going to phase out coal-fired generating plants, as required by the federal government, by 2029. That's a little more than a decade away. It was a well-reasoned plan that Albertans were onboard with, as were the companies, but that wasn't good enough for an ideological NDP government. As usual, it needed to push the goalposts. It decided that the six remaining coal-fired power plants had to go, too, even though some were state-of-the-art, new facilities.

We have that continuing controversy as the NDP tries to push its way to renewables in record time and chooses not to care one whit about the energy efficient technologies that are turning progressive countries like Germany back to coal. But as far as the NDP is concerned, none of that matters, nor do the communities that expected their coal plants to be operational for many decades yet.

In the meantime, the UCP became so concerned about all the tampering with our system that it sought the assistance of the Auditor General to determine the full costs and implications of the PPA losses, the province's decision to phase out coal-fired electricity, and its cap on electricity rates. It's quite clear, Mr. Speaker, that it's quite a mess.

Into all this mix comes the NDP's renewable electricity model. Modelling indicated that it would be problematic for all generators. AESO warned that the system would be compromised. But what did this mean to the NDP, which was continually pushing a plan that it was going to make work no matter what? Clearly, it meant little. It pressed through Bill 27 in the fall of '16 and set a firm target for renewables. Alberta's electrical system was compromised, and now the NDP are jumping into the deep end to create a capacity market and to do it in a hurry. The reforms continue and continue and continue.

Now the NDP is designing a new market, a capacity market, and at a time when no one knows the fallout from its last round of changes. The Energy minister actually said in the Legislature, “We have spent a lot of time in fixing a system that was broken for a number of years.” Who said that it was broken besides the NDP? Has anyone asked them to fix a system that wasn’t broken, a system that was evolving as planned? Does anyone have any faith that they can set this ship right again? They just keep pitching it from side to side. Albertans are confused and very likely have simply opted out of trying to follow this story, a new bill to fix the electrical system. They are thinking that they just want to go back to the way it was. Instead, we have a government that is trying to fast-track this capacity market.

Not only that, this bill allows the government to create much of it through regulation. Once again, Mr. Speaker, Albertans are at a loss. They don’t know what the NDP is doing. They don’t want them to do any more fixing. They do not know what’s going on, but they sure in heck don’t trust the NDP in taking care of their best interests.

It’s clear that I do not support Bill 13, and I do so for the sake of Alberta. You know, we finally had the electricity prices down to \$2.90 or less than \$3, and the generation market was working. It takes years to build that capacity, and we finally got there. We had the capacity, and that’s what drove the price down. Now with all these changes companies aren’t building that capacity anymore, and capacity is going away with the coal. We’ve got rising prices. I don’t see where the capacity is going to come back. I support green energy, and I support doing things better, but we’re not going to get that capacity back. The prices of electricity are just going to continue to go higher and higher for Albertans. That’s the reason I cannot support this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud. Standing Order 29(2)(a) if I’m correct.

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m rising under 29(2)(a) to make some comments and ask questions of the previous speaker. I was somewhat surprised, given the previous speaker’s experience in government, that he is so much in favour of this very unique system that we had here in Alberta, that the previous government had done. In fact, it goes back to the government of Premier Klein, who, in a very, I think, unfortunate spasm of what we were hearing earlier in another debate about small government, decided that there should be total deregulation of the energy market in this province.

You know, the previous speaker did mention AESO, and it’s interesting. I have a quote here from the president and CEO of the Alberta Electric System Operator, David Erickson.

After thorough analysis, the AESO concluded that the current energy-only market will not ensure that Alberta has a reliable electricity system in the future. There has been a growing reluctance for developers to invest in energy-only markets and this global trend was a critical factor in our recommendation to move to a capacity market.

That’s the president and the CEO of AESO.

I’d like to hear from the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti – I guess it’s the other Grande Prairie – I’d like to hear his reaction to that quote from the man who is actually leading the Alberta Electric System Operator.

5:00

Mr. Drysdale: Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, whether it’s in agriculture or forestry or any industry in Alberta, prices are dictated by supply and demand. It’s pretty simple. The more supply you’ve

got, the prices go down, and the less demand you’ve got, the prices go down. If you have a lack of supply and a high demand, the prices are going to be high. Pretty simple. That’s why, with the deregulation of generation of power, companies were making money generating electricity, and they built additional generation because the business was there and the plan was there. But when you add generation, the price goes down, and it takes years to shift that supply. We finally got to the point where we had a good supply of power in Alberta, and of course you know what the price was. It was less than \$3. As soon as you now shut down the cheapest form of power we had, which was coal, the supply goes down and the price is going up, and I don’t see that turning around lots. Our price is just going to keep going higher and higher.

One of my closest friends, an accountant, by the way, was on the AESO board. Maybe you were friends with the chair, but I was good friends with a guy on the board who explained to me how this was working. The board was very upset about how all of this went down, and I think you’ll see that most of those board members have left. I don’t even know if any of them are there, and I’m not even sure if the president is still there, the guy you quoted. Most of them were either fired or left on their own because they saw the mess coming and they didn’t want to be left holding the bag. My friend told me that. He got out of there because he saw the disaster coming from these changes.

I just can’t understand all these changes, when you’re taking away capacity and the generation. I mean, green energy is great. It’s been said that the wind doesn’t blow all the time and that the sun doesn’t shine all the time, and when the demand is needed, it’s needed, and it can’t wait. If you take that baseload out of there and take capacity out of there, the price is going to go up, and I’m really afraid for the citizens of Alberta, what their power bills are going to be over the next few years. Once you lose that, once you shut those plants down, you can’t turn it around very fast.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: All right. With 10 seconds left I don’t assume there’s anyone under 29(2)(a).

Any other members wishing to speak to Bill 13? The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s really my pleasure today to rise and speak in second reading to Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta’s Electricity Future. I’m cosponsoring this bill, and it’s something that I’m very proud that our government is doing to look out for everyday Albertans and make sure that Alberta has a reliable and stable energy system.

Now, in November 2016 the government committed to modernizing Alberta’s electricity system to ensure we continue to deliver reliable energy, attract investment, and prepare for a low-carbon future while protecting from that price volatility. I believe that this legislation does that. This legislation encompasses five key things. It encompasses the transition to the capacity market, the disposition of utility assets by regulated utilities, changes that enable existing and useful transmission policy elements to be captured in the appropriate regulation and legislation, small-scale and community generation, and the specified penalties for energy service providers. I think all five of those elements are really important pieces that we are bringing forward in this legislation, Mr. Speaker.

When I look and hear members opposite talk about how they had this great energy-only market that served all the needs of every single Albertan, I’m sorry to say, Mr. Speaker, that I think they are really wrong. That system was broken. For years Albertans were living with uncertainty and the worry that month to month their bills

could spike. Their bills could fluctuate wildly, and that anxiety was forged from examples and history. In the five years before this government formed government, we had seen spikes over 15 cents per kilowatt hour. Months that shot over 8 cents, over 10 cents, and even 12 cents were not uncommon. How could we expect families to afford those sorts of spikes, families that lived month to month afraid that their power bills would spike suddenly and without warning? How could any responsible government stand by and let this happen? How could any government not have sense or compassion to address this problem? That's why this government capped electricity at 6.8 cents, less than half the rate customers endured under the market system we inherited from the previous government.

Mr. Speaker, we know that that rate cap is only a temporary measure. We know that when you inherit a broken system, a Band-Aid solution isn't going to fix it. That's why this legislation is coming forward. Let's be clear: there was a real problem, and the problem was dire. The government engaged a number of experts who obtained analysis and feedback from many jurisdictions, developers, investors, and lenders around the world, and the conclusion was crystal clear. Alberta's energy-only market was no longer attractive to investors.

In fact, I've got a couple of quotes here, Mr. Speaker, for you. Why don't we look at Dawn Farrell, who is the president and CEO of TransAlta.

We welcome a shift to a capacity market in Alberta. It will enhance our ability to make investments in existing and new generation to the benefit of customers and other stakeholders in the services we provide.

When we have some of our largest electricity companies in the province welcoming the shift to a capacity market, I think we're on the right track. I think that we can say that the government is doing the right thing. We're working with the industry to make sure we have a market that works for Albertans, that works for families, and that works for our corporations that we work with.

Mr. Speaker, when the price spikes were going on and on and on, it was a system that wasn't only risky for families, but it was something that was unattractive to investors. It was unattractive to investors, who wanted a reliable energy grid. Price spikes weren't the only risk. Our system operators couldn't even be given assurance that we would have the supply necessary to keep the lights on. We were handed this really broken system, where we didn't know on any given day of the week what the price may be or whether we would actually have that power when we needed it.

By enabling development of a capacity market, I think Bill 13 takes a very crucial step in implementing the fix. Now, Mr. Speaker, again, that move was not made lightly. Unlike what members opposite would want you to believe, the move to a capacity market was recommended by current and potential energy investors, external experts, the Alberta Electric System Operator, who actually asked for this change. The reason they recommended it is because a capacity market is seen as a safe, reliable, sustainable, and affordable electricity model. It provides consumers with that greater price stability. It makes room for competition and innovation and private investment while providing revenue certainty for investors. It's a made-in-Alberta solution that benefits our consumers and our investors.

I understand that Bill 13's amendments relate to the capacity market over four broader themes. The first is to create that long-term policy certainty that investors need. The second theme is about clarity and authority. Alberta's electricity agencies will have extended duties and responsibilities that include that capacity market.

So when we talk about these issues, we can see in that second theme that the updated duties of the Alberta Electric System Operator include operating and managing the capacity market. I think that's a really important thing for consumers to look at because it adds review and approval of capacity in the energy market to the AESO and the Alberta Utilities Commission, and it extends the duties of the Market Surveillance Administrator to include surveillance of the capacity market.

It brings in these new tools for the AESO and the MSA and the AUC. We want to be able to go out and say that we have a system that is working for companies and working for consumers and that it's fair, that it's fair in a way that allows us to make sure that specified penalties are fair, for example, when energy service providers step out of line but also fair in a way that makes sure that those penalties are dynamic and work with the corporation. Every single step of the way, when we work with these companies, we make sure that it's a system that everybody can get onboard with.

The third theme that I think these amendments address is the enhancement of public oversight in the development of the market. Bill 13 will require that all new or modified market rules be reviewed and approved by the AUC. Now, when new rules are recommended, the Alberta Electric System Operator, AESO, will need to bring them before the Alberta Utilities Commission and satisfy the commission that they are in the public interest and support reliability and a reasonable cost to consumers.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

I think that's a really important thing, Madam Speaker. I think it's really important because when we talk about bringing new rules forward for our regulators, we need to make sure that we have as many eyes on that as possible, public eyes that can look at it and say: "Are these rules reasonable? Are these rules in the interest of safety and reliability of our system?" This is really important. I think that these amendments that we're bringing forward are going to bring the necessary rules into place before the start of the first auction process.

5:10

The final theme that I think is really important is stakeholder participation. I think stakeholder participation and consultation is one of the most important things any government can do, and it was one of the things where, when this government moved forward to transitioning to a capacity market, we ensured that the transition would be open and transparent, that it would be open and work with our stakeholders every step of the way through the process. I'm very proud that the government consulted with industry, consumers, and stakeholders in the market. I think that's just, frankly, good governance, Madam Speaker.

I'll give you another quote here, from Terry Boston, who's the former executive vice-president of power for the Tennessee Valley Authority and the past president and CEO of PJM Interconnection. He said:

I spent the last eight years of my career as the CEO of PJM Interconnection, which has a mature capacity market structure. Private investors from around the world have built over 30,000 megawatts of new generation in PJM under this market structure, which kept the lights on at stable prices. Investors have shown a growing reluctance to invest in the riskier energy-only market designs around the world, preferring the price stability and revenue certainty provided by a capacity market structure. I am confident this model will work well in Alberta too, ensuring future stability in your admirable and smooth transition to a lower carbon electricity system.

When we consult with people who have been involved in the industry around the world and when we consult with people who

have seen capacity markets compared to energy markets, when we consult with companies in Alberta, when we consult with companies around the world, we see that they agree that a capacity market is the way to move forward. A capacity market is the type of system that is reliable and sustainable for consumers and for the companies. It's the one that we can agree is the best way to move forward. That's something that I think the government did a very good job of doing, consulting with these stakeholders who have experience in this matter, who know the history of this matter and are able to move forward in this. I'm very happy to see that this legislation would continue to require consultations with market participants, other interested parties, and the Market Surveillance Administrator when rules are developed.

I think Bill 13 is abundantly clear. It does a good job of transparency. It does a good job of accountability. It does a good job of stakeholder participation. And when we compare that and we compare the checks and balances that are coming in, like the minister spoke about, things like the specified penalties, when we talk about things like this, we can see that it was a significantly more engaging consultation than even the deregulation that was done two decades ago by the Conservative government, and we can see that our government has done a much better job with these issues.

I think we talk about these issues over and over and over again, and many Albertans ask: "Well, what does that mean for me at home? What does that mean for me and my family?" I think it's really clear that Bill 13 brought forward something that really does speak to families, which is those specified penalties. When we talk about how specified penalties speak to families, how that works, it's by addressing concerns over incorrect power bills. It's an issue in customer service from electricity and natural gas providers that the Utilities Consumer Advocate, or the UCA, actually receives thousands of complaints about every single year, Madam Speaker.

Now, I know the opposition doesn't really care when consumers complain about companies, trying to make concerns like this known, but this government does, Madam Speaker. I know that they would rather see complaints just be filed away in a drawer forever, but I think this government really wants to address those issues.

We talk about these, and I want to say that currently what the AUC, the Alberta Utilities Commission, has is the ability to issue a penalty to electricity and natural gas service providers for particular breaches. The penalty is only available through a formal hearing process, and it's really burdensome for individual breaches. When we're talking about individual cases of one or two consumers, that can get kind of flaky in terms of: it's a very large process. When we're talking about thousands of consumers, Madam Speaker, I think that adds up really fast, which is why, when we talk about how fast these add up and how distressing this can be for consumers, it's important that we have a system that can move quickly and can address those issues on a broader scale.

I'm very confident the commission will develop the specified penalties rules in consultation with stakeholders to ensure that they are clear and that the penalties are very fair. It's also important for consumers to know that the utility companies are accountable and can be penalized for their violations of rules relating to service.

Madam Speaker, I know that there are so many great things on the principle of this bill that I want to speak to. There are so many things that I want to speak on on how important this bill is going to be. I know that all of these things we talk about are going to provide a stable and reliable energy system for Albertans, and it's going to provide a stable and reliable energy system for our consumers.

I'm running a little bit short on time here, though, Madam Speaker, so I'm going to table that for another time. I'll come back to it when

we get into committee and into our third reading, but I'll at this time move to adjourn debate on the matter.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

[Motion to adjourn debate lost]

The Acting Speaker: Are there any members wishing to speak?

Mr. Cooper: On 29(2)(a)?

The Acting Speaker: Oh, 29(2)(a). My apologies. The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Why, thank you. It's a pleasure to rise. I just have one very quick question for the member. Earlier this evening we heard the minister speak at some length about how this particular piece of legislation makes changes to the rules around the MSA, which is the market surveillance agency that provides oversight to these sort of industries. As you'll know, Madam Speaker, that position has been vacant for well over seven months. I'm just curious to know if the member thinks that it's important that if we're changing the rules, we might want to have the head of that organization in place to be able to provide some feedback and input on such an important piece of legislation, that's making widespread, sweeping changes to a very important industry here in the province of Alberta.

As you know, Madam Speaker, the government has been very quick to rush some processes but not others, so I'm curious to hear what the member might have to say about this particular issue and whether it's important that we have someone that oversees this very important organization at a very important time such as this, when the government is essentially making a complete mess of the electricity system.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Hon. member, do you wish to respond? The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think that when we talk about things like complaints to independent agencies like the MSA, it's something that I'm really happy to speak about because it's something that – when we look at the system and we look at what's happened and we look at what's happened since electricity was deregulated under the Conservative government, Albertans have been experiencing a price roller coaster. They've been exposed. I think that what the government is bringing in is fixing that. It's fixing that with common-sense reforms that are going to reduce that uncertainty. It's going to reduce that price spike now and in the future. When they want to get up and talk about how much they care about consumers and how much they want to look at these issues, I want to say that our government capped energy bills to protect Albertans from price spikes. Our government implemented common-sense reforms to reduce uncertainty.

Now, the people over there, Madam Speaker, would go back to insider deals that cost Albertans more. Their deregulation policies caused a price roller coaster for Albertans. I think that when we look at the history of what's gone on here and we look at who's the one that's really looking out for Albertans, I think that picture becomes very clear.

Now, as we move on with updating the energy market, I think that we can again show that the energy-only market is very broken, Madam Speaker. We can look at even everyday Albertans who expressed their frustration with the broken market to their MLAs. I've got some quotes from *Hansard* here, where you can see: "How can anyone budget for such fluctuations in the price per kWh? Why

are there such dramatic changes reflected in each bill?” That’s one quote.

5:20

Another quote is:

The fact is deregulation benefits only the utility companies – not the consumers . . . Those of us who are on pensions, on disability allowances, single parent families, & the working poor – among others – are adversely affected by what can only be called unbridled greed!

When I look at even what was said in this House just a few years ago, in 2012, I think it’s very clear that the system the members opposite would like to go back to, the system that they think was the Holy Grail of the electricity industry, Madam Speaker, was completely failing consumers. It was something that brought Albertans to have to complain to their MLAs about having dramatic swings in their bills.

When we look at those issues, I think it’s very clear that this government is moving forward in bringing in a system that works for consumers. The updates to the MSA and the updates to the system as a whole reflect that. When we talk about all these different types of issues, we need to know that the government has your back, that when we update the energy system and we bring in these new market changes, the government has your back. I think history shows us very clearly that the Conservative government did not have Albertans’ backs and will not have Albertans’ backs in the future, Madam Speaker. I think it’s something that Bill 13, as we move forward with updating our electricity system, shows really clearly, that we care about everyday Albertans.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just wanted to start off my conversation here just with a little bit of interesting information. Under the deregulated market we had this very interesting factor happen. It’s called zero utility debt. That is something that this province is or was extremely proud of. No process is perfect, I’ll give you that. There are certainly things that could have been done and changed.

But if we’re actually going to talk about where this legislation is coming from or why it was brought forward – the member opposite had mentioned that it was a broken system. Well, this bill is a result of other bills that have completely changed this entire market and without the foresight of understanding what those changes would bring forward. I mean, I can appreciate the government’s attempt to try and address the litany of problems that is resulting from these destructive policies on the electricity file, but I’m shaking my head because the only reason why we have to have this bill come forward is because the government mishandled this file from the get-go. We just have to go back to bills 27 and 34. For those of you who were here, those were some very, very, very late night discussions along the lines of why those bills weren’t going to work and the fundamental changes that were going to happen that are actually going to bring us into debt, that will actually fundamentally change the way that electricity moves forward here.

The other thing that’s interesting – and, you know, I’d like to bring this up as well – is that the member had mentioned the MSA and about having an overseer of the market surveillance. This is a very major issue. Seven months is a very, very long time.

But on top of that, let’s just talk about market transition for a moment. If you’re looking at what that transition is going to look like, the impact that it might have on competition, we’re also talking

about efficiency. That’s actually been a core piece of the electricity file in this province, efficiency, which is something, actually, that the government hasn’t talked about at all. They’ve talked about stable and reliable, which is interesting given that we’re talking about bringing renewables online. When the wind doesn’t blow and the sun doesn’t shine, we have to double-build for all of those kinds of things in order to have a baseline power in order to make sure that Albertans have stable and reliable electricity at all times.

But what about efficiency? The efficiency piece has been left out of this discussion quite significantly, and if we’re talking about the market transition, if we look at – it’s an interesting conundrum here because in 2015 the question was asked by this government: can the electricity market structure accommodate significant levels of renewable generation and an evaluation of carbon policy options for the Alberta electricity sector? Now, that was done, actually, before the climate leadership action plan came forward. It was done previous to the carbon tax. These questions were asked previous to the climate leadership action plan. With the climate leadership action plan, then, the decision was made to go towards a capacity market, all to make sure that there was an availability to bring renewables online.

Now, interestingly enough, the past bills that I was talking about gave extraordinary – extraordinary – powers to the Minister of Energy to be able to bring renewables online without debating it in this Legislature, without allowing Albertans to know what was going on, to be able to hide it under a capped amount of 6.8 cents.

Actually, speaking about that, the 6.8 cents, interestingly enough, if we’re talking about the cap on the regulation piece, it’s interesting that if it goes above 6.8 cents for any particular reason, those places, Medicine Hat – this is the deferral account statements. If for some reason we go beyond the cap of 6.8 cents, the REAs and Medicine Hat and anybody else who is impacted by that will be compensated by the government. I’d like to understand what that is, how much that’s going to cost, and what would allow that cap to even be surpassed considering it’s considered a cap but actually is written here with the retail rate cap regulation. Should that be surpassed, those places will be compensated by the government. What does that mean? What does that mean to the ratepayer? The ratepayer and the taxpayer are all the same person, Madam Speaker.

When we talk about bills 27 and 34 from the last session and how they fundamentally changed our electricity market – we have the closing of six coal-fired power plants to convert them to natural gas at a cost to the Alberta taxpayers at that point in time of \$1.36 billion. The more concerning piece of this is how this project, this mismanagement of this file has decimated some of those communities. You just have to talk to some of those families and be able to sit with them for a little bit to understand what that actually looks like and what that feels like. They relied on those jobs in those local power plants to pay their mortgages and to feed their kids and to save for retirement. For months and months and months at that point in time, I mean, they heard crickets from the government about what would happen to them when those plants would close, and then the residents faced unemployment.

Even more so, actually, the government has taken away the equity from these people. They can’t sell their homes. Their properties are valueless without having those job propositions, those job opportunities there. Congratulations. Those communities are no longer economically viable without those plants. Now, we were already set for those plants to end. There was already a plan to do that. What could possibly have possessed this government to think that that was okay? That is not having the backs of Albertans, Madam Speaker, not even close. Maybe you should go and sit down and have dinner with some of those folks and find out what is actually going on in their lives, how they feel, how that’s impacted

their families, their children's education, their ability to raise their families in the places that they planned on being in for some time. That's the ripple effect of this kind of policy.

Remember, folks, zero utility debt. That was the outcome of the deregulated market. The government has forced unpredictable renewable electricity on Albertans with little forethought of the costs and implications to the taxpayers and ratepayers down the road. Lookit, I love renewables. I mean, I've said this probably at least a hundred times in this Legislature. I have solar panels all over my house. I think they're fantastic. But it needs to resonate with people, and I believe they need to have the choice and the understanding of what they're paying for. We owe that much. I mean, when we talk about bills 27 and 34, the words "transparency" and "accountability" were removed – they were removed – from the actions of the minister under those pieces of legislation. She need not tell Albertans what she's doing at any time. Wow. That's really having Albertans' backs.

5:30

The Minister of Economic Development and Trade then – and this is during when these coal plants were being shut down – showed up with Mr. McGowan and the AFL on a full speaking tour in these areas. That was interesting. It was interesting to hear the comments from that. But I think that reasonable policy is not far fetched in this particular situation. I mean, if you look at a lot of these large emitters, a lot of these large companies, many of them, given the incentive that coal would be phased out later on, had the incentives to look to renewables and the time frame to actually bring those things online in a way that is conducive and reasonable for the people of this province.

I mean, you talk to any Albertan. They care about their earth, air, and water. They don't need government to make that decision for them. That's obvious. So why not trust in the people that put you here that they're going to make the right decisions given the right opportunities? There are a thousand other ways that this could have happened, but this bill is a result of the mismanagement of this file, the combination of a system that phased out coal-fired power and introduced wind power in way too tight of a time frame.

I can appreciate the mentality of what you're trying to accomplish – I really can – but it's caused absolute chaos in the system. It destabilized it to a point that the government needs to now step in frantically to put this back together again. You're saying that it was a broken system? Well, it's been broken even further. If there were issues with the system as it was, fix those issues. Nobody was saying that there weren't problems. Absolutely, Madam Speaker. But to break a system by breaking it again in about a thousand other ways gives so much pain and hardship to the people of this province. This file is the downfall of this government.

People who didn't understand anything about electricity now can tell you what a PPA is. People who didn't understand before how it worked and all that have now become savvy. This is a regular discussion at the doors. People who understood – they might have not been happy with the fluctuations before, but it was transparent. You could look at your electricity bill and know exactly what you were paying for. You might not have been particularly thrilled about it at any given moment, but you knew.

Now under the auspices and the smoke and mirrors of stability, the government is going to charge its own rate to bring these things on. You may not see it in your electricity bill, but you're going to see it in your property taxes, your business taxes, and everything else. There are about a thousand other different places that the government can make up and compensate for what they're supposedly giving to Albertans.

Truly, with all my heart, I actually believe Albertans would really, really have loved the opportunity to look at how to bring renewables online, but those large emitters, the ones that the government talks about, that supposedly wanted this change, were already prepped and ready to be able to bring renewables online. They had the dollar figures. They had the transition plans. If the government had taken the advice of the experts in this industry and slowed it down for a more measured transition to renewable energy, this market wouldn't have had to have been compromised so severely, Madam Speaker. But they were so eager to prove themselves to their friends and to Trudeau that they rushed into renewables and destabilized this market, that had run largely without incident for decades under the previous government.

I think the most concerning thing right now is that the watchdog of this electricity portfolio is not functioning. There is nobody watching over what's going on right now. For example, I mean, if we're talking about compliance – the member was talking about compliance and rules and reliability standards – I mean, since 2008 the MSA has collected \$1.7 million in financial penalties, and those are just the small ones. These aren't the large ones, okay? This was what their job was.

So I'm curious. The minister had mentioned that the government now is going to be – I'm sorry; I don't have the benefit of the Blues in front of me – working with the compliance piece of it to make sure that there's accountability so that if there are penalties, the government will now be in charge of that. So is the MSA actually going to be reignited, or is the government now providing that oversight as well?

My question, I suppose, is: is the MSA actually going to still continue on as an independent body to be able to hold all of these new things that are coming on accountable, that nobody knows about because it's under a piece of legislation that nobody knows about and nobody gets to find out about? Is the MSA now going to be watching that market on our behalf for things that nobody understands are within the auspices of that legislation, or is it going to be replaced by government oversight? If I understood the minister correctly, government oversight seems to be the direction that we're going. If somebody can answer that for me, I would be extremely grateful. I'd love to find out that that's not the case.

I think, too, that we have some really great crossjurisdictional information about other provinces that haven't done well with this. I mean, we only have to look to Ontario, right? We see families that are just suffering like crazy, and we want to make sure that that doesn't happen to our families here. Let's at least learn that much from other jurisdictions that have failed. You have the time to turn this around.

With that, I'd like to adjourn debate.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: I would like to call the committee to order

Bill 15 Appropriation Act, 2018

The Deputy Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered in respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Highwood.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today in the House to speak on Bill 15, the Appropriation Act, 2018. When the government introduced their budget earlier this session, Albertans for the first time could actually see the recklessness and carelessness of the government's finances. This year alone almost \$9 billion is expected to be added to the provincial debt. I constantly hear from my constituents, who express great concern over the direction of the provincial finances. They wonder how we got into this predicament. For many years we were a province that was the envy of Canada in terms of our finances. We had no debt and a balanced budget. How were we able to do this? We lived within our means and ensured that our fiscal decisions allowed for economic prosperity for all Albertans. We had a flat tax, the lowest corporate tax, and no sales tax. Under this government income taxes have gone up, corporate taxes have gone up, and the government has rolled out a massive job-killing carbon tax, which has driven away massive amounts of investment.

Now Albertans are asking questions, and they have every right to be concerned. Does the government really know what they're doing? Alberta is no longer unique in the Confederation. Its finances are just as bad if not worse than any other province. Alberta was once a bright light for opportunity and investment in this country, in Canada, but now those investors are looking for opportunities, and they're looking for opportunities elsewhere. Billions of dollars of investment have left this province, but, really, who can blame them? Nothing about the current budget gives investors any confidence that Alberta is open for business. In fact, Alberta's stellar credit rating has been downgraded. I think it's been downgraded at least five times. What happened to the Alberta advantage? This is what made Alberta special, and I'm disappointed that this is no longer the reality for our province.

5:40

Madam Chair, what is the government's plan? Well, they've increased taxes on Alberta families, yet they still can't balance the books. At this current rate the provincial debt will be \$96 billion by the middle of the next decade, almost a ninefold increase from when they took office. What will it cost us to service this debt? Just shy of \$4 billion. It's hard to imagine how many teachers and nurses could be hired with that amount of money. Instead of being able to use this money to provide services that are important to Albertans, this money is going toward paying off creditors, going to the banks, going to financial institutions, billions and billions of dollars in interest payments. Oh well. What can I say?

Further to this, how are we expected to pay back this money? It's not something that we can recover from quickly; rather, it will take generations and generations to pay back this debt. Our children, our grandchildren, my grandchildren will be the ones stuck paying back this government's fiscal mismanagement.

This government is taking Alberta off the fiscal cliff. If we continue on this path, by 2024 the debt per capita will be over \$20,000 per person. So what's the plan? Is there a strategy? Is there a debt paydown strategy? No. How are we going to get back to a balanced budget? This government has failed to provide us with adequate questions and answers.

This government needs to realize that raising taxes and spending more is not the answer. Ever since the government raised taxes across the board when they took office, tax revenues have actually gone down. Maybe there might be a correlation between tax rates and the amount of investment in our province. As I said earlier, Madam Chair, our records show that billions of investment dollars have left this province, and they've moved elsewhere. They're not coming back for a while.

With this economic downturn, coupled with this government's tax increase, Albertan families have had to tighten their belts and restrain spending. That's the rationale. Is that the rational thing to do? Can our government do the same thing? Can they do the sensible thing? Now, the government said that they would rein in their spending; however, expenditures keep going up year after year. Ninety-six billion dollars in debt. Four billion dollars to service the debt.

Now let's talk about the carbon tax. The government promised us that if we instituted this massive tax grab on families, we would get a magical thing called social licence. This apparently would silence all opposition to our oil sands and would give us the ability to get our products to market. As of today has this happened? No. With the Trans Mountain expansion hanging on by a thread, being stopped in its tracks by protestors, professional protesters, I might add, has the carbon tax really done anything to achieve the so-called social licence? I wonder if I can go to the registries office and buy a social licence. Not sure. I didn't get my renewal.

Believe it or not, raising taxes and increasing the cost of living for Albertan families doesn't actually get rid of the opposition to our energy products. Protesters who are setting up camp by the Trans Mountain expansion site didn't all of a sudden wake up and say: "Oh, Alberta has a carbon tax. Now I guess we'll change our minds on this project and pack up and leave." That is ridiculous thinking, and it goes to show that there's no such thing as social licence. The protesters exist to push back on Alberta's energy market and our energy products. Trans Mountain is on a thread. Now, I hope that at the end of the month we have good news, but I suspect that it might not be so.

We were first told that the revenues from the carbon tax would go into special green projects or be given back to Albertans in the form of rebates. However, we now know that beginning in 2021, the government plans to direct revenue from the carbon tax into general revenue, which is general spending, which is, I guess, padding the books. A tax on everyone. A tax on everything. This shows that the carbon tax is just nothing but a tax grab on Albertans and Alberta families.

People are hurting. People in my constituency are hurting. People have lost their jobs. Our economy is not doing well, and adding more taxes is not helping them. It's hurting them. Adding more money to the deficit and to the debt is not helping this province, and it's not helping our future generations. The carbon tax is just disguised as a tool to support the reduction of greenhouse gases, but in reality it's a tool used to help pay for this government's out-of-control spending.

Now, the current government likes to state that they're a government that supports families, but with this budget is that really the case? When I talk to my constituents, rest assured that not many of them talk about the benefits of the carbon tax. They talk about the negative aspects of the carbon tax, a tax on everything, a tax on all transportation, goods, products, and services. Every day people see that the cost of everything is increasing. It's going to continue to do so: \$9 billion in debt, \$4 billion to service the debt. That's \$4 billion which could be used for a lot of good things in this province, not just paying back the banks.

This budget does nothing to encourage investment and get Albertans back to work. Ask yourself how many families are struggling to make ends meet because of the lack of work. How many former oil workers are struggling financially because of this government's inability to get pipeline projects approved? Don't kid yourself. Kinder Morgan is not a guaranteed deal. Energy East is gone. Northern Gateway is gone. You're counting on one pipeline which is on life support right now. How many families are having

difficulty paying this detrimental carbon tax, a tax on everything? Madam Chair, with the budget that was presented earlier this session, it's hard to see how government is truly supporting families.

With that, I believe that I've demonstrated that there are far more questions than answers in this budget. This government seems unprepared to deal with the debt load and the debt that they're giving us, that they're presenting to us, our future children, our grandchildren.

Madam Chair, I'll be voting against this budget. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to stand and speak to Bill 15, the Appropriation Act, 2018. My colleagues and I are profoundly worried about the direction that this government has taken. We have talked specifically about this over the years, about the concern for the deficit and not being able to take measures necessary to be able to get the spending under control. A province that was once the envy of the Confederation has now been stifled both politically and economically and is projecting deficits every year up until 2023 to 2024. This is unacceptable, not just to me but to most every Albertan that I speak to.

Disastrous ideological decisions have been made by this NDP government over the last three years, and they have taken a struggling economy and made things harder for Albertans. Taxpayers are now on the hook for a massive debt that will hit nearly \$100 billion by 2023-24 if the NDP are given a second term. This, by the way, is a 78 per cent increase from the 2018-19 budget. It's deplorable, Madam Chair.'

5:50

The economic situation in Alberta is in such a bad state that once-thriving and -prosperous companies have decided to pack their bags and head south, leaving countless people without employment. As I speak to different businesses throughout this province, I am shocked to see how many people, how many of these businesses are saying that they are going to leave. I ask them not to leave and to believe in Alberta once again and to hope that in 2019 this will be a government one and done.

It's a sad state when we face many Albertans who tell us daily that they have given up looking for work altogether. While some have been fortunate enough to find employment, they are now working for a fraction of what they once earned.

According to Statistics Canada in a labour force survey in March of this year, zero full-time jobs were created and only part-time jobs increased. These are the real-time statistics, Madam Chair, that this government uses when it announces that jobs have increased. They seem to leave out critical details. In that same survey it states that there were 156,500 unemployed Albertans, 17,300 more than when this government took office. Also, there are nearly 44,000 unemployed youth in Alberta. The youth unemployment rate is 13.3 per cent, the highest outside of Atlantic Canada. Again in the same survey: youth lost 2,400 full-time jobs, that were replaced by only part-time employment.

I've had an opportunity to speak to a couple of businesses, and one of the concerns that they have with these policies that have been cascaded from this government is that they feel like there's death by a thousand cuts in that the labour laws have been changed, the minimum wage has gone up, and that exacerbates the economic challenges that these businesses are facing. A lot of these businesses

have indicated to me that they can't hire young people between the ages of 15 and 24 because they do not feel that they have those margins in their business to be able to provide that training wage that these young people would need, and because of that, we're now seeing 13.3 per cent unemployment amongst young people.

Again, as the Labour critic I've asked the Labour minister many times, you know, whether she had done an economic impact study. Unfortunately, the response that I received was that the economic impact study would not be done but that she would assess as she goes. Well, we've had three years now of these types of policies coming forward, and I think that at 13.3 per cent youth unemployment, the evidence is clear that the policies are not working, that they are not really helping the young people like originally designed or intended. This is just one aspect of businesses that are struggling to be able to make ends meet.

Now, when this government talks about increasing jobs, we know that they are talking about jobs that were once full-time and are now newly created part-time positions. That is all businesses can afford. In March of this year, while population numbers increased, the size of the labour force actually decreased by 500 Albertans. These statistics tell the real story about the economic picture here in Alberta.

In reality it's no wonder that the NDP will have to use the proceeds from the carbon tax and apply that to general revenue since they won't be able to get the revenue they need from other traditional avenues. The traditional avenues I'm talking about are where this government seems to not get it. I've talked about this before in the House, but I'll say it again. The difference between, I guess, Conservatives and Liberals or NDPs, as is the case in Alberta, is this. For some strange reason the NDP and Liberals believe that the pie, or the size of the economy, is static and that it's their God-given right to be able to take more of that pie and redistribute it. The difference with us on the Conservative side is that we actually believe that that pie is not static, that the pie actually can grow or shrink based upon good or bad policy. History is replete with examples of when good policy and bad policy have been instituted and how that pie has grown or shrunk.

We've seen over the last three years, according to the Conference Board of Canada, \$36 billion, in the first two years of this government, leave this province. That's the Conference Board of Canada. That investment that has left: the trickle-down effect is the loss of jobs.

The only way to be able to fix the problem is to try to throw more money at it – that's called Keynesian economics – try to buy yourself out of the recessions. You know, the truth is, Madam Chair, that I cannot see one example in history where Keynesian economics has actually worked, and here's the reason why. The reason is this. The full formula of Keynesian economics – I'm glad that I've got the attention of the members opposite now; it's good to see that they're paying attention – is that you buy yourself out of the recession but save during the good times. There have been very, very few – actually, the only one who has actually done it is Ralph Klein. He's the one who actually saved . . . [interjections] Again, it's good to know that we've got the attention of the members opposite on this. That is the only time that we've actually seen that happen.

Then we had what we called the \$15 billion rainy-day fund, which this government seems to have spent very quickly in their first three years of operations.

Now, you know what? The truth is – and I go back to my original point, which is that if the government truly did believe in Keynesian economic policy, they would have a strategy of not only balancing the budget but a strategy of being able to, once the economy

actually starts firing on all cylinders, start saving. Instead, what we're seeing is the government waiting until 2023-24 to be able to just balance the budget. Yet every indicator – in fact, even the members opposite have said that we are actually out of the recession. If they are truly going to follow Keynesian economic models, then at that point, once the economy starts to fire on all cylinders, they're supposed to be saving for a rainy day. Instead, what we see is this government continuing to spend exorbitant amounts in deficit spending.

So we find ourselves in a position now where we're sitting at – what? – \$56 billion in debt. I think when they took over, they took over an \$11 billion debt. The majority of that was actually for capital projects, not actually spending for operation. Now we're in a situation where these aren't even just capital deficits, but these are actually debts that are from operational.

Madam Chair, the concern that I have for the government and the strategy and the path that the government is following is that they are not even following the Keynesian economic model, which says that they have got to be able to get back into balance when the times are good and save for those rainy days. Because of this situation, unfortunately, we are now seeing these credit downgrades. We're now seeing a situation where they have no path to being able to get us back to a situation that is going to be good for Albertans.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Pursuant to Standing Order 4(4), at 6 p.m. when there is an evening sitting and the Assembly is in Committee of the Whole, the chair leaves the chair until 7:30 p.m.. We are now recessed.

[The committee adjourned at 6 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday evening, May 2, 2018

Day 23

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, May 2, 2018

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

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

Bill 15 Appropriation Act, 2018

The Deputy Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill?

Mr. Cooper: Well, a very fine May evening to you. It's a pleasure to be here this evening to debate what I can tell you, Madam Chair, is a very important piece of legislation to the good people of the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

An Hon. Member: Where?

Mr. Cooper: The outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

I might just add, Madam Chair, that while it's important, one thing that I can assure you is that I have not run into one – not one, not even one – constituent in that outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills who has encouraged me to support this particular budget. In fact, they have encouraged me to do the exact opposite of supporting a budget like this.

You know, I spend a lot of time connecting with the outstanding constituents of the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, and one of the things I found very interesting over the past number of years is that initially, when the government took office, they had some reservations about the ability of the Finance minister to deliver budgets that put Albertans first, and certainly they had some concerns about his ability to balance the budget. But I'll be totally upfront with you, Madam Chair. It's not the very first issue that they spoke to me about.

The good people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills over the past couple of years spent a lot of time talking to me about how they were concerned with the direction that the government was taking us in. They spent a lot of time warning me about the impacts of the carbon tax. They spent a lot of time being concerned about the negative impacts that the government's policy is having on small businesses, the way that the government is making an absolute disaster of our economy, driving investment away. That was their primary concern. I had the opportunity to speak to hundreds if not thousands of constituents in Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, in fact to people all across the province but in this case predominantly people in Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, and they were concerned about the actions of the government, but the budget wasn't the number one thing that they spoke to me about.

But, Madam Chair, all that changed. All that changed in late March, I think the 26th of March, whatever the budget day was. All that changed, and what very quickly became the number one concern of the good folks of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills were the absolutely damaging impacts that this Finance minister's budget is having and will continue to have on our province over a very long period of time. [interjection] It sounds to me like the Finance minister is trying to distance himself from his own budget it's so bad.

The outstanding constituents of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills have really highlighted this as their primary concern. Now, that's not to say that they have abandoned their distaste for the carbon tax, because I know that that continues to be a big concern. That's not to say that they haven't highlighted the major issues of the fact that this government has failed Albertans on pipelines, that they failed Albertans in so many capacities. [interjections] But what I've been hearing . . .

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, I know we've just started the evening, but you're awfully noisy. If you can maybe just bring it down so that I can listen to the hon. member, I'd appreciate it.

Mr. Cooper: The hon. member does have some very interesting things to say, so I appreciate your attention, Chair.

An Hon. Member: That's up for debate.

Mr. Cooper: Yes, and you'll have your opportunity. The amazing thing about the Legislative Assembly is that we all get a chance to represent the folks that sent us here.

As I was saying, Madam Chair, those folks that sent the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills to this fine place have been expressing their major, major concern about the impacts that this budget is going to have over a very long period of time. You might say that they are setting off warning sirens, and I hope that the Finance minister hears their warnings.

I know that the Finance minister hasn't paid much attention to Albertans, and he certainly hasn't paid much attention to the credit-rating agencies since he's taken office. We know that since this minister has had his hand on the public purse, we have seen six credit downgrades since the NDP took office, and now we are quite likely to continue to see that because Alberta's debt is projected to reach \$96 billion.

An Hon. Member: How much?

Mr. Cooper: Ninety-six billion dollars by '23-24. That, of course, has been confirmed by his officials.

You know, Madam Chair, as I was saying, debt and deficit were not the number one concern of the constituents of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, but this Finance minister has taken every opportunity to change their main concern, and that has now become the future of Alberta's finances.

The other thing that I can assure you of is that the people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills know that there is a better solution to Alberta's finances, and that is to have the Leader of the Official Opposition with his hand on the public purse guiding our future, not the Minister of Finance.

The other thing that I might add, Madam Chair, is the significant amount of interest payments that Albertans are going to have to pay because of the reckless spending of the NDP. Now, I anticipate that, like in other times in this place, the government members will stand on their feet and say: "Well, if you wanted this, then you shouldn't have voted against the budget. If you wanted that, then you shouldn't have voted against the budget." Let me be clear. There are things that the government spends money on that are good and important expenditures that we as Albertans need to see the government spending money on. But – but – just because one doesn't support this reckless spending plan, this reckless spending plan that this Finance minister has put before us, it doesn't mean that one believes that every single dollar the government spends is a dollar wasted. Now, let me be very clear. This government, this current NDP government, is wasting money. There is a significant

amount of opportunity for savings to be found within this very bloated budget that this government is proposing.

One of the big challenges that I hear from the good people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills is their concern around the long-term stability of Alberta's finances. If we look, Alberta is spending more than a billion dollars annually on interest payments on debt, and we are only going to see those debt-servicing costs increase in a dramatic, dramatic fashion: '18-19, \$1.9 billion; '23-24, \$3.7 billion. Madam Chair, I know that you know, because you are keenly aware of the spending of the government, that the total debt-servicing between 2018-19 and '23-24, if this NDP Finance minister is left holding the public purse, will be an estimated \$17.6 billion.

7:40

You know what's interesting other than the devastating impacts that that will have on our ability to do other good? It's interesting to hear what economists and others have to say about this particular issue, because they have major concerns. It's not just the opposition that's concerned with the reckless spending of the Finance minister and the cabinet of this government, this NDP government. It is folks at Moody's. It is their good friend Trevor Tombe, the U of C economist. He talked about – and I can quote him from March 24 – how there was a complete divergence between the public statements made by the Premier and the Minister of Finance and what Budget 2018 ultimately revealed, that if the government wanted to provide a plan, they could have, but they chose not to. A complete divergence, Madam Chair.

This government is very, very, very quickly becoming a say one thing, do another government, and they have a long track record now of communicating that to Albertans, and this is another example of just that. When we talk about getting back to balance, with this complete divergence between the public statements that the Premier and this minister made and what they ultimately delivered, when we talk about that plan, Trevor Tombe also said that the government needs \$66.3 billion in '23-24 to balance. Of that, \$10.4 billion they'll need from resource royalty revenues. But how much from income tax, carbon tax, gas tax, federal tax, and user fees? We don't know. We have no idea because of a lack of detail that this minister provides.

We all know, Madam Chair, that we can't trust this government. We can't trust this government because they implemented the single largest tax increase in Alberta's history without mentioning it at all prior to their election. We can't trust this government because we can't get a straight answer on whether or not they will increase the carbon tax, just as their close ally and friend Justin Trudeau has asked them to do. Not even their closest allies believe the things that this minister says, including the comment about a complete divergence from what they have said to what they are doing.

You know, if we look at what some of the other finance agencies have said, DBRS has talked about: "The [credit] downgrade reflects large operating deficits and rapid debt accumulation." Rapid debt accumulation. That is exactly what we see from this government, a significant commitment to debt. That is exactly what the Finance minister is committed to. He's committed to debt. He's committed. In fact, in his own documents it says that he's committed to \$96 billion in debt, debt that will disproportionately have a negative impact on the future of our province, and it is one of the many, many, many reasons why I won't be supporting this spending plan that the government has produced.

If there's one thing that I am confident of, Madam Chair, it is that today I will be voting against this budget. It is because the people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills have sent me with a very clear

message to deliver to this government, and that is that \$96 billion in debt is not a path that they believe is the best path for Alberta's future. They understand that long after this Finance minister is gone, someone is going to have to pay this \$96 billion back. It is not going to be easy, but it is going to be critical to the success of our province that we get our spending under control.

Madam Chair, we have also seen inside this budget that this government takes significant risks on the revenues that will come from the Trans Mountain pipeline. And I want to be very, very, very, very, clear that I, like virtually every single constituent in Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills that I've spoken with, want to see this pipeline built. It is not only important to our province, but it is important to our nation, it is important to the strength of our economy, and there are a litany of reasons why Trans Mountain should be built.

Now, like many constituents in Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, I have some concerns about whether or not that is going to take place. I have some concerns, particularly given that we are less than 30 days away from that announcement, that we have yet to hear from the Prime Minister on this, the close personal ally of the Premier. We have yet to see concrete action. I appreciate the fact that we're debating Bill 12 in the House and that we debated it earlier today. Certainly, some of the recommendations that have been made by the Leader of the Official Opposition, the Member for Calgary-Lougheed, are included in that particular piece of legislation, but I also have concerns given the fact that the Premier has in fact said in her meeting with Premier Horgan that she doesn't expect to have to use this piece of legislation.

But the big challenge here as it applies specifically to the budget is that there is significant uncertainty surrounding the pipeline, but the NDP is counting its revenue into their projections. I mean, a perfect example of the lack of action and the uncertainty is that the Premier won't even call upon Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, her close personal friend and ally, to limit nondiscretionary transfers to the province of British Columbia until we have all of the approvals in place.

So there is major uncertainty. In fact, less than 10 days ago, during the estimates process, the Leader of the Opposition was questioning the Premier at the same time that the president of Kinder Morgan was saying that in light of the developments, the project still may be untenable. Even given those strong comments by the president of Kinder Morgan, we see inaction on behalf of the Premier even calling upon the Prime Minister to act in the best interests of our nation and apply pressure to the province of British Columbia in the form of withholding nondiscretionary transfers. We see delay after delay, and all sorts of people, including the proponent of the project, expressing major concerns, yet we see the Finance minister essentially putting in his budget, that hangs in the balance of that pipeline getting built.

I think I was clear in my remarks that I believe that it is absolutely imperative for it to get built, and I want the project to get built. But putting our province's fiscal future on the Prime Minister, the close personal ally and friend to the Premier; and on the Premier of British Columbia, John Horgan; and on eco radical Andrew Weaver, the leader of the Greens, and hanging it on the balance of those outside influences to potentially get us back to balance in 2023 is reckless and inadvisable. I think it's important that the Finance minister take this opportunity to reconsider some of his decisions. It is absolutely unbelievable to think that the Finance minister would be putting our province at such financial risk based upon the actions . . .

7:50

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Before we continue, just a reminder to both sides of the House. If you could keep the tone down, please.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Budgets are the ultimate document that tells us what the choices that a government is willing to make are. And a budget is about choices. It is about choosing which programs to fund. It's about choosing how to fund those programs. It's about either being realistic about the fiscal situation a province faces, or it is about burying your head in the sand or perhaps crossing your fingers and simply hoping that things turn around. I think we have seen how that has gone for previous governments who've tried that.

Unfortunately, we have a government who is in exactly the same position, who has based a budget this time yet again on hope, on the hope that the price of oil goes up, on the hope that we can get not one but two pipelines built. I sincerely and genuinely do hope that this is going to happen, but it is risky for the province to bank our fiscal future and our fiscal sustainability on that hope, not only hoping that the pipelines get built at all but hoping that they get built in some reasonable time frame.

I think that as we've seen from the incredible opposition to the Kinder Morgan pipeline in B.C., that is far from a sure thing. As we've seen recently, the Enbridge line 3 pipeline has faced some setbacks in terms of its likelihood of moving forward in an expeditious manner. I sincerely do hope that those projects do move ahead and they move ahead quickly, but I have some grave concerns. I wouldn't say that it is responsible for a government to budget on the assumption that those projects are going to go ahead. Their purported plan to balance the budget is really nothing more than fantasy, pure fantasy. When I saw the budget, that was the first word that came to my mind was that this budget is pure fantasy. It is a hope; it is not a plan.

I wish that the government had found even a tiny modicum of savings. One of the most remarkable things to me in talking with stakeholders in the rotunda after the budget speech, on March 22, when the budget was brought down, was the number of stakeholders from either funded agencies or even internal departments within government – and I won't name names or talk about which departments, but I can tell you that it was more than one – that said: "You know, we don't mind receiving an increase this year. I guess we'll take the money. Of course we will." But they were genuinely concerned, Madam Chair – genuinely concerned – about the sustainability of that funding. Was it actually going to be there a year or two down the road? Because the more money that was put in and the higher the debt loads, as those stakeholders realized, the more likely it was that there would be a change of government as a result of the terrible fiscal mismanagement on the part of this government. They were worried that perhaps a far-right-wing government would come in and bring in '90s-style cutbacks. It was a genuine concern, and I share that concern.

The good news is that we in the Alberta Party stand here with a real plan. We brought forward our shadow budget. Our plan would not slash front-line services but would bring in reasonable cost savings, that compassionate belt-tightening that the government signalled so strongly leading into the budget. That was the great surprise that I heard from stakeholders, that: "We were ready. We were prepared to do some minor economizing and belt-tightening, but the government didn't even ask us. They signalled that they were going to do it, and we were ready to do it. We were able to find a way, but we didn't have to, so I guess we didn't."

That really told me that there are many, many areas – and I think we know of many areas – where we could find savings without having a tremendous negative impact on front-line services. In fact,

there may be areas – I suspect there are – where we can ask the tremendous public servants in our province to innovate in how they deliver those services and to have an incentive to do so because they realize they have to do more with those scarce resources.

So what's the impact of this whole plan? The impact, of course, in the absolute best-case scenario is \$96 billion in debt by the time this government's purported plan to balance would actually happen. The fascinating thing, of course, is that – and I hope this comment isn't out of order – that number is nowhere in the budget. That \$96 billion number is nowhere in the budget. We all had to do a little bit of arithmetic and ask the department and cajole, and eventually it came out that, well, it's going to be \$96 billion by the time we actually think we might possibly balance. Remembering that that, quote, unquote, plan to balance is really based on an awful lot of things going right, an awful lot of things going well.

One of those things is the personal income taxes and corporate income taxes going up substantially over the next five years whereas under this government the tax take, notwithstanding the fact that the taxes have been raised by this government, the actual take to the treasury, has gone down every year. It's lower than it was when this government took office because of the cumulative impact of all of the negative policies impacting the investment climate in this province. So to think that those corporate and personal income tax rates are going to go up by 40 per cent or more is fantasy.

So here we are \$96 billion in debt, at the very best. The government has tried to dress that up by looking at not debt to GDP like they've done in past budgets, but they've gone to net debt to GDP, again trying to pull the wool over the eyes of Albertans. I remember cracking open the budget in the embargo, and the first thing I went to look for was the debt to GDP numbers, and I couldn't find them. This budget was different. This budget is net debt to GDP. The table on page 11 is net debt to GDP this year, and last year it was debt to GDP. If I had the budget documents here, I would gladly show the Finance minister exactly what I'm talking about. That was yet another attempt to really hide the true scale of the problem.

It looks like my hon. colleague from Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills is sharing a copy of the budget with me, so as I talk, I can flip the pages, and we can go through it and actually have a look for it. Unfortunately, the one volume I need isn't in this pile. The fiscal plan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, if you could bring that. He tried to be helpful. Not that helpful. I appreciate the effort, though.

Then was it just a week or so ago that the Auditor General released his leaving report? It is a fascinating read. I would hope that every member has had an opportunity to not just read the summary but to read the entire document. One of the things the Auditor General talks about is the scale of the debt problem we're going to have by the year 2021, not even by 2023, when this government purports to possibly, maybe, sort of, hopefully, possibly, maybe balance the budget.

The Auditor General talked about that to pay off the amount of debt that this government will have accumulated by 2021, we would need to have a surplus of \$3 billion a year for 25 straight years, and we would need an additional \$1 billion or \$2 billion over and above that to simply maintain the level of infrastructure that we currently have, not to add more, just to maintain it. So that would be surpluses of \$4 billion to \$5 billion for 25 straight years. That is the scale of the problem that we have in this province, so we have a day of reckoning coming, unfortunately, sooner rather than later.

The only plan I can think of that may be worse than the government's plan would be the UCP's plan, except that we don't really know their plan because they haven't shared a plan with us. They have done a lot of arm waving and made a lot of noise about

it, but we don't know what their plan is. They're unwilling to share that with Albertans. I've said it many times in this House, and I'll say it yet again. The job of those of us in opposition is not just to oppose government, not just to stand up against every single thing the government does. That is half the job. The other half of the job is to propose ideas. The Alberta Party has always been very, very clear about what we would do. We bring our shadow budgets out. We share with Albertans what our ideas are and allow those Albertans to then tell us what they think. That's what I think good governance and good opposition is.

8:00

This government has firmly kept us on the resource revenue roller coaster. Now, they talk about getting us off that. The problem we have in this province is not so much an economic diversification problem. Alberta's economy, if you look at the actual underlying numbers, is one of the more diversified economies in the country. We actually have a relatively well-diversified economy. We certainly do very well on the oil and gas side. We have a lot of tremendous economic activity, a lot of jobs created in the oil and gas sector, and that's a wonderful, wonderful thing. Long may it continue, and long may that growth continue. But our economy in Alberta is relatively diversified. What isn't well diversified are government revenue sources, and this government has done nothing to grow the pie.

Mr. Ceci: PITs and CITs.

Mr. Clark: The minister is asking me about corporate and personal income tax. Although you've raised the rates, Minister, the actual amount of money that's being brought in by PIT and CIT is lower than it was when you came in. It has had a negative effect. [interjections]

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, I know we started in committee, but if we could please respect the speaker and at least keep the tone of the conversations down.

Thank you.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'll conclude by saying that notwithstanding the fact that I will be voting against the appropriation bill, I'm voting against the budget as a whole because I don't think the budget in the aggregate took the right tack.

I will say proudly that in the Alberta Party caucus we did vote in favour of four ministries. The budget for Children's Services: I was very pleased to see that that was increased quite substantially as a result of the work we did on the Ministerial Panel on Child Intervention. The Education budget: interestingly, Madam Chair, the Alberta Party in our shadow budget would actually spend more on K to 12 education than this government has proposed. Having said that, I did vote in favour of the Education budget because I think that if there is anything we ought to be doing, it's investing in education. The same applies, then, to postsecondary, which is why we supported that.

Perhaps the most curious line item of the budget that the Alberta Party supported and that the UCP did not was Justice. The UCP has talked a lot about the rural crime crisis, and it is a crisis in many communities. There has been more money put into the budget. Whether it's enough, that remains to be seen. I can tell you that that is a huge challenge all around the province. But we in the Alberta Party voted in favour of the Justice budget because of the fact that additional investments had been made to try to address rural crime in particular.

Those four ministries we can support and did support, but overall the opportunities to find even a modicum of savings, particularly in health care, which is by far the largest budget – and if we want to tackle the fiscal challenges facing our province, we must find savings in health care. We must find meaningful efficiencies, and we must move towards wellness, with less focus on acute care. At the same time, we need to address waiting lists. We need to address the challenges posed by ensuring that seniors are healthy into later life, also recognizing that as we age, we will use more health care services, and how we can keep people healthier longer in community as best we can. I didn't feel that in this budget there was nearly enough emphasis or focus on that.

I didn't feel that there was nearly enough emphasis or focus on housing. Very interestingly, in estimates we discovered that the vaunted five-year plan to spend \$1.2 billion on affordable housing has turned, magically, into a seven-year plan because the government just simply hasn't been able to organize itself well enough to get those dollars out the door on the housing side. Same thing on the long-term care side. The government has taken a government-first approach as opposed to partnering with the not-for-profit community. That not only costs us more tax dollars in the short term, tax dollars that we don't have – so we have to borrow – but it also takes longer to build. I can tell you that it greatly frustrates the not-for-profit community, which you would think would be a natural ally of this government. Unfortunately, they have really left those groups in the lurch.

In the end, Madam Chair, as much as we did support four areas of this budget, we're unable to support it in the aggregate. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question on Bill 15, the Appropriation Act, 2018?

Hon. Members: Question.

[The clauses of Bill 15 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Feehan: I think it's time for us to rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Mr. Hinkley: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 15.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

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

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Acting Speaker: Opposed, please say no. So ordered.

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

Bill 10

An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements

[Adjourned debate May 1: Mr. Panda]

The Acting Speaker: Are there any members wishing to speak to Bill 10? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak to Bill 10, An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements. This bill creates the property assessed clean energy program, which I will call by its acronym, PACE. Bill 10 will let municipalities approve a bylaw to put a PACE program in place for their communities. Basically, it's a home improvement program. If a homeowner were to take advantage of it, the repayment would be collected through their municipal tax bill.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Madam Speaker, that sounds simple, but it's not. In fact, it can come with all kinds of problems, and I would argue that it is inadvisable and completely unnecessary as well. Thankfully, PACE is not mandatory. Municipalities can choose not to create the enabling bylaw, and there's little compelling reason for them to do so. Bill 10 is vague, and that means municipalities may never know exactly what they are signing up for with PACE. Bill 10 claims that Energy Efficiency Alberta, the agency that brought us the free light bulbs and people who will come to your home and screw them in for you, will administer PACE. But nowhere in Bill 10 is Energy Efficiency Alberta mentioned. Like with almost every other detail, administration will be filled in later in regulations, which occur in the department and are eventually approved by cabinet.

One thing that is clear in Bill 10 is that PACE involves an energy improvement agreement between the municipalities and the property owner, and the municipality collects it through the homeowner's property taxes. What happens if the homeowner can't pay the taxes due to the PACE assessment? Will the municipality be on the hook to cover the tax deficit? And if the municipality isn't ultimately responsible, if, say, a financial lender is, does the municipality have to come up with the funds if the homeowner can't?

8:10

There's always the possibility that the municipality will have to put the home up for a tax sale to recover the money, and there are a whole lot of other costs involved for the municipality in doing that. These questions just aren't answered in the bill. Any time there is a potential cost to a municipality, there's a risk to taxpayers. Thankfully, most municipalities are cautious guardians, and for that reason they're unlikely to subscribe to this newest NDP program.

Let me also point out that there must be a risk to municipalities because Bill 10 exempts municipal borrowing from its debt limit. So somehow the loans must count as municipal debt. Once again, that means a risk to local residents.

Because we know nothing about how this program will work, let's also look at the possibility that it is totally administered through the province, with no risk to the municipality. Should homeowners default, the losses would have to be picked up by the province, which means all Alberta taxpayers. So does it really make any difference where the risk falls? It ultimately falls to taxpayers.

Furthermore, PACE is unnecessary because homeowners have many options for borrowing to make their home energy efficient. Just like any home improvement program, they can do it through

their mortgage or get a line of credit or a loan through their banking institution. In other words, we do not need PACE.

Its only purpose might be to assist homeowners who cannot get a line of credit, a loan, or extend their mortgage through their bank. In that case, the homeowner may not be in a financial position to be requesting it. If the financial institutions won't lend them money because they haven't got the means to pay it, it doesn't give them the means to pay it on the taxes. Then they'll default, and the municipality will be, again, on the hook for all the extra costs that go with that. If they can afford to pay it on their taxes, they can afford to pay it on their mortgage, in fact even more so because PACE is only over 10 years whereas with a mortgage you could spread it over 20 years, so it would actually be a smaller payment. So if they can't afford it on their mortgage, they can't afford it on their taxes, for sure. Once again, that points to the likelihood of not being able to pay it back and leaving the taxpayer on the hook.

Mr. Speaker, this NDP government does not seem to respect the intelligence of Albertans to know what's best for them. Albertans know that energy efficiency in their home is beneficial both financially because it lowers their costs and because it's the right thing to do for our environment. They have lots of options for making it happen. Let's just respect them and let them make their own choices.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there any members under 29(2)(a)? The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Holy moly. I respect the individual across the way immensely. Where do I start? There is a lot to unpack in that. I'll try to be fairly straightforward.

First off, I respect the opinions and the intelligence of the ratepayers and the people of Alberta, especially since they asked me for this. Municipalities across the province have asked me for this. Builders, developers, contractors – you name it, Mr. Speaker – have asked me for this consistently.

You can look to see different jurisdictions across North America where this has happened. Ontario has it – we're going in a little bit different way than they have – and the same with Nova Scotia. Down in the United States 33 states have it; that's Democratic and Republican states. They have brought in I believe the figure is over \$6 billion in economic development down there.

When we're talking about PACE, we're talking about the opportunity for everybody to be involved in energy efficiency. The member talked about not having the ability. Great point. Great point. You know, some people talk about solar and how it's expensive. Well, guess what? It's gone down a lot because China has put hundreds of billions of dollars into it and brought it down, which is beneficial to us. That being said, it's still pretty expensive, and the upfront costs are usually the problem with these types of programs. It's really hard to get involved. With PACE, not only are you able to get involved with solar but energy-efficient windows, insulation, water conservation. There's a multitude of things that you can do with this. It's spread out over a long period of time, and it stays with the property, which actually ups the resale value.

Speaking of resale value, recently I've been talking to a lot of realtors who are quite excited about this. Honestly, Mr. Speaker, they know that building in the future, in 2030, I think – I might have the year wrong – is going to be net zero. Realtors are excited about it, builders are excited about it and contractors because it gives them an opportunity to get a leg up on other provinces.

The Speaker: Hon. minister, you're going to direct your question to . . .

Mr. S. Anderson: Through you, Mr. Speaker, to the member. I'm trying to enlighten him on some of the things. Like I said, I respect the member immensely. He's a fantastic individual, but I think he's been given some information that's not quite correct, to be honest with you.

The other thing about this is that he talked about choice. There was a comment about choice. What this is about is individual choice of the property owner. Pretty simple. It's not the government mandating; it's the government enabling municipalities to bring forward a bylaw that will let them do this. I mean, it is pretty simple, to be honest.

That being said, there are some things that we have to work out. This legislation is the framework. Do we have a decent amount of the information worked out? Sure, because there are a lot of people around the world that have been working on this type of legislation, so we have great examples. But as Municipal Affairs always does – and we've been told that we have the gold standard of consultation, which I'll take every day of the week and I continue to push my staff to do – we are going to consult with builders, homeowners, realtors, everybody who this touches, contractors. You name it, and we're probably going to be talking to them. All those finer details on what I've said initially are going to be worked out through the coming months so this legislation can be brought back in the fall to do it right the first time, as my dad always said.

If there are some other questions or some other things that the opposition members would like to know, great. Ask the questions. But I would appreciate it if they didn't disparage what the program is – it's a great program – on lack of information. This is a nonpartisan conversation, Mr. Speaker. It really is. This is something that's going to benefit all Albertans. It doesn't matter if you're in an urban area or a rural area. Farmers, builders, property owners of all sorts are going to benefit from this.

I would gladly like to hear their questions, and I would really appreciate standing up and giving them some answers when I can. If I don't have the answer, as I've always said to people, I will find it for you. I have no issues with that.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. member, any additional comments?

Mr. Drysdale: I think there was a question there. I'll try and respond. I have respect for this minister, too, but we're still in . . .

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really appreciate the look of delight that comes across your face when I stand up to speak in this House.

The Speaker: You should see it in daylight.

Mr. Schmidt: Yeah. The sense of calm and peace and relief that comes over your face just brings me joy.

It's my pleasure to rise to speak in favour of Bill 10, An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements. First of all, I want to thank the Minister of Municipal Affairs for bringing forward this piece of legislation and for passionately defending it. I know that he got a little excited in his response to the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti's speech, which is unusual for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. He's not normally a very excitable person, Mr. Speaker.

But on this issue he has been passionate. In fact, I remember the first time that I ever sat down and had a one-to-one conversation with the Member for Leduc-Beaumont, the current Minister of Municipal Affairs. He and I talked about what was important to him. What did he want to achieve in his time in office? The first

thing that came to him and that we talked about was energy efficiency and clean energy development. This is something that the Minister of Municipal Affairs has worked on from day one. I am so proud of him that this bill is before this Legislature and that he's going to make a significant impact on the development of clean energy and energy efficiency measures in this province. He will leave behind a strong legacy of renewable energy and energy efficiency in this province. He should be proud of the work that he's done. His children should be proud of the work that he's done. It will have a significant positive impact on the people of this province, so I'm grateful that he's done such good work on this issue.

8:20

I'm also grateful because I represent the constituency of Edmonton-Gold Bar, which is the most humble constituency in the entire province of Alberta, Mr. Speaker. One of the things about the neighbourhoods that I am privileged to represent is that these are urban neighbourhoods that were constructed between the end of World War II and the middle of the 1960s. Certainly, the baby boom generation and their parents were the ones who built and lived in these neighbourhoods originally. What that means is that we have thousands of single residential dwellings that were built between 1945 and 1965 that aren't exactly up to the standards of energy efficiency that we would expect from a new house these days. There are thousands of individual bungalows that have poor insulation, maybe some leaky, drafty basements, leaky, drafty windows, not much insulation in the roof.

Certainly, Mr. Speaker, the first house that I bought in the neighbourhood and currently, to be honest, the house that I still live in is not particularly energy efficient. My family and I undertook to improve the energy efficiency of the house that we lived in. It was built in 1952, a small bungalow, a humble bungalow that didn't have much insulation in the walls, didn't have much insulation in the roof, and certainly had no insulation in the basement. It was uncomfortable to live there in the wintertime. It was draftier than the wind from the opposition side of this room and often got very cold. We undertook to improve the energy efficiency and the capacity to heat the house in the wintertime, so we upgraded the insulation in the walls, we upgraded the insulation in the roof, and we installed insulation in the basement. What a difference that made to not only my energy bills – my cost for heating and electricity went way down as a result – but the house was much more comfortable to live in as a result, especially in the wintertime.

But, Mr. Speaker, that undertaking came at considerable financial expense to my family and me. It was thousands of dollars to hire an energy efficiency expert to come in and do the assessment.

You know, just for the edification of the members of the House, we actually applied for grants from the federal government to upgrade energy efficiency measures in our house before the Member for Calgary-Lougheed and his wrecking crew had the opportunity to actually remove those grants. It's no surprise to me that the members opposite are opposed to this legislation. They have a storied history of defeating energy efficiency measures at the federal level and certainly not taking any action on it at the provincial level, so it's no surprise to me that they're doing so in this case.

But back to my story. We applied for some federal grants and city grants that allowed us to lower the cost of the energy efficiency upgrades that we undertook in our house, but it was still quite expensive. In fact, before we left that house, I'm not certain, Mr. Speaker, that we even earned back the investment that we made through savings on heat and electricity bills.

That's why it's so critical to have this kind of program, this PACE program, Mr. Speaker, because people can undertake the energy efficiency improvements that they want to take, but they don't have to pay the bill if they leave the house. That is one of the critical barriers that a lot of people in my neighbourhood face when they're considering making this kind of investment, because the payoff period for these energy efficiency investments is quite long, 20, 25 years, and in our modern, mobile age people don't tend to live in houses for that long. This way, people can choose to invest in these energy efficiency measures, and the bill is paid for as long as the people live in the house regardless of who the owner is. The benefits of those energy efficiency measures will stay with the owner of the house and will be paid for by the owner of the house.

Mr. Speaker, like I said, there are thousands and thousands of houses in my constituency, families who live in those houses in my constituency, who will stand to benefit from the implementation of this legislation because they're sitting on the fence right now. They're not sure if they can afford to make energy efficiency investments. You know, we all know that our government has made significant advances in making energy efficiency and clean energy more affordable for people of Alberta, but still it's tough for a lot of families in my neighbourhood to make all of that upfront investment to reduce their energy bills and to increase the energy efficiency of their homes.

This piece was the final missing piece – right? – to bring it all together. We can have a municipal loan program that will make it finally affordable and reduce the upfront cost, spread that out over the 20 or 25 years or however long the PACE loans are going to last so that families can go ahead and make these energy efficiency, renewable energy investments today, benefit from lower energy bills, lower heating bills, lower electricity bills today, and contribute to the development of renewable energy in our province today. The citizens of my riding have been talking to me, demanding this kind of legislation ever since the day I was elected, Mr. Speaker, and I'm proud that we're finally delivering on that promise because this is going to make life for the citizens of Edmonton-Gold Bar significantly better. I'm looking forward to seeing the number of energy efficiency upgrades and clean energy projects that will go up on residential properties as a result of this legislation.

You know, it will be interesting to just remind people of Edmonton-Gold Bar that all of this is at stake if the members opposite have the chance to form government at some point in the future. They've gotten up; they've spoken against this, right? I have no doubt that they are dedicated to repealing this as well as every other energy efficiency measure and every other clean energy measure that this government has undertaken for no reason other than they just don't think that it's the right thing to do. Like I said, they have a history of tearing down those programs when they made the federal government, when they comprised the federal government. They took no action on this issue when they were the provincial government, Mr. Speaker, and I'm sure that they would be more than happy to take the wrecking ball to all of these programs if given the chance.

The citizens of Edmonton-Gold Bar won't stand for it. They stand to benefit significantly from these kinds of programs that our government is undertaking. That's why they sent me here to do this job. That's one of the reasons that they sent me here to do this job, and I'm proud to say that we've done a really good job in representing their interests.

Mr. Speaker, I'm giving the whip the cold sweats, so I will take my seat, but I'm just proud to say that on behalf of the citizens of Edmonton-Gold Bar I will be voting in favour of this legislation.

The Speaker: Are there any questions for the hon. member under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to give the Minister of Advanced Education a chance to just maybe clarify a few points. One thing: the minister said that in his own situation or in his own personal anecdote his solar panels or whatever it is that you've installed don't pay back for 25 years. As I understand it, this program is a 10-year-long program. Then you were saying as well – well, you can clarify it when it's your turn. Just to be clear, you won't see anything back or it doesn't pay back, if I'm quoting correctly – sorry; you can correct me – for 25 years because it won't reduce the bills in that amount of time. I'm not sure. There were a couple of contradictions.

Then at the same time, you're saying that the program that you're putting in, Mr. Speaker, is actually going to reduce people's bills but not in your particular situation for at least 25 years. It's a slight contradiction. I mean, if the Minister of Advanced Education was selling this to me, I would be very concerned because when he's speaking about it – again, they'll get their chance to correct me. If it's over a longer period of time, I apologize, but I just wanted to make sure.

8:30

On one hand, the minister is saying that the folks of his constituency will benefit from lower energy bills but not for 25 years. That's exactly what I heard. Then you said that the money won't come back to you. At one time you're saying that it's sufficient, that you're going to save money on that but that you won't see the payback for that for 25 years. As I said, if it was a sales pitch, I'd be really, really concerned.

So I'm going to give you an opportunity here. Please, Minister, if you could clarify exactly what you meant by that. There are several contradictions in what you just said.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the opportunity to clarify. In my own personal situation, we invested thousands of dollars to upgrade the insulation in my home, and then we moved away two or three years later. We absolutely saw a reduction in our heating and electricity bills the day after those insulation upgrades were completed. Every Albertan who makes those energy efficiency upgrades will see reductions in their heating and electricity bills immediately. The problem is, though, that in some cases you don't recoup those upfront costs for a number of years, and it will vary, depending on the cost of the energy efficiency upgrade that you've undertaken and the amount of reduction that you see in your bills.

For the member opposite to say that I didn't see any reduction in my heating bills and that you won't see anything paid off until after 20 or 25 years is completely wrong, Mr. Speaker, so I'm very glad that she gave me the opportunity to clarify this. I'm grateful that she's asking questions and genuinely seeking to understand my statements and what this bill is concerning. You know, I think that through asking these kinds of questions and offering people the opportunity to respond and clarify, we can have a better understanding of what we're discussing.

My hope, my dream, my true aspiration is that now that she understands exactly what it is that we're talking about with the legislation, she'll actually vote for it, Mr. Speaker. You know, we live in hope, I suppose, that the opposition is listening to the things that we're saying and reconsidering their positions based on the facts. I haven't seen it yet in the three years that we've been here, but anything can happen, I suppose.

So I hope that my statements were helpful to the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and I are here to help. We're glad to clarify any questions that she or any other members across the way might have on this issue.

When you look at it closely, when you look at the energy efficiency investments and the financing options that we're providing through this legislation, it is quite clear that it provides an immediate benefit in reducing energy bills in households and that it provides an immediate benefit in lowering the financial barriers that Albertans face.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Are there any other members? The Member for Calgary-East.

Ms Luff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm hopeful that I can clarify some of the points that were made earlier in the day and also just now. I'm excited about this piece of legislation because this is a bill that is going to help diversify our economy. It'll increase energy efficiency, decrease greenhouse gas emissions, create jobs, and it's a very low-cost program. It costs the government very little and costs the taxpayer very little.

As has been mentioned previously, this is not a new idea. This is a program that's available in 20 states currently. Thirty-three states have enabling legislation, and 20 states have actual programs that are functioning. It's available in two other Canadian jurisdictions. I am somewhat disheartened to hear that the opposition is opposing this at this time because this is a bill that does a lot of things that they purport to be in favour of. It attracts private capital to the province, it creates jobs, and it upholds municipal autonomy. In the 20 states that currently have this program – and this was mentioned previously – it's generated over \$5 billion in investment and created over 50,000 jobs in the previous eight years that it's been in place.

I've heard some concerns that maybe this is something that Albertans aren't interested in, that it's not something that they've asked for, but in the conversations that I've had over the last, you know, couple of weeks since we've introduced this legislation, this is absolutely something that Albertans want. Everybody that I've talked to has said: of course, this is fabulous; this is a complete no-brainer. We're not forcing anybody to get new windows or solar panels. We're just proposing enabling legislation. It's legislation that gives municipalities the ability to pass a bylaw that will allow people and businesses to obtain a low-interest loan so that they can upgrade their homes and buildings in a way that increases energy efficiency and lowers carbon emissions, and then people can pay off that loan over a number of years on their property taxes, as has been mentioned previously.

The cost to install new windows or insulation or solar panels can be prohibitive for many homeowners, and this has been something, again, that was mentioned previously. A program like this encourages investment because of the number of people who can participate. When you have a large number of people who can participate and a large number of people who are willing to take up this kind of a program, what you can do is that you can increase investment because you have a lot of security for the loan. Private companies are interested in investing in this sort of thing because you're pooling your money across a large pool of investors. Because of this large pool of people who are interested, that can lead to a lower interest rate. Loans that have lower interest rates – these are loans that people will be able to obtain for lower interest rates, that should be lower than what any individual could secure on their own through their financial institution.

It's also important to note that these are loans that are available for a wide variety of upgrades. It was noted yesterday by the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner that a program already exists

through Enmax that helps people install solar panels. Now, this is something that's true. It's something that I have actually looked into for my personal house, and when I looked at the program through Enmax, it didn't really make a lot of sense. He asked about what the difference was between PACE and this already existing program and whether or not a new program was required. The main difference, as far as I can see it, is that PACE is available for many upgrades, not just solar panels. It's available, like has been spoken about, to upgrade your insulation, upgrade your windows, upgrade your water heater, anything that's going to help make your house greener and more energy efficient, whereas the Enmax program is only available for solar panels.

The other difference, according to my understanding from when I did my research into the Enmax program, is that the options are that you can purchase the panels up front, or you can lease them and then purchase them at the end of the lease, and the lease may be over a number of years. So that's not really quite the same type of program as PACE.

In answer to his question yesterday, I would submit that PACE has a larger scope, so it's available for more types of upgrades. Also, it's more flexible for customers. It's not the same type of loan program and, as such, is not a replication.

Then in terms of this program being needed, I think it's important to note that right now the number one growth career in the United States, according to the Department of Labor, the job that's going to grow the most over the next 10 years, that's most in demand right now, is the job of a solar panel technician. That's the number one job in the United States right now, followed very closely by wind technicians and then a whole bunch of health care professions. We're in a time when people are looking for good jobs. I've heard folks in the opposition bemoan the fact that the number one group of folks right now that is having a difficult time accessing jobs is young men, particularly young men who don't have a ton of education. This is the kind of thing where you can do a program at SAIT. You can get a good-paying job that will last you for any number of years.

This is something that many organizations recognize and something that they're excited about. The Building Industry and Land Development Association said, "BILD Alberta is pleased to support the PACE program and the opportunity for Albertans to access energy efficiency upgrades with less financial burden." The Alberta Construction Association "feels strongly that PACE... [offers] a financially viable way to retrofit older buildings... [and] offers a method for investment which does not create costs to the taxpayer." SAIT said that they look forward to supporting PACE by creating "career-ready graduates immediately able to meet industry [needs] in the green and clean-tech sector." And both of the province's major cities support this legislation.

Another concern that comes up when discussing PACE programs is the resale value of houses that choose a PACE loan. This is something that I've heard previously in debate on this bill. One of the features of PACE is that it enables the attraction of low-interest investment, and the reason that it attracts that low-interest investment is because PACE is attached to the home and not the individual owner. As such, when it's attached to a building, it has less risk. That's one of the things that enables this program to attract low-interest investment. So it's quite fair to ask the question of whether choosing this type of loan will increase or decrease the value of your home and whether it will make your home easier or harder to sell. That's an absolutely fair question to ask.

8:40

PACE programs have existed in the U.S. for about 10 years now, and there has been some research done on this issue. Overall, the

general consensus is that PACE loans increase the value of your home. According to one study it said that PACE homes have a higher sale price than would be expected using regular home price projections. For comparable houses in the same market a PACE home would actually fetch a higher resale value than a home that didn't have a PACE loan attached to it because people recognize that there's a value in having these energy efficiency upgrades made to your home.

The same study also cited that "homes with PACE loans fully kept up with... price appreciation in the area, after taking account of... financing cost and improvements, regardless of the price index used." This study took into account what the cost of the loan was and then looked at the cost of appreciation of homes in the area, and once they factored in the cost of what someone spent on a loan, the house after a certain number of years actually fetched a higher purchase price than it would have if it didn't have a PACE loan attached. So that's an attempt to address that question.

A third question that I've heard asked is whether the savings generated by the upgrades will be worth the costs, and this speaks a little bit to what the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View was addressing moments ago. It's true that large chunks of our power bills are somewhat fixed. There's not much that you can do about distribution costs. The distribution costs on your power bill: a portion of those are variable costs, but a portion of those are fixed, and as long as you're attached to the grid, you're probably going to pay a pretty similar distribution cost. However, many of the other costs that are part of your power bill are actually directly related to your consumption.

I was speaking with a gentleman just over the dinner break, actually, who had recently put solar panels on his house, and one of the things that he noticed when he put the solar panels on was that not only did the energy consumption portion of his bill decrease, but other portions of his bill decreased as well. That's because transmission costs, although a lot of people associate it with being fixed costs, are actually one hundred per cent based on your consumption. So if you halve your amount of consumption, you also halve your transmission costs.

Currently in Alberta your transmission costs are, I think, around \$27 a megawatt hour. The average house in Alberta uses about 600 kilowatt hours of energy. So if you halve your energy costs, you halve your transmission costs. Right now just on transmission costs alone – I'm not talking about energy consumption, not talking about carbon levy, not talking about distribution costs, just your transmission costs – that would save you about \$15 dollars a month, and that's just one of three components in your energy bill that are based on usage.

I mean, I think it's absolutely reasonable for anybody looking into this type of loan to consider how much the upgrades will save them. For transmission costs, if that's about \$15 a month, that's \$180 a year. And that's just one portion. You know, your consumption costs might go down, other costs might go down, your house is more comfortable, a variety of things.

You know, I've heard people speak about: are we allowing Albertans the choice? We're absolutely allowing Albertans the choice. I trust Albertans to do their research before they take out this type of a loan and look at: "Is this loan going to save me money? Is this loan going to make my house more efficient? Is it going to make my house more comfortable? Am I doing this because I'm interested in saving carbon emissions? Am I doing this because I'm interested in saving money?" Like, these are all things that I trust Albertans to look at when they're looking at this type of loan and to make educated choices moving forward. It's relatively easy to judge what the upgrades are going to reduce in your consumption and therefore what your bill is going to be reduced by.

I mean, to summarize, I think that this bill is exciting. It's forward looking, it's innovative, it's low cost, and it fills a gap that currently exists by removing the largest barrier to the uptake of energy efficiency upgrades. Home solar: the large upfront costs are why people don't do it, because it costs a lot of money. We're not forcing anyone to make this choice. We're just enabling them to choose to take out a low-interest loan that'll be attached to their home, not to themselves personally, and will allow them to make energy efficiency upgrades.

In the process it will create jobs, it will lower carbon emissions, it will bring diversification to the province, and it doesn't really cost anything. I don't understand why anyone would oppose this. It's very confusing to me why anyone would oppose this.

I look forward to speaking to this in more detail going forward in third reading, and I encourage everyone to support this in second reading. Thank you.

The Speaker: Under 29(2)(a), the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was interested in the comments by the Member for Calgary-East. I just have a few questions, if she can give us some clarity on this. First of all, she said that it is very little cost to taxpayers. I guess the question I have is: has there been a study done on what the cost is going to be? Obviously, she mentioned that there were other states down in the United States, and Ontario is doing this right now. If she could provide this side of the House with that information so we can know the cost of implementation, I think that would be very helpful.

I was trying to follow the math. I apologize. I got the \$15 part, the third part of it, but I didn't get the first two parts. When I was looking at this, I was thinking. You know, I actually have been very interested in green energy for my own house, and I have looked at especially the solar panels as an option, Mr. Speaker. The first thing I looked at was: what is the return on investment? The cost that it will be for the capital outlay: how long will it take to actually have that paid back? When I looked at it, I thought: okay; well, there is a portion of my electricity bill that's the retail part, and then you've got distribution, and transmission is the other part. The distribution and transmission I found were about 50 per cent of the cost of my electricity bill. But on the retail side there was also a fixed cost to that because I'm on a floating rate. But that floating rate part was what I could actually use as savings. I would use that floating rate, and then that would be applied to the cost of whatever that capital cost outlay would be.

I worked it out – I was very, very liberal with this – and it was about \$100 a month. So if we work it out at \$100 a month, it would work out to, obviously, \$1,200 a year, and it would take me 25 years to be able to see the realization of the capital cost that I'd be outlaying. I was thinking, you know, that Enmax does do that. I don't know if they actually amortize it over the 25 years. It might be 10 years. I talked to a couple of people who've done it, but I can't remember if it was 10 years or 25 years.

When the Member for Calgary-East talks about immediate savings, you might see less in terms of your electricity bill, but you also have to take into consideration the capital cost that you're paying back, whether it's through the banks, through a HELOC, through Enmax, or, in this case, through property taxes. The question that's always been in my mind is: is there actually a cost saving when you take into consideration that capital outlay that you still have to pay back? That's the second question, Mr. Speaker.

You know what? I have a couple of other questions. I can see you're getting antsy and making sure that I get those questions

asked. So I will ask those two questions and hope that the member can give me some clarity on those.

The Speaker: Great. Thank you.

The hon. member.

Ms Luff: Yeah. For sure. I'm so happy to attempt to answer some of those questions. I mean, in regard to the first I did say that the cost to the province would be low. My understanding at this time is that Energy Efficiency Alberta, which would be the administrator of the program, feels that they don't need any additional staff to administer this program, so at the current juncture it would be no cost. But, I mean, that remains to be seen going forward.

It's a good question. Again, our model isn't the same as Ontario's model. These are things that we'd have to look at going forward. But, overall, it's going to cost maybe, tops, a couple of full-time equivalent folks who can administer the program.

Then in terms of energy savings, like I said, I trust Albertans to look at, like you did, what those savings are going to be. The uptake of the program depends not only on cost savings. Most Albertans are, you know, financially minded and want to make sure that their investments count, so I would trust that most of them would look at it. The gentleman, again, who I spoke with tonight cited that his transmission cost went down. His electricity cost went down. He said that he generated about a kilowatt hour a day. That's with his solar panels, right? But it's not just solar panels. It's other things.

8:50

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Actually, I have "Madam Speaker" written here because I was going to speak this morning, but you look like a Mr. Speaker to me.

It is always a pleasure to rise in this Chamber and speak to legislation that affects all Albertans. It is the reason that we were elected, to bring the voices of those that we represent into this Chamber to be heard. Today we speak to Bill 10, An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements. Now, Bill 10 was introduced to let municipalities establish a program that would help private property owners make energy efficiency upgrades. This bill allows or enables municipalities to pass a bylaw, a bylaw which creates the property assessed clean energy program, or the acronym is PACE. Now, the intent of the bill is to provide a mechanism for property owners to finance affordable energy efficiency, renewable energy, and water conservation projects or upgrades to their property. The idea is that the municipality would front the cost of the upgrade, and the property owner would pay for said upgrade over time through their municipal tax bill, annually.

This property assessed clean energy program at the end of the day is a financing tool, a financing tool which building owners and developers can use to upgrade their buildings' energy performance, a financing tool which will allow those same entities to also install renewable energy systems, and a tool to be used to reduce consumption, all with no money down to the entities involved. The financing of those items that I just mentioned, being upgrades to their buildings, energy performance, and installing renewable energy systems as a tool to reduce consumption, is borne by the municipality.

You know, I think that there are likely a lot of people that reside in this province that would love to have major upgrades to their homes and not have to front any of the initial money to do it. Those of us that own homes are always looking at our properties and looking at projects that we believe need to be done around the property, and people are, I believe, generally interested in trying to

have their home more energy efficient, to the point where they may actually save money on their energy bill by pursuing green energy initiatives. But it usually comes down to being able to afford renovations like this.

I guess the question, then, becomes: is it really government's responsibility to encourage homeowners to invest in certain capital projects or to regulate the market to allow these renovations to take place? Is it really the government's job to do its best to direct a citizen to buy such green energy projects? I just wonder. I wonder if it's more the government's job to try to make circumstances in Alberta such that individual citizens can have an opportunity to prosper in their own right.

What the government information that I could find actually refers to is that it is somewhat widely believed that there may be barriers preventing a property owner from doing upgrades such as those I've just mentioned. It seems that the government believes – and it's probably true – that the biggest barrier to any of this that may stand in the way of a property owner actually going ahead with these projects is money, the initial investment, of course, cash on the barrelhead.

I guess, Mr. Speaker, that assumption may very well be true. I'm sure that it could be said that there is a portion of the population of the province that could indeed find it tough to come up with the wherewithal to pay tens of thousands of dollars to mount solar panels from one edge of their roof to the other, to have a company come into their yard and begin digging to install the mechanisms required to convert to a geothermal system of heating, to begin the process of replacing all the windows in one's home with windows that are more energy efficient, and, of course, potentially beginning the process of adding more insulation or adding insulation to certain areas of a building so as to keep the weather out and the climate in, so to speak.

I'm just going to stop there for a moment. Last night, as I was preparing this speech, I reached out to a chief administrative officer of a municipality. Now, I asked this person if there had been any opportunity for that person to hear of Bill 10 and how it is supposed to work and what it is meant to do. This person told me that this initiative had indeed been seen in a newspaper. The concern from the person was the fact that the government is saying that they will pass the bill and then consult with municipalities about putting forward a regulation with respect to the act.

I guess, you know, here we go again, Mr. Speaker. The government will pass the bill and then consult with municipalities about putting forward a regulation with regard to the act. And the chuckling starts. I don't know how many times I or my colleagues on this side of the House have actually stood in this Chamber and had to reiterate those same words. The government is going to pass a bill, then seek to consult with those that it affects. Folks, I don't know how many times, how many more times, we will have to say to this government before they catch on: but you get this backwards every time.

The generally accepted way of consulting with a municipality or anyone who is going to be affected by a proposed piece of legislation is to do the consulting first so that you actually can get a feel for what in this case is the municipalities and what they're thinking. You actually get a better feel for what could be considered your partners in this piece of legislation. But, instead, as has happened many times before, it appears that the government has done their due diligence backwards.

Anyway, this chief administrative officer that I was speaking with last night, that I took the time to consult with: this person talked about the time and energy needed to pass a bylaw in a municipality so that Bill 10 could actually even be used in a said municipality. Now, I've had the privilege to be involved with the

passing of bylaws in a municipality. It is very technical work for staff, and it can be somewhat time intense to draft a meaningful bylaw.

It's one thing to send staff into a room and gather data and spend a bunch of time preparing a potential bylaw, which is costly by itself, but then to have legal counsel review the infinite minute details, which must be as close to flawless as is achievable in order to have an infallible bylaw, all of those actions add infinitely more cost to the project. This all must be completed before a bylaw is ready to be presented to the public, which starts another, different set of actions to begin to complete the bylaw process.

Consider a municipal tax roll and the traditional assessment that has been in place for such a long time, which, in turn, creates that tax roll. Consider the major changes proposed here to that existing system. Simply writing a bylaw is not the extent of what is to be considered for a municipality when it comes to Bill 10.

The last comment that the chief administrative officer made was how disappointing it was that the government actually thought that municipalities have the staff in place that it takes to be the bankers and administrators of this kind of thing, another download of expense to the municipalities, that are actually, if things were running right in this province, supposed to be partners of government.

But, Madam Speaker – Mr. Speaker – I do tend to digress. I apologize, sir. I just wanted it to be perfectly clear to all in this Chamber this evening that I did my best to consult with an entity which will actually be affected by Bill 10 should it indeed pass through this House. [interjections]

I will get back to the workings of this Bill, which I'm sure the gentleman that's making all the comments on the other side of the House knows all about. This thing that tends to concern many of us on this side of the House is that a lot of details of how this whole thing is supposed to work are being left out of the bill, left out of the bill that is presented to us in this House so that we can debate it, which, of course, means that the details will be left to regulation. Now, we all know – probably most Albertans don't – that regulation isn't debated here in this House. It's debated around the Executive Council table, which, at the end of the day, asks all opposition MLAs here to trust government: just trust us, and we'll get this right.

9:00

Something else that gives some apprehension to those of us in the Official Opposition is the question about the property that this PACE program is involved with and the owner that decides to sell that property. What responsibilities will be placed on the owners of property that have a PACE program if they decide to sell? Will it be the obligation of the owner of the property with the PACE program attached to clearly indicate that there is this extra tax that's committed to the property? Will this be the responsibility of the seller? I mean, none of that's clear.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Mr. Schneider: Yes, it will be. I'm just told that it will.

And what about the potential of selling a property with the PACE program attached, being that the program hasn't been around in the past? I understand that it's in 30-some states in the United States and in Ontario.

An Hon. Member: Nova Scotia.

Mr. Schneider: Nova Scotia. Okay.

An Hon. Member: Both of them.

Mr. Schneider: And what about the potential buyer of a property that's involved with the PACE program? Of course, I assume that it will be a buyer's obligation to completely understand exactly what he's buying, as is traditional, and the potential additional tax for how long the additional tax will be added, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

But, folks, all of this stuff is left to regulation. Nothing in this Bill 10 document spends any time explaining to those of us that are charged with debating the bill that there is some kind of insurance of transparency when selling a property with a PACE property tax attached.

You know, if we consider that this PACE program is very new, not common in this province, for sure – and now it sounds like we may have two other provinces, so it's not terribly common in Canada, for that matter. It seems to me that it is highly unlikely that Albertans will know that such a beast even exists for some time to come. I wonder how many complications and lawsuits and issues that will cause folks that are buying and selling properties with a PACE program attached to them.

You know, there is another point here that needs to be mentioned. The government has stated that they intend for Energy Efficiency Alberta to be the administrator of this property assessed clean energy program, not the municipality. However, Energy Efficiency Alberta is not once mentioned in the legislation before us. As I mentioned, all administrative provisions for the program are being left to regulations, so once again we don't get a chance to debate or have input on provisions such as this. Also, there's nothing in Bill 10 that prevents a municipality from deciding to administer the program themselves. So I guess a question is: will this be a possibility? I wonder: will a municipality be able to hire someone to administer the program and potentially make a buck doing it? We don't know if that's a possibility or not because it isn't in the legislation. Some municipalities might like an idea like that.

I guess I've spent a lot of time here in the last 10 or 15 minutes talking about what I would consider the cons of Bill 10, and it's the job of the Official Opposition to hold the government to account and, certainly, to debate legislation. The NDP have been opposition members for most of their tenure in Alberta, so I believe they understand what the job of our Official Opposition entails.

But I would be remiss if I didn't take a few minutes to mention what I would call some of the pros of Bill 10. Now, I do like the idea that this program is completely voluntary for municipalities. They're not required to create a program, and Bill 10 does not force any municipality that doesn't wish to participate. It's beginning to look like the bill is supported by stakeholders, including BILD Alberta and the Alberta Construction Association. I think that the PACE program looks very similar in structure to a local improvement tax, which is already being utilized by many municipalities to improve roads in front of residences, et cetera. They're used for things like that in a lot of places in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, I've spent 15 minutes or so talking about this Bill 10.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod. Under 29(2)(a)?

Mr. Stier: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A pleasure to be here tonight. Good evening, all. Just a couple of comments and a question or two for the previous speaker, my colleague from Little Bow. It's interesting, some of the information we're getting here tonight regarding this bill. There seems to be a little bit of mixed information, especially on the part of the minister earlier as well, I noted, that might need some clarification. Perhaps you can shed a little light on it because you alluded to this in your talking points,

hon. colleague, and that is that there were earlier comments from the minister regarding how municipalities wanted this new program, that they were asking for this new program and they thought it was great. Yet it's kind of strange to me because the technical briefing I attended included a slide, which I believe you have on your desk right now, that indicates that that was not the case. We were at that technical briefing and took the notes. The Rural Municipalities association, as a matter of fact, said that they were not interested in administering this program and that they were not interested in being involved in the lending. I wonder if you could expand on that a little bit.

Secondly, I just was interested if you had heard at the last meeting of the Rural Municipalities association that there was a resolution regarding this and that a resolution to go forward with this idea failed. Perhaps you can expand on some of that, Colleague.

Thank you.

Mr. Schneider: Well, Mr. Speaker, I do have the slide in front of me. This is part of the presentation that was put forward by the Alberta government. All opposition members that wanted to be in attendance could be there. Indeed, the Member for Livingstone-Macleod talked about the Rural Municipalities association and the resolution that they had passed. It might have been today. It didn't pass, yeah. The resolution, of course, was whether or not they would support this PACE program for rural municipalities, and it did not pass. The membership determined that they didn't believe it was something their municipalities would be happy about.

What we did find out from the Rural Municipalities association just today was that municipalities are not interested in a lending role, you know, basically financing these upgrades. That's just something that they didn't want anything to do with. Even the mid-city municipalities, Mr. Speaker, are not interested in administering the program and incurring the administrative costs.

We talk about the municipalities. I'd kind of alluded to the fact that municipalities, in my opinion – because now I've spent time in both a municipal leadership role and as a provincial MLA. It always seemed to me that the municipalities should be almost considered partners with the province of Alberta. I know that municipalities feel sometimes that this is not the case. Yeah, as far as rural municipalities are concerned, it doesn't appear that they're too interested in the program.

The fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, that there are just a lot of unanswered questions and worries in this bill that make it very hard, certainly for me, to support in the way it's been presented. We are still only in second reading here, and as we move through the various stages of the bill, I'd like to think that we will get some sort of feel from the government side about answers to some of the questions that we've posed here and to questions that my colleagues have raised while we've been talking about Bill 10. Some of that's going on, and that's good. It's nice to be able to get some input from the minister as we ask questions throughout second reading.

9:10

Financing energy improvement to a property and paying back that financing through increased property taxes is indeed an interesting idea. I think there may be a few pitfalls that haven't been explored or experienced for obvious reasons, but it certainly is interesting. As I've stated, for reasons that I've already brought forward, Mr. Speaker, I cannot support Bill 10 as presented.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

Ms Jansen: I listened with fascination to what, to me, was a 15-minute diatribe on consultation, and I thought it was kind of

fascinating because it flashed me back to another Bill 10. I remember that on that particular Bill 10, which made GSAs mandatory, when the NDP came into power, the Education minister had an opportunity to sit down with me. I sat across on the other side of the aisle, Mr. Speaker, and he still took the time to sit down with me to talk about putting a framework together for GSAs, which was consultation and wonderful.

At the same time, from the Member for Little Bow's constituency I began receiving a flood of correspondence from his constituents, who were literally begging for consultation on GSAs because they were so stressed out about it, literally begging me. So I took the opportunity to call some of this member's people in his constituency because I was, again, an opposition MLA, as was he, and I wondered why all of his constituents were coming to me as an opposition MLA. They told me, Mr. Speaker, that he wouldn't answer any of their calls. He wasn't interested in doing any consultation with them on gay-straight alliances, yet he stands here in this House and he chastises this government for a lack of consultation.

I just feel, Mr. Speaker, this cognitive dissonance.

The Speaker: Hon. minister, you're going to get to the topic of Bill 10, I hope, soon?

Ms Jansen: Certainly, on this bill, when we talk about this sort of behaviour, we have a leader who rages about his members having to face hostility in the House but runs away when the government seeks a bill that offers women in this province the same respect. This member stands up and rages about a lack of consultation when he refused to meet his constituents for that very thing over and over and over again. I have a thick file in my office, Mr. Speaker.

So I would suggest that perhaps this member might look in his own constituency and embrace the idea of consultation because it's his job, and he wasn't doing it.

The Speaker: Are there any questions or comments to the Minister of Infrastructure under 29(2)(a)?

Are there other members who wish to speak to Bill 10? The Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As always, it's such a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 10, An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements. This legislation is going to enable municipalities to create property assessed clean energy, a.k.a. PACE programs, which provide property owners with a mechanism to finance energy efficiency, renewable energy, water conservation projects, which do not require any upfront investments but are paid off over a period of time by being tacked onto an individual's municipal tax bill.

A couple of things I just wanted to mention. The idea of solar, of course, to me is fantastic, and I think it's wonderful to provide opportunities for people to be able to do this kind of thing, but I wanted to clarify a couple of things, Mr. Speaker. Did you know that solar has enjoyed exponential growth without any government intervention? Since 2011, in fact, it's come down half in the cost. Part of that is due to the way that they build the solar panels. The silicon pieces that they use on there have significantly decreased in price. There are a lot more being imported. People are actually asking for them. They've significantly decreased.

They also produce a lot more energy. There are a whole bunch of factors that go into it. It's the angle that they're put at. It depends on a couple of things like location, location, location – that's a big deal – whether there's shade. There is the angle at which the solar panels sit, the size of them. Fortunately, in this province we have more sunny days than most places, so there is quite an opportunity. One of the best things about solar is that – this is with no

government incentive, Mr. Speaker – the payback is between 12 and 20 years, depending on location, depending on the angle of the solar panels, depending on shade, depending on many, many other factors. And even better than that, if you decide to participate in the feed-in tariff program, you are guaranteed a premium price on your solar. If you don't do that, it gets put back onto the grid, and you're paid back at the basic rate that you paid out in order to receive back. So there are a couple of different options.

As the Member for Calgary-East was saying, this is all about options, about choices for people. In fact – I know it's hard to believe – there already are a ton of them, a ton of options. In fact, I would think that by going through your own bank, you'd probably even have more options. Then, on top of that, you could have it put into your own mortgage. You can have it included in your bills. There are many, many different aspects on how you can do that.

But more than that, I'm curious. The government keeps wanting to become a bank, and I'm not quite sure why the government wants to become the bank. It's a very interesting process. We've seen this in a couple of different situations. [interjection] Well, exactly. You do own a bank. You could do it through ATB. That's a great idea, actually.

Here's the thing. The Member for Calgary-East brought up a few really good points about the costs of energy, and I just wanted to go over that a little bit. When you're talking about variable costs of energy, that equals your incremental costs, and those incremental costs are based on cost of delivery, cost of your energy, and also your local access. It all depends on location, orientation, all those kinds of things, and the impact of shading. There are a lot of different things that are included. She was actually mentioning, in terms of options that you have, also doing your research into this. As you can see, even just based on a very small discussion, it's kind of complicated.

I have a couple of questions, and maybe the minister will be able to answer these after. One of the things I wanted to find out is: is the government going to be providing – it's interesting. In the responses to municipal concerns the hon. Member for Little Bow had mentioned before that municipalities are not interested in administering programs and incurring administrative costs, and they're not interested in a lending role. So my question, then, is: was it absolutely imperative for this legislation to pass in order for a municipality to be able to participate in something like this? It seems to me that if they're not interested in administering the program or incurring administrative costs, then for you to create the legislation, Mr. Speaker, seems to be in contravention of the very things that they're looking at doing. I'm sure, being local – I mean, municipalities are the closest to the people. They actually have the pulse on their people. They know what's going on. They have, like, direct impact in the legislation that we bring forward. If they were able to do this and able to provide those loans and everything, I'm sure that if they thought that it was cost-effective, they would have done that.

The other thing that I wanted to ask, too. It says here, "It is envisioned that Energy Efficiency Alberta will administer the program." What does "envisioned" mean? Is it for sure going to go through Energy Efficiency Alberta or not? Maybe it's going to be somebody else or not. It also says here on the lending role: "It is envisioned that private capital" – okay – "will finance clean energy upgrades through agreements." So now if a person wants to go through this program, they're going to go through a private bank and then go through the government for the government to go back and make sure that these solar panels are paid for through the mortgage, the loan that the person took out from the bank and then to the government? Or maybe it's through Energy Efficiency Alberta. I can't quite figure it out. It sounds very complex. Maybe

there's a diagram. I'm a very visual person. I would love to see what this looks like in a diagram, because I would have a very, very difficult time explaining how this works.

9:20

Like I said, I have solar panels, so I understand how they work. I understand how it works on my mortgage. I understand the efficiencies. I understand what I gain from having those solar panels. I'm very grateful for them. But here's the thing. Solar panels are a depreciating asset. They're depreciating. The minute you put them up, it's like driving a car off the lot. And there's maintenance involved. If you live in Alberta, which we all do, we have dust and dust storms and gravel and hail and massive amounts of snow and many, many other things that impact the value. Actually, solar panels decrease by .5 per cent every year over 25 years, so your actual ability to recoup your costs does decrease over the years.

Is that included in the education package going along with getting this? I mean, I'm hoping, as the Member for Calgary-East had said, it's not a mandatory thing, right? A person can go and do their research and do all these things. Is the government, then, providing the companies that are going to be doing this, or do you just pick a company, any company you want? Let's say that the solar panels get put up and there's mould or there's leaking in your roof. These are heavy, large pieces of infrastructure that get put into your house. You cut holes out of your roof sometimes. You put them on your decks. You have all sorts of issues with elevations and weights with those solar panels there.

I'm curious about the loan. If something goes amiss and something goes wrong with those solar panels, then is the government on the hook for those, or is the person who bought into this program responsible not only for the maintenance of that but the depreciating asset? You can sell your house, saying that you have this wonderful asset, but if you're 20 years into your contract, five years away from having to replace those and still having to pay an extra \$6,000 a year in taxes in order to pay it off, I have a feeling that you are not going to get fully recouped on the house that you're trying to sell. I mean, those numbers just add up to me.

Like I said, I have them on my house. For some people, if they saw the way they were lined up across my deck, they'd think they were an eyesore. It might actually not be something that people like. I think they're nice, but other people may not. But that was the decision I made when I built those on there.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that it's going to be primarily urban municipalities that may be seeking this out. Maybe those are the municipalities that the minister talked to. I don't know. Like, I'm looking forward to seeing how this actually all works out. I mean, the bill has potential to do positive things, but the concerns are really, really big. When you take large chunks of legislation like this – I mean, it's very frustrating that it just seems so flippant, that it's just going to be easy. This is a really, really complex situation, you know.

The point is that this is, like, skeleton legislation. The interesting thing is that now the government is going to have this bill – and the minister is actually agreeing with me – skeleton legislation. All of the regulations are going to pass without any consultation with us or Albertans or the stakeholders.

Again, I need to understand how this works with the banks.

I'm interested, too. I mean, the government seems to think that they can add equity to people's houses through their property taxes, but there are so many things that can go wrong with this, and I think the government needs to have some understanding and some explanations as to how that's going to be handled. I think that if you look at the – you know, the devil is in the details, right? It always is. If you're looking at the financial logistics of this

legislation and protecting consumers – because on paper it sounds great. The homeowner is going to get all excited about wanting to install solar panels. If they didn't have the money up front, they could just roll the costs onto their property taxes and use it to pay it down. But how are we ensuring that the consumer is actually being protected?

Now that the government is involved, again I ask the question: is that any company, then, that can come in? Under normal circumstances I have a choice. I can pick my company. I will do the research. Also, because it's based on the market and my choice, it will also determine whether or not I give a green light to my friends and families and anybody else around me who may want to use these companies to do their own. And I can tell you that the people who did ours I've recommended a thousand times. A wonderful group of people. A wonderful group of people. And guess what? The companies are excellent at helping people find financing and understanding how to do it because they want their products out there. They want to see these things.

Oh. That was another interesting piece that I wanted to talk about. This was fun. The Minister of Municipal Affairs said that they had talked to builders and construction companies. Well, of course you're going to talk to builders. Who is going to benefit from this? Look at the cost benefit. A building company or a construction company can come in and charge whatever they want, and the government is just going to fund that? Like, do you have any regulations around how that's going to work? [interjections] It's really, really interesting. You know, everybody gets an A plus from me first; it's up to you whether you keep it.

But I'm interested. You know, the municipalities talk to the builders and the construction companies. I mean, these guys, like anybody else, have a right to and should be making a profit at what they're doing. It's a very complex thing to put solar panels onto a house. There are so many issues with sealing and making sure that they don't leak and making sure that they function appropriately. There's maintenance involved. I mean, the cost of installing them is just one teeny-weeny, little aspect. Is the government going to come up with another bill that's going to be a maintenance bill? We're on Bill 10. Bill 17 – I don't know – is going to be a maintenance bill to cover the cost of that, and you can go to another bank with that government and get your maintenance fees and costs for those problems. I'm just not sure, Mr. Speaker, because there's such a broad spectrum on this particular piece of legislation, and none of us are going to know about anything until the regulations come through.

On top of that, the municipalities, then, can or cannot decide to participate, but then they're not going to be responsible for the loan, so that goes back to the government. How does the government separate that from the mortgage? It's supposed to be on your property taxes. It's really super confusing.

Lookit, I really, really appreciate the intent.

An Hon. Member: You're sold, aren't you?

Mrs. Aheer: No.

I really appreciate the intent. I appreciate the idea of putting it in the property taxes. I really do. You know, there are so many things that we do with that with regard to recreation centres and roads and infrastructure and all these kinds of things. I do; I appreciate it. But this is a personal investment. I'm not investing in owning my piece of road out in front of my house. I don't pay only for my paving. I pay a portion of property taxes that pay for the entire paving of that entire area.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs under 29(2)(a).

Mr. S. Anderson: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to try to answer some of the stuff here, unpack a little bit of this. I'll try to be clear as much as I can. There was a lot going on there that I've answered before. They seem to be asking the same questions. We've briefed them and their staff. I'm confused why they haven't gotten that proper research. But that's fine. I will try my best to help them.

Different things. One, I don't assume. I run on facts, data, and truth. That's what I do. I have 342 municipalities. Guess who I've talked to? All of the municipalities. I didn't talk to one CAO. Also, if they don't want it, it's their choice. They don't have to enable it. That's a nice part about this. It's the choice of the municipality, and it's the choice of the consumer. They don't have to do it. That's a really good thing. It's business friendly. I thought they liked business. This is business friendly. It's consumer friendly. I'm not sure what they don't understand about that part. But that's fine. I understand about the details. I get it. That's where we're going to go with this.

Some municipalities didn't want to administer it. That's great. That's why we've talked about Energy Efficiency Alberta doing it. Some didn't want to front the costs. Perfect. That's why we are going to engage and have been already engaging with private lenders who are excited about this. So it's not the government or some random taxpayers that are fronting this; it's private lenders who are excited about this because they understand that when it goes on the property, that's a good investment. It's there and it stays, and they get their bills paid. It's pretty straightforward in that sense.

9:30

I agree that solar has come down. I said that in my statements earlier: a hundred per cent it has. But it's still not quite affordable for everybody, and that's fine. The upfront costs are always something that's tough. But, again, this isn't just about solar. It's about energy efficiency in a lot of different respects. We have insulation, water heaters, windows. I mean, there are a multitude of things. That being said, through the consultation this is a framework, typical of a lot of bills that come into the House in this type of respect, where you bring it in and it sits here. As I said before, we will consult through the summer with consumers, municipalities, builders, realtors. A lot of these we've already talked to, but to be open and transparent, we're going to do even more, which is typical of Municipal Affairs. We've done this consistently. We will continue to do this with the intent of bringing it back in the fall to have it done right. As I've said before, my dad always said: do it right the first time. That's the intent of this.

An Hon. Member: Is your dad Mike Holmes?

Mr. S. Anderson: He's not Mike Holmes. He's got a big moustache. He does a bit of building.

The RMA. They're talking about this resolution that came forward. That resolution actually was something that came forward that didn't really have any information, and it was not what we are proposing here in any respect. It had similarities, but really there was no information to it, so of course people were worried because they didn't understand what it meant. A hundred per cent; change is hard. They understand that.

When we're talking about the consumers and if something happens, right now through Service Alberta we've got a lot of consumer protection. When you have contractors come in, you understand that there's protection. You have warranties on your house. There are a multitude of things out there, Mr. Speaker. I'm

not going to go through them all. I'll let the Minister of Service Alberta. She knows a lot more of that than I do.

One of the other things that I'm excited about is that not only does it benefit residential folks, but it benefits people out in rural areas, farmers that I've talked to. It also benefits nonprofits, which I'm excited about in particular, and it's a community benefit in general.

I understand where some of these folks might have a little bit of misinformation or misunderstanding. I get that. I'm glad they're asking the questions because I will always stand up and try my best to answer them. That being said, when they try to say, you know, and assume and use opinions and try to speculate about the worst-case scenarios, I don't appreciate that because that's not what's happening here. This is straightforward and up front. I've said right from the get-go that we will be consulting, and that's what we're going to do. They're more than welcome to be involved in that. I actually would prefer that they were involved in that. That's the whole point of this place. This is nonpartisan. It has nothing to do with that. This is about what's good for people in this province.

There was another thing that the member said about: would municipalities have done this already? They can't. Under legislation it has to be something that we have to do. That's why we have to enable the bylaw for them, to let them be able to do this. Again, they don't have to do it. They don't have to do it, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Cooper: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 10 tonight. I would just like to start with thanking the minister for some of his comments. I also appreciate his haircut. I have some additional questions, and I hope that at committee, whether or not we get to committee this session – by the sounds of things I'm not entirely sure. When we do get there, I'm certain that I will have a number of questions that hopefully he'll be able to elaborate on at some length. But for this evening I'll pose some, and he can follow up with me later or whatever.

I appreciate that he just mentioned that Municipal Affairs has had a bit of a track record of putting bills on the Order Paper and then consulting over the summer. If that in fact happens with Bill 10, I think that will also be a positive. You know, he referenced his dad saying: do things right the first time. I think that that's good advice that his father has given to him. I think that the rest of the government should perhaps heed his dad's advice because what we have seen with this government is if at first you don't succeed, try, try, try, try, try again. We've seen a number of times when the government has failed dramatically and needed to try, try, try, try, try, and try again. I can think of Bill 1, jobs diversification, the one-job creation, whatever that was, from the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. I can think of the election financing acts. I believe I saw on the Order Paper today, Mr. Speaker, that this will now be the fourth or fifth time that this government has brought back the election financing act. Again, if at first you don't succeed, try, try, try, try, try, try, try, try again instead of doing things right the first time, which would've been helpful for all Albertans. But perhaps I digress. The long and the short of that is that I am pleased to hear that there will be some consultation over the summer.

I also did hear the minister reference the 374 municipalities.

Mr. S. Anderson: Three hundred and forty-two.

Mr. Cooper: I was way off there, way, way, off, by like 32 on the 342 or whatever he referenced. I heard him say that he's consulted with all of them, which is a pretty impressive feat. I do know that there are some municipalities in the outstanding constituency of

Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills that don't feel consulted with. It's possible that maybe he left their name off the e-mail list or whatever the case may be.

Mr. S. Anderson: I said that I talked to all of them, and I have been consulting with all of them.

Mr. Cooper: My apologies. It sounds like he's saying that he will be talking to them, and I misunderstood that he had talked to them. All I know is that he's going to have a very busy summer if he gets to all 342 of them. Particularly given that it's, you know, quite likely his last year as the minister, he should make the most of this opportunity that he has to tour the municipalities. I do think it's important, though, this consultation, that sounds like it may or may not be taking place. I'll hope that that in fact is what happens because I know that making sure that the municipalities have a full and robust understanding of exactly what they need to do or don't need to do will be important on a go-forward basis.

The other thing that I do have some reservations around – listen, I understand that they're going to consult over the summer and that takes time, and I appreciate, you know, that perhaps the government would like to take some advice when it comes to consulting in other areas of legislation. They're going to consult. Mr. Speaker, I would just draw your attention to page 8 of the legislation. I know that you're so intently following along that you probably have a copy of the legislation there. If you turn to page 8 of the legislation, the coming into force is: "This Act comes into force on Proclamation." I'm a little curious to know as to when that might actually happen.

We're going to see consultations over the summer. I'm a little unclear as to whether or not the regulations will be developed prior to proclamation or if they'll be done in conjunction or be done after proclamation. One way or the other, it sounds like this legislation isn't going to be passed until the fall session, which could be as late as October or November, December. Then, in turn, if the regulations still need to be developed, we're looking at January, February prior to a municipality even being able to pass the bylaw that then would enact the ability for the PACE program to be executed, which will be in, say, maybe February, March.

I don't know if you know or not, Mr. Speaker, but March 2019 is the start of the election window, when the NDP, if the people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills are a reflection of the rest of the province – I certainly know that the folks that I speak to in Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills hope to see the end of the NDP government. As such, I have some reservations about when the program will be actually implemented given that we're going to consult over the summer, come back in the fall, pass the legislation, regulations, and then we'll be into an election period anyway. So I do have some concerns both for municipalities in terms of the uncertainty as we move towards the next election as well as for potential homeowners that may in fact engage in the program should their municipality allow that to happen.

9:40

The other thing that the minister said that I would just like to highlight. In particular inside the Ministry of Municipal Affairs he said that he gets offended or takes offence – I don't have the benefit of the Blues, so perhaps I should be a little more cautious when I'm paraphrasing the minister. Essentially, he said he was displeased with the opposition talking about worst-case scenarios or, you know, trying to make up things that may or may not actually happen. "Speculate" I think is some language that he used.

At the end of the day one of the roles of the opposition is to in fact try to discuss and game out, if you will, what some of the eventualities may or may not be. The best-case scenarios are

fantastic, but – you know what, Mr. Speaker? – very, very, very rarely does a constituent call my office and say: you're never going to believe it; this program worked exactly as it was supposed to. In fact, it's the exceptions that constituents call and express some concerns around.

You know what? Just in the last four weeks I've had three or four constituents reach out to my office about a program that was under Municipal Affairs in the form of the new-home warranty. That took place a number of years ago, prior to this minister, but at that time I remember the Official Opposition asking lots of questions about potential scenarios. In fact, one of the scenarios that I was communicating with my constituents about was an exact scenario that had been brought up during that time of debate.

At the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, the role of the opposition is to do some of the exact things that unfortunately have caused pain and consternation to the Minister of Municipal Affairs this evening. My sense is that if the people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills are any reflection of the rest of the province, it may in fact be that the minister may have the opportunity to experience what it is to represent people when you sit on this side of the House and know that it is important to the process that we do just what we have done this evening, and that is highlight some of the potential concerns and reservations of the people that we represent or we may represent in the future. While I share some sympathy that we have offended the sensibilities of the minister, I think that he will agree that this is a very, very important part of the process.

We will continue to do our part in the process, and that is endeavouring to make legislation better. There are a number of ways that we do that. That is what we have seen here this evening. I will be the first to admit that I don't know everything about Bill 10 like the minister does. I'll be the first to admit that members on this side of the House don't know all of the same things that the government knows or intends to know.

In fact, you will know that sometimes even the government passes legislation where they intended one thing and another turns out to be true. That's exactly one of the reasons why we saw not one, not two, not three, but four election financing bills, for examples just like this. I know it's hard to believe, but sometimes even the government doesn't think of everything, even though they want you to believe that they will and that they do. That's what they tell Albertans: don't worry. In fact, I heard the Finance minister say this evening: trust us. But we, Mr. Speaker, take a trust but verify approach to legislation, and I think that the government should do so as well. We would all be well served if the government would do that as well. In fact, we could heed the advice of the hon. minister's father and do things right the first time. A good man, I might add.

One of those questions and one of the things in the legislation, the thing that creates some uncertainty, is that I heard the minister speak this evening about: if municipalities don't want to administer the program, don't worry; we have Energy Efficiency Alberta. The question I have for you, Mr. Speaker, would be: what happens if Energy Efficiency Alberta doesn't exist in perpetuity or in the ongoing...

An Hon. Member: Sounds like your problem.

Mr. Cooper: It very well may be our problem, if we are the government, if this organization doesn't exist any longer. What happens if they were administering long-term debt?

The other thing that we heard the minister say – and I'm the first to admit that I could have misheard him, or he could have misspoken, depending on which is correct – is that it sounded like some municipalities could administer the program and, as such, be

the lender, which I didn't believe to be the case. I see him shaking his head, so clearly he did misspeak then. As such, it will be Energy Efficiency Alberta or other lender, as we've heard this evening.

But there is certainly some uncertainty. On page 6 of the legislation, that you've been perusing for yourself this evening, section 390.7 reads:

If, after a clean energy improvement agreement has been made, the council refinances the debt created to pay for the clean energy improvement that is the subject of [an] agreement at an interest rate other than the rate estimated when the clean energy improvement agreement was made, the council, with respect to future years, may revise the amount required to recover the costs of the clean energy improvement included in that agreement to reflect the [rate] change in the interest.

You know, I'm the first to admit that I don't know all of the ramifications of the legislation, but I'm curious to understand exactly how this particular clause works. If, in fact, the council has nothing to do with the interest rate yet they are the financee in that they are essentially the collection agency for the financier...

Mr. Nixon: We've got to adjourn.

Mr. Cooper: There are a lot of questions that need to be answered. With that, I'd like to move that we adjourn.

The Speaker: Hon. members, there's been a motion for adjournment.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 11 Lobbyists Amendment Act, 2018

[Debate adjourned May 1: Ms Kazim speaking]

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

Ms Kazim: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to continue my speech where I left last time on Bill 11, Lobbyists Amendment Act, 2018. Under the proposed changes in this act the reporting threshold for organization lobbyists will be reduced to 50 hours from 100 hours. Also, any time an organization lobbyist spends preparing to communicate with a public office holder would be included in the 50-hour threshold.

Mr. Speaker, the changes in Bill 11 to the Lobbyists Act are long overdue and deserve our full support. They are based on the all-party committee review and input from Albertans, who are concerned about honesty, openness, and transparency in government. These changes deserve our full support. I look very much forward to the debate on Bill 11.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

9:50

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to rise and speak to Bill 11, the Lobbyists Amendment Act, 2018. Accountability is essential to a healthy democracy, so the decision to bring the Lobbyists Act forward to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship so that many of the recommendations from the office of the Ethics Commissioner could be heard and understood – we support these decisions. It is healthy to have checks and balances put in place, especially when it comes to the interests of the public. Any measures that improve transparency and accountability are, in my opinion, worthy of support.

This is one bill that my colleagues and I will be supporting but have some questions that still have not been fully answered. Many of the recommendations are very important ones to establish, while there are some recommendations from the OEC that are not found in this bill. One of the many questions I have is that while there are some excellent portions of this legislation that will bring increased transparency and improve administrative functions, my primary concern would be the increased paperwork and red tape burden on smaller organizations that typically fall under the Lobbyists Act.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, I brought in my private member's bill, Bill 207, Regulatory Burden Reduction Act, last year, that was modelled after a bill that was passed in the federal government. The bill would have allowed that for each regulation created, one or more regulations would have been eliminated. Now, as you know, this was a very successful bill federally. It was able to decrease up to \$32 million of administrative burden on the federal side as well as 750,000 hours in time spent dealing with red tape. Now, unfortunately, as you know, the NDP government did not support my bill and have brought in far too many pieces of legislation that have hurt smaller businesses to their detriment, actually.

My point here is not to reopen debate on my bill but, rather, discuss how when we overregulate and increase red tape burdens on small organizations, that may end up costing them too much. My hope is that this will not be the case and that we've struck the right balance with this bill. Has the government considered this? Do they know what the implications and costs will be?

The new legislation will bring the reporting threshold for lobbyists from 100 hours of meeting time annually down to 50 hours annually but now also includes any prep time. This is not a lot of time and will certainly increase the number of individuals and organizations that will now have to register as a lobbyist. This will for sure increase paperwork for the registrar at the OEC, so I guess another one of my questions would be: will the OEC require additional staff to deal with the added pressure, and will this require that Legislative Offices meet to increase the OEC's annual budgetary needs?

The semiannual returns is another piece I would like to talk about, Mr. Speaker. The OEC recommended in committee that the current semiannual registration filing should be changed to an annual filing on the anniversary date of their initial filing. This piece was included in the legislation, so my question to the minister is: why was the semiannual registration filing not changed to annual filings? With the additional paperwork the OEC will have to deal with, that we discussed previously, you would think it would only make sense to have lobbyists register filings once a year. Is there a reason this one piece was not added, and could the government side explain why, when something as simple as getting rid of unnecessary paperwork could have been dealt with in this bill, it wasn't? I'd like to hear the explanation on why this decision was made.

With the grassroots communication changes, I have questions when it comes to how you would define someone who is a parent of a child who has a disability versus a group that deals with the same issue, that may have some additional funds or grants, who builds mass mailing lists to communicate with their members. I understand that nonprofits are still exempt, but I have concerns about how groups such as these may be impacted by the grassroots communication portion of this bill. Since grassroots communication will now be defined as lobbying, if members of these organizations spend 50 hours a year communicating with their members on specific policy or areas of concern, would they have to register with that registrar?

My concern would be that these passionate advocates could be potentially burdened with red tape. I believe we can all agree that it should never be the intention of this legislation to regulate parents,

who are effective advocates for their families. Fifty hours, including preparation time, seems a little stringent for small groups or organizations such as local chambers or groups that meet perhaps twice a year. Tracking this time for everyone involved could potentially become onerous and take a lot of additional time and cost and unintentionally discourage those who are advocates for good and right causes.

How does the government plan on rolling out this new legislation? Professional lobbyists have the time and capacity to figure out the new system, but those who are unfamiliar with it or who only do this a few times a year but fall under the 50-hour rule may have difficulties achieving their noble goals. How does the registrar plan on addressing these types of issues?

We are concerned about the impact that the clause in this legislation that narrows the exemptions for lobbyists reporting on time spent responding to government requests for advice or comment will have. Advocates and stakeholders are often the most valuable resources to us as statesmen and stateswomen. Yes, it's critical to be accountable, but I would hate for us to miss out on invaluable feedback, ideas, and input from advocates and stakeholders because they are scared off by the reporting requirements.

We support the changes that will bring the rules governing the giving of gifts by lobbyists in line with the rules that govern us as elected representatives receiving gifts. This will simplify these social interactions and prevent awkward rejections and situations of conflict of interest. Gifts, while thoughtful, have no place, outside of cultural custom, in politics. They appear to give those with financial means an unfair advantage in acquiring our time, and it's been long established as inappropriate. I'm glad to see that this recommendation has been added to the lobbyist legislation.

As well, we were pleased to see the addition of indigenous elders that are recognized by their communities to the list of individuals exempted from the Lobbyists Act. When acting in their official capacity, elders in these communities serve such an essential leadership role for their communities and should be recognized as the advocates that they are. In my riding, Mr. Speaker, as you know, I have the largest First Nations reserve in Canada, the Blood reserve, and I can tell you that the work that the elders do there is so appreciated by the members of the communities. I think it's extremely important to make sure that they aren't penalized for the work that they do. They're a great voice and a great advocate for not only the First Nations but for the whole area in my riding.

One disappointment I have is with the OEC's recommendation for the registrar to be given the ability to issue interpretive bulletins and advisory opinions and that it was not included in this legislation. The Ethics Commissioner already has the authority to do this but feels that given the fact that the registrar regularly provides advice and opinions on interpretations of the act to lobbyists as part of their duties, they should also be given the authority to issue bulletins and advisory opinions. Many other jurisdictions lean heavily on these advisory bulletins as important tools for providing clarity to lobbyists rather than creating new legislation.

10:00

We are disappointed to see that the OEC recommendation to change the filing return requirements for lobbyists from semiannual to annual was not implemented in this legislation. The OEC recommended annual filings as opposed to semiannual filings given that they have found that lobbyists' first six months of the year were often virtually identical to the later half of the year. This would have reduced the burden of paperwork and provided clarity, especially for the large number of lobbyists that will have to register and file

for the first time ever if the reporting threshold is brought down from 100 hours to 50 hours.

In closing, I would like to recognize that the OEC and the registrar obviously spent many hours poring over this legislation, and I want to thank all of those who were involved in this process. It's good to see healthy checks and balances put into place.

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

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Mr. Feehan: Mr. Speaker, given the great work that was accomplished this evening on a variety of bills and given the late hour, I suggest that we adjourn until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 10:01 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday morning, May 3, 2018

Day 24

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Thursday, May 3, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good morning, everyone.

Let each of us in prayer or in contemplation remember and have a moment of silence in remembrance of the 10 deaths of Canadians on the streets of Toronto and of a fellow parliamentarian who died at work as a Member of Parliament yesterday. One moment of silence.

Please be seated.

Orders of the Day

Government Motions

Address to the Legislative Assembly by Governor General

21. Mr. Feehan moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:
Be it resolved that the Assembly invite Her Excellency the Right Honourable Julie Payette, CC, CMM, COM, CQ, CD, Governor General of Canada, to the floor of this Chamber to address the Legislative Assembly on the afternoon of Tuesday, May 15, 2018, and that this address be the first order of business at 1:30 p.m., following which the ordinary business of the Assembly will resume notwithstanding the designated times stipulated in Standing Order 7, and be it further resolved that Her Excellency's address become part of the permanent record of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Hon. members, any comments with respect to the motion?

[Government Motion 21 carried]

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

Bill 9

Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act

[Debate adjourned April 10]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I rise to speak to this issue, I do it with some trepidation. The issue of abortion is very sensitive, and I want to respect the sensitivity of the issue. I would also like to take the opportunity to thank members of this Assembly who have been courageous in their advocacy on this. I also want to acknowledge that this is an issue that is very divisive. It has divided us as a country. It has tragic consequences for doctors and others involved in the provision of abortion services and has resulted in jail sentences for those who have had strong beliefs that abortion is wrong.

Mr. Speaker, I understand the strong beliefs against abortion services. I've had friends of mine choose to go to jail as they defied existing bubble laws in B.C. I respect beliefs based on faith convictions. I personally would call myself someone whose faith influences my beliefs and world view. I acknowledge that it is my Christian faith that gives me such strong convictions for things such

as minimum wage, safe working conditions, social supports, public education accessible to all, and the strong commitment to creation care.

I also have experienced how faith influences health care decisions such as for those not wishing to have blood products, how one dies, or the shunning of lepers in the Buddhist society I lived in. I may not have the same beliefs as Sikhs, Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, Wiccans, or agnostics, but I respect and understand how belief in religion and spiritual teachings will influence how one will be convicted of social and community issues.

Mr. Speaker, I have lived in places where access to abortion was difficult, where women died because they were unable to prevent pregnancies, where women self-medicated to cause abortions. I also saw the difference when women did have access to contraception, to legal abortions, and when developing countries, with supports from the U.S. and Canada and other developed countries, supported programs to limit pregnancies. This has convinced me that those measures were life affirming.

Mr. Speaker, I am deeply saddened that the government had to put forth this bill in order to protect women accessing a legal medical service in Alberta. I am saddened that the women who have made a choice, which is their right, are hassled on their way to having a legal medical procedure. I am saddened that these women, who may have had difficult conversations with a partner, with family, and with themselves, are subjected to intimidation and harassment.

I am saddened that employees of the clinics are in fear for their safety and that of their families. The health practitioners are supporting women in a legal medical procedure, and they should be treated as such. I believe that everyone should have the right to have faith-nurtured beliefs, but I do not agree that intimidation, harassment, the taking of pictures, and threats to safety are a right.

Mr. Speaker, I have been known to engage in demonstrations in showing my disagreement with government policies. For example, I was horrified at the federal government that the Leader of the Opposition was part of. He was actually the minister responsible who stopped the funding of health benefits for refugee claimants in Canada. I was glad to be part of faith groups who demonstrated and worked hard to have this mean-spirited measure reversed. But I know that if I had threatened anyone within the Conservative caucus, I would have been arrested.

The same thing would have happened if I had harassed the present Leader of the Opposition as a cabinet minister for his government's treatment of prisoners, for removing training programs, closing prison farms and prison workshops, and increasing minimum sentences. The same government instituted more challenging citizenship requirements, wanted to ban burkas and niqabs. I could go on and on about these life-threatening policies previously passed by the government of the Leader of the Opposition. I personally cannot reconcile how someone who states he is antiabortion has supported policies that threaten the well-being and lives of so many.

But, Mr. Speaker, this brings me to a discussion of what it means to be pro life. I understand that many in the UCP would claim to be pro life. The opposition leader, the Member for Calgary-Lougheed, definitely claims to be pro life. Pro life is a code word that has different meanings. I am not Catholic, so while I'm familiar with the understanding of life within that context, that results in prohibition against birth control, I could not be able to theologically defend such a position. I wanted to speak about a faith tradition that I'm more familiar with and why it pains me so much to think of the members opposite voting against this bill or abstaining. I also want to address those with deep antiabortion convictions and urge them to explore a more completely pro-life outlook.

What does it mean to be pro life? Many people say that the only faithful expression of evangelical faith is to be pro life, but when pro life is used to refer only to life prior to birth, meaning a stance on the subject of abortion, then it is really just a small slice of a much broader faithful, evangelical expression. Being pro life ties into the Biblical concept that all are created in the image of God. There are times and places, and even the number of hairs on our head are known because God the Creator created such persons in their own image. However, being pro life and having that include only the value of life prebirth is the political, read UCP, expression of an evangelical value. It is the politicization of a theological issue.

Having a consistent life ethic means caring about fighting for the protection of human life in all of its forms. For those who call themselves pro life and have come to that conclusion from a Christian conviction, it most often means valuing life prebirth. However, being pro life should naturally extend to life after birth as well, so a faithful interpretation of what it means to be pro life as a Christian would be to care about the wages of the working poor, to fight the death penalty, and to be concerned about gun violence. A consistent life ethic would be pro immigrant and would likely lead people to oppose war and violence and especially the dehumanization of foreigners. A completely pro-life stance would care about both the opiate crisis and the life-saving needle exchange and opiate treatment centre and the effect climate change has on both God's planet and God's people.

If members opposite are using faith to vote no or to abstain against this bill, then I'm saddened that our common faith roots do not allow them to see that affirming life should have caused them to support environmental stewardship, increased support for affordable housing, support for safe injection sites, support for increased funding in social services, access to contraception, more funding for end-of-life services and, especially, antiracism and refugee programs. The federal Conservative Party and the UCP have used pro life to slice off a single issue. They have taken a portion of theological teaching and turned it into a tool for politics.

9:10

Mr. Speaker, I would urge all members of the Assembly to vote for this bill, to vote to ensure a hassle- and intimidation-free medical procedure that is legal. I would urge the members opposite to consider what a consistent pro-life ethic would mean. It definitely does not mean harassing women seeking a legal medical service, denying climate change, not supporting refugees, and they definitely would not deny increased funding for long-term care. It means creating a society where all lives can thrive, where care for the vulnerable, including the addicted, is there, where we invest in our community and share our wealth with each other through taxation.

Mr. Speaker, I think part of the challenge is that sometimes we only look at things from a very, very small perspective. For me, anybody who would oppose this bill, that is meant to support women going through some very difficult times and taking the step that they feel is right for them – hassling them just does not really support any consistent pro-life ethic. I would really urge members opposite and anyone who does not believe that this bill is necessary to consider what it means to be consistently pro life. I would urge you to especially look at climate change and creation care and how you're going to be supporting this in this House.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

Bill 15 Appropriation Act, 2018

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

Mr. Ceci: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning, everyone. It's my privilege to rise today and move third reading of Bill 15, the Appropriation Act, 2018.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

I along with members of this government am proud to implement Budget 2018, which is built on three pillars. The first is diversifying the economy by fighting for market access, adding value to our energy products here at home, and supporting new and developing industries. The second is protecting vital public services by making sure loved ones get the care they need, young people get the best education possible, and no one is left behind. The third pillar, Madam Speaker, is returning to balance by investing public dollars where they're needed most, eliminating Conservative waste, and controlling spending to return to balanced budgets by 2023-24.

During the course of this debate we heard concerns about Alberta's debt levels and deficit. That's why, along with the path to balance, we remain focused on finding efficiencies and savings as well. Madam Speaker, through Budget 2018 our government is ensuring public dollars are spent where they are needed most and eliminating waste. Even with the debt that will be accumulated as we reach balanced budgets, Alberta is still expected to maintain the lowest net debt to GDP ratio in Canada by a considerable margin. I'll just say that one more time. Even with the debt that will be accumulated as we reach balanced budgets, Alberta is still expected to maintain the lowest net debt to GDP ratio in Canada by a considerable margin.

Our pledge is to return to balanced budgets but doing so in a manner that continues to support Albertans by continuing to invest in health care, education, and social supports because if our recovery were based on hollowing out public services, neglecting our infrastructure like hospitals, schools, roads, and other government buildings, and leaving vulnerable Albertans behind through deep cuts to important income supports, as was done by the Conservatives in the recent past, it would in fact not be a recovery at all.

I ask all members of this House to support this bill so that we can get on with the important task of implementing Budget 2018: A Recovery Built to Last.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gottfried: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today and am pleased to speak to Bill 15, the Appropriation Act, 2018, for the budget. A recovery built to last indeed. In rising today, I rise to voice my concern for this budget and for the current and future state of our great province under the leadership of the NDP and in their decided collaboration with their close ally and fellow fiscal hawk Justin Trudeau. As we heard last night, the minister renewed his connection to the winning ways of Ontario, as was apparently quoted in his greetings from that province.

There are a few highlights to ponder in this budget which are concerning not only in this budget but actually in the effects, maybe

not the intent but the effects, the unintended consequences of some of the actions of this government, Madam Speaker: zero full-time jobs created in March; 156,500 unemployed Albertans; 44,000 unemployed youth; the loss of 2,400 full-time youth jobs also for the month of March; a shrinking labour force; 92,000 fewer payroll jobs at the end of 2017. Ninety-two thousand fewer payroll jobs: each of those is attached to a struggling Alberta family who is trying to make ends meet, struggling to keep a roof over their heads, struggling to put food on the table.

We're hearing of increased incidents and need at the food banks. I just spent several hours this past Sunday making 174 birthday bags for needy Albertans so that children don't have to go without having a birthday party and can receive one simple gift that might be the bright spot in an otherwise challenged life where one or both of their parents may have lost their jobs.

Out of work for a year or more. That doubled from 7.8 to 15.6 per cent. That doubled last year, Madam Speaker, a doubling of people out of work for a year or more. What I'm hearing in my constituency is that people have been hanging on. They've been hanging on to that hope, but as they say, hope is not a strategy. In keeping that roof over their heads, they've been accessing assistance from family and friends. They've been dipping into their retirement incomes, many of them, trying to keep themselves afloat. As I heard from the ATB's chief economist, he has an expectation during this year of more bankruptcies and foreclosures amongst Albertans. That frightens me.

Our largest city has the third-highest unemployment among major Canadian cities, and our second-largest city, the city of Edmonton, has the sixth highest. That's not the Alberta that I know and love. We led this country in wealth creation, led this country in entrepreneurial spirit. We led this country in wealth creation, that we shared generously with the rest of this country. More lower-paying jobs: also from many of our noted economists. As much of a struggle as ever, as we heard from the Edmonton Chamber.

Madam Speaker, 73 per cent of businesses are worried about rising costs due to an all economic pain, no environmental gain carbon tax. There are 60,000 fewer jobs across Canada due to misguided minimum wage increases, with the worst-hit demographic among those already experiencing some of the highest unemployment rates: the youth of this province, the future of this province, the young people with the entrepreneurial spirit, with the drive, with the ambition to build a great life for themselves.

But that's just the beginning, Madam Speaker. What do the headlines say? Alberta's taxes drive away investors. By my last count – this is an account from over a year ago – \$34.8 billion of foreign direct investment has left this province. I suspect that if we looked at pension funds and other factors of investment, it would be more than double that amount.

9:20

We're hearing death by a thousand cuts from small businesses, we're seeing homeless shelters at or above capacity, and a lot of people have run out of their EI. Again, back to my point earlier, when you have people that have been unemployed for long periods of time, a year or two years, they've run out of benefits, they've eaten into their retirement savings, they've taken equity out of their homes, they've run up their credit cards. This is what frightens me, Madam Speaker, about the state of this province under this government.

Charitable giving in Alberta has declined. I just talked with a close colleague of mine yesterday, and he said that the charity that he works with is down in their fundraising 11 per cent but that their costs due to the carbon tax and minimum wage and other things have gone up more than 10 per cent. So they now have a 20 per cent

gap in delivering those services to the families and needy and struggling that they serve.

Where is that gap going to be made up when we have an economy that is not firing on all cylinders? People are trying to be generous, they're trying to move ahead, they're trying to ensure that they can make ends meet and that they can support the communities in which they live, but it's becoming a struggle. As I noted yesterday, we have recreation centres and arenas and swimming pools and churches and nonprofit groups that are having a sincere challenge with that.

What are families saying? The carbon tax will cost us \$667 this year and up to \$1,111 when this government, in co-operation with their close ally Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, increases it a further 67 per cent. Again, I mentioned that recreation centres, arenas, pools, churches, nonprofits are really getting hit hard. That's from them, from those entities themselves.

The NDP have come up with better policies to crush not only small farms but all small businesses. That's what we're hearing, Madam Speaker. Seventy per cent of Albertans feel their economic situation is stagnant or getting worse. This budget is going to contribute further to that by following this misguided ideology.

Madam Speaker, 92 per cent of business owners are not confident the Alberta government is committed to improving the business climate. So in spite of up, up, up and all the new job creation, I think the bucket has too many holes in it. The Finance minister has a big drill. He's drilled too many holes in this bucket, and some of his other ministers trying to fill it to the top just cannot keep up with the holes that this government is drilling into the Alberta economy and into our finances. That bucket is draining faster than we can fill it.

Forty-two per cent of Albertans find it difficult to cover monthly expenses, and we're hearing comments that this government is coming off as tone deaf and spinning a story that is not true. And Albertans know it.

Our own recently retired Auditor General said of the climate leadership plan: "It is difficult to get a full picture of the . . . costs and benefits." I think that relates to our comment, which is: all economic pain and no environmental gain. It lacks an overall implementation plan. We've heard of certain things from unicorns that may relate to this. There is no implementation plan. Hope is not a strategy. We also heard that it does not clearly state the expected and actual costs.

Free light bulbs. I got a call two days ago from an old business colleague. He pulled up in front of a building, and there were 22 Energy Efficiency Alberta vans sitting there in the middle of the day, large vans, beautifully painted, beautifully branded, sitting there idle. Who's paying for that, Madam Speaker?

On the carbon tax what are we hearing? Schools feel crunch of carbon tax. The schools that are educating our children, the next generation, the postsecondaries, the places of worship.

Seniors' centres could close their doors. I'm hearing from the seniors' centres in my constituency that they're getting complaints from their residents because they're trying to cover the costs of the increase of the carbon tax and minimum wage, and they're getting complaints. Madam Speaker, maybe what we need to do is to give them our Premier's address and tell them to talk to this government about why those rates are going up, why that has to be passed on by those operators so that they don't have to take that nutritious meal off the table, that extra salad, that podiatric care that they may receive, those extra services that are delivered. Where are they cutting back? Where are they cutting back to meet the deficit, the hole that is created by irresponsible actions?

Carbon tax driving agriculture out. All pain no gain. Fifty-five per cent of Albertans received no rebate cheque, or it was less than

what they paid in carbon taxes. Then, back to the seniors, there are the clawbacks from the seniors so that when they get the cheque, they're passing it on again, sometimes to their detriment.

More stats and facts on the irresponsible, multigenerational debt that has been created and is continuing to be created in this budget by this government: \$1.9 billion in debt servicing this year; \$3.7 billion in debt servicing by 2023. Madam Speaker, did you know that cumulative debt servicing through 2024 will be \$17.6 billion? That's a lot of schools. That's a lot of hospitals. That's a lot of roadways. That's a lot of infrastructure. That's \$17.6 billion just in debt servicing. That, to me, is irresponsible, and it's spending that absolutely does not benefit one Albertan one little bit, as I think has been said by many of our members here, as we're enriching bankers across the country and around the world whom we are borrowing from to achieve this, to fill the gap between our irresponsible spending and a lack of creation and growing the pie for our economy.

This budget does not constitute a plan. It lacks any credible detail. It's an aspiration, barely, from one of Alberta's leading economists. We hear negative trends, debt burden, rapid debt accumulation placing a bigger burden on taxpayers from many fronts. These are what we're hearing from Albertans, Madam Speaker. Layer upon layer upon layer of irresponsible spending, irresponsible budgeting, irresponsible sacrificing of future generations' earning power and wealth creation, that they'll be saddled with for generations. I worry not only for my children, who are young adults, but I worry for their children, that we're going to pass this down two generations. Shame on us.

Then there is the coal shutdown, capacity markets, pipelines, social licence or the lack thereof, flight of capital, lack of business confidence, political risk. When did anybody in this House, anybody in Alberta think that Alberta was going to be a place of political risk, below some banana republics in the world? That's where the capital is going, Madam Speaker, because the perceived political risk there is less than it is today here in Alberta.

Regulatory burdens, unintended consequences, crime, social and mental health impacts, and a list of ideologically driven, job-killing, investment-repelling issues: Madam Speaker, this is what Budget 2018 looks like.

When I talk to Albertans, when I talk to those seniors and they are complaining to the manager of the seniors' home, again, I say: "Maybe you're talking to the wrong person. Maybe you're complaining to your seniors' centre manager. Maybe we should give you the e-mail address for this Premier so that you can send your comments about how that's impacting your life by e-mail to this cabinet, to this government, that irresponsibly is mispending Albertans' money."

Madam Speaker, this is what Budget 2018 looks like. If this is a recovery built to last, it is really more of a debt built to last longer. I'll say that again: not a recovery built to last, but debt built to last longer, two or more generations. They tell us this is a recovery built to last for working people, but what if you can't find a job after two, three, or even four years? Is this a recovery built to last for people that aren't working? Those people are coming to me. I see grown men and women coming into my office saying that they haven't worked for two years or are having struggles paying their mortgages. They're not sure that they're ever going to work again. They're dipping into their retirement savings. Some of them are now having to sell their homes to reduce their monthly expenses so that they can continue to live.

9:30

Again, I say to those people: thank you for coming in; thank you for sharing that with me as your representative in this House so that

I can speak strongly to that. But we want to make sure that they know that the source of that is the ideologically driven policies, the regulatory environment, and, yes, Madam Speaker, the budgets of this government over the past three years. Again, I say to them: you can come to me and I will share your message, and I will take your correspondence and I will pass that on to the appropriate people, to the cabinet of this government. Again, I'm quite happy to say: there's a Premier's office here, and you can have that e-mail address, and you can send those complaints and those concerns directly to them and copy me.

Madam Speaker, when I mentioned earlier about the Premier's address, I meant the Premier's e-mail address. Of course, we ensure and respect everybody's privacy and respect their security. But that e-mail address is a powerful, powerful tool for Albertans to voice their opinion. Now, a year from now we'll have an opportunity to do that in the polls, but in the meantime Albertans need and want to be heard.

This government tells us that they are controlling spending to return to balance, but it is purely on a wish and a prayer. As I said before, Madam Speaker, hope is not a strategy. We hear of efficiencies to balance the budget by 2023-2024, but nowhere do we see meaningful efficiencies from a government that believes austerity is a four-letter word. Last time I checked, it was not.

We hear of plans to tightly manage discretionary spending, but the only tight management we see is from the growing PR and anger machines. If I hear "lowest net debt to GDP ratio" one more time as we climb to a \$96 billion debt, I just might have to return to university for a refresher on that statistics 101 course I took, where it is clear the Minister of Finance excelled and where the first textbook they gave us was *How to Lie with Statistics* by Darrell Huff. Anybody who's taken statistics in this province has probably had that book as one of their textbooks that they carried around, *How to Lie with Statistics*. We hear that, Madam Speaker, each and every day.

We read that our risks include prolonged market access issues even though this government led us, with their friends and chosen advisers Tzaporah Berman and Karen Mahon at the helm, on a rather enlightening journey of pipeline-approving social licence.

We hear that highly indebted households remain vulnerable to a faster than expected increase in interest rates, but then we have a government that doesn't think that the same principles apply to our provincial treasury, particularly with a downgraded credit rating, which we seem to face. I think many of us on this side of the House are worried we're going to see the next announcement from Moody's or DBRS or one of the bond-rating agencies on how this government is going to have to pay more to service that expanding and rapidly growing and irresponsibly growing debt.

We're reminded of the potential for strong growth in oil production even though the attraction of capital remains suspect and is predicated on market access growth while having been complicit in the death of Northern Gateway and Energy East, Madam Speaker. We can't grow it if we can't get it to market.

Madam Speaker, I consider myself an eternal optimist, a born-and-raised Albertan, entrepreneurially spirited. I've had an opportunity to thrive in this province, and I want to make sure that my children and my grandchildren have that same opportunity. I will continue to fight for a return to the Alberta advantage irrespective of who is at the Alberta helm. That is our responsibility as Albertans. But it is clear that this government's recovery built to last is but a weak PR exercise. It has turned me into not just a skeptic but a fierce detractor of the policies of this government, that can only be driven by misguided, irresponsible, myopic ideology, which defies, to me, the characteristics that have made Alberta the

best place to make a living and to have a great life, where everyone can reach their fullest potential.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I was somewhat hesitant because I thought you were going to say: questions under 29(2)(a). But it's not available at this time if I'm reading your expression correctly.

Madam Speaker, it's a fine day in Alberta. As an agriculturalist, as a farmer it's sometimes frustrating to be in this Chamber when I could be out at my farm, which is where I love and would be happy to be, but I also have a full and absolute responsibility to represent the constituents of the proud and diverse constituency of Drumheller-Stettler. It's my responsibility, and through my life I've done and tried to effect those responsibilities to the best of my ability.

It's a pleasure to be in this place as well to share my thoughts today on Bill 15, Appropriation Act, 2018. This bill is all about the budget, all about money, all about the government's inability to control spending, to control debt, and to control or not any sort of fiscal restraint instead of going towards critical, compassionate services that Albertans rely on.

I'm going to relate a historical quote made in 1935 – I believe it was 1935 – by the then Premier, William Aberhart, who said: if Albertans haven't suffered enough, it's their God-given right to suffer some more. Madam Speaker, I'm hopeful that Albertans, as we go forward with this commentary, will understand the direction that this government has taken on them, and given an opportunity to express their opinion, they will do so with full and forthright vigour.

Madam Speaker, this government would rather pay ballooning interest payments to big banks, and it's frustrating because there are lots of many different ways that this money could be spent. It's an absolute disgrace that the interest we are paying is more than most of the government departments' total budgets. It's seriously hard to comprehend how much damage to our kids and grandkids this government is doing. Imagine – simply imagine – how many schools and hospitals that would buy. Some members on the government bench know and have lived in the rural areas, and they know what it's like to be in rural, remote areas, where facilities like that can mean the difference between life and death.

How many seniors in my riding and others in rural areas have helped to build this province, not singularly in rural ridings but across Alberta? These people have helped to build this province, and they are the fabric and backbone of what and who this province is. Could this money provide service to them in their twilight years? Absolutely.

Madam Speaker, as a person who's lived within six miles of the social experiment known as Saskatchewan my whole life, I question: where is this province headed? Numbers don't lie. The debt-servicing cost in 2018-19 is \$2 billion; 2019-20, \$2.4 billion; 2020-2021, \$3 billion; 2023-2024, \$3.7 billion. That's with a capital B. It hurts this old head to think about some of those large numbers. I can't comprehend that. As I said, my son is in the process of taking our farm implements, and we're putting the crop in the ground. Many producers are understanding the extreme budgets that go into their farming operations, but they don't do it with a capital B. Some might be into six numbers but not seven or eight.

9:40

It's obvious, Madam Speaker, that these folks have no plans to pay down the debt, debt that may reach approximately \$100 billion by the 2023 term. One hundred billion, with a capital B. That's a lot of burden to saddle future generations with. By 2020 debt-servicing costs will simply exceed \$500 per Albertan, more than double what they were in '16-17. That comes courtesy of the Fraser Institute, which I know some of the members opposite take great umbrage to and make fun of.

Funnily enough, though, the government says that they have a plan. It's a plan, though, that they did not share with Albertans, much like how they failed to disclose their carbon tax to voters. I'm looking forward to this government in the next election disclosing their carbon tax plan as we go forward to an election. It'll be interesting to see Albertans' reaction to that.

When the federal government's carbon tax is set to increase, beginning in 2021, it will be diverted to general revenue. Madam Speaker, that's right, general revenue. It was right there on page 54 of this year's fiscal plan. It never mentioned that anything above Trudeau's \$50-a-tonne carbon tax would not be recycled back to Albertans through carbon rebates or green initiatives and that none of it would be sent to general revenues. The NDP promised that every cent of the carbon tax would be returned to Albertans. Remember that they mentioned that their carbon levy would be revenue neutral, but not so much now. Sorry, Martha and Henry; we forgot to mention that little nugget of information. Hopefully, that'll be on the front of the NDP election literature going forward in the next election.

That reminds me of something else that has been lost in the shuffle, Madam Speaker. Remember when the government opposite railed against the flat tax or how they vilified it, commenting on how it shortchanged Alberta? Well, the government increased those taxes across the board. In 2015 overall revenue from taxes brought in less than the flat tax did. Every year tax revenue fell short of this government's budget – every single year – not the greatest of records to hang your hat on. After all, it was the UCP and this opposition that told the government that this would be the result. Once more, the NDP failed to listen to common-sense advice. Their 20 per cent tax hike has resulted in, actually, less revenue and dragged down investor confidence.

Investors are fleeing the province. They can see through distractions and posturing. Remember that this government has had staff and members actively protest pipelines, the oil sands, and other energy projects. Not the PCs, not the Wildrose but the government, your government. Over \$30 billion in investment has left Alberta since the government, the NDP government, took power. Here are some examples, Madam Speaker. Murphy Oil sold its 5 per cent interest in Syncrude in April 2016. Statoil sold its Canadian thermal oil in December '16. Koch oil issued a letter to the AER requesting cancellation of their SAGD project in October 2016. Shell sold Montney and Deep Basin assets in December 2016. And it goes on.

Shell also divested oil sands assets to CNRL in March 2017. I know of CNRL because they actually have surface assets on property that I farm around, that actually became a disgrace because of low maintenance and poor weed control on their site. Should they be so kind, through their public resources people, to contact me, I'd be happy to disclose the LSD of that development – LSD means legal subdivision – and the marking of where the actual wellhead is. Marathon divested oil sands assets to CNRL in March 2017. ConocoPhillips divested the majority of their Alberta assets in March 2017. Madam Speaker, these numbers are alarming. They represent jobs, pipelines, and investment.

I have a good friend who drives a truck, and he hauls freight. One of his major occupations right now is hauling, as we call it, mobile iron, oil field assets, from a giant auction firm south of the city here to Texas, Louisiana, Georgia, Florida. This gentleman is on the road full-time. That's his job, hauling these development assets out of this province and to other economical locations.

Madam Speaker, I'd now like to touch on the Trans Mountain project for a moment. Despite the growing uncertainty surrounding that pipeline, the government is counting on its revenue in their projections. This pipeline is nowhere near a guarantee. In fact, the other day I saw a news article saying that there's a possibility that Keystone XL may actually become a development prior to Trans Mountain. That's an interesting change of outlook. The pipeline is nowhere near a guarantee of getting built, and if the pipeline is just delayed, it will negatively impact this government's surplus financial projection. In fact, Kinder Morgan is already restructuring their labour force on the project, with 18 people being laid off from it to be reassigned.

Job losses are nothing to scoff at. After all, according to Stats Canada's March 2018 job numbers in Alberta zero full-time jobs were created in March. That's not very many, Madam Speaker. The square root of zero is still zero. Any growth in part-time employment? Eighty-three hundred jobs. Sixty-one hundred private-sector jobs were lost while the public sector gained 3,200. At 6.7 per cent Alberta still has the highest unemployment rate outside of Atlantic Canada. Calgary has the third-highest unemployment rate of major cities, at 8.2 per cent.

Madam Speaker, I said at the outset that I've lived beside the NDP social experiment known as Saskatchewan my whole life. I happened to be doing some research, and a friend sent me some research regarding economies of the world. It would turn out that Canada is the 10th-largest economy on a global scale, by the information that I have. But it's interesting to understand that there is another jurisdiction that has an equal rate of economic growth and development. That's in one state, and it's called Texas. It's quite interesting that through policy it would make that kind of a difference. Not unlike Saskatchewan and Alberta, that were formed at the same time, Saskatchewan at one time had a greater number of people, greater amount of economic development than Alberta, but they chose at the time to take the CCF's supposedly visionary direction, and now we have 1.1 million people in Saskatchewan and 4.3 million or somewhere north of 4 and a quarter million people in Alberta.

Madam Speaker, for those of us that lived along the border there, as I have, we used to comment somewhat vociferously that the best thing ever for Alberta was Saskatchewan because some of the hardest working people and many of the people that we know who are committed to economic development are from Saskatchewan, but Alberta has received that benefit.

To try and be more realistic, Madam Speaker, the simple truth of the matter is that the NDP wants to tell Albertans how things are just great again, but Albertans are not buying it. The economics don't show that. This is a government that is deeply out of touch with everyday Albertans. In fact, Janet Riopel, the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce CEO, stated recently, "Are the difficult times truly behind us? That's not what I hear. Things on the ground appear to be still as much of a struggle as ever." That's from the *Edmonton Journal*, March 7, 2018.

While other similar energy-based economies recovered years ago, Alberta is still being held back by harmful policies from the NDP and the Trudeau Liberals. My friend from Calgary-Fish Creek so eloquently described Justin Trudeau as a fiscal hawk.

The investment in infrastructure is heading to business-friendly environments. Now, Madam Speaker, that's actually reversed in

this case. Saskatchewan is becoming a developmental leader, and I see that across the border. North Dakota, Texas, and Louisiana, where my friend hauls the oil field development iron coming out of this province, also are experiencing marvellous and excellent fiscal growth.

Madam Speaker, I'd be remiss if I didn't talk a bit about the effects all this debt is having on Alberta. Please let's revisit some previous points. We are paying almost \$1 billion annually in interest payments on the debt, and that's from Alberta Finance's 2017-18 second-quarter fiscal update and economic statement, page 9, for those of you who may be curious and for those of you who may be watching and following this closely at home. From the same document our debt is projected to reach \$70 billion by '19-20.

9:50

Most importantly, Alberta has now seen six – six – credit downgrades since the NDP took office. Moody's, Standard & Poor's Global, and DBRS are a few. Those are the three main credit-rating bureaus here. It's simply unacceptable that the government dismissed these actions as irrelevant. It's an accurate business thermometer of what's going on in the province. I don't think Albertans believe the government for a minute.

Madam Speaker, this budget is simply a mess. The government has now been trying to imply that because we vote against the budget, we are voting against funding police, firefighters, schools, and hospitals, and that's simply . . .

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

We are now on 29(2)(a). Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I will now recognize the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Dr. Starke: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure this morning to stand and speak to third reading on the appropriation bill, Bill 15. You know, I have now been around this place for just over six years, and I've seen a number of budgets come and go. I have found it interesting to compare and contrast how those budgets are presented and how they are framed. You know, I rather chuckled at this particular budget's very optimistic-sounding title, *A Recovery Built to Last*. No. The only thing that's going to last out of this budget is the debt that you folks have built. The recovery is still very, very fragile, but I will tell you that the debt you're building: that's solid. That's solid.

You know, we stand here during the debate, Madam Speaker, and we hear – it's really interesting. They talk about looking at a glass that is either half full or half empty. Of course, the folks on the other side, especially the Finance minister, would have you believe that though the glass is really only half full, it's really overflowing because things are going so well. On the other side the glass is half empty, but you have folks saying, "No. The glass is broken, and it's leaking," and the glass is still half full.

You know, one of the things we were taught when I was in veterinary school, the very fine veterinary school in Saskatoon, that this government has seen fit to cut the funding to – they taught us that sometimes you can look at exactly the same situation and come up with different conclusions. I think that's sort of what we're seeing right here.

You know, I'm reminded of what Lincoln had to say about this. Abraham Lincoln once said: we can curse the rose because it has thorns, or we can praise the rose because it has flowers. The thing of it is that this government has chosen to only look at the flowers, the Official Opposition is certainly highlighting the thorns, and then the reality of it is that we have over 4 million Albertans out there

who are wanting to see a balanced approach. They are wanting to see an approach that is going to be sustainable in the long run, an approach that is in fact going to take care of all Albertans, that is not going to leave Albertans behind. Certainly, this government's approach is not going to get us there.

Now, over the course of the last three weeks, when we were in estimates, by my count I attended all or part of 16 of the 21 ministerial main estimates sessions. I did that because I wanted to have the opportunity wherever possible to ask specific questions of the ministers. You know, it would be impossible in the 15 minutes that I have here to really summarize all of the things we learned from that, but there were a few highlights during the course of that that I do want to point out.

The Minister of Treasury Board and Finance once again touted the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio, and I asked him some questions about that. You know, he mentioned in his session of estimates that that is the measure that economists use to measure whether your debt is sustainable or not. I don't want to call down the economist profession. Economists are important people; they understand how the economy runs. But I also have heard that God created economists to make astrologers and weathermen look good. Economists make a lot of predictions, make a lot of forecasts, and the reality of it is that at some point those have to be mobilized. Those have to be actually put into some form of policy.

So when I see low debt-to-GDP ratio, well, you know, one of the problems is that Alberta has got a remarkably high GDP when you compare it to the other provinces in Canada. You know, the entire 2016 GDP by expenditure in Canada was something a little over \$2 trillion. The province with the highest GDP was the province of Ontario, with some \$794 billion of GDP and a population of 13 million. The second was the province of Quebec, with \$395 billion and their population of 8.1 million, roughly double Alberta's.

Despite that, Alberta's GDP comes in third amongst the provinces, not fourth as we would be by population, but in fact third. Alberta's GDP in 2016 was \$315 billion, just a little bit behind Quebec's, even though we have half the population of that province. We have less than a third of the population of Ontario, yet our GDP is approaching 40 per cent of Ontario's GDP.

Alberta's GDP, because Alberta is a productive place, is very high. If you're using debt to GDP as your measure, well, you've got a lot to work with there. Your denominator on that equation is really high, so you've got a lot to play with. Not only do we know that you've got a lot to play with on the denominator side, but you've also got a lot to play with on the numerator side of that equation, as was stated last night in debate by the Member for Calgary-Elbow. Now the terminology has changed from total debt to GDP to net debt to GDP, a subtle change but a really critical one to pretty up the numbers and make things look better.

You know, this is the kind of obfuscation that happens at budget time. I mean, I will say that it happened when we were in government, but these folks, Madam Speaker, have taken that to an art form. These folks have taken the obfuscation and the muddying of the waters in order to make things look good – they've taken that to a new level.

You know, the minister in his remarks also talked about, you know, that we wouldn't make deep cuts to income supports. Well, I hear fairly regularly from AISH recipients, who would really like to see this government actually do something about AISH payments, which haven't increased since our government increased them in 2012. They haven't indexed them to inflation, and those recipients on AISH are in fact falling farther behind under this supposedly compassionate government.

Let's look at some specific things, Madam Speaker, that this government has done that are clearly poor decisions. I have spoken

many times in this Chamber about the practice of siphoning away the tourism levy into general revenue. I asked those questions of the Minister of Culture and Tourism again this year. About a third of the total tourism levy, the money that is collected from folks that are staying in our hotels and motels and fixed-roof tourism properties across the province, is supposed to go towards the promotion of tourism in the province. It used to; 100 per cent of it used to go to fund Travel Alberta, the tourism department. Not a single penny of tax revenue, general tax revenue, went to fund tourism.

But now it seems that tourism is going to fund general revenue. Some 30 per cent of the tourism levy that is collected each year in fact is siphoned off into general revenue. We used to know what that return was. Back in the day we knew that every dollar spent on tourism in the province by the province returned some \$19.50 in taxation revenue to the province, never mind the economic activity. So for the last two years I've asked the Minister of Culture and Tourism: what is that number today? We were told, startlingly, last year that they've stopped measuring it. They don't know. They have no clue. They've stopped measuring it, and this is a quote: because that measurement was deemed to be not useful. Well, Madam Speaker, if you don't know what you're aiming at, you're always going to hit your target. These folks have no clue, zero clue of what they're aiming at.

10:00

You know, the other thing that bothers me about the way the tourism industry is being helped or, more correctly, hindered by this government: they always tout how it's an important part of their economic diversification, yet tourism spending was cut this year again, for the third year in a row. Tourism spending as a percentage of the overall Ministry of Culture and Tourism has dropped to 15 per cent of the overall ministry budget, the lowest level ever. People in the tourism industry are wondering why this government, that prides itself, supposedly, on economic diversification, has abandoned tourism, because that's what you've done. You have abandoned the tourism industry, so . . .

An Hon. Member: The numbers are up.

Dr. Starke: The numbers are down. The numbers are down. You know, once again, you folks love to say: oh, the numbers are up. No, they're down. A point of fact is that in every region of the province, with the exception of the mountain national parks, the numbers are down. They're down significantly, and the numbers for the province as a whole are down. The tourism levy is down, and it's because of the activities of this government.

Now, we talked a little bit and, certainly, the minister talked about the minimum wage. In the Labour estimates there was talk about how the government is very proud of this rush to the \$15 minimum wage. You know, virtually everybody has said: look, by all means, the minimum wage should go up. I support the minimum wage going up, but let's do it in a way that doesn't damage and cause hardship to already struggling businesses. Other jurisdictions that are going to the \$15 minimum wage in the United States aren't going to get there until 2022-2023, places like New York, places like California. But, no, Alberta under this government has to get there by 2018.

Then we find out that they don't even really understand the minimum wage. The Minister of Culture and Tourism during estimates said: well, most of the people on minimum wage in Alberta are single mothers. [interjection] Well, no, your Minister of Culture and Tourism said that most people in Alberta on minimum wage are single mothers – it's what he said – that 6.7 per cent of

those earning less than \$15 an hour identify as single parents. But to say that and to toss that out there and not have it challenged for its accuracy – members of Executive Council, members of the cabinet, that should know those numbers, are throwing out numbers just because they're thinking that nobody is going to actually challenge them on the accuracy of them.

You know, there are so many other things that this government tosses out there and thinks that it's not going to get challenged on. The Minister of Economic Development and Trade always likes to talk about how coal is a thing of the past. Well, explain that to the countries that are either building or planning to build 2,400 new coal-fired generation plants world-wide. I wish something I was doing was so going out of style that 2,400 plants were being built around the Earth.

You know, Madam Speaker, there are so many things about this budget that are wrong, but whenever you bring up some of the things – and the Minister of Health is very fond of this – there's always the blame on the past. I learned something a long, long time ago that I take rather great comfort in, and every time she does it, I smile, because the people who like to bring up your past and blame you for the past do that because your future and your present look a lot brighter than theirs.

I can tell you that the future of our province, I think, looks much brighter going forward, but it'll be brighter after this one-term NDP government is turfed out of office, this four-year sadness of interregnum that we will see from this government once it is gone and it is assigned, as it properly will be, to a footnote in Alberta's history. This government will be gone in about a year's time if they have the courage to call the election during the actual period or if they will hang on desperately till the fifth year, hoping, praying . . .

Ms Hoffman: That's pretty rich.

Dr. Starke: Yeah, I know.

. . . that the polls will get better, hoping and praying that those numbers will improve.

Well, Madam Speaker, a year from now, when Albertans, hopefully, are asked, this government will be reduced once again to this small corner of the Legislature, where they belong, and they will be punished, and they will be remembered as being the worst government in the history of Alberta. It is not a happy thing, necessarily, but a lot of that has been because of the fiscal mismanagement of this Minister of Finance. It's because of the decisions that have been made that perhaps are well intentioned, but they have turned out disastrously.

There's no question in my mind that when I look at the numbers in this budget, they are a mistake. The numbers here show that we're sinking into an ever-expanding pool of red ink, of debt, and because of that, I will be voting in opposition to Bill 15, in opposition to this budget. I certainly hope that it is this government's last budget.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak on Bill 15. Now, I was entertained to hear the Finance minister introduce this bill when this debate started this morning, and I was entertained by him talking about eliminating Conservative waste. Well, that's a great start for the minister because it's probably one of the few things where he might be partly right. There's always waste in governments, but I can assure you

that it's not been the Conservatives that have been making waste the last three years. Listen, every government that ever has been has created waste, every government that ever will be will create waste, but the current team in charge of the good ship Alberta are really setting a standard like has not been set ever.

This is the same crew that started off with a billion-dollar surplus budget, a \$7 billion rainy-day fund, zero net debt, and has taken all those good numbers and flushed them down the toilet to have massive \$8 billion, \$9 billion, \$10 billion a year debt. They actually brag about lowering their annual deficit from something in the nature of \$9.1 billion to \$8.8 billion. They actually went out and bragged that this was progress, that this is really making things better for Albertans.

Well, Madam Speaker, we're having a political convention this weekend. I'll admit that probably some of our party members will wake up on one or more of those mornings with a hangover, but that hangover will go away within a day or two for those people. Albertans, after this government, after this term even, will have a hangover – hopefully, that's the end of the government; we don't know yet – a financial hangover. Children who have never had a drink in their life and may never choose to have a drink in their life will have a hangover, a financial hangover, that will last decades courtesy of the people across the aisle in this government today.

Those children, not old enough to pay taxes yet, 20 or 30 years from now will be paying taxes on 2018 paper clips because this government is buying billions for operating expenses. They will be paying 20 or 30 years from now for 2018 light bulbs. They will be paying for photocopying from 2018-2019. They'll be paying that 20 or 30 years from now.

That is a financial hangover that is inexcusable, that those children do not deserve, and that is being visited upon those children by this Alberta NDP government in this budget and all the previous budgets. They're saddling our children and our grandchildren with obligations that will take decades to pay back for paper clips from 2018. Paper clips. Paper clips, Madam Speaker. [interjections] You know what? I can tell that I'm getting under the government's skin because the anger machine is cranking up, and I'm hearing lots of noise from across the aisle. [interjections] You know what? They're not entirely wrong because part of what the money is being borrowed for is schools. Great. I agree. Those are good expenditures. The problem is that the debt will last longer in some cases than the schools will. Borrowing to build schools can be a good idea, but you need to have a plan to pay it back before the school gets knocked down.

10:10

This government has no plan to pay it back, not even dollar one. In fact, the last report of the outgoing Auditor General said that for this government to balance the budget after 2021, the government would have to be prepared to bring in, 25 in a row, \$3 billion a year budgets. I actually gave the Finance minister, two days ago in question period, a chance to look like he knew what he was doing. I said: can you commit to that? He refused to answer the question.

I said: well, let's go to the end of your budget, then, where you promise – this is a great promise – to have Alberta \$96 billion in debt by 2023. That's a wonderful promise. I don't think most Albertans think that's a wonderful promise, but this government actually has the courage, in fairness to them, to lay out in black and white just how abysmal their financial record and lack of planning are. I asked the minister, "Are you prepared for 24 or 25 years in a row to have \$4 billion surpluses," again giving him a chance to say that he's got a plan, and he wouldn't do it. Even when given the opportunity to commit to a plan, they will not commit because they don't have one.

Again, back to where I started, the financial hangover they are visiting upon Alberta's children and grandchildren is inexcusable, it's abysmal, and it's beyond the pale. They just keep bragging about making the numbers worse for Alberta, and while the numbers in an academic sense, I suppose you could say, don't matter, in a real sense they do because that is going to mean, in years to come, fewer social services for Alberta's poorest. It's going to mean fewer schools for Alberta's children. It's going to be fewer doctors and nurses due to the debt obligations.

The debt-servicing costs alone, Madam Speaker, not including paying down any of the debt but just managing the interest rates as they are predicted: this year, \$22 billion; by 2021, \$3 billion; by '23-24, \$3.7 billion. Not one time but every single year from then on. And who's going to pay for that? Boys and girls in grade 8 today, boys and girls in grade 3 today, boys and girls that haven't hit kindergarten yet today will be paying for 2018 paper clips purchased by this government, with no plan to pay for their own paper clips, at least not till 2023-24.

It's not like I'm making this up. The Finance minister stood here in this House repeatedly and admitted that and was proud of it. He says that that's making Alberta better, paying for 2018 paper clips in 2024 if indeed he can do that. I'm going to take his word for it: some small surplus in 2024. Even with that, his shiniest, biggest, best, least believable promise is to be paying for 2018 paper clips in 2024.

How – how – can these people look at themselves in the mirror when they're putting a budget like that on the table? How can they tell Albertans that that is a good budget? How can they actually look at Alberta's children and say, "We care about you" when they're saddling them with such an unbelievable debt, \$23,000 per man, woman, and child in Alberta, no matter how young they are, by 2023-24? And a big part of that debt will be paying for 2018 paper clips. Wow. Good job. Good job. Madam Speaker, this government is really rocking it for Albertans, I have to tell you.

But it doesn't get any better. They talk about diversifying the economy. Well, again, nonrenewable resource revenue in 2018-19 versus 2021 is expected to go up from 8 per cent to 9.3 per cent. That's a good thing. But I will remind the government that if the percentage of nonrenewable resource revenue goes up as a percentage of the gross domestic product, that means diversification is going backwards. [interjection] Yes. Again, this is so bad. A person doesn't – you can't actually make this stuff up. In fact, you don't have to, because the government's own numbers actually say how bad it is, just how abysmal it is. This is disgraceful.

Albertans are not happy. According to Janet Brown's poll for the CBC, Albertans trust Conservatives more than the NDP on education, on health care, on the economy, on virtually every measure. I think there were a couple where they edge us out, but on the vast majority they trust us more already than the folks across the aisle. And with all due respect, we haven't been in government, so we haven't really been able to effect a type of change. It's not so much that we've been doing great; it's how bad this government is. It's how bad this government is. [interjections] I love that the anger machine is cranking up here. It's great. It makes me happy because it actually makes it clear just how the truth bothers this government, just how badly the truth bothers this government. [interjections]

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I said that we haven't been in government for the last three years. During those three years this government has made it so clear that they are so bad at their job that though we haven't had effective control over things because they've been in government, Albertans

trust us on almost every major issue. This government has messed up almost every major issue, not the least of which is this budget. My goodness.

Okay. If there's any Conservative waste left, then you should have had it cleaned up by now, but if you don't, clean it up. The NDP waste is astounding, \$8 billion, \$9 billion a year in deficit. The services are not better than they were three years ago. They promised a \$25 million surplus this year. They're delivering us a \$9 billion deficit. That's about 350-fold. That's the difference between a day and a year. That's how much this Finance minister is off in his estimates, the difference between a day and a year, approximately, the difference between one and about 350-fold, almost a day and a year. A day and a quarter versus a year: that's how much this Finance minister and this government have missed the mark.

That is incredible. That's incompetent. That's not paying attention to business. That is not caring about the future. That's thinking that if they spend their brains out, they might be able to get re-elected based on all the things they've bought if they could only distract Albertans from the massive financial hangover that they are inflicting upon them. It is massive, and there is no plan to pay it back; 2018 paper clips will be paid for we hope – and that's not even a sure thing if these people stick around – in 2023-2024. What a tremendously terrible track record, what a tremendously terrible legacy for Alberta's children and grandchildren to have to deal with.

While they're spending this money, they're not looking after rural crime. It's going through the roof, Madam Speaker. Though one of the most important things, the government can't get police officers out to rural Alberta. The crime rate is going through the roof, and this government, for all the money they're spending, can't make it better. When they're trying to provide officers, the best they can do is rob Peter to pay Paul, take officers from one detachment, leave it more short, and move them to another to leave it less short. Well, I'm glad they're trying something, but the fact is that when rural crime is that bad and their response is that toothless, for the \$8 billion, \$9 billion a year that they're putting Alberta into debt, you would think they could handle this thing and get the manpower there to deal with it. Even though they are spending far beyond what's coming in the door, they still can't provide the basic services.

There are a lot of important services the government provides, but it's been often said that one of the most important services the government provides is protection of the people, and they're not getting that right. No wonder Albertans trust us more than this government on rural crime and on urban crime and on health care and on education and on social services.

This crew wants us to vote for their budget, and when we don't, they will say that we don't support their education plan or their health care plan. They have no plan. They have a plan to spend more money and hope it's okay. To be fair, the government will educate Alberta's children – thank you for that – and there will be health care for Albertans, and thank you for that. But for the dramatic increase in debt and deficit that they're putting on Alberta's children and grandchildren, any improvement that they might claim to have pales in comparison to how bad they're leaving the financial situation.

Sooner or later Albertans know – this government may not, but Albertans know – the bill has to be paid. The bill has to come due. On behalf of the government I'll say to every kid in kindergarten in this province: sorry; you're going to get stuck paying in 2023-2024, or maybe when you have your first full-time job, paying for paper clips from 2018. That is symbolic of the incompetence of this budget, the incompetence of this government, the financial mess

they've put Alberta in in three short years – in three short years – and there's another year before Alberta gets to go to the polls and try to put a stop to it. I believe they will. I don't know. Again, I've often said that if I could predict the future, I'd be a lot wealthier than I am today.

10:20

Here's a note for the government: budgets don't balance themselves. Folks, you're going to have to do something different. Madam Speaker, the government is going to have to do something different. That's the lesson, and the lesson that we're going to try to teach today is by voting no. I've got a hunch that Albertans are thinking about whether they're going to teach a bigger lesson to this government a year from now because this government has not had their backs. This government isn't making life better. They're making it worse.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Just listening to the previous speaker talk about the budget and all the damage it's going to do to Albertans and to future Albertans, too, I think one thing that really strikes me is the \$96 billion of debt that we'll be in before this government is proposing that the budget will be balanced. Of course, this government hasn't been too accurate in any of its forecasts on anything financial, so I don't know if we've got a whole lot we can believe in with that. At that time we'll have \$3.7 billion worth of interest we're paying each year. Presently we're at \$1.9 billion worth of interest per year, and of course those are alarming numbers. Those are numbers of dollars that are spent to make bankers rich, not for bettering life for Albertans. This isn't making life better for Albertans.

This government, you know, with its budgets has created all these credit downgrades, which, of course, affect our interest rate. This government has brought in the carbon tax, that's made life more expensive for schools, for busing students, made it more expensive to run universities, made things more expensive for seniors, and made everything more expensive for families in Alberta. I can't believe that this government can stand here and say that they're making life better for Albertans when they're increasing this huge amount of debt and creating uncertainty in the marketplace.

For instance, in March, the month before last, no new jobs. All this economic pain that they've been inflicting, suggesting that there was going to be some sort benefit in the end, of course, is all just smoke and mirrors. They talked about how the carbon tax was going to get us a pipeline. Well, we've got two pipeline cancellations, and we still don't have a pipeline. This government is going to cause pain to B.C. residents, increasing the price of their fuel. They're offering to pay for this pipeline. They're doing all these things that the carbon tax was supposed to do, and it obviously didn't. They're driving investment away with increased taxes, with the regulations, with permit processes that take years and years and hundreds of millions of dollars for these companies. Of course, what do we have? We've got pipelines cancelled.

I wouldn't mind hearing the previous speaker just elaborate a little more again on some of these things, how this government says that they've got the backs of Albertans and, really, they don't.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate that. The member reminded me of some remarks I didn't get to here this morning. The government's plan is poor and untenable and

unbelievable as it is. It's going to require, in my view, more than one pipeline, and at this point they're not sure of getting one. If they get one, we'll cheer for them, and to be clear, if they get one, it'll be largely because they've finally taken the advice of our leader to put some pressure on the good folks from British Columbia and on their close personal friend Justin Trudeau. Nonetheless, we will congratulate and high-five the government if they get this pipeline built.

Ms Hoffman: I'll hold you to account.

Mr. McIver: Deputy Premier, you can count on me for that.

Ms Hoffman: Okay.

Mr. McIver: I will high-five you – you can take a picture – but I will also remind people that it's largely because you and your government took advice from our leader. But you will get your share of the credit, too. You will get your share of the credit as well. [interjections] No, no. We're cheering for you. We're cheering for you because we're cheering for Alberta. We're cheering for Alberta. Madam Speaker, when this government does actually do something for Alberta, we're with them a hundred per cent. That's why you'll find us in support of Bill 12.

But the point is that even if they get the pipeline, it won't be enough to balance their budget unless they do other things differently. To answer the hon. member's question, we will be there to give them advice on this, and for the sake of Alberta's children and grandchildren I sincerely hope we get this pipeline built. All of the negative consequences this government has wrought on Albertans' children and grandchildren will only be worse if they don't get the pipeline, because that pipeline is in the budget. Without the pipeline that \$96 billion debt will be bigger because the Finance minister has admitted they're depending upon the pipeline to keep the deficit down to \$96 billion. Now, that's an odd phrase: keep it down to \$96 billion. Who would have imagined that that would be a phrase used in Alberta at any point? But those are the depths that this government has taken this province to.

They haven't got a plan, which is why we're concerned. We sincerely hope they get a pipeline. We're going to help. We have been helping. We'll continue to help the best we can. But the government has taken us down such a wrong path that even if they get a pipeline, they'll be paying for 2018 paper clips in 2023-24.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? I will recognize the hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to request the unanimous consent of the Assembly to move the division bells to one minute for the next vote.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Acting Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, is there anybody that would like to close debate?

Seeing none, I will, then, put forth the question.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:27 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Carlier	Hoffman	Payne
Carson	Horne	Piquette
Ceci	Jansen	Rosendahl
Connolly	Kazim	Sabir
Coolahan	Kleinstauber	Schmidt
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Schreiner
Dach	Luff	Shepherd
Dang	Malkinson	Sigurdson
Eggen	Mason	Sucha
Feehan	McCuaig-Boyd	Turner
Fitzpatrick	McKitrick	Westhead
Goehring	Miller	Woollard
Gray	Nielsen	

10:30

Against the motion:

Cooper	McIver	Strankman
Drysdale	Nixon	Swann
Fraser	Orr	Taylor
Gotfried	Pitt	van Dijken
Hanson	Smith	Yao
Loewen		

Totals: For – 38 Against – 16

[Motion carried; Bill 15 read a third time]

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

Bill 9

Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act

(continued)

[Adjourned debate May 3: Ms McKitrick]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour and a privilege to stand in this Chamber and speak to Bill 9. I want to be very clear. My hope, for this country and other countries, is that there is never ever another abortion. It pains my heart that women have to go through that, but again, being a male, what do I know?

I am going to support this bill, but I want to paint a picture and the reason why I support this bill and the 50-metre setback, because I think it's important. I think back on my career as a paramedic. There have been three calls. We know that posttraumatic stress syndrome for some people just one day clicks in. It could be anything that triggers it. I'll tell you what: with those three calls that I attended, if I ever have posttraumatic stress syndrome, it's probably because of those three calls. Those three calls were where women self-aborted their child.

Now, you can't imagine walking into a bathroom where the floor is filled with blood and water and the patient is on the ground bleeding to death, and what you see is a fetus torn in two. This wasn't 50 years ago. This wasn't 100 years ago. This was in this past decade. No woman should ever have to feel alone. No woman should ever have to go through that. No paramedic, no firefighter, no police officer that comes across that call should ever have to see that. I will never ever forget that. I will never erase those memories.

When we speak in this House about these issues, they matter. We disagree on them. Like I said, I do not want to see a woman get another abortion ever. The way that I believe we achieve that, based on my faith, is that we work in the community with people. We

educate people. We care for people with compassion and understanding, with love. That is how we are going to get to the heart of this issue, trying to curb abortions through education.

I'm going to suggest to this House – to the government, to the Official Opposition, to everybody – that this is not a political football. This is not something where we are trying to pin somebody back and forth trying to earn votes. We're talking about women's lives. We're talking about the lives of children inside the womb. Let's show some compassion. Let's speak honestly about this. Again, no woman should ever have to go through the things that I've seen them go through and having people deter them at the doorway. Again, I think the people in these clinics are well intended to try and educate women, give them the best care, the best support. A 50-metre setback I think is reasonable. That's why I'll be supporting this bill. But, again, let's not make this a political football. Let's move on and vote on this bill.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and thanks to the Member for Calgary-South East. That's the reality, I think, of too many not only in this part of the world, but it's certainly even worse in other parts of the world where there is no access to abortion, where, whether it's through rape or unintended pregnancy or failed contraception, it is going to continue.

We're going to need to have abortion services, and as regrettable as it is for both the woman and the aborted infant, it is a reality of our current life. I think it's important, to focus on this bill, that we recognize that there are some very strong feelings – ideological, religious, moral, and personal convictions – on both sides of this issue and that there's no easy answer. What I have come to is a similar conclusion. If we want to reduce the complications of pregnancy, if we want to reduce the harm done by self- or amateur-induced abortions, we have to make those available, and we have to reduce the stigma associated with seeking these legal, legitimate health services.

I have a major clinic in my constituency called the Kensington clinic, and that's clearly what has brought this very much to the fore for me, the increased activity on the street around this clinic and the failure of injunctions to actually limit the rather painful and, I would say, at times vicious attacks on women who choose this difficult, difficult option, a choice, indeed, between her doctor, her God, and herself. For other people to impose other kinds of admonitions, judgments, shame is not appropriate. It borders on hate speech. It borders on significant harassment and bullying, psychological bullying that adds to the trauma.

One has to believe that in the services we are now providing there is adequate counselling, that there is adequate education, that there is adequate prevention programming coming through our sex education in the schools. To that point, I would applaud the government for its announcement recently on consent education, starting in elementary school. Wow. It's taken a long time to talk about consent and nonconsent in a healthy way with children and young adults. That's much needed, and I hope that that will reduce some of the unwanted pregnancies that we see currently in our society.

Just to summarize a few relevant items, B.C., Ontario, Quebec, and Newfoundland and Labrador have passed similar anti-harassment legislation. More than 75 per cent of abortions in Alberta are provided at either the Kensington clinic in my riding or at Woman's Health Options in Edmonton. The rest are done, a

limited number, in hospitals. Perhaps that's appropriate. We're not taking up beds, we're not taking up expensive hospital resources when this can be done fairly well and safely in clinics. People can be appropriately managed as outpatients in that context.

10:40

I also mentioned, as I will repeat, that court injunctions do not work. The opposition leader says: if people don't like what's happening on the street, they can take them to court. Well, if he doesn't like what's happening, he can take it to court. Let's see how often he wants to do that and how easy that is.

The number of surgical abortions, fortunately, has not increased over the last eight years. It's still around 14,000, and that speaks to a lot of work that we still have to do to try to educate, to provide access for low-income people particularly, who may not be able to get access or who don't understand enough about the complexities of contraception to seek these appropriately.

Certainly, it's unacceptable to have women harassed, whether verbally or visually with objectionable pictures and physical antics on the streets, or preached at or anything that adds to the burden that they're already dealing with. If there's anything that needs to change, it's greater access to abortion services in those areas that have very limited access. That's primarily the rural areas in this province, that really deserve to have better access in this critical time, when we want to have it done as early as possible in a pregnancy, when complications are the fewest.

I won't belabour the issue. This is a legal health service. The pressure must not be on the individual who is having to make this very painful and difficult decision. I guess the political nature of this has been reflected in some of what's happened in this Legislature, with the opposition walking out in a debate. But that's not helpful to the debate.

What needs to happen is that we reduce the stigma, that we acknowledge the importance of this service from the point of view of health and safety and acknowledge that nobody goes into pregnancy wanting to have an abortion. These are unexpected, unintended, and in some cases really impossible situations that women have been placed in.

It also speaks, I guess, to the need for our communities to be more supportive of adoption and assistance throughout pregnancy, especially for those low-income single moms that can't cope with more. Maybe that says that we need to do more in terms of our community supports for young gals, whether married or unmarried, who don't want to have an abortion but don't feel that the supports are there for them to carry on either as mothers or, in fact, to adopt out in a reasonable way.

To the bill, I don't think there's any question that most Albertans repudiate the harassment and the call for them to simply take it to court if they feel violated or intimidated by street protests. That's unacceptable. It's not the Alberta way. It's not the Canadian way. I certainly will be supporting this bill.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I will now recognize the hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

Ms Jansen: Thank you. I want to thank the hon. leader of the Liberal Party and Member for Calgary-Mountain View for his wise words. I appreciate everything he said. I thought it was very well crafted.

You know, it was a little over a year ago when I got a call from the executive director of the Kensington clinic, and she said to me

that she hoped we would be examining the issue of buffer zones because they had seen a ramping-up of incidents at the clinic, harassment of staff, harassment of clients. Her concern was that every time they called the police, the protesters disbursed, and then as soon as the police left, they came back. I'm not a hundred per cent sure of the timing, but certainly it's interesting to note how much more activity there was around abortion clinics in the last year, year and a half.

I came in to have a conversation about it, and to my absolute pleasure our Health minister was 10 steps ahead of me on this. Really, it felt great. You know, in the area of social issues I wasn't used to that in the past. Certainly, joining an NDP caucus gave me an opportunity to really sit back and admire the diligent work of fine members like our Health minister and the way she cared about this particular issue.

You know, I think the enforcement piece is an important one to emphasize because if you don't have repercussions for behaviour, that behaviour will perpetuate itself endlessly. I think the folks who go out to these places understand there are no repercussions, so they feel emboldened, and the numbers grow bigger. It is hate speech, and it is bullying. The women who go to that clinic to exercise their legal right in this country have every right to do that without someone standing on the sidewalk and shaming them, because those people who are standing out there have no idea what their circumstance is.

You know, it was a little over a year and a half ago that I attended a rather infamous policy conference as a leadership candidate in another party. As I walked up and down the hallway – this is well documented; I've certainly given interviews detailing this – I was chased by antiabortion zealots who called me a baby killer because I supported women's reproductive rights. Without exception these folks were all supporters of a particular leadership candidate. I remember saying to some of these folks in that hallway at the Sheraton in Red Deer: please stop this. But they wouldn't. They were relentless, and when one stopped, another would start. This went on and on. I know there are folks who knew this was going on in the room. The fact was that in this leadership I wasn't even talking about this issue. These folks showed up because they were a galvanized community that were given a lot of feedback and appreciation from a particular leadership campaign that made them feel that they had a candidate who was going to help them get to a point where abortions could potentially become illegal in this province.

I don't think it's any secret that when we came into the House and we were charged with doing what we were elected to do, to have a conversation and a debate about issues of importance to Albertans, folks on the other side fled as fast as they could rather than have that discussion. Let's be very clear. This is not about free speech. This is about a woman exercising her legal, hard-fought right to her reproductive choices without being bullied by a far-right conservative group who feels emboldened in this province because they have leadership that has told them that they are making headway on this.

You know, that PC policy conference was no mistake. The message was loud and clear at that conference. The social conservatives who gathered there gathered there because they had a candidate who was willing to echo their far-right, dangerous, damaging, antifemale sentiments. Going forward, we know that there's going to be another policy conference this weekend, and guess what's on the agenda? I will tell you that our friends on the other side of the aisle, helped along by their federal counterparts, who have made themselves crystal clear on this issue, all feel the same way. They are actively interested in eliminating women's reproductive rights in this province, and I cannot be happier to be

part of a caucus and cabinet and to work for a Premier who will fight tooth and nail to make sure that they do not have the opportunity to do that.

10:50

We've seen in federal circles the election of MPs in Alberta in the last couple of years in by-elections who had antiabortion groups come forward and claim credit for getting them into their jobs because they went out and actively sold memberships, and they're bragging about it. Antiabortion groups in this country are bragging about leadership on the other side of the aisle and about how happy they are that they have advocates for this.

I can tell you right now that Albertans understand the value of women's hard-fought reproductive rights, and we are not going to stand for this. Every woman who accesses that clinic and, I hope, more clinics in this province, more opportunities for women to access what they have every legal right to access – I hope not a single one of them in the future has to ever walk that gauntlet and face a line of shame from a group of people who not only do not want them to have that right; they will not discuss any options that would create a situation where they didn't have to do that, like comprehensive sexual health education with conversations about consent.

You know, the whole pro-life moniker to me is absolutely astounding because as we talk about social issues in this House, we are talking about pro-life issues. This isn't a matter of not being pro life. This is a matter of women's choice in this province. We've seen south of the border what happens when far-right activists get involved, and we have seen incredibly concerning stories about states who now feel emboldened to create incredibly damaging policy and legislation that absolutely erode a woman's right to an abortion. We have states where you can't actually access one anymore, and you have to travel somewhere else to get it. I know that folks that I have listened to in conversations when I was part of another party were hoping that we would get to that point here in Alberta.

I can say that not only am I wholeheartedly supporting this bill, but I just want to say that for the men and women in this caucus, who are standing up for women's reproductive rights, I could not be more grateful for all the speeches, for the diligence, for the thoughtfulness in crafting their messaging. That, to me, is the importance of an excellent political process. For folks across on the other side of the aisle I really hope that you understand that your constituents make up more than just the far-right folks that you likely spend most of your time with. There are a lot of women in this province, and they vote, and I sincerely hope that in the coming year they think very hard about who has their back and who doesn't.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hawkwood.

Connolly: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and I want to thank the member for her statement. It was very passionate, and I want to thank her for her activism and her support for women in this province and for women who are just trying to access their basic health care. She brought up a good point, that there are people who want to make it so people cannot access abortion and their rights within Alberta.

This is already a reality for some Canadians. For the longest time in P.E.I. women could not access an abortion. They had to go to another province. In New Brunswick I believe – I could be wrong – the only clinic has shut down, so women in New Brunswick have to go to another province. It's horrible, Madam Speaker. When

women don't have access to abortions, when they don't have access to safe health care, a lot of women will do it themselves, and when that happens, women die.

I would ask the member if she wants to expound on this situation and how in many countries, even in Canada, this often happens.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Ms Jansen: I want to thank the member. You know, it's interesting. That triggered something. I remember having a conversation when we were discussing Bill 10, the original Bill 10, which ultimately made gay-straight alliances mandatory in the province where people asked for them. One of the comments from the people that didn't want to see this happen was: well, if kids want a GSA, they can go to court and ask for one. That was actually part of the conversation. My former colleague on the other side of the aisle is nodding. He remembers that conversation. So why don't we just let someone go to court and ask for it if they want something? We are legislators in this province. It is our job to create the law and the policy that protects people. We don't make a 15-year-old kid go to court to get a GSA any more than we need to make a woman go to court to have access to her legal right in this country.

You know, I've been thinking a lot lately about the turn towards the right in this province and how there seems to be a narrative out there about really espousing a lot more social conservative policy and ideas. It comes from a faction of people who now have a leader that represents those ideals to them. The concerning thing for me is that as we discuss what important policy looks like that protects citizens in this province, we are having conversations about how to create punitive policy for people and not supportive policy for people.

In addition to Bill 9, the buffer zone bill, and the other pieces of legislation and policy that we're working on, I think it's important for us to understand that in addition to this conversation we have to talk about how we support women better so that they don't need to do this. Nobody is pro-abortion. We are pro choice, and that is a choice for a woman to have autonomy over her own body. The fact that we are even having to have this argument in this House is a bit surreal to me. This is not a fight we should be having anymore. We should have moved beyond it. The conversation we should be having now is: how do we support Albertans with comprehensive sexual health education so that they have every tool at their disposal so that they can make healthy choices about their own lives? That's the conversation we should be having.

I hope that when we get to the point where we talk about curriculum changes, which are not the bogeyman, that encourage us to create healthier programs in that area, the folks across the aisle will be a little more present. If they are so against this, they should support the other.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak on Bill 9, and I rise to speak very much in favour of this legislation. I believe in a woman's right to choose. I am pro choice because I believe in a woman's fundamental right to access basic health care at a time and place and manner of her choosing. I've always believed in that because it's not up to me or any other man or any other person to tell a woman what she should do with her own body. Women have a right to access basic health care and to do so without fear of intimidation or harassment.

11:00

I understand and respect that there are those who have an opposing view, and they are entitled in a free and democratic

society to have those views just as a woman is entitled to have access to basic health care without harassment. Free speech and free access to health care are not in any way mutually exclusive, and I was pleased to see when this bill was tabled that the government struck an appropriate balance, that the buffer zone was 50 metres, not a kilometre. It's consistent broadly with other legislation in other parts of this country. It is defensible in court. In some areas it goes slightly farther than other provinces. In some areas it does not quite as far as other provinces, but in my estimation it has struck a very proper and appropriate balance, so my kudos to the government for doing that.

You know, to those who would say that bill isn't necessary because all you need to do is go to court to get an injunction, I've done some research and had some conversations on this bill, and I understand that those injunctions, in addition to being costly, inconvenient, and time consuming, are also not consistent from one jurisdiction to another. I understand that in Edmonton the injunction does not cover the public sidewalk where women and their families and supporters would come and park their vehicle on the public road, so protesters can be right there, barring them from even exiting their vehicle, and the injunction in Edmonton doesn't cover that. Interestingly, apparently in Calgary it does, but even still, there are some inconsistencies. That is a problem that needs resolving, and this Assembly absolutely has the power to do that.

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

You know, there are those, like I said before, who would consider themselves to be, I guess, "pro life" would be the term that they would choose to use to self-describe. That is a view that is allowed to them, of course, in a free and democratic society. But if there are those in the Official Opposition who hold those views, I will not suggest you should – well, I would suggest you should change those views, because they certainly don't match mine and I don't think they're helpful for women who would choose to exercise their rights over their own bodies, but you're entitled to that view. I would, though, expect that if you hold those views, say so on the record. Let's use the Legislative Assembly of Alberta for what its purpose is. If you feel that this bill isn't necessary, if you feel that the laws that exist in this province are appropriate, then say so. Be on the record and have the guts to do that.

Unfortunately, it looks like we have an Official Opposition who, if news reports and public statements are to be believed, will choose not to vote at all on this bill. I think that's an absolute abdication of your responsibility as a legislator. You're letting down your own constituents. You're trying somehow to play some middle ground, and I don't really quite know what the game is that you're playing.

The claim that this is simply a political trap for the Official Opposition to fall into: well, you know, based on what I've said previously and my understanding in doing some research and in talking with women and with stakeholders and just friends of mine is that this bill is absolutely needed. It is only a political trap because the UCP has made it a political trap. They've decided that through their response to this. Frankly, the walkout when the bill was originally presented at second reading was one of the most remarkable and shameful things I've ever seen in this Assembly. So I would encourage the UCP, when the bill comes up for the vote later today, to reconsider, to be on the record with your views. There is no abstaining in life, and this issue is no different.

Access to abortion services is something that we need to look at in terms of access not just in the big cities, in which there is reasonable access. In rural areas it's less so, and I was pleased to see reports that the minister is working actively to expand access to those services closer to where women need them.

I'm also pleased to see the Member for Calgary-Mountain View talk about prevention, talk about consent and the importance of teaching consent in school, the sex ed curriculum. A good, robust sex ed curriculum allows women and men to understand contraception, to understand their choices, to hopefully make good choices with their lives such that abortion would not be necessary. It will be in certain cases, either through mistakes that happen or through some very, very tragic and trying circumstances, and women will have to make that difficult choice. So prevention and sexual education and contraception, while important, are not the total answer.

I guess as I wrap up my comments in terms of the need for this legislation, I just want to read a direct quote from someone I had asked about this. I'm just going to read exactly the words that she said to me.

As a woman the most concerning thing about anti abortion protesters is their sense of entitlement over my time, my body and my agency. It is no one's business what a woman and her doctor decide is the best health care choice for her. I believe whole heartedly in free speech but it cannot include harassment.

Again, remember that these are the words of the woman who sent me this e-mail.

I do not condone characterizing seeking an abortion as a "vulnerable time in a woman's life." It can also be a relief and or liberating or sorrowful. It's not up to anyone to characterize abortion for a woman. Each woman's experience of abortion is unique and the "vulnerable" trope feeds into a characterization of women being weak and needing help.

The "debate" about abortion belies an inherent desire to control women and their behaviour. The misogyny behind [it] runs very deep.

Mr. Speaker, I think that's probably the best place to end. There's no question that the bill is needed to protect a woman's fundamental right to exercise choice over her own body.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing and hearing none, any other members wishing to speak to Bill 9? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek.

Ms Woollard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased with a lot of the things that have been said so far on this topic about Bill 9. I'm of the age that I remember very clearly a time when abortions were not legally allowed. I remember the dilemma that young people I knew went through in making the decision whether to terminate a pregnancy or not, what the choices were, what the dangers were. These were well-educated people who knew what their decision could mean in the long term. It was very important, and it was very thought provoking and worrying.

Now that it is seen as winning that particular battle, not meaning that everybody would rush out and change the way they did things but that it would take one – having the option to have a legal abortion meant that people could make their decision with less worry about their future such as: would they have one? It is a matter of choice, as has been said many times. It gives women – it confirms their ability and their right to have a decision over their own actions, over their own body. This is something that the other half of the population has never really seemed to think should be an issue, but for women it's been something that they've had to fight long and hard for.

Then to have the situation now, where the right is there to access a legal abortion but the means of acquiring it are impeded by a lot of negative voices and people who want to stand in the way? They're not invited. There is no consent there. These are people who are unwanted obstructors of a legal procedure. This is simply

unacceptable any way you look at it. This is a violation of human rights.

11:10

I'm trying to think of situations in which people might think this would be acceptable, which it would be clearly, legally not. I'm thinking about when women first started acquiring postsecondary educations and some people objected to that, and it was clearly wrong, clearly a biased way of looking at things, gender biased, and that was overcome. To think right now, in 2018, of people standing in the road of a woman going to university is just unimaginable. But in some countries, of course, it could happen, and we think of those places as being places that need to have a lot of work done on their human rights legislation and their way of thinking about things.

To think that right now in this country where we live people are, as I said, feeling entitled to harass and castigate, insult, shame, embarrass people that are already going through one of the most difficult decisions, one of the most difficult stages of their lives, something that no one wants to be in a position to feel like they have to do – this is a choice that was made. They're doing it. It's difficult. And then they have this added heap of humiliation on top of that. It's just unimaginable. When I think about anyone I know – my daughter, a granddaughter, a friend – having to go through that, I think, you know, how horrific.

This should not be allowed anywhere, nor would anyone in this Chamber think that it was acceptable for people, like I said, members of our family, our friends, to treat them in that manner if they made a decision that someone else didn't like. Really? If you don't like someone else's choice or behaviour, legally allowed behaviour, or decision, that you're going to have the right to do that I find so absolutely, horrendously objectionable.

Yeah, that's really about it. I think this bill goes a huge way toward stopping that practice. Hopefully, some people who, like I said, have thought that they had the right to get in the way of other people's decisions maybe will sit back and do a little thinking about their own behaviour now. It would be nice.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing and hearing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 9? The Member for Calgary-East.

Ms Luff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't think I really have too much to add to this conversation that hasn't already been said by many folks in this Assembly. It's heartening to hear support and understanding from men and women, whether or not this is something they've experienced.

I just, first, want to take the opportunity to say thank you to all of the women in this caucus and outside of this caucus who fought this fight when it needed to be fought. I'm lucky that I have grown up in a time in Alberta and in Canada where I always knew that abortion was something that I could access if I needed to. That wasn't always the case, as has been illustrated by some of the other women here. I know that it was a hard fight and that it was fought at a time when women did not have the equality and did not have the equal respect in society that we are fortunate to have today. We're still not as far as we need to be, but we're getting there. So I just want to take the opportunity to thank all of those women and doctors and health professionals and the men who supported them for fighting the fight to make sure that abortion was something that we could have legal access to here in Canada.

I'm also fortunate – and this is something that has been brought up here before, that no one wants to have an abortion. What are some of the things that we can do in order to prevent the need for

that to happen? One of the things, that has been mentioned previously, is good-quality, comprehensive sexual health education in school. I was lucky when I was a teacher that I had the opportunity to bring in the Calgary Sexual Health Centre to do the sexual health education in grade 8 at my school. They did an amazing job, and it was something that a lot of the girls – I taught at an all-girls school – didn't have access to at home. It wasn't something that their parents talked about, so it was an opportunity for them to really be aware of what their options are and to learn and to ask questions in a safe environment.

I was lucky that I was the recipient of incredible sexual health education, which I know was not universally the case in the '90s, when I was going to school. I'd like to give a shout-out to Ms Gamble and Ms Perry, who were my grade 8 physical education teachers and who did an incredible job of really just good, comprehensive sexual health education. They made it possible for me and armed me with the knowledge and the tools necessary so that this wasn't something that I've ever had to go through. I thank them for that, for giving me that opportunity and that knowledge, that I didn't have to worry about this being something that had to be an option for me.

I really appreciated the quote that the Member for Calgary-Elbow read from the woman who wanted to express that we need to stop framing women who choose abortion as victims. I'm not one to say why women are choosing abortion. The reasons that women might choose this option are as varied as women themselves. For some women, this might be an incredibly hard decision; for others, it might be a relief. But I'm not one to be able to characterize their choice. All I know is that this is a choice that's available to them, and they should be able to exercise it free from harassment, as has been mentioned.

The argument for this bill is simple. It's that any woman who chooses to access this legal health procedure should be able to do so in a manner that is free from harassment. They don't deserve to be filmed. They don't deserve to have things thrown at them. They don't deserve to be shamed. They don't deserve to be yelled at. These are all things that happen regularly, so this is a bill that will help women access a legal procedure free from harassment, plain and simple. There's not really too much more to it than that.

If you could imagine for a second a comparison that has been drawn in a somewhat ironic sense by women in the United States and sometimes here. If this was a protest that was happening regularly outside a vasectomy clinic, you would be hearing about this. This would not be allowed. It wouldn't be something that was considered. But that's a health procedure that men are entitled to choose and is legal, and they're entitled to do that, and we don't see people outside protesting that. What this gets to the heart of is the fact that people who oppose this are fundamentally opposing women and women's rights. It's just as simple as that. It's the kind of thing that really shows. It's like, you know, your misogyny is showing if this is something that you oppose, because you wouldn't oppose it if it was a man, plain and simple.

I also, you know, in my remarks, like to try to address questions that the opposition has – and I think that other folks in this House have done it fairly well – because it appears that the main problem that the UCP has with this bill is that they're claiming that we're using it as a political ploy. I can say, like many of the rest of us, that I was fortunate to go on a tour of the Kensington clinic that the Member for Calgary-Bow organized – I think it was well over a year ago, possibly two years ago at this point – and this was a concern that they had. It was a valid concern. The health professionals who worked there and the women who were accessing the service were seeing increased harassment. This was something that they came to the government and asked for.

The other side likes to talk about consultation. Well, here we go. We consulted with people. They asked us for something that was reasonable, and we're doing something about it. So it is not a political ploy. It is something that was asked for by the men and women who are providing the service, so we're doing something about it. You know, I think it's fair to say that it is absolutely not a political ploy. It's something that is reasonable. We're not impeding anybody's free speech.

Also, I would say to the members that, like, I believe in this democratic institution, and I believe in this House. I believe that if your constituents really oppose this bill, then you have an obligation to stand up and tell us about it. I've got some letters from people who have opposed this bill, and I've responded to them. It's not a large number of people, but I do have people. If you really feel like you're adequately representing your constituents by saying that the majority of them oppose this, then, you know, I don't begrudge your right to get up and do it. I like to think that freedom of speech is important, and that extends to our job as MLAs to stand up and represent our constituents here in this House.

I believe I will conclude my remarks there. I'm supportive of this piece of legislation, and I would encourage everyone else to do so as well.

11:20

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing and hearing none, are there any other speakers to the bill? The Minister of Culture and Tourism.

Miranda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to this bill because it has many things that have resonated with me as this bill moves through, and the discussions that we had both in caucus and in cabinet were very revealing as to the nature and the spirit with which we approach this piece of legislation.

When I was 17 years old, I had many good friends but one very close friend who told me one day – actually, we were having a conversation, and it just so happened that the conversation took it to the place where I was feeling comfortable enough to tell her that I was gay. Her reaction was, first, shock and then laughter, and she said, basically, “Yeah, I kind of knew.” And I was like: “Really? That's great.” And we laughed a little bit, and then she started crying. I asked her what was wrong, and she said to me, “I'm pregnant.”

Now, at 17 – she was the same age as me – I don't know that it was something that she had really thought about or something that she had considered, but definitely when she talked to me, she just didn't know what to do, and she didn't know where to go and find information. You have to remember now – I'm dating myself – that these were the days before the Internet was available and before information was readily at the hand tips of somebody's cellphone. You know, you had to go through a phone book, if anybody remembers what those look like anymore.

The conversation that she and I had was very impactful to me, and I just listened to what she was telling me. At the end of the conversation I simply said to her: “Listen, I love you. If you need me to help you in any way that I can with this child that you may have, I'm there. We'll get an apartment somewhere, move in.” It was always something that I wanted to have, a family. I'm blessed to have them. At that time I knew that I wanted to have a family, and I said, “I'm ready for that.”

But I also said to her, “If you need me to accompany you to an abortion clinic, I'll do that, too.” She said: “Tell me what to do. Give me your perspective. What would you do if you were in my place?” I tried for a second to put myself in her place, and I just simply couldn't because it was really not anything that I had any

say whatsoever on. It was her decision, and one decision that over a period of a few weeks she agonized over, over and over again. We would talk, and she said, “You know, I think I'm going to keep this baby.” Then an hour later she was changing her mind, and she was very, very heartbroken about this. The agony that she went through is not something I wish on anybody. The agony that she felt was in everything. Her personality changed. Of course, it's a very impactful to thing to think about.

Now my daughter is 21 years old. I mean, I've raised this child, and I've seen her, and I'm so very proud of the young woman she's become. As you know, we have three young babies in our caucus. Being a parent is a very, very difficult thing, right? But not everybody is ready to be a parent at any given time, and it really does take a lot of soul-searching.

That process that a woman goes through, imagining what she must evaluate, what she must think about, what she must consider when she's making that decision, should not be influenced by outside forces that are constantly bombarding her with these awful messages. As recently as a little over a year ago there were pamphlets delivered to my home of very graphic pictures with respect to abortions, and I was very deeply disturbed. I remember having this conversation with my daughter. I said, you know: “What does this mean to you? How are you affected by this?” She was the one who brought the mail in. She said, “I don't know why this is even allowed.” I said: “Well, it's freedom of speech. That's what it is.” She said: “I understand that, but it's not something I would want to see. Imagine if I was going through that process myself. Like, how would this help me to make a decision? It wouldn't.”

In fact, getting back to the original story, my friend – well, actually, you know, it doesn't really matter what her choice was. The point is that she made a choice. She had that right. She had absolutely that right, and the only thing that I should be allowed to do is to provide her unconditional support in any choice that she makes. The only thing that anyone needs when they're going through something like that is to have information that is scientific, that would allow information to get to that point where she has all the facts. Then you step back, and you allow that process to take place.

I don't for a second believe that a single women who has had that procedure done has done it just because she woke up that day and decided she was going to have an abortion. The thought of that doesn't even cross my mind. It has to be something that is a complete turmoil spiritually, physically, all kinds of things.

From my perspective, when we're talking about this, every time I've marched in a pride parade, there have been people holding signs saying: God hates fags. I've seen it. Every single parade, somebody is usually standing there and doing that. Frankly, I could do without that. Seriously, I really could. But there is that freedom of speech, and I respect that, and I understand that they have the right to their position and to their opinions however wrong it may be in my opinion. However, they do have that right.

The other thing, though, is that in this situation I am not making a life-altering decision. I am choosing to express myself in a pride parade. A woman walking into an abortion clinic is making a life-altering decision, and that decision needs to be made in safety and in the absolute most dignified manner possible. I cannot, in my mind, ever be supportive of anybody who does not understand that a woman's most basic human right is the right that she has over her own body. It is simply not acceptable to dictate what she may or may not do with her body.

Some people out there have a lot of interest in what happens with people's, I guess, ultimate autonomy over their body. I mean, it's both curious and peculiar at the same time. You know, I really don't

think I'm that interesting, to be honest with you, but apparently some people really care about who I sleep with. Frankly – you know what? – that is nobody's business. It is something that when we come down to it, again, every time we have these kinds of discussions, all of a sudden it becomes a political issue. It becomes politicized, and this is the most unbelievable thing for me because a person's human rights should never be something that becomes political. Unfortunately, we have folks in this province, some of them sitting across, who would deny people like me access to a GSA. When I was younger, I wish I had had them. Quite honestly, my life would have turned out very differently.

Mr. Eggen: I got it going as soon as I could.

Miranda: Thank you, brother. I appreciate that.

The thing is that a woman has no fewer rights than I do to exercise the choices that I make. A woman should always have access to information, medical support, the ability to exercise that autonomy over her body at every step of her life.

It doesn't stop here. We need to continue working because there are many, many issues that we need to resolve, but on this particular issue I have absolutely no problem whatsoever to say that I am incredibly proud of the work that my colleague the Minister of Health has been doing. She has sat down, and she's done what every human being ought to do. She sat down, and she listened to women, and she heard what they had to say. She sat down and heard what their concerns were. She sat down and heard why this was important. Then she brought it to our cabinet and to our caucus, and we had a discussion. I was so proud of the conversations that were taking place, because not one person said: this is wrong. Everybody, in fact, said: we need to move this, and we need to ensure that we're creating a safe space for women. That is why we're here today, because of all the conversations that we've had and all the information that we've gathered and all the folks that we've talked to.

11:30

Of course, I've also received, as did the Member for Calgary-East, e-mails, and I've explained that this is the reason why we're doing this. Some of these e-mails were very misinformed because they were, again, being generated out of sheer misunderstanding or perhaps misrepresentation of the facts, intentionally done, to the point where, you know, they were asking me, "Why are you banning people from protesting?" I said: "No. This is going to be a 50-metre buffer zone. People can still protest. They still have their right, but their right to protest should not impede a woman's right over her body."

This is not the oppression Olympics here. What we're talking about is every Albertan having access to medical services. Every Albertan has that right universally, so if these services are legal in this country and there is a way for a woman to receive them without putting her body at risk – you know what? There are places, like the country I'm originally from, Nicaragua, where abortion to this day is still illegal. I can tell you, from conversations with my mother, that there are still young women who die because these abortions are performed not in the most hygienic way. It's not done in a clinical setting, and unfortunately many end up suffering from sepsis and subsequently dying from the infection. Is that really what we want for the women in our province? I don't think so. If that's where the folks across the way are going, I'm sorry, but that's just absolutely wrong, reprehensible, and I cannot even – there are a million other words that I could use, but it's just something that I would never stand for.

I am very blessed to have been raised by strong women who, without even realizing, were raising a feminist in my family, and I'm very proud of the strong women in my family. I have no reason whatsoever to doubt that they have every capacity and ability to make those choices for themselves. That commitment that I made to my friend many, many years ago is the same commitment that I made to my daughter. I have had this conversation with her because I think that as a parent you need to have these kinds of conversations. I've always said that this is something that could happen. "If you're ever yourself in that situation, know that you can come and talk to me because what you'll hear from me will be, in fact, three things: I love you, I will help you if you decide to have a child, and I will be the one to drive you to an abortion clinic and walk through whatever it is I need to walk through with you and hold your hand if that's what you need." Those are the things that I can do as a parent.

Today we're talking about legislation that will actually do that for every single woman in this province, allowing her to walk with dignity, allowing her to access medical services which are legal in this country without anybody obstructing their access, without anybody challenging their decision, and without anybody making them feel worse than they already do, because they have made a very tough decision at that point. I am very proud to see our government stand up for women in our province. I personally have, like I told you, dealt with this issue at a very early age. I've learned so much since then, and I'm sure that there's a lot more that I could learn. I will be one of the many, many Albertans who will stand with women in this province and say to them: your body, your choice.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing and hearing none, Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to be in the House today speaking to Bill 9, unfortunately as the only conservative who will actually be speaking to this bill at all. It's disheartening that there is not a single conservative voice in the House that'll be speaking to this bill other than myself. That's unfortunate. I think we have a duty as MLAs and elected officials to speak to legislation regardless of whether we like the bill or not.

On this side of the House we vote against a lot of government bills, but at least most of the time we show up to debate it. [some applause] Well, don't give yourself too much applause. You skipped the debate on the motion I had on Monday. But we'll have to give you a pass on that.

This is an important piece of legislation. You know, some have argued it's just political, meant to raise the issue of abortion, which is a divisive issue that a lot of folks don't want to talk about. But, on the other side, there is a genuine good intention to the bill as well.

You know, being a man, I am never going to be faced with the decision of whether or not to have an abortion. That's, I suppose, a blessing because it's got to be one of the toughest decisions a woman could ever be faced with in her life, and I can only imagine that for most people that's not going to be an easy issue. What we think about it morally can be very different than what we think about it legally and politically. You might believe that it should be entirely open and accessible legally, but you also might have moral questions about it personally, and that is a moral question for someone to address between themselves, their doctor, and God. When a woman makes that decision, I think we need to support her, love her, be there for her, and help her make the best of the decision whether we agree with that decision or not.

Now, my wife used to live in Kensington in Calgary, very close to where the main Calgary abortion clinic is, and she can't recall

ever seeing protesters there. There certainly have been protesters, but it's not a very common occurrence.

Dr. Swann: It's actually very common.

Mr. Fildebrandt: My colleague from Calgary-Mountain View says that it's very common. I've never seen it myself, but I take him at his word. There have been protesters there, but I don't believe it's a daily occurrence.

But I do believe that those protesters are not doing themselves or the cause they stand for any favours. The vast majority of pro-life Albertans that I know detest the idea of standing outside of an abortion clinic and protesting not abortion but protesting the women themselves. That is very different. That's personalizing it, and it's not compassionate, and frankly it's not very Christian. Those folks who choose to stand outside of a clinic and protest are not just protesting something they disagree with; they're protesting the women themselves. They're not saving a fetus, as they might hope, and they're not advancing their cause. I think it's an absolutely detestable way to make your point.

There is merit in legislation that will protect women from undue harassment or intimidation or even stalking, but I believe that legislation needs to strike an appropriate balance. All legislation is a balance. No legislation is purely black and white, as much as we frame most things as black and white, and I'm guilty of that on many things. I see economics a bit more black and white than these kinds of issues. These kinds of issues require a very delicate balance, especially between the need to balance protecting women and their access to health care on one side and protecting freedom of expression and assembly on the other.

I believe it was John Stuart Mill – I'm sure the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster will correct me if I'm wrong – who said: I may disagree with you, but I will fight to the death for your right to say it. I know I'm quoting and getting the person wrong as to who said that.

11:40

You know, it is so important. If you support freedom of speech, you support freedom of speech that you disagree with. It's always easy to support freedom of expression and assembly for speech that you agree with. The real test is if you'll support it when you disagree with it. I disagree with the people who protest outside of abortion clinics, but I will defend their right to speak. At the same time, they don't have a right to harass anybody. They don't have a right to film anybody. They don't have a right to scream at people or to block entrances. Those are not reasonable things.

Much of this is already covered under the Criminal Code and court injunctions. The Criminal Code already prohibits harassment and intimidation, threats, and assaults. Now, some have argued that the police can't always be there. That's a fair point, but passing a law saying that they can't stand there in the first place isn't going to particularly change the frequency of the police being there. There is no other law that I can find that forbids persuading or informing other people regarding a moral or political issue. The bill prohibits expression not based on form or place but based on content.

Now, you have to forgive me. Those of you who have had to hear me drone on in private know that I've made a lot of Roman references lately. I'm listening to a very long, extensive podcast on the history of Rome. In it they describe the founding of the 13 laws. This is when the Romans finally codified their laws during the early republic or the midpoint of the republic. These were 13 permanent laws that would be cast in bronze and mounted in public places. They were cast in bronze because these could not be changed. These were, effectively, a sort of constitution in a way. One of the most

important laws was that no law could be passed that targets an individual. Laws had to be general and broad. Now, they didn't always live up to that, certainly, but it was a principle that they had.

This is a law being proposed that is overly specific. It targets one group that I think broadly most of us don't agree with. I'm sure there is probably a wider range of views in the House and in the public in general on the topic of abortion, but I think almost all of us agree that protesting outside of an abortion clinic is an outright cruel and nasty thing to do. But a law should not target a specific group because we disagree with their political views. If we believe that a bubble-zone legislation is necessary to protect people from harassment and intimidation or being blocked from entering a place, then we should have a law that applies more broadly, that applies to protecting the rights of anyone to enter and exit a place, that they can't be blocked by abortion protesters or, say, union picketers, that if they're trying to enter a restaurant, they can't be screamed at by activists.

Now, these things vary in how important they are. I think that an abortion clinic is a particularly more sensitive issue, but laws need to apply in general and not target one specific group whose social or political views we might disagree with.

I've tried to come up with wording for an amendment that would adequately amend this bill to keep in place the protections that the Minister of Health is proposing for women trying to access an abortion clinic but that would apply more broadly to pretty much everything. We have some basic laws around protesting: that you can be there but can't harass people, that you can't block people, that you can't film them, et cetera. But Parliamentary Counsel informed me that that amendment would be too extensive and beyond the scope of this bill, so I would not be able to adequately make it.

Instead, I'm going to propose a reasoned amendment. I have five copies here for distribution. I'll hand these to a page here.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, if you can just wait until they start distributing.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Yeah.

The Acting Speaker: This will be amendment RA1.

Please proceed, Member.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have tried to propose an amendment that would work within this bill that the Minister of Health has proposed so that I would be able to support it. It actually wouldn't have changed too much of the actual content of the bill as it applies to the intent she is trying to achieve, but I wanted to vastly broaden its scope so that this would not target any one social or political group whose beliefs or views we may have issues with.

As I said, Parliamentary Counsel said that that amendment would be outside the legal scope of the bill, so I am not allowed to do that. So, unfortunately, I have to propose a reasoned amendment calling on the government to shelve the bill temporarily and come back to the House with a new bill that better balances protecting women's access to health care with freedom of expression and assembly.

Mr. Fildebrandt to move that the motion for second reading of Bill 9, Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act, be amended by deleting all the words after "That" and substituting the following:

Bill 9, Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act, be not now read a second time because the Assembly is of the view that the bill does not appropriately balance the need to protect individuals from harassment with the right to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly, and further input from the public is therefore necessary.

I understand that the members opposite and the Minister of Health are eager to get this bill passed. Frankly, I would be as well, but the changes to the bill – we’ve already worked out the wording. It’s quite manageable and easy to do. We could bring back the bill during this very session, before we break for Stampede in the summer. We can get it done before we break for session, and we can get it done in a timely manner. It’s actually a relatively simple change to the bill. It’s just broadening the scope. It leaves in place all of the protections that the Minister of Health is proposing that we have in place, most of which I don’t think are entirely unreasonable.

We can quibble with how big the bubble zones should be. I think it might be a bit broad to have them half a kilometre away. We can quibble with those details, but if we are hoping to achieve this, we could shelve this bill at this immediate point and come back Monday with a new bill, very simple changes to it, that broadens its scope and protects all Albertans from harassment, intimidation, or being filmed unnecessarily when there’s a protest going on.

It’s been my honour to speak to Bill 9. Again, I’m saddened that there is only one conservative voice in the entire Legislature speaking to this bill. I know that there are members of the Official Opposition . . .

Dr. Swann: What about your colleagues here?

Mr. Fildebrandt: There is a Progressive Conservative. That’s fair enough.

You know, I do know that there are members of the Official Opposition who will take issue with this bill in their hearts. I know that there are pro-life members of the caucus, there are pro-choice members of the caucus, and like the public more broadly, there are a lot of shades of grey in the moderate middle on the issue.

Regardless of where you stand on this issue, this is not an issue about abortion to me. This is not a pro-life or pro-choice issue. This is about protecting the dignity of people to go about their lives, in this case a woman accessing an abortion, if you agree with it or not, and it’s about freedom of expression and assembly. The issue of abortion in this is a bit of a red herring. We need to focus more broadly and achieve a better balance in this legislation, and I wish that all members of this Chamber will stand up and debate the bill.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments under 29(2)(a) for the reasoned amendment?

Seeing and hearing none, any members wishing to speak on the amendment? The Minister of Health.

11:50

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First, I just need to clarify that half a kilometre is 500 metres, so this is actually a tenth of half a kilometre. It’s very reasonable. I actually had the opportunity at the Kensington clinic, where the staff complained to me about this about a year ago, actually, to walk the 50 metres, and it’s less than a city block. I think this is very reasonable. I also think it’s really important that women be able to enter their doctors’ appointments without harassment or intimidation. I’m sure that I’ll have an opportunity to talk about that more once we deal with this amendment.

With regard to this amendment I have to say that I feel that this totally disrespects the intent of this bill. This bill was brought forward by women who’ve been impacted by this as either patients or staff members working in these clinics. They expect us to act on this quickly. They expected the former government to act on it 30 years ago, when they brought this forward. The government failed to do so then. They expect our government to do so now. I’m very proud to be standing with the women of this province to bring

forward legislation that will make their lives a little bit easier during such a time of important decision-making and accessing the health care services they’re legally entitled to.

That being said, I think it’s important that we deal with this amendment swiftly. I recommend to my caucus that we vote no on this, and to any others who are here as well, because I think it’s totally counter to the intent of this bill, and I don’t think it would help the legislation in any way. So I will be voting against this amendment.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing and hearing none, Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Just very briefly, I will also be voting against this amendment. I feel that it is a delay tactic and would solve a problem, frankly, that doesn’t exist in the bill. I think this bill strikes exactly the right balance of freedom of expression. The government has actually been quite reasonable in the bubble-zone parameters that they have chosen here. As you’ve heard from my earlier comments, I think it’s, absolutely, badly needed legislation to protect a woman’s right to exercise choice over her own body and access to legally permissible health services.

Thank you.

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

Seeing and hearing none, any members wishing to speak on the amendment?

Seeing and hearing none, I’ll call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment RA1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:53 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

For the motion:
Fildebrandt

Against the motion:

Carlier	Gray	Nielsen
Carson	Hoffman	Payne
Ceci	Horne	Piquette
Clark	Jansen	Rosendahl
Connolly	Kazim	Sabir
Coolahan	Kleinstauber	Schmidt
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Schreiner
Dach	Luff	Shepherd
Dang	Malkinson	Sigurdson
Eggen	Mason	Starke
Feehan	McCuaig-Boyd	Turner
Fitzpatrick	McKitrick	Westhead
Fraser	Miller	Woollard
Goehring	Miranda	

Totals: For – 1 Against – 41

[Motion on amendment RA1 lost]

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, the House stands adjourned until 1:30 this afternoon.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12:09 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, May 3, 2018

Day 24

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (UCP),
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Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (UCP)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (NDP)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (NDP)
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (NDP)
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Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (NDP)
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (NDP)
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)
Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (NDP)
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP)
Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP),
Deputy Government House Leader
Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (IC)
Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (NDP)
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (AP)
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (NDP),
Deputy Government House Leader
Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (UCP),
Official Opposition Deputy Whip
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (UCP)
Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (NDP)
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)
Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (NDP)
Hunter, Grant R., Cardston-Taber-Warner (UCP)
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Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),
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Premier
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Payne, Hon. Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (NDP)
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Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)
Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (NDP)
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP)
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)
Schneider, David A., Little Bow (UCP)
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (NDP)
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (NDP)
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (NDP)
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (UCP)
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (UCP)
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (NDP),
Deputy Government Whip
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)
Vacant, Fort McMurray-Conklin
Vacant, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake

Party standings:

New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 25 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent Conservative: 1 Vacant: 2

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, May 3, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Culture and Tourism.

Miranda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly the consul general of Ukraine to Canada, Mr. Andrii Veselovskyi. Alberta's ties to Ukraine go back 126 years, to when the first Ukrainian settlers chose our province as their new home. Since then Ukrainian Albertans have made Alberta a better place, and we continue to build and expand our relations with Ukraine across culture and trade, especially under the Canada-Ukraine free trade agreement. We are also very happy to hear that Ukraine intends to open a consulate in Edmonton later this year. We look forward to working with the consul general and his new colleagues when it does. I would like to now ask our guest to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise today to introduce to you and through you the grade 6 students from High Prairie elementary along with staff and parents here for the visit. It's wonderful to have you visit from High Prairie and Big Lakes county, in the riding of Lesser Slave Lake. It's especially impressive as I understand that you had to get up at 5:30 in the morning to get here. The students are accompanied by teachers Mitch Hammond, Joanne Murphy, Andrea Pollock, and Melissa Isaac, and, of course, the parent chaperones: Tracy Pratt, Shannon Calahasen, Karen Janzen, Samantha McNutt, Belinda Dieppenaar, Robyn Pattyson, and Dan Cooper. I'd ask everyone to please rise and receive the warm reception of the House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Nielsen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a real pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the organizing team and guest speaker for the pride event in Northmount park. I'll be speaking more about this event later in my member's statement. My guests are seated in the public gallery, and I'd ask that they rise as I call their names: first, our guest speaker, Chevi Rabbit; my constituency manager, Maria Vicente; from Northmount Community League, Meagan Plamondon, president; from Dickinsfield Amity House Executive Director Tracy Patience and Jenn Lee, preschool teacher; and from the Alberta Sex Positive and Community Education Centre, Angel Sumka. I would ask that we please extend my guests the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

I believe there are a couple of school groups. Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my absolute pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through on behalf of the Member for Stony Plain 26 amazing students from the school of SML Christian Academy. They are joined today by their teacher, Gary Skoye, and their chaperones, Annette Visser and Shelley Kulak. I would now ask the guests to please rise and received the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 30 students from Muriel Martin school, just a short distance from my own home. The students are accompanied by their teacher, Rhonda Surmon, today along with their chaperones, Jacqueline Kelly and Heather McDonald. I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an absolute pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly my good friend Labiq Nazari. She's a small-business owner in Edmonton-Ellerslie and also happens to be a constituent. I met her a few months ago. She's a tireless advocate for diversity and inclusion, and she's a great volunteer, who's now part of my electoral district association. I'm happy to welcome her. Hopefully, one day we'll see her on this side of the House with all of us in this caucus. Please provide her the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through guests from the Canadian Celiac Association. May is Celiac Awareness Month, an opportunity to educate Albertans about the disease. The Celiac Association is asking Canadians to go beyond the guide and to be alert to the atypical features of the disease and the impact that it has on the whole body. Celiac disease is an autoimmune disorder where people experience negative health impacts from eating gluten and must follow a gluten-free diet. Thank you to the members of the association for their tireless efforts to raise awareness. I invite Brian Readman, president of the Edmonton chapter; Jim Calverley, president of the Calgary chapter; along with other members and volunteers to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other guests today? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House Mr. Jason Smith. He's a member of the SCI Red Deer chapter and is here with a couple of his friends to listen to question period today. If we could give them the warm welcome of this House, that would be great.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

2016 Fort McMurray and Area Wildfire

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to salute the residents of the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo and the more than 100,000 Albertans who were affected two years ago by the Horse River wildfire. The massive evacuation from one of the most damaging wildfires in Canadian history was two years ago today. Over that two years much has been done to help Fort McMurray and area recover. Rebuilding of the homes and buildings lost during the fire continues, lessons learned from the fire have informed the area's wildfire mitigation strategy, and there's been a renewed focus on FireSmart initiatives and measures to reduce the threat of wildfire in every community in the region.

Much has also been done to help the residents of the area recover. The province, in partnership with other levels of government, has supported mental health crisis teams, community wellness programs, indigenous and vulnerable population outreach teams, supports for school wellness, and increased AHS staff, including mental health therapists. We know, Mr. Speaker, that recovery from such a natural disaster is a slow and uneven process. Everybody affected was affected differently, and some may take longer to mend than others. We also know that fires are a constant threat in Alberta, and the smell of smoke in the area may be enough to trigger memories and reactions.

For those people who live in the area, please know that the Wood Buffalo region has some of the most experienced and dedicated professional firefighters in Canada, and they will be ready to respond. Please know that the province and its emergency services are there to help now and in the future. Please know that our health and mental health services are there for anyone who asks. Please know that we understand that recovery is not an easy road. The people of Alberta and your provincial government are here for you.

Health Services Procurement Process

Mr. W. Anderson: Mr. Speaker, in 2014 Alberta Health Services' hand-picked appeals committee determined that a \$3 billion lab RFP process was flawed. They found there was reasonable apprehension of bias in the award to an Australian company with no presence in Alberta or Canada. AHS had not taken reasonable steps to mitigate such bias. Improper considerations or influence could not be ruled out. There was a lack of transparency, and AHS had breached its duty of fairness. Eventually, this government decided to cancel the RFP for policy reasons.

Fast-forward to today. It seems AHS is a slow learner. The air ambulance RFP issued in 2013 and subsequently withdrawn was reissued in 2016. Despite having three years to get it right, AHS is currently embroiled in controversy because it ran a procurement process that was unfair, nontransparent, and breached numerous best practices. Over the past few weeks we've tabled documents relating to the \$800 million air ambulance RFP and asked numerous questions of the government. The nonresponse indicates the government either didn't care or doesn't understand. It is ultimately accountable for what AHS does.

What did it do? Specifically, it manipulated the procurement process by ignoring its own policies regarding a fair, open, and transparent process; accepted a bid based on conditional pricing; amended the RFP criteria throughout the process, after the RFP was issued, to favour certain proponents; failed to conduct appropriate due diligence; refused to release the fairness report of its adviser, despite arguing the fairness proviso was what the adviser said was accepted; and accepted a bid notwithstanding the selected proponent having no hangar in the base location or any prospect of getting one.

Mr. Speaker, there are other breaches. There is the obvious issue of wasting time and money continuing to defend the indefensible, money that should be dedicated to front-line services. There is also the real consequence of a loss of trust in AHS. The public questions whether patient care and services are what truly matters. Vendors simply stop participating in processes they feel are rigged.

It is now time for the Minister of Health to act. However, as we've seen, the minister seems to be preoccupied with partisan attacks and pushing divisive issues instead of actually doing her job and holding AHS accountable for unfair procurement practices.

Ms Hoffman: I can chew gum and walk at the same time.

The Speaker: Hon. member.
Calgary-Elbow.

1:40 Calgary Area Flood Damage Mitigation

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today marks the start of Emergency Preparedness Week. Unfortunately, our province is particularly susceptible to floods, fires, tornadoes, and other natural disasters. Albertans should be justifiably proud of AEMA. We should also all be prepared, but being prepared isn't limited to the actions of individual Albertans. The government also has an obligation to prevent damage from disasters wherever possible.

As we approach the five-year anniversary of the southern Alberta floods, it's time for a reality check. We have choices when evaluating options for addressing preventable damage from things like floods. We can choose to follow the advice of unbiased world experts to build the most effective and least expensive infrastructure to protect from flooding, or we can give in to those who either oppose for the sake of opposition or have a direct interest in pushing an inferior option.

Since 2013 a lot of work has been done, but it only accounts for about 30 per cent of what's needed to prevent the loss of billions of taxpayer dollars, damage to the downtown core and retail businesses, and, most importantly, to reduce the risk to human life. Let us never forget the five lives who were lost in the 2013 floods. It was only through the action of first responders and simple good luck that it was not a lot worse.

Also in the past five years both the PCs and NDs looked at more than a dozen independent studies and decided that the Springbank reservoir is the cheapest, the most effective way to prevent future flood damage on the Elbow and that a water retention reservoir on the Bow is the best way to mitigate floods and address long-term water needs and drought mitigation. No project is without impacts, but the public interest of the million or more Albertans who rely on downtown Calgary for their livelihoods means that 20 Springbank landowners will unfortunately need to sell their land for fair market value. I wish there was an equally effective option that didn't require buyouts, but there simply isn't.

The debate over flood mitigation feels, at times, like the battle to build a pipeline. There's clear public interest, a positive return on investment to Albertans, and the objective facts for Springbank to be the best option, but much like the pipeline debate, opponents will use every tool at their disposal to stop it. If we can't build basic infrastructure that will save millions of taxpayer dollars and protect human life, it's fair to ask if we'll ever be able to build anything anywhere ever again.

Thank you.

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

Gas Station and Convenience Store Worker Safety

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In December 2015 Edmontonians were shocked to hear of the deaths of two convenience store workers in Mill Woods. Arrests for this crime occurred on Terwillegar Drive, in my constituency of Edmonton-Whitemud. Many of my constituents work in convenience stores or gas stations or they have family members who are potentially exposed to violent criminal activity. This makes protecting these workers a major priority for me and for our government.

Six months ago it was a pleasure to join with all MLAs to pass Bill 19, An Act to Protect Gas and Convenience Store Workers. Bill 19 updated the occupational health and safety code to make enhanced safety regulations mandatory, including prepayment of fuel and violence prevention plans. By the time of passage Husky Energy and 7-Eleven Canada had already implemented the prepay and violence prevention procedures, and subsequently many other retailers have followed suit. All Albertan convenience store workers and gas station operators will be protected by June 1, 2018. I've spoken with many such workers in my constituency, and they appreciate the enhanced safety. My constituents who have had to make small adjustments when paying for gasoline in prepaying or using a credit/debit card at the pump are also very supportive.

Another important benefit of this legislation is reducing the workload of our police. The reduction in criminal fuel-theft incidents will allow them to focus on other policing activities. Chief Knecht of the EPS reported that 60 such events happened monthly in Edmonton in 2017.

This problem is not just an urban issue. It's a real issue for rural Alberta, too. The fatality in Thorsby in October 2017 was a dire reminder of this. Indeed, over the past three years five convenience workers have died and three others have been seriously hurt in Alberta.

It's notable that this common-sense legislation was supported by all MLAs in this House. May we continue to work together to make life better for all Albertans, including our most vulnerable workers.

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

Pride Event in Edmonton-Decore

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like all of Alberta, my riding of Edmonton-Decore and north Edmonton as a whole is home to numerous members of the LGBTQ2S-plus community. I've had the privilege of visiting the GSA at Queen Elizabeth high school and was inspired by the courage and compassion of the students and teachers who participated. I'm also proud to be part of a government that has done so much to recognize the fundamental human rights of all Albertans.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, there is still prejudice and abuse directed at the LGBTQ2S-plus community, and my office continues to hear complaints about that, which is why I'm especially happy that this year Edmonton-Decore and north Edmonton will have a pride event of their own. My office together with Dickinsfield Amity House, Northmount Community League, and the Alberta Sex Positive Education and Community Centre, are planning a fun-filled evening of activities that will include: free consent seminars taught by ASPECC; free clothing, shoes, and accessories for all genders inside Northmount hall; LGBTQ2S-plus resource fair; and activities for children that will include face painting and a story time.

Our guest speaker for the evening is none other than Chevi Rabbit, who was the first transgender person to be named to *Avenue*

magazine's top 40 under 40 list and has organized the annual Hate to Hope rally in Edmonton to combat all forms of hate.

I'm very proud of the work that our government has done to protect the rights of the LGBTQ2S-plus community, and I'm extremely proud to be a part of Edmonton-Decore's first pride event. I would now like to extend an invitation to all members of the Assembly to attend and participate in a truly inclusive and caring evening. In particular, though, I would like to invite the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition, the Member for Calgary-Lougheed, and the entire opposition caucus. June 14 at Northmount from 6 to 9 p.m. Hope to see you there.

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

Association for the Rehabilitation of the Brain Injured

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Three years ago Mary Ellen Neilson invited me to tour the Association for the Rehabilitation of the Brain Injured, also known as ARBI, in the community of Spruce Cliff in my riding of Calgary-Currie. Since then I've returned on multiple occasions and have attended their annual Stampede breakfast and Christmas open houses because, as I learned on my first visit, their important work is making lives better.

You see, ARBI provides intensive community-based, long-term rehabilitation and support for survivors of traumatic brain injuries related to falls, car crashes, sporting injuries as well as to nontraumatic brain injuries caused by strokes, infections, or lack of oxygen. All these services are unique to ARBI, unique because this rehabilitation program brings together professionals and volunteers on-site and throughout the community. Studies have shown that this leads to significant improvements for ARBI's clients. ARBI's novel approach has been accredited by the Alberta Council of Disability Services and is funded annually in part by the government of Alberta, but last year secondary supports coming from various charities were cut, leaving the more than 150 clients at risk. After working with Mary Ellen Neilson, the executive director of ARBI, and the Minister of Community and Social Services, I was pleased to announce last week with the minister that our government had ARBI's back and would provide \$400,000 of support over two years.

You know, I saw the joy, Mr. Speaker, on the faces of the clients and the volunteers at ARBI, and it was one of my proudest moments as an MLA to see how a relatively small amount of money, at least by government standards, could bring so much help to 150 Albertans who are in need of this support. ARBI is going to be having their 40th anniversary this September, and with this extra funding it is definitely going to be one worth celebrating. To all the folks at ARBI who are dedicated to enriching the lives of survivors and their families by providing both hope and support, I thank you.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Presenting Petitions

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

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present a petition signed by more than 900 constituents of Calgary-West. They're petitioning the Legislative Assembly

to urge the Government of Alberta to continue to fund educational programs of choice – including, but not limited to, independent . . . charter, and home education options in Alberta – under the current inclusive provincial education funding model, without reducing current funding rates, as indicated within the Education Funding in Alberta Handbook 2016-2017.

I present this to you.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Oral Question Period

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

Market Access Task Force

Mr. Nixon: It is 29 days until the Kinder Morgan deadline. It's been 70 days since the Premier declared victory and called off the wine ban. Meanwhile we see headlines like these: at least 18 workers fired this week as a result of suspension in nonessential spending on Kinder Morgan. Yesterday we now see that the government has announced another work group on this file, but all the while the clock is ticking. My question is to the Energy minister. Is this task force an admission that the previous Market Access Task Force has been a failure?

1:50

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to see this Conservative opposition willing to stand in this House and share their opinions on this topic. Our government is fighting for pipelines so that everyday Albertans benefit from our natural resources and more good jobs. Albertans are behind us. We've seen recent studies that show that over 80 per cent of Albertans support the Trans Mountain expansion. It's about time we got support from the members opposite to make it happen.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, this NDP government has a history of taking verbal action and then not taking any real action. It's been several months since the access task force was created. The Minister of Energy is on that task force. My question to her is: are those meetings still ongoing, and when was the last time that this task force met?

Ms Hoffman: It's nice for the member from the opposition to talk about verbal action. It would great if we saw verbal action on all issues that matter to Albertans from the Official Opposition, Mr. Speaker.

I can't actually tell if the opposition members are among the pipeline supporters or if they're trying to see them slowed down. It certainly doesn't seem like they are being supportive. The Conservative leader has advocated for this project to be tied up in court, Mr. Speaker. It would lead to further delays. Who else thinks that sending it to court is a good idea? Oh, yeah, that's right. John Horgan. You keep using Mr. Horgan's playbook; we'll keep standing by our Premier, who's getting results on pipelines, and we will get it to tidewater.

Mr. Nixon: It's interesting that the Energy minister will not answer that simple question. Instead, the Deputy Premier will get up with partisan rhetoric that had nothing to do with the issue that we're talking about.

Albertans are concerned about this pipeline. This is the number one issue facing our province right now. I've asked a simple question. Are the meetings for the access task force still ongoing, and when is the last time that that task force met?

Ms Hoffman: You know what, Mr. Speaker? Thank you for the question, and as the Deputy Premier I have the honour of responding to it. I have to say that we will certainly see the results of the good work that's happening. We've already seen them, for example, in British Columbia. A hundred senior British Columbia businesses,

indigenous leaders, community and labour leaders are flying out in two weeks to build a bridge between our province and British Columbia. They will be meeting with our government, and collectively we will get shovels in the ground. Let me be clear. We will not stop until our pipeline gets built to tidewater.

The Speaker: Second main question.

Mr. Nixon: Well, it's disappointing, again, that the Deputy Premier will not answer a very simple question. In fact, it appears that she won't allow the Minister of Energy to stand to answer that question. Instead, you just get partisan rhetoric and absolute panic from the NDP government. It must be their poll numbers or something, Mr. Speaker.

Again to the Energy minister: has the task force met? Yes or no? When was the last time it met, and what did you discuss?

Ms Hoffman: You know what, Mr. Speaker? We're really proud to be discussing what is happening, and what's happening is that we're moving people all across this province towards a yes. We're moving people all across this country towards a yes. We will be very happy to tell you exactly how that strategy worked out, but you're not going to stand behind the Energy minister, peek over her shoulder, and tell opponents to pipelines what cards she's got in her hand. We're not going to let that happen. I'm proud of the results our Energy minister is getting. I'm proud of the fact that we've got our approvals. We've got the majority of Canadians standing with us. It's about time the Official Opposition did the same.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, this government has a history of standing in this House and declaring victory when there is no victory, stopping wine bans when really nothing has happened or changed in B.C. – we still have a pipeline being blocked – and now continues their history of just standing up with partisan rhetoric about what we are not discussing. I have not asked what the minister's cards look like; I simply asked: when is the last time that the task force met, and what is going on with the task force? You can't get any more simple than that question. So what is this government hiding that is going on with the task force?

Ms Hoffman: You know what, Mr. Speaker? We're really proud of the work that is happening and the fact that we're making huge inroads right across this country instead of bringing up divisive policies that we see the members opposite are going to be discussing. Let's talk about the Conservative opposition and the things they'll be discussing this weekend. Let's take a look, shall we? Transphobia, homophobia, climate change denial, antichoice, health care privatization. We care about pipelines. We also care about the other issues that Albertans care about, and we're not afraid to discuss them in this House.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, again, what is this government hiding? This is a simple question. We don't need to hear the NDP's campaign talking points. There's time. I know that they're campaigning to be in opposition. They show that over and over. But I'm asking a simple question on behalf of Albertans. When is the last time that the task force met, and what did they discuss? What has the task force accomplished so far? Why won't the Energy minister stand up? Why are we seeing this partisan rhetoric? What is going on?

Ms Hoffman: We're really proud of the fact that our Energy minister is meeting with stakeholders from across this country to continue to build allies and get our pipeline to tidewater, Mr. Speaker. This has been her track record, and she is making huge

progress. That's why we have significant support. And she won't stop. She'll keep meeting with that task force. She'll keep meeting with energy leaders. She'll keep meeting with indigenous leaders.

We are certainly looking forward to finding out what's behind the curtain of the members on the opposite side because they won't stand in this House, but they're willing to discuss these issues of division at their convention. Mr. Speaker, it's time that they come clear with Albertans about what their real plans are.

The Speaker: Third main question.

Bighorn Area Land Use

Mr. Nixon: Well, let's try another, Minister. The environment minister has clearly been saying that the government has no predetermined plans for the Bighorn area and that the NDP is focused on consulting with the public on this issue. The UCP has obtained a leaked government memo showing that these statements from the minister are not factual. The memo from January 16 contains an actual timeline and plan with the end result being the establishment of the Bighorn wildland provincial park. This shows that a provincial park has been predetermined by the NDP, and any so-called consultation by this government is a sham. Minister, will you come clean with Albertans and tell them the truth?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order, please.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: You know, when we talk about the Bighorn, we're working in the backcountry on responsible land use. That's been incredible. We've worked with many local groups managing off-highway vehicle trails and monitoring campgrounds. There's also been enormous engagement with all stakeholders and efforts to repair the damage done by those who don't respect this region. You know, Mr. Speaker, this is going to be a good park for everyone because it's got stakeholder input from all sides.

Mr. Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, interestingly enough now, the Energy minister will answer questions for the environment minister, but the Deputy Premier has to answer questions for the Energy minister.

I'm not sure what's going on, but we just heard the Energy minister confirm that, basically, that memo is in fact true, that my constituents and the people of Alberta have been told that there will be proper consultation when it comes to the Bighorn, and this minister just confirmed 100 per cent that it has already been predetermined and Albertans have been misled by this government. What is going on? Is there a consultation, or have you already decided that there's going to be a park, as this memo says?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we have been asking Albertans, and there has indeed been consultation to provide feedback on the North Saskatchewan Regional Advisory Council's report. This project, Bighorn, or known as the west country, is a good project. It's got support from and input from a number of areas, and we're developing a plan that grows the economy, protects that environment, and enhances important opportunities for hiking, camping, hunting, fishing, horseback riding, and off-road vehicle trails, something we all as Albertans enjoy very much.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, let's be very clear. This NDP government is not consulting with Albertans. They're consulting with select groups of individuals at invite-only meetings. They're not talking to local politicians, local stakeholders, some of who are in the gallery today. They certainly haven't talked to me, and I've lived in the west country most of my life and know it very, very well. But what this minister has confirmed yet again is that this memo is correct. This has already been predetermined by this government. This government has been misleading the people of my constituency and this province, saying that these consultations that are ongoing right now are real. It turns out, I guess, that they're fake, and the park has already been determined.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I will confirm – and I will speak slowly on this. It is not predetermined. We are still seeking public input. The plan is in development, but as we look at things we are seeking input. I invite the hon. member, who claims to be the west country expert, to give his input because we will accept it along with everyone else's.

Coal Phase-out in Parkland County

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

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government doesn't appear to understand the economic and social impact of shutting down coal-fired electricity generation. Parkland county derives around a quarter of its revenue from taxes paid by the coal industry and will be forced to reduce service levels for the county and their participation in regional partnerships. What is the government doing to better understand the impacts of the policies on the county and people in the county feeling the effects?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, we are of course working with coal communities. We want to continue to make sure that the workers in those places earn good livings. We're talking to people in the coal counties and their elected representatives. That's why we're ensuring that those workers have the supports they need as we go forward. The transition fund is in place. The community transition fund is in place. There have been a number of consultations. There'll continue to be some.

2:00

Ms McPherson: Parkland county is in a doom loop. They can't attract a larger tax base because they can't invest in infrastructure without the province, and that infrastructure is needed to bring in replacement revenue. The coal phase-out is occurring faster than the government expected, and this catch-22 will only accelerate. The government hasn't responded to the innovative solutions suggested by the county in their December 2017 MOU. How can Parkland county be expected to diversify and sustain its regional economy without an effective partnership with the province?

Mr. Ceci: Of course, partnerships, Mr. Speaker, are important for all orders of government working together. This is critical for Parkland county, as it is for the government of Alberta. It's unfortunate that Parkland county chose not to apply for the coal community transition fund, but we're going to continue to meet with the county. We'll continue to reach out and encourage them to apply for these funds so that they can do the work that the hon. member is identifying that needs to be done. But even if the county

decides not to act, we'll continue to have the backs of the workers in those communities.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Ms McPherson: Parkland county already had a transition plan in place, so they refused the money and gave it to other communities that needed it. The coal community transition fund is 4 and a half million dollars to help develop plans to deal with phase-out. This is smart, but the amount is one-tenth of the \$40 million to support worker retraining and 350 times less than the amount paid to coal-fired plant owners. What substantive strategies are coming to demonstrate the government's commitment to transitioning these communities to a sustainable future?

Mr. Ceci: Mr. Speaker, I just need to perhaps step back for a second and say that the Coal Association of Canada believes that the work of this government is in the right direction. It said, "The release of the panel's recommendations and the announcement of the Coal Workforce Transition Fund is a step in the right direction." That was echoed by the mayor of Hanna when he said that these supports will go a long way to help workers and the community. We'll continue to have the backs of those communities.

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

LGBTQ2S-plus Rights

Connolly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am proud of this government's record on LGBTQ2S-plus rights. That's why I was so dismayed to hear about some of the policies that will be debated at the founding UCP convention, including resolutions that take away the rights of LGBTQ2S-plus Albertans. To the Minister of Culture and Tourism: what has this government done to ensure that all Albertans are respected no matter who they are?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Culture and Tourism.

Miranda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud to be part of a government that has three openly gay MLAs. It has taken historic steps to create a more inclusive and welcoming province such as amending the Alberta Human Rights Act to include gender identity and expression as well as creating safe and caring schools and shelters for LGBTQ-plus youth. This extreme right-wing rhetoric vilifies people who have fought and won the rights for people to be who they are. It is divisive and promotes hate and discrimination and, quite frankly, is very shameful.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Connolly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that a couple of the resolutions that will be debated this weekend suggest that the government should, quote, allow parents the ability to have current information on their child's activities if the parents request such information, to the same minister: what is the government's policy on outing LGBTQ2S-plus kids in the school system?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Miranda: Thank you, and thank you to the member for the question. The Premier has made it very clear that she will not let the Leader of the Official Opposition or anyone else out gay children, and our government has made that promise come true. I am proud to be part of a government that brought in legislation to make it clear that schools cannot disclose without cause or without consent the identity of a student who joins a GSA. We will not allow the

Leader of the Official Opposition, his party, or anyone else to turn back the clock with a dangerous plan to allow schools to out kids to their parents without consent.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Connolly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What impact do government policies of inclusion have on our reputation as a province and on business and on tourism?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Miranda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Businesses and visitors want to work and, of course, vacation in a province that is safe, inclusive, and welcoming, not one that promotes hate, fear, and intolerance. It is disturbing that the electoral success of some political leaders is based on supporting those who spread hate, discrimination, inequality. It is divisive, and it weakens us as a society and as a province. I want to thank the Premier, the MLAs for Calgary-Hawkwood and Strathcona-Sherwood Park, and all of my government colleagues, really, for standing up for the LGBTQ-plus community. I look forward to celebrating pride with them this year.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Bighorn Area Land Use

(continued)

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, it just seems to me that it's odd that the minister is talking about this report and what's going on with this, but this report that we have says that the government says that in September 2018 they're going to establish the Bighorn wildland provincial park. Now, that sounds like that issue is settled as far as the government is concerned. Also, the minister suggested in estimates that the consultation on the Bighorn was done as part of the North Saskatchewan regional plan, yet it appears that the minister is personally consulting with foreign-funded special-interest groups like Y2Y. Why is the minister consulting with these groups while telling us in estimates that the consultation is "now complete in terms of hearing from the public"?

The Speaker: The Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, Albertans deserve strong regional planning that supports economic diversification, protects the environment, and ensures recreational opportunities for future generations. You know, we as Albertans love all those opportunities to enjoy our beautiful province. The North Saskatchewan region is home to Alberta's Industrial Heartland, the capital region, and some of the best farmland in the world along with foothills and mountains. It's also home to prized headwaters that supply drinking water to the cities of Edmonton and surrounding communities such as Red Deer. We are asking all Albertans to provide their feedback. We're still accepting it.

Mr. Loewen: Given that that answer has nothing to do with the government's predetermined decision to establish the Bighorn wildland provincial park and given that the minister also told us in estimates that the consultation process for ordinary Albertans was solely by online survey and given that the minister suggested that the government was not conducting any town halls or public meetings in relation to the Bighorn and given that the minister refused to tell us whether she believed that consultation should focus on affected residents of our province, can the minister clarify now whether she prioritizes input from everyday Albertans or foreign-funded special-interest groups?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will say it again: we have not determined what this plan will look like. We are accepting input from everyone. We value all Albertans' opinions. We seek input as I speak, but you're not going to wait for everything. You will start to develop a plan as you get it, and you will tweak things. Again, there is no predetermined plan.

Mr. Loewen: Given that that flies in the face of the facts of this document, produced by the government, to in September 2018 "establish the Bighorn Wildland Provincial Park" – that's very clear – and given that the minister has clearly gone above and beyond to cater to special interests while putting in the minimum amount of effort to consult with ordinary Albertans and given the shocking revelation from the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre revealing the predetermined outcome of the new wildland park, will the minister commit to going back to the drawing board and conducting an open, transparent process that is focused on Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would point out that it was the previous government who created the RAC, and we released it for input. That is what we're doing right now. It feels like the opposition wants to do nothing that's going to help the health and livelihood of Albertans. We're taking action to protect vital headwaters supplying drinking water to Edmonton and Red Deer. You guys across the way are drumming up a problem that actually, quite frankly, doesn't exist. We're making sure that Albertans have dedicated areas for hiking, camping, fishing, canoeing, and exploring OHV trails.

Market Access Task Force (continued)

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, what it feels like is that this government continues to audition to be in opposition. Don't worry. They'll be there shortly, I suspect, if they will not answer a simple question. The NDP government has a history of taking verbal action and not actually taking any real action. I have asked this question a few times today, and I want to know this. Are the Market Access Task Force meetings still going on, and when was the last time that task force met? Will the Minister of Energy stand up and answer a question?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The task force is continually in contact with each other, but the last official meeting that's on record, where we met fully, was on April 12. But we continue the work, phone calls and that kind of thing. It's an ongoing process, as it is with our companies, our industry, and many people involved.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you. That wasn't that hard.

Given, Mr. Speaker, that the NDP government has a history of saying that they'll take action and then not actually taking concrete action and given that they have a history of declaring victory when there is no victory and given that they announce task forces that are not gaining anything as a result usually, my question to the Energy minister is this. How many times has the task force actually met, what has been accomplished in that time when they met, and when will we see a report of the results?

2:10

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, in this matter of getting pipelines built, especially the TMX, we consult with a number of people. The task force is one, but I was in Calgary yesterday consulting with industry again. This is an effort – as I've said many times, it takes a village to get this pipeline built. It's unfortunate that the opposition spends most of their time trying to sabotage, to be honest, those efforts, and it seems like they don't want to be part of this process. I said yesterday publicly that it's a nonpartisan issue. This is about Alberta, and this is about Canada.

Mr. Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that this is the NDP's task force that I'm referring to and given that the minister is on that task force and given that we're now on six questions, simple little task force questions, that the minister either refuses to stand up and answer or can't answer, I'll try again. It's very simple. How many times has the task force actually met, and what was accomplished and discussed during those meetings?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the opposition seems to be trying to create a conspiracy theory here that doesn't exist. There's no story here. The task force is one piece. We have industry, we have experts, we have anybody who can help us get this pipeline to tidewater, and we're going to continue to do that work. I don't know that it's germane to know who we talk to, when, and how. What I did yesterday was that I asked people of all political stripes if they would join us in this as a government to get this pipeline because it's important to Albertans and it's important to all of Canada.

FOIP Requests on Carbon Levy Reports

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, this government's carbon tax makes life harder for Albertans and especially those in rural Alberta, making it more expensive to drive for groceries, take their kids to soccer, or even get to work. We asked the government through freedom of information to come clean about, quote, all financial reports related to the carbon tax, and they withheld all of that information. I have a simple question to the government. What are they hiding?

Ms Hoffman: Nothing, Mr. Speaker. If the member from the Official Opposition would like help writing FOIP requests, I'm sure there are a number of folks that used to be employed with his caucus that would be very happy to help him because they have the expertise. I have to tell you that wild fishing expeditions don't get documents. Asking specific questions gets you specific results.

Mr. Cooper: Well, Mr. Speaker, we asked a specific question, to have all of the information that they had released to us. On eight or 10 occasions – and I'm happy to table the document here in the House – they refused to provide the information because, quote, it was advice to officials. Why is advice to officials okay but not information for Albertans?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The reason why there is that clause is because the former government, who you used to campaign against – but now you're sitting side by side with those folks, Member from the Official Opposition. That legislation was written by the former government, and there is a very specific

clause about advice to officials. For example, cabinet briefing documents, that are given to us to make informed decisions, aren't actually released to the public if they have confidential advice that could impact markets or could impact the important decision-making that goes into making this. This is to ensure that government can have the best information without it being feared that it could negatively impact Canadians and Albertans.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, given that they didn't release this information because they are afraid of Albertans finding it out and given that this government is already under at least four investigations as a result of their secrecy – they hid the carbon tax from voters during the election – and given that now they are continuing to hide financial reports relating to their own tax from Albertans, to the Minister: will you stop hiding this information, release it today, or is it going to take another investigation for you to do the right thing?

Ms Hoffman: Oh, it is very rich to have members of the Official Opposition talk about hiding when I have a feeling that in about an hour we're going to see just that, Mr. Speaker. I hope that I'm not right. I hope that they show up and do their jobs. It seems that they're more comfortable talking about their divisive policies at a closed-door convention in Red Deer than they are in this very Chamber. We follow the legislation. We're happy to comply with freedom of information requests, and if you have a question, you can certainly raise it with the commissioner. But it's pretty rich for you to talk about people hiding when I have a good idea of what's going to be happening in about, oh, 58 minutes now.

The Speaker: Calgary-West.

Educational Delivery Choices

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When the NDP government formed, many groups such as the ATA saw an opportunity to lobby the government to withdraw funding that provides Alberta's parents and children with choice in education. Independent and charter schools, alternative programs, home-schools remain concerned to this day that the NDP's friends will convince them to halt their funding. Minister, will you show support for choice in education today by vowing to reject any more of these lobby efforts?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, every couple of months or so I have to reaffirm what we have done for the last three years, which is to fully fund education in all of its combinations and permutations across this province, be it private schools, home-schooling, francophone schools, separate schools, public schools, and so forth. We will continue to do so. In fact, in this last budget we did it again, and – you know what? – the members opposite did not even vote for that budget. They voted against it. They voted against children, they voted against building capital, they voted against the home-school increase, and they voted against the private school increase, the whole kit and caboodle.

Mr. Ellis: Mr. Speaker, given that a report indicates that Alberta's system of school choice has saved taxpayers \$750 million over five years and given that although the Premier called the charter and independent schools "havens of elitism" even though in 83 per cent of the independent schools the average household income is slightly below the provincial average, Minister, will you confirm that Alberta's current system of educational choice does not take resources away from public schools?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a former teacher I never refuse the opportunity to do a teachable moment, so this is compare and contrast. Compare this government fully funding education in all of its combinations, including the ones that he described here today, to massive cuts and the members opposite not voting for the Education budget. Compare and contrast. That's also known as irony.

Mr. Ellis: Mr. Speaker, given that constituents in Calgary-West fully support an educational system that provides parents with opportunities to enrol their children in schools and programs of their choice and given that these parents and students are looking for assurance that this NDP government will not erode the current inclusive educational funding model, Minister, will you commit today that you will not change the current funding model, that allows choice in education, either now or in the future?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker. Further to teaching literature, which I enjoyed doing, Chicken Little and the sky falling: those are metaphors, right? This idea that the sky is falling around funding of education is not only false and confusing, but they are spreading and casting aspersions to scare people every so often while I have now built four budgets in which we have fully funded all of our combinations and permutations of education here in the province. We're very proud of that. We're very proud of the investments that we made. We will not waver from our commitment to children, to parents, and to education in all of its forms here in the province of Alberta.

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

Support for Students with Special Needs

Ms Woollard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Education. Parents in my constituency are quite concerned about the level of support available in schools for children with special needs, particularly those who have behaviour challenges. Can the minister please tell us how special-needs students are being supported in our schools?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and for the question. We have been funding classroom conditions for all students, including those with special and complex needs. That's why in Budget 2018 we did increase the funding towards inclusive education. Our current line item on this is \$461 million, which is an increase of \$8.4 million. You know, I do recognize that there's also room for improvement in regard to inclusive education. The best way by which you can move forward on this is to make sure that you have adequate staffing, which we've been moving forward on, because we have fully funded for enrolment here in the province of Alberta.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Woollard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What provisions are available to our classroom teachers to help them support their students with special needs?

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you for the question. Further to the end of the last answer, of course, fully funding for enrolment has led to the

hiring of more than 3,600 new teaching and support-work positions here over these last three years. Our government has also invested \$66 million in the regional collaborative service delivery program, and this means more speech pathologists, social workers, nurses, and other front-line staff to meet complex challenges. We need to make sure we support our teachers every step of the way. They are often the first line of contact for families with special needs, and we're there to help them.

2:20

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Woollard: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Children with challenges in more than one area need greater than usual amounts of support. Is it possible to provide the necessary levels of support for these children in the neighbourhood schools, or is it provided in specialized school settings?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and for the question. I think it's important to move forward on the idea of inclusive education, where students are able to be integrated into the classroom, but you also have to have that choice where students and parents and families can choose special programming in classrooms. We tried to strike a balance on both. I mean, not to say that we are perfect in this regard. I'm taking lots of input from groups and from parents to look for ways by which we can strengthen our inclusive education program and education for special-needs students. You know, in Budget 2018 . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The Member for Calgary-South East.

Seniors' Housing

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the most important things we can provide for seniors is the security and safety of a place to call home. Continuing care, home care, supportive living, and long-term care are all part of making sure that our seniors can live their lives with dignity. With an aging population, we need to make sure that there are as many spaces available as possible so that we can offer seniors a choice and not have to turn anyone away, and that means that we need to make sure we're spending efficiently. To the Minister of Seniors and Housing: are you confident that your government is getting the maximum value for money in constructing new seniors' housing?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much. I'm going to start with this one because it was actually about health care facilities that often do serve seniors, but I'm sure that the minister of seniors would be happy to answer questions about lodges and other items that are actually within the minister of seniors' budget.

In terms of long-term care and supportive living, including dementia care spaces, Mr. Speaker, I'm incredibly proud of the fact that our government, when given a choice between deep cuts that were being proposed by the opposition, including the then government that that member was a part of, instead of moving forward with those deep cuts – a billion dollars to health care, bringing in a health care levy – we stood with seniors. We kept their rates affordable. We made sure that we increased the number of spaces. We've built 2,000.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Fraser: Given that the partnership with nonprofits and faith-based organizations meant that in 2014-15, when we were the government, we were able to build spaces at an average of \$65,000 a bed, all meeting or exceeding the provincial building standard, and given that the two most recent government projects, in Calgary and Fort McMurray, were built at rates of \$655,000 and \$764,000 a bed, over 10 times the cost per bed, to the same minister: why did the government not pursue partnerships with nonprofits when it's been shown that these partnerships could allow you to deliver 10 times as many spaces at the same cost?

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

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we are making life better and more affordable for seniors in Alberta. Our government has invested more than \$3 billion in seniors' programs this past year alone. We are building 4,100 affordable housing homes through our \$1.2 billion investment. We have over 60 projects on the go. Seniors in our province are well cared for by this government.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the CEO of the Alberta Continuing Care Association has specifically pointed to partnerships between government, nonprofits, faith-based organizations, and private providers as being the most effective way to address the increasing need for assisted living spaces, it would seem that this government is more committed to making an ideological point than providing the best possible care for Albertans. To the same minister: in developing any long-term strategy to address seniors' housing, will you put aside the ideology and include nonprofits, faith groups, and private providers as equal partners?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our ministry partners with private developers when appropriate for construction and design services, creating good jobs right here in Alberta, and we'll make sure that these facilities are used for the purpose they were intended for. As for affordable housing for Albertans with low income, the previous Conservative government gave millions to private developers who operated under short-term agreements. We're making sure that affordable housing will support seniors for years and years.

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

Economic Competitiveness

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday an article published in the *Globe and Mail* painted a grim picture for our energy sector. The Suncor CEO said, "We don't see major investment in the Canadian oil sands until we see an improvement in the competitive position of the industry." This doesn't just hurt our oil and gas industry. I was just informed that Lafarge Canada will be shutting down its ready-mix concrete operations in Bonnyville and Cold Lake due to the lack of economic viability under this NDP government. Can the minister responsible please tell Albertans how the government plans on solving the economic competitiveness problem they have created?

The Speaker: The hon. Finance minister.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we'll look into the situation that's been identified here just now. But I can tell you that our government is working across this province to support good jobs and create a more diverse economy. Certainly, cement and other things like that are part of a diverse economy. I know there is a cost to those manufacturers, and we as a government believe that more needs to be done. We'll be looking into that as a result of hearing this information.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Lafarge's operations have been shut down by the market conditions fostered by this NDP government and given that the company has said that they do not expect a change in the foreseeable future and given that this particular decision means that 15 families in Bonnyville-Cold Lake will be directly impacted by the closure, is the minister aware of the closure, what plan does the government have for these newly out-of-work Albertans, and will the minister commit to engaging with Lafarge to address the further barriers that they have implemented on this industry?

Mr. Ceci: I think I just mentioned, Mr. Speaker, that I just heard about the closure, so, yes, I am aware of it. We will be, through our officials, reaching out and finding out more.

But it's not the NDP government, Mr. Speaker; it's not the government at all that has done this. It is a result of, probably, market conditions that make it somewhat unaffordable for their product to meet the specs of other companies that are selling the same product. We're going to be looking into it, as I said.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that our job creators are having their viability eroded by high taxes, high regulation, and antigrowth policies of this NDP government and given that these policies have a real impact on Alberta families all across the province, will the government commit to repealing its harmful policies such as the job-killing carbon tax, the 20 per cent business tax increase, and the numerous policies contributing to the increased cost in electricity?

Mr. Ceci: No, Mr. Speaker. What we will do is that we will continue to work with Albertans and companies. For instance, in 2017 90,000 full-time jobs returned to this province. Eight thousand were created last month. We know that things like the GDP, which is 4.9 per cent, not 4.5 per cent, as we have been saying many, many times. StatsCan said that it's a 4.9 per cent growth. We're going to lead the nation in GDP growth again. Those are the kinds of things that will put people back to work, and companies will flourish.

The Speaker: Drayton Valley-Devon.

Educational Curriculum Review Working Groups

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've asked a number of times for the list of organizations, not individuals, who have presented to the curriculum rewrite working groups. Each and every time the minister has refused to provide that list. Now, through a freedom of information request, we have a list of which groups presented on January 12 and 13, 2016. Minister, will you provide a list of all external groups which have presented to the committee working groups, or is FOIP the only way you disseminate information?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we're very proud of the curriculum process that we are engaged in in all grade levels and in six subject areas. In fact, they're building the K to 4 component of that right now and working through a process to have approval for the end of the year. Certainly, you know, I've said many times that we've had financial institutions, that we had military history groups presenting. We had the agriculture sector, the forestry sector. It's a process like we've never seen before in regard to transparency and engagement of citizens and our economy and Albertans in general.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Smith: FOIP it is.

Mr. Speaker, given that I have heard that for the first time ever members of at least some curriculum working groups have been required to sign nondisclosure agreements and given that I asked the Minister of Education about this during estimates and he noted that he would follow up, I would like to now give him the opportunity to do so. Minister, is this the first time ever that nondisclosure agreements have been required for working group members, and did all working group members across Alberta have to sign nondisclosure agreements?

2:30

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, during our most amicable budget review that we had a couple of weeks ago, I did say that we would provide that information in its entirety to the member, and we certainly will honour our word and do so.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that parents need to have confidence that all parties involved in the curriculum rewrite are fully committed to transparency and given that the ATA executive council believes that information reported by the press regarding aggregate test scores needs to be controlled by the Minister of Education and given that the minister will not release the list of presenting groups and is requiring at least some working group members to sign nondisclosure agreements so that he can control the information released on the curriculum rewrite, again to the minister: is this the level of openness and transparency Alberta parents should continue to expect in the curriculum rewrite process?

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, you know, the hon. member is a little confused, which is okay, in regard to the individuals that are in the working groups. As I said before, I will give the information – I won't stand in the way of the law – in regard to individual people, right? But I certainly will stand to protect those individual people, too, because I know that there's been a systematic way by which people are trying to spread conspiracy theories around the curriculum. There is nothing further from the truth. All of the groups that are working and have presented to us: we are very happy to – the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry and myself were with a great group the other day.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Rural Infrastructure Project Approval

Mr. Stier: Mr. Speaker, rural municipalities have expressed serious concerns related to months of unnecessarily delayed inspections and approvals from Alberta Environment that are involved in road construction, general repair, and maintenance projects. These outstanding inspections and approvals are directly caused by a failed process that was implemented by the ministry in July of '15, which results in enormously long delays for even the most routine, low-maintenance activities. To the minister: why were these new inspection and approval procedures implemented without a capable system of process and manpower?

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much for raising this matter. I appreciate the concern that has been identified and would be happy to follow up with the hon. member. We'll certainly work to get back to him with the appropriate information to support a thorough understanding of the issue.

Mr. Stier: Mr. Speaker, given that for decades municipalities accomplished proper, routine, yearly maintenance of bridges, culverts, and roads without delay and given that the new system is now so clogged that the response to municipalities is a canned one stating that they're experiencing high volumes of applications and that the timeline for decisions is eight to 12 months and given that these inspections and approvals and maintenance can only be done in the warm season and therefore a complete construction season is lost again, Minister, what actions are you going to take to remedy this clogged system?

The Speaker: The Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much. Well, Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Transportation I'll try and help the hon. member with the question. I will have to get back to him after consultation with the Minister of Environment and Parks on this matter, but I can say that our government believes very strongly that transportation in rural Alberta is very important, and we've been doing a number of things in the Transportation department to support rural municipalities in terms of replacing culverts, roads, bridges, all of the things that they need for the infrastructure that they need. In terms of Environment's process for approvals we'll have to get back to the hon. member.

Mr. Stier: Mr. Speaker, given that Alberta municipalities facilitate growth and economic development that require attention to public safety requiring timely construction activity involving minor bridge, culvert, and road maintenance plus other routine municipal projects and given that the rural municipalities association passed a resolution to urge the province to relax the unnecessary, overreaching requirements for formal approvals on routine maintenance projects, which the department claims to be attempting to address, to the minister again: will these improvements to the development of less burdensome wetland codes of practice for low-impact activities . . .

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

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I certainly do appreciate the point the hon. member is making, that it is important that we be able to proceed with our infrastructure projects, whether in rural Alberta or urban Alberta – it doesn't matter – in a timely fashion. But we also have a responsibility to

provide adequate protection for our environment, which is the task of the Department of Environment and Parks. I will undertake to take his questions up with the Minister of Environment and Parks, and I'm sure she will respond to him in good time.

Thank you.

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

Traffic Congestion in South Edmonton

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The population of southwest Edmonton is burgeoning and is very grateful to the government for opening a lot of schools and announcing a new hospital in Heritage Valley. Transportation facilities, though, are taxed, and this has resulted in severe congestion on our arterial roadways and leads to excessive greenhouse gas emissions, among other things. To the Minister of Transportation: can you provide the House an update on plans to increase the capacity of the Henday-Terwillegar-Whitemud corridor, particularly at the interchanges?

Mr. Mason: Well, thanks very much for the question. Mr. Speaker, portions of the Anthony Henday from Calgary Trail to Terwillegar Drive, I know, are a source of great frustration to commuters in south and southwest Edmonton. We are committed to doing what's necessary to deal with these problems and to help people get to their jobs, to their appointments, and to family and friends as expeditiously as possible. I can tell the hon. member that we are going to be moving on that, and he should stay tuned.

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Minister. I'm sure it's in the fullness of time.

Given that the city of Edmonton is reviewing options to facilitate movement of traffic from as far south as the Edmonton International Airport to the University of Alberta campus and to downtown through the HTW corridor, what role can the province play in helping get this long-planned improvement moving forward?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member for his question. We are aware of the future planning by the city. I mean, we always do our level best to stay aware of the transportation needs of all our municipalities, whether they're urban or rural. We know the city is doing preliminary consultations in order to develop options for upgrading the drive to full freeway status, beginning with the construction of an interchange at 40th Avenue, but we haven't received any specific requests yet from the city for provincial involvement, which we will of course consider carefully when we receive it.

Dr. Turner: Thank you again, Minister.

Given that LRT, bus rapid transit, and active transport alternatives are favoured modes of many residents in my riding and across Alberta, is there a role for GreenTRIP funding in providing this?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. No. The GreenTRIP program is fully expended, but there is provincial transit funding available. Budget 2018 invests \$1.5 billion over five years in grants to municipalities for transit projects, including \$855 million for Edmonton and Calgary LRT projects. Our government is committed to expand that over the next 10 years to help both

cities with their LRT networks. We are doing what's necessary to reduce congestion and to reduce emissions and to make traffic . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Rimbey Area Fatal Highway Crash

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, on December 13 two lives tragically ended as a result of an automobile accident 45 kilometres west of Rimbey, Alberta, a case where someone shot through a four-foot stop sign at a T-intersection going 96 kilometres per hour, resulting in the least offensive charge of careless driving being levied. The family has told me – and so many things have gone wrong with the case – that they just want to get answers. Minister, the family would like to know: why was there only a charge of careless driving rather than dangerous driving causing death or criminal negligence?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First, I want to offer my condolences to the families of the two victims who died in this tragic accident, and I want to thank the member on behalf of the Justice minister for bringing this matter to our attention. The police and the Crown lay charges based on the evidence at hand, but I can share with the House that the head of the Crown prosecution service reached out to the family last night, and a local Crown handling the case will be following up with more details today.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you. I'm glad they're reaching out.

Given that the mother of one of the victims had called the RCMP to find out what was happening with the case only to find out that the case could have been heard this Friday and given that only then was she told, "Oh, by the way, you can fill out a victim impact statement," critical information they wouldn't have known if they didn't make the call in the first place, Minister, will you commit to a full review of victims' services so that no one else falls through the cracks when something serious like this happens again?

2:40

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. I can further share that RCMP victims' services reached out to the family yesterday evening to answer questions and walk them through the court process. We will continue working with the family. I will also thank the member for bringing this concern to our government. We will make sure that somebody is going to be following up on this matter.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. member, before you begin, help me understand and the House understand: is this matter before the courts now?

Mr. Taylor: It will be going perhaps on Friday, so not yet.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I believe that question is not in order under the sub judice principle; therefore, I will not allow the supplemental.

Mr. Taylor: Okay.

Introduction of Bills

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

Bill 17

Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2018

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill, being the Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2018.

As you know, Alberta's tax statutes are reviewed annually, and amendments are made to (a) protect the integrity of our tax system; secondly, to implement government policy decisions; and thirdly, to ensure our tax legislation remains aligned with the federal tax legislation.

The proposed amendments will change two acts, the Alberta Corporate Tax Act and the Alberta Personal Income Tax Act. These amendments are largely administrative in nature and would first align provincial legislation with current administrative practices; secondly, repeal expired provincial provisions; and thirdly, maintain consistency between federal and provincial legislation. Again, these types of changes are important for maintaining the integrity of our tax system in Alberta and keeping our legislation up to date.

With that, I move first reading of Bill 17.

[Motion carried; Bill 17 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the memo that I referred to in my question, that clearly shows that the NDP have already predetermined that there will be a park in the Bighorn and, in fact, have even predetermined the date, that there has been no true consultation with the people of my constituency, and that the NDP, in fact, are misleading them as to that fact.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of an editorial out of the *Edmonton Journal* called Press Must Remain Free, in which it states, "Disagreeing with standardized testing is a right in a free society; seeking to dictate press coverage absolutely shouldn't be."

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

Dr. Swann: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today, one from a constituent, Erin Dowell, who asks the question: "Can you please explain why the taxpayers of Alberta are subsidizing the daycare for some of the wealthiest families in Alberta?"

The second tabling is the appropriate copies of a petition from the pharmaceutical industry in Alberta asking the Legislature to reinvest at least 50% of any savings anticipated from generic drug cost reductions resulting from the 5-year agreement recently negotiated between the pan-Canadian Pharmaceutical Alliance and the Canadian [generics] . . . into frontline pharmacy services and programs.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Highwood.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to table the appropriate number of copies of a FOIP request for a copy of the fairness advisers' report pertaining to RFP: AHS-2016-2199.

Mr. Schneider: Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday and Wednesday afternoon during question period I asked questions with regard to

overland flooding in my riding, in every constituency, and every municipality, including the MD of Taber, the counties of Vulcan and Lethbridge, and the Siksika nation. Now, I have copies of information that I received from these municipalities. They include written descriptions and pictures as well. I have the appropriate number of copies.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I have one tabling this afternoon. I rise to table five copies of a May 2, 2018, memo and attachment to all members regarding committee meeting protocols.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 9

Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act

[Debate adjourned May 3]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: Are there any members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm proud to rise today to close debate on the second reading of Bill 9, the Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act. I'd like to begin by acknowledging that we are joined by a number of women's choice advocates seated in the gallery, who've come to watch today's debate and see for themselves who is willing and who is not willing to stand up for Alberta women. On behalf of all members of the Legislature I want to thank these strong, passionate women for their tireless work advocating for women's right to make their own choices and for access to health care free from harassment, intimidation, and violence. Every day when I come to this Chamber, I walk down the fourth floor and look to the east, and I see written high in the sky: "Now that we are persons." This is really about women exercising their own bodily autonomy. Also, I think this is about this Chamber being here to serve all Albertans, including the Alberta women who fought for us to have a voice in this place.

This women's issue is an issue that matters. Of course, we are very willing to talk about other issues, including the work we're doing to ensure that we have our pipelines built to tidewater, the work we're doing to diversify our economy, the action we're taking to support local communities. But this issue is important, too.

By acting on this today, we say to the women who are here today and to other women that we hear you, we support you, and we know how important this bill is. We know how difficult it can be for Alberta women to access health care safely. They know how difficult it's been for far too many care providers to safely provide that care without being harassed, being forced to go to court, or being judged and treated terribly for the work that they do for our community. Madam Speaker, it's unacceptable to me that these women have to face this across our province. That's why our government is standing today with women, and more importantly that's why we are taking action.

Before I talk about how this bill would protect women accessing health care, I'd like to add some clarification to some points that were raised in second reading. I mentioned that the injunction doesn't apply to public property. Just to be clear, both the injunction and the access zone include pieces of public property as specified in the injunction. I gave an example of a woman who was not able

to access the clinic via the sidewalk. With only the injunction in place, the woman was forced to walk on the road, through a puddle, to avoid protesters. This, Madam Speaker, is unacceptable. Women should be able to access health care free of harassment, and this is why we have brought forward this legislation.

2:50

I mentioned that legislation will provide a greater space of protection than the injunctions. The access zones extend further than the current injunctions in some directions, and the legislation will provide greater protection for patients and service providers at these clinics. The injunctions will remain in place, but the legislation will add crucial protections for patients to ensure that they aren't bullied, photographed, or recorded without their consent.

Additionally, the legislation prohibits any photographs or recordings from being distributed for the purpose of discouraging a person from accessing or providing abortions on social media. This is something that many women raised with me, that when they walk into their doctor's office and see somebody holding up a cellphone, recording a video, they felt very unsafe. I'm really proud that our government is working to make them feel safe and supporting them in accessing the care that they choose.

I want to be clear that the injunctions are an important tool, and they've been an important enforcement mechanism in the past. However, in practice they haven't always had the desired outcome of protecting women that I imagine the courts intended. That's why we're adding another tool through this bubble-zone legislation. Through legislation, information about penalties is laid out clearly, and they're more easily accessible to the public and to law enforcement. This information can be found online in the public domain rather than having to go into a clinic to get hard copies of the actual injunction. It allows for better communication with protestors on where they're allowed to protest and about what the consequences are and violations should they not follow them. It provides law enforcement with better clarity when enforcing the legislation.

I mentioned that the injunctions have had to be repeatedly amended at the expense and time of the clinics. Both clinics' injunctions were implemented in the early 1990s and amended again in the 2000s. When they brought this forward initially to the government of the day, they didn't want to have injunctions. They wanted to have laws similar to those that were put in place in British Columbia, and they were told at that time that, no, it just wasn't something that the government was willing to focus on, that instead they'd have to go to court. Then they went to court again. What were they told just a month ago? They should go to court again. Madam Speaker, that is not fair. That is not justice. These women deserve to be treated fairly under the law, and that's why we brought this bill forward, to make a law to protect these women. In turn, the clinics can focus on their expertise. They can provide their clients with the care that they are seeking. They don't have to spend their resources and their expert time going to court.

Madam Speaker, before I move to close debate on this bill, I'd like to talk about some of the stories that I've heard from women. When I was at the Kensington clinic, they have a journal in one of the rooms, and they walked me through the entire journey for women who are there exercising their right to choose. They walked me through the counselling area, where women are given their full range of options and are given the opportunity to exercise choices in that moment or at a later time around other components that they have questions and concerns about. Then one of the last spaces they have before you go into the operating room: they have a really quiet space with a journal.

A lot of women take the time to pick up that journal and write a few sentences about their experience. Without going into specifics about who these women are, I want you to know that one of the women talked about being married, having two children, finding out she was pregnant for the third time, and trying to be really happy, trying to be excited. She said that no matter how hard she tried, she just couldn't get there. She was feeling sick. She was exhausted. She and her husband hadn't planned on having a third child, and she just felt like she couldn't catch her breath. She said that sitting in this clinic after having an opportunity to talk to the counsellor was the first time she felt like she had some control back in her life.

Another woman talked about being a new Canadian and how, in the country that she used to live in, this wouldn't have even been an option, for her to have a legal abortion – she would have had to consider breaking the law to exercise her own bodily autonomy – and how instead she was treated with respect and compassion by the people inside the building, who were giving her the support she needed to make this choice in a way that was going to be safe, that was going to be supported, and that was going to honour who she was as a human being.

There were other stories, too, that talked about what the women experienced when they walked into the clinic. It is very real for the women who are walking into these clinics and for the people who love them, when they have brought themselves to this point of deciding to see a doctor and seek medical support for the choice they've made. They talked about hearing the protestors outside yelling at them when they were in the waiting room.

I want to say, Madam Speaker, that this bill is sorely needed by these women who've asked us to do this, who've asked governments repeatedly to do this. The women of Alberta deserve no less protection, respect, or dignity than the women of British Columbia or Newfoundland and Labrador or Ontario or Quebec. Alberta women deserve the same respect, dignity, and protection that women in other jurisdictions have.

Again, Madam Speaker, before I close, I want to thank the members of this Assembly who have chosen to participate in this important debate. I want to thank the members on this side of the Chamber and some members on the other side for standing with Alberta women.

To the members who chose not to speak for these women, for the health care providers, I'd like to remind you that the protections that you have in this place to do your job every day, including a Speaker and including a Sergeant-at-Arms – we're not even asking for there to be a Sergeant-at-Arms accompanying these staff members while they walk in to do their jobs. We're asking for them to have some safety, some protection, and some dignity. Here in the Legislature we're protected, so I find it pretty rich to see some members afraid to come into this Chamber to debate this bill and protect women and front-line health care workers. I find it pretty offensive to hear some members saying that these women and workers should go to court just to feel safe when they're doing their job or accessing health care.

If 90 per cent of success is about showing up, well, then I think Alberta women are going to have a grade to give to the Official Opposition because, Madam Speaker, Alberta women deserve a hundred per cent support in this Legislature. They don't deserve to be ignored by their MLAs who hide when it's time to protect them, they don't deserve an opposition that courts the support of groups who would defund their health care and their rights, and they don't deserve to be called a distraction. They deserve respect, and that's what they are getting from this government.

I've mentioned that I've heard from a lot of women about the difference that this will make in their lives. That's who this bill is

about. This isn't about the Leader of the Official Opposition. This isn't about freedom of speech. This is about freedom from intimidation tactics that rely on shame, stigmatization, and that prevent Alberta women from exercising choices about their health care. While the members opposite sit with their Conservative leader or stand elsewhere with him perhaps, women across this province have said: enough is enough. Madam Speaker, enough is enough.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 2:59 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Carlier	Hoffman	Payne
Carson	Horne	Piquette
Ceci	Kazim	Rosendahl
Clark	Kleinstauber	Sabir
Connolly	Loyola	Schmidt
Cortes-Vargas	Luff	Schreiner
Dach	Malkinson	Shepherd
Dang	Mason	Sigurdson
Feehan	McCuaig-Boyd	Starke
Fitzpatrick	McKitrick	Sucha
Fraser	McPherson	Swann
Goehring	Miller	Turner
Gray	Miranda	Westhead
Hinkley	Nielsen	Woollard

Against the motion:

Fildebrandt

Totals: For – 42 Against – 1

[Motion carried; Bill 9 read a second time]

Bill 13

An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future

[Adjourned debate May 2: Mrs. Aheer]

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, are there any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

An Hon. Member: He's found his voice today.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members.

We will now continue with debate. The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you for sharing some decorum in this House.

Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to the second reading of Bill 13. At the end of the day the reason we are here today, this legislation, Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future, is in front of us because the government is rapidly and, some would argue, irresponsibly phasing out reliable, cost-effective coal-fired electricity generation, the baseload we just and we must need to allow for an orderly transition and a new energy balance, and pushing forward with renewable power generation with no regard for the reliability of our electricity system. I call this a disorderly

transition doomed to failure on the shoulders and backs of hard-working Albertans.

Now, Madam Speaker, in order to attract the necessary investment to replace the baseload which has been lost from the ever-reliable coal-fired electricity generation facilities and those towns which provide it to us, this government will change Alberta's electricity market from an energy-only market to a capacity market. It seems like the fallout from the accelerated coal phase-out just keeps coming back again and again and again into this Legislature.

Madam Speaker, let's backtrack a little and look what brought us to this bemusing point in the first place. As much as this government likes to point fingers and say that it was actually the Harper government that phased out coal-fired electricity and are the ones to blame for this mess, that just is not true. Yes, the federal government, in their efforts to address emission reduction targets, implemented a plan which phased out 12 coal-fired electricity-generating plants. Twelve. These 12 plants were scheduled to be phased out by 2029 as per the federal agreement brought forward at the time. This was in line with the life cycle of these facilities as their end of life was estimated at 50 years.

However, Madam Speaker, the NDP took this a step further and included six newer plants in Alberta into a 2030 timeline, and I'll list them for the benefit of those in the House and those watching. Sheerness 1, Sheerness 2, Genesee 1, Genesee 2, Genesee 3, and Keephills 3 were all scheduled to operate well beyond 2029 under the federal government's agreement. Genesee 3 was supposed to operate all the way until 2055. That's a lot of baseload there. Keephills 3 was supposed to operate until 2061, providing inexpensive and reliable baseload power to Albertans even as we transition into a renewable world.

3:20

Before this government tries to once again shift the blame onto a previous Conservative federal government, as they are extremely fond of doing, just remember that with these two plants this government cut off 56 collective years of stable, reliable, inexpensive electricity generation just to prove a point, a point on the shoulders of hard-working Albertans, that their climate leadership plan would earn us social licence. How is that working for us, Madam Speaker? And for what? For social licence that has yet to matter to anyone opposing our energy industry and the environmental lobby, foreign-funded enviroactivists, no less, who settle for nothing less than the complete decimation of the industry, which has played such a pivotal role in building Alberta and, more recently, Canada into what it is today through the generation of wealth and jobs, transfer payments, funding of health, education, and creating prosperity not just for this province but for this country.

Not only is this phase-out an ideological decision, Madam Speaker; it is and will continue to be a very, very expensive one for Albertans. It's been estimated that it cost the NDP a paltry \$1.36 billion in compensation just for the asset value loss on the phase-out of these six remaining coal-fired plants. But what is not included is the loss of many, many other sources of revenue: corporate taxes; personal income taxes for those who will look back as previous employees of this industry; royalties on the coal, which I think is about equal on an annual basis to some of the compensation and some of the funding that is going to those – I think two years of royalties is all they're getting to try and transition into a new economy – and, of course, all the other economic multipliers too numerous to quantify, as those funds and those dollars go into the economy and are spent and respend by the people in those towns.

Just think of the decimation of those communities when they lose those jobs, lose that economic activity. I worry for those towns that

are the hosts of those coal-fired electricity-generating plants. Madam Speaker, \$1.36 billion and all the other multipliers and other sources of income and taxes and economic multipliers that I mentioned: that sounds like a lot of schools and roads and hospitals and an incalculable number of teachers, engineers, nurses, and doctors who would work at those facilities were we able to build them with money that we actually have, not with the red ink that this government is so fond of writing their cheques with.

Additionally, the government likes to talk about converting some of the coal-fired plants to natural gas. Great idea. But this is only a stopgap measure for impacted communities as the government kills off their major source of employment and leaves them hanging. I think I mentioned to the Minister of Culture and Tourism that he'll have a great new asset, the ghost towns of Alberta as a new NDP tourist attraction. Ghost towns. Many of us have visited those from a previous generation across this province.

However, we all know that these converted facilities are not as efficient as brand new combined-cycle natural gas power plants. A pretty simple concept. Not really what an effective transition should look like, but as I said, they decided disorderly transition, with many unintended consequences, as only this NDP government can be so adept at.

Natural gas plants are much less labour intensive than coal-fired plants, which means, Madam Speaker – guess what? – fewer jobs in those facilities and in those communities. No need for coal mining operations, of course, unless this government just intends to export the problem around the globe. Now, isn't that the height of greenhouse gas hypocrisy?

Which brings me to one of my next major problems with this legislation, Madam Speaker, and this government's overall approach to the electricity system. The NDP through their bungled electricity strategy have made life more expensive for families and businesses in Alberta. Not only is that burden going to be on the shoulders of our families and struggling families, in many cases unemployed families – I think the number was 152,600 unemployed in Alberta and the families that they represent – but also the businesses that we try and attract by being competitive, by attracting businesses and investment to this province. That stable baseload of electricity power is highly important to that competitiveness, Madam Speaker.

To make things even worse for consumers, this legislation only adds to the problem by transferring more risk away from generators with the smoke and mirrors for consumers and cap rate schemes, but at the end of the day, Madam Speaker, there is only one taxpayer. They are the very same person as the consumer. Robbing Peter to pay Peter indeed. A curious and manipulative, ideologically driven arrangement that actually harms Albertans and their ability to put food on their table, to pay those mortgages, those mortgage-paying jobs we always hear about, and then to attract the businesses we need in this province to create the jobs, to take those unemployed Albertans off the unemployment rolls.

As we know, the NDP wants to force renewable electricity on the Alberta market whether anyone has concerns or not. We've heard earlier today about consultation, too little and too late. Unintended consequences be damned as long as it fits the ideological narrative, divorced from any concept of good old Alberta common sense. We see it time and time again with this government's burdensome policies, regulations, and costly irresponsible actions. More winning ways borrowed from Kathleen Wynne, perhaps. It is their way, their vision through the myopic lens of the NDP world view that is guiding this misguided strategy.

Madam Speaker, any alarms raised by experts, past senior bureaucrats, or this opposition around the stability of the electricity system and the risk to Alberta consumers, a great risk to Alberta

consumers and to taxpayers, are ignored and summarily dismissed. And it's not like the opposition are the only ones saying these things, Madam Speaker. An October 2016 report from the Alberta Electric System Operator, also known as AESO, stated:

Without investment in new firm generation (or equivalent but alternative sources of firm supply such as demand response, etc.) to replace retiring coal-fired electricity, the market will be unable to support increasing volumes of intermittent renewables and provide a healthy reserve margin to manage through a wide range of system conditions. System reliability will be compromised.

That is very troubling to me, Madam Speaker, and I think it should be to everyone in this House and all Albertans, our electricity expert telling us that we will have a compromised electricity system and compromised reliability for consumers and businesses in this province as we hopefully move back into economic growth, not the up, up, up we hear from the other side but real, true economic growth through the attraction of business and investment.

Despite these warnings the government went ahead with Bill 27 in November of 2016 and set the target for 30 per cent renewable electricity generation. In doing so, the NDP purposely and perhaps purposefully compromised the electrical system's reliability and did so without a guarantee that the natural gas peaker plants would be built to produce electricity when, as we always say, the sun doesn't shine and the wind doesn't blow.

Which brings us back to the reason we need this legislation in the first place, the reason it's being brought in front of us. Once this government imploded the system in place, litigated themselves into a corner, and pushed ahead with their misguided agenda, they realized they would need to move to a capacity market to attract any investment at all, the same people that they've been facing lawsuits with and launching lawsuits against, the same people that they now want to have as partners. They've had to go to a capacity market to attract some investment to give the baseload that we all know we need.

Essentially, this government has now given Albertans a choice between high electricity prices with volatility and high risk or higher electricity prices with stability and lower risk. Higher electricity prices, Madam Speaker: does that sound like a story we've heard all too often from Ontario, the pleas from people there who can't afford to pay their electricity bills anymore, their electricity bills higher than their mortgage payments? All this because they tried to force renewables, a disorderly transition into the market, and shut down coal at an unnecessarily rapid pace, which went far above and beyond what the federal government had implemented. No one wants the disaster that is Ontario's electricity system. You win some, you lose some, as some might say. In just a few months maybe that government there and their ideological allies will face the music. Maybe we'll get there one day in this province as well.

3:30

No one wants ratepayers to be paying for power plants that sit idle and don't run, just in case for when the sun doesn't shine and the wind doesn't blow. We know that that's the way it works. We know that we have short days in the winter. We know that the wind is not always blowing at the time when we need the peak-demand power. But, as always, this government is leaving a number of the important details to sketchy regulations and is asking us, so far, to trust them and their judgment. Well, Madam Speaker, that ship sailed \$96 billion ago.

I understand that at the appropriate stages in debate we will likely see some positive suggestions brought forward by some of my hon. colleagues, and I hope that this government is prepared to listen to

these reasonable suggestions, Madam Speaker. This might at least recognize some of the many concerns I'm hearing from Albertans, your constituents and mine. Albertans should not be paying for the reckless decisions of this government, not today, not next year, not for a generation, as seems to be the chosen path and pattern of this government.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I will not be supporting this bill.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Mrs. Schreiner: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm very happy to stand and speak to second reading of Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future. This bill is about delivering safe, reliable, sustainable, and affordable electricity to Albertans. This bill is also about attracting investment and preparing for a low-carbon future. It's about protecting Albertans from electricity price spikes.

This legislation will modernize Alberta's electricity system, transitioning our energy-only market to a capacity market. The move to a capacity market is highly recommended by current and potential energy investors as well as external experts, consumer groups, and the Alberta Electric System Operator. Madam Speaker, David Erickson, president and CEO of the Alberta Electric System Operator, states:

After thorough analysis, the AESO concluded that the current energy-only market will not ensure that Alberta has a reliable electricity system in the future. There has been a growing reluctance for developers to invest in energy-only markets and this global trend was a critical factor in our recommendation to move to a capacity market.

A capacity market system will make life better for all Albertans. A capacity market will be a benefit for both consumers and investors. A capacity market will provide consumers with a greater price stability as opposed to the volatile price spikes Albertans have endured in the past. A capacity market is a welcome concept for competition, innovation as well as private investment.

This government, on this side of the House, has been working with stakeholders to come up with a state-of-the-art capacity market for Alberta, made in Alberta for Albertans, a system which will ensure certainty and confidence. With predictability and stability comes increased investment certainty. This is a made-in-Alberta approach to a proven system used around the world. Capacity markets are currently serving tens of millions of customers in more than 30 jurisdictions around the world, including the United States and the United Kingdom.

Back in November 2016 our government made an announcement that it would create a capacity market for electricity. The government committed that the new market would be in place in 2021. In order to meet this commitment, changes need to be made to a number of acts and regulations in 2018. If passed, the Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future will lay the groundwork for a more stable electricity system by creating a capacity market, which will increase investor confidence, protect consumers from breaches of service quality and compliance standards, and at the same time provide more options for Albertans to generate their own electricity from renewable or alternative sources. The act encompasses several initiatives, including a transition to a capacity market. This transition means greater price stability for everyday Alberta families as well as more revenue certainty for companies, a win-win for everyone.

Madam Speaker, in 2017 over 2,000 Albertans wrote to the Utilities Consumer Advocate regarding billing issues. Albertans were asking for change, and this act proposes to make those changes. The Alberta Utilities Commission would be able to issue penalties, much like tickets such as speeding tickets or traffic tickets, instead of slow and often expensive hearings. The Alberta Utilities Commission would have the authority to act quickly and resolve issues with service providers.

While most customers experience few problems with retail electricity and natural gas services and bills, those who do experience issues have not always felt properly supported. The Utilities Consumer Advocate continues to receive complaints on inaccurate bills, which shows a need for more efficient enforcement of utility customer service quality standards. If passed, this act would provide for the Alberta Utilities Commission to issue specified penalties to electricity and natural gas providers for particular breaches.

The Alberta Utilities Commission would be able to enforce minor breaches of its rules, orders, and decisions in a timely, efficient, and effective manner, and this measure will help ensure that electricity and natural gas providers are more accountable to Alberta customers, all of which will improve the level of service Albertans receive from their electricity and natural gas service providers. Jim Wachowich from Consumers' Coalition of Alberta stated:

As an independent and residential-focused consumer group, we're encouraged by legislation that's designed to protect Alberta utility consumers. We're pleased to see the government views efficient and effective consumer protection as an important part of the public interest.

The act will address the utility asset disposition. The utility asset disposition refers to who pays for any losses and who profits when a regulated utility asset is either sold, destroyed, or is no longer being used to provide customers with utility service. Madam Speaker, there has been a lack of government policy and legislation on how dispositions of utility assets are to be addressed. A 2006 Supreme Court of Canada decision found that Alberta's legislation did not provide the Alberta Utilities Commission with clear legal authority to allocate gains and losses of disposed assets. As a result, currently the Alberta Utilities Commission is prevented from allocating gains and losses between utility customers and shareholders.

3:40

All financial gains and losses associated with an asset disposition are presently allocated to the utility, which puts an increased risk on the utility, which results in investor uncertainty. The increased risk can result in higher borrowing costs for utilities, which potentially leads to higher utility rates for Alberta customers. Without An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future, which clarifies the AUC's authority, legal challenges between utilities and the Alberta Utilities Commission will likely continue. Utility asset dispositions are complex issues which require the Alberta Utilities Commission to have flexibility in making decisions and the ability to take all public interest considerations into account.

Madam Speaker, in the past there have been many lengthy court battles over who pays for losses and who is the recipient of profits when utilities dispose of assets. Industry is asking for clarity. This policy will give the Alberta Utilities Commission the authority to decide, and of course more certainty equals more investor confidence.

Madam Speaker, key outcomes of the utility asset disposition policy include ensuring that customers are not subject to unfair risks and costs, providing a more stable investment climate for utilities, providing regulatory certainty for stakeholders, and avoiding

further litigation on this issue where possible. This policy is consistent with the approaches currently used in other jurisdictions throughout North America that do not have Crown corporations providing utility services, including Ontario, Nova Scotia as well as jurisdictions in the United States.

To enact this policy, proposed amendments would give the Alberta Utilities Commission the authority to make utility asset disposition decisions in the public interest. These decisions can be made – but they would not be limited to this – through consideration of social, economic, and environmental effects and on a case-by-case basis, and the Alberta Utilities Commission is being given authority to develop rules for which considerations it may take into account when deciding the allocation of costs and benefits between utility customers and shareholders.

Madam Speaker, I support Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future. We are taking the important steps necessary to secure Alberta's electricity future. Our approach to modernize the system will provide stability for everyday Albertan families and provide certainty for investors. We are making our electricity system more reliable and are better protecting Albertans.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I'll now call on the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Yao: Why, thank you so much, Madam Speaker. It is an honour and a pleasure to speak here today about Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future. It used to not be every day that the NDP were trying to recover from legislation they bungled up in the past, but it seems to be becoming more and more frequent recently. This government's destructive policies have caused the need for this bill, and although I am glad to see the government take ownership of their mistakes, it saddens me that we have arrived at this place at all.

We recall from last session when, despite warning, the government brought in bills 27 and 34, which fundamentally changed the way our electricity market operates and introduced instability and unpredictability. Not only that, but electricity prices are simply more expensive for Albertans, and unfortunately we on this side of the House have lost trust in their ability to fix what we've wronged in Alberta's electricity market.

The closing of six coal-fired power plants cost Alberta's hard-working taxpayers \$1.36 billion in order to convert them to natural gas. Not only is the burden being felt by those closest to those power plants who rely on their jobs at the plants in order to pay their bills and take care of their families and save for retirement, but that cost is also being shared by all of Alberta's taxpayers.

This tax season I'm sure we all wondered what our hard-earned dollars were being spent on, who they were benefiting, and if they were being spent in the most efficient way, seeing as the NDP's policies have driven costs up for all Albertans. And that's at the pump, on their bills, and just about everywhere. I'm wondering why all of their policies have simply been making life more expensive for Albertans. In fact, we have so little faith on this side of the aisle that the UCP has written to the Auditor General asking for the full cost accounting of the NDP's whole electricity fiasco. The taxpayers deserve accountability, and as legislators in charge of the welfare of Albertans it is our duty to stay liable to those we represent.

However, that is not what happened when for months and months the communities most closely affected by the government's policies heard nothing at all about what they were in store for or what would

happen to them when the plants that they relied on for their employment and livelihood would close. Families cannot simply uproot their lives and leave their communities, but without a power plant and without employment that community is no longer a viable place for them to live. As part of the federal agreement Alberta was to phase out 12 coal-fired generating plants by 2029, which gave much more time for a reasonable transition, for families to make plans and not have to scramble to figure out what comes next. This was thoughtful and mindful of families, giving them time to transition. Albertans cannot change their entire direction each time the NDP wants to try their hand in another sector just to see what would happen.

Instead, this government would phase out the six remaining coal-fired power plants that would operate past 2029. Some of these coal plants are practically brand new. Keephills 3 was supposed to run until 2061, and Genesee 3 was supposed to run until 2055.

Coal conversion to natural gas is not as efficient as brand new combined-cycle natural gas power plants, but of course the NDP want to force renewable electricity on the Alberta market, and they want to do it fast and with disregard for families who depended on this for their livelihood. Again, the NDP's policies have cost us \$1.36 billion to shut these plants early and convert them to natural gas. There was no consideration of taxpayers, the norm we have come to expect at this point from this government.

The point when the government started disregarding the best interests of Albertans and narrowed their sights on a climate leadership plan, Albertans were the ones left to deal with the aftermath. Now we're seeing them trying to clean up their mistakes on the electricity debacle, a system where they phased out coal-fired power and introduced wind power in much too tight a time frame, causing chaos in the electricity market. As per this government's decision an energy-only market was no longer an option since the \$1,000 per megawatt hour cap on electricity prices would have to rise to \$5,000 a megawatt hour in order to attract the investment it would need to keep the system reliable. Looking to their friends in Premier Wynne's Ontario system, this government knew they could not politically afford Alberta's high power bills being five times higher than they already were.

The Alberta Electric System Operator, the legislation-mandated operator connecting generators with transmission to run the electricity market and keep adequate electricity flowing, ran many models, which included the high use of intermittent renewables to generate electricity in Alberta. Their modelling showed that the renewable electricity program will decrease the revenue needed for all generators to recoup investment and earn a profit, thus deterring investment. In fact, they released a report in October 2016 which also stated that "system reliability will be compromised." The NDP had advice and more advice to tell them what would happen, and they still went ahead with their plans.

3:50

The AESO report said:

Without investment in new firm generation (or equivalent but alternative sources of firm supply such as demand response, etc.) to replace retiring coal-fired electricity, the market will be unable to support increasing volumes of intermittent renewables and provide a healthy reserve margin to manage through a wide range of system conditions. System reliability will be compromised.

They then introduced Bill 27 the next month. This bill set the target for 30 per cent renewables. The NDP was entirely aware that they were compromising the reliability of the electrical system, yet they proceeded anyway. Furthermore, this government did this without a guarantee that the peaker plants would be built to produce

electricity when the sun doesn't shine and when the wind doesn't blow. The foresight is clearly lacking from this government.

This then drove the need for the capacity market, which we're now seeing, which results in medium risk and medium costs, except, of course, the \$1.36 billion associated with shutting down these coal plants early and converting them to natural gas.

However, after this government messed up this file so badly, the electricity stakeholders – the capacity market generators, the AESO, the Market Surveillance Administrator, the investors, and consumer groups – all demanded that this government fix their wrongs and somewhat restabilize the market in the only way left. This government has given Albertans two choices. They can choose either high electricity prices with volatility or higher electricity prices with stability and lower risk, all of this because they tried to force renewables into the market and close coal in too short a time frame, with no forethought.

The capacity market will mean higher power bills for consumers. The government has put in place a 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour cap, and they'll subsidize your power bill should power prices rise above that 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour. They believe that they're protecting ratepayers because they will be using tax dollars to pay the rest of your power bill. Where do those tax dollars come from? Hmm. Ah, yes. From the same place that this government gets all of its money, from the taxpayer, the exact same person who is defined as the ratepayer.

This government will make it seem as though they will take the burden off, but that money still comes out of Albertans' pockets, and that seems deceitful. This is merely a roundabout way of taking more money from hard-working Albertans in order to protect themselves from suffering the same fate as their friends in Ontario. The ratepayer will not see that cost coming out of their pocket for their power with their bills about the same, but that same taxpayer most definitely will.

Madam Speaker, listing the cost directly on the bill allows for Albertans to transparently see what is going on and to watch for any wrongdoing by the government. However, this government doesn't want ratepayers peeking behind the curtain and will allow taxpayers to subsidize their mistakes.

We also need to recognize that while wind and solar energy are important, they're technologically a long way from being interchangeable in terms of cost, reliability, and capacity with coal or natural gas. Alberta needs a steady basic stream of electricity from baseload combined-cycle natural gas and simple-cycle natural gas in order to begin to replace coal and to provide the backup necessary for renewable forms of energy. Renewables like wind and solar on their own are not reliable enough to be considered as viable options to address the AESO's requirement for a 15 per cent reserve margin. This reserve margin is essential to the electricity market in case demand for electricity spikes. The AESO has determined that wind and solar cannot be used as part of this reserve margin due to how fickle they are. Again, there must be a backup in place if the wind is not blowing and the sun is not shining.

Now, I would have thought – and I'm sure many others have thought the same – that this government would learn from their mistakes. After rushing out timelines for the coal phase-out and implementing the renewables margin, which caused the chaos in the first place, they're attempting to simply implement the capacity market in two years as opposed to three to six years. I just continue to lose trust in this government when I see them continuing down this path.

Madam Speaker, this government has bungled this file immensely. They left no other choice but to move to a capacity market. It is unfair that Albertans will be left to pay for their mistakes, however many more shots they'll take at trying to fix

those mistakes. I am deeply disappointed that this government would act so recklessly and with such little forethought, but I'll let all Albertans know that Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition will continue to hold this government to account on behalf of them.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The hon. member made mention of Ontario and some of the experience there. I'm just wondering if he would comment on that because I'm a little concerned with the amount of intensity that we see from the opposite side in copying Ontario. We are copying their financial experiences. We seem to be bound to go down the road of copying Ontario's electricity policy, which has made their electricity one of the most expensive in the country. I think they're so obsessed with it, in fact, that I was a little surprised last night to hear the Finance minister make a little slip of the tongue, maybe a telling one, where he welcomed about a thousand businesspeople to a dinner on behalf of the Premier and the province of Ontario. It was a slip of the tongue; I grant that. But why are we so obsessed with the province of Ontario? I just wonder if the member could comment on that.

Mr. Yao: Why, thank you, my good man. I really appreciate your question. I have to be honest with you that I find what Ontario did to be extremely complex. You know, the desire to have renewable energy is a great vision, quite honestly. We all want clean air, clean earth, clean water, but there are certain practicalities that don't necessarily correlate with these thoughts. Certainly, our technology still has to catch up for a lot of these things to be viable. But Ontario demonstrated wholeheartedly the rush to try to do that, and the end result was that they are billions of dollars in debt right now, and they're costing the people of Ontario in extremely high tax bills.

We have just discovered very recently that the Auditor General of Ontario has done an audit of Ontario's finances, and they found that they were hiding money, that they were using skulduggery in their accounting to hide a lot of the real costs of this. I hope this government doesn't pick up any of those thoughts and try do the same thing. I have more faith in our people here, I hope, but again I can't help but wonder if you're heading down that same path. It would be very dreadful if we did.

To answer the good Member for Lacombe-Ponoka's question, I'd have to say that Ontario just did it in the poorest possible way. They tried to really push their ideologies, full of rainbows and unicorns. It just isn't the case. The reality wasn't there. You know, it's disappointing that we're sacrificing our own economic future across this nation for, obviously, great ideals of clean air, clean earth, clean water, but they are currently not sustainable, currently not as achievable as we hoped. That's a shame.

You know how Canada really impacts the world? When our people are working and we're putting our kids to school and we have this highly educated population who doesn't have to worry about putting a roof over their head and putting food in their mouth and are getting a great education. Those are the ones that travel all around the world, those kids. They're the ones that preach our Canadian values to the rest of the world. They're the ones that sew those maple leaves onto their backpacks so that they can proudly say that they're Canadian, and they go volunteer all over the world.

4:00

We spread our values that way, and we demonstrate to the world about all the great things that we have to offer and what we can share with them. If anyone here has travelled, you'll find that the

other nations of this world aren't quite at the level that we are of being socially conscious. I mean, we have a government right now full of social justice warriors, but if you go to any other nation, they are few and far between because they're still struggling with their economies. They're still struggling to ensure that their people are employed. They're still struggling to make sure that people are fed. The world out there is not as clean and as ideal as we hope.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. This is Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future. That is the name of the bill. I would say that it's a very descriptive name, but it really doesn't tell you what the bill involves. Now, that's an important thing to bring up because a lot of times what happens is that when you put a bill forward, in the name of the bill usually you're trying to describe what you're doing. Now, it is my understanding that Bill 13 will change Alberta's electricity market from an energy-only market to a capacity market. That is the goal of the bill. It makes sense that the name of this bill probably should have been An Act to Change Alberta's Electricity Market to a Capacity Market. I think that's a reasonable thing that we should have had as a name for the bill.

Mr. Mason: Is that an amendment?

Mr. Cyr: Well, you know, the House leader has said that he'd be willing to put an amendment through should I do that, and I'm very thankful for his voluntary – now, for me, though, what I have to say is that, to be honest, I don't know what a capacity market is. I would argue that many Albertans don't know what a capacity market is. I also would argue that many Albertans wouldn't know what an energy-only market is. So for me I'd like to take some time today for the record to go through an article. It was written by Adam James. The paper that he did this for is the energy collective. The name of the article is How a Capacity Market Works. It was written on June 14, 2013, so this not a recent article, but having read through the article, I do believe that I have an understanding of what the author is trying to get through.

Now, I would like to start off with a quote from the article, right off the bat. "I have a confession to make. I am one of those folks who consistently write on wonky energy things without ever taking the time to write out simple explanations of the basic concepts or why they matter." This piece is a brief description of what electricity capacity markets are and how they work.

Now, you can tell that Mr. James has got to be very much an expert in the field because here I am trying to understand the basic concept, and he's showing that this is something that is simple. Having gone through this article, I can say that if there is an error in my interpretation, I would hope that the government would correct me on this because it's not my intent to misinform Albertans.

What we're talking about is:

Part One: What is a Capacity Market?

There is a difference between energy and capacity, and power plants are compensated for both because both are important to maintaining the electrical system in different ways.

Here is the distinction. A power plant generates electricity that you use in your home – and it needs to be paid for that electricity. This happens in the energy market. In these markets electricity is like any other commodity, bought wholesale and [then] resold to consumers at retail prices.

This is just saying that we have a group of companies or a company that makes electricity. Then what happens is that it sells that to a

market, and then it gets resold to the consumer. That seems to be pretty simple, and I can get onboard with that one.

However, some grid operators are experimenting with capacity markets, or “forward markets,” which direct investment a few years ahead of when electricity needs to be delivered. This is important, since power plants are expensive and take a long time to build; adding [an] additional risk that they may not even be used can obviously discourage investment. Hopefully, these markets create long-term price signals for all resources.

The basic idea is that power plants receive compensation for capacity, or the power that they will provide at some point in the future. The way these markets are run in the PJM territory, there is an auction every year that has a delivery date three years away. This auction is called the Base Residual Auction. Then, there are smaller balancing auctions every year leading up to the delivery date where bidders can buy or sell their commitments. These are called “Incremental Auctions,” and occur just in case a power plant cannot meet its commitment, and needs to purchase replacement capacity from another power plant.

There’s a lot to be unpacked in that one paragraph. I have to say that clearly there’s a lot to just getting the origin of this going.

Now, he moves on.

One quick note here: in these auctions, there is no functional difference between a megawatt of power from a power plant and a megawatt of reduced power from efficiency or demand response. So although I’ve been saying “power plants” to help picture this process, demand-side resources can also bid into the auction.

What I am interpreting this to say is that we have different ways of creating power. We have wind. We have solar. We have coal. We have gas. There are a variety of ways of creating the power. That’s part 1.

Now, part 2 goes on to saying:

How Do Capacity Markets Work?

Every resource bids into the auction at its total cost of operation. Since power plants depreciate over time, this bid can sometimes be [lower] if a plant has been around for a long time. This makes sense, since the capital investments in the plant have been paid off and the total cost of operations is mostly employees and fuel. New plants total cost of operation is higher at first, since it would include the capital costs plus the operational costs.

What it’s saying in this statement is that new plants cost more money. This is not shocking for most people. They go out and buy a new car. Obviously, you’re going to have a payment on that car. Then you’re also going to have the maintenance on that car, the fuel for that car, washing the car. You’re going to have all of these little costs. But if you have an older car, it’s potentially going to cost you less because you no longer have those initial payments for the new car. So what they’re trying to say here is that new plants cost more money to operate. I think everybody can get around that.

4:10

This means that what price a power plant bids into the market can vary quite dramatically. A 30 year old nuclear plant could actually bid in very low and a wind turbine that has zero fuel costs could have a much higher bid.

Again, what we’ve got here is that if suddenly we bring on a wind turbine versus an old coal plant, like what we’ve got here in Alberta, the cost of producing that power could be a lot higher for that wind turbine if it is a new build. If that coal plant is an old build and has had time to depreciate, you’re going to find that it’s actually very low cost to operate. So what happens here is that when those two sources of power are bidding for supplying power, the coal plants will be able to bid at a lot lower cost than the wind turbines or the solar.

Moving on.

So what happens is that the grid operator holds an auction based on projections for what electricity demand will be in three years. When I say “electricity demand,” I actually mean peak demand for that entire year, plus a bit extra as a buffer (called a capacity margin).

What happens is that they actually provide a picture. Unfortunately, this is one thing that I can’t show, but what we’ve got here: if you would picture steps going up to a door and if you think of these steps as bids that need to be able to get into that doorway, which would be that peak demand, the lowest bid on those steps would be the bottom of the stairs. And as the bids increase, the value of what they get at the top will be the bid that all of the steps get for the cost of that power.

Now, I know this is confusing, but let’s go on to this wonderful diagram. What they’ve got here is – this is just an example, and I think this is a well-written example, actually – that they’re saying that 550 megawatts of power is the top threshold of the staircase. That’s what you’re trying to get to. Now, you’ve got a wind turbine that is at \$30 per megawatt. You’ve got another wind turbine at \$50, natural gas at \$100, natural gas at \$110. Then we’ve got something that’s called efficiency – I’m not sure what that is, unfortunately – and that’s sitting at about \$130, and a coal plant at \$150 and another coal plant at \$160.

What happens here is that they all bid into the pool. We start with the low one. We start with the wind turbine, the wind turbine. We go to the gas plant, the gas plant, then the efficiency, and then the coal plant. And then what happens is that you meet that wonderful threshold of 550 megawatts. That last coal plant at \$160 per megawatt would have to, unfortunately, not get its bid. What happens is that everybody below that threshold of 550 megawatts would all be paid at the \$150 level. That’s the capacity market, as the way I understand it.

Now, again, if I am wrong, I would encourage the government to correct me. What I’m trying to do here is understand it for myself, and I’m trying to make sure that when we’re on the record here, I’m always putting forward very clear and concise information to the public.

Now, they go on to say in the same example – and I’ll read it word for word.

Pretend that the grid operator had to meet 550 megawatts of demand. This is absurdly low of course, it’s closer to 170,000 in PJM, but the process is much easier to [understand] with smaller numbers. The grid operator will then hold an auction to try to get the 550 megawatts of demand met at the lowest cost to consumers.

So then every resource bids into the auction in at its total cost of operation. In our hypothetical auction below, I’ve arranged the stack . . .

This is the stack I was talking about.

. . . from lowest to highest cost bids, and drawn a line at the point where . . . [the] capacity has been acquired to meet that demand.

Again, that’s that 550 megawatts.

As you can see here, the cheapest resource . . .

In this example that they gave, as I told you before, it’s \$30.

. . . is one wind turbine bidding in 50 MW of capacity at \$30 per MW. But wait!

They’ve got an exclamation mark because they’re making this sound very exciting.

Just because they bid \$30 per MW, that does not mean that the turbine receives 30 per MW. All it means is that the wind turbine is now committed . . .

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to thank the member opposite for his remarks. I just had a really quick question for him. I actually have the exact article that he's reading from in front of me right now. Basically, the next paragraph – I'll quote from it here – is:

The other story here is that in capacity markets, lower cost resources can have the effect of suppressing prices for all of the resources since they ensure that demand can be met at a lower cost . . . For a company who owns lower cost resources, it is good. Consumers always benefit from lower prices.

Capacity markets are important. They are the firing line for the electricity system of the future, because they direct and encourage investments in different kinds of assets.

I guess, just to finish his thought, if we're going through the entire article here, does he agree with the article that capacity markets are important and that they're the future of energy markets?

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, I actually have to say that at this point I am still reviewing the bill, and I am myself trying to get through exactly how this works. I have stated this from the very beginning, so this is not a shock to this House.

What I would like to do, though, is continue reading where I was at here. Now, what we have is:

As you can see here, the cheapest resource is one wind turbine bidding in 50 MW of capacity at \$30 per MW. But wait! Just because they bid in \$30 per MW, that does not mean that the turbine receives 30 per MW. All it means is that the wind turbine is now committed to have 50 MW of power available in 3 years from now. Looking further up the stack, another turbine bids in 50 MW at \$50 per MW. Even higher up the stack, you can see efficiency bid into the auction at \$130 per MW.

That is for a coal plant. The bid is at \$130 per megawatt, and another coal plant bids in at \$150 per megawatt.

So what compensation do they receive? In this example, all of the resources, including the wind turbine at the bottom, receive \$150 per MW. This is called the "clearing price," and it is set by the most expensive unit needed to meet demand. In this case, that is the coal plant.

In this case the diagram shows the coal plant in orange.

This is important to understand the dynamics between . . . [the] resources in the market.

In this example, efficiency actually displaced a coal plant (shown in purple) whose total cost of operation was \$160 per MW. Think about it this way; if efficiency had not bid into the market, then demand would have been 100 MW higher and [the] coal plant would have been called on to meet [the] demand. Then the clearing price would have been \$160 per MW.

Now, I know this is really hard to be able to understand without seeing the diagram, and I'm sorry. As my colleague across the aisle said, it is easy to pull up the article should you decide that you would like to.

4:20

Now, I do understand that we do have a government side that says that this is the best way of selling electricity. Now what we are seeing, though, is a retirement of assets that have low depreciation costs. This is important because that means that they are very efficient right now and very cheap for us to be able to produce power from. When the government decides to retire these assets early, some of them, as we heard from my other colleague, 20, 30 years before the time that they were supposed to – what happens here is that we had capacity bidding at a lot lower rates than they would be if we shut them down early. This is where the capacity market is one that we need to acknowledge that if we had not retired

those coal plants early, what we would be seeing right now would be lower electricity prices for both the energy-only . . . [The time limit for questions and comments expired]

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Because this article seems so riveting, can you please table it next week?

Mr. Cyr: I can.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much.

Are there any other members that would like to speak? The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. As I always like to say when I rise to speak on a bill in this Chamber, it's my honour to be able to be here to speak today to Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future. As a result of the coal-fired generation phase-out and the push for renewable generation the NDP government have put in jeopardy the reliability of the electrical system in Alberta. In order to attract the necessary investment, in order to replace the baseload lost from coal, and, of course, for future growth, Bill 13 will change Alberta's electricity market from an energy-only market to a capacity market.

Now, in 2016 the government announced the creation of a capacity market. This bill, Bill 13, is not about renewables per se. It's about financing coal-to-gas conversions, new natural gas generation, and backup for renewables. Bill 13 is here to fix the mess-up from the coal phase-out, which made the grid unstable when 30 per cent of renewables under Bill 27 were included to be part of Alberta's daily energy use.

I think my colleague from Calgary-Foothills referred to the process as an attempt to put humpty dumpty back together again. The Alberta Electric System Operator contracts renewables capacity through the bid process. Now, as I understand the capacity market, it is a market that pays companies both for the capacity that they could offer the market even when their facilities are not operating plus the price they receive for the electricity they generate when operational. Interestingly, Albertans pay for capacity now, but that cost is bundled in with their monthly energy costs.

Under the new system, as I stated a moment ago, generators will receive two payments. The first one is a constant, steady payment for capacity to produce electricity, and the second is a separate payment for the electricity that the generator will produce. The minister has stated that changes were necessary to attract investment after the province shifts away from coal-fired power by 2030.

Now, coal-fired power makes up a little over 50 per cent of Alberta's electricity, so in order to offset that decline in the backbone of the electricity in Alberta, the province needs companies to build new generating stations. Those generating stations will also need to consistently produce about 8,000 megawatts of electricity by the same 2030. Of course, over the same period the province is also going to be looking for companies to invest in new renewable energy projects.

Madam Speaker, this whole situation started when this new government initiated a carbon tax and levied it to heavy industrial emitters. At the end of the day, it appears that the target for that tax, in a large part, was coal-fired power plants, that have created a large portion of Alberta's electrical use for some time.

Now, of course, the carbon tax was not something that the government included in their platform when they were running in 2015, so when the tax was levied to these companies that were energy generators using coal power, they opted out of their power

purchase agreements because the contract that these energy-producing companies had with the province stated that they could do just that, opt out of their agreement with the province if any government made those agreements uncompetitive. So that is what they did. Of course, this government put on quite a show about how this was some kind of a backroom deal that was made and how they were going to correct this problem with their own agreements because all of the companies were exercising their right to turn back those contracts.

Now, of course, Alberta was on a timeline to phase out 12 of the coal-fired power plants by 2029 as it was. The federal government had set that goal previously. It was a thoughtful plan. Some of those plants were older and were going to be converted to natural gas or shut down anyway. You know, it seemed like a common-sense plan that the companies and the province agreed with. Then came the change of government and their determination to shut down all coal-fired plants in Alberta way ahead of schedule, all tied, of course, to what Trudeau number two called social licence.

Anyway, Madam Speaker, there were six of Alberta's plants that had actually been scheduled to be shut down much later, as late as 2061. Genesee 3 was to be shut down in 2055. These were considered to be state-of-the-art facilities, so of course there was some turmoil in the industry. As the power generation companies handed their contracts, legally so, back to the Balancing Pool, the whole power generation system was in a bit of a risky position. The cost to the Balancing Pool turned out to be \$70 million a month, \$70 million a month. At the end of the day, the pool lost an astounding \$2 billion. The government poured a lot of money into the Balancing Pool while they tried to come up with a way to stop the bleeding, a lot of money that Albertans are paying for.

On top of the hundreds of millions of dollars that Albertans are forced to pay for their actions, we have several coal communities that were of the understanding, of course, that their coal plants would be operational for some time to come. Many, many Albertans will be forced out of work decades earlier than they had

planned for. Anyway, we've all be sitting here for the last three years, and we have all seen this play out over that time.

I don't think there's any question that the government is going to make electricity more expensive for Albertans, and Albertans know it. The electricity price is already starting to move up, and people are noticing that. I've noticed it myself. How far the price of electricity will go is not known. That is kind of the scary part here. Coal conversion to natural gas for these plants is not as efficient as brand new combined-cycle natural gas power plants, of course. The conversion of these plants is costing Albertans in the neighbourhood of \$1.36 billion to shut them down early and do a conversion to natural gas. Madam Speaker, this government was bent on forcing renewable energy on the good people of Alberta, and it appears that they were prepared to do that at any cost.

This has concerned the UCP enough that we've written the Auditor General in regard to the NDP's tampering with the electricity system. We asked for his outlook on the full costs and implications of the power purchase agreement losses as well as the province's decision to phase out coal-fired electricity and its cap on electricity rates. Clearly, Madam Speaker, this is something that will affect all Albertans to one degree or another. The position of this independent officer is important.

Now, the Alberta Electric System Operator ran many models in its quest to determine how the change to electricity provision in Alberta would shake out, including the use of intermittent renewable to be part of the electricity generation in this province. It appears that the Alberta Electric System Operator modelling shows something that may have been expected by folks on this side of the House . . .

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(2) the Assembly stands adjourned until 1:30 on Monday afternoon. Have a good weekend.

[The Assembly adjourned at 4:30 p.m.]

Bill Status Report for the 29th Legislature - 4th Session (2018)

Activity to Thursday, May 3, 2018

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

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

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

Bill 1 — Energy Diversification Act (McCuaig-Boyd)

First Reading — 6 (*Mar. 8, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 50-51 (*Mar. 13, 2018 morn.*), 184-87 (*Mar. 15, 2018 aft.*), 233-43 (*Mar. 20, 2018 morn.*), 301-08 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 2 — Growth and Diversification Act (\$) (Bilous)

First Reading — 118 (*Mar. 14, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 243-46 (*Mar. 20, 2018 morn.*), 294-96 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft.*), 314-25 (*Mar. 22, 2018 morn.*), 411-12 (*Apr. 4, 2018 aft.*), 702-05 (*May 1, 2018 eve., adjourned*)

Bill 3 — Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2018 (\$) (Ceci)

First Reading — 184 (*Mar. 15, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 221-26 (*Mar. 19, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 261-68 (*Mar. 20, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 296-98 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 28, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force Mar. 28, 2018; SA 2018 c1]

Bill 4 — Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2018 (\$) (Ceci)

First Reading — 165 (*Mar. 15, 2018 morn., passed*)

Second Reading — 226-32 (*Mar. 19, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 268-75 (*Mar. 20, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 298-301 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 28, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force Mar. 28, 2018; SA 2018 c2]

Bill 5 — An Act to Strengthen Financial Security for Persons with Disabilities (Sabir)

First Reading — 200-201 (*Mar. 19, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 360-62 (*Apr. 3, 2018 morn.*), 482-87 (*Apr. 10, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 6 — Gaming and Liquor Statutes Amendment Act, 2018 (Ganley)

First Reading — 448 (*Apr. 9, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 533-34 (*Apr. 12, 2018 aft.*), 669-79 (*May 1, 2018 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 7 — Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act (Carlier)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 491-97 (*Apr. 10, 2018 aft.*), 534-36 (*Apr. 12, 2018 aft.*), 679-83 (*May 1, 2018 aft., adjourned on amendment*)

Bill 8 — Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2018 (S. Anderson)

First Reading — 374 (*Apr. 3, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 9 — Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act (Hoffman)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 497-502 (*Apr. 10, 2018 aft.*), 785-93 (*May 3, 2018 morn.*), 775-76 (*May 3, 2018 morn.*), 807-08 (*May 3, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Bill 10 — An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements (S. Anderson)

First Reading — 528 (*Apr. 12, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 611-12 (*Apr. 19, 2018 aft.*), 643-50 (*May 1, 2018 morn.*), 761-72 (*May 2, 2018 eve., adjourned*)

Bill 11 — Lobbyists Amendment Act, 2018 (Gray)

First Reading — 505 (*Apr. 11, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 612-13 (*Apr. 19, 2018 aft.*), 650-56 (*May 1, 2018 morn.*), 772-74 (*May 2, 2018 eve., adjourned*)

Bill 12 — Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act (McCuaig-Boyd)

First Reading — 547 (*Apr. 16, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 736-46 (*May 2, 2018 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 13 — An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future (\$) (McCuaig-Boyd)

First Reading — 606 (*Apr. 19, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 746-53 (*May 2, 2018 aft.*), 808-16 (*May 3, 2018 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 14 — An Act to Empower Utility Consumers (McLean)

First Reading — 590 (*Apr. 18, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 718-24 (*May 2, 2018 morn., adjourned*)

Bill 15 — Appropriation Act, 2018 (\$) (Ceci)

First Reading — 610 (*Apr. 19, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Second Reading — 683-89 (*May 1, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 753-56 (*May 2, 2018 aft.*), 757-60 (*May 2, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 776-85 (*May 3, 2018 morn., passed on division*)

Bill 17 — Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2018 (Ceci)

First Reading — 806 (*May 3, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 201 — Employment Standards (Firefighter Leave) Amendment Act, 2018 (W. Anderson)

First Reading — 118 (*Mar. 14, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 201-14 (*Mar. 19, 2018 aft., referred to Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future*)

Bill 202 — Alberta Taxpayer Protection (Carbon Tax Referendum) Amendment Act, 2018 (Kenney)

First Reading — 179 (*Mar. 15, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 549-63 (*Apr. 16, 2018 aft., defeated on division*)

Bill 203 — Long Term Care Information Act (Schreiner)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 632-40 (*Apr. 30, 2018 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 204 — Land Statutes (Abolition of Adverse Possession) Amendment Act, 2018 (Gotfried)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

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The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday evening, May 7, 2018

Day 25

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Party standings:

New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 25 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent Conservative: 1 Vacant: 2

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Monday, May 7, 2018

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: Good evening. Please be seated.

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

The Chair: I'd like to call the committee to order.

Bill 5 An Act to Strengthen Financial Security for Persons with Disabilities

The Chair: Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill?

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 5 today. I'm so enthralled with the debate. I'm just so curious if the minister might have a few comments.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Member, for that. I do not have extensive comments, but I want to say that I'm pleased to see Bill 5 come to Committee of the Whole. This bill is important to our government, to many Albertans with disabilities and their families. Bill 5 will help to ensure that Albertans with disabilities are treated fairly and will support families that are planning for their children's future.

Bill 5 proposes two amendments to make this a reality. First, Bill 5 amends the AISH Act to ensure trusts are exempt as an asset when determining eligibility for the AISH program. Secondly, there will now be a one-year grace period if someone receives a large payment such as an inheritance to invest the payment into an exempt asset. This grace period will allow people time to make thoughtful decisions and plan for their future. People will now have time to seek advice and make good choices about how to invest their assets. They won't have to worry about losing their AISH benefits.

For decades the previous government's regressive policies were designed to keep people off AISH. We are working to ensure Albertans have clear access to the supports they need. Instead of making cuts to the program, we invested \$103 million to ensure more Albertans have access to AISH. We are working to make the AISH program more accessible, user friendly, and fair. We are taking strong action to combat poverty and make life more affordable for Albertans who depend on AISH.

I want to thank my colleague the MLA for Calgary-Currie, who met with advocates and families of people with disabilities and heard their concerns. In response he championed changes to the AISH Act with a private member's bill introduced last fall. His bill didn't make it to final reading, but he highlighted the importance of this issue and a lack of fairness in the system that needs to be corrected.

As Minister of Community and Social Services I'm honoured to bring this bill forward. I look forward to this evening's discussion, and I encourage everyone to fully support this bill.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I'm not entirely sure how grateful I am that I waited, but I appreciate the minister's brief remarks this evening on what, surely, will be a wonderful time together as we debate this important piece of legislation.

I think that it's fair to begin some of my comments with some sort of general comments around Bill 5 and the importance of the legislation. I live in the constituency – Madam Chair, you'll know, the outstanding constituency – of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. In the community of Olds we have just an incredible, vibrant, diverse community and, in particular, a number of folks who are clients of community services. We have a number of just spectacular agencies that provide an incredible quality of life and build into the lives of those with disabilities. I am honoured to represent that constituency and, in particular, those individuals. I have a few of my absolute favourites that pop by my office on a weekly basis. On a Friday afternoon I'm certain that they'll come in and say a big hello, and it brightens my day.

Of course, we have Horizon school, which is a school that is part of the Chinook's Edge school division. They provide very specialized programming in a learning environment that is really second to none, and they do an incredible amount of work. So these sorts of issues are very near and dear to my heart. I also just recently had a number of constituents, some outstanding constituents, contact me about Henson trusts and their desire to be able to set those up. I responded to them that it was my expectation – of course, I would never presuppose a decision of the Assembly, because you just never do know what would happen, but I provided them my best guess – that, in fact, this piece of legislation would quite likely pass through the Assembly prior to the rising of the House. So they were very excited about their ability to do some preplanning for their family and their loved ones.

Now, as you'll know, Madam Chair, those individuals who are on AISH have the ability to earn some form of income and to not have that income have a negative impact on their ability to receive AISH payments. If they have a part-time job or whatever, where they earn additional to the exemption, then that has an impact on their AISH payment. That exemption, you will know, is \$800 per month.

This evening, at some point in time here, I'm happy to move an amendment on this particular piece of legislation because I think that we have a good opportunity to try to make this legislation a little bit more robust. Inside the legislation there are some exemptions about what the income that an individual would receive from the trust can and cannot be used for. I think we should look at all avenues in which we can potentially help an individual. Currently the single exemption, for a single person or for two people if they both receive AISH and have no dependent children, is the first \$800 of the total monthly net income. Following this amount, above the \$800 up to \$1,500 is 50 per cent exempt, for a maximum employment income exemption of \$1,150.

Under the legislation that's before the House, an individual will now qualify for AISH if they have either a discretionary or a nondiscretionary trust in their name, but they would not qualify if they were drawing a set amount of monthly income from that trust. So an individual could do a number of things like repairs to their home, purchase a specialized vehicle, that sort of thing, and that would not have a negative impact on their AISH amount. But if they were receiving an income from the trust, that would potentially have a negative impact on their eligibility.

7:40

This amendment would bring income from the trust in line with the current legislation on income from employment. So if a client has income from a job, that money is exempt, but if they receive a

monthly amount from the trust, that wouldn't be exempt and then, as such, would be clawed back, if you will. Those individuals with a trust would potentially be negatively impacted. This legislation, in my opinion, isn't applied fairly because if they had a job or some other form of income, particularly in the form of employment, it would be exempt, but here, if they have a trust that they could potentially be drawing a monthly income from, it isn't exempt and could then negatively impact the AISH payment.

I'm happy to table the amendment now, actually, Madam Chair, the original for the chair and the appropriate copies, and wait until you are ready to proceed.

The Chair: This will be known as amendment A1.

Mr. Cooper: I feel that this is a small measure that could make a very large difference in the lives of those Albertans receiving AISH who also have the benefit of a trust. I think that it closes a significant loophole in the current legislation.

The NDP, you know, time and time again have made it clear with their minimum wage hike that they believe in what they call a living wage, yet under their government the cost of living has really increased, and the carbon tax has had such a negative impact on folks, particularly those on AISH. We have heard from a number of AISH advocates that AISH recipients are struggling for some of the most basic necessities, and the current legislation doesn't provide for those individuals to receive any monthly income from a trust – they would be negatively impacted – to be able to do these very, very, very basic things that they might like to do with the benefit of the trust.

The other thing that I might add, Madam Chair, is that we've heard from a number of stakeholders that this would be a very positive step towards protecting the financial security of Albertans receiving AISH. It is a very, very reasonable solution. It does not provide the ability for those receiving AISH to receive \$800 from the trust as well as \$800 from a form of employment. It would be a maximum amount of \$800, so it doesn't provide any additional benefit that someone who doesn't have a trust then would not have available. I think this can be a very positive step forward. I think that it's reasonable. It creates fairness and also doesn't negatively impact those who may be able to benefit from a trust, the way that those who may be able to also have additional sources of income in the form of employment.

I urge the government and the minister to view the amendment for what it is; that is, a desire to assist those who have this trust. I also understand that there may be some nuance in regulation that would need to take place as a result of the amendment, but I think that's very reasonable for the minister to be able to deliver for these very, very important Albertans.

The Chair: Do any other members wish to comment on the amendment? Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you very much. I want to thank the member for this amendment. As always, it's a pleasure to rise in the House to speak about important issues like this. As the member was mentioning earlier, Madam Chair, we've had the wonderful opportunity to talk to a lot of people about this. This is a great bill to start off with, but just to add on to what the member was saying, we're wanting to look at protecting the financial security of these folks. As we know, there's been a lot of information that has come out recently with regard to how some of these folks that are on AISH are living. I'll get to that a little bit later, but this particular amendment would go a really long way to establishing and protecting that financial security of Albertans receiving AISH, because we don't want to have them be penalized for their parents'

and their family's hard work in this particular situation. The reason for this entire bill is to make sure that parents can feel that should they pass, their children will be taken care of. This just adds an extra piece of financial security to that.

Currently, as I understand it, the single exemption for a single person, or two people if they both receive AISH and have dependent children, is the first \$800 of the total monthly net income. Following this, an amount above \$800 and up to \$1,500 is 50 per cent exempt from their maximum employment income exemption of \$1,150 per month. Under the current legislation before this House the individuals will now qualify for AISH if they either have a discretionary or a nondiscretionary trust in their name, but they wouldn't qualify if they were drawing out a set amount of money from that trust.

What we're wanting to accomplish with this, Madam Chair, is to be able to just set a monthly amount aside from that trust. The amendment would bring income from a trust in line with the current legislation on income from employment. This is actually a loophole that's in the legislation that we would like to see closed. Like I said, it's a good bill. This just helps to close that loophole and helps to make sure that Albertans who are receiving AISH, again, aren't penalized because their parents happened to put money away for them. We want to make sure that they have the ability to have that standard of living and to be able to live their best lives with that. There is a gap there that needs to be closed. It would make a huge difference, I believe, in the lives of Albertans.

The government has been talking significantly over the last two years to make it clear that the minimum wage hike, that they believe in, is what they call a living wage, but under the legislation right now as it stands, the government has increased carbon taxes and other economically detrimental policies. This has put an immense strain on the tight finances of AISH recipients already, Madam Chair. We heard from the AISH advocates and recipients that a lot of them are still living in poverty and can't even afford basic necessities such as hygiene items. Again, just to reiterate, this would be a positive step towards protecting their financial security with a program that is already there, but it just takes into consideration that loophole.

The last time that AISH was indexed to adjust for the cost of living was in 2012, when it rose from \$1,188 to \$1,588, which is significantly lower than the low-income cut-off, which is \$1,699. When we talk about the low-income cut-offs, these are the income thresholds. When we're talking about these, these are when folks are more likely to devote a larger part of their income to the necessities of life such as food, shelter, and clothing and more so than the average family. "The approach is essentially to estimate an income threshold at which families are expected to spend 20 percentage points more than the average family on food, shelter and clothing." That comes from StatsCan.

Again, we're trying to look at seeing if there's a way – and this is a really good amendment, and I want to thank the member for bringing this forward. It's a very thoughtful amendment that adds to a good bill and closes that loophole to create a larger ability for financial security for folks who are on AISH.

I can honestly tell you, having gone through the process myself with my son, that it is an extremely difficult process to navigate. I can't imagine if my son didn't have an advocate on his behalf to be able to go through this. My husband and I have gone through years and years of paperwork since he was a little, teeny-tiny guy, Madam Chair, years and years of advocating on his behalf to get services that he needed, especially when we were younger. I can tell you that it's extremely difficult. Now, as a parent of an adult child the largest concern, of course, for us is that if we're not here, the financial security is one piece of it but also being able to make sure not only

that he's financially secure – as the member was saying, if there are cognitive disabilities or if a person is physically disabled, there are certain items that they're going to need outside of what AISH can provide in order for them to live their best lives.

7:50

This little piece, this little amendment really, really makes sure that for those people who are able to provide a trust for their children upon their passing, those adults will be able to have it and be able to live their best lives and provide themselves with some financial security. As a parent I can honestly tell you that you have a huge sigh of relief knowing that that's a possibility, that you can do that on behalf of your child.

Of course, there are significant differences between – when there's a cognitive disability, there's also the issue of making sure that you have a person that you can truly trust and to be able to leave these trusts in the hands of those people to disburse them. This is one of those ways that we can make sure that when we're not here, those dollars are getting to our adult children to make sure that they are protected financially as they go through the rest of their lives.

I can honestly tell you that my son is working. He will continue to work. I mean, if he's able to work enough that he has AISH clawed back, that would be just fine, but in the instance that something goes seriously wrong, Madam Chair, it would be good to know that in my absence there is that added ability for him to do that without having it clawed back, for him to be able to have that added financial security. The purpose of these kinds of programs is to give a hand up and to be able to take care of our vulnerable populations, and that extra bit could potentially raise them out of poverty.

Again, if for some reason my son was unable to – I mean, at this point in time we're teaching him about his finances. We're hoping that he'll be able to independently do some of that, but it would be very, very easy, should he not be able to understand that, that he could end up living in poverty without the help of making sure that he has those extra dollars and the person to watch over those funds. We want for him to be independent. We want for him to be able to live his best life.

This amendment helps to create that within this very good legislation. We would encourage our colleagues across the aisle to vote in favour of this amendment. This just makes really good legislation even better by making sure that all Albertans, especially our adult children, the ones that we're talking about with this, have the ability to live their best lives when we're not here to see them. As a parent, like I said, I can't begin to tell you how important that is, what that means to me, to be able to know that that's what will happen.

Madam Chair, my husband and I spent, I think, a couple of hours at our lawyer's office just before – actually, it was in the last session. Unfortunately, this bill didn't make it across before the Legislature rose, and then it came back as Bill 5. But I remember we spent a couple of hours with our lawyer trying to discuss what we were going to do with our trusts and how that was going to work out. It is convoluted, going through the process of choosing a person that will oversee that, but we did ask these questions. This amendment actually comes from a lot of stakeholders asking how it is that we can make this work, how we can make sure that folks that are on AISH are able to have, without taking the system too far – like, we want to just make sure, if they're able to receive that small amount, that \$800, that that AISH will not be clawed back.

I'm sure the member has heard about this as well, and the minister of community services has heard from me many times. I've sent him many cases where people's AISH has been clawed back, and we don't understand why. It can be because of CPP. There have

been a lot of different reasons. It's very convoluted. In this particular situation this will protect those people, hopefully, through legislation from having that clawback happen.

We've had several constituents – and I have more that I'm going to be sending to the minister – that have actually been rejected from AISH on the basis that they had a trust and they were drawing income from that trust. If this amendment should pass, will those individuals have to restart that lengthy process again, Madam Chair?

Like I said to you, the process for me has been nothing short of absolutely overwhelming. It's hundreds of pages. It's a ton of work. One of the facilitators that we work with is wonderful, but we have another one who I think doesn't quite understand the system. For the most part, I mean, the folks that we work with have been fairly helpful. Even the people who are working in the system don't always understand how this all works, and that's been our experience. It's a bit of a mixed bag. When you're a parent and you're in this situation, you feel very vulnerable because you're asking questions about what's going to happen to your child when you're not here anymore.

Maybe the minister can answer this question for me, Madam Chair. Will the individuals have to restart the lengthy process of applying for AISH, or will the government be contacting them directly? I will maybe just leave that to the minister to answer.

Also, if I could, I asked some other questions last time we were debating this. I don't know if the minister has answers to those questions, Madam Chair.

Thank you so much for the opportunity to speak to this.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak in favour of the amendment proposed by my colleague the member for the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. My colleague is the United Conservative critic for Community and Social Services. I believe his amendment complements Bill 5 in a most common-sense way. It is also completely consistent with the current practice. I would like to take a few minutes to review the amendment because it is an important issue, and it will greatly enhance the lives of Albertans who receive financial support from the AISH program.

First of all, let me thank the government for resurrecting this private member's bill, which had died on the Order Paper. I strongly support it, and I am glad to see it here before us this session. The constituency work of a Member of the Legislative Assembly is important, often unseen work, that we perform to serve Albertans. I for one am always pleased when AISH recipients come to my Grande Prairie-Wapiti office when they're running into difficulties with the system. One of the reasons we have offices and staff in our community is to help our constituents navigate government services and programs.

The assured income for the severely handicapped program provides financial and health benefits to 60,000 Albertans with permanent medical conditions that prevent them from earning a full living. This program has been around in its current form for many years, and I believe that it is important for this Legislature to review it on a regular basis to ensure it is working fairly and efficiently. Bill 5 is allowing us to do this, and it is also allowing us to evolve the act that outlines the AISH program in a positive way. Alberta needs to introduce what is known as a Henson trust in the same way other provinces have done. It is natural for parents to want to leave their children an inheritance, and to know that they'll be able to do so without disqualifying them from AISH is a very positive move.

8:00

Now, let me specifically address the amendment before us now. I strongly support it because it will broaden Bill 5 in a way that is completely consistent with the current rules for AISH. I'm pointing specifically to the fact that someone who receives AISH is allowed to earn up to \$800 a month before it affects their monthly income. We all applaud that income rule. It makes sense because earning a living should never be a disincentive. Albertans who can benefit from AISH should not have to decide between earning an income and not participating in a program that has been designed to assist them.

In the same vein, parents should not have to decide whether or not to leave an inheritance to their beloved children because it'll affect their ability to collect a secure monthly AISH income. This Chamber appears to be onside with that concept in Bill 5. Since that's the case, why would we not marry the idea of permitting trusts, which we all seem to support, with the ability of those trusts to provide a monthly income up to \$800, which is the amount already permitted in employment earnings?

The name of Bill 5 is An Act to Strengthen Financial Security for Persons with Disabilities. Doesn't strengthening financial security include an amendment such as the one before us? I know that we tend to break down along partisan lines in this Chamber, but surely this is one of those times when we do not want to do that.

AISH income has not changed for a number of years, and in the interim Alberta has gone through an economic downturn that has been difficult for so many people. The proposed amendment to allow AISH recipients to accept a sensible income from the new trusts will assist them a great deal. It will undoubtedly ease their daily pressures to know that a little more income is available to them. Maybe that's why we're all supportive of the reasonable changes that Bill 5 is proposing to make to the Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped Act. It is hard for many people to make ends meet on a daily or monthly basis, so when government can come up with a common-sense plan like this, one that can assist some Albertans, we all want to do our part and support it.

Madam Chair, I wholeheartedly support this amendment from my colleague for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. I believe it is the perfect companion to Bill 5. It will not cost the government anything, and it is a compassionate amendment that I urge everyone in this House to support. Also, we feel that this is a small measure that can make a large difference in the lives of Albertans receiving AISH, and it closes off a significant loophole in the current legislation.

We have heard from AISH advocates that AISH recipients are living in such poverty that some cannot even afford basic necessities such as hygiene items. This amendment has the potential to help raise those on AISH out of poverty by allowing them to draw income from a trust and still receive their full AISH funding.

We would encourage our colleagues across the aisle to put partisan politics aside and vote in favour of this amendment for the betterment of disabled Albertans. Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm just looking at this amendment moved by my colleague for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, and I have the AISH income act in front of me. In the amendment, under Exemptions:

- (2) For the purposes of section 3(3)(d), the value of all assets of a person and the person's cohabiting partner must not include
 - (a) the value of any assets . . .

and then it goes on to list (b) and the rest of the amendment here. I'm wondering. Just sort of from my reading, in looking at the act, if an individual on AISH has a trust, is the aim of this to basically prevent a cohabiting partner from also having an exempt trust? Just as I'm looking through this, it touches on a bunch of regulations here. If I could get a quick clarification from the hon. member on that, just to make sure that I understand this as we go through debate, I'd very much appreciate it.

Mr. Cooper: I can come back around to you. My intention in the amendment is to have it so that if you had two individuals in a home and they were both receiving an income from employment, the exemptions would be the same in both cases. So if both individuals had a trust, they would both be able to then receive the \$800 as income from that trust. Just as the exemption for employment is the same, the goal is to not have a differentiating factor between the income that they would receive from employment or income that they would receive from the trust.

I'm more than happy to confer with Parliamentary Counsel that that is, in fact, what has been delivered by the amendment and get back to you while the minister provides a response with some of his thoughts and on the importance of the amendment.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much for the clarification. I'm going to continue to listen to the debate. Just when I was going through and looking at it – I appreciate the clarification.

Thank you.

The Chair: Calgary-Greenway.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on this bill and amendment. I do want to say thank you to the minister and the Member for Calgary-Currie for bringing this much-needed piece of legislation so that people who are currently on AISH can take advantage of this bill. I also want to thank you, Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, for bringing this amendment to strengthen this bill.

Madam Chair, as the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View spoke of her personal experience with AISH, I would echo those comments. Like the previous speakers, I think we can all agree that we're happy to support this legislation, intended just to give much-needed, you know, peace of mind to the families of Albertans who are currently on the AISH program in knowing that with any inheritance they leave, their children will not be disqualified from the AISH benefit just because an inheritance has been left for these individuals.

Now, the amendment that the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills brought is something that we heard from the constituents and the stakeholders that we did a consultation with. They are the ones who are telling us that this would actually strengthen the bill and that it would be a positive step towards protecting the financial security of the very individuals who are receiving AISH, again, going back to the same thing, making sure that they're not penalized for their parents' hard work and their savings and making sure, actually, that when these kids are on their own, they're taken care of.

Currently the exemption for a single person, or for two people if they both receive AISH and have no dependent children, is the first \$800 of total monthly income, and following this, an amount above \$800 up to \$1,500 is 50 per cent exempt, for a maximum employment income exemption of \$1,150 per month. That will, again, like I was saying, strengthen the bill.

8:10

Under the current legislation before this House, Madam Chair, individuals will now qualify for AISH if they have a discretionary

or a nondiscretionary trust in their name but would not qualify if they were drawing a set amount of money monthly from the trust. You know, we feel that this amendment would bring income from a trust in line with the current legislation on income from employment. I think the intent is that this small measure could make a rather large difference in the lives of Albertans receiving AISH and close a significant loophole in the current legislation.

Now, the NDP have made it clear with their minimum wage hike that they believe in what they call a living wage, yet under their government the cost of living has gone up, Madam Chair, as we can all agree, with the different taxes, the carbon tax, other economically detrimental policies. This has put a strain on the already tight finances of AISH recipients because, as we know, it's a fixed amount. We also heard from AISH advocates that AISH recipients are living in such poverty that they cannot even afford basic necessities such as hygiene items.

The last time that AISH was indexed to adjust for a cost-of-living increase was in 2012, like, six years ago, when it rose from \$1,188 to the current, which is still the same, \$1,588, which is actually still significantly lower than the low-income cut-off, which is \$1,699. The low-income cut-off is an income threshold below which a family will likely devote a larger share of its income on the necessities of food, shelter, clothing than the average family, Madam Chair. The approach is essentially to estimate an income threshold at which families are expected to spend 20 per cent more than an average family on food, shelter, and clothing.

I think the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View already spoke on the same point I'm trying to bring up, that this amendment has the potential to help raise those on AISH benefits out of poverty by allowing them to draw income from a trust and still receive their full AISH funding. So I really hope that the government members will support this simple amendment.

I think the Member for Calgary-Currie had some questions for the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, and also the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View had some questions for the minister on how it's going to impact. I'm thinking that if we all work in good faith and, you know, pass this amendment, it can strengthen the bill and actually benefit the people on AISH, the recipients.

We would also like some clarity from the government on what measures will be put in place in the case that a cognitively impaired AISH recipient inherits funds that have not already been put into trust. The Member for Chestermere-Rocky View already touched on it. In this case we are under the impression that the beneficiary could potentially choose to place these funds into a nondiscretionary trust, where they would be able to appoint a trustee and set the terms of spending for that trust. Are there some checks and balances that will be laid out in the regulations to protect the financial assets of Albertans who are on AISH and show that they're getting some sound financial counsel? Hopefully, we'll get some clarification from the minister on that.

The point of this, Madam Chair, the intent of this amendment, is to allow those individuals who are applying for AISH to draw up to, again, \$800 a month of income from a trust and still be approved for AISH. A one-year grace period, the wills-handled-badly clause, for inheritance is important to allow AISH recipients the time to navigate the system and place their inheritance into an asset with exempt status without having to worry about whether their monthly income from AISH will be revoked.

Madam Chair, in the end, I think we already spoke a little bit on this very simple amendment. Let's support this amendment, and let's strengthen this bill and try to help those individuals who are receiving AISH benefits. I truly hope that we will get government members' support on this simple amendment and strengthen this bill so we can all make sure, you know, that nobody is left behind.

The intent of the NDP government, the slogan, is to work hard for Albertans, so let's pass this amendment, and let's show them that we are working hard and that we're doing the right thing and putting partisan politics aside to help those who need us the most.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to rise. Just prior to the inspiring remarks from the Member for Calgary-Greenway, I had committed to the Member for Calgary-Currie that I would just confer with Parliamentary Counsel that the intention of the amendment is not to differentiate between income from employment and income from trust funds and that the exemptions that currently exist amongst cohabiting individuals would not be negatively impacted. That is, in fact, what Parliamentary Counsel has confirmed with me, that both individuals would be able to be eligible, that income from both trusts would not have a negative impact on AISH eligibility.

The longer that we go in this discussion, the more intrigued I am by the fact that the government members haven't provided any indication as to whether or not they intend to support or not support such a very important amendment, that provides certainty and fairness amongst those who both have a trust as well as are on AISH. It's surprising to me, in fact, that we haven't heard from the minister, so I invite him to do so now.

The Chair: Any other members on the amendment? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, I'm going to try, too. I've had some questions. [interjection] Okay. I'd like to give a chance to the minister to speak.

Okay. I'm going to try again if that's okay, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Go ahead.

8:20

Mrs. Aheer: Okay. Thank you. I actually have whole bunches of questions, and maybe the minister can take a few minutes and answer some of my questions. Of course, many of them come from anecdotal and lived experience in my particular situation, but this is a little bit more from stakeholder outreach.

Here's one thing that I think needs to be clear. Persons with disabilities should not be given fewer financial protections than those without. It's a pretty simple statement. That's what this amendment does. The bill is already excellent. The bill is already doing great work. This is an extra step to create financial stability for folks with disabilities.

I have to say that if we're talking about cognitive disabilities specifically, there is a humungous amount of navigating that goes on when you are in this process. Quite often there are special circumstances, especially if a parent is not there or a caregiver is not there to help a person with cognitive disabilities to be able to reach out and find out what's going on. Like I was saying earlier, we've had some great facilitators, great workers over the years, but we've had some that are really difficult to work with as well. I can't imagine if my son was on his own and responsible for working with some of these folks. Even for the ones who are excellent, this is convoluted. It's so complex.

We're simply asking here to make sure that folks that are on AISH have the ability to go into the trusts that are set up by the parents. There's nothing here that the government needs to do other than to allow people who are on AISH to access the amount of money without it being clawed back. I mean, there is a tremendous

amount of frustration on behalf of those – even to get determined for eligibility for AISH, Madam Chair, is a huge process. Sometimes it takes up to 20 weeks just to find out if you're eligible, and then there's an entire process that comes after that. If we're already talking about that, with this particular situation these are people who have lost their caregivers; they've lost their parents. We're wanting to make sure, in advance of that, that there is an ability for these people to be financially secure.

I have a bunch of questions for you, Minister, so if you have a moment to answer these, I'd be very grateful. For example, if there is an AISH recipient that is cognitively disabled and they're able to receive sound financial counsel, the question I'm asking is: if they're not inheriting money specifically to put into a trust and are protected and are able to receive sound financial counsel, how is the government going to help them make sure that that happens, especially if they're only provided with the minimum and there's not an extra amount of money there for special services or to help out with those kinds of things? Has the government thought about that or the ability to look at that specifically?

This is one of the reasons why the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills came up with this, to provide financial stability. Like, what measures are going to be put in place to ensure that that specific scenario – this is something that as a parent you think about. These are nightmares actually – okay? – because if that person who is cognitively disabled is not able to make financial decisions, they're vulnerable to being taken advantage of. In advance of that, Madam Chair, we're trying to implement ideas and add to an already excellent bill the ability to make sure that our children are taken care of when we're not here. I would love for the government side to be able to answer yes or no on whether this is a possibility. As a parent this is important. I mean, if you say no, say no, and tell us why.

The other question I have. I mean, we don't want recipients of AISH to be penalized for inheriting assets. What happens, then, if AISH is clawed back? For example, if something in my son's life changed and he was financially secure at some point, for whatever reason that was, if it gets clawed back, if something has changed, what measures has the minister taken to make sure that the person who was part of AISH before is able to get back into that situation? As we all know, there are lots of ups and downs in life. We don't know what could happen to our children because we're not here to see that. We're leaving and entrusting our children to other people and situations and, in this particular situation, to government to some degree. What measures are put in there to make sure that an adult who is on AISH who may be cognitively disabled, especially, has the supports to be able to reapply if that is necessary? Or are there measures there to make sure that that person is still part of the system, that should they go through a difficult time or they're taken advantage of – there are a gazillion things that could happen – that that happens?

Again, right now we have people who are being denied. We have couples who are being denied. In fact, I can give you one example of that, where there is a couple, an elderly couple, that have had it clawed back because of their contributions to CPP. Now, the minister has this particular one. I've sent it to the minister. It is particularly invasive because now the wife is also unable to work. She was the one who was able to make things last up until this point in time. He was already being clawed back, and now there's an extra clawback. These are the kinds of things that are happening.

The other question that I'd ask the minister also is: what happens to those that have already been denied AISH because they had a trust fund? Now do they have to go through this process again, Madam Chair, from the beginning? These are very, very reasonable questions. It's a great bill, but is it retroactive? Like, the folks that

already applied that were denied: do they reapply again? What if they're on their own now? What if that trust has already been put in? What measures are there for those people? Life changes real quick. I'm sure things have changed even since the member put his bill forward. There are a whole bunch of things.

Again, the bill is very good. We're asking these questions and we're asking for these amendments to help clarify and to make sure that they are financially stable. Being able to tap into their trust funds helps them to be more financially stable and helps them to be participatory in their lives, to have better lives, to participate in their lives, to feel great about what's going on in their lives, for their parents to know that they're contributing to their lives when they're no longer here to be able to see what's going on.

Like I said, I'm inquiring about a couple of different things. I'd like the minister to tell me about the individuals that have already been rejected from the AISH program for receiving a trust. I would really like to know and understand what's going to be happening with that. It's such a lengthy process, Madam Chair, such a lengthy process. To say that one is disappointed when one is rejected, I don't even think that that language begins to describe what that feels like.

Also, I wanted to ask one other question. As I understand it, Human Services spokesman Aaron Manton said something about the funding increases of \$28.3 million addressing caseload and cost-per-case growth. The AISH program, he says, is one of the most comprehensive of its kind in Canada. But he also mentioned that the child benefit will help families. Could the minister please also explain what that means? Does the child benefit program claw back AISH? Does it stay the same if we were to draw from a trust? This is why this is important. We need to make sure, Minister, that there is financial stability for these folks. If we can exempt that \$800 and if that child benefit is there also: if you could please answer that question, that would be very helpful. It's very confusing. Again, this is an extremely, extremely complex and very difficult situation for a family to navigate, for an advocate to navigate, for a recipient to navigate. We're hoping that that long-awaited advocate will be available to be able to help out with those things. I can't wait to hear about that.

8:30

Like I said – and I'll say it again – I am so pleased to support this legislation, extremely pleased. It provides so much deserved protection to some of Alberta's most vulnerable. I really simply have just a couple of concerns, and this comes from a very honest place of lived experience, of understanding what goes into this, of the difficulty. My son is going to be 20 this August. It took me almost a year, Madam Chair – a year – to navigate this whole system, and I am determined. It took my husband and I a year between the two of us, probably mostly our fault because we didn't understand it, but it wasn't like there was a whole lot of ability to find out exactly what to do in this particular situation. We're very lucky, very, very fortunate in our situation.

This comes down to independence and seeing these amazing, amazing people live their best lives. This money doesn't take anything away from the taxpayer or from the business of government or budgeting or anything like this. These are dollars that already belong to these people. We're just asking that the government acknowledge that and exempt those dollars so that that financial stability is there. It costs the government nothing. And to the member's credit who brought this bill forward, it wouldn't even be possible if Bill 5 wasn't on the table, so we're very grateful – very grateful – to even be able to bring this piece forward, Madam Chair. Like I said, we wouldn't even be able to had the member not brought the bill forward. But this addition, that costs the taxpayer

nothing, allows parents to know that when they pass, they're able to contribute to the well-being of their living families, to make sure that the caregivers are able to contribute to the living family members.

As a parent that has gone through this process – I don't know how many people in here have done wills when you have kids. It's a pretty emotional experience going through that. I put it off for a really, really, really long time. I think I was, you know, in denial that that kind of thing ever happens. When you're young – and I had my kids when I was 24 and 26, so I was young at the time I had my children, and as much as I think I'm type A, that's one of those that I put way off down the line, Madam Chair.

Mr. Cooper: Not that you would recommend that.

Mrs. Aheer: No, no, no. Don't do what I did.

It's funny because our children are grown now. They're going to be 22 and 20 this year. I can't even believe I'm saying that. Anyway, we are working very hard to make sure that they are better at this than we were at the time. But I can honestly say that it's already hard just as a parent going through that process and acknowledging your own mortality as you go through that. It's even more invasive when you know you have a dependant, and that dependant is a person I love with all my heart, every hair on his head. I wouldn't change anything about him. He is spectacularly special in my life, and I think he's spectacularly special to the world, actually. But I want to make sure as a parent that I have the opportunity to do right by my child when I'm not here.

So I would ask: if the minister has a moment to answer some of my questions with respect to this, I'd be eternally grateful. Moreover, if we could have some idea about how the government feels with respect to this amendment.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Hunter: Madam Chair, it is an absolute pleasure to stand and talk in support of this amendment from my colleague and to welcome the Government House Leader to our side. It's a pleasure to have him here today.

An Hon. Member: He's finally on the right side.

Mr. Hunter: I've always known him to be on the right side of history.

Madam Chair, from what I see with this amendment, I first of all want to preface my remarks with one of the Auditor General's comments on the state of AISH. This was on Global News back in 2016, so this was a little while ago. The report talked about the AISH program having severe problems with it, and it said: "Auditor General . . . in a new report, says the Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped . . . program is rife with duplication, roadblocks, subjective decision-making, and poor oversight." You know, what's interesting about the program is that this program is designed to help those people who are the most vulnerable in our society.

When I describe the way that our society works here in Alberta – I love to travel, so when I talk to people in different places, I talk to them often of the head and the heart of Alberta. The heart of Alberta is the wraparound services: the health care that we have, the education that we have, the policing and fire and ambulance and social services, the social network that is a cushion for those people who are the most vulnerable in our society. People with disabilities are those people who we need to help. The AISH program is specifically designed in order to be able to help them. The head part

of our society, I often say, is that part that actually pays for this. This is the entrepreneurs, the people who are the wealth creators in our society. They create the jobs and provide that opportunity for us to be able to have those wraparound services for the people who need it most.

To tell you the truth, Madam Chair, when I describe this to people in areas that don't have these types of wraparound services, they think this is fantastic, almost utopian. You know what? I actually am very grateful for a lot of the work that the current NDP government has done for that part of our society, something that I think is very important to Albertans and to the people who need it. Obviously, I've been in this House many times saying, though, that I'm a little concerned about the head part of it, where they're not getting that right so that we can provide for those services. So that's the preface to my comments.

I just want to get to speaking to this amendment. One thing that I really like about it is that it's creating a situation where we're trying – look, there's never enough money to be able to provide everything for those in need in our society. However, whenever we can come up with a solution where the government can incentivize people to be able to stand on their own two feet or create a solution for those people who are disabled so that they can have dignity of life, then I'm very, very much in favour of that kind of a solution.

What I see with this is that it allows for those people who have been careful with their money, parents of disabled kids that have been careful with their money that have realized that, you know, it's not the responsibility of the government to take care of their kids if they're disabled, so they're trying to create some kind of a cushion for them. This is why I'm very interested in this concept. When the Member for Calgary-Currie first brought it forward – I think it was a year ago – I was very intrigued with it. I thought, "Now, there is a really good solution, thinking outside of the box, looking for best practices," and I was actually very impressed that it actually came from the member opposite, on the government side.

8:40

Taking a look at the bill, the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills recognized that there was some concern with the present iteration of this bill. Taking a look at it, I believe that he saw where those problems were, and this is a reasonable amendment to be able to make it better. Now, as has been stated already by many colleagues on this side, this is a bill that we can support. Once again, I go back to the original comments that I made, which are that it's important to have both the head and the heart of society. That heart part, which is these wraparound services, we want to make robust so that it actually helps those people who are in need.

I have a family member that's on AISH. He has osteogenesis imperfecta, brittle bone disease. When he was younger, we would be out playing, and all of a sudden he'd fall and break a leg or break an arm. We didn't really understand it at the time, but as he started to get testing from the medical system we have, we found out that he has this osteogenesis imperfecta. He's not even 50 yet, and he has the bones of an 85-year-old, he's told. Because of the number of bones that he's broken, whenever there's a barometric change in pressure, he obviously struggles. He's in great pain. His knuckles are all gnarled up. You know, this is a difficult thing for him. He struggles with that. He wants to be able to be a productive member of society. He wants to be able to do what he can do because he recognizes the necessity of being able to stand on his own two feet. This is something that he thinks is very important. But because of something that's a genetic issue with him, he's not able to fire on all cylinders, to be able to stand on his own two feet, so he's on AISH. So I do know a little bit about the AISH system because this is something that has affected our family. It is close to my heart.

This amendment provides him an opportunity and an option so that when my parents pass away and my brother is still alive, he will have an opportunity to be able to set up a Henson trust so that he can have the little extra that he needs to be able to live a life of dignity. This is something that my parents have been preparing for for years, knowing that in time they're going to pass away and that they're going to need to help my brother. This wasn't a government-initiated directive. My parents made this something that they wanted to do themselves, knowing that my brother would need this.

What this does, though, this Henson trust and this amendment, is that it actually allows my parents' forethought and good work to be able to be rewarded, and it provides them an opportunity to be able to help my brother without it costing the government anything. I think that when we look for those kinds of solutions and we find them, we should embrace them. Whether you're on this side or on that side, those are best practices that we should embrace.

I wholeheartedly am very much in favour of the Henson trust, and I will be voting for this. What I am also in favour of – and I hope that the government side will take a look at this and see the value of it, whether it comes from this side or that side – is that there are still best practices that we can see from both sides of the House. I think that this was a well-thought-out amendment that can be embraced by both sides.

Just really quickly here, from what I understand, the current single exemption, for a single person or two people if they both receive AISH and have no dependent children, is the first \$800 of the total monthly net income. Following this, an amount above \$800 and up to \$1,500 is 50 per cent exempted, for a maximum employment income exemption of \$1,150 per month. This amendment would address, I guess, the issue of having the 50 per cent exemption, and it would allow them to be able to have what they need, again, to be able to live with dignity.

I would ask the members opposite and all members of the House to seriously take a look at this amendment and to give it some good thought because I believe that some good thought was already established in creating and drafting this amendment.

With that, thank you very much, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Any other speakers to amendment A1? The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Chair, plus thanks to the member from the outstanding constituency for bringing forward this motion. First of all, I appreciate the intent of this amendment. I do want to emphasize that what's in the legislation right now relates to the assets. As such, conservation of income wasn't in the scope of the consultation my colleague the MLA for Calgary-Currie did or within the correspondence and petitions we received. But still, as I said, the intention of this amendment is good, and I certainly support that intention. We should provide the needed resources and services to those who rely on these supports. That is the reason that so far in four budgets the government has increased AISH by \$103 million, to make sure that those on AISH receive the benefits they need.

Under the AISH legislation, if the intent of this amendment is to make income from assets and income from trusts the same as income from employment, I would say that it's not clear. At this point, essentially, trusts, investments, interest, capital gains, rental income, all of those incomes which are passive incomes, are treated the same. What I see from this is that you just want to carve out one trust and leave everything the same, which is at this point exempt. The first \$200 is exempt, and then it's 25 per cent exempt going forward.

The second category in income, with that same trust income, is that if it's an Albertan with a spouse or a partner or a single parent or a couple with children, their trust income, or passive income, is exempt up to \$775. The way it's worded right now: "the income of a person and the person's cohabitating partner." The way I read it and I understand it, to me, it looks like this one doesn't apply to individuals; it's more designed to cover the income of a person and their cohabiting partner. Again, at best, it's not very clear to me.

8:50

When it comes to the treatment of these incomes, like, this passive income is treated differently from employment income. The rationale for that is that employment income is exempt to encourage and incentivize individuals to seek employment while this one, trust income, was treated with other passive incomes like interest income, capital gains income, investments income, so I'm not very clear. In general for employment income there is \$800 per month that is exempt and then up to \$1,500 at 50 per cent, making it a maximum of \$1,150. If the idea was to make this income similar to other exemptions, then I think there is some more work on this amendment that needs to be done.

With that, I will move that we rise and report progress on this bill. Thank you.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Mr. Hinkley: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 5. I would like to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in this report?

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 12 Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act

[Adjourned debate May 2: Mr. Schmidt]

The Deputy Speaker: Any members wishing to speak to Bill 12? Seeing none, the hon. Minister of Energy to close debate.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 12, Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act. I want to thank my colleagues on all sides of the Assembly for the contributions they've made to this debate and, in particular, the Member for Calgary-Klein for opening debate at second reading in my absence.

I won't belabour the details of the bill since the Member for Calgary-Klein outlined those in his remarks on May 2; however, I do believe it's worth reminding members of certain elements. First, this bill responds to a particular situation that members in this Assembly understand all too well; namely, the roadblocks that have resulted in the delays to the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion. These roadblocks have been thrown up by the government of British

Columbia, which claims that it has the right to delay a project which has received approval from the government of Canada.

As we all know, Madam Speaker, in Canada it is the federal government, not the government of B.C. or the government of Alberta, for that matter, that has jurisdiction over interprovincial pipelines. Simply put, B.C.'s actions to delay or frustrate the Trans Mountain pipeline are unconstitutional. They're outside of its authority as a provincial government.

By the way, it's worth noting, Madam Speaker, that the B.C. government seems more interested in intervening in matters over which they have no jurisdiction, but in energy development matters that fall under the B.C. government's purview, it's business as usual. One example: the Vancouver Airport Fuel Facilities Corporation is, as we speak, constructing a new 13-kilometre underground pipeline to Vancouver International Airport to supply aviation kerosene fuel from an upgraded marine terminal and adjacent fuel storage facility in the south arm of the Fraser River in Richmond, B.C., and the B.C. Oil and Gas Commission approved a permit for this pipeline. Similarly, the B.C. government recently announced exemption for LNG projects from that province's carbon levy. To be sure, they attached conditions to those exemptions, as they rightly should, including guaranteed jobs for British Columbians, respect for First Nations, and environmental protection. Their conditions sound, actually, a lot like the 157 conditions that the NEB put on the approval for the Kinder Morgan pipeline and the community benefits agreements provided to First Nations along the proposed pipeline route.

At the time of the announcement I suggested that the B.C. government's actions were hypocritical. Now, some people said that my choice of words was a little harsh. Very well, Madam Speaker. Let's try some other adjectives. I'm a former teacher. I'm up to the challenge. How about inconsistent, very, very inconsistent? How about profoundly, shockingly inconsistent? Or, to borrow a phrase from the Member for Calgary-Hawkwood that was used last week, there's a lot of cognitive dissonance going on over there.

But I digress. The point here, Madam Speaker, is that Alberta, in fact Canada needs to access the new markets that this pipeline will provide. Historically the biggest customer for Alberta oil and gas has been the United States, but in recent years that has shifted dramatically. Today the U.S. is our biggest competitor. Because there is one buyer, the oil and gas resources, that belong to all Albertans, are being sold at a discounted price. Albertans and Canadians deserve better. As Albertans we deserve to get the best possible price for the resources we own.

To be sure, getting better value for our resources means value-added activities like petrochemical diversification and partial upgrading, which is why we have introduced Bill 1, but we need action on multiple fronts. We also need to get Alberta's energy resources to tidewater, and the Trans Mountain pipeline can do that. Moreover, it comes with a \$1.5 billion oceans protection plan to better protect Canada's west coast against spills, and it comes with community benefit agreements for First Nations communities along the pipeline route and a great deal of indigenous support.

But it has become clear that the government of Alberta needs more tools in our tool box to motivate B.C. to stop using unconstitutional tactics to delay the pipeline construction and to motivate the federal government to defend its jurisdiction on the decision it made. The Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act would give the government authority to, if necessary, require a licence for any company exporting energy products from Alberta. First, to be clear, companies would not be automatically required to apply for an export licence. They would only need to do so if the government deemed it necessary. The criteria that would be used would be whether adequate pipeline capacity exists to maximize the return on crude oil and

diluted bitumen produced in Alberta and whether adequate supplies and reserves of natural gas, crude oil, or refined fuels will be available for Alberta's present and future needs.

Now, Madam Speaker, our government believes in being strategic. This legislation is broad, so it can be executed in such a way as to maximize its effectiveness while minimizing any potential adverse impacts on Albertans. I pledged from day one with industry that there would be no surprises, and I've been true to my word. I can tell you that industry has been briefed on this bill. While some are understandably nervous about its implications, they are very supportive in the need to get this pipeline built. They understand the need for firm and decisive action, and they are supportive of this bill.

Now, Madam Speaker, if circumstances force us to use this legislation, again, there will be no surprises. We will be fair, we will be thoughtful, and we will be strategic. Let's be clear here. This isn't a step that we want to take, but we will if it means long-term benefits for our industry, for our province, and for Canada. We know that we're on the right side of this issue, and it's not just here in Alberta. Look what people across the country think. National polling shows that two-thirds of Canadians support construction of this pipeline. That's an increase of 10 per cent since February, so it's clear that the work of this government and our Premier is winning over Canadians. We will win, and we will get this pipeline built.

Now, members opposite have tried to suggest during debate on this bill that because we have taken this even-handed approach, because we have preferred mature leadership to bombast and bluster, we lack the resolve to make use of the powers in this bill if necessary. Well, Madam Speaker, as so often is the case, the members opposite are wrong. As part of my commitment to there being no surprises for industry, I took a day away from my constituency to brief the industry on the contents of this bill. My staff and I have spent countless hours meeting with stakeholders. I'm a busy woman. The people I meet with are busy people. I don't believe in wasting people's time, and I don't believe in wasting my own time.

9:00

Madam Speaker, if we have to take drastic action to get this pipeline built, we will. Notwithstanding the opposition's penchant for misinformation, this government is serious in its call for unity among the members of this Legislature. So I extend my hand to them. If they have good ideas for the best way to use these powers in this legislation while minimizing adverse impacts on Alberta, I'm all ears. I invite them to share their suggestions. I can't promise, of course, that I will act on them. As I said, we will need to be thoughtful and strategic in our actions if it comes to that, but I am absolutely open to good ideas no matter where they come from.

Thank you for this opportunity to share my thoughts today, Madam Speaker. I look forward to the rest of the debate as it unfolds.

With this, I move second reading.

[Motion carried; Bill 12 read a second time]

Bill 13

An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future

[Debate adjourned May 3: Mr. Schneider speaking]

The Deputy Speaker: Any members wishing to speak to Bill 13? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and speak to Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity

Future. It proposes to amend a total of four statutes: the Alberta Utilities Commission Act, the Electric Utilities Act, the Gas Utilities Act, and the Hydro and Electric Energy Act.

This legislation is one of a series of bills focused on improving consumer protection for energy consumers and seeks to reintroduce or reinforce the NDP's strategic message. The bill empowers the Alberta Utilities Commission to fine electricity and natural gas service providers up to \$10,000 a day for breaches in customer service such as sending out late bills or overcharging and provides additional options to Albertans who want to generate their own electricity.

It also enables the creation of a capacity market, which is new for Alberta. It clarifies how infrastructure losses and profits are split between consumers and utilities. I take some exception to that. It appears that, at least under the current regime, the government is going to pick up any losses to individual consumers, retail consumers, over 6.8 cents a kilowatt hour. I think there's some mixed messaging here that needs to be resolved, but it does plan a transition to a capacity market from an electricity-only market. Clearly, that's necessary if we're going to incent the clean energy that the government has been wanting to incent, up to 30 per cent of the capacity in renewables. But they're going to have to do a lot of incenting to get that kind of achievement in the next 10 to 15 years.

I was interested to learn that most markets across the world, including the United Kingdom and the U.S., are capacity markets. This was a surprise to me. It's also been a surprise to me to see a government that while we were enjoying some of the lowest electricity prices in a decade, decided that it wasn't good enough to protect customers and have gone off on these tangents with respect to the power purchase agreements and the lawsuits that ensued in association with the carbon levy. They now are signing contracts with the same escape clause that was in there that they decided to overturn.

So there are a lot of interesting and unfortunate changes that have been made to our electricity system, and it's getting more and more complex for most of us to understand where it's going. Certainly, I think that if this government is trying to create certainty in the industry, there needs to be a lot more clarity about how far one is going to go in regulating what has been a relatively deregulated market in which a price signal is going to be felt by consumers. That's being taken away. So the very purpose of this – this government has said that they wanted to incent changes in fossil fuel use and carbon use and electricity use – they're undermining by having fixed prices above which all taxpayers will have to subsidize the sector.

It's created a really ambiguous electricity market, in my view, that is not sending the right signals to consumers. Yes, indeed, if companies fail to properly bill and if they overcharge – many of us will remember that back in 2015 TransAlta had to pay \$56 million for manipulating the power market – yeah, it's really important for us to be able to identify that and to shut that kind of activity down. I think it sent an important message back then that they did this. But I guess the bigger picture here is one of a somewhat confusing direction. It hasn't really been clear to many of us how far this government is going, and it therefore isn't creating the kind of certainty that I think a lot of electricity businesses and operators would feel comfortable with. It may be clear to the government, but it's not clear to many of us just how much they're going to regulate and remove the price incentive in the electricity market.

Madam Speaker, I'm not sure how I feel about the general electricity market. I don't think there's much in this bill that's controversial. They're going to fine inappropriate behaviour, and

that's all good. But the bigger picture in electricity is very perplexing and troubling for a government that says that they want to try to incent different behaviour in consumers and incent new clean energy development. I don't know if we can afford this in the long term, and it'll be interesting to see if we can learn more about how they think these disincentives for efficiency and subsidies for new energy are actually going to serve the longer term price signal. They seem to be following somewhat the Ontario problems that evolved and not learning what we could and should have learned from Ontario.

I'm not fully decided on this bill, but it looks pretty harmless, Madam Speaker, and we'll probably be supporting it. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

Mr. Hunter: Madam Speaker, I would like to rise to speak to Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future. One of the things that I thought was interesting about this bill and the narrative that I've heard for the last while now is that the system was broken. In fact, I think it was the Government House Leader that actually said that if it was up to the opposition, they would have crashed the electricity system. He also said that if the NDP had not moved into a capacity market, these electricity providers would not have survived. Now, I don't have the benefit of *Hansard*, so I'm not quoting him exactly. I will admit that. But I will say that that was the intent of what he said. When I heard him say that, I thought to myself: this is supposed to be the government that is the champion of the little guy, the champion of the people, yet here was a statement made by the Government House Leader that they are, in fact, the champion of businesses, the big businesses that provide electricity in this province.

Now, think about this, Madam Speaker. This is an interesting point. Actually, many people in description of the NDP have often said that they are the government of unintended consequences. Yet I think that that's being, you know, very nice, to tell you the truth, because I actually think that they're more accidental.

9:10

But I would say this. Here's the situation. We have three parts to this electrical system. I admit that that has not been my past. Before I was a politician, that is not what I did. But in the three years that I have watched this, I've watched one mistake after another. It started out with this idea that they need to revamp the whole electrical system. Now, there are three parts to the electrical system, from what I understand. You've got the retail, the distribution, and the transmission. From what I understand, the retail side was the only part that the PC government in the past had deregulated. The other parts, which are the transmission and the distribution, were regulated parts of that electrical system. Interestingly enough, from what I can see, moving from the system that we had prior to a capacity market is moving to a regulated system.

So here's the problem I have with this from 30,000 feet up. Transmission and distribution costs are now almost 50 per cent of your electrical rates. We've seen a threefold increase in transmission prices alone whereas we've seen a decrease in the retail side. Obviously, the deregulating of this part of the electrical equation actually worked. We probably should have looked at transmission and distribution, but, you know, hindsight is 20/20 vision.

But here we have a situation where we already have that hindsight. We already have the 20/20 vision. We've seen what worked. We've seen that by deregulating that retail aspect or

component of the equation, we drove the price of electricity down, beneficial to all, whereas in that regulated part we now see – I can't remember – an 8.7 per cent guaranteed return on investment to the likes of Berkshire Hathaway. You know, the members are correct. It was not under their watch that that was done. But we can certainly learn from the mistakes of the past, learn from what was done wrong and try to rectify it.

You know, as I look through kind of the press release on this, look through the pros and the cons, which are supposed to actually help a government decide whether or not they're going to be able to move forward with a project or legislation or not, we're in a situation where – some of the things that it says is: while revenue sufficient, this was not a revenue-certain option and would create too much volatility for consumers. Well, revenue certainty is what we saw with the transmission and the distribution parts of the equation. The only thing that was good about the revenue certainty was for people like Warren Buffett. It was not valuable or beneficial to the regular Albertan. It wasn't beneficial to me or to my family as we watched these transmission and distribution charges go from, you know, 20 per cent of your bill to 50 per cent of your bill.

Look, I have no problems with the government taking a look and saying: what is the problem, and how do we fix it? That's what the government is supposed to be doing. But in this situation all I saw was them taking the part of the equation that actually has been working, which is driving down the price of the retail side, and changing the part that actually worked to the part that hasn't worked. In the transmission and the distribution parts of it we've seen substantial increases in those costs. If that's the case, Madam Speaker, I have no idea why the government would not take a look at, again, the best practices and find out how to fix those transmission and distribution parts. Instead, what we see is a meddling in the area where we've seen success.

The other part that I thought was interesting in terms of, you know, the talking points about why this was valuable is that industry, investors, AESO, the Market Surveillance Administrator, and consumer groups asked for the capacity market. Well, of course they did, Madam Speaker. Why wouldn't they ask for it when you're getting a guaranteed 8.7 per cent return on investment? I'm sure they're looking at the distribution of the transmission side and saying: they've got it right; we want that guarantee. No matter what the capacity that they build, they're getting that 8.7 per cent return on investment guaranteed. Well, that is certainty. But why do we want to facilitate that? Why do we want to facilitate foreign profits of the world? I don't understand.

Look, I don't begrudge Warren Buffett for making money, but not on the backs of Albertans, not at the expense of Albertans. We don't have to do that. I'm surprised to see the NDP government, who is supposed to be the champion of the little guy, championing these things for Warren Buffett, the wealthiest man in the world. It doesn't make sense.

Now, I understand why Warren Buffett would invest in this, Madam Speaker. Who wouldn't invest in a guaranteed return on investment? Who wouldn't? I would. But for the NDP government to say that it was a broken system – they didn't finish the sentence. It was a broken system but not the part that they're trying to fix, the part that they're trying to wreck. The retail side was working. We drove the price down.

Now, this concept of certainty – look, if you're going to get into business, it's not certain. You try to be able to do best practices. You try to be able to create efficiencies in your business. You know what? You shouldn't ever allow a business to become too big to fail. This is what it almost seems like with the transmission and distribution sides of the equation for the electricity. You know, Bill 13, I think, is just going in the absolute wrong direction, Madam

Speaker. It is addressing the part of that equation that was already working. Why would you need to upset that part? I'm fully in favour of us addressing the issue of transmission charges going up. I'm fully in favour of us trying to figure out that part of the equation that's not working and that's hurting Albertans.

Are we going in the direction that Ontario did, like the member that just spoke talked about? I would have to say that it looks like we are. I hope that there will be sober second thought on this, Madam Speaker. We do not want to see the same thing that's happening in Ontario. They are driving businesses out for electricity prices, for utility prices. There are lots of other reasons why businesses could get driven out, but for goodness' sake why are they driving them out for utility prices?

This is, in my opinion, a knee-jerk reaction to be able to try to facilitate a broad carbon reduction strategy that they just don't seem to be getting right. Because of that, this is, again, a government of unintended consequences. They go from one mistake to another mistake to another mistake, and the problem is that the people who are actually being hurt by this are regular Albertans, people who are just trying to be able to make ends meet, and the things that I hear from them, Madam Speaker, are: we're being killed by a thousand different cuts; we're being killed by a thousand different cuts.

Now, with the issues that I've talked about here, the other point that I thought was very interesting was when it talks about the fines, fines of up to \$10,000 per day. You know, one thing that I've seen quite evident with this government is them picking winners and losers. If there's a retail area, a company that is not playing the game the way they want them to, they can slap fines on them, and it can be punitive to the point where they can drive them out of business.

9:20

What's sad about this, like I said – I've said this a few times in this House – is that this government is responsible for the loss of \$36 billion of investment leaving this province in the first two years and, you know, more in the last year, quoting the Conference Board of Canada, \$36 billion driven out. You know why they're being driven out, Madam Speaker? They're being driven out because businesses need to see certainty in terms of the rules. They need to be able to say: "These are the rules of the game. If I apply those rules, I have the ability to be able to provide for my shareholders a good return on investment as something that could work." Yet what's happened with this government is that they change it. They changed the rules in the middle of the game. It scares away investors so that the investors don't want to come back.

Now, I don't know if this is an actual term, but this is what I would call policy shock, when you have policies that happen so quickly and policies that are so detrimental to industry or to businesses. Then those businesses are in such shock that they say: "No. We can't continue on. We can't continue to do what we're doing. We have no faith in this jurisdiction to be able to provide a return on investment. We need to leave. We need to take our capital elsewhere." Then you have capital fleeing this province.

Then I hear comments from the members opposite: well, why are they leaving? Well, they're leaving because you're changing the rules of the game in mid game. They don't want to see that. They want to be able to know that, hey, if they apply the rules of the game and you establish those things, then they can do all right. That's why we saw that for a 10-year period during Ralph Klein's day, and whether you like him or you don't like him, the truth is that in a 10-year period there was more foreign investment coming into Alberta than Quebec and Ontario combined.

Why is that? That was because of good policies, Madam Speaker. That was because the policies that the government at the time was

establishing created something that we called the Alberta advantage. The trickle-down effect of that Alberta advantage was that foreign investment came in at such a speed that we had almost a hundred thousand people moving into this province each year, the size of Lethbridge. Obviously, that's going to affect problems in terms of being able to keep up with infrastructure. Often we hear from the members opposite that, no, there was an infrastructure deficit. Well, of course there was an infrastructure deficit. There was an infrastructure deficit because you had a hundred thousand people moving in.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Well, the hon. member opposite in his comments indicated that \$36 billion of investment was lost by this government, he said, over the first two years, and he cited the Conference Board of Canada as the source. Now, I don't remember the Conference Board of Canada saying any such thing.

It's certainly true that investment has ebbed as a result of historically low oil prices and a view in the industry that with the advent of new technologies, namely hydraulic fracturing, and major new plays, for example the Midland play in Texas, there are far more profitable areas for them to invest their capital because the costs are so much lower and it's so much easier to extract the oil and it's not heavy oil so it doesn't need upgrading, all of which makes it considerably cheaper and easier to access. So there has been a change in investment patterns and flows as the capital moves towards new areas of investment, where they can get a quicker return, faster turnover on their capital. That, combined with the sustained relatively low prices over several years, has led to some industry decisions with respect to where the capital will be invested. That, Madam Speaker, has nothing to do with the policies of our government despite the best efforts of the opposition to pin these historic shifts in the investment pattern on some of the policies of this government.

I guess I would like to challenge the hon. member to provide the evidence for his citation that the Conference Board of Canada laid a \$36 billion drop in investment at the feet of the policies of this government. If he can't produce that, Madam Speaker, then I'm going to ask him to withdraw those remarks and apologize.

The Deputy Speaker: Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The reality is that the Conference Board of Canada – and I will be willing to submit that and table that in the coming days so that the hon. member can read it himself.

Here are two points that I wanted to make on this. One is that the Conference Board of Canada said that \$36 billion of foreign investment has left. I will table that information. The hon. member is correct. There are changes in technology that have also affected where capital flows; however, we have a situation where that is only one portion of the problem. When I've talked to members from the industry, they have said that policies that this government continues to heap upon them are driving them out of this province. Now, if the truth hurts, you've got to look in the mirror, and you've got to be able to say: "You know what? We're doing something we shouldn't be doing."

That is something that I hoped that the members – you know what? Look, you can point your finger and say that it's this or it's that or whatever, but at some point you've got to start asking yourself: "You know what? These other oil and gas producing jurisdictions are doing well." We have a situation where in this

province just red tape alone causes these companies to leave. When it takes us 10 times as long to be able to sink a well in this province versus what it does in Texas, obviously they're going to go where they can actually get into the ground and start making money more quickly. What the member is saying is that these things don't matter.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour to rise today to speak to Bill 13, what is called An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future. One might say that it may also be an attempt by this NDP government to fix the thing that they meddled in and messed up so poorly. But, alas, we are here today dealing with this bill, which will essentially make electricity more expensive for consumers. This bill in and of itself is extremely thick. We have had it for a few days here and had some time to go through it and consult with various stakeholders and industry, get some feedback on what they think. It's an extensive piece of legislation here that truly does contain quite a bit of information, you know, for example, to develop some policy framework to allow Albertans to generate their own electricity from renewables, alternative sources.

9:30

One might suggest that Albertans would want to have their say, particularly in regard to that. I think that the government would also particularly like to hear from those that might have some thoughts and opinions on what that might actually mean to them and for them. You know, perhaps it's an extremely positive thing for the people of Alberta. But I'm sure that they would like to provide some input so that they can, you know, feel like the government is listening to them and giving them what they want and what exactly they need.

Sometimes I think, in particular, that government can really, truly miss the mark for whatever reason that might be in actually providing what it is that the people are looking for, Madam Speaker. That can mean various sorts of things, and I wouldn't pretend to know what those are standing here today, but I would certainly like to hear what those are. I think that there is an opportunity to do so in a committee sense, where we can allow Albertans to participate in democracy and have something that they want in their communities come out of this bill; not only that, but for Albertans to provide input on a piece of legislation that changes our electricity market so significantly.

You know, we've been in a deregulated market for quite some time now, and it's worked quite successfully. In fact, I'd never heard there was a problem with it until the government started suing people and messing things up and telling us that electricity prices were going through the roof. Even their own cap rate was higher than we've seen prices at for such a long time. There are a lot of things that aren't making sense, and I think that there's an opportunity here to help Albertans maybe make some sense of what this NDP government is doing. Committee is certainly the way to do that, to really delve in.

You know, Madam Speaker, I think that the NDP need to have the opportunity to explain to Albertans, too, what was really wrong with the electricity market, not after they meddled with it and made a muck but before they meddled with it. Probably, actually, the answer is that there wasn't anything wrong until they started messing with it. I could be wrong. I think that that would be something that definitely could come out of committee.

I would like to move an amendment as such. I'll just wait until you have a copy, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Go ahead, hon. member.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I move that the motion for second reading of Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following: "Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future in accordance with Standing Order 74.2."

Madam Speaker, as I had mentioned prior to moving this amendment, this is a massive piece of legislation that in its physical form is quite large, but also it's a significant change to the way that electricity is delivered here in Alberta. There is a need for members in this House to thoroughly debate and provide advice and feedback to this Legislature and to this government on the various components that exist inside of this bill.

The Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future in particular has the resources and the abilities inside the committee to bring in our stakeholders, AESO in particular. Sure, yeah, we can give them a call, Madam Speaker. I don't have an ability to record that call, with all the questions that I have, and to post it on the Internet and hope that people tune in and hear that. But we would certainly appreciate an opportunity in a legislative committee to invite our stakeholders – generators, AESO, the Market Surveillance Administrator, investors, and consumer groups – to come and participate in the debate. I mean, there's just so much – right? – from changing from a deregulated market to a capacity market to having components that allow Albertans to generate their own electricity from renewables and alternative sources.

Madam Speaker, I don't know what that looks like. I don't know what the government has in mind. I'm sure that they've consulted with Albertans and that Albertans have given them advice, perhaps. I don't know. I would assume so. This government doesn't have a great history of consultation, so the Official Opposition is allowing the government an opportunity to ensure that they do right by Albertans by making sure that they've thoroughly done the consultation and done their homework and done their research.

I mean, Madam Speaker, there wasn't anything wrong with our electricity until the NDP increased the carbon tax on large emitters. Maybe they don't know that. I don't know. I think they probably do, and I think that's probably why we're in the situation that we're in.

I would like to hear from AESO in particular. I think that this could be done quickly and efficiently here, certainly over the summer. Before the end of summer this could very likely be wrapped up. I mean, this is a huge change.

Madam Speaker, I would probably argue that when and/or if there were to be a change back to a deregulated market from a capacity market at a future date, the NDP themselves would move an amendment to refer to a committee and do some homework and do some research and, you know, allow the government then to participate in proper consultation and that type of thing. I would probably be safe to assume that's what the NDP Official Opposition would do, this of course being after 2019. Maybe that's generous. I don't know.

Madam Speaker, I don't know everything. I'm not going to pretend to know everything. I'm not an expert on electricity generation or delivery – I'm really not – so I would certainly welcome the opportunity to participate in the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future to hear and to learn and to be able to involve my constituents. The people of Airdrie are extremely concerned about rising prices from this NDP government and quite frequently let me know that they're really concerned about the

rising prices from this government. We do know that NDP governments right across the country haven't really done anything but make life more expensive for Canadians across the country. I mean, they're certainly concerned right now because this government in particular has such a close tie with the Kathleen Wynne government in Ontario and the boondoggle mess that her government has created there. They would absolutely be concerned about what their cousin party in Alberta would be doing with our electricity markets as well.

9:40

Madam Speaker, I need to allow my constituents the opportunity to hear why this government is doing what they're doing and how they can ensure my constituents that prices aren't going to go through the roof like they have in Ontario, where people are paying more in their monthly utility bills than on their mortgage and their grocery bills combined. We've seen desperate pleas from residents in Ontario because it's so unaffordable to just keep their lights on and in the hot, hot summers that Ontario has to just try to keep it cool a little bit.

I don't want my constituents to not be able to afford to keep the baby monitor on, Madam Speaker, or anything else in their home that they're used to and that they need. I need to be able to put my constituents' minds at ease, and this can certainly be done through the legislative committee. I'm hoping the government will agree that this is an important piece of this puzzle, of this large piece of legislation, that indicates significant changes to Alberta's electricity market in the way it has been and in the way that they're proposing it to be, you know, before they pass this. It's the right thing to do.

I know, Madam Speaker, that this government has learned a lot of lessons over the last three years about consultation and how it annoys Albertans if they don't really do it. But this time they're going to get it right. I know they're going to pass this amendment because it makes sense, it's the right thing to do, and Albertans want to have their say on this bill.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to the amendment to refer Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future, to the legislative Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future. I would like to thank my colleague from Airdrie for moving this referral amendment because there is a good reason to do that, and I'll explain why. In my estimation it is essential that Bill 13 be sent to a committee for examination.

Now, we need a public hearing on this bill, Madam Speaker. We need the experts to come in and testify on this bill. Electricity law is perhaps some of the most complex law to understand. As soon as you bring in some of those complex mathematical equations, a person starts getting lost. My good friend the Member for Calgary-Mountain View, I mean, who happens to be their green left best friend, even said that it's very complex. He also said that he doesn't understand why they brought it. He said that we can't afford at this time to subsidize renewables. He is the Liberal member. He said that the Alberta NDP is going down the same rabbit hole that the Ontario Liberals have gone down, which made life hard and made life expensive and, to say the least, miserable for Ontarians. I have lots of friends there who've told me the pain they have gone through and are still going through.

That's why, Madam Speaker, we need experts to come in and testify on this bill. We all need to understand what the implications of Bill 13 mean in regular, everyday, ordinary language because it's very complex. Firstly, we need the Alberta Electric System Operator, better known as AESO or, in the legislation, as the Independent System Operator, ISO. The Member for Airdrie spoke about different stakeholders, so I just want to give a little bit of detailed explanation on: who are all these stakeholders, what are their roles, and why do we need to consult them? The AESO recommended a capacity market, and Bill 13 gives complete power to AESO to design this capacity market, both the provisional rules to get the capacity market up and running and the final rules after it is. The Legislature is being asked to trust the NDP government and give up all the powers to design the market to AESO, and the minister will be following AESO's recommendation for the regulations. That's why we need to hear from AESO.

Now, once AESO brings in rules for the capacity market, the Alberta Utilities Commission, AUC, will be asked to approve those rules. We need to hear from AUC as to how they will go about approving those rules. This is the most fundamental shakeup in the electricity system since the 1990s, Madam Speaker. We need to hear from the AUC on Bill 13.

Next we need to hear from the Market Surveillance Administrator. The MSA is the watchdog ensuring that people are not trying to game the electricity market to spike the prices and gouge customers by being greedy. The Market Surveillance Administrator recommended the capacity market. I think we need to hear from the MSA in person.

Madam Speaker, we also need to understand the relationship between the MSA and the AESO and the AUC going forward. Will the MSA have powers over the AESO, and can the AUC rein in the MSA and the AESO? These are all important questions.

Regular people, like the Member for Calgary-Mountain View explained, like my wife, for example, don't understand. She keeps saying that when we talk about all these acronyms – ISO, AESO, MSA, AUC – she doesn't understand. So I had to go in a simple way, like, using some common mythological language, for her to understand the story, a bit like AESO is the Creator, for example; in her faith it is Brahma. And the MSA is the Preserver; she understands Vishnu as the Preserver. And the AUC is the Destroyer, like Shiva. That's how I had to explain that, because it's very complex.

Mrs. Aheer: It's a soap opera.

Mr. Panda: Yeah. I had to use different language to my constituents when they call my office or when I door-knock.

Smart people also don't understand because they're not paying attention. They only look at the bills, and when the electricity prices are so high, they start paying attention. Why we got there, how we can fix it: those are now the questions they're asking.

Anyway, Madam Speaker, who else do we need to hear from in a committee? Between the AESO, the AUC, and the MSA we need to call in the generators as well because they are another major stakeholder. For example, Enmax will be an excellent witness. Not only do they own generation assets, including green power; Enmax owns transmission and distribution, which gives Enmax a unique view on the entire electrical system. Enmax was also battling this government over the power purchase agreement debacle and reached a settlement.

We also need to hear from Capital Power, another major generator. As the owner or the co-owner of 4 out of the 6 coal-fired generating units the NDP have decided to shut down sooner, Capital Power will be in a unique position to answer whether or not the

capacity market was needed before or after the NDP coal phase-out, that is costing over \$1.3 billion. Capital Power also won the renewable electricity program auction, auction 1, for 201.6 megawatts to be installed near Medicine Hat. Most of the people don't even know that. There will be much insight to be had from Capital Power on renewables inside the capacity market.

9:50

Next we need to hear from TransAlta. As the co-owner of four of the coal-fired generating stations the NDP plan to scuttle and eight of the units federally mandated to shut down, TransAlta will know the score, whether or not we need a capacity market. TransAlta has much experience in renewables also, Madam Speaker.

The other one is ATCO, previously Canadian Utilities. ATCO has three coal-fired units being shut down by the federal coal phase-out and two partially owned units. The NDP has accelerated their phase-out, Madam Speaker. ATCO will certainly have an opinion on whether or not that capacity market is needed and whether Bill 13 is the correct means to make that happen.

We also need to hear from the winners of the renewable electricity program, auction 1. Now, the NDP indicate REP 1 contractors will not be in the capacity market. Maybe they should be, Madam Speaker. Let's talk to them and find out why they're excluded and whether or not they should be in the capacity market.

EDP Renewables Canada Limited is a subsidiary of EDPR. Let's bring them in and hear about the Sharp Hills wind farm near Oyen that will generate 248.4 megawatts, Madam Speaker. EDPR is a global green energy company traded on the stock market in Europe, and they have installed capacity in North America, Spain, and Portugal. It's a Portuguese company, actually. They also have a minor stake in Brazil as well. That's another stakeholder we need to bring in.

Enel Green Power Canada Inc. also won renewables for electricity program auction 1 for two projects, 115 megawatts near Pincher Creek and 30.6 megawatts also near Pincher Creek. Enel Green Power Canada will be able to provide insight into the transmission line build-out that AESO has ordered up in the Oldman River valley. Enel is a subsidiary of a multinational Italian company, Madam Speaker, and they have some operating plants in South America, Europe, India, and South Africa.

You see, Madam Speaker, we have all kinds of people we need to hear from to get advice on Bill 13. We need to hear from the experts who know if electricity on provincial interties can be subject to capacity payments. Does B.C. Hydro site C qualify if it has its own intertie? These are the big questions we need to understand.

Most importantly, after the experts we need to hear from Albertans as well. We need the feedback from regular Albertans in the field who may know something about the capacity markets. Maybe we'll hear that we need this. Maybe we'll hear that Bill 13 will not do what it is supposed to do. Maybe we'll hear that the NDP is right with Bill 13, but let's hear from them. Maybe they'll say that the NDP is wrong, very, very, very wrong. We don't know what they're going to say unless we hear them.

Because we believe the NDP has raised the electricity prices and will continue to raise the electricity prices, Madam Speaker, I trust I have made my case for referring Bill 13 to the legislative Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future. I look forward to the debate on this topic.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The definition of stakeholder: a person with an interest or concern in something. I was very interested to hear the Member for Calgary-Foothills talk about the different stakeholders. What I would like to know: in his opinion, the value to hearing the stakeholder, in this situation the consumer of electricity, the regular Albertan, the people on fixed incomes, the newlyweds, the young families going to university, the student trying to just make ends meet. I'd like to hear from him: what is the value to being able to have that stakeholder be able to give witness to the devastation that these types of policies will provide for them in their own personal lives?

Look, I think the equation here is important to get right. We need to make sure that those people who have put capital into this as a business are heard. But I am worried about making sure that individual Albertans also get heard, Madam Speaker, because in this equation you've got the supplier of electricity and the consumer of electricity. You know, they create the supply and demand, which is supposed to be able to determine what the equilibrium price is.

But in this situation, again back to this Bill 13, it seems like the government is only addressing what the businesses want, which is certainty. I can imagine businesses coming in and saying: "You know what? We're very happy to be able to get this kind of certainty. It's great to be able to lock in a price. It's great to be able to build something and not have to be able to provide electricity. We just get to be able to make money just because we've created capacity." But what about the cost increases for the regular Albertan – how is that going to affect them? – and being able to have credible witness from them saying: you know, this is really going to affect me materially. I'd like to know from the Member for Calgary-Foothills what he feels is the value of that kind of feedback from the consumer.

Mr. Panda: Madam Speaker, the reason I'm supporting this referral amendment is to strengthen this legislation. Like, the previous speaker spoke about the unintended consequences. I saw a pattern here. I picked up this file very recently, and then ever since I've consulted so many stakeholders. It's really complex. Even for someone like me with a technical background, it's spinning my head. The more I dig in, the more I realize it's very complex.

The regular Albertans that the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner mentioned, it's for them – you know, they may think that the government is protecting the price for them, but how do they protect? I mean, it's going to cost more to generate electricity, to transmit, to retail, and to supply. But if it is costing actually 10 cents a kilowatt hour and if we are saying that we're protecting them by capping it at 6.8, someone else is paying. The young couples he's talking about may not be paying, but their parents, their neighbours, other Albertans, who are the taxpayers, are paying to subsidize the consumer, who is the ratepayer.

Like I said, even the Member for Calgary-Mountain View, who is generally very supportive of this government, said that this is unnecessary because this government got into this mess by bringing in their ideological policy of early coal phase-out. The government says that the federal government, the Harper government, wanted to do it. They wanted to do it in 2030.

10:00

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. First of all, I am standing up to speak against this amendment. I wanted to point out that there have indeed been consultations. I sat personally in on a day, on March 15, where we had 96 organizations pull together.

They all came to McDougall Centre, 140 representatives. They were mainly CEOs of the companies. We had the Alberta association of municipal districts, now the RMA. We had AUMA. We had the Aboriginal Financial Services Corporation. We had people like the Alberta Federation of Rural Electrification Associations. We had the Alberta-Pacific Forest Industries. We had the Alberta Utilities Commission. We had ATCO. We had ATCO Electric, Canada West Foundation. We had Camrose Energy. I think every company or stakeholder that was named by the opposite member was part of this list: Enbridge, EPCOR, Capital Power, Husky energy, Imperial Oil.

We had all kinds of investors, big generators, distributors, renewable folks. Again, 140 participants, 96 companies were represented, including municipalities. All of this is on the AESO website, so it's easily available, who we met with. In fact, it may have the names. I think this is all redundant, to do this kind of thing, because there has been very thorough stakeholder engagement in all parts of this in designing the capacity market, Madam Speaker, so I speak against this amendment. I think it's been done, and we need to move on.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The question that I just asked the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills I would also pose to the hon. minister. You know, all of the names that she mentioned: it's important to have that consultation with those people. I didn't hear her once say that they actually opened it up to the public, to regular Albertans, to know what they are going to feel about this. The truth is that right now we are sitting at around 3 cents a kilowatt hour, and moving up to even a cap of 6.8 cents a kilowatt hour is going to double that. This is a cost to Albertans that Albertans are going to have to bear: at what cost to regular Albertans? They are going to be the ones who bear this. It's the taxpayer, it's the ratepayer that is going to have to bear this.

So the question, again, to the minister that I asked the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills: what consultation have you done with regular Albertans in order to be able to get their feedback on whether they're accepting of these cost increases? Have you shared with them an economic impact study? Have you shared with them what the cost increases are going to be and what they are going to have to bear? You know, I think that that's a very reasonable question to ask.

If that hasn't been done, Madam Speaker, then if we were to send this to committee, it would allow us the opportunity to be able to hear from those credible witnesses and to find out what the material costs are going to be to them. If the minister could answer that question, that would be fantastic.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Well, as I mentioned, we had the AAMDC, which is now RMA, I believe, and AUMA. Those are elected groups that represent stakeholders in all of Alberta. I think there would be an opportunity for them to check back with their stakeholders. That's what they're elected to do, to represent everyday Albertans, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Hunter: Fantastic to hear. They're great organizations. Once again, were they able to represent and get feedback from regular Albertans that are not members of associations or organizations directly affiliated with something like a company that is going to be benefiting from this?

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

Mr. Panda: I would like to thank the hon. minister for her comments. If she says that she consulted behind the closed door all those stakeholders that I named, what other deals did they make behind closed doors? Why don't they let them come to the legislative committee and through the legislative committee tell regular Albertans what they discussed, what concerns were raised by the stakeholders, and how they plan to mitigate their concerns? That's what the same stakeholders are telling me. They have huge concerns about this bill.

Madam Speaker, this government has a record. You know, they said that the settlement with Enmax wouldn't have any impact, and then they have backdoor negotiations and deals done with them, and then they settle the case. But in the process Albertans lost hundreds of millions of dollars. This is not small money, hundreds of millions of dollars, which they proudly say that they're spending on infrastructure projects to help Albertans. All that money they blew could have been used for those infrastructure projects. But they don't tell me. We asked so many times in this House how much it costs, whether these coal phase-out settlements accelerated the coal phase-out.

You can blame the Harper government, but the Harper government would have phased it out later, would have let that run through the life cycle. You accelerated it. Then you brought in your carbon tax, which was not campaigned on. Because of that, that triggered the dump of PPAs. That created the necessity for a capacity market. So all these things they won't explain to regular Albertans. They just bury it in small print somewhere, which regular Albertans don't have time or . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Wow. This whole discussion is very reminiscent of bills 27 and 34. Interestingly, I think that as we put these puzzle pieces together, we kind of are seeing the mandate or the puzzle come together of what it was that the government was intending at that time and what the fallout is. A lot of this legislation is happening as a result of those two bills. I'm going to be discussing the amendment, obviously, but in order to put it into context, I will also be bringing up aspects of bills 34 and 27 to explain where I'm coming from.

Just to bring up the language of the Minister of Energy, I believe she said "cognitive dissonance." That's interesting. The government has forced unpredictable renewable electricity on Albertans with little forethought of the cost and implications on the taxpayer and the ratepayer, the same person, down the road. Their actions are driven by ideology. I'm not sure. They keep saying that it's in the best interest of Albertans, but I don't quite understand it.

I would like to thank the minister for meeting with 96 organizations and 140 reps. As I understand it, you said that it was on the 15th, a particular day. That's a lot of people to meet in one day. I don't know if you'd call that a consultation or a group meeting. Anyway, I know that my colleague from Calgary-Foothills has spent months meeting with people. It's a significantly different level of consultation, I would suggest, but that's just me.

The Minister of Energy had spoken in the past about ensuring reliable electricity and then went on to blame the previous government and industries about sweetheart provisions and how they had failed to provide the necessary tools for the Balancing Pool and to manage the potential losses for this roller coaster. The minister kept repeating that the PPA costs were being loaded onto

the consumers. Well, I would actually like to speak about the truth and the cost of electricity. Actually, the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner did a very good job of explaining, especially when it came to the retail piece of this.

10:10

Madam Speaker, you could pretend to protect the ratepayer by capping the cost and falsely leading Albertans to believe that we are paying for our usage, misleading Albertans under the smoke and mirrors of a cap that we are paying for our usage. You can't just pretend to try and cover up the costs and say: "Well, you have to pay for it one day. Oh, well." You're pretending to protect people, absolutely pretending to protect people. You say, like: "We're just going to cover it for you. That's what the government is going to do. We're going to cover the cost for you. You don't have to pay for anything." The taxpayer does, and the government triggered this whole shemuzzle, the entire thing.

Let's go back a little. I mean, this is incredibly irresponsible, and now the Minister of Finance can, with the recommendation of the Energy minister, loan money to the Balancing Pool. So let's take a look at this. The government can make loans to the Balancing Pool and then guarantee the obligations to the Balancing Pool with no accountability, no transparency, and no public way to explain where that funding went, a blank cheque. A blank cheque.

Now, let's go into this a little bit more. Let's talk about the Balancing Pool. The Balancing Pool did have a way of taking care of their losses. Those were on the consumer bills, and they were called rate riders, the charges and refunds. Now, let me reiterate, too, that the refunds over the years have added up to \$3 billion, Madam Speaker, \$3 billion. That's what the rate rider does. Those were already there, and interestingly enough the average Albertan, as convoluted and complex as the electricity bill looks, could see the line item of where that was. We have zero utility debt in this province at this point. Interesting.

So we have charges, yes, and there were some times where you had to pay more, but there were also many times where you had to pay less. Those rate riders covered that. They were approved to be used or collected or reimbursed by the regulated market, and that regulated market used the regulated rate of transmission and the distribution utility. Based on that, they can forecast it. It's very transparent.

There's another situation here. I mean, the combination of a system that phased out coal-fired power and introduced wind power – this time frame is too tight, and it has caused absolute chaos, Madam Speaker, for the electricity market and destabilized it to a point that the government now needs to frantically try and step in and put those pieces back together that they broke in the first place.

I agree with the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner. There were pieces of this that were broken. You decided to break the part that was already working. Madam Speaker, how is that possible? There were definitely things and issues that needed to be looked at, no doubt. The Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner already went into that. But why would the government take the piece of it that was already working and working efficiently, break that wide open, cause this immense chaos, humongous charges that are going to come and be downloaded onto the taxpayer, that they're supposedly protecting, and then blame it on supposed sweetheart deals that happened in the past?

Now, the minister is meeting with corporations and groups and everything like that but isn't willing to use our referral amendment to go in front of committee and transparently explain to Albertans why it is that this capacity market is supposedly so fantastic. What a wonderful opportunity for the minister to actually show Albertans

why this would work. I could be wrong. Let's do it. Let's get together. Let's figure it out. But no, no, no. We're just supposed to acknowledge that all of these people were met on one day and that that's a consultation, and therefore everything is just wonderful.

Unfortunately, though, the costs associated with the changeover to the capacity market and the conversion to natural gas and renewables are significant, and while the government says that it intends to restabilize the market, in actuality, Madam Speaker, the government has spent billions of dollars, billions of hard-earned taxpayer dollars, to fix their mistake. There is nothing stable about that. Again, you can pretend to protect Albertans under the mystique of a cap. Nobody is buying it. Nobody is buying it. It doesn't work in Ontario. [interjection] Oh, yeah, somebody is making money off it, but it's certainly not Albertans.

You know, I'd like to continue on here. The rate riders, just to go back to rate riders, needed to actually be approved by the system. There are experts in the field, and they were the ones that would approve the rate. The Balancing Pool once upon a time was an independent body. Interestingly enough – I don't know if you remember this; this is a little blast from the past – many of those board members resigned en masse because of political interference, Madam Speaker. That's what happened as a result of Bill 34. That's what happened. Interestingly enough, Bill 27 took away the powers of the Market Surveillance Administrator but only on renewables. We'll get into that a little bit later.

Very interesting. You can see these puzzle pieces getting put together. Very disturbing. You don't have to be a specialist in electricity to start adding up the pieces to find out where this government is going. One mistake after another after another after another, and we end up with legislation like this to try and put together this broken mistake that has happened, this debacle, and then more ways to hide it, more ways to hide it from Albertans.

We had the Balancing Pool as an independent body, and we are going to, on this side of the House, stand up against the writing of that blank cheque. These are taxpayer dollars. These are not government dollars.

This is the interesting part, too. You know, the government, with the rate riders, actually, had immense transparency to our ratepayers because they would understand the full cost of electricity. What is the government afraid of? If you want to do this capacity market, Madam Speaker, show us the money. Show us where it's going. Show Albertans what you're doing. Do not hide it underneath a 6.8-cent cap, pretending to protect Albertans, when we know that those dollars and those taxes are going to get spread out across the board in a thousand different other ways and will impact Albertans and their pocketbooks. They're already starting to see the difference.

The government is misleading Albertans, Madam Speaker. The Balancing Pool can recover its costs, and Bill 34 – this is the most interesting part and the most interesting part that actually leads to this bill – removed the checks and balances. That is this government's legacy, removing the things that actually protect Albertans. That's what this is about. You can't hide it in a cap. It's not possible. Everything will come out. It might not come out while this government is in power, but the truth will come out.

Once we start seeing those bills and not understanding – I'm sorry, but Albertans are intelligent and savvy. They're going to understand what's going on. Initially it might look okay with rebates and all this other kind of stuff, and then it's going to start to hit them in their pocketbooks, and, whoa, we're in trouble. We're in trouble, Houston.

Bill 13 shows us where the government was going with this. You know, it's funny. When we were debating bills 34 and 27 – and those were some late, late night debates – we knew, we could feel

that there was something on the horizon, and here we are. I mean, we were concerned about wide-sweeping and irresponsible changes and no limit on spending to backstop the Balancing Pool. Can somebody on the government side please explain this to me? Please. How is it that you can justify spending taxpayer dollars to backstop the Balancing Pool? Once upon a time it actually had excess money, \$700 million to be exact, which went out the door real quickly, Madam Speaker, the minute that this capacity market came on the docket. What happened to those dollars, Minister?

10:20

And the debacle continues. I mean, Bill 34 was senseless, absolutely senseless. If you looked at the rate riders, there was only a difference of one or two dollars. There was absolutely no need to do this, but, no, the government decided to do this, and now we can see the fallout and the motive, and now this legislation has to happen. So the government created uncertainty. Then it blamed the market, like it was the market's fault that their renewables scheme wasn't working.

I hope we all understand in this House that low-priced power equals economic growth. Almost 80 per cent of our grid, Madam Speaker, is industrial, and those low prices are key to investment in this province, absolutely key in this province, especially for the job creators, which, my understanding was, this government actually cared about.

Now, the government also talked about how there wasn't any new investment. Well, actually, there was new investment, which also brought on a needed and large reserve margin. That large reserve margin is exactly what we need for spikes or anything that happens within the grid, especially for the industry, especially in this province, Madam Speaker. I mean, why attack the wholesalers, the retailers? Oh, I know. They responded to a few large corporations who did not like the low prices, right? Isn't that interesting? Something that they're always riding this side about, that government is involved. The government decided to choose to side with a few small corporations that didn't like the low prices, and instead they decided to tax these people, that they're sent here to represent, under the smoke and mirrors of a 6.8-cent cap.

The Deputy Speaker: Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the comments by the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View because she did a very good job of being able to show the timeline of how we got to this point. I actually think that that's extremely important in order for us, again, to be able to see kind of the broad view of what's happening in this market.

One of the things that I was thinking about as the member was speaking – and she got me really thinking about this – was because she was talking about, I guess, motive for why the government is doing this, you know, kind of giving the top 1 per cent of the rich people in this province help, which they always seem to keep on saying that we do. But, in reality, what they're doing is that they're helping a few corporations to be able to maximize profits because there's going to be a guaranteed return on investment.

I was going to ask this question. In terms of the renewables I watched one day when the wind was at about 4 per cent of capacity, so I think that they produced about 4 per cent of the capacity on this one given day. Yet under this bill creating this capacity market, it would actually pay the wind companies the full amount versus the 4 per cent that they actually only produced. So if they had a hundred per cent of their capacity and they're still only producing 4 per cent, the model didn't work.

I asked a person that actually had the largest wind farm in Alberta. I said, "How did you do it?" and they said: "You know what? The only way we could do it was if we sold carbon credits to California." Now, this was, again, not underneath this government, but it indicated to me that the technology is not where it needs to be yet.

So there's a big push for renewables. It'd be great. Again, I've said it many times: I love renewables. But always the problem is that it just doesn't make sense. I have to also be able to weigh the idea of how good renewables are versus the cost of them. The wind at only 4 per cent of capacity is now, under this bill, going to get paid the extra 96 per cent for just having capacity. My question to the member is: how is this not going to create an increased cost to Albertans?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think I was asked the question. Thank you. Actually, to answer, I have some interesting information. I was mentioning this in question period today. Today we were at 3.1 cents per unit, and the government subsidized anything before 3.7. The interesting thing, though, is that the wind today is at a whopping 2.5 per cent of generation, so that's 227 megawatts out of a possible 8,801. That's the rate today. This is really quite interesting, because if you look at that capacity, if the government is subsidizing 100 per cent of that on a day that produced 2.5 per cent, yikes.

You were asking me about how that would impact people. Well, the capacity market, Madam Speaker, will be reflected in higher power bills for the consumer. Since the government has put in the 6.8-cent kilowatt cap – this is the part – the government is going to subsidize your power bill should the power prices rise above. It's smoke and mirrors. It's going to look like you're not paying more. I mean, we were just talking today about what it will cost an average Albertan to pay back their debt, and now we're loading them with this, too, for our future.

I mean, I can't begin to explain how much I love renewables. I completely love them. But the secrecy and the speed by which they're being implemented – it's so costly, Madam Speaker. You know, I can't speak to wind, but the price of solar has been reduced by half since 2011. The market is deciding, and instead of the government looking at the market and allowing the market to decide, they decided to get their fingers into the part that was actually working.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would just like to move that we adjourn debate at this time.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 17 Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2018

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to move second reading of Bill 17, the Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2018.

As I mentioned during the introduction of this legislation, Alberta's tax laws are typically reviewed on an annual basis and amended as required. This process ensures that government policy decisions are implemented and the integrity of our tax system is

maintained. The proposed amendments impact two pieces of legislation, the Alberta Corporate Tax Act and the Alberta Personal Income Tax Act. As indicated at first reading, these amendments maintain consistency between provincial and federal tax legislation. They align provincial legislation with current administrative practices, they address technical deficiencies in the legislation, and they repeal expired provisions.

I'll begin by outlining the proposed changes to the Alberta Corporate Tax Act. With regard to electronic communications over the years Alberta's corporate tax system has moved to reflect the growing use of electronic communications by allowing Alberta's corporate tax administrators to send and receive certain pieces of information electronically. One proposed change through Bill 17 would continue to expand on this ability. Specifically, electronic communications could now be used to send companies notifications that they must file a tax return or provide information necessary to administer the legislation.

10:30

This change will only impact taxpayers who currently communicate electronically or those who indicate their preference for electronic communications. Currently the minister may only demand that a corporation file a tax return or provide information necessary to administer the act by serving this demand personally or by registered mail. This change will modernize the Alberta Corporate Tax Act and improve administrative efficiency.

With regard to insurance underwriting, Alberta's general practice is to parallel the federal definition of corporate taxable income. This practice helps keep tax compliance costs low for corporations and administrative costs low for government. The 2017 federal budget announced that starting in 2019, the government of Canada will eliminate the special corporate tax exemption that income insurance companies earn from underwriting farming or fishing properties. The exemption was introduced in 1954 to encourage the provision of insurance in rural districts. The federal government has indicated that this special exemption is no longer needed as Canada's financial sector is best positioned to effectively underwrite the risks associated with farming and fishing properties.

Amending Alberta's corporate tax legislation to parallel this federal change will maintain Alberta's practice of adopting the federal definition of taxable income and will help keep tax compliance and administrative costs low. The amendments also ensure that Alberta's tax treatment for insurance companies is aligned with all other provinces.

Now I'll move on to the proposed changes to the Alberta Personal Income Tax Act. With regard to infirm dependants and caregiver credits through Bill 17 other personal income tax changes are being undertaken as a result of recent federal legislative changes. We are making sure that these federal changes do not impact Alberta's infirm dependant and caregiver credits by putting the underlying rules directly into provincial legislation rather than referencing the federal Income Tax Act. These amendments do not change credit entitlements or who qualifies. Rather, they simply ensure that the underlying legislation supports Alberta's existing policy and the way the credits are administered.

With regard to the climate leadership adjustment rebate the proposed amendment would also clarify that income earned by minors is not included when determining a family's Alberta climate leadership adjustment rebate. This is how the Canada Revenue Agency has always administered the rebate, so it will not impact the rebates these families receive. This change is simply a technical change that aligns our legislation with how the rebate is actually administered.

Lastly, with regard to electoral financing changes the last changes I'd like to explain are housekeeping amendments to both the Alberta Corporate Tax Act and the Alberta Personal Income Tax Act that reflect recent electoral financing changes. As trusts are no longer allowed to make political contributions, we are amending the Alberta Person Income Tax Act to clarify that trusts are not allowed to claim the political contributions tax credit. We are also repealing the political contribution tax credit section from the Alberta Corporate Tax Act since corporations are also no longer allowed to make political contributions.

Finally, the Senatorial Selection Act expired in 2018, so there is no need for the tax acts to allow for a tax credit for contributions to senatorial candidates.

In closing, Madam Speaker, to recap, this bill will maintain consistency between federal and Alberta legislation, it'll align provincial legislation with administrative practices, it'll address

technical deficiencies, and it will repeal expired provincial provisions.

I would encourage all members of the House to support this bill, and I look forward to debate.

I would like to adjourn debate. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

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

Mr. Feehan: Thank you. Looking at the time and the work that's been accomplished, I'd like to motion for adjournment until 1:30 tomorrow.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 10:35 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, May 7, 2018

Day 25

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Vacant, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake

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New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 25 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent Conservative: 1 Vacant: 2

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, May 7, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Hon. members, let each of us in our own way pray and reflect on the good fortune we have to meet the young people of our province and on our confidence in them being our future leaders.

Hon. members and ladies and gentlemen, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Mr. R.J. Chambers. I would invite all participants to sing in the language of your choice.

Hon. Members:

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

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

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

Mr. Gottfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a former MLA, Ken Allred. Mr. Allred is one of the most accomplished land surveyors in the province. Graduating from SAIT in 1961 with a gold executive award, Ken went on to hold a number of prominent positions with the Alberta Land Surveyors' Association, the Canadian Council of Land Surveyors, and the International Federation of Surveyors. Mr. Allred was also an adjunct professor of the University of Alberta from 1984 to 1992. In addition to his professional accomplishments, Mr. Allred was an accomplished politician as well. He served on city council in St. Albert from 1980 to '86 before deciding not to run again. He changed his mind, however, in 1989 and served an additional three terms before retiring in 1998. He returned to politics in 2008, when he was elected as the MLA for St. Albert.

It was during his term of office that Mr. Allred originally attempted to abolish adverse possession, which we will address later today, something he remains passionate about to this day, and he will be staying on for the debate later this afternoon. Mr. Allred was very, very instrumental in my bringing this private member's bill forward. I would now ask that Mr. Allred rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Ms Jabbour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my great pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly 87 students, representing 65 constituencies, who are here today as participants in the Mr. Speaker's MLA for a Day program. Offered annually

since 2003, this program strives to further develop the interest in and understanding of our parliamentary system among Alberta youth.

These high school students arrived on Sunday and since then have been participating in a variety of activities. In the last day they've toured the Legislature, explored the grounds, attended inspiring sessions facilitated by community leaders, and they've made friendships and learned about dorm life at MacEwan University. After observing question period today, they will meet with a panel of former MLAs. Tomorrow they'll debate a resolution in this very Chamber, presided over by yourself, Mr. Speaker. During this debate the students will be given a unique perspective on the work done by the members of this Assembly, and following the debate, they will have the opportunity to visit the offices of their MLAs. I would ask that all of our MLA for a Day participants, who are seated in both the members' and public galleries, please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ms Jabbour: I have a second.

The Speaker: Sure.

Ms Jabbour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do have a second introduction. I wanted to acknowledge a remarkable young man from my constituency, from the town of Fort Vermilion, Carson Flett. He's here with the MLA for a Day program, but Carson is really outstanding. He has wanted to be in this program since the first day that I met him, years ago, and he's very excited that he finally is old enough to come. Carson's current project is that he's got a petition going to reduce the voting age to 16, so he's very politically engaged, and I know that one day he's going to achieve his goal of being an elected representative. Please give Carson a special warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Hon. members, lest there be any doubt, I look forward to the debate that the students will be having tomorrow, and lest there be any doubt, I expect that the quality of debate will exceed this Chamber.

The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am honoured to rise today on behalf of my colleague for Stony Plain to introduce to you and through you 37 students from Stony Plain Central school. The students are accompanied by their teachers, Morgan Wilson and Alesha Broadbent, and I would like to ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Are there any other schools groups, hon. members?

Seeing and hearing none, the Minister of Health and Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you Ashwak Bawa-Morad and her guests, who are seated in the Speaker's gallery. Ashwak is an early childhood educator at the Community Options Edmonton Northwest Child Care Centre in my riding of Edmonton-Glenora. I am so proud to share with you and all guests that Ashwak received one of only five awards from the Prime Minister. She received the certificate of excellence in early childhood education. Ashwak has gone above and beyond and has a very special place in the hearts of the children she cares for as well as their families. She's joined by Mason, one of her young students, as well as his mom, Tamara. My

heart is warmed when Mason tells me about his best friend, Ashwak, and how he gets to play and learn from her every day. I ask that Ashwak and her guests please rise and join me and receive the warm welcome of our Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you Elaine Munce with Hospice Calgary and Jennifer Elliott with the Alberta Hospice Palliative Care Association. They join us during national Hospice Palliative Care Week. This year's theme is Towards a More Compassionate Canada, Eh? This week encourages Canadians to consider ways that community involvement can support the dying and bereavement process, asking: what makes a compassionate community, and how can compassionate communities support end-of-life care? We are truly fortunate to have organizations like these. Their advocacy and partnership are vital in providing quality end-of-life care for Albertans. I invite both Jennifer and Elaine to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Red Deer South.

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Joel Ward and Elaine Vandale. Joel has been president and CEO of Red Deer College for nine years and is an outstanding champion for RDC. Elaine is the executive director of board and corporate relations and is a member of the president's executive team. She has been working at RDC for over 21 years. I thank my guests for the great work they do at RDC, which I will speak more about later today. I ask my guests to now rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Education.

1:40

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm thrilled to introduce to you and through you to all Members of the Legislative Assembly 29 amazing participants in the 2017-18 Minister's Youth Council plus six staff members. These students have come from all across Alberta, and I'm very honoured to have worked with them during this past year. They have done important work that definitely has positively impacted our government. They've told me about important issues like rural education, mental health, and supports for LGBTQ youth. I'm very humbled to have had these conversations with these students, and it's certainly helped to influence my work and to make me a better minister and MLA. I would ask them now to all rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Members' Statements

Gay-straight Alliances in Schools

Ms Goehring: Mr. Speaker, yesterday our government was proud to give 15-year-old Noah Nicholls a Great Kids award for his work in promoting LGBTQ2-plus rights. After joining a gay-straight alliance at his Calgary high school last year, Noah gained the confidence to start telling his friends, relatives, and finally his parents that he is gay.

At the same time we were celebrating Noah's courage and leadership, delegates at the UCP convention in Red Deer were shamefully voting to double down on outing gay kids who join a GSA, a policy their leader first proposed over a year ago. In fact, they went one step further. UCP delegates overwhelmingly adopted a resolution that would mean kids aren't even allowed to join a GSA unless they have parental consent.

Outing kids is not only extreme; it's downright cruel. As Noah said yesterday: "I can't think of something worse than ... not getting to tell people myself ... It's about when you're ready. It should be up to you." The facts are clear. Gay-straight alliances not only give some of the most vulnerable kids in our schools a place to feel welcome and safe; they also save lives.

That's why I am so proud that our government passed a law to protect every student's right to form a GSA at their school without fear of being outed. The vast majority of Albertans support our law. They understand that in today's Alberta it matters how we treat each other, especially the most vulnerable. But this weekend made it clear that the UCP doesn't stand with moderate Albertans. They stand with insular, extreme special-interest groups who want to take our province backwards on GSAs and so many other issues. On this side of the Legislature we'll keep fighting to ensure that that does not happen.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Women's Political Participation

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, this weekend in Red Deer 2,600 delegates met and listened to an extraordinary speech from former Conservative Party of Canada leader Rona Ambrose. She encouraged strong Conservative women to take the leap into politics and to win. Our caucus is stronger when it truly reflects its members and the people of this great province. Rona knows our party leader well and is confident, as am I, that he supports women and makes decisions based on merit and not on tokenism. Conservative women don't want special treatment. We want an equal opportunity to compete and to succeed. I am proud that our party members just elected hard-working individuals to serve on our executive board. Half of them are women but not because of any quotas. They were the right persons for the job.

It's not surprising, Mr. Speaker, because Conservatives have a strong record of empowering women. Who gave women the right to vote? Conservatives. What party appointed the first woman cabinet minister? The Conservatives. Who appointed the first woman Foreign Affairs minister? Conservatives. Who gave aboriginal women equal rights under the law in this country? Conservatives. Who was the first female Prime Minister? Kim Campbell, also Conservative. The first woman Leader of the Opposition, Deb Grey, a Reform MP, withstood unbelievable sexism and harassment from the so-called progressives in the House of Commons, yet she stood her ground, and she made us proud. We cannot forget about these women, who have paved the way for the rest of us. They were not filling token positions. These women competed for and earned them.

I would like to thank Rona Ambrose and Lauren Harper for their initiative, the She Leads campaign, which will support women running for the United Conservative Party. I look forward to a United Conservative government full of talented and experienced women who work hard and improve this province. We believe in our families, in our communities, and in our principles.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Publicly Funded Health Care

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This weekend, after months of trying to hide, the UCP answered the question about what kind of party they are. They could have decided to be an open tent party, but instead they decided to be a party focused on exclusion and collusion. As the *Edmonton Journal* wrote: “United Conservative Party delegates had one job at their founding convention this weekend – don’t look extreme. They didn’t succeed.”

The UCP are showing Albertans just how elitist, extremist, and reckless they really are. Their votes to attack LGBTQ youth, to give big tax giveaways to millionaires, and to privatize health care tell Albertans everything they need to know about what kind of party they are. Their plan would bring back the bad old days of queue-jumping for their wealthy insiders and donors and cutting health services for people like my dad, a house painter who could not have afforded to pay for health care after falling at work and breaking four ribs and puncturing a lung. Albertans deserve better than the two-tiered, American-style health care they rejected last election, and I can confidently say that they’re getting better from our government.

Mr. Speaker, while the UCP refuse to talk about women’s reproductive health, we’ll stand up for women’s rights in this province. While the UCP advocate for reckless cuts to health care, we’ll keep building the Calgary cancer centre so patients can get the care that they need. While the UCP threaten to fire nurses, doctors, and health care aides, we’ll stand up for Albertans and ensure those same nurses, doctors, and health care aides are there at the side of Albertans when they need them. While the UCP try to give political insiders and campaign donors preferential access to health care, we’re going to stand up for regular Albertan families. We believe in public health care based on need, not the size of your wallet.

Rural Infrastructure Project Approval

Mr. Stier: Mr. Speaker, Alberta municipalities facilitate growth and economic development that always requires attention to public safety, which involves timely construction activity involving routine minor bridge, culvert, and road maintenance. For decades in rural areas municipalities have always accomplished those tasks by incorporating professional engineering standards in their construction processes. However, since July ’15 rural municipalities have noticed a considerable change in the environmental approval process and have expressed serious concerns related to months of unnecessarily delayed inspections and approvals, especially for routine maintenance work. According to several municipal superintendents these project approvals are not forthcoming from Alberta Environment and Parks due to a new Alberta wetland policy that contains overreaching changes to the wetland regulatory requirements. This is causing additional and, in their view, unnecessary assessments being required prior to work being done.

In fact, when initial responses are now received to municipal inquiries regarding delayed project applications, responses from Environment now state in almost all cases that at this time they’re experiencing a high volume of applications, and the expected timeline for review and a decision by the director is currently eight to 12 months from submission of the application, Mr. Speaker, and that includes inquiries for simple, routine projects such as replacing a local road culvert. This is simply not acceptable. Entire construction seasons are being lost because of this red tape policy.

To address this growing concern, the Rural Municipalities association passed a resolution to urge the province to relax these

unnecessary, overreaching requirements for formal approvals on routine maintenance projects, requesting that consideration be given to safety concerns related to delayed environmental approval processing from Alberta Environment and Parks. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all Albertans this critical safety problem for the travelling public must be addressed by the minister as soon as possible.

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

Red Deer College

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m honoured today to rise and speak about Red Deer College. RDC has been very busy the last few years, with three major construction projects under way. The Gary W. Harris Canada games centre, the new residence, and the alternative energy lab are on their way to completion. Of course, the announcement by Premier Notley and Minister Schmidt that RDC is on its way to becoming a degree-granting institution has helped make things even busier.

1:50

As if all of that wasn’t enough, RDC has also been busy with its alternative energy initiative, which promotes environmental stewardship through the application of sustainable and energy efficient technologies. The new alternative energy lab will create opportunities for education and research. This will not only assist industry; it will also provide RDC students with the skills necessary to install, operate, and maintain alternative energy systems. RDC will be installing 3,645 solar panels. This along with a combined heat and power unit and their ongoing conversion of their exterior lighting to LED bulbs will create or conserve over 9,000 megawatt hours per year. This will offset campus electricity usage by an estimated 67 per cent. That, Mr. Speaker, would be the equivalent of the energy required to power 1,300 average Alberta homes or the equivalent of removing 1,100 cars off the road annually.

RDC contributes over \$500 million to our local economy every year as well as educating 7,500 full- and part-time students and employing 1,415 people last year alone. RDC has a proud history of providing a top-notch education to its students. I look forward to it leading the way into a better future for Red Deer and the rest of Alberta.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. member, if I might remind the House about using personal names in statements: we avoid that practice.

Oral Question Period

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

Federal Carbon Pricing

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, today the Leader of the Official Opposition is in Ottawa talking to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance about the federal government’s Bill C-74, which would enact a federal carbon tax and devastate Alberta and the oil and gas industry. Our leader is standing up for Alberta and protecting provincial jurisdiction, unlike the NDP, who are just rubber-stamping carbon tax increases while Trudeau stands by and does nothing on Trans Mountain. Premier, when will you realize that your job is to protect Albertans and start standing up to Justin Trudeau rather than just rubber-stamping and doing whatever he tells you to do?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm so proud of our Premier and our government for the role we've taken in ensuring that we get pipeline approvals to tidewater, including the climate leadership plan that got us that very approval. The members opposite never came close. If they want to talk taxes, let's talk taxes. Their members this weekend voted for a \$700 million tax giveaway to the richest among us. The rest of us will pay for ballooning class sizes, longer hospital waits. We stand with everyday Albertans. We know that they stand with their rich friends.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the members across the way want to talk about what was voted on at party conventions. The last time that this party across from me met at a national convention, they voted for the Leap Manifesto, which called for the shutting down of the complete energy industry in our province. But I digress.

This government has already rubber-stamped a carbon tax increase to \$50 to start – there'll be another one 67 per cent beyond that – at the request of Justin Trudeau. My question, Mr. Speaker, to the Deputy Premier is: did the NDP receive an analysis from the federal government on the full cost of that \$50 carbon tax before they agreed to it, or did they just rubber-stamp that increase at the request of their close personal ally Justin Trudeau?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Ms Hoffman: You know what, Mr. Speaker? We're proud to show up and do our jobs on behalf of Albertans, and our government is focused on making life better by supporting our energy industry to get great jobs that create good opportunities for Alberta families. The members opposite are focused on making life worse by denying women access to health care. In fact, they won't even debate the matters in this House. This weekend we saw a little bit about what's behind the curtain. They want to put down women who run for public office. They don't even show up for the job themselves. That's shameful. [interjections]

The Speaker: Let's be calm, folks.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, all we get from the NDP government is rhetoric while the deadline clock continues to tick and the NDP continue to punish Albertans with a ridiculous carbon tax that has absolutely no benefit for this province. They've already increased it to \$50 per tonne and have also increased it yet again by 67 per cent in their latest budget. My question – and I'll ask it again – is: did the NDP receive an analysis from the federal government on the full costs of going to a \$50 carbon tax before they agreed to it, or did they just rubber-stamp it because their close ally Justin Trudeau told them to?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, we are incredibly proud of the fact that even though there were two governments that were Conservative, one in this Chamber and one in Ottawa – they kind of looked the same – that failed to get a pipeline to tidewater, this government is not accepting failure as an answer. We know the members opposite keep cheering for that. We made it very clear to the federal government that we will get onboard if and only if we get our product to tidewater. You know what? That's in Alberta's interest. It's in the national interest. We won't back down. It's about time you guys came to the party. We know that you're at other parties doing other things, but on this side of the House we stand up for ordinary Albertans.

Carbon Levy Rate

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, we've seen an Environment Canada commissioned report that anticipates the carbon tax rising to \$75 per tonne. That means that gas would go up 18 cents per litre; propane would go up 12 cents per litre; natural gas would go up 15 cents per cubic metre; aviation fuel, 20 cents per litre; diesel fuel up 21 cents per litre; home heating fuel up 24 cents per litre. That begs a question. The NDP government continues to do whatever Justin Trudeau and the federal government tell them to. What is this government's position on a \$75-per-tonne carbon tax? Do you support it? Yes or no?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that report was written when that member's leader was in Ottawa, actually, and when his government received that report. But all of that aside, on this side of the House we're standing up for ordinary Albertans. We take our direction from Albertans. We saw a little bit about what kind of party the members opposite are creating. They had an opportunity to set themselves apart, to be a big tent, to welcome women into that, and they did the opposite this weekend. They brought forward extreme, crazy, risky ideological policies that even some of their own members spoke against. But you know what? On this side of the House – don't worry – we've got the backs of LGBTQ youth, we've got the backs of women, and we've got . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
First supplemental.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't know if the Deputy Premier is even going to try to answer a question, but I'll try yet again. There's this report that's come from Environment Canada that calls for a \$75-per-tonne carbon tax. This government continues to do whatever the federal government tells them to do over and over, whatever Justin Trudeau tells them to do. My question is this: what is your government's position on a \$75-per-tonne carbon tax? Do you support it? Yes or no? What will you do if the federal government tries to bring it in? Will you do what you did before and just do what they tell you to, or do you have a plan?

Ms Hoffman: Well, our plan, Mr. Speaker, is to get a pipeline to tidewater, to address climate change, to make sure that we have good jobs for this generation and the next generation, sitting in our gallery. Our job is to make sure that we protect youth. We don't want to out gay youth. We don't want to privatize health care. We don't want to cut education funding and attack teachers. We don't want to bring in tax cuts for the richest 1 per cent, which would involve \$700 million in giveaways to the richest among Albertans. On this side of the House we're on the side of everyday Albertans. We will fight for them, and we won't back down.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the NDP's carbon tax is one of the most crippling things for everyday Albertans. It's punishing them every day. We hear about it every day, how frustrated they are that this NDP government continues to punish them with their ideological agenda. My question to the Deputy Premier, which she continues to avoid – and that's going to make Albertans very concerned because they always do what Justin Trudeau says – is this: do you support a \$75-per-tonne carbon tax, as is being called for by Environment Canada? Yes or no? If the federal government tries to do this, what will you do about it?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, we've made our plan very clear. We've mapped it out for many, many years. That's why we're proud of the fact that because we had our plan, which was an Alberta plan, not the Ottawa plan that they keep trying to doom and gloom everybody here with – we had a made-in-Alberta plan – it resulted in pipeline approvals. You know why that's important? Statistics Canada reported 4.9 per cent growth last year, and most of that was due to the oil and gas sector here in Alberta.

But that's not what's got me down, Mr. Speaker. The members opposite think it's okay to out gay students. They think it's okay to attack teachers. They think it's okay to destroy public schools. This side of the House stands up for all those things and all the people of this province, and we welcome you to do the same once in a while.

The Speaker: Third main question.

Health Care Wait Times

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the NDP's budget in 2015 committed to "implement a Wait Time Measurement and Waitlist Management Policy to address long wait times in the health care system." However, as we've seen from a FOIP from Alberta Health Services, in the second quarter of 2017-18 wait times have actually dramatically increased under this NDP government's watch, not the last government's. Will this government explain their terrible performance on this file?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're very proud of the work that we've done over the last three years to improve access and improve quality of health care. It's tough to undo 44 years of cuts and attacks on the working people of this province in one, but let me tell you about some of the progress we have made. We brought forward the very important Calgary cancer centre. It's well under construction right now, a project that, we know, got jerked around by the members opposite in both parties. With it, we'll add the resources as well to ensure that we have EMS workers. The UCP plan and what they did in this House is to vote against all those investments. On this side of the House we're standing up for improving health care, not just cutting and privatizing to two-tiered like the members opposite.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, it's disappointing to see the Deputy Premier say that she's proud of wait times increasing. I find that troubling. Again, this is a question of outcomes, not a question of outcomes under the last government but under this government. Wait times for heart valve surgery have increased by 6.5 weeks under the NDP. Wait times for hernia repairs have increased by 7.3 weeks under the NDP. We are talking about this government's failures on this file, not the last government's. Why is this government allowing these services to decline under their watch?

2:00

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our 17 stroke treatment centres are the best in Canada. That's helped us reduce wait times in that area. In terms of hip fracture repair, knee replacement, and radiation therapy we're among the best in the country. That's not good enough. We want to go further, and we want to improve in other areas as well. You know what won't improve it? Massive cuts and privatization so that only the rich –

the \$700 million that they get back in big tax giveaways by the leader opposite go toward them being able to queue-jump. We don't believe that's right. We believe every Albertan deserves access to quality public health care.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, in the founding document of our party, a document I was proud to help write, it says that "universal access to high quality, publicly-funded health care" is a main cornerstone of our party. While the minister continues to dodge the question, my question is: why are wait times going up under her watch? Wait times for interventions on stomachs have increased by 12 weeks, wait times for interventions on lymph nodes have increased by four weeks, and on and on and on under this government's watch, not the last government's. You have failed on this file. This is your responsibility, so why, Minister, have you failed on this file? Why do you continue to let these services decline?

Ms Hoffman: Well, let me be clear that services aren't declining. We're actually providing more services. What has changed is that the needs continue to grow in the community. Mr. Speaker, while we keep funding and supporting front-line health care, the members opposite are calling for deep cuts. You know what? We can't catch up on 44 years of mismanagement – we're doing our darndest – but the areas that we have been focusing very clear attention on we've made good progress on. We're going to keep doing that, and they're going to keep calling for 20 per cent cuts and voting against the very budget that provides these increased resources to hospitals in their own communities. Man, I'm sure glad for the communities in the rural parts of the province that they don't have these guys running the show because we know what would happen to their hospitals with 20 per cent cuts.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The Member for Calgary-South East.

Energy Industry Competitiveness

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In February this year we heard from the chief executive of the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers that the energy sector was looking at moving more of their investments away from Canada and into the United States. Recent fiscal updates from energy companies are showing that his concerns were very valid. One concern is that the ballooning regulatory review of timelines is making it almost impossible to properly set project timelines. To the Minister of Energy: will you commit to reviewing regulations for energy project approvals to stop the loss of investment into the United States?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, our government absolutely understands that timely and effective regulatory processes are important to our sector. That's why we're working with the Alberta Energy Regulator on ways to improve the process, and we're doing that with industry to help us pinpoint where we should be looking, making it shorter without sacrificing effectiveness. Specifically, we're working with the AER to ensure proponents have a simplified process that includes one application, one review, and one decision because they deserve a streamlined application system.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While we support the government in their bid to get the Trans Mountain pipeline built, there are concerns that we might sacrifice long-term regulatory certainty in order to gain approval for the project. Companies rely on stability and predictability when investing billions of dollars needed for their large energy projects. Given the promises of legislation from provinces and the federal government both for and against energy development, many companies now lack any long-term certainty. To the same minister: what is your government doing to make sure future energy projects don't need to rely on an extraordinary act of government to get the project built?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, as members know, the AER is an arm's-length regulator that certainly works with each project. Some of the projects are very, very complex and do take a lot of time, but they're working very quickly to get one-stop shopping for smaller projects that will be a matter of days, even as little as five business days. One of the biggest things that helps with competitiveness is pipelines, and we're working very hard on that as well, pipelines to tidewater.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The United States used to be our best energy customer, but now they are our biggest competitor. Their growth has been fueled by a competitive tax regime and a regulatory process that offers more certainty around timelines. While we don't need to copy exactly what the United States is doing, we do need to look at how we can make Alberta more attractive to investors. To the same minister: beyond a single pipeline or project what are your plans for growing our energy industry and allowing them to compete with the U.S. on a level playing field?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, first of all, we are working on the pipelines. We know that that's the number one advantage to our industry. Currently we're leaving \$40 million a day on the table, not just in Alberta but across Canada. That's money that could be used for all the good things that we want to see in our province and indeed in Canada. As I mentioned, we're working with the Energy Regulator on things we can change within Alberta, and we're also representing Alberta's interests to the federal government when they talk about changes that they want to make to the NEB. On this side of the House I can assure you that we are absolutely supporting the energy sector.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

School Design and Construction in North Calgary

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In mid-March the second annual north-central high school rally was held on the site reserved for a future CBE high school in Calgary-Northern Hills. At the rally residents made it clear that it was our turn. Budget 2018 and subsequent school funding announcements contained good news. To the Minister of Education. Residents of Calgary-Northern Hills are excited that the north Calgary high school received design funding in Budget 2018 but want to know: what exactly is design funding?

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. Design funding is money provided to ensure that a school board can start drawing blueprints and could make exact plans to make the school come to life. This process takes up to about a year. For example, last year we announced design funding for an elementary school in Lethbridge, and lo and behold it was a fully funded project in Budget 2018. It's a great indication of a school being built in that particular area. I thank you for your advocacy.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In a constituency where census data tells us that 20,000 residents are under the age of 18, school spaces are top of mind. Given that many attending the recent rally had advocated for over a decade for the high school to be built, what are the next steps in the process to ensure that design funding is delivered, and what should residents expect to see?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we can see that there's a fast-growing population in the elementary and junior high, so it's inevitable and necessary to build this high school. It takes between 38 to 48 months to go through the entire process, but the process has started now, drawing the blueprints, getting a design that is not just functional but is meeting the needs of students. It will be a wonderful, positive addition to the neighbourhood and is all part of what we're planning to do with this project.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Finally, having attended the school funding announcements in spring 2017, it was good to hear that an elementary school was approved for Coventry Hills, providing a designated school closer to home for hundreds of the community's five- to nine-year-olds. In addition, this new school eases capacity pressures on other schools in the area. Given the school's importance to the community, to the Minister of Education: is there an update on the construction progress of the new elementary school?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, Coventry Hills elementary school is in its design phase right now and will go to tender, and construction will start straightaway after that. We know how desperately we do need these schools across the province. We're in the midst of the biggest infrastructure build in the history of the province. As an indication of the sense of optimism and hope for the future, people are settling down, having kids. We're building schools to meet that need, to make life better for Albertan families.

Thanks.

Parents' Rights

Mr. Fildebrandt: Those of us who are moms and dads know that we love and want to protect our children more than any government bureaucracy ever could. Children have fundamental rights and freedoms, but we recognize that until they're adults, parents are the ultimate authority over children. Government is not. I believe that government should only take away that authority in very specific cases like abuse or neglect, but this government has on occasion gone much further, like social engineering. Who does this

government believe is the ultimate authority over our children, government or parents?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we work closely with parents every step of the way to ensure a strong education. It's absolutely necessary. That contract between providing education through our government and the relationship with parents is absolutely paramount and foundational to everything that we do.

Do you know what else is foundational? It is to make sure that you actually put some funds into running those schools. By making 20 per cent cuts to schools, not building schools over the last 10 years or more, you know, we've seen that contract being broken. It's been put back in place with this government.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Fildebrandt: As the ultimate authority over children parents have the fundamental right to know what their children are being taught and are facing medically. There are reasonable exceptions to this, however. Does the government agree with this statement, but if not, what exceptions would he make?

Mr. Eggen: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, certainly, that contact between family and school is paramount, and we recognize that. We make sure that we are in communication every step of the way. If there are issues around safety and security or medical things, for example, then of course that communication is always, always there.

When people try to somehow convolute this idea and somehow put it onto GSAs and outing kids that join a GSA, that is unacceptable; it's objectionable. It puts kids at risk, and it's dangerous as well.

2:10

Mr. Fildebrandt: Politicians on all sides inserting themselves between children and parents serves nobody well. Clearly, there must be a middle ground between requiring parental consent for removing an ingrown hair and stripping parents of their right to raise their kids as they see fit. Let's roll back the politics a bit and provide Albertans with clarity. Would the government agree to form an all-party committee to draft a parents' and children's charter of rights and responsibilities that we can hopefully all agree on?

The Speaker: Hon. members, again I must attempt . . .

Mr. Eggen: Well, Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: Hon. minister, just a moment.

Mr. Eggen: Sorry. Go ahead.

The Speaker: . . . just to remind everyone about those elongated preambles. Be conscious of that, everyone.

The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, you know, conflating this idea and outing kids that join GSAs. I think the vast majority of Albertans agree with our position. Bill 24 is designed specifically to protect and create safe sanctuary for a very vulnerable position and very vulnerable children. Even just having this discussion in resolution, words on paper hurts. That hurts kids. It compromises their position, and it rolls back the very good work that we've done over these last weeks and months and years to create safe and caring environments for children.

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

Electric Power Prices

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans have enjoyed some of the lowest cost electricity in North America for a very, very long time, and now the NDP plan to force wind onto the market, driving power bills up, and to use the carbon tax to subsidize wind if the price drops below the average of 3.7 cents per kilowatt hour. It's 3.1 cents today just to be clear. Will the minister explain: why is the NDP making families pay to keep wind farms from going bankrupt?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we're focused on the right priorities for regular families like ensuring the power bills are affordable and predictable. You know, many years ago — there are several years that I cited last week — the power price was more than a hundred dollars. Today it's low, and there's a reason. We need more investment, but we also got a very good price on our first auction, 3.7 cents, which was highly competitive, one of the best in North America and indeed the world, and we're very proud of that.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you. But today the government is subsidizing at 3.1 cents just to be clear. Given that, Mr. Speaker, the NDP plan to protect families is to subsidize everyone's power bills above 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour and given that the NDP plan to subsidize wind farms when the price drops below 3.7 cents per kilowatt hour, again which is today, will the minister table the electricity price forecast I'm sure her department has prepared in order to have come up with these subsidy decisions?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, 2001, 2002, 2006, 2007, 2013 were all years when the pool price for electricity was more than a hundred dollars. We're fixing a broken system that we inherited from the previous Conservative government, who favoured backroom deals with their partners rather than thinking about regular Albertans. We're getting rid of those backroom deals. We're standing up for Albertans, and capping prices is one of the ways we're standing up.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I think I would respectfully disagree that the PPA situation has severely broken this situation.

The Market Surveillance Administrator still lacks a permanent head and given that the Market Surveillance Administrator is critical to ensuring that families are not being gouged by the wind generators spiking electricity prices — the surveillance administrator is a competent watchdog — is it true, Minister? Can you please tell Albertans that when you are able to put this Market Surveillance Administrator together, they're not going to be some ideological NDP pawn with no real power?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The role of the MSA is critically important, and we are, as the member says, in the process of finding a new MSA. But our government's priority is standing up for regular Albertans and making sure the power bills

remain affordable and predictable. That's why we're capping prices. That's why we're introducing a capacity market. Albertans for too long have had this up and down roller coaster that we do not need anymore. When I cite those years – 2001, 2002, 2006, '07, and '13 – I wonder what their explanation is for why those prices were so high?

Provincial Debt

Mr. Barnes: Forty-two thousand dollars are the taxes a 16-year-old Albertan will pay over their lifetime just to pay the interest on the NDP's debt. That's on top of additional income taxes. Fifty thousand: that's the debt burden that a 31-year-old Albertan will pay during their lifetime on just the interest, again, plus higher income taxes. To the minister: how do you consider it fair that Albertans that may go their life without paying interest on their credit card balance each have to pay you \$42,000 in interest?

Mr. Ceci: You know what I find extremely fair, Mr. Speaker? The fact that Albertans today are getting the services and programs they need. When they go to a hospital, there's a hospital there. It's not blown up like in '97, when the General was blown up. If they want to get an education, they can get an education. Albertans aren't having to wait with an infrastructure gap that those people caused, that we're fixing today.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, a recent CBC article highlighted the stark reality of the Premier's managed decline of Alberta's economy. Today only 55 per cent of young men have jobs. Forty-five per cent without work is staggering, a crisis. To the minister: how can you possibly say that everything is fine when a huge sector of our young population does not have employment, the opportunity to build a future, and when they do return to work, they face a wall of NDP interest and NDP debt?

Mr. Ceci: You know, those same young people, Mr. Speaker, had they been under the control of that side and that government, would have faced Alberta Works cuts, like happened in 1993 to '95. Albertans were left to drift because that side wanted to balance the books. That side wanted to get rid of the debt, but they left an infrastructure debt. They don't talk about that. What we talk about is supporting Albertans, making sure they have the supports and programs they need, and helping to build a better future at 4.9 per cent GDP growth. What did you guys do? Nothing.

The Speaker: Hon. member, caution about the preamble, okay?

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, given that the U of C and the CBC reports talk about young Albertans being more likely to be unemployed and they're facing the prospect of having to pay tens of thousands of dollars over their lifetime of NDP interest and debt – that's on top of your already higher taxes – to the minister: how do you expect young families to pay for their education, support their communities, start their families, and still be able to repay billions of dollars of your interest and billions of dollars of your debt?

Mr. Ceci: Well, that's a lot of stuff to do, Mr. Speaker, but I'm so glad this side, the NDP government, is doing that work and the Conservatives are not because we know what they would do. They would slash, cut, and fire. We're not doing that. You know, the Leader of the Opposition's record while in Ottawa – I shared it before – six straight deficit budgets, \$56 billion in one year alone; \$309 billion in interest payments; and \$145 billion to our national

debt. That's no record that we want to follow. We're going to put our own course forward, and it's a great course.

Pipeline Approval and Construction

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, when this NDP government's close friend and federal ally Justin Trudeau imposed upstream emission requirements on the Energy East pipeline project, this government went dead silent. As a result, Trans Canada has decided not to proceed with that investment. My question to the Minister of Energy is very simple. Will you launch a court case against Ottawa for interfering in provincial jurisdiction, and if not, why do you refuse to stand with Albertans?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, we are working to get a pipeline to tidewater, and we will succeed. We've never been as close as we are right now in securing access to the west coast. If you want to talk about interference, the members opposite, who continue to out gay kids, attack our teachers, make our schools feel unsafe: frankly, you folks have a lot of explaining to do. We will stand with everyday Albertans to do exactly what they want, which is to be a government that's on their side.

2:20

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, given that we are just 24 days to Kinder Morgan making a decision to proceed or not to proceed with the Trans Mountain pipeline, when was the last time the government of Alberta or the Market Access Task Force spoke to Kinder Morgan to encourage them to proceed with the pipeline expansion project?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, our Premier and our government are focused on the priorities of Albertans, which is fighting for pipelines. We have two approvals. We're working very hard with folks like industry, the task force, Albertans, anybody who is supporting. We're happy to say that daily and weekly the support for this pipeline is increasing, and we're going to keep working hard to increase that support. That pipeline will be built.

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, given that there are alternative pipeline routes proposed to tidewater, including Eagle Spirit, Foothills via Alaska, the Mackenzie valley, and even the port of Churchill, Minister, what have you done to encourage commercial investment into these alternative routes under the existing regulatory regime before your friends in Ottawa kill those projects as well with their bills C-69 and C-48?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. You know, there are many pipeline projects in this country and indeed in this province, and we're working with all our proponents who come and meet with us, or we meet with them about them. But to be clear, the closest one to tidewater right now is the TMX, and that's the one that we're putting full efforts on. We've been doing that since we were elected. We're going to continue to do that. We're working every day. I still fail to see why this opposition wants us to fail. We're not letting it fail. We're on the side of Albertans, we're on the side of the energy industry, and we're not going to stop until that pipeline is built.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Calgary-East.

Health Facility Construction Projects in Calgary

Ms Luff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When I speak with constituents, especially those who work in health care, they often bring up that hospital infrastructure is something that's been neglected over time under previous governments. I'm excited about the improvements this government has made by investing in the Peter Lougheed maternity and NICU and by committing to build the new Calgary cancer centre. Can the Minister of Infrastructure update us on the progress of this crucial new facility?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Well, the project is on track, and we are happy to see a bustle of activity on the site. The shoring is completed; excavation continues. The installation of the tower cranes has actually been under way already. One of the great things about this facility is that when it's done, it's free. It's free because we believe in public health care. Unlike our friends across the way, who spent the weekend crafting policy that would see folks pay for something like this, when folks who have to use the Calgary cancer centre have to use it after it's built, they're not . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Ms Luff: Given that all of us are touched by cancer at some point in our lives and that Albertans expect world-class care and given that the Calgary cancer centre will be so much more than just a "fancy box," can the minister tell us what this project will mean for Calgarians?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, this project, really, is going to have 160 outpatient beds, operational and clinical support services, a clinical trials unit, research laboratories, systemic and radiation treatment services, more than 1,500 jobs. Unlike the folks across the aisle, who characterized it as a "fancy box," the folks who know this sophisticated project know that this is life-changing cancer treatment here in this province that we can be proud of. The folks across the way would privatize it all.

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

Ms Luff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the previous government had a record of literally blowing up hospitals in Calgary, to the same minister: what is this government doing to invest in the health facilities that Calgarians need?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, certainly, our capital plan has \$4.6 billion for health facilities, and we think that's pretty important. The Foothills medical centre, \$528 million in upgrades to their emergency room; the Peter Lougheed Centre, \$82 million in consolidation, renovation, and expansion for women's services – we believe in women's services; unlike the folks across the aisle, who talked about feminism being the F-word at their convention, we actually think it's important to invest in women in this province – the power plant expansion, the Foothills medical centre, a total cost of \$52 million; the complex continuing care facility in Calgary . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Carbon Levy Economic Impacts

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, earlier this session I asked that our dedicated school bus drivers be exempted from the NDP's crippling carbon tax. Diesel and gasoline have now hit near-record highs of upwards of \$1.30 per litre. Minister, will you agree to cancel this disastrous tax on Albertans just trying to provide a much-needed service?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, our schools and school boards have been working very closely with myself and my ministry to ensure that we have the transportation needs met every step of the way. You know, the best way by which we have done that and have an agreement on that is that we have been funding properly the school system over the last four budgets in a row. I was just with Chinook's Edge on Friday, and they were very pleased with all of the work that we're doing. We're working very co-operatively, and that's the way you do it. You don't do it by trying to pick fights. You do it through co-operation.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
First supplemental.

Mr. Hanson: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we continue to hear from volunteer organizations, shelters, food banks, and seniors' support groups about the harmful effects of the carbon tax on their operations, to the minister of environment: will you please just scrap this carbon tax?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, our priority is to ensure that we've got stable, predictable funding for all of our social services, which is why we have done exactly that for the family and community social services funding to municipalities, funding to social housing and other things. That's our priority, building this province, unlike the priorities from across the way, which are outing gay kids, privatizing health care, cutting education funding, attacking teachers, cutting taxes for the very richest among us. We're working for Albertans. They are working for the extremist parts of their party.

Mr. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, there's nothing that affects every Albertan like the carbon tax. Given that the NDP carbon tax has not resulted in any of the desired outcomes such as social licence or any measurable reduction in GHGs and given that the only measurable result is the negative effects on investment in our province, Minister, will you do all Albertans a favour and just scrap the tax?

The Speaker: The hon. minister

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, the fact of the matter is that we have two pipelines approved. That's a fact. The fact of the matter is that we have country-leading economic growth, and we also have diversification happening. Those are facts.

Now, the folks across the way are not interested in facts. They don't care about the fact that GSAs save lives. They don't care about the fact that privatizing health care will be so hard on working people in this province. They don't care to build and maintain the great standard of living and make life better in this province. All they care about is appeasing the extremist parts of their party. That's what we saw this weekend.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Provincial Debt
(continued)

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's economy and families will pay for the NDP debt for many years to come, and youth will be most burdened. U of C's School of Public Policy calculated the lifetime per-person cost of interest only on the debt projected for 2023. For those 16 to 25 each will pay over \$42,000; for those 26 to 35 each will pay the highest, \$50,000. This is extra taxes for interest only on your debt, Minister. Why have you burdened Alberta's youth in this way without their consent?

Mr. Ceci: It feels like déjà vu all over again question period wise, Mr. Speaker, but I can tell you that we had a choice, of course. When the price of oil collapsed, we had a choice of slashing like that Conservative side would have done. They would have slashed programs and services and left Albertans adrift and to figure it out on their own. We chose to have the backs of Albertans so that through the recession they had jobs by greater investment in our capital plan than ever before. Ten thousand Albertans kept working, and their businesses kept employing them because of our capital plan, that helped Albertans out.

Mr. Orr: Minister, given that small businesses are the economic engine of this province and most are family owned, but now every family of three will be forced to pay well over a hundred thousand dollars of interest on NDP debt, and given that this will be a huge obstacle in starting businesses and consequently even a larger drag on future economic growth, have you given any consideration at all to how the interest burden is going to stall our economic engine and restrict recovery even more?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, the opposite would stall our economy and the recovery. We grew 4.9 per cent. We led the country in GDP growth. We're going to be among the leaders in 2018 and 2019. We know small business confidence is up. BDC says that small-business confidence is up in Alberta. Thirty-five per cent of small businesses are looking to hire more staff, and 73 per cent say that they'll invest more in their businesses in 2018. This is going in the right direction. The opposition, the Conservatives, want to take us back to 1950. Ozzie and Harriet were here; now we've got Rachel here.

2:30

Mr. Orr: That's kind of rich from a minister who wants to take us all to Ontario and invite us to be one of them.

Minister, given that you have misled Alberta families and are already blaming everything except your own reckless spending and given that if families were to actually make equal interest and debt repayments – in other words, paying twice as much – it would take 24 years for each person to pay back \$80,000 to \$100,000 of interest and debt, do you know anybody who seriously wants to spend the next 24 years of their life to pay \$100,000 of their earnings for your debt?

Mr. Ceci: Thank you for the question. You know, we'll carefully find savings and cut out the Conservative waste that has been left here by that Conservative side. We've done a number of things already. At Q3 I had a \$1.4 billion reduction in the budget in the overall spending in that year, and that was as a result of investments turning a greater profit and of finding more Conservative waste to

cut out of our budget. We're going to keep doing that because that's in the interest of Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Farm and Ranch Worker Safety Regulations

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On November 17, 2015, the Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act was introduced by the Minister of Labour. It was a highly contentious bill due in no small part to the complete lack of consultation by this government. This bill received royal assent on December 11 of that same year. Bill 6 has caused enough uncertainty amongst farmers and ranchers. Minister, will you continue to keep them in the dark about your government's next steps?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Labour and democratic renewal.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm incredibly proud of the work that our government has done to ensure farm workers in Alberta have access to the same rights and protections that farm workers across the country have had for years. We promised Albertans that through this process we would consult with farmers, ranchers, working with the community as we implemented recommendations from technical working groups that had membership from the farming and ranching community, those who understood what things were like in that farm and ranch environment and could provide good advice to government. We've been looking at the technical working group recommendations. We've also listened . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
First supplemental.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that farmers are once more in their fields seeding and calving cows and given that it's been two and a half years since this bill's introduction and given that we still hear from farmers who have no clear idea of what those regulations will look like, to the minister: can Alberta farmers and ranchers expect further consultation and/or clarification?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We will continue to work with the farming and ranching community as we move forward. Specifically, we worked with the technical working groups, and then we posted the results of the technical working groups for the farming and ranching community to review. We extended that consultation to give people extra time to continue to work with us. We are working with the ag coalition, and as we look to implement regulations, we will again communicate and consult with the farming and ranching community.

Mr. Strankman: Again, Mr. Speaker, given that in the 2018 throne speech the word "agriculture" was not even mentioned and given that this government's record of dealing with the Alberta farmers and ranchers – be it Bill 6 regulations, water licences, or timely wildfire emergency responses – has been less than stellar, what my peers in agriculture would like to know from the minister is that given how contentious some of these regulations can be, will Alberta farmers and ranchers be given an opportunity to see a draft of the OHS regulations and provide additional feedback before these regulations come into force?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We were very pleased to take the recommendations from the technical working groups and make those public so that we could get feedback directly from those in the community. That consultation wrapped up very recently, and I'm very excited about the number of responses we received as well as the help that we've received from the ag coalition to make sure that we're getting this right. We are still on track to have these rules and regulations in effect later this year, and we will continue to work with Alberta's farmers and ranchers to get this right.

Thank you.

Crown Prosecutor Practice Protocol

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, the Justice minister triage protocol has been in place for more than a year. When she introduced it, she said that it was necessary to ensure that serious crimes were not dismissed due to court delays. However, in the past year we have seen accused murderers and alleged perpetrators of sexual assaults walk free. Minister, for the sake of public confidence in Alberta's justice system will you commit today to review your triage policy?

The Speaker: The Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, it's always our policy at Justice to continue examining our policies as we move forward. In the wake of the Jordan decision we had a choice to make. We had to respond to ensure that cases were not being lost in court. Some of those had been in process for quite a long time, and there was nothing we could do about them at this stage, but we had to make sure that cases going forward had the best chance. We made policy changes, and we've also been investing in our system. If the members opposite are so worried about it, perhaps they should have voted for the budget.

Mr. Taylor: I wonder if they're issuing get-out-of-jail-free cards.

Given that other provinces have chosen to clear court backlogs by investing in the justice system rather than implementing a triage system that encourages the Crown to drop criminal charges and given that the minister originally indicated that she may abandon the triage system once court backlogs dwindle – Minister, it's been a year – has the triage protocol become a permanent policy of your government?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Like those other jurisdictions, we have chosen to ensure that we are supporting our justice system and supporting our victims of crime by investing in the system. We've made investments in all aspects of the system from the office of the Chief Medical Examiner to policing to Crown prosecutors to courts and to court clerks. I wish the members opposite would support those decisions.

Mr. Taylor: Given that the objective of the triage protocol is to ensure "that serious and violent crime is given priority and prosecuted effectively" and given that I became acutely aware of the triage protocol after the tragic death of two young constituents and that most Albertans have no idea that some serious criminal cases are now not being dealt with to the fullest extent of the law, Minister, how can you continue to justify your triage protocol to Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our triage policy is absolutely clear that it intends to prioritize serious and violent cases. The allegations coming from across the way that it's not serious when someone has a fatality on the highway is absolutely untrue. We think that those matters are serious. Those are exactly the matters that we attempt to prioritize, and any allegation to the contrary is just absurd.

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

Support for Seniors

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My home constituency of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville is a unique community of many new families as well as long-standing generations of farm families. Our needs are diverse and unique. To the Minister of Seniors and Housing: how are you continuing to support seniors, that have built Alberta?

The Speaker: The Minister of Seniors and Housing.

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Seniors are vibrant members of our province, and we're committed to supporting them. I have travelled all across this province and met with many, many seniors, and I know they want to age in their communities, close to their loved ones. One of our core programs, the Alberta seniors' benefit, provided financial assistance to more than 150,000 seniors last year, and that's just one example of the many programs we have to make life better for seniors.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the commitment that our government has shown to support seniors and the significant investment in programs that they rely on, Minister, what else are you doing to better the lives of seniors in Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Sigurdson: Well, again, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I know seniors across the province want to stay in their communities as they age. That is why our government invested \$250,000 in planning funding for Heartland Housing Foundation. This funding helped the town of Fort Saskatchewan plan for a growing seniors' population. And we are helping seniors who need housing right now by opening the new Beaverhill Pioneer Lodge in Lamont. These investments show our government's commitment to protecting vital public services seniors count on.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, and thank you to the minister for investing in building the Beaverhill Pioneer Lodge.

Given the challenges that our economy faces as it begins to recover, many seniors are still having trouble making ends meet because of living on a fixed budget. To the Minister of Seniors and Housing: how are you ensuring that seniors are not left behind in this recovery?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you again, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to thank the member very much for her advocacy on this issue. Our government invested more than \$3 billion in seniors' programs last year. In Budget 2018 we maintain stable funding for seniors. We

increase funding for the seniors' home adaptation and repair program. The opposition's reckless plan would give big tax giveaways to those at the top and cut the support seniors depend on. Our plan is focused on helping the economy grow and diversifying while protecting the vital public services Albertans count on.

2:40

Health Care Wait Times (continued)

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, earlier today the Deputy Premier and Health minister in response to some questions to the Premier about health wait time increases went on with continuing to campaign to be the Official Opposition and just with partisan rhetoric. We're talking about a serious issue. Wait times have drastically increased under this government's watch. People continue to die, sadly, in queue in our province while this minister has completely failed to follow through on her promises to them on wait times. Minister, why have you failed, and what are you doing about it?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, just to reiterate what I actually said, I said that we are working to make life better, and we're among the best in the country on things like hip fracture repair, knee replacement, and radiation therapy. Our 17 stroke treatment centres are the best in Canada and among the fastest in the world. But that's not good enough. On this side of the House we want to make sure that all health care wait times are shorter. We're working to make sure that it's for every Albertan, not just those who can afford private, two-tiered, American-style health care like the members opposite are proposing. We are fighting to make sure that everyone in this province has quality health care, and we won't let you guys move forward ramming privatization, two-tiered health care, and deep cuts on the public system.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, given that the minister said earlier that she was proud of the wait times and that still will not stand up in this Assembly and even attempt to try to answer a question – now, I get it. I would be ashamed of this record, too, if I was this minister. This minister is responsible for seeing an increase in wait times, something like heart valve surgery going up by 6.5 weeks. This costs people their lives. This is serious business. So can the minister drop her rhetoric, stand up, and explain what went wrong, how she has so terribly failed on this file, and how she's going to fix it?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, in Budget 2018 the government proposed a \$40 million increase to reduce wait times for surgeries like cancer surgeries, hip and knee fracture replacements. What did the members opposite do? They voted against that very budget. On this side of the House we are fighting to make sure that we have quality public health care, that everyone has access regardless of how much money they have in the bottom of their pockets. And what did you spend your weekends doing? Promoting private, two-tiered, U.S. style health care. Those ideas aren't the ones that are going to be guiding us on how to make life better for Alberta families. We're going to be doing it by investing in services that families count on.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, this side of the House fully supports public health care.

But it is interesting to see the Deputy Premier stand up and continue to do the same thing. She cannot answer the question on how she has failed so miserably on this file. Wait times went up under her watch. It's a question of outcomes, not a question of spending. This minister and this government have failed on this file. Why? How are you going to fix it? Stop hiding behind the rhetoric.

Stand up and tell us what you're going to do because Albertans won't put up with this anymore.

Ms Hoffman: Well, Mr. Speaker, if they believe in public health care, why did they just pass resolutions on the weekend to privatize health care? You guys need to get your story straight. You can't say one thing on Sunday to your base, that's pushing for extreme cuts, privatization, two-tiered health care, and another thing in this House on Monday and think that we're not going to hold you to account. On this side of the House we have effectively reduced wait times for hip fracture repair, knee replacement, radiation therapy, stroke treatment. And that's not enough. That's why we put \$40 million in the budget to help to reduce it in other areas. Those guys voted against it. They keep voting to privatize, outsource, and bring in U.S. style health care, and we're not going to allow that.

The Speaker: Hon. members, this might be a good time for a 30-second break, and then we will go with the next member's statement.

Members' Statements (continued)

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

Long-term Care Beds

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This NDP government promised to build 2,000 new long-term care beds over four years. The Ministry of Health confirms that over 1,600 beds the government is taking credit for were already under way with the previous government's ASLI program. Only three true long-term care facilities have been initiated by the government of Alberta, at least in political promises to date. They are Edmonton Norwood, 145 new beds and another 200 replacement beds, to be clear; Bridgeland for 200 new beds; Fort McMurray Willow Square with 144 new beds.

The Calgary and Fort McMurray projects will cost \$241 million to build 344 beds. The Alberta Continuing Care Association notes that if the ASLI funding model had been used, this money could have resulted in the building of 3,700 beds, 10 times as many. Two combined acute-care and long-term care facilities opened by the government were started by the previous government: in Edson, 100 beds; in High Prairie health complex, 100 beds. And, of course, the Grande Prairie hospital was started before, with 176 new beds. ASLI funding funded an average of \$65,000 per bed but is never even considered now by the AHS.

Site-based home care could be provided from new purpose-built seniors' apartments with sprinklers and barrier-free access. They would have no capital costs, no wait time to build. This could serve many more Alberta communities and suburbs instead of only Calgary and Edmonton. Also, the Health Quality Council of Alberta finds that private, public, and not-for-profit deliver the same care. Ownership doesn't change that. Operating costs for site-based home care are often much lower than for long-term care at \$150 a day or acute care at \$1,100 to \$1,500 a day.

Mr. Speaker, with only one year in this elected term to go and fewer than 900 new beds in the works, when will this government change course or just admit that the promise of 2,000 new beds is indeed a broken promise?

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Ms Luff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of an article from *Maclean's* magazine about the demolition of the Calgary General hospital, entitled *When a Hospital Dies*. I made reference to that demolition in question period this afternoon.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have five copies of a column from the CBC entitled *Still No Money for Deerfoot Trail* after "Affordable" Fixes Identified.

The Speaker: The Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table two reports. First of all, from the CBC: *Why Young Men Are Being Left out of Alberta's Economic Recovery*. I have the five reports that, sadly, explain how, since this government was elected, the number of unemployed men is up to 45 per cent of the workforce between 15 and 24 years old. What a shame that is.

My second report is *Fiscal Policy Trends*, from the University of Calgary. It clearly explains, Mr. Speaker, the burden of the interest and debt that this NDP government and this Finance minister are placing on our next generation.

Thank you.

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, I rise to table five copies of the pamphlet the NDP government has sent to the mailboxes of all Albertans announcing subsidized electricity for all. Thank you.

Orders of the Day

Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 203

Long Term Care Information Act

[Debate adjourned April 30]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any hon. members wishing to speak to this bill? The hon. Member for Highwood.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today in the House to speak on Bill 203, Long Term Care Information Act. Bill 203 was introduced by my colleague from Red Deer-North. This bill will create a registry accessible to the public to disseminate information on each long-term care facility in Alberta and ensure that it's regularly updated.

Now, as the population is aging, thousands of Alberta families are going to have to start making important decisions on their care and the care of their family members. This is something that every family has to go through. Of course, most seniors I know would prefer to stay in their homes as long as possible and, of course, have medical care provided in their homes. This would help clear up spaces in our long-term care facilities and help seniors live where they want to live. However, there comes a point when a family has to sit down and decide when it's time to move to a facility with greater care. It can be an overwhelming experience just trying to compare all the different facilities and all the options they provide.

2:50

There are many factors to consider, everything from cost to availability to personal care options, which brings us to the bill

before the House, Bill 203. Bill 203 would put all the information on long-term care facilities into an easy-access registry that could help seniors and their families make very informed and important decisions. The information that this registry would include would be, of course, the name and contact information of the operator of the facility; the type of facility; the total number of residents; the description of the intake process; obviously, services provided by the facility; accommodation charges; and other information. Can you imagine a senior and their family trying to gather this information on their own?

As I mentioned before, it can be a very time-consuming process, looking at all the different long-term care options. Now, having all this information readily available could save families time and could help give them peace of mind in what could already be an extremely difficult and a very stressful situation.

The registry would also enable seniors to make their own choices for long-term care facilities if they're able to do so and without having one chosen for them by a continuing care placement co-ordinator. Now, this would give independence to seniors, which is something I believe they actually seek.

Furthermore, such a registry could help to decipher all the information present and allow potential residents to give input into the system. This could allow for the registry to potentially find the best fit for seniors who are seeking a long-term care facility.

Now, that being said, I don't think I have to go any further into the merits of such a registry. However, similar resources already exist in various formats available online. On the government of Alberta website exists a list of all the long-term care facilities funded by the government of Alberta. This data set already includes much of the information that this bill seeks to put within a registry. Further, the Alberta website has a searchable website where people can search for continuing care facilities throughout Alberta. With this, it is important to ask: will this bill potentially be redundant, or will this bill in some way expand the information that is available to Albertans? Will this bill increase the frequency that this information is updated? One would hope so.

As my previous points have indicated, this bill does have a lot of good points and does do a good deal of service for Albertans. I do question the redundancies, however, as I wouldn't want to have an increase in bureaucracy and cost if we're forcing multiple different government employees to be publishing the exact information. Or is it the case that this bill would just possibly be replacing previous online resources that are currently available? As I'm not a fan of duplication of process, especially in government, I would hope that multiple different government websites are not all providing the exact same service. That would be quite wasteful, especially in times when we're already facing an \$8 billion deficit.

Further, Alberta Health Services already has the ability to create the website without passing legislation. It is ultimately unlikely, with the large Health budget, that there's not been the capacity to get this done. I believe that the Department of Health, with the Health budget, and Alberta Health Services have sufficient IT departments and resources – I'm pretty sure they do – to be able to provide this on their own without legislation. Again, I don't have an issue with the ideas behind Bill 203, but I don't want to create redundancies.

Further, it is important to note that there are other pressing issues facing long-term care in Alberta. Now, we might recall that the Auditor General in the 2017 report identified many issues with long-term care in Alberta. These include a recommendation to create a system to periodically verify that facilities have a sufficient level of staff every day of operation and to "develop a system to periodically verify that facilities [provide] the [correct] care every day by implementing individual resident care plans and meeting

basic needs of residents.” I think these issues are a higher priority than the content of Bill 203 such that I believe that if a private member’s bill on long-term care was introduced, the issues that were mentioned by the Auditor General should have been addressed.

As mentioned earlier, if information on long-term care facilities is already available online, then why would we need to introduce this bill to potentially duplicate resources and services? With the issues facing residents in long-term care facilities, our time as legislators should be used to address these issues raised by the Auditor General and other issues that are being raised by our constituents regarding long-term care.

In closing, Madam Speaker, Bill 203 is a beneficial piece of legislation that can aid seniors and families in making decisions on long-term care facilities. However, this is likely a duplication of service that is already provided. I think that’s something we need to consider. While the goals of this bill are good, it is important that this government realize that there are many issues additionally in long-term care that they could be addressing, as per what was stated, as I said earlier, in the 2017 Auditor General’s report. Potentially, maybe Bill 203 could have included some of that.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my pleasure to speak to the Long Term Care Information Act and the long-term care system in Alberta. This is about people being able to make informed decisions and understanding that folks that are in these particular situations need to be informed and need to be brought into the conversation.

In concept, the bill looks very good. There are a few things, of course, that I’m concerned about, that I’d like to chat about a bit, but the concept of the bill is quite beneficial and, hopefully, will move the health care system in the right direction. Having said that, though, it’s similar to what the member had said with regard to the AISH bill. You don’t want to ever make these decisions without making sure that the stakeholders that are impacted by this are fully informed and that they’re part of this discussion. That’s one of the things, I think, that needs to happen as we go forward, that their decisions are fully informed and that they’re able to participate and that we understand that folks that are in this particular situation are the ones that need to make these right decisions for themselves.

I wanted to understand, too. I have a question: how were people getting this information before? I mean, obviously, we support efforts to improve long-term health care, improve access to information, but is this bill actually giving a solution to that, or is this a redundant part of the information, that already exists? It seems to me that this information is already available.

Long-term care facilities. The potential user of the registry will only have a portion of the information available to them. Why is that? It seems interesting, for lack of a better word, that the importance of putting this bill forward is to make sure that people have access to information, but then they’re not allowed to have the full information, Madam Speaker. That seems to defeat the whole purpose of the registry. If somebody could maybe answer that for me and explain why that is being left out.

I would suggest that more information is better. As I understand it, I mean, if you read the name of the bill, the Long Term Care Information Act, the assumption would be that information is available, right, Madam Speaker? Like, that would be the assumption, but it seems to me that the information is going to only be what it is – I’m not sure. It’s a little bit broad. So I would like

some clarity and some understanding on how the potential user of the registry will be able to access that information. And if my understanding is correct, if only parts of this information are accessible: why?

3:00

The whole point of the bill is to enable access to information. The government had said this on several occasions, about it being a one-stop shop. Well, if the registry itself doesn’t contain all the information and the person who is requiring that information then has to go to the larger registry to find out the rest of the information, this is very complex and complicated. My assumption is to make this easier for people to have access. Again, I have to restate that we already have access to this information. As I understand it, the thing is that they’re going to have to extensively research other pieces of information that are not going to be accessible to them in this particular piece of information. So why do that? I’m certainly not against the bill. I just don’t understand the premise of the bill if the bill is actually stopping access to information, which is what it’s fully intended to do in the first place. I think it’s a really simple question.

Then we’ll be seeing a list of facilities and the criteria laid out in the bill. What will that look like? How is the government going to list facilities and criteria? Is this something that is looked at just like looking on a hotel website, where they show pictures of it and what the rooms look like and various amenities that are available, sort of like a sales pitch for this place? Or is it just basically, “Here’s the facility. Here’s what you have,” and then there will be a government standardized application form built into the website? Do I understand that correctly? How does that work? What is the list of criteria? Or, again, is the government expecting the user to sift through that? I mean, then you’re going to have to get a whole other app to put together for this in order to be able to sort via cost or via whatever it is, whatever the criteria is for this. It would be interesting to see because there is absolutely no idea of how this application will work.

Again, I’m not against the bill. I just find this extremely redundant, and I have no understanding of how the application will be. So if the user is required to sift through the information, that person, then, I believe – I mean, they’re obviously wanting to be able to make their own decisions, but if the government is making it more difficult for the user to find the information, I’m not quite sure what the purpose is. Maybe I’m misunderstanding this. If I’m wrong, that’s just fine. I’m sure it can be explained very, very easily. However, how is a person supposed to determine the best fit for themselves if they’re required to sift through the information?

We’re not sure what that’s going to look like or how that application will work or how people will understand what that is. Are they expected to go and view all of these facilities before they go in there? What if they’re not able to do that? These are all questions that need to be asked in terms of being able to sort through and sift through all of this information. As you can imagine, I mean, all of us have probably booked a trip online before, and that’s minor compared to this. This is a person’s life and where they’re going to be spending their time for the rest of their life. However, all of us have done this online before, and there have been times where you’ve looked at a facility and everything is there, and you show up and it’s not what you expected. That happens sometimes. Of course, that’s our choice to go online and do those things. We can hire somebody to do that as well, but if you’re like me and you go online and you spend hours and hours and hours trying to find where you’re going to go, it’s not always what you expect it to be. It’s my responsibility to find that out.

However, the government is trying to supposedly make this easier for people, but it looks to me, upon reading it, that they're going to have this massive amount of material to go through and sift through based on the government's criteria and what they deem to be a certain particular thing because there is no information about what that looks like. Then a person is supposed to make that decision based on the criteria that the government has depicted at that point in time. I think that we just have to be careful about how that goes and what that looks like. I'll be very interested in hearing from the government's side about what that will look like.

I mean, obviously, we would like our seniors to get the maximum benefit from this. My assumption is that the government is actually trying to make this easier for our seniors, but as you can see, there are things that actually could make it more difficult. You want to get the most value that you possibly can from this registry. You want to make sure that maximum value also has maximum information and that it's easily accessible and that they don't have to go to another site to be able to find out the information that's not on this one because the registry will only have a portion of the information. I think it would be a very easy fix for the government to look at just adding this in to what's maybe already there. But pulling this apart and making another registry may not accomplish what the government's intent is. Just as a suggestion.

I just have a question, too. You know, this is an initiative through the Ministry of Health. Having access to that information is so important for seniors who have made the decision to move to long-term care. Is it required in legislation to do this? Is the bureaucracy necessary in order to create this registration, Madam Speaker, or is there some way that this can be incorporated into what already exists and then have it laid out specifically for seniors to make it easier for them? It's just a question. I mean, right now . . . [Mrs. Aheer's speaking time expired]

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I don't know if anybody in here or everybody in here has searched for a facility for an aging parent. My parents wanted to live in their own home until they died, and we were certainly prepared to support them to do that. I had somebody come into my office, and they came in and started to talk about looking for long-term care for a parent. I thought I was listening to the details of my own family's story when this person talked to me.

My dad passed away before my mom. He did stay at home, and he died at home in his own bed. However, my mom was by herself. We realized that for the 14 years after my dad died, she was slowly starting to deteriorate. When she offered me a cup of tea and turned the electric kettle on and then took the tea bags and put them on the burner and turned the burner on, I knew we had a bit of a problem. My sister and I talked about it, and then my other siblings talked about it.

Initially we were able to secure two home-care workers that came and broke the week up between the two of them so that they were there with her. However, we knew that that wasn't going to last for a long time because her care required more than they were able to give her, so my siblings and I were looking for facilities. Now, what we had to do was go out and visit every facility to see what it provided. Could we perhaps convince our mother that that's where she needed to be? Well, that's not an easy thing to do. Certainly, we spent – well, I shouldn't say we. I did a little time, but my other sister spent most of the time looking. She didn't just look in my mom's hometown; she looked in areas around each of our homes

because we lived in different areas. What would be the best fit for Mom?

3:10

Well, Mom woke up one morning and slipped on the floor and broke her hip. She had to have surgery. After the surgery her hip healed fine, but she never really came out of the anaesthetic. It meant that we needed to find a place fairly quickly, and she was being kept in the hospital until we could find a bed for her. Now, as I said, there was a lot of time spent looking, and eventually she was moved out of the hospital into a facility that, in fact, we weren't very happy with. In the long run it was a good facility and they provided good care to Mom, but it wasn't a place that Mom would have wanted to be. She didn't have a garden that she could sit in and look at her flowers. It didn't have many of the things that she needed.

However, I've had a number of discussions with my colleague from Red Deer-North about the things that we asked in every facility. In fact, there were a couple of questions that are here that when we asked those facilities, they didn't provide an answer to us. It was the question about the results of inspections. We couldn't get an answer. However, if this is necessitated by this bill, as it is, this would be on the website. I would have to say that being able to go in and access a database that has every bit of information about those facilities that we could consider would have made this a lot easier. In fact, my mother could have participated in this part of it before she had had that surgery.

Ultimately, my mom went to a facility that she had no say in, and in fact we weren't as happy as we would have liked to have been when that facility was chosen for her. However, I can certainly go in and look at all of this so that my kids will not have to do that for me. I can go in, and if at some point I'm going to have to go into a long-term care facility, then I will have that legwork done. In fact, they may go in on the website and be able to verify the things that I've provided to them.

I kind of liken this to buying a car. Years ago, when I bought my first car, my dad and I had a conversation about what I could afford, what kind of a vehicle would be a good vehicle for me to get around, to go to work, to do whatever I had to do. Again, the way we did it was that we went from car dealership to car dealership to car dealership and took those vehicles out for a ride. Now I can go in and I can put the parameters for what I want into the computer at a dealership, and they can come up with the car that I want to get, they can come up with the price, and they can meet all those parameters. For me, I find that this bill actually addresses that, and it would have addressed it had that been in place when my mother needed to go to a facility.

I stand in absolute support of this bill, and I thank the Member for Red Deer-North for bringing this bill forward as her private member's bill because I know from our conversations that many of her constituents have also talked to her about this, as they have in my constituency.

Thank you very much. I stand in full support of this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's actually a real pleasure for me to rise to . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, I just need to verify. Have you already spoken on this bill?

Dr. Turner: Oh, I apologize.

The Deputy Speaker: You have spoken already on this bill.

Dr. Turner: I'll wait for Committee of the Whole.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other member who wishes to speak? The hon. member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise and speak to this very thoughtful private member's bill brought forward by the Member for Red Deer-North. A number of reasons, personally, that I'm very pleased to rise in support of this piece of legislation stem from my lengthy career as a real estate agent, when in many, many cases the reason for sale of a property was that the client, the seller, was entering into a stage of life where they needed long-term care. They could no longer live in their own home, either one or both of the owners. Quite often it was the one surviving owner of the house, and that necessitated, as it often does, that the real estate agent get involved in family discussion on providing services that are needed to house in long-term care the surviving tenant of the property that's going to be sold. Very often as a service to clients, of course, real estate agents will apprise themselves of all different types of information that is going to be helpful to get their client to move into the next suitable property, and in this particular case it's to find and be apprised of what options there are for long-term care for that client.

Numerous times we would as real estate agents consult with each other in our own brokerages and talk about places that we happened to know of or had happened to situate past clients in and had good success with. Notwithstanding the fact, as some members have pointed out, that there's a list of long-term care facilities on the government website and that there might have been a list of such facilities in publications such as those put out by SAGE, the Seniors Association of Greater Edmonton, there was always a question as to whether or not they were totally comprehensive, accurate, and up to date. The requirement wasn't there that the existing facilities actually had to register.

That's a small gap in the legislation, and that is served by this private member's bill. That's what private members are responsible to fulfill. When they discover a small gap in legislation that can be satisfied with a change in the rules and governance, then this is what a private member's responsibility is to do, and I think the Member for Red Deer-North had done just that in this case. She's found a need that families have and professionals such as real estate agents have when an individual who's no longer able to live independently needs to find the most appropriate long-term care facility and has to rely on information that might be incomplete.

I know that, for example, when discussing with colleagues in the office about situating an individual in a certain long-term care facility that was close to home and accessible by relatives and had the right type of services available, somebody else would pipe up and say: hey, did you hear about this one? And we hadn't, so it was not completely comprehensive, and it left one wondering if we had actually been able to give the right advice to that particular family. This piece of legislation addresses that risk of perhaps not having all the information at hand for a family to be able to make the correct and fulsome decision to situate that family member in the most appropriate long-term care facility. It does address a niche that was a gap in the information that families, I think, deserve to have when they're making that decision.

It really makes a huge difference in the life of an individual who's going into long-term care to get it right the first time. If indeed a person has to go through and switch long-term care facilities after they've lived in one for a while, one that was chosen by family members in consultation with anybody they could find who would

let them know about facilities that were available, only to discover subsequently that there was a better option that existed that they didn't really know about, that would have prevented the necessity of a secondary transitional move, that's a really unfortunate situation to find oneself in. It's difficult for particularly the elderly to face significant changes in their life.

3:20

A move is one of the most stressful things that a person can go through. Secondary to loss of a spouse or a divorce, moving is the third most stressful life event that a person can go through. That's something that I dealt with every day of my life as a real estate agent. So if we can avoid a situation where an elderly person has to move a second time because family members discover that there's a more appropriate facility that they could have selected had they known about it, that's a huge, huge benefit to the lives of seniors and their families that is addressed by this private member's bill.

I really am pleased that the Member for Red Deer-North has brought it forward. It may not seem to be a huge cog in the wheel of life, but when it's your mom or your dad or your grandparents who are facing that decision as to where they will live in the waning years of their life to get the best care and also how they can situate themselves close to family members who are assisting and visiting and monitoring and overseeing that family member's care, those are hugely important logistical decisions and, I would say, health as well as mental health decisions not only for the person receiving long-term care but for those caregivers who are undertaking responsibility to make sure that their parent, their loved one, their aunt, their uncle, whoever the individual that they're caring for might be, is indeed making the best decision the first time to avoid a possible secondary move, which is totally upsetting and unsettling, particularly for individuals who are seniors and no longer exercising independent decisions and feeling that loss of independence as a debilitating experience.

To have to go through it a second time is really something that should be avoided, and I think this bill goes a long way to addressing that. One of the consequences of it is that you'll have seniors or individuals needing long-term care in a facility that is the most appropriate facility available at the time given that they would have access to an up-to-date resource of facilities that exist throughout the province.

I applaud the efforts of the member for responding to this need and addressing the concerns of families who are under enough stress as caregivers already that they shouldn't be given the burden of possibly having to make this decision twice. I fully support the legislation and the private member's focus on the concerns of her constituents as well as the benefit to seniors that this legislation provides, those individuals who built our province and deserve our absolute respect and attention when it comes to making sure that the actions of government make their life easier.

That's, of course, a focus of this government, whether it's long-term care for seniors or any other health aspect of a senior's life. We definitely respect and recognize the contribution of our seniors to the province and its well-being. I for one am, of course, above the certain age that is going through a similar process myself, having done so with grandparents and now with parents, a surviving mother. That is something that I face daily, the question of keeping my ailing mother in her own home, which she's been able to do so far with the help of a live-in caregiver. But, you know, at some point it may be possible that that type of an in-house caregiving situation doesn't meet her needs. So definitely knowing exactly what long-term care facilities might be available when that time comes for us as a family to make a decision and make a choice is going to be

essential. I can't imagine how regretful I would be if we indeed made a decision to place my mom in a long-term care facility and then found out that there was a better option, that we didn't know about, that we might have known about had this registry existed.

I really look forward to the establishment of this registry. That component of it I think is really important and will be a very helpful and welcome service for families such as my own which are in the midst of making those decisions for a loved one. I applaud once again the efforts and thoughtfulness of the Member for Red Deer-North and look forward to passage of the legislation.

The Deputy Speaker: I'd like to invite the hon. Member for Red Deer-North to close debate.

Mrs. Schreiner: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am very happy to rise today and speak to my bill, Bill 203, the Long Term Care Information Act. While crafting the bill, it was very important to me to look into what other jurisdictions were doing regarding the availability of long-term care information. I was pleased to see that other provinces had put in place similar resources to what I am proposing in my bill. While the context of information varies from province to province, there are plenty of examples of provincial governments supporting people investigating long-term care options. British Columbia, Ontario, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland have comprehensive sites that include all types of continuing care facilities.

However, it is important to note, Madam Speaker, that those accessing these websites need to have a strong understanding of the language used in order to differentiate between the types of care offered. Inspection reports are available within some regions by way of an extra link, as is the case with B.C. and Ontario. However, this information varies as well. Currently Saskatchewan is revamping its website, taking the responsibility of providing this information from regional health authorities and placing it with the provincial government. In Manitoba, P.E.I., and Nova Scotia there are listings, but they encompass all aspects of health and not just long-term care. As a result, they do not necessarily make it an easy, one-stop shop model.

I'm proud to say that this bill can provide consistency, accuracy, and information that enables those searching to have the majority of their questions answered through the information provided. From the crossjurisdictional research we can confirm the importance of having this information available within a one-stop resource and that the variety of approaches serve as an interesting sample of the ways we could potentially approach this issue in Alberta.

Madam Speaker, this bill serves to support a framework that enables Albertans looking into long-term care to identify the qualitative information that is available immediately. This bill serves to provide the basic contact information, operator and facility type, total resident capacity, additional services and fees, inspections and results as well as establishment. Additionally, it makes it a requirement that this information be updated regularly to ensure the integrity of the information is accurate. This bill will also ensure the government has the flexibility to include additional information that Albertans deem necessary and require. Transparency regarding inspections and outcomes also serves to provide opportunity for corrective measures to be implemented and addresses systematic gaps that hinder compliance.

My Long Term Care Information Act is aimed at easing the stress and streamlining information required when a loved one is determining which long-term care facility best serves their needs, and that, Madam Speaker, makes life easier for Albertans. As

individuals choosing our forever homes, our needs are a priority in making the best decision, and having that information available in one location enables and empowers the right decision-making process. I have done the research, spoken to governing agencies as well as enlisted the feedback from constituents, and there is strong support for a resource that provides ease of access to this information. As I mentioned, this bill speaks to certain criteria required to build this resource, but that does not mean that more information cannot be provided.

My Long Term Care Information Act will establish transparency regarding space availability as well as maintain acceptable standards of information, but what it also does, Madam Speaker, is to provide the information within one stop. That supports transparency, and this is what Albertans are asking for.

3:30

While there are numerous items that this website can disclose, Madam Speaker, it is important to remember that availability of specific items such as dietary issues can also be addressed within the forum of the resident and family council body.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:31 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Goehring	McPherson
Anderson, S.	Gotfried	Miller
Anderson, W.	Gray	Nielsen
Ceci	Hinkley	Nixon
Clark	Hoffman	Panda
Coolahan	Horne	Payne
Cooper	Hunter	Rosendahl
Cortes-Vargas	Kazim	Sabir
Dach	Kleinstauber	Schmidt
Drever	Larivee	Schreiner
Drysdale	Littlewood	Sigurdson
Eggen	Luff	Stier
Feehan	Malkinson	Sucha
Fitzpatrick	Mason	Westhead
Ganley	McCuaig-Boyd	Woollard
Gill	McKitrick	

Totals: For – 47 Against – 0

[Motion carried; Bill 203 read a second time]

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, before we proceed, I've had a request to revert to Introduction of Guests.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests (reversion)

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

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly one of my constituents, Jim McIndoe. Mr. McIndoe is a University

of Calgary graduate who spent 40 illustrious years in the oil and gas industry, mainly on the exploration and production side of the business. He started and sold four exploration and production companies during his career before retiring as CEO of NuLoch Resources. He continued as a director for NuLoch after it was sold to an American company in 2011. Since then he has been involved in various private enterprises and enjoying retirement. Mr. McIndoe is married with three children and six grandchildren, and he is joined today in the gallery by his daughter Leanne Kidd.

Mr. McIndoe is with us to listen to the debate on adverse possession because, as I will note later, he is a victim of this legislation and ended up losing over a thousand square feet of his residential lot because of adverse possession. I'm sure he never thought he would be a relative expert on this subject. He has been a tireless ally in bringing this legislation forward, and I hope that we are able to pass Bill 204 as it will prevent a situation like Jim's and all of the stress and loss that he suffered through that process, and hopefully we'll be able to make it never happen to another constituent of mine and yours ever again. I would now ask that Jim and his daughter Leanne Kidd please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Bill 204
Land Statutes (Abolition of Adverse Possession)
Amendment Act, 2018

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

Mr. Gottfried: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour for me to rise today to introduce Bill 204, the Land Statutes (Abolition of Adverse Possession) Amendment Act, 2018, into second reading. As heavy-handed as it may sound, the phrase "possession is nine-tenths of the law" may be true. In fact, it is true in today's Alberta after just 10 short years of possession. Or maybe it's just a case of: what's yours is mine, and what's mine is mine with respect to current Alberta law.

3:50

Bill 204 seeks to remove all reference to the legal doctrine of adverse possession, commonly known as squatters' rights, from Alberta's legislation in order to ensure that it is no longer grounds for claims, de facto legal seizure of land from the registered owner, who, in most cases, is just another good neighbour unaware of this outdated, archaic legislation.

In fact, as I just mentioned, joining us in the House today is one of my constituents, who in a recent adverse possession judgment, in Moore versus McIndoe, lost approximately 1,000 square feet of a suburban residential lot without compensation to such a claim and after thousands of dollars in legal bills fighting for what he felt were principles of fairness and reasonableness. Indeed and sadly, the outcome was not in his favour given current legislation, and in the application of law and administration of justice in this case, Madam Speaker, I ask you if that is justice.

Again, adverse possession in Alberta enables a trespasser who is occupying land without legal title for a period of 10 years as identified by surveys, land registration, and title, as reflected in our adopted Torrens system of land registration, to be recognized as the legal owner, indeed, a legal seizure under current law of somebody else's registered titled land.

Madam Speaker, I am proud to be bringing this bill forward today, following on the good and principled work of past and current members of this Legislature. In fact, as previously introduced, we have the former Member for St. Albert Mr. Ken Allred – I see he's joined us in the members' gallery – with us

today, and of course the hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod sits with us as my colleague in this House. What is the history with respect to attempts to address this issue? MLA Allred's Motion 507 was agreed to on November 28, 2011. MLA Allred's private member's bill 204 was passed unanimously on second reading on March 12, 2012. MLA Stier's Bill 204 was introduced to this House in 2017 in the Third Session of this Legislature. Now, again, ironically, in 2018, yes, another Bill 204.

I'm honoured to bring this bill forward on the strength of the past efforts of our legislative colleagues because I truly believe that adverse possession has no place in Alberta legislation in the future. If passed, Bill 204 would ensure that adverse possession would no longer constitute a legal basis for possessors to seize land without compensation and to take title of land that they have never paid for nor has ever legally belonged to them prior to exercising such a claim. Yes, that could be your good neighbour or in the rare case, that could become the not-so-rare case, as we now see in urban and suburban Alberta – often we think of this in rural terms, but the person who does not subscribe to your expectation of the good neighbour policy might be that neighbour that you face and purely because your fence was not on the survey line when it was built 10 years and one day ago.

Yes, currently in Alberta if a person possesses that land that does not belong to them for 10 or more years, so that 10 years and one day, they may legally claim title to the property, which in my mind clearly flies in the face of Alberta's very efficient land titles system, with its accurately marked boundaries, well-surveyed land titles, and the expectation of validity of commonly referenced real property reports, of which, I would suggest, any Alberta homeowner is quite familiar from when they've purchased or sold a home. Indeed, most would argue that this is conclusive proof of a registered owner's interest in the land.

Further, the government as owner and operator of the land registry guarantees the inviolability of current certificate of title as an accurate record of registered interests. I think we would all assume that that is the case. Madam Speaker, I believe and I'm encouraging the members of this House to agree that this is how it should be to allow peace of mind and certainty of title to all Albertans who have worked hard to become proud land- or homeowners. Historically land tenure in England, from where we inherited adverse possession, was based on boundaries indicated by general markers such as hedges, fences, ditches, probably a few castles in the middle. This is known as a general boundary system. As such, it was difficult to determine with precision the true boundaries of a plot of land, and property disputes were therefore common. Given that context, Madam Speaker, it is easy to understand why England established the doctrine of adverse possession, but in Alberta we adopted the Torrens system of land registration. Under the Torrens system the title to land in Alberta is registered and guaranteed by the province – registered and guaranteed; I'll repeat that – based on accurately surveyed parcels prior to the grant of title by the Crown. That sounds to me like ownership.

To this day the extent of a person's title is determined by those surveys, a measure which quite reliably protects landowners from such unjustified and inexplicable loss of property, as I'm sure Mr. McIndoe would be more than happy to share with members of this House if they so choose. Reliance on this well-established, government-administered land title registry system has avoided countless property disputes between neighbours, and in cases where disputes arise, landowners can easily resolve the problem by verifying the original survey.

As we can see, Madam Speaker, the principle and issues that adverse possession was meant to resolve in jolly old England never actually existed in Alberta. To this day the doctrine does not offer any real benefit to everyday Albertans. In fact, it has caused a number of difficult legal challenges over the years. In 1965 the city of Calgary lost numerous plots of land to an adverse possession claim, and in 1993 irrigation districts also lost land in two adverse claims. This Legislative Assembly subsequently amended legislation to ban adverse possession claims against municipalities and irrigation district lands. Such amendments made abundant sense under the circumstances to protect those parties from spurious claims. By passing Bill 204 and abolishing adverse possession completely, we will afford that same protection to all Albertans.

Similarly, Madam Speaker, an action for adverse possession in 1948 deprived a landowner of some significant improvements on the land, which resulted in an amendment to the Land Titles Act, which is now entrenched in the Law of Property Act under section 69, which is very beneficial to Albertans and, in fact, has been duplicated in other provinces. Section 69 of the Law of Property Act enables a landowner who has mistakenly built lasting improvements on a neighbour's land to lay a claim to that land so that they do not lose their investment or assets. The legislation requires the occupier to pay fair and just compensation to the true landowner in keeping with the spirit of the law while protecting both the legal owner and the land of the neighbour who may have built on that in good faith. So we do have protection for unusual circumstances by abolishing adverse possession.

Section 69 of the Law of Property Act adequately addresses problems of building encroachments among other similar issues that may arise from time to time, so that protection is afforded by section 69. Knowing that section 69 in the Law of Property Act is in place, we can rest assured that the abolition of adverse possession will certainly not leave a gap in our legislation. Instead, it will make room for more modern and relevant laws to protect Alberta landowners and bring us in conformity with all other Canadian Torrens jurisdictions that currently ban adverse possession.

Madam Speaker, perhaps it is finally time – and maybe three times will be the charm for Bill 204 – to pass these measures in the abolition of adverse possession once and for all in Alberta. This in turn will further support the integrity of the registry system and the reliability of the title record and would serve to protect the land- and homeowners I believe it is intended for and the rights they believe they hold with respect to private property.

Madam Speaker, you can think about this in an urban setting. Again, we think of this in a rural setting. But what if you own a 25-foot piece of land, an urban infill here in the city of Edmonton? You build a fence on the north side, and it's six inches on the wrong side, inside your property, and you build one on the south side, and it's six inches in. Now you actually have a 24-foot lot. Well, actually, at that point in time you do not meet the setback regulations when you build a home on that. So if push came to shove, you could actually be told that your house is not compliant.

These are the kinds of issues we could face, and we could face thousands of adverse possessions across this city and across this province because fences have been in the wrong place for 10 years and a day. That is not right, Madam Speaker. In that light, I ask you to support Bill 204.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to Bill 204? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak in support of Bill 204, Land Statutes (Abolition of Adverse Possession) Amendment Act, 2018. I want to thank my colleague

the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek for the leadership he has displayed in introducing this bill. He's allowing all of us in this Chamber to end an unfair practice that over decades became law through our common-law system. He is also allowing Alberta's United Conservatives to end the NDP's practice in committee of burying progressive movement on this issue.

4:00

Madam Speaker, if any one of us walked out on the street today and told the first person we came across that someone could set up on their land and then after 10 years it would become theirs even if it's been in your family for generations, they would not believe us. They would think that we're talking about some old bylaw that was on the books but everyone ignored. In fact, that's not true, and I can provide a recent example of how challenging it can be.

You know, Madam Speaker, I'll tell a little story about something that happened right in my community and not that many years ago. There was a fellow that owned quite a bit of land there, and one of his quarter sections had an old shack on it, and a struggling family moved into that shack and happily lived there for quite a while. The landowner was okay with that because he thought he was helping this family out and doing the right thing, and everybody lived quite harmoniously and peacefully for quite a few years.

Nine years later he became aware of this adverse possession. Luckily for him, he found out about it in nine years and not 10 years. The sad part was that, obviously, the family that moved into the shack was well aware of the adverse possession, and the landowner couldn't get them to move out. The guy even told him: well, in a year from now this is going to be my land, anyway. He had no choice. He got the police involved because he couldn't get them to move off his land. Actually, when the police went out there, it ended up being a standoff with weapons and firearms, and there were young children in the house. He eventually let the children and the wife out, and most of the day they had a standoff.

Eventually they did get the guy to give in, and they arrested him and took him to jail. Of course, the guy wasn't in jail that long. He got out, and the family lived there throughout the whole time he was in jail. I'm not saying anything, Madam Speaker, but for some reason mysteriously that house got burned down one night, and I guess the problem was resolved. Why would we force people to have to come to do these things?

With this legislation now I'm sure that that fellow would have been happy to let that family keep living there. They could still be living there today, but because of the laws that we have, he wasn't able to do that. Hopefully, we'll get support to pass this legislation here today, and things like that won't have to happen again.

Madam Speaker, to abolish adverse possession, or squatters rights, as it's often better known, has gone on far too long. In recent years we have found opportunities to take steps that delete it from our statutes. We came close with a former colleague, Mr. Allred, the former Member for St. Albert, who is here today observing. I know he worked long and hard to get this done. He came really close. He introduced the motion, it passed first and second readings, and then it died on the Order Paper, Madam Speaker. So it came close once.

Then in 2014 it came up again. The Property Rights Advocate recommended abolishing adverse possession by resurrecting Mr. Allred's private member's bill, but nothing happened.

In 2016 Conservative members of the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship sought to support the Property Rights Advocate with another motion to abolish adverse property rights, but the NDP members used their majority to send it to Justice for a review. And what happened next? The information we received was that the Alberta Law Reform Institute is "currently developing its

work plan for this project.” So here we are – what? – three years later, and they haven’t even got a work plan started yet. Madam Speaker, that information was provided to the committee after the fact because Justice could not answer the question in committee.

So what did we learn? Years after the Resource Stewardship Committee provided clear direction to start the work to abolish adverse possession, the department was still developing its work plan. Does that even make sense? Who is accountable for this issue being shelved? It’s not the bureaucrats. They take their orders from the minister. So we can only presume that the minister is choosing to ignore the all-party committee’s recommendation.

In October 2017 the Resource Stewardship Committee gave another strong push, this time suggesting that the Legislative Assembly review adverse possession and other property rights issues, but the government members had other plans. They once again used their majority to put forward a motion, which we were unable to change, directing the government to do the review. This was seven months ago, and as expected, the NDP has simply buried the issue.

Madam Speaker, that is why I’m so pleased to see the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek bring forward Bill 204. Once again we’re going to give this a try, and hopefully with the co-operation of all members in the House we can maybe be successful this time. We can do it here in the Assembly in quick order. As I mentioned at the outset, should the average Albertan learn about this law, they would be shaking their heads if every member of this Chamber did not simply vote in favour of it today.

Madam Speaker, Alberta’s United Conservatives have fundamental respect for property rights. We work tirelessly to ensure that the right of all Albertans to freely own, enjoy, and exchange property is protected. Our commitment to this principle will never waiver. You know, it just seems like common sense to me. This shouldn’t be that hard to do, and it’s been tried quite a few times.

I know that a lot of the members on the opposite side aren’t rural. I know there are a couple of rural members over there. It’s hard for somebody living in a city to understand. You couldn’t even imagine if somebody moved into your backyard in the city and squatted there in a tent and stayed there for 10 years and all of a sudden said that it was their land. Like, you can’t even imagine that happening. But that’s what’s happening in rural Alberta. It doesn’t make sense, but hopefully, you know, through this member’s bill here today we’ll have support in this House and finally get this archaic law removed.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It’s a pleasure to get up and speak to this private member’s bill. Of course, that private member’s bill was in this House previously. It’s always good to debate private members’ bills in this House because they come forward from members who are very passionate about the particular topics that they bring forward.

I listened to the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek’s opening and the rationale for the bill. Of course, I myself and the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek both represent urban ridings in Calgary. His is a little bit more suburban than mine, but, you know, the same sort of issues apply. I agreed with him when he talked about issues about when you have infills, like when you have a fence on one side that’s slightly out or a fence on the other.

In my riding of Calgary-Currie the original houses in certain parts of that area were built as early as 1910, 1920, and since in Calgary you could build a garage in your backyard with no building permit

for many of those years, there are many garages and fences that have been built over the years, perhaps, without proper surveying. So the hon. member’s point is taken, that even in an urban context, for a person with a piece of land, this piece of legislation on adverse possession may be relevant.

4:10

It’s quite interesting. There are multiple pieces of legislation that this has touched. As I understand it, the argument from the hon. member is that there are pieces of legislation to deal with scenarios where, say, for example, I built a garage in my backyard and just perhaps had a couple of inches in my neighbour’s yard due to a surveying error – or perhaps the house was even bought that way – and to deal with how the neighbours can deal with that and perhaps have some compensation there.

You know, I think this also counts if there’s a problem for real estate agents as well. Of course, he mentioned real property reports. Those are always quite good. I myself, having been in the house-hunting process for a while, you know, often look at pieces of property where there’s a shared driveway between two pieces of property. Instead of having a traditional driveway up to a garage in the front of the house or a garage in the rear, there’s actually a driveway between the two houses, which means, of course, that that driveway is half on somebody’s piece of property. That real property report is always quite interesting because, depending on where the houses are positioned, if one person or another wanted to put a fence on that driveway – I don’t know very many cars that are four feet wide, so that would potentially be problematic. I think it speaks to the importance of making sure that there are agreements between neighbours in this particular regard, specifically on how to deal with that when it comes to compensation.

I have to admit that this is something that, previous to this, I hadn’t thought much about. I know that our rural members, you know, from the story the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti brought up, do hear about this a lot more often. I have to admit that in my office it is something that no constituent has ever asked me about. That’s not to say that in the future they won’t, but through this debate I’m aiming to try and see things from both sides, for what may be pros for this, what cons there may be.

As we know, in this House several members always like to use the phrase about wanting to make sure that we examine these bills thoroughly to watch out for unintended consequences. You know, I think the history of politics in general, whether it be in this province or Canada or even at a city level, is rife with well-intentioned people who have missed something or didn’t see a particular outcome of what the legislation would do. You do something over here to fix a problem, and it creates problems a couple of pieces of legislation and regulations over, where it has a totally unexpected outcome.

You know, I think the hon. member made a very compelling case on the reasons for his bill. I can’t remember if it was the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek or for Grande Prairie-Wapiti who was talking about how, of course, this has come forward in the Resource Stewardship Committee. There was a suggestion that perhaps the issue is being buried.

I know that out of those motions that came from the Resource Stewardship Committee, the government requested expert analysis from the Alberta Law Reform Institute. They began that work in the fall of 2017. Of course, the Alberta Law Reform Institute – I’m probably just going to call it ALRI from now on so I don’t trip over that. You know, we went out and asked them for advice when this bill was introduced, and they told us, “While considerable work has been done, we are not yet in a position to make preliminary recommendations and to put those out for consultation with

stakeholders.” The institute went on to say, “To exempt claims to recover possession of land from the operation of the Limitations Act would be a significant change to Alberta law and one that should not be undertaken without thorough review.”

I don’t think the member who proposed this bill would disagree with that statement as, of course, it would be a major change. I haven’t had a chance to hear a fulsome debate. My first thoughts would be to let the ALRI complete their work to see what comes out of those changes. I know, of course, that this would touch on several areas. You know, we want to make sure this isn’t touching any other pieces of legislation.

I know the Wills and Succession Act, which came into effect in 2012, is an example of viable legislation that came from the ALRI. The ALRI’s work on reviewing adverse possession, you know, I believe, also included a review of private members’ bills that were brought forward in the House, and I believe it was a private member’s bill that was previous to this one here from Calgary-Fish Creek. They are actually reviewing approximately 50 Alberta cases that have been mentioned in adverse possession cases since 2000 to consider how these cases fit in with historical case law in this area and whether amendments to the Limitations Act would have led the law to go in a different direction if a piece of legislation were to pass. The work also includes a look at other jurisdictions and their dispute resolution mechanisms that act as a substitute for adverse possession. I believe the hon. member mentioned that in his opening statements.

Discussion of adverse possession, you know, usually focuses on boundary disputes due to human occupation intentionally, as was the story from Grande Prairie-Wapiti, or, of course, by human error. As we know, in our suburban areas sometimes people build garages and wells and such without doing a survey first, and sometimes as a result stuff happens. But there can also be natural boundary changes where no person is at fault for trespass, and I would think that the law would need to accommodate both instances.

Abolishing adverse possession, just from my research on this, may require amendments to various pieces of legislation, including the Law of Property Act, the Land Titles Act as well as a review of related legislation such as the Municipal Government Act and the Public Lands Act to ensure, as I mentioned previously, that there are no unintended consequences. You know, my understanding is that that is part of the work the ALRI is undertaking. Transitional issues, of course, would need to be considered such as how to deal with existing rights and claims of owners or occupiers that would perhaps currently be in progress at that time.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It’s a pleasure to rise and speak to the bill this afternoon. I’m a little bit surprised, to be totally up front with you. Of course, I’m always up front with you, but I’m very, very shocked to hear my colleague from the other side of the world, by the sounds of things, express such concern about the potential of the unintended consequences and how this really isn’t an issue in the city but more so in rural Alberta when my colleague from Calgary-Fish Creek has a constituent who – I don’t know if you were following along at home – is from the city and not, in fact, from rural Alberta. I think that if the hon. member from across the way was listening, he would have heard that this individual, at significant cost, lost 1,000 square feet of his urban property.

This is not just an issue that affects rural Alberta but, in fact, affects urban Alberta as well. While I can appreciate that the member perhaps hasn’t had any of his constituents who have come

in and addressed this issue specifically with him, this is a significant issue. Madam Speaker, the very interesting thing about this particular piece of legislation is that while it may not be a widespread problem, although it is certainly larger than people would expect it to be, for the people that it does affect, it has a significant and negative impact on those people.

4:20

We have fallen drastically behind many other jurisdictions on this issue of adverse possession, and it is outrageous that the government continues to drag their feet on this particular issue. You know, I think, Madam Speaker, this government has had such a lengthy record of doing one thing and saying another. Today, by all accounts, it certainly sounds like the government members are going to blame the ALRI and say: we need to wait for them to complete their work.

Madam Speaker, for extended periods of time members of this government used to claim that they supported property rights, so much so that in the much-celebrated platform of the NDP, which, I might add, had a few small challenges in it, including when they anticipated that the budget would be balanced . . .

An Hon. Member: It didn’t have a carbon tax.

Mr. Cooper: The other small challenge that they may have had was that they didn’t include significant things in it like, say, the single largest tax increase in Alberta’s history in the form of the carbon tax, but don’t worry about those small, little challenges.

Members of that government and, in fact, the Premier herself as well as the Minister of Transportation, the Government House Leader, at one point in time had a commitment to property rights, so much so that they wrote it into their platform in the form of 5.30: “We will strengthen landowners’ rights.” Madam Speaker, you’ll remember that the hon. member from Wetaskiwin, in his very first opportunity to bring important business before the Assembly, brought a motion on property rights. What has happened since then from this government is exactly nothing. We’ve heard them talk, talk, talk, talk with no action. What we have in the form of this NDP government is a government that says one thing and does another, and that is exactly what’s taking place this afternoon in the form of property rights.

Madam Speaker, I am confident that you will remember that during the debate around Bill 204, that was moved by my colleague for Livingstone-Macleod, the Government House Leader, the hon. Minister of Transportation, rose in his place and expressed significant support for this particular clause, the removal of adverse possession from the law in the province of Alberta. Now, that particular piece of legislation did a number of things, which, I might add, the government used to pretend that they supported. That was fair and equal compensation and a whole bunch of other issues that were particularly associated with Bill 28, Bill 50 – anyway, I’m sure that you are very aware of all of these things – that many people from all across the province had significant concerns about at that time. So my colleague for Livingstone-Macleod endeavoured to correct a whole bunch of those problems that still exist today.

The Government House Leader, to his credit, rose and said: “Listen, a number of these clauses” – I’m paraphrasing here – “are problematic, and we are unable to move forward on them at present, but we do support the removal of adverse possession.” He went so far as to say that if this particular piece of legislation was only a piece of legislation on adverse possession, in fact, he would potentially encourage private members of the government to then support that piece of legislation.

So what do we see? The member from Foothills addressing that exact problem. Peeled back from the legislation are all of those other significant concerns that many members on this side of the House still have. Sometimes, Madam Speaker, you know that politics is the art of the possible, so he, the wise young man that he is, in addressing significant concerns of many people from all across Alberta, rural or urban, brought forward to the House today a very reasonable piece of legislation that is possible.

Yet it sounds like government members are going to hide behind Bill 204, Bill 201, committee delays, and now the Justice department, who has done absolutely zero in terms of reporting back to the Legislature on the good member from Wetaskiwin's response on his motion. Now they're saying: oh, well, we've kicked the can down to the ALRI, and we should just really wait until we get feedback. Well, I don't understand what's better feedback that members on that side of the House need to receive than from the Premier, who has supported this in the past, from the Minister of Transportation, who as recently as just a couple of sessions ago supported the importance of property rights.

Again, it blows my mind how the government can be such a say one thing, do another government. They say that property rights are important, but their actions indicate to rural Albertans, to urban Albertans, who have these significant concerns, that they don't want to do anything about property rights, and it is my belief that that's exactly what we're going to see on this piece of legislation today or whenever it should pass second reading or likely fail at second reading, whether it's this week or next.

It is more than just a little disappointing because, I believe, Madam Speaker, Albertans actually were hoping for something different from this government, but what they are getting is more of the same. That's a government that implements the largest tax increase in Alberta's history without telling anyone about it prior. When they've said that they want to do something, their actions are the exact opposite. This isn't what Albertans expect of this government. It's one of the many reasons why the outstanding constituents of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, when they come to my office to express their displeasure with this government, are so anxious for the opportunity to send a Conservative government to Edmonton. One thing that the constituents of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills have been clear with me about is that this government hasn't listened to them, and they certainly, it appears, are not listening to the good folks who are in the gallery today who have their concerns.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It gives me great pleasure today to rise and speak to a bill that is the subject matter of my career's work in the real estate industry, and I do take some exception to some claims from members opposite that this caucus is not respectful of and not defenders of property rights in this province. You won't find a more committed defender of private property rights than this member speaking right now, having spent 30 years in the real estate industry defending those rights and establishing those rights for my clients. I'm really very happy to see the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek speak so eloquently in defence of our current Torrens land registry system because it is indeed, truly, the best system of land registration in the world.

Originally established in Australia, actually, it is a system which ensures that title is indefeasible, and that's one of the principles that is enshrined in the Torrens system. While the members opposite I think rightfully suggest that adverse possession is an affront to that indefeasibility, I think that we still need to respectfully follow the processes in place right now to ensure that the ALRI finalizes its

work so that in making a determination as to which direction to go on this issue, we can make sure that there's an adequate dispute resolution mechanism in place.

4:30

I know that the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek did identify that, in his opinion, the dispute resolution mechanisms were sufficient already should this bill proceed and the legislation be adopted, but I think the process by which we've invoked the services of the Alberta Law Reform Institute is one that we should follow. I know it's time consuming and it has taken a bit more time than one would have hoped, but it's a situation that I think we should approach carefully, because I know that the land registration system that the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek speaks so highly of is one that we should protect and even consider strengthening over time.

For those that don't really know about it, I'll just briefly say that the Torrens title system operates on the principle of title by registration, granting the high indefeasibility of a registered ownership rather than the registration of title. The system does away with the need for providing a chain of title, as is common in many jurisdictions even in Canada or particularly in Quebec, which comes to mind, where you have to sometimes go to different parishes to find actual physical documents of title deeds to verify title and verify the subsequent sales of the property, one after another, to actually show that that chain of titles belongs to you rightfully and that you actually own the land.

The Torrens system does away with that need to prove a chain of title. The state, the province in this case, guarantees the title, and it's usually supported, as is stated, by a compensation scheme for those who lose their title due to private fraud or error in the state's operation. In most jurisdictions there are some portions of land which are still unregistered, but the Torrens system has three basic principles that it works under. The mirror principle: the registry reflects or mirrors accurately and completely the current facts about the title to each registered lot. This means that each dealing affecting a lot such as a transfer of title, a mortgage or discharge of the same, or a lease, an easement, or a covenant must be entered onto the register and so be viewable by a relatively inexpensive online search. That's one of the beauties of our Torrens system registration and the SPIN 2 government of Alberta website, that it's easily accessible at fairly low cost to individuals wanting to verify what the title registration is actually on a particular parcel of land, and it's government guaranteed.

That system is something that I think is under attack in other parts of Canada, where there is consideration to actually privatize that situation, the land registrations service. I think that in this province we can tell the world that that is a system of government land registration that we're going to protect here because it is fundamentally a right of Albertans, one that is enshrined in our human psyche in this province, that private property is sacrosanct and that registration of that private property should be held in public hands and not disseminated to a private company that may not have the same guarantees or the same abilities to guarantee the privacy of that information and the accuracy of it and the verifiability of that information.

So I'll always defend the Torrens system of land registration that we have in this province and the SPIN 2 accessibility to that information that we have on that government website. I really hope that we as a government will look to perhaps register other things within that SPIN 2 system that could rightfully belong there and be accessible to Albertans, whether it be, perhaps, vital statistics or other government information that we want the public to have ready access to and to have good verifiability at a reasonable cost and hopefully in the not-too-distant future on a 24/7 basis.

The Torrens system of registration is something that we're very, very fortunate to have in place here in Alberta. Most jurisdictions in the world would give their eye teeth to have the public registration of land title established in the way that we do in Alberta. Other jurisdictions, I believe Saskatchewan as well, operate under the Torrens system, British Columbia, too. It is something that we should always do our best to protect.

There's another principle in the Torrens system of land registration called the curtain principle. It says that one does not need to go behind the certificate of title as it contains all the information about the title. This means that ownership does not need to be proved by a long, complicated document that is kept by the owner, as in a private conveyancing system, that you'll find in the United States, where title deed companies will search title. It costs quite a bit of money, in a lot of cases, to actually go through successive documents, that may or may not be properly stored and accessible, to prove that you have the right to sell the property and that you indeed own it and can convey title to a new owner. There's a title deed insurance situation that takes place there that may protect the buyer, to compensate them in case of defects in that chain of evidence. But here the guarantor is the province. The state guarantees the veracity of title, so all the necessary information regarding ownership is on the certificate of title.

As indicated also by the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, the indemnity principle, the third principle of the system of land registration we have in Alberta, the Torrens system, provides for compensation of loss caused by private fraud or errors made by the register of title. That situation is in place and is one that we should protect forcefully and never let go because once it's gone into private hands, it's gone forever. It's a real jewel, that we have the public system of land registration in Alberta.

The thing that we want to make sure of when we do look at the piece of legislation at hand, the private member's bill, is that before we decide upon whether or not to go ahead with it, we must make sure that the dispute resolution mechanisms are fully in place. I can think of situations many times over where there were difficulties with structures, in particular, on a piece of property that I had listed for sale or that a client of mine was looking to make an offer on or perhaps had even made an offer on subject to verification of compliance and so forth.

Most of the issues that you find, as the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti alluded to, are more rural situations. But what I do take a bit of an exception to is the allusion that perhaps urban members don't have the facility to comprehend what the rural situation might entail. In fact, many of the rural situations that a real estate agent or a land sale might encompass are fairly straightforward. They usually involve somebody having made a mistake.

One situation in particular I dealt with not too many years ago was a situation where an individual property owner had an acreage property and wanted to sell the property, list it for sale. He actually just let it slip that there was a well on his property. I thought that, well, maybe this was one of those abandoned well situations, like a water well that was no longer in use on an old homestead. But, no, it was a real well.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to rise and speak to Bill 204, the Land Statutes (Abolition of Adverse Possession) Amendment Act, 2018. I'm trying to learn more about this bill, and I was paying attention to hear from my colleagues on the other side if there was any reason

why they oppose it. I haven't got there yet. I didn't quite understand whether they support it or oppose it. But I rise to speak in support of this bill, particularly when my fellow Calgarians are sitting in the gallery and want to listen to both sides of the aisle, the reasons why they oppose or support. I haven't heard that very clearly from both NDP members who spoke prior to me.

Madam Speaker, I was born and raised in India. There were lots of civil cases on property rights. I was sitting here and wondering. You know, I came to Canada thinking that here there is no chance that someone else can claim your property. It seems that it's a reality based on the examples given by both the members for Calgary-Fish Creek and Grande Prairie-Wapiti. That scares me to death. That means that my hard-earned money, that I put into investments in acquiring properties here, also might be at risk of being lost. I mean, that makes me think twice, to do even more research on that, which I'm going to do.

4:40

But today I want to talk about a few examples. The way I understood it is that in the past when people came early and if they stayed on the Queen's Crown land for 10 years, then it became theirs. But now adverse possession, better known as squatters' rights, where Alberta, you know, ran into trouble, also applies to private property. I didn't know that till the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek informed us, me particularly; others might know. Madam Speaker, just think of all the NDP world travellers scrambling to set up tents on the lawns of the homes of NDP members of the Legislature in order to ensure that in 10 years the lawn belongs to the squatters. How do they feel about that?

In 2012 former member Ken Allred – I think he was from St. Albert – brought forward a private member's bill which would have abolished adverse possession, and the bill received second reading and died on the Order Paper. In 2014 the Property Rights Advocate recommended that adverse possession be abolished. They made this recommendation because, in their view, abolishing adverse possession would strengthen the integrity of the land registry system and the reliability of the land title records. The 2014 report suggested introducing and passing the legislation previously brought forward by Mr. Allred.

In February 2016 the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship reviewed the 2014 report from the outgoing Property Rights Advocate, Lee Cutforth. Like the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti mentioned before, the NDP used their majority on the committee to refer the matter to the Department of Justice. We are not aware of any review having ever been initiated by the Department of Justice.

Would the Minister of Justice like to have some squatters on her property? I don't think so. But why is she wavering on this bill? We don't know. The government of Alberta has this beautiful building in downtown Calgary called McDougall Centre. If memory serves, I think a camper trailer can get pulled onto that lawn, too. It's big enough.

In February 2017 the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship again revisited the recommendations from the Property Rights Advocate, and the committee recommended that the government should abolish adverse possession. A motion was unanimously passed by the committee recommending that the government introduce legislation abolishing the common-law doctrine of adverse possession in Alberta and all statutory references supporting adverse possession in Alberta legislation. To date this has not been acted upon by this NDP government.

That's why we are here today with Bill 204. The Official Opposition is here to help the government. In their election manifesto they said that they support property rights. When they

became government, they forgot about that, so we are here as the Official Opposition to remind them and help them to act on what they said they would do.

Adverse possession is an archaic law which needs to be abolished to protect the rights of property owners in Alberta. This is not the era of Rupert's Land, with the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company trading furs where the property title didn't exist. I know the Member for Edmonton-McClung, who happens to be the subject matter expert, is trying to educate us . . .

Mr. Gill: No, he's not. He's a realtor.

Mr. Panda: Yeah, but it seems he knows something about this. But he still didn't convince me that squatters can, you know, claim the property of private owners.

We're now the modern province of Alberta, with proper laws and a proper land title registry, which we agree with him on, and allowing an individual to intentionally or unintentionally possess the property of another individual without compensation for the original owner flies in the face of basic property rights. As I said, Madam Speaker, that really scared me, that in a western democracy like Canada it can happen. I couldn't imagine that.

This is an issue that spans the urban-rural divide. It's not urban-rural. The Member for Calgary-Fish Creek mentioned about what happened in Calgary in an urban area, too. We know of the people parking trailers in the yards of rental properties, and the landowner cannot evict the people living in the trailer or remove the trailer from the lot. It's time to abolish adverse possession. What would the Premier do if a tent city decided to set up on the south lawn of the Legislature and claim squatters' rights? It's a possibility. If we don't act on this, anybody can take advantage of that. We have seen tent cities set up in cities around the world, even in major European cities, in very public areas and common-use parks in the heart of those cities. You can be sure adverse possession has been extinguished to present land claims in those countries. Do we still need adverse possession here? It invites tent cities to form in public areas where we don't want people living; we want common-use space.

Madam Speaker, I would actually thank my colleague from Calgary-Fish Creek for bringing in this Bill 204, Land Statutes (Abolition of Adverse Possession) Amendment Act, 2018. It's time to do the right thing and end squatters' rights in Alberta. It's time that we protect property owners and protect their rights.

The Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills talked about the Government House Leader and the Premier, that in the past they said that they'll stand up for the rights of Alberta property owners. This is the time, then. They have to put their money where their mouth is. He also illustrated the NDP election manifesto, where they said that they'll protect property rights. Here is your opportunity. I ask all members, on both sides of the aisle, to support this bill.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to thank my colleague from Calgary-Fish Creek for bringing this important bill forward to this House. It's my pleasure to be able to speak to it.

Back in 2015, during the campaign for the election, I was in a debate with some other colleagues, and it was a question-and-answer period. A question was asked about squatter rights. I knew a little bit about squatter rights. I hadn't heard of specific examples, but they talked to us about this situation where an individual had

nicely given a neighbour some land to be able to use. It wasn't a lot, but it was some land that they just lent. After 10 years they had tried to figure out some stuff, compensation, being able to work it out, but what happened was that the two gentlemen weren't able to work out some kind of a compensation package. This actually hit the news, that the squatter, as I guess we would call him, decided that they had been there for 10 years and deserved it.

4:50

What's interesting about this case is that they asked: what would you do if you were in government? There was an NDP person there, someone from the Alberta Party, someone from the PC Party, and someone from the Wildrose Party. I happened to be the last person on this panel. From each one, as they were asked the question, the answers were: well, you know, we would have to take a look at the situation and really study it closely, and we'd have to figure it out. This is what I've been hearing so far from the government side of the House, that we'd have to take a look at different aspects and the different nuances of the situation and find out – you know what? When it came to me, Madam Speaker, I said: absolutely, we need to get rid of this law.

This is a terrible law because the reality is that – and it was actually stated in this article, and I brought it here today so I could kind of review it – the person who owned the land was paying the property tax on it. This was not a rich farmer. This wasn't a rich person. The person actually paid hard-earned money to buy this land, which I believe was about 10 acres, and paid taxes for this land over the 16 years that they had owned it, and 10 of those years happened to be with this person that they just out of the goodness of their heart decided to let use, and this person took advantage of it, Madam Speaker. Took advantage of it.

Now, since this time there was another situation that came up. Another guy came into my office, just probably about six months ago, and he said: I have this guy who's in one of my rental properties; he's decided to build a little squatter cabin on a flatbed trailer, and he won't leave, and he claims squatter rights. Now, he wanted to be closer to his ex-girlfriend, that actually had left the premises. But because he had been there not more than 10 years – I guess he didn't really understand the full extent of the law, but he was claiming that he deserved because of squatter rights the right to be able to stay in this location. This landlord had the opportunity to bring the police even to try and escort him off. He used the plea: I have the rights under squatter rights; you can't do anything to me. Now, luckily, this landlord was able to take him to court and \$127 later was able to evict him.

The problem is that there will be people that are using this adverse possession law to their advantage even when they don't deserve it or even though the law doesn't apply to them. This ambiguity is really setting a bad precedent in helping people who have not actually earned something to be able to have it. This is the sort of thing that drives Albertans crazy.

The other thing that I wanted to just quickly say, Madam Speaker, is that it almost seems in this situation that, you know, if it didn't happen in my backyard, then I don't really care about it. That's almost like what I'm hearing from the members opposite: it doesn't really matter; it didn't happen to me. But you know what? I can guarantee you that if it had happened to them in their own backyard, I question whether or not they would be standing on the side they're standing on. I highly doubt it. In fact, I would imagine that they would be fighting against the squatter rights law. They would say: "You know what? This is unfair. I worked hard to be able to buy this property. It is mine. I've paid taxes for it. I should be able to have and use that land." Instead, what we're hearing is this idea that

— you know what? — we’ve got to check these nuances out; we’ve got to check this out. Meanwhile people are still using this plea of squatter rights.

I wanted to bring those two cases up. The court case actually went in the favour of the squatter for the 10 acres. In the other case they were able to work it out where, you know, the landowner was able to get rid of this guy and he couldn’t use the plea of squatter rights.

So I am very much in favour of this private member’s bill, put forward by the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, and I would hope that just common sense would dictate the way that members on both sides of this aisle will vote on this and that they would ask themselves, first of all: if it was me, if I was the one that this was affecting, how would I vote?

With that, thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Dr. Turner: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I’ve been actually anxiously hoping that I would be given some time to speak to this bill.

I was actually really intrigued by the debate that was initiated by the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek and then followed through by members on our side as well as the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti, but I have to say that I was dismayed at the comments of the Member for Calgary-Foothills. I have rarely heard in this institution a less reasoned and logical presentation. I mean, the idea that somebody could set up a food truck or a tent on the grounds of the McDougall building in Calgary and, just by being there for 10 years, assume possession just is preposterous. I mean, within 10 minutes the Calgary Police Service would be there hauling away the trailer or whatever it is.

The same would go for the suggestion that that would happen here on the Legislature Grounds. I mean, really, come on. I don’t know how many thousands of dollars this hour of debate is taking, but to consume it with that kind of drivel is really, really, really beyond the pale. I don’t care if the member didn’t grow up in this environment and understand the purpose of the Torrens land title system, but let’s get real here.

The other thing that amazes me is that those folks across the way, who have two legacy predecessors, the Progressive Conservative Party of Alberta and the Wildrose Party of Alberta, have joined together in this so-called United Conservatives, but they really are the same thing as those legacies. Just talking about the Wildrose, I mean, scratch a Wildrose, and you’ll find a Socred. Those Socreds actually were in power from the time of Aberhart, in the ’30s, until Lougheed took over in I guess it was the ’70s.

An Hon. Member: In ’71.

Dr. Turner: In ’71. Thank you.

It was before I got to Alberta, but, you know, I have so-called enjoyed a Conservative government in this province since I came here, in 1977, and I am very happy to be now governed by folks like our Government House Leader and our Premier, who have a real appreciation for property rights and for the rule of law and a respect for institutions of this government such as the Alberta Law Reform Institute.

Now, the Alberta Law Reform Institute is looking at this problem, and it’s taking them some time, but that Law Reform Institute is also doing lots of good work for us Albertans. For instance, it’s looking at informal public appeals. With all of the interest now in GoFundMe campaigns, the Alberta Law Reform Institute is actually helping the government set up the framework in

which these informal charitable appeals can be made and how we can make sure that they are being run in the proper way.

The Alberta Evidence Act, a pretty important piece of legislation: that’s also before the Alberta Law Reform Institute. And we have a lot of interest in nonprofit corporations. I guess that would tie into the informal public appeals. It isn’t as though the Alberta Law Reform Institute is sort of wasting its time and forgetting about this very, very important issue.

The other thing. I’m not a lawyer, and I certainly don’t have the experience of my colleague . . .

The Deputy Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt you, hon. member, but the time for consideration of this item of business is now concluded.

5:00 Motions Other than Government Motions

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Fiscal Management Policies and Practices

503. Dr. Starke moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to amend its fiscal management policies and practices and introduce any necessary legislation to ensure that revenue from fees, levies, specific taxes, and fines goes directly to support the program and service areas requiring those fees, levies, specific taxes, and fines to be collected and is not deposited into the general revenue fund.

Dr. Starke: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It’s my pleasure this afternoon to introduce debate on Motion 503. What does all that mean? Well, in Motions Other than Government Motions we can have an open discussion about a number of different topics, and in this case the discussion is going to be about taxation.

Now, there’s always been a lot of discussion about taxation going back through history, and the arguments continue to this day. We have to ask ourselves questions like: why do governments levy taxes in the first place? What about fees, levies, fines, and other sources of government revenue? What is their purpose? Should taxes and taxation policy be used as a lever to change human behaviour, and is that indeed effective in doing so?

To focus today’s discussion, I want to look at one of the fundamental challenges we face as legislators today, and that is that people don’t like taxes. Now, it’s been said that the only popular tax is the one that someone else has to pay. One of the reasons that people don’t like taxes is that there is a disconnect between the payment of the tax and the benefit derived. We live in a transactional society where we regularly exchange funds for a specified good or service. We make many decisions about those transactions, choosing, for example, to purchase an item with a greater perceived value and being prepared to pay more for it.

But taxes don’t work that way. We pay taxes in a wide variety of ways, but the connection to what we receive as citizens in return for those levied funds is tenuous at best. This is especially true when the revenue from taxation is not earmarked for specific purposes; rather, it goes into general revenue.

Now, there is a widespread belief that as elected officials we are not faithful and trustworthy stewards of those funds. Anyone who has been placed in a position of public trust and trust over the public purse should exercise that duty as a sacred trust. In fact, 200 years ago the fifth president of the United States, James Monroe, said to the joint houses of the U.S. Congress: “To impose taxes when the public exigencies require them is an obligation of the most sacred character, especially with a free people.” People just don’t talk that way anymore. It’s a shame.

We have all heard the examples of wasteful expenditure, and it is completely understandable that the taxpayers who have contributed to those general revenues are upset. We should all be. It has prompted us to introduce various safeguards and accountability mechanisms in an attempt to eliminate these cases of imprudent spending. But even in these instances taxpayers have reason to question the stewardship of those dollars. The recent investigation by the federal Auditor General, Michael Ferguson, into Senate expenditures found some 30 instances of inappropriate expenditures totalling just under \$1 million. Now, that's certainly serious and should not be minimized in any way, but the cost of the two-year audit to find those expenditures was some \$23.6 million. Canadian taxpayers shelled out \$24 for every dollar of inappropriate expenditure that was uncovered. Now, the mechanisms that we put in place to monitor the spending of taxpayer dollars all come at a cost. While there is a perception that these mechanisms will save the taxpayer by curtailing wasteful or inappropriate expenditure, they often end up costing more than they save.

So what am I suggesting? Some of the taxes, levies, fees, and fines that the government collects are related specifically to a purpose or, at the very least, those that pay the taxes can be connected to a related expenditure. For example, the tourism levy, what some people call the pillow tax, is a 4 per cent charge added to your hotel bill when you stay in a fixed-roof accommodation anywhere in Alberta. Now, when it was first devised, in 2005, the intent was that the levy would be used to fund the promotion of tourism in Alberta, and it did. For many years every dollar collected by the tourism levy was reinvested into the promotion of Alberta as a tourist destination through Travel Alberta and the tourism ministry. Not a single penny of taxpayer dollars went to pay for tourism efforts in Alberta, and the ministry was indeed self-funding. Since about 50 per cent of the tourism levy was collected from nonresidents of Alberta, we had devised a way to have those visiting our province help to further promote it as a tourism destination. Now, this model was so successful that it became a template for nearly every Canadian province which now has a similar tourism levy in place.

Sadly, the current government has chosen to siphon revenue from the tourism levy into general revenue. Some 30 per cent of the levy now flows into government coffers as general revenue, and despite its insistence that this government supports tourism as a key driver of economic diversification, this government has cut funding to tourism in each of its years in office.

Now, my argument is simple. Take the full amount of the tourism levy and use it to fund the operations of the tourism ministry and Travel Alberta. Given that every dollar spent in this way used to return \$19.50 to the Alberta treasury in various other forms of revenue – and we don't know what that number is now because they've stopped measuring it – that would seem to be a good investment.

Well, let's look at another example. The Alberta government collects just under a billion dollars annually in tobacco taxes, and we know that these tobacco-related costs to our health care system number in the billions of dollars every year. Yet Alberta Health spends only \$4 million each year on tobacco reduction initiatives. That's less than half of 1 per cent of tobacco tax revenue. If we were to specifically earmark, say, 2 per cent of tobacco tax revenue to a robust tobacco reduction strategy, which we actually already have in place if this government would ever get around to proclaiming and acting on it, just think of the kinds of savings in both reduced human suffering and lower health care costs that we could glean.

Sometimes it's a matter of more closely tying revenues that already exist to existing expenditures. For example, the government collects \$1.4 billion each year in provincial fuel excise taxes. Now,

according to Budget 2018 numbers the Ministry of Transportation is investing some \$1.2 billion in capital projects this year. If those two numbers were more closely tied together and it was clearly explained that the excise taxes are going to fund capital expenditures on roadways and bridges, I would suggest that the acceptance level would at least rise to a level of begrudging. But as it is currently, I hear the complaints every day.

Madam Speaker, there are many other examples, from camping fees in our provincial parks, which are far too low, to fees charged for basic services from our registry offices, where our government takes in revenue but that there is little or no connection to the cost of the service provided. Every time we charge a fee for a service that does not cover the full cost of providing that service, that service is receiving a subsidy from the taxpayer. Unless we can establish that providing that subsidy is in the greater public good and is therefore worthy of support from general revenue, we should seriously consider changing the fee structure to move more toward a cost-recovery model for providing that service.

Now, what this motion suggests is that we establish a more direct link between the fees, charges, levies, and taxes that Albertans pay for the services that we require. Albertans do care about this issue. Just look at their reaction to the government's recent announcement that, contrary to what had been promised before, the additional \$20 per tonne in carbon tax that will be levied starting in 2021 and again in 2022 will now go into general revenue. Whatever happened to the promise that every dollar collected would go either into rebates, tax reductions, or initiatives to combat climate change? Your attempts to call the last \$20 of the carbon tax as the federal tax while the first \$30 was the provincial carbon tax: well, Minister, nobody is believing you.

There will always be a need for funds to flow into general revenue, and the government has many sources of revenue that would qualify. We have \$11 billion in personal income tax, \$4 billion in corporate income tax, roughly \$3 billion in investment income, and \$4 billion from nonrenewable resource revenue. Interestingly, that totals \$22 billion, roughly the same as the Health department's 2018 budget. So the next time you're having a coffee shop discussion with folks about provincial spending, you could point out that the Health department, roughly 40 per cent of our government's budget expenditures, would take every penny in income taxes, both corporate and personal, resource royalty revenues, plus investment income. The question then becomes: what do we use to pay for the other 60 per cent? The total list of revenue sources can be found in our budgetary documents.

5:10

Madam Speaker, if taxes are indeed a certainty – and as Benjamin Franklin said, the only two certain things in life are death and taxes – and if we are to be good and faithful stewards of not just tax dollars but of all of the funds entrusted to us by Albertans, I think it behooves us to make the best possible use of those funds to minimize wasteful or unnecessary spending but also to demonstrate clearly to the people of Alberta, where possible, the connections between revenue and expenditure.

I look forward to the debate.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I also would like to rise on this topic and thank the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster for bringing this forward for discussion. I do rise today, however, to speak against this motion. Our government is making life more affordable for Albertans across a number of ways.

We've done work over the last three years to reduce costs for Albertans where possible.

Some of those examples, Madam Speaker, where we are doing that, reducing costs and therefore utilizing tax monies in other ways to address the needs Albertans have, are that we're reducing costs in school fees, for example. We reduced that to ensure that Albertans could afford to send their kids to school to receive world-class public education, something we gladly as citizens want to know that our tax dollars go to in terms of enhancing the education of our children.

In addition, we've grown Alberta's tax advantage over the next lowest taxed jurisdiction. Now that advantage stands at \$11.2 billion over the province of British Columbia. If we were to have the same taxes as B.C., all Albertans and their corporations, companies both small and large, would have to pony up another \$11.2 billion. We have kept the tax advantage in this province strong by making sure that we are not the highest taxed jurisdiction in this country and among the lowest by \$11.2 billion.

We've also done incredibly good work at bringing down the cost of government, Madam Speaker. There was a tremendous amount of bloat in the system as a result of the 44 years of Conservative rule, and we have cut salaries for Alberta's agencies, boards, and commissions and the perks that those CEOs, in many cases, would have received. We've cut perks like golf memberships that were simply out of line with the expectations of Albertans and what they expect their public servants to receive in compensation. We froze management salaries, political salaries, MLA salaries, and those last two, political staff and MLAs, were frozen immediately upon this government being put in place. That will last until the end of this term. We've achieved several practical labour agreements with teachers, nurses, allied health professionals, and others.

Specifically to this motion and why I want to note that it's out of step with every provincial jurisdiction in this country is that Alberta's tax revenue collected and investment policies are in line with provincial legislation and Supreme Court decisions. This includes ensuring that compulsory fees reflect the cost of providing certain services, and we have done that and are onside with that.

Certain ministries levy fees for various things, and others do not, Madam Speaker. If the government were to place restrictions or parameters on funding from specific revenue streams to fund only specific programs or services, there would be far less money for vital public services like health care and education, where we don't levy a great number of fees. They are paid through the general revenue fund for the most part, and that is aligned with identifying what the needs of those areas are and then providing monies for them.

I'm deeply concerned that shifting to the model proposed by this speaker would encourage more fees to be levied to cover costs and increase costs for Albertans. That would not make life more affordable for Albertans, Madam Speaker. This motion would shift government's incentive from providing high-quality services to increasing or creating fees to provide for those services.

With regard to our fiscal accountability and transparency, Madam Speaker, our approach to budgeting certainly receives high marks from the C.D. Howe Institute. For the third year running, Alberta has received a consecutive A plus rating for its fiscal accountability. Under the three final terms of the previous government, which some members on that side were involved in, they received a B and two Cs. Our rating is three A pluses. The previous government in '14, '13, and '12 received C, C, and B.

I'm proud of the work we've done to ensure fiscal accountability and transparency when we release budgets and quarterly reporting and other ways that government provides updates to the budget.

Albertans expect such transparency from their government, and I'm pleased to say that we've been able to deliver, thanks in very large part to the excellent work done by the public servants in the Treasury Board and Finance department and across government by the SFOs.

Again I'd like to thank the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster for bringing this forward. I won't be supporting it because it would reduce funding that goes to many vital programs and services that Albertans rely on.

With regard to the pillow tax, or the hospitality 4 per cent charge, that was changed by the previous government. We have not made the change to any of the kinds of things that were brought forward.

I want to also say that we're going to continue to be the fiscally transparent government that we have shown in the last three years, far different than the previous government, where they separated everything. They had savings, they had investments, they had operational spending, and they were offside with our own AG as well. He kept saying that they don't consolidate their budgets, that they're going the wrong way. We've changed that. We're onside with the AG as well as, of course, the C.D. Howe Institute.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. First of all, I want to start by thanking the hon. member, my hon. colleague from Vermilion-Lloydminster, for bringing forth Motion 503. I will absolutely be supporting it. I like so much about the direction of this motion, that would like to help the government.

Let's start with a little bit about the situation we're in, why some more value for tax dollars is essential, and where we're at with spending, debt, and taxes. Of course, this government immediately upon being elected increased our corporate tax 20 per cent. Madam Speaker, when I talk to oil and gas companies and good agriculture companies and other companies around the province about the hardships and the layers and layers of burden that this government has added with labour changes, with caps on emissions, with carbon taxes, more often than not it comes back to how that 20 per cent increase in the corporate tax did more to drive investment and to drive jobs out of Canada, out of Alberta. The lack of accountability, the lack of foresight as to where this government is going is connected to that.

When Albertans realize that this government has gone from \$13 billion in debt three years ago to \$56 billion in debt today, headed towards \$96 billion or a hundred billion by 2023 – personally, I think that's a low estimate. We've seen the Finance minister three times, when he's had a complete budget cycle, be a billion to a billion and a half dollars over budget. How will that continue?

The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster spoke very, very well about the tourism levy and the fact that initially it was targeted to help the industry, and now a huge, huge percentage of that is just dumped into general revenue. Madam Speaker, that reminds me of the Taxpayer Bill of Rights, number 6, where taxpayers "have the right to complete, accurate, clear, and timely information" – complete, accurate, clear, and timely information – as to where their money is going. Of course, they're not receiving this when it's dumped into general revenue.

5:20

That reminds me probably of what I've heard the most in six years of sitting in this House. With Alberta Health Services and Alberta Health now at \$22 billion, taxpayers wonder: does anyone

in the government, does anybody in Alberta Health have any idea what services cost us? All we know is that it goes up annually between 4 and a half per cent and 6 and a half per cent. At the same time tax revenue is declining because of the NDP's managed decline of our economy because of their increase in tax rates.

Madam Speaker, I believe that if this government were to adopt the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster's Motion 503 and actually implement it, this discipline could actually spread into some cost control as well and add some value and effectiveness measures to where these hard-earned tax dollars go. When it doesn't happen, it builds frustration. Hopefully, it doesn't build too much noncompliance, because Albertans are good people, but certainly what it does build is people looking for tax efficiency, people looking to make their investments outside of Alberta, where they know what future tax rates are going to be, where they know what future spending is going to be, where they know that there'll be more certainty in their return on investment.

It's important to get this right right now when we look at the environment that we're in. This government brags continually about how we are still, you know, the lowest taxed jurisdiction in Canada even though they've changed that considerably, even though what we're facing today is an American government that has reduced corporate taxes by 40 per cent – 40 per cent – at the same time that they've increased them by 20 per cent. Where is that going to lead investment to? What is that going to make happen? When capital has the ability to be placed anywhere around the world to create jobs and create wealth that governments and programs can tax, when this is what the real world is – when investors and wealth funds in the real world, Madam Speaker, have the option of deciding where they invest, they look for consistency, they look for return, and they look for certainty.

Madam Speaker, that leads me to this government and their carbon tax. We all remember when we were told time and time again that it was revenue neutral. That was the weirdest, most incomplete, most inconsistent definition of revenue neutral I have ever seen. Time and time again we've heard in this House and around Alberta how much hardship this tax has caused. We have seen and heard, of course, senior citizens associations that have difficulty, school boards that have to rob Peter to pay Paul because of higher transportation costs, municipalities that are faced with higher taxes. Now we know, as we've heard in this House many times, that when Justin Trudeau says that in 2023 it's time for the tax to be raised 67 per cent, the fallacy of revenue neutral is completely thrown out the window by this NDP government, and 67 per cent of that increase is just going to be dumped into general revenues.

Madam Speaker, it's no wonder taxpayers out there are concerned about value for their tax dollars. It's no wonder they're concerned about big debt and big deficits. It's no wonder they're concerned about future generations. My goodness, the report I spoke about today in question period by the University of Calgary: can you imagine being 33 or 35 years old and knowing that already in just three years your share of the interest on the debt that this NDP government has run up is \$50,000? That's a truck. That's a down payment for a house. That's charitable giving to help your community, to go somewhere where Albertans have been great givers. Instead, it's dumped into the highest spending per capita government in all of Canada, where citizens know, with health care as an example, that access to a waiting list is not access to health care.

Madam Speaker, I look at younger people, the people 16 years old, and they're faced with a \$42,000 tax bill just on the interest, and that is before we consider that this government and their ally

Justin Trudeau have raised personal taxes to as high as 49 per cent. Can you imagine how much wealth creation that's driven out of Alberta? Can you imagine how much of that money is now being invested in another country, in another jurisdiction, that we could have taxed for health care, that we could have taxed for education, that we could have taxed for the needy in our society and those that need a temporary hand up?

Madam Speaker, I'm going to close with, you know, that this government has shown time and time again that their preference is to do things based on ideology, whether it's own laundry services publicly, long-term beds, rather than to respect how hard many Albertans work to create jobs, to create wealth, and how much risk...

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the motion? The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to be able to rise and discuss the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster's Motion 503. I'm pleased that the member has brought forward this common-sense motion and hope that the government does take this to heart.

As I took a look at the motion, there are a lot of, in my opinion, good, best-practice ideas in there. The one part, though, that I actually am not sure of in terms of logistics, to be able to make it work, is not depositing it into general revenue funds. I think you could still probably take it and you could deliver it into general revenue funds, but you'd have to make sure that you know where the money is going to, where it's coming from. I think you could still work that same way.

Other than that, I think that this is a very common-sense motion that asks the government to think about the idea of best practice and, more importantly, to think about the concept of transparency. Now, even though this government thinks that everything they're doing is transparent – and the Finance minister did get up and say that they've received better grades for the work that they've done in terms of the transparency, and I applauded them for that. I think that's very important, and Albertans are demanding that at this point.

The carbon tax, that the NDP never campaigned on, is a good example of the very need for this type of transparency, that needs to be resolved. The Auditor General insinuated that there's a lack of accountability and oversight when it comes to the carbon tax. In the February 2018 report it states that "it does not clearly state the expected and actual cost of the overall CLP, and it does not state for each program the expected cost needed to achieve those reductions." This is unacceptable, and there needs to be more transparency and accountability for taxpayer dollars.

5:30

If the government wants to collect their levy, as they call it, then these taxes should be benefiting the programs directly. The money taken from these programs in the form of the carbon tax is really money that has been redirected to the programs that has been taken from the taxpayers in some form. The government then takes taxpayers' money from these programs and calls it a carbon levy and then plans to deposit it back into the general revenue. A good accounting trick, but let's be honest here. Albertans are not being tricked at all.

In a CBC article from January of this year entitled *Carbon Taxes Might Not Change Consumer Behaviour, But They Sure Will Feed Government Coffers* it talks of how "the governments requiring [Albertans'] money won't call it a tax." I understand the problems with them calling it a tax, but it is. A tax is a tax. Whether the

government wants to call it a tax or call it a levy, this needs to be resolved here and now with this motion. I believe that the government should put their money where their mouth is and show Albertans today that they want to appear open and accountable to Albertans. This motion is a great first step, but we would like to see the government go one step further and provide Albertans with fuller disclosure of the taxes that they are charged.

I've talked with constituents and stakeholders for the past three years, and I have heard that they are tired of the ever-increasing taxes, specifically the taxes on businesses and the carbon tax, that have hit everyone hard and have hurt families in every wrong way. Albertans understand that there is a need to support the programs and services they rely on, but what they are not in agreement with is a double-taxing situation that the programs and services are facing and the lack of accountability and transparency. Albertans deserve to know exactly where their money is going, and we believe that governments need to be held accountable to the taxpayer. Albertans not only deserve to know but have repeatedly questioned the government on this matter, to no resolve, I might add. I believe that this motion is the beginning of a promise to restore confidence in how programs and services are run in the province and to give hope for a brighter future.

Even in the federal Taxpayer Bill of Rights it says that it is every person's "right to complete, accurate, clear, and timely information." Madam Speaker, Albertans have a right to complete, accurate, clear, and timely information regarding where their tax dollars are being spent. Not only that, but in that same document it says that it is every person's "right to expect [the government] to warn [the people] about questionable tax schemes in a timely manner."

Madam Speaker, even though this motion could possibly increase red tape and regulation, it seems to me that this would be a sure step in the right direction. Now, as you know, I presented a private member's bill, that was defeated, to reduce red tape. Once again, though, the concept here is: what is reasonable for Albertans? I believe what is reasonable for Albertans is to have that transparency. I believe that if they knew where each of those tax dollars are being spent, there would be a lot more hue and cry from Albertans.

Alberta has a number of taxes, levies, fees, and fines that are all collected for a specific purpose. Without passage of this motion, there is nothing in legislation that would require the NDP government to actually direct the revenue from these taxes, levies, fees, and fines back to the programs and services that Albertans have spent their hard-earned dollars on. As a matter of fact, to direct them back into general revenue is a government who is trying to play catch-up by essentially double-billing Albertans. Taxpayers need these programs and services and do not want the government using these funds just to catch up on the debt that they have incurred while they have been in office. This is a reckless use of taxpayers' money.

It is my wish that all members of this Assembly would support this common-sense motion and get the ball rolling by redirecting the taxpayers' monies to the programs and services they are in need of rather than catering to an ideological position and creative accounting practices.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other speakers to the motion?

Seeing none, I'll invite the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster to close debate.

Dr. Starke: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker, and I'd like to thank everyone who spoke in the debate today for their comments. You know, I do want to say that the intent of the motion today was to

open up a discussion. I appreciate the comments from the Minister of Finance. Actually, I have to say that I'm not surprised by those comments because they very much mirror the comments that were made by his predecessors, that were part of our government, who defended the current practice, based to a certain extent on advice from the folks in Treasury Board and Finance, as he said, and also defended it based on what's done in other provinces.

You know, I understand that. Life is easier when you can basically just take all the forms of revenue, put it into one pool, and then divvy it out accordingly. I get that, and I appreciate that that's a practice that he would defend. But the people that don't defend that practice are Albertans. The people that don't defend that practice or at least like the idea of some of what is being called for in this motion are the Albertans I talked to. Albertans would like to see some degree of logical linkage between what they pay to the government – and in some cases, that payment is very begrudging; in other cases, it's more willing – and what they receive back from the government.

I think it's fair to say that most of us don't particularly enjoy paying taxes. The day that our property tax bill arrives on our home we don't say: "Fantastic. My taxes arrived." Most people don't, but most people do appreciate that taxes are necessary in a civilized society to provide the services that we call government to provide for us. Now, there's obviously a debate as to what level of services should be provided. Some people feel there should be more. Others feel there should be fewer.

My argument is that as long as we're going to have these services, they should be delivered in such a way that they provide value to those who are paying for them and they should also provide quality to those who are receiving them. I think one of the things that's important – and I provided services to people in my business for close to 30 years. One of the things that I was always prepared to do was to justify the cost of the service and explain why there was value.

My concern and the reason for bringing forward this motion – and I'm not saying that every last service that government provides or every last fee the government charges has to immediately be linked to a specific service. I am saying: let's look for opportunities where we could do that to demonstrate and to help better inform the taxpaying public about the linkage between what it costs to provide a service and the payment that is being asked for, whether it's in the form of a personal or a corporate income tax or a fee or a charge on things.

I mean, there are many examples, sadly, Madam Speaker, where the fees we're charging are woefully inadequate. I'll give you one. You know, this is my bad. I was the minister of parks for a while. What we charge to camp in our provincial campgrounds is scandalously low. It's scandalously low. It's much lower than what is being charged generally in similarly equipped private campgrounds. Because it's been so low, we haven't been able to reinvest funds into the upkeep and modernization of those campgrounds.

You know, that's just one very small example, but for the quality that we're providing people in those campgrounds, for the quality of the site – we have absolutely gorgeous campgrounds in our provincial parks – sadly, some of the services that we are providing in those campgrounds have fallen behind simply because we have not reinvested. Part of the reason is that our provincial campgrounds, our provincial campsites have about a 33 per cent cost recovery. Other provinces recover fully 100 per cent of the cost of operating their campgrounds, and I think, actually, contrary to what the Minister of Finance said, the services they provide in fact are very high quality, higher quality in some cases than what we can provide.

Madam Speaker, my intent in this debate was not to have some partisan discussion about what taxes are good or what taxes aren't good. My intent in this was to encourage members to look at the possibility or the feasibility of providing a closer connection, for the benefit of taxpayers, between the services that they receive and the taxes they pay. Simply that. I will tell you that most Albertans that I talk to also agree that that would be a good idea, and I would encourage members to support this motion.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion Other than Government Motion 503 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:40 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Drysdale	Starke
Anderson, W.	Gill	Stier
Barnes	Hunter	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hoffman	Payne
Ceci	Horne	Phillips

Coolahan	Kazim	Rosendahl
Cortes-Vargas	Kleinstein	Sabir
Dach	Littlewood	Schmidt
Drever	Luff	Schreiner
Eggen	Malkinson	Shepherd
Fitzpatrick	Mason	Sigurdson
Ganley	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha
Goehring	McKittrick	Turner
Gray	Miller	Westhead
Hinkley	Nielsen	Woollard
Totals:	For – 8	Against – 36

[Motion Other than Government Motion 503 lost]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. With a view to the hour and the wonderful success that we've had this afternoon, we'd like to call it 6 o'clock and adjourn until 1 . . .

Some Hon. Members: Until 7:30.

Mr. Mason: Oh, yeah. We're coming back tonight. Okay. The fun never quits, Madam Speaker. So until 7:30.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:57 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, May 8, 2018

Day 26

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (UCP),
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Anderson, Hon. Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (NDP)
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (UCP)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (NDP)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (NDP)
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (NDP)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (NDP)
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Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)
Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (NDP)
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP)
Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP),
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Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (NDP)
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (AP)
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (NDP),
Deputy Government House Leader
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Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (UCP)
Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (NDP)
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)
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Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)
Schneider, David A., Little Bow (UCP)
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (NDP)
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (NDP)
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (NDP)
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (UCP)
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (UCP)
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (NDP),
Deputy Government Whip
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)
Vacant, Fort McMurray-Conklin
Vacant, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake

Party standings:

New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 25 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent Conservative: 1 Vacant: 2

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Kleinsteinuber	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, May 8, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Hon. members, let us each reflect or pray, in our way, about our loved ones and friends. Think about a time when one of them or ourselves experienced emotional anxiety or pain. Let us remind ourselves that while we all have mental health, there are many times when we and our loved ones experience mental illness as well. Why do some illnesses get treatment while some others get judgment?

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

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

Ms Woollard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly 97 grade 6 students from A. Blair McPherson school in the beautiful constituency of Edmonton-Mill Creek. They are accompanied by their teachers: Ben Maklowich, Holly Paranich, Hayley Sylvester, and Christie Jedelee. I would now ask that they all please stand and receive the warm traditional welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other school groups today?

Seeing and hearing none, the hon. Minister of Transportation.

I'll go to the next one.

Mr. Mason: Please.

Mrs. Aheer: Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to rise today to introduce to you and through you a powerhouse Conservative woman and my friend, Laila Goodridge. Last week Laila won a hotly contested nomination for the United Conservative Party in Fort McMurray-Conklin. She's got some big, big shoes to fill, but we are confident that she can fill them, and we are so looking forward to the day when she will bring her years of experience to our UCP caucus here in the Legislature. I would ask her to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: I'm ready, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and to all members of this Assembly two constituents of mine who are visiting the Assembly today. Austin Mardon holds a master's degree in both science and education as well as a doctorate in geography. He was elected to the Royal Society of Canada for his academic work in 2014. Dr. Mardon was diagnosed with schizophrenia at the age of 30 and has contributed an impressive body of work on behalf of mentally ill persons since that time. This work has earned him many awards, including the Order of Canada in 2007. He is currently an assistant adjunct professor at the University of Alberta.

Catherine Mardon, his spouse, was born in Oklahoma and earned degrees in agriculture and law there. She also earned a master's degree in theological studies from Newman Theological College. Catherine suffered an accident which left her disabled, and she has advocated strongly on behalf of persons with disabilities, earning a

true grit award from the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta's Circle on Mental Health and Addiction in 2016.

I would ask Austin and Catherine Mardon to please rise and accept the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a great pleasure for me to introduce to you and to all members here an old friend, Les Hagen. He's the face of and executive director of Action on Smoking & Health. I think he's been around for about a hundred years, Les? No, 40 years. Tobacco is still the leading cause of avoidable death, disability, disease. Les is seated in the public gallery, and I'll ask him to stand and receive the warm welcome of the Legislature. Thanks, Les.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you Shiva Dean, who is the vice-president of corporate operations at Northlands. He's been there for three years and was operations lead during the Fort McMurray wildfire evacuation two years ago. He's joined today by his wife of 20 years, Lisa Dean, who works at Champion Petfoods, and their three children: Nathaniel, Surya, and Joshua. Mr. Dean is also joined by his mother, Sandra, who is visiting from Ontario. They're here to view our proceedings in the House, and I want to thank them for taking the time to come and visit today. I would now ask my guests to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to the House three Albertans. One has already been introduced, actually, by our deputy leader. Laila Goodridge is the candidate for the United Conservatives in Fort McMurray-Conklin. She's joined as well by another 30-year-old candidate who won a hotly contested nomination for the upcoming by-election in Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, Devin Dreeschen, who is a farmer with a great deal of experience in public policy and in government service. We congratulate him and wish him well. In addition, I'd like to welcome Erika Barootes, who just won the hotly contested election for the presidency of the United Conservative Party, a strong, young Edmonton woman committed to public service. We think that these three fine young Albertans represent a new generation of leadership.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions today. First, I'm honoured to introduce special guests who are with us to celebrate Mental Health Week. They are seated in the public gallery. They're a group of committed, passionate mental health therapists with the Alberta Health Services school-based team. The team provides specialized intensive mental health services for students in Edmonton schools. I want to say thank you to them for improving the quality of care for young people, for school staff, and for families. I ask that Rachelle, Erin, Helen, Allison, Nisha, Karen, Angela, Kirsten, Eileen, Teresa, Gabriel,

Carla, Amanda, Marcy, and Christina rise and receive our warm welcome and our appreciation for all your service, please.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, if I might, I have a second introduction, and that's to introduce members of the Alberta Public Health Association who are seated in the public gallery. This association has been working hard to improve the health of Albertans through advocacy, partnerships, and education for 75 years, and I congratulate them on this milestone. I'm inspired by their dedication to advocating for public health, and I thank them for their commitment. The members here today include Lindsay, Angeline, and Aslam. Please rise and receive the warm welcome and gratitude of our Assembly.

The Speaker: The Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to introduce to you and through you guests from the Canadian Mental Health Association's 211 and the Distress Centre joining us today during Mental Health Week. The 211 is a 24-hour information and referral line that helps connect people to social, health, and government programs and is there to help when someone is in distress. This year's theme for Mental Health Week is Get Loud. This means speaking up to stop the discrimination and the stigma that usually go hand in hand with mental illness. Tell everyone to get loud to maintain positive mental health. I ask that Stephanie Wright, Patricia Skagen-Emokpae, Bronte Diduck, and Stephanie Chard please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of our House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Adam McDonald. Adam has walked all the way from Fort McKay, starting on April 30, and, sir, he's making his way to Prince Rupert. Why is he walking? He's trying to bring attention to the fact that we have many, many issues dealing with missing and murdered indigenous women, and he hopes to bring attention to this very subject. Sir, if you would please rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

1:40

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Mr. Gagan Singh. He's a certified environmental professional, and he's licensed with the Canadian Environmental Certification Approvals Board. Gagan's professional career spans over 13 years, and he's successfully given consulting services for the climate change policy and carbon offset regimes, sustainability and environmental policy and legislation, energy efficiency and conservation, natural resource management, and solid waste management. He also happens to be a new member of the Edmonton-Ellerslie EDA, and I'm proud to call him my friend. I ask him to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other guests today? Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and to all members of the Legislature seven individuals. I would ask that they stand as I mention their names. First, three very important ladies in my life: my wife, Barb, whom you have met before, and with her today is one of our five children, Laura, and one of our seven grandchildren, Annalise. Laura and Annalise are visiting from Langley, British Columbia, where our son-in-law is stationed as an RCMP officer. Yes, they are from B.C., and, yes, they are very much in favour of the Trans Mountain pipeline project. With them are friends visiting from Munich, Germany: Julia and Torsten Schuster and their children Julius and Pauline. Julia and our daughter Laura became very good friends while completing their master's of business degrees in Maastricht, Netherlands, and they continue to visit back and forth and will remain friends for life. I ask that the members would please give them the traditional warm welcome of this Legislature.

The Speaker: Hon. member, you may not have seen that, but she was waving to you.

Members' Statements

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

United Conservative Party Tax Policies

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This weekend conservatives of all stripes gathered in Red Deer to celebrate and debate their shared passions for homophobia, health care privatization, attacking women's rights, and, one of my personal favourites, big tax giveaways for millionaires. You know, I wish I could say that I was surprised, but it's just so predictable. The actions of the UCP this weekend show Albertans loud and clear exactly whose side they're on, and it sure isn't the side of everyday Albertans.

For too long the richest Albertans and wealthiest corporations weren't asked to pay their fair share. Every year ordinary families were asked to do more with less, and in a province that's as rich and as diverse as Alberta, that's simply unacceptable.

Now, just when things are looking up and everyday families finally have a government that supports them, the Conservatives want to rip the rug out from underneath them and send Alberta back to the Dark Ages. Their plan will see everyday working families having to pay more for the services that they rely on while those at the very top, the richest Albertans and wealthiest corporations, all will get a \$700 million tax giveaway. Their plan means deep cuts to things like health care and education just so Conservative insiders and the top 1 per cent can afford an extra round of golf on the taxpayer dime. Albertans have seen this all before, and they rejected this vision and sense of entitlement in the last election.

Mr. Speaker, we're not going to let that happen. Albertans deserve better than an opposition who's only focused on making things easier for their rich friends and insiders. While it's clear that the Conservatives are out of touch with the priorities of everyday Albertans and are only interested in themselves, I'm very proud to say that our government has the backs of ordinary working families across this province, and we will never stop fighting to make life better and more affordable for all Albertans.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If the member opposite is looking for the Dark Ages, he could find it in the socialist Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Aga Khan's Diamond Jubilee

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, this week Alberta is privileged to be welcoming His Highness Prince Karim Aga Khan as he visits our province as part of his diamond jubilee visit around the world to celebrate his 60th anniversary since becoming the 49th imam of the Ismaili Shia Muslim jamaat.

Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to have known His Highness for many years. As the federal minister for multiculturalism I was responsible for the Global Centre for Pluralism, a partnership between the federal government and His Highness the Aga Khan, which is offering Canada's successful model of pluralism to parts of the world riven by conflict. This is just one of so many examples of how His Highness and the Ismaili community have contributed to Canada. Indeed, I was honoured while being minister of citizenship and immigration to declare His Highness an honorary Canadian citizen.

Mr. Speaker, Canada was very blessed back some 45 years ago to receive tens of thousands of Ismaili refugees from racism, primarily from east Africa, who came to this country with nothing but who, with the moral support and guidance of the Aga Khan, have managed to go to the very top of Canadian and Alberta society in every domain: in business, in the arts, in the academy.

Mr. Speaker, while we welcome His Highness to Alberta, we join with him in celebrating the innumerable successes of the Ismaili community in Alberta. Alberta can be proud to say that we were the first province to elect a Muslim to the Parliament of Canada right here from Edmonton, an Ismaili.

Mr. Speaker, happy diamond jubilee to His Highness and to all Alberta Ismaili Muslims celebrating this happy occasion.

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

Aga Khan's Diamond Jubilee

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my distinct honour today to rise to welcome His Highness the Aga Khan to Alberta as he prepares to visit Calgary on Thursday. Albertans congratulate His Highness on the occasion of his diamond jubilee. For 60 years as the spiritual leader of the Ismaili Muslim community His Highness has dedicated his life to improving the quality of life of people around the world. His global institutions exemplify the values of pluralism, commitment to education, gender equality, access to quality health care, and building community and civil society in the countries in which they have a presence. Members of the Ismaili community are active leaders in civil society and contribute to Alberta's social, cultural, and economic landscape.

I am proud to work closely with the Ismaili community here in Alberta, a community that sees diversity not as a weakness but as a strength, a community that strives to build an inclusive society, a community dedicated to fostering a pluralistic society and a commitment to helping the most vulnerable amongst us.

This year the Ismaili community in Canada has surpassed their pledge to engage in 1 million hours of voluntary service to improve the quality of life of fellow Canadians. Right here in Alberta over the course of the diamond jubilee year the Ismaili community in Alberta has contributed over 350 thousand volunteer hours.

As His Highness the Aga Khan said: we have a duty to leave the world a better place. This quote is something I take inspiration from every day and something I try to live up to in the work our government is doing to make a more inclusive and caring Alberta, where no one is left behind.

We thank His Highness for the gift of the Aga Khan garden, Alberta, and hope that he will be able to join us to enjoy this

magnificent celebration of peace and hope once it is completed in the coming months.

On this joyous occasion we welcome you, Your Highness, to Alberta, and on behalf of all members of this House we wish you diamond jubilee Mubarak.

Oil and Gas Transportation to Tidewater

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to supporting and encouraging pipelines to tidewater from Alberta, the NDP have an abysmal record. We have the video of the Premier before election day in 2015 withholding support for the Northern Gateway pipeline. When the federal government invaded provincial jurisdiction to mandate that the National Energy Board examine upstream emissions on the Energy East pipeline, the NDP rolled over and failed to defend the Constitution and the pipeline. Continuing to sell our product at a discount to only one customer is not common sense. With countless attempts at obstruction by the NDP's fellow travelers, we must fight to move our product to tidewater.

1:50

There is the proposed indigenous-owned Eagle Spirit pipeline to a terminal near Prince Rupert, or we could negotiate with CN Rail for access to their 100-metre right-of-way. It would be easy, with one landowner all the way to the Pacific. But if Trudeau's tanker ban interferes, we can build a pipeline or a railway to Alaska and ship via the Trans-Alaska pipeline system, which is running at the minimal capacity. Then there is the possibility of going east. Forget about Ontario and Quebec. Let's fix the railway and move the product via Churchill. The tank farm sits ready and waiting to move product to Europe, with shorter sailing times over Thunder Bay.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta ingenuity, hard work, determination, and a can-do attitude will ensure that new markets and tidewater access will be achieved for Alberta in spite of the NDP's and Trudeau Liberals' actions speaking louder than their words. If there is a will, there is a way.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

Carbon Levy Increase

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I was in Ottawa to represent the majority of Albertans, who oppose the carbon tax. They oppose the NDP's carbon tax and the proposed Trudeau tax, that would raise the rate here by 67 per cent. We heard at the committee I appeared at that carbon taxes can actually be progressive if they have generous low-income tax credits. Now that this government has decided to stop increasing the rebates as the rate goes higher, will the Premier not admit that the carbon tax will become increasingly regressive in impacting low-income Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased that the member opposite has recognized that, in fact, the climate change leadership plan includes a progressive element to the work that we've done. That's a fundamental commitment that we made. We wanted to ensure that it didn't have a disproportionate effect, that it wasn't a flat tax, like the flat tax that the members opposite are proposing to reinstate as a result of their interesting convention on the weekend. While I appreciate that the member is concerned

about progressive taxation as it relates to the climate leadership plan, I suggest they should . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, that talking point might have been fine for the first \$30 of the NDP carbon tax, but it no longer works for the next \$20, as they raise it to \$50 a tonne, because the government has admitted in their budget that there will be no additional rebates to offset a higher rate. Again I'll ask the Premier: will she not admit that by failing to increase the rebates as the tax goes higher, low-income people will continue to pay more for the energy they consume simply to live normal lives?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, in fact, most people will talk about the fact that a carbon levy like the one that we are bringing in actually is progressive even without the rebates because it is, in fact, higher income earners who actually burn more carbon. The progressive nature of it continues regardless although we will continue to look at other ways in which we can enhance that.

Mr. Speaker, it really is rather rich for the member opposite to be suggesting this when his party just passed a plan to give the top 1 per cent of Albertans a \$750 million tax cut. I mean, I think they should really figure out . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Kenney: For the record, Mr. Speaker, high-income Albertans are actually paying less now than they used to. Income tax revenues are down since the NDP raised the rates. That's what happens when you disincentivize economic activity.

Mr. Speaker, the experts on the panel that I appeared at in Ottawa yesterday talked about how carbon taxes can be great in that they replace so-called costly regulations. Interesting idea. Could the Premier please identify a single environmental regulation that her government has repealed as a result of the introduction of the carbon tax?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our carbon levy works together with a whole other plan to reduce our emissions. That's what we need to do as responsible stewards of the environment, and it's also what we need to do to get a pipeline to tidewater, something which, the members opposite will recall, they were unable to do after nine years. The reality is that our climate leadership plan is focused on getting a pipeline built, a pipeline that will fund education, health care, all those things that the members opposite appear to be not quite as much in support of now as they were right before last weekend.

The Speaker: Second main question.

Carbon Levy Provincial Debt

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the Premier has again invoked the notion of social licence, that if we punish Alberta consumers for heating their homes and driving to work, we'll somehow get a pipeline built. Could the Premier please tell us if she can identify a single provincial government, municipal government, political party, First Nation, or environmental organization that has gone

from opposition to coastal pipelines to support for coastal pipelines as a result of the NDP carbon tax?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What I can do is talk about our ability to talk about a responsible climate leadership plan and a cap on emissions and all the things that go with the incredible work that the province of Alberta and industry in Alberta are doing to meet our responsibilities and how that has been part of the conversation we've had across this country and in B.C., where support for Kinder Morgan is well over 50 per cent and has grown at least 20 per cent in the last six months, and it's because of the good work that we have been doing here in Edmonton and with industry. We believe in making progress on this file, and I'm very proud of how it's been working.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Kenney: Well, I'll take it from the Premier's failure to answer the question that there is no organization that's moved from no to yes on pipelines as a result of the carbon tax.

Mr. Speaker, in Ottawa yesterday I also heard from carbon tax proponents that they can be revenue neutral when there are offsetting cuts in other tax rates to make up for the higher government revenues coming in from carbon taxes. Could the Premier please identify what tax rate she cut to ensure the revenue neutrality of Alberta's NDP carbon tax?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, in fact, what we did was that we cut the small-business tax rate to 2 per cent, so that worked out well. You know, I know the member was in Ottawa rigorously fighting against any effort to combat climate change. Here's another thing that the member said when he was in Ottawa just a couple of years earlier. It's a good one: when it comes to pipelines, no project is a national priority. That's what he said then. Say one thing and do another: it reminds me very much of the UCP convention that we saw on the weekend. Despite what the UCP says, behind the curtain things are a lake of fire.

Mr. Kenney: Because all of those pipelines are a priority.

Mr. Speaker, the University of Calgary's economics think tank, the School of Public Policy, has released a report showing how devastating the massive increase in the public debt of this government is for future generations. They found that a 16-year-old in 2023 can expect to pay the equivalent of \$42,000 over her lifetime in additional personal income taxes to pay the interest on the public debt. Is the government proud that they're going to force a young Albertan to pay \$42,000 to bankers and bondholders for their debt?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What we are proud of is that young Albertans, as they leave school, will not be spending \$45,000 in the first four years after they leave high school to pay for their postsecondary education, and that's because we made a decision to freeze tuition and to maintain funding in our postsecondary system because we know that that is fundamental to supporting our young people, and it is also fundamental to growing our economy. We're going to invest in the future. We are not going to try to cut our way to prosperity for the top 1 per cent.

The Speaker: Third main question.

Provincial Debt

Mr. Kenney: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, does the Premier not understand that today's deficits are tomorrow's taxes? Has the government conducted any assessment of the long-term transfer of wealth from future generations to today's generation because of their massive deficit spending?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, what we have said – we made a choice when we were elected. We made a choice that we would not make a bad situation worse. We would not follow the recession. We would lead the recovery, and as a result things are starting to look up. Not all, but they are starting to look up: 90,000 new jobs, leading the country in economic growth. This is how you work your way out of this kind of problem. You do not cut your way out. You do not make Albertans pay for the mistakes of generations past, and you do not give tax breaks to the top 1 per cent.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, shortly after the budget I asked the following question. I didn't get an answer then. Perhaps the government has been able to do their homework since. Could the government tell us: how much do they plan to spend on interest payments to bankers and bondholders as a result of the \$96 billion debt included in their budget?

2:00

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I've answered that question in the past, and that is fine. It's interesting. When it comes to doing one's job, one of the things that official oppositions often do is introduce a shadow budget, and they talk about what they would do differently to deal with the fiscal pressures that are facing this government, that are real. But they never did it, and they said it was because they wanted to wait for their membership to tell them what to do. Now they've decided that they're not going to listen to their membership. They're going to write their own policy. I'm wondering if the member opposite is now prepared to tell the people of Alberta what he would cut to make things different.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, according to this University of Calgary study almost half of the burden of higher taxes as a result of the NDP's debt will be borne by the 16- to 35-year-old age group. Those over 65, on the other hand, will pay less than 3 per cent of the total tax burden. This constitutes an intergenerational transfer of wealth. I'd like to ask the Premier. Does she think that it is fair, just, or progressive to transfer wealth from future generations to pay for our overspending here today?

Ms Notley: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that transferred debt to future generations was the failure of the previous Conservative government to invest in infrastructure, for instance. We had an infrastructure debt and deficit which was gargantuan, which regular Albertans paid the price for each and every day when they tried to access the services that they and their families relied upon. That kind of management doesn't work. It is time that we not have our teachers wake up in the morning to check the price of oil to see if they're going to be able to go to work to teach our kids. We can do better, and that's exactly what we're doing.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Violence Prevention

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Every Albertan and indeed every human being deserves to live and work free from violence or the threat of violence. Lately I've seen a disturbing rise in the number of threats directed against female politicians. Whether they're being threatened because they hold differing political views or have spoken about their Me Too experiences or simply because they are women in public spaces, it's wrong and we need to do more to stop it. To the Minister of Justice: do the police and the justice system have the resources to identify and prosecute threats of violence and to support the targets of those threats?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. Of course, it's absolutely critical to our government and to our policing partners as well to ensure that every person across Alberta is able to feel safe in their homes, in their communities, regardless of their gender. We absolutely continue to work with our police partners to ensure that they have the resources necessary to service all different communities because this is absolutely a critical issue for both us and them.

Mr. Fraser: Threats of violence are disgusting enough, but we recently saw in Toronto what can happen when the kind of hate that motivates these threats is allowed to fester. Ultimately, the people responsible for these acts are the people who commit them. We need to ask ourselves, though, if there is more that we can do to prevent online hate from becoming a real-life tragedy. We can try to stop the radicalization of these men through measures like community intervention or, if necessary, police intervention. To the same minister: is your government working with the police, federal and municipal governments, and community leaders to intervene before the violence escalates to physical violence?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and again to the member for the incredibly important question. I could go on for considerable length about this one. We do work with police, with the ASSIST team, to ensure that we're assessing threats throughout the province. Another really important portion of this is ensuring that we're investing in those community resources so that all members of our community have access to the services they need, including mental health services, when they need them and including the ability to access other members of the community so they can feel like part of the community, which helps a lot with this radicalization.

Thank you.

Mr. Fraser: I've spoken about it before, but I want to be very clear. What we say in this Chamber matters. Our tone, our words, and the example that we set for Albertans plays a role in fostering or preventing expressions of hate or threats of violence. I commend all sides of this House for speaking out against violence, but this isn't an issue that we can afford to stop talking about. We must be sure that Albertans know that there is no place for hate in this province. To the Premier, respectfully, I'm asking for a nonpartisan answer. Will you work with us as legislators to establish an all-party committee so that we can address this on an ongoing basis?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, I have to say that one of the things that I think speaks most to my

heart about this side of the House is how many women have been involved in this government to make sure that we create laws, that we create an environment, and that we create a culture where women are respected in every workplace. I have to say that part of that starts with the tone at the top with our Premier, who made sure that we had 50 per cent of the people on the ballot as women because 50 per cent of Albertans are women. When I hear other members of this House refer to things like feminism as the F-word, well, I guess that's better than when they called it cancer, but I do have to say that I will not back down. I will keep fighting for women. You're certainly welcome to be part of that, but we don't need an all-party committee. We need a government that's on the side of women, and we've got it.

The Speaker: Hon. members, just again, many times I've mentioned it, but we're about to move to question 5. There are no preambles under our standing orders that we've discussed here. As we move forward, please act accordingly.

The Member for Calgary-Klein.

Tax Policy

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the first things we did as a government was to reinstitute a progressive tax in Alberta. My constituents would like to know: what has returning to a progressive tax meant for the government and for Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Progressive tax is what exists in every province in Canada, and the federal government as well uses a progressive income tax system. We are simply asking those who make more money to pay a little more to support the vital programs and services in this province. A progressive tax results in more stable revenue for government to fund those important programs and services while building the infrastructure like schools, hospitals, highways, and bridges that all Albertans need and rely on.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the UCP convention over the weekend the party's membership voted to return Alberta to the flat tax, one of the many regressive policies introduced at the UCP blast from the past. To the same minister: why has this government chosen to move away from the flat tax of the previous government?

Mr. Ceci: That was a proud moment, when I moved away from the flat tax in June of 2015. Returning to the flat tax benefits only Alberta's wealthiest to the tune of a \$700 million tax cut for the richest 1 per cent in Alberta. That's people making over \$300,000 a year, Mr. Speaker. Albertans just get stuck with the bill. Regular Albertans will pay it through cuts to our kids' classrooms and longer ER wait times. While the members opposite want to fight for those at the top and their friends, we stand for Albertans.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that getting rid of the flat tax has benefited Albertans, what effect would reversing this policy have?

Mr. Ceci: It would be devastating, Mr. Speaker. The UCP's plan to blow a \$5 billion hole in the budget with no plan to pay for it will only make the problems in this province get worse. On the flat tax

specifically they would have to cut nearly the entire budget allocated to the children's intervention ministry, or they would cut the entire budget allocated to home care for our elderly. Either way, Albertans lose, and the UCP and their rich friends and insiders benefit.

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

Tobacco Reduction and Industry Lobbyists

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The framework convention on tobacco control is a public health treaty prohibiting the signatories, including Canada and Alberta, from meeting behind closed doors with tobacco lobbyists. In opposition the ND caucus railed against insider lobbying by tobacco companies, and now they do continue to bring about the multimillion-dollar lawsuit against big tobacco. It's surprising, then, that now the NDP government appears to be welcoming these lobbyists, including the Premier's former press secretary Sally Housser, into its backrooms. To the Premier: how many times has she met with lobbyist Sally Housser in the last year, and what was discussed?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms. Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Let me be perfectly clear. My understanding is that with the exception of one former staff member in the Health minister's office who met once inadvertently, there have been no meetings with tobacco lobbyists on the matter of tobacco by anybody in our government.* We are committed to making progress on reducing tobacco use across this province. That is why we banned the use of menthol cigarettes soon after we got elected, and we will continue to work very, very hard on that matter.

2:10

The Speaker: Thank you.

Dr. Swann: Well, Mr. Speaker, we have reliable sources that say otherwise. I'd like the Premier to tell us in which other departments tobacco lobbyists have met with her members and table the subjects, the places, the dates, and the times of those meetings in other departments in your government.

Ms. Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, what I will say is that it is a bit disturbing the kinds of suggestions that are being made without any kind of evidence behind them. What I can tell you is that as far as we can tell, there was one inadvertent meeting very early on in the mandate, and it has never happened since. For people to make suggestions like that is not very responsible, quite frankly, and I expect more from the member opposite. The reality is that there is nothing to table because we've been following the rules, and we always follow the rules, and we have not been meeting with tobacco lobbyists.

Dr. Swann: Mr. Speaker, the Alberta government continues to stall on the implementation of the 2013 Tobacco and Smoking Reduction Act. Some provisions will be dropped soon if this is not proclaimed. Why are you delaying, and when will you fully implement the tobacco legislation that we passed almost five years ago?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms. Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm really proud that over the last few years Alberta has introduced tougher tobacco laws, making it possible for us to move more swiftly on reducing

*See page 1081, left column, paragraph 15

tobacco use, and we've seen success with our youth. We've seen reduced revenues for tobacco sales as well, which speaks to there being fewer people purchasing tobacco, and cigarettes have minimum package sizing, et cetera. And as the Premier said, we did ban menthol and received a reward from Smoke-free Alberta for that, that we're very grateful for. We understand that there is more work to be done on some other areas, including vaping, and that's why we're working with the federal government to make sure that we're compliant.

Midwifery Services

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, women in this province are increasingly seeking the services offered by midwives. Midwives play a valuable role in supporting the health of mothers and their babies. Not only that, but midwifery helps save the system costs associated with low-risk births. Minister, the opposition has been advocating for years for women to have better access to this service. Will the government finally remove the cap restricting midwife access so that more women can make use of this cost-saving measure?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Well, thank you so much, Mr. Speaker and for the question. Today they're advocating for increased expansion of services. Yesterday and probably five minutes from now they'll be advocating for more cuts to health care. I'm sure glad that we have a government that's working to expand funding and increase the number of courses of care. Every single year this government has increased courses of care by 400. That's 400 women who are getting the support, 400 families who are getting the support, 400 babies or more sometimes who are getting the support when they are exercising that right to choose. We are excited that we are supporting this instead of moving for deep ideological cuts like the members opposite.

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, it's a pretty sad day when the Health minister doesn't know that this is a cost-saving measure. Given that women all over this province are giving birth and given that the Associate Minister of Health agreed with the Official Opposition last year that midwifery has the possibility of actually helping to save dollars in the system – tell your minister – Minister, last year you brought forward what you described as a stable model, yet wait-lists are still increasing. Will you finally take our advice and remove the cap?

Ms Hoffman: Well, as we've seen, Mr. Speaker, I respect the fact that women are increasing their right to choose a midwife, and we support that expansion. The arguments around financial are arguments that, frankly, are one part of this question but aren't actual sound and scientific evidence. While I appreciate that there is the possibility that women are potentially having home births and if there is an OB who is not working at the same time, there could be savings, in actuality often we've seen that there are increases. But that isn't what's driving this. What's driving this is making sure that we support women in exercising their choices around their birth plans.

Mrs. Pitt: I'll table evidence later, Mr. Speaker, that shows substantial savings by using midwifery.

Given that more and more women are finding that this service is valuable and supply is just not meeting the demand and given that pregnancy is nine months and women really can't wait, Minister, when will you finally remove the cap and make this service a priority for women in our province?

Ms Hoffman: Well, Mr. Speaker, we saw what happened when the now Official Opposition was in government and they removed caps on things like daily dispensing fees. We saw seniors have to pay out of pocket every single day to get their prescriptions refilled. Sometimes people say: well, if they're not seeing a doctor and they're seeing a pharmacist instead, maybe the costs will go down. That isn't what's driving decision-making in this. What's driving it is ensuring that we get women the care they need. We're working to expand that by 400 courses every year. We certainly appreciate that there is potential in some situations for there to be cost savings, but we also know that that can't be the only driver, because we're not going to lay off nurses and ob-gyns to offset these costs. We're going to continue to expand access, and that's why we have.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

Crown Prosecution Practice Protocol

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In October 2016 the Justice minister unveiled her triage policy, and I quote: we had to respond to ensure that cases were not being lost in court. Unquote. In the following six months the Crown abandoned 200 criminal prosecutions. Minister, another 14 months have gone by. What is the total number of charges dropped to date, and what does this say about the minister's triage policy?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the member has alluded to, in the wake of the Jordan decision it was absolutely necessary for the government to respond. We've responded to that in two ways. The triage policy enables us to ensure that the cases which we are dropping tend more towards the low end of the spectrum rather than serious and violent, dangerous offences to ensure that we're using the justice system most effectively. The second way we've dealt with that is by investing in the justice system. I wish the opposition members would support that investment.

Mr. Taylor: I'd still like to know what that number is.

Given that the total number of criminal charges abandoned since the fall of 2016 is likely well over 500 by now and given that if the minister's triage policy has not cleared the court backlog in almost two years, it has failed to do its job, Minister, are you willing to make the changes needed to ensure that the triage policy works?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Well, as the member is no doubt aware, the population of the province of Alberta continues to expand. What that means is that there continues to be a higher demand for services as we move forward. Because the justice system had been underfunded for decades under the previous government, we suffered from a serious backlog in terms of funding to different areas of the system. We're addressing that, again, in two ways, by making sure we're using the justice system in the most effective possible manner and by making sure that we're funding the things that we need to fund in order to make it work efficiently. We'll continue to look at that as we ...

The Speaker: Thank you.

Second supplemental.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It doesn't sound like the triage protocol is actually working that well. Given that the minister said yesterday that her triage policy "intends to prioritize serious and violent cases" and given that every time an alleged murderer or sexual offender walks free, it hurts Albertans and shocks Albertans, Minister, will you please either provide us with evidence that your triage policy is working or come up with a solution that works for all involved?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's quite clear to us that every time a matter isn't adjudicated in court, every time someone walks free without the victim or the family of the victim even getting to see a day in court, that hurts all Albertans, and it hurts the justice system in that perception as well. That's why we have brought in measures to ensure that the justice system is able to focus on those serious and violent offences. When the Jordan decision came down, the system had been underfunded for so long that we were too far behind to catch up with just resources. We're also ensuring that we're putting additional resources in. It's pretty rich for them when . . .

The Speaker: Thank you.

Electricity Regulated Rate Cap

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, Albertans received a mailer telling them that the NDP government will cover them when the market price for electricity exceeds 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour. Today at the Public Accounts meeting the assistant deputy minister confirmed that the NDP government paid \$9 million in April 2018 to cover higher prices. To the Minister of Energy: why do you force taxpayers to subsidize the electricity bills of ratepayers to cover up your failed ideological policies? Taxpayers and ratepayers are the same.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we are changing the system. It's a holistic change because the system that we inherited was broken. As we go through the stages, it's important to help educate Albertans on what those changes are, what they will look like. One of the promises we made was capping rates at 6.8 cents should those rates rise above that, and it's important for Albertans to understand how that rate cap is going to work.

2:20

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, given that the Energy department's 2016-17 annual report says that the cost of subsidizing all of the power bills is currently unknown, yet the NDP have budgeted \$74.3 million this year to cover the electricity costs over and above 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour, how would the NDP government know that \$74.3 million would be enough to cover higher electricity prices since they don't know how much it will cost?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we look at forward prices. We take in a lot of information from third-party sources to look at the trends for electricity going forward. That's one of the ways we come up with that. I would take exception that we don't know the costs. The costs are actually in our budget projections. All they have to do is open up the budget and have a look.

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, given that the minister didn't know who Neil McCrank was during the budget estimates and given that Neil McCrank sued the government for maligning his reputation and that with McCrank being under indemnification, the AUC ended up paying his legal fees, Minister, how much did this lawsuit cost taxpayers, and did you admit the mistake and apologize? How much did you settle for?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, all of that information is publicly available. You just have to look either on our website or in the budget projections.

But I have to say, you know, last weekend hearing about the plans to abolish the carbon levy, last night's discussion about the capacity market, things we're looking to change, that industry wants to know what your take is on the capacity market, because they're very worried.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

Athabasca University

Mr. Piquette: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Athabasca University provides Albertans with a high-quality university education no matter where they live. In my riding it is also a pillar of our community, providing high-quality jobs and educational opportunities. The staff of AU and the greater Athabasca community are grateful for the support our government has provided to keep the university strong in Athabasca. However, recently there have been concerns over professional jobs being lost to big urban centres. What is the government doing to make sure that Athabasca University is sustainable and that jobs in Athabasca are protected?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. He's been a powerful advocate for Athabasca University and the town of Athabasca. We're proud of the work that we've done to put AU back on track and to keep it in the town of Athabasca. We commissioned a third-party review, written by Dr. Ken Coates, and we've been working with AU to implement its recommendations. We've made clear that as progress is being made, jobs in the town of Athabasca must be protected. The Coates report calls for enhancing the role of Athabasca University in Athabasca and states that "AU should be able to maintain if not expand the size of its operations in the Town of Athabasca."

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that under the previous Conservative government there were grave concerns about roller coaster funding and the long-term financial sustainability of AU, what has the government done to provide financial stability?

Mr. Schmidt: Well, we know that one of the favourite Conservative pastimes was making cuts to postsecondary education, and that made the problems at Athabasca University worse. We've been proud to increase our funding by 2 per cent for our universities and colleges every year that we've been in government, including at Athabasca University. We were very pleased to see that the financial reports from AU last year were positive, and thanks to our support, they are now on much more stable financial footing. If the Conservatives ever got the chance again, they'd make more cuts and undo the progress that we've made at Athabasca University.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Coates report provides a way forward for Athabasca University to thrive in the years to come, what is the minister doing to make sure that the third-party report is being followed through on?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're working closely with Athabasca University's new president and board chair to see this work through. AU has been consulting and recently presented a strategic plan, which outlines a path forward and clear goals and objectives through 2022. I'll be visiting Athabasca in the coming weeks and providing further updates on our government's support for Athabasca University, and I look forward to having the hon. member there with me.

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

Carbon Trunk Line and the Sturgeon Refinery

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is the potential for benefit to Albertans from our investment in the Sturgeon refinery, but there are also substantial risks. Earlier today in Public Accounts I had the opportunity to ask the Department of Energy about one specific risk, and that is the status of the Alberta carbon trunk line. Now, you'll recall that this project is meant to support enhanced oil recovery while sequestering carbon. Unfortunately, we learned that this project still does not have financing and still does not have a start date for construction. To the Minister of Energy: what happens if the Alberta carbon trunk line isn't built by the time the Sturgeon refinery starts full operations later this year?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, the carbon trunk line is part of that project. You know, we work with the North West upgrader. We're looking forward to the opening of that refinery. It's going to be a good project for Alberta, and we'll continue to monitor the results as we go forward.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's about the furthest thing from an answer that I've seen in this House for some time, and that's saying something.

Mr. Speaker, in my risk management days we used to say that a problem is when a risk becomes a reality, so I'd say that the minister, unfortunately, has a problem on her hands. Given that the Alberta carbon trunk line was an integral part of the original business case for Alberta's investment in the Sturgeon refinery and given that the project not only hasn't gotten started, it hasn't even secured financing, to the Minister of Energy one more time: if the refinery is forced to emit carbon instead of capturing it, how much will they pay in carbon tax, and does that affect the return to Albertans from this investment?

The Speaker: Hon. member, you're going to have a second supplemental. Maybe you didn't hear at the beginning. I found a thread, a number of preambles in that question. So when you get the next chance, please reduce them.

The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we've been clear. We have two projects right now, the Shell Quest project

and certainly the North West upgrader project. We've been clear that we would continue with those. They were both continuing contracts from the previous government. I can assure the member that I'll get him some specifics. I don't have those specifics before me.

We're looking with interest at the costs of carbon capture. We do know that in places like Saskatchewan the cost is about a hundred dollars a tonne. We're doing many projects here for far less than that, and that's good for Albertans, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Clark: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given during estimates we learned that the price of the Sturgeon refinery has gone up yet another \$300 million, to \$9.7 billion, and may go further over budget and given we still don't have a date for full-scale production and given the likelihood of additional costs from the carbon levy, from delays to the Alberta carbon trunk line, one more time to the Minister of Energy: if the Alberta carbon trunk line is delayed or never built, will that tip the scales for the Sturgeon refinery from profit to loss?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I promised before, I will get back to the member on that matter. I don't have the facts before me.

But I do know that the North West refinery is slowly ramping up. It takes about a year. So far it's been successful. I've seen examples of low-sulphur diesel, which is going to be good for us. Again, we are looking, with interest, at the two carbon capture projects, and I'll have more to say once I find out some more information.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Seniors' Housing

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently the Member for Stony Plain said, "We know that people are healthier – physically, mentally, and emotionally – when they can transition into care in their own communities." The Health minister, in response, said, "We are committed to helping Albertans lead healthy and safe lives in their homes and in their communities." And just yesterday the seniors minister said, "I know they want to age in their communities, close to their loved ones" and "I know seniors across the province want to stay in their communities as they age." If the minister and this NDP government really believe this, what happened to the Berwyn Autumn Lodge and their ability to age in their community?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the member mentions the Member for Stony Plain, I want to make sure that she knows that our thoughts are with her today as she undergoes this battle.

I had the opportunity of visiting the Autumn Lodge with the local MLA, the Minister of Energy, just before Christmas and had a lovely visit with some of the residents there. We also worked to make sure that the housing management body knew that there were some additional supports that we could put in place to help them protect that facility if that was their priority. They chose to exercise their own choice on that matter, Mr. Speaker, but we've certainly worked to try to support it through the housing management body.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Loewen: Likewise, our thoughts are with the Member for Stony Plain.

Given that a seniors' facility, owned by the Alberta government, in DeBolt was closed due to a creek bank sliding near it and given that seniors were moved out, some of them right out of the community, and given that this issue has been going on for two years – and I now understand that the ministry just came up with half a solution by saying that they might cover moving and renovations of the buildings – and given that there's no word yet on the acquisition of the land needed, what the community needs to know is: who's responsible for purchasing the land, and will the seniors in DeBolt be able to access the same opportunity to age in their communities as they did before?

2:30

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, and we appreciate the question. It's certainly one that we've been asking with the housing management body. We respect their local authority over this matter, Mr. Speaker. We've given them resources to consider how they might be able to support movement or transition for those individuals who are impacted, but certainly we respect the fact that the housing management body is the one making this decision. We've been working to try to give them tools to enable them to make the decisions they feel are best.

Mr. Loewen: Given that the DeBolt facility is actually owned by the provincial government, not the housing management, but given that there have been seniors' facilities shut down and that this government keeps talking about the lack of seniors' facilities, how are you going to make up for the shortfall due to the aging population along with the stress of existing facilities that are shutting down?

Ms Hoffman: The member is right to note that there is significant stress and deferred maintenance in this province because we saw that happen over many, many years of budgets being cut any time the price of oil dropped, people being laid off, and we are working diligently to try to address that massive backlog of deferred maintenance, that we've inherited from decades of Conservative governments, Mr. Speaker. We're investing in affordable housing, including affordable housing for seniors in lodges. We've got the biggest investment in that in more than a generation, and we're proud to do that. I wish the members opposite would vote for it every now and then instead of just asking for more resources and then voting down every single budget.

Hospital Helipads

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, yesterday I received an e-mail from a constituent in Westlock. Last year he observed for months on end as the work at the hospital helipad went on and on and on. "They could have built a whole hospital in the time that effort took," he said. Apparently, the helipad at the Westlock hospital is still not operational, putting the lives of my constituents at risk when they need to medevac to Edmonton or be brought in from an accident scene. Can the Minister of Health explain what is holding up this critical life-saving facility?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. With regard to this specific helipad I'll have to get back to the hon. member, but I can tell you that I am aware of two that are undergoing some

significant renovations. This is in line with changes that have been made by Transport Canada around helipads. There is a backup plan always, any time they have to decommission one and do renovations or build a new one, to use an adjacent facility, which would sometimes mean a nearby field or a nearby airport. With regard to this very specific one I'll have to get back to the hon. member, but please do know that it is our priority to ensure patient safety, no matter what.

Mr. van Dijken: Given, Mr. Speaker, that there is about \$7 million left in this now six-year program of \$26 million and given that hospitals around Alberta have had their helipads compromised during a repair schedule that was supposed to be done three years ago, can the minister assure this House that the delays in repairs are over and the hospital helipad work will conclude this year?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, that is our hope, but of course patient safety needs to be the number one priority. We need to comply with Transport Canada regulations around these, and I don't control the inspectors who do the final sign-off. Certainly, our goal is to ensure that we have helipads close to health facilities, close to where residents are throughout the province. We are investing in this, and we're committed to ensuring that we have safety throughout our province. We're expanding investment in EMS services as well. On this side of the House we're investing in the health care services that Albertans count on.

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, given that the Fort McMurray hospital used to just land the medevacs in the parking lot and since the order came down medevacs in Fort McMurray as well as in Westlock have had to land at the airport and take an ambulance downtown, losing critical time, when will Westlock and Fort McMurray be able to land their helicopters back at the hospital to help save lives?

Ms Hoffman: Well, thank you very much for the question. Again, Transport Canada changed some of their regulations around where helicopters were allowed to land and how they had to be provided safely. Certainly, we understand that you may have some questions for folks in Ottawa. I understand that your leader likes to spend time there. Maybe he can ask them on your behalf. On this side of the House we're working to comply with the safety in parameters to ensure that people, no matter where they live in the province, can be safe, can be transported safely. On this side of the House we're investing in health care instead of pushing for deep ideological cuts, just like your membership voted for on the weekend.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Wildfire Season Preparedness

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've arrived at two years since the fires ravaged Fort McMurray. Although we recall the mismanagement of resources that occurred by the government and the ill-preparedness, we now have concrete numbers that show a \$20 million reduction in firefighting supplies, services, and equipment before the fire. To the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry: how can you defend that to the people of Fort McMurray that lost everything?

The Speaker: The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and for the member's question. You know, without a doubt, protecting Alberta's

communities and citizens is a top priority. That's why we continue to invest in forest fire fighting equipment, in people, in contractors, why we've made changes to legislation to ensure that our communities stay safe, why we've tripled the investment in FireSmart so our communities right across the province stay safe. We'll continue doing that good work.

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, fire season is here, and there are already fire bans appearing in parts of our province. On May 3, 2016, the Premier said that this government was ready. In Fort McMurray there are still 2,700 outstanding claims on insurance two years later despite our NDP government being prepared. What assurances do Albertans have that this government is prepared for another disaster?

The Speaker: The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I stated on the first question, you know, this government is committed to the protection of Alberta's communities, protection of our forests, protection of infrastructure, protection of our citizens, and that will continue. We've taken steps. We've taken all the recommendations on the Flap Top Complex, for instance. All those recommendations have been implemented. We're looking at all other recommendations that have taken place in reports for the past years as well to ensure that we do everything we can, and we will continue to do so.

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, last year I was given confidential information that during the opening day of the fire the command centre had been locked out of the computer and was unable to contain emergency codes. Given that the computer had to be reset by someone in Edmonton, to the minister: what actions have you taken to ensure that this type of incident does not happen again?

The Speaker: The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I was just up in Fort Mac, actually, a couple of weeks ago – and I did see the member there – to see some of the things that were happening, the growth, the building. There's still a lot to do. A lot of houses need to be rebuilt. But one of the things: after every single disaster that we have in this province, we do a postassessment report. We had 21 recommendations come from KPMG. A lot of those have already been fulfilled, and a lot of that centres around communication, which is key in these kinds of instances. Also, I put a bill to the House where I talk about communication and understanding roles and responsibilities of local officials on the ground, where the hand-off is from local officials to us.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Edmonton LRT Valley Line West Leg

Mr. Carson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The proposed west leg of the valley line LRT is a critical piece of infrastructure for residents of Edmonton-Meadowlark and all of west Edmonton. On March 23 Edmonton city council finalized the LRT plan, with a majority of councillors supporting it. To the Minister of Transportation: has the city of Edmonton submitted their finalized proposal, and when can we expect to see a formal agreement with the province?

The Speaker: The Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to thank the member for the question. Our officials in Transportation have received a draft business case for the west valley LRT project from the city of Edmonton. We're currently in the process of reviewing that. You know, I want to say that our budget includes an investment of \$3 billion, split between Edmonton and Calgary, for LRT projects over the next 10 years. I want to assure the House that we're committed to bringing this form of clean, efficient transportation to both of our major cities.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Carson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister. Recent changes to the design of the west leg of the valley line have increased the original proposed costs of the project. Will this have any effect on the city's ability to get the funding they require?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Well, thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. We have a great working relationship with the city of Edmonton on this, and we're committed to working with them to finalize the details. I want to assure the House that the financial commitment that the government has made to the city of Edmonton and the city of Calgary will stand, and I'm sure that they will be able to move ahead on the construction of this line with the funding that we provided.

Mr. Carson: Thank you, Minister. Once again to the same minister: if your department accepts city council's proposal, how soon can we expect to see this project ready for procurement?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Well, thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to indicate to the hon. member that while the government of Alberta is prepared to provide significant funding to both Edmonton and Calgary for their LRT projects, these projects are their projects, and the schedules are determined by those cities as they move forward. I'm sure that the city of Edmonton will be able to move this project forward in a timely fashion, and we're there to support that.

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

2:40

Midwifery Services (continued)

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to follow up on good questions put earlier by my colleague from Airdrie to the Minister of Health. I believe that all members recognize the great services provided by midwives to women giving birth and that often this can help to save the health care system funds and provide more options to expectant mothers. Because I'm new here, I must confess that I don't understand why there's a cap imposed by the government with respect to midwifery. Could the minister please advise why, and how can this be changed to increase access to this efficient option for childbirth?

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much for the question, the opportunity to discuss the way the Health budget works a little bit. We do have some folks who are fee-for-service. We do have some folks who are salaried within Health. Certainly, within midwives, midwives are paid on a course of care, so they are paid, essentially, a fee for service, but the reason why we have a budget is to ensure that we can give certainty to those midwives that they will have opportunities to engage in those courses of care and that the

government will be in a position to pay for it. We certainly appreciate the important role that midwives play and are proud that we've expanded the number of courses of care by 400 every year over the last four years.

Mr. Kenney: Given that I appreciate the minister's thoughtful and substantive answer, Mr. Speaker, what could be done to increase access to this important service so that women who would like the assistance of a midwife in childbirth can have access to that?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for speaking in this House about women's choice, women's choice around accessing the type of health care provider that they choose to be able to support them during that period of their lives. We are certainly pleased that on this side of the House we've increased investment in health care every single year, that we are planning on hiring more health care workers, not laying them off and sending them onto the streets, and that we honour the women who are exercising their choice around midwifery services by increasing funding in this area every year.

Mr. Kenney: I'm not sure that was an answer, Mr. Speaker, so would the minister please consider lifting the cap on midwifery services to ensure greater access for Alberta women to midwives for expectant mothers?

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much for the question and the proposal. We certainly are interested in ensuring that we have a well-funded health care system throughout Alberta. We've got a very good working relationship with the association that represents midwives, and I think they appreciate that during an economic downturn, rather than repeating mistakes of the past, bringing deep cuts to health care, we've increased opportunities for midwives and for women to choose a midwife. We respect the fact that this is a choice women are making. Every year we've increased it by 400 additional courses of care. We have a government that's stable, and we're working to expand those opportunities for women instead of moving with rash ideological cuts. I appreciate that they want lift the cap, but where would they cut...

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

Hon. members, we'll proceed in 30 seconds.

Members' Statements

(continued)

United Conservative Party Candidate Selection

Mr. Fildebrandt: Some of my colleagues here will know that I've fallen back into the bad old habit of smoking. Over the last week I made the decision to quit, though. For those of you who know me well, old habits die hard. There are some times in life when you need to know when to quit, like smoking, and I'll admit, to those who have seen me hidden by the east entrance, that I haven't always been successful.

But sometimes in life knowing when not to quit is even more important. When Albertans have their backs up against the wall, we don't tuck tail and run. We put our heads down and charge like a bull at the Strathmore Stampede. When I was told that I would not be allowed to run in my own constituency because of affirmative action gender quotas, I didn't quit, but when I was told to just keep quiet and

keep my head down until all this passed, I did. It wasn't in my character to do so, and it was a mistake. I allowed the scheming backroom operators to dictate my behaviour as they are now dictating the behaviour of others.

I was the first member of this House to call for the unification of conservatives, but I'm honestly not sure if history will judge that to have been the right thing to do anymore. Conditional for supporting unification was the grassroots guarantee that local members would select their own candidates and that members would set the policies of the party. If you believe in democracy, then you accept that you lose a vote sometimes on policy or on your hand-picked candidates.

I can't be whipped. As long as I've been an MLA, I have always voted freely and have broken with the party whip on more than one occasion. One of the things I'm grateful for right now is that there is no party whip telling me how to vote or even not how to vote. The only people who get to tell me how to vote are the people of Strathmore-Brooks. Party backroomers may have stripped the members in my constituency of the right to vote for the candidate of their choice, but they have not stripped me of my voice to say: I don't quit.

Rail Transportation Backlog

Mr. Schneider: Mr. Speaker, it's certainly not news that Canada has a serious issue with shipping via rail, and that problem has been coming to a crisis point for several years. Recent reports indicate that not only grain and energy producers are having a difficult time with the critical shortage of rail cars, but it's also severely impacting the forestry industry.

As the minister noted in this House, he has heard from forestry stakeholders that the mills are having difficulties getting their products to customers. They're having to take extraordinary measures to avoid unplanned shutdowns. Now, that's not good news for anyone. In fact, last winter only one of the companies surveyed got more than half of its cars on time. All other mills were under 50 per cent, with the worst-off mill only getting 14 per cent of the cars they ordered.

Now, how on earth can a company function effectively if they can't get the majority of their products to their consumers? Without access to rail, companies are incurring ballooning costs due to warehousing their inventory and hiring more and more trucks to prevent inventories from piling up at mills and warehouses. Mr. Speaker, these companies need to get their products to market, many of which have already been paid for.

This is a crisis not only for the energy sector, but for forestry, agriculture, and numerous other sectors that count on railways to ship their goods. While it's understandable that weather can cause havoc upon the prairies, especially in the winter, the lack of infrastructure such as engines, grain cars, flat decks, and even staff to run them – all need investment to curb this problem. After all, our two major rail companies have been operating in this climate since the 1900s, so I'm sure they've learned a thing or two about prairie winters.

Mr. Speaker, we are at the tipping point here, and so far all of the Band-Aid solutions by government and industry are falling far short of solution, especially for the forestry industry.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal.

Bill 16
Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure
Statutes Amendment Act, 2018

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce Bill 16, the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Statutes Amendment Act, 2018. Amendments to the act will ensure electoral fairness by requiring that all election campaigns are subject to the same spending limit. We are acting in continuation of what we've been doing from day one, making sure that ordinary Albertans decide who represents them, not private interest groups or big money.

If passed, Bill 16 would guarantee a level playing field by ensuring that associated parties cannot circumvent the statutory spending limit rules to support the same candidates but also increase transparency by enhancing reporting requirements. Our government continues to act on our commitment to ensure that our electoral system is fair, accountable, transparent to all, and these will help to preserve the fairness and integrity of Alberta's democratic electoral system.

So it's with pleasure that I would like to move first reading of Bill 16.

[Motion carried; Bill 16 read a first time]

2:50 Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The President of Treasury Board and Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of the C.D. Howe Institute's report entitled *The Numbers Game: Rating the Fiscal Accountability of Canada's Senior Governments, 2018*. This report shows a huge improvement in Alberta's fiscal accountability since our government took over. In its final three years the Conservatives received a B grade and two C grades. I'm proud to say that Alberta received its third consecutive A plus grade for fiscal transparency under this government. I'm very proud that we've improved this rating of transparency and accountability dramatically from the opaque budgeting of the Conservative government, one the Auditor General couldn't even get his head around. Here are five copies.

The Speaker: Are there any other tablings, hon. members? It appears not.

I believe, hon. members, we are at Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day
Government Motions

Election Commissioner Appointment

16. Mr. Mason moved:
 Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly concur in the report of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices tabled on April 10, 2018, Sessional Paper 67/2018, and recommend to the Lieutenant Governor in Council that Mr. Lorne Gibson be appointed as Election Commissioner for a term of five years commencing May 15, 2018.

[Debate adjourned May 2]

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On a point of order.

The Speaker: A point of order?

Mr. Mason: If I may, yeah. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to briefly correct a misstatement that was made by me when this matter was under debate last week. At that time I indicated that the position of Election Commissioner is already covered under the sunshine list provisions of the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act.* That is not correct. I was misinformed on the matter. Due to an inadvertent omission this position was not added to the list of independent officers covered by that act. That was an oversight which, I should inform the House, we mean to correct through the miscellaneous statutes amendment act, and those changes would be brought forward in this sitting.

I can further advise that no contract has been signed by Mr. Gibson, and there is therefore no contract to disclose. If and when a contract is signed, Mr. Speaker, we are prepared to discuss the matter of early disclosure, not only with Mr. Gibson but also with two other independent officers who, I should note, have been appointed by the House without a similar request being made.

The Speaker: Hon. member, that is a unique kind of point of order. I understood that we would not raise that until the end of the debate; nonetheless, it has been said, and we'll adjust accordingly.

I believe we're on Motion 16. Who wishes to speak to the motion? The Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As always, it's a pleasure to rise in the House and to speak to Motion 16. I mean, we've been very clear on this side of the House on our impression of this process. I have to say that I haven't had the privilege of being on a selection committee before this time. I actually really, really enjoyed the process. It was very interesting. There was a tremendous amount of information and great discussion that comes to the table. It's always, really, a huge privilege to be able to be with members and find out their particulars on what they believe to be true about a particular situation. You learn a lot about each other.

Again, I would like to acknowledge the chair and his ability to manage this particular committee as there was a lot of very passionate and robust debate about this particular position. Just to restate for the record, Mr. Speaker, this side of the House, the opposition, made very clear statements towards the lack of necessity for a commissioner to be appointed through debates on Bill 32.

I'd like to also make a couple of other things extremely clear. We felt that there were other people that would have better fit the position. Having said that, no matter who had filled the position, Mr. Speaker, we would have been asking for the exact same amendments, the exact same amount of transparency, and we would have still altogether, no matter who had been chosen, remained with our original stance, that we believed that the commissioner was not necessary from the beginning, being that we were told straight out that the commissioner position was already being handled extremely well, as it was originally, through the officer.

I just want to clarify that because the government has tried to make a point that this is personal or that we are just attacking one particular person. I want to make that very, very clear, that that is not the case and that, again, no matter who had been chosen in this particular situation, we would have very much backed our original decision on this side of the House that the Election Commissioner position was not necessary given the fact that we had been informed in committee that the particulars of this particular situation were being handled very well as they are. Just to be clear with that because of the government wanting to take a personal position on

*See page 702, left column, paragraph 10

this or saying that we are having a personal issue or a personal position with this person: that's not the case.

We've said on many occasions that he's extremely qualified, that there are obvious, you know, reasons that you would choose this person under normal circumstances, but because of historical issues with previous governments and those concerns, which we raised over and over again, and considering, too, that the government actually takes responsibility for the people that are handled here – interestingly enough, in discussions I was asked if I was concerned, if I was concerned about this commissioner being chosen. I found that to be a very interesting question. Why would I need to be concerned about an officer of the Legislature? I don't know, Mr. Speaker. Should I be concerned? This is a question that was asked of me, if I should be nervous or concerned or worried about this particular person. It's an interesting question, isn't it?

I put it to the Legislature that I don't believe that any of us should be concerned. I don't believe that an officer of the Legislature should have any more power than what is designated in their role to do. As I understand it, with this role the commissioner will be investigating situations and, quite frankly, is going to be investigating situations – I mean, I can speak for rural. I've never run in a city riding. In rural ridings many, many, many times we have humungous areas to cover. Quite often it's our families and our husbands, wives, our children – in fact, on my CA I have my husband and my son. Initially, it was my husband, my son, and my sister-in-law, along with three members that were from the original party, that started that CA. Had they not supported me and supported the desire to go forward, we wouldn't have had a constituency association, let alone being able to support me going forward with my election campaign.

I can't begin to tell you how important – and I'm sure everybody here can understand that. We're so, so grateful for the support that we receive on any of our individual campaigns. These moms and dads and husbands and wives and kids that are all involved are the ones that could potentially – they are going to be the ones under investigation. This is a really, really sensitive issue, and based on what we saw with many of the other applicants coming forward, we saw that sensitivity. We understood that. That's at least my interpretation. Of course, you'll have to take my word, Mr. Speaker, and my lived experience on this and my anecdotal experience, which doesn't take away from any of the anecdotes that other members in the Legislature would present because theirs are as valuable as mine. I'm not trying to overstate that. I just want to make clear where my position comes from.

3:00

The Chief Electoral Officer had made it very clear that he was extremely capable and that his office was capable to handle all of the work that was coming his way. Even with that, the government pushed through Bill 32 in order to create this position. It was quite reckless in the aspect that it was forced through the Legislative Assembly Office, and it was a job posting that was “composed.” That is a very interesting word. It's created. It's an evolved position.

An interesting piece of this, I'd like to add, is that never – it's funny because when Lorne Gibson had the Chief Electoral Officer position before and his contract wasn't renegotiated, at no point do I ever recall any talks about the need for a commissioner. We always talked about officers. We always talked about that role. Interestingly enough, Mr. Speaker, the idea and the objective of commissioner never came up. It's interesting now that that's the role that's being applied for. Interestingly enough, we're here with a composed job for a commissioner. I just find it an interesting intersectionality of information.

The other thing, too, that we've spoken about at length, is that the job posting for this was done over Christmas. Mr. Speaker, in any situation why would a government make a posting over a holiday? I don't understand the logistics of that. I don't understand the logic. I don't understand how there's any relevance to posting it then. There weren't enough people that responded, so then they had to rush back in and do another posting. There were people here that had to come back in to make certain deadlines. They had to come in over the Christmas holidays. That's an amazing staff. Congratulations and kudos to the folks who did that because that's a lot to ask. I know that as MLAs we're all on all the time. It doesn't matter when we're home, whether it's Christmas or Easter. I mean, we're all on all the time, but that's the decision that we've made being elected officials, being public officials.

But to create a brand new position – and Mr. Speaker, the position was created in less than 48 hours – and then decide to open it during Christmas? I just don't understand it. It was more expensive to run it over Christmas. It was \$20,000. We actually advised the government not to do this. There was a huge rush, which we don't understand. I still to this day very much don't understand.

So in respect to that, I would like to make an amendment.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I believe we now have it distributed. An amendment is proposed. We will be identifying it as amendment A2.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, sir. I would like to move that Government Motion 16 be amended by striking out “a term of five years commencing May 15, 2018,” and substituting “a term commencing on May 15, 2018, and expiring 12 months after polling day for the next provincial general election in Alberta.” The reason for this, Mr. Speaker, is that this aligns with the Chief Electoral Officer. He has similar wording in his contract, so it'll align with that. There is absolutely no reason for the commissioner's contract to go beyond what the officer's contract goes to.

Basically, Mr. Gibson is supplementing and, in some ways, quite redundant in his position to the officer. The suggestion would be, Mr. Speaker, that that job and the contract should align with the officer. It makes complete sense. There's absolutely no reason – the whole reason to have these folks here is to help us through the election period. The work has already been done. Mr. Gibson has already been hired, so we would like to make sure that taxpayers get the most for their dollars and that Mr. Gibson is hired for a term that aligns with the electoral officer, which would make for a very efficient use of his time. I'm quite certain, based on Mr. Gibson's history and who he is and his obvious ability to do his job, that one year will be more than enough time to give him what he needs in order to finish up any concerns or outstanding issues that he may have had during the election.

As I've stated previously, there's been some interesting conduct with regard to this particular situation. This process was so rushed. The process was definitely one-sided. The process could have led to a mutual decision about a person. It would have been very, very easy to have a vote that was more consistent with the feel of all of the people that were part of the committee. We had an opportunity also to look at – we want to make sure, Mr. Speaker, especially because this is a new position and we're not quite sure how the position will work out. I think it's better to err on the side of efficiency so that Mr. Gibson, when he comes in to set up his office, is given a very clear set of rules on the way his job will go so that he is able to make the most use of his time while he's here to benefit Albertans. It is their taxpayer dollars that go toward paying for this position. Because it's a brand new position, I think that we owe it to ourselves to see how that position goes.

If Mr. Gibson is hired back to do the job afterwards, his contract can be renewed at any time after that 12 months or during that period, I'm certain, with the committee getting together again to renew his contract. I'm sure the government is quite certain that this is the person for the job. I'm sure he'll do an excellent job. I'm not quite sure why we have to extend it to the maximum, Mr. Speaker. I think it would be better if we bring that down, get his work done, and then we have an adequate amount of work to be able to look at to see how that contract should be renewed. Should the contract need to be extended for any particular reason, it would be worth while to look at renewing his contract should that need to happen.

At this point, Mr. Speaker, it would align with the election, which makes the most sense. If the election would be in 2019, he would stay for 12 months after that election to finish up any particular work that he would need to do at that time. Based on Mr. Gibson and his very, very excellent resume I'm absolutely sure that he would have no problem getting this done. He seems, based on his resume, extremely efficient. He gets his jobs done on time. And I think that, with anything, efficiency happens when we give structure.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any questions or comments under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View?

Seeing and hearing none, we're dealing with amendment A2. The Member for Calgary-Currie on the amendment, correct?

Mr. Malkinson: That is correct, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Malkinson: Mr. Speaker, amendment A2 is seeking to shorten the term of Mr. Gibson's appointment to 12 months after the next election. That would mean there would be a term of basically two years, you know, assuming the election happens according to the time of the next expected election.

Now, how I would interpret this, having watched this whole process, Mr. Speaker, from the beginning – I just got a note from the Clerk that we started debating this motion on May 1. We are currently at May 8. This is a clear attempt, I think, for the opposition to fire Mr. Gibson even before he has a chance to meaningfully get the office set up and started. It is a clear attempt to frustrate this process.

3:10

I'm going to leave that aside for a moment and talk a little bit more about the amendment itself. Twelve months after the next polling day, Mr. Speaker. Now, elections tend to be when perhaps electoral issues, whether it be perhaps bad behaviour by a third party or by political parties, tend to come to bear, during an election. I'm not casting shade on any third party or any particular political party, but historically that's when elections tend to generate the most complaints, that Mr. Gibson would potentially be investigating. To say, "Oh, you're going to have go up for review in 12 months," when the government of the day might be under investigation at that time, perhaps seems like a bad idea and goes against the spirit of Mr. Gibson's position.

I think this amendment is an extremely bad idea. I ask the members from the opposition why they continue to frustrate the process, Mr. Speaker. We have already seen multiple news articles that say this idea that, you know, perhaps there were some problems with how he was not appointed the previous time. I think I would be happy to talk to the members previous on that.

But I think I'm going to leave with one question for the opposition on this amendment: when will you stop frustrating the

process, when will you stop filibustering the process, and when you will pass this motion so that Mr. Gibson can start the good work to protect our democracy?

I will be voting against this, and I encourage everyone in this House to stop this ridiculous filibuster and get his appointment approved.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View. Is it on 29(2)(a)?

Mrs. Aheer: Yes, sir.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Oh, there were lots of words: filibuster, frustrated, fired. I'm going to deal with all of those. First of all, nobody on this side has said anything about firing Mr. Gibson. Absolutely not. I love the assumption that we're going to be in government, though, so thank you so much. I love even more the assumption that we would fire Mr. Gibson because we might be in trouble. What did I just say to you? There are accusations that I should be concerned about? What should I be concerned about? Can somebody in here tell me what I need to be worried about? I will go over all of my – I don't know. If you have some concerns for me, I would love to know about them. Please list them and send them my way. If I can avoid a run-in with the commissioner, I'd prefer that.

Secondly, the reason, Mr. Speaker, that we have democracy and filibustering is for robust debate, and I think the only thing that's frustrated is the member, to be quite honest. I don't think we're frustrated over here debating this. I'm sorry that you're frustrated. That's not something I can help you out with.

However, we will continue to do what we were hired to come here and do, which is to filibuster this issue until we understand and make sure we've made every single point on this side about our concerns. To be clear, when the Election Commissioner is hired, if for some reason there's a concern about his work or anything like that, guess what? We have an officer who is actually completely competent and very able to continue on with any concerns.

I find it interesting. The member across obviously likes Mr. Lorne Gibson very, very much and has said on many occasions that he's completely capable, and now he's basically saying that Mr. Gibson is not capable to finish his job 12 months after the election cycle. Honestly, if there are concerns or if a government, for example, is under question about particular situations and they can't figure that out within a year, we have trouble, Houston. We need to figure that out sooner.

Mr. Speaker, to be clear, we will filibuster on this side until we feel that the debate has been handled appropriately and we have done our job on behalf of the taxpayers that have put us here.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much. I find it interesting that, you know, all of a sudden the members opposite have a sudden enthusiasm for the democratic process when over and over again they walk out on the vote on Bill 9, an important issue for women in this province. If anyone is not doing their job, I would suggest it's the hon. members.

But I will get back to some of the comments that were in here before. What I said, Mr. Speaker, was that to have the term expire 12 months after an election means that there would potentially be investigations that would be in progress. I think, to anyone who's listening to this debate right now, one could logically see why that might potentially be a conflict of interest, to have the government

of the day have to perhaps have a different Election Commissioner because the one that they would have currently might be investigating them, and the government of the day might not like that. One of the reasons why Mr. Gibson is an incredible candidate for this position is that he has a long, proud history of speaking truth to power. That is why this amendment is an amazingly not good idea.

I ask again the hon. members why they keep filibustering what should be a simple appointment. To say it's because they've suddenly found righteousness for doing their jobs – perhaps I look forward to, you know, introducing them back to the House when we have a vote on Bill 9. Hopefully, they will stand up for their constituents then.

Now, they're going to go on and say: oh, the position is perhaps redundant. They're fair to say that, but that bill has already passed, and I think the ship to debate on that has passed, Mr. Speaker.

I know that they're going to talk about how there were other experienced candidates, and I would say to that, in fact, that he is the most experienced candidate. That is why the majority of the members on that committee voted for him to be the candidate, Mr. Speaker.

Some say that there's a cloud around him. Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm happy in a future 29(2)(a) to go on a very loud history lesson on how the previous PC government was making partisan appointments. I think we could all see why that would be a problem if we're going to have fair and open elections, that we have the government of the day appointing returning officers who are partisan. I mean, of course, members of the UCP: although a new name, a good majority of them are from members of the previous PC Party.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Any other members who would like to speak to amendment A2? The Member for Calgary-Greenway.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for allowing me to speak on this very important Government Motion 16. You know, the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View's amendment: I think it's very simple, changing the term to 12 months after the next election.

As the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View already said in her comments, the government side fought tooth and nail to have this person selected. Like, you should have been there. I think the committee was more furious and feisty than the movie *300*, Mr. Speaker. I'm not even making this up. This was, like, predetermined: this is the person we want, he's our candidate, and we're doing whatever we can to get this person in. That was the intent of that search committee. I had the honour to be in the search committees for the Auditor General and Ombudsman, and in those two search committees the members from all parties worked for a common goal in a nonpartisan way to have this person selected so that the person can do their job to serve Albertans, but this was clearly not the case here.

They're talking about, like, how amazing this person is, and we don't deny that. Of course, this person brings a lot of experience, Mr. Speaker, but I said that. I quoted that in the committee. He also brings a lot of stigma, a lot of baggage. When the government is trying to create this new office, we need a fresh start. We need a noncontroversial person. Why we have to have this person as soon as this person gets selected – and I have nothing against that person, Mr. Gibson, and I think he has, you know, served the public, and that's great.

3:20

For the government member to ask our Member for Chestermere-Rocky View, "You guys must be concerned," I find it, like, very offensive, actually. Why would we be concerned? We're not concerned with Mr. Gibson. We are however concerned with the intention of this government. The Chief Electoral Officer, Mr. Glen Resler, on the public record – and, Mr. Speaker, I think I'm saying this for probably the 10th time – said that his office is totally capable of handling all the inquiries, all the problems, all the issues, so there's no need to create a new office.

By the way, Mr. Speaker, this government wants to believe that they're fighting for Albertans and their families. This office is going to cost \$1.5 million plus the office expenses and whatnot. On top of that, they will not disclose his salary. This doesn't even pass the smell test. [interjections] It's easier to heckle. You can heckle after 2019 all you want because that's all you'll be doing.

The Speaker: Hon. members.

Mr. Gill: It hurts. The truth hurts, Mr. Speaker. We don't heckle, so let me talk.

Funny thing. I was having a conversation on a side note yesterday with the Government House Leader, and you know what I said? I said: it must be really hard for you to do your job because your members will not listen to you. Yesterday. You can probably talk to him.

We have a job to do, Mr. Speaker, to defend people. Did you see that? They think this is a joke. Over 4 million people are depending on the decisions that are made in this House, and they think it is a joke.

An Hon. Member: Do you see me laughing?

The Speaker: Hon. member.
Please proceed.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that I'll try to speak to the amendment.

You know, as I said, the temperature was very high in the search committee, and it was told by all members that this person is like a godsend. If he is that good a person, I think he should be able to do his job. He should be able to handle all the complaints 12 months after the election. Don't you think that's a reasonable amendment? I think it's a reasonable amendment.

Now the government is not willing to disclose his salary. That was the whole idea of this bill and this office, to be more transparent, take the black money out of politics, so let's do that. Let's take the black money. Let's be transparent. Let's tell the people who are paying our salaries. Let's tell Albertans, who are paying this office and the whole set-up. You guys can heckle all you want after the next election, I'm telling you, but this is the serious thing. Let's tell them that their money is going towards this office. Why do we need to hide it from Albertans? I don't understand.

I think we should support this amendment, and if there's any issue, let's try to talk about the issue, how we can make this bill stronger and this office more transparent. I think that's the real job we have at hand, not to do a personal attack and heckle and, you know, all those things. We're here, and we have a duty to perform. Let's do our duty to the best of our abilities, and let's see how we can work together and how we can make this land a better land. How can we serve our people in a better way?

We have a bill which has passed. That's okay. Let's work together to make this office a better office so that the officer, Mr.

Gibson, can perform his duties without any interruption, without any political parties, no matter who is in the government. I don't think there are any objections to that. There shouldn't be any objections to that. Why are we not doing this? I don't know.

I mean, like, from the beginning of this search committee, when the advertisement was done during Christmastime, the government members were warned, Mr. Speaker, that it's only 48 hours and that this advertisement in the local media, wherever this advertisement was going to go, was not going to attract enough coverage. I don't know. Some people are saying that they just wanted this person, so they already knew, it's safe to assume. I don't know that that's why they advertised during the holidays, so that nobody else would find this ad. I don't know. But we're past that point.

Since we've passed the point, I think we can make this a stronger bill. We can make this office a stronger office, be more transparent, what this government intends to say every time. They claim that. So why are we hiding from Albertans? If this person is that great that he's so capable, he should be able to perform his duties unless the government has a crystal ball and they see that, like, there are going to be so many complaints in the next provincial election that this person will not be able to handle that. I don't know.

Look at this, Mr. Speaker. Where is the Government House Leader? I feel bad for the Government House Leader. Honestly, I do.

Anyways, I ask members from both sides, I think: if they believe in transparency and if they believe in serving the public, which they always claim every time they open their mouths, especially when they're not heckling, let's support this amendment. Let's make this office a transparent office and give Mr. Gibson all the tools that he needs to get his job done, to do his duties. However, when we don't need him, we don't need to keep him in his office.

Anyways, I'll ask every member to support this amendment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. member, just to remind you – I didn't want to interject – we do not refer to whether there's any member in or out of the House. For the future I would remind you of that.

Mr. Gill: Appreciate it.

The Speaker: Under 29(2)(a)?

Mr. Barnes: Yes, please, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank my hon. colleague for standing up and talking so passionately about a procedure that could have been straightforward, that has obviously gone so sideways, with money being wasted, things not being full and transparent to the taxpayer. What I'd like to ask the hon. member – I know, from his past life and experience in business, that two things here seem really, really odd to me, that the officer's contract, a full five years, goes past the Chief Electoral Officer's contract, who he'll be working closely with. He's obviously stated that he felt his department could have done the job. So how does it seem appropriate and practical that the new five-year contract goes much longer than the existing commissioner's contract?

Secondly, we saw and heard how the government just threw away \$20,000, totally being unwilling to listen to the Official Opposition members on the committee that spoke clearly: let's get as much value for taxpayer dollars as we can; let's make our time and our staff's time as productive as possible.

Now here we are with a five-year term. It appears to have no probationary period, no out clause for the employer. It seems to me to be a bad protection for the taxpayer, you know, those people that stand in northern Alberta on December 15 and January 15 and loyally and faithfully pay their taxes to help fellow Albertans. In your experience, is it standard business practice to give a five-year

contract with no means of review or changing it or escape if necessary? Is this something that is a standard business practice?

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat. You know what? It's actually a very good point, and we did this bring this concern in our search committee meeting. The bill allows for this office for a term of five years. However, I mean, in any business model – like, in my previous life you would never ever have something like this, as concrete as this, without any probation, without any respect, for the lack of better words, for the taxpayers, who are sending us here. I think it throws all those things out of the window, five years without any clause.

3:30

Mr. Speaker, you probably remember this. I know my PC colleagues are probably going to hate me for this. Do you remember when we had the previous government, and Alberta Health Services – remember the cookie guy? You remember, right? And he was eating. It was, like, Alberta Health Services or – I don't remember. They changed so many times. They centralized, then decentralized. He was eating a cookie, and the media asked him a question, and he said, "Can't you see I'm eating a cookie?" or something like that. It was, like, back in the day. That is disrespectful towards the taxpayers.

My statement is going to be played, I guarantee you, when this person is going to be – people are going to say that this was a waste of the taxpayer's dollar. Sir, I say that with all humility, because we could have done such a better job. It is not a laughing matter. That's respect for the people who wake up, who do night shift, who pay our taxes. It is their money, sir. This is not a laughing matter. It is a laughing matter to you.

Mr. Westhead: Point of order.

The Speaker: Point of order noted. What's the point of order, Banff-Cochrane?

Point of Order Imputing Motives

Mr. Westhead: Mr. Speaker, under 23(h), (i), and (j) the member opposite is ascribing motives to members on this side that are just simply false. It's become a pattern of this particular member. I think he ought to portray the actions in this Legislature accurately. He's not doing so, and I would ask you to ask him to stop.

The Speaker: The party whip for the Official Opposition.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I listened carefully, and the hon. member that spoke on the government side didn't say what motives the Member for Calgary-Greenway was ascribing, so I don't know how there's possibly a point of order. There's probably a disagreement. For my part, I would, with your permission, advise my colleague to address his remarks through the chair.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

I think the point of order being raised: you might be getting awfully close to that, hon. member. But I reminded you a few minutes ago to speak through the chair. You engaged in finger pointing and dialogue with the other side of the House. You then again did it. So please (a) be conscious of the comments that you're making, and (b) speak through the chair.

I think you have a few minutes left.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will definitely speak through you, sir.

Debate Continued

Mr. Gill: Going back to the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, you know, the crux here, Mr. Speaker, is the respect for the taxpayer dollar. Like, will any businessperson make this kind of a deal? That was his question. No. This is a bad deal for taxpayers to have. That's the real issue here.

The Speaker: We are on amendment A2. Are there any other members? The Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege. You called it amendment A2 to Government Motion 16, as introduced by my colleague from Chestermere-Rocky View. I will be speaking in favour of this amendment. I do believe it's an amendment that's worthy of consideration. Essentially, the amendment reads: to strike out the portion in the motion that reads "a term of five years commencing May 15, 2018" and substitute "a term commencing on May 15, 2018, and expiring 12 months after polling day for the next provincial general election."

You know, Mr. Speaker, I was fortunate enough to be part of the search committee for Election Commissioner as well as for Ombudsman and Auditor General, and I believe that the work we do on search committees is on behalf of all Albertans in the best interests of all Albertans. In that regard, the member opposite from Calgary that spoke just a little earlier with regard to his concerns that possibly the opposition is frustrating the process – you know, we have not even had all of our members have the ability to speak to the motion, and already the members opposite are considering that we are frustrating the process. I would disagree, and I would suggest that the process is an important process to allow Albertans to be the judge, to allow Albertans to see what is going on, and to get the information. Let Albertans be the judge.

I believe that the search committee, the search that the Leg. Offices Committee began and went through, was a rushed process, much like the member opposite is now trying to rush the deliberations on Government Motion 16. I believe it was done in a fairly reckless manner, and we've heard many of the other members here talk about that and how things were rushed against certain recommendations to the committee with regard to advertising during the holiday season, with regard to building a job description in a very short period of time. I have concerns with that.

But speaking to the amendment, we're looking at working on a term that would be in conjunction with an election period. To end the term of the Election Commissioner a year after the general election would allow the Election Commissioner to do the investigations and all of the work that needs to get done and then to have the term end the same as it is for the Chief Electoral Officer and to be considered for reappointment. I do not believe that this amendment is offside in any way. I believe it would give the Election Commissioner ample time to do the investigations necessary and to file reports. Let's face it, Mr. Speaker. The Election Commissioner's work in years 2 and 3 after an election is probably very minimal, so we can take a look at this and see that to end it a year after appointment or after the next general election is very reasonable.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

When the member from Calgary spoke with regard to the opposition frustrating the process – the process started on May 1, the motion was introduced on May 1, and now here we are on May

8. Well, I would suggest that we have not been deliberating for a whole week on this motion. We have had very limited time dedicated to Government Motion 16.

I do believe that Albertans expect us to ensure that we do a thorough review of the work that's being done. It is our role as Official Opposition to ensure that Albertans are fully informed, and I have concerns when members from the governing party are complaining that we're frustrating the process when the process is in place to protect the people – that's the people of Alberta – and that's to allow the people of Alberta to be the judge. If the people of Alberta will judge that we're frustrating the process, so be it. That's on us. If the people of Alberta will judge that the government is operating in a manner that is irresponsible, does not necessarily match with what would be considered good business practice, good planning, then I think that's on them.

This appointment by this committee was not a unanimous choice – that's very clear – so we can expect to have further discussion when we get into this House to discuss this appointment. I believe that that's what Albertans would expect of the Official Opposition.

3:40

We need to consider what a five-year term would entail. A five-year term, if started on May 15, 2018, with an election expected in May 2019 and then, four years after that, an election in May 2023, I suppose: in the election of May 2023 the Election Commissioner is right at the end of the five-year term. It seems completely unreasonable to me. It does not seem reasonable to have a term end for your Election Commissioner right in the middle of what would be the very busiest time of that commissioner's job description, their duties. It could land up pretty much right at the same time as the next election after the 2019 election, the election of 2023.

You know, elections can be called early. I understand that. But the reason that we discuss at committee and we discuss here with regard to ending the term a year after the general election is to highlight the fact that there was a good reason that governments in the past had decided to end a term of the Chief Electoral Officer a year after a general election. Why would they make that decision? Because, I believe, it makes good practice. If you end a year after, it gives you time then to do another search. If the individual would retire or if the individual was not reappointed, it gives you time to do the search necessary to fill that position again before the next election.

I believe that's an important process, that Albertans will understand that, yes, a five-year term really doesn't make sense with regard to this position. A five-year term and having the commissioner's reappointment needing to happen right in the middle of an election process, pretty much right when the next election would need to be scheduled, do not make sense, and everyday Albertans understand that. I'm not sure why members of the governing party do not understand that. They continue to move along and move along in a manner that for some reason seems to work in the favour of this individual.

Five years was the maximum term that was allotted or allowed under the legislation. The committee was – essentially, in the advertisement we put out the range of salary that would be allotted to this individual and also that it would be up to a maximum of a five-year term. I don't understand why the government, members from the governing party, would make a decision to go to a full five-year term, the maximum term allowed under the legislation, for an individual that's just beginning in the first-year process. I could maybe understand, if they had been in their office for two years or three years and everybody was very happy with the performance of this individual, possibly looking at a five-year term.

But to look at a five-year term before any work has even been started or accomplished or the like concerns me, especially since the five-year term with this position, Election Commissioner, lands us up right in the middle of what would be considered probably the next election after the 2019 election. I do not believe that that's in the best interests of Albertans.

I am here to work on behalf of Albertans and to provide common-sense solutions to the ideas that the government is putting forward and, at the same time, hope that the members from the governing party see the sense in those common-sense solutions. I believe that this amendment, amendment A2, to end the term a year after the next general election aligns with what we would expect for the Chief Electoral Officer and makes perfectly good sense. To end it 12 months after the next provincial election allows us to recognize that the work that's necessary to get completed, the investigations that are necessary to get completed on the previous election could get done. The reappointment could happen or not. The individual could retire. That would give this Assembly the opportunity to take the time necessary to find a replacement before the next election cycle starts.

I do not want to be in a situation, in a position where we are almost forced to reappoint an Election Commissioner right in the middle of an election cycle. I do not believe it's in the best interests of Albertans to be in a position where we have to make a decision one way or the other during that period of time, so I think this is a very reasonable amendment. I think we can all agree that the work that the Election Commissioner will have can be wrapped up in a year's time and that there would be a very limited number of complaints that would be coming forward in year 2, year 3, after an election. Therefore, there would be very limited work there. We would not have to rush the process and all of a sudden be forced to go: okay; now we need an Election Commissioner. If we are caught in a position where the individual retires, is not reappointed, we're rushed into the process of finding another individual, and that does concern me. It concerns me how this has been rushed at this time, and that gives me concern about the process that we will be faced with in 2023, at the end of the five-year term.

Madam Speaker, I do not believe that we should move forward with a five-year term. I believe this is a perfectly reasonable amendment. I believe Albertans would judge it the same, that this is a perfectly reasonable amendment, and at the end of the day I would like to do what Albertans would see as the most reasonable. I do not believe that Albertans would see it being reasonable to have this position end right in the middle of an election cycle. We are likely into another election by May 2023, and here we are: we have no Election Commissioner. To me, that's poor management. To me, that's poor decision-making. To me, that hangs on this government's decision at this time to move in that direction.

I believe it's a very reckless decision. I believe it's a decision that's not in the best interests of Albertans, so I need to try and understand: who is it that gets the best interests from this decision for a five-year term? The only person that I can see that gains from this – let's say that there are possibly two groups. Maybe the government gains from this. I do not know. But, at the end of the day, with the five-year term being the maximum term that was allowed in the legislation, it seems to favour the candidate, seems to favour the individual that's been appointed to this position. Is that fair or not? I can't judge that at this time – I would leave that judgment till after the work is performed – but at the end of the day I believe that Albertans would recognize that to have a five-year term and to put a decision on an Election Commissioner at a point in time where we have the next general election likely to happen is concerning.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? Calgary-West.

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'd like to thank the Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock. He does raise some interesting questions and, actually, doubt. He had me thinking that it is peculiar. It is peculiar that you have a five-year term that, you know, would start on May 15, 2018, and potentially end in May 2023, which would be smack dab in the middle of an election unless the government has no intention of calling an election in May 2019. Then that raises a doubt as to the possibility that this government has no intention of calling an election in May 2019, and therefore that would change the possibilities and the timelines as set forth.

3:50

I mean, surely, this government cannot be that naive, that in 2023 you would have a role, that the Member for Calgary-Currie said is such an important role – and I have already questioned in this House the duplication and the words from Glen Resler, the Chief Electoral Officer, who indicated that this is a role that he questions and that he and his office already can do. So I raise this to the Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock. Is there certainly a possibility that the government has no intention of calling an election in May 2019 and therefore would skew the timelines, as indicated by the hiring of this individual?

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to my colleague from Calgary-West for recognizing the peculiarity of having the five-year term ending in 2023. With regard to the government not calling an election in 2019, I would suggest that it would be a fatal mistake by the government to move in that direction. I believe that would be something that would definitely upset Albertans, much like the early call of 2015, I believe, upset Albertans. It was politicians that were moving, not necessarily in the best interests of Albertans, and thinking that they knew best, but Albertans decided that, no, it was not in the best interests of Albertans. I would suggest that if that's what the government is considering and that's what allows the five-year term to make some sense, that's one thing.

Also, with regard to the Chief Electoral Officer and the comments that the Chief Electoral Officer has made in the past with regard to doing these investigations and being able to handle them within his office, you know, there may be duplication here, absolutely. I believe there probably is. The position of Election Commissioner: it is possibly not necessary for it to be an office outside of the Chief Electoral Officer. But I don't believe that that's necessarily what we're needing to discuss here. It is what it is. We have the legislation before us. The term falls within the legislation. But I believe that it is somewhat reckless.

What I like about this amendment is that it allows us to recognize that if the government decides to call an election later, it still would allow that position to end a year after the next general election. So if the government decided to delay the election possibly one more year – I'm thinking that that's a possibility – if they decide to have the next general election in 2020, then I guess the term for this commissioner would end in 2021, so it would be a three-year term.

That's the beauty of the amendment that's before us. It recognizes that general elections come and go. They're not necessarily, in Alberta under the current legislation, going to land at a very prescribed time. The amendment allows us to recognize that, and we can have the term end 12 months after, recognizing

that the commissioner needs to finish his work, needs to do what needs to get done, to do the investigations and get it done.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to speak on Government Motion 16 and on the amendment that the term would commence May 15 and expire 12 months after polling day for the next provincial general election in Alberta.

Well, Madam Speaker, here's an interesting thing. I'm probably not the only one in this House that's looking forward to the next election. There could be members, as far as I know, on all sides looking forward to the next election. But here's where it's relevant to the discussion today, if you don't mind. I have a countdown clock in my phone, and according to that, there are 384 days, four hours, four minutes, and 19 seconds till the close of the polls in the next election.

The reason that's relevant to this discussion is because the time and date that I chose for that was the last Monday in May next year. We've heard the Premier – and I believe the Premier – say here in the House several times before that she intends to honour the law about when the election should be called. I believe the Premier when she says that. Now, elections don't have to be called on a Monday – I understand that – but they usually are. That, indeed, is the last Monday within the legislative time frame. I don't think the time that I've said – well, only the Premier gets to call the election, nobody else, and that's also how it should be.

Again, getting back to the point, the Premier has made it clear that she intends to follow the election law and has, rightly so – I don't blame her – taunted us a couple of times, saying, “You see what happens when you don't follow the election bylaw?” as the previous government didn't. If I was the Premier, I think I might taunt the previous government and those people attached to it about that very same thing, so I would say good on the Premier for so taunting when she has done so.

This does actually connect very directly to the discussion that we're having here, Madam Speaker. It's relevant. Four years after that, again according to the legislation that's in place right now for the time frame to call an election, would be March, April, or May – wait for it – in 2023. At this point, which is really what makes this amendment completely reasonable and sensible, you would actually be looking at finishing the terms of an important part of the electoral preparation team essentially right after, right before, or right in the middle of the next election cycle.

Now, I'm not a cowboy, and I admire those that are. One of the sayings that I've heard cowboys say is that you don't change horses in the middle of a stream. It would be potentially changing horses in the middle of a stream to swap out an important part of the electoral team right before, right after, or right in the middle of a general election. That is not in Albertans' best interests. I don't care what party you're with; there's nothing partisan about what I just said. I think all the folks watching at home, all six of them, might say: yeah, that makes sense. I wouldn't be surprised if members on all sides of this House were thinking: yeah, wait a minute; that actually makes sense, too. That is indeed swapping horses in the middle of a stream. Not a good idea.

Again, if we're to take the Premier's word, which I do – I'm not doubting it; I believe in her a hundred per cent on this – when the Premier says that she'll call the election within the time frame provided for in the legislation, then that makes it incredibly reasonable to support this amendment.

Further, as has been pointed out by several of my colleagues, the date picked here, if I heard them correctly, would co-ordinate with

the time that the current Chief Electoral Officer's contract is up, and if they're going to work together as a team, then why wouldn't you have some co-ordination between their contracts? I would say that with the contract with the current Chief Electoral Officer ending 12 months after the election, it is a completely reasonable time. There's always some accounting to do, some cleanup, some filing of paperwork, some chasing down of successful and unsuccessful electoral candidates to make sure they file their paperwork and get it in and all that kind of stuff and even chasing the ones down that don't get it in on time to get them to do that. With the current time, it gives those people in charge a full year to mop up all the paperwork – all the details, all the after-the-election reporting – after another election, a whole year.

4:00

Let's be clear. I think most Albertans would say – and whether they do or not, I do – that one would hope that the vast majority of if not all that paperwork would be mopped up in three or six months. But, making allowances for unexpected circumstances, making allowances for human frailty, making an allowance just for people leaving things to the last minute, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, a year seems completely reasonable. That's what this amendment says: let's do something completely reasonable in line with what we've done up till now. Something completely reasonable.

Again, you know, leaving aside just for a second that the current Chief Electoral Officer thinks this position is not needed, not my interpretation of his words but his words on the record – we'll get back to that later – nonetheless, if the government is to go ahead and spend whatever amount of money they're going to spend on a position that's not required according to the Chief Electoral Officer, why would you add an additional complication by having the contract ended right before, right after, or right in the middle of a general election? It's silly. That's a polite word, “silly.” I think that's parliamentary. I wasn't trying to be provocative with what I'm saying, but from a common-sense standpoint it seems silly, Madam Speaker.

At some point perhaps we'll hear people from the government side talk about how it's a good idea to have a contract end right before, right after, or right in the middle of a general election. I would be highly entertained and interested to hear whatever logic springs forth to support that position. I will eagerly anticipate that. But between now and then I think it's important that we just try to do what common sense dictates, and common sense dictates that we don't change horses in the middle of a stream. That's what this amendment says. That's why I'm going to support it, and that's why I would politely suggest that all other members of the House support it, too, because we seldom get something that comes along that makes such complete sense in such a nonpartisan way as this amendment that's before us right now.

The Deputy Speaker: Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), the minister of the environment.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It sounds like we can look forward to a number of amendments on this particular matter before the House. I have a couple of questions about that, this one in particular.

Madam Speaker, it's helpful to remember how we got here. There were a number of questions around transparency with respect to elections as matters unfolded for 44 years, and there remain a number of questions. The reason for that is that there's an awful lot of dark money sloshing around Alberta politics still in the form of political action committees, which is why we had to take action on those matters, and there's still a studied attempt to obfuscate

coming from Conservatives, because clearly they haven't learned anything. The leader of their party still refuses to disclose his donors to his leadership. One wonders if it is because he is ashamed of some of the foreign interests or other groups that do not share mainstream Alberta's values that have perhaps donated to his leadership.

In any event, we are now in the situation where we have hired someone to undertake some of the work that was long overdue in Alberta's election process and, in fact, undertake some of the work that Mr. Gibson, prior to Conservatives' firing him the first time, is now legally mandated to do. It doesn't at all surprise me, Madam Speaker, that now we have Conservatives proposing an amendment to fire Mr. Gibson a second time. What we now have is Conservatives who don't want to have a public conversation about who funds their leadership campaigns, who are running from any mention of the dark money sloshing around their party in the form of political action committees as they not only potentially import foreign money to manage their affairs but also import tactics from the United States with respect to these political action committees. Now we have a proposal to fire Mr. Gibson earlier, like they did the first time, as I said, for doing his job, which is exactly why Conservatives fired Mr. Gibson in the first place. The first time was for doing his job. Quite frankly, that's why Mr. Gibson was the first choice of the majority of the all-party committee, because he did his job. That is why Conservatives don't want him in the chair again.

Madam Speaker, I guess my question is: how many more of these amendments are we going to have? How many more proposals to fire Mr. Gibson is this Legislature going to have to entertain from Conservatives because apparently firing him once, the first time, wasn't enough?

Second, could Conservatives then go on the record and commit to a position where they would, if given the chance, fire Mr. Gibson prior to his term being finished? I'd like to hear them go on the record and commit to firing Mr. Gibson a second time for doing his job because once wasn't enough when he stood up for transparency and accountability and the integrity of the democratic system, when he stood up to Conservatives the first time.

The Deputy Speaker: Calgary-Hays, do you wish to respond?

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. The hon. minister would do well to take lessons from her Premier, who did the taunting about calling the election early and didn't go off on a bunch of sidetracks that are completely inaccurate, starting with the fact that my understanding of the gentleman's contract was that he finished it the first time around and, as best I could tell, got paid for every day he worked. Where I come from, I don't call that getting fired. It's just the way it is.

Anyways, the fact is, Madam Speaker, they intend to give this person, who is newer than the current Chief Electoral Officer and who the Chief Electoral Officer says isn't needed, a longer tenure than the current Chief Electoral Officer, who is doing a very good job. They intend to have this person's term come to an end in the middle of a general election for the people of Alberta. I can't think of anything less responsible than the timing the government has chosen. I know they're a little embarrassed about being corrected on that.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thanks very much, Madam Speaker. Well, I was an original part of the committee that was disbanded at some point in

relation to electoral reform, but I did have some conversations even after I left the committee. Only in most recent days, after the considerations of this new commissioner, did I speak with others across the country about the role of this new officer. Indeed, I've spoken to at least one Chief Electoral Officer in the country who found it surprising that it was necessary to hire a totally separate Chief Electoral Officer and that he was full-time because the indications that this experienced Chief Electoral Officer had around these issues were that it certainly wouldn't be a full-time position. It raised the question about: why not start small and see what is necessary, consider a part-time position, if at all?

Given the comments that we've heard from our own Chief Electoral Officer, it does raise serious questions about an extra expense and potentially a political motivation around hiring a man who has obviously had challenges with the process at some level. I don't know all the details of his lawsuit, but it was certainly a concern for me at the time that he appeared to be scapegoated by the previous administration. That was of some concern to me, the reasons. I felt that that election had serious problems with it and that as much responsibility lay with the previous government as it did with the Chief Electoral Officer, so I wasn't surprised when the lawsuit happened.

4:10

But to the point of this amendment, it strikes me as eminently reasonable to consider a year and see what the importance of this position is, see how relevant it is, see how essential it is to spend quite a lot of money. You're talking over a couple of million dollars to house him in the office and all his ancillary expenses. At the very least, he should be hired on a part-time basis, and he should be given a shorter term limit, in my view, to see the extent to which the work demands this extra support system.

Again, our own Chief Electoral Officer has said that he could probably handle that within the expanded role that he has and the expanded staff he has under the new elections financing act that was passed here. I'm a little bit surprised at the resistance across the way in looking at this position in such a long-term way when there are serious questions about the need for a full-time person and signing a five-year contract. We're talking about millions of dollars that could be spent elsewhere.

I will be supporting this amendment for the reasons I've given, including an authority across the country who says that he's surprised at why you would be hiring a second Chief Electoral Officer in a full-time position for a five-year period. He just gave me those very frank comments without knowing any of the background of this, so I think the government should take a second look at this and see about the public interest, about the fiscal responsibility issue, and indeed about a position that hasn't really proven itself necessary.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I was very interested in the member's comments, particularly when he talks about hiring a second Chief Electoral Officer. To the member, you know, I wonder how he would feel if, for example, the people of Calgary-Mountain View selected a second MLA while the hon. member was still doing his job. I wonder if the member could comment about if the government appointed a second environment minister while the first environment minister is sitting there and what kind of a message that would send to the current environment minister. I

would think that that would be a very negative message and one that would not give the person with the current role, whatever that role happened to be, a lot of confidence that their employer had confidence in them.

To me, hiring a second Chief Electoral Officer when you've already got a Chief Electoral Officer seems very disrespectful. Certainly, in our party there's a deputy whip, you know, but if they selected to put a second whip in place, I would start to wonder whether they thought I was doing a bad job. Now, they might think that. They might think something else. But, honestly, I'd have to say that that's a thought that would come to my mind right away. To the member, I just wonder about how respectful it is to the current Chief Electoral Officer to essentially hire somebody to do the same job that he's already doing when he's taken the time out of his life to go to a committee and say that we don't need this position and that it's duplicating what he's already doing. If your job is to count buttons at the button factory and you get all the buttons counted every day and they hire a second button counter, the first button counter might think: "Wow. Maybe they don't think that I'm doing a good job of counting the buttons. Maybe I'm on borrowed time. Maybe they're going to get rid of me."

To the hon. member, I hope you'll talk about this. I'm going to give him some time to stand up and talk about it. In this light, when elections are so crucial and democracy is so crucial, to actually rock the confidence of your Chief Electoral Officer by hiring someone to shadow that person when he's already said that that's not needed: clearly, it just seems like a recipe, potentially, for anarchy. I just wonder what the hon. member would think about that. I'd like to give him an opportunity to comment on hiring a second person. Particularly, on top of all of that, when the government is already running \$8 billion and \$9 billion a year in deficits, why would they hire a second person to do a job that's already being fully done?

Dr. Swann: Well, thank you for the question. Indeed, I am concerned at what the morale in that office would potentially be by disregarding the advice of our own Chief Electoral Officer and hiring somebody that may or may not fit into the culture of the current Chief Electoral Officer. But more to the point, when we're still exploring the need for this, why not give it a shorter term and at least assess the extent to which a full-time, separate office is needed here in the interests of fiscal responsibility as well as the issue that's been raised? How do we divide up the work in that office if we have two chiefs, and what will some of the implications be for his staff and the other commissioner's staff? It does raise serious questions about how quickly we're moving to that commitment, a five-year commitment, and some of the challenges associated with that.

I don't think it's too late to pull back a little bit and then to review the contract at least. It may be that we're committed to a contract, but I would hope that we would review things at the end of a year and decide: first of all, is it needed; secondly, is it full-time; and thirdly, what kind of a job is this delivering? So I would hope the government would think about it again.

It's not something that I have a particularly vested interest in. I'm speaking on behalf of Albertans, who want to see a responsible electoral process, who want to see some reform. I applaud the government for bringing in the financial limits, some of the important, important work that was not done by the previous government.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It is indeed my pleasure to rise in the House today to speak to Motion 16, the appointment of Lorne Gibson as Election Commissioner, and specifically to amendment A2, put forward by my colleague from Chestermere-Rocky View, that talks about the fact that the proposal is for a term of five years commencing May 15. The amendment is seeking to reduce that to "expiring 12 months after polling day for the next provincial general election in Alberta." I think that the Chief Electoral Officer's contract reads in somewhat that same kind of language, so this would align, certainly, with that.

Now, there has been a minority report put forward by four members of the committee, which has been made public, so I will refer to that from time to time as I continue. I can certainly table the document if required, but I am sure that that has already been done.

On April 5 the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices passed a motion recommending that Mr. Lorne Gibson be appointed as Alberta's first Election Commissioner. Now, I am not a member of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices, so I wasn't there to witness the vote or the discussion that took place when the motion was created or the discussion before, but I understand that the motion to appoint this individual to the new position was not unanimous and did not have all-party support at the committee.

Now, I understand that members of this committee have been involved with a few other search committees over a period of time and that in those cases all members had a very good working relationship and, most importantly, were in all of those instances, at least, able to come to unanimous support. If we consider the position of the Auditor General or the position of the Ombudsman, I think it was clear that it was all-party support. I believe there was some good communication between all party members, all voices at the table were heard, and there was more of a robust discussion that led to a unanimous decision in those cases. I guess what I would say is that there was nothing partisan like what happened in the proposal to appoint this elections officer.

4:20

Madam Speaker, it appears that from the outset of this committee, that started deliberation on the choice of Election Commissioner sometime back in December of last year, it became apparent to some of the members of the Legislative Offices Committee that the members that represent the majority of the committee were ready to move ahead in a way that seemed to the opposition members somewhat hasty and somewhat jumbled. This particular search seems to have raised the eyebrows of some of the committee members that do not sit on the majority side of the committee. Those same members have suggested that they were less than satisfied or somewhat disappointed in how the majority members conducted themselves through the entire search process in this particular case.

Now, part of the minority report talks about what the four members of the Official Opposition were witnessing while the search for this new position was going on. Now, it talks about how the government members required, by use of their majority, the standing committee to compose a job posting and a position profile for a brand new position at the Legislative Assembly of Alberta and to complete that task, what some would consider, I'm sure, a laborious effort, in 48 hours and, within that same time frame, determine to open the competition for this position during a time of year that certainly everyone here celebrates their Christmas holidays.

Now, all of that was done with direction from, once again, the majority members of the committee while the opposition took a strong stance suggesting that these actions would be a waste of money and would put undue strain on support staff. Now, that may

seem a little bizarre, but deciding to open the competition during Christmas holidays, which required an expensive run of print advertisements, of course, at that time of year, necessitated the need for an officer of the LAO to come into the office during their holidays in order to make deadlines so that their advertising could be put out to the public.

Now, I can imagine asking a member of the LAO to come into the office to complete such a task at such a bizarre time of year would be somewhat, I guess I would say, difficult. I dare say that the employee of the LAO may have had a few ideas as to what his Christmas holidays were actually for and that they did not include coming back into the office to open a competition for a new position at the Legislative Assembly or to take care of a run of print advertisements.

Then, once we got into January, the committee was asked for an additional \$20,000 for a second run of print advertisements. It became apparent as to why they needed that. It was because it appeared that not enough applications had been received within the proposed time in the original advertisements. Even as a member that doesn't sit on the committee, I can see why. The advertisements were sent out during Christmas holidays. What was the rush? I wonder. This couldn't wait for a week or 10 days until after the holidays were over and everybody came back to work as the due course? This committee spent an additional \$20,000 because of this seemingly horrible rush to get the advertisements out to the public at a time when they were spending time with their families and not reading the paper, probably. It makes no sense to me, Madam Speaker.

Now, we already put an amendment forward here last week to make this position's salary public, and that was defeated by the majority of the House. We've seen a range that was made public, but the committee won't allow the actual salary for the new position to become public. I guess all the talk from this side of the House when the amendment was put forward that was about transparency and accountability is something that this government would like people to believe that they believe. I'm sure they would like us all to believe that. I think Albertans deserve to know what the salary is. It fits within the sunshine list rules, but government determined that we weren't going to go there, that we were not going to let Albertans know that information.

But, Madam Speaker, that was a different amendment. Today's amendment is to amend the motion to end the contract of the Election Commissioner one year following the completion of the next general election in Alberta. This would allow the position to complete all tasks that were incurred as a result of the election, give time to create a report as a result of the election and report back to the appropriate authorities. Considering some of the things that went on in that committee, that to some may seem less than above board, it seems to me like a perfectly legitimate amendment.

Let's just get back to how we got to where we are today. When a committee takes the job of considering employment for a newly created position, certainly a position as important as Election Commissioner, which, according to the government, will root out dark money, which, of course, came along with the passing of Bill 32 in December, it seems that the committee charged with this serious task should move forward in a nonpartisan way. It seems to me that such an important posting would demand co-operation of the members from both sides of that committee. I mean, after all, we are all supposed to be working for Albertans, I believe – I think that's right – in the best interests of Albertans. I think that's right, too. I mean, after all, the committee was really tasked with doing a search for a competent applicant that could handle the chore of Election Commissioner.

I'm not saying that the proposed commissioner isn't qualified. I'm not saying that at all. I don't think any of the committee members from the opposition side ever stated anywhere along the way that Mr. Gibson was not qualified for the position. I think it's been stated in this House many times that he certainly has the proper qualifications. I understand that there were other strong, qualified candidates that made submission as well, that, in some members' minds, would have made good election commissioners as well.

When we hear that in the past there were no issues on the committee when selecting applicants in other searches and when we hear that the majority government members pushed hard to put forward a person that not all members of the committee saw as possibly the best choice, which, as I say again, was not a problem for the committee in the selections of the past, well, it kind of makes me wonder why. It makes me wonder why things became partisan all of a sudden.

You know, sometimes it takes a little or a lot of intestinal fortitude to work together with someone who sees things differently. The job of any committee that I ever sat on was to come to a consensus. Of course, most of the committees that I sat on in the past were nonpartisan in nature. But when we have seen that in the past this committee was able to put partisan ideas aside to come up with candidates that the committee could truthfully say were selected unanimously, well, Madam Speaker, that seems to go against everything that we have been talking about with regard to Motion 16. From what I can see, the majority of committee members weren't interested in working together with other committee members. It seemed to have strayed from what the committee was able to accomplish in previous searches.

Madam Speaker, it should concern all Albertans when a standing committee of the Legislature is given the task of searching for an officer of a new position and there is this kind of disagreement and irregularity, I guess is how I'll say it, from the majority members of said committee.

4:30

I'll just talk for a moment about the individual whose name was put forward here. As has been stated, I don't think there's any question that Mr. Lorne Gibson is certainly qualified for the position. This posting would not constitute the first time this individual has worked for the government of Alberta. He previously served as Alberta's Chief Electoral Officer. His job, of course, was to oversee elections between 2006 and 2009.

Now, in 2009 Mr. Gibson's contract with the government was allowed to expire. That was one year after a provincial election. Now, Madam Speaker, it appears that there was some sort of falling out, I would suggest, because two years later Mr. Gibson filed a lawsuit against the provincial government and the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. The lawsuit claimed that he had been terminated without cause and that his termination had been politically motivated. Mr. Gibson was claiming a large amount of money in compensation, but as it turns out, a judge dismissed the case and found that his employment had terminated when the contract expired as a natural course.

Now a committee of the Legislative Assembly has chosen to hire this man that, shall we say, carries a little baggage with him. Not only that, Madam Speaker, but the Chief Electoral Officer, Mr. Glen Resler, reminded the committee that he had not had a chance to comment on the bill that actually created the position of the Election Commissioner.

Now, the Chief Electoral Officer has been held in high regard throughout this province and has done his job very ethically. I don't think that there would be too many that challenge that statement. He has served the electoral process in Alberta well.

The Deputy Speaker: Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The member was making some important comments here in terms of the process that led us here to this amendment, and I was quite taken by some of the clarifications that he gave. I think that at one point the environment minister had said that the gentleman was fired before. Of course, there was a judge that said different after a court case. So I think there is an important clarification for the House that I didn't want anybody to miss, because the hon. member did make that.

Another thing that I think the hon. member made a good point on in his remarks is about the fact that the current Chief Electoral Officer was not given an opportunity after all these years of service to even comment on a piece of legislation to create a job that completely shadows his own. It seems incredibly disrespectful. I certainly hope that the government doesn't get accused of constructive dismissal over hiring somebody for the exact job that somebody already has and then giving him a contract for three, four years longer than the person currently in the job. It seems incredibly, incredibly, incredibly disrespectful to the current Chief Electoral Officer. Incredibly disrespectful.

To the hon. member that was just speaking, when you add all this up with the fact that the government was in such a rush to be that disrespectful by putting the ad in over the Christmas break, and essentially the government majority on the committee forced it through the House when there wasn't consensus on the committee – Madam Speaker, I'll talk about this with a little bit of context. I was on the committee that hired our Clerk. I have to say that we worked in very close and co-operative means with members on the government side, and to the ones on this committee I would say thank you. We didn't agree every day on everything, but when we finished, because it was such an independent officer of the Legislature, that needs to support us all equally and not be biased in any way, I think that was a pretty good result. Again, I'll compliment members from our side, and I will most certainly compliment every member from the government side for working together co-operatively on such an important thing to come up with a consensus.

To the hon. member: do you think it's as disrespectful to the current electoral officer as I think it is when they do something over the Christmas holidays to rush this thing out, when they don't even ask the current electoral officer about the legislation that's before us now, to give the new person with exactly the same job a contract four years longer than the current independent officer that we have? There's quite a bit of negative evidence here towards the government's motivations.

I'd ask the hon. member for his thoughts on that. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Schneider: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Calgary-Hays. I don't think there would be any question that if I was the electoral officer, I'd be wondering a little bit about what the government was up to if they were hiring somebody that was actually trying to just about shadow the job that I was doing and was given a contract that was longer than the one that I had held. I know that Mr. Resler stated, you know, when he was asked to present to the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices in regard to election investigations, for instance, that he actually had no issues handling current complaints that came into his office in regard to investigations. He made it very clear that he was able to handle all of those complaints in his regular duties as Chief Electoral Officer.

I mean, let's just hold it for a minute. The Chief Electoral Officer made it clear that he had no problem or issue handling current complaints that come through his office with regard to investigations. I'm not sure if we're expecting more complaints and if that's the reason why we would hire somebody that actually almost doubles what the electoral officer is doing. If the man who's doing the job is well respected and has been doing the job well, it makes you wonder why the position is needed at all. Madam Speaker, it seems . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate this opportunity to talk about the amendment to Motion 16. I have it sitting here in front of me. I have to say that what the amendment is trying to do, for those that just are logging in, is to take a guaranteed term of five years and say that the term for this newly created position, the Election Commissioner, should line up with the election date, like the current Chief Electoral Officer's position.

Now, I believe that this is quite reasonable. I do hear the concerns that the government is saying here. They want to make sure that they are able to find a qualified candidate. It's going to be tough to do if we only offer them potentially a two-year term. Fair enough. If he does a good job, though, he will get renewed for another term. That is how this works. What we're saying here is that the problematic part of this, going with a fixed term, is that it is possible for that term date to end in the middle of a general election. Clearly, that would be problematic.

Now, if we look at this right now, we're sitting in May. We're looking to create this position, it looks like, on May 15. What we're seeing here is that this position will go five years; that is, to May 15, 2023. Now, what we're seeing here is that if we look at the next fixed election date, that is going to be held in the spring of 2019. So if you add four years from that, that's 2023. These dates are lining up, so this is not idle speculation. We literally have the Election Commissioner's term ending most likely in the middle of a general election or even just after an election.

4:40

Now, here's the thing. When an election is called and the writ is dropped, we have no MLAs sitting in the House, which means we have no committees formed, which means we have no ability to be able to deal with an extension to this gentleman's term. What we've got here is that it is important that we have stable, transparent, and reasonable elections.

Now, this gentleman in 2008 had some issues with the election and then came in after the election with important changes to the Election Act. Why would this gentleman even want to go through that process again of having a terrible election during his term of office?

Let's move on to the fact, too, that when this gentleman last held a position as the Chief Electoral Officer, his contract ended. Now, what we've got here is that we had a legislative committee use a majority and not renew his contract for another term. What this individual did was that he sued the government, saying: wrongful dismissal. What happens to us if his term terminates and this individual sues the government in 2023? This is reasonable. This is not speculation. This has happened already once. Alberta is dealing with an election, and now we're dealing with a lawsuit happening with our Election Commissioner. This is very problematic for whatever government is looking to take office.

When you bring forward an amendment that says, "Let's line this up with elections," that's reasonable. Again, if this individual does

a good job, his term will most likely be renewed. I don't believe that anybody on my side has said that this gentleman is not qualified. He has been clearly picked by the majority of the committee. There was clear, clear concern about his potential lawsuit against Alberta, but our caucus has been saying that it appears that he has the qualifications to do the job. So if we make this 12 months after this next election, he shouldn't have a problem with an extra term. That's the key here, that they keep saying that he was fired. That is completely false. It is completely false, and a judge ruled that false. It is important to make the distinction that when you say that in this House, you're actually doing a false statement.

Now, what we're seeing here is that – I'm going to use an example for those that don't quite get this because I understand that this could be complex. Let's say that you file your taxes on time every year. April 30: you file your taxes. It makes sense that if you're deciding to choose an accountant, you're not looking for that accountant after or on April 30. That just makes sense. If you were dissatisfied with your accountant for whatever reason – it could be that you didn't like his hair that day – what happens is that . . .

An Hon. Member: Yours is excellent.

Mr. Cyr: Oh, thank you.

. . . you would complete the tax return, and then you would start the process right after the taxation year to find yourself a new accountant.

This is what we're trying to do with this amendment. What we're saying is that an election is held and the Election Commissioner has got 12 months to wrap up his cases, which is very reasonable. It's unbelievable if it took longer than 12 months. If he's got the odd case, it is likely that either he will be renewed to move forward as the commissioner or the new commissioner will be able to deal with that single case or, well, a few cases that are left.

What we've got here is an individual that is being treated differently than our Chief Electoral Officer. That brings the question: why is he being treated differently? Why is he being treated better? I understand that the government is committed down this road. I also understand that the Official Opposition filed a minority report against the hiring of this individual. It was very clear that there was clear contention regarding him, the opposition versus the government. It appears that this process was very clearly rushed. We're rushing the process, and then what happens is that we're treating him differently than our other elections officer. Why are we treating him any differently than our CEO?

It does appear to be the potential for favouritism. This is the stuff that we see when governments bring forward individuals that they choose and they say: "You know what? We're going to push him through the system. We're going to use our majority, and we're going to get this done." You know what? That rarely works well. We've seen this repeatedly. When you go and you try and force a system, usually this ends poorly. I will say that again.

You know what? I have been on the Auditor General search committee. We have just gone through this process. I have to say that our Auditor General, who has decided to retire, was a remarkable man. Mr. Merwan Saher: remarkable man. He decided that he wasn't going to renew his term, so this wasn't even that the government let his term lapse. What they did was that they started the search committee. Then what we did was that we got together as caucuses and were able to discuss the best person. We didn't rush the process. We went out with advertising across the country. We even went international. That shows you how committed we are to ensuring that our Auditor General is the best possible person to

bring accountability to Alberta. You know what? Did we agree on everything? No. But I will say that we did come out with consensus. That is a functioning committee. That is a functioning search committee. But when you have a committee that appears to be rushed, that clearly isn't a functioning search committee.

Now, what I would like to say is that it's important to understand what our current Auditor General does. Bear with me here. I've got the website open for Elections Alberta. He's got his mandate here for Elections Alberta, and I think this is important.

Elections Alberta's mandate is to:

- administer open, fair, and impartial elections;

That's good.

- provide stakeholders with the necessary information and means to participate in the democratic process;
- provide support to election officers to ensure impartial service delivery;
- serve in an advisory and regulatory role to achieve compliance in electoral finance activities;
- provide the public with disclosure through the publication of reports and financial statements;
- embrace partnership opportunities and innovative ideas by adopting best practices and new technologies from the service, business, and election communities; and
- support a positive, respectful, cohesive and self-rewarding work environment where individual aspirations can be achieved.

4:50

Wow. That office seems to know what they are trying to achieve. I believe that it showed that it worked well in 2015. If it didn't work well, there wouldn't have been a government change, because it was clear that the people of Alberta wanted change.

We've got an elections office that appears to be functioning. It appears to be doing what it's tasked to do. It appears to have a good vision. It appears to be following its mandate. So when you ask me for a five-year term for an Election Commissioner, I am saying, for one, that our Elections Alberta CEO, the Chief Electoral Officer, seems to be doing his job, but you disagree. You created a new office. Fair enough.

What I would like to say is: let's treat them the same at least. Let's at least give them the same terms. Let's at least make sure that we have some consistency because I will tell you that we'll have two people that will find working together almost impossible because they don't have matching terms. That seems problematic. We're going to have them competing with each other or unable to work with each other, figuring out where each other's boundaries are. That seems to be the big concern that I've been hearing from my colleagues. We need stability when it comes to our elections. We need to consider the fact that a five-year term isn't the way to do that.

When you start talking about us picking on Mr. Gibson, I wholeheartedly disagree. This is a good amendment. This gentleman, if he does his job, could have a 20-year, 30-year career with us. The only thing that would prevent that is if we have turmoil, which we already saw in the 2008 election.

The Deputy Speaker: Under 29(2)(a), Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I've been listening, of course, with a great deal of interest to the member's comments. A decent amount of them, of course, centre around this cloud, the fact that, you know, he was let go or fired, perhaps, as some might describe that. I was hoping to provide a little bit of context and then ask a question to you, hon. member.

I'll just do a quote here from a Graham Thomson article to have a little bit of background about where that cloud came from. The article says:

He poked, prodded and embarrassed the PC government-of-the-day by pointing out serious shortcomings in the 2008 general election, where 27 per cent of voters were left off the list and some people waited hours to vote.

Gibson complained he couldn't conduct a proper enumeration of voters because of Alberta's bizarre, antiquated and unfair practice where the PCs controlled the system of nominating returning officers for each riding. Yes, you read that right. The PCs, through cabinet, controlled who would be the chief ballot-counter in every constituency. It was the stuff of banana republics.

Gibson made 182 recommendations . . .

which I have right here,

. . . to improve the system, including allowing the chief electoral officer to appoint returning officers. The government eventually adopted many of his suggestions a few years later, but Gibson had proven to be such a thorn in the government's side that in 2009 PC MLAs voted not to renew his contract, effectively firing him.

Madam Speaker, I'm sure that I will have a chance to table that in the Legislature tomorrow for all members.

Now, let's have a look at what some of those recommendations mean. If anyone is interested, I am looking at the Report on the March 3, 2008 Provincial General Election of the Twenty-seventh Legislative Assembly. For those of you who are looking for a copy from our library, which is open at this late hour, this is – wow, that's a really long item ID. I won't read that into the record, but if you ask our librarians downstairs, they will be able to find this for you.

It starts off that one of the chief recommendations, to provide that full context, is this:

Returning Officers who manage enumerations and elections are currently appointed by Order in Council. When the Writs of Election are issued, Returning Officers appoint their assistants, the Election Clerks, to support them throughout the election period. The Election Clerk is the Returning Officer's primary support during the election period and may be requested to fulfil the responsibilities of the Returning Officer if [they are] unable or unwilling to act. When this occurs, there is a strong probability that the Election Clerk could be called on to act with minimal notice, so it is essential that the Election Clerk is qualified to act, should the need arise.

Now, the key part is in the next sentence here.

Returning Officers and Election Clerks are the most visible election officers during an election and, therefore, must be perceived by voters, candidates and the political parties to represent an electoral system that is fair and impartial. Their independence in both fact and perception helps to assure the public of the integrity of election administration within the province.

That line and the recommendations that came out of it – you can keep reading in the report from pages 63, 64, 65, and so on. It goes on to around page 130-ish. There are a great deal of recommendations there from the officer that caused such a problem for the government of the day that they decided to not renew his appointment, which effectively fired him. That was the interpretation from the media and the opposition of the day, that that was in fact what was happening.

My question to the hon. member is that, you know, if he feels that there's such a cloud, the cloud is that he spoke truth to power. If that is a problem, why is it that he has issues with a person who's got a demonstrated record of having spoken truth to power, has a demonstrated record of speaking up to the government of the day to ensure that elections are run fairly? I wonder why he's doing that. Or is he, like his government colleagues, going to continue to

needlessly filibuster Mr. Gibson's appointment to prevent him from getting to the good work of making sure that our elections are fair? Those are the two questions, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Cyr: With these last 10 seconds I have repeatedly said that he's qualified for this job, sir – repeatedly said that – so to say that I'm putting a cloud on this man's career is completely incorrect.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Here we are again. You know, I actually have quite a few questions for the Member for Calgary-Currie, although I know and I understand that I'm not in that opportunity to ask those questions at this time. Certainly, things were going through my head at the time when he was speaking. A question I would, if given the opportunity, ask him, of course, would be: are we going to take the word of a journalist in an article, or are we going to take the word of a judge in a court ruling? This certainly is something that pops into my mind. A contract that wasn't renewed is not somebody who is fired, but I guess that's something we will obviously agree to disagree on.

I will stand up here, though, in front of you, Madam Speaker, to of course support this amendment, a term of five years commencing May 15, 2018, and substituting "a term commencing May 15, 2018, and expiring 12 months after polling day for the next provincial general election in Alberta." As many of my colleagues have stood up for here already, something that is a very reasonable amendment.

I've already brought up during one of my opportunities that it certainly raises some questions, and it is curious. It provides doubt as to why the government would have a contract that would potentially end in the middle of an election cycle, that would be May 2023. As my colleague and friend from Bonnyville-Cold Lake rightly pointed out, during an election none of us are MLAs, so there is not an opportunity or an ability to rehire somebody if that contract was to end in the middle of, again, an election cycle.

5:00

As I discussed with my friend from Calgary-Hays, you know, this is something that would be chaos. I mean, again, if we have a position that is supposed to be so critical – so critical – why would we have it end in the middle of May of 2023, which would throw an election cycle into sheer chaos? Like, this is not what I would believe to be a wacky, crazy amendment, Madam Speaker. This is a very reasonable amendment. I think that some of the arguments, of course, that are being made are reasonable arguments. It does not make sense for this contract to end in May of 2023.

It raises questions. It raises doubts. It raises the question: is the government – you know, we have to believe what the Premier has said, that she's going to abide by the current legislation and that they are going to have that election in May of 2019. I can tell you on behalf of my friend from Calgary-Hays that not doing that will have some severe and negative consequences.

Mr. McIver: As we learned.

Mr. Ellis: As we learned, right?

You know, again, it raises doubt. Is this government going to have this election in May of 2019? Are they planning on extending it, or are they planning on bringing it forward? I don't know. But certainly it does not make sense for this individual's contract to end in May of 2023.

Then, you know, we talk about much that has been brought up about Mr. Resler, the Chief Electoral Officer. Nobody has had any disparaging comments to say. I believe that everybody believes that

the work he does is important. I believe there is much respect for Mr. Resler. Again, we talk about the feelings of that individual. I think it's very important. Let's think about that. You have a gentleman that is supposed to be working alongside what, again, has been pointed out to be a very important position, the Election Commissioner. Well, you've just hired somebody to do a job that is similar to the one that he's already doing. He's already indicated to the committee that his department can do that job.

Again, it brings us back to duplicity. Why are we spending money on a position that really can be done by somebody that has already said that they're able to do the work that needs to be done? Nobody is disputing that the work needs to be done but is questioning why we are spending whatever that amount of money is. I've heard various reports of a couple million dollars, I think, and somebody can certainly correct me if I'm wrong. Certainly, that is a concern, that we are going to be wasting money on a position that's already going to be done or could be done by Mr. Resler and his staff, right?

Another point here. You know, let's assume that this amendment is going to go through, Madam Speaker. Let's assume that it's going to go through. Although the government appears to have indicated that they're not going to support it, let's just assume that it's going to go through. I think it's very reasonable. I think back to the career that I had working for an association which we call the police union. I mean, even as a police officer after 18 months they reviewed whether or not they were going to keep me. If I was doing a good job, if I was serving the public in the way that was asked of me in the contract that I signed with the city of Calgary, then, of course, they would continue to hire me for the X number of years that an individual chooses to stay with that particular department.

To take a look at this one year after the election: I don't think that's unreasonable. I think that, you know, Mr. Gibson, if he's working hard, he's doing a good job, he's showing value for his work, then, sure, he'll likely be reappointed, which happens with many other departments, with many other services, with many other unions. It's very, very important, right? You can't just give somebody – again, as one of my colleagues pointed out, even in the private sector it's very unusual to just hire somebody for a five-year period of time with really no checks, no balances, not really much of anything.

You know, again, Madam Speaker, I think what's really going through my head, that I just can't seem to figure out, is why this contract is ending in May of 2023. It just does not make sense. I have to question: was this just naïveté from this government? Did they just not notice? This government has been commonly known over the last several years as the government of unintended consequences. What would the unintended consequences be of an individual that is going to end his contract in the middle of an election cycle, in 2023? Does that mean that Mr. Resler is going to have to do the work that he's already indicated he can do? That's a good question. That's assuming that he, of course, gets rehired. His contract may or may not end. I mean, these are questions that I think we all have.

You know, Madam Speaker, I have to bring this up. I brought this up during one of my first talks on the main motion itself, and it has to do with the confidence, the overconfidence, the arrogance. I know I brought this up, and I'm not meant to be a broken record in this particular case, but I sat and I watched – I watched – the arrogance, the Member for Calgary-Hays and myself. We saw it. We saw it, and those people are no longer here. Here we have it again, just going to force stuff through.

I know. I've talked to people that were in the previous government, Madam Speaker. They got their marching orders from the person at the top that says: you will hire that person no matter

what anybody says. I see the threads, the common threads. I wish the government would see those threads, but they don't. That's very, very, very sad, really, to see. We have four individuals from the previous government, that sat over there, and they watched. I'm watching them make some of the same mistakes, the same mistakes that my colleagues were making when I was just new to this Legislature.

But who am I? I'm not part of the government. I'm part of the Official Opposition. I'm here to offer my opinion, to represent the people of Calgary-West. Certainly, you know, the government can choose to listen to the Official Opposition or not. That's fine. We've seen what happened in 2015 with a government that chose not to listen to, maybe, recommendations from the Official Opposition on that side, from members of the parties that sat over there, the Liberals who sat over there, the NDP that sat over there. I sat there. I watched. And maybe – maybe – for this government, if they choose to listen to this recommendation, to maybe listen to a few recommendations, there might be some opportunity. There might be some opportunity for the future.

5:10

I want to talk maybe a little bit here about Mr. Resler and talk a little bit about how he would feel, of course, when you have an individual who comes in, even though he has indicated the he can do the same job, that his department can do the same job. Mr. Resler has witnessed this government giving the new person, who would be the Election Commissioner, Mr. Gibson, a large extension past Mr. Resler's existing contract. I certainly would like to know if the salary is similar, but they're not disclosing how much Mr. Gibson is making. That certainly brings into question an opportunity for Mr. Resler to maybe feel even worse if that's even possible. You know, I think that it is very unfair for Mr. Resler. I think it's unfair for his department.

Now, what I would like to see, of course, is that if Mr. Gibson is indeed hired, which I believe he is, to go through the process – my understanding is that he hasn't signed a contract yet. When he does, which seems like it's going to be the case, although I hope that this Legislature listens and this amendment goes through so that there is an amendment to that contract, I think it's very important for all Albertans and for everyone in this Legislature that if they are going to be working together that these two individuals work together as a team, that they're going to work cohesively, and that there will not be any barriers between them because both of them are providing a vital service to the people of Alberta for a fair and open and transparent election.

Madam Speaker, you know, I get to listen to always being accused of having rich friends, but I'm a very simple police officer. I'm a working guy. My friend from Calgary-Hays is a butcher.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you. You know, I have to say that it's important to hear that a lot of us have occupations outside of politics. The thing is that that gives us this life experience of being able to see some concerns as they arise. Some of us can take those life experiences and put them towards, in this case, a motion, an amendment that's coming forward.

You know, when I hear the Member for Calgary-West state that he is using some of his experience through law enforcement and how it relates to a decision we're making in the House, I think there's value in that. I truly do see value in that. What happens here is that if we were to start to go down this road and start going with mandatory terms for our officers or accountants or, in the case of

Calgary-Hays, butchers, you can see that this could be problematic if it's not structured correctly.

What would be the ideal time, do you think, Member for Calgary-West? Do you think that it's a year after the election date? Do you think that we could have ended it on the election date like what the NDP are planning with 2023? Do you think that the ideal time would be before the election date by a year? What do you think would be the appropriate time for it?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you to the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake. You know, my opinion on this, I guess, would be consistent with what I'm seeing in this amendment to this motion. I believe that it is very reasonable to have this term end a year after the election. You know, as indicated by my friend from Chestermere-Rocky View, it gives a year for somebody to clear up any sort of issues or abnormalities or just work that may need to get cleared up, which is a lot of time. I know my friend from Bonnyville-Cold Lake is an accountant by trade, so he certainly has more experience than I do when it comes to clearing up work on a desk. In my previous career my work was in a car – that's where my office was – so I certainly can appreciate what he is saying.

You know, to have any sort of change – again, we assume that we have these two positions that are going to come forward here. To have them begin or end close to the important election date I think is hugely problematic. I think that it would cause potential chaos in the system. So to have a review, if you want to call it that – I mean, we called it a probationary period, as I was indicating, as part of the union that I had previously belonged to – to have that at a time that is a year past the election date I think is extremely reasonable. I think that would provide a sufficient amount of time for Mr. Gibson to clear up any of the work that he needs to do, and as I've already indicated, if he's working well and he's doing a good job and he's providing value to this Legislature and, more importantly, to the people of Alberta, then there is really no reason why whoever is the government at that particular time would not renew his contract.

It is absolutely peculiar, as has been indicated here in this House already today, why you would have a contract that ends literally at a time that we can only assume is in the middle of a writ period, in 2023, unless there is going to potentially be some alternate date that is going to come up in 2019. That's the only reasonable conclusion that one can extrapolate from the information that we're being provided here, that are we really – I think that's the question.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2? The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Madam Speaker, thank you very much. It's my pleasure to rise today and speak in favour of the notice of amendment. I'm grateful to my colleague from Chestermere-Rocky View that she proposes that Government Motion 16 be amended by striking out "a term of five years commencing May 15, 2018," and substituting "a term commencing on May 15, 2018, and expiring 12 months after polling day for the next provincial general election in Alberta."

Madam Speaker, two or three overriding general observations to start with. Honestly, I'm surprised we're here, when the electoral officer said that he could do the position with his staff, with his mandate. Of course, the Official Opposition stood up and conveyed that as well as our committee and our dissenting members. We expressed the savings. Sometimes smaller departments and fewer employees are better for focus and actually doing the work right.

Certainly, we believe in trusting our experts. We believe in local decision-making. My goodness, 87 of us miles away from this House certainly cannot make better decisions. That being what it is, of course, the government, in the same heavy-handed manner that they handled the committee, refused to listen to that and voted that down.

5:20

Now our electoral officer, faced with not being listened to, rebuked at that point in time, is looking at a situation where the government chooses to give the new person a contract, the Election Commissioner, four years longer than the person he'll be working closely with. And you know the potential amazement and the potential problems that could arise from that.

You know, Madam Speaker, everyone makes mistakes, and some mistakes are easy to correct. We spent some time talking about this bill a week or so ago, trying to advocate for the taxpayer, advocate for the people of Alberta to ensure that the wage would be on the sunshine list earlier, quickly, so that we could have more sunlight to clearly show Albertans maybe some of the intentions, maybe some of the reasons, and maybe some good things as to why the government was going to do that. Of course, two or three hours ago the Government House Leader stood up and apologized – and rightfully so; he handled it very well – and said: I made a mistake; we're going to correct it. Easy to correct. Thank you, Government House Leader, for doing that.

But, Madam Speaker, if this is another mistake by the government, if this is yet another mistake with a five-year term, after hours and hours of Alberta's loyal opposition standing here, highlighting this, showing all the pitfalls, respectfully, and making great amendments to reduce the exposure for the taxpayer, to reduce, you know, maybe some friction and some problems that our electoral officer may have, and of course not getting a response, not getting a positive movement from the other side – it was easy three hours ago to stand up: I made a mistake, and I'll correct it. One, two, three, or four years from now it may be a heck of a lot harder to stand up and say: I made a mistake. The NDP government made a mistake, and we need to correct it.

Again, I think back to the families and the communities in Alberta. Unfortunately, a lot of them are struggling with high taxes, with high utility rates, making much less than they did. This government owes it to every single one of them to get as much value for their hard-earned tax dollars as possible and, wherever possible, to leave them as much money as possible so that they can care for their own families.

This committee threw \$20,000 away over Christmas even though every single opposition member on the committee stood up and said: don't do it; don't do it; do it right the first time; get it right the first time. But in reckless fashion, with a lack of regard for taxpayer dollars and a lack of regard for getting the process right the first time – Madam Speaker, maybe I'm wrong. Maybe it was just inexperience. You know, maybe it wasn't a fast movement towards a predetermined decision. Maybe it was just a \$20,000 mistake that somebody who's out working tonight, a first responder or a nurse or somebody standing on an oil well, has to pay for us. Maybe it was just a mistake. Maybe it was just inexperience.

Again, maybe this is a mistake, too. I absolutely believe it's a mistake. I absolutely think that when we have our electoral officer say that the position is not needed and tell the people of Alberta that he can do the job and save us money. Now the government is forcing this on him, on us with a five-year commitment. Of course, we know the range that the hiring had to be at, I guess, from the orders and the prescription that was out there, but Albertans don't know what it's going to be, and it'll be over a year until we do. This

may end up being a very, very costly mistake, again, caused by a lack of respect for how hard people actually have to work to earn tax dollars.

I want to come back to, you know, some of the words I've heard while I've been sitting here listening for two hours: reckless, irresponsible, rushed, no transparency, waste. Five of the things that I've heard the most are reckless, irresponsible, rushed, waste, lack of transparency. This thing is a mess. This thing has been a mess from start to finish in a government-dominated committee. Again, not knowing how so much, you know, advice from – start with Mr. Resler, an excellent officer for the people of Alberta, an excellent reputation. In my six years it's all been good. For his advice to be so totally disregarded absolutely leaves me speechless, hopefully not for the next 10 minutes, but . . .

Mr. Mason: It's a figure of speech.

Mr. Barnes: I see.

Madam Speaker, it's amazing. That's one of the reasons why this government should back up now. This government can put the brakes on. We have a top top-quality officer with top top-quality staff who's saying: we can do the job.

So okay. It's the government's decision. They're the majority. They're forcing their will on the people of Alberta and on the Official Opposition. But it does give us some time. Madam Speaker, it gives us some time to change the terms of the contract, to go back to the other individual, which I believe is Mr. Gibson. Hiring people is a two-way process, the employee and the employer. And we are representing the people of Alberta, again, the people of Alberta that tonight will be saving somebody's life on a nursing ward, creating tremendous wealth and providing jobs, you know, 50 miles from the nearest community standing on an oil well.

I spent a little bit of time on Twitter earlier today, and my goodness, I'm already seeing in Cypress-Medicine Hat ranchers that are praying for rain. They need it instantly or will be faced with selling top-quality breeding cattle that they've nurtured and improved, feeding Albertans and feeding the world for tens and tens and hundreds of years. These are the people that are paying the taxes. These people are why we're here.

Madam Speaker, when I read words in this dissenting opinion from my four caucus colleagues – and I thank them for their work and their courage, my colleague from Airdrie, my colleague from Calgary-Greenway, from Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock, or BMW as I heard the other day, and Chestermere-Rocky View – here are some of the things that they said in April 2018.

We have long been disappointed in how members of the government caucus chose to conduct themselves throughout the entire search process . . .

Well, I think we can add to that: through the entire amendment process in the Legislature.

. . . in a reckless fashion by forcing the Legislative Assembly Office to compose a job posting and position profile for a brand new position in less than 48 hours, and deciding to open the competition during the Christmas holidays.

This is probably an appropriate time for me to tell everyone about how on the Christmas holidays I took my three boys and their three girlfriends and my wife down to Cancún and what a great holiday we had.

But how many quality people that would have been eligible for this job were doing the same somewhere with their family, somewhere with their friends, somewhere where they weren't able to reply? You know, Madam Speaker, I don't and the Official Opposition doesn't take any pride in being able to say: I told you so. So this NDP government had to then take \$20,000 out of

Families and Communities' pockets, an additional \$20,000, for a second run of print advertisements and maybe end up with where they were headed all along.

5:30

The last sentence of that paragraph really concerns me. "We also took issue with being strong armed by government MLAs." We get it. They're the majority. They have control of the Legislature and all the committees, but, Madam Speaker, that is not how you lead. "We also took issue with being strong armed by government MLAs who would declare that a consensus had been reached on issues in camera and would try to force votes with little to no discussion." Little to no discussion, stacking the deck with the majority of the members.

Of course, we've heard some of the past history of the candidate, and we've also heard from many people on the opposition side that the candidate is good and there appear to be a lot of reasons that he should be hired. Of course, what this debate is about is the terms and the process. We've heard many, many people stand up and talk about how a five-year term may collide directly with this next election, not the one that Albertans hope to have March 1 to May 31 next year but the one that may fall four years after that. If this servant of Alberta is doing a good job five years from now – and I hope he is – does that mean a 10-year contract five years from now? It will be right in a very, very delicate time zone. Madam Speaker, we can correct this problem now.

You know, I also understand that Mr. Resler, our elections officer – the expiry of his contract matches what my colleague from Chestermere is proposing, 12 months after the polling day for the next provincial general election. Twelve months after the polling day. As has been stated many times on this side, if there are a few little things to organize or, let's say, a minority government is in place in a year and . . . [Mr. Barnes' speaking time expired]

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Under Standing Order 29(2)(a) Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, I have to say that I have an incredible respect for my colleague from Cypress-Medicine Hat. I have to say that when I first became an MLA, he was very helpful in trying to guide myself and a lot of my colleagues through the process. I'm also thankful for the other, in our case, Wildrose MLAs that had gone through the purge, if you will. [interjections] I'm sorry. I wasn't meaning to be funny. But what I will say, though, what I'm trying to bring up here, is that the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat has been at this for a while. He's seen search committees. He's seen committee work. He's also one of the most respectful men of this Legislature when it comes to our committees.

So, you know, when we see something happen like what happened with this search committee, when we've got contention on this committee, I'm just curious. It seems like the government is saying that all we're out to do is to get this individual. I don't believe that the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat is out to get Mr. Gibson. I do believe that he's asking reasonable questions. I think we've got a reasonable amendment before us. Why are we not lining these up?

I would like to hear from the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat. You've been through committees. It would be great to see maybe the House leader from the government side even speak on this, on how he sees committees work. It's the experienced parliamentarians that we've got here that we should be looking to to improve. They've

been through the process longer. I've been here for three years. I do believe that we can always get better at what we're trying to do. It comes to compromise.

Will you speak on other committees that you've been part of, sir, and do you see that the committee that we had, the search committee for this new position, is problematic?

The Deputy Speaker: Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you for that. I greatly appreciate it. Just quickly, the first thing that came to mind was that when I was fortunate enough to be elected in 2012, one of the first committees I was on was Resource Stewardship. The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity at the time was our chairperson, and I think back to what a great job she did. I guess it's fair to say that there were many things that were on that committee that, when it came to my inexperience, I was as green as grass in many ways. She started to bring in people that presented to us about indigenous peoples' rights and their way of life and how that would be impacted by hydro developments and lots of the proponents of it and the people that were going to be affected. My goodness, I learned so much, and it was so respectful, and it was just a great opportunity to put things forward.

Then the next step was the bullet train between Calgary and Edmonton. She brought in a lot of people that wanted to talk about how that was going to happen. It was an amazing, amazing educational experience to hear that there are only one or two of them in the whole world that actually pay for themselves. Of course, they're in centres of 10 million and 20 million people. Probably the thing that was the easiest for me to remember was that because this train was going to be going 220 miles an hour, if it even hit a rabbit, it could derail the whole train, so it was totally crucial to have these fences and guard it and make sure nothing like that happened. It was a real opportunity to share information and learn.

You know, I even remember at one point the Wildrose legacy caucus – I can't remember exactly what we were talking about at the time, but there was talk of a dissenting opinion on something. I remember the committee pulling together and talking about it and working it out. Because it was a step away from where we were actually making laws and . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Mr. Mason: Well, the hon. member asked me a question. Unfortunately, my colleague used all the time, so he has learned some things since he was first elected, in 2012.

The question that was asked is: what is my experience of committees? Well, my experience of committees is that you have discussions, you have an agenda, you debate the issues, and you reach a consensus if you can. If you can't, you take a vote, and whoever has the most votes wins. Then the matter is settled.

The Deputy Speaker: Under Standing Order 29(2)(a) any questions or comments?

Mr. Cyr: Well, thank you for that, sir. I do appreciate you getting up. You know, I do say that it was great to see that you, I believe, got a 10-year pin. Was it you that got a 10-year pin?

Mr. Mason: Fifteen.

5:40

Mr. Cyr: I apologize. A 15-year pin. We do have some very experienced parliamentarians here.

Now, as the minister has been in opposition and he has been able to feel when government uses its majority to push something

through a committee, is it not frustrating for you to see something like that happen, to not even try to come to some compromise, sir? I truly believe that working on compromise – and as I said before, with the search committee for the Auditor General, it didn't mean that we agreed on everything, sir. But we were able to come to compromise, and I believe we picked Mr. Wylie. He is going to be the best Auditor General we have for Alberta going forward. You know what? I think that process worked.

To the minister: do you feel that it is appropriate that we are pushing things through these committees very quickly and, in this case, that we had missed the fact that a five-year term is not appropriate for this man? Thank you, sir.

Mr. Mason: Well, Madam Speaker, I wasn't a member of the committee, but I have indeed served on many committees. I've often found it frustrating, to be sure, but I've also found that when I had some good, constructive points to make, they were often listened to with sympathy and occasionally incorporated into the decisions of the committee.

But one of the things that I recognized, whether I was frustrated or not, was that we have certain principles of democracy that we operate in this House, which is based on debate and votes, and that that is how decisions are made in this place on bills, on motions, on all manner of things. The proportion of seats on committees is equivalent to the proportion of seats in the Assembly, which is in fact determined by a free vote of the electors in an election. Ultimately, refusal to accept the decision of the majority after fair debate really amounts to a rejection of the choices that have been made by voters and is not in its essence democratic. I would urge the members opposite to recognize that we operate under certain principles of democracy in this place and in our society and to respect those.

With the greatest of respect to the opposition, we need to move on to much more important business of the public. We have pipelines. We have health care. We have an electricity system. There are many issues before this House that need to be resolved. It is the people's business, Madam Speaker, and we need to show respect to the public, that we use our time wisely in this Assembly and focus on the things that are most important to the public as opposed to being concerned about someone who may have in the past brought forward a number of recommendations which quite embarrassed the previous government.

For example, of course, the long-standing practice in this province where the governing party appointed all of the returning officers in every constituency in the province was an outrageous abuse of democracy. In this case, Mr. Gibson, as the Chief Electoral Officer, brought forward recommendations to do away with that, which the government of the day found very awkward. There are many other quite good recommendations that were made, in all honesty, that the Conservative government didn't like. Some of them have been adopted since; most notably, the notorious system of political appointees as returning officers. But there are others that have been subsequently adopted. The awkwardness and embarrassment that it cost the government of the day was in part why they got rid of him and why they're opposing this now, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise to speak to this amendment, particularly after the hon. House leader made some comments. I mean, let's be very clear. This motion is to

appoint Lorne Gibson as the Election Commissioner. That's what the government motion is. The Election Commissioner, at least as told to me by the government, is an extremely important position. That's what members of the committee said. So I find it interesting that the Government House Leader may not agree with that statement that the committee members are making.

However, we are here, and our democracy is extremely important, Madam Speaker. You know, to say that debating this here today fulsomely is not as important as some of the other business that the government may have would appear to be a little bit confusing to some of the members of the committee and/or to the Government House Leader. I don't really know which is which.

Madam Speaker, also, in addition to government business, there have been a number of opportunities where this government could have – let's say particular to the pipeline legislation, where there's an urgency to get this legislation passed. You know, there would certainly be a willingness from members in the Official Opposition to expedite that process and get that moving through. Certainly, that's not what's been happening with this government.

There have been a number of bills additionally, Madam Speaker, that the government isn't offering debate on. In fact, the Official Opposition has been carrying much of the debate on most of the bills in this Legislature. I would think that the statement about moving on to other business, having more important things to do is not the whole truth.

I know that the people in my constituency of Airdrie are very in tune to this new position that's been created by the NDP government and the process that it's taken to get there. They don't really know much about it. The government refuses to disclose the salary. The Chief Electoral Officer says that this position is redundant because that's what he already does, so in addition to insulting the Chief Electoral Officer in bringing this position – and I still would like to get some questions answered for my constituents in Airdrie, who absolutely deserve to be represented in this debate as we move forward.

Madam Speaker, the amendment that's on the table was moved by my hon. colleague the MLA for Chestermere-Rocky View, who made some really good points in her debate. I particularly agree strongly with this amendment. This is an amendment that's consistent already with the office of the Chief Electoral Officer. There's nothing unusual about what's going on here. It's, in fact, consistent with other things. It's an easy talking point for the government: well, you know, we chose this term because it's consistent with almost exactly the same office in another manner. I don't really understand why the government is treating this new Election Commissioner differently than they are treating the Chief Electoral Officer. I think that's a bit of a concern. Why does the new Election Commissioner have a better contract or a better deal than the Chief Electoral Officer? It doesn't make any sense. I would think the government would agree, being consistent and open and honest and transparent, that they should be treated the same, but they don't, and I would be concerned as to why they think that.

Madam Speaker, there's been a lot of controversy surrounding this whole situation, and this government is trying to make this debate about the person in particular whereas the Official Opposition has a lot of concerns about the process and how we got here in the first place. We've offered a number of suggestions on how to make the government's decision to create the position in the first place and then to hire the Election Commissioner a whole lot better. But they are choosing to, you know, keep things secret and blame us in the Official Opposition for filibustering, which, in fact, is not true. This is the first time I've been able to speak to the amendment, which I think is so important.

5:50

I think that Albertans deserve to have this fulsome debate, Madam Speaker. In fact, if the Official Opposition hadn't been offering such good suggestions along the way in regard to this motion, we wouldn't have gotten to a point where we heard the hon. Government House Leader stand up today and say: actually, I made a mistake. "You're welcome," is probably what I would say and what should be said, maybe, because that's an extremely important part.

The government voted down an amendment to make the new Election Commissioner's salary public – right? – and their whole argument at the time was that it will be made public in due course, the way that everything else is made public. That was the argument of the government. It was the only argument of the government, truly. But then we find out that isn't even true. The whole debate isn't even true. I actually wonder if we should reintroduce the amendment. I don't know if there's a process to do that, but I think that the government would probably, certainly, appreciate an opportunity to be able to have a debate on some facts. We have those now, and that's certainly because the Official Opposition has taken the time to do research and to consult with constituents and to be able to come back here and bring that expertise to the House and debate it here.

I know that my constituents in Airdrie don't want to see this Election Commissioner be treated any differently than the Chief Electoral Officer. They don't want that. Certainly not. This is an amendment that would bring those two in line with one another.

Like has been said before, Madam Speaker, if the Election Commissioner does a good job, he could have a very long career. You know, there are certainly some concerns that the contract will run out and the committee at the time won't renew it and that then there'll be another lawsuit against the government, which was not successful the first time. However, there's always a considerable amount of time and money and effort put into these things when one is faced with such legal proceedings.

There are just so many things, right? There are just so many things. It's like, you know, if you have a problem employee, Madam Speaker, or in an interview process. I don't know if you've hired anybody before. I'm fairly certain you have. You're a very accomplished woman. If somebody comes in to see you and they're applying for the job, but you kind of have a, "Why did you leave your last job?" and there's a little bit of uncertainty around the explanation as to why they left their last position, in your head and in your heart of hearts you know that something is off. You also don't necessarily have multiple newspaper articles with additional information that you can refer to. I wouldn't want to speak on your behalf or for you or assume anything, but I would think that sort of in a case like that, you probably wouldn't proceed to the next phase of the interview process.

But that's exactly what happened in this committee, and there's some concern. And the Official Opposition is not the only one with concerns. The members of the committee are not the only ones with concerns, Madam Speaker. Albertans are concerned. You know, this is an individual, an office that will be interacting with the public, that have significant powers that are different from what the Chief Electoral Officer has.

No one here is suggesting that we shouldn't have investigations. I mean, there's always an – the work that the Chief Electoral Officer currently does is extremely important, and I value the work that he's done, the help that he's given to the public, the investigations that he has pursued and made rulings on. There are a number of people that can't run for any elected positions here in Alberta that are

clearly listed on the website. Those were investigations that occurred, and there was a ruling that was made on those.

But apparently that doesn't matter anymore, Madam Speaker, so the NDP created another position, another couple of million bucks, saying, "Who cares, right?" It's not real money; it's just numbers, a piece of paper for this government. They created a redundant position that, at best, has been described as part-time. Why don't we see if this even works? What if this isn't something that the government likes after the next election? I suspect they might not because the results are going to be a little bit different than what they think they are, despite their efforts to stack the deck. This government isn't willing to put their money where their mouth is.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, the Member for Airdrie has the floor, and it's getting awfully noisy back here. If you've got conversations, please take them outside of the House.

Go ahead, hon. member.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you so much, Madam Speaker. I appreciate that. It's hard to put some thoughts together with the chattering, so that was very good. I appreciate that.

I was just saying, Madam Speaker, in regard to this amendment that we are currently discussing to Government Motion 16, to strike out "a term of five years commencing May 15, 2018" and substitute "a term commencing on May 15, 2018, and expiring 12 months after polling day for the next provincial general election in Alberta" that this is an amendment that mirrors the language for the Chief Electoral Officer. It's a position that the NDP government has taken from the Chief Electoral Officer, added a whole bunch of money to and time and whatever and created what is new in the Election Commissioner's pile over here. I don't know why it would be treated any differently. It's the same thing. It went from here to here, right? That's it, but a whole bunch of extra money and time and all that kind of stuff.

I guess I'm having a hard time, Madam Speaker, trying to figure out why this position and this particular legislative officer are receiving special treatment from the NDP government. I think Albertans are going to have a hard time with that, too, but we have

an opportunity and the government still has an opportunity, when we vote, to provide the people of Alberta with peace of mind in that no favouritism is happening. You know, this individual works for all Albertans, not the NDP government but all Albertans, and I just don't understand a scenario, Madam Speaker, in which the NDP would not think that that is okay. They make the rules. They can certainly go back to the Election Commissioner and explain that because of the redundancy in the position that has been created, we have to treat everybody the same because that's the right thing to do. I know that the new – I would assume. I mean, I shouldn't assume, but I would probably be safe that the new . . .

6:00

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I know that my time is going to be limited, but I'd just like to comment that you mentioned the words "stacking the deck." It seems to be a catchphrase whenever this government deals with anything to do with the upcoming election. I think we talked about it on Bill 32, where the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre used "stacking the deck" a number of times, and there was a little bit of diatribe between him and the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills where they went: stacking the deck, stacking the deck, stacking the deck. It kind of gives that appearance when you look at – you know, they question us as to what we would have against this person being appointed, which he was, so the question it begs is as to: what do you have to gain by forcing and appointing this person? I'd like to remind the government that this person was a man that actually sued the Alberta government and lost.

The Deputy Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt, hon. member, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(2) the House stands adjourned until 7:30 this evening.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6:01 p.m.]

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The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday evening, May 8, 2018

Day 26

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (NDP),
Deputy Government Whip
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)
Vacant, Fort McMurray-Conklin
Vacant, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake

Party standings:

New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 25 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent Conservative: 1 Vacant: 2

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Shannon Dean, Law Clerk and Director of	Committee Services	Chris Caughell, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms
House Services	Nancy Robert, Research Officer	Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Stephanie LeBlanc, Senior Parliamentary	Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of	Gareth Scott, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Counsel	<i>Alberta Hansard</i>	
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel		

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Sarah Hoffman	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health
Shaye Anderson	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Sandra Jansen	Minister of Infrastructure
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Children's Services
Brian Mason	Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Stephanie V. McLean	Minister of Service Alberta, Minister of Status of Women
Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Community and Social Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

Parliamentary Secretaries

Jessica Littlewood	Economic Development and Trade for Small Business
Annie McKittrick	Education

STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Mr. Coolahan
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	Luff
Dang	McPherson
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha
Deputy Chair: Mr. van Dijken

Carson	Littlewood
Connolly	McPherson
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schneider
Fitzpatrick	Starke
Gotfried	Taylor
Horne	

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Goehring
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Orr
Ellis	Renaud
Fraser	Shepherd
Hinkley	Swann
Luff	Woollard
McKitrick	Yao
Miller	

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Shepherd
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Aheer	McKitrick
Gill	Pitt
Horne	van Dijken
Kleinsteinuber	Woollard
Littlewood	

Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Wanner
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Babcock	Nixon
Cooper	Piquette
Dang	Pitt
Drever	Westhead
McIver	

Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms Kazim
Deputy Chair: Connolly

Anderson, W.	Orr
Babcock	Rosendahl
Drever	Stier
Drysdale	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kleinsteinuber	Taylor
McKitrick	

Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	Miller
Cooper	Nielsen
Goehring	Nixon
Gotfried	Pitt
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Cyr
Deputy Chair: Mr. Dach

Barnes	Malkinson
Carson	Miller
Clark	Nielsen
Gotfried	Panda
Hunter	Renaud
Littlewood	Turner
Luff	

Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola
Deputy Chair: Mr. Drysdale

Babcock	Loewen
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Fildebrandt	Panda
Hanson	Rosendahl
Kazim	Schreiner
Kleinsteinuber	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, May 8, 2018

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: Please be seated.

Government Motions

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Amendments to Standing Orders

19. Mr. Mason moved:

Be it resolved that the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta be amended as follows. Standing Order 56 is amended by striking out suborder (2.1) and substituting the following:

(2.1) A temporary substitution in the membership of a standing or special committee may be made upon written notification signed by the original Member and filed with the Clerk and Committee Chair, or through an email communication sent directly from the original Member to the Clerk and Committee Chair, provided such notice is given

- (a) on a business day, not less than 24 hours prior to the meeting for the substitution of the Chair or Deputy Chair, and
- (b) prior to the scheduled start of the meeting for the substitution of any other Member.

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Madam Speaker. By way of explanation I should indicate that these changes would make it easier for all caucuses to manage unexpected absences from committee duties. Under the current rules 24-hour notice is required for committee substitution. This can make substitutions for Monday meetings as well as Tuesday mornings quite difficult to manage. The change would allow for substitutions to take place up to the scheduled start time of the committee in the event of committee members. The 24-hour notice is maintained in the case of chairs and deputy chairs.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: That's the place, Madam Speaker. Thank you very much. First of all, I just want to thank the Government House Leader for this particular change to the standing orders. It's a good change. It's a change that was a result of some positive conversation on both sides of the House, and it will allow greater flexibility for MLAs to make substitutions at committee meetings.

However, there was an element that we talked about that did not make it into the final motion before the House, and that is the issue of subs for chairs or deputy chairs. The current standing order means that when a noncommittee member substitutes for a chair or a deputy chair, that substitute automatically becomes the chair or the deputy chair for the meeting. Now, sometimes, Madam Speaker, that's not a big deal, but other times to have a chair or deputy chair who is not a member of the standing committee and doesn't know the history of that standing committee can cause some complications.

Therefore, I'd like to propose an amendment to this government motion, which I support. I have the appropriate copies for the pages.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, if you can just wait until I have a copy, please.

Thank you, hon. member. The amendment will be referred to as A1. Please go ahead.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I move that Government Motion 19 be amended, in the proposed amendment to Standing Order 56, by adding the following after suborder (2.1):

(2.2) Notification of a temporary substitution under suborder (2.1) for the Chair or Deputy Chair may designate an existing Member of the committee to act as Chair or Deputy Chair, as the case may be, and another Member as a temporary substitute.

Madam Speaker, this amendment proposes to allow a chair or a deputy chair, when making a notice of substitution, to effectively divide their substitution. They can choose to make a committee member the chair or deputy chair for the duration of the meeting and also allow a noncommittee member to sit as a substitute. I should also point out that it allows the chair or deputy chair flexibility in that they can still choose a noncommittee member to substitute for the chair or deputy chair.

In case members are having a hard time following this concept, allow me to explain with a little example. Take the Public Accounts Committee, which is chaired by my good friend the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake. In the unlikely event he needs a substitute, currently when he is advised that the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills is going to fill in for him, his substitution notice also would make the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills the chair. I see all sorts of problems with that, but I digress, Madam Speaker. This is problematic because the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills hasn't been a member of Public Accounts for the Legislature, so he hasn't received the same level of training as the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake and has less knowledge of what is currently going on inside the Public Accounts Committee.

An Hon. Member: It's too complicated for him.

Mr. Nixon: Yeah. And we also get a little sick of hearing about the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

What we are proposing is that when the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake sends his notice of substitution, it can advise that the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek will be taking over as committee chair and that the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills will be a substitute sitting as a regular member, able to vote on motions but not sitting as the committee chair.

I should also add that the new provision in Government Motion 19 isn't affected and that the chair or deputy chair could still have 24 hours to submit their notice of substitution, as set out in section (2.1)(a).

I hope I can find the support of all members of the House for my amendment, Madam Speaker, and encourage everybody to vote for it.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak to the amendment on Government Motion 19? The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: I would indeed, Madam Speaker. You know, I'm leaning very heavily toward supporting it except for the scary examples that the Opposition House Leader used. Nevertheless, I'll overlook that and just indicate to all members that I do support this amendment. I think it's a helpful amendment, and it will make management of the committees easier for all involved.

So I urge all members to support this amendment.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Any other members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, I will now call the vote on amendment A1 as proposed by the hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

The Acting Speaker: We are now back on the motion as amended. Any other members wishing to speak?

Hon. Government House Leader, would you like to close debate?

Mr. Mason: Yes, please, Madam Speaker. Vote yes.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

I will now call the question.

[Government Motion 19 as amended carried]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Amendments to Standing Orders

18. Mr. Mason moved:

Be it resolved that the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta be amended as follows. Standing Order 7 is amended by striking out suborder (7) and substituting the following:

(7) The items in the ordinary daily routine will be deemed to be concluded at 3 p.m. and the Speaker shall notify the Assembly unless notice has been provided under suborder (8).

(8) The Government House Leader, or member of the Executive Council acting on the Government House Leader's behalf, may provide notice to the Assembly prior to 3 p.m. on that day that the daily routine shall continue beyond 3 p.m.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. This amendment corrects what I believe to be a loophole in the existing standing orders that requires unanimous consent to be granted in order that Routine proceedings be extended beyond 3 o'clock. As you know, from time to time the Routine does extend to and beyond 3 o'clock. This is often a result of a combination of other factors, whether there's been a ministerial statement, how many guests are introduced, and whether there are interruptions to the clock during Oral Question Period.

Members have no doubt seen it from time to time. Upon seeing the clock approaching 3 and knowing that there may be unfinished business, the Government House Leader seeks unanimous consent of the Assembly to extend the Routine past 3. In such situations there is uncertainty for members who may have important members' statements scheduled for that day. There may also be occasions where important legislation needs to be introduced or notice of an important motion needs to be provided.

Madam Speaker, there was indeed an instance in this Chamber in the last few years where unanimous consent was requested but not granted, which thereby impacted the government's ability to introduce legislation. On April 4, 2016, the government had intended on providing oral notice of a bill to be included in the following day's Order Paper, that bill being Bill 5, the Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act, sponsored by the hon. minister of housing. However, Routine proceedings were longer than is normal that day because at the opening of the proceedings the Speaker made a statement regarding the hiring of a Clerk of the Assembly, and brief comments were made by a number of members following his statement in order to welcome the new Clerk to his position. At approximately 3 o'clock the Deputy House Leader at the time sought unanimous consent to extend the Routine. Consent was not granted. As a consequence, introduction of that bill was delayed until the following day.

7:40

I think this is an important matter, Madam Speaker. It is possible, I know from personal experience, for the opposition to use a variety of tactics to make sure that the Routine is not completed by 3 o'clock. It can happen inadvertently, just by a combination of factors, but it is also subject to ingenious tactics by skilful opposition leaders. Therefore, it can prevent the government from introducing an important piece of legislation in which there may be some time constraints.

For that reason we are proposing this change, and we would hope that members on both sides would support this. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. Government House Leader.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Olds—for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Perfect. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm glad you got all the towns this time. I don't want to be mistaken for my friend from Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. There is a slight height difference. I don't know if anybody has noticed.

Mr. Mason: And width, too.

Mr. Nixon: And width, too. For sure. Thank you to the government for pointing out my width compared to the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

The reason the Government House Leader needs this government motion is because, as he said, one time the Official Opposition hurt his feelings because we didn't give unanimous consent to the government, and it had to delay by one day introducing a piece of government legislation. One day, Madam Speaker.

I would say that it seems a little petty to me to now make a standing order change because of that, but I guess they get to do it. They're in government. I should also add that the Government House Leader continues his government trademark consultation style, which is really where they tell us what they're going to be doing but don't actually listen to our concerns. Now, no surprise there, Madam Speaker, because they're so used to not listening to Albertans' concerns on issues like carbon tax or farmers' concerns on Bill 6.

But I digress, Madam Speaker. In fact, I am even inclined to advise my caucus to let the Government House Leader go ahead with making this unnecessary change to the standing orders. I still kind of don't understand, though. I mean, at the end of the day, previous governments seemed to implement their legislative agenda just fine without this change, but I guess this government needs all the help they can get by changing the rules of the Assembly in their favour. You might even say that they're stacking the deck.

However, before we let the Government House Leader continue to weigh the rules of the Assembly in the favour of cabinet members, I'd like to propose an amendment, and I have the appropriate copies.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. If you could just wait until the table has the required copies.

Please go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. Nixon: Well, Madam Speaker, I move that Government Motion 18 be amended, in the proposed amendment to Standing Order 7(8), by striking out "The Government House Leader, or member of the Executive Council acting on the Government House Leader's behalf," and substituting "Any member."

Madam Speaker, this amendment suggests a crucial change to how the Government House Leader proposes to change the rules. Instead of consolidating the power in the hands of the Government

House Leader or other members of cabinet, it allows any member to make the request to extend the daily Routine. It doesn't even stop the Government House Leader from being able to be the one to make that request. On that note, I want to remind all members and particularly the Government House Leader that all MLAs have a role to play in the management of House affairs, and it's not exclusive to cabinet.

I hope the government members support this amendment.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. Your amendment will be referred to as A1.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? I will recognize the hon. Government House Leader, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Well, we didn't know that this amendment was coming, so I'm formulating my thoughts here as I go. Now, the Official Opposition House Leader's ... [An electronic device sounded] From now on I'm having overtures when I speak.

This amendment means that any member can extend Orders of the Day. Let's think this through. It is possible, as I've already indicated, for brilliant and insightful Opposition House Leaders to find a way to extend Orders of the Day, potentially, for a very long time, almost indefinitely, by constant use of – and I hate to give them ideas – introductions of guests, you know, points of order, tablings. There are lots of ways to do that. Then the amendment would allow any member to automatically extend the Routine so that Routine could be extended throughout the whole afternoon. It would allow a small minority or even an individual, for example the hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks, to extend this.

The intention here, Madam Speaker, is to provide an option so that the government can actually make sure that if it has a bill to introduce, it can introduce the bill. That's the only reason for this particular motion to change the standing orders. I think that what the hon. Opposition House Leader is proposing could be fairly dangerous and may have, you know, unintended consequences, and I'm sure the Official Opposition doesn't want to be known as the Official Opposition of unintended consequences. So I suggest that members defeat this amendment.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. A couple things. I think the Government House Leader just did a very good job of proving my point that the intent of his amendment is to consolidate all of the power on this issue in cabinet and/or the Government House Leader, not to share that ability with all members of the House, which was the point of my amendment.

Also, the argument of dangerous. Let's be clear. This Government House Leader brought forward a change to the standing order because he was embarrassed because once this government slipped up and got caught and wasn't able to get a bill forward.

I do ask the hon. Government House Leader on 29(2)(a) if Bill 5, that he refers to as his reason for bringing this forward in this Assembly, did in fact pass the Assembly, or did something tragic happen along the way and Bill 5 was not able to make it through the process as a result of that standing order being utilized? I'd be interested to hear his answer.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to respond? The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. You know, the hon. Official Opposition House Leader is a skilled debater, and he has cleverly pointed out that, in fact, the government was able to get the piece of legislation through. However, there have been important time constraints on bills; for example, if we're facing some sort of a court-imposed deadline to make changes to legislation would be one possibility. There are a number of other reasons why it might be very harmful to the province of Alberta and to the government of Alberta were the government not able to give notice of a piece of legislation which is required. That is simply the case.

It is not an attempt to put all power in the hands of the Government House Leader. That, I think, the hon. Official Opposition House Leader would have to admit, is rather a gross exaggeration. It is simply to make sure that if the government wishes to proceed with a piece of legislation and there's a time limit on that, it cannot be held up by mischievous tactics by the opposition. That's all there is, Madam Speaker.

7:50

You know, there are many, many tactics that the opposition can use, and I know very well what many of those tactics are. I think the Official Opposition is learning as they go, and after another term in opposition I'm sure that they're going to become quite proficient, Madam Speaker, at some of the tactics that are available. We've been very sparing in terms of changing the rules in order to shift things in this House because we don't wish to shift things, quite contrary to what the suggestions are opposite. We don't wish to shift the balance heavily in favour of the government.

Now, I did have to face a Deputy Government House Leader, Ron Stevens, who called myself and the Liberal House leader to a meeting and read us a long list of changes that severely circumscribed the ability of the opposition to do its job, and then those were put through despite our objections. It actually led to an extraordinary circumstance where, as the NDP House leader, I held a joint news conference with the Liberal House leader, and that was almost unheard of. I think that at that time our relationships with the PCs were much better than our relationships with the Liberals. You know, that shows the extent of the threat that we faced from the PC government.

We've never done anything like that, Madam Speaker. We actually and I personally respect the role of the opposition in this place. It is essential to hold the government to account, and with a really good opposition they will actually put forward alternatives to what the government is doing; for example, perhaps a shadow budget or something like that. You know, the opposition is actually quite necessary.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. Government House Leader.

I did recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow to go first, and then I'll recognize the Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm not generally in favour of this motion, so I'm a bit conflicted on whether or not I'll support the amendment. I'm also not certain whether the term "polishing a turd" is, in fact, parliamentary. If it is not, I apologize and withdraw that term. If it is, then let's keep it in *Hansard*. But it's there now because *Hansard* is forever.

Madam Speaker, my concerns with this amendment are similar to the Official Opposition House Leader's concerns. When we get back onto debate on the main motion itself, I will elaborate on those

concerns. I'll vote in favour of the amendment. I think that it's at least going to blunt the power that is put in the hands of government.

I guess the question I would have for the Government House Leader if perhaps he'd like to rise under 29(2)(a) and answer the question – you know, beyond the one case of Bill 5 that we had in this term, he's talked about that it could be very, very harmful to extend daily Routine. Potentially there's a bill that needs to be passed very urgently, and somehow the Official Opposition or any other private member would withhold unanimous consent or would propose that we extend daily Routine ad infinitum just for the simple purpose of frustrating whatever this particular bill happens to be. It seems far fetched to the point of just being inconceivable that something like that could actually happen. What seems more likely is that the government is just caught out not well prepared.

I think that this amendment would make what's a bad idea, I guess, slightly better, so I would speak in favour of the amendment. I look forward to having more to say when we get back on debating the main motion.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I will now recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Speaker. What we have here is a classic case of a solution looking for a problem and not finding one. The reason why this amendment is a good one is that the Government House Leader just finished giving zero examples of the government not being able to get their legislation through. He gave one example where they got their legislation through one day later than they would have liked to have, and I'm not even sure that happened because I'm not sure, at the end of the day, because of the way they can put things on the Order Paper or not put things on the Order Paper, whether the third reading was completed at the same time, perhaps even earlier. It takes me back to the fact that the Government House Leader is doing this with exactly zero examples of where it was a genuine problem for the government.

Further, he gave an example where the former Ron Stevens – may he rest in peace – got the Government House Leader in front of media when they paid attention to them. I think he will even agree with me right now that at that point, when the NDP got in front of the media, they owed the government a thank-you card and a bouquet of flowers because at the time I think they had a hard time getting in front of the media, not like now, where they get all the airtime.

But, Madam Speaker, I think the Government House Leader, respectfully, has killed his own argument by giving zero examples where it's been a problem for the government and one example where it was an opportunity for him as an opposition caucus leader or House leader at the time.

And what's further troubling to me, Madam Speaker, because I'm used to being insulted around here, is the fact that the Government House Leader would consider all of his private members as – his word, not mine – dangerous. It's what he just said. The only people that won't be able to do this if he votes against this will be private members, including the government's own private members, which are now considered, in the words of the Government House Leader, dangerous. I think at this point, since the Government House Leader has . . .

The Acting Speaker: Hon. Government House Leader, are you calling a point of order?

Mr. Mason: Yes. A point of order, please, if you don't mind.

The Acting Speaker: Okay. Please proceed.

Point of Order

Allegations against a Member

Mr. Mason: Well, under 23(h), (i), and (j) I just want to correct what the member is saying. I never called any member of this Assembly dangerous. I said that it would create a dangerous situation, potentially, where the rules could be used in a way to prevent the Assembly from doing its job. That's the danger that I'm referring to, so I would ask if he would please withdraw those remarks.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. First of all, clearly, this is a matter of debate. The hon. Government House Leader is attempting to use a point of order to clarify his comments. He should probably be more careful with his comments when he gives them. But there are also 29(2)(a) and other ways to clarify the hon. member's comments. If he didn't mean to call his private members dangerous, I think it's probably fair that he at some point will rise and apologize for that misconception. But he shouldn't rise on a point of order which is clearly a matter of debate, and we should move on with the hon. Member for Calgary-Hay's comments.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

At this point, I think it is a differing of opinion. It has been clarified by the hon. Government House Leader.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays, if you could please continue.

Mr. McIver: Thank you.

Debate Continued

Mr. McIver: Let me say this. While I may agree with the hon. Government House Leader's private members on that side on many occasions, I've never considered them to be actually dangerous because they're nice people.

On that note, and because the Government House Leader has given zero examples – that would be zero examples – where the government didn't get their agenda through, I would finish my debate the same way I started it. This, in fact, is a solution in desperate search of a problem.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I will now call the question on the – oh. The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just would like to speak against the amendment. The reason, you know, put forward for this amendment was that there's a contention that this puts all the hands in the power of the Government House Leader or his or her designate. I think that's not quite true because any member of this Chamber has the ability to ask for unanimous consent to extend the Routine past 3 o'clock, so members of the opposition and private members would have the opportunity to request that Routine be extended. Therefore, a mechanism does exist for that to occur, and for that reason I can't support the amendment.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

8:00

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much. I'd like to stand and speak in support of this amendment. I'd just like to point out that the Government House Leader, while he's given zero examples of why this is necessary, that could be substantiated by any major cause of alarm for any of the bills – as was said, it may have delayed it by a day. It may have actually pushed it ahead. But I'd just like to bring to your attention that, you know, we've been trying to get changes to the standing orders from the Resource Stewardship Committee so that we can actually allow the committee to do some work and have been stymied on multiple occasions. We've given multiple examples of why that was necessary and were voted down at every turn by this government.

So I don't understand why we have to change the standing orders on an irrelevant, really, example that was given by the Government House Leader when we have multiple reasons to change the standing orders to allow our committees to do some actual work while they're waiting for reports, and we get voted down at every stand.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Mr. Nixon: Absolutely, Madam Speaker. I already spoke to the amendment.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Perfect. Thank you to the hon. member for his comments. I do have a question for him. I wonder what he thinks about the deputy whip's comments that essentially cabinet now has special privileges, with a reduced threshold compared to private members, which he did not refer to in his comments. If opposition MLAs would need unanimous consent, cabinet ministers would not, which is the point of that. I wonder what you think, you know, the private members of this Chamber must feel like knowing that this government continues to come to this Chamber thinking that cabinet is above even their private members. I mean, the Government House Leader has already called them dangerous. Clearly, he comes into this House with a motion to treat private members different, including his own private members. How do you think they feel about that, hon. member?

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, would you like to respond?

Mr. Hanson: Absolutely.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and thank you for the question. You know, as a member not sitting in the Executive Council, I would have trouble, even as a government member, if my voice wasn't considered as relevant as anybody else's in the House. We were all elected by the people of Alberta, and I think that we should all have the same rights and the same say in the House. I don't believe I recall an instance where someone other than the Government House Leader or his stand-in would call for unanimous consent to extend past 3 o'clock at any other time, so I don't understand why we need to change the orders.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. It troubles me. I'm going to speak in support of the amendment because I do believe that what is currently happening here gives me cause for concern. The Government House Leader has proposed a motion – I would suggest it's probably on behalf of Executive Council, so on behalf of the government – to possibly strip the ability for all members in this Legislature to be able to exercise their due diligence in all matters. I do have concern a little bit with regard to the process and with regard to how we are currently moving forward. I believe that there may have been a step in the consultation missed here.

You know, we have a Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing, and conveniently a motion is put before that committee when government feels like it's a good idea. Yet in something like this, which I believe should be brought before the committee for discussion and some consultation, the process gets skipped. I think we can do better. I think we can do better in this House, and I think that good governance would require us to try and do better.

So I'm going to support this amendment based on the fact that I believe it's in the best interests of all members of this Legislature to be properly consulted. If the government can put forward an argument, possibly before the committee, as to why this is very necessary, then I suspect the committee would come before the Legislature here and make a recommendation as such.

But now here we are. We're sitting with a motion from the Government House Leader on behalf of, essentially, Executive Council, I would suspect, and I am not prepared to support the motion the way it is. I believe the amendment will help to improve it.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'd just like to ask the hon. Member for Barrhead . . .

Mr. van Dijken: Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock, BMW.

Mr. Hanson: BMW. It gets stuck in my head.

You said that it would be a little bit more convenient to take this to the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing. I'd just like him to comment on when the next meeting is because I believe it's tomorrow at 6:15. Maybe it would be a great time to discuss this matter.

Mr. van Dijken: You know, if I said that it's more convenient, I would suggest that possibly it's not more convenient, but it's probably better due diligence and a better consultation process. Yes, we have a committee meeting scheduled for tomorrow evening. I'm not sure that the committee would be able to include it in the time frame that is in place.

Of course, you know, we have committees in place to do this very thing. I do believe that it's necessary to recognize that and that it's necessary to start to move in a direction that these committees be utilized in the fashion that they were designed. The way it's looking is that it's the no-meet committee or what used to be considered the no-meet committee. Maybe that's why it's called that, because in

the past it was not being properly utilized. I would suggest that we can do better, and we should do better.

So I would support the amendment to try and put into place the opportunity for the Executive Council, for government, to come before the committee and argue the case and make the case that this is a requirement.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the motion?

Seeing none, I will now call the question on amendment A1.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 8:08 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Barnes	Fraser	Schneider
Clark	Hanson	Starke
Cyr	McIver	Taylor
Ellis	Nixon	van Dijken
Fildebrandt		

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Horne	Miranda
Carlier	Kleinstauber	Nielsen
Carson	Larivee	Payne
Ceci	Littlewood	Phillips
Coolahan	Loyola	Piquette
Cortes-Vargas	Luff	Schmidt
Dach	Malkinson	Schreiner
Drever	Mason	Sucha
Fitzpatrick	McCuaig-Boyd	Turner
Goehring	McKittrick	Westhead
Gray	Miller	Woollard
Hoffman		

Totals:	For – 13	Against – 34
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[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

The Acting Speaker: We are now back on the government motion. I would like to recognize the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Dr. Starke: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to beg leave of the House to ask unanimous consent to revert to Introduction of Guests, please.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, please go ahead.

Dr. Starke: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my very great pleasure this evening to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the mayor of the town of Vermilion, Caroline McAuley. Mayor McAuley has joined us this evening as I promised her that we would be in for several hours of riveting debate. When you're from Vermilion, that's great entertainment any time. [interjections] No. You've never been to a Vermilion town council meeting, let me tell you.

I should mention that Mayor McAuley is in the city to chair a series of meetings of the Recycling Council of Alberta, that she chairs, and she is certainly very passionate about that as well as many other subjects. I'd like to ask my colleagues to join in welcoming her and giving her the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Acting Speaker: Welcome.

Government Motions

Amendments to Standing Orders

(continued)

The Acting Speaker: We are now back on Government Motion 18. Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Why, thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, it's amazing how easy it is to get unanimous consent when one needs unanimous consent. I think the timing of this is remarkable given the topic of the motion that is before us. I mean, I say that with obviously a bit of good humour, but at the same time that is my experience in this Chamber over the last three years, almost to the day. I think that members who have been here longer than I have will tell me that this has also been the experience, that almost invariably when the government requests unanimous consent to extend the daily Routine past 3 p.m., they're granted unanimous consent.

What I'm really curious about is the timing of the changes to the standing orders here. We are now three years into this Legislature, and but for one very small example, which really had no material impact on the government's ability to conduct the business important to our province, the government has decided that now is the time to bring this standing order change. So it makes me wonder why that is. What's cooking? What's coming next week? What's coming this fall such that the government feels there's some risk that a member of the Assembly might not grant them unanimous consent? I wonder. Are they going to introduce a dozen bills in a day and try to steamroll a bunch of things through the Legislature at some point? Is there some incredibly controversial bit of legislation on its way that we haven't been told about? I don't know. I have absolutely no idea.

The other thing that I think it's important for this government to understand is that at some point, perhaps less than a year from now, they may find themselves back on this side. They may find that having made this change to the standing orders is perhaps not in their interest when they do eventually, be it after this election, after the next election, after the election after that, find themselves back in opposition, as every government eventually, ultimately does. Far be it from me to predict the outcome of the next election.

I don't mean to be cynical, but is this something that the government is going to change under the auspices of it simply being a technical, small, niggling little change, use it to their advantage for a session or two, and then, right before the writ is dropped, change it back because they think that perhaps they're going to find themselves on the receiving end of some of that stuff? I don't know what the government is thinking. I do find it suspicious that this is coming up now.

The opposition, as the Government House Leader has said, who has spent a number of years in this very region here of the House very capably using whatever tools he had at his disposal to hold the government to account – sometimes those tools include withholding unanimous consent. I can't see a plausible scenario where the opposition would use a daily Routine filibuster to

somehow frustrate the government's ability to introduce bills by perhaps just tabling repeated tablings over and over and over again. Of course, that wouldn't work because it happens immediately after Introduction of Bills, so I can't really see a scenario. I suppose we could come up with several petitions, but that's not very easy. I suppose we could contrive to introduce every single one of our staff members at great length, but I know, Madam Speaker, certainly if you were in the chair, you would never allow us to go on and on like that. Members' statements can only be two minutes long. We have no control over Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees. We could I suppose bring some Notices of Motions. That's very brief, and then we're into Introduction of Bills.

8:30

I can't see a scenario where the opposition or some rogue private member on the government side, much as I would encourage you to do so and entertaining as it would be to all of us, could frustrate the ordinary business of the House in any kind of systematic way by filibustering Orders of the Day or by filibustering the daily Routine. It seems incredibly unlikely.

I'm just left wondering why. Why is the government bringing this at all, (a), and (b), why now? This is something that could have happened a year in, two years in. The Government House Leader knows the Standing Orders better than probably anybody in this Assembly with the possible exception of the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster. I feel like I'm learning at the knee of the masters as I go on my journey here in the Legislature, but I do wonder why.

So, Madam Speaker, I will not be supporting this amendment. I do question why the government is bringing it, and I would encourage all members of the Assembly, including government backbenchers, to shock the world, break with the government's vote, and vote against this motion.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. Member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the motion? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: When I first saw this motion, I took a look at it because I like to read the Orders of the Day. I looked it over, and I thought: well, you know, I'm just not sure what they're doing. It looks like our cabinet is unilaterally giving themselves power that they didn't have before. From what I hear from the House Leader, that is the case. They are giving themselves power that they did not have before.

Now, I would like to say that unanimous consent that is being used currently, right now, is sort of like a detente. Right now what happens is that if you abuse unanimous consent, it creates problems for both the government and the opposition. I think it's reasonable to say that nobody wants to see that. Now, we may have had a procedural manoeuvre that the government may have been upset with, but that is the exception. That is not the rule of what happens in this House.

What I'd like to say, though, is that the government is clearly stating that by having this additional authority, it can stop the opposition from abusing unanimous consent. That seems strange. What it does do, though, is it gives a loaded gun to one side, and it I guess more or less takes all the weapons away from the other side. What we've got here is a government that can do exactly what the House leader said, which is saying: now we can stop members' statements from happening on the opposition side, but we can get members' statements through the government side. This is

important. We need to use unanimous consent to be able to get our members' statements through, where the Government House Leader now has the ability to press their own.

Now, why is unanimous consent so important? Because what happens is that when you abuse unanimous consent, the media understands that. What we're talking about here is the fact that – let's say, for instance, you decide to put a unanimous motion or something forward that says: we support pipelines. We say: let's put through a motion with unanimous consent. And one member speaks against that. That's all it takes with unanimous consent. That member will make it into the newspapers because of the poor choice of the direction they're going. They're more or less going against the people of Alberta. It is breaking this detente, if you will, right now. That is important, and I believe it was intentionally designed this way to create that balance. We are taking the balance away.

The government has not shown there is clear evidence that we are abusing unanimous consent. You saw just recently that we granted unanimous consent. It happens very regularly. If this was a problem, then, absolutely, the government would have to do something about it, but what we've got right now is – let's say, for instance, the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, our House leader, and the House leader of the government get into an argument. This seems strange, but it does happen from time to time. I know that these two individuals respect each other, but let's say that there is an argument. We're bringing a knife to a gunfight when it comes to unanimous consent.

We are no longer going to be able to push through members' statements, and that is problematic. The House leader himself said that it's for Members' Statements that he was doing this, when he said that we could, more or less, block a member's statement and it's private members' business. This is something, and if I'm wrong, then please feel free to correct me. But I am telling you that it is problematic when we break the system, and I truly believe the system was created this way intentionally to prevent this exact thing.

When the government decides that they want to start going and giving themselves additional powers, it is important that we review that. It is important that our House leaders are involved with this together and that they come to a compromise, but it is very apparent that there is no compromise here.

So we moved forward an amendment that allowed any member to move the Orders of the Day forward, and the government voted that down, again, breaking that detente. We were creating the detente. That's what's important here, that you need to create balance within this House. When you abuse the standing orders, that is incredibly, incredibly dangerous.

I would like to say: please vote down this motion. It's clear that it's an abuse. The cabinet should not have this power, and I believe that we need to go on with other business.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the motion? The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Dr. Starke: Oh, thank you, Madam Speaker. I felt that it was important to provide perhaps some context from our reference texts on parliamentary procedure in this regard. The third edition of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, the 150th anniversary edition, which was just released last year, which is some outstanding bedtime reading for those suffering from insomnia. It might be useful to read the seven-page section from 591 to 598 on unanimous consent because, in point of fact, unanimous consent is

a tool. We've heard a lot of talk in this House and other places about the tools in the tool box that can be used. In fact, unanimous consent is a tool that is used from time to time where it makes sense and where it is a useful or a propitious thing to do, whereby the standing orders are set aside for one particular and specific purpose. Or more specifically – and I'm quoting here from page 593 at the top of the page – it states here:

For the most part, unanimous consent is used as a means either of expediting the routine business of the House or of extending the courtesies of the House. During debate, unanimous consent has been sought to extend briefly the length of speeches or the length of the questions and comments period following speeches; [or] to permit the sharing of speaking time; to permit a Member who has already spoken once to a question to make additional comments, and even to alter the usual pattern of rotation of speakers.

8:40

Now, Madam Speaker, in each of those cases it reflects a courtesy that is applied to hon. members in order to expedite the work of the House. The standing orders are, in fact, the provisions that are made by the members of the House to govern themselves. What I see in this motion is a desire by the Government House Leader to strip away some of those rules that have been in fact set by members of the House and hand over more power to cabinet and to the Government House Leader. This Assembly does not belong to cabinet. This Assembly does not belong to you folks who sit in the front row of the government, who have tremendous powers in many areas and are called upon not to abuse those powers. In fact, our system has many checks and balances in place to ensure that cabinet does not have the power of abusing the powers that they're given.

However, regrettably, in the course of this motion and in complete wilful ignorance of the seven-page section on unanimous consent in the most recent addition of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* we have a situation where the Government House Leader is seeking to shift the transfer of power dramatically in favour of cabinet. You know, for cabinet to have supremacy in the cabinet room and for Executive Council to exercise its authority and the significant powers that are vested in it by our traditions in Parliament is one thing, but here in this place we are all members. We have all been returned by the electors of our individual constituencies. To shift the rules in such a way to provide specific favour to cabinet and to members of Executive Council is not only unfair, but it's completely not in keeping with our British parliamentary traditions.

Unanimous consent is rarely abused. I think that the hon. Government House Leader, who has been here for many more years than I have, will agree that the number of occasions where unanimous consent was not provided under 7(7) are very, very infrequent. Even when they are used, it creates a very temporary interruption in the government's course of doing business.

Madam Speaker, I cannot accept and I cannot support a measure that places more power in the hands of cabinet, that places more power in the hands of Executive Council, when those power are already significant as they stand. This Assembly and the rules of this Assembly belong to all of us, and that includes whether you're the Premier or whether you're a private member representing any constituency in our province. To shift the rules such that that balance of power is upset and that we no longer respect and identify the very clear rules that are in place, I think is a mistake.

I would urge all members of the Legislature to defeat this motion, which I believe would be damaging to our procedures here.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the motion? The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, not many folks other than the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster and the Government House Leader can quote from the good book of parliamentary practice like it was the gospel. I certainly appreciate their ability to reference it like we're at Sunday church here.

A lot of the members in various parties here have made, I think, very pertinent comments that we should take to heart: Calgary-Elbow, Bonnyville-Cold Lake, Vermilion-Lloydminster. They've made good arguments, so I'm not going to rehash what they've said too much, but I'll just add a few thoughts of my own. You know, our rules are evolved from approaching a thousand years of tradition. There is a careful and delicate balance of power that has evolved over that time. Each Westminster Parliament has its own particular quirks and rules and traditions, but we fall in a general tradition.

You know, when I was briefed on this by my staff, I was baffled. I couldn't figure out: what the heck is the government trying to achieve? I had to really think about it. Why would they do this? In my time here I don't believe – someone correct me if I'm wrong – there's been a time since the last election where unanimous consent has been denied, where the government has requested it. Perhaps there's been a case, but I can't remember. Perhaps it was at midnight some point. It's always been granted when asked for. So it's very difficult to see why they would want this unless there is some agenda behind it, and the Member for Calgary-Elbow has mentioned a few of those points.

You know, our traditions here are meant to balance the ability of the government to advance its legislative agenda with the ability of the opposition to hold the government to account and to at least say our piece. I'm still waiting for the day where we'll be able to get enough government backbenchers together with the opposition that we can finally defeat a government motion at some point, but I'm not holding my breath. Perhaps tonight. We'll see.

In the opposition we don't get to win votes. This isn't like the United States congressional system, where the outcome of votes is actually in doubt, where you actually have to bargain back and forth between parties. We don't really have that. All we can do as the opposition is to just have our say, hold the government accountable and have our say. That's not a lot for four years, to have your say. The Government House Leader spent – I'm not going to say how many years; I think I'd be dating him – quite a few years just being able to have his say, and have his say, he did, with every tool at his disposal.

Now, I've regularly been the lone dissenter in this House, something which I get a rather sadistic pleasure from.

Mr. Mason: A masochistic pleasure.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Masochistic. Well, I like to think it hurts you guys, but I don't think it does. Yeah, it's a masochistic pleasure that I get out of being the lone dissenter in this House for the last three years on quite a few issues.

But I've never denied the government unanimous consent. I've been the one dissenting voice many times, but it's always been on issues of policy, where we're voting on amendments or bills. It's never been on a request from the government to seek unanimous consent to reasonably expedite the business of the House. Every time I've been the lone dissenter, it's been on an issue of policy, not just to be a jerk. As much as we can be prone to do that in this business, I think that, for the most part, our better angels control us

so that when the government or the opposition request unanimous consent for something that is reasonable, it is always given.

Now, there are a few potential – maybe the Government House Leader can clarify. I do have a more technical question on what some of the repercussions of this could be. Now, Members' Statements is supposed to be before question period, but if introductions go for too long, it's often after question period. We've had a little bit of shorter introductions lately, so we often get to two, three, or even four. Today we got to four, but that still left two members' statements to be after question period. Now, my question is to the Government House Leader, and this is just a technical question that I'd like an answer for: in his opinion, would this mean that if our daily Routine ends at 3 o'clock sharp, any outstanding members' statements that have not yet been made would then be lost?

Now, if that's the case, that is taking away one of the few opportunities that private members, both government and opposition, have to make themselves heard in this place. If that is the case, then you're going to have to come back to the people about what order these members' statements are in. I'm number 5, so I'm pretty worried about what that's going to mean. One of the unintended consequences might be that I'm going to have to figure out a way to filibuster introductions every day if I want to get to my member's statement, and I don't think that would be a reasonable thing to do because we normally operate as gentlemen and gentlewomen in this place, with the best of intentions and respect for one another. That's why we operate on unanimous consent for these kinds of issues. So I hope that the Government House Leader can at least clarify that.

I do believe that this government motion to change our standing orders upsets the balance of power. I hope that they would at least think through what they're doing. But, at the very least, if the Government House Leader could answer my question about what effect this will have on Members' Statements if the daily Routine concludes before members' statements are concluded.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the motion? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Although I'm not a minister, I would like to ask the House for unanimous consent for one-minute bells on this item.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Acting Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak to the motion? The hon. Government House Leader.

8:50

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I want to thank all members for their contribution. With respect to some of the points that have been raised, first, the Member for Calgary-Elbow asked: why the timing? In fact, this has sort of been in the works for some time, and it was brought forward because we were also bringing forward a couple of other changes to the standing orders. So this was the time that we did it. We'd circulated this, of course, to the opposition for some time, and we have brought it forward now simply because there are a couple of other changes to the standing orders that are being dealt with.

There is not – and you can take this for what it's worth – some conspiracy to introduce some very controversial bills all of a sudden. I think that will be borne out in time. Whether the member

believes me now or not, that has really nothing to do with it. It does stem, as I said, from an earlier instance, where unanimous consent to extend Orders of the Day was denied, and the government was unable to give notice, according to the schedule that had been set out, of a bill that it wished to debate the following day. So, yes, it was delayed by a day. The bill was ultimately passed; however, it flagged for us, and me in particular, the potential abuse that could happen.

Now, I know that some members of the opposition have said, you know: it's not really possible to drag things on and block things. But it is. Some other clever former Opposition House Leaders have done it. I'm not going to explain how it's done because I don't want to give anybody any ideas. But it is, in fact, in the standing orders. There are multiple provisions which identify things that the Government House Leader is responsible for doing in this House. Customarily, when the House is adjourned, the Government House Leader is given the authority to move that. I'm not going to give all of the examples, but it is not unusual.

In respect of the comments from Vermilion-Lloydminster there are limitations in the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* on the use of unanimous consent, and I don't believe that this fits within the categories of things that he is referring to.

With respect to Strathmore-Brooks' question about how it could be used for Members' Statements, I do not recall in all of the time that I've been in this place where we didn't get through Members' Statements. It's usually the last few items, if it does happen on the rare occasions, on the Order Paper under the Routine that sometimes we don't get to. This would not be a way to shorten in any way the Routine, which would still continue until 3 o'clock. It is an opportunity to extend the Routine in the case that there was some unfinished business that needed to be attended to. That can be accomplished either through any member requesting unanimous consent or, if this is approved, the Government House Leader or a Deputy Government House Leader giving notice prior to 3 o'clock.

Madam Speaker, I'm not surprised that the opposition is not happy with this, but it is the duty of the government to make sure that it can bring forward its legislative agenda, that we provide ample opportunity for full debate and for the opposition to do its job and to carry out its responsibilities. Ultimately, the government has an obligation to move forward its legislative agenda and its budgets in order that the affairs of the province can be properly conducted.

That is apparent in any readings of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* or our own standing orders. That's the responsibility of the government, and it is given authority in the standing orders and in the long-standing rules of the Westminster system in order to be able to do that provided that it can command a majority in the Assembly. At the same time, those rules set out the rights and responsibilities of all members and of the opposition, official and otherwise, in order to hold the government to account, and they have many tools with which they can do that.

Ultimately, it comes down to the simple fact that if the government needs on an urgent basis to introduce a piece of legislation, it ought not to be held up by tactics on the other side or by an inadvertent combination of circumstances so that it is accidentally unable to do that. So I feel I have a responsibility to bring these changes, and I would urge all members to support this government motion, Madam Speaker, so that we can amend our standing rules and get on to our other business.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

[The voice vote indicated that Government Motion 18 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 8:57 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Kazim	Nielsen
Carlier	Kleinstauber	Payne
Carson	Larivee	Phillips
Ceci	Littlewood	Piquette
Coolahan	Loyola	Rosendahl
Dach	Luff	Schmidt
Drever	Malkinson	Schreiner
Fitzpatrick	Mason	Sucha
Goehring	McCuaig-Boyd	Turner
Gray	McKitrick	Westhead
Hoffman	Miller	Woollard
Horne	Miranda	

9:00

Against the motion:

Barnes	Fildebrandt	Schneider
Clark	Fraser	Starke
Cyr	McIver	Taylor
Ellis	Nixon	van Dijken
Totals:	For – 35	Against – 12

[Government Motion 18 carried]

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 7

Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act

Mr. Schneider moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 7, Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 7, Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

[Adjourned debate on the amendment May 1: Mr. Westhead]

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, are there any members wishing to speak to the referral amendment? The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm speaking to support the amendment that's been put forward by my hon. colleague from Little Bow. We're dealing with Bill 7, Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act. The amendment that's been put forward before us is:

Bill 7, Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

I was just reflecting on some of the things within the bill and also why it would be, in my opinion, a good reason to refer this bill to committee for the committee to look into the good parts of the bill and possibly the negative aspects of the bill. I was able to speak to

the bill in second reading and recognized that the bill is essentially – well, it's got a part 1 and a part 2.

Part 1 does have two parts to it. With regard to a recognition of the Alberta local food week, the third weekend in August in each year being proclaimed the Alberta local food week, I don't see that this can create any harm, so I don't know that the committee would have to spend a whole lot of time with regard to that part of Bill 7.

But then we move into the second part of part 1, local food, the local food council. I do have some concerns with the local food council, how it's being essentially structured, how it will be put together, how people will be searched out to serve on this local food council. The local food council is charged with providing a report to the minister, and the minister then is given the task from that report to digest that report and make decisions on how to move forward with reducing barriers for local food producers and how to possibly look at best ways forward for processing food distribution and how to gather it together for food distribution, increasing access to local food, and consumer awareness of local food.

What does concern me about this is that I think we need to hear from a broad spectrum of producers, processors, consumers to get an understanding of their needs and their ideas. We currently have many examples of local food production that have been able to get started, been able to produce in the province and distribute that food amongst consumers through either retailers, farmers' markets, and many other avenues where you can distribute hampers, food baskets off the farm.

I would not be in favour of a government program that would possibly negatively affect those who have already done a lot of work to establish their businesses, to establish their relationships with their consumers, with their wholesaler, with the retailers that they choose. We see or I see that there's potential for that type of a negative consequence with regard to our local food sector that's already been established, so I have some concerns on that, where government interference may not recognize how government decisions on how to proceed, how to best move forward will damage very effective and good working relationships and systems that are already in place. I do believe that if we get too involved with government and government regulation and government systems and red tape that go into these types of programs, we take a risk that we will actually reduce local food availability, and we take a risk that we possibly put in barriers that make it uneconomical for the sector to really thrive and grow and move forward.

We possibly are putting in barriers that might affect one production unit differently than other production units. A co-operative unit might be affected differently than a wholesale or retail type of an arrangement, so I think that when we're in government – like the old saying says, you know: I'm from the government; I'm here to help. Most times people take that as, "I'm from the government; I'm here to help," and they say: "Well, we don't need your help. We just want to be able to be free to do what we're already doing, and we are not willing to take the risk of government programs and plans getting in the way of a very healthy evolution of the local food business."

You know, Madam Speaker, I'm involved with the Outstanding Young Farmer's program as an alumnus. Over the last 20 years that I've been involved with that program, we get to watch more and more production units and different ideas come forward, units from across Canada, young people that are trying new things, young people that are being very successful in trying new things, being very entrepreneurial. I believe that there is a certain amount of natural evolution in the transition from large acreage farms to possibly a little bit smaller acreage farms but more intensive farming practices. Much of this is occurring just from organic

growth, where these individuals see an opportunity, they see a need, they see a market, and they decide to start to feed that market.

9:10

I recall one operation, when we were developing a local food relationship with the co-operative system in Saskatchewan. This operation was selling through farmers' markets in both Saskatoon and Regina. They were a 60-acre farm that more or less didn't have opportunity because they weren't able to market beyond those farmers' markets. So they approached the co-op, and they were able to build a relationship with a retailer, and it was good for the producer, good for the retailer, good for the consumer. I think that's what we try and achieve, where we can have a win-win-win situation.

It's important that we recognize that in this bill for local food production, once the minister receives the report from the local food council, I believe that it's within a year that the – yeah: "Not later than 12 months after a Council is established . . . the Council must submit a final report to the Minister providing the advice and recommendations of the Council on the matters referred to in subsection (1)," which is essentially on how to possibly move forward.

What does concern me is that we have right now an all-party committee that's in place that could do much of this work. I believe the council is essentially put in place to get much of this information aggregated and brought together and to try to understand what's in the best interest of industry, what's in the best interest of the local food sector. An all-party committee would allow it to be a very open discussion amongst all members within this Legislative Assembly as opposed to a local food council appointed by the minister to provide a report to the minister and then the minister having the ability to put forward regulations, put forward legislation, put forward whatever the minister feels necessary to moving forward on those recommendations. I believe that that's a dangerous road to go down. I don't believe that that's necessarily the best way for government to be involved.

All-party committees are very effective in being able to be very transparent, accountable to the people as opposed to when we have the potential of a minister appointing a council. I don't know how that council – there's no description in the bill to ensure that the appointment to the council is done in a fair and a very transparent manner. Are the people that are going to be affected by this going to have the opportunity to report to the council, to witness to the council, to be part of the council? These types of things concern me, and I believe the amendment to put it before the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future is a good recommendation at this time.

I also am concerned a little bit with part 2, organic agricultural products. When we take a look at organic agricultural products, I'm not sure how that fits in with the Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act. Like, Alberta's local food sector's organic agricultural products are not only consumed within Alberta locally; they're consumed right across Canada, right across North America. They are marketed around the world. Organic systems are in place and CFIA standards are in place to ensure that organic products that are marketed, exported elsewhere in the world meet the CFIA regulations.

I'm a little bit concerned that we're lumping organic agricultural products within this bill. I think the Economic Future Committee would have the opportunity to delve into whether or not that's really a part of local food. I believe that it's a completely separate sector. I would suggest that organic agricultural products is essentially a brand that is being sold in the marketplace under certain guidelines, and there are consumers that are attracted to that brand name, to the

name "organic" and that certification. At the same time, is it government's place to put in place the regulations in the monitoring of organic agricultural products? That's a question I have.

You know, I was in the hog industry. We worked on, at the time, implementing a food safety program, a quality assurance program in consultation with the producers so that the producers had input into what was necessary to ensure that we had a quality, safe product. So, you know, we look at it, and I believe that there are a lot of things that are better put before the standing committee to get a better understanding of what the role of government is in this. How are we as legislators, as overseers of our society, to be involved in this in recognizing that we cannot necessarily favour one society over . . . [Mr. van Dijken's speaking time expired]

With that, I move to adjourn debate, Madam Speaker.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

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

Bill 9 Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act

The Deputy Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered in respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

Drever: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to make an amendment to Bill 9, and I have the appropriate number of copies.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, if you could just wait till I have the copies at the table before you proceed, please.

Hon. member, your amendment will be referred to as A1. If you could please proceed.

Drever: Would you like me to read the amendment? Okay. The bill is amended as follows: section 6(4) is amended by adding the following after clause (b): "increasing the dimensions of an access zone set out in subsection (2) in respect of a facility or class of facilities to a distance not exceeding 150 metres from the boundaries of the parcel of land on which the facility is located."

Madam Chair, it is my pleasure to rise today to make this amendment on behalf of the Minister of Health to Bill 9, the Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act. I've been proud to spend my time as an MLA standing up for women and supporting vulnerable women here in the Legislature and when I'm in my riding and every day. I was proud earlier in my career to introduce legislation that protected women fleeing domestic violence. I removed barriers which prevented those women from being safe. One of my proudest moments was seeing that legislation receive the unanimous support of this Assembly because, Madam Chair, Alberta women deserve nothing less than our unanimous support every single day. That's why I want this legislation to have the strength to protect women every single day.

9:20

We know that the proposed legislation will help women in Alberta access abortion services without fear of interference, harassment, threats, or intimidation. But in the event that the 50-metre access zone around a facility is not enough, we need to make sure that there is a mechanism in place to increase that distance

when it's required. The proposed amendment before us would authorize regulations to be made to increase the size of access zones around facilities from the current 50 metres to a maximum of 150 metres. This amendment would also further align Alberta's legislation with Ontario's access zone legislation, which has the option to extend access zones for a facility by regulation to a maximum of 150 metres.

The amendment is necessary in order to provide flexibility for cabinet to deal with situations where the 50-metre access zone is insufficient. These situations may include protest activity outside of the currently proposed access zone if it interferes with women accessing health services. All Albertans should feel safe when accessing any health care service, including abortion services. The legislation before you will help protect the safety and privacy of women accessing abortions as well as those who provide abortion services.

I encourage all my colleagues to support this bill and the amendment that I put before you today. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I just rise briefly to speak in favour of the amendment and thank the hon. member for bringing it forward and again thank the government for taking action on something that is needed. I would hope that any time we have an opportunity to protect women's access to basic and fundamental health care, we should do so and that they should always have that right without fear of harassment or intimidation.

This is a reasonable amendment that I think ensures that the original intent and purpose of the bill is met. I look forward to hearing, perhaps, from the Official Opposition, but you can be assured that the Alberta Party caucus enthusiastically supports this.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. Of course, I also rise to speak in support of this amendment. First of all, I want to thank the Member for Calgary-Bow for all of the good work that she's done, not just through this amendment but through all of her time here in the Legislature to this date, standing up for the rights of women. You know, it's quite remarkable to reflect on her legacy. She's not as experienced as many of us in this Legislature, and already she has a significant accomplishment to her name for enhancing the rights of women in this province. I know that she will live a long life with a proud legacy behind her, and this only adds to that.

One of the questions, though, that I have for the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow – you know, I'm interested to hear her opinion, hear her conjecture, perhaps. It was with great interest, Madam Chair, that I watched the proceedings of the UCP policy convention on Saturday and Sunday this past weekend, and I noticed that there were some protesters outside of the policy convention hall. Those protesters, oddly enough, were asked to move at least 50 metres away from the door to prevent offending the rather delicate sensibilities of the delegates who were there and may have had their feelings hurt by being confronted with people who didn't share their world view or their opinions on minority rights, for example, or women's rights.

According to the reports and the media those protesters were asked by the organizers of the United Conservative Party policy

convention to move 50 metres away from the door of the policy convention, which, you know, struck me as odd, Madam Chair, because 50-metre buffer zones is something that the members opposite have absolutely no opinion on. When pressed, they have absolutely nothing to say about 50-metre buffer zones. It struck me as really strange that on the matter of 50-metre buffer zones around abortion clinics the members opposite have nothing to say, but when it comes to their own policy convention, a 50-metre buffer zone must be strictly enforced.

We see the behaviour from the members opposite all the time. They have their feelings hurt and stand up on points of order and call us on points of order regularly. Of course, they do nothing, Madam Chair, to ever cause us to rise on points of order. Their behaviour is beyond reproach. If there was sarcasm font in *Hansard*, my previous comments would be reflected by being printed in that sarcasm font.

An Hon. Member: Irony.

Mr. Schmidt: Irony. Thank you. Unfortunately, *Hansard* hasn't advanced to the point yet where we use different fonts to identify whether or not the speaker was speaking ironically or seriously.

But I digress. My question to the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow is whether or not she thinks that by passing this amendment, she would encourage organizers of future United Conservative policy conventions to ask protestors to not just move 50 metres away from the doors of the convention but now 150 metres away. You know, obviously, we're intent on protecting women's rights, but I certainly wouldn't want to see the rights of protestors at UCP policy conventions impinged. Certainly, 50 metres is a generous buffer zone around a UCP policy convention although, obviously, their feelings can be hurt even outside of the 50-metre zone. There are incredibly sensitive buffer zones around UCP delegates, Madam Chair, and they can have their feelings hurt from 150 metres or possibly even greater distances away.

You know, I was wondering if the Member for Calgary-Bow could speculate, I guess, on what protestors at future UCP policy conventions can expect with the passage of this amendment and whether or not she thinks that that will affect the outcomes of these UCP policy conventions. Will they still pass these horrible resolutions that are intent on outing gay children, intent on impinging on women's rights? Will they still have the ability to go to the microphone and complain about indigenous people taking and taking and never giving back to the province of Alberta? Will we still be able to hear Heather Forsyth call feminism the F-word and barriers to women's participation in the political process as socialist crap? I am very curious if the Member for Calgary-Bow can tell us what impacts her amendments may have on future UCP policy convention protests.

The Deputy Chair: Just a reminder that there is no 29(2)(a) in Committee of the Whole.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much. I want to thank the hon. member for moving this amendment on my behalf and say that one of the reasons why this came to me is because there was discussion around how half a kilometre was too big. I have to say that I agree with that. But I think that if we require more than a tenth of that, a tenth of half a kilometre, it's important for us to give us the ability through regulation to be more responsive to some of the issues as they arise. I have to say that 15 per cent of a kilometre I think is an appropriate barrier to be able to expand it through regulation,

obviously, ensuring that it never contracts but that if something does happen, we have the ability to be able to react to that.

I want to thank the member for bringing that amendment forward on our behalf and members for contributing to the discussion, those who have, to give us the ability to consider this potential opportunity to create greater protections for women should the need arise.

Thank you.

9:30

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll thank the Member for Calgary-Bow for bringing this forward and participating in the debate. However, I have to disagree with where this is going.

I've always said that I don't think it's unreasonable that we codify in law protections for women accessing abortions, that they're not being harassed or intimidated. These things are already forbidden under the Criminal Code, but I can appreciate the need to want to more specifically tighten the laws up around this. My concern has always been, though, that this is targeting a particular political, social movement, and I don't believe any law should, even if it was targeting a group that I disagree with. I very much do not believe it's appropriate in any way, regardless of your feelings on the topic of abortion, to harass women, intimidate them, film them, any of these things that some folks, however few, do endeavour to do. But all laws are about balance.

My reasoned amendment earlier, to my shock, was not accepted by the government. I did not receive unanimous consent, you could say, for the reasoned amendment to shelve this bill and bring it back this week as a broader bill.

Dealing with the matters of the bill itself here, I think we need to make sure that it is still striking an appropriate balance because however much I may disagree with what some of these folks are doing, there is a difference between quietly protesting with a sign and, you know, yelling at women as they're going in, photographing them. I think we can all recognize there is a spectrum of inappropriateness here. I think it's generally inappropriate to do it, period, but there is a broad spectrum. But if someone is protesting respectfully, as much as you can protest this respectfully at an abortion clinic, if they are by other means behaving themselves, I think we still need to recognize their right to freedom of speech and assembly and not treat them differently than others.

I've believed that at the very least we should limit the size that these zones can be. Now, this amendment from the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow extends this to quite a significant degree, 150 metres. I mean, that's quite a distance for protesting. Again, you don't have to agree with what these people are doing, but they do have a right to express themselves, however distasteful the way they're going about it may be in this particular case.

I've believed that the government's original position here went too far in terms of the size of the buffer zone, so I was prepared to bring forward amendments changing the size of the buffer zone. You'll have to forgive me; I'm a little unprepared for the change of order in which we're dealing with this. Anyway, rather than putting these forward as stand-alone amendments, I'm going to move these as subamendments. I hope that Parliamentary Counsel can bear with me, that we can make this work. If there are any issues, let me know, but I'll be distributing this now.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, if you could just wait till I have it at the table, please, before you proceed.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Yeah.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you.

Hon. member, your subamendment will now be referred to as subamendment SA1.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. As I've said, I beg the understanding of members here. These were intended as stand-alone amendments to Bill 9, not as subamendments to a government amendment. Governments amending their own bills: I don't laugh at it. I think it's a sign that says: we can always make something better. Even if I disagree with the substance of the amendment, the government clearly believes that their bill can be better.

This amendment: Mr. Fildebrandt to move that Bill 9, Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act, be amended in section 7 in subsection (3) by striking out "160 metres" and substituting "10 metres" and in ...

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt. Sorry. I just looked at the amendment again. This is written in the format of an actual amendment, not a subamendment, so we would have to wait until the vote on amendment A1 to see if you would then introduce this as amendment A2. It's not in order as a subamendment.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Okay. Can I ask the chair just for clarification, with Parliamentary Counsel, if the amendment that I am proposing here would be in order as a stand-alone amendment if the government's amendment still passes? Our parliamentary monk here says that it does, but I await Parliamentary Counsel.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, yeah, because of the way that it's formatted, you will be able to introduce it because you're actually amending section 7, which is an amendment to a different section than this amendment that we're debating on the floor as A1. Right now amendment A1 is amending section 6(4), and your amendment, that you have just introduced, is amending section 7, so it's a separate amendment from this one. You'll have to wait till we vote on A1, and then you can reintroduce this one as A2.

Mr. Fildebrandt: It would be in order as a stand-alone amendment?

The Deputy Chair: It would be in order to be a stand-alone amendment, yes.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Okay. Very good. In that case I would temporarily withdraw the subamendment. I'll be reintroducing it later as a full amendment.

But I'll speak to the Member for Calgary-Bow's amendment, put forward here. I think in this debate on this issue we should try to understand that we're dealing with real people, people in a vulnerable case, and we want to protect them, but at the same time we have to protect the fundamental right to free speech and expression and assembly of everyone here.

Now, before I was trying to quote Voltaire. It turns out it's attributed to Voltaire. I think I said that it was Jean-Jacques Rousseau – it's normally attributed to Voltaire – but it was actually someone else, I think a woman from Britain who was paraphrasing Voltaire. That's a long way of saying that I was wrong and the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster was right. But the saying attributed incorrectly to Voltaire is: I may disagree with you, but I will defend to the death your right to say it. If we believe in free speech, we believe in free speech that we disagree with. That's the real test. You know, we all here, I think, pay lip service to free

speech, but do we really stand by it when we hear something that we strongly disagree with? That's the real test here.

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms: it's an imperfect document, but one of the geniuses of that document is that all of these rights and freedoms have to be justified in a free and democratic society. That's essentially the big asterisk below the entire Charter of Rights and Freedoms, that we have all these rights and freedoms, but they're not absolutes. As Canadians we tend to be lukewarm about a lot of things. We believe in free speech, but we generally don't believe in incitement to hate and violence. The degree to which we believe there should be limits on that varies, but generally we believe that you shouldn't be allowed to incite explicit hate. So all of our rights and freedoms are subject to some caveats. You know, we all have our favourite rights and freedoms here, but as strongly as we believe in them, none of them are absolute under the Constitution, including my very favourite freedom after guns and property, free speech.

9:40

Mr. Mason: After guns?

Mr. Fildebrandt: Guns and property.

Dr. Starke: But religion falls below that yet.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Religion comes a bit below.

We've all got a hierarchy of our favourite rights and freedoms, but they're not in any particular order in the Constitution. They're all equal rights, but they're all balanced off against each other. You know, we have the right to the security of person. We have the right to the security of person, to be safe from harm, and we also have the right to freedom of speech and assembly. Sometimes those rights are in conflict with each other. In this case they are in conflict, and it's up to us as legislators and, hopefully, not the courts if we get it wrong to find the appropriate balance between those two.

I think the original legislation has already too large a zone restricting freedom of expression and assembly and that the amendment goes even further, obviously, but I certainly appreciate that the member has put it forward with the best of intentions, that she believes that this will help. I believe her concerns are genuine, but I think that they are moving the balance even further off than the original government legislation proposed. So I would ask her to consider her position. None of us, once we stand up, are ever wrong, except for myself – I like to admit if I am – but I'd like her to just consider if this amendment is striking the appropriate balance in a piece of legislation that's dealing with very delicate and competing rights right now.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

Drever: Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, I'm a little confused by the Member for Strathmore-Brooks' comments. He's saying that he wants to see women be protected, yet he doesn't support my amendment, where there could be situations where they need that further protection. I want to be clear about one thing. This bill is not about free speech. This bill is about protecting women. It's about protecting them from harassment. So I'm a little confused by his comments. You know, we all know that he is a libertarian, and we have different ideologies. We'll put it that way. But I think that this bill is not about partisanship. This bill is about women's rights, and as I said earlier, we should be unanimously supporting women's rights every day in this Legislature.

I appreciate his comments, but I wish he would reconsider his position on this amendment as this is a really important one. You know, I know that he's not a woman, that he'll never be in the position where he has to go to an abortion clinic, where he has to make that tough choice, but a lot of women in this province do. Put yourself in their shoes just for one minute because this bill is about them. It's not about you; it's about them. So I ask the member to reconsider his position, and again I ask the House to support my amendment.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you. Thank you, Member for Calgary-Bow, for your comments. I think they're reasonable, and I think they're heartfelt, but we don't deal with pieces of legislation in silos. You know, I generally don't like taxes, but we need taxes. We balance everything, and we always try to – the difference is that what we try to do is balance. Some of us think the balance should be one way, and some of us think the balance should be another. When we debate fiscal issues, I don't think I've heard anybody say that we should have a 100 per cent tax or a zero tax. We have varying degrees because government and legislation are dealing with competing interests in trying to balance things. We're not always balanced in here. I'm as guilty of that as members opposite. We are dealing with women's rights here, and we are dealing with the fundamental right to security of the person, enshrined in the Constitution. But we are also dealing with other fundamental rights and freedoms, the freedom of expression and freedom of assembly. We're not dealing with just any one right here in isolation.

As I've said, we all have our hierarchy of favourite rights. I think we all do, and it's legitimate for you to want to put more weight on one than on another. That's legitimate. We have different backgrounds here and different priorities, but I would ask you to not consider this as dealing with one specific right, just as dealing with the budget is not dealing with just the income tax. It's dealing with all revenue, it's dealing with all spending, and we take these on as a whole. We might focus on certain parts of it here and there and pick it apart, but as legislators it's our duty to try and find an overall balance.

When we're dealing with important Charter rights here, on both sides, that are competing, it's important that we get the balance right. So, unfortunately, I'm not able to vote for the member's amendment, and it might come as a great shock to her, but I do thank her still for putting it forward and participating in the debate.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1?

Seeing none, I will put the question.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:46 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Horne	Miranda
Carlier	Kazim	Nielsen

Carson	Kleinstauber	Payne
Ceci	Larivee	Phillips
Clark	Littlewood	Piquette
Coolahan	Loyola	Rosendahl
Dach	Luff	Schmidt
Drever	Malkinson	Starke
Fitzpatrick	Mason	Sucha
Fraser	McCuaig-Boyd	Turner
Goehring	McKittrick	Westhead
Gray	Miller	Woollard
Hoffman		

Against the motion:
Fildebrandt

Totals: For – 37 Against – 1

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

The Deputy Chair: We are now back on the original bill, Bill 9.
I will now recognize the hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I would move that we rise and report progress.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. Government House Leader.

[Motion carried]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, I will now call on the hon. Member for Calgary-East.

Ms Luff: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 9. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

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

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Acting Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

Bill 7

Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act

(continued)

[Adjourned debate on the amendment May 8: Mr. van Dijken]

The Acting Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 7? The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm very happy to stand and speak to Bill 7, Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act, on the referral amendment. The reason that we're asking to refer is that, you know, I look across the aisle – I know that there are a few producers and farmers on this side – and I don't know how many producers and farmers there are on that side. [interjections] I'm just saying. This is why we should be consulting

the people that are actually producing the food and preparing it. It would be a good thing to have them present to committee.

I see that the Minister of Finance had a little bit too much coffee, maybe, today.

Anyway, I'm pleased to rise. That's the reason that we, Madam Speaker, go to committees, so that we can get consultation from the experts in the field, in this case the farmers and producers and food processors.

This bill basically has three parts that it deals with. The first is to establish organic standards. This means that it would now need to meet Canadian standards established by CFIA. The second is about local food week. It would coincide with Open Farm Days celebrations. These are typically held during the third week of August. The third is the establishment of a local food council. This would be in an effort to promote and support local small producers, including farmers' markets.

You know, out in the St. Paul area we have a producer that grows vegetables and is famous for his carrots. He sells them packaged to a lot of the Sobeys stores in the area. He calls them Al's Carrots. His name is Al. It's amazing. They're wonderful. My wife particularly likes them. You have to be pretty quick when they do arrive at the store because they're bought out that quickly because they're so fresh and sweet compared to other stuff that you get from other parts of the world. That's why it's important. It's a real bonus that we can actually enjoy fresh produce here during the summers at least, and we should support our local growers.

Also, I'd like to talk about the farmers' markets especially and at-gate stands, where a lot of seniors use that not so much as a form of entertainment – I don't think a lot of them make a whole lot of money on them, but they do sell a lot of pies or, you know, pickles. Especially around our community there are some babas that get in every Friday to the farmers' market and sell fresh perogies, cabbage rolls, and borscht. It gives them a chance to get out on a Friday and make a little bit of extra money. I hope that when we start introducing legislation, we don't make it so cumbersome that we affect those good people that are just trying to make a few extra dollars and occupy their time.

Before this legislation there was no Alberta standard of organic. Goods that were sold outside of Alberta or Canada needed to meet standards that are set at the federal level by CFIA, but this regulation closes the gap for Alberta. There are many stakeholders that this legislation would affect, and we believe that not enough consultation was done. Again, like I said, I'm not trying to be insulting to any of the members opposite, but I don't see a lot of farmers or producers there, so I really think that we need to gather as much information from the people that are actually doing the work as we can. I mean, we would do it in, hopefully, any other bill that we were presenting to the House. If it was a health bill or something like that, we would definitely consult the health professionals. So I see that in this one we should be consulting.

It's kind of a déjà vu moment or *Groundhog Day* or however you want to put it, but it seems that we've been down this road before with the local producers, and at that time I believe we did submit that one to committee. I think that this one should also go there and get some further study.

Further, to the title of "organic," this legislation sets out regulations to deal with standards and labelling. With so many changes coming forth, we want to ensure that all those affected by this bill have their voices heard.

10:10

We also want to ensure that there are no unforeseen consequences inflicted on Albertans. It is our duty to consult beforehand. This is why it is imperative that this bill be referred to committee, where

we can bring in the specialists. I know that the minister of agriculture probably talks to forestry, you know, when they're considering a bill or, hopefully, some of the bigger producers. If you're doing something, it's always nice to talk to the people that are actually on the ground and that will be affected by these bills. In this case it is smaller producers, and we don't want to put in legislation that is so cumbersome that it forces them out of business or forces them to work underground, where they're not going to be taxed at all.

Madam Speaker, this bill will cause Alberta to be among the other provinces with legislation. We have the opportunity to analyze what worked and what didn't work in those other jurisdictions and how those situations fundamentally differ from ours. So I would hope that in considering this bill, we would actually look at the successes or failures of the other jurisdictions before we wrote up ours. Every province finds itself in a quite different position. That is why it is our responsibility as legislators to listen to what Alberta's food producing industry believes would be beneficial and what wouldn't. The only way we're going to find that out is if we actually go to committee and have them be allowed to come and present.

Now, that being said, you have heard my frustration in the House before about the ability of our committees to actually meet with stakeholders. I've been on that Resource Stewardship Committee for three years, and we've not been allowed to meet with anybody. I hope that gets addressed in the meeting tomorrow regarding the standing orders.

Also, a part of this bill would establish a council whose mandate would be to provide a report no later than 12 months after its creation to report advice and recommendations regarding provincial policies, programs, pilot projects, or initiatives which support Alberta's food sector's sustainability and growth. This council would be dissolved upon providing that report to the minister. This is a good example of why an analysis is needed to determine the effects of this bill. We need to consult with those who will be affected prior to putting this bill into effect, not simply implementing it and then collecting information on how it affects Albertans, food production workers, and families. Again, as I said before, a lot of these producers are small. At farmers' markets a lot of grandmothers put together their produce. I would say that a lot of those people and a lot of the gardens around our area, though they're not certified organic, are probably about as organic as you can get.

We need to consult with stakeholders about what type of unforeseen costs there might be. It is not fair to simply inflict these

costs with minimal input having been heard. It is their livelihood. If you put a per capita or a per volume on product, it's easy for large producers to absorb those costs. Although they can't pass them on to the consumer, they are a lot more able to absorb those whereas a small producer, like I mentioned Al's Carrots – I would hate to see legislation that's going to make it more difficult or less profitable for him because I know exactly how much work he goes into every year.

The imposition of this bill without properly consulting those that will be affected is once again reflective of a top-down, paternalistic government that does not want to listen to Albertans. As the government continues to eliminate ABCs, this bill adds more. An example of this is the aforementioned council. It seems perfectly reasonable that an existing group with the capacity could take on this task. It seems as though this bill has not been fully thought through and will massively benefit from the opportunity to discuss the effects in committee, where stakeholders will have a chance to have their voices heard. This will have a far-reaching impact.

As such, it is the government's duty to represent the desires of Albertans. Without adequate feedback and without proper analysis of unplanned costs it is hard to imagine that they are doing their duty in representing Albertans. If the government is not giving the chance for input to those who know the sector better than any legislator, how would the government get any legislation better than just a one size fits all? Again, I'll mention the fact that not all producers are the same size. We have to protect our small market producers. For this reason I strongly urge all of my fellow members to support sending this bill to committee, where we can discuss the real effects of this bill.

Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the referral?

[Motion on amendment RA1 lost]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. We have made some progress tonight, perhaps, depending on your definition on progress. I would move that we adjourn the House until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 10:16 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday morning, May 9, 2018

Day 27

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Wednesday, May 9, 2018

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Deputy Speaker: Good morning.

As we begin our work for the day, let us acknowledge that we are on Treaty 6 territory, traditional lands for a wide diversity of indigenous people. We're all treaty people, and as such we have a responsibility to work collaboratively and respectfully with our indigenous partners.

Please be seated.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

Bill 14

An Act to Empower Utility Consumers

[Debate adjourned May 2: Mr. Orr speaking]

The Deputy Speaker: Any members wishing to speak to this bill? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 14, An Act to Empower Utility Consumers. The Utilities Consumer Advocate was established by the former government approximately 15 years ago, by the government of Premier Klein. I believe that it has provided great service to Albertans, and I am pleased to see the way it has evolved over the years to assist more and more utility consumers. It's focus so far, as per legislation, has been on electricity and natural gas. Education, advocacy, and mediation are its areas of expertise, and it does a good job.

I support the government's plan to include water under its purview in this proposed legislation. In fact, we were pleasantly surprised to see the government do this for we have not seen the government display much concern about average Albertans in the first three years of this government's mandate. The government, despite repeatedly telling us that they're making life better for Albertans, has brought forward many policies that do not help make life better for Alberta families, yet that is what they are continually telling us. We only have to look as far as the carbon tax to see the trials this government is putting Albertans through. They blindsided Albertans with the tax in the first place and then increased it this past January by 50 per cent. You can understand why we are not convinced when the government is suddenly showing much concern about Alberta's water bills.

That said, I do support the UCA expanding to include free mediation services for water billing disputes. As we all know, mediation should always be the starting point when there's a dispute about anything. It lowers the temperature, thereby reducing stress. It saves time and money. Expanding the UCA's mandate to include this utility is clearly a good move and completely consistent with the existing services. I like the idea of offering Albertans a one-stop shop for utilities, and anything that makes it easier for citizens to receive assistance, especially at an early stage, is positive.

I do note that the department is not planning to expand personnel to perform these extra mediation services that will come with

handling water billing concerns. That seems a little naive, but I guess we'll see how that works out.

I'm also curious as to how the UCA will work with municipalities on billing issues that require mediation. We hear some unfortunate stories about spikes in water bills if there's a leak in a line or a toilet is left running. Right now some residents feel the need to go public with their plight to bring attention to it. Hopefully, having the ability to turn to the UCA will prove helpful to both parties involved in disputes of this kind or any other kind.

While it is good to see the government address this issue in a positive manner, I wish they displayed equal interest in addressing the financial burdens they are choosing to place on Alberta's families. They continue to pick and choose, acting on one thing like this bill, and ignore other areas where Albertans are really hurting such as the instability they are causing in our power system.

As an example, the NDP have displayed little concern for the communities trying to figure out how they'll survive the aftermath of the early phase-out of the coal-fired generating units. In her speech on Bill 14 in the House last week, the minister talked about Albertans feeling powerless when they have received massive water bills and had nowhere to turn. Well, what about the communities that feel powerless to stop the government's rushed phase-out of their coal-fired plants, plants that have been main employment generators in their communities, plants that had moved to clean-burning technologies? Madam Speaker, these communities are full of families that the government has shown almost no concern for. Their main industry is going to vanish, and so will jobs, and that means families are already leaving these communities for they see no future there anymore. A little bit of caring about these families would go a long way, but the government has never seemed concerned about the fate of rural Alberta.

A point I have yet to address in Bill 14 relates to the Utilities Consumer Advocate gaining the ability to report the track records of power and natural gas utilities companies. One of my colleagues described the change as turning the UCA into something akin to a Better Business Bureau for utilities. I believe this is quite apt. This addition to the act should allow Albertans to become more informed utility consumers. If the UCA is reporting on the performance of power and gas utility companies, then Albertans will likely pay more attention to the information available to them, which will also raise the profile of the UCA and the services it offers. That is a very positive move and something I applaud.

Now that I think about this point, Madam Speaker, perhaps the UCA's mandate should be extended to address the carbon tax on utility bills. I'm speaking specifically about natural gas. Maybe the UCA could act as a mediator when consumers have concerns about high heating bills due to the government's carbon tax on natural gas. Now, that would be providing a really good service for Albertans.

I'll leave this Assembly with that thought. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 14, An Act to Empower Utility Consumers. Being from Calgary, local residents would welcome this bill as Calgarians have been facing a fiasco of problems with their water bills. This bill appears to be an honourable bill. The NDP finally appears to be taking notice of the concerns of Albertans in regard to utility bills and not just Calgary's water bills. But after three years of serial increases to the cost of

living for Albertans by this very NDP government, at \$30 per tonne the carbon tax nearly doubles the cost of residential natural gas before other taxes and fees, so it's very important to have the outlet of the Utilities Consumer Advocate, to be able to call, complain, get help, and fix the problem with utility bills.

Not only has the natural gas jumped in price for consumers, but so has the electricity. Last month alone, the NDP spent \$9 million subsidizing electricity bills for consumers on the regulated rate option.

Mr. Gill: How much?

Mr. Panda: Nine million dollars just in one month.

Why? Because the price of electricity climbed above 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour, and that is the price cap that consumers get and the NDP subsidizes from a fund of \$74.3 million budgeted.

I'm sure the NDP's actions in subsidizing electricity prices have freed up some workers at the Utilities Consumer Advocate to take the water utility complaint calls that Bill 14 will now allow. Or have they? I'm hearing lots of people complain about the high price of electricity these days, Madam Speaker. In 2017 and '18 the Utilities Consumer Advocate took 22,790 calls and conducted 5,184 mediations on electricity and natural gas, and it is all the NDP government's fault.

9:10

For the first three years this government seemed determined to raise the cost of utilities for everyday Albertans. They hiked the job-killing carbon tax, and the early phase-out of our most efficient coal-fired generation: that coal-fired generation produced fly ash, which is used in the construction industry. Now the cement plants will have to use silica fume and metakaolin. But that's our NDP, always driving the costs up for consumers in the name of environmental do-goodism. The NDP even dared to close down brand new coal-fired generating stations – that's not common sense; it's crazy – then sent the minister on a road trip with the president of the Alberta Federation of Labour to visit the affected communities and bring hope when the workers are still at work trying to make the last dollar they could. It isn't right, Madam Speaker.

If the NDP are unwilling to address the cost of electricity and natural gas to ratepayers and taxpayers, it's a small comfort that they are willing to address concerns surrounding water bills. The UCA, the Utilities Consumer Advocate, is a good tool to provide consumers with the information and tools that they need to understand and manage their electricity, gas, and water bills. After all, it was a Conservative government who brought it in in the first place because the private sector was being unfair and not being accountable.

Bill 14 is going to allow the UCA to provide public reports on power and natural gas utilities. These reports will tell of the utilities' customer service performance. I know these reports will get used and generate news stories and make consumers shop and switch if they are being treated unfairly by utilities. However, there is inherent hypocrisy. The NDP are talking about public reporting on utilities while they simultaneously try to play down and hide the negative impacts of their policies on the utility costs for average Albertans. The NDP have raised electricity and gas prices and dared to tell customers and consumers to go complain to the Utilities Consumer Advocate.

Now, the NDP are not known for getting consultation right with Bill 6 and all other bills. We hope the NDP government engaged in meaningful consultation with municipalities on this bill, Bill 14, as this is an area primarily of municipal responsibility.

Bill 14 only solves water billing disputes, not water rate disputes as those rates are set by municipalities. It costs money for water lines, treatment plants, and environmental monitoring, and if you're using more water than your neighbour, you'll get billed more. That's why it is so important to stop any leaks as soon as they are found because you'll be charged for the water that leaked. I understand that over the last period of time, the UCA received 179 calls with respect to water bills. With Bill 14 giving them a mandate to handle water bills and a water billing dispute in the city of Calgary, I expect the calls to rise. Extending the free mediation services provided by the Utilities Consumer Advocate to water bills is the issue I can support, Madam Speaker, but what I can't support is the NDP government raising electricity and natural gas prices with their carbon tax, coal phase-out, and forced renewable electricity programs.

Madam Speaker, my colleague from Grande Prairie-Wapiti talked about extending the scope of the UCA to handle the complaints on the carbon tax. I think that that government is open to considering that. I encourage them to consider it because it's the most important concern on the minds of everyday Albertans. Their costs have gone up. The NDP tries to, you know, say in the House every day that they're making life better, but if they look in the mirror, they will know that they are making life even harder, miserable, unaffordable. If they really want to know that, they should extend the scope of the UCA to cover the complaints on the carbon tax as well.

With that, thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. When we have an act that comes through the House, Bill 14, An Act to Empower Utility Consumers, I think that what's important to note here is that it's always good that there's a mechanism for people to be able to deal with monopolies, and that really is what a water commission is. You've got one line coming into your home. You have one supplier. Now, what happens here is that when there's a dispute with that supplier, we end up with a situation where they can just cut you off. Now, if this was something that wasn't a necessity of life, then that would be something that would be dealt with between the supplier and the consumer. In this case I see the wisdom in the government bringing forward a bill that says that we need to make sure there's a mechanism in place for us to be able to resolve these concerns before it gets to the point of cutting off that water.

Now, what I hear is that this is a good mechanism that deals with just the dispute between the two parties. What we have here is the fact that the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills has been very clear in saying that maybe, possibly, we need to also address the rates that they're using. This needs to be something that is maybe potentially an improvement going forward, and I think that's a reasonable improvement.

He also brought up the fact that carbon taxes are another thing that are a concern to a lot of Albertans. We heard that two-thirds of Albertans disagree with the carbon tax levy on their bill.

Mr. Gill: Tax.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you. It really is a tax. This tax is levied on top of their bill, that Albertans are now responsible for.

What we need to do is ensure that the consumer has the ability to be able to discuss these things if a government implements an unfair burden on those consumers, and I do see the carbon tax as an unfair burden. It's disappointing to hear and see the fact that we have a mechanism to deal with water but that we do not have a mechanism

in here to deal with something where a government goes off the rails, like what my hon. colleague has been saying.

My question to the Member for Calgary-Foothills is: do you feel that this bill, while it's a start and we agree with it, could have been improved?

Mr. Panda: Absolutely. As legislators in Alberta our job is to critically evaluate every single bill that comes in front of us and see if it meets the expectation of the constituents that we represent. That's why I supported the point of view raised by the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti here. I do a lot of door-knocking in my riding, Calgary-Foothills, and sometimes I go into other areas, too, to talk to people. That's what they say. They say that our colleagues from the government side, the NDP MLAs, have good intentions, but they're not close to reality. Unless they go and consult Albertans on this very subject, they won't know. They think that just covering electricity and water will solve the problem and that Albertans don't have any other problems. They're all happy, in their mind, but they would realize how they feel about the carbon tax if they went and talked to their constituents.

That's why I think government should be open to an amendment to include the carbon tax also in the scope of this bill, and that's how we can serve our constituents better. I don't understand why they're hesitant to talk about this, because two-thirds of Albertans . . .

9:20

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Good morning, Madam Speaker, and thank you. This is an interesting bill, and thank you to the government for bringing this forward. It's interesting. You can read in the newspaper, you can read all sorts of interesting things about what it's like for the average person who's having these issues and trying to get help and trying to have somebody mediate through a lot of these issues.

As I understand it, the bill will expand the current mandate of the Utilities Consumer Advocate to mediate disputes for Albertans who have concerns about their water bills, sewage, and drainage as well as expand the UCA's ability to report on customer service performance, a company's history of consumer complaints, investigations and penalties. Madam Speaker, this is a great idea. It certainly pushes accountability. For anybody who is in this, to bring up the point of my hon. member over here that was talking about the fact that there is a monopoly on these things, there is absolutely a need to make sure that there's transparency and oversight. We all know how stressful this can be – right? – so to make sure that we're advocating on behalf of Albertans when something goes wrong, especially in these particular situations, is a really, really good idea.

As we know, the Utilities Consumer Advocate was actually established in 2003 to act as a mediator between Albertans with concerns regarding electricity and natural gas bills and companies that provide energy. Madam Speaker, I can honestly say that I'm sure everybody in this Chamber at some point in their life has gotten that bill, that one bill that was way higher than expected, way higher than they budgeted for, that causes unbelievable stress.

I remember when my husband and I bought our first house in Chestermere. We'd actually bought it from my parents. My parents had built this beautiful atrium off the back, extremely pretty but very, very inefficient and poorly built. It had plants. They put a banana tree in there and a jasmine tree and all sorts of wonderful things. However, the bills to heat it and to take care of it were well beyond the scope of what we were able to afford at that time. We had a particularly bad winter, and I remember my husband and I

getting that bill, and I almost fainted. Now, that wasn't the fault of anybody else other than us not realizing the amount of energy that it was going to take to run that particular greenhouse at that time. But being a young couple with young children at the time, unfortunately the bougainvillea and the jasmine and the banana tree met an early winter death because the power quickly went off in that wonderful little space until we were able to figure out what was going on in there.

I'm just sharing this story because I can share the stress with you, what that felt like, and what it took to be able to pay off that massive bill as well. I mean, you're looking at the bill. You know, you look at your bill, and you look at the number at the bottom of the page. I know, for us, our eyes bugged out. You start to run through your monthly expenses. You wonder: oh, my goodness, how are we possibly going to pay this?

Especially right now, Madam Speaker, we've got people in severe stress and distress. I can't imagine that there's a single person in this House that hasn't had discussions with folks about how hard it is right now. This is a good act in order to make sure that we're protecting people from at least some part of the stress or that at least they have somebody that they can talk to when that happens. I'm sure all of us can talk about a point in time when we didn't understand how that bill happened, and it's very, very difficult to get answers and very stressful and not always friendly on the other side of that phone call either.

You rack your brain and you desperately search for a reason for why your bill is so high. You know, did you turn the lights off? Did you have your heat turned up too high? Did you get a new appliance that is sucking more energy than you expected? Have your kids been playing with some button on your heating vents or the AC or whatever it is? Did you leave a window open? Or whatever the case may be. Sometimes you figure things out, but other times consumers are really, really left struggling and scrambling to figure out: why is the bill so much higher than you expected? You know, this is a very, very easy thing to relate to.

Now, obviously, there are many things that can lead to the discrepancies in the bills. When a consumer is faced with having to figure out which one of the multitude of factors might have caused the hike in the price, it's an incredibly, incredibly vulnerable feeling, Madam Speaker, when you're dealing with a large corporation. We know, at least in my office, that feeling of vulnerability. It's a feeling of helplessness, and you feel hopeless. Realistically, for the average Albertan, it's very complex to go through. It's very difficult to understand, especially with all the changes that are going on right now. We have a multitude of changes that are happening right now. Can you imagine, for the average Albertan, what it must be like looking at their bill right now to understand the energy market and the impacts of that on their bill and then to be able to fully advocate on behalf of themselves?

Having a Utilities Consumer Advocate I think will make a huge difference as someone, hopefully, that is in your corner so you don't feel like you're up against the odds with massive corporations. It's also another avenue when you're out of options. It's somebody that you can go and talk to.

Madam Speaker, there's one constituent in particular that comes to mind when I think about this advocate. We had gotten a call from a senior constituent in our riding who lives in a rural area and was away for a month. They're snowbirds – right? – so they fly out of the country for a little bit. When they returned, they had a \$3,000 power bill. That's when your eyes bug out of your head, at \$3,000. The family called the company, and they asked them to look at the bills for the last several years. When they looked at the average, it was about \$150 a month on average, and he explained to the

company that his bill was way off base. I mean, it was just astronomically expensive.

In fact, you know, he had his heat turned down to, like, 13 or 14 degrees the whole time he was gone, so it should have been less expensive than usual because he wasn't actually living in his house at the time. He was told by the company that they had no way of verifying the information and that there was nothing they could do. Can you imagine coming home to that bill? That would be horrible. Then, on top of that, for the power company, the ones that are supposed to have the expertise in doing this, not to be able to tell them what's going on – I can't begin to explain to you what it was like talking to this gentleman. I mean, his voice was cracking, and he didn't know how he was going to make this happen on his fixed income – I mean, it was obvious in his face: what was he going to do to pay this \$3,000 bill? – and he also was facing the horrible, horrible fact that his power could be turned off. And with absolutely no explanation.

He felt that he had no way to prove that he had not used that amount of power. It was basically, Madam Speaker, his word against that of a giant company, who hold all the power – no pun intended – literally. He absolutely felt completely helpless in all of this, completely unable to find answers. He was being blamed for this and hadn't even been there. The heat had been turned down. It just didn't make any sense. The legislation will help to protect Alberta consumers not only on concerns about their power and natural gas bills but also on the water bills, and that's good.

9:30

I wanted to talk for a moment, too, about what the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti and the Member for Calgary-Foothills said about how this should extend to the carbon tax as well. If you think about how many issues we've had with distribution of the carbon tax rebate – folks whose spouses have passed away who have had to return carbon tax rebate cheques and it going out to people who don't need it, that aren't on fixed incomes – like, there have been a lot of issues with that. I imagine it's very difficult to do something like that, to get that program up and running, so it might be a worthwhile umbrella to put the carbon tax under there, too, because it is very complicated and some people don't understand why they're having that clawed back. I mean, we have that issue with seniors, where 30 per cent of their carbon tax was being clawed back in order to help pay for utilities in the facility that they're living in.

These are all things where I think advocacy would be very, very useful for the folks of this province. You know, there are a lot of things going on that are making it difficult for people in this province, but as we all know, people love this province. They love being here. They're resilient. If they're given the opportunity to be able to be resilient and to be able to figure things out, they're going to do that. So the government might want to be able to extend this advocacy to that, too, especially given the number of issues that the government has had with the distribution of the carbon tax and especially because the rebates will not be increasing along with the amount of the carbon tax increases. Anyway, it's something to think about.

But this poor gentleman doesn't have much of a choice right now, Madam Speaker, and it's for these exact situations that the UCA is so important. We know that in recent years the number of complaints that the UCA has received regarding water bills has increased dramatically, but their hands have been tied since water bills didn't fall within their mandate. So thank you for putting that in there.

I've also heard from some of the members of this Assembly that constituents have seen their water bills increase, and this is

especially a problem as Albertans head into the summer season and the demands for water to water plants and grass and to fill recreational pools increase. But even aside from those kinds of things, there was a woman – it was in one of the newspapers, so I don't have it exactly. But I remember they were saying that she was charged \$2,700 for her water bill – \$2,700 – and had absolutely no way to be able to advocate on behalf of herself for this. There was another thing, where they were describing that she had to choose between I think it was, like, lessons or putting her daughter into dance classes.

Mr. Panda: Heat or eat.

Mrs. Aheer: Yeah. There's always that, too. Heat or eat.

But, I mean, she had to choose between paying her water bill and being able to do extracurricular activities with her daughter. I don't know about you, Madam Speaker, but I think that this is solvable. I hope that this advocate is able to bring some sense of closure for these folks and that they have somebody who has their back with respect to these things. Adding water bills to the mandate of the UCA will give Alberta consumers some recourse for these inexplicably higher bills.

I think equally important, Madam Speaker, and what I actually really, really like about this bill is the increased reporting measures. I think it's one thing to have an advocate; it's a whole other thing to be following up with them and making sure that they're actually doing their job appropriately. I think that's excellent, and those reporting measures will really give us a sense and an idea of what's happening with the people who work within this monopoly, as the hon. member said, to make sure that they're being held accountable for their work and that they have great people on the ground that can help folks at this very, very stressful time in their life.

It's also important to note that the UCA has no formal enforcement powers. The one thing that they can do, which is very useful, is that they can go public, and they can report on the providers. Their ability to be able to report on these providers and either their ability to handle those situations or their inability to handle those situations is a hugely significant tool in itself. Sometimes public shaming is the only way that you can get things done, especially with these particular situations, when we have people that have these massive bills. I think that's incredibly important, and it will push those companies that are not putting the interests of their consumers first to actually start doing so.

I don't want to make it sound like these companies are always these terrible people – they're not – but there are situations where these things happen, where it's maybe a customer service issue or it's a contractual issue. I'm not sure. I mean, every one is significantly different.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Listening to the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View, you know, she has brought up some really good points. Specifically, I would have to say that whenever it comes to monopolies, we always need to be very cautious.

Now, as we've seen with this government – and we're seeing some municipalities follow suit – we're seeing a lot of creative taxes being added to bills and levies. This is something that I think – it doesn't just end with the carbon tax that we're seeing. We're seeing other things that are being put on the bill as a line item that more or less go into the general coffers of that utility commission or that municipality. You know, when I look at some of these line items, I ask myself: is that money doing what it was intended for or

what the people think it's for? It's easy to add a 1 per cent or 2 per cent levy or, in the case of the carbon tax, a tax. What we see here are breakdowns with incredible amounts of detail, but we have no idea whether there's actual accountability to see that money actually go to where it was intended.

We also see that it's done on these utilities that we have no choice but to buy. That's the problem here. When you've got a monopoly, you can tack on whatever you want. Some of them are very well intended, but in the end, we end up with things like the – a good example is when the city of Edmonton added a fee to its new builds, that accumulated large amounts of money. Then we found out that that money was meant for helping the process of new builds, and the problem here is that that money ended up becoming a massive slush fund for the city of Edmonton. Clearly, that was not the intent of that money. Clearly, the auditor of the city of Edmonton pointed this out. Now what happens is that we have an embarrassment for one of our largest cities, our capital city. This is an example of what happens when we have fees that are added and nobody is watching them.

When we've got a carbon tax – and this is a good example – we have a massive green slush fund that has been put together by this government, that is not being used as they had initially laid it out. There's no accountability mechanism when it comes to the things that are put on our bills. I do believe that it would be an improvement to this bill should the government decide to move this forward. I'm sure they will; they brought the bill forward. Again, the opposition agrees that this is a very important bill to move forward so that we've got the mechanism in place.

But the question here to the member is: do you feel that the carbon tax is the only one that we should be focusing on? Should it be all the potential levies that we've got on those bills, and if so, what mechanisms do you think we should put in to protect the consumer?

9:40

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you very much. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I actually think it's a great idea any time that we can provide transparency. It might be complicated, but every time there's a line item that explains – because sometimes you have fees for service. Sometimes you have fees for a product. There are all sorts of fees, especially if there are utilities that are run through particular cities. Those will also have their fees running through their utility. There are all sorts of things. Presently we understand what that looks like. If it's not put onto these bills, we're not going to have any idea of what's happening. So the carbon tax would be a very, very good step in the right direction.

I think that to a large degree, to the point of the member, we don't actually understand what percentage that would be. So even if we understand that there's a carbon tax on that, we don't understand how that's being incorporated into that overall bill. By doing this and actually adding those pieces in, if you're a large company and you're providing water right now with very few incentives to actually do the right thing . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's an honour, as always, to rise in this House and speak to a bill, in this case Bill 14, the utilities statutes amendment act, which would expand the Utilities Consumer Advocate's ability to deal with water complaints in particular and extend their education and free mediation services to disputes that involve water bills.

As we've heard in the debate previously, this has been an issue. Certainly, in the city of Calgary in particular it's been especially acute. It's been a challenge and an issue for certain of my constituents, so I certainly welcome the opportunity for those constituents to have another avenue of recourse should future issues like this arise.

The question I have is that this is a bill that seems to be designed to elicit a great headline for the government, but I'm curious what the actual outcome will be for consumers. Beyond the urban areas like my constituency it does, of course, include farms and small businesses as well and does continue to respect municipal jurisdiction. I'm pleased to see that the government has consulted with AUMA and RMA as well. The reporting of performance: I'm sure the House knows, but it's never a downside to say again how much I love data and how much evidence is, I think, the backbone of good decision-making, so I'm pleased to see that it will publicly report on that performance. I think that's, obviously, an important thing to incorporate into everything government does. It's especially true here.

What I'm fascinated by, though, Madam Speaker, is that there doesn't seem to be any need for new resources and there doesn't seem to necessarily be a plan here to actually promote these new services. The services will be made available by the UCA now to consumers who have complaints about water bills, with some pretty remarkably quick turnaround times by the looks of it. The mediation looks like two weeks to mediate the complaint, which is the same as existing.

It makes me wonder if the services that we have been paying for to date have been underutilized. Perhaps they have, or perhaps this organization has found some efficiencies that allow them to expand their capacity without additional cost. If that is the case, I give them great kudos for doing so, and I would say that it's a small but important example of what is possible when one sets one's mind to finding ways of doing more with the same resources and could be used as a tremendous example for the rest of government. I would really encourage the government side to find other areas within the government where this same basic model applies and more can be done.

You know, it is interesting that members have brought up some of the challenges that have been faced in Calgary. It didn't seem to be a huge focus for the government in their initial comments on the bill, but I can tell you that it has been a big, big issue in Calgary. So I think that the changes will, at the end of the day, be welcome. It's certainly not going to cost us any more, and it's going to allow consumers another avenue.

With that, I think we will be supporting this bill – I just wanted to put those brief comments on the record – and I will move to adjourn debate on this bill, Madam Speaker.

Thank you.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 1 Energy Diversification Act

[Adjourned debate March 21: Mr. Westhead]

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane, did you wish to continue in your time? No?

Do any other members wish to speak to this bill? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 1. It's always a pleasure to rise in the

Assembly and speak to such important pieces of legislation that the government is so aptly bringing before the Assembly.

You know, one of the challenges that we see with this particular government is that they seem to be putting together such a lengthy track record of causing economic pain and terror and then needing to come to the Assembly to try to fix some of the problems that they've created. Any time government is engaging in this sort of governance, we wind up with government programs that often fail; we wind up with government programs that sometimes create more harm than good. I think of another Bill 1 that was brought before the Assembly. I can't remember the name off the top of my head, but something about: We're Going to Create the Most Jobs that the World Has Ever Seen Act, or the jobs plan bill, or the most amazing Bill 1 that the Alberta Legislative Assembly has ever seen, An Act to Create Jobs, Jobs, Jobs.

Madam Speaker, I think that you'll recall that it was basically a bill about nothing, trying to solve a problem that the government had created. In fact, it was used more as a political tool for the government to talk about jobs and how they were going to create all these jobs, and it really came down to the fact that it was a lengthy job description for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. I remember him standing in the House so triumphantly about how they were going to create all these jobs. The reality is that it created zero jobs. Well, maybe it created one job, and that was formalizing the job of the minister and giving him an actual job description.

We've seen this time and time again, where the government is responding to crises that they've created and then bringing forward legislation to try to correct some of the problems that they have started to make. In some respects that's exactly what we see with this Bill 1 as well. While, you know, I have spoken with a number of stakeholders and colleagues about this particular piece of legislation and while there are some good things in Bill 1, particularly in terms of its overall goal and that, we wouldn't be here if it wasn't for the government and their significant mismanagement of a wide variety of challenges that they've created.

While I've spoken with some stakeholders, and they have said that on balance they're not super opposed to this particular piece of legislation and that they, in fact, will be happy to apply to receive some benefit from this particular piece of legislation, what they would prefer even more than that is a strong and robust economy that didn't require government intervention or the overregulation that we see from this NDP government. And while they are going to quite likely engage in efforting to receive some of the revenue or the guarantees that come from Bill 1 because, at the end of the day, it has the ability to have a positive impact on their business and potentially – and I use this cautiously – have a positive impact on the industry, it also has the potential to be an absolute boondoggle as well.

9:50

While there is the potential that it will have a positive impact on the petrochemicals industry and in diversifying our energy industry and the economy as a whole, we've seen time and time and time again that where government efforts to intervene in the industry in the form of picking winners and losers, it is actually the taxpayer that loses. Now, I will provide some qualifying statements there because I understand that in Bill 1 there are more checks and balances than we've seen in the past with respect to trying to prevent those boondoggles in that some of the revenue doesn't actually get delivered until the project is – and these sorts of things make this piece of legislation appear to be better than some of the other times when the government has engaged in the economy.

But I think we can all agree – certainly, folks on this side of the House will agree with me – that government, generally speaking, has a terrible, terrible, terrible track record when it comes to intervening in the economy or providing subsidies or projects and oftentimes, Madam Speaker, under the guise of very noble ideals and ideas but delivered quite poorly. There are a lot of things that I believe could be done to help provide some additional assurances.

As well, I keep coming back time and time and time again to when I speak to the outstanding constituents of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills that they talk about the destruction and the damage that the government has imposed upon Albertans and that they are the leading challenge to Alberta's economic future. I just keep coming back to that, that if it wasn't for the government, we wouldn't be in such a terrible position that needed to then be corrected.

As I look at Bill 1, on balance I see that there are just so many things that, first of all, have not been done that should be done to ensure that this piece of legislation is as good as it can be. But at the end of the day, it's difficult to support a piece of legislation that wouldn't be needed if the government didn't create the problem in the first place, and then it's difficult to support such a piece of legislation when you consider all of the other external factors and the financial position of the province and all sorts of other really good concerns and challenges that I hear from outstanding constituents in Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills with respect to the way that the government continues to govern.

I don't know for sure, you know, and I see no reason why we shouldn't have sent this particular bill to committee. Industry has been speaking to the government with respect to diversifying the economy; therefore, it makes some good sense that we would allow industry to speak to the Legislative Assembly, to advise all of us. It would provide the opportunity for the opposition to ask industry in public. It's one thing, Madam Speaker, for me to call up stakeholders or for stakeholders to approach me privately in my own office or in the constituency office or here in Edmonton when they come to express either some concern or pleasure with legislation that is just like this, but it is entirely another thing – entirely another thing – to allow the sunlight of public presence to shine on those sorts of meetings.

I know that I've heard from some of my colleagues. The independent Member for Calgary-Mountain View, the former leader of the Alberta Liberal Party, recently brought up some of the concerns on the government meeting with certain types of lobbyists under the guise of secrecy. If there's one thing that folks on this side of the House know, it is that this government has all sorts of a track record now on doing business in secret. We look at the number of times that this government has been under investigation by the Privacy Commissioner, whether it's on shredding documents, not allowing access to visitor logs, whether it's operating in voice mode, whether it's political interference in the Premier's office in the absolute highest form, whether it's interference and political engagement in the FOIP process, in the PPA – they're under investigation for their interactions in the power purchase agreements – just four or five or six significant issues where they have been proving to Albertans that they act in secrecy.

I think just yesterday at the PAC meeting we heard some very troubling reports out of the Energy ministry's office on this very topic of the government essentially acting in secrecy. We've heard the Deputy Premier at times openly talk about how this government operates in voice mode. That's exactly why these sorts of pieces of legislation need to go to committee, so that it isn't on voice mode and it isn't just members of the opposition of the government calling up industry stakeholders and speaking to them about the legislation and whether or not it's right or wrong. I don't understand why the government continues their very poor track record on

consultation, their very poor track record on openness and transparency and continues to not allow these sorts of things to take place.

You know, Madam Speaker, there are a number of other areas with respect to this piece of legislation that I have significant reservations around. I know that my colleague the Member for Calgary-Foothills has risen in this place to talk about whether or not the government fully understands, and not necessarily specifically to Bill 1 but on a number of pieces of legislation. He's done a great job of holding this government to account with respect to: what are the actual impacts of Bill 1 going to be? This government likes to study everything under the sun except what the actual economic benefits or impacts of this legislation are.

A perfect example – and I've already alluded to it this morning – is that if the government had done an economic impact assessment on Bill 1, the bill that didn't create one job or do anything, they would have known in advance that they would have been embarrassed to introduce such a piece of legislation as they did. They could have saved themselves the heartache and the pain if they just had done an economic impact assessment on Bill 1 at that time. I believe that there have been zero actual economic impact assessments done with respect to the current Bill 1 we see before us, the Energy Diversification Act.

It's one thing to make yourself believe that your legislation is going to do what you hope it will do, and it is entirely another thing to go ahead and spend a brief amount of time to make sure that the results you hope to have happen will actually be the results that the legislation delivers. One of the ways – I'm not saying that it's the only way – that you can do that is to have an economic impact assessment. I just wonder if that was done. I'm certain that it hasn't been done, but from time to time I like to give the government the benefit of the doubt. I just wonder if, in fact, the government could save itself some hardship in the future by actually doing the important work that needs to be done now.

10:00

I was in the House just the other day when the Minister of Municipal Affairs rose in his place and talked about the impact that his father had had on his life. His father had taught him that if you're going to do something right, do it right the first time. I think that that is good advice that this government should heed. They have not done that on numerous occasions in just their short term in government, whether it's the elections financing act, that they've now brought back to the Assembly three, four times. I think this is the fifth time that we're going to see it, in the form of Bill 16, that I believe is currently on the Order Paper.

We've seen the government trying to do things that will diversify the economy.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you. You know, I've been listening very intently to my colleague from Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. I have to say that whenever you have a lot of questions about process, secrecy within the decision-making part of the process, the question is: is this the appropriate place to be putting taxpayers' money? Now, I have to say that when you hear the member speak of the Energy Diversification Act, he has some reasonable concerns, and the reason is that as we move forward and we're dealing with billions of dollars, it needs to be transparent. It needs to be something where we can look back and actually quantify and qualify the results. If we put large amounts of money in something, did we end up with the result that we were hoping for?

The question here that the hon. member brings forward is: did the government do an economic impact study? It's clear that whenever we've had decisions go through this House, we have asked that question repeatedly, and the answer always comes to a cold silence on the other side. It's because what happens here is: do we actually have a government that just wants to go out and pick winners and losers? Do we have a government that is looking out for the best interests of the economy? Just because we're spending money doesn't mean that we're ending up with the results we're hoping for. That's an important point to bring up.

We look at our health care system as a good example. We continue to spend more than any other province on our health care, and we continue to see this government pouring more and more money into health care, but we see our wait times going up. Clearly, what we're doing isn't working for Albertans. We put money into the system. These hard-working men and women, who are doctors, nurses, technicians: they're working hard. So what is it that is preventing Albertans from getting these services? That is the question, yet the only answer we receive from this government is to put more money into it.

That doesn't seem to be a solution that is working for Albertans, and to be honest with you, it is reckless when it comes to the taxpayer because what happens is that we get into a cycle, a never-ending cycle of levying taxes and adding more and more money to the system and achieving fewer and fewer results from that money. Now, I can't remember the exact definition for insanity, but if I remember correctly, it's doing the same thing repeatedly and expecting a different result.

Now, what we're looking at here is the important question to the member: do you feel that an economic impact study is a necessity whenever you're dealing with large-scale credit projects like this one here being announced by the government?

Mr. Cooper: Thank you for your thoughtful question. You know, I think, as I highlighted, the government likes to study anything and everything except for things when it comes to the economy.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Highwood.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise in the House this morning to speak to Bill 1, the Energy Diversification Act. I listened intently to my colleague from Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills talk about some concerns and issues he may have.

The government's purpose behind this bill is to encourage investment in Alberta, specifically in the petrochemical industry. An important point to make and, I imagine, one of the reasons for the introduction of this legislation is the staggering amount of money that has been invested in other jurisdictions instead of Alberta in the same industry. We know now that most of this investment has been shifted to the United States' market, and part of the reason for this was the use of incentive programs and business-friendly tax policies in the United States that made them a very attractive place to invest. I'm not sure what the recent dollar amount is, but I'm thinking that billions of dollars have left this province in investment in this industry. Now, the bill does attempt to deal with some of this and some of the lack of competitiveness in Alberta.

I believe the government has good intentions behind this legislation. In fact, there are a few positives we can probably pull out of this bill. First off, the bill uses a mix of incentives to encourage the petrochemical industry to invest in long-term facilities, to grow here in Alberta. That sounds like a good plan. With investment drying up in Alberta, any incentive to get money

flowing again through Alberta's economy can be seen as a good thing. Now, this could and would put Albertans back to work and would increase our tax revenue.

It is important to state that part of the reason there has been a lack of investment in Alberta's petrochemical industry is because of this government's inability to encourage investment. This, coupled with attractive incentives from other jurisdictions such as the United States, has led to Alberta becoming an undesirable place to invest. If we're able to lure some of this investment back to Canada, I think that would be an extremely desirable goal.

Further, some of the initiatives that this bill proposes could have the potential to free up pipeline space for our resources. This could be done through partial upgrading, which would open up pipeline capacity. This would have added, to the benefit of enabling more refineries, the ability to access Alberta oil and thus expanded our market. Now, with this government's inability, with Ottawa, of course, to get pipelines such as Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain expansion built, any program that could increase pipeline capacity would be extremely beneficial to Albertans. And if more refineries are able to purchase our oil, that could also be beneficial to our economy, for our tax base, and to Albertans.

However, Madam Speaker, I have some concerns with Bill 1. Bill 1 allows for the Alberta Petroleum Marketing Commission to use any financial tools available, including loan guarantees and equity investments. I don't think that's a good deal for taxpayers. I think taxpayers get nervous when governments start to control these financial tools. What happens when a loan is defaulted on? What about if we invest in a company that goes bankrupt? Some of you might not remember, but NovAtel and the magnesium factory and a few other investments that governments in the past have invested in have not been beneficial for the taxpaying base here in Alberta. I'm not comfortable with giving Alberta public agencies too much power and too much financial ability.

10:10

Further to this, Bill 1 also gives power to the minister to create programs that support economic growth and energy diversification. This may include government grants or others, and I wouldn't trust the minister to have the power to create programs with taxpayers' dollars unilaterally. In other words, we, I believe, require a considerable amount of consultation and economic baseline adjustment to truly understand where those dollars should be invested.

We've seen how this government has used public dollars so far. I believe that we should not give them any more power to waste more money, chase good money after bad. We know that this bill would give the minister this power, but what programs would the minister create? We've yet to hear anything, nothing specific. How would this be rolled out? Again, no one is really sure how this will be rolled out. It's just too vague, and I still have many questions on exactly how or whom they consulted with regarding these programs that they would be potentially creating.

Now, my colleagues on this side of the House have argued unsuccessfully to refer the bill to committee. I'm getting used to going back and forth to the committee, by the way. In committee we could have heard expert opinions and hashed out the details and what the ramifications of this bill could be and would be. With billions of dollars that could be spent with the passing of this bill, is it not a bit irresponsible for the government to be pushing this through without proper study, economic consultation, maybe some experts and some expertise? Bill 1 is not a simple piece of legislation, and with the implications really unknown at this point, I and my colleagues on this side of the House believe that it needs

more time for study and that henceforth we want to send it back to committee.

Madam Speaker, in my opinion, it's just a little too risky. As a general rule, the government and/or its agencies should not be using public money, at the best of times, to try and influence the market. Now we are far from the best of times, and this government wants to throw money into projects that may or may not succeed. With a \$96 billion debt expected in the next decade, now is not the time to be throwing money away on projects at this government's discretion without consultation, without discussion, without an economic impact study, without people actually having a chance, an opportunity to deal with experts and expertise. I know that governments in the past, in this province and others, have considered situations like this, and they have not worked out well for the taxpayer.

I think everyone in this House would love to see the economy be diversified – we talk about diversification quite often, but what does that really mean? – however, we cannot do it at the expense of taxpayers. This government is already spending billions of dollars we just don't have. Let's not spend more on projects that we're not sure are really going to work out for the benefit of Albertans and for the benefit of taxpayers. The government's job is to set the market conditions that encourage investment.

If this current government really wanted to diversify the economy, there are many things they could do to increase investor confidence. Perhaps the government could look at repealing the job-killing carbon tax, which is absolutely driving away investment. Does the government think a \$30-per-tonne carbon tax is actually encouraging investment? How about when the carbon tax rises to \$50 a tonne? Will there be any investment left in our province? How about the increase in corporate taxes or the increase in regulations, red tape – red tape – bureaucracy? Has the government done anything that says that we are open for business? The answer, Madam Speaker, is no. This government has spent three years driving away investors and driving away jobs. Albertans are suffering for it.

After pushing their ideological agenda since they were elected, this government for some reason seems to be surprised that the economy is not rolling forward anymore. What's their solution? Let's spend taxpayers' money and drive us deeper in debt. This thinking, to me, makes no sense. With the current government policies, economic activity has decreased and tax revenue has gone down substantially. Tax revenue has gone substantially. So in order to try and get the economy going again, the government decides to spend money it just doesn't have. Again, I believe this is poor economic planning and, quite frankly, backward thinking.

There's a simple solution, Madam Speaker. The government needs to repeal the tax hikes, reduce regulations, and create the conditions so that businesses can succeed and for investment to thrive. We've got to put a sign on the border: we're open for business. This is far easier and far cheaper than pushing through Bill 1. Now, this would give investors the confidence that Alberta is actually open for business, which would increase economic activity, increase the tax base, and get Albertans back to work.

Madam Speaker, it's disappointing that the government is pushing through Bill 1 when there are far better solutions that could benefit Albertans, increase jobs, and, of course, increase our tax base. Now, unfortunately, I think Bill 1, as I said earlier, is a risky piece of legislation that spends additional taxpayer money without the confidence that it'll actually accomplish the outcomes the government is seeking. I think it would be prudent for us to go back, take this to committee, or at least have a chance to communicate with and involve experts and expertise and do an economic impact

study and try and design legislation that will work for Albertans without burdening Albertans and putting us more in debt.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Under Standing Order 29(2)(a) any questions or comments? Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have to say that, again, listening to another one of my colleagues describe the state of our Alberta economy in detail, showing how we had a thriving economy – and, yes, oil did start to plummet. There's no doubt that oil is a factor in this slowdown in Alberta. Now, we have seen low oil prices before. As a matter of fact, from what I understand, during Premier Klein's time we actually saw oil plummet to about \$10 a barrel, and we were still able to move forward and bring stability to our market and show the industry, the energy industry, that we are a good place to put their money.

Now, what's happened here is that we've seen ideology trump common sense. We've seen a government that said: we are going to fix the industry through taxes, and then we're going to pick winners and losers on who is going to get the money and go in that direction. Now, my colleague has been very clear in his speech, saying that it's that ideology that is preventing us from getting back on our feet. That seems to be a very reasonable statement. We see the damage this government has done when it comes to our energy industry, and it's not just the fact that we've done it with the taxes. We also had our Premier and ministers showing embarrassment for our industry.

Now, what happens here is that I am proud. I am proud of everything that has happened within my Bonnyville-Cold Lake constituency. I am proud of every single company. I am proud of the men and women that drive those companies. I am proud of our environmentally responsible approach to getting that oil out, and I am proud of the footprint, the ability to create smaller well sites to get that natural resource out. To the member: do you think that the government should be looking at repealing the carbon taxes, the emissions caps, and the other things that they have levied on top of our industry that more or less have chased away every big industrial player?

Thank you.

Mr. W. Anderson: Well, thank you to my hon. colleague for Bonnyville-Cold Lake. He raises some interesting points. Now, my feeling is that you can't tax your way to prosperity. It's a very difficult position to take. Moreover, reading through this legislation and with the lack of consultation, I think there's just a little too much risk involved. There's nothing specific in here that talks about or mentions how we are going to encourage investment. All it states here is that what we're going to be doing is potentially borrowing out more capital that we don't have to potentially provide an economic environment for investors to come back into Alberta and invest in our industry.

10:20

Now, if we wouldn't have chased them out in the first place – what makes us think that through taxation we're going to keep them here? The reality is that if you lower taxes and you create an economic environment that makes sense for people to invest and they can receive a good return on their investment for their shareholders and others, then they would really consider coming back and investing here. But all this really is is a tax play. It's taking our tax dollars and putting them back out in the public market and saying: here you go; come on; let's invest.

But the reality is that the investment capital that's going to be provided for these individuals is debted product. We're getting too

deep in debt, and this province cannot afford to continue going down this road: a \$96 billion debt over the next 10 years. It's \$8 billion this year, and we're going to offer more of our tax debt dollars to a market that has run away because they increased the taxes – corporate taxes have gone down – and the carbon tax. All those things are not favourable for investors in the North American market to invest in this province. That's why they've moved billions of dollars into the U.S. market.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I see another Bill 1 coming from this government, a cornerstone bill. It is the government's flagship, if you will. They're saying that this is our most important piece of legislation, the one that we need to bring forward first and that we need to deal with quickly. Now, it's called the Energy Diversification Act.

I would say that you would find hardly any Albertans that would say that we don't want to get off the energy roller coaster. I would say that every Albertan is tired of the fact that when the oil prices go down, our royalties go down, and then in turn our spending either is reduced or we run deficits. With that in mind, this seems to be a bill that should be getting unanimous consent, you would think anyway. So what is it that we may have some concerns about when it comes to this?

Now, I'd like to go to a press release done by the Alberta government and released on March 8, 2018: Investing in a Diversified Energy Future. Underneath that it says:

New initiatives would create thousands of jobs, attract billions of dollars in private investment and secure Alberta's energy future through diversification and innovation, under legislation introduced today.

What happens here is that we have more or less taken money from Albertans and said: let's make sure that we go in a direction we want. Now, having said that, in fact, it sometimes can be reasoned that maybe taxpayer dollars can go down this road if you were to explore an economic impact study. What happens here is that you need to ensure that you end up with the result you were hoping for, and then if it doesn't work, you stop. But what happens is that when we have no way of quantifying the results, you end up putting more and more money in, that our hard-working families put into this wonderful province, to subsidize something that isn't doing what it was intended to.

A good example was when Justin Trudeau bailed out Bombardier. This seems to be a very clear example. Bombardier was in trouble. It went to the government for a bailout because it was not profitable. It was no longer viable to continue running in Quebec. I understand that there are thousands of jobs on the line. What happens is that instead of working with Bombardier and saying, "We cannot continue to bail you out," what they did was just gave them a lump sum of money. I would say that once that money runs out five years from now, we will see the same story happening on the front page of the newspapers again, where Bombardier is requiring a bailout in order to be able to sustain its operations.

Now, what happens is that instead of calling this what it is – it's a bailout. It's taxpayers' money. It's hard-working families that paid into that. That's hundreds of thousands of families paying into Bombardier so that we can support several thousand jobs. That seems problematic when they are not breaking the cycle, the cycle of continually asking for bailouts. Now, if Bombardier came to them and said, "You know what; we're in trouble; we need a little bit of help; we will get through this; we have a solution in place; we

are going to ensure that a bailout is not going to be needed in the future,” that is something that we could look at with an economic impact study. We can look into it to see if their solution will work, and then we will come up with an answer that best reflects what the province feels.

In this specific case, what we had was a bailout that came to Bombardier, and then they fired a bunch of employees within Quebec, and then they gave their executives millions of dollars in bonuses. Does that not seem problematic to each and every one of you? That seems very problematic to me, and that seems to go against exactly what the intent of that money was. The money was to go and save Bombardier, to save those jobs, but in the end we saw the exact opposite. We saw abuse of the money.

Now, going back to this bill, what we’re seeing here is the government asking us to trust them that they are going to get this right without an economic impact study. Clearly, that is something that we as the opposition need to do our job on and say: “This is too general. We need specifics. We need to ensure that we end up with the result you’re trying to move forward.” But you know what we end up with? Silence. We end up with a government that says: “You know what? Trust us. We’re going in the right direction.”

Now, you’re saying that Bombardier isn’t even an Alberta company. Well, fine. You know what? I’ll give you an example that is in Alberta, an example that this government is responsible for. What happened is that we ended up with a government that forced a 3 per cent growth mandate on our Alberta heritage trust fund. They said: you have to invest in Alberta. What they did was that AIMCo, who is responsible, invested in a company called Calfrac. This company unilaterally got loans from the government and equity agreements and then moved their operations, a large part of it, to the United States. That’s shameful, and that is something this government is responsible for. It did not do an economic impact study. They didn’t ask Calfrac: what are you going to do? Yes, we saved jobs. We saved American jobs. That is what we did. You know what? That is sad.

We’ve got Bombardier. It’s a great big number, billions of dollars saving them, and we’ve got a smaller one, and, yes – you know what? – several million dollars in the grand scheme of things doesn’t make or break Alberta. But I will tell you that it is an example of when ideology gets in the way of common sense. What we need to do is that we need to ensure that we always are respecting the dollars that Albertans are putting forward. That’s why, when we have a bill that comes forward that says, “Let’s put money into diversifying the economy,” we need to be very cautious. This government has shown a repeated lack of foresight when it comes to managing the money that our citizens have given them the responsibility for.

10:30

Now, when we see the fact that we’re running almost a \$9 billion deficit – and most of that is to keep the lights on – what we’re seeing, then, is the fact that we have a government that isn’t even trying to manage itself. It won’t even put forward a real, credible plan on balancing a budget, and that is troublesome.

You know what? As we continue to go down this road of issuing credits and loans and guarantees and all these wonderful, creative ways, what ends up happening is that when the money runs out, the system collapses. When the money runs out, the system collapses. This is what we see in green energy projects across the world. When governments stop subsidizing those green energy projects, we see the entire company collapse.

Now, I am convinced that Bombardier would collapse its entire Quebec operations the very minute the Quebec government and the federal government stop bailing them out. That clearly isn’t

working right for Quebec. That is clearly not working right for the Canadian people.

When you bring in a bill, Bill 1, the cornerstone of your entire mandate, it’s important that you do a little bit more. Now, we had my hon. colleague speak before me here about how the government brought forward a plan for jobs, their Bill 1, the last Bill 1. It was more or less a job description for the Economic Development and Trade minister. If he needs a description for his job – you know what? – power to him. But I will tell you that when it comes to the fact that that minister was told that one of the programs that he was going to be bringing forward was going to fail and he refused to do an economic impact study on that, it’s shameful. You know what? In the end, it failed, and it was because what happens is that it was offering businesses money to hire employees when they had no profits. That is a strange way of putting forward a program.

Now, thankfully, the government has collapsed that program. I will tell you that it was poorly thought out. This is my concern here. We had one cornerstone bill before that clearly was a mockery to this government. Now we’ve got the government putting out a bill that says that we need to diversify our economy, which, I will reiterate, every Albertan agrees with. We should be looking for diversification, but when we do it, do it responsibly.

Another quote, and this is from our Energy minister.

We’re taking bold steps to help the energy industry innovate and diversify. These measures are not one-off fixes – they’re part of our made-in-Alberta plan for a more diversified and resilient economy that’s built to last – one where no Albertan is left behind.

That’s from that press release that I just referenced.

Let’s talk about this even further. We’re starting programs that aren’t just going to be affecting this year; they potentially could affect generations. That’s troublesome. It is troublesome that we have not done economic impact studies and that we are maybe putting forward programs that could affect generations to come because of the decisions you’re making today. If you’re looking at buying equity in companies, if you’re looking at loan guarantees, if you’re looking at creative ways of getting money to diversify our economy, putting our entire province at risk is not the way to do that.

Now, the government continues to say that they’re all about diversifying the economy. What we see is a tax levied against Alberta. We see families paying, we see seniors paying, and we see the results for companies. A good example is Lafarge Canada in my constituency. Two ready-mix cement plants, one in Bonnyville and one in Cold Lake, have said that they’re no longer economically viable within my constituency. That’s 15 families now that have no job, no source of income.

Now, let’s point to what potentially created this, the storm that created this. What we’ve got are oil companies that are saying that you’re too unstable. We’ve heard our leader, the opposition leader, Calgary-Lougheed, say that companies are now doing risk assessments and showing that dictatorships are less risky than Alberta to invest in right now. That means that the people – the residents, the families – of Bonnyville-Cold Lake no longer see the incredible growth that we had before because of the unstable nature of this government. The fact that they have brought about a situation where companies feel that we’re so risky here that they’re unwilling to put capital here is very, very sad.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Yeah. I’ll just be very brief. I just wanted to correct one thing. Calfrac actually does have a presence in Calgary

and western Canada. They're on 4th Street and 8th Avenue. They're also in the United States, Russia, and Argentina or Brazil, I believe.

When the opposition speaks about the good old days and the Klein days with the oil prices, I would encourage them to look at where the royalties truly came from in those days. It wasn't as much from oil royalties as it was from natural gas, and that situation has changed.

The plan for EDAC: it was consulted on for over a year. The number of companies and people who were consulted is in there. It's available online. It's 167 pages. I guess my question to the hon. member or members is: have you actually read the plan? It gives how it's going to be done. We've accepted all the recommendations. We're acting on three of them right now. It's got who's on the committee, who was consulted, how long, what they heard, the plan for financing, and all that. Just read the plan, 167 pages. It's not that much, and it's all nicely outlined in 10 sections. Most of the answers are there for you.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you. It's always great to see the Minister of Energy up defending her government.

Now, let's talk about that advisory committee. They met four times. Wow.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Wrong.

Mr. Cyr: The minister is calling me out on that. Absolutely. It's in the report. Did you read it?

Yes, I actually did read the report. You know what? I can actually list the dates that they met: March 13 and 14, March 28 and 29, May 2, and June 12. That's in the report. What we've got here is a group that is highly partisan that met, and what we've got are real problems when it comes to the fact that this report does not seem to have a balanced approach.

Now, having said that, let's move on to Calfrac, which was her other concern. They moved the equipment from Alberta to the United States. Yes, they have a presence here still, but – you know what? – a box number is not a presence, in my opinion.

You know what? When we've got a government that is making decisions that, clearly, I question, clearly it shows that what we've got here is an ideology moving forward. You know, when we've got a committee that appears to have been formed when we actually have standing committees that are not being used in this House, that is completely insulting. We have the Resource Stewardship Committee, that should have been consulted on this specific piece of legislation before it went anywhere. But what we did was that we decided: why would we actually use MLAs for their function? Why would we actually bring all parties together to try to find a solution here?

10:40

What we found was a government that decided they already had a path. They already knew the direction that they were going to go. They decided to bring people together, and in the end they created a 167-page report which, I would say, has some good ideas. I am not discrediting the entire report. I am discrediting the fact that we could have done a better job of consulting. Now, they do have a large list of people that they did one-on-one meetings with. They have a large list of people that met, it appears, with government staff, not even with board members. I asked that question; there was no answer.

We have an advisory committee that doesn't seem to be functioning at its best capacity. We do have a Resource Stewardship Committee, that is tied up in an endless inability to be able to meet with stakeholders. My colleague from Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two

Hills has repeatedly brought up that they haven't had somebody come before their committee for two years.

Mr. Hanson: Three years.

Mr. Cyr: For three years no stakeholders.

What other purpose can we have other than to go out and reach out to our stakeholders? But what we end up with are decisions made beforehand. We have committees tied up in things that are probably important in the function that they're doing, but we are looking for more.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to Bill 1? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you for the opportunity to speak on this. It's interesting, for me anyway, when we talk about diversifying and growing support for our petrochemical sector. I think what we sometimes forget in our discussions: the province and the amazing folks that work here in this industry have already done that.

I mean, when I had the Energy portfolio, one of the most interesting things that I found out in meeting with people was the way that the industry is able to pull resources out of the ground, for lack of a better word. I remember having a meeting with some of the geoscientists and some of the geophysicists, and they were talking about how they were able to extract bubbles of oil and gas from underneath incredible structures under the ground. Like, they're able to extract tremendously difficult, wonderful resources from our ground that are not easy. It's not like you just drill straight in and pull it out. It is extremely difficult.

These folks are unbelievably innovative. That has come from a province that has had to be able to figure that out. They've had to be able to figure that out. I mean, if you think about SAGD or all of these other things that have come from this province and all of those amazing things, the technology and the work and the innovation that have come from the industry are really quite astonishing. I was really a novice in this industry and really wanted to learn. You know, you find out why people that are working in this industry love this industry so much and why we have a responsibility as legislators here to really be, like, the biggest cheerleaders of our industry that we can be.

I just want to be clear, though, that diversification has been going on for a long time, and some aspects of diversification have been going on just fine without government involvement, too. Now, I realize that other pieces have had to have government become involved in order to spur technology and all of those kinds of things. We've had some great experiences, but we've also had some really serious boondoggles in the past. That's what's always concerning about this kind of thing.

When we're talking about the original Bill 1 and diversification, why are we just talking about this now? The government has been talking about diversifying the energy sector from the moment they came in here like it had never been done before. Like I said, when I had the privilege of being in that portfolio, these were discussions that were happening then.

My questions mostly revolve around, I suppose, the discussion that all of these things look great on paper. They always do. Even when I was reading the bill initially, I thought: okay; there are some really, really good ideas in here. I think all of us can agree, like, that we can understand where the government is coming from. We get it. But if you're looking at the market and at making us a competitive jurisdiction, the only part that the government is focused on is subsidizing. They haven't focused on the fact that we

have lower productivity due to winter, that we have regulatory complexities that delay labour regulations.

There are so many things, Madam Speaker, that could have been done with respect to red tape. This has been an issue for us from the beginning. Diversification: you have to have many, many regulations to oversee what's going on because there are a lot of new products that are coming on, there are a lot of new innovations, all those kinds of things. I get that. But if we actually want to be able to get our products to places, you have to be able to look at the regulations to see if that's actually part of the reason why the industry hasn't been successful in the first place. You don't just throw money at things.

Now, I appreciate that the Minister of Energy has had these meetings. I don't doubt that for one moment. The Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake mentioned a few that are supposedly on the website and within this document, that is public. I don't dispute the fact that she's met with all of these other companies. I'm not saying that. But why, within this particular bill, are we not talking about regulatory issues and red tape? That's a major issue in this industry. We all know that.

Saskatchewan is managing to drill. They're in the ground, they're creating product, and it's not just because dollars are being thrown at them. It's because the regulatory burden is completely different there. It's two years less to get into the ground there than it is in this province. Madam Speaker, that's a huge differentiation in the ability for an organization to be able to get their product to market.

The other interesting thing, too, that I want to talk a little bit about is the carbon tax with respect to this. As I understand it, you know, because these are large emitters, they will not be involved in paying the carbon tax because they're already more efficient. Maybe the minister can correct me if I'm wrong about that. The specified gas emitters already function higher, which is why large corporations are able to stand up and go, "Yay; carbon tax," because they don't have to pay it, just regular, everyday Albertans have to. But what about transportation of these products, Madam Speaker? What about that? Are we transporting it through – well, some of it will probably go through a pipeline if we're lucky enough to get that built, but what about truck transportation, train transportation? Those aren't exempt from the carbon tax, I don't think.

On one hand, the government is going to give over hundreds of thousands of dollars, hundreds of millions of dollars, actually, to incentivize an industry, but then that industry is going to have to charge a carbon tax to the people at the other end that are supposedly buying these products, which makes them less able to compete. I understand when I read this bill that that was the whole point of this.

We were the most competitive jurisdiction, and then other jurisdictions were putting in incentives that eroded our ability to be competitive. So if I was to understand this correctly, Madam Speaker, the incentives that were put in by the government were to help to stimulate this industry, to be able to get them started, to get them going. But at the same time, on the other side, all of the other pieces of this: running the facilities, the transportation, and everything else that a carbon tax is on, which is everything. Where's the cost-benefit analysis showing us how that all lays out? First of all, this is being paid for by tax dollars, and then on top of that, we have a carbon tax that we're paying into this as well to subsidize the costs that are going to come from the regular, everyday operations of these particular groups. Where is that information?

You know, this is a huge amount of intervention. The whole point of this, as I understand it, is that the government wants to create diversification. If the market is there – and as we can see, the market seems to be available – why not look at making us the most competitive? There are places where taxes could be looked at to

give incentive to these companies. I mean, on paper it looks great. It looks like PDP 1, based on their royalties and based on what would come back to Albertans within, I think – what is it? – a three-year period or something like that that we were looking at: the numbers look like they would add up.

10:50

But guess what, Madam Speaker? There's no cost-benefit analysis to hedge that, to give Albertans any sense of security that that will actually work out so that we can actually look at those numbers and see that it's been done in the past and it hasn't worked. Other governments have failed with this. It would be really, really good for this government to take a look at the failed policies of other governments or where this has worked. Policy matters. That's the thing. You know, we look at the legislation and the language and the attitude of a government that was so anti-resource for such a long time, so negative towards resources for such a long time, and now the government has to pass legislation to counter that. What if the government had from the very, very beginning promoted that diversity, looked at where the taxes could have been changed?

How much do each of these jobs actually cost? I mean, it's wonderful. Job creators are fantastic. That's what all of us want. But each of those jobs is now being supported by the taxpayer, and we don't even know what the cost-benefit analysis of that is for Albertans. What are they going to see back from this? I mean, I hope we see something.

It seems to me that this level of diversification, where we're talking about, as I understand it – and the minister can correct me if I'm wrong. But we're looking at, you know, the feedstock of propane, extending it to methane and ethane as well and using those feedstocks to be able to produce products that are needed elsewhere. Well, we're kind of landlocked here, Madam Speaker. It's not like we have a port that we can just use. We actually have to transport these items somewhere. So how are we getting it there? Trucks, trains, cars, some form of transportation that is pollution intensive. That would be my best guess.

I mean, the Kinder Morgan as it stands right now does push diesel to B.C., but aside from that, all of these other products, as I understand it, are going to have to use transportation to get there. Why is that not part of the discussion as to the overall cost of this, not only the physical cost of what it's costing the taxpayer but the environmental cost, the environmental footprint? That has to be part of the overall cost of this as I understand it. I mean, it is this government that agreed to upstream emissions being put on pipelines. They certainly didn't fight against it with the federal government. It's interesting, isn't it?

Why not look at repealing some of the harmful policies? Why not repeal the carbon tax? Repealing the carbon tax would automatically change the way that we are able to compete. Automatically. Every other jurisdiction that is oil intensive – Australia, France, United States – has repealed those because they don't work. Look at a different way, especially because these products are going to be using pollution-intensive mechanisms to get their product to market. There's no way to change that footprint, Madam Speaker, at least not at this point in time.

Then I'm not even clear about the legislation that is used to carry out this agenda. There's a ton of – I mean, the Minister of Energy has extraordinary powers on many, many, many, many levels. So when that lack of transparency is there – like, we're looking at the fact that we don't understand the cost benefit. We don't know how much this is going to cost Albertans down the line. It could end up being a really great project, but if it's a great project and it's everything that the government says that it's going to be, where's the analysis for those of us who are looking at this and going: hmm?

I mean, it's our job to give the government an opportunity to fix any of the mistakes that might be in there. Hopefully, this is helpful.

I just have to say this again. There is nothing – nothing – in this bill to address the regulatory roadblocks, Madam Speaker. This is one of the major issues. I mean, we've been talking about this forever. We have competition in other jurisdictions that are getting there faster than we can. I mean, the government is saying this, too. These are jobs that are on the line. Even to keep a base of people to work here when they can just cross the border to Saskatchewan or go to the United States – I mean, money is mobile. It certainly is, and the energy industry realizes that. To tell you the truth, I mean, you can throw as much money as you want at these projects, but at the end of the day, the company is only going to stay as long as they can see that there is profit for them and that they're able to continue on and that the jurisdiction they're working in is actually working along with them, not against them. The industry here certainly has not seen that.

Now that the government is finally jumping onboard, it's a little too late. Like I said, I believe that policy matters. We need a cost benefit, an economic plan, an understanding of how this is going to work out.

The other thing, too, is that the government has in here some ideas about guarantees – I'm not sure; maybe the minister can answer that for me – in the feedstock infrastructure program. She talks about industry constructing more straddle plants needed to capture more natural gas liquids required to feed the petrochemical industry in Alberta; namely, ethane, propane, methane. Evidently, there are more details coming on that. Can she answer what that actually means? Like, is the government not only going to help out with the process of creating plants to create these products but also with the capture of those products as well? So we're in at all ends of this.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I actually had the honour to work with the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View when she was the Energy critic and I was the economic development critic. She took a lot of interest in that file, meeting with so many stakeholders in and around Calgary. We went to those meetings together. I really appreciate her passion on this file. She's raised many good points on this Bill 1.

I know Chestermere has a similar demographic to my constituency of Calgary-Foothills. Many of the people work in the oil and gas sector in downtown Calgary, travelling every day from Chestermere. How do they feel about the overall economic environment? What do you hear from your constituents about the job opportunities and whether they're still gainfully employed? Are they able to find work in Calgary? Can you share your thoughts on that, please?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you for the thoughtful question. I am actually really thrilled to be able to talk about this. There are some people that are doing okay. I mean, part of it, too, is that because so many people have left the industry, there are jobs for those that have been able to stay around and been able to pick up some of those jobs. We have some people that are okay and are successful, but that's also because they've divested a lot of their interest to the United States. A lot of their capital, that was once invested here in drilling – and there's a ton of drilling out in Chestermere and around that area. A lot of those are on hold right

now. They've taken their finances out of those, and they've put them into other countries, into Saskatchewan. So some of those folks are doing okay.

But weekly the hardest – and I don't think it's just this particular timing right now. I mean, there are ups and downs all the time, but particularly right now, because of the added burdens, there are just so many things. We have, you know, the economy, that is in rough shape. The government keeps saying that we're coming out of this recession. My goodness, I really, really hope that they are correct. The folks in Chestermere-Rocky View aren't seeing a lot of that right now. We have that. We have the carbon tax. We have small businesses that are impacted by minimum wage increases.

11:00

On top of that, we have a government that is bringing in bills at the last minute to try and create job opportunities. I'm sure that they will, but the thing that we all don't understand as taxpayers and ratepayers is: why are we consistently being put on the hook for something when the government is coming literally late to the game to bring this idea forward?

Then, on top of that, we have no changes in the regulatory burden. Let's say that somebody has some capital and wants to get involved in this; they can't. They're looking at, like, a four-year date out, Madam Speaker, if they're lucky enough to be able to put their cash there. Quite frankly, as an investor there's no way that I would look at that. I would absolutely be looking to other jurisdictions. I'd have to in order to be able to maintain my investments where I want to keep them, and I would certainly direct my friends, too. I'd love to be able to invest here, but I don't know how to do that when there's this much regulatory burden.

I just think that most of what we hear in ours over and over and over again is to please repeal the carbon tax. If that was able to happen, that competitive nature and the competitive ability for the province to be able to function would certainly increase. We've seen it in other jurisdictions. We've seen it in the United States, we've seen it in France, and we've seen it in Australia, all of these places. The government will keep trying to reinforce that somehow this helps the environment, but it doesn't. There are so many other ways that you can reinforce good behaviour for the environment.

On top of that, the government has a responsibility to really, really show Canadians, especially our friends out east – or especially their friends out east – and the world what an amazing, responsible development jurisdiction we are. What I find interesting is that ...

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to Bill 1? The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: I thought that you'd already spoken to this bill, hon. member.

Mrs. Pitt: Are you sure?

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Mrs. Pitt: Can I move to adjourn debate?

The Deputy Speaker: No.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

Mr. Gill: Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I move to adjourn debate on this bill, please.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 2 Growth and Diversification Act

[Adjourned debate May 1: Mr. Mason]

The Deputy Speaker: Any members wishing to speak to Bill 2? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to go to the throne speech and see a lot of the direction that the government is taking when it is putting forward a piece of legislation. Now, in the throne speech, if you go to page 6:

The first bill will focus on diversification within the energy sector. As we work to diversify the markets our energy resources can access via pipeline, we will also do more to add value to our resources right here at home. The second bill will focus on diversification across our economy. The third bill will focus on laying the groundwork for new renewable energy jobs and an electricity system with more stable prices.

That is underneath the heading *Diversifying Our Economy*. We've got Bill 1, which is on diversification, then we've got Bill 2, which is on diversification, and we've got Bill 3, which is on diversification. So it seems to follow the premise that the government has put forward.

Now, again, when we've got a government that is clearly looking at diversifying the economy, it is important that they understand that the opposition agrees that diversification is important. We do need to find ways to diversify because I don't believe that anybody likes to be on the oil roller coaster, but, again, we need to do it responsibly. We need economic impact studies. When we show that the government has repeatedly made ideological decisions over decisions that are clear and concise, when it comes to results, we get failure.

Now, to go back to the throne speech and what we've got here, I'd like to see what the government is trying to accomplish with Bill 2. The heading is *Diversifying through Education, Training, and Business Development*. What we've got here is that the government is saying that they want to train the workforce, and what they're looking to do is develop new diversified parts of Alberta that they can work in. Now, to continue quoting this:

While your government works to diversify our traditional strengths, we will also diversify by helping other sectors of our economy grow. The second bill your government will table before this Legislature will be the Growth and Diversification Act.

We do have that act before us.

This act will expand existing tax credits, introduce new tax credits, place major resources behind education and training, and help make postsecondary education more affordable.

Now, over the last weekend we had the honour of holding our founding meeting of the United Conservative Party, and we had a speaker, the past Premier of Saskatchewan, Mr. Brad Wall. He is a remarkable man who did remarkable things with that province. You know what? I had never seen a speech given by Mr. Wall, but I will tell you that no matter what party you're with – you probably may not agree with his speech if you are on the socialist side – it is an entertaining speech, and it is one that is very informative.

To get back to the point, one of his comments was that Alberta needs to thank Saskatchewan. I'm, like: well, okay; what is it that we need to thank them for? One of his points was that they helped to build Alberta, and I think there's some truth in that. I truly believe that what happened was that Saskatchewan was training their students, and those students were coming to Alberta and growing our economy. So when we've got Saskatchewan saying that they helped to build us, the question is: now that we're putting this forward – and let's say that these tax credits don't diversify the

economy the way the government is hoping because they didn't do an economic impact study – are we going to be training 3,000 new Albertans to work outside of Alberta? I don't believe that's an unreasonable question, because in the end what we need to be looking at is the best value for taxpayer money.

In this case what we see is the government saying that they're going to diversify the economy. This is important here.

We will extend the capital investment and Alberta investor tax credits to help businesses grow and expand.

Now, what happens here is that these tax credits are normally applied against profits. Right now a lot of our businesses are having a hard time attaining a profitable balance sheet or income statement.

11:10

What happens here is that until they see a stable government come in, which means a government that is less likely to implement taxes every single – well, it seems like every month we've got some new tax. But what we've got here is a government that made it so hard for businesses to actually run here, let alone start here, that that's problematic. So now what we end up having to do is to create subsidies for them to survive, subsidies to grow. This is something new for Alberta. This is something that we have never had to do before because of the tax environment that we had before. What happens is that the more you take out of these corporations, the less likely they're going to put their capital here in Alberta. It seems that when this government moves, every time they decide to, it is our corporations, our business communities, our small businesses that seem to take the right hook.

Here we've got a bill that is using tax credits, more or less, on the justification of expanding the training of students within Alberta. It is admirable that we are trying to diversify, something that I mentioned right off the bat in my speech. I said that that is something that I think we should all be trying to attain, which is: let's try to get off this roller coaster.

Going back, why is it that we see no economic impact study? Can they show us that this is going to work? Do we have anything to show success? I would say that we will end up creating a whole lot of unemployed youth in Alberta. That is unfortunate. I believe – and somebody can correct me if I'm wrong – we're sitting at about 45 per cent unemployment for our youth right now. Is it that high? I thought that I heard that.

You know what? If we start to continue going down this road, we're not going to see the youth staying in our province, which is getting back to my main point that Saskatchewan, Ontario, B.C. are going to be thanking us for these trained youth.

Apparently, that was completely false, and I am going to clarify. There are 43,000, which is where I got that number from, unemployed youth, which is 13 per cent. So I apologize. I wasn't meaning to bring misinformation to the House. But we still have a very large youth population that is unemployed. So if we don't create these jobs, like the government is hoping, that is clearly problematic.

Moving on:

We will also support [jobs] in digital industries with a new digital industries tax credit.

So they're saying that they're trying to move into new industries. Now, it's my understanding that when it comes to a lot of these industries, they are highly subsidized. If that is the case, is it the intent of the government to start massively subsidizing it beyond the tax credits that they're already offering in order to attract them here? That is a question that I have.

This act will also create thousands of new spaces in our postsecondary institutions dedicated to technology, an investment that will enable more Albertans to get the education and training they need to get good jobs in this growing sector.

We're going to be training Albertans in a sector that needs to be developed en masse. If that tax credit doesn't work, these Albertans will have no choice but to move out of Alberta because of how specialized this training is. That is problematic.

At the same time we will continue to make postsecondary education costs here more competitive with costs elsewhere. The tuition freeze will be continued, saving students up to \$1,500 on a four-year degree. To keep education affordable and to protect the gains we have made on behalf of students and families, any future tuition increase will be capped by law.

Now, we have heard from our universities that they adamantly disagree with the cap. You can see why. They need to be able to move according to what their needs are.

Now, as a past student I can tell you that I lived on that shoestring budget, like a lot of people that went through university. When it comes to every dollar that is in your pocket, that actually matters. I'll tell you that \$1,500 over four years doesn't sound like much. You're looking at – what? – about \$375 a year. That doesn't sound like a lot of money, but to me that was a large amount of money. That was an incredible amount of money. You start looking at the fact that I was eating a great big thing of spaghetti. That thing would last me for a week. It sure wasn't good at the end of the week, but – you know what? – you made it work. Your suppers, lunches, and breakfasts really depended on how much money was in your pocket, on how much you could budget.

Now, I have to say that when we start looking at this, it's very attractive to these youth that are looking to get out into the job market. They're saying: I need the money in my pocket. Fair enough. But if you end up getting out of school with no job waiting for you, that also is problematic. We always had a system where when youth got out of school, no matter what they were looking to do, there was a job waiting for them in Alberta. That has changed. That has dynamically changed.

We've got a system right now that more or less has been attacking our business community. A lot of these business leaders are saying: why would I keep capital here in Alberta? It's not being malicious. This is not businesses saying: I don't want to support Alberta. In the end, what happens is that a successful small-business community, a successful business community, means jobs. It is plain and simple. As we continue to levy more and more taxes against them, you're going to find that those jobs are not there for our students, which gets me back to Bill 2.

You're looking to diversify the economy. Why would anybody want to when it's too unstable? As we continue to put in more and more restrictive labour laws, as we continue to put in more and more red tape, as we continue to levy more and more taxes on them provincially, municipally, and federally, they're not going to see us as a jurisdiction that they want to place their business in. I can tell you that when it comes to business, we all need to be wary whenever we start attacking them.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? Calgary-Greenway.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for giving me the opportunity, and thank you to the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake. The hon. member was speaking on Bill 2, Growth and Diversification Act. I understand that the intent of the government is to look for another way to demonstrate this government's commitment to diversify the economy. Again, this bill creates tech spaces in postsecondary institutions, creates a framework to invest in new scholarships and programs in tech, launches an interactive digital media tax credit, continues the Alberta investor tax credit and the capital investment tax credit, and installs the Minister of

Transportation as a point person for the unmanned aerial systems sector.

11:20

The Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake, you know, spoke at length. I know it's unclear at this time, according to my understanding, if the companies who have received tax credits during the first incarnation of the program were actually in need of the tax credit support. Some would likely have been able to access investment capital through the traditional channel. I would ask the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake if he can further comment on that and share his experience and knowledge with us. Like, how does this work with the companies? Who can benefit from this program?

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. My colleague brings up some very important parts here. When we start picking winners and losers, the entire industry becomes the loser. That's the problem here. Let's say that there are, for argument's sake, 30 different businesses within that industry. We pick three of them, saying: you are going to get these credits. The other 27 suddenly are not competitive with those three different businesses. Clearly, that is a system that we need to be very cautious of. Now, that's where, if you were to do a tax credit, you would do it to an entire industry. In that way, they're all competing at the same level. But that is not what we have seen traditionally when it comes to this government.

Now, I would like to finish off with the throne speech, though, in this section.

To make education more accessible and affordable in northwest and central Alberta, colleges in Grande Prairie and Red Deer will begin their path to becoming degree-granting institutions.

They're acknowledging that we've got parts of Alberta – and I would argue that northeastern Alberta, actually, should have been highlighted. Actually, to be honest with you, northern Alberta should have been highlighted.

Now, what we've got here is a government that is more or less, it appears, giving up on the oil sector, giving up on the forestry sector, and they're saying that we need to retrain you for a different occupation. That is what it seems like. In the end, we're not proud of our energy industry when it comes to the fact that we continue to levy unbearable, incredibly insulting restrictions on this industry. We need to make sure that we're competitive with neighbouring jurisdictions, we need to make sure that we're competitive for the world, and we need to make sure that our oil gets to markets.

I know that the government is working very hard to get the Kinder Morgan pipeline, and it is important that they continue their advocacy. I support them and I hope they're successful in that because it does mean jobs for Bonnyville-Cold Lake. When they say that we're naysayers on the opposition side, that is categorically untrue. My constituency depends on that pipeline as much as this NDP government. That is just a fact.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you. It's a pleasure to rise this morning and speak to Bill 2, the Growth and Diversification Act. I'd just like to thank my colleague from Bonnyville-Cold Lake for some of his remarks. I think that they are certainly well and truly on point.

As I spoke earlier today about Bill 1, Madam Speaker, you'll know that Bill 1 and Bill 2 certainly have some similarities with respect to providing tax credits and the like to certain sectors. I'd

just like to highlight or reaffirm some of the comments from the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake with respect to some of the concerns around tax credits.

In particular, Bill 2 is a first-come, first-served tax credit, similar to the AITC credit that we saw in the past. About 5 per cent of that credit wasn't used in the last round of similar programming, so it begs the question: do we need another one if it wasn't fully used prior? Given that it is a first-come, first-served credit, you do run the risk of making one business more competitive than the other.

I think the highlight he used was that if there are 30 businesses and three of them get the credit and 27 don't, then you've essentially chosen winners over losers, whether or not it was just on a first-come, first-served basis or was hand-picked by the government. I know that they like to provide hand-picked handouts, certainly, to some of their close friends and allies with respect to funding from the carbon tax. In this case, when these things happen, you make one business more competitive than another, and the free market has significantly more difficulty adapting to these sorts of conditions. Any time you have the government engaging in the free market in a way that creates an unfair environment, that always will have negative impacts on that market.

You know, the role of the government should be essentially – I know that this side of the House and that side of the House have a very different view on this – getting out of the way of the job creators, getting out of the way of the market, getting out of the way of creating undue regulation whereas on that side of the House they want to do the opposite. They want to meddle in the market. They want to meddle in so many different – I mean, the carbon tax is a perfect example of this exact problem.

This government implemented the single largest tax increase in Alberta's history, that essentially removes \$3 billion from the economy so that it can be redistributed by the government. This isn't equitable, it's not reasonable, and it doesn't create an environment of competition both here in the province as well as across North America. That's one of the big, big, big problems with the carbon tax, that it continues to put Albertans at a competitive disadvantage to our single largest competitors, whether it's the province of Saskatchewan, British Columbia, Manitoba, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota. While British Columbia does have a carbon tax, it's certainly structured significantly differently than ours. In North Dakota, South Dakota, all of the northern states, and, in fact, clear around the world it's one of the reasons why we see many jurisdictions moving away from carbon taxes, because they don't have the same net positive effects both on the economy as well as on the environment.

We've heard at length from some of the government's very own experts talking about what the price of carbon actually needs to be to have the positive impacts that they say that their carbon tax is going to have with respect to actually reducing emissions. Some say \$200 a tonne, some say \$300 a tonne, but already at the current price it has major negative impacts on Albertans, in particular on low-income Albertans. In the future, as the government has now made a commitment to not having rebates and to rolling back the rebates, with all of the money moving to general revenue, what we see is a tax is a tax is a tax under the guise of having a positive environmental impact.

11:30

These are the fundamental differences between this side of the House and that side of the House. They believe that the government knows better than everybody else, and we believe that everybody else knows better than the government. We need to do things to eliminate government intrusion in the marketplace, we need to do things that eliminate government intrusion in people's lives, but we

currently have a government that wants to do the exact opposite of that.

Bill 2 is an example of just that. Bill 2 is an example of where some businesses will receive a benefit and others won't. It's an example of the government engaging in the marketplace that is – and I will submit that it may be helpful, but the opposite of that can also be true. It may not be helpful and, in fact, may be damaging.

That's one of the reasons why I would like to move an amendment. I will provide the page the copies, and I will wait for your direction.

The Deputy Speaker: Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Notice of amendment. I move that the motion for second reading of Bill 2, Growth and Diversification Act, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 2, Growth and Diversification Act, be not now read a second time because the Assembly is of the view that the government should pursue other measures to reduce the cost of doing business in the province, including the introduction of legislation to eliminate the carbon levy, which, if implemented, would make the measures proposed in the bill unnecessary.

You know, Madam Speaker, before us we have a very reasoned amendment. I think the case has been made very clearly this morning that the reason that we're here needing to implement these boutique tax credits, these programs of government intervention, in many respects lies at the feet of the fact that the government has such a disastrous record on the economy and on taxes. I think the carbon tax is a perfect example of that.

Now, I recognize – and this may be one of the very few times that you'll ever hear me say the words "carbon levy." I think I've got something in my throat here. The reality is that if the government was to actually take the time and introduce legislation to eliminate the carbon whatever you call it, the province would be much better off. As such, I am of the belief and I'm certain that many members on this side of the House are also of the belief that eliminating the carbon tax would in fact have the same sorts of impacts or better.

In fact, I spoke earlier in the House about an economic impact assessment, and I would be more than happy to have the government do one on this very task. Unfortunately, I as the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills didn't have the available resources to do a full, costed economic impact assessment, but I can assure you that the government has the ability to do so.

I also know that the outstanding people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, certainly the thousands that I have spoken with – I'll acknowledge that I haven't spoken to every single member of the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills – have spoken at length about their concerns about the cost of everything being increased by this government and, as such, would also agree with me that eliminating this tax, that has negative impacts all across the economy, would in fact have better results than simply introducing patchwork quilt type legislation that we see in the form of Bill 1 and Bill 2.

You know, this government has such a terrible record when it comes to increasing the costs to business and, as such, a negative impact on the economy, a negative impact on small-business owners, a negative impact on employees. I know many businesses in the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills that, because of a lot of the regulatory burden – the increase in costs, the minimum wage, the change in the labour legislation – no longer exist.

I think it's a very reasonable amendment. I think that the government would be well served. I can tell you that the popularity

of the NDP would increase by significant, significant orders of magnitude in Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills if you eliminated the carbon tax. Just to offer you a small piece of free political advice, if you're looking to make any inroads in the constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, the number one thing you could do is to pass this amendment and take steps to eliminate the carbon tax because they would actually believe that you're finally listening to the people.

But I think the amendment is a good one, particularly because it speaks about: "pursue other measures to reduce the cost of doing business in the province." It's not just specific to eliminating the carbon tax, although that is clearly the best path forward for everyone, but it also encourages the government to pursue other measures to reduce the costs that our small businesses and our economy are facing because of this province – because virtually the only thing that we've seen from this government is an increase in costs, with the one small exception of a small reduction in the small-business tax rate, which, if you're following along at home, was actually a suggestion that the Official Opposition had made, that was initially rejected.

Mr. Cyr: Actually, they did it, but it was 3 per cent.

Mr. Cooper: Yeah. It was initially rejected, and then in the following session the government realized that this was a good idea and that, in fact, it would be a positive for small-business owners, so then it was implemented. [Mr. Cooper's speaking time expired] I sense there's a pattern.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Mr. Cyr: You know, I would like to thank the member from the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. You know what? I have to say that when you start looking at a reasoned amendment, that is the equivalency of saying: let's shut this bill down. Here's the reason why. When you look at this bill and you hear why the member feels that this is important, you start to see that we really need to review the direction we're going. Going back, we have several committees that could be tasked to come up with better ways of diversifying our economy.

11:40

Now to go back to his point, let's talk about the Calgary Chamber of commerce: "73% of businesses surveyed reported that their costs will increase due to the carbon [tax]." This is the Calgary Chamber report, December 14, 2017. This is not something that was long ago or outdated.

Let's read the reasoned amendment again.

Bill 2, Growth and Diversification Act, be not now read a second time because the Assembly is of the view that the government should pursue other measures to reduce the cost of doing business in the province, including the introduction of legislation to eliminate the carbon levy, which, if implemented, [will] make the measures proposed in the bill unnecessary.

What it's saying is that we need to start taking the burden off the business community. When you start looking at any of the chambers across Alberta – I can't speak for them all, but I will say that when it comes to the chambers, many of them will agree that the carbon tax is a burden on their business.

Now, there are a few other quotes. The Canadian Taxpayers Federation: 55 per cent of Albertans received no rebate cheque, or it was less than they paid in carbon taxes.

Now, here's the thing. This is not just harming our business community; it is also harming the Albertan who spends money at

these businesses. It reduces the amount of disposable income. Some of it is not disposable income; some of it is plainly for necessities. So as we start seeing the fact that these individuals or these Albertans, these families in Alberta have less money to spend, the businesses are also feeling the pressure on themselves. They have less revenue coming into these businesses, and they also have a collapse in the fact that they're no longer being profitable.

Now, to the member I have to say that this amendment should be moved forward. You started talking about your constituency and the fact that what we see here is a business community that has gone from shock to, I guess, a standstill, and now they're declining. Do you see that this is going to change in the immediate future?

Mr. Cooper: I mean, certainly, it's not going to change in the immediate future. You know, one thing that could help change it, of course, is repealing the carbon tax. We would see significant economic growth, and we would become again equally as competitive as our neighbours, lots of steps forward that would be very positive for Alberta. But the thing that's important about this is that it's not just business; it's also Albertans. This government is taking \$3 billion out of the economy in the form of the carbon tax, and that is hurting families as well.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hawkwood.

Connolly: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's truly a pleasure to rise and speak to the amendment. As we all know, Alberta's economic future is looking up, and it has been gaining speed over the past year, I'd say. But there's more work to be done in what we've gained and sustained and to continue on a path of economic diversification. Like I said, we've made great progress. We've introduced programs to stimulate growth across sectors, to support job creation, and we've opened doors to small business and new entrepreneurs to start and expand. We have to keep this recovery going for the long term and not return to the same boom-and-bust policies that put the security of Albertans at risk. That's what this bill supports. It supports businesses in Alberta to continue to grow, to continue to hire, to make sure that we're still on that trajectory.

I just want to remind everyone what this bill does. It's starting with the Alberta investor tax credit. The AITC encourages investors to provide entrepreneurs across sectors with greater access to the capital they need to innovate and expand by offering a 30 per cent tax credit for investments in small Alberta businesses. Bill 2 proposes to add a diversity and inclusion component to the AITC program for those investors who invest directly into companies where the majority of the board of directors as well as the CEO are members of an underrepresented group. Now, our government is encouraging companies to do more to ensure that inclusivity and diversity are part of their business models. That's part of this bill and why I don't understand why the opposition thinks that this isn't needed and that we should just get rid of some other issue instead of actually putting the details in this bill into power.

Now, businesses asked us for these things, have asked us to help them grow through tax credits like the capital investment tax credit, like the AITC; however, it seems the opposition is constantly attacking business. They don't want to help these businesses grow. They don't want to help these businesses with the tax credit that they've asked for. They've asked for these tax credits for decades, Madam Speaker – for decades – and the opposition, when they were in power, did nothing to help them in this respect. So I'm proud to be part of a government that's actually putting these measures into motion.

To remind everyone what the capital investment tax credit does, as with the AITC, the CITC has supported new jobs by fostering increased economic activity through the labour required to make these new investments in capital assets and through the positive impacts in related industries once these investments are up and running and turning a profit. The CITC offers Alberta companies a 10 per cent nonrefundable tax credit up to \$5 million, encouraging timely capital investments that offer opportunities for economic growth.

Now, this program has already seen huge success, with 35 companies from across the province conditionally approved for a total of \$62 million in credits through the first and second round of the CITC. I just don't understand why the opposition doesn't think this is a good idea, when businesses are using this to grow, to hire, and to expand.

The opposition seems to want to put the brakes on this right when the economy is growing. We're the fastest growing economy in this country, and the opposition just wants to put the brakes on, saying: "No. We need to stop now. We need to lower taxes for higher industry and get rid of these things through cuts." Cuts, cuts, cuts. That's all the opposition has. They don't want to help these businesses through tax incentives. They just want to cut taxes. That's how we got the boom-and-bust cycle that we've been living in for the past few decades, and that's why we have such large infrastructure deficits.

Now, just to remind the opposition, I just want to quote a few people who are very much in favour of this. Kevin Barrett, the executive director of studio operations at Serious Labs Inc., has said:

For Serious Labs, a groundbreaking virtual reality training company based in Edmonton, the new IDMTC would help ease the strain of our 100 per cent year-over-year staff growth rate. The demand for our industrial [VR] simulators is enormous, and we require more and more highly qualified and experienced developers to design and build them. Government assistance in helping us expand and retain our talent pool is greatly appreciated.

Once again, that's Kevin Barrett, the executive director of studio operations at Serious Labs.

11:50

From Heather Sworin, HR manager of CodeHatch Corp.:

We're happy to see the Alberta government taking a competitive approach to growing Alberta's video game development industry by coming alongside tax credit programs that have long been in place in other Canadian provinces. Edmonton is already on the development map, but it would be great to see that reputation grow much further, and to see the industry grow all over Alberta. We're excited to see how this program will help local studios to expand, both in size and ambition, as we bring our games to a global, highly competitive market.

Since the video game market is worldwide, the potential for growth is very high – we think the government will see a good return on its investment in Alberta video game developers through this tax credit program.

I just want to reiterate that I just don't understand. Maybe the opposition can explain to me why they don't think that these tax credits and this – sorry; I'm going to get the exact wording – interactive digital media tax credit are a good idea. They seem to want to be hurting businesses that have been asking us, once again, for decades to put these tax credits in place. The opposition continuously wants to put the brakes on the economy of Alberta. They want to stop business from growing in Alberta. They just want to go back to the old ideas that they've been on.

They think it's a laughing matter. I can't believe they're laughing. The Member for Calgary-Greenway is continuously laughing. Why is he laughing, Madam Speaker? He just thinks that growth in the economy is a laughing matter. It's not a laughing matter, sir. I don't know if you noticed from last time, but the Member for Calgary-Greenway was continuously talking when other people were talking in this Chamber. I'm sick and tired of his attitude to these businesses, who are just trying to grow.

They just want a little support from their government, and that side of the House could never give it to them. They just helped the oil and gas companies, which are beneficial for Alberta. We do have a lot in my riding. I would say that probably in every riding in Alberta we have people who are employed in the oil and gas sector, but that's not the only industry we can concentrate on. We have to help other sectors of the economy grow. We have to help them through tax incentives and tax credits like we're doing here.

That's why we are not going to accept this amendment, because it's putting the brakes on the economy. It's stopping business from continuing to grow. It's going to hurt these businesses that need these tax credits to continue to grow. That's why we will not be supporting this amendment; at least, I won't be. I would suggest to all members of this Chamber to not support this amendment.

The Deputy Speaker: Under Standing Order 29(2)(a) *Chestermere-Rocky View*.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you for the passionate discussion. It's very nice to see the member stand up and discuss this, and I would love the opportunity to make a few remarks if that's okay and to potentially ask a question here.

I just wanted to mention that I've been living in my riding of *Chestermere-Rocky View* for 40 years. I've had, well, at least seven businesses over the course of that, three of which I still have with my husband, so I am this person. I am a small-business person. I represent an entire body of people who are small business in this province, and I can tell you – the member was mentioning something about the last 10 years. I'm part of the Chambers of Commerce. You know, the one thing that small businesses want more than anything is for the government to get out of the way so that they can be very, very, extremely positive in their ability to do their business.

Part of what small businesses actually talk about – I don't know. Maybe the member has some experience in small business and would like to share that back with me afterwards. That would be great. It would be a wonderful discussion. Having been a person who's been involved in small business since – I think I was probably 21 when I started my first business. I'm a musician by trade, so I started a small music school. My entire life – and I can only speak anecdotally for myself – has been about building that business, building relationships, being successful in that.

Anybody in the world who's a musician knows that it's not an easy job. The pay is not great, and you usually have to have four or five jobs to make it work out. But as a small-business person, as an entrepreneur, that is the energy, the driving force, Madam Speaker, behind the fabric of the people who have built this economy on small business long, long, long before this government was ever in power.

In fact, this jurisdiction of Alberta has brought more small business to the forefront than pretty much anywhere else in Canada. Do you want to know why? They had the ability to do that because people came here with big dreams. They came here with everything they had from different countries. They've immigrated. They've come from all over the place.

My father is a perfect example of a person who came to this country in 1963 with a few bucks in his pocket and big dreams. He absorbed the Canadian way of life, grew a business, and raised a family. My father-in-law, who came from extreme poverty in India, Madam Speaker, and was able to come here because his brother was here, raised a family of four, pulling logs at the mill for 32 years, raising his family, not asking for anything other than the fact that he could have this job and do this here and raise his family.

You know, the Member for Calgary-Hawkwood said that all we want to do is cut, cut, cut. Well, cutting taxes is actually a tax advantage, Madam Speaker. If you look at what the carbon tax is versus what these tax incentives were, the reason why we brought in this amendment was because cutting the carbon tax would significantly impact those of us who actually have small businesses, who are impacted daily in every single part of those businesses that we run. It impacts our ability to hire people, along with minimum wage increases. It impacts our ability to do our business in a way that we've done it before. It impacts absolutely every aspect of our lives.

I can speak for myself, Madam Speaker. My family are huge volunteers. We are huge volunteers. Because of our entrepreneurial spirit, our ability to be able to contribute back to our communities is because of the ability that we had to be in this province, not because the government put in some tax incentive. It's because the government gave us the best jurisdiction in the world to be able to build those businesses. People who build businesses will give back. Albertans give back more per capita than anywhere else in the world. We are a generous, giving, magnificent group of people.

Helping businesses get started is actually government being able to give an economic environment to be able to do that. It's an environment in which people will come and flock to this province because . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Oh, I get to speak again. I'm sure you're so excited. [interjection] I know. I'll just keep going.

I have to say – and I've said this before, Madam Speaker – that policy is the most important thing that happens in a government. You know, all governments have failed, and all governments have been successful. There are none of us who have the ability to stand

up here and say that one way was perfect or anything like that. I couldn't agree more. I mean, we all have different reasons as to how we got involved in politics. There are a lot of different reasons for why we're here.

As a small-business person there were a lot of reasons for me to get involved. Largely in part, though, for me, it was making sure that we're not mortgaging our children's future. I'm certainly not here for me. A lot of the things that we will put in now won't impact specifically my business or the things that I do at this point, Madam Speaker, but it'll impact my children and certainly my grandchildren and those that I may never see. It's something where we have to be able to look at ourselves every single day and know that the policies that we put in place are the most important things that we will do, not for us – it's not for us right now – but for the future.

Certain things need to get passed right away because they are absolutely necessary. There are concerns that need to get pushed through right away. I get that. But in these particular things there are huge waves and ripple effects to the impacts of these things.

When we're talking about economic policy, the biggest thing that we can do for this province, the best thing that governments in the past have done, even with mistakes that have happened, is to make the environment here the best in the world to come and invest. That is something nobody else had. You hear us talk about the Alberta advantage and all that kind of stuff. That has always been one of those wonderful things.

I mean, I've had the privilege of travelling all over the world. When I've talked to people about coming to Canada and especially coming to Alberta – I mean, this is a cold place. It's not an easy – you talk to anybody who has emigrated here, you know, from other countries. We have a new family in Rocky View that came from the Caribbean islands. I'm telling you that this winter – oh, my goodness – just about sent them home. They were freezing. I mean, there weren't enough coats and leg warmers and mittens. It was just traumatic for them. What were we at, 176 days of winter or something? I can't remember what the number was. It was huge.

The Deputy Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt, hon. member, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(2.1) the House stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, May 9, 2018

Day 27

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (UCP),
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Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (UCP)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (NDP)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (NDP)
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Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (NDP)
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New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 25 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent Conservative: 1 Vacant: 2

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, May 9, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Dr. Starke: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my very great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly today students from Viking school from the community of Viking. I had an opportunity to meet with them and their teachers, Mr. Brick and Mrs. Josephson. Amongst them I am sure that we have a future Don Mazankowski, Glen Sather, or one of the skating Sutters, because they all came from Viking. They, of course, are here to observe us in action, and they're particularly interested, as the students from Viking always are, in what happens over in this corner, the Valhalla section. I'd ask my colleagues in the House to join in giving them the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-South West 53 students from Dr. Margaret-Ann Armour school. They're accompanied by Ms Karen Mosewich and Mrs. Markiana Dhadli and their chaperone, Mr. Joffe Hotz. I'd ask them to rise now and please accept the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any additional school groups?

Seeing and hearing none, the hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

Cortes-Vargas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an absolute pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two amazing constituents of Strathcona-Sherwood Park, Valerie Hawrelak and Eva Shwetz. Valerie and Eva have a keen interest in politics and governance and are eager today to watch the House proceedings and especially question period. I thank them for their continued support and for their interest. I ask them now to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my great honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Tara Martin. Tara is a former work colleague of mine and an Edmonton entrepreneur who is doing some pretty remarkable work with gig work and the new workplace and really is somebody who is not only responding to but helping to shape the next economy in our province. It looks like Tara is standing there. I ask that you all give her the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Health and Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions. The first is to rise in recognition of National Nursing Week. Alberta's nursing professionals bring compassion and expertise to the roles that are continuously evolving and changing over more than a hundred years here in Alberta. Our guests today are licensed practical nurses and members of the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees. I'm grateful for their tireless work to care for Albertans when they need it most, and when we chatted outside, I realized that some of these staff actually cared for my own grandmother just down the street at the Edmonton General. I ask that those present, including Mary, Dolly, Remy, Teresita, Derrek, Bree-Ann, Sharon, and Edward, please rise and receive the warm welcome of our Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ms Hoffman: The second introduction I have, Mr. Speaker, is that I'm privileged to introduce members of the Alberta and Northwest Territories division of the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada, who are seated in the members' gallery. They work to improve the quality of life for those living with multiple sclerosis through education, support, research, and public awareness. I commend this society for bringing together researchers, health professionals, and the MS community to find better ways to care for Albertans. I invite Dr. Garry Wheeler, Dr. Penny Smyth, Dr. Pamela Valentine, Patrycia Rzechowka, Candice Laws, and Julie Kelndorfer to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have two introductions. It is my privilege to rise today to recognize National Nursing Week. Nurses are a critical part of our health care system, and we value the work that they do to provide the right care in the right place at the right time. I am so grateful for the work of the more than 40,000 registered nurses from across this province, who provide compassion and care to Albertans when they need it most. I am so glad that members were able to join us on Wear White Wednesday. I would now ask that Meagan LaRiviere from the College and Association of Registered Nurses and Jane Sustrik and Karen Craik from the United Nurses of Alberta please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ms Payne: I'm also honoured to introduce to you and through you guests from the Canadian Mental Health Association housing program, who are joining us today during Mental Health Week. The goal of the program is to provide quality, secure, and affordable housing for people with mental illnesses and/or low income. The CMHA is committed to building healthy, resilient communities by providing mental health services, educational resources, and crisis intervention. I thank them so very much for their partnership in making life better for Albertans. I ask Gail Haynes, Averie McNary, Richard Boulet, and Cheryl Williams to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other guests? The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to join in the recognition of National Nursing Week. I rise today to introduce to

you and through you Dr. Harrison Applin, dean of health, Northern Lakes College, indigenous scholar, leadership studies, and Shelly Gladue, senior adviser, north zone, indigenous health program. Dr. Applin is a board member of the Canadian Indigenous Nurses Association. And representing Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta, Health Director Sandra Lamouche, and Treaty 8 protocol office and Bigstone Cree Nation members Margo Auger and Cheryl Moberly. The CINA works with communities, health professionals, and government institutions on aboriginal health nursing issues and practices within the Canadian health system that address particular interest and concern in aboriginal communities. CINA's work benefits aboriginal peoples of Canada by improving their health and well-being physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually. I'd please ask all of my guests to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Members' Statements

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

Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion Opposition

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The latest study from the Fraser Institute indicates that a lack of pipeline capacity in Canada will cost our energy sector as much as \$15.8 billion this year. That's .7 per cent of national GDP. Think about it for a minute. If our country had effective national and provincial leadership steering pipeline projects into reality, our national GDP would increase by almost a full percentage point without any government incentives or spending. In fact, invoking constitutional jurisdiction might just be enough to get hostile provincial governments out of the way.

Mr. Speaker, who are the people blocking this pipeline? Our government's fellow-travellers, their B.C. NDP colleagues, who I imagine would vigorously defend the pensions of B.C. government employees. But even the B.C. Investment Management Corporation, which manages pension funds for their public-sector workers, sees the importance of our energy industry and invests in companies like Enbridge, Pembina corporation, and, lo and behold, Kinder Morgan.

Not only is Horgan putting the livelihoods of Alberta and B.C. oil and gas workers at risk; Mr. Speaker, he is risking the financial futures of his own employees and an untold number of other public-sector employees across Canada, whose pension funds are invested in our humble energy industry, protecting the public sector with yet another dose of hypocrisy, indeed.

Finally, who is actually on the front lines protesting this pipeline? Free speech gives individuals the right and the ability to voice their opinion for or against Kinder Morgan within the confines of the law. However, just this week when Global B.C. tried to film the protest camp and the structure that is being built there as these individuals settle in for the long haul, the journalists and the crew were threatened with violence by the protestors and were told they could not film even though it was on public property.

Mr. Speaker, I'm hopeful that one day we will have a federal government with the courage to step in and press our vital energy interests as a national priority instead of sitting idly by and letting the hypocrites and violent foreign-funded protesters rule the day.

Thank you.

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

1:40

Progressivism and Conservatism

Ms Kazim: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As an MLA I get to hear a lot of debate with many terms in this House. Two of the most relevant are the terms "progressive" and "conservative." The definition of the word "progressive" includes the concept that the human condition as a whole can be improved, that progress, improvement, and social justice are possible for everyone. Our government talks about everyday Albertans and the need to focus on a bright future for everyone. It is the NDP government that is investing in health care, education, seniors' services, youth, children, families, socioeconomic growth, and environment. All in all the concept is that the next recovery is for everyone in every area of life.

The definition of the word "conservative" includes the concept that tradition and existing social and political hierarchies must be maintained, that social stability and continuity are critical. In more extreme, reactionary cases conservatives seek a return to the way things were. That's what the UCP wants, to return to the past, a society built on traditional power structures. Their inherent inequity is part of their platform.

Mr. Speaker, as we grow older, our needs change. The needs of each generation change due to continuous advancements in population and technology. The needs of each generation and life in each century are different. If we do not accept this reality, then we are doing injustice to Albertans by imposing traditional ways upon them that no longer serve them. Conservatives' refusal to support our government's policies to increase rights for the LGBTQ-plus community, provide equity for women in the workplace and the economy, and enhance the fairness of elections is nothing but injustice to Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, our province demands a progressive government that is striving to build a future for Albertans instead of turning back the clock, like the Conservatives want, to a time that no longer exists.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Carbon Levy

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Monday the Leader of the Opposition was in Ottawa standing up for Alberta's economy and against the carbon tax, a tax the NDP failed to mention in the election but imposed anyway, the largest tax increase in our province's history. On January 1 the NDP raised the carbon tax 50 per cent and have committed to raising it again a further 67 per cent. This is the frog in the pot, bit-by-bit increases to get Albertans used to paying more for everyday essentials.

The NDP will continue to raise this tax. Experts say that in order to reach Paris targets, the tax has to go up to \$300 a tonne. Advocates of the carbon tax would rather see it increase than look for sensible, positive adaptations and changes to anthropogenic global warming and that would actually reduce greenhouse gases, not burden Alberta families. Instead, they will continue to increase the carbon tax, forcing Albertans to pay more to heat their homes in winter and drive to work.

The NDP sold the carbon tax as a social licence. They told Albertans that if they paid more for just about everything, we'd get pipelines built. How's that working out? Well, as we see in the news today, we're approaching Kinder Morgan's May 31 deadline and are nowhere near to getting Alberta resources to tidewater. The NDP's friends in British Columbia continue to firmly oppose any pipeline and will stop at nothing to get the Trans Mountain pipeline cancelled with their death-by-delay methods.

B.C. had the first carbon tax. Instead of causing people to alter their consumption behaviour and use less gasoline, sales have skyrocketed over 23 per cent, over a billion litres increase in demand from 2012 to 2016. No change of behaviour there, and no social licence. Not one activist or the Prime Minister has gone from no to yes on pipelines. And greenhouse gases? Hmm. No statistically measurable change except up with a hope of going down while protestors keep using hydrocarbon fuel to power their lives along with the rest of the world.

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

Multiple Sclerosis

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. May is Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Month, a campaign to raise awareness as Canada has one of the highest rates of MS in the world; 1 in 340 Canadians are living with this disease. However, Canada has the best MS researchers in the world. MS is an autoimmune disease, which means the immune system, designed to protect against intruders such as viruses and bacteria, attacks tissues in the body. In the case of MS the tissue that is targeted is myelin. Without myelin the communication between nerve cells is disrupted, and the body does not receive the instructions necessary to perform basic functions like speaking, seeing, walking, and learning.

MS is the most common neurological disease affecting young adults in Canada. While it is the most diagnosed in young adults ages 15 to 40, we know that it also affects younger children and older adults. Women are three times more likely to be susceptible to MS.

Symptoms of MS depend on what part or parts of the central nervous system are affected. This can include the brain, spinal cord, or optic nerve. For this reason, symptoms of MS are unpredictable and vary greatly from person to person and can fluctuate within the same person from one time to the next. This can lead to impairments of vision, memory, balance, and mobility.

The cause of MS is still a mystery. However, thanks to the continued research by groups such as the MS Society of Canada, Alberta, and the MS Scientific Research Foundation, we are getting closer to exploring ways to repair the damage it causes and getting even closer to preventing MS from occurring.

The MS Society asks that we as Members of the Legislative Assembly work with them to both improve the lives of Albertans living with MS and raise awareness not only during the month of May but year-round.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Carbon Levy and Vulnerable Albertans

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The law of unintended consequences is a rule articulated by reputed economists, who point out that the actions of people and, especially, of government will often have effects that are unanticipated or unintended. It seems that this government simply does not consider this concept of unintended consequences.

The cost of energy is a shining example of how what was perceived to be in the public interest can go horribly wrong. Recently my constituency offices in Drumheller-Stettler have received several calls concerning the consequence of this government's energy policy, proving that, typically and unfortunately, unintended consequences often land at the feet of our most vulnerable and those least equipped to handle it. I'm getting calls from single mothers, the disabled, and seniors who are indicating that Alberta's legislators have failed when it comes to securing energy. It's disheartening, Mr. Speaker,

to hear people on the phone saying that they have to decide: do I eat, or do I have electricity? Up till now this government has generally resorted to blaming the previous government or another level of government for problems. But doing such a thing will not keep anyone's lights on, heat a home, and it definitely will not feed anybody.

What would help these struggling Albertans is if this government cancelled its crippling carbon tax. That would keep hard-earned money in people's pockets and lessen the burden when it comes to utility costs. It is imperative that we all remember that real people suffer real consequences that affect their lives and their families, Mr. Speaker, regardless of whether the consequences were intended or otherwise. It matters very little to the senior sitting in the dark or a single mother wondering how she can possibly keep lights on and feed her children.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Provincial Election Third Anniversary

Mr. Hinkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Three years ago our government came into power, and I'd like to mark that anniversary by looking at some of our achievements.

We banned corporate and union donations to keep big money out of politics.

We enhanced farm safety, protection, and compensation for farm workers. We did this while the opposition yelled and screamed that we were killing the family farm. The opposition was obviously wrong, and it's clear that they would have left paid workers vulnerable and unprotected. Zero farms have been killed in my constituency. In fact, profitability has gone up, and land values have increased.

We know that human-influenced climate change is real and instituted a carbon levy to help support environmental change, foster clean energy jobs, and create a made-in-Alberta solution. In my constituency alone three solar companies have hired 20-plus employees.

We took the advice of financial experts and invested in infrastructure projects while the economy was down. We've kept Albertans working and tackled the crumbling infrastructure that Conservatives left behind. We're building a hospital in Calgary, while the Conservatives blew one up. We will build 200 schools. While the Conservatives promised 400, they built two.

We are raising minimum wage to give the lowest paid people in Alberta a chance at dignity. This while the opposition incorrectly screams that it is killing the Alberta economy. It's obvious they would have kept Alberta's working poor even poorer.

We've created over 90,000 new jobs in the past year, most of them in the private sector.

We've expanded the sunshine list for public servants earning more than \$125,000, and we're getting rid of the outrageous salaries and perks that ABC appointees enjoyed under the Conservatives.

Mr. Speaker, we've made progress on so many things that it would take three more years just to talk about it. Thank you.

1:50

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

Bill 12 and Federal Tanker Ban Legislation

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is only 22 days until the deadline for Kinder Morgan's decision on possible cancellation of

the Trans Mountain pipeline, that they have cancelled. This government brought forward Bill 12, the turn-off-the-taps legislation, at our suggestion, supposedly to give us leverage in opposing British Columbia's stalling tactics. However, that bill is not moving forward. Given that there are only 22 days left, what is the government waiting for? Why aren't they expeditiously moving through this place their supposed keynote legislation to turn off the taps?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We certainly are keen to move a number of bills forward in this House, and we certainly welcome every member of this Legislature to debate all of those bills and support us in that. For example, when it comes to doing your job, we look forward this afternoon to debating, in Committee of the Whole, Bill 9. We certainly look forward to being able to do that. We welcome all members to participate in that, and we also welcome all members to participate in every piece of legislation. We have a number of bills that are important to the people of Alberta, including Bill 12, and we're proud to be able to move that forward soon.

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, Bill 9 is something they didn't even think was important enough to mention in their throne speech, let alone their platform, but Bill 12 was billed as the keynote legislation of this session to turn off the taps, to get tough with the New Democrats in British Columbia for blocking our resources and attacking our vital economic interests. But now, nothing. In fact, they voted to adjourn debate on that critical, urgent legislation. Why? Why are they surrendering? Isn't this just a pattern? They surrendered to Trudeau's cancellation of Northern Gateway, his killing of Energy East. Aren't they now surrendering to the B.C. New Democrats on Trans Mountain?

Ms Hoffman: No, Mr. Speaker. Actually, nothing could be further from the truth. If we want to talk about surrendering to failure, I think the member opposite could look at his track record in Ottawa, with nearly a decade in cabinet and not getting a pipeline to tidewater. This side of the House has been working diligently. We got our approvals, we're making progress every day, and we won't back down until that pipeline is built. We're also going to deal with other important matters like women accessing abortion services or youth being protected from being outed. We're proud to protect people in this province and to get a pipeline built.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, last night the House of Commons passed Bill C-48 to impose a ban on tankers exporting Canadian oil from our northwest coast. That is now going to the Senate of Canada. Does the Alberta NDP government support or oppose Bill C-48, the Trudeau ban on the export of our oil from the northwest coast?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, we're working diligently, day in and day out, to get our products to tidewater. Of course, getting our products there is part of the challenge. Of course, the other piece is making sure that we can get them to a world that is thirsty for Canadian energy products, Alberta energy products. We certainly are working to make sure that we get our product there and we get our product across those oceans to the other markets. I have to say that we won't take advice on how to get this pipeline built from the member opposite since he didn't actually manage to do it when he had a Conservative government here, he was in a Conservative government in Ottawa, and we didn't get it done. But you know what? This government is up to the task, and we will get the job done.

The Speaker: Second main question.

Federal Policies on Oil and Gas Transportation

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, it was not advice, nor was it an invitation for clichéd government talking points. It was a very simple question, which was not answered, so I will repeat it. Does this government support or oppose the federal Bill C-48 to impose a tanker ban on the export of Canadian oil? I will repeat: does this government support or oppose the federal Bill C-48 to ban Canadian oil tanker exports from the northwest coast?

Ms Hoffman: It's really sweet of the member opposite to ask the question slower the second time. Thanks for that. I really appreciate that tone that you're setting in this House.

We've been clear with Ottawa that our energy and environmental sectors can work together to promote economic development and don't need to sacrifice one to have the other. In fact, late last year Minister Garneau, at a press conference, referred to the concerns that we had with the federal tanker ban bill. Mr. Speaker, we've been very clear about our record on this issue and on all issues that are before this House. In this House we also debate bills that matter to women who are accessing health care services. We wish that the Official Opposition would do their job.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Kenney: Well, I think the minister said something about concern. Is that opposition or support for the bill, Mr. Speaker? Will the government join with the Official Opposition in calling on their federal Liberal allies to drop Bill C-48, the ban on the export of Canadian oil from our northwest coast? I repeat: will they join with us in calling on the federal government to stop the C-48 attack on our energy industry?

Ms Hoffman: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, we're happy to make our position triply, quadruply clear. We've told the federal government that there are better ways to protect the west coast, which has had tankers moving safely along it since the 1930s. We are fighting for this pipeline to tidewater. We're fighting for tankers.

It's nice that you want to debate federal legislation, but you're sitting in a provincial Legislature. There's a bill before this House that can stand up for women. You have an opportunity to tell us whether or not you're going to stand with women or hide in the bathroom with your colleagues. We'll see what happens in about an hour. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order, please. Order.

Mr. Kenney: I can only infer that this government doesn't really care about the imposition of this tanker traffic ban by their federal Liberal allies, yet another example of their total failure to stand up for Alberta's interests.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the federal government also said that they were going to bring forward legislation to clarify federal jurisdiction over the Trans Mountain pipeline. That was supposedly part of the co-ordinated strategy between our Premier and Prime Minister to ensure the construction of Trans Mountain. That bill hasn't come forward. Is there now a co-ordinated strategy to down tools and surrender to John Horgan on Trans Mountain?

Ms Hoffman: Of course not, Mr. Speaker.

If you want to talk about co-ordinated strategy, let's talk about the UCP's fiscal plan, that only benefits the incredibly wealthy.

You might think that's me talking. It's not, actually. It's a quote from U of C economist Lindsay Tedds, who said that it is very clear that everyday Albertans will get nothing from the economic policies that are being proposed by the members opposite, only \$700 million in tax giveaways to the richest of Albertans. What would be the cost? Schools, hospitals, the economy, that we've worked so hard to diversify. You know what? Let's talk about the issues that matter to regular Albertans because this is one of them.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Trans Mountain Pipeline Public Purchase Proposal

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, what concerns us about the government's failure to move forward with their turn-off-the-taps legislation, their surrender to the federal Liberal shutdown of the northern coast, the Trudeau government deciding not to proceed with its pipeline legislation is that instead we're hearing a lot of talk about backroom deals to have taxpayers essentially buy the pipeline. Does the government not understand that any public financial participation in the pipeline should be a last resort and not a first resort and that we should first fight for the rule of law and the construction of that pipeline?

The Speaker: Hon. member, it was your third main. I apologize. I thought it was the second supplemental.

The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It sounds like the member is backtracking on the position he took very clearly about a month ago, when he said that he stood with this government to make sure that we would get our product to tidewater, even if that meant buying the pipeline. It sounds like he's backing down. Maybe it's because some of the folks he's friends with in Ottawa, where he likes to spend a lot of time, are telling him that that's problematic for their position. I guess we'll only find out one way. But you know what? The truth is that on this side of the House we will let nothing get in our way on pipeline access to the west coast. That's why we are moving on three fronts: the courts; public investment, if it comes to that; and, of course, making sure that we are moving forward with our legislation, Bill 12. We're very proud of that.

Mr. Kenney: They're not moving forward with the bill that they just adjourned.

Mr. Speaker, I said that we would be willing in principle to see financial participation as a last resort. As a last resort. The first resort was to fight back. The first resort was to ensure that the British Columbia government understands that there will be consequences. It appears that what we've got are backroom deals being made to force taxpayers to clean up the mess created by this provincial government and their close ally Justin Trudeau. How many billions of tax dollars are they prepared to risk in order to clean up their political mess?

Ms Hoffman: Well, here's the thing, Mr. Speaker. We hear a lot of stuff in this House that doesn't exactly ring of the truth. Here's one. This afternoon we will be debating Bill 12. It's in Committee of the Whole. We welcome the members opposite to help us get it moving forward in a very timely manner because this is a tool that it's important that Albertans have at their disposal. The Minister of Energy has made it very clear that nothing will stand in our way on getting this pipeline. We've been having meetings with folks from across this country and building national support around this national pipeline, that's in the national interest, and we look

forward to seeing you move this forward with us in an expeditious fashion.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, this is becoming slightly comical. The Official Opposition voted to continue debating Bill 12 to get it done. It was the NDP that voted to adjourn debate on their own bill because they wanted to delay it. The question is: why? What are they cooking up behind closed doors in terms of risking tax dollars with their close ally Justin Trudeau? Why won't they stand up for Albertans against Justin Trudeau? Why won't they stand up against his tanker ban? Why won't they stand up against his failure to bring forward federal pipeline legislation? Why, instead, are they prepared to risk billions of dollars of taxpayers to bail them out of this political problem?

2:00

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Ms Hoffman: We'll be debating that exact bill this afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

If you want to talk about why, why is it that the member opposite is committing to having a \$700 million tax break for the richest 1 per cent, Mr. Speaker, with those cuts, of course, inevitably happening to schools and hospitals, to the health care providers that we count on to make sure that we have a healthier society tomorrow than the one we inherited yesterday? Our students and loved ones will suffer if that \$700 million cut goes forward, as the Official Opposition is proposing. We saw it under 44 years of Tory rule. We actually stand up for Albertans on this side, and they only stand up for their rich friends and insiders.

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

Antiracism Strategy Development

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Now, the vast majority of Albertans are open and welcoming, but sadly our province is not immune from racism. Today we learned about a disturbing incident caught on video. This government says that they want to tackle racism, but their words are not backed up by action. Community grants under the human rights, education, and multiculturalism fund have been cut by the NDP to levels lower than 2013, and at the same time the Alberta Human Rights Commission reports that complaints are the highest they have seen in 15 years. To the Premier. Words are meaningless without action. Why have you cut the very programs intended to target racism?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the very important question. Racist and bigoted comments have no place here. We know that Alberta is a positive and welcoming place, and so is the city of Lethbridge. I think any of us who saw the video today are absolutely shocked by what we saw displayed there. That's why we're not only working with the items that the member has referred to, but also we have a minister dedicated to ensuring that the work around antiracism moves forward in this province because we absolutely are better when we are loving and accepting of one another.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Clark: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad the minister mentioned the work that the Minister of Education was tasked with nearly a year and a half ago. At the time, you got some good headlines, but since then we've heard absolutely nothing. Hundreds

of Albertans participated in consultations in good faith in hopes that your government would take real action to address their concerns about increasing racism. The mandate letter to the minister says that his work was to be completed by last fall. Now, it's funny how priorities change when the story slips out of the headlines. Again to the Premier: will we see the report soon? Have you given up on it, or do you have the report and you've simply decided not to release it?

The Speaker: The Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member for that important question. Certainly, yes, we have been working on a paper and a strategy to fight racism, to foster inclusion, and promote acceptance in the province of Alberta, and we have been working hard on this issue for the last number of months. We will have a paper and the results of this very, very soon. In the meantime we've been working in Education to further this since the best way to fight ignorance is through education.

Mr. Clark: Well, Mr. Speaker, Albertans from diverse backgrounds face racism far too often. The incident we're learning about today is a particularly graphic example, but it is far from the only one. In April this year there was an anti-Muslim rally held in Calgary. This weekend we saw disturbing anti-indigenous sentiments loudly voiced at a political convention. People of colour face subtle and overt racism in their everyday lives. Premier, addressing racism in our society absolutely must be a priority. It's easier to write a letter to a minister, but it's much more difficult to take real action. I want to know exactly what this government plans to do to address racism and when we will see concrete results.

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member again for the question. We are in the final stages of consultation on the report that we promised, and we are working with the community. It's proving to be very complex work. When we intervene to stop racism, it is at any opportunity we have the chance. I'm very proud of the fact that Alberta Health Services worked very quickly around disciplinary measures when health care workers last year used racist terms. They fired those workers. We know that there are hundreds of Albertans that are working alongside to make sure that we get this right. We want to honour their report. It will be released very soon, but we want to make sure that we get it right.

Thank you.

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

School Nutrition Programs

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Too many children go to school with empty stomachs, and we know that they cannot learn properly if they are hungry. That is why we introduced the important pilot school nutrition program in 2016. To the Minister of Education: are we looking to further expand this program through Budget 2018?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to say that, yes, in fact, we are intending to expand this program. We are now feeding more than 30,000 kids a day a daily nutritious

snack or meal through Budget 2018, and we have been expanding it exponentially every step of the way. We know that it causes positive effects in regard to education and learning, and it also fosters a positive relationship between the school and the parents and the children. It's in all ways a very, very successful initiative.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: this program does not extend to all schools across the province, so how do you decide which schools will benefit from this program?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. We've been working so that all school boards have access to this program, and they are making the choices based on socioeconomic factors and so forth to see where their areas of greatest need are. I was just amazed how school boards have taken to this and have expanded the program, have combined with charities and existing food programs to do truly, truly a wonderful job. This program is dependent on the budget that I brought forward, and I was really, really disappointed to see that the members of the opposite side refused to vote for this.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: what kind of improved learning outcomes have we seen for these children?

Mr. Eggen: Well, Mr. Speaker, certainly, when kids are well fed, they are more confident as well. They're able to concentrate on their studies and learn about food as well, quite frankly. There's a component of curriculum built into the nutrition program so that they can set up a lifetime of good habits and positive returns. You know, it costs money to run this program, and I'd rather put that money into the nutrition program than into the pockets of the richest 1 per cent in our province.

Long-term and Continuing Care Beds

Dr. Starke: Mr. Speaker, in the last election the NDP promised to create 2,000 public long-term care beds. Now, depending on the day, the Health minister says either that it's already been done or that they're well on their way. Now, most of the beds that have been created came about as a result of the 2014-15 ASLI program, that this minister first delayed and then proceeded with. To the minister: as I asked in estimates and have not yet received a response, what is the number of public long-term care beds that have been created since you took office, and where are they located?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think I recall the day where the member is referring to me potentially misspeaking, but I want to assure all Albertans that our commitment to build 2,000 long-term care and dementia spaces by 2019 is well under way and that we're on track to achieving that. In fact, since coming into government, we've approved approximately 3,002 – I guess that's not approximately if it's 3,002 – new long-term care and dementia spaces. That includes beds which will be completed beyond 2019. The three public builds are Calgary, the complex care there at Bridgeland; Norwood here in Edmonton; and Willow Square, of course, in Fort McMurray. Those will be completed after 2019, but they are well under way.

Dr. Starke: Well, Mr. Speaker, let's take a look at those. Given that the vast majority of long-term care beds are a result of the government simply completing ASLI projects that were already planned or under way under the previous government and given that those beds were built at an average cost to the taxpayer of \$65,000 per bed and that this government's three projects, that the Health minister just mentioned, will create 489 new beds at a projected cost of \$587 million, or \$1.2 million each, to the minister: why are the long-term care beds created by your government 18 times more expensive?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thanks. I believe I also committed to tabling the math because I think there's some creativity happening by members who keep asserting those numbers, so we are working to ensure that we do that. The former Conservative government made a lot of promises without actually budgeting or signing any contracts. When we came in as a government, we made sure that their empty promises became actual projects. We moved many of those beds up from being lower levels of care to being long-term care or dementia care beds, and many of them are open. For a fact, I toured St. Theresa – I always want to say Mother Teresa – in Calgary just on Friday, and the staff and the residents who are there are in very good hands, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

2:10

Dr. Starke: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that in this time of fiscal restraint strategic partnerships with nonprofit, faith-based, and private continuing care providers would maximize every taxpayer dollar and given that many Alberta communities are desperate for additional continuing care spaces but the government's current building projects have resulted in skyrocketing costs, to the Minister of Health: will the minister inform Albertans whether future projects will be built using a cost-effective partnership program like ASLI, or will she continue with the government-only projects, that are astronomically more expensive and provide a tiny fraction of the number of beds?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, I'm proud of the fact that we're building almost 200 net new beds in Calgary for complex patients, who are some of the most challenging to care for. We're also building 350 at Norwood, which I think is important, 145 net new for, again, patients who are some of the most hard to care for and who regularly find that they aren't welcome in other facilities. It's important for us to build a variety of types of options for the people of this province because nobody should be living in a hospital bed or receiving care that is inappropriate. For folks who are receiving the most complex care, we need to make sure that they have those options as well. So I'm not going to apologize for building . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
Calgary-West.

Drug Use and Treatment in Correctional Facilities

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Four people in custody died of suspected opioid overdoses in Alberta's correctional centres in the last few weeks. One of the young men had told a family member that he was staying clean by choice because he had access to a whole market of drugs in the Lethbridge Correctional Centre. Minister, what are you doing about this crisis? I'm asking

specifically about the systemic problem of drugs in the correctional facilities.

The Speaker: The Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the very important question. We know that drugs have been getting into corrections facilities since corrections facilities have existed. As a result of the new designer drugs coming onto the market and the new opioids coming onto the market, those have become much more dangerous not only for individuals in the facilities but for our staff working inside those facilities. We continue to implement a number of methods that I'm sure I'll get to talk about in subsequent answers, but one of our brand new initiatives is that body scanner that we implemented at the Edmonton Remand Centre. That is having some great results, and we're hoping to be able to expand that pilot project.

The Speaker: Thank you hon. minister.
First supplemental.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that drugs fuel crime and that rural Alberta is dealing with a crisis that is seeing repeat offenders prey upon those citizens and given that addictions counselling is critical to helping people become law-abiding members of our society, which in turn helps reduce crime, Minister, why does it appear not to be a priority of your government to ensure that people in custody receive addictions counselling in our correctional centres?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is absolutely a priority of our government to ensure that people throughout the province, whether they're in custody or out of custody, have access to those services. What that requires is that we fund the staff to assist with that, that we fund the medication to assist with that. That's why we're continuing to invest. We're continuing to invest not only in my department but in the Health department and throughout the province. It is absolutely critical that we invest in those things. It's critical that we target these long-term offenders and ensure that we are dealing with the issues that are causing them to offend, and that's exactly what this government is doing.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Ellis: Mr. Speaker, thank you. As the minister previously mentioned, given that the ministry invested in body scanners last year to stem the flow of concealed drugs into the Edmonton Remand Centre and given that the minister said that her department would assess the scanner's effectiveness over the course of the year, which we all, of course, look forward to, Minister, what were the results of that study, and are you planning to expand the scanner program based upon them?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Well, of course, we're still evaluating the information on that, but I would have to say that I don't want to speak too soon, but initial signs look incredibly positive. That scanner has been having some fantastic results. We're incredibly glad that we had the opportunity to partner with our staff to invest in that piece of equipment. We intend to hopefully move that forward very quickly. Of course, that requires that we fund those

projects, and I hope that the opposition is interested in actually voting for funding those projects in the future.

Oil Sands Investments Provincial Debt

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, yet another job provider, Royal Dutch Shell, is divesting from Alberta oil sands. To the Premier. You promised that in exchange for your job-killing carbon tax, Alberta would receive social licence to build pipelines and attract investment. Shell leaving is yet another example of how your plan has failed. When will you scrap the carbon tax, reduce regulatory burden, and admit your alliance with Justin Trudeau is not in Alberta's best interests?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we agree with the opposition that failure is not an option on the Trans Mountain expansion, and that's why we've taken the actions that we have. Where we don't agree is that apparently the members opposite don't believe that kids deserve to be safe in their schools. They don't agree that women have reproductive rights. They don't agree that we need to support public education and support teachers. Where we disagree is in the servicing of extremist special-interest groups. On this side of the House we have the backs of ordinary Albertans. On that side of the House they've been hijacked by extremist special interests.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, I'm appalled that Alberta's youth unemployment rate is nearly 14 per cent, 30 per cent higher than in the rest of Canada. Given that Alberta youth are facing the additional burden of repaying this NDP interest on debt instead of saving for their own futures, to the minister: how do you expect Alberta's youth to repay your interest and your wild spending while your government policies are forcing companies like Shell, Statoil, and Marathon to flee the province, resulting in reduced opportunity for all Alberta youth?

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

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Viking Air just announced 150 jobs in Calgary, with a chance of 900 more jobs in Calgary. Some of those youth will probably want to work in those areas, and they'll be hiring. Youth also have a chance at an education that's affordable in this province because of the work of this government. The youth in Alberta are also getting apprenticeships. STEP was restarted after that side cut it off. The summer temporary employment program is helping many youth get back into the workplace. Those are all great things we're doing on this side. That side doesn't really do any of that stuff.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, given that a recent U of C report indicates that young Albertans each face an additional tax of over \$40,000 – that's on top of all this NDP's other income taxes – to repay this Finance minister's big-spending ways and given that if this interest burden was instead invested in an RSP, a 16-year-old Albertan would accumulate over \$100,000 by retirement, to the minister: why do you and your NDP government insist on making young Albertans poorer?

The Speaker: The Minister of Infrastructure.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, you know what happens when you pay attention to youth and you pay attention to

postsecondary? You get a lot of great results in the province. One of the things we're doing is paying attention to postsecondary institutions. We're making sure that they have the supports they need, and when we do that, we turn out great, educated young people. Instead of vilifying them, vilifying teachers, and vilifying the education industry, we pay attention to that. If you want more information on that, we'll be happy to give you information on what we're doing at postsecondary institutions and hope that you pay attention to the excellent work educators in this province are doing.

Mental Health Services for Children

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago I raised in the House the issue of services for the mental health of Alberta's children and was only met with talking points from this government. Our children need and deserve so much better. Recently released data from the last year showed that the number of children offered mental health treatment within 30 days had fallen almost 10 per cent. Thirty days for families desperately waiting for help. To the minister: if it was your child in need of mental health supports, would you want to be part of the over one-quarter of Albertans that have to wait?

Ms Hoffman: Of course not, Mr. Speaker. There is no Alberta family who, when they have somebody they care about, wants to see them do without. They want to make sure that they get the care they need. That's why this government brought forward a budget that increased investment. Even though last year we increased investment, we know that demand went up even more than the increase. That's why we increased it again. That's why earlier this week I was at Jasper Place high school talking about the STAR program, something where we are adding to the grant that helped fund that, a 50 per cent increase in funding so that thousands of children across our province can have increased access to excellent mental health support in schools.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, the government can claim all they want that they're addressing the issues, but the numbers don't lie. Given that in the past year the numbers of children actually receiving mental health treatment within 30 days have dropped from 73 per cent to 67 per cent and given that those are the facts, why is it that this government's investments in mental health are not being reflected in outcomes for vulnerable children, and when will they actually get control of these plunging statistics that have real-world impacts on Alberta's families?

2:20

The Speaker: The Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm so happy to be able to talk about mental health during Mental Health Week. You know, it's hard to know where to start with this one, but I think an important piece is that what we're seeing is an increase in demand. Due to the work that our government and community health partners are doing to reduce stigma, to make it okay to talk about mental health and mental health challenges, we're seeing more and more Albertans coming forward. That's a good thing. People were struggling all along, and now they're reaching out and getting connected with the supports they need. In Edmonton alone we've increased the number of spots for youth and children accessing services . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, in Children's Services estimates my colleague discovered that two key strategies from last year's

business plan relating to children's mental health were not even transferred into this year's plan. Given that these issues were not addressed in the last year and given that the government still has not supported and implemented the recommendations from the mental health review and given that, when asked, the Children's Services minister claimed that this was Health's problem, when will the government step up, stop passing the buck, take some responsibility, and ensure that our children's mental health is a priority?

Ms Payne: Mr. Speaker, we have ensured that children's mental health is a priority. We did that by increasing investment year over year in the term of our government into mental health supports for Albertans across the province, from the northernmost tips to the southernmost tips. We are working with community partners, with community agencies. We are recruiting child psychiatrists across the province. There is a shortage in Canada, and to address that, we are also looking at how we can support families while they're waiting to access other supports. We're also doing work to build resilient communities. We know that mental health exists on a spectrum, and we have Albertans' backs. The members opposite should have voted in favour of the budget if they . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Drinking Water Quality in Indigenous Communities

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After years of setbacks and attempts to ignore the problem by the previous Conservative government, our NDP government has made significant strides in renewing the relationship between government and indigenous communities in Alberta. To the Minister of Indigenous Relations: what is the Alberta government doing to ensure that First Nations reserves have access to clean water?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud of what our government has done to renew the relationship with indigenous people of this province, who were clearly long neglected under the previous government. We're working with First Nations, the federal government, municipal water commissions, and Alberta's Ministry of Transportation on the First Nations regional drinking water tie-in project, which will help determine how we can provide access to clean and safe drinking water on First Nations reserves. I'm proud to say that we are the first province in the country who has put our provincial money forward to do this.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister. Conditions on reserves have traditionally been the responsibility of the federal government. It has pained me over these years to know that our former Conservative government refused to act on this file. Why has Alberta's provincial government now finally chosen to act in this case in response to this issue?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the hon. member mentioned, water on reserves is the federal government's responsibility. However, our government has chosen to support that responsibility by working with our partners to expand water infrastructure to the reserve boundaries – our investment in water to reserves, our leveraging federal dollars to ensure that First

Nations in Alberta have clean, reliable drinking water – and the side benefit is that many other communities near reserves are also getting connected, something, again, that was neglected by the previous government.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister. This problem certainly is not going to be solved overnight. I'm just wondering if the minister could give us a progress report. What number of indigenous families have been served with clean drinking water as a result of your initiatives?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The First Nations regional tie-in project is currently considering about a dozen projects throughout the province. Our government is funding the construction up to the reserve boundaries of the Alexis Nakota Sioux, just west of the city of Edmonton, and the Paul band First Nation, again west of the city of Edmonton, both of which will be completed in this year. Two other projects are in the design phase, four are in the feasibility phase, and others are in the engagement phase. These are exciting projects. They have a high degree of support by the indigenous community. We have brought in the support of the federal government in a way that has never been done before, and we are doing something that should have been long done.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Oil and Gas Rail Transportation

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week the Energy minister said that her new crude-by-rail working group is looking for solutions to address bottlenecks in the rail system. Her focus is on moving oil. Albertans are aware that we need more access to foreign markets, not just the heavily discounted U.S. market. To the Energy minister: we all want Trans Mountain to succeed, but has the minister given any consideration to expanding market access with a rail line from northern Alberta to Valdez, Alaska?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my colleague for that important question. You know, we're absolutely at a critical point not only in pipelines but in rail capacity, and that is exactly why we announced last week our crude-by-rail panel, who's going to meet with stakeholders to look at options. We do absolutely need market access, which is truck, rail, and pipelines to the Pacific coast to get our products to market. The company he mentioned, G7G, is one of them that we're talking to, who have an exciting project going north.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the proposed G7G rail line would have the flexibility to move bitumen, grain, forestry products, and many more commodities to ports that are significantly closer to China and given that the company does not need government funding – it is just looking for support – to the economic development minister: since meeting with G7G in February, what steps have you taken to support this project?

The Speaker: The Minister of Infrastructure.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, you know, one of the great things about our economic development minister is that no one works harder. He is constantly on a plane, having those conversations, travelling around, making sure that when we talk about innovation and we talk about diversifying our economy, we are walking that talk. I think that's really important. Certainly, when it comes to information like that, we're happy to get that over to your office. I know we have open lines of communication. We're happy to continue that.

Speaking of walking the talk, Mr. Speaker, certainly there's an opportunity for the opposition to do that as well. If they want to ask questions . . .

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

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the G7G railway is a green project because the locomotives would be electrically driven, with power produced by wind turbines, and given that our northern neighbours support this project because of the economic development potential it offers them as well as the indigenous partnerships involved, to the Energy minister: since rail lines seem to check off all your boxes, will you commit to invite G7G to your next working group meeting?

The Speaker: The Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yeah, I can further comment for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. He and I have both met with the proponents, and he reports that he feels they're doing good work in demonstrating that they have the ability to raise the capital. Absolutely, I will contact the chair of that panel and make sure that they have the ability to meet with the chair and, hopefully, the whole panel, because that's an important part of our market access strategy.

Health Services Employees

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, I have previously asked the Health minister about the duplication of bureaucracy in Alberta Health Services and the Department of Health. The Auditor General pointed out that there's parallel management at the highest levels. Everything from mental health to continuing care to infection prevention have mirrored management structures within the Ministry of Health. Has this government done anything to evaluate and streamline these officials to increase efficiency for patients?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We certainly do look for opportunities to protect the front lines and increase investment there at any opportunity. Of course, the responsible thing to do is to always look at whether there are efficiencies and opportunities for management or duplication of structures.

Mr. Speaker, I'm really proud of the fact that we've been able to hold our health spending increase to 3 per cent while increasing front-line services at a greater level than that. That's because we have a government that's working to invest and reduce any type of duplication. Every time a position is vacated in management, we certainly look to see if that's absolutely required, but we're not going to get rid of the HR staff. They are important as well.

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, the Health minister informed us previously that AHS has hired 10,000 employees over the last several years,

going from 90,000 to 100,000 staff, making it the fourth-largest corporate entity in the nation. I asked you last year how many of those are front-line workers, to which you replied: 1,500. I reminded you of this question a month ago. Have you since done some research to identify the remaining 8,500 positions that AHS grew in the last seven years, and if they were not front line, why were they more important than front-line services?

Ms Hoffman: There's nothing more important than front-line services. It's also important that front-line services get paid, that they have staff that make sure that their rights are being protected, in terms of providing support staff to those workers as well. I appreciate that the member opposite wants to imply that we could get rid of everyone who works in any office, but the truth is that those people are important, too. Many of them provide important front-line services. Very recently I was at 108th Street, an AHS tower that has tons of mental health professionals that see staff right in that building. Yes, it's an office tower for AHS, but they're also front-line workers, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud of the work that they do on 108th Street, in every hospital, and in every clinic across our province.

2:30

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, according to the AHS website they now boast of having over 108,000 employees. I'm going to give her a pass on answering about the previous 10,000 hires, but can she explain the 8,000 that have been hired in the last couple of years? I ask this, sir, because Calgarians are still waiting 36 weeks for hip surgery, Albertans are still waiting 46 weeks for cataract surgery, 73 out of 100 children can't access mental health treatment in Edmonton within 30 days, and I have seen no additional staff in any emergency room or operating room.

Ms Hoffman: Well, I don't know where you've been touring, hon. member, but where I've been touring, we're seeing increases. We're seeing important investments to make sure – for example, the EMS budget that this government brought forward has an increase to EMS front-line workers. What did the members opposite do? They voted against that very budget. Why is that, Mr. Speaker? They are calling on us every day to make deep ideological cuts. They did it again at their convention. They want to give \$700 million in tax giveaways to the top 1 per cent. We know what that would do to emergency room wait times. We are working to make sure that we're increasing staff, we're increasing mental health supports, and we're increasing front-line service providers because that supports Albertans.

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

Victims of Crime

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The recent case of a 28-year-old indigenous woman who was brutally attacked by serial violent offender Lance Blanchard rocked Alberta and highlighted some of the serious concerns within victims' supports. This young victim was thrown in jail, forced to ride back and forth from jail shackled and in the same vehicle as the man who raped and almost murdered her. Given that this woman was not referred to victims' services at all and had no contact with a victims' support worker between June 2014 and 2015, can the government please tell us what they're doing to ensure that this never happens again?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the absolutely important question. I think all members on all sides of this House were incredibly disturbed to learn about that case, as was the public. The government was extremely concerned. That's why we moved expeditiously to launch two different reviews, one performed by an outside agency, by Roberta Campbell, and another one internally to review our policies to ensure that we're doing better as we move forward. We have been working with our partners in victims' services to ensure that we are closing those gaps because, as the member identifies, that was a concern in this case.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The story of this young woman could have ended so differently if she would have had the support system around her in order to help her. This was an overwhelming, terrifying situation. Given that the report mandated by this government following the tragic incident recommended the development of a centralized victims' services mode that operates independently of Edmonton police and the RCMP, has the minister consulted with the relevant stakeholders on this recommendation, and what was the feedback?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and again to the member for the absolutely critical question. We have had the opportunity to speak with our partners in victims' services. We have been dealing with them on a number of recommendations from the office of the Auditor General with respect to the victims of crime fund as well. It is true that Roberta Campbell's report did reference this and suggest a change in the way in which we do business. We have hundreds of volunteers throughout the province working very, very hard to provide those services. Sometimes there are differences in the needs in different rural communities, because of the size sometimes, so . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mrs. Aheer: The victims of crime fund is meant to be used to help fund and support those that have been impacted by crime, and given that the former Auditor General highlighted that the government had no plan to spend the tens of millions of dollars sitting in surplus in the victims of crime fund for over two years and given that the current amount is \$65 million sitting in that fund, \$30 million earmarked for reserve purposes, and given that the government promised it in the spring of 2018 – Mr. Speaker, it's the spring of 2018 – where's the plan, and when will that be public?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and again to the member for the important question. The member is absolutely correct. For over a decade a surplus has been accumulating in that victims of crime fund. When we came into office, the Auditor General was looking at this issue. He made a series of recommendations, and we were looking to move forward on that. Obviously, an intervening event was the report from Ms Campbell, that suggests a move in rather a different direction. We have been consulting with individuals in the area and working with those victim-serving agencies. This file is absolutely critically important, and the government absolutely must get it right.

Service Alberta and Status of Women Minister's Remarks

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, a video was circulating showing a terrible racist tirade by a person in, I believe, Lethbridge, the sentiments of which I'm sure we all condemn. The Minister of Service Alberta and Status of Women issued a tweet earlier today apparently trying to offer sympathetic context to the racist tirade. Will the government agree with me that this message posted by the minister was unbecoming of a minister of the Crown?

Ms Hoffman: Absolutely, and so does the minister, Mr. Speaker. She has apologized and since removed the remarks, and our government unreservedly apologizes to all Albertans for the remarks that were posted. There is no excuse for racist, bigoted comments in the province of Alberta. Our government is determined to make sure that we combat racism and unreservedly apologizes for the minister's remarks, as she did on the Internet as well just a few minutes ago.

Mr. Kenney: I appreciate that thoughtful response by the hon. the minister.

Mr. Speaker, given that last week the *Edmonton Journal* reported Anti-Semitism on the Rise in Alberta and given that the Minister of Service of Alberta and the Status of Women posted: "This is very concerning. The conservative movement in Alberta and Canada . . . need to be held accountable" for this rise in anti-Semitism, will the government agree with me that such comments are unbecoming of a minister of the Crown?

Ms Hoffman: Those comments were inappropriate, and they were removed. Our minister also apologized.

We are working closely with our friends in the Jewish community, and the Premier was recently recognized for the work with B'nai Brith. We certainly look forward to working with all members of Alberta, and we are fighting to make sure that we have a more just and inclusive society for us all.

Mr. Kenney: I appreciate, again, that answer, Mr. Speaker. Given those comments will the minister undertake to encourage all members of the Assembly, including ministers of the Crown, to avoid divisive remarks publicly in social media that divide people on the basis of race or ethnicity?

Ms Hoffman: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. I think all Albertans should be living with a desire to show that they are an accepting, loving, and inclusive society. We certainly are engaging in that work, and we encourage not just all members of the government caucus but all members of this House and all Albertans to do that as well, not just through their remarks or through their outward expressions but also in their thoughts and in their actions. We're going to continue to work to make sure that we have an inclusive Alberta and welcome all Albertans in doing that work in partnership with us.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Climate Change and Agriculture

Mr. Rosendahl: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know producers see first-hand that the climate is changing. This year winter came earlier, and spring came later. We also see extreme storms and unpredictable precipitation. How is the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry helping producers deal with the effects of a changing climate?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Climate change is a growing threat, and it's already having an impact in rural Alberta. As a government we are proud to be taking actions to fight this and to support Albertans through the climate leadership plan. We refuse to leave farmers to deal with this on their own as the problem worsens. The opposition prefers to stick their head in the sand and chooses to ignore this. To ignore climate change means jeopardizing the entire industry.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Rosendahl: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. How is the minister helping producers adapt to climate change and become leaner and cleaner, thereby reducing their emissions and spending fewer hard-earned dollars on fuel, fertilizers, and other high-carbon inputs?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We provide substantial support through the Agriculture Financial Services Corporation, providing subsidized assistance in the event of extreme weather or market variations. Hundreds of farms benefit from AFSC assistance. As part of our preventive efforts we offer many business support programs to farmers and recently injected \$81 million into energy efficiency programs. Most of this recent funding comes from the carbon levy being reinvested in rural Alberta. We also provide an abundance of expertise through Ag and Forestry department staff on how producers can respond to new issues and make their operations even more efficient.

2:40

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Rosendahl: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Beyond programs, how else does your ministry continue to ensure that farms in Alberta continue to be profitable?

Mr. Carlier: Mr. Speaker, since day one this government has taken a position against the reckless cuts proposed by the opposition. As the climate continues to change, markets shift and new pests and diseases emerge. Farmers need a supportive government now more than ever. If the opposition were making program and insurance decisions in the province, farmers could expect a 20 per cent cut to everything that is available to them now. Ag services boards would see an \$11.4 million cut. It would mean privatizing AFSC, crippling farms with huge hikes in costs and fees. Also, all the opposition could do is to give tax breaks to their rich friends.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. members, in 30 seconds we'll continue with the Routine.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On June 1, 2017, the Standing Committee on Families and Communities was deemed by the Assembly to be the special committee for the purpose of conducting a comprehensive review of the Missing Persons Act pursuant to section 13 of the act. As chair of the committee it is my honour to table five copies of the committee's report of the review of the Missing Persons Act. Copies of the report are also available through the committee office and online.

Thank you.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Government House Leader I would like to give oral notice of a motion for the next Order Paper, that motion being:

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Government Motion 16 is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the motion, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the motion shall be put forthwith.

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have in my hand here five copies of a May 2 Graham Thomson article which refers to the motion that was just talked about, where it says that the opposition may dread the idea of having "such an outspoken truth-speaker as Lorne Gibson" when it comes to the opposition opposing Mr. Lorne Gibson's appointment.

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

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table five copies of Controversial Nominee Named for Alberta's First Election Commissioner, Tasked with Rooting Out 'Dark Money.'

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

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite five copies of the mandate letter sent from the Premier to the Minister of Education outlining the work that is to be done to address racism in Alberta and the timeline, which dictates that that work was to be completed by last fall.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of an article in an obstetrics publication from the Faculty of Nursing, University of Alberta; nursing and midwifery in London, U.K.; and advanced specialty health studies, Mount Royal college, Calgary, Alberta. The results: "For women who chose midwifery care, an average savings of \$1172 per course of care was realized without adversely affecting maternal or neonatal outcomes." This is in particular for the Health minister.

Mr. Speaker, I have two more. This is, again, another report done by a medical journal. The conclusions read: "Our findings should reassure health planners and policy makers that there are not deferred excess costs associated with planned home birth with a registered midwife."

One more, Mr. Speaker, this one being from Maternity Care in Alberta, written by the Alberta Association for Safe Alternatives in Childbirth. The report highlights:

This difference in approach translates into an average cost savings of just over \$540 per in hospital midwifery birth and a savings of \$2,055 for out of hospital births when compared to uncomplicated vaginal birth with an obstetrician. Midwives offer both high quality and continuity of care, relieving some of the burden on the healthcare system while also offering cost savings.

I would like to add that that would be a significant cost savings when multiplied by the number of women in this province that choose a midwife as an option.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite five copies of two articles that I would like to table. The first one is by Dr. Frank Wolak. He's the director of the program on energy and sustainable development. He's also the Holbrook working professor of commodity price studies in the department of economics at Stanford University. He has a PhD from Harvard, and his research focuses on the design and the regulation of energy markets.

The second document I'd like to present is an actual 19-year study of a capacity versus energy-only market on a case study based in the country of Chile, which turns out to be a country where it was fairly easy to separate the two out, and it makes clear that capacity markets are actually more costly and unstable on the grid than just a plain energy-based market.

Thank you.

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, I have a report here from ATB: Alberta's Still Not the Economic Driver It Once Was. It talks about the annual unemployment rate jumping above the national average in 2017 for the first time since 1988. So much for the talk in this House that there is a recovery. It's a jobless recovery.

Thank you.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

Bill 13

An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future

Mrs. Pitt moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future, be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

[Adjourned debate on the amendment May 7: Mr. Feehan]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After 44 years in the political wilderness governing must have looked so easy to the NDP. Sometimes it is. The way forward is clear, the public supports you, and the decisions you make are clear. But as this government has figured out, that's simply not how governing usually works. The decisions are almost never clear, nor are they easy, and there are always unintended consequences. There are enough pitfalls and obstacles for government to avoid that it shouldn't go about creating new ones. But this is exactly what this NDP government did, and I can only conclude that the NDP is so ideologically opposed to market-based electricity generation that it couldn't help itself but start to meddle and muddle about, all in the name of renewable energy.

Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that the system we had was working, and it was working well. It was the NDP – the NDP – that have made electricity much more expensive. Under the market system the electricity producers held the risk and consumers, Albertans, enjoyed lower prices as a result. A capacity market will make electricity more expensive for consumers by transferring more risk away from generators.

2:50

Mr. Speaker, I found this interesting tidbit on the website of the Alberta Electric System Operator, or AESO, under the heading Market Basics: Guide to Understanding Alberta's Electricity Market. "The wholesale electricity market in Alberta is currently an 'energy-only' model, meaning that generators are only paid for the energy they produce, not how much they are capable of producing." So we have a system whereby producers are paid for electricity that they produce, and we are moving to a system that pays producers based on how much power they could or might produce.

I believe that Frank Wolak explained it best in his 2004 Stanford University report entitled What's Wrong With Capacity Markets? Dr. Wolak wrote: "Consumers want cars, not automobile assembly plants. They want point-to-point air travel, not airplanes. They want a loaf of bread, not a bakery." When Albertans get up in the morning and turn on the lights, they expect electricity, not the ability and overcapacity to create electricity, Mr. Speaker, and fortunately the electricity market that we had – that we had – successfully delivered Albertans' electricity for the best price. When Albertans turned the light switch on, there was always a steady, reliable current there to ensure that our lights stayed on, our homes were heated, especially on January 15, and our refrigerators kept our food from spoiling.

Before this government came to power, it had long ago decided that it was going to phase out coal and shutter our most efficient, cleanest burning power plants decades – decades – ahead of the federal government's deadline. The existing federal deadline had Alberta phasing out 12 of our coal-fired generating plants by 2029. We knew this wouldn't cause much volatility because we had planned for it and the generating plants were nearing the end of their lives in many cases anyway. What the NDP did was demand, insist, force six of the newest and most efficient coal power plants to be shuttered well before the federal agreement allowed. Some of these coal plants, Mr. Speaker, were practically brand new. Keephills 3 was supposed to run to 2061, Genesee 3 to 2055.

This ideological decision cost Albertans \$1.4 billion just so that we can shut these coal plants early and convert them to natural gas. Mr. Speaker, I shudder to think that with our system now headed toward 70 per cent reliance on natural gas electricity generation – that's a complete redundancy necessary for the NDP government's plan to have 30 per cent renewables, so another 30 per cent, where natural gas will be the backup – our youth, our families, and our communities are so subject to volatility if the price of natural gas doubles, triples. And it's been there in the past.

On top of that cost is the fact that coal to natural gas conversion is not as efficient as brand new natural gas power plants. We could have transitioned our system to natural gas over the long term by having new gas-only plants replace coal plants as these coal-powered plants ended their life cycle in 2061 and 2055. Instead, we are left with a more expensive option and less efficient gas power plants. No matter which way you slice this, we are going to end up paying more, receiving less, and driving Albertan industry, billions of dollars of wealth and tens of thousands of jobs, out of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, what is more, a full accounting has not yet been done. No one knows just how much the NDP's poor decision-making has cost or will cost Albertans. The United Conservative Party Official Opposition has written the Auditor General requesting that his office investigate, with a full-cost accounting of the NDP's electricity fiasco and report back to the Legislature. Albertans, taxpayers, communities, and our youth deserve to know exactly what this NDP boondoggle is going to cost them.

What's even more mind blowing is that AESO's own modelling showed that this government's renewable electricity program

would actually decrease the overall revenue needed for all generators to recoup investment and earn a profit. Mr. Speaker, what does that mean in layman's terms? What it means is less investment in our electricity generation system, less reliability, and higher prices, a no-win everywhere for Albertans.

In his 2016 report to government the AESO said:

Without investment in new firm generation . . . to replace retiring coal-fired electricity, the market will be unable to support increasing volumes of intermittent renewables and provide a healthy reserve margin to manage through a wide range of system conditions. System reliability will be compromised.

System reliability will be compromised in the middle of July, in the middle of January. It's amazing that we are subjecting ourselves and our families to this.

Despite this warning the government charged ahead and legislated that the electricity system must have 30 per cent renewables anyway. The NDP purposely compromised what was a world-class, sustainable, and reliable electricity system for an ideological fool's errand. Without guaranteeing that natural gas peaker plants would be built to produce electricity when the sun doesn't shine and the wind doesn't blow, the government has completely, on their own, manufactured the need for a capacity market.

Mr. Speaker, if the government had continued to do nothing in response to their invasive meddling, the \$1,000 per megawatt hour cap on electricity prices would have had to rise to \$5,000 per megawatt hour just to attract the investment needed to make the system reliable. The NDP have now given Albertans a choice, a choice between high electricity prices and high risk or higher electricity prices with lower risk. What a terrible choice, all because they have tried to force renewables into the market and close coal-powered plants early.

As I mentioned, Mr. Speaker, governing is tough. Often the choice is between two bad options, and you have to choose the one that's less bad. However, this government created the situation, created the bad options, where the people of Alberta are left with two bad choices. They did have a choice not to meddle in the electricity generating system in the first place, a choice they should have made, could have made, but didn't. We are where we are because this government couldn't help but make an irresponsible, ideologically based decision that is not in the best interests of Albertans.

This all could have been avoided. It's incredibly upsetting and exasperating to see Alberta in this position when it all so easily could have been avoided. I don't support this government's irresponsible and ideological meddling in what was a perfectly reliable and inexpensive electricity generation system, a system now, Mr. Speaker, where the costs will be billions and billions of extra dollars for years and years down the road and a loss of reliability. It was a perfectly reliable and inexpensive electricity generation system, and I certainly do not support their attempts to hide their bad decisions from Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, I will be voting against this bill, and I encourage all of my colleagues to do the same. Thank you.

The Speaker: Under 29(2)(a), the hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Just to confirm that it's under 29(2)(a)?

Ms Phillips: Yes. Mr. Speaker, there were a lot of half-baked statements in the hon. member's comments; in fact, when it comes to renewables, probably a baker's dozen worth of mistruths and misstatements.

But, you know, we'll start with the phase-out of coal. The member claims that they are efficient and the cleanest burning, perhaps, of coal, but we have a number of lower emission ways to generate electricity in this province. I'm wondering if the hon. member is not looking at those because he simply doesn't believe in the science of climate change, that greenhouse gas emissions actually do cause anthropogenic climate change, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, the hon. member has gone on the record several times indicating that he does not understand the science of climate change, so I'm wondering if that's what's behind some of his statements.

3:00

Mr. Speaker, leaving aside climate change for a moment, you know, when his own leader was part of the cabinet that gazetted the regulations to phase out coal, in there there were statements around the hundreds of millions of dollars that would be saved in the health care budget due to phasing out those plants. I'm wondering if the hon. member would restart the coal plants, or if it is in fact the position of the Conservatives that they would restart those coal plants and take on all of that pollution and those health care effects. That's not some kind of hoax perpetrated by the Chinese, as the hon. member seems to think that climate change is. The health care costs and the effects of burning coal are well documented. If he has questions about that, then he can ask his own leader because he sat in cabinet, the same cabinet that gazetted those regulations. Those facts are right there for him to see. Or he could go and talk to any health care provider, emergency room doctor, the asthma society of Canada, for example, a number of other folks, the Lung Association and others.

I'm wondering if they will reverse those agreements, Mr. Speaker, if they would commit to doing that. I'm wondering if they would commit to reversing the capacity market. This is something that if you want to talk about uncertainty and investor uncertainty, this would send all of that investment capital that is looking at new natural gas investments, looking at options in hydro, looking at the renewables climate into quite a tailspin. I'm wondering if the Conservatives can go on the record right now and commit to reversing the capacity market.

I'd also like to ask, given that there were so many misstatements – and you can't glaze them over; they were just wrong – around renewables in there, if the hon. member would like to go on the record and reject the thousands of new jobs that are coming into his riding and into his economic region as a result of the lowest cost procurement of renewables in Canadian history, Mr. Speaker, that are directly benefiting his own constituents.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to my hon. colleague the minister for rising and being involved in the debate. I guess where I want to start is that the Alberta government's year-end is March 31, and our government put in a system where the ratepayer is capped, capped at 6.8 cents. But capped by who is what's important. Capped by the taxpayer. Subsidized by the taxpayer. What's amazing to me: the ratepayer has a cap, meaning the most they'll pay is 6.8 cents for the cost of their electricity, but the poor taxpayer doesn't have a cap. If the cost of electricity goes through the roof, the taxpayer and the ratepayer, who are often the same thing, will just end up paying the higher cost of this NDP boondoggle but in a more indirect, inefficient, noncompetitive way.

Mr. Speaker, why I mention March 31 is that I think it was April 8, and already the taxpayer was subsidizing the ratepayer in the province of Alberta. I think it was \$8 million or \$9 million.

Mr. Panda: \$9 million.

Mr. Barnes: Nine million dollars. Thank you. Eight days into our year. Already this capacity, this boondoggle of a system that the NDP government put in, had resulted in the hard-working youth, the hard-working job providers, the hard-working wealth creators of our province having to dig into their pockets in an unintended way and pay, pay for the cost of this boondoggle, pay for the cost of this fast, ideologically driven I want to call it overexposure to natural gas. As I mentioned in my comments . . . [Mr. Barnes' speaking time expired]

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just want to take some time today to talk on Bill 13 here, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future. Of course, as usual the government has come up with a good name to describe their bill and all sorts of rosy outlooks because of this bill. But let's be certain about one thing. Everything this government has done having to do with electricity has been a failure. This government from the start, when they increased the carbon tax and started the shutdown of coal, everything they have done has caused problems in the electricity market. We've seen the problems with the Balancing Pool and the companies returning their contracts to the Balancing Pool and how the government had to pass legislation in order to bail out the Balancing Pool. Every single thing this government has touched has either damaged the electricity market or has been to try to fix the problems that they've created by the bills that they initially passed.

There's one thing we can be certain of, Mr. Speaker. The prices of electricity are going up. There's only one way that this ideology goes, and that drives electricity costs up. We've seen it happen in Ontario in huge ways, and this government seems to be wanting to go down the same path. Now, it's crazy to me to think that we have such an energy-rich province here in Alberta, and this government is talking about importing energy from other areas. This doesn't make any sense.

Now, another thing that doesn't make sense is that this government talks about, you know, wind power, generating electricity from the wind. They talk about it like it's something that's never been done in Alberta. That's just not true. There've been wind generators in Alberta for years. In fact, some of the first ones that were started are actually being decommissioned now because they've fulfilled their lifespan. It's just amazing to me that this government comes up with these things like it's some new, incredible revelation that's never happened before, and it's just not true. It's been going on, but this government wants to push ahead and force the market to do what it wouldn't do naturally. Of course, when you do things like that, somebody has to pay. Who's going to pay, Mr. Speaker? Albertans are going to pay for this. When natural gas plants that are producing electricity are shut down, presently they cost nothing to Albertans, but under this plan when they're shut down, Albertans will still be paying for them. Albertans will be paying whether these plants are working or not.

Now, the only thing we're certain of, of course, is that prices will be getting more expensive. We've seen this already. This government has brought in a cap on the price of electricity, but they put it in at over twice the price of what it is. Obviously, there was an expectation that the prices were going to double or more in order to have any benefit of a cap. Of course, Mr. Speaker, what happens when the cap is reached? What happens then? If the companies need to charge that much money to make a profit or to keep going, when they hit the cap, who's going to pay for it then? Who's going to pay

for that electricity to keep coming in? Well, it doesn't matter whether Albertans are paying for electricity or whether they're paying a tax that's funnelled back into these companies generating this electricity. It's still the same people that are paying. That's Albertans.

This government has to quit trying to convince Albertans that there's some magic here that creates a situation where they put a cap on it and all of a sudden it just doesn't cost anymore. It still costs. If the company has to have a return on the investment higher than that cap, then somebody has got to pay for it. Of course, there is only one person paying for electricity in Alberta, and that's Albertans. This will result in paying for electrical generating capacity that is not being used. Whether the electricity is being generated, the power is going to be paid for; that capacity is going to be paid for.

Now, AESO demands a 15 per cent reserve margin, and of course wind and solar cannot be used to factor into this margin. You know, these other things, wind and solar, can't be factored into that because they're not dependable. Solar doesn't work when it's dark, and wind doesn't work when it's not blowing. So there are several issues with this situation that we find ourselves in, and, again, it all started because of this government's ideology of driving through the electricity market and thinking that they can force fixes on the economy.

3:10

I think we all agree that there could be some tweaks made and some fixes made, but this government has decided to change the fundamental way electricity is generated and distributed in Alberta. That's just a dangerous road to go on, especially when they don't fully understand the market. They didn't understand that these contracts were returned to the Balancing Pool. They didn't understand that. They just thought: oh, that's no big deal. Well, it turned into a big deal. The contracts were returned; the government sues the energy companies. That's a pretty big deal, especially when some of these energy companies were owned by Albertans. Then we have the Alberta government suing another Alberta-owned, taxpayer-owned company. There's just a double whammy when it comes to the effects of a government that can't see how the market works and feels that they can just run roughshod over everybody and force everything to happen when, really, these things are intricately related.

Now, Bill 13 amends the Renewable Electricity Act to make FEOC not applicable to renewables. FEOC is the rules of fair, efficient, and openly competitive electricity markets. This bill wants to take away rules of fair, efficient, and openly competitive electricity markets. Now, for a government that pretends to be open and transparent, they bring in legislation to remove that, especially when it comes to renewables. It places merchant wind and potentially future renewable electricity projects at risk by doing that. Mr. Speaker, I mean, I don't understand how this government feels that taking away rules of fair, efficient, and openly competitive electricity markets is somehow going to benefit Albertans.

Now, the NDP government announced the creation of a capacity market in November 2016. Bill 13 is not about renewables per se. It's about financing coal-to-gas conversions, new natural gas generation, combined-cycle gas, and backup for renewables, which is simple-cycle gas in peaker plants. Bill 13 attempts to fix the mess from the coal phase-out, that is making the grid unstable with 30 per cent renewables under Bill 27. The AESO contracts renewables capacity through a bid process. Mr. Speaker, I mean, obviously, again, this is a situation where the government's previous bills have created problems. Of course, we come up with another bill to try to fix those problems. Obviously, there should have been more

thought, more consultation, and more listening to opposition and to other people in the market before they started down this road.

Now, we talked about that with the capacity market the retail electricity prices would be capped at 6.8 cent per kilowatt hour until 2021. Of course, that's not part of this bill, but if retail rates exceed that amount, the Alberta government will use carbon tax revenues to pay the difference. This government is somehow trying to convince Albertans that they're going to be saving money if they put a cap on the electricity rates. Of course, we see that this government is going to use the carbon tax revenues to pay the difference. Well, Mr. Speaker, the carbon tax is a tax on Albertans. Albertans pay the carbon tax. So suggesting that they're saving the money of Albertans by putting a cap on electricity rates and then paying the difference with Albertans' tax dollars doesn't save Albertans any money. It doesn't make things any better because it still costs Albertans.

There is \$74 million set aside in the budget for this year to do this. They've already planned that this is going to happen. They already know what's going to happen. They know that the price is going to go up. They know that it's going to go up above their cap. They know that they're going to have to take taxpayer dollars to fund this, to subsidize this process that they've undergone.

Now, the three generators who won phase 1 of the renewable electricity program are not eligible for capacity payments, only electricity payments, so when the price goes above 3.7 cents per kilowatt hour, these generators pay into the government. When the price goes below 3.7 cents, the government pays these wind farms from the carbon tax.

Again, Mr. Speaker, we have this situation where the government is taking Albertans' tax dollars and putting them into electricity. They've changed these rules, and they've tried to get all these different things going within electricity, with all the bills they've passed, without fully understanding what the effects are. Now we have a situation where, when the price is below 3.7 cents, the government pays the wind farms from the carbon tax. I mean, we've had wind farms here in Alberta for years, but now, of course, we have a government that figures that they have to take taxpayer dollars to make these things work.

Now, again, it's very clear that the NDP have made electricity more expensive, and it's going to go higher. What's happening is that it's transferring more risk away from the generators, but somebody has to pay, and the only person to pay is Albertans. I don't know how Albertans can have any trust in this NDP government when it comes to electricity because we've seen over and over again the cause-and-effect reaction of their bills and their legislation that they pass here.

Now, we've written to the Auditor General asking for a full-cost accounting of the NDP's electricity fiasco. I think Albertans deserve to know. They deserve to know how much this is costing. If they're going to suggest that the people of Alberta want this – and this is what they're saying, that Albertans want this, that this is the road that Albertans want them to go down – I don't know how Albertans can make a decision on whether they want this or not unless they know what the full cost is, unless they have all the facts. You can't make an informed decision without information. Mr. Speaker, this is, again, this government not wanting to provide all the information to Albertans so that they can make a decision on their own.

Now, we've given them plenty of opportunity. A lot of times we've given them opportunity to send these bills to committee so that we could gather more information. More people could present to the government and to opposition in a committee setting so that we could learn this information, and they could have input on the actual effects of this. But any time we ask for that to happen, the

government, of course, votes against it. They feel that they know everything, that they know better than everybody else, so they don't want to listen to anything more. They don't want to hear the truth, I guess. They just want to push ahead with their ideology and push ahead with these multiple bills that have caused damage to Albertans.

Now, Alberta was to phase out 12 coal-fired generating plants as per a federal agreement by 2029. Mr. Speaker, those coal-fired generating plants are ones that were reaching the end of their life. They were going to be shut down anyways, and that was kind of a bit of a natural progression. But when this government comes along and they decide that they're going to not only shut down those 12 but shut down the other six, the newer ones, the ones that are burning pretty clean and the ones that haven't had their life cycle run out on them, then that's what costs millions and millions of dollars. Again, who pays the millions and millions of dollars to shut down these coal-fired generating plants early? Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud under 29(2)(a).

3:20

Dr. Turner: Under 29(2)(a). I've been quite anxious, actually, to get a chance to participate in debate on this very important Bill 13. Bill 13 is actually going to enable the capacity market to function the way it was designed to do. I think it's been one of the great accomplishments of this government to get the capacity market in place, and this legislation is designed to make sure that it operates in the best way.

Now, there's a lot of hot air coming from the other side. That's a trite sort of a comment, but I think it's appropriate on this one. I want the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky to think about a few years ago, when there were rolling brownouts across this province. The city of Calgary, I think, was particularly affected by that, but even Edmonton was affected by it. I don't know if Grande Prairie suffered from it. I imagine they might have. Those brownouts actually were happening – I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, you experienced them in Medicine Hat although you've got an excellent electricity provider in the city of Medicine Hat, that maybe was able to avoid it. The way that the energy-only market was working in this province meant that some of the providers of electricity, actually, for their own economic benefit – they called it economic withholding – shut down power plants, and the government of Alberta had absolutely no way to ensure that that didn't happen.

I'm sure the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky remembers those brownouts. I'd like him to comment on whether or not his reaction to it is to go back to this energy-only market – he thinks the capacity market is the wrong way to go – whether or not we would actually be plunged back into those horrible summers of brownouts, when the air conditioning wouldn't work, when perhaps the air conditioning in his farm buildings would shut down because the power wasn't being supplied.

The other thing that I'd like to have him comment on – and he was talking about this at length towards the end of his comments – is the coal phase-out. I think it's one of the smartest things that the Conservative Party of Canada did when they were in power in Ottawa. They actually started it, and the leader of the UCP was part of the cabinet that decided that it was very important to speed up the phase-out of coal-powered electricity because of the health costs. I can tell you as a physician that those health costs are real. It causes problems with the health of all Albertans. It costs us money.

So on those two topics I'd like to hear the member's comments.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much. Speaking of hot air, I guess we do hear a lot of hot air from the other side on a lot of these issues. We have a government, again, that doesn't want to provide the facts to Albertans so Albertans can make decisions. You talked about rolling brownouts. Well, the same thing happens in capacity markets, too. The problem with the renewables is that the sun doesn't always shine and the wind doesn't always blow, so you have to have backup. There are extra costs there, but there is also extra risk there.

Now, again, with the coal phase-out – he talks about the coal phase-out – well, why don't we get the facts to the people and let them decide, you know? It cost \$1.36 billion to shut down these coal plants early, and this is even the newer plants that they want to shut down. Some of these plants were supposed to run until 2061. Genesee 3 was supposed to run to 2055. Of course, that's why it cost so much money to shut these plants down. Again, these are newer plants that are burning very clean.

I guess I don't understand why this government – we've asked for dollar figures on the cost of their electricity experiments that they're doing. Of course, I would presume that they've done some sort of study. If they hadn't, of course, that's very irresponsible. But, obviously, if they have these numbers, then provide them to us. Provide them to Albertans. Let's see them.

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

Mr. Gill: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak on this Bill 13, Alberta's electricity future, in second reading. In a few short years this NDP government's strict attachment to its ideology – and we can see that time and time again decisions are not made here based on rationale. Rather, it's on ideology, the way this government thinks and presumes that everything that has happened in Alberta was wrong before they came along. That's what they think. They have taken our electricity system down I don't even know which route, this wild ride, that creates a new mess at every turn in trying to create something.

Mr. Speaker, let me quote from the April 19, 2018, edition of the *National Post*, from a column by Kevin Libin.

Get ready, Alberta, because all the thrills and spills that inevitably follow when politicians start meddling in a boring but perfectly well-functioning electricity market in the name of pointless political symbolism are coming your way, next.

Well, this next step of political symbolism is Bill 13, which creates a capacity market to fix a multitude of NDP redesigns already.

We see many problems with this bill, not the least of which are the details for creating this new market in regulations. As we all know in this House, Mr. Speaker, that means that the NDP government, which has made such a mess of our system already, can do more shocking changes behind closed doors. You know what that means? It means that the legislators, who supposedly craft these rules, will learn about it at the same time as Albertans would. The NDP would just craft their own rules without consulting the stakeholders. I think history is on my side when I say that. The failure of this government to consult with the stakeholders on a number of other occasions: I don't think anybody can argue that. For those consumers, Mr. Speaker, the NDP changes so far have meant more government debt, to the tune of billions of dollars, and higher rates down the road for a long time.

It's not that the concept of a capacity market is bad. It is that regardless of the electricity market, electricity prices will go up. This NDP government repeatedly tells us that it is fighting for Albertan families and that it's making Alberta better for families and that they've got their backs. How is it possible when they

continue to play games with our perfectly run system which cost billions of taxpayers' dollars and which result in higher rates?

Mr. Speaker, let me say that the carbon tax does not help families either. We still have not seen any study presented by this government pertaining to the carbon tax. They have taken – I don't know – hundreds of millions of dollars from hard-working Albertans, and they still have to show what the impact of that is and the greenhouse gas emissions reduction. Well, I'd rather stick to Bill 13.

The carbon tax does not help families. We all know that. This supposedly caring, progressive NDP government has generated a regressive electricity system. The Member for Calgary-Glenmore spoke very passionately about their progressive government. When 200,000 people are sitting at home without work, I don't think that's progress. Like, 14 per cent of youth are sitting at home. I don't think that is progress, Mr. Speaker. A \$96 billion debt we're passing to the future generation: in my humble opinion, I don't think that's progress by any stretch of the imagination.

3:30

Again let's go back to Bill 13. After this bill, Mr. Speaker, Albertans are simply shaking their heads at it and saying: "Like, what is going on? What is this government up to again now?" They can't keep up with the changes this government brings. On this side of the House the Conservatives have been, like, blowing the whistle on the NDP's interference in our complex electricity system from the beginning, but they simply dismissed our concerns, and they dismissed Albertans' concerns because they think they always know best. I understand. They can dismiss our concerns. Like, you know, we're partisan parties. That's their duty, to ignore us. But they should not be ignoring the concerns of the people who sent us here.

We warned them not to introduce the carbon tax and apply it to heavy emitters. I mean, like, they never listen, so they forged on and moved, triggered a clause that allowed now unprofitable companies to hand back their power purchasing agreements. The NDP appeared to be taken by surprise that this was even a possibility. Lawsuits ensued – and they are not cheap, Mr. Speaker; I'm sure you came across a few lawsuits, like, in private life or something; I definitely have – in a short period of time, that we all predicted would come to pass and had to come to pass.

All that Albertans really know is that the unnecessarily purely ideological move is costing taxpayers a fortune, and it's a multibillion-dollar fortune. Albertans know that the only party to blame here is the New Democratic Party, the NDP. Most Albertans don't know more than that. That's all they know, that the NDP is creating this mess and that they're going to blame them. They don't feel the need to move more than that. They're not happy with the changes, especially in this thing.

When they hear about yet another change to fix the last one that went wrong, they just roll their eyes, like: "You know what? We just can't wait for our chance to, you know, make our voice heard," especially the hard-working people in Calgary-Greenway, Mr. Speaker. Every time I'm stopping at Tim Hortons or getting gas at Petro or something, they're just, like, "When is the next election?" I'm, like: "I don't know. That's up to the government, right?" Albertans are ready for that. We feel that it is our job, until that occurs, to continue to be the best guardians we can as opposition, to hold this government to account, and we need to guard their hard-earned tax money, which this government is trying to take every opportunity they get. We need to guard their lifestyle, and we need to protect the future of the province they love so dearly. They helped build this province.

Anyways, let's get back to the repercussions of Bill 13, Mr. Speaker. I've only mentioned one of the many interferences in the market that have brought us to this state of looking at the capacity market. If you remember, Bill 27, the Renewable Electricity Act, was brought forward despite the warning from AESO that it would compromise the electricity system. And what happened? The NDP chose not to allow for a guarantee that the peaker plant would be built to produce electricity when renewables were not co-operating. You know, the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky said that the sun and the wind: we know that they're not always working. The sun is not always shining. The wind is not always blowing. That's why the industry has been calling for a capacity market.

If all of this sounds like echoes of the Ontario market to you, Mr. Speaker, you are correct. We have all seen the electricity prices in Ontario. I remember, like, when the Prime Minister was doing a town hall, and this hard-working lady at the town hall – most Canadians would have seen the video – was basically crying and saying that she cannot afford to pay her utility bills. This seems like we're on the same path.

Mr. Kevin warned about this problem, too, in the same column I quoted from earlier, and let me do it again. "Whenever progressive politics infests the electrical grid, people always pay for it in the end." That was Mr. Kevin's comment. He notes that people either pay through their power rates, or they pay it through their taxes.

The NDP makes it all sound great, with the rate caps and such, but if the rates are capped, the money has to come from somewhere. That means that this NDP government, Mr. Speaker, slides into another pocket to pay for its experiment. Last month I think it's, like, \$9 million if my memory is correct, and the government has put aside \$76 million for the whole year.

Now, the government's talk about, you know, building schools and building infrastructure – I mean, a simple question to all of us: how many teachers can we hire with \$75 million? How many schools can we build? Well, they all would, say, like, average \$40 million to \$50 million, depending on the size and location, each school that can be built. So why are we throwing this money away rather than putting the taxpayers' money towards the infrastructure this government claims that we need? We do need that infrastructure.

So it just tacks onto it. It's a \$54 billion debt, which we all know will be close to, like, \$100 billion by the time of the next term under this NDP government. Even for those who expected an NDP government to be costly and did not care about the origins of the funds, it is so reckless. This NDP government has been tragic for Alberta, even the people who thought, like: "Okay. We can look at Manitoba. We can look at, like, the late '90s in British Columbia. We can look at before the Saskatchewan Party." In Saskatchewan people say, like: wherever this style of government goes, they just, like, mess things up. Even they are saying: wow; this is beyond our expectation.

Anyways, Mr. Speaker, I'm just going to wrap it up. In the end, what I would like to do is, like – you know, we're hoping that when it comes to Bill 13, this government will give it another thought and try to do the right thing for the taxpayers and Albertans. We'll find out shortly if they really care to protect Albertans because right on their website it says: fighting to protect what is important for you and your family. That's their website, on the Alberta NDP site. So if you really claim and believe in that, let's do the right thing and put the partisan politics aside and start actually serving the hard-working people of Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Are there any questions under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Calgary-Greenway? The Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

3:40

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yes. I enjoyed listening to my colleague's comments here on some of the problems with the electricity market and the NDP's, you know, plans, that have changed things fundamentally and, obviously, cost Albertans more. He mentioned about the coal-fired generating plants being shut down. I think it's important to note that coal conversion to natural gas is not as efficient as brand new combined-cycle natural gas plants. Of course, by forcing these companies to shut down early the coal-fired part of their plants, they're somewhat forced to try to recover some money out of that investment. So instead of waiting for the life cycle of the plant to run out and then just building new plants, they're encouraged by this program to build less efficient generating plants using natural gas.

Regardless, it seemed like the NDP wanted to force the renewable electricity on the Alberta market. But AESO ran many models, including for high use of intermittent renewables to generate electricity in Alberta, and what this modelling showed is that the renewable electricity program will decrease the revenue needed for all generators to recover investment and earn a profit, thus deterring investment.

Mr. Speaker, by deterring investment – that's something that, we've seen, is a recurring theme in Alberta here since this government has been involved with governing this province. They seem to be always meddling with things and always causing stress in the investment community, and therefore the investment just doesn't want to come here to Alberta. These people are still investing money. They're just investing it somewhere else, not in Alberta. We keep warning the government about these things, about the messages they send the investment community. Of course, when the investment community spends money in Alberta, it creates jobs, and these jobs, of course, make life better for Alberta. This government talks about making life better for Alberta, but of course they don't. They bring in things like the carbon tax. They increase the cost of electricity. They do all these things that do anything but make life better for Albertans.

You know, I just want to hear my colleague talk again about some of these additional costs that are affecting Albertans and how this meddling with the electricity market is causing problems for Albertans.

They do something, they bring in the carbon tax, they send all these shock waves into the investment community, and of course every time they meddle with something, there are unintended consequences. Now, they're always warned about the consequences of what they do, but they never seem to listen. They just bulldoze ahead anyway. If it fits into their ideology, they bulldoze ahead, and if it doesn't fit your ideology, then you send it to committee to die. That seems to be the way this government operates. I think we have, you know, a problem here, and we need to make sure that as this government moves ahead with the different bills and legislation, it doesn't have these unintended consequences. Over and over, Mr. Speaker, we try to warn the government. We try to have things go to committee so that there can be more input, so that this government can have an opportunity to learn the full effects of their legislation.

With that, I would just like to have the hon. member kind of respond to that and his opinions and his thoughts on that issue. Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my hon. colleague from Grande Prairie-Smoky. You're right, sir. Albertans are actually getting frustrated with this government's unintended

consequences in anything they do, basically. I mean, I just touched on one saga, its ideological experiment with Alberta's electrical system, but there are many, many more.

I mean, like, let's look at the climate change plan. It's another experiment that has baffled and infuriated Albertans. The root of it, of course, is the carbon tax. We still have to see the study of, you know, what it has caused environmentally. What kind of gain it has caused we still have to see. Mr. Speaker, Albertans are waiting to put a delete button on it because that's what the hard-working people in Calgary-Greenway tell me. They're, like: why do I have this carbon tax on my bill? One of my friends actually is in the towing business. He had to pass that tax . . .

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak to Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future. The bill before us today is a very important bill as far as my constituency is concerned, but in order to address the issues that are found in Bill 13 and how it's affected my constituency, I believe it's necessary to place this bill into the context of what has happened over the last two or three years in my constituency.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta was going to phase out 12 coal-fired generating power plants as per federal agreement by 2029. Instead, the New Democratic government here has decided that it would phase out the additional six remaining coal-fired power plants that would have operated past 2029. They have decided to phase them out early. This decision has not only negatively affected the coal and the electricity workers in my constituency but also businesses like Capital Power, also at a cost to all Albertans. The NDP have cost us approximately \$1.36 billion in their attempt to shut down these coal plants early and to convert them to natural gas.

Today I had the pleasure of attending the annual general meeting of ATCO Canadian Utilities. At that AGM they talked about the fact of having to shut down their Sheerness power plant. While it was going to shut down earlier than, say, the Genesee power plant in my constituency, there was still going to be significant cost to the early shutdown of that facility. Indeed, some of these coal plants that are going to be shut down are practically brand new. Keephills 3 was supposed to run till about 2061 and Genesee 3 to 2055. That's a continued and long lifespan that was going to go past 2030, and the costs of stranding those assets are going to be significant.

The decision of the NDP government to move away from coal-fired generation to generation of electricity by natural gas and/or renewable energy generation like wind or solar power has greatly impacted my constituency. Currently in my constituency of Drayton Valley-Devon I have the Genesee power plant. That's a coal-generated power plant. It's not just a power plant but one of the most efficient coal-burning electrical power plants in the world, so efficient that I'm aware of engineers that have come to my constituency from Germany, engineers that have visited and have studied the technology in this coal-burning power plant and are using that as a template to go back to Germany and begin transitioning away from nuclear energy and away from the renewable energy that they have pursued in Germany to this point, to go back to a stable, low-cost coal energy source. Ironical, isn't it?

I've toured Westmoreland Coal, that provides the coal for the Genesee power plant. I've seen the jobs that are created there by this mine, and I've seen the land reclamation that they have so diligently applied in my constituency. I've gone to the meetings of the workers that have been so concerned with how they are going to transition out of the jobs in coal, how they're going to try to transition and find new jobs and take care of their families in doing so. All of this economic and this personal pain is because this

government has decided to transition early to natural gas and renewables, by 2030.

3:50

This government has tried to justify their actions by claiming that shutting down coal will greatly improve the health of the people of Alberta. Yet, Mr. Speaker, in my constituency is the West Central Airshed Society. It was created after the Lodgepole blowout in the 1980s. They have continuously monitored the air in my constituency for well over 30 years. I have gone to their meetings, and I have looked at their annual reports, and what we've seen is that in fact the air has never been better than it is today in my constituency. We have in fact quintupled the amount of oil and gas and coal activity in my constituency over the past 30 years, yet today we have better air quality than we had 30-plus years ago. It's not my opinion; this is science. In fact, the air monitoring shows us that the air quality meets or beats all of the ambient air quality standards in Alberta.

The fact that phasing out Alberta's coal-generated power plants reflects a large portion of Alberta's electrical generation and capacity does not seem to register with this government. The fact that all of this economic pain to generate electricity by natural gas only marginally improves the reduction of greenhouse gas production and will have little to no effect on climate change does not seem to register with this government. The fact that we were already on track to phase out coal and that companies like Capital Power already had a plan for phasing out coal in an economical way that would provide a stable source of electricity to this province has yet to seem to have any impact on the actions of this government. This is the backstory of Bill 13 in my constituency. In my constituency it's all economic pain for no discernible environmental gain.

So what is Bill 13 going to do? Well, the New Democratic Party government here announced the creation of a capacity market in November 2016. We presently have an energy-only market which produces our electricity. Electricity-producing companies are paid solely based on the provision of the electricity that is consumed in an hourly wholesale market. This is an efficient system. It has produced some of the lowest energy prices for Albertans in North America. But the NDP have decided to move away from an energy-only market towards a capacity market.

Now, in a capacity market the companies that produce electricity are paid for the provision of energy in an hourly market and for the potential to generate electricity; in other words, a payment for potential generation at some point in the future. Supporters of a capacity market believe that a capacity market will ensure that there is sufficient investment in new generation capacity to keep the lights on and to reduce the price swings in the wholesale electricity market.

Bill 13 is really about financing coal-to-gas conversions, creating new natural gas generation and backup generation for renewable energy sources like wind and solar, that are nonbaseload sources of energy, or, in other words, peak power, therefore the need to provide simple-cycle gas or peaker plants.

Bill 13 is an attempt to fix up the mess that they've made of the coal phase-out, that has made the grid unstable and would make the grid unstable, by the setting of a 30 per cent renewable energy goal under Bill 27. The problem is that the renewable energy that the NDP have pursued, solar and wind, is peak power and cannot replace the baseload power of coal-generated electrical plants. In other words, Mr. Speaker, we cannot replace 30 per cent of Alberta's power supply with peak power like solar and wind and still maintain a stable electrical grid for Albertans.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I sometimes wonder where the NDP is going. I've had very good conversations with the Member for Leduc-Beaumont and with the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Because we share some of the same school boards, et cetera, we come into contact with each other quite often. It's a bit of a mystery to me. I'd love to be able to understand why the New Democrat government is not prepared to look at geothermal energy, which is baseload energy. I have been able to see from the figures from companies that have come to me and have proposed this to me where they are able to produce electricity from the heat energy of the ground, do so without government subsidies, and meet that 30 per cent energy from renewable resources yet from a baseload power source.

I just finished going to the ATCO Canadian Utilities AGM, where they were talking about taking solar and wind power – one of the problems with solar and wind is that you can't store the energy when it's not needed. When you've got wind power going at night, the energy is not needed. Yet they have been working in Australia on looking at taking that excess energy and putting it into hydrogen and then using abandoned pipelines to store the hydrogen, which is simply just a battery. That makes more sense than what we're doing here.

The hydroelectric dam that I have in my constituency is going to be building a second channel where they can take that same electrical energy that's being produced by renewables like solar and wind and use it to pump the water back into a second channel, where it can be used essentially as a battery to create energy again. That makes more sense than what this government is doing.

Bill 13 has significant problems. The energy direction that this NDP government has taken has created significant problems, that they're trying to address through Bill 13. As a result of the coal-fired generation phase-out and the push for renewable generation the NDP have significantly compromised the reliability of our electrical system. Therefore, in order to attract the necessary investment to replace the baseload lost from the coal and for future growth, Bill 13 will change Alberta's electricity market from an energy-only market to a capacity market. Mr. Speaker, the first step will be to auction off to companies a percentage of the energy market that each company will produce and at what price they will produce their energy in order to provide the electrical energy that Albertans will need. The capacity auction is targeted for late 2019, with the capacity market to be fully operational, in theory, by 2021.

Now, until the capacity market comes in, retail electricity prices will be and have been capped at 6.8 cents a kilowatt hour until 2021. If retail prices exceed that amount, that 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour, then this government has said that they will use the carbon tax revenues to pay for the difference in the price. That's why when we take a look at the budget that they have presented this year, Mr. Speaker, they have put aside \$74,310,000 – set aside in the budget this year – to cover the costs should they exceed the 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour, money that would not have to have been there had we stayed with an electricity market for . . .

4:00

The Speaker: Are there any questions under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon? The Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yeah. I was enjoying the comments from my colleague on these electricity boondoggles that this government has brought forward and the additional cost that it's costing Albertans. I guess I wanted to kind of touch on something here on AESO. We were talking earlier about how AESO ran many models, including high use of intermittent

renewables like wind and solar, of course, to generate electricity in Alberta. This AESO modelling showed that the decrease in revenue needed for all generation to recoup investment and earn a profit would deter investment.

Now, in October 2016 AESO created a report that said that system reliability will also be compromised. It says:

Without investment in new firm generation . . . to replace retiring coal-fired electricity, the market will be unable to support increasing volumes of intermittent renewables and provide a healthy reserve margin to manage through a wide range of system conditions. System reliability will be compromised.

Mr. Speaker, that's not from the Official Opposition; that's from AESO. That's who has done that report, and that's what their findings were.

When we look at what this government is doing and how they're ramming through this legislation and doing all these things that have hurt Albertans and hurt Albertans' pocketbooks with the renewables, what was the government's response to this AESO report? Well, Bill 27 was introduced in November 2016 and set the target for 30 per cent renewables.

Mr. Speaker, here we have a situation where the government has received good information from an organization that's not a political organization. It's not a partisan organization. They've received information from this organization. What did they do? They just ignored it. They just bulldozed past it. It doesn't fit their ideology, so: "We're going ahead with what we think. We're not going to listen to anybody. We're not going to listen to common sense or anything of the sort. We're going to do what we want."

The NDP purposefully compromised the electrical system's reliability and did this without a guarantee that the peaker plants would be built to produce electricity when the sun doesn't shine and the wind doesn't blow. That, of course, created the need for the capacity market. Because of this government's plans that they've decided to push ahead, that's what's created the situation where all of a sudden they need to do the capacity market.

Mr. Speaker, you know, I just want my colleague to kind of respond to that and to just give us a bit of an idea of what his feelings are as far as how this government has bulldozed ahead with this and not listened to organizations that have provided good advice for them. We'll just have him respond on that.

Thanks.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the hon. member for his question here. You know, I think that's probably one of the things that's most worrisome here. When this government gets information from nonpartisan sources like AESO, like the West Central Airshed Society, sources that don't rely on the opposition – obviously, they're not going to pay a whole lot of attention to the opposition – they simply won't pay any attention to those nonpartisan sources that know a whole lot more about this issue than members of the government do.

When AESO suggests that you're not going to have the financial capacity there to encourage people to continue building peaker plants and to be able to deal with the drop in energy production because of the wind and the solar problems and you don't listen to it and you continue down a path that's going to create problems, that's when you get the \$74 million that you have to set aside. It's not fair to Alberta taxpayers. We have a situation here where AESO – I mean, a capacity market, from everything that I've read, is very complex, and you have to have organizations like AESO and the AUC that will help to regulate a capacity market. You have to have

a series of regulations that will help this capacity market to actually function.

You know, one of the things that's missing in the discussion about this . . .

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Yao: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today to speak to the referral amendment on Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future. We have time and time again seen how the NDP government's destructive policies and disregard for Albertans have affected the economy, the job market, and just about every aspect of our lives.

Mr. Speaker, from Fort McMurray's perspective, the policies that this government has put in have affected us negatively on personal taxes, municipal taxes. The carbon tax alone, or – sorry – carbon levy, has impacted everything. Chasing away all the international companies from our region truly didn't help us. You know, it's really unfortunate. The policy to decide to do a review of our oil industry: that took you eight months, to decide that oil was good, and in that eight months you gave all the internationals a great amount of time to realize that they didn't see any future here, and they left.

It's unfortunate because a lot of those internationals actually had a lot of good Canadians, local boys and girls, working for them, and they took the cream of that crop, and they moved them to all their jurisdictions everywhere else in the world. My good Member for Calgary-Foothills knows a lot of those guys that left. And then they left themselves, those big companies. So it's unfortunate that your policies haven't been very positive for our province.

One of the insults to injury is that Albertans keep telling the government how this is impacting them, but the government just does not listen. This is one of the reasons that we need to tell the government that it's time to take a step back and send this bill to committee. Albertans need to have their voices heard. Their concerns need to be acknowledged, and considerations need to be made for issues that are insurmountable. I can predict that the government will tell us that they don't need to listen to Albertans, but this is the same type of attitude that led the NDP into the situation where they are now, where they have no other choice but to rush into a capacity market.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, I am referring to how they brought in bills 27 and 34 last session, rushed them into effect, and then bungled up the electricity file altogether. They changed the fundamental ways the electricity market operates and introduced instability and unpredictability. They caused volatility in the market, and it was no longer viable for Albertans. No Albertan should be kept out of the loop only to open up their power bill and be shocked by what's inside. Albertans should get their word in before the decision is made, not as feedback to the complaint department.

On this side of the House we've lost trust in the government's ability to fix what they've wronged in Alberta's electricity market. Last time they pushed through with their electricity bills, they did so despite warnings from the opposition, the same as we're doing now, and warnings from the AESO, the Alberta Electric System Operator, the operator mandated by legislation which connects generators with transmitters to run the electricity market and keep adequate electricity flowing. AESO ran many models, in fact, including the high use of intermittent renewables to generate electricity in Alberta, and as the operator that would arguably be best suited to provide guidance on this matter, they proceeded to find with their modelling that the renewable electricity program will

decrease the revenue needed for all generators to recoup investment and earn a profit.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Madam Speaker – wow; that was gender fluidity there – they warned that this would be a deterrent to investment, as we then went on to see, with stakeholders begging the government to take action to fix the chaos. As part of providing advice in order to ensure the best outcome for the electricity market, they released a report in October 2016, one month before the NDP came out with Bill 27, and warned them that the reliability of the system would be compromised. Obviously, they said it to deaf ears, just like I am now.

4:10

The report read:

Without investment in new firm generation (or equivalent but alternative sources of firm supply such as demand response, etc.) to replace retiring coal-fired electricity, the market will be unable to support increasing volumes of intermittent renewables and provide a healthy reserve margin to manage through a wide range of system conditions. System reliability will be compromised.

The government needed to listen then, but they didn't, and they need to listen now to the experts in the field, the stakeholders in the electricity market, and families across Alberta that have something to say about their power bills.

This is why I urge all my colleagues to support the amendment to send this bill to committee and have a thorough round of consultations done so that we can truly, truly analyze the consequences that this bill will have on everyone because it does affect everyone. It affects business people, it affects employers, it affects mom and dad, and it affects all of our neighbours. It's really disappointing.

Madam Speaker, back when they proceeded to push Bill 27 through despite the constant warnings, they had set a target for 30 per cent renewables. In doing so, they compromised the reliability of the entire electricity system in Alberta. They proceeded recklessly and with little foresight, without a guarantee that peaker plants would be built as backups to produce electricity when the sun doesn't shine and the wind doesn't blow. AESO had warned of compromised reliability for the electricity market, which fell upon deaf ears.

With the volatility and unpredictability of the market stakeholders such as generators, the AESO, the Market Surveillance Administrator, investors, and consumer groups demanded a capacity market. It seems that the prospect of all these stakeholders standing in unison against a poor government decision has forced the NDP to introduce a capacity market. However, they seem to be making the same mistakes as before. They seem to be rushing through it with short timelines and little input.

I have no doubt that you're taking lessons from your comrades in Ontario, but as you can see, what they did to their province wasn't the best. I ask that they slow down and consider taking input from those that will be most closely affected by this legislation. Albertans should not have to open their electricity bills to the shock and dismay of finding out that the government has gone and passed legislation that will affect their day-to-day lives.

I have a friend who used to work for the fire department up in Fort McMurray. He now lives in Airdrie. He sent me a little e-mail on Facebook, and he said: Tany, our bills have gone up \$300 from last year. He's got a family of, I believe, three children, ages, like, five to 13, in between there. That's disappointing when a family like that has to stomach that much in their bills. You know, \$300 is

a lot of money for some people. Maybe not for you guys because you're all raking it in, aren't you?

In the end, we simply do not trust that this government has the expertise on this file to be able to foresee all the effects this will have on the industry without proper consultation. They must be willing to slow down and take input. I thought we had taught you about consulting and speaking to Albertans. You claim to have gotten that consulting thing down pat, but then you throw something out like this. You really lack on that consultation. You lack on consultation that involves anything that relies on the economy and jobs and our industries, and that's a shame.

Due to the lack of former consultation they're now costing taxpayers \$1.36 billion for the early closing of the power plants in order to convert them to natural gas. This is not what consultation would have looked like. The people who will be out of work because they depended on those coal plants for employment in order to pay their mortgages and feed their families did not experience consultation. In fact, they did not hear a word from the government about what would happen to them once those plants shut down. Some of those plants are practically brand new. Keephills 3 was supposed to run until 2061 and Genesee 3 until 2055. We believe that taxpayers, who will be cleaning up this mess, have the right to their voice being heard by the government that they have elected. We have also asked that the Auditor General do a full-cost accounting of the NDP's whole electricity fiasco. In one way or another they must be accountable to Albertans.

In a completely different light, when the federal government came out with a reasonable and well-thought-out proposal to phase out 12 coal-fired generating plants, they would have done so by 2029, a much more sensible timeline, which allows proper transition plans to be put in place. They were mindful of families. Instead, this government would phase out the six remaining coal-fired power plants that would operate past 2029. Shameful. I'd like to know what kind of consultation they would have done on this and whether the stakeholders believe this would be an overall benefit.

Well, Madam Speaker, coal conversion to natural gas is not as efficient as brand new combined-cycle natural gas power plants.

[The Speaker in the chair]

But, Madam – Mr. Speaker. Oh, you pulled another fast one on me there, sir. You are the most fluid of fluid.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP forced this on Albertans way too fast. We have seen this bureaucratic style of top-down decision-making a lot over the last three years. They rush the implementation of a coal phase-out against warnings by all, and now they're rushing to fix their mistakes by implementing a capacity market. I urge this government to stop the rush and send this bill to committee, where its effects can be thoroughly examined, so that in a year's time we're not all playing cleanup once again.

The \$1,000 megawatt hour cap on electricity prices would have to rise to \$5,000 a megawatt hour in order for investment to be attracted to keep the system reliable. Can you stand your power bills going up five times the price? Or how about the monthly volatility of your bills? No one wanted the same electricity disaster as in Ontario, but this government could not politically afford Albertans' power bills being five times higher. This government is already costing taxpayers \$1.36 billion by shutting down these coal plants early and converting them to natural gas. The government was set on shortening that time frame. I'd like to know why this is so rushed, why it needs to be passed so quickly that it should not be thoroughly consulted on first. Instead of implementing the capacity market over three to six years, they're doing it over two years.

Mr. Speaker, this government has put in place a 6.8 cent per kilowatt hour cap, and they will subsidize your power bill should power prices rise over that 6.8 cents. However, they're going to be using tax dollars to pay down the rest of the power bills. Where do those tax dollars come from? I'll have you guys know, if you haven't clued into this already, that the ratepayer and the taxpayer are the same person. You're hitting all Albertans, and it's very unfortunate.

You know, I just find it amazing that you do attack our coal generation plants here. Quite honestly, when we look at a country like China, where the homes are heated with coal, a whole bunch of individual furnaces in every home all use coal. I can't help but wonder if when the Minister of Economic Development and Trade went to China, he thought of, like, perhaps selling them our gas and selling them our furnace technology to heat all those individual homes, because China is the biggest polluter in the world. Yes, you have billions of people who are using coal to heat their homes, and not all of those are high-efficiency burners. Those are ovens that they're heating their houses with. They are trying to put some gas in, but that's been unreliable, and for the last few winters they've had to fall back on coal, even the ones that did convert over to gas.

4:20

Anyways, back to the subject, sir. This is the government's roundabout way of taking money out of the pockets of Albertans without them knowing. Wind and solar energy are important, but they are not yet at the level where they can be interchangeable with coal or natural gas in terms of reliability and capacity. Alberta needs a steady, basic stream of electricity from baseload combined-cycle natural gas and simple-cycle natural gas obtained through peaker plants in order to begin to replace coal and to provide a backup necessary for renewable forms of energy.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills under 29(2)(a).

Mr. Panda: Yes, sir. I wanted my colleague from Fort McMurray to finish his thoughts about the coal-fired electric generation and other subjects he was talking about if he can.

The Speaker: I'm having a little difficulty hearing you, hon. member.

Mr. Yao: Why, thank you very much, my good engineer friend. He'd love to just hear me finish off my thoughts, and if I could, that would be wonderful.

Let me reiterate: Alberta needs a steady basic stream of electricity from baseload combined-cycle natural gas and simple-cycle natural gas in order to begin to replace coal and to provide the backup necessary for renewable forms of energy. The AESO has a requirement for a 15 per cent reserve margin, and wind and solar energy on their own are not reliable enough to meet that as they are too fickle in nature. The wind doesn't always blow, and the sun doesn't always shine.

It is clear that the government has not done enough consultation on this matter, and the electricity file is too important to all Albertans to just wait and see what happens. We need to send Bill 13 to committee and allow everyone impacted by this bill to have their voices heard. That's why I'm urging all of my colleagues from across the way to vote in favour of this referral amendment.

I thank you for your time, sir.

The Speaker: Any other questions under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll keep my comments brief. I think my colleagues have generally made most of the points that need to be made here, but I think they're well taken.

The members for Calgary-Foothills and Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo have made the point about why this bill is certainly flawed, why it's important to send it to committee for consultation. In general I believe that all bills should be sent to a committee for consultation. I rarely consider Ottawa to be a shining beacon of good parliamentary process, but when they can shame us, I think that there is something to be said for it.

I won't belabour the point, but I think that it's important for us to recognize that bills like this have an important impact on our economic future, on the ability of families and small businesses to live normal lives and to run normal businesses without undue burdens and the long-term impacts that this bill could have, as we see in Ontario. I would encourage all members of the House to support this amendment to refer the bill to a committee so we can hear from Albertans, small businesses, and those who are impacted by it.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there any other questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing and hearing none, the Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would rise to adjourn debate on this bill.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

The Chair: Hon. members, I'd like to call the committee to order.

Bill 9 Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act

The Chair: Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Thank you, Madam Chair. I spoke on this bill during second reading. I spoke to the two miscarriages I endured. I spoke to the fact that those miscarriages were not my choice, and I will refer back to this fact a little later.

When this debate began, the only voice from the Official Opposition spoke of freedom of speech and then left the Chamber crying: heckling. I have to speak on this and the disrespect I see and feel when the Official Opposition fails to stay in this Chamber to debate this issue. I expect many Albertan women feel as I do in that you don't have the whatever to actually speak to your values. I am telling you that I do. I am telling you that any person's freedom of speech does not trump my right or any other woman's right to security of person.

I will also tell you that within my head I had to be brought to the distance of 150 metres kicking and screaming as my gut was telling me no. The fact is that there was a time when I could have sprinted 150 metres in 16 seconds. In 16 seconds a lot of damage could be done to a person or a facility, certainly much quicker than the police could arrive and provide security. Personally, I would have preferred the distance that one could shoot a gun to ensure the safety of a woman, but I do understand that 150 metres is a reasonable distance.

Again, having said this, many people go to clinics every day, and no one hassles them as they go to get a medical, a cancer treatment, or a prescription for Viagra. My question is: why is it that someone becomes a uterus control person when it comes to my or somebody else's body, in fact so much so that we have to create a safety bubble around a facility which addresses the needs of my uterus? It is none of your business.

Now I will reflect back to my statement about how those miscarriages were not my choice. They were the choice of a uterus control person who wanted to control every facet of my life. I don't want that to happen to anybody else. I don't want that to happen to any woman who's seeking medical treatment for whatever reason. It's none of your business, just as it is none of my business if you're going to get a prescription for Viagra.

I will stand here, and I support the member's amendment for 150 metres. Again, I'd like it to be further, but I do think that I'm a fairly reasonable person, so I stand in support of that amendment.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to thank the Member for Lethbridge-East for her comments, especially with regard to Viagra prescriptions. At least she could get up in the House. Do I need to say anything else?

I certainly appreciate a lot of her comments. You know, a lot of women go to these clinics not just to seek abortions, but they go for miscarriages. These are not just purely about abortion even. They are in many cases just going to deal with other issues around pregnancy. I certainly respect their right to privacy and to not be harassed and to be able to go about their business peacefully.

4:30

Now, I said in the debate last night that every debate is balancing competing interests and competing rights, and no one right absolutely trumps all other rights without any regard for balance. You know, different members here put different weight on different rights, but I think we're well served to remember that every right is weighed in contrast to other rights that it is conflicting with.

I have an amendment to put forward here that does not deal, necessarily, with the substance or even the merits of the bill but, I think, just seeks to improve its wording. Actually, members who support or don't support the bill itself should generally be supportive of this amendment. I believe that it just seeks to clarify some wording and make it easier for the law to be carried out.

I will table this now to the pages.

The Chair: This will be known as amendment A2.

Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you. I will read the amendment into the record. I move that Bill 9, Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act, be amended as follows. In part A section 2 is amended by striking out subsection (2) and substituting the following:

(2) Subsection (1) does not apply to the following persons, while those persons are carrying out their duties:

- (a) police officers;
- (b) persons empowered to enforce a bylaw under the Municipal Government Act, a provision of the Municipal Government Act or a provision of other enactment that a municipality is authorized to enforce.

In part B section 3(2) is amended by striking out clause (b) and substituting the following:

- (b) the persons referred to in section 2(2), while those persons are carrying out their duties.

This amendment does not change the substance of the bill. It does not change the merits or demerits of the bill. It preserves it intact. But it is a rather technical amendment that I think is just better legislation regardless of what one thinks of the merits of this bill.

In essence, the bill does have roles for police officers in the enforcement of the act that the government is proposing here, Bill 9. What this amendment seeks to do is to ensure that the same rules apply to municipal bylaw officers. As I said, if anything, it actually strengthens the bill, probably, from the government's perspective, but even for those of us who do not believe it strikes the appropriate balance, I think it's just good legislative writing.

I've consulted on this with municipalities in my constituency and with legal experts. This takes away no powers from the police or powers that the government is proposing to give the police to enforce the act, which ensures that municipal bylaw officers are also able to carry out their duties fully without being worried about stepping over the law here. I think we would generally recognize that a legal matter of this nature can also be dealt with, at least in many circumstances, by municipal bylaw officers. If it's a circumstance that's more serious, obviously we would have police involvement. But I think that in many of the cases, we would generally agree that municipal bylaw officers are capable of carrying it out, and if that's appropriate, they should be covered by this legislation as well.

I would welcome feedback and comment from members on all sides of the House, and I hope that they support this amendment.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and I want to sincerely thank the Member for Strathmore-Brooks for engaging in the parliamentary process that we are so proud to have the opportunity to do here. I know that that isn't the case, necessarily, for everyone in this House, so I appreciate that he's taken the time to bring forward something that he thinks can improve this legislation and that he's taken the time to consider it and vote on it as well. Again, I want to say that I respect that.

Always when I look at an amendment to a piece of government legislation, my first question is: does this honour the intent of the original bill, and is this going to help us make the bill or hurt us in making the bill? I can say that I think this honours the intent of the original bill. I think that it's exciting to see an amendment that – this isn't the way it's worded in other jurisdictions that we've used as our template, but I think this certainly doesn't impede or hurt our ability to do so enforcement. With that as my sort of guide, I think this honours the intent of the bill and that this won't be damaging in any way. I think this says to me and, hopefully, to all members of this caucus that this is something that we can certainly move on in good conscience moving forward.

While I don't always agree with the member – actually, I rarely agree with the member – I have to say that I do agree that it's important for us to come here every day and represent our constituents and the people we're here to serve. I have the honour of being able to do that with sort of guiding values around – you know, I mentioned the other day that I walk into this place and I see “Now That We Are Persons.” And now that we are persons, we can create laws to help other women and to help make a more just society.

I think that this is a reasonable amendment, and I am happy to speak in support of it and encourage not just my colleagues but colleagues from other caucuses as well, I'd say, to consider voting for this amendment. I think it's fair and reasonable. I think it gives additional protections, confidence to the police without compromising the safety of the women accessing these zones. I certainly think that

this could be a very useful amendment, and I would encourage not just colleagues in my caucus but in all caucuses to consider supporting this amendment from the member.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A2 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:38 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Gray	Miller
Carlier	Hinkley	Miranda
Carson	Hoffman	Nielsen
Connolly	Horne	Payne
Coolahan	Jansen	Phillips
Cortes-Vargas	Kazim	Piquette
Dach	Kleinstauber	Renaud
Drever	Littlewood	Rosendahl
Eggen	Loyola	Sabir
Feehan	Luff	Sucha
Fildebrandt	Malkinson	Turner
Fitzpatrick	McCuaig-Boyd	Westhead
Ganley	McPherson	Woollard

Totals: For – 39 Against – 0

[Motion on amendment A2 carried unanimously]

The Chair: We are back on the bill. Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Well, that was weird. I'm not really used to this. It feels good to finally win one, although it will damage my record of being the member with most votes against the NDP, for which I'm sad. But I'm not sure if it counts when the NDP get to vote with me. It felt great. But no, I want to thank the members who were present for the vote for supporting the previous amendment. I think it improves the bill. As I said, it was a rather technical change still preserving the intent of the bill.

You know, in many ways there is a lot in the bill I could support. I do believe that the balance is wrong. I don't believe it's appropriate for a bill to target one specific group generally not liked by the government of the day, but there are still laudable intentions, I think, behind the bill.

Some of the amendments I'll be bringing forward, I have to say, probably don't have the greatest chance of getting accepted by the government but I think are necessary to make regardless. Some of them, like the previous one, I am hopeful will receive the support of government and other opposition members as we seek to, even if we don't always agree with the bill, at least make the bill better from a technical and legislative standpoint. I've got binders full of amendments, Madam Chair, and I'll be bringing some forward here.

My next amendment – well, here. I'll just distribute it to the House and pages before I speak to it.

The Chair: Amendment A3.

Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. As I was saying before I distributed the amendment before the members right now, this amendment is put forward with the intention of simply just better legislative writing. I know that the public servants who put in a lot of work in writing bills are professional and second to none. I was very surprised to learn that Parliamentary Counsel is not paid by the hour. If they were paid by the hour, they'd be racking up the overtime with what my office has put them through.

You know, I've learned a lot about the parliamentary process as an independent, and while I don't think it's practical, I think that all members should try six months as an independent. You really learn the way this place works. I don't think many are going to take me up on the offer, but you learn quite a bit about the actual functionality of this place and parliamentary process when you've got to do the heavy lifting. Frankly, the heavy lifting has been done by my staff, which has been incredible, and by Parliamentary Counsel, who have probably really gotten sick of me by this point, but they've been excellent here in helping to write legislation that just improves upon existing bills, again, if we agree with the intent or balance of the bill or not.

Some of the other amendments I'll put forward are dealing more with the substance of the bill, its appropriate balance as a piece of legislation, but this amendment before the members right now is in the same spirit as the last amendment that I put forward and was accepted. I'll read it for members now. I move that Bill 9, Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act, be amended as follows. In part A section 1 is amended by adding the following after clause (e):

(e.1) "journalistic purpose" means communications by a publisher, writer or reporter for a newspaper, news magazine, television broadcaster or radio broadcaster, as the case may be, that is of general and regular circulation or broadcast for the purpose of disseminating information to the public;

In part B the following is added after section 1:

Application

1.1 Sections 2(1)(c), 3 and 5(1)(a) and (b) do not apply to a person communicating for a journalistic purpose.

The purpose of this is just to clarify that journalists will still be able to do their business in covering the issues of the day without being considered a protester. This is very carefully worded. You know, we have the phenomenon of activist journalism, and the intent of this is not to include activist journalism.

Now, it's always very dangerous if a government tries to define journalism. I don't think that's a proper role of government. It's a very dangerous road to go down, a slippery slope. This is not intended for every blogger with a keyboard or camera. This is defined here . . .

5:00

Ms Hoffman: Aren't you defining it right now?

Mr. Fildebrandt: Well, no.

The government should not be picking and choosing who is a journalist but that we have a broad definition that's not so broad that it's everyone with a keyboard. It is defined here as "a newspaper, news magazine, television broadcaster or radio broadcaster, as the case may be." I think it would be fair to say that, for the most part, that does not cover citizen journalism or activist journalism. Those are very legitimate forms of journalism. They tend to be, obviously, much more politically slanted, and there's a real place for that, and they should never be silenced. But the goal of this should be that the objective journalistic organizations which cover the news shouldn't be considered protesters.

If an activist organization is covering a protest here and filming that, I believe that the wording of this amendment would not

exclude them from the bill, that they would not be able to do so. I think one of the most horrible things that some people can do in these protests is to film individual people and try to shame individual people. Regardless of how you feel about abortion, attacking an individual woman once she's already made that decision is not going to advance the cause and, frankly, takes away from what they're trying to achieve and is very uncompassionate. So I think that stopping photographers and cameras from filming women entering these facilities is a laudable goal.

I know what it's like, actually, to have journalists pry into your home. I've had the CBC parked outside of my house with cameras pointed into my windows, where my wife and baby child were. The CBC parked outside of my home, prying into my windows, and that's not appropriate. No one wants to deal with that. You know, it often comes with this business, and we have to deal with it, but I don't think that individual women accessing an abortion clinic should be subject to that. They're not public figures. That is harassment of one of the most disgusting types, so I want them to be protected from that.

I think that most nonactivist or citizen news organizations are certainly not engaging in that. They would not, with the wording of this amendment, be able to film individual people entering or exiting an abortion clinic or women's health centre of some kind that's covered in the legislation, but they would be able to otherwise go about their business. Hypothetically, if the building had been broken into or graffitied or, say, there had been a strike or, say, they added to the size of the building or upgraded the building and there was legitimate news to be covered about the facility, then it would not be unreasonable or intrusive for journalists to do their job and to take some film of the facility.

I've never seen a news organization ever take film or photos of a woman entering or exiting an abortion clinic. It's always been in the nature of B-roll, where there are a couple of cars rolling by and maybe a bird in the background. It's very objective. I've never seen a news organization film individual women entering or exiting one of these clinics, so I don't think it's been abused by the media to date, and I don't think it would be abused in the future. But I think it's an important aspect to take note of when we're writing legislation like this.

I do not believe it takes away from the intent of the bill and what the government is trying to achieve here. I think it's trying to clarify that, you know, if the CBC, CTV, Global were to set up a camera across the street and take some B-roll film in the background, not filming individual people entering or exiting the clinic, I don't think that constitutes a protest. I don't think that constitutes harassment, blocking an entrance. I don't think it fits the definition of any of that. So I would submit this to members on all sides of this House for due consideration. This is not changing the intent of the bill in one direction or another. Again, it's an amendment of a largely technical nature that seeks to, I think, better clarify the wording of the bill to make sure it doesn't do things that it's not intended to do. I do not believe that the intention of this bill would be to stop Global News from filming B-roll outside of a clinic, not featuring any individuals entering or exiting.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, I appreciate the amendment you're bringing forward, and certainly my colleagues do as well. I think that one of the big questions for the ages here is: what is journalistic purpose? Certainly, you mentioned that the goal of this is not to allow special-interest groups who call themselves media to have the kind of access that protesters have. But the fact

is that you are not making that call, and these folks are out there. The idea is that antiabortion media – if you google “antiabortion media,” what will come up is a list as long as your arm of folks in this country who have media outlets that they call media but whose sole purpose is to disseminate misinformation about women’s reproductive rights.

You know, first of all, that’s a concern because you’re not going to be able to make a comprehensive list of who is mainstream media and who isn’t mainstream media. Now, I will certainly say that anyone who wants to go out there and call themselves mainstream media then has the opportunity to argue that they’re journalists and they’re exempt from the rules that other people have to follow. That’s concerning because the definition of media is so broad.

I can tell you that I was a journalist for 24 years, and at no time in that 24 years – and I covered many stories, many stories at clinics – did I ever hang around outside a clinic looking for a story. Mainstream media will pick up the phone, whether it’s our assignment editor or we’re doing the work ourselves, and we will make a phone call to the clinic and say, “We’re coming down to do a story or an interview,” and we will book an appointment. It’s called consent. That’s a thing that we do in the media. In all the stories that I covered at clinics, we booked appointments, we went down, we did interviews, we got our B-roll, and if we were ever in a situation where the only thing we were looking at was B-roll, we went to the clinic and shot the B-roll.

A buffer or a bubble zone would have absolutely no effect on a mainstream media outlet’s ability to carry out their job. So this is, first of all, unnecessary in the sense that it doesn’t intrude on mainstream media in any way at all. Secondly, what it does is that it creates a window of opportunity for antiabortion groups to come and to do their harassment within the bubble zone.

Now, I will say that, certainly, when women are accessing a clinic, they don’t show up at a clinic with a chart to show everybody outside what it is they’re going in for, nor should they. What happens is that women go into these clinics for many-layered reasons, and when they go into these clinics, these groups then have an opportunity to not only take pictures of them, whether it’s video and photographs, but to use them in any way, shape, or form they want. That is chilling. What you see when that happens is that these women are going in during an intensely personal, painful, emotional, vulnerable point in their lives to have whatever discussion or procedure they plan to have within that clinic, and this would allow these special-interest groups to stand within the bubble zone and to get images of them to do with whatever they want.

5:10

Now, we have lots of media groups, as we’re very familiar with in this country, who call themselves mainstream media, who clearly are not. They have agendas. And to actually have to make a list of who is mainstream media and who isn’t would be an impossible task to do.

You know, I understand what you are explaining, that the whole goal is to make sure that mainstream media can cover stories. I appreciate the goal of the amendment. I will say that I consider it a bit naive. I know, Member, you’re probably not going to hear people describe you that way a lot, but I will. I will say that, certainly, if the goal is to make sure that the media can still tell their story, there is absolutely nothing to stop them from talking about these issues the way they have always done, by making a phone call, by booking an interview, or by simply going to a clinic the way they have ever since I can remember – and I’ve been around a long time – and shooting the footage respectfully and using it respectfully like they have done so far.

While I appreciate the effort, I will say that I find the implications of this amendment frightening, and I know that’s not what you intended. At the end of the day, it endangers the people who use the facility, the staff, and anyone in that proximity. So I will urge my colleagues to vote down this amendment because I believe that in no way at this time are the efforts of the mainstream media or their attempts to cover stories hampered in any way, shape, or form, and I think this amendment, if accepted, would open the door to a frightening possibility of some very negative interactions happening at these clinics.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the Member for Calgary-North West for her comments. You know, I think she is correct that if essentially anyone with a camera and keyboard can call themselves a journalist or media now – and sometimes that’s positive; sometimes, perhaps, it’s not. There is left-wing citizen or activist journalism, and there is right-wing citizen and activist journalism, and some people who just want to blog about the issues of the day without a particular agenda but who would probably not be considered mainstream media.

I take her comments well here, but I have to disagree with how she believes this would be applied. You know, she spoke to her time in the media – I believe it was CTV for some time – and that, in her experience, never once did they send a CTV camera to one of these clinics without first consulting them and letting them know that they were coming. If I understood her correctly, they certainly never captured the images of any individual people entering or exiting these facilities. It was carried out respectfully and reasonably. It was not used to target or harass or shame an individual person. That’s the way it’s already been taking place for media outlets. This bill, however, would at least legally stop the media from respectfully and even consensually taking what amounts to B-roll footage outside of a clinic.

Journalists who are covering this story, at least for television, that I’ve seen have been respectful. The footage I’ve seen on television is footage from the Legislature, and B-roll footage was used. I haven’t seen anyone in the media, activist or mainstream, that has used images of individual women entering or exiting these facilities. So it’s actually been used respectfully.

Now, individual people may at some point have tried to use their cameras to capture images of and shame individual women, and it’s beneath contempt for anyone to do that. But in the experience that she’s pointed to, they never showed up unannounced at one of these clinics with a camera and ambushed anybody. It was respectful; it was consensual. They called in advance. That’s the way it should be, and that’s the way I envision it going forward. But the way this legislation presently reads, that wouldn’t be the case.

Now, in practicality it is likely that, you know, if a media outlet contacted a clinic in advance and said that they wanted to come and capture some B-roll footage, I think it’s probably fair to say that the clinic would not call the police or bylaw officers to come and do something about it and enforce this bill, but the bill still could be enforced if it is passed in the present wording. It is unlikely that the clinic would call the police or bylaw officers on a media crew that at least have their consent to be there, but legally speaking, they would not be allowed to be there even to film B-roll footage that doesn’t single out or identify any individual woman.

So the purpose of this amendment is to clarify this so that it’s very clear. I think if someone who called themselves a journalist or called themselves media were to show up there and take images of

an individual woman entering or exiting the facility, that would still constitute a violation of the bill because it would be used for the purposes of harassment or intimidation or shaming, and the bill is still clear that that would be illegal. That's one part of the bill that I really agree with, that you should not be allowed to film people entering or exiting these facilities. It's contemptable. That is probably the part of the bill that I would agree with the most. But it's important that if a news organization is simply going to take some B-roll footage of the facility without the intention or result of harassing, identifying, or shaming anyone, then it's perfectly reasonable for them to do so.

As the Member for Calgary-North West has said, when she was a journalist, she would always call in advance or her colleagues would call in advance, and they always did so in a respectful way. Perhaps members of the gallery can send me a direct message if I'm wrong, but I can't remember any time that CTV or Global or CBC has ever used individual images on their programs of a particular woman or doctor entering or exiting one of these clinics. It simply, as far as I'm aware, has not happened in Canada as long as I can remember.

So I would ask that members give this amendment due consideration. It is an amendment of a rather technical nature, not changing the intent of the bill, not even changing the weight in which it leans one direction or another, but simply clarifying some of the language around this so that, you know, journalists can still do their business in the respectful way that they generally do.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A3?

[The voice vote indicated that motion on amendment A3 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:19 p.m.]

[One minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:
Fildebrandt

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hinkley	Miller
Carson	Hoffman	Miranda
Connolly	Horne	Nielsen
Coolahan	Jansen	Payne
Cortes-Vargas	Kazim	Phillips
Dach	Kleinstauber	Piquette
Drever	Littlewood	Rosendahl
Eggen	Loyola	Sabir
Feehan	Luff	Sucha
Fitzpatrick	Malkinson	Turner
Ganley	McCuaig-Boyd	Westhead
Gray	McPherson	Woollard
Totals:	For – 1	Against – 36

[Motion on amendment A3 lost]

The Chair: Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to the bill? The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I would move that debate be adjourned and that when the committee next rises, it reports progress on Bill 9.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 12

Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act

The Chair: Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Chair. In respect to Bill 12, Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act, the bill is a result of a set of extraordinary circumstances, and the situation it seeks to rectify will hopefully be very short lived. It's a shame that it had to come to this, but here we are.

As I understand it, the industry is generally supportive of the bill because they understand the importance of taking actions to ensure that Alberta producers get the maximum return on Alberta's natural resources. But the power to arbitrarily dictate to whom and how products are shipped should not exist in perpetuity. As such, I propose an amendment to Bill 12. If the pages would like to come and collect it. Let me know when you'd like me to go ahead.

The Chair: This will be known as amendment A1.

Go ahead, hon. member.

Ms McPherson: I move that Bill 12, Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act, be amended by adding the following after section 13:

Repeal and continuation

14(1) Subject to subsection (2), this Act is repealed 2 years after the date on which it comes into force.

(2) Where in the opinion of the Legislative Assembly it is in the public interest of Alberta to extend the date of the repeal of this Act, the Legislative Assembly may adopt a resolution to extend the date.

This amendment adds what is commonly referred to as a sunset clause. It means that all provisions of the bill will expire on December 31, 2022, unless the Legislature extends the bill or if there are other circumstances. This will provide industry with assurances that the power to arbitrarily dictate to whom and where and when they sell their product will only continue so long as the Legislature approves it to continue. Given the power that the government is granted with this bill, it's reasonable to place a limitation on that power. At the very least, the Legislature will need to reaffirm that power, or if it has served its purpose, the power will revert to how things are today.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to thank the hon. member for this amendment. Looking at it, it looks reasonable to me. Two years is a reasonable time, and then there is the ability to revisit it should, at that time, circumstances dictate that we keep it. If not, you know, as this pipeline is done, we may look at others. This legislation isn't just directed in one direction; it's all directions.

We think this is reasonable, and I would encourage all members of the House to support this amendment.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to thank the government for their support. I was actually on a flight from Calgary to Edmonton this morning, and I sat beside a gentleman from London, Ontario. His name was Richard. He didn't know what I did for a living, and he said: "What about that pipeline? When are

you going to get it built?" We had a really good conversation. It's broadly recognized across the country how integral this pipeline is to the economic security of our entire country. There are certainly times in the Assembly when we need to put aside partisanship, and this is definitely one of those times. In an effort to ensure that a pipeline that is in the best interests of the entire country goes ahead, this bill is important, but it also is very powerful.

I'm really very grateful for the support. You know, working together, we can make great things happen for a great province. Again I just want to extend my thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to thank the Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill for bringing the amendment forward and the hon. Minister of Energy for accepting it. She got the jump on me. I was going to bring forward a very similar amendment to this and give the government four years before it expired. Perhaps I was trusting in government a bit too much. But I think the point is very well, that these are extraordinary circumstances and these are extraordinary powers. We should always be very cautious about giving government powers that are largely arbitrary in nature. I think that under the circumstances that we're in, they are appropriate powers but that powers like this have a sunset clause. So while I was going to propose four years, I think two years is even better because if we still need them in two years, we're in a whole other host of trouble.

I want to thank the Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill for bringing this forward and encourage all members to support it.

5:30

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you so much. Now, this is fun. I have to say that I appreciate that the member – because last night I think he wanted to amend a section that we already had an amendment to amend so that he could amend the same section if that amendment passed.

I think his idea of looking at other time frames is something that merits discussion. I think this is worded as two years. Maybe we land on 25 months, or maybe we land on 23 months, or maybe we land on something else. That being said, I actually think that this could be an opportunity for us to consider other timelines.

That being said, I'm going to actually encourage my colleagues to consider voting against this so that we can consider other timelines. Thank you very much to the Member for Strathmore-Brooks for his contributions to the debate and helping us to consider those other opportunities.

Thank you.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Madam Chair, we are in the twilight zone. I don't want my amendment to pass. The amendment from Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill is better. As much as I would like the credit perhaps for getting the bill amended, I think that two years is much more appropriate than four. I really don't know what the heck to say.

I prefer four years over having no sunset clause, but I don't know what to do anymore. If the government members vote it down, I will bring forward my amendment of four years, but I encourage all members not to make it necessary for me to bring forward my amendment. The Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill's two-year timeline, I think, is eminently superior.

Two years from now will be after the next election, in all likelihood. There may or may not be a new government. I'm sure that members opposite don't think that's possible. You know, I

think that in two years, if the government still needs to have these powers, then we're into probably a much graver step in this crisis. If those powers are still needed, I think all members here would be happy, when everyone here is re-elected exactly as they are, to renew the mandate of this bill. I certainly would be if those powers were still required, but it is a bill with very significant and, admittedly, arbitrary powers, and we should always be careful when granting government arbitrary powers. In this case I do because I think we all share the intentions of what the government wants to achieve here.

Two years I think is certainly an ample amount of time for this bill to go before it requires renewal by this House, so I would strongly encourage members to support the amendment from the Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill. It's eminently better than my amendment of four years. I beg members: don't vote for my amendment; vote for the amendment from the Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm really struck by the saying: politics makes strange bedfellows. It's not often that I find myself in agreement with the Member for Strathmore-Brooks, but in the last couple of weeks I think I've said, "Oh, good for him" and "I could just hug him," which is unusual.

I just want to reiterate why I think the timeline is important. This is a bill that grants a lot of power, and it is important given the circumstances that we're in right now. With the pipeline being in jeopardy, it is really important for the government to have the tools that it needs in order to be able to put the province in the best possible negotiating position to ensure that the pipeline is completed.

Those powers in perpetuity are actually very concerning. It is possible for a government in the future to use these powers in a way that wouldn't necessarily be in the best interests of the province or the producers in the province, and that would certainly not be in the best interests of the country either. That's why we came up with two years. Two years is, I believe, an ample amount of time to resolve the current position that we find ourselves in. It allows the government to do the things it needs to do, and it gives the government the tools that are required in order to be able to resolve the situation but doesn't give them those powers forever. In the eloquent words of my colleague from Strathmore-Brooks I think two years is a reasonable amount of time. It's sufficient to get the job done, and it also ensures that the powers of the government are limited in the future.

For those reasons, I would like to encourage my colleagues to please vote in favour of the amendment.

The Chair: Calgary-Klein.

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll speak to the amendment. You know, it's really difficult to enact this bill itself because we don't want to be doing this at all. We don't want to enforce this bill because it does give extraordinary powers and it could actually be hurtful to not only British Columbia but to Alberta. With that said, because we have to think about the consequences of this bill and the good things that could come of this bill, we have to think about what this amendment does as well. We shouldn't take this amendment lightly as well. As the Deputy Premier said, maybe we need to take some more time to think about if we need to have timelines or what specific timelines we should have on a sunset clause, if you will.

You know, it does give the minister extraordinary powers, but we have to be clear as well that companies would not be automatically required to apply for an export licence either. They would only be required to do so if the minister deems it appropriate. As per the bill, section 2(3) of the legislation, the first step in the process is actually for the minister to determine whether requiring an export licence “is in the public interest.” I think that’s a key phrase right there: in the public interest. I think we can say that about the amendment on the table right now: is it in the public interest?

The criteria that would be established for determining the licence include several things, too: “whether adequate pipeline capacity exists to maximize the return on crude oil and diluted bitumen produced in Alberta,” the method by which these resources may be exported from Alberta, and many other criteria.

We have to understand, too, Madam Chair, as I said, that we don’t take this legislation lightly, but we also didn’t start this fight either, did we? We didn’t start this fight at all. You know, this government has been playing by the rules from day one. We had this pipeline in our sights from day one. With the climate leadership plan a big part of that was getting approval for the pipeline in the first place. That was the big first step. As I’ve said before, you know, we wouldn’t be here right now if it weren’t for the climate leadership plan. Let’s face it; we wouldn’t be talking about shovels in the ground.

I guess that’s part of the reason why we don’t want to necessarily support this amendment at this time either, because we understand the criticality of the pipeline, and we understand how important this piece of legislation actually is to Alberta. You know, there’s deep frustration that we have felt as a government in playing by the rules and getting approval for the pipeline, and then we see the blatant hypocrisy happening in British Columbia right now with their own pipeline going up the coast with jet fuel. The other hypocritical piece of that is that the pension plan is invested in pipelines, Kinder Morgan. Isn’t that shocking?

5:40

You know, the B.C. government can’t continue to impact Alberta’s economy, and we just don’t know how long the government is going to be required to enforce the statutes in Bill 12. Is it going to take a day? Are they going to succumb? Probably not. Is it going to take a month? I mean, we’ll keep fighting. We’ll keep fighting every court challenge. Do we need to bring more legislation in? Maybe we do, but this is a really good first step. I don’t think at this point we can actually say: “Two years is sufficient. We’ll have this taken care of. The minister doesn’t need to make these crucial decisions on pipeline capacity and whether to withhold pipelines and whether to grant licences to producers of all sorts of energy, natural gas, bitumen.”

So at this time I don’t think we can support it, but I will be happy to sit down at some point and discuss more about what should be the timeline on this. I mean, should it be indefinite? Perhaps that is what we need to do. Are we not going to face this type of resistance to pipelines in the future? I think we just might. I mean, it seems to be what’s happening in British Columbia right now, so maybe we actually need to have an indefinite timeline on this so that at any time the B.C. government will understand that the Minister of Energy will have the ability to turn off the taps.

We saw how much the price of gas is in the Lower Mainland right now. How’s two bucks, \$2.50, \$3? Can I go for \$4? You know, in a lot of places gas is actually cheaper than a litre of milk. A litre of gas is cheaper than a litre of milk, I’m telling you. Soon it won’t be. It’s going to be very expensive in British Columbia. We don’t want

to get there, but we want to have the ability to turn off the taps and make a statement on this.

With that said, Madam Chair, I will not be supporting this. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just feel compelled to maybe review a few things while we’re thinking about this whole bill and just remind us, you know, why we’re here and the nature of what’s in the best interest and that. Bill 12, Preserving Canada’s Economy Prosperity Act. We’re now at Committee of the Whole, and I appreciate the input everybody has had.

Through this bill, Madam Chair, our government is demonstrating that we are standing up for Alberta and a healthy Canadian energy sector, including the working people and men it employs. I’m pleased that we’ve had positive speeches on both sides of the House on this. I cannot think of a more timely and important piece of legislation than what we are about to debate in this Committee of the Whole and when we look at amendments and that. I hope our government will have the support of every single member in this House for this bill. I think most members in this Chamber know why this legislation is needed. Simply put, our existing pipeline capacity is full, there’s no more room in the system, and because of this we face some hard choices.

Alberta all along has played by the rules. We secured federal approval for this pipeline thanks in large part to our climate leadership plan. We have defended the expansion every time it has been taken to court, Madam Chair; 14 out of 14 times we have been successful, each and every time, over the opponents of this pipeline. But the B.C. government has continued to put up roadblocks despite this court action, and the Canadian government has remained slow to defend the decision it made in this area, that falls under, clearly, their jurisdiction.

So it has fallen, Madam Chair, to Alberta to act. Now we must defend all Canadian workers, the Canadian economy, and Alberta’s and Canada’s progress on climate action. Every day the Canadian economy is losing \$40 million – \$40 million a day – because of the lack of this pipeline capacity and the lack of access to markets. That’s money that we all agree could be supporting jobs, families, social programs, and, incidentally, funding our transition to a low-carbon future.

Alberta’s natural resources are owned by Alberta, but the benefits that those resources provide are shared across the country. There’s no road, there’s no school, there’s no bridge, there’s no hospital, courthouse, seniors’ centre that doesn’t owe something to Alberta’s energy economy. A low-carbon future for Alberta will make it possible for Canada to meet its climate targets. Without progress in Alberta, Madam Chair, Canada will miss those targets by a country mile, and that’s just a fact. So people from every corner of this country who care about the environment should be rooting for this pipeline, not opposing it.

I’m pleased to see that support for this pipeline is rising. Thanks to the work of our Premier, that she has done across the country, people are climbing onboard and realizing what a good project it is. Thanks to the good work of many people in this government, more than two-thirds of Canadians now support the Trans Mountain expansion, but clearly more needs to be done. Our government needs more tools in the tool box to bring this pipeline to fruition, which brings us to the bill before us.

Preserving Canada’s Economic Prosperity Act would give the government the authority to if necessary – and I emphasize if necessary – require any company exporting oil and gas products

from Alberta to acquire a licence. It's important to understand a few distinctions about this legislation.

To be clear, companies will not be automatically required to apply for an export licence. They will only be required to do so if it's deemed necessary. As per section 2(3) of the legislation the first step in the process is for me as minister to determine whether requiring export licences is in the public interest. I want to review the criteria for establishing that:

- (a) whether adequate pipeline capacity exists to maximize the return on crude oil and diluted bitumen produced in Alberta,
- (b) whether adequate supplies and reserves of natural gas, crude oil and refined fuels will be available for Alberta's present and future needs.

Should I determine that such a decision would be in the best interest of Albertans, I may then establish some terms and conditions of such a licence. These are outlined in section 4(2) of the legislation. Those conditions may include but are not limited to:

- (a) the point at which the licensee may export from Alberta any quantity of natural gas, crude oil or refined fuels;
- (b) the method by which [these resources] may be exported . . .
- (c) the maximum quantities . . . that may be exported from Alberta during the interval or intervals set out in the licence;
- (d) the maximum daily quantities of natural gas, crude oil or refined fuels that may be exported from Alberta;
- (e) the conditions under which the export . . . of [these resources] may be diverted, reduced or interrupted;
- (f) the period for which the licence is [in effect].

In addition, I may impose different terms or conditions upon a licensee for different types of refined fuels.

I have met with numerous industry leaders in the past several weeks, and I have promised there will be no surprises. While we all know that this legislation will have economic impacts on Alberta companies, the industry leaders that I and others in our government have spoken with absolutely understand this is for the long-term benefit of a healthy and stable energy industry.

We understand the gravity of using this legislation. It is not a step we would take lightly, but we know it is a step we must be prepared to take if necessary. As the Premier has said, we need to ensure Albertans get the best value from the resources that we own, so we will strategically deploy this authority to ensure that we get the best value. This will depend on circumstances at any given time. The bill is crafted so that we can use it quickly when needed.

I want to move on for one moment to discuss not just the need for our pipeline from our end but the demand that exists on the other side of the ocean. It has been suggested by critics that this vital pipeline is not needed because no one overseas wants Alberta oil. They try to suggest that because very little has been exported to Asia from the existing pipeline, this proves that there's no demand.

Well, Madam Chair, we need to set the record straight. In the fall of 2017 I went on a trade mission to Japan, China, and Korea, where it was made very clear to me that importers in these countries are eager to buy our oil, and they cannot understand why Canada cannot deliver it. Companies such as Cosmo Oil of Japan said very clearly that they're interested in diversifying their imports with oil from Canada. In fact, the company has said that it will take 11 to 12 days for Aframax tankers to reach Japan from Vancouver, compared to nearly 30 days for tankers to come from the U.S. Gulf coast via the Panama Canal. That's nearly 20 days' difference in travel time. Of course, that doesn't just mean time; it absolutely means money. Simply put, Asian markets will save money on buying Alberta oil.

5:50

Of course, we know that Asian markets want our oil, no matter what some pipeline opponents might say. But more than that, Alberta can offer oil produced under some of the highest standards

in the world. Alberta has strict environmental regulations and a climate leadership plan that includes a cap on oil sands emissions, a plan to cut methane emissions by almost half, and a price on carbon. We have oil and gas producers with experience in deploying new technologies designed to reduce their carbon footprint. We have regulations to protect the health and safety of the workers who produce that oil, and we also have legislation and a government committed to defending their human rights as well. We know that a growing number of markets are interested in oil produced according to some basic norms of social and environmental responsibility. Madam Chair, that's something Alberta can deliver.

Currently nearly all the oil produced in western Canada goes to one market, as we know, and that's the U.S. For much of the last decade Canada has been selling to the United States at a discount to the world price for similar oil products. Of course, the U.S. will remain an important market for our Alberta oil exports, but access to tidewater and markets beyond the U.S. will provide producers with more options and the ability to react quickly to market conditions, moving crude supplies to higher priced markets as supply and demand conditions change. It will also ensure that Alberta's crudes, both heavy and light, are able to secure the highest prices.

In closing, Madam Chair, our government understands the great responsibility that comes with this legislation, and that is why we have pursued all options before arriving at this point. We know that there is potential for impacts on Albertans if we are forced to use this legislation. The powers in the legislation are not to be taken lightly. They should not be used cavalierly to score cheap political points at the expense of Alberta energy producers, the workers they employ, or the communities where they're based.

But make no mistake, Madam Chair, that if we need to use these powers, we absolutely will. We are prepared to use every tool at our disposal to defend Albertans, to defend the right of Albertans to get the best possible price for resources we own, to protect public funding for the vital public services all working families rely on, to defend Alberta's and Canada's progress on addressing climate change, and to preserve Alberta's and Canada's economic prosperity.

I look forward to hearing more from the members in the Chamber and to passing this bill, and I look forward to hearing more input on the amendment. It's important, the amendment as well as this bill. We need to get it right, but we all need to get it done, and we need to get it done together.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the Minister of Energy for bringing in this bill and supporting the amendment. As you might have followed the debate in this House and outside of the House, our party and our leader and our caucus colleagues, every one of us, were eagerly waiting for this for more than eight, nine months. We would love to work with the government and everyone in this House to send a unified voice and message to the rest of the world that we are all together in this House working on this bill. If the rogue governments in our neighbouring provinces are trying to attack the livelihood of Albertans, we have to stand together and send them a message.

We know that the government has good intentions to use this judiciously to meet our goal of getting access to tidewater. This is a good tool, and we are hoping the minister and the Premier will use it as soon as possible. To strengthen this further and to contribute our part, I rise to propose a minor amendment. If you don't mind, I'll pass this around.

Madam Chair, we understand that the minister doesn't want to misuse this. She always said that she would be fair. That's what she said. She talked to the stakeholders in Calgary. You know, if the government of B.C. continues to obstruct this pipeline, then we want her and the Premier to be able to use this option of shutting the taps. That's why I'm proposing this minor amendment, and I'm asking everyone in the House to support this amendment.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any members wishing to speak to subamendment SA1? Calgary-Hawkwood.

Connolly: Well, thank you very much, Madam Chair. I appreciate the member's subamendment, and I have to say that I believe that it makes the amendment much stronger. I believe that our whole caucus will be able to support both the subamendment and the amendment as proposed by the Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill if we have the subamendment from the Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Thank you very much for the camaraderie and the working togetherness that we've seen in the past few minutes. I want to thank the member opposite, and I hope that all my colleagues in the House support this subamendment.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the subamendment?

Seeing none, you're ready for the question?

[Motion on subamendment SA1 carried]

The Chair: We're back on amendment A1 as amended. Any other speakers to this amendment?

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

The Chair: Are there any further speakers to the bill? Any questions, comments, or amendments to Bill 12?

Seeing none, you're ready for the question?

[The remaining clauses of Bill 12 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

Cortes-Vargas: Madam Speaker, I'd just like to ask that we rise and report progress on Bill 9 and report on Bill 12. There's been so much good work done today that I think it's a good point to rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

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

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill with some amendments: Bill 12. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 9. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the Assembly's records.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report? Say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Any opposed, say no. The motion is carried. The Assembly stands adjourned until 7:30 tonight.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday evening, May 9, 2018

Day 27

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 25 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent Conservative: 1 Vacant: 2

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, May 9, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: It's a wonderful evening. Please be seated.

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 11

Lobbyists Amendment Act, 2018

[Adjourned debate May 2: Mr. Hunter]

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

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's always a pleasure to rise in the House and comment on legislation. I'm going to keep my comments relatively short here.

We can all agree that lobbying, the process of lobbying is not a bad thing, but we can also all agree that Albertans deserve to know who is actually lobbying their government. Of course, the main aim of the amendments that are being presented right now, in fact, is that we want to have an open, transparent government. That means that Albertans indeed know who these stakeholders or lobbyists are that are actually trying to influence decisions that the government is making. We're confident that the proposed changes will increase transparency without creating additional barriers to government access on issues that matter. I mean, it's really important for the stakeholders in our society and, of course, organizations to be able to have access to the government so that they can give their opinions on pieces of legislation that we're considering.

I was really happy to participate in the actual review of the Lobbyists Act through the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship. We appreciate the commitment and the hard work that all members contributed towards the review of the Lobbyists Act. We can't forget that the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee was part of that as well, which I had the privilege of sitting on. Of course, all of the information that was done by the members of that committee was then passed on to the Resource Stewardship Committee for further consideration.

I truly believe that members on this side of the House, members on the other side of the House that participated on both of those committees had ample opportunity to be able to reflect on the issues that were brought before the committees, the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee, of course, as well as the Resource Stewardship Committee. We really think that we struck a good balance here to be able to provide that openness and transparency that Albertans are looking for and rightly deserve from their government.

I would highly suggest that all members on each side of the House vote in favour of this bill. I'll leave it at that, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Under 29(2)(a)?

Mr. Strankman: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, sir. It's a fine spring night to be discussing ethics, accountability, and democracy, particularly with the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, with his previous experience regarding democracy and its presentation in a new democratically governed area. I'd ask if the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie could expound upon his previous depth of experience in regard to the demonstration of democracy,

particularly beyond his experience on the Resource Stewardship Committee and the special ethics committee.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. As I've mentioned in the House before, my family and I fled the violence that occurred on September 11, 1973, in the nation of Chile. We all know that on that very day there was a ruthless dictatorial regime that decided to bring an end to democracy in the nation of Chile. Of course, it had an incredible impact on many Chileans that ended up having to flee from the nation at that time. I can tell you as a fact that Chileans ended up going all over the world as a result of what happened on that day.

For that reason, transparency and openness of government and making sure that they follow democratic process, that people in society feel that they have a way of connecting with their government and making sure that their government is truly representing what their aims are and especially their values – that is the goal of this Alberta NDP government, making sure that we're doing things like implementing a \$15 minimum wage, things that people have actually requested from this government, making sure that we're implementing the pilot program for \$25 a day daycare.

We all know that families in this province find it very difficult to find affordable daycare. That's something that I've heard substantially from constituents in my own riding. It's really important that we remember that women feel the brunt of this, unfortunately, because they're the ones who are saying to themselves: well, if I go to work and more than half of my wage ends up going to child care, I might as well just stay at home.

As a result, we have an incredible number of these very capable, intelligent, and giving women here in the province of Alberta that feel forced to actually stay at home rather than join the workforce. We all know that once they do join the workforce, well, that's a contribution to our great province here. Of course, I've heard it said by many that for every dollar that we invest in daycare, we actually see \$1.65 in return through the actual revenue through income tax that ends up coming back to the government.

These things that we're hearing from Albertans, the things that they want their government to do: this is what true democracy is really all about. How we're providing access and opportunity so that we can move forward together as a province: this is what true democracy is really all about.

For me it's so important, coming from the history that I've come from, that we listen to Albertans, that we're out there on the doorsteps listening and consulting with people, hearing what they have to say. Of course, that's what this Lobbyists Act is really all about. Perhaps in the past – and I can't speak in all instances, you know – stakeholders seemed to have the ear of the previous government, I would say, more so than the actual constituents. The MLAs, the cabinet ministers, the people that they were here to represent were hearing more from particular lobbyists, and the process wasn't necessarily as open and transparent as Albertans would want it to be.

This is really important. These amendments that we're making right now are truly important so that we can make sure that we have a strong democracy here in the province of Alberta as we continue to move forward, so that we can continue . . .

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 11, the Lobbyists Amendment Act, 2018. I'm pleased to say that I think it's an important bill. Lobbying is truly part of the conversation that needs to happen between citizens and government at various levels,

so I think it is an important act. I realize that the act did go through the process of the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship. Quite frankly, I think more bills should go through that process. They would probably come out as much better bills if they did. When they get rushed and that committee process gets skipped, too often things go awry.

I think having the bill put through the committee was an excellent process and has resulted in some good steps. Many of the recommendations actually came in that process from the office of the Ethics Commissioner, who has the authority to administer as well as enforce the Alberta Lobbyists Act and the Alberta Lobbyists Act general regulation as well. As I move forward, just for shortness I'll refer to the office of the Ethics Commissioner as the OEC, just to keep it simple.

7:40

This piece of legislation does make a variety of changes to this act, and I will be supporting it. As I've said, I think it's a good piece of legislation. However, I think there are some questions yet that could be asked, some follow-up questions from the committee work. Some of what was recommended there and picked up and some of what was recommended and not picked up is interesting.

Most of the recommendations from the OEC are based on improving transparency and reducing confusion for lobbyists who have to file returns with the OEC and comply with the regulations. I do believe that accountability is essential to a healthy democracy. There need to be clear checks and balances put in place to ensure that the interests of the public really do come before government, that they are heard, and that the public is given a fair opportunity to speak but not an unfair opportunity to influence. We are certainly in favour of supporting any measure that improves transparency and accountability and that relationship, as I've spoken of.

One of the OEC's recommendations that I guess you could say was partially successful was the recommendation to remove the 100-hour threshold altogether. That's been partially acted on. Instead of removing it, though, the threshold has just been reduced from 100 to 50 hours, and then as well the prep time was included in the 50 hours, which didn't use to be the case before. I would be interested to know, I guess, why the 100-hour threshold wasn't just removed altogether since that's what the OEC had asked for and suggested. But what we've got is an improvement, no doubt. I guess my question is: is the OEC satisfied with the way this has come out? Will this be workable for them? I think that's important.

I think another area of related concern might be: what impact will these changes have, particularly on the smaller organizations, the smaller groups that previously didn't fall under the Lobbyists Act? They will now, and quite frankly many times the paperwork, the bureaucratic process, all of the steps that have to be complied with are much more difficult for smaller groups. I would hate to see that this has the unintended effect of just really pushing the lobbying efforts onto just the big professional organizations, even the professional lobbyists. I think the closer you come to grassroots, the better off we are. I guess that's a concern that I would have and something that I would want to make sure was not happening.

As well, I'd like to just comment on the piece about contingency fee payments. I think this is an important piece. The OEC recommended that consultant lobbyists should not be allowed to accept clients on a contingency basis; in other words, essentially have them on retainer. They felt that lobbyists should be facilitators and not have remuneration attached to success. I think the intention of attaching payment to success in a way defeats the effect of this whole thing. The point is that they should be acting with the utmost of integrity and transparency, and when their fee depends on how successful they are, then the motivation to maybe use methods that

aren't entirely transparent, the motivation to do whatever it takes to get paid is somewhat challenging, I think. So I guess that's a bit of a concern for me.

I also want to comment on the bit about grassroots communication. I think this is important. Grassroots communication now falls within the definition of lobbying. It refers essentially to when organizations try to communicate with the general public or with individuals. Not having been a member of the actual committee that discussed this, I do have a real question here on, I think, something that needs to be a concern to all of us in this modern day and age. I don't really see anything in here in that regard, particularly with regard to the grassroots communication out to the general public.

With regard to Internet, social media, the use of computer bots, as we all know, around the world, beginning in the U.S. and other places, there have been massive, massive efforts to sway public opinion, to influence voters and policy-makers. I think there needs to be some thought given to: are we aware, and are we setting up the kind of regulations that will protect us from some of the influence and influence peddling that happen in the social media world? We have some of that already happening here in Alberta, where, quite frankly, officials of all types are being heavily lobbied via social media and e-mails and other things, sometimes not always with integrity, sometimes, in fact, in the name of other officials and other individuals when those other officials and individuals do not even know that their name has been attached to that.

I think there are real challenges and concerns in this whole area of digital communications and, particularly, lobbying at the grassroots level. How do we keep that honest? How do we keep that truthful? How do we know who's even doing it? How do we make sure that the kind of people that appear to be speaking to individuals are actually the people that it appears to be? In many cases it's not. I think this is a really sort of – I don't know what word I want to say – the cutting edge of the reality of our world. Although “cutting edge” has the implication often of being positive and where we should be going, this is the wrong direction. It's cutting edge in the wrong way.

We really need to be thinking about: how do we address and incorporate into the definition of lobbying and even the regulations of lobbying with regard to digital and even anonymous communications and, quite frankly, even communications that may come from outside of our country? These things are very real in our world and something that I think needs to be addressed. Maybe a further review of this act at some point will be required in order to do that. I raise that as a very serious question that has not been addressed and, I think, really does need to be addressed. Probably the sooner the government is thinking about it and looking into it with a very close magnifying glass, it would be a very good thing.

There are a couple of things that the OEC did ask for that did not make it into the bill, and maybe some explanation in regard to some of those things would be helpful. The recommendation that current semiannual registration filing should be changed to annual did not make it into the bill. I just wonder why, if that should be in there. It would certainly cut down on the work of the OEC. I don't know that it would necessarily cut down on their ability to actually monitor or not because there are other kinds of things that would take care of that. An important question, I think.

The OEC also asked that the registrar be given the authority to refuse to accept a return when the filer has not paid the administrative penalty. Again, I think there does need to be some penalty involved, and I think that needs to be backed up. It seems like maybe it's not being backed up in this case.

I'm also concerned about the fact that the OEC recommended changes to be made to the section that exempts nonprofits. There

are some very large nonprofits in our country. As society evolves toward more nonprofits and nonprofits in some cases being a different kind of organization that even takes on the work that in some cases used to be done by private companies, I think that it's important that nonprofits, quite frankly, if they're going to lobby, should have some reporting requirement. I think that's a loophole. I think that nonprofits do often engage in lobbying. Some of the very large ones, quite frankly, are very aggressive about lobbying. They have full-time paid staff. They raise a lot of money, and they spend a lot of money on their lobbying efforts, and that they should have a free ride raises questions for me. I would much prefer to see something in that regard.

I realize that maybe there was a concern, as I mentioned earlier, about the smaller nonprofits and the burden that would put upon them, but the reality is that if they're not actually actively engaged in lobbying, it probably wouldn't be of a concern to them. I think that's an important piece and something that should be considered as well.

Let's see. What else here? I think I'll leave it at that for now, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity.

7:50

The Speaker: Any questions for the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka under 29(2)(a)? The Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yeah. I just wanted to get the member to expand a little bit. He talked about, of course, transparency and accountability and how important it is that we have that when it comes to lobbying. I think this is essential to a healthy democracy, to make sure that we have these checks and balances, to make sure that the interests of the public come first.

He talked a bit about the small groups, and I think that there's definitely some concern that small groups, even though they may be trying their best to comply with regulations such as these, may be kind of slipping through the cracks. I think our hopes are that they won't find themselves in a situation where they're on the wrong side of the regulations because, of course, these larger organizations that are more professional lobbyists, that sort of a thing, have the personnel to take care of these regulations and make sure that they're in compliance and track things like how many hours of lobbying they're doing and prep time and that sort of thing. For some of these smaller groups, you know, they may have a hard time keeping track of what each member of the group might be doing at different times, depending on their organizational structure. I think that's kind of a concern as far as how these organizations are going to keep track of this and make sure that they are on the proper side of the legislation.

They could have problems navigating the system, too. I think that sometimes we in the Legislature here become, I guess, somewhat used to dealing with paper and dealing with different parts of the government and the different paperwork that has to be done. Though we might not enjoy it any more than anybody else, we still have to work with that. Some of these organizations may be the same. You know, if you have organizations with people that aren't necessarily computer savvy or used to dealing with bureaucracy and different regulations, again we just want to make sure that they don't fall through the cracks and find themselves on the wrong side of regulations. They may be just simply advocating their concerns to government regarding an area of special interest but not really in a professional way or in a calculated way. Obviously, when you have situations like that, you don't want to have these smaller groups burdened by any kind of investigation or something into their activities if really they meant no harm or just maybe weren't up to date on everything.

Again, the larger groups, of course, the professional lobbyists, I mean, are used to a system similar to this. Of course, the dropping from 100 hours of meeting time to only 50 hours, including prep time: I mean, that is a substantive change, but it's something that these larger organizations probably won't have too much trouble calculating and figuring out. Some of these smaller groups, where they're just volunteers, they're just helping on the side, they're spending a little time in the evenings working for their organization, and they meet a time or two a year with an elected official: of course, that would come into play as far as lobbyists if they were there to, you know, give the government an idea of what they would like to see happen.

I guess, some of the concerns that the member brought up were along those lines, and I just want to maybe have him discuss it just a little bit more as far as making sure that we don't have the issue of these smaller groups ending up in trouble for something that they may not have known.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Orr: Yeah. Thanks. I think it is a valid concern. I've already raised it, and I guess, you know, that raises one of the other recommendations from the OEC that wasn't actually picked up. The OEC had asked for the opportunity or to be given the ability to issue interpretive bulletins, advisory opinions as sort of standing and official documents. I think the ability to issue those kinds of documents would actually go a long ways to helping the smaller groups understand what the rules are, what the regulations are, what the interpretation of various regulations is. So I think that if the Ethics Commissioner had been given that authority, it would have gone a long ways to helping people who don't really do this on an everyday basis understand where the paths lead and what the complexities are and what's safe to do and what's not appropriate to do because some of them, quite frankly, might make mistakes entirely out of innocence. I mean, it's never any excuse in the law, but the reality is that it could happen, so issuing those kinds of bulletins and interpretive opinions would, I think, be very helpful.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak to Bill 11, the Lobbyists Amendment Act, 2018. You know, there's a lot to like about this bill, and I believe that it raises the issues that we need to consider in a democracy when it comes to this whole process of lobbying and trying to get the ear of the government and trying to have an influence on policy that the government is bringing before a Legislature and before the people.

Mr. Speaker, I think that anybody that's listened to me over the last few years in this Legislature knows that I'm a strong defender of democracy. I believe that it's the best form of government that we've been able to have, and I'm particularly fond of the version that we have in this country. I believe there's a great deal that we can be proud of in this Legislature and in all of the Legislatures across this country.

I know that I have said at various times that occasionally I travel down to the United States, and I can remember being engaged in a conversation with a couple of ladies that I had bumped into. They asked me what I did, and I said that I had just finished being a teacher after 30 years and I had now started a new career as a Member of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. They paused. "Oh, you're a politician." I said, "Yeah," and they said, "Well, you know, when did you get elected?" So I started talking about how I had started to run for political office a year before and started selling memberships and how I'd raised a grand total of \$29,000 to run my

campaign. They stopped, and they looked at me. They said, "Do you realize that the governor of California, the person that lost in the last election, had to raise \$64 million, and they lost?" I said, "You know, I think that one of the values of having the system of democracy that we have is that very normal and very average people have the opportunity to participate and to run for office and to be elected to public office in this country." I can't express how important that is to my vision and my understanding of democracy.

Mr. Speaker, I know that you're wondering: well, how does that fit into this bill? I believe that it does because I think that we can look down south and I think that we can see how much big money runs the political system down in the United States and how often it's hard for politicians to stay away from that big money and how that big money can be intertwined with lobbyists and with that whole issue of trying to get the ear of the government. I believe that there's a lot to be said for this bill before us and how it begins to address this concept of lobbying.

Now, I can remember being in my classroom and having the kids in grade 12 go through and look at this whole idea of lobbying, and one of the things that we would do is that we would look up – for instance, I can remember that on a regular basis *Maclean's* would come out with a poll that would look at the top 10 lobbyists at the national level. We would look at the types of organizations that were lobbying the government on a regular basis. Many of them had to deal with the economy. Many of them had to deal with sectors of our economy, whether it was mining or forestry or oil. But there were always a few in the top 10 that dealt with some sort of a social issue or an environmental issue, where you could see those groups that had met with the government many, many times. Then we would talk as a class. We would take a look at who some of those lobbying groups were and some of those individuals were. We would look at some of the methods that they would use, and we would talk about some of the legal and illegal methods, and we would look at the pros and the cons and whether we should be straying into the illegal or not. And we would come to an understanding that, in some ways, this is a two-edged sword because when you lobby, you are simply exhibiting and using to the fullest extent your right to freedom of speech and your right to come into contact with the people that make decisions within government.

8:00

As private citizens you have the right to lobby and you have the right to try to get the ear of the government, but at the same time, that can't be to the disadvantage of the person or the people of this country and of this province, that Joe Average person. I can remember that we would often send my kids home thinking and ask them to come back the next day and be prepared to talk about many different kinds of issues. One of them might be: to what extent should lobbying be controlled in a democracy?

Well, I bring this up because one of the main reasons that I rise is to speak in favour of this legislation because I believe it increases accountability. Accountability in a democracy is essential. It's essential if you're going to maintain a healthy democracy anywhere in the world. Now, there need to be checks and balances in every democracy. Some of those checks and those balances to the power that we have here in this Legislature are the interest groups and lobby groups because they help to point us back to the interests of the public and that the public should always come first.

Now, we all know that there are caricatures out there of big money and lobbyists that represent big money. To be honest, I believe that is probably a caricature. It's more based on the activities, perhaps, of American politics than I think it is on Canadian. My experience with lobbyists in Alberta in the three or

so years that I've been in this Legislature has actually been very positive. We might not always agree, but they come with a position that they're articulating, and it allows me to be able to listen and to hear and to question and, in some cases, to become educated on a particular issue.

I know that as we've looked at the marijuana laws and as we've started to look at the legalization of marijuana and what the impact is going to be and whether we should have stores and how we're going to have those stores, as we've had constituents come in and businesses come in, it's been an education for me. It brings a greater understanding of whatever the issue is.

This specific piece of legislation amends the Alberta Lobbyists Act, which is the piece of legislation that regulates lobbying in Alberta and the lobbying activities in Alberta. I believe that it brings a balance of free and open access to the government but also that it's the public's right to know about who is actually accessing government and who is actually meeting with your elected officials or with the bureaucracy within the government. While at the same time that allows them to be able to provide information and education to the government, it is also a check on that power through transparency and accountability.

Now, this legislation makes a variety of changes to the Lobbyists Act, and these changes come about as a result of, as we've said before, the recommendations to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship and based on recommendations, in many cases, from the office of the Ethics Commissioner, plus other stakeholders. Many of these recommendations, Mr. Speaker, come from the Ethics Commissioner, as I've just said, and they're based on trying to improve the transparency and reduce the confusion that sometimes comes around lobbying and lobbyists that have to file returns with the Ethics Commissioner regarding their activities. This is good.

As I've said many times and I'll continue to say into the future, increased transparency is always a positive step in a democracy because it allows the citizens of this state to be able to know what their government is doing and why they're doing it. I'm sure that all of the various lobbyists across Alberta probably welcome this piece of legislation because there is going to be a reduction in the confusion, hopefully, involved in filing their returns with the Ethics Commissioner.

Well, this legislation defines two main types of lobbyists. The first is a consultant lobbyist. They are likely the type of lobbyist that first comes to mind when you consider it and think of it as a profession. They're individuals who are paid to lobby on any kind of specific issue on behalf of a particular client. Now, the chief purpose of these individuals is to lobby. Currently the consultant lobbyists are automatically required to register with the office of the Ethics Commissioner.

The second type of lobbyist revolves around organizational lobbying. These individuals lobby for a group, an organization that they work for or that they may own or that they are a partner in. Currently organizational lobbyists are required to register if they have combined with anyone else in their organization and they lobby for more than a total of a hundred hours in a year.

The main difference between the organizational lobbyist and the consultant lobbyist is that lobbying is not the sole purpose for the organizational lobbyist. They obviously belong to an organization. They represent perhaps a business or a group of businesses, so it's wider than just simply a lobbying effort.

Now, this legislation changes the threshold for the number of hours in a year that an organizational lobbyist would have to cross in order to be required to register with the Ethics Commissioner. Instead of the previous 100 hours, the number is now 50 hours, and this is where I perhaps have some concerns, Mr. Speaker. My

concern is that maybe there'd be an overburden with paperwork on some of the smaller organizations who've not previously fallen into the Lobbyists Act. Because you have a 50-hour threshold before registry is required, you now have a lower threshold, and that actually includes the prep time that they have. So 50 hours of lobbying, including prep time, as you can probably see quite easily, is not a lot of time.

This will increase the number of individuals and the number of organizations that will now be responsible for registering as a lobbyist. That means that there's going to be more paperwork for these organizations, including semiannual returns. Now, for example, an advocate group such as a local chamber of commerce could quite easily cross this threshold. If this group has 10 people who are all involved in the process of lobbying and each person takes two one-hour meetings in the course of a year, well, there's your 50 hours, and they would be required to register. This same organization could have five people in a meeting, where they are preparing to meet with a government official, and if that meeting is one hour long, which is not unusual, they have just burned 10 per cent of their 50-hour threshold with one single meeting. So there's some concern there.

In other jurisdictions prep time is not included in that lobbying effort. It's not included in the hour threshold. You know, for example, in British Columbia the threshold is 100 hours, not including prep time. In Ontario their threshold is 50 hours, but again prep time is not included.

I guess that does beg the question, you know: why was that threshold not just removed altogether? It's going to become a problem for many organizations. It would be nice for this Legislature to consider whether or not we should make some amendments towards that issue with regard to the thresholds and the prep time. I think it would and could make this a little better law. I would just like to make sure that in our efforts to decrease the confusion and increase the transparency, we are not creating an extra level of red tape and regulation for small organizations that are just trying to bring forward a position that represents their small organization or their small group.

8:10

My other concern with the 50-hour threshold, including prep time, is that it could potentially impact those who become advocates because of personal circumstances. You know, it's not unusual, especially when we're dealing with something like our own kids, for parents to get involved in advocacy for their children; for example, a parent who's asking the government for increased wheelchair access for public buildings because they have a child or a loved one who requires a wheelchair. You know, I just had an organization, a school group, that wants to build an all-inclusive playground. The people that are involved in that committee are all parents advocating on behalf of the children that they love. If you've got a child who's experiencing a specific medical condition of some sort and they would like to raise the awareness of the need for treatment options for others experiencing that same condition, then perhaps these restrictions on time and prep time could be a problem.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert. On 29(2)(a)? Please proceed.

Ms Renaud: It was interesting to listen to the member talk about the importance of disclosing money in politics. Certainly, I think it's important. I'm just curious if it bothers you at all that contrary to the grassroots guarantee that your leader would be clear and open about who funds him – I'm just curious how you feel about when

he ran to take over the PC Party. I think he spent about \$1.5 million and raised about \$2 million before the writ, a lot of that going to a PAC, so he wasn't required to share that information with Albertans, although he did promise to. Of course, later that sort of changed. So I'm just wondering how you feel about that, working for somebody who doesn't quite walk that talk.

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

The Speaker: Point of order is noted. Go ahead.

Point of Order Relevance

Mr. Nixon: Again, the NDP may want to laugh when the Opposition House Leader rises on a point of order. They can act that way. That's fine. That's their decision. But, Mr. Speaker, that clearly had no relevance at all to the topic that we're talking about, and it was a clear attempt at a personal attack on another member. I'd ask that you'd encourage members to stay on the topic of the legislation we're debating.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I might note that the Deputy Government House Leader has a opinion as well, I see.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Clearly, in these kinds of situations there's always some leeway given for somebody to express some of their context before they actually get to the point of their question. It happens all the time in the House. In fact, I've been here in the House where a full five minutes was used in creating context without actually arriving at a question. To stop the process, as it was less than a minute, seems a little premature. You did offer a warning. The speaker clearly was preparing to wrap up the context so they could proceed, and I think if we allow that to happen, I'm sure we'll see a question at the end of that.

Thank you.

The Speaker: In fact, I did caution the member, and she declined to speak. However, not only to that member but to the others: please stay on the subject matter that's at hand, and when you are making context, make it more brief and less directed at individuals. I'm seeing some shaking of heads, but I would like to move on.

Hon. member, please proceed. Do you have a question or an additional comment?

Mr. Smith: Mr. Speaker, I think that we've already had a conversation about how appropriate that question was.

Thank you very much.

Debate Continued

The Speaker: Under 29(2)(a), anyone else to the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon?

To speak to the bill, the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Strankman: I was looking around there for a minute, Mr. Speaker, because the Member for Strathmore-Brooks has had an interesting day in the Chamber. He even commented about being near a twilight zone, I think, or something.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the chance to speak to Bill 11, or, as my notes say and my assistant put down, "Bill one one," so that I would not forget that, the Lobbyists Amendment Act, 2018. This bill speaks to accountability and transparency, a theme that we've heard a great deal of varying remarks on in the Chamber as we go forward.

Mr. Speaker, I too have some personal experience going forward, and I'll try and relate it to that. Depending on the timing, I'd be

happy to entertain some questioning under 29(2)(a). I know that quite likely the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie might take an opportunity to question me on some of our varying experiences of the effect of democracy in different regimes.

The Speaker: Hon. member, the same principle as before: keep going on subject. Thank you.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm getting to the point about democracy and the lobbying of that because of personal experiences of varying natures. This bill is getting to that.

You know, we've heard comments about the varying amounts of dollars involved, and some people think that dollars relate to democracy. Dollars do relate to the presentation of it in some cases but not always, because the people have reason to move forward. As we go forward, I'd like to try and hit the mark regarding this. There are unquestionably a lot of different perceptions on accountability and transparency, and those terms are completely subjective.

I'd like to share, if I could, Mr. Speaker, a personal situation I had in relation to my activism and my lobbying. In fact, not unlike the Official Opposition leader, I too travelled to Ottawa at one point in time to appear at a standing committee in regard to federal legislation which was effected unequally across the province, and I did so on my own time, on my own expense. Simply to travel to Ottawa by jet travel is three hours each way or four hours depending on the tailwinds. From where I live, it's three to four hours, depending on traffic, to travel. So it takes one day each way to go forward with these sorts of things. So sometimes the limitations – how do you value that to simply get from a rural position to have an opportunity to voice your democratic opinion?

Mr. Speaker, this situation involved, as I say, travelling to Ottawa and commenting with many other elected members, in fact, who were already there at government expense. When you make your presentation to the standing committee, it takes some time. As I'm telling you and telling other members, it takes prep time simply to get there, never mind the commentary required. You know, I have some umbrage putting an exact value on this because third-party organizations do this all the time.

We've talked about consultant lobbyists, we've talked about organizational lobbyists, and we've talked about the contingency fees required for that. We've also talked about grassroots communication. How would you define grassroots communication as we go forward and at what cost, Mr. Speaker? That's an extremely difficult thing to figure out. You know, the government in some realm – I can understand their concerns when you have many thousands of organized union labourers who are forced to give some portion of their wages and dues to the membership of an organization that may or may not lobby exactly in their direction. Sometimes then we get into a grey area, an area of perception, so there's lots of debate back and forth.

We've received also some valuable insights from the office of the Ethics Commissioner. This is how it could be done, and it could be done more often. Could you imagine how much easier the government's lives would have been had they taken this approach to the Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act? There was a lot of miscommunication and missteps and, frankly, bad decisions and making more bad decisions, and this could have been alleviated with open and transparent processes. There was no reconciliation. There was no explanation to the number of people that actually lobbied for these changes. But the government decided in a relatively inexperienced fashion as a new government, and that's fair. Everybody is allowed to make mistakes.

But when it comes to democracy, it's a blunt instrument. It's handled awkwardly at many times, not unlike the situation where the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie actually had to flee his country. I still live and he does, too, the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, Mr. Speaker, in a country that did at one time incarcerate farmers for selling their own grain, in a free country. How can the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie defend something like that? I would appreciate a 29(2)(a) question from him explaining his opinion on that and requesting that information from me. That's talking about lobbying to change a piece of legislation. That's what I did, and that's what was done and happened at the time.

8:20

I'd like to take a positive note on this bill, Mr. Speaker, talking about the elimination of gifts from lobbyists. Kudos to the government for adding this measure. I think everyone in this House has probably been in a situation where you're in a meeting with a lobbyist or a stakeholder group or speaking in a public function where somebody gives you a gift, not knowing that that may or may not be above certain limitations. Now, it's thoughtful, but it tends to be awkward because sometimes you have to ask the person who is giving you a heartfelt gift: is this over \$50, or what's the value of this? They don't understand that they may be putting you in a compromising position. It gets uncomfortable and weird trying to accept it, so I'll take that gift if it's only the value of a glass of water or something under \$50. How do you, on the spot, deal with those sorts of things? It's completely awkward. But it's important also for the sake of optics and correct conduct, absolute correct conduct, to not necessarily accept onerous, large gifts from others because we are elected officials.

Certainly, as members of the opposition we have a different ability of perception from lobbyists coming forward to us complaining about actions of the government. The government is in a position of power, Mr. Speaker. They can approve or deny or change legislation going forward, so it's a bit of a benevolent dictatorship in some regard going forward. So it's an unfair advantage in acquiring their time, different from us as opposition members.

I think everyone agrees that in many ways this can be seen as inappropriate, especially to a governing body as opposed to an advisory body, if you would call us that, Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, Mr. Speaker. It's an important role that all of us play in this Chamber. But as we go outside and as we go into the separation between church and state, if you will, this being the state and the church being the political parties that we all belong to, that, too, also becomes a separate entity.

I'd like to say that these new rules will bring the giving of gifts more in sync with the rules outlined in the Conflicts of Interest Act as it pertains to those gifts. A great benchmark, Mr. Speaker.

From my notes here, as I go forward, I've discussed the potential ambiguity, though, when the matter pertains to a thing like lobbyists hosting meetings with greetings and receptions. There have been plenty of MLAs – and you may know that federally, Mr. Speaker, people have expensed \$16 glasses of orange juice, to the great chagrin of the taxpayers that pay for those abuses to their dollars.

The Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster may remember when I questioned him in the Chamber about the expensing of \$180 tuxedos that his staff used in a meeting, an interdepartmental meeting. Mr. Speaker, I think some members of the Clerk's department might remember the day when I actually took the liberty of renting my own tuxedo. Fortunately for me, the Speaker of the day did not call it as the use of a prop, but I know full well that the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster remembers that day in the Chamber.

Mr. Speaker, if I remember correctly, in the office of the Ethics Commissioner's original recommendations they suggested restricting lobbyists from offering a gift of more than \$100 to public office holders to prevent lobbyists from offering high-valued gifts, which is great. It makes sense. But it still allows for various industry associations to host information sessions for many MLAs.

I know that many of the members opposite last night attended a hosted session by a lobbying agency for the irrigators of Alberta. I found it and I know that other members found it highly educational. So, Mr. Speaker, is that an infringement on these rights? It's hard to know because I don't know and I'm quite sure the members opposite who attended don't know what the lobbyist organization was paid to allow those irrigators to meet with us going forward. I see one of the members – I believe it's Lac La Biche – shaking his head in agreement, so I think he, too, would understand that there may be some questions there or understand that there could be some questions as to what the money was that was spent in that regard.

Another concern I have is around the proposed legislation bringing the reporting threshold for lobbyists from 100 hours of meeting time to only 50 hours. That would be including prep time. Mr. Speaker, I primarily covered that in my earlier, introductory comments. I know that for those consultant lobbyists who are not necessarily sometimes familiar with all the subject matter at hand, as I was in regard to my volunteer activism role – I'm fully versed on the infractions or the inadequacies of the federal legislation. I was lobbying and appearing, actually, at federal standing committee meetings to hear. Fifty hours of lobbying: you know, in the case of the federal situation, that doesn't even hardly get you to Ottawa and back.

In the case of Edmonton, in relation to where I live, it is three and a half hours one way. I know that the Member for Peace River takes considerably longer, and Grande Prairie is similar. It will be onerous in some cases for a number of individuals and organizations, who will be responsible for registering as lobbyists so that their effective action is not completely disqualified or they don't get the member that they're meeting with into some form of trouble. It could be quite burdensome on small groups, Mr. Speaker. It could create a whole bureaucracy of required paperwork although a lot of it nowadays is electronic. Still, you know, some people may be doing this in absolute good nature and without malice, but then all of a sudden they find themselves offside to go forward with this funding.

As we found last night, there are many irrigators, for example, who pool their resources to meet with us as MLAs. Then it becomes a quandary as to how you're going to separate that out for each individual organization. Even though they are jointly irrigators, each of them was representing many different organizations. So there's a technical issue based on interpretation, Mr. Speaker. I'm not singling out that one organization, which I view as a valuable organization, but I'm talking about similar organizations with the same name but who are legally different entities. If that's going to be covered in this legislation, it needs to be dealt with.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to go on and talk about grassroots communication, trying to understand how volunteer grassroots communication could be affected or licensed. How do we license or unlicense free speech? If these people want to voluntarily get together and speak on any subject, whether it be anything from health care to agriculture to transportation ... [Mr. Strankman's speaking time expired]

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Under 29(2)(a)?

Any other parties who would like to speak to Bill 11?

Seeing and hearing none, do you wish to close debate, hon. minister?

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the comments that I've heard from my colleagues on the Lobbyists Amendment Act, 2018, and I look forward to continuing the discussion as we move into Committee of the Whole.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 11 read a second time]

8:30

Bill 10

An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements

[Adjourned debate May 2: Mr. Cooper]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House – it's such a size.

Mr. Nixon: You're almost there, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yeah.

Mr. Nixon: We can't forget about the beautiful little town of Sundre down south. But you got the rest of it down pat, for sure.

It's my pleasure to rise and have a conversation today about Bill 10, Mr. Speaker. I have to say that it's great to be here this evening. I'm sure you feel the same way. It's interesting that we find ourselves in the same place over and over in this Chamber, not just sitting in the same place, though some of us move to different locations, but discussing often the same type of theme when it comes to legislation that this NDP government brings forward. I think Bill 10 is no different, unfortunately, than some of those themes that we've seen with some of the legislation this government has brought forward.

Often it appears that this government is behind on bringing legislation forward, that they panic as they're going into session, and we end up seeing legislation that is sometimes coming off the photocopiers moments before it arrives. It doesn't even have time to be bound or sent to these places. Then what we see is mistakes that happen because of that speed. Then we come back, and we see some consequence because of that mistake. There's some push-back on the government, and the government then comes back to this Chamber and brings other legislation off to the next sitting, trying to fix all the mistakes that they made in the last batch.

There are a few examples of that, particularly when it comes to reforms to our election system. This government repeatedly over the last several sittings has brought forward bills. Some of the content is good, that we agree with, on our election system. Then they went too fast, didn't consult, didn't work with Albertans, with the opposition, with others and then had to come back in the next sitting right away and fix mistakes in their own bill that they just passed several months before.

I'm starting to become concerned the more that I review Bill 10 and talk to constituents and stakeholder groups. People that have an interest in the content of Bill 10 are starting to realize that this, sadly, Mr. Speaker, is starting to appear to have some mistakes inside this legislation. I know the Minister of Municipal Affairs is laughing right now. Over the course of this evening I'm sure we will talk about some of those mistakes, particularly some of the comments that he has made already in debate on this bill. After research, since the last time that we debated portions of this bill, we've been able to find out that there are some mistakes with what the minister has even said inside this Assembly on this piece of

legislation. Maybe the minister doesn't know, and that's fair. I guess that's part of what the process is all about.

As such, Mr. Speaker, I believe that we are in a position where I need to move an amendment to be able to address that. I have the appropriate copies for the pages, and I will send them to the table and wait for your permission to continue.

The Speaker: We identify this as amendment REF.
Please proceed.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that the motion for second reading of Bill 10, An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements, be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 10, An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the reason that I move this referral amendment is for some of the reasons that I've already articulated in my preamble to the amendment. We have a situation where it appears that this legislation the minister is bringing forward has been poorly thought out, has missed some key issues that we want to discuss with him. The number one issue right now that I think is a problem with this bill and why it should go to committee is that again this government is asking the members of this Chamber, specifically this cabinet is asking the members of this Chamber, both on the government side and on the opposition side, to just trust them to get the details of this legislation right at a later date. [interjection] This is a pretty standard procedure. I know the Minister of Municipal Affairs is laughing about that.

Mr. S. Anderson: That's not true.

Mr. Nixon: That is where it is. They're asking MLAs to trust them because the details of this program will come forward later in regulations. They will not be debated. They will not be voted on by MLAs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Yes, they will.

Mr. Nixon: The minister suggests they will, but they're not in here. That's where it will happen at another time. Thus, it should go to committee.

Another interesting concern that we have with this legislation that shows why it should go to committee is around that the requirements of the disclosure of PACE property tax to prospective buyers in this legislation is left to regulations, just like I said, Mr. Speaker. Nothing in this legislation in itself ensures transparency when selling a property with a PACE property tax.

Considering that PACE programs, Mr. Speaker, are not common in Canada and it's unlikely that Albertans know that they've even existed for some time, this is a problem. It's also unclear how a PACE property tax will affect an owner's ability to obtain a mortgage. Now, considering the likelihood of interest rates increasing and the new, more onerous stress test proposed by the federal government for mortgages, this is a problem. When the minister was asked questions about that last time we were in the Chamber on this bill, he was unable to answer, again showing that this legislation is not ready to go forward.

Bill 10 exempts – this is an interesting thing – municipal borrowing associated with the PACE program from counting against the municipality's debt limits. Now, Mr. Speaker, debt limits are in place to ensure the viability of Alberta's municipalities. I represent lots of small municipalities, and viability is extremely

important. I can tell you that for our counties – the minister represents a county, at least one, I think, Leduc county. The counties have lots of concerns on this issue, the viability of some of the smaller hamlets and towns inside their communities, because ultimately the county ends up in those situations. Now, how this will impact that debt limit is extremely concerning and something this minister has not addressed. Currently a municipality's total debt cannot exceed 1.5 times the revenue of the municipality. The municipality's debt servicing costs cannot exceed 0.25 times the revenue of the municipality. This could affect the debt limit of the municipality. That is a serious issue which would again show why this needs to go to committee.

Again, Mr. Speaker, we continue to see this government bring forward poorly thought out legislation at a rapid speed and then say: "Hey, trust us. We got this all taken care of. It's going to be okay. We're going to go back, and we're going to fix it with regulations." Well, our experience – I'm sure you would agree – is that that has not worked out very well for Alberta. It has not worked out very well for Albertans. A prime example of that is Bill 6, one of the most famous pieces of legislation of this Legislature. We still have not seen the regulatory side of it finished because, as the opposition pointed out, the bill was a mess. A mess. How do we know that's not the same with this piece of legislation based on what we're seeing? The minister appears not to have been ready to bring it to this place.

The government has said that they intend for Energy Efficiency Alberta to be the administrator of the PACE program, not municipalities, but Energy Efficiency Alberta is not mentioned in the legislation, and all administrative positions are being left to the regulations. Again, when I started out talking today, Mr. Speaker, the minister was laughing when I said that this would all be decided in regulations. Again I just provided another prime example of where this will be decided in regulations. Another prime example of where this bill falls short and that not enough information has been provided to this House is that this minister has not shown this House that this bill is worthy to be passed or ready to be passed. This bill has fallen short. It should go to committee to make sure that he has it right.

8:40

Nothing in Bill 10 prevents municipalities from deciding to administer the program themselves, another hole in this piece of legislation that the minister seems to have missed and that needs to be addressed. Is this another piece that the minister expects the opposition to just trust him on, that he will deal with in regulations, Mr. Speaker, given the track record of this government and their complete inability to legislate on most issues effectively and the fact that they have to continue to go back to this Chamber to fix previous legislation that they've done in very short periods of time? It clearly shows that the minister is not ready to bring this piece of legislation here.

Now, according to the NDP government's PACE information website on how PACE works, it states:

Once a PACE program is established, property owners would take the following steps to access the program:

1. Owner decides to make a clean-energy upgrade
2. Owner signs agreement with municipality
3. Municipality installs and pays for upgrade
4. Owner pays back municipality through property taxes
5. Property owners save money on energy bills, reduce emissions and contribute to a green economy.

Wow. The word "municipality" was in there an awful lot. That was on the NDP's website. This minister has stood in this House already on this bill and told this side of the House that municipalities have nothing to do with it, but the website says that

they do. So is the website accurate, or is what the minister said last time that we talked about this bill accurate? Another good reason why this needs to go to committee and shows again that the minister is not ready to take this to this place.

The minister said that Energy Efficiency Alberta will be administering the PACE program. Energy Efficiency Alberta is not even in the legislation, Mr. Speaker. Municipalities will have nothing to do with it, but then the minister's website associated with this program says "municipality" in, like, three or four of the steps, and it also doesn't mention the Energy Efficiency Alberta website at all.

I know that the minister gets upset by that, but those are the facts. You can go look at it. I'm sure, based on the reaction from the minister this evening, that that website will be down soon. But don't worry; it's there. The point, though, is . . . [interjection]

The Speaker: Hon. members, calm it down.

Direct the comments to me. Keep going.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the point is that I brought this referral forward because the minister is not ready to bring this legislation to this House. The things that he has brought forward inside this Chamber, through you to him, are not what the facts show.

It's frustrating to continue to see this government in a rush to bring forward legislation, try to jam it through, try to get it fixed. You know, that's frustrating for us to have to be here through the process. But who cares about us at the end of the day? What matters is the Albertans that will be impacted by this. It matters to my towns, something like 24 or 25 towns and counties that I represent, that will be impacted by this and to the constituents that live in my communities who will be negatively impacted by this because this minister brought forward legislation to this House that was not ready to be here.

Then when he tried to address the questions from this side of the House, he got it wrong. That's okay. I don't expect the minister to know everything. But the problem with this, particularly, is the fact that he said that municipalities basically couldn't be in any way negatively impacted by this or would have no role in it, and you have a website that says it, Mr. Speaker. The website says it. The legislation and the website don't even mention the Energy Efficiency Alberta organization. But they talk about municipalities: owners sign an agreement with the municipalities; municipalities install and pay for the upgrade; owners pay back the municipality through taxes. It sure sounds like the municipalities have a lot to do with this process, I would think. It does not make any sense for the minister to say that municipalities will not be impacted by it.

We're starting to hear from municipalities, that they have some concerns with this. The minister says that all municipalities that he has heard from, or most that he's heard from, I believe he said the other night, are not concerned. It appears that that may have been the case even a few weeks ago. I don't know. But it ain't the case now as people begin to look through this actual legislation this minister has brought forward because they're starting to realize that there are possible serious negative impacts to our communities and to the people who are in them.

Because this minister is not able to answer this yet, because this minister continues to just ask this House to trust him – and we don't – and pass this legislation, this bill should go to committee to make sure that they've got it right. This government across from me should stop punishing Albertans because of their incompetence and start making sure that they bring proper legislation to this place in the future.

The Speaker: Are there any questions or comments to the member under 29(2)(a)? The Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think we've had a pretty clear indication here tonight. We've seen the minister, heard the minister, of course, howling over there on the other side, protesting the truth, the facts that are written on the website that are clear and plain. I think my colleague clearly described what was going on here. You know, as I look through it, too, it talks about the next steps.

If Bill 10 passes:

- the government would consult with municipalities, lenders, real estate associations and other stakeholders to develop a guiding regulation in the summer of 2018.

So here we have another situation where this government says: pass the bill, and then we'll consult. But, of course, they're saying that they're consulting all the time. They're saying that these municipalities are more than happy with what's going on, but obviously that's not the case. Obviously, they want us to give them the blank cheque that they usually ask for in this House, and then, of course, they're going to come up with the regulations afterwards. Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't think that's our duty here representing the people of Alberta, to pass legislation with no regulations, no ideas. They can't even get their story straight between what they have on their website and what they say in this House.

Mr. Speaker, I think this is very clear, and my hon. colleague has pointed this out very clearly. It's on the website. It clearly says these things, and, of course, the minister is still grumbling over there about the facts.

The Speaker: Hon. member, stay away from words like "grumbling." Keep going. Do you have a question for the member?

Mr. Loewen: Yeah, I do, actually. I would like my hon. colleague to carry on with his comments on this because obviously there's a severe lack of congruency between . . .

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

The Speaker: Point of order.

Point of Order Parliamentary Language

Mr. Nixon: I rise on 23(h), (i), and (j). The hon. Member for St. Albert is heckling across the room at the member, who is trying to get his question out, to: spit it out. It's unbecoming of this place for the member to say – she can deny it all she wants. That's what she said. All of us heard it. She should stand up and apologize and withdraw that comment.

The Speaker: Hon. member, it's important that I heard it, and I didn't hear it.

Debate Continued

The Speaker: Please continue, Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky. Are you ready?

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like my colleague to continue on with his comments on this, clearly stating the difference between what's on the website, what the minister is saying, and what he's grumbling about even right now. He can continue on with pointing out the incongruences between what the minister says. The website clearly says that municipalities would install and pay for upgrades on private property. I mean, that's a pretty bold statement of an expectation for municipalities to do as opposed to what the minister has said. If my hon. colleague would like to carry on in that vein, that'd be great.

The Speaker: Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky has a great point. I think he has understood and articulated the core problem with this legislation and the core point of why it needs to be referred to committee. There are several other issues, and I'm sure you're going to hear about them over the next little bit from other members inside this Chamber who have some concerns with it.

But at the end of the day, this minister said that Energy Efficiency Alberta will administer it. Energy Efficiency Alberta is not mentioned on the website or in the legislation anywhere. It says that municipalities will not administer it, really will have almost nothing to do with it, but then when you go on the PACE website, it says that owners sign an agreement with the municipalities, municipalities install and pay for upgrades, and owners pay back municipalities through property taxes.

I know I can hear the minister heckling away at me, Mr. Speaker, but this is what it says. This is what it says. I hear the Minister of Infrastructure heckling away. This is what this says. This is it. There's nothing to heckle or shout me down about while I speak. This is what this website says. This website says that. The minister said that it was Energy Efficiency Alberta that would administer it, but the website says something different. That's something alone right there that needs some clarification, I would say.

8:50

But it also goes back to the core point, that the minister's intent is to bring legislation here and say: trust me; I'll keep care of it during the regulatory stage. The municipalities that I represent don't trust him. They don't. Never mind that I don't trust them. The municipalities that I represent don't trust them. They want to make sure that we have this legislation right, that we're not going to be back here in a few months trying to fix another bill the NDP has messed up. The government gets really upset about that being pointed out, but with the track record like theirs when it comes to legislation, it has to be pointed out. What this government does is that they bring forward a bill, come back a couple months later, fix it, come back a couple of months later, fix it, come back a couple of months later, fix it, come back a couple of months later, fix it, because they can't get it right, mainly because they won't talk to anybody. That's their biggest problem. They won't talk to anybody.

This should be referred to committee, and I thank the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky for indicating his support of my referral amendment. I look forward to hearing much more vigorous debate through the evening.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka, REF, the referral amendment, is what you're speaking to?

Mr. Orr: Yeah.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Orr: Mr. Speaker, I have a different series of concerns about this bill and why it should be referred. I'm speaking to Bill 10, An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements, which is referred to as PACE. My concerns are that while the PACE website says that this is meant to help Albertans make clean energy improvements, save money, et cetera, et cetera, I really fear – and I'll demonstrate this as I move through – that the unintended consequence may be, in fact, for many families and individuals that it will not help them; it will in fact harm them in significant and serious ways.

The reason I go there is because this is about borrowing money. This is about adding debt to families, adding debt to individuals.

Now, debt is a great tool. Debt is a tool. I come from a construction industry. Tools can do great work, and tools can also do great damage. This is a bill that needs to take some time considering: what are we pushing upon our people? What are we leading them to? The use of tools, whether it's physical tools or debt tools, requires knowledge and training and clear safety procedures. That's why we have OH and S in the world I come from. Why do we push, in this case, a potentially dangerous tool of debt without giving people adequate training, preparation, warning, or instruction? That's where this is going.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Debt is debt is debt. I've said it before that we live in a society that is too often endangered by debt. Debt added to taxes is actually one of the highest priority forms of debt. While we all look with excitement at the toys we get to bring home on debt and credit card debt, then too often we get the after Christmas hangover and spend the next six months trying to pay off the debt. Hopefully we do get it paid off, or it gets carried forward next year and gets added, to be even higher.

There are concerns about the form of this debt. First of all, who's going to manage it? It's not clear. There are concerns from mortgage companies about how this impacts the process of discerning how much capacity a person has to pay. We have very strict and very clear rules in this country about how much a person should be allowed to borrow – there are limits to that – for the protection of the people, but now we're adding another system of debt that may in fact short-circuit that. The stress test for mortgages today went up in Canada, and now we're going to add another level of debt that will probably not be subject to stress tests. Or maybe it will be. If it is, then more and more people are going to be disqualified from buying a home, not even be able to do it.

Unfortunately, this whole thing follows a pattern from California. The whole PACE idea originated in California. It's something that has been in use there since about 2008. Interestingly enough, we have from April 12, 2018, in the *Los Angeles Times* a lead article that states: *Lawsuits Filed against L.A. County, Lender over the Green Energy Program*. It's not just a single lawsuit, Madam Speaker. It's a class-action lawsuit. This is a serious problem. Homeowners have taken on PACE debt, not quite realizing the implications of it, and now they can't afford to pay for it. They can't afford to keep their homes. They're afraid of losing their homes. They can't afford to pay their regular bills. Unfortunately, this is turning into a very bad experience in some jurisdictions that have had it for a good amount of time already. It turns out that it's all related to debt and the way that debt is handled, the way it's introduced to people or not introduced to them, the lack of clarity, the lack of rules around it. This kind of debt becomes a lien on their house, which means that their house will be lost when it's filed against. There's a lack of adequate consumer protections with regard to this kind of debt.

We have a government that wants to say that it's always out there to protect the consumer. Well, I want to say to you that this piece of legislation is not yet ready in terms of protecting the consumer. The consumer is at risk here. It's happening already in other places. This thing needs to be looked at very, very carefully, which is why it needs to go to committee, have some time to learn from the experience of others, and make sure it's better.

The challenge is that it's the low-income people, the elderly, and those who don't speak English as their first language that are the most at risk and are having the biggest amount of trouble with PACE-related debt in the U.S. This is something that needs to be carefully administered, carefully thought about. What it does is that

it produces inadvertently excessive debt-to-income ratios. People are left with very little money to actually live on after they pay off their loan or pay their loan on a regular basis. As I said, it's not just one person. This is a systemic problem. There are many people involved in this.

Some of these people are saying that if somebody had told them in the first place what this actually involved, they wouldn't have gotten involved in it. The problem is that the people who are pushing it are not actually under the rules that lenders and bankers and mortgage brokers are under in terms of how they deal with customers for customer protection. In many cases what's happening is that, actually, the contractors are showing up at people's doors, giving them a quick whatever, promising them a government rebate. They sign on, and they have no clue what they're getting involved in. They don't know what the interest rates are. They don't know what the repayment schedule really is. They don't understand what the complications and repossession realities might be if they don't make their payments.

In Canada today, with most of the banks, you can actually have your monthly mortgage rate forgiven for a period of time. You can go in and talk with them. You can work things out. This is different. This isn't subject to any of those rules. Then there's the whole issue of the fact when large numbers of people, as is happening in Los Angeles county now, begin to run into trouble with these things. What's actually happening is that the Los Angeles county has had to set up a reserve fund to cover the borrowers' missed payments, and the county is now on the hook for people who are not making their payments. This is debt that the lenders have pushed out. In fact, the article points out that in many cases this is a very similar kind of action and behaviour that happened in the U.S. subprime mortgage crisis that brought down many of the big banks and all the rest of it.

The same kind of practices are happening here, where contractors, who have no accountability, no experience, and just want to make a sale, serve as de facto mortgage brokers and push this stuff out, and it's creating a crisis. It's not helping. The contractors, quite frankly, are not legally required to determine if a customer is qualified to take on the loan. It's not their responsibility. They're not even accountable for it. Of course, the payment loan brokers that are behind it just rubber-stamp what the contractors do without responsibility to follow any guidelines. So now we have a class-action lawsuit coming off the ground over all of this.

This is a very problematic idea. I get that it's meant to try and help people. It's certainly meant to advance the green agenda. But when you do it at the cost of the ordinary people, put people at risk, you don't have their back. You're not helping them in that regard. We need to be very, very careful about this. This bill absolutely needs to go to referral.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? Grande Prairie-Smoky.

9:00

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I was listening to the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka talk about, you know, how this lending situation is and how it's not the same as going to a bank and borrowing money. Basically, what's happening with this situation is that it looks like they're looking more at property-based lending versus income and credit scores. Of course, there's a reason why lenders use income and credit scores. Things can change within a household's income over time, and of course banks will look at that and understand that, okay, maybe this family or this couple, seniors for instance, may not be able to afford to pay this back. It might put

them in a situation where they can't afford to pay their other bills, their necessities of life.

The member brought that up very clearly. I just want him to expand on that a little bit because I think it's so important to realize that based on the situation we're in with this government, where they bring this bill forward that obviously they haven't had time to properly think through and properly prepare for – I mean, they have a website that directly contradicts what's being said. They've got the briefing notes that contradict everything else. We have just a situation where this government has brought this forward without a whole lot of thought and a whole lot of planning.

Of course, they think that we should just pass it here and they'll just come up with all the regulations afterwards. They think that's a great way to do business, but unfortunately I don't think that's what Albertans are expecting us to do here today. I don't think they're expecting us to come here and just say, you know: "Yeah. This looks okay. You fill in the blanks afterwards, and we should be happy." I don't think it's the case that we should be doing that. I think that we owe it to Albertans and we owe it to the people we represent to make thoughtful decisions and make informed decisions.

Of course, to make informed decisions, you need information. Obviously, this is deeply lacking in information. There are so many contradictions that obviously this wasn't prepared properly. This was thrown out there in a panic, I guess, to – I don't know – maybe get out for the summer break quicker or whatever they wanted to do. They haven't consulted properly with the municipalities. You know, it says right on the website that the municipalities will install and pay for these upgrades. Well, I don't know about the municipalities of the other MLAs in this House right now, how their municipalities feel about it, but I'm pretty sure mine would be thinking twice before they started to install and pay for upgrades on private property.

I'd just like to have the member maybe take a little more time and talk about that a little bit more. Thanks.

The Deputy Speaker: Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you. My concern really is to protect the consumers. You know, I guess maybe the reason this jumps to the forefront of my mind at this point in time is that just a couple of days ago, last weekend, in my riding at a meeting a gentleman came up to me. He held out his phone, and he had a Google map on it with a whole bunch of different points plotted on it. It was central Alberta. He said to me: "Do you know what those are?" He said: "Every one of those is a foreclosed home in central Alberta. I'm a property manager. I manage foreclosed homes for the banks." He said: "We're up substantially over what we were a year ago. All of those places are homes that I look after now that the bank owns." And he says: "Get this. I'm only one of 40 property managers in the central Alberta region. There are 40 more people that have other cellphones with other lists of homes on them that are foreclosed."

Now, if you go and add a PACE debt tax burden on top of these houses, how many more houses and homes are we going to have foreclosed? How many people are going to be thrown out of their houses? How many families are going to be broken apart over the stress and the anxiety of having signed on to an additional debt burden that they didn't properly understand? They didn't know what the implications of it were, and it's going to lead them into an extreme level of crisis.

My concern is that we need to think this through really carefully to protect consumers. This is a form of legislation that, literally, when it comes to how this debt is rolled out, how consumers are liable for it, falls through the cracks. As I said before, we have very

clear debt and lender legislation and rules in this country for the protection of the consumer, but as soon as we introduce something new and novel, it falls through the cracks, and it puts consumers at risk. I think we need to be very, very careful about that.

Thank you.

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

Seeing none, any other speakers to the amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gottfried: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to rise to speak to Bill 10, An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements. I thank the Minister of Municipal Affairs for bringing this forward. I do think he's brought forward some important legislation. An opportunity, I think, to introduce renewable energy into consumers' homes is a good idea.

[The Speaker in the chair]

However, the legislation which he is bringing forward is another sign here. Although that minister actually had a track record once upon a time of consulting, I think this is a case where we do not have enough robust consulting with some of the people that should be brought into the picture before we leap forward with this legislation. You know, I think that we have an opportunity here with Bill 10, An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements, to do some good, but I think the minister has missed the mark on this one because there are long lists, which I'll get into as we discuss this, of people that they have not consulted, experts that have not been consulted. We've seen this before, Mr. Speaker.

Bill 20 enables municipalities to pass a bylaw creating a property assessed clean energy, or PACE, program, which provides a mechanism for property owners to finance energy efficiency, renewable energy, and water conservation projects or upgrades on their home properties. This program does so by allowing the repayment to be collected through the property owner's municipal tax. Sounds really nice. We're hearing here, of course, that we're not sure how that's going to be done or even who's going to be doing it. It might sound like a great idea, and there's nothing wrong with green technology. We all believe in the opportunities to save money for households and also to bring renewable energy into our households.

But if you aren't looking for ways to save money on energy bills, I'm not sure why you like lighting your money on fire, which could be the case with this program, especially considering this government has taken every conceivable opportunity to make electricity and home heating more expensive for Albertans. So I guess if they want to have a greater rationale, I suspect we're going to see that, Mr. Speaker, in the future people may be running for programs like this because they're going to see their electricity bills spike because of some other bad decisions made by this government. I just don't think taxpayers should have to pay for these upgrades, though, in the way that we see these upgrades and these upticks in the costs. I'm a little concerned here, and I think this really indicates why we need to have further consultation on this legislation.

Now, the municipality already collects property taxes, so there could be little or no additional costs on municipalities to add this PACE program, but they've told us that they don't want to administer them. We as provincial legislators need to make sure we spare municipalities from additional burdens, which they would then pass on to their taxpayers. Again, as we all know, there's only one taxpayer, Mr. Speaker.

Energy Efficiency Alberta, it sounds like, is administering the plan, so the municipalities don't have to be responsible for those costs, but it's nowhere, again, in the bill. We're told that it's going

to be in regulations, but I've got a wonderful orange piece of PowerPoint presentation here that tells us that they're in there, Energy Efficiency Alberta or another administrator. I'm going to tell you here that that concerns me, another administrator. We've heard from other members here how those other administrators have been positioned in some of the lawsuits in the States as predatory lenders. That frightens me. We're going to protect that in the regulations? I think we'd better do our homework on this one, Mr. Speaker.

You know, we've also talked about some of the lending institutions, and I'll get into that later. Lending institutions may or may not be a key to this program as well. Who's going to do the lending? We'll talk about that as well.

Mr. Speaker, who wouldn't want to have solar panels on the roof and put electricity back on the grid and maybe have some more upgrades or have their hot water heated by solar, maybe have a windmill in their backyard? People used to have windmills. You know, we got those from Holland, and they used to pump water for people. They used to work on the prairies before we had electricity. Maybe you have appliances or machines drawing a lot of current, driving up your power bill. PACE could help replace those. I think they've replaced some light bulbs already. What a great idea. Maybe you're trying to protect a wetland on your property in order to conserve drinking water, or maybe you have home needs, you know, your home needs an energy audit to find the leaks and then renovations to keep the heat during the winter. Of course, PACE can help. It's going to fix all of these things for everyone, but at what cost?

You know, it concerns me when I look at some of these bills, and, Mr. Speaker, I look at a long list of things here. But we've heard from people that there's predatory lending. I think about the seniors. You know, what we see in the presentation from the website is that financial barriers will be reduced. That sounds like a good thing. But we have seniors on fixed incomes that could be the subjects of either predatory lenders if that's not controlled properly in regulations – we don't even know what they are – or contractors that may or may not be well regulated. We all know that this government has actually taken the ability of some of the people that are offering these programs so they can't knock on doors anymore, to put in – guess what? – energy-efficient furnaces, hot water tanks. They can't even go door to door. So now we're going to have that entrenched in this, and we're going to have people now through the PACE program able to essentially go door to door and sell these things or maybe not even door to door, maybe through their tax bill. It'll come with their tax bill, with maybe an unregulated lender and an unregulated service provider. But – you know what? – we're supposed to trust that that's all going to be in the regulation. Why don't we regulate that now?

9:10

We've seen in the article from the U.S. financial elder abuse. Is that what you want, financial elder abuse because of the regulations we can't even see and touch here today? Predatory lending, predatory contractors: what if that's the case? You know, we see already that the uptake on reverse mortgages from seniors and the SHARP program is not what we expected it to be. Guess what? Those seniors are worried, they're afraid, they're scared that they're going to get scammed. The headline on the article from the States says: scam, S-C-A-M. These people that you're actually targeting: many of them are on fixed incomes.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I'm over here.

Mr. Gottfried: I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. I love talking to . . .

The Speaker: I know. I thought I was forgotten.

Mr. Gotfried: Seniors are there, and they're worried about that. That's the reason they don't use many of those programs, sometimes reverse mortgages and the SHARP program.

Also, they don't want to take equity. Well, this, Mr. Speaker, is actually taking equity from their house. It doesn't look like it. It's on the tax bill. But when they go and sell it, it's going to be considered as a liability and reduce the value that they can sell that home for.

What about new-home owners? I was in the new-home building business. I know what new-home owners are like. You know what, Mr. Speaker? Most new-home owners today come in with – guess what? – 5 per cent down. Now they're going to be stress tested with the new mortgage regulations. I can tell you that their debt and risk tolerance is much higher than mine was when I bought my first home. If we take this and we put the PACE program off the books, they may put themselves at increased risk by taking that program and putting themselves another \$20,000 or \$30,000 in debt, that they can ill afford. They may not be someone who's been through enough economic cycles to know the risk of economic cycles. What if one of the members of the household loses their job, and they can't pay the taxes, and they can't pay the PACE program, and they can't pay the mortgage? Then we have foreclosures and bankruptcies. That frightens me, that we have not addressed that.

I ask: did the government consult? A simple list. You know what, Mr. Speaker? When the SHARP program was announced, I spoke with the reverse mortgage experts, who'd been doing that for almost 30 years in this province. Nobody talked to them. They're the people doing the SHARP program for 30 years, and nobody in this government talked to them. I talked to the fellow who actually started it. They call him Mr. CHIP. That's unconscionable. Mortgage brokers, reverse mortgage lenders I just spoke about were not consulted.

How about CMHC or Genworth, the people that insure the mortgages? We saw that reference in the U.S. articles as well. I'm sorry; you said that this isn't going to affect your qualification for a mortgage. But what if they say that it does, and people can no longer insure their mortgages? Did anybody talk to CMHC or Genworth, Mr. Speaker? Did anybody talk to CMHC and Genworth? We need to put this to committee so that they can be appropriately consulted.

What about the chartered banks? You know what? They do this lending already, too. You know what it's called? It's called a home-line credit program, home-line loan. Maybe it can be done as a second mortgage or put on the first mortgage when they renew to do these home improvements, with an ability to pay them back.

I don't want Albertans to act like this government over here, where they borrow money they can't afford to pay back. They push it down the road. They push it so far down the road that when it comes time and something unusual occurs, Mr. Speaker, they go bankrupt. They are foreclosed upon. Their assets are seized. Their house is seized because of nonpayment of taxes. Is that what we want?

What if the administrators are allowed to be private lenders? I mean, maybe it's ATB. Well, guess what? That's public risk because ATB gets all of its money from the Treasury Board.

What about realtors? Did we talk to realtors? The PACE could be viewed similar to maybe an underfunded condo reserve fund or maybe considered as a cash call to come on a building. It is a liability, Mr. Speaker. It is not an asset anymore. Those pretty panels on the roof might be outdated, they might be in ill repair, they might actually need to be torn out. So what do you do when you buy the house? Say: "You know what? Could you tear those out before I buy this house because they're a liability?" Wow. Great

asset. But, by the way, you're still going to be paying for it, so let's reduce the price on that house by \$20,000 and maybe wipe out all the equity that that new homeowner has in the house. Great. The Member for Calgary-Greenway has been in the business. He knows what happens when houses have assets and liabilities.

What about poorly installed items that may have been done? You don't have regulated installers, then you get into a situation where it's poorly done and it needs repair or it needs maintenance or it should be torn out. What a debacle, Mr. Speaker.

You know, there's a reason why we have orderly and disorderly transition into new technologies. I remember when my brother-in-law – and he's got more money than I do – bought his first big-screen TV. I think it cost him \$6,000 or \$10,000 or some stupid amount of money. Now you can go into Costco and get that same big-screen TV, bigger, twice as big, for \$499 or maybe \$599 for the bigger one with a curved screen and all that sort of stuff. That is the pace of technology, so five years from now the pace of technology might mean that your \$30,000 investment is now worth \$6,000. Great investment, Mr. Speaker. Let's let our consumers, our Albertans catch up with the pace of technology with an orderly transition to renewables.

Like the climate leadership plan, coal shutdown, or – you know, again, I've been talking about orderly versus disorderly transition, Mr. Speaker. The coal shutdown is quite clearly a disorderly transition because it's going to – mark my words. I had a fellow in my office yesterday who wanted to bet me that electricity was going to cost double within the next 24 months. You know what? I wouldn't take that bet because he might be right, and I don't like to lose my money on bad bets.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I was in the housing market, as I mentioned to you, and I was involved with affordable housing and attainable home ownership, where we worked and I worked to the penny so that we could qualify people for their mortgages, so that we could get low- and middle-income Albertans into home ownership. We helped them with down payments, and we helped them with monthly subsidies, and we helped them to achieve home ownership. We worked it to the penny so that we could get the people with the lowest possible income into ownership but not so that they could lose that home a year or two later. We wanted that to succeed, and I'm proud to say that we had over a 95 per cent success rate. In fact, I think it was 97 per cent. Only 3 per cent of the people that went into that program ever foreclosed, and some of them probably shouldn't have been in that program in the first place.

Maybe some of these people should not do it in the first place either, Mr. Speaker, and we do not have the mechanisms. The minister has not done his diligence on this to ensure that we do not put Albertans at risk with this program. That should not be the objective.

What about the legal mess we've seen, class-action lawsuits? Where's that going to lead to, Mr. Speaker? Where is that going to lead to? We're seeing the people that we followed in this program now going in class-action lawsuits and being accused of predatory practices. That's not where we want to go.

I think about the builders out there – I was a builder for a dozen years – and the move, actually, towards net zero building in the future, and I think we'll get there one day because we have the technology. It's not necessarily affordable for every homeowner so that we can allow Albertans, low- and middle-income earners, to actually be able to afford a house. That should be our goal, to actually allow Albertans to achieve that dream of home ownership – and many of them have – by doing things in an affordable manner.

But I can see a builder who specs in \$30,000 or \$40,000 worth of this new technology in a house, but – guess what? – it's not on the

sticker price. They do a whole community, and they push that all into a PACE program, and every house on the block has that caveat, that monthly bill, for 10 years on that property. The builder makes it look like it's more affordable. Well, the builders are already faced with taxes upon taxes upon taxes and levies. Mr. Speaker, please . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any questions to the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

9:20

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would love to go on 29(2)(a) with the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek. He was giving a very impassioned speech on this. All the warning bells and whistles are going off with this legislation: obviously, the unpreparedness of the minister and how this was brought forward in such a haphazard manner, where things don't seem to match when it comes to what the minister says and what's on the website and what's written down on the handout they give.

Now, I actually was watching the minister, and he talked about the reduced value of the property when it's sold with a lien such as this. The minister was just shaking his head like he couldn't believe what he was talking about. Well, of course, what the minister, I guess, maybe doesn't understand is that not everybody wants to pay for these things. When these liens are put on these properties, people that are buying a property are going to look and see: okay, what are the taxes? That's something that you have. When you mortgage a house, you have to show what the taxes are because the bank wants to see what payments there are. Obviously, if there are some additional fees on those taxes, the bank is going to want to see them, and that's going to come into effect in the borrowing. Of course, another thing is that these products age and they become obsolete.

There are a lot of different issues here that the minister doesn't seem to have realized. In fact, it was like it was something that he had never considered before, obviously. I think we see in the U.S. that, like, "Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac won't lend money on houses with PACE" is what I've read. I mean, obviously, these are lending institutions that won't lend money if houses are involved with this PACE situation. Obviously, there are a lot of things that haven't been considered here.

When we look at the handout that the government gave out, it says here, "Municipalities are not interested in administering the program and incurring administrative costs." Well, that doesn't line up with what they've said on the website, where it says, "Municipalities would install and pay for upgrades on private property." So I don't understand how all this has gone so far off. If we look in this handout here that the government has, it talks about this first being implemented in California in 2008. Of course, they're using California as an example when we happen to know that there are class-action lawsuits going on over this.

I would like to hear the member continue on with his thoughts on this PACE program that this government has brought forward. Thank you.

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

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for his questions. I think we've seen in this that there is a big concern. We're worried for consumers. You know, we've heard the term "financial barriers reduced" in the presentations by the minister, but I think what we're seeing is financial accountability ignored. Now, this seems to be a bit of a theme with this government, financial accountability ignored, but you know what? It's not our position to force and push that onto Albertans because of a lack of diligence and a lack of consultation.

To the member, I agree that there are some concerns here. Even on their own website versus their own presentation there are some inconsistencies. You know, I'd hate to see this become the son of subprime loans. We all know what that did in the United States in 2008, don't we, Mr. Speaker? It triggered an entire economic and financial system meltdown. Now, if this program were done through some administrator and all the lending is done through ATB and everybody uses it, that could be us taxpayers on the hook for those losses when those loans go bad. I don't want to see that. I'd like to see a big caution about predatory lending.

Really, I think the thing here is that we must send this to committee for further consultation with the real experts because I'd sure like to hear from the minister about this long list of organizations and industries and people that I don't think have been consulted. Mr. Speaker, I think that that would be irresponsible of us as legislators, to let that occur. It'd be irresponsible of this government to not refer this to committee for further consultation.

Mr. Speaker, at that, I'd like to adjourn debate and move that we adjourn debate for the evening. Thank you.

The Speaker: I'm sorry, hon. member. I'm advised that you're not able to move adjournment under Standing Order 29(2)(a).

But I do see the Minister of Municipal Affairs standing.

Mr. S. Anderson: You bet. Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. I've listened with interest, very, very keen interest. I'm not sure . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member – I'm looking to the table – are you closing?

Mr. S. Anderson: I'm going to. Yeah. I've just got a couple of words that I'm going to say, Mr. Speaker. I won't take long.

The Speaker: All right.

Mr. S. Anderson: I listened intently to the rabbit holes we've gone down tonight, the interesting casting of aspersions and accusations and conspiracy theories. I don't know if Bigfoot is going to walk in the door here pretty soon. I'm not too sure because of all that they've said. I would encourage them to continue to look at the website.

Mr. Nixon: Here I am.

Mr. S. Anderson: There he is.

Mr. Speaker, just a couple of things that I'll say, and then I will adjourn. This is enabling, this piece of legislation. It's an enabling piece of legislation. It comes down to the people that want to participate in it. It's a personal choice. We're talking about third-party lenders. That's what I meant about saying that the municipalities didn't want to do the lending. So we'll look at third-party lenders. Of course, we've been discussing that with them. That's fine.

An Hon. Member: It's pro choice.

Mr. S. Anderson: It's pro choice.

Mr. Speaker, really, you know, it's quite interesting here about raising the bar. I just want to say that the consultation I've done continuously through Municipal Affairs has proven itself again and again. This is legislation that's setting the framework for us to go out and do extensive consultation through the summer. I've said that on record in here. You can go back in *Hansard* and find it. I'll keep saying it. I've said it in the press. I'll say it again. That's what we've done before. We've learned that through the MGA, how well that worked, and we will continue to do that with this ministry. With that,

I do have a list of quotes and a bunch of other people, like from the AUMA, some other folks who are supporting this. I won't go through that now because I know we have some other things to go through.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I will ask that everybody just relax in here. Take a deep breath. There's no reason to get agitated about everything and make personal attacks on anybody. This is a great place to debate things that we might disagree with in a very respectful manner.

With that, I will adjourn debate, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Your motion was with respect to the amendment, correct, hon. minister? Is that right?

All in favour, please say aye.

Mr. Nixon: Whoa. Mr. Speaker, he's not closing debate; he's adjourning debate. Just making sure. Let's make sure we're clear what we're voting on. Thank you.

The Speaker: Let me try again.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 1 Energy Diversification Act

[Adjourned debate May 9: Mr. Gill]

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I move that we immediately adjourn debate on this and go to Bill 12 as the Premier said in question period today that it was important that it get passed. So I move that we adjourn debate now and get Bill 12 done for the people of Alberta.

The Speaker: Hold on a sec, please. Just to clarify, hon. member, it's to adjourn debate on Bill 1, correct?

Mr. Nixon: That's correct.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion to adjourn debate lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:29 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Gill	Nixon	Strankman
Gotfried	Orr	Yao
Loewen	Smith	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Horne	Payne
Carlier	Jansen	Phillips
Connolly	Kazim	Piquette
Coolahan	Kleinstauber	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Littlewood	Rosendahl
Dach	Loyola	Sabir
Drever	Luff	Shepherd
Feehan	Malkinson	Sucha
Fitzpatrick	McPherson	Turner
Gray	Miranda	Westhead
Hoffman	Nielsen	Woollard

Totals:	For – 8	Against – 33
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[Motion to adjourn debate lost]

Mr. Nixon: Switching back to the bill, Mr. Speaker, I assume Bill 1 because the government doesn't want to go to Bill 12. We are on Bill 1; I just want to be clear on that.

Mr. Westhead: Point of order.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane has a point of order.

Mr. Westhead: I think the member has already spoken on this bill, so I don't think he can speak again. He just adjourned debate.

The Speaker: I've been advised that he was adjourning debate, that he still has an opportunity to speak to the bill. It was simply adjourning the debate. I've consulted on the matter, and I believe that's the order.

Mr. Nixon: You'd have to adjourn debate with me as the speaker.

Anyway, thanks, Mr. Speaker. I will talk on Bill 1. This is an interesting bill. I would think that the vast majority of Albertans do not support the programs that the minister is creating in Bill 1. Now, the reason I think that is because that's what I'm hearing from the vast majority of Albertans.

I think it's interesting that when you look at this legislation – I think it's even telling – the NDP is now introducing this three years into their mandate. If this was so important and the NDP truly wanted to create economic benefit, create jobs, do different things with this legislation, why did they wait till they're in the red zone and not do anything for the last three years? Instead, what did they do for the last three years? The NDP raised taxes on job creators by 20 per cent. They dramatically increased red tape. They imposed a carbon tax telling investors to go elsewhere. They sent billions and billions and billions of dollars of investment from our province to other jurisdictions. They brought in a carbon tax that they did not campaign on.

It's interesting, Mr. Speaker. The hon. Leader of the Opposition keeps an NDP platform in his desk and often refers to it. In that platform it says nothing about that carbon tax. Then they bring it in secretly along the way without telling Albertans about it. They don't tell anybody about it when they door-knock. That's secretly. That's what they did. Now, three years in they seem to think that they can come up with some loan guarantees and a few grants and they're able to fix the absolute catastrophic damage that they've done to the Alberta economy.

It doesn't make any sense. It's disingenuous. You have a government who, when they came into power, brought in the largest tax increase in the history of this province. They attacked the largest industry in this province, the energy industry, chased away investment, raised taxes on job creators, lowered revenue in the process but raised taxes on job creators, oversaw some of the largest unemployment in generations under this government's watch, and continue to then take that tax and raise it because their close friend and personal ally in Ottawa Justin Trudeau called up the NDP and said: I want you to raise it to \$50. What did this NDP government do? They said, "No problem, Justin," and raised it to \$50. They didn't do an economic analysis, didn't listen to the people of Alberta, the large majority of which in almost every poll are clear that they do not like this job-killing carbon tax that this government has brought in, but they did it because of Justin Trudeau.

Then we see, Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: Try not to use members' names in the House.

9:50

Mr. Nixon: Well, Justin Trudeau is not a member of this House. He's a member of the House of Commons.

The Speaker: Okay. I'm sorry.

Mr. Nixon: That's okay. Am I right, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: Yes, you are. Please proceed.

Mr. Nixon: Okay. Thanks, Mr. Speaker. So they did what Justin Trudeau told them to do, which is to raise the carbon tax. Then they tell the people of Alberta: "We're going to keep this carbon tax. We're going to give rebates to everybody. This won't be used for general revenue."

Now, first of all, let's talk about the rebates. They don't give the rebates to everybody. Even the rebates that they give do not come anywhere close to covering the cost of what people have to pay for the carbon tax because the carbon tax raises the price of everything. As you know, Mr. Speaker, everything in our society comes by train or rail or truck, so everything has fuel costs. So it costs you when you buy carrots at the grocery store, when you buy your kids' Christmas presents, and none of the rebates cover that nearly. They did bring in some rebates, granted, though now, with a 67 per cent increase inside the budget, they're clawing back those rebates.

Interestingly enough, you want to talk in this bill about bringing in loan guarantees and grants, et cetera, but the rebates that are there don't even come close to covering the 67 per cent increase that this NDP government has done. They're now crawling back on fixed-income seniors inside our communities and allowing them to reduce those carbon tax rebates by 30 per cent, holding them to 70 per cent. Fixed-income seniors, Mr. Speaker. Now, that shouldn't surprise me because you know what this government told seniors in my community that complained to them about the carbon tax? They told them to go fund raise to pay for the carbon tax.

Bringing in legislation now, saying, "Hey, a couple of loan guarantees, a few grants spread out over this time will make up for all this damage that we have done to Alberta," is not accurate, Mr. Speaker. It is ridiculous. This government should be ashamed about the way that they have treated Albertans, particularly when it comes to how they treated them with the carbon tax.

Now, we talked about their attack for the last three years on the largest industry, that they're trying to fix here. They also attacked the second-largest industry during their time here. They attacked the agriculture and farming communities across this province, something that has still not been forgotten or forgiven in rural Alberta, and it will not be. Very soon, hopefully less than a year, rural Alberta gets to come and cast their judgment on that attack. But this bill . . . [interjection] The Minister of Municipal Affairs said that I should go talk to some farmers and ranchers. I do every day. I live next door to them.

Mr. S. Anderson: That's not what I said, but that's fine. [interjections]

The Speaker: It's getting late, hon. members.
Keep going.

Mr. Nixon: Absolutely. You have a piece of legislation. The NDP tries to bring it forward and says: "It's okay. Forget all that stuff. We're going to be able to fix the catastrophic damage that we've done to the economy by bringing in some of these grants and loan guarantees." The fact is, Mr. Speaker, that if the NDP really wants to change or start to adjust or modify even a little bit the hurt that they are doing to Albertans, the very first thing that they should do

is start repealing some of their disastrous policies – start repealing some of their disastrous policies – starting with the carbon tax.

If the NDP would go outside of their little bubble of people that have their world view and talk to Albertans, they would find out that the reason that they're 30-some points behind in the polls is because they won't listen to Albertans. Albertans are frustrated with this carbon tax and other taxes. They're tired of paying for it at the gas pumps. They're tired of paying for it on their heating bills. Industry is tired of having this extra cost added. It's costing us jobs. Instead of doing a little, tiny Band-Aid solution like the government is proposing in this legislation, this government right now should join the opposition's call to repeal the carbon tax.

Fortunately, Mr. Speaker, as you know, if Albertans in a year elect the United Conservative Party and we're given the privilege of governing, the very first thing we will do is get rid of the carbon tax. We won't bring in little Band-Aid legislation; we will listen to the people of Alberta, and we will get down to work. We will fix the problems that this government has created. But now you have a government that wants to distract from their disastrous record with this bill. That's their goal with this bill. There's nothing here. There's nothing inside this legislation that addresses the regulatory roadblocks, red tape that's holding up project permits.

Further to that, Mr. Speaker, we oppose \$800 million in loan guarantees for partial upgrading and \$500 million in loan guarantees for the feedstock infrastructure program. We oppose the \$200 million in grants for partial upgrading. What we want this government to do is to stop bringing in Band-Aid solutions to distract from their disastrous record but instead come to this House and get to work on trying to fix things, get to work on reversing the damaging policies that they brought forward, that have hurt the people of this province. Listen to the seniors in Sundre when they come from a place like the West Country Centre and say: Premier, we can't keep our doors open to our recreation centre because of your carbon tax. Actually listen and realize that there are no grants for those people from this government, confirmed by the Premier's office. The Premier's office said to them: "No grants. There's nothing to help you. Go fund raise for your carbon tax."

If this government truly wants to distract from their disastrous record and wants to truly help the people of this province, why wouldn't they go there? Instead, they come here, try to distract us from the real problem. You know what that real problem is, Mr. Speaker? I suspect you do know what that real problem is. Certainly, no big surprise, it's the NDP government. The number one thing this NDP government could do right now to make things better is to scrap the carbon tax, not bring forward bills that are distractions.

They could attract investment back to our province, stop bringing in ideological policies that are scaring away investors and creating unemployment, not stand in this House and call the 200,000-plus people that have been unemployed under this government's watch an opportunity cost so that they can put in their ideological agenda, which they did. They're not an opportunity cost, Mr. Speaker. Those are the people of Alberta, this government's boss. This government's boss.

They want to make the province better for the people with this bill, they say, a government that tells seniors to fund raise for the carbon tax, a government that won't help seniors, that reduces seniors' carbon tax rebates by 30 per cent. Then when you ask the seniors minister why that's happening, the response, Mr. Speaker, is: "It's okay. They got 70 per cent." This is a government who does not care about the people of Alberta. They show it each and every day with their actions. They show it each and every day with their actions.

The Municipal Affairs minister represents a lot of constituents that I know who do not like the carbon tax. They talk to me about it all the time. He gave a speech the other day in Leduc. The number one thing that they spoke about was how upset they were with the carbon tax. This is all across the province. The members across the way know that the majority of their constituents do not want the carbon tax. They know that, so instead of doing the right thing, reducing the carbon tax – removing the carbon tax. Mr. Speaker, I want to be very clear that I misspoke. I don't want them to reduce the carbon tax; I want them to get it out of here. At the very least while they're here I want them to stop their increases. But instead of doing the right thing and removing that carbon tax for their constituents, they're now going to try to come here with this piece of legislation to try to distract from their disastrous record. Well, you can see it's not working. It's not working.

You know, in Red Deer this weekend I talked to hundreds of people – hundreds of people – all of whom want the carbon tax gone. All. Interestingly enough, the waiter who was waiting at a dinner that I was having at the motel in Red Deer last weekend, Mr. Speaker, found out that we were having a political convention, and he asked some questions about that. His number one concern was the carbon tax. Number one: carbon tax.

Ms Hoffman: How do you think he felt about the minimum wage? [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. members.

Mr. Nixon: Actually, it's interesting that the Deputy Premier just heckled me about what he thought about the minimum wage. He also brought that up, too, Mr. Speaker, interestingly enough. He brought up the minimum wage, and he was very upset about it because it ended up costing him money. What he was explaining is that since the minimum wage increases have happened, he's seen a drastic reduction in his tips. He made more money before this government messed with the minimum wage. He made more money. He is in a worse spot now because of what this government did on minimum wage, so I don't think the minister should heckle about that as a great thing. Twenty-two thousand people lost their jobs because of this minimum wage increase. [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. members.

Let's stay on the bill here, hon. member.

10:00

Mr. Nixon: I am referring to the bill. This bill is a distraction from that, as you can tell. The Deputy Premier, that's the example she wanted to use to try to justify it. That's silly, Mr. Speaker. It's silly.

Mr. Carlier: You're right. People should work for nothing. The world would be a better place.

The Speaker: Hon. minister.

Mr. Nixon: It's silly, Mr. Speaker.

I know the agriculture minister is really upset and heckling away over there right now, Mr. Speaker. He probably is because he's the guy, under his watch, that attacked farms and ranches in our communities with Bill 6 and is trying to use this legislation to distract from his record. I would be heckling, too. That's what he's doing. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Nixon: Now, as I said, Mr. Speaker, it would be far more effective to start by repealing NDP harmful policies than utilizing

this legislation. That's what it would be. It would be far more effective to do that. Instead, what we get is the NDP bringing forward this bill to try to distract from their record. The vast majority of Albertans did not support this.

It's telling, again, that the NDP is introducing this after three years. Why, Mr. Speaker? You have to ask yourself as we debate this legislation why they would bring this forward after three years. Why was it not important in the first year? I think that in the first year what was most important to them was chasing off investment in this province, raising taxes on everybody, causing unemployment, et cetera, et cetera. That seems to have been their bigger priority rather than bringing forward this legislation at the time.

In this bill the NDP will provide \$1 billion for partial upgrading over eight years beginning in 2019-20. Now, most of this, Mr. Speaker, will be up front, with about \$800 million in loan guarantees and \$200 million in grants. With that money it appears, certainly . . .

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Klein, under 29(2)(a)?

Mr. Coolahan: Under 29(2)(a), yes.

The Speaker: Okay. The Member for Calgary Klein.

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to make a few comments and then perhaps ask the member a question. He's saying: why is this brought in after three years? Well, after three years because we had the Energy Diversification Advisory Committee working on this, right? You have to understand that we wanted a fulsome understanding of what would make the petrodiversification program successful. We took the advice of that committee and of the experts in the field.

You know, I don't necessarily believe the member when he says that people don't support this bill. Maybe in his world they don't support it because of the way the question is framed, right? "Bill 1 stinks, right?" Then, of course, they say: "Yeah. You're right. You're right. It stinks." But it doesn't. This is coming on the heels of a very successful first round of the petrochemicals diversification program.

I also find it hard to believe – you know, in 20 years in my circles all I've ever heard about is: why aren't we upgrading bitumen in this province, right? I mean, people used to point to the B.C. example of their forest industry. The money isn't in the raw product; it's in the finished product. That's where the money is, and look at where the B.C. forest industry went. They had to start diversifying that economy as well.

But, you know, this is really about creating good jobs. It's about creating good jobs. I mean, we're looking at a situation in which the Alberta chemicals sector thinks that they can employ about 7,500 people directly at a salary of over \$90,000 per year. Now, that's creating jobs, and that's creating an industry that's going to be sustainable when the oil and gas price crashes. We have seen the ebbs and flows of that over and over again.

So I guess I would like to ask the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre under 29(2)(a): when you do talk to your constituents, do they say that we should never diversify our oil and gas economy? I mean, should we just stay having one customer, selling it at a discounted price to the U.S., who has become our major competitor, our only source of income for that right now, really? Is this what the member thinks, that we should just continue doing what we have been doing for 30-plus years, selling to one customer one product and buying it back at a discounted price? Should we not be moving in a direction where we can be selling a

finished product to other customers? This doesn't make any sense to me, Mr. Speaker.

I find it hard to believe that the member's constituents find this formula of boom and bust and one customer forever to be the solution to Alberta's economy. To keep it strong and to create jobs, we've always talked about diversifying the economy. It has actually, I think, become a reality under this government.

The Speaker: Hon. member, why don't we give the member an opportunity to answer your question?

Mr. Coolahan: Okay. So the question would be, then, Mr. Speaker: should we not diversify our oil and gas sector, and should we continue to sell our raw product at a discounted price?

Thank you.

Mr. Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, in the limited time I have left, I will tell you what my constituents think. What my constituents

overwhelmingly tell me back home is that they do not want the carbon tax. What they also tell me overwhelmingly back home is that they want this government gone and that . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Loyola: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to move that we now adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Speaker: The Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the hour of the night and the fact that we have accomplished a great deal today, I would like to move that we adjourn until tomorrow at 9 o'clock.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 10:08 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday morning, May 10, 2018

Day 28

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Thursday, May 10, 2018

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Prayers

The Acting Speaker: Good morning.

Let us pray and reflect, each in our own way. As we conclude this week's work in this Assembly, we renew our energies with thanks so that we may continue our work for the people in the constituencies we represent.

Please be seated.

Orders of the Day

Government Motions

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Time Allocation on Government Motion 16

23. Ms Ganley moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:
Be it resolved that when further consideration of Government Motion 16 is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the motion, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the motion shall be put forthwith.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. As outlined by the Government House Leader when the matter of Government Motion 16 was last before the House, it has become clear that the opposition are not only opposing the appointment of Mr. Gibson as Alberta's first Election Commissioner, but they are filibustering to try and prevent the appointment from even coming to a vote.

It has been five months since the legislation was passed in this House, creating the Election Commissioner, legislation that we believe is vitally important to ensure that we are getting dark money out of politics and ensuring that we put the voice back to the people of Alberta. This legislation, Madam Speaker, was opposed by the United Conservative Party.

A hiring process was launched in December, led by an all-party committee. That committee completed its work and made a recommendation to the Assembly. That recommendation was made last month and tabled in the Assembly on April 10. It is now, of course, May 10.

We began debating the motion last week. It has been debated multiple times, for a total of about six hours. In my view, through the course of numerous committee meetings, through their minority report, through their statements and motions, and through the amendments they have presented, the opposition has made as compelling a case as they can for why Mr. Gibson's appointment should not proceed. But they have not made that case. We continue to be compelled that his appointment should proceed because there is no such case to be made, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Gibson has devoted many years to this issue and has a proven track record. But rather than stating their objections, then voting against the appointment, we have witnessed speaker after speaker simply repeating the same talking points. Madam Speaker, on the government side we want to see the position of Election Commissioner filled, and we want to see it filled by Mr. Gibson as soon as possible so that he can start his important work to protect Albertans.

For that reason I am moving this motion, and I urge all members to support it.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the motion? The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and wow. Wow, wow, wow, wow, wow. I think it's worth pointing out here that the first time that the Government House Leader time allocated in this Assembly was on Bill 6. I'm sure you remember Bill 6. Bill 6 was the NDP's attack on family farms, where thousands of farmers were protesting right across this province because this NDP government was attacking the very way in which they live and do business. This government stifled debate then, and they're trying to do it again. History is but repeating itself.

Madam Speaker, I think it's worth pointing out that this probably means that the government feels like they're in trouble. Why would they feel like they're in trouble on this motion and feel like they have to time allocate? The Official Opposition has only put forward two amendments on this motion, very reasonable amendments, I might point out. One very, very transparent amendment we put forward was an amendment to disclose the salary of the Election Commissioner. The government during the course of that debate told us: "It'll happen. Just wait. You've just gotta do it. It's the law. Why would you be breaking the law and not following the law? This is crazy. It's gonna happen." They voted it down, and then we find out after – and the Government House Leader brought this forward – that in error, in fact, that was not the case. Had it not been for the Official Opposition standing up for Albertans, we wouldn't know this.

The second amendment, Madam Speaker, that this Official Opposition put forward, which we actually have yet to even vote on and not all members have even spoken to yet, is that the Election Commissioner's term mirror that of the Chief Electoral Officer, the position which this NDP government took from in the first place. That's all they did. They made one become two.

So if this government thinks that the Official Opposition is filibustering when we're standing up for Albertans and trying to make this process more transparent, then I guess we're filibustering. Madam Speaker, this is insane. If this government thinks that we're filibustering when we stand up for Albertans against their reckless ideological agenda – is that what they mean? Is that what counts as filibustering?

You know, it's sad to have this government, more specifically the Government House Leader, once again embody something that they used to fight so fervently against. Madam Speaker, do you remember the time that the Government House Leader said that this time allocation thing is a way for the government to short-circuit democracy? I remember it. I'm sure you remember it. This House remembers it, most certainly, but he's forgotten that. It's nice to know that this government holds firm to their convictions. Albertans see it. Perhaps he didn't really mean it when he said it, because he certainly doesn't mean it now. This government certainly doesn't mean it now.

Now, does anyone else find it amusing that this government brought forward this independent officer of the Legislature, an office which is supposed to be nonpartisan in the application of its roles and responsibilities, yet they time allocate? They do not let members of this House debate this position, try to make it more transparent. Nothing says partisan like time allocation, and that's exactly what this government is doing for an independent officer of the Legislature that is supposed to uphold democracy, that is supposed to be nonpartisan. What is this government hiding? This

is something special, Madam Speaker, that I don't think Albertans are going to be pleased with.

I would ask all members of this Assembly and specifically those who weren't in attendance at the committee: why do you think the Official Opposition is standing up so strongly against this? Something happened in that committee that made us question and made us fight and made the Official Opposition make sure we were standing up for all Albertans.

Please vote against time allocation.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

I will now put the question.

[The voice vote indicated that Government Motion 23 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:08 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Gray	Miller
Carlier	Hinkley	Miranda
Carson	Hoffman	Nielsen
Ceci	Horne	Payne
Connolly	Jansen	Piquette
Coolahan	Kazim	Renaud
Drever	Kleinstauber	Rosendahl
Eggen	Larivee	Schreiner
Feehan	Littlewood	Turner
Fitzpatrick	Loyola	Westhead
Ganley	Luff	Woollard
Goehring	Malkinson	

Against the motion:

Barnes	McIver	Schneider
Ellis	Orr	Taylor
Hunter	Pitt	van Dijken

Totals:	For – 35	Against – 9
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[Government Motion 23 carried]

Election Commissioner Appointment

16. Mr. Mason moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly concur in the report of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices tabled on April 10, 2018, Sessional Paper 67/2018, and recommend to the Lieutenant Governor in Council that Mr. Lorne Gibson be appointed as Election Commissioner for a term of five years commencing May 15, 2018.

Mrs. Aheer moved that the motion be amended by striking out “a term of 5 years commencing May 15, 2018” and substituting “a term commencing on May 15, 2018, and expiring 12 months after polling day for the next provincial general election in Alberta”.

[Debate adjourned on the amendment May 8]

The Acting Speaker: Just a reminder to all members of the House that due to the time allotment any points of order will be considered as in time. Time does not stop for the hour.

Are there any members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Seeing none, I will call the question on amendment A2 as proposed by the hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A2 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:25 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Barnes	McIver	Schneider
Ellis	Orr	Taylor
Hunter	Pitt	van Dijken

9:40

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hinkley	Miller
Carlier	Hoffman	Miranda
Carson	Horne	Nielsen
Ceci	Jansen	Payne
Connolly	Kazim	Phillips
Coolahan	Kleinstauber	Piquette
Drever	Larivee	Renaud
Eggen	Littlewood	Rosendahl
Feehan	Loyola	Schreiner
Fitzpatrick	Luff	Turner
Ganley	Malkinson	Westhead
Goehring	McKitrick	Woollard
Gray		

Totals:	For – 9	Against – 37
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[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

The Acting Speaker: Before we proceed, hon. members, I just want to clarify the division bells and the timing associated with division. During time allotment the division is included in the timing of the one hour. We started the time allotment at 9:26, which means it will continue till 10:26, inclusive of any divisions and points of order.

Are there any members now wishing to speak to the motion? The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Despite our time allocation restriction by this government, the Official Opposition will continue to improve transparency and accountability in this House. We have now failed on two amendments in an effort to do so, despite the government and their entire argument actually being wrong on the first one, and that, of course, was being transparent with the salary of the new Election Commissioner.

We are going to continue to try again, so I will introduce another amendment.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, can you just wait till I have a copy at my desk? Hon. member, please proceed. Your amendment will be referred to as A3.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you. I move that Government Motion 16 be amended by striking out “five years” and substituting “four years” and adding “, and that the position of Election Commissioner be designated as 60 per cent of full-time with the salary pro-rated accordingly” after “May 15, 2018.”

Madam Speaker, the rationale for this amendment, firstly, by striking out “five years” for “four years,” is that five years will put us right into a scheduled election year. Given that this is an Election Commissioner position, I would think that it would be rather difficult to be renewing a contract or not renewing a contract or

dealing with that whole situation at that time. That's obviously just a really good idea.

In addition to that, we're moving that the designation be 60 per cent of full-time and that the salary be pro-rated accordingly. We've already heard from other members in this House who have also been consulting with various Albertans and Canadians, more particularly the Member for Calgary-Mountain View, who also said that this is to be known as a part-time position. Madam Speaker, I think that it's an accurate assumption to say that because this position came already from the current Chief Electoral Officer and half of his job is being taken away and created over here, only half of another job was created in the first place. So, in fact, I think we're being generous with the 60 per cent of full-time marker.

Madam Speaker, this is a very reasonable amendment. It's very common sense, and I would urge members of this House to vote for it.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A3? The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you for the opportunity to speak to – what are we calling this amendment? – A3 with regard to Government Motion 16. We take a look at the situation that's before us, and I believe that many Albertans will recognize that it's disappointing that we're now in time allocation debating the terms and the disclosure with regard to the position that's been created through Bill 32 in December. Here we are rushed through things to get to a point in time where I believe full disclosure is necessary to ensure that Albertans can understand that the process was somewhat reckless and that they should be given all the information that can be made available to them.

I believe that the Member for Calgary-Currie was speaking the other day, a couple of days ago, with regard to this individual and the ability of this individual to speak truth to power. We also recognize that this is a point in time where this government, in choosing an Election Commissioner, in moving towards the position of Election Commissioner in a somewhat reckless manner, I would suggest, uses their majority, their power, to confirm their candidate. Now I believe it's again using its power to limit our ability to allow the government to become fully transparent with Albertans and fully accountable and allow some common-sense resolutions to come forward and be considered.

I think that all Albertans should be concerned with this abuse of power. I would suggest that the work of the opposition, what we are doing, is helping the government to recognize the need to be fully transparent and accountable in our democratic process. This government has chosen not to be, and I find that very concerning.

When we take a look at the amendment, we're looking at the term that was suggested in the motion, that the government is offering through their majority vote in committee, offering this individual a five-year term, which is the maximum that's allotted in the legislation. So it's permissible, but is it practical? Is it practical when you create a new position to go the full term, the full five years? I would also speak to – the Member for Calgary-Mountain View brought this up in his discussions. The Liberal member of the Legislature brought up in his discussions the other day that it seems somewhat reckless and it seems we're moving in a direction that "does raise serious questions about how quickly we're moving."

The government should take notice that the Official Opposition is just doing its job. Now that we're under time allocation, can we do our job properly? We would like the government to recognize

that Albertans expect transparency, Albertans expect accountability from their government, and we're not having it at this point.

9:50

Now, the reason to go to a four-year term – we did propose an amendment to match the term length to be similar to the Chief Electoral Officer, where the term would end a year after a general election. That makes great sense because it gives the time for the Chief Electoral Officer and then it would also give the time for Election Commissioner to complete their work, their investigative work, the work necessary to present final reports with regard to the general election. Then it also allows the term to be fixed based off general election cycles.

Now we have a situation with a five-year term in that we quite likely are going to land up with an Election Commissioner's term ending right in the middle of an election. That's concerning, and that should be concerning to all Albertans. It should be concerning to this government. It makes me wonder why they pushed so hard for the five-year term. Now we're looking at a four-year term, a very reasonable amendment that allows us to move into a four-year term and allows us to recognize that it most likely won't land right in the middle of a general election.

The other portion of the amendment that – we were looking to bring this forward as two amendments, but because of the time allocation we're forced to highlight the issue that possibly is before us. In our stakeholder outreach and, I believe, maybe some of the stakeholder outreach that the Member for Calgary-Mountain View has done, there are questions about: is it a full-time position? We need to take into consideration that it quite likely is not.

Many of the stakeholders that we talk to – especially, you know, a lot of the work is going to happen within the six months, probably, before the election actually takes place and within the year after the election. How much work is the Election Commissioner actually going to have to keep him busy or her busy, whoever it may be at the time, to actually work on in year 2 after an election, year 3 after an election, when there really is not very much activity? This is an investigative role. It's not planning elections and working much like what the Chief Electoral Officer has to do in preparing the office and preparing for the next general election. There's a lot of work that has to get done there.

Time allocation now has restricted our ability to speak to these and actually possibly have a chance where the government members can fully consider our position and understand the risk and how the abuse of the power could negatively affect them. I believe that Albertans will look at this and interpret it as an abuse of their power, and that is concerning to me. You know, we look at others that have spoken to the amendment, both from our caucus and other members in the Legislature. We are speaking on behalf of Albertans. The government can propose that we are filibustering, but I believe that we are truly speaking on behalf of Albertans, and all Albertans want to know that this government is working hard to get value for tax dollars.

By appointing this individual for the full term, the term ending in the middle of a general election, likely, and not disclosing salary – we know the range was in the advertisement. I don't have the advertisement in front of me, but it could have ranged, I believe, from about \$158,000 to \$212,000. The government is making a commitment on this one individual for a term of five years, potentially for compensation that's going to exceed a million dollars. I think Albertans would like to be sure that they're getting value for that tax money. The government is not going to disclose this at this time. They're going to wait until after the election to disclose what that commitment is, what Albertans are committing to here. I find that concerning, that they're not willing to be

transparent with Albertans, and I think Albertans will question: well, why won't they? What are they trying to hide here? It makes no sense to have a term end in the middle of what probably is the next election, in 2023, after the 2019 election, and not disclosing.

You know, with the potential that with this position there are going to be a couple of years there where there will be very little if any activity, as the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills pointed out, this position is potentially going to be compensated more than what our Chief Electoral Officer currently makes, an individual that's in charge of a much larger office, that has a lot more work to do in preparation for a general election.

I am speaking in favour of amendment A3. I believe that the term is better than the five-year term. I honestly believe that in good governance we would have matched what's in the term for the Chief Electoral Officer, that we end it a year after, but the government decided to vote that down. I believe that four years is much better than the five-year term that's being proposed. In consultation with others that there is potentially only a half-time position, we felt that 60 per cent of full-time was being fair and maybe a little bit on the generous side. I guess we'll leave it to the government members to try and become more accountable and more transparent to Albertans.

I am speaking in favour of this amendment, and I would encourage everyone within the Legislature here to also vote in favour of this amendment and try and fix a little bit about what has potential risks of not bringing true value for taxpayers' dollars.

I also believe that we need to, when we create new positions, have time to evaluate properly. Is the position necessary? That was the question of the Chief Electoral Officer, even. Is the position necessary? Is it a full-time position? Others have raised that concern. Here we are. Now we're to a five-year commitment, and we don't have the opportunity to evaluate that after the next general election. We will end up moving right into where we have a term ending in the middle of an election in 2023.

With that, I would encourage all members of the Legislature here to vote in favour of amendment A3. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any members wishing to speak to amendment A3? The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm just going to take a quick moment here to speak on amendment A3. I'm just going to start from the beginning: "by striking out 'five years' and substituting 'four years'." I don't agree with this particular change. Mr. Gibson has my full confidence, and as a result I think he should have the full five years to reflect my confidence in him.

Second of all, referring to the second part of the amendment, "that the position of Election Commissioner be designated as 60 per cent of full-time with the salary pro-rated accordingly," Madam Speaker, in his new role, should he get it, Mr. Gibson would be overseeing multiple investigators, and I believe that that is, in fact, a full-time job. Those investigators are going to be looking at political action committees, third parties that participate in our electoral system. We have seen a rise in dark money recently here in Alberta and throughout Canada and the United States. This is a new phenomenon here when it comes to democracy, and I think that that is a full-time job, to oversee the investigators to make sure that our democracy is fair and that there's not undue influence from third-party agitators.

10:00

You know, there was a suggestion that between elections there might perhaps be less work. Well, I would suggest that those third

parties and dark money don't take a break after the election, so that is why I think it is important that this position is a full-time position. I will vote against this amendment, and I encourage all members to do the same.

Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'll just be brief. You know, I have a question for the hon. member. If this amendment does not go through and the original motion goes through and Mr. Gibson has his term conclude in May of 2023, which could potentially be right in the middle of a writ period, does he have any concerns or issues, or does he think there might be any undue or unintentional consequences as a result of his term potentially ending in the middle of a writ period?

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much. As we know and have seen in this province, elections and by-elections could potentially happen at any time, depending on the makeup of the Legislature. We can have, of course, minority governments. We could have majority governments. As a result, trying to predict when the next election would be, whether it be a by-election or general election and trying to look into the future is, I think, perhaps not an optimal thing to be doing. The short answer to the hon. member is no. I do not have any concerns.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Just a real quick question to the Member for Calgary-Currie. I wanted to know. He talked about: dark money doesn't rest. My question to him is: does he feel that the \$45,000 being paid by the Toronto Steel Workers union to a PAC that is actually under the direction of one of the past members of the NDP is considered dark money?

The Acting Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A3? The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yeah. I guess I have to start off by saying that I'm disappointed that we're into a time allocation and that we're not able to actually get this right. That's a problem here. You know, the Member for Calgary-Currie made a good argument for amendment A2, saying that a year after the election – because you don't know when the election will occur. It could be three years. We've seen that before. It could potentially be five years. His argument to say that we don't know when that date is made the last amendment very logical. I'm disappointed that that was voted down as a result. We still have to make sure that we're trying to do something that's going to be more workable.

We're looking at this one because four years is more logical than the five years is. If we take the five-year term and we go a year from now and we have the election – you know, the Premier has stated before that we'll have an election next year sometime around now. We will have an election. Then four years from that would lead us

to five years. That would be kind of timing out at the same time the election is called. I'd have to argue back again to the Member for Calgary-Currie, saying that I appreciate the fact that he recognized it, but I'm disappointed that the member did not vote for A2, which would have allowed for that logical, sequential change that needs to happen.

You know, if we have that logical, sequential change and we have that time just after the election, well, then you're able to do the proper filing, the paperwork, and make sure you've done your job right. You've got the accountability and the transparency that you need. Frankly, there's a lot of information that needs to be done after an election, but potentially putting it at the same date as the election is problematic.

When we look at what we have here, striking out five years and substituting four years, well, we're looking at an election time that would be at least in the year earlier than what the next potential election is. We still allow for that accountability and that transparency, and it just makes it, like you say, a simpler transfer for the next person that might be taking up the job. We don't know if that same person will have that job. We don't know what happens in four years' time or five years' time. It's all a matter of who gets that job.

But it's not a firing, as was mentioned before. They called it a firing because the person's term ended and then all of a sudden that person said: well, my term has ended and you're not continuing to hire me; therefore, it's a firing. They went before the courts. The judge found not in favour in that case, that it wasn't a firing. It was a normal agreement for a term of a contract. When the term of the contract expires, you can either renegotiate it and continue on, or it's done. In that case it was done. We see those kinds of terms of contract. Even in the military we have terms of contract. They're expected to work usually three-year contracts. I have a son-in-law that works in the military, and he is hired under three-year contracts. It doesn't mean that he's fired at the end of the three years. He can make those decisions. There are so many people that work under contracts, and when the contract is done, it's done. It doesn't make it a firing, so I found that debate that was brought up earlier just disappointing.

I'm disappointed that this process has been rushed. This process has been rushed from the beginning. If we go back and we look at the minority report – I wasn't a member of the committee, so I wasn't able to do it. I have to take the word for what was going on in the committee.

It became evident,
it says,

at our first meeting at the end of December that government MLAs were determined to proceed in a reckless fashion by forcing the Legislative Assembly Office to compose a job posting and position profile for a brand new position in less than 48 hours.

That does not seem like somebody is taking the time and cautiously moving forward to make sure that we get the right person. This is being rushed.

We don't want to rush what we're doing here in that sense because this position is very important. The position that we're talking about for elections governs what we do and allows us to have a democratic process. We're not having a democratic process.

Deciding upon the completion date during the Christmas holidays: this is during the Christmas holidays for the completion date,

including a costly run of print advertisements that required an LAO employee to come into the office on their holidays to make certain deadlines despite the Official Opposition's strong advice that this would be a waste of money and put undue strain on support staff.

Again, this is rushed, and to what? They could have taken their time, and now they're stopping the debate on this. We've got a time allocation on this, so we're stopping this.

10:10

This position, the member yesterday was bringing up, really is not a full-time position. This is not truly going to be a full-time position, so when we bring it in here designated as 60 per cent full-time with this salary pro-rated accordingly, this makes a lot of sense. You know, if you're hiring for a job, if you're only doing 60 per cent of the work, it should be paid for 60 per cent of the time. The government has posted on their website – I'm not quite sure what that number is, but it is between \$150,000 and over \$200,000 that could be paid to this position. That would be based on a full-time position, I would assume, but we should be looking at it as a part-time position, at 60 per cent, perhaps. But, I mean, that would have to be determined, how much time actually needs to happen for this thing.

I really have to be in favour, of course, of this amendment A3, but I have a problem with the government's motion because the timing that they have set aside does not seem to make sense. The five years just doesn't make sense.

I was not on the committee that selected Mr. Lorne Gibson as Election Commissioner, you know, but just listening to the comments and that minority report that I referred to, like I say, causes me to pause. Why was the selection made? Why was this one person selected? It wasn't a majority of the committee that wanted to do it. That's why you ended up with the minority report that is on here. Typically speaking, when you select somebody for this position, you really want to have a consensus because then you have a balance between what the different parties are looking for, Madam Speaker. We're not getting that balance. At least getting some of the consensus: even if 75 per cent of us on this side were saying, "Yeah, that's a reasonable candidate," that's closer to consensus than what they've achieved. Like I say, they had to have a minority report to discuss this.

There are issues that were discussed. It also says here in the minority report that we "took issue with being strong armed by government MLAs who would declare that a consensus had been reached" – consensus among themselves, I assume, but not consensus from all of the committee – "on issues in camera." Consequently, not being on the committee and not being able to know what happened in camera, I can't tell you what the consensus was. It goes on to say: "and would try to force votes with little to no discussion." It seems like that's kind of the process that's happening now because we're not having a fulsome discussion on this motion. We have a time allocation. Therefore, where's that discussion? Where's this fulsome discussion? Trying to get these things is just, like I say, problematic.

The selection of an Election Commissioner should be a nonpartisan exercise. Where only one party votes in favour of a potential candidate – when there's a potential to confirm a consensus candidate, that is what we need to have. We need to have all the parties involved. It seems the committee acted in a partisan manner in this case. They acted just for themselves, to make sure that this person was elected. Why? We don't know. It was a problem before. The person was not hired again for the position. Albeit, he has experience. He would understand what's going on. But he was not rehired and caused some disruption and dissention.

Why is this a problem, Madam Speaker? Well, you know, when you use a partisan kind of an approach, the optics alone would tell you and it would tell Albertans that this candidate was potentially not selected to represent the interests of all Albertans. I'm not

saying that he wouldn't represent the interests of all Albertans, but there's that perception, Madam Speaker. It's certainly there.

With that in mind, another concern of mine is the morale in the office, what could potentially happen when the advice of our own Chief Electoral Officer was disregarded and then to go on to hire someone who may or may not fit into the culture of the current Chief Electoral Officer office. So Mr. Gibson's proposed appointment is brought into question, an appointment that should have but did not follow the same kinds of nonpartisan rules and procedures, for lack of a better term, as the members of the committee have expressed previously.

As I mentioned before, there were other qualified, good candidates. As mentioned here, they did not have a negative history with the government of Alberta. These other candidates did not try to sue the government for firing them. That's problematic, when, in fact, that's the furthest thing from the truth, and I expressed that before. That's the furthest thing from the truth. The person's term – his contract just termed out, his service term, and the judge confirmed that decision. He was certainly qualified, but is he the right person? I think that you would call this a somewhat tarnished history if you look back at what has happened. If he has to say that he was fired and, in fact, all he was was termed out, that's a problem.

However, this government has proposed to hire him again, and that might raise an eyebrow or two on Main Street, Alberta. It really should concern every Albertan, that we can expect this individual to move forward in a type of manner that will see no animosity, stigma, or baggage. We need to make sure of that. That's how we're moving forward. This has to be something where we want to have the best candidate, not one that's going to cause problems going forward.

Based on the information that we do know – some information was held in camera that I wasn't privy to and that the rest of us that weren't on the committee just do not know – and based on the strange way that the majority of the committee insisted that advertisements for the position had to be hurriedly blasted out during Christmas holidays, like I say, this whole thing is problematic.

I have to speak, you know, in favour, again, of this motion A3 . . .

An Hon. Member: Amendment.

Mr. Taylor: The amendment. Pardon me. Not the motion. Thank you.

It's amendment A3 to Government Motion 16 to put it to four years. A four-year term is going to, in all likelihood . . .

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As the chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices and indeed having been the chair for the search process, I deeply appreciate this opportunity to make a few brief comments before the vote comes before this House on the appointment of Mr. Gibson.

The member that was just speaking, again, as many of the members across the way have, referred to concerns about the conduct and the work of Mr. Gibson in his position as the Chief Electoral Officer for the province of Alberta and made the suggestion that perhaps there have been concerns that he did perhaps a poor job in the 2008 election, that there were issues, perhaps not from that specific member but certainly this has been what we've been hearing from other members across the aisle.

Now, Madam Speaker, they have not offered any actual specifics on that. They prefer to go with broad insinuations. So I'd like to take a brief moment to reflect on what actually occurred during that period.

Paula Simons at that time wrote . . .

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, I just want to clarify that you're speaking to the amendment.

Mr. Shepherd: I am indeed, Madam Speaker. This has to do with the amendment because these are the reasons that they are putting forward for why they feel the need to restrict Mr. Gibson's term and indeed partly why they seem to be suggesting that they feel the need to reduce the time that's allocated to this position.

10:20

Now, I would note that Paula Simons wrote an article back in February 2009, Gibson Affair Sends Terrible Message. One of her comments was:

But whatever Gibson's failures as chief electoral officer may or may not have been, it looks as though he was dismissed because he repeatedly embarrassed the Stelmach government by writing reports filled with uncomfortable recommendations.

That was the view of the media at the time, Madam Speaker, and indeed the view of members of the opposition, including at that time our Premier.

I would note that what actually occurred at that time was that Mr. Gibson came in, and he became the Chief Electoral Officer for the province of Alberta. This, Madam Speaker, is all from the *Alberta Hansard* and is available online for anyone that wishes to review it and the testimony that was taken regarding the 2008 election, noting that Mr. Gibson sent multiple requests to the then Minister of Justice asking for them to appoint returning officers because at the time of Mr. Gibson's arrival as Chief Electoral Officer in the province of Alberta the governing party selected returning officers. They appointed the people that would supervise the vote in every constituency across the province, not terribly nonpartisan and definitely not a system that was in place in many other jurisdictions, including the province of Manitoba, from which Mr. Gibson had come.

Indeed, he worked within the system that was available. He made multiple requests, beginning on May 16, 2006, continuing through March 29, 2007, four requests in total. Then on April 18, 2007 . . .

Mr. McIver: Point of order.

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

The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Point of Order Imputing Motives

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm rising under 23(h), (i), and (j). The member is imputing "false or unavowed motives to another Member." You know what? We've been careful on this side not to question the incoming person's track record but, rather, to talk about the process and how the government is trying to actually be disrespectful to the current Chief Electoral Officer.

In my view, the hon. member is really being disrespectful after putting time allocation on, trying to not even talk about the amendment and, rather, chew up time. I know the government is embarrassed by this motion, which is why they had to time allocate it, and I understand that they're trying to cover up what is a big mistake that they're making and an obvious mistake. But the fact is

that the hon. member and the rest of the government actually are going down this road, not addressing the amendment and trying to imply false motives to members of the opposition because they're embarrassed by this motion, as they should be, which is why they put time allocation on it.

They don't want to hear the opposition's good and reasonable objections to this action, they don't want to hear the opposition's genuine concerns about changing electoral officers in the middle of an election, and they don't want to hear the opposition's genuine and heartfelt concerns about how disrespectful this is to the Chief Electoral Officer, to put somebody else in his office, give him essentially the same job, potentially pay him more money, essentially after not even having consulted with him about the piece of legislation that authorizes this hiring.

They have so much to be ashamed about, and they're implying false motives to the opposition in an attempt to cover up and hide and run away from debate on something that the government is clearly and rightfully and justifiably embarrassed about. I would ask you to ask the hon. member to stop.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I think that before I address the point of order directly, because that went on a bit of a frolic, I might say that the government is not the least bit embarrassed about this. We are absolutely so proud to be able to bring forward this appointment, to be able to bring forward and protect democracy in this province from dark money.

Madam Speaker, the member, I believe, rose under imputing false and unavowed motives. I'd like to point out that our member was actually citing a columnist's, a journalist's writings. Using the words of journalists is a frequent thing that happens all the time in this place. He's not intending to impute unavowed motives to anyone.

Madam Speaker, I think that with respect to the allegation, which I don't think was the point of order, that he's trying to talk out the clock, it's certainly not the intention here. He is in fact speaking to the amendment. The hon. members have put forward a justification for shortening the term, they've put forward a justification for only making this a 60 per cent position, and these are the justifications for why we think that the original decision was, in fact, the correct decision.

So I don't believe that there is a point of order here. I think there is a dispute as to the facts, facts which occurred, Madam Speaker, quite a long time ago.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

I am prepared to discuss the point of order at this time. It is not a point of order. However, I would like to remind the member that if you could speak specifically to the amendment, that would be appreciated. Also, if you could table any of the documents that you have spoken to.

Mr. Shepherd: Absolutely. I'd be happy to table that document.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Debate Continued

Mr. Shepherd: Indeed, in regard to this particular amendment, again suggesting that Mr. Gibson's term should be limited to four years and then designating a salary of 60 per cent, as I was noting, there were multiple requests that were made. It took 19 months before the requests were met to appoint returning officers – 19

months, Madam Speaker – and that shortly before the election itself was actually called. These matters are available in *Hansard* for anyone that wishes to read them. Indeed, many journalists and people did at the time and observed that Mr. Gibson's conduct given the circumstances was, in fact, pretty commendable.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Hon. members, pursuant to Government Motion 23, that was agreed to on May 10, the time allotment has now expired. I will put forward the first question, which is the vote on amendment A3 to Motion 16, as proposed by the hon. Member for Airdrie.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A3 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:27 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Barnes	Orr	Starke
Ellis	Pitt	van Dijken
McIver	Schneider	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hinkley	Miller
Carlier	Hoffman	Miranda
Carson	Horne	Nielsen
Ceci	Jansen	Payne
Connolly	Kazim	Phillips
Coolahan	Kleinstaub	Piquette
Drever	Larivee	Renaud
Eggen	Littlewood	Rosendahl
Fitzpatrick	Loyola	Schreiner
Ganley	Luff	Turner
Goehring	Malkinson	Westhead
Gray	McKittrick	Woollard

Totals:	For – 8	Against – 36
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[Motion on amendment A3 lost]

The Acting Speaker: We are now back on the original motion, Motion 16. Does the Assembly agree with Government Motion 16?

[The voice vote indicated that Government Motion 16 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:44 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hinkley	Miller
Carlier	Hoffman	Miranda
Carson	Horne	Nielsen
Ceci	Jansen	Payne
Connolly	Kazim	Phillips
Coolahan	Kleinstaub	Piquette
Drever	Larivee	Renaud
Eggen	Littlewood	Rosendahl
Fitzpatrick	Loyola	Schreiner
Fraser	Luff	Turner
Ganley	Malkinson	Westhead
Goehring	McKittrick	Woollard
Gray	McPherson	

11:00

Against the motion:

Barnes	McIver	Schneider
Ellis	Orr	Starke
Fildebrandt	Pitt	van Dijken

Totals: For – 38 Against – 9

[Government Motion 16 carried]

The Acting Speaker: I will now call on the Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I would seek unanimous consent of the House that when we go into committee, the first bell and all remaining bells be one-minute bells.

[Unanimous consent denied]

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

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

Bill 9 Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act

The Deputy Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered in respect of this bill? The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to thank members for joining us, late this morning now, for continued debate on Bill 9. As I've mentioned previously, I don't believe that this bill strikes the appropriate balance between security of the person for women trying to access abortion clinics and balancing it appropriately with freedom of expression and freedom of assembly. Some of the amendments I bring forward are trying to better balance that, in my view, but some of the amendments I'm bringing forward are of a more technical nature, a more fine-tuning nature, trying to simply improve upon the wording of the bill, trying to clarify some of the bill so that, you know, even those of us who do not agree with it can at least have a more clear piece of legislation in front of us so that when it probably, inevitably passes, it'll be the most functional and clean piece of legislation possible.

Before I continue, I'll distribute an amendment to the pages.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member. If you could please just wait until I have a copy at the table. Hon. member, please proceed. Your amendment will be referred to as A4.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. Mr. Fildebrandt to move that Bill 9, Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act, be amended in section 1 by adding the following after clause (e): "(e.1) 'intimidate' means to threaten violence or other injury to another person or to damage the property of another person."

This isn't changing the substance of anything in the legislation other than adding a definition in the definition section. This is, to the best of my knowledge here, using the Criminal Code of Canada's definition. This is using a definition of intimidate that has

been upheld by the courts on federal and provincial levels from time immemorial, that clearly defines what intimidate means.

I think even those of us here who oppose Bill 9 – I at least support parts of the bill. I think it should be and it actually already is illegal to intimidate folks by threatening violence or injury to another person or to damage the property of those persons. That is already illegal, but this bill wants to clarify that. This is not a part of the bill that I have any problem with whatsoever. So if we want to clarify in this bill that intimidation is illegal, although it already is, if we want to do that, that's still a laudable goal.

My goal here is not to change the legislation in a substantive way except only to include a definition, a definition used in the Criminal Code of Canada, that has already been upheld by the courts. This just clarifies so that we're not throwing it to the courts. You know, the goal of this bill, I think, from the government's perspective, has been that the court injunctions, in their view, are insufficient. They want to put this in legislation because the court process can be lengthy and unreliable at times. If the goal is to make sure that this is speedy and not tied down in the bureaucracy of the courts, then it's, I think, best to have a very clear definition of what we mean by intimidate.

So I've decided not to reinvent the wheel here. We've just looked to the Criminal Code of Canada and taken that to be inserted. As I've said, it doesn't change the substance of the legislation in any way. It doesn't change the intent of the bill. It doesn't change the spirit of the bill. This is just cleaning up some of the wording by adding a proper definition of what intimidation is using the Criminal Code of Canada.

I ask members to give this due consideration regardless of how you feel about the bill. If you're for it, if you're against it, if you have no official opinion on the bill, simply adding this definition is just cleaning up the wording for better legislation regardless of how you feel about the bill itself.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak to amendment A4? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Madam Chair. I thank the member for this amendment, for being here through the votes and the discussion and debate. I don't actually support this amendment and encourage everyone else to do the same. The reason is that I think the amendment, if approved, would narrow the scope of the word "intimidate" to the wording used in the Criminal Code. Some forms of threats and intimidation that could be included under the legislation could not be included if this amendment were to pass. Currently the definition of intimidate and intimidation is left up to the discretion of the courts, which allows more flexibility when enforcing. Although I appreciate the effort to try to make this better and to keep providers and women seeking treatment safe, I don't actually agree with it.

I wanted to say a couple of things. Like most people, I think, I find it shocking that members on the other side will stand up and say how important it is to support women and to keep them safe from violence and intimidation and harassment yet wilfully stand up and turn their backs and walk away when they're given the opportunity to do just that.

In addition to that, I think the abortion provider community – again, it's not just those particular services that are offered in this clinic – is made up of medical professionals who are both highly skilled and uniquely dedicated to protecting the lives and the health of women. They treat their patients with incredible respect and provide the highest level of care, and they deserve our thanks and

protection. You know, they don't need to go to work and be fearful every day or to mentally and physically have to prepare themselves to face an onslaught of intimidation and harassment, not to mention a woman simply trying to get health care in this province.

The fact, once again, that people across the way, when given the opportunity to stand up and say, "Regardless of what I may think, I want to do what's right for women in Alberta; I want to keep them free from abuse and intimidation, so, yes, I'm going to support this": they're choosing not to do that.

11:10

I think one other thing that they're doing is that they're encouraging other people to take this stand. You know, we can't help but see, living as close as we do to the United States, what's happening there, when political leaders wilfully call women who obtain health services and express their reproductive rights, essentially, criminals that should be punished. Of course, you know, there is one particular leader who I won't name. I think there's a fact-checker full-time at one of the big national papers that does a running fact check, and one of the things he said repeatedly is to spread lies about the fact that abortion providers will simply rip a child out of a woman's womb at nine months. We know that's not true. That's just a bald-faced lie, and it's disgusting, and it emboldens people.

What all of this does: by turning your back on women and by allowing this to happen, it has ramped up the hatred. It has ramped up the misinformation, the protesting, the intimidation, and the harassment, and we're seeing it here in our province. We're allowing it to happen, and by turning your back and ignoring this important issue, you're creating an environment where you're condoning. When you do nothing and you say nothing, you condone, and that's sad. I can't imagine that every woman in your constituency is okay with that, but I imagine you'll have to reckon with that at some point.

Again, thank you to the member for the amendment. I appreciate the fact that you've been here throughout by yourself. That's all I have to say.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A4? The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm just trying to share the floor and wait and see if anyone else tries to get up. You might want to just always check with the Valhalla section before calling the question.

I thank the member for her comments in the debate here. I can't agree, though, with her objections to this amendment. We're simply mirroring what is used in the Criminal Code of Canada, which has been upheld by the law. It is possible that the amendment could even be redundant because if this goes before the courts, it is highly likely that lower courts would be looking to use of the term "intimidation" as has been already upheld in the courts. Even if they don't, surely appellate courts, if it goes that far, would likely uphold the definition of intimidation already established by our common law and the Criminal Code of Canada.

It may be a moot point regardless, but my concern is, you know, that sometimes we can use terms rather loosely. What constitutes intimidation? I think that the Criminal Code of Canada's definition is pertinent and tight. It's threatening violence or injury to another person or damage to their property. Sometimes the term "intimidate" can be used a little bit loosely. It might mean that someone simply has a big presence. You might be intimidated, but

it might not be intentional intimidation. I think it's important that we clarify what exactly we mean when we're passing laws like this.

I appreciate her concerns. Harassment is a different part of this. We're not clarifying the harassment definition here, so I don't think that any concerns around this would take away from, you know, having flexible enough language around "harassment," which I think is, again, a term that does mean something but can be used rather broadly sometimes. I mean, there's harassment, and there's heckling. I don't think most of us here – everybody loves heckling. I don't think we'd call it harassment, but some could probably extend the definition to that. Like "intimidation," I think it's important when we're writing laws to be very specific about what we mean.

That's why this is going forward and just simply mirroring what is in the Criminal Code of Canada. This is not changing the intent of the bill. This is not changing even the spirit of the bill or even the weight of the bill in one direction or another. It is simply trying to clarify the language in it so that we're absolutely clear what we mean when we make it illegal – it already is illegal, so when we essentially make it illegal again – for people to intimidate anyone entering or exiting these buildings. I'd ask members to give due consideration to this just to clarify some of the wording.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A4?

Seeing none, I will now call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A4 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:16 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Fildebrandt

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hinkley	Miranda
Carlier	Hoffman	Nielsen
Carson	Horne	Payne
Ceci	Jansen	Piquette
Connolly	Kazim	Renaud
Coolahan	Kleinstauber	Rosendahl
Drever	Littlewood	Schreiner
Fitzpatrick	Loyola	Starke
Fraser	Luff	Swann
Ganley	Malkinson	Turner
Goehring	McKittrick	Westhead
Gray	Miller	Woollard

Totals:	For – 1	Against – 36
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[Motion on amendment A4 lost]

The Deputy Chair: We are now back on the original bill. Are there any comments or questions? The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I would now move that the committee rise and report progress on Bill 9.

[Motion carried]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Mr. Hinkley: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 9. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

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

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Acting Speaker: Opposed, please say no. So ordered.

Government Bills and Orders

Third Reading

Bill 12

Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act

The Acting Speaker: I'll now recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Hawkwood.

Connolly: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today as cosponsor of Bill 12 to move third reading on behalf of the minister and to voice my support for this bill and for the action our government has taken to get pipelines to tidewater.

Now, the other day the Leader of the Opposition railed about the campaign of misinformation being conducted by opponents of the Trans Mountain pipeline, and I have to say that I agreed with much of what he had to say. Certainly, I believe that pipeline opponents are often short on facts to back up their arguments. They oppose Trans Mountain expansion out of concern for the rights of First Nations while ignoring the numerous indigenous leaders who have voiced their support for the pipeline, including virtually all of those along the proposed pipeline route.

They oppose the pipeline on environmental grounds but ignore the considerable progress that the industry has made to reduce emissions and Alberta's cap on greenhouse gas emissions in the oil sands.

Of course, there is the B.C. government, who opposes the Trans Mountain pipeline, a pipeline over which they have no jurisdiction, while approving a pipeline to transport fuel to the Vancouver International Airport.

I have to say, Madam Speaker, that if one is going to rail against misinformation, one had better practise what he preaches, and on this front the Leader of the Opposition and members of his caucus fall woefully short. Let's just name a couple of examples. Members opposite like to claim that members of the government have done nothing to promote or support pipelines. I guess that when you get your news from Rebel media, it's possible that they may have missed hearing everything our government and our Premier have done.

Really, Madam Speaker, when you're a member of the Legislature, is it too much to ask to follow the news? The members opposite apparently missed it, but the Premier's first interprovincial meeting after being elected was with New Brunswick Premier Brian Gallant, in July 2015. A news release stated, "The two premiers . . . discussed carbon exchange pricing and the Energy East project, and recognized their importance for both governments."

In October 2015 our Premier and Premier Gallant held a news conference right here in Edmonton to affirm their support for Energy East. A direct quote from our Premier: Alberta as the push and New Brunswick as the pull in terms of getting that pipeline approved.

In March 2017 we even talked about our support for both Energy East and Trans Mountain in the Speech from the Throne. Again, I know it's not on Rebel media, but the pages actually handed

members opposite a copy of that speech in the very Assembly. Is it too much to ask that they read the Speech from the Throne?

Also on Trans Mountain, on January 12, 2016, our Premier provided a written submission on behalf of the government of Alberta to the National Energy Board. In April 2016 she presented to the federal cabinet, and in December 2016 she travelled to Vancouver to promote the economic benefits of Trans Mountain to British Columbia and British Columbians.

I could go on and on, Madam Speaker, but I'm sure you get my point. If members opposite fail to understand, I'm sure my colleagues would be happy to give some further examples of where we have stepped up to support pipelines because I want to move on to a different example of how the Leader of the Opposition and his caucus like to spread misinformation.

You know, a favourite talking point of the members opposite is that because someone somewhere still opposes pipelines, our government's climate leadership plan has failed. They claim that it hasn't convinced anyone, Madam Speaker. This conveniently ignores the fact that the climate leadership plan helped convince the people with the authority to actually make this decision, the government of Canada. In other words, this pipeline would have been dead 18 months ago if it wasn't for the leadership our government has shown to position Alberta as a responsible energy producer. The members opposite can try to ignore it, but it's an undeniable fact.

It also ignores the fact that as our Premier and other members of our government share Alberta's story across Alberta and across the country, support for the pipeline is rising. According to recent polls a large majority of Canadians, including a majority of British Columbians, now support the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion. In other words, Madam Speaker, our strategy to work with industry, with environmentalists, and with indigenous people to get this pipeline built is working.

But members opposite howl that because not everyone is convinced, somehow the government has failed. We haven't convinced people who are never going to change their minds under any circumstances, no matter what facts were placed in front of them, people with extreme positions whose minds were made up a long time ago and who will never budge from those positions, no matter what evidence shows or what a majority of their fellow Canadians may think.

You know, Madam Speaker, it's a lot like the opinions of the Leader of the Opposition, and this was the point I was trying to make the other day on social issues. For years public opinion polls have shown that three-quarters or more of Albertans support a woman's right to reproductive choice or the right of same-sex couples to marry, yet the Leader of the Opposition clings to his extreme hardline views on these topics. He hasn't changed his mind with more information or tried to catch up with the majority. He believes what he believes.

Madam Speaker, the climate leadership plan was about getting the trust of reasonable Canadians and potential investors from outside Canada, the people who needed convincing. The majority of Canadians were and are people who believe that climate change is real, who care about the environment, and who want to see evidence that Alberta is a responsible energy producer. Well, we've been able to show them that evidence, and the result is that support for the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion is rising. A majority of Albertans support it, a majority of Canadians support it, and a majority of British Columbians support it.

Our approach is working, Madam Speaker. It's winning the day, and it's thanks to this approach that this pipeline is going to get built. Thank you.

With that, I'd like to move third reading of Bill 12.

11:40

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to compliment the Member for Calgary-Hawkwood for actually speaking up on important matters like pipelines recently. I appreciate that. But he would do well, instead of being obsessed to go after the Leader of the Official Opposition on every single occasion – his constituents, partly going to be my constituents soon, would appreciate if he really focused on matters of substance.

Madam Speaker, I rise to speak in support of Bill 12 because in this House, at least on this bill, there is no scope for divisions. But since the members opposite keep bringing up criticism of the Leader of the Official Opposition, I also have the responsibility to correct the record here. I'll speak to that briefly.

Madam Speaker, Bill 12 is an incredible, powerful bill that can halt exports of Alberta's oil and gas, or it can prioritize or it can optimize the products shipped to the west coast. While the province cannot restrict flows on federal pipelines or federal railways, it is the feeders to these that can be shuttered, slowing the flow to a trickle. Provincial pipeline tank farms are all affected by Bill 12. So, too, are the provincial short lines and industrial railways. This means that many tank cars will not get loaded for the shipments outside Alberta if the powers of Bill 12 are used. These are incredible, extraordinary powers. Bill 12 is a very much loaded economic weapon, with unlimited ammunition, and the NDP government has no shortage of targets.

The Leader of the Official Opposition and the Member for Calgary-Lougheed has been advocating for these powers for eight months. We in the Official Opposition are here prepared to help load this economic weapon and hand it over to the Premier and her government to actually use. But recent comments indicate that the NDP government does not understand the concept of ready, aim, fire.

Industry is onboard with these powers. Some of my stakeholders that I consulted such as the Explorers and Producers Association of Canada and its president, Gary Leach – this is what he had to say: we are supportive from the perspective that we need this pipeline impasse resolved. So, too, Petroleum Services Association of Canada's president, Tom Whalen: "The larger issue is the crisis in confidence that investors cannot rely on the rule of law in Canada for investment of their capital, especially if the government must resort to taking a financial position in the project to ensure it proceeds."

The Official Opposition understands the need for these powers now, until the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain pipeline expansion is built. So, too, does Saskatchewan. A bill before the Saskatchewan Legislature will do the same thing. Having an expiry date for these powers signals to industry that this is a temporary measure. An expiry date allows investors to invest with certainty and confidence instead of uncertainty.

Bill 12 brings in a licensing system for the export of petroleum products. Needing a licence is not a given but entirely at the minister's discretion and subject to a public interest test. Permits issued under the Gas Resources Preservation Act to move natural gas are deemed to be already having a licence. There will be a public interest to test the issuing of the licence, based on the point of export; method of export; maximum quantities; maximum daily quantities; conditions for diversion, reduction, or interruption; and the period of time for the licence. The minister may reconsider decisions made.

Madam Speaker, I actually went to the technical briefing on the bill, and I had tons of questions. The minister's chief of staff gave me his phone number and said: call me later; I'll clarify it for you.

I took him up on that, seriously, and called. But no answer till today. I reminded the minister: Minister, I called your chief of staff; he offered to clarify; no answer. I didn't want to bring it up in the House. I wanted to come prepared to debate, and I also wanted to share that information with my colleagues. Till today no one got back to me, just to put it on the record. That's why we have so many questions still. In spite of that, we're still supporting this bill because the United Conservatives put Alberta first.

The Minister of Energy will create regulations as required, specifying how Bill 12 will be: applications for which fuels, applications for a licence or an amendment or renewal of a licence, fees for a licence or licence renewal, terms or conditions to which licences are subject, and the method of measurement of natural gas, crude oil, or refined fuels.

Madam Speaker, with up to 35 per cent of Washington state petroleum coming from the Trans Mountain pipeline, any disruption in flow will raise gasoline and diesel prices in America as well. We know that the governor of Washington stands arm in arm with the B.C. NDP Premier, John Horgan, on this pipeline. What would America say and do if their most trusted, secure supply of petroleum was halted? Would America take Canada in front of the NAFTA panel and litigate? We don't know.

Would the federal government be forced to pay a penalty, and would Ottawa even dare to try to tax the penalty back from Alberta after Albertans pay over \$20 billion a year to Ottawa? That's not just small money. We're sending \$20 billion to Ottawa each year that never comes back. That is the equivalent of the entire budget for national defence. And British Columbia had a chance to oppose the pipeline at the NEB hearing, and they didn't.

Madam Speaker, the Member for Calgary-Hawkwood also mentioned that when someone somewhere opposes pipelines, we say something. It's not someone somewhere. There are people in this House, that actually sit on the front benches on the other side, that oppose pipelines. I have a video showing the Premier opposing Northern Gateway, and this Premier didn't say one word when Trudeau killed Energy East. A member of this cabinet wrote the introduction to a book on how to obstruct pipelines, how to take an action a day to keep capitalism away. I can name other members. I mean, it's on the Internet. They can google it. When he says that, he should remind himself that there are people in this House who oppose pipelines still today.

I'm not making it an issue. They brought up, you know, on Bill 12, instead of talking about it, an attack on the Leader of the Official Opposition. That is not helping Albertans. That's why I had to bring it up. As I said, Madam Speaker, we have to stand together on this. We don't care who gets the credit. Our leader said that he'll give the credit where it is due.

If they don't want to follow through on what they say in this House, what's the point of passing this bill if they don't want to even use it? In good faith we are supporting this bill, hoping that they'll use it, because Bill 12 is a loaded economic weapon. It will take a government that is prepared to proclaim it. They have to proclaim this, Madam Speaker; otherwise, they can't use it. They have to proclaim the law in order to make British Columbia wake up and realize that there are consequences to their lawfare and their disrespect of the Constitution vis-à-vis projects in the national interest.

With that, Madam Speaker, I urge every member of this Legislature to vote in favour of Bill 12. Thank you.

11:50

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I feel I've been sitting here in the Assembly listening to a lot of speeches from the opposition, and I always have to ask myself: what are they actually saying, and do they always recognize that we're sitting here in the provincial Assembly of Alberta and not in Ottawa? I'm really confused about what you believe, what you don't believe, and where you're going with this.

Today I wanted to talk about Bill 12 and the wonderful day that I spent with the Minister of Energy actually visiting a lot of the pipeline industry in my riding. The members opposite may not know this, but in our riding we actually have the beginning of the Trans Mountain pipeline and we have the Inter Pipeline company and Pembina, who, through their control stations, run all of the pipelines, I think, mostly in Alberta. As you can well imagine, the issue of the pipeline is very important to myself and my constituents, and we actually spent a lot of time talking to the companies. You know what? We discussed this bill with the companies in the visits with the minister.

I should pause and really thank the staff of the Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park who organized these visits with these companies.

We actually talked about this bill and why the government was proposing this bill and the importance of this bill. Do you know what? We didn't get any push-back from these companies because they understood that the reason the government was putting this bill forward was because it was really needed to show our determination to get this pipeline built.

I want to really thank the Premier and the Minister of Energy for their commitment to having this pipeline built and for understanding the importance of having legislative resources in case we run across blocks. We spent the whole day with the minister and these pipeline companies. Through that discussion, it was very obvious that the minister had spent quite a bit of time consulting with the oil and gas sector and that she had talked to them, obviously, about the purpose of this bill and what may happen or not. And they were very, very supportive of the opportunity.

Now, I just want to really speak a little bit more about the point that I made that we're here in the provincial Legislature and not in Ottawa. I'm really, really confused. I believe that it's very dangerous to keep mixing provincial and federal political levels. I have to also wonder if a lot of the comments that are coming from the opposite side on this bill are really something that should have happened at the federal stage but that the current leader of that party is still fighting in this Legislature his thinking about climate change. I don't think the opposition really believes that climate change is something that really happens.

One of the things that the opposition recently said – and I think it really relates to this bill and why there's been some work done by the ministry – is, again, an attack on environmentalists and so on. You know, when I talk to the oil and gas companies – and I do spend a lot of time with them, and I know the Minister of Energy and many ministers do – one of the things that I always do is to meet with environmentalists within the oil and gas sector.

I don't know if you know that, but all of the oil and gas sector has environmentalists that are a very important part of their team. When the pipelines are built, there are a lot of environmental standards. There's actually not only one control station for each pipeline; there's also a substation somewhere else that's totally independent so that in case there's a failure within the main control station, there is the possibility of quickly switching to the other control station so that any leaks and so on are prevented.

So the oil and gas sectors have very strong environmental safeguards, and they hire environmentalists. This is why I have to wonder why the opposition is always talking negatively about environmentalists and the work that environmentalists do because we wouldn't have this pipeline and all the other pipelines in Alberta if these companies did not hire environmentalists to make sure that the environment is protected and so on.

What I would really like to ask the opposition at some point is: why are you always fighting environmentalists, and why do you think that the work of environmentalists is very bad when the oil and gas sector all have a lot of environmentalists on their staff? It is the work of the environmentalists and the staff, as I find out when I visit these companies, that is really allowing the pipelines to be built in a way that safeguards all of us. So I would like to just suggest to the members opposite that you actually go and visit these companies and meet environmentalists and find out what work the environmentalists have done to allow these pipelines to be built.

I'm so thankful for the work that Trans Mountain has done and is doing and the careful work that they were doing in my riding at the beginning of the pipeline to make sure that the pipeline can be built in a safe way that protects all of us from spills.

I just wanted to go back and talk a little bit about the work that the Minister of Energy is doing on this bill and why this bill has gotten support from the oil and gas sector. The oil and gas sector knows that the only way that this bill would be used is if indeed it was the only way, if we could not get the pipeline built. There are a lot of safeguards in that so that it's only going to be used when it's needed and not used for purposes that are not appropriate.

I wanted to talk a little bit about the importance of the Trans Mountain pipeline, not only to my sector. I don't know if you know that when a pipeline is built, a lot of the companies make sure that the material is bought locally. For example, in my constituency we actually have steel manufacturers and we have a steel mill, but the pipeline is going to bring economic benefits to many, many communities around Alberta. One of the things I really appreciate from the oil and gas companies in my riding and in the Industrial Heartland is that they make a real huge effort of employing local people and buying the material that is needed in Alberta and from local companies. I think this is a real demonstration to me that these oil and gas companies understand that the benefit of their work is throughout Alberta.

I'm especially delighted when I find out that these companies, including the Trans Mountain pipeline, are hiring a lot of women. When we recently visited the Trans Mountain pipeline, Inter Pipeline, and Pembina Pipeline, we saw the real efforts that these companies are making to diversify their workplaces, to hire women, to hire more minorities, to hire indigenous communities.

I would like to urge all members of the Assembly to support this bill, to also support the work that those pipeline companies are doing to be environmentally responsible, and to stop bashing environmentalists through their policies at their conventions or through what the Leader of the Opposition says because these pipelines would not be built if these companies did not have such strong environmental leadership within their head offices and within their top management.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(2.1) the Assembly will now stand adjourned until 1:30 this afternoon.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, May 10, 2018

Day 28

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (UCP),
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Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (UCP)
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Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (NDP)
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)
Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (NDP)
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Vacant, Fort McMurray-Conklin
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Party standings:

New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 25 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent Conservative: 1 Vacant: 2

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, May 10, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Good afternoon. I'm from southern Alberta. It's nice to see that there's a little bit of rain happening. It's dry out there.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Adriana LaGrange. Adriana has served on the board of trustees for Red Deer Catholic regional schools since 2007 and is currently in her second term as president of the Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association. She's known as a faith-filled and energetic leader with a great passion for Catholic education across Alberta. With Adriana today are Dean Sarnecki, executive director with the Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association, and Eugenia Kowalczyk, also with the ACSTA. I would ask that they now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly family members of our current page Amanda Porter. Seated in the Speaker's gallery are James and Shelley Porter, Amanda's parents, as well as her sister Elizabeth Porter and grandfather William Klute. Shelley is a former school trustee who is currently with Alberta Justice, and James is a salesman with a love of politics. William is a farmer in Sturgeon county, and Elizabeth is currently studying chemical biology at UBC. They are in the Speaker's gallery today to observe Amanda in her role as head page during her last session here at the Legislature. We will bid farewell to Amanda as she leaves to attend university in the fall, after holding her position as a page since November 2015. I would ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ms Sweet: Mr. Speaker, joining the Porter family in the Speaker's gallery is former page Christian Fotang. Mr. Fotang was a page until last year and is joining us to watch session one more time. I would ask him to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Good to see you again.

The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you today the students and assistants from St. Augustine school, a great bunch of students and a great school, I have to say. The students are accompanied by teachers Sharon Hackett and Ken Hackett along with some chaperones: Amanda Scott, Jennifer LaForge, Sara Dennis, Crystal Fleck, Alison Roland-Klimec, Marilyn Almond, and Tony Cabay. I would ask them all to rise, please, and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Mr. Carlier: Mr. Speaker, it is my sincere pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Alberta's official forest fire prevention mascot, Bertie Beaver, standing today in the members' gallery. Bertie was a gift to the province of Alberta from Walt Disney as a thank you for filming in Kananaskis. This year marks Bertie's 60th birthday, and I must say that Bertie has never looked better. As we observe Alberta Forest Week, I invite everyone to honour and protect our forests by following Bertie and helping us stamp out wildfires. I would like for Bertie to wave and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: So, hon. minister, what's the matter with being 60?

Mr. Carlier: Nothing, Mr. Speaker. Not a thing.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise today to introduce to you and through you Janice Willier along with her sons Zachary and Jaxon. The Willier family lives here in Edmonton, but they are proud members of the Moostoos family in Sucker Creek First Nation in Treaty 8 territory. Janice has long worked to improve the holistic health of First Nations in Alberta, a passion that has led her to an executive director role at HCOM, the Health Co-Management Secretariat, here in Edmonton. Zachary is a talented fiddle player who attends Maskwacis academy and has represented Alberta youth at the national Métis gathering in Batoche, Saskatchewan. Jaxon attends Prince Charles school and is also a gifted fiddle player who dabbles in drums, guitar, and violin. I would ask them now to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions today. First, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you members of the Stollery Children's Hospital Foundation and some of the families that they support, who are seated in our members' gallery. They're here to celebrate Stollery day, and I hope that my colleagues were able to spend a few minutes with them downstairs to celebrate the excellence that they are helping us provide in terms of children's health. Now, please stand as I say your names – the Stanley, Post, Pinchuk, and MacKinnon families as well as Martin Schuldhaus, Mike House, and Cora Carter – to receive the warm welcome of our Assembly as well as our appreciation.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ms Hoffman: The second, Mr. Speaker, if I may. Thank you. I also rise today in recognition of World Lupus Day. Lupus is a serious autoimmune disease affecting approximately 1 in 1,000 Canadians. I want to commend Lupus Canada and the Lupus Society of Alberta for their leadership in promoting public awareness and general education about lupus and for providing compassion, hope, and support for those who are affected as well as their families. I invite Shane from Lupus Canada as well as Rosemary from the Lupus Society of Alberta and all of the patient advocates who are here today seated in our public gallery to please rise and receive the warm welcome and, again, appreciation of our Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning has another introduction, I believe.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to stand to introduce to you and through you a school from Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, Destiny Christian School. Currently they are visiting the Legislature with 26 students from their school. I would ask them all to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Members' Statements

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

Stollery Children's Hospital Foundation

Mr. Carson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The health of our province starts with the health of its children. The Stollery Children's Hospital Foundation has a vision. It wants to help transform children's health care so that every child, no matter where they live, can get the best possible care anywhere. That's why we're proud to host Stollery day at the Legislature today. This is an opportunity for our members to celebrate the amazing, world-renowned expertise that exists right here in our own backyard to help kids like Austin from Cold Lake, Evanna from Calgary, Jack and Lily from Redwater, Josie from Whitecourt, and Porter in his backyard of Onoway. I'm proud to say that all of these Stollery kids and their families are with us today in the gallery.

With more than 291,000 patient visits each year and more than one-third of those kids coming from outside the Edmonton region, the Stollery children's hospital is one of the busiest children's hospitals in Canada. It is the most specialized pediatric facility in all of Western Canada, performing more than 11,000 surgeries per year and providing care to some of the most complex health cases anywhere in the world.

The foundation is committed to investing in the best people, programs, equipment, and research to make sure that the Stollery has what it needs. With the support of its donors the Stollery is the foremost funder of pediatric research in Alberta, \$40 million over 10 years, through the Women and Children's Health Research Institute at the University of Alberta.

1:40

The foundation also believes in equity and fairness. That's why it's investing in mental health, indigenous health, and transitional health from child to adult in an effort to expand the Stollery's growing network of care.

Stollery day is an opportunity for us to reflect on the tremendous impact this hospital has on our province and the vital importance children's health plays in the future of our province.

On behalf of Austin, Evanna, Jack, Lily, Josie, Porter, and their families, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Catholic Education

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise and highlight today as World Catholic Education Day, which is being celebrated across Canada. Catholic education has served parents, their children, and communities in countries across the world. In Canada Catholic education is an integral contributor to our Canadian identity and culture, serving the nation through faith-based leading and learning. Catholic education, with its deeply rooted teachings of social justice, service to the community, and ongoing promotion of respect and dignity for all persons, values which are inherent to our identity as Canadians and Albertans, has helped define who we are.

Catholic schools provide an environment for the students which encourages not only high academic achievement but strong emphasis on love of God, self, and others. This is achieved by permeating all curriculum with faith, emphasizing sacrificial love, respect for creation, and academic development in an effort to form the student's whole person.

Mr. Speaker, the strength of Alberta's education system is built on the foundation of choice. Parents have a variety of options to choose from as they decide what the best avenue of education is for their kids. With steadily increasing enrolment numbers, parents in Alberta continue to demonstrate that Catholic education remains a primary option for many families across the province.

I would like to offer my most sincere congratulations to all who are involved in Catholic education in our province, and I would ask all members of the Assembly to join me in congratulating all of our fantastic English and francophone Catholic schools across this great province and wishing them the best as they celebrate World Catholic Education Day.

Human-animal Bond

Dr. Starke: Mr. Speaker, humans have kept domestic animals as pets for thousands of years, but it's only been in the last 40 years or so that the benefits of the human-animal bond have become better understood. Research has shown the health benefits of pet ownership: lower blood pressure, lower cholesterol, less anxiety, fewer heart attacks, and fewer suicides. Incredible service dogs support people who are blind, deaf, have autism, epilepsy, or PTSD.

Other research has shown the benefits of having animals in our workplaces. While we've gone to great lengths in making this place more family friendly, our four-legged family members are banned. I used to bring my dog to work here at the Legislature, and those days were the best days.

Ninety per cent of Canadians consider their pet a member of the family. Now, as a veterinarian I viewed my job not as someone who cured disease or repaired injuries; my job was to preserve family relationships.

Now, our family has been blessed with the unconditional love over the years of three dogs: our Airedale, Hillary; our golden retriever, Sara; and until three weeks ago our Bernese mountain dog, Liesl. We shared all the joy, the laughter, the heartaches, and the tears of our time together.

It's been said that dogs live short lives and that it's really their only fault. When they die, we grieve and maybe ask the question that I got so many times from teary-eyed children: will my dog go to heaven? Now, Hollywood says that all dogs go heaven, but some theologians argue that dogs can't go to heaven because they don't have souls. Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm a veterinarian, not a theologian, but I've looked deeply into the trusting eyes of thousands of dogs, and my professional opinion says that dogs have souls. And as for going to heaven, well, I agree with Will Rogers: if dogs don't go to heaven, I want to go where they went.

In the meantime I'll keep believing that we are richly blessed to share the Earth with animals and that when my earthly journey here is done, my dogs will be waiting patiently for me at the rainbow bridge to go for one more walk.

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

Mental Health Week

Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to speak about a topic that affects us all. Mental health is something that affects 1 in 5 Albertans, and when you think about your family, your friends,

and your co-workers, I'm sure that you yourself know someone who has been impacted. Mental health is something that we should all be aware of year-round, but this week especially we need to make some noise and let everybody around us know that mental health is an issue to be taken seriously.

The 67th annual Mental Health Week runs this year from May 7 to 13. It is an opportunity to attend events, speak to loved ones, and raise awareness. The theme of this year's event is Get Loud, and the Edmonton chapter of the Canadian Mental Health Association lets everyone know what that means.

Getting loud means speaking up to stop the discrimination and the stigma that usually go hand in hand with mental illness. It means using your voice to raise awareness and build support. For someone at work. For someone at home. For yourself.

I am proud to be part of a government that recognizes the importance of mental health. Soon after our election the Premier struck the Alberta Mental Health Review Committee to look at the state of mental health and addictions treatment in Alberta. From that committee came the Valuing Mental Health report and a series of recommendations to improve the system. I'm proud to say that Alberta Health has been taking a proactive role ever since implementing those recommendations and working in collaboration across government and with community agencies to support people in need.

For this Mental Health Week let's say it proudly and loudly: mental health is everyone's business. Stop the discrimination and stigma. Offer and build support. Together we can all be healthier.

Thank you so much.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Catholic Education

Ms McKittrick: Thank you. Merci, M. le Président. Alberta's Catholic community makes an enormous contribution to our province. This is why I'm rising today to recognize World Catholic Education Day. Every year Catholics across the world give thanks for the gift of Catholic education. Alberta has a long and wonderful tradition of publicly funded education. Every day Catholic schools teach students the skills they need to be leaders in their communities and to build a bright future for themselves, their families, and the province as a whole.

The government is proud to support all of our students. We are hiring new teachers, reducing school fees, and making investments we need to make in our children. In my constituency we are celebrating the announcement of the modernization of l'école Père Kenneth Kearns Catholic elementary school, which will provide modern learning spaces for students for generations to come.

Alberta's greatest strength is its diversity. Alberta is home to many faith communities, who have contributed greatly to the identity of this province. While each of us in this province lives out our own values, there is more that unites us than divides us: our sense of fairness, our compassion, our sense of justice, our desire to ensure that all children are nurtured and cared for, our pioneer spirit, and for many of us the centrality of our faith to our daily lives, myself included. I love walking into Archbishop Jordan school in Sherwood Park and seeing the 12 chairs and the statue of Jesus, where students meet and develop community. It brings the centrality of faith into the everyday life of the students.

I hope that World Catholic Education Day brings Albertans marking the occasion inspiration and grace and that together we can continue to do the important work of ensuring that our children can reach their full potential.

Merci.

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

Justice System Concerns

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our legal aid system limps along in a state of crisis that costs all Albertans in longer court wait times and impaired access to the legal system for everyday Albertans, with serious charges being stayed in criminal court cases. The president of the Criminal Defence Lawyers Association recently said that a lawyers strike is possible if the NDP government doesn't provide a significant funding increase immediately for legal aid, currently needing about \$61 million. Albertans who are full-time employees making the minimum wage, about \$19,000 a year, currently would not qualify for legal aid coverage. If the working poor can't get legal aid, then the system is broken. It must be fixed now. The system is overwhelmed, with up to 1,400 calls per day.

I applaud the government's investment in therapeutic courts for mental health and addictions issues, which keep people out of jail and help people heal as well as free up court time, but changes are essential to improve efficiency in the system. Foremost is a more independent board to Legal Aid from the NDP government. What is the government afraid of? Allow the board to make common-sense changes; for example, to streamline folks needing social services, mediation, private lawyers; more flexibility for family law cases to reduce conflict and ongoing court disputes that drain the system, damage clients, and do not result in optimal outcomes, especially for children.

1:50

Clearly, there's also a need for more focus on the 30 per cent of clients that are indigenous. Siksika Nation, for example, has duty counsel and social workers on-reserve at the band office. Other First Nations would benefit greatly from this service. The NDP Justice minister is not providing lasting solutions, including some increased funding, to deal with increasing demands. Instead, it's offering more consultations and delaying essential changes to the provincial justice system. We need solutions now. Albertans cannot wait any longer.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Provincial Response to Pipeline Opposition

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We all want to see Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain pipeline expansion succeed and ensure that our natural resources get to tidewater. That's why our Official Opposition called for consequences last summer, when the B.C. NDP was sworn into government, but the government chose to ignore calls for consequences until just recently. To the Premier: why did the government not take B.C.'s threat seriously until B.C. was already taking active steps to obstruct the pipeline?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. We are working to get our pipeline built to tidewater, and we are committed to ensuring that it succeeds. As our Premier said this morning, Ottawa is in a very serious and determined discussion with our government with regard to Kinder Morgan. I want to assure Albertans that those discussions are focused on one outcome and one outcome alone, the construction of the Trans Mountain pipeline. We won't take our foot off the gas. We're going to keep moving forward. We're proud

that we are in a position to be able to move this important project in the national interest forward after many decades of it failing to move forward under the former government.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since last summer our Official Opposition has called for this government to turn off the taps to British Columbia if their NDP government tried to stop the pipeline. Only on March 8 of this year did the government announce that they would take such an approach. There are now only 21 days left until Kinder Morgan makes a decision on whether or not to even proceed with the project. To the Premier: why did this government wait until March 8, after months of uncertainty, to even consider this?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and again to the member for the important question. Certainly, we know that over many, many years there was a Conservative government here in Alberta and a Conservative government in Ottawa and that they didn't turn the taps down. We know that things have also changed over the last several months. We are very determined to make sure we get this pipeline built. That's why we brought in Bill 12, and that's why we are going to back down at nothing.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On April 15 B.C. Premier Horgan said that our Premier told him they wouldn't actually be using Bill 12. On April 17 B.C.'s Attorney General said: clearly, the legislation is a bluff; they don't intend to use it. There are now 21 days left until Kinder Morgan makes a final investment decision. To the Premier: how does this government plan on using Bill 12 to get the pipeline passed if they've already signalled to British Columbia that they won't use it?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much again, Mr. Speaker. Again, we've heard this question asked before, and the answer remains the same. Of course, we brought in Bill 12 so that we can have additional tools so that we can use them if we need to use them. I understand that you're taking: somebody said something to somebody else that got reported in the media, and now it's coming back to Alberta. I can tell you straight up that if we need Bill 12, we will use Bill 12. If I were one of the people in British Columbia – we've already seen the prices at the pumps go up – I'd be really worried about what's going to happen if Bill 12 does have to get used, which, of course, is at our disposal, hopefully, very soon.

The Speaker: Second main question.

Federal Policies on Pipeline Development

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After his April 15 meeting with our Premier, the Prime Minister announced that the federal legislation would be coming to reassert and reinforce federal jurisdiction on pipelines. There are only 10 sitting days left federally until Kinder Morgan makes its final investment decision, and the Liberal government has not actually done so. To the Premier: has the government reached out to their federal counterparts to see why they failed to table this promised legislation?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We're using various tools with the goal, of course, of getting that TMX construction on track this summer. We aren't going to back down. I'm very proud of the work that we've done to build bridges and to build relationships with folks across this country, including now the majority of British Columbians, even in the Lower Mainland. We're going to keep moving forward to get this pipeline built.

I won't take advice from the members of the opposition around a number of things, including their proposal around outing gay kids. This is making international media, including *The Guardian*: Forcibly Outing LGBT Children to Their Parents Is Monstrous. I have one question: will you please stop?

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. According to the Canadian Energy Pipeline Association federal Bill C-69 will make it "difficult to imagine that a new major pipeline could be built in Canada." Given the uncertainty already created over the Trans Mountain expansion and a number of companies already divesting in Alberta, this is troubling for the families that depend on our energy industry. To the Premier: when was the last time this government expressed concern about Bill C-69 to the federal government and on which specific date?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We've been very clear. I believe that the correspondence started last fall, and we continue to say that we want to ensure that we not only get our pipeline to tidewater but that we have a means of transport to ensure that it gets across to the markets that really do want it. The Asia Pacific markets are very hungry for our resources. I do have to say that this is an important project in our national interest. We won't back down from standing up for Albertans, whether it's women accessing health care, children wanting to feel safe at school, or getting our products to tidewater.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The urgency and necessity of the Trans Mountain expansion is the result of the failure of other important projects like Northern Gateway and Energy East. A recent report showed that the lack of pipeline capacity is costing our energy industry \$15.8 billion every year, or nearly 1 per cent of GDP. To the Premier: with the continued uncertainty over Trans Mountain, what actions has this government taken to ensure that future pipeline projects can be considered?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the Leader of the Official Opposition did in fact indicate that he didn't think that the Northern Gateway pipeline was in the national interest. Certainly, we do need to ensure that TMX is built, and we will ensure that TMX is built. That's why it's a priority of this government. It's identified as a national priority, unlike with the Leader of the Official Opposition. It's been identified as such because our government has put it on the agenda. We've also secured the approval for the Enbridge line 3 project as a result of the climate leadership plan. As for our interventions on federal C-69 there are about 120-odd amendments that we're sifting through right now.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
Third main question.

Health Care Wait Times

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. According to the Canadian Institute for Health Information Albertans are now waiting longer for surgeries than they were just three years ago, including hip replacement surgeries, cataract surgeries, and knee replacement surgeries. Fewer Albertans are receiving these surgeries within the recommended times. To the Premier: how is it that wait times for these important surgeries are increasing?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. We know how important it is for Albertans to be able to access timely care in the right place at the right time by the right provider. Of course, we believe that that should be public. It shouldn't be derived based on how much money you have in your pocket but on how much need there is. The need has gone up dramatically over the last few years. We have made significant strides in reducing wait times in a number of areas like hip fracture repair, radiation therapy, stroke treatment, but we know that there are additional needs. That's why we brought in a bigger budget. We wish that the opposition would have voted for it, but we're proud to pass a budget that's going to invest in health care.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a matter of outcomes, not spending.

According to a freedom of information request wait times for heart valve surgeries are up from 16 weeks in 2015-16 to 23 weeks last summer. That's a long time for families waiting for a needed surgery for a loved one. To the Premier. These increases all happened under this government's watch. Can you explain how it happened, and what steps are being taken to address it?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much. Well, there are increased needs in this province, so while we're providing more services, there are additional people who are also lining up. That's because people are choosing Alberta as their home, and we're really proud of that. We've also, as I've mentioned, addressed wait times in a number of those other areas. As well, family physicians have been able to reduce the wait-list for nonurgent GI treatment in the Calgary zone by 98 per cent, Mr. Speaker. That's certainly a success. One of the other things we did was that we added \$40 million for AHS direct funding to support things like cancer surgeries and hip and knee and cataract surgeries. We voted for that budget. Why didn't you?

2:00

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A recent Alberta Health Services quarterly update shows that the percentage of Alberta children needing mental health treatment and actually getting an appointment within 30 days has been declining in Edmonton, from 77 per cent in 2014 to only 45 per cent last year, and in northern Alberta, from 84 per cent in 2014 to only 70 per cent last year. To the Premier: how is it that these wait times are getting longer? Are you concerned about it, and if so, what is being done today to address it?

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker and for the question. It's a fair question. We have increased service provision significantly across the province. Part of what is also happening at the same time is that more people are coming forward identifying as being in need of mental health supports. That is certainly a good thing. We want people to come forward and ask for help, and we want to make sure that help is there for them. That's why just on Monday – this is Mental Health Week – we announced the increase of a grant that we have that goes specifically to schools to help hire staff to support children in school. We've increased that grant by 50 per cent this year alone. That's why we brought forward a Health budget that increased spending instead of calling for drastic cuts. I'm proud of our government and what we're doing.

The Speaker: Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

PDD Program Review and Advocate

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government of Alberta has a legal and moral obligation to provide appropriate and equitable funding to persons with developmental disabilities and to manage the PDD program in a manner that's responsive to the needs and concerns of individuals, families, service providers, and workers. To the Premier: when will the government conclude its review of the PDD program in respect to the principles of inclusion, transparency, independence, collaboration, and best practices?

The Speaker: The Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I couldn't agree more with the hon. member. It is absolutely the case that this government is completely committed to ensuring that we have a better PDD program going forward. As my colleague is always saying, what we've heard loud and clear from various communities is: nothing about us without us. We are absolutely taking the time to go out and consult with different communities. We've demonstrated our commitment by increasing funding by \$150 million to provide 800 additional PDD clients with the supports they need, and I'm sure I'll have more to say about that shortly.

Ms McPherson: The community is confused by conflicting messages about the government's intentions with the PDD program. It's been almost three years since the government has taken power, and we've yet to see a comprehensive PDD strategy. Why did it take so long to initiate a PDD review, let alone address community members' long-standing and well-known concerns?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Well, of course, as all members of this House will be aware, when you're dealing with a complex situation and you want to make sure that everyone is included, sometimes it takes that long to get it right. I think that rather than hearing from us, we should hear from some people who have been affected by this. Bruce Uditsky, Inclusion Alberta CEO and parent of a son who receives PDD services, said that our government showing "leadership in launching this forward-thinking review and ensuring families and individuals with developmental disabilities are fully heard and engaged is much appreciated."

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Second supplemental.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In May 2017 this Assembly voted unanimously to create an advocate for persons with disabilities to examine broader issues affecting people with disabilities and assist individuals having difficulties with the system. Despite royal assent in June 2017, the government only began searching for an advocate this week. To the Premier: how much longer will Albertans have to wait for an advocate to finally hear their concerns after years of inaction by previous and current governments?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. Of course, our government is incredibly proud of the Member for Calgary-North West for passing a private member's bill to make life better for Albertans with disabilities. I'm proud to announce that the posting was opened recently. There was incredible engagement on this file. Over 1,300 Albertans with disabilities, their families, and self-advocates shared their input on the role that the advocate should take through a survey to help us determine what the priorities are. We're committed to working with those communities to make sure that we get it right.

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

Access to Health Services and Social Supports

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This morning I attended the Momentum mental health awards honouring those who've helped end stigma that prevents many from seeking help. Indeed, stigma against mental illness can drive some to self-medicate through substance use. Yet while the Leader of the Opposition yesterday expressed concerns about access to treatment, he also continues to spread stigma about individuals who access life-saving supervised consumption sites, having referred to them as addicts who inject poison into themselves. To the Associate Minister of Health: alongside providing funding for those life-saving health services, what steps are you taking to end stigma by pushing back against such life-threatening misinformation?

Ms Payne: I'd like to start by thanking the member for his advocacy on this important issue. Mr. Speaker, stigma kills. Stigma prevents people from talking openly about mental illness and substance use, and stigma prevents people from accessing the help they need. I'm so proud of the work our government has done to make supervised consumption services available in Alberta. In Calgary there have been more than 10,000 visits to the Chumir site since it opened, and almost 200 overdoses have been reversed. Behind each reversal is a person with value who deserves to be treated with dignity and respect, who has friends and family who care about them. Now they have another chance to find help.

The Speaker: Thank you.
First supplemental.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that stigma is also one of the reasons that many LGBTQ2S-plus youth struggle with their mental health and given that studies show that GSAs save lives by offering them safe spaces with peer support free from judgment and given that the opposition leader and UCP MLAs have contributed to harmful stigma against them by repeatedly suggesting GSAs...

Mr. Nixon: Point of order.

Mr. Shepherd: ... teach secret curriculum on sexual subjects, to the Minister of Education: what steps are you taking to push back against such life-threatening misinformation?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you know, GSAs literally do save lives in schools and outside, too. I've visited a number of these GSAs around the province, and I've heard that message loud and clear from students. For that reason, we passed Bill 24 into law this past fall, and I was definitely disappointed that we did not get unanimous support for that. The opposition did vote against it and then brought forward policy that would reinforce the destructive elements on GSAs. I was very disappointed, but certainly our government is here to protect kids. They know that, and students should feel safe and welcome.

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

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that women have long faced judgment and stigma simply for insisting on the right to control their own bodies and reproductive decisions and given that members of the opposition refused to even engage in discussion on ensuring they can exercise that right with privacy, safety, and dignity and given that the majority of their party members voted to strip that right from young women old enough to drive and work a part-time job, to the Minister of Health: what steps are you taking to ensure that all women in our province can access this safe, legal health care service?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This government stands with women, and we believe strongly that women's rights are human rights and that their right to make their own decisions is not up for debate. The members opposite showed what their beliefs are at their convention, but they won't stand up in this Chamber and state their beliefs for Albertans. On this side we welcome every day all members of this House to stand up for Albertans. This side of the House won't stop doing their work to protect the things that matter most to Alberta families.

Thank you.

Power Company Compensation for Coal Phase-out

Mr. Gotfried: Mr. Speaker, when the government agreed to compensate coal-fired electricity producers, these companies assumed the government would act in good faith. Well, one year into this agreement there are already issues. Capital Power is suing Alberta Energy, alleging the government failed to act in good faith, shorting the company \$2.7 million in just the first year of this 14-year agreement. To the Minister of Energy. One year into this deal and we already have a lawsuit. Will this be a recurring theme of Alberta Energy, being sued for failing to live up to contractual obligations?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the agreements that our government negotiated are fair. They will help companies continue to power our electricity grid, to transition to natural gas where appropriate, and ensure that power companies keep their headquarters here in Alberta and protect worker benefits. They were negotiated with the support of an internationally respected expert with decades of experience. This particular case is

before the courts, so it's inappropriate to comment any further, but we are confident in our legal position.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

2:10

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that litigation is almost always a last resort, I would assume, taken only when parties refuse to negotiate or bargain in good faith, and given that on April 9 a dispute resolution meeting between Alberta Energy and Capital Power was arranged to avoid costly court proceedings; however, at this meeting a deal could not be reached because the province did not send someone with the authority to resolve the dispute, to the Minister of Energy: why did you force Capital Power to pursue litigation by refusing to send someone with a level of authority to negotiate a settlement in good faith?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member is inquiring about a specific case, so it would be inappropriate to comment on this particular case and what led to it. We are confident in our legal position. We are also confident that the communities that are affected by the coal-fired transition, whether it's the 12 that were phased out under Prime Minister Stephen Harper at the time or the remaining eight 12 years from now – we're making sure that the worker benefits are in place, that there's a transition fund for workers. The communities will be protected.

Mr. Gotfried: A great way to do business, Mr. Speaker.

Given that yesterday ATCO indicated they are considering litigation against this government as a result of the coal compensation agreement and given that if litigation is instigated by ATCO, that would mean 3 out of 4 companies compensated through the coal phase-out will have had to sue the government in order to receive the compensation they are owed, again to the minister. These companies want to be adequately compensated based on contracts signed in good faith. Why are you forcing them into the courts and proving yet again that this government cannot be trusted?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. While I will not provide comment on a particular case before the courts or a hypothetical case before the courts, what we do know with respect to this government's approach to the coal-fired transition is that we ensured that the federal government had the regulations in place to ensure coal-to-gas conversion, something that the previous federal government utterly failed to do and, in fact, the previous Conservative government here in Alberta as well. We made sure that we had transition funds in place, some \$40 million, to ensure that families have the supports they need to phase out coal, and it was certainly not supports that were in place under Prime Minister Stephen Harper's phase-out of coal.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

Long-term Care Facility Construction Costs

Mr. Gill: Thank you. During budget estimates the Health minister told me that my math was wrong when I pointed out that her government's plan to build a long-term care bed program through a purely public funding model is costing 10 times that of the

abandoned ASLI program. The minister offered to table her department's figures one month ago. Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister. Minister, it's been a month now, and you still have not tabled those figures yet. Can you please table those figures now?

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will be happy to table the responses that I said that I would be happy to provide. Let me just say right here in this place, in the 30 seconds that remain, that the types of beds that are being built are very different from some of the other types of beds that were being built in the past. Instead of building low levels of care, we're building the highest levels of care for those who are most in need. Rather than keeping people living in hospitals or unsupported in home facilities, we're building these types of beds, that are most needed for those who are most critical in our province, and I'm proud to do that.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we all had noted that the \$110 million Willow Square project in Fort McMurray was costing, Minister, approximately \$700,000 per bed – I understand, as you just mentioned, that you're building different types of beds – and given that under the ASLI program the average cost per bed was \$65,000, can you please explain to the taxpayer why your program is costing 10 times more than the previous program? What kinds of different beds are you making or developing or creating?

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much for the question. One of the biggest differences, that I'm happy to explain, is the difference between renting and owning. When you're building a facility that is publicly owned, the province after five years, 10 years, 30 years will still own that facility. When you're building a facility that the members in your own caucus asked us to move from out of town to downtown, where we have to do some flood mitigation to make sure it respects the needs of the community – we're willing to invest in that. We're willing to invest in Fort McMurray, honouring the requests of your own caucus members. Why aren't you?

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've been asking for that but not on the taxpayer's dime, which is costing them 10 times more, Minister.

Given that the Health minister informed this House her government is on track to build 2,000 long-term beds by 2019, please let us know and please share the information with the House: what is the status of those 2,000 beds? How many of those beds have been created? How many are left? When are you planning to complete them?

Ms Hoffman: Well, I did answer that question yesterday, so I'll be happy to make sure – I can't table *Hansard*. On the exact breakdown, I did answer that yesterday.

Let me tell the people of Fort McMurray how proud I am that we are investing in the project that the people of Fort McMurray asked us to. Your government kept jerking them around for more than 10 years about whether the site was going to go forward or not. These people are sitting in the hospital waiting for the very important health care service that they certainly deserve. This government stepped up to the plate. Instead of moving a project from the edge of the city to the heart of the city, that's what we did. Instead of

making people languish in hospital, we're building a facility, and I will be very proud to move forward on that.

I can't believe your colleagues are letting you ask . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
Chestermere-Rocky View.

Carbon Levy and Pipeline Approvals

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pipelines are the safest and most green method of transporting our resources to tidewater and to the world market, yet the Premier doesn't seem to believe that this is good enough. Given that the Premier has felt that rather than fighting to show her friend Justin Trudeau that pipelines themselves would reduce emissions instead she imposed a crippling carbon tax and given that the carbon tax has failed to get the social licence promised from her Liberal friends, why would the government not scrap the carbon tax, which has failed to get anything more than paper approval for these pipelines?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, we do share with the hon. member across the way the priority of getting a pipeline built, but it's the only thing that we share.

Here's a list of things we don't share, Mr. Speaker. We don't share the value that you need to out gay kids in our school system, that you need to privatize health care, that you need to show up at an emergency room with a credit card and not a health care card. We don't share the idea that cutting education funding and attacking teachers is any way to build this province. We don't think that you need to cut taxes for the wealthiest 1 per cent. Those are some things we don't share.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, this government brought in the largest tax hike in the history of Alberta, a tax that they did not run on and that makes life more expensive. Albertans were told that this bitter pill would ensure a pipeline to tidewater with thousands of jobs, yet here we are, three years later, with no pipeline, damaging policies, and bills for families that are piling up because of this carbon tax. What does this government have to say to everyday Alberta families that can't afford to put their kids into hockey this year, take a family trip, buy fresh groceries because of the NDP's failed tax grab?

The Speaker: Thank you.
The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the climate leadership plan led to the approval of two pipelines to tidewater, and we stand in this House every day to talk about the work that we are doing to get that pipeline to tidewater. That's our job. We're happy to do that job.

Clearly, the opposition is not interested in doing their job. They continue to run away from a debate on women's health care. Looking at some of the motions they passed over the weekend, I guess we know why they need to run away from being honest with Albertans about what they really stand for.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, on two separate occasions my colleagues in this House brought forward a motion that would suspend this crippling carbon tax until there were shovels in the

ground on the Kinder Morgan pipeline. Given that on both of those occasions this government voted against those motions and given that this government's carbon tax has failed to get a pipeline to tidewater and given that pipelines are the safest and most green method for transferring resources, why won't the Premier scrap the carbon tax when the pipeline, by its very nature, should have been enough of a green incentive to get approval from their friends in Ottawa?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much. Of course, our climate leadership plan led to the approval of those two pipelines. Certainly, that pipeline will be built, unlike the expectations of the members opposite, who are continually cheering for Alberta to fail on this. When we do succeed – and we will, Mr. Speaker – we will generate revenue that we will put towards important health care projects like the Calgary cancer centre, something the members opposite dismissed as “a fancy box.” It'll add to resources used to cut wait times, to assist our EMS workers, and it will add to a public health care system that in this government's hands will remain public.

2:20

Bill 12

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, Bill 12 was introduced on April 16. We are now at May 10. Why has this NDP government dragged their feet on passing this legislation?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. We're really proud of the progress that we're making.

Mr. Nixon: Point of order.

Ms Hoffman: We continued to make progress on that bill yesterday, and we look forward to doing so again today, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Hunter: Given that we are now going on to almost four weeks since it was introduced, why has the government not passed it sooner? There are only 21 days left.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're happy to move through the business of this House, including Bill 12. It is one very important piece of legislation. We certainly are looking forward to being able to have it passed and to have those tools at our disposal. We're also looking forward to being able to protect women who are walking into clinics from being bullied, shamed, and harassed. We're also looking forward to being able to invest in the petrochemicals diversification program, that's putting thousands, tens of thousands of people to work across our province. We have a number of important bills, and we look forward to you supporting them and helping them all make their way through this Assembly. Maybe you'll vote on all of them. We'll see.

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, given that the Official Opposition has indicated that we are more than willing to pass this legislation in one day, why has the government dragged their feet? Are they really championing this Kinder Morgan pipeline?

Ms Hoffman: Of course, we are. Of course, Bill 12 is one tool that we are using to help us champion it. We are in regular contact, almost daily contact, as a matter of fact, with the folks in Ottawa to make sure that they are moving all of the barriers that lie in our way. We are making sure that we are meeting regularly with Kinder Morgan. We've taken intervenor status, and we've won 12 out of

12 court cases, Mr. Speaker. We are using all of the tools at our disposal, and we are happy to welcome the Official Opposition to start cheering for the project instead of finding ways to pretend that they are cheering for the project when they're actually working towards its demise.

Eastern Slopes Land Management

Mr. Westhead: The eastern slopes are some of Alberta's most valuable environmental assets. They provide water for millions of downstream users, recreation opportunities for Albertans and tourists alike, and critical wildlife habitat for endangered species like westslope cutthroat trout. To the Minister of Environment and Parks: what role do environmental NGOs play in advising the government on ways we can protect and enhance Alberta's wild spaces?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Over the weekend the Leader of the Opposition vowed to fight civil society if they stand up or advocate for the protection of our wildlife, our fish, our water. Here's what Dave from southern Alberta had to say about this in the pages of the *Calgary Herald*.

I feel that recent comments about "activist special interests" are directed at me, my friends, family and neighbours who share my values . . .

There is, however, one special interest group I will gladly admit to being part of: Grandfathers who want to give their grandchildren the same clean water and life-filling fishing, hiking, camping and hunting experiences that I have had the privilege of enjoying in Alberta's foothills.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Westhead: It's hard to believe the opposition leader would add grandparents to his enemies list.

To the same minister: given that draft management plans for the Livingstone-Porcupine area were recently opened for public comment, can you please tell us about the consultation process that went into creating the draft plans?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. For years landowners, grazing lease holders, ranchers, and others in southern Alberta have been asking for better management of our public lands. Certainly, the Livingstone Landowners Group and the Livingstone-Porcupine Coalition were some of the first to ask us for that. They'd been asking the previous government for years and years, falling on deaf ears. We listened to ranchers, we listened to people who live there, we listened to recreation groups, and we've put forward plans that enjoy the broad support of the people in that area. You know, it's really not surprising that the folks across the way have chosen to side with . . .

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

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It hardly sounds like a special interest to me.

Again to the same minister: given that there had been plans to close fisheries along the foothills due to declining trout populations, why were those plans reversed?

Ms Phillips: Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker. As I said, civil society in Alberta, whether it's the Alberta Fish and Game Association or

Trout Unlimited or the land trust organizations or others, has been asking us for better management of our resources and our water resources, in particular, and really managing to keep habitat in place so that we can ensure that we have native trout species to enjoy for generations. For years those concerns fell on deaf ears. In terms of our approach to fishing regulations I said very clearly to the Fish and Game Association that I was not going to make Alberta anglers pay for 40 years of Conservative inaction on habitat. So we're moving forward.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The Member for Calgary-South East.

Legal Aid

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I asked the Minister of Justice previously about the problems facing legal aid, and the minister has responded by pointing the finger at other levels of government or previous administrations, but defence lawyers currently have their fingers pointing squarely at the minister. Calgary defence lawyers are open to meeting with this government to discuss this in good faith but warn that the situation is dire enough that they're considering strike action. To the Minister of Justice: will you commit to meeting with these lawyers and attempt to resolve this issue before things get worse?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think the first thing to note here is that stating that legal aid has historically been underfunded is not intended to blame anyone; it's simply a statement of fact. That's why when our government took over, we took this issue very seriously. We have increased funding to legal aid by close to 40 per cent. We absolutely are in negotiations for a new governance agreement. We meet regularly with the defence bar in terms of that governance, and we will continue to have those conversations.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that court slowdowns caused by a strike action would not only have a negative impact on those seeking justice but would also likely end up costing the government more money in the long run and given that this government has spoken at length about the need to invest in the future as justification for borrowing, to the same minister. Minister, a healthy legal aid program is like a vital piece of infrastructure for our justice system. Why are you shortchanging this one program?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Well, I think the member's statement is fairly inaccurate. It's absolutely the case that legal aid has received a greater increase in funding percentagewise than anything else in my department. It's absolutely correct that we continue to need to invest in legal aid. That's a critical service. But many of the other services in my ministry are also critical services, and we have to continue to invest in those as well.

Mr. Fraser: Given that court times and a responsive justice system are threatened by the troubles facing legal aid and given that the expectation of a fair and timely trial is both a right, regardless of personal wealth, and encourages participation in the justice process by both offenders and victims and given how crucial public trust is for this process to succeed, to the same minister: how will you

ensure that your conflict with defence lawyers and legal aid won't erode public trust in our justice system?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, we have regular conversations with all participants in the justice system to ensure that we're responding to the Jordan decision and to underfunding from the government of which that member was a member. It's the case that we've worked very closely with the defence bar. For instance, the CTLA here in Edmonton had advocated to have defence lawyers at bail hearings. We've heard that call, and we've responded accordingly.

Air Ambulance Service in Peace River

Mr. W. Anderson: Mr. Speaker, Alberta Health Services issued an air ambulance service update on March 15, 2018, stating that it will base one plane in Peace River, on the tarmac, exposed to the elements of Alberta's weather because the successful proponent did not have a hangar, with a second plane based out of Grande Prairie to service this region. This was followed up by an assertion by AHS on March 16, stating that this was an improvement in patient care. My question to the Minister of Health: can she explain how one plane stationed on the Peace River Airport tarmac is equivalent to the level of service that was provided by the previous supplier, that being two planes stationed in a fully serviced hangar?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, the hope of AHS is that the provider will be able to secure space for both planes in a hangar in Peace River. I understand that there are some details that are before the courts right now, but I can assure all Albertans that the plane that is in Peace River is the plane that responds to all emergency calls. The plane that is in Grande Prairie is the one that goes out for scheduled calls. But the direction has also been given that if the emergency plane is away and the scheduled one is not on another call, it be moved to Peace River as well to ensure that there's always one in Peace River available to respond to those emergency calls.

Mr. W. Anderson: Mr. Speaker, given that the preferred proponent still does not have hangar facilities at the Peace River Airport, why didn't AHS simply extend the current service provider's contract, which would have ensured a higher level of service while AHS continues to inappropriately do all it can to resolve the problem for a proponent it should not have selected in the first place?

Ms Hoffman: Well, you know, it's really interesting, Mr. Speaker. Some days the members opposite ask for fair and open and transparent bid processes, and other days they don't. What is happening right now is that there is a review before the courts. There was a bid process. Of course, my expectation is that all Albertans have confidence that they're getting a high level of care. I've made it very clear that we need to have air ambulance in Peace River, and that's why, even though it can't be in a hangar, it's on the tarmac. I'm grateful that this is making its way through the courts and that we'll be able to hopefully come to a decision soon.

2:30

Mr. W. Anderson: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that the preferred proponent still has insufficient facilities at Peace River Airport and given that just recently the aircraft was improperly stored without proper facilities to date and given that just two weekends ago their airplane was stuck in the mud and could not leave with a patient for

two and a half hours after dispatch, can the minister agree that this a reduction in service? If not, how so?

Ms Hoffman: Well, I certainly will agree to look at the details of the assertions that were just made. We've seen on more than one occasion that when members opposite throw mud in this place and then we look into the details, they're not exactly factual. I will guarantee that I will look into the situation that the member just asserted occurred, and I will be happy to address that with him at a further date.

Thank you.

Agricultural Concerns

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, a rangeland recovery study was launched by the universities of Alberta and Saskatchewan to look into how farmland responds to wildfire. The province will put in \$200,000 to fund this study. Odd. That is the same amount that the government offered up in March to cover all of the landowners that were devastated in the Hilda and Acadia Valley wildfires. To the minister: with losses in the millions of dollars, don't you think that spending a similar \$200,000 for a study shows a lack of respect and understanding reminiscent of your handling of Bill 6?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The reference to Bill 6 is the oddest part of that question, but I will answer the legitimate part of that question. The study was requested by some of those landowners down there. Some of the grasses that were affected are in very delicate soil, so it's important that we have all the information we need to be able to continue assisting those producers down there. The wildfire was a traumatic event. We're going to make sure that we do what we can to ensure that the grasslands are able to survive and are able to continue doing what they do; that is, providing feed for the cattle down there.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, given that Alberta farmers and ranchers settled in and built Alberta to what it is today and given that these entrepreneurs face increasingly expensive and burdensome regulations brought in by your Bill 6, the Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act, Minister, with all the uncertainty farmers face, why is your government continuing to treat our farmers and ranchers with so little respect?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I'd request that the member perhaps needs to hire more researchers over there so they could actually have real questions, but I'm happy to talk about the good work that this government is doing for our farmers and ranchers. Last year was the highest sales for farms in the history of Alberta. It was 12.6 per cent higher than the year before. I think the member there owes all farmers and ranchers in this province an apology. This government will continue supporting that good work that farmers and ranchers do.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, given that Alberta farmers and ranchers help feed the entire world and given that these entrepreneurs face global, personal, and financial risks and given that a UCP government would repeal Bill 6 and that farmers and ranchers are always offering a hand up and that they will often rally the entire community to a good cause, Minister, why can't your government help and repeal Bill 6?

The Speaker: The hon. minister of agriculture.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Jocularly. Jocularly. I believe the member has not talked to any farmers and ranchers. He should realize that the legislation protects farm workers, and they appreciate that. It also protects farms from getting sued. Bill 6 is doing what it's supposed to do, and farmers and ranchers are respectful of that and appreciate that. We'll continue doing the work here on behalf of them, as we always have.

Mental Health Services for Children

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, mental health outcomes for children in Alberta are spiralling downward, and this government doesn't have any answers for families across Alberta. But mental health is just one portion of the problem. Twenty-five per cent of Alberta's population are under the age of 18, approximately 1 million kids, and research has proven that many health outcomes that plague adults often set in in the first thousand days of life. We're spending most of our money on health outcomes for adult services rather than prevention. This government doesn't have a comprehensive children's health strategy. Why not?

The Speaker: The Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, you know, given the member's statement and given all the research that we do have around the impacts of the early days of a child's life, I would actually say that that's all the more reason the members opposite ought to be supporting programs like the early childhood learning centres and \$25-a-day day care, that have been introduced by this government. That is one of many things that we are doing as a government to support young people across our province, including making sure that young people and their families have access to the mental health supports that they need.

Mr. Cooper: Given that there is a pressing problem of children in emergent need of mental health services and given that the Stollery children's hospital is the only emergency department in Edmonton capable of dealing with children in imminent danger and given that families whose children are in crisis have described the system as a revolving door and that these families are ending up in the ER regularly with no long-term solutions, to the minister. Your government is supposed to be implementing the mental health review. When is the revolving door going to stop for these families?

Ms Payne: Mr. Speaker, I couldn't be prouder of the work that our government is doing in partnership with the Stollery as well as the Stollery foundation to improve access to mental health supports for children in the Edmonton region as well as across our province. They are great partners, and we're pleased to work with them. Further, our government has been working diligently to implement the recommendations from the Valuing Mental Health report, to the point that they are embedded in every single thing that we are doing in the mental health space. We are making sure that families and children are among the top-priority populations and that we are investing in their supports. I wish the members opposite would have done the same at budget time.

Mr. Cooper: Given that representatives from AHS described the child mental health system as, quote, I think we often don't have a very well co-ordinated and easy system to navigate, unquote, and given that we've heard almost no details about the government's child suicide prevention strategy and given that the results from the mental health review have not yet been implemented, to the minister: when are you going to start taking some responsibility and

make meaningful change to protect Alberta's families, that are struggling to navigate your poorly co-ordinated system?

Ms Payne: You know, Mr. Speaker, it takes a little longer than three years to fix a system that was underfunded for 44. Our government knows that an important part of providing services is to address the stigma that has existed for so long and that has led mental health to be treated as an afterthought by the previous government. We support mental health initiatives for children and youth. In 85 communities across the province, from as far north as Fort Chipewyan to southern towns like Milk River, we are doing everything we can, working diligently with Children's Services to develop a youth suicide prevention framework and are working with community partners and advocates across Alberta.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The Member for St. Albert.

Diabetes Support in Schools

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Type 1 diabetes is a complex condition that requires patients to manage and monitor their blood sugar through a combination of diet, insulin injection, and blood sugar checks. It often affects children and youth, who require accommodation so they can thrive in school. One of my constituents is just such a child. To the Minister of Education: what supports exist to support students, especially K to 4, with the management of diabetes in classrooms?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know that the care of a student with a health or medical condition such as type 1 diabetes is a shared responsibility, and our government is working collaboratively with school authorities, Alberta Health Services, Community and Social Services, Children's Services, and other partners with the regional collaborative service delivery system that we have in place. Certainly, we're looking for a common way to tackle type 1 diabetes here in our schools.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a number of young constituents, as I said, living with diabetes. I'm sad to say that some of those young students are not getting the supports they need to thrive at school. Given that this can affect their academic performance and cause medical complications later in life, again to the minister: what is your ministry doing to improve the access to supports for students who need these critical medical supports?

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you to the member for that critical question. I've been hearing from parents about the challenges that students face in regard to type 1 diabetes. That's why my ministry has been providing resources and information assembled by Diabetes Canada directly to school boards to help to build policy to deal with medical conditions, especially type 1 diabetes. I'm very sorry to hear about your constituent not receiving the support she needs. We can certainly meet to discuss this further, how we can ensure that she has her needs met in terms of diabetes.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's a lack of consistency across the province when it comes to how students with type 1 diabetes are supported in our schools. We need to ensure that all students in Alberta get equitable access to supportive learning

environments regardless of where they live. Again to the minister: what is your ministry going to do to make sure that all students with type 1 diabetes get the supports they need to succeed in school?

2:40

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, I have directed my ministry to develop a provincial guideline that will set common and consistent expectations across the province of Alberta to support students with type 1 diabetes. I do recognize that the impact is significant, and we need to make sure that our kids with this condition are safe and healthy in our schools.

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

Election Commissioner

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government has committed to adding a new Election Commissioner although the current Chief Electoral Officer said that it wasn't required. Albertans will want to know: can the government tell Albertans how much the new Election Commissioner will be paid?

The Speaker: The Minister of Labour and democratic renewal.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased with the work that our government has been able to do to renew democracy, beginning with Bill 1: banning corporate and union donations, putting in new, important spending limits for both individual campaigns and for parties, and bringing in someone who, especially during an election period, will be able to focus resources to look into any complaints or concerns so that the Chief Electoral Officer can concentrate on running an election and the new Election Commissioner can concentrate on enforcing. This is a model that we've borrowed from the federal government that will allow us to make sure that our democracy is respected and is working cleanly.

Mr. McIver: Well, Mr. Speaker, in the interest of protecting democracy and given that the new commissioner will have a term expiring in May 2023, which is exactly in the middle of the writ period in the second next election, my question for the government . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, I'd like you to address your question to the policy issue.

Mr. McIver: I am. That's exactly what I'm doing, Mr. Speaker. The policy I'm addressing is: will the government change the election schedule, or will they actually change commissioners in the middle of a writ period?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's very important to us that Albertans are able to trust in a fair and democratic electoral process, one that gives the power to the people of Alberta, not big money, not heavy influencers, which may have been the case in the past. We will continue to work with the Chief Electoral Officer, as we have in the past, and now with our new Election Commissioner to make sure that our Alberta elections are protected, respected, fair, transparent, and accountable.

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, given that the government won't say how much the new commissioner is getting paid and given that they won't commit to sticking to the election schedule – we know from

past history that that hasn't turned out well for other governments – and given that the Chief Electoral Officer said that the position wasn't necessary, to the government: will you apologize to the Chief Electoral Officer for ignoring his advice?

The Speaker: Hon. member, that question is a significant stretch, I think, from a policy matter. It seems to be focused on an administrative matter.

I would give the minister an opportunity to respond if she would like, but it's entirely your call.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We greatly respect the Chief Electoral Officer, as we respect Albertans, unlike the members of the opposition, who follow a leader who promised to disclose his donors and has not. We need to work very hard to make sure we get big money out of politics and have a . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Introduction of Bills

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

Bill 205

Supporting Accessible Mental Health Services Act

Ms Woollard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Member for Peace River I rise to request leave to introduce Bill 205, the Supporting Accessible Mental Health Services Act.

This bill is very close to the Member for Peace River's heart, who knows the challenges and stigma that patients can face when seeking treatment for mental illness and substance use disorders. Mr. Speaker, everybody has a fundamental right to be treated with dignity and respect when dealing with a substance use disorder or mental illness.

If passed, Bill 205 would establish the enactment of a mental health bill of rights. This bill also looks to establish a publicly accessible online registry of mental health services available in Alberta and to ensure that supports and understanding are in place for all Albertans seeking treatment for a substance use disorder or mental illness.

The Member for Peace River looks forward to debating this bill with her colleagues in the House. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 205 read a first time]

The Speaker: I believe that the hon. Member for Calgary-Klein has a request.

Mr. Coolahan: I'm introducing a bill, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Oh. I'm sorry. Please proceed.

Bill 206

Societies (Preventing the Promotion of Hate) Amendment Act, 2018

Mr. Coolahan: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to request leave to introduce Bill 206, the Societies (Preventing the Promotion of Hate) Amendment Act, 2018.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta has seen a rise in organized hate groups with racist and extremist views, and that is something that should not be supported by this or any government. No organization that is founded on the principles of hating another Albertan or engaging in illegal activities should receive special recognition from the government.

Bill 206, the Societies (Preventing the Promotion of Hate) Amendment Act, will ensure that organizations that exist solely to promote hate like the Ku Klux Klan will not be revived as a legitimate organization under the Societies Act, and Bill 206 will prevent modern hate groups from achieving legitimacy by incorporating under the Societies Act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to debate on this bill.

[Motion carried; Bill 206 read a first time]

The Speaker: Minister of Municipal Affairs, I believe you have a request.

Mr. S. Anderson: Yeah. Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask if the House would allow us to revert to Introduction of Guests briefly.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests

(continued)

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is it an honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House some of my incredible staff that I work with every day and who keep me grounded. If they would stand as I say their names. First is Lisa Gentles, my scheduling co-ordinator, who is actually somebody who runs my life and finds me babysitters at times and more; Cindy Chisholm, our correspondence assistant, who deals with everything that comes into our office and picks ties for me all the time even though I wear shirts that they don't match, so I appreciate that. They are also newly grandmothers, which is fantastic as we get to see cute baby pictures all the time. Gillian Kerr, who is my ministerial assistant, is one of the smartest people you'll ever meet. I don't know how, but she's got more energy than probably all of us combined. As well, we've got Harman Kang, who is our new intern for the summer, who is incredible. I'm so glad that she's joined us this week on our team. Hopefully, she has a great summer.

Again, thank you to them. They keep me grounded, and I couldn't be doing what I do without them. If we could give them the warm welcome of the House, I'd appreciate it.

2:50

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to introduce a group that was here a little earlier during question period, that I didn't have a chance to introduce before. It's the Rosedale Christian School. They're from the bustling metropolis of downtown Ridgevalley. In the group here I have Mr. Andrew Reimer, Darla Goossen, Fred Goossen, and then Arlin Loewen, my cousin, and Gloria Loewen, his wife. I had a chance to meet with them earlier, I guess, last week. They had some great questions, and we had a great discussion on how the Legislature works and the different processes that happen in this place. If we could give them a warm welcome, I'd appreciate it.

Thanks.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite number of copies of a letter from June 18, 2013, that I quoted today in my main question. It was written by the MLA for Edmonton-Strathcona to the then minister of human services.

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

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three tablings today. The first is an article I referenced in my comments this morning on Motion 16, about the appointment of the Election Commissioner, an opinion article by Paula Simons, Gibson Affair Sends Terrible Message: When the Chief Electoral Officer Criticizes Government and Loses His Job, What Are Other Officers to Think?

My second article is from the *Lethbridge Herald*, titled Kenney Opposes Consumption Sites, in which the Leader of the Opposition states, "Helping addicts inject poison into their bodies is not a solution to the problem of addiction."

Thirdly, I have an article here from CBC news regarding Bill 24, which was passed last fall, the title being Gay-straight Bill Could Allow Covert Sex Ed: Alberta United Conservatives, which states, "Alberta's United Conservatives say they're concerned the government is using a bill on gay-straight alliances to prepare for kids to be taught sex education without parents being told."

The Speaker: The Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of an article from CBC entitled Oilpatch CEOs Blame High Costs, Red Tape for Erosion of Canada's Competitive Edge. This is in response to the Minister of Transportation two days ago questioning this information.

The Speaker: The Member for Highwood.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to table the appropriate number of copies, alluding to my question to the Minister of Health, giving some photographic evidence of an aircraft in Peace River stuck in the mud for two and a half hours, not providing services for a needy patient, from April 29 of this year.

My second tabling, Mr. Speaker, is the appropriate number of copies of AHS's March 16 statement outlining their opinion that having fewer aircraft would actually improve patient care.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I believe we have a couple of points of order to deal with.

Calgary-Foothills, did you have a point of order? No. Withdrawn?

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills is indicating, and I will officially on his behalf, to withdraw his point of order, but I would like to argue my point of order. At the time, I called it.

The Speaker: Proceed.

Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on 23(j), using "abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder," particularly language of a nature likely to create disorder. The hon. Deputy Premier and Minister of Health in her answer to a question today in regard to Bill 12, the shut-off-the-tap legislation, indicated

two things that are certainly likely to cause disorder in this House. The first was that the opposition in some way was rooting for trying to slow down Bill 12, the shut-off-the-tap legislation. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, twice we have voted against adjourning on Bill 12, trying to get that piece of legislation done. So that's one misleading of the House.

Second was to say that they're trying to get it all through the House in one day, when, clearly, we know that, Mr. Speaker, that is not the fact. We gave them a chance again last night to do that, and they haven't. We will give them a chance shortly to do it yet again, and hopefully they will do it.

So I would ask that you would ask the minister to stop misleading this Assembly.

The Speaker: The Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This point of order is clearly, actually, just a matter of debate and not a point of order. The minister did not use unparliamentary language. What she did do was to engage in legitimate debate in a manner that is not unordinary in this Chamber. This isn't the first time that the members of our government have pointed out just how much the Conservatives seem to root against Alberta. A similar claim was made on December 7, 2016, when the Premier first pointed to Conservatives at the Prosperity Fund meeting who called the possibility of this government getting pipelines a doomsday scenario. No point of order was raised at that time, and none should have been raised today.

The fact of the matter is that we have an opposition party who thought getting pipelines was a doomsday scenario and who just don't seem to be on the side of Alberta families. I think it's unfortunate, and I wish they would put their partisanship aside and celebrate the great progress being made.

The Speaker: Hon. members, it seems to me that this is yet again another example of a difference of opinion about the discussions in the House. I don't know how many more times you want to hear the warning about avoiding those circumstances, but in this particular instance I don't see that there was a point of order.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Bill 6

Gaming and Liquor Statutes Amendment Act, 2018

[Adjourned debate May 1: Mr. Smith]

The Acting Speaker: Are there any members wishing to speak to the bill?

Mr. Nixon: Yes, Madam Speaker. I move that we immediately adjourn debate and go to Bill 12 and get it passed this afternoon.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion to adjourn debate lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 2:58 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, W.	Hunter	Panda
Drysdale	McPherson	Swann
Gotfried	Nixon	Yao

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hinkley	Nielsen
Carlier	Hoffman	Payne
Carson	Horne	Phillips
Connolly	Kazim	Piquette
Coolahan	Kleinstauber	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Larivee	Rosendahl
Drever	Littlewood	Schreiner
Eggen	Loyola	Shepherd
Fitzpatrick	Luff	Turner
Ganley	Malkinson	Westhead
Goehring	McKittrick	Woollard
Gray	Miranda	

Totals:	For – 9	Against – 35
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[Motion to adjourn debate lost]

The Acting Speaker: We are now back on the debate for second reading of Bill 6. Are there any members wishing to speak to the bill? The Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm disappointed that we can't move on with important legislation that needs to be dealt with soon, but we'll talk about Bill 6 for a little bit.

Madam Speaker, this legislation is in response, of course, to the federal government's decision to legalize cannabis. I think it's important that we note that this discussion is not about whether or not cannabis should be decriminalized. That decision was not up to the provincial government. The provincial government, without a lot of time, has had to regulate cannabis to prevent a legal vacuum, putting us in a spot where we have to make some decisions. This government does not have the authority and the responsibility, however, to make important decisions when it comes to legalization.

Last fall this government passed Bill 26, An Act to Control and Regulate Cannabis. My understanding is that this bill is a companion to that bill or a follow-up piece of legislation, if you will. Our caucus ultimately voted in support of Bill 26 as a fairly reasonable response to the federal government's decision to legalize cannabis. We did have some concerns and questions surrounding Bill 26 at the time, however, Madam Speaker, that you may recall. Unfortunately, as is the pattern with the NDP, the NDP rejected our amendment to mirror restrictions around alcohol instead of mirroring their public consumption laws with tobacco. This plan allows us to question whether public health is one of the NDP's main priorities when it comes to cannabis laws.

When marijuana becomes legal, Madam Speaker, unless a municipality passes a bylaw restricting it, people can walk down the street smoking a joint and they can smoke in public parks. Albertans will be exposed to it almost everywhere outside. Alberta will have a patchwork of smoking laws across the province, no doubt confusing citizens and making it challenging for the police and bylaw enforcement officers to enforce.

Public safety and health of our children need to be priorities, Madam Speaker. We need a sound public education strategy on the effects of cannabis as well. Some people are already doing cannabis illegally and know the sorts of effects cannabis has on them. But when it has been legalized, likely some people will try it for the first time and those who were doing it illegally might get bolder. I've

heard from constituents concerned about drug-impaired driving in particular, and it's not very clear what this government is doing on this front.

In closing, though, Madam Speaker, it's clear that this legislation has to be discussed in this place because of the decision by the federal government, and I look forward to the discussion as we go through Bill 6.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 6?

Mr. Panda: Madam Speaker, I rise to speak about Bill 12, actually. So I'm moving to adjourn the debate on Bill 6 because Bill 12 is impacting the livelihoods of Albertans and Canadians as we speak. This government, as they spoke today in question period . . .

Speaker's Ruling

Projected Government Business

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, can you please sit down. Thank you, hon. member.

I just want to clarify for the members of the House Standing Order 8(2.1), which indicates that on Thursday afternoons the government sets the agenda for the government debates. You get an Order Paper that gives you the order of the bills that will be debated. Unfortunately, this afternoon Bill 12 is not on the Order Paper to be debated. So if we could please continue on with the debate that is on the Order Paper, as set out in the standing orders.

Debate Continued

Mr. Panda: With due concern, I move to adjourn the debate on Bill 6, Madam Speaker.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion to adjourn debate lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:19 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, W.	Nixon	Strankman
Drysdale	Panda	Yao
Hunter	Stier	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hinkley	Nielsen
Carlier	Horne	Payne
Carson	Kazim	Phillips
Connolly	Kleinstauber	Piquette
Coolahan	Larivee	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Littlewood	Rosendahl
Drever	Loyola	Schreiner
Eggen	Luff	Shepherd
Fitzpatrick	Malkinson	Turner
Ganley	McKitrick	Westhead
Goehring	Miranda	Woollard
Gray		

Totals:	For – 8	Against – 34
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[Motion to adjourn debate lost]

The Acting Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak to the motion? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: My apologies. Sorry, hon. member. The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills still has the floor as his time allotment has not expired.

The hon. member.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to rise and speak at second reading of Bill 6, the Gaming and Liquor Statutes Amendment Act, 2018. I realize that this discussion is not about whether or not cannabis should be decriminalized and that it is not up to the provincial counterparts, like my colleague from Rocky Mountain House said, but I have come to share and perhaps ask some questions. This bill was brought about to basically close holes that were in Bill 26. It amends the Gaming and Liquor Act as well as other small sections of other acts to respond to the federal government's decision to legalize cannabis and set up a retail framework and combine cannabis with most tobacco laws.

On the provincial side of things, Madam Speaker, we really haven't had too much time to respond to the legalization of cannabis but have the responsibility of regulating cannabis to prevent a legal vacuum. That said, however, the government does not have the responsibility and authority to make the very important decisions surrounding legalization, decisions that could affect thousands of people across the province. There has been a lot of debate, and the issue has been well circulated in the news. Some are in support; others are not. I'm not here to debate those issues but, rather, to discuss reasonable responses to the federal government's decision to legalize.

Late in the fall the government passed Bill 26, An Act to Control and Regulate Cannabis. That bill was more in response to the federal government's legalization through their Bill C-45. The bill more or less discussed how households would be allowed to grow up to four cannabis plants at home, that the only way to purchase legally online would be through the one publicly operated store, and that sales would start immediately following legalization in July 2018. That is coming up here shortly. It also gave the specialized private retailers the ability to sell cannabis legally with no co-location with alcohol, tobacco, and pharmaceuticals. Eighteen was decided to be the minimum age to use and sell, and 30 grams was decided upon as the maximum public possession limit. It discussed restrictions on where cannabis could be publicly consumed, which basically is anywhere that smoking is already banned.

The bill also gave the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission the authority to carry out the oversight and compliance functions, and it will manage the distribution of cannabis to licensed sellers. Bill 6 is basically a companion or follow-up piece of legislation which will amend and fix some of the issues that may have been missed in the previous legislation.

My colleagues and I did have some misgivings about Bill 26. Unfortunately, the NDP rejected our sensible amendments to mirror restrictions around alcohol and instead decided to mirror their public consumption laws around tobacco. Even though the federal government has legalized cannabis, the provincial government has been given the authority to work out the details, so that was one of the areas that kind of shocked us and had us questioning whether public health really was one of the NDP's main priorities.

3:40

We did support the premise of Bill 26, but that doesn't mean that we necessarily support all the additions that were made, and we had

kind of wished that the NDP would have listened to some of our amendments. Now, once cannabis becomes legal here in July, unless a municipality passes a bylaw restricting it, anyone can walk up and down the street smoking their joint and will also be able to smoke it in public parks. Unfortunately and most importantly, due to the nonrestrictive use our youth will be subjected to it everywhere outside.

The other problem with mirroring the public consumption laws on smoking is that Alberta has a lot of different smoking laws across the province, which will no doubt confuse citizens and make it challenging for the police to enforce. I'm a firm believer that public safety should come first and that the health of children needs to be the government's top priority.

On that note, I would like to ask the government if they thoroughly went through all the suggestions of the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta and the College of Pharmacists. They both indicated concerns about the health implications of using cannabis recreationally, particularly amongst individuals younger than 25. Did this government take their suggestions into consideration?

I sure hope that there will be some sort of public education strategy on cannabis effects that will roll out prior to it being legalized here in July. It is very important that all Albertans be educated on the effects. There are some who, once it is legalized, will decide to try it for the first time. We know that there are plenty of people doing it now illegally. They already know the effects it has on them, but those who will be tempted to try it now may not know how it can alter and impair the mind. The other point I would like to point out is that for those who have already tried it illegally, they might get bolder and try to use it with another substance. These are some of the issues that should be covered in the public education piece, Madam Speaker.

Many people are concerned about the impaired driving piece. We would like to know what the government is doing on that front. Will the police be properly supported, and will they have the right tools to do their jobs properly? Albertans are asking that. The United Conservatives will be monitoring the government's implementation of the legalization of cannabis and will continue to talk with and seek feedback from special-interest groups and the public.

The government has been quiet about details on how the government-run online store for cannabis will work. One of the questions Albertans have: how is the age verification process going to work when ordering online? It would be a shame if minors would be able to process orders online. Even if asked for a driver's licence, what is to say that they won't use another adult's identification?

Bill 6 opens the door for permitting cannabis sales in an existing business such as a separate section of the rural general store in communities too small to support a stand-alone cannabis store. Was this done because the government was hearing concerns from special-interest groups? We understand that enabling regulations for this subsection will be created if there is demand. Is there already demand?

Also, I have noticed that Bill 6 includes two additions unrelated to marijuana legalization. One allows you brews and establishments to order liquor products such as for premixing batches of cocktails, adding flavouring, infusing food with liquor, and creating barrel-aged liquor. Why have you decided to add in this piece? The other one is that government is proposing changes to the liquor laws while the act is open, and they have the opportunity because they were apparently listening to what Albertans want. I wish this government would listen to Albertans more often. This was not the case with the previous Bill 6, that affected all farmers in this province.

I would like to now close by saying that I'll be supporting this bill although it is Bill 6, but it's a different bill, so I'll be supporting

this. It's my hope that they would answer the questions that we have on this side of the House as most questions that we ask come directly from the concerns of Albertans.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Mr. Strankman: I really enjoyed the presentation from the Member for Calgary-Foothills, Madam Speaker, because he's got a bit of a rural background and from a foreign country. I wonder if he could expound on some of his perceptions of Canada, from another country.

Mr. Panda: I'd like to thank my friend from Drumheller-Stettler for his advocacy on another bill, Bill 6, on which he was our lead as ag critic. That bill scared all Albertans to death. But this bill, Bill 6, I think is a companion bill to the previously approved Bill 26, which we supported with some reservations. But to the member's point: what do I like about this bill? The way I understood, it's the federal government which has the jurisdiction, so they chose to legalize cannabis.

Personally, I never tried it, and I don't intend to try it even when it is legalized. Where I grew up, it was taboo, actually. People wouldn't try it, at least the people that I know, that I grew up with, my family members. They don't have access to it. They won't try it. But here, if both levels of government and municipal government choose to implement, I'm cautioning, based on what I hear from my constituents, that we can't make it a free-for-all. We have to implement it with the utmost caution and care in a responsible way.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I've actually been looking forward to being able to speak to Bill 6 for some time, and I was actually quite disturbed earlier in the day when it appeared as though the opposition was basically impeding the work of this Legislature in making progress on this very important legislation.

I mean, you can't compare bills. That's like comparing children. But this bill is a necessary bill. We need to get working on this bill so that Albertans and Canadians as well as retailers and basically all citizens and municipalities know what the lay of the land is from the provincial legislation point of view.

It is really important legislation that we've known is coming down the pike for a while. This government has been showing some proactivity in getting ready for what is going to happen, presumably in early July. It may be delayed because of some activities by the Conservative Senators in the Canadian Senate that are putting some obstacles into getting the federal legislation actually enacted. In any case, it's very important that we here in Alberta are ready to go and that we can deal with the health issues, with the public safety issues, with the potential exposure of our youth to a mind-altering and presumably brain-altering medication.

3:50

I just read in the *Edmonton Journal* that 450 small-business people have actually applied for a licence to open a shop to sell cannabis in the city of Edmonton. Now, in the hamlet of Sherwood Park apparently there's only one. I don't know what that tells you about Sherwood Park, but I can tell you that here in Edmonton, and I presume in Calgary as well and probably in most of Alberta, there

is a lot of interest among small business as an economic opportunity. Why would the opposition want to stand in the way of small business developing a new market and, you know, allowing us to diversify the economy? Here is a great chance, folks. Go for it.

I was just out at the Edmonton airport, the pride of the Member for Leduc-Beaumont. Edmonton airport is a fantastic place, and if any of you are not using that facility that are in the opposition, please start doing so. They've got a new Costco, an outlet store, and the actual Edmonton Airports is expanding its footprint a lot. There's a race track there that you can bet money on if you wish. It's great for that sort of stuff.

You know what else is at the Edmonton airport? One of the largest hemp-growing facilities and also part of a company that, I believe, is called Aurora Cannabis. Aurora Cannabis is Canada's largest grower. That company is showing a lot of faith in what this province can do in terms of economic development. It needs to know that we've got some laws around the production of cannabis.

I would also say that it's important that we modernize our liquor laws as well, and this law has some very common-sense points in it that are going to bring us, basically, up to date in that regard.

It really is a pleasure on behalf of the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General to rise in support of Bill 6, which is amendments to the Gaming and Liquor Act. You know, we're making a number of amendments to modernize and update that act. In some cases these amendments are in response to the impending legalization of cannabis, but it's also the result of extensive consultation for some time that these are coming through. As I said before, the amendments help to further protect public health, keep cannabis out of the hands of children, and most importantly – and I didn't mention this before – limit the illegal market. I mean, we talk about getting dark money out of politics; let's get dark money out of drugs.

We're also going to increase the capacity and capability expertise of the board of AGLC. I talked about the economic opportunities here in Edmonton and across the province for cannabis sales. The changes in this law are also going to help the liquor retailers.

The federal government in April of 2017 announced that cannabis is going to become legal across the country. At that time they said in the summer of 2018. At that time, a year ago, this government started to develop a system for legal cannabis, and the minister started by asking Albertans what our province's legal cannabis system would look like. She reports that there were over 60,000 Albertans that responded. That must be one of the most – I think only my colleague from Edmonton-South West's consultation on daylight savings time actually produced more response. I believe it was 80,000 that he received. But 60,000 Albertans: that's evidence, I think, of the real interest of Albertans in this process.

You know, besides keeping cannabis out of the hands of children and ensuring public health, road safety is another thing that's really important, not just road safety but workplace safety and even in the public spaces. We've heard a little bit in the previous speech about concerns about consumption of cannabis in public. This legislation is actually going to help municipalities or give the municipalities a framework in order to deal with that. The legislation grants authority to the AGLC to oversee the system, and it paves the way for us to begin preparing for the private, licensed retail sale of cannabis. The regulations were announced in February of this year, and they provide clarity for the cannabis retailers while ensuring our system is safe, secure, and effective.

Today I'm seeking the hon. members' support in this Legislature for Bill 6, which continues to work on what's been done to date. The legislation is important. It's important that we don't drag our feet on it. It's important that we get these bills passed in the next

short while. Bill 6 includes amendments that, if passed, would provide the AGLC board with the tools it requires to better regulate and enforce rules around cannabis. Some of this includes prohibiting retailers from using names such as "pharmacy" or "medi-" or any symbol that has a medical connotation. Actually, as a physician who has prescribed medicinal marijuana, I think this is a very, very important distinction. They also are going to prevent the packaging or naming of the products that would be in any way attractive to children.

You know, it's part of a comprehensive approach to making sure that if cannabis is going to be legalized – and that was a decision made by the federal government. The province of Alberta did not make that decision. This government did not make that decision. I think this situation is kind of analogous to tilting against windmills, that I heard in that previous speech. I mean, the law has been changed by the level of government that has the power to change that law. Why would we try to stand and sort of tilt against that windmill and not deal with this effectively? We want to produce the best kind of legislation, the safest kind of legislation, the legislation that's going to keep our children and youth as safe as possible and our roads as safe as possible, our public spaces as safe as possible, our workplaces as safe as possible.

I'll come back to that "choice" word. We've been discussing other bills that involve choice here. You know, after it's legalized, it's going to be a choice whether or not a person age 18 and over is going to use recreational cannabis. At least in my opinion, government's role is not to get in the way of that choice, just as it's not to get in the way of choice in other contexts. I don't think I have to spell that out, but I'm saying it because the members opposite actually disappear when we vote on that kind of choice. At least they're sitting here listening to me talk about choice. It's a fundamental democratic principle that a citizen, a resident, has choices to make, and it's the responsibility of the government to make sure that it's done in a safe and responsible way.

You know, I do want to talk a little bit about what the AGLC is going to do or the tools that we're going to give the AGLC. There are going to be fines that are an important tool in deterring contravention. We propose increasing the maximum fine from \$200,000 to \$1 million per incident. This amount gives the AGLC the room it needs to properly address serious infractions when necessary.

4:00

Madam Speaker, Bill 6 also amends the act so that for the minor ticketable provincial offences the court could rely on evidence that a product is cannabis based on packaging, labelling, or smell. I think this is very common sense. This applies for public consumption, youth possession, consumption in a vehicle, improper transport in a vehicle, and, most importantly, sales to a minor.

While the legalization of cannabis was the impetus for developing the legislation, we also saw the opportunity to amend the Gaming and Liquor Act so that it will better reflect an evolving liquor industry. The first amendment allows fermenting on a premises basis, and this basically adds to the business.

The bill would also allow retailers to blend and infuse liquor products. This is a growing trend that involves infusing liquors with flavouring agents to create specialty drinks, infusing food with liquor, and creating house-aged liquors. I mean, that's going to help small business in that field.

Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm trusting that members on both sides of this House will support this legislation.

With that, I would ask to adjourn the debate on Bill 6.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 17
Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2018

[Adjourned debate May 7: Mr. Ceci]

The Acting Speaker: Are there any members wishing to speak to Bill 17? The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to adjourn debate so that we can speak about the important bill, Bill 12, and have the opportunity to be able to address an issue that is . . .

Speaker's Ruling
Projected Government Business

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt you. I've already made the ruling under Standing Order 8(2.1) about Orders of the Day already being determined on the Thursday prior to the proceedings of the week. You were notified that Bill 12 was not going to be on the Order Paper of the day.

In addition, I would like to remind all members of Standing Order 28, which requires "some intermediate proceeding" to take place between a motion to adjourn debate, requiring that at least there is some progress in the debate in order for the motion to be put forward again. I would like to allow a member to at least speak to the bill that has been put in front of us before we ask for an adjournment of the debate.

Mr. Hunter: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker: Please go ahead.

Point of Clarification

Mr. Hunter: Madam Speaker, I actually would like to just reference 13(2). In this situation I'm trying to find out why it is – the government can actually bring forward a bill at any time. It doesn't have to be on the Order Paper. They can bring it forward at any time. What you've quoted to us is actually something that – they would have no problems being able to just bring forward Bill 12, so I'm not sure why we aren't addressing this bill. We've given them many times this opportunity today to be able to address the issue, which is that we're almost four weeks into introducing this bill, Bill 12, and we're still not bringing it to fruition. If they want to put their money where their mouth is, then let's pass the bill. We've already said that we'll do it in one day, yet they're not willing to be able to bring forward the bill. We've given them lots of opportunities to be able to do that, and this is why I'm asking if you can please give us some information.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, I will clarify my ruling. Standing Order 8(2.1):

On Thursday afternoon . . . the Government House Leader shall provide notice to the Clerk of projected Government business to be brought before the Assembly.

As the Speaker it is not my responsibility to debate what the government decides to bring forward as the issue of the day. My job is to moderate between both sides. You need to negotiate amongst yourselves what you will be having to debate on the afternoons when bills are brought forward. That is not my role. My role is to enforce the standing orders, and that is what it says. It's not up for debate.

Mr. Nixon: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker: Are you speaking to a different point of order?

Mr. Nixon: Yes. Absolutely.

The Acting Speaker: Please.

Point of Clarification

Mr. Nixon: I'm speaking to a different point of order. You let the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud just adjourn debate, and there were no intervening speakers, which seems to significantly contradict what you've just told the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner. So under 13(2), could you explain that, please?

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, your members were actually provided the opportunity to adjourn the debate on the exact same bill twice. I asked if anybody would like to speak. Your member was able to speak and have a break on his time allotment. The next speaker spoke on that particular bill, and my ruling stands. We are now on to the bill that we are speaking about, which is Bill 17. We will not be discussing my past rulings on Bill 6. If you'd like to call a point of order to discuss an issue on Bill 17, please go ahead.

Debate Continued

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am most pleased today to speak to Bill 17, Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2018, in second reading. While the UCP agree with the main premise of the bill, I have some questions and some additional comments I would like to make today. Bill 17 amends a number of pieces of provincial tax legislation to reflect changes made at the federal level. Some of the changes are good ones; others I do not agree with. I want to talk today about those things to bring some fulsome debate to the House so that no stone is left unturned.

I'll start with some of the more positive pieces, like the fact that this amendment will now align Alberta tax legislation with federal legislation. This will align tax collection and ensure efficiencies. I am more than sure that this will make many agencies and accountants across the province happy. This will undoubtedly save money, and saving money is obviously a good thing for a Conservative.

On another positive note, this amendment will correct legislation to better align provincial practices with the CRA administrative practices regarding how the carbon tax rebate is calculated for those families who have working child dependants. I'm glad that the federal government did not act and calculate the income, and it's definitely a positive step forward for the provincial government to align with the federal government on this front. Families are already facing too many obstacles, Madam Speaker. This doesn't have to be one of them. Can you imagine including a dependent child's income? How can a family get ahead when we start including income that likely isn't taxed in the first place? This was another piece we brought up when the carbon tax bill was introduced that we believed needed to be changed, but of course a lot of our debate in this House tends to fall on deaf ears. Glad to hear that this one is now being fixed.

However, on that note, I would like to add that I just heard one of the government members talk today about one of the UCP members' speech and how to criticize this side of the House for wasting thousands of dollars in wasted time, just to hear a speech he didn't quite agree with. Madam Speaker, here we are in the House, now fixing a government bill that went awry. I wonder how much these changes have cost the government in time on the carbon tax bill. I mean, we're not talking about just listening to a speech;

we're talking about hours of research and collection of data over the last two years, including lawyers and perhaps some laypeople to make the corrections. Maybe that member would like to count that cost. I'm sure it would cost more than the thousands he accused us of today. We're being paid by Albertans to scrutinize the government. Please, we should not have that taken away from us.

Moving forward, I have to say that I am scratching my head when it comes to taking away any tax credits for fishermen and farmers. This NDP government has shouted from the hilltops that it prides itself on the principle of helping those who are struggling. Madam Speaker, many fishermen and farmers that I know struggle every year. It's not an easy way to make money. It's not an easy way to support a family, and it's sheer back-breaking, hard work. We should be doing everything possible to help our farmers, not removing tax credits that would help them. They feed their province, the country, the world. If it wasn't for farmers, none of us would eat as well as we do.

An article from ATB Financial that was posted in 2017 talks about how the number of Alberta farms has been shrinking for some time. The article claims that in 1996 there were over 59,000 farms in the province. In 2017, just last year, they claim that there were just a little over 40,000 farms. That, Madam Speaker, is a little bit more than a 31 per cent decrease in farms in the province in those few short years. However, the article states that the average size of a farm in the province has grown from 881 acres in 1996 to 1,237 acres in 2016. That is an increase in farm size by a little over 40 per cent, which could prove the theory that only the strong will survive.

I have to wonder if now would be a time to remove tax credits for farmers and fishers alike. I'm not sure if that would actually help small farmers or hinder them. Obviously, it would hinder them. As minuscule as you might think them, every small financial hit hits a farmer and, especially, small farms. Unfortunately, now farmers will have to pay more in taxes.

4:10

Another area that I am not too happy about but really shouldn't be surprised about is the changes in notification, which at first appearance look to lessen government's responsibility to ensure delivery of requests for information related to businesses' tax filing. But that one isn't really worth debating.

Madam Speaker, this will now be the second consecutive year where we are called into the Legislature to correct mistakes that were made in the carbon tax bill. In 2016, when we asked the House to refer Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act, to committee, it was because it was riddled with new legislation that wasn't well thought out. A couple of those pieces that were problematic we now see the government trying to fix in this bill.

While we spoke about how Bill 20 would hurt families in the province that don't have the access to everyday needs that most of us have, they made no change. Those families who struggle and who depend upon charities come in all shapes and sizes. We asked and implored at that time for the government to ensure that families have access to the basics and to help out these charities by making sure they were tax exempt. We talked for hours about how this bill would raise prices at a time when charities were already facing a double-edged sword, on one side, due to the fact that many more Albertans were struggling, were going to have to rely on these essential nonprofits and, on the other hand, realizing that prosperous businesspeople would have to focus more on saving their businesses and keeping Albertans employed and would not have the ability to donate at the once generous levels they had once before.

We spoke about how the Climate Leadership Implementation Act would hurt Albertans all across this province. We gave specifics

and told the government exactly how we thought it would hurt them, only for those things we talked about for just two short years to become reality. Madam Speaker, Albertans are hurting. This bill doesn't reach far enough. We're glad to see that there will be some of the changes that were badly needed back then coming to fruition but wish the bill went further.

I truly wish that when legislators come into this House to debate a bill, all sides of the House would take a good look at what is being debated to ensure that all potential problems are included and dealt with at that time. There is wisdom in prudently looking into the future and asking ourselves: how will this piece of legislation affect Alberta families, businesses, and the prosperity of our province? I know that the government has the right intent, and I applaud them for that. They want to do the right thing for this province, but sometimes that means looking outside of your own ideologies and putting all that aside, especially if you see something better that would produce better outcomes. My hope is that during this session the NDP ponder outcomes rather than focusing on so much ideology.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak?

Mr. Panda: Madam Speaker, I move to adjourn the debate on Bill 17.

The Acting Speaker: Before I put the question on the adjournment – we have not been able to make much progress on this bill, as I have already indicated – is there anybody from any other side that would like to speak to the bill?

Then I'll allow the vote on the adjournment.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 16

Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Statutes Amendment Act, 2018

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It is my honour to rise today to move second reading of Bill 16.

Our government continues to act on our commitment to ensure that our electoral system is fair, accountable, and transparent for all. In fact, having me rise as the minister responsible for democratic renewal to introduce legislation to make sure that we have a fair, accountable, and transparent system for our elections and our democracy may seem familiar to you, Madam Speaker. The reason it may seem familiar is because I've had the honour to do this a number of times.

I would like to set the stage into which we introduce Bill 16 today. That stage began with the introduction of Bill 1, the very first thing that our government did when we formed government in 2015. Bill 1, An Act to Renew Democracy in Alberta, banned corporate and union donations, returning to Albertans the confidence that it is the votes of our citizens, the voices of our citizens that will be heard through the democratic process. Banning corporate and union donations as a first act as a new government sent a strong signal to all Albertans that our government was going to be very different, that the priority was not going to be for big money and the insiders but, rather, to make sure that the voices of the citizens were protected, respected in our democracy. I was very honoured to be part of the caucus at the time Bill 1 was introduced.

Following Bill 1, following my appointment as the minister responsible for democratic renewal and building off the work of the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee, that was formed to review the Election Act, the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act as well as the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act and Conflicts of Interest Act, I have been pleased to continue to work on the task of renewing democracy here in our province, Madam Speaker, to touch on a number of key issues that impact our citizens as we look forward to the coming election, and make sure that it is the will of the citizens that will prevail.

It was with honour that I stood in 2016 and introduced Bill 35, legislation designed to make sure that we were getting big money out of politics, building on the initial work of Bill 1. The Fair Elections Financing Act, as it was named, was designed to ensure that Albertans, not big money and special interests, decide the outcome of elections. It did a number of important things, Madam Speaker, including amendments to limit campaign spending, ensuring that, for the first time, campaign spending limits for political parties would be capped, at \$2 million. This touches directly on Bill 16, the second reading of which I am introducing now. That \$2 million spending limit would apply to all political parties within an election.

As well, though, we also imposed spending limits of \$50,000 for each individual candidate's campaign so that, regionally speaking, it was not going to be a candidate who was able to fund raise vast sums of money from wealthy donors who would be able to dominate the conversation. We want to make sure that all candidates are able to participate and communicate with the electorate and allow everyone the opportunity to participate.

To that end, while putting in spending limits, we also made a point of making sure that there were certain things that would not count towards those spending limits, particularly candidate travel costs, because we know we have ridings that are incredibly large.

Care for a candidate's or contestant's children and other dependants. Wanting to support women and wanting to support parents who may be interested in running as a candidate for a political party in a provincial election in Alberta was very important to our government. To that end, excluding some of these costs from these spending limits could help to support these candidates.

Expenses related to a candidate or a nomination contestant living with a disability: very similarly, making sure we are accessible and offering supports to all who may be interested.

Petty expenses incurred by volunteers, which we know will vary from region to region but could touch on things like – Edmonton-Centre, represented very well by the member in this House: his volunteers will have parking expenses that my volunteers in Edmonton-Mill Woods will not, so allowing petty expenses to not count towards those limits was something that we were considering.

4:20

Finally, we also imposed nomination contestant spending limits of \$10,000, which is roughly 20 per cent or exactly 20 per cent of the spending limit in each electoral division, because nomination contests can often be very important in our democracy. So those spending limits are very important, and it is on those spending limits that Bill 16 will continue to protect our democracy.

Bill 35 did a number of other things as well. It limited contributions so that individual Albertans – when we banned corporate and union donations, individual donations were capped at that time, Madam Speaker, at \$15,000, up to \$30,000 in an election year. Now, that is big money to me. We have now created an aggregate contribution limit of \$4,000 per individual contributor each calendar year. That means that whether you donate to a party,

to a constituency association, to a candidate, to a nomination contestant, any of these donations contribute to your \$4,000 contribution limit. Making sure that we had reasonable contributions pairs nicely with spending limits.

The other thing we did in Bill 35 which again touches on what we are going to be amending through Bill 16 is third-party advertising. The act set spending limits on election advertising by third parties. The limit would apply from writ drop to the close of polls and be set at \$150,000, of which no more than \$3,000 can be used to support or oppose candidates in a particular electoral division. Making sure that we have those types of spending limits and that third-party advertisers' donors are disclosed in a type of sunshine list is a way of renewing democracy and making sure that it is accountable and transparent for all, so I was very proud, Madam Speaker, to introduce Bill 35 in 2016.

Then, knowing that my work was not done, I was also proud to introduce Bill 32 in 2017, making elections fair and more accessible. This bill touched on the fairness and integrity of our elections, including setting new limits on third-party spending, again, another area that the bill I am speaking to today, Bill 16, touches on. Bill 32 placed new spending limits on third parties that would start December 1 prior to an election year, which is three months before the beginning of Alberta's fixed election period. It made sure that third parties would not be permitted to spend more than \$150,000 on political advertising before the election is called; again, not more than \$3,000 per area. It made clear that political activities should be done by political parties, not by PACs or third-party advertisers. It also made sure that third parties would not be allowed to incur expenses to do the work of political parties: sell memberships, fund raise, or collect information.

Similarly and after a great deal of debate here in the House, where a private member's bill had been introduced, we also introduced restrictions on government advertising, advertising or publishing information about government and provincial corporation programs or activities, and put in clear, common-sense rules when government advertising was taking place during by-elections or general elections, allowing specifically for important health and public safety messages to proceed.

Now, in Bill 32 we also created the new position of Election Commissioner. This new, independent Election Commissioner is responsible for fully investigating complaints and recommending prosecutions, and the annual report goes to the Legislative Assembly.

We reviewed penalties, again an aspect that touches on Bill 16. When we introduced Bill 32, we reviewed the penalties inside of our Election Act.

Now, Bill 32 did a number of other things as well, encouraging greater voter participation, but as that does not touch on my Bill 16 pieces, I will leave that there.

Today we introduce Bill 16, the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Statutes Amendment Act, 2018. We know that as a result of Bill 35, where we introduced spending limits, our act currently allows each registered political party to incur election expenses up to \$2 million to promote or oppose a registered political party, its leader, or a candidate during an election period. Our amendments forward a simple concept. Elections should be decided on big ideas and not big money. As part of our work to deliver on the promise we made to make elections more fair and balanced, we are now closing another loophole that could be used to get around election financing rules. We've heard concerns from Albertans who've told us that right now it's possible for associated parties to collude together and circumvent the legislated spending limit. Now, this is not right.

It's clear that electoral fairness requires that associated parties be subject to the spending limit of a single party. The proposed amendments would ensure that associated parties won't be able to take advantage of multiple individual spending limits. If Bill 16 is passed, associated parties must abide by and share the \$2 million spending cap. The proposed amendments would enable the Election Commissioner to investigate whether two or more registered parties are associated registered parties. The criteria for being associated would include whether the parties have common leadership, political programs, or policy statements; whether one party controls another; whether parties have the same advertising material and branding; and the nature of agreements and interactions between parties.

The Election Commissioner would be able to initiate an investigation on their own or at the request of the Chief Electoral Officer, an elector, or registered party. The commissioner would not have to wait for a breach of the spending limit to initiate an investigation into whether parties are associated. If the parties are being investigated to determine whether they are associated, then the commissioner would also be required to notify these parties. Parties would also be free to approach the Election Commissioner in advance of an election to seek advice on whether or not they would be in compliance. To be clear, Madam Speaker, we are not suggesting that being an associated party is in any way wrong, only that associated parties should share that same \$2 million spending cap.

To that end, we are proposing adopting an anticollusion provision. This provision would specifically prohibit parties from colluding in order to circumvent spending limits. If Bill 16 is passed, a party would be prohibited from using its status as a registered party for the purpose of circumventing or attempting to circumvent spending limits. In effect, these provisions, like the provisions for associated parties, will prohibit the use of a multiparty structure to get around that \$2 million spending limit introduced in 2016 as part of our Bill 35. The bill would provide for a penalty of up to \$100,000 for associated registered parties or the

chief financial officers of the associated registered parties who contravene the spending limit.

Likewise, the maximum penalty for nonassociated parties exceeding the spending limit is increased to \$100,000. This change would make spending limit penalties for parties consistent with existing penalties for third-party advertisers who breach their spending limits. The maximum penalty for registered candidates, registered nomination contestants, and their chief financial officers would go from \$5,000 to \$10,000.

On another note, Bill 16 will also touch on something out of Bill 32, revising the definition of election advertising period to include by-elections. The current definition only covers general elections. We want to make sure that any advertising done by third parties during a by-election does fall under political advertising rules instead of election advertising rules.

We are also updating the reporting. We are committed to ensuring that everyday Albertans have the confidence they deserve in our electoral system, so we are making changes to both the quarterly reporting and the annual financial statements. These amendments would enhance transparency and protect fairness in election spending.

Fair elections depend on all parties and candidates having a level playing field so that big ideas and not big money decide our elections. Our democracy belongs to Albertans, to every person in our province, and we will not allow private interest groups or big money to unduly interfere in our electoral system. Bill 16 is another step to preserve the fairness and integrity of all future elections within our province, another step along the path that we began with Bill 1, the very first action of our government, followed by Bill 35 and then Bill 32.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. minister, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(2) the House stands adjourned until Monday afternoon at 1:30.

[The Assembly adjourned at 4:30 p.m.]

Bill Status Report for the 29th Legislature - 4th Session (2018)

Activity to Thursday, May 10, 2018

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

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

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

Bill 1 — Energy Diversification Act (McCuaig-Boyd)

First Reading — 6 (*Mar. 8, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 50-51 (*Mar. 13, 2018 morn.*), 184-87 (*Mar. 15, 2018 aft.*), 233-43 (*Mar. 20, 2018 morn.*), 301-08 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft.*), 919-27 (*May 9, 2018 morn.*), 981-84 (*May 9, 2018 eve., adjourned*)

Bill 2 — Growth and Diversification Act (\$) (Bilous)

First Reading — 118 (*Mar. 14, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 243-46 (*Mar. 20, 2018 morn.*), 294-96 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft.*), 314-25 (*Mar. 22, 2018 morn.*), 411-12 (*Apr. 4, 2018 aft.*), 702-05 (*May 1, 2018 eve.*), 928-33 (*May 9, 2018 morn., adjourned on amendment*)

Bill 3 — Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2018 (\$) (Ceci)

First Reading — 184 (*Mar. 15, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 221-26 (*Mar. 19, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 261-68 (*Mar. 20, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 296-98 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 28, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force Mar. 28, 2018; SA 2018 c1]

Bill 4 — Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2018 (\$) (Ceci)

First Reading — 165 (*Mar. 15, 2018 morn., passed*)

Second Reading — 226-32 (*Mar. 19, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 268-75 (*Mar. 20, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 298-301 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 28, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force Mar. 28, 2018; SA 2018 c2]

Bill 5 — An Act to Strengthen Financial Security for Persons with Disabilities (Sabir)

First Reading — 200-201 (*Mar. 19, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 360-62 (*Apr. 3, 2018 morn.*), 482-87 (*Apr. 10, 2018 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 847-54 (*May 7, 2018 eve., adjourned*)

Bill 6 — Gaming and Liquor Statutes Amendment Act, 2018 (Ganley)

First Reading — 448 (*Apr. 9, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 533-34 (*Apr. 12, 2018 aft.*), 669-79 (*May 1, 2018 aft.*), 1010-13 (*May 10, 2018 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 7 — Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act (Carlier)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 491-97 (*Apr. 10, 2018 aft.*), 534-36 (*Apr. 12, 2018 aft.*), 679-83 (*May 1, 2018 aft.*), 908-09 (*May 8, 2018 eve.*), 913-14 (*May 8, 2018 eve., adjourned*)

Bill 8 — Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2018 (S. Anderson)

First Reading — 374 (*Apr. 3, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 9* — Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act (Hoffman)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 497-502 (*Apr. 10, 2018 aft.*), 785-93 (*May 3, 2018 morn.*), 775-76 (*May 3, 2018 morn.*), 807-08 (*May 3, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 909-13 (*May 8, 2018 eve.*), 957-61 (*May 9, 2018 aft.*), 992-94 (*May 10, 2018 morn., adjourned*)

Bill 10 — An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements (S. Anderson)

First Reading — 528 (*Apr. 12, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 611-12 (*Apr. 19, 2018 aft.*), 643-50 (*May 1, 2018 morn.*), 761-72 (*May 2, 2018 eve., adjourned on amendment*)

Bill 11 — Lobbyists Amendment Act, 2018 (Gray)

First Reading — 505 (*Apr. 11, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 612-13 (*Apr. 19, 2018 aft.*), 650-56 (*May 1, 2018 morn.*), 772-74 (*May 2, 2018 eve.*), 967-73 (*May 9, 2018 eve., passed*)

Bill 12* — Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act (McCuaig-Boyd)

First Reading — 547 (*Apr. 16, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 736-46 (*May 2, 2018 aft.*), 854-55 (*May 7, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 961-65 (*May 9, 2018 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 994-96 (*May 10, 2018 morn., adjourned*)

Bill 13 — An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future (S) (McCuaig-Boyd)

First Reading — 606 (*Apr. 19, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 746-53 (*May 2, 2018 aft.*), 808-16 (*May 3, 2018 aft.*), 855-64 (*May 7, 2018 eve.*), 947-57 (*May 9, 2018 aft., adjourned on amendment*)

Bill 14 — An Act to Empower Utility Consumers (McLean)

First Reading — 590 (*Apr. 18, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 718-24 (*May 2, 2018 morn.*), 915-19 (*May 9, 2018 morn., adjourned*)

Bill 15 — Appropriation Act, 2018 (S) (Ceci)

First Reading — 610 (*Apr. 19, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Second Reading — 683-89 (*May 1, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 753-56 (*May 2, 2018 aft.*), 757-60 (*May 2, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 776-85 (*May 3, 2018 morn., passed on division*)

Bill 16 — Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Statutes Amendment Act, 2018 (Gray)

First Reading — 879 (*May 8, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1010-13 (*May 10, 2018 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 17 — Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2018 (Ceci)

First Reading — 806 (*May 3, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 864-65 (*May 7, 2018 eve.*), 1014-15 (*May 10, 2018 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 201 — Employment Standards (Firefighter Leave) Amendment Act, 2018 (W. Anderson)

First Reading — 118 (*Mar. 14, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 201-14 (*Mar. 19, 2018 aft., referred to Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future*)

Bill 202 — Alberta Taxpayer Protection (Carbon Tax Referendum) Amendment Act, 2018 (Kenney)

First Reading — 179 (*Mar. 15, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 549-63 (*Apr. 16, 2018 aft., defeated on division*)

Bill 203 — Long Term Care Information Act (Schreiner)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 632-40 (*Apr. 30, 2018 aft.*), 829-33 (*May 7, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 204 — Land Statutes (Abolition of Adverse Possession) Amendment Act, 2018 (Gottfried)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 833-41 (*May 7, 2018 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 205 — Supporting Accessible Mental Health Services Act (Jabbour)

First Reading — 1008 (*May 10, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 206 — Societies (Preventing the Promotion of Hate) Amendment Act, 2018 (Coolahan)

First Reading — 1008-09 (*May 10, 2018 aft., passed*)

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, May 14, 2018

Day 29

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)
Vacant, Fort McMurray-Conklin
Vacant, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake

Party standings:

New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 25 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent Conservative: 1 Vacant: 2

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, May 14, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Hon. members, let us each in our own way pray or reflect in the celebration of motherhood and the mothers, stepmothers, grandmothers, and great-grandmothers of our wonderful province.

Hon. members, ladies and gentlemen, we now will be led in the singing of our national anthem by Mr. R.J. Chambers. I would invite all to participate in the language of their choice.

Hon. Members:

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

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

Mr. Carlier: Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly a couple of distinguished guests sitting in your gallery: the high commissioner for India to Canada, His Excellency Vikas Swarup, and his wife, Aparna Swarup. His Excellency's visit offers Alberta and India the opportunity to discuss potential co-operation across Canada, across government, academia, business, and more. With growing economies in both our jurisdictions, there's enormous potential to expand bilateral trade and collaboration. I look forward to working with His Excellency on further developing and strengthening our relationship with India. I would now like to ask the high commissioner and Mrs. Swarup to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Introduction of Guests

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

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. M. le Président, c'est avec fierté que je me lève à la Chambre aujourd'hui pour introduire — it's a tremendous honour, as always, to introduce to you and through you students from a school in my constituency, Lycée Louis Pasteur. Les étudiants et étudiantes sont accompagnés par leurs enseignants. The students are accompanied today by their teachers Nicole Pereversoff and Ryan Taylor. If I can ask all the students and teachers from Lycée Louis Pasteur to please now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

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

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to announce to you and through you to all members of the Legislature staff from the Department of Treasury Board and Finance. I'd ask

that they please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome as I call their names: Heather Ford, Carla MacLeod, Jared Anuik, Mary McPhail, Arlene Hendrickson, Dylan Corcoran, Bijon Brown, Rebecca Isbister, Mason Meyers, and Cindy Yang. Please stand up. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier today I had the honour of standing on the Legislature steps with parents, families, and advocates along with my colleague the MLA for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville. I want to recognize some incredible advocates for their courage and commitment on behalf of children with disabilities and their families, and I want to thank them on behalf of our government and let them know that we are committed to working with them. I would ask them to rise as I call their names: Marcy Oakes Henschel, Jennifer Shipley, Angela Anderson, Sabrina Park, Sandra Temple, Victoria Hampson, Shirley Samuel, Angela Seitz, Francie Astorino, Stephanie Ballard, Li Luo, Yufeng Zhang, Adolph Zelmer, and Kristina Peters. I ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

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

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions today. The first is to you and to the rest of the Assembly Ms Jenn Thompson, who is the firebrand that held the rally on the steps of the Legislature today, a dedicated mother, activist of children with autism and other disabilities. She spoke passionately at the rally with dozens of parents on the Legislature steps about internal policy that has replaced direct therapy for children with a consultation-only model, laying the burden of treatment on parents. They've also raised serious concerns about the accountability of families with supports for children with disabilities, and I've referred that to the Auditor General. She is seated in the public gallery. I'd ask her to rise and be recognized by the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Dr. Swann: Thank you for indulging me with a second introduction, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you Mr. David Renwick and Brent Korte. Please stand and be recognized. They are, respectively, the general manager of Adapt Pharma, who produce a nasal delivery of naloxone now being used in Ontario and Quebec; David is visiting Alberta to explore its application to our opioid crisis. Brent, a mental health advocate and consultant representing Adapt Pharma, supports a number of life science companies in engaging government. They are seated in the public gallery. Please rise and let us recognize them.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you some of the individuals behind the annual EPCOR RiverFest presented by the River Valley Alliance. EPCOR RiverFest celebrates and connects Albertans with our hidden gem, the North Saskatchewan River. It also draws attention to the river as a critical water resource in our region, one that is to be protected and enjoyed. I'd ask my guests to rise as I call your names: Mr. Brent Collingwood, executive director of the RVA; Ms Connie Smart, RVA marketing and communications manager; and Andrew Laycock with EPCOR government relations. I would ask that they now receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [Disturbance in the gallery] I rise today to introduce to you and through you some amazing Albertans and dear, dear friends of the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner. Naomi Pedersen and her husband are the proud parents of seven children and four foster children whom they love dearly. They work every day to support and educate their children while being active community members and fierce advocates. I'm so lucky to have met these folks. They reached out because of their natural love for children and their knowledge that family is so important for healthy societies. I'm going to say your names, and if you could please rise as I say your names: Naomi Pedersen, Talia Pedersen, Isaac Pedersen, Kamilah Pedersen, Hannah Pedersen, Anaya Pedersen, Robyn Bowyer, and Violet Bowyer. If we could please give them the warm and traditional welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

I must say, hon. members, that it's nice to hear a child's cry in the place occasionally. Very refreshing.

The hon. Minister of Health and Deputy Premier.

1:40

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I have the pleasure of introducing to you and through you two of my constituents, Mary and Dean Michailides. They live in the vibrant constituency of Edmonton-Glenora, and they're seated in the members' gallery. Mary has been an educator, consultant, and leader for 35 years, and Dean is a principal at Centre High here in downtown Edmonton. Mary is a founding member of the Zebra Child Protection Centre, and at the time she first had a child disclose the experiences she'd received as a survivor of sexual assault – that was more than 20 years ago – Mary chose not to put the child in the police car alone. She instead drove the child with her to the headquarters, and she stayed with her. That was really a first that we'd experienced here in Edmonton. Since that ordeal she's become very active in finding a different model to protect children experiencing abuse, and I'm so proud of the work that she does to support our most vulnerable children. I thank her for her work in the community, especially with Zebra centre, of which she was a founding member. I'd ask that both Mary and Dean please rise and receive the warm welcome of our Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to be able to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a couple of home-schooling families in my riding. As I say your name, I'd like you to please rise. We'll start with Lindy McKay, Maxwell McKay, Hyrum McKay, and Daniel McKay; and we also have Mireyah Proffitt and Sariah Proffitt. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I had the honour of standing with the Minister of Community and Social Services to stand with parents of children with disabilities, with their families, their advocates, many people who just want to be known as mom and dad. I'm thankful that they were able to come in and join us today in our Assembly, and I want to thank them for their dedicated advocacy and recognize their courage in bringing forward their

stories and also their children with them here today. I ask them to rise as I call their names: Claire Wilde, Kristi Rouse, Peter McDonald, Leanne Hart, Helen Hampson, Lisa Bazzardeth, Helen Oakes, Chantelle deVisser, Debbie deVisser, James Gauthier, Aaliyah deVisser, Tammy Suarez; I also recognize those that wished to come. Thank you again for coming here, and thank you for your work. I'd ask all members to extend the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Members' Statements

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

United Conservative Party Policies

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last weekend the UCP held their first convention, where they at long last laid out some actual policy on how they'd govern our province, and for that we thank them, as do, I think, a number of Albertans, because in doing so, they clearly displayed and doubled down on some truly risky ideology, risky ideology like claiming to support mental health while dehumanizing individuals struggling with substance use as addicts injecting poison into their veins and suggesting that peer support groups for vulnerable youth are Trojan Horses for secret sexual curriculum. Risky ideology is stoking resentment based on those views for political gain and then feigning surprise when your membership refuses to listen when you beg them not to vote to out gay kids and block them from joining life-saving GSAs.

Risky ideology is planning a \$700 million tax cut to benefit less than 10 per cent of Albertans and cuts in spending on health care, education, and other supports for everyone else.

Risky ideology is believing that real barriers that women face in getting into politics are socialist crap, that a cabinet with more women than men is patronizing, and that feminism is a dirty word. Risky ideology is refusing to debate or vote on behalf of your constituents on a bill ensuring women have safe, dignified access to a legal health care service. Risky ideology is believing that young women old enough to drive, work, and consent to sex can't be trusted to make their own reproductive choices. And risky ideology is promising that your policies will be developed democratically by your grassroots members, not imposed by a leader until you don't like what they propose and then declaring: I hold the pen on the platform.

Mr. Speaker, I was elected by the people of Edmonton-Centre to stand against those sorts of risky ideas. I'm proud our government continues to stand by the people of Alberta to make their lives better and more affordable, that we, in the words of Don Braid, are working "to level social gender and minority inequalities in Alberta," and that we are working to build a diversified economy, rooted in a recovery built to last because that is an ideology I can believe in.

Electric Power System

Mr. Loewen: This government's handling of the electricity file has been boondoggle after boondoggle. First, this government increased the taxes on specified gas emitters to the tune of 70 per cent and rising. They also initiated accelerated phase-out of coal-fired generators. Of the 18 coal-fired plants 12 were already planned to phase out under their natural life cycles, which would have left no cost to taxpayers. The six newest plants, which, of

course, were the most efficient, are being shut down well ahead of their life cycle, at enormous cost to taxpayers.

These changes and others caused electricity companies to return their contracts to the Balancing Pool, exercising the “more unprofitable” clause of their contracts. This government, only too happy to blame everyone else for their own mistakes, decided to sue these companies for exercising their rights written in their contract. Further, these actions and costs have sent shivers through the investment community, making potential investors in our electricity markets even more uncertain.

On top of all this, the government has tried to sell an interesting story to Albertans with their legislation to cap electricity prices at 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour. They claim that they are helping Albertans, but really they are just trying to hide the cost of their policies from consumers. The fact is that the average cost of electricity was 2.2 cents per kilowatt hour in 2016 and 1.8 cents a kilowatt hour in 2017, but now, after NDP meddling, the price for the regulated rate option in April 2018 was 7.9 cents a kilowatt hour. Now the government is subsidizing green electricity when it goes below 3.7 cents a kilowatt hour, placing all the risk with Alberta taxpayers.

The electricity policies of this NDP government have been an abject failure, and they need to come clean and admit it. Albertans want to know: how much did the lawsuits, the accelerated coal phase-out, the additional cost to the Balancing Pool, the electricity cap, the renewable electricity program, and all the other market manipulations cost and will continue to cost Albertans? The ratepayers and taxpayers of this province deserve a straight answer, yet the government refuses to give one. If you want to prove you’re on the right track, give Albertans the information so they can decide. I think Albertans will be unpleasantly surprised. The Auditor General needs to take a look into these mistakes and others.

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

Stanley Knowles

Ms Woollard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recent comments in this House regarding decorum during question period have made me think about Stanley Knowles, a decent and compassionate man known as the conscience of Parliament. Stanley Knowles became a United Church minister in 1933, and he quickly realized that it was not enough to preach compassion and fairness from the pulpit; he needed to be part of the struggle. Winnipeg at the time was the home of Canadian progressive thought, and it was there that Knowles ran under the banner of the CCF, the precursor of the New Democratic Party. He won a by-election in 1942, thus beginning an astounding run of 13 federal election wins, broken by only one loss.

Knowles’ maiden speech was an appeal for social justice, lower unemployment, better pensions, and improved housing. It was a mark of the esteem in which he was held by all members in the House that his pleas for equity for the less fortunate were always listened to with respect, no matter how often he made them. Knowles’ work ethic and grasp of parliamentary procedure were awe inspiring. He became known as the Gretzky of Parliament. His dignity and decency always kept him above the rough and tumble of political frays. Former Prime Minister Joe Clark remembered the parliamentarian crossing the floor to give him a pep talk. “With Stanley,” he said, “you had a sense of collegiality in the fraternity of Parliament.”

Stanley Knowles toiled in Ottawa for four decades, until a stroke in 1981 forced him to retire from politics and led him to being given the unprecedented distinction of being made an honorary table officer of the House of Commons by Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau.

This allowed him to spend his retirement viewing parliamentary debates from the floor of the House.

Thank you very much.

Flood Mitigation and Recovery in Southern Alberta

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, residents of southeastern Alberta have been struggling to put back their lives from a devastating overland flood which took place in the spring of this year. Thirteen homes were flooded and 831 overland flooding sites were logged in the MD of Taber alone, but it could have been worse, much worse. If it weren’t for the quick and proactive responses of many, there could have been tens of millions of dollars more in damage.

Just one example is the great work of the St. Mary River, the Taber, and the Bow River irrigation districts’ team, that worked collaboratively to combat Mother Nature. Recognizing that when the ice started to flow in the main canal, it would destroy bridges and canal walls, they brought in 40 excavators to clear the floating ice. They worked continuously for two weeks. Due to their proactive and quick response, they are now able to provide irrigated water to the farmers of southern Alberta, and not one bridge was destroyed, Mr. Speaker. Had they not been proactive, many farmers may not have received irrigated water this year, which would have been an unquantifiable cost.

1:50

Now the cleanup starts. The devastation, in spite of the mitigating efforts of so many, is immense. The question I hear most is whether DRP funding will be made available and when it is coming. The MD of Taber has had to put on hold two road construction projects this year in response to the increased cost of this flood, so DRP funding needs to be allocated quickly. My hope is that the government will reward the district’s implementation of best practices, that saved tens of millions, rather than punish them for taking concrete action, as they did. We want future disaster events in this province to be handled in this proactive way as being proactive mitigates the overall cost to all Albertans.

I salute the forward-thinking individuals in my communities and in my riding. I look forward to working with the Minister of Municipal Affairs in freeing up the much anticipated DRP funding.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of Her Majesty’s Official Opposition.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If I could just begin by expressing our concern for the minister responsible for seniors, with her sad health news today, and our encouragement to her to get well soon.

Bill 12

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, it was on March 8 that the government announced its intention to bring forward legislation to allow it to turn off the taps to British Columbia to protest that government’s blockage of the Trans Mountain pipeline. That legislation could have been passed in a day. It’s now 10 weeks later. Why has this government been delaying its own keynote legislation to turn off the taps of Alberta oil to British Columbia?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would start by responding, simply by saying that we’re not delaying it, but it is certainly a piece of legislation that needs a certain amount of

oversight and the opportunity to be debated, so that's what's happening. I expect that we'll see that piece of legislation pass later this week, and then we will do what we need to do in the best interests of all Albertans, to do what the members opposite have so far been unable to do, which is to get a pipeline built to tidewater.

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, in fact, the government itself has voted to foreclose debate on that bill several times. We're in the peculiar situation where the Official Opposition has been trying to accelerate the government's keynote legislation and the government has been delaying it. It makes us wonder how really serious they are about the threat. We know that the NDP Premier of British Columbia doesn't take it very seriously. After meeting with our Premier in Ottawa last month, he said that it was essentially an empty threat. So I ask again: why has the government been dragging its feet on its own keynote bill?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We have not been doing that. But, you know, ready, fire, aim: that is the approach that the members opposite would like to take with respect to getting this pipeline built. That is probably in part the explanation for why, over nine years when they were in Ottawa and their friends were here in Alberta, they couldn't get a pipeline built to tidewater. We have every expectation that we will use that legislation in a way that best supports Albertans in all of their objectives, including ensuring that we get that pipeline built, and – you know what? – we will get that pipeline built.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, a coastal pipeline had been approved, and then this Premier told her close friend and ally Justin Trudeau that he could go ahead and cancel Northern Gateway. She surrendered to his veto of Energy East, she and Justin Trudeau, her ally, surrendered to Barack Obama's veto of Keystone XL, and now here we are, 10 weeks after a threat, with no action. Does the Premier not understand that Albertans don't just want empty words? They want action. Will the government agree to pass that bill at all three stages this afternoon?

Ms Notley: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is very impressive in terms of his ability to rewrite history in a way that is very disconnected with, oh, the facts and also history. That being said, what we will do is that we will ensure that that bill is debated properly and that everyone gets an opportunity to engage in it. It will be passed this week, subject, of course, to the efforts of the members opposite. But we will ensure that it's passed this week, and we will move forward with respect to that bill in a thoughtful, strategic, cool-handed way. That is the way we will get this pipeline built.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I'll take that as a no, that the Premier will not take us up on our offer to expedite her most important legislation.

Provincial Response to Pipeline Opposition

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, this NDP government spent 9 million tax dollars telling Albertans why it was a great idea to punish them with the NDP carbon tax, and now they're going to spend \$1.2 million at the eleventh hour to advertise on behalf of the Trans Mountain pipeline. Why was it so much more important for the government to spend tax dollars advertising in favour of their punitive carbon tax rather than in favour of market access for Alberta oil?

Ms Notley: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, I will say that given that the member opposite, when he was in Ottawa, actually went on national TV to say that pipelines are not a national priority – it is true that perhaps if we'd spent just a fraction of that amount educating the member opposite when he was allegedly standing up for the people of Alberta, it might have been a better use of our money. That being said, our campaign is working. The polls are showing that the level of support in B.C. and across this country is growing. We're doing exactly what we need to do. I wish the member opposite would get onboard and hope for our success rather than cheering for the failure of Albertans.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I said no such thing. When, in 2015, I was on the front page of the *Victoria Times Colonist* arguing for coastal pipelines, the NDP was attending rallies and lobbying against Keystone XL, lobbying against Northern Gateway. Why did it take the government until 17 days before the potential cancellation of Trans Mountain to finally come up with \$1 million in advertising on behalf of Trans Mountain? Why didn't they do this nine months ago, when the New Democrats came to office in Victoria?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, the fact of the matter is that this project is getting closer and closer to getting built, and we are seeing success after success. Just last week in the courts we had two more decisions which bode very well for the outcome of this project. In addition, we're seeing the polls show increasing and growing amounts of support as a result of reasoned, respectful, fact-based conversations that the people of Alberta, all the people of Alberta, well, except for maybe one or two, are having with respect to the people of B.C. In addition, we're having business leaders and community leaders come here to Alberta later this week to continue this work. We will get the pipeline built. We will get it done.

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Premier doesn't seem to be able to take responsibility for the fact that she gave her ally and fellow New Democrat John Horgan a pass when he came to office last July on a threat to do everything possible to shut down Trans Mountain. She attacked our suggestions for potentially turning off the taps. She did not advertise on behalf of Trans Mountain until now, 17 days before its potential cancellation. Again the question is: why did the NDP government wait so long to get in the game?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact, the announcement that we made last week is not the first round of advertising, nor is it the first round of efforts to engage with the people of B.C. on the matter of the pipeline, so, first of all, the member has his facts incorrect there. Secondly, we've been engaging in a number of different strategies to get this pipeline built. We didn't move into a corner and start having temper tantrums and then wonder why nobody was talking to us. That particular strategy was tried for nine consecutive years, and it resulted in abject failure. Thank goodness other people are in charge of this, and – you know what? – because of that, we're going to get it done.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.
Third main question.

Mr. Kenney: Yes, Mr. Speaker, she's delighted that her close friend and ally Justin Trudeau is in charge of this. She's happy that he cancelled Northern Gateway. She doesn't care that he killed Energy East or that he surrendered on Keystone XL.

Carbon Levy and Nonprofit Organizations

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the Community Kitchen Program of Calgary delivers 1.3 million pounds of food to 190,000 people, but they are deeply concerned. They said that it is very tough with the higher gas prices now. "This keeps us up at night," they said. One of the reasons for the higher gas prices is the higher NDP carbon tax. Is the government happy that they're squeezing nonprofits trying to deliver food to poor Calgarians?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, first of all, let me be very clear that the vast majority of the price increases that the member opposite is talking about are as a result of an overall increase in gas prices. To suggest that it's all because of the carbon levy is misleading; hardly surprising, not out of character, but nonetheless it is that. Meanwhile, our government is working with social agencies through a number of programs that we have engaged in over the last three years because we are focused on making life better for all Albertans, including lower income Albertans, and we will continue that record.

2:00

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I've said the carbon tax is part of the reason for higher fuel prices. It's about six cents right now, but the NDP want to raise that by 67 per cent. Why? Because their close ally Justin Trudeau asked them to. Now, the Vecova Centre for Disability Services and Research says: when our costs go up, it means a reduction in the amount of money that can come back to support the programs that we offer. They said this in the context of higher gas prices, which are partly driven by the higher carbon tax. Will the government reconsider their pledge to Justin Trudeau to raise the NDP carbon tax by 67 per cent?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me begin by saying that I find it interesting that the member opposite is standing up for an organization that is focused on doing drug and alcohol treatment, which is important, after a convention a week and a half ago where you had motions actually suggesting charging people for treatment because they've made the choice to become subject to addictions, illnesses. I've got to say: a little rich for folks over there. That being said, we will continue to do the work that is necessary to support those kinds of organizations and many other important organizations which deliver that important service.

Mr. Kenney: There was no such motion adopted.

Mr. Speaker, the Women in Need Society provides food and services to underprivileged women. It expends about 38,000 litres of fuel every year, meaning that the carbon tax has already cost them \$2,500 a year. Now the NDP wants to raise that carbon tax by 67 per cent to get the approval of their close ally Justin Trudeau. Why are they placing their alliance with Justin Trudeau ahead of the good people at the Women in Need Society?

Ms Notley: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. The member opposite is ignoring the many things that our government has done to support an organization like Women in Need, the many things that we will continue to do, and

the supports that go to not only those organizations but the people they serve; for instance, as a result of having a progressive tax situation, by having rebates to low-income people through the carbon levy program, as a result of the child tax benefit, and as a result of the numerous things our government has done to stand up for women in need. We will continue that record. We will not let their record hurt those women.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Homelessness Initiatives

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With the warm weather we are currently experiencing, it may come as a surprise to many Albertans that Inn from the Cold is seeing a spike in users that is leaving them at or near capacity. Landlords aren't allowed to evict tenants during dangerous winter months, and rightly so, but this leads to a surge in the number of evictions as the weather begins to improve. To the Premier: what is your government doing to make sure organizations like Inn from the Cold have the resources to deal with the increased user numbers?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. We have been working with our partners in that area, and we have provided stable and predictable funding to make sure that they can provide the services to Albertans who rely on these services. If we were take advice from that side, the proposed cuts each and every day would have made the situation worse. We have increased funding in all four of our budgets to make sure Albertans get the services they need.

Mr. Fraser: Affordable housing and programs like Inn from the Cold are vital parts in dealing with homelessness and housing insecurity, but we need to be more proactive about keeping people housed to begin with. We can save the system money if we focus on keeping people housed instead of rehousing them. That stability has associated benefits to the health and wellness of families who are no longer being evicted. To the Premier. We need to support organizations like Inn from the Cold, but we also need an alternative, proactive solution to keep people in their homes. Where is your government on this issue?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. As I said, instead of cutting funding for homelessness housing, we are investing almost \$170 million in the homelessness file. We have invested \$5.2 million in support for 200 new permanent supportive housing. We are also investing \$1.2 billion to make sure that affordable housing is available, that there is a permanent solution available for Albertans who rely on these supports.

Mr. Fraser: The problem that is shared by people at risk of losing their housing as well as the nonprofits that assist them is the lack of cash on hand. Both groups are usually very tight on budgets, and small increases in costs can have dire consequences. This means that a carbon tax actually has a higher impact on these families and nonprofits, who have to pay increased costs every day but then have to wait months for rebates. You can understand that those months feel like a very long time when you're struggling to make ends meet. To the Premier: will you show some understanding and some

compassion and exempt nonprofits and low-income Albertans from the carbon tax?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that when the climate leadership plan was brought forward, we considered those. That's why two-thirds of Albertans are getting those rebates, so they're not burdened with that. As I said before, the reason we are facing these challenges is that that side over there – the member was a part of that – for 40 years ignored these, and those social deficits were off-loaded onto Albertans. Now we are making those investments. We are investing \$1.2 billion to make sure that housing is available for Albertans who need it.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek.

Family Support for Children with Disabilities

Ms Woollard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The family support for children with disabilities program is intended to provide vital resources to children and their families. Many families consider this program a lifeline, but we've also heard from families that feel the program isn't working the way it's supposed to. To the Minister of Community and Social Services: what is your ministry doing to ensure that children and their families have the supports they need?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. Let me begin by saying that children with disabilities deserve every opportunity to be successful. As a government we are here to support families and children. We do know that parents of children with disabilities, many of whom have joined us here, work tirelessly for their children, and they know best about their children's needs. I stood with them out on the Legislature steps, I heard their concerns, and I'm absolutely committed to working with them to ensure that they get the supports they need.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Woollard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're hearing from parents that they feel that too much pressure is being put on them by the FSCD program. Does the minister support parent training as a replacement to direct supports for children with disabilities?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. I guess, first and foremost, I will say that they are parents first, and we do not support the idea that they should take on the role of professionals. These supports are there to support their children. We had listening sessions over the last week, four sessions, and I'm committed to working with them, listening to them, and taking action to make sure that this program responds to the needs of the children and their families. We will work with them to make sure we get this right.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Woollard: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Caseloads for FSCD are growing, and parents are concerned about cuts to the program. To the same minister: what investments have been made in FSCD,

and are there any plans to make cuts in order to manage caseload growth? What would the effects of these cuts be?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member. First, I want to say that even during the worst economic downturn we made a decision to put Alberta's families first. We didn't make any cuts to this program. I would say that we added \$50 million to this program in the last four budgets, and we will continue to work with the parents and their children to make sure that this program responds to their needs.

Thank you very much.

Cannabis Legalization

Mr. Fildebrandt: The Stone Age policy of Canada's prohibition is finally expected to come to an end this summer, but even once it's legalized, thousands of Canadians will still carry criminal records. They will continue to be criminally penalized for something that is no longer a crime. When the Wheat Board was abolished, Prime Minister Harper pardoned those who were charged with the crime of selling wheat. One of them is our colleague from Drumheller-Stettler. Will the Minister of Justice call on her federal counterpart to provide a full pardon for those who carry a criminal record for violations that will no longer be illegal?

2:10

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. Well, the issue the member raises is absolutely an issue that I think would be of interest to many people in Alberta and many people throughout this country. It rests within the jurisdiction of the federal government and is therefore a decision that they would need to make.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Given, Mr. Speaker, that there's a lot of good in this government's cannabis legalization plan but that there is a notable hole – legitimate business owners like Marc and Jodie Emery, who operated with a storefront and paid taxes, are lumped in with organized crime, like the mafia and Hells Angels, in being prohibited from operating a licensed cannabis business in Alberta – will the Minister of Justice amend our legislation to ensure that legitimate business owners like these are not treated the same as violent criminals?

Mr. Ceci: Under the Alberta gaming, liquor, and cannabis commission, AGL Ceci, I just want to say that there's a process. All people who want to be legitimate sellers of cannabis in Alberta have to go through that, be monitored, and run through the AGLC. Everybody's background will be checked as well as the people who are selling in the store will be checked. It's not a process of saying that we're lumping this group in with that group. Albertans want to know that everybody's record is stellar.

The Speaker: Hon. minister, I just want to point out that you can't use a person's name in this House.

Mr. Fildebrandt: I guess a new slogan will be Pot is Good.

Given, Mr. Speaker, that while it's not perfect, Alberta has the best system in the country for the legal sale of cannabis, with no government weed stores with bureaucrats helping you pick out a bong, but for some reason the government believes that it can establish a monopoly on the online sales of cannabis – you can buy pot online right now without much trouble even though it's illegal,

so good luck with that. They even expect to lose money on online sales. Only the government could possibly lose money selling pot. Can we agree that after we legalize it, we should privatize it?

Mr. Ceci: Again, with regard to the legal sale of cannabis, once that comes through, with the federal government approval to make that happen, the government of Alberta will be the online seller of cannabis. We think that's in the interest of all Albertans. Alberta will have a social responsibility to deliver cannabis in their online sales and not to promote it and to make wild assertions about their cannabis. It'll be sold socially responsibly, and for a couple of years it'll be challenging to make a profit.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Provincial Response to Pipeline Opposition (continued)

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many Albertans are currently struggling to find work. Alberta was once prosperous, and workers from many different jurisdictions came to Alberta for well-paying jobs. Now what we are seeing from other jurisdictions are activists that are trying to shut down our energy industry and the jobs that go with it. I'm referring to the Tides Foundation, Packard Foundation, Rockefeller Brothers foundation, and the like. They don't have Canada's national interests at heart and are far from it. Minister, what are you doing to stand up to these foreign special-interest groups that are doing everything in their power to block the Trans Mountain pipeline?

Mr. Ceci: I think it's clear, Mr. Speaker, what the government of Alberta is doing to promote it and to assure Albertans that it's in the interests of Canada that we get this right and we get a pipeline to tidewater. We are out there with: making Canada work. There's an advertising campaign to convince all Canadians that it's in all of our interests to see this pipeline get to tidewater as quickly as possible. We'll continue to stand up for Albertans and Canada in that regard.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this NDP government has a very poor record of standing up for Alberta when it comes to our energy industry and given that this NDP government has yet to pass Bill 12, which would allow the government to turn off the taps to B.C., and given that this NDP is still punishing unemployed Albertans with its expensive carbon tax that has not moved any opponents to the pipeline from no to yes – Minister, we only have 17 days left until Kinder Morgan's decision – when will Albertans finally see concrete action to stop those who are illegally obstructing the pipeline?

The Speaker: The Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we've been standing up every day since we were elected to support our most important industry here in Alberta, not just with the construction of the Trans Mountain pipeline but with Keystone XL and line 3. Anything we can do to promote market access, we've been doing. You know what? It's starting to work. An article this weekend in the *Herald* talked about: "Slowly but surely, pipeline backers [are] winning 'hearts and minds'" of not just people in B.C. but in all of Canada.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Second supplemental.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we already have the most environmentally responsible oil and gas industry on the planet and that we continue to improve and given that we've already seen job losses on the Trans Mountain expansion sites as a result of the uncertainty created by pipeline opponents and given that the government in B.C. has not yet changed its opposition to the project, since the government isn't rushing to pass Bill 12, what is being done to ensure certainty for this project?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, again, we have been working very hard, and sometimes it takes one conversation at a time. Many of our ministers have been going across Canada. Our Premier has been doing hard work talking to people about why it's not just important for Alberta and not just for B.C. but for all of Canada. Despite the naysayers in the opposition benches we are winning the hearts and minds of British Columbians and Canadians thanks to the leadership, as I mentioned, of my colleagues and our Premier. Over the next 20 years we know that this pipeline is going to generate \$5.7 billion just to B.C.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Caribou Protection

Mr. Loewen: The environment minister went with a delegation of Alberta industry and community representatives to Ottawa to meet with the federal ministry to talk about caribou plans. Would the minister confirm that the federal government is very willing to work with Alberta on the caribou issue and not unilaterally enact a protection order as long as Alberta shows progress towards dealing with this issue?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The member is quite right. We did go to Ottawa. We secured a financial commitment from the federal government, so it was a very successful trip, in no small part due to, I think, the interventions of the municipalities who came with us and who told their stories of the effect of range planning on their communities. You know, the fact of the matter is that the federal government is willing to be good partners to us on this – they understand where we are coming from – but at the same time everyone is being pushed forward by the courts, and there's very little we can do in that context.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Loewen: Given that a protection order is not the preferred route as it has negative effects on the economy and the people in the region, would you be willing to push the federal government to work with the province to expand the section 11 agreement, if necessary, so that there is a reasonable alternative to a protection order?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, the member is correct. The section 11 agreement is one of the tools in our tool box. We need to make sure that it's the right tool for us, and we need to make sure that it aligns with the funding commitment that we did secure from the federal government. You know, the Species at Risk Act is a very inflexible instrument. There were nine years that the hon. member's leader was in Ottawa that

he could have used to change it, and he didn't, so this is what we're stuck with now.

Mr. Loewen: Given that the federal government committed to giving money to Alberta to help with the costs associated with the caribou issue, can the minister confirm exactly how much and exactly what products that money will be spent on?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We do not have that information at this time.

Provincial Response to Pipeline Opposition (continued)

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, last month the Premier said that the NDP government would file for intervenor status in the dilbit reference case, but she has a record. She failed to file a brief to the parliamentary committee in opposition to Bill C-69. Kinder Morgan wants their permits to build from all levels of government not to be held up by endless court cases and foreign-funded special interests who are NDP fellow travellers like Al Gore. Has the NDP government filed for intervenor status in the dilbit reference case with the Court of Appeal of B.C.? Minister of Justice, if not, why not?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned in an earlier question, we have fought every step of the way for market access, and that is certainly true in the case of the Trans Mountain going to B.C. We've fought in the court and won now 14 out of 14 times, and we continue to have intervenor status as necessary. We're doing everything we can to make this pipeline go, and absolutely it's going to go.

2:20

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, given that effective May 22 the Liberals in Ottawa have cut off the committee work on Bill C-69, the federal bill that makes changes to the National Energy Board, despite having 470 amendments to consider, to the Premier: in your closed-door meetings with your best friend Justin Trudeau did you object to Ottawa running roughshod over Alberta's energy industry and the Canadian economy with the dangers of C-69, and if not, why not?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the reference case brought forward by the B.C. government is not good for Canadian jobs, it's not good for the industry, and it's not good for economic union. Frankly, it's just not good for our country. Essentially, B.C. wants the power to unilaterally throttle our resources and hurt the Canadian economy, and I would suggest that they be very, very careful in what they ask for. Our Premier has instructed officials to immediately apply to be a party in this reference case, and we are going to aggressively stand up for Alberta and, frankly, for Canadians and all economic interests.

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, given that Bill C-69 allows the federal minister unlimited powers to reject major projects like pipelines before an environmental assessment is carried out – the Alberta NDP government never filed any briefing in opposition to C-69, but I did – Premier, why have you failed to stand up for Alberta's

industries and defend the Constitution against this federal Liberal government that disrespects the provinces?

Ms Hoffman: Well, I want to thank the member for bringing this issue forward, and I certainly wonder why, when his leader was in Ottawa for nearly two decades, they didn't address this at that time, Mr. Speaker. These are the kinds of things that compel people to question the determination of the members opposite, actually, on these issues. Conservative leaders sat in Ottawa and in this House here in Alberta for a decade, almost, at the same time and didn't get this pipeline to tidewater. Our Premier has made significant progress on this file in just three short years, and we are going to get our pipeline built. You can mark my words.

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

Classroom Improvement Fund

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since being elected in 2015, I have visited a lot with teachers. Not once have I ever heard a request for a raise, but what I did hear about was the need for classroom funding support, support promised by governments before but never delivered. The last collective bargaining agreement saw teachers and our government come together to put kids first with the commitment of \$75 million in classroom improvement funding, and on a visit to SouthPointe school in Fort Saskatchewan we saw the impact of those funds first-hand. Would the Minister of Education please update the House about how the classroom improvement funds are being used to improve the lives of Alberta's students?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, the classroom improvement fund has been very successful. We've seen more than 400 new teachers and support staff hired across the province. In Peace-Wapiti and Wetaskiwin school divisions they started Empower Reading, which was a comprehensive approach to teaching students to read. Horizon school set up a policy called calm, alert, and learning, which helps teachers to talk about diversity in school. We see many, many interesting projects.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that each school has different needs and given that teachers and locally elected school boards are best suited to address those needs, to the same minister: how has the classroom improvement fund specifically helped students like those in my constituency of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville with their literacy skills?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member is correct. The SouthPointe school in Fort Saskatchewan is the first new school that was built in 30 years – can you imagine? – while the whole city grew by more than many times that amount. Anyways, what they are using it for is for comprehension and the tracking of reading comprehension over the course of the school year. You can see quantifiable improvements by focusing on young learners and their literacy from ages seven and eight.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that our classrooms continue to grow and given that we know what the UCP

wants to do to publicly funded education, to the same minister: how have you ensured that students in rural schools have the same access to the classroom improvement funding as those in large urban centres like Edmonton and Calgary?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, the classroom improvement fund is spread out across all 61 school boards. I mentioned some examples of both rural initiatives and urban initiatives. People are focusing in on mathematics skills and critical thinking skills. You know, the best way to make sure that kids get the help that they need is to make sure you hire teachers and support staff, which we're doing through this fund. You do not help kids by making cuts and laying off teachers and support staff, as the UCP has suggested they would do.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mathematics Education

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Falling math scores remain an issue for Alberta schools. The minister assured us during estimates that memorization and algorithms will be a fundamental part of the new curriculum which is being developed. However, my concern is for the students currently in the system, especially those in junior high and high school. These students cannot be left behind. How they are learning math now needs to change. To the minister: what specific changes to the way math is taught in our schools have been made to address falling math scores?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, there's every reason why we need to build a new curriculum. You know, I found it very interesting that the member's leader said that he would put the curriculum into the shredder. Can you imagine that? We're building curriculum that will strengthen mathematics, and if we have a good idea, we're using it straight away. For example, I put the written section into the diploma exams for mathematics. We put in the no-calculator sections for the PATs for grade 9s. We're working hard with teachers, as I said, with the classroom improvement fund, funding specific initiatives. I'll tell you lots more about it later.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Calgary board of education has done significant work to tackle falling math scores, including hiring math coaches, with a focus on getting back to the basics, and given that this diversion away from discovery math has begun to show results, demonstrating once again the importance of being able to memorize times tables and demonstrate recall, again to the minister: what are you doing to provide leadership on the issue of falling math scores so that individual school boards do not have to fill in the gaps?

Mr. Eggen: Well, Mr. Speaker, as it happens, the school boards work together with us to improve education. The Calgary board of education: you know how they're doing that? They're using the classroom improvement fund, that we negotiated together, to make that investment. The best way they can do that is in hiring those coaches. You hire teachers, and you hire support staff. What you don't do is make reckless cuts towards education and compromise

the education of our students. We're there to make life better for our kids, and I think we're doing a pretty good job.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that I recently had a first-year engineering student from an Alberta university write to me about discovery math and given that he stated – and I quote – that discovery math only helps a small percentage of students and that many fall behind, end quote, and given that he went on to say, quote, that as someone who uses high levels of math on an almost daily basis, discovery math does not help and that Alberta math scores have been dropping because of this, end quote, again to the minister: are you concerned that the way math is currently being taught in Alberta does not properly prepare students for postsecondary success?

Mr. Eggen: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's very important to make some distinctions here. You know, we don't look at saying, "Back to basics" or "the old curriculum" or "the new curriculum." What you look for are the best tools every step of the way to make sure a kid learns math and English and critical thinking skills as well. You don't shy away from making investments even during tough economic times, as we did. We doubled down to make sacrifices in other areas to fund education for enrolment. I would suggest that the hon. member should take a second look. I don't know if you can do a do-over and allow him to vote for the Education budget. He didn't do it the first time, and that kind of was an indication of their true intentions.

Edmonton General Continuing Care Centre Parking

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, last week's question got results. On Friday AHS reported to me that the Westlock hospital helipad is now open.

But on to another project. Across the street from the Edmonton General Continuing Care Centre I understand AHS plans to replace a parkade with – get this – a new parkade. A real estate developer made an unsolicited offer to buy the air rights over this new parkade in the hopes of adding apartments to the neighbourhood, but AHS turned down the revenue. Can the Minister of Health explain: why is AHS turning down this surprise source of revenue?

Ms Hoffman: Thank you for this opportunity to set the facts straight. We absolutely worked to make sure that that helipad was open as quickly as possible. It was literally the day after the member asked a question that we ensured it was back up and operational.

I also want to set the facts straight on some questions that were asked last week. The member said that things were shut down for two and a half hours with regard to an air ambulance. It was 10 minutes. They said that it was an urgent case. It was a routine transfer. Mr. Speaker, I'm sick of the mudslinging in this House. If you want to talk facts in improving health care, I'm there. I'm willing to do it with you. I welcome you to the table.

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, given that Alberta Health Services is re-evaluating this matter at the joint capital projects table with the ministries of Health and Infrastructure and given that the Minister of Infrastructure deferred questions on this matter during estimates to the Minister of Health, with the NDP running a near \$9 billion deficit, can the Minister of Health provide an update on the re-evaluation of this proposal and advise: will the air rights for this parkade be put up for auction, bringing in potentially millions of dollars in new revenue for Alberta Health Services?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

2:30

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much for the question, Mr. Speaker. It is true that there is a need to ensure that staff and visitors have a place to park when they visit hospitals. I believe that it was at a former policy convention where some members opposite were talking about making parking free for everyone. Today they're talking about charging those same staff and visitors \$9 billion. Let's take some time to get your facts straight. Come to us with reasonable solutions. Of course, we're going to make sure that people have a place to park when they come and visit their grandparents, their loved ones, their children. I think that's the right thing to do, and it will be cost recovery.

Mr. van Dijken: Given, Mr. Speaker, that AHS funds parkade replacement projects out of the revenue generated from parking fees and given that visiting loved ones in care can exact an emotional toll, never mind having to pay for parking, is the Minister of Health in any way considering providing some amount of short-term free parking since AHS seems to have enough money to replace parkades with parkades without accepting millions in surprise revenue for condos and affordable housing?

Ms Hoffman: Well, let's fix some more facts. It's a Covenant Health facility. Covenant Health, just like AHS, ensures that they're not diverting funds from front-line services, not laying off nurses to provide free parking. There are certainly important investments to make sure that they're cost recovery. That's one of the reasons why they're asking for this to be done, so that they can build one facility while they are certainly replacing another one.

Mr. Speaker, it's important that we be compassionate with people. We know that health outcomes are better when people have an opportunity to visit, but we're not going to lay off nurses and other important front-line providers. It's important that health be Health funded and that parking be cost recovery.

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

Elizabeth Métis Settlement Wildfire

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Fire season is here, and the people of the Elizabeth Métis settlement in my constituency found themselves facing a state of emergency due to a fire this weekend. Could the minister please provide us with an update on the situation, its impact on the community, and the status of the wildfire within my area?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you. Thank you to the member for the question. It's an important question. There are some fires around the province right now, Mr. Speaker. We do empathize with the folks out there, specifically the Elizabeth Métis settlement. On the 12th of May a wildfire on the settlement did grow rapidly to over 300 hectares. They do have a state of local emergency and established an EOC and a reception centre. Fishing Lake and Cold Lake assisted with fire suppression. The fire is now being held. Fifteen residences were evacuated, and a mandatory evacuation remains in place due to hot spots although residents are allowed to return during the day to deal with animals and property issues.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for that answer,

Minister. Given that this fire has forced the evacuation of residents and given that wildfires often behave in an unpredictable manner, could the minister please tell us what resources the government has dedicated to keeping both people and property safe from this blaze, and how long do you expect that these resources will be in place?

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you to the member for the question. Well, it's a crossministry initiative, obviously, with Ag and Forestry right now, so right now there are resources out there. There are 860 firefighters out there. I don't have the specific numbers that are right there in Elizabeth. There are 84 helicopters, 79 pieces of heavy equipment, and 16 air tankers. We do know that, thankfully, power has been restored in the settlement. There is one firefighter, unfortunately, that was taken to hospital for smoke inhalation, but we are still working on the ground with the Alberta Emergency Management Agency and with field officers to help.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Second supplemental.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to the minister for that fulsome answer. Again, given that people have been displaced from their homes, that have been threatened by this fire, can the minister please tell us how the evacuated residents are being accommodated and provided for in these serious and stressful circumstances?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, and thank you to the member again for the question. I do want to make sure that – I'd be remiss if I didn't thank the local volunteers and the folks on the ground out there, the first responders. The municipalities and the people out there have been absolutely phenomenal working on the ground. You know, I want to let them know that the POC is open 24/7. We are monitoring the situation daily, so everything we can do to adapt to the situation – we do know it's hot and it's windy out there. But it's also incumbent upon us as citizens to be ever vigilant. We will have the assistance there for those folks when they need it.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Grande Prairie Regional Hospital Construction

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The new Grande Prairie hospital looks great from the outside. We know there's a lot of complex work to do inside, but we are hearing rumours of delays. Constituents are asking if this is true. To the Health or Infrastructure ministers: can the ministers confirm that this project is on schedule to open in 2019?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to assure members here on behalf of the Minister of Infrastructure that we're doing everything possible to make sure that that hospital is completed in a timely fashion. Having said that, we inherited quite a situation when this government took office. The previous government had built an envelope for the hospital that was far too big for the needs of the hospital. It created many challenges, not the least of which was a significant overbudget situation, because they hadn't planned the hospital properly.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

First supplemental.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the hospital project includes a parkade and given that we've not seen any construction activity yet on the parkade site, to the same ministers: can you confirm that the new parkade will be there when the hospital opens?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much. Well, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Infrastructure I can undertake that question and provide a response to the hon. member. There are many difficulties associated with the poor planning related to that particular hospital, and the Infrastructure department officials have been working very hard in order to remedy those things. The next thing that needs to be done is continuing construction on the interior, including the mechanical, electrical, and drywall work. Site and landscaping work is under way and is expected to be completed in 2018.

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

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the hospital is supposed to be finished at the end of this year and open in 2019 and given that the constituents are very interested in the project and appreciate updates on it, to the same ministers: if the project runs into delays, will you commit to communicating this information to the constituents?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the minister I can assure the House and the people in Grande Prairie that everything is being done to diligently complete this very difficult project, which, unfortunately, was very badly planned by the previous government. We will provide continuous updates on the progress of the project.

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

Calgary Southwest and West Ring Road Construction

Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Transportation: can you please give my constituents and Calgarians in general an update on where the southwest ring road construction is right now?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for that question from the Member for Calgary-Bow. Construction continues along highways 8 and 22. They will require some speed reductions in some areas. Detours along Glenmore Trail, highway 8, and Sarcee Trail will be going into effect later in the summer. We'll be taking the proper steps to help Calgarians understand the effect of this work. The construction of the southwest Calgary ring road is a historic and much-needed project for Calgarians and Albertans alike.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What impacts will this construction have on the travelling public as far as traffic disruptions are concerned?

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much for that question. As with all projects, there's going to be some inconvenience during construction, but once it's complete, the southwest Calgary ring road will make

life better for all of those who make use of it and will improve the free flow of traffic. My department has worked closely with our contractor, and we've come up with a plan to have the least possible impact on the travelling public. There are detours, as I've mentioned. Some lanes will be narrowed, and the connection between highway 8 and Glenmore will be forced through a detour, so we do anticipate significant levels of service disruption, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for those updates. People in my riding are also waiting to hear about the completion of the ring road. What can you tell my constituents about the west Calgary ring road?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, the Calgary west ring road will complete the ring and will be the final leg, providing more than 100 kilometres of free-flow traffic around the city of Calgary. It's an approved project that's part of Transportation's 2017-2020 capital plan. The project remains a priority for this government, and we understand its importance to residents and businesses in the Calgary region.

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

2:40

Bill 12 (continued)

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier today in a question that was asked by the Leader of the Official Opposition, the Premier indicated in regard to Bill 12 that they were not delaying the passage of Bill 12 but were in fact trying to make sure that this House could debate it. The question, though, then becomes why the government won't allow Bill 12 to come to the floor. Why does the government keep voting against the opposition on trying to get it to the floor to debate it?

Ms Hoffman: I'm just going to take this first one, and then I certainly welcome the Government House Leader to supplement in the other responses. I want to be very clear that Ottawa is in very serious and determined conversations with Kinder Morgan. I want to ensure Albertans that these discussions are focused on one outcome, and that's the construction of the Trans Mountain pipeline.

With respect to Bill 12 the Premier made it very clear that our intent is to have it passed this week. We certainly welcome members to participate in that. We respect democracy and welcome them to participate in the debate on Bill 12, Bill 1, Bill 2, Bill 9. We'll see where they are when it comes to all of those bills, Mr. Speaker, because I think Albertans deserve to know.

Mr. Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that it's been four weeks and the government repeatedly continues to stop this bill from coming to the floor to be discussed and that when they do allow it to the floor, they then vote to shut it down instead of dealing with this issue on behalf of Albertans, again my question to the government is: why will they not allow this bill to come to the floor to be debated and passed on behalf of Albertans? Why do they continue to delay it?

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, there are many bills before this House. You know, the opposition thinks that they can pick and choose which bills they want to debate. They can't wait to debate Bill 12, and they can't wait to get out of the House when we deal with Bill 9. They can't have it both ways. The Premier has told the House that we will debate and pass this bill out of third reading this week. I'm sorry, hon. member; I don't know what the point is.

Mr. Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, the point is that the Premier said that she was wanting this bill to be debated in this House, but the government continues to delay it. It's now acknowledged by the Government House Leader that he will not bring forward this piece of legislation. The question is why, first of all, but second, I'll just ask another question. Why did the Premier say that it was going to be debated in this House and then her Government House Leader won't allow it to be debated in this House?

Mr. Mason: Well, I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps the hon. member and I speak different languages, because I just said that it's going to be debated and passed out of third reading this week. I don't know. Does he have a hearing problem? I just don't understand the question. You know, we couldn't have been more clear. We will debate and pass Bill 12 and finish it this week.

Members' Statements

(continued)

The Speaker: If you'd like to leave, hon. members, you have 15 seconds to do so.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Killarney 1 Affordable Housing Project in Calgary

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A few weeks ago a construction manager walked into my office because he felt compelled to come see me, his representative in this Assembly, and say thank you to our government for investing in Alberta's people and communities.

A few short years ago he had a lull in business and had not been paid for work completed. He was like so many contractors at the start of the 2015 recession, down and out. But that changed when his company won a bid on a maintenance project funded by this government that is refurbishing a 17-unit affordable housing project in Calgary-Currie. Over the past year he has hired 12 local workers to renovate and upgrade what is known as Killarney 1.

Three Fridays ago I visited Killarney 1 and heard many hopeful stories. One man used to walk by with his grocery cart collecting bottles until the crew asked him if he was looking for work. He was, Mr. Speaker, and he has since become a member of this hard-working team and has found housing and belonging. Another person was hired for this team just as his landlord was about to evict him, and yet another young man was hired whose struggles with mental health had forced him to quit university. He now owns his own apartment and has a good income.

The bonds forged between these workers and the residents of Killarney 1 were heartwarming. The construction crew not only chats with the residents, but they also have lunch together on the back patio when it is appropriately sunny. The construction manager told me that this has been his favourite project because it allowed him to provide good jobs for people who are too often forgotten.

For me, Mr. Speaker, it was an amazing example of how government decisions to invest in affordable housing, invest in job

creation and people make lives better, and we also know that the opposite is true. The opposition's desire to cut infrastructure spending would slow down business and prevent hiring, making lives worse for average Albertans.

I am so proud of our government, Mr. Speaker, and I will continue to work hard to ensure that more stories like this one are possible for more people across this province.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills

Seniors' Mobile Blood Collection Service in St. Paul

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to speak to the obvious lack of respect shown by the NDP government to the seniors of our province. We've all heard how the Premier's office responded to the Sundre West Country Centre when they were threatened with closure due to the effects of the carbon tax. They were told: just hold a fundraiser. Otherwise, they would have had to increase fees of fixed-income seniors just to cover the costs of the carbon tax.

More recently I received a copy of correspondence from the east area laboratory manager for Alberta Health Services to the Sunnyside lodge residents in St. Paul regarding a change to mobile collection requisition dated May 8. Previously a lab tech from the nearby St. Therese health centre would come by once per week for scheduled blood work. Often as many as 20 residents would be lined up, and with help from the staff, this convenient, senior-friendly service was expedited.

But no more. Suggestions were made by this manager of numerous options for seniors to find adequate transportation for a small fee, and I'll quote from her letter. "If finding adequate transportation is an issue there are many options within St. Paul such as the Action Bus that is ran through the Town of St. Paul for a small fee, utilizing cabs and family members." So residents can bundle up and go sit in the emergency ward at the hospital, exposing themselves to the virus of the day. Oddly enough, this service is still available to patients in extended care in the facility next door, literally just metres away.

I wonder how many levels of management at AHS and how many meetings of the minds it took to come up with this cost-saving measure. I wonder if any thought was given at any time to eliminate a management position rather than cut this service to seniors, or is it just easier to hit the most vulnerable who don't have a voice?

Thank you.

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the minister of environment, who is not able to be here but who referenced this particular article by a gentleman named Dave Klepacki when she was speaking last Thursday, that Kenney Doesn't Get to Label Me a 'Special Interest,' I have the requisite five copies.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In my member's statement I referenced a letter from Megan Boire, the east Alberta lab manager for Alberta Health Services, to the residents of the Sunnyside lodge, saying that their on-site blood collection will be cancelled.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the hon. Ms Phillips, Minister of Environment and Parks and minister responsible for the climate change office, pursuant to the Alberta Land Stewardship Act proposed amendments to the South Saskatchewan regional plan.

2:50

Orders of the Day

Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

Bill 204

Land Statutes (Abolition of Adverse Possession) Amendment Act, 2018

[Debate adjourned May 7: Dr. Turner speaking]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton Whitemud.

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying when this matter was last debated, the government takes this matter very seriously and has asked for expert analysis from the Law Reform Institute. That work has begun. I'm of the view that proceeding with this bill at this time rather than waiting for advice from the experts on a very complex bill would be premature. For that reason, I will be moving a reasoned amendment. It reads . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, let's just give an opportunity for the pages to pass the document around, and then we'll proceed.

Hon. member, proceed with the amendment.

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. MLA Turner to move that the motion for second reading of Bill 204, Land Statutes (Abolition of Adverse Possession) Amendment Act, 2018, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 204, Land Statutes (Abolition of Adverse Possession) Amendment Act, 2018, be not now read a second time because a review of adverse possession is currently underway by the Alberta Law Reform Institute, and any recommendations and advice coming from that review must be taken into account prior to the government developing legislation and policies to give effect to the abolition of adverse possession.

Members, I agree with the principle and motive behind this bill, but I believe that we have to get it right. Adverse possession is a complex matter that impacts not only the legislation included within Bill 204 but also potentially other provincial statutes. That is why the Alberta Law Reform Institute has been asked to review the matter. I understand that the review is under way and that stakeholder consultations will form part of that review. I believe it's appropriate that further action on this issue should await the receipt of this report.

For that reason, I urge all members to support my amendment.

The Speaker: Hon. members, the amendment will be identified as RA1.

The Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing me today. It's funny how much of a pattern you've seen in this Assembly over the last three years. It would be very funny if it wasn't for the fact that it has such serious consequences for people each and every time that the government continues their pattern when it comes to this.

So here we go. We have another amendment, another referral amendment from the government, sending a bill to committee. [interjections] Oh, sorry. A reasoned amendment. Thank you. I was coming back from talking with the Government House Leader. A reasoned amendment. My point would still stand. Sorry; I thought it was a referral.

We have a history of this government when they recognize that politically they can't vote against something but because of their ideology or because of the circumstances that they have they are incapable of or unwilling to support an opposition private member when it comes to a piece of legislation, where this government has repeatedly done this in this House. I mean, the earliest recollection I have is when they did it to the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler on an important piece of legislation in regard to holding politicians accountable in our democracy.

What happens then is that the government over there looks and says: "Whoops. We can't vote no for this because our constituents will not accept that, so we'll do a procedural amendment. We'll send it off to a committee to die, and then we'll walk around and tell our constituents that this will actually, truly be debated." In that case, that's where it would go, and then it never happens again. Repeatedly now. This is even more appalling when it comes to Bill 204 because this has been through committee after committee after committee in which the result has been to say: vote for this.

Now, the constituents that I have that are being impacted by this, that are actually losing property or those types of things, they aren't going to accept that as an answer. I mean, the government, Mr. Speaker, should stand up and acknowledge that they don't want to vote for this because they disagree with it. That's fine. But to then just try to run and hide and kill the hon. member's bill without admitting why or even discussing why they want to do it is appalling. It's appalling.

Ms Hoffman: Why do you want to run and hide?

Mr. Nixon: I don't want to run and hide from this at all.

This is an important issue. We have had several constituents who have come and talked to me about this. Early in my elected life this was one of the first issues that came to my office. I do understand that in urban Alberta they may not hear it as much, though the examples used by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek are from urban Alberta.

You have a government who over and over and over brings forward legislation in this Assembly that they're not ready to legislate on, and when it's pointed out that they're not ready and the opposition says, "Hey, get this to committee and get this fixed," the government won't do it. They'll jam it through, come back in another session, and try to fix it. But then in the case of private member's business that is reasonable, that Albertans want – this government realizes that, and they won't vote and support it – they do the same thing, they bring forward a procedural amendment each and every time.

It's shameful, Mr. Speaker. It's ridiculous that this government keeps doing it, and it's time to call a spade a spade.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we're dealing with amendment RA1. Hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, to the amendment?

Mr. Gottfried: Yes.

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

Mr. Gottfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, it's a bit

disconcerting. I have to say to you that we actually as a caucus joked about whether we should maybe do our own referral to committee on this because it's been a ping-pong ball back and forth between this committee and the Ministry of Justice and various other organizations.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation has been addressed since 2003 by the ALRI. It was addressed in a bill, brought forward by Ken Allred, that was unanimously passed at second reading in 2012. It was discussed and the adverse possession component of it was supported in many ways by members of this government when Bill 204 came up most recently.

But I wanted to look through a little bit of chronology on this, Mr. Speaker. I'm referring to the body of recommendations, most specifically from the Alberta Property Rights Advocate and the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship, which is of course dominated by members of the government side, in support of the abolition of adverse possession that started in 2014. The Alberta Property Rights Advocate annual report recommendation 2014.03, submitted on June 22, 2015, is "that the law of adverse possession be abolished in Alberta."

In March of 2016, when that report was addressed by the Committee on Resource Stewardship, it was determined that this recommendation should be reviewed and addressed by the Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General based on these considerations. "The Committee recommends that the Legislature not act on recommendation 2014.03 at this time but instead refer the recommendation to the Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General for review."

Mr. Speaker, from a minority report at that time expressed from that committee:

Despite it being clearly within the committee's mandate to recommend that the Legislature act to reassure Alberta landowners they are not vulnerable to this archaic law, the majority chose to abdicate its deliberative function and pass the matter on to the Minister of Justice to review at her leisure with no expression of support for the change.

At a subsequent meeting of the committee it was noted that Standing Order 52.09(1) requires the government to respond to a report of a Legislative Policy Committee, with certain exceptions, within 150 days from the date on which the committee reports to the Assembly. It is unclear whether the standing order was met at the appropriate time by the Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General, but from what I've been able to determine from the committee reports, that was not met.

Mr. Speaker, fast-forward to July of 2016 and the Property Rights Advocate 2015 annual report, recommendation 2015.02.

It is recommended Alberta Justice and Solicitor General be asked . . .

And this is because of inaction.

. . . as the ministry administering the Property Rights Advocate Act, to develop a process to ensure recommendations made by the Property Rights Advocate Office are followed up on after they are endorsed by a Standing Committee of the Legislature, or where the Committee requests additional action, which they did.

When the Committee endorses, or rejects a recommendation, it may be desirable to have a mechanism that demonstrates what follow up was taken.

Without a clearly-defined process . . .

This is from the Property Rights Advocate.

. . . for follow up, the work of the Property Rights Advocate Office, the Committee and others [who work on it] may not bear fruit.

I don't think there's any fruit coming from this committee and from the Ministry of Justice at this time, and now we are trying to grow a new tree to try and bear the same fruit.

3:00

Further, in the 2016 Property Rights Advocate office annual report:

In addition, both recommendations contained in the 2015 Property Rights Advocate Annual Report were unanimously endorsed by the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship. Once these recommendations are fully implemented, the likelihood for government to identify and act upon ways to improve fairness and equity among property rights should be enhanced.

In addition, implementation should increase transparency and accountability to Albertans by their government regarding property rights.

Property rights: that's what we're talking about here, Mr. Speaker.

During its meeting on February 21, 2017, the Committee made a [further] recommendation with respect to the common-law doctrine of adverse possession in Alberta. While considering the issue, the Committee acknowledged that the law of adverse possession is archaic and has been abolished in other provincial jurisdictions except in Nova Scotia, which is currently in the process of abolishing this doctrine. The Committee therefore determined that adverse possession should be abolished in Alberta.

And we want to bounce it back to that same committee, Mr. Speaker?

Based on these considerations the Committee recommends that the government introduce legislation abolishing the common-law doctrine of adverse possession in Alberta and all statutory references supporting adverse possession in Alberta.

That sounds pretty clear to me.

July 21, 2017, would have marked 150 days from the date of that motion and that recommendation from the committee, and to date, we do not see evidence of a response to the committee nor any action to abolish adverse possession, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, subsequently I had the chance to meet with the ALRI, and they told me that they have not gotten to this yet, that it has been pushed to them by the ministry, and that it is in the queue, which means that they may or may not be able to get to it. Once they do get to it, it will take between 12 and 18 months. So we don't have a timeline of when they're going to address it, and we're told that it's going to take 12 to 18 months.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Madam Speaker, I had a constituent recently, who was in this House just last week, who lost almost 1,000 square feet of his property, valued in the tens of thousands of dollars, because of a fence misplaced for just over the 10-year limit; 11 years, I think, 11 and a half years. When he decided and went to his neighbour and said, "Neighbour, you know, why don't we put in a new fence? It's time. The fence is getting a bit run down. It's time to put in a new fence, and then we can kind of get this thing settled once and for all," well, guess what? The next thing he got was papers served to him for adverse possession because that land was going to be seized by his neighbour with no compensation. This is within today's law.

So there's a time to get rid of bad laws. We have section 69 of the Law of Property Act, which will protect people where something has been done inadvertently, where a house or something or a garage is in the wrong place. There are settlements, and there are ways for that to be done with compensation, Madam Speaker, not a legal seizure of land. A legal seizure of land. Can you believe it? When I talk to my constituents about it, they go:

“No, no, no. You have to be kidding. Squatters’ rights: I thought that was some sort of thing of the past that we talk about in sort of archaic terms.” Outdated and archaic terms, to use some of the terminology of the very committee that we’re trying to send this back to.

Madam Speaker, this is ridiculous, for us to send this back to a committee that’s treated this like a ping-pong ball. We’ve had to force some decisions on that committee, and they finally passed unanimously – unanimously – to recommend to this government that they abolish adverse possession, and now that ping-pong ball came back into this Legislature.

We gave you the opportunity here today. We’re giving you the opportunity to do what’s right for your constituents, your constituent that might lose their property with a legal – not illegal; legal – seizure of land with no compensation because a fence was in the wrong place for 10 years and a day. Does sound right to you? Now look me in the eye, and tell me that. Madam Speaker, have them look me in the eye. Have them go to their constituents and tell them: “Oh, by the way, it’s okay. I’m okay if we have this battle on the books for another 18 to 24 months” – or maybe it never gets addressed by this government – “that you can have your land seized.” They’ll look at you, and they’ll laugh and say: “You’re kidding me. That can’t be a law today.”

This is a chance to get rid of a bad law, Madam Speaker. You know what? There might be some other changes that we make to this law in the future, as we see, but there is section 69 to make sure that there is a way to adjust unintended buildings, unintended improvements, unintended location of buildings. There is a law in place to be able to adjust that.

This reasoned amendment, Madam Speaker, is not something that we should consider at this time. This reasoned amendment is a bit of a joke to me. In fact, we joked about it earlier today, that maybe we should do that, just to sort of say: wouldn’t this be crazy if this reasoned amendment were to pass, if this motion were to pass. And we said: no, that’s crazy; why would we want to do that, send it back to the very same committee? What for?

Dr. Turner: It’s not going to a committee.

Mr. Gotfried: Sorry. It’s a reasoned amendment. It’s being hoisted here.

You know what? The bottom line is that we’ve talked about this piece of legislation enough. We’ve promised Albertans. We’ve had the Property Rights Advocate tell us time after time after time. That’s the Property Rights Advocate, a specialist in property rights, Madam Speaker. A specialist in property rights has told this Legislature and that committee that they wanted to – and that committee agreed with that, and they said that they were going to do that. They recommended that it be done.

Is this because the government is embarrassed in not meeting that 150-day rule once, that 150-day guideline twice? Now we’re going into triple jeopardy on this, and we’re going to push it down the road at least another 12 to 18 months. And the ALRI: I’d love to hear if the ALRI has actually given us a date they’re going to start this. They only have five people there – five people – and they have other legislation they’re dealing with.

You are doing this reasoned amendment, are saying to Albertans that the seizure, illegal seizure of their land, the absolute disregard for their property rights, the disregard for our Torrens system, which – by the way, Madam Speaker, the Torrens system: actually, we guarantee. And I’ll use the term here, “we guarantee.” This reasoned amendment does not deserve . . .

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the reasoned amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow first.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Often when something comes before the House, in particular under private members’ business – but it happens on other topics as well – the government will do something that seems to be a little counterintuitive or, perhaps, even very intuitive. There’s a very clear, often transparent political motive behind what the government may want to do because perhaps they just don’t want to be caught out with the opposition having passed a particular bill or motion. Perhaps they don’t want to be seen to vote against something that really is in the best interests of Albertans or just sort of fits good, common sense, but for political reasons they don’t want to give the opposition a win.

But what I really have a hard time getting my head around on this topic is: what is the motivation of the government for not supporting the end of adverse possession? I can’t actually understand why we’re in this place. The only thing I can think about is that they somehow don’t want the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek to get the credit for doing something that is so far overdue that Alberta is now the last province not only in the land but one of the last places in the entire Commonwealth to have this system in place. That’s all I can think about. If that is, in fact, the rationale from government, it’s about as petty as you could possibly get, and it’s profoundly disappointing if that is, in fact, the reason. Perhaps there’s some other reason, but I haven’t heard through the course of debate any logical, rational reason why this should not go ahead.

I’ve heard from the government: “Good idea. We think this is, you know, long overdue. It’s about time, and, yup, we’re looking at it.” Well, guess what? The Resource Stewardship Committee did look at it. I happened to be part of that. I happened to be part of the committee when it wrote its report, released in March 2017, which recommended that

the law of adverse possession is archaic and has been abolished in other provincial jurisdictions except Nova Scotia, which is currently in the process of abolishing this doctrine . . . the Committee [recommended] that the government introduce legislation abolishing the common-law doctrine of adverse possession in Alberta and all statutory references supporting adverse possession in Alberta legislation.

[The Speaker in the chair]

It’s about as clear as you get, Mr. Speaker. That is a standing committee of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, dominated by government members, that passed that recommendation, if I recall, unanimously. It’s the right recommendation.

The only reason, I can think, that this is not being supported by government is because somehow they want the credit for doing it themselves, I guess. I don’t know. It’s certainly not on the legislative agenda for this spring. The clock is ticking. Frankly, because this bill, as a private member’s bill, is on the Order Paper for this session of the Assembly, my understanding procedurally is that the government couldn’t even bring it forward in the fall, so we’re basically out of time if we want to deal with this under this Legislature unless we’re going to go into next spring and go deep into next spring without an election. This is your chance.

3:10

So what do they do? They send it to the Alberta Law Reform Institute, which, by the way, has addressed this question three times already. What information do you think you’re going to get from the Alberta Law Reform Institute that you don’t already have?

Nova Scotia is abolishing this. The United Kingdom: interestingly, my wife is British, and you hear these stories, in

London in particular, of squatters' rights. Someone comes in, lives in a building for a particular time, and claims it. It actually happened to friends of ours. They ended up walking into their brand new apartment in London – they just got posted there – and there's a notice on their door from the squatters who have taken over the building. They're a little shocked because they're Canadian, and they want to be polite and nice about things. But these people are in their house, so what do you do? They called the police. There was a process. It took a bit of time. It wasn't straightforward. There are still people operating and labouring under the misapprehension in the U.K. that there is such a thing, but it's been abolished since 2002. Even the root parliament, the root set of laws – the common-law principle, where this comes from many, many, many hundreds of years ago, has been abolished basically everywhere but here.

This is our chance to do it. It makes absolutely no sense. I honestly can't actually see – even from a political perspective, if I was just to flip it around and think about why the government might strategically want to kind of get one over on the opposition or not be seen to be outfoxed, I can't actually even understand what logical purpose it serves for the government to bring forward this amendment, to not simply stand up and say, "Hon. member, good bill; we like it," perhaps work with the member if there are certain amendments that you'd like to see, work with Parliamentary Counsel to make sure we get it right because, of course, this is complex legal territory. That would have been the right approach. I'm sure that if it's a question of timing, I think we could have moved it through the Assembly very quickly. We could have paused it as needed to make sure we get the technical aspects of this correct.

What I see from the member here is not some political trick to try to corner the government. I see an opportunity and an attempt to actually legitimately make change that is in accordance with the finding of a standing committee of the Legislative Assembly, of which there were all parties present. We spent an awfully long time on that particular topic and came up with some very good recommendations.

Mr. Speaker, it makes no sense to me, why this government seeks to not now read this bill a second time. It makes absolutely no sense why we're not simply abolishing the law of adverse possession. It causes real harm to the people of Alberta, and I really am absolutely baffled why this government is allowing that situation to persist.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a fine day in Alberta. It's quite interesting to be talking about the Alberta land statutes act when many Albertans are actually out on the land. An old rural, farmer adage: they talk about being out standing in their fields.

I'd like to share some thoughts, too, on this amendment coming forward from a backbench NDP MLA. It's kind of interesting that we would be talking about this because this has been referred to many times in the Legislature. If I could, Mr. Speaker, just to be perfectly clear: MLA Turner moves that the motion for second reading of Bill 204, Land Statutes (Abolition of Adverse Possession) Amendment Act, 2018, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and submitting the following:

Bill 204, Land Statutes (Abolition of Adverse Possession) Amendment Act, 2018, be not now read a second time because a review of adverse possession is currently underway by the Alberta Law Reform Institute . . .

That's an important organization.

Any recommendations and advice coming from that review must be taken into account prior to the government developing

legislation and policy to give effect to the abolition of adverse possession.

Well, Mr. Speaker, if we don't make and change policies in this Chamber independently or at some point take our own initiative, I don't know when we would. It's time that there be some responsibility taken in this Chamber going forward. I can see that I'm enthralling the members in the backbench on the other side over there like another member from Calgary there, who takes great umbrage in the importance of the discussion here. It's important that we learn and understand, you know, about adverse possession. This is truly about the actual dirt when we talk about property rights.

It's important because in my career of travelling about the prairie provinces, I've seen false and incorrect survey installations go on across the prairies. Because of the way the survey is imparted upon the globe, there are various areas of the province that have what they call correction lines, where the survey is corrected. As a result of that and prior to the development of the modern GPS technology, there are many places where sometimes a survey is not necessarily accurate. Even in the situations that I have in our farming operation, when land surveyors come out to survey for oil field lease site development, sometimes they'll find where the stake that was driven by the surveyors of the 1880s isn't necessarily completely accurate based off the information that they have from their GPS survey.

Mr. Speaker, what I'm talking about is a legal process, in this case, where a person who is not a registered owner of land can acquire legal ownership of that parcel of land from the actual existing registered owner if the new person claiming ownership can prove continuous, open, and exclusive possession or occupation of the owner's land for a period of 10 years. If the new person trying to acquire legal ownership can satisfy a Court of Queen's Bench justice that the defined conditions have been met, then the court can issue a judgment that would allow a new certificate of title to be issued in the name of the new owner. The former owner would not be entitled to receive any compensation for the land that was lost to the new legal owner based off the court action.

Mr. Speaker, as I've said, from my flying career, you know, at elevation above the ground of anywhere from 10,000 to 5,000 feet, sometimes these lands are easily discernible, and it's easy to see and to understand why there may have been misunderstandings. But the implications of this act are absolutely basically very simple.

If I could just go on with some more background, in 2014 the Property Rights Advocate recommended that adverse possession be abolished. Mr. Speaker, the Property Rights Advocate is an entity coming forth from government, and they receive and field lots of questions, lots of comments and regularly meet with all sorts of landowners. That's their job, to talk about property rights, not necessarily always about the physical attributes but sometimes the nonphysical attributes of property rights. They made this recommendation because, in their view, abolishing adverse possession would strengthen the integrity of the land registry system and the reliability of the land title records based off our Torrens system of land ownership. This 2014 report suggested reintroducing and passing the legislation.

3:20

Mr. Speaker, I was fortunate enough in 2003 and 2004 to travel to Brazil, and in that jurisdiction they don't use the Torrens land system. When you go and purchase land from an existing neighbour, they go to all the boundary neighbours of the land that you're talking about purchasing and get signed documents based off the opinions of the neighbouring landowner. From that, now they go out and put GPS co-ordinates based off where the boundaries are that are agreed upon by the neighbours of the land that's about to be transferred.

Mr. Speaker, this predecision, this preacknowledgement of what they perceive the boundaries to be based now on modern GPS locations is a predecessor to preventing any miscommunication of where the actual legal boundary lines are. In the Torrens system this land boundary system was perceived to be created in the 1880s.

In February 2016, Mr. Speaker, the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship reviewed the '14 report from the outgoing Property Rights Advocate, Mr. Lee Cutforth. The legacy Wildrose Party and PC members urged the government to support them in recommending to the Assembly that adverse possession be abolished. Instead, the NDP used their majority to refer the matter to the Department of Justice. We are not aware of this review ever being initiated by the Department of Justice. So I ask again: when is this Chamber going to take some intestinal fortitude, I would call it, and move forward with legislation?

In February 2017 the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship again revisited recommendations from the Property Rights Advocate. At this time the committee was also urged by legacy Wildrose and Progressive Conservative members to recommend that the government should abolish adverse possession. Again, while considering the issue, the committee acknowledged, Mr. Speaker, that

the law of adverse possession is archaic and has been abolished in other provincial jurisdictions except in Nova Scotia, which is currently in the process of abolishing this doctrine. The Committee therefore determined that adverse possession should be abolished in Alberta.

A committee of our own Legislature, Mr. Speaker.

Based on these considerations the Committee recommends that the government introduce legislation abolishing the common-law doctrine of adverse possession in Alberta and all statutory references supporting adverse possession in Alberta legislation.

The motion was unanimously passed in a committee of this Legislature, Mr. Speaker. The committee recommended that the government introduce legislation abolishing the common-law doctrine of adverse possession and all statutory references supporting it.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, the NDP MLA for West Yellowhead published a column attacking UCP members of the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship for voting against a motion he had put forward relating to the Alberta Property Rights Advocate, but, as usual, sometimes the government isn't giving the full story. The motion introduced by the member and pushed through by the committee's NDP majority proposed to have an internal government committee assess options to bring fairness and equity to the property rights dispute settlement process. On the surface this may look reasonable, but a closer look reveals several fundamental problems. This side took issue with the idea that these discussions should be internal to government and take place behind closed doors with minimal or any input from the public.

Mr. Speaker, this government has an established track record of failing to adequately consult with Albertans before implementing policies that directly affect them. Albertans are growing tired of being told . . . [Mr. Strankman's speaking time expired]

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Yao: Why, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today to speak on Bill 204, Land Statutes (Abolition of Adverse Possession) Amendment Act, 2018. I was surprised to learn that in 2018 our laws still state that someone can take over ownership of someone else's land simply by having squatted on that land for 10 years. You never think that when you have a large piece of land

passed down from generation to generation, a family legacy, someone would one day claim ownership to that land because a fence was in the wrong place. That just doesn't seem right.

I commend my colleague for bringing forward this bill that prevents individuals from losing land they have the rightful claim to. It is an archaic law. We need to protect the rights of property owners in Alberta. Most other provinces have made this change already as it is sensible, and it alleviates unnecessary concerns for property owners. For example, Mr. Speaker, did you know that the owner of a large farm under the current legislation would need to inspect the bounds of his property frequently to ensure that no one else lays a claim on that land? This could pose challenges when it comes to examining every inch of fence that was built to make certain that he does not risk forfeiting any of his rightful property.

It is evident how adverse possession, more commonly known as squatters' rights, is problematic in a rural setting, but it is equally troublesome in an urban city. It is all too frequent that we must rebuild our fences every few years, whether due to erosion, rotting wood, rust, or even a bad storm that knocks over a tree. Either way fences need to come down, but then the new problem arises. When working with your neighbour to put up a new fence, if you deviate from the census line by even a few inches, that property transfers ownership after 10 years and one day.

Mr. Speaker, I know that across the way we have a subject matter expert in this field. He sold real estate, and I hope the Member for Edmonton-McClung can speak to this because, certainly, these are very real issues that are happening here in Edmonton.

I might say that about six years ago I bought a house here in Edmonton, Mr. Speaker, to renovate and stuff. You know what? When I was getting it surveyed, they told me that the fence lines were completely off. They said that this is epidemic throughout the entire city of Edmonton. You see, sir, they didn't have the same technologies that we do today. You know, they used a little bit more in the way of old-school measuring back even 50 years ago, 40 years ago. As a result, there are a lot of properties even within Edmonton that do not have the proper property lines on them. And it was substantial, sir. The neighbours actually had a few feet either way from the property that I had purchased. Everyone was good and understanding with: should we decide to move the fence? But I don't think people are aware that they could basically take that land and just make it theirs. Fortunately, most people, I like to think, do have some sort of morals about them that are of the better qualities.

I think we do owe property owners who have invested their hard-earned money into this province the peace of mind that they will not lose their land without fair compensation. We do not simply play finders keepers with privately owned land. It seems completely counterintuitive that we can allow ownership to change hands, for property that was legally purchased, to someone that has squatted on the land for a basic, certain amount of time as this flies in the face of basic property rights and the law itself. To follow the law to the letter, have legal claim to land, and then through a loophole lose possession of that land sends a message that the legal system and the government will not protect your rights.

Mr. Speaker, seeing this bill brought forth by my colleague, I'm very optimistic. I hope that this time around we will see real change. Back in 2012 former member Ken Allred's private member's bill sought to abolish adverse possession. Unfortunately, although the bill passed second reading, the bill died on the Order Paper as Mr. Allred did not seek re-election.

In 2014 the Property Rights Advocate recommended the abolishment of adverse possession. This recommendation was

made because, in their view, abolishing adverse possession would strengthen the integrity of the land registry system and the reliability of the land title record. The 2014 Alberta Property Rights Advocate annual report recommendation 2014.03 was submitted on June 22, 2015. Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, the report suggested reintroducing and passing Mr. Allred's proposed legislation.

In February of 2016 the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship reviewed the 2014 reports from Lee Cutforth, the outgoing Property Rights Advocate. The legacy Wildrose Party and PC members urged government support in recommending to the Assembly that adverse possession be abolished. Instead, as we're quite used to in this place, this government used their majority to refer the matter to the Department of Justice, and we are still not aware of a review even being initiated on this matter by the Department of Justice.

3:30

The minority report expressed:

Despite it being clearly within the committee's mandate to recommend that the Legislature act to reassure Alberta landowners they are not vulnerable to this archaic law, the majority chose to abdicate its deliberative function and pass the matter on to the Minister of Justice to review at her leisure with no expression of support for the change.

That is shameful, Mr. Speaker, that we still have not heard a word on this important matter being reviewed, supposedly, by the minister.

It is noted that at a subsequent meeting of the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship it was reaffirmed that under Standing Order 52.09(1) the government is required to respond to a report of the legislative policy committee, with certain exceptions, within 150 days from the date on which the committee reports to the Assembly. Yet it is still unclear if the standing order was met within the appropriate time by the Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General.

In February 2017 the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship once again revisited the idea of abolition of adverse possession from the recommendations of the Property Rights Advocate. From both the Wildrose and PC sides members unanimously agreed and passed a motion that would recommend that the government introduce legislation abolishing the common-law doctrine of adverse possession. However, as the government has been aware of this issue since taking office, we continue encouraging action from this government much to our frustration. Even their own members tried to stir some action on this file over a year ago to seemingly no end. As such, it is now time that we do take action and abolish adverse possession.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this notice of amendment to basically scrap this proposal by the good Member for Calgary-Fish Creek is disappointing. You know, I expect more out of the good doctor from across the way. I have no doubt that a gun was held to his head and that he had to put this one out there, but it is disappointing. I guess the point is that we do have the opportunity to fix this law and to correct it.

Don't get me wrong, Mr. Speaker. I know there are people on the government side that totally plan on squatting somewhere, taking over some land one day. That's the NDP way, right?

Mr. Gotfried: Squatters' rights.

Mr. Yao: Ah, yes. Squatters' rights.

I guess that in the end we do have to be careful because we have legislation. We have rules that govern property and land, and it is a huge part of our economy. We cannot undermine an aspect of our economy with something like squatters' rights. It will either

encourage or discourage confidence in our system, depending on the rules that get passed through this House.

I would implore all members on both sides of this House to truly approve this Bill 204.

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

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll be brief. The statements have been made pretty cogently, in my view.

I've been dealing with this issue for at least five years, and it was going on before I arrived or paid attention to the issue. Bill 204, the Land Statutes (Abolition of Adverse Possession) Amendment Act, 2018, proposed the repeal of section 74 in the Land Titles Act, which allowed an individual to obtain title and ownership through adverse possession, often referred to as squatters' rights. That's been back and forth between here and committee. We've had input from many organizations across the province, including the municipalities, law institutes, legal counsel, the committee itself. Those who have been adversely affected already in the province have addressed the issue.

It may be a reasoned amendment, but it doesn't seem like a reasonable one to many of us. I mean, this is such a basic concept that most of the western world has shifted away from it. Our own review of it called for this change, so let's get on with it.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Standing Order 8(7)(a)(i) provides up to five minutes for the sponsor of a private member's public bill to close debate. The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. "Be not read right now." Well, it is time for us right now to all do the right thing for everyday, hard-working Albertans, many of whom are lucky enough to have those mortgage-paying jobs we all seem to talk about in this House.

Mr. Speaker, we heard from the Member for Calgary-Currie that he hadn't yet heard from any of his constituents on this issue and that it needed more study to avoid unintended consequences, but today this law has specific, intended consequences, namely the potential, each and every day, of legal seizure of your constituents' land or a portion thereof without compensation. I ask that member: do you truly think we need to send this back to the ALRI after years of expert legislative recommendations, including a unanimous recommendation from a committee chaired by one of your hon. members, on which you personally sit, which said that "the law of adverse possession is archaic" and then unanimously recommended that the government introduce legislation abolishing the common-law doctrine of adverse possession? Do you want to vote against that, members? Do you want to vote to send it somewhere where it doesn't need to be sent and not get it done today? When will this government do so after having similar recommendations in their hands since the spring of 2016? Now is the time.

The Member for Edmonton-McClung waxed prophetically about indefeasibility, yet the very application of adverse possession, in fact, makes a mockery of that concept. Property rights and government-administered title registration, indeed. I note that on Service Alberta's own website it clearly states that "the Government guarantees the accuracy of the title." So why would members opposite not respect their own government's guarantee to Albertans? Is your word and your guarantee of such little consequence? Now is the time, Mr. Speaker, to live up to that guarantee.

The now Minister of Transportation has said in previous debate in this House, "I find it ironic in a way that it's the New Democrat opposition that is standing up and has stood up from the beginning for the rights of property owners in this province." Mr. Speaker,

voting down this bill will be a clear sign to Albertans that the members opposite do not in fact stand up for the property rights of all Albertans. Irrespective of their political affiliation we have a duty to Albertans. Shameful, empty rhetoric. Let's put this quite simply.

I have a classic example. This is not a partisan issue. I have a constituent who you've met in this House. He was a guest in this House just last week who lost a portion of his land, a classic and recent example of bad law in action in my own constituency, the recent case of Moore versus McIndoe. A suburban lot, a misplaced fence, 11-plus years of dutifully paying taxes, and then out of the blue a legal claim of adverse possession resulting in the loss of close to a thousand square feet of his lot, tens of thousands of dollars in lost value on land that may still hold a mortgage, Mr. Speaker. Tens of thousands spent to fight it on principle, and land seized legally by a possessing neighbour because of this bad law.

Mr. Speaker, possession is 10-tenths of the law in this province right now, and squatters' rights rule the day after 10 years and a day. Adverse possession is a time bomb of legal seizure of land for all Albertans. This is a quote from Mr. McIndoe, my resident, my constituent, who motivated me to bring this private member's bill. This is not a partisan issue. This is for everyone in this House. He brought that forward to me, and that is his quote: this is a time bomb for every Albertan who has lived in their house 10 years plus a day and may have a fence in the wrong location. Property rights injustice, indeed. Let this be a reminder that your constituent might be the next to be surprised by such a punitive, unfair, legal seizure of their land.

If you want that to be a possibility, vote yes to this amendment and you will be doing a disservice to your constituents. If you believe in doing the right, nonpartisan, constituent focusing and protecting the legal, registered, government-guaranteed property rights of all Albertans, vote no for this amendment and abolish adverse possession now here today. Prove that you truly stand up for what is right and the expectations of property rights and ownership protection shared by virtually every Albertan against this outdated, archaic law. Mr. Speaker, let's live up to our responsibility to Albertans, accept overwhelming expert legislative opinion, and get this done once and for all for hard-working Albertans. Let's not make this, my private member's bill, solely motivated by one of my constituents, Mr. Jim McIndoe, who has given his personal phone number to several members on the opposite side to share his story with them. Nobody has taken him up on that opportunity.

3:40

Mr. Speaker, the same Albertans that this government purports to be making life better for and who've worked and struggled so that they personally and their families may have a humble place that they believe they rightly own to call home: let's make sure that that home remains theirs and is not seized through the misapplication of a bad law. Vote no to this reasoned amendment, and vote yes to Bill 204.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment RA1 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:41 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hoffman	Nielsen
Carlier	Horne	Payne
Carson	Jabbour	Phillips
Ceci	Jansen	Piquette
Connolly	Kleinstauber	Renaud
Coolahan	Larivee	Rosendahl
Dach	Littlewood	Sabir
Dang	Loyola	Schmidt
Drever	Luff	Schreiner
Feehan	Malkinson	Shepherd
Fitzpatrick	Mason	Sucha
Ganley	McCuaig-Boyd	Sweet
Goehring	McLean	Turner
Gray	Miller	Woollard

Against the motion:

Clark	Gotfried	Smith
Cooper	Hanson	Strankman
Cyr	Loewen	Swann
Gill	Nixon	Yao
Totals:	For – 42	Against – 12

[Motion on amendment RA1 carried]

The Speaker: Hon. members, as you will no doubt know, with a reasoned amendment, debate on the bill will end, and the bill would disappear from the Order Paper.

4:00

Bill 205

Supporting Accessible Mental Health Services Act

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Ms Jabbour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to request unanimous consent of the House to defer second reading of Bill 205 until the first available Monday of the 2018 fall sitting.

[Motion on amendment to second reading of Bill 205 carried]

Bill 206

Societies (Preventing the Promotion of Hate) Amendment Act, 2018

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

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a great honour to move second reading of Bill 206, the Societies (Preventing the Promotion of Hate) Amendment Act, 2018.

Mr. Speaker, there has been a disturbing rise in organized hate groups around the world, and unfortunately this is also true right here in Alberta. Why do we know this? They've become emboldened; they've become visible. I'm not going to speculate on the reasons for this brazenness. I have my suspicions, but I'll leave that to the experts. The fact is that hate groups appear to feel that it's a good time to rise, that it's a good time to crawl from the dark corners of the Internet and publicly share their hate with other Albertans. Albertans should be concerned and appalled.

It is the brazenness of these groups in Alberta that was the impetus for me bringing Bill 206 forward. Seeing groups such as the Worldwide Coalition Against Islam openly promote their message on the steps of Calgary city hall did something to me. It made me concerned. More than concerned, Mr. Speaker, I was appalled and disgusted that the past 50 years of progress on inclusion was disappearing or, at the very least, that it was being

challenged. What I said to myself was that there must be something that can be done to, in some way, stifle the potential upswing of these hate groups trying to gain traction and influence a new generation to join these hate-filled organizations, which brought me to tabling Bill 206 in looking for some way to bring forward legislation to limit the ability of hate groups to grow.

I discovered that becoming a registered society in Alberta is a fairly simple process and, most alarmingly, that the Ku Klux Klan, the KKK, Mr. Speaker, was officially a society in Alberta until 2003. Much to my amazement, the postal code of the KKK that was attached to the application was actually in my riding of Calgary-Klein. Very concerning.

As such, the opportunity was presented. The ability of hate groups to be a legitimate society or organization in Alberta must be stopped, and this is what this bill will achieve. Mr. Speaker, Bill 206 amends the Societies Act by adding the term “lawful purpose” in section 1. That is the most important part of this legislation as it gives the registrar the ability to consider the purpose of an applicant to become a society from a perspective that considers that its intentions are for a lawful purpose. While this seems obvious, I have already noted that the KKK was a society until 2003, and without passing this legislation, there is nothing to stop this infamous hate group from reregistering as a society in Alberta. This legislation is not complicated. In fact, it’s common-sense legislation that blocks hate groups from becoming legitimized as a society in Alberta.

The second primary change in Bill 206 is that it puts the onus on the director of the society that the group applying for status has a lawful purpose and to ensure that this is not only valid at the time of application but that this declaration is carried out indefinitely.

Now, Mr. Speaker, a very important and positive consequence of the changes being proposed in Bill 206 is the fact that without being able to become a legitimate society, hate groups will not be able to accumulate wealth as a society. Societies are able to own and inherit property, and much like any other organization, it is money that enables a registered society to sustain itself and to grow. Isn’t it great that this legislation will stand in the way of both legitimizing and development of these hate groups? I think so.

British Columbia adopted this language in its Societies Act in 2015 and did so for the same reasons for which I bring this forward.

I spoke with the Alberta Muslim Public Affairs Council and the Calgary Jewish Federation, who endorsed this bill and applaud not only the symbolism of it but the practical step it takes to not permit hate groups to have official status. I also spoke with those who work to combat hate groups and have an intimate understanding of the inner workings of these groups, including retired RCMP officer Terry Wilson and Cam Stewart of the Alberta Human Rights Commission, who were also closely monitoring hate groups in Alberta. Mr. Wilson, who specialized in hate groups and is very familiar with the B.C. legislation, sees Bill 206 as a positive step forward in confronting hate groups. For Mr. Wilson, the biggest thing is the fact that this legislation limits the ability of these groups to accumulate wealth, and I couldn’t agree more.

I’ve had a lot of questions from media and other interested parties around how this legislation will be carried out; that is: are there currently organizations that promote hate who have society status in Alberta? Well, the answer to that is that we actually don’t know at this point, and there’s no intention to go through the 50,000 registered societies in Alberta to attempt to uncover groups whose sole purpose is hate. But Bill 206 will allow the registrar to use the criterion of lawful purpose when reviewing the yearly financials of current societies and to apply this to new applicants and those who may try to revive their society status such as the KKK.

Again, Mr. Speaker, without this legislation there is nothing to stop the KKK from renewing its status as a society in Alberta, and there’s nothing to stop the emboldened hate groups that we’ve seen come onto the scene recently. On the advice of Mr. Wilson and something that I understand was done in B.C. in concurrence with the legislation, Alberta’s registrars will be encouraged to have a relationship with the province’s hate-crime units to have an understanding of how hate groups are operating, under what names they’re operating, and to keep apprised of the trends in this area to allow them to carry out this legislation in the most effective way possible.

Mr. Speaker, I’m not going to dwell on the past and wonder why this simple piece of legislation wasn’t enacted years ago. In fact, it is my understanding that the Premier’s father and former leader of the Alberta New Democrats, Grant Notley, attempted to make similar changes to the Societies Act during his time in the Assembly here, and he also cited the fact that the KKK was granted society status. I’m not going to lament the past. I just want to move forward with this government’s goal to make life better for all Albertans and to continue to move forward towards a more inclusive, kinder society.

I do, however, Mr. Speaker, want to make a comment outside of this legislation, a comment that is nonetheless germane to the topic of hate and hate groups overall, and that is that we have individuals and groups right here in Alberta who may not be directly related to hate groups but do, however, foment hate in our society, like the opposition’s close friends and allies at the Rebel media. We need to stand up to these organizations and let them know that it’s not okay to stir the toxins in the well.

To recap, Mr. Speaker, there are really two main reasons for introducing this legislation. First, by not permitting hate groups to become societies, we as a government and as a greater society are not giving hate groups legitimacy, we will not acknowledge them as an entity under the law, and we are making a statement that their ideas are not welcome. Secondly, it puts the onus on directors of societies to ensure that a society does have a lawful purpose and that it remains that way. Without having society status, it will not allow hate groups to accumulate wealth, the wealth that allows them to thrive and grow.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I ask that everyone in this Assembly support this bill and, in doing so, help keep Alberta the inclusive society that we all want it to be now and into the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

4:10

Mr. Cooper: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 206, and I’d like to thank my colleague from Calgary-Klein for bringing this important piece of legislation forward. I think it is an issue that is of paramount importance here in our province, and that is to stop and speak against the promotion of hatred and any form of bigotry through any means and through any avenue. Any form of hatred, bigotry is completely and totally unacceptable.

Mr. Speaker, it is an important issue that we can all address together. We have an opportunity in this House to either address it together from both sides of the House or to divide the House as well. I think it’s important that we do all that we can to ensure that on such an important piece of legislation we don’t play politics but that we put the interests of Alberta ahead of any personal interests, and the interest of ensuring that hatred and bigotry are not accepted in our province of Alberta: I think it’s something that we need to do together.

Throughout history we have seen all sorts of devastation and destruction at the hands of hatred. Literally tens of thousands of people have lost their lives, there has been untold suffering, and entire generations have been wiped out under what is an absolutely disgusting practice, and that is the form of hate. There is no place in our society for this kind of behaviour, yet it's unfortunate that we see groups aimed directly at promoting hate against one particular group or another cropping up all across North America.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I have the absolute pleasure right now, myself and some of my colleagues, of reading a book called *Why Young Men*. It's written by a Canadian author. His name is Jamil Jivani. He speaks very specifically about the politics of division, about identity politics, about hatred, and about the radicalization of young men not just around the world but also right here in Canada. I think that we would all be well served to read such a book to have an understanding of what's happening in our society and what's happening to allow predominantly young men to find comfort and safe haven in digital and online communities and other spaces for these sorts of ideological positions and radicalization of individuals that suffer from a lack of community, that suffer from a lack of respect. Oftentimes they turn to communities where they feel those things that are unfortunately based in hate, that are based in a lack of respect for society and in bigotry.

I think that there is so much work that can be done, and while certainly this particular piece of legislation doesn't solve all of those problems, I think it does send an important signal about what we value here in our province of Alberta. As the member opposite stated, potentially societies that are based on hate or those directors who have committed hate crimes or hate speech would not be able to profit under the new legislation, and I think that we as a province would be well served.

We in Alberta are not immune to this sort of hatred. I think that, as the author that I previously mentioned has rightly pointed out, all across the country there are the sort of groups that promote this hatred, and we need to do what we can. I believe that that's what the intention of the Member for Calgary-Klein was. It was founded in that desire to do something against this terrible, terrible situation. We have seen and, as mentioned in a recent audit from B'nai Brith Canada, we found that anti-Semitic crimes are on the increase in Alberta, and that is disturbing.

Mr. Speaker, you'll know that the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed has spent significant periods of time in his career fighting against the forces of hatred right here in Canada as well as abroad. The Member for Calgary-Klein is absolutely right that we each have a personal responsibility to do everything we can to stomp out the flames of racism, bigotry, and hatred. That is exactly much of the work that the Leader of the Official Opposition has done over his time in public life. You'll know, Mr. Speaker, that as the minister of citizenship, immigration, and multiculturalism he defunded many of the so-called human rights organizations that were using public grant money to promote the type of hatred that the Member for Calgary-Klein is trying to prevent with respect to the Societies Act here in the province of Alberta. The Leader of the Official Opposition worked tirelessly to reach out to ethnically diverse communities in our province and across the country to help to promote a vision of unity, of understanding, and of respect and dignity, that is so important when it comes to preventing the radicalization and the promotion of hate inside our province.

You know, Mr. Speaker, we agree that any group that is found to be promoting genocide or inciting hate of any nature should certainly not be permitted to register as a society here in the province of Alberta. I think about the world that I would like my children to grow up in, a society that's based on kindness, that's based on equal opportunity for each individual, a society where the

likes of some of the radical folks that the member opposite has mentioned are not welcomed in any way, shape, or form, be it here in the present or in any form of digital or online community. As we saw just so recently on the streets of Toronto, in the absolute darkest places on the Internet individuals are celebrated for promoting such hate, and if those individuals are benefiting in any way, shape, or form from being a society here in the province of Alberta, we should not tolerate that any longer or in the future.

Mr. Speaker, the role of all of us here is to ensure that we have legislation that is absolutely the most sound. I have some small reservations about one particular section in the piece of legislation, and I hope that we can work collaboratively to ensure a piece of legislation that is the strongest, that is the absolute best piece of legislation for all of Albertans. I hope that we can have a number of questions answered around the practical application of section 3(1)(b), where the word used is "could." It certainly leaves something to interpretation, so I have some small reservations around that. That's not to say that we shouldn't support this piece of legislation. I look forward to voting in favour of Bill 206 at second reading as we proceed forward together.

My colleague from Bonnyville-Cold Lake will outline some of these concerns in greater detail, but I want to reiterate that I hope that we can work productively with the government side of the House and all members, and in particular the Member for Calgary-Klein, to address these concerns, to ensure that the legislation is as strong as possible and that as an Assembly as a whole, over the next year that we have left together, we can have frank and real conversations about how we address this issue of hatred on a wider scale. One thing that we always need to ask ourselves as legislators is: what problem are we trying to solve? It's an important question that we ask. While this piece of legislation solves one piece of this larger problem, it is certainly not the entire solution.

I think that as legislators and as Albertans we have a duty and a responsibility to speak up against hatred and bigotry and do all that we can to ensure that this sort of behaviour is not tolerated or respected or celebrated in Alberta in any way, shape, or form. I look forward to supporting the legislation. I look forward to working collaboratively to find solutions so that we can get the best piece of legislation past third reading as well.

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

4:20

Mr. Sucha: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, one thing that I always look forward to is a future in which, to be frank, we don't talk about a lot of social issues in this House, where hate groups are not part of the narrative, where we don't talk about the challenges we deal with, transphobia or homophobia. There are some days where I think we're very close, and then there are some days where we see things on social media or the Internet that seem like we're rolling back.

If I can extend a thank you to the Member for Calgary-Klein for bringing forth this bill. I know it's done sincerely. I know he's done a lot of work behind the scenes, that he doesn't do it to seek accolades but he does it because it's the right thing to do and it's something he's passionate about. So as I open up, I do want to say thank you. You know, I do look forward to the day where we really judge people on the merits of their character and the merits of the job that they do when they're seeking employment. While we're not there just yet, I would love to see the day in my lifetime where we do get to that.

When I door-knock in Calgary-Shaw, I hear from many of my constituents who express concerns about fringe groups who really try to leverage things like social media and the Internet to get out

and spread populist, extremist views, in many cases of a racist nature. We see many groups, as the member alluded to, some like Rebel media, that really pick up on these racist undertones. It's very unfortunate, so anything that we can do to try to combat the legitimacy of this is very important for us to do.

You know what? At the end of the day, we will always stand up in this House, and we will always defend free speech. Our party will always defend it. Even though we don't like the narratives that we have, it is important to recognize that we are not stopping free speech. We are only using this to take away the ability to register as a society. To refresh members, societies may own property and may also sign contracts under the name of societies. They also may accumulate debt without the debt being put under an individual's name. This also provides them with a bit more formality. At the end of the day, anything that we can do to pull back that formality for groups of a racist nature is important.

You know, being a born-and-raised Albertan and growing up in northeast Calgary, I always felt blessed to be living in that area, in that part of Calgary, because it was very diverse. I learned a tremendous amount, and my family and my parents saw it as a benefit for us, a net benefit. At the end of the day, we could learn about our country, we could learn about our cultures, and we could learn about our world. We always leveraged that as a huge net benefit for our community.

Unfortunately, in the '90s there was an uptick of racist undertones that happened, and I would see that in my community. Sometimes it was from other – you know, we weren't leveraging the Internet, but we were leveraging editorials and other fringe ways for this, whether it was slipping in leaflets or whatever the case may be. We saw that coming from populist groups like the Heritage Front at the time. Groups like this would use their status to try to influence the political narrative and to really influence what was happening within policies that were being made.

I recall in 1992 the Heritage Front members even attempted to influence the Reform Party, and members were joining that party. You know, credit to the leadership base of the Reform Party at the time: they did expel these members when they caught wind of what they were trying to do. I do have some respect for that. When I door-knock in my community, one of the things that I've heard that is a huge appeal of the NDP to people is that we stand up for building strong, united communities. The last door that I knocked on on Saturday, that was what I heard from them: I've always been a strong supporter of the NDP because they build strong communities.

So it concerns me when I'm in my constituency that some extremist views might be influencing people who are represented in my community. Just eight days ago we saw Motion 30 come out, and unfortunately that was sponsored by members of the UCP Calgary-Shaw EDA. Essentially, going against the views of the ATA, it would out gay kids within schools. I want to give some credit where credit is due, to the Member for Calgary-Hays, because he spoke up against that motion, and he did say that this is about outing gay kids, and he really tried to push against it. Unfortunately, it did pass the convention.

I'm hopeful that this is not influenced by any extremist groups. To be honest, when I received the few comments against Bill 24, that this Motion 30 would look to repeal, they cited so-called pseudo-news articles. These ones were coming from Rebel media, and this is a group that has been known to spread hateful comments.

At the end of the day – I will move on my next point – I think it's very clear to the people of Calgary-Shaw who's going to stand up for LGBTQ rights in that area because we've already seen the motions that have come forward from the EDA in that constituency. But you know what? The one thing that the member brought forth, that I would like to put as an undertone, moving on to my next topic, is

that it's hard for us to really know if fringe groups are really trying to do this, if they've gone into societies, because there are so many of them.

To put some safeguards in place that'll prevent them from spreading hate as a society will allow us to pull these groups back. We've really started seeing them coming out in the communities, whether it's on the steps of city hall or even in my constituency. I know that some of them have set up in Fish Creek park a few times to spread their racist views. These groups are really trying to manipulate facts to spread a false narrative and false truths that are existing. Whether they use this to try to influence immigration policies or whether they try to use this to influence overall general policies or even our curriculum, it can be very disconcerting because it spreads false fears, and it spreads falsehoods.

With that being said, I look forward to this bill moving through the House and hearing comments from all members. I want to thank the member for bringing forth this bill because I know that it comes from the right place, and it comes from very strong views. I know that he really wants to make his community the best one possible, just as all members of this House do.

Thank you very much.

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

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and speak to Bill 206, Societies (Preventing the Promotion of Hate) Amendment Act, 2018. It's surprising that we have to address this in such a formal way, but I'm pleased also to see this formalized in a bill, recognizing that we've come a long way in Alberta. It's so subtle at times and so dramatic at other times that our society and culture are shifting to recognize universal rights. Over the decades, centuries it's taken this kind of attention to address everything from women and their rights, to indigenous people, to gender issues, such as we've heard today, and all manner of religious intolerance around the world.

I think we're united here, very clearly, in wanting to address the issue, to prevent this kind of activity in society, and to ensure that we don't have to deal with problems in the streets, in the courts, in other respects when we could be dealing with them very proactively by identifying these kinds of activities that discriminate and promote hate and ultimately violence.

I guess one would have to look, indeed, at improving some of the checks and balances on our social media, that is digital media, but also on our public media, because in some ways it's creeping in in various places there. Whether or not these individuals or organizations are registering: that's a question I would have for the bill promoter, to what extent this adds to and supplements the other ways in which we can identify and intervene on some of these intolerant and hateful messages and images that are coming across, that go beyond the federal act and violate the hate speech laws that we currently have in place in Canada.

It should be very easy to move this forward. How these various acts and messages are determined to be unacceptable is a matter for those involved in the legislation federally. But it also places a burden now on our Service Alberta ministry to be more vigilant, to identify even in current societal registrations whether there's been due diligence, and to look backwards at some of the activities of some of the organizations that have been in place. Of the thousands of societies in Alberta, there may be indeed some examples that need to be confronted under this new bill.

4:30

I won't prolong the discussion, recognizing that we have many things to deal with, but I think this would unite us in support for a

very vigorous, very public recognition that this kind of speech or activity within an association or society needs to be confronted as soon as it's identified and proactively snuffed out.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak to Bill 206, the Societies (Preventing the Promotion of Hate) Amendment Act, 2018. Before I even get started here, I wanted to state my condemnation of any individual or group that spreads hate in our society. It is unacceptable to give any legitimacy to hate groups in our society. The United Conservative Party stands resolutely against the promotion of hate and bigotry.

I thank the member for his action to raise this issue through this bill, and I wholeheartedly agree with the sentiment and the goal to try to eliminate the horrendous occurrences of inciting hatred and the support for genocide that we, sadly, see from time to time. Under this legislation a society may only be formed for a lawful purpose, specifically targeting those who promote or advocate genocide and those who would speak publicly to incite hatred. Again, this is a well-intentioned proposal which acknowledges, correctly, that government should not be inadvertently legitimizing hate groups through the Societies Act.

I also want to be clear that this is not a partisan issue. We all stand united against hatred and bigotry, and we all support action to combat it when and where it occurs.

I also would like to take a moment to thank our Alberta law enforcement officers and prosecutors, who work diligently to ensure that the perpetrators of hate crimes are brought to justice and feel the full force of the law. We need to ensure that law enforcement professionals and legal professionals have every resource at their disposal to do their jobs efficiently and effectively. With the recent increase in crime, we've been seeing a strain on our justice system. We need to do all we can to ensure that those who are engaged in criminal activity like advocating for genocide and the incitement of hatred are investigated, arrested, charged, and prosecuted, period. As such, I certainly hope that the members across the aisle will support real, concrete action to deal with the increased strain on our justice system, that our caucus has been raising as an issue for quite some time now.

We'd like to make sure that no Albertans live in fear of encountering these types of crimes in our society. Alberta has long been a welcoming place for peoples of all races, religions, backgrounds, and no one should ever feel targeted for these reasons. I want to make it absolutely clear to any Albertan that has ever experienced any form of hatred targeted towards them: the United Conservative Party stands with you. We will be your voice against hatred and bigotry. We will work with you to combat hatred in our province. That is why I can say that I support the principle of this legislation without hesitation.

That said, I do have some questions surrounding the potential administration. Thus, I would like to take an opportunity to seek clarity from the proponent on parts of this bill and its potential application. Particularly in section 3(1)(b), I am hoping to gain some insight on the use of the word "could." We want to have clarity on what will be and will not be included there. The current wording seems to make this subjective and opens up a large grey area. Surely, the member would agree that when it comes to the serious matter of promoting genocide and inciting hatred, we want the law to be absolutely clear and unequivocally something that we can move forward with. This may be an area where we can offer up a friendly amendment to strengthen the legislation in a crosspartisan

fashion. Perhaps some of our colleagues should share their thoughts. I look forward to the discussion on this matter.

I would also like to inquire with the member if he has had the opportunity to discuss with any legal experts the implication of extensive Canadian jurisprudence on the matter of hate speech laws and any impact it might have on potential legislation like this. I want to make sure that when we pass legislation, we stay within the bounds set out on the topic of law in question to ensure that it is capable of standing up to a potential legal challenge, again, something that has been quite common with legislation dealing with the topic of hate speech in the past. We owe it to the victims of hate and bigotry to make sure that we get the protections like this right the first time. As I said, I would appreciate any insights on this from the member proposing this bill.

I think that we can take the good intention of the member, the noble goal to combat and eliminate hatred and bigotry in our province, and iron out any minor wrinkles, that together we can pass a law that will protect Albertans and show that we will work together to take action on this serious issue, specifically when it comes to Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, I sincerely hope that we can do exactly that. I hope that we can work together to combat hate and bigotry. I hope that through discussion and debate we can get clarity and make improvements on this bill before us, and I look forward to hearing what my colleagues have to say on this topic.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for this bill. It's about time, and I'm thrilled that this is going to be happening.

For many of you, I know that you've been part of boards for nonprofits that are registered societies. I know that I've worked for a number of registered societies over the years, and it's a lot of work, actually, to submit the objectives of your societies, your annual returns, your audits, all of the things, and I think that most of us take it very, very seriously as we register, outlining the importance of the work that we do and the benefit that it has to our community. That's really key about nonprofits, the benefit. The fact that this member has brought forward something that will address this very issue is fantastic. It's about time. I know that great nonprofits all around Alberta are standing up and applauding this, so thank you for that.

I've heard the members from across the way a few times now highlight the fact that they don't think that this is a partisan issue. I agree with them. I don't think that this is a partisan issue at all. I think it's a human issue, absolutely, but how you govern yourself is certainly a partisan issue. I know that I can speak for the people on this side that we don't make a habit of going on hate-filled, lie-filled sites like Rebel to be interviewed or to be supported and then turn around and come into this place and say: yay; we're going to do something to clamp down on these hate groups.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Let me remind you a little bit about the hate that that particular organization spews, and let's be honest with ourselves. I think we're in denial a little bit in Alberta and Canada that this isn't a big problem here. It's not as big of a problem as it is south of the border, but it's getting worse. It's getting worse all the time, and it's getting worse for a reason. When you have hate-spewing sites like Rebel doing things, hiring people that will use their platform to talk about things that they hate about Jews or to go stand and record the tragic events at Charlottesville — and that's just touching the surface. I

mean, there are so many hateful things that go on there that I can't even begin to touch on them all. They legitimize hate. They use it. People call it clickbait. That's what it is. It's clickbait. If you associate with groups like that, you're encouraging them, and you're saying that that's okay. Sure, maybe you didn't spew hateful facts or lies while you were being interviewed that day or, well, maybe you didn't retweet something particularly hateful, but you're supporting it. So it becomes a partisan issue when you as a partisan person choose to support that kind of work.

4:40

If you didn't read this article, there was a really great article written. It was *Vice* that published the article in August 2017, which I will table tomorrow. It talks about their very long – I think it was eight months long – study on hate groups and the rich history of hate in Alberta but also some of the growing hate. Some of the things they talked about: they reminded us about some recent rallies in Edmonton. I think that in 2012 there was a particularly vile rally here in Edmonton in Churchill Square. Again, people are starting to focus on immigration, of course, spreading lies and misinformation about immigration and anti-Islamophobia.

I heard a member from over there talk about how great their leader was at bringing us together. Well, I can think of a lot of examples where, you know, that really wasn't the case. I remember comments made by him in the House of Commons where he wanted an English-to-English translation from somebody whose first language clearly wasn't English. That wasn't just a slip-up. He also worked pretty hard, after the courts ruled otherwise, to prevent Muslim women from wearing head coverings at citizenship ceremonies. Why? Ask yourselves: why? That doesn't seem like a uniting activity to me.

Anyway, more recently I remember that the federal government was trying to pass some prevention of anti-Islamic activity after the mass shooting in Quebec City, and although we were not there – we were not debating that federal movement or those decisions – the stuff that was coming out of Alberta was disgusting. The stuff that was coming out of Rebel media, who the opposition supports by participating in their activities, was awful, and it was vile. That's the kind of stuff that incites hatred.

The other kind of stuff that incites hatred is promoting these fallacies and these lies about immigration, about religions that are not yours, about rights. You know, we heard earlier today somebody talking about the need to stand up for property rights, which I agree with – we're all here to stand up for everybody's rights – yet they turned around and walked out when faced with an opportunity to protect women's rights. That's a form of hatred. When you have innocent women trying to get some health care and exercise control over their own bodies and they're faced with this wall of hate, lies, and misleading photographs, that's not good. That is not good at all. I do think that we're in denial about the growing hatred, and all of us as leaders in our communities and as elected officials absolutely have the responsibility to do everything we can to counter that, to not incite hatred.

I wanted to go back, too, a little bit. Clearly, folks across are not looking up too much because we're talking about Rebel. I would like to remind the House just how vile some of the things that they've said and published are. One of the people that they hired went to Israel and published information about why they hate Jews. They actually blamed Jews for the Holodomor. I don't even understand that. They literally gave and shared their platform with the KKK Grand Wizard David Duke – I can't believe that I'd ever say his name in this place, but they did – and white nationalist Richard Spencer. Why on earth would you support an organization that promotes that kind of hate and then come to this place and say

that you support legislation that aims to check the activities of groups trying to seek society status in this province when you are guilty of associating with these groups that promote violence and hatred and misinformation?

I'll tell you that I think it was last year when, very much in the news, people were talking about Omar Khadr and the federal government. Actually, the Supreme Court of Canada had ruled that the government had obtained evidence during oppressive circumstances, which led to some other things, and the government of Canada negotiated a settlement. I wasn't saying that I agreed, that I was happy. I was neutral on that point. What I was saying is that it's important to respect the Supreme Court of Canada. That was it. Instantly I was flooded by the Rebel crew with these horrible, nasty messages. They have meme makers that are so fast, it made my head spin. I had a picture of myself with "traitor" over it or a bullet hole in my head. This is the kind of stuff that incites hatred. I won't even get into all of the history of this case because it's not my case. I'm not a lawyer. But I do trust the Supreme Court of Canada.

I just want to say again that I am incredibly thankful to the member for bringing forward this bill. It's important. A few people have asked: "Why wasn't this done earlier? This should have been done a long time ago." We say that a lot these days, but it should have been done a long time ago.

You can propose amendments to try to make it better, like what normally happens. You can say that it's not partisan, but it is. You can do everything you can in your personal power in your communities and in this place to say: that's not okay. When you go to your own convention and you have people attacking indigenous people for taxes, you can stand up and say: that's hate. When you talk about people that are different from you, that practise different religions, and you hear them say things like that, you can say: that's wrong. You can point out that the garbage that is spewed by the Rebel is wrong, and you can choose to distance yourself. Or you can just vote for this and say, you know: you're good.

I would encourage everybody in this House to support this bill.

Again, I thank you very much for your work.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

I'll now recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It really is an honour to stand up this afternoon and speak to Bill 206, the Societies (Preventing the Promotion of Hate) Amendment Act, 2018. The intent of the bill, to prevent the establishment of hate organizations, is laudable. I want to acknowledge the Member for Calgary-Klein, my neighbour in north-central Calgary, for bringing forward this bill. As private members we don't have a lot of opportunity to bring forward any policy directly to the House, and it's really commendable that he's using this opportunity to address the very upsetting and distasteful subject of racism. We certainly don't need to embolden hate groups by allowing them to create societies for racism or to give them assistance in organizing. By not allowing them to incorporate, the bill reduces access to banking services, public funding sources, and the legitimacy that some of them seek to spread their hate in Alberta.

[The Speaker in the chair]

One of my constituency staff members, Saima Jamal, has worked for decades to overcome racism and hate in Calgary and in the province. As an antiracism activist she knows how pernicious racism is in Calgary, with followers of groups like the Alberta Three

Percenters, Soldiers of Odin, and Polish priest Jacek Miedlar claiming their racism loudly and proudly in Calgary. She's told me about the impact this hatred has on the communities she works with. Their actions make it explicitly clear that not everyone thinks racism is awful and that hateful individuals have gained more of a foothold in Alberta.

In the '90s I worked for Shell Nigeria in Calgary, and our workplace was very diverse. Most of my colleagues came from Nigeria while some were from England and the Caribbean. I was enlightened about racism by my colleagues. I grew up in a small town in northern Alberta, and at that time most of the faces I saw in school and on the streets in my town looked a lot like me. I was privileged to live so long and not see much racism. But they told me that racism in the U.S. was much easier to identify because it was overt. They knew who the racists were.

4:50

Racism has been deeply embedded in parts of Alberta culture for a long time, but it was mostly hidden. Recently, however, people who hold racist views have been emboldened by the normalization of intolerance in the political discourse, mostly in the U.S., and on social media. The experience and negative impacts on the tens of thousands of Albertans who experience racism and hate in public, at work, online, and in the receipt of services speaks to the urgent need to address casual and systemic racism in Alberta. We must be active. We cannot be complacent on racism. As elected members of this Assembly it is incumbent on all of us to moderate our social media pages and remove any intolerant or racist comments. Homophobia, misogyny, sexism, and racism cannot remain unchallenged because to do so is to implicitly approve of them. The Alberta Party stands resolute in our commitment to challenge and remove any intolerant or racist comments on social media.

The bill is a good move in challenging hatred, but I would like to see it go further. There are some limitations with the bill, including a gap in the practical ability of the registrar to enforce its provisions. Existing societies currently receive very little oversight from the registrar about their activities as long as their paperwork is filed regularly. I'd be curious to know if or how the registrar can ensure that Alberta's over 58,000 existing incorporated societies do not have hateful objects or practices or that their actions under apparently benevolent objects are carried out in inclusive, nonracist, and nonhateful ways.

Despite decades of work the memberships and boards and clients of Alberta's 58,000-plus nonprofits do not consistently represent Alberta's diversity. This bill as it stands doesn't address existing embedded racism experienced by Albertans from nonprofit societies. How will the registrar address groups that try to incorporate by simply hiding their racist intentions under benign-appearing objectives? How many Albertans who are members of societies actually read society bylaws or objects? I believe the bill could be made better and more effective than in its current form by being informed by lived experiences.

I'm happy to support passing second reading of Bill 206. I look forward to discussing and improving this bill in debate, and I certainly urge all of my colleagues to support this bill as well.

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

Mr. Shepherd: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to have the opportunity to stand today to speak to this bill, brought forward by my colleague from Calgary-Klein, an act to amend the Societies Act. This is a very important and timely bill. As many members have observed today, we have seen a sharp rise in

language of hatred and intolerance here in Canada and, unfortunately, much of it here in Alberta, so it's incredibly important, I think, that we move forward on taking clear steps to show that we as public leaders do not tolerate, do not accept, and indeed will not provoke or stoke or incite this kind of language.

Local journalist Mack Lamoureux recently did an investigation through *Vice* magazine. He spent eight months investigating the inner workings of a group that is very openly anti-Islamic, largely based here in the province of Alberta and known as the Three Percenters. As one expert has described them: a wholesale lift of an American militia. A very frightening group. These are individuals who have heavy weapons. They buy shock canes. They openly posture online about being anti-Islamic; about conducting monitoring and surveillance of mosques, live-fire, paramilitary-style training; claiming that they're going to purchase land; making plans for creating smoke and flash bombs. In the words of their founder: what we like to consider ourselves is Canada's last line of defence from all enemies, both foreign and domestic; if the time would come and we would need to use force and take action, you know, we will do that.

This is a group, Mr. Speaker, that took their name from an American paramilitary group which organized after Barack Obama was elected President. I'm sure their only motivation there was the fact that he was a Democrat. I'm sure that was the only objectionable thing about that particular President.

Numerous people who are linked to the Three Percenters in the U.S. have been charged with crimes, including one gentleman who shot five people at a Black Lives Matter protest. Another member was arrested in a foiled bomb plot to bomb federal buildings in Atlanta. For almost a year now the Three Percenters chapter in Alberta, which has the most active members of the Three Percenters in Canada, has been slowly forming themselves into a militia-like organization according to the investigation by Mr. Lamoureux, with the chapter in Wild Rose Country boasting, at the time of his investigation, about 150 to 200 active members and over 1,600 members that subscribed online.

As I noted, they claim to be heavily armed. They like to post photos of their numerous weapons and guns that they own. They claim to meet on a weekly basis to train, and they clearly state: we are anti-Islam; we dislike Islam and the Muslims. This is a group that exists currently here in Alberta. They are big fans, Mr. Speaker, of spreading debunked news stories, far right wing commentary from sites like Rebel media, Infowars in the U.S. As I mentioned, they've openly admitted to surveilling mosques in Calgary, conducting live-fire paramilitary episodes.

This group, as Mr. Lamoureux uncovered, recently had plans to launch a series of recovery homes here in Edmonton called the freedom house Canada recovery homes. Now, a recovery home is a privately owned group home for residents that are recovering from drug addiction. Certainly, Mr. Speaker, you know that our government is strongly in support of offering supports to individuals who are recovering from substance use disorders. But this group was looking to open these homes as a means of trying to whitewash their reputation. There is a history of this with such groups. They went so far as to begin to consult with existing recovery homes. They held auctions amongst themselves, selling guns, knives, bikes, whatever they had, to raise money for this purpose, for the purpose of transferring 43 rental properties over to their group to operate. I quote from Mr. Lamoureux's article, with one of them stating: "Guys, this is huge, and will definitely put us into the media and public spotlight on a huge, huge positive note."

Mr. Speaker, these groups are real, they're alive, and they are active. The Soldiers of Odin, another group which was seen to begin

here in Alberta a couple of years ago, in 2016 were doing street cleanups and raising money for food banks while also spreading anti-Muslim rhetoric and marching in the streets. This is a common tactic of these kinds of groups. It is not necessarily unheard of that one of these groups might, then, try to register as a society in our province and try to access government dollars, grants, other forms of charity to support their cover work, to support work done in the community to hide the fact that what they are about is promoting hatred and intolerance and indeed endangering the lives of Canadians.

I think that, again, as I said, it's incredibly timely and incredibly appropriate that my colleague from Calgary-Klein has brought forward this bill to ensure that we can close this loophole, that we can protect Albertans from these groups trying to exploit that opportunity.

Now, I appreciate what the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills mentioned today about not wanting this to be a partisan bill, and indeed I can understand the spirit of that, Mr. Speaker. I think my colleague the Member for St. Albert said a lot of what I would have to say in that regard. I will recall that in February of last year I stood in this House and I loudly called out Rebel media because, indeed, in my work with many people from the Muslim community here in the city of Edmonton, they told me how the types of language that they saw from that group made them feel deeply uncomfortable and unsafe and targeted as Canadians.

As I have stated, I am deeply uncomfortable when I see our political leaders in any way appearing to support or incite or provoke this kind of language and this kind of behaviour for their own political gain. Indeed, in the last few years, Mr. Speaker, we have seen some shameful examples of that. I am glad that finally, after the events of Charlottesville, members of our political leaders distanced themselves from that site.

I look forward to the opportunity to speak to this more.

The Speaker: Hon. members, the time for consideration of this item of business is concluded.

5:00 Motions Other than Government Motions

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

Electricity and Natural Gas Bills

504. Mr. Cyr moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to introduce legislation that would prohibit distribution fees and levies to be charged on residential customers' electricity and natural gas bills unless there is an actual, measurable use of electricity or natural gas and which also caps administration fees on such bills at \$10.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I have the privilege to stand before the Alberta Legislature to move Motion 504. This simply means that if you use natural gas or electricity, you pay for it. Period. If you don't use energy, you should not have to pay a fee other than the \$10-a-month administration fee. This motion is not a matter of some abstract or theoretical problem. It is one where there is a real problem for Albertans across this province, some of them my constituents and, I imagine, many constituents of other members as well.

I have two specific real-life examples I would like to share with you. The first one is a realtor named Louise, who reached out to my office for a meeting. During that meeting she identified that she has a lakeshore cabin and that she uses that cabin for the summer months. In the winter months she has significant fees on her bills

because she has infrastructure on her land. An important clarification is that this is infrastructure that she paid for, and even though she's not using the lines, she still has to pay significant fees. If she doesn't pay the fees, then the utility company will remove the infrastructure at no cost. However, should she wish to have the utility again, she would have to pay tens of thousands of dollars to reinstall it and be put on a waiting list, and it could take several months to install the lines. Clearly, this isn't a route that any landowner would take, so you're forced to pay the monthly fee for no service.

The second example is Chad, who received property through the passing of his father. During the grieving process Chad requested that the utilities be shut off and disconnected as he lived in Calgary and his father resided in Cold Lake. Chad thought that his obligations with the utilities ended, yet two years later, just when he lost his job, he got contacted by the utility company demanding back payments of several thousand dollars. He explained that he disconnected the utility, and they responded that you pay even though your services are disconnected. He was shocked and dismayed that as a utility they were clear that they were going to remove his utilities if he did not clear up the bill. However, if they removed the utilities and he wanted to reinstall them, it would be between \$30,000 to \$50,000. He had no money but had no choice but to come up with the money as property within the rural setting needs utilities in order for it to be sold, because nobody wants to buy a property without utilities on it.

These two examples show that the current system has put people into a situation where the utility has you over a barrel whether you pay for the service or not. This motion would eliminate all costs other than the \$10 administration fee when you don't use their services. However, when you do use their services, you would pay the rate that is charged to the general public.

This may seem like only a small number of individuals that may be impacted, but there are wider implications of this motion. If we look at renewables, renewable energy, and the direction that this current government is intent on moving Alberta towards, there is a problem. For many, it comes to the fact that the numbers just don't add up when you move your residence to renewables. It's just not viable. The problem is that renewables just aren't a stable source of energy, so many if not all will still need to be connected to the grid. When the sun doesn't shine and the wind doesn't blow, they have to have access to energy. This means that fees are added to the cost even though you aren't using the energy. By passing this motion, we would be reducing one of the largest burdens on renewable energy. When the sun is shining and the wind is blowing, the household would only be paying \$10 per month, and this, in the end, could save a family thousands of dollars.

The NDP continue to ask what the United Conservatives are contributing as ideas for moving Alberta forward with renewables. Well, this is an idea. This is an idea to move Alberta forward when it comes to installing renewables in residential households. Instead of more light bulbs, thermostats, and subsidies and grants, this will actually have a long impact that increases renewables installed in homes across the province. What is important to note is that there is no cost to government and minimal impact on our energy companies.

This motion also just makes sense. Why would we set up a system that has user fees with no services provided? It is like purchasing a cellphone for \$2,000 with a three-year contract with one provider and finishing the contract and the provider telling the customer that there is no pay-to-talk feature. It just simply doesn't exist. So if they don't continue paying for the phone that they've already paid for, they will take it back, and should that happen and should you need to be connected back to the telecommunication

grid, you need to buy another \$2,000 phone. They're completely happy to sell you another one. Therefore, continuing to pay for a phone that you already own just doesn't make sense, just like this motion that I'm trying to move forward.

I acknowledge that should you use a network, you need to pay the fees. This motion isn't about eliminating or challenging the current fee structure. That is another debate that needs to happen but isn't one that is happening with this motion. This is completely about: if you don't use the energy, there should only be a \$10 administration fee so that if you do need that energy, it will be there for you to use. This is good conservatism at work.

Mr. Speaker, good Albertans like Louise and Chad shouldn't be punished for the circumstances they're in. Like many Albertans in similar circumstances, all they want is fairness. I know that on this side of the House we talk a lot about fairness for ratepayers and taxpayers, but I also know that on the government side they hear a lot from their constituents on these issues as well. I know that the government members have also talked on occasion about fair practices for consumers. I would hope that they turn that talk into action here and vote to protect the interests of their constituents as I am proposing to do for mine and for the people like Louise and Chad all across our great province.

I would also hope that the government members, given all of their talk about enabling consumers to make choices to use green energy, will also support the motion on the basis that they're helping Albertans who want to pursue microgeneration with residential-scale wind and solar. If actions like this will assist the adoption of these technologies without burdening the taxpayer through costly subsidies and guarantees, why wouldn't we want to pursue them?

Mr. Speaker, I hope that we have adequately explained to the members of this House that this is indeed a real and important issue for everyday Albertans. I hope that members from all parties will join with me in voting for this motion and taking a step in the right direction and urging the government of Alberta to solve this problem.

I have members that will be speaking on this motion and go further in explaining how it doesn't just help a small subset, but it also helps additional groups within Alberta, and I will allow them to continue with those speeches.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been an honour to speak on this motion.

5:10

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Klein.

Mr. Coolahan: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the member for bringing forward this motion. I rise to explain why I will be voting against Motion 504. Motion 504 would benefit a small number of people at the expense of other Alberta electricity consumers. Let me start by saying that I understand the basic motivation for the motion. We know that Albertans pay close attention to their utility bills, and we know that they are concerned about delivery costs. We understand the impact that rising or unpredictable utility rates can have on families and their budgets.

In fact, that is precisely why we are addressing energy costs on electricity bills in two key ways. First, we capped rates for electricity at 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour. We knew that the electricity system we inherited from the Conservatives was prone to bad price spikes. We heard from experts that this was only going to get worse over time because investors were no longer comfortable with the energy-only market like the Conservatives put in place. To protect consumers immediately, we capped rates so that Albertans didn't ever again have to fret about the threat of rates tripling in mere months.

But that was only an interim measure to give consumers immediate protection against the Conservatives' broken market. It bridges the time we need to take to bring in a system that stabilizes rates in the long run. We are doing that by introducing a capacity market, which is implemented through Bill 13, legislation that is currently before members of this Chamber. Unfortunately, the members opposite choose to forget the rampant price spikes that consumers have endured for years under the Conservatives' energy market system, but we remember them all too well. That's why we introduced Bill 13, to bring stability and steady affordability to electricity rates. It's a responsible measure to protect utility consumers.

Motion 504, by contrast, is not a responsible measure. Let me explain. Distribution systems are built to serve peak load so that everyone has access to a reliable electricity supply regardless of how much they use and when they need it. You can compare electricity infrastructure to a road system or a highway. It is built for everyone to use whenever they need to go somewhere, not just for frequent travellers. As distributors' infrastructure and operating costs are for the most part fixed and do not change regardless of energy consumption, the wires to your neighbourhood, in your neighbourhood, and right up to your house and your neighbour's house essentially cost the same no matter how much you or your neighbour use.

Now, say that your neighbour uses all the power and gas they need in December, when we often have peak usage, which is what the system is sized for. The system is sized for them to be able to use the energy on demand when they need it. Then they leave on holiday in January and February, so they don't use any power and natural gas, but when they come home in March, they still need the wires and pipes so that they can turn the lights on and the furnace on. They didn't need the wires or the pipes any less, and they didn't decrease the cost of those wires or pipes at all, but with this motion they would get two months free from paying for them even though they still need the wires and the pipes when they get home.

Now, someone has to pay for the building and maintenance of that infrastructure, and that someone is you, you and the rest of your neighbours and the people in your region. Why should your bill have to go up to cover their costs just because they went out of town for the winter? That's totally unfair, Mr. Speaker, and I have to believe that it is not what the member intended with this motion, but it's what the motion will clearly do.

Now, as the government that protects Albertans, we're not satisfied to just dismiss the member's motion. We know that we need to stay vigilant and take action on behalf of consumers. That's why we are introducing new penalties to ensure that utility service providers like distribution companies and retailers cannot bilk their customers with unwarranted and erroneous charges. That is an important part of Bill 13 as a strong, responsible measure to protect consumers. I encourage the member to support this legislation, which is still before the House. We are also taking a close look at all the bill components, and the Minister of Energy has asked her department to assess opportunities to develop policy to better manage electricity distribution costs in Alberta.

We inherited the system from the previous government, and we think that there are ways we can do better. This work includes finding ways to bring better and more effective regulation of electric distribution costs, and this work is already under way. It's the kind of real work that we need to undertake to reduce overall costs for consumers so that all consumers benefit from lower system costs. We can't rely on gimmicks that let a small number of particular customers pay less for a system that they equally need and then force those costs onto their neighbours, like we see with this motion.

Mr. Speaker, this motion is so flawed and so ill considered that I encourage all members to vote against it. It would hurt the pocketbooks of the vast majority of Albertans, and I encourage everyone to vote against it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, if you seek it, I'm sure you will find unanimous consent to move to one-minute bells.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for . . . just a second.

Mr. Hanson: Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

The Speaker: Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, I saw you scan the room to see if anybody else was standing, you know, so I have to be a little offended by that.

Anyway, what I'd like to do is just stand and speak to Motion 504. I don't know whether this is what the member is referring to in this motion, but I'll just give you an example that I had in my constituency in the town of Two Hills. There was an old mechanic shop that had been sitting vacant for years, and the owner phoned me because he'd received a bill for \$1,500. Now, the previous summer and fall he had rented that space out and, prior to that, had not received any bills at all from the power company.

He was approached in the summer or fall by an individual that wanted to rent the property, so he said: "Okay. You can rent the property, but you have to take care of getting the power reinstated, getting the meter put in." The individual did that. He kept the lease up for about six months, and then he got a hold of the owner and said, "You know, I'm no longer requiring the rental of the place," so the deal was struck that he could vacate the premises on the understanding that he would disconnect the power and deal with the power company.

The owner was a little surprised when six months later he got a bill for \$1,500, so he contacted the leaseholder and was told: "Yes. You know, I cancelled everything." But, apparently, there's some loophole. The infrastructure company had leased the power supply agreement to another company, and they, without giving any notice to the owner, were continuing to bill this premise. The breakers were shut off. The meter was not running. There was no power consumption at all. So he was a little surprised when he got this bill for \$1,500.

He came to my office, and we had a chat. I phoned the power provider and asked them to explain it. They said, "Well, this is our policy," or whatever. After a couple of phone calls they finally agreed to reduce the bill by a thousand dollars, so they brought it down to \$500. I called the building owner, and I said, "They've decided to meet you kind of halfway," and he said: "No. I never signed a piece of paper with that company. I have no agreement with that company. There's no reason that I should owe them \$1,500 when no power was consumed at all. I had no knowledge that there was even an outstanding bill on the property or a caveat on the property."

I called the company back, and I said: "You know, he's not willing to accept that thousand dollar reduction. He would like the bill wiped out completely." At that time I asked them: "What piece of legislation allows you to do this anyway? If you could tell me that piece of legislation, maybe as a government we can look into it and see if it's fair to consumers or not." Well, about 15 minutes later

I got a call back from the company saying: "You know, tell that landowner that he doesn't have to worry about it. We're just going to waive this one."

To me, that tells me that there's something there that we need to look at. Maybe this isn't the answer, but I think it opens it up, that we do need to have a look at which legislation allows this to happen to Albertans and consumers and commercial property owners and residences. You know, as investors in buildings or residential properties we shouldn't be responsible for deals that are made without our knowledge and without our consent between a leaseholder or a renter and any power company or gas company.

5:20

If that's the intent of Motion 504 and if it opens up the investigation so that we can at least look at the legislation, find out where the problems are, and maybe tweak them to fix them a little bit, I'd be open to that. I think that the House should be at least open to the idea of looking into the legislation and protecting consumers, whether they be residential owners or commercial building owners.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there any other members that wish to speak? The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak to Motion 504 on fees and levies on residential electricity and natural gas. This motion has been brought forward by the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Speaker, I guess I would first draw attention to the fact that I would like this Legislature to consider that this is not actually a bill but a motion. It's just a motion. If a motion is passed by this Legislature, it's just simply saying that this is a direction we think the government should consider going in, that this would be a good idea. This is not going to change the law, but it is going to give direction to the government, give an idea to the government about where we think the government should go. So let's be clear. This doesn't create legislation. It's a motion. It's not a bill. It's just there to consider the issue, in this case an issue surrounding electricity and natural gas and the fees that surround that.

So what are we asking the government to consider? Well, we're asking that a motion be considered that would prohibit the charging of distribution fees and levies on electricity or on natural gas when a residential property is not actually accessing either the natural gas or the electricity, that if a property is owned by an Albertan but that property is not being lived in or the owner of the property is not accessing the electricity or the natural gas, they should not be forced to pay the distribution fees and the levies charged. It just makes sense that a citizen should not have to pay the levies and the fees for a service that they are not actually receiving. This has the ring of fairness to it, I think.

Currently if a consumer is placed in a situation in which they are responsible for a property that is not in use, for which they are not using electricity, not using natural gas, they may still be charged hundreds of dollars in fees and levies. This motion would seek to allow those who are in that situation to effectively disconnect their utilities and be exempt from paying distribution fees and that a cap of \$10 would be placed on there for an administration fee simply because they are a part of the grid.

You know, Mr. Speaker, in Alberta a significant portion of our utility bills are as a result of the fees and the levies that are applied to them. I don't know about any of my other fellow MLAs, but I've had many seniors come through my office very concerned about those

extra levies and those extra fees, even to the point where they're wondering if they can stay in their house. We have people that are in very constrained circumstances, and they often face the situation where there is more month than there is income, and they want this Legislature to address those fees and those levies.

While Motion 504 may not address that whole wide-ranging issue, it does in a fairly narrow way address at least a portion of that. Currently consumers do not have the ability to avoid paying those fees even if a property sits unused for a significant period of time, even if they are not consuming any measurable amount of electricity or natural gas. In fact, it's my understanding, Mr. Speaker, that the only way to really avoid paying fees and levies is to have a property physically disconnected, and this could result in thousands of dollars of extra costs should, at some point in time in the future, the property owner desire to be reconnected to the grid.

Mr. Speaker, some Albertans desire to hook their residences up to renewable energy sources for microgeneration, and while they would like to provide their energy needs from a renewable source like solar or wind, et cetera, they would also like to remain hooked up to the grid for those times when their intermittent renewable energy sources don't actually meet their electricity needs. The problem is that when the residences' electricity needs are met by the renewable energy and they are not using energy from the grid, they are still expected to pay the fees and levies for the electricity.

Motion 504 is just simply a common-sense measure based on the principle of fairness. If you're using a utility, you are expected to pay the associated costs and fees. However, if you are not using that service or consuming the product, you should not have to pay exorbitant fees.

I would therefore recommend to this Assembly that they support this motion. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Any other members prepared to speak to Motion 504?

Seeing and hearing none, the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake to close debate.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to say that it's disappointing to see that the government won't be considering supporting this motion when we hear the government every day get up and say that they want to see a change when it comes to responsible government. To vote down a common-sense motion like this one is shameful.

I've heard some that say: well, if you don't like it, just sell the property. That seems a little radical when you're looking at the circumstances involving this. I'll also say that when we hear the government talking about fair share, that does seem like a concept that a socialist government would buy into. [interjections] I wholeheartedly agree. The only thing that I will say that counteracts this is that when you look at a socialist government – what they're trying to do is that they're trying to move Alberta to a renewable source. What they've done is that they're looking to shut down our coal industry, which supplies about 50 per cent of our energy right now. When we've got ideas on how we can move Alberta in the direction that this current government is looking at, you would think that they would at least entertain the thought.

Now, my hon. colleague had brought up that – you know what? – when you're moving a motion, this does not mean that we're creating law. What it does mean is that we're reviewing the motion, a sensible motion. Then what happens is that they will take that information and they'll create laws. We've got a government that is clearly moving in a direction of reducing our fossil fuel dependency. So when I have

this clear motion in my hands here, that says that if we can reduce the red tape or the burden that's placed on residential – residential – renewable energy, solar and wind, that makes it more attractive to the consumer, which means that we will end up moving in this direction without a dollar spent by the government, you would think that this government would take notice.

5:30

What happens is that we've got a government that is so focused on their direction, they are unwilling to take interest in other ideas. We have a government that would rather put billions of dollars into paying out PPAs, breached agreements, than deal with something as simple as saying: let's give the consumer the ability to do this on their own. Let's make this viable for all Albertans and then move in the direction that this government is looking to do. What we end up with is a government that says: we inherited a problem from the past government, and – you know what? – our way is the only way to fix this.

Well, clearly this isn't working because we've seen incredible raised rates when it comes to both natural gas and electricity. This is becoming a real concern for most Albertans, especially when we start looking at the most vulnerable: our seniors, our disabled, and our single parents. The fact is that should they need to shut down utilities during the summer months to be able to make payments, that option is there for them in a way that is a responsible way when it comes to forming government.

Now, again, it is disappointing to see that we have a government that is unwilling to follow through with a clear mandate that they have said that they have from Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to this motion, I would encourage every member in this House to consider it and to vote for this. Thank you.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion Other than Government Motion 504 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:32 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Cyr	Hanson	Strankman
Gill	Smith	Yao

Against the motion:

Carlier	Hoffman	Payne
Carson	Horne	Piquette
Ceci	Kleinstauber	Renaud
Connolly	Larivee	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Littlewood	Sabir
Dach	Loyola	Schmidt
Dang	Luff	Schreiner
Drever	Malkinson	Shepherd
Eggen	Mason	Sucha
Feehan	McCuaig-Boyd	Sweet
Fitzpatrick	McLean	Turner
Ganley	Miller	Woollard
Goehring	Nielsen	

Totals:	For – 6	Against – 38
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[Motion Other than Government Motion 504 lost]

The Speaker: Hon. Government House Leader, who does not have a pair of red socks, do you have something to say?

Mr. Mason: I'm not sure you know what colour my socks actually are, Mr. Speaker.

We have made good progress, we have done good business, and I would move that we adjourn the House until 7:30 this evening, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:37 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday evening, May 14, 2018

Day 29

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (NDP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (UCP),
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Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (UCP)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (NDP)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (NDP)
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Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (NDP)
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Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)
Vacant, Fort McMurray-Conklin
Vacant, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake

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New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 25 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent Conservative: 1 Vacant: 2

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Monday, May 14, 2018

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: Good evening. Please be seated.

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 10

An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements

Mr. Nixon moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 10, An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements, be amended by deleting all the words after “that” and substituting the following:

Bill 10, An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Alberta’s Economic Future in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

[Adjourned debate on the amendment May 9: Mr. S. Anderson]

The Deputy Speaker: Speaking to the amendment, Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As always, I appreciate the opportunity to rise and share my thoughts and particularly this evening for my good friend from Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. This motion would propose that we send this bill off to the Economic Future Committee for further input. Once again, I couldn’t agree more with my colleague on this subject in this regard. This motion, of course, is meaning additional work for the committee members, but isn’t that what we were elected to do, work together to make laws that not only protect Albertans but make sure what laws we do pass are the best that they can be? That is why we have the option of sending them back to committee for a more fulsome debate and input to make sure we get it right.

As I mentioned in an earlier speech, consultation is not always the government’s forte. I mentioned how they failed to consult on the carbon tax, the largest single tax in Alberta history. Some would talk in the federal arena in the past election of one Stephen Harper. When he became Prime Minister, a lot of people felt that there was some of secret agenda. Well, Madam Speaker, that secret agenda was never shown. Again, reverting back to the provincial government, our new provincial NDP government, I talked about how badly they got it wrong on Bill 6, and it was only after massive, massive backlash, Madam Speaker – in fact, one day we saw almost 2,000 people on the steps of this place. It was quite something, the protests. They admitted that the government had failed miserably on the consultation process. Madam Speaker, here we are again. I don’t think it’s on the level of the total lack of consultation on the carbon tax. It’s somewhere between the two examples for sure.

It always concerns me when I see the words “will consult on regulations.” To me always that is tantamount to saying: trust us. Well, I don’t think I’m the only one that takes this with a grain of salt. While I have never for once believed that government members have any sort of ill intentions when they pass legislation, I can’t say that I support their ideologically based policies. Those are two distinct things. Even with the best of intentions – and we’ve heard these words in this Chamber many times, talking about unintended consequences. Even sometimes the best intentions play out down the line or at some other far and remote place to create unintended consequences.

Madam Speaker, this bill, once again, needs the important aspects of it to be completely fleshed out, to be worked on with the consultation of the municipalities and other stakeholders such as the Real Estate Association to develop this Bill 10’s regulations. Once again, I can’t help but feel that this government is putting the cart before the horse. The government will pass the bill, then consult with the municipalities about putting forward a regulation with regard to the act. I don’t know how many times I myself or my colleagues in opposition have actually stood in this Chamber and had to say those very same words: the government is going to pass a bill, then go and consult with those that it affects. They do that time and time again. It’s repetitive, so we make a referral motion time and time again in the hopes that they finally get it right. I’m not sure who said that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again hoping for a different result, but here we are, Madam Speaker, once again, and I’m sure we’ll hear that expression again.

This issue is fraught with missteps and mistakes, things that were caught by the opposition because we took what little time we had, made some calls, talked to some people, and, no surprise, found some flaws, flaws that could have been avoided had time been taken and this bill had been floated by the correct standing committee, first for debate, then consultation and examination. Fortunately, we are at a stage in this House where we can remedy this flaw and send it back for these important corrective steps.

Now, as we know, PACE, or the property assessed clean energy program, is a financing tool which building owners and developers can use to upgrade their building’s energy performance, install renewable energy systems, and reduce resource consumption with no money down and with the financing repaid through their property’s tax bill. PACE financing capital primarily comes from private investment sources who are seeking long-term, secure investments. This program is a financing mechanism that enables low-cost, long-term funding for energy efficiency, renewable energy, and water conservation projects. PACE financing is repaid as an assessment on the property’s regular tax bill and is processed the same way as other local public benefit assessments, i.e., sidewalks, sewers, and other infrastructure, in the way those have been paid for decades. Depending on local legislation, PACE can be used for commercial, nonprofit, and residential properties. Sounds like an interesting program, Madam Speaker, but it’s not all what it’s cracked up to be, not at all.

While it could be said that homebuyers are attracted to properties with energy saving features and may even be willing to pay a premium for them, as cited in the Berkeley Lab study of 2013, *Remodeling Magazine* in 2016, reporting the 2015 *Appraisal Journal* study, the financing structure of PACE projects may be a deterrent for resale of properties with an outstanding PACE loan. Madam Speaker, I’m talking about some American models that are already in effect in the U.S.

What I’m getting at, Madam Speaker, is that the design of PACE programs in California has resulted in some financing institutions’ – Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac; they’re popular names – decision not to lend monies to homebuyers when the property has an outstanding PACE loan. This is due to the fact that PACE loans are recorded against the property as a tax lien that assumes a first position in case of a mortgage’s default. As a result, many sellers in California had to repay the loan first to attract buyers. Others, unable to pay off the loan, were unsuccessful in finding a buyer. As a result, depending on the specifics of Alberta’s PACE financing scheme, homeowners may sign up for the program without understanding the full implications of having a PACE lien on their property’s land title and related ramifications at the time when they are looking to sell it. I’m talking about unintended consequences.

In fact, there have been some that I've mentioned that they have concerns around section 390.7 of the MGA, the Municipal Government Act, which says:

If, after a clean energy improvement agreement has been made, the council refinances the debt created to pay for the clean energy improvement that is the subject of that agreement at an interest rate other than the rate estimated when the clean energy improvement agreement was made, the council, with respect to future years, may revise the amount required to recover the costs of the clean energy improvement included in that agreement to reflect the change in the interest rate.

Again, Madam Speaker, I'm talking about the potential of unintended consequences with a lot of moving parts in play.

What this section does, Madam Speaker, is that this provision introduces a level of uncertainty for Albertans interested in signing up for the PACE program as the municipalities will have the option to unilaterally revise the interest rate after the agreement has been signed by the parties involved. That's deeply troubling. I know that I don't enter a poker game if I know that after I buy in and the cards are dealt, the dealer can make up the rules as he sees fit. That simply is not an option, and in that arena it's not common for that to occur. I think that Albertans should be equally troubled. We can't simply let the government sweep this under the rug with a vague reassurance of: it will be dealt with in regulations. We have seen too many examples where "trust us" simply won't cut it, and this situation is no different. It's another reason to send it to committee.

Additionally, I can't help but worry that considering PACE programs are not common in Canada, it's highly unlikely that Albertans will know they even exist for some time or that they will fully understand the rules or the legal implications around them. As these regulations will be trotted out, it will take some time for understanding of or adherence to the ideas going forward. This could have a deeply unsettling effect upon consumers, not unlike the sense of disquiet and uncertainty that Alberta farmers and ranchers have experienced over the two and a half years previous to today with the passing of Bill 6. Considering the requirement to disclose PACE property tax to prospective buyers is left to regulations, nothing in the legislation itself ensures transparency when selling a property with PACE property tax. Where have we heard that before, Madam Speaker?

7:40

Some other issues I can't help but have trouble with revolve around this government's original briefing on the whole act. According to the government brief municipalities will "install and pay for upgrades on private property and recover costs through the owners' property taxes." Now, I highly doubt that municipalities will want to get into the business of greening businesses and homes as a lucrative sideline. Madam Speaker, it's not their role, nor should it be. There will be an accounting cost to be effected with all the collecting or not collecting or the arrears of taxes that may go on. It's not likely they have a geothermal engineer's degree or a solar panel insulation expert on staff, so I can't rightly say where the statement makes any semblance of sense. Where is the understanding or the qualifications of the install? Is it going to simply be built based on taxes, based on somebody's whim or idea?

In Ontario, Madam Speaker, at one point the green energy thing was so prominent and so efficient that they actually paid for rain barrels so that the homeowners could store their fresh rainwater. Is that actually an energy saving thing? That was what the program dictated, but a lot of people didn't like to carry the water in from the back side of the house.

Now, that isn't the only contradiction between various government documents, notes, and web pages. Not at all. In the government's own bill briefing it was pointed out that the Rural

Municipalities of Alberta had expressed concerns on whether this program will be mandatory or not. That's kind of a big unknown if you ask me. After all, the briefing states that it will be up to municipal councils whether to pass a PACE bylaw or not, which is odd to me because on the government's own website it states: "Under PACE, municipalities would install and pay for upgrades on private property and recover costs through the owners' property taxes." Anyway, if the municipality has the option to pass the PACE bylaw or not, why does the website say that it will? It contradicts itself in the briefing and again on the website. Madam Speaker, as you well know, in this place we live and die by the words that are used. Whether they be heckles or whether they be direct quotes that are recorded in the services of *Hansard*, we live and die by the words. Again, I go back to the use of the word "will." It contradicts itself in the briefing and – I'm repeating myself, I'm sorry – on the website.

That's not all. There are other concerns as well. Certain stakeholders have expressed concerns that there was no interest in administering the program and incurring those extra costs, which is a fair argument. They have their choice. But here again we see that there seems to be a contradiction in the government's briefing and some of the website statements. The government response to the concern was that it was an envisioned portion, envisioned that Energy Efficiency Alberta will administer the programs on behalf of the municipalities that pass the PACE bylaw. Maybe I'm missing something, but this also appears contrary to what is stated on the website.

Finally, again concern from the RMA, where they state that many municipalities are not interested in a lending role. Well, the government envisions the EEA finding private capital, but that's not how it's explained on the website.

Now, as I run through this, it dawns on me that nowhere does this bill talk about how – and the Member for Leduc-Beaumont is quite familiar with my next bit of terminology here – the government entity, his government agency, known as the special areas. Nowhere does it talk about how they would adopt Bill 10. After all, they aren't a municipality. They may act like one on most day-to-day operations, but they are certainly not one under the Special Areas Act, written in about 1935 or '38, somewhere back there. I mean, how will the PACE programs be dealt with by them? Madam Speaker, I live in that area.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, speakers to the amendment? The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Yao: Why, thank you, Madam Speaker. Holy smokes, don't we have a star-studded cast across the way here tonight. I see that they put all the good-looking ones in tonight, so that's nice. But life has a way of balancing itself out, and though they're gifted with one thing, they're lacking somewhere else. But that's why we're here, to educate them.

It is my pleasure to rise today to speak in favour of the referral amendment on Bill 10, An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements. This bill would enable municipalities to pass a bylaw creating a property assessed clean energy program, otherwise known as the PACE program. Madam Speaker, there are so many aspects of this bill that have either not been discussed enough with Albertans or that just seem to be unprepared. I urge this to be sent to committee to be discussed.

It is our duty as legislators to bring forth legislation for which we have considered all the possible consequences without leaving the

fate of what the law would like to see in action to a wait-and-see mentality. It is our responsibility to Albertans to listen and to hear how they would like legislation to work for them, which is what we were all elected to do here in this House, not to make high-level decisions and impose them in a top-down manner. I want to take a look at the ways this bill is not a fully finished piece of work and could use the benefit of a committee for it to be refined and for input to be given by those it is intended to be useful to.

Madam Speaker, conversion of every nook and cranny of this province to energy efficiency has been quite a frequent topic of conversation over the last several years, and although we, quite obviously, know that this is not the most pressing matter to every single Albertan, this government continues to insist that we treat it as such.

With that, I'd like to discuss what Bill 10 endeavours to bring about, the PACE program. We often hear that a substantial barrier to energy efficiency is that large initial investment cost that the property owner must take up in order to upgrade their existing set-up to meet efficiency standards. It's quite costly, and, you know, quite honestly, only wealthier people can afford this. But in the scheme of things, what we're basically getting people to do is take out a mortgage for an additional piece of infrastructure in their home. Albeit the long-term goal is energy savings and more reliance off the grid, the truth of the matter is that it is very expensive. If we were to see a natural cycle in the economy of scale and things like that that happen over time with these things, it might be cheaper for people, even just a few years from now, to do this on their own without the need for these subsidies.

As much as everyone would love to replace existing windows, upgrade insulation as this would not only provide added comfort in winter but also reflect the savings in energy bills, again, people just have other priorities, and that's the truth of the matter. Coming from Fort McMurray, I see that many people have been laid off, lost their good jobs. They've moved back to everywhere from New Brunswick and Newfoundland to the Lower Mainland, British Columbia, and they're struggling trying to pay their mortgages, to get food on the table. And it's not just nation-wide. A lot of those people that are affected by the shortage of jobs in Fort McMurray are from right across our province as well, and they have more immediate monetary priorities, especially when there are carbon taxes to pay.

Green infrastructure is expensive, and understandably Albertans aren't queuing up to install solar panels on their roofs while still in the grips of a recession and high unemployment. In essence, Bill 10 provides the tools for property owners to be able to finance renewable energy products and allow repayment to be collected through their municipal property tax bill.

My first concern on the forthcoming list of concerns is the fact that we as legislators are being asked to simply trust the government on what regulations and plans to put in place to govern this program. I, for one, do not feel comfortable granting my approval to a program where I've not had the opportunity to thoroughly study nor debate and vote on the regulations that will be put into action. As legislators our responsibility is to remain transparent to the public, and I feel that my duty is not to blindly vote on unseen regulations.

Furthermore, as eligibility is based primarily on property information rather than on income and credit scores, it could mean that PACE would be relatively easy to qualify for, but it poses a problem as the program is structured as a tax assessment rather than a loan. A loan is considered based on a thorough risk assessment with a repayment plan and based on a credit assessment that indicates an individual's history with finances.

7:50

Although this structure would allow a lot more people to qualify, I have to wonder how the government intends on handling situations when the money is not capable of being repaid or perhaps if someone intends to bite off more than they can chew; that is to say, they'd like to undertake more than they are capable of repaying on their municipal property taxes relative to the valuation of their property and the regressive nature of property taxation, particularly for fixed- and low-income owners. I find this troubling as the structure of assessment for the approvals of these loans relies heavily on the property owner being encouraged to commence green energy upgrades and then being stuck with the tax bill for the next many years as there was no income assessment done beforehand to ensure that this was a viable undertaking.

Now, tying these last two points together, there seems to be nothing governing a situation where someone who has not finished their payments on a PACE property tax sells their property. As, once more, the regulations are not up for debate or voting, we cannot discuss the matter of disclosing the remaining PACE property tax when selling a property. The lack of this takes away from the transparency of the process, which makes me very wary. I certainly hope there will be no abuse of the system, no intentional malice, but as you know, Madam Speaker, the onus is on the buyer to ensure that everything is in good order and that they've done their due diligence.

I fear that there may be loopholes in this bill. This is why I urge all of my colleagues in this House to refer the bill to committee, as there are clearly some gaps. I could foresee that there will be some concern from Albertans on what those mean for their property tax bills as well as for when the time comes to sell their home and enter the market for a new one. We don't want to introduce uncertainty and distress into the housing market. Therefore, I continue to urge that all the members of this House vote in favour of this referral amendment. [interjection] Thank you, sir.

We are continually seeing further lack of clarity when analyzing what this has the potential to do to mortgages. As a PACE property tax has a likelihood of increasable interest rates, we may see more onerous stress tests imposed by the federal government. We could well see this program affecting property owners' ability to obtain a mortgage. Of course, I believe this is territory that even the most green-minded of us don't want to dabble in. It has the potential to affect our future abilities to obtain a mortgage. The problem is that we just don't know. It may have an impact; it may not. But I'd much rather hear an answer that comes out of an intense study from committee than what the government can come up with here on the spot.

One aspect of this bill that staunchly troubles me is that it exempts municipal borrowing associated with the PACE program from counting against the municipality's debt limit. The debt limit is in place to ensure viability of Alberta's municipalities, Madam Speaker. Currently a municipality's total debt cannot exceed 1.5 times their revenue, and debt servicing cannot exceed .25 times the revenue of the municipality. I find this portion makes absolutely no sense. Is the government suddenly making fiscally counterintuitive decisions to play to their green energy agenda? Is renewable energy debt not still debt? Does it not count as money spent if it's going towards something that this government wants to boast about? Or are they trying to draw attention away from how much their green program spending has racked up debt? I found this portion particularly mind-boggling. If it impacts a municipality's debt-servicing costs as well as its economic viability, how can the government be giving them the mandate to spend unrestrainedly?

Let's talk about the cost of the program. The government has stated that they intend for Energy Efficiency Alberta to be the administrator of the PACE program and that the government will bear the cost to administer this program. However, Energy Efficiency Alberta is a provincial agency funded by Alberta taxpayers, in essence yet another roundabout way for the government to take money out of the pockets of hard-working Albertans.

Furthermore, the administrative costs of the PACE program are unknown, and I have yet to consider where the brunt of any defaulted loans would fall. The bill seems to have a premise that seeks to help Albertans, but in the process it creates more problems than it patches. I firmly believe that this bill needs to be thoroughly revised in committee. Albertans need to have a voice in the process as well as municipalities, that seemingly will be bearing the majority of unintended consequences.

In closing, I urge all my colleagues in the House today to please support the referral amendment and send this bill to committee. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Not under 29(2)(a), Madam Speaker. I'm moving a motion to move to one-minute bells for the remainder of the evening.

The Deputy Speaker: You wouldn't be able to make that motion in the context of this bill as you've already spoken to the bill.

Mr. Nixon: Got you. Okay.

The Deputy Speaker: You moved the amendment.

Mr. Mason: Madam Speaker, being considerably more innocent than the Opposition House Leader, I would like to try my luck to move to one-minute bells for the remainder of the evening.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Deputy Speaker: I've also had a request to revert briefly to Introduction of Guests, which also requires unanimous consent.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests

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

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the House. It's my great pleasure to introduce a couple that many of you might know. They've been here virtually every year for the last 14 years, standing up for farm workers and the rights of farm workers that have been expressed through Bill 6. Eric Musekamp and Darlene Dunlop have committed their lives in the last 15 years to seeing the resolution of this important basic right given to farm workers and the protection of farm owners and ranch owners from litigation. I'm very delighted to see them here. They're here, of course, to see the Governor General, who wants to meet with them and talk to them about their leadership on this tomorrow, hopefully. Thank you very much to the House for giving them a warm Legislature welcome.

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

Bill 10

An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements

(continued)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak to Bill 10, An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements, or, rather, to the referral motion that we're looking at right now. We look to a referral amendment to study and get a deeper understanding of the bill that's placed before us. It's a chance for us to be able to take a look at the bill as legislators but also to invite people in, stakeholders, to provide more consultation and to get a better understanding of how the bill is going to impact Albertans. I would speak in favour of sending this to committee.

I'd start first by, I guess, saying thank you to the Minister of Municipal Affairs for bringing forward this piece of legislation. I believe that his heart is in the right place. I know that we've had many conversations in the past about alternative energy sources. We would both probably agree that an end goal we would like to see is net zero communities that have the capacity to be environmentally responsible.

Madam Speaker, I guess I would put some caveats on that. I believe that they need to be cost-effective and cost-efficient, that net zero shouldn't be dependent on the largesse of the taxpaying citizens of this province, and that at the end of the day whatever we're looking at does not place the property owner or, for that matter, the government at risk as a result of those programs.

Madam Speaker, we know that there are times when property owners and the people that purchase property can place themselves at risk, and the government allows them to place themselves at risk when we start to take a look at the parameters that they allow for taking out mortgages.

We could talk about the subprime mortgage housing bubble that we saw in about 2007, when consumers were allowed to take on very high debt at low interest rates that would eventually increase, and we realized that they would have insufficient income in order to handle the mortgage and the interest payments and would have to hand their properties over. So we can see that if we don't do things wisely when it comes to probably the most important purchase you're going to make in your life, your house, we can get ourselves into trouble.

8:00

When we take a look at Bill 10, Madam Speaker, I would suggest that we need to be careful. Bill 10 enables municipalities to pass bylaws creating what we call a property assessed clean energy, or PACE, program. This property assessed clean energy program provides a mechanism for property owners to finance energy efficiency, whether we're talking about renewable energy or whether we're talking about water conservation projects or simply upgrades to their property, with the idea of creating a more energy-efficient property in which they can live.

So far it's sounding pretty good, a good idea for a program. Anyone who owns a property is more than likely going to be looking forward to saving some money on power bills and on water bills as they take advantage of the PACE program, you know, the former of which is becoming much more expensive, obviously. When we take a look at the energy bills that we're starting to see as a result of the NDP government, they're just starting to become more and more and more expensive. For many people this might be

a program that they look forward to as a way of sort of hedging themselves from the poor policies of the NDP.

But back to the legislation here. The PACE program provides the mechanism for financing the types of projects that we've just been talking about by allowing the repayment of the monies that are being put forward for these renewable projects and for the water conservation projects. The repayment will be collected through the property owner's municipal tax bill. This, in theory, could be seen as an innovative way to pay for these upgrades, a new avenue of financing for cash-strapped property owners, if you will. However, as you drill deeper and deeper into the details, more and more concerns begin to arise.

That's why I would argue that as we begin to talk about these concerns, we need to think about referring this to committee. This bill and the concerns that we're going to be talking about need to be addressed at a deeper level. We need to ask the right questions. As legislators sometimes that means that we need to go back to the drawing board and that we need to start studying the bill and that we need to start asking the appropriate questions that will help us to make sure this program truly does meet the needs of Albertans. Maybe we need to bring in some of the banking and financial institutions to come talk to us, to find out if we're placing Albertans at risk through this program. Maybe we need to bring in the builders that, in some cases, will be front-loading this onto the backs of the property owners. We need to start asking these kinds of questions, do our due diligence, and make sure we've done the consultation before we start passing this bill into legislation.

The first major example that I would like to highlight was given to me by the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, and it deals with what happens in the case of a foreclosure, Madam Speaker. Let's use what's an oversimplified example – I'll grant you that – but for now let's just use this as an example. Let's look at an individual that has a \$30,000 solar panel installation built onto the top of their house. They finance this through the PACE program. This individual finances the \$30,000 for the solar panel installation over a 10-year period of time at \$3,000 per year. Well, this individual perhaps has overextended themselves, or they've lost their job, or there are some other unforeseen events that occur. Essentially, Madam Speaker, sometimes life just happens. Now that individual finds themselves in a position where they're having a hard time making their mortgage payments. Banks are usually pretty good. They try to work with the individual, but sometimes many mortgage payments can be missed, to the point where eventually the bank feels like they have no other option than to foreclose on that property.

Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, this is not something that in the last three years has been uncommon in my community of Drayton Valley. I've talked to former students. I've talked to friends. I've talked to acquaintances. I've had people come in. I remember one lady coming into my office and begging me: "What can we do? I'm going to lose my house." She'd lost her job. She'd maxed out everything. I saw her about three and a half months later, when I went to the Drayton Valley parade that we have in the summer. She was sitting on the side of the road as the parade was just waiting to get started. She walked up to me, and she said, "Do you remember me?" I said, "Yeah, I do." She said, "Well, I lost my house last week." There were tears in her eyes, and there were tears in mine. My heart was just breaking.

So we need to make sure that we do our due diligence, that we make sure that this program doesn't set people up for failure. Madam Speaker, we've seen at times that programs like this, as in the United States, have set people up for failure and have created problems. I don't know if you've seen the photos, but I've seen photos of houses that have been foreclosed. Sometimes before the person leaves, those houses are stripped bare. Sometimes they've

pulled the copper out, the pipes. Sometimes they've pulled out the electrical wires. With houses that are being foreclosed, sometimes people, in their anger and their disappointment and their frustration and in order to try to get as much as they can before they leave, break the law and damage the facility. That bank has to take over a house that is, in some cases, hard to sell. Sinks, toilets, light bulbs: anything of value is pulled out before they leave the house.

Well, for a house where the property owner has invested through the PACE program and put in, for instance, say, a \$30,000 solar installation, what would be the first thing to go, Madam Speaker? Well, I would suggest that this individual, who is not too careful about whether he's on the right side of the law or not, is going to be looking at that expensive solar installation, and he's going to take it right off the top of the roof and into the back of his truck, never to be seen again. What then happens to the remaining money, which has to be paid through the property taxes to fund that installation? Who's on the hook for that money? Is the municipality really going to have to go after an individual who has, clearly, no regard for the financial contracts or commitments to which they've agreed?

This and many other questions continue to abound with this legislation, Madam Speaker. That's why we need to talk with the builders. That's why we need to talk with the stakeholders. We need to make sure that before we pass this piece of legislation, we've used all of the mechanisms that we have in the power of this Legislature, that we refer this to committee, that we allow ourselves to have the time to do due diligence on this bill.

However, let's give credit where credit is due. There are some very positive aspects of this legislation despite the fact that I have some overall opposition to Bill 10. Municipalities have already collected property taxes in the past, so the burden to municipalities is pretty limited in that way. Energy Efficiency Alberta will administer the plan, so again municipalities are not responsible for the administrative costs, which is a key factor, Madam Speaker, that we all need to be wary of because all orders of government need to be committed to working together and to not adding additional burdens onto the other levels of government.

I wish the federal government would have some consideration and show more leadership in that area. Again, that's one of the reasons why we should be referring this to committee. We expect and we need to have all levels of government, whether municipal, federal, or provincial, working together in concert with each other to ensure that these kinds of programs succeed. If we send this back to committee, a referral to the committee, we could take the time to consult with the municipalities, we could take the time to consult with the federal government, and we could work together as Canadians, as Albertans, as fellow citizens through this legislation and make sure that it is indeed serving the needs of all levels of government so that the property owners, at the end of the day, benefit from this, their largest purchase, probably, in their life.

8:10

Now, an additional strength of this legislation is that it does not impact property owners' ability to borrow from lending institutions. Lending institutions will be involved, but the money is not coming from the municipalities.

Who would not want to have a solar panel on their roof and put electricity back onto the grid or have their hot water heated by solar, maybe have a windmill in the backyard? Madam Speaker, I know I've thought of that often over the course of my life, and that's why I'm not averse to this bill at all. I believe that the more self-sufficient we can make individuals in their property ownership, the better off we're going to be as a society. And if we can do it cost-efficiently, in a way that makes economic sense, giving people the capacity to reduce their carbon footprint and to generate their own

electricity and put that together into the pockets and into the lives of people that own their own property, that's a good thing. So I'm not averse to this, but I do say that we need to make sure that we're doing it very, very wisely.

You know, maybe you have appliances in your house or machines that are drawing a lot of current and driving up your power bills. Well, the PACE program could potentially help to replace them. Maybe you're trying to protect a wetland on your property in order to conserve drinking water, or maybe your home needs an energy audit to find the leaks and then perform some renovations to help keep the heat in during the winter. This program, Madam Speaker, if executed properly, could help address all of these issues.

So it's not that I don't see the many benefits that this program could bring, but I believe that we do need to make sure that as we go through this bill, we are indeed making the best legislation we possibly can. That's why in sending it to committee and letting the committee do its work – let a nonpartisan committee bring in the stakeholders that we can consult – we can educate ourselves, and we can pursue the best possible piece of legislation that we can create in this House.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the bill? Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise and speak to Bill 10, An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements across the province.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, I should have clarified. You're speaking to the amendment still?

Dr. Swann: Yes.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Dr. Swann: Madam Speaker, I think this is a bill that many of us recognize has important leadership and bold initiatives around a very critical issue for us, the climate change reality, and the need to incent some of the changes both in individual and in commercial operations. The fact that the last member was speaking against it in relation to financial liabilities I think is unsupportable because this is clearly going to be attached in the Municipal Government Act, to tax repayment. This is a very forward-thinking way, and it's been used in Calgary by Enmax to incent solar panels on their roofs for some time, where they recoup the cost of solar panels on the basis of their premium or the monthly instalments that they charge their customers.

The same principle is involved here. It would be repaid through the building owner's property taxes. Very little risk, and there's a real opportunity to do three things: one, improve the energy efficiency of homes and offices in the province, thereby over the long term saving that individual's or organization's finances; secondly, reduce carbon emissions; and thirdly, stimulate the economy and jobs, which is what we keep hearing is something that is desperately needed in Alberta to move away from our carbon-dependent province.

I think it behooves us to move with the times. Government has been a laggard in this area for decades. We see important leadership coming from other provinces like Quebec and B.C., other countries in the world like the United Kingdom, for example. I think there's an opportunity here to take another step without any risk if you believe that the MDs, the municipalities can properly bring in the

changes that are needed to ensure that these investments – and I call them investments advisedly – will be repaid through a properly imposed tax subsidy on individuals who choose to make this kind of investment and both stimulate local economies and do their part in reducing the climate emissions that are such a big part of this current reality.

I think the Liberal caucus is quite clear that this has very little risk and much, much to benefit Alberta. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), any questions or comments?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Seeing none, we're ready for the question?

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 8:16 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Gill	Loewen	Strankman
Gotfried	Nixon	Yao
Hanson	Smith	

8:20

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Horne	Phillips
Carlier	Jansen	Piquette
Ceci	Kleinstauber	Rosendahl
Connolly	Larivee	Sabir
Dach	Loyola	Schmidt
Dang	Luff	Schreiner
Drever	Malkinson	Shepherd
Eggen	Mason	Starke
Feehan	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha
Fitzpatrick	McKitrick	Swann
Goehring	Miller	Turner
Hinkley	Nielsen	Woollard
Hoffman	Payne	

Totals:	For – 8	Against – 38
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[Motion on amendment lost]

The Deputy Speaker: Back on the main bill, the hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I will move that we adjourn debate on Bill 10.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 1

Energy Diversification Act

[Adjourned debate May 9: Loyola]

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

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to Bill 1 this evening. The government and the minister proponent of this bill are continually looking for ways to

position themselves as the only champions of economic diversification. Indeed, there was no economic diversification until this government came forth with some of these bills and other great initiatives. Of course, before they took office, one hundred per cent of Alberta's economy was based on oil and gas, and there was a drill bit in the back of every one of those dually pickup trucks out there, and that's all we had in this province. That was what we were, a one-trick pony. Not one single person in this province worked outside of that industry, and our government couldn't afford to even keep lights on if oil dropped by \$5 a barrel.

That might seem a little facetious, Madam Speaker, and of course it is, but that is basically the crux of every government talking point we've been fed on this legislation: we diversify, and nobody else does or did. Of course, all you have to do is to go on the Economic Development and Trade website to find, right on the front page if I'm not mistaken, that from 1986 to 2016 Alberta's GDP grew from \$59.6 billion to \$314.9 billion. During those 30 years oil and gas and mining decreased as a percentage of total GDP from 23.2 per cent to just 17 per cent. Now, that sounds a little bit like diversification to me. Further, the construction sector grew from a 7 per cent share of GDP in 1986 to 10.7 per cent in 2016; the finance, insurance, and real estate sectors from 13.5 to 16.7 per cent; and business and commercial services from 6.6 to 11.7 per cent, almost double. Perhaps one of the members opposite could jog my memory, but I'm not sure who was in government for 29 of those 30 years. During that period a lot of diversification took place. Surprise, surprise.

I would also like to provide a quick quote from a paper written by Dr. Bev Dahlby and Mukesh Khanal at the policy school at the University of Calgary. This paper was published in January 2018, not long ago.

In 1997, the oil and gas sector accounted for 35.81 per cent of total Albertan economic output. By 2009, that share was 24.95 [per cent], a decline of 10.86 percentage points.

That also sounds to me like a significant decline of the oil and gas industry and a rise, surprisingly, in diversification in those other industries, many of which I have referred to earlier. In the release for that article Mr. Khanal also stated:

Research shows that economic output in Alberta today is as diverse as in Ontario. Alberta's economic output has become quite diversified in the last 20 years, and that has resulted in a 21 per cent decline in the volatility of economic output.

Now, I know that members opposite are quite fond of quoting the distinguished members of the policy school at the University of Calgary, as they should be. The policy school in Calgary is a fantastic group of high-level academics who contribute extremely valuable and insightful information to the public policy debate. I think we can all agree on that, ministers. I personally enjoy this paragraph by Drs. Mintz and MacKinnon from their October 2017 paper published through that very same policy school. They're comparing this government's actions to those of the Romanow government in Saskatchewan.

In contrast, the Alberta NDP has raised taxes for larger businesses and high-income earners, increased environmental and other regulations, imposed a carbon tax, significantly increased the minimum wage and has run large deficits . . .

thanks to the minister,

. . . raising the prospect of future tax increases to balance the budget. Taken as a package, the message to potential investors is that doing business in Alberta is becoming more difficult and . . . expensive.

Very interesting. More difficult and expensive: that, Madam Speaker, is why we've seen \$34.8 billion and climbing of foreign direct investment leave this province. The bucket has a lot of holes in it.

Prior to this government taking office in Alberta, Alberta was able to grow in part because of previous governments who worked extremely hard to make Alberta the most business-friendly environment in Canada and perhaps in North America and one of the few debt-free jurisdictions in the world. One of the few debt-free jurisdictions in the world, Madam Speaker. That attracts investment because people know that they will not be burdened by someone reaching more deeply into their pockets, year after year, to try and balance those budgets, to try and pay back irresponsible debt. Corporate tax rates were reduced, personal income tax rates were reduced, and the economy continued to grow, and that created jobs.

But we've heard from the minister of economic development many times, saying how without programs like the ones being introduced in Bill 1, the economy will nosedive. Well, that's not what happened in the past. We attracted. We were the most business-friendly and investor-friendly jurisdiction in Canada, in North America, a beacon from around the world, where international investment was attracted.

Madam Speaker, I think of the international investors, of which I hear many say: "Well, it doesn't matter. They left, and Canadians bought those assets." Sadly, those foreign investors are the canaries in the gold mine or maybe the coal mine – maybe that's an appropriate comparison – leaving this province because they detect that early. They have the international options, much more than the Canadian companies. Sadly, what we see after that is the Canadian companies following suit because they're not stupid either. They look at the big international companies, that have maybe more robust analyses and more choices, and they have a chance to go and look at those companies and say: "You know what? Maybe we'll invest a little bit more in the United States. Maybe we'll look overseas. Maybe we'll increase our drilling program there or build a new pipeline there." That's why we're not getting investment here and that diversification we so very much and dearly need.

Minister, this is curious to me. If I recall correctly, in 2013-2014 – and at that time I was employed with Calgary Economic Development – Alberta created fully 87 per cent of all the new jobs in Canada, in fact 82,300 new jobs, and all of that with a supposed competitive disadvantage because we didn't have the diversification tools that we're being thrown here. Alberta had the highest median wages in the country – not the highest mean; the highest median – indicating that the data was not being skewed because of a select few who were making inordinate amounts of money, because a growing economy isn't all that valuable.

Every day work-seeking Albertans are unemployed, Madam Speaker. If we cannot generate the wealth and thereby the tax revenues to balance our budgets without reaching deeper and deeper and deeper into the pockets of hard-working Albertans, hard-working, middle-class, mortgage paying job type Albertans, kind of like what we have right now, where the Minister of Finance says, "Things are looking up, up, up," while Albertans are telling the government that they aren't feeling the recovery and widely respected pollsters are telling the government that they are coming across as out of touch, out of touch with everyday Albertans when they say that they're making life better for Albertans, making life better at the same time as being out of touch with those very people who are looking for a better life, looking for better incomes to support their families, looking to create long-term wealth – and it saddens me when I see that we have a generation here that's going to pass on debt to the next generation and not a little bit of wealth to carry them through and to give them a hand up in the future.

Madam Speaker, the government has decided that to turn the tide, they will introduce Bill 1, Energy Diversification Act. As a whole I think Bill 1 and Bill 2 are focusing on the trees at the expense of

nurturing a mighty forest. Both bills are basically applying a Band-Aid to what I see as a critical injury, throwing candy after taking away that plate of meat and potatoes that this province once had.

8:30

Choose your own metaphor, Madam Speaker. They all paint a picture of trying to undo a failure of economic, regulatory, and fiscal fundamentals, because it's the fiscal and economic fundamentals that attract investors when they come looking and look around the world for places to invest. The smart ones aren't looking for somebody throwing something at them today that they can take away tomorrow. What they're looking for are strong economics – tax, fiscal economics, and fiscal responsibility – that do not layer burden on them down the road. They can see it coming. They have economists. They're not stupid.

We wouldn't even need programs like this, Madam Speaker, if this government had not so severely damaged Alberta's attractiveness for business and investment and business and investor confidence. Whoever thought that the term "political risk" would be used in the same sentence as Alberta? Political risk: usually that's reserved for banana republics and third-world countries with unstable political and economic environments and war and famine and poverty going on, but, no, we're talking about political risk in Alberta – in Alberta – because of this Alberta NDP.

I would also add that it's telling that the NDP is only introducing this after three years in government, and in those three years they raised taxes on job creators dramatically here, by 20 per cent, Madam Speaker. You know what? With the debt that they're building, \$96 billion in debt, somebody is going to be reaching deeper into those pockets. Even if those pockets are able to generate wealth, somebody from that government will be reaching deeper in there to try and fix the tide of red ink that is washing across this province. It's incredible to see that.

Increased red tape and regulation for those job creators, imposition of a carbon tax, massively hiked minimum wage despite the protestation of businesses across Alberta: I hear from them every day, restaurateurs, small businesses that say that the owners of these businesses are putting in 70-hour weeks and taking home no wages, Madam Speaker. This government will tell us that they're not managing the businesses well and that they're doing something wrong, that they're taking advantage of people. But they're out of touch. They're tone deaf to what we're hearing from job creators and investors.

It's hard to see how the programs contained in this bill will draw much-needed investment back in any meaningful way from long-term investors, long-term investors who'd look at the fundamentals. That is the crux of the issue with the government bringing in legislation like Bill 1, Madam Speaker. The government has gone out of its way to erode, seriously erode the Alberta advantage. They have introduced cost after cost after cost, and they wonder why the Finance minister's talking points and debt tolerance are so different than the experience and priorities of everyday Albertans.

I find it hard to believe that anybody doesn't think about how they would run their household or run a business. Madam Speaker, if we ran our households the way this government runs their government, we'd all be on the street. We'd all be on the streets because we wouldn't be able to afford our homes. The businesses that we run would be out of business, and we'd lay off all those workers, and all the paycheques would be gone because nobody can live on that kind of red ink.

You know, Madam Speaker, I hear the heckling going on from over there, but you know what? Honestly, when you take on a mortgage on your home, guess what you do? You start paying it next week. You don't push it down the road to your grandkids so

you can live in a big house today and say: it's okay; the grandkids will pay for it. That's so irresponsible.

If the government had not implemented all of their negative policies in the first place – dare I mention the all pain, no gain carbon tax – there would be no argument, justification, nor need for programs like these because Alberta would have no hurdles or issues attracting and retaining investment, as we did for many, many years, or worries about competitiveness in all market sectors and industry, including capital markets, Madam Speaker.

You know, I'll go back to that bucket. If you drill 20 holes in a bucketful of water and then you take that, add Bill 1 and Bill 2 and other bills, and you try and plug, and you get two, three, four of them plugged, your economic bucket is not going to hold a whole lot of water. So they keep dumping it in the top, Madam Speaker, but the holes in the bottom are just too many, and that bucket just keeps dropping down and keeps dropping down.

Mr. Ceci: And you drilled all the holes.

Mr. Gottfried: You drilled the holes. We didn't drill the holes. You drilled the holes in the bucket.

That is essentially what the government has done. They took a bad situation, and they made it worse. Now they're turning around and pretending like everything is rosy and that these Band-Aid, candylike, hole-plugging programs will save Alberta and attract back the investment we truly need for a robust and sustainable recovery, yes, a return to the Alberta advantage, that so many people are yearning for in this province. They know they won't get it from this government. Madam Speaker, those arguments – and, ministers, your buckets do not hold water.

Madam Speaker, what Alberta needs is to recommit to becoming the most business- and investor-friendly jurisdiction in North America. We need to get back to making sure that the world knows that Alberta is open and looking for business and welcomes new investment and that we respect investors and the risks that they take, the jobs they create and that we do not jealously covet the profits they earn, those rewards which balance off with the risk.

I often say that Hong Kong, which is kind of like my second home, has been voted the most free-enterprise economy in the world for 26 years running. Once we get Alberta back on track, we'll do that.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills: it's such a difficult constituency because it doesn't exist anymore, I guess. That's what makes it tough.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 1, the Energy Diversification Act. This bill put forward by the government seeks to incentivize investment in Alberta, and upon studying this bill, I see that it focuses most directly on the petrochemical industry in Alberta.

Let's talk about energy diversification. You'd kind of think that it's a new idea, listening to this government, but here are just a few of the diversification or refinery projects that I've worked on personally throughout my career. Imperial Oil refinery, Strathcona: started on that in about, I want to say, 1980. The Gulf refinery: I worked on that one as well. That's out in Strathcona as well. The Husky upgrader, Lloydminster; the Shell Scotford refinery out in Fort Saskatchewan, which is one of the largest refineries in Canada, I believe; Dow Chemical, Fort Saskatchewan; Redwater fertilizer plant; Sherritt Gordon fertilizer, Fort Saskatchewan. There are

many, many more out there that I didn't actually get a chance to work on. My point is that all of these or most of these projects were started back in the '70s and '80s, long before the NDP government and their Energy Diversification Act, so the idea that this is anything new to Alberta is just a little bit ludicrous.

Although the government has brought forth a number of different programs, some that may appear beneficial even, it's clear that the vast majority of Albertans do not support the programs proposed in Bill 1. A part of this bill that I find troubling is that it enables the APMC, the Alberta Petroleum Marketing Commission, to use financial tools available such as loan guarantees and equity investments. This is not in the best interest of taxpayers, nor is it in the best interest of the industry. I have serious concerns, if we are allowing the APMC to guarantee loans, in the case that a company goes bankrupt or defaults on a loan. Alternatively, should the APMC be in the gambling game at all in terms of loans? This strikes me as a power with which a public agency would be in a unilateral position in relation to any other controlling body and raises a question about how much power we should really be giving to Alberta's public agencies.

Furthermore, not only does it enable APMC to use financial tools; it also enables the minister to use any financial tools to establish programs that support economic growth in energy diversification, which include royalty credits and grants. We've all seen how things can go off the rails when it comes to getting into debt here in the province. I believe my colleague mentioned that \$96 billion is what the projected debt is going to be when this government is finished.

However, what we've seen from the minister thus far is a track record of ineffective, inefficient use of money. We've seen money spent on the early closures of coal plants which should have been in operation for another 30 to 40 years, costing the taxpayers \$1.36 billion. On the program front we have seen the true effect of these programs on Albertans, whose tax dollars would be better off left in their pockets to begin with. I feel that until we get concrete answers that show Albertans that their money will be used in the highest value-per-dollar way, the minister should not have the mandate to spend more taxpayer dollars on these unspecified programs.

Further to my questioning of their use of tax dollars, another question has arisen here as well. As we are investing in the partial upgrading to free up pipeline space on existing pipelines, which in and of itself would sound like a benefit of the bill, I'm at a loss as to why we are not investing in full refining instead. Like I said, we have many examples, that I've given, that refining has been taking place here in Alberta. We know how to do it, we know how to build them, and we know how to deal with the weather conditions.

8:40

If our target is to expand our market and increase our ability to refine and export, this would be the sensible route, although I suppose that it is telling that the NDP introduced this after having already been in government for three years. They have spent the last three years implementing detrimental policies that drove out investment, decimated jobs, crippled the economy, and shattered both investor and Albertan confidence. Now we have to throw incentives back to try and get the energy industry back on its feet. A lot of the bills put forth by the NDP that we've seen come through this House have been reactionary to a mess they've created with another one or more of their own bills, and this one is no different.

Madam Speaker, trying to stick all these patches on something inherently flawed just gives you have a pothole-riddled highway with Band-Aids scattered on top. I believe I sent pictures to the Transportation minister last year of highway 28, where they

sprayed black topcoat over top and then painted yellow lines right over top of the potholes.

Trying to stick all these patches on something inherently flawed when it looked like the economy was at the end of its roll, the NDP started poking it with a stick. Perhaps it would be more effective to start repealing harmful NDP policies. Addressing the root concerns of investors in dealing with our province, such as the detrimental policies brought about in the last few years, would bring back Albertan confidence whereas Bill 1 simply reads like a distraction from the NDP's record.

From the time the NDP were elected until the introduction of this bill and still to this day, they have spent their entire time in government raising taxes on job creators, which are effectively those who largely stimulate the economy. We've talked many, many times in this House that the only true source of revenue is from the private sector and people working for the private sector. It is unsurprising that they need a bill to legislate the need for investor attraction considering that their policies were the ones that had them running for the hills in the first place. They increased red tape, imposed a disastrous carbon tax, imposed administrative hikes, corporate tax hikes, and put out bill after bill indicating that it would be their way or the highway, and what did investors choose? Highway 1 right out of the province.

Moreover, Bill 1 has no framework set out to address regulatory roadblocks and red tape that are holding up project permits. As per the EDAC report document's recommendation 3.2, this bill does not address those sorts of delays. In terms of increasing investor confidence, this bill does a wavering job of even laying out specifics in which it will accomplish its mandate.

Madam Speaker, I'm having trouble truly believing that relatively modest loan guarantees and grants that will be spread over eight years have the potential for significant impact in re-attracting much-needed investment to Alberta. It's going to take a lot more than that to get all of the investment dollars and foreign investment dollars back into Alberta that left this country because of their policies, especially since, in a legislative sense, nothing has changed. The carbon tax is still in full swing and growing. We are a jurisdiction with significant red tape and significant cost of doing business that result in nothing but dead-weight loss, a gain to absolutely no one, not the government, not the company, not the average Albertan.

Therefore, with these policies remaining in place, I struggle to see how we could by definition be competitive with other jurisdictions. We've got a lot of catching up to do. They have the good sense to be economically attractive to investment by creating an attractive, open, free-market environment without the need for government incentive programs. The simple need for government programs demonstrates an intrinsic undesirability. It means that this jurisdiction is not a favourable environment and the government is desperate. To reiterate, it would be far more effective to start repealing those harmful NDP policies. Our leader has spoken many times in the House about how foreign investment is going to places like Iran and Kazakhstan rather than coming to Alberta. That says something about our policies here in this province.

Instead, we keep seeing the government spend money it doesn't have and drive up debt. On this side of the House we stand against the \$800 million in loan guarantees for partial upgrading and the \$500 million in loan guarantees for a feedstock infrastructure program. We also oppose the \$200 million in grants for partial upgrading.

Madam Speaker, this government should not keep scrambling to fix problems it has caused in the past, thus causing multiple other problems in the process. The best solution to restore investor confidence and get Alberta back on track is to repeal the tax hikes,

reduce regulations, and create favourable conditions under which investors can flow back into our jurisdiction. Rather than pushing Bill 1 and ballooning our debt more and more, I wish that the NDP would take a step back and analyze the much better solutions this side of the House has proposed.

I urge all members of the House to vote against Bill 1. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to Bill 1?

Seeing none, the hon. minister to close debate. No? Okay.

Are you ready for the question?

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 8:46 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hoffman	Nielsen
Carlier	Horne	Payne
Ceci	Jansen	Phillips
Connolly	Kleinstauber	Piquette
Dach	Larivee	Rosendahl
Dang	Loyola	Sabir
Drever	Luff	Schmidt
Eggen	Malkinson	Schreiner
Feehan	Mason	Shepherd
Fitzpatrick	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha
Goehring	McKittrick	Turner
Hinkley	Miller	Woollard

8:50

Against the motion:

Gill	Loewen	Starke
Gotfried	Nixon	Strankman
Hanson	Smith	Yao

Totals: For – 36 Against – 9

[Motion carried; Bill 1 read a second time]

Bill 17

Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2018

[Adjourned debate May 10: Mr. Panda]

The Deputy Speaker: Any members wishing to speak to Bill 17? The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Are you ready for another riveting speech?

An Hon. Member: Use the same speech.

Mr. Hanson: I'll just use the same speech and see if you notice. Sure. See how long it takes.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 17, the Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2018. I have risen more times than I can count in this Chamber to discuss this government's hastiness and lack of forethought.

An Hon. Member: Really?

Mr. Hanson: Yes, I have.

Rather than taking the time to meaningfully consult and consider all consequences and thoughtfully correct course when they discover inconsistencies, this government has bullishly railroaded through legislation despite constant warnings from the opposition, stakeholders, and experts on glaring problems. We saw it with Bill 6 on farm safety, we saw it with labour changes, we saw it with minimum wage increases, and we saw it with the carbon tax. They wouldn't listen to anyone.

These are just a small portion of examples that show that this government's dedication to ideological policy supersedes their dedication to careful, well-researched, well-thought-out, and thoroughly consulted legislation. Perhaps it's not surprising that after their frantic passage of laws over the last three years, we have seen at least two tax statutes amendment acts in the last year. I can imagine that there are accountants from the CRA who turn on Alberta legislative TV and curse the heavens when they see that the NDP are about to further complicate their jobs.

Madam Speaker, as we know, decisions have consequences and ripple effects. It is the duty of the government to take the time to think about how every pebble that they drop into the water will ripple out and impact Albertans. When you're ramming through legislation in the middle of the night and you have Albertans standing in the cold outside of this building protesting that legislation, it normally is a pretty good indication that you are not carefully considering the outcomes.

Madam Speaker, when this NDP government introduced the carbon tax, which is the largest tax hike in Alberta's history and a tax they did not run on in the last election, I might add, everyone told them to pump on the brakes. My colleagues on this side of the House warned that in the grips of our current recession, inflicting further costs on Albertans would cripple families. We talked about how the cost of everything that Albertans would buy would go up in price through the rise in direct costs of transporting goods and services that would be translated into indirect costs that would affect everything from the price of apples in the grocery store to the price of bus passes to the new hockey skates that families needed to buy for their kids.

I think that we've been proven right time and time again. The carbon tax makes absolutely everything more expensive, including the cost of gas at the pumps that Albertans use to fill up their cars, the cost of heating Albertans' homes so that they can survive through these bitterly cold winters, or the price of running recreational facilities that bring communities together. No one and nothing is safe from the reach of this carbon tax.

Albertans were told that it was not a regressive tax and that they would not be seeing increased costs as they would get rebate cheques in the mail – I believe they're saying that's two-thirds of Albertans – except, as we suspected, this government had not done their due diligence on this large and controversial piece of legislation. This is why last year we saw the government harassing grieving families by demanding that their deceased relatives repay their carbon tax rebate, and it is why this year the CRA realized that the government had inadvertently been calculating the income of dependent children into the net family income that is used to determine the carbon tax rebate, which was never supposed to happen.

Luckily for us, the folks at the CRA caught this glaring mistake and were able to prevent families from being underpaid in their carbon tax rebates from the administrative side. Unfortunately, though, this meant that the CRA was in noncompliance with Alberta law. Such silly mistakes with easy solutions, which could have been prevented had the government taken the necessary time to consult properly, bring in the experts.

Now, Madam Speaker, I know that I'm being hard on this government, and I know that tax statutes amendment acts are necessary from time to time to ensure that our legislation is in line with federal legislation and to make it easier for Albertans to navigate filing their taxes. The CRA has a tough but important job in maneuvering an incredibly complicated system of rules, credits, and exemptions. Ensuring that Alberta's legislation is up to date means that they are working off the best and newest information in order to ensure continued efficiency in tax collection, which is why I'll support this bill and why the legacy caucuses voted in favour of the latest Tax Statutes Amendment Act, Bill 15 in 2017. But I would like some clarity, specifically around the issue of tax credits for fishermen and farmers.

I don't know how many of the government members have spent significant time farming, but I can tell you that many in our caucus have dedicated their lives to feeding this country. Farming is an absolutely grueling but essential job, Madam Speaker. It requires great personal sacrifice, significant capital risk, long hours, and hard labour. Farmers out in my area right now are running their seed drills all night long. It's amazing to watch and incredible, the amount of acreage that they're putting in. Farmers put up their own personal capital to seed crops that are under constant threat from Mother Nature in order to ensure that when we go to the grocery store, there are wholesome options that are reasonably priced. Farming is not a cushy job, but I am so glad that this province is blessed to have so many great folks that are taking up that torch.

You can imagine, with all of that information, why I'm confused that this legislation, which I understand was passed at the federal level, undoes existing federal tax exemptions for farmers' and fishermen's insurers, which has been in place since 2006. This will likely lead to higher insurance rates for farmers. Did this government even raise these concerns with their friend Justin Trudeau? Did they advocate on behalf of our hard-working fishermen and farmers? Madam Speaker, if we look around Alberta, farmers have enough insurance rate headaches thanks to several years of droughts, wet springs, and early winters that we certainly don't need to burden them with further expenses.

I also want to highlight another question that I would like answered. Section 71 changes the notification requirements for government communication with a person regarding the individual's information return. From my reading of this, there is the potential that this amendment would release the minister and the department from having the responsibility to ensure the person receives the request. Is there any particular reason that this clause is necessary? It seems there's a risk that we could potentially have taxpayers who the government has requested further clarity from but who are unaware of this because they missed one letter.

I don't know about you, Madam Speaker, but I'm not always home before 5 p.m. In fact, I rarely am, which means that I frequently miss registered mail drop-offs. Since I travel frequently between Edmonton and St. Paul for my work, as many Albertans do, that means that sometimes mail can slip through the cracks. Add to that fact that we have a hard time getting registered mail

delivered out on the farm, and if you're not in the post office before 5 o'clock, you miss it completely.

If the government needs something from me in terms of my individual information return, should it not be their prerogative to ensure that they get in touch with me to give me the opportunity to fix whatever the issue may be? Perhaps I'm making a larger deal out of this than necessary, and please correct me if I'm wrong. I'd be grateful for some clarity on that.

Now, Madam Speaker, another group that I'm worried about are small and medium-sized businesses that may be impacted by this legislation's changes to the Corporate Tax Act. While these might be minor for massive organizations, who have accounting departments dedicated to ensuring that they're in compliance with tax legislation, there are far more small and medium-sized businesses in Alberta who do not have the luxury of a dedicated accounting team and may be negatively impacted by these changes. Has the government taken necessary precautions to ensure that these mom-and-pop shops would get the necessary information to remain compliant with the legislative changes?

The last available data from 2015 shows that there are 168,000 small and medium-sized businesses in Alberta, so while these changes may be small, their impact may be large. Has the government thought through what ripple effects may result from this legislation for the small and medium-sized business owners, that are the backbone of our community and our economy?

The point of me asking these questions, Madam Speaker, and my hope is that these questions will give the minister pause to double-check and hopefully avoid some of the unintended consequences that have been made in the past. Albertans deserve our very best, and I hope that with this legislation and a little diligence and fact checking, we are able to avoid being back here this time next year debating another tax statutes amendment act.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

9:00

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to Bill 17?

Seeing none, the hon. minister to close debate.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for the information that was presented. I'd like to close to debate.

[Motion carried; Bill 17 read a second time]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Well, good progress tonight. I would like to thank all members, and I'd particularly like to thank the opposition. We made, I think, quite a good effort tonight. I would move that we adjourn the House until 10 o'clock tomorrow morning, which is actually the right motion this time.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 9:01 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday morning, May 15, 2018

Day 30

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (NDP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees
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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

10 a.m.

Tuesday, May 15, 2018

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Prayers

The Acting Speaker: Good morning.

Let us each pray and reflect in our own way. May we always do the right thing unto others as we journey through this maze of life, where we are but servants chosen by others to bear the burdens, the challenges, and the duties of public life.

Please be seated.

Orders of the Day

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I request unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 3(1) to allow the Assembly to recess at this time and reconvene at 11 this morning.

[Unanimous consent granted]

[The Assembly adjourned from 10:01 a.m. to 11 a.m.]

The Acting Speaker: Please be seated.

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 2 Growth and Diversification Act

Mr. Cooper moved the motion for second reading of Bill 2, Growth and Diversification Act, be amended by deleting all of the words after “that” and substituting the following:

Bill 2, Growth and Diversification Act, be not now read a second time because the Assembly is of the view that the government should pursue other measures to reduce the cost of doing business in the province, including introduction of legislation to eliminate the carbon levy, which, if implemented, would make the measures proposed in the bill unnecessary.

[Debate adjourned on the amendment May 9: Mrs. Aheer speaking]

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, are any members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the chance to rise and talk a bit about our reasoned amendment. Of course, the reasoned amendment should be supported. It's totally logical and makes total sense because of what's happening in Alberta right now and what this three-year accidental government has done and what they haven't done. It's been said in here already that just repealing the carbon tax would do more to stimulate economic development in the economy than this picking winners and losers, this creating huge levels of bureaucracy to have yet another law.

I want to talk about the carbon tax for a sec and the number of people I bump into in coffee shops, restaurants, the number of people that e-mail me, text me, send letters to my constituency office that talk about the \$35 carbon tax on their bill when the electricity charge portion is \$50 or \$60. When they couple that with high administration charges, Madam Speaker, it's absolutely crystal clear that because this money comes out of so many hard-working

Albertans' pockets, so many family budgets, these people don't have enough left over to support the businesses in their community, to support their favourite charities, and to support each other. A reduction of the carbon tax, just in the everyday pocketbooks of everyday Albertans, everyone included, would go a long, long way to stimulate the economy.

Of course, when we realize that this money was transferred from the pockets of hard-working Albertans, from the balance sheets of successful and struggling small businesses to big renewable companies, to ideological phasing out of coal early, you just think of what we've got for this money, and it's absolutely huge, huge steps back. Madam Speaker, just the elimination of the carbon tax alone would ensure that Albertans can support their communities rather than support costly NDP lawsuits because of the early coal phase-outs, costly lawsuits that have absolutely destroyed our competitive advantage of cheap carbon.

Madam Speaker, of course, as we all know, the NDP expert that designed the climate leadership plan, the professor from the University of Alberta, mused about carbon leakage. He mused about industries, that instead of setting up in Alberta, instead of paying \$10 million, \$20 million, or \$40 million in carbon tax because of using a virtually clean fuel like natural gas, what they've done is that they've gone to Montana, Saskatchewan, Louisiana, and other jurisdictions.

Madam Speaker, in Medicine Hat we have a great company called Methanex, an absolutely great corporate citizen, a great company, a great corporation. About two weeks ago the announcement on the front page of the *Medicine Hat News* was that instead of expanding in Alberta, Methanex has picked Louisiana. Again, you see that when you talk to many of these people who were around the edges of similar boutique tax credits, their preference was: no, for government to get its spending in line, for government to get its taxation fair, for government to ensure that all businesses have an equal opportunity. Of course, they, like so many others, have voted with their feet.

Madam Speaker, I was in Beaumont last week, and I was meeting with three younger drilling executives, guys who had come into the coffee shop in their work clothes. I came up and I introduced myself and shook their hands, and I said, “Isn't it great news that oil hit \$72 a barrel?” The answer I got was: “It doesn't matter. We've just sent all our rigs to Texas. Taxes are too high here. Regulation is onerous.” It's unlikely they'll come back because – guess what? – the price of oil is also \$72 in Texas.

Then one of them talked about this government's huge spending ways, its \$8.8 billion operating deficit, its \$15 billion or 15 and a half billion dollars combined deficit, and how he knew that today's debt is just a future tax. He knew how businesses and younger people were likely to be the targets and the ones that faced the most burden of that huge debt. He knew full well that this government is headed towards \$96 billion, minimum, in debt in just three more years. Madam Speaker, and he was absolutely a believer that that was a future tax on him, a future tax on his kids, and a future tax on his industry, where other jurisdictions don't have that burden that has to be paid off by future generations.

Madam Speaker, that reminds me of that U of C report from about 10 days ago now. It's alarming – absolutely alarming – that a 16-year-old Albertan today is faced with a minimum of \$42,000 more tax just on the NDP interest on their overspending and their borrowing. I think it was a 32- or a 35-year-old that's going to be faced with \$50,000 in extra personal tax just on the interest – just on the interest – of this NDP government racking up huge debts. Of course, we know that interest rates have been rising a bit. Interest rates have gone up, and that problem may get worse. But, of course, that interest doesn't take into account the fact that today \$56 billion

of NDP borrowing has to be paid back, headed to \$96 billion in just three more years.

You know, Madam Speaker, these are the kinds of things where, if this government and this Finance minister would have the strength to get these things in order rather than kick the can down the road, rather than putting this on the backs of future Albertans, absolutely Bill 2 would not be necessary. We wouldn't need to pick winners and losers. That is why this reasoned amendment should be supported. It is not necessary.

The carbon tax and the debt are two other things that I have to touch on. I'm always amazed when I talk to oil and gas job providers, oil and gas executives, these great technological drillers that quite often stand 20 miles from the Northwest Territories border to make money and create wealth and create taxation for all of us, how they say that the layers and layers of NDP burden are bad enough – the carbon tax is terrible; the regulations are onerous – but the biggest reason that they're deciding to allocate scarce capital and create jobs in jurisdictions other than Alberta is what this government did initially. That was the 20 per cent increase in corporate taxes for Albertans.

Of course, that corporate tax rate, that 20 per cent increase, was on top of what the federal government already taxes these companies. When you compare it to other jurisdictions, when you have the opportunity to set up your firm and your jobs in other jurisdictions, the fact is that our biggest competitor to the south is just reducing taxes 40 per cent. That our government is increasing taxes 20 per cent while our major competitor is making it 40 per cent more affordable to do business there is absolutely unimaginable and that it was thought of as sound policy. It is obviously going to have serious consequences unless this government gets its house in order.

Let's talk about that for a second. Madam Speaker, I'm appalled that three years ago, when this government was elected, our good energy companies said that what takes a week to get approved in Texas and takes two weeks to get approved in Saskatchewan takes up to four years to get approved in Alberta. I'm appalled that I have seen no improvement on that. We had the Energy department at Public Accounts about two weeks ago, and there didn't seem to be any meat on the bone for ensuring something as simple as making sure that the regulations are proper, fair, and streamlined so that these people could allocate their capital and create their jobs in a timely manner. It appears that it's not even on this government's radar. My goodness. When Saskatchewan can do it in two weeks, surely to goodness we can at least beat Saskatchewan. Surely to goodness, we can put in the focus and the resources to make sure that when Albertans and other people have the opportunity to invest money, we haven't put barriers in their way.

11:10

You know, as some of the proof about how this government's plan of big spending, big taxation, not getting to regulations, and huge debt for our kids and our economy isn't working, let's talk about tax revenues, how tax revenues have fallen across the board even though tax rates have been increased. As I've said in this House before, people are voting with their feet. People are putting time and money and effort into professional advice and professional paperwork to ensure that their business affairs are as tax efficient as possible, something that used to happen considerably less, I'm told, when we had a 10 per cent flat tax, when we had a government that tried harder to look for value for taxpayer dollars.

I still remember a report from about a year ago that talked about how more oil sands leases, bigger than the entire province of Prince Edward Island, had been turned back. Now, buying an oil sands lease and when you have to drill and how you get extensions and

when you have to develop is a very, very complicated set of rules, and that's something that needs to be changed. But, Madam Speaker, I am absolutely amazed that companies would spend tens and tens and tens of millions of dollars to buy the right to develop a much-needed asset and then walk away from millions and millions of dollars because of this government's policies, this government's carbon tax, this government's 20 per cent hike in corporate tax.

Madam Speaker, we don't need little boutique tax plans, where the Minister of Finance or the cabinet get to pick winners and losers. We need an economy that's fair, that's vibrant, that gives every Albertan the opportunity to be involved, the opportunity to help each other, the opportunity to create choice in the services that are provided, and the opportunity to create jobs.

You know, another example, from a week or so ago, of the plan not working is Royal Dutch Shell, which is, like, the second- or the fourth- or the 10th-biggest company in the whole world, bigger than a lot of countries. Guess what they did? They, too, decided to vote with their feet. They said: we're not keeping our money in the Alberta oil sands. They put their shares in, I believe, a joint project with CNR up for sale. Almost \$4 billion. Madam Speaker, if that money was still in our economy, all the money that Total and Marathon and others have taken out of Alberta, think of the jobs it would provide, think of the tax base that it would create, think of the services that we could provide, and think of the opportunities for young Albertans.

If you're a young Albertan without the NDP carbon tax, without the 20 per cent corporate tax, without the big tax hikes, you'd have an opportunity to actually go out and create, you know, a family, buy a house, pay off some of your university debts. My goodness, too many young kids are coming out of school with huge university debts and without jobs. That's the real problem. They don't have the jobs to pay these off. Madam Speaker, instead, what these youth are faced with is \$40,000 to \$50,000 in additional provincial tax – additional provincial tax – just on the interest of this Finance minister's and this government's big-spending ways. It's a burden that families have to face or leave. I know that Albertans are extremely qualified and hard working. I know that our future is bright, and I know that our opportunity is there.

I want to talk about opportunity. Madam Speaker, I stood up at a meeting in Medicine Hat about two weeks ago, and I said that the demand for oil is increasing and what a shame that it's not coming from Alberta, with our strong environmental records, our strong social justice records. We're always improving. We're always getting better. I said that because the demand for oil is currently 90 million barrels a day, and I've read that it's going up to 1 million barrels per day annually. So a year from now it'll be 91 million, and two years from now it'll be 92 million. Then I got schooled. There was a financial planner in the meeting who had some financial data that showed that it's actually 100 million barrels a day now.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a real pleasure to rise and offer some comments in response to the statement that the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat made this morning. First of all, let me just express my severe and ongoing disappointment that the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat has yet to bring doughnuts to share with the members of this Chamber. I hope that the good people of McBride's Bakery continue to ply him with doughnuts and that he is willing to share with the people of this Chamber.

I want to talk about some of the statements that the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat made today. On this issue of taxes, he has about as much credibility as he does on the issue of climate change, and that's precisely none, Madam Speaker. You know, it's well known that the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat funds climate change denial movies in his spare time. I really encourage him to get the opportunity to meet with the Governor General while she's here today because she's a very learned person in science and has seen through her own eyes that not only is climate change real and having severe and drastic impacts on the world but that the world is, in fact, round. She's seen it with her own eyes. I hope that the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat takes the opportunity to learn something from such a learned person, who has the privilege of being the vice-regal representative here in Canada.

My initial point was that the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat has no credibility on the issue of taxes, just like he has no credibility on the issue of climate change. Here's why. I can't remember which member of the opposition it was who claimed that, you know, our tax rates were driving businesses out of Alberta. That is a patently false statement, Madam Speaker. In fact, he mentioned Methanex. Of course, I've conferred with some of my colleagues here on this side. Methanex hasn't actually made a decision about where they're going to invest in their next plant, so for the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat to get up and say that they've already picked up and are moving to Louisiana is not entirely an accurate statement. I hope that the people of Alberta who are listening to this debate take that with a grain of salt.

More importantly, on the issue of taxes generally, the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, of course, along with all of his colleagues in the United Conservative Party, has long complained about tax rates that have gone up under this government. Of course, our government has implemented a \$30-a-tonne carbon tax, and we raised the corporate tax rate from 10 per cent to 12 per cent, Madam Speaker. In my comments to another member from the opposition I had identified that Amazon had just opened a new head office of some kind – I can't remember which – in Vancouver a couple of weeks ago. The Prime Minister was there to celebrate. This was a great day for economic prosperity for the people of British Columbia. When I pointed out that the corporate tax rate in B.C. is also 12 per cent and that the carbon tax is \$30 a tonne in B.C., I was actually corrected by my hon. colleagues after the fact. The carbon tax rate in British Columbia is actually \$35 a tonne, \$5 a tonne more than what we're charging here in Alberta, yet Amazon chose Vancouver as the site to locate its new, splashy headquarters and develop the economy there. It's a shame that they didn't choose Alberta, which is why we need to move quickly on the legislation that is before us.

Madam Speaker, I wish the members opposite would stop selling this snake oil that our tax rates are driving investment out of Alberta, because it's not supported by the evidence. We maintain overall the lowest taxed jurisdiction in the country. We're competitive with everywhere in North America, and of course we have a lifestyle that's beyond compare here in Alberta. We have an incredible health care system. We have an education system that's second to none. If some company wants to pick up stakes and move someplace where their children are going to have a third-world education system, you know, where the children of the workers are going to graduate from high school being barely literate . . .

11:20

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the referral amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you for the opportunity. I rise today to speak in favour of the reasoned amendment brought forward by my hon. colleague. Of course, I feel that some of the comments I will make today will be very reminiscent of a narrative and a conversation we keep having in this House about the destruction of the fundamental economics of this province, which has scared away so much investment. You know, I'm not happy about the song this government is singing nor the song sheet that they're singing from. We just seem to be getting that same story over and over again about the challenges we have with economic fundamentals and why we have to keep bringing forward other legislation, as I say, throwing candy at a situation after we've taken away the meal.

This government and this minister are continually looking for ways to position themselves as the great diversifiers, Madam Speaker, but as I just heard actually this morning in Public Accounts Committee, they have big plans, big strategies, big outcomes but very few measures to keep them accountable. In fact, I think there were 12 objectives and two outcomes to measure those objectives. I don't know how that equates in the real world. When you set objectives in the real world, you set objectives, you put measures by them, and then you achieve them. It's often said that if you can't measure, you can't manage, but I think that also, consequently, if you can't manage, you just don't get results.

Madam Speaker, from 1986 to 2016 Alberta's GDP did grow from \$59.6 billion to \$314.9 billion. During those 30 years oil and gas and mining decreased as a percentage of total GDP, decreased from 23.2 per cent to 17 per cent. That GDP number still represents – we talked about this in Public Accounts this morning – the third-largest economy by GDP in Canada, ahead of British Columbia. That's without the oil and gas industry. That doesn't sound like a failure of diversification in the past to me.

Alberta was able to grow in part because previous governments worked extremely hard to make Alberta the most business-friendly environment in Canada through fundamental economics, Madam Speaker. Fundamental economics attracted people from across this country and around the world, but it not only attracted people; it attracted investment. Last time I heard, you don't create a job until somebody puts an investment dollar at risk with the hope of some reward for creating that job. But you have to attract those people. You have to have them willing to take those risks.

Madam Speaker, we were one of the few debt-free jurisdictions on this planet, and that was attractive to investors and to businesses as well because there was an opportunity there. They knew that the burden of debt was going to be not only on their shoulders but on their employers' shoulders and their families' shoulders and the shoulders of future generations, their children and their grandchildren, on those who moved here. Over the years we saw so many people come from so many places across this country and around the world. They chose Alberta for those fundamental economics and the way of life that we generate and are able to sustain and for the social programs that we are able to sustain through the wealth that we were able to create by attracting that investment and attracting those businesses and then creating those jobs and creating the wealth thereby that came from that risk taking.

In the past we had corporate tax rates being reduced, we had personal income tax rates reduced, and the economy continued to grow. Actually, our provincial coffers prospered. Yet we've seen tax rates increase more recently. And what have we seen? A reduction in revenues. What does that tell you, Madam Speaker? I might add that the current government is all too happy to point out as a defining attraction for investment in Alberta that they opposed cutting those same taxes, but that attraction is really what we need to focus on. How do we attract people back here to grow that

economic activity, grow the GDP, grow that economic pie so that we can have an opportunity to succeed, to actually have a chance to pay off that debt, to balance the budgets, to pay off that debt, and to start doing that today, not pushing it down the road to future generations, onto the shoulders of future generations? I think many of us in this House worry that that's not going to be just our children but our grandchildren to come.

We've heard from ministers and backbenchers alike from the NDP side that because Alberta has not had these programs previous to this government, it left Alberta and Albertans at a competitive disadvantage, Madam Speaker, that they were doing so to level the playing field and that without that level playing field, that was so magically created by this government with their initiatives, somehow we couldn't compete on a national and global scale. Well, again, this is curious to me. If I recall correctly, in 2013-2014 Alberta created 87 per cent of all the new jobs in Canada, in fact 82,300 new jobs in that year, and all that with a supposed competitive disadvantage and an unlevel playing field before we had some of these pieces of candy, or Band-Aids, that we see coming into play.

I think some will remember this term. It's faded into the past, and hopefully we can revive it in the future. That unlevel playing field was once called the Alberta advantage. Fundamental economics, Madam Speaker. Fundamental economics attracted people with lower tax rates, a positive business environment, and an absence of what we're hearing, oddly, in today's world, the terms "political risk" and "Alberta" used in the same sentence. I don't think I ever heard that in my life, and I was born and raised in this province. I don't think I ever heard the term "political risk." Yeah, I've heard it in other places. I lived in Nigeria. We heard about political risk there. We hear it about Venezuela and Saudi Arabia. In the Middle East we hear about political risk. But I ask all the members of this House and all Albertans: did they ever expect to hear the terms "political risk" and "Alberta" used in the same sentence?

Madam Speaker, Alberta then had the highest median wages in the country, and these weren't skewed because of a few high salaries. They were skewed because of broad high salaries for most Albertans and the opportunity for work for many of those that are currently unemployed today. They actually had the opportunity to work and to make a good living and to build a good life in this province. Growing an economy isn't all that valuable every day if work-seeking Albertans are unemployed, is it?

They're unemployed not just in the short term, but for many I'm hearing from in my community, it's going on two years. I'm hearing about people not being able to make their payments on their homes, and I'm hearing about bankruptcies. We've heard stories in this House of people approaching them and telling them that they've lost their house. We heard that from the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon just yesterday. Losing their houses. These are hard-working Albertans who have lost one or two incomes, who are trying to live a frugal and modest lifestyle and have tightened their belts as much as they possibly can, Madam Speaker, and still to this day cannot find employment because of the lack of the attraction of that investment and those businesses to create the jobs we need.

We need to generate wealth, Madam Speaker. We need to generate wealth in this province to balance our budgets. Those tax revenues from generating wealth will do that because the businesses will pay taxes, and the individuals that are employed by them – but they have to be employed first – will generate those tax revenues to help balance our budgets without reaching deeper and deeper into the pockets of hard-working Albertans, on whose shoulders this province is built.

And our seniors, Madam Speaker. Many of the seniors of today thought that they would be living a comfortable retirement, but

many of them are not able to. Many of them hope to have part-time employment. We're seeing that. But you know what? Some of them are having to steal jobs from the youth that we once employed before we jacked up our minimum wages and things like that that made it attractive to hire youth without the experience. So what are they doing? They're hiring 65- and 70-year-olds who need that income just to survive. That's a sad reflection of the way our economy is today and how we are not generating the wealth to support not only our budgets and balancing our budgets but to pay off our debt and to generate the types of social services which a compassionate society will do.

11:30

You know, when I hear from the Finance minister that things are looking up, up, up, I worry again, because that's not what the Albertans that I talk to are telling me. They're expressing to me that they're having difficulties paying their household bills, yet we hear in this House that we want to put more through the PACE program, that we want to put more tax burden on people so that when they lose a job, they're more likely to lose their homes much more rapidly because their ability to reduce their burn rate through something that is a fixed cost on their tax bill will not be something that they can adjust. They can't go to their bank and say: I'm going to skip a payment here; I'm going to skip a payment; I'm going to reduce 10 per cent, working with the banks. I know the banks have worked hard with their clients to keep them in their homes, and I hope that that will continue in this province from a compassionate standpoint.

When we hear from the polls, pollsters and we hear from Albertans face to face telling us that they're still struggling, they're not saying: up, up, up. They're saying that they're worried, worried, worried. They're worried about the future of this province. Madam Speaker, some of them are worried about themselves, but I hear more often that they're worried about their kids not being able to find jobs. We know that the highest unemployment is in the youth segment of our population, who now are being deeply affected by taxes and deeply affected by the lack of investment, the lack of new businesses, the failures of so many small businesses, many in the service and hospitality sector, that just can't survive with the burden of the carbon tax, the burden of the minimum wage increases, and the burden of some of the employment and labour costs that have been pushed on them even though they're struggling today just to survive. That's sad for me, Madam Speaker.

So the government has decided that to turn the tide, they will introduce Bill 2, the Growth and Diversification Act. This bill builds on Bill 30, Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act, which introduced two tax credits, the Alberta investor tax credit and the capital investment tax credit. As a whole, I think both Bill 30 and Bill 2 are focusing on the trees at the expense of actually nurturing a mighty forest, that we once had here in Alberta. Both bills are basically applying – I used the phrase earlier – a Band-Aid to a critical injury of bad fundamental economics, Madam Speaker. The throwing of that candy after taking away that attractive plate of meat and potatoes that Albertans have enjoyed for so many years, taking that away from them and throwing candy at them: that's great. It's going to rot their teeth at the same time.

Madam Speaker, choose your own metaphor. They all paint a bleak picture of trying to undo a failure of fundamental economics in this province and regulatory and taxation failure that have been wrought by this government. We wouldn't even need programs like these if the government had not so severely damaged Alberta's attractiveness for business and investment, business and investor confidence and put us in the realm of being a jurisdiction of political risk. By my last count – and that was now over a year ago – \$34.8

billion of foreign direct investment has left this province. I think I called it yesterday that they are the canary in the coal mine, again a very appropriate term given what's been done to decimate our coal industry in those towns that are attached to our coal industry in this province.

We heard just this morning in Public Accounts Committee that not only do we have that damaging effect but very little is being done. I think they've got \$5 million allocated. I think that might be just enough to buy all the shutters to shutter up all the businesses in those communities because we have not anticipated what the outcome was going to be, what I call a disorderly transition rather than an orderly transition, which brings me, Madam Speaker, to such things as the carbon tax. The carbon tax always comes to mind because it has layered another burden on top of Albertans, with all economic pain and no environmental gain. That is one of the reasons I am speaking in favour of this recent amendment.

Madam Speaker, the University of Calgary School of Public Policy issues a number of great documents. A recent personal favourite was by former Minister of Finance from Saskatchewan Dr. Janice MacKinnon. In that paper they state that to grow the economy, you need to consider important policy objectives like the creation of a positive environment for business. They say that to spur economic growth, you need to do certain things but that this NDP government in Alberta has abandoned traditional opportunities. In fact, in Saskatchewan back in the 1990s they did abandon traditional NDP policy, which normally "supported raising taxes on business and high-income earners in the name of tax fairness." They call that business-killing initiatives. "However," the paper notes, "raising corporate and personal income taxes discouraged investment and economic development." Discouraged investment and economic development.

When you tax them and then you try and throw some candy back at them, Madam Speaker, you really don't achieve anything. That bucket is still leaking even more. You're just trying to pick winners, and you're trying to pick losers. You're trying to fill up the coffers with other people's money and then redistribute it, all the while burning a bunch of that money up through administration and other costs.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to offer some comments, if I can, on some of the statements that were made by the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek. First of all, let me just start off by saying that I have never seen a group of people more resistant to facts than the hon. members over there. It doesn't matter how many times we stand up here and talk about the fact that our tax rates are not discouraging investment, that, in fact, we are the most competitive taxed jurisdiction in the entire continent, they get up and say the opposite. It's true for climate change. It's true for a whole host of things on which they are resistant to facts. They are so focused on their ideology that they refuse to look at the evidence and make decisions based on that, which is really disappointing. I think the people of Alberta deserve better, and they have been getting better from this government for the past three years.

You know, I want to talk about, first of all – I also want to address a phrase, "political risk." This is a phrase that the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek has used a couple of times recently in debate. He says that, oh, he's surprised that he's heard the words "political risk" used in Alberta for the first time, and they're only talking about it because of the NDP.

Madam Speaker, I want to confirm what the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek has said because I, too, have heard the phrase "political risk," but it's in relation to the Member for Calgary-Lougheed and the United Conservative Party. I'm hearing the phrase "political risk" from women, and I'm hearing the phrase "political risk" from gender minorities, from LGBTQ people. I'm hearing the phrase "political risk" from ethnic minorities, from indigenous people. They are scared witless that those guys over there are going to win an election and take away their hard-earned rights, that have been championed by this government. So when the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek talks about political risk, he'd better remember that there are a lot of Albertans who are scared of the political risk that his own party poses to the good people of this province.

Now, on the issue of economic diversification, one of the key objectives of this bill is to enhance economic diversification in the digital realm, and in fact the interactive digital media tax credit is designed to do just that, Madam Speaker. This came from extensive consultations with video game designers, people working in the digital industry. They pointed at one jurisdiction that really got this right and has spurred development in this area better than any jurisdiction in the country, and that's Quebec. I wondered, as I do when I listen to the members opposite, what the tax rates are in Quebec, because apparently we hear nothing but the fact that our high taxes are driving out investment, that our taxes are so high that they're driving investment in the interactive digital media world to Quebec.

What is the corporate tax rate in Quebec, Madam Speaker? You'd be shocked to know that it's 11.9 per cent provincially, .1 per cent lower than the corporate tax rate here in Alberta. What are the provincial income tax rates? I was shocked. I was shocked to find out that a person earning \$42,000 a year pays 15 per cent in provincial income taxes. That is our highest personal income tax rate in this province. People earning \$300,000 a year or more are paying 15 per cent. What are people paying who are earning \$300,000 or more in Quebec? It's a whopping 25.75 per cent, more than 10 per cent higher than our highest provincial income tax bracket, and that starts at \$103,000 a year.

You know, the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek isn't paying attention because, like I said, he is as resistant to facts as everybody else on that side of the aisle, Madam Speaker, and I'm sure that he's whiling away his time wondering how he can attack the rights of indigenous people and other minorities that that party opposite seems to be intent on attacking, but . . .

Mr. McIver: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

11:40

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Point of Order Imputing Motives

Mr. McIver: The hon. minister is out of line. Under 23(h), (i), and (j) he's imputing false motives to another member in order to create disruption, and the hon. member needs to apologize and withdraw his remarks.

The Acting Speaker: An hon. member wishing to respond to the point of order? The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: I apologize and withdraw my remarks, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. Would you like to continue?

Mr. Schmidt: Yes, I would, Madam Speaker.

Debate Continued

Mr. Schmidt: You know, my previous comments aside, I do have a question, though, for the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek. Why has the development of the interactive digital media technology sector in . . .

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the reasoned amendment? The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you. It's a privilege to speak in favour of this reasoned amendment proposed by my hon. colleague. The interesting thing, as I've been listening to the debate go back and forth here today, is that the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar continues to indicate that this is all about comparing taxes. You know, I think that we've tried to make the argument very clear that this is actually not just about taxes but specifically about the environment that has been created in Alberta. So through you to that hon. member, Madam Speaker, I would like to just indicate to him that our argument is specifically about the environment that the government has set up that has chased away the investment in Alberta. This is very important for the members opposite to realize, that we're not actually attacking one specific thing but a whole suite of things that they have done in order to be able to chase away that investment.

Now, the way that the investment trickles down is that the investment comes in, and as the investment comes in, it creates the jobs that Albertans need. This is really what we're trying to fight for. I actually don't believe that the members opposite are trying to chase away investment or that they're trying to stop Albertans from having gainful employment. I don't believe that. In fact, when I talk to people, I say: you know, some of the nicest people I've met are from the NDP side. Here's the problem. The problem is that they might have the best of intentions, but, again, if you were to go to a mechanic, and the mechanic didn't do the job properly, you'd fire the mechanic. You would not go back. This is the concern that I hear from Albertans. They are very concerned about outcomes, not best intentions.

I think this government would get an A for best intentions, but the problem is that they continue to make a bad situation worse. Now, we know full well that with the collapse in oil, many jurisdictions throughout the world have suffered because of that, and Alberta's economy is very much dependent upon oil, and there's nobody arguing that. What we are arguing, Madam Speaker, is the fact that the policies that this government has brought forward have exacerbated the economic downturn in this province.

When I take a look at Bill 2, Growth and Diversification Act, this again is another response or reaction to, I guess, maybe best intentions that just haven't played out the way that they feel they should. This is why, you know, I believe that we don't need to have this bill, and this is the reason why I believe that the reasoned amendment is the proper go-forward strategy, because had we not introduced, first of all, the carbon tax, had we not introduced the increase in the tax burden, had we not increased minimum wage, had we not – and the list can go on. It may be the best of intentions, but the problem – and I've described this in the House before – is that this government seems to be the government of unintended consequences.

So we're in a situation now where the government is arguing for I guess we would call it maybe a boutique tax program, picking winners and losers. This is something that I've been very interested in as I've watched for the last three years. I'm not saying that they are arrogant, but there this an arrogance to the idea or belief that we know how to be able to micromanage an economy. There is an arrogance to the idea that we believe that we can actually mess around with supply and demand, which creates the equilibrium, and figure it out better. History has proven that when you allow those market forces to be able to float freely in free-market economies, as we call them, that creates a better outcome, because the markets know.

There are two forces in the market. There are those who supply, and there are those who consume, or demand. Those two forces have to come to an agreement about what is the right approach forward, and there are the best of intentions out there, and there are lots of businesses that fail. The problem is that this government, through programs like this, has determined that they know better, that they know how to micromanage this economy, and that they know what is the best, growing approach for the future. I have to say that there is an arrogance to that, that that's something that has never proven to be true as we have moved into the 21st century.

Again, I've listened to the arguments by the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, and you know what? I wanted to give him the benefit of the doubt, that perhaps he has an argument that I haven't already heard from members on the opposite side, but I haven't heard an argument that sways me to believe that this type of a tax boutique is something that we should embrace and use as a go-forward plan.

Now, one of the reasons why I think we see some of the problems in Alberta is because of the regulatory burden. I actually had a private member's bill, Madam Speaker, that I brought forward to try to address this issue. The NDP government voted that down and rejected the idea. In fact, the argument that they gave me was: well, we're addressing it as we go.

It sounds similar to when I talked to the Minister of Labour about the consequences of minimum wage. I said to her: "Listen, you know, this isn't the first time we've actually done this in the world. We think that if you just raise minimum wage, there won't be outcomes or consequences to that." I said: "Take a look at the plethora of studies out there, the peer-reviewed articles that are done. It shows that for every 10 per cent increase in minimum wage, people between 18 and 24 have an increase in unemployment of between 2 to 8 per cent, so it's a terrible trade-off." I said to her, "Well, have you done an economic impact study?" That's the first question I asked. Then the second question I asked was, "If you haven't done one, are you going to do one?" and she said: "No. We're going to assess as we go." Well, it's been three years now. Unemployment amongst young people is 13.2 per cent.

Mr. Schmidt: Historically low.

Mr. Hunter: You know, again, the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar: I don't know if he knows anything other than angry, but he heckled out "historically low."

Mr. Schmidt: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker: A point of order has been called.

Mr. Hunter: Oh, he can dish it out, but he can't take it.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

Mr. Schmidt: Yup, under 23(h), (i), and (j). I heard the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner call me an angry person, Madam Speaker. You know, I recognize that I get under their skin, that they don't like a lot of the things that I say. But under 23(h), (i), and (j) I think that to characterize me as angry and then to sit down and say, "Oh, he can dish it out, but he can't take it" is language that's abusive or insulting, and I request that the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner withdraw his remarks and apologize.

11:50

The Acting Speaker: Are there any members wishing to speak to the point of order?

Mr. Hunter: Madam Speaker, I believe that the words I used were that he doesn't know anything other than anger. I didn't call him an angry person, just to make sure that the member understands what I did say, and that's what I said. But if I have gotten under his skin, I apologize, and I withdraw those remarks.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, I believe that if we could just, you know, revert to discussion of the policy of the bill and the reasoned amendment and try to refrain from directly speaking to each other, maybe just through me, that would be the best way to do it. At this time there is no point of order.

Please continue.

Debate Continued

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Now, again, I was talking about the minimum wage issue and how it is a terrible trade-off to have 13.2 per cent unemployment among young people. The point, again, that I was making is that there is lots of evidence out there that shows that the increase in unemployment amongst young people is a terrible trade-off for those increases in the minimum wage. So I asked: "You know, have you done an economic impact study? What are you going to do about this, and would you ever stop?" The answer specifically was, "No, we are not going to do an economic impact study, and we will assess as we go."

Well, again, three years into this now, we're already seeing unemployment among young people at 13.2 per cent. When is it enough? When is it that this government is going to start to say that there is a terrible trade-off and that the unintended consequences were not what we expected? Again, I'm not saying that this government wants to see this unemployment or wants to see Albertans not gainfully employed, but I am saying that when they see the outcomes of these things, I wish that they would reassess and say: we need to be able to take a look at this process and move forward in a positive way. But I haven't seen that yet. I haven't seen that in their approach.

With this bill, the idea of having a tax boutique, as it were: even if it did work, have they measured? I was at a PAC, a Public Accounts Committee, meeting this morning, and the committee asked the Economic Development and Trade deputy minister and his team, you know, what kind of measurables they're using, whether or not they are measuring the success of these things. It was all anecdotal, the evidence that they gave, which is: well, our economy is increasing, in terms of GDP growth, fastest in the country, and it's projected to go the same this year. That was the evidence that they gave, but the question has to be asked, which is, once again: is the money that is being spent, these tax boutiques, the result of this increase or this growth? They could not give us an answer, Madam Speaker.

Again, if this is supposedly the answer to our woes, this concept, then there must be some way of being able to measure to say that, yes, this is actually working or that this injection of cash in terms of the Growth and Diversification Act is going to work or has worked. I don't know if there's any evidence that I've seen that shows that.

The other thing that I was concerned about with this is that it's unclear if the companies who have received the tax credits during the first incarnation of the program were in actual need of the tax credit support. You know, obviously, the question is: is there a private-sector vehicle that can provide the funding or the initial start-up capital costs that would help that organization or that group or that company to be able to get on their own two feet? I don't know whether or not even the first iteration or incarnation of this program can show that that is actually the case, that, again, these tax boutiques were actually of benefit or helpful to facilitating growth in the economy or in these areas.

The other question that I had that I was a little concerned about is that as of March 16, 2018, there was unallocated money to the tune of roughly 5 per cent of the first AITC funding. Now, that was a first-come, first-served funding pool, but the question is: was it undersubscribed, or was it not successful in its delivery? Was there too much red tape to be able to get it out in time? What were the reasons why it was 5 per cent undersubscribed or underutilized?

These are some of the things that, you know, I think any prudent government would take a look at and say: what have we done right, and what have we done wrong? This is really the major reason why I cannot support this bill, because I do not believe that this government, with the best of intentions, is going to be able to get it right.

You know, B.C. and Quebec supposedly have been doing this for a while. By us injecting and getting in this late in the game, how much of the market share can we actually access and get ourselves? Again, these are the questions that I think an economic impact study would actually tell us, yet again we've seen nothing from the government that says: "This is how it is going to roll out. This is what's going to happen if we inject this amount of money, that we will be in a position where we can see this number of jobs and this amount of growth in our GDP."

With that, Madam Speaker, I will just conclude by saying that I believe that this could all be fixed by having the government not do these tax boutiques and instead be able to provide an opportunity for Albertans to have that gainful employment or that gainful business opportunity by getting out of the way. In the olden days they used to call it salutary neglect.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members that want to speak under 29(2)(a)? I'll recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays, followed by the Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I just wanted to talk to the hon. member that was just on his feet about some of his remarks. He talked about how the government is making changes, these boutique tax changes, essentially trying to undo the damage that their other policies have done. I wanted to get his opinion on the fact that, well, in the past, under previous governments there have been several periods of time when we've been in a recession and several periods of time when energy prices have been low, but never before in history have we had those things happen at the same time as a tremendous outflow of capital. That has only happened under the NDP government. Never before, despite all the recessions in the past, despite all the low energy prices in the past, has 35-plus billion dollars leaked out of Alberta. Essentially, there has to be

another reason. Clearly, an obvious place may be the policies that the NDP has put in place. But I'd like the hon. member to have an opportunity to elaborate on this fact.

Mr. Hunter: You know, I think the member makes a very important point, and I think the point is this. Businesses want certainty. They want to have a belief that if they're going to play the game of business and developing business, the rules aren't going to change or that the umpire is going to be fair. It has been clearly shown throughout history – we've seen it in B.C. and Ontario – that when an NDP government gets in, it scares

businesses to death because they are absolutely not convinced that the NDP government will not change the rules midway through a project. They do not believe that the playing field is going to be fair, that they will have an opportunity to be able to provide for the people in their businesses.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(2.1) the Assembly will now stand adjourned until 1:30 this afternoon.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, May 15, 2018

Day 30

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)
Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (UCP)
Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (NDP)
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)
Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (NDP)
Hunter, Grant R., Cardston-Taber-Warner (UCP)
Jansen, Hon. Sandra, Calgary-North West (NDP)
Kazim, Anam, Calgary-Glenmore (NDP)
Kenney, Hon. Jason, PC, Calgary-Lougheed (UCP),
Leader of the Official Opposition
Kleinstauber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (NDP)
Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (NDP),
Deputy Government House Leader
Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (NDP)

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

Party standings:

New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 25 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent Conservative: 1 Vacant: 2

Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly

Robert H. Reynolds, QC, Clerk
Shannon Dean, Law Clerk and Director of
House Services
Stephanie LeBlanc, Senior Parliamentary
Counsel
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel

Philip Massolin, Manager of Research and
Committee Services
Nancy Robert, Research Officer
Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of
Alberta Hansard

Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms
Chris Caughell, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms
Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Gareth Scott, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

Executive Council

Rachel Notley	Premier, President of Executive Council
Sarah Hoffman	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health
Shaye Anderson	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Sandra Jansen	Minister of Infrastructure
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Children's Services
Brian Mason	Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Stephanie V. McLean	Minister of Service Alberta, Minister of Status of Women
Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Community and Social Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

Parliamentary Secretaries

Jessica Littlewood	Economic Development and Trade for Small Business
Annie McKittrick	Education

STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Mr. Coolahan
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	Luff
Dang	McPherson
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha
Deputy Chair: Mr. van Dijken

Carson	Littlewood
Connolly	McPherson
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schneider
Fitzpatrick	Starke
Gotfried	Taylor
Horne	

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Goehring
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Orr
Ellis	Renaud
Fraser	Shepherd
Hinkley	Swann
Luff	Woollard
McKitrick	Yao
Miller	

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Shepherd
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Aheer	McKitrick
Gill	Pitt
Horne	van Dijken
Kleinsteinuber	Woollard
Littlewood	

Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Wanner
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Babcock	Nixon
Cooper	Piquette
Dang	Pitt
Drever	Westhead
McIver	

Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms Kazim
Deputy Chair: Connolly

Anderson, W.	Orr
Babcock	Rosendahl
Drever	Stier
Drysdale	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kleinsteinuber	Taylor
McKitrick	

Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	Miller
Cooper	Nielsen
Goehring	Nixon
Gotfried	Pitt
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Cyr
Deputy Chair: Mr. Dach

Barnes	Malkinson
Carson	Miller
Clark	Nielsen
Gotfried	Panda
Hunter	Renaud
Littlewood	Turner
Luff	

Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola
Deputy Chair: Mr. Drysdale

Babcock	Loewen
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Fildebrandt	Panda
Hanson	Rosendahl
Kazim	Schreiner
Kleinsteinuber	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, May 15, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Please be seated.

Hon. members, the RCA Band under the direction of Captain Christopher Embree, CD, will now play a brief musical interlude, *The Arrival of the Queen of Sheba*, originally a sinfonia for two oboes and strings from the oratorio *Solomon* by George Frederick Handel, which premiered in London on March 17, 1749. *Solomon* is rarely performed in its entirety, but Handel's bright and lively *The Arrival of the Queen of Sheba* interlude is a widely appreciated processional set piece.

Please enjoy listening to the Royal Canadian Artillery brass band ensemble performing *The Arrival of the Queen of Sheba*.

[The Premier and the Deputy Sergeant-At-Arms left the Chamber to attend the Governor General]

[The Mace was draped]

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

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

Mr. Speaker, Her Excellency the Right Honourable Julie Payette awaits.

The Speaker: Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms, admit Her Excellency the Right Honourable Julie Payette, Governor General of Canada.

[A fanfare of trumpets sounded]

[Preceded by the Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms, Her Excellency the Right Honourable Governor General of Canada, Julie Payette, CC, CMM, COM, CQ, CD, her party, and the Premier entered the Chamber. Her Excellency took her place upon the throne]

The Speaker: Ladies and gentlemen, I would now invite Mr. R.J. Chambers, accompanied by the Royal Canadian Artillery Band, to lead us in the singing of our national anthem. Please join us in the language of your choice.

Hon. Members:

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

The Speaker: Your Excellency, hon. members, ladies and gentlemen, please be seated.

On behalf of all members and Albertans I am honoured to welcome you, Your Excellency, to the Legislative Assembly of Alberta.

Your Excellency is an outstanding Canadian whose exceptional achievements range across a number of fields. You worked as an astronaut. You flew two missions in space, and you served for many years as a capsule communicator for NASA. You are a scientist and

an engineer of considerable repute and have been active in the educational, sports, and cultural matters of our nation.

1:40

Your Excellency, you are a role model for young Canadians and most especially for young Canadian women. Do not underestimate your influence and your voice, that needs to be heard. You reinforce our confidence and hope in the future of our province and of this great nation we call Canada. We are proud of your appointment as Canada's 29th Governor General.

It is truly a momentous occasion to have the Governor General here with us in our Chamber. It is only the third time in the history of our province that a Governor General has addressed the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. Representing Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Queen of Canada, Your Excellency's presence here today strengthens the connection between the Crown and our Assembly. The Governor General continues to play an essential role in our constitutional democracy and through official visits such as this helps to bring us together as Canadians, a bond that is not hampered by boundaries but which celebrates our diversity and our strengths from sea to sea to sea.

With great respect for you, your accomplishments, and the esteemed position you hold, I wish to extend Your Excellency the best wishes from all members of this Assembly as you make your way through our great province and as you travel through our beloved country.

I am pleased to invite the Premier to make her remarks to Your Excellency and to all Albertans.

Thank you.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Your Excellency, colleagues, distinguished visitors, ladies and gentlemen, what a great pleasure it is for me today to welcome Her Excellency the Right Honourable Julie Payette, Governor General and commander-in-chief of Canada, to this Assembly.

While she is still relatively new to the vice-regal role, having been installed as our 29th Governor General only last October, Mme Payette is very well known to Canadians. We know her best, as the Speaker has already mentioned, of course, as one of Canada's most accomplished astronauts. She flew two space shuttle missions and was the first Canadian to board the International Space Station, she served for many years as capsule communicator to NASA's Mission Control Center in Houston, and from 2000 to 2007 she was Chief Astronaut for the Canadian Space Agency.

Her down-to-earth accomplishments, to name only a few of them, are no less impressive. She was a scholar at the Woodrow Wilson International Center in Washington, DC. She served as the chief operating officer of the Montreal Science Centre. A long-time member of the board of Own the Podium, she was recently appointed to the International Olympic Committee's Women in Sport Commission. She is also a gifted musician and singer and has sung with the Orchestre symphonique de Montréal and Toronto's Tafelmusik Chamber Choir.

Mr. Speaker, Her Excellency's experience as an astronaut has given her the rare privilege of looking upon our wonderful nation in its entirety from the vantage point of outer space. She has seen Canada as we all should strive to see it, as a precious and beautiful gift without lines or divisions. In her unifying role as representative of Her Majesty the Queen, Her Excellency is travelling the nation to meet Canadians of all backgrounds to learn the stories and aspirations of Canada's greatest resource, its people. We are honoured that Her Excellency has chosen to visit Alberta so soon in her tenure as Governor General.

Your Excellency, all Albertans are honoured to receive you as our guest. We hope that you enjoy your visit to our province, and we know that you will experience the great warmth of Alberta hospitality. You will find that Albertans are to the core of their very being proud and committed Canadians. Merci, Votre Excellence, et bienvenue.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

I would now like to welcome Her Excellency the Right Honourable Julie Payette, Governor General of Canada, to address this Legislative Assembly. Your Excellency.

**Address to the Legislative Assembly by
Her Excellency the Right Honourable Julie Payette**

Her Excellency: Merci. Thank you. Mesdames et messieurs, ladies and gentlemen, I first would like to acknowledge that I am on Treaty 6 territory, and very proudly so. Because I cannot speak all the languages of the First Nations of Alberta, I can speak a greeting in the First Nation language of the Algonquins, where Rideau Hall, the residence of the Governor General, is located. [Remarks in Algonquin]

I would like to go down here, if you don't mind, because I am so humbled by the invitation to address this venerable institution and all of you distinguished guests. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Mme Premier, M. chef de l'opposition. I am humbled because I never thought in a hundred years that I would be standing here, truly, addressing you.

The good reason is that I have a long-standing relationship, actually a love relationship with western Canada and Alberta in particular and that for many decades. From the moment I could buy an airplane ticket on my own, I flew from the east because the real skiing is right here. I came to ski, and I discovered something that was really similar to where I came from, the same kind of warmth of people.

Then I got chosen in 1992 to become an astronaut, and they sent us to – you know that province next door? Saskatchewan. They sent me to become a pilot in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, and they sent me to survival training in Jasper Lake, Alberta. It was in November 1993. You may not remember; I do. In November 1993 we went from plus 10 to minus 25 in, like, a day, and we weren't acclimatized. They left us in the forest out there to survive with the contents of the seat pack of an ejection seat to demonstrate that we can actually survive until the rescue folks can come to us. We did. They plucked us out of the forest after a little while, and they took us to Hinton. I have this memory of the best hamburger ever in Hinton, Alberta. It was just so amazing, because we hadn't eaten. It was just Alberta beef, the best. The best.

But that was not the end. I was so impressed by Alberta that when I flew in space in 1999, there were places where I needed to take my crew, and this province was one of them. In 1999, after our flight, which occurred in May, June, we came in the summer here to Alberta. We, of course, went to those places like Ottawa, Montreal, and we even ended up in Nunavut. Nunavut in 1999 had just become a new territory, and we had brought the flag with us into space to honour the new territory.

We came back down, and we landed in Edmonton. We went to see our friends at the science centre and Telus World. We gave a presentation, and then there was a local person who lent us a 1971 Oldsmobile Cutlass, and we took off on highway 2, drove down from Edmonton to Calgary. Six astronauts, five Americans, in one Cutlass. We stopped at the Dairy Queen in Red Deer. Is it still there? It was in the middle of summer. The chinook was there, so it was a really, really nice day. Everybody was out there having an ice

cream, so we came out of the car and we had an ice cream, and it was just amazing, because it is exactly what this is about. Then we ended up in Calgary being received with full honours for the Calgary Stampede and receiving, you know, the warmest of welcomes.

1:50

One of the newspapers in Calgary had taken a photo of me and the pilot of my crew. His name was Rick Husband. We were sitting somewhere. They had a caption underneath that said: Canadian astronaut Julie Payette and rich husband are coming to Calgary. I was, like: all right; I'm getting there. Unfortunately, you may know that Rick Husband was the commander of the space shuttle Columbia, that failed to re-enter the atmosphere in 2003. But he had fond memories of his trip to Alberta.

You're probably wondering why I'm telling you all this. I came again and again and again; I've been everywhere in this province. I've been to Coutts. I've been to Grande Prairie. I've been to Lethbridge. I've been to Fort Smith. That was my last – oh. That's true: Fort Smith is not in Alberta, right? Well, we played a game with my son. Fort Smith, yes, on the map is in the Northwest Territories, but we played that game where we had one foot in Alberta and one foot in the Northwest Territories. Of course, you can't distinguish, right? It's the same soil, the same planet.

That's exactly why I'm talking about this. It's because when we fly in space, that's exactly what we see. We see no distinction. Often the planet makes little distinction except if it's a geographical one. We share a vast, diverse, spectacular country, all of us, and we work together to accomplish things. You do so in this very room every day. We work together so that we can move forward and improve things and so that we can ensure prosperity for all Canadians, including our children, in the future. That's who we are in this country. That's who you are in Alberta, an incredible place.

You have here in this province, more than anywhere else I've ever seen, a culture of open innovation, a resilience, a leadership, a will to move forward no matter what happens. Yet when I think of Alberta, because I've been here so many times, it's mostly the people that I think of. I think of the warmth, of the pride, of the hard-working people of Alberta, and they remind me of other people throughout this country. Then I think of the fact that you're really, really good – I was at the University of Alberta just an hour ago – at developing and exporting talent, excellence, resourcefulness, highly qualified personnel. I know that for a fact.

Actually, I know this first-hand now in this new position. Just last week we had five Albertans that received the Order of Canada, the highest distinction in this country. One of them you might have heard of, Mark Messier, a guy who exemplifies almost alone exactly what this province is all about: hard work, teamwork, and sharing, always.

Ce qui me mène aussi à dire que je suis maintenant dans une nouvelle position, Gouverneure générale, mais un prédécesseur, Roland Michener, from Lacombe, Alberta, was the 20th Governor General. Roland Michener a été le premier décoré de l'Ordre du Canada au monde. Puisque l'ordre a été créé en 1967 et qu'il était le Gouverneur général, donc il a reçu le premier insigne de l'Ordre du Canada. So now, if you did not know this before, then please use that at the next cocktail hour. Yes, the first person that was decorated with the Order of Canada was an Albertan, Roland Michener.

Let me go back to perspective, if I can, for a minute. I know I only have five minutes, so I'm going to go fast. Perspective. One of the greatest privileges that we get when we see the planet from above is to see with perspective, to realize how important and precious home is and how much we need to put in some work.

La planète, c'est tout ce qu'on a. C'est la seule qu'on a encore aujourd'hui, et donc on doit s'en occuper et travailler ensemble pour répondre à ses besoins et à ses défis. Because challenges we have. You know this more than anybody else in this room. There are a lot of challenges, and they're not going to go away. It's through collaboration and it's through the will to make things happen that we move forward.

Oh, by the way, I do have another link with Alberta. You might know that I flew my second mission in space in 2009. At the time, when I arrived onboard the space station, there were people onboard, including a Canadian. The only time so far – this will be rectified in the future – that there have been two Canadians orbiting the planet at the same time, it was me and the chancellor of the University of Calgary. So, again, another connection.

Certainly, you know more than anybody else, because you serve the people of Alberta every day, that we have to be very careful. Things move fast in today's world. Things change. We can't be complacent. We have to always keep our guard up. I know that you will continue to do what you do so well in this room, that you will continue to look out for those who have less, that you will stand up for those who can't, just like those Famous Five, whose mural is right in the middle of the city of Edmonton, who stood up at a time when there was a need for that; that you will continue to do what you do particularly well in this province, welcome people who seek harbour; that you will continue to use, exploit, and share your land intelligently; that you will continue to reach across differences and also seek opportunities for more collaboration and team work; and that you will never cease to base your judgment on facts and evidence, to be curious, and to ask questions, because that is the premise by which we find solutions.

Let's not forget, of course, because that's what we are, to celebrate who we are and what we'd like to become. There is no doubt that this province, in particular, the economic powerhouse of Canada, has made a tremendous contribution in the past to the well-being of our country. Without a strong Alberta, Canada could never reach its full potential in the future.

Thank you for welcoming me into these venerable walls. I actually do feel at home. Merci de m'avoir accueilli si chaleureusement. Thank you for the service that you do for this province and for the entire country.

In closing, I hope you will allow me to use a parting phrase that we flyers use to send each other off on a really important and challenging mission, and that's Godspeed to you all. Merci beaucoup. Merci. [Standing ovation]

I wanted to do this at the beginning, but of course I forgot because I was too impressed. Mr. Speaker, who was so kind to lend me his chair for a few minutes, I brought something that astronauts bring. It's what we do get to see. This here is a picture taken by a colleague of mine two years ago onboard the International Space Station. We see in its entirety, at night, bathed in the beautiful northern lights, the entire province of Alberta. This is the highway we travelled right here. This is Edmonton, Red Deer, Calgary. There's Grande Prairie, and then there's Fort McMurray. We see a little bit of Saskatoon, but don't tell. This is, hopefully, something that will remind you that you inhabit a fantastic world.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Your Excellency, you said that you had five minutes left. Actually, I would be prepared to give you far more time than any other individual in this room. If you were surprised that you were sitting here as our Governor General in this place, you would almost be as surprised as myself, who is a Speaker welcoming the Governor General of Canada. You used the word "spectacular." We

do have a spectacular country, and I think we have a spectacular Governor General.

Thank you, Your Excellency.

2:00

Ladies and gentlemen, I would now invite Mr. R.J. Chambers, accompanied by the Royal Canadian Artillery Band, to lead us in the singing of *God Save the Queen*. Please remain standing at its conclusion.

Hon. Members:

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

The Speaker: Au revoir.

[Preceded by the Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms, Her Excellency, her party, and the Premier left the Chamber as a fanfare of trumpets sounded]

[The Mace was uncovered]

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Hon. members, we will now take a two-minute pause before starting our regular Routine. You will have a tough time in the next couple of hours upping that.

Hon. members, on behalf of all of you I will be extending appreciation and thanks to the staff of so many that helped organize this event. It took a lot of commitment and time.

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Ms Jabbour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to welcome four important guests seated in your gallery today who were here to watch the address by the Governor General of Canada, and I'd ask that they please rise as I call their names. First, we have Grand Chief Isaac Laboucan-Avirom, the Treaty 8 grand chief and chief of the Woodland Cree; Grand Chief Wilton Littlechild, the Treaty 6 grand chief and member of the Order of Canada and the Alberta Order of Excellence; Audrey Poitras, president of the Métis Nation of Alberta; and Chief Crowchild, chief of the Tsuut'ina Nation. I would ask that they receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Stier: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly two special visitors. Former MLA Dave Coutts represented my riding of Livingstone-Macleod for three terms, from '93 to 2008. During his 15 years in office Dave served as the minister of government services from 2001 to 2004 and as minister of environment and sustainable resource development from 2004 to 2006. Dave is joined by his grandson today, 12-year-old Graham Morrison. Graham attends Brookside elementary school here in Edmonton and missed his class visit to the Legislature, so his grandfather is making good on his promise to show him around today. I don't think anyone should be surprised to see Graham back here in a more official capacity very soon. They are seated today in the Speaker's

gallery. I'd ask that they please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Introduction of Guests

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

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you the brilliant students from Eastview middle school in the spectacular constituency of Red Deer-South. The students are accompanied by their teachers and chaperones. I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Ms Jabbour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On your behalf I'd like to welcome a number of special guests from around the province who are seated in your gallery today, who were also here to watch the address of Her Excellency the Right Honourable Julie Payette to the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. If these individuals could please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly: Marichu Antonio; Marlene Poitras; Meeka Otway; Stephen Mandel; Hal Danchilla; David Dorward, former MLA; Erika Barootes; Glen Resler, the Chief Electoral Officer; and Doug Wylie, the Auditor General of Alberta. Please give them a warm welcome.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you and to you I'd like to introduce your constituents and close friends Jennifer Kerslake and her mother, Natalie Sauer. They are both committed public servants. Jennifer works for Medicine Hat College and Natalie for the city of Medicine Hat. I'd ask both Natalie and Jennifer to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

2:10

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I have three introductions if I may. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislature Meghan Keating – if you could please rise when I say your name – who grew up in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, and then studied to be an MRI technologist at NAIT here in Edmonton. She has worked in diagnostic imaging for 11 years and recently volunteered on the playground committee in Harvest Hills through the NHCA. They recently received CFEP funding and are super excited to start their playground construction soon.

Leah Argao was born in Lac la Ronge, Saskatchewan. She then moved over 20 times and went to school at Grande Prairie university. She then moved some more before settling down in beautiful Harvest Hills to raise her three children and work in the business and financial risk industry. She currently volunteers as president of the Northern Hills Community Association because she wanted to give back to her community.

Finally, Tamara Keller is originally from a farm in north Saskatchewan. She went to the University of Saskatchewan for a bachelor of commerce. Tamara worked in the agricultural industry for 10 years, then two years in telecom, and then moved to Coventry Hills in 2006 to raise her two boys. She's an active volunteer with AHS, a chair for advocates for the north Calgary high school, and a

member of Northern Hills Connect, which is the subject of today's member's statement.

It's great to see them all here today, and I would ask my colleagues to now give them the traditional warm welcome of the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Joining us today is Colin Belliveau, director of training and apprenticeship for the Alberta carpenters' union. Colin works with Alberta's carpenters, scaffolders, floor layers, and interior systems mechanics to get them trained and working safely and productively. The carpenters' union is a key partner in supporting Alberta's workers and in keeping our economy growing. With Colin is my friend Jeff Sloychuk. No one really seems to know what Jeff does, but he assures me that he does it very well. I want to thank my guests for their work on behalf of Alberta workers, and I'd ask all members to extend to them the traditional warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek.

Ms Woollard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to be able to introduce two guests today who have been here for the address of the Governor General. I'm very pleased to introduce Gulwant Singh, who is a constituent in my area – I'm very pleased to see you – and Haiqa Cheema, who is my fairly new constituency manager and a nearly completed graduate of the U of A in political science. Thank you, both, and please receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I didn't know he was going to be here today, but it's a pleasure to introduce to you and through you Jeff Kasbrick, who is now with the AMA, but we got to know each other about 10 years ago, when we were both political staff. It's a pleasure to have him here today. I'd ask my colleagues to please join me in welcoming Mr. Kasbrick to this House.

The Speaker: Hon. members, any other guests today? The Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a strong advocate for conservative values and principles, a strong member of the community advocating to stomp out racism, and a good friend of mine, Mr. Arundee Sandhu. I'd invite him to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly my constituency assistant Mathew Goncalves. He's a very dedicated and a very hard worker. With him today is Mariam Hosseiny, who is an intern in my office this summer. I'd ask that we all extend the warm welcome to these wonderful guests.

Thank you.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

Federal Response to Pipeline Opposition

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Prime Minister is visiting Alberta today. He arrived yesterday. Will the Premier be meeting with the Prime Minister to discuss the Trans Mountain pipeline with 16 days to go before its possible cancellation?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much to the member opposite for that question. I will not be meeting directly with the Prime Minister, but as I've said before, we are fully engaged with federal officials. Discussions are happening daily with those officials. We are very much focused on outcomes, and the particular outcome that we are focused on, the only outcome that we will accept, is that we get a pipeline to tidewater and that we get the certainty that is needed to ensure that construction resumes this summer. We know that we are on track for that outcome.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, does the hon. the Premier believe that the Prime Minister's refusal to meet with her during his visit to Alberta demonstrates the seriousness of the federal government's commitment to building the Trans Mountain pipeline?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, I can say very clearly that the Prime Minister did not refuse to meet with me, and that is a ridiculous assertion on the part of the member opposite. You know, the Prime Minister knows exactly where I stand, quite honestly. The only confusion out there right now is the position of the Leader of the Opposition. Back on April 8 he said that the federal government must be prepared to step up and provide financial certainty. Now he's saying that that's just the wrong way to go. I just want to know: who is pulling the strings of the Official Opposition leader? The Conservative leader in Ottawa? Or is he actually committed to the people of Alberta?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I guess the Premier doesn't understand the difference between that as a last resort – it appears that she and her close ally Justin Trudeau are prepared to write multibillion-dollar cheques as a first resort.

On April 15 the Prime Minister said, quotes: we are actively pursuing legislative options that will assert the government of Canada's jurisdiction on the Trans Mountain pipeline. Close quotes. A month later no legislation. Today in Calgary the Prime Minister said that he's still considering his options. Why can't this NDP government get any action out of their close friend and ally Justin Trudeau?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact, we are getting a great deal of action. As I've said, we're working very closely. But you know what's really interesting? The member opposite is opposed now to ensuring that we support, provide the financial certainty to Kinder Morgan to make sure we get the project done. Meanwhile, when he was in Ottawa, he and his Conservative government friends wrote a \$9 billion cheque to General Motors and Chrysler for Ontario jobs, but apparently Alberta's industry isn't worth it. So my question is: he may have said that he's moved back to Alberta, but is he still picking up his mail in Ontario?

The Speaker: Second main question.

Mr. Kenney: So now I see we're back to the NDP attacking their opponents . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. member.

Mr. Kenney: . . . but that's all right, Mr. Speaker. When they go low, we'll go high. [interjections] Can you hear them heckling? It never stops.

The Speaker: Hon. member.

Mr. Kenney: The anger machine never turns off.

Federal and Provincial Energy Policies

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the real question is this. This Premier gave in to Justin Trudeau's carbon tax. She's going to increase it by 67 per cent. She's increasing payroll taxes to satisfy the Prime Minister. He's given us two dead pipelines and is doing nothing to build Trans Mountain. How is this working out for Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, what I will say is that when the member opposite and his friends in Alberta were running both governments – you may not have heard this before, but I'll just let people know – for nine years they couldn't get a pipeline built to tidewater. They messed it up so badly that they couldn't save it when the courts said no. But you know what? We are working very carefully, very strategically to get the job done. We will keep a cool hand on all the levers at our disposal, we will use them at the right time, and we will succeed.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, let's be clear. The NDP gave Justin Trudeau a carbon tax. They're going to give him a 67 per cent increase in that carbon tax. They're going to raise CPP payroll taxes. What have we got in return? The cancellation of Northern Gateway; the killing of Energy East; the intrusion of the federal government into provincial jurisdiction on upstream emissions; Bill C-68, that will make it impossible to get a future pipeline approved; and rewarding the B.C. government with billions of dollars of transfers even though it's violating the Constitution. What exactly are we getting out of the NDP's close alliance with Justin Trudeau?

2:20

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, what I'll tell you that Albertans are not getting is a Premier who's standing in a corner grandstanding, having temper tantrums for the sake of that day's media cycle and their own political, cynical desires. What they have instead is a government that is working strategically, thoughtfully with a multipronged approach with many, many different stakeholders at many, many different levels to get this pipeline built. And you know what? Things are looking up, and we're going to get it done.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, what the Premier characterizes as a temper tantrum was my suggestion nine months ago that Alberta should be prepared to turn off the taps of Alberta oil fuelling the B.C. economy if the NDP there violates the Constitution and attacks our vital economic interests. That so-called temper tantrum is now the policy of the NDP government. Well, it was supposed to be. It was in their throne speech, but 10 weeks later they still haven't passed their keynote legislation. Why, again, are they dragging their feet on the turn-off-the-taps legislation?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I think I was very clear about yesterday, we expect that that piece of legislation will probably pass tomorrow. As I've also been very clear and very consistent on from the very outset, this is one tool that we will use at the right time at the right place in the best interest of Albertans to ensure that we get the best return for our resources. I have always been very clear about that. But when it comes to consistency, the member opposite had better figure out his position. Is he for government support or against it? Is Andrew Scheer his boss or are the people of Alberta?

The Speaker: Third main question.

Federal Response to Pipeline Opposition (continued)

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, we know who the boss of this NDP government is. His name is Justin Trudeau. He killed the Northern Gateway pipeline. He killed Energy East. He's killing any future pipelines with his Bill C-68. He has got this NDP government to agree to punish Albertans for heating their homes with a 67 per cent increase in the carbon tax, and he won't even meet with this Premier while visiting in Alberta. He promised legislation to crack down on B.C.'s obstructionism, and nothing has been forthcoming. Will this Premier get on the phone with her friend Justin Trudeau and demand federal action to defend Alberta's economy?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Ms Notley: Well, again with the temper tantrum, Mr. Speaker.

What I'm not going to do is make things up, as the member just did in about three-quarters of his preamble there. What I am going to do is carry on with exactly what we have been doing. We are working closely with the federal government, with federal officials on a very clear strategy to ensure that the uncertainty is removed and that construction resumes on schedule this summer. That is the only outcome that is acceptable to this government on behalf of the people of Alberta and the people of Canada, and we will not stop until that is exactly what happens, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, one of her ministers said that shovels would be in the ground last fall. The project is 18 months behind schedule. We are 16 days away from its potential cancellation, and this Premier has given Justin Trudeau everything he wants, including a punitive carbon tax. She can't get any action out of the Prime Minister to defend Alberta's vital economic interests. Why is the NDP government giving in to Trudeau on everything and getting precisely nothing in return?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What we're not doing is getting the outcomes that the member opposite and his friends and colleagues in Ottawa and Alberta delivered to Albertans: zero, 'zipkus,' nothing, no pipeline to tidewater. Nine years: no pipeline to tidewater. We are on the verge of getting construction under way on the best reviewed, most rigorously reviewed pipeline in the country. We will get it done. The member opposite should join Albertans instead of hoping for their defeat.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, our previous government approved and saw the construction of four pipelines that doubled the capacity of shipping oil and approved the Coastal pipeline, Northern Gateway, that she opposed and that her Education minister said was a dirty tar sands pipeline that should not be allowed to proceed. Justin

Trudeau listened to the NDP when he cancelled Northern Gateway. He listened to the NDP when he shut down Energy East. He apparently has listened to the NDP with Bill C-68, that makes it impossible to get another pipeline built. Why are they punishing low-income Albertans for heating their homes in order to get no pipeline built?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact, the first delay to Energy East came as a result of the bumbling, last-minute appointments of the former Conservative government that blew the whole process up and then made them have to start all over again, so everyone has a lot of blame to share for the end of Energy East. What we have done is that we have worked thoughtfully and consistently to play by the rules and get things done to build support, which is growing – I know the member opposite hates to admit it, but it is growing everywhere, including in B.C. – for that pipeline to western coastal waters. We will get it done.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Unemployment and Job Creation

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week Edmonton's chief economist spoke about how the unemployment rate in Edmonton was dropping but that it was dropping for the wrong reasons. What he was referring to is the fact that some Albertans have been out of work for so long that they're actually leaving the labour force altogether, this in spite of this government spending millions of tax dollars to try to retain and retrain these workers and consistent messaging from the government about the strength of the economy. Premier, we want to see this province succeed, but if things are as good as your government is saying, why are workers continuing to leave the workforce and the province?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I don't think that they're actually leaving the province. It's interesting. One of the other things that was in that report by the city of Edmonton's chief economist was that one of the things that has helped make the problem not as bad as it would have been – we all know that we have a very serious problem and that people are suffering – is the fact that our government chose to continue to invest in important public services and that if the plan put forward by the Official Opposition were to go in place, the city of Edmonton would struggle mightily with respect to jobs and economic growth. Thankfully, that's not what is in place, but we know that we have more to do to deal with the very people that that member opposite ...

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Fraser: Our caucus believes in the value of public investment in the economy, but we must always ensure that there's a good return on investment when we're using public dollars. This is especially true when we're talking about programs aimed at job creation. Unless there is a measurable impact on job numbers, these programs often amount to paying public dollars to companies for jobs that would have been created anyway. To the Premier: what specific measures is your government using to make sure that the tax dollars that you're using for job creation are actually delivering value for Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the member opposite knows, last year alone our province created roughly 90,000 new jobs. That's exactly the kind of progress that we need to make after one of the worst recessions that the province of Alberta has ever felt in history. We know that we have more work to do, but we know that we're taking a multidimensional approach and that we also need to focus on diversification. We need to not just talk about economic diversification, but we need to start delivering on that. That is work that our government will continue to do.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Premier, for the answer. This government has focused on tax credits for specific industries, with the goal of diversifying the economy. The problem with that approach is that most economists agree that Alberta's economy is well diversified but that the real lack of diversity is in the government's revenue. We can see this in the government's plan for a balanced budget, which relies almost exclusively on royalty revenue to come close to balance. To the Premier: if the government continues to offer industry-specific tax credits, aren't government revenues going to become even less diversified and more reliant on resource revenue?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact, while our path to balance does continue to rely to some degree on resource revenue, it does so with relatively conservative assumptions around the price of oil and the differential and all those things. In fact, if we continue to perform in the long term above those conservative assumptions, we actually will be in a position to apply that money to other projects. Meanwhile we'll continue to focus on diversification, and we will, of course, measure the effectiveness of different programs as we go, because we know we share the same objective, diversifying the economy and getting people back to work.

Calgary LRT Green Line

Mr. Malkinson: Mr. Speaker, my riding is served by the west LRT and the upcoming southwest BRT, and Calgary-Currie is seeing the benefits of this investment in transit. The upcoming green line is the largest infrastructure investment in Calgary ever. This investment in public transportation will directly help tens of thousands of Albertans get around the city faster and connect with transit currently serving Calgary-Currie. Can the Minister of Infrastructure explain why this significant investment is needed?

2:30

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. You know, capital spending to remove impediments to growth was exactly the message I got from former Bank of Canada Governor David Dodge when I circled back with him for a conversation before we released our capital plan. The green line means an easier commute to work and school. It means that an extra 65,000 Calgarians every day will have an easier time getting around, 12,000 direct jobs, 8,000 supporting jobs. Great cities have great transit infrastructure. Flailing opposition parties fight great infrastructure.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: what are the other environmental and economic benefits of this project?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member. You know, stage 1 of the green line is going to reduce CO₂ emissions by an estimated 30,000 tonnes every year. It would be nice if the opposition actually listened to this because it's important to them, too. I know that when they ask for infrastructure, their list right now is over \$3 billion. I'm sure they should be paying attention to this. The green line is going to promote growth and diversification over the long run. It will help stimulate housing, employment, and shopping developments in all the neighborhoods that it serves. We continue to make these investments in the economic growth of Calgary, of all the cities in this province. Certainly, building back from previous . . .

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

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand that this project is possible because of funding from the carbon levy. I'm often asked: what would happen if the carbon levy was axed, as the UCP proposes? To the same minister: what would happen if the tax was axed?

Ms Jansen: I'd like to thank the member. You know, \$1.5 billion of the green line funding is coming from the climate leadership plan revenue. The other side calls it a green slush fund. Mr. Speaker, if we want to build this province into an even greater province than it is, we need great infrastructure, and it would be nice if everybody got onboard with that. They promise to do nothing about climate change. They're not interested in putting folks to work. They promise to leave tens of thousands of Calgarians stuck in traffic while they spend their policy time working at how to out gay kids in school and limit women's reproductive rights.

Workplace Safety and Employment Standards

Dr. Swann: As a result of Bill 6, passed in this House in 2015, farm workers are now persons. Last week in question period the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, following through on the lead of the opposition's grassroots guarantee, announced that the UCP would repeal Bill 6 based on the votes of a strong majority at the UCP convention. The Official Opposition continues to misrepresent the legal, moral, and business imperatives of Bill 6. To the Premier: could you explain again to the political opportunists in this party why Alberta must abide by the Canadian Charter and the Supreme Court decisions in Canada?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member opposite for that important question. I know he's fought for years, as have I, to ensure that we finally bring justice to a group of very underrepresented workers for whom that justice was long overdue. The member opposite rightly points out, of course, that there were also, in fact, among many other reasons to bring forward legislation that would protect the safety and health of working people in the farming industry, previous judicial decisions that stated very clearly that we were discriminating against these people by treating them differently from other workers. So we were proud to address that injustice.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.
First supplemental.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Could the Premier also explain the moral imperative behind finally bringing in child labour standards in this province, health and safety and employment standards in line with the rest of Canada and the developed world?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, I want to really congratulate the work of our initial Minister of Labour and our current Minister of Labour and our Minister of Agriculture and Forestry because what we've done is that while we have brought in important legislation to protect this very vulnerable group of workers, we have also followed that up with extensive consultations across the board, with agricultural industry people, with farmers, with health and safety representatives, and with workers, to bring in health and safety laws that are both workable for people in the industry but will protect children and workers in that sector.

Dr. Swann: Again to the Premier: could you explain how Bill 6 respects and protects farmers, landowners, operators in the industry by bringing Alberta's agriculture sector in line with the standards of the world market regarding health, safety, compensation, and employment?

Ms Notley: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely true, actually, that if you have a catastrophic accident in a place and you don't have proper workers' compensation coverage, it is very possible that you could be sued in a way that could hurt your business and make it impossible to carry on. The insurance that people were buying for that, actually, in the long term is ultimately very, very expensive, so what we've been able to do is that in many respects we've provided more certainty to farmers while also providing care and income support for families and injured workers should they suffer an accident in the workplace.

Provincial Fiscal Policies

Mr. Barnes: Former U.S. President Herbert Hoover once said, "Children are our most valuable resource." Unfortunately, this government's legacy of debt, interest, and deficit will leave a \$96 billion bill to be paid by our children. According to a recent U of C report a 16-year-old Albertan will pay an additional \$42,000 in interest debt over their lifetime. Mr. Speaker, this is nearly four times the cost of a criminal justice diploma at Medicine Hat College. To the minister: why do you insist on setting our children up for failure rather than success?

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

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, on this side of the House we are setting Albertans up for success each and every day by investing in education, by investing in advanced postsecondary schools and hospitals. Here's another U of C professor. Economist Lindsay Tedds from the University of Calgary School of Public Policy stated that only the incredibly wealthy would benefit from the policy that's been peddled by the Leader of the Opposition, the flat tax. That's no legacy to leave anybody.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, given that since the carbon tax was instituted, rec centres around the province have been forced to drastically reduce their service levels in order to pay the carbon tax and given that one rec centre in Calgary literally turned off the heat and instituted cold showers, the NDP's carbon tax is leaving many young Albertans cold. To the Premier: are these the type of choices

you were referring to when you said that the carbon tax was a tremendous opportunity for people to make better choices?

The Speaker: The Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, a few weeks ago we announced \$54 million to help municipalities and recreation centres and others reduce their energy costs. That's \$17.5 million to reduce energy costs at community rinks, arenas, swimming pools, and so on. The folks from the RMA said, "The magnitude of this new funding is an important recognition of the role municipalities play." It enables municipalities to continue to build climate change resilience, improve efficiency, reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Those are all win-win-win scenarios that position Alberta well for the future rather than dragging us into the past.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, given that the carbon tax will cost school boards nearly \$20 million this year – and that doesn't even account for the increased cost of electricity – that's the equivalent of 201 experienced teachers. To the minister. Your carbon tax has ripped tens of millions of dollars of funding out of the classroom in order to pay for the increased cost of utilities and transportation. Will you commit to scrapping the carbon tax and keeping education funding where it belongs, in the classroom?

The Speaker: The Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I find that a bit rich coming from the members opposite, who are going to cut education quite significantly, 20 per cent. Our government has put significant investment in education for the last four budgets. We owe it to our kids to make sure that we have great schools, that we build schools, and that we also protect the planet that they will inherit from us one day.

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

Physicians' Disciplinary Policies

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last month I asked the minister about Dr. Ismail Taher, who, after showing a repeated pattern of sexually inappropriate behaviour and being found guilty in the court of assaulting an 18-year-old girl, sexually assaulting a nurse twice, and physically assaulting a clinical manager, had been allowed to return to work as a doctor following the ruling from the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta. Last month the Health minister assured me that her ministry had reached out to the college to seek assurances. Can she please update the House on this discussion?

Ms Hoffman: Thank you to the member for the important question. I'm deeply concerned by this, and we know that all Albertans and Alberta women should feel safe when getting medical care or when working in a doctor's office as well. Doctors are in a position of trust, and patients have the right to know that their disciplinary histories will be public, especially for those they're putting their trust in. When I was made aware of this situation, where a doctor was convicted of sexual assault and got his licence back, I was shocked. My staff reached out to the college immediately, and we're working on developing the supports to be able to remedy this.

2:40

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, given that Dr. Taher's case is not an isolated case in Alberta and given that Albertans are calling for greater transparency and higher penalties for physicians who abuse the trust of patients and given that the College of Physicians & Surgeons has limited options under the current legislation to sanction its members that abuse patients' trust, what specific measures is the minister taking to ensure that patients are protected and that Albertans maintain faith in the health care system?

Ms Hoffman: Thank you for that. I want to ensure that the college has all of the tools necessary to keep Albertans safe and make Albertans aware if there has been disciplinary action or a criminal conviction against a doctor in the past. Some jurisdictions are ahead of us in this work. For example, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario posts criminal convictions of doctors and also keeps disciplinary decisions on their website longer than we do here in Alberta. I also understand that Ontario has recently taken legislative steps to prevent sexual abuse by amending the Regulated Health Professions Act to expand the grounds for mandatory revocation of medical licences. These are two of the things that I'm certainly considering.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you. Given that there are serious concerns with compliance with those disciplinary conditions currently imposed by the College of Physicians & Surgeons – to follow up on what the minister said, there's a lack of transparency, Mr. Speaker, in the disciplinary process, including the fact that Alberta only maintains those records for five years. The minister said that she would consider bringing forward legislation similar to Ontario's, which requires the colleges to revoke the licences of members who have engaged in certain types of abuse. To the minister: will you then be bringing forward this legislation to protect Albertans this session, and if not, why not?

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much for the question. We are certainly working hand in hand with the College of Physicians & Surgeons and looking at what has happened in Ontario as well. I want to make sure that we get any legislation right, and of course we want to ensure that it will withstand any kind of appeal that might happen. We're working to bring a draft as quickly as possible, Mr. Speaker, but I also want to ensure that it will be something that we can all be confident will withstand court challenges, so I'm not going to rush the timeline. I want to make sure we get the legislation right, and I also want to ensure that every Alberta woman feels safe when she's going into a doctor's appointment or receiving that care.

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

Adverse Possession of Property

Mr. Gottfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday this House was faced with a choice, and once again the members opposite rejected the principle of property rights protection for land- and homeowners across this province. As they voted down my private member's bill, NDP MLAs continually said that we needed to further await a review already two years in the making. To the Minister of Justice: when will the review of adverse possession be complete, and when will the results of that review be tabled in this House?

The Speaker: The hon. Justice minister and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I believe that what the hon. member is referring to is the request that the government made after the recommendation of an all-party committee that adverse possession be eliminated in Alberta. We have asked the Alberta Law Reform Institute to take a look at that. As I understand, they will be coming forward with recommendations later this fall to ensure that we enact that fully across all the acts throughout the government of Alberta.

Mr. Gottfried: So we're hearing this fall.

Mr. Speaker, given that the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship, with an NDP chair and majority no less, voted to ask the Department of Justice to develop legislation to abolish adverse possession and given that the minister has consistently failed to actually follow through on these recommendations, which should have been initiated as much as two years ago, again to the minister: when will we see this legislation in this House to abolish the doctrine of adverse possession?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, as I have said, an all-party committee studied the issue. They made recommendations that the doctrine of adverse possession be eliminated here in Alberta, and that's why we asked the Alberta Law Reform Institute to take a look at all of our legislation throughout the government of Alberta to ensure, first off, that we are impacting all things that have an impact on adverse possession so that we're getting it right but also that we're not having any unintended consequences, because this has been in the law for quite a long time in this province.

Thank you.

Mr. Gottfried: Mr. Speaker, given that this government has an abysmal track record on standing up and protecting the property rights of Albertans and given that various government MLAs demonstrated their lack of respect for landowners in Alberta when they dithered around the abolition of adverse possession, leading many Albertans to question this government's commitment to scrapping this punitive and archaic law, again to the minister: when your review is complete, if the recommendation is to abolish this outdated law, will you commit today to following through on that recommendation and abolishing adverse possession at the earliest possible opportunity?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I believe I've said it twice before, but I'm happy to say it again a third time. An all-party committee has recommended the abolition of that doctrine. That's why we asked the Alberta Law Reform Institute to look at how best to abolish the doctrine, and that is what they're doing.

In terms of our record on property rights, Mr. Speaker, it's pretty rich for the members opposite to stand up and say that after they voted against investments in the RCMP to protect the property of rural owners.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Seniors' Mobile Blood Collection Service in St. Paul

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I informed the House about the government's decision to abandon seniors in my constituency who rely on mobile collection for blood

work. To the Minister of Health. Especially with higher fuel costs and the carbon tax and the increase in GHGs that this will create, transportation for seniors in rural Alberta is not always easy. Why was it a priority to abandon this service for our seniors?

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much to the member for the question. I'll be happy to follow up with specific details with regard to the specific situation.

I want to ensure that all Albertans know that in 2015 we had a choice. We had a choice between going down a path that we'd been down many times in Alberta, one that saw deep cuts; for example, seniors had to start paying property tax for education, something that was done under the guise of, you know, everyone needing to carry their weight. Seniors had a lot of health care services cancelled. Instead, our government chose to follow a different path, one that invests in seniors and makes sure that we support communities and the health care that those seniors count on, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Hanson: This certainly looks like a cut to seniors to me, Mr. Speaker.

Given that the lab technician providing the mobile collection service is paid whether they are performing the service in the hospital or on-site and given that the medical supplies used are the same either way, to the Minister of Health, a simple question: what were the criteria used to make this decision?

Ms Hoffman: Thanks again for the question. I will be happy to look into this very specific case. We do have an MLA contact in my office that we try to ensure is available to all Albertan MLAs so that we can make sure we can get details on very specific, case-related items community by community. I'll have to certainly look into this. I imagine that this is something that Alberta Health Services determined. I didn't make this decision, but I'll certainly be happy to look into it and determine if there is something that we can respond to, to help provide greater clarity.

I do welcome all MLAs to please bring these kinds of concerns forward as soon as you hear of them so we can help to come up with clarity and potential solutions. Thank you.

Mr. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, I did a member's statement yesterday on this topic, and I tabled the documents from AHS so that the minister could read them.

Given that it is much more efficient to do this service on-site with the help of the more-than-willing staff at Sunnyside lodge and given that travelling to the ER for lab work is not only costly and inconvenient for these seniors but it exposes them to unnecessary illness, Minister, why are you allowing these seniors to be treated this way? Will you reinstate this program immediately?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and again to the member. My office is completely accessible. We certainly welcome you. There are many times that we've worked through a number of local concerns. For example, we found a solution when some of the seniors in your neighbouring riding wanted to ensure that they could have their Remembrance Day honoured in a respectful way. For example, we brought dialysis to Lac La Biche, something that I'm very proud of. This government has shown that we are willing to work on coming up with solutions. We certainly welcome you to call our office or e-mail my office, and we'll be happy to look at the details about your specific question.

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

Home-care Services

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Home-care clients rely on service providers to perform daily living tasks, things like personal hygiene and medication management. I was disturbed to hear this week that a senior home-care client outside of Edmonton waited for hours for an AHS-contracted home-care provider, who didn't show up for a scheduled appointment, to move her between her wheelchair and her bed. To the Health minister: what is being done to ensure that AHS home-care clients receive services from providers?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. One of the big things that we've done as a government is that we've provided stable, predictable funding to the people of this province to ensure that health care under, well, what was the Conservative cabinet minister and now the leader of that member's party – they were proposing a \$1 billion cut to health care. We reversed that. We invested in the people of this province, and we specifically increased home-care funding every single year because we want to ensure that the people of this province get the care they need close to home.

Again, with regard to a very specific situation, I'll be happy to look into that specific instance. But, Mr. Speaker, this side of the House is investing in the people of this province and expanding home-care services.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Ms McPherson: Given that the home-care provider told the client that they didn't need to provide any backup and that the client would need to find her own backup and given that after being previously stranded in her home for 13 hours in her wheelchair, this time she called a friend to drive from Edmonton to her place, almost an hour, to give her some help, how is it acceptable for AHS to allow contractors to not have contingency plans and to require home-care clients to find their own backup services?

2:50

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you. Again, with regard to one specific case we'll be very happy to look into that. My office is very accessible. Please call my office or e-mail my office, and we'll be very happy to address specific concerns with specific care.

Under self-managed care clients receive funding to hire and pay for their own unmet personal care and supportive needs. We also have AHS care, and we also have AHS contracted care, Mr. Speaker. We're proud of the fact that we're providing these choices and options for the people of Alberta to ensure that they get the care they need instead of pushing for rash cuts that would certainly hurt all Albertans, including those who are on home care. This government is investing in the people of this province.

Ms McPherson: Given that not every home-care client lives in a community where ad hoc home-care services are available when AHS fails to provide sufficient oversight of its contractors and given that adding funding to pay for the services Albertans do not receive does not make life better, does the minister know how much of the \$575 million spent on home care last year through AHS has been spent on services that were not delivered?

Ms Hoffman: Well, I can tell you that it's a lot more than a billion-dollar cut. Mr. Speaker, I'm proud that on this side of the House

we're investing in health care, we're investing in our seniors, and we're keeping them well. We had a choice in this province. We could go down the same path that Conservative after Conservative after Conservative asked us to go down, which was deep cuts that hurt the people of this province, including our seniors. On this side of the House we were elected to stand up for the people of Alberta. I think actually many members were elected to stand up for the people of Alberta and make sure that they got the services they needed. I won't be lectured to by somebody who is now following the lead of a leader who's advocating for billions of dollars in cuts. That's pretty rich.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The Member for Calgary-West.

Serenity and Her Siblings

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We all know the sad tale of little Serenity and her all-too-short life. Less acknowledged is the story of her two older siblings, who survived in the same horrific circumstances. Minister, can you please tell us if Serenity's sister and brother will ever see justice for the abuse that they experienced?

The Speaker: The Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government is absolutely committed to working to improve the way that kids and families are supported when they are struggling. We are absolutely moving forward – thank you to the all-party panel members – with ensuring that as we move forward, our child intervention system has all the support it needs to ensure that children and families have the very best opportunity to meet their potential. I do want to thank all the members of the House for supporting an increase to the budget of Children's Services. It's so important to ensure that we actually have the capacity and the front-line staff to ensure the well-being of those children.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Ellis: Given that police have investigated the treatment of Serenity's siblings and that that involved multiple interviews, which caused them to relive their horror each and every time, and given that Alberta's Child and Youth Advocate has also confirmed that these children suffered abuse and given that Serenity and her sister and her brother were all living in the same care home and experienced the same terror, Minister, can you please tell us why almost four years later no charges have been laid in relation to Serenity's siblings?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, these sorts of situations are incredibly concerning. They're incredibly concerning to all Albertans and to all members on both sides of this House. Ultimately the police make the decisions. They investigate specific cases. It's not appropriate for me to speak to those investigations or to what those decisions will be in terms of them laying charges. You know, we continue to be dedicated to ensuring that as we move forward, we revamp our child welfare system just to make sure that things like this don't happen again in the future.

Mr. Ellis: Not dedicated enough, Mr. Speaker.

Given that in budget estimates last month, following a question from my colleague, the Minister of Children's Services said, "The Serenity case is somewhat dated at this point," and given that if we ever consider Serenity's case dated that that means we are not doing

her memory any justice, Minister, why would you have used that term in relation to a little girl whom you say that we can never forget?

The Speaker: The Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I think the children and the families of Alberta deserve is a government who's committed to ensuring that they take action instead of putting a report on the shelf. I'm really excited that we will be moving forward with an action plan very soon in terms of actioning the recommendations from the plan. What they don't deserve are Conservative politicians who would politicize this particular issue and politicize a particular family instead of focusing on getting down and doing that work that needs to be done.

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

Schoolchildren's Transportation

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Department of Education has announced a student transportation survey to help determine future changes for school busing criteria and mandated service levels. It's a bit curious to do this consultation now as the government implemented major and unwelcome changes to busing last fall, which greatly affected students in alternative programming in my constituency in northeast Calgary. Minister, is transportation to alternative education programs part of the scope of this review, or is the review solely focused on the public system?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, the survey that we have out is very popular. We have many thousands of people participating. We know that we need to focus on transportation to make sure it's safe, to make sure it's timely and reliable. We've been meeting those targets to some degree, but you can always improve. I encourage everyone to make sure they make their submissions and work with school boards to make sure that we make life better for all our kids and the school buses that they travel on.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the survey mentions that any, I quote, potential changes, unquote, will not take place until the 2019-2020 school year, not this upcoming one, and given that the surprise policy changes made this past school year left students in many alternative education programs without busing, leaving them to take transit or rely on their parents to get them to school, Minister, will the government commit to being fully transparent with parents on the future of busing for their children?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's important to point out that individual school boards do build their schedules and scheduling. That is their responsibility. It's also important to point out that it's a very large task to build busing transportation schedules. That's why we're consulting and working with school boards over this next year to make sure that we get it right. You know, the biggest thing that we can do to support them is to make sure that we're financing and putting money behind education in each and every budget, which we've done so for enrolment. If you take money away, like the members opposite would do, chaos would ensue.

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

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Member for Calgary-McCall held a town hall on education and transportation issues in northeast Calgary and given that I'm interested to know if anything came out of it that could inform education policy, Minister, what was the outcome from this meeting, and how much of a role will it play in affecting your decision on future busing policies in northeast Calgary for students attending alternative programs?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Yes. Well, certainly, Mr. Speaker, I recognize that we want to improve school busing in general. That's why we made the space through Bill 28 here last session to look specifically at the walk limits, right? The walk limit has been set at 2.4 kilometres for many, many, many years, and clearly that wasn't working. You know what? When I see something that needs to be improved, I actually act on it and I actually put in money. We have a caucus and a government behind us that actually do invest in education. That's something that we can all be very proud of.

Medical Laboratory Construction in Edmonton

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, media reports that costs for Edmonton's new superlab facility have risen to \$595 million, significantly more than the preliminary estimate of \$325 million. When a building doubles in cost, there should be some hesitation. We all want to have the necessary health facilities, but can the minister of Health or Infrastructure explain what is causing this massive cost overrun?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I think what he's referring to is the budget documents the first year that the lab showed up and the budget documents this most recent year. As the member might be aware, but I want to ensure that all Albertans are aware, the budget documents usually only have three or four years. We've actually gone out six years with our fiscal plan, so it's the entire costing for the project as opposed to just the first three years of the plan.

Mr. Yao: It's still double what your estimates were.

Mr. Speaker, the current lab contractor is occupying a facility owned by AIMCo. It has a podium for an office tower with no current plans of expansion due to the proliferation of the Ice District. The city of Edmonton wishes to develop a technology cluster in the city centre, and removal of this lab does not help. Can the minister explain how they chose the new location, what the criteria used was, and was there not a downtown option available to own, lease, or build there?

3:00

Ms Hoffman: Well, again, the member is wrong. What I said is that the first fiscal time it ended up in the budget, it was just the first three years of costing. This is now six years out. We're being even more open with Albertans about the cost of our infrastructure projects, clearly far more open than we ever saw under the former government. My job, Mr. Speaker, is to make sure that we get the best value for the people of Alberta. We had land in Edmonton on an excellent site that's adjacent to the LRT. You're asking me to lease land or buy land from a private developer downtown. I don't think that's very fiscally responsible. I'm going to look at the best

way to get the best value for the people of Alberta, and we will own that lab in the city of Edmonton.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Yao: So let's clarify. In three years it's going to cost you \$300 million, and then it's going to cost you \$600 million over double that time, yet the value of the building is actually in the equipment involved and the people that are there, the lab technicians. Please explain: what is the doubling in cost that has occurred on this project?

Ms Hoffman: Let me clarify that. You're wrong. What we did is that we put it in the budget the first three years. Now we've got a six-year fiscal plan, so we have the total costing for six years of development. This is a massive project that's certainly in the public interest. The Health Quality Council of Alberta confirmed that we want to ensure that there's confidence, that no matter where you are in the province, you get the very best quality of lab services, and I also believe that those lab technologists deserve to be treated with respect in a consistent fashion as well, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud of the fact that we're building a public lab. I'm proud of the fact that it's going to be in Edmonton. I'm proud it's on land that we already own, so we don't need to waste money buying additional land. You guys have got to figure out what your real values are in this place.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Indigenous Relations

Mr. Hinkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's previous government did a poor job of consulting with indigenous peoples, and if their founding convention is any indication, it appears as though the current UCP isn't doing much better of a job. Since forming government, our party has committed to renewing the relationship between indigenous peoples and the government of Alberta. To the Minister of Indigenous Relations: what are you doing to ensure proper consultation happens with indigenous peoples?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Throughout the past two years the Alberta government has been working to renew our First Nations and our Métis settlements consultation policies and is developing a Métis consultation policy for those living off settlements. As part of our work to ensure Alberta's consultation process is more effective and efficient for all parties, we're also speaking to industry and municipalities and other groups in the province. We've engaged First Nations, Métis settlements, the Métis Nation of Alberta, and the MSGC, and we're planning to have our policies in place this fall. These new policies will help to ensure that indigenous people living in Alberta have a voice and can . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

First supplemental.

Mr. Hinkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to mention, before I do my second question, that we have Mr. Willie Littlechild in the audience today, and he was a member of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

To the minister. I would like to know: what other consultation processes has the Alberta government undertaken with indigenous peoples?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very proud to speak to this question because, of course, the provincial government has really worked on transforming our relationship with the indigenous people in this province, and that includes coming to the table with them and having multiple conversations, whether it be through our Treaty 8 tables or our Blackfoot protocol tables or many other areas. For example, we have had consultations with indigenous people around curriculum, around rural broadband, around the North Saskatchewan regional plan, mandatory training for the Alberta public service, a human health study in Fort Chipewyan.

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

Mr. Hinkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Conservative governments in the past just tried to ignore the problems facing indigenous peoples and given that the same attitude seems to be alive and well in the UCP today, again to the same minister: what are you doing to ensure that indigenous people and communities are treated with the respect they deserve?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much, Member, for the question. I appreciate the hard work you've been doing in the area of Wetaskiwin, and I look forward to working with you and with the Maskwacis communities again, just as we did even last week.

You know that we have been working very hard to develop a really positive relationship with indigenous people in Alberta, but meanwhile the UCP members, like the Member for Little Bow, say things like, quote: these people don't traditionally vote. I'm not sure what part of that sentence is most offensive. It's a shame that a member of this House would say that, and that shows that the UCP has no interest in working with our indigenous peoples. Our government will continue to strengthen these important relationships . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
Thirty seconds, hon. members.

Hon. members, I think the Deputy Premier has a supplemental answer which she'd like to clarify. Is that correct, Deputy Premier?

Tobacco Reduction and Industry Lobbyists

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to all members. I have a supplemental response to the question that the Member for Calgary-Mountain View asked last week of the Premier. I'd like to clarify some information from last week.

In the Ministry of Health there were actually two meetings with staff and National Smokeless Tobacco regarding the ban of menthol cigarettes. I also understand that there had been annual meetings with Treasury Board and Finance staff regarding regulating the industry. In 2017 I directed my deputy minister to send a memo to Health ministry staff to reinforce article 5.3 of the framework convention on tobacco control, which states that interaction with the industry is limited to only those meetings which are absolutely necessary about regulating the industry. No government official will meet with the tobacco industry going forward.*

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

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't have a lot to say, but thank you for clarifying it. There have been rumours about meetings within other government departments. You've clarified that there have been a couple. I would hope that all departments in government get the same message at some point so that related departments such as Economic Development and Trade or whatever other departments also understand the same proscription on meeting behind closed doors with tobacco lobbyists.

Thanks very much.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That's certainly my intent. I look forward to – I believe my office has tried to schedule time so that the Member for Calgary-Mountain View and myself can discuss this in further detail face to face and discuss how we're going to make that happen.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: Edmonton-McClung.

Ramadan

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to rise today and wish Ramadan Mubarak to all, especially to those of my constituents in Edmonton-McClung and to all Albertans of Muslim faith. Muslim Albertans have a long history in our province. Across Alberta Muslims are volunteering in our communities, donating not just time but also financially. In Alberta we are proud to say that the oldest mosque in Canada, the Al Rashid mosque, was built right here in Edmonton in 1938.

During this month Muslims will be fasting from sunrise to sunset, praying, reading the Quran, and reflecting on their personal habits. This time of renewed devotion to the practice of Islam is meant to not only connect mind, body, and spirit but to increase empathy for those less fortunate. While Ramadan is a time for faith, prayer, and fasting, it is also a time for charity. Let us all take some time this month to reflect on what each of us can do in our own communities to help those less fortunate and how we as Albertans can work together to make a more inclusive society, a society that helps those in need, values diverse cultures, and sees our differences as a strength.

Muslim Albertans will be gathering to break their fasts this month at iftar meals across the province. In my constituency Rahma mosque will be hosting daily iftar meals. I encourage all MLAs to work with their local mosque to invite their non-Muslim constituents to attend an iftar meal. You will be wholeheartedly welcomed. This is an excellent opportunity to learn about the commitment to community that is fundamental to Islam throughout the year, and the food is fabulous.

Observing Ramadan in a climate as northern as Alberta's means long hours of daylight, leading to long hours of fasting. I hope that this month those of us who do not observe Ramadan take the time to recognize and support our friends, colleagues, and neighbours who may be fasting. I plan to do a one-day fast in solidarity with our Alberta Muslim neighbours, and I invite all MLAs to join me.

Once again, I wish a hearty Ramadan Mubarak to all.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we've had a request for unanimous consent to revert to introductions.

[Unanimous consent granted]

*See page 872, right column, paragraph 6

3:10

Introduction of Guests*(continued)*

The Speaker: The Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure what happened earlier, but some of the school groups were escorted out before introductions were made. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly the Taber Christian school. The children are accompanied by René Angermeier, Trina Friesen, Stacey Kopp, Helene Ypma, Jennette Ypma, and Colin Oosterhof. If they could please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege to introduce one of my constituents from the lovely constituency of Edmonton-Manning, Ranjit Singh Powar. I would like to congratulate him also for the celebration that happened this past weekend with the bringing together of families between his nephew Harpreet Singh Sandhu and Anapreet Kaur Dhillon.

Thank you so much.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Culture and Tourism.

Miranda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 20 staff and members of the Book Publishers Association of Alberta, and I'd ask them to please rise at this time. The Book Publishers Association of Alberta was founded in 1975 to support the development of a thriving provincial publishing industry. Earlier today I had the honour of declaring, with the BPAA, May 15 as Alberta Book Day, recognizing the importance of Alberta's book publishing industry in preserving and sharing Alberta's culture with the world as well as contributing to the province's economic growth and diversity. I would like to now ask our guests to receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Members' Statements*(continued)*

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

Provincial Election Third Anniversary Reflections

Mr. Gottfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is now just three years since earning the honour of serving the constituents of Calgary-Fish Creek, and I continue to firmly believe that there is no greater privilege than public service. We are given the opportunity to not only represent people from all walks of life but to hear, listen, consult, and share conversations around the hopes, wishes, dreams, and, yes, more than occasionally the challenges they face in making a living and living a good life.

I am adamant in my commitment to absolute accessibility to all of my constituents irrespective of political or other affiliation and am proud to host my regular MLA cafés, to attend community meetings and events, and to be visible, engaged, and accessible to all in the community. It is my pleasure as well as my privilege to do so.

I believe we are all blessed as legislators in our opportunity and commitment to bring our varied work, life, and community experience, skills, and ability in all that we do, and I am grateful for

the opportunity I've had in my life for global travel, community building, community and economic development, the creation and growth of businesses, and, yes, for the philanthropy and volunteerism that enrich the community.

We must represent, promote, advocate, and defend the best interests of our diverse constituents with passion and humility. We must be frugal, accountable, and responsive with hard-earned tax dollars and remember that all of the resources we are entrusted with and the debt we create are theirs, not ours. We must be committed to the health, education, and well-being of Albertans while being compassionate about the vulnerable. And, yes, we must be committed to enhancing life not just for today but for tomorrow and to pass on wealth and prosperity, not debt and burden, to future generations.

That should be our goal and our responsibility to all Albertans. Mr. Speaker, we must do so with the highest commitment to integrity, ethics, and principles of selflessness, even when we respectfully agree to disagree, while doing our best to do so with a sense of humility, humanity, charity, and compassion.

Thank you.

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

Flood Mitigation

Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise before you to talk about the very critical issue of flooding in Alberta and in particular in Calgary. As most Albertans know, conditions can swing dramatically year to year, season to season. The flooding that hit Calgary in 2013 was devastating to families, homes, businesses, schools, and many communities. My own constituency of Calgary-Bow suffered during that flooding.

As memories fade and other priorities arise, our government took action to ensure that progress was made on key flood resilience and emergency preparedness initiatives. These projects will help ensure public safety, protect critical municipal infrastructure, and better manage stormwater.

As part of its \$150 million in funding for Calgary the province has approved the new Alberta community resilience program grants, totalling \$13.5 million. This funding will support three of the city's top-priority projects: the construction of the downtown flood barrier along the south bank of the Bow River, the separation of the upper plateau stormwater system from the community of Sunnyside-Hillhurst, and support for raising the replacement deck for the 9th Avenue bridge.

Across the province the government will invest close to \$30 million for 20 flood mitigation projects. Additionally, a new \$10 million investment will support projects to prepare communities across the province for emergencies.

Mr. Speaker, flood mitigation initiatives help communities address existing flood concerns while taking proactive steps to better protect our neighborhoods from future floods. We have made significant progress in our efforts to address immediate and short-term remedies while working on long-term solutions to protect our people and property well into the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Farmers

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's springtime in Alberta. That means that birds have returned, bringing music to the ears of all. In rural Alberta there's another sound springing up. It's the sound of farmers hitting their fields. As Albertans we are one of the world's

most productive agricultural economies, with a total farm area of 50 million acres. To offer another perspective, farm cash receipts tallied \$13.5 billion in 2016, which accounted for 22 per cent of our nation's agriculture production.

Alberta has been increasing its ability to process agricultural products at home, and most of our entrepreneurs' endeavors have succeeded wonderfully. In fact, based on revenues of \$15 billion our value-added agricultural product sector has become our top manufacturing industry.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to work with many colleagues in our United Conservative caucus who are proud farmers. It amazes me that they spend their time here in Edmonton representing their constituents in this Legislature, and then they go back home and they're busy performing valuable work in their community. Instead of relaxing, they will head out to their fields, for they must take advantage of this good weather to seed their fields. So when we see a farmer making the solitary journey around their land as they sow their crops and hope for perfect weather, I encourage everyone to take a moment to appreciate them.

As I am myself from a farming family, I would like to extend my best wishes to all the farmers for this upcoming season. As the saying goes, if you ate today, thank a farmer.

I would like to close with a famous quote from Paul Harvey. And on the eighth day God looked down on His planned paradise and said, "I need a caretaker," so God made a farmer.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

Northern Hills Connect Social Enterprise Support

Mr. Kleinstuber: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In early 2017 Vivo for Healthier Generations facilitated community discussions focused on increasing social connections in Calgary's Northern Hills. Out of this, Northern Hills Connect was born. This group of energetic neighbours connects entrepreneurs with innovative ideas for social enterprises with the people and resources to further their business plans.

With the support of the Northern Hills Community Association, Vivo, Momentum, and Thrive Calgary, Northern Hills Connect hosted workshops throughout 2017 to develop skills for social entrepreneurs. Of the 150 participants, eight pitched ideas in September's pitch competition and two went on to share their winning ideas at EconoUs, the national community economic development conference.

Nanny shack was one of those winning ideas. Pitched by Jessie Leighton and Fatima Cuade, nanny shack was further developed by Sanya Chaudhry, a student at the University of Calgary's Haskayne School of Business. Sanya described the impact of the experience. She said that it had been a discovery of her own strengths and talents with the help of her neighbours. Social enterprise is what she wanted to be a part of.

Night Market North was another social enterprise born out of a connection with Northern Hills Connect. Within a few short months Ian McAnerin's idea became reality, with vendors, entertainment, and food trucks converging in Vivo's parking lot. Six hundred people attended the first night and 2,000 the second night.

Mr. Speaker, to kick off Stampede this year, my office will again partner with Vivo for Healthier Generations, changing it up from our usual breakfast to instead host a Stampede barbecue at Night Market North on July 6. This is a great opportunity to support Northern Hills Connect as it cultivates entrepreneurs to launch social enterprises, thereby fostering community connections.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

3:20

Serenity's Siblings

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alex, Ryan, Ezekiel, Serenity: these are all children of Alberta who died tragically. There is another distressingly common thread among them. In each case there were adults in their lives who were aware of that plight.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, there are many other children out there at risk right now who can be saved by adults today. How do we know this? Well, because the media reports their cases on an, unfortunately, regular basis. What happens following each report? Each time we shake our heads in shock and say that we have to stop this from occurring, and then we simply go about our lives.

At this point I'm sure everyone might be expecting me to talk about Serenity's law, my private member's bill that the NDP refused to implement. You know, the one they say isn't supported by the Alberta chiefs of police, but, Mr. Speaker, I called them, and – guess what? – they actually do support it.

But I digress. Today I'm not going to do that, even though it is always on my mind. Instead, I'm going to remind everyone about Serenity's siblings. They, too, were in care like her. The child advocate in his comprehensive report confirmed that they also suffered but that, thankfully, unlike their younger sister, they survived. These children have been back with their mother for years now, and they are thriving. I hope that brings joy to your hearts. It certainly does to mine.

It seems that this government has forgotten them, for while Serenity's case continues, her brother's and sister's appears to have been abandoned. I have promised Serenity's mother that I will never give up seeking justice and protection for children for the sake of her children and all others who are at risk. Today I make that vow again. My wish is that everyone in this Assembly makes that vow with me, for we are in a position to make a difference, Mr. Speaker. Let's never lose sight of that. We can and we must do better.

Thank you.

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I spoke in support of Bill 206, Societies (Prevention of the Promotion of Hate) Amendment Act, 2018, and I have some tablings. The first is an article with *Vice* June 14, 2017, The Birth of Canada's Armed, Anti-Islamic 'Patriot' Group.

The second was in the *Edmonton Journal*, Jonny Wakefield, August 21, 2017: After Charlottesville, Police and Activists Look to Counter Alberta's Extreme Right.

I tried to get a copy of the Rebel media piece called 10 Things I Hate about Jews, but of course they've since taken it down, or the paywall is strengthened.

Here they are. Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In response to the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat this morning, to the comment that he made during the Bill 2 debate, I rise to table the five requisite copies of three separate articles detailing the Methanex investment in Louisiana. In one of the articles the CEO of Methanex says: "That doesn't mean Medicine Hat is dead by any means . . . We [still] think Medicine Hat is a great place to [make] methanol."

Thank you.

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

Mr. Coolahan: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the five requisite copies of the incorporation certificate for Invisible Empire Association of Alberta, Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, which I referenced during second reading of Bill 206 yesterday. It shows that the KKK was registered as a society in Alberta in 1980.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Mr. Feehan, Minister of Indigenous Relations, responses to questions asked by MLA McPherson, hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill, Mr. Loewen, hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky, and Mr. Hanson, hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, during Ministry of Indigenous Relations 2018-19 main estimates debate.

On behalf of the hon. Ms. Sigurdson, Minister of Seniors and Housing, responses to questions asked by Mr. Clark, hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow, and Dr. Starke, hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster, during Ministry of Seniors and Housing 2018-19 main estimates debate.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

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

Bill 5

An Act to Strengthen Financial Security for Persons with Disabilities

The Chair: Currently under consideration is amendment A1. Are there any members wishing to speak to this amendment? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to read the name of the bill out again: An Act to Strengthen Financial Security for Persons with Disabilities. That's what we thought we were doing when we were bringing this amendment forward. I'm really quite disappointed. This is purely what would seemingly be a partisan decision, voting against this amendment. This amendment strengthens this legislation. Actually, that's what's in the title, just to be clear, An Act to Strengthen Financial Security for Persons with Disabilities. That's what this amendment does.

The amendment would have allowed AISH recipients to draw up to \$800 a month from a trust without their AISH benefits being clawed back, the same way that AISH recipients can currently draw \$800 a month of employment income. I mean, this costs the province nothing, Madam Chair. Nothing. Earlier, you know, the Premier was saying that they're standing up for Albertans. This is not the way you show how you stand up for Albertans, by not giving AISH recipients another opportunity to be able to top up the money that they receive in order to maybe, potentially, pull them out of poverty. I can't even begin to tell you how disappointing this is. It costs the government nothing.

I am a parent, Madam Chair, of a child who is now an adult who could be part of this particular situation, and I am telling you as a parent and as a stakeholder and as a person who's researched this that this decision of this government to go against this amendment is ridiculous. My only hope is that maybe they'll come back with

their own wording and do it in a different way. I'm not quite sure what the government has in store, but I can tell you that as a stakeholder and as a person who is a parent of a young adult who could benefit from something like this when I'm not here to oversee this that it's more than disappointing; it's appalling.

Bringing some income from a trust and employment is in line. It's a practical, common-sense amendment that would have positively impacted the lives of disabled Albertans and their families as well as reducing confusion. Let me tell you that at a time when you're going through this, when you're creating these wills, when you're doing this, when you know that your child could be on their own some day, reducing confusion is absolutely imperative in piece of a piece of legislation like this.

I mean, I was so excited about this bill. It's a measure that we specifically heard from stakeholders. The government, Madam Chair, keeps saying: nothing for us without us. Well, I am telling you that going against this amendment is going against that saying straight up. This came directly from stakeholders. The disappointment is not only that the government is voting this down but that they didn't come up with this on their own. But even that would have been okay because the legislation as it stands is a needed piece of legislation. But let me read the title again, just to be clear so the government knows that this was their title. An Act to Strengthen Financial Security for Persons with Disabilities. So strengthen it. Strengthen it. Madam Chair, this is a real opportunity to actually do that. The government is voting down a reasonable amendment, and I'm going to go into why later.

3:30

This is particularly interesting for Albertans, for families that I know of. I happen to be in touch with a ton of families in this particular stakeholder group and not just because my son happens to be a part of that group but because we actually have friends and associates and groups of people.

Did you know that people have travelled to this province from all over the world, Madam Chair, to receive services in this province? The government would have you believe that our services in this province have been lacklustre. Let me tell you. I can tell you of 10 or 15 families, specifically, that moved here to this province for these services in the time that I had the privilege of finding out all about these services that were there and the people that came to my aid when my son was first diagnosed. Let's just clear that one up right away.

If the government has concerns about the language, which was vetted and approved by Parliamentary Counsel – these people are extremely well educated and brilliant. I'm pretty sure that if there was an issue with the language, they would have caught it. I'm not sure if maybe the government, then – can you just take the spirit of this legislation, Madam Chair? Is that possible? I would love to know what wording issues are here because it has already been vetted by the experts.

If you want to put forward your own amendment, please do. I really don't care who takes credit for this, but it is a needed part of the legislation that was left out by your government, and we brought it forward with good intentions to work with the government to make this better. Let me read the title again, just to be clear, because this is the government's title: An Act to Strengthen Financial Security for Persons with Disabilities. Really? But you're not willing to take a well-intentioned amendment, and you're going to say that you're not taking it because of language. Really? Well done. Well, then you fix the language and bring it back. How about that? Like I said, I really don't care who takes credit for it. Let's just get it right. Will the government commit to doing this, Madam Chair?

I'd also like to highlight a few other things. The government has concerns about the specific wording of this amendment. We would have been more than happy to sit down with them and discuss these concerns, rework the amendment to get all-party consent to pass this. That's what happened with my bill for adoption. The government had concerns. We went back and forth. We fixed it. We did it together. That would have been fine.

But to vote down this amendment is ludicrous. At no time did the government reach out for further clarity or to work collaboratively. Interesting. The government said today, specifically in question period: please reach out to us; our offices are open; we're here to do work with you. Really? Well, here's a perfect example, Madam Chair, where that didn't happen. We did reach out. We did ask for help. We were willing to work collaboratively, but the minister decided, along with the government, to vote down a reasonable amendment instead of working with us to get the wording clear to make this legislation stronger, which is in the title of the government's legislation. Wrong. I hope Albertans are watching this. Wrong. We did reach out for help.

The NDP has made life more difficult and more expensive for more Albertans, and under this government they've increased the cost of everything. With the carbon tax, minimum wage increases, regulatory burden, the cost of life in this province is soaring. Meanwhile, the last time that AISH was indexed to adjust for the cost of living was 2012, when it rose from \$1,188 to \$1,588, which is significantly lower than the current low-income cut-off, which is \$1,699. This means, Madam Chair, that the AISH recipients are receiving the same amount of money, but their costs have risen. Their costs have risen.

So we came up with an alternative plan, especially for those folks who do have trusts that would be able to draw on that, that costs the government nothing. It leaves a huge financial gap, and many AISH recipients are living well below the poverty line, which is absolutely unacceptable. Our disabled population deserves every opportunity we can give them to live comfortable and successful lives, and this amendment would have provided them an additional opportunity. I cannot understand why the government would have taken this away.

Again, should the government choose to bring their own amendment forward, that would be fantastic. We will vote in favour of that. If it needs to be in your language, then do it. Again, this suggestion came from the stakeholders, Madam Chair. It's such a simple amendment, and the only reason the government has given us for voting it down is because of language. Please do clarify. It would be greatly appreciated.

The ability of AISH recipients to draw from a trust, in line with employment income, would have helped to make up some of the difference in that financial gap that is created by this government. It's so incredibly disappointing that they would have voted this amendment down. I mean, again, this could have helped raise AISH recipients out of poverty. I mean, honestly, it's a top-up. It's a top-up that would have cost you nothing – absolutely nothing – and it's already something that can be put in this legislation right now. But it's clear. Despite talking a big game, Madam Chair, does this government actually care about Alberta's vulnerable populations? Does this government actually have their backs? I would say, based on this, no.

We've seen that this is the case with the minimum wage increase. I mean, I can give you a perfect example. We have a fellow who's working at our car wash, and the increases to minimum wage made him unable to work at our car wash and still receive what he needed. I know that the minister knows this because I've sent him this information. This is a person that was trying to get ahead but, if he made more than \$12 an hour, was unable to receive the

requirements that he needed. He had to pick, Madam Chair, between either his medication or his AISH payment, and with one sign-off from the government, that could have been fixed in that particular situation. Again, I have reached out to the government. I have asked for help.

We've seen it with their shocking mishandling of the PDD review, which was frantically announced in early January this year despite stakeholders receiving assurances that the government would not be doing a review. Since the stakeholders have heard little to nothing about this review, which has no scope, no timeline, or deliverables – and it appears to be simply another announcement that the government can pat themselves on the back for, Madam Chair. Where is that PDD review? I'd like to know.

We have seen, in fact, that the PDD agencies were not consulted – isn't that interesting? – on the recent labour changes regarding overtime and holiday pay, which has caused some agencies the choice of being noncompliant with the legislation, closing their doors, or cutting services. This is particularly interesting. The government is cutting services to vulnerable populations, Madam Chair. The government is cutting services to vulnerable populations. I'm so tired that the government keeps talking about what they're doing to help vulnerable Albertans, and time and time again I see those Albertans' needs not being met. They're pawns, pawns for a government, being used as a political football.

This is actually a decent piece of legislation. I was so excited about this. We just wanted to help strengthen it, and the government, for partisan reasons, has shot it down. Interesting.

The disabled are already being negatively impacted. Let me give you another example, Madam Chair. Federally, if CPPD increases living for a person with disabilities, guess what happens? Da-da-da-da: AISH is clawed back. The minister also has that one, too. I've sent him a couple of those as well. Every time they get a cost-of-living increase, this is deducted from AISH. The minister has the power to fix this. Why not? Why am I bringing this up? Here's a decent piece of legislation that could have been strengthened, and the government is choosing to vote down the amendment. Hopefully, I can convince you not to do that.

You know, when you see a piece of legislation come through this – and the member had done a ton of consultation on this, went to the stakeholders. I was at all of those meetings. I saw the work that was done. It was very, very good. There are some things that are going to get missed, and it's such a privilege to be in this place, to be able to bring forward amendments that will strengthen legislation that is already good to start with. You feel like: oh, my goodness, they're listening to stakeholders – that's fantastic – and not just making meaningless promises and cutting ribbons and patting yourselves on the back. Yet such a simple amendment, which would have strengthened the legislation, is going to be or has been defeated needlessly.

3:40

There's another hole in this legislation that I'd like to also bring out, that the NDP has failed to address, which is that, unfortunately, due to the scope of the bill we are not able to amend because this bill does not bring this into consideration. We've heard from concerned families of disabled seniors who have trusts like the one that's laid out in Bill 5 and that raise their income to a level that is disqualifying them, Madam Chair, from being able to receive the Alberta seniors' benefit. Okay. I understand that that's out of the scope of this bill, but why isn't there legislation on the table, then, for that one? Bill 5 is supposed to ensure that those that receive an inheritance or trust will not be disqualified from AISH. Would it not stand to reason that the bill should also prevent disabled Albertans who have gone over to the side of the Alberta seniors'

benefit from being disqualified from those benefits as well? I think it's a fairly major gap that needs to be fixed. Maybe the government has legislation in the works. Let's hope so.

We know that the transition from AISH to the Alberta seniors' benefit at the age of 65 is really, really, really, really difficult, and it's a huge hurdle for Albertans and their families. Like I've said to you before, Madam Chair, as a parent that has tried to navigate this – and I feel like can navigate this – I've made a gazillion mistakes in my own situations. I'm telling you that when those mistakes are made, you are rejected and not just once or twice or three times. You know what's even more interesting? When you're rejected, nobody tells you what you're rejected for. That's the most interesting part, going through that form and trying to figure out what you did wrong in the first place. It can sometimes be as simple as putting your name in the wrong space or not having a doctor's piece of information completely directed to the same place as what you may have checked off elsewhere.

If the government isn't taking the time to actually read the forms and make sure that people are being taken care of – I mean, hopefully, that advocate will be available to us soon so that maybe there will be some help there because this is extremely difficult to navigate. It's extremely stressful. I am so blessed, Madam Chair, that I have family around me. My husband and I are able to work through this paperwork. If it was my son who had to do this with some sort of advocate, I can tell you that I don't even know the language that I should use to explain to you the level of anxiety that that puts into me even thinking about that. The anxiety is almost too much to bear, the idea that my son could be left as an adult without help to figure out and navigate this system. And the government is not even willing to pass a small amendment to make it easier for people in this province. Holy moly.

Anyways, I would highly recommend that the government look through this problem and create legislation to protect disabled Albertans of all ages from having their government subsidies negatively impact their family's ability to leave them an inheritance. In conclusion, I mean, I've said "ludicrous." I've said "appalling." All of those words describe to me an inability to see past partisanship, but what's worse is that I'm really sad that the government would vote against a valuable amendment. I hope, Madam Chair, that they will fix this problem that our amendment highlighted as well as amend Bill 5 to include a provision to protect disabled seniors from having their seniors' benefit revoked because of a trust.

It would be a nice show of unity for the government to work with the opposition to make life better for Albertans with disabilities, but what, in the end, this side of the House cares most about is that the work gets done. We don't care who takes credit for it, and we would be happy for the NDP to take credit for closing these loopholes, as long as they get closed.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Member, for the remarks. I also heard words like "ludicrous," "appalling," and I can start by telling you what's really appalling. We added \$103 million to this program in the last four budgets, and you have voted down those increases every time. What's really appalling is that we added \$150 million to the PDD budget, and every time you along with your caucus have voted down all of those increases. There was an opportunity to vote on that budget separately as well; you still chose to vote it down. What's really appalling? You were asking about other bills that may be in the pipeline. There is a bill before the House, Bill 9, which you have walked out on along with your

colleagues six times so far if my count is correct. That's really appalling. Yes, you made arguments about this amendment without even listening to this side, what we have to say about this amendment.

The thing is that what we have done as government: we had focused on making these programs better, making improvements to these programs, increasing funding to these programs over the period of last year. As I said, we have increased funding for AISH by \$103 million to ensure that more Albertans have access to this vital support. If we were to take the advice from that side and cut 20 per cent, make it equal to B.C. – B.C. pays around \$1,100 in AISH payments.

Also, there are things that are shared here that I don't think are completely correct. The way the AISH program works is that it's a guaranteed income program. What it says is that it ensures that your income from all sources doesn't fall below \$1,588. There are categories of income which are exempt, partially exempt, not exempt, and if something falls in one of those categories, it will be treated accordingly.

I can talk about some other questions raised. Again, there are many things that were talked about that don't fall within the scope of this amendment or this legislation, so I will talk specifically about this legislation and this amendment and how AISH treats trusts and other incomes. I will start by saying that we have made strong investments in public service, health care, and education so that individuals and families have the help that they need. We have invested in the Calgary and Edmonton low-income transit pass program, which most people on these programs benefit from. We are investing in affordable housing, a \$1.2 billion investment that low-income families will benefit from. We increased funding for FCSS programs, \$25 million.

With that said, we value the intent of the amendment put forward by the member opposite, that they are trying to give an exemption to those on AISH. However, I think I briefly said this before. I do not think that it accomplishes what it's intended to accomplish. Insofar as the language of 3.1(1) goes, it refers only to cohabiting partners. The way I am reading it and the advice that I'm getting on it, this assumes that all AISH clients have partners, and it could have a negative impact on individuals who do not have partners. At best, I would say that it's not the most clearly written piece of legislation. We think that that's not fair, and we are concerned why it's drafted that way. I think I spoke to the member who brought this amendment. I shared my concern when this bill was debated a couple of weeks ago.

Secondly, the exemption level of a maximum \$800 per month that is quoted in 3.1 doesn't actually match the true employment exemption level for a single client or cohabiting partner. The single exemption for employment income is the first \$800 of net employment, which is fully exempt, and any amount over \$800 up to \$1,500 is 50 per cent exempt, for a maximum of \$1,150. The family exemption is that the first \$1,950 of the applicant or client or their cohabiting partner's combined net employment income is fully exempt. Any amount above \$1,950 up to \$2,500 is 50 per cent exempt, for a maximum of \$2,225.

3:50

Neither of these exemptions is reflected in the proposed amendment. We are concerned that this amendment could result in unintended consequences and penalize single individuals who count on AISH. As a result, we cannot support this amendment. However, we are interested in looking at this issue further. I will be directing my department to explore this issue and any potential opportunities, and I will certainly keep all members of this House apprised of this work.

Another difference that I want to explain here is that the rationale behind different exemptions is different. Employment exemptions are there, I guess, to support and encourage employment while this trust income, rent, and other passive incomes – there are quite a few of them – are treated in one bucket separately. Going forward, we can certainly look at how we treat passive income, and again I will ask my department to look into it. But creating this one-off exemption I think creates a new layer of exemption which only applies to one kind of passive income, and the rest of the AISH recipients will have the same \$200 plus 25 per cent exemption.

I think there is more work that needs to be done on this one. When my colleague the MLA for Calgary-Currie consulted with Albertans, that's not something that we have consulted on. We will work with our community partners to make sure that we get this right and that we make a decision that is taken in consultation with the community.

Thank you. As much as I appreciate the intent of the amendment, I will ask all members of this House to vote against this amendment.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, and thank you to the minister for the answers. I have absolutely no issue with the fact that there needs to maybe be more work. I understand that. But for the government to say that this amendment, that went through Parliamentary Counsel and an entire group of people before it comes to you, is poorly worded is disrespectful to this House, in my opinion. If the government had an issue, Madam Chair, with the language or anything like that, as you know as and as we've said to you on several occasions, we would have been happy to work with you on that.

I understand the exemptions. This exemption has nothing to do with those other exemptions, and you know that as well as I do. So if we needed to change the language in order to fix that, it would have been a very minor change. You know that as well as I do. It could have been a very small change that would have very much helped those of us who have children in this particular situation, who will one day leave this Earth and leave these things to our children, to make sure that some aspect of that was taken care of for them, and it could have very well raised them out of poverty.

I think your interpretation of the single versus cohabiting is misunderstood, and that's fair. If you've misunderstood it, Madam Chair, that's fair; that's fine. But we could have discussed that, and I would happily have done that. Having been a parent and having been in the system and having gone through this, I would have happily been a person to have bounced these ideas off to make this amendment work.

The only thing I care about at this point in time, Madam Chair, and that I'd like to have on the record is that the government look at this fulsomely. If you need to come up with whatever language you need to come up with, Minister, in order to make this work, we will be very grateful. If that's what needs to happen here, then so be it.

But in the meantime to be able to have an opportunity, especially in committee like this, to be able to work on language together would have been a wonderful opportunity to make this legislation stronger, which – I've read the title several times – was what this was intending to do.

Madam Chair, thank you so much for the opportunity to speak to this. I look forward to the amendments to this legislation that the government will be bringing forward to amend their own legislation. Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment A1? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to take a couple of minutes to speak to this amendment. When I read it when it was first introduced, I was actually pretty excited to see it. I think it makes a lot of sense. I think it's very compassionate. It fills in a gap that was noticed, and I'm very disappointed to understand that the government isn't supporting this.

I appreciate the explanation that the minister gave, but I think that, as the Member for Chestermere-Rocky view said, there's still space to have a conversation about it and to change the amendment in a way that would be acceptable and still meet what it is that the amendment was trying to achieve in the first place, which is compassionate. AISH recipients are pretty vulnerable people by and large, and it's hard to get by on AISH. Anything that we can do from a regulatory or legislative point of view to make it easier for them, to make life easier for them: I think it's incumbent upon us to at least give it very serious consideration.

With that, again, I'm disappointed in the decision of the government, and I would still urge colleagues in the House to support this amendment.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. I won't take up too much of members' time, but I've been following this bill pretty closely. The Member for Calgary-Currie and I met I believe last September to discuss this when it was in the form of a private member's bill. I thought it was an absolutely excellent piece of legislation, compassionate, and helping families to care for their loved ones in need, and it was sorely needed. I want to thank the Member for Calgary-Currie for bringing this forward.

I won't belabour the point, but this amendment I think does improve upon a positive piece of legislation. I'll be voting for the final piece of legislation if this amendment is accepted or not, but this is a very nonideological piece of legislation and a nonideological amendment. I just want to thank the Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill for her comments, Chestermere-Rocky View, and then, obviously, the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills for bringing it forward.

I think this does build upon an already positive piece of legislation. I imagine we'll agree a bit more on this piece of legislation than on the next bill up for debate, but I think it would be a positive move on the government's part to consider accepting this. If they need more time to consider it, perhaps they would just tell the House so, and we could adjourn debate on this and come back to it later in the day or tomorrow. It does build on a positive piece of legislation.

I just also wanted to make sure I'm on the record thanking the Member for Calgary-Currie for consulting widely and bringing forward a good piece of legislation even though it's now in the form of a government bill.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:59 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Gill	Panda
Anderson, W.	Hunter	Starke
Clark	Loewen	Stier
Drysdale	McPherson	Swann
Fildebrandt	Nixon	Yao
Fraser		

Against the motion:

Carlier	Ganley	McKittrick
Carson	Goehring	Miller
Ceci	Hinkley	Miranda
Connolly	Hoffman	Nielsen
Coolahan	Kazim	Piquette
Cortes-Vargas	Kleinstauber	Renaud
Dach	Larivee	Schmidt
Dang	Littlewood	Schreiner
Drever	Loyola	Shepherd
Eggen	Luff	Sucha
Feehan	Mason	Woollard
Fitzpatrick		

Totals:	For – 16	Against – 34
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[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

The Chair: We are back on the main bill. The hon. Member for Calgary-Hawkwood.

Connolly: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 9 Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act

The Chair: Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to speak about Bill 9, access to abortion services act. This piece of legislation has created quite the interesting conversation in Alberta as of late. I think that this is an incredible move by the government to ensure that there is fair access when women are choosing to access reproductive health care. There are a number of services that women access when they visit abortion clinics. It is not only an abortion that they are always seeking when they go into a clinic, and it's important that they feel safe and respected in that community. Just like being at home, just like at a workplace, it's important that they feel that they can access health services without feeling harassed, without feeling that their privacy is being compromised.

I know that we have heard in this House experiences of an increase in protester activity when people are going to these clinics. As well, health professionals have also been feeling fearful for their safety. As well, people that go as a support system to these clinics with friends of theirs, with family of theirs are also feeling a lot of unease when they go to access these services. So, you know, that stigma that still surrounds abortion in Canada and in Alberta is still a real thing.

It reminds me of when, I think, I was 20 and I was seeking services, psychiatry services. I made a trip to the University of Alberta hospital, and I knew that if I were to go in the door and go

through the doors of the office, I would be able to attain services, and if there was someone standing outside staring at me with a placard to tell me that there was something wrong with accessing mental health assistance, I probably would not have gone. It was only because of the ease of accessing that service that I was able to get through those front doors, and I'm grateful that those services were there when I needed them. You know, I've spoken a lot in this House about the stress of having a mom with a lot of complex mental health issues. Over the course of my life that created a lot of compounded stress and was leading to depression, so I needed help that my friends were not able to give me. It's good when we can have support systems around us, but having a mental health professional that is accessible is something that is worth its weight in gold, so to speak.

4:20

You know, the stigma that also surrounds accessing abortion is very real. I was talking to a friend of mine who had accessed those services for herself. She's still not ready to tell it as sort of a general part of her story about who she is, where she's been. She's only told, I think, three people in her life because she's afraid of what people will think of her even though this has been a legal service that women have had access to for 30 years in Canada.

You know, it's for those reasons that I speak highly in favour of this bill. I know that for her it was the right choice. It was a choice that she thought about for as long as she needed, and she needed to know that she had support from her family and friends around her. She had certain plans that she had for her life. She didn't feel like having a family at that time was the right choice for her, so she made that choice of her own free will. That's all this is. It's to allow a woman to be able to have that freedom, to not have someone else, whether it is their values, their morals, their ethics, putting those upon a woman that is going to make her own choice about her own health care.

I think that that's really important. I know that we come from a lot of diverse experiences. You know, I had the opportunity to meet with a couple of people that actually are some of those people that meet outside across the street from clinics that provide abortion services. I listened to them. I listened to why it is that they go. They feel that they're doing their own service. They feel that they are being there in a very specific way for a specific reason outside of the clinic, and they'll continue to do that. They're not happy about this, but they will continue to do that. They just will continue to do it from a further distance away from the clinic. These actually were not people that loudly protest, that hold placards. They just engage in their own prayer. They will continue to do this, and that's their freedom to do that. It's their freedom to practise in their own way, and it is a woman's freedom to access legal health services that are available to her.

I'm also glad to hear that there are parts of this legislation that will make sure that, you know, even beyond that zone that will be set up around a clinic, it will not be legal to harass people outside of that, whether it's to try to intimidate health care providers, to use people's connections that are in these communities and in their families to try and stop a health care provider from being able to do their job. That's what we're trying to address, that sort of chilling effect that happens when women feel afraid to access the service and the health care providers want to be able to practise health care free of intimidation. That should be their right, especially in this country of ours, especially in this province of ours.

Those were some of the things that I needed to reflect on from my own experience and that of my good friend. Also, you know, I needed to reflect on how it is going to affect others, people that would want to go and engage in loud or silent protest outside of

these clinics. It's about striking a balance. It's about protecting a woman's right to access health services, legal health services, and protecting the ability for someone to exercise their own views, their own opinions. But there is a line. There is a line at which my rights should never impede upon yours. I think that's a really important balance to strike.

With that, Madam Chair, I will conclude my remarks on the bill at this time, but I thank the government for bringing forward this bill. I'm thankful that in this country and in this province, women are able to make their own choices when it comes to their own bodies, and I am proud to stand up for those rights.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Hawkwood.

Connolly: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to rise in full support of Bill 9. Now, Madam Chair, I am pro choice, and I am about as pro choice as one can get. I've always believed in a woman's right to choose, and I'm passionate about making sure that people have access to safe abortions.

Something that I want to point out before I continue is that abortion rights are not only women's rights, but many men also have uteruses. There are thousands of trans men and nonbinary people in our province who have a different type of difficulty accessing these types of services, and I want to remind the House that we cannot forget them when we're talking about health care and abortion services.

As a man who doesn't have a uterus and doesn't have to worry about being pregnant or even worry about impregnating my current partner, I realize that I'm in a position of extreme privilege when it comes to the subject of abortion, which is why I don't think it's up to me to tell people what they should do with their bodies. Being pro choice means that you believe people should be able to choose what is best for them when it comes to their own bodies. It's not up to me to decide what is best for people who are pregnant and are making the decision of whether or not to go through with the pregnancy. When I have people that I love trying to make that decision, I help them, I support them, I hold their hand, and whatever they choose, I am there for them. But it's not up to me to make that decision for them.

I can understand people who don't want to have an abortion themselves. But to stop everyone else from seeking access to an abortion is such a foreign idea to me. I simply don't understand. You cannot be pro life and antiabortion because when states bar access to abortion services, people die. We've all heard stories of people trying to self-abort, and we all know that many of those stories end in tragedy. That's why I'm fighting for this bill, because the people of Alberta deserve to have access to abortion services without harassment. They deserve the right to access legal health care services without attacks, without molestation, and without having to go through a throng of people yelling at them and holding up signs with graphic images to try to dissuade Albertans from making a very personal decision.

I am very proud to support this bill, and I would ask all members of this Chamber to stand and vote in support of Bill 9.

The Chair: Any other questions, comments, or amendments? The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to thank members for their participation in the debate here, especially the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville for her personal experiences and the experiences of her friend. It is a choice, but it is, I think, for the vast majority of women who make the choice, a

very difficult and personal choice that shouldn't be an easy choice, but it is their choice to make.

I want to address just a few of the comments from the Member for Calgary-Hawkwood around what it means to be pro choice. I am pro choice for everything. If you are pro choice and you believe it is your body and your choice, that should apply beyond just abortion. It should apply to every law that the government passes. It should apply to private health care. If you believe that it is your body and the government has no right to tell you what to do with it as long as you're not hurting anybody else, then surely we should at least believe in the right of people to access private health care in parallel to our public system. If it is our body and our choice and the government has no say over it, then clearly the members opposite must believe that the Canada Health Act itself is in violation of that principle.

4:30

If we are pro choice in believing that it is your body and your choice and that the government has no say over what you do with it, then clearly banning flavoured tobacco should be against the spirit of their convictions. If they are pro choice that it is our body, our choice, then clearly the right to ride a motorcycle without a helmet, however ill advised that activity may be, should apply to everyone regardless of their religion. This is the concept of sovereignty of the person.

Now, there is a legitimate debate about, you know, that some people would say that in the case of abortion there is another person involved, and surely at some point there is, and we generally have a hard time determining where that point starts and where it ends. Some people have black-and-white views on it. I have a bit more of a grey view on it. I want to emphasize the point that if you do believe in what you're saying, that it is your body and your choice, then surely that principle must apply beyond the narrow confines of the abortion debate.

Again, you know, the story the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville spoke to I think is very heartfelt and one that many women go through every year in Alberta. As men in this Chamber we should be very grateful that we don't have to face that. That is a difficult time. But I do take issue with some of what she said. I think she is confusing opposing a legal right to abortion with opposing even questioning the morality around it. I think that the vast majority of reasonable people in Alberta and in Canada have nuanced views on the topic. As I've said before, if you want to ruin a perfectly good conversation between two civil and reasonable people, talk about abortion. You'll ruin a conversation pretty quickly because it's such a polarized debate, and nuance does not function well in it.

There is a difference between trying to actively deprive someone of the legal right to do it physically and having a disagreement about it as a moral issue. Bill Clinton, probably the most famous pro-choice president of the United States, famously said that abortion is between a woman, her doctor, and her God. He was clear that, you know, he believed that he was pro choice, he believed in lifting restrictions on abortion, but he did not deny that there are moral implications involved in it that every woman must make a decision on herself.

You know, the pro-life movement itself has a pretty broad range of views. There are the more extreme ones who believe it should be banned in all cases. I think that's a very small group, but there are some who believe that. There are moderates along a long line of where they draw the line. And then there are a significant number of pro-life Albertans and Canadians who believe it should be legal but who take moral issue with it and seek to change hearts and minds rather than legislation.

I think this bill is going to make it illegal for even the most respectful kind of protest. I'm sure there probably have been examples, but I cannot recall an example in recent history where there's been violence or active intimidation at an Alberta abortion clinic. These protests are rare in general, but in most cases where I'm aware of something, it's been a little old lady praying quietly, and this will make them illegal. You might disagree with her, and she might disagree with you, but if she's not hurting anyone, if she's not harassing anyone, if she's merely praying, I think that's her business.

That's where this bill crosses the line. It is already illegal to harass someone. It's illegal to intimidate someone. If this bill sought to just clarify that in law, around intimidation and harassment, I would be its most enthusiastic supporter, but this bill talks about protest and has a very broad definition of protest, and that would include someone who just sits there quietly praying, even silently, to themselves. I'm sure that we have a hard time as legislators figuring out what she's saying to God, but that's her business. Somehow we're now going to expect law enforcement officials to figure out what she might be praying quietly. That's a very strange thing for government to legislate.

I'll have a series of amendments dealing with some of these issues, trying to better balance this bill. I'll distribute them now before going any further.

The Chair: This will be known as amendment A5.

Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. The amendment that I've put before members reads as follows. I move that Bill 9, Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act, be amended in section 7 by (a) in subsection (3) striking out "160 metres" and substituting "10 metres" and (b) in subsection (5) by adding "not to exceed 10 metres from the boundaries of the parcel on which a residence is located" after "physicians or service providers."

Now, I can speak from personal experience of having unwanted political business outside my house. I mentioned it at an early stage of this debate. Several months ago I had CBC camped outside my house with a camera pointed through the windows of my home while my wife, children, and other members of my extended family were inside. It was a gross violation of privacy and, I think, outright paparazzi-style media, unbecoming of any news broadcaster, let alone one that receives state taxpayer funding and support. I believe that that should have been illegal. I think that would constitute harassment and a violation of my privacy at home. If they want to wait outside my office, that's fine, but not at my home.

The home is much more sacred than that, and there is legitimacy in, I think, stopping protests outside of a home, period. One area of the bill where I would be more comfortable with limiting freedom of assembly is outside of people's homes. Protesting at a place of work is one thing, protesting at a monument or a government building is one thing, but protesting at someone's home is quite another. I'm actually quite supportive of there being a no-protest zone at residences, but at 160 metres it's quite an extraordinarily large zone that's been proposed. I mean, where can we draw the line? If you simply drive by a house with a pro-life bumper sticker, would you be considered protesting? If you wore a T-shirt as you walked by, would you be protesting?

What I'm seeking to do here is leave in place a part of the bill with which I actually strongly agree, that you should not be protesting outside of someone's home, but to bring that zone down to a more manageable level of 10 metres. At 160 metres, especially if you're in an urban area, you might not even know who's there.

That's a very large zone that was extended by the government without particularly much opposition here. I disagreed with 50 metres before, and I certainly disagree with 150 and 160 metres.

I will just say that this is a part of the legislation with which I strongly agree. You should not be protesting outside of someone's private residence. I've experienced that myself, and it's disgusting regardless of what you're doing. I support the spirit of it, but I want to bring the zone size down to a more manageable level so that we're not capturing people in this who should probably not be considered protesting outside of someone's home at that kind of distance.

Thank you.

4:40

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to the amendment. I am immensely appreciating the opportunity to do so to the amendment, reducing the distance from 160 metres – was it? – to 10 metres. So 10 metres I don't have a way to measure, but that's approximately from myself to you.

I don't know how many clinics you've driven by, but I don't just see little old ladies sitting there praying. It tends to be groups. It tends to be graphic, graphic signs that are huge that people are holding, and they tend to yell some obscenities that I'm not going to say in this place, not to mention the harassment that comes with the name-calling. I don't know. I'm pretty sure that if I called you a baby murderer from here, you'd hear it, so I think 10 metres is not sufficient. Although I do certainly appreciate your interest in this bill and allowing us the opportunity to debate every facet of it, I would encourage all of my colleagues to vote no on this amendment.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A5?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A5 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:41 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Fildebrandt

Against the motion:

Carlier	Ganley	Miller
Carson	Goehring	Miranda
Clark	Hinkley	Nielsen
Connolly	Hoffman	Piquette
Coolahan	Kazim	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Kleinstauber	Sabir
Dach	Larivee	Schmidt
Dang	Littlewood	Schreiner
Drever	Loyola	Shepherd
Eggen	Luff	Starke
Feehan	McKitrick	Sucha
Fitzpatrick	McPherson	Woollard
Fraser		

Totals: For – 1 Against – 37

[Motion amendment A5 lost]

The Chair: Any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my absolute honour and privilege to stand up today to talk about Bill 9, the access to abortion services act. As a woman, as a mom, as a friend, as a social worker I've had first-hand experience assisting those who both work professionally and have had to use abortion services here in the province of Alberta. I was a young mom, and I had several friends that had to make that decision when faced with an unplanned pregnancy, and I can say that it's not an easy decision.

Being a young person and having to come to a decision and then being forced to go to a clinic where you're being yelled at and threatened and told that you are an absolutely horrible person because of a decision that you have to make, accessing health care, is absolutely unacceptable.

Early on in my career I chose to work with young parents. I worked at an organization called Terra. This organization supported young parents and/or pregnant teens. Not all of us chose to parent. Some chose to place for adoption, some chose an abortion, some had miscarriages, but we all came together as a community, and we supported each other. Seeing these young women and young dads was absolutely remarkable. The thing that was really heartbreaking was when a young woman had to decide that she needed to have an abortion for her own personal choices and then had to run a gauntlet of protesters, who were horrible. Seeing the aftermath of that as their friend, as a counsellor was absolutely devastating.

5:00

When I was a social work student in my second year, I chose to do my practicum at Planned Parenthood, and to me it was one of the most amazing experiences that I could have had as a social worker. I had the privilege of hearing first-hand from women who were struggling with an unplanned pregnancy. As staff at Planned Parenthood we received horrible, horrible messages, hate mail from people that were just disgusting in the language that they sent to us as staff that were supporting women that were able to access health care. In talking to staff that worked in the abortion clinics, they were terrified sometimes to go to work, had been accosted on ski hills out with their family during vacation, had people that knew where they lived and would come to their home. It was absolutely terrifying, and my heart went out to so many people that were doing their job, essentially, every day.

That was in the '90s, Madam Chair, and to hear that they had asked government for protection, for bubble zone legislation, and that the government turned their back on them is horrible. I am so proud that our government listened to the women and to the health care providers and that we came forward with legislation that's going to help protect those people that need to access their employment and need to access health care services.

I remember a woman when I was working in a women's shelter. She was pregnant, and she was terrified that her husband would find out, and she chose to access abortion services. She went to the clinic and came back in tears to the shelter. She was horrified. She didn't feel safe and was terrified that somehow her husband was going to find out that she was pregnant just simply by going to the doctor. She struggled a long time about how she would make that decision to simply walk through the doors. That's not okay. This was a woman who needed for her own personal safety to access health services and was afraid because of the protesting that was happening right out front of that clinic.

I stand here in disappointment that there aren't more members listening to some of these stories and standing up for what they believe in regardless of whether they're supporting it or not. I stand

here proud of our government and what we're doing to help women. This is simply about making it safe for women to access health care. They need to be able to walk into a place where they can access health care and feel safe and secure and not abused, Madam Chair, just for having an appointment at a clinic.

I would really strongly suggest that all members of this House stand with the women of Alberta and stand with the health care professionals that go to work every day and have a right to go to work and access services without being harassed, threatened, ridiculed. It's our right, Madam Chair, and I'm pleading: please, please support this bill.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to thank the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs for her comments.

Madam Chair, certainly, it'll be a change in tone, but if you and the members would indulge me for just a moment to go completely off topic – I'll try to tie it in – I want to get on the record after meeting members of different parties during the bells as we chatted. I think there will probably be all-party agreement if the Minister of Finance, responsible for the AGLC, were to extend opening hours for places that serve alcohol on the 19th of May so that all Albertans can join in celebrating the royal wedding as good, loyal subjects of the Commonwealth. We did this during the World Cup when it was on, and I greatly appreciated it. We may have done it during hockey games as well. I know I'm completely off topic, so I appreciate members' indulgence on this. I think there'll be a great deal of crossparty support, and I would encourage the Minister of Finance to consider it.

Back to the more serious matter at hand, though, I have another amendment to put forward, that I'll distribute to members before continuing.

The Chair: This will be known as amendment A6.

Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. In the amendment put forward, I move that Bill 9, Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act, be amended in section 2(1) by striking out clause (b). This is striking out three words in the bill: "engage in protest."

This is important because this is keeping everything in the bill about intimidation and harassment. The Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs spoke to her experience and the experience of people she knows of horrible intimidation and harassment, things that are unacceptable, really, anywhere but in particular when someone is going through such a difficult time. But "engage in protest" is an overly broad term. Protest can range from aggressive shouting, which I believe should not be permitted – I think we would consider that harassment in the context of outside an abortion clinic – but it can also include peaceful and respectful protest. It can include protests, which are actually more common in these places, of just silent prayer.

I won't belabour the point, but as I spoke to earlier, if someone is engaging in silent prayer somewhere, this legislation would probably consider that protest. It may be a form of protest, but I think it's not intimidation. It's not harassment. It's someone expressing their religious freedoms, freedom of expression, and freedom of assembly in a way that I don't believe is worthy of being struck down. It's not a kind of protest I would engage in or even encourage at that place. I think there are better places for it. But if someone is engaging even in silent prayer as a form of protest, I

think it would be a gross overreach and violation of freedom of expression, assembly, and religion to ban that.

I think all members, on all sides of this House, should stand up for those basic liberties. This is a part of the bill where the balance is completely wrong. If we're trying to protect people from harassment and intimidation, we can do that, but we should not be unduly infringing on people's basic Charter rights. The Criminal Code already prohibits harassment, intimidation, threats, and assaults. The Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs spoke to that. Those things are already against the law. If this bill wants to further clarify and entrench those things in legislation, I think that is positive, but this is where the bill goes completely off script, where it goes completely off balance in balancing important Charter rights.

This is a very simple amendment to better balance this legislation. It keeps in place everything on harassment, intimidation, threats, and assaults but strikes out only three words: "engage in protest." I'd encourage all members to support it.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? Seeing none, are you ready for the vote?

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:10 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:
Fildebrandt

Against the motion:

Carlier	Goehring	Miranda
Carson	Hinkley	Nielsen
Clark	Hoffman	Piquette
Connolly	Kazim	Renaud
Coolahan	Kleinstauber	Sabir
Cortes-Vargas	Larivee	Schmidt
Dach	Littlewood	Schreiner
Dang	Loyola	Shepherd
Drever	Luff	Starke
Eggen	McKittrick	Sucha
Feehan	McPherson	Swann
Fitzpatrick	Miller	Woollard
Fraser		

Totals: For – 1 Against – 37

[Motion on amendment A6 lost]

The Chair: Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to the bill? The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. Let's try again. I'll try to be brief, which I am sure members will surely appreciate. I'll distribute this amendment before continuing.

The Chair: This will be known as amendment A7.
Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. The amendment I propose is to move that Bill 9, Protecting Choice for Women

Accessing Health Care Act, be amended in section 13 by striking out:

(4) Where a corporation commits an offence under this Act, any officer, director or agent of the corporation who directed, authorized, assented to, acquiesced in or participated in the commission of the offence is guilty of that offence and liable to the penalty provided under subsection (2)(a) or (3)(a), as the case may be, whether or not the corporation has been prosecuted or convicted of that offence.

Now, this is more of a housekeeping part of the bill. The last amendment I moved dealt with the substance of the bill, I think, trying to better balance Charter rights and freedoms. This amendment is more housekeeping in nature, just trying to improve the wording of the legislation.

Corporations are already subject to the Criminal Code. The definition in section 2 of "every one, person and owner" includes public bodies, bodies corporate, societies, and companies. Corporations can only act through their employees and agents. Under current Canadian law officers and directors of a corporation cannot be convicted of a crime for the acts of the corporation solely because of their status as a director or officer. That's a basic principle of Canadian corporate law and societies law. If they are directing the corporation to commit crimes that will benefit the corporation or otherwise participate in criminal activities within the corporation's context, they can already be held criminally responsible. In those circumstances, though, it is highly likely that the directors and officers would be charged with the offence jointly with the corporation, not singled out.

So if that conduct is what the government is targeting in Bill 9, it would be supplementing the Criminal Code, meaning that Bill 9 is potentially encroaching on federal jurisdiction. I think that that is an issue with the way this legislation is written. This particular amendment is not trying to change the spirit of the bill, the intent of the bill, or even the strength of the bill from the government's perspective but is simply trying to clarify important distinctions between individuals and corporations here, to clean up the wording there.

I would encourage all members to support this amendment.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A7?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A7 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:18 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:
Fildebrandt

5:20

Against the motion:

Carlier	Goehring	Miranda
Carson	Hinkley	Nielsen
Clark	Hoffman	Piquette
Connolly	Kazim	Renaud
Coolahan	Kleinstauber	Sabir
Cortes-Vargas	Larivee	Schmidt
Dach	Littlewood	Schreiner
Dang	Loyola	Shepherd
Drever	Luff	Starke

Eggen	McKitrick	Sucha
Feehan	McPherson	Swann
Fitzpatrick	Miller	Woollard
Fraser		
Totals:	For – 1	Against – 37

[Motion on amendment A7 lost]

The Chair: Any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll distribute the next amendment before commencing to speak.

The Chair: This will be amendment A8.
Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that Bill 9, Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act, be amended in section 5(1) by striking out clause (c).

The section that I'm proposing be stricken out says "persistently request that another person refrain from providing, or facilitating the provision of, abortion services." I consider this part to be a direct assault on freedom of expression. It is not necessarily harassing somebody or intimidating somebody or assaulting to express your viewpoint to someone. Members across the way tell me not to do things all the time. I may not listen to them all the time, but they have a right to express themselves. As the opposition it's nearly our job to tell the government not to do things, but they are not obliged to listen to us.

Someone expressing their point of view about what you're doing is not violating their rights. Freedom of expression is the right to express yourself, but someone does not have the right to make you listen. That's what the block feature is for on most social media platforms. You don't have to listen to somebody.

In this case, this amendment, if taken in isolation, would keep the bill intact. It would achieve, I think, most of or all of what the government is intending to do except that if, you know, someone were to politely ask someone: would you like to talk about this? Again, it's not something I would encourage at an abortion clinic. I don't think you're going to talk someone out of it, but if someone simply wants to talk about something, I don't think we should be stopping them for simply asking if someone wants to talk about it. To request that someone refrain from doing it I think is an overreach of the law. So I believe that this amendment would better balance security of the person, a Charter right to protect women accessing these services, with the competing Charter rights in this bill of freedom of expression and freedom of assembly.

I'd encourage all members to consider supporting this particular amendment.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I want to thank the member for being very clear and open about where he stands on this and for the work that he's done in this Assembly to make sure that he is present and active in debate regarding something that women have been asking for government to act on in this province for about 30 years. They only asked this government about a year ago.

When I toured Woman's Health Options here in Edmonton and when I toured Kensington clinic in Calgary, the staff there said that what they were most excited about with this legislation – there were lots of pieces, but when I said, "You may have heard. Our Premier wants us every day to get up and do something that day to make life

better for Albertans. I know that you've told me this legislation will help make your life better. Tell me one way this will help you personally," some of the staff said: "I'm really looking forward to not having to spend an hour every day deleting e-mails from my inbox. I'm really looking forward to not having to answer hateful phone calls when I start my day."

People have the right to make their opinions known. I believe just last week there was a protest at the Legislature regarding legislation around this work, but: "People shouldn't be coming to my place of work day in and day out and harassing me for doing my job." Part of it was that they were saying that they feel like this government for the first time in the history of those clinics respects what they do. Part of that is not allowing harassing behaviour that really is beyond reason.

I have to say that I believe that removing the words that are in this clause would remove one of the benefits that these staff said will indeed make their lives better. For those reasons, I won't be voting in support of the amendment, and I would encourage colleagues to also oppose it.

Again, through you, Madam Chair, to the hon. member, I do want to say that I appreciate how open he's been about what his views are on this legislation. Clearly, he is engaging in this process and has opinions, as I'm sure many Albertans do. He's right. Sometimes this is a contentious issue for folks, but I appreciate that he's showing up to his job and doing it in a way that he feels safe, respected, and honoured. Certainly, we won't necessarily agree, but you can't deny the fact that he is giving his job his all. I want to give that to the women who are entering these clinics as well, whether they're staff or – I imagine there's probably been a man or two working in these clinics. I've only met women when I've visited them, so I use that gendered language, I guess, when I'm referring to it. I have to say how much I want to make their lives better.

I imagine that many of us in this House signed up for this work because we wanted to have an opportunity to influence public policy and make our opinions heard. Certainly, to that hon. member: your opinion is heard. You joked I think a few days ago about being the Leader of the Opposition, and I have to say that you are certainly holding government to account and doing your job. While I won't be voting for your amendment, I certainly respect that you've brought it forward and the way that you've been open about your opinions on this issue.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members to speak? Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: I want to thank the hon. Deputy Premier for her comments, but for the sake of my popularity in Strathmore-Brooks please stop complimenting me.

Ms Hoffman: Sorry. This is just too much fun. I won't drag this on much longer. I appreciate the focus that has been given to this item.

I do want to say: don't worry. I think you're up soon for a rotation in question period, and I'm sure you'll have an opportunity to highlight just how much we differ in our opinions on many items. Certainly, you being the lone vote on this for many items I think bodes well for your reputation as well.

5:30

Again, I imagine that there are people in this Chamber that have strong opinions on this and might not feel so safe or supported. I imagine sometimes it cannot necessarily feel safe or supportive to be a lone member, an independent member, but I certainly do respect that you have shown up to do your job and that you have said that nobody is going to stop you from doing that. I can tell from

your tenacity with these amendments that you're committed to trying to do everything through your powers as a Member of the Legislative Assembly and the responsibility that comes with that to do your job.

Again, to the hon. member, I'll bring the gloves tomorrow, but I respect, certainly, the work that you've done on this today and in the many days that have been previous and, I imagine, forthcoming as well. Thanks again.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A8?

Seeing none, I'll call the vote.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A8 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:31 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:
Fildebrandt

Against the motion:

Carlier	Goehring	Miranda
Carson	Hinkley	Nielsen
Clark	Hoffman	Piquette
Connolly	Kazim	Renaud
Coolahan	Kleinstauber	Sabir
Cortes-Vargas	Larivee	Schmidt
Dach	Littlewood	Schreiner
Dang	Loyola	Shepherd
Drever	Luff	Starke
Eggen	McKittrick	Sucha
Feehan	McPherson	Swann
Fitzpatrick	Miller	Woollard
Fraser		

Totals: For – 1 Against – 37

[Motion on amendment A8 lost]

The Chair: Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Well, Madam Chair, I have the pleasure of announcing to members that this will be my last amendment to the bill. Sorry to disappoint some. I'll distribute it before speaking further.

The Chair: This will be known as amendment A9.

Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. The amendment is as follows. I move that Bill 9, Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act, be amended as follows: in part A section 1(d) is amended by striking out the word "or" at the end of subclause (iii), by adding "or" at the end of subclause (ii), and by striking out subclause (iv), and in part B section 15 is amended by striking out clause (a).

What this does is that it essentially strikes out sections that say:

The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations

- (a) specifying or describing premises as a facility for the purposes of section 1(d).

This is an amendment, again, I think, from just a better legislative perspective. It is not changing the intent of the bill, it is not

changing the spirit of the bill, and it's not even changing, I think, probably in the minister's view, the strength of the bill. What this is doing is ensuring that this is legislative, that they are legislating very clearly here that the cabinet through order in council cannot simply expand the definition of what types of facilities here are protected through the back door. I think the bill is pretty clear about what it means for these kinds of facilities that they're trying to keep protests or dissent away from. They've been pretty clear on that. They've spelled it out in the legislation. My fear is that by simply granting the government the power through a simple decree, through order in council, the government may expand this to other kinds of facilities not really intended to be covered by this. This is, I think, just better legislative writing.

You know, regardless of where you fall on the political spectrum, what party you're in, we should always be careful to write laws that will be good regardless of what side of the aisle you're on. In the freak accident that the NDP were not re-elected in a year, they may regret giving a different party power through order in council to essentially change this bill. That's a very dangerous thing to do, to give unreasonable power to government through order in council.

There are appropriate times for orders in council for the government. I think that we've all demonstrated that in our support for the bill giving the right to the government to potentially stop oil shipments to unnamed provinces that try to stop our exports. That's a reasonable power to give government through order in council in cabinet, and the government has accepted a sunset clause to that. It's important that we restrain the arbitrary power of the executive, and that's why I believe that this amendment, which will keep the entire bill intact but remove the ability of the executive level of government to arbitrarily change the definitions of the protected facilities, is an appropriate move.

Dr. Swann: What would be an example of a misuse?

Mr. Fildebrandt: The Member for Calgary-Mountain View has asked for an example of it. You know, perhaps there is a pro-choice activist organization that has a building with a headquarters somewhere, but they do not provide abortion services there, there are no abortion doctors, and there are no patients seeking abortions or health services of any kind. It might be simply an activist headquarters of some kind.

5:40

It might simply involve organizations that support abortion access but aren't providing abortions themselves, and there's therefore no purpose to saying that you can't protest there. You know, if X organization supports abortion rights but they're not actually performing any there – there are no patients, there are no doctors, and it is simply a political activism group of some kind – disagree with them you might, but I think it would be unreasonable to restrict someone's right to protest that facility if there are no doctors or patients who can be affected. It is, then, simply a matter of political and social disagreement on issues, and I don't believe that the government would be right to limit that. That is one particular example.

But when you grant governments powers that are virtually unlimited to expand the definition of something beyond the legislation, it is always a dangerous road to go down. I hope that the government and other opposition members will recognize that it is always a very dangerous thing to grant the executive powers to change something arbitrarily.

I hope that they'll give this due consideration as an amendment to maintain the spirit and intent and powers of the bill but ensure

that it does not exceed what they intend themselves for it to include. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much. I think that I am not inclined to vote for the amendment for the reason that, for example, 30 years ago, when other jurisdictions were considering this, hospitals and clinics were the only places where abortion services were provided. We've since expanded to include pharmacies because of the addition of Mifegymiso across Canada, with recent approvals. Again, it is very clear in sub (iv): "premises specified or described in the regulations in which abortion services are provided." So it's not a pro-choice organization that isn't actually providing abortion services. This would be a specific place.

Again, with the evolution of science and with medicine, we didn't want to require a House of the day, whether it be in one year or 10 years from now, to have to come back and reopen this legislation to protect another site where this might be happening. We tried to be very careful in the choosing of these words to ensure that it was only about addition, that it wasn't about retraction of the types of locations that are included. But the addition could only be for facilities or premises where abortion services are provided.

I think the intent of the mover is acknowledged in the original legislation. Therefore, I would discourage my colleagues from voting for the amendment.

Thank you.

The Chair: Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll thank the Minister of Health for her comments. I just have a couple of questions around this, though. Is she able to cite examples where there have been protests, that involved harassment or not, outside of pharmacies in the last year or two? I know that most pharmacies will provide certain prescriptions and medications that can terminate pregnancies. Some of that might be considered abortion, some of it not. If she can provide whether there have been examples of people protesting outside of pharmacies: that is my first question.

The second, though, would be: in her view, are pharmacies already included in the definitions that she has prescribed in the bill that she's put forward here? If pharmacies are in fact included in the definitions that she's highlighted, why would it be necessary to give the government the power to expand the definitions to other kinds of facilities if clinics, hospitals, and pharmacies are all covered? Perhaps she can correct me if I'm wrong, but I can't think of other kinds of facilities that could be – yes. The Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster has highlighted the section very specifically. Pharmacies are included right now.

This is not seeking to remove pharmacies from the legislation. It keeps it in there. Clinics, hospitals, pharmacies are all there. She can correct me if I'm wrong, but I can't think of other kinds of facilities that provide abortion or abortion-related services. Because they've been quite broad in the kinds of facilities that they seek to keep protest or dissent away from on this issue, I have a hard time seeing why the executive would want to grant itself extensive powers to expand the definition if it's already very broad and does include things like pharmacies already.

Ms Hoffman: In other jurisdictions it specifically referred to hospitals and clinics because at the time when these laws were brought in – it was a number of years ago – other jurisdictions, including Alberta, didn't have abortion services provided anywhere other than a hospital and clinic. We wrote in "pharmacy" because of the evolution over the last year of Mifegymiso coming on and

our government making the choice to make that fully funded and publicly available for those who choose to access it. That's why we added in "pharmacy."

It's that same rationale that drove us to add in section 1(d)(iv), because nobody foreshadowed that "pharmacy" was going to be included. Now, in those other jurisdictions should the pharmacist feel that there is unreasonable protesting outside their pharmacy, they don't have the ability through an order in council to be able to protect those pharmacies from those types of protests. That's exactly why we added (iv), because science and medicine continue to evolve, and should there be – again, it's not any building – "premises specified or described in the regulations in which abortion services are provided," that's the type of building it could be expanded to.

Just like we didn't foresee "pharmacy" 20 years ago, I don't want to compel the House – we know that some members don't think this issue is worth debating today. We certainly envision that they might not feel it's worth debating in five or 20 years from today. I don't want to require a business or a premises where this service is provided to compel any government to have to come back to debate this legislation. As long as they meet the criterion of (iv), they could be expanded through an order in council to protect that space as well.

Again, I will be voting no on this amendment. Thank you.

The Chair: Go ahead, Calgary-MacKay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a couple of things regarding this amendment. The first one has to do with language. The Member for Strathmore-Brooks referred to abortion doctors. Those are actually called gynecologists, and they're doctors that specialize in women's reproductive health care. That's a whole spectrum of things. It could be things from menstruation to having babies, conceiving babies, having a hysterectomy because of health issues. I think it's incumbent on us to use the correct language when we're speaking about matters like this. This is an important discussion, an important debate, and I'd really encourage us all to use the correct terms.

The second point that I wanted to make was that I agree wholeheartedly with the minister on this. I think it's very smart, actually, to leave it a little bit more open ended. This doesn't empower the government to make a change through an order in council to a wide range of health care services. This is specifically related to abortions.

Something that I've kept in mind throughout this whole debate and especially in listening to a number of these amendments: I would make a correlation to how generally we would expect people to react if it was a man going to fill a prescription for Viagra. Imagine the hue and cry if people were protesting and harassing somebody that was going to get a prescription for something that is legal. For some reason we – not "we" generally, but a lot of people – seem to think it's okay to protest against women who are securing legal health care procedures. I would really hope that everyone keeps that in mind. It's obvious for the people who are voting on these amendments. This is something that has occurred to them. There shouldn't be any sort of differentiation between the health care services men receive and the health care services women receive. If they're legal, people should be able to access them unfettered.

For those reasons, I would certainly encourage people to vote against this amendment.

Mr. Fildebrandt: I've said it before, but again: thank you to the member for getting up. To her point around the terminology of

“gynecologist,” she is correct. These are gynecologists, but not all gynecologists perform abortions. Some of them provide these kinds of services, but not every gynecologist does. I think there is an important differentiation, and I’m not sure if there is a very specific term to single that out. But I want to thank her for her comments.

I want to thank all members who have participated in the debate. It’s been a lonely debate here in the Valhalla section, but it’s certainly been a privilege to do so.

I have no other amendments going forward, and I’m sure all members are anxious to get out for the 6 o’clock bells, so I would ask that we put the question.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A9 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:50 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:
Fildebrandt

Against the motion:

Carlier	Goehring	Miranda
Carson	Hinkley	Nielsen
Clark	Hoffman	Piquette
Connolly	Kazim	Renaud
Coolahan	Kleinstauber	Sabir
Cortes-Vargas	Larivee	Schmidt
Dach	Littlewood	Schreiner
Dang	Loyola	Shepherd
Drever	Luff	Starke
Eggen	McKitrick	Sucha
Fitzpatrick	McPherson	Swann
Fraser	Miller	Woollard
Ganley		

Totals: For – 1 Against – 37

[Motion on amendment A9 lost]

The Chair: Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

[The remaining clauses of Bill 9 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That’s carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Chair. At this moment I’d like to move that the committee rise and report progress on Bill 5 and report Bill 9.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

Mr. Kleinstauber: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill with some amendments: Bill 9. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 5. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur with the report? Say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed, say no. So ordered.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Speaker. At this time, having made great progress this afternoon, I would like to move that we adjourn, returning at 7:30 this evening.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:56 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday evening, May 15, 2018

Day 30

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, May 15, 2018

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: Good evening. Please be seated.

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 7

Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act

[Debate adjourned May 8]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Stier: Good evening and thank you, Madam Speaker. Good evening, everyone. Nice being here on a nice, warm summer evening to enjoy the weather and so on. I'm sure we all wish we were doing more of that.

Tonight I'm speaking for a few moments on Bill 7. I'd like to start out just with a little bit about myself in some respects, and that is that I take these bills that we get and the legislation that is written fairly seriously, and I like to take a lot of time to go through it. A lot of times I run into the legislation language and find the detail in the bills to be a little bit wanting in many respects, so I've put together a few comments with that in mind regarding Bill 7.

I know that a lot of you are very much involved with this local food idea. I think it is probably a reasonably good idea, but I just wish that the legislation was more detailed and not quite as vague. I understand that it's being proposed as a three-part bill designed to support Alberta's local food producers. The three main parts of the bill will deal with establishing organic standards, which must now meet Canadian standards established by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.

I also understand, secondly, that the local food week is to coincide with Open Farm Days celebrations. It's usually held in the third week of August across the province. [interjections] Thank you. Establishment of a local food council can help promote and support local small producers, including farmers' markets, U-picks, at-the-gate stands, and other direct consumer activities are another aspect of this.

As most in the Chamber know, demand for locally produced food has steadily increased in Alberta in the recent past. This is great news as it means that more consumers are interested in knowing where their food comes from and how it's produced. The agricultural industry is an integral part of our economy. All over farmers' markets and direct farm purchases exceeded \$1 billion in 2016, and it is expected that this trend will continue for the foreseeable future. A large part of this growing subset of the agricultural economy is in organics. We see it every day in the markets that we all go to. While the term "organic" has been around for many years, it hasn't really been very well defined up until this point. I think Canada Organic defines organic agriculture as, "the way agricultural products are grown and processed; organic food is produced using environmentally and animal friendly farming methods."

Unfortunately, the term "organic" has been misused due largely to the fact that the organic market has been left unregulated for the most part, something Bill 7 attempts to address by bringing Alberta's organic food industry in line with the federal CFIA regulations, including regulations around labelling of foods as organic. I hope that Bill 7 would, you know, in the future be able to

be amended and be a live document and some of these things could be augmented, especially because regulations, of course, are not debated in this House. A lot of times that is one of our concerns that we've always had, where some of the vagueness is looked after in regulations, but how do we know what is really going to happen with regulation once it leaves this Chamber? Nonetheless, it is important that the organic label means something to Albertans, more than just marketing ploys. So it is important that we get this legislation right at this time.

One issue is that the cost of certification is completely borne by the producer if they want the organic designation from the CFIA. The question then becomes whether certification will actually be of benefit and increase profitability enough to make certification valuable to a small producer. While the organic industry is growing, we don't really have a clear picture yet of how much of the agricultural industry in Alberta is organic, actually.

It becomes difficult to know if this bill is really even necessary at this time, especially considering that the cost of the carbon tax already seems punitive. That isn't me saying this. A former Calgary greenhouse owner stated that the government couldn't have come up with a more punitive policy for small producers, specifically small businesses, generally, from the carbon tax.

The proposed legislation is great in theory, but it really comes down to: how much is this going to cost producers? I simply haven't been given the level of detail in the bill that I need to be able to answer that here today.

When it comes to the local food council portion of this legislation, it's, again, pretty unclear as to who will be on the council. All the legislation itself tells me is that "the Minister shall ensure that the members appointed to the Council are representative of Alberta's local food sector, including small producers and processors." Why doesn't the local food council follow the lead of the other producer associations and elect members of the council?

Mr. Mason: Like the Wheat Board.

Mr. Stier: Like the Wheat Board, hon. minister?

The format seems to be working very well for the pulse growers association. This would address the legitimate concerns that have been raised by many stakeholders that the council will become dominated by one sector of the organic food industry.

Another question that this legislation raises is regarding the costs associated with the marketing council, which remain completely unknown. If the government knows what they will cost, we haven't heard about that yet. It seems that the government has undertaken a review of agencies, boards, and commissions, and, for the most part, this has been one of the few things that I think has been a positive reform. But the question remains: why is the government creating yet another agency, board, or commission with this bill? Wouldn't it be a lot easier and more efficient to simply expand the mandate of an existing producer group, similar to what Bill 14 does with the Alberta Agricultural Products Marketing Council, for example? This government seems insistent on creating, with we're listening to here in this prepared statement, ever more bureaucracy and red tape, which is really unfortunate. We could have already used existing boards for this one, we believe.

Other concerns I've heard from several producers is with the vagueness of the legislation, which I mentioned earlier. But other producers are saying the same thing. Sadly, it's not something that is specific to this bill. It seems like every time I speak about a bill – I know I was speaking the other day about Bill 10 – I'm repeating the same story about how vague the legislation seems to be and how much the specifics are always left up to regulations. I know many of you weren't here during the NDP time in opposition, but I was.

If memory serves me correctly, there were many times that one of my colleagues from the NDP caucus would stand and decry how vague a government bill was and how much of the specifics were being left to regulations.

A great example of how vague this bill is, anyway, is with its definition of a product, which includes “any food or drink wholly or partly derived from an animal or plant.” I would say it’s fairly vague. That covers just about everything we eat. Is it that vague because government needed a definition that covered ordinary things? How about hot dogs? Do we need to have one for that?

Mr. Sucha: Only if they’re organic.

Mr. Stier: Only if they’re organic.

Seriously, though, why does it need to be so vague? That definition covers about everything Albertans could possibly imagine as food. We’re trying to work with legislation. It’s going to be something that’s going to be likely passed as law. Doesn’t it need to be detailed and right and correct and not vague? Wouldn’t you think that would be the way it should go?

7:40

Another of my concerns is related to why this bill, which is supposed to be related to organic labelling and certification, includes a subsection which deals with all agricultural products produced or processed in the province. All means all, so are we going to get involved in our poultry industry totally across the province? How about our pork industry? How about the beef industry? How about all of these industries? Are we really going to expand this that far?

Other concerns I have are whether the increase in power for the ag minister is really necessary in order to regulate organics such as in section 20, which the minister may make regulations on “respecting any matter the Minister considers advisable for carrying out the intent and purposes of this Act.” The good old catch-all clause that we see in a lot of the legislation.

Albertans already support local food, as shown by a 2016 survey where 92 per cent of households bought local at a farmers’ market. I’m not really necessarily therefore convinced that this legislation is necessary even if it was well thought out at this time. That’s why I would have preferred to see this bill go to committee, as was being spoken of earlier in this process, so that it could be very, very carefully, examined and as a result perhaps amended and improved. But since that was defeated, at this stage, because I am so concerned about the lack of information in this bill and the vagueness of the clauses without the specifics and that I’m not involved in any discussions on the regulations nor will any of my team be, I’ll be inclined, unfortunately, to vote against this bill at second reading. Change the way it reads. Improve it. Make amendments. Give us some detail to work with, something to bite on, and that could change.

That’s all I have, Madam Speaker, at this time. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you all this evening.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to Bill 7?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

[Motion carried; Bill 7 read a second time]

Bill 14

An Act to Empower Utility Consumers

[Adjourned debate May 9: Mr. Clark]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Highwood.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It’s a pleasure this evening on this warm, wonderful May night to speak to Bill 14, An Act to Empower Utility Consumers. Bill 14 will allow the inclusion of water bills as part of the free mediation services provided by the Utilities Consumer Advocate. This bill will also expand to the Utility Consumers Advocate the ability to report publicly the performance of power and natural gas utilities as well.

Since being established in 2003, the Utilities Consumer Advocate has had a mandate to educate, advocate, and mediate electricity and natural gas concerns as well for Alberta’s residential farms and small businesses. The UCA currently handles mediation between consumers and electricity and natural gas providers. Adding water to the mediation process, I believe, is a logical step. Madam Speaker, it’s very difficult, if not impossible, for the average member of the public to go up against the large utility providers with a dispute. Ordinary Albertans do not have the time or resources to do so. That is where the Utilities Consumer Advocate comes in. You see, the UCA specializes in handling disputes between utility providers and consumers. They exist to serve Albertans, and they handle thousands of complaints on an annual basis.

Now, with the economic downturn and this government’s prolonging the downturn with their policies, it’s not uncommon for Albertans to be struggling to pay their utility bills. This, coupled with this government’s increase to the cost of living for Albertans, has made the situation worse for a lot of families, especially those in my constituency. With the inclusion of water in mediation services and the expansion of reporting for utility providers, it is my hope that Bill 14 will be able to aid those that are struggling and are now faced with a problem with a utility provider. Now, there are many positives in this bill. Adding water bills to the free mediation service by the Utilities Consumer Advocate, I think, is a good step for serving Albertans.

Now, as I’ve noticed and as I’ve said before, I’ve spoken to many residents in my riding who’ve had some difficulties with their water supplier. Previously these residents had few options to handle these disputes. Now, with the passing of this legislation, however, mediation services can be provided for water bills. This slightly expands the role of the Utilities Consumer Advocate, and I think that, again, as I said before, this will serve Albertans better. In the past the UCA was limited in how it could address water bill disputes. However, with the passing of this bill, Albertans have someone in their corner advocating for their rights in water disputes.

Another encouraging part of Bill 14 is that the current UCA personnel will be able to handle the water mediation. What does this mean? This means that no additional labour costs will be carried by the UCA. Considering the financial crisis this government has put us through, I’m very much in support of not spending more taxpayer dollars to hire additional staff. Likewise, doing more with existing resources is something I think all members in this House would be and should be, obviously, in favour of. Now, in that regard, I commend this government, for once, for actually being fiscally responsible.

On the same note, I can support having the Utilities Consumer Advocate as a one-stop shop for Albertans with utility issues. This means that the process for disputing utility bills is quite simple. No need for busy ratepayers to be going to multiple different agencies to sort out a utility problem. Additionally, having one agency to deal with all utility issues allows for greater savings for the taxpayer.

I also have to commend the government for increasing the UCA’s ability to report on the performance of utility companies. I think that’s a great thing. Bill 14 will enable the Utilities Consumer Advocate to report on consumer service performance, the history of

consumer complaints, a company's compliance with laws and standards such as the orders from regulators, and a company's history of enforcement such as the investigation and, of course, penalties.

Knowledge is power, and if the consumers are able to make informed decisions on their utility providers, they can then choose the company that best fits their needs. This, in turn, can increase competition between providers and will better serve consumers. It gives them a choice. Competition is good. This also makes utility companies accountable to the public. Now they can no longer get away with unfair business tactics without being called out for it.

It looks like the government might be finally listening to Albertans. I've heard for three years concerns from constituents regarding their water bills. Too bad it only took three years to introduce this legislation. It is ironic how the government has been increasing the cost of utilities for three years, but only now do they introduce a bill that will assist Albertans with their utility issues.

Well, while I am supportive of this bill – I do believe there'll be positive results from it – there are much greater things the NDP government could be doing to better serve taxpayers. They could start with repealing the ideological carbon tax, which has had significant harm and impact on families. At \$30 a tonne, the carbon tax nearly doubles the cost of residential natural gas. This means that families have less money to spend on their housing, food, and things that are truly important to them. What would happen if this government is still in power when the federal government raises the carbon tax to \$50 a tonne? Wow. To \$50 a tonne. Will this government, the NDP, actually stand up for the interests of Albertans, or will they blindly follow the federal government and significantly increase the cost of living for Alberta families?

We can also see the NDP pushing their ideological agenda at the expense of everyday Albertans with their coal phase-out. Coal is the most efficient and most reliable form of electricity. The early phase-out of coal will only end up costing ratepayers more. How can the government say that they support families when their policies again and again end up hurting those families they claim to help? Does this government know the impact of their policies? Do they understand the impact of the carbon tax and the coal phase-out on Alberta families? I don't know.

While many families were barely making ends meet – barely making ends meet – prior to this government pushing their ideological agenda, can they imagine how much worse it is now? If the members opposite are concerned about ratepayers and Alberta families, there is much more that they could do. However, as we've all seen, they've not acted to repeal their detrimental policies despite repeated requests by the members of this side of the House, the opposition.

7:50

Let us also not overlook the irony that this government is advocating for more information to be publicly available, yet they are hiding and trying to downplay the effects of their policies. Now, I do think it's a good thing that utility companies are accountable to consumers. Too bad this government isn't held to the same standards.

Now, in closing, Madam Speaker, I do plan on supporting Bill 14 as I believe that this legislation will be beneficial to Albertans, and I do commend the government on finally doing something to help utility consumers, but I will continue to press the government to take further action to repeal their energy policies that have truly harmed all Albertans.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you again for the opportunity to speak. I wish were outside in the nice warm weather. It's a little chilly in here tonight. Again, I wanted to thank the government for bringing this bill forward.

A couple of interesting things here that I thought about when I was reading over some of this legislation and just some of the information that has been put out. Over the last little while the UCA has received 179 calls with respect to water bills, which doesn't seem like a lot, and it's wonderful that Bill 14 has given them the mandate to handle these. But in the city of Calgary – and this is expected to rise. What I thought was really, really interesting, Madam Speaker, was that the UCA between 2017 and 2018 took 22,790 calls and conducted 5,184 mediations. That's pretty incredible. I mean, I imagine that many of those calls were probably able to be dealt with just with the call alone, but that's a lot of mediations on electricity and natural gas.

I guess one of the questions that I have with respect to this is: is the mandate of the UCA also going to be expanded to deal with renewables as well as they come online? There are going to be all sorts of disputes and interesting things that happen as the REPs are built and as the renewables come online. It's just a question for later. If someone can answer that, that would be wonderful. We're going to be having a lot more interest, for lack of a better word, in mediation and necessary people to be there in order to be able to look at a person's bills and have that dispute resolution, especially with capped prices on electricity and wind. It will be significantly more difficult to find out if something has gone wrong with your bill.

I'm just curious if the mandate for renewables will also be expanded in this particular bill or if the bill will be open to that. In my understanding of this bill, that's not up for consideration. I would hope that there will be an advocate at some point that will be able to help out with those disputes, too.

Having said that, you can imagine, you know, that if the UCA doesn't have formal enforcement powers, then that is difficult, but one of the things – and I think I mentioned this before – is that they have the ability to publicly report on providers. That's a very, very significant tool, that they can push companies that are not putting the interests of the consumers first by publicly being able to explain to people what these companies have been doing.

For example, you have a large company that provides water. Right now, without this person, there are very few incentives, Madam Speaker, to prevent a company from overcharging customers or not addressing customer complaints, especially with respect to unexpectedly high bills, especially if the individual is not representing their customers appropriately and is not helping out with customer policy. The ability for the UCA to publicly report on customer service performance, history of consumer complaints – and that one in particular is, I think, very important. I think most Albertans will, knowing that they have access to this – and I think that part of the plan, too, that is super important, is that Albertans understand that they have access to this. I mean, I think most of us, obviously, don't think about this until we see a bill that makes your eyes bulge out of your head and you don't understand what's going on. All of a sudden you're trying to call somebody to try and help you.

But if there's a history of consumer complaints to a company that is not providing the ability to address a customer complaint and is not incentivized to do so, it's very difficult to follow up on that. The

ability to report history of consumer complaints and the history of investigations as well, Madam Speaker, will mean that companies that make a pattern of overcharging or becoming inattentive will be highlighted. It's a huge, huge, important piece for these companies to be transparent and make sure that they're doing right by the customers. I think that's excellent.

I think that if these things such as being inattentive and whatnot are highlighted, it will dramatically affect the ability to attract new customers, and at the end of the day the customer is always right. If the customer has the ability to be able to research and find out what's going on and to be able to advocate on their own behalf, especially with what the bill does, I think the companies themselves will be more willing to make sure that they're taking good care of their customers. That's always good.

Also, the good part about it is that you retain customers as well, right? Customer service and attentive abilities within these companies I'm sure for the most part are actually quite good, but this will reinforce and make sure that they take good care of their current customers as well as having to protect their public image, which I think at some time, to a large degree, is probably the best tool that we have. Certainly, with the advantage of social media and all of the other things that we have access to, information is quickly released. If a company is not doing right by their customer, I can almost guarantee that that's going to make it onto Twitter and Facebook pretty quickly, and those companies will have to deal with that quite fast. That's a good thing.

Companies that are attentive to their customers will generally work to resolve disputes anyways, but they will also benefit on the flip side from strong, strong customer service. As much as the bad representations will be made public, so too will the good ones. That's wonderful for companies that are doing the right thing, that are resolving disputes, and that have strong customer service records. Those good things will also be made public.

There was a news story on this legislation, about some of the consumers and their interactions with the UCA and that they're ultimately made to pay the higher bill, but at least with this legislation it will give them some time to delay a threat of their water being disconnected. Madam Speaker, again, can you imagine the anxiety from those kinds of things happening? Everybody is paying a lot more right now. You know, there's a lot of suffering going on in this province. We have a good chunk of our population that isn't working right now. We have a growing population of newcomers coming in but also of our seniors, too, and people who are on fixed incomes. The stress of having your water turned off or other things is massive. At least, through dispute resolution and through the UCA they have the opportunity to bring that forward. It gives them a little bit of time to figure out what's going on.

The legislation will also protect municipalities, who have jurisdiction over water utilities, from being put in a position to have to subsidize abnormally high water bills, which is what has happened in Calgary for some time now. I mean, we're looking at a subsidy of \$1.5 million, which probably doesn't seem like a lot in the grand scheme of things, but it is, especially if this is an annual subsidy that's happening.

I'd like to ask a question, too, if there's anybody who can answer this for me. The legislation protects municipalities, who have jurisdiction. How are they protecting the municipalities from this? What is in the legislation? I'm not quite sure I understood that. I would love some clarity on: the subsidy versus what? Is it just a dispute resolution piece? Is it something that's coming down from the government to cover that subsidy? If there's somebody who could provide some clarity on that question, I would be very grateful for that.

8:00

I will be voting in favour of this legislation. I think that there is a little bit of irony here, though, that has to be pointed out. We have a government that is charging a carbon tax, the largest tax in Alberta's history. We have a government that is charging extra minimum wage. We have a lot of different things that are happening from this government in that the cumulative burden on Albertans, regulations, a whole bunch of things that are impacting Albertans in their pocketbooks, their everyday lives, and their ability to do things with their families and their children, choosing heat sometimes over hockey – I mean, that's just here right now. If we go towards Ontario, that could be choosing eating versus heating your house. These are some really, really serious issues. The irony of it is that we have a bill that is concerned with making sure that people aren't getting overcharged on their bills, but ironically the government is sure doing a lot to increase what that bill looks like. I think that's something that the government needs to consider going forward.

This legislation on its own is good legislation, but I will ask again: is this legislation going to be broadened to take into consideration renewables coming online and any disputes that will be happening with that? It's going to be very complicated, I would imagine. We have new infrastructure builds. We're going to be having different types of energy coming onboard that are not necessarily consistent. They don't necessarily have a baseline of energy that you can go from. It's intermittent. It's going to come on the grid in different places and different ways. I'm curious to see if the government is going to expand this mandate to take into consideration any sort of dispute resolution that may come online as a result of renewables also being brought online.

You know, Albertans are looking at a lot of different things. They're looking at: their taxes have risen; their cost of food has gone up; activities, clothing increasing due to passing on of transportation costs from the carbon tax. These are everyday Albertans that are being impacted every single day because the transportation of the goods and services that they need costs them more. Our ratepayers and our taxpayers are the same people. They're the ones that pay this. The increase of the minimum wage. Power bills have also climbed, and that is due to some considerable meddling by this government in the electricity market.

At the current rate the carbon tax rate is, well, depending on the day, a dollar and a half per gigajoule. Nearly half the cost of the residential gas price is a tax. An Alberta family that may face a \$100 bill for natural gas prior to their fees and charges is actually paying nearly \$45 in carbon tax. That's an interesting way of looking at it, isn't it? That's when it becomes a little bit more of a reality for the average family. It might not seem like a lot to those of us who have the privilege of being in here, but to the average family, that is a lot. While I'm glad to see that the government is taking some measures to protect Alberta consumers, I would like to highlight the fact that there's a litany of issues here that have caused poor economics. It's poor policy, it's impacting the economics of this province, and it's made things exceptionally harder for Albertans, Madam Speaker.

We will take our wins where we can get them, so thank you to the government for this legislation. If there's somebody that potentially could answer my questions with respect to broadening this legislation to renewables coming online, dispute resolution with respect to that, and also with respect to the protection of the municipalities, I would be very grateful for that.

I will be voting in favour of this bill, and I would urge my colleagues in the House to do the same. Thank you so much.

The Deputy Speaker: Under Standing Order 29(2)(a) any questions or comments?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

Are you ready for the question?

Hon. Members: Question.

[Motion carried; Bill 14 read a second time]

Bill 6

Gaming and Liquor Statutes Amendment Act, 2018

[Adjourned debate May 10: Dr. Turner]

The Deputy Speaker: Any members wishing to speak to this bill?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

Hon. Members: Question.

[Motion carried; Bill 6 read a second time]

Bill 2

Growth and Diversification Act

Mr. Cooper moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 2, Growth and Diversification Act, be amended by deleting all of the words after “that” and substituting the following:

Bill 2, Growth and Diversification Act, be not now read a second time because the Assembly is of the view that the government should pursue other measures to reduce the cost of doing business in the province, including the introduction of legislation to eliminate the carbon levy, which, if implemented, would make the measures proposed in the bill unnecessary.

[Debate adjourned on the amendment May 15]

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

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, again, Madam Speaker. Whew. It's a marathon tonight. Thank you again for the opportunity to speak on the Growth and Diversification Act. This act seeks to address current and future projected labour shortages in the tech . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, we are still on the amendment, and you have spoken to the amendment already. I apologize.

Mrs. Aheer: Oh, pardon me. Thank you so much. I thought so. Okay. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Highwood, on the amendment.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Absolutely. I rise in the House today to speak on and give my support to my colleague's reasoned amendment for Bill 2, the Growth and Diversification Act. This bill is another attempt by this government to try and diversify the economy. This bill aims to create spaces in tech programs in postsecondary institutions. It creates the framework to invest in new scholarships and tech launches, and an interactive digital media tax credit continues the Alberta investor tax credit and capital investment tax credit.

As I've said before in this House, I don't have a problem with the diversification of the economy. In fact, I would be thrilled if Alberta had a strong, robust, diverse economy. However, the problem we run into is: how do we as legislators encourage the diversification

of our economy? How can we get private industry and private capital to invest in our province to get these industries going in Alberta?

Now, Bill 2 specifically looks at the tech sector as a place to encourage diversification. There's no doubt that Alberta would certainly benefit from an increase in tech-related jobs. Furthermore, the technology sector is one of the fastest growing industries worldwide. That sounds great for Alberta. However, Madam Speaker, as I stated earlier, the question is: how do we attract this investment to our province? The problem with Bill 2 is that it uses a mix of incentives to encourage the diversity of the tech sector; in other words, incentives as taxpayer dollars. Does the government really want to spend more money that it just doesn't have on a program that may not achieve the desired outcomes?

Alberta is in a fiscal crisis right now. The government's latest budget proposed a deficit of almost \$9 billion. By the middle of next decade we will be looking at Alberta's debt hitting just shy of \$100 billion. That's a lot of money. This is not the time to be throwing away taxpayer dollars or taxpayer money into projects that may or may not succeed. The government has attempted multiple times to try and diversify the economy. Has it worked? Well, the government keeps proposing more and more bills on diversifying the economy, so that should just give us an answer. Is the government thinking: “Well, we haven't had any success with any of our previous economic diversification legislation, but this time it's just going to be different. This time it's going to produce the results.” Madam Speaker, I think that's just unwise thinking.

Furthermore, the tax credits, the so-called incentives, proposed in Bill 2 allow the government to pick and choose winners and losers. Now, I want to let the members opposite know that the government isn't very good at picking winners and losers. These sector-specific tax credits leave out many potential businesses that would like to access capital. However, the government has already picked which industries they want to receive the credits, so if a business doesn't fit the specific framework of the legislation, it looks like they're just going to be out of luck.

Albertans will be skeptical of programs like these. The NDP has had difficulty rolling out these programs in the past. There were delays and difficulties with the rollout of the Alberta investor tax credit last year, and the interactive digital media tax credit program will not have any details until late this summer. Now, how can we trust that the government will get this one right? Also, the companies that are receiving these tax credits: could they not just get this capital from the private markets? If they could get capital privately, then why would we use taxpayer dollars to support it? If companies cannot get private capital, then why not? If the private market won't invest in these projects, why should the government?

8:10

Now, some may argue that the reason Alberta is lagging behind other provinces such as B.C. and Quebec in the tech industry is because we do not have a tech-specific tax credit. However, if we're already far behind, how are we going to catch up?

Maybe a better solution is not to be like every other province and instead restore the Alberta advantage and make Alberta the most attractive place to invest. I'm not sure why the NDP government hasn't learned by this point that the private sector does the best work of creating jobs. The government doesn't create private-sector jobs; the private sector does that. What should the role of the government be? To get out of the way of job creators and create conditions that allow them to succeed. Madam Speaker, we need to stop and step back and look at why private-sector jobs are not being created. That is why I'm supporting the reasoned amendment to stop proceeding

with the waste of additional taxpayer dollars and actually address the reasons for Alberta's economic woes.

If the government was serious about seeing the results of a diverse economy, they could start with repealing the job-killing carbon tax. First off, Madam Speaker, the NDP never campaigned on the carbon tax. They had no mandate to introduce one. Secondly, the carbon tax was introduced without proper consultation or study. Did the government know the impacts of the carbon tax before they introduced it? Do they understand how detrimental this tax has been for businesses? I don't think so. I can't imagine they do. Otherwise, they would have taken the advice of the members of the opposition to repeal the tax a long time ago.

You see, Madam Speaker, the government has created an economic mess, and their solution is to spend their way out of it. Will this end? What happens if the federal government raises the carbon tax, a move, I should add, that this government is all too happy to go along with. Well, the NDP government just created more incentives. Will they waste more taxpayer money to try and achieve this so-called diversification? We all know that when the carbon tax goes up, economic activity goes down. Will the government try and spend more money to counteract the negative effects of their carbon tax? Eventually the government is going to have to realize that they cannot spend their way out of this.

We can see how much investment has decreased with the implementation of this carbon tax. What will happen when the carbon tax gets increased more and more? How much more will investment decrease? Although I'm not sure that this government knows this, with the decreased investment comes decreased tax revenue. The government is implementing policies that cause decreased tax revenue, but they're going to try, with less revenue coming in, to spend their way out of decreased economic activity with legislation such as Bill 2. To me, this is backwards thinking and will only lead to increased deficits and increased debt.

Instead, Madam Speaker, let's axe the carbon tax. Let's axe the waste of taxpayer money trying to spend our way to job creation. Rather, let's create the conditions for businesses to succeed and for investment to be welcomed. This would do far more for diversification of the economy than anything else I can think of. Has the government actually asked industry what would benefit them the most? Many business owners I've talked to say that they would benefit the most from the repeal of the carbon tax and reducing red tape, cutting out the bureaucracy, if you will. Has the government even looked into ways to reduce red tape? This is an area that they can explore that would cost very little to implement but could have large positive effects on business here in Alberta.

Less government would be a good thing, too, Madam Speaker. Less government means more economic freedom to invest, create jobs, and increase business activity. Unfortunately, the approach we've seen from the NDP, which we see in Bill 2, is to add more government and create more red tape for businesses. That doesn't attract private-sector business.

Before making this reasoned amendment, my colleague on this side of the House argued unsuccessfully to send this bill to committee. Here we could have studied the bill in depth to better understand the impacts of this bill, but unfortunately the government wanted to push through this bill and push through their ideological agenda.

In closing, Madam Speaker – and I know you wanted to hear those words – we need to show investors that Alberta is again open for business. That is why I encourage all members of this House to vote in favour of this reasoned amendment to put a halt to what the government is trying to do and step back and implement policies that'll actually help us, help the economy, and help all Albertans.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), the hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It is indeed a pleasure to rise and offer some comments on the speech that we heard from the Member for Highwood. I certainly listened with great interest to what he had to say. It was particularly interesting to compare and contrast it to what the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner had to say earlier this morning because at least the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner had reacted to some of the comments and responses that I provided to previous speakers earlier this morning.

A number of speakers from that side have risen and claimed that because of high provincial income taxes and high provincial corporate taxes the tax structure is driving investment to other jurisdictions. Of course, I've refuted that assertion by stating to the House what the provincial corporate tax rates and income tax rates are in those jurisdictions. Across the country, Madam Speaker, taxes are higher than they are in Alberta. Provincial income taxes are higher in every other province than they are in this province. Provincial corporate taxes are comparable or higher in most of the jurisdictions that we're trying to compete with in the high-tech sector.

Other jurisdictions where we find investments in the high-tech sector in particular, Madam Speaker, also have a carbon tax. In the case of B.C., of course, the carbon tax is \$35 a tonne, so higher than the tax here in Alberta. In fact, in Quebec, although they operate on a cap-and-trade system, so it's not a direct charge to consumers, the estimated cost of the carbon tax per tonne is about \$20 a tonne, so comparable to what we're taxing in Alberta. One of the things that I neglected to mention, of course, is that we have no provincial sales tax in Alberta, and there is a significant provincial sales tax in British Columbia as well as in Quebec.

Anyway, my point is that at least the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner reacted to the information that I brought to the floor of the Chamber refuting the notion that higher taxes in Alberta are driving out investment. It's not true, Madam Speaker. All across the board we have lower taxes than the other jurisdictions where we see development in the tech sector in particular, which is what we're trying to stimulate.

It was interesting, though, the tack that he took. He said that, in fact, it wasn't taxes, Madam Speaker, that were driving investment out; it was the environment. Then he failed, of course, to stipulate what environmental conditions in particular are driving investment out of the province. Perhaps he meant the extreme cold that we experience sometimes here in Alberta.

This just goes to show, Madam Speaker, the length to which the members opposite will cling to their ideological belief that tax rates somehow drive investment decisions, which is not necessarily what we're seeing in respect to investments in the tech sector, of course, because if that were the case, all of the tech investment would be happening here in Alberta. It wouldn't be happening in jurisdictions like British Columbia or Quebec because the taxes are higher in both of those sectors.

In the eight hours and 15 minutes since the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner got to his feet and said that, oh, no, in fact he wasn't actually talking about tax rates, he was talking about the environment, the Member for Highwood has gone back to this fairy tale that the UCP continues to peddle that tax rates somehow drive investment. In fact, he went on at length about the corporate tax structure in Alberta driving out investment, the provincial income tax structure driving out investment.

Madam Speaker, you know, I feel like a firefighter. I feel like a firefighter of truth. Every time misinformation is created by the

other side, it's my job to get out and put it out, put it out with facts. I can see that the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood is particularly enamoured with my metaphor, and I invite him to use this any time that he pleases because it's so effective.

Anyway, the fight against misinformation is never-ending, particularly in this House, Madam Speaker. That's why I feel compelled to stand up and remind the Member for Highwood again that we have the lowest provincial . . .

8:20

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to support my UCP colleague's reasoned amendment to Bill 2, the Growth and Diversification Act. This bill is yet one more example of the government's lack of understanding about what Alberta's business community needs to thrive. Bill 2 creates specific tax credits for specific sectors, and once you start doing that for one sector, other sectors expect the same treatment. In the end, you end up with a multiple-layered set of narrow tax credits that may not accomplish anything.

We know that this is a problem because the government tends to have few, if any, measurables for these programs and policies. That means it creates policies before deciding what it wants them to do, and the ministries generally have no way of measuring how they're progressing. That's not a good way to create government policy. If you go down that route, it's easy to forget that you're spending taxpayers' money. Piecemeal policies like those offered in Bill 2 are good examples of that, and that's why I support the reasoned amendment that would ensure it does not proceed to any further readings.

Let me point to an example of a problem that Bill 2 purports to be fixing. This proposed legislation expands eligibility for the Alberta investor tax credit and tops it up, yet the first round of the tax credit was undersubscribed and it left \$1.4 million on the table. This might indicate that there was less interest in this tax credit than expected, which means that there wasn't necessarily a burning need for it. Another possibility is that the government was not successful in letting investors know that the pool of money even existed. Clearly, the government needs to answer these questions about this specific tax credit and determine how it's performing before serving up millions of more dollars for a new set of narrowly defined tax credits.

I think it's quite clear, Madam Speaker, that Alberta's United Conservatives look at the government's role differently. We know that the greatest gift we can give business is a strong, sustainable economy, one that does not carry around big weights such as the carbon tax. If this government really wants to help business thrive, it needs to take a broader approach. Instead of picking out specific sectors, it needs to unfetter them all and then watch them flourish.

That approach has been successful in Alberta for many decades. It made Alberta the gold standard for attracting global investment. It created jobs and prosperity. It attracted people to come from across Canada and the world who have a similar independent mindset. Albertans know that when business thrives, Alberta thrives. Unfortunately, in choosing to focus on bills like this one – that is, one with a slate of tax credits designed for a small and specific sector of our economy – this government is taking a very narrow focus.

I believe that this is the wrong approach. That's why I support this amendment. This government has a pattern of tinkering and then creating problems that require even more tinkering to fix the problems that it's created. We have seen the folly of this approach

in the way the government keeps meddling in the electricity system, to the cost of billions of taxpayers dollars and, of course, more and more debt.

We have spent many hours debating Bill 13 in this Chamber, and you will have heard the United Conservatives describe a long list of problems with this piece of legislation. It all started with the carbon tax, which prompted the power providers to hand back their PPAs. Since then we have had multiple pieces of legislation come forward to fix the cascade of problems created by rolling that first die.

At some point, I would suggest right now, with Bill 2 the government needs to take a different tactic and a more Albertan tactic. I admit that Bill 2 is not a tremendously expensive policy decision; it's simply the wrong one. But this government continues to ignore what the larger business community asks of it. It's first job-killing move was to increase taxes on larger businesses and high-income earners. It then piled on regulations with little, if any, consultation with those affected. Then it focused on measures that increased labour costs even though businesses warned that these unexpected costs would affect the jobs it could offer Albertans.

I believe this government's priorities are backwards, and Bill 2 is a good example of the reason why I feel this way. Business is asking government to stop introducing policies that are making it less competitive. Business is not asking the government to create tax credits like those handed out in Bill 2. That is a major philosophical difference between the NDP and the UCP, Madam Speaker.

You know, Madam Speaker, we're always being accused of giving tax breaks to, I think they call it, our big, rich friends or something like that. We're not giving them tax breaks. We're just treating them the same as everyone else. A flat tax of 10 per cent is the same for everyone. We're not abusing them and chasing them away. Ten per cent of not much isn't much, but 10 per cent of a big income is a lot of money. So if you chase that away, you're losing a lot of money. I mean, for example, just look at your income on the tax side. It's gone down. You've increased the taxes, yet you've got less income. I guess maybe it's not working.

You know, these are the people that create the jobs, the people that run businesses, make money. They create the jobs, and now this government is punishing them by increasing their taxes. These people aren't stupid. That's why they are high earners in the first place. If it's not profitable and the taxes are too high, they can show a loss. In any given year you can show a loss. So then you pay zero for income tax. So instead of getting 10 per cent of quite a bit, all of a sudden you get zero. Maybe that's showing up in your budget. Not only do they do that, they show a loss, they lay off people, they lay off workers, and that's why we have unemployment. All they're asking is to be treated fairly. We don't need to give them a break; just treat them fairly like the rest of the people. But I guess if you choose to chase them away with their taxes and their jobs, that's up to you.

You know, I know that probably the Advanced Education minister is going to get up and give me the same lecture you've given my colleagues about not understanding how taxes work. I think I understand it pretty well, Madam Speaker. You know, I won't get into personal stuff, but businessmen and people on this side know what makes money in this province and know what drives the reality. Treating them poorly and chasing them away and raising their taxes isn't what's going to get Alberta back on track. We don't need to give them breaks. We just need to treat them fairly and not punish them, Madam Speaker.

So I urge all members in the Chamber to vote for this reasoned amendment for it is time to put our priorities in the right order, and Bill 2 is not the way to do that. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: On Standing Order 29(2)(a) I'll recognize Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Madam Speaker, I was very interested to hear my hon. colleague talk about this bill, and I think that in comparison to the short, you know, five-minute clips that we get from the Edmonton-Gold Bar MLA, I can see why a reasonable approach here is represented on this side. The reasonable approach is that, look, we want investment to come back into this province. Now, the approach on the other side is that if we raise taxes and then do these tax boutique giveaways to some of our friends or to the people that we want, then we'll somehow magically make the economy work and get people back to work. Unfortunately, history has proven that that does not work. It's not a sustainable, long-term approach. As I listened, I heard a reasonable approach, which is: let's take a look at what has worked in the past, and then even if we need to tweak it a little bit, apply that because we know it works. We don't have to try to reinvent the wheel. We just have to be able to be conservative in this approach.

8:30

The nice thing about what happened in the past is – I know that the members opposite love to say how it's been terrible for 44 years here.

Mr. Coolahan: Agreed.

Mr. Hunter: And here's the heckle: agreed.

Now, here's the interesting thing about it. A majority of the people on that side moved to this province because of what Alberta actually provides for them. When I hear them say that it didn't work for 44 years, it's a hypocritical argument because they moved to this province to be able to get what the Alberta advantage offered.

Now, Madam Speaker, here's a situation where we have the members opposite speaking out of both sides of their mouths. First of all, they're saying: "You know what? Let's champion Alberta." But they're saying: "No. Alberta is terrible. It's broken." No, Alberta isn't broken. It was broken when they got in. That's exactly the reason that these guys are in the numbers in the polls that they are. That is what I hear constantly from business owners and from people who are just trying to be able to provide for their families. All they want is to be able to have some gainful employment, to be able to get back to this thing we called the Alberta advantage.

If the Alberta NDP government would just practise a principle called salutary neglect, which is that the government gets out of the way. I would like them to look that up afterwards, and then we can talk about it. This is the sort of thing that they need to do. This is

what I hear from businesses. Businesses say: "The government needs to stop doing harm to the economy. They need to get out of the way. We know how to be able to create gainful employment. We want people to be able to be involved in our businesses, we want people to be able to provide adequately for their families, and we want to be able to pay them more than a \$15-an-hour wage."

This is the sort of thing that Albertans have been great at. This is the sort of thing that Albertans – look, I've lived here almost all my life, and the great thing about Alberta is that it's been really good to my family. But what is it going to do for my children and grandchildren? Saddle them with \$96 billion of debt? That's not the kind of legacy that I want to leave them, Madam Speaker.

This is the argument that I hear from the side opposite, this idea that they know best. I said it earlier, Madam Speaker. It is an arrogant approach. It is an arrogant idea or belief that you know better than a very complex economy – a very complex economy – one of the most complex in the world right here, and these guys know best how to be able to create tax boutiques to somehow start and make this thing work better.

Madam Speaker, I'm not trying to be rude to the members. I've said this before. They are some of the nicest people, some of them are some of the nicest people that I know. The problem is that they will not be judged by their intentions, because they would get As for their intentions. What they will be judged for are their outcomes. Have they been able to do what they promised? They sold hope and change like nobody's business, but were they able to deliver on that hope and change? I can tell you that they were not.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Seeing none, you're ready for the question?

The hon. Minister of Transportation, on the amendment.

Mr. Mason: Yes, Madam Speaker. Sorry to be a little slow getting to my feet. I would move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Mr. Mason: Well, I don't usually believe in miracles, Madam Speaker, but we've accomplished a great deal tonight. I would like to thank all hon. members for that and move that we adjourn the House until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 8:35 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday morning, May 16, 2018

Day 31

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 25 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent Conservative: 1 Vacant: 2

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Wednesday, May 16, 2018

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Prayers

The Acting Speaker: Good morning.

Let us reflect or pray, each in our own way. Let us have confidence in our abilities to make decisions while maintaining respect for those who may oppose those decisions. Never let our actions or words be disrespectful. Amen.

Please be seated.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

Bill 16

Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Statutes Amendment Act, 2018

[Debate adjourned May 10: Ms Gray speaking]

The Acting Speaker: Are there any members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Well, thank you and good morning, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to be here with you on this fine May morning, the day after my son's birthday, so happy birthday to you, Porter, if you happen to be watching along at home, which you're not because you're in school. It's a pleasure. It is always a pleasure to rise in the Assembly and speak about issues that are important to Albertans.

Bill 16, the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Statutes Amendment Act, 2018, is a bill title that I'm sure you're familiar with as we have had this particular piece of legislation come before the Assembly on numerous occasions now, and you'll know, Madam Speaker, that I have spoken at length about this particular piece of legislation. Let me just begin by stating that I think that there are some very positive things that have come from making changes to the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act. You know, in fact, the United Conservative caucus as well as other legacy caucuses have been in support of many of those things, and I think that some good work has been done.

I think it's unfortunate the number of times that we've had to do this. You know, this is now the fourth or fifth time that the government has brought this forward. You've heard me in this House before, Madam Speaker, talking about the importance of that if something is worth doing, then we should do it right the first time. It shouldn't take us four or five times to get things right on Bill 16. Yeah, in fact, you'll know that I've spoken on a number of occasions about the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs and his father's commitment when he was growing up about the importance of just that, doing the job right the first time, and I hope that he communicates to his cabinet colleagues and encourages them in the future to do things right the first time and not have to do things time and time and time again.

In particular, this piece of legislation, Bill 16, the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Statutes Amendment Act, 2018, is a very, very interesting piece of legislation. If I could be so bold, perhaps Bill 16 might be better named the NDP Doesn't Trust the UCP Amendment Act because this piece of legislation is specifically targeted and tailored to the United Conservative Party.

You'll know, Madam Speaker, that following the unification of the legacy Wildrose and PC parties to create the new Official Opposition, that, I might add, has received some significant confidence and support of Albertans from pillar to post and corner to corner – I find it interesting that the government now is introducing a piece of boutique legislation specifically targeted at the United Conservative Party.

In fact, Madam Speaker, I know you weren't there, but I found it very interesting that at a government briefing for this legislation the minister's office actually made specific reference to internal party documents of the United Conservative Party in the form of the agreement in principle. The agreement in principle was a document that was created to help form the United Conservative Party. I found it very, very interesting that at a minister's briefing we wound up speaking about such an internal party document. In fact, I was quite concerned about this, that the government would be making legislation specifically targeted to the Official Opposition.

Now, having said all that, this legislation does do a couple of things, but the most significant piece of this legislation is the portion that surrounds associated parties. The purpose of defining associated parties is to ensure that parties that are closely affiliated share a single \$2 million spending limit for a single party. As such, parties that may be associated wouldn't then individually be able to spend \$2 million, \$2 million, \$2 million and then be able to circumvent the legislation that prevents a political party from spending more than \$2 million on an election campaign.

Now, Madam Speaker, I don't know if there is anyone else that the government could have been talking about other than the United Conservative Party and the two legacy parties that were united. While we were very clear in the agreement in principle, the document that I've previously referenced, the government clearly has some concerns about that. In fact, in that agreement in principle on page 7 of the document it clearly states that the United Conservative Party "and the Legacy Parties will respect the spirit of the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act (Alberta) by adhering to the spending limits of a single political party registration." So it's a big surprise to me that now they've placed this legislation before the Assembly specifically targeted at the United Conservative Party.

Madam Speaker, I don't know how else we could have been any more clear with our intentions. The Leader of the Official Opposition, the MLA for Calgary-Lougheed, signed his name to that founding document, which is legally binding in the negotiations between the legacy parties. I think you can probably understand my mild entertainment that the government is so concerned about the United Conservative Party's ability to spend \$6 million total even though we've announced our intention to Albertans about adhering to the intention of the law, that now the government is bringing in boutique legislation specifically targeted at this very issue. It speaks to the concern that they have about the strength of the Official Opposition.

I'd also like to point out that there was a much, much, much, much, much better path forward, a much simpler way to create the same result. It's something that the Official Opposition and both of those legacy parties were speaking at length about, and that is simple: allow the parties to merge. Legislation like this has already been found at the federal level and in Ontario and Quebec. When the UCP was formed, its structure of having the legacy parties continue to exist under the UCP umbrella was done out of necessity rather than preference since there's no legislation that exists in Alberta that would allow the political parties to merge. If the government was actually concerned about this – they're solving a problem that will not exist and cannot exist. Instead, they could have just allowed the political parties to merge.

Now, Madam Speaker, despite the somewhat ridiculous nature and the redundant nature of this bill, the United Conservative Party is in favour of transparency and accountability when it comes to Albertans, and we will be supporting, or I will be encouraging my colleagues to support, this piece of legislation because the legislation is doing exactly what we said we would do, and that is respect the intention of the law. But I would state that any time that we're governing for tiny, tiny one-off situations, creating such legislation, this in fact isn't the best way to govern. It would have been much more reasonable and advantageous and forward looking to create a scenario where political parties may want to merge in the future. In fact, I can see a path forward, where political parties on other sides of the political spectrum may in fact want to also merge.

9:10

Having said that, we support the legislation. It's a little bit ridiculous because it's specifically targeted at the Official Opposition and doing something that we've already said that we would do. Any time that we create legislation on a go-forward basis on one-offs, it's rarely a good way to govern.

I would also like to highlight some questions and concerns that we have within the legislation. As stated, the legislation has a variety of factors that are used to determine whether or not parties are associated. They need to meet a set number of qualifiers that will deem them associated. Some examples of that are that if parties have the same leader, executive director, persons in positions similar to an executive director, CFO, they could be deemed associated. If they share common political programs, policy statements, advertising, branding materials or if one association controls the others, they could be deemed associated.

Now, Madam Speaker, one of the reasons why I have concerns about this portion of the bill is the fact that the individual who'll be making the decisions about whether or not they could be deemed associated is, of course, the Election Commissioner. This individual has been appointed and was the source of a highly debated and contentious government motion, Government Motion 16, which did not receive universal support from the search committee. Given that this newly appointed position is being filled by, some would suggest, a contentious candidate, additional power to deem associated parties leaves some significant discretion and also some concerns on a go-forward basis.

I specifically have some questions around what the Election Commissioner could constitute as similar political programs or policy statements that would deem registered parties associated given that many registered parties across the political spectrum hold similar platforms and how they could be implemented. You know, one concern that I have for my friends on the left is the Alberta Party and the Liberal Party. They're essentially the same organization, very similar to the NDP, all three of them, and in fact will quite likely make very similar policy statements in the next upcoming election. Like, they're going to all pledge their undying support for the carbon tax. Those are very similar or associated types of statements. They will have very similar political programs. They're all going to be very committed to high debts and deficits. They're all going to be committed to the carbon tax. So I have concerns for them on the left about whether or not an Election Commissioner may in fact deem them as associated because of their policy statements.

These are the types of concerns that we should all take a step back from when making legislation like this, when you're trying to solve one problem but not really getting at the heart of the problem, and that, of course, is continuing to prevent parties from merging because it's beneficial to the government.

I look forward to hearing the minister provide some specific examples on how the following section of the bill would be implemented:

the activities of the registered parties and their registered constituency associations and candidates, including the extent to which the registered parties have been involved in electoral campaigns or made public statements in support of any other registered party or registered parties.

Another perfect example – I know the NDP loves this sort of thing federally, and they love this thing in British Columbia – is making coalitions. Let's just say that the Alberta Party and the Liberal Party chose to work collaboratively in certain areas, or perhaps even the NDP chose to work collaboratively with their friends on the left in the form of the Liberal Party. I mean, we all know that their close personal friend and ally is the Prime Minister, the leader of the Canada's Liberal Party, Justin Trudeau, so what would prevent them, then, from working on a coalition-style election campaign when they start to look at the numbers and see, "Oh, man; things aren't looking as good for us as they once did," and then in turn wind up in a situation where they need to work in a coalition to try to prevent other parties from electoral success? Could then they be deemed associated parties by the Chief Electoral Officer and be in breach of the legislation?

I think that there are some very, very significant and realistic concerns that need to be addressed. Again, all of those things would have been mitigated if they solved the actual problem that was before the Assembly, and that is the inability of parties to merge.

You know, Madam Speaker, I spoke at some length already about the need for legislation to come forward and the fact that now we're seeing this particular piece of legislation before the Assembly for the fourth time. Just last session the NDP introduced Bill 32, which made large, sweeping changes to the electoral system. Some of those changes were important, but we also heard from the Chief Electoral Officer about the lack of consultation with his office with respect to Bill 34. He spoke at some length about the potential for unintended consequences in Bill 32, and we've yet to see all of those, but I'm certain that some are forthcoming.

I'm often concerned about the lack of consultation that takes place with the Chief Electoral Officer. I have yet to hear directly from him, but I look forward to hearing back from his office just to find out how much consultation took place with the Chief Electoral Officer during the drafting of Bill 16. I know that the Election Commissioner wasn't in place at that time and, in fact, it was the Chief Electoral Officer who was acting on behalf of the Election Commissioner, so it's my hope that they would have spent some time connecting with Chief Electoral Officer to ensure that he had the opportunity to provide input and feedback on this particular piece of legislation. Now, it's my guess that that hasn't happened because this government has such a poor track record of communicating with the Chief Electoral Officer, and he's written at some length, in a number of letters that have been tabled in this House, about some of his concerns when the government is tinkering in this area.

Now, it's not to say that all changes have been bad, but we are in the business of trying to make the best changes for Albertans and not the best changes for the NDP, and what we have here before us is a change that's best for the NDP and not necessarily best for Albertans.

Now, I have been clear that it certainly is my intention to support the legislation because it puts into law what we have said that we would do in practice. Now, it's unfortunate that we have to arrive here, but I do believe that members of the Official Opposition will be pleased to speak in favour of the legislation. I've had a good chance to speak to a number of my colleagues,

and certainly they have some concerns about the government behaving in such a way that really targets the Official Opposition and, as such, creates or potentially creates unintended consequences on a go-forward basis.

There are a few things in here, additionally, that I can support in terms of some of the changes around by-elections and quarterly filings that are both good and create some concern about the difficulty that some of those things might pose in terms of campaign return filings, of separating out regular contributions and specific contribution campaigns during a by-election, for instance, where donations were not made specifically by the donor but it was received during a by-election period. There are a few potential challenges around that but nothing that can't be overcome.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, we on this side of the House, the Official Opposition, are incredibly flattered that the government saw fit to create a piece of legislation just for us. It makes us feel very special inside. It highlights the fact that they are concerned about the strength of the Official Opposition, that they are concerned that the Official Opposition is gaining momentum all across the province. In fact, the exact opposite of that is what is happening to the government.

9:20

We simply hope that unlike in past instances, they've thoroughly thought through this piece of legislation and that we won't be back again next session with another bill on elections advertising and financing to add to all the bills that they've rolled out so far in the past. I look forward to the debate. I look forward to supporting the piece of legislation. It's unfortunate that we're here, but I also look forward to the minister's comments.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gottfried: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Again, it's always a pleasure to rise in this House today to speak to Bill 16, Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Statutes Amendment Act, 2018. You know, we've had an opportunity to review this. Of course, the UCP Party believes in democracy and accountability and transparency and adhering to these rules, laws, and the spirit of these rules and laws in and outside of election periods, and that's a commitment that we make to all Albertans.

Madam Speaker, we've seen this type of legislation. In 2016 we had Bill 35 and in 2017 Bill 32, and we seem now to be taking three runs at this to try and get it right. There are many very positive aspects of this bill, but as was mentioned by my hon. colleague from Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, there seems to be some specific targeting of one party or another, and I don't think that that's really within the spirit that we would hope is in this House, that we actually try and address things that not only apply to all parties but are taken a look at from many different perspectives to ensure that we do the right thing on behalf of Albertans.

Some might say that there's some overreach in certain parts of this and past legislation into party activities, as the member previously noted. A commitment was made that we would treat the two legacy parties and the new party, in our instance, as one entity in terms of the spending limits. We've made that commitment, and that's a commitment we intended to honour, but of course if that's brought into this legislation, that's certainly something that we would continue to honour in that respect. But what we want to make sure of is that there is no overreach that is targeted and that there is fairness and that nobody is trying to stack the deck here in any way, shape, or form, Madam Speaker.

I think it was referenced with the Election Commissioner that that should be an opportunity for us in this House and in that committee to come together to select an individual who's universally accepted for their fairness and lack of bias and certainly who is acceptable to all members of this House with unanimous consent and in a unanimous decision. That would have been, I think, more appropriate and more respected and honoured in the spirit of what we're trying to do here with Bill 16.

You know, Madam Speaker, I look at some of the past here and some of the practices. I just remind all members in the House here that there is an election coming up, the election that we hope to have next year, intend to have next year, and I hope it will be held on time. It's one that is actually going to have to be hard fought, and the individuals there on all sides of this House will work hard and work fiercely for the privilege and the honour of representing the constituents in their constituencies. I know that I intend to do so. I know that I did so last time.

It reminds me of a few examples that I've noted within the last election, where, in fact – and I'll use a very specific example – in my constituency there really was nothing to worry about for the candidate who was running against me because when they filed their election finances, there were zero dollars spent, Madam Speaker. Zero dollars. I can tell you that even if you're just out knocking on a door and handing out a brochure, that takes more than zero dollars. What it actually showed and what we heard from my constituents as I was knocking on doors was that there was not one door knocked on. There was not one brochure printed. There was not one opportunity to meet the candidate, even a cup of coffee purchased for that purpose, not one sign printed. In fact, all the signs were for the hon. Premier. People were asking where the Premier's name was on the ballot. That was an opportunity there to show that there was really not much intent in terms of the energy, effort, or dollars in this respect to do that.

We saw it across many other constituencies, Madam Speaker. We've heard comments and thoughts that: well, we didn't have to do any of that; we just knocked on doors. But in this case there were no doors knocked on that I know of. I would be happy to be corrected on that. We saw in other constituencies election finances registered of \$300 and \$400 and \$500. Well, that doesn't buy a lot of brochures, and it doesn't do a lot of different things in terms of reaching out.

We want to make sure that everybody in this House realizes that these are rules that we all must embrace, we all must live by, and that we all must have the spirit of those laws as well as the intent and also the administration that comes with those at heart. We're happy to reach out and to ensure that we not only adhere to the spirit of that but that we meet the administrative requirements around these in terms of spending limits and how we spend our money and who spends the money.

Madam Speaker, there are some other issues that have been brought to my attention as well. Again, it was mentioned by the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills about the agreement in principle, which was referenced again, which concerns me when there's specific targeting of a party or an individual or political movement in that case. That concerns me, that that was brought into this as well, when we really should be looking at this from a broader view of how it impacts all parties, all candidates, and indeed all Albertans.

The increase in penalties, I think, for the political entities that exceed spending limits is a positive thing. If you're going to break the rules, you need to be penalized for doing so. Many of those were laid out in previous bills, Bill 35 and Bill 32. We think that that's a good thing. That's a positive thing because sometimes you need to have appropriate penalties in place when that's taken into account.

We also have some questions, I have some questions around the associated party issue, associated registered parties. You know, it often is brought up in this House, curiously, that many of us belong to parties that have individual registrations and brands and entities across this country. Some people think of us as the same. In the past there's always been confusion between the Conservative Party of Canada and, previously, the Progressive Conservative Party and now the United Conservative Party, but we are individual and separate entities, Madam Speaker. One thing that is constantly mentioned in this House is that the NDP Party is just one party nationally. There is one party. You hold one membership. I have some questions around that in terms of how that will be addressed, how that will be applied, and whether there will be any blurring of those lines not only with a similar brand and maybe some similar policies, although those seem to differ often in application across this country. There may be disagreements, but in essence you have one party that is representing that.

I wonder what would happen in a year that you have a federal and a provincial election at the same time, with the same registered umbrella party that is actually in play in both of those. What if the federal election was before the provincial election, Madam Speaker? Would that mean that the spend of that federal party, the value of the brand that might accrue positively – in this case it might be negatively, but if it was positively, would that be considered as an associated party? That spend could in reality benefit the provincial party when the federal party is spending money on billboards and advertising and mail drops for their candidates.

Let's be honest, Madam Speaker. Many of our constituents are not that clear on the separation between provincial and federal politics. I hear it all the time. I knock on doors, and people say, "Oh, we have memberships for this, and we have memberships for that," confusing provincial and federal parties. Of course, in the NDP's case there is no confusion because you only have one party. So where does that come in? Is the membership somebody who chooses to buy a membership in the federal NDP, and part of those funds goes back to the provincial NDP? Where does that start out? When somebody runs an advertisement, when somebody says, "Support your local NDP," is there a blurring of that? Does that create an associated party relationship? Again, what if we were in a situation where a provincial election were called in the same calendar year and just after a federal election? That sounds a little bit odd to me, a little bit blurred and a little bit associated.

9:30

That concerns me, and I certainly would ask that question to the minister and to this government on what the intent and what the application of that would be. Will that be left up to an Election Commissioner which was not selected unanimously by this House? Madam Speaker, there are lots of things for us to consider in this bill, and the associated party one certainly is one that concerns me greatly.

But I think the main thing that we have to consider here is that fairness, the fairness and the transparency and the accountability that I would generally sort of assume that everybody in this House wants to adhere to. They want to do the best. They want to do what's right by their constituents. I believe that a hundred per cent, and I believe they want to be fair as well. Everybody wants to win an election fair and square by working hard, by talking to their constituents, by sharing their ideologies and their policies and their goals with their constituents, and by doing so in a way which respects the limits that are put in place.

Madam Speaker, it does take energy and effort and commitment and dollars to run an election, and I think we owe it to Albertans as well – we can argue over whether these limits are the correct limits

or not, but if we all have to play by the same rules, I believe that that will serve the purpose that we want, which is fairness. However, democracy does take a lot of work. It takes a few pairs of shoes to wear out for a good election. It takes a lot of door-knocking. It takes a lot of effort. It takes a lot of volunteers. It takes a lot of commitment from all of us. Any of us that have run those hard elections and not spent zero dollars and not knocked on no doors and not printed no brochures – those of us that have done that know how much work it is.

Having only been through my first election in 2015, trust me; I gained a lot of respect for anybody who runs for public office at any level in this country. I respect the commitment not even of those that win but of those that compete, who choose to compete and put themselves out there for public service. We'll see that again in the coming election, next year. I respect everybody for stepping forward and working hard and trying to earn the support of their constituents.

That, Madam Speaker, is actually the essence of the democracy we live in, and we need to respect that commitment that they put into that and respect the fact that they step forward and do their best, whatever that might be. Some people may want to knock on doors nine hours a day and some three hours a day and some three hours a week. Some may want to have brochures of various sorts. Some may have signs, and some more borrow their leader's signs. Some may host coffee events. Some may stand on street corners doing Burma-Shaves and waving signs in the morning to get people's attention. Those are always fun when it's nice and cold out in the morning. Don't forget to wear your gloves when you're doing those.

But, Madam Speaker, that's the essence of the democracy we live in and the opportunity for us to work hard and to be fair and to honour not only the spirit but the letter of these laws. That's where the letter of these laws is important, that they empower us to empower democratic society, that we have the resources required to reach out to our constituents, who can vote freely in any way they want in a secret ballot – I know that that's a unique concept in some circles in this House; secret ballots are not honoured across all platforms in this province at this point in time – so they can go in and they can actually say something and do another. They can have a sign on their lawn and do another. They can not have a sign on their lawn and tell somebody that they're not going to let anybody know how they're going to vote and do what they want when they walk into that polling station.

That empowerment that we give people is called democracy, the essence of what our forefathers and those who sacrificed before us in two world wars. The men and the women that fought for us – and many sacrificed their lives so that we can have that democracy in this country. I think sometimes that we take that too much for granted and start worrying about getting into the weeds of: can we spend \$12 on a sign, or can we spend \$6 on this, or can we have a coffee party?

Again, Madam Speaker, it's about fairness. It's about limits. It's about a level playing field and not stacking the deck. There have been some issues raised here of concern about whether we are stacking the deck on this one, whether there's a card being pulled from the middle or whether there's a joker being put in there as well to try and tee this up in a way which skews it for or against one political entity or another. That should not be the intent of this. The intent should be fairness. But the intent should also be there to allow for democratic participation.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Yes. That's a very difficult one to remember. Anyway, I'd just like to ask the hon. member. I was listening to his speech and just wondered if he'd have any comments. You know, this was specifically directed at the two legacy parties of the UCP, but in the event that two parties, say, the government and, say, the Liberal Party or the Alberta Party, decided that they would combine forces and not run a candidate in a specific riding to make it easier for one of their candidates to win over, say, the United Conservative Party's, could that be seen by the Election Commissioner as collusion and maybe in the same light that they're looking at the combined legacy parties of the UCP?

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you to the member for his very thoughtful question. That is a good question about this whole associated party issue. I do have concern about that because I think that in the past, if I'm not mistaken, in the last provincial election, we did have someone who actually sought the nomination from two different parties, so that would imply that there was some sort of agreement to run a single candidate. That is a concern for us because we know that some of the parties have not actually fielded candidates in all constituencies in past elections.

What if they chose to do that again if they didn't have candidates across the board and they chose to actually support one another in that election, through intent or through an agreement or through funding, that they would support or not support direct finances in various directions? Would that associate them enough? Even if that was in one constituency only, would that associate them enough that there was collusion, collaboration, association? That's a good question, Madam Speaker. To the member through you, that is a good question.

A question that we have for this government is: what's going to happen in those? Who is going to adjudicate that? Is it the Election Commissioner? Are they going to come in there and go: "That looks a little too cozy. We're going to call that associated." Maybe that's what should happen. I know our party is intent on and will have candidates in 87 constituencies, but we know that's not the case for all parties. So where do they decide – we're hearing it, actually, in the provincial election in Ontario, that there's collaboration between the Liberal and the NDP parties there. What is their elections commissioner going to say about that? What if that was Alberta, Madam Speaker? What if that was Alberta? Would that then mean that the two combined parties could only spend \$2 million? That's an interesting question.

I know that the hon. member said that we have two legacy parties, but we have committed firmly that we will, right from the get-go, as part of our original agreement in principle – that was something we committed to Albertans, that we weren't going to try and circumvent, we weren't going to try and triple down on this. That was a commitment we made coming together as a party. Now, that could be put into law here, and that's fine if that's the way it is, but we want to make sure that this actually not just about the UCP and our two legacy parties, that it will be equally and to the letter of the law applied if there were to be collusion, collaboration, association between other parties in this province, Madam Speaker.

9:40

I think that there's an opportunity here for us to reflect on the letter of the law and the intent of the law and then, most importantly, the application of the law. The application of that law is really where the rubber hits the road in this province, Madam Speaker. I just would caution all of the members in this House to think about how this might impact them. We're happy to work by these rules, but be sure that the letter of the law, the impact of the law will be something that is borne by all of us. And then the application of it:

not just the letter and the principles but the letter of this law will need to be appropriately adjudicated and administered across all parties. That is something we all need to be certain about while we're drafting legislation and approving and passing legislation of this sort, that we understand the implications of it and we are all willing to live up not only to the letter and the spirit but to the application of this law.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

To the member through the Speaker: I'm concerned about that as well. I'm concerned about what this is going to look like. We've talked about: what if the policies of parties are similar? You know what? There are lots of principles of democracy which apply.

Thank you to the member for his questions. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other speakers on the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate this opportunity to talk about Bill 16, the one that is entitled, at least, Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Statutes Amendment Act, 2018, as some of my colleagues have mentioned, a boutique piece of legislation presumably born out of fear that the Official Opposition will do something that they've promised they won't do. I'm not sure how even under the current rules, without this legislation, any Chief Electoral Officer would let that happen. Nonetheless, the government saw fit to put this into legislation. Ultimately, one of the most interesting things about this is that it's kind of a bit of a window into the minds of the government, that the Official Opposition is in their heads in a serious way in that they would pass a piece of legislation designed to do what probably cannot be done in any event.

It really is the continuation of several pieces of election finance rules that the government has put in place. Unfortunately, because they just can't get it right, they keep creating unintended consequences. They have to go back and try to mop up the mess that they made before and then go back again and try to mop up the mess before. This is the – I don't know – fourth or fifth iteration of them trying to mop up, not getting it right the first or the second or the third time. So here we are again, with this government trying to create what they weren't able to create the first two, three times around, though at least the last time they had two or three years in order to sort it out, but that wasn't enough, so here we are. They're back.

Madam Speaker, here's what's interesting and consistent, unfortunately, across this NDP government in so many of the things that they attempt to do and the things that they say. In many cases what the big print giveth, the small print taketh away. That's pretty consistent across much of the legislation that this government has and many of the things that they do. The most obvious example of that here is that while they seem awfully earnest and awfully concerned about collusion, they took the time to create an exemption for collusion. No. You can't actually make this up, Madam Speaker. It's right in there. They've made it so that if three parties – for example, the NDP and the Liberals or the Alberta Party – decided to share the 87 seats across the province, saying: we'll run in these 50, you run in those 40, and you run in those 50 ...

Mr. Schmidt: That doesn't add up to 87.

Mr. McIver: I know it doesn't add up to 87. Thank you.

The fact is that the example is that if they took the 87 seats and said that somebody will run in 50 and somebody will run in 30 and somebody will run in seven, that somehow wouldn't be collusion. You actually can't make this up, Madam Speaker.

An Hon. Member: You are right now.

Mr. McIver: It's in the legislation, folks. The member is saying that . . .

An Hon. Member: It's not in the bill.

Mr. McIver: "It's out," says the minister. That's a good thing because that is something that we cannot have. We cannot have the ability for collusion if the government doesn't want collusion. I'll take the minister's – the earlier draft that I saw had it in there, okay? Fair enough.

The fact, Madam Speaker, is that we're going to support this because there is no fear in our minds that we're going to try to combine spending between the parties. As my hon. colleague said, if the government legislation had just allowed us to put the parties together in the first place, then this wouldn't even be an issue. We would be happier if indeed we were able to do that. It would certainly be simpler for the taxpayers to administer through the Chief Electoral Officer's office, it would certainly be easier for any government of the day to keep track of it, and it would certainly be easier for our party, with the two legacy parties that were unable to fold into one, to keep track of it all. So this would actually benefit the taxpayers, benefit the government's side, and benefit the opposition's side if the government had indeed just made it possible to merge the three parties. That would really make all of this a lot more simple, less expensive, easier to administer for everyone.

Now, there are things in here, again, that are fine. The government felt that some of the fines weren't high enough. They increased them. No problem. Limiting election advertising by government and third parties during writ periods for the most part is fine. I think that if I don't mention it – I'm happy for the government members to mention it – there's at least one example from the previous government where there was a school announcement in the middle of a riding by somebody that was the Education minister, and I think we've agreed on all sides of this House that that was inappropriate. It was wrong. It happened. There's a piece of this legislation that, frankly, I agree with, that is an improvement.

While we're going ahead with this, we are trying once again to get to the point where there aren't any unintended consequences, where hopefully on the third or fourth attempt the government has got this to the place where they won't wake up the morning after it's passed and decide that they need to change one more thing. I suppose that will be a good thing because the election is approximately one year and two weeks away potentially. I appreciate that the legislation says March, April, or May next year, but I guess in my mind, Madam Speaker, I'm making the assumption that a choice for the government might be the last Monday in May next year. That's what I'm going on. Of course, the government might make a different decision. Well, there's only one person that has the authority to make that decision, as it should be, and that is the Premier. That is as it ought to be. The Premier of the day is the one that gets to make that decision.

The point is that even using the last Monday in May next year as the example of when the election might be, we're just over a year away. It's probably time, for the sake of Albertans, to know what the rules will be because out of 4 and a half million Albertans or 4.3 million Albertans, roughly, a large number of them, of course, are eligible to run. We don't know how many will, but the fact is that all the ones that are eligible to run probably have a reasonable expectation to know what the rules are going to be ahead of time.

9:50

The Chief Electoral Officer has a reasonable expectation to know what the rules will be ahead of time because the commissioner in

that office is going to need to put administration in place to make sure that the election is run in a fair, consistent way that's not open to interpretation as to anything that isn't fair. All I'm saying is that that will be easier to do if those people charged with this responsibility know what the rules are, that they have to actually put in place and apply, and can put the fail-safes and the checks in place so that that can happen. So I am one of the ones here, as I believe are many of my colleagues if not all, that is hoping that the government is satisfied with their third or fourth attempt at getting this right so that they don't have to come back in the next session, with a little over half a year before an election has to take place, and try to do this one more time.

Here's the thing that is open to interpretation that the government may want to think about: what conditions, what rules? In fairness, perhaps – and this is a good question – the government may want to think about what are the rules that constitute an associated registered party and, again, if it were exactly the same policies, exactly the same rules, and how consistent. How much the same is it going to have to be? In fairness, there may be policies in the next election that every party running agrees on. One might be that everybody might say: we're in favour of getting the pipeline built. I think there's a pretty high probability of every party in the next election saying that they're in favour of that. So if every party says that, I would say that that's probably not grounds to consider the parties associated on its own.

I have a great deal of faith in the Chief Electoral Officer to make good value judgments for us, which is what they are charged with doing and what they get paid to do, but it is, in my view, still to a large degree open to interpretation. I would be interested if the government side, when and if they choose to take the floor here, might let us know what discussions, if any, they've had with the Chief Electoral Officer and, if indeed they have, whether the Chief Electoral Officer has given any hint or clue or idea or a direct statement on what would be considered similar policy or program or policy statements that would deem registered parties associated. That's something that, in my mind, the government should have done and they may well have done.

I have no recollection of them saying that one way or another, but when one of them gets on their feet, I would be interested in hearing from the minister or some other representative from the party on what indeed the Chief Electoral Officer has said on this topic, because it is one that I think all members of this House should be concerned with, all Albertans should be concerned with. Their democracy is important, and I expect that that is something that probably members from all sides of this House will probably be in agreement with. To have confidence – having been here long enough to have been on the winning side of an election and on the losing side of an election, in either case and in all cases it is important that the public, when they watch the late news or open up their newspapers the next morning or check the social media feed or whatever way they get their information, has confidence that the persons announced as the next government in 2019 actually got the most votes, actually won in a fair, equitable, well-refereed, well-run election.

It's my sincere hope and, really, my expectation and belief that all members of this House feel the same way, that if any of us win or lose the next election, there won't be any doubt about the conduct, the fairness, the way the election was done. Of course, then the people in government will have a true mandate to govern, as this government does. No matter how much we disagree with them – and we disagree with them a lot – the fact is that they won the most seats and earned the right to govern for the past three years and one more year to go. So it's equally important that when the next time – and, indeed, there was a previous government that won, I don't

know, 13 or 14 in a row and each time had a mandate and had the right to govern, and we'll go through that really important process again next year.

Madam Speaker, it is, I think, of utmost importance that we get this right. In my opinion, just based on the timing of when the next election is likely to be, I think it's important that this probably is the last electoral rule change bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yes. I was just listening to my colleague here speak on this issue, and I think it's important that we have an opportunity to have an open discussion on this and have an opportunity to know, you know, what the government's plans are and why. I think we need to have that opportunity to have further discussion, and I hope that maybe my colleague could kind of continue on in his thoughts there and maybe just cover a little more ground in that regard.

Thanks.

The Deputy Speaker: Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to my hon. colleague. To my hon. colleague: I've tried to ask some questions during my time on my feet and have given several invitations to the government side to speak. Hopefully, the minister or somebody on the government side, before this debate is done, will speak because it's important that we give confidence to Albertans that we know what we're doing, that we've got a good process, that it'll be fair. I think it's important that we give confidence to Albertans that, in my view, I hope this is the last electoral bill only because of the timing. Again, we're now to the point where once we go into the fall session, it will be less than a year before the next election according to the election laws here in Alberta. Consequently, it's high time that we start writing things in cement instead of sand in terms of, again, giving those people charged with running the election the confidence that they know what the rules are and they know what they're doing.

It's also good to talk this out in this bill for that reason so that if there is some tweak, some amendment, some improvement from any side of the House that we could make to the rules, it's certainly my wish that this is the time to do it. To me, it doesn't matter whether those changes come from our side of the House or the government side or any of the other independent members as long as it makes the election better. If there's one place where I believe all of our interests in this House do align and ought to align, it's in having a fair, equitable process that all Albertans could have confidence in and know that on the day after the next election, those people that are announced as the winners truly do have a mandate from the people to make rules about how Albertans live.

That's why it's my hope more members of this House will stand up, talk about this, express their views. Again, regardless of the fact that we disagree on a lot of things, if on something so fundamental to what we all do here we all talk with a spirit of making the legislation better, of making the elections more fair, more transparent, giving Albertans more confidence in all of that, then we all win. Whether we win our seats in the next election or not, we all win if that election is part of a process that we and all Albertans can have confidence in.

10:00

It gives confidence across Alberta if we do that. Indeed, it gives Alberta, in my view, more respect across Canada and across the world if we can make sure that it's a jurisdiction where everybody

feels good about the elections we have here and that when the government of the day is dealing with people, whether it's from another province or a state or another country, they know that Alberta is a place where democracy is protected by a strong set of rules, and that when a government official visits with someone from another country, another province, or our own federal government, they know that the persons were elected in a system that gives the people the utmost of confidence, the utmost of faith that the people's voice has been heard.

A year and two weeks from now, roughly, we'll all be fighting to take each other's jobs away, which is a proper and legitimate part of the process. I think it's in all of our interests to do everything that we can to push for the rules at that point to be as fair, as transparent, as honest, as clear as they can be.

Madam Speaker, I sincerely hope that I hear from more members of the House about this because, again, this may be our last chance with this bill to make it as fair as we can. We ought not miss that chance.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is a pleasure to have the opportunity to rise today and speak to the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act amendments. I've appreciated the thoughts that have been brought forward so far by the members across the aisle. We've had some good discussion, some good debate, and I appreciate the opportunity to respond to some of the concerns that have been raised by these members.

I would note that one of the concerns that had been raised by members across the aisle is that responsibility for enforcing this act and indeed for making assessments as to who would constitute an associated party and other aspects of this would fall to the Election Commissioner. Now, members across the aisle, Madam Speaker, have been indicating again this morning their dissatisfaction with the individual that has been selected to serve as the Election Commissioner. Again, as often occurred during the debate on the appointment of this individual, they have indicated that they fear this individual may have some form of bias. They have expressed concerns about the history of that individual when he served with the Alberta government previously as the Chief Electoral Officer. Indeed, the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek this morning expressed that he is concerned that the issues that are contained within this act and the aspects that would be enforced would be decided by an individual not unanimously selected by this House.

Now, I would note, Madam Speaker, that when the gentleman, Mr. Lorne Gibson, who has, I understand, now gone through all the necessary requirements to begin his service as our Election Commissioner here in the province, served as the Chief Electoral Officer for the province of Alberta, the decision not to renew his contract – in other words, to cease his work as the Chief Electoral Officer for the province of Alberta – was not unanimously selected by this House. In fact, that decision fell along extremely partisan lines, with all opposition members voting against the motion to not reappoint Mr. Gibson and all members of the government voting for. This is something we have seen before, and indeed the circumstances around that were somewhat concerning.

There have been many comments about Mr. Gibson's history with the 2008 election, an election, I would note, approaching which he made six requests over the course of 16 months for the government at the time to appoint the returning officers necessary for him to begin to do the work of enumeration and prepare for that election. Those were all ignored. Sixteen months, Madam Speaker. This is what members of the opposition would wish to use against this individual to indicate that for some reason he was going to be

biased or not be able to make prudent decisions. Indeed, at that time it was the view of many outside of this House and, certainly, the view of members of the opposition at that time that the decision that was made not to renew Mr. Gibson's contract was where the real hint of bias lay. So I would suggest that those concerns are being somewhat overstated.

In this case I think that Mr. Gibson is, in fact, in a very good position. Indeed, he made 180 – wasn't it 180, Mr. Deputy Chair? – recommendations on how we could improve our electoral system here in the province of Alberta. The majority of those have been implemented since, Madam Speaker. This is an individual who has great knowledge and understanding of electoral law, electoral financing across Canada and indeed has been called into service in numerous jurisdictions across this country and is respected greatly for his knowledge and understanding. I cannot think of a better person to make these sorts of judgments, to make these sorts of decisions, and indeed I am quite comfortable placing these directions in his hands.

Now, the members across have also expressed their concerns that they don't believe we should be bringing in any legislation or making any decisions that are targeting any particular party. Indeed, Madam Speaker, again, I think back to that debate on the Election Commissioner and how members opposite spent the majority of that debate bringing forward amendments specifically singling out that particular appointment for unique treatment compared to the process used with any other officer of the Legislature.

Now, their argument was that they were merely looking out for transparency for Albertans in line with the spirit of the law. Indeed, Madam Speaker, that is all we are doing with this legislation. This legislation simply provides for the spirit of the law to ensure that no parties would attempt to circumvent that intent to provide transparency for Albertans, to provide Albertans with the assurance that when the elections law says that no political party would incur election expenses more than \$2 million, that indeed that is the case. Members opposite have said that they agree with that. They have no problem at all with that provision. They indeed say that, you know, they themselves have taken steps to ensure that in the process of creating the party in which they now sit, they would not do so. So I don't see that we have any basis, then, for disagreement on this legislation.

It's fantastic that they've taken that step, and now we will ensure that any future parties in this province that choose to take a similar step will abide by similar rules. I think that's something all Albertans would support. I think that's something the members of my constituency, the folks that I am here to represent, would ask that we do. Indeed, I'd say that it's probably not appropriate, Madam Speaker, to simply say that we'll just trust any groups in the future that might choose to do that, that we will trust them on their goodwill. I've certainly heard frequent expressions from across the aisle about how much they trust our government in terms of making decisions that they feel are not going to be biased. I think it's fair and prudent that indeed in bringing forward this law, we would ensure that there are no loopholes outstanding that would allow any parties to circumvent in the future.

Indeed, when we look at the history of this province, Madam Speaker, we know that in the past there have been particular political parties which have sought to circumvent at times the elections laws that were in place. There was a time when there were particular political parties who took donations from places that they should not have been taking them from: public institutions, municipalities, universities, others. Thankfully, elections law was enforced in those cases, and those amounts were forced to be repaid. But we need to ensure that we do not leave loopholes for people to

exploit, and so far, from what I've heard this morning, all members of this House agree on that point. There is no disagreement there.

So I think it's fair that we move forward with legislation to ensure that we're going to have these protections in place for Albertans. We're all – and all members of the opposition spoke this morning to say that they are in favour of transparency, that they have every intent to respect the intention of the law, and indeed we want to make sure that for every political party going forward, for any examples in the future, anything that may occur, that will also be the case.

Now, members have also mentioned, you know, their deep concern that perhaps somebody might consider parties with similar policy platforms to be associated. There was a comment that perhaps, well, the Alberta Party, the Liberal Party, the NDP could be considered associated or that parties in a coalition could be seen as acting collaboratively. Indeed, Madam Speaker, that is why this has the Election Commissioner with the ability to make that decision and make that ruling.

10:10

It was referenced that members have indeed run for a position in this House under the banner of multiple parties. That was my opponent in the last election who ran with nominations for the Alberta Liberal Party and also the Alberta Party, had both symbols on her signs. I respected that decision on the part of that individual and her choice to represent both those banners. Certainly, if this legislation had been in place and we had had an Election Commissioner at the time, then I could have approached him and said: "Hmm; I have a concern. Is this appropriate?" and he would have investigated. Indeed, the legislation also provides that that individual herself could have had the opportunity before making that decision, before holding that press conference, before producing those signs to sit down with the Election Commissioner, much as many of us often do on occasion with the Ethics Commissioner, to discuss and say: "Hey, I have this opportunity. Is this appropriate?" I think that's reasonable and clear, Madam Speaker.

Certainly, if there was the opportunity, if there were parties within the province that wanted to act collaboratively in terms of where they put their candidates or that sort of issue, they have that opportunity to sit down with the Election Commissioner, who has some clear criteria, and discuss and determine whether or not he would consider those parties to be associated, and he would be able to instruct them to act accordingly. Should they choose not to act according to that recommendation, he would have the option then to press appropriate penalties.

There have been some concerns raised about, I guess, some elements of the particular things that are put forward here in terms of the criteria to determine whether a party is associated. Now, just to be clear, Madam Speaker, it states here that the criteria that would be considered would include whether the parties have common leadership, political programs, or policy statements. Note there: common leadership. So do they have the same folks on the boards of both parties? Do they have the same people making the decisions, the same people serving on both constituency associations, that sort of thing? It's not just a question of whether or not they both happen to support a carbon levy or whether they both happen to support a flat tax. There are more criteria than that involved. It's not that simple a question.

Whether or not one party controls another: that's a fairly strong statement, Madam Speaker, and that would be something that the Election Commissioner can very clearly investigate and determine.

Whether parties have the same advertising material and branding: for example, again, the individual whom I ran against in the 2015

election indeed had election signs which contained branding of two parties, so the Election Commissioner would consider that criterion alongside all of the other criteria.

Members this morning have been talking as if one single criterion would be enough to consider parties to be associated. There are multiple criteria here, Madam Speaker. Again, we have an Election Commissioner who has a deep understanding of electoral law, has written instructional guides for multiple jurisdictions across this country, and indeed has provided education in multiple jurisdictions to individuals ranging from elected officials all the way down to volunteers on the ground. He is making himself available under this legislation to be able to sit down with any individuals who have concerns about whether or not they may be considered to be associated parties, to have that discussion with them and to help provide them with clarity before any action is taken.

Then, of course, you could also take a look at the final criterion that we have here, the nature of agreements and interactions between those parties.

That is a robust set of criteria, Madam Speaker. For myself, reviewing that, I have every confidence that an individual with the kind of training and knowledge and background that the Election Commissioner has would be able to come forward with a fair and prudent ruling, provide that advice, sit down and work with the individuals involved, help them to determine whether or not they may be in contravention of either the spirit or the letter of this law.

As I said, Madam Speaker, I think all Albertans want to ensure, when we have our next election, that things are conducted fairly, that things are conducted evenly, that there is indeed transparency on the part of all Albertans, and that indeed promises that are made are upheld, indeed that all of our commitments to transparency and how we work together and how we spend the money which is donated to us by Albertans to express their political views is used appropriately and indeed that we continue to maintain the kind of opportunity and accessibility to the democratic system that we now see following that 2015 election, where for the first time in a very long time in this province money did not decide the vote of the people of Alberta.

Now, in my view, that's resulted in some very good change. I understand that members opposite may not agree. We have disagreements on many areas of policy, but I think we can all agree that at the very least there is far more opportunity for democratic participation by all the people of Alberta than there has been in this province for many years. That is because of prudent changes that have been brought forward over the course of the last couple of years by the minister responsible for democratic renewal lowering those spending limits, lowering the campaign contribution limits, bringing these much more in line with other jurisdictions, much more within the reach of the average, everyday Albertan.

The Deputy Speaker: Under Standing Order 29(2)(a) the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm very pleased to be able to rise now and ask the Member for Edmonton-Centre about a couple of curiosities that have arisen while listening to the debate on Bill 16. One of them arises from the comments and claims from the UCP opposition members who've been speaking, including the last member who spoke, asking whether this legislation was needed or not, in the light of their founding document, that promised not to do what this legislation would prohibit them from doing, that being that an associated party would be subjected to the spending limits of a single party.

It occurs to me, Madam Speaker, that placing that restriction or making that promise within their founding document is a clear

admission by the Official Opposition party that all Albertans might have a concern that this would be a problem if indeed associated parties were to combine assets and to circumvent the spending limits. I wanted the Member for Edmonton-Centre to perhaps comment on that curiosity of mine and tell Albertans whether he feels that it is really an admission of concern by the opposition party within their founding agreement that this really is a problem that needs to be addressed and should be formally addressed in legislation such as we're doing now in Bill 16.

Secondly, another curiosity that I had revolves around this principle of unanimous consent. As we all know, majority rules for most decisions of this House. Once the House or a committee of this Legislature has made a decision by majority, we expect as parliamentarians that we will respect that decision and not necessarily in the case of an appointment to a position shoot the messenger because we don't happen to like the appointment that we may have voted against in a committee or in a Legislature and therefore smear the reputation of an individual who may be taking on a position that he's been appointed to even before the appointment is made official.

I'm wondering if the Member for Edmonton-Centre could comment on those two curiosities of mine, the principle that indeed the UCP Official Opposition does in fact admit freely through their founding document that they are addressing a problem that needs to be highlighted and regulated by legislation and, secondly, whether or not this unanimous consent requirement that's implied by the opposition is really something that should be opposed and we should be highlighting the respect for our parliamentary institutions and allowing the majority decisions in committee and in this House to be respected when it comes in particular to appointments of legislative officers.

Thank you.

10:20

The Deputy Speaker: Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker and to the Member for Edmonton-McClung for that question. Certainly, again, I appreciate and I have heard the concerns of the members opposite that this is legislation that is particularly aimed at a particular party or that it might be targeted to a particular group. But, again, I would simply note that it is important that we protect on all fronts our democracy here in the province of Alberta to ensure that no groups have the opportunity to circumvent the letter or the spirit of the law as it's brought forward to protect the people of Alberta and ensure we have fair and balanced elections.

I would note, again, along those lines, Madam Speaker, that members opposite have expressed concerns about the structure of the federal NDP and the provincial NDP. Certainly, I respect that there is a different model by which our party operates than theirs. I would note that generally at the recent UCP founding convention they certainly had a large number of members from the federal Conservative Party both speaking and participating and very actively part of that, but I wouldn't look at that in any sense and consider them to be associated.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak to Bill 16, Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Statutes Amendment Act, 2018. Wow, what a title. I rise today quite happy to speak in favour of this Bill 16 with some reservations. I see Bill 16 as in a long line of legislation that has attempted to make our

system of democracy better, more transparent, more open, more accessible to the citizens of this nation and this province.

Madam Speaker, electoral reform is not new. Perhaps one of the strengths of the British parliamentary system of government is that it has allowed itself over its many centuries and its long and storied history to be amended and to be changed and to be improved upon.

Madam Speaker, there was a time when in our nation a property requirement was necessary in order to vote. That was not unusual. There were many democracies at the time that had the belief that in order to be able to participate, you needed to have attained a certain stature, a certain amount of financial and fiscal responsibility. I remember a story of one individual who had voted in an election. Because he had a certain amount of property, the primary piece of his property being a donkey, he was allowed to be able to vote. In the next election he had fallen on harder times. He had had to sell the donkey. He no longer had the donkey, and he was no longer allowed to vote. The question that he brought forward was: who voted in the first election, myself or the donkey? [interjection] Yeah. I didn't want to use that word.

You know, electoral reform has a long history in our province and in our country. At one point in time you had to be the right sex. I can remember growing up and having a great-aunt that lived to be 103 years old who could remember what it was like not to have been able to vote because of her sex. I think we've understood and we would all support in this House the evolution of our democracy to include people of both genders.

First Nations at one time in our nation did not have the right to vote, and I think our endeavour to have moved forward on that has been a positive thing.

At one time, Madam Speaker, we did not have a secret ballot. The abuse of that was obvious to everyone, so we moved forward on that.

I think that, to the credit of this House and of this Legislature, we have come together many times here to talk about how we can make our system of government better. This bill, Bill 16, addresses perhaps another issue that we need to pursue. It will have my support but not without some concerns and some reservations. I think we can say, as the hon. members have said today, that all of us support balanced legislation that will protect the voters and that will pursue accountability and transparency so that the results of any election, present or in the future, will reflect the will of the people.

Madam Speaker, we know that this Legislature has addressed in this session Bill 32, An Act to Strengthen and Protect Democracy in Alberta. In that act we passed rules on procedures that govern elections and by-elections. We established the new and independent office of the Election Commissioner. We addressed third-party advertising. We've addressed political action committees by setting new spending limits and time frames. We've set some guidelines regarding expenses. I believe that we have made some positive steps towards making our democracy more efficient and more fair so that it is addressing, truly, the will of the people when we go into an election.

I believe that I need to look at Bill 16 here in that spirit of co-operation. I believe that it does address some reasonable concerns. The United Conservative Party has always supported transparency. We've always supported accountability in election law. We're a little frustrated sometimes when legislation has to come back before this House four and five times in order to try to get it right. We should be able to get it right, better the first time. Perhaps we need to do a little more consulting or a little more thinking before you bring legislation before the House, but that's fine.

We're now stuck in a situation where we have Bill 16. Maybe it should be no surprise to the United Conservative Party that the

government doesn't trust us and doesn't take us at our word. But when we placed into our agreement in principle that we would respect and adhere to the single-party registration and live under the \$2 million spending limit, we placed that in there in all sincerity and good faith. But what it really highlights, Madam Speaker, is what this bill should really have been about. Bill 16 should really have been willing to address the heart of the matter, and that is that we have a problem when parties decide to merge in this province. There's no vehicle by which that can be done. So we are now looking at Bill 16, which addresses some of the results of what we've had to go through but hasn't really addressed the issue or the problem.

We pursued the path that we did in order to bring conservatives together. It was out of not desire but necessity that we pursued the path that we had to in order to unite. So we can stand here before you today, and we can say that we will support this bill. We don't believe that it's necessarily the best way to govern, to have boutique legislation, as one of the other members has described it, that sort of targets the opposition. That is concerning. We would just, I guess, at the end of the day, argue that if the government were willing to pursue the real problem, we wouldn't need this kind of boutique legislation.

We brought up some concerns about some of the qualifiers, Madam Speaker, about which you will deem that parties are associating: common leaders, common policies and programs, common materials. On the surface these things sound fine. It's when you try to apply them. It's the application.

10:30

What about the fact that it's often in our very flexible form of democracy for parties to be able to not compete against each other, to choose not to? Does that cross the line, Madam Speaker? By choosing to put forward just a single candidate or maybe even no candidate so that a third party would have a better chance at winning, is that kind of co-operation now transgressing this piece of legislation?

Madam Speaker, we have many parties. It's one of the differences between, say, our traditional Westminster parliamentary form of democracy and, say, the American form of democracy. We can have four, five, six, seven parties that are running for office within our multiparty system of democracy. That means that sometimes the differences between parties may not be on policy but may be on the personalities of the leaders. Sometimes their policies and their practices can be very similar and may simply be a difference between the regions of the country or the regions of the province.

We're leaving ourselves open, Madam Speaker, for decision-making by the Election Commissioner when, really, I believe those decisions should be made by the people at the ballot box when they vote. I'm not sure that it should be up to a single individual or to the government to be making decisions about whether parties have too similar policy platforms. At the end of the day, this should be in the hands of the people.

Just simply because they support a carbon tax or they have a similar policy on high debt and deficit – and some of the members have brought up that as much as we have chosen not to organize our political parties where the federal and the provincial parties are one party, the New Democrats have. That's fine. There are some problems that come with that, Madam Speaker, in the minds of Canadians, when they try to differentiate what is a policy from the federal side that's impinging on the provincial side, but we believe that that internal kind of organization should be left in the hands of the political parties involved.

But this piece of legislation draws that into question. Are you one party, and will this piece of legislation now think of you as being an associated party, of crossing the lines of provincial legislation, of political parties? Madam Speaker, will an Election Commissioner conclude that parties that are simply and merely co-operating are now associated parties?

You know, there have been times, Madam Speaker, in the history of our country when under great duress our political parties have eliminated the political lines and have actually come together in what we call union governments, where party lines are completely set aside in order to address the issues of the day; for instance, in World War I under the pressures of world war. Governments come under crises and come under times of great stress. Should the Legislature of Alberta ever decide that in order to co-operate, in order to address the problems of this province, we need to form something of a more formal union between the opposition and the government, are we now contravening our own pieces of legislation? These are some of the concerns that we throw out as needing some consideration, understanding that, at the end of the day, we will be supporting this piece of legislation.

Madam Speaker, last session Bill 32 created the Election Commissioner, and the Chief Electoral Officer spoke about the lack of consultation over Bill 32 and the unintended consequences that could be had as a result of that piece of legislation. I guess we would argue that to a certain degree Bill 16 is poised to do the same thing. The question that we would ask is: just how much consultation have you actually done with the Chief Electoral Officer? We know that there are times when we've accused the government of having a poor track record when it comes to consultation, and I think the question is worthy of being asked in this House today as to how much consultation has actually occurred with the Chief Electoral Officer over Bill 16. That's a part of our job as the Official Opposition, to ask these questions and to see what the response of the government is. I've yet to hear anyone on the other side of the House tell us just how much consultation they did on this bill. Who did they talk to?

We will support this bill because it puts into law what we are already willing to do in practice – we've stated that clearly, Madam Speaker – but that doesn't mean that we support the fact that this bill is targeted specifically to the Official Opposition.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's just interesting listening to the comments on this Bill 16, the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Statutes Amendment Act, 2018. You talked a little bit about how this was, you know, making changes to Bill 32 and cleaning up some of the things that obviously had been missed when they brought that forward. I just wondered if you would like to continue a little bit more along those lines. I think you covered quite a bit of ground as far as the associated parties and how there seems to probably be a little bit of opportunity for whoever is making these decisions to kind of make their own judgment call on what's considered associated and what isn't. I know the Member for Edmonton-Centre seemed to think that it was spelled out so clearly, how could anybody go wrong? But I actually think that there's a lot of ambiguity there, that it will be up to the Election Commissioner to make some decisions there.

I'd just like to see if you want to comment a little bit more along those lines. Thanks.

The Deputy Speaker: Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think all of us in this Legislature would agree that, at the end of the day, the decisions of political parties, the platforms of political parties, the political alliances that are made in the Westminster parliamentary system of democracy, how it functions – it does have to be driven by the people. I think that's one of the real advantages of our system of democracy.

I mentioned previously, earlier, that we've seen a long history of evolution when it comes to our system of Westminster parliamentary democracy. A strength of that system has been its capacity to evolve and to change and to address the issues of the day, but always, always, always at the heart of that has been the fact that this is driven by the people and the desires of the people. We must make sure that we have legislation that protects this democracy but does not handcuff this democracy, that allows for the will of the people but doesn't constrain the will of the people. That's a delicate balance, and it's one that sometimes takes a few generations to figure out.

10:40

I think that both sides of this House have been willing to have discussions on spending and finance and how we want to see that reasonably constrained but not to the point where it constrains or stops the people from being able to express their will, whether that's through the support of a particular political party or whether that's through third-party advertising. You cannot constrain and pass legislation that disallows the capacity of the people to speak, to communicate, to coalesce around ideas and political parties, and to make decisions.

We understand that because there was a lack of legislation allowing for political parties to be able to merge, we had to use a process that essentially creates two legacy parties and a third political party, that we now call the United Conservative Party. It would have been so much easier if we'd had legislation that simply would allow the people through their membership in political parties to democratically make the decision to come together if that's what they choose. It was never the intention – and we've placed it clearly in our agreement in principle that we were not prepared to wiggle out of the \$2 million spending limit, that we would have abided by the principle, and that we would have, Madam Speaker, followed the intent and the spirit of the law. I'm not sure . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and speak to Bill 16, Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Statutes Amendment Act, 2018, subtitled An Act to Strengthen and Protect Democracy in Alberta. Obviously, there need to be checks and balances on spending and donations.

I guess the disappointment from my side has been that when given an opportunity to reduce the impact of political action committees, the government still hasn't made any attempt to reduce spending of unions, corporations, other than individuals, which therefore will continue to have a major influence not only on third-party advertising but potentially on policies and programs of this government. As we put forward under Bill 214, we were wanting very much to stop that practice and stop the ability of political action committees to inordinately influence media and public opinion, and we were looking for more there.

I was hoping that in this amendment we might see a much stronger attempt to reduce PACs such as this government seems to be associated with – Progress Alberta, Project Alberta – again,

garnering increasing amounts of money from unknown sources inside or outside the province, including unions and, potentially, corporations. None of that is here, of course.

This simply focuses on the capacity of the new election officer to investigate whether two or more registered parties are associated and collaborating on advancing a political agenda, and of course this is important. One would not want to see parties that are extending the spending limits, garnering more power as a result of colluding, and therefore once again influencing unduly the electoral process, subverting democracy in that sense. This is important, but it pales in comparison to the soft-peddalling on the political action committees, the so-called dark money that continues to build as we head into this election year.

While we certainly will be supporting this bill, it adds another dimension, an important dimension, to preventing collusion and enabling the Election Commissioner to investigate and to prevent this kind of collusion. It doesn't go far enough, as far as we're concerned, in terms of the ongoing expansion of the dark money in this province, some of which this government is, of course, aiding and abetting by not addressing in a serious way the funding and financing of political action committees.

That's all I need to say, Madam Speaker. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I was just listening to the previous member speak here, and he talked about concerns with unions and financing and campaigns and that sort of thing and the money that unions spend on politics in Alberta. He talked about the dark money and how this government is aiding and abetting this dark money by not covering issues like this. I just wanted to see if he could expand a little bit more on that issue.

The Deputy Speaker: Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Well, thanks, Madam Speaker. I think we were very clear in our bill proposal, before it was superseded by this government's softer bill, that we wanted to ensure that there was no undue influence by nonindividuals. Under the original Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act, that was amended a couple of years ago, it was very clear that political parties could only receive donations from individuals. Somehow that wasn't good enough in terms of this government's amending of the financing of political action committees. It's disappointing because we know that there are at least a couple of political action committees that appear to be associated with this government.

Some of the examples that we have seen in the past, both in the United States and in Canada, where the tremendous influence, in the United States particularly, these big corporations have had on U.S. elections has been very, very disturbing – and it's ironic that although this government has been critical of that kind of influence, they have failed to actually put teeth into the PAC control legislation.

Although they are standing up for individual rights in many cases – in relation to farm workers, for example, and to women seeking help with their health care – they don't seem to be prepared to stand up for individual rights and responsibilities in the election financing area and, in fact, seem to be enabling the restrictions on free speech if you equate funding with access to media and greater influence on individual rights.

Presently there are no limits when it comes to donating money to third parties or political action committees. The sky is the limit. We propose that the \$4,000 limit annually be applied also to political action committees. That was not accepted by this government. In

fact, the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act doesn't even define what a political action committee is. We found that to be problematic as well. It's now going to be up to the Chief Electoral Officer to define that and what constitutes the unacceptable activities of a political action committee in advertising.

In summary, we're confident that our bill would have stood up to any Charter challenge, and we would have been willing to fight this in court if necessary. Unlike the NDP, we purposely did not prohibit the kinds of activities that PACs can engage in. Instead, we chose to make them subject to contribution limits and greater disclosure requirements and prohibit them from receiving union, corporate, and out-of-province donations. The NDP's Bill 32 simply doesn't go far enough, and this legislation had an opportunity to amend some of that but fails to do that.

It's obviously welcome that the fines for contravening this act have jumped from \$10,000 to \$100,000. That certainly should discourage collusion, but it says nothing about, again, what political action committees are doing behind the scenes, quite apart from the writ period, where they're limited to \$100,000 of spending. So we think there should be some more serious attention to the whole dark money issue.

Once again I would call on the government, if they're serious about undermining dark money in the electoral process and if they're serious about confronting their own complicity with dark money in relation to Progress Alberta and Project Alberta, to make it clear to Albertans that you stand on the side of openness and accountability.

10:50

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to Bill 16? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Now, I've been listening to the debate this morning on Bill 16, Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Statutes Amendment Act, 2018, and one of the most interesting things, I think, that happened this morning was listening to the Member for Edmonton-Centre get up and talk about Motion 16. He talked so much about it that I wondered if he was confused whether we were on Motion 16 or Bill 16. Regardless, Motion 16 is the appointment of Lorne Gibson as Election Commissioner. Probably one of the most interesting things that I noticed is that all this discussion on Motion 16 – the government, when we were debating Motion 16, time-allocated us. They shut down debate. They cut down the opportunity for us to speak on Motion 16, yet the government comes in here today, and, of course, what do they want to talk about? The want to talk about Motion 16. Well, we wanted to talk it about it, too, but of course that opportunity wasn't given to us to the fullest extent that we would have liked.

You know, we were talking about this Motion 16, and he talked about the idea of not renewing this person's contract when he was previously employed by this government. It wasn't supported unanimously. Of course, we know what happened there. The contract wasn't renewed, and then this individual sued the government. Now, of course, any time that anybody sues a person – in fact, if I was sued by somebody that was previously working for me, I think I would think seriously about whether I would want to rehire that person. Obviously, that's not a very good indication of goodwill shared back and forth. But this government, of course, thought that was just fine.

Now, when we talk about singling out – I think the Member for Edmonton-Centre talked about that. We're talking about how this bill has kind of singled out the United Conservative Party. But when

we talked about Motion 16, when we wanted to have Lorne Gibson's wages on the sunshine list immediately, the government said that, well, this singling out of him was horrible. There's just, you know, a little bit of hypocrisy going on here, where they say that singling out the Election Commissioner is horrible but singling out in this situation is just great. This is just the way it has to be.

Now, I also wanted to talk about this one part here: constituency associations for registered political parties must file their annual return statements on March 31 of each year regardless of when a party becomes registered. Currently if a party registers in the four months leading up to March 31, a constituency association would not be required to file their financial statements until the deadline for the following year, which could mean that there are CAs that could have unfiled financials for up to 19 months.

You know, that somewhat makes sense, that they shouldn't have that amount of time to file their financial statements. But, of course, when we were talking about Motion 16 and we wanted the person that was to take the dark money out of politics on the sunshine list, which the government, of course, opposed, which is in itself fairly bizarre, I would say, one of the problems was that this person won't hit the sunshine list as it is presently for probably 16 months. So here we have the government bringing forward legislation that suggests that 19 months is too long for a constituency association to record their finances, but for somebody to hit the sunshine list after 16 months: I guess that's fine. There just seem to be disparities everywhere we go here.

Now, there were accusations, I guess, in previous elections and everything about things that were done wrong and different financing things, and the Member for Edmonton-Centre said that the election law was enforced, fines were levied, people were punished, and we went on. But, of course, that's supposed to be the job of the Election Commissioner, and there hasn't been an Election Commissioner yet. So it did point out the fact – it's good to see the Member for Edmonton-Centre at least admitting that even before this Motion 16 was passed, we still had laws being enforced and fines being levied. This isn't anything new, as they kind of allude to, that this is something new. Like I say, I just see some really strange things going on here this morning.

Now, the Member for Edmonton-Centre also talked about the coalitions and how in one of the previous elections somebody had run under two parties. Actually, it was three parties. It was actually the Liberal Party, the Alberta Party, and the Green Party. We look at these kinds of coalitions and how three parties could have one candidate run under them. I guess that does maybe spell it out a little more clearly as far as where the Alberta Party, the Liberal Party, and the Green Party sit on the political spectrum as far as the things that they believe. Obviously, they were very, very like-minded, or they wouldn't run the same candidate for the three parties.

I guess I wonder. You know, they talk about these associated parties and how that's all going to work. Of course, the Member for Edmonton-Centre talked about the person that he ran against that was representing two, as he said, three, as it was, parties. I could see that maybe he's a little concerned about the possibilities of re-election if it happens again, I would guess. Now, when I look back at previous elections, probably at least five or six elections in the past, the New Democrats got between 12 and 19 per cent of the vote, and then in 2015, of course, they got over 50 per cent. This member may have a very good chance of being re-elected in Edmonton-Centre, but obviously history has shown that the NDP hasn't had a real stronghold in Edmonton-Centre. So, obviously, when the government is working on these different issues, you always wonder why. Why are they concerned about some of these things? I guess it becomes more apparent as you look at past history and look at how things might be affected going forward for them.

Now, it talks about the criteria of association. Of course, I look at this, and I see some pretty vague things as far as what's considered associated and what isn't. I think the Member for Edmonton-Centre did mention, you know, that maybe – I don't know if he was really meaning this or not – one indiscretion was okay, but maybe two is bad. Or is three real bad? At what point do we get to the situation where any kind of association becomes an issue to cause problems?

Now, if we look at the past B.C. election, of course, what we've seen there is that after the election there was a coalition. So what I wonder is: in a situation like that, where two parties get together after the election, where does that fit into this legislation? That's a pretty deep association. Now, did that happen before the election, or did it happen after the election? Was it all predetermined? Had they colluded before, or did they make all the decisions afterwards? What's the penalty for this kind of association if it's deemed to be improper? Let's say that this legislation was in British Columbia, and we have a situation where two parties come together and form government, and then it was found out that they had colluded beforehand. Would this legislation mean that they would not be government anymore? Would they hold another election? Would it just be a fine, and you carry on? I think that there are probably a lot of questions that could probably be answered here or at least investigated.

11:00

Madam Speaker, when I look at Bill 16, I mean, this makes amendments to Bill 32, that was just passed last fall, so obviously there were some shortcomings in Bill 32, and now we're here to correct those shortcomings.

I also look at this situation here, where there is an exemption for parties that establish noncompete clauses in ridings – so if the Alberta Party and the Liberal Party agreed to run or not run competing candidates in Edmonton-Centre – but that's going to be pulled out now, is my understanding. So already we're amending the amendment act. I would probably suggest that if this government, I guess, keeps going down this road, we'll be amending the amended amendment act in the next session.

Again, I want to get back to this, that under this legislation the newly appointed Election Commissioner would be able to initiate an investigation on his own at the request of the Chief Electoral Officer or at the request of an elector or a registered party in order to determine if two or more registered parties are associated. Now, if two parties are found to be associated, they must share the \$2 million spending limit for a single party. Of course. That makes sense. A variety of factors will be used to determine if parties are associated, but parties do not need to meet a set number of these qualifiers in order to be deemed associated. So they don't need to meet a set number of these qualifiers. Again, there's all sorts of vagueness here.

If registered parties have the same leader, executive director, or person in a position similar to an executive director or CFO, they could be deemed associated. If they share common political programs, policy statements, or advertising and branding material or if one party controls another, they could be deemed associated. It's getting right down to similar policy statements, which, of course, on the left, you know, there could be a lot of similar policy statements. They all seem to like the carbon tax. They all seem to like spending money. They all seem to like taxes, the more the better. I would say that there might be a lot of similarities there.

The Election Commissioner will also take into consideration the activities of the registered parties and their registered constituency associations and candidates, including the extent to which the registered parties have been involved in electoral

campaigns or made public statements in support of any other registered party . . . or of a candidate of any other registered parties.

So I guess this Election Commissioner is going to have to be reviewing all the public debates and all the printed material and all the different interactions that go on during an election to see if there's any kind of association between parties.

Madam Speaker, it's good – I mean, we want to have fair elections. We want to take out any kind of improprieties with elections. I think that in a democracy we owe it to ourselves and we owe it to the people to have fair elections, where there is accountability and transparency in and out of election periods. It's not just during election periods. We need to have that at all times: democracy, accountability, and transparency, three very important things in the political process.

Now, what does seem odd are some of the things that this government is concerned about and some of the things that it's not concerned about. One thing is that we still haven't in this Legislature passed Bill 12, and that's something that's very important. Now, we're not supposed to have an election for a year, and as much as it is important to have, you know, fair and accountable and transparent elections – that's very important – even more important is the 14-day deadline on the pipeline. We have Bill 12, which is supposed to exert pressure to get the pipeline approved, and we're still sitting here talking about other things over and over again before dealing with probably the most important legislation of this session. I don't know if anybody could disagree that the pipeline is the most important issue facing Alberta today, and it's got a deadline. It's got a timeline. But, again, we're sitting here day after day talking about many different things when we should have been focused on making sure that Bill 12 passed.

We're a little concerned about some other issues, too, of course, with this bill. We're concerned about the difficulty that might be posed in the campaign return filing with separating out regular contributions and contributions specific to a by-election in instances where a donation was not specific by the donor but was received during a by-election period. I think we've all had that opportunity where we've taken in cheques during a time period where we're not sure and the person didn't say exactly where that cheque was going to go, so then we have to make a determination . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm sure that you were not quite close to finished there, but I'd just like to bring up that the Member for Calgary-Mountain View was talking about dark money in politics. He made some brief references to unions and that but kind of concentrated on PACs. I know that we've talked about this on numerous occasions in the House, when the government has been trying to stack the deck with their elections bills that they've put through, numerous bills over the last couple of years. One of the things that I'd like you to comment about – and I was hoping to get the Member for Calgary-Mountain View's opinion on it – is that when we talk about PACs, we're talking about individuals that support a particular political movement, and they give their money freely to support that movement. When we talk about unions and the Alberta Federation of Labour, if I'm a member of a union that's associated with the Alberta Federation of Labour and I happen to be a Conservative, \$1.25 every month of my union dues goes to support the Alberta Federation of Labour, that supports anything but conservative views.

I'm just wondering if you might want to comment on that, that basically it's a forced donation to support a party that I don't support. You know, if we want to talk about dark money, I think that maybe these unions should be getting permission from their membership before they distribute that money. So if you want to talk about democracy and fairness, I think maybe we should do that, right? I just thought maybe you'd like to finish your comments and if you wanted to delve into that dark money hypocrisy that we've talked about here and expand.

Thank you.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much. Yeah. It's actually an interesting topic you've brought up, of course, with unions and how they spend their money and that sort of thing. Now, just to give you a bit of an example, my son is a schoolteacher. He teaches in Hillside high school in Valleyview, and he does a great job there, of course. He coaches the football team and that sort of thing and, of course, teaches in the classroom, too. I think it's probably alarming to him to think that part of the money that gets taken off his cheque each month actually goes to campaign against his dad, whom he supports. He supports my political endeavours. I have to think that that's very frustrating for him to see that. We see that these people that are working under these conditions with unions don't have a say in how that money gets spent. I think there are some, you know, issues there of what's considered dark money, what's considered fair, what's considered right when this sort of thing is happening.

Now, of course, the members on the other side are chatting away over there. They're not too happy about that. I guess they feel that that's okay. I'm not sure. But I'm sure that if money was being taken from your cheque and directed to a political party that you don't agree with, I think you would probably feel that that's not quite fair and not quite right.

Madam Speaker, there are a lot of things we can do to make things better in Alberta as far as making things fair and more transparent and accountable with elections. On this side of the House we're in support of all of those. It only makes sense that we do the best we can to make things just as good as possible.

11:10

Of course, this government every time we turn around is lacking transparency and they're fighting transparency. We've seen, like I was saying earlier about Motion 16, where we wanted to see the Election Commissioner's wages hit the sunshine list immediately, and they think that waiting over a year is the best way to go. So the person that's supposed to get dark money out of politics: their wages will not hit the sunshine list for over a year after they're hired. There are things like that, of course, that are alarming about what this government is doing. I think transparency, fair elections are a top priority, for sure. We need to be doing that, but of course this government seems to fall short just about every time we turn around on this kind of thing. Consultation: no such thing. Transparency: they have a really hard time with that. In fact, they seem to fight it just about any chance they can.

Madam Speaker, I think that's about it for now. Thanks.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Yao: Why, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It is an honour and a pleasure to rise today to speak on Bill 16, Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Statutes Amendment Act, 2018. Amendment act. Wait a minute. Didn't you just run a bill through just last term? Aw, jeez. You guys just keep throwing out legislation. Then you have got to keep on going back and fixing it.

Now, fortunately, you have us here to help guide you in these things, but it is also good that you guys admit that your bills are all flawed and that they need to be rejigged. But at the same time, it is disappointing when our preference would be to talk about things like Bill 12, which really will have timely implications with the issues that are going on in British Columbia and with Prime Minister Trudeau. God knows what he's doing right now. Hopefully, he's going to help with that pipeline.

But back to Bill 16 here. This legislation makes a variety of amendments to Bill 32. You know, with Bill 32 you did make sweeping legislative changes to the rules and procedures that govern elections and by-elections here in Alberta as well as establish a new independent office of the Legislature in the form of an Election Commissioner. The last bill, Bill 32, also addressed the issues of third-party advertisers and, to some extent, the political action committees by setting spending limits and time frames as well as guidelines regarding those expenses and what those entities can spend their funds on.

But with Bill 16 here it seems that in particular you've just targeted the agreement in principle which amalgamated our two former parties, the Wildrose and the PCs. It's necessary. If I understand correctly, it wasn't anyone's intent on this side, but if it's to clarify some certain things, then I can respect that.

I mean, certainly if we look at the definition of what "associated registered parties" are under the legislation, the newly appointed Election Commissioner would be able to initiate an investigation on their own or at the request of the Chief Electoral Officer or at the request of an elector or registered party in order to determine if two or more registered parties are associated. Yeah. If that doesn't target us, I don't know what does, really. If these two parties are found to be associated, they must share the \$2 million spending limit for a single party.

A variety of factors will be used to determine if parties are associated, but parties do not need to meet the set number of these qualifiers in order to be deemed associated. If registered parties have the same leader, executive director, or person in a position similar to an executive director or chief financial officer, they can be deemed associated. If they share common political programs, policy statements, or advertising branding material, if one party controls another, they could be deemed to be associated. I get all that.

The Election Commissioner will also take into consideration the activities of the registered parties and their registered constituency associations and candidates, including the extent to which the registered parties have been involved in electoral campaigns or made public statements in support of any other registered party . . . or of a candidate of any of the other registered parties . . .

when deciding if parties are associated. That's terrific. You are trying to define what happened with our two legacy parties as we turned them into one, and you want to make sure that there are no shenanigans with any spending that's associated with these former, legacy parties.

I can respect that, but, again, you know, as the good doctor from Calgary- . . .

Some Hon. Members: Mountain View.

Mr. Yao: . . . Mountain View. Thank you. Yes, not the good doctor from Edmonton-Whitemud but Calgary-Mountain View there. He did point out just some of his concerns around dark money, or so-called dark money, and he's right. A lot of that has not been clarified. Certainly, organized labour has that ability to collect money and to spend it in such ways that would support one political

group or another, as we've seen in every election. It'd be interesting to see, especially in this next election that comes up, what all the advertising is all about, who is spending money on that advertising, who sponsored those ads.

It would be interesting to see what happens in the next election and where a lot of the advertising does come from because that \$2 million for a party to advertise itself is not a lot. Good thing we don't have – you know, they could never afford a commercial during the Stanley Cup playoffs, never mind the Super Bowl or anything like that. Certainly, they might go and get some radio ads. I know from my neck of the woods that people aren't as interested in politics, so they don't care to hear a lot of the advertising. A lot of those folks probably won't mind if there's less advertising and that sort of thing. Again, I'm curious to see what happens in practice after these bills are all passed and how our next election will look.

Democracy, accountability, and transparency: that's what this government preaches when they talk about drafting these bills, but again that transparency, that accountability disappear when the loopholes are left in for things like organized labour to advertise accordingly for one side or the other. That is disappointing. Some might even call it hypocritical. There are all sorts of concerns around there. You know, we've been trying to teach you guys about transparency and accountability in our democracy. Certainly, that is a reflection of all of our speeches as we try to educate you folks. I hope that at one point you guys will have that epiphany, and the light bulb will go off. I don't see those light bulbs, just very dim-bulbs right now.

Mr. Ceci: Hey.

Mr. Yao: My apologies to you, sir. I would never say that.

The agreement in principle: that is what makes up the United Conservative Party when they amalgamated the Wildrose and the Progressive Conservatives, and it was created to honour the spirit of the law. The United Conservative Party never had any intention of taking advantage of a multiparty structure spending limit, but the NDP: you know, you don't feel that we're onboard, and that's a shame. You chose to legislate this issue, but again you missed out on some other ones. That is disappointing.

The increase in penalties for political entities: you're bringing in those new penalties in line with penalties set for third-party advertisers, which were laid out in Bill 32, so I can certainly respect that.

11:20

Again, it would still be nice to hear more from our stakeholders regarding the provisions that require parties to include contributions relating to general elections and by-elections in a quarterly filing to the Chief Electoral Officer in addition to a campaign return within six months of a general or by-election. I'm curious to see how much more work my CA personally will have to do. You know, everyone who volunteers on my association works long and arduous jobs, 12 hours a day. With commuting and that, it's a 14-hour day, and they'll do one-week stretches. Some run four on, four off. Others run one week in, one week out. Some work two weeks in, a week out. So I hope that my team can handle the extra management of paperwork. It'll be interesting to see.

Most importantly, there will be a by-election up in the Fort McMurray-Conklin area, and I do look forward to that. I see that our government side picked out a candidate who has a name, a reputation already, so this is their most high-profile candidate. I'll be curious to see what kind of advertising will get put in there for this person. Yeah. It'll certainly be an interesting perspective on

things, to see how many resources are allocated towards that by-election.

But just so you guys know, every single rule and law that you have put in has hurt my town of Fort McMurray, has hurt the people up there dramatically . . .

Mr. S. Anderson: Not true.

Mr. Yao: . . . from personal taxes to – oh, the Minister of Municipal Affairs says that he hasn't hurt Fort McMurray. I would question you on our municipal taxes that we're about to get the shock and awe from, and I challenge you to talk about that at the door with the constituents that you are trying to get to support you.

Through the Speaker, Madam Speaker, I would ask that the government side, certainly when they are campaigning up in Fort McMurray, knock at all hours of the day and that you ask those questions about municipal taxes and ask about what the people of Fort McMurray feel about all the internationals being chased away from our region. There's a lot of disappointment there. It's interesting. Yeah. So we'll see how it goes here.

Now, election finances and contributions disclosure statutes: again we're going back and fixing legislation that you guys already put in. You've done that a few times now. You keep on retracting things and going forward.

Even yesterday, when I was asking the Health minister about the doubling in cost of a structure, the answer she gave wasn't very valid. She just simply said that the timelines were doubled and that they were budgeting for places, for many years for a project that is getting built. I still have questions around how she answered that. But, again, you know, how you guys build infrastructure is a prime example of how you guys work on your bills. You just ramrod these things through but then realize all the errors and mistakes that you made before or how you underestimate things, and then you have to go back and re-evaluate. All these decisions that you're making: these things are costing Albertans a ton of money, a lot of money. To build that lab, that's going to cost a substantial amount of money, \$600 million. That is disappointing.

Now, the noncompete clauses that you said that you pulled out: that is good to see, that you pulled them out, because again that demonstrates a level of collusion. We're happy that you agreed with us in identifying that allowing two parties to do noncompete clauses with each other is suspicious and shady, for lack of better terminology. That is the stuff that we want to see out, and it is important that we do so.

Now, I do have some questions around what the Election Commissioner could constitute as similar political programming or policy statements because I see a lot of overlap respectively within all the political parties. Quite honestly, at the core of it all, we're all Albertans. We're all Canadians. There are some values that are very similar. We don't have any anti-Semitic comments in our stuff like the government side does, certainly, but . . .

Mr. Schmidt: Whoa. Point of order, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: We have a point of order.

Point of Order False Allegations

Mr. Schmidt: Under 23(h), (i), and (j). The member opposite just accused us having anti-Semitic statements in some of our policies and platforms. You know, honestly, the things that come from that man's mouth are enough to drive a person to drink, but that takes the cake, Madam Speaker. I demand that the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo withdraw those comments immediately

and apologize to everyone in this House for accusing us of anti-Semitism.

Mr. Yao: Madam Speaker, I was simply referring to the Leap Manifesto, but I recognize that they state that they've dissociated themselves from such a document, so perhaps my comments were inappropriate, and I withdraw them.

The Deputy Speaker: Did you wish to expand on that?

Mr. Yao: I wish to apologize for those comments associating them with the Leap Manifesto and those comments that were in there. My apologies.

Mr. Schmidt: Can I speak again?

The Deputy Speaker: Go ahead, hon. minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Madam Speaker, you know, to link the Leap Manifesto to anti-Semitism is such a giant leap. We've seen some pretty huge conclusions jumped to in this House, but this takes the cake. There's no way that we can link the Leap Manifesto to anti-Semitism, so I humbly ask that the member withdraw his statements about anti-Semitism and apologize for implying that we are an anti-Semitic people.

The Deputy Speaker: Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: With all due respect to the hon. member, the member has apologized and withdrew the remarks. It's over. I know that the hon. member would love to stand up and verbally beat somebody with a stick, but the fact is that the hon. member has apologized. The hon. member withdrew the remarks. Madam Speaker, with all due respect, that's normally the end of the issue here although I can see that the hon. members would love to drag this out. I know he had to apologize and take back some remarks this week, which he did, and I will say that this side left the issue alone at that point, which is the right thing for him to do at this point.

The Deputy Speaker: I do agree that, yes, it's usually an apology to the satisfaction of the House. I was sensing some concern, however, from the majority in the House that perhaps that apology wasn't clear enough. However, I think we've accepted now that the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo has withdrawn the comments and has apologized to the House, and we will move on.

You've got a few minutes to continue.

Debate Continued

Mr. Yao: I've lost my spot now. Let's start all over here, shall we? Amendments to Bill 32, An Act to Strengthen and Protect Democracy in Alberta, again, this bill that you introduced last fall which made sweeping legislative changes to the rules and procedures that govern elections and by-elections here in Alberta. As well, Bill 32 established that new, independent office of the Legislature.

The Deputy Speaker: Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), the hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. While I was listening to the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo up until the very last couple of minutes, you know, and preparing the comments that I was going to make in response to his speech, I was going to congratulate him for raising the level of discourse to which we're normally accustomed because at least he didn't accuse socialists of

eating dogs. Unfortunately, he drove himself into the ditch just a couple of minutes before he ended his speech. Unsatisfactory apologies notwithstanding, I would like to offer some comments on what we've heard from that member with respect to this bill.

11:30

First of all, I guess the overarching theme that we've heard from every member opposite is that this seems unnecessary because the United Conservative Party, in signing their memorandum of understanding, put their hand on their heart, you know, and promised to be good citizens and respect the \$2 million spending limit. Of course, we know the value of the promises that the Leader of the Opposition makes to anybody, including his own members.

Mr. McIver: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Go ahead.

Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

Mr. McIver: Right away the hon. member, shortly after talking about the importance of discourse under 23(h), (i), and (j), leaps into avowing false motives to another member of the House and saying things that are designed to create disorder in the House. You know, the hon. member is right when he says that discourse should improve around here. He himself had to apologize and take remarks back just this week, and a member of our side did. It's not acceptable for all sides, and this member, having been already chastised and required to take back remarks earlier this week, should know. I would ask you respectfully, Madam Speaker, to ask the hon. member to live up to the standard that he is promoting.

Mr. Feehan: Madam Speaker, I find the point of order here absolutely ridiculous. He's indicated that this speaker applied false motives, but we know that that's not true. We know that the Leader of the Opposition promised to disclose his contributions and failed to do so. We know that the Leader of the Opposition said that there was a grassroots guarantee, and then, when it was inconvenient, he immediately withdrew that grassroots guarantee. This is not false motives. This is a statement of fact.

I think that we need to, you know, stop using points of order here to display outrage about things that we know to be true just to protect members who are making ridiculous statements in the House and are being forced to withdraw them. Instead of addressing the issue of whether or not something wrong indeed was said here, he brings up issues from another time, and he continues to stand, against the orders of the House, while I'm speaking. What we're seeing here is a complete disregard of the rules of this House, a use of this section of our code of conduct in order to waste time and in order to display contempt not only for yourself, Madam Speaker, but for this whole House.

I would like them to stop doing this now, and I would like them to get back to debate and get back to the agreed-upon conversation that we're having. If they want us to have a debate about the behaviour of their leader, then I'm happy to have that debate. I'm happy to put the facts forward. But that is not what they're doing. They're just rallying against things in order to waste our time, and I do not respect them in doing that, and I wish them to stop. They have 20 seconds left, and I'd like them to finish their 20 seconds.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, we still have a lot of work that we need to get done this morning, so in the interests of trying to move on, I will say that I had some very deep concerns about the accusation that was levelled. I was concerned that perhaps the

apology wasn't clear enough for the House, which is why I allowed a little bit of discussion on that to try and clarify that. I think it's incumbent on all of us to be aware of the language coming out of our mouths, that we are never accusing another member or party of having any kind of anti-Semitic policies in the things that they're doing. We know that that is simply not true. I would caution members to never go in that direction, please.

Now, that being said, I would also caution all members to please be aware of the things that you're saying and how you are levying comments regarding individuals in the House. Let's move forward and try to be a little bit more respectful of one another.

Go ahead. Please continue.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker, and . . .

Mr. McIver: Is this still the point of order, Madam Speaker?

The Deputy Speaker: We're done with the point of order, and we're moving on.

Mr. McIver: Okay. Are we not done with 29(2)(a) as well?

The Deputy Speaker: We're still under 29(2)(a).

Mr. Schmidt: I still have time under 29(2)(a), correct?

The Deputy Speaker: You still have three minutes and 20 seconds.

Debate Continued

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the interventions from the Member for Calgary-Hays. I suspect that deep down he really enjoys this kind of back and forth as much as I do, so I'm glad that we have the opportunity to spar in this way. It certainly livens things up around here.

My original point, though, in response to comments that were made by the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo and comments that I heard from other members who got up to speak in regard to this legislation, was around the idea that we on the government side should just trust them. My earlier comments were designed to indicate that there isn't a really high level of trust, I guess it's fair to say, in what the members opposite intend to do.

That's why we brought forward this legislation, Madam Speaker, because we've observed a repeated pattern of behaviour of maybe not following through on their intended promises. That's why it was concerning to us and concerning to the people of Alberta that we hold them accountable, that we bring forward legislation that actually forces them to do what they said they were going to do. You know, if they were given the opportunity to do so voluntarily, we've seen before that they wouldn't necessarily do that, so I think that's why it's been important to bring forward this legislation and deal with this.

It's concerning to me, Madam Speaker, the number of times we've heard the members opposite get up and say that they would never do such a thing. You know, when somebody goes to such great lengths to say that they won't do something that they don't intend to do, I certainly ask myself the question, as do many members on this side and many people out there in the province of Alberta: why is it that they're working so hard to convince us that they would never do such a thing?

You know, I'm glad. I think that they have decided to vote in favour of this legislation although it's not always clear from their speeches whether or not they intend to support this. So we'll see, Madam Speaker, when they do vote, whether or not they actually support this. But it's important to provide this insurance to maintain

the integrity of the democratic system and to make sure that we have responsible finance laws that are respected by all parties and create a level playing field between all parties that are contesting elections in this province.

I'm glad that we're able to bring forward this legislation and deal with it. You know, the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo then proceeded to veer off track a little bit, accuse the minister of . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Feehan: I'd just like to move that we adjourn debate on this bill at this time.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion to adjourn debate carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:39 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S. Fitzpatrick Malkinson

Carson	Hinkley	Miller
Connolly	Horne	Miranda
Coolahan	Jansen	Piquette
Cortes-Vargas	Kazim	Renaud
Dach	Kleinsteuber	Rosendahl
Dang	Larivee	Schmidt
Drever	Littlewood	Shepherd
Eggen	Loyola	Turner
Feehan	Luff	

Against the motion:

Fraser	McIver	Smith
Hanson	Pitt	Yao
Loewen		

Totals:	For – 29	Against – 7
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[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Mr. Feehan: Madam Speaker, given the time and the work completed this morning, I'd like to make a motion for adjournment until 1:30 this afternoon.

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

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, May 16, 2018

Day 31

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (UCP),
Deputy Leader of the Official Opposition
Anderson, Hon. Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (NDP)
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (UCP)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (NDP)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (NDP)
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (NDP)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (NDP)
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Alberta Party Opposition House Leader
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Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (NDP)
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (NDP)
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)
Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (NDP)
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP)
Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP),
Deputy Government House Leader
Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (IC)
Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (NDP)
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (AP)
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (NDP),
Deputy Government House Leader
Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (UCP),
Official Opposition Deputy Whip
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)
Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (UCP)
Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (NDP)
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)
Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (NDP)
Hunter, Grant R., Cardston-Taber-Warner (UCP)
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Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (UCP)
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)
Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (NDP)
Malkinson, Brian, Calgary-Currie (NDP)
Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),
Government House Leader
McCuaig-Boyd, Hon. Margaret,
Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (NDP)
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Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (UCP)
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Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (NDP)
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP)
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)
Schneider, David A., Little Bow (UCP)
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (NDP)
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (NDP)
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (NDP)
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (UCP)
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (UCP)
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (NDP),
Deputy Government Whip
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)
Vacant, Fort McMurray-Conklin
Vacant, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake

Party standings:

New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 25 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent Conservative: 1 Vacant: 2

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, May 16, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

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

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First, it's great to see the hon. Member for Stony Plain here today. [applause]

Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly our special guests from the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region, also known as PNWER. PNWER is an excellent model for regional and binational co-operation because of its proven success to foster economic growth, cross-border relations, and market access efforts. We've worked hard to get tariff exemptions for Canadian steel exports to the U.S. and have a fair deal on NAFTA. In my role as vice-president of PNWER for Alberta I want to acknowledge the PNWER leadership joining us here today: Senator Arnie Roblan from the state of Oregon and PNWER president; Mike Cuffe, representative from Montana and PNWER vice-president; Matt Morrison, executive director of PNWER, which operates out of the state of Washington; and Brandon Hardenbrook, COO of PNWER. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Labour.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly several members from the Canadian Welding Bureau. We have – and I'll ask them to stand as I call their names – Ms Michelle Stanford, senior vice-president, industry services; Mr. Craig Martin, vice-president, public safety; and Mr. Saro Khatchadourian, senior consultant. The CWB is a certification, registration, and training organization for companies involved in the welding of steel structures. They hosted a fantastic spring reception last night for MLAs, where I had the opportunity to try the welding simulator. Unfortunately, my high score was beaten by the Minister of Advanced Education. I'd like to now invite them to receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the House Eric Musekamp and Darlene Dunlop. Eric and Darlene have fought tirelessly and at great personal cost to gain personhood and equality of law for men and women and children employed as Alberta farm workers. Their efforts played a crucial role in the creation of the Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act. Since the passing of the act, Eric and Darlene have continued their efforts to help Alberta farm workers overcome the continued misrepresentation by the UCP members and take their rightful place in society. If they'll stand, we'll give them the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the amazing students from Christina Gordon public school. They are accompanied by their teachers, Erin Gates and Gavin Rutledge, as well as chaperones Cameron Loose and Jen Hoiland. I must say that during our interviews earlier these kids grilled me like the media does when they corner a politician. If everyone could give them a round of applause, please.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce a second class to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, the fantastic students from Timberlea school. They also were very inquisitive when I went to visit them in class, and I couldn't help but notice, but now I understand why these two groups were so knowledgeable: they were prepared to come here. They're accompanied by their teachers, Bambi Lafferty and Justine Kelly, as well as their chaperones, Tracey Penney and Cassandra McLean. I'd ask that the House please give them a warm welcome.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my distinct privilege to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a remarkable group of grades 5 and 6 students from Champion school, which, of course, is in the village of Champion, which is, of course, in the Little Bow riding, as you know, sir, and also very close to my home. My daughter was actually educated from her elementary school to junior high in the same school. I met with these students and teachers out on the steps as we got our picture taken this afternoon. As I say your name, please stand. The students are accompanied by their teachers, Mrs. Amanda Rodgers and Mr. Nathan Jackson, chaperones Mrs. Tami Sanderson and Mrs. Melanie Groves. I ask that the rest of the class please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm honoured to introduce to you and through you the team from Telus who have been outside all day helping to serve our constituents by hosting kits for kids. It's a program that helps kids in ridings with school supplies. They've helped more than 15,000 students at the start of every school year, giving them pens, papers, notebooks, and so forth. I'd ask them all to rise now and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly three members from the Foundation for Addiction and Mental Health. The FAMH is a grassroots, community-based charitable organization committed to sharing the reality about addiction and mental health, the potential links between addiction and other secondary health conditions, and the continuing care required for long-term recovery. Would you please rise as I call your name. Alistair Hepworth is the vice-chairperson for FAMH; Cory Hetherington, the chairperson for FAMH; and Dr. Raju Hajela, the

medical adviser for FAMH. Please receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to the whole House the Paul band First Nations consultation team, Donny Rain, Raymond Cardinal, and Vince Rain. Consultation in indigenous communities on projects that might affect their rights is vital to the success of our partnership with nations as we work to protect the environment and support economic growth for all Albertans working together in the spirit of reconciliation. In addition to working on project-based consultation with Alberta's aboriginal consultation office, Paul First Nation is also partnering with Alberta Environment and Parks with the goal of collecting environmental data needed to guide management and recovery actions under the north-central native trout recovery program and the whirling disease program. I also would say that this team is working on the Trans Mountain with Kinder Morgan and upholding the values and needs of the community. Please welcome Vince, Raymond, and Donny.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Culture and Tourism.

Miranda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Lauren McMahon, a summer intern with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Lauren is working hard at her second year at university, working on a degree in peace, conflict, and political science. Originally from Calgary she has travelled to India and Vietnam on several international community development projects. We're very glad to have Lauren join our team, and I ask all the members to give her the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the House two Albertans who are working very, very hard to communicate and share their ideas to make the future of Alberta brighter. I first met these two gentlemen on Twitter, and then I was really pleased to see two weekends ago that they were at UCP AGM, where they were totally willing to be involved, share their ideas, talk to each other, and, with 3,000 other Albertans, build a stronger future for Alberta. Strong family men, strong entrepreneurs, strong Albertans. I would like to ask Spencer Bennett and Payman Parseyan to please rise and accept the traditional warm welcome of the House. Thanks for being here.

1:40

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the Reverend Kurt Katzmar and his wife, Marcia. Reverend and Mrs. Katzmar joined our community and the congregation at Sherwood Park United church in October 2016 from the U.S.A., when Kurt joined the worship leadership team. On April 15 I was pleased to be present when Sherwood Park United church was officially declared an affirming ministry of the United Church, recognizing and celebrating all legal marriages, including same-sex couples, previously divorced people, and couples of different religions. As the MLA for Sherwood Park it is my honour to represent the Katzmars

and Sherwood Park United church. Kurt and Marcia, please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to rise today to introduce some committed hospital foundation volunteers who are seated in the members' gallery. They are dedicated to enhancing care in communities across Alberta, and they share their passion for philanthropy and building excellence in health care. I want to thank them for their contributions and invite them to rise as I say their names and stay risen until the end of the introduction: Catherine Williams, Alberta Children's Hospital Foundation; Waseem Jabre, Drayton Valley Health Services Foundation; Jim Brown and Dr. Allewell Nieberding, University Hospital Foundation; Zicki Eludin and Mayor Omer Moghrabi, Lac La Biche Regional Hospital Foundation; Ralph Westwood, Tri-Community Health and Wellness Foundation. Thank you so much for all of your contributions to the people of Alberta and to the hospitals in your regions. We are very grateful. Please, colleagues, join me in extending a warm welcome.

The Speaker: The hon. Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you patient advocates and members of the ALS Society of Alberta. We're a couple of weeks ahead, but June is ALS Awareness Month, a time to focus attention on advocacy, prevention, research, and cure. I'd like to thank the ALS Society of Alberta for its dedication to making each day the best possible for people living with and affected by ALS and their families as well as for their tireless work to increase awareness of the illness so that greater compassion and understanding is extended to Albertans with ALS. Our government is so grateful for the work you do and for our partnership. I would invite Cathy Martin,* Karen Caughey, Lisa Copeland, Mary Thorp, Rodol Reyataza, and Matt Jarbeau and his family to rise if they are able and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a very special introduction today. I'm proud to introduce one of the most engaged residents of Edmonton-Gold Bar. I don't know if he's ever been introduced to this Legislature, but he's certainly well known to all of the members, Mr. Brad Jones. Brad Jones writes e-mails to us every day on matters of import of that day. He is certainly to be commended for his active engagement in the political process in this province, and I'm proud to call him my friend. I ask Brad to please rise, and I ask the members of the Assembly urgently and permanently, with no foot-dragging, to give him the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Members' Statements

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

Organ and Tissue Donation

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak in the House on behalf of the thousands of Canadians whose lives are on pause as we speak, on pause waiting for organ and tissue donations. Right

*Glen Jarbeau attended in place of Cathy Martin.

now there are approximately 4,500 Canadians and 700 Albertans on the transplant wait-list, waiting to get a call that will change their lives forever. That's 700 families praying for a miracle that is organ donation, 700 individuals whose lives are on hold or are in pain or are limited while they wait, 700 Albertans whose lives could fundamentally and permanently be changed by the generosity of a perfect stranger.

In 2013 the previous government passed legislation to create an organ and tissue donation agency to help Alberta address the serious deficit of organ donation in our province. The legislation would require private registry agents to ask everyone renewing their licence if they wish to donate their organs. Despite those efforts, our province is still well below the national average in terms of registered donors. In 2016, 260 Canadians sadly lost their lives while waiting for a transplant, 45 of which were Albertans.

Recently we saw the amazing impact of organ donation when Logan Boulet, the Humboldt Broncos player, saved six lives by donating his organs following the tragic bus accident that killed him and 14 others. Organ and tissue donation, Mr. Speaker, are the gift of life. It's the greatest gift that we as humans, Canadians, and Albertans can give.

In honour of Logan Boulet I want to encourage my fellow MLAs and everyone in this House and all Albertans to consider giving that gift of life and registering to be an organ donor. I was inspired to become a donor by Logan, and I hope that you will all join me in signing the back of your health card or registering at your local registry agency.

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

Female Cabinet Ministers

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At a recent UCP policy meeting attendees applauded comments from a senior member who said that a government cabinet made up of 50 per cent women was humiliating and patronizing and even said she would have trouble naming five ministers. It's against the rules to use names in the House, but here's some help.

Minister of Labour and Democratic Renewal. She introduced job-protected leave for sexual violence survivors and put the power of our democracy back in the hands of Albertans. I know her name.

Minister of Justice and Solicitor General. She amended laws to protect gender identity and gender expression and to allow for sexual assault cases that are older than two years and appointed Alberta's first female First Nations Provincial Court judge, Karen Crowshoe. She also has a baby. I know her name.

Deputy Premier and Minister of Health. She expanded midwife services, announced the Calgary cancer centre, and introduced legislation that will protect a woman's legal right to access reproductive health services without harassment. I know her name.

Associate Minister of Health. She is opening up harm reduction services across the province. She also has a baby. I know her name.

Minister of environment. She just created the world's largest boreal protected forest. I know her name.

Minister of Seniors and Housing. She is overseeing the building of \$1.2 billion of provincial housing. I know her name.

Minister of Children's Services. She has created 7,300 affordable \$25-a-day child care spaces. I know her name.

Minister of Infrastructure. She is overseeing the largest infrastructure build in Alberta's history. You can believe I know her name.

Minister of Service Alberta and Status of Women. She announced \$8.1 million in comprehensive support for survivors of sexual violence, a first. Also has a baby. I know her name.

Our Premier. She asked these amazing women to run for the NDP. Conservatives called that quota filling. We call it empowering women to take on the roles they rightly deserve.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

G7G Northern Railway Project

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Generating for Seven Generations, also known as G7G, has plans to construct a railway from Fort McMurray to Alaska. Investors have lined up to finance the project, so it doesn't need funding; it just needs provincial government support. It's hard to imagine why this government won't support it because G7G rail checks off all its boxes. Let me review them for you.

Tidewater access for Alberta energy: check. This rail line will go to the existing west coast port facilities in Valdez, Alaska, and it'll be able to move in excess of 1 million barrels per day.

Economic diversification: check. The railway will carry a multitude of commodities for many resource sectors, including forestry, agriculture, mining, and energy.

First Nations partnerships: check. All First Nations along the route support it with resolutions. Furthermore, G7G plans for First Nations to acquire 50 per cent equity ownership in the railway, and their communities will benefit from long-term employment.

Create jobs: check. The railway's operations will generate employment all along its path as well as even more jobs created through economic development in northern Alberta, the Yukon, and the Northwest Territories, not to mention the rail line's construction.

1:50

Encourage renewable energy: check. It's green, an electrically powered train driven by wind turbines.

Mr. Speaker, the G7G railway is innovative, with design safety features, versatile, and welcomed by our northern neighbours. As I've just demonstrated, it checks off every box. I look forward to hearing that this government is working with G7G to make this railway a reality because going north is the right direction for Alberta's future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

Alberta Boycott of British Columbia Wine

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On February 22 the hon. the Premier lifted the wine boycott of British Columbia, saying that she thought there was certainty that the government of British Columbia would allow the construction of the Trans Mountain pipeline. The Premier said at the time: we know we have tools in our tool box. What are those tools, and why have none of them been used?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms. Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the member opposite knows, we did get small movement from the B.C. government in terms of stopping the immediate action to restrict products going into B.C. with respect to the wine ban. He also knows that we have been working with leaders across the country to work on changing and developing public opinion in support of Kinder Morgan. That is one of our tools, and it is being used quite

successfully. In addition, today we will be further debating Bill 12, which he also knows is part of that plan.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, does the Premier believe that it sent the right message to her New Democrat friends in Victoria about our determination on Trans Mountain that she lifted the wine boycott? Does she think that was the right thing to do in retrospect?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think that we have done a number of things to make our position with respect to the need to get Trans Mountain built very, very clear to the government of B.C. I can tell you that very definitively. One thing that we'll be doing tomorrow is meeting with a mission of business leaders from British Columbia who are coming to Alberta to talk with us and share the fact that they understand the value of this pipeline to the B.C. economy and talk about how they will make sure that that opinion is shared even more in the province of B.C.

Mr. Kenney: I thank the Premier for the answer, and I commend the Vancouver board of trade for that initiative. I look forward to their visit.

But, Mr. Speaker, the question is really about the strategy because the British Columbia government has not stopped their stated intention to obstruct and prevent the construction of the pipeline, yet our government here decided to reduce pressure on the B.C. government. Is the Premier sure that was the right call to make? Doesn't she think that instead we should have increased pressure rather than releasing it on the B.C. government?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would suggest that there is nothing but growing pressure on the B.C. government with respect to this matter. The discussions that have been going on over the last several months have increasing impacts on pressure. More to the point, probably the most important form of pressure is public opinion in the province of British Columbia. We have been working very hard to influence that public opinion, and we are succeeding on that topic. I wish the member opposite would actually join in that instead of constantly trying to call down our efforts and cheer for failure on the part of Albertans.

The Speaker: Second main.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, we certainly hope for the construction of the pipeline, as I've reassured the Premier on multiple occasions. We just want the most effective way of ensuring that it gets built.

Trans Mountain Pipeline Public Purchase Proposal

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Premier: is she offering to buy the Trans Mountain pipeline from Kinder Morgan?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, as the member opposite has probably heard me say in the media, we are working daily, talking daily with the Minister of Finance. Our officials are working with federal officials. We are engaged in complex, multilayered negotiations with Kinder Morgan to ensure that we meet their deadline, that we ensure that the summer building schedule is resumed and that no time is lost, and that we get the pipeline built.

Mr. Kenney: Well, that wasn't an answer to the question. The question was: is the Premier offering to buy the Trans Mountain pipeline? Mr. Speaker, is the government offering to buy either the proposed expansion, which is, I think, a \$7 billion capital commitment, or is the government offering to buy the 60-year-old Trans Mountain pipeline operated by Kinder Morgan, or both?

Mr. Mason: I'd love to play poker with you.

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, the House leader makes a very good point, that it's not helpful to reveal your full hand when you are negotiating on these matters.

As I've said, we have been very focused, we have been working very hard, we've been working very closely with the federal government, with the clear intention of ensuring that we remove both the legal and the financial uncertainty that has been troubling Kinder Morgan and to ensure that the project moves forward without delay. We are very confident that we will get there.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, Kinder Morgan has made it clear repeatedly, including this morning, that what they are seeking is absolute legal certainty that the pipeline will be built in British Columbia without obstruction from the provincial government. Has the Premier received any such assurances from her counterpart Premier Horgan in Victoria?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What we have done is that we are working with the federal government to meet the concerns that are legitimately raised by Kinder Morgan with respect to their ability to proceed with building this pipeline, and we will continue to do that. I think it's very clear that at this point we haven't got those kinds of assurances from the B.C. government, but we are working to put pressure on them and/or to render their participation in this irrelevant. We are continuing to do that, and we'll get there.

The Speaker: Third main question.

Federal Bill C-69

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the Alberta-based Canadian Energy Pipeline Association says that the federal pipeline bill, Bill C-69, will make it virtually impossible to imagine a new pipeline being approved in Canada. The Premier committed to this House to raise concerns with the federal government about these provisions in Bill C-69. Has she received any undertakings from the federal government that they will substantially modify that bill so that it does not effectively block the prospect of future pipeline approval?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact, I believe both our minister of environment and our Minister of Energy have engaged with the federal government to outline the significant concerns that arise from elements of that bill, and we have been assured that they are hearing those concerns. We haven't gotten any formal undertakings yet, but we are continuing to work with them because there are definitely some uncertainties that exist in that bill that need to be remedied. So we will continue to do the work to make sure that happens.

Mr. Kenney: Well, the problem here, Mr. Speaker, is that there were consultations leading towards this bill over the past two years, yet a bill was introduced that, according to the industry, will block future pipeline approval. That bill is now proceeding through Parliament. No changes have been made, so apparently the efforts of the Alberta government have been ignored. Will the Premier join with us in expressing concern about the prospect of a new federal law that according to the industry will make it impossible to get future pipelines approved?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, we've already articulated our concern about the impact of this suite of laws on the ability to move forward on a number of different projects, including pipelines, so we have looked at a number of different ways to ensure that it doesn't have the effect that our reading of the legislation might well have. One thing, for instance, would be to ensure that the climate leadership plan is recognized as sufficient for evaluating upstream greenhouse gas emissions associated with pipeline projects. As a result, we would see C-69 not have any impact. But there are a number of different mechanisms at our disposal, and we'll continue.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, there's actually only one mechanism available, and that would be an amendment or a series of amendments to Bill C-69, amendments which have not been forthcoming. Again I will ask the Premier: will she join with the industry in expressing grave concern that Bill C-69 could cause significant further investor damage to confidence in our oil and gas sector, and would she join with us in adopting perhaps the unanimous motion of this Legislature calling for major amendments to that bill to protect our industry?

2:00

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I've said before, our ministers have already been engaging with the minister of environment with respect to this bill, and we will continue to do that. We will ensure that industry in Alberta is protected, and I suspect that we'll see some good resolutions with respect to that matter. We support ensuring that we have an accountable but time-determined process to get these projects approved that ensures certainty for investors and accountability to Canadians.

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

Trans Mountain Pipeline Public Purchase Proposal (continued)

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta Party wants to see the Kinder Morgan pipeline built. Unlike others, we will never cheer against Alberta and hope for the pipeline to fail because we think somehow that's going to help our political fortunes. Today the federal Minister of Finance in Ottawa said that Ottawa would indemnify Kinder Morgan and that that would transfer to new owners if the pipeline was sold. Now, interestingly, he said that there are plenty of investors who'd be interested in taking on that project. To the Premier. You have said before that you would consider buying the entire project. Is Alberta one of the investors considering taking on a stake in the Kinder Morgan pipeline?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Now, I appreciate the member's question, but as I've said, we are working very closely with the federal government. Our officials are working very closely with them. We're speaking, again, with lead negotiators on a pretty much daily basis, and negotiations are under way. There are a number of different elements to those negotiations. When we get to the point where we are in the best position on behalf of Alberta taxpayers as well as Alberta citizens to release more information, we will do that.

Mr. Clark: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's very interesting. You've said that you won't negotiate in public, but your headlines say otherwise. When news about the troubles with Kinder Morgan first broke, the government overreacted, saying immediately that they would buy the whole thing. The Premier even said that the pipeline project was, quote, too big to fail, which further jeopardized Alberta's negotiating position. It seems that every time the government speaks, the price goes up. To the Premier: will you commit here and now to exercise some discipline and not speak publicly about the Kinder Morgan pipeline negotiations until there is a deal to announce?

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a darn good thing I didn't answer his first question. Yes, we will certainly be very strategic in the way we engage in the communications on this because we understand that the stakes are high and that we need to be very strategic on this matter. What we do know is that at the end of the day, there are a number of different paths to ensure success for Albertans, and we are pursuing all of them rigorously on behalf of the people of Alberta.

Mr. Clark: Mr. Speaker, here's my concern. It isn't just government officials speaking openly about this project; we have backroom operators leaking like a sieve as well. According to the CBC a senior official in this government said, "Kinder Morgan is not making this easy." Now, as tempting as it may be for the government to grab for headlines, these sorts of leaks damage our relationship with Kinder Morgan, they damage Alberta's reputation, and they hurt our chances of getting a pipeline built. Again to the Premier: will you ensure that none of your officials or anyone with knowledge of the Kinder Morgan negotiations speaks to the media on or off the record until a deal is done?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, what I will ensure is that we are as strategic as we can possibly be to ensure that we get the best outcome for Albertans, one that represents the overall public interest, that is reflected in getting this pipeline built, as well as one that goes as close as possible to achieving the best commercial interest in terms of the way in which the pipeline is built. That's a complex process. We are working very carefully to navigate it, and we will do so in the best interests of all Albertans.

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

Support for Postsecondary Students

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, my constituents are very concerned about the policies passed at the recent UCP policy convention, particularly motions passed that would make life harder for students, like making student union fees optional. These organizations rely on these funds to deliver programs and services that benefit everyone on campus. To the Minister of Advanced Education: how does this government continue to support student-led organizations?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I want to thank the Member for Edmonton-South West for being such a powerful advocate for student issues. Certainly, it's been my pleasure as Minister of Advanced Education to work with many students' unions on issues that are important to students, like maintaining access to affordable higher education in this province. I'm proud of the work that we've done to keep tuition affordable as well as making student mental health grants available. It's clear that the motion that the Conservatives passed two weeks ago is intent on crushing dissent at universities because they plan to make big cuts to postsecondary education and they want to weaken students' ability to fight back against that. The funding that students . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

A government policy question. First supplemental.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that students' unions benefit all students and given that I'm hearing from students in my constituency about how they appreciate these organizations, again to the same minister: what are you hearing from student organizations about how they support students?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The thing that I hear from students over and over again is how vital students' unions are for providing students with essential services such as scholarships, student food banks, and support for refugee students. The Conservatives want to make big cuts to postsecondary education, and they want to impair student unions' ability to fight back. With this kind of policy students would be poorer, hungrier, and less supported. We're proud to make education more affordable, and the Conservatives would do just the opposite.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, about those big cuts. Given that those past big cuts by Conservatives to postsecondary education made life more difficult for students, what supports is this government providing for students?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we've been proud to freeze tuition for four years as well as provide millions of dollars in new funding every year to every university and college in the province, which stands in stark contrast to the previous Conservative government's famous cuts for universities and colleges. They managed to find creative new ways to hurt students such as implementing market modifier tuition hikes. Despite being one of the wealthiest provinces in the country, our universities and colleges were the most expensive. Under our government they're among the most affordable.

Pharmacy Funding Framework

Dr. Starke: Well, Mr. Speaker, we're one day away from the deadline for Alberta pharmacists to sign on to the disastrous new pharmacy funding framework, which has thrown the Health department into full damage control mode. Now, last week's hastily called briefing included representation from even the Premier's office. That doesn't happen until an issue is really going south. To the Health minister. We know your department is scrambling. What

contingency do you have in place for the pharmacists who don't sign off by tomorrow's deadline?

Ms Hoffman: I want to say that nothing could be further from the truth. We respect the opposition and want to support them in being able to do their jobs, and that's why we arranged to have staff, including staff from my department, sit down with any members of the opposition through your offices. We certainly welcome you to have the information, to be able to have the best information about what it is that we're doing on behalf of all Albertans.

I'm very proud of the work that we've done to make sure that we're making life more affordable and not hurting front-line services. We know that Conservatives have called for deep cuts. We've kept growth to only 3 per cent, and we've improved services for the people of Alberta. I'm proud of the work that we've done with pharmacists, and we're going to keep doing it, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Dr. Starke: Well, Mr. Speaker, this framework is nothing the minister should be proud of. Given that we now know that the new framework was driven by a desire to reign in a large Ontario-based drugstore chain that had dubious dispensing practices and given that this government's heavy-handed approach will hurt small mom-and-pop pharmacies and their most vulnerable patients, to the minister: why don't you work with the RxA to investigate this chain? Why are you instead penalizing hard-working Alberta pharmacists, hurting both them and their patients?

Ms Hoffman: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, we sat down with the RxA. We brought a budget forward to them, a budget that's very reasonable, a 4.3 per cent increase to account for volume growth and population growth. We said to them that this is a reasonable increase. We know that the Conservatives are pushing for deep cuts. We're not doing that, but we need to have sustainable growth. We sat down with them and we came up with a formula that will ensure that we have that while reducing copays that seniors are paying, while protecting the important services that matter to the people of Alberta. I'm proud that we're investing in health care instead of moving for deep cuts or trying to get rich people richer. We're standing up for ordinary people in this province.

Dr. Starke: Wow. Well, Mr. Speaker, that just shows that this government has shown a consistent pattern of distrust and disdain for various health care professionals, and you can now add pharmacists to that list.

Given that this government's solution to every problem is to nationalize it and bring it under government control and given that the federal NDP has already indicated that a national pharmacare program will be a major plank in their next election platform, to the minister. You've nationalized laundry. You're nationalizing lab services. We know you hate private business. Is it your ultimate goal to nationalize pharmacy services in Alberta?

2:10

Ms Hoffman: Well, let's just back up about a minute and reflect on who it was that was disparaging certain providers in this province. It certainly wasn't me. I'm proud to stand up with the people of this province, including the health care workers. Instead of moving forward with billions of dollars of cuts or instead of laying off people who are working in laundry facilities throughout our province to privatize them and move them into urban centres, Mr. Speaker, I stood up for the people who live in your riding, who work in your hospitals, who want to be able to keep doing those services for the people of Alberta. I'm proud of that, and I welcome all of

you to stand up for important jobs in this province, including front-line health care providers, instead of pushing for deep cuts and calling every day for us to lay off people. On this side of the House we're standing with front-line services, and we're standing with . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Federal Bill C-69
(continued)

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, has the government of Alberta made a submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development with respect to Bill C-69, the environmental impact assessment act?

Ms Hoffman: You know, the Premier has answered this question before, and I'll answer it again. The ministers of Environment and Parks and Energy did make a written submission to the minister of environment. We know that the member opposite likes to spend a lot of time in Ottawa – I get that – and that he wants everybody to spend a lot of time in Ottawa. Here we're focused on Alberta, making sure we get good results for the people of Alberta. We're proud to do that, and we've certainly made our position clear to the minister of environment. We will continue to fight for access to tidewater, and we will succeed, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, to correct the hon. the Deputy Premier, the Premier did not answer that question because I didn't ask her that question. The question, just to be clear, is: has the government of Alberta made a submission to the federal House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development with respect to Bill C-69, which, according to the energy industry, may make it virtually impossible for another pipeline to be approved in the future? This is a question of vital economic interest to Albertans and Alberta jobs. The question is: has the government made a submission to the committee studying that bill?

Ms Hoffman: Just to reinforce what we did, the Minister of Energy and the minister of environment wrote a letter to very clearly outline their concerns to the federal government to make sure that the positions of our province and of our industry are taken as the highest priority as we continue to move forward while protecting the environment and protecting good jobs, Mr. Speaker. We're not afraid of staying in Alberta and doing our jobs here. We show up to debate bills, we show up to meet with our constituents, and we want to continue to show up for an industry that we know is so important to this province of Alberta. We will continue to do that. I know that some people miss Ottawa a little bit too much, but we're really proud to be in Alberta.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the problem is that the government is not showing up to defend Alberta's energy industry from a federal bill that could impose massive damage on it. Given that, my question is: will the government agree to make a submission to the House of Commons committee studying a bill which, according to Alberta's energy industry, may have a massive, damaging, long-term effect on Alberta jobs? If not, why not?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, both the minister of environment and myself have shared our concerns with our counterparts in Ottawa more than once. We have reviewed the process and absolutely have stood up for our energy industry. We continue to do that. You know, it's something again – we have a

robust climate leadership plan which is absolutely part of Canada's goals. If they want to reach those, Alberta is absolutely part of it, and they know that. We stand up for our energy industry every day, something you folks should be doing as well.

Federal Bill C-69
Methane Emission Regulations

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, how is the government standing up for the industry by refusing to even make a simple submission expressing concern about a bill that can impose massive permanent damage on our largest job creator? How is that standing up for Alberta when they can't even send a submission to a committee?

Ms Hoffman: Sorry; I just have to take this first one. How is it standing up for Alberta to hop on an airplane and jaunt off to Ottawa every time you get a chance to meet with a committee when we have ministers right here in this province who are speaking directly with the government of Canada, the ones who are in the position to be a majority government, I might add, to be able to make these changes? Mr. Speaker, we will continue to push at all opportunities to stand up for the people of Alberta. We are doing it in Alberta. We're also making sure that we reach out to people in the public and other jurisdictions. That's why we've got majority support in British Columbia now. The only place that we seem to be struggling with majority support is on the opposition benches. I trust that you guys will get onboard . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Kenney: That's true. We plead guilty to not supporting the government's job-killing policies.

You know, Mr. Speaker, the government of Canada is proposing regulations on methane, which could also be massively damaging to Alberta's largest employers. Has this government received any assurances from Ottawa that the federal government will not impose those federal methane regulations but will allow our province to regulate in that area ourselves?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, when we've been developing the methane regulations, we've worked with industry, environmental groups. We've had talks back and forth with our federal counterparts. Again, our climate leadership plan is crucial to Canada's goals. They know that, and we've had lots of robust talks about that. Our methane plan is going to be crucial to our goals, and we've worked, again, with industry and everybody involved.

Mr. Kenney: So to translate that into plain language, the government is proud of the NDP carbon tax. We already know that.

Mr. Speaker, the question was: has the government received assurances from their federal counterparts that the damaging proposed federal methane regulations will not be imposed on Alberta in a manner that will kill Alberta jobs? Have they sought and received such assurances?

The Speaker: The Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we've worked on a balanced plan that is a made-in-Alberta plan. We don't want an Ottawa-imposed plan. We've taken steps, again in concert with industry, to look at ways to reduce methane pollution and tackle climate change at the same time. We've had great feedback. The AER has taken the lead, and we've had great feedback from

them. We've absolutely had ongoing conversations with the federal government, and we'll continue to do that.

Mr. Kenney: Well, I guess ongoing discussions means they have received no assurances.

Methane Emission Regulations

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, will the government join with us in calling on Ottawa not to impose federal methane regulations on Alberta that would kill Alberta jobs?

Ms Hoffman: You know what would kill Alberta jobs, Mr. Speaker? Failing to move forward with our climate leadership plan, a climate leadership plan that is investing in many sectors of the energy industry in the province of Alberta. You know what would kill Alberta jobs? Pulling that opportunity for us to say that we are global leaders. We are going to stop at nothing to ensure that everyone is proud to have Alberta energy products flowing through Alberta pipelines to Canadian tidewaters or Canadian pipelines to Canadian tidewaters. It's important for us that we stand together and united on ensuring that we have a strong environmental reputation because environment and jobs go hand in hand. You can't have one without the other. You guys tried. It didn't work out. We've got other people making the decisions now.

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, nobody is fooled by a word salad of talking points. The question was very simple. Will the government join with us in calling on their federal counterparts not to impose the proposed federal methane regulations, that would kill Alberta jobs? This is a pretty simple question. I think the only right answer here is yes. Will the government commit to join with us in opposing the imposition of such damaging federal regulations?

Ms Hoffman: The government of Alberta has brought forward a climate leadership plan for Alberta, a climate leadership plan that's a made-in-Alberta solution, not a made-in-Ottawa solution. You don't need to always turn to Ottawa to tell you what to do. In Alberta we came forward, working with industry, working with environmentalists, and working with leaders from throughout our province, and came up with an Alberta plan. We want that Alberta plan to succeed.

Instead of making grandstanding political gestures that you're going to pull it – you know what? Your colleague in Manitoba, who you used to sit in the House of Commons with, said that if we do nothing, we get Trudeau; if we do something, we get our own plan. Mr. Speaker, we're proud to have our own plan, and we're going to keep moving forward with it.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, Premier Pallister also said that he'll see Justin Trudeau in court if he tries to raise the carbon tax, unlike the NDP, that said: we'll happily increase it by 67 per cent. They want to punish Albertans for heating their homes because Justin Trudeau asked them to.

But, Mr. Speaker, the whole point here is not to be dictated to by Ottawa in the field of our jurisdiction, environmental regulation. Why is it so difficult for the NDP to stand up for Alberta and say no to Ottawa's threat to kill Alberta jobs through the federal methane regulations?

2:20

Ms Hoffman: You know, it's interesting, the comments that were made yesterday about going high. That's an interesting tone, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, I have to say that that isn't what I saw when I was reading the newspaper today. I saw somebody who was going

very low and was very shallow in his criticism. We are working to make sure that the Alberta plan, the Alberta climate leadership plan, something that has gotten us the approval of two pipelines, moves forward and that the federal government sees that we have the ability to lead, that we don't need to always turn to them and then ask them what direction we should go in. Albertans are leaders, Albertans are innovators, Albertans have a plan that will work, and it's about time the opposition got onboard.

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

Government Spending

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The previous Conservative government had a habit of using taxpayer funds to finance their lavish lifestyle. With my constituents' tax dollars the government financed private planes, a sky palace, and a \$45,000 trip to South Africa. Now, given that the previous government had runaway travel and hospitality expenses, can the Minister of Treasury Board and Finance tell me how this current government stacks up in terms of travel and hospitality expenses?

The Speaker: The Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The entitlement of the Conservatives across the way was most evident when it came to boondoggles and travel expenses. Millions of taxpayer dollars were wasted on the sky palace and lavish trips. Since our government was elected, we have done away with all that Conservative waste. Travel expenses were cut to one-sixth of what they were under the previous government. This is only one of the ways we have cut wasteful spending and found \$750 million in savings last year.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What is this government doing to ensure that expenses are kept low and that the budget priorities are right?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the biggest thing we can do is not follow the lead of the previous government. Under their leadership salaries for executives were out of control, private health care and golf club memberships were handed out like candy, all on the taxpayers' dime. Albertans rightfully rejected that. We got rid of all that and brought salaries of the highest paid public servants back to where they should have always been.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the previous government, when the price of oil was high, spent vast amounts of money and, when the price of oil was low, made drastic cuts to spending, to the same minister: how is this government ensuring that we do not have these drastic and volatile spending swings?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This was and remains a top priority. The previous government had wild spending increases when times were good, often upwards of 10 per cent year over year, but then they would cut drastically in bad times because of their poor planning. Unlike members opposite, we believe that funding for our kids' classrooms and our loved ones' health care should not be dependent on the price of oil. That's why we have invested in

those services while responsibly limiting spending growth. Budget 2018 sets out a plan to continue providing that stable funding while avoiding wild spending swings. The members opposite have prioritized the flat tax.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Gasoline Prices

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Almost daily Albertans ask me why we pay so much for gasoline when the oil comes out of the ground literally beneath our feet. People in this province understand that oil is sold on the world market and that there are refinery costs. However, this government continually shows that it doesn't have the backs of Albertans and, in fact, rides on the backs of Albertans, making things even worse. You see, the carbon tax presently adds almost 7 cents per litre to the cost of gasoline. The provincial gas tax is 13 cents a litre. That's roughly 20 cents a litre of provincial taxes on gasoline. To the minister: isn't the carbon tax on everyday Albertans unreasonable, and why wasn't 13 cents a litre enough for this tax-hungry NDP government?

Mr. Ceci: Mr. Speaker, our taxes on things like gasoline are on par with all other provincial governments. We're not exploiting Albertans in that regard. We do know that if there are taxes, there are decisions made by people to reduce their use of things and to cut emissions. We are doing these things because they're, really, following through with the government's plan to make life more affordable, to make life better for Albertans and reduce emissions, and to bring in a carbon levy that works for everybody.

Mr. Loewen: Given that that's their definition of making life more affordable and that the federal gas tax is 10 cents per litre plus the 5 per cent GST calculated on the fuel and on the other taxes also and given that removing all taxes from, let's say, \$1.30-a-litre gasoline would leave the price at 94 cents a litre – wouldn't that be nice? – Minister, don't Albertans pay enough tax on gasoline? Do you really need to increase the carbon tax another 4 and a half cents per litre because Justin Trudeau asked you to?

Mr. Ceci: Mr. Speaker, you know, news flash to the member opposite: gas prices rise in the summer. It happens every year, and it's not because of the carbon levy in any one year. It has everything to do with the rising demand we see at this time of year and refinery issues. We can't control when refineries go down or when demand spikes in the summer, and we can't control the price of oil. What we can control is how we support families through tough economic times. We've done it. They would cut them loose.

Mr. Loewen: News flash, Minister: we're talking about taxes here.

Given that this means that at \$1.30 per litre almost 30 per cent of that price of \$1.30-a-litre gas is taxes and given that Albertans have had enough with the constant tax hikes of the NDP and their ally Justin Trudeau and given that the NDP could cancel the carbon tax tomorrow and join Saskatchewan in standing up to the Trudeau Liberals in Ottawa, will this government finally cut Albertans a break and cancel the carbon tax and for once defend Albertans from Justin Trudeau's Liberals?

Mr. Ceci: Referring to taxes, Mr. Speaker, there is no sales tax, there is no payroll tax, and there are no health care premiums. Albertans still pay the lowest overall taxes in the country by \$11.2 billion. I don't think that side would be happy if it was zero taxes that Albertans paid, but that's not the way government runs.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Education Funding

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Red Deer public board passed a budget with a deficit of slightly more than half a million dollars. They identified a number of fiscal issues that I'm concerned about. Almost half of this deficit is the result of a shortfall in their transportation budget. The government's continued insistence on supporting last session's Bill 1 was identified as a factor in this budget shortfall, and the carbon tax makes these issues even worse. To the Minister of Education: what are you doing to work with school boards like Red Deer public who are experiencing budgetary stress as a result of your policy changes?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, I work with all school boards across the province to ensure that we're providing excellent education and that our students are being looked after in the broadest possible way. You know what I did to begin with and for the last four budgets? I built a budget, together with this fine caucus, that funded for enrolment, funded for growth, something that the members opposite were not going to do. That's part of the reason they lost the last election.

Mr. Smith: Interesting answer, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, given that at one point or another, including today, this session the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Advanced Education, and now the Minister of Education have all stated that their government is funding for enrolment growth and given that the Red Deer public school board noted that per-pupil funding is an issue for them, with officials saying that enrolment growth takes place every year but that they have not received a funding increase from the province in the last five to seven years, to the minister: who is telling the truth? You or the Red Deer public school board?

Mr. Eggen: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, I think the truth lies somewhere betwixt the two. In fact, Red Deer has been working with us very closely every step of the way and working with the enrolment increases that we have given them. Certainly, we're happy to be financing what is a growing city and a growing school board, but I think the hon. member opposite might have some math issues that he would like to work out in terms of how that all adds up. Certainly, we are in total congress between myself and Red Deer public and working very well.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that I've repeatedly raised the issue of the seemingly never-ending negotiations between the ATA and local school boards and given that the current deal expires on August 31 and that various boards continue to contest the deal, with some even seeking resolution through the Labour Relations Board, and given that the Red Deer public board presented the expiring ATA contract as a medium to long-term risk to their operations and decision-making, again to the minister: when will the current deal be fully completed, and how are you going to prevent this from happening during the next round of negotiations?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, as it happens, we resolved the wage issue around teachers for the collective agreement here quite a few months ago, and I think

perhaps he's referring to local bargaining, which is continuing on, as it should. We, I think, did a great service to not only teachers but for certainty for our budget as well by starting provincial negotiations with teachers in terms of wages. That's what we did with Bill 8 a few years ago, and it's been going very well. We've had excellent bargaining in good faith, and we will continue to do so.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

2:30 Economic Competitiveness

Mr. Gotfried: Mr. Speaker, Nancy Southern is one of Alberta's most prominent business leaders, whose family has contributed so much to this great province. Yesterday at the ATCO annual meeting she took Justin Trudeau to task for his lack of leadership on Canada's economic competitiveness. She went as far as to say that Canada's decline was heartbreaking. To the minister of economic development: have you raised this competitiveness issue with your close allies in the Trudeau government?

Ms Jansen: You know, Mr. Speaker, it appears that the Prime Minister of Canada, Justin Trudeau, occupies a lot of rent-free space in the heads of the members of the opposition. I would suggest that the next time the Leader of the Official Opposition is in Ottawa, which I'm sure is any day now, he can ask for some of that money, and we can put it towards the deficit.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A great response for those allies out in Ottawa.

Given that this government is very fond of referring to guidance received from David Dodge and given that David Dodge has stated that Canada is doing a number of things to shoot themselves in the foot when it comes to economic competitiveness, again to the minister. The federal government continues to fail Alberta. What specific changes have you requested from your Trudeau Liberal allies to ensure that Alberta is not left in the dust as a result of their and your damaging policies?

Ms Jansen: You know, Mr. Speaker, when we circled back with David Dodge, the former Bank of Canada governor, to have a conversation, certainly, about our capital plan and about a lot of details around our budget, one of the things he said to us was that the most important thing we could do was remove the impediments to growth in Alberta, and that's what we did. That was the lens through which we viewed our capital plan and all of the work we do in our ministries. That is something that is extremely important to us. David Dodge and his comments are important to the work we do. We continue to listen to him, and certainly when it comes to . . .

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

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Time to switch feet or learn a new dance, I think.

Mr. Speaker, given that Suncor CEO Steve Williams, in talking about the investment exodus, stated – and I quote – that he thinks we're running out of companies to leave in a sense, that the big guys have already exercised some of their options, and given that he went on to say that generally around the world there's been an off-Canada signal and given that this is yet another example of you and your ally Justin Trudeau failing Albertans, again to the minister: if the PM won't step up, what specific policy and regulatory changes,

including scrapping the carbon tax, will you make to improve our economic competitiveness?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, one of the things we have done to keep Alberta competitive is having the lowest overall taxes of any province in the country by \$11.2 billion. That's not trivial. As a result, GDP growth last year was up 4.9 per cent. Manufacturing is up in this province. Exports are up. Small business confidence is up. I can go on and on and on. Cities like Calgary were doing better last year, and of the cities in the prairie provinces they'll do the best again this year. We're on the right path.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Health Care Concerns

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday we heard the Minister of Health claim that her office is accessible, welcoming, and happy to deal with concerns. Indeed, I did meet with the minister a month ago regarding the lack of psychiatric hospital beds at the St. Therese health centre, and that's an issue I've brought up several times in the House. AHS designated this health centre as a psychiatric hub for the northeast area, yet they continue to be underresourced. As the minister seemed very eager to fix this issue, can the minister give us an update, please?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member. I was proud to welcome him and other stakeholders from the community to my office to discuss this very issue, and certainly it is a complex matter. I think we all agree that we want to increase capacity to support people living with mental health challenges. One of the big things that was mentioned more than once in that meeting was the desire to have supports for wraparound services like homelessness, to make sure that we're not discharging people from hospital into homelessness, that we should be investing more in these areas. Certainly, we're investing more in these areas. I wish the member opposite would have voted for that budget. We certainly welcome him to revisit his position . . .

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Hanson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that I continue to hear concerns from some hospital patients in the area and outside of my area as well regarding the quality of pre-prepared off-site foods, will the minister agree to mandate freshly prepared food on-site so that all Alberta patients get the same good quality of food in their centres?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker, for the question. What we have been able to do is provide significant improvement in terms of the number of meals. We prioritize first long-term care, of course, because patients are going to be in those facilities the longest. It's their home, and that's where they plan on living. And we've increased previous percentages of foods that were prepared on-site significantly. I think we're close to the 90 per cent mark now Alberta-wide. That is certainly the highest priority.

I know that I appreciate having fresh, locally made food. We want people to get out of the hospital as quickly as possible. We

know that long-term care residents will be there a little bit longer, so that's where we've put our focus at this time.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: given that yesterday I made her aware of the cancellation of a very popular front-line service in St. Paul, Minister, have you made the call to reinstate the mobile collection services to Sunnyside lodge?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We did receive the correspondence from your office yesterday evening, so we thank you for that. I'm good, but I'm not quite that good. We certainly did commit to following up with Alberta Health Services, and we are proud to do that. We certainly welcome you – again, my number is 427.3665 – anytime you have concerns like this. Please do reach out to us. It's certainly the fastest way to be able to address local issues.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Wildfire Update

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Dry conditions throughout the province have resulted in a number of major wildfires, including one that is burning in Strathcona county. This week the Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park and myself had the opportunity to experience the challenges our firefighters face by spending a day in their shoes. It is an exhausting and demanding occupation. To the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry: can you please provide an update on the wildfires near my constituency?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Wildfires are always scary. We empathize with community members who have been impacted by the recent spate of wildfires that have happened over the last few days. On May 12 two wildfires near Bruderheim spread rapidly, with one of them growing to an estimated 500 hectares. The Lamont county fire is now under control as of Tuesday. The Strathcona county fire has stabilized, and the fire is being held as of May 15. The Fort Saskatchewan fire department remains on standby to assist with any incoming calls in the area, and Alberta Wildfire will continue to assist as deemed necessary.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: how is the province supporting the fight against these fires?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is committed to protecting Albertans and their communities from the threat of wildfire and to ensuring that the necessary resources are in place to fight fires when they happen. Because these fires are outside of the forest protection area, the municipalities are the lead agencies, but the province has been assisting with air support and other resources. So far the province has provided as many as 45 firefighters and support staff, three helicopters, and heavy equipment to help build fireguards. Even though things appear to

be settling down, with the fire now being held, we'll be ready to provide further support if necessary.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that the mayor of Bruderheim, whom I spoke with this morning, would be very happy to know about the support of the province for the fire near his constituency.

Then, Mr. Speaker, as we head into the long weekend, thousands of Albertans will be heading out to camp, to enjoy the outdoors, and to work on their farms and ranches. What precautions is the government taking to prevent the outbreak of more fires?

The Speaker: Hon. member, before you answer that, just let me tell both sides of the House that preambles are continuing to go on. I've reminded you so many times. On both sides I heard several questions today that had preambles after question 4, so please be conscious of that.

The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the very important question. The member has identified one of the most important parts of fighting wildfires in this province: preventing them in the first place. So far this year almost all of the wildfires have started because of human behaviour. We're telling Albertans to be smart and safe while enjoying our wildlands. We've instituted penalties for risky behaviour, like using incendiary targets and leaving campfires unattended, and ramped up campaigns to make sure Albertans understand wildfire risks.

Just yesterday I helped unveil a new fire ban app that will help folks heading out for the long weekend to know where there's an increased risk of a wildfire . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

2:40

Pro-pipeline Advertising Carbon Levy

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, just days ago the Alberta government announced that billboards are now on display across British Columbia to highlight the benefits of the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion. The opposition agrees that Canada needs this pipeline, but we're only 15 days away from Kinder Morgan's deadline, the date when the company requires certainty that the project will actually proceed. Minister, we can't help but wonder: does your last-minute pro-pipeline advertising campaign mean that you admit that your expensive carbon tax on Alberta families, businesses, and nonprofits hasn't actually gotten us the so-called social licence for Trans Mountain?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to talk again about how our government has been fighting for Alberta's strong environmental standards, for Alberta's strong oil and gas industry, and for Alberta to have access to tidewater. This has been a big push of our government, and that's why we've got two pipeline approvals. We also are at the table working diligently to ensure that we get the barriers out of the way to have that pipeline construction begin this summer. That's also why we have the majority support of Canadians, including people living in British Columbia, now on the side of this government for the pipeline.

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, given that the Premier said in support of their advertising campaign, “It is important that Canadians understand what’s at stake . . . it is putting the national climate plan at risk,” is the only reason this NDP government wants this pipeline to go through because their carbon tax is at risk?

The Speaker: The Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, since day one we have been fighting for not just this pipeline but other pipelines because market access is so critical. It continuously astonishes me that the opposition here doesn’t want to support Albertans, they don’t want to support Alberta workers, and they don’t want to support the industry. They just continually cheer for us to fail. But you know what? On this side of the House we’re standing up for all of those people, and we’re standing up for this project. If advertising on billboards in B.C. is what it takes, that’s what we’re going to do.

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, I sure hope it works.

Given that the Trudeau Liberal government has failed to deliver on their promise for legislation to assert federal jurisdiction and given that the B.C. NDP government has failed to back down from their opposition to the pipeline and that this government’s federal allies have done nothing to deter their obstruction, it’s clear that the carbon tax failed to secure anything more than a paper approval. Mr. Speaker, a simple question: why is the NDP government agreeing to a 67 per cent hike in the carbon tax instead of scrapping it altogether?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, what we’re agreeing to is that our climate leadership plan got two approvals for pipelines, and we continue to support those pipelines. Again, it’s something that the opposition should have done both federally and when they were in power, and they didn’t. They failed to do their job. On this side of the House we’re not failing. This pipeline will be built, and it will be built soon.

The Speaker: In 30 seconds we will continue, hon. members.

Members’ Statements

(continued)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

Economic Recovery

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to talk about something on all of our minds and likely on the minds of every Albertan, and that is the economy. Alberta is recovering from one of the worst recessions this province has seen. On the doors and in the community the concerns of Albertans about the future of our province are clear, but so are their hopes.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans envision an economy that leads across the board, not just in resource extraction or primary agricultural production. Albertans see a future where we are world leaders in all parts of the energy sector, from refining to renewables to research. Albertans see a future where value-added products are just as much a part of the agricultural sector as sun and rain. And they see Alberta becoming the Silicon Valley of the north and a destination for software engineers and programmers.

Everywhere I go in Spruce Grove or St. Albert, I hear about these hopes and dreams. I see it in the faces of our schoolchildren who

are going to new schools funded by our government. I can hear it in the voices of young mothers who are accessing the \$25-a-day daycare funded by our government. I can feel it in the new-found confidence of minimum-wage earners who can finally afford to feed themselves while working full-time without relying on the food bank.

Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we listen to the voices of everybody in our province and are doing everything we can to build a recovery and a future that includes all Albertans. On that side of the House they don’t care about the voices of everyday Albertans. They would rather give a tax break to the wealthiest 1.2 per cent of Alberta taxpayers and make the rest of the province pay for it. They are so busy looking to the Alberta of the past that they’re forgetting the Alberta of the future. That’s not a vision we can support because that’s not a vision Albertans want.

Thank you.

Mental Health Initiatives in Airdrie

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, silence is not always golden, and I am pleased to see the shift towards increasingly open discussions about mental health even after Mental Health Week has concluded. Airdrie is taking action, and great mental health initiatives are taking root. The Airdrie Mental Health Task Force was recently launched. The idea came from the Thumbs Up Foundation and the Airdrie and area health co-op. It’s to be a citizen-driven initiative that will examine what the current pathways are for mental health treatment and mental health prevention, and then it will make recommendations to improve the pathways and related services.

I encourage constituents to go online and participate in the survey found on the Thumbs Up Facebook page. Many agencies are getting onboard and are willing to collaborate. The Thumbs Up Foundation also recently piloted a peer support group for families with a loved one facing mental health issues. The results were overwhelmingly positive, and a new session is beginning this month.

This foundation was started by the Titus family, who lost their beloved son Braden to suicide in 2015. Braden fell through the cracks, and other Canadians are also falling through the cracks when it comes to mental health.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Titus family for their work and their advocacy, which has already made a difference in so many lives. Airdrie residents and Albertans are also very fortunate to have access to the services of the Foundation for Addiction and Mental Health, or FAMH, and members of their team are here in the gallery today.

Mr. Speaker, mental health issues are dark clouds that hover over individuals and their loved ones, but I’m optimistic that we are seeing some sunlight breaking through these dark clouds because of organizations such as these.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Wild Mountain Music Festival in Hinton

Mr. Rosendahl: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Come to the original Crossroads near Hinton and join us for three days of bliss, the Wild Mountain Music Festival, July 13, 14, and 15, at the historic Entrance Ranch just off highway 40. This year’s lineup includes an impressive array of Juno award winners, nominees as well as local up-and-coming groups and artists from across Alberta and Canada.

Wild Mountain has the best beer tent ever, with a great view of both performance stages. Camping is included with every weekend

pass, but the field is rustic, so bring everything you need. Wild Mountain is a family-friendly event with a full schedule of performers and events for the children at the children's tent. But sorry; no pets allowed.

Wild Mountain will run a shuttle for three drop-off/pick-up spots in Hinton to the site. The shuttle will get you to the show prior to the start of the music and they will run well after the music ends, so you can ride the shuttle and not miss any of the fun.

We expect to attract 9,000 visitors to our region, which will make a major contribution to the economy and bring a unique arts event to West Yellowhead.

For more information search under the website Wild Mountain Music Festival 2018. The Wild Mountain Music Festival started in 2007, and this one hundred per cent community-owned and volunteer-run initiative has relied on sponsors to grow into one of the province's most important artistic events.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the many individuals and organizations without whom this event would not exist. I look forward to seeing you in Hinton in July.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

2:50 **Tabling Returns and Reports**

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present the requisite number of copies of an article that I referred to in my questions during question period titled Red Deer Public School Board Passes 'Another Tight Budget' for 2018-19.

Thank you.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

Bill 12

Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act

[Debate adjourned May 10: Ms McKittrick speaking]

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure and pride to rise and speak very briefly to Bill 12, Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act. This is a bill, I think, that emphasizes, in fact, that Alberta's prosperity is Canada's prosperity and builds on the principle that has been established and fought for by Peter Lougheed and others that Alberta has control over its own resources and has a right to defend its ownership of those resources to ensure that Albertans get the full value for them and that they can move freely to markets.

We've seen a number of developments that cause the government very great concern, you know, in terms of actions taken by the British Columbia government which are, in our view, potentially unconstitutional. It is important, I think, that some tools be added to our tool box in order to make sure that we can in fact get full value for the resources that all of us Albertans own together, Mr. Speaker. That's really important. This resource belongs to Albertans, and Albertans know that to the very fibre of their being. That's why there is such intense interest in this.

Now, I want to deal a little bit with the opposition and how they've been handling it. Mr. Speaker, they've been spending a lot of time trying to criticize the government's actions on this file. Furthermore, they focus a great deal of attention – in fact, I would dare say they seem almost obsessed – on the current Prime Minister,

Mr. Trudeau, and the federal government. It seems to me that their focus is there as much as it's here. Their focus is in Ottawa as much as it is here in Alberta. While it's important that we take into account what the federal government is doing and we hold the federal government accountable to protect its own constitutional authorities and to protect the rights of people of our province, I think it's important to remember that it's here in Alberta that we need to focus. Right now we need to focus on overcoming the activities of another provincial government that would restrict and restrain us from exercising our authority over our own resources and receiving the full value.

The opposition, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, is a tail that keeps trying to wag the dog. They're not the government. They keep saying, "Will you follow us in taking these actions?" when in fact the government of Alberta has a very carefully considered strategy, which the opposition attempts to disregard and to try and run the show, as it were, drive the bus from the back seat. That's not how it works.

You know, we've seen the opposition make a great deal of fuss about this bill and why it wasn't passed sooner. Well, Mr. Speaker, we wanted to make sure that all Albertans had a chance to know what the Legislature has under consideration, and I think we've achieved that. I'm very hopeful that we can pass the bill now in a very quick fashion.

But just to deal with the opposition activities a little bit more, Mr. Speaker. This is something they really don't understand. Just because you make sure that you have an additional tool in your tool box, it doesn't mean that it is advisable to use that tool right away. For example, you might be building a house or a fence, and you go out and you get a hammer. You already have a saw. The opposition would like us to start hammering before we've sawed the boards that we need to build the fence. That's exactly what they're doing.

Let's be clear, Mr. Speaker. If we want to restrict exports of Alberta's natural resources to British Columbia, then this is a tool that this bill gives us, but it is not something that we want to do at all. You know, it's sometimes better to speak softly and carry a large club. I think there was an American President that said that. It might have been Teddy Roosevelt. I'm not sure. You don't have to go in swinging, but that's what the opposition wants. It's what the opposition leader keeps wanting to do. He has belligerent language for leaders of other jurisdictions, provinces, and federal government with whom he disagrees politically, and he has aspirations to be Premier. I certainly hope that never comes to pass, Mr. Speaker. Can you imagine a Premier trying to lead this province who has offended his neighbours, his colleagues across the country, the Prime Minister, other Premiers? Who knows what other politicians he has denigrated and attacked on a regular basis?

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that I know from this place is that while you have strong political differences, it's very helpful to have relationships across the aisle with the other political parties because, you know, ultimately, disagree or not, we're all here to work for the same end, which is to improve the lives of Albertans. That's a lesson I think that the Leader of the Official Opposition could learn because his partisanship on this matter is, I think, very detrimental to Alberta's case and I think really undermines his claim to some leadership on this file.

I don't think that we can trust the Leader of the Official Opposition on this issue because he is too hotheaded, Mr. Speaker. He's too antagonistic and belligerent. He stands in this House day after day attacking political leaders of other jurisdictions within Canada with whom he disagrees, and that's not an effective way to get things done. We can take on opponents, we can be tough, and we can be effective in our strategies, but in the end we're all part of the same country, and we have to have those relationships in order

to make this country work. That's something that has eluded the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

So, Mr. Speaker, this bill does give the government more tools, very strong and effective tools, and it's my hope that by passing this bill, by giving those tools to us, we'll send a message to those who want to stand in the way of Albertans' right to sell their resources, sell their products in the world market. It will mean that they'll get it. This is a hope, not a prediction, that we will not have to use this particular tool in the tool box. I dearly hope that we don't. We don't want to inflict harm or pain on anyone, but we do want to make sure that we have the capacity to effectively stand up for our rights as a province and as a people. For those reasons, I think this is an extremely well-advised piece of legislation, something that will strengthen Alberta's position and will help us.

3:00

What doesn't help us is attempting to demand that we use the hammer when we have a lot of sawing to do ahead of us. That's what the opposition is doing. They're out of sync. They don't have a sense of the strategy that needs to be followed and the fine touch. I'll use another analogy, Mr. Speaker, and it's playing pool. Now, I did spend some time in my youth, when I should have been maybe somewhere else, in a bit of a pool hall. One of the things that you've got to learn in pool is that sometimes to sink a ball that might be right near the corner pocket, for example, you have to use a really light touch. If you fire that cue ball across the table at 90 miles an hour, you know what's going to happen? You're not going to sink the ball. In fact, both balls are going to end up on the floor.

That's the approach that the Official Opposition is taking. They're like some kind of a rookie pool player on steroids. They just want to fire that pool ball in any direction and think it's going to go into the pocket, and it's not. You need a little bit of spin, maybe a little bit of backspin. You've got to be able to bank it, you know. And this eludes them. I think they approach the game of pool as if it was a game of dodge ball, and I don't think that it's particularly effective.

You know, having said that, Mr. Speaker, I do hope that we will have unanimous support for this bill. It is something that I think all Albertans want to see. All Albertans are watching this debate. They want our government to succeed, and I wish that the opposition would show through their actions that they also want us to succeed, because that has not been apparent from their behaviour and from their approach in question period.

It's time to pull together, Mr. Speaker. It's time for unity in our province. This bill is one example of what we can do if we work together. But we need to employ it after it's passed in a judicious manner because the object of the exercise is to sink the ball.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I don't think there's 29(2)(a) yet. I'm the first speaker in third reading.

The Speaker: I think we have – is this the second speaker?

Mr. Nixon: I'll go under 29(2)(a). Sure. Happy to, Mr. Speaker. I thought there was no 29(2)(a) at this stage, after the first speaker. It was interesting to hear the Government House Leader's comments on this legislation. I'll probably have more to say when I speak to the main bill.

First, I'm not too surprised to hear that the hon. Government House Leader in his younger days spent a little bit of time in the pool hall. I don't think that surprised you either, Mr. Speaker. It may not surprise you either that in my younger days I played a little

bit of football. In fact, when I arrived in high school – I still remember that, in fact, our late good friend Manmeet Bhullar and I used to play football together. I remember arriving in high school, and the very first thing the coach did – my high school in Calgary went from grade 9 to grade 12. The coach of the senior football team took a beeline across that high school when he saw me arrive and said, "Do you like football?" and then offered that I could play, and I said: "Well, I'm in grade 9. I can't play on the senior team." He said, "Oh, we've got to try to figure a way around that." And then I would go on to play high school football.

The reason I bring that up, Mr. Speaker, is because the analogy that the Government House Leader is trying to use is kind of ridiculous, and I'll show you why. When I played high school football as the largest person, probably, in the league, definitely a threat and a tool for our football team – in fact, they often would not let me off even for water breaks; I had to stay on and play both lines – it would make no sense if the coach then announced, "Hey, we have this six-foot-eight, 290-pound kid playing for us, but we're not necessarily going to put him in the game" or indicated that there was a possibility that we're not going to put him on the bus and bring him to the game, that we may hold that tool back.

What the Government House Leader fails to acknowledge or just glosses right over is the fact that that is exactly what his government did during this process. Our leader and the United Conservative Party have been abundantly clear that this should be the last resort. In fact, he has been calling on this government to take action for well over a year, and they have not. Now, you know, with the clock ticking and in an urgent situation, we have to rush through decisions. That's unfortunate. They should have listened at that time to the opposition leader's advice.

But what the opposition leader has made clear is that you don't tell the other side that you won't use the hammer. You don't tell the other side that. That is what this Premier and this NDP government have done since the start, which is why the opposition has been concerned and trying to get this bill to the floor. The question I have for the Government House Leader is: why did his leader and his government, the first time that they met with B.C.'s now Premier, Mr. Horgan – he was in opposition at the time – not even bother to try to persuade him on pipelines? Why did his leader bring in a wine ban and then declare victory in this House when there was no victory and then pull back that wine ban? Why did his leader travel to Ottawa – travel to Ottawa – and meet with the Premier of B.C. and the Prime Minister of this country and then tell the Premier of B.C. that she probably would not even use this legislation? Why did his leader do that?

The reality is this, Mr. Speaker. The opposition has been clear: last resort, but we have to have that tool in our tool box. All that this government has done is to indicate to B.C. that they will not use it. That's silly. Again, you know, we're in Edmonton. Do you think it would be smart, during the heyday of the Edmonton Oilers, that in the Stanley Cup finals they indicated that they may not bring Wayne Gretzky to the game? Doesn't make any sense. "We're going to put him on the bench. Don't worry." That's what this government has done, and it's unfortunately done.

The other thing that has to be clarified from his comment is that the opposition has not led the way on this file. The hon. Government House Leader's leader made fun of the Leader of the Opposition before he was even the Leader of the Opposition when he raised doing exactly what we are here to talk about today. This government is asking for support from the opposition for exactly what the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed suggested they do, and at the time, Mr. Speaker, they made fun of him. They tried to compare him to the American presidential candidate.

The Speaker: Just checking, hon. member: do you have . . .

Mr. Nixon: I understand, Mr. Speaker, that you don't want me to continue, but in the House what's been happening lately is that the other side has been going for five minutes.

The Speaker: I just wanted to know if you wanted to give him an answer.

Mr. Nixon: Well, I have some questions I still want to talk to him about, Mr. Speaker.

The reality of this is that. So whether the tail was wagging the dog, which is the analogy that he wanted to talk about, I can tell you that I don't care how we got there at the end of the day. The point of it is that we have to get here because Albertans are depending on us. So if the NDP want to come in here and say, "Oh, this was all our idea from the beginning and not the Leader of the Opposition's," so be it. The record is clear.

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

Dr. Swann: Speaking to the bill, Mr. Speaker. Speaking to the bill.

The Speaker: Yes.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise on third reading of Bill 12, Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act. As everyone knows, third reading is about the implementation. We have spoken in support, in principle, of developing tools to ensure that our energy industry has a viable future and that the rights of all Albertans and Canadians are respected with respect to the national interest, our oil industry, and an approval that has been a long time in the works.

But in terms of implementation we have grave concerns that this bill grants extreme powers to the NDP government that will allow them to unilaterally force the energy industry to reduce exports without any accountability. It breaches the democracy that we, I think, all adhere to, something that most Albertans, I think, would have great difficulty with and would find disconcerting, especially as it entails a commitment by this government to buy the pipeline if necessary. That's one of many concerns that we will raise.

3:10

The Energy minister will have the authority to grant and renew, suspend, revoke, and amend export licences. If companies or individuals want to appeal this decision, their only option will be to plead their case back to the same Energy minister. Why is there no independent, arm's-length appeal process? The oil and gas industry is understandably concerned about this new power. Indeed, it will be fined up to \$10 million a day for breaches of this new, arbitrary power.

Most important, the bill lacks any details, which is disturbing, giving itself extraordinary powers to interfere with the oil and gas industry but not providing any specifics or limitations on those powers. The bill needs to be supplemented by clear regulations and limits before it can be effectively implemented. Mr. Speaker, the devil is indeed in the details.

This is a divisive strategy that has the potential to result in job losses, economic downturn as well as a costly blank cheque, which this province, this Premier appear to want us to give her in this Legislature, billions and billions of dollars. Beginning when? Ending when? And what are the checks and balances and accountabilities to Albertans? As a strategy there's no guarantee that pushing the price of gasoline to \$2 a litre in B.C. will actually get the Trans Mountain pipeline built. What's most certain,

however, is that it will result in a backlash, indeed, divisions exacerbated across this country.

Mr. Speaker, I have great concerns about these new and unfettered powers that this government is seeking. It may be politically convenient legislation, but this is not necessarily good legislation for Albertans. It could well have a backlash against Alberta that would reverse our growing economy by restricting exports. We may well be shooting ourselves in the foot, as they say. Providing these extreme and unilateral powers without accountability is not in the interests of my constituents.

We in the Alberta Liberal caucus cannot support this at this time without more details, accountability, and an appeal process that is recognized and independent. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Questions or comments to the Member for Calgary-Mountain View under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to begin by thanking the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood and Minister of Transportation for his excellent comments. Some of my comments will follow, I think, in the same vein, not exactly because we don't agree on everything.

I rise today in support of Bill 12, Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act, and I do so for a number of reasons. First, Alberta's gas and oil industry has been – and I will quote Her Excellency the Right Honourable Governor General Julie Payette from yesterday – the economic thrust in our country for many years. It is so in terms of employment, sale of resources, and spinoffs from that industry, to name a few. Much of that spinoff, much of that industry is right here in Alberta. It's in British Columbia and, in fact, right across the country. Many have said: when Alberta works, Canada works. I believe that that's true.

The second reason for supporting this is because it ties directly to our taking steps with respect to climate change. A phrase that has been used many times was: we received social licence. I have been a proponent of renewables for virtually all of my adult life. I recognize that to eventually get there, a dynamic process has to be in place, and it is. This process has begun and taken some significant strides forward.

My colleague in Lethbridge-West, the minister of environment, has along with our government put forward our climate change plan, a plan to reduce drastically our carbon footprint. I also see that oil and gas have recognized that they have to do things differently if they are going to sustain themselves. They are investing in renewables and doing their business, specifically gas and oil, in a more environmentally friendly manner, that respects and protects our environment. Our government has and is supporting green energy, innovations, and technology, which are all steps to improving our climate now and into the future.

The third reason. I will use an example. I recently saw – it was either on Facebook or Twitter – a video which gives a visual of the impact of stopping oil cold turkey. If you haven't seen it, let me give you a visual. There is a young man sitting on a couch about to watch the Winnipeg Jets game in the playoffs. He's pretty excited, probably because it's been a long time since Canada was in this position. He picks up the remote control, and – poof – it disappears. He is taken aback. He attempts to adjust his glasses to see what happened, and – poof – his glasses are gone. Then the big-screen TV disappears, the covering on the couch, and he's left sitting on a wooden frame. The camera pans to the right. You see through the window the body of his crew cab, the interior upholstery, and the tires disappear as the frame lands on the driveway. Are you getting the picture?

Oil isn't just about transportation. Your car or your truck, your flight to someplace warm during the winter, or even keeping your house warm, especially this winter, all use oil re transportation.

Is your house sided? An oil-based product. Are any of your blankets a plush product? If so, that's an oil-based product. How about your toothbrush or your hairbrush? Oil-based products. Oil is not disappearing for quite some time. Anyone who says that we could just stop production is daydreaming in technicolour or some altered-reality haze.

The fourth reason. Currently oil and gas resources, that belong to all Albertans, are being sold at a discounted price. This is because our neighbour to the south is now our biggest competitor. We have to get our resources to tidewater because we have to be able to supply other customers. This impacts us dramatically here in Alberta but also in the rest of the country. Our economic thrust here and in the country is dependent on getting our resources to tidewater. Our Premier has said over and over again: this pipeline will be built. This bill, I would say, is a key piece to getting that done.

I particularly liked the comments of the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood when he said that, you know, we have a big stick. This is our big stick, but we don't go into the fight throwing that big stick around our head. We go in to have a discussion and to treat the other party with some respect. They know we have the big stick, they know that we can use it, but we have to have the big stick if we want to go and have that conversation.

3:20

I don't think there is anyone here or in your constituency who is not impacted by oil, oil by-products, or jobs that are directly or indirectly related to the oil industry. Every one of us can pick a relative or several relatives whose employment is directly impacted by the oil industry. In fact, last night at the welders' event I spoke to a welder from Lethbridge who said: are we going to get it done? His job depends on our getting that pipeline completed.

So I expect you to vote for this bill. If you don't, I believe that you are showing your true colours of nonsupport for this province and this country, just like you did this week when it came to women's reproductive health choices, and that is beyond shameful. It is not doing your job, not representing your constituents, Albertans, Canadians. Vote for this bill.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Under 29(2)(a), questions to the Member for Lethbridge-East?

The Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Dr. Starke: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to stand and talk on Bill 12 in third reading. I want to start, from the outset, by saying that I will be supporting Bill 12 but that I do so with reservations. You know, a lot of my reservations about Bill 12 were actually very well articulated by the Member for Calgary-Mountain View. I have significant concerns about the powers that Bill 12 imparts, and some of those powers haven't even been clearly defined because they will be left up to the regulations, that are still to be developed. I'm certainly very concerned.

But I want to just back up a little bit. You know, Bill 12 really is talking about, if you like, if you want to sort of really précis it, turning off the taps, right? This is a narrative or at least a phrase that we've heard a lot over the last number of months, that Alberta should turn off the taps, and there's usually a reference back to Peter Lougheed and the actions that he took in the 1980s. I remember when it was first articulated, and then when the Premier took up that call as well and when it was mentioned in the throne speech, I

thought to myself: I don't believe that Alberta has the power to do that. The circumstances that were faced by our province in the 1980s were really quite different than what they are today, so I did some checking with some authorities on this. In fact, they said: well, not under the present framework, no. Alberta does not have the power to simply turn off the taps unless some legislation enabling the province to do that is passed, and indeed that has been the genesis of Bill 12.

But I guess my concern with regard to Bill 12 is that it confers a series of very significant powers to the Energy minister and, in a broader sense, to cabinet with regard to restricting both oil and gas and refined products and their export from our jurisdiction. In talking to people who are involved in the oil and gas industry, they have expressed a great deal of concern about that to me as well. We know that there are already many oil and gas producers who have expressed concerns about the stability of the situation with investing here in Alberta. We know that some of that is because of uncertainty on a number of issues. My concern with Bill 12, quite frankly, is that it adds to that uncertainty. Bill 12 allows the government, in its purview, to place restrictions on the export of oil, gas, and refined products.

If I'm a producer and I'm considering making a large-scale investment in an oil and gas facility or some other means of producing oil and gas, while those resources are, in fact, the property of the people of Alberta, considerable energy, considerable costs, capital costs and otherwise, are going to be invested in ensuring that those resources can then be extracted. Yet I know throughout this that the government has the possibility of restricting my ability to provide my customers with those products, on which I will probably have contractual obligations. In fact, I would say that almost certainly I will have contractual obligations to provide that product to those customers and that the government could interrupt that. That would cause me concern, Mr. Speaker. That would cause me a great deal of concern.

One of the first things that I thought to myself when I heard about this piece of legislation was: well, at the very least, there needs to be a limitation on the length of time that this measure could be used, that this bill would be enforced. We're hoping, at least, that this bill is being brought in as a response to the very specific situation that we find ourselves in currently, and because the current laws don't allow the powers we require to, as we say, turn off the taps, that's why Bill 12 has been brought in. But it is, hopefully, a temporary situation. It is, hopefully, a situation that will not be perpetuated over a long period of time. When I first heard about it, I said: "Well, is there a sunset clause here? Is there some limitation here?" As we know, there wasn't.

Now, I know that during the committee stage an expiry or sunset clause was brought in and was passed as an amendment. I think that's a truly important limitation on this bill and in many ways is part of the reason why now I've got at least some comfort to vote in favour of the bill as opposed to opposing it. Mark my words, Mr. Speaker. I want our province to succeed, I want our nation to succeed, and I know full well that the success of both our province and our nation is dependent on getting our products to tidewater.

I also want to talk a little bit here about what I'm seeing, even during third reading, as being an extremely polarized argument. Now, the speakers that we've heard so far from both the government and — we haven't heard a great deal from the opposition yet, but I'm sure we will. There's a lot of back and forth and finger pointing and blaming and that sort of thing. It's frustrating, Mr. Speaker, because this is a critically important issue to Albertans. It is not one that should be used to score political points.

You know, I have to say that I find it interesting when NDP members lament the fact that they feel that their government, their

Premier are not getting the credit they deserve for defending the oil and gas industry and for taking up the fight on pipelines. Well, I will tell you that there's a very simple reason why that is happening, and that is that this government has a deficit. This government has a deficit in credibility. It's not a dollar – well, they have a dollar-and-cents deficit as well. They have a credibility deficit, and that credibility deficit, Mr. Speaker, has been built up over a long time. It didn't just happen overnight.

It is not only because they have shown in the very recent past that they were opposed to pipeline development, that in the very recent past they were opposed to the oil and gas industry itself, but their cohorts in other provinces – in fact, the government that is opposing the Trans Mountain pipeline is the NDP in British Columbia – are opposed to the oil and gas industry. The national NDP is similarly opposed to the oil and gas industry and opposed to pipelines. At the not-so-long-ago convention of the national NDP, here in Edmonton, despite what I understand was an impassioned speech by the Premier saying why the Leap Manifesto would be bad for Alberta and bad for Canada, the national NDP proceeded with it anyway.

So, Mr. Speaker, whether you like it or not, whether you care to admit it or not, you folks have a credibility deficit, and the people in the oil and gas industry simply don't trust you. Now, they may come around to trusting you someday, but at least right now they don't trust you. The reason they don't trust you is because supporting oil and gas is not in your nature, and what we mean by that is that it's not part of your past history. It's not in your nature.

You know, there's a fable, Mr. Speaker, and you can probably appreciate that, coming from me, it's an animal fable. It's been around since the mid-50s. It's the fable of the scorpion and the frog, and it applies here. The fable goes like this. One day a frog and a scorpion found themselves at the side of a river that they both wished to cross. The frog, of course, is able to swim, but the scorpion is not. So the scorpion says to the frog, "Would you allow me to ride on your back to the other side while you swim across the river?" The frog, who is suspicious of this arrangement, says to the scorpion, "Yes, but what if you sting me?" And the scorpion says, "Well, if I sting you, then we both shall die, so why would I do that?" So the frog somewhat reluctantly allows the scorpion to climb on its back and starts swimming across the torrent. About halfway across the frog feels a sharp, stabbing pain in his back and then starts to feel the effects of the scorpion's paralyzing venom in his body. As the frog is sinking below the surface of the water, with his dying breath the frog turns to the scorpion and says, "Why?" And the scorpion with his dying breath says, "It's in my nature."

3:30

If you're wondering what the correlation here is, the oil and gas industry is the frog, and you folks are the scorpion. That is what we have in Alberta. We have an industry that is trying to trust the current government, an industry that in many ways has no choice but to trust the current government because it has to work with that current government, yet it knows that at any time the scorpion could return to what is in its nature.

When I talk to oil and gas people, certainly in my constituency and around the province, the oil and gas industry folks that I talk to tell me that at least at this point they simply do not trust this government – and neither do most Albertans – on the issue of oil and gas and promoting pipelines. That's not to say that the efforts that have been put forward, by the Premier especially, haven't been appreciated. I think those efforts have been acknowledged – and they should be – by Albertans right across the province.

Certainly, a great deal of effort has been put in, but the problem that you've got and the reason that you're having so much trouble

convincing people is because of your credibility deficit, and making up that credibility deficit is incredibly difficult. Make no mistake; those credibility deficits work a number of different ways, and you folks exploit them just the same way. You folks exploit them against people on this side of the Chamber whenever you need to make a political point, and it is every bit as unfair going either way.

I think of one instance in particular, when the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills was elected as the interim leader of the United Conservative Party. He received a great deal of ridicule and criticism because 10 years previously he had participated in a radio program that espoused some very controversial views. He said very simply and plainly that in 10 years his views had changed and that he has learned a lot and that he's a different person today, yet that didn't get him any credit at all, none, not a bit, because it was more convenient for you folks – and it was easier for your narrative – to continue to brand him in a way that you felt was politically beneficial.

That's part of what is blocking good political dialogue in this province, Mr. Speaker. We are not acknowledging that people can and do change. We're not acknowledging that people can see a better way; for example, the NDP. I have no doubt that this government today is trying to support the oil and gas industry, but if they weren't in government, if they were over here, as they were a little over three years ago, I suspect they would be every bit as hard on the oil and gas industry as they always have been. But they finally acknowledged that, sitting over there in government, they don't have that luxury, that they must govern on behalf of all Albertans, and that includes our main economic driver.

Mr. Speaker, I will vote in favour of Bill 12. I think it is important that the government has this tool, but I think it's extremely important that this tool is used very judiciously. You know, the Government House Leader talked about a hammer. Well, this bill is a power nailer. The only thing we've done to reduce the potential use of it is to put a time limit on it, and I think that's a very important improvement. But I am certainly concerned about this government using this bill. If I was an oil and gas investor, I would also be very concerned and hoping that at some point this bill could potentially be repealed if the conditions change.

In the meantime I say to the government that the oil and gas industry is the frog from my fable, and the oil and gas industry is ever watchful for the scorpion and ever wary of its sting. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, are there any questions under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster?

The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to be able to rise to speak to Bill 12, an act to preserve Canada's economic prosperity. I'm very pleased to be able to speak to it today in third reading. First, let me begin by offering my thanks to all Albertans for the support and the solidarity that they have shown each other over the last few months. Our fight to build a pipeline to Canada's coast for the most part on most days transcends partisan politics. It unites us in the conviction that we can achieve great things for our province if we work together, and it shows that when Albertans think big, big change is possible.

Mr. Speaker, before I speak directly to Bill 12, let me set the context and speak about how far we've come and the moment that we are at today. The economic arguments in favour of building a pipeline to the coast are well understood by Albertans. We are an energy-literate province, to say the least, so I won't restate those arguments in great detail. But for the record and as I have repeated countless times to countless Canadians, a strong Alberta means a

strong Canada. Every school, hospital, road, bus, bike lane, or port in the country owes something to Alberta's energy industry. So when Alberta is forced to sell our country's most valuable commodity to one customer at a discounted price, Canada is not at its best.

Lack of pipeline capacity is costing our economy, by some estimates, \$40 million a day. That means that our schools and our hospitals are just not as good as they could be and that working people have fewer opportunities than they should have and that our country's economy is not as competitive or productive as it must be. Every dollar that evaporates into thin air because we wilfully handcuff our economy represents a lost opportunity to build a better Alberta and a better Canada.

When my government was elected, we were determined to change that, determined to overcome decades of failure and frustration, determined to not repeat the mistakes of the past and to change our approach because – let's face it, Mr. Speaker – overall what we were doing before just wasn't working. Albertans elected this government to shake up the failing and out-of-touch status quo. Where former governments ignored climate change and ignored the need for environmental sustainability, leaving Alberta's number one industry exposed to attack, we took on the issue head-on; where former governments just pointed fingers and demonized everyone who had questions and concerns, we listened; and where former governments were content to talk to themselves, we hit the road and talked to Canadians.

Mr. Speaker, a funny thing happened along the way. Frustration started to give way to hope. Albertans from all walks of life – industry, First Nations, environmental leaders, and everyday working families – worked together on solutions, and in short order change started to happen. Alberta's environmental laws were modernized with the climate leadership plan, the most comprehensive response to climate change anywhere in North America. It's a made-in-Alberta plan that fundamentally changes the game on old-style pipeline politics, that were failing the province before.

For too long the choice between our economy and our environment was framed as a trade-off, a zero-sum choice that led to zero results for our economy and for our environment. The climate leadership plan blew that thinking apart because it can't be one or the other. If it is, it is failure on both. It must be a plan that builds our economy and protects our environment for future generations. So in addition to reducing methane emissions, phasing out coal, and pricing carbon, the plan capped emissions. This is critical. In capping emissions, Alberta delinked pipelines from climate change once and for all, a breakthrough that reframed the debate about the economy and the environment.

3:40

Mr. Speaker, soon after the climate leadership plan was introduced, Ottawa adopted it as the model for a national plan. And they did something else, too. Ottawa approved the Trans Mountain pipeline, another breakthrough for our province and for our country, proof that when we change our approach, when we don't pit people against one another, when we unite around common aims and shared values, change is possible.

But, of course, the story does not end there. Our job was far from done. A former federal government approved Northern Gateway and didn't do a thing to support the decision. Mr. Speaker, we weren't going to make that mistake, so we hit the road to talk to Canadians in rooms of supporters and opponents. In Toronto I spoke to leading environmental organizations about why a pipeline is key to Canada's climate plan and meeting our international commitments. In Montreal I spoke to thousands of union members

about why action on the environment and the economy is possible. On Bay Street I spoke to business leaders. I said to them: there is no escaping what is at stake for our national economy. They can't sit on the sidelines anymore.

In B.C. I spoke to the Vancouver board of trade, among others, and I told them that Albertans cherish our coastline and how proud we were that the decision to approve Trans Mountain was paired with a \$1.5 billion oceans protection plan, that will improve safety for all shipping along our west coast. I asked them to stand up and make their voices heard, and as I mentioned earlier today, I'm pleased to say that tomorrow the Vancouver board of trade is coming to Edmonton to do just that, a powerful and welcome gesture, fellow Canadians supporting each other for a larger, national goal.

In Ottawa I carried a message to Canada's national party leaders. To those in my own party who oppose the pipeline, I said that it's time to smarten up, and quite frankly I still say that. We cannot build a more equal, more prosperous Canada if we write working people out of the formula for climate action. To the federal Conservatives I said: it's time to listen up. We are not going to make more progress on pipelines if we dismiss Canadians' real concerns about the environment. That strategy, if you want to even call it that, got exactly zero pipelines to tidewater built. And to the federal Liberals I said: step up. The pipeline approval is in the national interest. The decision was made for the right reasons, so it is now time to forcefully back that decision.

But as important as it is for us to speak to national, political, and economic leaders about Trans Mountain, the most important conversations are happening on shop floors, in hockey rinks, soccer fields, and over kitchen tables, Canadians speaking to Canadians. Albertans from all walks of life have stepped up to this task. Tens of thousands of people have signed our petition calling for action. Tens of thousands more have reached out to their friends, neighbours, and families. My government has done everything it can to arm Albertans with the facts and to take those facts to Canadians. To those who may be listening today, I still say: visit keepcanadaworking.ca to learn everything you need to know about why Trans Mountain is so important to our future, and while you're there, sign the petition.

Drive into Victoria from the airport or walk down Robson Street in Vancouver and you'll see billboards reminding everyone that Trans Mountain is about more than getting oil to the coast; it is about those good schools, good hospitals, and good infrastructure. Click onto Facebook or Twitter and you will no doubt see social media posts promoting the benefits of the pipeline. It's the largest social media campaign ever undertaken by the government of Alberta.

Friends, all of these efforts – the climate action plan, the outreach, the information campaigns, and the one-on-one conversations – are working. Canadians from coast to coast to coast support Trans Mountain in large numbers, and public support is the most effective tool that we have in winning this fight. And, yes, that public support includes our neighbours and friends in British Columbia. In B.C.'s rugged and beautiful interior, in the bustling Lower Mainland, and on Vancouver Island, polling shows that a growing majority of British Columbians back Alberta because they know, like we know, that a strong economy and a clean environment are possible. They know, like we know, that we can't tackle climate change if we write working people out. And they know, like we know, that we can't build a modern economy that works for working people if we turn our backs on the environment. This is the emerging Canadian consensus, Mr. Speaker, and I'm proud to say that Alberta is at the forefront of that consensus. Now, of course, as I said before, there

is no celebrating until the job is done, and we know it is not done and that, in fact, hurdles remain.

British Columbians and Canadians may back us, but we know, as everyone knows now, that the new minority government in B.C. does not. Of course, that is their right. But on January 30 of this year the B.C. government did something that they have no right to do. They took direct and unconstitutional action aimed at harming Alberta's economy, claiming they would restrict the flow of Alberta's resources across their border, what is now known as point 5. To call point 5 a provocation is an understatement. Point 5 undermined the very nature of our Confederation and our economic union, and it's triggered the events that lead us to this day.

Mr. Speaker, from the moment B.C. took its action, Albertans have stood together, and we've executed a careful strategy to protect our jobs, our industry, and the pipeline. We banned B.C. wine and got B.C. to back off its imminent and immediate threat. We established the Market Access Task Force made up of prominent Canadians from around the country to help Alberta win. We continued our court interventions. We increased our outreach to Canadians to win the battle of hearts and minds. Alberta is winning in the courts, where we have won every case brought against the pipeline so far. In the court of public opinion, as I have talked about, more Canadians are with us than ever before. On the national stage we have the backing of many fellow Premiers and the federal government.

Mr. Speaker, as I speak, the federal government is fully engaged with Kinder Morgan and Alberta to ensure that this pipeline is built. As I've said before, I'm optimistic that these discussions will be successful. I'm aware, as well, that the leader of the federal Conservatives as well as the Leader of the Opposition here in this House are fighting against federal support, but let me just say this. When the Leader of the Opposition was in Ottawa, he helped write a \$9 billion cheque to bail out the auto industry, and I simply can't understand why, after first supporting my call for federal help, he would now so forcefully oppose Ottawa backstopping a project that will add tens of billions of dollars to the Alberta economy alone.

Mr. Speaker, now is not actually the time to grandstand. Now is not the time to chase headlines. Now is not the time to score cheap short-term political points. This is a critical moment in our history. Now is the time to stand with and for Albertans, and I encourage the leader of the UCP to put Alberta first – there will be lots of time for politics later – because our first and only focus must be to get as much value from our resources as possible using all the tools that we have at our disposal.

This is where we come to Bill 12, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's energy resources belong to Albertans. They are our natural inheritance upon which we have built this province. In Alberta we have the right to maximize the value of those resources in our interests. With pipeline capacity stretched to a limit, we have the right to choose how our energy is shipped so that Alberta gets the best possible return. Bill 12 gives us that power. With a price differential on our oil taking billions out of our economy, Alberta has the right to act in the public interest to reduce the cost to the treasury and to the economy. Bill 12 gives us that power. With the B.C. government seeking to limit what energy products can flow across provincial borders, we have the right to make that decision in terms of exporting for ourselves. Bill 12 gives us that power. Make no mistake; we will not hesitate to use the powers Bill 12 provides to ensure Albertans get the best return possible for a product that fuels Canada's economy because we Albertans have come too far to ever turn back.

Alberta's energy industry is the bedrock of Alberta's economy. It's defined our past, and it's critical to our future. That's why this

government and all Albertans are fighting so hard to defend Albertans' interests. It's why, upon being elected, we chose to set aside the failures of the past and charted a new and better course. With the climate leadership plan we've helped bridge divides that have held us back in the past. No one can ever say that it's the economy or the environment. Alberta has shown that we can lead on both. With the approval of the Trans Mountain pipeline we're closer than ever to breaking the land lock, opening up new markets, and securing our economy for a new generation.

3:50

It hasn't been easy. Important things seldom are super easy, Mr. Speaker. The critics and the naysayers want us to fail. Proving that we can do things differently is a threat to some people, and the promise of change must be joined to the practicalities of politics in a very complex and a very diverse country. But we are closer than ever to the results we need.

At the end of the day, only results will matter. That's what we've been focused on from the very start, drawing on the hard work and ingenuity of this province with a plan to secure a better future. Today our renewed advantage is clear. We are young, we are diverse, and we are confident. We Albertans aim to have the most educated and skilled workforce anywhere in the world. We Albertans aim to ensure that every child, no matter what their circumstance, can achieve their full potential without limit. We Albertans aim to be at the forefront of energy and environmental leadership at exactly the same time. We Albertans aim for the inclusive society that welcomes the world, and we Albertans aim to build a modern, diverse economy that works for the many – the many – not just the few.

Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, the Trans Mountain pipeline is a means to these many larger ends. We will get there together, and we will do what it takes to make all of this happen. That's why I encourage all members of this House to stand together and vote in favour of Bill 12.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, are there any questions or comments to the Premier under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing and hearing none, are there any other members? The Member for Stony Plain.

Ms Babcock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker [applause].

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be one of the cosponsors of this bill. Unfortunately, I've missed quite a bit of the lively debate that I've heard is going on in this House. But I'm also very proud, as I've stated many times in this House, to be from a family in the oil and gas and to be a pipeliner's daughter. This bill is about protecting the jobs and livelihoods of thousands of Albertans and our ability to keep Canada working. It's simple. When Alberta works, Canada works.

It continues to be the greatest honour to be able to sit in this House to represent the people of Stony Plain, and I can state that on this side of the House we know – I know, Mr. Speaker – how important it is to come to work to do the jobs that we've been elected to do and to engage in fulsome debate in the effort to make Alberta stronger.

We did not start this fight, but let there be no doubt that we will do whatever it takes to build this pipeline, and we will get top dollar in return for the oil and gas products that are owned by every

Albertans, whether they're oil and gas families, health care families, or families that are in education.

While we're standing up for Alberta and a healthy Canadian energy sector, this is for the long-term benefit of all Canadians. We're taking simple steps to defend our workers, our economy, and our progress on climate action, things that we are so proud of having worked on for the last three years on this side of the House. We're giving ourselves the greatest range of tools that we can use as we go forward. A pipeliner is only one step in building a pipeline. This legislation is about having maximum flexibility and leverage in the event of future efforts to delay or block construction of the Trans Mountain pipeline. Mr. Speaker, it's going to be a fantastic day, the day after May 31.

Albertans have been clear: get this pipeline built. We listen to our communities on this side of the House, so we have heard them. Albertans are right because this pipeline must be built. Alberta is prepared to do whatever it takes to get this pipeline built. Every day that it's delayed, the national economy, let alone Alberta's economy, loses millions and millions of dollars. We are barricaded and prevented from moving forward with the economic recovery that so many Albertan families are looking forward to and need so heavily.

In my riding of Stony Plain, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of families that have been affected by the downturn that happened, and there are a number of families that haven't seen the results of the recession being turned around yet. Those families and those constituents of mine in my communities need to see this pipeline built.

Ground zero for this pipeline is in Wabamun. We have seen the investment from Kinder Morgan in Wabamun already. They put money towards a town square that makes it more viable for the tourist industry to come into Wabamun and be part of that community. These are things that wouldn't happen if we didn't have the Trans Mountain pipeline. We know that they're also supporting Enoch, where they put down land for a lay-down yard. Those things are supporting the local economies in the region to the west of the city here, and they wouldn't be happening if this pipeline wasn't going to be built. We recognize the importance of oil and gas.

I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for oil and gas. I wouldn't have the education I have without the oil and gas sector in this province. You know, my father was one of the early retired under the previous government in 2015, when the oil and gas sector tanked. It was a very difficult thing for him to have to deal with. Mr. Speaker, I have to say that he sat and he watched the first budget presentation that our minister put forward. He had all this time; he was on the couch. He called me. My father was up in Fort McMurray for many, many years. He was a member of the PC Party at one point. He was blue through and through. He called me, and he said: "Erin, your family, your caucus, what you are putting forward, this is exactly what Alberta needs today. This is exactly what Alberta needs to go forward." I said to my father: "But why did it take you this long to figure it out?" And he said: "Because we were making money hand over fist. We didn't care. We didn't care that we weren't making what we should be making. We weren't caring that Albertans weren't getting the supports they needed because we were getting money hand over fist." He said: "I've had time to read now for the first time in 40 years, and you're doing it right."

Mr. Speaker, I have to say that for somebody who is a blue-and-blue Conservative to have turned a corner to understand the long-term goals of what we're trying to accomplish in this House and for all Albertans is an amazing thing for me to hear. I think that there are many Albertans who have a similar story, who hear what we're

trying to accomplish and understand that it's for all Albertans because we can't be successful if everybody's not successful.

Mr. Speaker, I am really proud of this bill. I'm really proud of being able to have these tools at our disposal so that we can move this forward in a thoughtful way instead of yelling like children. I will say very clearly that I hope every colleague of mine in this House supports this bill at this reading.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, on 29(2)(a)?

Mrs. Littlewood: No. Not on 29(2)(a).

The Speaker: Not on 29(2)(a). Please proceed.

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to Bill 9, a bill that of course is in the interest of getting the Trans Mountain – oh, Bill 12, not Bill 9. Bill 12, a bill that would see the expansion of the Trans Mountain line into B.C. As another MLA that represents a region where we have a lot of oil and gas industry and a lot of the workers that work in that industry, this is a bill that's really important to me to make sure that I'm representing those voices.

4:00

I've heard a lot from constituents across where I live that are asking, you know: "What are you doing? What is your government doing? When are you going to be passing this legislation?" And it's because they have a feeling of frustration. I think it's tough when you've become accustomed to this boom-bust over a couple of generations, and it makes you concerned for your family, and rightly so. You're not sure when that next cycle is going to hit.

It's an area that has a long history, you know, of being worried about things like the national energy plan, being worried about politicians with the last name of Trudeau. It's a long history that has created a lot of people who are circumspect when government tries to do things that they know, that they believe are in their best interests, but they're suspect.

This is one thing that I think is really important to show people, that we are endeavouring to put all the tools at our disposal that we can, tools that we don't know if we'll have to use or not. But we have to ensure that those tools are at our availability.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

You know, it's my honour to be able to fight in the interests of families and workers and labour groups and industry, all that falls inside of Alberta's Industrial Heartland. We have seen more progress on this file in the last two and a half years than we saw in the previous 44, quite frankly. This pipeline was built back in the 1950s, and the capacity has been reached. The capacity needs to be expanded, and it's not in Alberta's interests to not be able to work with other jurisdictions. That is part of the reason why we have been ending up land locked with a lot of our resources, having to move it by rail, something that's less safe, more expensive. Those were the options that were left to industry.

That wasn't as pressing an issue when oil was at \$140 a barrel, but now, when we saw, of course, a massive dip in the world market prices for oil and gas, we know how important it is to actually make sure that we have the most efficient means of transportation that is also safe and why it is that important to open up our markets and not have to ship billions of dollars and thousands of jobs down to the Gulf coast. That's not in the interests of Alberta, and it's not in the interests of Canada.

Of course, you know, we see the benefits of our oil and gas industry on a day-to-day basis. In my constituency having a job there means being able to own a home. It means being able to put your kids in hockey. It means being able to send your kids to postsecondary, university or college, or getting them into the trades and taking on, potentially, their parents' trade. It means having money in your pocket, hard-earned dollars that you can actually put back into nonprofit organizations, back into your community.

You know, you see some of those direct large-scale impacts because of having these industry partners. In Fort Saskatchewan we have the Dow Centennial Centre. It's not just a rec centre; it's for dance, theatre, recreation, gallery space. We have a hospital where the wing is named for Sherritt International. It's a place where you take your family for world-class health care in Alberta. There are more partners, of course, because it is such a hub of oil and gas activity. We have initiatives like technology purchases that are made by Shell Scotford for local high schools. Dow provides scholarships in the STEM fields and looks at ways to make sure that we are bringing more women into those industries.

The opportunities that have opened up for Alberta have been huge, but they've also been opened up for the rest of Canada. I know that in the city of Fort Saskatchewan we had a pub opened up by people that came from the east coast. People are, you know, opening up different restaurants and pubs with the themes of where they came from because we have so many people of diverse backgrounds come here to make a life for themselves. These opportunities can only be afforded if we actually demand a fair price for those resources.

In continuing to have our economy being held hostage by one customer, the United States, and one price, it causes us to lose billions of dollars and thousands of jobs. You know, now we are seeing that stranglehold on our economy by the B.C. government. That is why we will not hesitate – and we have said that since the Speech from the Throne – to take bold action on this file, the same bold action that Premier Peter Lougheed had taken when our energy economy was attacked in the past.

You know, we cannot be treated as a landlocked country. That is not the point of having a federation of provinces. The point is that we're supposed to be able to work together for a mutually shared benefit. We see the rest of the country. Quebec has \$2 billion worth of their GDP linked into our oil sands. That's why that interprovincial jurisdiction is controlled by the federal government.

We are proud, Madam Speaker, to be identified as Albertans, but we must hold paramount our identity as Canadians. Without access across our provincial boundaries by pipeline or by rail, we would not be able to grow our economies. We stand as a country right now with three coasts. It's not fair that the provinces that enjoy having those coasts directly at their service, so to speak, should make us suffer economically. That's why we have a country that is supposed to be united. Of course, we don't have to look far in the world to see what detrimental effects it has on nations when they are landlocked. That's the problem that we are facing right now. Canada's decade-long inability to diversify our markets and diversify our customers holds our entire country back. That's why I am proud of the actions of our Premier and our government. They have continued to fight on behalf of our province but also on behalf of our entire country.

Burnaby tried to block the Kinder Morgan pipeline in court. That's why we intervened. That's why the Premier intervened. As a result, Trans Mountain was granted an injunction against those same blockades at two terminals. When B.C. tried to limit what could go through an interprovincial pipeline, something they had no right to do, we shut down talks that would have meant \$500 million per year in electricity sales. To put that into perspective,

Madam Speaker, B.C. had fought to get \$20 million a year from Kinder Morgan as part of their previous agreement – \$20 million a year – and we were talking about \$500 million in sales of electricity.

When B.C. threatened the livelihood of 4.3 million Albertans by restricting the flow of our resources, we responded by banning B.C. wine, and I don't believe that that was arrived at easily. We share with B.C. our value of protecting working people. But they had attacked every single Albertan, and our government could not let that stand. This action of banning B.C. wine was applauded by Jim Carter, former president of Syncrude and a member of our new task force that is continuing to look for options that would be available to our government to get the TMX built.

Of course, this pipeline must get built. Alberta has the best regulated oil and gas industry in the world, and we must demand a better price for the resource owners of Alberta. Our government has been able to take that leadership role because we have been the most responsible in taking a stand on climate change. We have capped emissions. We have passed laws that allow coal plants to be converted to natural gas.

4:10

We've decided to expand on the previous Conservative government's action in 2009 that priced carbon from heavy emitters, and we made that market-wide. The specified gas emitters regulation, a carbon tax levied by the previous Conservatives, recognized the impacts of carbon dioxide and applied a price for clean tech and efficiency development. Making this price market-wide allows each Albertan to play a role in our economy while raising the revenue needed to retrain workers, help coal-affected communities develop and build on their strengths, and continue to have their own long-term economic success. Also, it can build greener infrastructure, and it will help companies that are interested in developing technologies. It can recover bitumen, clean tailings ponds, and help Albertans invest in energy efficiency in their own homes.

The Leader of the Opposition should be supporting these efforts. His record under the Harper Conservatives committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 30 per cent by 2030, down from 2005 levels. Even their friends at the conservative think tank the Manning centre are telling them that carbon pricing is the right thing to do. They also agreed with G7 nations to phase out fossil fuel by 2100, which sounds, Madam Speaker, a little extreme to me, but we should remain responsible developers of those resources.

That is why we developed a plan that is made in Alberta, a plan that leads a path to balancing the economy with the environment, without having a plan imposed on us by the federal government. That is why our province continues to add jobs, 90,000 jobs over 2017. We led the country in GDP growth last year, and we will tie, at least, for growth this year again. Our plan is working. Our plan received approvals from the federal government for two pipelines, and it's helping fund the cleanup of orphan wells and has also expanded employment income eligibility for Albertans that have been hit the hardest during the downturn that we all have seen and felt. As our economy turns around, we will continue to hear good news. Earnings will continue to go up. Investment is increasing. Drilling activity has gone up. Manufacturing has also been on an upswing.

But that doesn't mean that every family has felt it. That's why we know that we are doing the right thing, Madam Speaker. We need to diversify our energy sector. We need to move to where the world's energy economy is moving so that we're not left behind. Right now we need the opportunities that this pipeline, the Trans Mountain expansion, will afford us in the present and in the near future.

Thank you very much for allowing me to speak to this bill. I look forward to supporting it.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the bill? Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to have the opportunity to rise today to speak to Bill 12, Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act. You know, I have to admit that I have not had a lot of personal history of involvement in the energy or resource industry in the province of Alberta. Though I have lived in this province all my life, probably the closest that I personally got to working with oil and gas were the summers that I spent manning the tar tank and shoveling and raking asphalt with road crews with the city of Edmonton. But, indeed, I recognize that the energy and resource industry in Alberta has been the lifeblood of our province for many, many years.

Indeed, Madam Speaker, it had great benefit, I know, for my own family. You know, my father came to Canada from Trinidad in 1967. He'd taken some training in Trinidad, and when he arrived here, he earned his ticket as an electrician, and he began working in that field. My father was just starting to work during the late '60s, into the early '70s, around about the time that we were starting up with the work in the oil sands. We were first beginning to see the results and benefits of government investment to get that industry started, recognizing, of course, that it was investment by the government which laid the foundations for that industry, which private industry has now built on so successfully and to the benefit of our province.

My father had many years of good work as an electrician. He worked on a number of construction projects across the province, and we recognize that it was royalties that came from the development of that energy industry that were helping to fuel a lot of that construction, that was allowing people to have good jobs. It allowed them to build good homes. We know this was part of what helped my father work because when we had the drop in prices, the economic recession that came in the early '80s, that had an impact on my father's ability to work.

Throughout the mid-80s, as Alberta was struggling with that recession, my father struggled to find work. I remember that he had to go far afield. He would spend weeks away from home working up in the Northwest Territories, northern Alberta, other places. That was the only place work was available. There would be long periods where I wouldn't get to see my dad. Eventually he went on and went back to school. He became an electronics technician, and he was able to work very well in a public service job for the remainder of his career.

He worked repairing equipment at the Royal Alex hospital. I think that is every bit as honourable a job as he had before but, also, work that was, we recognize, fuelled in part by the royalties which were taken in by the government of Alberta, which then allowed us to pay for those public services, which included being able to hire my father to maintain the equipment, which in turn maintained the health of many Albertans at the Royal Alex hospital. So I recognize, Madam Speaker, that the ability for our province to get the best possible price for the resources which we proudly produce is essential to the well-being of Albertans and the Alberta economy.

Indeed, as many speakers before me have noted, it's not just the Alberta economy. Alberta makes incredible contributions to the Canadian economy because of the strength of our resource industry. As people have said, when Alberta does well, Canada does well. Indeed, we've had our discussions in this House about equalization.

We've had members that have expressed their concerns about that formula. But we recognize that the reason Albertans contribute so much to that is because Albertans have done so well, generating a lot of federal tax, which has then gone to the federal government, who then divides that up for equalization payments, as I know all members are aware, although they don't always quite express them in terms quite that accurate.

All that to say, Madam Speaker, that Alberta is an essential part of the Canadian Confederation in what we offer, in what we provide, and the support that we give to the rest of Canada. That's why I'm very happy to speak in support of this bill, a bill to help ensure a pipeline which will help Alberta get our resources to tidewater, where we can access a much better price. Even setting aside any opportunity for further expansion of the oil sands, simply the opportunity to actually send our product to a market where we are not trying to sell to our largest competitor, where we can instead sell it to Asian markets and others who will pay us a better price for what we have: how could I not support a bill that was going to help support that?

Pipelines have been a difficult conversation for Canadians for some time, Madam Speaker. You know, I started watching politics in Canada around 2008. I'm not quite sure exactly what triggered that. But under the government of Prime Minister Harper, I guess, that was about when he got his first — well, there was an election that year, I believe, and the Conservatives had perhaps their first majority. I could be quite mistaken. But I recall that that point is when I first began to watch federal politics. It was of interest to me to watch the way that we communicated and to watch the way the federal government worked with provinces.

Indeed, I watched with some interest as we began to have the discussion around the Northern Gateway pipeline. I recall in January 2012, when one day ahead of the hearings that were going to take place on the Northern Gateway pipeline, at that time Minister Joe Oliver took the opportunity to issue a letter. It was a fairly strongly worded and harsh letter warning that he felt projects were taking far too long to get off the ground and targeting for that specifically what he considered to be environmental radical groups. It took a very particular tone, Madam Speaker, one which someone could read as somewhat antagonistic. I could understand. Again, we understand the importance of this infrastructure for Alberta and indeed for Canada, and I understand that for that particular government it was a particular issue that they wanted to see happen.

4:20

They chose to strike a particular kind of tone in how they approached this. It was an antagonistic tone. It was a very aggressive tone in some respects. In that letter he warned of "environmental and other radical groups," including "jet-setting celebrities" funded by foreign special interests, who "threaten to hijack our regulatory system to achieve their radical ideological agenda." That's not unfamiliar language, Madam Speaker. Certainly, it sounds like language we've heard from particular leaders, leaders of the opposition and others, who think this may be the best approach and best way to get a pipeline built.

But, Madam Speaker, when I look back, I recall what happened with that pipeline. Certainly, that sort of aggressive language and posturing in many ways, I think, just grew stronger opposition. We saw the results of the work of that particular government and the way that they approached trying to get a pipeline built, that sort of belligerence that they brought to their attempts to take another approach with the regulatory system, to take another approach with the consultation, to try to take steps that they felt, in their view, would be able to get that pipeline built faster.

In the end what ended up happening is that even though they provided the approval for that project, subject to 209 conditions, the Federal Court of Appeal ended up ruling that they had failed on the consultation piece. So in their zeal and their zest to try to get things done so quickly, to try to move things along without taking due time, care, and attention, without working with all parties involved, they had significantly failed on that particular piece.

Indeed, the judges said, “The inadequacies – more than just a handful and more than mere imperfections – left entire subjects of central interest to the affected First Nations . . . entirely ignored.” They pointed out that this was not a difficult thing to do. They said: “It would have taken Canada little time and little organizational effort to engage in meaningful dialogue on these and other subjects of prime importance to Aboriginal peoples. But this did not happen.”

Madam Speaker, I bring that up because we need to be careful about how we approach this. We’ve heard numerous accusations from our colleagues across the aisle about the manner in which our Premier and indeed our ministers have gone about advocating for this pipeline. They have expressed a desire to see much more belligerence in the tone, to add much more aggression in how we go about it. They did not like the strategy of the conversation that the Premier continued to have.

Now, Madam Speaker, we know that the Leader of the Official Opposition understands a few things about strategy and building relationships. The evidence of that lies just across this aisle, the fact that he successfully merged these two conservative parties together with a surprisingly minimal loss of members, sitting members, in this House.

Dr. Starke: We didn’t all like it.

Mr. Shepherd: Indeed. Indeed.

But it shows that he had at least some understanding that you don’t have all your conversations in public, that you don’t find all your success by standing and yelling or posturing, that sometimes you sit down and you have conversations with people and you talk out your differences. You discuss what aspects of policy you may or may not agree on, and you find common ground. Much in the same way he has made a public commitment, in fact, to improving the tone of debate in our Legislature, and he’s been largely successful with that, with perhaps some occasional failures, like we saw this morning. But on the whole, again, he has recognized that at times it is appropriate to have a reasonable dialogue and try to maintain a more even tone.

Now, Madam Speaker, I deeply appreciate the work that our Premier has done and her advocacy on this issue. Indeed, when I go out and I knock on doors in my constituency, when I go to various events with people from all sorts industry and all walks of life, even people who say, “I do not like your party and your policies,” tell me that they like how our Premier has stood up for this pipeline and this project, and that is by using a range of tools, by maintaining a number of conversations, by not discussing all of those conversations publicly but keeping private conversations where they need to belong.

But, also, Madam Speaker, by bringing forward steps like this, not in a belligerent way, not at a time when she had not yet had the opportunity to sit down and talk with our partners in industry and the people who this would also affect – to ensure that we had their support and understanding in moving forward with this, she waited until such a time as it was appropriate, when they had drawn it up in such a way that it would be able to provide the results that we are looking for. And she has been very clear that if the province of B.C. continues to use tools to delay and frustrate the construction of this

project, Bill 12, which we hopefully will have the opportunity to pass today, will be ready and waiting and will be deployed.

Again, Madam Speaker, we want to maintain a good tone. We would love to be able to have this conversation with the province of B.C. and have them work with us and work under the Constitution of this country and under the jurisdiction of the federal government to build this federally approved infrastructure. However, they have shown on multiple occasions that they are not willing to do that in good faith. Indeed, the Premier of B.C. seems to have a penchant for misrepresenting the Premier’s remarks, for trying to paint things in as good a light for himself as he can, and members of our opposition seem to delight in taking him at his word, though they don’t on many other factors.

I will say that this legislation is going to provide us with one of the further tools that we may need. The Premier continues to have conversations with Kinder Morgan, continues to work with the federal government, as does the Minister of Energy and other partners within our government. But we are taking prudent steps to ensure that we have the tools available that we need to work with Kinder Morgan to ensure that the Trans Mountain pipeline is built, that we have the opportunity to move our resources to the best markets, where we can get the best price for the benefit of all Albertans.

As other colleagues have noted, Madam Speaker, we are doing that while also addressing the issue of climate change. Indeed, I do have constituents who come and talk to me, and they express concerns about the ecological costs, the possible environmental costs of continuing to expand the oil sands. It’s been my pleasure to have some great conversations with them. Many of them come to understand much better when we’re done.

Some aren’t quite convinced, but I explain to them the work that we have done in our climate leadership plan by placing that cap on emissions from the oil sands, that will allow for further expansion but, along with the carbon levy, is incenting companies to find ways to reduce the amount of carbon in the barrel. Indeed, Alberta companies, being the entrepreneurs and innovators that they are, are doing that work with this continued investment that comes from the funds that come in from the carbon levy, from investments from the federal government, from the opportunities they have and will have once we get this pipeline built to get a better price for their product.

Alberta is going to lead the way in the world in terms of being a green energy producing, resource-extracting jurisdiction. That is due to the leadership of this Premier, Madam Speaker, and the leadership of our Minister of Environment and Parks, who have worked with industry, who have worked with partners across this country, indeed, have worked with our federal government to . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Under 29(2)(a), the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Loyola: Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I was so intrigued and so, I’ve got to say, enthralled by the amount of knowledge that the Member for Edmonton-Centre was sharing with us, and I’d like to give him the opportunity to just wrap up his comments if he doesn’t mind.

The Deputy Speaker: Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I’ll be brief.

All that to say that I am proud of the work that our government has done. I’m proud of the work that we continue to do in what, as I described, has been an incredibly challenging and difficult endeavour for multiple governments in this country, both Conservative and Liberal and indeed now the Alberta NDP. But I am confident in the work that our Premier is doing. I am confident

that with the work of our ministers and the conversations that they continue to have, we will see this pipeline built, we will move Alberta's resource industry forward, and we will do it in a responsible way that will allow us both to support new industries here in the province of Alberta, renewable energy and many other things, and allow us to reduce our emissions and continue to provide the well-paying jobs that allow Alberta families to thrive.

With that in mind, Madam Speaker, I will be proud to vote in favour of Bill 12. Thank you.

4:30

The Deputy Speaker: Any further questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the bill? Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm really pleased today to rise to speak to Bill 12, Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act. All members I think recognize that we are at a very momentous occasion in our Confederation, actually, when we are considering getting this pipeline built to tidewater. Bill 12 is a pretty serious and powerful tool, and members across the way have recognized this. The Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster has expressed satisfaction that there would be some limitations by means of an expiration date on the powers contained in this bill because he recognizes how strong they are. And strong they must be because if indeed we don't have the ability to get our products to tidewater, if this country has the ability for one province to prevent another from building such a pipeline, then our country is not functioning as a federation and we've reached an impasse. This is the reason, I say, for the seriousness of the situation.

We have a real responsibility to approach the mechanisms for fixing the situation very, very carefully with respect to the long-term consequences for our federation and knowing that there will be long-term consequences one way or the other. The option, of course, is to fail. It can't happen that way, Madam Speaker. The pipeline to tidewater is a responsibility of not only provincial governments but the federal government to ensure that it happens. This is about protecting the jobs and livelihoods of thousands of Albertans and our ability to keep Canada working. It's simple. When Alberta works, Canada works.

You know, I was talking to other members of my caucus, many of whom have had some experience working, as a result of oil field money, in good-paying jobs over the years. I for one did many years in the real estate industry, and we saw the ups and downs in the economic cycles as a result of the price of oil dictating how our economy reacted.

I also in my earlier years worked directly in the oil industry. I actually know the smell of crude oil quite well because I've been covered head to toe in crude oil, working on a service rig just north of Edmonton, in a Redwater oil field in the St. Paul area. So I know exactly what it's like to be directly involved in the oil industry and know what it's like to experience an economy that's on fire as a result of a huge demand for oil and high prices for the product. Now we're not looking at necessarily that type of an on-fire economy because the situation has changed since that time in the '80s, when I was working in the oil patch as a fairly recent high school graduate.

I do remember when former Premier Peter Lougheed actually made his fireside chat speech to the country. I watched that broadcast, and it wasn't a happy day for Confederation in this country. It was something where we were, I think, as a nation very saddened to know that we'd gotten to and reached that point. What Premier Lougheed did at that time, of course, was to empower the

province to reduce exports of oil to Ontario by 15 per cent, thus causing an increase in price and securing the principle that Alberta controls its own resources. This is what Bill 12 will also do in making sure that we tell not necessarily the population of British Columbia – because the enemy in this situation isn't the people of British Columbia; it's the position of the B.C. government. Unlike the situation that happened in the '80s with Premier Lougheed, where the fight was with the federal government, the federal government and the B.C. government are really the combatants, and we're caught in the middle of the situation.

It's a political pickle that nobody could have predicted, but right now that's what we face. The situation is one where we need to arm ourselves with all of the tools necessary in order to show that there are consequences for the position that the B.C. government is taking and that consequences will result in higher prices for petroleum products in British Columbia, thus keeping momentum on the current increase in support for this pipeline in British Columbia.

That momentum is expressed and that sentiment is expressed in calls I've received from former real estate agents that I worked with who are now living in Victoria. Many people, of course, move from Alberta to British Columbia and the island for different reasons, for retirement but also because they like the lifestyle and always wanted to go to British Columbia, to the coast and so forth. They're phoning me and saying: "Right on. Tell Premier Notley and tell the rest of your government caucus that we like what you're doing. We're living here. We've got a constituency of people who are telling us as we're getting together for coffee and we're talking about it that that's what the provincial government in Alberta should be doing because we support that pipeline and we realize that it's a national requirement for our country to be able to move its products to export." That's not something that right now the British Columbia government is purporting to allow.

I remember in younger years when we would go on trips. There were six kids in my family, and we'd go on trips with my grandfather. He'd take two or three of us, and he loved going where new projects were being built. There was a new highway. He loved to take the Yellowhead before it was actually fully complete. He took three of us one year – it would have been probably 1966, something like that, '65 – up to the Bennett dam when it was under construction. This was an exciting thing because, you know, it was something that we heralded, a major project. It was going to be, in that case, hydroelectricity. Back then not as many concerns were expressed or we didn't really look at the side of the equation of where the environment was valued. We would joyfully herald the new construction of a dam, and then when the oil sands were later being developed, we would be very, very happy about that and know that our Alberta technology had triumphed over the difficulty we had in figuring out how to get the bitumen out of the sand and make a viable product. The environment wasn't necessarily in the equation.

Well, that story has changed now, Madam Speaker. It is in the equation, and that's the reason that we have to be responsible stewards of the environment as well as making sure that the resources that we have are developed to our economic benefit. It behooves me – and I'm very, very curious. I'm not sure how many studies have been done on this, but I mean, we should have had extra capacity to tidewater for decades, long before now. To get to this point, where we're at a choke point, when we don't have pipeline capacity to tidewater to match our export capacity, is really a shameful situation to be in. Previous governments, of course, are to blame for that.

We relied upon the U.S. market as a sole market. We were taking a discount on our product for decades by simply relying on the U.S.

market and not developing export capacity and pipelines to tidewater. That situation has cost us billions. As has been mentioned before today by previous speakers, up to \$40 million a day is being lost in economic opportunity because we can't get our product to tidewater. That is a mind-boggling number, \$40 million a day, that we would be able to spend on schools and hospitals and public services and actually build a long-lasting heritage savings trust fund, which we could use as a sovereign wealth investment fund if we can get our product to tidewater and receive full market value for it, full world price for those products.

This bill is, I guess, one more chapter in the story that's being written about Alberta's oil and petrochemical industry. It's one where, hopefully, we'll finally correct a long-standing situation and get this particular pipeline built and ensure that our product gets to tidewater and receives the world price. In the situation that we're in right now, it's difficult to imagine that, you know, we've let it come to this over the decades, but it has happened.

4:40

Now, members opposite have accused this government of perhaps not reacting vociferously enough or, you know, not bashing the federal government and not coming out like gangbusters to attack the federal government for not dealing more harshly with British Columbia. In fact, it's not a strategy that would necessarily have the right effect. It may sound good coming from the opposition benches, but it doesn't necessarily make a winning strategy. Fed bashing as a party policy maybe works well for the opposition, but it's not necessarily good public policy for a government such as ours here in Alberta, that wants to ensure that we have a long-standing relationship not only with British Columbia and the federal government but with all other provinces as well because there are going to be situations that arise in the future where other provinces wish to transport commodities across provincial boundaries and into other international markets where this will be seen as a precedent.

That's one other element that I think we have to be careful about, Madam Speaker, is to concern ourselves with the precedent we're setting for our federation constitutionally as far as the ability of provinces to transport across interprovincial boundaries and to international markets commodities such as petroleum – it could be other commodities as well down the road – which there may be interprovincial disputes around. What we're doing here we have to be very, very careful with and keep an eye to the precedent that we're setting. It is one that, hopefully, will be seen as a way or a pattern or a method or a behaviour of solving disputes interprovincially that is reflective of what used to be called co-operative federalism, a collaboration of different levels of government that show examples of how this federation can work.

To attack the federation, to attack the federal government when there are jurisdictional disputes or where there's a situation such as we're in right now doesn't necessarily bode well for the future of the federation. I think the tactics, the strategies that we have taken, and the federal government as well, as we approach the fulcrum of this issue have been demonstrably the right ones to have taken. We see that there are possibilities of success coming forward, and we know that the probability of this pipeline actually getting built is pretty, pretty high. We'll do everything necessary to make sure it actually happens because every MLA in this House has constituents whose livelihoods depend upon the petroleum industry.

The Kinder Morgan pipeline runs through my riding, and I look forward to the day when a secondary line by Kinder Morgan will be running through that constituency, taking all kinds of products to the coast: petroleum products, bitumen, and – who knows? – maybe even some diesel fuel. I expect that that situation, with the pipeline still being a single pipeline, will be finally solved in the not-too-distant

future, but it will be solved by people actually getting together. No matter what dispute a person is involved in or our governments are involved in, ultimately, whether you're bashing each other, if you're going to get it solved, you have to sit down and talk to each other reasonably. To start out that way is probably the way to go forward from the beginning. I don't see the benefit, as the Leader of the Official Opposition suggests, of basically going to war with the federal government when, in fact, I think it can be shown that they have been pretty diligently covering . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Ms Fitzpatrick: I was quite interested in what the member had to say, in particular about collaboration between federal and provincial, if you'd like to say a little more about that.

The Deputy Speaker: Go ahead.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's always pained me in this country – and I've been a student of politics for a very, very long time here – when we find that different levels of government or provinces end up at loggerheads with each other over whatever type of dispute may be in the offing on the particular day in question. As I mentioned before, once a dispute happens, in order to resolve it, ultimately people climb down from their platforms and negotiate in good faith and with respect and actually get the job done and solve the issue at hand.

This one, this issue, getting this pipeline to tidewater, is a particularly tricky situation. I don't think anybody could have predicted or even would have thought of the various different marbles that are in the air politically that happened to land in the places they did in Canada. The fact is that we are where we are. We have a B.C. provincial government that is under threat of losing power if they don't meet the demands of the three members of the Green Party there. That dictates some of their behaviour, and that of course has to be taken into account. It's a reality. I don't tend to speak in analogies because I think they can get twisted and turned although they are sometimes quite humorous. Our Government House Leader is one of the best at turning a good analogy.

But I know that with the situation that we have right now, the reality of it is, I think, strong enough to deal with as far as looking at a story of what lays before us rather than depending upon analogies. The fact is that the B.C. government is going to have to accede to the reality of the situation, that we have a Confederation that allows us to get that product to tidewater. We've had 14 court decisions that say that.

I look forward to our government's continuing strategy of respectfully but very forcefully making it known that we have the right – and the willingness to enforce that right – to get our products to tidewater, to get this approved pipeline built. Madam Speaker, the intention of this government in bringing forward Bill 12 is to ensure that the British Columbia government knows full well that we're prepared to use this legislation if indeed we have to.

Premier Lougheed in the 1980s was not pleased that it had come to the situation where he ended up having to act on the powers that he had at his disposal then to ensure that this provincial resource was demonstrably controlled by the province. In this case many years later, Madam Speaker, we are with different circumstances showing British Columbia, showing Canada, showing this whole federation that we will do what we need to do to protect our rights as a provincial government to control the flow and movement of our resource products across provincial boundaries to our national tidewater.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Minister of Finance.

4:50

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to stand up and to speak to Bill 12, Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act, and to say how proud I am of the Minister of Energy and the Premier for bringing this bill to our attention in this House. Another way of thinking about this bill, as some have called it, is the Shutting Off the Taps bill. It is evident, if you read the bill, that right under section 2(3) it talks about that any shipper, any company exporting natural gas, crude oil, or refined products must obtain a licence first, and there'll be a decision made about whether, in granting that licence, it is in the public interest of Alberta to do so. That's how serious this is.

We know that the public interest in Alberta and indeed Canada is not upheld if the important natural resources, that are part of this province's great legacy – they're lawfully produced, lawfully created – are not allowed to get to market. Unfortunately, for far too long we've had those constraints in this province.

We can know that Budget 2018 lays out before us a whole section on the importance of market access. That market access of a lawfully produced product is the right of companies, and it's the right of this province to receive the benefit from that product by way of royalties and other taxes. Unfortunately, there are some who choose not to behave in the way that all Canadians need to behave, which is to respect the laws of this land. So the actions that we are initiating today lay the groundwork for actions that may need to be taken, and our Minister of Energy, under the direction of the Premier of this province, will do what's in the best interest of the public in Alberta each and every time a licence is applied for. We have to ensure that both this province and this country are seen by the rest of the world as states they can count on in terms of lawful behaviour, and when we can't count on that, we do ourselves a lot of harm.

I was flipping through Budget 2018 and looking at the number of places where we've had to make forecasts kind of trying to understand, make assumptions on what the future will be. Madam Speaker, those assumptions, those forecasts are made way more difficult because we cannot count on the lawful activities of another province.

We are in a difficult situation as a province as a result of the oil price crash in late 2014 and 2015, which carried on through 2016 and 2017, and only now are we seeing some lightening of that whole situation. You know, we're four months, five months into 2018, and the whole idea of lower for longer in terms of oil price forecasts have been realized but are made doubly more difficult because companies want to continue to produce and are doing it in better and better ways. We know that, looking out, there will be production gains in this province as a result of the oil sands producers doing even better in terms of their efficiencies, and those gains are troublingly constrained in this province. If they can't make sure they get to international prices, notably tidewater access, then, frankly, we're underachieving as a province, and we're underachieving as a country. My colleagues here have laid out quite convincingly what that lack of being able to address our real capacity will mean for this province, will mean for this country.

Madam Speaker, we don't want to constrain this country and this province. We want to achieve the best value for a nonrenewable resource. That's the right and proper thing, knowing that you can't make any more oil in the ground. When you exploit it in a lawful way, you should be able to get the highest price for it.

We're doing other things in Budget 2018 to try and redress that by looking at incentivizing private companies to do partial upgrading, but that's not the kind of thing that'll happen quickly. It'll be years and years before that is achieved in this province. That's really the direction that Albertans want to go, and they often ask the question: why has that not happened earlier in this province's history? There are probably some good reasons, but it's not an excuse to not take another look at it, to try and do it right this time, Madam Speaker. We know that there's a partial upgrader under development now. It's in the testing phases, and it'll be ramping up into higher and higher production in the future. It being joined by other partial upgraders is probably a good thing for this province to get a higher value for this nonrenewable resource.

But the things we can do today are encompassed in Bill 12. Bill 12 is significant to the extent that the Minister of Energy has been in consultation with producers of oil in this province, energy companies. She has their support. She wanted to make sure that there are no surprises in any of these actions that are identified in Bill 12, and there are no surprises because she's met with these producers. She's met with them and talked about the actions government could take and will take and is taking. They're onside as well. We know that there are a growing number of Albertans and Canadians who support this action.

We need to always reflect. You know, these are actions that are important. We need to reflect. We need to be sober and think about these things. My colleagues have done that. They're ready to pass this bill because then we can begin to show the rest of the country, particularly those who would take unlawful actions, that this is how you move things forward, that this is how you stand up and say: I need to be counted because I'm taking actions that are within our purview. We're not doing anything a person or a company wouldn't do who was lawfully following the rules of this country and looking for the proper redresses for their activities.

As a group we're in a place, you know, we wish we wouldn't have to be in, but frankly we've been pushed as a Legislature into these actions. We're taking them because it's the right thing to do not just for us, not just for Albertans today, but it's the right thing to do for the future of this province going forward.

Thank you very much.

5:00

The Deputy Speaker: Any members wishing to comment under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour to rise today and talk on this bill although it's not one that I am particularly excited that we've had to bring forward. You know, I've been reflecting on this bill a lot in the past weeks and thinking about what it means for the province, for the country, and why I ultimately support it.

Before I really get into that, I want to first take a moment to talk a little bit about a piece of my childhood. We had a spot out at Lac La Nonne that we went to every weekend. Most weekends we were out there we spent fishing, and occasionally we'd go berry-picking and such. There were, you know, many days in Alberta, having the unpredictable weather that we do, that we would end up being rained out so that, instead, we would end up sitting around the kitchen table, often playing cards.

Now, I bring this up because anybody who has played cards knows the importance of a trump card. This is a card that you don't want to waste, that you want to be very careful with. Now, there are some that will often play it at the first opportunity they can, and

they'll get really excited because they've played their trump card and they've won that round. You know, two or three rounds later they go to play that trump card, but they've already played it, and now they're not doing as well as they could have if they had played a bit smarter earlier.

Madam Speaker, I think that's a very similar situation that we could have found ourselves in today, and that is a situation indeed that we were in for far too long with a Conservative government here in Alberta and a Conservative government in Ottawa, where instead of trying to work co-operatively and collaboratively and really listen to everybody and play strategically, as it were, there was a tendency to immediately stomp your feet and hold a press conference, where anybody who's critical of anything to do with oil and gas was anti-Alberta. Thinking back to the trump card, it sounds a lot like some of the rhetoric we hear down south.

But there's a very important change in strategy that we took when we formed government, and that was to try to work more collaboratively with all of our stakeholders. You know, we had the climate leadership plan, where we had industry and indigenous groups and environmental groups all collaborating on: how can we as a province move forward and try to advance on some of those criticisms that we were facing? Now, members of not just the Official Opposition but indeed some of the smaller parties that are represented in this House have criticized the climate leadership plan in a lot of ways. That is their right, but it is also very concerning that there is a continued tendency to try to ignore some of the criticisms that we're facing. So I was very proud to see that we took that shift and we tried to work collaboratively to address some of the concerns that we are faced with.

Now Alberta is situated to become one of the greenest oil-producing economies anywhere in the world, and I'm very proud of that. But the fact that we are creating a greener economy is currently being hamstrung by the fact that that oil we produce, that is the source of the economic activity for so many in this province – indeed, thinking back to the lake, there was a family just down from us that was from Fort McMurray. They, of course, had a much longer drive. We drove an hour; they drove several every weekend to be there.

It's very concerning that for the barrel that we sell, we are seeing a massive price difference. For the same barrel produced down south from the same type of extraction, we're seeing a \$15 to \$20, sometimes higher, price difference between what we can sell our product for and what an American source can sell for. Now, historically that wasn't as big a concern. There wasn't too much activity. There was activity but not as much in the States. They certainly weren't producing as much oil as they were consuming, so we sold oil anyway. That led to our booming economy. Indeed, it was fairly good for us. But then fracking came along, and the Americans expanded their extraction. Now the group who used to be our biggest customer is our biggest competitor. They've prided themselves on becoming an energy exporter. You know, I can't blame them for that. That's fair enough, but it's something that we have to respond to.

Now, many people would say: well, we should simply refine all of our oil here. Indeed, I think that that is something that is good for us to look at, how we can refine our oil. But that's Bill 1; this is Bill 12.

I'm very happy to see that we're working towards a pipeline to the west, but I'm very, very concerned that our neighbours to the west are trying to block that. I have heard some people raise concerns, when I talk to some of the few contacts I have in B.C., about: "Well, how would you feel if the pipeline ran through your community? How would you feel if this was your backyard that you're talking about?" Now, I don't believe that you've been to my

office, Madam Speaker, but I have a map of Spruce Grove on my office wall. On it I have marked where Trans Mountain runs through my community. So in response to that criticism, I am very happy to see that we have oil in every community in this province. We are impacted by it in every community in this province, and that is why I am so especially concerned that we have had our neighbours to the west trying to block our industry.

That gets me to why I support this bill, although hesitantly. I would have hoped that it wouldn't have been necessary, but I hope that all members in this Assembly can support this bill and get our product to market.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other speakers? The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's an honour to speak to Bill 12 here at third reading. I along with my Alberta Party colleagues will proudly be supporting this bill, but I think it's important that we understand the context that got us to this point. I will say that it is a terrible shame that it has come to this, that in the great Confederation of Canada we need to be in a position where we pass legislation in this Assembly that could have the impact of hurting our neighbours. It's unfortunate because the reason that we need to do that is that our neighbours have chosen to take actions that hurt the people of Alberta. It's a real shame that it got to this point.

5:10

When I reflect on how it is that we got to this place and why it is that we find ourselves in this position, I can't help but think what it is that this government could have done sooner to ensure that we were in a better position, to ensure that it didn't come to this. This is a government that's moved forward very aggressively with an environmental platform, with what they call their climate leadership plan, and I truly think that they believe that by simply having a carbon tax in the province of Alberta, the majority of the people of British Columbia and the government of B.C. would go: "You know, good enough. I'll accept that grand bargain. I see that Alberta is taking action on climate change, so those of us in B.C. will accept the pipeline." I think that was meant to be this grand bargain, this great trade-off. But, of course, here we are. It obviously hasn't worked out that way.

The issue of climate change is a defining issue of our time. It's an issue that the people of Alberta and the people of B.C., certainly the government of Alberta and the government of B.C., both being New Democrat governments, ought to be aligned on. Alberta has taken action to reduce carbon emissions, to stimulate investment and innovation that's going to not only address carbon emissions, water use, land use, environmental impacts of oil and gas production in the province of Alberta, but those technologies are going to be the next generation that's going to diversify our economy. That's the idea behind what this government has been pushing. What is such a shame is that that aspect has not been shared with the people of British Columbia. The environmental benefits of shipping Alberta crude through British Columbia to world markets have not been aggressively marketed by this government, certainly not until recently. I would even argue that the environmental case has never really properly been made by this government to the people of British Columbia.

Sure, they talk about the economic benefits, and those are real. Those are real to the people of British Columbia. Those are real to

indigenous communities all along the route, both in British Columbia and in Alberta. There is real, genuine partnership with indigenous peoples. Kinder Morgan did a remarkable thing in the work that they did with consultation with indigenous communities, and good on them. I think they've set a standard for what that consultation can and should look like. Is support unanimous? Of course it's not. I don't think you'll ever get unanimity on really any issue, certainly not an issue as contentious as this one, but I do think the process has been very good in terms of how indigenous peoples have been consulted. Again, that is not something this government has done much work to really emphasize.

Instead of talking up the environmental benefits of this pipeline, instead of talking up Alberta's track record as a responsible producer of oil and gas, as a responsible regulator – in fact, our regulator is world renowned. Alberta exports its regulatory expertise all around the world. This is something that we should be shouting from the rooftops, that Alberta should be the shining example that the rest of the world aspires to. Well, the good news is that Alberta is the shining example that the rest of the world aspires to. Our regulatory structure is far, far more advanced than the United States even and certainly in comparison to the countries whose crude we will be displacing on the market with Alberta oil sands crude, places like Venezuela, Nigeria. Their track records are abysmal. Their human rights records are just abhorrent. Alberta has the most environmentally responsible, the most socially responsible oil and gas industry in the whole world, and that is something we ought to be fiercely proud of in this province.

Unfortunately, it's not a story that's been told loudly enough or often enough by this government. As a result, we are in this position where British Columbia is retaliating against Alberta crude and, I guess, a pipeline that, by the way, has gone through I think one of if not the most extensive regulatory review processes in the history of these sorts of projects. The 157 conditions that were placed on the project I think speak to the comprehensive nature of that environmental review. We have gone through a review. The project has been approved by the national regulator, the National Energy Board. It has been approved by the federal government, and it should go ahead.

But for political reasons in terms of saving their own political hide, in terms of the fact that the B.C. NDP find themselves in a position to be propped up by just three lonely Green Party MLAs, we are in a position of having to potentially take action to make sure we maximize return to Albertans from our natural resources. That's what this bill is all about. That is why while I certainly do not wish that producers would need to suffer from having the powers that are invested in this bill be used, if that's what it comes to, well, so be it. That's what has to happen. But if that is what it comes to, I think it's very important that this government think very hard about what compensation industry would receive.

Now, I've talked with many, many people in industry, both in my constituency, just walking down the street, and talking formally with advocacy groups, part of the energy industry, and they have said to me in general terms: "We are supportive of Bill 12. We're onboard with this. We'd really rather it didn't have to come to this, but here we are." But there is some concern about whether there would be compensation paid should the government of Alberta dictate to whom and when and where and in which volumes Alberta product is shipped.

There's concern about the impact on existing shipper agreements. Would the companies, the shippers perhaps be exposed to legal liability? Certainly, there's a financial liability. Again, there's an understanding that we're in this thing together as Albertans and as Albertan companies and that if this is what it takes to get a pipeline

built in the best interests of our province, well, so be it. That's what it takes. I would have liked to see in this bill or at least hear more definitively from the Minister of Energy or from the Premier specifically what the plan would be for compensation. We haven't heard that. I have heard more generalities, that perhaps, maybe, possibly something might happen, but I would have liked to have seen more specific detail on that.

The other piece is that when you have a piece of legislation as powerful as this, this power ought to be limited in some way. That is why I was so pleased that the government did in fact accept the Alberta Party amendment brought forward by the Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill – and thank you very much to her for stewarding that amendment through the Assembly – that added a sunset clause to this bill.

This bill will expire unless further renewed by the Legislative Assembly, and I believe that has given industry some assurance that these dramatic powers will not exist in perpetuity unless there is a legitimate need for them. We are in extreme times, and desperate and extreme times call for desperate measures. That's what this bill is. So it is good that we have been able to limit the power of government to exercise such powers to a relatively short period of time, until hopefully we bridge and get past this point that we find ourselves in and these powers are no longer needed. But to the degree that they would be, they're there and can be exercised.

We'll certainly be supporting this bill, especially given the acceptance of the government – and thank you again for working collaboratively across the aisle – to build in that sunset clause to improve the bill. I look forward to voting for Bill 12 at third reading.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Does anyone have any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased and honoured to speak to support this very important bill for our province. Like many Albertans, I had a long career in the energy industry. I started, actually, as a receptionist for an oil company, a little one called Petrocorp. Like many oil companies, it expanded, changed its name.

I was really fortunate to meet a lot of very good people throughout my career. I moved from being a receptionist into business development, and that helped me parlay the rest of my career. I've been really lucky to work in many areas of the energy industry – drilling, operations, accounting, land management, even the oil sands – and the energy industry made my life better, like it has for many others in the province. Bill 12 is necessary to ensure that our energy products can reach their markets and that Albertans can continue to have careers that provide a good standard of living.

Bill 12 was introduced because we're dealing with a set of extraordinary circumstances in Alberta's history and Canada's history. The situation we want to solve with this bill will hopefully be resolved very quickly. In conversations with industry stakeholders there's wide support for the bill and the temporary actions it enables to ensure that Albertans get the maximum return on Alberta's natural resources. We're not getting that now, and it's having a negative impact on both government revenue and investment in our province.

I'm glad that both the government and caucuses in opposition recognize the urgency of acting to resolve our pipeline dispute with B.C. as soon as possible by working together to include a sunset clause amendment to this bill. The power to arbitrarily dictate to whom, where, and when industry can sell their products will only continue so long as the Legislature approves it to continue.

5:20

As a national priority improving Alberta's pipeline access to tidewater strengthens the economic security of our entire country. I'm proud to be part of an Assembly that has set aside partisanship to get this measure passed. This isn't just about one pipeline; it's about the ability of our nation to support provinces when they are contributing to our national prosperity.

In the wake of questions about Canada's commitment to global investment and trade and the measures that some in B.C. have taken to show that not all British Columbians oppose the pipeline, we have to reaffirm our commitment to being open for business in the 21st century. It's crucial to our future. Investor and customer confidence is key to ensuring that Alberta continues to attract capital and growth in oil and gas, renewable energy, and other sectors more broadly.

We have to simultaneously show that we are committed to our established energy industry and that we are continuing to innovate and diversify. Showing that Alberta is committed for the long run to defending our exports, whether in energy or other forms, will become increasingly critical to our ability to attract and retain investments in renewable energy, in artificial intelligence, in rural connectivity, and in other emerging infrastructures and sectors for future economic growth.

This bill is a prudent bipartisan measure, which I'm proud to support.

The Deputy Speaker: Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), any questions or comments?

Seeing none, I will recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Before I begin, I do want to open with some of the comments that came from the Member for Calgary-Elbow about the three lonely Green MLAs. While I strongly disagree with the policies that come from the B.C. Green Party, don't be so hard on a three-person caucus. [laughter] That got a laugh out of him.

Nonetheless, you know, the one thing I've reflected on during this session of the House is, really, the history of the NDP and where we've come from as a legacy. When I look back at 1932, when our party was founded under the previous banner of the CCF in Calgary, my hometown, in a uniting of the UFA and Labour, it was really coming with the heat of the Great Depression and a focus on sustainable resource development, whether that's growing off the land or it's mining or extracting our natural resources or our nonrenewable resources. It was always focused on very sustainable ways. When I think back to J.S. Woodsworth or M.J. Coldwell or any other previous leaders, like Tommy Douglas, I cannot see any of them standing in the way of this pipeline development.

So I find it unfortunate and very disrespectful to the legacy of our predecessors in this party for the B.C. NDP to be standing in the way of this development. You know, when we go across the country and we talk to our colleagues from the NDP in Saskatchewan or the NDP in Manitoba and hear the support that they have, they recognize the value that this has within the federal landscape and how we all are going to benefit from this.

When I look back at where we came from and the history side of things – you know, I remember when Peter Lougheed passed away. My parents were emotional. My parents are long-time New Democrat supporters, and it comes as far back as my great grandmother, who carried a century club membership because she donated \$10 a year, and that was a lot of money at that time. Nonetheless, they got emotional at that time because Peter Lougheed did a lot of great things for this province. While they

disagreed on some things, when it came to resource development, there was a lot of agreement here.

As we move forward with this policy and many of the policies that our government has done, we really take pride and celebrate the legacy that we got from Peter Lougheed and many of the accomplishments and things that he did. Unfortunately, that government lost its way after his departure. We stopped seeing investment in petrochemical diversification, and we saw a little bit of pullback. We stopped seeing money being put into the heritage savings trust fund. Fortunately, an NDP government came into place, and we've started to restart and kick-start a lot of those programs, including investing in petrochemicals, trying to diversify the economy in that way, investing in other sectors while recognizing the value of our oil and gas sector.

The one thing that I have to comment on. You know, we talk about our climate leadership plan and the initiatives that we've launched to really try to achieve social licence. When people say that it hasn't worked, that could not be further from the truth. The fact of the matter is that we had a lot of challenges with the narrative when we got into government. We saw previous governments that were not consulting with people across this country in the appropriate ways and sharing the story appropriately. While we were having a lot of our oil and gas companies like Kinder Morgan sharing the story in a very sustainable way, we saw a lot of bullying coming from previous governments. We didn't see the right message, and we weren't celebrating the leadership that we were seeing from our energy companies at that time.

The reality of it is that if you look at the national narrative on it, the narrative that we were getting from the previous Conservative governments around pipeline development was why they lost the last federal election, because Canadians rejected that narrative. And it's one of the reasons why we gained this election, because the previous government was not sharing the story appropriately.

If you look at the polls right now, every single news media – I hear about polls in relation to pipeline development and support for the pipeline – is saying that public opinion continues to go up. The reality of it is that it's because we have a government that is taking the environment seriously while developing resources. We have a government that understands the importance of social programs and social licences, who does amazing initiatives that were overlooked for many years, whether it's basically trying to solve the challenges we're having around payday lending or private members who are bringing forward legislation to allow women who are in domestic violence to break their leases.

The fact of the matter is that we have a government who cares about people and their well-being and is going to put policies in place while bringing policies in place to protect the environment while supporting resource development. People are taking our message very seriously, and that is why across this country we are continuing to see the polls go up and why the narrative is starting to shift.

The fact of the matter is that we have this very strong enabling piece of legislation, that I am very proud to support, that will continue to drive that narrative. If we have to use this, if we have to enact it, we will have a tremendous amount of support that's coming from across this country. The people of B.C. are going to look at this and say: this government, the Alberta government, has done so much for the environment, and our government has continued to stand in their way. That's why I'm proud to stand here and support this legislation, because I think it's a final tool. If we have to use it, we can.

You can already start seeing the narrative shift in B.C., and I really hope, if the B.C. government and their members are watching this, that they recognize that their people, the people in B.C., know

this is important for them. They know that pipeline development is going to benefit jobs, that the First Nations are behind it, and that, you know, if we have to reluctantly go down a path to ensure that all Canadians can prosper from our resources, we will.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Now, I just wanted to, I guess, talk a little bit about this and maybe ask the member a couple of questions here. We're sitting here on May 16, I guess, and we're about to pass this Bill 12 that the government has been working on. This bill was brought forward on April 16. We've been sitting on this bill for a month now. Obviously, this is a bill of extreme importance. Obviously, I think everybody in here at least says that they believe that this pipeline is important to Alberta and important to Canada. This government, of course, brings this bill forward only a month ago, and we spend a month here, and we work on lots of other things. This bill could have been passed long ago, so I'm kind of wondering if the member could maybe explain a little bit along those lines as far as: why?

Of course, we had the Speech from the Throne on March 8. We started in the Legislature here on March 12. So there was even a month before that that we were sitting in this Legislature where we could have been working on this bill. We could have had this bill passed, probably, by March 14 had the government brought it forward, but of course here we are, sitting here on May 16, two weeks from the deadline that Kinder Morgan has put on this pipeline decision. If this bill is that important that we could actually use this to encourage British Columbia to stop their plan to, you know, stop this pipeline, then why wouldn't we be working on this two months ago? Why would we not have this passed already? Why would we not already be able to use this to work on this pipeline?

5:30

Now, I know that some other members on the government side have suggested that we have belligerent words on our side and that this needed to be handled differently. Of course, we remember here not too long ago a dispute that we had with Saskatchewan regarding licence plates on work sites. Now, just reading from a couple of news articles, as I said: on Thursday Alberta again threw down the gauntlet, saying that Saskatchewan has until next week to reverse the decision. The Minister of Economic Development and Trade warned about other unnamed consequences. He also went on to say that Brad Wall needs to smarten up. So this government sits here and says that we use harsh words on this side of the House, which isn't even true, and then we have a situation where when it comes to dealing with Saskatchewan over the licence plates issue, this government made all sorts of threats. They made all sorts of accusations and, you know, called people names. Of course, you know what happened one month later? The problem was solved.

But when it comes to dealing with their friends and allies in British Columbia, the NDP government there, and their friends and allies in Ottawa, the Liberal government there, it seems like they've got velvet gloves on and they just can't say anything or do anything to offend them. Of course, when it comes to Saskatchewan, there's no problem. There's probably been no province that's been a greater ally on the pipeline dispute than Saskatchewan.

I just want the member to kind of explain a little bit of the thought process that goes on over there when they say that they really care about this pipeline issue. We've been sitting here for over two months in this Legislature, and we're in the process here now where

we might be actually getting to pass this bill today. All I can say is: about time. About time.

Now, another thing is that when we're talking about harsh words – we heard multiple times the government talking about inflicting pain on the people of B.C. with this turn-off-the-taps legislation. That sounds pretty harsh, those kind of words: inflicting pain on the people of B.C. But the problem is that it isn't the people of B.C. that's the problem; it's the government of B.C. that's the problem, the NDP government of B.C. It's not the people of B.C. Those are our friends and neighbours, but we have a government there that's doing everything it can to obstruct what's best for Alberta and for Canada. Of course, we also have a Prime Minister in Ottawa that has the power to make this go through, and he's doing nothing for us.

Madam Speaker, I just wanted to have the opportunity to have the hon. member respond to some of these things as far as why we're sitting here two months after we started the Legislature. We're finally passing this legislation. We're two weeks before the deadline that Kinder Morgan has put out. I don't understand why we've delayed this long with something so important. Again, it's about time. Let's get this thing done and get this thing passed and then see what we can do about getting this pipeline to happen.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Mrs. Schreiner: Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise and speak today regarding my support for the Trans Mountain project, that would benefit my constituency of Red Deer-North immensely. Fellow members, my city of Red Deer engages many of the support aspects for our oil and gas industry. With a population of over 100,000 this pipeline would mean tremendous growth and breathe a strong sigh of relief for Red Deerians as well as all Albertans. Red Deer has been home to many of the oil and gas service companies for many years. It is our mandate as legislators within this Chamber to strive to support our oil and gas industry as it has provided so much to our great province for decades.

Supporting the Trans Mountain pipeline would result in a stronger economy for Red Deer as well. It means that families can continue to provide the necessities as well as some of the extras for their households. It means that people can breathe easier, embracing the economic recovery that provides peace of mind. This pipeline enables families to put food on their tables and helps regain the momentum that the recent downturn had impeded.

Madam Speaker, a strong economy means that people are working and supporting other industries. When we are in a position of strong economic stance, we see retail and hospitality flourish. The entrepreneurial spirit that our great province was built on becomes alive again and knows no limits. With the recent degree-granting status of our Red Deer College, we will see our future Albertans seeking the education that reinforces the strength of our workforce both within the oil and gas industry as well as the peripheral. This pipeline means growth.

Members, it was three years ago that we initiated the momentum to diversify the Albertan economy. By investing in infrastructure, we created an environment that segued to our current position. The QE II corridor is now safer for our Albertans to travel on and to transport product. The conditions are becoming optimal to stand together as a province and as legislators and to do what we can to bring this pipeline to fruition. Our progress cannot be capped because we do not want to cap the potential for our Albertans, our economy, or the realm of prosperity that this project represents.

While I realize that this speaks to the potential for all Albertans, it is my duty and my privilege to bring to the forefront what the

Trans Mountain pipeline means to my Red Deerians. Madam Speaker, Bill 12, Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act, is about protecting the jobs and livelihoods of thousands of Albertans and Canadians, and we know that when Alberta works, Canada works. Our government will do whatever it takes to build this pipeline and to get top dollar in return for the oil and gas products that are owned by all Albertans.

Madam Speaker, I fully support Bill 12 and hope all in the House support it as well. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

Mr. Kleinstaubert: Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's nice to have an opportunity here this afternoon to speak to Bill 12, Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act. Through Bill 12 our government is demonstrating that we are standing up for Albertans, and by doing that, we are standing up for a healthy Canadian energy sector, including all working women and men that are employed in it.

Historically speaking, our biggest customer for Alberta oil and gas has been the United States, but in recent years it has shifted dramatically. At this point the United States is not only our biggest customer; they're also our biggest competitor. As a result, oil and gas resources that are sold to other markets from this province are being sold at a discount, and the spread between western Canada select and WTI, west Texas intermediate, is costing energy producers in this province, and it is costing the province in potential royalties that we could be collecting. I find this discrepancy unfortunate, and we must find additional ways to get our natural resources to foreign markets.

That is why our government supports the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion. We firmly believe that the twinning of this pipeline project will help oil and gas producers get better value for their products and that we as Canadians will all share in the benefits derived from these resources. Passing Bill 12 will ensure that the interests of Albertans are optimized before authorizing the export of natural gas, crude oil, or refined fuels from Alberta. This legislation would give our government authority, if necessary, to require any company exporting energy products from Alberta to require a licence. It is legislation that is centred on making sure that government has a series of mechanisms, if necessary, to protect the best interests of Albertans.

5:40

I'd like to take a moment to talk about some of the feedback that I've heard from constituents in Calgary-Northern Hills. Through my travels, events, and door-knocking this topic has turned up frequently in conversations. In fact, I can think of a few constituents specifically keenly interested in shutting off the taps and sending a message to other areas of the country that oil and gas resources are important and that we all depend on them to heat our houses, to fuel our vehicles, and to power our aircraft. Then there are the petrochemicals and plastic products we use every day. Madam Speaker, I've tried to go a day without using a plastic cup or plastic cutlery, wearing polyester clothes. It's not easy. These products are literally everywhere.

Bill 12 has not only received the endorsement of many constituents in Calgary-Northern Hills, but I'd like to take a moment to read an endorsement from the mayor of Calgary, Mayor Naheed Nenshi. He said:

I'm strongly behind Premier Notley on whatever she does to push this. I'm also calling on the federal government and their

jurisdiction in this matter and ensure that we don't hold up the economy of all of Canada – to make sure that we have

... safe, clean Canadian energy – for political reasons in our province.

Madam Speaker, this legislation is about being prepared for action should it be necessary. As many have said before me, the power of this legislation should not be taken lightly. We must defend our rights under the British North America Act to ensure the best possible value for our resources. These are resources that belong to all Albertans. We need to defend the public services that all working families have come to rely on.

With that, I'll be supporting Bill 12 and hope that every member of this Assembly will join me in their support. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other speakers to the bill? The hon. Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Obviously, we are running a bit short on time, so my comment will be simply to say that I couldn't be gladder that this is a step that our government is taking and a tool that we're willing to give ourselves.

With that, I think I will just request unanimous consent from the House to move to one-minute bells.

[Unanimous consent denied]

The Deputy Speaker: Any other speakers to the bill? The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's indeed my pleasure to rise and close debate at third reading of Bill 12, Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act. I want to start by thanking members on all sides of this Assembly who have spoken in favour of this bill. It's never a great day when you have to bring legislation like this forward, when you're forced to defend workers and families across Alberta and indeed Canada from unfair and misinformed attacks aimed at their industry and the jobs that so many Canadians depend on. It's a sad state of affairs that even though we followed the rules and have led the way for Canada on climate change and responsible development, those who choose to ignore the rules and ignore the facts can continue to harass and obstruct responsible energy development that is so vital to Canada. It's heartening to see that as representatives of the people of Alberta we are all on the same page, that defending the interests of Albertans and Canadians is more important than partisan politics.

I think we can agree that Alberta needs to have this legislation ready in its tool box in the event that it's needed, and I think we can all agree that we hope it is not needed because we all know that it may cause some temporary hardship for industry, for the workers they employ, and for the communities where they are based here in Alberta. But as I've said before, we've been in discussions with industry from the beginning. They understand its importance and how it can help ensure the long-term well-being of the energy industry not just here in Alberta but in Canada. We are all aware of the continued obstructionist tactics, and we are also aware that we are losing significant dollars every day into our economy here in Canada. With the passing of Bill 12, we will have a powerful tool at the ready that will ensure that the interests of Albertans are optimized.

Once again, let me be clear. This would give the government authority to only if necessary require anyone exporting energy products from Alberta to acquire a licence. Companies will not

automatically be required to apply for an export licence. They will only be required to do so if I as Minister of Energy determine it is in the public interest. The criteria we've discussed over and over in the bill, and it is quite clear. We've outlined in earlier debate the terms and conditions for export licences that would be established. It's also been established that there is some leeway in setting those terms and conditions. This would be necessary in dealing with a wide variety of potential situations in a timely manner. The Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act also outlines the steps that would be taken if anyone fails to comply with the requirements of this act and future regulations or terms of the conditions of a licence.

If we do have to use this legislation, we will have strong measures to enforce it. But as I've said to many industry members – they've told us that they support the objectives of this legislation and want to comply with any export regulations should restrictive measures become necessary because they know, as we all know, that this is for the greater good of our industry.

I want to again thank the members for taking part in discussing this legislation in a constructive debate and for suggesting amendments for a sunset clause. As I said during Committee of the Whole, this looks reasonable to me, the amendment, and we're happy to move on and vote for this bill today. It's not just about one pipeline or exports in one direction. This legislation is about being prepared to take action in all directions should it be necessary to defend Albertans, our resources, and the economic future of Canada.

With that, Madam Speaker, I would like to close debate on Bill 12.

[Motion carried; Bill 12 read a third time]

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

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Seeing as we have passed a very important bill and made some good progress today, I would move that we call it 6 o'clock and adjourn until 7:30 this evening.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:48 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday evening, May 16, 2018

Day 31

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Dang	Pitt
Drever	Westhead
McIver	

Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms Kazim
Deputy Chair: Connolly

Anderson, W.	Orr
Babcock	Rosendahl
Drever	Stier
Drysdale	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kleinsteinuber	Taylor
McKitrick	

Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	Miller
Cooper	Nielsen
Goehring	Nixon
Gotfried	Pitt
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Cyr
Deputy Chair: Mr. Dach

Barnes	Malkinson
Carson	Miller
Clark	Nielsen
Gotfried	Panda
Hunter	Renaud
Littlewood	Turner
Luff	

Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola
Deputy Chair: Mr. Drysdale

Babcock	Loewen
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Fildebrandt	Panda
Hanson	Rosendahl
Kazim	Schreiner
Kleinsteinuber	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, May 16, 2018

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: Please be seated.

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

Bill 16

Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Statutes Amendment Act, 2018

[Adjourned debate May 16: Mr. Feehan]

The Acting Speaker: Any members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's great to have an opportunity to rise to talk about Bill 16. Bill 16 is an interesting piece of legislation that was added on at the last minute, if you would. What I find most interesting about Bill 16 is that it shows without a doubt two main issues: one is the fear of the NDP government of the United Conservative Party, which we'll talk about in a minute; second is the NDP's tendency when it comes to bills associated with our election system to try to, if you would, stack the deck, which we've talked about many times when the government has brought forward legislation in this area.

First, let's talk about why this bill shows the NDP's concern about facing a United Conservative Party in the next election, so concerned, in fact, Madam Speaker, that they have to rush a piece of legislation to the floor in the spring sitting because they're so nervous.

Now, my friend the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays and I as well as the hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod, amongst others who are not MLAs, had the privilege of sitting on the unity discussion group and working to bring both the great parties, the Wildrose Party and the Progressive Conservative Party, together to be able to create this United Conservative Party that we now see here in the House, of course, united. We also see it united across the province. In fact, Madam Speaker, I'm proud to tell you it's the second-largest political party in the country, the first-largest political party in the province, the most popular political party by a long shot in the entire country of Canada if polls are to be believed. We know what polls can be for, but there is no doubt that the excitement around the United Conservative Party is very real.

But long before we were able to get there, some of us had to go in a room and had to overcome some significant legal hurdles to be able to make this happen. The reality is that the law was not very friendly or able to accommodate political parties coming together in the province of Alberta. Federally it was, which we saw, of course, with the Reform Party and the PC Party. They were able to unite because the law was able to do that. But the law inside Alberta did not allow for it.

Interestingly enough, though, when we were going through that process, we recognized that the way around that was to have all three parties fall under one leader, one executive, and be under the control of one unit. And that's how the United Conservative Party, the Wildrose Party, and the PC Party are now because that was the way that we had to deal with the legal circumstance around that.

Now, what that would allow for, Madam Speaker – under the last law that this government brought forward in regard to election issues, they capped the spending of political parties at \$2 million

per writ period for a party. There are different rates for the constituency associations, and I don't think we need to talk about that today. But the way that we used to be able to bring our parties together would have allowed us to be able to spend \$2 million for the Wildrose Party, \$2 million for the Progressive Conservative Party, and \$2 million for the United Conservative Party.

Now, my colleagues and I, the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays and I and our colleagues inside the unity discussions, recognized that that would be against the spirit of the law, a law that we voted for and supported inside this Assembly. As such, as the authors of the agreement that brought these parties together, we made a determination to put into the agreement that we would respect the spirit of the law. Only one cap would be spent despite the fact that we control three political parties. Now, that's in the agreement in principle. It's been signed by both leaders of the legacy parties that brought it together and by the current leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. Let's also be clear, Madam Speaker. The easiest way to have dealt with this would have been to let those parties merge together and move forward because that's what we've been able to accomplish anyway.

Now, sometime over the last few months somebody over on the NDP side – it just dawned on them finally that we might be able to spend \$6 million in the next election. They're a little bit behind us on that process, but they had a look at it and they realized: oh, these guys may be able to spend \$6 million. So they panicked and reached out to us. We said: "Whoa, whoa. It's okay. We've put it in this agreement, and we don't have any intention of breaking this agreement. You know, it's there. It's written down. It's signed." But they started to panic. They started to look at the fundraising numbers, probably the polls that show them 30-35 points behind right now and went: "Oh, my. What if these guys actually spent \$6 million? Our law didn't work."

Now, that's fair. It's fair. That's why the unity group made sure to put in the agreement that that cannot happen because we want to honour the spirit of the law. The problem comes, then, Madam Speaker, though, is that the easiest way to fix that would have allowed these entities to finally merge instead of creating a ridiculous law to continue on to keep them as separate entities and the extra complications that come with managing that, et cetera.

The fact is, Madam Speaker, that despite the NDP's biggest wishes and their hopes, I'm sure, last year these political parties came together. Right-of-centre political movements, free-enterprise political movements in this province have united. The majority of Albertans support that side of the spectrum. I know it makes them very, very nervous.

But to then try to just do one little piece of the puzzle and make sure that we can't spend \$6 million, all of which we've already agreed not to, and not allow those political parties to come together, shows exactly what is wrong with this government, and that is that they continue to bring legislation in regard to our election system to this House that at its core is often designed just to stack the deck for this government. That is how desperate they are right now and how scared they are about what will happen in 11 and a half months, when they have to go to their boss, Albertans, who they have completely neglected in their time in office. They have to go back to those Albertans, who are going to probably send this government packing, Madam Speaker. Then they continue to bring forward legislation to try to make it easier for them, and in this case they could just allow these political parties to come together, but they can't do it.

It goes back to the very first time that they brought a bill to this House, actually the second time. The first time was about corporate and union donations, which, of course, we supported, but the second time they came to this House and through a whole

committee process tried to get my constituents and your constituents to pay for their campaign expenses. Do you remember that, Madam Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: They were stacking the deck.

Mr. Nixon: Stacking the deck. They know it. That's what they were doing, and when they get called on stacking the deck, they finally have to cave, but that's what they were trying to do. Now, it's a good thing that the Official Opposition was there to be able to catch them trying to stack the deck.

We saw in this House a motion to bring forward a new Election Commissioner with some legitimate questions from the opposition around salary and different types of things that certainly appear secretive. What did the government do, Madam Speaker? They brought in time allocation for the second time in their mandate. The only other time that they brought in time allocation was during Bill 6, when they were absolutely being destroyed politically for that ridiculous piece of legislation, but the second time they do it, after all these years, is something to do with elections. Over and over – and I'm sure some of my colleagues will talk about it tonight – this government's main focus is stacking the deck.

Mr. Coolahan: Stacking the deck?

Mr. Nixon: Stacking the deck. The government, you hear them, Madam Speaker. They're talking about stacking the deck because they know that that's what they're trying to do. If they were not trying to do that, why would they not just accept the fact that these parties have come together, allow them to merge? Of course, we will have to look at changing that law if we're fortunate enough to form government in a year to allow that to take place because it's pretty silly for it not to.

But this government, in a mad panic to make sure that we would honour our agreement, which is fine, brought forward a more complicated way of doing it. The easiest way to do that would have been to allow these parties to become one entity to make sure that they all fit under the cap. Instead, they bring forward a bill that has what appears like other loopholes for different parties but not for the Conservative Party, that is only focused on making sure that the United Conservative Party can't spend \$2 million for each of its legacy parties plus itself. It draws all this stuff out in a big lengthy process to be able to make sure that that works legally, when all they had to do was change one clause in the law that would allow the Wildrose Party, the PC Party, and the United Conservative Party to join together. They're stacking the deck. That's all this government can do.

You know, I lost respect for this government a long time ago, Madam Speaker, but the number one thing that caused me to lose respect for this government is when they tried to get Albertans to pay for their campaign expenses. It's one of the most shameful things that this government ever did.

7:40

Mr. Schmidt: I can't believe we lost your respect then.

Mr. Nixon: Absolutely disappointing. I mean, I know the minister of postsecondary is heckling how much he wishes that could have happened, but it didn't, sir. We caught you. It never happened. We got ya. We got ya. You know, it was worth a try, I guess. I think it's kind of disappointing that you would try to do that – through you, Madam Speaker, to the minister of postsecondary – to Albertans.

An Hon. Member: Not a problem.

Mr. Nixon: And, of course, the Minister of Municipal Affairs now wants to chime in about his great hope to make sure that taxpayers can pay for his campaign expenses. This side of the House would not accept them stacking the deck. On that one we managed to win, Madam Speaker. We managed to win one for the good guys. And sadly those wins have . . . [interjection] The minister of agriculture right now. Maybe he's hoping right now that they'll get another chance to get his campaign expenses paid for. Not under my watch, sir. Not under my watch, sir. Not under my watch, sir.

Just because you have a majority, minister of agriculture, does not mean that you should try to take taxpayer dollars to pay for your campaign expenses. That would not make any sense.

The Acting Speaker: We were off to a good start. If we could go through the chair, please. If we could respect the speaker, I would appreciate it. Thank you.

Hon. member, please continue.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It was getting hard to hear you. I'm glad that you were able to get the government back in control.

An Hon. Member: Because you're so loud . . .

Mr. Nixon: Already, Madam Speaker. That's the minister of postsecondary. Through you, Madam Speaker: he can't even obey your ruling from the chair.

An Hon. Member: Education.

Mr. Nixon: Or Minister of Education. Sorry. He can't even obey your ruling from the chair. The minister of postsecondary. Can't do it. You know why? This government's instinct is to not follow the rules, and it's to try to stack the deck to make things easier for them. That's what this government does. They want to laugh about it. I don't think it's funny. I think it's absolutely appalling that that's what this government has tried to do. And they continue to do it.

It gets even worse. There have been about five pieces of legislation associated with our election system since this government came to power. Each and every time that they have brought a bill, each and every time, Madam Speaker – it's shocking – they've had to come back by the next sitting to fix the mistakes they made with the first bill on our election system.

In their desperation and their blind run just to be able to try to make it easier for them, just to try to make it easier for them, they end up making terrible mistakes. Then they have to bring forward extra PAC legislation that they should have got right the first time.

Mr. McIver: Lots of mulligans.

Mr. Nixon: Mulligans. Over and over. That's exactly right. I think the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays's description of mulligans is a great description. That's what we get from this government.

So I will encourage my caucus to support Bill 16 because, as I said, Madam Speaker, our intent is only to spend one cap and follow the spirit of the law, which we voted for in this Assembly, which we signed an agreement on amongst our parties to make sure it would happen.

Ms Payne: How about the grassroots guarantee . . .

Mr. Nixon: Well, you know, the Associate Minister of Health wants to heckle about grassroots guarantees. Well, let me ask through you, Madam Speaker, to the minister: how good is the NDP's grassroots capability when they go and try to take money

from that grassroots to pay for their campaign expenses? That's what this government did. That's one of the legacies of this government: trying to manipulate the system to be able to get their campaign expenses paid, trying to manipulate the system to pay for their campaign expenses.

And you can tell how sensitive they are about that issue today, Madam Speaker, because of how much noise you're getting from this side of the House because of the fact that they won't listen to your ruling from the chair and stay calm during a debate and allow us to have the floor when we talk. They are disappointed that we're pointing out the ridiculousness of their position, the fact that they want to bring legislation here just to manipulate things or to protect themselves but not make it fair for all parties.

The minister should stand up and explain why she would go through the most complicated process to be able to deal with this situation rather than let these three legacy parties come together.

At the end of the day, Madam Speaker, it does not matter. We figured out the way to handle this under the law. This group across the way will be facing a united, free-enterprise vote in all of their constituencies.

An Hon. Member: Not in Strathmore-Brooks . . .

Mr. Nixon: That's going to happen no matter what. It will happen in Strathmore-Brooks, too. There'll be a United Conservative candidate. But Strathmore-Brooks doesn't exist anymore, minister of postsecondary, so try to follow along.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members. We are in second reading. Can we please respect the speaker.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Again, in closing, you have a government who has brought forward a bill because they're scared the United Conservative Party is outfundraising them. They know we have more votes than they do, and they're in a panic. That's fine, but we already agreed to do this. Instead of dealing with it in the easiest and most efficient way to get it done, they went with an extremely complicated way to still try to punish their political opponents. It is absolutely appalling and disgusting that the NDP continues to do this with our election system, that they continue to try to manipulate it to their advantage.

Madam Speaker, I predict through you to all of them that it will not work and that the time for this government is coming to an end. They better enjoy it because soon they will have to go to the doors, and Albertans will look at them and say: we don't accept the ridiculousness of what you've done, particularly the fact that you tried to manipulate our election system, and as such, we're going to send you packing.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

Are there any members wishing to close debate?

Seeing none, I will now call the question.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 7:46 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Horne	Orr
Carlier	Jansen	Payne
Connolly	Kazim	Piquette
Coolahan	Kleinstauber	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Larivee	Rosendahl
Cyr	Littlewood	Schmidt
Dach	Loyola	Schneider
Dang	Malkinson	Schreiner
Eggen	McCuaig-Boyd	Shepherd
Ellis	McIver	Sucha
Fitzpatrick	McKitrick	Taylor
Goehring	Miller	Turner
Hinkley	Nixon	Woollard

Against the motion:

Fildebrandt	Swann
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Totals:	For – 39	Against – 2
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[Motion carried; Bill 16 read a second time]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Speaker. At this time I would like to request unanimous consent to shorten the interval between bells within Committee of the Whole to one minute.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

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

Bill 17 Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2018

The Deputy Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[The clauses of Bill 17 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Bill 11 Lobbyists Amendment Act, 2018

The Deputy Chair: Are there any members wishing to offer any comments, questions, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to speak in committee on Bill 11, Lobbyists Amendment Act, 2018. The bill proposes to amend the Lobbyists Act to better regulate lobbying activity and make it more transparent. It prohibits lobbyists from giving money, gifts, or other benefits to public office holders that would result in them contravening the Conflicts of Interest Act. It requires that lobbying activity be reported regardless of who is

asking for the meeting or who made the first call. That's progress. It requires individuals or groups that lobby government on behalf of their employer or business to register the activity after 50 hours of lobbying in a year. That 50-hour reporting threshold will include preparation time. That's half the time that it was prior to this, and only face-to-face meetings were reportable in the past.

It requires lobbyists who are paid as consultants by organizations to file with the registry within 10 days of starting their efforts. That's progress. It prohibits contingency fee payment arrangements that allow consultant lobbyists to be paid only when they're successful. Grassroots communications will now be included in the definition of lobbying to reflect a lot of lobbying practices currently. It exempts indigenous elders who approach government officials to advocate for their communities from having to report such actions.

Bill 11 does not change the rule for lobbyists hired by outside clients. They're still automatically required to register regardless of the time spent on an issue, and the law requires them to register within 10 days. Information about lobbyists is posted publicly on a registry maintained by Alberta's office of the ethics and conflict-of-interest commissioner.

The concerns I have are that it's still got some major deficiencies that relate to the need for a stronger code of conduct for lobbyists. It isn't clear and should be explicit what an acceptable code of conduct for lobbyists is. Other jurisdictions have this. It identifies strategies and behaviour and incentives and disincentives that are appropriate for a responsible relationship with government.

If the aim of the legislation is to enhance transparency, why does it not compel lobbyists to disclose the names of those they met, the topics of discussion, the time, date, and location of the meeting, and other relevant information? This could have gone to a greater length to provide all of us, including citizens, with the certainty and the accountability for some of these lobbying activities.

A case in point was the tobacco lobbying, that I raised in question period this week, where in spite of having international agreement on prohibiting lobbying behind closed doors, it became evident that there was lobbying by tobacco lobbyists, including friends of the Premier, that are meeting behind closed doors and are now going to be, hopefully, addressed in a more transparent way. I look forward to seeing the evidence for that.

A final concern is that we should be capturing lobbying done by front groups on behalf of other Conservative – other commercial interests.

Mr. Fildebrandt: A Freudian slip?

Dr. Swann: A little Freudian slip there. Are you getting a lot of lobbying from the Conservatives over there? Yeah. It must be a problem.

More transparency I guess is better if we're talking about lobbying. Albertans deserve to know who, when, where, and what is being discussed.

8:10

Apart from those, I think the bill does make progress. There's no question that this is better than we've seen in the past. It's incremental. One would like to have seen a little more dramatic commitment to some of the issues that I've raised, including a code of conduct, but on balance this is progress, and I will be supporting it.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 11?

[The clauses of Bill 11 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Bill 6

Gaming and Liquor Statutes Amendment Act, 2018

The Deputy Chair: Are there any comments or amendments to be offered in regard to this bill? The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. Before I begin, I've already provided an amendment to the table officers. If it could be distributed before I begin speaking.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Hon. member, your amendment will be referred to as A1. Please go ahead.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to speak to Bill 6, Gaming and Liquor Statutes Amendment Act, 2018. I'll speak to the bill in general, but I'll also speak to the amendment that is before members right now. Members will note that I've distributed this amendment to the different caucuses in advance in genuine hope that this is an amendment we can pass to improve upon this bill and improve the lives of many Albertans as we move into the post cannabis prohibition era.

Now, I apologize for my voice right now. As we discuss cannabis, I am technically on drugs. I'm full of cough medicine right now, a little woozy, but I've thought long and hard about this bill in advance, so it is still my pleasure to speak to it.

We are finally coming to the end of at least part of the destructive war on drugs. The war on drugs has disproportionately hurt and targeted minorities and people of colour and various indigenous people and different vulnerable people in our society and even more so in the United States. The war on drugs takes very different forms on different drugs, and we can certainly debate the merits of it at large, but we are in this bill debating the merits of ending the war on drugs for cannabis.

Now, I hate to admit when this government does something good, but I'm going to give them credit where credit is due. As the federal government moves us into the postprohibition era, the government of Alberta has, while it's not perfect, I think actually led the way nationally on the best retail and administrative system for pot. They have embraced the free market. They've embraced the power of free enterprise and decided that it is not good to follow the advice of the Alberta Federation of Labour and set up bong bureaucracies. They've decided that pot should be in the private sector. If Bob Marley was alive today, I'm sure he would sing a song about: privatize it. I've waited a while to say that.

I'm going to give credit where credit is due. There's a lot of very good in this system. I think the main exception to that would be online sales. I've talked with some members of the government outside this Chamber. It's just not going to work. You can go online. Some of you are probably going to be moving around your computers a lot tonight on the less interesting parts of debate, when you're all done listening to what I have to say, and if you want to buy pot online right now, you can do so from your seat in the Legislature. Now, I haven't done it, at least that I've been caught for. I haven't done it, and I wouldn't tell you if I did. But it's not

very difficult. You can go online right now. It's pretty easy to get it. I've got friends who have done it without too much trouble. You know, flavoured tobacco is illegal to buy in Alberta, period, online or in stores, and I'll let you in on a secret. You can get it online. And it's illegal.

So if your goal is to somehow establish an online monopoly, it's not going to work. It's going to cost a ton of money to set up this bureaucracy, and regardless of who's in power in a few years, it's going to get scrapped. So continue to embrace the power of free enterprise. If we're going to snuff out the black market in cannabis, the only way to do that is really by being more competitive than it and embracing free enterprise. That is the advice I offer to the government, which I'm sure they'll take.

Outside of the online monopoly that they seek to establish, it is otherwise a very good program that they've put forward. It is really opening up new markets in Alberta for people producing and selling. If you just look at the number of stores popping up just in Calgary alone, it's incredible. In my constituency is Wheatland county. Some have proposed they rename it Weedland county with all the growing that's starting to come up. It is really a boon for business, and Alberta is actually going to lead the way nationally. It's a real growth opportunity. No pun intended.

But there is a part of this bill that needs to be addressed, and we have an opportunity to help some people here enter the legal licensed market and participate in licensed establishments. Now, broadly I do believe that for laws that are changed to make something that once was illegal no longer illegal, we should provide amnesty or a pardon for those people. You know, when the Wheat Board monopoly was abolished – the Member for Drumheller-Stettler went to jail for the crime of selling wheat. Wheat, not weed. For the crime of selling wheat, he went to jail. Now, it is completely crazy that someone went to jail for the crime of selling their own wheat to someone besides the government.

Dr. Turner: He was smuggling it.

Mr. Fildebrandt: He was a smuggler. He was the pirate of the South Saskatchewan River.

Dr. Starke: There's a song about that.

Mr. Fildebrandt: There is a song about that, and I think it's about him.

Once that Wheat Board monopoly was abolished, Prime Minister Harper provided him and some of his, as he calls them, jailmates a pardon. It was the right thing to do. It was no longer against the law. It was an unjust law to begin with, but it was no longer against the law, and they should no longer be treated as criminals with any kind of record. That's the right thing to do.

As we move, as is expected at least, by July 1, to end cannabis prohibition, it will no longer be a criminal offence to possess small amounts of marijuana, but there are still people who currently will carry criminal records for the rest of their lives. They may have been caught with a joint at some point, as a teenager or in their '20s or at some point of their life, as I'd guess some people in this Chamber may have been at some point. The Prime Minister has admitted to smoking it at some point, but he doesn't require a pardon because I guess he's not been charged for it.

But people are carrying around a record for the rest of their lives, and I think it would be a great move forward for these people if the Minister of Justice were to call on her federal counterpart to provide a general amnesty or pardon for Canadians who have been convicted of possession of small amounts of marijuana, not dealers, not large amounts, not for hard drugs, just for marijuana in small

possession. There are a lot of people who are not real criminals who have been tagged by this.

8:20

You know, can we imagine someone carrying around a criminal record because they got caught in a speakeasy in the 1920s? No. We've moved on from that. So I think it's time we give these people a pardon and some justice so that they can move on with their lives. A pardon on a criminal record is a federal matter, but what we can do here within provincial jurisdiction and within the scope of this bill is with regard to licensing.

The current legislation allows the AGLC, or AGL Ceci, to determine who can actually have a licence to own and operate these businesses. They also actually require licences for people just to work in them. That's very interesting. As far as I know – someone can correct me if I'm wrong – you don't require a licence to work at Co-op Liquor or Solo Liquor. You know, you need a licence to own the business, but you don't need a licence to work in it. But this is actually going to . . . [interjections] Pardon?

Some Hon. Members: You need ProServe.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Oh. ProServe, yes, to actually serve.

But in a store I don't think they're going to be smoking over the counter. At least, I don't think that's the plan under the regulations. If they're just buying in the store and they're not consuming it on the spot, I think it's more akin to a liquor store than an actual bar.

Now, I'm actually okay with the AGLC being able to green-light and red-light some people for this. I think if people have been actual drug dealers, they should not be in this business. But if they've simply been pegged with a small possession charge at some point in their life – they got caught with a joint – it is now very possible that the AGLC, under the current legislation, will disallow them from being allowed to work in these stores. I don't think that's fair. I don't think that's just. They're being held criminally responsible for something that is no longer a crime. They will have already paid for it, but because they're carrying around that record, they're not allowed to get a job in a legal and licensed facility.

I think it is the reasonable and the compassionate thing that we allow for there to be an appeal process. The amendment that I've put before members of this House leaves all of the legislation intact but simply adds a power to the Minister of Finance, responsible for the AGLC, that in the event that the commission, the AGLC, denies someone the right to work in these stores – I'm not talking about the right to own and operate one of these stores. This bill doesn't get into it, so I'm not able to bring that amendment forward, but simply for regular blue-collar employees working in these stores. If the AGLC under the current rules decides that someone cannot work in that store, they will have an avenue for appeal. They can make a written appeal to the minister responsible for the AGLC, and the minister will have it in his discretion whether or not to allow this person to work in one of these stores.

The intent of this, now, is that it would be at the discretion of the minister. I've consulted with Parliamentary Counsel. We were not able to spell out exactly under what conditions because that gets into areas of federal jurisdiction. But the minister would have the ability, in regulations and in his own decisions, to decide . . .

An Hon. Member: Or her.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Or her, but it's currently a he.

. . . to allow someone to still work in one of these stores. He would have some discretion there as a form of appeal. I would expect that, in good judgment, if someone has been charged and convicted of trafficking, if they've been involved in other crimes related to

drugs, be it violent crime or hard drugs or property crimes, all of these things, then I think that request and that appeal should be denied. But if someone simply got caught with a joint at 20 years old, I don't think they should be told that they can't get a job. I don't think that they should have to carry that around for the rest of their lives when it is no longer illegal.

This would be the equivalent of someone who got caught with a bottle of hooch in the 1920s, and they could no longer work in a liquor store when Prohibition ended. It just wouldn't be fair. It's not compassionate. This is an industry that is just starting off in Alberta, and we're getting off to a great start. This government has made – again, I hate to say it, but you guys have made in aggregate some very good decisions on how to proceed with the administration of cannabis in the postprohibition era.

I'd encourage all members to support this amendment. I'm very happy to discuss it with members if they have any questions. I think that this is a very nonideological issue. This is simply being compassionate and being reasonable to people who are going to be saddled by something from the past that is no longer a crime.

I thank you, members, for your time, and I ask that you give consideration to this amendment.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Dr. Swann: Well, Madam Chair, this is an extraordinary day. I find myself once again agreeing with the member. We may have to change our names over here to the Valhalla party. But I think that I heard a compassionate Conservative speak just now. It made eminent sense to me that we give more discretion to the minister. These are difficult, interesting, challenging, and unprecedented times. All across this country we're going to be making decisions about cannabis, and particularly for those who've been involved with a drug that was illegal until this year, it carries all kinds of baggage for people, their employment, their ability to work in the industry, which they may know very well having had some past experience which wasn't exactly legal, people who have expertise, who have lived experience that can be helpful in the industry.

This is really, in many ways, recognizing the minister with the discretion that a minister should have to make decisions that may vary somewhat from the standard policy but in circumstances that require it to make different decisions and intervene in lives in ways that would be helpful and constructive from an employment point of view and a mental health point of view and indeed a legal point of view.

So I find myself in support of this amendment. I don't think there's anything to be lost. I think that the member has rightly identified an area in legislation that just hasn't maybe been considered fully. This would add another dimension to it in which, obviously, the minister would have discretion, would consult potentially with others, and is in a position to then make decisions on individual cases that would be in the interests of not only that individual, their family, perhaps their community but also in the broader public interest.

I'll be supporting this amendment, Madam Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the amendment from the Member for Strathmore-Brooks. I would like to begin by stating that I appreciate the thought that he's given this particular issue. I certainly recognize that the enforcement of laws around cannabis has been

shown to statistically have targeted more individuals from marginalized communities than from the mainstream or, shall we say – let's be honest – the Caucasian community. That is something that I think we need to be aware of and that I'm certainly hoping the federal government is considering. As the member has suggested, the federal government should be considering providing pardons or exemptions for individuals who have been convicted under laws which are now going to be taken off the books and indeed recognizing that those laws have impacted individuals from marginalized communities more than from others.

8:30

It would be my hope, particularly as we work towards issues like reconciliation with indigenous peoples in Canada, and certainly as the federal government has indicated its intent – it recognized this year the International Decade for People of African Descent and has made other efforts towards trying to balance some of these issues – that it would be considering the impact these laws have had on these communities and, indeed, with legalization of cannabis would be moving to help redress the problems that have been caused for those communities by the application of those laws disproportionately.

That said, in regard to this particular amendment we believe that the requirements that have been put in place so far for cannabis workers are important to ensure that the product is distributed safely and legally and to achieve the goals of keeping cannabis out of the hands of children, those under the age of 18. Those requirements are not subjective. They are: a minimum age of 18; a completion of the mandatory SellSafe training, which will be related to the ProServe training we were discussing earlier but for cannabis; and passing a records check.

Now, of course we believe that it is important for individuals to have recourse if they feel that they've been excluded when they should not have been, and the AGLC is well suited for that task. That's why they were given the job of overseeing the use and sale of cannabis here in the province. They've long been a quasi-judicial board here in the province. They hear appeals on liquor and gaming issues. They have the capacity to do the same with cannabis.

We recognize that the board is going to require some additional capacity in order for them to take on this additional work. That's why this legislation also moves to expand the AGLC board to nine members. The additional capacity will allow the board to add the expertise it will need and to deal more quickly with both policy issues that may arise and to address additional appeals and hearings. They have a well-established process in place to deal with concerns or complaints of this nature. We have confidence in this process. We believe it would be inappropriate for the minister to get involved in such decisions. It's our belief that the legislation as it's currently presented allows us to achieve our goals of keeping cannabis out of the hands of kids, protecting our roads and public spaces, and curbing the illicit market.

Indeed, Madam Chair, I've encountered a similar circumstance. Recently I've been talking with some folks who had been told that they would no longer have access to a casino licence through the AGLC due to some changes that had occurred, so they came to speak with me in my office, and we discussed it with them. Ultimately, they had the ability to appeal through the AGLC to make that decision, and that is as appropriate. With the AGLC being an autonomous body, we wouldn't want the minister interfering with the decisions that are made.

But I am happy to report, as I do understand the concerns of the Member for Strathmore-Brooks, that the AGLC has already put in place some of the regulations that would be around determining what the requirements would be to be a qualified cannabis worker,

that being, as I mentioned, the minimum age of 18, completion of the mandatory SellSafe training, and passing a records check.

In February they defined in the regulations that a person does not pass a records check if they've been charged with or convicted of an offence under the Criminal Code, the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, the Food and Drugs Act, or the Excise Act, and, in the opinion of the board, the offence is sufficiently serious that it may detract from the orderly or lawful conduct of activities authorized by a cannabis licence. But in doing so, they specifically excluded from these charges or convictions the possession of cannabis, so a cannabis charge for possession would not be an automatic exclusion.

The criteria and the processes that I mentioned are in place, then, including the offences against which an assessment might be made, and that process includes escalation for assessment through the director of investigations with the AGLC.

Finally, then, if the qualification was denied at that level, the worker would have the ability to appeal to the vice-president of regulatory services within the AGLC. So there is a dual-level appeal process that has been set up within the AGLC, and, as I said, I believe that's the appropriate place for that to occur, at a distance from the minister, so that they can continue their work as an autonomous agency on behalf of the province of Alberta.

With those thoughts, I'll give, I guess, any further members the opportunity to respond. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

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

Mr. Ellis: Yes. Well, thank you, Madam Chair. It truly is bizarre land today. Let's take note of the date, May 16, 2018: the United Conservatives agreeing with the NDP, the Liberals agreeing with the Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

I'd like to thank the previous speaker for his words. I do concur with what the Member for Edmonton-Centre said. You know, the Alberta gaming, liquor, and cannabis commission is indeed a quasi-judicial board, and certainly there is an appeals process. Again, you can appeal to the Court of Queen's Bench, certainly, if a particular decision is not liked by a particular party.

That being said, as indicated by the Member for Edmonton-Centre, there appears to already be an exemption for simple cannabis possession, so, you know, I certainly encourage the government to do whatever they can to support people who have been convicted for a substance where it's now about to be legal.

I can tell you from my own personal experience, Madam Chair, that I never ever really felt comfortable laying that simple possession charge for marijuana, and it's not really a particular charge that I certainly spent a lot of time laying with alleged offenders at that particular time.

Again, I don't want to belabour the moment and the discussion here. I will only add that it also doesn't seem practical to send it all the way to the minister's office for a final appeal. Certainly, there's an alternative way, and I think we do have confidence in the Alberta gaming, liquor, and cannabis commission to deal with it, so I would like to encourage members not to support this amendment.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll thank members for their comments. We really have entered the twilight zone when the liberals and the libertarian are on the same page, and the

socialists and the conservatives are, too. We make for strange bedfellows in this place sometimes. But I want to thank all members for their comments. I think they're still all well taken.

The Member for Edmonton-Centre had very pertinent and important points about how a lot of drug prohibition laws have had a significantly disproportional effect on a lot of disadvantaged minority groups. Our First Nations, visible minorities have been far disproportionately charged and convicted under many of these laws, even more so in the United States. I don't think it's as acute in Canada, but I think that these problems still do plague us here.

There is actually a very clear history in the United States of how cannabis prohibition was actually quite explicitly a racist law, meant just simply to give governments the powers to oppress African Americans. That was the whole intention for many behind the initial push for cannabis prohibition. It eventually got sold in other ways because that's perhaps not a very civilized pitch for a law, but those were some of the main intentions behind the original push for cannabis prohibition in the United States. If that was here is more difficult to say, but we often follow the United States's lead on things, for better or worse.

But to the Member for Edmonton-Centre's comments, then, I think, in large measure echoed by the Member for Calgary-West, you're actually not incorrect in most of what you've said. The AGLC is a very respected and established organization. They have excellent professionals who do a very good job of regulating the liquor and gaming industry, and I've got quite a bit of confidence in their ability to do so when cannabis becomes legal here, expected July 1.

They are reinventing the wheel a bit here. They're looking into a new industry that has not existed in Canada in a legal form in the modern era. Like, they're going to be making decisions that are not purely administrative in nature. Alcohol prohibition ended, if I'm not mistaken, in the 1920s in Canada, in the 1930s in the United States. We have not had a licensed, above ground, legal cannabis industry in this country in the modern era. They are reinventing the wheel here. They're going to face a lot of major challenges, and some of these decisions that they're going to have to make will be political in nature. Some of these decisions will not be easy decisions with a lot of precedent behind them.

8:40

You know, if you've been charged under the Excise Act even for non pot – what if you screwed up paying duty free coming through the border once and you may have had an Excise Act charge? You could potentially fall under that. So some discretion is going to be necessary. Some of the decisions around how we administer legal, licensed cannabis, at least in the first few years, will be political in nature, and there needs to be a final stage of appeal where decisions can be made that are of a more political nature.

The AGLC is very loath to make political decisions. Like most bureaucracies, they will err on the side of caution. In many cases I fear that people, especially who are in more extraordinary circumstances, could be barred from entering the legal market.

I take as prime examples Marc and Jodie Emery. They operate out of Vancouver. They're not here, but I know they want to set up businesses in Alberta. I was actually just talking to them today, consulting about this amendment going forward, and I have them in mind. They don't have simple possession. They are technically dealers. They sold seeds. They didn't sell cannabis. They sold seeds, and they had a big storefront with a sign on it. They paid taxes, and they said on their tax forms exactly what they did and sold. They remitted GST to the federal government. They remitted PST to the provincial government. They accepted payments by credit card for seeds. Now, I don't know any street dealers who

remit GST to the federal government. I don't know any street dealers who have a nice storefront and accept MasterCard or Air Miles. That doesn't fit the definition of a dealer or organized crime, but they are an ambiguous case.

They were targeted because some of their sales went towards activism for legalization in the United States, and the DEA had Marc extradited, and he spent five years in a U.S. prison unjustly. He did nothing wrong, but the DEA wanted to stop his activism. So he has a charge against him. Now, he is an extraordinary case. There'll be very few cases like that, but that's what this amendment is for. If the AGLC is faced with a decision that is not very clear, that does not have a lot of precedent behind it, because there is almost no precedence in this – they're a quasi-judicial body. Where are they going to look to? They can't even look to examples in other provinces because we're all going towards legalization at the same time.

So there needs to be a final route of appeal at the end of the road. The AGLC is very well equipped to handle probably 99.5 per cent of these cases, and there is an appeals process there within that can handle appeals reasonably. But at least for the first few years there will be ambiguous decisions, decisions that are not clearly outlined in the law as one way or another, decisions that may require a political call at the end of the day.

That's why it is important that after someone has gone through the entire process in the AGLC, they have the ability to request in writing to the minister a final route of appeal. The minister is under no obligation to accept it, under no obligation whatsoever, but if they've exhausted the process in the AGLC, there needs to be a final place that they can go where an ambiguous decision that doesn't have precedence behind it, that might be extraordinary can be addressed. I think that that's just justice. I think it's fairness, and I think it's compassionate.

I actually agree with the vast majority of what the members for Edmonton-Centre and Calgary-West have said. They seem to have a good grasp of the AGLC and the way it's working. It is a very good organization that we can be very proud of. As far as we can be proud of bureaucracies, we can be proud of the AGLC. It does a very good job. But it is important that for these extraordinary cases, as we're writing the book on this, making history, without any precedents to look to in the law, there be a final route of appeal.

So I ask that members consider this in making their decision on how they would vote on this amendment so that we can take Alberta, which is without a doubt the best example in the country for how we should be moving forward with legalization, and make it all that much better and set an example for other jurisdictions that we understand that it is not right to treat people as criminals for activities that are no longer crimes.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any of members wishing to speak to amendment A1?

Seeing none, I will call the question on the amendment.

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, we are now back on the original bill. Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Chair. I won't take long. I've just been asked to provide a bit of information on behalf of the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General in regard to some questions that have been raised during debate so far. There's been some good discussion about the changes so far, and I'd like to thank everybody who has provided their thoughts and their opinions.

In response to a question regarding whether an 18-year-old high school student could have cannabis in his or her possession on school grounds, I think it's important to make clear that, as is the case with tobacco or alcohol, which may be legally possessed by those who are 18 years of age or older, school boards are able and have the right to establish policies governing possession on school property. Government rules for legalized cannabis are designed to protect youth by ensuring that cannabis retail locations aren't located in close proximity to schools, that minors are not permitted in cannabis stores, and indeed that cannabis products and promotional materials aren't visible to young people.

In regard to some concerns that were raised by other members regarding the potential for confusion, with different rules existing in different parts of the province around where cannabis can or cannot be smoked or vaped, to be clear, in the fall session here in the Assembly we passed Bill 26. That bill prohibited individuals from smoking and vaping cannabis anywhere where they are prohibited from smoking tobacco as well as in additional specified areas that are likely to be frequented by children. That would include, of course, schools, as I mentioned, but also play structures, playgrounds, splash parks, and the like. As with restrictions on tobacco smoking, municipalities then have their own discretion respecting local decision-making through bylaws that reflect local priorities and circumstances. Public education campaigns ahead of legalization will help to inform Albertans about what the provincial regulations are while emphasizing where local rules may vary to help avoid confusion, so perhaps between Calgary, which has opted to put some tighter restrictions on where cannabis may be consumed and, say, the city of Edmonton, which has opted so far for a more open approach.

There are also some questions that were raised regarding why the government would allow some retailers to sell items other than cannabis and cannabis products. Again, these are changes that were part of Bill 26 when it was debated and passed in the fall session. Currently in the case of liquor sales we recognize that there are some remote locations in Alberta where a stand-alone liquor store would simply not be viable. They would not have the sales volume to make it worth their while. There is in existence already a special class of licence that allows liquor sales in retail locations where they normally would not be permitted; for example, in a small, remote community at the general store. When it comes to cannabis, given that online sales are going to be available, as has been mentioned, we don't know at this point if there's actually going to be a need or if there's going to be a demand or indeed any interest for alternative retail locations in some remote communities, but should that be found to be necessary, the legislation establishes the authority to create regulations to govern those exemptions. So it's provided in the provisions, once we actually see how things start to operate in the field, to have that option available just as it is for liquor.

8:50

Now, in regard to a comment that was raised around the Drug-endangered Children Act and a question about whether our cannabis regulations are placing children in danger, I want to make it very clear that the purpose of the Drug-endangered Children Act is primarily to protect children from exposure to the dangers associated with illegal drug manufacturing or production, for example hazardous chemicals, or to the dangers associated with trafficking and other forms of illegal drug activity. Much different from small amounts of cannabis. It was largely established in response to encountering children in meth houses or in high-risk cannabis production situations that were using butane hash oil, which is explosive. Those risks are not anticipated in households that are limited to up to four legally grown cannabis plants for personal use.

That said, the use of organic solvents such as butane hash oil remains a criminal offence, and if there are reasonable and probable grounds to believe that a child is in need of intervention due to endangerment by a guardian for whatever reason, the powers under the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act remain available to help protect those children.

Lastly, there was a member who asked, stepping away from cannabis for a moment – this bill does deal with a couple of other things – if this bill will allow you-brew operations. The answer to that is yes. The authority established in Bill 6 here will allow the AGLC, which, interestingly, as has been mentioned, is going to be the Alberta liquor, gaming, and cannabis commission – unfortunately for those of us who love a good pun, it will remain the AGLC with one C and not two. We'll find a way to live. Anyways, this bill allows them to create appropriate licence types for on-site brewing for patrons under the guidance of a licensee.

The details of what activities will be allowed specifically under this licence type will be established by amendment to the gaming and liquor regulation and developed in consultation with stakeholders. The you-brew scenario would be one potential option for a licence holder. There are a few pieces in here that are sort of opening up a few more opportunities for folks that are operating businesses that primarily sell alcohol but may also want to branch out into allowing others to come in and brew at their premises as well.

In short, if passed, Bill 6 is going to, I think, be another step in our continued work to prepare for the legalization of cannabis and build a system that I truly believe is going to prioritize the health and safety of Albertans. Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 6?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[The clauses of Bill 6 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Chair. At this time I would like to request that we rise and report on bills 17, 11, and 6.

[Motion carried]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Mr. Hinkley: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bills: Bill 17, Bill 11, and Bill 6. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this day for the official records of the Assembly.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

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

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Acting Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

(continued)

Bill 2

Growth and Diversification Act

Mr. Cooper moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 2, Growth and Diversification Act, be amended by deleting all of the words after “that” and substituting the following:

Bill 2, Growth and Diversification Act, be not now read a second time because the Assembly is of the view that the government should pursue other measures to reduce the cost of doing business in the province, including the introduction of legislation to eliminate the carbon levy, which, if implemented, would make the measures proposed in the bill unnecessary.

[Adjourned debate on the amendment May 15: Mr. Mason]

The Acting Speaker: Are there any hon. members wishing to speak to Bill 2? The hon. Member for . . .

Mr. Cyr: The reasoned amendment.

The Acting Speaker: Oh. Yes, we are. We are on the reasoned amendment. The hon. Member for – where are you? – Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yes. It's getting late, so I do sympathize with you. And the material that we're about to go into is a little dry, so I sympathize even further.

Now, Bill 2. I had earlier talked on the main bill about how I was concerned about the fact that we may be training massive numbers of Albertans to be working in other provinces. I did go through how I thought that maybe that would be a poor strategy if we do not have jobs for these individuals, and I think that's a reasonable concern.

Moving on from there and dealing with the reasoned amendment, this does also go on to credits, the Alberta investor tax credit, the AITC. It also goes on to the capital investment tax credit, the CITC. Now, when I started looking for press releases – I like to know what it is that the government is saying that they're trying to achieve with whatever bill that they're putting forward – I came across the last time that we had a bill put forward that was similar to this. I'd like to mention that we had a press release put out by the government on February 21, 2018: Tax Credit Spurs Growth in Northern Alberta. This is good to hear, that they're trying to spur growth in northern Alberta, especially with the fact that my constituency is based in northern Alberta.

It says right underneath the title here: “Alberta's north will see new jobs and business expansion with support from the Capital Investment Tax Credit.” That's the CITC. That's the one that I just mentioned that is in Bill 2. This is the next phase, if you will. It sounds like there was three tranches when they came out with the original one.

Now what we've got here, moving forward, is a quote from the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. The minister says:

We're proud to have created a tax credit that helps businesses in Alberta create good jobs in a variety of sectors – diversifying our economy and helping protect us from the oil price roller-coaster. Other provinces have had tax credits like this for decades. Per capita private-sector investment in Alberta rose to more than twice the national average last year, during the first round of our CITC. We will keep building on that momentum.

So the government comes out with something new. They justify it by saying that it's done in other places, so it's going work here. What we continued to ask for was an economic impact study.

Clearly, the government doesn't like doing those. But for argument's sake, if we put forward a tax credit, it would be nice to know if the first one worked before we move on to a second one. I don't believe that's unreasonable. When we ask for anything that they would have, all we hear is: you're trying to mislead Albertans; you're trying to, more or less, put down what we're trying to achieve.

I don't agree with that because if you fail, my communities hurt. That is just a fact. We have high unemployment rates. We have incredibly high vacancy rates. We have businesses closing, which I addressed last week. Lafarge is a good example. Lafarge Canada shut down two cement plants within my constituency. So let's be clear. I want to see these things work as much as you do, but I want to know that they're going to do something. Now, I understand that the argument is that if we study it, then potentially we're going to be taking time away from helping people, but the fact is that we don't even know if the first one worked.

9:00

What I would like to know here is that when we start looking at how these more or less corporate welfares work – I went and found an article by a man named Mark Milke, and this was written on January 22, 2017. The title of the article is *The Non-transparent Reality of Canadian Corporate Welfare*. This is exactly what I am talking about. We need transparency to know if it worked. Now, I'm going to read some of this article because a lot of it, actually, is relevant.

Politicians offer many justifications for handing out taxpayer cash to corporations. They include how government grants and loans are akin to "acorns" that will ostensibly grow companies to great heights.

Or the usual canard, on offer recently when the federal and Ontario governments gave \$83.6 million in taxpayer cash . . . to Honda of Canada: that extra jobs and tax revenues will result.

What happens is that we get a government that says that we're going to give this money out and that we're going to get this money back in return. So is it unreasonable for Albertans to find out if that first bit of money that we had given out achieved the targets the government had set?

Now, when we look at this, it's very clear that they're saying that what happens is that the government is really good at announcing subsidies and grants and loans to corporations. They say that we're going to create jobs, we're going to create wealth, and we're going to improve Alberta as a whole. The question is: did that happen? I, again, want to see these things work as much as you do because it means jobs in my constituency.

It goes on to say:

The economic literature on such claims is almost uniformly negative. Here's what Terry Buss, a professor in Australia formerly with the World Bank, and one of the world's leading experts on subsidies to business, points out: The claims and the flawed supportive studies that accompany them are inevitably "based on poor data, unsound social-science methods [and] faulty economic reasoning."

What we've got here is a government that puts out a projection. Now, we hear the government in this House say that they've got a six-year plan – six-year plan – yet we hear the government say that we can't plan out beyond a couple of years because of the fact that we don't know what oil prices are going to be. So making something out that far really is guesswork, or a guesstimate if you will. Now, I do see value in saying that we should be looking out further, but putting all of our ducks in one basket that that one six-year plan is going to actually be achieved is a little bit of a stretch.

Now, it moves on to say:

As an example, the substitution effect is ignored. That's where the money used for subsidies to business – corporate welfare in common parlance – comes from other businesses and individual taxpayers. That transfer thus depresses economic activity, jobs and tax revenues elsewhere in the economy.

What we're saying here is that we have to take from one place in our economy, and we're picking a winner and loser in another part of our economy. Now, what's happening here is that when we take from businesses that are already hurting like businesses within Bonnyville-Cold Lake that are already running, then we more or less start driving them into the ground so that we can create diversification. That could be very harmful. That's why I'm asking you: did you do an economic impact study on the fact that this first round didn't work? I haven't seen evidence that shows it, but I do have evidence that there are businesses still closing down in my constituency. I also have evidence that shows that investment is moving away from Bonnyville-Cold Lake when it comes to the oil sands. We've got large companies, international companies that are outright telling this government that what you're implementing in policy is hurting them and that they are moving their investment away. That isn't good for anywhere, especially Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Now, this one here says,

arguments over the efficacy of subsidies to business aside, taxpayers at least deserve to know how much of their money is granted, loaned, and repaid – including how the loans perform.

This moves on to say that if you're going to do it, there should be some incredibly strict guidelines and performance measures that are in place. We need to track this. That is just a fact, because when we start giving out taxpayer money, we have no idea where it's going.

I'm going to go down a little further because this actually goes on to a part that I had talked about before, which was Bombardier. Now, what we've got here is that when the federal government had given money to Bombardier, this individual, Mr. Milke, had asked for transparency. He went to the federal government, and he used the FOIP program, which is the way residents get to find out if the money is being used responsibly because sometimes the government actually has these answers and refuses to release them to the public. That is shameful unless there is something that is preventing them. Normally what happens is that you'll find that the only reason that they could come forward with is that it's embarrassing to the government of the day.

Now, it goes on. It says that

the department told me to file an Access to Information request. I did, for all grants and loans over \$5-million for all companies. The request came back with information for Bombardier (and some other companies) blacked out – completely. Bombardier's information was clearly missing because I possess the results of past Access to Information requests – now five years old, which were more transparent.

Recent practice is to deny such information. That is in part because Bombardier is in Federal Court blocking Access to Information data from being released. It is also because of department and Information Commissioner interpretations of Section 20 of the Access to Information Act. That section requires a department to not release information that might result in material financial loss or gain to a third party, or which might prejudice their competitive position.

Now, I would like to just wrap up saying that when it comes to these programs, we give a lot of money, we have no ability to be able to track if it was successful and what your intent was, and then when people want to find out, they can't even FOIP that information. This is why Bill 2 needs this reasoned amendment to go down. We need to make sure that we see this bill brought to a

committee or any other way, but we need to make sure. The fact that this is working is very important.

Now, Madam Speaker, I would like to move that we go to one-minute bells for the remainder of the evening.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Acting Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

9:10

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my privilege to rise and speak today to government Bill 2, Growth and Diversification Act, which is really a basket full of a bunch of different pieces that are all meant to rescue our economy from its current state. I think there are some of these pieces that seem useful. I haven't got a doubt that they've been brought forward with some good intent and with a bit of a will to try and make some things better, but I'm not sure I can have a lot of confidence based on the reality that the government's past track record in actually consulting with stakeholders and hearing from them directly hasn't been very effective. Too often consultation turns out to be nothing more than seeking those who will give some confirmation bias but doesn't really challenge the ideas or challenge the need to look at things a little bit differently. For that reason, I'm in favour of the reasoned amendment and will support that amendment.

The reality is that in my own connections with people I've run into some stakeholders in the film industry that don't even know about the interactive digital media tax credit. I think that in order for this to work any better than the last one, as my fellow member here was just speaking about, clearly it's going to need to be promoted. People are going to need to be aware of it. The truth is that it tells me that there probably hasn't been a lot of broad consultation even within industry when at this stage in the game they don't even know anything about it yet.

While I think the bill shows some good intentions, I do have my doubts, as I say, as has already been described somewhat by the previous member, and I would further say that the reality is that there have just been too many other damaging policies come from this government that have crippled the ability of business and the people to really trust where this is leading. We need a fulsome study of this bill, and we need to look into the actual effectiveness or not of the previous one.

I guess part of my concern also rises from realizing that folks at the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, which focuses on entrepreneurship and how to develop entrepreneurial realities, have done some significant study on the whole business of government funding development in certain business fields and, studying several hundred of them across the U.S., have discovered that there's only very, very few of them, in the order of maybe half a dozen, that have ever actually returned anything to the taxpayer of real value. What the taxpayers pay and what they get in the supposed results just never does add up although it does seem to be a favoured political move of politicians to try and make the promise and the promotion.

So there are reasons to be concerned, reasons to question: was the last one that we've just had here in this province actually of any effect or not? As I just mentioned, major studies indicate that quite likely it hasn't been. While it all sounds reasonable and I accept the good intention, I think there is some further work that needs to be done. I think there's some real additional homework that should happen before we rush ahead and commit a bunch more taxpayer dollars to something that's motivated with good intent but maybe not a lot of wisdom in it. It has the appearance, as so often these kinds of government initiatives do, of sort of grasping at straws to

try and make something happen, try and stir something up to make things look better and to make it look like the government is busy, but too often they actually end up hurting the economy rather than repairing it, and I think this basket full of many little pieces may have some of those characteristics to it, to be truthful.

So let's look at some of the pieces. The bill creates tech spaces in postsecondary institutions, creates a framework to invest new scholarships and programs for tech industry. It also launches the interactive digital media tax credit, as I referred to a moment ago. It continues the Alberta investor tax credit and the capital investment tax credit. It gives the minister responsibility also for a new piece, the unmanned aerial systems sector. Quite frankly, the only thing that ties these all together is the wish or the hope that somehow these are going to improve the economy, that these are going to make things better for the economy, and that somehow Alberta's economy is all of a sudden going to be revived because we have these pieces in play.

But, as has been said, the last Alberta investor tax credit wasn't entirely successful. A lot of it was and has probably brought some benefit, but just recently checking the website, there's still \$1.4 million that were unallocated, so there are some questions there about: was the intake lower than expected? Was it not efficiently advertised or distributed? Just some questions there that I think need to be answered before we rush into something new.

With regard to the last Bill 30, Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act, from December 2016, both of the legacy parties had a hard time supporting the bill, again, without some kind of economic facts and a study to back it up and to support it in a very real way. If we want to do what's right, we need to know whether what we've been doing is the right thing to do, because, as I think Einstein quite well said, if you keep doing the same thing, you're going to get the same results. If the results aren't what we're hoping for, then we need to do something a little bit differently.

That Bill 30 and this Bill 2 leave me feeling somewhat the same. The truth is that if this government had not implemented sort of global damaging economic policies, Alberta really would be in much better shape and be a much better place to live today than it is. We see some glimmers of hope. By now we should be actually into full-blown growth and recovery. The little bit of hope that we're seeing here now is minimal compared to what has happened in other areas. In Saskatchewan and the U.S. they're into full growth, and here we're just struggling along. The truth is that when the environment is healthy, plants flourish. When the environment is not healthy, plants just barely survive. When the economy is healthy, business and investment flourish, and they do so much more. We're not nearly where we could be or where we should be at this point in time, and these kinds of efforts to fix the major problems, as I said, of global economic policies, universal economic policies that have hampered and damaged our economy are the real problem, the things that we really need to be fixing.

So it seems that this government is just sort of trying to put a Band-Aid on it, to fix an economy that's been broken under their care, that really has been damaged by risky and radical policies, and something else needs to be done.

I'd like to refer to the very recent, May 14, Conference Board of Canada report Alberta Has Entrepreneurial Spirit but Falls to a "D" Grade on Conference Board's Innovation Report Card. Clearly, something is not right here because Alberta has fallen to a D grade. We're 19th amongst 26 comparative jurisdictions – 10 provinces, 16 advanced countries – behind most in Canada here. Our innovation report card is not doing very well, yet when you look into the details of this Conference Board of Canada report, it's even more instructive. It confirms that Alberta, in fact, is a province of self-starting entrepreneurs, because we rank first amongst

provinces on both entrepreneurial ambition and enterprise entries. But the trouble is that while there are a lot of people trying to be entrepreneurial, the low and the falling rankings in the numbers are the fact that we don't have people willing to invest deep amounts of money in research and development. Venture capital investment is way too low. Public and business research and development are not what they should be.

9:20

The reality is that while we get an A plus for ambition – Alberta wants to be entrepreneurial – we earn a D on most of the things that would make it happen, which includes the willingness to commit to research and development, which is an indication, quite frankly, of political risk – they view the risk as too high – and the fact that we don't have anybody willing to invest here, again because of political risk. Seventeen per cent of Albertans report some kind of early stage entrepreneurial activity, and then it drops right off. Why? Because they encounter a wall of regulation and delays and costs that make it impossible for them to have the hope to proceed and go through.

We get a B on labour productivity. Albertans want to be there, they want to do it, but they've got a government, quite frankly, that is making it extremely hard for them to do it, a government that is causing innovation to leave the province, a government that puts up so many regulations and difficulties that they give up after they make the initial effort.

I think that these overall policies that create this kind of a report from the Conference Board of Canada are much more important considerations. The way to draw and attract investment into Alberta is simply to reduce all the red tape, reduce the regulatory burden, reduce the tax for all businesses, and create an overall environment that is actually supportive of business rather than holds business as somehow a suspicious activity and people that have the capital to invest as somehow evil and betraying the rest of society. Those are just simply not true. We get what we are investing in here, which is driving the money and the investment and the innovation right out of our province.

I also struggle with the policy that selects relatively small slivers of industry and supports them. What about all the rest? If we had universal policies that were supportive of business, business in so many other areas would also proceed and advance. The problem with picking winners and losers is that it creates a market distortion, it creates an artificial demand, and it creates an environment that's unsustainable in the real world. So I don't think playing favourites is a good idea. We've seen what's happened in other provinces when these same kinds of policies have been put into place. Government basically drives business out in the process of trying to say that they're creating it.

Here we have in Alberta over the last few years a situation in which our strongest industry was in recession. Prices plummeted, no doubt. A majority of those kinds of high-paying jobs were lost, sending tens of thousands of people out of work, but not in Saskatchewan or the U.S. They're doing just fine, quite frankly. Sometimes the jobs people have now in replacement are part-time jobs just to feed their families. Many of them have lost their homes, including in my own riding, because of the financial hardship that's driven by policy.

The reality is that we've had a government that's continually put up barriers for the industry and created difficulties, and that's what has driven the industry out. We started in 2015 with a royalty review because the Premier was very clear that Albertans deserved their fair share. In the process we created nine months of uncertainty for industry, continued to drive capital out of the province, and in the end, after nine months of uncertainty, the Premier had to come forward and say that, well, in fact, Albertans are getting their fair

share. This idea that somehow business and investment are evil and wrong just needs to be challenged and corrected.

Then we have all kinds of other damaging policies like increasing the minimum wage, increasing taxes on business. Oh, and let's not forget that ill-conceived carbon tax. All of this has driven our province into a tailspin, is already hurting our economy, drove investors out. We would be much farther ahead now if we hadn't had this global policy of being antibusiness in so many respects.

At the time when the NDP first came into power, they were very vocal that they were against the oil and gas sector and against pipelines, calling Albertans embarrassing cousins because of it, and as a result, investors have withdrawn from the province and decided not to invest in any projects inside Alberta's jurisdiction. I mean, the NDP made this abundantly clear in the beginning years. They raised business taxes by a whopping 20 per cent. The money that's been taken out of business in this province, that could have been reinvested in so many different industries and created tens of thousands of jobs, went elsewhere, which is a tragedy. Who raids businesses during a recession? Really. That's crazy. It's a move that was destructive and has reduced jobs in Alberta, and all of these things together have contributed to an environment that has caused us to suffer in our industry.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and let me apologize in advance to all of my colleagues for taking up an additional five minutes, but I just couldn't restrain myself. You know, I understand that the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka in a previous life was a minister. I haven't been converted, but I am convinced that there is an afterlife. Certainly, listening to the member speak, I hope that it comes quickly.

I do want to address some of the issues that were raised in some of things that we heard this evening from the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka as well as some of the other things that we've heard because, you know, one of the things that we continue to hear in speeches to this bill is about how economic development in Alberta is suffering, right? If the members opposite were to be believed, our economy is lagging the country, people are not feeling the recovery, and while it's certainly true that not everyone is feeling the recovery, economic growth is up. Every economic indicator that should be up is up.

You know, when I listen to the members opposite talk about the economy here in Alberta, I'm reminded of that scene from *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, where they drag the patient out of the house and say, "Here's a dead one for you," and he pops up and says, "Well, I'm not dead yet." Of course, they claim that he is dead. He says, "Well, actually, no; I might feel better." Then they actually kill him to prove their point that he's dead. When I hear the United Conservative Party members opposite talk about Alberta's economy, it's reminiscent of the way those people react to their claims that this person was not dead.

You know, the other thing that we continue to hear is whether we did an economic analysis of the capital investment tax credit and the Alberta investor tax credit. For everyone's reference I want to reference a press release dated February 5, 2018, where we provide some information about the effectiveness of the capital investment tax credit. To quote from that, it's created "more than 3,000 jobs, with companies investing more than \$1.2 billion to build or upgrade . . . facilities." So that's a significant economic impact.

What's interesting, though, are two things when we talk about economic impacts. We know that the Leader of the Official Opposition, when he was in Ottawa in 2009, voted for a \$10 billion

subsidy to the auto industry in Ontario, and I invite the members opposite to table the economic impact analysis that the government did at that time when they voted for that industry.

What's also interesting, though, Madam Speaker, and I know is interesting to many of our colleagues is that the members opposite continue to call for tax cuts, personal income tax cuts as well as corporate tax cuts, yet they don't provide any economic impact analysis of those tax cuts. The good news is that they don't have to because we've done the economic impact analysis of those tax cuts, and I'd like to take a few moments and just elucidate those for the people listening.

We know that millionaires and billionaires will be given an extra \$700 million, which is \$700 million that will come out of the government's budget to spend on things like health care and education. So if we look at \$700 million out of the Education budget, for example, that means people would only be able to go up to grade 8 – right? – which was good enough for my grandparents' generation, but it's not good enough for Albertans today. We need to have not only more Albertans graduating from high school, but we need more Albertans to go on to postsecondary education, which is another thing that this bill that's before us is contemplating. You know, \$700 million, of course, would mean that we don't get a Calgary cancer centre or a new hospital in Edmonton or would significantly impact the construction of the green line or hundreds of schools across the province. It would throw thousands of teachers and nurses out of work, Madam Speaker.

9:30

That kind of economic impact analysis the members opposite aren't honest about, but fortunately the people of Alberta can rely on us to tell the truth about what kind of economic impact we can expect from those kinds of tax cuts, Madam Speaker. You know, it's quite clear that those economic impacts would be devastating to the people of Alberta except the millionaires and billionaires, who would stand to gain significantly.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the reasoned amendment?

Seeing none, I'll put the question.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:31 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Cyr	Nixon	Schneider
Ellis	Orr	Taylor
McIver		

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hinkley	Miller
Carlier	Horne	Payne
Carson	Jansen	Piquette
Connolly	Kazim	Renaud
Coolahan	Kleinstieber	Rosendahl
Cortes-Vargas	Larivee	Schmidt
Dach	Littlewood	Schreiner
Dang	Loyola	Shepherd
Eggen	Malkinson	Sucha
Fitzpatrick	McCuaig-Boyd	Turner
Goehring	McKittrick	Woollard

Totals:	For – 7	Against – 33
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[Motion on amendment to second reading of Bill 2 lost]

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, we will now resume debate on the motion for second reading. The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Speaker. At this time I'd like to move that we adjourn debate on Bill 2.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Seeing that we've made tremendous progress this evening, I'd like to move that we adjourn the House until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 9:36 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday morning, May 17, 2018

Day 32

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (NDP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (UCP),
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Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (UCP)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (NDP)
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Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (NDP)
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Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (NDP)
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (NDP)
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)
Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (NDP)
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Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP),
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Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (NDP),
Deputy Government House Leader
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Official Opposition Deputy Whip
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (UCP)
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Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)
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Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (NDP),
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Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)
Vacant, Fort McMurray-Conklin
Vacant, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake

Party standings:

New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 25 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent Conservative: 1 Vacant: 2

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Thursday, May 17, 2018

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Deputy Speaker: Good morning.

Let us reflect. As we finish our work this week and prepare to return to our home constituencies, let's reflect on the positive things we've accomplished over the last few weeks. Let us always seek more opportunities to make life better for the families in the communities that we serve.

Please be seated.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

Bill 13

An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future

Mrs. Pitt moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future, be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

[Adjourned debate on the amendment May 9: Ms Ganley]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Orr: Lacombe-Ponoka.

The Deputy Speaker: Sorry. Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: It's all right. A little farther north.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I consider it a privilege today to rise to speak to Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future. I believe we're on a referral motion, so I will speak to the referral and the reason why I think referral is important for this, that it be referred to committee and there be some further research put into considering it.

What's happening here is that Alberta is in the process of radically remaking our entire electricity system. We're moving from what has been an energy-only market to a capacity market. A capacity market pays investors to build capacity whether they will actually ever use that or not. It pays them the capital costs of constructing it. A parallel would be to say that we should pay the car manufacturers a fee just for the privilege of them actually manufacturing a factory, and then they make money off the sale of the cars.

It really is about indemnifying the risk of the investors more than anything else. It guarantees that the investor will not lose money on their capital investment whether there's a demand for that electricity or not – that's an important point – whether there's a consumer need for it or not. In effect, what it does is that it switches the risk and the liability away from the investor, away from the corporations that have money to invest, onto the backs and the responsibility of the citizens. Some that have written about it speak of it as a means of socializing the risk of the investment for electricity infrastructure, so it becomes then the risk and the

responsibility of the citizens and of the consumers to actually pay for that capacity whether or not it's actually used. Unfortunately, the reality is that world experience has shown in multiple jurisdictions that, in fact, the capacity is not used in many cases. It's overbuilt, so that becomes a real challenge, a real problem.

The reality is here that this is a further example of the current government driven by an ideology to socialize everything – old code language for that is to nationalize everything – even if it's at the risk of the consumer. I would have thought that a current government concerned about the ordinary person, the little guy in the province, would be more concerned about pushing the risk of loss onto the backs of the supposedly rich and evil corporations and letting them lose money rather than having to take it out of the wallet of the ordinary person, which all too often is the case. I actually think that we should make the investors responsible for the risk, and if there's loss, which does in fact sometimes happen, let them bear the loss. Let the national banks that finance them bear the loss rather than having to raise the taxes of individual consumers in order to pay for something that may, in fact, not actually be used.

There is the argument presented that, oh, it's necessary that we do this because we need to protect from brownouts. Well, studies show that there are, in fact, brownouts under capacity markets just as much. It happened quite a bit in the eastern U.S. in the early 1990s. The capacity wasn't there. There were other issues. So brownouts aren't really solved just by creating a capacity market. That's a cover that sounds good, but it doesn't really solve the problem.

What it does, though, is that the intent of it is to incentivize the capital build of electricity generating capacity, so it incentivizes corporations because it basically indemnifies their risk. It guarantees them a profit no matter what, and the result in too many cases is that, in fact, there is an overbuild of capacity, and then that overbuild sits. I'd like to refer to just a couple of illustrations from other markets that have occurred around our world.

The Texas regulator is a good example there. Back in 2010 to '12 there was a huge public debate in Texas, whether or not they should actually move to capacity markets. I refer to an article called Texas Regulators Saved Customers Billions by Avoiding a Traditional Capacity Market. I'd like to just point out a little phrase there, too, "traditional." Our current government has tried to tell the people of Alberta that this is something new and innovative and that they're actually doing something that's never been done before when, in fact, capacity markets have been around for a very, very long time. Their history and their track record is fairly well known, and in many places they have been looked at and rejected. As I said before, they are generally moved to not so much for economic reasons as for political agenda reasons.

In Texas the reality is that they had this long debate over a period of years. Regulators rejected the idea of capacity markets. The Electric Reliability Council of Texas looked at it, tried to predict where they were going. There was, of course, a huge debate over it, as we're having now, and the reality is that they avoided it and saved billions of dollars of potential consumer costs that would have raised the electricity costs for their consumers. In fact, their capacity issues, the amount of capacity online to make sure that there were not brownouts, things like that, have actually increased over the years under the current choices that they've made, energy-only, and it's saving their customers a substantial amount of money.

The capacity has increased for a couple of reasons. It's increased because of the ongoing build-out of renewable generation, which happened without the need for a capacity market. There's tremendous expansion in the renewable market. It also happened because of the reduction of natural gas costs, which we also have

here, so it's quite natural that people would move to that market. Then the reality is, too, that the – oh, I forgot what I was going to say.

I'll move on to the next piece. In essence, what they saved: the study shows here that if they had moved to capacity markets to close the supposed revenue gap for generators, it would have been an extra \$3.9 billion in 2014, an extra \$5.2 billion in 2015 for the consumers or the taxpayers of the state of Texas. Because they did not go to capacity markets, they've actually saved that much money for the consumers.

Oh, I know what I was going to say a minute ago. The reason that the increase in capacity has occurred is partly also because there's been a slight demand-curve decrease across the state. In fact, there's been research and study to show that across many, many jurisdictions, due to renewables, due to reduced costs, LED lights, the installation of new kinds of meters that charge people based on the demand hour – and the rate changes depending on what time of day they use, so people have become more responsible in when they use their electricity – the demand curve has slowly been reducing over the years in quite a few jurisdictions.

The result is, then, that staying with the energy market rather than going to capacity market has done a very good job of saving the people of Texas at least \$9 billion in two years alone. This is a serious consideration. We need to at least look at the example of other jurisdictions, find out what their experience has been, and use it as a little bit of caution as we move forward here in Alberta rather than just rushing forward on an ideological idea that seems like it might be really good. In fact, it hasn't always turned out that well in other jurisdictions.

9:10

A forward-capacity market that would have focused on guaranteeing investors the kind of money they want in Texas would have actually erased all of these savings of \$9 billion, as I just said, over two years, and consumers would have been out that much more money. Essentially, Texas regulators have let the investors assume the risk of reading the tea leaves of where demand is going to go, where we need more command, and allowing the generating companies to recover their costs through the actual sale of the electricity through forward markets.

Sometimes, then, the argument is thrown out: well, peak demand and other things cause huge escalations in price, and therefore we need to protect consumers from that. Well, that's a bit of a misnomer and a bit of a scare tactic, quite frankly, on the part of the government because it isn't the consumer directly that pays those peak prices; it's the distributors and the retailers. All of that is protected through forward hedging contracts in almost every jurisdiction in the world. It's averaged out over the period of the year, and the consumers never pay those massive, escalating prices that we've heard from the other side, thousands of dollars a kilowatt hour and that kind of thing.

Sure, it happens during peak demand, but those escalating costs, when they finally get to the consumer, are truly mitigated by means of forward averaging contracts, by the reality of the fact that we are now, across most parts of the world, moving to energy meters that can control and price the consumption of electricity at the retail level based on peak demand or nondemand and the fact that energy conservation appliances and lights and all the rest of it are reducing demand.

The world is changing in ways that – oftentimes governments try to predict and try to create policy predicting the future, and their predictions don't always turn out quite the way they thought they were going to. The conclusion of the Texas market is that the decision-makers elsewhere should reconsider using forward-

capacity markets to balance energy revenues in order to recover operating costs for producers. It's just a word of caution that we need to be careful how fast we jump into this thing because while it sounds like a great story, it hasn't always worked out in other jurisdictions.

In contrast to that – in Texas they chose to not go to capacity markets – on the other side of the example, in Western Australia they did go to capacity markets in spite of the fact that there were huge amounts of renewables taking place, several million solar systems being put up. They were trying to use a hybrid, both capacity and energy markets. Again, their predictions: the reason they went to it is because they predicted that the demand for electricity was going to continue to go up substantially, and in fact the demand didn't go up in Western Australia for the reasons I've already enumerated.

The government decided that they had to make sure that they were going to have a safe system, that they had to protect the consumer from potential shortages of power, et cetera, et cetera, the same story we hear. So they set out to procure capacity to meet a 1-in-10-year scenario for peak demand. They did that. They spent the money. They went through a whole process to get there, and then in spite of their predictions, the demand actually began to fall on them.

What happened is that as – there's a researcher, Philip Lewis, who has studied over 60 different markets around the world, and he says that since about 2006-2007 the reality is that the demand curve for electricity in the 60 markets he's studied, including most of the major ones, is actually falling in some respects, as I've said, because of these reasons: better meters, better use, those kinds of things.

What's happened now in Western Australia is that, in fact, they have 600 to 1,500 megawatts of overcapacity that they've built, that they've paid for, that they continue to make capacity payments on to the investors. Some of it is still being built under this system with little expectation that they're ever actually going to use these systems because the demand isn't there. But they set out in policy that we needed to do all of this. They paid for it with taxpayer money, and their conclusion is that in our system the excess capacity is socialized through the system rather than falling on the investors.

That is, truthfully, the risk that we are facing here by moving to a capacity market, that we may in fact be putting on the backs of consumers excess cost to create, to actually build electricity facilities to produce power that may in fact never actually be needed, as in Western Australia: 600 to 1,500 megawatts of overbuild that's been paid for, and it sits there basically mothballed, not being used. Although they had great intentions and good plans and actually thought they were doing a great thing, the truth is that it has not turned out the way they thought it was going to. To quote: capacity markets have proven to be a very expensive way to meet forward demand.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I was really following very intently the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka's comments. It seems he did a lot of research on other markets in Texas and Australia and elsewhere. He also talked about the forward hedge contracts that will derisk consumers and transfer the risk to the major companies, the big investors. He also made an interesting comment that this NDP government, who indulges in big propaganda every day, is on the side of regular Albertans, the common man. But it seems they're very tight with all these big businesses, big oil, and that they've forgotten about those regular

Albertans who elected them. I would ask the member to share his thoughts on that aspect.

Also, how do we actually derisk consumers from paying higher prices, not artificially capping at 6.8 cents per kilowatt but actually encouraging the generators to take that risk independent of the capacity they have and still provide reliability to the grid?

Thank you.

Mr. Orr: Thank you. Madam Speaker, yes, there is a difficult balance between how much is enough capacity and how much is too much because if we don't have enough, of course, we do have brownouts. If we have too much, the reality is that somebody has to pay for it and it has to come out of somebody's pocket. In reality it kind of turns out to be a bit of wasted money. Now, we need a little bit of reserve capacity, no doubt, but if we go over too far, the concern is that – well, for instance, in Texas recently, since 2016, there's been a lawsuit actually brought forward by one of the power companies over being fraudulently misled into investing \$2.2 billion in new combined power that isn't actually going to be needed. So what's happened even in Texas with energy-only markets is that the market has overbuilt.

What it boils down to is that this is a very delicate balance that no matter which system you use, you're never going to get it completely perfect, although one way or another eventually it sorts itself out, and we get the right balance.

My concern is that we really should be letting the investors bear the risk and not the taxpayers because the taxpayers shouldn't have to bear that. I think sometimes government, well, tries too hard. We try to look like we're fixing everything in the world. We jump into things that we really don't have the ability to fix. So we need to be careful as government that we don't jump in with great intentions but, in fact, end up costing consumers huge amounts of money that is in fact not wisely spent when things turn out somehow different than we originally thought they would in the first place.

We need to look at these other places. That's my whole point. I think this should go to referral. I think we need to study it carefully, that we really need to examine with all the stakeholders involved whether or not this is, in fact, the right thing to do or that maybe, in fact, it's a huge risk for the stakeholders. Primarily the taxpayers is what I really mean, that we're putting taxpayers at risk.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

9:20

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, and good morning to you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 13 and in particular to the referral amendment to committee from my colleague from Airdrie. I think that it'll come as no surprise to you and other members of the House that I'll be speaking in favour of sending this important piece of legislation to committee. I think my colleague from Lacombe-Ponoka has pointed out a number of very good reasons why it's important that we actually study this piece of legislation, why it's important that we hear from a wide variety of stakeholders.

There is significant, significant risk to Albertans and to the government with respect to the capacity market. We've heard much debate about the merits of that. We've heard the government talk about how everything is perfect and everything is going to go according to plan, but we've also seen the government literally cost Alberta taxpayers billions and billions of dollars on this very issue,

this issue of electricity and powering our province. You'll know, Madam Speaker, that the Balancing Pool itself has lost \$1.96 billion, and that's only in this year's financials. That doesn't include all of the monies that it lost prior to this year. You'll know that the Balancing Pool actually had a significant surplus prior to this government starting to turn the dials in the electricity market, if you will.

One of the challenges that we see is that the government makes a bunch of decisions that seemingly are: shoot, aim, and ask questions, in that order. The electricity market is such a complex grid, a complex system that when you move one dial over here, it actually affects a whole bunch of dials in other areas of the grid and in other areas of the market.

We've seen the government just make an absolute mess of this particular issue and this file. You know, the government was suing Calgarians for an extended period of time before they finally came to an agreement. I believe and many in this House and many stakeholders believe that the reason why they came to an agreement was because they were actually going to lose that particular case because it was their actions that created the problem in the first place, and whether or not they knew about it, they certainly should have known about it.

This is the exact reason why we need to send a piece of legislation like this to committee. The government has proven that they didn't know things they thought they should have known, and the results of that have literally cost Albertans billions of dollars. It is just so critical to the future of our province.

Madam Speaker, you'll know that the fiscal outlook of the province is not very good. The Finance minister introduced a budget just a couple of months ago that includes \$96 billion in debt. When we govern, we ought to make decisions in advance of costing Albertans billions of dollars. You know, the government made a mistake, and it cost a few billion. You'd think that they would not want to do that in the future, and one of the ways to not do that is to have all the appropriate information. I also think that it's important for Albertans to have that information.

You'll know, Madam Speaker, that I and my colleague from Calgary-Foothills reached out to the Auditor General just about two weeks ago and asked for him to provide some detailed information on just exactly the scope of the problem that the government has created, because it is north of a billion and a half dollars, quite likely over \$2 billion, that these decisions have cost taxpayers.

The other challenge is that as we look forward, we don't know what the end costs are going to be as well, another good reason why we could have this discussion at committee so that we can talk about some of the ongoing expenses and get some good information around just that.

My colleague from Lacombe-Ponoka highlighted a number of issues with the capacity market itself and why we should have a discussion about that at committee. One of the other things that I've heard a lot from stakeholders, whether they're in the industry, as in they are power producers or retailers or providers, one of their really, really significant concerns – the government is right in that you can certainly find individuals in the industry who will speak positively about a capacity market. But one thing that I have found in my conversations is that universally even those who are pro capacity market have very significant concerns, Madam Speaker, about the speed at which this government intends to implement the capacity market. It's actually very difficult to find any situations or any cases that can be studied with respect to the timelines that the government looks to implement. I think that should really provide pause and really provide us some flashing red lights on the dashboard.

You know, you're driving down the highway, you're heading somewhere, not entirely sure of the end destination, Madam Speaker, and the check engine light comes on. You think: oh, maybe we should just slow down and check this out. In the case of this government the check engine light might have been the cancellation of the PPA agreements or some of the early decisions that they made that caused billions of dollars in damages to the province of Alberta. But the government continued to drive. I don't know what sort of vehicle you drive, but in my vehicle the check engine light might come on if there is a problem that one should address quickly. In the vehicle that I drive, if there's a big problem, it actually starts flashing, and that's an indication that you should have your engine or your vehicle checked in the next 50 kilometres. And that's really where we are today. There's a giant check engine light flashing in front of the government, particularly around the speed in which they are proceeding and intend to proceed into the capacity market.

Those who are supporters and proponents of the capacity market – and there are many of them – have spoken with me about their concern around this very issue. I think that it would be of critical importance that we send a piece of legislation like this to committee so that some of those folks – and, listen, they are going to be in favour of doing exactly what the government wants to do, so I don't know what the government would be afraid of. The government can bring in all the folks who are pro capacity market and ask them these questions, ask them questions about what happened in Texas, as my colleague from Lacombe-Ponoka has highlighted, ask them questions about Western Australia. There's one thing that is for certain, and that is that there is learning that can be done from those jurisdictions. My big reservation is all around the timeline, the costs, and the exposure to Albertans but, in this case, certainly the timeline. I don't see any good reason why we would proceed on Bill 13 in its current form.

You know, I think it's important that organizations like the Market Surveillance Administrator, the Industrial Power Consumers Association of Alberta, the AESO, the Alberta Utilities Commission, the AUC, would have the opportunity. Then on top of that, of course, would be a bunch of the power producers in the form of EPCOR, Enmax, and all of the others and the retailers that provide such a valuable service to the grid and to our homes.

You know, one thing that I was very interested to learn about this summer – and you'll know that I had the opportunity to do some touring around this summer, and I toured a number of power plants. If there was one thing that I was more certain about after than I was before, it's just how complex the electricity market is, how complex the grid is, and just how many people it takes every single day so that I can have the benefit of waking up in the morning and switching on a light switch in my own home. There are literally hundreds of people at work every single day just so that we can have that luxury of turning on the lights in our home.

9:30

It is a complex system. It is a complex grid of individuals, of competing interests, of common good. All that comes together to ensure that we have the benefits in all of our homes and our businesses that power our economy and drive jobs and all of these sorts of things. The government continues to interfere in what has been a very stable and sufficient and better-than-good market as well as in performance. It should be important to the government that we refer this bill to committee so that these important players can come and provide context and feedback about some of those other markets, how they can reassure us that that's not going to happen here.

Goodness knows we don't have to look even outside Canada to see a total disaster in electricity markets in the form of Ontario. You know, the people of Ontario are in the middle of an election right now, and one of the big concerns in that election is power prices because the government in Ontario, just like this government, made a total mess. This government is in the process of making a very similar mess. These decisions that they're making today are going to have a long-term impact on Albertans at significant cost to Albertans.

While it's difficult for people to engage at this level at this point in time, people are going to be very engaged when they begin to see the significant cost increases, when they continue to see the government carrying billions of dollars of debt for other organizations like the Balancing Pool. At some point in time those costs are ultimately borne by the Alberta taxpayer.

I don't understand why the government wouldn't want to make sure that they're not making a terrible decision, why they wouldn't want to ensure that they have all of the information, not just them, the members of cabinet, but certainly members of the backbench. They as well as members of the opposition all represent their constituents. I know that it is of critical importance to get this decision right. When you don't have to look very far to other jurisdictions to have some learnings, you would think that the government would want to do that.

Instead, they are rushing at breakneck speed into the capacity market, and this is just an absolute disaster in the making. The issue around the timing of this: you know, people thought that Ontario made a mess of it quickly. This mess is going to be made in, like, half the time. This is not good for Albertans. While the electoral success of the NDP may in fact fall on some of these decisions, I actually would prefer to see them make a good decision on this particular situation because, at the end of the day, those who are going to pay are people like me and you, Madam Speaker, like the constituents of the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. They are the ones who are ultimately going to pay the price for the mismanagement of this NDP government, just like the people of Ontario are paying the price for the mismanagement of the Liberal government in Ontario. The people of Ontario aren't happy about that, and certainly the people of Alberta won't be happy.

The Deputy Speaker: Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), Edmonton-Whitemud.

Dr. Turner: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I've actually been eagerly awaiting the opportunity to enter into this debate. I'm going to start off with a quote from somebody that I think has a lot of credibility on this issue. It's Jim Wachowich, the long-term president of the Consumers' Coalition of Alberta. His quote actually was supported by a member of the legacy Wildrose Party four years ago – I'll mention that quote first – and that was Mr. Anglin, who was the Energy critic for the Wildrose Party at that time, who said that the energy-only market was broken, was a complete catastrophe, and that it was really important that if the legacy Wildrose Party were to form government, they would immediately transition away from the energy-only market because that energy-only market was broken.

Premier Klein, at the time when he deregulated, didn't put any safeguards in the system. We ended up with rolling brownouts, and we ended up economic withholding that resulted in tremendous volatility of prices, with prices going from 3 cents to 15 cents in the matter of a few minutes. It was the consumers that were damaged: people on fixed incomes, people that couldn't afford their electricity bills, people that ended up having their electricity shut

off because they didn't pay their bills. Now, the opposition stands up and says: well, you know, they could have entered into a long-term contract, or they could have maybe borrowed money from their kids to pay their electricity bills, because we don't want to burden the taxpayer with the possibility of protecting those vulnerable citizens from price volatility.

What Mr. Wachowich said was:

As an independent... consumer group, we're encouraged by legislation that's designed to protect Alberta utility consumers. We're pleased to see the government views efficient and effective consumer protection as an important part of the public interest.

This is our job in this Legislature, the public interest. It's not the companies, the corporations; it's the public. It's the consumers. Those are our prime concern, and we need to put in systems that protect the consumers of Alberta from that tremendous price volatility and assure consumers of Alberta, just as the previous speaker said, that when they wake up in the morning and turn their air conditioner on or they want to turn their computer on, there's actually going to be a power source there. The capacity market system does that.

The other thing I need to remind the opposition of is that the capacity market is a fact in Alberta. Six months ago we passed legislation in this Chamber – and it actually wasn't discussed at great length by the opposition – to create a capacity market. It's a fact. In 2018 we need to actually get the regulations set up, get the systems going to ensure that the capacity market functions well. If we put this referral motion in place, it's going to delay that, and it's going to make it impossible to accomplish what is needed.

What I would really like to know from the member that was speaking is: what is the UCP policy on this? Are they going to reverse the capacity market system? Albertans need to know that. A year from now they're going to be making some decisions about who should be governing this province. I want to know, as a citizen of Alberta, what a UCP government would do in terms of protecting consumer rights and making sure that we have an effective and efficient capacity market.

By the way, that capacity market is supported by investors. The managing director of Morrison Park Advisors says...

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:40 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Drysdale	Panda
Anderson, W.	McPherson	Pitt
Cooper	Orr	Stier

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Gray	Miller
Carson	Hoffman	Nielsen
Ceci	Horne	Payne
Connolly	Kleinstauber	Piquette
Coolahan	Larivee	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Littlewood	Sabir
Dach	Loyola	Schmidt
Dang	Malkinson	Schreiner

Eggen	Mason	Sucha
Feehan	McCuaig-Boyd	Sweet
Fitzpatrick	McKittrick	Turner
Ganley	McLean	Woollard

Totals:	For – 9	Against – 36
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[Motion on amendment to second reading of Bill 13 lost]

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any members wishing to speak to Bill 13? Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 13. I know that there has been some significant debate on this particular piece of legislation, and I think it's important that we highlight some of the concerns and some of the challenges around it. I had the opportunity to do a little bit of that during my remarks on the referral amendment, but I'd like to just take a couple of seconds and speak briefly to the bill a little bit more broadly, and then actually I intend to move an amendment as well. I'm happy to do that now, and then I'll speak to it a little bit in my remarks.

The Deputy Speaker: Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, Bill 13 has some significant challenges before it, and I think that it's important that those challenges are dealt with. In fact, I think that the government should go back to the drawing board on this particular legislation. We just saw moments ago the government unwilling to refer this bill to committee. Since they're unwilling to refer the bill to committee, I think that the bill should actually not be read a second time, and that is the intention of the amendment that we just circulated as well. I move that the motion for third reading of Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future, be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following: "Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future, be not now read a third time but that the third reading be three months from this day."

10:00

Sorry. Oh, no. This is the one that I want.

This piece of legislation needs to go back to the drawing board. I understand that the capacity market is moving forward, but the government's unwillingness to send the bill to committee and have a discussion about some of the importance around that is, I think, of significance.

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

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I just note that this particular amendment references third reading. We're presently at second reading, so I would seek your guidance in terms of how to proceed.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Deputy Government House Leader. I actually had just noticed that myself. It means that this motion is not in order, so we'll have to refer back to the main bill.

Mr. Cooper: Well, I'll continue to speak to the main bill. I'll continue to speak to second reading while counsel makes the necessary adjustments for the amendment to read "second reading" instead of "third reading." I'm confident that in the 15 minutes that we have before us, we'll be able to get this particular task accomplished. I think we can speak to the intention of the amendment, which will remain the same despite the amendment referencing third reading instead of second.

You know, it's very clear that the NDP have made electricity more expensive, and Bill 13 continues in that trend of exposing Albertans to risk. There will be significant challenges ahead in the electricity market because of the work that the NDP is doing on this very important file or, more importantly, the work that they're not doing, and that is considering all of the risks that are ahead. Bill 13 will make electricity more expensive for consumers by transferring more risk away from generators. I've heard the government talk about how industry and generators are so excited about the capacity market. In some respects, certainly, there are large supporters of the capacity market. One of the big reasons is that it provides a lot of assurances and guarantees to those . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, if I could just interrupt for a moment. I've been advised that Parliamentary Counsel has made the necessary adjustment. Rather than reprint the amendment, if all members of the House will simply read their copies as if it read "second reading." We'll have the official documents adjusted accordingly.

You can go ahead and speak to the amendment.

Mr. Cooper: I couldn't be more happy that we saved 95 sheets of paper this morning as well. I'm sure our good friends in the paper industry are a little disappointed with our lack of additional photocopying, but everybody else is very pleased that we were able to do that. For those of you following along at home, if you need to make the adjustment, it's just in the first sentence, the third sentence, and the fourth sentence, if you change it. I may be number 3 in the program, but I know we're number one in all of your hearts.

As I was mentioning, significant risks and challenges are ahead because of the capacity market. Certainly, some industry players have voiced significant support for that, particularly because the risk gets moved away from them and placed onto Albertans. As I mentioned previously, we have reached out to the Auditor General in hoping to get some comment from that office around the importance of having a full and broad understanding of the costs of this particular move.

In light of the fact of the government not being willing to do the committee level, I think it's important that the government take a pause and make sure that they get this right. I certainly know that there are lots of problems in the bill as well, in particular around section 17. Instead of just tinkering with some smaller changes, I think it's important that we just put the whole thing on hold until we can make sure that we get it right.

You know, I've spoken at some length in the House about: if we're going to do something right, we should do it right the first time. That's what this amendment does. It provides the government with the ability to get this piece of legislation right today because it'll allow them to come back in the fall session and do this again. Goodness knows, we've seen the government do something in the spring and then have to fix it in the fall on numerous occasions. There is definitely going to be some fixing that needs to be done on Bill 13, and this hoist amendment provides that ability to do so. That is exactly what we should do this morning.

I know that my colleagues from Chestermere-Rocky View as well as Calgary-Foothills will be pleased to speak about the importance of this amendment but also to remind us all of some of the large concerns about why we shouldn't proceed with this legislation. In particular, generators, the AESO, Market Surveillance Administrator, investors, consumers groups: all of these people have raised significant concerns. As I was mentioning previously this morning, you know, so many jurisdictions across Canada and North America and right around the world have made major, major, major missteps.

When we talked about the capacity market a number of months ago, we did highlight some of those concerns. I think that it's important that we put a pause on Bill 13, step back from it a little bit so that we can move forward in a way that has a much better balance between protecting generators, protecting consumers, and ensuring that everyone is getting the closest to a win-win as possible. The legislation before us is just not that. There are all sorts of issues and challenges around the retail side of Bill 13.

It would be my strong recommendation that we not read this bill again at second reading but that we read it in three months into the future and provide the government with the necessary pauses put in place. The government has been seemingly so unwilling to put a pause on damaging and devastating legislation. You'd think that after three years of warning from the opposition that the government would start to clue in that the goal of the opposition isn't just to oppose the government but actually to warn them when they're making bad decisions for Albertans. That's what our intention is here this morning.

A friend of mine, who also works here in the precinct: I've heard him state that from time to time politics breaks out in the Legislature. But this morning isn't about politics. This morning is actually about trying to get the government to do what's best for Albertans. Listen, there are times when it is about politics, but today it's about: what is the best path forward for Albertans? Right now the government isn't on it on this file.

10:10

Like, listen, there have been a number of pieces of legislation already this session that the opposition has voted in favour with the government on. You know, I can think of a number of those situations, like Bill 5 and the good work that the Member for Calgary-Currie is doing. We're going to support Bill 16, which is an elections financing bill. The politics can be put down.

Now, I haven't seen the government actually at all in the last couple of years put down the politics when it comes to changing legislation that the opposition is suggesting. I have seen the government from time to time ridicule the opposition, then adopt the opposition's ideas, and then go around talking about how they were always their ideas, in particular in things that the Leader of the Official Opposition has done. But with respect to legislation itself I have yet to see them put down the politics and actually make the best available decision for Albertans.

I encourage them to do that this morning. That's what this particular amendment would allow them to do, to put down the politics, put this thing on pause, make sure that we get it right, and come back to it when we've done so. I look forward to hearing the remarks from my colleagues and to hearing the rest of the debate this morning.

The Deputy Speaker: Any members wishing to speak on 29(2)(a)? Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you so much, Madam Speaker, for saving the planet by being innovative and using the same sheet of paper with minor corrections.

I would also like to thank my colleague from Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills this morning for a couple of reasons. The first one is for pairing with me to approach the Auditor General to do some audit and investigation of this whole file. We couldn't get any answers here. We couldn't get any answers from the ministerial staff at PAC. I'm a member of that standing committee. I tried everywhere I could to get some reasonable answers on the concerns that I heard in Calgary-Foothills and also across the province.

Also, I would like to thank the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills for again pairing with me this morning to wear the same tie to celebrate Ukrainian heritage day today. Although there's a lot of brotherhood between Calgary-Foothills and Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, I think he's crossing the line a little bit. He's trying to play good politics, but he's telling the government that he's giving them opportunities to improve their electoral chances. I don't know. The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud already gave up. He said that he wants to know what the UCP government will be doing in 2019. He's already keen to know. I think the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills should make note of it.

Also, you talked about doing this right. You and I had concerns. We approached the Auditor General. We'll wait for the response, but in the meantime I feel it is a reasonable amendment because we need to get the AESO here. We need to get the Balancing Pool. We need to get the Alberta Utilities Commission. In your previous speech you used the analogy that if you dial in something here it has a cascading effect somewhere else. I used a different analogy, Whac-A-Mole policies. Because of their ideological carbon tax policy that kicked in, other measures are required to fix that problem because that's taking away reliable, cheap electricity without any tangible outcomes, whether it is health benefits or anything that is not quantifiable. I asked those questions in this House. Let's talk about the economic impact analysis of that policy. How much emissions are we reducing, and what are the other benefits, and what's the overall cost to the consumers and taxpayers, who are the same?

We didn't hear that. So, to your point, can you share your thoughts on that and on how we can actually bring all those stakeholders and get this right, not for today but for future generations? Some of these costs are actually going to be in the future. We won't see them on any financial statements of today's government, but that will impact future Albertans.

Mr. Cooper: Well, I think that is a very good point that you make. I was going to mention your very nice tie this morning.

Another analogy. I think, you know, that when it comes to the electricity market, it's like when you have a wool sweater and you pull a string and you keep pulling the string and the sweater is unwinding. If the government is not careful, they're going to wind up with no sweater at all, and they're going to be out in the cold. They will have created a pile of string so discombobulated that future generations are going to pay the price. That is exactly what you were saying, that we're not just making a decision for today, but we're making a decision for tomorrow and for generations to come. When you make such sweeping and broad changes to the market and to the grid and to each one of these players, you create a...

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and, again, thank you so much for the opportunity to speak to this. There's something I want to start with. Fair, efficient, open, and competitive, FEOC: this is something that was attributed to the energy-only market. Interestingly enough, the reason for a hoist and the reason for a postponement is that I would think, at the very bare minimum, we'd want to make sure that that piece of this puzzle is there: fair, efficient, open, and competitive. It's interesting because that piece of what was part of the energy-only market is not applied to the capacity market. In fact, it's in the documents.

I wanted to bring up a couple of points that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud had brought up. I want to thank you for

speaking about that. You're right. The legacy parties did have issues but not with this part of it. The part that is being misunderstood, Madam Speaker, is that the retail part of this was not the issue. We had issues with transportation and distribution, for sure, and those were parts of the market that I think would have been worth while looking at to see where those issues were. I do believe that under normal circumstances and with time those were issues definitely worth looking at, but the government attacked the part that was working, which is retail. Just to be clear, that's the part that this government has messed up on with regard to the PPAs, with regard to stranded assets.

The member had asked, you know, what we would do differently. Well, I can tell you what we wouldn't have done. We sure wouldn't have rushed this. Electricity is so complex, and then on top of that, we're bringing in renewables. This is a piece of the puzzle that, at the very, very least, we know for sure is not consistent.

To just give you an example, the government wants to bring on 9,000 megawatts, but only 35 per cent of that capacity will be used. Guess what, Madam Speaker? The Alberta ratepayer/taxpayer is on the hook for 100 per cent of that. Is that protecting Albertans? No. The interesting thing is that it is hidden in a flat rate. We have zero utility debt right now. The member had also asked how we'd protect consumers. Those were called rate riders, and it was very transparent.

Like I said, there were issues. There are issues with the model – I one hundred per cent agree – but not this part. The ability to be able to have the consumer have access to every single piece of the puzzle on that electricity bill is the way the government should behave so that the person who is paying that fee understands exactly what they're paying for, top to bottom.

10:20

Like I said, I think that there were so many aspects of this that could have been looked at, but because this is being pushed through so quickly, the consumer is completely at odds with understanding how this is going to work.

To the point from the hon. members for Calgary-Foothills and Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, it's not going to show up in your government. It's going to show up down the line. Our children and our grandchildren are going to be paying for this for a really, really long time.

As you know, I actually agree with the energy-only model, but had there been the ability and the capacity to actually sit down and talk about this and the way that this market could have worked, Madam Speaker, anything is possible, but this is an ideological change. This isn't a change for Albertans. You know what? Albertans are catching on really quickly. They sit down and talk with us, and we go over the information on what this is actually going to cost them down the line. And you know what's even more interesting? We can't get any straight numbers out of the government at all, which is why the Member for Calgary-Foothills and the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills asked the Auditor General, because we don't know. We actually have no idea as the opposition even how to tell our constituents how this is going to work.

Bill 13, like I said before, is this interesting piece in the puzzle. The government basically took away the powers of the market surveillance adviser to be able to report on renewables being brought online, so the Minister of Energy has extraordinary powers to be able to bring renewables online without ever telling Albertans what she did. I don't know how else to put that, Madam Speaker. I find that completely, completely disrespectful to Albertans.

Albertans would love to see renewables come online – I love renewables; I'm one of those people – but you have to be honest

with the people of Alberta about what the cost is so that they have a say and they have an understanding. Especially right now, of all the times to be looking at this, people are suffering. The government keeps using this as their climate leadership action plan, that moves forward all of these other things, forgetting that it's the very people that they represent in here that are going to be paying for this.

On top of that, absolutely zero transparency. Not only did they remove the powers of the market surveillance; they put it in with the AESO. So when they start to build REP 1, when this starts going forward, Albertans will have no clue on the cost. We're not just talking about the cost of bringing renewables online; we're talking about the infrastructure.

I mean, already the system is overbuilt. The government is looking to overbuild again. The capacity of what they will be overbuilding will land on the backs of the taxpayers, Madam Speaker. And guess what? The government doesn't even have to report that because within their own legislation, when they removed it during Bill 27, Bill 34, it removes all responsibility from the government to be transparent with Albertans about what they do.

I find it interesting, too, that the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud said that we didn't talk about this at all. I have pages and pages and pages of *Hansard* in here from bills 34 and 27, of those discussions leading up to Bill 13 and the capacity model. In fact, I can tell you exactly the number of times that I spoke to the capacity model and my issues with that. So I find that a little bit disconcerting, that the member would stand in here and say that we didn't talk about the capacity model. I have proof otherwise, actually. I have an entire binder here full of the discussions that we had on bills 27 and 34, which were leading up to this. I find that extremely interesting.

Lookit, the combined-cycle and simple-cycle natural gas obtained through peaker plants, in order to replace coal and provide the necessary backup for renewable forms of energy, needs to be a steady stream because we know that wind and solar are not reliable enough. That is why this needs to go back. We need to postpone this and actually look at the numbers. Why can't we work on this together to see what's the best way to bring this online? If the government truly believes that this is what Albertans want, why don't you give us a little bit of time to discuss this?

Madam Speaker, the government is creating legislation to fix the mistakes that they've made in other bills and fix the mistakes of going against the PPAs and fix the mistakes of the costs that they're charging Albertans right now. This government didn't protect Albertans when they turned back the PPAs; they cost Albertans almost \$2 billion. That's not protecting Albertans. On top of that, they sued them and acted as though somehow they didn't know what was going on.

Well, we have proof otherwise, because changes to this were being made before the capacity market or any of the other pieces came online, and they were discussed. I mean, I have quotes where the Minister of Energy said that it wasn't in her binder, in the transition binder on electricity. Now we're basing an entire set of rules and legislation changes on a mistake, when the minister didn't know what was going on with the PPAs, and now this is what Albertans are left with.

Like I said, if there is a clear choice here and if this is the right decision to be made, there's absolutely no reason for the government to hide it in smoke and mirrors. Absolutely none. In fact, if it was the right decision, I think Albertans would get behind you a hundred per cent. But the problem is, Madam Speaker, that it's hidden in a flat rate. There is no transparency or accountability. Those words were removed in Bill 27, I believe, when the capacity market was being brought forward, and that took away the powers

of the market surveillance adviser to be able to ask questions. Now, on top of that, Albertans don't have anybody to watch over them.

I was asking the other day, on our other bill, about the increase in the ability for Albertans to talk about water issues. Right? This is great, that that's been expanded. I asked the question, too: is that expansion going to also include renewables? Are Albertans going to have an advocate that they can go to when they don't understand how much of renewables are being brought online and when they're being charged extra but don't know why because they can't tell from their bill? I'm telling you, Madam Speaker, that when property taxes go up and business taxes and everything else that has to happen in order to compensate for this, we're going to be in real trouble. Like the Minister of Energy said, you know, they got a great price on that first auction for wind. But the thing that she forgets to tell is that that's also subsidized by the taxpayer.

Madam Speaker, I think that the intention of the government is correct, and I love the fact that the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud wants to protect his constituents from fluctuating, volatile rates. That's what we should all be doing, but I don't believe that this is the methodology that will work. There's something in between that may or may not work, but there are absolute, imperative pieces that are missing from this, and it is imperative for us as government and as opposition and the people that work in this beautiful building to be able to look at this a little bit closer and see what the ripple effect is going to be of this particular piece of legislation that's coming forward. Like I said, on many occasions we could see this legislation coming. It had to in order to fix the mistakes that were done in other pieces of legislation.

Bills 27 and 34 fundamentally changed the market functions. As the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills was saying, he's talked to people in the capacity market, and even people who agree with the capacity market are concerned about this methodology. It's because there are a lot of gaps in the system.

The other thing, too, is that having those watchdogs in place, Madam Speaker, is absolutely imperative to Albertans. Those electricity watchdog folks at the market surveillance: these are the people that have stopped large corporations from taking advantage of Albertans. The government has actually taken away the right of that group of people to protect Albertans.

Who's going to protect them if a solar or wind company decides to take advantage of Albertans? I'm not saying that they will, but we've seen other companies do that. They were fined, they were caught, and it was public. That's the whole point of this entire situation, Madam Speaker. None of that is in here.

I go back to my original – we're talking about fair, efficient, open, and competitive. Is none of that part of this discussion? I mean, I would suggest that, based on the government and what they say, these are words that they live by: fair, efficient, open, competitive. This fundamental piece of how the electricity market works and a fundamental philosophy of how electricity works in this province has been left out of the discussions around the capacity market.

As a person on the opposition I would very, very much suggest to the government that they take a very, very close look at this. This is on you. The wonderful thing about a hoist amendment, about being able to do something like this, is that it actually buys you some time. Really, folks, it buys you some time to take a look at this. If you're right and you can prove that that's right for Albertans, what a wonderful opportunity for you, six months before the election. But I think the government prefers at this point in time to hide it in smoke and mirrors and to hide it under a flat rate and hide it in the idea that we're getting a great auction on wind and all these things, not telling Albertans that that's subsidized by them.

10:30

There are a couple of other things, too. I mean, we're already overbuilt, right? We're already overbuilt. The government is going to be overbuilding considerably more for this in order to be able to bring that capacity online. That is a really major piece of the puzzle that needs to be discussed with Albertans because it was part of the problem before, right? That's why Albertans were angry before with the overbuild originally.

Did you know, Madam Speaker, that this government is doing the exact same thing that got previous governments into trouble? Even worse than that is that they're hiding it. That overbuild will come in. Albertans are going to see that again. Guess what? They do not benefit from that overbuild. There is absolutely no equity for Albertans to be able to participate in in that overbuild. There's nothing. So everything that this government says that they disliked about what previous governments have done, they're doing, and they're doing it five times faster.

Madam Speaker, I think that when you're looking at unpredictable and renewable electricity and you haven't been able to bring forward cost implications, we need to think about it.

The Deputy Speaker: Under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? Edmonton-Whitemud.

Dr. Turner: Thank you. Again I'm pleased to participate in this discussion and debate. I just want to bring up one point that was mentioned in the previous speech, and that's about the authority of the Market Surveillance Administrator, MSA. What was stated was completely erroneous. In fact, Bill 27 actually has a statement in it that the MSA has a clear mandate under the Alberta Utilities Commission Act, section 39, "to carry out surveillance in respect of... the supply, generation, transmission, distribution, trade, exchange, purchase or sale of electricity," including renewable electricity. It has the authority to investigate such matters and to undertake activities to address contraventions of our electricity legislation and regulations, including any "conduct that does not support the fair, efficient and openly competitive operation of the electricity market." This includes the authority to bring matters before the AUC for adjudication around penalties. Its mandate includes investigation and enforcement of the conduct of electricity market participants.

You know, I really wish that the members opposite would actually be aware of what's in the legislation, and I would remind them that this legislation was passed six months ago. It was passed after remarkably little discussion in this House because the opposition wanted to get out of here before Christmas. I remember that period very well. They didn't want to be here because there might have been some questions about some of their members. I'm really quite anxious to hear what the member has to say about that, particularly about the MSA.

The Deputy Speaker: Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you so much. It's interesting that you bring that up. In Bill 27 that was removed. If within the regulations the government has changed that, that's very interesting to me.

I'd also like to bring up that the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud likes to keep, you know, casting aspersions. The difference is, Madam Speaker, that we actually talk about policy on this side. They can cast as many aspersions as they want to. That's fine. If you want to say that we wanted to get out of here, I find that interesting since we're the ones that extended our stay here. To the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, I think actually you need to look at your information and be very clear about how it was that

that discussion went forward. I'm not sure. Maybe we can take this offline, and he can tell me exactly why it was that we wanted to get out of here. I know that I was debating here fairly late on all of those debates. I can prove it to you in *Hansard* if you'd like. We can take it offline later. I'll show you later.

Anyway, as far as the Market Surveillance Administrator goes, the difference is that – I'll read this to you about the investigations. The MSA in 2017 had an "investigation of the Balancing Pool arising from complaints about the Balancing Pool's conduct related to Power Purchase [agreements] ... This matter remains an active investigation."

This is still going on, and as a result of it – the thing that the member doesn't understand is the extraordinary powers of the Minister of Energy, who has the ability to remove the MSA's ability to look at renewables coming online. If the renewables come online and there's an issue thereafter – I'm not sure. Maybe the member is correct that the ability of the MSA to be able to look at those situations might be possible. The difference, Madam Speaker, is that the Minister of Energy has complete control over that. She has extraordinary powers over anything happening with the MSA. The MSA is no longer an arm's-length group of people that oversee this on their own. It is by the discretion of the Minister of Energy. There's a huge difference in that, a massive difference, in fact.

In other opportunities to talk about this particular bill, I will bring forward that exact information. I don't have it in front of me right now, but I'm very, very happy to bring forward all of those pieces of information. I appreciate the member explaining the piece about the MSA. I'm really looking forward to digging into that. I will be researching that today to find out when that actually came online and how that applies to this particular industry. But more importantly... [The time limit for questions and comments expired]

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to rise and speak to the amendment moved by my colleague from Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. It is very timely, I think, to move this amendment. The information that we have obtained from industry and consultants who have been reviewing the rollout of the capacity market comes down to: the NDP needs more time. That's what it's coming down to. To get this correct, two years is a little bit of a rush. The stakeholders told us that usually in other jurisdictions it took longer, up to three to six years.

The changes we are contemplating are massive, and they have a big impact on the day-to-day lives of Albertans because of the affordability of the electricity. People are already subject to so many other taxes, like the carbon tax, and so many other cost increases due to this government's ideological policies, whether people can afford that or not. I mean, everyone on this side of the House at least likes renewables. We support them as long as they're self-funded and as long as they're affordable. We have to do it in a responsible way so that the grid doesn't become unreliable. We have to be careful. At the same time we have to ensure that the cost of the electricity is affordable.

This amendment does exactly that. It will slow down the implementation of the bill and give the minister the necessary extra time to go out and do real consultations with industry and consumers, not just on the legislation but also on the regulations. We won't see the regulations until the bill is adopted, but if we are doing proper consultations, then we'll come out with appropriate regulations well ahead of time. This extra time will also give AESO

the time to consult on the market rules and get them right before going to the Alberta Utilities Commission for approval. The extra time, surprisingly, will bring stability to the market and confidence in the bids on the capacity contracts. Why? Because we have increased the chances of getting it right.

10:40

One criticism I have seen about the capacity market so far is that some parts of the new market design appear to be equivalent to being locked in a casino, for example, and being forced to play at a table where your potential outcomes are losing 130 per cent of your money or breaking even. That tells me everything about this NDP plan. The NDP wants something for nothing, but they're gambling. They don't have a solid business case here, or at least they couldn't illustrate that to us on this side of the House, the soundness of their business case. The NDP wants electrical companies to generate electricity and make it free for all. As you know, Madam Speaker, economics doesn't work that way.

Another complaint is that several areas of the new capacity market design violate the principles of fair, efficient, and open competition, the so-called FEOC, that my colleague from Chestermere-Rocky View referred to a few minutes ago. We want our markets to be fair. If they are not fair, no one will bid and build the capacity. We want our markets to be efficient. Nonefficient markets mean waste and money down the drain, and we don't want to waste taxpayers' money like that. We want open competition. Open competition means new players could show up and build and bid on electricity. Madam Speaker, you remember when Areva, the French nuclear giant, came around looking to build reactors. If we didn't have an open and competitive market, that wouldn't have happened.

We know that the NDP spent \$1.36 billion to shut down the coal plants early and convert them to natural gas, but then there was another \$2 billion to bail out the power purchase agreements, let alone the litigation. The litigation is, in fact, really offensive because, being a Calgarian, I was sued by this government. I don't know how my neighbours, like the Member for Calgary-North West or Calgary-Hawkwood or Calgary-Northern Hills or Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill, feel about that, but I felt really offended because they sued that company, quoting the Enron clause, and they blamed a guy called Neil McCrank. He said that government was not correct in their approach. He tried to defend. All he asked for was a simple apology, but the Minister of Energy refused to apologize to him, so then he had to go to court to defend himself. He being a former bureaucrat who is indemnified by the AUC, we ended up paying for his legal fee in defending his honour and dignity.

So this government doesn't know what they're doing. That's why I use that Whac-A-Mole analogy. They make one mistake, and to fix that mistake they had to, you know, bring in another regulation or legislation, wasting taxpayers' money and time and energy.

Now, Madam Speaker, we have \$74.3 million to subsidize electricity prices this year, and \$9 million got spent in April as TransAlta idled the Sundance 3, 4, and 5 coal-fired units. The natural gas fired plants are actually coming, but TransAlta is building a pipeline to ship gas to Sundance to convert the coal-fired generators. You know, that's all wishful thinking, hoping that the natural gas prices will remain low so the feedstock for these generators based on natural gas, the price and the cost of that generation, would stay low. That's our wishful thinking.

But what happens if the natural gas prices go up? There is a lot of demand in the world for Canadian natural gas, and this NDP's best friend and their cousin in B.C. John Horgan: when he manages to build those LNG export facilities and build a pipeline to export natural gas, then the prices will go up. When it happens, there is no

hedge here with coal or some other baseload. That's what the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka spoke about, that forward hedged strategy. That's another risk we foresee, Madam Speaker.

Also, another important factor is that this capacity market will be in place after 2021. It's not going to happen tomorrow, but it's going to come into force in 2021. But power prices are already going up today. In April we spent \$9 million to actually pay for the difference between the price capped at 6.8 cents and the current market price. That's the subsidy from the taxpayers, whether we like it or not. No one wants power plants – ratepayers are paying for that – that just sit idle and don't produce anything. That's what this bill does.

That's why, for all those reasons, Madam Speaker, we have one shot at getting this right. That's why I'm hoping the government MLAs here would really think about that because they have to think about their constituents, who will feel the pain. They're already feeling the pain because we already paid \$9 million more in April, and there are going to be a lot of hidden costs, which won't show up on consumers' bills today or taxpayers' taxes, but this government is going to – because of the mistakes they're going to do in a hasty way, Albertans in the future will end up paying for that.

Madam Speaker, can you imagine the disaster we would have if we had a capacity auction and no one would bid on the capacity contracts? It's a possibility. We can go ahead and auction the capacity, but there may be nobody because there are so many questions that the marketplace is questioning. That's why we have to get this right, and we have to slow it down a little bit and talk it out. Let's make sure that we have it right. If not, this NDP government is answerable to Albertans.

By creating unnecessary capacity today – today we are sitting at 16,000 megawatts of installed capacity, and our peak load is about 11,000 megawatts. Even if the coal generation is taken out sooner, with the accelerated coal phase-out, there are many cogen plants that are coming up. All these oil and gas producers up north, particularly in the Athabasca and Cold Lake regions, many of these in situ developers told me that they are planning to convert their power plants from the existing type of production to cogeneration, which would help so they can actually use the steam to put into the reservoir to make viscous bitumen flow and also generate the electricity that is required for them. They're creating additional capacity, which they're going to put on the grid, so that will provide some reliability.

10:50

But if we are creating too much of a capacity which is not reliable, then we are paying for idling capacity. We asked some questions about that for all these renewable projects, if we are going to pay for their capacity even though they're not reliable to produce. We haven't got those answers. I don't know who is taking notes for the Minister of Energy. I would like to get those questions answered because those are reasonable questions asked by my constituents and my stakeholders. I tried to get those answers from the minister in this House and her officials, and I was not successful. I'll make another attempt.

That's the reason, actually, I stayed up a couple of nights thinking about this file. I and my colleague from Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills approached the Auditor General as a last resort because I was not able to get any of those questions answered here in this House and also at PAC. As a member of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts I tried to get those answers, and I didn't get those answers. We don't want to load up the Auditor General with additional workload, but it's a matter of public interest. Electricity is not a

luxury; it is a necessity that impacts the livelihoods of regular Albertans.

That's the reason I raised those concerns, and this amendment would be helpful so we can bring in the important stakeholders like AESO and the Balancing Pool and the Alberta Utilities Commission. All these changes actually are happening when . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?
Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Calgary-Foothills for some of that very good explanation on this. I must say that the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills has done excellent work on this file, excellent, excellent outreach with stakeholders, detailed work with his constituents and with people who are coming and asking him questions. I'm sure every person in this House has had people coming in with their bills and asking questions.

I wanted to talk to him a little bit about the prices because in the short term there's an expectation that customers are going to be paying increased rates as a result of the coal-fired power plants going offline. As they go offline and because, Madam Speaker, this is extremely expedited – the costs of that expedited move of coming off coal-fired: as the generators withdraw, we're expecting to see those costs increase. Well, with the analysis, we're looking at the fact that as they come off, there's an unfair competitive advantage. As a result of that, there's a possibility that there could be a withholding of power, and that could impact the system's reliability on top of everything else that we've been talking about.

This is why we talk about the market so much, Madam Speaker, because what ends up happening is that it negatively impacts the market and the ability of new firms to come on. Otherwise, there's no compliance within the system, and as a result of that, it could impact not only the reliability but also the ability for the market to be able to decide what is in the best interest of the taxpayer/ratepayer, the same person.

I was curious if the Member for Calgary-Foothills could talk a little bit more. You were speaking about the market and also the fact that the Market Surveillance Administrator doesn't have a head right now. We don't have somebody at the head of that. If you could please speak a little bit more about what you were saying with respect to increasing rates that will happen as a result of these changes.

The Deputy Speaker: Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you. She's right. All these changes and all these policies they're bringing at a time when three of the four boards won't have heads. It's the Alberta Utilities Commission and the Balancing Pool and – what's the third one? – AESO.

Mrs. Aheer: Yeah, AESO.

Mr. Panda: Yeah.

So three of the four won't have the key top executives in place. I know there will be others in those departments to look after because all those boards and agencies won't run based on one person. I get that. But the key leaders: when they're not in place and you're trying to rush all these important policies, that's not helpful.

It's not like people on this side don't like renewables. That's another criticism government benches throw at us. When I visited the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View, actually she has solar panels on her house, and this was done a while ago, when the price for solar panels was too high and the technology was still evolving.

So don't say that we don't like renewables. We do. We are talking about the affordability and the reliability of that.

With this fast-paced implementation of this policy, it's actually going to hurt Albertans. It's not going to help them. The stakeholders I talk to say: we have to look at the big picture, and we have to look at where we can improve the efficiencies. They're thinking that generation is the problem. I don't see generation as a problem today. We have to look at efficiencies in transmission, distribution, and retailing. Some of those stakeholders are saying that they need more time. In other jurisdictions it took four to six years to implement this kind of capacity market. Here we are rushing, and already we are seeing, although it won't come . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I've been listening to the discussion this morning, I think I've finally figured out why we have so much purple. It's because I need to lift my spirit up. Every day, I stand here in the Leg., and I just hear that the sky is falling every single day – I think that it's time to actually talk about the good news for Alberta – and keep thinking that everything that we're doing in terms of the electricity is bad news for Alberta.

I also am very intrigued by the fact that this amendment has come to the floor of the House because the amendment calls for us to go and meet in the House again in August. I don't know about the members of the opposition, but it does indicate to me that they're not interested in consulting with their constituents, that they prefer spending time in the House to meeting constituents. I also noticed that they've been absent from some very important debate in this House such as Bill 9. So I really don't understand why we're being asked in this amendment to not read it for a second time but to come back and meet here in the middle of August because I indeed spend a lot of my time meeting with constituents.

Many of my constituents have talked to me personally about how delighted they are with this bill. One of the things we haven't talked about this morning – and maybe the members of the opposition might like to look at the bill a bit more closely – is that this bill would bring more accountability to the electrical system, and it would address concerns from their constituents, ordinary people, I think, the little guy. I think one of the members of the opposition said those things.

It would address concerns about incorrect power bills and issues in consumer services from electricity and natural gas service providers. My constituency staff actually spend a lot of time on these issues, and I'm delighted to see that in this bill the Utilities Consumer Advocate will be able to deal with these issues and to address them by issuing penalties to electrical and natural gas service providers for specific breaches. I don't want to delay this bill because I want my constituents to have an ability to have their concerns addressed in terms of their utility bills. I am not in support of delaying this bill, as the amendment suggests.

11:00

Then there's another issue that this bill really addresses. Maybe the members of the opposition have never met any members who are involved in community renewable energy, but I have. Actually, for the last three, four years I've spent a couple of hours every month talking to them, and I know that our government has worked very, very closely with those advocates in the community renewable energy sector. They include co-ops, they include municipalities, and they include community-based organizations who really want to have their ability to generate electricity and feed it back to the grid.

I would really like to encourage members of the opposition to meet some of them, and if you're interested in a list of these communities and co-ops and small-scale providers who have been advocating to the government for such changes to regulations that would allow them to generate electricity and feed it back to the grid, please contact my office. I would be very happy to encourage you to go and meet with them and to understand why this bill is very important for them. Actually, it so happens that many of them are in your ridings, and maybe I would encourage you, when you're not sitting in the Leg. or not failing in your duties to vote on a bill, to go and meet with some of them because I think these are really important constituents of ours in Alberta.

Maybe because we haven't really discussed a lot about that sector, actually, just so that we're all clear on what we mean by small-scale and community generation providers, I thought I might read into the record this definition. Small-scale generation refers to electricity generated from renewable or alternative sources closer to consumption so that it can bypass the transmission system and be connected directly to the distribution system. Examples include a group of neighbourhood homeowners who set up a system to generate their own electricity, a rural or town operation that sets up a system to generate their own electricity, or an indigenous community that owns or operates a renewable energy project. Community generation refers to a subset of small-scale generation that provides benefits to communities such as training, environmental protection, and economic development opportunities.

As you can see from this bill, the government is interested in helping the everyday Albertan and especially in helping them to be able to have environmentally safe renewable energy projects that benefit them. This is different from microgeneration in the fact that in microgeneration it's usually just for the homeowner that puts solar panels on or for the farm, but the community renewable energy sector is also intended to possibly feed energy back into the grid.

This bill does two really important things that I think the opposition has failed to mention in their opposition to it. They have failed to mention that this bill will really help consumers with their energy issues and that this is so needed. I mean, when I told members of my constituency that we were really looking at working with the Utilities Consumer Advocate to make it possible for changes to be made and for possible penalties, they were delighted. I think this is something that the government is doing because we do have the backs of everyday Albertans.

When we think about the potential of community renewable energy projects, including in the constituencies of the members of the opposition, you realize how important this is. Just think of a developer that builds a community renewable energy facility. The whole subdivision can have their own electricity, and the profit can go back to those homeowners collectively. I think there's so much potential in that.

For those reasons, I think it's really important that this bill is passed before the end of the session. If members of the opposition really feel that they want to spend more time in this House and come back in August, I would really like to encourage them to actually vote on the bills that the government has put forth, not to disappear when they disagree with a bill but to actually show to all constituents of theirs that they actually do care what happens in this House.

Madam Speaker, having said this, I would like to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 10

An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements

[Adjourned debate May 14: Mr. Mason]

The Deputy Speaker: Any members wishing to speak to Bill 10? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Mr. Carson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 10, An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements, otherwise known as the PACE, or property assessed clean energy, program. As it's been stated many times over the course of debate, this legislation will enable municipalities to establish energy efficiency and renewable energy programs like solar panels while deferring the cost to their property tax installments.

Here in Edmonton I've had a chance to speak with some of the city councillors, mainly in my community in west Edmonton, and it's been made very clear to me that councillors here in the city are very interested and find climate change to be an issue that we need to tackle with great urgency. Also, the need for environmental stewardship: they take that very seriously as well. Through my conversations with some of those councillors I know that they support this legislation as it gives people in our city the ability to take action without the traditional front-end costs that we see.

I feel that it is important to say once again, though it has been said several times on this side of the House, that this legislation will not force any person or any municipality to, you know, use this program if they don't want to. It simply enables them to make that decision. Madam Speaker, as you may know, I spend quite a bit of time door-knocking in my community. At this point I've knocked on just about every door if not every single door over the last three years, and energy efficiency and renewable energy is a topic that comes up often, obviously behind the economy, behind pipelines. It does come up a lot.

There is a large segment of the population that is extremely interested in putting solar panels on their property, but until now there weren't enough mechanisms or methods of financing for them. Traditionally we see the costs being \$20,000 to \$30,000, depending on the size of your house. Not many people can afford to pay that on the front end. Now, with a program like PACE, residents will be empowered to look at the cost and the benefit and to make a decision on whether this program works for them.

I can see many benefits to a program like PACE. Before, a homeowner would have to decide whether it is of value to them to cover the initial costs, which might be a disincentive if they are planning to move in the near future. Now, if this legislation is passed, they can make the decision to pay through their property taxes, which would then be transferred to the new homeowner if they chose to move, which, in my opinion, makes more sense than trying to recoup the entirety of the cost at the point of sale. Of course, the cost will be little as they are able to reduce their energy bills while needing to buy less energy from the grid, reducing their energy costs.

As you may know, before becoming elected to this Legislature, I was an apprentice electrician. Through that work and through the work of being in the Legislature, I've had an opportunity to speak to many stakeholders, whether it be my own local union, IBEW 424, or ECAA, the Electrical Contractors Association of Alberta, or private companies within my own constituency and business owners. Honestly, I have not talked to anyone who didn't find this legislation to be of importance to them, and I've found a lot of support out there, probably unanimous support, for this program.

Many of them have been advocating for this program for many years, even before we came into this Legislature.

These groups see the incredible benefit that renewable programs like PACE mean for jobs in our province. My local union also has an exceptional training centre on the south side of Edmonton, where they're able to train their apprentices and their journeymen and contractors for solar installations, and a program like PACE will ensure that that training centre keeps busy while helping to diversify our workforce and our economy.

11:10

I think there's also something to be said about the idea of builders offering a program like PACE to somebody working to customize their first home or second home, whatever it may be, and I believe it will be a great opportunity to increase the abilities for microgeneration for all residents in our province while, once again, putting more electricians to work.

Make no mistake, Madam Speaker; this legislation is extremely positive for those in the industry. This is a program that I truly believe should have been implemented a long time ago, but as we have seen, there are quite a few common-sense programs that we've implemented over the last three years that have left people wondering why these weren't in place before. Ontario, Nova Scotia, and Quebec already have PACE legislation, and since 2008 33 states across the United States have enabled PACE programs, which has led to \$6 billion of economic activity across the United States. I think it's time for Alberta to move forward on this important program.

Madam Speaker, if you take a look at the original news release that was sent out with the PACE legislation announcement, you'll see a number of stakeholders talking about the importance of PACE. The Building Industry and Land Development Alberta Association, the Alberta Construction Association, the mayors of both the cities of Edmonton and Calgary, and other private companies have said that they understand the benefits and that they're excited to see this moving forward.

Now, I believe this program will change our province in a big way. There is no doubt that, if implemented, thousands of solar panels will go up on homes across our province, including on my own home – I'm very excited to use this program – employing thousands of Albertans in an industry that is growing exponentially, creating more opportunities for people to train in an industry that is quickly shaping the province and the future.

I'm proud to stand in support of Bill 10. I thank the minister for bringing it forward. I thank the many people within the industry who have been advocating for this program for many, many years. Once again, I'm proud to support it, and I thank you for the opportunity to speak to it.

Thank you.

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

Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm happy to rise and speak on Bill 10, titled An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements. I listened carefully to the member that started the debate this morning, and part of what he said I agree with. I think a lot of Albertans are interested in making improvements to their homes that would make them more energy efficient, things like perhaps adding solar panels or other things, and I'm not surprised at that. Albertans care very much about the environment.

I have to say that the program as advertised by the government – and I'm reading off the government website page here – says things

to the effect that the program “should not be mandatory,” that the “legislation is enabling in nature.” It says that “Municipal Councils will choose whether to pass a PACE bylaw.” It sounds pretty good. But then somewhere else on their website it says that municipalities will pay for and finance these things and then collect the money back off their property taxes.

Well, you can imagine, Madam Speaker, that both of those things can't be true, yet they both come off official government documents. So one could only reasonably ask and, hopefully, get some kind of an explanation from the government before this thing is done on which of those two things on the government website is true. I think it's pretty easy to imagine that both of them cannot be true at the same time, yet both of them exist at the same time. So one of these things does not belong with the other.

It also says, again on the government website – these are not my words, Madam Speaker; this is what it says in the government of Alberta document – that “municipalities are not interested in administering the program and incurring administrative costs.” Then in the bullet underneath that it says that “it is envisioned Energy Efficiency Alberta will administer the program on behalf of municipalities who have passed a PACE bylaw.” Well, you can imagine how municipalities might like that, yet again it says on the government website that municipalities will finance these things and collect. So it sounds to me like the municipalities are doing all the administration.

Again, it can't be both. It has to be one or the other. I think that at some point it would be a fair question for someone in the government to stand up and say which part of their documents are incorrect. Or maybe they're both incorrect. Maybe there's a third story we haven't heard yet. These are concerns that I think are legitimate and fair for us to ask.

It also says here in this government document, again, Madam Speaker, not my words, the government of Alberta's words: “Municipalities are not interested in a lending role (financing upgrades). It is envisioned that private capital will finance clean energy upgrades through agreements with [Energy Efficiency Alberta].” Yet again, for the third time, and I think reasonably so, I will point out that on the Alberta government website it says that municipalities will finance these improvements and then pay for them. Imagine my surprise. The government, that I should be able to trust, is telling me two what seem to be exactly different things, and if I am an Alberta citizen, I would think: wow; my government maybe doesn't have their story straight, maybe doesn't know what they're doing, maybe hasn't figured it out yet, maybe is still figuring it out.

I don't know. Maybe there's a third story that's true, and maybe neither one of these is true. I mean, until we get some clarification, how are we to know, especially when we have two things written on the government of Alberta website that give different answers to the same question? So I think there's much to be concerned about here.

You know, when we look at, again, the program as advertised, it sounds nice. It says that it “reduces financial barriers associated with high upfront costs for energy-related property improvements.” It says that there's “an opportunity for longer-term repayment periods and lower interest rates.” Okay. I don't see any numbers there that say what those lower interest rates are. If it's on someone's taxes, I guess, then the municipality is administering it. I'm not sure. I wonder how happy the municipalities are with administering a loan program that they may or may not be in control of the interest rates for.

It appears that through the legislation they're going to turn municipalities into ATMs or banks as well as collection agents. I guess that if that's what the government is going to do – they're the

government; they certainly have the right to do that – they should probably get their story straight as to whether they’re turning the municipalities into the banks and the collection agents or whether indeed Energy Efficiency Alberta is going to become a bank, which I think would be mission creep for them, and a collection agent. I don’t know. But these are, I think, obvious questions that, obviously, should be answered. And who wouldn’t want solar panels? It sounds like a nice idea.

Again, here’s the other government document that I’ll read straight from, on the government of Alberta letterhead.

Under PACE, municipalities would install . . .

See, now they’re in the installation business. They’re not just administering them, okay? On one page it says that somebody else is going to do it all, and on this other government of Alberta page, which is in my hand here, it says:

Under PACE, municipalities would install and pay for upgrades on private property and recover costs through the owners’ property taxes.

Here’s where it gets fun here, too. It says:

Since first implemented in California in 2008, PACE programs have expanded to every region in the United States . . .

The hon. member before me just said, “33 states,” and I don’t take any issue with him that he said that.

. . . generating nearly \$6 billion in economic activity. Ontario,

Nova Scotia and Quebec have also adopted PACE legislation.

Well, if you don’t read too carefully and ignore where things say exactly the opposite on one page from what they say on the other, you might actually be convinced that it sounds pretty good.

It says that it will be “a voluntary program for municipalities and property owners,” yet the other page in the same document, the page before, said that “municipalities would install and pay for upgrades.” One does need to ask whether the government has their act together on this and has figured out what they’re doing when they have so much conflicting – and all these things that I’ve quoted are not from me; they’re off government of Alberta documents. Government of Alberta documents. They do not seem to have their story straight.

11:20

Now, it gets to be more fun because what’s not in the government of Alberta documents is that in the States there are lawsuits against the PACE program. So it raises the issue of consumer protection, whether somebody perhaps gets a \$30,000 set of solar panels that maybe are only worth \$3,000. Maybe. I don’t know. But let me just say this. Down in the States there’s not just one lawsuit – wait for it – there’s a class-action lawsuit against the PACE program.

So when the government talks about how everything is shiny and beautiful and that it’s all figured out, their own documents betray the fact that that may not be the case, Madam Speaker. All these things that I’ve said are not my words. They’re from the government of Alberta website. I haven’t invented any of these words. They’re all in government of Alberta documents. You can imagine my concern when I’m seeing exactly the same things, opposite things, underneath a government of Alberta logo. I think most Albertans might share my concern and have a few questions for the government on this.

So in light of some of the things that we were able to find with some research, Madam Speaker, I would like to move an amendment to Bill 10. I have the requisite number of copies here. I will wait for your permission to continue if that’s okay with you.

The Deputy Speaker: Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. McIver: Thank you. I move that the motion for second reading of Bill 10, An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements, be

amended by deleting all of the words after “that” and substituting the following:

Bill 10, An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements, be not now read a second time because the Assembly is of the view that the bill does not provide sufficient detail to ensure there is adequate protection for property owners to avoid the type of litigation that has arisen with the PACE programs in California.

Madam Speaker, listen, I’ve seen the government documents. An organization I respect very much, AUMA, is quoted in here as saying that they like the program. I think RMA is a little bit less enthusiastic about it so far, but I’m not saying that they’re against it. But I am saying to not read it right now and give the government sufficient time to ensure that litigation won’t happen; give guarantees to Albertans that consumer protection will be put in place, that vulnerable Albertans will not be taken advantage of at their front door or through other mechanisms of marketing, that people won’t lose their homes because they can’t pay their property taxes if they get talked into improvements they perhaps can’t afford the tax bill for.

Listen, the government may be able to get this right still, but by passing this amendment, it will actually give them time to get on the same page not with us but, rather, with themselves. If they can get on the same page with themselves, they’ll be in a better position to convince Albertans that this is good.

Now, again, I accept what the hon. member from the other side said, and I agree with him that a lot of Albertans are interested in upgrading their properties to make them more energy efficient and more environmentally friendly and all those things. I don’t disagree with that at all. I don’t even disagree with the government’s idea about helping people do that. I certainly wonder about the fact that they have conflicting information. I haven’t read enough about how consumers are going to be protected. I haven’t read enough about who’s going to pay for the improvements, whether it’ll be the municipality – actually, I’ve read that it’s both. I’ve read too much on that. I’ve read that the municipalities will pay for it, and I’ve also read that Energy Efficiency Alberta will pay for it.

Now, I see the minister shaking his head, and I’m sure he’s got lots to say, and I’ll actually be happy to hear it. He’s probably a little embarrassed that documents are floating around that say exactly the opposite things, but that’s what ministers get to sort out. That’s part of the challenge of that particular difficult job. I admire how hard some of the ministers work on doing their job, especially when they have to sort out stuff like this on television. It doesn’t make their job any easier.

So I think it’s a reasonable amendment under the circumstances. I think it’s a program that has potential to have good things in it. I think the evidence, not provided by me but, rather, provided by the government itself, indicates that the government is not really ready to launch it yet. I think that the amendment will give the government time to undo the inconsistencies that they’ve published, to maybe get one clean story out to Albertans, maybe get their story straight, maybe not have such big inconsistencies floating around out there. At that point they may be able to come back and mop up the inconsistencies and have everybody in this House know what they’re voting for in legislation and have the public get one consistent message out of their Alberta government. At that point we might even be ready to support this thing.

I’m certainly not accusing the government of having bad intentions here. It’s just that it appears the cake isn’t fully baked, Madam Speaker. In fact, it’s pretty obvious that the cake isn’t fully baked. So I hope that all members of the House will support the amendment to give the government a little more time to be consistent in their messaging, to not confuse Albertans, to make sure Albertans know that they’re protected, to make sure that this

thing is well communicated. It certainly isn't the case yet. I'm not accusing anybody of bad intentions here, but the evidence, again, not from me but, rather, from the government's own websites and such, would indicate that this thing isn't ready.

I think the worst thing the government could do is to thrust something onto Albertans that isn't ready, and I think that the best thing they could do is to just say: "Okay. Let's take a breath. Let's find out where we're inconsistent. Let's come back to Albertans with a nice clean, consistent message. Let's deliver that to Albertans, and let's see if Albertans like it." I think that would be the best thing for the government to do. It's what I am proposing, and I sincerely hope that all members of the House will see what I think is the obvious good sense in doing that.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you. I don't think you'll find it surprising that I will not support the amendment, but I do want to clarify a couple of things, and I'm glad that the member brought it up. One thing, first off, is that legislation is the number one source that we have to get our information from.

There is one sentence that I've been made aware of from the member that on the website does kind of give a little bit of – it's not clear, and it seems like a contradiction. I do apologize for that. It seems like it's a little bit of a mixed message. I think it's because – I've got a note that I wrote here – the payments for the clean energy improvements are being done through the property taxes, and the municipality must be the one that delivers a service. It doesn't mean that the mayor and council are going to be installing solar panels or windows or doors on your or your neighbour's home. Just like they don't repave the streets, it will be contracted out to a third party.

So I appreciate that. There was a mistake on the website. But, again, the legislation is the number one source, so just to make sure that we always follow that. I appreciate you bringing that up.

Consumer protection is under the Fair Trading Act. It's pretty straightforward. I want to make a point, too, that it's not just solar panels that we're discussing here. We're talking about windows, doors, insulation, small things that can make a big difference, especially for people on fixed incomes, nonprofits. It's not just residential. I think a lot of this is going to be very beneficial for a lot of bigger projects like older apartment buildings with giant boilers in them that are super inefficient. So I just wanted to make that point.

It's also not going to be the municipality that pays for these, and Energy Efficiency Alberta isn't going to be the one that's paying for these. There will be third-party lenders. We've set it up as I've done with the MGA, the massive piece of legislation, the same way. This is a framework. The framework for this is coming through right now. We've discussed this before in the House, and I've made it abundantly clear that the regulations – and we've already consulted with a lot of people – will be consulted on through the summer to make sure that we get all those details right. So it won't be thrust upon Albertans without discussing it with them and getting all the information out to them and all the details to them. That is something that we want to make sure that we do through whatever the spring is right now and then through the summer and then into the fall, when we'll bring the legislation back and then make the final decision on that. I just want to make those points clear.

11:30

Like I said, I do appreciate the member bringing that up, that there was a line on the website that was a bit mixed messaging, to be honest.

There are a lot of people that are behind it. You know, I had a message from the president of AUMA a few days ago – and actually I've discussed it with him a couple of times after – that AUMA backs this. They're behind it. I've also got letters from Clark Builders, from EllisDon, from architects, the Green Building Council, from the whole myriad of people that have stood behind this, a homeowner, Mr. Hanlan, in Edmonton who says, "PACE would be of great benefit for senior homeowners by providing them with a source of funds to retrofit their homes for energy efficiency." There are a lot of people out there that are behind this. I'm actually accumulating all the letters and all the information so at some point, when I have time, I can let more people know who's behind it.

Yeah. I just wanted to make a few points there about that and to clarify for folks. If they do have those questions, by all means, make sure you bring them up to me. But, again, the legislation is the number one source of information, and then come to me and ask if there are questions.

Thank you very much, Member, but, yeah, that amendment is not something that I will be behind. I hope that nobody else is either, on our side.

The Deputy Speaker: Did you wish to respond, Calgary-Hays?

Mr. McIver: See, there it is. I didn't accuse the government of wanting to do anything bad. I think the minister has said that he doesn't want to do anything bad. No one has accused the minister of that, but he has acknowledged that there is some confusion there.

The only thing I would take issue slightly with in what the minister just said is that while he might believe that the legislation is the main place to get information, the public doesn't typically go to the legislation. They usually go to the government website, right? For those people listening and watching at home, if you were wanting to know about a government program, any government program, would you look up the legislation, or would you go on the website and look up the topic? Of course, I believe that the vast majority of Albertans would go to the website and look up the topic because that's what people do. Again, I'm not taking big issue with what the minister said. Maybe his friends all go to the legislation; I think that most of my friends would go to the website. I truly believe that.

That could just be a difference of opinion that the minister and I have, and that's fair. We're allowed to have differences of opinion in here. I don't find that offensive, any way that he disagrees with me, and I hope he doesn't find it offensive that I disagree with him on this. But I think it does support my point that the government could use more time.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other speakers to the amendment? The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Stier: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and good morning, everyone. Today it is my intent to speak once again about some of the problems that we had noticed beforehand and, through some other research, you know, been concerned about since we first got onto this bill. I'm here to speak and put forward some of the basis behind the reasoned amendment that my colleague from Calgary-Hays has presented, which I'm in full support of.

I think we know what the reasoned amendment says in essence. It's basically:

Bill 10, An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements, be not now read a second time because the Assembly is of the view that the bill does not provide sufficient detail to ensure there is adequate protection for property owners to avoid the type of litigation that has arisen with the PACE programs in California.

Madam Speaker, we are making this amendment today based upon information provided by the ministry on the proposed program in the original technical briefing plus information we have obtained from the ministry's website. We also have details from the news media, articles published recently in the state of California regarding serious legal proceedings involving the PACE program. As a result of this information, we have very serious concerns that approval of this legislation could lead to similar legal difficulties for the public here in Alberta.

Madam Speaker, I want to reflect back a moment, actually, at this time and take a look at the substantive issues that have led us to make this amendment here today. As I mentioned during my last presentation here, two days ago, as an opposition member I look upon the task of reviewing proposed legislation seriously as it is our role and responsibility in this House to ensure that what is proposed for the benefit of Albertans is worded correctly to ensure that the purpose and the intent are achieved and that it prevents unintended consequences from occurring. It is for that very reason that I stand before this House today, as I believe this proposed legislation is not appropriate at this time because the program that is to be enabled will potentially, left as is, without detail, have the opportunity to cause Albertans great financial difficulty.

When the government first invited my assistant and I to the technical briefing regarding Bill 10, I was cautiously optimistic, actually. Documents provided by the ministry indicated that the PACE program being promoted by the staff was originally implemented in 2008 in California, and it outlined how property owners would be able to finance renewable energy projects which would constitute upgrades to their properties, and repayment would be collected through property owners' municipal tax bills, much like off-site levies that we have today. However, the briefing document went on to indicate that many of the Alberta rural and urban municipalities had serious concerns regarding the implementation, the administration, and the financing aspect of the proposed PACE program. That is a fact. It is in the document.

The document reported that large and mid-sized cities were not interested in administering the program or incurring any administrative costs with such a scheme, nor were they interested in a lending role. Additionally, the briefing document went on to mention that in addressing those concerns, the ministry had envisioned instead that Energy Efficiency Alberta would be administering the program and that the lending role would be provided through agreements with that agency. So some of the municipalities' concerns were addressed somewhat in that regard.

However, despite those comments and investigation, as was mentioned earlier here this morning, the quickest search of the program came upon the Alberta website and yielded the concerns that we were just mentioning here a few moments ago. It did say, "Municipalities would install and pay for upgrades on private property and recover costs through the owners' property taxes." It was also repeated on the second page. Now, that totally contradicts the information that we got in the original briefing. I think the minister did address that somewhat and admitted a few minutes ago in the previous conversation and exchanges, therefore, that there seemed to be some error on the government website.

Nonetheless, at this point in time, though, we wondered: what were municipalities actually told, then? That contradiction in

information leads us to believe that there was something kind of faulty in how they were putting this proposal together and how it was presented by the ministry to municipalities. In that regard, one of the things that I found the most troubling, though, about the administration of the program was that the eligibility for this program is going to be based primarily on property information rather than the industry standard in lending, income and credit information. Although this would make the program easy to qualify for, I suspect, a proper loan should only be considered through risk assessment, with a repayment plan in place. The basis would normally be an individual's history with finances in almost any other setting.

It would appear that the government is so eager to get this green spending out the door that by not following normal lending qualification practices, they are prepared to put this program together which may put ordinary Albertans at risk, especially seniors, who are not necessarily well financed. If a family can't pay, they risk losing their home, ruining their finances, or being plagued with the burden of debt for a decade or two or more.

But the most crucial information pertaining to this reasoned amendment, Madam Speaker, was found when our members along with our staff also discovered these news articles, that the PACE program is facing class-action lawsuits in the United States and in the very state that the ministry has essentially been modelling the program from, specifically L.A. county in the state of California. Let me reiterate that in case those that weren't listening would like to just get me correctly. There is a class-action lawsuit filed in L.A. county over the PACE program due to the program lacking adequate consumer protections. We'll be tabling copies of that article later today, after question period, in the process this afternoon.

Attorneys representing homeowners allege that this county program that funds energy-efficient home improvements, known as PACE, has ruined the finances of many borrowers saddled with loans that they cannot afford. They claimed that the lenders did not provide adequate protections. There were no special safeguards for seniors, and many PACE participants were left living hand-to-mouth to hold on to their homes. We have the same concern here with this program, Madam Speaker. We see nothing in the legislation to offer these protections. People are on the verge of losing their homes over this program in L.A. county, actually. A homeowner can be foreclosed upon if a PACE loan goes unpaid. In the boondoggle of their trial run with this program they particularly noted the lack of special safeguards for seniors.

11:40

What I'm getting at, Madam Speaker, is that making this same program accessible here for all applicants in Alberta would do nothing but put a great portion of them in a position of potential risk as well. The legislation doesn't say anything about safeguards. We're tasked with making sure that legislation is correct, yet we cannot make a fair judgment in the absence of that information. We are worried that they would possibly risk losing their homes, just like in California, ruin their finances, be plagued with the burden of debt for a decade or two, and suffer many of the same unfortunate fates that those in the States are currently enduring and over which they are suing their county.

Madam Speaker, I'm surprised and appalled by this situation. Why should the Alberta government even consider to propose, promote, and legislate a program that is of the very same type and name that is involved in class-action lawsuits in another jurisdiction and in the very state that this government told me in the briefing meeting they're modelling it on? That's quite surprising.

Madam Speaker, if the money is not capable of being repaid or if the money being lent is greater than the value of the home or if for

any other reasons an individual undertakes more than they are capable of repaying – it's sometimes called biting off more than they can chew – that is a problem. It's, of course, a problem for the government, that will not be getting its money back, but it's an exponential problem for property owners, who are now possibly, if they participate in a program without proper protection, losing everything.

As eligibility will be based primarily on property information rather than the income or credit check, as I said before, I am at a loss for how they expect the money to be paid back if there is no emphasis on financial responsibility or even a credit check to see if there's a lending risk. Again, the legislation has no detail on that. How are we to judge if it doesn't include information pertaining to that very risk?

Madam Speaker, this proposed legislation and the program in its current form simply don't pass the smell test, in my opinion, for Albertans. There should not be any type of government-proposed program that leads to people being fearful of losing their homes and possibly ruining their finances. There already exist several types of lending services for home improvement, from lines of credit to second mortgaging plus the CHIP program, which involve proper qualification standards that protect the homeowner and the financing companies. Therefore, this program is entirely unnecessary.

To conclude, we've attempted to show in previous submissions during the second reading debate of this bill that the legislation is vague and has insufficient details that would be pertinent to prevent future unintended financial consequences or even potential litigation. We've also shown how the municipalities have serious concerns over the implementation, administration, and financing aspect of the proposed PACE program. Those words are not mine, Madam Speaker. Those are the words that were in the briefing document that we received. They had serious concerns over the implementation, administration, and financing aspects.

We've shown that this same program in L.A. county in California has some serious problems for its citizens that have actually been so bad that it's led to class-action lawsuits. Therefore, we can only conclude that Bill 10 does not provide sufficient detail to ensure that there's adequate protection for property owners to avoid the type of litigation that has arisen with the PACE program in California. That's the reason for our amendment. We think this needs to be redone with more detail to satisfy us that this legislation can and will be viewed by Albertans as being correct. They could receive a bit of reassurance with it. Given all of the above, I urge all of you to think about what I've just said. We are charged with ensuring that legislation is correct and has proper detail in it.

I urge all of the members of the House to protect Albertans from the same fate as what has already happened in L.A. county. Make it better. Do so by voting in favour of our reasoned amendment so that this bill does not proceed in its current form.

Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate that one of the things we have in Alberta, I think, to be honest, is the opportunity to look at other programs around not only this country but other countries, the United States being one, and to learn from them. It's just like when they say that everything we're doing in Alberta is the same as Ontario, which is completely wrong. We've learned from other jurisdictions, and we take things that are going to work well for Alberta. That's what we do here because Alberta is unique – frankly, I'm biased – and, I think, better.

Again, with this program it's the same idea. I understand the concerns that they're bringing up about the United States, and they can beat that drum all day long, about lawsuits and things, but they forget about consumer protection up here and how we have different laws and the Fair Trading Act. There are numerous things that we have up here that are different than the United States. We're different countries.

So that's fine. I understand the concerns, and I appreciate that. We have learned some lessons from how PACE was implemented down there, and those lessons, combined with how we are proposing to enable this program through legislation, will make it impossible for predatory contractors or lenders to use the clean energy improvement tax to be able to take advantage of Albertans because the municipality or its contracted administrator must be involved in the process. Only property owners who apply through those official channels will be eligible.

In addition, a list of approved contractors will be developed in consultation. I will say that word again, "consultation," which is super important to me and to Municipal Affairs and the rest of this side to make sure that we get it right. I've said it I don't know how many times in this House that this legislation is going to be put in place here as a framework and that we will consult. We've done consultation already, but we will do this formal consultation again through the spring and summer to bring it back in the fall because we need to. As I said, it will be developed in consultation with Energy Efficiency Alberta and Alberta's energy-contracting stakeholders. This will also ensure that these improvements are being installed appropriately to achieve Alberta's climate change goals and to protect consumers.

Ultimately, Madam Speaker, what I would like to do and what I am doing is bringing forward a program that's going to help consumers, that's going to help contractors, builders, farmers, ranchers, nonprofits, seniors, people on low incomes. But one of the most important parts about it is that they're accountable to themselves. They make that choice. It's enabling. They can make that choice if they want, just like right now if they go and try to buy something or make a choice on buying a car or whatever it might be. We as human beings have choices, personal freedoms in this country, which other people in some other countries don't have. I'm not forcing anything on anyone. It is simply enabling legislation that they can choose to use if they would like.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, do you wish to respond?

Mr. Stier: Yes. Well, thank you, Madam Speaker and through you to the minister. I appreciate his comments, and I appreciate the work that has been put in by the department. I know many of the people over there, and I appreciate that their intent, I'm sure, is well above board. But the problem is that, as I said earlier – and it's part of our system, I think – when we're working with legislation in the House, a lot of times it is bare bones, structural with no detail. I know that regulations will come forward at some point in time from the department after they do the work that the minister alluded to, but we are charged with deciding about this legislation now, the legislation that we've been presented with. In the absence of any of the details, that he just shared now, how are we supposed to make the choice that this is appropriate in its current form? If all of those things should be important to Albertans, I would say that they should be in the legislation.

Madam Speaker, I appreciate the time this morning. I appreciate the incredibly great amount of co-operation we have with the minister's ministry and with him. I look forward to perhaps seeing changes to this legislation, something to give us some satisfaction,

where we can move forward with this with more confidence and more confidence for Albertans.

Thank you.

11:50

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

Seeing none, any other speakers to the amendment? Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Before I begin, I'd just like to say that I have a lot of respect for the minister. I think you've done a good job on this file. I thank him for answering some questions here this morning. Some of my speaking notes now are going to be repetitive of what everybody else has said as he's already answered some of the questions. You now, I'm getting used to this, but our job over here as the opposition is to question. You bring the legislation, and our job is to question it. I guess that's what I'm doing here. We can't just rubber-stamp everything you do, so it's all with respect and just doing our jobs and looking out for Albertans.

You know, one of the things that I'm a little concerned about is that it's almost like the municipalities will become a bank, that they're doing banking, then. Basically, they're lending the money to homeowners to upgrade their homes. They can get loans and mortgages at a bank already, so now the municipalities will be competing with the banks. I get it that it makes it easier, but if they can't get the mortgage at the bank, that means they probably don't qualify. The bankers have their rules to go through. In making their mortgage payments, they always take into account what they have to pay for taxes, what they have to pay for utilities. Now this is going to be an added cost on there, and they're going to take that into account if they're trying to decide if the homeowner can afford the payments.

If the banks say, "No, we won't do it," they must think they can't afford it. So then they'll come to the municipality like the lender of last resort. I know it's not the same, but there is a chance that the municipalities will be funding homeowners that the bank won't. That kind of brings up the odds that they might not be able to make the payments. You know, I don't know if the municipalities want to have to go through the hassle of doing that.

The municipalities I've talked to actually – you know, I've just talked to the ones in my constituency, and most of them really don't know much about it. I think they've heard of it, but they don't really know. They're not sure about it. They're not sure if they want to get involved. But I guess the good thing, as the minister has pointed out, is that it's optional. I mean, they can do it, or they don't. Each municipality gets to decide that, so if they're not comfortable with it and don't think it's something they want to do, I guess they don't have to. That's a good part of it.

Then it's a little confusing, but I think I've got it. The minister has said that he's going to consult all summer, so I wasn't sure if that meant they're not going to move this bill through the final stages. We've done that before and consulted and come back in the fall and moved it. Or is it a matter of moving it now and then consulting after the fact, after the legislation? I assume it's consulting on the regulations. Then he says that he'll consult, if that is on the regulations, and then bring it back in the fall. Usually the regulations don't come back here. You know, you might consult, but I don't think it'll come back to this Chamber in the fall. I guess I'm not really sure what he's meaning there.

There are some questions on the legislation, but the details all come out in the regulations, so that's a lot of work to do. The minister is going to consult on it, but it just reminded me of one

thing that's been said lots of times before: the devil is in the details. So once we see the details in the regulations, I guess we'll know more about it.

I'm just going to read some of my speaking notes. I know they kind of repeat what's been said before and that the minister has already answered some of the questions. I thank him for that.

You know, I rise to support my colleague's reasoned amendment not to proceed with further readings of Bill 10, An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements. Madam Speaker, the more we've researched Bill 10; the more the critic and caucus have become concerned about it. You just heard my colleagues point out comments about the pitfalls of this proposed legislation. We cannot proceed further with Bill 10 if we are to provide a good legislative framework to Alberta's municipalities. It's out of concern for municipalities and consumers and the taxpayers of Alberta that we ask this Assembly to end the bill at this stage.

As usual, the title of Bill 10 sounds wonderful. How could anyone not support a bill that enables clean energy improvements? But it is our job as legislators to scratch below the title of the bill to ensure it is a benefit to Albertans, not a detriment. Our investigations have raised too many red flags to allow us to support Bill 10. For instance, after reviewing the government's PACE website, we discovered that the municipality installs and pays for the upgrades. That was interesting because the government was assuring Albertans and municipalities that Energy Efficiency Alberta was to be the administrator of the PACE programs and that municipalities had little to do or worry about. It certainly sounded promising, but like so much of Bill 10, the details were to be left to the regulations.

The government might have forgotten that it provided some of those details on its PACE website. Madam Speaker, it appears that the municipal government was always to be a partner, in fact, more than a partner, in this program. When we find this out through our own research rather than from what the government told us about the bill, it makes us question other aspects of the bill.

Madam Speaker, the information on the website was followed up with a look at the California experience with the PACE program. That state introduced it in the late 2000s, and it created problems for many homebuyers. In California PACE loans are recorded against the property as a tax lien, and in the case of someone defaulting on the mortgage, before they're able to sell their home, they had to first pay off the loan to attract buyers. You know, that may not be the case here, as the minister said, but like I say, we don't know those details. Those details will come out in the regulations. Some financing institutions chose not to lend to homebuyers when a PACE loan was outstanding on the property. In other words, it hampered both sellers and buyers. Why would Alberta want to go down this same road and also put PACE liens on the property?

This program is clearly problematic, and it would be unfair to lead Alberta homeowners and municipalities down that same road. The California homeowners had a poor experience with this program, and since Alberta is following the same model, could we not also have some problems? Why would the Municipal Affairs minister not have known about the California experience, and why is he so keen to import it to Alberta? For all of these reasons, I support the reasoned amendment on Bill 10.

We have also heard from the minister that we just do not understand Bill 10. You know, the minister has explained some stuff today, and he's had time to explain about the finer details, but I think even he doesn't know all the details yet because of the regulations. So, yeah. We don't understand it. I don't think all of the homeowners understand it or the municipalities. Until the

regulations are produced, I don't even know if the minister and the department understand all the details to it yet.

The act offers little help because it leaves so much for the regulations to fill in. That is yet another good reason to support this reasoned amendment. Without details about the program and with the mixed and somewhat contradictory information provided by the government about how it will work and the California experience with PACE, which points to a loan program that created problems for both home sellers and homebuyers, not to mention municipalities, Madam Speaker, I'm not sure why the government is so keen on PACE. There are too many red flags to allow this bill to pass.

I would like to point out that homeowners have options. If they want to invest in energy efficient home renovations, they can go to their bank and review their options for loans, lines of credit, and mortgages. Despite the government's ideological belief that it

makes economic sense for household finances, Albertans will take these measures without government pushing them to do so. They have been doing it for years and will continue to do so without government meddling.

Madam Speaker, I would like to see this government show more faith in Albertans to not only do the economically sensible thing but to do the right thing. Government does not have to manoeuvre them into doing so. With the pitfalls PACE serves up to homeowners and municipalities . . .

The Deputy Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt, hon. member, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(2.1) the House stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, May 17, 2018

Day 32

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, May 17, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

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

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you the brilliant students from Eastview middle school in the spectacular constituency of Red Deer-South. The students are accompanied by their teachers and chaperones, and I would like to ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed my distinct privilege to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly an amazing group of grade 11 students from the Calvin Christian School at Coalhurst, which is just a few minutes north of Lethbridge, as you know. It's always nice to have visitors from way down south up here at the Legislature to visit us. I met with these students, teachers, and chaperones as we had our picture taken, of course, out here on the steps leading to this Chamber. They also took part in the mock Legislature this morning over at the Federal Building. I understand that the young fellow that was doing your role as the Speaker – I stood beside him; I think he's about six foot four – is looking for your job here pretty quick. As I say your name, please stand: Johannes Gerardus Jacobus Lock, Jacqueline Oudshoorn, Albert Oudshoorn, Harry Oudshoorn, Christina Oudshoorn, and Geraldine Vanden Hoek. They must be behind me. There are some over there. I ask that the rest of the class please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. M. le Président, c'est avec fierté que je me lève à la Chambre aujourd'hui pour introduire students from the beautiful Covenant Christian school in Leduc. Today they debated a bill about making parents go to daycare for two hours at the end of the day, which I thought would be a great break from things. They are accompanied today by their teacher, Beth Gillard, and their chaperones: Roland Owens, Angela Cardinal, Tanya Dennis, Lidia Kuessher, and Pastor Dennis Gulley, whom I've also had the pleasure of meeting before. He's a fine gentleman. I wish they would rise, and if we could give them the warm greeting of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today and introduce the guests from Morrin school in the diverse constituency of Drumheller-Stettler. I had a chance to meet with the folks from Delia school but not Morrin school today. Kealey Gordon is their teacher. I was wondering if the rest of the class would please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Are there any other school groups, hon. members? The Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've got the honour of being able to introduce to you and through you a school from my constituency, the Holy Cross elementary school. It is an incredible school that both my children go to. I have the privilege today to say that one of my daughters, Amelia Cyr, actually is here in the stands with the grade 6 class. I also have to say that I think the teachers that come up here and do all the hard work to educate my children – I'd like to acknowledge them. If you could stand, please, as I read your names. Let's start with Mr. Clinton Lamarsh and Miss Laurence Dubois-Jolin. Those are the two teachers with the group. We've got the chaperones: Jacqueline Jorgensen, Sherrie Follett, Nadine Pitclett-Janvier, Anna Bekkema, Chris Bekkema, Olivia Larocque, Chris Vining, Samantha Walker-Dean, Amber Yantha, David Morrison, Leah Palmer, Lesley Mills, and Julia Colbourne. So we have quite a few people. If the rest of the students can stand so that we can give them a warm welcome from the Assembly, please.

The Speaker: Hon. member, they may not have been in the House yet.

Any other school groups?

The hon. Minister of Labour and democratic renewal.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly some amazing community leaders and volunteers from Edmonton's southeast. We're very fortunate in the southeast to have what is called the Mill Woods Presidents' Council, who meet together to share ideas to work collaboratively to build strong communities in the southeast. Today from the Mill Woods Presidents' Council we have Michelle Gosselin, president of the Summerside Community League, and Leigh Makarewicz, one of the volunteers from the North Millbourne Community League. These individuals are leaders in our community. They dedicate countless hours, and sometimes the Mill Woods Presidents' Council meetings are not short. I want to say thank you to them for all of the work that they do and recognize how important they are to our communities. With that, I'd like them to please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

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

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members in the Chamber my courageous friends Kerri Workman and her partner, Malcolm Eyjolfson. They're from Calgary, and they are seated in your gallery. They're here today at the Legislature to speak to two ministries about the choking game and what can be done to prevent children from taking part in it and keep them safe. I'd like to ask them to rise and please receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

Cortes-Vargas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly guests from the Imperial Sovereign Court of the Wild Rose. Today is International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia. The Imperial Sovereign Court of the Wild Rose works hard to raise funds for other organizations which provide services to the LGBTQ community, and it has become a yearly

tradition to bring the court and introduce them to the House. Here today is Empress 42 Kenya DeWitt, Emperor 42 Trey LePark Trash, and the other members of the court: Harvey Steele, Carrie Du'Way, Dyxson Kuntz, Melinda Verga, Jessie Cann-Dewitt, Christy Heely, Lady O Mercy, and Angelo Mercy. I would ask them to all stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

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

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a great group of individuals who work each and every day to protect one of the most important areas of our province, an area that many of us refer to affectionately as Alberta's west country, my backyard and their backyard. I'm glad to see them here today. I'd ask that they stand up as I say their names: Ronald Willert from Snow and Mud; Dean Bradko from the Lac Ste. Anne off-highway vehicle association; Garrett Schmidt from the Alberta committee for eastern slopes stewardship – I love your trails – Jason Smith from Safari Club International Red Deer; Calvin Rakach, my neighbour and friend from the Clearwater county trail initiative; and Brent Hodgson from the Alberta Off Highway Vehicle Association. I thank them all for all their hard work that they do for the eastern slopes and ask that they receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Health and Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to do three introductions today. The first is two constituents from Edmonton-Glenora, Karen and Adam Jones.* They are seated in your gallery, and they are the very proud parents of Mark, one of our pages, who is seated directly below them. They are here to observe Mark in his role as a page. Mark attends Jasper Place high school, and he is a talented writer, long-distance runner, and a theatre enthusiast. I ask that his parents please rise and receive the warm welcome of our Assembly.

1:40

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ms Hoffman: My second introduction, who is in the members' gallery, is the newest member of the board of directors for Alberta Health Services, Robb Foote. Robb is currently the executive director of Lakeland primary care network and the interim executive director for both Cold Lake and Bonnyville PCNs as well. After working with health care management in the United States for 15 years, Alberta's public health care system called him home. He is the proud father to Brenden, Joshua, Tyler, and Kaitlyn as well. I'd ask that Robb please rise and receive the warm welcome of our Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ms Hoffman: My final introduction, Mr. Speaker, is to recognize World Family Doctor Day, which is May 19. This year's theme is Family Doctors: Leading the Way to Better Health. I'd like to thank the Alberta College of Family Physicians for their leadership in improving the health of Albertans and for their work in promoting excellence in family medicine. Here today on their behalf are Dr. Fred Janke, president; Terri Potter, executive director; Susan Wong

Armstrong; Adam Filiatreault; Wendy Steele; Susan Soufi. Please rise and receive our appreciation. Yes, family docs do rock.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

Mr. Coolahan: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two sets of introductions today. First, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Dan and Erin Walker and their sons Damon and Keith.* The Walkers are friends and constituents. I think Dan and I get along because he doesn't pay attention to politics. It's great to have them here today, and I'd ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Second but certainly not least, it is my great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the three people that make fighting for a better Alberta not only possible but a great honour: my incredible partner and wife, an amazing mother and cook, Sarah, who really does it all – and the best thing is that she does it all for us – and also my wonderful children, my daughter, Mehna, and my son, Kieran. It's such a pleasure to have them here today. I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome. Hon. member, your son was shaking his head. I don't know what that means.

Mr. Coolahan: I noticed that.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a couple of introductions today. First of all, it's my pleasure to introduce some of Alberta's physiotherapists and members of Physiotherapy Alberta College and Association who are seated in the public gallery. May is dedicated to physiotherapists as they dedicate their careers to the well-being of others. Physiotherapists work to help Albertans get moving and keep moving. I ask William Tung, Alayne Barreda, Simon Cooke, Tress Gibson, Allyson Jones, Jody Prohar, June Norris, and Leanne Loranger to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Mr. Schmidt: For my second introduction, Mr. Speaker, it's a privilege to rise and introduce two dedicated volunteers, Michelle Devlin, a volunteer with the Stollery Children's Hospital Foundation, and Tammy MacKay, a volunteer with the Tri-Community Health and Wellness Foundation. Both are seated in the members' gallery. They're dedicated to enhancing care in communities across Alberta, and they share a passion for philanthropy and building excellence in health care. I thank them for their contribution and partnership. I invite Michelle and Tammy to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Any further introductions, hon. members? Please proceed.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the privilege to introduce my wife, Megan, who has come up, and my daughter Charlotte. I also have the fortune to have my sister Melonie Dyck, her daughters Annalise and Rebecca Dyck, and my nephew Matthew Dyck. It's great to have all of them come up and visit us in this Legislature.

*These spellings could not be verified at the time of publication.

*These spellings could not be verified at the time of publication.

It's also a privilege that I have Matthew here. He's a part of my member's statement that I'll be giving this afternoon. It is just an incredible honour to have all of you here.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Members' Statements

LGBTQ2S-plus Rights

Cortes-Vargas: Twenty years ago legal history was made. Julie Lloyd, Alberta's first openly gay judge, described this change in momentum in the landmark Delwin Vriend case, that has become the foundation for the protection of the rights of gender and sexual minorities.

All the ridiculous arguments that had been given to discriminate against gays and lesbians just started to fade away. They disappeared like a puff of smoke in the clear light of the Supreme Court. Each of the arguments was revealed to be specious, haranguing, alarmist and simply untrue.

Mr. Speaker, today is the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia. We must remember that the courts might provide the foundation, but it is those that are visible and vocal, that work every day on changing the culture, that truly eliminate discrimination.

I stand being visible alongside those that cannot park their identities. We stand with those that have experienced violence, job loss, bullying, and stigma because of who they are and for who they love. We stand alongside those who have paved the way, some through the courts and others, like the Imperial Sovereign Court of the Wild Rose, who continue to redefine gender binaries. We stand with allies in the government that have not wavered in their commitment to support safe and inclusive spaces. We stand with regular Albertans that refuse to accept that their hard-fought rights are again under threat. We stand with equity and equality because it strengthens our community. We stand with more than just words.

Our government and our party will never waver when it comes to standing up for human rights. We will continue to fight for the rights of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, nonconforming, questioning, intersex, pansexual, two-spirit, asexual, and gender nonconforming Albertans. We will not relent.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Persons with Developmental Disabilities

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to take this opportunity to recognize the valuable contributions of Albertans with developmental disabilities to my community and to the province at large. We all have people in our communities and in our lives who face the challenges of living with a disability yet despite these hurdles are still able to add so much value – so much value – to our lives.

This weekend in my constituency of Bonnyville-Cold Lake we'll be recognizing one of these amazing individuals in a celebration of her retirement. The remarkable woman is Lynn McFarlane. She is retiring after an amazing 30 years with the Tri City Value Drug Mart in Cold Lake, and I want to wish her all the best going forward.

Mr. Speaker, prior to becoming a member of this House, I had the honour to serve as a volunteer director for the Dove Centre, which provides opportunity and support to those living with developmental disabilities in my constituency. I can say that it was a privilege to make a contribution to this cause, and I do my part to help members of our community who live with these disabilities.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, on a more personal note, I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge my nephews Matthew and Kaden, who live with autism and also bring so much joy to our family. To Matthew, Kaden, Lynn, and all Albertans with developmental disabilities: thank you for everything you contribute to our vibrant society.

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

Choking Game

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pass-out challenge, knockout game, space cowboy, cloud nine: these are some of the names that the choking game is known by. It's a risky practice of self-asphyxiation that many kids engage in, bringing themselves to the brink of passing out. Sadly, some kids suffer brain injuries, and some kids die. In October 2014, at the age of 11, my friend Kerri's son Bryce Eyjolfson was playing the game. She didn't know about it until she discovered him lifeless in his room. Most parents don't know about the choking game. Many school-aged kids do know about the game and probably know someone who's playing it.

Sometimes we hear reports of the choking game and deaths in the media, but rarely do we hear about injuries or near misses or about education or prevention. Deaths from the choking game are often classified as suicide, and Kerri and her partner, Malcolm, had to push to have their son's death reclassified. It was originally listed as suicide. Among the many videos available online, there are those that show how to play the choking game.

Kerri has offered to share her experiences with several ministers here today. I join her in the effort to bring attention to this dangerous practice and to urge for more education, both for the public and in our schools, so that we can keep our kids safe and families from having to experience the deep grief that I've seen my friends go through. I urge all of my colleagues to meet with Kerri and Malcolm while they're here and to learn about the impact of the choking game and to raise awareness.

Thank you.

1:50

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Carbon Levy and Education Costs

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The carbon tax has been causing a great deal of economic hardship for school boards across Alberta. Every other week there is a story in a rural paper about an additional school board with a significant transportation budget deficit brought on, at least in part, by this burdensome tax. The Rocky View school board was pushed to the point where they had to ask parents' permission to divert funds out of the classroom in order to help cover their \$360,000 carbon tax payment. To the Premier: why do you continue to punish school boards across Alberta with this ideological tax?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have to tell you that as a former trustee it was actually the policies that were being proposed by the government of the day that inspired me to run, because it was very clear that there were going to be very deep cuts to education, far in excess of the price on carbon, that there were going to be children showing up in classrooms with no

additional resources for them in any way. While I appreciate that for any cost people pull out their books and try to find the best balance, I can tell you that I am so proud that we stopped those regressive cuts that were coming, and we're going to be fighting to do that again in 2019.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. School boards across Alberta continue to run budgetary shortfalls brought on, in part, by the massive carbon tax payments they are forced to make back to the government. The Department of Education projected that during the 2018 calendar year the carbon tax is expected to cost Alberta school boards as much as \$18 million. That represents the salaries of roughly 250 teachers. To the Premier: has your government completed an impact assessment for Alberta school boards which addresses the upcoming 67 per cent increase to the carbon tax?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I'm just going to remind everyone how many teachers and educational assistants have been hired because this government has fully funded enrolment, and that's 3,600. The Leader of the Opposition said: oh, well, we probably would have just frozen spending at 2015 levels. That's 3,600 teachers and educational assistants who wouldn't have been hired in this province. We are working with boards, and I'm so proud that we are funding students' enrolment, that we're funding new schools, hiring new teachers for classrooms instead of prioritizing \$700 million in tax breaks for the richest of Albertans. We're standing with ordinary families.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Every time our caucus brings up the cost that the carbon tax is heaping on school boards across Alberta, we receive vague talking points in return, just like what we received now. Yesterday I brought forward the financial issues the Red Deer public school board is having, and the minister responded with vague platitudes or non answers. I'm concerned that this government is blinded by their belief in the carbon tax and is continually refusing to take this issue seriously. Again to the Premier. The education system requires leadership to keep all available dollars in the classroom. Will you do the right thing and scrap the carbon tax?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, the right thing is taking leadership on supporting children, their classrooms, and the boards that help do that. That's why we've invested in education, allowing for the hiring of 3,600 new teachers and educational assistants, when the members opposite are talking about either freezing budgets or cutting them to 2015 levels. That would mean thousands of staff not there to support children. And guess what? We're also investing \$50 million from the carbon levy in a solar energy initiative that's expected to help schools reduce their carbon emissions by 5,300 tonnes. Children want to take leadership. They want to ensure that they have a good climate for future generations, and so does this government.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Economic Competitiveness

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this week one of Alberta's most prominent business leaders said that the federal Liberal government's policies are scaring away investors and that Canada's economic competitiveness is in decline. Alberta families are the ones paying the price. Earlier this month Lafarge Canada announced that they are shutting down the ready-mix concrete operations for Bonnyville-Cold Lake due to a lack of economic viability. Minister, has this government raised these concerns with their Trudeau Liberal friends, and if so, when will we actually get an answer for this?

Ms Hoffman: We are proud to fight for the people of Alberta each and every day, Mr. Speaker, and we keep pushing the federal government to make sure that they keep Alberta as a top priority. We want to ensure that Albertans have strong opportunities for future generations and for this one as well. That's why we are so proud that we got two pipeline approvals, and one is very much on the brink of being able to break our land lock. We have approval to tidewater on the Canadian coast, and we are so proud of that, something that the federal government, when they were in Ottawa and we had federal Conservatives here as well, weren't able to do for nine years.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's not only the federal Liberal government's lack of action that's sending a message to job creators. Imperial Oil's Aspen project is a proposed 150,000 barrels per day project. They have now been waiting four and a half years for the government of Alberta to give this project the green light, four and a half years of waiting on a multibillion-dollar job-creating project. A simple question to the government: do you actually think that this is an acceptable length of time, and what message is this sending to other prospective job creators in Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much. We're very proud to work with the job creators of Alberta. That's why we were able to celebrate that there were 90,000 new full-time jobs coming to Alberta last year, mostly in the private sector, Mr. Speaker. We know that there are still families that haven't felt that direct uptake in the economy yet, and that's why we're continuing to push forward. That's why we were so happy that in April Canada's energy stocks rose by 7 per cent, with CNRL up 14 per cent and Suncor Energy up 10. Canadian-based Calfrac Well Services reported more than double its first-quarter revenue from last year. Things are trending up. We're working with industry, and we want to keep moving Alberta forward, including a pipeline.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A report from GMP FirstEnergy last month said, quote: we suspect we will see more oil sands divestitures from foreign companies in the coming years. End quote. The federal Liberal government's Bill C-69 will, according to the Canadian Energy Pipeline Association, make it difficult to imagine that a new major pipeline can be built in Canada. These projects are creating jobs in Alberta and supporting Canadian families. Yesterday this government said that they had raised concerns with the federal government on Bill C-69. What specifically are they requesting to ensure that there aren't further job losses in Alberta?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our government is very active in lobbying and pushing the federal government to ensure that we not only get our pipeline to tidewater, something that the Leader of the Opposition failed to do when he was in government in Ottawa for nine years, but also that we have access to get those products to the Asia Pacific markets that are really seeking those resources. We have no lessons to learn from the members opposite. They like to say that they got success on pipelines. I have to say that a pipeline to Jasper is not a pipeline to tidewater. Thanks for trying, but this side of the House has got the job under control.

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

Methane Emission Regulations

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, gas prices in Calgary are about 30 cents a litre higher than they were in May 2017, and that is squeezing charities that rely on donations and fixed grants. It seems that the NDP have decided to allow the oil and gas industry to be exempt from the carbon tax for five years in order to reduce their methane emissions. My question to the Finance minister is: now that you have exempted big industry from the job-killing carbon tax, will charities, school boards, and the municipalities be exempted next?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, in all our climate change plans we've consulted with industry, academics, environmental groups. When we look at tackling methane, that's one of the biggest focuses that we could work on in reducing GHGs. We're working with industry, and we know that there are going to be a lot of costs up front for them to work on tackling methane. We are, as I said, working with industry on a cost-effective plan to tackle one of the most serious GHG problems we have.

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers wanted to use a fleet-average approach, with a lower cost to industry, to reduce methane emissions, and this would have reached the same methane reduction goal the NDP wants to accomplish with the more expensive site-specific approach. To the minister of environment: is this some kind of exercise to shut down the industrial sites that cannot meet your targets when the industry can meet the overall goal at a lower cost?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure what information the hon. member is reading from or who is telling him this, but in fact we've worked with industry. CAPP has been one of the industry groups that have worked with us. We've gone back and forth about what we need to do. We all know the goal is over here, and we're working together on that. We've listened to industry, and we're looking at cost-effective for them but at the same time achieving our goals.

2:00

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, it appears that the provincial methane reduction plan is running headlong into the federal methane regulation plan. The fact is that the regulation and the development of Alberta's natural resources is a provincial matter guaranteed under the Constitution. What actions has the Minister of

Environment and Parks taken to assert Alberta's jurisdiction and tell Ottawa to back off and get their nose out of Alberta's business?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, in all of the things that we've done with industry, the Minister of Environment and Parks and I have worked very closely with them to develop made-in-Alberta plans because we certainly don't want a made-in-Ottawa plan imposed on us. Our industry gets that, and they've been good partners with us to get our made-in-Alberta plan. We have the draft directives that speak to methane, and we're very proud of that. Honestly, we don't need advice from the other side. They haven't been part of this. Industry has, and we're very proud of that.

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

Choking Game

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A 2015 review in the *Archives of Disease in Childhood* found that between 5 and 7 per cent of kids engage in the choking game, often alone. Many kids are aware of the practice, and 17 to 40 per cent of youth think there are no risks. Very sadly, 93 per cent of parents of choking game victims are surprised to discover their child's participation because it often leaves no observable signs. To the Minister of Health: how are you equipping Alberta health care providers to recognize the signs and educate people about the choking game?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for her question. I certainly want to recognize the family that's here today. I couldn't imagine the grief that must be experienced when you say goodbye to a child. No parent should ever have to go through that. Certainly, one of the big pieces we need to do is ensure that everyone is aware that self-harm is risky, that there are consequences that come with self-harm, and whether it leaves bruises or not, it doesn't mean that you're doing something that's safe. Certainly, education to youth, families, and health care providers: it's a three-pronged approach.

Again, our deepest sympathies to the family.

Ms McPherson: There is much awareness of and concerning high participation rates in the choking game among youth aged four to 20. They are learning about the choking game from online sources and from their peers. To the Minister of Education: when will the provincial health curriculum include information about the risks of the choking game throughout our children's education?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member for the question. Certainly, we've been looking through the curriculum as part of our new curriculum writing process for places where we can improve and strengthen personal safety, and this specific behaviour and in general does take place in the kindergarten to grade 9 health program now, but I think it bears upon all of us to be responsible to strengthen that position and to remind ourselves on a regular basis about both the gravity of the situation and the fact that there are students that are engaging in this kind of behaviour.

Ms McPherson: It's hard to develop strategies to address the choking game without good data, and there's a lack of consistent reporting about choking game deaths. Deaths are often recorded as

suicide, leaving families without closure for their children's death, and it means a lack of accurate data. To the Minister of Justice: what will you do to improve the way child deaths are recorded so that we can know how many kids die this way and so that their families can have a little peace in very distressing circumstances?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member again for the important question. The member is correct. It is very difficult to move these items forward without ensuring that we're collecting accurate data. I've been very lucky to work with our current Chief Medical Examiner to ensure accuracy of data collection in a number of areas, and I'll be happy to have those conversations and follow up offline with the member.

Supervised Drug Consumption Site in Lethbridge

Ms Fitzpatrick: Mr. Speaker, I'm so proud of my city of Lethbridge and the people that make it such a great place to live. An incredible example is the supervised consumption site at ARCHES, which, sadly, the opposition leader has publicly spoken against. Despite his ideological opposition during their first eight weeks of operation this site has saved the lives of over 70 Albertans. To the Minister of Health: would you tell me a little more about the positive stats that you have received about Lethbridge's site?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for her question. I'm so thankful for the incredible work of ARCHES, the Lethbridge police chief, the city of Lethbridge, and of course the members from Lethbridge as well for their work on supervised consumption. This is what happens when we put people first. The ARCHES site has had more than 7,200 visits since they first opened, far above the anticipated demand. More importantly, not one fatality has been incurred. They've reversed 70 overdoses. That's 70 lives saved, and we couldn't be more proud.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister. I know there are many positives to having such a site, and one of those positives is that it can receive referrals from physicians and other health care professionals. In fact, it has received over 1,500 referrals. Would you tell the Assembly about what kinds of referrals are being made?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Some in this House choose to disregard the evidence showing that supervised consumption services save lives and actually help people move away from substance use. Through ARCHES these 1,500 referrals have connected people with food, laundry, naloxone, and long-term treatment. Clients have had a further 1,300 referrals to wraparound services like addictions counselling, wound care, and housing. These are all services that every Albertan should be able to expect to access and that we're proud are being accessed because of ARCHES.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My third question is also to the same minister. The expected number of visitors to the site have tripled, as you mentioned. How will your ministry provide

support to expand the site and the delivery of services to meet this need?

Ms Hoffman: Thank you. We are putting extra service capacity in place before the long weekend, Mr. Speaker. Four additional temporary overdose prevention booths will be operational at ARCHES tomorrow. Within a few weeks ARCHES will be adding four more permanent booths on-site as well as an overdose prevention site at the Lethbridge Shelter and Resource Centre. While the Leader of the Opposition regards these services as nothing more than, quote, addicts injecting poison into their bodies, we will do whatever it takes to keep these people alive because somebody loves them, and they deserve to have a chance to live that life.

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

Methane Emission Regulations (continued)

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, the natural gas industry was only given 30 days to review and analyze the extensive draft directive and respond to the NDP, and now only a week is left. Given the NDP's extensive record of failed consultations and the importance of the natural gas industry to Alberta jobs, why did the government think that such a short period of time for a review was adequate?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, our government, as I've mentioned many, many times, works with industry on a number of matters, and we get good advice from them. We get good advice from, when needed, academics or environmental groups, and we come together to do what's best for the industry here in Alberta because regardless of the regulations we do not want something imposed from the outside. We're very proud of that. This collaboration together has gotten us a solid climate leadership plan, which has three pipeline approvals. We have the Keystone XL, we have line 3, and soon TMX will be under construction.

Mr. Panda: Yeah; they can add Keystone, too, to their feather, Mr. Speaker.

Given that the impact that these new regulations will have on industry will lead to thousands of job losses and hundreds of millions of dollars removed from the economy, will the Minister of Environment and Parks table the socioeconomic analysis of her methane reduction regulations, and if not, why not?

The Speaker: The Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the methane draft regulations are online on the AER site, and there's probably a link through the site of my ministry. They're fully available. They're there for industry to react to. Again, we've worked with industry off and on. We've come up with a plan that we all believe is good for Alberta, good for our industry, at the best cost to industry, and has the best outcomes for the environment.

Mr. Panda: Given, Mr. Speaker, that the minister knows there is a real, serious cost to implementing the new methane regulations, so much so that she has given the industry a five-year carbon tax holiday, and given that this impact will mean thousands of people out of work and hundreds of millions lost from the Canadian economy, Minister, if industry's proposed regulations would have done the job, why are you ruining the lives of thousands of hard-

working families? How is that making life better for Albertans or affordable?

2:10

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, this is more conspiracy theory and fearmongering from our opposition. It couldn't be further from the truth. We've talked to industry. We feel we've got a balance. We're standing up to the federal regulations. We don't want Ottawa to impose this on us. We've come up with a made-in-Alberta solution and at the least cost to industry to do that. They have been given a bit of a break because we know it's going to cost them money, and we do not want to see jobs lost. That's part of this whole package, and I wish the opposition would quit fearmongering so much.

North Saskatchewan Regional Land-use Plan

Mr. Nixon: Public land-use decisions not only affect the way of life of local residents and the recreational opportunities for Albertans at large, but they also affect critical economic activities throughout our province. From forestry to agriculture to tourism and other sectors, our public lands support millions of dollars of economic activity and thousands of Alberta jobs. I could not find a single mention of any independent economic impact study when reading through the NSRP regional advisory council's report. Does the minister believe that land-use changes should be made without independent economic impact studies?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. When it comes to the North Saskatchewan regional plan, the government has been consulting for years. In fact, the regional advisory council includes many fine people, folks living in the member's riding who have contributed to this work since 2014, since his own colleagues in his own caucus were part of setting it up. We certainly appreciate all of the work that they have done through the North Saskatchewan regional plan, and we respect the work of folks who live in your community, hon. member.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, given that I know the folks that live in my community, given that some of them from my community are right now in the gallery, and given that the minister says that she respects the work that they did on that regional plan, then why is it that this government, through leaked memos and through the Minister of Energy's confirmation on behalf of the minister of environment, has already predetermined the result for the Bighorn and did not listen to those fine folks who worked on the North Saskatchewan regional plan?

Ms Hoffman: Well, just to clarify, Mr. Speaker, the information referred to is advice from the options note that was created for the Department of Environment and Parks. No decision has been made. We've said that over and over again to you, hon. member. That's a fact, and I would appreciate if you reflected on facts in this House instead of again creating conspiracy theories. It is no secret that officials have been working with options for more than five years because these members across the way never got the work done when they had the chance to when they were in government. Our government is going to take care of it and finish the job.

Mr. Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that it is this government's leaked memo that has caused the problem, nothing that I said, and

given that this government has continued to refuse to consult with the people of my community and will only talk to the special-interest groups that they want to talk to, will this minister then stand up and commit right now that she will respect the regional advisory council's recommendation not to put a wildland park inside Bighorn?

Ms Hoffman: Again, Mr. Speaker, the memo that the member refers to was advice that was given. We are gathering advice from 21 different town halls, advice from the folks who worked on the council, advice from department officials. No decisions have been made yet. We are committed to making sure that we get this project right, and the member opposite is being irresponsible with the truth. We just provided \$200,000 in grants to Bighorn Heritage ATV Society with their OHV trail development, promoting responsible recreation. That's our track record. Those are the results that we've brought forward.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I clearly asked this government several times, very clearly today, that if it is not true, the memo that was leaked from their government, that if this is not predetermined, will the minister stand up and assure the people of Alberta and the people of my community that this is, one, not predetermined, which she has done, but, second, that she will follow the regional council's advice and there will not be a wildland park in the Bighorn? Yes or no? No more rhetoric answers, just a straight yes-or-no answer.

Ms Hoffman: Well, I don't tell you how to ask questions, hon. member, and you don't get to tell me how to answer them. What I will say is the truth, and the truth is that we are taking advice from many folks, including experts in the department, experts in the region, the 21 town halls that were held to ensure that we get this right moving forward, Mr. Speaker. I wish the hon. member's colleagues would have done something about this when they were in government just three short years ago. But you know what? This side of the House is no shrinking violet. We will stand up, we will make sure we do what's right, and we will reflect on all the advice we're being given.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, again I will note that the Deputy Premier will not answer the very simple question.

Yes, this side of the House actually got it right. They put in a process for regional planning, which has been followed, a process that this government has kept hidden from the public for over a year and has now finally released. The question I am asking is very, very simple, Mr. Speaker. Will this government respect the recommendation from that report and not put in a wildland park or not?

Ms Hoffman: Again, the answer is more complicated, Mr. Speaker, than the member wants to allude to. We are getting advice from lots of folks, including folks who are part of the North Saskatchewan regional plan, folks who are part of those 21 town halls, folks in the department who are giving advice. All of this is advice, and the reason why I can't give an answer is because we don't have an answer yet because we're reflecting on the advice. We're doing the responsible thing, consulting with folks and making sure that we get the right determination as we move forward.

Mr. Nixon: Well, there certainly have not been 21 town halls inside my constituency. Given that I am the only one that has actually held a town hall completely open to the public, a hall that was so full they had to shut a provincial highway, while this government continues to only meet with select people, I'll ask another simple question, through you, Mr. Speaker, to the Deputy Premier. Will

this government finally meet with my community, not lie about meeting with mayors, but finally come to meet with them?

Mr. Mason: Point of order. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Ms Hoffman: Yesterday – or maybe it was the day before – the Leader of the Opposition said: when they go low, we go high. Hon. member, you are no Michelle Obama, I can tell you that much.

I have to say that the folks of the North Saskatchewan regional plan, the council developed opportunities for 21 town halls. Folks that are a part of your own community, hon. member, worked to make sure there were 21 town halls that were available so that people could give their advice. The reason why the advice was released was so people could give their feedback on that advice from . . .

Mr. Nixon: Point of order.

Ms Hoffman: . . . the folks from within the department itself, Mr. Speaker. I have to say that I am very proud of the fact that we're making sure we get this right and that we're not rushing to rash stunts like the members opposite continue to . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Deputy Premier. Thank you. Cool it down, folks.

Mr. Loewen: From the caribou draft plan: "The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) of Northern Alberta modelled and analyzed areas for priority for caribou protection." Now CPAWS is also trying to actively influence the outcome of the North Saskatchewan regional plan by undermining the work of the regional advisory committee, particularly when it comes to the Bighorn area, calling the Bighorn Regional Advisory Committee advice out of step with most Albertans. Now, in estimates the minister told us that the North Saskatchewan regional plan process was the primary tool used to consult with ordinary Albertans. Given this, can the minister tell us why the government has been working closely with organizations like CPAWS, who delegitimize part of the public consultation process with Albertans?

Ms Hoffman: I think slandering organizations that are global in perspective is also delegitimizing the role of the opposition, I have to say. We are happy to have the feedback from all Albertans, including the 21 town halls that were held by the council to gather input. We are very proud of the work that the North Saskatchewan regional plan has been engaging in, Mr. Speaker. We're proud of the fact that we just provided \$200,000 in grants to the Bighorn Heritage ATV Society, the OHV trail development promoting responsible recreation. That's our track record. Those are the results, and we're proud of them.

Mr. Loewen: Given that the minister doesn't seem to understand that the problem is not CPAWS, that it's the minister putting special-interest groups like that ahead of Albertans, and given that the government is clearly relying on foreign-funded interest groups to drive the Bighorn planning process and given that it has already been confirmed that the government decided an outcome of a new wildland park prior to the completion of the public consultation process, can the minister tell us: when did the backroom deal on this predetermined outcome happen, and which special-interest groups were there?

Ms Hoffman: Well, Mr. Speaker, again, the members opposite maybe own tinfoil companies these days because I have to say that conspiracy theories keep coming from across the way, when the truth is – and I've said it over and over again, and I will continue to – that there was an advice document that we received from the department. There was also advice from 21 town halls that were held on this specific matter, and the regional advisory council includes folks from the Bighorn area. We're proud to receive their advice and make sure that we're working to do the responsible thing. It's been five years of consultation. I wish you guys would have gotten it right when you had the chance to, but don't worry. We will get it right.

2:20

Mr. Loewen: Given that the minister can evade the question but not reality – now, this is an anticipated timeline for development of the North Saskatchewan regional plan; it's not advice; it's a government document – and given that it is one thing to have secret backroom deals with special-interest groups and quite another to actually consult with Albertans, Minister, I have a simple question: will you commit here and now to holding a genuine open and transparent public consultation process, including personally attending open town halls in the community to listen first-hand to everyday Albertans whose lives will be impacted by any changes made to the Bighorn?

Ms Hoffman: I'm proud of the fact that we are probably one of the most accessible governments in the history of this province, Mr. Speaker. We're proud to continue to meet with Albertans, ordinary Albertans, every day, and we're proud of the fact that there were 21 town hall meetings that were held in advance of this. Also, the advice document that the member refers to is advice, and the advice is posted publicly so Albertans can give their feedback on it. We certainly welcome your feedback and the feedback of all Albertans regardless of their expertise. We want to welcome all information so we can make the very best decisions moving forward.

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

Alberta Teachers' Association

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta Teachers' Association has been a strong and consistent advocate for public education, something that I believe in wholeheartedly. It was encouraging to see the teacher salary negotiations end on a very positive note for both the ATA and the government. Given the improvements we have seen in this relationship and given the importance of public education to Albertans, to the Minister of Education: how is this government consulting with teachers and, in particular, with the ATA during the curriculum review?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're listening to teachers, the ATA, and people across the province when it comes to our new curriculum. With our old curriculum, some of it was more than 30 years old and needed to be updated, so we've engaged with tens of thousands of parents, teachers, and regular Albertans to find out what our kids should be learning. They're telling us that schools should not just teach the basics but also teach problem-solving skills that they need to thrive. The Leader of the Official Opposition said that he would put this work on the curriculum through the shredder if he was given the chance, and I find that horribly offensive.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. How is your ministry working with the ATA to help to uphold professional standards of practice, including making sure that GSAs are available and respected?

Mr. Eggen: Well, Mr. Speaker, our government strengthened the law to ensure that every student can form a gay-straight alliance no matter what school they go to and without the fear of being outed. The ATA is instrumental in helping to ensure these safe spaces for GSAs or QSAs are created for students. I'd like to also point out that it was just a few days ago when the members opposite voted at their policy convention to out students. Shameful.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The ATA does a great job representing teachers, both as a professional association and as a bargaining unit. To the same minister: what would be the effect of splitting these two functions like the opposition would like to do?

Mr. Eggen: Well, Mr. Speaker, as you know, collaborating instead of attacking has allowed us to move this province forward on common-sense collective bargaining agreements, new professional practice standards that will support the continued excellence of teachers across the province, and investments such as the classroom improvement fund. Dismantling the ATA is an attack, and it undermines the collaborative relationship our government has with teachers, with parents, and with school boards. Quite frankly, it's a distraction from their real motive, which is to give big tax cuts to the rich.

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

Calgary Board of Education Funding

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, the Minister of Education has talked about how proud he is that his ministry has fully funded enrolment growth. The Calgary board of education would beg to differ. According to the CBE they are facing a \$35 million shortfall. Provincial funding simply has not kept up with enrolment growth, there's no backfill funding for reduced school fees for alternative programs, the funding they have provided is at 2015-16 levels, and that doesn't even consider the nearly \$200 million in urgent deferred maintenance. To the Minister of Education: who's right? How do you explain the discrepancy between your claims and the challenges faced by the CBE?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, this has become an annual event, where I have the Calgary board of education saying that they have this deficit, and then by the end of the year they end up posting a surplus, so I have had them under audit for the last few months. We've been working collaboratively for ways by which we can rectify this process, and we have a very collaborative and constructive relationship by which to do so.

What you really don't do if you want to make contributions to education is that you do not make massive 20 per cent cuts to education, as the members opposite are saying that they are going to do.

Mr. Clark: Well, good news, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta Party's shadow budget has a higher investment in education than this government's budget currently. Given that the shortfall in funding is going to result in jobs being cut and given that many of the jobs

lost will be support staff who work with students with complex learning needs, disabilities, or mental health challenges and given that reduced funding levels of support staff will have serious negative consequences for those students, again to the Minister of Education. You've been telling Albertans that your government supports public education, but your funding plans clearly says otherwise. How can you explain this to students, parents, teachers, and staff?

Mr. Eggen: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, you know, I did have the Calgary board of education under financial review, and we're looking for ways by which they can make sure that they prioritize to spend money in classrooms. Given the substantial investment that we have made into the CBE, it's my expectation and all Calgarians, for that matter, that they make decisions to make sure that they balance their budget without influencing and cutting front-line staffing levels in the city of Calgary.

Mr. Clark: Mr. Speaker, given that one of the reasons the CBE is facing a shortfall is this government's carbon tax and given that asking school boards to pay a carbon tax really is just transferring dollars from one level of government to another and given that school boards have a very limited ability to reduce the carbon tax they pay because there are a fixed number of school buses required to transport kids to school, once more to the Minister of Education: will you acknowledge the unintended consequences of your plan and eliminate the carbon tax on school boards?

Mr. Eggen: Well, you know, it's interesting. The members opposite want more money, and then they want us to make cuts. It's all very confusing. I can give a very simple process by which we are making sure that – we owe it to our children to give them great schools and education, that we are investing in, and to protect the planet that they will inherit from us. Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, that is not negotiable, and I don't think it is for the majority of Albertans as well. We are making investments in schools. We've made significant investments in Calgary in regard to the solar energy initiatives in terms of upgrading schools, upgrading boilers, improving windows and lights to make sure that they are not just . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister. Thank you.
The Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Carbon Levy and Agricultural Costs

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government of Manitoba has announced its made-in-Manitoba climate and green plan, which will exempt natural gas for heating or cooling a farm building and for operating your grain dryer if metered separately. The Manitoba plan will be implemented on September 1, 2018. Minister, Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition suggested similar exemptions when you introduced your crippling carbon tax on Albertans. Why are you making it harder for Alberta's farmers to remain competitive with other jurisdictions such as Manitoba and Saskatchewan?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Early on with our climate leadership plan we recognized some of the challenges that producers might have, so we exempted marked fuel for farming operations right across the province. We've also very recently announced an \$81 million fund that will help them find that efficiency. When I talk to farmers and ranchers

across the province, they ask me what they can do. How can they do their part to reduce greenhouse gas emissions? I'm very proud that this government is answering that call, being able to find those efficiencies, reduce those greenhouse gas emissions, reduce their costs as well.

Mr. Strankman: Again, Mr. Speaker, given that farmers produce commodities whose prices are set on a global market and given that these increased costs cannot be simply passed on to the consumer and given that you could easily go through 400 to 600 gigajoules when you're grain drying, even more if farming up north, Minister, was any thought given to how crippling your tax would be on these Alberta farmers' and ranchers' viability, or does ideology trump all?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As an example, the Schuurman Dairy farm near Millett, Alberta, says:

The energy-efficiency programs offered by the government gave us the incentive to move ahead with installing solar power on our operation . . . we have found that by investing in solar power we have been able to lower our dairy operation's power consumption by over 60 per cent.

There's efficiency to be found. I will continue working with the producers, farmers, and ranchers right across the province that continue to find those efficiencies whatever their operation might be: dairy farms, chicken barns, irrigation structures, and grain drying as well.

Mr. Strankman: Given that with approximately 49,000 farms in Alberta the carbon tax will cost Alberta farms upwards of \$182 million and given that each year this total far exceeds any rebates from any of the available efficiency programs, Minister, with your government set upon increasing the carbon tax another 67 per cent to appease the Trudeau Liberals, has your government done any economic study on how much this increase will impact Alberta farms to compete in a global market?

2:30

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I already mentioned the exemption on marked fuel, for instance. Farmers and ranchers can do their part and want to do their part to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Energy efficiency as well is available to them to lower their costs, make their operations more efficient, make them more competitive in the global marketplace. The rebates for the greenhouses, for instance, were called extremely good news by the Alberta Greenhouse Growers Association. There continues to be good news from this side of the House. I'm very proud of this government and the good news that we are offering farmers and ranchers right across this province.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Economic Competitiveness (continued)

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The business climate in Alberta is truly heartbreaking. ATCO president Nancy Southern says that regulatory policy and a litany of roadblocks constrain our business environment, that governments in Canada are busy bringing in multiple and compounding policies and regulations, policies that are growing into boulders of burden on all manner of businesses

and that, in fact, Stats Canada reports that foreign investment has dropped from \$50 billion to \$31 billion, 38 per cent. Minister: name one regulatory policy that you are willing to remove to make business more competitive and bring investment back into Alberta.

Ms Jansen: Mr. Speaker, I think this whole narrative about the situation for business in Alberta that the opposition is trying to create is an absolute disservice to the people of this province. You know, I can only speak for Calgary in saying that it's the fastest growing city in the prairies this year. The Conference Board of Canada explicitly points to projects like the cancer centre, the green line. Compared to a year ago, Calgary created over 31,000 full-time jobs. Take a look at the business expansion in this province. Viking Air just added 150 aviation jobs in Calgary. They're looking at even further expansion. Goodfood Market Corp. is currently . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister. [interjection] Thank you.

Mr. Orr: It's not our narrative. We get it from the people of Alberta.

Alberta companies are being forced to diversify by moving away from risky Alberta government obstructionism to other parts of the world. Given that ATCO is building a hydrogen power plant – where? – in Australia and given that ATCO is building an office tower in Idaho because they say that it's not competitive building it in Alberta anymore, which are their words, not mine, and given that Alberta businesses are finding that opportunities are actually surfacing abroad and not at home and that companies are being forced to diversify Alberta risk and look into other jurisdictions: is this what the NDP government means when they say that they want to promote diversification?

The Speaker: I would again remind the House to please, hon. members, manage the preamble comments that tend to be raised in this place on occasion.

The hon. minister.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is committed to working with companies like ATCO – in fact, I met only a few months ago with Nancy Southern – as we transition off coal and stabilize our electricity market. You know, ATCO's CEO did donate more than \$21,000 to the opposition leader's PC leadership campaign. I understand as a former Conservative that they are certainly good friends of the Conservatives. We are still committed to listening to all Alberta businesses and certainly are happy to do so.

To continue on in talking about the successes in business in this province, Mr. Speaker, Amazon . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister. [interjection] Thank you. [interjection] Hon. minister.

Hon. minister, you were speaking while I was speaking, so you may not have heard me. But we try to be fair with the 35 seconds. I would ask that all members in this House make that a practice.

Folks, we have the whole of next week where we get a chance to not see each other, so be nice while you're here, okay?

I think we are at the second supplemental.

Mr. Orr: Well, there's also the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Canada has fallen from fifth to 34th out of 35 countries. Given that a delay is as good as a cancellation and that a delay is a deliberate strategy, will this government finally admit that delay, with risky ideological policies, is driving investment and industry out of Alberta, including our own ATCO corporation?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The more you talk about that narrative, the more we will stand up and talk about the successes in this province. In addition to Calgary's 31,000 new full-time jobs and Viking Air and Goodfood and Amazon, there's Champion Petfoods, 340 construction jobs and 200 jobs at the plant itself; Pinnacle, 70 new jobs; Cavendish Farms, the biggest private-sector investment in the history of Lethbridge; Aurora Cannabis, a hundred million dollar investment in Leduc, 400 new jobs in Edmonton, another 450 jobs in Medicine Hat. The list is long and getting longer. Our minister of economic development is always on a plane . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister. [interjection] Thank you again.

The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

Carbon Levy and Rural Education Costs

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The carbon tax brought in by this government represents the single largest tax hike in Alberta history. The result has been severely impacted school division costs. Buffalo Trail school division costs have increased \$65,000 since the tax was implemented, for the schools alone. Minister, this amount represents one full-time salary. With ever-increasing costs and decreasing student enrolment, what is this government doing to ensure the viability of rural schools?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What are we doing to ensure the viability of rural schools? They had a big ceremony, and the bulldozers were there. They were starting to build the foundation for Irma school in Buffalo Trail yesterday – very proud of that – an investment that not only builds a lovely school but a community centre as well, using the latest technology to reduce emissions so that they will save money on their utility bills. So, yeah, we're building schools. We're educating kids. We're making efficiencies, reducing carbon, and doing a great job.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you for building that school, but the carbon tax is cutting teachers' jobs.

Given that the government is set to raise the crippling carbon tax about 67 per cent to fund their green slush fund and help pay down the debt that they are currently racking up and given that nonprofits and school boards will continue to be harmed by this punitive tax, Minister, have you determined how much the average school division will have to pay when your increased carbon tax comes into effect, or have you not done any economic studies to estimate the burdening cost to school boards?

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, as school boards move forward in close co-operation with my ministry and in working with individual schools as well, we've come up with lots of ways by which we can save money, by which we can reduce carbon and improve education opportunities, too. We have a more than \$50 million solar program, for example, that's going on, that includes real-time activities for the kids to see how much electricity they're producing and so forth on the roof of their schools.

This is an ongoing process, Mr. Speaker. It's a learning process. It's a teachable moment. I'm very proud of the progress that my ministry has made in regard to . . .

Mr. Taylor: The Premier once said, quote: it could sometimes be a question of taking a bus, walking, you know, those kinds of things in terms of the patterns of fuel use that people engage in. Unquote. Given that walking is an option that rural school kids simply don't have, Minister, since busing or dropping off students at school by car are pretty much the only options rural parents have to get their children to school and to extracurricular activities, will you consider exempting school boards from any future increases?

Mr. Eggen: Well, Mr. Speaker, of course, we are working on a transportation initiative right now to build better transportation systems in all corners of the province. If the hon. member has some constructive ways by which we can do so, he can make a submission, and we will use it. We've had thousands of people that have contributed to this. I'm very pleased that we have created a co-operative means by which to build a better transportation system, build a better education system in general by making investments in four straight budgets, a budget that this hon. member and his party failed to support.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein

School Capital Construction

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The previous government failed to invest in maintaining and preserving government-owned facilities in this province. This led to many buildings and structures crumbling and falling apart. Two schools in particular in my riding fell victim to the previous government's neglect. To the Minister of Infrastructure: can you please give an update to my constituents on the status of the St. Francis and James Fowler high schools?

Ms Jansen: Mr. Speaker, St. Francis high school is currently undergoing a \$29 million modernization. That is expected to be done in May of 2019. James Fowler high school has a \$20 million modernization, including modernizations to its career and technologies classrooms and labs. That's going to be completed by September of this year, so students actually get to move in there.

Investing in infrastructure is something that benefits everyone in Alberta, not just the people like the kids who get to use it in the member's constituency but the folks who get great jobs out of that infrastructure. Maintaining infrastructure preserves . . .

2:40

The Speaker: Thank you again, hon. minister.

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that there is still maintenance to be done to restore schools neglected by previous governments and given that our population continues to grow and we'll also need to build new schools and that this government has chosen to invest during the downturn instead of pursuing drastic cuts, to the same minister: can you please tell us what this investment has meant for schools in my constituency and for the province of Alberta?

Ms Jansen: Mr. Speaker, you know, the opposition stated that they would cut \$9 billion in infrastructure funding. That is on top of an infrastructure deficit that went back generations in this province. Those reckless cuts meant cramped classrooms for students – we saw that – out-of-work teachers, crumbling facilities, less opportunity for extracurricular activities. Seeing as how extracurricular activities aren't big on the list of the opposition, we can see from their policy that maybe that's not a priority for them. But classrooms and what they look like and kids' ability to operate in them . . .

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

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: what is the economic value of investing in school infrastructure?

Ms Jansen: Mr. Speaker, over the next five years we're investing \$2.2 billion in planning and building and modernizing school facilities. That's \$393 million for 20 new school projects across Alberta. You know, when kids have good schools, it's easier for them to learn. Infrastructure is critically important. I know that in the past infrastructure was the first and the easiest place for Conservative governments to cut, and they did it, pushing that debt onto a future generation. It's our job now to fix that problem, and we are doing it.

The Speaker: Hon. members, before we move on, I would invite the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre – you wish to make a statement with respect to a matter from earlier?

Mr. Nixon: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. I would be happy to withdraw and apologize for using the word “lie” during question period.

The Speaker: Thank you very much, hon. member. That's good to hear because I know that the Government House Leader had a speech that he wanted to give, but he's not going to get that opportunity.

You're going to withdraw the point of order as well?

Mr. Nixon: That first point of order, yeah.

The Speaker: I also have had a request for unanimous consent for an introduction.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests

(continued)

The Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour for me to rise today and introduce to you and through you individuals who have travelled here from India to visit and see our beautiful province. Suniel and Mana Shetty are visiting their relative Ashok Gangwani, who's a good friend of mine. Suniel Shetty is a financial analyst involved with various NGOs and with raising funds for the welfare of various committees. Mr. Gangwani is a long-time resident of Edmonton and a founding member of the Press Council of Edmonton, a grassroots organization made up of local journalists that strive to connect with various multicultural groups and deliver up-to-date, relevant news in their own language. I wish you all a wonderful visit in our beautiful province of Alberta. Thank you for coming to visit us in the Legislature Building. I'd ask my guests, who are now standing, to receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Members' Statements

(continued)

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

Premier's and Official Opposition Leader's Allies

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Leader of the Official Opposition and his caucus are fond of using the refrain: the Premier's good friend and ally Justin Trudeau. It is important to have friends, and it is a testament to the good working relationship

they've developed that Prime Minister Trudeau praised our Premier and said that he could not have approved the Trans Mountain project without the leadership of our Premier and Alberta's climate leadership plan.

But why just focus on the Prime Minister? The Premier has many good friends and allies, such as Mark Scholz, head of the Canadian Association of Oilwell Drilling Contractors, who said, “We are very supportive of [the Premier]. She has shown some incredible leadership on this file,” and the Alberta Fire Fighters Association, who said, “We've been way behind other provinces as far as a lot of our WCB coverage, and I think this government is very proactive in trying to bring them up to date,” and Cenovus Energy, who called Alberta's climate leadership plan an important step forward in addressing climate change.

Now, to be fair, Mr. Speaker, I don't want to give the impression that the Leader of the Opposition is without friends. He, too, has many close friends and allies like Rebel media, who endorses the UCP leader and whose media outlet he and many of his colleagues have appeared on regularly; allies like the Campaign Life Coalition, who have given the opposition leader a 100 per cent rating for his voting record on life and family issues and who are helping him recruit candidates; and close friends like former Wildrose interim leader and Progressive Conservative cabinet minister Heather Forsyth, who called feminism the f-word and dismissed the idea that women face barriers in politics as socialist crap at the recent UCP convention.

Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to say that both the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition have many close friends and allies. As the old saying goes: show me your friends, and I'll tell you who you are.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Official Opposition Leader

Connolly: Mr. Speaker, it's flip-flop season, and the leader of the United Conservative Party has been out in full force this month, strutting his ability to both disagree and be disagreeable. He started off the month by going back on his grassroots guarantee. On August 1, 2017, the leader of the UCP stated, quote, the policies of the United Conservative Party must be developed democratically by its grassroots members, not imposed by its leader. On May 7, 2018, that same leader stated, quote: “Guess what? I'm the leader. I get to interpret the resolution.” I think the member opposite and I may have different interpretations of the word “grassroots.”

In 2009 the UCP leader voted for a nearly \$10 billion bailout for the Ontario auto industry, but when Alberta and Canada talked about investing in the Trans Mountain pipeline, the Leader of the Opposition said on May 14, quote: the fundamental message that this sends to investors is that if a project doesn't work, we'll buy your way out of it. It's interesting that the member thinks investing in Ontario is A-okay but investing in Alberta's oil and gas sector sends the wrong message.

On May 15 in this very House, Mr. Speaker, the leader of the UCP quoted Michelle Obama by stating, “When they go low, we'll go high.” Then a day later the leader of the UCP was quoted by the *Calgary Sun*, saying, “I know Justin,” referring to the Prime Minister of Canada. “This guy is an empty trust-fund millionaire who has the political depth of a finger bowl . . . He can't read a briefing note longer than a cocktail napkin.” I didn't realize that the height of the opposition leader's decorum would be at the bottom of the Mariana Trench.

If the UCP leader believes that he is best suited to sit in the Premier's chair, I would suggest he start acting like it. Going back on

promises and smearing people you have to work with are not helpful in any position, much less the top job in our province.

I'm proud to work with a Premier who is ensuring pipeline access and working with our federal and provincial counterparts rather than making ad hominem attacks.

Provincial Election Third Anniversary Reflection

Dr. Starke: Well, Mr. Speaker, this Saturday horse racing fans from around the world will be watching Pimlico raceway in Baltimore, Maryland, for the 143rd running of the Preakness Stakes. Meanwhile, back here in Alberta we've also been witness to a fair bit of jockeying for position this past year. Welcome, racing fans, to the Legislature Downs and the third running of what used to be called the NDP Stakes. That name has been dropped because the Environment minister doesn't think we should eat beef. As the horses are being loaded into the starting gate we have two late scratches. B.C. Wine Boycott and Licence Plate Brouhaha have been scratched.

They're at the post, and they're off. Breaking quickly from the gate is Green Shoots and Up Up Up. Following close behind is Blind Optimism, Mountain of Debt, and Credit in Shambles. Investor Confidence is lagging, and Pipeline Construction has yet to leave the starting gate.

As they go into the first turn, here comes the odds-on favourite, Carbon Tax. This horse is undefeated and looks 50 per cent stronger this year than last, but his stable mate Social Licence is once again nowhere to be seen. Social Licence has yet to start a single race this year, leading skeptics to speculate that it does not even exist.

Moving down the backstretch, Green Shoots is wilting, and Up Up Up is going down, down, down. Here comes Mountain of Debt, Credit in Shambles, Outta Here as well as the crowd favourite, Sewer Rat.

2:50

As they enter the clubhouse turn, it's Carbon Tax by two lengths over Mountain of Debt, Outta Here, Sewer Rat, and Credit in Shambles. There's a late charge by the curiously named We Want the NDP. According to the racing program this horse was bought by the Finance minister at 10 times market value, financed by craft beer and online weed sales. Investor Confidence has disappeared, and Pipeline Construction is still stuck in the starting gate. Now making up ground on the outside is Sewer Rat, 96 Billion Reasons, and prerace long shot Cannabis Causes Communism.

Down the stretch they come. It's Carbon Tax and Credit in Shambles going head to head. There's a late charge from Outta Here and 96 Billion Reasons. They're neck and neck, and at the wire it's Carbon Tax by a nose, followed by Credit in Shambles, and 96 Billion Reasons, We Want the NDP, Outta Here. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

By the way, hon. member, it was refreshing – very refreshing – to hear that. You might even get double time if you were to do that again.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Bill 18 Statutes Amendment Act, 2018

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, that was very, very impressive. I would just mention in the House that it has been done before by me. His was good, too.

I would request leave to introduce Bill 18, the Statutes Amendment Act, 2018.

Bill 18 contains a number of minor housekeeping amendments. The amendments are intended to provide clarity and update a number of other acts. The draft of the bill was provided to opposition MLAs for their review, as is typical for miscellaneous statutes amendment acts. At the request of the opposition the bill name was changed. We are expecting some debate as this bill proceeds, Mr. Speaker, on certain clauses.

[Motion carried; Bill 18 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I table a petition that was started by Leanne Zee on February 7, 2018. As of May 16, 2018, it has 17,004 signatures on it. I have the appropriate copies. These are 17,000 people who want to make it clear that this government has not consulted with them on the future of the Bighorn and would like the government to talk to them before they make decisions about their backyard.

I thank the pages in advance, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Any other tablings or reports, hon. members?

Now, hon. members, I just want to clarify. Government House Leader, I believe the hon. member acknowledged earlier your point of order. We can move past that, or was there a second one that you had?

Mr. Mason: No, Mr. Speaker, I only had the one.

The Speaker: Okay.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, we had a second point of order. The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky has that point.

The Speaker: Okay. The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky has a point of order.

Point of Order Gestures

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under 23(h), (i), and (j). Earlier today the Minister of Advanced Education raised both fists in front of his face at the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. Now, multiple people on this side of the House saw this. This member has repeatedly made outrageous and insulting comments. Multiple times we've had the Minister of Justice get up and say that she heard nothing even though she sits right in front of him and multiple people on this side have heard these things. I'm going to guess that the Government House Leader is probably going to get up and say the same thing, "Well, I didn't see anything," because it happened behind his back. I think it's about time that this minister grew up and cut the childish actions and comments and starting acting like a minister. I think he should stand up, apologize, and withdraw what he did there.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I have in fact confirmed that this incident did in fact take place; therefore, on behalf of the Minister of Advanced Education I would like to apologize to the House and to the member.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. members. I believe there are no further points of order.

Orders of the Day
Government Bills and Orders
Second Reading

Bill 2
Growth and Diversification Act

[Adjourned debate May 16: Ms Larivee]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: Are there any members wishing to speak to Bill 2? The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have an amendment to put forward here. I'll have it distributed before I continue speaking.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. Your amendment will be referred to as RA2.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Bill 2: I can't find particularly much redeeming about it. We were debating Bill 6 last night. It was a generally positive bill being tweaked, but Bill 2: I find very little redeemable about it. It won't come as a great surprise for members of this House to know how I feel about corporate welfare, that no government, regardless of their ideology or party stripe, is well suited to decide what businesses should be winners and what businesses should be losers. You know, Ronald Reagan said: if it moves, tax it; if it keeps moving, subsidize it; and if it stops moving, buy it. That seems to be this government's economic philosophy.

Now, governments of all stripes engage in this. You know, in Ottawa the Conservative Party of Canada, unfortunately, has regularly engaged in corporate welfare, going so far as even to nationalize the auto industry or partially nationalize it, causing me to actually leave that party for several years in protest. I thought it was completely against my beliefs as a conservative. I returned to the party during the leadership campaign of Maxime Bernier very specifically because of his commitment to scrapping corporate welfare. Conservatives engage in it sometimes, but they at least feel a little less comfortable with it because it's against conservatism, so Conservatives tend to feel a less comfortable doing it.

But the NDP has no such scruples when it comes to corporate welfare. I find this difficult to understand because they're supposed to be the party of the blue-collar worker, of the regular guy, not handing multimillion-dollar cheques to billionaires and corporations, but they seem to very comfortable doing it. They seem to believe that they are very well suited to determine how businesses should be running their internal affairs, presumably because they believe that the government knows more about business than businesses.

3:00

Now, corporate welfare is bad enough. It's bad economics, but Bill 2 goes significantly further than regular corporate welfare. It gets into affirmative action, gender, and racial quotas. In its own bill this piece of legislation will require businesses that want the cash handouts and tax incentives provided from the taxpayers to these businesses – for them to be eligible for them, they're going to have to meet quotas for their employees, for their boards of directors, or for their CEOs, to fill those positions not on the basis

of merit, not on the basis of who's best for the job, but on the colour of their skin or their sex or other criteria that have absolutely nothing to do with who's best for the job.

Now, depending on the workplace, it often is good to have men and women and people from different backgrounds – it's a positive thing – but that is for that business to determine, not for the government. It is not the business of this government whatsoever to determine who is best suited to work at a business or to sit on its board. But if they want to receive these cash handouts from the government, then they're going to have to follow diktats about who they should be hiring.

Corporate welfare is bad economic policy, but affirmative action and racial and gender quotas are bad economic policy and bad social policy. It is social engineering extended into the private sector. It is contemptible when governments or even political parties engage in gender or racial quotas or any kind of affirmative action programs of their own to put people in jobs or positions on any other basis than merit and who is best for the job. It's bad enough when government does it internally or when political parties do it internally, but when they require that the private sector do it, when they require that private businesses in their own internal affairs accede to the government's social agenda, whatever it may be, they are far overextending themselves. It's not their business.

If businesses of their own accord wish to hire people on a basis other than merit, if they want to hire someone simply because they maybe meet an internal quota that they have decided upon themselves, independent of the government, that's their business. Quite literally that is their business. That is their decision to make. If a business decides that they're going to have a quota for X group to be filled, they can do that. They do not require a government to do that. But most businesses that I know don't have quotas for race. They don't have quotas for gender or any of the many different categories or boxes that we can tick off in these things.

You know, the government, I think, should not be engaging in this themselves. If they wish to engage in it themselves as a political party, I suppose that's their discretion. I don't believe it's the right thing to do, but that is their discretion. I don't think any political party should be engaging in gender and racial quotas, but I suppose that's their own business. But it is complete overreach for the government of Alberta to use legislative powers and tens of millions of tax dollars to require that private businesses meet racial and gender and identity quotas.

The amendment that I have put forward would scrap this bill. It would send it away. I don't think it needs to even come back. I think there's very little redeemable about it to begin with. Beyond just the affirmative action quotas within it, it is engaging in gross corporate welfare, and I don't think there's much in it, that it even needs to come back. It doesn't need to go to committee. It just needs to be scrapped outright. The motion that I have put forward in the form of a reasoned amendment to members right now will scrap this bill, send it back to the trash pile, and we can consider better economic policy moving forward that doesn't pick winners and losers in business and doesn't require business to pick winners and losers in a quota system.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak to the referral amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Mr. Carson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have to tell you that I'm a little bit surprised to see the Member for Strathmore-Brooks bringing this motion forward, seeing that he does not support tax credits for gender and for ethnicity and for those with disabilities,

but he's more than happy to take government subsidies for Airbnb. That's quite interesting.

But on a more serious note, our government has been working very hard to support diversity, whether it be in our creation of the Ministry of Status of Women, our work on agencies, boards, and commissions to create more spaces for gender and ethnic diversities, as well as our many programs like the \$15 minimum wage as well as \$25-a-day daycare programs or child care programs, that most often do support women getting back into the workforce and support them to be able to have jobs that can help support a family.

There is no doubt that throughout history those who are Caucasian and of male gender have been advantaged in the workplace. Through my conversations with those in the interactive digital media industry who I've had chances to consult with – I'm not sure that the Member for Strathmore-Brooks has done any consulting on this issue, but it's well known within that industry that those with a disability or those that consider themselves of a female gender or those of a different ethnic background are disadvantaged.

You know, that's on the one point of the interactive digital media tax credit piece and the inclusion parameters within that and the 5 per cent extra tax credit for that. But to say that we should throw this entire bill away because of that one issue? I just don't understand that at all. We've seen the track record of the capital investor tax credit. We've seen the record of the AITC. It has created a lot of diversity within our province, and it's brought massive amounts of money into our province.

The conversations that I have with companies, especially start-up companies in our province – you know, we go back to this debate of: oh, we need to lower corporate taxes. We have an \$11.2 billion tax advantage over the next lowest taxed province, which I support for the most part. I think it's important to have that competitive advantage. But what I hear when I talk with these companies is that they need that start-up capital. So for the member across the way from Strathmore-Brooks to say that we should throw this entire bill away because he doesn't like one section of it: I find it to be quite disingenuous.

I would be happy to speak to more amendments, which I probably won't support judging on the track record of his amendments, but I'm not willing to throw this whole bill away. I think it's an important bill. I think that it will help our economy diversify and that it will help corporations, both start-ups and larger, in my communities get to a place where they need to be to create jobs throughout all of our communities.

I would recommend that none of my colleagues support this. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Seeing none, I will call the question on the amendment.

[Motion on amendment RA2 lost]

The Acting Speaker: We are now back on the original bill. Are there any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Mr. Carson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour to rise to speak to Bill 2, the Growth and Diversification Act. Just a little recap. As laid out by the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, Bill 2 continues on the important work of the Alberta

investor tax credit, which offers a 30 per cent tax credit to investors to provide capital to Alberta small businesses doing research, development, or commercialization of new technology. Bill 2 also supports the continuation of the capital investment tax credit, which provides a nonrefundable tax credit valued at 10 per cent of a corporation's eligible capital expenditures for manufacturing, processing, and tourism infrastructure, making an investment. The CITC program alone has brought in over \$1 billion of investment to our province, creating thousands of new jobs in emerging markets.

Both of these programs have been widely supported by chambers of commerce across the province. I'm very supportive to see them move forward, creating more success stories like the second-round recipient Aurora Cannabis, who's CCO explained:

Our Aurora Sky facility will be larger in capacity and more advanced than anything that's ever been built or operated before in the cannabis sector. With support [specifically] from the CITC, we are using an unprecedented level of new technology and automation. This will be the most sophisticated and efficient cannabis production facility in the world . . . technical positions requiring advanced science degrees, and we're proud to have established this flagship site in Aurora's home province of Alberta.

Madam Speaker, continuing these two important tax credits will mean companies will continue looking to Alberta to start or expand their business, leveraging these credits to raise capital, creating good jobs and helping to diversify the local economy.

3:10

While our government continues on these two important tax credits, we are also creating more opportunities for investment through the interactive digital media tax credit. The IDMTC would provide a 25 per cent tax credit for labour costs to eligible digital media companies. This investment will ensure our province plays a bigger role in the growing digital media and technology sector, fostering new development, encouraging innovation, and accelerating growth in new industries.

Of course, we have many success stories within our province in the IDM sector, including Edmonton's own BioWare, founded in 1995, the creator of the truly exceptional titles Mass Effect, Dragon Age, Star Wars: The Old Republic, Baldur's Gate, and Neverwinter Nights, all truly fantastic games if I do say so myself. I do have to give a plug today to the creators of BioWare: Ray Muzyka, Greg Zeschuk, Trent Oster, Brent Oster, Marcel Zeschuk, Augustine Yip. Of course, Muzyka, Zeschuk, and Yip had recently graduated through the medical program at the U of A and decided to make the jump into creating video games. I'm not sure how that connection happened. You'd have to ask them. But they pooled some resources together and were able to pull together about \$100,000 in capital to create BioWare.

Like I said, I'm sure they could tell you this story better themselves, to find out how they made that jump, but it is an incredible story nonetheless. With the interactive digital media tax credit we will see more stories like this develop, ensuring that we are exporting products across the globe, not exporting our talent.

As I was reading comments from people in my community in regard to Bill 2, someone made a great point that though we have a few incredible game developers in our community, talent will often look elsewhere, to places like Quebec. They want to settle in a community where there are more opportunities, more gaming companies because they want to have more job opportunities. If this legislation is passed, I'm confident we'll see more companies popping up, which means more people are willing to come and stay here because if they were to lose their job, well, in some cases, they

might not be able to find another company to work for in this jurisdiction.

It's also important to note that organizations like BioWare bring between \$50 million and \$80 million to our local economy, with their workers making an annual wage of \$71,000. When we look at the costs for the IDM industry and the video game industry, we see that labour costs make up the majority of those costs, around 65 to 90 per cent of the production costs. That is why this tax credit is aimed at labour specifically.

We do see similar programs, as was mentioned, across the country. B.C. has a 17.5 per cent tax credit, Quebec a 37.5 per cent tax credit, with Manitoba and Ontario at a whopping 40 per cent. With those figures, you can quickly understand why it's so important for us to move forward on this initiative and another reason why it's important to understand the difference between having a low corporate tax above all else. It's important that we are able to compete on all levels, and in this case it's a tax credit offered to interactive digital media companies.

Companies like BioWare have long explained that Alberta is losing when it comes to holding on to our talent, and I'm extremely happy to see, moving forward with Bill 2, that we will be able to level the playing field. We won't have tax credits as high as 40 per cent, but we'll at least be levelling it a bit better.

Madam Speaker, I'll admit that I'm a bit of a video game enthusiast. For the last two years I've participated in a fundraiser for the local Stollery children's hospital, who was here within the last two weeks. It's called Extra Life. I will also mention that the Minister of Labour joined me as well as a few other MLAs. Edmonton-Centre, Edmonton-South West, and Edmonton-Decore also made an appearance. Edmonton-South West beat me in the game that we played at the beginning, but I won't hold it against him. Extra Life is a 24-hour gaming marathon where gamers from across North America come together to play games for 24 hours. It's the only marathon that I participate in, and it's sponsored by many local game companies like Retro Active Arcade, Happy Harbor Comics, Fragapalooza, and The Gamers' Lodge, just to name a few.

Now, Edmonton has an incredible community of game developers and, of course, game players, and this bill will definitely be good news for them, especially when we look at the 3,000 postsecondary tech spaces that we're talking about creating through this legislation. It's important, when we look at the postsecondary institutions, that we're able to help them grow in this industry and expand the scholarships that will be offered for programs in the high-tech industry.

At the announcement of Bill 2 the minister of economic development and the Minister of Advanced Education were joined by Trent Oster, who cofounded BioWare and started the international gaming company Beamdog. I'll add that just last week they released their – oh, this is a bit of an old speech. A couple of weeks ago they released their *Neverwinter Nights: Enhanced Edition*. Just a shut-out for them: go pick it up on Steam.

He explained that the tax credit will help the industry in Alberta. He said: I'm happy to be an Albertan, and to be able to play here with a level playing field excites me greatly; we're the best in the world at interactive content, high-speed simulation, user interface; the next 20 years is going to be built on these technologies; augmented reality, virtual reality are all based on high-performance simulation; the games industry is going to feed that, and it's going to grow huge.

Once again, in the past we saw companies like BioWare increasingly move their operations to provinces with these tax credits, specifically Quebec in this case. Now we can keep our

homegrown talent here, benefiting from the jobs they create and the products they export.

Now, as somebody who graduated from the radio and television broadcasting program at NAIT, I've always hoped that one day my voice might make it into a video game. It hasn't happened yet, but, you know, BioWare, you can give me a call any time. With this funding I think that we'll see more opportunities for postsecondary spaces to work together with programs across the board, and I would love to see more partnerships like that for future students and graduates.

Now, I also have to mention another conversation I had, with a fellow named Aaron Clifford, who is a virtual reality producer with an Edmonton company, KOVR. Robert Lennon is the CEO there, and Mike Bowman is the managing partner. This organization uses VR programs like Unity 3-D and Google augmented reality core to show their clients how final projects like lighted signs on buildings will look before they make their final decision to buy their product. In my conversations with Mr. Clifford he explained that they are bidding on interactive projects for businesses and media and that the IDMTC program will help them compete globally. He explained: we're still finding our path, and this credit will give us 25 per cent more time to find those amazing clients.

Madam Speaker, this is a perfect example of an organization filled with experienced leadership working on projects that will diversify our local economy. It's also a great example of the flexibility of the jobs within the industry as in their spare time they are working on VR games that will soon be in the beta stages, which I look forward to testing on my own virtual reality product Oculus Rift.

We see examples of VR and AR more and more in industries like advertising. Realty organizations are moving to this platform to give homebuyers the full experience before making the final decision to purchase a home, and the same is happening within the architecture and project development industries. It will truly revolutionize the way that we see concept projects, not to mention the breakthroughs that are happening within the medical industry and education as a whole, using VR and AR to experience situations that can help students practise before the real thing. I've also seen a few instances where retirement homes are using it for people and where long-term care facilities are using it for seniors that are experiencing Alzheimer's and even dementia. It's an opportunity for them to experience, whether it's music or certain places, you know, Paris or anywhere else, that again without having to leave the facility. So there are some great opportunities there.

Back to the contents of the bill. I was also incredibly proud to see the diversity and inclusion component within Bill 2, although the Member for Strathmore-Brooks doesn't find it to be particularly important to him, adjusting the AITC program for these investors who invest in companies where the majority of the board, including the CEO, are members of an unrepresented group, providing an extra 5 per cent tax credit. This extra 5 per cent tax credit also extends to the programs that were already in place, the AITC and the CITC, but also to the digital media tax credit as well, and it is the first of its kind across Canada when it comes to truly supporting those who focus on inclusive employment.

Finally, if Bill 2 passes, it will enable this government to strengthen our ties with the unmanned aerial systems sector. Partnerships with institutions and industry will enable the testing of technological applications and will expedite the uptake of advanced technology industries in Alberta. Of course, Alberta is already home to the Canadian Centre for Unmanned Vehicle Systems, and we want to continue to support the centre. Unmanned aerial technologies have economic applications in a number of sectors, including oil and gas, agriculture, resource management, wildlife

tracking, transportation systems, and emergency response processes. All of this has the potential to create new employment opportunities and positions Alberta as an attractive investment location.

3:20

Madam Speaker, I'm very proud to see the initiatives put forward in Bill 2 moving forward: extending the existing tax credit programs, creating the interactive digital media tax credit program as well as 3,000 postsecondary spaces and more scholarships for those attending our postsecondary institutions. I'm very proud to stand in support of this legislation, and I look forward to seeing it move forward. I'm very thankful to the minister and all of my colleagues here, who have helped to shape this program moving forward, as well as the many stakeholders that have been consulted on it, and I look forward to seeing it move forward.

Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Very good. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I know that it's getting late and it's the last day here, but I couldn't miss an opportunity to stand up and point out the failings of our government one last time before the break.

Madam Speaker, although I would like to find the humour in this situation, it simply is no laughing matter. The government has implemented so many disastrous policies that investors have fled the province.

Mr. Mason: We miss them, too.

Mr. Hanson: The Minister of Transportation misses all those companies. Is that what he said?

Their administrative and corporate tax hikes, their complete bungling of the electricity file – and who can forget the job-killing carbon tax? You know, let's talk about the carbon tax for a minute. We've brought it up in question period many times, looking for exemptions for school bus drivers, school boards, food banks, virtually every business in Alberta, and virtually every family in Alberta. Now that they've driven out investment and are scrambling, they need to introduce legislation to attempt to make Alberta once again the attractive place to invest that it once was. Unfortunately, the damage has been done. Not only that, but the damage continues to be done. Introducing a bill that would promote investment when their carbon tax still has its grip on Albertans seems counterintuitive. It seems to me as if they are trying to mop up the water without having plugged the holes in the bottom of the boat.

The first logical, common-sense step would be to repeal the carbon tax, would it not? Madam Speaker, we are now at a point where we need to use incentives, a.k.a. the money of hard-working Albertans. A reminder: it is the taxpayers' money, not the government's money. We're using that money to try to encourage investors back to Alberta and to promote the diversification of Alberta's technology sector.

Of course, a large, blossoming tech sector would be a great thing for Alberta, and I certainly support that, as I'm sure my colleagues on this side do as well. Where my issue takes root is that providing tax credits to a specific sector of the market has the potential to distort that market. The NDP government insists on having a hand in all free-market activity in this province, but this has the potential to create tax credit or subsidy-dependent industries.

Madam Speaker, when it comes to the economy, the NDP has no leg to stand on. We've seen this over and over with their track record of increasing the regulatory burden as well as the tax burden for businesses, driving investors out. They've damaged the playing field. As a matter of fact, they've plowed up the playing field and have no other choice but to bring in yet another bill that tries to repair a sector that they've bungled up.

Let me remind you of what happened when they thought they knew better on the electricity file. They pushed that legislation through, and then Albertans were left with volatility and unpredictability. Investors urged the government to do something, so they were forced to bring in Bill 13. This is yet another one of those bills that has been brought in to do damage control by the NDP after they have scared investment away with their tax and administrative hikes.

According to CFIB, and I quote: 92 per cent of business owners are not confident the Alberta government is committed to improving the business climate. Madam Speaker, that says a lot. The overwhelming majority of Alberta's hard-working business owners do not believe that their government has any interest in actually welcoming investment back to our province, getting private capital flowing, increasing jobs, or getting Alberta back on track. They do not feel that this government has their backs. Albertans are not confident that their government wants what's best for their business. But now the government will do what it takes, meaning taking more of taxpayers' money to fund these credits, to lure investment back, only to see that the economic climate here has not in fact changed at all.

CFIB has also stated – and I quote – that entrepreneurs in Alberta are the least confident in the country. In the entire country Alberta now has the least confident entrepreneurs. Alberta used to be the province that people would think of in Canada when they imagined opportunity and economic success, or what we Albertans called the Alberta advantage. Now the NDP government has bungled it up so badly that they need Bill 2 to try to get back at least some of the investor confidence they lost.

To re-emphasize, we don't have trust in their ability to restore the economy when they have already damaged it so recklessly by raising taxes on larger businesses and high-income earners, increasing environmental and other regulations, imposing a carbon tax, and creating increased labour costs. According to the Calgary Chamber of commerce it's becoming harder to run a successful business in Calgary, which cites the carbon tax in addition to rising labour costs and increasing personal and corporate taxes as the causes. When the Calgary Chamber of commerce is citing the carbon tax as well as other tax hikes as the causes of hardship for business owners in Alberta, it should be as clear as day to the NDP government.

Madam Speaker, any time the government wants to introduce something new into an existing market, the NDP's track record is cause for concern for me. Last year there were difficulties and delays in providing the Alberta investor tax credit funding in a timely fashion. Meanwhile the interactive digital media tax credit program will not have any program or application details until the summer of 2018, probably not a great surprise to anyone as these last three years have proven the great inefficiency of the NDP government. In fact, the *Calgary Herald* published a headline last year that read: New Alberta Tax Credit off to Slow Start with no Money Awarded Yet. The government's own program, and they couldn't get it out the door.

Madam Speaker, the government continues to play favourites. We've seen them introduce tax credits in relatively narrow sectors, with the potential of creating market distortion. Alberta not only

needs to remain competitive to neighbouring provinces as well as all Canadian provinces, but it needs to stay competitive globally. Alberta is competing on a global stage, and when the investment has left us, it has gone somewhere it deems more favourable to set up shop, to safer investment climates like Iran.

This side of the House has lost trust in the government's ability to restore the economy and investor confidence, and so have Albertans. For that reason, I will not be supporting this bill.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Mr. Mason: Just a question. I'm not sure that I caught what the hon. member said correctly. Did he really say that he felt that Iraq had a safer investment climate than Alberta?

Mr. Hanson: Iran.

Mr. Mason: Iran. Okay. Just wanted to make sure we had that on the record, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, hon. minister, would you like to close debate?
Then I will call the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 2 read a second time]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I would like to thank all members of the House for their co-operation and contribution this afternoon and this week. I think it would be nice, to start our long weekend, if we had, you know, maybe just an extra hour so that people can beat the traffic and travel on those beautiful Alberta highways. I'll move that we adjourn the House until 10 o'clock – no, until 9 o'clock . . .

An Hon. Member: It's 1:30 on Monday, May 28.

Mr. Mason: I've got to get better notes, Madam Speaker.

Okay. Yes. I'll move that we adjourn, and I wish everybody safe travels and a very productive constituency week.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 3:30 p.m. to Monday, May 28, at 1:30 p.m.]

Bill Status Report for the 29th Legislature - 4th Session (2018)

Activity to Thursday, May 17, 2018

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

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

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

Bill 1 — Energy Diversification Act (McCuaig-Boyd)

First Reading — 6 (*Mar. 8, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 50-51 (*Mar. 13, 2018 morn.*), 184-87 (*Mar. 15, 2018 aft.*), 233-43 (*Mar. 20, 2018 morn.*), 301-08 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft.*), 919-27 (*May 9, 2018 morn.*), 981-84 (*May 9, 2018 eve.*), 1054-59 (*May 14, 2018 eve., passed on division*)

Bill 2 — Growth and Diversification Act (\$) (Bilous)

First Reading — 118 (*Mar. 14, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 243-46 (*Mar. 20, 2018 morn.*), 294-96 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft.*), 314-25 (*Mar. 22, 2018 morn.*), 411-12 (*Apr. 4, 2018 aft.*), 702-05 (*May 1, 2018 eve.*), 928-33 (*May 9, 2018 morn.*), 1061-68 (*May 15, 2018 morn.*), 1101-04 (*May 15, 2018 eve.*), 1163-67 (*May 16, 2018 eve.*), 1202-06 (*May 17, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 3 — Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2018 (\$) (Ceci)

First Reading — 184 (*Mar. 15, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 221-26 (*Mar. 19, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 261-68 (*Mar. 20, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 296-98 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 28, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force Mar. 28, 2018; SA 2018 c1]

Bill 4 — Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2018 (\$) (Ceci)

First Reading — 165 (*Mar. 15, 2018 morn., passed*)

Second Reading — 226-32 (*Mar. 19, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 268-75 (*Mar. 20, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 298-301 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 28, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force Mar. 28, 2018; SA 2018 c2]

Bill 5 — An Act to Strengthen Financial Security for Persons with Disabilities (Sabir)

First Reading — 200-201 (*Mar. 19, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 360-62 (*Apr. 3, 2018 morn.*), 482-87 (*Apr. 10, 2018 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 847-54 (*May 7, 2018 eve.*), 1084-88 (*May 15, 2018 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 6 — Gaming and Liquor Statutes Amendment Act, 2018 (Ganley)

First Reading — 448 (*Apr. 9, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 533-34 (*Apr. 12, 2018 aft.*), 669-79 (*May 1, 2018 aft.*), 1010-13 (*May 10, 2018 aft.*), 1101 (*May 15, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1158-63 (*May 16, 2018 eve., passed*)

Bill 7 — Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act (Carlier)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 491-97 (*Apr. 10, 2018 aft.*), 534-36 (*Apr. 12, 2018 aft.*), 679-83 (*May 1, 2018 aft.*), 908-09 (*May 8, 2018 eve.*), 913-14 (*May 8, 2018 eve.*), 1097-98 (*May 15, 2018 eve., passed*)

Bill 8 — Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2018 (S. Anderson)

First Reading — 374 (*Apr. 3, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 9* — Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act (Hoffman)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 497-502 (*Apr. 10, 2018 aft.*), 785-93 (*May 3, 2018 morn.*), 775-76 (*May 3, 2018 morn.*), 807-08 (*May 3, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 909-13 (*May 8, 2018 eve.*), 957-61 (*May 9, 2018 aft.*), 992-94 (*May 10, 2018 morn.*), 1088-96 (*May 15, 2018 aft., passed with amendments*)

Bill 10 — An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements (S. Anderson)

First Reading — 528 (*Apr. 12, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 611-12 (*Apr. 19, 2018 aft.*), 643-50 (*May 1, 2018 morn.*), 761-72 (*May 2, 2018 eve.*), 973-81 (*May 9, 2018 eve.*), 1049-54 (*May 14, 2018 eve.*), 1180-87 (*May 17, 2018 morn., adjourned on amendment*)

Bill 11 — Lobbyists Amendment Act, 2018 (Gray)

First Reading — 505 (*Apr. 11, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 612-13 (*Apr. 19, 2018 aft.*), 650-56 (*May 1, 2018 morn.*), 772-74 (*May 2, 2018 eve.*), 967-73 (*May 9, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1157 (*May 16, 2018 eve., passed*)

Bill 12* — Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act (McCuaig-Boyd)

First Reading — 547 (*Apr. 16, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 736-46 (*May 2, 2018 aft.*), 854-55 (*May 7, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 961-65 (*May 9, 2018 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 994-96 (*May 10, 2018 morn.*), 1135-54 (*May 16, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 13 — An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future (\$) (McCuaig-Boyd)

First Reading — 606 (*Apr. 19, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 746-53 (*May 2, 2018 aft.*), 808-16 (*May 3, 2018 aft.*), 855-64 (*May 7, 2018 eve.*), 947-57 (*May 9, 2018 aft.*), 1169-80 (*May 17, 2018 morn., adjourned on amendment*)

Bill 14 — An Act to Empower Utility Consumers (McLean)

First Reading — 590 (*Apr. 18, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 718-24 (*May 2, 2018 morn.*), 915-19 (*May 9, 2018 morn.*), 1098-1101 (*May 15, 2018 eve., passed*)

Bill 15 — Appropriation Act, 2018 (\$) (Ceci)

First Reading — 610 (*Apr. 19, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Second Reading — 683-89 (*May 1, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 753-56 (*May 2, 2018 aft.*), 757-60 (*May 2, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 776-85 (*May 3, 2018 morn., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*May 14, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 14, 2018; SA 2018 c3]

Bill 16 — Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Statutes Amendment Act, 2018 (Gray)

First Reading — 879 (*May 8, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1010-13 (*May 10, 2018 aft.*), 1105-22 (*May 16, 2018 morn.*), 1155-57 (*May 16, 2018 eve., passed on division*)

Bill 17 — Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2018 (Ceci)

First Reading — 806 (*May 3, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 864-65 (*May 7, 2018 eve.*), 1014-15 (*May 10, 2018 aft.*), 1058-59 (*May 14, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1157 (*May 16, 2018 eve., passed*)

Bill 18 — Statutes Amendment Act, 2018 (Mason)

First Reading — 1201 (*May 17, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 201 — Employment Standards (Firefighter Leave) Amendment Act, 2018 (W. Anderson)

First Reading — 118 (*Mar. 14, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 201-14 (*Mar. 19, 2018 aft., referred to Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future*)

Bill 202 — Alberta Taxpayer Protection (Carbon Tax Referendum) Amendment Act, 2018 (Kenney)

First Reading — 179 (*Mar. 15, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 549-63 (*Apr. 16, 2018 aft., defeated on division*)

Bill 203 — Long Term Care Information Act (Schreiner)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 632-40 (*Apr. 30, 2018 aft.*), 829-33 (*May 7, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 204 — Land Statutes (Abolition of Adverse Possession) Amendment Act, 2018 (Gotfried)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 833-41 (*May 7, 2018 aft., adjourned*), 1031-37 (*May 14, 2018 aft., reasoned amendment agreed to*)

Bill 205 — Supporting Accessible Mental Health Services Act (Jabbour)

First Reading — 1008 (*May 10, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1037 (*May 14, 2018 aft., deferred to Monday, October 29, 2018*)

Bill 206 — Societies (Preventing the Promotion of Hate) Amendment Act, 2018 (Coolahan)

First Reading — 1008-09 (*May 10, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1037 (*May 14, 2018 aft., adjourned*)

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, May 28, 2018

Day 33

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (NDP), Speaker
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Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (UCP)
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Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)
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Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)
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Vacant, Fort McMurray-Conklin
Vacant, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake

Party standings:

New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 25 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent Conservative: 1 Vacant: 2

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, May 28, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Hon. members, I know that I speak for all of you. It is, with humility, an honour and privilege to be a part of this historic reconciliation. At my request Elder Herman Many Guns from the Piikani Treaty 7 territory has provided me with a prayer. I would ask that each of you reflect and/or pray, each in your own way.

Prayers

The Speaker: Creator gave us life to live in harmony. Creator created and gave us our Mother Earth. Creator taught us how to share with all walks of life. Our way of life was darkened, and we had to walk in the shadows of a foreign way of life that destroyed our beliefs and that of future generations. Today our children of tomorrow may see the new and true life of the future, so we have to adapt to change. We start by acknowledgement of ceremony and begin healing the darkened wound of our souls that have gone before us. We pray for a new tomorrow for all of the '60s scoop survivors, past and present, and continue to work with government on truth and reconciliation for a better future and continue building better relations for tomorrow.

Hon. members, ladies and gentlemen, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Debbie Houle, Sherry Sewepagahan, and Sarah Pocklington. Together they are the group Asani in the gallery today. I would invite all of you to participate in the language of your choice.

Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!
True patriot love in all of us command.
Car ton bras sait porter l'épée,
Il sait porter la croix!
Ton histoire est une épopée
Des plus brillants exploits.
nohtāwīnān kanawēyihta.
Kakanata, kinipawīstamātinān;
Kakanata, kinipawīstamātinān.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my profound honour to introduce to you and through you special guests who are joining me to bear witness to a historic day in Alberta history. Sitting in the Speaker's gallery are members of the Sixties Scoop Indigenous Society of Alberta, which was formed to represent survivors throughout Alberta and to advance the work of true reconciliation and healing. It's difficult to understate the role that SSISA has had in getting us here today or my gratitude. On this long-awaited day I ask the board members to rise: Adam North Peigan, president; Sharon Gladue-Paskimin, vice-president; Sandra Relling, treasurer; Kathy Hamelin, director; Orlando Alexis, director; Lena Wildman, secretary; and Lew Jobs, former director. Several family members are also in the Speaker's gallery to bear witness and support their

loved ones. I ask that they also rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ms Larivee: Mr. Speaker, I have to admit that I was a little bit unclear as to who are visitors and who are guests. I think, in my mind, they're all visitors, so I'm going to step in and say that I also want to acknowledge several elders in the public and members' and Speaker's galleries. These elders have guided us through individual '60s scoop engagement sessions throughout the province or led us in ceremonies so integral to those sessions. I ask that the elders who were able to be here today stand to be acknowledged by the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ms Larivee: Lastly, Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and through you several representatives from First Nations in Treaty 8 territory who join us today to witness the apology. We have Chief Albert Thunder from the Whitefish Lake First Nation, and we have Councillor April Isadore from Driftpile First Nation. Please join me in honouring these guests and offering the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce to you and through you a number of special visitors who are here to join us in witnessing the '60s scoop apology. These visitors that I'm introducing are from the First Nations in Treaty 6 territory, upon which we are gathered here today. I'd like to acknowledge Chief Bill Morin, chief of the Enoch First Nation; Irvin Bull, chief of the Louis Bull First Nation; Chief Kurt Burnstick and Marsha Arcand from Alexander First Nation; Bernice Martial, chief of the Cold Lake First Nation; Chief Tony Alexis from Alexis Nakota Sioux Nation; on behalf of Chief Craig Makinaw councillors Cheryl Montour and Daniel Wildcat from the Ermineskin First Nation; representing the Montana First Nation Councillor Bradley Terrance Rabbit; and Faron Bull from the Paul First Nation. It's my honour to ask them all to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

1:40

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To continue our acknowledgement of our special visitors here to witness the '60s scoop apology, I would like to begin by introducing the AFN regional chief, Marlene Poitras. From First Nations in Treaty 7 territory I'd like to acknowledge Chief Stanley Grier of the Piikani Nation and Chief Lee Crowchild of Tsuut'ina Nation. As well, representing the Metis Settlements General Council we have Gerald Cunningham, president, from East Prairie Métis settlement; Ken Noskey, representing the Peavine Métis settlement; and Herb Lehr, representing the Fishing Lake Métis settlement. Finally, representing the Métis Nation of Alberta, I would like to introduce Audrey Poitras, the MNA provincial president; Diane Scoville, region 1 president; Cecil Bellrose, region 4 president; and Sylvia Johnson, region 6 president. I would ask all of my guests to please rise and receive the warm reception of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ms McKittrick: Mr. Speaker, on this important day it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you Jim Gurnett. Jim Gurnett has been a Member of the Legislative Assembly and has worked in staff positions with other members. In community work and friendships over the years he has been aware of and troubled by the '60s scoop and is happy to see its dark history being addressed. He has had a special focus on supporting connections between indigenous people and recent newcomers from around the world. As the MLA for Sherwood Park it is an honour and a privilege to represent constituents like Jim who have demonstrated a deep and long-standing commitment to social justice and serving our community. Jim, I ask you to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Ms Jabbour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On your behalf I would like to introduce to the Assembly a special guest of yours seated in the Speaker's gallery. Lewis Cardinal is a long-time advocate and educator on indigenous issues in Alberta. Most recently Mr. Cardinal has been working with your office on creating a better understanding of indigenous culture and incorporating it into the Legislative Assembly. He's received a number of recognitions for his work both provincially and nationally. I would ask Mr. Cardinal to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour on behalf of the Minister of Environment and Parks and minister responsible for the climate change office to rise and introduce to you and to this Assembly a team of individuals helping to ensure dam safety in our province. The team from Environment and Parks is responsible for the regulation of dams and canals in this province under the Water Act and the ministerial water regulation, excluding energy-related projects. The regulation provides oversight to ensure dam and canal owners can take active responsibility for the integrity and safe operation of their structures. In total we have about 1,500 dams that fall within these requirements in our province. I would like to introduce the members of this team who are joining us today. We have Garry Bucharski, Gary Titosky, Jenna Montgomery, Kaisie Moxam, and Shannon Higgins. I thank them on behalf of my colleague and all of us for their hard work and ask members to join me in the traditional welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ministerial Statements

The Speaker: I recognize the hon. Premier.

'60s Scoop Apology

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to begin by acknowledging that we are gathered here today on the traditional territory of Treaty 6, and I'd also like to acknowledge the Métis people of Alberta, who share a very deep connection with this land.

I rise today in the spirit of truth and reconciliation. Before we begin, I'd like us all to take a moment and just look up. When we speak about colonialism and its vestiges, when we speak about the

need for truth and reconciliation here in Alberta and across Canada, when we speak about healing, we must remember always that we speak about people. Above us today are survivors of the '60s scoop: women and men, children and grandchildren, parents and grandparents, all of them survivors. As we speak today in their presence, we are mindful that their presence carries with it also a terrible absence: parents lost; children taken; families destroyed; cultures shamed, ignored, and forgotten; by force, a proud way of life taken away.

The decisions that led to that personal trauma: many of those decisions, Mr. Speaker, were made right here on this floor in this Chamber. The government of Alberta owes these people an apology, and today that's what we are here to do. But for that apology to have the meaning that these women and men deserve, these women and men deserve to know that their experiences were heard and are heard and are understood as best we can. These women and men deserve to know that we stand here today looking up at them not only with hearts of reconciliation but with eyes that see the wrongs of the past as clearly as we can. So before we can offer our apology, please allow me to speak to the work done to make this apology meaningful for these brave women and men, because they deserve nothing less.

The '60s scoop is the colloquial name for the government practices perpetuated in Alberta and across Canada from the 1950s to the 1980s. Indigenous children were taken from their birth families, from their communities, put in nonindigenous homes, without meaningful steps, in some cases without any steps at all, to preserve their culture, their identity, their relationship with their community, and, even most importantly, with their family.

To speak of the '60s scoop in these terms is to speak merely of the broadest and the most impersonal strokes. To appreciate the trauma these women and men lived through, we need to hear it from them in their voices, and that's what we set out to do. Over 800 courageous survivors of the '60s scoop shared with us their heartbreaking experiences, and I want to thank each and every person who participated in that. All of you who came forward and shared your experiences did so with courage beyond measure. You didn't just share the trauma of what was done to you; you spoke truth to power. You spoke truth to the same power, the same institution, the government, that inflicted this trauma on you in the first place. So to all of you, thank you.

The stories that you, the survivors, shared with us are heartbreaking. These stories transcend generations: children – kids, babies, toddlers, teens – ripped from your families; parents unable to see through the tears as they took your children away from you; grandparents forced aside as your families were destroyed. We heard stories of how you were lied to and told that your families didn't want you or couldn't care for you. We heard how many of you were never told where your children had gone, where your parents had gone, where your brothers or sisters had gone. Many of you were placed into foster care, with no linkages to your culture, bounced from home to home, place to place, with no stability or sense of who you are and the proud place that you came from.

We also heard clearly that some of those foster homes were also not safe. Many of you faced terrible abuse – physical abuse, sexual abuse, mental and emotional abuse – forced labour, starvation, and neglect. A survivor shared this quote with us, and I want to share it today because I believe it reveals the horror and the tragedy of what was done to these children. That person said: "I was abused in every home. The worst part was that we actually had a family that loved us." Many of you shared that even as children you contemplated suicide.

1:50

Those feelings were often compounded by the isolation that you experienced. When you were placed in nonindigenous homes and communities, the dominance of colonial thinking meant that you regularly faced racism and discrimination. Some of you were forbidden to speak your own language, forced instead to speak English or French. Many of you were not allowed to honour or express your culture. Make no mistake. The '60s scoop was an assault on indigenous identity, your sense of self and who you are. As a result, many of you never felt at home anywhere, not in the homes and communities where you were fostered or adopted and not even when you returned home. One survivor remembered: "At 19 I went back to the reserve. One minute I am white. One minute I am red. I never knew which side I belonged on." Another said: "I lost my spirit. It was taken away from me."

The impacts of these government actions are still felt by you and your families today. The scars of this tragedy still linger, some as fresh as they were a generation ago. Many of you told us that you still experience family dysfunction and difficult relationships as a result of what was done to you. Some survivors shared that they never felt love during childhood. One survivor said, "I couldn't understand what real love was." Many of you struggle with self-identity due to losing your culture, your language, and the connection to your families. Many of you spoke about ongoing challenges with government systems and education and police and justice. When we look clearly at what was done to you, what we did to you, it is no wonder that it is so hard for so many of you to trust again.

Many survivors spoke about poor physical and mental health, about drug and alcohol addiction, about depression and suicide and early deaths amongst families and friends. The legacy of residential schools was and is a constant shadow over your lives. Many of you had parents and grandparents who were traumatized by residential schools. These traumas were often passed on to you, and many survivors spoke of the ongoing trauma their parents experienced. Many fear that they passed this trauma on to their children. A survivor told us, "The cycle needs to stop," and we agree.

I ask again for the members of this Assembly to look up, to see these survivors, to honour them and their ancestors with our full attention. To you, the survivors of the '60s scoop, to your children, to your parents, to the rest of your families, and to your communities, from me as Premier of Alberta, from all of us here as the elected representatives of the people of Alberta, and on behalf of the government of Alberta, we are sorry. For the loss of families, of stability, of love, we are sorry. For the loss of identity, of language and culture, we are sorry. For the loneliness, the anger, the confusion, and the frustration, we are sorry. For the government practice that left you indigenous people estranged from your families and your communities and your history, we are sorry. For this trauma, this pain, this suffering, alienation, and sadness, we are sorry. To all of you, I am sorry.

In Cree the word is *ni mihtâtam*. In Dene the word is *bek'e nasdlj*. In Beaver the word is *sekaa-tah*. In Nakota the word is *wéčā ptač*. In Blackfoot the closest term is *tsik skāp(h) tsap spinaa'n*. In Saulteaux the closest term is *gaween-ouchi-dahh-do-taw-naan*. In Michif the term is *ni mihtatayn*. We are sorry.

For an apology to be worth anything, it must also carry with it a promise. Here is my promise, our promise, to the survivors of the '60s scoop. We will work with indigenous communities, with each of you. We will ensure that your perspectives, your desires, and your priorities for your families and communities are reflected in what we do going forward. No one knows what indigenous children and families need better than First Nation, Métis, and Inuit

communities. We will honour that. We will work together with you, your families, your elders, and your communities to correct historical injustices and find a path to true reconciliation between our government and indigenous Albertans. Together we can help heal the wounds of the past, together we can ensure that indigenous children grow up happy and healthy and connected to their families, their communities, and their cultures, and together we will ensure that all indigenous Albertans enjoy the same privileges and opportunities as every Albertan.

With all of this work we are not starting from a standstill. The work that began with the '60s scoop consultation continues, and the relationship being built through those consultations, a relationship that we hope is a new and growing form of trust, will serve us well as we continue together down the path of reconciliation.

Honoured guests, Mr. Speaker, members of the Assembly, thank you for the privilege of speaking with you today and for the opportunity to express our deepest apologies for the government practice known as the '60s scoop. Before I conclude, I do want to acknowledge the amazing work of the Sixties Scoop Indigenous Society of Alberta and thank them for their guidance and their leadership over the past months. To everyone who participated in the engagement sessions over the past months and told their story, thank you again for your bravery and for putting your trust in us. We will honour that trust.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all members of the Assembly rise and join me in offering their thanks and their honour to the survivors who are with us today. [Standing ovation]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In the spring of 2016 I received a meeting request from Adam North Peigan to discuss the '60s scoop. They were frustrated in their attempts to reach out to the government, so they asked for my help.

The experiences that they related to me of how they and others had been taken from their families and how those that survived were now trying to reconnect with family, community, and culture: I listened to Sharon, who, along with her sisters, was living with her grandparents on reserve land until a social worker came to visit. Shockingly to the social worker, this family was living in a house with no power, no indoor plumbing, and living on wild meat, so the children were removed and separated. Mr. Speaker, that was in the mid-1960s, the same time when I was growing up. Many, many Albertans lived that way. We didn't have running water in our house or indoor plumbing until I was 12 years old, but nobody came to rescue me.

On budget day 2016 I introduced 22 survivors of the '60s scoop here in the Legislature and helped Adam and his group raise awareness and bring this issue to the forefront. Over the last year, sessions were held all across Alberta to meet with and listen to the people affected. I attended the session held at Blue Quills university. I heard many stories of children being removed from their parents or grandparents and then, to make it worse, separated from their siblings.

2:00

One of the most touching stories was related by Eva. She told of walking with her nine children from Saddle Lake to St. Paul, a distance of 30 kilometres, so that she could go to school to further her education and make life better for her family. They walked over 20 kilometres before somebody would stop and pick them up. Eva ended up in Edmonton with her children, trying to go to school and work, but it got too tough for her, so she contacted social services.

Rather than lending a hand so she could keep her family together, they took her children, separated them, sending some to foster homes and others to group homes, depending on their age. She talked of the struggle to reunite her family.

We are here today because of the province's role in decisions that were made that affected thousands of families, intergenerational. I'm sure that those involved at the time thought they were doing the right thing. The troubling thing for me is that while we can look back at the past and say that we were in error, we are allowing this to continue under our watch today.

I had the privilege of standing in for the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre on the child intervention panel on several occasions. At one of these meetings we heard from a number of young people that had recently gone through the system. This was in 2017, Mr. Speaker. A young man named Jessie related how he, now 17 years old, had been through 14 foster homes before finally being adopted. He said that after the third transfer he felt that no one loved or cared for him.

The same day Samantha, also 17, said that she had lived with the same family for over 10 years and was very, very much considered one of the family. They never mentioned the words "foster child" until one day when she was 14 and her foster parents told her that Children's Services would be coming the next day to get her. No explanation was given to her. She was taken from that loving family environment and put into a group home setting. It was only after a FOIP request to view her own file that she discovered the reason that she was removed was her age. Her foster parents were only allowed children in a certain age group.

Many people I've talked to that have survived despite the system are frustrated because they are not allowed access to their own files. Even after many, many years they still have to pay to FOIP their own history, only to have much of the information blacked out, redacted.

On Friday, May 18, I was asked to sit on a panel at the Blanket of Remembrance event in Edmonton to remember a little girl named Serenity. We heard very emotional speeches from both her mom and her dad. Then right at the end of the panel discussion her grandmother stood up and tearfully talked about her recent fight to get her grandchildren back from social services. Why did she, a caring relative, have to fight for years against the system for the right to raise her own grandchildren? She tearfully told us that when she finally got them back, she said: they're ruined.

Back in 1951, when the responsibility was handed off from the federal government to the province, it was handled poorly, to say the least. That is why we're here today to recognize the efforts of people like Adam North Peigan and his group for shining a light on this issue and forcing the government to take responsibility for their role. Here we are in 2018 and, as you can see by the experiences I've related, the system is still very much broken. This is happening now. We need these departments to open up, put away their black markers, and fix this before we can take another step forward, or we'll be back here again in the future addressing another generation.

Hay-hay.

The Speaker: The Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would request unanimous consent of the House to allow a response on behalf of the Alberta Party and on behalf of the Alberta Liberal Party.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-South East.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with humility and is a great privilege to address this House on this special day and to address the guests and visitors in this Chamber. Let me start by also acknowledging that we're on the traditional land of Treaty 6 First Nations. I'd also like to thank the Premier for her leadership on this issue, for her heartfelt and thoughtful words.

On behalf of the Alberta Party caucus I rise today to join the government in apologizing for all those affected by the actions of those in power. The '60s scoop was a tragedy on every level. It was a personal tragedy for those that were taken from loving homes; it was a cultural tragedy, where a generation of indigenous peoples were forcibly separated from their traditions, their identities, and families; and it was a societal tragedy, that we allowed and perpetuated such a terrible and callous act against our indigenous brothers and sisters.

It's my hope that this apology is a step towards true reconciliation, that by acknowledging where we have gone wrong in the past, we can continue to work towards healing and true partnership. There are too many lost years, shattered families, stolen childhoods for this to be fixed by words alone, if indeed this can be fixed at all. But as we've heard today, this is about breaking the cycle. It's about naming and recognizing those that have suffered through these horrific policies. This is about ensuring that we do everything we can to ensure that something like this never ever happens again.

To all indigenous Albertans, your families, your communities, your ancestors: we deeply, deeply apologize. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me add my humble thanks to all those present today, including the Premier, with her very passionate tribute to our indigenous people and Métis community, who have suffered for so long and at such depth and persisted under such difficult circumstances for so long hoping to educate a very slow-learning western culture.

The '60s scoop is one of the many dark chapters in modern Canadian history: indigenous children in alarming numbers taken from their families, their homes, including kinship care, taken from the life they knew, the culture that fostered them, and the most basic experience of security. Governments past have actively undermined their culture and identity as indigenous, appropriately termed cultural genocide, which all of us as treaties people must help redress at every opportunity.

Over many generations the residential school system added to this family violence, and more recently Canadians are recognizing this particular period, the '60s scoop, which actually spanned decades, including our current times, with intergenerational trauma and fostered ongoing racism. We apologize for this profound trauma and commit every one of us today to do what we can do in our personal and public and professional lives to help the healing together.

Even today many indigenous youth in government care are cut off from families and culture as the child care system continues to lack cultural resources, especially on our reserves, for which we have challenged the federal government to step up, to preserve critical connections and indigenous identity and to build the capacity for indigenous health care, indigenous education, indigenous social and child care services. Two-thirds of children in Alberta in care come from our indigenous communities despite indigenous Albertans only comprising 10 per cent of our population. Research from the tenacious Dr. Cindy Blackstock has well demonstrated the discriminatory funding for health, education,

and child and family services on-reserve, something the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal has ruled unacceptable, unlawful, and discriminatory.

2:10

I applaud both levels of government for taking this important step, recognizing not only the '60s scoop but beginning the substantive policy changes and key service changes that I know are coming and that we will be holding them accountable for. With an urgent need in Alberta to implement the recommendations of the Ministerial Panel on Child Intervention of this past six months, it's time for tangible change in all our relations with indigenous communities at all three levels of government: federal, provincial, and municipal. Only then can we confidently say that there will be no more scoops, no millennial scoop that is currently being talked about.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give notice to the Assembly pursuant to Standing Order 7(8) that the Routine shall continue beyond 3 p.m.

The Speaker: Hon. minister, I've had a request from an independent for unanimous consent to speak.

Ms Ganley: Then I would make that request, Mr. Speaker.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Mr. Fildebrandt: I want to begin by welcoming our brothers and sisters from our First Nations and Métis communities here today, many of which are outside in the rotunda because there's not enough space in this place for everyone to fit. I want to join the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition, the Alberta Party, and the Liberal member in sharing these comments towards peace and reconciliation in Alberta with our First Nations.

The '60s scoop was an attack on families, on individuals, on a culture, and on nations. As the Member for Strathmore-Brooks I've developed a very close and positive relationship with the Siksika First Nation, which is next door to my constituency and is in many ways a sister community to Bassano, Gleichen, Cluny, and Strathmore. The '60s scoop violated treaties, it violated trust, and it violated our own values.

We have come a long way since then. We have come a long way in coming together as common Canadians and Albertans and as just humans, but there is still much to do. Together we take responsibility for what happened, and we ask for your forgiveness as we move forward together.

Thank you.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just briefly I would like to thank the Premier for her gracious remarks and the gesture of this important apology and, on behalf of the Official Opposition, join with the government in sharing our highest esteem for the survivors who join us today in the Chamber, in the rotunda, and across the province.

'60s Scoop Survivors Ministerial Panel on Child Intervention

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, would the Premier care to expand on her remarks and suggest what further measures could be taken to

advance reconciliation with the survivors of this terrible historical injustice?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much to the hon. Official Opposition leader for that important question. The work that we need to do going forward is fundamentally important. It is a continuation of what our government began when we adopted and committed to moving forward with the principles of the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. As it relates to the survivors of the '60s scoop, we know that there is much we must do to do a better job supporting families and indigenous communities to care as best they can, as they should, for their children and to move forward on a number of different fronts supporting indigenous communities so that they can grow in the years to come. That's the work that we've begun on many different fronts and that we will continue to do in partnership.

Mr. Kenney: I thank the hon. the Premier for her thoughtful response, Mr. Speaker.

Is it the Premier's view that more historical research needs to be done to identify the policies of the government of Alberta that led to this? I understand there have been listening sessions, and I myself have listened to the members of the '60s scoop survivors association. At the federal level I led redress projects with respect to things like the Chinese head tax and found it very important to establish a permanent historical record. Is the government committed to helping to do that through archival research and other projects so that we never forget the lessons of this injustice?

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much again to the member opposite for that insight. I think that we're certainly open to moving forward on the priorities that are primarily given to us by the survivors themselves and by leaders within indigenous communities across the province, so the work will continue in terms of the consultations between our ministers and the leadership in terms of: what's the best path forward to redress the wrongs of the '60s scoop as well as to move forward on full reconciliation under UNDRIP? Certainly, the suggestion made by the member opposite is worthy of consideration.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, members of the '60s scoop survivors association and others, including members of this place, have raised ongoing concerns about the treatment of children in care. That has obviously been a point of great concern for the government and the Legislature through the special Legislature committee that spent well over a year studying this. [Noises in the gallery] I would like to ask the Premier if she would care to update us on the progress of implementing the recommendations of the Legislature committee on children in care.

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, our minister of children and families, the Member for Lesser Slave Lake, has been working in a very focused way to move forward with those recommendations. There were a number of very meaningful and substantial recommendations that came from the all-party committee, some of which have short implementation horizons and some of which we need to work on for years and years to come. But we are very committed to moving forward with those recommendations and ensuring that we fund them appropriately so

that we can get at the root causes of many of these concerns that continue with us today.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The second main question.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure, through you to our visitors in the gallery, that we understand if they will absent themselves. I know that all members would look forward to meeting with them afterwards, but the work of democracy continues.

Provincial Response to Pipeline Opposition

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, in three days we face the possible cancellation of the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain pipeline expansion project. I'm wondering if the Premier could update the House on whether there are any developments to give us cause for optimism in this respect.

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, our government has been clear that there is one outcome – and one outcome only – that is acceptable to the people of Alberta, and that outcome is that construction resumes on schedule this summer and that uncertainty is removed and that that pipeline to tidewater is built. It is fundamentally important, obviously, to the people of Alberta and to the energy industry across this country and, frankly, to investment in all sectors across the country of Canada. We are committed to getting it done.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I obviously agree with the hon. the Premier about the importance of this project and thank her for her hard work on this file, but my question was on whether there are any tangible signs of optimism.

Mr. Speaker, the government announced its intention to introduce turn-off-the-taps legislation four months ago and then reinforced that in the throne speech in March. When will that legislation become effective?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

2:20

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, on the matter of tangible signs, I did forget to mention in answer to the last question that we were very pleased last week when the proponents of the project won not one but two legal decisions at the B.C. Supreme Court, once again supporting the work of everybody who's been working towards getting the pipeline moving forward and doing their due diligence to approve it after considering all the necessary information. That was good news.

Generally speaking, with respect to Bill 12 we will move forward on that at the time that is most strategic, representing the interests of Albertans.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the Premier decided not to attend the Western Premiers' Conference last week. Why did she not see it as an opportunity on behalf of the Alberta government to look across the table at Premier Horgan and indicate that Alberta will indeed turn off the taps unless we have absolute legal certainty that the government of British Columbia stops its strategy of death by delay through obstruction? Why did she miss that opportunity, and why is this legislation not yet coming into force?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I said in advance of the Western Premiers' Conference, it struck us as quite surreal and quite tone deaf to spend two days to go to a meeting to talk about how to spend money, albeit on very good projects, as opposed to staying back in Edmonton and doing the hard work of ensuring that we have the capacity to earn the money that would pay for those important programs like, for instance, pharmacare. That was the message that we delivered, and it was delivered extremely articulately by the Deputy Premier, and I want to . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, Madam Premier.

Third main question.

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I've said before, a threat is only effective if the other side of the table believes that the threat will be used. Premier Horgan walked away from his meeting with our Premier and the Prime Minister several weeks ago in Ottawa saying that he was given assurances, effectively, that he didn't have to worry about this threat. Given that there are only three days left, when will the government bring Bill 12 into effect? When will they actually follow through on the threat to turn off the taps to defend our vital economic interests?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, to be very clear, at no time has the Premier of British Columbia ever been assured by anyone that has any line of sight into my strategies that they needn't be worried about Bill 12 being implemented. Let me be perfectly clear. They are fully aware that that is an issue, and they are fully seized of the matter. That being said, we are not in the business of jumping out of a plane without first checking to see if the parachute is in place, and more importantly we only do it when we're over the place we want to be. We will be very strategic, we will be very thoughtful about how we implement this bill, and when it is necessary, we'll let the member opposite know.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm simply quoting the Premier of British Columbia, who said, following that meeting, quote: Alberta didn't necessarily think they were going to act on Bill 12. It seems that the government of British Columbia has called our bluff, and that's why they have not downed tools on their death-by-delay strategy. How many billions of tax dollars is the Premier prepared to risk in her offer to buy the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, I think that implicit in that question is the notion that now the member opposite is not actually interested in Albertans investing in Albertans' futures in one fashion or another, yet previously the member was in favour of that. I guess he's only in favour of it when it's the government investing in Ontario jobs, to spend \$9 billion rescuing the auto industry. Let me be clear that the principles are these: we will get the pipeline built, and we will ensure certainty and we will ensure value for Albertans in whatever strategy we adopt.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, to correct the hon. the Premier, implicit in that question was that the Official Opposition and the people of

Alberta are not prepared to give the NDP a blank cheque to clean up the political mess that they have created.

Mr. Speaker, is there any sense of fiscal limits in the government's negotiations with Kinder Morgan, or are they so desperate – so desperate – to dig themselves out of this terrible hole that they're giving Kinder Morgan a blank cheque in these negotiations?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. One thing I can say for sure is that we won't write a \$9 billion cheque on behalf of Ontario workers. But even though the member opposite seems more concerned about them than Alberta workers, what we will do is that we will move forward with very key principles in place, absolute value for money for Albertans. They need to make money off this. Moreover, we will move forward to ensure that there is certainty on construction and ultimate completion. At the end of the day, this is about standing up for Albertans, standing up for our energy industry, and making sure that we're better off than we were before.

The Speaker: Calgary-South East.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We all know that facts matter, and for many Albertans the fact that matters the most is that we still don't have any certainty on the future of the Trans Mountain expansion. The reality on the ground is that spending on the project is still suspended, and we're days away from the project being abandoned entirely. Despite all that, this government seems quite confident that they'll succeed on this file. To the Premier: without revealing any more details about the negotiations with Kinder Morgan, can you assure this House that the matter will be resolved by the May 31 deadline?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, what I can assure this House is that this government will never stop fighting to make sure that this pipeline gets built and that, in fact, it will get built. I can tell the member opposite that we are working very hard every day to get this matter across the finish line. We are cautiously optimistic. In fact, I'd go beyond that. We're reasonably confident that we are going to meet the deadlines the member opposite referenced. In any event, we are absolutely sure that we will fight as hard as we need to fight at exactly the right time to get this pipeline built for Albertans.

Mr. Fraser: Well, another place where facts matter is in the courts. B.C. is currently bringing a court challenge over Bill 12, and this government may have given them the ammunition they need to win that challenge. It's a fact that a law can't specifically target the economic prosperity of another province, and while Bill 12 doesn't specifically name British Columbia, it's also a fact that the Minister of Energy said in public, "We're going to be introducing legislation shortly which will inflict pain on British Columbia." To the Premier: why would your government expose Bill 12 to a constitutional challenge just for the sake of political points?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, as the member opposite probably knows, the courts will interpret a bill on the basis of what is in the bill. The bill is very clear that the purpose of moving forward on it is to ensure that we maximize the return for Albertans in the way that is best possible. It could include a whole range of options, all of which are allowed for in the bill. That is the way that we will go forward, in a strategic way to ensure that we get the best price possible for Albertans at the right time.

In addition, when it comes to the courts, as I mentioned to the other member, we just won two cases last week. You know, that's a good thing.

Mr. Fraser: Well, we know for a fact that the federal government is able to exercise their authority on things it believes are in the national interest. We only have to look at how they've pledged to impose a carbon tax on provinces that don't come up with their own. In light of that, it's confusing and concerning that they've been so reluctant to exercise their authority on the approval and construction for an interprovincial energy project. Again to the Premier. Minister Morneau is going to be in Calgary this Wednesday, and we all hope that he brings good news to share. What is your government prepared to do if the federal government refuses to put their full support behind this project?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, we have a number of tools that we are very ready to use to ensure that the folks who have the authority to do the thing, to get the pipe built, use their authority and that the thing happens and that the pipe is built. We are looking at all the various people who have a role in that, whether we're talking about the government of British Columbia, whether we're talking about Kinder Morgan, whether we're talking about the federal government. We will always fight for Albertans, we will stand up to defend this province on any front, and you can count on us making sure that this pipeline will get built.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

'60s Scoop Apology

Mr. Hinkley: Mr. Speaker, this afternoon we witnessed a historic apology and acknowledgement of the wrongdoings committed towards indigenous people by the past governments in this province. I've heard from survivors in my constituency about the damage that the '60s scoop caused, and their stories are heartbreaking. To the Deputy Premier: why was this so important, that our government make this apology, and why did it take so long?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. This apology is an important part of truth and reconciliation, and our government wanted to ensure that we got it right. That's why we worked closely with the Sixties Scoop Indigenous Society of Alberta to plan the engagement that led to this apology. As survivors themselves their goal was to raise awareness about the '60s scoop and support other survivors in Alberta. Their members and especially their president, Adam North Peigan, have shown strong leadership and courage, and we thank them for their wisdom and guidance throughout this process.

2:30

Mr. Hinkley: Mr. Speaker, given that thanks to the advocates and survivors sharing their stories, Albertans are more aware of the impacts of the '60s scoop and why it was so important to apologize, to the same minister: how did you get input from the survivors to ensure that this apology was meaningful to the survivors and their families?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you. Again, I really want to thank SSISA for their work that they've done to help us get to this point. Together we conducted six engagement sessions across Alberta, and we heard from hundreds of survivors about the impact of the '60s

scoop. The purpose of the engagement was to listen to survivors, to gain a deeper understanding of their diverse lived experiences, and to empower survivors through respectful and inclusive engagement to inform a meaningful apology and a meaningful day rather than just a few seconds of apology. This has been really, I think, a very powerful day, especially for people of indigenous heritage, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Hinkley: Mr. Speaker, given that this apology is only a first step and given that we know it cannot be the only step in the path to reconciliation, again to the Deputy Premier: what are you doing to ensure that this work continues long after the apology today?

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, hon. member. To you and other members of the Assembly who, I know, have a deep connection to this issue and this history: I really want to commend you for your advocacy and recognize that it's just one step in truth, reconciliation, and healing. Our government is also implementing training for the Alberta public service staff to learn about treaties and residential schools and antiracist education for employees of Alberta Health Services. We're revamping the curriculum so that Alberta students learn about indigenous history and contemporary indigenous issues, including the residential school legacy and the '60s scoop legacy. We're working with indigenous communities to co-operate and cocreate an action plan . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Diversity-related Tax Credits

Mr. Fildebrandt: Buried in the government's agenda is a policy that will mandate gender and racial quotas for businesses in the private sector if they wish to qualify for tax credits. The plan is to take taxes from people and businesses and give some of it back to them only if they hire a proportion of groups designated by the NDP to be worthy. Everyone I know in the private sector hires and fires on the basis of merit only. A business owner's prejudices would only hurt their bottom line. Does the government believe that Albertans are so prejudiced and hateful that quotas are necessary in the private sector?

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know what? I'm quite proud of the work that our government has been doing to promote diversity and inclusion in the workplace and in the private sector and the public sector. I'm proud that in Bill 2 there is an opportunity to try to encourage people from underrepresented groups to participate more fully in sectors where they traditionally haven't. Quite frankly, I'm curious to know why the member doesn't believe that we should be encouraging diversity as opposed to restricting it.

Mr. Fildebrandt: You don't lift someone up by putting somebody else down, Mr. Speaker.

Given that governments and political parties have long engaged in racial and gender quotas as a way to appear politically correct because government has the resources to hire on a basis other than merit but the private sector does not – the linchpin of government mandating equality of outcomes over equality of opportunity is the neo-Marxist world view that society is a strata of groups and not free individuals – does the government believe that people's group identities should trump their value as individual, free people?

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, I'm proud of the work that our government has done on a number of different fronts to support and promote the participation of those especially that are part of underrepresented groups. You know, our investor tax credit would have a diversity top-up, something that doesn't exist in other jurisdictions, in order to promote participation of those underrepresented groups, similarly with our digital media tax credit. This is widely celebrated and was asked for by industry when we were designing these programs to ensure that we are promoting inclusion and diversity.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks, I encourage you to remember the rule about preambles if you would, please.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Given, Mr. Speaker, that privilege exists but in a different way than many members here might believe – some are born into wealth and health and functional families, but the human condition often only gives us two out of these three – and given that someone born into a poor, broken family in a Strathmore trailer park but who happens to not meet some of the identity groups identified by the government is not privileged, does the government believe that the way to build opportunity for the underprivileged is to lump them together into racial and gender groups?

The Speaker: The Minister of Service Alberta and Status of Women.

Ms McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government recognizes that there are intersectional factors that affect some particular groups more than others. In Alberta we have the largest gender wage gap in Canada. This is unacceptable, and we must do better. There are grassroots organizations across the province working very hard to ensure that people of diverse backgrounds, including women and other minorities underrepresented in the STEM fields in particular, have a fighting chance. That's what this does. It was asked for by the business community. Quite frankly, it's shocking that we would see anyone speaking against something that works towards improving the outcomes for women in this province.

Premier's Former Chief of Staff's Consulting Contract

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, last fall the NDP quietly rehired John Heaney, former chief of staff to the Premier, just weeks after he tendered his resignation to return to B.C., where he still resides. According to his contract he barely even came off the government payroll, quietly transitioning directly into the role of executive adviser to the ministers of Energy and Finance, earning over \$130,000 a year. Mr. Heaney is currently the subject of an ongoing investigation by the Privacy Commissioner for political interference. To the Premier: do you honestly not see any ethical issues with Mr. Heaney's continued employment?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To address this question and to unpack some of it, let me just say that after leaving his position as the chief of staff for the Premier, Mr. Heaney was retained as the executive adviser to both the Energy minister and myself. He's been tasked with providing legal advice related to pipelines and market access, working specifically on the Trans Mountain pipeline to make sure we get that expansion to tidewater and assisting me on our path to balance, which was new this year from this government.

Mr. Cooper: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that in addition to being the subject of a political interference investigation, Mr. Heaney is also a registered lobbyist in B.C. and given that the code of conduct for political staffers states that employees may not engage “in any business or undertaking other than his or her employment with the government” and given that Mr. Heaney registered to lobby for a B.C. client in January 2018, months after the new contract started, can the Premier please explain why she would allow this blatant violation of the code of conduct?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The contract that is referenced here also comes with an exemption to work outside of government. Again, there’s mudslinging from that side with no relevance at all. Mr. Heaney is on contract with the government of Alberta. As such, he’s not permitted to lobby government members or employees of the government of Alberta.

Mr. Cooper: Special rules for the government.

Given that Mr. Heaney has quietly been working for your administration since October despite very publicly resigning from his position as the chief of staff to the Premier to, according to the *Calgary Herald*, spend more time with his family, to the Premier: did your office deliberately mislead Albertans when it announced Mr. Heaney’s resignation, or did misleading Albertans happen accidentally?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. When structuring the addendum to Mr. Heaney’s contract, we actively sought the advice of the Ethics Commissioner of Alberta. Of course, we’re happy to follow up with any further information the commissioner requires. We have been complying with the Privacy Commissioner on the FOIP investigation, and we’re happy to provide information there as well.

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, during the Energy estimates debate the minister indicated that she added a staff member to deal with things like the off-coal agreements, the coal-to-gas conversions, the electricity price gap, renewable electricity, the transition to the capacity market, the methane reduction strategy, and output-based allocations. My question to the Premier: who is the real Minister of Energy, the MLA for Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley or the B.C. NDP Premier’s best friend John Heaney?

2:40

Ms Hoffman: Really nice to see the new tone that’s been set under the new leadership here in the Official Opposition.

I have to say that I am so proud of the strong women on the front bench in this government. We have some pretty great guys, too, but we have strong women leading on important files. Of course, the Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley is the minister. She’s doing a tremendous job. No government has ever been as close to accessing new markets and tidewater as this government with this Minister of Energy, and I couldn’t be more proud of her work, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Panda: Given, Mr. Speaker, that the Premier’s director of communications said that John Heaney has been tasked with providing legal advice in spite of not being registered here in Alberta for giving legal advice and given that another NDP lawyer, Joseph Arvay, who handled the PPA lawsuits for the NDP, is now fighting against Alberta, defending B.C. on Bill 12, Premier, are

you and John Horgan channelling Cicero and crafting some real political theatre that only serves to . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, I’m so proud of the work that this government has done to make sure that we are moving forward on construction of line 3 moving to the east and, of course, getting a pipeline to tidewater. Members opposite like to talk about the progress they made. Let me tell you that a pipeline to Jasper is not a pipeline to tidewater. This side of the House is going to get that job done. This side of the House is making sure we’re moving forward to ensure that people get the jobs and the economic benefits that come with those and that we continue to invest in the people of this province instead of mudslinging like the members opposite.

Mr. Panda: Given, Mr. Speaker, that John Heaney returned to Victoria to be with his family in August 2017 but that this new contract was inked in October 2017, less than two months after his departure from the Premier’s office, can the Premier confirm or deny that John Heaney has been working for the Minister of Energy and the Minister of Finance from home in Victoria, B.C., this whole time?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, the opposition couldn’t find tidewater if they were standing on the pier in Victoria. This side of the House is employing the appropriate people to ensure that we get the job done, and we won’t be lectured by people who had nine years in government in Alberta and nine years in government in Ontario at the same time to make sure that they could have gotten this project done. We’re working hard here in Alberta. We’re working hard in B.C. Feel free to spend your time in Ontario, but this side of the House is getting results, and we’re going to get that pipeline.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the Member for Calgary-Foothills just asked the Minister of Energy about the terms of the contract with Mr. Heaney, the Premier’s former chief of staff. She didn’t even pretend to try to answer the question. She offered a typical partisan rant instead. So let’s come back to the issue because hopefully the government understands that it has to be accountable to taxpayers. How much is this contract for, when was it signed, and where has Mr. Heaney been working from?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The annual sunshine list is due to be released in late June. Mr. Heaney’s contract took effect this past February. There hasn’t been a sunshine list released in that time, but it will be released in June. He has been giving us advice on the Trans Mountain pipeline, he has been in consultation with Energy, and he has been in consultation with members of Treasury Board and Finance. We have done a number of things to make that happen to get his advice.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, did Mr. Heaney receive a severance payment from the government of Alberta after his termination as chief of staff to the hon. the Premier?

Ms Hoffman: You know what? Fair question, Mr. Speaker. I know that under Conservative governments in this province, many times people did get insane severance payments. What we did in our government is that we haven’t been writing those kinds of contracts that have those kinds of nice victory lap, gold-plated pension plans that pay out, like Conservatives did in this province many, many times. Mr. Heaney left his position of his own volition. He has taken a different position in an advisory capacity, and we thank him for

the work he's doing because – you know what? – it's going to get us a pipeline.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I'm listening with the earpiece to try to get every word here, but I think I still missed an answer to the question, which was whether Mr. Heaney, the Premier's former chief of staff, received a severance payment after he left the Premier's office. Let me ask the question a third time just for the sake of absolute clarity. Did Mr. Heaney receive a severance payment from the government of Alberta after he left the Premier's office, and if so, how much was it?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, severance, I believe, is what happened many, many times under the Redford government and many other governments when people were fired. Mr. Heaney left of his own volition. He did not get terminated. Certainly, we respect the fact that he wanted to spend more time with his family and still wants to serve. He quit that position. My understanding is that he did not receive any severance. If that's not the fact, I will make sure that I correct the record. He quit instead of being fired, like we saw with many scandals under the former government. That certainly wasn't the case here in the province of Alberta. We respect the fact that he chose to leave, and he did so of his own volition.

Champion Lakes Wildfire

Mr. Westhead: Mr. Speaker, residents of the MD of Foothills, Rocky View county, and the hamlet of Bragg Creek are concerned about a wildfire that started over the weekend near the McLean Creek provincial recreation area. To the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry: can you please update residents on the status of this fire?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. Wildfires are often scary events, and we empathize with residents in the member's constituency that are currently facing these issues. This wildfire has been named the Champion Lakes wildfire and is currently about 100 hectares in size. While it is moving slowly, Alberta Wildfire is taking this fire very seriously. It is currently the number one provincial priority for the wildfire management branch, and the province has dispatched many resources to manage it as best we can. There is no immediate threat to the town of Bragg Creek, but I urge all residents of the area, including rural residents, to be vigilant and use all information resources available.

Mr. Westhead: Given that residents are concerned about their safety and property and given that the conditions continue to be quite dry, to the same minister: can you tell us what resources you've committed to this fire?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Member. This is our number one priority right now, and we have put substantial assets into fighting the fire and protecting communities and property. In addition to air tanker support we have dispatched dozens of firefighters, eight helicopters, and many pieces of heavy equipment. The office of the fire commissioner has also dispatched a wildland urban interface structural protection team. We'll continue to monitor the situation and are working with local officials to ensure that we're doing what we can to protect the member's constituents.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the wildfire risk is very high and given that many communities across the province have had tragic experiences with wildfire, what is the government doing to prepare communities for the threat of wildfire and to prevent fires from starting in the first place?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member. We all know that we need to do our best to prevent wildfires. It helps to focus resources and stop the threat from happening in the first place. That's why last week we instituted a fire ban in many parts of the province to further attempt to prevent fires. It is the same reason we amended the Forest and Prairie Protection Act, to give officers more tools to discourage risky behaviour and restrict the use of items like incendiary targets and other high-risk products. We've also been working with communities through the FireSmart program and have tripled investment in that program so that communities can undertake planning, manage fuel and education, and perform other preparedness activities.

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

NDP and Pipeline Development

Mr. Gottfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government remains steadfastly committed to a punitive carbon tax. Part of this devotion arises from the false belief that it has or will grant social licence, yet we have NDP Premier John Horgan continuing to unlawfully obstruct an approved project and federal NDP leader Jagmeet Singh saying that the approval process was rigged, the science was ignored, and that it is clear that the pipeline should not be built. To the Premier: how can you continue to believe in your so-called social licence when you can't even convince your own fellow travellers to support Canadian pipelines?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we developed a made-in-Alberta plan rather than an Ottawa-imposed plan, and we're very proud of that. I wish the opposition would quit cheering for us on a number of fronts to fail. The reality is that we are winning the hearts and minds of not just people in B.C. but, in fact, in Canada. Make no mistake. This pipeline is going to be built, and it's going to be built because of our climate leadership plan.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Gottfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that in 2016, amid opposition observations that the NDP social licence wasn't working, the Premier said, and I quote, that that's just wrong and it's also quite silly, and given that today we see yet more prominent NDP politicians openly opposing pipelines than in 2016 despite pipelines generating significant dollars for public treasuries, something spendthrift NDP leaders should be most conscious of given their proven inability to control government spending, again to the Premier: how can you maintain that social licence is working when your own party is leading the charge against Alberta's constitutional rights?

2:50

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I'm very proud of the leadership our Premier has shown on this and indeed many of my colleague ministers. We know that \$40 million a day

is being left out of our economy here in Canada because of the lack of capacity, and that's money that could be spent on roads, hospitals, schools, and a lot of programs that all of us in this House would agree are important. This climate leadership plan has gotten us the approvals, and the work we're doing is going to continue. We are going to get that pipeline built.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess on Thursday we hope the answer is a positive one.

Given that this government remains steadfast in its belief in social licence despite mounting evidence that your plan has failed and given that the minister of economic development stated in April 2016, "We've also introduced the most robust climate leadership plan in the country that . . . will get the social licence to get pipelines approved and our product to tidewater," again to the Premier: why are Albertans still paying an all-economic-pain, no-environmental-gain carbon tax, that has clearly failed to get a so-called social licence to build much-needed pipeline capacity?

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member for the question. I'll walk him briefly down memory lane. It was the work that the Premier and the Minister of Environment and Parks did building our climate leadership plan, which is something that we're very proud of, which led to the Prime Minister giving approval of several pipelines, including the Trans Mountain pipeline. I would argue, in fact, that the climate leadership plan has been successful. At the same time, we're showing that the economy and the environment go hand in hand. We're working very closely with industry across sectors to ensure that Alberta continues to remain the best place to invest and to do business, and we will continue to fight on behalf of businesses to ensure that there is economic prosperity shared by all Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Carbon Levy Revenue Utilization

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. "Every penny raised by the carbon levy will be rebated back to Albertans or put back to work for our economy in new economic initiatives." That was the Premier in 2016 attempting to pass off her job-killing carbon tax as revenue neutral. Albertans weren't fooled in 2016, and they aren't fooled now. To the Premier: why did you mislead Albertans when you said that the carbon tax was revenue neutral?

Mr. Ceci: Mr. Speaker, the carbon levy that is part of the climate leadership plan is reinvested back into Alberta through a number of mechanisms. Rebates that Albertans get are one mechanism, and innovation investment is another. Those companies that need to turn over their coal-fired generating plants to gas fired: that's another way it's getting reinvested. We're doing the job that Albertans need to reduce GHGs, and we'll continue to do that. I just wish that they would get onboard with believing in climate change and things like that. They don't seem to. Lookit, they're totally . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Barnes: Given that when their ally Justin Trudeau raises the carbon tax to \$40, then \$50 in 2023, and who knows after that, the NDP will direct all carbon tax revenue into general revenue and given that a carbon tax is a tax on everything and a PST is a tax on

everything, a carbon tax is regressive and a PST is regressive, Albertans don't want a carbon tax and Albertans don't want a PST – Albertans are having trouble understanding the difference – to the minister: what is the difference between the two taxes?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. We have been fully upfront every step of the way. We've said that up to \$30: those monies will go back to Albertans, be reinvested into the various programs I mentioned in the answer to the first question. After that, you know, it's contingent on the Trans Mountain pipeline being under construction and built and finished and all that sort of thing and delivering product to the coast. Those monies that come as a result of the federally imposed increase to the carbon levy will go to bring us closer to back to balance and reduce the deficit.

Mr. Barnes: So it is a PST.

Given that specific estimates vary but the consensus is that a provincial sales tax would raise around \$1 billion for every percentage point and given that last year the government raised over a billion dollars in revenue from the carbon tax – the difference is that a carbon tax allowed the NDP to skirt the law and forgo a referendum – to the minister: why won't you be straight with Albertans, admit the carbon tax is just a ploy to circumvent the law, and call a referendum to scrap the carbon tax?

Mr. Ceci: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure where the talking points from that side are coming from. What we are doing is addressing GHGs with regard to the carbon levy and the climate leadership plan that is in this province. We have been clear. We're not bringing in a sales tax or a PST. We haven't done anything to make that happen. That side seems to want to talk about PSTs. Well, then bring in a platform. Put it in your platform that you don't seem to provide, that you don't give us in terms of a shadow budget. No shadow budget from anyone on that side. Where are your thoughts? Where are your abilities?

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Mountain Pine Beetle

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pine beetles are threatening 15 million acres of Alberta's forests, putting \$8 billion of pure pine stands at risk as well as the operations of major forest companies. We must contain this infestation because Alberta is the final barrier before the beetle begins a devastating march across Canada. To the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry: what do the preliminary results show about the survival rate of the pine beetle from this long, hard winter?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the very important question. This past year there was indeed a survey. Those results are still being compiled, still being analyzed, and will be available later this summer. I'll be happy to share with the member once those results are available. It's important to note that this goes a long ways to ensure that we have all the necessary tools we need in our tool box to continue this fight with the pine beetle. The member is absolutely correct. This is the western front for the battle with the pine beetle, a battle we've been fighting for some years and currently are able to keep on top of.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the mountain pine beetles are on a rampage through Jasper national park, which means the Hinton area is their next feeding ground, and given that if the beetles survived this winter, just one day of strong summer winds could transport millions of them into the foothills east of Jasper, to the same minister: what progress are you making in convincing the federal government to help battle the beetle infestation in Jasper national park?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and the member for the important question. You know, the province has had a very aggressive management strategy throughout the years when it was very bad in the northeast in 2006 and 2009. We have seen a 50 per cent decline in the number of affected trees, so the programs we have in place are necessary. The member is correct. In the Hinton area now it is the worst in the province. About 50 per cent of all the control we're doing now is in that area. We'll continue working with the communities. We've had grant programs to Hinton, to Whitecourt, Canmore, and other areas to ensure that those communities as well do what they can.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Second supplemental.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the province has announced funding for suppressing pine beetles discovered on municipal land and in the Hinton area due to the infestation occurring next door to Jasper national park and given that the vast majority of the pine forests in that area are actually on provincial Crown land, to the same minister: what is your government's containment plan for beetles that appear on Crown land in this critical area?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely, it continues to be important working with all our stakeholders, including the communities, including the forest industry. It's important to note that those stakeholders have played a big role over the years in helping to combat this pest. It is about combatting this pest. We're probably not going to get rid of the beetle, but we can, with proper management, control. The province has allocated again this year \$25 million to do just so. Even though it is a threat, it is an imminent threat to our communities, to our forest industry, I do believe that this government is on the right track to do what we can to make sure that we control the pest.

The Speaker: Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Carbon Levy and Methane Regulations

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Every day Albertans are forced to pay the carbon tax just to go to work and heat their homes in a failed attempt to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. On top of that, methane regulations can have serious impacts on some of Alberta's biggest employers, potentially impacting future job creation. On May 17 the Minister of Energy claimed that they've had talks back and forth with their federal counterparts on methane regulations. To the minister: what assurances have you received that Alberta will be able to continue to regulate its own jurisdiction?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, protecting jobs for our oil sector in Alberta has been job number one for us and a top priority. We've engaged them, as I mentioned, along with other stakeholders to develop a made-in-Alberta plan to deal with methane, and that's exactly what we've done. The draft regulations have been open for 30 days to the public and to industry, and we look forward to seeing that feedback and working towards our final regulations.

3:00

Mr. van Dijken: Given, Mr. Speaker, that the true effect of the carbon tax would be measured by the amount of emissions being reduced in Alberta and given that information does not seem to be available anywhere and that baseline and scientific measurements are not being reported and given that the carbon tax has clearly failed to result in shovels in the ground for a pipeline, contrary to this government's claims, to the minister: why won't this government stop punishing everyday Albertans and scrap this all-pain, no-gain carbon tax?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Nothing could be further from the truth. We've worked with industry from day one on a number of matters, whether it was the royalty review, climate leadership plan, methane, any number of issues, and we continue to do that. We have a great relationship with our industry. We understand that we need to be competitive, but we also understand that we need to deal with climate, and that's why we have a very robust climate leadership plan that's guiding us in all of those matters.

Mr. van Dijken: Given, Mr. Speaker, that just over two years ago the Minister of Economic Development and Trade stood here and said that the carbon tax would, quote, get the social licence to get our product to tidewater and given that the federal Liberal government has failed to deliver on their promise to assert federal jurisdiction on the pipeline against B.C.'s obstruction, why is this government still forcing Albertans to go along with Ottawa's 67 per cent carbon tax increase?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, we have a plan that's made in Alberta rather than made in Ottawa and imposed from Ottawa. We're going to continue with that. But I would challenge the opposition: we hear nothing from your side on a number of matters. We don't see a platform. We don't know where you stand on anything. All you do is complain about the climate leadership plan, but we hear zero from you. Looking forward to hearing it soon.

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

Classroom Improvement Fund

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Class size is important. Parents want to make sure that there are appropriate supports in the classroom to ensure that their children get the best education possible. I've heard that the classroom improvement fund is supposed to help with this. To the hon. Minister of Education: what are some of the best ways that you've seen this funding being spent in the classroom?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we've seen lots of innovation around the province. For example, in Fort Saskatchewan they hired reading specialists, and they can see a measurable increase in improvement for young children within even the first year. That's why we were glad to put it back in this year as well. In Calgary we saw the Calgary board of education focus on math, hiring math specialists. Again, we can see lots of progress taking place there. So you put the money into the classroom, you make sure you invest responsibly, working with teachers and parents, and results will happen.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I understand that there are some changes to the funding being provided this year. What can the \$77 million classroom improvement fund now be spent on?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This year we realized from the last year that the best way that you can invest is to have teachers and support staff in the classrooms in front of kids, so we have \$77 million in the classroom improvement fund this year focusing on hiring teachers and support staff. We expect to see more than 450 new positions as a result of the classroom improvement fund this year.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I've heard from teachers how beneficial this program is, but I've also heard some concern from the ATA about whether the funding is permanent. Again to the same minister: are you looking to make this a permanent funding arrangement?

Mr. Eggen: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, when you are making a study of a phenomenon, you look for patterns. We have delivered four budgets in a row for education that have funded for increased enrolment across the province. I'm very proud of that. We saw how great this classroom improvement fund is in the first year. Now we're putting it back in for the second year. I have to go back to my caucus and cabinet and Premier, but I can show definable scientific results that we are improving education here in the province of Alberta.

The Speaker: Hon. members, in 30 seconds we will continue.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

Official Opposition Leader

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans like politicians who say what they mean and who mean what they say. They like straight shooters, leaders who they can respect even if they don't agree with everything that they stand for. What they don't like are leaders who talk out of both sides of their mouths. One of these Albertans is a former Wildrose member and activist. This is what he had to say in a letter that he wrote to me recently.

I'm thoroughly disgusted with [the Leader of the Official Opposition]. He and the UCP MLAs are being paid by us people to conduct the province's business. Yet they walk out whenever they don't like an NDP motion. That's like an employee of a

supermarket walking out if a lousy song comes over the public address system. We pay them to work, not to walk.

I'm also disgusted with [the Leader of the Official Opposition's] flip-flopping about grass roots support. He's proven that he uses his members for his own ends, not to make Alberta a better place for all. He made a big show about letting the grass roots members make policy and then he acts like an old style politician and claims his is the final decision. I'd snap his pen in half if I could.

Remember too that most of the grass roots support came to Brian Jean. [The Leader of the Opposition] parachuted in and won the leadership race with his big donor money. Now he's repaying them by behaving like the old boys of the PC days. This isn't what I supported with my 2015 vote.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that this constituent speaks for many who went to Red Deer expecting to be part of a populist grassroots movement and then found out that the new UCP is the same top-down, big-money-dominated party they left the PCs for being. If this is how this new party is starting out, where will they end up? Who knows? What I know is that if Albertans want a government that has taken big money out of politics and that makes the tough choices necessary to secure our continuing future prosperity and can be trusted to stand up for regular Albertans and the services they depend on, there is one clear choice, and that is our NDP government.

Finally, I'd like to thank this honest and frank constituent for his letter. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Provincial Intergenerational Debt

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, since the Second World War the west embraced the value of permanent progress. The idea that each generation should be better off than its parents can be found at the very core of our economic and political systems. We invest in modern infrastructure, technology, and education because we know it will improve our children's ability to compete and succeed. We value progress because we want to leave more freedom and more opportunity for the next generation.

However, when we finance paying for modern infrastructure, technology, and education through debt by running deficit budgets, we are not leaving our children better off. We are in fact setting them up for failure. Borrowing, once reserved for emergencies, is now being used to fund the day-to-day operations of this NDP government. According to the NDP's most recent financial plans Alberta's budget will not be balanced until at least 2024, at which time the debt will have reached a staggering \$96 billion. That's when the bill really comes due, Mr. Speaker. According to a team of researchers at the University of Calgary Albertans will eventually be forced to shell out \$3.8 billion annually just to cover the interest on this massive pile of debt.

Who will ultimately be responsible for paying for this fiscal mess? According to the researchers our province's young people. A typical 16-year-old in 2023 will be forced to pay an additional \$42,252 over the remainder of his or her life just to cover the interest on the NDP's debt, and according to the U of C's research team those aged 16 to 25 will pay 20 per cent – 20 per cent – of the additional tax compared to just 2.4 per cent for seniors. Today's youth, who were given no democratic voice in this government's reckless and irresponsible spending, will ultimately be stuck with the consequences of today's political decisions, less freedom and less opportunity. That's bad news.

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

Support for Immigrant Women

Ms Woollard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. People in the great constituency of Edmonton-Mill Creek are very aware of the wide range of cultural and ethnic diversity brought to us by people from all around the world moving to Alberta over the years. Many of these newcomer groups often support and help each other as they adapt to their new country and new ways of life. One notable organization is the Indo-Canadian Women's Association, formed in 1984 by a small group of determined, resourceful, and courageous women. I had the privilege of meeting a few of the founders of this group, who described some of the issues that they and other immigrant women were facing when they formed the group. They took it upon themselves at that time to meet weekly and support other women who were struggling in a strange and new landscape.

3:10

The Indo-Canadian Women's Association has grown to be a thriving and well-respected nonprofit in Edmonton, providing evidence-driven, outcome-based services to newcomers and expertise for all who wish to learn about the challenges faced by immigrant women and their families. The organization also works to challenge gender stereotypes and biases, to promote visibility of women, and to be an advocate for uplifting women and celebrating women's achievements.

Another group working to provide support to immigrant women is called Tea Connection. This group focuses on women who are socially isolated and need support to meet people other than their families. The women who attend Tea Connection help each other figure out how to get around Edmonton, practise speaking English, understand how schools here work, and learn what other supports are available. This group provides a secure space for people to develop skills and a safe place to talk about their concerns. For many older immigrant women who do not work outside the home, this is . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Air Ambulance Service in Northern Alberta

Mr. W. Anderson: Mr. Speaker, at various times the Minister of Health has referred to questions on the air ambulance issue as mudslinging, irresponsible, and fake questions. She's also stated that there would be no base location changes and that the contract would only be assigned to a proponent that could secure hangar space. Alberta Health Services issued an air ambulance service update on March 15 stating that it will base one plane in Peace River on the tarmac, exposed to Alberta's unpredictable weather, because the successful proponent does not have a hangar, with a second plane based out of Grande Prairie to service that region. This was followed with an assertion by AHS on March 16 that this was an improvement to patient care. Yet AHS met with the town's representatives on March 15, and according to the town they were, quote, completely blindsided by their plan as they totally contradicted every assurance they gave us. End of quote.

We asked the Minister of Health if she could explain how one plane stationed on the Peace River Airport tarmac is equivalent to the levels of service being provided by the current supplier, being two planes stationed in a fully serviced hangar. No answer. On May 14 this minister stated:

I also want to set the facts straight on some questions that were asked last week. The member said that things were shut down for two and a half hours with regard to an air ambulance. It was [only] 10 minutes. Mr. Speaker, I'm sick of the mudslinging in

this House. If you want to talk facts in improving health care, I'm there. I'm willing to do it with you. I welcome you to the table.

Well, here are the facts. In response to this statement I was informed in an e-mail from the town chief administrative officer that on Saturday, April 29, at approximately 10 a.m. a Can-West plane was stuck in the mud at the airport. The town security cameras captured video of the entire incident. The medics were dispatched at 9:30, and based on AHS's wheels-up requirement, the aircraft should have been in the air by 10 a.m. The aircraft departed after 12 p.m., approximately one hour and 40 minutes late. A second plane had to be brought in. I was further informed that the town has pictures, videos, and e-mails which document both the incident and the efforts to alleviate the situation.

In the words of the town's CEO, this is a ticking time bomb . . .

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

The Member for Edmonton-South West.

Premier and Official Opposition Leader

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now it is my pleasure to rise today to point out a contrast between leaders. I am so proud to sit on this side of the House, where we have a leader that makes promises and sticks by them. On the other side of the House we have a leader who guaranteed that "the policies of the United Conservative Party must be developed democratically by its grassroots members, not imposed by its Leader." I know that I wouldn't buy a car with a guarantee that can be tossed out at the whim of the dealer. And during the PC leadership campaign the leader opposite said that his campaign finances would be disclosed after the contest. Another broken promise. I sure wouldn't trust a financial institution which changed its rules after my money was already in its hands. So we have a pattern.

On this side of the House we have a leader with a different kind of pattern, a pattern of making tough and fair decisions, a pattern of sticking to her guns. When the international price of oil plunged more than 50 per cent, our leader promised to have the backs of Albertans during a difficult economic time. The opposition screamed for cuts and voted against schools and hospitals and roads and jobs for Albertans.

Now, our leader is keeping her promise to support everyday Albertans. We're opening new safe and caring spaces for seniors in their communities; building and modernizing schools across the province, with 20 new school projects scheduled to start this year; protecting women from harassment when accessing legal health care services; enhancing safety in workspaces; creating affordable child care spaces for families; and supporting the fight against rural crime. The list goes on and on, Mr. Speaker.

On this side of the House our promises won't shift in the direction in which the political wind blows. We promise to clean up Conservative waste and corruption, fight for pipelines, and build an economic recovery that will last, Mr. Speaker, and that's exactly what we will continue to do.

Pregnancy Pathways Program for Homeless Women

Mrs. Aheer: For a moment imagine expecting a baby. Now imagine that you live on the street. You don't know where to turn, you don't have any home, no support, you may not have a job or a family, and your only thought is: how am I going to take care of my baby? You would feel completely alone, you feel afraid, you feel ashamed, and you feel like the odds are stacked against you in this seemingly insurmountable situation.

I had the pleasure of meeting with Pregnancy Pathways. They are an amazing, dedicated group assisting vulnerable pregnant women in the city of Edmonton through affordable housing, services co-ordination support, and mentorship. Too often vulnerable women do not access care for essential services, and you might ask: why? It's because of shame and fear that their baby will be taken away from them. Together with community organization partnerships, Pregnancy Pathways works to connect these women with essential mental health and addiction supports, security, prenatal care, life skills, financial literacy, and to connect them to available services to empower them, to give them and their children the best possible start in life. Pregnancy Pathways is supporting five extraordinary women with culturally sensitive resources as they grow to their full potential. One of those resources is the amazing wellness co-ordinator, who during a recent meeting noticed that a client was extremely anxious and was able to perform a smudge ceremony on the spot.

There are approximately 100 homeless pregnant women in Edmonton a year that desperately need the help and guidance of Pregnancy Pathways. This groundbreaking pilot project is making a real-world impact. Pregnancy Pathways has been made possible thanks to the generous support of a variety of donors, and I would encourage all of my colleagues in this House to support this remarkable initiative, like by donating to the Boyle McCauley health centre or the Royal Alexandra hospital.

Thank you.

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to table five copies of a letter I received from a group called the Clearwater Coalition, who have raised two major concerns about water extraction from the Clearwater River by a number of oil and gas companies and also about the long-term impacts of fracking in the area on not only drinking water but on earthquakes.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, I rise to table the requisite number of copies of a petition of thanks and gratitude from the students, staff, teachers, administrators, and parents of Bearspaw Christian School in my riding for "continuing to maintain stable funding through the 2018 Provincial Budget."

Mr. Speaker, I also have other tablings. The first one, by Andrew Khouri, is entitled *Lawsuits Filed Against L.A. County, Lenders over Green Energy Program* and is from the *Los Angeles Times*, April 12, 2018.

The second one, by Kirsten Grind, is from the *Wall Street Journal*, January 10, 2017, and is entitled *America's Fastest-Growing Loan Category Has Eerie Echoes of Subprime Crisis*.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the requisite number of copies of a *Calgary Herald* article from September 2016 titled *Notley Remains Confident 'Social Licence' Will Work*, in which it dismisses the notion the NDP government's strategy to win support for pipelines is failing.

3:20

Orders of the Day

Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

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

Bill 203

Long Term Care Information Act

The Deputy Chair: Are there any amendments, comments, or questions to be offered on this bill? The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to stand up and make some comments and to ask a couple of questions about Bill 203, the Long Term Care Information Act. Having had the experience of looking for an assisted living facility for my mother after she was assessed by a home-care nurse to see that she did in fact qualify for level 4 assisted living, it was an interesting process of trying to figure out what places she qualified for as well as how much it would cost. We did have some help, having that home-care nurse do some advocacy within Alberta Health Services as well as working with my mother's social worker, that deals with her AISH file, but it was a really convoluted system to try and navigate. One of our biggest concerns – this was just a few years ago, when we were starting the process – was how she would be able to afford it.

Not having a lot of experience in actually finding housing for someone who was in need of it – I worked in that field, in long-term care, when I was in my early 20s, so I knew what it looked like from the inside, but I didn't know what that system looked like from the outside – going through living facilities to try and figure out where she qualified to live, because she was a few years shy of 65 and needed intensive care that could not be delivered fully with my mother still staying at home, was a real challenge. That, of course, was, you know, just another step along the way in an entire life of trying to help look after my mom with my two sisters.

When we were trying to figure out places that she would qualify for, there were different places that saw to complex mental health issues, complex addiction issues. We were trying to find a place that would allow her to have more independence but that would allow her to have a better quality of life. At the time my mom was in an apartment that was one storey below ground level, and stairs became very, very difficult for her to traverse on her own. Just to go to the store was becoming a larger and larger challenge as time went on.

When we were looking at different places, it was absolutely impossible to find information about what different facilities were available aside from working within and trying to get information from Alberta Health Services. Even now I can see that going online and trying to figure out how much extra costs can amount to when someone goes to live in assisted living or long-term care is virtually impossible.

There are facilities that say that they do have the allowance to charge more for certain services, whether it's laundry, assistance to and from meals, medication costs, looking after the management of cigarettes. All of these things became a big concern because when someone goes into care and they're on government assistance with their finances, whether it's AISH or whether it's seniors' benefits

income, you are only allowed now – and I think it increased by \$30 under our government – \$315 at the end of the month every month.

To worry about my mom and whether she would be able to meet the needs of her life with \$315 became a massive source of stress, and that was with having the assistance of her three daughters. You know, I've heard a lot more stories now, since being elected, about people basically being impoverished by this because their medications might not be fully covered and that they might need all of these extra costs. I know that my mom has a monitoring device that she wears around her neck every day, and that has an extra cost added to it as well.

When the seasons and the weather change and you only have \$315 at the end of the month every month to try and plan for expenses, whether it's something as simple as deodorant and toilet paper and shampoo and lotion, these things, you know, pile up and make it more difficult for people to have what we would commonly accept as a quality of life that someone, especially as they are aging, should have a right to.

I'm very pleased to see this legislation coming forward. [interjections] I certainly would hope that the members opposite would be as interested in this legislation as I am. Maybe they could keep it down just a little bit, Madam Chair. I'm sorry. I can't hear over them. Okay.

At any rate, it's incredibly difficult to try and find the information for this, so I'm glad that there will be legislation that will compel care providers to be able to provide this for people. You know, it's another complication of aging in our province. It shouldn't be another extra burden on the individual that's going into an assisted living facility or be a burden on the family to try and traverse that all by themselves without any sort of central information gathering. I'm glad that the Member for Red Deer-North is putting this forward. If I could ask her to give us some information on this and on how the bill will address it and perhaps on currently what some of those extra costs are that people are burdened with, I would appreciate just some information from the member about that, please.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

3:30

Mrs. Schreiner: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I thank the member for the question. First of all, I'd just like to thank the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville for bringing forward her story, her experience that she as well as her sisters endured when it came to their mother's care. That's just one story of thousands. Right now there are 15,000 Alberta seniors that are living in roughly 170 institutions all across Alberta that offer long-term care in over 100 communities across our great province. The member brings forward just one story of thousands of stories: here you are living your life, and all of a sudden you get a phone call from a doctor, perhaps your mother's doctor, saying that your mother's health has deteriorated and that maybe you might want to look into long-term care. And there you are, like so many other hundreds and thousands of Albertans: "Where do I go? What do I do?"

I brought this bill forward to be able to address where you would go looking for an easily accessible long-term care website that people can go to and it has all their options. They can look at a community, maybe the community of Fort Saskatchewan, and see what their options are there. Maybe they want to look in the community of Stettler or the community of Red Deer. They can go online, and they can find out all the basic information that would be

pertinent to be able to make the decision as to where to place their mother.

Some of the information that this bill talks about is, of course, the contact information like the address, phone number, and e-mail address. Some of the other information would be how many beds the facility offers. Some people maybe would like to live in a facility that has many different options available in a bigger facility whereas some people might feel more comfortable living in a smaller facility. We each have our own needs, what makes home for us, what makes it special for us.

I want to thank the member for bringing her story forward. Exactly what this bill will do is just outline the different services, what's available in each long-term care facility and auxiliary hospital across our great province. Hopefully, that'll make the hard decision that many of us have to make in our lives a little bit easier.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thanks very much, Madam Chair. I believe we're speaking in general to third reading, and I'm happy to give my comments.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, just to clarify, we're in Committee of the Whole, not third reading yet.

Dr. Swann: Yeah, committee. Sorry.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you.

Dr. Swann: The bill obviously fills a tremendous need in this province. Many of us in our roles as MLAs would be hearing from families and individuals who recognize a need for change and are terrified by either delays or lack of clarity around what the options are, everything from, of course, improved home-care services to hiring personal care attendants, many of whom have questionable training, right to the full gamut of 24-hour, seven-day-a-week nursing care. This is a much needed support to people making these decisions without having to travel the province or to find individuals who have either lived there or worked there and get personal testimonials. It does importantly put this information online.

With over 170 institutions across the province that are providing these kinds of services, it's critical that people have some ability to evaluate what the options are both in terms of the quality of care and in the other amenities that are associated with that particular setting. It provides the basic data, including whether it's public, private, nonprofit, and the type of the facility, what services are provided, the total number of residents, the details of the services, the charges, including extra charges for extra services, how old the institution or service is, and a description of the status of the resident and family council if it exists, which is another great contributor to comfort and understanding of what to expect.

Also, there is the accreditation status. Clearly, if there's anything more common for me to get calls about, it's the accreditation status: what it means, how authentic an accreditation is, whether it has actually been done by people who have themselves appropriate credentials, whether or not it's being done frequently enough, whether it's being done unannounced so that they can actually see how things work when people haven't prepared for the accreditation. I think that's all part of what people are looking for in terms of valid reviews.

I understand that the minister will ensure that information contained in the registry is updated periodically, every six months.

I guess it raises the question of whether client and family evaluation is going to be actually included there. Like with some of the travel websites or some of the other websites – hotels and doctors – where people can register their own personal experience, good and bad, whether those will be part of it is, I think, an important question. There should be no fear of individuals and families registering their evaluation of an experience here because, surely, that's part of what is needed to objectively evaluate what happens there on a day-to-day basis.

Many of these places will never live up to the expectations of individuals and families, but we at least have to be open to the fact that if people have had negative experiences and if a number of people have had negative experiences, the public has a right to know something about those and what the nature of the concerns were, whether it was staff time, whether it was staffing, whether it was attitudes, whether it was language issues that were barriers to appropriate care, whether there were, you know, issues with the physical plant or renovations that were delayed, access to extra supportive services when changes in a person's condition arise. These kinds of stories and anecdotes and experiences should be part of an online – and maybe that's something that hasn't yet been considered, but I hope it will be. This is a very progressive and much overdue opportunity for people and should help significantly in both improving the targeting of individuals and their families to the right place but also in holding those institutions more accountable. With more scrutiny comes more accountability and a higher standard of care; I have no doubt.

I'll certainly be supporting this and appreciate the member for this private member's bill.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

Mr. Taylor: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 203, the Long Term Care Information Act, at Committee of the Whole. This bill seeks to create a publicly accessible online registry to provide information on long-term care facilities in Alberta. You know, our seniors are remarkable. They have given so much to every aspect of this province and serve as pillars of our communities, sources of enormous wisdom and knowledge, and they also make up a group of people in my own life who I'm proud to call friends. I think that bears repeating, that our seniors deserve nothing but excellence as they go into their golden years. They have worked hard to build this province that we all enjoy, and they have paid their dues.

3:40

It is also worth noting that families want to provide for their aging relatives with the best of the best when it comes to a home in which they can retire in peace and comfort. It is their opportunity to give back to their loved ones, so it's understandable that this process can be a daunting task, and unfortunately, as many of us in this Chamber know, it can also be a frustrating task that is fraught with systematic failures on the part of the health care system. The Auditor General has made a variety of recommendations regarding long-term care facilities, which have highlighted long-standing issues such as wait-lists, overcharging, or exceeding allotment of care. In October of 2014 the Auditor General released a report stating that the government needed to work to

- develop a system to periodically verify that facilities deliver the right care every day by implementing individual resident care plans and meeting basic needs of residents.

As of the most recent AG report those recommendations remain unimplemented.

We also know that the wait-lists for long-term care facilities are substantially backlogged and that divorce by nursing home remains a concern for many Albertan families. I have had a number of constituents come to my constituency office at a loss for how to protect their elderly loved ones. I have heard from adult children whose parents required different levels of care and due to this were separated and had to be put into different facilities.

One constituent cried while telling about the stress the separation had caused her parents and the toll that had been taken on their mental health. Her parents had been married for over 50 years and had never slept in different beds until they were separated by the lack of options for long-term care facilities. This also puts an enormous amount of stress on their own marriages and children as they attempt to see both their parents after work every day. This constituent talked about the extreme guilt she felt whenever one left one parent to go to the other, knowing that whoever she left would be lonely. It's a problem. It's a problem that's out there, a problem we need to address, of course.

I was also shocked to hear my colleague from Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo point out the story of Ethel in his constituency, who went to visit her husband of several decades to find out he was in a state of disarray, soiled, and uncomfortable. When she asked why her husband had been left in such a shocking, inhumane state, she was told that her husband had exceeded his allotment of care.

Madam Chair, these instances of what constitute senior abuse are completely unacceptable and should never be allowed to happen. So you can understand my disappointment when instead of this private member's bill being one of substance that can actually address the numerous systematic issues our seniors and families are facing in regard to long-term care facilities in Alberta, as the Member for Red Deer-North brought forward in this piece of legislation, to be honest, this bill is fine, but it's innocuous, and it doesn't rock the boat. I'll vote in favour of it; it just doesn't have a lot of substance. This bill doesn't make any meaningful change. It doesn't solve a problem. It wouldn't make life easier for our seniors and their families.

I am disappointed about this because all of us in this Assembly have a duty to work hard to bring forward legislation that impacts the lives of Albertans for the better. Drawing a private member's bill is a gift. My friend and colleague from Bonnyville-Cold Lake is someone who has had his own private member's bill passed. From my conversations with him he's quite proud of the fact that his bill passed, and he should be. The bill I'm referring to is PMB 202 – I believe that's correct; he's nodding – Protecting Victims of Non-consensual Distribution of Intimate Images Act. This bill has addressed a real problem.

It is truly a remarkable opportunity to make the changes that we need to see here in Alberta, and there are so few private members' bills that actually get to the floor for debate, Madam Chair. There have been so many amazing ideas for legislation that won't be implemented because they weren't high enough on the private member bill draft. It feels like this is such an opportunity, and it has been squandered on solving a problem that was already solved. I remain confused. Instead of addressing one of the numerous real issues facing our seniors, the Member for Red Deer-North chose legislation on an issue that, one, was not a problem that needed fixing and, two, even if it was a problem, could have been implemented through the Department of Health without a

- provide residents with an adequate number and level of staff, every day of their operation [and]

legislative debate, which draws out the timeline for this initiative being implemented.

Mostly, I feel confused by this bill. Now, Madam Chair, I'm happy to be corrected on part of the reason why I'm confused by this bill that will create a website, that will create a registry to provide information on long-term care facilities in Alberta. After 30 seconds or so, if you do a Google search, you can already see that there are two such registries, information pages that already exist through Alberta Health. I found a document entitled List of Publicly Funded Designated Supportive Living Accommodations and Long-term Care Facilities, an open Alberta website, as well as a searchable page with information on supportive and long-term care accommodations in Alberta, which is even broader than the mandate of this bill. So what does this bill do that is not already being done? What will this new registry provide that is not already being provided to Albertan families? I'm happy to admit if I misunderstood and this is a huge problem, but from a simple search it appears that this problem was already solved a long time ago.

I don't understand why we're not legislating on actual issues in this House. I think that if the member felt that this was an issue, she could have worked with the Ministry of Health – I mean, you have that direct access to work with the Ministry of Health – to have it addressed outside the Chamber. The only way that I could see this bill improving the lives of Albertans is if the website is a one-stop shop for Albertans considering moving to a continuing care facility. Since this bill only mandates the creation of a registry of long-term care facilities, namely nursing homes and auxiliary hospitals, without including supportive care facilities and other types of assisted living facilities without long-term care facilities, a potential user of the registry will only have a portion of the information available to them, somewhat defeating the purpose of the registry.

I'll be voting for the legislation, but I would caution my colleagues with future PMBs to ensure that they are using them as a valuable tool and a meaningful way to solve problems for Albertans here in Alberta.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Mrs. Schreiner: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to thank the Member for Battle River-Wainwright for getting up and speaking today. I will say that there are a few things I agree with you on. I very strongly agree that our seniors are indeed very remarkable, and, yes, they have worked hard to make this province the absolute best place in the world to live and to work and to raise a family.

3:50

But some of the language that was used I take offence at, the word "squandered," when it comes to my private member's bill. I have to say that I take this private member's bill very seriously. I have worked in long-term care for my entire adult life. I have worked with seniors, and they mean so much to me. When I have people coming into my office that say, "Can you come to my house because I can't bring my parents here and you need to have a conversation with them? They're looking for long-term care" and I drive to their house, I meet a very lovely couple that have been married for over 70 years and now find themselves where they need long-term care. They're living with a daughter, and they feel guilty living with the daughter because the daughter is working full-time as well as taking care of them. She had been working for five

months to try and find a long-term care facility that would be comfortable for both of her parents.

You talked about a simple search. It is not a simple search, and I hear that over and over and over again from my constituents. I have people that call my office, come into my office as an MLA. But when I worked in long-term care, it broke my heart to see people coming into the long-term care facility just to see what it was about, what you have to offer, because they went online and tried to find that simple search. It is not a simple search. It is very difficult to navigate, and if you don't come from health care, you may not know all of the language and what it means, dementia and level 3 and level 4. It's very complicated, and these people are at a time in their lives where we should be, as legislators, taking care of them. That is why I took this bill very seriously. I wanted to have something that was easy for Albertans, an easily accessible online tool for them to go on and find where would be the best place for them to live out the rest of the days of their lives.

I take offence at some of your language, but this is an actual issue. I quote you as saying that it was not an actual issue. This is an issue. I hear it from my constituents. I had consultations, and I heard over and over again from my constituents not only in Red Deer but surrounding Red Deer. This is something that they've been wanting to do for a very long time. I've reached out to just about every resident and family council in all of Red Deer and met with them to explain about the new act, the Resident and Family Councils Act, as well as my private member's bill. These are people that have just placed their loved ones, a mother or father, into a long-term care facility. They just went through months and months of trying to navigate through this system. They are very happy with the bill.

I just have to say on behalf of all Albertans and our seniors that I am very proud to bring this bill forward. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am very pleased to see this bill, and I do believe that the Member for Red Deer-North should be very proud of it.

I did a little bit of research, and I came up with an article. It's Long-term Health Care: A Look Inside the Often-baffling System. This was written by Theresa Boyle on June 21, 2013. I think that this article, even though it's out of Ontario, does a good job of explaining the struggles for people that are trying to get into seniors' homes. I'm going to go through some of this article to really reflect what an actual person is going through when they're trying to find that nursing home. Now, right off the top it says:

You're turned upside down. This is a priority because in five days' time you have got to choose where your loved one will live for the rest of their life and probably will die. You [will] want to make sure it's the best and that you can advocate for them.

That's quite a statement right there. Let's unpack it. This was by Howard Cohen, and he's actually trying to find a place for his mother. What happened here is that when the hospital decides that you need to go to long-term care, you've got five days in Ontario to find that long-term care. Trying to find a place without online access would be a struggle. In this specific case it's even worse. I have to say that whenever you add layers of burden in order for seniors to be able to find those homes, it's not good for any one of us.

Now, this bill – and I think it's important to touch on – is going on to what it does, and I think we need to describe what this bill is actually trying to do. We'll go through the descriptions here. "Operator name and contact information, including a mailing address and telephone number." What we've got here now is that

we've got a list of institutions, and you can choose the institution that is closest to you. This is important. This is one thing that has come up in my constituency a lot. When you finally made that decision, that one facility in my constituency may not have the spaces. It just might not be there. Right now one of my seniors' facilities has an 80-person wait-list. You can see where that is challenging. So then having facilities around Bonnyville that can take them until they have a space for somebody in Bonnyville is what's important here. Making sure that that senior knows all the options for them is what's important here, making sure that that senior who has made that choice to go into long-term care, because that's a big decision, is provided for.

Now, what we've got here is a "description of the type of operator." For me, I have found through my career, already three years as an MLA, that it can be publicly operated, nonprofit, or privately operated. For myself, so far I have found that there have been flaws in all of them, but there have also been successes with all of them. In my constituency I am very proud of every one of my seniors' homes, each and every one of them, whether they're nonprofit, private, or public, because they are out there doing their job.

On Mother's Day I take my family and I go out and I give a pink rose to all of the wonderful senior ladies at the seniors' homes. It's an opportunity for me to ask each one of those seniors: "What do you think this facility is like? Do you feel you're being treated well? How is it that this facility is meeting your needs?" And you know what? A resounding, incredible reinforcement says: the staff is wonderful; the food is good; they are doing an incredible job. That is success. That is success that I think we can all take home. The problem in my case is finding a facility you can get into. That is the problem.

Going back to this bill, trying to address the fact that we may have some good facilities – we do have excellent facilities out there. We may have poor facilities out there. But, in the end, identifying the facility that best fits you is what we all need to aim towards.

Now, it goes on to "description of the type of facility" and the "total number of residents that may reside at the operator's facility and a description of the intake process for that facility." One thing that I have noticed is that there is confusion on how exactly you can get into the facility. That is one thing that comes into my office. Unfortunately, not all of our seniors are Internet savvy, if you will. They're not able to just go and start clicking stuff, and that, unfortunately, seems to be the place that they need to go in order to get the resources they need. So having a place for them or their family where they can go and see all of this compiled into one spot is probably good for everybody.

Moving on, "details of the services provided at the operator's facility." Let's talk about the different levels. Let's say that your parent has dementia. You found that wonderful facility that is a neighbour. Everybody is talking about how great it is. What if it isn't a 4D? What if it's a 3, right? Or, in some cases, what if it's a 5? It's important to make sure that you identify what facility type your parent, grandparent should be in. Having this listed is actually good for everybody so that we know what they're rated for.

4:00

Now, one thing that is a barrier for most – and this is a really good point – is the accommodation charges payable by residents. If there's extra cost, let's make sure they're aware of it. I think that's a reasonable thing that we can all say, that if we've got a senior that is struggling financially that they're able to know what they're getting into before they get there. And if we have problems – you know what? It is important that if you need to get into a facility and you're having trouble, your MLA will always be there to help you.

I cannot speak for everybody here, but I am sure that no senior will be turned away from an MLA's office.

Now, moving on, the date on which the operator's facility was established. This is important because what we're trying to see is: is the facility new? Is it old? What state is this facility in? What happens is that you may need to have – it gives you an idea of what age and what type of facility. Is it old? Is it new? Is it something that you really would want to live in? I think that's another great point in there.

Description of the status of the resident and family council. Here's something that is saying that if you've got a resident council there, how is it operating? That's the way I understand that one to work out. This is important because we saw in the Lacombe facility, where they didn't have one, that we had a clear, unfortunate breakdown with the Alberta government when it was about taking care of those seniors. I'm not here to put down any of the facilities, but I am saying that there was a breakdown, and it could have been solved by having a very strong resident and family council. So making sure that this is implemented and how involved I think is a great idea.

The accreditation status I think is another good point, which is what I brought up.

The results of the inspections conducted under section 12 of the Nursing Homes Act. Now, this one the member may need to clarify, but what happens here from the way I understand it – and if she can clarify this for me – is that what Alberta Health would do is that they would go in and do an inspection, and if they find any deviation from the rules, they would post that online so that you could find out what infractions they've had and whether they've been corrected or not. If that is the case, I believe this is a great idea because in the end if you've got a seniors' home that has significant infractions that have not been corrected, I want to know about it.

Now, moving on to this article that I was talking about earlier, the long-term health care:

Cohen ...

He's the gentleman that's putting his mother into the institution.

... started to climb what would be a steep learning curve, researching and touring homes. He was perplexed by the disparities, particularly when it came to what the homes had to offer residents with dementia. These same disparities result in some homes having empty beds, while others have [wait times] as long as 14 years.

That's quite lengthy.

He was stunned to discover, he says, that he had been misinformed and given inadequate information about how to select a home by a hospital social worker and a case manager from one of the province's 14 community-care access centres (CCACs), which control entry into LTC homes.

After intense research that involved talking to seniors' advocates and even consulting the Long-Term Care Homes Act, Cohen discovered ...

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to Bill 203, the Long Term Care Information Act. I'd like to thank my colleague the MLA for Red Deer-North for bringing this bill forward and indeed echo her comments earlier regarding the comments from the MLA for Battle River-Wainwright. I found those comments to be in fairly poor taste, especially considering that to suggest that any member's concerns that they are bringing forward from their constituents are not worthy of consideration in this House, that somehow that is

being squandered, that somehow it is not as worthy of consideration and debate as anything else that has been brought forward before this House by members on either side of the aisle is frankly insulting, condescending, particularly considering that the Leader of the Opposition not that long ago, a few weeks ago, took over a private member's bill for the sheer purpose of grandstanding regarding the pipeline, bringing forward a private member's bill that all knew would not pass in this House, and using up an opportunity to perhaps bring forward something, as the MLA who was speaking earlier might have considered, in his words, more substantive.

That said, I'd like to take the opportunity to debate the bill that is before us. Not too long after my election I received a letter from a constituent named Sally. As the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake noted, often when individuals need to select a place for a loved one to go to receive long-term care, this can occur very suddenly. It can occur without much warning. In those situations people can find themselves with a matter of days to review a wide number of facilities and make what may be one of the most important decisions of their life, where their loved one is going to spend the final years of their life in care. Having a codified, online registry, as proposed by the Member for Red Deer-North, could make this a much easier process for families. Indeed, if families have some advance notice, if they're aware of the deteriorating health of a loved one, whether that's mental or physical or perhaps both, they would have that opportunity to be perhaps better informed and better prepared.

Now, when Sally wrote to me, she told me about the circumstances with herself and her husband, who had been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease and Lewy body dementia. She'd been taking care of him for about over a decade at home, and he'd been attending a day treatment program. He was seeing a neurologist, a psychiatrist, a family doctor, and they all gave him clearance to take a vacation with his wife to Mexico in January 2016. It seemed like a great opportunity for them, but two days into that trip he began to fall. He began to show signs that his Lewy body dementia was indeed getting worse. He ended up in a hospital in Puerto Vallarta for 12 days. He received good care there, and eventually their insurance company was able to help them get back to Edmonton. Arriving back in Edmonton, unfortunately, they were caught in the emergency department for a while but were eventually able to move from there into a hospital bed. After evaluation and after having been looked at there, it was determined that he was going to require long-term care.

Now, they faced some challenges there in the system, and I had the chance to meet with Sally and talk through them with her and hear from her directly and to indeed pass her feedback on her experience on to the Minister of Health for consideration. One of the challenges they faced was that indeed they had to make within a number of days a tour of care facilities across the city to evaluate their top choices, to try to find the right place for him, a place where he could stay, where he could receive the care he would need, a place where he would likely spend the remainder of his life. It was incredibly difficult for them. Not only did she and her children have to watch the deterioration of a husband, father, grandfather, but they were also then faced with these challenges of trying to find a place for him to stay and the challenge of having limited information and being put under a good deal of pressure and feeling that they did not have much support in making that decision.

This bill, Madam Chair, provides the opportunity for families to in advance know what is available in the province of Alberta, to know indeed what each of those facilities offers: what type of operator, the facility's capacity, the services that they provide, any

additional charges that might apply, results of any inspections or investigations that might have taken place.

4:10

I know that my colleague consulted considerably on this bill, speaking with Alberta families, speaking with the long-term care facilities themselves, with a number of stakeholder groups to ensure that within the reach of what she was able to within this bill, as a private member, she provided as much substance and indeed action as possible because we recognize, Madam Chair, that not all changes we get to make in this House are major. We don't always get to make the big decisions. A lot of that falls to the hands of the ministers. Frankly, I am deeply appreciative of the work that our Minister of Health has done to advance the number of long-term care beds available in this province. We are well on our way to fulfilling our promise of 2,000 new long-term care beds to support Alberta seniors, Alberta families, because the experience of my constituent is one that is all still far too common. Unfortunately, it is due to years of neglect by previous government who failed to make the investments to put us in a position where we were prepared to offer dignified, appropriate care in community for what we knew was a rapidly aging population.

We are taking every step we can now, Madam Chair, to try to fulfill that backlog, to take responsible action. Indeed, that is the province of the minister, and she is doing that well. But I appreciate that my colleague has done what many private members' bills do, and that is to identify smaller gaps in the system which can be addressed through a private member's bill, which are within our grasp and focused in scope, and that allow us to indeed, sometimes even in just smaller ways, make a difference, to make life better for Albertans.

I'd like to thank my colleague for bringing this forward and see if she has any further thoughts as to how this bill might further address some of the concerns that were brought forward by my constituents.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Mrs. Schreiner: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I'd like to thank the Member for Edmonton-Centre for his words and for the story that he brought forward. I'd just like to say that in working in long-term care over many years, I've seen so many members of the public walk in looking for those answers, looking to see what the different facilities offered. It was heartbreaking to see seniors come in with their walkers or their wheelchairs. You could tell that some of them were in pain when they walked in with their canes just to find out the answers that could be so easily accessible at home, in the comfort of their own homes. The information that this online website will have is information that is already there. All the operators, operator-owners already have all of the information that will be on the website. It's just a matter of putting it in place and the minister setting it up.

This will make the lives of Albertans and our seniors so much better, and I'm very proud to be able to do that for them. You know, they are the ones that made this country, this province as great as it is today, and just even having something like this put in place that will make life better for them, I am very proud to do.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Peace River.

Ms Jabbour: Thank you, Madam Chair. I also want to just express my disappointment at the words of the Member for Battle River-Wainwright, who has clearly never had to go through the process, that he would make the comment that this is not a necessary bill or not important. I consider this an extremely important bill, and I'm so grateful to the Member for Red Deer-North for bringing it forward. I think that, in a nutshell, the reason why this bill is so important is because we're not out there looking for a facility; we're out there looking for a home.

I'd like to just share the experience that we went through with my parents, with my dad in particular, to help illustrate just why that is so, so very important. I'll give you a little bit of background and tell you about my dad. My grandparents actually had a homestead on the southeast end of Edmonton. There weren't very many properties out there at the time. There was the refinery and then their farm and a few other farms around there. My dad grew up in that area. He rode his bike. He delivered newspapers. He went over the Beverly Bridge to deliver papers to the north side. He was an integral part of that community right from the time it was growing, from the time that there was nobody there. It was home to him.

After he got married to my mom, they initially lived in what she would always call a shack. I don't remember it. I wasn't there yet, so I don't know what it really was. It was very small. Then he built a trailer. My dad was very good with his hands. He was able to pretty much do anything, fix anything, build anything, so he built a trailer. By the time I came along, that's where I grew up. My first early years were in this trailer. Of course, after my brother and then my other sister and my younger brother were born, we needed some place bigger, so my dad then built a house. Again he did this himself, with help from members of the family who were in construction. It was important to him. This was his home. He invested his own blood, sweat, and tears into building this home. And that's where we grew up. We spent all our time and my grandkids spent their young years in this home and just loved it.

When the time came that my mom had terminal cancer, she tried to stay at home as long as she could. My dad took care of her until finally she knew that there were only a few more days left. The process of getting her into hospice was complicated, but it was relatively straightforward. There was support, and there was help.

Once she was gone, my dad tried to stay on his own in this home that he had built. He succeeded for a little while. I was already living up in High Level, so a lot of the bulk of having to take care of all kinds of things like this fell to my sister. He managed for a while. We got in home care for a while. We had somebody actually come and live in, and then later on we found out that a number of his credit cards were missing and a few valuable items, so that one didn't turn out so well. He'd tried really hard. We tried to support him. We wanted very much for him to be able to live out his days in his home. But the time came when he had a fall, and he ended up in the hospital. There we were faced with suddenly having to make a really quick decision on what was going to happen.

I think that we already sort of knew that the time was going to come, so my sister had been doing some research and having discussions with him about what his alternatives might be. She sort of had a sense of where he wanted to go, but my dad was fiercely independent, of course, and he didn't want to have to be anywhere where he'd have to rely on people to do things for him. It was important that he was able to be independent in the decision-making. But when we went, my sister and I, and started to look online and tried to see what was there, yeah, there was a list, but it really didn't help much. It didn't give us all of the details. It didn't tell us what was in this particular facility that would truly make it a home, a place where my dad would be well taken care of, where we could be confident and know, when I'm up in High Level, far away,

that he would be safe and be taken care of and be treated with dignity in his home. Those kinds of details weren't in the website list that we found, and they only covered certain facilities. They didn't cover everything that was out there.

In our searching around, we discovered that there were some smaller I guess you'd call them private facilities, that were almost like a home. There were maybe five or six residents only that lived there. Then it ran the whole gamut, from larger facilities to small. To have had a centralized registry, where all of these things were in one place, where we could have gone and said, "Okay; we can compare this; we can see what this is like, where it's at, how this one compares to the other one," would have been so helpful, and how much I wish this bill would have passed a couple of years ago.

I'll take a step back just to explain how traumatizing it is for families. When we had to pack up my dad's house, I wept all the time. My sister kept looking at me and saying: "Why are you crying? He's not dying." But, for me, it was a form of death. We were leaving the home that we had grown up in. It was such an integral part of our family. So it was important that we be supported through that process and not be traumatized further by struggling to find a place and not knowing where was going to be a good place for my dad to call home. That's what families are facing. We need to make that decision as easy and as smooth as possible for them. That's how we make their lives better.

4:20

But even once we chose the place – and he eventually did end up in a facility that was pretty good – there were problems. You know, they had difficulties with staff. It was one of the better facilities in the city, but he told me some real horror stories. I'll tell you just one because it just blew me away. The cleaning lady would come in. She'd put on her gloves, and she would go around and clean the toilet, clean the bathroom. His roommate was very sick and was coughing all the time. She'd go clean up his bed. Then she'd come with her gloves and pick up his water glass at the edge of the rim, wipe the table underneath, and put his water glass back down. My dad, of course, got around that by drinking out of a straw. But he was terrified to say anything. I said: "Dad, why don't you complain? Why don't you bring this up?" He said, "No, because then I'm afraid they'll treat me badly or that something negative will happen." So he would not speak up when these kinds of things happened. Had there been a family council available, at least maybe he would have had the confidence to know that he could say something safely.

If these things were online, if the reviews of facilities were online, at least residents and people like my dad would be able to go and say: "Okay. There are some negatives here, but I'm free to speak up. I can have the confidence that if I say something, I'm not going to be punished, because it's going to be out there. It's public." It protects people. It's really, really important as a way to empower the people that are living there. I think this bill is incredibly, incredibly important.

I envision what this might look like. The other day I was looking to buy property on a real estate website, and I was blown away. I hadn't looked for property for years and years. This website had everything. You go on there, and you can tour the house. You can see the vicinity. You can see the neighbourhood, a 360-degree view. You can see what's close by. You know, it's an amazing thing. If we can have that for real estate, to purchase a home, why can we not have something like this for the home for us at the end of our lives? It's a no-brainer as far as I'm concerned.

I do want to just comment a little bit about – this was our personal experience with my dad, but in my constituency, being a rural constituency, some of these decisions are even more difficult. The

residents up there don't have as many options. Sometimes they are faced with having to go a long way from home to find a place to stay, so it's even more important that they have some kind of facility to be able to look at and say: "This is how I can compare this place to this place. This is where I'd like to be. This is where I want to have the last years of my life." It's incredibly important for rural residents as well to have this.

I did want to comment a little bit about how, you know, we are playing catch-up, absolutely. Up in High Level we're thrilled because, finally, we're going to have a seniors' facility. After years and years and years of the previous government promising and promising and then just making the announcement and then never ever coming through, finally we're going to be breaking ground next month in High Level, and people are so excited.

Fort Vermilion is working on a facility for them, but they're planning now because the need is growing, and they know they're going to need it in a few more years. This is part of good planning. We are planning right now to have this registry so that as we finally catch up and have the number of facilities that we actually need to meet the needs of our seniors, then this will already be in place, and people can make informed choices about the home that they're going to go and live in.

I think this is absolutely essential, and I really, really appreciate the hon. Member for Red Deer-North for doing this. I really look forward to seeing it implemented. Hopefully, it'll be very soon. One day my kids are going to be looking for a place for me, so I'm hoping it'll all be there.

Thank you very much.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes. I was interrupted in my last speech, so I'm just going to continue on from where I was there. I was talking about Mr. Cohen. What he was saying was that he went through a lot of process to find out if the information that was given to him by the government was accurate, and at the end here what he says is, "I felt pressured, there is no question about it, in trying to make a decision."

What we've got here is that it's important that we choose a facility for our loved ones, but it has to be the right facility. We need to make sure we have the right information sitting in front of us to be able to at least give us a place to start. In this case here Mr. Cohen goes in and says that he was told that he had three institutions that he could pick from a short list, if you will. Then what would happen is that they would more or less choose where his mother was going from there. Clearly, that's not a good way of finding a place for your loved ones. I think it's important here to be clear that we respect our seniors, who have worked and built this incredible province we all live in and enjoy, that they are taken seriously and given the dignity that they deserve. What we've got here is that he went through a lot, actually. This is actually quite a lengthy article.

To bring up one point that is important in this article, it's that this actually is something that appeals to the Conservative in me. In this article – and I don't know if it's the same in Alberta, but I have to suspect that it's fairly constant – it says:

One day in a hospital costs \$1,000; one day in LTC ...

That's a long-term care unit.

... costs \$130; and a day of home care or community care costs \$55.

The auditor ...

That's the Auditor General of the province.

... said that by freeing up beds occupied by patients waiting for [long-term care], there would be more available for other patients, including those coming in through the ER, where [wait times] can be long.

What it's saying here is that finding people the appropriate place to be able to reside actually saves the government money, significant amounts of money if we can get them out of the hospitals. That is actually one of the things that attracts me to this bill, I have to say. It brings dignity to our seniors and saves money. How can you go wrong with a bill that's going along that road?

Now, unfortunately, I do have some criticism but not regarding this bill. More or less, I have the 2017 government of Alberta's 2016-2017 Health annual report. On page 28 of the report are performance measures and indicators, performance measure 1(a), which is "Access to continuing care: Percentage of clients placed in continuing care within 30 days of being assessed." Now, what we've got here is a bar graph. In 2012-2013 it was at 67 per cent. What happens is that that slowly degrades over time. What we've got is that for '16-17 it is sitting at about 56 per cent, so we're showing that we're holding more seniors within our hospitals for longer periods of time.

Now, the government, to their credit, is saying that we want to at least bring it up to 62 per cent from the existing 56 per cent, but clearly they need better ideas on how to get our seniors out of the hospitals into more comfortable atmospheres that they actually would want to live in, what I would want to live in. I'm waiting patiently to find out when the next Health annual report comes out because I'm curious if they actually met this target or if it went down. I speculate here that we probably haven't seen a lot of change there, and that is problematic.

The Member for Red Deer-North at least is actually trying and has a concrete plan to possibly bring down the wait times, and I think that's something that she should get some important recognition for. When we see that this trend is actually happening right now, when you've got ideas that more or less cost almost nothing to implement, it just makes sense.

To go on in this report, under Results Analysis:

A number of factors have contributed to this year's lower than targeted result, including an ongoing need for capacity expansion due to an aging population as well as some unanticipated continuing care capacity and facility issues that arose in 2016-17. These challenges have driven longer waits and higher waitlists for placement into continuing care living options.

4:30

Right now what we've got, more or less, is no list. We don't know which facilities are currently needing some potential help from the government because we don't have a complete list. This is one thing that is obviously problematic. Whenever you see the government bring forward a performance measure that says that they're going to get better but they don't actually seem to have any real plan on how to do that, that's troublesome.

Now, I do understand that the government always wants to protect our seniors, and I would give this government that same reasonable expectation that they're trying to do that as well. When I see these performance measures at 62 per cent, I think we can do a lot better and I would hope that we do a lot better because in the end we're trying to save money when it comes to trying to get people out and into more comfortable positions.

To finish up here, I think that this bill has some real valuable parts in it, and I do look forward to seeing it implemented. Again, I want to thank the Member for Red Deer-North for putting forward this bill.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you. I'm delighted to speak to this bill. I wanted to start off first by expressing my disappointment in the remarks that were made earlier today but especially by reading this other thing that I read on Twitter recently where members of the UCP or their allies were commenting on the background of MLAs in this House. I have to say that I am very proud to be here as an MLA with at least three MLAs on our side who've actually worked in long-term care, and I think we're really representing . . .

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, sorry to interrupt. Are you speaking to the bill?

Ms McKittrick: I am. I'm addressing the expertise . . .

The Deputy Chair: Okay. Please go ahead.

Ms McKittrick: . . . of MLAs to be able to speak to this bill.

We actually have MLAs on this side of the House – I don't know about the opposite side – who've actually worked in long-term care and who really understand thoroughly the issues around long-term care and the dilemmas that elderly people and their families face. I am very confident that the bill that the MLA for Red Deer-North has proposed really meets the needs of those seniors that we've been talking about all afternoon.

I'm really thankful to her because she has acknowledged that this is something that she's worked on for many years and that she learned from experience in working in these places. I have never worked in a long-term care hospital. I haven't worked with elderly people very much, but I also know that the work that happens by the staff requires someone to be not only caring but also to be involved in doing a lot of things that are not always the most pleasant. You really have to work with elderly people and make sure that they're fed, that they have proper hygiene, and that their emotional, spiritual, and physical comforts are met.

I think this bill comes from some very powerful experiences. It comes from the experience of someone who has experienced first-hand what it means to be either a patient or a family member in these facilities. I wanted to thank her, and I wanted us to be reminded that in this House our private members' bills and the things that we're passionate about come from our own experiences and the lives that we've led and the expertise we have by doing that. So I wanted to start off by saying that.

I did a little bit of research, like most of the members, and I realized that I could not find any place where I would find the whole list of available facilities in the Edmonton area, because I happened to be the MLA for Sherwood Park, that included the name of the facility; the website; if it was private, public, or not-for-profit; who had the ownership – was the ownership local if it was private, or was it a multinational? – and the kind of staff that you had and the staff ratio and the quality; and especially the cost of the extra services that are provided or what will be the costs, because all of the time it says to you: well, you need to contact the facilities, and then the costs will become apparent.

Last weekend – the MLA for Strathcona-Sherwood Park was with me – we went to visit a seniors' facility. In talking with one of the seniors, the first thing she said to me: you know, I really, really like this place, but I don't know if I can afford it for a very long time. She said: my children put me in this place, but it's very, very expensive. This really was a great reminder to me that if I was going to put any elderly relatives into long-term care, I would really need to make sure that I knew the costs, especially the costs of extra

services, and that I would have to evaluate carefully what the costs are over the long term.

I think that probably the year after I was elected, an elderly gentleman came to visit me in my office, and he begged me to go visit his wife in one of these long-term care places in Sherwood Park. He had to pay over \$1,200 a month so that his wife would be fed. She had dementia. She could no longer feed herself, and if he was going to have somebody feed her three times a day, he had to pay for that service. Of course, his budget had not accounted for it. So the gentleman every single day prepared food for his wife that she liked and went every single mealtime to feed her because he could not afford the cost of having somebody else feed his wife. I went with him, and I visited him as he fed his wife. It was a very moving experience for me not only because this gentleman obviously cared for his wife deeply but because when his wife had to go to this place, nobody had told him that if her dementia got progressively worse, then he would be on the hook for paying to have her fed.

So I'm very concerned about these issues.

I'm also very concerned about the fact that couples are often split. If I was putting a couple in a facility, I would want to know: what are the policies for these couples in the facility? What is going to happen when they do require two levels of care? Will the facility split them up? Do they have arrangements? Do they have any special policies that will allow elderly couples to be together? I think that as MLAs we've all heard of the really sad stories when an elderly couple is separated. I recently dealt with one of those cases, that I'm still working on to see if something can be done.

What I would like to ask the Member for Red Deer-North – I have actually, really, two questions because none of my research on the Internet has allowed me to know the answers. I'm really hoping that the bill will provide these answers to me. My two main questions that I'm hoping this bill will cover are: in your research have you found a website that has all of these long-term care facilities that are available in one place with all of the information that we're talking about? Then my second question is – I'm particularly interested in this – is there any place that you've found where the additional charges to the families or to the patient are outlined? I think that, for me, too, one of the questions that I'm really wondering about: on a website is there any place where the level of the staff, the training of the staff, the number of staff, staff ratio are and also what's available 24 hours, what's available only at night, and what's available during the day?

Thank you.

4:40

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Mrs. Schreiner: Well, thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the Member for Sherwood Park. I appreciate very much your comments and your questions.

I have a very easy answer to your question. Is there a website available right now with all of that important information that seniors and their loved ones are looking for when they want to put a loved one in a long-term care facility? Absolutely not. That's why we're bringing this bill forward. That's why this bill needs to actually be a bill, because that information is not available right now. There are different websites that offer piecemeal information, but there's not a website with all of the facilities, the over 170 facilities that we have in Alberta in over 100 communities. There is not a website that has all of those facilities entered and what services they offer and what those sites look like, how many beds,

whether they're accredited. So to answer your question, no, there is not a website.

The additional charges. There are a few jurisdictions across the country that have additional charges online, but this is something that we need to have in Alberta as well so that when a loved one is going into long-term care, we know exactly how much money it's going to cost them to live there month to month, whether there's an additional charge, like you were saying, to take someone to the dining room, whether there's an additional charge for foot care or an additional charge for the beauty salon, what all those additional charges are. I hear over and over and over again from my constituents that they were shocked to see a bill at the end of the month with these additional charges that they were not informed about and had no idea about.

I thank you very much for bringing those concerns forward, and you're absolutely right. There is nothing right now, and this is what we're trying to do with this bill, to have that easily accessible online website that has all the information that seniors are looking for, including additional charges and how many beds the facility has.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Yeah. Thank you for your answer, but you didn't really address the whole issue of staff qualification. I think this is an issue that loved ones really want to know about, the qualification of the staff, who they're supervised by. And some other questions have also come to my attention. Is there a doctor that visits? Do you have to have your own doctor? So what other information do you think is not currently available in one place that, from your own experience, would really benefit ourselves as possible people who will be in long-term care or family members?

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Mrs. Schreiner: Well, thank you to the Member for Sherwood Park for asking that question. You're absolutely right. This is something that's important to seniors and their loved ones. When they're looking to place someone into long-term care, they want to know if there will be doctors' visits in the facility. They want to know if there's a registered nurse there in the facility 24/7. They want to know if there are licensed practical nurses and health care aides to make sure that their loved ones are getting all of their needs met as well as if there is a dietary professional to be able to assess their loved ones. Will there be recreation therapy that will, you know, help keep their loved ones happy? They want to know what the staff ratios are. This is something that is absolutely very important.

I know that this bill will enable to have that information online so people can look to see that, yes, there's a registered nurse that's there 24/7; yes, the doctors come and visit at least once a week and do their doctor's report. It's very important information. Whether or not there's a dentist that comes to the facility to look after their loved ones, whether there's a wound care specialist, nurse practitioners: all that information will be right there readily accessible on that online website, a very important website.

Thank you. Thank you for the question.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am pleased to rise today to speak briefly on the matter before us. I wanted to make it known to the House that it's not only family members who are faced with counselling a couple or an individual who may be going into long-term care. It's also a number of professionals who really are placed in a position of trust and need to give good counsel and good guidance to individuals who, for reasons usually due to health or age, find themselves with increasing difficulty staying in their own home, whether it be rented or owned.

My personal experience, of course, typically, over the past 30 years, as a real estate agent formerly, has been to assist families who owned their properties with making the decision about where to go when they were no longer able to function properly in their existing property. That is something that I, of course, willingly agreed to do, and I said, "Yes, I can help you with that," not knowing exactly how big a job I was undertaking. When I first offered to help families which were facing a family member going into long-term care and were wanting to list and sell their property, doing a bit of research, I found it was a wide open minefield and not something that was easily undertaken. So I'm really, really glad to see that this website is going to be available online for professionals in the real estate world, who are now able to go online much more easily to find out reliably what options exist for their clients.

I guess others have already asked this question. I mean, I think this is self-evident. This website exists because of need. I for one would have really been grateful to have seen this much earlier than it has come forward, and I'm happy to see it now.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[The clauses of Bill 203 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

[The voice vote indicated that the request to report Bill 203 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:49 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Gray	Panda
Barnes	Hinkley	Piquette
Bilous	Hoffman	Renaud
Carlier	Jabbour	Sabir
Ceci	Jansen	Schmidt
Clark	Kazim	Schneider
Connolly	Kenney	Schreiner
Coolahan	Kleinstaub	Shepherd
Cortes-Vargas	Littlewood	Smith
Cyr	Malkinson	Sucha
Dach	McCuaig-Boyd	Swann
Dang	McKittrick	Taylor
Drever	McLean	Turner
Eggen	Miller	van Dijken
Ellis	Miranda	Westhead
Ganley	Nielsen	Woollard
Gill	Nixon	Yao
Gotfried	Orr	

Totals: For – 53 Against – 0

[Request to report Bill 203 carried unanimously]

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that the committee rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

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

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 203.

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

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Acting Speaker: Opposed? Ordered.

Motions Other than Government Motions

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Upstream and Downstream Emissions

505. Mr. Kenney moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to immediately demand that the government of Canada introduce any necessary legislative changes that would prohibit the consideration of upstream and downstream emissions by a federal energy regulator at any stage of the pipeline approval process.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to rise in support of my own motion, Motion 505. Let me begin by offering some historical context. In the history of our federation it was not clear in 1867 that provinces had regulatory authority or indeed ownership of subterranean, subsurface resources because this was not an active issue in 1867. But in the 20th century provinces began to realize that they had vast wealth to be developed in mines with heavy metals plus oil and gas. This was clearly the case here in Alberta. Our provincial government in the 1920s succeeded in establishing that by getting an amendment to the Constitution Act recognizing provincial ownership of subsurface natural resources.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

However, the federal government did not surrender a putative claim of regulatory authority over provincial resources later in our history. This is what led to the national energy program, the infamous design of former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, which sought effectively to micromanage Alberta's oil and gas sector from Ottawa and which, of course, led to a catastrophic failure of that industry, leading to what until recently has been the longest and deepest recession in Alberta history, in the early 1980s.

This is precisely why the late, great Premier Peter Lougheed brought forward the original version of Bill 12, which this Legislature has recently adopted. This is why he brought forward the legislative tools to allow the Alberta government to stop the shipment of oil to central Canada at that time in order to send a message to a different Trudeau federal Liberal government that

Alberta would use every tool at its disposal to defend our resources, our wealth, our economy, and our way of life. He used the threat of turning off the taps in order to force the federal government to the negotiating table, which occurred throughout the negotiations on repatriation of the Constitution, the British North America Act, in 1981.

5:10

In those negotiations, because of his threat, Premier Lougheed managed to secure a new section in the Constitution Act, under section 92A, under the delineation of federal and provincial powers, so that it now reads and has read for the last 36 years:

(1) In each province, the legislature may exclusively ...

Key word: "exclusively."

... make laws in relation to ...

(b) development, conservation and management of non-renewable natural resources.

Let me just recap that for the sake of clarity, Madam Speaker. Since 1982, thanks to Peter Lougheed's threat to turn off the taps, we have established in the Constitution that this Legislature has not shared but exclusive jurisdictional authority to make laws in relation to the development, conservation, and management of nonrenewable natural resources. That's a critically important historic gain by an Alberta government. Frankly, this is something that provincial governments had fought for for decades and failed to obtain until Peter Lougheed was willing to go to the wall, with the support of this Legislature, 38 years ago.

So, Madam Speaker, the clock moves forward to 2017. Now we have another Trudeau Liberal government in Ottawa that decides it's going to ignore the Constitution. More than that, they've decided that they will not just ignore it; they will violate the black-and-white meaning of section 92A(1)(b) of the Constitution Act. They will disregard this historic, hard-fought strategic victory for this province to manage the resources that belong not to Ottawa but to the people of Alberta, these resources that fuel so much of our prosperity, our quality of life, our social programs, our public finances.

How did they do so, Madam Speaker? Well, the Trudeau government in its unbalanced zeal, a government with a Prime Minister whose principal secretary, Gerald Butts, once said that he does not want any pipelines, any alternative pipelines, that he wants an alternative economy with zero hydrocarbons, a government led by a Prime Minister who has said that he wants to phase out the oil sands, a government that vetoed the Northern Gateway pipeline, a government that surrendered to Barack Obama's veto of Keystone XL – both of those pipelines, by the way, opposed inexplicably by the Alberta New Democrat Party.

Then it came to Energy East. Now, Madam Speaker, Energy East was a proposal made by a great Alberta company, TransCanada PipeLines, several years ago, and it was really the achievement of a new national dream. We often speak about the Canadian Pacific Railway, that bound Canada together with ties of iron from the Atlantic coast to the Pacific coast. It was the condition precedent of Confederation, of British Columbia joining the federation, of Canada maintaining sovereignty over what was then the North-West Territories. Without that railway, Alberta could very well have ended up like the rest of Canada's northwest, having become part of America's expansionism, of manifest destiny. That was the national dream of the 19th century. Many of us have shared a national dream in the 20th century of a country that shares its resources, its wealth, and its energy so that we could displace our dependence on foreign oil imports from some of the world's worst regimes.

TransCanada was prepared, with good partners like Irving Oil in New Brunswick, to make this dream a reality by reversing a series of long-existing pipelines and building additional infrastructure to allow us to effectively ship Alberta heavy crude to Canada's east coast, to refineries in New Brunswick and in Montreal and in Quebec City, to effectively displace the billions of dollars of foreign oil imported by our fellow Canadians. It was a great proposal. It was a \$15.7 billion proposed capital investment that would have increased our capacity to ship Canadian oil by 1.1 million barrels per day, which is about a third of our total current production. It would have also allowed not just for the displacement of energy imports but for Canada to become a net exporter, a major exporter, to substantially reduce the price discount, which is currently costing us \$40 million a day.

But, Madam Speaker, something happened. Something happened called the Trudeau Liberal government, which, since coming to office in the fall of 2015, was determined to do everything it could to damage Canada's energy sector. As I mentioned, they vetoed the Northern Gateway pipeline. Our Premier admitted in question period two weeks ago that her close ally Justin Trudeau did so at the invitation of the Alberta government, that said: we were only looking for one coastal pipeline. It killed Northern Gateway.

Then the Trudeau government instructed the notionally independent, quasi-judicial regulator the National Energy Board to get into the business of assessing up- and downstream carbon emissions notionally associated with proposed new pipeline projects. The National Energy Board clarified this in black and white in their letter to TransCanada on the Energy East proposal on August 23, 2017, in which the NEB said:

Given increasing public interest in GHG emissions . . .

That's greenhouse gas emissions.

. . . together with increasing governmental actions and commitments (including the federal government's stated interest in assessing upstream GHG emissions associated with major pipelines), the Board is of the view that it should also consider indirect GHG emissions in its NEB Act public interest determination for each of the Projects [associated with Energy East].

I have the letter right here, Madam Speaker. This was the death knell of Energy East. This is why we are now just three days away from the potential cancellation of the last remaining coastal pipeline project. The NEB, black on white, told TransCanada PipeLines that "the federal government's stated interest in assessing upstream GHG emissions associated with major pipelines" means that the board will now consider "indirect . . . emissions in its NEB Act public interest determination for each of the Projects" associated with Energy East.

Well, it only took two weeks before TransCanada responded. They issued a statement on September 7 of last year saying that they were pausing the project subject to further review "due to the significant changes to the regulatory process introduced by the [National Energy Board]" on August 23. Of course, as we know, TransCanada went on later, in October of last year, to cancel the project. Lest there's any doubt, there's a direct line: Trudeau government commitment to get into the regulation of GHG emissions on pipelines; the NEB telling TransCanada that they are following their orders getting into the regulation of even indirect emissions on pipeline projects, including Energy East; TransCanada hitting the pause button because of the regulatory uncertainty created by this decision; TransCanada cancelling Energy East and, with it, a \$16 billion project and the dream of energy independence.

5:20

Now, why do I walk through that so deliberately? Because for some inexplicable reason our Premier, a very capable, intelligent, and committed person, I believe has been misbriefed by – I don't know – somebody, by her office, her officials because repeatedly she has misstated the facts, I'm sure in good faith, Madam Speaker. She said in response to a question from me on March 12 in this place that "the outcome with respect to Energy East had nothing to do with the NEB decision."

She further said, under questioning from me at Executive Council estimates on April 18, that "I think it's really important to put that on the record, that Energy East was never meant to be covered – and it was very clear that it was never meant to be covered – by the proposed policy changes that the NEB voted." So our Premier does not understand the simple, undeniable, factual record about what happened here.

Now, Madam Speaker, I have asked – in fact, we have put forward requests on multiple occasions – for unanimous consent for consideration of motions calling on the government of Canada to amend the National Energy Board Act to respect section 92A of the Constitution Act and our exclusive jurisdiction over the regulation of the production of oil and gas by precluding the NEB or its successor agency, the environmental impact assessment agency, from intruding in our jurisdiction.

Now, Madam Speaker, when the NEB talks about considering indirect GHG emissions, upstream and downstream emissions, in a pipeline application, let's break this down. Upstream emissions are emissions – first of all, a pipeline itself produces virtually no emissions. A pipeline ships energy. There are trace elements of emissions, much lower, by the way, than emissions generated, for example, by train cars, according to two exhaustive studies done by the United States State Department under the leadership of former secretary Hillary Clinton. So pipelines themselves are not a significant contributor to GHG emissions.

But the board wasn't saying that they were going to consider the pipeline's emissions but indirect emissions, by which they meant that every barrel of Alberta crude that might end up being shipped by that pipeline from Hardisty to Saint John should be taken into consideration in terms of the GHG emissions associated with its production in Alberta. In Alberta. But, Madam Speaker, I quoted the Constitution, which says:

- (1) In each province, the legislature may exclusively make laws in relation to . . .
- (b) development, conservation and management of non-renewable natural resources.

Oil, bitumen, is a nonrenewable natural resource. Its development, environmental conservation, environmental and resource management, obviously, includes any regulation with respect to emissions. So this decision by the National Energy Board was a gross and obvious violation of our province's jurisdiction.

Now, we've been trying to get the government's – I really, you know, with respect to my colleagues opposite, don't imagine that there's any ideological, or there should not be, or any deep policy difference between my party and theirs, between the opposition and the government on this. I can't imagine that. Obviously, we have honest disagreements on a number of issues. I can't imagine why this would be one of them, Madam Speaker. I can't honestly imagine why this government would be indifferent to or indeed, at worst, invite the federal government to intrude into this Legislature's exclusive constitutional jurisdiction on the production, conservation, development, and management of our bitumen, of our oil and gas. So I would ask them honestly to maybe

just go back and check the record. Maybe they just haven't followed the track here on what the National Energy Board did.

Maybe I'm wrong, Madam Speaker. Maybe I'm wrong, and they can prove me wrong and debate on this. But maybe the documentary record and I are correct, and maybe TransCanada was correct in the way it read the threat created by the NEB.

Donald Savoie is considered the leading academic scholar on public administration in Canada, de l'Université du New Brunswick à Moncton, and he said:

Politics, not market conditions, killed the Energy East pipeline. If government and regulatory agencies drag the puck long enough and if they keep changing the rules of the game and adding new requirements along the way, market conditions will surely kick in. The Energy East initiative is a case in point. Not only was the approval process changed . . .

on up- and downstream emissions

. . . and requirements added, [but] it was done so retroactively.

Dennis McConaghy, former TransCanada senior executive, said that we have an utterly dysfunctional regulatory system for projects like this; the company had spent billions of dollars, and the hearing process hadn't even started when this was killed.

The Canadian Energy Pipeline Association also confirms my understanding of the documentary record.

Madam Speaker, as I begin to wrap up, this motion is an opportunity for Albertans to speak with one voice in defence of our hard-fought exclusive constitutional jurisdiction to be the masters of our resources. If we choose to do so in co-operation with the dominion government, that is our choice, not Ottawa's choice.

Madam Speaker, in closing, it's not only a question of upstream emissions about which I am particularly concerned but also the downstream emissions because I'll tell you this much. The oil tankers coming in from Venezuela, Nigeria, Iran, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia are not regulated for their GHG emissions, direct or indirect. The cement factory that the Quebec government built recently with half a billion dollars of subsidies and loan guarantees, that was exempted from environmental review, produces 2 million tonnes of GHG emissions. Bombardier, associated with that cement factory, the same ownership, is not limited based on its GHG emissions.

Madam Speaker, if we as a province are going to be the engine of Canada's prosperity, then we need to be able to develop these resources without a federal government violating our constitutional jurisdiction to do so.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Motion 505. You know, I'm pleased to see the opposition finally engaging in a debate that we've been having with the government of Canada for well over a year, starting with a letter and a technical submission from my department in March 2017, a debate that's carried on through a number of subsequent submissions, including a letter last June, a second letter in August, and a letter last October. Copies of all these letters, by the way, were tabled in this Legislature on October 30 last year.

Madam Speaker, we would love nothing more than a unanimous motion from this Assembly on Alberta's position on this issue provided it was based in fact. That's why we proposed to the opposition an amendment which more accurately reflects the work our government has done on Bill C-69. That motion as amended would have read as follows:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to immediately demand that the government of Canada introduce any necessary legislative changes that would prohibit the consideration of downstream emissions by a federal energy

regulator at any stage of the pipeline process and recognize Alberta's climate leadership plan, including a legislated oil sands emissions limit, as sufficient for evaluating upstream emissions.

Unfortunately, they've chosen to pass on the opportunity for a unanimous, fact-based statement from this Legislature on Alberta's position on Bill C-69 in favour of their usual brand of political theatre.

Madam Speaker, we've been clear all along that we do not need federal government regulation on upstream emissions. That is because Alberta's climate leadership plan, which includes a hard cap on oil sands emissions, is sufficient to meet this need. That plan effectively delinks pipelines from increased greenhouse emissions.

Madam Speaker, if the members opposite aren't prepared to present a clear position to the government of Canada based on the facts of the matter, then they leave us no choice. We would have supported the motion as we proposed to amend it, but we cannot support the motion in this form. It's not factual, it's not useful, and it adds no value to this important national conversation. So I will be voting no to this motion, and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

Thank you.

5:30

Mr. van Dijken: Madam Speaker, I stand to speak in favour of Motion 505, and I want to thank the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition, the Member for Calgary-Lougheed, for bringing the motion forward. The motion reads:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to immediately demand that the government of Canada introduce any necessary legislative changes that would prohibit the consideration of upstream and downstream emissions by a federal energy regulator at any stage of the pipeline approval process.

It appears to be very clear to me that the motion that's being put forward is to recognize that the government of Canada has been interfering with some of the provincial jurisdictions that we have protecting provinces with regard to regulatory approval and so on with their resources. The Minister of Energy might claim that this motion is not factually accurate, but I would suggest that it is very clear to me that it is accurate and can be moved upon without any delay.

It does concern me, Madam Speaker, that we seem to see that unity in Canada takes a nosedive any time we see the Liberals and especially a Trudeau take power in Ottawa. They always seem to find some crevice of national discord to try and wedge open and fan the flames that erupt and then act like heroes when they try to solve the crisis. It is really easy to do when you disrespect the Constitution and when the federal government goes playing around in the domain of the provinces in sections 92 and 92A.

Former Premier Lougheed fought to stand up for our province and our energy industry by securing section 92A of the Constitution, and we must do the same. It is plain to see that the federal Liberal government remains unwilling to stand up for our energy industry beyond empty platitudes. It's time for the NDP to stand up for Albertans, not to stand up alongside their federal Liberal allies.

By their deeds you shall know them, and under the federal Liberal government's watch the much-needed \$15.7 billion job-creating Energy East project was scrapped following an outrageous mid-review mandate expansion from the federal regulatory agency. This should be very troubling to anyone in Canada, where we have politics getting in the way of due diligence and proper regulatory oversight.

I would suggest that some of the quotes that we have heard from industry are very accurate on the concerns with regard to the past and the regulatory changes with upstream and downstream

emissions and also going forward with Bill C-69. To quote TransCanada, the Energy East project was scrapped “due to the significant changes to the regulatory process introduced by the [National Energy Board].” That’s a quote from September 7, 2017. Yes, Ottawa imposed upstream emissions tests and got playing around in provincial regulatory domain.

Dennis McConaghy, a former TransCanada executive, said that we have an utterly dysfunctional regulatory system for projects like this; the company had spent a billion dollars, and the hearing process hadn’t even started. That’s in the *Globe and Mail*, October 10, 2017.

What’s troubling, Madam Speaker, is: where was the NDP in fighting this invasion into provincial jurisdictions by the federal government? Is that the sound of crickets chirping? Where were they? Do you know how angry the cancellation of Energy East made the industry? The cancellation of Energy East made the Irving family of New Brunswick very angry. The Irvings got so angry that their newspaper, the *New Brunswick Telegraph-Journal*, ran a column, written by our very own Member for Calgary-Foothills, excoriating the latest plea for help for Bombardier by Premier Couillard of Quebec while the Montreal elite chose to stick a fork in Energy East.

Changing the rules mid-game is not the only thing the federal Liberals are doing. The federal Liberal government’s new approvals process, Bill C-69, the impact assessment act, as I referred to earlier, continues down the same troubling action. According to June Warren-Nickle’s 2018 oil and gas industry outlook survey 62 per cent say that the NEB modernization, Bill C-69, will limit new projects. Bill C-69 is a disaster for the Alberta energy sector, let alone the Canadian energy sector. Again, the NDP government sits here and mouths platitudes.

Madam Speaker, meanwhile the world wants more oil. All of these climate change do-good policies do not change the fact that demand for oil will continue for the foreseeable future. It will continue to rise, and someone has to supply it. We have a perfectly legal commodity that is in high demand around the world, and here we are putting in regulatory reviews and accepting product from outside of our country into our country that does not have to even undergo the same reviews that our own domestic production has to go through. Utterly irresponsible, in my opinion. Canada is being the proverbial Boy Scout by trying to shut down our own production not necessarily in order to allow but in allowing products coming from dictators in the Middle East, from Vladimir Putin’s Russia, from frackers in Texas, North Dakota, from all around the world, allowing that to supply the world’s petroleum needs.

According to the International Energy Agency the global oil demand growth for 2018 will be 1.4 million barrels per day. That’s oil demand growth for 2018, 1.4 million barrels per day. That’s huge growth, and it continues to grow. We need to recognize that we have the product available that can supply that demand. If we don’t supply it, somebody else will. The most environmentally friendly produced oil is produced right here in our backyard. The Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain expansion pipeline could solve half of that demand. Energy East could have solved 79 per cent of that demand. These are projects that, in my opinion, the federal government has made a mess of, and our provincial government has not stood up and ensured that our industry is being heard and that they’re being fairly represented.

Madam Speaker, the words of Peter Lougheed, the late Premier of Alberta, come to mind: the Ottawa government has without negotiation, without agreement simply walked into our home and occupied the living room. Quebec doesn’t put up with that. Alberta used to not put up with that. But the NDP just rolled over and let

Ottawa mess around in our jurisdiction. It’s as if the thieves have broken in, and the owners, not knowing any better, have welcomed them in with beer and munchies and have started a party. Meanwhile no one sees the big screen TV and grandmother’s jewellery going out the front door.

But it gets better yet, Madam Speaker. You see, because of the confusion and dissension sown, we now have two sets of regulations coming in to reduce methane emissions, one federal, one provincial. It continues to get skewed. It continues to get messed up. Industry doesn’t know who to follow anymore. Ottawa? Alberta? Neither? Or both? We need to recognize that when the federal government starts getting involved in what would be considered provincial jurisdictions, the provincial government needs to have the backbone to stand up and say: no, this is not acceptable.

So while Ottawa has been taking time consulting on these regulations . . .

5:40

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It is an honour to rise to speak in this Assembly. I have to say that I’m a little surprised by the government’s reluctance to support this motion. Obviously, I am not now nor will ever be a member of the UCP. I differ with that party on many things. But listening to the Minister of Energy, this feels like a very, very thin argument as to why she and, I assume, the government side would vote against this motion. I can only assume that they don’t want to give the UCP a win somehow on this.

I would hope that of all the issues this Assembly deals with, this would be an issue of great national importance, that we get pipelines built, that we advocate to the federal government that their regulatory structures are predictable, consistent, and fair around the country, and that all members of this Assembly would want to do something like that. This is not legislation that we’re talking about passing here. This is a motion urging the government to take certain actions. I would hope that the government would take those very actions in doing that. It’s a shame, Madam Speaker, to see the partisanship gone wild on this particular issue.

Let’s talk, though, about the substance of the motion itself and the federal government’s attempts to consider both upstream and downstream emissions from pipeline projects and in particular downstream emissions. I can’t help but notice that every time Ottawa provides a grant or a subsidy to a car plant, I don’t see any consideration of downstream emissions. It’s remarkable, you know, that automobiles in this country and around the world are the ones that consume the product that Alberta produces, that we ship very safely and responsibly through pipelines, yet the federal government seems reluctant, not even considering downstream emissions when they would fund a project like that, like an auto plant.

Let’s talk about another example. One of the great products that comes out of Alberta’s oil sands is jet fuel. A company called Bombardier produces airplanes that consume jet fuel, yet I see absolutely no mention of the carbon emissions that are caused by the production of those airplanes themselves or, of course, of the fuel that the airplanes themselves produce.

So it’s deeply hypocritical for Ottawa to be imposing such restrictions on an industry that is specific primarily to Alberta, not exclusively. Other parts of this great country produce oil and gas. Pipelines certainly benefit the people of Alberta, but I would say, without question, that they benefit the entire nation in many, many different ways.

The other great concern with the shifting rules that seem to be coming out of Ottawa these days is that they are having a tremendous impact on investment, foreign investment in this country and domestic investment by energy companies. You know, although Canada is geographically large, we simply don't have the population base, we don't have the business base to generate all of the investment that we need to unlock all of the natural resources in particular that we have in this country available to us, so we need foreign capital to support that.

If we have an inconsistent regulatory system – what had historically been a strength of Canada is that investors were very keen to invest in a country that has tremendous political stability, that has regulatory predictability, and that follows the rule of law – we will see the problems that we're having with the constant barriers that British Columbia is attempting to put up, to constantly question a legitimate project in Kinder Morgan that has been rigorously, rigorously approved and reviewed, with 157 conditions. I can assure you that not a single project in some of the other oil sands producing regions of the world like Nigeria, Venezuela, or some of the traditional oil production that happens in Russia or Saudi – I'll bet you that collectively those projects have not had 157 conditions imposed upon them in terms of their regulatory structure. This is a single pipeline.

I am fiercely proud of the regulatory regime in this country. But, unfortunately, adding upstream and downstream emissions as part of the consideration for pipeline projects is just another barrier to investment, another barrier to job creation, another barrier to the legitimate and responsible energy industry that has become and has been such a big part of what Alberta is. Instead of putting these artificial barriers in the way, our federal government ought to be proud of what it is we are in this country, and I would hope that this government in Alberta also is proud of what Alberta has delivered in terms of our energy industry.

For those who may construe this as some sort of anti-environmental argument, let me be very, very clear. The Alberta Party believes that climate change is real, it is human caused, and it is a problem that we need to address. We need to have solutions that can and should include a properly constructed and responsible carbon tax as part of that overall package in addressing and tackling climate change. We should not just be looking at it as some barrier to be overcome; we should be looking at it, in fact, as the single greatest economic opportunity of our lifetimes if we do it properly. It is absolutely possible.

Alberta can solve carbon. That is going to help support our base industry in energy, oil, and gas, and it is going to help diversify our economy by creating companies and technologies that we can sell to the rest of the world, which is exactly what's happening just outside of Calgary at the Shepard natural gas power plant, the new Enmax power plant. Just recently a two-year pilot project kicked off with five different companies with different carbon reuse technologies, a long-term pilot project supported, yes, by carbon tax dollars from here in Alberta and by the federal government. This is precisely the kind of thing. It's the only example of its kind anywhere in North America.

Anyone who says that Alberta is some sort of environmental laggard or is irresponsible doesn't know the story, doesn't know the facts. It is Alberta that is going to solve carbon for the rest of the world. We are going to therefore enable the continued responsible development of our energy industry, and we're going to diversify our economy. It's absolutely possible, and it's happening right here in Alberta.

So a motion like this, I think, is exactly the right way to go. It allows us to send a strong message to Ottawa that, in fact, Alberta is doing the right thing, that we shouldn't be punished, that the

companies that have made their home in this province, that responsibly develop pipelines, that responsibly develop the oil sands and traditional oil and gas resources, should not be land locked, should not be punished. We need to send that strong message, and I believe that's exactly what this motion does. I would really urge the Minister of Energy and the entire government side to reconsider their opposition to this reasonable motion.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any members wishing to speak to the motion? The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my privilege to rise this afternoon and to express support for the Member for Calgary-Lougheed's private member's Motion 505, which urges

the government to immediately demand that the government of Canada introduce any necessary legislative changes that would prohibit the consideration of upstream and downstream emissions by a federal energy regulator at any stage of the pipeline approval process.

I appreciate the previous member's comments. Quite frankly, I'm deeply disappointed that the government has decided for purely partisan reasons that they will not support this, they will not express a united front for Alberta on this very, very important issue. The motion really depicts an intent to stand up for and to protect Alberta's oil and gas sector against federal intrusion into provincial jurisdiction. I still want to express hope that all members of the Assembly will vote in support of this motion and prove that we are together to stand up in the gap to protect Alberta's interests. The intent of this motion is really not only just for the pipeline approval process, but without a doubt it's about restoring Alberta's economy, about restoring jobs in our province, about restoring the authority of our legal jurisdiction, and restoring our prosperity in this province.

We've had a little bit of a history lesson. I'd like to add just one little bit more to that. Even going back a bit farther, when this province was first created, the federal government challenged the future authority and success of our province. What are now Saskatchewan and Alberta were to be one province, but Ottawa chose to divide them into two to keep them weaker, to keep them smaller lest we would somehow challenge their authority. Then in the 1920s we had to fight again for the right of ownership of our resources, the affirmation of that. Then in the 1980s Ottawa attacked us again with a national energy policy, when in reality the truth is, as has been said, that the Constitution recognizes the exclusive power of provincial Legislatures to make laws with regard to the development and conservation and management of provincial nonrenewable resources.

5:50

These are our resources. They belong to the people of Alberta, and I think that the government of Alberta needs to stand up for our people rather than hide behind some partisan quibbling over the wording of the intent of the bill. What happened in 1982 is that Premier Lougheed, through section 92A, challenged the federal government, pressed them to the wall on it, and actually won some success for Alberta in that tremendous success. That's part of his legacy, something that we need again and something that now Bill C-69, the impact assessment act, completely contradicts and goes against.

It seems to me a bit interesting that earlier this year our Premier and the NDP went to great efforts to align themselves with Premier Lougheed. The Premier even mentioned in her throne speech in March: "In the past when workers in our energy industry were attacked and when the resources we own were threatened, Premier

Peter Lougheed took bold action.” Oh, that we had such a Premier today, Madam Speaker. The reality is that if the NDP want to wrap themselves in the cloak of Peter Lougheed and want to claim the kind of glory and honour that he had, then they need to do the same kinds of actions.

Premier Lougheed actually cut oil shipments to the east. He did things that were more than just comfortable little phrases and talking about it. In the Premier’s speech she cited him and referred to him, and we’ve heard it again in this House numerous times how they want to be like Premier Lougheed. Well, with two days left, which is all we’ve got left till the cut-off date, I would assume that it’s more necessary than just to invoke idle sentiments. Bill 12, that’s supposed to be acting like Premier Lougheed, is still unproclaimed. It’s just a bluff. There’s nothing coming of it.

If they want to compare themselves to Premier Lougheed, who was a protector of Alberta’s resources, then it would only make sense for all of us to stand united, to stand up with Premier Lougheed for our province, for our energy industry, and support this motion to demand that the government of Canada introduce any legislation necessary to prohibit the consideration of upstream and downstream industry emissions by a federal regulatory agency.

The reality is that we are standing at a crossroads in our history, where the federal Liberal government have proven themselves opposed to the energy industry, and now they’ve blatantly brought forth this process in the middle of the development, C-69, the impact assessment act, which includes upstream and downstream emissions. According to the Canadian Energy Pipeline Association it will make it significantly less likely that future projects will get approved.

I think it’s patently unfair and unjust that these things are applied to Alberta but not applied to other parts of our country. Tanker oil comes into Canada every day. It’s drilled in another hole down in some other part of the world rather than drilled in an oil hole here in Alberta, and they don’t have to pay any of that. There are no emissions attached to them. There’s no carbon tax attached to them. They are completely free in terms of bringing in tanker after tanker after tanker of oil, and if we try to send one railroad tanker car of oil out, we get all of these things assessed against us. It’s unfair. It’s completely unfair to the people of Alberta, and the government of Alberta should be standing up for our people.

We all watched how last year, under the federal Liberal government’s watch, the \$15.7 billion job-creating Energy East pipeline was scrapped precisely because in the mid-term of their working through on that one, mid-review, the rules were all changed.

Now, you know, when my grandkids get together and they start playing a game and partway through the game somebody wants to change the rules, inevitably it’s viewed as unfair and unjust, and it creates a great hue and cry. It isn’t fair to change the rules to suit me or somebody else halfway through the game. Well, that’s exactly what the federal government has done here with regard to Bill C-69 and the Energy East project. No wonder, when you change the rules halfway through like my grandkids do, they get mad and they walk off and they won’t participate.

You know, this is far more important than a child’s game, yet the federal government is changing the rules midway through, driving industry and investment and the hope out of Canada. This is not what should be happening in Canada. It’s making us the laughingstock of the world, and as we’ve heard, our regulatory process is completely broken when, like little kids, they can change it halfway through and totally stack the game in their own favour.

It should be no shock that the Canadian Energy Pipeline Association said that now, with the built-in climate change tests only for Alberta oil, not tanker oil, but only for ours, covering

upstream and downstream greenhouse gas emissions, that it is the federal Liberal government’s intent, declared purpose, to curtail oil and gas production as an attack on Alberta. This will mean that no more pipelines will be built, at least here in Canada, and that Bill C-69 sure has hit the mark to make sure that no more of it happens here in Canada.

We need to stand up for this. Our government needs to stand up for our people instead of hiding on this issue. What happened to Energy East was senseless. It’s an important, job-creating project, and now we’re doing even more of it, and the government won’t stand up for the people. The NDP promised that a massive carbon tax and caps on our upstream industry inflicted on Albertans by large emitters would buy us social licence somehow, an approval for pipelines from our federal cohorts, but we have seen none of that, and two days from now Kinder Morgan may very well just walk away from the whole thing.

Our leader, along with UCP caucus members and others, has repeatedly discussed our concerns with the federal government with regard to the federal government’s efforts to force upstream and downstream emissions consideration and that energy investors will be discouraged. Investment will effectively be extinguished, a squelch on our industry, and the NDP refuse to stand up and vote for it. This energy industry is our strength. It’s the thing that gives us the income, the energy, and the resources by which to actually make investments in green development, and we’re going to cut that opportunity off from ourselves.

This action by the federal government to include upstream and downstream emissions is a direct intrusion into provincial jurisdiction, and it should not be tolerated by us. We should not simply roll over and allow them to do this. We need to restore investor confidence. We need to restore our jurisdiction on our authority and our economic stability.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the motion? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. We have but a brief moment left, so I’ll just quickly note some quotes from a letter written by the Minister of Energy to ministers McKenna and Carr. Actually, this is a joint letter from the Minister of Energy and the Minister of Environment and Parks.

The Government of Alberta submits that our Climate Leadership Plan should be recognized as sufficient for evaluating upstream greenhouse gas emissions associated with pipeline projects originating in Alberta.

It goes on to outline then the specific steps we have taken as a government under our climate leadership plan.

That was sent on August 28, 2017, and followed on October 2, 2017, with a further letter expressing our continued and growing worry regarding the potential impact on Energy East, in which the minister notes:

It is our government’s position that the inclusion of downstream uses in the scope of the Energy East review is an historic over-reach. In our view, this is simply not an appropriate issue to include in the review.

Later in the letter she also wrote:

I am asking for clarity on whether the scope of review for the Energy East project can be seen as precedent-setting for what the regulator will be mandated to review for future projects in the new legislation.

On upstream emissions, Madam Speaker, she noted: Alberta’s climate leadership plan and in particular the oil sands emissions limit should satisfy concerns about upstream emissions; the Prime

Minister directly cited our climate plan in his approval of two new pipelines last fall.

Indeed, Madam Speaker, our Minister of Energy has, in these particular letters and in her continued conversations with the ministers and in continued communication with the Prime Minister, continued to raise our concerns regarding this evaluation and this approach. This is severely problematic in considering downstream

emissions because, indeed, as other members have capably explained, the consideration of downstream emissions simply is not a reasonable option in that it forces . . .

The Deputy Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt, hon. member, but the House stands adjourned until 7:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6. p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday evening, May 28, 2018

Day 33

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Gotfried	Panda
Hunter	Renaud
Littlewood	Turner
Luff	

Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola
Deputy Chair: Mr. Drysdale

Babcock	Loewen
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Fildebrandt	Panda
Hanson	Rosendahl
Kazim	Schreiner
Kleinsteinuber	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Monday, May 28, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Government Motions

Duty on Cannabis Products

24. Mr. Ceci moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Alberta approve the arrangement between the government of Alberta and the government of Canada outlined on page 128 of the 2018-21 fiscal plan presented by the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance to the Legislative Assembly of Alberta on March 22, 2018, Sessional Paper 43/2018, with respect to the implementation by Canada of a duty on cannabis products to be imposed under the Excise Act, 2001, Canada, in respect of Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. Finance minister and President of Treasury Board. Good evening.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What that all means is that when it comes to cannabis taxation, a co-ordinated approach with our federal and provincial partners will help ensure consistent pricing and drive out the illegal market in Canada. We have asked the federal government to use the federal excise tax to collect cannabis tax revenue on behalf of Alberta. This includes Alberta's share of the tax room that was agreed to by federal and provincial finance ministers, the greater of 75 cents per gram or 7.5 per cent of the producer price. To ensure Alberta can apply a similar level of total tax compared to other provinces, an additional amount would be collected from licensed producers. This amount would be equivalent to 10 per cent of the retail price and would be similar to the amount of tax applied in other provinces once cannabis is legalized. Federal collection of these amounts also minimizes our administrative costs as well as minimizing compliance costs for Alberta businesses.

Before collecting amounts on behalf of a province, the federal government requires provinces to confirm this through a vote in the Legislature no later than June 1, 2018. Mr. Speaker, we are required to bring a motion before this House before June 1, 2018, to indicate our preference about the government of Canada collecting taxation amounts on our behalf. That's why I'm bringing this forward today.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-West.

Mr. Ellis: Great. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, I rise to speak to Government Motion 24. This motion is necessary, of course, due to the federal government, the Trudeau government, decision to legalize marijuana whether we in Alberta here are ready for it or not. As the Official Opposition critic for Solicitor General and as a former certified breath technician for the province of Alberta, I can say with certainty that we are not ready. Why can I make this sort of statement so strongly? Because unlike alcohol there is no roadside device that has been approved for reading levels of THC, which, of course, is a huge concern if we are dealing with any form of impaired driving.

Although we keep hearing about public safety being the most critical aspect of all legislation that is going through Ottawa, here in this Legislature we know that our roads will become more dangerous. The Transportation minister, to his credit, admitted that

when proposing amendments to the Traffic Safety Act to include drug impairment in our provincial legislation. Perhaps this critical failure to ensure that police have access to a roadside device is one of the reasons that the Trudeau government seems ready to miss its long-held target of July 1 as the marijuana legalization day. We do not know for sure because the government is fairly quiet on this issue and perhaps a little embarrassed, as it should be.

Now, in Alberta, however, our government has been bringing a few pieces of legislation forward each session to prepare for July 1 or whatever day, of course, when legalization is now about to occur. I must commend them. I mean, this, Mr. Speaker, is like drinking out of a fire hose. It is very much a challenge. But we've seen the aforementioned Bill 29, which amended the Traffic Safety Act, and Bill 26, which dealt with the retail structure and public consumption. By the way, our UCP caucus warned the government that marrying marijuana use with tobacco laws rather than alcohol would not offer the kind of public protection Albertans, especially children, would require, yet the NDP rejected our amendment that would have done just that. And now what is occurring? Alberta's municipalities are left dealing with it.

Government Motion 24, while necessary and supported by the UCP caucus, also leaves a blank area for municipalities. Let me just spell this out for you, Mr. Speaker. This motion is asking the Legislative Assembly to approve the deal crafted between the provinces, specifically in this case Alberta, and the federal government regarding taxing marijuana. They came up with a tax limit of \$1 on each gram sold. I'll address the importance of that price in just a moment, but right now I want to stay focused on municipalities.

This government has admitted that the lion's share of the cost of implementing legalized marijuana will fall to municipalities. Edmonton and Calgary, for instance, have both pegged the cost of planning, zoning, and administration as well as bylaw policing and inspection services at approximately \$9 million to \$12 million. Let me quote Mayor Nenshi in a December 7, 2017, *Calgary Herald* article.

We've not padded this number... We're looking north of \$10 million a year, so it's incredibly important that any revenue that is gained from cannabis sales, the excise tax on cannabis sales, be shared directly with municipalities.

That is the outstanding question, Mr. Speaker. Just how much of the tens of millions of dollars that the province will collect will go to municipalities? The Premier has stated that the first few years of legalized marijuana will likely be a net loss despite the revenues from the tax estimated to reach approximately \$80 million in the first full year of legalization.

Now, hopefully, there's a huge policing component that might be involved because Alberta needs those officers specially trained in recognizing the signs of impairment. This is especially important because there is still, again, no roadside device that can test the levels of cannabis impairment. That means that it will totally be up to the officers to recognize drug impairment because the next step is an invasive blood test. The province hasn't yet told us how they plan to deal with the need for more of those facilities and, of course, the court times that would be involved in that as well as planning and execution of blood warrants if that is indeed required. As you can see, legalization of marijuana will be expensive to the province and to the municipalities, so I urge this government to not dismiss the municipalities. They're carrying a huge burden, and they want to do everything right for their citizens, which are our citizens.

This tax on marijuana will provide important revenues to ensure legalization occurs properly in Alberta with a crucial eye on public safety. Public safety, of course, includes ensuring our retail regime stamps out the black market. For the black market it means

organized crime, and that brings deep-seated trouble for Albertans. Now, remember, this is an industry that is currently owned and operated by organized crime, so the thrust behind the organized crime is money. A goal of legalization is to erase the black market, which they control, by offering a safe product by legitimate retailers. The price, however, must also compete with the black market. That's why this tax on the sale of each gram is so important, Mr. Speaker. Curiously, and thanks to previous governments, which refused to implement a sales tax, Alberta will have the lowest cost for marijuana in Canada. Since the price of a gram is the same across the country, \$8, as is the excise tax, \$1, the only variable involves the various sales and harmonized taxes. Remember, people who sell marijuana illegally do not care if they are selling this substance to children.

7:40

Bill 6, which is before this House right now, allows the AGLC to add a markup. We have been told that this mechanism is there for the future, not the present, and is something that we will have to watch very carefully if we want to make and keep the black market irrelevant. Now, I certainly hope that the NDP government, which likes to surprise Albertans with unexpected taxes, does not look at the markup as an opportunity for revenues. I'm aware that the markup proposed in Bill 6 is only for the cost of the legalized recreational cannabis to the Alberta gaming, liquor, and cannabis commission, but I still want to add a caution that adding a markup for cannabis can create a rejuvenated black market for marijuana. We want to avoid that as much as possible. We must be cognizant of that, Mr. Speaker. Although legalized marijuana may not have been the choice of everyone, eradicating the black market and organized crime that controls it can be a positive effect to come out of this process.

Mr. Speaker, although I am in support of Government Motion 24 because it is part of a much bigger picture and Alberta needs revenues to enforce the marijuana laws, I want to take this opportunity to say that I personally think that this government could have gone a bit further in some of the public safety fronts. Hopefully, when legalized recreational marijuana rolls out in a few months, if changes are needed to legislation or regulations, the government does not hesitate to address them. You know, I speak specifically on two issues, marijuana in schools and public consumption. I have already indicated an issue with the NDP government choosing to align consumption specifically with smoking and vaping of tobacco. Marijuana is an intoxicating substance, yet Albertans will be able to smoke it almost everywhere in public, and that's why municipalities are having to scramble to create public consumption bylaws, because this government refused to deal with it in a responsible way.

So let me expound for a moment on the school issue, for I believe it is important that that, too, has gone under the radar. Students aged 17 and under cannot possess marijuana at all. They cannot buy it. They cannot consume it. Yet students 18 and over can. Although last fall's Bill 26 restricts them from smoking it on or comparatively near school grounds, there is nothing to prevent them from having it in their possession at school. This is the kind of public safety issue that I believe the government has sadly failed to address. Perhaps it sees no issue with some students being able to possess marijuana. Perhaps it plans to address this hole in some other way. But I ask the government to take care of it before the fall. I think that we all can agree that the safety and well-being of children are most important to each and every one of us on both sides of this House.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I want to return to the costs of the marijuana. The federal government had \$81 million in start-up costs to provide to the provinces. Alberta's share should have been approximately \$10 million. Did the municipalities see any of it?

The excise tax is estimated to bring in \$80 million in 2019-2020. Will municipalities see any of that? These are legitimate questions to be asked. Municipalities are partners with the provincial government. Local governments take care of Alberta's citizens in their communities. The work that they do is critical to a well-functioning provincial government. I, of course, urge this government to view them as a partner in the rollout of the cannabis framework and always hold up the safety of children and families and citizens as the most important objective not just in approving legislation here but in making sure that it works well for Albertans on their streets.

Thank you for your time, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to talk about Government Motion 24, to which I will offer my support. I do have some concerns. I am relatively pleased to see that this motion applies to cover the first two years of legalization and a common set of principles between the government of Canada and the government of Alberta. Unquestionably, this area, this change, and this legislation could have considerable unintended consequences.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to start out by saying, you know, that I can't help but feel that we haven't talked enough about the safety, about the effects of the legalization of marijuana. Of course, as legislators our primary duty – our primary duty – for anything we do is for the safety of our communities, the safety of Albertans, and especially the safety of children. My goodness, there's adequate, ample, an abundance of evidence about the effect of frequent consumption on adolescent brain development. I just feel that it's necessary that every time we move into this area of change, we be reminded that with every change there come positives, there come negatives, and there are always unintended consequences.

My colleague from Calgary-West spoke very, very well about the concern with our police forces, our first responders. We all know how taxing and how hard their job is now, and thank goodness for each and every one of them. What a whole new level of duty and diligence and care the implementation of cannabis into our society is going to have on these people. I don't doubt for a second that their professionalism is more than up to this job, but I don't doubt for a second that it will cause extra work and extra concern. I'm grateful for them, and I offer my support.

Mr. Speaker, that brings me to one of my other concerns. We've all heard and the media has been very, very great at reporting how bad the federal government has been at getting this out, defining the rules, stating how it's going to happen. It's thrust on all the provinces and, of course, now thrust on the municipalities to bear the costs. I can't help but wonder if this two-year agreement is just a way for the feds to legitimize stepping into an area of Alberta's economy. They need our approval to put their taxation into effect. They're straying into an area of provincial jurisdiction. They're straying into an area where we, at least, are closer to the people than they are and we can help the best. That's why their first idea of forcing their rules and their plans on Alberta and taking the lion's share of the money was so ridiculous.

Still, is this just a plan to legitimize their need to dip into the money we'll need for our citizens, for our municipalities, for ensuring that the unintended consequences of this are minimal, for ensuring that we can support our first responders at the level that we have to? Okay. I get it. It's a new thing. It sounds like the feds have handled this terribly. At least, there's a two-year limit on this, and that will give everyone a chance, you know, to have a look at it then.

I have some concerns. Our researchers have discovered that some states with legalized marijuana have run into a particularly interesting dilemma. I have Colorado, Oregon, Washington, Nevada, Massachusetts, and Maine. After they legalized marijuana, guess what? The price dropped. Then they found themselves at: now what do we do? The price dropped. Do you start to promote it? Do you start to advertise it? Do you start to combat the black market, which obviously doesn't have to deal with any level of taxation? Mr. Speaker, I don't doubt that a lot of our good policemen and RCMP people and people that are living life on the streets protecting us have a better understanding of where this will lead to, but I don't think that our government and the bureaucracy do.

7:50

My concern, again, is if the home growing and the home consumption turns out to be a big market and the price drops because of the black market or because of other things. Who knows where culture will take us? Mr. Speaker, this government may find themselves in a very awkward spot.

For all those reasons, I will reluctantly support the government on Motion 24, but I will ask that in the next year and in the foreseeable future they do everything possible to monitor this, to watch for the unintended consequences, to make sure that the federal government does not step any further into where the Alberta government and municipalities should be and should be supported, and to make sure that all Albertans are protected, especially our young people.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Any questions to the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat under 29(2)(a)? The Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: I would like the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat to clarify where the two-year limit you're talking about is in my motion or in the fiscal plan.

Mr. Barnes: Okay. Well, thank you for that. My summary has that this is a common set of principles that would cover the first two years of legalization. Hon. minister, if that's not the case, could you please correct me?

Mr. Ceci: I don't have the agreement before us here, but I'll go up and check it as soon as I have the opportunity. I just would like to ask the member again to – no. I think that's clarified.

Thanks.

The Speaker: Any other members wish to speak to Motion 24? The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much. To close, I want to address some of the things that I heard the Member for Calgary-West talk about with regard to, you know, the municipalities needing to provide the lion's share of support for cannabis in communities. I'm not sure I ever said that. I don't think I said that the lion's share of responsibility would be on municipalities.

I can tell you that the Alberta gaming, liquor, and cannabis commission is busily getting ready for the legalization of cannabis, not only with online purchasability for Albertans that want to do that but ensuring that only Albertans who are over 18 years of age can purchase and are identified through the online purchasing. We're getting all of that ready.

We are getting ready the ability to receive cannabis from licensed producers and to distribute that to legal retailers throughout the province when that is put in place. We're also putting in place an

ability to approve retailers, check the backgrounds of those retailers as well as every person working for them. The government of Alberta is going to, if I could suggest, do the lion's share of this work with regard to getting cannabis ready for distribution throughout the province.

Certainly, municipalities have asked to be at the table with regard to the sharing of revenues at some point when those revenues actually net out positively, and we really don't know when that will be. It could be in a couple of years' time, more or less. We will work in a co-ordinated fashion with municipalities, and we will have discussions with municipalities about that revenue sharing at some point in the future.

The approach to cannabis taxation with our federal government and other provincial partners across the country is the best way to get consistent pricing, Mr. Speaker, and to help drive out the illegal market. I think that on that point I agree with the Member for Calgary-West, that that is a critical aspect of all of this.

The specific tax on cannabis is no different than applying product-specific charges on other commodities such as provincial fuel and tobacco taxes and liquor markups. That's the only way we can ensure that Alberta can apply a similar level of total tax compared to other provinces. As was noted, there is no sales tax in this province, so we need to ensure that our pricing in this province is consistent with other provinces. The federal government has agreed to, on behalf of Alberta, make the sale of each gram consistent with the approximate average of other provinces. I did mention that we're going to be as efficient as possible with administering the costs and complying with the requirements around cannabis taxation, and if it's handled by the feds instead of us setting up our own process, that's going to be more cost-efficient.

I just want to look at a few of the other thoughts that were brought up by the Member for Calgary-West. Of course, we'll not dismiss municipalities and their efforts to do the best job they can in their communities. They're closest to their communities, so I think it makes sense that at some point in the future there be discussions about this with them, and there will be. They know their communities best, and they more likely know what the mores are than us sitting in Edmonton and making laws that affect them. We've made them permissive so that they could decide to do things differently if they chose, and some of them, most notably Edmonton and Calgary, have. But, again, we're not forecasting positive income on this until 2020, 2021.

I think those were some of the issues that were brought up that I believe needed to be further clarified.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta is responding to a federal government initiative. We're responding with a full suite or a complement of processes in this province that will continue to place safety very highly in our communities, place very highly the lack of legitimate cannabis getting into the hands of young people. We don't want that. We want to make sure that our communities are great places to live, work, and to recreate, and that's why we're doing the responsible thing like putting a process in place before the legalization of cannabis. I think that's as Albertans would expect.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Before calling the vote on the motion, the Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Feehan: I seek unanimous consent to revert to one-minute bells for the rest of the evening.

[Unanimous consent granted]

[Government Motion 24 carried]

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

Bill 10

An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements

Mr. McIver moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 10, An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements, be amended by deleting all the words after “that” and substituting the following:

Bill 10, An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements, be not now read a second time because the Assembly is of the view that the bill does not provide sufficient detail to ensure there is adequate protection for property owners to avoid the type of litigation that has arisen with the PACE programs in California.

[Debate adjourned on the amendment May 17: Mr. Drysdale speaking]

The Speaker: Any members who wish to speak to the amendment to Bill 10? The Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's always a pleasure to rise in this Chamber and speak to legislation that affects all Albertans – today is no exception; today we speak to Bill 10, An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements – and specifically to speak to the reasoned amendment that my colleague from Calgary-Hays proposed.

8:00

Bill 10 was introduced in order to allow municipalities to establish a program that would help private property owners make energy efficiency upgrades. This bill also allows or enables municipalities to pass a bylaw, a bylaw which creates the property assessed clean energy program, or PACE. The intent of the bill is to offer the instrument for property owners to finance affordable energy efficiency, renewable energy, and water conservation projects or upgrades to their property.

Now, the idea is that the municipality would be expected to borrow funds from private lenders and then use those funds to front the cost of the upgrade. The municipality would then put the cost of the upgrade plus the interest onto the property owner's tax bill, and the said property owner would then pay for the said upgrade over time through their municipal tax bill on an annual basis.

I call that glorified financing or backdoor financing. There's no other way, I don't think, to put it. I think it was called innovative financing on the government's technical briefing. Backdoor financing has already been in place for several states down south of the border for some time. I believe that California was the first state in the union to implement the PACE program. I could be wrong about that, but they've had it for several years. I'll talk about that a little bit later.

You know, Mr. Speaker, there are a few people on the government side of the House that have spent time in the role of opposition members in the Alberta Legislature – I don't know that there are any in the House tonight – but some have been opposition members quite recently as well. So whether the people that were here when they were opposition members have shared with the rest of their colleagues what the duty of the opposition is in this House is something that we don't know.

But the reality is that on this side of the House we are challenged with the task of reviewing proposed legislation as it is our role and responsibility in this House to ensure that what is proposed for the benefit of Albertans through government legislation is expressed and phrased in such a way as to ensure that the purpose and the intent of the proposed legislation is indeed achieved and that there's no danger of unintended consequences occurring. Mr. Speaker,

from this side of the House we believe that the proposed legislation is not quite ready at this time because the program that is to be enabled, if left as it is presented without any further detail, will potentially have the chance to cause Albertans possible financial difficulty.

Like I said, I do have a copy of the original technical document that the government gave to those that attended the bill briefing, and it starts off talking about exactly what I've already said, how property owners will be able to finance renewable energy projects, which would constitute upgrades to their properties, and how repayment would be collected through property owners' municipal tax bills. Now, that reminds me a lot of a program that we have used in Alberta for quite some time called off-site levies, which have been successful; don't get me wrong.

Again, the document that the government gave us at the bill briefing made it very plain that large and mid-sized cities were not interested in administering the program or incurring any administrative costs. They also weren't interested in a lending role for the program. The briefing document on page 7 asserted that “it is envisioned Energy Efficiency Alberta will administer the program” and that the lending role would be provided through agreements with that agency. Now, that, I suppose, relieves the municipalities' concerns about having to have a role of lending in this program, but the words “it is envisioned” I think mean that we would picture the role of the lender mentally, especially in some future event.

Now, in all fairness, I don't believe I've heard the minister state unequivocally that Energy Efficiency Alberta will indeed be the administrator of the PACE program. If he has, I stand to be corrected. The fact is that Energy Efficiency Alberta has not been named in the legislation as the administrator or the lender of the PACE program. What I do know, Mr. Speaker, is that the minister stated last week that the legislation is the number one source that we have in order to get our information. But, once again, the information regarding Energy Efficiency Alberta isn't available in the legislation.

While I'm at it, I believe that the minister indicated that indeed there was a mistake on the government website. One of my colleagues brought up a potential mistake that stated that municipalities would install and pay for upgrades on private property. That certainly contradicts the information within the briefing document. I guess from where we're at here, we weren't involved in what information was given to the municipalities, but the question is: what were the municipalities told? Which version? I just wonder if that doesn't point out, you know, just a little bit, that there could be some uncertainty among those who would use this legislation. One document says one thing, and another says something else. That just lends more credence to the amendment that my colleague from Calgary-Hays has put forth here.

What about financing? We were told during the technical briefing – a data sheet was presented – that it is envisioned that private lending institutions will indeed be the lenders of the PACE program. But does anyone – this is a question for me – who applies to have energy efficiency programs done on their property qualify? It appears that eligibility for this program is chiefly to be based on property information rather than what I would call the industry standard in lending, which assesses the applicant's income and which seeks credit information about the individual applying for the financing before any monies or in this case property upgrades are completed.

You know, it looks like qualifying for the PACE program loan would be rather easy. Is there no risk assessment done on the borrower? Those are things that we don't know yet. I guess that another question is: who does that assessment? Another question is:

is the borrower aware of the interest rates for a loan that is to be paid off through his property taxes? Here's another question. If the borrower's history with finances is suspect, does he still qualify for the loan? For instance, if the borrower has a history of delinquency on debt repayment or, worse yet, has a history of delinquency on tax payment, does the property owner still qualify?

I mean, I can look into the legislation to find that under section 7 on page 7, proposed section 390.9(a), a regulation may be made "respecting eligibility." That means that understanding how those questions will be answered will not be debated here in this House. That will all be done by regulation. That is decided around the Executive Council table. Now, does that sound like something that could put Albertans at risk? Just a question without malice. That's how I ask that question. Does that mean that the government is asking us to trust them rather than provide some answers for the users?

Consider seniors in this province. Of course, we all know that many seniors live on fixed incomes. If they haven't had some kind of an assessment as to repayment of this loan for their energy efficiency upgrades that would be paid back through their property taxes, are they at risk of losing their property if they cannot make the additional payment on their taxes for several years? That's what happens in municipalities when somebody doesn't pay their taxes. There's a real possibility at the end of the day that the property will be put up for sale. It can be sold at auction. I don't see anything in the legislation that refers to that kind of a scenario at all.

8:10

There is another point that is left to regulation under the same section 390.9:

The Minister may make regulations respecting clean energy improvements, including, without limitation, regulations . . .

(e) respecting the disclosure of clean energy improvement agreements to prospective purchasers of property.

I'm going to reference the United States and the issues that they've had with the PACE program, and I know it's been talked about here before and the minister has likely heard all this before. I know the minister will probably stand up and tell me that the Fair Trading Act protects consumers. Well, to be honest, I believe that the Fair Trading Act likely does protect consumers when it comes to exerting undue pressure or influence on a consumer; when it comes to being deceptive, misleading, or ambiguous about the terms and consequences of a transaction; when it comes to many types of unfair pricing practices, charging fees without informing customers in advance and using terms or conditions that are harsh, oppressive, or excessively one-sided or misrepresenting that

a supplier's representation that goods or services have sponsorship, approval, performance, characteristics, accessories, ingredients, quantities, components, uses, benefits or other attributes that they do not have.

I took that right out of the act, sir. I quoted it word for word.

As I look at the act, as far as I can see, it doesn't pertain to anything like what may happen in the PACE program, certainly what we know has happened in the PACE program in California. In California PACE has been an option for several years for property owners that want to do energy upgrades for their property but don't have cash upfront. The complaint by county supervisors is that the program places liens on property owners that can make it difficult to sell or difficult to refinance a property. The loan is different from a standard mortgage. It is given out by private companies and is paid off by a property owner's property tax. The county, or in our case the municipality, then puts a lien on the property until that debt is paid.

Now, last week the minister stated – last week is not right. The week before the minister stated that it's also not going to be the

municipality that pays for these energy projects and that Energy Efficiency Alberta isn't going to be the one that's paying for these upgrades. There will be a third-party lender. That being said, it looks like this program looks a lot like the States' program.

What happens after the loan is made is what the U.S. realtors are talking about. Down there the property owner was told that the debt that was incurred to do energy upgrades could be passed on to the next purchaser of the property. Apparently, according to the realtors, that never happens. When a buyer purchases a property with energy efficient upgrades, they are buying those amenities. When the property has a lien on it, even though it is through annual taxes, this is a debt against the property. In that case, purchasers will expect that the debt will be cleaned up before they purchase the property, that the lien will be erased.

It's just like if you borrow \$10,000 or \$30,000 or something to do a reno on your property. I think it would be fair to say that a prospective buyer is not going to pay for that refinancing. Now, down in California it seems that the property owner is usually unable to pass on PACE-related debt to the buyer. I'm afraid, once again, that I can't see anything in the legislation, Mr. Speaker, that tells me that an Alberta property buyer is going to accept PACE liens when buying a property with PACE upgrades.

Consider if a buyer agrees to take on the incurred debt that comes with a PACE property. That buyer then would have to qualify for this additional property tax in their mortgage as well. You'd have to qualify for the debt as well as the . . .

The Speaker: Hon. members, under 29(2)(a), any questions or comments to the Member for Little Bow? Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was riveted to hear about some of these concerns that realtors are bringing forward, and I would ask that the member finish his speech.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess, as I was saying, the proposed purchaser would then have to qualify for money that would actually pay the lien off as well. According to feedback that our caucus has received from Genworth Canada, the largest private residential mortgage issuer in Canada, any PACE property taxes would be included in their calculations of an individual's mortgage. This means that any potential buyer with a Genworth-insured mortgage approved for a PACE property would be able to afford a more expensive property, likely with the energy efficiency upgrades that are already paid off.

It appears that California's advice to those that were thinking of using the PACE program – the PACE program has stayed. County supervisors and realtors that have been involved with this PACE program suggested that it would be wise to spend substantial time in the home or the property if using this program or plan to keep the property as a rental property. That would be good use of the PACE program in their opinion.

Once again and without any malice of any kind, the minister told my colleagues that they only need to go to the legislation for all answers. Frankly, this legislation doesn't say anything about the safeguards for Albertans in any of the circumstances that I just mentioned. The Official Opposition's job is to make sure that legislation presented in this House is fair and responsible and palatable for Albertans. As I said before, Mr. Speaker, this is simply glorified financing.

You know, Mr. Speaker, there are already a lot of lending services for home improvements, from lines of credit to second mortgages to the CHIP reverse mortgage program. These services

involve proper qualifications, proper qualification standards that protect the property owner and the lending companies. That tends to beg the question as to why the program is necessary.

Mr. Speaker, we in this House are charged with making a decision about whether or not the legislation should proceed now. We have to decide if the legislation is clear and concise for those Albertans that it will affect now. Considering that the legislation doesn't answer a lot of the questions that I brought up, how are we supposed to do that? I heard the minister say that he will be consulting the stakeholders through the summer and bringing the legislation back in the fall for the final decision. I hope I heard that right. If not, then this legislation is just a little too vague for me.

It seems that there are some questions that my colleagues and I have asked that are not intended to be out of line in any shape or form. They're serious questions about much of what this legislation is lacking, which, in my opinion, is detail. Of course, my biggest concern is how a property owner sells the property he has that is involved with the PACE program. Passing on an incurred debt for energy upgrades to a buyer of a property doesn't make sense to me. Those are two separate actions. I can't for the life of me understand how a buyer would purchase a property that has a lien on it, especially when their mortgage qualifies them for a property without existing unpaid improvements.

I haven't seen anything, including the Fair Trading Act, that talks about a property owner selling a property with PACE attached, so how are we to determine whether to support this legislation that will simply have difficult questions explained away in regulations and may negatively affect Albertans?

As I conclude, Mr. Speaker, I want to pass on some concerns of the Alberta Real Estate Association. Section 7 of the legislation under proposed section 390.7 on page 6 reads:

If, after a clean energy improvement agreement has been made, the council refinances the debt created to pay for the clean energy improvement that is the subject of that agreement at an interest rate other than the rate estimated when the clean energy improvement agreement was made, the council, with respect to future years, may revise the amount required to recover the costs of the clean energy improvement included in that agreement to reflect the change in the interest rate.

Specifically this provision introduces... [The time limit for questions and comments expired]

The Speaker: Hon. members, any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to rise to speak to Bill 10, An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements. Yes, this is an act that intends to provide a mechanism for property owners to finance affordable energy efficiency, renewable energy, water conservation projects, upgrades to their homes, and several other things.

8:20

The Speaker: Hon. member, to clarify, it's on the amendment.

Mr. Orr: That's correct.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Orr: Yes. I am speaking to the recent amendment, and that was the next piece that I'm getting to.

I think the ideal and the minister's intention here are truly honourable and positive in intent. It's a great goal, but I do have serious concerns that it might be the wrong way to get there or that there is a great deal of need for taking a look at that. Because of that, I think that we should treat this as a reasoned amendment, that

we should support the reasoned amendment and take a little bit better look at this and make this a truly safe option for Albertans to develop clean energy and green energy in their homes.

I'm a hundred per cent in support of green energy. I think I've said in this House before that I built a house just a couple of years ago. I did insulation to 50 per cent above code simply because it's smart, it's good value, it saves energy. That's both the walls and the ceilings. I also did not put in any hydrocarbon heating within that house. It's entirely renewable and electricity. Again, it baffles me that we need all kinds of government programs to inspire people to do things that are good and that are positive, that are actually helpful for our world and actually beneficial to us. They do save money. They're just plain the right thing to do.

Now, when we begin to create all of these tinkering, I guess I think of them as, and projects whereby government can busy themselves and make themselves look like they're trying to make the world a better place, I'm concerned because the unintended consequences often are much more challenging than we first think they are. I think that we really do need to learn from those who have been down this road before and who have discovered some very, very serious potholes in the road or, I might even say, some bridges out over some difficult spans.

The reasoned amendment does ask that the bill not be read a second time now. The reason for that is that it does not provide sufficient details, and particularly it does not ensure the protections for Alberta property owners to avoid the kinds of pain and litigation and municipal difficulties that have arisen with PACE programs in other jurisdictions. Some jurisdictions are actually now even cancelling their engagement of PACE programs altogether because of the difficulties and the problems that they've encountered. Now, I'm not saying that it can't be made workable, but I do know that in light of the experiences of others it's not necessarily that easy to make it workable and safe and efficient and that, in fact, it takes a very, very careful look at how we get there and what we are leading Albertans to.

The bill on the surface does look like a good piece of legislation, I confess. It is potentially intended to help advance clean energy improvements in Alberta, potentially support the development of more clean energy in the province. But while this is all well and good, the reality is that there are some very serious concerns, which I'd like to enumerate in the next few moments.

One of the concerns that I hold with this particular piece of legislation is that in the province maybe more now than ever in history the difficulty of buying a home is actually rising, particularly for low- or fixed-income owners. We have a combination of two major headwinds to home ownership in Alberta. One is that we have experienced in the last months significantly more difficult mortgage rules at a federal level, which are going to make qualifying for a home much harder for a lot of people who are sort of on the borderline income level to qualify for the particular home that they want to buy. Those more difficult mortgage rules are going to certainly disqualify some people from buying.

Then you add on top of that that the utility prices for a home are escalating significantly, the carbon tax and other reasons. The reality here is that utilities are part of the calculation for mortgage qualification. If we were to imagine that here in Alberta that we will possibly not too far in the distant future have the same kind of utility rates that fellow Canadians in Ontario are experiencing, the reality is that we could be looking at utility bills being very closely equivalent to the mortgage financing bills that people are having to pay.

In my riding – I just checked – the average price of a lower end home is only \$250,000-ish. Financing for that is not that much, but

if you were to add Ontario-style utility rates on top of that, the utility costs would almost equal the mortgage cost. Those kinds of obstacles to home ownership are in fact going to make it extremely difficult for many people to buy an entry-level home. Then we're going to begin to add further debt burden onto them. But in this case, with the PACE program, they may not really realize the impact of that additional debt. By allowing them to participate in these programs regardless of income level checks, it could mean disaster for their families, as has happened in other locations. It could mean the loss of their property.

I'm just concerned that the details of these kinds of things and the due diligence of making consumers aware of the implications of this kind of additional debt burden on the purchase of their home may actually push those who are already struggling to experience home ownership into a deeply difficult position. That's why I think that we also need to really ask ourselves – it isn't in the legislation – if there should be a required educational piece that goes along with this program. In other jurisdictions the problems have arisen from contractors and others who promote and push the program as a way for them to do their business, but the homeowners don't quite understand. When you're only sold the rosy side of everything, people don't understand the risks and the potential dangers of the program. It could cause serious issues. I think there needs to be a required educational piece for every person who signs on to this.

The question is: is that going to happen? Who's going to be responsible for that? Who's going to be accountable for that? In other jurisdictions the qualification of potential purchasers got left completely out of everybody's thought. It's not the contractor's responsibility to do finance qualifying. There isn't a bank directly involved. The municipality doesn't want to qualify the financial ability of potential consumers. Who does this? It has led to significant difficulties, particularly when you have a program in which eligibility is not based on income levels or on how much debt a person is already carrying. There's no requirement to even check credit scores to see if they're capable of carrying this extra debt load. These are major concerns. What will happen to those who unwittingly and unintendedly end up in a situation where their payments are more than they can afford to manage? Who's going to bail them out? Are they going to get bailed out, or are they going to then become just further victims of unintended consequences of a bill?

I think we also really have to ask the question of contractors. I mean, I understand they want to make a sale. There's an incentive to do that. There's an incentive to promote extensive upgrades. There's an incentive to upsell. You know, you get going and: well, just add this and add this. Every piece they can add on improves the viability of the job for them, but where does it leave the homeowner? As I said a moment ago, it's not the contractor's responsibility to qualify that. Who's going to monitor and hold accountable the contractors who sell and upsell this whole thing?

You know, we try to put in consumer protection, but I don't see it here in this particular bill. I really hope that the minister will resolve these issues over the summer since he says that that's his intent.

Another problem I have with this legislation that's been brought to my attention is that buyers and sellers all of a sudden have a point of difficulty in reaching an agreement. Homes have definitely become harder to sell in regions where there are PACE loans attached to the home. The new purchaser doesn't want to buy them. The seller maybe doesn't even get enough money out of their house to actually cover the thing. It can lead to very disastrous situations, especially in those circumstances where families are forced to sell because of financial necessity.

8:30

I mean, even in this downturn here in Alberta the number of repossessed homes has gone up substantially. I could see that being even worse if there are PACE agreements attached to many of these houses. It's a potentially disastrous brew of things. There needs to be protection in place.

You know, it took many decades in Canada for us to figure out how to create a safe mortgage system that doesn't get mortgagees in trouble. The Americans didn't figure that out very well, so they had their financial crisis a few years back. At least in Canada we were able to protect most of our citizens from those kinds of predatory mortgage practices. I want to make sure that this doesn't become a predatory loan attachment to their taxes that is going to create the same sort of difficulty in these kinds of situations.

It's a necessary thing that these questions be examined. Really, the way this looks at the moment, the only necessary requirement to have a PACE program is that you have a home that needs upgrading. It doesn't matter if you qualify. It doesn't matter if you can afford it. It doesn't matter if your credit limit contributes to it. If you've got a home and you want it, you can have it. I mean, it's the highest level of retail mortgaging: put everything you buy on your credit card. Then people end up finding themselves unable to meet their credit card debt and having to declare personal bankruptcy. People need to be aware of these risks and rewards.

Another concern that I have is: what will the terms of this borrowing, or debt attachment, to their title actually be defined as? I mean, what will the interest rates be? How often will the interest be triggered? What fees and penalties will be involved? What kind of repossession triggers will there be? Will there be any forgiveness of any kind for missed payments as you can get on a mortgage currently? There are so many questions here. The reality is that in many cases, I suspect, you can probably get better money – let's remember that this is just all about buying the use of money. You can probably buy money cheaper from a home equity loan or a line of credit than what these have proven to be in the U.S. Again, that needs to be taken into consideration. Will people be aware that they can actually shop around and get the same thing by just doing their own home equity line of credit or an equity loan? These are very real questions.

Making it supposedly so simple generally tends to be making it so simple that people get sucked into something they didn't quite understand, and then they have serious buyer's remorse after. We don't want to create an environment where our citizens have buyer's remorse. We try to protect them from predatory lending. Let's make sure we don't do that with this particular piece of legislation.

Another big piece of this, of course, also questions that need to be answered, again sort of just left to regulations – maybe; we hope; we'll see – is the requirement for disclosure. PACE property tax loans may not actually be clearly disclosed because there's no requirement on it. Most lenders would check the tax, but maybe not all do. I mean, I've had people come to me after having bought a house, and they find out things that they should have asked before they bought and that everybody would have thought they would have asked, but they didn't. There's nothing at all in this legislation that ensures transparency in selling a property with a PACE property tax piece added to it. I would hope that the real estate agencies will actually make that happen.

The Speaker: Any questions under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you. I, again, am very interested to hear about how poorly rolled out this PACE program is, especially when you see

the failures across the United States when it comes to this, so if the member could please continue, I would enjoy it to hear the rest of his speech.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Orr: Yeah. I won't take too much more time, but I do have some concerns that we make this thing safe and actually good for our Albertan citizens. Leaving too many things to regulation is difficult. I mean, we have Bill 6, the farm tax. We still don't have the regulations for it. How long will it take to get safe and workable regulations for this? Some of these things need to be worked out a little bit sooner rather than later, and these questions should be answered before the legislation is rolled out rather than roll it out and then try to figure out how to make it safe later. That's part of my concern. To just trust that somehow it'll all work out in the end generally leaves a few victims along the way who learn the hard way, and by them we learn what has to be fixed. I would hope that we don't have to do that kind of thing.

While bank mortgage rules are tighter, there's real challenge for people who are new homeowners or seeking to become new homeowners at least, and I just think we need to be very careful how we approach this.

So I would encourage everybody in the House to actually support the reasoned amendment that's before us at the moment. Thank you.

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

Any other members who wish to speak? The Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise this evening and speak to this amendment. Currently, as I understand it, there are 31 states in the U.S. as well as one province in Canada that have PACE programs. Some of the states include California, Michigan, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska. We also have British Columbia. So there's quite a wealth of knowledge about PACE programs in different jurisdictions. I believe that using the lessons learned from those jurisdictions, it's possible for us in Committee of the Whole to introduce any sorts of amendments that might be helpful in making the bill more robust for both municipalities and consumers.

PACE is a financing tool. It has capital coming primarily from private investors who are looking for secure, long-term investments. While I can appreciate some of the comments here regarding education of consumers and contractors and municipalities – I think those are all very important – at the end it's a financing tool that has a side effect of being an incentive to install retrofits for energy efficiency. But the most important thing to remember is that it is private capital by and large that's going to be financing this. They're looking for secure, long-term investments, and they're not apt to be lending money that's going to be defaulted on. So I think that's something else we want to keep in mind in terms of more information about this particular bill.

Another point that I'd like to make is that right now solar installers are already facing significant business downturn while consumers are waiting for municipalities to create their programs and implement them. That means that right now they are seeing a downturn in their investment. If we were to pass this particular amendment, refer the bill to committee, that means that there will be an even further downturn for solar installers. These are by and large independent small and medium businesses, and they certainly can't withstand further delays in their income streams that would be as a result of referring this bill to committee.

For all of those reasons, I cannot support this amendment, and I'd like to encourage my colleagues to vote against it as well. Thank you.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 8:40 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Barnes	Nixon	Taylor
Cyr	Orr	van Dijken
Ellis	Schneider	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hoffman	Miranda
Bilous	Horne	Nielsen
Carlier	Jansen	Piquette
Carson	Kazim	Renaud
Ceci	Kleinstauber	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Larivee	Sabir
Dach	Littlewood	Schreiner
Dang	Malkinson	Shepherd
Drever	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha
Eggen	McKitrick	Turner
Feehan	McLean	Westhead
Goehring	McPherson	Woollard
Hinkley	Miller	

Totals:	For – 8	Against – 38
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[Motion on amendment to second reading of Bill 10 lost]

The Speaker: Hon. members, we will now resume debate on the motion for second reading. Anyone?

The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs to close debate.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to all the members that were up speaking earlier. I appreciate it. There were a lot of good questions that were asked. As one of the members said, I did say that we are going to consult through the spring and the summer – well, I guess it's straight into summer now – and bring it back in the fall with all of that information to make sure that everybody can vote on that. That's what we do in this House, that's what I did with the MGA, and that's what I promised to do here.

I'm excited about it. I've talked to many builders, realtors, homeowners, private homeowners, nonprofits that are excited about it. I'm excited to get it going and to have some conversations outside of this House with more people so we can bring something positive forward that's going to be a game changer for this province.

With that, I'll just close debate. Thank you.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 8:46 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hoffman	Miranda
Bilous	Horne	Nielsen
Carlier	Jansen	Piquette

Carson	Kazim	Renaud
Ceci	Kleinstauber	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Larivee	Sabir
Dach	Littlewood	Schreiner
Dang	Malkinson	Shepherd
Drever	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha
Eggen	McKitrick	Turner
Feehan	McLean	Westhead
Goehring	McPherson	Woollard
Hinkley	Miller	

8:50

Against the motion:

Barnes	Nixon	Taylor
Cyr	Orr	van Dijken
Ellis	Schneider	

Totals: For – 38 Against – 8

[Motion carried; Bill 10 read a second time]

Bill 13

An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future

Mr. Cooper moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future, be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future, be not now read a second time but that it be read a second time this day three months hence.

[Adjourned debate on the amendment May 17: Ms McKitrick]

The Speaker: The hon. member?

The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to talk, of course, about the hoist amendment and Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future, an act to secure Alberta's energy future, because it's not that. This NDP government made huge mistakes on the backs of Albertans, on the backs of families, communities, the next generation and, of course, had to react by introducing a capacity market. I want to go there for a second and talk about the huge errors that this government has made financially and in their implementation, but when we're talking billions and billions of dollars, when we're talking about an essential part of an economy or a community or a household such as electricity, it only makes sense to take some extra time, to have some experts, to hear some different opinions, to take a long, long look at things to make sure that we get legislation, regulations, and any changes that are deemed favourable or necessary correct.

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

Of course, this government's need to push this through so quickly because of the uncertainty, because of the lack of security in the energy industry has maybe made them feel that they have to charge ahead at light speed, but again it'll be Albertans that will be facing all the consequences of that.

Let's start with the first step. Mr. Speaker, under the federal regulations Alberta was meant to phase out 12 coal-fired generating plants, as per the previous government's reasonable agreement, by 2029. Instead, what this NDP government did was doubled down and phased out the six remaining coal-fired plants that could have run past 2029. Keephills 3 was meant to go until 2061 and Genesee 3 to 2055.

So it was a stroke of a pen by the Premier, an okay by the Energy minister, but, Mr. Speaker, what that cost was \$1.36 billion. You've got to ask yourself: who did that cost? It cost Albertans; it cost ratepayers; it cost taxpayers. Well, what it means, first of all, by my quick calculations, is that's 11,333 nurses that won't be on the front lines to help Albertans have babies, fix a sprain, or something worse. It's also 54 schools that could have been built, 54 schools that could have been built from scratch, never mind modernized, never mind improved, and never mind that could have gone to help rural Alberta.

You know, Mr. Speaker, this is one of the reasons that this amendment is necessary, so that we can get a gauge of the further cost, we can get a look at the further damage that this government is doing to our economy.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I want to come back to where we were at under the previous government: 2016's wholesale price of electricity averaged 1.7 cents per kilowatt hour, of course, as a result of the open, competitive market. It was meeting a fast-growing demand for electricity in Canada. Now, what I want to talk about is the fact that from 2001 to 2016 competing generators added over 8,000 megawatts of new supply; 8,000 megawatts. We had a situation in Alberta where the supply was about 50 per cent greater than the demand. What a great position for Alberta families, communities, and businesses to be in. What a great position, where we had a bid-in electric generation situation, where we had competition, where we had great pricing, we had the opportunity, and we had growth of demand.

Of course, what this has done, Mr. Speaker, has made it so that electricity generators will be paid not to produce; will be paid to be ready in a competitive market. I want to talk for a second about this. We all know that the government had to put on a 6.8 cent cap.

[The Speaker in the chair]

I've heard it many, many times in this House, but it still is astonishing that it wasn't mentioned. I'm still surprised when I sit and talk to Albertans in coffee shops and I tell them that the taxpayer is the one that covers the cap for the ratepayers. My goodness, the ratepayer has a cap, but guess what? The taxpayer doesn't. No cap for the taxpayer.

Mr. Speaker, I think we were only about eight days into this fiscal year, so somewhere around April 8, when we actually hit, I think, 8 or 9 cents a megawatt, already over the 6.8 cent cap. That day cost Albertans I believe the number was \$9 million. Of course, the report that I spoke about earlier in the House today, the debt and the interest burden that this government has placed on younger Albertans: I put it out there that it's \$50,000 in extra tax that a young Albertan who's between, I think, 25 and 35 years old is going to have to pay, \$50,000 in extra tax just on this NDP interest. I put it out there that, you know, that person could instead buy a truck, take their family on a vacation. I put it out there that if that money was invested in an RSP, it might grow to \$100,000 or \$200,000, and that person could take care of their retirement. I had financial planners e-mail me and say: "I can do much better than that. Give me an opportunity to help that young man or that young lady."

Mr. Speaker, I contrast that with this government, that first of all adds that \$50,000 burden to our young ladies and our young men and now adds this burden of higher electricity rates, with no cap on the tax, with no cap on how much the taxpayer may end up paying the ratepayer. Can you imagine what that could grow to for our kids and our grandkids and do to our ability to compete in the market?

You know, this NDP government has scared a lot of investment, a lot of business out of Alberta, because we know that today's deficit, today's debt, is tomorrow's tax, especially on business. But

think of what it's doing to our youth, our youth that are faced with this additional \$50,000 of NDP interest tax burden. Can you imagine, Mr. Speaker, if the price of natural gas goes up? Let's say that the price of natural gas were to double. Could you imagine what that would do to utility rates? It would absolutely be devastating to our young families and to our economy, to our seniors on fixed incomes and to all Albertans.

9:00

Mr. Speaker, I feel the need to talk a little bit about Medicine Hat, the area that you and I both represent. I know that we're both so grateful to do that. Of course, Medicine Hat just attracted two substantial businesses, both who are considerable, huge electricity users. There comes a time when maybe these companies go to a different jurisdiction because this government has pushed it too far. Now, I don't know what arrangements the city of Medicine Hat made with them. I'm very, very grateful for the work that the people did and the opportunity to have these companies there, but I do know that a favourable electricity deal was part of it. It's a competitive world. These companies can go to many different jurisdictions. We've seen oil and gas companies move investment to Kazakhstan and Iran, jurisdictions that they feel are much safer, much more stable than an NDP Canadian jurisdiction. Think of what this destabilizing of our electricity market may do.

Mr. Speaker, it only makes sense to me that we hoist this bill, we go out and we talk to the experts. My goodness, there are all kinds of experts in this industry, from AESO to the industrial users, to market surveillance administrators and consumer groups, who all have a huge vested interest – a huge vested interest – in ensuring that our electricity prices are competitive, our supply is stable, and there's not too much risk.

Mr. Speaker, again, I feel the need to say that that risk includes the risk to the taxpayer, not just the ratepayer. We all know that when we looked at our utility bills the last, you know, few years, the cheap part of the electricity bills was the electric generation. What a surprise that eight or nine days into this new fiscal year we were already at 8 cents. We were already having the taxpayer have to dig into his pocket to pay the ratepayer. I think it was just short of \$80 million that the Finance minister put in his budget for what he thinks will be the year's total for what the taxpayer will have to pay the ratepayer for securing Alberta's energy future.

Mr. Speaker, I think it'll be a few years till we see the total cost of this capacity market, this paying people not to produce, this situation where we were so ideological that we had to close down plants early, where we had to expose Albertans to all the risks of natural gas going up, where we had to expose Albertans to a less competitive market for creating jobs and for creating the wealth that we need to tax.

It has surprised me in the Alberta Legislature – and I've said this before – how we don't take more time with a lot of these bills and we don't send them, like I understand the federal government does, to permanent standing committees or committees where experts, where Albertans, where consumers, where investors can be brought in, and they can tell us their side of the story. I hear daily about a big solar plant that's taking up, I think, maybe a quarter section of land and is only 4 per cent efficient. Mr. Speaker, I'll be the first to admit that I hear that in Tim Hortons; I hear that in The Roasterie; I hear that, you know, in the coffee shops. I don't know that it's a hundred per cent accurate, so wouldn't it be great to have the experts in here? Wouldn't it be great for us to hoist this bill and take some time and actually give us time to go out and see what this capacity market will cost? Wouldn't it be great to hear maybe how the city of Medicine Hat

found a little advantage and was able to attract those two businesses when other parts of Alberta couldn't?

No, no. Instead, that's not what we do. What we do is: because when the NDP decided that they had to shut down some fairly new coal electric generation plants quickly at the cost of I think the number was \$1.3 billion, we have to double down. We have to now make sure, again, because the renewable market is not as reliable as a coal or a natural gas market, that we don't have disruptions. So we have to charge ahead and pay people just to be ready to produce electricity just in case we need them.

At the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, somebody has to pay these bills. Somebody has to make sure at the end of the day that the debits equal the credits and we don't pass on any more hardship to our kids.

The Speaker: Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat?

Seeing and hearing none, the hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

Mr. Taylor: Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take this opportunity to speak on the hoist amendment for Bill 13. I think it's an honour to be able to talk about this because it's important to take caution when looking at this bill.

I believe that if we step back and take a bit more time, which a hoist amendment allows us to do, then we can see more clearly the consequences – or should I say the unintended consequences – that might happen as a result of passing a bill such as this. We owe it to ourselves, to current Albertans, and to all future Albertans to make sure that we get this bill right.

I frankly feel that it's necessary to speak to some of the components of the bill as it truly changes how our electricity market works. This bill takes us from an energy-only market to a capacity market, and in doing so, the electricity prices will be more expensive. As the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat has talked about, we're already seeing that. The NDP would argue that the cost to the consumer is capped and the price cannot go beyond 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour until 2021. The government is so offside with this that they had to set aside \$74,310,000 in the budget to look after the potential shortfall of revenues to pay for this misguided agenda from the proceeds of the carbon tax.

What if this isn't enough to cover the costs? I'd like us to go back a couple of years so that we can see that there was a formulation, I think, of a plan by this government so the average costs could be paid for not by the consumers necessarily but by all Albertans in the form of debt. You have to bear with me because I'm going to go back to 2015.

In 2015 I recall that we were sitting here and we were discussing the budget. That was in the fall of 2015, and the government at the time said: we want to borrow up to 15 per cent of GDP. They said: "Well, we'll never use that much money, but trust us, we want to borrow that much money. It's just to be able to hedge, just in case we needed to have to borrow that much." Unfortunately, four months later we came back into the Legislature and we had another bill, another financial bill. It was Bill 10, Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016, which at the time took away the accountability of the Legislature with regard to how much it can borrow.

Looking back, then we knew that there was a problem, but at the time we didn't altogether know where the problem was heading. Going back to 2016 again, we got to have another bill, which kind of lends itself to what we have today with this bill. We had Bill 34, Electric Utilities Amendment Act, a bill that is arguably one of the smallest bills that I recall seeing in this Legislature, but it had

tremendous consequences. Really, what the act said – and it only had a couple of points to it – is that “The Electric Utilities Act is amended by this Act”. That was the first point. The second point:

The following is added after section 82:

Loans to the Balancing Pool and guarantee, 82.1 The President of Treasury Board [and] Minister of Finance may, on the recommendation of the Minister of Energy, make loans to the Balancing Pool and guarantee the obligations of the Balancing Pool.

Now we’re getting kind of a clearer picture of why they wanted to have the Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016: so they could borrow more money. Now we’re seeing that they have to borrow more money for this program as well. Here we see that they guarantee the obligations of the Balancing Pool by the Minister of Energy so that no matter how badly they messed up this file, they would always have a way to cover it. This will not be the consumers but the average taxpayer, who will be on the hook for whatever the shortfall is because the government can borrow whatever it takes on for this or any project and leave the taxpayers on the hook, Mr. Speaker.

Well, let’s just dip into this seemingly unending pot of debt that this government has set up through Bill 10, as I previously mentioned. This brings us to today. As a result of the coal-fired generation phase-out and the rush to push for 30 per cent renewables generation by 2030, the reliability of our electrical system seems to be compromised. The phase-out of coal-fired electricity: the federal government under Stephen Harper said that the existing plants built in the last 50 years would be grandfathered, meaning they would have up to 2030 to close or introduce carbon capture and storage technologies to reduce emissions. As you can see, Mr. Speaker, there was an option for these plants to continue on.

What effectively has happened here, too close to home in communities like Hanna, Forestburg, Keephills, for that matter, is a premature closure of their coal-fired plants, and that is, frankly, harmful to these communities. This bill is a result of this government’s plan to phase out coal or to push for renewables. In doing so, this NDP government has compromised the reliability of the electrical system and has made it so that the electricity prices will be more expensive and less reliable.

What I’d like to draw your attention to are the communities of Hanna, Forestburg, or generating plants like Keephills 3, which was to close by 2061, Mr. Speaker, or Genesee 3, which was to close in 2055. Coal-fired electricity has made up over half of the electrical generation up to this point and has provided us with a safe, stable, inexpensive, and reliable base that Albertans could rely on. They were paid for what they produced out of the capacity market. Using renewables, there seems to be a problem because the wind, well, doesn’t blow all the time, and the sun, you know, just doesn’t shine all the time. The backup plan is simple cycle peaker plant generation to cover off for the wind. AESO demands that there will be a 15 per cent reserve margin, and neither wind nor solar can be used in this factor.

The good folks in Hanna and Forestburg, in all of Alberta, that I’ve talked to seem to have zero trust. In my riding they have zero trust in the NDPs when it comes to the electricity market here. They can’t get their minds wrapped around it. In fact, not only is reliability a factor in why these folks have no confidence in their ability to deliver reliable power, but so is the harm that they are doing to these communities. This is what makes passing this amendment so important. It will give time to the government to fully consider what the trickle-down effect to these communities may entail.

Take Hanna, for example, which will be losing about 200 jobs, Mr. Speaker. Those are full-time, great jobs that you can raise a

family on, that are paid about \$90,000 per year per job. You know, that’s a tremendous loss. If you’ve been to Hanna, you’ll know it’s a very small town. It’s a tremendous loss for these families and the town. These are great-paying jobs that are just going to be lost.

Simple math, Mr. Speaker: \$90,000 per worker for 200 jobs is \$18 million. Eighteen million dollars is going to come out of that community. Perhaps that would not be a huge loss of income or jobs in places like Edmonton or Calgary in pure numbers, but for a town like Hanna, that’s 7.5 per cent of their population. If you did the same comparison to, say, the city of Calgary and you did an initiative that cost the city of Calgary 7.5 per cent at the stroke of a pen, then Calgary would lose about 90,000 jobs. Ninety thousand. What do you think would happen to the economy and the housing market in Calgary if you did that? Well, I can tell you that the market would tank. So why does this government think that Hanna won’t be affected in much the same way when much of this money and the great-paying jobs are taken out of it? Not only are these direct jobs affected, but then there’s less money to go out for dinner, and consequently the restaurants suffer. There’s less money to fix up your home, and the hardware stores suffer. And the list goes on.

What has this government done to create a plan? Well, they felt quite magnanimous, I can tell you, because what they did was that they gave the community of Hanna \$455,000. [interjection] Yeah, \$455,000. They’re losing \$18 million that they had in these jobs, but they’re giving \$455,000. Do you really think that that’s going to be enough to cover the jobs lost, the \$18 million in lost wages?

There’s a ripple effect that happens here in these communities. Take Forestburg, for example, where power is generated. Jobs have been lost. Towns like Halkirk, Alliance, Bashaw, Castor, Coronation, Donalda, Killam, and many more are going to feel the ripple effect just from Forestburg, with less money in the area. Most of these small towns will be impacted by the closure of coal-fired plants. All the pain that is hitting and will further hit these communities throughout rural Alberta is all for the sake of getting Alberta on what will likely be a more expensive, less reliable renewable generation system.

What seems to be missing from Bill 13 is an economic withholding. Companies that set up shop here in Alberta should not be receiving a capacity payment and then at the same time rejecting or denying the supplying of electricity when AESO wants electricity in order to spike electricity prices. This practice is intentionally pricing power generation out of the market to drive price spikes in many jurisdictions, and in many jurisdictions it is regarded as illegal. Without addressing it here in Bill 13, is this government accepting this behaviour and considering it permissible?

Here is another strong argument for hitting the pause button, as my good friend from Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills has suggested with his amendment. Mr. Speaker, this government is so concerned with new technologies and is putting money into them through their carbon emissions reduction plan. Given that coal is going to be used for power generation here in Alberta until 2030 – that’s another 12 years; it’s 12 more years till 2030 – these same coal plants will still be operating. For a government that claims to care about the environment, I have to wonder why there seems to be no investment – and you can correct me if I’m wrong – in the research and development of clean coal technology. I haven’t seen any clean coal technology investments coming out of this. Technology advancement could reduce Alberta’s emissions over the next 12 years. That would be a good thing.

If successful, these technologies could be exported to the world and have a far greater impact on the environment than any carbon tax or any domestic policy action within Canada because the rest of the world would be benefiting from lower carbon from the coal-

fired plants that are still going to carry on. As a bonus – the government should like this – they would be diversifying our economy here in Alberta and meeting one of the specific goals that this government has set out. I challenge this government to use our own resources, both people and products, to make coal-fired emissions meet the standard that the previous federal government had laid out and not wait 12 years and then just shut them down.

9:20

As long as I've been an MLA, Mr. Speaker – and I realize it's only been for a little over three years – I've had the privilege to speak to coal communities around Alberta and visit the various sites around Alberta. They truly – truly – take pride in what they do. They take pride in the fact that they have provided Alberta with clean, reliable, inexpensive electricity for many years. These same coal-fired plants and communities were and are willing to step up to the plate and make coal generation cleaner. This government, in my opinion, is missing a big chance here to diversify our economy and create a cleaner environment for both Alberta and the world and at the same time fight for Alberta jobs and cheap electricity. There are so many things that you could have.

In closing, I believe that we should all agree that this bill should be hoisted and not read for at least another three months, for the arguments that I've put forward and for the arguments of my colleagues and for the reasons that I've just stated, so that we can have a fulsome chance to talk about how to properly secure Alberta's future electricity and, further, to ensure that the reliability of our electricity system is not compromised as this government attempts to transition from an energy-only market to a capacity market. I believe that it is imperative to all Albertans that we look . . .

The Speaker: Are there any questions under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Battle River-Wainwright?

Are there any other members who wish to speak to the hoist amendment? The Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just have a few short remarks about this particular motion. I'm happy to stand in support of this motion. I think that the capacity market is pretty complex. There are a lot of different things that have to happen in order for this transition to be completed. It's extremely complex.

In January 2017 the Pembina Institute actually hosted a webinar to help stakeholders understand. It was called Capacity Markets 101. By slide 4 I was pretty confused; I felt quite lost. Slide 8 includes a number of variables that I'm not familiar with at all, including net CONE. I'm not too sure what that means. Variable resource requirement curve; system supply curve for annual, extended summer, and limited resources; clearing price: all of these things intersect in lots of different ways.

By slide 13 it becomes extremely complex: marginal value of system capacity, annual resource price adder – I don't think it's a snake; I think it's a price – extended summer price adder. The wheels of understanding, for me, just completely fell off.

Time is definitely required to more fully understand the bill, what the capacity market will look like as a result of the bill, to hear from stakeholders about how the bill will affect them, and to more clearly understand which pocket the costs will come from. Will it be a tax pocket, or will it be a consumer power bill pocket?

For those reasons, I'm happy to support this motion, and I urge everyone else to do the same.

The Speaker: Any questions or comments to the Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill under 29(2)(a)?

Does anyone wish to speak to the amendment?

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:24 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Barnes	McPherson	Schneider
Cyr	Nixon	Taylor
Ellis	Orr	van Dijken

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hoffman	Miller
Bilous	Horne	Nielsen
Carlier	Jansen	Piquette
Ceci	Kazim	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Kleinstauber	Sabir
Dach	Larivee	Schreiner
Dang	Littlewood	Shepherd
Drever	Malkinson	Turner
Eggen	McCuaig-Boyd	Westhead
Feehan	McKitrick	Woollard
Hinkley	McLean	

Totals:	For – 9	Against – 32
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[Motion on amendment to second reading of Bill 13 lost]

The Speaker: Now on the motion for second reading of Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Energy Future, as proposed by the hon. Minister of Service Alberta and Minister of Status of Women on behalf of the hon. Minister of Energy.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:29 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hoffman	Miranda
Bilous	Horne	Nielsen
Carlier	Jansen	Piquette
Carson	Kazim	Renaud
Ceci	Kleinstauber	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Larivee	Sabir
Dach	Littlewood	Schreiner
Dang	Malkinson	Shepherd
Drever	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha
Eggen	McKitrick	Turner
Feehan	McLean	Westhead
Goehring	Miller	Woollard
Hinkley		

Against the motion:

Barnes	McPherson	Schneider
Cyr	Nixon	Taylor
Ellis	Orr	van Dijken

Totals:	For – 37	Against – 9
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[Motion carried; Bill 13 read a second time]

Bill 18
Statutes Amendment Act, 2018

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to rise and move second reading of Bill 18, the Statutes Amendment Act, 2018.

This year the Statutes Amendment Act seeks to make 36 changes to 19 acts. I will shortly list the acts: A Better Deal for Consumers and Businesses Act, the Alberta Corporate Tax Act, Alberta Human Rights Act, An Act to Strengthen Municipal Government, the Auditor General Act, the Conflicts of Interest Act, the Consumer Protection Act, the Election Act, the Electronic Transactions Act, the Employment Standards Code, the Financial Administration Act, the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, the Municipal Government Act, the Occupational Health and Safety Act, the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act, the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act, the Public Service Act, the Public Service Employee Relations Act, the Vital Statistics Act.

As indicated at first reading, the amendments before you today are largely housekeeping in nature, updating details to align with similar legislation and current needs. They will provide greater clarity and efficiency in providing services to Albertans.

That being said, I ask all members to support this legislation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Any members wish to speak to Bill 18? The Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 18, the Statutes Amendment Act, 2018. I thank the hon. minister for bringing this bill forward to make a number of minor administrative or technical detail changes in law. I believe there is nothing controversial here and that the government is not authorizing any direct spending of money, nor are we making criminals out of law-abiding citizens with these changes in law. Bill 18 touches on laws administered by the departments of Justice and Solicitor General, Labour, Municipal Affairs, and Service Alberta. We broadly support the changes being proposed as they are relatively minor in nature.

But there is a change I want to highlight, and that is a change to the public service transparency compensation act. When I first went through Bill 18, I was surprised at how many times I read the addition of "Election Commissioner" in Bill 18. It appears that Bill 18 needs to make a change in order to allow the public disclosure of the Election Commissioner's salary. We noticed the need to add the Election Commissioner to the public service transparency compensation act.

Now, I find it interesting that back in the debate on Government Motion 16, to appoint the Election Commissioner, government MLAs were a little sanctimonious when we suggested the need to publicly disclose the salary of the Election Commissioner. On May 1 I proposed an amendment that would have required the disclosure of the Election Commissioner's salary, but government MLAs spoke firmly against the amendment and spoke that, well, it was all going to happen in due time and the legislation was already in place that would allow it to happen. The Member for Calgary-Currie talked about:

As my hon. colleague from Edmonton-Centre already explained earlier in debate in great detail, in fact there is legislation called the sunshine list that will have that information . . .

the disclosure of the Election Commissioner's salary,

. . . become public in its due time, like for all other officers of the Legislature.

But here we are now, and we see that the government MLAs voted against the amendment to disclose, and I can't imagine why. They asked why it was necessary to single out this particular legislative officer, but it is a matter of administrative fairness. Now the salary disclosure is back, and it's right here in Bill 18.

We know that the amendment was necessary because the Government House Leader admitted on May 8 that he provided inaccurate information to the House about the public disclosure of this officer's salary. I quote, from *Hansard* for May 8, the Government House Leader.

I'd like to briefly correct a misstatement that was made by me when this matter was under debate last week.

And then he also talked about the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act, that there were provisions to correct that. There was also a comment in there – I found it very interesting – that:

I can further advise that no contract has been signed by Mr. Gibson, and there is therefore no contract to disclose. If and when a contract is signed, Mr. Speaker, we are prepared to discuss the matter of early disclosure.

I'm wondering if the minister is actually prepared to discuss that at this point because I would suspect that a contract has been signed.

I further note that this change for public disclosure still won't have the effect of letting Albertans know the details of their secret deal with the Election Commissioner until after the next election, but I suppose we're not surprised by that. Therefore, we support this, but once again the government is late to admit their mistakes, and it's only when held to account by the Official Opposition that they are forced to do what is in the best interests of Albertans. Mr. Speaker, no matter our party stripe, we're all elected to make Alberta a better place. Sometimes the partisanship can get a little excessive, and little fix-ups like this one can be avoided if we drop our partisanship.

On that note, Mr. Speaker, I would urge all MLAs to support this bill and that we adopt it expeditiously.

9:40

The Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to agree with my colleague. Whenever you've got minor changes to large pieces of legislation, it's always important that we push this through fairly quick. I do have a few questions, though. Going through this page by page, I'm just curious why we needed to change, on page 1, the Fair Trading Act with the Consumer Protection Act. I am curious if the reasoning is because they just want to be able to announce that they have now protected wonderful consumers. If that's what they're doing, then that's unfortunate.

Now, to move forward, page 2. I'm curious why the Election Commissioner is going to need access to the Alberta Corporate Tax Act. From the job description, which I have in front of me, I don't see anywhere in here where it shows that he needs to have access to our Alberta Corporate Tax Act. So if the government can explain to me exactly why the new position needs access to this when our existing Chief Electoral Officer has this ability already, that would be great. It does seem that we're duplicating responsibilities.

Now, on page 3, what we've got is that the Chief Electoral Officer is having "the Election Commissioner" added as a subclause underneath that. Does that mean – and I apologize if this has already been explained – that the office of the Chief Electoral Officer is above the Election Commissioner? It is a subsection throughout this entire clause. Will the Chief Electoral Officer be running the new office? I think that's a reasonable question. It is just strange when you start looking at: every other office is its own

point or its own clause. So when you're putting something underneath it like that, it just seems that the government is putting it in there. I'm just not understanding why. I'm not stating that the government has done anything wrong, but it would be nice to have some description.

When we move these miscellaneous tax acts – you can see that it's fairly thick; there's quite a bit here – and when we start going through them, we want to make sure that everything in here is actually a minor adjustment. When we do have questions like this, it is good if the government could get back to us with clear, concise answers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?
Are there any other members who wish to speak to Bill 18?
The Deputy Government House Leader to close debate.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think we have had an opportunity to hear some of the concerns from the House, but given that these are fairly minor changes to various acts, I suggest that we close debate at this time and call the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 18 read a second time]

The Speaker: The Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Noticing the time, I think that I would like to make a motion to adjourn for the evening and begin tomorrow at 9 a.m.

Some Hon. Members: Ten.

Mr. Feehan: Tomorrow is Tuesday: 10 a.m. Thank you.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 9:45 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday morning, May 29, 2018

Day 34

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

10 a.m.

Tuesday, May 29, 2018

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Deputy Speaker: Good morning.

Let's reflect. As we continue moving forward towards a new era of reconciliation and hope, let us strive to follow paths of justice for all. Let us always be resolved to practise honesty and integrity in all we do.

Please be seated.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

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

Bill 2

Growth and Diversification Act

The Chair: Any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill?

Mr. Schmidt: Well, good morning, Madam Chair, and may I wish all of my colleagues here a merry pipeline Christmas. I'm glad to get some recognition from across the aisle, deeply desired by myself, of course. Nothing makes me happier than getting praise and smiles from the gentlemen across the aisle.

I'm pleased to speak with everyone today about Bill 2, the Growth and Diversification Act. I want to begin with a brief overview of the legislation that's before us this morning. As highlighted during first and second reading, the bill outlines a number of actions that will enable government to continue spurring innovation, diversification, and job creation in Alberta. The bill will enable government to reinforce two successful tax credit programs, the Alberta investor tax credit and the capital investment tax credit. It will create a new interactive digital media tax credit to encourage the growth of the digital media industry, a burgeoning sector that has great growth potential here in the province, and it'll support 3,000 tech spaces in postsecondary institutions across Alberta and new scholarships to help grow a future high-tech workforce.

We know that investment is the key driver of growth and diversification in Alberta's economy. This proposed bill will ensure that government continues to promote economic diversification and investment in new products, services, and capital projects while supporting employers and entrepreneurs in creating jobs and encouraging high-tech training opportunities in Alberta. We are investing in Alberta businesses and in our future workforce to help build a recovery that works for everybody and a recovery that lasts.

Second reading of Bill 2 concluded this week, and I'd like to thank the hon. members for their support and for sharing their questions on the legislation. During debate opposition members were critical of some of the economic policies our government has introduced and questioned whether these policies have hurt Alberta's ability to grow successful businesses and attract investment. I want to take a moment to highlight that Alberta is and will continue to be an attractive place to invest and do business under our government.

Alberta has world-class universities and colleges and one of Canada's youngest and best educated workforces. Albertans across all income ranges generally pay the lowest overall taxes compared to other provinces. Albertans still benefit from no provincial sales tax, no payroll tax, no health care premiums, and the lowest gasoline and diesel taxes among all provinces. Our corporate tax rate remains comparable to those in other provinces. We also have an innovative, flexible capital market and vast trade and investment opportunities across many sectors. Last year private-sector investment in Alberta was two and a half times higher than the Canadian average, and we are on track to lead the country again this year by a wide margin.

We're seeing many other signs of investor confidence. Amazon chose Alberta as the location for its new fulfillment centre. Google recognized the tremendous research capacity at the University of Alberta and brought their first-ever international artificial intelligence research office to Edmonton. Johnson & Johnson recognized our huge strength in life sciences and opened up their first-ever Canadian virtual lab at the U of A, which enables our researchers to commercialize their research and access new markets.

These companies are only the latest high-profile companies that we've attracted to Alberta. RocketSpace and Swoop are coming to Calgary, Champion Petfoods and Pinnacle to Parkland county, and Cavendish Farms to Lethbridge. At TEC Edmonton, a business incubator focused on emergent technology growth, Merck is investing in Alberta companies that create jobs here in the health sector, and Air Canada just announced that they're adding a direct flight between Edmonton and San Francisco, linking the incredible high-tech work happening here with Silicon Valley.

Mr. Cooper: In San Francisco.

Mr. Schmidt: Perhaps the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills can more easily live out his dreams of being a hippie in San Francisco when he's not spending his time here in the Legislature.

Mr. Strankman: Just like you?

Mr. Schmidt: Yeah. Well, you need hair to be able to put flowers in it, Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Strankman: I see it.

Mr. Schmidt: There are many more examples to point to, but thanks to the strong policies and economic supports our government has rolled out over the past few years, Alberta remains a choice destination for investors. Things in Alberta are looking up, and Bill 2 will help keep this momentum going and build on this growth.

Another area that members raised some concerns with was the success of past initiatives, particularly the Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act. This act gave the Minister of Economic Development and Trade the power to establish the programs that focus on supporting workers and job creators, and that's exactly what our government has done. Over the past couple of years we've been focusing our efforts on stimulating economic growth and supporting Alberta job creators during the economic downturn.

Our government has launched a suite of initiatives to support Alberta businesses. Some of these initiatives included cutting the small-business tax; launching the Alberta investor tax credit, which offers a 30 per cent tax credit to investors who provide capital to eligible Alberta companies; launching the capital investment tax credit, which encourages companies to make timely capital investment by returning a percentage of the companies' costs, including the purchase of machinery, equipment, and buildings;

restoring training programs for new entrepreneurs while adding an array of supports for established ones; providing \$10 million through the Alberta entrepreneurship incubator program to scale up support for entrepreneurs and early-stage innovative companies; adding new Alberta export expansion package programs; increasing the loans and investments available through Alberta Treasury Branches, the Alberta Enterprise Corporation, and the Alberta Investment Management Corporation's heritage fund to improve access to venture capital financing and build stronger connections with Alberta entrepreneurs; working with the Business Development Bank of Canada to establish a billion-dollar fund for new business loans; and expanding consulting and mentoring supports to businesses with the BDC so that entrepreneurs can launch more start-ups, innovate, and expand.

The province experienced a serious and prolonged economic shock. Our government took action, and now Alberta's economy is looking up. We've seen 90,000 new full-time jobs created, primarily in the private sector. Exports are up almost 30 per cent. Manufacturing is up, and we're expecting to be near the top of the economic growth in Canada again in 2018, at 2.7 per cent growth.

The success of the Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act was another area where members wanted more information. I'd like to highlight that this past December marked the one-year anniversary of the unanimous passing of Bill 30, the Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act, and this January marked a full year since we began accepting applications for the capital investment and Alberta investor tax credits.

Since then, both programs have seen significant success. In the first year of the Alberta investor tax credit we distributed 97 per cent of the annual program budget, representing more than \$28 million in issued tax credits. These tax credits leveraged \$94 million in investment in Alberta's small and medium-sized businesses. Terrapin Geothermics is a prime example of one of the innovative companies who was able to offer its investors tax credits through this program. Terrapin Geothermics produces an electricity-generating device that uses geothermal energy from nonproducing wells and industrial waste-heat sources to create electricity.

I'd also like to highlight that since launching, the program has trained additional staff to ensure that eligible companies can access tax credits for their investors in a timely fashion. With this additional support in place we expect to see even more successes as the program continues. This tax credit has helped foster a more diversified economy, encouraging investments in nontraditional sectors such as health and clean technology. We expect \$100 million per year of investment in new and growing small businesses by continuing to fund and support this program.

Through the capital investment tax credit we are encouraging capital investment that will help make Albertans' lives better by supporting hundreds of new jobs and injecting millions of dollars into the economy. Overall, 35 companies across the province have been conditionally approved for a total of \$62 million in credits through the first and second rounds of the capital investment tax credit. Together these credits are expected to support more than 3,000 jobs, with companies investing more than \$1.2 billion to upgrade their facilities.

10:10

Some examples. Aurora Cannabis Enterprises received conditional approval of a tax credit for the completion of its Aurora Sky project, a state-of-the-art cannabis manufacturing and processing facility at the Edmonton International Airport. The facility will be the largest of its kind in the world and, once operational, will run three shifts, employing 330 people. Madam Speaker, that's not just money that's going up in smoke.

Seven Generations Energy, a liquids-rich natural gas developer, received conditional approval of a tax credit to build a natural gas processing facility in the Montney-Kakwa River area. The project will create about 150 construction jobs and dozens of direct permanent jobs once operational.

Tolko Industries, a forest products company, received conditional approval of a tax credit to restart its strandboard mill in High Prairie and modernize two mills near Slave Lake and High Level. Tolko supports an estimated 1,500 direct and indirect jobs through its three operations across northern Alberta. You, Madam Chair, know first-hand how important those jobs are to the people of your own constituency. These numbers speak for themselves.

Now, one of the members raised the question of whether or not the companies that accessed these tax credits over the past year actually needed them. Innovators and investors routinely claim that there are funding gaps in two phases of a product's development and business cycle: first, the seed and start-up phase and, second, when the business is operational but needs to expand and survive. The AITC and CITC seek to address these funding gaps by incenting investments in businesses during these two critical phases of the business cycle.

I want to re-emphasize the fact that Alberta businesses have been asking for these tax credits for years. We introduced these tax credits at a time when businesses were struggling with low cash flow to boost investor confidence and incent timely investment decisions, and I think the volume of applicants trying to access these two programs is evidence that Alberta businesses see value in them. For example, the president and CEO of Tolko Industries had this to say. "With the assistance of programs like the CITC, we can invest in northern Alberta with confidence and continue to be economic drivers for these communities." Together these tax credits are enhancing investment in businesses and regions across the province.

Now I'd like to take a moment to address last year's implementation of the Alberta investor tax credit and concerns about the implementation of the interactive digital media tax credit. For the first time we introduced an investor tax credit here in Alberta that other provinces have enjoyed for decades. You can imagine all the companies that were waiting at the starting line for us to announce this, and as soon as the gun went off, we received a significant number of applications. The internal controls and procedures we have in place ensure that the investments being made meet the spirit and intent of the program. Our AITC program staff have been playing a valuable role, meticulously going over each application to ensure that the companies applying are truly Alberta-based companies whose assets are here in the province. Since launching, the program has also trained additional staff to ensure that eligible companies can access tax credits for their investors in a timely fashion.

Like any new program, after launch we also listened to our stakeholders actively making their way through the application process, and based on comprehensive feedback from the companies using the program, we made a series of amendments last year to ensure that the program best suits the needs of Albertans. Reviewing a program's success is best practice, and we will continue to review program processes, requirements, and guidelines for all of our programs to encourage growth and diversification for businesses, reducing barriers along the way.

We're also committed to pushing for more inclusion and diversity across all sectors. Alberta is a diverse place, and our workplaces, policies, programs, and services need to reflect this. We've included provisions under the AITC that enable an enhanced tax credit for investors who invest directly in companies where the majority of the boards of directors as well as the CEO are members

of an underrepresented group. Where we can make immediate changes and incentives to help bolster inclusivity, we will make those changes.

In terms of the interactive digital media tax credit the proposed program design will reflect information gathered from consultation with stakeholders that have deep expertise in this sector. We engaged with a number of stakeholders, including IDM companies, industry networking groups, and postsecondary institutions during in-person sessions in Edmonton and Calgary, where most of Alberta's IDM companies are based. Each session included a discussion of program design and eligibility requirements. A continuous evaluation approach will be used to ensure that the program is successful.

Members opposite have also flagged the need to do an interjurisdictional comparison with other provinces to review the tax credit models that other provinces have used to enhance access to capital for small businesses. I'd like to re-emphasize that this work has already been done. Let me assure you that the AITC includes many of the proven aspects used in other jurisdictions, including British Columbia and Nova Scotia. For example, British Columbia's venture capital tax credit program has seen a positive impact on increase in equity available to small businesses, job creation, and economic return.

In terms of the capital investment tax credit we found that many jurisdictions around the world offer investment tax credits to specific industries, including Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Quebec, the Atlantic provinces, and the United States. In fact, companies engaged in manufacturing and processing are common recipients of these investment tax credits.

In terms of the interactive digital media tax credit Ontario, Quebec, and British Columbia have for years offered similar programs that alleviate labour expenses through a refundable tax credit to IDM companies. With support from these programs the three provinces have successfully supported a nascent industry and built world-class IDM clusters in Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver. For example, Quebec has seen an increase of 42 per cent in the number of video game studios since 2015, while Ontario and B.C. have seen increases of 58 per cent and 19 per cent respectively.

That said, it's important to note that not everything that works in other jurisdictions is appropriate in the Alberta context. We took these interjurisdictional comparisons into account when developing all of our tax credit programs, and we adjusted the programs where needed to make sure that our programs would work here in Alberta. In addition to conducting a crossjurisdictional comparison for our tax credit programs, we also engaged directly with businesses and industry groups to inform each tax credit's development. In all of our consultations we found that our stakeholders were supportive of these tax credits and their ability to offer opportunities for economic activity, diversification, and employment growth.

In fact, a number of Alberta companies have been quite vocal in their support for an interactive digital media tax credit, including BioWare, Serious Labs, Beamdog, XGen Studios, and CodeHatch Corp. Alberta businesses have been asking for tax credits like this for years. By extending the Alberta investor and capital investment tax credits and introducing the new interactive digital media tax credit, we're taking action to level the playing field with jurisdictions that offer similar incentives and attract investment from growing industries.

Members opposite are concerned that the scope of our tax credits is too narrow and doesn't support a broad enough range of sectors. I'd argue, however, that our tax credits are very open and far reaching. The capital investment tax credit is not sector specific and is available to companies across the province involved in

manufacturing, processing, and tourism infrastructure making an investment of \$1 million or more. The same can be said for the Alberta investor tax credit. The investor tax credit has impacts across the economy, offering a tax credit to investors who provide capital to Alberta small businesses doing research, development or commercialization of new technology, new products, or new processes and to businesses engaged in interactive digital media development, video postproduction, digital animation, or tourism.

While the interactive digital media tax credit is more targeted, this is a high-growth sector that develops products that impact sectors all across the economy. We see a lot of potential for this program to support significant growth in the interactive digital media industry and beyond. Not only is Alberta's interactive digital media industry involved in the development of video games and digital content that are available through a variety of digital platforms such as mobile devices, tablets, game consoles, and web applications, but it also develops interactive digital media products and technology, including augmented reality and virtual reality, that have wide applications outside of digital games, including in the health, energy, education, real estate, e-commerce, advertising, and film and television industries. An interactive digital media tax credit will help foster a more diversified economy, encouraging the growth of the interactive digital media industry and other related creative industries right here in Alberta.

Now, another concern raised was that sector-specific tax credits mean that we are picking winners and losers. I'd like to take a moment to re-emphasize something that I highlighted earlier. The Alberta investor and capital investment tax credits focus on activities that are applicable across a variety of sectors. When it comes to the interactive digital media industry, stakeholders have consistently advocated for a tax credit program similar to those in other Canadian jurisdictions, and the government of Alberta research and modelling has determined that additional support is needed to meet the needs of this industry.

10:20

Alberta interactive digital media businesses are competitive with other provinces' cost structures in terms of labour, rent, utilities, and other operating costs. However, Alberta companies are not disadvantaged due to higher costs or poor performance; they are at a disadvantage because of the significant long-term subsidies offered in other Canadian and American jurisdictions. Research, analysis, and economic modelling have confirmed the need for targeted, consistent support that helps offset labour costs in the IDM industry. By introducing an IDM tax credit here in Alberta, we will level the playing field with other Canadian jurisdictions that have already had similar programs in place for years, bringing more tech entrepreneurs and companies to the province while preventing those already here from relocating to other jurisdictions.

We strongly believe that this is much-needed and strategic support to ensure that Alberta does not fall behind and continues building on our technology growth in the province. We want to foster a more diversified . . .

The Chair: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Chair. I was very interested to listen to what I felt was a response to some of the questions. I do actually appreciate that from the minister, yet there were a couple of things in there that I had questions about. If the minister could respond to these, it would be, again, very helpful.

First of all, one of the things that the minister said was that they had heard from Albertans that this was something they had asked for extensively. Then he went on to quote the people who had asked

for those subsidies, and the names that he quoted were from companies that would receive the subsidies. It does make sense, Madam Chair, that these companies would look for those subsidies. I mean, I don't know any company that wouldn't look for free money.

I guess the question is: has there been any analysis of what Albertans in general would like to see? Would they like to see these boutique taxes? We've used the term – and he has used the term as well – “picking winners and losers.” Is that something that Albertans are looking for in general? He has said that there is an appetite amongst Albertans to be able to have this. If this is true, I would be very interested to see the analysis done by the government to show that Albertans in general are interested in this.

The other question that I have. I'll just kind of point out that as I thought about these tax boutiques, these subsidies, I am the first to admit that there actually have been successes in this province in the past that have used this model. One of them down in my area is the irrigation districts. I can say that as we look to the south in Montana, they have not done what they needed to in terms of being able to have the capital injection into those irrigation districts, and they look to the north into our province enviously. So I do accept that there are models where we've seen a net value to being able to do this.

I want to just go back to this issue here because there was a comment made, again, by the hon. minister that said that if we don't have the same kind of subsidies as other jurisdictions such as Quebec, he mentioned, then we're falling behind. Now, the question is: let's say that we offer the same subsidies and we incentivize companies to come, maybe because we have other comparable advantages to those other jurisdictions such as lower tax rates or a better climate, whatever it is. Are we not going to be in a situation where these companies now are going to at that point be looking once again, shopping for the best deal in Canada or any jurisdiction throughout the world, really, where they can say: “Okay. Well, now Quebec has upped the ante, and they're going to increase the subsidy to X amount.”

I guess the question is: where does the rabbit hole end in the subsidies? Is there a point where you say: “You know what? We've got to jump off. It's getting too rich for this industry or too rich for us to be able to subsidize this industry”? At any given point does the government say: “You know what? It's not worth that investment”?

So those are a couple of questions that I have. I've tried to be fair with the questions, partisan out. I'm just looking for some more clarity on this issue. I've said already that I have seen some examples where this has worked, and I just want to know whether or not this type of vehicle would facilitate that.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: The hon. minister of economic development.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll thank the member for his comments and questions, and I'll attempt to address them. When we look at – and the Minister of Advanced Education mentioned a number of different companies that have been asking for this, but this goes far beyond the three or four that he included in his speaking notes. You know, I can tell this Chamber that I've been travelling around the province over the past couple of years speaking with many different chambers of commerce, many different economic development entities and associations, business associations throughout the province, who told me, once this ministry was created, when our Premier created it in October 2015, that they had asked previous governments for decades for a tax credit for investors and one that would help spur capital investment.

Now, of course, capital investment: you know, when the price of oil was fairly high into our oil sands or into our gas plays, there wasn't a problem to get that. Capital investment in some other areas was a little more tricky. But especially in the past couple of years with the price of oil, when it collapsed, it was a challenging time to get significant capital at that moment in time, when we needed it to help the economy recover. So with the capital investment tax credit, as the Minister of Advanced Education explained, we conditionally approved just over \$60 million worth of tax credits that have leveraged \$1.2 billion worth of investment. So I think the numbers in that example speak for themselves as far as investment that maybe wouldn't have happened or that wouldn't have happened at this moment in time without that bit of incentive, so that 10 per cent nonrefundable up to \$5 million.

On the investor tax credit, for example, the province of British Columbia has enjoyed an investor tax credit since 1985. When we've talked with economists as to why British Columbia's economy is quite diverse, one of the tools – I'm not saying the tool but definitely one of the tools – was an investor tax credit, that helps a couple of things. First of all, again, it's not sector specific; it's sector-wide. This applies to agriculture, food processing, manufacturing, forestry – I mean, you name the sector – tech space, health innovation.

It helps companies that need to scale up, and it provides an opportunity for Albertans to invest in companies in their own backyard, which is something that I'm very proud to offer Albertans to be able to do that. So companies are able to scale; they're able to grow; they're able to hire more people. At the same time, Albertans are able to invest in their own companies, their neighbours, their communities. Really, it's a win-win as far as a tax credit.

Just to the member's first point, this is something that businesses and the business community all over the province have been asking for. This goes far beyond the number of companies that have received the credit. Also, I can tell you there were a number of venture capitalists and those looking to invest and wanting to keep their money here at home. Their dollars are being lured to other jurisdictions. So this essentially levels the playing field. That is what we're trying to do here.

The other point that the member brought up. We talk about the digital media tax credit, again something that the provinces of British Columbia and Quebec have enjoyed for a number of years. Quebec has a very, very strong digital gaming/interactive digital media cluster within the province due in large part because they do offer an incentive, because for those companies, their number one cost is labour. These are highly paid, highly skilled jobs that aren't project based. They are, you know, on a continuum, on a long term. We know that we have incredible talent that we are graduating here in the province of Alberta. Part of the challenge is that once the talent graduates, people looking to set up companies are lured to other provinces.

10:30

Let's take BioWare, for example. Once upon a time BioWare had about 800 employees here in the city of Edmonton. Due to, again, Quebec's attractive tax credit program, approximately 500 jobs have moved from Alberta to Quebec over the past 10 years. There are, I think, approximately 300 employees in Edmonton or in Alberta that are employed by BioWare. The reason that they've stayed and that they haven't moved shop altogether: what they told me is that, again, you know, the founders are from Edmonton. They're an Edmonton-based company. There's a loyalty to our province and to our city, but again as a company they need to be competitive. Again, when you have other jurisdictions that are providing incentives to lure them away or also to help them reduce

their costs, a company has a hard time being able to justify staying in a jurisdiction that is much more expensive to do business in.

Now, we have a number of advantages over other provinces. We know that. We talk about that all the time as far as no health care premiums, no payroll tax, no PST, and that is significant for companies. But in the space of digital media and tech, again, we have the talent. We have incredible postsecondaries across the province. In fact, I'd love to – I learned that many of the grads from GPRC are hired by BioWare when they graduate. I mean, that's, you know, a very positive story. We want to see more companies in that space in the province pop up and grow. I'm using BioWare as an example, but before the member jumps up and says, "Oh, this is a credit designed for BioWare," not at all. We've spoken with a number of small companies, with start-ups, and others that are looking at developing talent and their companies here.

I think, you know, really, what we've done and what we've been able to do is a trifecta to attract and retain talent and support companies in the tech space here in Alberta. We have not only the digital media tax credit; we also have made a commitment to 3,000 new spaces in our postsecondaries that are tech related through the Minister of Advanced Education and also scholarships to be able to attract and encourage students into the STEM field, especially women. We want to see a much more equal number of men and women in that space.

Then we also have worked very closely with the city and the airport and Air Canada to get a direct flight from Edmonton to San Francisco. I can tell the House that when I'm down there on trade missions, there is significant interest in the Bay Area back into Alberta. They recognize that there's talent. One of the barriers that companies that I sat down with had mentioned was that a direct flight is absolutely critical. So with our new linkage now between Edmonton and San Francisco on that front, we have three different outcomes or tools that are able to help us continue to develop this space.

On the comment to the member as far as where we landed and studies, we did a comprehensive analysis, looking at other jurisdictions, like I had mentioned – British Columbia, Quebec, other jurisdictions in the U.S. as well – as far as different programs that are offered to help support the business sector and entrepreneurs. Again, our eye was on levelling the playing field and ensuring that we're supporting our companies in our areas of strength. You know, when it comes to interactive digital media and gaming, I mean, this is an industry that is worth hundreds of billions of dollars world-wide, and we have an incredible amount of talent here. This is one of the ways that we're supporting that talent. We're supporting our companies to grow and expand, to stay here in Alberta.

I mean, I'll leave my comments there. But what I do want to point out and what I find fascinating is that the members opposite, when Bill 30 first came through this House a year and a half ago, all voted in favour of the investor tax credit and the capital investment tax credit. I don't know if this has something to do with their leader change. Back then, of course, they were under the leadership of Brian Jean, and all spoke about how this tax credit was beneficial, how they saw that this would help our companies in the province grow. Now, today, under their new leader suddenly the tax credits are not something that they're interested in doing. You know, I've put the question out to folks on a number of occasions. I would love to know why the Leader of the Official Opposition is not interested in and would essentially kill all three of them.

The Chair: Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Chair. As we are in Committee of the Whole, I do believe that the Minister of Advanced Education could have answered those questions. I appreciate the answer, but again I want to just point out that I've asked the question now, and I didn't receive an answer. The question is on specifics. I'm going to ask it in a different way so that the minister can answer.

In order for the government to be able to provide a tax credit or a subsidy to a business, the only way the government can do that is if the government takes a dollar from the taxpayer. This is why the question is a relevant question. In order for the government to be able to go to the taxpayer and say, "I'm going to give \$1 of subsidy to this company, XYZ company, but I need to take \$1 from you in order to be able to do that," they have to sell that idea that the subsidy is in the best interest of Albertans, not just in the best interest of one specific industry or one specific group.

Once again, I don't know any business out there that wouldn't take free money. Actually, maybe there is a company. I remember when down in the States Ford decided that they weren't going to take the bailout money. GM decided they were going to. Dodge decided they were going to. So maybe there are some companies out there that actually take the high road on this.

But, generally speaking, I would say that if a company has the ability to receive free money, unencumbered by shareholders or by market forces but free money, they're going to take it. There's an interesting book called *The Law* by Frédéric Bastiat that talks about this specific issue, you know, written long ago. Some of the things in the book, obviously, I don't agree with, but that is a point that he brings up, that if you actually give an incentive to someone, they're going to take it. That's just a natural inclination and disposition of people.

So my question is still the same. If they take a dollar out, if they say that they're going to give a dollar in subsidy to a company, in order for them to be able to do that, the only way that they're going to be able to do that is if they take a dollar from the taxpayer to be able to do that. That's why the question is very relevant to this House.

Now, again I go back to this point. I have seen situations where this kind of vehicle has provided a net benefit to Alberta in irrigation down in my riding. Also, in the oil and gas industry we've seen successes. We've seen failures in the oil and gas industry with this kind of vehicle as well. If the government has this empirical evidence that would allow them to go forward with full confidence that Albertans in general, not just the people who are actually getting this subsidy but Albertans in general, are one hundred per cent onboard, would the government be willing to table the evidence to show that Albertans are onboard with that? If there's anybody on the government side that would be willing to answer that question, I would be very interested in hearing it.

The Chair: Any other questions, comments, amendments?

The hon. Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I would move that we adjourn debate on Bill 2 and that when the committee next rises, it reports progress.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion to adjourn debate carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:40 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Gray	Miller
Carson	Hinkley	Nielsen
Ceci	Horne	Piquette
Connolly	Kazim	Renaud
Coolahan	Kleinstauber	Rosendahl
Cortes-Vargas	Larivee	Schreiner
Dach	Littlewood	Sucha
Dang	Loyola	Sweet
Drever	Malkinson	Turner
Feehan	McKittrick	Westhead
Fitzpatrick	McLean	Woollard
Ganley		

Against the motion:

Aheer	Fraser	McIver
Anderson, W.	Gotfried	Stier
Cooper	Hunter	Strankman
Drysdale		

Totals: For – 34 Against – 10

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 16 Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Statutes Amendment Act, 2018

The Chair: Any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Minister of Labour.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I am really pleased to rise and speak to Bill 16, the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Statutes Amendment Act, 2018, here at Committee of the Whole. I want to thank all the colleagues for their commitment to this bill and, through the debate that has happened so far, for identifying their concerns, which I'm happy to address.

Bill 16 would ensure elections are fair by requiring associated parties to adhere to a single combined spending limit. The proposed amendments would guarantee a level playing field by ensuring that associated parties cannot pool separate spending limits to support the same candidates. It would also increase transparency by enhancing reporting requirements. Our amendments put forward a simple concept: electoral fairness requires that associated parties be subject to the spending limit of a single party. If Bill 16 is passed, associated parties must share that \$2 million spending limit for a single party.

There were several concerns raised during the debate at second reading, and I'd like to just quickly address each of them. One concern was raised as to whether the Election Commissioner could conclude that political parties that decide not to run a candidate in an election in the same constituency might be considered associated parties. To clarify, what this bill does is that it prohibits a registered party from circumventing or attempting to circumvent an expense limit through collusion with another registered party. The bill would also enable the Election Commissioner to investigate whether two or more registered parties are associated registered parties. An agreement between parties not to compete in a constituency is unlikely to be considered collusion. It's unlikely that the Election Commissioner would make a determination that registered parties are associated based solely on an agreement not to compete in a constituency. Of course, the decision as to whether political parties are associated is the commissioner's decision to make.

Another concern was whether agreeing on specific issues would make political parties associated. The commissioner will not be using a single criterion to determine whether parties are associated. When determining whether or not parties are associated, the Election Commissioner must consider all relevant information. The criteria include whether the parties have common leadership, political programs, or policy statements, whether one party controls another, whether parties have the same advertising material and brand name, and the nature of agreements and interactions between parties.

11:00

If parties are concerned whether they could be considered associated, they would be free to approach the Election Commissioner in advance of an election to seek advice on whether or not they'd be in compliance.

A concern was also raised as to what would happen to political parties that decide to get together after an election. A member asked whether there would be penalties for this or whether another election would be called. It's really important to emphasize that this bill is about electoral fairness. If registered political parties are closely associated, electoral fairness may require that these parties share a single, combined spending limit. There is nothing wrong with political parties being associated. Parties that are associated would not be subject to fines simply because they are associated, nor would another election be called.

We were also asked whether a federal political party and a provincial party would be considered associated under this legislation. To clarify, Alberta's election financing rules only govern political parties that are registered in Alberta. During the debate at second reading opposition asked why the proposed amendments do not enable the merger of political parties. Again, we want to emphasize that our government's intent is to preserve the fairness and integrity of elections in Alberta. We are closing a loophole that could weaken our democracy, and protecting our democracy is not a partisan issue. We recognize that the opposition has publicly agreed to stick to the spending limits of a single party. Our amendments ensure that our democracy stays healthy by making this an official requirement of all future elections.

We've also heard concerns from members about how unions could force their members to donate to a political party that they don't necessarily support. To clarify, only individual residents of Alberta may make political contributions. Both unions and corporations are prohibited from making political contributions. We have been working hard to find the right balance between taking big money out of politics and making sure that citizens of our province can exercise their constitutionally given right to participate in democracy.

In addition, last year Bill 32, An Act to Strengthen and Protect Democracy in Alberta, brought forward the most comprehensive legislation in the country addressing third-party entities. We've limited their participation in the election period and have made it more transparent. Now, a member of the House expressed concerns about the newly appointed Election Commissioner. Under Bill 32, An Act to Strengthen and Protect Democracy in Alberta, which came into force December 15, 2017, the position of Election Commissioner was created as an independent officer of the Legislative Assembly. The position has responsibility for ensuring compliance with and enforcement of certain obligations of the entities regulated under the Election Act and the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act.

I would like to remind the members that the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices reviewed applications for the position and passed a motion, with a recorded vote, recommending to the

Legislative Assembly that Lorne Gibson be appointed as Alberta's first Election Commissioner. The Legislative Assembly has now passed that motion to appoint Mr. Lorne Gibson, and that is now in effect.

We're working to preserve the fairness and integrity of Alberta's democratic electoral system for all future elections within our province. We've discussed all our proposed changes with the Chief Electoral Officer to ensure they are workable. The Chief Electoral Officer shares similar goals around transparency, and we've taken his recommendations into account.

I hope I've been able to address some of the concerns raised during second reading. These amendments would enhance transparency and protect fairness in election spending. Fair elections depend on all parties and candidates having a level playing field so that ideas and not money decide who wins. Bill 16 is another step to preserve the fairness and integrity of all future elections in our province. I'm happy to continue debate now that we are in Committee of the Whole. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

Mr. Cooper: Well, thank you. I'm pleased to rise and speak to Bill 16, Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Statutes Amendment Act, 2018, the boutique legislation of all boutique legislation, that has clearly been created, as mentioned previously, as an act to prevent the conservative movement from being one conservative movement. All sorts of interesting titles could be used for this particular piece of legislation because it's specifically written for the Official Opposition. So we take a little bit of pride in the fact that the government is writing such specific legislation to do something that the Official Opposition is also already committed to doing, and that is to respect the election laws and the intention of them. I find it a bit unique that we're here.

I appreciate the comments from the minister; however, one question that she didn't answer, although she alluded to it, is the single largest question that is before us, as far as I'm concerned, and that is: why didn't the government just create legislation that would allow political parties to merge? The reason why is that they're concerned that that would not be of benefit to the NDP Party and could potentially cause challenges to them. So instead of doing what is actually about creating fairness and an equal set of rules for everyone, particularly on a go-forward basis, the government made the decision to create a piece of boutique legislation that only addresses one problem.

It's my guess that in 30 – well, who knows how long? – or in some period of time in the future this type of legislation will actually be repealed and replaced with something that makes much more sense, that actually creates a more democratic playing field for everyone and actually allows parties to function in the way that they see fit and that is best for their membership. You know, I think that when you write boutique legislation like this, it's the type of legislation that gets very old very quickly. There's lots of legislation that's still on the books that needs to be removed, legislation from decades and decades ago. My sense is that this is exactly the type of legislation that is being created, because of the very, very, very, very small problem that they're trying to prevent.

Like I said, Madam Chair, my sense is that it's because it is most expedient for the NDP Party in their desire to perhaps prevent other political parties from merging that might like to, be it the Liberals and the Alberta Party, or maybe the NDP might like to merge with some other leftists in the province at some point in time. This is no way to govern. This is no way to govern, to create such small, boutique legislation.

Now, having said all that, Madam Chair, while I don't agree with the path which the government has chosen to solve the concern that they have before them, I will be supporting Bill 16 because the intention of Bill 16 is to do exactly what the Official Opposition has already committed to doing, and that is respecting the intent of the elections law and not having multiple legacy parties each spend to the limit of \$2 million in our election endeavours.

Now, we all know that this got started with taking big money out of politics. Goodness knows we've heard that on numerous occasions from the minister and from folks on every side of the House. But maybe it would be advantageous to just remind the House that the biggest money in politics is not actually union money, not actually corporate money; it is actually government money and the amount of money that the government spends advertising itself in the lead-up to the election. So there is a significant advantage that continues to remain for the government. You know, we saw them spend \$9 million alone on advertising the carbon tax. I'm not sure if that's what they called it, but they spent \$9 million alone on advertising the carbon tax and speaking specifically about that.

11:10

The Official Opposition, in the upcoming provincial election, will be able to spend \$2 million total. I was certainly not a math scholar in high school or at any other point in time in my life, but one thing I do know for certain is that \$9 million is more than \$2 million. So we will see over the next year the government spending significant amounts of money, taxpayers' money, advertising the work, good, bad, and indifferent, that the government is doing. We'll see very clearly significant numbers of announcements in target areas that the government is targeting. We'll see funding announcements in areas that are specifically important to the government and them using massive amounts of dollars in the lead-up to the election. So let's be clear. There is still big money in politics, and it is taxpayers' money that is going to be funding a lot of the work that this government is doing.

One of the other big problems with Bill 16 and the legislation that's before us is the fact that we've been here before. The government's track record on election financing is not ideal, and in fact if it wasn't for the Official Opposition, we probably would see government-funded political parties. You know, my hon. colleague from Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre will tell you that the government spent a full summer trying to stack the deck in their favour in funding political parties. So we've been here before. We have seen election financing pieces of legislation two, three, four – I think this is the fifth time that it's been before the House. The government fails to consider all of the challenges before them, so we wind up creating legislation that is ad hoc and, as I mentioned, boutique legislation.

One of the problems that we saw even just last session was that we passed another election finance bill, Bill 32, and the government failed to consult with the Chief Electoral Officer. He wrote at some length about his concerns around that. Now I see that the Chief Electoral Officer has sent a letter to the chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices requesting nearly \$9 million to cover the costs of Bill 32. These are the types of ramifications that the government doesn't consider.

The Chief Electoral Officer is asking for provincial door-to-door enumerators and will be required to hire 7,000 of them. Now, I know that government is into job creation, but they seem to only be creating government jobs. I think today was a good reflection of that. There are significant costs, \$9 million of costs that come along with Bill 32. While it appears that Bill 16 doesn't have any additional costs associated with it, one thing that it does do is to

provide significantly more swath for the Election Commissioner, and Bill 32 was the deliverer of the Election Commissioner. These two things are almost undividable. The government chose to put an Election Commissioner in place, and now there are significant costs that are associated with that, including other pieces of Bill 32 that are problematic and have significant costs to the taxpayer.

During Bill 32 we spoke at length about the fact that the legislation required door-to-door enumeration, which was ridiculous. Door-to-door enumeration is astronomically more expensive than targeted enumeration, has significant safety risks, and the Chief Electoral Officer was not listened to at any point in time with respect to door-to-door enumeration. Every single province has moved away from it, but this government has chosen to put workers at risk, which is exactly what the Chief Electoral Officer's primary concern is around, the risk to enumerators. There are a whole bunch of challenges before us, and it's going to cost \$11 million.

These are the types of implications that come when you write legislation based on ideology and not based on due diligence. The due diligence on Bill 16 was to allow political parties to merge, but it didn't suit the narrative of the government, so now we see Bill 16, legislation specifically drafted to prevent political parties from merging but also preventing them from doing what they've already committed to do, or preventing them from spending \$6 million in the case of the two legacy parties in the United Conservative Party. For the record, even if we did that, it would be less than the government is going to spend on government-funded advertising in the lead-up to the provincial election. The Leader of the Official Opposition committed to not doing that, so that's exactly what we would have done regardless of Bill 16.

We've seen so many of these bills on electoral reform, on electoral democracy. You know, in an ideal scenario these pieces of legislation would have been rolled into a single bill. Rather, we've seen bill after bill after bill coming forward in little bits and pieces. It's my guess that if we have a spring session in the lead-up to the 2019 election, there will be another piece of legislation specifically targeting the Official Opposition, to try to handcuff the Official Opposition in the days leading up to the next provincial election. The government is starting to scramble to do everything that they can to rig the system, to put in place obstacles to the Official Opposition's ability to be able to compete fairly in the next election.

Again, the biggest obstacle is the fact that the government is going to be spending big taxpayer dollars on their campaigns and their announcements in the lead-up to that election, whether it's carbon tax money that they're announcing or infrastructure projects in target ridings and otherwise. It is a significant concern that we have as we continue to see the government try to do everything they can to hold on to the chair of government.

Now, there are a few positive housekeeping measures inside Bill 16, which are good to see. In fact, the fines for registered parties, registered candidates, registered nomination contestants, and the chief financial officer of these entities who exceed the spending limits will increase. These current fines are quite small and, really, kind of an incentive for those wishing to take advantage of the law, so it is good to see that they are providing some additional strength.

The legislation will also mean that election advertising period rules will also apply in by-elections, which is good, which will bring advertising done by third parties during a by-election under election rules as opposed to political advertising, which is where they currently fall. Election advertising rules apply starting December 1 prior to the election and end on the day of polling whereas political advertising, of course, is year-round.

On balance, we will be happy to support – well, we will reluctantly support Bill 16. Again, Bill 16 is more about the government's concerns about the Official Opposition than it actually is about creating good policy for the province of Alberta. Governing is about governance and good governance, not about writing legislation that is against your opponent. Any time that a government is doing that, we need to take stock and pause and ask ourselves the question: what is really the intention of this legislation?

11:20

While we support the fact and are committed to the fact that we will not try to circumvent elections legislation or the intent of that legislation, we're disappointed that the government wrote legislation to create and serve its own needs, not the needs of the greater political sphere. It doesn't encourage political engagement. It doesn't encourage political parties to potentially merge if that is what their membership wants.

Again, the government has a long track record of removing choice, not encouraging choice, and this is just another example of that, of trying to govern private entities, of trying to govern parties and creating rules that would prevent them from doing what might be advantageous for them but not advantageous for the government.

So we will be supporting the bill, with some significant reservations, and look forward to the rest of the debate as we move forward.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

Drever: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today to speak about Bill 16, Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Statutes Amendment Act, 2018, and it's a pleasure to do so. I was part of the Ethics and Accountability Committee, where the opposition parties really pulled every trick to not get dark money out of politics. You know, they even organized a walkout, which actually has become quite a habit for the United Conservative Party. It seems like when the conversation turns into something that makes them feel uncomfortable, they like to get up and leave, and it's a shame. It's a shame to this House, it's a shame to democracy, it's a shame to their constituents, and it's a shame to Albertans.

I'm proud that our government is moving forward with transparency because that is what Albertans deserve. They deserve honesty, which is why the first bill that we passed as government was Bill 1, which bans union and corporate donations to make elections fair. Albertans deserve to have elections decided on the basis of who has the best ideas, not on who has access to the most money. I know the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills mentioned that we pass a lot of bills here in this Chamber to make elections more fair and to have more transparency in Alberta.

You know, I mentioned Bill 1. We also passed Bill 35, the Fair Elections Financing Act, that lowers the cap on political donations to \$4,000 per individual per year. We have a \$2 million spending cap and a combined spending limit of \$50,000 per candidate when the election is there, when the writ is dropped.

We also passed Bill 32, An Act to Strengthen and Protect Democracy in Alberta, and this was a really important bill. I know that the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills had a lot of questions on this bill, so I would like to maybe talk about it a little bit to clear the air. You know, if it was up to the United Conservative Party, this would never have happened. They want to keep dark money in politics because it really benefits them. It doesn't benefit their constituents, but they like to pretend that it does. So I would like to stand up here and make sure that everyone

has a clear understanding of what Bill 32 is, and then we'll get into Bill 16.

Bill 32, making elections fair and more accessible, was passed to make elections in Alberta more accessible and help them run smoothly, efficiently, and fair. Bill 32 amends the Election Act and the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act to enhance the fairness and integrity of elections, encourage greater voter participation, make it easier for people to vote, enhance the efficiency of elections administration, and enhance the fairness and integrity of elections.

The new limit on third-party spending: now, this is something that we talked about in great detail in the Ethics and Accountability Committee. As I said before, the opposition parties were very much reluctant to talk about this, to pass that in the committee, to the point where, like I said before, they walked out. You know, I'm really glad that we have a government in this province that has Albertans' backs, that aren't going to be pulling little tricks like that. I know that when they go door-knocking, if they even do that, they probably don't go talk to their constituents and tell them that they pulled that one. I'm pretty sure they're probably feeling a lot of shame right now.

Talking about the third-party spending limits, they were applied starting I think December 1, 2017. Third parties will not be permitted to spend more than \$150,000 on political advertising before the election is called. Of that \$150,000, no more than \$3,000 can be used to promote or oppose the election of one or more candidates in any one electoral division. So money spent on canvassing and organizing events to promote or oppose a party or candidate will be considered advertising expenses towards this new limit. Political parties, leadership contestants, nomination contestants and candidates will be prohibited from colluding with third parties such as political action committees to circumvent spending or contribution limits.

You know, I think this is something that's extremely important and, like I said, makes elections fair. We're doing this because our government respects democracy, and I think it's about time that there is a government that actually does that.

You know, I want to get into Bill 16 right now. The primary purpose of this bill is to ensure that the democratic process remains in the hands of Albertans. To accomplish this purpose, the act regulates how election spending works in the province of Alberta. The act states that parties cannot spend more than \$2 million during an election period. The election period runs from the writ drop to the close of the polls on polling day. Also, no one candidate can spend more than \$50,000. These amounts are adjusted for inflation. Nomination contestants may not exceed 20 per cent of the spending limit for a candidate. The changes proposed in Bill 16, if passed, will ensure that the associated parties must comply with the election spending rules set out in the act. As well, minor changes to ensure transparency in the electoral process are being introduced.

I know that the United Conservative Party said that out of the goodness of their heart they wouldn't be doing this, but frankly I don't think Albertans trust them. When I go to the doors in my constituency, I certainly hear that. They're very grateful and they're happy that they have a government that has their backs and that they're not going to be pulling a fast one on their own constituents.

It's concerning when I'm listening to the other side. They say that they agree with this bill, but I hear a lot of resistance. If it was up to the United Conservative Party, they would keep dark money in politics. Albertans do not want that, and that's why they're losing trust in that opposition.

You know, I'm proud to stand and support Bill 16, as I was proud to stand and support Bill 1, as I was proud to stand to support Bill 35, as I was proud to stand to support Bill 32. This is just another

level of transparency that this government is bringing to this province, and I encourage all members of this Chamber to support it.

Thank you very much.

11:30

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

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Madam Chair. I do know the hon. member said that he's better looking than me. I assume that may be true . . .

Mrs. Littlewood: Agreed.

Mr. Nixon: . . . though my mom always said that I was a good catch. The hon. member from Vegreville-Viking is now heckling about what I look like. It's kind of weird where we end up in this Chamber.

But what was really, really weird was the comment that we just heard from the Member for Calgary-Bow in relation to her time on the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee. I also was a member of that committee, Madam Chair, as you do know, and the points that the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow just laid out are not what took place in that committee. That's what confuses me. That really takes away from the debate in this place and how this legislation connects to it. One of the things that the hon. member spoke about was that she alleges that the opposition walked out of the committee. Nothing could be further from the truth. The committee met for months and months and months, but there was a day where the government was stacking the deck during the process, and there was a stage where the opposition walked out to say: this process is not being fair to the minority.

Now, do you know who led that process, Madam Chair? The Minister of Infrastructure, the hon. Member for Calgary-North West, organized that walkout. She was right at the time. She put together the main points of why that walkout happened for those brief moments to make it clear that this government was attempting to stack the deck against Albertans to make the system to their advantage. Now, I don't agree very often with the Minister of Infrastructure, but in this case I agreed with her wholly on her having the courage to stand up and point out what this government was doing. Their minister – I see that the Member for Calgary-Bow doesn't want to talk about that – led the opposition members out of the room to draw attention to the abuse of process, from our perspective, that the NDP was doing.

Now, what's also interesting during that process was how much the Minister of Infrastructure spoke out against this government's process, this government's deliberate attack on democracy, and this government's deliberate stacking of the deck to try to advantage them. The hon. Member for Calgary-North West, the Minister of Infrastructure, a member of the government across the way from me, has pages and pages in *Hansard* during that committee where she speaks very vocally on behalf of her constituents about the crazy and inappropriate behaviour of this government. And I don't use the word "crazy" lightly, but do you know what the main thing was that the government was doing during that committee, Madam Chair? They were trying, including the Member for Calgary-Bow, who just spoke, to get my constituents and your constituents and the people of Alberta to pay for her campaign expenses and to pay for that party's campaign expenses.

So, yes, if that is disrupting the process, as she just accused us of, darn right, Madam Chair, we disrupted the process. We fought hard every day during that process to stop this government's abuse of taxpayer dollars and to stop that Member for Calgary-Bow from getting taxpayer money for her campaign expenses. Side by side

with the Minister of Infrastructure, I'm glad that we got to fight that. What was great about that was that we were successful with the process that we used to hold the government to account for their ridiculous attempt to take taxpayer money for their campaign expenses. In the end, they stopped.

The Chair: Hon. member, can I just remind you that we're speaking on Bill 16 and not about a previous decision or previous committee, so if you could maybe stick to that.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm responding to Bill 16 and to the comments from the Member for Calgary-Bow, who spent 20 minutes talking about Bill 32 and what happened in that committee. That's the response that I am discussing and its relation to this piece of legislation.

Dark money in politics is something else that this member wanted to talk about. The biggest dark money, I guess, if you want to use that term, in politics is the government's purse. This government and that Member for Calgary-Bow have worked diligently to stop the opposition from being able to pass legislation that would stop them from abusing taxpayer dollars during elections. They have stopped that at every turn. They don't want to get that big money out of politics. They just want to get one kind of big money out of politics whereas the opposition has always said that we need to get big money out of politics, period, including government money, stuff like not being able to make election announcements with money during by-elections, a bill that they made sure to send to committee because they didn't have the courage to vote against it in this House. So they had to send it somewhere to hide it and to try not to stand up for their constituents, just like they did when they tried to take their constituents' money to pay for their campaign expenses.

This bill, though, at its core, as the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills articulated very well, Madam Chair, has nothing to do with the issues that the Member for Calgary-Bow raised, not one of them. It is a piece of legislation that was hurriedly put together, that actually seems to have the broad support of every member of this House, which is great. The minister and the government all of a sudden became concerned because they realized that while they were going out of their way to uphold the law that would not allow the Wildrose Party and the PC Party to merge, they accidentally created a situation where both of our legacy parties would be able to spend money inside the next election, something we'd already committed to not doing.

The minister – and I thank her for recognizing that – recognizes that we signed an agreement that would not allow that to happen, but she wanted to make sure that that could not happen in the future. We agree with the point of that, which is why we agreed to honour the spirit of the legislation. What we find alarming is that this minister and this government continue to bring election changes to this House and then get it wrong every single time, and then we have to have another bill come forward to this Assembly and then try to fix the mistakes that they make.

Mrs. Aheer: Like the PPAs.

Mr. Nixon: Well, there's other legislation – you're right – on other things where they have continued to do it. It's a pattern of this government. But specifically on electoral reform, which is what this bill has to do with, this is what this government does. They make a mess of it. They fall short because they won't talk to the people that are involved. They get their blinders on, Madam Chair, and are so focused on trying to deliberately stack the deck to their advantage that they end up making mistakes that they don't think of. This is a prime example of that. This is a mistake they didn't think of.

Instead of this time sitting down and getting it right, allowing those two parties just to come together, which is the simplest and cleanest way to deal with this situation, they still want to try to make things harder. It won't work, but they still want to try to make things harder. Instead, they make it overly complicated.

The other thing the Member for Calgary-Bow spoke about in her comments in regard to dark money – I think she was primarily referring to PACs. It's interesting. At the end of the committee that she referred to in her speech, all members of that committee, from all parties, voted unanimously to continue the work of that committee, recognizing that we had not gotten the work done on PACs, that we had run out of time. Every member, including the hon. Minister of Infrastructure, the member from Vegreville-Viking, the Member for Calgary-Bow – and the list goes on and on – voted with the opposition on that. They voted with the opposition on that without a doubt. You can check *Hansard*. It's there. It's on the record. I know the member from Vegreville-Viking may not remember her vote, but that's how she voted, to extend the work to make sure that we could get PACs ready. But they didn't do that.

Instead, they chose to bring a hurried bill to the floor because they were very concerned that the opposition was raising more money than them at the time. They brought that legislation. It was broadly supported, getting union and corporate donations out of politics. And what happened? You go a couple of months later, and they realized: "Oh, wow. That committee was right. We didn't get it right on PACs. We fell short. We haven't dealt with that." Now we come back to the next sitting, and there's another bill here trying to deal with the issues that they forgot to deal with. The problem with that is that they never talked to anybody again. They went into a room somewhere and came up with a piece of legislation with some good stuff in it, but it fell short. Then we got to the next sitting, and they had to bring in another piece of legislation to fix it. Now here we are in yet another sitting with another piece of legislation to fix it.

The point, Madam Chair, is this. Our party will support the intent of this bill. We'll vote for the bill because it is what we've already agreed to. But we are calling on the government to stop focusing on stacking the deck in our election system to their advantage and to put the focus back on Albertans, to put the focus on getting the legislation right here that will make sure that our election system is fair for generations to come. Even when this government is on the opposition side of the House in little under a year, they're going to deserve to have fair elections. Everybody deserves to have fair elections. Most importantly, Albertans deserve that our election system is fair, and they fundamentally reject the NDP's stance to continue to try to stack the system to their advantage while getting legislation wrong over and over and over and having to come back to this House and say: whoops; we made a mistake.

11:40

Then, lastly, Albertans will not allow the Member for Calgary-Bow and those other members who spent that entire first summer of their legislative term trying to stack the deck to their advantage and trying to get constituents to pay for their campaign expenses. It's disappointing. They should stand up, and they should finally apologize for it, because I can tell you, Madam Chair, that the constituents of Calgary-Bow and other ones are extremely disappointed in that behaviour.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Madam Chair. Listening to the Member for Calgary-Bow, you know, I have to say that I've been in this Chamber for six years. I'm honoured to be here and watch a number

of things play out, but, yeah, just a few things have happened since I've been elected, in 2012. There's this conversation around dark money, and I want to ask the Member for Calgary-Bow or any other member of the government about what I did before I got elected. Were you aware of what I'd done for the community before I got elected? Were you aware of the members for Chestermere-Rocky View, Grande Prairie-Wapiti, Calgary-Fish Creek, Calgary-Hays? We love to evoke people like Peter Lougheed and others when it's politically convenient.

We're talking about a bill here, and I support Bill 16 in terms of the idea to make elections more fair and transparent, but the last time I checked, Madam Chair, every contribution coming into my campaigns, my latest leadership run and elections past, is all up on a public website. They're there. So where is the dark money? What the member is suggesting when we talk about these things – and, yes, there are issues and there are going to continue to be issues in this Chamber and in this province that we have to deal with as legislators, but we totally shake the confidence of the voter and disrespect them. To the Member for Calgary-Bow and to the government caucus: who had more money in the last election? The Progressive Conservative Party, which became the third party. So to suggest that dark money rules the day is not only false, but it's an insult to the people who elected you.

At the end of the day, when we're talking about this, Madam Chair, the point that I'm trying to make is that the Member for Calgary-Bow was duly elected and expected to do a job but also to speak respectfully about the other people and the people that elected me. I respect those folks that elected this government.

An Hon. Member: Cross the floor.

Mr. Fraser: The member says to cross the floor. I've been in a couple of different parties, but I don't know if I'm going to go that far yet.

At the end of the day, everybody here is trying to do their very best, and they come with their voices. It is not about the Member for Calgary-South East or the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek. We are the conduits, we are the voices of our constituents, and we need to hold that with the deepest amount of respect. When we talk about things like dark money – which is just simply false because every single contribution shows up on a website.

Now, I'm all for the idea – whether it's a PAC or whether it's a union, hey, just post it. If you stand for a particular issue, run on that issue, but don't talk about innuendo and things that are just simply not true because, respectfully to the Member for Calgary-Bow, when you make these allegations, you not only make this Chamber look bad, but you make yourself look bad and the idea that people just can't trust politicians. I believe there are so many people on the government side and the opposition side that have worked in their communities for years and years and years to get the credibility to get elected into this Chamber to talk honestly.

Again, I just take offence at the idea that in anything I've done in my career, whether it was with the government, whether it was my time in cabinet or my time in the third party or on the opposition benches, somehow I have gerrymandered my way to having this seat. It's disrespectful to my constituency, that elected me based on the work that I did in the community, not based on the amount of money I raised. You can go look at my contributions. I don't raise a lot of money. I'm happy to talk and defend anybody who's contributed to my campaign. I'm willing to stand behind that, and if I'm not, then I just simply don't accept that money.

Again, Madam Chair, we need to raise the level of debate in this House and respect each other. I just think that "dark money," that term, doesn't sit well with me – and I know it doesn't sit well with

my constituents – because we need to be building everybody up in this Chamber so that Albertans can trust what's happening in here.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and thank you for the opportunity to speak on Bill 16, Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Statutes Amendment Act, 2018. I wanted to thank the Member for Calgary-South East for pointing out the human component to all of us being here. I think that sometimes we forget that every single person in here is somebody who came from somewhere, who has family, who has people that they represent.

I wanted to talk a little bit, actually, on the dark money piece because it's been language that's been used right across the board, whether that was with the motion for the Election Commissioner – the Member for Calgary-Bow today brings it up again. I question, with all due respect – and I realize that you were on the Ethics and Accountability Committee. Madam Chair, what is darker than trying to use taxpayer money to pay for your campaign expenses? Even I wouldn't have used that term, "dark." That comes from the government. But I can't imagine a situation that is more disrespectful to the taxpayer than expecting that it's their responsibility to pay for my campaign expenses. I can't imagine.

The Member for Calgary-Bow: she's been through a lot, not only here but in this Chamber and even in her career starting out here. I remember adamantly defending her right to be here at the very beginning, adamantly defending her right when she sat on the opposition side as an independent, regardless of her background, regardless of where she came from. She was duly elected by her constituency. I would still defend to this day her right to be here.

And then to hear an accusatory tone coming across from the member, Madam Chair, accusing the people on this side of somehow bringing in dark money when, in all honesty, this piece of legislation is here because the government has made several mistakes along the way with regard to transparency in elections – let's talk about this bill for just a moment. The member had mentioned about: if we door-knock. Well, I would suggest that the member maybe go on our Facebook pages and look at the people that we're impacting not only through door-knocking but attending events. I know the member attends a lot of events in her area, too.

We have the privilege of not only working within our own constituencies, Madam Chair. We work with Albertans. All of us on this side also hold critic portfolios that expand way beyond the mandate of our constituencies, so we're actually dealing with people in other constituencies all the time because we represent them at a critic level in a portfolio as well. We have that added exposure and that added privilege of being able to work outside of our constituency boundaries because of that.

I wanted to also thank the minister. It's so nice to see a minister stand up and answer some of the questions that we had. I really, really appreciate that. I wanted to just mention, though, that you had talked about the associations and whatnot, and I really appreciate that. But just to be clear, when you go into the bill, Madam Chair, the reason why we asked about the associations and why we were looking for clarity on that is because within the definition, not only is the definition very, very broad, but it is open to interpretation by the Election Commissioner.

11:50

The minister had mentioned – sorry; I don't have the benefit of the Blues – that we had passed the motion in our committee for him to be elected. I just want to be clear that it was the government that voted for the commissioner. We have made very strong statements

in this House about even the need for an Election Commissioner, let alone Bill 32. Many issues with that. I've spoken about that at great length. Just to be clear, I think that when we're stating that, we need to be clear about how it is that this commissioner has come into existence.

The clarifications, I think, on those pieces with regard to the associations: we have a lot of language in this bill, Minister, that says things like "if." Like, there's a lot of language – the words "could," "if" – that is not specific, that would very much allow for the interpretation of the commissioner based on any particular issue. I'll read the definition here. This is where I'm concerned: or at the request of an elector or a registered party in order to determine if two or more registered parties are associated. Now, you answered that question, but that is still up to interpretation based on the request of the elector or the registered party. We have "could."

Then a little bit later on in the definition it says: if parties are associated. But parties do not need to meet a set number of these qualifiers in order to be deemed associated. Again, the interpretation, Madam Chair, by the commissioner could – based on this, we don't know what those qualifiers are, so even though the minister has said certain pieces about whether or not an association is occurring, within the definition itself it is extremely broad and leads to an intense amount of interpretation by the commissioner, should the commissioner deem that. I mean, I would want to make sure. Obviously, we're going to vote for this legislation, but there are really huge concerns there about the broad aspects of what that means and the interpretation of the person that is then charged with making that decision.

The other thing is that a little bit later on within the definition it says that if registered parties have the same leader, executive director or person in a position similar to an executive director, or CFO, they could be deemed associated. Again, what does "could" mean? How do we define that? Who's making the definition, whose interpretation, and how does that reflect on whatever party that happens to be at that time? I do not see in the legislation any clarification over the word "could."

I honestly believe that if we're looking for transparency and fairness, which is what this is all about, language like that within legislation – obviously, there's interpretation in legislation. We can't get away from that. But this is specific to a party that would be merging or could be merging or all those kinds of things, specifically this side, specifically the opposition. As a person that

this legislation is for, yeah, I would like to understand what "could" means. I think the minister is, hopefully, going to be able to answer that after, so thank you, Minister, for that in advance.

Then another part of this is that it says: "the activities of the registered parties and their registered constituency associations and candidates." They can take into consideration – this is another piece. This is a concern. The Election Commissioner will also take into consideration the activities of the registered parties and their registered constituency associations and candidates. To what extent is that? What do we mean by that? Again, this isn't a definition. This is more of a broad-based perspective based on, I believe, especially based on what the Member for Calgary-Bow said, an interpretation of distrust in a procedure where all of us are held accountable.

Truthfully, Madam Chair, if you look at the legislation, the government could have actually created a very strong piece of legislation regarding mergers of parties and, within that legislation of mergers, could have laid out what that is supposed to look like. Obviously, I mean, we're the ones who even said . . .

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

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

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

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports progress on the following bills: Bill 2 and Bill 16.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in this report?

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Any opposed, say no. So ordered.
The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Seeing the hour and the progress we have made today, I would move that we call it 12 o'clock and adjourn until 1:30 p.m.

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

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, May 29, 2018

Day 34

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (UCP),
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Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
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Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (NDP)
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Vacant, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake

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New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 25 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent Conservative: 1 Vacant: 2

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, May 29, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Ms Jabbour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am so thrilled to introduce to you and through you a school group visiting us here from Ridgeview central school in La Crête. I know that these students have the distinction of travelling perhaps the longest distance of any school students that ever come to visit the Legislature, so I'm always so excited when they come to visit. Accompanying the students are their teachers, Karie Becker, Eran Cardinal, and chaperones Abe Driedger, Chad Friesen, Angela Wiebe, Tracy Neudorf, Wilma O'Rourke, Laura Martens, Mary Jane Driedger, and Diana Driedger. I'd like to ask them all to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Legislature.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my great pleasure to rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislature a class from McKee school, which is in my riding of Edmonton-Strathcona. This is McKee elementary. They are a wonderful group of students, who are here with their teacher, Mrs. Lisa Zimmer. In the past it has been my great privilege to visit them at least once a year and read them stories during Read In Week. They are one of the most diverse schools in the city, and they represent the face of our province's future. It's wonderful for them to be here. I'd like to ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly students from Landing Trail intermediate school in beautiful Athabasca, Alberta, a very bright group. I had a chance to visit them last year and catch up a little bit today. You know, I don't think you'll find a finer bunch of bright kids in the province. They're accompanied by their teachers, Mr. Calvin Klaczek and Mrs. Hope Bradfield, as well as educational assistant Mrs. Jamie Aubé. If the students and staff can rise – I'm assuming they're behind me; there they are – and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm so pleased to be able to stand to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly two constituents from the riding of Edmonton-Mill Woods. These individuals are active leaders in our city and in our communities, and they help to build a strong community in Mill Woods not only through their participation in their local community league, the North Millbourne Community League, but through their participation in the greater Mill Woods Presidents' Council, which

works to co-ordinate work between community leagues to share great ideas. They do fantastic work. I'd like to ask them both to rise. We have Leigh Makarewicz, who is a board member with the North Millbourne Community League, and Brandon Kowalczyk, vice-president of the North Millbourne Community League. Thank you both for all that you do for the North Millbourne Community League and greater Mill Woods. I'm so pleased to have you here with us today. I'd love for them to receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. members, I should have noticed earlier. Are there any other school groups today?

Seeing none, the Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my great pleasure to rise today to introduce to you a great kid. Marigold Mioc is here along with her mother, Lily Ahonen. I had the pleasure of meeting Marigold and her mother earlier this month at the 2018 Great Kids awards gala. Marigold is no ordinary eight-year-old, possessing a love of CPAC, dreams of 24 Sussex Drive, and multiple selfies with the Premier on her Twitter feed. She was Little Miss Calgary in 2016 and also started her own business, Marigold's Heart Garden, selling flower headbands she used to sponsor a Syrian refugee family. Just a few days ago she cut off her hair to donate her hair to Angel Hair for Kids, which provides wigs for disadvantaged children. Marigold is working hard to make this world a better place. I would ask you, Marigold, and your mother to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three introductions today, all from groups who facilitate and provide innovative co-working spaces in Edmonton and Calgary. First, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you Frances Connolly and Mariann Roberts, who are with Homestead, which is a professional co-working space here in Edmonton. Members join Homestead to have somewhere inspiring to work, a change of scenery to keep ideas flowing, and to surround themselves with like-minded Edmontonians. Their membership currently has 30 businesses and 60 individuals.

Next are Alex Putici and Arielle Land, who are with Work Nicer, one of Alberta's entrepreneurial catalysts. Since 2015 Work Nicer has seen much growth and now supports over 250 members, with two locations in Calgary and one soon to open in Edmonton. They help to build bridges that connect, empower, and grow the small businesses and entrepreneurs of Alberta. Alex is also a cofounder of the Calgary Coworking Alliance.

Lastly, I would like to introduce Tiffany Linke-Boyko, the CEO of Startup Edmonton, which is committed to supporting tech-enabled companies as they start and scale. Startup Edmonton is a thriving community that serves as home for our city's innovation and technology meet-ups. Currently they work with 900 members and 90 companies through a variety of support streams. Since 2009 they've been at the forefront of some of our country's most exciting and successful start-up and scaling companies. I ask all my guests – I see they've risen. I ask now that we provide them with the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to introduce to you and through you Aurora Claire Borin. Aurora lives in Banff, where she works with passion as a music educator. As a volunteer she built the Bow Valley Music Festival up to the provincial stage, where it remains a source of inspiration for young local musicians. She's a constant advocate for queer and trans folks and always makes herself available to help those in need. I'm proud to call her a constituent and a friend. I'd like to ask her now to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ministerial Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain Pipeline Update

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to update the House on something that is of importance to all Albertans. Today we took a major step forward for working people in Alberta and across Canada. As I said earlier today, the Kinder Morgan deal announced today puts people to work building the pipeline right away, creating good jobs. This deal and this pipeline will unlock investment in our oil sands because we are now on the path to getting full value for our energy resources. This deal and this pipeline will help us build up the things that matter to working families such as our schools and our hospitals.

As members of this House will recall, our work to get this pipeline built started three years ago. From the very beginning we said that good jobs for working people and meaningful climate action can and must go hand in hand. Put another way, any climate change plan that ignores the needs of working people is a plan that's doomed to fail, and any economic plan that ignores climate change is setting our businesses, our kids, and our future generations up to fail. We can tackle climate change and still protect our good energy industry and the jobs it creates. This commitment to working people and our environment has driven our strategy from day one.

At my first meeting with all of Canada's Premiers we convinced governments of the day to agree on the need for new pipelines through a Canadian energy strategy. We then worked with all Albertans to bring in the most comprehensive climate leadership plan on the continent: capping oil sands emissions, phasing out harmful coal emissions, putting a price on carbon, and attracting record investment in renewable energy in our province. We have travelled the country, speaking to business leaders, to workers, to investors, to environmentalists, to academics, and more, building the case for why Canada needs new pipelines, particularly to tidewater, and why this pipeline is unlike any other before it.

1:40

We've invested in winning the hearts and minds of all Canadians, making sure everyone understands the importance of our energy resources, and this work paid off. We moved public opinion. We moved public opinion on pipelines in a way that has never happened before in Canada. First, we made people aware of the project, and then we made sure people knew why this pipeline matters to working people and how it can still put us on a path to good jobs and responsible environmental stewardship. This support is growing, and it's growing on the basis of our economic arguments and our environmental arguments.

Now, a lot of commentators like to throw around the term "social licence," but it is, in fact, even about more than that, Mr. Speaker. What this comes down to is good governance. It's about building the economy for working people while protecting our environment.

Progress on the economy and progress on the environment: you cannot have one without the other. This project meets that test.

When Kinder Morgan issued its deadline on April 8, we responded immediately. We promised that the deadline would be met and that certainty would be provided, and today we are delivering on those commitments. As of today we have the most certainty that this project has ever had. That certainty is critical.

I want to thank the federal government for working with us to get to this point. After all, this is not a conflict between provinces. British Columbia took a run at the authority of the federal government and the interests of all Canadians, so we challenged the federal government to step up, assert its jurisdiction, and do whatever it takes to give investors the certainty they needed to see this project through.

In return the federal government asked Alberta to be part of the solution. We said that we would so long as three conditions were met, Mr. Speaker. First, construction needs to resume immediately; second, there needed to be certainty that the project would be completed; and finally, Albertans needed to see value for any investment that they made. I'm happy to say that those conditions have been accomplished through today's announcement. By purchasing the project, the federal government now has the power to make sure it goes ahead. Alberta has contributed to today's announcement by investing up to \$2 billion to backstop any risk. That investment would be payable only once all oil begins to flow through the pipeline, and at that point our investment would be converted to equity, maximizing the return for Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, this project will be the first direct pipeline to Canadian tidewater built since the 1950s. In a project of this magnitude, so clearly linked to the task of nation building, it is sometimes the case that the public sector does have a role to play. I would suggest that complaints about this investment are short sighted and ignore the needs of working families and Canada's economy.

The certainty provided today will be especially important to our shippers, who, as we all know and as everyone in this House knows, attract the single largest private-sector investments to Alberta and to Canada. This announcement helps them get product to market and helps us all get on the path to full and fair value for our resources. In doing so, we will ensure that good, long-term, mortgage-paying jobs are created for people and for families. That is what this is all about.

We were elected to get things done for working people. The approach to pipelines in the past let working people down. Rather than hurling insults and engaging in political theatre for political theatre's sake, we made the choice to roll up our sleeves, bring people together, and do whatever it takes to create jobs, get our resources to market, and support working Albertans. Mr. Speaker, Canadians have come together, and we brought them together.

There's work yet to be done, but, Alberta, this is a major step forward for each and every one of us. We said that we would meet the deadline; we've met the deadline. We said that we would provide certainty; we're providing certainty. We said that we'll get this pipeline built; we're getting this pipeline built. Mr. Speaker, we will not stop until the job is done.

The Speaker: The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. the Premier for updating the House and for her hard work on this important issue. The Official Opposition and the government do not agree about how we arrived at this point, but we do agree about the enormous importance of coastal access for Alberta energy products.

Mr. Speaker, it's unfortunate that some political leaders of this province have in the past referred to us as the embarrassing cousin of Confederation, that no one wants to talk about. I think most Albertans are enormously proud, not embarrassed, that we have been one of the key engines of Canada's economic prosperity, sharing hundreds of billions of dollars of our wealth with other parts of Canada and being for many years the key job-creation engine of our economy. I think most Albertans are proud to know that we are the most environmentally responsible and ethical major producer of oil and gas in the world, with the third-largest oil reserves on the planet, reserves that have a current notional value of over \$11 trillion, wealth which represents a potential for a bright future, for our ability to handle our huge and growing debt obligations, growing health care and other social costs.

But, Mr. Speaker, that wealth means nothing unless we can get it to markets at a fair price, so we agree with the Premier that it is unacceptable that we should be forced to undersell this critical asset by some \$40 million a day. It is a strategic imperative for the future of our way of life, of our economy. Indeed, I would argue that it's a moral imperative that we get Alberta energy to market so that we can compete with and, we hope, displace energy produced at much lower environmental, human rights, and labour standards by some of the world's worst regimes. That is why we must do everything we can to ensure access to coastal markets.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we find ourselves in a situation today where governments are effectively buying out a private-sector company that was willing to risk over \$7 billion to invest in the Canadian economy and in this dream of exporting Canadian energy. Today, sadly, is an indication of yet more damage done by markets and investors and their confidence in this country.

Let us be clear about what has led us to this day. The decision of the current federal government arbitrarily to cancel the approved Northern Gateway pipeline, the decision of the current federal government, through the national energy ... [A timer sounded] I didn't realize ...

The Speaker: I will give you just one more minute if you would like.

Mr. Kenney: I'm sorry. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wasn't clear on the time.

Mr. Speaker, the decisions to cancel Northern Gateway, to kill Energy East, to surrender to the Obama administration's veto of Keystone XL have been compounded by the failure of the federal government to ensure respect for the Constitution and the rule of law with the construction of the Trans Mountain pipeline. That is why Kinder Morgan pulled out today.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we find ourselves in this regrettable circumstance. We do not agree with the Premier that it is cause to celebrate today the failure of investor confidence, the decision of this company to withdraw from a major investment in Canada. We will with reluctance support in principle the proposed \$2 billion potential indemnification of cost overruns associated with the hopeful continuation of this project, but we will discharge our responsibility as the opposition to ask questions and demand transparency with this or any other risk of tax dollars.

We, I submit, Mr. Speaker, are no closer to certainty. We need to see the federal government step up to the plate to exert leverage on the B.C. New Democrats to ensure that the rule of law is respected, and we will continue to call on this government to do the same.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, I would request unanimous consent of the House to permit a representative of the third party and any independent member who wishes to respond to the Premier's statement today to do so.

Upon the conclusion of Ministerial Statements the minister of economic development would like to do an additional introduction, so I'll request that as well of the House.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

1:50

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. If today's announcement gets a pipeline built, it is a good day not just for Alberta but for Canada as a whole. But today's announcement doesn't actually get the pipeline built. It is just one more step on what is still a very long road, and that's why I urge the government to show some restraint. It is far too early to take a victory lap.

There are many questions still to be answered, questions like: what will the government of Alberta do to win over B.C. and those who will use any means to block the pipeline from going ahead? What are the details of Alberta's \$2 billion potential investment? Under what conditions would this investment be made? Will the investment be transparent, and will the true costs and risks be shared with Albertans? What message does it send to investors that a private company that followed every single rule the government made requires a government buyout to get a project built? Who will ultimately buy the project? Will the province push to ensure there is significant indigenous ownership in the eventual pipeline?

The Alberta Party is pleased to see that we are one step closer to getting a pipeline built to tidewater, and we will continue to hold the government accountable for making sure that this is the right deal for Albertans and, most importantly, for making sure that this pipeline actually gets built.

Thank you.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Mr. Speaker, today I rise from my seat in the Alamo as the only MLA again in this House to oppose a major decision from this government. The Trans Mountain pipeline can and must be built, but this government and the federal government have bungled it every step of the way.

Ronald Reagan said: "If it moves, tax it. If it keeps moving, regulate it. And if it stops moving, subsidize it." That is the economic credo of this government: the carbon tax, emissions caps, prostrating over and over to win over nobody. This is not an investor problem; this is a government problem. Our federal and provincial governments have been more focused on obtaining a mythical social licence and pandering to extremists than on the rule of law and the Constitution.

By negotiating in public, the parties that have supported the nationalization of the Trans Mountain pipeline have handed all of the negotiating cards to Kinder Morgan. We are not getting a good deal when we negotiate in the media.

Now the Trudeau Liberals, the NDP, and unfortunately, the opposition support one of the largest corporate welfare programs in the history of our country. Alberta fought one Trudeau owning our national energy infrastructure decades ago. Now we have handed it over to another Trudeau without a fight but, in fact, with a thank you. The NDP may not care about this, but Conservatives should. We have handed Prime Minister Trudeau a chokehold over Alberta's energy infrastructure, that he will be able to use to ensure the enforcement of his carbon tax. If we attempt to scrap the carbon tax, do we believe for one moment that Prime Minister Trudeau will not simply turn the taps off on us if he owns that pipeline? This is a

multibillion-dollar corporate welfare program. It is a sellout for free enterprise, it is a sellout of taxpayers, it is a sellout of the Constitution, and it is a sellout of Alberta.

I challenge the government to put this issue to a full debate and a vote in this House no later than the end of this week. I know where I will stand.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Dr. Starke: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today's announcement with regard to the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain expansion certainly raises as many questions as perhaps it answers. In fact, I see this as trading one set of uncertainties for another. I want to be clear from the outset that I share the government's – I wouldn't go as far as saying "joy." But I share the government's and, I suspect, all Albertans' – this project now has a measure of increased impetus going forward.

But I have a lot of concerns and uncertainties going forward. Some have already been articulated. Certainly, there is concern about the \$2 billion or up to \$2 billion in indemnification and what conditions they would carry with them. I think those are important things that this government must answer. I think, furthermore, that there's a larger question that needs to be answered, and it is for the private investor community, and that is: when you have a project that is approved, that is legal, that has passed every hurdle in place and is in fact opposed by, in some cases, illegal and unconstitutional means, will that project necessarily always be nationalized by some order of government? And what criteria will be used to decide whether that project is worthy of being nationalized? I think these are troubling questions and ones that should be on the minds of those of us who are here in this House.

So while I share with the government's approval, I do not share in their sense of jubilation because I suspect that today's decision, while it is positive in the short term, comes with cost. It comes with short-term monetary cost, and it comes with unknown future cost to the prospect of private investment in our oil and gas economy, one that I think is incredibly important and one that we shall remain watchful over.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Introduction of Guests

(continued)

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank all members of the House for allowing me to do this brief introduction. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members in the Assembly an incredible group from Beacon Heights. They're the Beacon Heights seniors in my constituency of Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. Their motto is: have fun, be kind, and help each other. If I may, this group really is part of the heartbeat of our community. I'll ask you to rise as I call your names: Pat Moffitt, Betty Franko, Vivian Cheperdak, Pat Sharun, Jenny Kolada, Audrey Peltier, Lil Fediuk, Alene Carter, Elsie Gizowski, and Joanne Houtstra. They're celebrating their big event, the kickoff to Seniors' Week celebration, June 4 at the Abbottsfield rec centre: crafts, hobbies, games, music. All are welcome to attend, so I invite all members of the Assembly to join these lovely seniors and many others in my riding.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion Opposition

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Has the hon. the Premier received any assurances from British Columbia Premier John Horgan that he will stop the policy of his government to do everything possible to prevent the construction of the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, we've not had any direct conversations. I can say that just today the Premier of British Columbia was quoted as saying that, in fact, what they are now doing is doing everything possible to protect the coast and that they have officially switched from it being focused on everything possible to stop the pipeline. That was in today's press conference. That being said, though, I think the real key issue here is that through the federal decision to purchase, the issue of Crown immunity changes the situation and provides more certainty than we had before.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier just said that it provides greater certainty. Could the hon. the Premier please identify a single environmental organization, municipal government, First Nation, provincial government that has indicated, as a result of today's announcement, that they support and will stop efforts to obstruct the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What I can say again is that what we know is that the concern about investor uncertainty has been eliminated because the investor that is currently in play is absolutely committed to getting the pipeline built. In addition, through Crown ownership there is a legal principle of Crown immunity that actually further strengthens the role of the federal government from a legal perspective as it relates to complaints that might be raised by some of the organizations outlined although not the indigenous groups, where we were all very committed to continuing to work with them respectfully.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, accepting the Premier's claim that federal ownership will clarify federal jurisdiction, does the Premier then support the undertaking of the federal government to sell its interest as soon as possible to private-sector shareholders?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

2:00

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, in fact, you know, we will keep a watchful eye on that matter, but I do know that even as the federal government is looking at that option, they are looking at doing it in a way that pairs that option with the kind of additional legal certainty that I was just referring to in answer to the last question. So we will be sure that that certainty remains. That's one of the principles that we outlined on April 8. That's one of the principles that we were very happy to deliver today on behalf of Albertans for working Albertans to build this province and this country.

The Speaker: Second main question.

Trans Mountain Pipeline Public Purchase

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the hon. the Premier has said that the decision by Kinder Morgan to withdraw its planned pipeline expansion project increases certainty. The Canadian Energy Pipeline Association instead has said that they are concerned about the implications of the government's financial intervention for future transmission pipeline projects. Many other leaders and associations in the energy industry have echoed the same concern, that in fact today's developments do not increase but, rather, undermine investor confidence in Canada's energy sector. Does the Premier believe that CEPA and other industry groups are wrong?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, we've actually heard from a number of people in the energy sector today that this is good news and that this actually increases certainty and that it does not undermine it. You know, the Trans Mountain pipeline, when it is completed, will be the first direct pipeline constructed to tidewater since the 1950s. Every now and then it becomes necessary for the public sector and government to be involved in nation building. That's what many people actually elect their governments to do. We are proud to be part of it. Walking away, tying our hands, and pretending that we have no role to play: that's how you have failure.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, we have failure because the federal government cancelled the Northern Gateway pipeline, killed Energy East, surrendered to the American initial veto on Keystone XL, and has still done nothing to exert pressure on the government of British Columbia to ensure the construction of the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion regardless of who happens to own it. Will the Premier agree with me that the federal government must exert pressure on the NDP government in Victoria to stop its policy of obstruction and of death by delay?

Ms Notley: You know, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite started his question by saying that what we have today is failure. I tell you, he is like the person who shows up at a dinner party empty-handed, complaining about the food and the colour of the cocktail napkins, I swear to God. This deal puts people to work, it unlocks investment, it helps us build schools, hospitals, and roads, and it gets us to tidewater. It is exactly what we said we would do, it is exactly the thing that Albertans wanted to see their government work on, and that's what we've done.

Mr. Kenney: Yet, Mr. Speaker, this is a Premier who seems to have celebrated a policy that's led us to every private-sector investor trying to build a coastal pipeline withdrawing or having been vetoed. This seems to be the NDP's definition of success, being backed into a corner and forcing taxpayers to pick up the tab. Now, the question is: given that Premier Horgan has tripled down today on his threat to do everything possible to stop the Trans Mountain pipeline, will the Alberta government use Bill 12 to exert pressure on the B.C. government to ensure construction of the pipeline?

The Speaker: Thank you.

Ms Notley: You know, Mr. Speaker, in fact, that's not exactly what happened in B.C. today, so first of all that's not true. What we will do is that we will continue to work strategically and effectively to get this job done. Today was a major, major step forward. And let me say that if someone else had been in charge and we'd adopted their path of, first, having temper tantrums at everyone who

disagreed with us and then, secondly, hurling gratuitous insults at the federal government just 'cause, you know what would happen? We wouldn't have this today. We wouldn't have a pipeline. It'd be a repeat of the previous nine years, when the member opposite was in the federal government and . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.
Third main question.

Federal Policies on Oil and Gas Transportation

Mr. Kenney: Well, we do know what did happen, Mr. Speaker. We had a provincial government that signalled to Prime Minister Trudeau that he could go ahead and cancel Northern Gateway with the agreement of Alberta, that he could effectively kill Energy East with no protest from the Alberta government, that he could refuse to apply any meaningful fiscal or political pressure on the government of British Columbia without any meaningful complaint from this government. So the question is simply this. Will this government indicate to Premier Horgan that if his obstruction continues, there will be consequences?

Ms Notley: You know, Mr. Speaker, I know the member opposite likes to grab a narrative and then just hold onto it without a particular regard for the facts, but I'd like to remind the members of this Assembly that the Northern Gateway pipeline went down because the Federal Court looked at the record of the previous Conservative federal government and said that their failure to consult with indigenous people was an abject failure and that that was why the pipeline could not go ahead. So we really must clarify the record.

Our government is taking a different approach. We are talking with indigenous people, we are working with all our partners, and we will get the job done.

Mr. Kenney: The Premier is rewriting the historical record, Mr. Speaker. The court asked the federal Crown . . . [interjections]

Mr. Speaker, are you going to stop the heckling here?

The Speaker: Hon. member, I will address at what point I wish to enter in rather than it coming from a member of the House. Please proceed.

Mr. Kenney: Sure.

Mr. Speaker, the Federal Court asked for additional consultation. Enbridge continued with the plan to proceed with Northern Gateway. It was the Justin Trudeau government that vetoed it and is now hammering the nail into the coffin of those exports with Bill C-48, the tanker traffic ban, and Bill C-69, that will make it very difficult to get a future pipeline built. Will the Premier agree with me that these bills are unhelpful to the prospects of future market access for Canadian energy?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, what I will agree is unhelpful is having someone in this province who claims to be onside with Albertans in the task that we all believe in, which is getting this pipeline built, but at the same time signals to investors, signals to the opposition, works with the opposition, dines out on the opposition to the pipeline in order to serve his own political interests. The fact of the matter is that today we took a very important step forward, and what we should be doing is celebrating that fact and continuing to work together rather than cheering for the failure of Alberta's working people.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I didn't appoint Tzepporah Berman to the oil sands advisory committee, and I didn't appoint Karen Mahon to the oil sands advisory committee, people who are calling for the total elimination of this industry. I don't belong to a federal party that's calling for the shutdown of Alberta's energy industry. The question was simply this. Does the Premier agree with me that we should continue to pursue other potential export possibilities by encouraging the federal government to suspend Bill C-69 and Bill C-48 to create greater certainty for other prospective pipeline projects in the future?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, it's interesting. The member opposite actually belongs to a federal party that is right now saying that it doesn't think that the federal government should be putting any money toward supporting Alberta's energy industry. When it was in office, it put \$9 billion toward supporting Ontario's auto industry. You know what? The member opposite says that he stands for Albertans, but I think that guarantee is a little bit like his grassroots guarantee, here today, gone tomorrow. But maybe it's just an IT problem.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.
The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Trans Mountain Pipeline Public Purchase (continued)

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The federal government today announced that they would purchase the Trans Mountain pipeline and the expansion. While federal ownership of the pipeline does eliminate some obstacles to this construction project, we've already seen lengthy delays, and the project could be facing significant cost overruns. In light of this, your government's decision to offer up \$2 billion worth of tax dollars can be a cause of concern for Albertans, and I think you can see that. With billions of dollars at risk, what is your government going to do to address the risk of delays in the construction?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There's no question that there are important issues that are raised in the member opposite's question. That is why, as I've said, the government of Alberta's commitment is up to \$2 billion; it is not just \$2 billion. Moreover, it doesn't become payable until the oil is actually flowing through a completed pipeline. It's also attached to timelines, and it also, of course, assures equity interest for Albertans. So this is not a subsidy, as one member opposite had suggested. Quite the opposite. It is an investment for Albertans by Albertans.

2:10

Mr. Fraser: Mr. Speaker, we spoke in this House before about how the extraordinary measures being taken to push this pipeline could actually hurt the long-term prospects of energy infrastructure construction. The fact that there is a need for direct federal investment in this project to go forward sends a signal that every energy project won't succeed without government intervention. It also opens the door to political interference in the construction of energy infrastructure. To the Premier: what are you doing to ensure that the next piece of energy infrastructure in Alberta can succeed without taxpayer support?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, as the member opposite knows, we have supported – well, we have just simply celebrated; we had nothing to do with the approval of line 3. We have committed barrels for Keystone. On this matter, of course, yes, the government is involved. As I've said before, when you're talking about the first new construction of a pipeline directly to tidewater since the 1950s, sometimes it's necessary for the public, for the government to be involved. But, overall, this is going to provide more investor certainty, not less, and we're committed to ensuring that that principle is met.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Aside from the few leaks of this government, the negotiations with Kinder Morgan and the federal government were basically done behind closed doors. We totally understand the need to protect commercially sensitive information, but, Premier, I think you would agree that facts matter. The fact that this project soon could be owned entirely by taxpayers means that it is basically no longer acceptable for the details to be withheld from the public. Premier, since it's taxpayer dollars and it's their investment, it's time we release all the details regarding this project. Do you agree with that?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I definitely agree that there will come a point where, absolutely, all Albertans need to see all the details. We are still at a point, though, where some of the information is commercially sensitive. That's why what we've been able to communicate today are some high-level principles which we hope will assure Albertans in the short term: one, that they are getting equity value for their investment; two, that there is certainty associated with the project; and three, that it's only up to \$2 billion, that it is not the full \$2 billion. We know that more information needs to be forthcoming, but we also need to respect the issue of commercial sensitivity at this point.

The Speaker: Thank you.
The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

School Maintenance and Repair

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, P3s were sold to the public as a cheaper way to build schools quickly, but it's pretty clear that you get what you pay for, and we need to make sure that these schools are safe for students. My office has been in contact with Alberta Infrastructure on a regular basis on drainage issues. Given that this ongoing issue around P3s has been happening for years and is dangerous for students, what is the government doing to ensure that our school sites remain safe environments for students to learn in?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member, who actually has done some pretty incredible advocacy on this issue, and that is much appreciated. You know, the previous government, of which I was a part, had certainly a zest for P3s. You know, we were talking about some poor design and a lot of problems at these schools. We have a situation now where Alberta Infrastructure meets every month with the school board and the P3 contractor to review some important issues, as you have mentioned, and they include repair requests from the schools, security clearance issues, health and safety concerns, and we're keeping . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
First supplemental.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, to the same minister: what is the minister doing to ensure that those landscaping and mud field issues do not continue into the next year?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, as the member said, there are some significant problems at some of these P3 schools, and we meet every month to discuss them. I have seen mud at these sites. It gets tracked into the schools. It gets tracked into the bathrooms at the schools. It creates a tremendous amount of mess and a health hazard for the kids. These badly designed contracts have been an obstacle to fixing these problems. We are going full tilt this summer, and we're going to fix all of these things ourselves just as soon as the school kids get a break for the summer.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Second supplemental.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for the answer. Again to the same minister: how will the government be handling P3 schools in the future?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, all of our new schools are public builds, and Alberta's population is growing. Families are coming to Alberta from across the country and, in fact, from around the world. We have schools to build, and we need to build them for a growing population, so we're going to do it by building schools as public builds. The previous government's approach did not work, and we're going to take the approach we're taking and know that we have full control over the maintenance of these schools.

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

Trans Mountain Pipeline Public Purchase (continued)

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like many Albertans, the Alberta Liberals and leader David Khan are pleased to see the federal Liberal government negotiate a deal to help the Kinder Morgan pipeline expansion proceed, a significant economic opportunity for Alberta and Canada, allowing Alberta to safely send its energy products to new markets at a better price. However, there are still unanswered questions and concerns about our environmental and public liabilities. Premier, will the Alberta government now commit to annual full-cost accounting as we triple our greenhouse gas emissions in relation to that pipeline and, according to the Parkland Institute, exceed our hundred megatonne . . .

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

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Let me begin by saying very clearly what I've been saying to many people for about two years: that underlying assumption is incorrect. We will not be tripling our greenhouse gas emissions. This is because we have put a cap on emissions. That's one of the fundamentally important pieces of our climate leadership plan. This pipeline is not about increasing emissions. What this pipeline is about is increasing the value and the return for Albertans on the product that we will

ship regardless, whether it's on pipeline or whether it's on rail. So the assumption is, unfortunately, not correct. We will of course commit to as open an accounting as . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Dr. Swann: Mr. Speaker, I and others need help in understanding how you can triple the capacity of a pipeline without increasing emissions from the oil sands.

Given, however, that Albertans need to be off the hook, will you commit to annual reporting in relation to the \$26 billion cost liability for reclamation of the tailings ponds and their cleanup? Will you commit to annual reporting on that \$26 billion liability for cleanup?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, in answer to the first part of the question let me just say that the way you do that is that you take the product off rail and put it onto pipeline. That's what's going on here. Secondly, of course, you engage in the innovation that our climate leadership plan is investing into the oil and gas sector, that will result in reducing the amount of emissions in any barrel of oil produced. That's how you deal with the first thing.

With respect to the second thing our Minister of Energy and the minister of environment are working carefully and rigorously on the issue of dealing with the tailings ponds liability, and we'll have more to say in . . .

The Speaker: Thank you.

Dr. Swann: That's been dragging on for I don't know how many years, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to a deadline for that negotiation.

Will the government commit to not using the green fund, the carbon tax, or the heritage savings fund to pay for this project's liability?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, because the amount of money – it could be, you know, \$5 or up to \$2 billion – will not become payable until the oil is flowing, we will in fact see a significant bump in annual revenue. We have a great deal of flexibility in terms of how that money would be provided and the pace at which it's provided. But this is the fundamental principle: Albertans will get value for money. It will not be a payment; it will be an investment.

Electric Power Prices

Mrs. Aheer: Mr. Speaker, electricity is now subsidized by taxpayers when the price spikes over 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour. As a result, small industrial users of electricity like Alberta farmers are exposed to the increase of electricity prices as their price is not capped. On May 23 electricity prices spiked over 90 cents per kilowatt hour. To the Minister of Energy: why are you not telling consumers to shop around and get locked into fixed-rate contracts to ensure their electricity prices remain stable, to minimize the subsidies that you pay out?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I've said before, we are doing many things to protect consumers, you know, as we transition from coal-fired electricity to renewables. One of the pieces, in addition to providing a cap and several things like that, is

an education piece. We have been putting out some things in the mailers with some of the bills, and we will continue to do so. Absolutely, we've encouraged companies to market their products to customers so that they do know that they have a choice.

2:20

Mrs. Aheer: Actually, Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, one of the constituents in my constituency was told by Enmax that they should probably pick a fixed rate very soon as electricity prices spike.

To that, the NDP government shelled out millions in April to backstop electricity prices and, unlike in Ontario, with failed electricity prices and policies, the NDP is shutting down baseload power plants, driving those prices higher, throwing thousands out of work. Minister, are farmers and ranchers in my constituency going to have to make the choice between running their operations and keeping their families warm at night?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, any reference to Ontario is somewhat misleading because we have a totally different system than theirs. We chose a far different path than Ontario did. We're using competitive auctions, that have set record low prices, and we're also encouraging projects to be where we already have infrastructure. We are not building new infrastructure.

With respect to the cap, the cap is quite high, and many farmers and ranchers actually come under that cap. So if there's a particular case in point, I'd invite the member to contact my office, and we'll look at it.

Speaker's Ruling Preambles

The Speaker: Hon. members, I continue to be challenged by the artful skill that many of you have here with respect to preambles, and every day I find a surprise. I would, however, urge you to put your paintbrushes down if you could at certain occasions and be specific with respect to the questions. I appreciate your assistance with that.

Thank you.

Please proceed.

Electric Power Prices (continued)

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that these pieces of education aren't making it out to our rural farmers and ranchers and constituencies and given that they have to run electric pumps to move water to cattle and to irrigate crops and given that these small industries are not getting a rate cap on their electricity bill and are getting double whammy from the NDP's carbon tax, how can the minister go around saying that they're making life better for Albertans, when all they've done is increased input costs for the food we eat, making basic groceries cost more and more, reducing the money in the pockets of the farmers to the point where many of them are having to leave the industry?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, increases in costs have quite a few factors.

The cap itself is 6.8 cents, and it has not risen in the last while. In fact, we've been paying some of the lowest prices right now. We

are working with REAs. If the hon. member's constituent is in a REA, we are working with them. Everybody is going to be under the cap. Again, we have a fairly high threshold, so if they're above that, I encourage the member to have them contact our office. We'll work with them.

Trans Mountain Pipeline Public Purchase (continued)

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, this morning we were glad to hear that the Trans Mountain pipeline project was not permanently cancelled. However, to be clear, we're in this situation as a result of the inaction of the Trudeau Liberal government, with no opposition from this Alberta NDP government. With the private sector sidelined now, the burden and risk are, unfortunately, shifted onto taxpayers, and the B.C. NDP and activists are still refusing to back down. Minister, how will this new deal alleviate the uncertainty caused by the illegal protesters in B.C.?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the deal announced today is a huge, major step not just for Alberta but for Canada. You know, when Kinder Morgan announced their concerns on April 8, we took to talks between our government and the federal government, and today we're celebrating that commitment and the hard work of our Premier. We're pleased with the work the federal government has done, and we're pleased to continue that work until that pipeline is in operation.

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, given that today the Trudeau government repeatedly dodged and deflected when asked if they were going to take any action to end the disruption tactics in British Columbia and given that B.C. has been effectively blocking this project for over a year now, will the minister please tell us their plans to address the Trudeau Liberals' failure to take action to end the death-by-delay tactics in B.C.?

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

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the deal that we heard about today is a good gain for Albertans and for Canadians. It puts people back to work on the pipeline in the next few weeks. The deal is that it's going to unlock capital, and it's going to provide assurance that this pipeline will go forward. I know that people up where I live are very excited today, and in a number of interviews I did, there's a lot of excitement and a lot of hope in Alberta. We're going to get this pipeline built.

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, my question is simple. Had the federal government and the Alberta provincial NDP government not procrastinated until this late hour, would Alberta taxpayers have been required to purchase a viable project that was already fully privately funded?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, what happened in the past with all the efforts of the previous Conservative government and the federal government was zero. Our efforts have gotten us two pipeline approvals, and today we're closer than ever to getting that pipeline built. We've been clear from the get-go. There is no outcome but to get that pipeline built, and we're going to do what it takes to continue that work until that oil is flowing.

Premier's Former Chief of Staff's Consulting Contract

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, yesterday I asked the government to explain why it rehired John Heaney, the former chief of staff to the Premier, as an adviser despite obvious ethical issues with his employment, including the fact that he's a registered lobbyist in British Columbia. Yesterday the minister assured us that he had worked closely with the Ethics Commissioner to achieve an exemption. To the Minister of Finance: what exactly does that exemption allow Mr. Heaney to do?

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

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much. The contract is an addendum. It's structured as an addendum to Mr. Heaney's contract. We sought the advice of the Ethics Commissioner. Of course, that addendum allows him to have outside employment, and he has done that.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, given that in January of 2018, three months after the contract had begun here in Alberta, Mr. Heaney resigned and Mr. Heaney registered to lobby on behalf of a cannabis company, Nuuvera, to communicate with the government about the production, distribution, and sales of cannabis in B.C. and given that part of his role here in Alberta is to advise the Finance minister, the very minister responsible for establishing a retail market for cannabis in Alberta, does the minister not see this as any form of conflict of interest?

Mr. Ceci: I think I explained yesterday that Mr. Heaney's role with regard to Treasury Board and Finance is talking about the path back to balance, Mr. Speaker, a path back to balance that gets us by 2023-24 to a zero balance. It is not around cannabis.

With regard to his contract the exemption is to work outside of government. Again there's mudslinging from the other side. Mr. Heaney's contract says that he is not permitted to lobby government members in this province or employees of the government, so he's not working on behalf of those cannabis . . .

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

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, given that this government has been on record talking about how it operates in voice mode and given that Nuuvera is also registered and engaging in lobbying the provincial government of Alberta with respect to distribution and sales of cannabis and that now Nuuvera's lobbyist in British Columbia is a government of Alberta employee, could the minister please again state for the record that he sees no ethical issues whatsoever in the lobbyist also being a government of Alberta employee?

Mr. Ceci: I think what I'll say, Mr. Speaker, is that Mr. Heaney is on contract with the government of Alberta. He has worked with the Minister of Energy and my department around the path back to balance and with that department around the Trans Mountain pipeline and advising on that. He is not permitted to lobby the government members in this province or to talk to members of government in this province.

Environmental Advocacy

Mr. Westhead: Mr. Speaker, in December of 2016 this Assembly passed my private member's motion, Motion 511, which urged the government

to increase its efforts to conserve and manage public lands in Alberta's headwater regions to optimize downstream water security for future generations of Albertans.

On May 15 of this year this government announced the world's largest protected contiguous boreal forest. To the Minister of Environment and Parks: what role did that motion play in that decision?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank the hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane for his strong advocacy and hard work on behalf of his constituents, who want to see us leave a legacy of conservation and protection of nature to future generations. We've heard questions around market access and around Alberta's environmental performance in the past, and that's one of the reasons why we moved forward with the largest protected boreal forest area in the world. We have heard those concerns around headwater protection that were brought up by the hon. member, and we've acted.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: what other initiatives has the government undertaken as a result of my private member's motion?

2:30

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, on this side of the House we continue to recognize the importance of headwaters, of responsible management of those headwaters. The Member for Banff-Cochrane on behalf of his constituents continues to advocate for those issues every day. One of the things that we did as a result of his advocacy was establish the Livingstone-Porcupine Hills as public land-use zones, which follows through on our commitments to science-based land management and protects the environment and protects people's private property as they go about their business of ranching and farming and so on.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: how do jobs and the economy work together with efforts to better conserve and manage our environment and natural spaces?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the Member for Banff-Cochrane is always a strong advocate for things like species at risk. When we have native trout populations that are in good shape, then we can grow our tourism industry, for example, and we can give our children those high-quality outdoor experiences. That shows what we can do when we work together and when we actually care about the environment that we bequeath to future generations.

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

Education Concerns in Calgary-Elbow

Mr. Clark: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past weekend I held a town hall in my constituency to allow parents to weigh in on recent changes to student transportation that resulted from Bill 1

and to hear from them on other issues in education. I committed to ask questions on their behalf, so my questions today come from those parents. To the Minister of Education. Parents expressed a desire to move French immersion from the definition of alternative programming and make it part of a designated program. Given that Canada is a bilingual country, to the minister: will you make this change, and if not, will you amend Bill 1 to allow parents to pay extra to ensure adequate and timely bus service for students in alternative programs?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can notice a marked improvement in the quality of questions based on the fact that they came from those fine parents in Calgary, so that's great.

Certainly, we're looking at all aspects of transportation. We have a transportation survey that we're working through right now, and we are looking for ways by which to make changes to the walk limit and to other aspects of busing as well. We know that we need to make an investment to ensure that busing is safe and that it is economical as well. So between the two, working with parents, working with school boards, we'll find a solution that is amicable.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No parents smarter than those in Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Speaker, given the strong support expressed by parents who attended my education town hall, their support for public education, and given questions from parents of students in the public, charter, and private education systems, to the Minister of Education: what is your vision on funding for private, charter, and public schools?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you've heard from the beginning, we have one of the fastest growing populations, the youngest population in Canada and tremendous enrolment growth right across the province in our schools, especially in urban areas. So we need all the capacity we can get, quite frankly. The choice that we do have available to us between each of the forms of education: francophone, public, separate, charter, and private are all certainly not just required but I think provide an excellent level of education here in the province of Alberta. Indeed, we have one of the best education systems in the country.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Clark: Why, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that one of the issues that has been particularly challenging for parents in Calgary-Elbow and the rest of the city is disconnected bell times due to student transportation constraints and given that there are some middle schools that start over an hour after their feeder schools and given that this makes it very difficult for families with kids in both schools and has a negative impact on parents' ability to maintain regular work hours, to the Minister of Education: have you met with parents to discuss these concerns, and if not, will you meet with them?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Yes. Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, the issue around bell times in the city of Calgary is something that I've heard a lot about. Certainly, you want to make sure that it is convenient so that you have some synchronization between kids in different levels of school and so forth. So, yes, I have, but, yes, I will in the

future, too. You know, it's important for us to make investments in education. We've done so over the last four budgets, and we continue to do so now, with \$77 million for our classroom improvement fund, for example, which resulted in the hiring of more than 140 new positions in the city of Calgary, in Calgary public alone.

Aerospace Industry Promotion

Mr. Schneider: Mr. Speaker, 10 years ago Alberta's four government-owned firefighting air tankers went through an upgrade and conversion to run turbine engines. Now Longview Aviation Asset Management, which is a division of Viking Air of Calgary, has a new conversion kit to turn this type of aircraft into CL-415 enhanced aerial firefighters. Can the minister advise us today: what is the future of Alberta's four aging, government-owned air tankers, please?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the very thoughtful question. Are those air tankers in particular? They are. They still have some use to them. The air tankers are deployed across the province as contract air tankers as well. To update the House, we have well over a thousand wildland firefighters today supporting our communities, supporting our citizens, supporting our infrastructure across the province. There are extremely dry conditions, as you know, and I'm encouraging all Albertans to be extra careful as we all pray for some rain.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Minister. Given, Mr. Speaker, that aircraft conversions and new builds are able to be exported to all corners of the world, can the Minister of Economic Development and Trade confirm or deny for us that Longview Aviation Asset Management or Viking Air is a recipient of the capital investment tax credit, the Alberta investor tax credit, or any other assistance programs?

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We've done some work with Viking Air as far as their plans to open a facility in Calgary go. I don't want to misspeak in the House, so I will get back to the member. I believe that they did qualify for the capital investment tax credit, but I will verify that and get it to the member.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Minister. Given, Mr. Speaker, that the Edmonton Airshow is quickly gaining a reputation as being the aerospace showcase for Alberta's aerospace industry and given that the aerospace sector has a shortage of pilots and mechanics, jobs that are knowledge based and high tech and well paying, Minister, what are you doing to encourage Alberta-based industries like Viking and educational institutions like SAIT to showcase their high-tech products and programs to the public at this annual gathering of over 40,000 people?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll thank the member for the question. I recently spoke at the aerospace conference in Calgary, where there is significant expertise and interest in really developing our aerospace sector. There are a number of different companies throughout the province of Alberta, and we have quite a few strengths. I know that there is a role that we have played as far as engaging with postsecondary institutions

to look at how we can maximize the use of training and education to help fill the supply of pilots around the world. We have an incredible flight simulator at Edmonton International Airport, that's booked year-round.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Air Ambulance Service in Peace River

Mr. W. Anderson: Mr. Speaker, for several weeks I've been inquiring into the procurement and subsequent award of air ambulance contracts and specifically the level of service or lack thereof. On May 10 during question period I asked the Minister of Health about a specific situation at the Peace River Airport on April 29, where a medevac plane was stuck in the mud for over two hours during a patient transfer. The minister responded by saying that she would look into the incident. On the 14th of May the minister's response to my colleague's question was that she was tired of the mudslinging and was going to "set the facts straight" and told this Assembly that the delay was only 10 minutes. While speaking, the minister motioned to a document she was holding. Can the minister commit to tabling this document or any other documents that show the delay was only 10 minutes?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The truth is that that hon. member said that it was an emergency transfer. It was not an emergency transfer; it was a routine transfer. That hon. member said that they were stuck for two hours. They were stuck for 10 minutes. A second plane did get called in because it wasn't an emergency, and the second plane was used rather than using the original one. I'd be happy to provide confirmation of that. This is that confirmation as well. Certainly, if the member requires me to put something in writing to his office, I'd be happy to do that. Our number one priority is to keep Alberta patients safe, and that will continue to be the number one priority.

Mr. W. Anderson: Mr. Speaker, I never mentioned that it was an emergency transfer.

Given that the chief operating officer of Peace River e-mailed the Minister of Health on May 11 and that in his e-mail he expressed concern over the air ambulance service in his region and the reduction of patient care resulting from it; furthermore, given that he described the incident on April 29 as a medevac being stuck in the mud for two hours, not the 10 minutes the minister stated, can the Minister of Health clarify this discrepancy between the information provided by the chief administrative officer of Peace River and the information the minister stated on May 14?

Ms Hoffman: I can tell you that the plane itself was stuck in the mud for 10 minutes, that a second plane was called. Because it wasn't an emergency transfer, they waited for a second plane rather than using the other one. If it was an emergency, certainly, they could have used the plane once it was dislodged from the mud, Mr. Speaker. The second plane did take more time. Again, because it wasn't an emergency, that was deemed as the best mode of transport. But I can tell you once again that nothing is more important to our province, to our government, and to the people of Alberta than ensuring patients' safety, and that will continue to be the top driver in Peace River and every other part of the province.

2:40

Mr. W. Anderson: Mr. Speaker, given that the town's security cameras captured the entire incident, specifically showing that the

delay was in fact two hours and not the 10 minutes that the minister stated, will the Minister of Health set the record straight? Why did she say that this level of service is an improvement in patient care? Obviously, it's not.

Ms Hoffman: Just to reiterate what I said, the plane was stuck for 10 minutes. Rather than using the same plane again, once it was dislodged, they called for the second plane, Mr. Speaker. Because it wasn't an emergency, that was deemed by the people working in the community and closest to the patient as the best mode of transport. So a second plane was called in.

Again, the remarks that the member opposite is referring to: he's being very fast and loose with the truth. It smells a little bit like somebody's pants might be on fire. I certainly want to make sure that we protect all of the people of the province of Alberta, that we keep them safe and that we ensure that they have the very best access to the very best care no matter where they live, Mr. Speaker.

Coal-produced Electric Power from Montana

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, during budget estimates the Minister of Energy asserted: "It's absolutely false. The Alberta government does not purchase coal-fired electricity from Montana under any arrangement." My question to the Minister of Energy: if the government of Alberta does not purchase coal-fired electricity from Montana, then who does? Is it the Alberta Electric System Operator, AESO?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The contract that is referred to there is a private contract. It is not anything to do with the Alberta government. It is a private contract. I can't remember the number of kilowatts. It's a very small contract between a private operator and Montana.

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, given that the Montana-Alberta tie-line has a rated capacity of 300 megawatts and given that there is only 189 megawatts of wind power being stored along the transmission line, to the minister: when AESO draws more than 189 megawatts from Montana – and I know they do – who is the generator supplying the electricity to Alberta? Are you sure it is not coal-fired electricity? Do you really know?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said, this is a private contract. I don't know the details because it's a private contract, private company. It is not the Alberta government. If the member wishes, I could delve into it and see what I could find out, but I'm guessing that when it's a private contract, it's not any business of the government.

Mr. Panda: Given, Mr. Speaker, that the purchase of coal-fired electricity from Montana would represent gross carbon leakage from Alberta to Montana and given that such carbon leakage demonstrates an abject failure of the NDP government's signature climate leadership plan, Minister, will you admit that Montana's coal-fired electricity will continue to enjoy a prominent, low-cost place of privilege in the forthcoming Alberta capacity market?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I can say is that the capacity market is being designed as we speak. It's spoken to in Bill 13. It will be a competitive process. It will be, I assume,

Alberta companies applying, and there'll be more to say once we go through that process. I appreciate the question, but it is misinformed and not totally full of facts.

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

Postsecondary Education Funding

Ms Woollard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has some of the best postsecondary institutions in the world. We're proud to welcome students from around the globe who want to live and study in our province. However, the cost of education for international students can be very high. To the Minister of Advanced Education: what is being done to support our international postsecondary students studying here in Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, for any international students who want to take a class on getting pipelines built, Alberta is the place to be. Alberta remains a destination for international students because of our high-quality education and our top-ranked universities and colleges. We proudly welcome students from around the world, but they do need to pay a cost that reflects the true cost of their education. They do pay higher fees, but our government believes that international students should be treated fairly. Unlike the Conservatives, we are not going to balance the budget on the backs of students. We're going to ensure that all students . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
First supplemental.

Ms Woollard: Thank you. Thank you for your answer. Under the previous Conservative government tuition fees spiked rapidly and funding to universities and colleges was inconsistent. What are you doing to provide predictability and stability to our postsecondary institutions?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unlike Conservatives, our government believes that all Albertans deserve an affordable and accessible higher education. We're proud to invest in new and creative ways to support students whereas the Conservatives want to look at gouging students, like implementing market modifiers on tuition fees. On this side of the House we're proud to have increased funding to all institutions by 2 per cent as well as provided backup funding to compensate for the tuition freeze. We've frozen tuition for four years. We've made a commitment to predictable and sustainable funding, and we've stuck to it. Finances should never be a barrier for anyone who wants to get an education.

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

Ms Woollard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While costs for students rose under the Conservative government, so did compensation at the highest levels. What has the government done to bring executive compensation in line with the rest of the country?

Mr. Schmidt: Well, Mr. Speaker, our university and college presidents do critical work to ensure that their institutions deliver the high-quality education that students deserve, and they should be fairly compensated. But for too long the previous Conservative government let compensation packages get way out of control and

way out of touch with the expectations of Albertans. Postsecondary executive compensation in Alberta was the highest in the country. These changes that we finally brought in will bring those salaries in line with presidents' compensation in the rest of Canada, and those savings will mean more money in our classrooms and more affordable education for our Alberta students.

Premier's Former Chief of Staff's Consulting Contract (continued)

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, the rehiring of John Heaney, the former chief of staff to the Premier, is shady at every single turn. Mr. Heaney started work just weeks after resigning in October; however, his contract was not signed until February and wasn't posted online until May 15. The Auditor General has warned this government on numerous occasions about starting work without signed contracts.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
The Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much. Let me say, first, that after leaving his position as the chief of staff to the Premier, Mr. Heaney was retained as an executive adviser for both the Minister of Energy and myself. He was tasked with providing us legal advice, Mr. Speaker, on pipeline and market access, and he's been doing that – this is a good day for pipeline access, so he's very good in this job – and he's also helped us on the path to balance. There was discussion about how best to structure his contract based on the advice from the Ethics Commissioner. We've done that.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, given what we've just heard from the minister, in fact, that Mr. Heaney was asked to provide legal advice to the Department of Energy, and given that Mr. Heaney is not a registered lawyer in the province of Alberta, does it seem reasonable that you would ask someone who is not a lawyer in Alberta to provide legal advice to the province of Alberta?

Mr. Ceci: You know, Mr. Speaker, it should be noted that there is an interprovincial agreement between a number of provinces, including Alberta and B.C., that allows lawyers to practise in each other's jurisdictions. So there's nothing here, there's nothing over there that's being asked. I figured the opposition would actually do a bit of research before they brought questions like this up because it's wrong, wrong, wrong.

Mr. Cooper: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that the Finance minister has just encouraged us to do research, it's interesting because I have done some research. That exemption is provided for 100 days of providing legal advice or practising law in the province of Alberta. October is more than 100 days ago, so I'm curious if the minister would be happy to respond to: why at every single turn is this contract of their good friend and colleague, the friend of John Horgan, the person absolutely fighting against Alberta right now, so shady, so dodgy . . .

2:50

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

Mr. Ceci: Yes, Mr. Speaker. The situation is that we have had good advice from a person who is a lawyer, and he can practise in this province. We have got pipeline access approval, of course. Today is a day we should be celebrating more around pipelines. Mr. Heaney has given us good advice, and we'll continue to see that good advice.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I think you may want to take a 30-second break.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 7(8) I am providing notice to the Assembly that the daily Routine will continue today past 3 p.m.

Members' Statements

Farm and Ranch Worker Legislation

Mr. Rosendahl: Mr. Speaker, I stand today to talk about something good happening in rural Alberta that some people tried to exploit for their own political ends. Since our government introduced the Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act, there have been over 1,600 Albertans who have had WCB claims approved for farm-based injuries. That is 1,600 Albertans whose health and safety were taken care of, whose families and incomes were protected, and who have a better life because of what our government did. At the same time, the number of registered farm employer accounts through WCB grew over 240 per cent. That sounds like success.

From the farmers I've talked to and the farm organizations who are involved in the ongoing consultation about regulations, there's a lot of goodwill and understanding now about what Bill 6 was all about. That wasn't always the case, and I don't think it will be a surprise to anybody when a recent article in *Alberta Views* said that the Wildrose Party, Rebel media, and the Leader of the Official Opposition stoked farmers' fears with incendiary speeches. Even now, the Leader of the Opposition promises to kill Bill 6 if he's elected. Barb McKinley is quoted in the *Alberta Views* article. "There's no reason for that other than cheap politicking."

The problem with incendiary speeches and cheap politicking is that it leads to real-world, dangerous consequences like the intimidation and bullying of farmers and farm safety advocates like Eric Musekamp and Darlene Dunlop, who stood up for farm workers' rights and safety. It leads to social media threats that were directed against some of our government members. Where it does not lead is toward a better future and a better and safe life for farm workers and their families. That, Mr. Speaker, should be a source of shame for . . .

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

Oil Sands Development

Mr. Yao: Did you know, Mr. Speaker, that way back in the year 1714 the Hudson's Bay Company wrote about a gummy substance that the local inhabitants used to seal their canoes? In the 1790s Alexander Mackenzie wrote about the bituminous seeps along the Athabasca River. Fast-forward to 1925, when Dr. Clark of the Alberta Research Council perfected a method, using hot water and caustic soda, for separating bitumen from sand. It was a major discovery, to identify a resource in the land being settled by farmers and ranchers. The first great attempt at harvesting this resource happened when they broke ground in 1964 and then started producing in '67. Thus, the great Canadian oil sands was born.

In the 1960s Canadians became aware of pollution caused by industrial activity and automobiles. Industry responded by dealing with spills into waterways, developed major advancements in waste management. New tech was created to reduce carbon dioxide emissions and reduce other contaminants like sulphur dioxide. Lead was eliminated from fuel. Gasolines were reformulated, and methods of capturing hydrocarbon vapours were instituted. Land reclamation is more comprehensive than you see anywhere else. Dr.

Clark himself had a vision that after the land was cleaned of oil, it would be used for farmland up in the north. Tailings ponds were developed so as to not dump sewage into our waterways.

The Alberta Research Council experimented with microwaves, electricity, steam, and even nuclear, that was experimented with or theorized back then, and today the most popular method of accessing oil is using steam to access these deep reserves of oil.

The legacy, sir, is that we have institutions that train highly skilled professionals, technical personnel, and tradesmen, who get extensive experience in this difficult resource, working in a challenging environment where the weather swings from minus 40 to plus 40 degrees Celsius. We have laws, policies, and regulatory authorities that address industry issues more encompassing than any other country has done.

That, Mr. Speaker, is our Canadian oil sands. This is an industry that Canadians need to embrace and be proud of, a sector that provides revenues to build our schools, roads, and hospitals for our nation. Alberta has contributed more than \$200 billion in the last decade to the federal coffers, and Canadians can thank the oil sands for that.

Government Achievements

Mrs. Schreiner: Mr. Speaker, we learn when we are very young that not everybody can be on the same side of the sandbox. As we grow older, we learn that there are those on the progressive side of the political spectrum and those on the reactionary side. Today it is my pleasure to speak to how sitting on the progressive side of this House has changed our province and how that looks in Red Deer-North.

This government recently announced 90 new \$25-a-day daycare spaces in Alberta's third-largest city. This side supports everyday Albertans by making daycare affordable so parents can participate in the workforce and support their families and the economy. From the opposite side of the House all I hear about are cuts, cuts, and more cuts.

Because of the infrastructure deficit we inherited from the old Conservative government, residents of Red Deer-North had the worst air quality in the province, partially as a result of the QE II corridor. This government's investment in infrastructure has enabled my constituents to breathe easier, so to speak. Now all Albertan residents can travel with more safety through and around Red Deer. Investing in the safety and health of Albertans had not been a priority of the tired, old Conservative government, and it certainly would not be a priority of the opposition.

It took 25 years and three asks to support Red Deer College's degree-granting status. I am glad I sit on the side that is moving Alberta forward instead of running toward the past, when tuition was spiralling out of control.

While these examples are specific to my riding, progressive changes like increases in minimum wage, investment in education, growth in health care services benefit constituents of every riding in the province. The work in my city and in this province is far from over, but, Mr. Speaker, I am proud that my side of the House has all Albertans' best interests at heart.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Trans Mountain Pipeline Public Purchase

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are a lot of mixed emotions today around the announcement that the federal government will purchase the Trans Mountain pipeline and the

expansion project. On the one hand, Albertans welcome the news that the Trans Mountain pipe expansion was not permanently cancelled. We need this pipeline to ensure that our products reach international markets. On the other hand, this demonstrates the abject failure of governments to enable the private sector to succeed in building energy infrastructure in Canada.

Today we learned that Kinder Morgan has decided to cash out rather than have to risk shareholders' money in a country where the federal government fails to uphold the rule of law. Justin Trudeau has decided to spend 4 and a half billion dollars in taxpayers' money, but has anything really changed? I would suggest that very little has changed. The Prime Minister is still going to have to enforce the rule of law over the eco activists. He needed to and still needs to take immediate and meaningful action.

A good first step would be to pass S-245, the Trans Mountain Pipeline Project Act, and declare the project to be works for the general advantage of Canada. Trudeau needs to end the court challenges and disruption by the B.C. NDP and actually get the pipeline built. We're in this situation as the result of the actions of the Trudeau Liberal government having halted two other needed coastal pipelines, Enbridge's Northern Gateway and TransCanada's Energy East. Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain is the only option left. We know where the Prime Minister's real interests are. They are summed up – and I quote: we can't shut down the oil sands tomorrow; we need to phase them out. End of quote.

With Energy East and Northern Gateway being cancelled, with world majors like Shell and Total divesting their assets and moving capital to other places around the world and now Kinder Morgan cashing out, Albertans rightly remain concerned that private investment dollars continue to be driven away by the political uncertainty that remains in this province and in this country.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

3:00 Trans Mountain Pipeline Project

Mr. Coolahan: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. From the beginning we've been steadfast in our commitment to getting the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion built. We made it clear that growing the economy and protecting the environment can and must go hand in hand. First, we put in place a country-leading climate action plan. It's a plan that led directly to the approval of a long-awaited pipeline to tidewater by the federal government.

But we understood that this approval needed to be worth more than the paper it was written on. That's why our Premier called on Ottawa to step up, and it's why she travelled the country, speaking to business leaders, workers, environmentalists, and ordinary Canadians. She didn't throw temper tantrums or call people names or ignore the climate crisis. Previous governments tried that approach for years, and it failed. Now it's clear that our Premier's tough, thoughtful approach is working. The vast majority of Canadians, including those in British Columbia, support this project.

Today the federal government announced a deal that will immediately put people to work building this pipeline. This is a major step forward for Albertans and for all Canadians. It means that tens of thousands of good new jobs are on the way. It means that a better price for our natural resources is on the way, and it means that billions in revenue to build roads, schools, and hospitals are on the way.

Mr. Speaker, we know there is more work to do, but with this deal no Canadian pipeline to tidewater has ever had this level of certainty. We are closer than ever to accessing new markets and

creating new jobs. Thank you to every Canadian who spoke up for working families, thank you to our Premier for your leadership, and thank you to all Albertans who have joined us in this fight.

Thank you.

Exercise Maple Resolve 2018

Mr. Taylor: On this international day of peacekeepers I'd like to acknowledge Maple Resolve, the largest and most comprehensive Canadian Army training event of the year, which was completed at the training base in Wainwright: over 6,000 troops from not only across Canada but including 1,500 of our allies from the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, and France. This is not just another exercise. Rather, members undergo a full year of intense training, given the responsibility of being on the road to high readiness. It's awesome to know that our Canadian Army's flagship training program, that prepares soldiers for these domestic and other deployments, happens right here on the doorstep of our town of Wainwright. It's impressive, to say the least, to watch the tanks, the troops, and the equipment that have all been rolling in and out of town for quite some time and now are starting to leave.

Although Maple Resolve happens strictly from May 13 to 24, it takes the better part of a year to prepare and to execute. This exercise offers full-scale dress rehearsal for combat. Short of an actual deployment, this joint exercise provides the most realistic and real-world experience to prepare Canadian troops for an operational deployment.

Mr. Speaker, this exercise is a force-on-force battle where Canadian troops work to liberate the fictitious country of Atropia against the aggressive nation of Ariania and re-establish the international border between the two. Soldiers of all nationalities play both native and enemy forces and use their expertise just as they would on a real-life battlefield. These soldiers practise skills not only in combat but in peacekeeping, infrastructure, building, and repair. In addition, soldiers interact with citizens of these warring countries, who are played by actors for this exercise, making the simulation as realistic as possible.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud of Canadian soldiers and their commitment to this country. Thank you for your service.

Tabling Returns and Reports

Mr. W. Anderson: Well, Mr. Speaker, I have two tablings. One is a copy of a letter from Christopher J. Parker to the Minister of Health outlining the situation in Peace River regarding the airplane being stuck and a commitment and a documentation of the security camera, the fact that this plane was stuck for a considerable period of time and not 10 minutes. I have the appropriate copies.

My second tabling is the time-stamp of the security camera outlining specifically the time frame that this airplane was stuck in the mud – believe me, it was a lot more than 10 minutes; I have the appropriate copies of that as well – from the same individual, Christopher J. Parker, the chief administrative officer of Peace River.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The Member for West Yellowhead.

Mr. Rosendahl: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the five requisite copies of two articles from *Alberta Views* that were referenced in my member's statement today. The first is entitled Beyond Bill 6, and it contains the quote about cheap politicking that I referenced in my member's statement.

The second article, also printed in the *Alberta Views*, is from a CBC news article entitled *Alberta Couple Pays High Price Advocating for Farm Workers' Rights*.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just rise to table a document today. It is from the office of the Registrar of Lobbyists of the province of British Columbia. It is the lobbyist information for one John Heaney, the former chief of staff to the Premier, and it outlines his client information: Nuuvera Corp, “a global cannabis and industrial hemp company based in Toronto, Ontario,” the same company that is currently lobbying the provincial government here in Alberta.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I believe we have two points of order today. The Opposition House Leader.

Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on 23(h), (i), and (j) in regard to an interaction between the Deputy Premier and the hon. Member for Highwood during question period. The hon. Member for Highwood was asking some questions about a patient that was stuck on a plane, and the plane had been stuck in the mud. The Deputy Premier, during that conversation in question period, repeatedly almost made some references early in that question that could be taken as calling the hon. member a liar, but I didn't call a point of order.

But when the Deputy Premier said that the airplane was only stuck for 10 minutes and the hon. member then got up and pointed out that there was, in fact, actually a videotape of the incident which clearly shows, even as late as one hour and 40 minutes into it, that the airplane was still stuck, the Deputy Premier then seemed to lash out at the member. She said at that point that he was playing “fast and loose with the truth,” said that his pants were on fire, clearly in reference to, you know, the same thing that my kids say to each other, “Liar, liar, pants on fire” – I know it's quite shocking that the Deputy Premier would talk the way my kids do in the backyard, but that's what happened – and a few other comments in her speech.

I would quote Speaker Kowalski on that, that you cannot try to do indirectly what you're not allowed to do directly. While I do appreciate that the Deputy Premier was frustrated that she had been caught – I don't think the Deputy Premier was lying. I'll give her the benefit of the doubt. But when she had been in that spot where she realized that the plane had not been stuck for 10 minutes – in fact, there was a video of it being stuck longer – her reaction to that should not be to lash out against another hon. member and call him a liar. She should just withdraw and apologize for that.

The Speaker: Hon. member, any other arguments to the point of order rather than speculating about it?

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving us that whole 30 seconds.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, there are many instances in this House where the creative use of language has been utilized in order to make a point. The rules of the House and the rulings of you, Mr. Speaker, and other Speakers, have

clearly indicated that context is very important. Clearly, the hon. Deputy Premier had made a clear statement with respect to what had happened and was not prepared to accept the facts as they were being put forward by the other member in the opposition.

3:10

There are many cases. For example, in *Alberta Hansard* on page 1611, October 30, 2017, the then Opposition House Leader made a point of order that one member of the government had suggested that the other side was telling whoppers, and, Mr. Speaker, you ruled – the quote was: “I guess . . . if you're going to spread around mistruths, then you might as well tell whoppers” – that “mistruths” was out of order, and an apology was duly given. But you did not so rule with “whoppers.” It is the creative use of language. It's important to consider the context.

In this particular case both members had different information, and the Deputy Premier clearly did not accept the assertions of the hon. member. She used that language but did not suggest that the hon. member was lying or telling mistruths. So I would ask you to take into account those facts, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be very brief, but I have to say that I'm surprised to hear the Government House Leader make the argument that he has because, frankly, if we accept his logic, then I think we're on a very, very slippery path in this Assembly, where members on both sides could abuse the ruling. Very clearly, I think that when you say that someone's pants are on fire, then as the Opposition House Leader said very clearly, we all know where that comes from. I kind of wonder if maybe next it's cockney rhyming slang as a way of insulting one another or skirting the rules.

I do think that the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, 2017, page 619, is useful, where, in fact, it spells out what the Opposition House Leader has said, and that is: “a Member ‘cannot do indirectly what cannot be done directly’.” I think that is a very important principle here because, frankly, I think that if you do not find that this is a point of order, I worry about the future of decorum in this Assembly.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I do not have the benefit of the Blues, but my recollection of what I heard – I think the House leader for the opposition has, in fact, a good case, a good point where he references the decision made by the former Speaker Zwozdesky, I think. “He is playing fast and loose with the truth” and “pants on fire” are the particular references that were made today. I thought I heard something in addition to that, but I ought not to speak to that until I see it.

I would agree with the Government House Leader's argument that it is in context when the Speaker makes the decision. Well, in this context I believe the Deputy Premier ought to have been more cautious with her comments and not left the impression of what might be construed by others as a deliberate falsehood. I would say that in this instance, in fact, there was a point of order, and I would hope that we proceed in the future using more caution.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, if that's the case, then on behalf of the hon. Minister of Health and Deputy Premier I will withdraw the comment and apologize and assure the House that we do not believe the hon. Member for Highwood's pants are on fire.

The Speaker: I'm just . . .

Mr. Cooper: Taking it all in, sir?

The Speaker: I have significant insight into the future because of, in fact, context, and in that context maybe the Government House Leader can get away with it.

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

Point of Order

Allegations against a Member

Mr. Cooper: Well, thank you. I rise to argue a second point of order. Before I begin, I might just say that sometimes you're surprised in the Assembly as to the way a discussion goes. I never thought I'd see a time where we were talking about people's pants on fire here in the Assembly. Nevertheless, we digressed.

During a question this afternoon that I asked the Minister of Finance – and I rise under 23(h), (i), and (j) of the standing orders today; unfortunately, I also don't have the benefit of the Blues – it is my belief that the member, the Minister of Finance, implied or said directly that I was misleading the House with respect to the question that I'd asked on the Premier's former chief of staff, John Heaney. I think that it's important that I just spend a brief moment discussing some of these concerns that I have.

Clearly, I am not misleading the House. I rose to speak specifically about Mr. Heaney's contract. The fact that he'd begun work in October, signed the contract in February, and then that contract was posted online in May: all of those facts are available to the government and are on the government website as the information I received was from the contract.

Secondly, I tabled the document in the House today that gave an indication that he, Mr. Heaney, is currently lobbying on behalf of a cannabis company in the province of British Columbia. Nuvera cannabis, I believe, is the name of the company.

The Speaker: Hon. member, you are getting to the point of order?

Mr. Cooper: Yeah. The point of order is that he said that I've misled the House, and I am providing you the evidence that shows clearly that I am not misleading the House, only giving the government the very information that they have provided to me. The minister is making an accusation that I have misled the House. The document that I tabled today is an indication that he, in fact, is a registered lobbyist for a cannabis company and that he works for the Minister of Finance here in the province of Alberta as a senior adviser to the Minister of Finance, that same minister who is responsible for the sale of and the creation of a retail market for cannabis in the province of Alberta.

The other thing that we spoke about at length today was the fact that he is not a registered lawyer, but the Minister of Finance said that he was here to provide legal advice. He has provided legal advice for over a hundred days here in the province of Alberta.

The Speaker: Hon. member, where are you going with this? There's an allegation that the Finance minister made a statement. Is that correct?

Mr. Cooper: That's correct, and I'm providing you the evidence that I did not mislead the House.

The Speaker: More and more we ought to have a rule around the idea that when we're listening to this, there is not a story told two or three times that has already been mentioned.

The allegation is that the minister disputed the facts that you said and that you now support with actual evidence. Am I right?

Mr. Cooper: No. The allegation is that he made a claim that I misled the House, which clearly I have not. I mean, not to belabour the point, but the very fact that there's a code of conduct that he is in breach of presents a significant challenge to the fact that the Minister of Finance would make this allegation that I'm misleading the House when all of those documents are available to the Minister of Finance, and he should know that I'm not. As such, he should withdraw and apologize for making such an outlandish accusation.

The Speaker: Wow.

The Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Well, Mr. Speaker, there may have been a lapse on my part. I didn't hear that particular part of the exchange, so I'm not really in a position to argue. Obviously, if the Minister of Finance did suggest that the hon. member had misled the House, that would be a breach of points of order, and I would deal with that appropriately. I'm not in a position to confirm or dispute the hon. member's suggestion of being accused of misleading the House.

3:20

The Speaker: Hon. members, I did not hear the allegation. I would remind the House that when you are rising on a point of order, is the allegation to the degree that it was misleading rather than to determine the truth of the statements leading to the dispute?

To the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, I think there was much discussion about continued disagreement about the facts but not necessarily to the misleading statement made in the House.

I do not see a point of order in this situation.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms. Jabbour in the chair]

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

Bill 1

Energy Diversification Act

The Chair: Hon. members, are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak to Bill 1 in Committee of the Whole. This bill is the Energy Diversification Act. This government received the Energy Diversification Advisory Committee's report. There are some good points in this bill. We, actually, as the Official Opposition, the United Conservatives, support efforts to diversify and grow our petrochemical sector because that will also help to free up some of the pipeline space. We get that, so we support it.

But if you look at this government's record, Madam Chair, in the last three years they have done nothing to promote private investment. They actually chased private investments away from this province. They raised taxes on the job creators by 20 per cent, and they also dramatically increased the red tape. They imposed the job-killing carbon tax. They never said once in their campaign platform that they were going to bring in the job-killing carbon tax, which is an economy-wide carbon tax. When they brought that in, they said that by imposing the job-killing, economy-wide carbon tax, they'll create jobs. On the other hand, they actually killed the economy, they killed the jobs, and they killed the investments.

Madam Chair, if they had done other things right, then we wouldn't have required this Bill 1. Their message to the investors was very clear. By bringing in their tax increases, by bringing in a carbon tax, and by bringing in regulatory red tape at every stage, the Alberta NDP were telling global investors that you'd better invest your money elsewhere.

Given all this, Madam Chair, it's really hard to see how effectively these modest loan guarantees and grants, spread over eight years, draw much-needed investment back in any meaningful way or in any timely fashion. Albertans have clearly taken note of the NDP's policies of the first three years. Now the NDP is trying to pass legislation to counter that. There is a pattern here. This government makes one mistake, and to fix that mistake, they have to make another mistake, and to fix that, another mistake. That's why I call it Whac-A-Mole policy. They bring each time one policy, and there are flaws in that. We identify them. We tell them. We move amendments to make their bills better, but they won't take our advice. They just ignore us, and they vote down our sensible, common-sense amendments.

It would be, you know, far more effective to start repealing their harmful policies rather than bringing in new legislation and adding more red tape. It's not even clear why the NDP needs legislation to carry out this agenda as opposed to using their executive power. This is clearly a political exercise to try and distract from their own record.

Talking about their record, Madam Chair, this government and their federal ally Justin Trudeau killed the Energy East pipeline, they killed the Northern Gateway pipeline, and, you know, they did everything they could to get Trans Mountain to the stage where we are here today. We need both the federal and provincial governments to backstop Kinder Morgan's losses. The government is now saying: okay; we'll buy you out because no other private investor is ready to invest into the project. We have to spend taxpayers' money to give that certainty of completing a pipeline to ship our product to the Canadian coast when their federal ally Justin Trudeau could have just implemented and enforced the law and invoked 92(10)(c).

That could have saved lots of time for the project proponent, and that could have saved billions of dollars of Canadian taxpayers' money, but this Alberta NDP government did nothing. For three years they have been saying that their climate change leadership plan will get us social licence and that then that will change the minds of people like Tzeponah Berman and Karen Mahon, but they haven't moved any opponent of the pipeline from no to yes as of today, including today. Even today John Horgan said that they'll fight to the end and that they'll use every tool in their tool box. This Premier: we equipped her with Bill 12, and she kept saying that she would use it in her tool box. But today she said that, no, she's not going to use that. That's the record of this government, Madam Chair.

Having said that, coming back to Bill 1, which was actually not required if this government was doing their job, we as the Official Opposition definitely support diversification of the petrochemical sector. Also, we support partial upgrading because it will definitely free up the pipeline space.

3:30

You know, as the bill is written, there are some shortcomings, particularly on accountability. It's not good enough to just have the programs and the Alberta Petroleum Marketing Commission, the APMC, send reports to the minister and cabinet. The government is actually the steward of the resources for all Albertans, so it is critical in this era of openness and transparency that reports be brought before and tabled with the Legislative Assembly. Madam

Chair, the people that elected me in Calgary-Foothills are looking for accountability, and as their representative they would expect me, being the critic for Energy, to hold this government to account and bring openness and transparency. At the end, we are the elected representatives, and the buck stops here, in this temple of democracy, the Legislature.

Also, the Auditor General called for improved reporting from APMC, so we have serious concerns about this bill. The APMC is also currently running on a "trust us" basis. They say: don't worry. When we ask questions in PAC and everywhere, they say: "Don't worry. Trust us. Believe us. We are the experts. We know what we are doing." That's the kind of response we get, Madam Chair, and that's not good enough for the government's accountability.

That's why I move an amendment to Bill 1. With your permission, Madam Chair, I'll read this. I have the requisite number of copies, and I'll give them to the page here. I'll wait till you get the copies.

The Chair: This will be known as amendment A1.

Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that Bill 1, Energy Diversification Act, be amended by striking out section 4 and substituting the following:

Reports

4(1) The Minister shall prepare an annual report on the Minister's progress in establishing and implementing any programs under section 2, and shall lay the report before the Legislative Assembly if it is then sitting or, if it is not then sitting, within 15 days after the commencement of the next sitting.

4(2) The Alberta Petroleum Marketing Commission shall annually, and more frequently if the Minister directs, report to the Minister on any project supported by the Commission through any programs established under section 2, and the Minister shall lay the report before the Legislative Assembly if it is then sitting or, if it is not then sitting, within 15 days after the commencement of the next sitting.

Madam Chair, it's about accountability. This government talks a good game. If the Premier is serious about bringing openness and transparency, all I'm asking is that every member of this Assembly support this amendment and pass this amendment so that we can strengthen Bill 1 to make the legislation stronger.

I ask all of my colleagues here to support this amendment. Thank you.

The Chair: Any members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Great job, Madam Chair. Thank you very much. I really appreciate the opportunity to stand again and speak to this amendment on Bill 1. I have spoken to Bill 1 previously, and I'd just like to reiterate a couple of the points there. This amendment is talking about transparency and accountability. It's one of the things that I recall this government ran their campaign on, so I don't think it's unreasonable for us to ask for amendments that can address that.

While I'm on, you know, Bill 1, we talk about incentivizing investment in Alberta. I worked in the oil and gas industry for a very many, many years. Alberta was a great place to invest, specifically over the last 25 years or so, especially in the oil and gas industry, where we really, really grew the economy up in the Bonnyville area, up in the Grande Prairie area, all over northern Alberta. But when I look at why we're doing this – and we had the announcement today about the Trans Mountain pipeline and the federal government getting involved. I almost see Bill 1 as kind of the same thing, where the government has kind of gone in and

meddled with things and muddled things up to the point where they actually have to step in and start putting taxpayers' money at it.

Now, when we talk about accountability and this diversification, we're dealing now with Justin Trudeau's government, and he's been very clear that he doesn't really support pipelines or our oil and gas industry. So in handing over control of this to him – you know what? – there are a lot of Albertans that don't trust him, and I think the polling is showing that. At the same time, we do have to talk about our provincial NDP government and their allies, the federal Liberals and their federal NDP counterparts who support the Leap Manifesto. We see the true colours of the NDP being delivered by the Horgan government.

Now, when I look at the NDP and their sudden stance in support of the oil and gas industry – I believe I've talked to a few of my colleagues about this, and I may have even mentioned it in the House once or twice. When I was a kid, I used to spend a lot of time at my grandparents'. My grandfather was a worker. He was up early in the morning, sun-up to sundown, except on Saturdays. At 1 o'clock on Saturdays there was a program on CFRN TV called *Stampede Wrestling*, and it was fantastic. You know what? Everything would stop. It didn't matter what you were doing, if you were in the middle of seeding or anything; it was *Stampede Wrestling*. Ed Whalen was the announcer, and he would get the crowd fired up. I believe that it was filmed down in Calgary. The Hart family was a real big part of that. There were numerous villains. You know, they would pack dust inside their wrestling shorts and throw it in the guys' eyes.

The reason I'm bringing this up is that when I look across the aisle and I see all the NDP that used to be protesting pipelines and protesting the oil and gas industry suddenly standing up and waving the flag of prosperity for Alberta – “We've got to get behind” and, you know, “We're pushing for this” – it makes me think of *Stampede Wrestling* because everybody that's watching it knows it's phony, but it is entertaining. It's like watching a train wreck. You can't take your eyes off of it.

I would ask for support for this amendment to this bill because it does provide some transparency. It does give us a better look and forces the government to do some reporting. But while you're at it, if you're looking for some entertainment, you could always look up some old episodes of *Stampede Wrestling*, and you'll kind of get where I'm going with that because these folks would get up there and put on a really good show, but at the end of it all everything was fake.

3:40

I really don't trust this government. I don't trust the federal Liberals either when it comes to this pipeline. I don't think that everybody is really all that sincere in their support for the pipeline or for the oil and gas industry. I have a very big concern for all the smokestacks out in Fort Saskatchewan. We talk about incentivizing and diversifying our economy. I think that when I talked about Bill 1 originally, I talked about how I had worked at a lot of those plants, the Sherritt Gordon fertilizer plant and the Dow Chemical plant, and that was diversification that didn't need incentivizing. I do have a concern for the folks out in Fort Saskatchewan because all of those smokestacks don't really fall into the whole Leap Manifesto doctrine, you know, the people that are supporting the document federally and our neighbours to the west and, actually, any NDP with a membership, really, that signed on to that.

So I do have a big concern for the folks out in Fort Saskatchewan at the moment that maybe they'll be next, when they look at what happened to our coal industry, when they look at the attempts to get this pipeline approved. I really think that a lot of the folks out there are quite nervous that maybe their smokestack will be next on the

shutdown list for the oil and gas industry and the NDP Leap Manifesto, so we do have to take that into consideration. [interjections] I see the members are laughing. You know, they didn't campaign on the carbon tax and they didn't campaign on shutting down the coal industry, but guess what happened? So I would say that the people that I talk to in the industry out in Fort Saskatchewan are very, very nervous about you folks getting another term and seeing exactly where your focus lands.

So if I could get other people to support this. Like I said, I know that you campaigned on transparency, you campaigned on accountability, and that's all that this simple amendment is asking for on Bill 1 is to provide some accountability and some reporting.

With that, I will allow others to have a chance to speak.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the Member for Calgary-Foothills for bringing forward the amendment. I understand what he's trying to achieve with that amendment, and that's great. I mean, I think we all want to understand what's happening to public dollars when they are going into these facilities. However, it is a bit redundant because the Department of Energy prepares an annual report, and that report, obviously, would include information on any projects that would be authorized or supported under the programs enabled by Bill 1. That report is publicly available, and it could be debated in the Public Accounts Committee as well.

I'm confident in the ability of members in this Legislature and at the Public Accounts Committee to review this annual report and to ask questions during that time. As such, I will not be supporting this amendment because it's simply not necessary.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today to speak to the amendment to Bill 1, that essentially asks this House to be willing to prepare an annual report that will go not just before a minister and Executive Council but before the Legislative Assembly. When we go through the process and the exercise of democracy, we elect people into this Legislature for a reason, so that the people and their representatives can have a say on the legislation that is brought before this House and on how the government accounts for its actions when it comes to various enactments and following through and doing the business of government.

Madam Chair, we know that the NDP campaigned on a campaign of transparency and accountability. That's laudable. It is something I believe that all sides of this House can and should support. And I will freely admit that as the business of the House comes before a committee like the Public Accounts Committee, that's an appropriate way, one of the ways, that we can deal with information that is coming from the government through the business of this province. But I would also argue that at the final end of the equation, the final authority should not be a small group of people on a Public Accounts Committee but should be the Legislature in full. It should be the Legislative Assembly and the representatives of this Legislative Assembly that have the opportunity on behalf of their constituents to be able to address this issue of transparency and accountability.

Madam Chair, it's actually really quite important for us to be able to do so in this Chamber. We are the representatives of the people, we are the voice of the people, and we are here to strengthen legislation and to hold the government to account. I believe that it is critical. This is a critical piece. This amendment speaks to a

critical piece of governance when it comes to democracy, that all legislation and all government actions should at the end of the day come back before this House. You know, nothing more or less than the prosperity of this province is at stake at times, and it's important, as we meet as a Legislative Assembly, that we consider amendments like this and that we try to make legislation better. I believe that this amendment does indeed do that by asking the government to consider bringing this back before the Legislative Assembly.

Madam Chair, when we take a look at the Energy Diversification Act, we can see that there's a background to this bill that needs to be considered. You know, at one time the United States was a net importer of energy. That's no longer the case. Today, now, the United States is a net exporter of energy products. Energy-producing and -exporting nations are now in a struggle to maintain and to increase their global market share, and Alberta and Canada are not outside of this reality that we face. Nations like Canada and the United States and the OPEC nations are competing in places like Asia to sell their energy products, and it's going to be very important that we produce and that we have an energy industry in Alberta that is capable of carving out that market share and is capable of competing on the world stage.

We need to consider this amendment because I believe that as we bring back the information about how we are doing and how this is performing, the financial tools that we're going to be using to try to promote the diversification of our energy industry, it's going to be important to bring it back to the people and to their representatives.

Madam Chair, we in Alberta are going to have to compete and to participate in this global energy market, and that's what this bill really speaks to. It speaks to the fact that this government in particular has struggled to figure out how best to participate in the global energy market. As a result of that, I believe that we need to come back to the House and that we need to review through our representatives in this Legislature just how we are doing and, for the programs that we have passed through Bill 1, whether they are actually doing the job that we're asking them to be able to do.

We've seen the value of doing exactly that, bringing this kind of information and this kind of transparency to government and bringing it back into this Legislature. Legislation that's been passed through this House has obviously negatively impacted this province over the last three years, and we've had the opportunity as the opposition to try to provide constructive criticism. We warned the government about the confusion that is created when you try to address things like royalty rates, the carbon tax, emission caps, regulatory red tape that often has bound the hands of business in Alberta, increased corporate taxation, loss of capital investment.

We've had all of these things in this House at one point in time over our last three years, and we've had the opportunity as an opposition to be able to speak to these and to at least try to get the government to listen to the wisdom of the opposition. From our perspective, at least, at any rate, Madam Chair, we certainly wish the government had listened to this. We could have solved and stopped ourselves from pursuing courses of action that have severely hurt this province.

3:50

What we have seen is a government that has waffled and come late to the party when it comes to supporting pipelines to tidewater. They've come late to the party when we've tried to explain to them that you can take and pass legislation and pass regulations that actually take capital and get companies to actually not want to invest in this province. When we start talking about Bill 1, this Energy Diversification Act, and the kinds of grants and subsidies that we're looking at implementing here, it's going to be important

for us to make sure that as we begin to digest whether or not they're doing the job, we come back to this House.

The section of Bill 1 that refers to how we will hold these programs under Bill 1 to be accountable and use the financial tools outlined in the bill, from royalty credits to grants: we need to know how we're going to make that accountable in the best way to the people of Alberta through the representatives of the people in Alberta. Rather than reporting to the Legislature, Bill 1 suggests that we should just report it to the minister and to Executive Council. Madam Chair, we would suggest differently, that it is not a good idea to sidestep the people's representatives. Rather, bring it back to the Legislature for appropriate oversight and insight.

I would finally just wrap up my comments, Madam Chair, by saying that it's not good enough to just have the programs and the Alberta Petroleum Marketing Commission send reports to the minister and to the cabinet. The government is the steward of a hugely important resource that we have in energy in this province. We've been gifted with this resource, and it's something we need to steward and to manage very carefully for the best interests of the people of Alberta. So it's critical, absolutely critical, in an era of openness and transparency that the reports be brought before and be tabled before the Legislative Assembly.

Madam Chair, at the end of the day, the buck stops with the people that have been elected in this Legislature. We have and should have the final say on how this government is acting and how the programs and the legislation that we have carried forth into this House and into the rest of the province are functioning. We would argue that we need to consider the Auditor General when he called for improved reporting from the Alberta Petroleum and Marketing Commission, that we take into consideration his wise counsel, that the Alberta Petroleum and Marketing Commission is currently running on a trust-us mode, that we know that that's not good enough, and that we bring this back into the House and into the Legislature for the final approval of the people through their legislators, MLAs.

Thank you for your time, and I would urge the government to support this amendment.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today to speak in support of the amendment by my hon. colleague from Calgary-Foothills.

Madam Chair, this is about accountability. It's about accountability that we all take on when we take on a role as a Member of this Legislative Assembly and the opportunity to serve our constituents in a way which is a responsible one and one which recognizes that we answer to them at the end of the day. This amendment asks us to not only honour that but to actually embed it into this legislation to ensure that we actually will meet that requirement of diligence on their behalf and to ensure that we report back to them when we move ahead and that when we move ahead with legislation, we do so with a degree of diligence that I think is not only expected of us but that we owe in terms of our ability to represent the province.

Madam Chair, we've talked about some of our concerns with this bill on a broader perspective. We've talked about the fact that we do not believe that the economic fundamentals of this province have been held intact and, certainly, in reflection of some of the past advantages that we've had – and I use the Alberta advantage – where we did not need to incentivize businesses to invest. I've been following it quite closely. We had lost – and this is going back over a year now, to actually probably as early as 2016 – at that time over \$34.8 billion worth of foreign direct investment in this province. I

think that I'd mentioned before in this House that I look at the foreign investors often as the canaries in the coal mine here on whether Alberta is a good place to invest, a great place to invest, or not. Unfortunately, the terms "political risk" and "Alberta" have been used in the same sentence all too often recently. Hence, we are needing to sweeten the pot for investors to even consider coming to Alberta and investing. I think that in doing so, we are taking an opportunity here, and we're taking some moves.

We've perhaps damaged the economic fundamentals with respect to the carbon tax, with respect to the minimum wage, with respect to increased personal taxes and increased corporate taxes that have scared away these investors. Now we're coming up with legislation that says: well, we want to attract you back. I think that in doing so, we need to also take into account everyday Albertans, who are on the sidelines, saying: is this good? We've heard the term "corporate welfare." We've heard different things there. Of course, we have found ways to support industry in the past, many different ways. We used to have an unlevel playing field that had Alberta and the Alberta advantage over and above our competitors around the globe. We need to get back there, Madam Chair. We need to get back there.

But in the meantime we're stuck with putting some Band-Aids on some critical wounds here in the province because of flawed fundamentals with respect to our economic situation and the confidence that investors have in our province. In doing so, I think that the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills has put in an amendment here, one that, again, goes back to that accountability to the people we serve, those that are lucky enough to still be employed and those that are unlucky and have not found employment, not just for a short period of time but many of them getting on to two and three years. Their benefits have run out, and their opportunity to thrive in this province has run out. Many of them are leaving, and we've seen that. We've seen an exodus not only of capital, but we've seen people leave this province.

Of course, if you're not a growing province, if you're not attracting people and having that influx of investment, the creation of new jobs, eventually it leads into net negative immigration in the province, which then affects so many other industries, Madam Chair. I was in the home building industry, and the big measure for us at the end of the day was net migration. Are we adding people to Alberta? Are they choosing Alberta to invest in? Are they choosing Alberta as a great place to live and make a living? Madam Chair, that's where we run into an issue here. Are we doing that the right way?

We're accountable to all of those people. Some of them may have a spouse that's lost a job, but one member of the household is still paying taxes as a hard-working Albertan. The other member of the household may be trying to make ends meet or may have taken employment that was certainly below their qualifications just to make ends meet and to ensure that they have that opportunity to support their families but at the same time are supporting this province through their hard-earned tax dollars. We need to respect that if we're going to embark on any of these types of opportunities, albeit, again, because of flawed and damaged economic fundamentals, Madam Chair, we need to consider how we're going to approach this.

I think that we're in a situation here where we are asking this House, this Legislature, and those organizations like the Alberta Petroleum Marketing Commission and the minister's office and the ministerial staff to be accountable to this organization, to this Assembly here, and through this Assembly to Albertans on a broader perspective. I think we owe that diligence, Madam Chair. We owe that diligence, we owe that respect, and we owe that level of accountability to every Albertan who takes a look at this and may

not understand it as deeply as we do. People in industry understand it. They have lawyers, they have accountants, and they have all kinds of experts in the field to take a look at this and to see how it impacts their decision to invest in this province. That's fine. That's what we expect. We expect that those industries are going to do that, and we hope – we hope – that they'll leverage that investment and that assistance that we're providing to them and, hopefully, invest more.

4:00

What I am concerned about is that if we take away some of these supports and incentives, people will say, "Thanks very much, and now we're leaving again" and that we will actually have damaged the economic fundamentals even further by creating a subsidy that is there and actually lowers productivity and lowers the ability for us to compete on a global scale, Madam Chair.

Those are the things that concern me, and that's why I believe in this amendment. Actually, the spirit of this amendment, the wording of this amendment, is such that it ensures that we in this House are accountable to everyday Albertans, to the people that put us into this Assembly, that vote for us every day of the week, and who pay those taxes. At the end of the day, if we remind ourselves, there is no such thing as government money, Madam Chair; there are only taxpayers' dollars. Because of that, I will be supporting this amendment, and I encourage everyone in this House to do so.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members on the amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this amendment to Bill 1, moved by my hon. colleague from Calgary-Foothills. It seems a common-sense amendment.

But just before I get into that, I'm going to, interestingly enough, take issue with what our hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills said when he was on his feet. He actually disparaged the honour of *Stampede Wrestling* at one point in his remarks, and I would like to say that that was first-class entertainment and as authentic as anything that I recall. That's what I have to say about that.

Back to the amendment. Madam Chair, this is common sense. It says:

The Minister shall prepare an annual report on the Minister's progress in establishing and implementing . . . programs under section 2, and . . . lay the report before the . . . Assembly.

Now, it's just a simple accountability matter. It seems completely common sense to me.

If a minister of the Crown from any party at any particular time is going to put in place subsidies, supports for businesses at the taxpayers' expenditure, I think it's only reasonable that the taxpayers should get a report back on what the program is, on how successful it is, on what the government hopes to achieve on behalf of the taxpayers for it, I would say, in terms of tax revenue, in terms of employment, in terms of basically expanding a particular industry in order to build a critical mass so that the industry could flourish and develop further. In short, the government ought to be able to express and explain to the public that when they do this, they actually have a plan, they have intentions, and they should be able to actually express to the public measurable goals that they had and then come back each year and report progress against the measurable goals that the government ought to put in place.

If ever there was an amendment, in my view, this one makes sense. So I thank the hon. member that put that forward, the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Now, it also says:

The Alberta Petroleum Marketing Commission shall annually, and more frequently if [required], report to the Minister on any project supported by the Commission through any programs established under section 2.

Again, the first piece is about – actually, they’re both about accountability to the public, but the second piece is also about accountability to the minister, that the agency or commission reports to the minister, that the minister is responsible for appointing people to the commission. I think it’s only right that the minister ought to hold the commission accountable. The minister ought to know what the goals are. The minister ought to require the commission to report on a regular basis their progress against the stated goals. Again, under Bill 1, if it’s using taxpayers’ dollars, then through the minister and through this Legislative Assembly that report really properly and rightly ought to be put in front of the citizens of Alberta.

Madam Chair, if there was ever an amendment that was common sense, that makes sense, that members on all sides of this House really ought to get behind – and it’s surely not partisan. There’s surely nothing here that casts a negative pall on the government side or any other side of the House. I think it’s just making – whether anybody likes this bill or doesn’t like this bill, this improves it. On that basis, I would respectfully ask members on all sides of the House to support this common-sense, nonpartisan amendment that improves the legislation that’s before this House.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Yes, I did want to take a moment to talk about this amendment that my colleague from Calgary-Foothills brought forward. Again, I want to speak in favour of supporting this amendment. You know, in reading it here, it says that the “Energy Diversification Act be amended by striking out section 4.” Now, section 4(1) presently reads:

The Minister shall annually, and more frequently if the Premier directs, report to the Executive Council on the Minister’s progress in establishing and implementing any programs under section 2.

Of course, what’s going to be substituted in its place is:

The Minister shall prepare an annual report on the Minister’s progress in establishing and implementing any programs under section 2, and shall lay the report before the Legislative Assembly if it is then sitting or, if it is not then sitting, within 15 days after the commencement of the next sitting.

Madam Chair, I think this is a pretty good amendment to bring some clarity and to bring some light into what happens with this bill as it progresses. I think that, obviously, taking it to Executive Council rather than the Legislative Assembly – now, Executive Council, of course, is just, you know, the cabinet of the government, so obviously this isn’t something that’s going to be seen in public like it will be if it’s brought into the Legislative Assembly. I think it only makes sense that if this bill has the effects that the government suggests and it’s such a great bill, then I’m not sure why they wouldn’t want to bring forward the results of this bill, bring it forward to the Legislative Assembly so that we can all see it and so the people of Alberta can see it and decide for themselves, too, the success of it or the failure of it, whichever is the case.

Madam Chair, I think this is a great amendment, and I think it definitely will bring an opportunity for some clarity and also to make sure that it’s transparent. This government talks a lot about transparency and how they want to claim that they’re the most transparent government ever. Of course, we could debate that long

into the night, but if they want to make that claim, this is an opportunity to bring just a little bit more transparency to what they’re doing here. I think that’s a good part there.

Now, if we look at section 4(2), it presently reads:

The Alberta Petroleum Marketing Commission shall annually, and more frequently if the Minister directs, report to the Minister on any project supported by the Commission through any programs established under section 2.

Now, of course, this amendment is going to change that section to read:

The Alberta Petroleum Marketing Commission shall annually, and more frequently if the Minister directs, report to the Minister on any project supported by the Commission through any programs established under section 2 . . .

And then this is where it changes.

. . . and the Minister shall lay the report before the Legislative Assembly if it is then sitting or, if it is not then sitting, within 15 days after the commencement of the next sitting.

Again, Madam Chair, this is another opportunity not only to bring light and transparency to what’s happening in this bill but also to what’s happening under this bill based on what the Alberta Petroleum Marketing Commission is doing. Instead of, you know, just bringing it to the minister, with what the Alberta Petroleum Marketing Commission is doing, it’s going to be brought to the Legislative Assembly. Of course, this is where the public will have a chance to view this. Obviously, in the minister’s office the public doesn’t have opportunity to sit in the minister’s office and see every document that comes through, but the things that go on in this Legislature the people of Alberta do have an opportunity to see.

So I think this is a great opportunity for this government to show a little more transparency and have an opportunity to show Albertans the work that they’re doing and the results of the bills that they’re passing in this Legislature. Again, if this bill is that great and is going to do all these great things, I would think that they would want to bring it forward here so that they can show Albertans what’s happening and have that opportunity.

4:10

I think there are some odd things, of course, with this bill. I mean, the NDP is bringing in this bill after three years in government. I’m not sure what the problem is. I guess I could probably surmise what the problem is. It’s that the government has been driving investment out of Alberta for years, since they’ve gotten in. They’ve had three years of driving away investment and raising taxes and everything, so now they have to do something to gain that back.

Of course, there are things that the government could be doing to attract investment and keep investment here in Alberta, but the government has been doing the opposite. They haven’t done anything to reduce regulations; in fact, they’ve increased regulations. They haven’t done anything to reduce taxes; in fact, they’ve increased taxes. They’ve created a lot of uncertainty for the people that invest money in large projects in Alberta and elsewhere. It’s not like this money isn’t being spent now; it’s just being spent elsewhere.

Obviously, this bill is basically an admission by the government of failure. Of course, if this bill is going to do all these great things, then I think it only makes sense that the results of this bill come before the Legislative Assembly, not be hidden in cabinet, not be hidden in the minister’s office or anywhere else but be brought forward here to the Legislative Assembly so that the people of Alberta can see exactly what’s going on.

I think this is a great amendment. I think we should all support this amendment. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Chair. At this point I would like to move that we adjourn debate on Bill 1.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Ms Larivee: And that we rise and report progress.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on Bill 1. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Any opposed, say no. So ordered.
The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Speaker. At this time I'd like to move that we shorten the bells for all bills for the duration of committee for this afternoon to one minute.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms. Jabbour in the chair]

The Chair: I call the Committee of the Whole back to order.

Bill 1 Energy Diversification Act (continued)

The Chair: Are there any further speakers on amendment A1?
Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:15 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

The Chair: Just for the benefit of our guests in the gallery wondering why we've got all these ringing bells, it's the way we call members back into the House for a recorded vote. We will proceed with that.

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Clark	McPherson	Starke
Gotfried	Nixon	Strankman
Hanson	Panda	Swann
Loewen	Smith	Yao
McIver		

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Ganley	Miranda
Bilous	Gray	Nielsen

Carlier	Hinkley	Piquette
Ceci	Hoffman	Renaud
Connolly	Horne	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Kazim	Sabir
Cortes-Vargas	Kleinsteuber	Schreiner
Dach	Larivee	Shepherd
Dang	Littlewood	Sucha
Drever	Loyola	Sweet
Eggen	Malkinson	Westhead
Feehan	McKittrick	Woollard
Fitzpatrick	Miller	
Totals:	For – 13	Against – 38

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

The Chair: Before we proceed with the bill, we've had a request to revert briefly to Introduction of Guests, for which we need unanimous consent.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests (reversion)

The Chair: The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to introduce today to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the school group from the Assumption school in the little town of Oyen, which is along the border. Some great number of years ago in the diverse constituency of Drumheller-Stettler their present representative was born in that town. I'd like all those wonderful students and their parent chaperones to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

4:20 Bill 1 Energy Diversification Act (continued)

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I rise to make a few brief comments about Bill 1, and then we'll be proposing an amendment, which I hope the government would agree would improve the bill. You know, in general terms I think that taking steps to expand Alberta's energy industry in any way is always a positive thing. It is interesting that this legislation doesn't really do a whole lot that the minister can't already do, so I have some concerns that the bill itself is somewhat redundant, that it's really more of a showpiece bill, as Bill 1s occasionally can be, and really allowing the government more to promote a particular political agenda rather than actually do some substantive legislating. However, having said that, it does give us an opportunity to improve upon what is already in the bill.

One of the things that I think is important is that, noting that Alberta has benefited greatly from the energy industry throughout our history, that benefit has not always been evenly distributed through our province, be that geographically or socially. So one of the things that I think is important is that we use whatever funds that are generated from a bill like this, using a portion of those to ensure that everyone around the province, those in under-represented groups both geographically defined and otherwise, have an opportunity to participate.

Given that, I will pause briefly and hand out this amendment to the page.

The Chair: It will be known as amendment A2.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I move that Bill 1, Energy Diversification Act, be amended in section 2(1) by striking out clause (e) and substituting the following:

- (e) encourage increased participation and leadership from under-represented groups and geographic communities in the energy sector, and.

I'll just read section 2(1).

2(1) The Minister shall establish programs that have the primary purpose of supporting economic growth and energy diversification, including, without limitation, programs that

and then right now the current section (e) reads:

- (e) encourage increased participation from under-represented communities in the energy sector.

That's great, encouraging participation from underrepresented communities in the energy sector. What my amendment would do is expand that out beyond increasing participation and leadership, not just participation but active leadership from underrepresented groups and geographic communities. I think that's an important distinction. It's not a huge difference in terms of what the government bill currently has, but it is expansive, I think, and perhaps better representative of what the minister is going to do.

I will note that the bill itself says the words "without limitation" in 2(1), so certainly the minister is not limited just to this list, but there is a list all the same. Given that, I think it's important that if we're going to name names – one of the first things I was taught when I went into public office was that when you give a speech, if you're going to name names, be sure you get absolutely everyone or name no one because you're almost certain to offend. In this case the government has chosen to name some names and list different groups or different things that the minister may do, although saying "without limitation" that "the Minister shall establish programs that have the primary purpose." So the minister has gone and named these names, and I think that in doing that – there are some great things here, but it is perhaps not as comprehensive as it could be.

So the intent here behind my amendment is to simply improve the bill by expanding out some of the wording. You know, as we move in Alberta in our energy industry to satisfy the world's energy needs, be they hydrocarbon based or other, we are in this province on the cutting edge in many ways of developing new ways to harvest, to store, to distribute, and manage energy. That gives us a tremendous opportunity to develop value-added industries in new parts and different parts of the province that perhaps historically have not simply had the blessing of having those natural resources immediately adjacent. That's going to inspire, I hope, a new generation of energy researchers from different communities in Alberta than have historically participated and different groups, including indigenous groups, that have not been full participants in Alberta's energy industry so far.

The intent here is to do a better job by including diverse geographic communities in energy diversification, diverse cultural communities, and especially and with enthusiasm indigenous communities, so I hope the government sees merit in this amendment. I would encourage all members of the Assembly to support it.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2? Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to thank the Member for Calgary-Elbow for bringing this amendment, but I have a few questions. Maybe he can help me understand this. We are removing 2(1)(e) and then replacing it with:

- (e) encourage increased participation and leadership from under-represented groups and geographic communities in the energy sector.

When you say "leadership from under-represented groups," I'm just curious to understand. Is that the leadership in those companies, like, at CEO level? When you talk about geographic communities, is your idea to spread the development across the province? If that is the case, our Official Opposition is all for spreading out the development to all parts of Alberta. Particularly when I toured in your area, Madam Chair, up north, there is a lot of potential there, but it also has to be practical.

Also, I just want to caution the Member for Calgary-Elbow that when the federal government brought in Bill C-69 – I mean, it's not exactly the same thing. I'm just cautioning from my experience with that bill. For approving pipelines, the Prime Minister wanted to apply a gender-based approach, labour considerations, things that directly won't have any impact other than ideological. In this case I don't think that's the intention of my friend from Calgary-Elbow. My understanding is that it's about spreading the development evenly across the province and bringing up the underrepresented groups like the First Nations, who were here the other day. We all thank them for their contributions in building a better Alberta and Canada. If that is the approach, I and my colleagues are open to supporting that, and I encourage everyone to support this amendment.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Chair. At this point I would like to move that we adjourn debate on Bill 1.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 10

An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements

The Chair: Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Chair. At this point I would like to move an amendment to Bill 10, An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements, and I have the requisite number of copies for you.

4:30

The Chair: This will be known as amendment A1.

Go ahead, hon. minister.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Chair. We've received feedback from stakeholders, particularly municipalities, during the debate of Bill 10. We are listening and responding to those conversations with stakeholders, including a recent conversation between the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Edmonton's Mayor Iveson. I would like to introduce some amendments to Bill 10 as a result of those conversations.

The amendments do not change the intent or the structure of Bill 10. This is still enabling legislation, and municipalities will have the choice to pass a bylaw to establish a PACE program or not. Instead, the amendments will bring additional clarity and certainty on how we expect the program to be run should a municipality make the choice to implement PACE. The amendments provide additional clarity regarding how a clean energy improvement program is expected to operate.

A municipality is expected to pass only one bylaw to establish a clean energy improvement program and authorize borrowing to fund the program. This bylaw will include the types of property and improvements that a municipality would like to make eligible for

improvements and borrowing requirements such as the amount of money that a municipality will borrow to fund the program, maximum interest rates, and terms of repayment.

The amendments also reduce redundancy regarding the listing of a clean energy improvement tax on the tax notice as this is already required under the Municipal Government Act, change the term “agricultural property” to “farmland” to align with terminology used in the MGA, and update the wording regarding prepayment of outstanding PACE taxes to align with the similar provision for local improvement taxes under the MGA.

The amendments also provide greater clarity regarding petitioning of a clean energy improvement program. Specifically, if a successful petition leads to a clean energy bylaw being repealed, existing agreements will remain in place, and those taxes will continue to be paid.

Finally, the amendments will specify that a complaint about a clean energy improvement tax, as it is entered into voluntarily, can only be made in the first year that it is imposed.

I ask that members support this amendment to Bill 10, that will bring further clarity and guidance for municipalities and respond to the feedback provided by the city of Edmonton and others.

With that, at this time I would like to move that we adjourn debate on Bill 10.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 2 Growth and Diversification Act

The Chair: We will now consider Bill 2, the Growth and Diversification Act. Any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gottfried: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for the opportunity to speak to Bill 2 in Committee of the Whole. I’m going to start out by giving some kudos. The minister for economic development, I know, works very hard. I have a lot of respect for the work that he does. I know that he’s been travelling around the globe a little bit recently, in some of my favourite parts of the world, to ensure that we keep the lights on and make sure that we’re promoting as best as we can in some of the Asian markets: China, Singapore, Hong Kong, and vicinity. I think that those are important initiatives.

But, Madam Chair, I guess I look at him as being kind of the jack of spades of the government over there. Sometimes he’s out there as a brave knight promoting things, but sometimes it feels maybe to me that he’s got a deck of about 37 cards and that he’s gambling Alberta’s economic future with a little less than a full deck. I mean that in the nicest way.

Madam Chair, you know, this government talks about boutique tax credits as sort of the saving grace of our economy. We’ve heard myself and other members talk about them as Band-Aids and candy and things like that. I think it’s a reminder to us that the economic fundamentals of this province have been severely damaged by a number of different things: an ever-increasing carbon tax, which we know in the future, from all indications, is actually going to end up in a situation where it goes into general revenues. We’ve seen an increase in minimum wages, and those will continue to increase, creating a greater burden, I think, on our struggling small businesses.

We’ve seen increases in personal income tax, which has had the effect of chasing away many of our high-income earners, who, not surprisingly, are the same people that invest in venture capital and many different things and try and move ahead our economy and are deal makers and entrepreneurs and risk takers and those sorts of

things which those of us on this side of the House greatly appreciate, that respect for risk capital and that respect for the rewards that may come from those risks but are never guaranteed. The fact is that those are the people, those are the individuals who actually make those deals, and they network with each other, and they interact with each other and typically are looking for those venture opportunities that come up.

Of course, increased corporate tax: we could talk about at great length as to what that’s done, Madam Chair, what we’ve seen in terms of the investment-repelling and job-killing policies that we sometimes talk about on this side of the House. I hope that the people on the other side of the House are thinking about that as well. We’ve lost \$34.8 billion in foreign direct investment. Again, that number is from almost two years ago. I wonder what the real total is now. If we throw in the pension fund money that we know has left this province as well, I would suspect that we’re probably well in excess of \$50 billion, \$60 billion, or even \$70 billion that has left this province because of what is perceived as political risk and what could be also perceived as death by a thousand cuts, the death of the Alberta advantage by a thousand cuts of ill-advised and ill-thought-out policy and the overburden of labour and employment standards, which I hear on from restaurants, I hear on from small businesses day after day after day.

In fact, Madam Chair, I was in a restaurant not that long ago, about four or five weeks ago, and the owner there was telling me that they had gone from working 50-, 60-hour weeks and had already not been paying themselves any wages but were forced into tightening up on the hours for their employees as best as they could and were now individually themselves working 70-hour weeks so that they can actually keep the lights on and still not paying themselves a wage. She shared with me that, thankfully, her husband was still employed and was paying the mortgage and keeping food on the table in their home but that she was not only not paying herself for a 70-hour week but not taking home any return on her investment in doing so. Those are some other layers, more of those thousand cuts that we see coming along.

Madam Chair, this government needs to be more concerned with protecting and enhancing the fundamentals of the Alberta economy. I’d say that the fundamentals of the Alberta economy, those are really where we have to focus. We have to focus on being attractive not just to the investors that we have tax credits for and capital investment credits for and digital tax credits for but for the entire economy – the entire economy – because it’s an entire economy we all live in, an economy which is very much engaged and interactive and dependent on each other.

We’ve been blessed in the past to have a robust energy sector. Make no mistake, Madam Chair, that the entrepreneurs that came here that weren’t in the energy sector came here because there was disposable income, because people had disposable income to spend on the great idea that they may have brought here from Saskatchewan or Manitoba or British Columbia or the Maritimes. They knew that Alberta was a place of opportunity and a place of advantage, the Alberta advantage, again, that we talk so much about, that this was the place to come with their good idea and make it a great idea, that they could do that and they could find investors, and they could take the risks with their own assets and their own blood, sweat, and tears and make a go of it and have success in this province because of the Alberta advantage. That was the attraction to this province for so many people. It wasn’t just the jobs in the energy sector.

4:40

When I was with Calgary Economic Development in 2012-2013, in this province we created 87 per cent of the new jobs in this

country, and that was before we had this. We actually had an unlevel playing field, Madam Chair, but – guess what? – we were the ones that were at the high end of that unlevel playing field, and things came. People climbed up that hill, that unlevel playing field. They climbed up that hill to come to Alberta to make a success of themselves because they knew that they could take risks here and that they could succeed through hard work and a great idea and that they could find investors to invest in those ideas because of a robust economy where people had disposable income, the disposable income that is so compromised when the economic fundamentals of this province are damaged, where so many people are living now not just paycheque to paycheque but minus at the end of each month with paycheque to paycheque and relying, maybe and sadly, on their credit cards or on taking equity from their homes or on dipping into retirement savings because one member of the household is unemployed.

They've tightened their belts, and they've tried to reduce their burn rate to survive and succeed and maybe not have to change their lifestyle as drastically as they have to. But many of them are having to do that. They've having to change their lifestyles drastically, in many cases, to avoid foreclosure on their homes, to avoid foreclosure on their businesses. Those small-business people that were hurting because of bad economic fundamentals, Madam Chair, don't have EI, and if they run up their debt, their short-term debt, on a credit card or take money out of the equity of their home, when they finally have to close the doors on their businesses, I'm saddened by the fact that they may look back and say: "The mistake I made was not closing it two years ago because now I have a compromised mortgage, now I have a credit card that I can't pay, and I have no safety net, no EI because I'm an entrepreneur. I'm a self-employed individual, and I don't get EI."

I worry about those families. We hear about them from Todd Hirsch, the economist from ATB saying that he's worried that there is going to be an increased incidence of foreclosures in this province. That, of course, begets a whole other cascade of impact on the communities that we live in because when there are foreclosures, it actually depresses the value of other real estate in those areas. When businesses close in strip malls, then you have that burden, that impact that's put on the landlords and passed up and maybe on to their investors.

So the level playing field: we've had the minister mention that before we had these programs, we were uncompetitive and that we needed to level the playing field. But we actually had an unlevel playing field – and it was to our advantage – when we kept our eye on the ball of fundamental economics. If the NDP had not severely damaged our economic fundamentals with their bad policies, we would not need to be looking at tax credits like these. We would be having the people taking the risks, in the deal flow, attracting people from around the globe but even just here in Alberta investing in venture capital opportunities. We need to reduce the regulatory and tax burden for businesses and investors. That would do far more good for Alberta, Madam Chair, in Alberta's ability to attract investment, than these tax credits would be.

I mentioned before, you know, that I was in the building industry. You know what? The builders of this province – and I talk to many of them – live and die by net migration. At the end of the day, if you're not a growing province by population, by investment, by business creation, by job creation, you're probably a declining province, and net migration is key to them. They're suppliers to the economy in many ways. They build homes, and they hope that there are enough people that feel confident enough, so not necessarily just new people but people confident enough to move up or to change their lifestyle and maybe downsize. It creates opportunities for those builders to survive and thrive. We know that there are

indicators out there, Madam Chair, that are just not responding to this.

Again, we're picking some winners and losers because this is not applying across the economy to all those small businesses and all those entrepreneurs who take risks and have taken risks with an eye towards an opportunity, but when they see the lack of confidence out there, they don't have the ability to pass on the additional carbon tax and the addition to the minimum wage because they're scared of losing their customers every day of the week.

Take a look around this province, Madam Chair, and look at the specials in the restaurants: come and see us on Tuesdays because of this and Wednesdays, which is that, and Thursdays. There's a special every day of the week because they have to to attract their customers because people have less disposable income. They have less disposable income. That is the economic fundamental that will drive an economy, that ability for people to feel the confidence, to develop and to be able to earn that disposable income, which is that little bit that they earn over and above paying their taxes in three levels of government, paying for their housing, which typically is somewhere between 30 and 40 per cent of their income, and paying for their everyday expenses: the insurance, the food on the table, their utilities, and all those other things that they pay for outside of taxes and housing. Then if they're lucky enough, they have a little bit left over at the end of the day.

In a good economy, a robust economy, where the economic fundamentals are strong, they have an opportunity to actually have a little bit more, Madam Chair. Then they go out and spend it in the economy, and that's where we get the economic multipliers which support a robust and healthy economy. That's what Albertans are not feeling today. It was shared with us before, and we've seen it from some of the economists.

Madam Chair, you know, I've had some great opportunities recently to talk to people from Alberta Innovates, Alberta Enterprise Corporation, Tecterra, Calgary Economic Development, Edmonton Economic Development, many of the economic developers across the province, Innovate Calgary, and some of the start-up groups, and the chambers, and I'm impressed. These people are working hard to attract businesses. They're working hard to work with their membership or their stakeholders to try and ensure that they can position their cities or their jurisdictions or their towns or their regions and this province to attract the kind of investment we need. Some of them probably do need some of these credits because, again, they're suffering the same malaise of bad economic fundamentals and bad policy which is hurting this province, Madam Chair.

It's hurting this province every day, and it concerns me because it's not just us today. This could be multigenerational, inter-generational. Madam Chair, dare I mention that the debt burden is being put upon us by this government's irresponsible spending and not understanding how you generate additional income, how you attract the investors to come here to increase the size of our economic pie so that we can tax fairly. Tax "fairly." I'm not sure that that word is understood because anybody who actually generates income and takes a risk and makes some money seems to be just a pocket to reach deeper into. Those are the deal-makers, those are the investors, those are the risk takers, and those are the venture capitalists.

As we've talked before, it's not just them. It's the large corporations who have chosen, those canaries in the coal mine, which I've mentioned on a few occasions, which are the international investors. When they leave, they are the canary in the coal mine, Madam Chair. They are leaving here. Then the local companies, the big ones that have the wherewithal to invest internationally, start wondering what they're doing that maybe they

shouldn't be doing, and we start hearing of large companies talking about relocating to Houston or Denver or moving their assets and moving their productive capabilities to Texas. That's not growth. That's not strong economic fundamentals. That's not attraction of investment in new businesses. That's decimation of that.

Now, I worry about that for my kids and grandkids to come down the road sometime. I want them to be able to not only stay in Alberta but thrive in Alberta. I have brought my kids up to think of the world as the place where they will work. If they want to work in Singapore or Timbuktu or London or Paris or Johannesburg, I encourage them to be global in their thinking. But I want this to be their home. I want them to have the opportunity to have gainful employment in their chosen fields in this province, not just a job but a career and an opportunity and the chance to make a living and to build the kind of lives that I believe my generation has had the opportunity to do, as generations before me have had, because of the opportunity, the can-do spirit, the entrepreneurial spirit, and the 'agripreneurial' spirit that has built this province. I'm scared, Madam Chair. I'm scared that we're losing that.

This policy is again focusing on playing favourites and delivering, you know, a narrow focus of tax credits for a very small sector of industries and cross-section of industries. It creates a potential for market distortion, and maybe it even damages productivity and competitiveness. What happens when another jurisdiction says: "We've got a better credit. We've got a better subsidy. We're going to help you out even more"? Is this a race to the bottom, Madam Chair, where we think we're now having a level playing field? Well, that level playing field can be tipped very quickly if your fundamentals are not strong enough to attract people within their own rights, to attract investment and businesses to create business activity and economic activity in this province. That can be upset very quickly.

4:50

You might find that the competitive analysis that we have shows that New Brunswick or B.C. or Manitoba sweetens the pot because they say: "Oh. Look what Alberta has done. We've lost a couple of businesses to Alberta, so let's sweeten the pot." And then you may have created an opportunity for them to say: well, if you don't sweeten the pot again for us, we're going to have to move to B.C. or Saskatchewan or Manitoba or Texas or Idaho or Pennsylvania or Brooklyn or wherever it is. And that scares me because what that does is that it begets a lack of productivity and competitiveness that this province needs to focus on. We need to be competitive globally.

We've had various economists and credit-rating agencies point out time and time again that our rapidly accelerating debt levels are damaging our competitiveness, yet this current government has done nothing to curtail expenditures and I do not think actually fundamentally understands how to increase revenues. We've heard even more rumblings yet again from the Moody's and the DBCs of the world that we're on watch. We're on watch because we can't seem to get anything done. We can't attract the investment we need to get out of this hole. Like I say, what happens when those credits and subsidies disappear?

Madam Chair, I was in the airline business, and I've seen time and time again: "Well, airline X or Y, why don't you come to this destination? We'll subsidize you for the first couple of years just to get you here. We want you to come and fly to our destination." I can tell you what happens two years later. "Well, that million dollars of yours isn't quite enough, so unless you give us a million and two, we're going to have to pull out." That's what happens. You attract them there. You subsidize them. They become used to having that kind of subsidy. I worry about that when we're talking about pipelines, that we're creating a situation here where nobody

is going to come to Alberta unless we have a big cheque waiting for them, equity or indemnity or whatever you want to call it, and that concerns me.

The government will point to the tax advantages that Alberta has relative to the other provinces. Well, less than they were before. That was the result of some better economic fundamentals, where we actually focused on attracting people here through competitive tax levels, and that has deteriorated. But, you know, we see here comparisons. We're still the best in Canada. Well, guess what? You're welcome, from the Conservative governments of this province in previous years. We need to compete on a global stage, not to have a race to the bottom on a global stage.

Madam Chair, I'm going to share some statistics here so that we can talk about what this looks like, what this economic fundamental looks like, not the up, up, up we hear from the Minister of Finance. That's not what I'm hearing from my constituents. I talk to my constituents every day and to people in the business community every day. I talked to a fellow this weekend, a gentleman who was in the oil and gas industry for 45 years. He's worked in Venezuela. He's worked in Canada. He's worked in the United States. He said that in the 45 years of his career, he's never seen it this bad. That's what we're facing, a failure of economic fundamentals and a failure for people that have seen the ups and downs of this industry.

Madam Chair, this is not a bill that we can support at this time. Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today to introduce an amendment to Bill 2, the Growth and Diversification Act. This amendment seeks to include foundational pieces of modern digital media products; namely, structure data such as geophysical information, GIS, that is useful for learning about the environment and climate, and real-time data such as positions of vehicles or energy generated, used, or stored. So I move that Bill 2, Growth and Diversification Act, be amended in schedule 1, the Interactive Digital Media Tax Credit Act, in section 1(d) by striking out subclause (iii) and substituting the following:

- (iii) is capable of presenting information in at least 2 of the following forms:
 - (A) text;
 - (B) sound;
 - (C) images;
 - (D) structure data;
 - (E) real-time data.

I will give the amendment to the pages.

The Chair: Hon. member, can I just clarify that you are moving this on behalf of the Member for Calgary-South East?

Ms McPherson: Sorry. Yes, Madam Chair. Thanks.

The Chair: This will be known as amendment A1.
Go ahead, hon. member.

Ms McPherson: Thanks. The existing list already covers two visual information formats that can be displayed on a screen both in text and images. I'm sure the minister didn't intend to omit other information formats critical to interactive digital media applications, but listing only two suggests that other visual formats do not qualify. As written, the bill would not cover Smart boards, which is a true Alberta innovation success story, since real-time changes to a virtual whiteboard may not contain any text at all nor necessarily be accurately described as an image or even a series of

images. Now, if you've ever scratched on one of those, you know what I mean.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Similarly, the bill would not cover three-dimensional interactive visualizations such as those used to train surgeons to perform surgery in virtual reality or those used by geologists to explore formations in caves. As written, the bill would not cover a product that displays a real-time chart of household energy usage because it would not necessarily be text nor would it be an image comparable to a photo of the Legislature. Alternatively, if we want to define images to include charts, there's no reason to keep text as a separate category.

I urge all MLAs to support this amendment. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'll thank the member for her amendment on this. I just want to explain real quick the reason that the definitions in 1(d)(iii) and then (A), (B), (C) are just text, sound, and images. Essentially, we modelled this piece after legislation from British Columbia. We did a cross-jurisdictional scan when we looked at different interactive digital media tax credits. The rationale for using a combination of the text, sound, and images as a requirement is that these are primary sensory methods of interaction with an IDM product. Data, either structured or real-time, is not a method of sensory interaction; it's information. The addition of those two would significantly broaden the scope of the program well beyond its policy objective to specifically support the interactive digital media sector.

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

You know, an example that we've come up with if we did broaden it and accept this amendment by adding structured or real-time data is that a business could use the program to develop an online app that provides things like weather, news, or stock exchange information, which is not an interactive digital media product. For that reason, I will be encouraging members of the Assembly not to vote in favour of this amendment.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Seeing as we're speaking of media and the promotion, I did take a little walk down memory lane earlier, and apparently I might have stepped in it a bit and upset some of the security forces here that stand and protect us in the House every day. It's kind of like telling your kid brother that there's no such thing as Santa Claus or the Easter Bunny. Apparently, I've upset them by saying that *Stampede Wrestling* wasn't real. So I do apologize for that, and in recognition of that, I'd like to talk a little bit about it.

Mr. Sucha: Predetermined. The term is "predetermined."

5:00

Mr. Hanson: Predetermined. Sorry.

Stampede Wrestling was established in 1948 and actually ran till 1984 and had a long list of alumni. I'll read them into the record for you if I could. We have Adrian Street, Abdullah the Butcher, Bad News Allen, Hercules Ayala, Ben Bassarab, Black Tomcat, Steve Blackman, Bulldog Bob Brown, Kerry Brown, Leo Burke – all real people; that's why I'm bringing this in in recognition of these folks;

this was a real program; these were real people – Larry Cameron, the Cobra, Cuban Assassin, Steve DiSalvo, Dynamite Kid, Dory Funk Jr., the Great Gama, Sumu Hara, Bret Hart, Bruce Hart. And the list goes on and on.

I'd just like to apologize to the good security. I didn't mean to upset anyone.

Thank you.

The Chair: Hon. member, was that in relation to amendment A1?

Mr. Hanson: Yes, ma'am. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to make a point. I'm not sure if there's maybe a gap in understanding. I am moving this on behalf of another member, so I don't have the benefit of the context that the amendment was developed in.

Something that the minister said: he was talking about structured data and real-time data not being part of interactive digital media. With all of the data that's presented, however data is presented to a user, there is data being fed behind it that facilitates that interaction between the user and whatever application there is. The example that I used in the comments was Smart boards, and that is definitely an interactive application of data. So I really am not understanding what the concern is in particular. I heard that it would open things up, but it seems that things are quite closed off by the limitations right now. I just wonder if the minister would be able to offer some clarification.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Madam Chair. My point was that text, sound, and images are the ways that an individual interacts with the media. Structured data, real-time data are not modes of interaction; therefore, we feel, I feel that it doesn't necessarily augment this program. What it does do is open up the scope to businesses that may use it for non interactive digital media purposes, which really is the crux of this program. Hopefully, that helps clarify.

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

Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

Hon. Members: Question.

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

The Chair: We are back on the bill. Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Chair. I have another amendment that I would like to move. This is a simple amendment that enables smaller businesses starting out in digital media to benefit from this bill at the time when they would benefit most from the support by reducing the threshold from \$50,000 in wages to \$25,000 in wages. On behalf of the MLA for Calgary-South East I move that Bill 2, Growth and Diversification Act, be amended in schedule 1, the Interactive Digital Media Tax Credit Act, in section 4(1)(c)(ii) by striking out "\$50,000" and substituting "\$25,000."

The Chair: This is amendment A2.

Go ahead, hon. member.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Chair. Not every business or Albertan who works in interactive digital media starts out in that industry as their main business or full-time occupation. The skills required to succeed in digital media overlap with other sectors, with many other sectors such as graphic design, video production, animation, programming, engineering, artificial intelligence, health informatics, data visualization, and other vocations that are enabled for anyone who can afford a laptop. Consequently, there is a much larger pool of talent who contribute to the interactive digital media industry than who work full-time.

Recognizing the actual structure of Alberta's digital media workforce is key to the success of the bill. Apps are routinely designed by students who aren't necessarily working full-time in interactive digital media but who wish to enter the interactive digital media industry. Companies and organizations with existing data that could benefit more Albertans might not want to become interactive digital media companies but may still invest in a part-time or contract role to put their data and information online in an interactive way. Individuals employed at organizations might want to explore careers in interactive digital media during their off hours. What better way to support more Albertans to experiment in interactive digital media than by offering them a boost to get in? We can do better for Albertans by reducing the threshold from \$50,000 to \$25,000 to open the interactive digital media door to more Albertans.

I urge all members of the House to support this amendment to improve the lives of Albertans pursuing business in interactive digital media.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2? The hon. minister of economic development.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Madam Chair. My pleasure to rise and speak to this amendment. I want to start off by thanking the member and her caucus for putting this forward. I completely appreciate the spirit of this amendment as far as lowering the salary from \$50,000 to \$25,000.

What I will say is that, you know, my ministry did some comprehensive work reaching out to different companies, looking at different jurisdictions across the country as far as what they do in other jurisdictions. What's interesting is that in British Columbia, for example, the minimum threshold is actually \$100,000, substantially higher than what we proposed. The reason is that this tax credit goes to employees that are game developers, program developers, programmers. These are typically high-paying jobs. The median wage in Alberta in this space is I believe somewhere between \$70,000 and \$75,000. That's part of the reason that we decided to make the minimum \$50,000. We want to make sure that we catch different wages and ensure that we catch employees.

We actually took initial feedback from the companies when we were first designing this credit program, again, as I said, in a crossjurisdictional scan and looked at what the wage are. I can tell you, Madam Chair, that, again, \$50,000 is the amount that the majority of stakeholders that we've spoken with have also agreed is middle ground between a high enough threshold for dedicated IDM companies but not so much that legitimate small firms would be inadvertently unable to access the program. Really, what we want this for is for companies that are serious about growing and scaling. You know, if there are companies that are more in the area or aligned with doing this as a hobby, that isn't necessarily what this tax credit is aimed at because, really, we're trying to help support and grow the industry.

Again, we shopped that number around in conversations with a number of different stakeholders, and when you look at where

Alberta is, again, British Columbia's is the minimum of \$100,000. We decided to go with \$50,000, but I'm a little concerned that dropping it down to \$25,000 could have some unintended negative consequences, or it could be potentially encouraging, you know, a race the opposite way, a race down to the bottom as opposed to recognizing that the majority of these positions are well-paying jobs. That's what we want to promote and support. Again, I think the \$50,000 is a reasonable number that will allow for companies to be able to make use of this but not to take advantage of it.

Thank you.

5:10

The Chair: Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd ask the Chamber if we could revert to introductions briefly, please.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests

(*reversion*)

The Chair: Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Chamber a grade 6 class that is here from Eckville in the great riding of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. It was a pleasure visiting with them just a few moments ago as we were taking our picture. They were telling me that their favourite thing about Eckville is actually GTI in the middle of the town, which happens to be my favourite thing because when you ride around a riding as big as yours and mine, Madam Chair, you get to know the gas stations very, very well. In Eckville the GTI always treats me very, very well, so I agree with them on that. I would ask them all to stand – go ahead; don't be shy – and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Chair: Hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks, did you want to do an introduction?

Mr. Fildebrandt: An introduction, yes.

The Chair: Okay. Go ahead.

Mr. Fildebrandt: I don't do too many introductions around here, but I wanted to welcome – if he could stand and rise – a new employee in my office, Michael Tiberio. He's from Calgary and is working in my very large caucus office. We've now come to a staff of two. He's a passionate young conservative and a former semipro soccer player. A condition of employment was that he now has to cheer for Germany. He has not agreed to it, but we'll see how good a job he does. If all members would join me in giving him the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Bill 2

Growth and Diversification Act

(*continued*)

The Chair: On amendment A2, the hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you to the minister for his comments. I did have a couple of points that I wanted to make. I've heard a couple of comparisons to British Columbia so far this afternoon, and a point that I would like to make

is that B.C. has a good decade's head start on us in terms of the development of their tech sector. I think that it's really incumbent upon Alberta to not just be reasonable but to be unreasonable in the pursuit of developing the digital media business industry in Alberta as well as the tech industry as a whole. For those reasons, yes, \$75,000 is a median salary at a big company like BioWare, but what this amendment does is that it opens up the playing field for small players, for people who don't have a lot of time to dedicate but are very committed and passionate about digital media.

I'm thinking of an example of somebody that I used to work with. I worked in IT for a number of years. This was a young man who was very talented in network administration. Unfortunately, he had an accident, and he broke his leg. Now, this isn't directly related to digital media, but it shows what our circumstances can do in terms of promoting our ingenuity. He was actually really badly injured in this accident, and his leg was so badly injured that he risked losing it. He was on crutches for a number of months. What he did was that he came up with an exoskeleton for people to wear on their legs so that they didn't have to use crutches. Crutches are very cumbersome. They're very uncomfortable. It's very difficult to get around with crutches. He was able to start playing with his kids again by using this thing that he developed.

Now, he wasn't a full-time product developer. He was a network engineer, and he's been able to access some funds to help get his product off the ground. I think it's stories like those that really should encourage us to open up programs like this to more people who are innovative, who don't necessarily have the structure of a company around them, who aren't even interested in starting their own company, because they need to be able to prove their product, and all they can afford to do is to hire a developer for \$25,000 a year part-time.

This suggestion for this amendment came from a stakeholder. It came from somebody who's already in the business. This has validity. It comes from the industry itself, and I would really encourage, urge all of the legislators here in the Assembly to be unreasonable and to support this amendment because it does open up this industry to more people.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2? Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Chair. I looked at this, and just from a practical standpoint and from the government's position, you know, legislation should probably be drawn up, whenever possible, to last a few years. I think the government would agree with me on that, and probably the mover of the amendment would agree with me on that.

To be clear, I'm not onside with the government's plan to raise the minimum wage to \$15. Nonetheless, they're the government, and they will probably be in government long enough to raise the minimum wage to \$15. I believe that's a fact. So I'm just considering that for somebody that makes \$15 an hour, when the government gets there, even at minimum wage and working 40 hours a week, that's \$600 a week. At 50 weeks you're looking at \$30,000. That's above this.

Just from a practical standpoint, the minister said – and I think he's reasonable in his assertion – that if the government is going to give subsidies or supports to a company, if they're going to get government support, they don't want to be fooling around at something; they want to be serious at it. I think I'm in line with what the minister said there: not a part-time person.

So if you've got a full-time person even making the minimum wage – and one would think that in any technical industry they

would be making more than the minimum wage, which actually more than makes my point – even the lowest paid full-time person in that tech company making the minimum wage would be making \$30,000 a year if they're full-time, which makes me scratch my head a little bit and wonder how we would pick this particular chosen number, a number below what people are likely to be making in Alberta a year from now.

I would be interested if the mover wants to stand up and talk about this, but I think even the mover will understand why I'm asking the question, and I'm not trying to be hard on the mover. I'm sure that the mover's intention is good, and I'm not suggesting anything otherwise but just on the practicality of having an amendment to a piece of legislation that essentially, if it's not out of date today, will be out of date the next time the province raises the minimum wage. They do have a majority and they do have a year left in their mandate, so I think there's a pretty good chance that they will do that. As much as I think it's a bad idea, I haven't heard any evidence that they're changing their mind on that.

I think I'm asking a reasonable question, and I would be interested in the mover's opinion on the choice of that number of \$25,000.

Ms McPherson: I'm intrigued by your question, but I'm not clear what it is.

Mr. McIver: If that's the case, then the mover shouldn't be surprised when I vote against her amendment if she's not clear on what I just said, because I thought it was crystal.

The Chair: Any others wishing to speak to amendment A2?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

The Chair: Any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will have a series of amendments coming forward, which I'm sure all members here are looking forward to with delight. Many of them are in the same vein, but they'll have to come in different pieces because this bill is constructed in a rather unique way, not in regular sections but in schedules.

The bill itself is packaged and viewed so far, in the lens of the media, as just a regular corporate welfare bill, that we're going to take tax dollars and give some of it back to specific businesses for doing things the government wants them to do. Most corporate welfare, you know, be it GM or Bombardier or perhaps now even Trans Mountain, is generally some way of trying to keep the business afloat when it has run into problems, be it their own fault, like GM or Bombardier, or when it's not their own fault, like Trans Mountain. But I have yet to see a form of corporate welfare in this country that seeks to micromanage the employee composition of a private business, that seeks to take finite tax dollars from all businesses and redistribute it back to them if they meet gender and racial quotas. Now, members can correct me if I'm wrong, but I'm not familiar with any other province that has to date done this. I would certainly hope no others have. This is a quantum leap in what we do through corporate welfare.

5:20

Now, part of this bill is dealing very specifically with the Interactive Digital Media Tax Credit Act, which is dealing, obviously, with this specific area of corporate welfare. But it also is dealing with the broader Growth and Diversification Act, which is across the entire economy.

This bill will be taking finite tax dollars from businesses and individuals and redistributing it back if they hire certain groups that this government will define at some point, one would imagine, as deserving of special help. Certainly, some groups are advantaged, and some groups are disadvantaged. But when government gets in the business of deciding who they are by classifying people as groups and categories, treating them as bar codes and numbers on a spreadsheet to tally up points, we're no longer treating people as humans. We're no longer treating people as individuals, as people with their own lives and their own experiences.

You know, government and political parties have long engaged in quotas on race, on gender, sometimes based on region if you're building a cabinet. We've done that since 1867. We would balance religion and language. There are all sorts of things that go into building cabinets because those are political considerations. Within the bureaucracy governments have engaged in more explicit and legislative racial and gender quotas for a long time. Governments seem to be able to afford that because the resources of government are effectively infinite. It can always borrow and borrow. It can tax and it can borrow whereas the private sector cannot.

In the private sector virtually all hiring is on the basis of merit. Perhaps you might hire a friend. Perhaps you might hire a family member, or, you know, an uncle put in a good word. But, overwhelmingly, people are hired in the private sector on the basis of merit. Now, we are not living in a horribly prejudiced and hateful society. [interjections] You know, I'm surprised to hear many New Democrats across the way scoff at that. Do they really believe that the people who have elected them are hateful or bigoted, racist or sexist or misogynist? Do they really believe that people in the private sector need to be told who to hire specifically?

This is only going to apply to certain groups, and this is just one of the many problems with having government in the business of not just picking winners and losers between businesses, as regular corporate welfare does, but picking winners and losers based on the colour of people's skin, based on their sex. They're going to pick winners and losers by classifying people into groups, and it doesn't seem to make particularly much sense.

You know, the daycare that my daughter goes to is staffed exclusively by women, and they do a fantastic job. Maybe having a man on staff would help things, maybe not. Either way, they are a private business, and it is their decision, and I'm confident in that daycare to provide good, quality care for my daughter. I really don't care about the colour of the employees, and I don't care about the sex of the employees. The fact that it happens to be an all-female workplace is their business. If I don't like it, as a consumer I can take my business elsewhere.

That's the way free enterprise is supposed to work. If you are not hiring someone because you are prejudiced against them based on their sex, their race, their religion, or even their soccer team – I came close on that front; he's an Italy fan. If you hire anybody on a basis other than merit, you are only going to hurt yourself. In my case I'm going to hurt the effectiveness of my office and organization. In the case of a private business you are going to hurt your profitability and only hurt yourself. A qualified person who's been discriminated against will probably find a good job somewhere else, and the loser is the employer who refused to hire them. By putting people into these categories of race and sex, we are denying their individuality.

You know, I know quite a few members of this House pretty well and members across the way a little less well, but I've gotten to know some of you. But I don't know where you come from. I don't know what your story is. Some of you might be white, male, Protestant, straight, essentially all of the things that would not get you a tax credit here, but I don't know your backstory.

Perhaps you're privileged. Perhaps you come from a wealthy background and a good family that had two parents. You got a good education, were wealthy. Perhaps you come from that, but maybe you come from a broken home. Maybe you come from a rural, isolated community. Maybe you come from a poor family. But based on the categories established in this kind of legislation, if you are poor, from a broken family in an isolated community, you're still considered just as privileged as the Justin Trudeaus of the world. You might come from a racial minority background, and you also might come from a poor family, a rural, isolated, broken family, and also not be advantaged. But you also, despite coming from a minority background, may have a good family background, have a good education, come from a higher economic strata with a good education. There is no way to determine who is really privileged here or not. There are privileged, and there are underprivileged, but government has no possible way of determining that.

You know, I come from a series of small army and air force towns, low-income places. The number of people I grew up with, my friends in school who were on welfare, who got caught in drugs, who were into dealing drugs – you know, a lot of the people I grew up with didn't get out of there. They never got out of those small towns, or they joined the army and they fought in Afghanistan because that was the only opportunity. Some of them are just dead. But they came from demographics that according to this bill are privileged. They are not privileged, and they deserve just as much of a hand up as anybody else regardless of their race and their sex. We are denying their individuality. We are saying: "We're going to make a judgment on you like judging a book by its cover. We're going to judge you by your demographics and say that you are privileged or not privileged based on that, and your backstory, your life experiences, don't matter."

Now, this is well intentioned from the members across. I know there's no hateful intention. It's not bigoted towards any one group. You know, we were dealing with the '60s scoop yesterday. That was government action and legislation that targeted people based on their race but with malicious intent, and I do not believe that this bill has malicious intent by any stretch. I believe that they are genuinely trying to help people, but it will not. It is still legislating judging on the basis of race and on gender, and there is something wrong with that. We should not be singling people out.

I'm going to have a series of amendments here dealing with this in different sections of the bill. I'm precluded from doing it in one larger single amendment, which I'm sure makes members very sad. I'll speak about this amendment in particular once it's distributed by the pages.

The Chair: This is amendment A3.

Go ahead, hon. member.

5:30

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. This amendment deals with schedule 1 of this bill, more specifically on the Interactive Digital Media Tax Credit Act. Other amendments that I bring forward will deal with this topic of race and gender quotas more generally, as are being imposed through the Growth and Diversification Act, but this will be dealing more specifically where it's essentially noted a second time in the bill as a part of the interactive digital media tax credit.

The government has got no business deciding what races and genders should make up the employee roles of private businesses. If the government does believe that every business should be a microcosm of Alberta's demographics more broadly, do they then agree that the daycare where my daughter goes to has to hire 50 per cent men or should? Will the daycare that my daughter goes to be

eligible for a tax credit if they hire 50 per cent men? They're already quite diverse in terms of race. Perhaps, you know, there are a lot of East Indians there, so do they have to diversify to other groups as well?

We are micromanaging the specific employee composition of private businesses. Government has not got the skill and expertise to make a decision on what decisions a business should be making in general – that's one of the many problems with corporate welfare – but they certainly have no expertise to determine what employees they should be hiring.

This amendment will very clearly strike out clause (l) in section 1, strike out section 7, amend section 20(1) by striking out clause (a) and substituting:

(a) defining “eligible activities” and “salary and wages”; and also strike out clause (e).

This will be the first in a series of amendments to, at the very least, if the government is going to go forward with a corporate welfare bill, take all references to race and gender out of it. If a company is going to hire somebody, let them just make the decision on merit alone.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A3? The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to respond to a number of the comments the Member for Strathmore-Brooks made in bringing forward this amendment. First of all, let me disabuse the Member for Strathmore-Brooks as well as anybody who might be inclined to side with him on this that we are in any way implementing any quotas. There's not a minimum requirement for hiring particular numbers of gender or ethnic groups to qualify for the tax credits. It's hiring one underrepresented employee described in the regulations. We're not saying that a company needs to have a minimum percentage of women in their corporation or a minimum percentage of people from an ethnic group, which is what a quota system would be. So let me just disabuse everybody in the House of this notion that we are somehow implementing a quota system. We are not.

Secondly, I want to take a few minutes to discuss an issue because this is an issue that is important, I think, and doesn't get a lot of discussion at our level. The member says that we don't have an electorate that's actively sexist, particularly when it comes to the interactive digital media world. I want to just remind the members of this Assembly about an issue that struck the interactive digital media world quite severely three or four years ago, and that was the Gamergate discussion.

To remind everybody in the House or to educate those who maybe weren't paying attention, the Gamergate controversy started when a jilted ex-lover of a female game developer wrote a 9,000-word blog post accusing that woman of having an illicit affair with a game reviewer to get good reviews for her game. Madam Chair, that woman was the subject of death threats, rape threats. She was forced to flee her home, and it didn't stop there. The people who were on the side of this blog poster took it upon themselves to not just attack the particular woman who developed that particular game but thought it was their duty to chase women out of the gaming industry entirely. So they focused on other women developers in the gaming system. They focused on media critics who looked at issues of sexism in the gaming industry.

There is a very high profile case of a media critic named Anita Sarkeesian who also was the subject of death threats, rape threats, who also had to flee her home because people found her personal information, her address, her workplace, posted it online so that

people could hunt her down and find her where she lived, Madam Chair. She had to cancel a number of speaking engagements on university campuses, where she was supposed to talk about issues of sexism in gaming, because these people who were hounding her online were making violent threats to hurt her if she appeared in person on campus.

So for the Member for Strathmore-Brooks to get up and say that there isn't sexism in the gaming world is completely untrue. Sexism is virulent. It is very dangerous in the gaming world, and it needs to be addressed.

Madam Chair, my only regret is that this doesn't go far enough to address the serious and very present threat that sexism makes to female gamers and female employees of the gaming industry. But it's a step in the right direction, right? Women are incredibly underrepresented in the gaming world. They don't play games at the same rates that men do, they don't work in the gaming industry at the same rates men do, and the gaming industry is really being held back by that fact.

You know, the gaming industry is one of the largest entertainment industries in the entire world, and it's managed to achieve that by locking out almost half of the world's population. Madam Chair, imagine how much more successful and profitable the gaming industry could be if it opened the doors to the other half of the population that it currently actively seeks to keep out. That's what we're trying to address. By tackling the issues of sexism in gaming, we're making the current world of gaming safer for the women who are already there and we're expanding opportunities for more women to feel safe and to feel valued and included and to participate in the gaming world. That will make them safer. That will make the gaming industry more profitable and more successful.

So for the member opposite to get up and say that this has absolutely nothing to do with the growth and success of the gaming industry is completely false, and I really hope that the Member for Strathmore-Brooks goes back home tonight, reconsiders his comments, and – well, ideally, I'd like him to retract this amendment. I don't think that my words have been persuasive and convincing enough to get him to do that, Madam Chair. But to anybody else who is listening, I just want them to understand how destructive sexism is in the gaming industry and how our tax credit to employ more women in the gaming industry will help that industry be successful and will help our women feel welcome and included in a world that they aren't feeling very safe in right now.

For all of these reasons that I've laid out, I urge everyone in this House to vote down this amendment and to support getting more women into the gaming industry.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A3? Strathmore-Brooks.

5:40

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, the member's comments around Gamergate are interesting. Obviously, what happened in that case was disturbing, but I don't think that a couple of nerds sitting in their underwear in their mom's basement harassing somebody justifies collective punishment. I don't think it justifies the government legislating how many women or men or what specific races should be involved in a particular field.

It's not just about gaming here. This government's bill here, Bill 2, is not dealing just with gaming or even just with digital and online issues. It extends into the entire economy. If his goal is simply to get more women into gaming, why doesn't the bill specifically say so? It doesn't just say: women into gaming. It just says: “underrepresented groups.”

That's a bit difficult to swallow because it's not just about women. It's now talking to racial groups. I don't think that you can make a very strong argument that, you know, it's a rabidly racist industry within it, say, that Southeast Asian Albertans or east Asian Albertans are being systemically excluded from the gaming industry. That's patently false, yet this bill makes no distinction. This bill is simply going to give businesses money from their competitors for having people on the payroll who are simply from "under-represented groups." This is not just in gaming or digital; it's across the entire economy.

If we're talking about underrepresented groups – and I will have an amendment to clarify what the government means by that at a later stage here – if that is the case, in some industries you might have men underrepresented, and that's okay. Sometimes – and perhaps it might be heresy to say so in the NDP world – in some industries or professions certain sexes gravitate towards certain professions. Not always so, but sometimes that happens. You know, the nursing profession is overwhelmingly women. That's great, but it doesn't mean that there's a problem for men there. Teachers are disproportionately women. I think that's a good thing, that certain professions disproportionately attract people from different demographics. That's okay. They should be open to everybody. Nobody should be barred from it.

My mother-in-law was one of the first lawyers to work in Calgary in her day. She's retired now, but when she broke in, she was one of the only women to be a lawyer in downtown corporate Calgary. That was not a friendly place for women, but she broke into it. Now my sister-in-law is a lawyer, and she's certainly far from alone now, but she's still outnumbered by men. Some professions are just going to disproportionately attract people from one demographic or another. With the military, no matter how many quotas you bring in there, I'm willing to say that the military is going to be disproportionately men even if you mandated that it wasn't. You know, that's people's free decisions. People are individuals, and not every business, not every institution needs to be a makeup of Statistics Canada. Private businesses have the right to hire who they want, and employees are going to be attracted to the jobs that they want.

The member across says that this is not a quota. No. It is a quota. It is not a hard quota in the sense that businesses are forced at the gunpoint of government to do so, but it is an incentive quota, that if they do not meet the government's race and gender quota system, they will be denied the tax credits given to their competitors. They'll still be paying taxes to the government, but the government will take those revenues and give them to their competitors who accept the government's quotas. It is a soft quota, it is an incentive quota, but it is a quota nonetheless, and it is legislating on the basis of people's race and on the basis of their sex.

Now, I don't know the member's background. I don't know what his family history is. I don't know how wealthy a background he comes from. I don't know his educational background, other than that he runs it. But I judge him as an individual. On the surface he is a white male, and I don't know much about his background other than that. That does not give me any ability to judge him or his life story, what he's been through. Perhaps he comes from privilege, but perhaps he does not. Perhaps he comes from a rural area, a poor area. Perhaps he comes from a broken family. Would that make him still a privileged person? Well, under this legislation, yes, it would because the legislation will judge him as a book by the cover.

That's not right. We're supposed to be beyond that. The modern left's obsession with race and sex and identity politics is driving people mad. Most people outside of this House just don't care. If they're in the private sector, they just don't care. They're going to hire the best person for the job. There is going to be the odd racist

or sexist or misogynist, but it is not this grand epidemic across the province.

The Premier, for goodness' sake, was elected duly by the people of this province. I certainly didn't share the opinion that got her elected, but she was not stopped from being the second woman Premier of this province. I think that's fantastic. I may very strongly disagree with her policies, but there is clearly no evidence of this sexist and racist epidemic gripping the majority of Albertans, that is distorting the hiring decisions of people on the ground, stopping people from getting jobs if they're the most qualified persons for them.

I'll reference a story of someone I know. I won't name him for privacy purposes. He's a young man applying for university. His application was sent back to him, and he was asked essentially if he could check any of the boxes that would mean that he's not privileged of some kind. He had to think about it. He had to think about what he could come up with because they were simply not going to give him that slot and that scholarship if he could not prove that he was anything other than, unfortunately, the demographic that I fall into. It's not fair. He doesn't come from a background of privilege. He comes from a middle-class background but nothing special, and he comes from a family with a single mom. Yet he is being treated under this legislation as a Justin Trudeau, someone born into power and wealth and celebrity, with all the possible advantages that you could hope to be born with in your life.

Any legislation that comes before this House dealing with gaming, dealing with industry more generally, or dealing with the private sector or public sector, any legislation that comes here that seeks to codify and categorize people by their race or their sex or their gender or anything other than the merit of who they are as an individual man or woman is beneath the duty we have to maintain the equality of opportunity for all Albertans and should be voted down accordingly.

The Chair: The minister of economic development.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'll try to keep my comments brief. There are just so many things wrong with what the member just said that I don't know where to begin. What I will say, first of all, is that diversity is a strength, not a weakness. On this side of the House we celebrate diversity in the workplace and we celebrate diversity everywhere, quite frankly. What we'd like to see and what you do see in a lot of very successful companies is that the companies reflect our society, similar to what we're trying to promote.

Now, Madam Chair, I can tell you, first of all – and maybe the member is confused – that this is a 5 per cent top-up to a tax credit if a company so chooses to hire people from underrepresented groups. The member had made a comment. I just want to clarify that, you know, when you look at our postsecondaries and you look at, for example, the University of Alberta's gaming program, women make up about 30 per cent of the classroom, of the students. However, their employment rates are much, much lower. The Entertainment Software Association of Canada estimates that in 2015 only 16 per cent of workers in the IDM sector were women. So there are clearly barriers to employment. What this diversity top-up does, Madam Chair, is that it provides an additional carrot or helps the market catch up, again, as a carrot for companies to be more diverse in their hiring.

5:50

I can tell the member, you know, that I think it'd be a little far fetched to say that a company is about to take unqualified people for a 5 per cent tax credit. So for 5 per cent of their salary they're

going to hire someone completely unqualified: not at all, Madam Chair. What this is doing is drawing light and attention to the fact that especially in the IDM sector it's very homogenous as far as the workers that are typically employed in that sector. Again, what we're trying to do is to help encourage diversity.

With this amendment – I don't even think I need to strongly encourage members of this House not to support it. I think they will see for themselves the value of what we are trying to do in this bill and how this amendment would take away from that.

The Chair: Any other speakers to amendment A3? Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Well, I want to thank the minister for his comments. I would agree with his first statement on the face of it, *prima facie*, that diversity is a strength, but diversity is a strength when it's natural, when it's organic, when it's something that people have done voluntarily, as citizens coming together. It is never a strength to force people to hire someone or to give them extra money to hire someone over someone else because when you provide a subsidy to a business, even 5 per cent, they are going to change who they're going to hire based on that. You know, it is a carrot on one side, but it's a stick to somebody else. Businesses, unlike government, are finite in how many people they can keep on the payroll. If they have one spot open and one person might be slightly less qualified than the other, but they're going to get a 5 per cent top-up, for a business operating on the margins, as businesses do, that's going to make a real difference.

You don't lift somebody up by putting somebody else down, and that's what this bill will do. It is incompatible with our universal beliefs in equality of opportunity because this is focused on equality of outcome. I've certainly noticed the noticeable lack of other Conservative voices in this debate, for reasons I won't speculate on. But possibly the least conservative thing we could do would be to vote for a bill codifying race and gender as reasons for corporate welfare. It is putting equality of outcome before equality of opportunity.

I don't think I've been nearly eloquent enough to sway members of the government, but I would certainly hope that all members of the opposition take a principled stand against any attempt by the government to legislate race and gender above merit.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A3? Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just thought it was important for somebody who was actually a woman in technology to get up and say a few words. I don't agree with this amendment. I think that the provision in the bill makes a lot of sense.

I was often the only woman in many of the departments that I worked in. I really strongly believe that technology should be developed by both men and women. It should be developed by a diversity of people so that the products that are created out of that

development accommodate the people of our society. If we only have white men predominantly developing products, that's the bias that's in there inherently. It doesn't mean that they're rabid misogynists. It doesn't mean that they are even somebody that would consider themselves to be sexist. I see that I got some little side eye here about that comment. This is based on a lot of research. Companies do better when they embrace diversity. Encouraging diversity I think is a smart move.

From what I've seen of the bill, it isn't a requirement that you have X number of people of this gender or X number of people of colour. It incentivizes. I think there's a lot more that can be done by society to encourage companies to embrace diversity so that they can realize the benefits to their bottom line. Also, it's just the right thing to do. It's just the right thing to do to make sure that you have fair representation of women, of people of colour, of people of all minorities reflected in a business, and for these reasons, I will not support this amendment.

The Chair: Any other speakers for amendment A3?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A3 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:56 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:
Fildebrandt

Against the motion:

Bilous	Hanson	McPherson
Carlier	Hinkley	Miller
Ceci	Hoffman	Nielsen
Connolly	Horne	Piquette
Coolahan	Kazim	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Kleinstauber	Rosendahl
Dach	Larivee	Sabir
Dang	Littlewood	Schmidt
Drever	Loewen	Schreiner
Eggen	Loyola	Shepherd
Feehan	Malkinson	Sucha
Fitzpatrick	McCuaig-Boyd	Westhead
Ganley	McIver	Woollard
Gotfried	McKitrick	Yao
Gray		

Totals:	For – 1	Against – 43
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[Motion on amendment A3 lost]

The Chair: The committee will be recessed until 7:30 p.m.

[The committee adjourned at 6 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday evening, May 29, 2018

Day 34

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (UCP),
Deputy Leader of the Official Opposition
Anderson, Hon. Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (NDP)
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (UCP)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (NDP)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
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Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (NDP)
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Miranda, Hon. Ricardo, Calgary-Cross (NDP)
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)
Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (UCP),
Official Opposition House Leader
Notley, Hon. Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),
Premier
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (UCP)
Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (UCP)
Payne, Hon. Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (NDP)
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (NDP)
Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (NDP)
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (UCP),
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)
Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (NDP)
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP)
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)
Schneider, David A., Little Bow (UCP)
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (NDP)
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (NDP)
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (NDP)
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (UCP)
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (UCP)
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (NDP),
Deputy Government Whip
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)
Vacant, Fort McMurray-Conklin
Vacant, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake

Party standings:

New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 25 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent Conservative: 1 Vacant: 2

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Shannon Dean, Law Clerk and Director of	Committee Services	Chris Caughell, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms
House Services	Nancy Robert, Research Officer	Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
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Counsel	<i>Alberta Hansard</i>	
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel		

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Shaye Anderson	Minister of Municipal Affairs
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Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
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David Eggen	Minister of Education
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Danielle Larivee	Minister of Children's Services
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Stephanie V. McLean	Minister of Service Alberta, Minister of Status of Women
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Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
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Parliamentary Secretaries

Jessica Littlewood	Economic Development and Trade for Small Business
Annie McKittrick	Education

STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Mr. Coolahan
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	Luff
Dang	McPherson
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha
Deputy Chair: Mr. van Dijken

Carson	Littlewood
Connolly	McPherson
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schneider
Fitzpatrick	Starke
Gotfried	Taylor
Horne	

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Goehring
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Orr
Ellis	Renaud
Fraser	Shepherd
Hinkley	Swann
Luff	Woollard
McKitrick	Yao
Miller	

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Shepherd
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Aheer	McKitrick
Gill	Pitt
Horne	van Dijken
Kleinsteinuber	Woollard
Littlewood	

Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Wanner
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Babcock	Nixon
Cooper	Piquette
Dang	Pitt
Drever	Westhead
McIver	

Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms Kazim
Deputy Chair: Connolly

Anderson, W.	Orr
Babcock	Rosendahl
Drever	Stier
Drysdale	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kleinsteinuber	Taylor
McKitrick	

Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	Miller
Cooper	Nielsen
Goehring	Nixon
Gotfried	Pitt
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Cyr
Deputy Chair: Mr. Dach

Barnes	Malkinson
Carson	Miller
Clark	Nielsen
Gotfried	Panda
Hunter	Renaud
Littlewood	Turner
Luff	

Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola
Deputy Chair: Mr. Drysdale

Babcock	Loewen
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Fildebrandt	Panda
Hanson	Rosendahl
Kazim	Schreiner
Kleinsteinuber	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, May 29, 2018

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

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

Bill 16 Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Statutes Amendment Act, 2018

The Deputy Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered in respect to this bill?

Seeing none, I will call the question on Bill 16. Are you ready for the question?

Hon. Members: Question.

[The clauses of Bill 16 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Chair. At this moment I would like to move that the committee rise and report progress on Bills 1, 10, and 2, and report on Bill 16.

[Motion carried]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Mr. Hinkley: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 16. The committee reports progress on the following bills: Bill 1, Bill 10, Bill 2. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Having heard the report as proposed by the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose, all in favour, please say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Acting Speaker: Opposed, please say no. Ordered.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Chair. At this time I would like to seek unanimous consent to shorten the bells for all bills for the duration of Committee of the Whole for this evening to one minute.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole (continued)

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

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

Bill 7 Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act

The Deputy Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered in respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to rise in the House and present some additional thoughts surrounding Bill 7, Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act. Now, we have established that this bill has a primary focus to standardize the use of organic labelling and certification. This goes to ensure that any food products grown or produced here in Alberta will comply with current CFIA standards in labelling and certification.

Certainly, there is no one recognized threshold for products produced locally for sale within Alberta. This act will now make a uniform minimum standard. It's my understanding that the overall purpose of this act will be to encourage the development of our local food sector throughout the province and to regulate agricultural products that are produced or processed in the province and marketed and sold as organic products within the province. This will be achieved, Madam Chair, primarily through three parts of this act, starting with establishing organic standards; creation of a local food week to coincide with Open Farm Days in August; and, finally, this act proposes to establish a local food council.

I'm going to quickly focus on the organic aspect of this bill. As I understand it, previous to this products sold within Alberta had no established common criteria for organic labelling or standards. However, if you exported these same products outside of Alberta, you had to comply with CFIA standards for labelling and certification. Going forward, these CFIA standards will have to be met within Alberta in order to use the term "certified organic" on these products. This now puts us to the same standard of other jurisdictions excluding I'm thinking at this point in time Quebec and Saskatchewan, who currently don't have the same requirements.

But it has been brought to my attention that the act, specifically on page 4 under the application 3(a), seems to have consequences that far outreach what the bill has presented. This section (a) talks about all agricultural products.

3 This Act applies to

(a) agricultural products produced or processed in the Province.

Madam Chair, my question is: why does an act that is identified to be primarily about organic labelling and certification include subsections (a) and (b), which separate organic products and all other agricultural products? Why the distinction? Is that a needed distinction? I would argue that subsection (a) may not be needed.

Madam Chair, you know, we live and breathe in a descriptive wording atmosphere in this place, and we've seen a lot of that demonstrated here today and on other days in the Chamber. In that vein, I'd like to propose an amendment, and I have the requisite copies here for the pages.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member. If you could just wait until I have a copy at the table. Thank you very much.

Hon. member, your amendment will be referred to as A1. Please go ahead.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to read my amendment. Mr. Strankman to move that Bill 7, Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act, be amended by renumbering section 6 as section 6(1) and adding the following after subsection (1) . . .

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, I just want to clarify. The amendment that I have in front of me is about appointments.

Mr. Strankman: I would have to apologize, then, Madam Chair. There may be some error. That was the information that I was given.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, I think the table has two different amendments, so we may have mixed your piles.

Mr. Strankman: I may have mistakenly given you what I perceived – I gave you the two. I may have spoken about the . . .

The Deputy Chair: Do you want me to send them back to you so you can clarify which one you would like to speak to first?

Mr. Strankman: Yes, if you don't mind. I'd appreciate that.
The amendment applies to section 3. I'm sorry, Madam Chair. "Section 3 is amended by striking out clause (a)."

The Deputy Chair: Is that the one you would like to start with first?

Mr. Strankman: Yes, please.

The Deputy Chair: Okay. Can I please just have a copy of the one the hon. member is speaking to?

Mr. Strankman: I apologize, Madam Chair.

The Deputy Chair: No, that's fine.
That one will be referred to as A1. If you could please just clarify for the House which one you'd like to start with.

Mr. Strankman: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Nixon: She needs to know which one you'd like to start with.

Mr. Strankman: I said the one that's talking about section 3.

The Deputy Chair: So you're looking for: "Section 3 is amended by striking out clause (a)," and "(b) section 6 is struck out"?

Mr. Strankman: Yes, Madam Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Okay. Thank you very much. Please go ahead.
7:40

Mr. Strankman: Mr. Strankman to move that Bill 7, Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act, be amended as follows: (a) section 3 is amended by striking out clause (a) and (b) section 6 is struck out.

The reason for this amendment is straightforward. I apologize again for the mix-up in the paperwork going forward here. The minister does not need power over all agricultural products produced or processed in the province. As I stated earlier in my dissertation here, we're simply trying to clarify and be more exact in the wording going forward. This act is primarily about setting standards for organic products, not all products produced and manufactured. As you know, Madam Chair and to the minister,

there are other commercial entities, whether they be JBS or Cargill, that commercially process beef, for example, in large commercial standards, and they would fit under the process of all products but not necessarily organic. My goal here is to simply have a clear set of well-defined rules for organic certification, singularly, everybody on the same page. What isn't needed is giving the act absolute power over all agricultural products, again with the emphasis on the word "all," be they organic or not. It's overreaching, it's too ambiguous, and it's not necessary, so I'm highly doubtful I would support this act and this bill without the amendment.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Yeah. Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you to the member for what he's trying to propose here. He is right in one sense that, obviously, not all foods produced in Alberta are organic or can be considered organic, but that's what is going to be captured here. Are those products going to be marketed separately or differently from organic? You know, there are opportunities to market your products in many other different ways and making sure that that is not lost, not lost on the consumers, not lost on the producers, that they're able to market their products as perhaps grass fed or raised naturally or raised without antibiotics or raised without hormones. There are many different labels they're able to do, and we're looking at making sure that with those labels we don't lose anything there, that we're able to continue with the good products of local food that is grown in Alberta, wherever it might be in Alberta, and that they're able to use those other labels, if you will, to market their products right across the province, maybe across the country or around the world, using those labels that are not necessarily organic.

I think it raises a level of confidence not only with consumers but with producers as well that they're able to do so. That is what, you know, this will capture, those opportunities for those producers to be able to do so. Looking for the advice from the local food council, to be clear, Madam Chair, is not the same as an agency, board, or commission. It's quite separate from that, but legislation allows us to set up committees to be able to look at one-offs, to have reports back on. That's what we're looking for even for the local food council, to have a report on what these other marketing tools might have for producers. I think it's an opportunity for confidence within the consumers themselves and within the producers to be able to do so.

I hope that clears the air a little bit for the member with the amendment. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Yao: Why, thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak in support of my colleague's amendment to Bill 7. This amendment will allow Bill 7 to be amended by striking out clause (a) in section 3 and striking out section 6. The section that will be removed will be

- 3 This Act applies to
- (a) agricultural products produced or processed in the Province.

The remaining section will read: "agricultural products produced or processed in the Province that are intended to be marketed and sold within the Province as organic products."

It is important to state that this bill emphasizes the local food movement and specifically the move towards organic products. The main purpose of this bill is to bring organic standards in line with federal organic standards. Now, with that being said, it is important that we allow this bill to regulate only organic products. It's quite an overreach for all agriculture products to fall under this act, when, really, only organic products are being targeted. While I support the main purpose of this bill, I don't think it's necessary to go beyond what needs to be done. We should move provincial organic regulations in line with federal ones, but let's not get ahead of ourselves and put all agriculture products under the act.

Therefore, I do support the good Member for Drumheller-Stettler's amendment removing section 3(a) from this bill and section 6. Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak in support of my colleague from Drumheller-Stettler's amendment to Bill 7. To be clear, this amendment will allow Bill 7 to be amended by striking out clause (a) in section 3 and striking out section 6. The section that will be removed will be: "agricultural products produced or processed in the Province." The remaining section will read: "agricultural products produced or processed in the Province that are intended to be marketed and sold within the Province as organic products."

It's important to state that this bill emphasizes the local food movement and specifically the move towards organic products. The main purpose of this bill is to bring our organic standards in line with federal organic standards. With that being said, it's important that we allow this bill to regulate only organic products. It's quite an overreach for all agricultural products to fall under this act when, really, only organic products are being targeted. While I support the main purpose of this bill, I don't think it's necessary to go beyond what needs to be done. We should move provincial organic regulations in line with federal ones, but let's not get ahead of ourselves and put all agricultural products under the act.

Therefore, I support the amendment from the hon. member, and I think it's incumbent on the agriculture minister to explain in more detail why he would not support this amendment.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

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

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Madam Chair. One thing I want to touch on is in relation to how we kind of got to this bill here. I serve as the chair of the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future. One of the things that we did was – and this came from the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Before he was a minister, he was sitting as a member of this committee. He brought forth a motion for us to look at ways that we can expand and explore and grow our agriculture and agribusiness sector as it was a sector that was emerging and, as we saw during the low price of oil and downturn that came from that, a sector that could absorb some of the shock that we were facing.

I have to admit that I was pretty moved by how efficient the committee actually served and worked in that process. We unanimously passed about 13 different motions that the committee report cited. Members like the Member for Little Bow and the Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock had some very good insights in this meeting.

One of the motions that was passed was:

That the Government expand the Explore Local [food] initiative to include a made-in-Alberta brand to assist in expanding and

promoting local [food] market demand for local products as well as creating a recognizable brand that signifies sustainable, responsible, and quality food products.

Another thing that was cited in this report is looking at organic foods, which has been addressed in this bill.

One of the reasons why I cannot support this amendment, simply looking at section 4 as one of many examples, is local food week. If we're looking at striking out this clause that promotes "agricultural products produced or processed in the Province," and then we tie it into local food week, the concern, the big challenge I have in relation to that is that it would create a situation in which celebrating local food week becomes extraordinarily broad. You can't necessarily define what local is without that clause being in this bill. At the end of the day, could we define local as being Montana? Could we define local as being North America as a continent? It leaves too much up in the air. As the member alluded to, wording is very important.

So I cannot support this amendment at this time.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

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

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to talk to this amendment on Bill 7. The mover, the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler, makes a good point. I know the previous speaker was talking about the amendment being poorly worded. I would actually go back and say that the reason for the amendment is because the bill, frankly, is poorly worded. It leaves the minister with a great deal of overreach beyond just organic food production and market and actually gives the minister the opportunity through this local food sector act to reach into all areas.

7:50

Now, the previous member talked about: what does that mean? Well, I think, essentially, after spending 25 years in the meat business on the inspection side, the whole time I was working in the industry – it's probably the same way today, but it's been a few years since I've been out of it. The fact is that there's federal inspection for meat and there's provincial inspection. Frankly, it's pretty clear. If you have provincial inspection, you can sell it across the province. If you want to go beyond the provincial borders, you need federal inspection. I think it's quite clear. Of course, if you want to go internationally, then you need HACCP and potentially a bunch of other approvals to sell your product that way.

This actually is an important amendment in terms of making the bill supportable. I wouldn't be surprised if all members of the House are okay with doing things for the local food sector. The problem is that when the bill is written in such a fashion that it allows the minister to automatically overreach, then you could reasonably start questioning the true intention behind the bill, whether the bill isn't really about local food, whether it's about other things. It's certainly not in the spirit of the title of the bill, the local food sector act. So this amendment is actually quite important. Actually, it's well thought out. It removes some of the overreach that's in the bill for the minister.

You know what? Albertans that are buying food deserve to know what they're buying. Frankly, there's a variety of opinions, and in my view all of those opinions are legitimate. There are probably people that would say: "I don't believe in organic. I'll never buy it." There are other Albertans that would say: "I'll only buy organic. It's the best thing. It's the only thing." And there's probably a variety of opinions in between: "I'll pay for it as long as I don't have to pay too much more for it than nonorganic." In my view, all of those opinions are legitimate, how people think about the food

they feed themselves and their families. They're entitled to be pro-organic, they're entitled to be antiorganic, and they're entitled to only buy organic if it's within 5 or 10 per cent of the price of the other products that are available.

So not giving the minister overreach in order to take pieces of the food industry that are functioning well now and allowing the minister the arbitrary authority to change things that are operating well now, I think, is a reasonable limitation to put on the legislation. I think it's part of what my hon. colleague is suggesting. As a result, I support this amendment. I think that if the government side looks at, they'll see that it's actually an improvement to the bill as it's written right now, and I'm hopeful that they will consider supporting it.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 7:54 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Cooper	McIver	Strankman
Gotfried	Nixon	Yao
Hanson	Smith	

Against the motion:

Carlier	Kleinstauber	Piquette
Ceci	Larivee	Renaud
Connolly	Loyola	Sabir
Dach	Malkinson	Schmidt
Drever	McCuaig-Boyd	Schreiner
Fitzpatrick	McKitrick	Shepherd
Gray	McLean	Sucha
Hinkley	Miller	Turner
Horne	Miranda	Westhead
Jansen	Nielsen	Woollard
Kazim		

Totals:	For – 8	Against – 31
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[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

The Deputy Chair: Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to seek your pleasure to bring forward another amendment, please, in regard to this bill. I understand that the table has the original copy. I've given the requisite copies to the pages, and I'll await your direction.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, you can please proceed. Your amendment will be referred to as A2.

Mr. Strankman: Madam Chair, I move that Bill 7, Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act, be amended in section 5 by striking out subsection (2) and substituting the following:

(2) The Minister shall appoint members to the Council on the recommendation of a nominating committee that is representative of Alberta's agricultural producers, which shall include large producers, the local food sector, small producers and processors.

The act currently reads:

(2) The Minister shall ensure that the members appointed to the Council are representative of Alberta's local food sector, including small producers and processors.

As a result of this, Madam Chair, it creates a good deal of uncertainty on who would be on the council at this point in time other than that the minister would ensure that the members appointed to the council are representative of Alberta's local food sector.

We have concerns, Madam Chair, about the council being dominated by one sector. In our reaching out to stakeholders, small producers, and large producers, the small producers worry that the council could be controlled by large producers, and vice versa, the large producers are concerned about the council being controlled by niche producers. The idea with this amendment is that the minister would choose the council from a list of candidates submitted by any Alberta producer group or council that wishes to participate in the local food council.

8:00

While still not as openly democratic, I believe that this achieves a balance of costs and that the minister could make his selections and allow people who participate the opportunity to do so of their own free will. It also gives the minister a ready list of groups that are interested in this council and its work. It allows for a degree of openness if the council is chosen from a known list of potential candidates, and this list could be made public. It also strives to be inclusive, fair, and transparent.

It has been discussed in committee, Alberta's Economic Future, as my colleague from Calgary-Shaw talked about, that there would be work done in creating a uniform, made-in-Alberta designation or label. There would be certain standards, et cetera, in order that they be allowed to use such a designation or certification. This amendment would ensure that producer groups are consulted prior to any sort of identifier or certification so that their concerns or ideas could be taken into consideration prior to regulation being developed.

Again, Madam Chair, this is about transparency as this bill primarily deals with and is meant to deal with organics. It's a vital aspect of any legislation that deals with agricultural products that need to be fully discussed openly with producer groups so they may share their input and have an opportunity for public input.

I rest my case, Madam Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2? The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Yao: Why, thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak in support of my colleague from Drumheller-Stettler's amendment to Bill 7. This amendment substitutes this wording for subsection (2):

The Minister shall appoint members to the council on the recommendation of a nominating committee that is representative of Alberta's agricultural producers, which shall include large producers, the local food sector, small producers and processors.

This amendment allows the makeup of the council to be slightly more democratic, and while this is not as democratic as we would like, this would allow those that wish to participate the opportunity to do so. This amendment would also address some of the concerns we have heard from stakeholders, where small producers were concerned over the council being dominated by large producers and vice versa. The idea behind this amendment is that the minister would choose from a list of candidates submitted from any Alberta producer group or any council that wishes to participate. This helps

give a voice and a seat at the table to groups that may otherwise be left out. It further allows for a degree of openness if the candidates are chosen from a list. It is a good goal to be inclusive, fair, and transparent – I know those concepts are foreign to you all – which is why I'm supporting my colleague's amendment.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2? The hon. Minister of Forestry – of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Madam Chair. You can say "Forestry" ahead of "Agriculture" once in a while. I think the forestry guys would probably like that.

You know, with all due respect to the member who is proposing this amendment, I think what he's basically suggesting here is that we strike a committee to strike a committee. I think that's probably a little bit more red tape than I would normally see from the members across the way, but I understand what they're getting at. I understand what their concerns are; that is, ensuring that the council itself is well represented.

You know, in the wording of the legislation, in subsection (2) of section 5, it does say that "the Minister shall ensure that the members appointed to the Council are representative of Alberta's local food sector, including small producers and processors." So I think it well captures what the member is trying to allude to, and that is that it's representative of all producers, all the types of producers, processors right across the province. I think that adding a layer of red tape by striking a committee to strike a committee gets a little too onerous for a council that I hope, if this bill is passed, will be able to be quite nimble to be able to come up with some of those recommendations, including on what other marketing tools local food might have across Alberta, not just organic but others, as I mentioned earlier, Madam Chair.

With that, you know, I can't support it. I understand the nature of what the member is trying to achieve, but because of that, what we have here already in the bill is sufficient. I believe it is very sufficient. Therefore, I can't support this amendment.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Why, thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to rise this evening and talk about the finer points of springtime in rural Alberta with respect to calving and branding and other activities that take place, that I know the minister of agriculture is very familiar with, very, very familiar with. One thing he's not familiar with, though, is this amendment. At no point in time did my colleague recommend that there needs to be a committee for a committee, just merely stated that the minister shall appoint members to the council on the recommendations.

I think that it is of critical importance – of critical importance – that they have a widespread representation of producers on the committee. Goodness knows that we've seen the type of appointments that this government has made. In fact, I think one of them, Tzeporah Berman, was tweeting again today about how there are 22,000 people ready for all hell to break loose in British Columbia. These are the type of people that this government has produced and has appointed, people like Karen Mahon. They appointed folks like that.

All that my colleague is trying to prevent is this sort of thing from happening again in the future. This is exactly the problem, and there's no reason why we shouldn't put some checks and balances in place so that we don't wind up with a council full of folks who

aren't accountable to producers, who aren't accountable to Albertans, and so that we don't have a real dominance of one sector over another on what is a very, very, very important council.

I hope that the minister will reconsider his poor choice this evening, make better choices in the future, and encourage his colleagues to do the same.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak to amendment A2 to Bill 7, Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act. The amendment is pretty straightforward here, and I think it speaks to good democratic practice in that one of the things that we want to try to do at times when appointing people is to get free from the politics of life and of business. Sometimes that can dominate government decisions. I don't think this is unique to any one particular party. Here we have an opportunity, with this amendment, to address this in a nonpartisan way, a way that doesn't necessarily affect any one political party but all of us, I would argue, at some point in time or another in the future. Obviously, we have examples of poor choices made by the government in some of their appointments, but this would help to address that.

One of the things about a democracy is that you need to have checks and balances at times to ensure that the government is representative of the will of the people, and I believe that this amendment speaks to that by making sure that a wide range of stakeholders are involved in decisions as a part of this act. One of the things that this amendment does is that it asks to include large producers. While I respect the opinion of the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, that he believes that it is a full encompassing of stakeholders, I would argue that it's clear from this amendment that it adds at least one more set of stakeholders for consideration when it comes to this committee.

I would speak in favour of it. I think that there are times when we need to remove the politics from the situation, and I believe that by having a committee that lists and puts forward the names of individuals and a broad range of individuals, it just speaks to some common sense, and I would encourage everyone in this House to support this amendment.

8:10

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity. Now, I know the minister was trying to be clever and maybe even meant what he said about having a committee to arrange a committee, but the fact is that the government already appoints people to lots of agencies, boards, and committees. In many, many cases the government appoints people to agencies, boards, and committees out of organizations that already exist; for example, in this amendment – and it's spelled out here – through "agricultural producers." It could be large producers. It could be out of the livestock industry. You've already got cattle producers, pork producers, chicken producers, turkey producers, and maybe those people would put one or two people on the board. You've already got pulse growers. You've already got the Barley Commission, different grain commissions, and maybe out of those already.

In other words, we're not creating a committee to create a committee. We're talking about creating this new committee out of existing organizations to make sure that all the weight in this new committee doesn't come from one area of the agricultural

community. You understand that, Minister? I think it's a legitimate concern. I know that the government's intention is not to do that, to give all of the power to the grain growers over the livestock producers or to the livestock producers over the grain growers or any of the other combinations thereof.

I think my hon. colleague, through this amendment, points out that it's actually worth it to put some parameters around it, not to create a committee to create a committee, which the minister I think incorrectly stated, but to create some structure out of currently existing agricultural organizations and pick from each segment of the currently existing, not new, agricultural organizations and say, "This group of one or two or three organizations appoints one person, and this group of three or four existing organizations appoints another" and so on so that one sector or more of those who produce food are not left unrepresented and, consequently, unfairly treated.

With that perspective, I sincerely hope that the minister would reconsider what I'm just hoping he hadn't thought of when he spoke earlier and see the wisdom of making sure that this well-intentioned local food group is representative of all the producers so that no one is left out. I don't think the minister's intention is to unfairly have a sector of those that produce food in Alberta unfairly put upon, unfairly ignored, or to have rules put in place to somehow restrict or eliminate the marketing opportunities of a sector of the food industry.

I don't believe for a second that that is the minister's intention. I don't think it ever was and I don't expect it ever will be the minister's intention. I hope the minister will think about the fact that if you pick from the currently existing organizations to create this new local food organization, it will actually probably make the minister's job easier. It will probably make the minister less susceptible to criticism by producers of food whose sectors are not included in the selection of the local food organization and probably also get better and more balanced results, which I actually think the minister wants.

Again, there's nothing partisan about this amendment. I think it's truly meant to be helpful, and I think that if the minister thinks about it, he might actually see that it could be truly helpful. I hope he changes the position that he took a few minutes ago as a result.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A2 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 8:15 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Cooper	Nixon	Strankman
Gotfried	Smith	van Dijken
Hanson	Starke	Yao
McIver		

Against the motion:

Carlier	Jansen	Nielsen
Ceci	Kazim	Piquette
Coolahan	Kleinstauber	Renaud
Dach	Larivee	Sabir
Dang	Loyola	Schmidt

Drever	Malkinson	Schreiner
Eggen	McCuaig-Boyd	Shepherd
Fitzpatrick	McKittrick	Sucha
Gray	McLean	Turner
Hinkley	Miller	Westhead
Horne	Miranda	Woollard
Totals:	For – 10	Against – 33

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

The Deputy Chair: Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Strankman: Possibly, Madam Chair, three times may be the charm. I don't know. I'd like to move an amendment. We have a copy here for you and for the pages.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, your amendment will be referred to as A3. Please go ahead.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, I'd like to see the Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act amended by renumbering section 6 as section 6(1) and adding the following after subsection (1):

- (2) The Minister shall consult with producers and processors for a period of not less than 60 days and consider any comments or feedback provided prior to making a regulation under subsection (1).

The act currently reads, Madam Chair, under section 6:

The Minister may make regulations

- (a) establishing a certification program for agricultural products other than those certified as organic products under Part 2;
- (b) respecting the creation of a protected label, the use of which may be restricted or prohibited.

Madam Chair, we're simply trying to achieve government consultation. I know that, as we've said before, sometimes there's a lack of definitive wording. We're simply trying to create public notice to those that are affected by this legislation.

8:20

This ensures that prior to enacting any regulations dealing with certification, there would be a public consultation period, rather than just special-interest groups at the whim of the minister. That would allow that there be certain standards in order to be achieving a special designation or certification. This amendment would ensure that producer groups are consulted prior to any sort of special identifier or certification so that their concerns or ideas could be taken into consideration prior to regulations being developed. That's part of the legislation.

Finally, to almost sound redundant, Madam Chair and to the minister, this is about transparency. The intention of the bill is to deal with organics, and it is vital that any aspect of this legislation that deals with agricultural products be fully discussed with those producer groups so that they may share their input. We're simply trying to achieve that as we move forward with the amendments.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A3? The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, I absolutely understand what the mover of the amendment is attempting to do. I would even consider supporting the amendment if not for the fact that the bill already stipulates the formation of a local food council. What he is asking in the amendment is what a local food council

would already be representing, what the producers and processors across the province would actually be considering. So any considerations they have on establishing some type of certification program for foods other than what's stipulated in the legislation around organic, might that be grass fed to cage free, whatever that might be, whatever recommendations that might come out of the council, that then would hit the minister's desk, would be considerations that are already deliberated by the council that is already made up of various producers and processors.

So I think adding another layer of red tape isn't necessary only because of the fact that we do have, you know, the feedback from the local food council already. Though I understand the nature of the amendment, to ensure that producers and processors have that feedback on any proposed possible different certifications for different agricultural products, I think that is already built into the fact that a local food council will be struck and then will report back to the minister within 12 months. There is a period there where, obviously, they will have an opportunity to discuss and talk to other producers and processors as well.

Again, you know, I can't support this amendment. It's close. I would suggest that the member is getting closer but just a little bit off the mark on this one.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Official Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. It never ceases to amaze me the things that will come out of this government at a certain point. I mean, red tape, the NDP government talking about red tape. There are all sorts of jokes there. But the night becomes late, so I won't touch that. But the fact that the minister of agriculture is saying that if he is required to consult with the agriculture industry, that is red tape: I think that given the track record of this government, maybe what the minister of agriculture is saying is that it's red tape for him to be able to continue to unilaterally make decisions for the agriculture industry without talking to them because that's what this ag minister has done for the last three years.

Let's talk about this government's ability to consult and whether or not the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler has a reasonable point by bringing forward this amendment to the Legislature tonight. This government's signature piece of legislation associated with the agriculture industry was a bill called Bill 6, Madam Chair. You may remember that piece of legislation. Maybe you don't. Maybe you've forgotten as time has gone by. I can tell you that the farmers and ranchers in my communities have not forgotten that.

Now, what was the biggest concern that came out of that process? The number one concern was that this government made a decision to bring forward significant legislation that impacted the agriculture community and family farms in particular, and they never talked to them. In fact, the first that most of those family farms and those people began to hear about that was at a meeting of that minister and the Minister of Labour's staff in the Grande Prairie area, I believe, in which a very famous thing was said within that debate. When there were some questions about what would happen when calving was happening at night, how that would work within occupational health and safety regulations, the response from that minister's staff was: don't let the bull out anymore with the cows at night, and the calves will not go through.

Now, my friend the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster is a veterinarian, and he may be able to take it offline and explain to

you why that strategy won't work. I will leave it to him to discuss the science of that because I suspect, Madam Chair, that that would be difficult to do in *Hansard*. But that does not work. That's the point.

That is the consultation that we see from the minister of agriculture. Now, he calls that red tape.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, you are going to link this back?

Mr. Nixon: Absolutely. We're going back to his comments about that the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler's amendment is red tape because it would require that minister to actually talk to the people that he is responsible for governing.

This government has a terrible track record when it comes to consultation. There's no doubt about it. They can't hide from that. It is not unreasonable for the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler, who is a producer himself, to point out that the industry wants to be consulted before they make significant decisions. So the minister, who belongs at least to a government that has the worst record of consultation with the people of this province in the history of this province, should at least turn that back over to the people of Alberta. Instead, though, it appears by his own words that he wants to avoid the red tape of consulting with farmers and ranchers inside the province of Alberta, and that is a shame.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A3? The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster, followed by the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Dr. Starke: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. It's with some interest that I address the amendment that is being proposed to Bill 7 with regard to requiring consultation prior to the invocation of a certification program. I really worry in a lot of instances with regard to this bill but specifically with regard to the certification. I would really appreciate the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry actually addressing this; that is, what is his familiarity with certification programs as it deals with food production, whether it be animal or plant production? I'd really like to know what that level of familiarity is because I will tell you that I have a considerable degree of familiarity with certification programs, how they work and how they don't work.

I'll provide an example that I'm very familiar with, and that is the pork quality assurance program that was brought in by the pork producers of Alberta some 15 years or so ago. Now, the pork producers, being a very progressive and forward-thinking lot, realized that it was important that consumers are given assurance that the pork that was being produced within Alberta is of high quality and that it removed a number of the potential hazards that could occur, including the presence of antibiotic residues, including the presence of broken needles in the pork meat, and a number of other things. They recognized this before it was demanded by consumers, before it was mandated by government. This was something that was led by the producers themselves. They developed a pork quality certification program within the industry, and that certification program was then expanded a number of years later to include animal welfare issues. That certification program was in fact run by the pork industry.

8:30

My concern with what is present within this act right here is that that would clearly fall outside of the organic food production section, starting with section 7 in the act, and a program like the pork quality assurance program could be mandated by government as a certification program. When the Minister of Agriculture and

Forestry assures us that that's what the local food council would look at, my concern is: what if there are no pork producers on that local food council? That could easily happen. There is no mandated requirement that specific producer groups be included. What if during the course of the recruitment of the local food council no pork producers stepped forward or were in fact nominated or appointed to this local food council?

Now, the local food council may decide: hey, it's a good idea for us to develop a certification program. Or it might not even be the council that thinks that. Maybe someone in government would say: let's have a pork quality assurance certification program. The minister would then go to his local food council and say: well, what do you think? There being no pork producers on said council, they might say – well, first of all, they would have really no idea as to what sort of impact that would have. But they might say: "Sure, Minister. That sounds good. Go ahead with that." This amendment requires the minister to actually go to the pork producers of the province and say: hey, I need your feedback on this. But without this amendment that certification program or any other certification program that the government of the day deems desirable could be put in place, and it could be implemented without feedback from the directly impacted producer group.

That, Madam Chair, is a flaw in this legislation. It is a flaw that the Member for Drumheller-Stettler is, I think, honestly trying to help the minister with in terms of improving the legislation, yet the minister says that it is not needed. Well, it's a little bit like insurance; you don't know how good it is until you actually need it. In this case you don't know how good this legislation will be until something like this comes up.

Now, I've used the example of pork certification because I'm very familiar with it. It was a program, as I said, run by the pork council of Alberta, and the certification was performed by certified registered veterinarians across the province who had to take specific training as far as being auditors and validators of pork production in the province. But no, the government thinks that it can just institute a certification program and go ahead with it. My concern is: what if we're talking about a small producer group, a relatively tiny niche group that somebody, though, decides, "Wow. We should have this certification program," and that niche group is not represented on the minister's local food council? Who speaks for that producer group? Who will tell the minister, "Whoa. This certification is either unnecessary, a duplication of what already exists, or running contrary to what happens"? None of those safeguards or checks and balances will be in place because this legislation does not provide for them.

So, Madam Chair, this is a flaw in this legislation. Now, I would hope that the minister would recognize that this amendment attempts to address this flaw and attempts to address a situation that could become extremely problematic for a specific producer group. I can only conclude that if the minister does not see that as being a potential flaw, if the minister does not see the need for this amendment, he is satisfied with the legislation as it stands. But I will tell you that the legislation as it stands leaves significant potential for a certification program to be introduced that would be specifically detrimental to a sector of agricultural production, and there are no checks and balances in place to prevent that from happening. So I would certainly encourage the minister to rethink this, to take this back to his ministry officials if need be, to adjourn debate on this amendment if need be, but this amendment is a good measure to try to close what potentially could be a very detrimental part of this legislation.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? Is the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo still wishing to speak?

Mr. Yao: Sorry. There was a list.

The Deputy Chair: Please go ahead.

Mr. Yao: Madam Chair, it's hard to follow Vermilion-Lloydminster because, quite honestly, he's a great orator, so I will just stick to my speech. I rise to speak in support of my colleague's amendment to Bill 7. This amendment will add the following subsection to section 6: "The minister shall consult with producers and processors for a period of not less than 60 days and consider any comments or feedback provided prior to making a regulation under subsection (1)."

Now, Madam Chair, you know, my colleagues are correct. This is about consultation, and quite honestly we've been trying to teach the government side consultation for the last three years to no avail. I should not say that. I give due credit where credit is due. For the daylight savings time bill they consulted, and they consulted very thoroughly. They set the bar there for consultation because they sent it to committee, and they did a proper communication with the public. They got people from all over to speak on that, and it was good.

All right. Anyways, the point is that it was great consultation. It set the bar for consultation. We thought they had learned, but they did not. My good friend from Drumheller-Stettler has provided a good amendment that is really trying to cover the bases for the good minister. You know, too often this government lacks real consultation with those affected by the legislation, but this amendment would allow for more proper consultation with stakeholders prior to any new regulation being enacted. This is a very important amendment, as we want to be sure that those that are affected most by this legislation are consulted before any changes are made. Again, this bill is about transparency and giving groups a proper voice so that any changes made are done with the support of the industry and for the benefit of Albertans.

Madam Chair, I encourage all members to vote in favour of this amendment. Thank you so much.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak amendment A3? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate this opportunity. This amendment truly is about consultation, something the government could actually use a reminder of. Bill 6 was raised here. I understand that there was a time not that long ago where the minister was at a beef meeting in Red Deer. He picked up an apparatus and suggested that it might be for piercing ears. He learned later on that it was for use on the other end of the animal, that it assisted with the transition from bull to steer. Had there been consultation before that, had he actually consulted before this particular event, the minister might not have gone through that embarrassing little question-and-answer period. I'm sure his colleagues will all want to ask him about this particular incident after this evening's proceedings.

It's about consultation. It matters. Now, listen, the government, with all due respect, has embarrassed itself constantly in the last three years by bringing out a piece of legislation without talking to people and then having to follow up with another piece of legislation to fix what the first piece of legislation did and then having to bring up another piece of legislation to fix what the first and second pieces of legislation did and in some cases even having

to bring a fourth piece of legislation to fix what the first, second, and third pieces of legislation didn't get right.

What comes to mind right now as another example are the election finance bylaws, where they seem to have to change it twice a year even though every time they do it, they claim that it's the best ever and it's perfect. Why? Because they don't consult before they make the decisions and commit them to legislation. You know what? Everybody that works with something every day is an expert. If you live on one side of the street and go to the other side, you're an expert at crossing the street at that corner.

They're about to make legislation now about food producers, food producers in a whole range of areas. You would think they would have figured this out after the Bill 6 fiasco that they authored. They're dealing with a whole range of producers. All this is saying is: take 60 days. Talk to those producers before you put the regulations into place so you don't have unintended consequences, so the government doesn't have to come back here in the fall embarrassed for the mistake that they made in the spring.

8:40

Now – you know what? – in the best world maybe this is perfect, but the government's track record is not one of being perfect. Their track record is of botching the job and having to come back two and three times to fix what the first piece of legislation got wrong, and in almost every case because they didn't ask the people that the legislation was affecting. All this amendment is asking the government to do is take a little time, talk to the food producers, the livestock producers, the crop producers and say: before we put these rules into place that are going to affect your life, how is it going to work for you? They might be pleasantly surprised. They might be surprised, whether it's pleasantly or not, about the suggestions that people might make. Whether it's a pleasant surprise or not, it might prevent the government from being humiliated and having to come back and fix what they say doesn't need fixing, again, because it's happened so many times.

You know what? In consultation, it says here, with some organic producers, some have said that this is far from perfect, this legislation, but it's a start. Well, if it's far from perfect, perhaps it would be incumbent upon the government before they put the regulations in place to spend 60 days and make it a little bit closer to perfect since it's already been stated that it's far from perfect.

Again, unintended consequences. We've heard from producers, a former Calgary greenhouse owner that said, referring to the carbon tax, something that they've had to come back and change three or four times for all the mistakes they've made, "You couldn't come up with better policies to crush not only small farms, but I think small Alberta businesses in general." That quote was from Global on December 15, 2016.

At what cost to producers is certification, one has to ask. Well, if you ask the producers, they might tell you. Minister, we're trying to throw you a lifeline here. We're the best friends you've got, because you keep botching the job, and we keep giving you great suggestions on how to not botch the job, and you're drowning, frankly, and you keep pushing the flotation device away. Grab onto this one. This is a good idea. You'll be happier. You'll be happier when you don't have to come back and bring in another piece of legislation to fix it because you made a whole bunch of food producers angry because you put them out of business or made it harder for them to stay in business.

This is an opportunity for the minister to get it right. This is an opportunity for the minister to actually – what's really crazy is that this is about talking to Albertans. The minister has just said that he considers talking to Albertans to be red tape. It's actually his job. This is just a polite suggestion. I'm probably being less polite than

the amendment actually is, but the polite suggestion of the amendment is that talking to the Albertans whose lives you're going to change is not red tape; it's a good idea, which is why I'm going to vote for this amendment and I sincerely hope the government does, too.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

I will now call on the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Well, thank you. A pleasure to rise and speak to the amendment this evening. I'd just like to point out a couple of things. You know, this evening many of us had the pleasure of eating some local food. It was so kindly provided by the Alberta Beef Producers. I think some of them have joined us here in the gallery this evening to witness the proceedings in this very important bill debate, interestingly enough on a piece of legislation that will be very, very likely to affect beef producers in the province of Alberta, along with a whole swath of other producers, including barley producers. I understand that there was some . . .

Mr. McIver: Bless the barley producers.

Mr. Cooper: Bless the barley producers.

. . . barley production that also took place at the dinner this evening and was consumed, some good Alberta barley. Liquid barley.

I don't know. I think that if you were to go up to the gallery this evening and ask the beef producers: would you like to be consulted prior to regulations being changed on a piece of legislation that directly affects you? I'll almost give you a 10 out of 10 that they will answer: yes, we would like to be consulted. I heard the minister this evening say: "Well, that's what the council is for. It's to talk to them about consultation. Trust us. We'll talk; we'll talk to them; we'll talk to the council. Don't worry. We've got it all covered. I'm from the government; I'm here to help." What we ought to do is trust but verify, and that's exactly what this amendment does. We trust that the minister will consult, but this amendment produces verification that, in fact, consultation will take place for at least 60 days prior to the changing of a regulation.

Now, this particular amendment isn't even all that prescriptive. It doesn't specify the type of consultation. It doesn't require notification. It still leaves even more ability to the minister than perhaps I would have if I was writing the amendment, but I know that my colleague from Drumheller-Stettler is kind and gracious and wants to allow the minister to make sure that he still has the tools to do his important work. So he wasn't overly prescriptive of the minister in this particular case but merely asked for 60 days. I can tell you that nothing this government does gets done in 60 days anyway. I mean, look: the most important piece of legislation that they had to introduce, Bill 12, was introduced probably close to 60 days ago, never received Royal Assent. You know, even the most important thing they do takes longer than 60 days. The member isn't asking for six months on every single regulation change, merely 60 days of consultation.

It behooves the minister . . .

Mr. McIver: Hooves. I like what you did with that.

Mr. Cooper: It behooves the minister . . .

An Hon. Member: Another one. Very good. He's on a roll.

Mr. Cooper: That one was an accident.

... to take stock about where exactly they're at with respect to interacting with producers, with a wide variety of producers, in allowing folks who are going to be affected by legislation to provide feedback.

I don't need to remind this House, because a number of my colleagues have, of the debacles in the past. I don't need to remind this House of the missteps that the minister has made. I don't need to remind the House how the government has continually turned its back on rural Alberta. I don't need to remind the House that the situation in rural Alberta with respect to crime has been outrageous and that the government did nothing for way over 60 days. You know, I don't need to remind the House about all of these negative situations that the government has been responsible for, but this type of amendment right here is exactly – exactly – what can prevent these sorts of actions in the future.

I encourage members of the government to act on your own accord, not just the accord of the minister. Act on your own accord. I only see a few ministers here present today, so here's your opportunity. [interjections] I didn't refer to the absence of any minister, just that there are only a few here.

Mr. Westhead: Point of order.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, a point of order has been called. The hon. member for Banff-Cochrane.

Point of Order

Referring to the Absence of Members

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's against good parliamentary practice to refer to a member's presence or absence, and I think the hon. member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills should know better. I would like him to retract that and apologize.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. – what are you? – Official Opposition House Leader. My apologies.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I blend in with the rest of my colleagues. I understand.

First off, I notice there's no citation from the hon. deputy government whip. As would certainly be the tradition in this place, you should rise with a standing order citation.

That said, the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills did not refer to any specific minister's absence and therefore did not break the tradition of this House. While I understand that the deputy whip would really like to just avoid the core point of the fact that this government doesn't want to consult with people, he should probably listen to what the member has to say. It will help him out.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Hon. members, there is no point of order, but I would caution all members of the House. I recognize that we're enjoying the debate this evening, but maybe we could try to refocus on the amendment at hand and refrain from deviation.

8:50

Mr. Cooper: Well, in the name of reaching across the aisle, I'll be happy to withdraw my remarks.

An Hon. Member: All of them?

Mr. Cooper: Not all of them because 99 per cent of them were really, really excellent.

Debate Continued

Mr. Cooper: The point remains the same, Madam Chair. The goal here is to save the minister from himself. The goal is to require consultation with the very, very, very important producers that are all across the province. That's exactly what this does.

I encourage all members to act on their own accord and not on behalf of the minister. I see that we may have the numbers in order to pass this this evening if everyone wanted to vote with the opposition on this. Do the right thing, and support consultation.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A3? The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. I will be brief. I do feel it important to stand up and speak to amendment A3 to Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act. Essentially, my colleague from Drumheller-Stettler is bringing forth an amendment that makes a lot of sense, to try and close some of the holes within this bill. I believe that the minister has a responsibility to properly consult with the public, with the industry, with the stakeholders that are being affected by legislation that's being brought forward, and I do not see anywhere in the bill that it is protecting stakeholders, industry from government sticking their fingers in the business of industry. We need to be careful that we're not doing something from the government side that will interfere with what is naturally occurring quite often at the industry level.

I reflect back on debacles of the past without proper consultation and how that has affected this government. But I also reflect back on the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster's comments with regard to the pork quality assurance program. Having been in the pork industry for a couple decades and then some, I was able to be part of that whole process as a producer. That consultation and that development of the quality assurance program within the pork industry was a very healthy development of a program that brought certainty to consumers about the quality of the product that they were going to be able to buy and purchase. It was a healthy development of the program because the people, the stakeholders that were directly involved got to have their say.

We had many town halls right across the province – I attended a few of them – and we had open discussion on the best way forward. The fact that that education took place alongside that consultation became very effective in the buy-in from producers to realize the need for such a program and for such regulations that they would have to put in practice on their operations. It is critical that we have producer buy-in, that we have industry buy-in.

You know, we have the bill in front of us. The local food council is being put in place by the minister. We really don't have any parameters on the structure of the local food council, who will be participating, who will not be participating. It's completely under the guise of the minister to make those decisions, to make those appointments. In that regard I would suggest that it's very important that the minister recognize that there is quite likely the possibility that the local food council is not going to be able to cover all the bases of the different segments of food production that are currently in Alberta.

When regulations are being brought forward by the minister, we have a small segment of food production that's being represented on the local food council. We have that small segment of food production being appointed by the minister, so it does concern me as a food producer that the minister is receiving a fair bit of leeway in the appointment of the council and also the development of the regulations that will be put in place with regard to local food.

I do know that the minister is regularly consulting with producers. In fact, this morning on my way into work I met with some of the dairy industry and the Alberta vet and pork industry representatives and beef industry representatives who were going to meet with the minister on concerns with regard to some prescription drugs and the availability of these. I know that this is happening at this time. I believe it's a healthy discussion that continues to happen, but I have concerns where we have the potential for the asparagus producers of this province that they might not get heard. I would suggest that quite likely the asparagus producers of this province will not be part of the local food council.

You might say: well, yeah, we don't grow asparagus in Alberta, do we? Actually, there are asparagus farmers in Alberta. I was privileged to tour one of the farms in the Olds-Didsbury area and learned a lot about asparagus growth in Alberta. These are the types of individuals that might get blindsided by regulations put forward where the minister and the government feel that it's in the best interests of that individual, of that producer group, yet they are not fully aware of all of the aspects of what those businesses, what those producers are facing on a day-to-day basis and how these regulations could impact their businesses and their bottom lines.

We have to be very careful how we move forward as governments and not to stick our fingers into the business of industry and potentially create damage to an already healthy – we want to try and improve and continually try and move forward with industry. I believe that this is a very healthy, a very good way to try and close off some of the loopholes within Bill 7, and I would encourage all members of the House to vote in favour of this amendment.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A3? The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I just wanted to stand up and briefly speak in support of the amendment from our senior member here from Drumheller-Stettler.

I just find it a little bit ironic that we're actually having this conversation tonight, being that a lot of us here in the House from both sides attended a very nice meeting and greeting with some great Alberta beef and some great beers. I remember the minister actually getting up and speaking about the respect that he has for the producers and the ag industry in our province. He talked about the importance of those industries, and I think you're absolutely right, sir, that they are very, very important to us.

We also talked about the idea that there were 1,400, I believe, different brewery products that were around the province and his desire to go out and with the help of one of the other ministers try all 1,400. I think that would be a great opportunity to get out and meet with these producers, and maybe we could go to different areas of the province and sample that while we're consulting with these folks on some of this regulation. I don't think it would be all that unpleasant, Minister, if we got out and actually met with these folks.

9:00

What I want to do is that I just want to read this amendment, and then if the minister could please comment on exactly which part of that he has a problem with. Here it is.

(2) The Minister shall consult with producers and processors for a period of not less than 60 days and consider any comments or feedback provided prior to making a regulation under subsection (1).

If the minister would please clarify for us exactly what part of that statement you have an issue with. Thanks.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? Seeing none, I will call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A3 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:01 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Cooper	McIver	Starke
Fraser	Nixon	Strankman
Gotfried	Panda	van Dijken
Hanson	Smith	Yao

Against the motion:

Carlier	Jansen	Nielsen
Ceci	Kazim	Piquette
Connolly	Kleinstauber	Renaud
Coolahan	Larivee	Sabir
Dach	Littlewood	Schmidt
Dang	Loyola	Schreiner
Drever	Malkinson	Shepherd
Eggen	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha
Fitzpatrick	McKitrick	Turner
Gray	McLean	Westhead
Hinkley	Miller	Woollard
Horne	Miranda	

Totals:	For – 12	Against – 35
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[Motion on amendment A3 lost]

The Deputy Chair: We are now back on the original bill, Bill 7. Are there any comments? The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Dr. Starke: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to speak to Bill 7 at the committee stage. You know, I will share with the Assembly once again, as I have in the past, that when it comes to food production, this is an area that as a veterinarian I've had significant involvement with, and the veterinarians take very seriously their role in ensuring the wholesomeness, safety, and nutritional value of the food that is produced from the animals that are raised in Alberta. I think it's been said before and it bears repeating that the food products that we produce in Alberta are sought after the world over. The minister will know this from his trips abroad, that the products we produce are of high value and are highly sought out the world over. But we also have a burgeoning local food market. We have a burgeoning local food movement, and that was certainly discussed in a previous private member's bill, when we talked about a local food act and promotion of local food.

I think the point that I'm raising here is that this increase in interest and in consumption of local food is happening – it's interesting that we would use this term – “organically.” It's happening on its own. It is happening without the assistance of government. It is happening without, in fact, the interference of government.

My concern with Bill 7 is that, as this government has done so many times in the past because it has a government-knows-best attitude, it is a solution looking for a problem to solve. There is no problem that needs solving here, yet the government has come up

with this bill to ostensibly solve a problem that has been undefined and does not in fact exist. Local food production, local food consumption, the interest in local food by consumers, by restaurants, by various other quarters within the province of Alberta, is exploding without the government's assistance or, in fact, their interference. So the need for the government to intervene here is questionable.

You know, again, we were just at, as has been referenced earlier, a reception where Alberta locally produced beef was provided as well as some of the beer that is brewed in Alberta today. A lot of that expansion is happening without a local food act, and my question, in fact, is on how the government thinks that, of course, you can bring something like this piece of legislation in, and it just will make things go better because the government's assumption is, specifically, this party's assumption is, that things go better when they're run by government. Well, they don't always.

I will offer specifically an area that I have, again, some knowledge and expertise on, and that is starting with section 10 of this act. I would really appreciate if the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry would actually listen to my comments. I know he's engaged in a very active conversation with his colleagues there. I can appreciate it's very important, yet I'm trying to point out some flaws in your legislation, Minister, as they relate specifically to the process of complaints and verification of certification status.

It relates to the topic, Madam Chair, of biosecurity. I'm not as familiar with plant producers, but I will tell you that with regard to the production of animals in this province, many producers in our province conduct very strict and stringent biosecurity rules in their production. In fact, I have been the consulting veterinarian, for example, once again, in the pork industry for a pork barn, and I could not have any contact with live pigs for 72 hours prior to setting foot in that farm. Prior to going into the barn, I had to shower and change my clothes completely. It was a shower-in, shower-out facility. You know, that's not unusual. There are lots of facilities in Alberta that run like that. That is true in the poultry industry. That is true in the turkey production industry. That is true in many, many operations in this province.

9:10

Yet in this bill in the certification section there is absolutely no provision for respecting the biosecurity of the facilities to be inspected. In fact, I would suggest to the minister that because these are organic facilities and many of these facilities do not use antibiotics, will not use antibiotics, then in some ways those animals are in fact more susceptible to disease and that if a disease was accidentally introduced by an inspector, the government could be liable in that situation, yet there are no safeguards in the legislation whatsoever to protect against that happening.

Madam Chair, this is not some esoteric or theoretical threat to producers. In fact, you know, during the consultations on Bill 6 – and the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville will remember this because it was in Vegreville – this point was raised about biosecurity, and one producer, who talked about the level of biosecurity on her premises, indicated that if an occupational health and safety inspector came to her farm gate, she would force that inspector to strip to his underwear before she allowed him on the farm. She said that, depending on her mood of the day, she might not even be that fussy about him leaving his underwear on.

[Mr. Hinkley in the chair]

Now, Mr. Chair, that may all sound humorous to some members on the other side, but the truth of the matter is that that is just how serious our producers treat biosecurity on their premises. They have specific protocols in place to ensure that infectious and contagious

disease organisms are not introduced inadvertently by inspectors or people that come onto the farm. You don't go onto these farms just casually to try to sell something to the farmer. You don't just pull up to the barn door and say: hey, I've got this new piece of equipment or this new feed I'd like to sell you. That doesn't happen because these Alberta producers are very concerned about biosecurity.

The provisions in this bill, Minister, do not safeguard producers against breaches in biosecurity. There's nothing in here. And the regulations that you might draw up are unknown to this point, and they give producers absolutely no comfort in this regard.

Mr. Chair, I pointed out the broader difficulties that I have with this bill. This bill is not necessary, and in fact this bill has greater potential to do harm. The local food sector is doing very well. Organic food is doing very, very well in this province. My younger son works at a Planet Organic grocery store in Calgary, and they are very, very busy. That sector is doing very well. The consumers do their research, and they're very, very careful about how and where they source their products. I just am very concerned that we have found in this legislation enough examples of flaws that in now trying to have government regulate a sector which is already growing, which is already expanding, which is already having great success, the government is simply going to get in the way of all of that.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Madam Chair, I can't support Bill 7, but specifically I would like to hear from the minister what measures are going to be in place as he sends out these verifiers, these inspectors to go onto farms to inspect the different areas of verification that are described within section 13 of the bill. How is he going to assure the producers of Alberta, those who have adopted high-level biosecurity practices, that from these casual visitors the production facilities aren't then going to be susceptible to the introduction of a contagious or infectious disease that could spell disaster for that production unit? How are you going to prevent the introduction of porcine epidemic diarrhea where that doesn't occur in a production facility? What about transmissible gastroenteritis? How are you going to protect against that? It's highly contagious. It can easily be transmitted by vectors, vectors being things like vehicles, clothing, and that sort of thing.

Madam Chair, these are not theoretical, esoteric considerations. These are very real-world considerations. The minister, by introducing this bill, has brought forward a mechanism which threatens some of our highest level producers in the province because it allows for inspection of facilities with no provision for the respect of biosecurity. I think the minister needs to answer to that. I think Alberta producers deserve some response from this minister, whether he does that now or whether he does that at third reading, to ensure that these biosecurity protocols will not be violated and that these producers will not inadvertently fall victim to the introduction of a contagious or infectious disease that could spell the end of their production facility.

I'm not overstating this. Producers have been ruined by the introduction of a contagious or infectious disease. It was one of the risks of being a practising veterinarian. It was one of my worst nightmares, that a producer could be rendered basically bankrupt because I inadvertently introduced an organism into their production facility. I can tell you that we took very, very, very careful steps to make sure that never happened.

Madam Chair, again, I'm opposed to this piece of legislation, but with the specific provision of these inspectors I need to hear from this minister how he intends to assure Alberta producers that their livelihood will not be threatened by an inadvertent, accidental

introduction of contagious or infectious disease into their production facilities.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members that are wishing to speak to Bill 7?
The hon. member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Yeah. Well, Madam Chair, this is a sad point because the government brought a bill that, if they had taken a little more time, has the potential of doing some good things, but it's clear that that isn't the case. My hon. colleague from Drumheller-Stettler put on the floor three amendments, all of which could have improved it, and the government shot them all down, which is their right to do. The problem is that now we're left with a bill that while the government could have made it supportable, it has chosen not to do so, has chosen to put a bill in place without committing to consulting with the industry members that will be affected. They've not committed to dealing with the industry committees that already exist before creating the local food councils to make sure that no important sectors or segments of the food producing industry are left out.

For the producers what are they to think except: "While this might be a good idea, what if the government leaves my sector out? What if I produce a particular crop that isn't represented on the local food committee? What if I produce a type of livestock or egg that isn't represented on the food products marketing council, and they put in rules that make it impossible for me to do business? I don't even have that 60-day period to talk to the government to say: hey, what about me? What about my family? What about my job? What about all the people that work for my farm, for my ranch, in my business?"

We've got a minister that in the debate complained about red tape on a bill which is essentially creating red tape. He talked about a committee creating committees. This is a bill creating red tape. The silly thing is that the red tape or regulations potentially don't have to be bad. They could be helpful if the minister would commit to doing it right, but after multiple efforts to correct it, all of them rebuffed, they've made it impossible to support this bill.

The Chair: Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the remaining clauses of Bill 7 were agreed to]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:20 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Carlier	Kazim	Miranda
Ceci	Kleinstauber	Nielsen
Connolly	Larivee	Sabir
Coolahan	Littlewood	Schmidt
Dach	Loyola	Schreiner
Dang	Malkinson	Shepherd
Eggen	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha
Gray	McKittrick	Turner
Hinkley	McLean	Westhead
Horne	Miller	Woollard
Jansen		

Against the motion:

Cooper	McIver	Strankman
Fraser	Nixon	van Dijken
Gotfried	Panda	Yao
Hanson	Starke	

Totals: For – 31 Against – 11

[The remaining clauses of Bill 7 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Bill 1

Energy Diversification Act

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, we are now on amendment A2. Are there any members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to thank the Member for Calgary-Elbow for bringing forward this amendment. I certainly think that there's a laudable sentiment behind it, one that the government shares, which is to increase the participation of underrepresented groups in our energy sector. I also want to see communities from all regions and all groups of people in our province benefit from these programs.

You know, Madam Chair, there's a tendency when we talk about these programs to only focus on the immediate construction jobs that will build them and then the full-time staff who will be hired to operate the facilities once they're built. It's one reason that people focus on the locations where the facilities are built, and that's perfectly understandable. But the fact is that projects of this scale have enormous spinoff benefits for other businesses, and projects like these create many jobs for those contractors as well.

During a recent visit to Fort Saskatchewan with the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville I had the opportunity to meet with some of the contractors working with Inter Pipeline, who the members know was one of the successful candidates in the first round of PDP. I learned first-hand how widely spread the benefits of the Inter Pipeline investment are. I met the head of an indigenous company from out of Peace River. I heard that Cleantek, which is based out of Balzac, near Calgary, has been manufacturing light towers being used for the construction site. A few weeks ago the Premier and I visited Trade Winds, a subcontractor to the Inter Pipeline project, that currently employs a couple of hundred staff and is poised to hire another hundred merely for the increased business of Inter Pipeline. So I'm very excited by the possibilities I see for these programs to generate opportunities for companies right across the province.

Madam Chair, the current bill refers to programs for improving participation in the energy economy by underrepresented groups, which could include indigenous in some cases. The draft evaluation criteria for the program, separate and apart from the bill, specifically encourage indigenous community participation in the projects. I'm sure all members will agree that we need to encourage more indigenous participation in the energy sector.

That said, Madam Chair, I'm concerned about adding more specific requirements into this bill. One thing we did right in the first round of the PDP was evaluate specific applications on their merits,

and the integrity of that first round was independently verified by a fairness monitor. We want to replicate that process again. We want to be sure that we are looking at the best projects to achieve the government's objectives. A big part of the process of evaluating each project is its economic viability. That means such factors as access to feedstocks, utilities, water; access to a trained labour force; transportation to markets; and infrastructure support. All of that needs to be considered. For that reason, I think it's best that the programs remain neutral on geographic location and that we leave it up to industry proponents to demonstrate how their location sets out the best possible location that derives the greatest benefits to Albertans.

Again, I thank the member for his amendment, and I want to assure him that I did reflect carefully on the intent behind it because it is one I share. We do want to ensure that the benefits of these programs are as widespread as possible, but I believe we need to avoid adding further conditions to these programs at this time. So I will be voting no to this amendment, and I am encouraging other members of this Assembly to do the same.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? Seeing none, I will call the question.

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

The Deputy Chair: We are now back on the original bill, Bill 1. Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Madam Chair, thank you so much for the opportunity to speak again at the Committee of the Whole stage of Bill 1. A couple of hours ago my colleague from Calgary-Elbow and I tried to reason with the government and tried to make Bill 1 a better bill. I'm so disappointed that the NDP would not pass those amendments.

I have another amendment here, which I'll give to you shortly.

9:30

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, your amendment will be referred to as A3. Please go ahead.

Mr. Panda: Okay. Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that Bill 1, Energy Diversification Act, be amended in section 2(3) by striking out "to use any financial tools available to the Commission under the Petroleum Marketing Act, including, but not limited to, loan guarantees and equity investments" and substituting "to use any financial tools available to the Commission under the Petroleum Marketing Act, with the exception of loan guarantees and equity investments".

Madam Chair, we fundamentally disagree with the use of loan guarantees and equity positions in businesses except if it is an emergency situation like the Trans Mountain expansion. When the government policies fail the investors, then there is no other way other than supporting, backstopping losses to the businesses. Other than that, in normal course we fundamentally disagree with the use of loan guarantees and equity positions.

We know the minister can still use these tools under the Petroleum Marketing Act, and that act is not being opened here. We also disagree with the minister being able to use any financial tools available. By restricting taking an equity position to businesses that produce dividends, it would be a matter of mitigating that risk. Madam Chair, that's why I brought this amendment. Businesses that produce dividends typically have a stronger financial position. For example, you know, the New Brunswick Liberal government

got into big trouble by handing out loans and loan guarantees to Atcon Construction, and they did that knowing the company was near the brink of insolvency, and the New Brunswick government is on the hook for tens of millions of dollars that they don't have.

We don't want the same situation here. We understand the intent of this bill, but at the same time this government failed all those businesses. No one wants to invest in petrochemical diversification because of the record of this NDP government and their ideological policies. That's why they need this Bill 1, which has some good intentions, but, you know, if we keep doing this, then investors will lose confidence, and there are no private investments coming based on the good policies. Businesses are leaving Alberta, so that's why I brought this amendment. I hope this House will pass this amendment.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: I'll be brief, Madam Chair. You know, this whole bill was formed on advice that we got through the EDAC committee, who did consult a wide breadth of Albertans and industry and indeed did some studies of what was done in other areas. They did this consultation over about 16 months, so I think we have some fairly solid advice on that.

I will be voting against the amendment, and I would ask members to also join me in that.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

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

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A3 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:35 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Cooper	McIver	Strankman
Fraser	Nixon	van Dijken
Gotfried	Panda	Yao
Hanson	Smith	

Against the motion:

Carlier	Horne	Miranda
Ceci	Jansen	Piquette
Connolly	Kleinstauber	Renaud
Coolahan	Larivee	Sabir
Dach	Littlewood	Schmidt
Dang	Loyola	Shepherd
Drever	Malkinson	Sucha
Eggen	McCuaig-Boyd	Turner
Fitzpatrick	McLean	Westhead
Gray	Miller	Woollard
Hinkley		

Totals:	For – 11	Against – 31
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[Motion on amendment A3 lost]

The Deputy Chair: Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just have an amendment to move on behalf of the Member for Calgary-Elbow.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member. Please go ahead. Your amendment will be referred to as A4.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my honour to stand and rise and speak to this House on behalf of my colleague the Member for Calgary-Elbow. I have to say that when he comes up with these amendments and he works on these amendments, he's typically nonpartisan when he's looking at it. It's in earnest. He's trying to come up with better ways not necessarily to help the government but to help Albertans, and that's what we really should be here for.

My amendment on behalf of Mr. Clark is to move that Bill 1, Energy Diversification Act [interjections] . . .

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, he's reading the amendment out loud. Please give him the floor.

9:40

Mr. Fraser: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. Member, let's all get along tonight.

. . . be amended in section 2(1) by striking out "and" at the end of clause (e), by adding "and" at the end of clause (f), and adding the following after clause (f):

- (g) promote and encourage domestic and international consumption of products supported under these programs.

This amendment aims to make Bill 1 more robust by looking for more opportunities to export energy in new ways as in the amendment I just stated. Although section 2(1) already states that the economic growth and energy diversification programs may be established under this act without limitation, the government saw fit to explicitly list a number of areas of focus. I believe that we can do better for Albertans by including diversification of export markets in energy diversification. One of the weaknesses that has been brought to the fore recently is our dependence on pipelines to export our energy products. We really want this bill to help Albertans develop and export energy products in ways other than fluids through pipelines or electricity through power lines. We want to help uncap Alberta's full energy potential.

Alberta is blessed with an abundance of relatively inexpensive electricity and natural gas, which can be combined to make a variety of value-added materials that embed carbon in objects that will last for centuries. We could also make this hydrogen gas for fuel cells, producing next to no environmental contamination if spilled. We can use our potential clean energy wealth to build our electric-intensive manufacturing or chemical treatment. We could use our electricity wealth to export computational capacity, which is critical for our data-intensive artificial intelligence and machine learning futures. Today we might not conceive of what inventions and discoveries will come in the world of energy future, but we can prepare Alberta to become a full participant and a leader.

We must do better for Albertans by considering and developing a platform for energy innovation for our future, and I urge all members to support the inclusion of more export opportunities in developing the future of Alberta's energy industry. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A4? The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I would like to thank the hon. member for presenting that on behalf of the Member for Calgary-Elbow. I agree that it's well thought out, but I do have concerns that it fundamentally changes the intent of the bill. I think

some of what has been described can be captured under Bill 2, and some of the work we are doing in market access within my department and some that is being done in some of the others it covers.

Again I will not be voting for this amendment, but I do thank him for the thought put into it.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A4?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[Motion on amendment A4 lost]

The Deputy Chair: We are now on the original bill, Bill 1.

Hon. members, are there any speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Yeah. I'm speaking to Bill 1 again, Madam Chair. We tried a couple of amendments and were not successful. I have another amendment here, and I have enough copies here. I'll give them to the page.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member. Your amendment will be referred to as A5. Please go ahead.

Mr. Panda: I didn't keep the copy. Sorry.

The Deputy Chair: Okay. If we can just get one of the pages to bring you back a copy.

Mr. Panda: Yeah. I've got one. Okay. Don't worry.

The Deputy Chair: Oh. You found it. Okay.

Mr. Panda: Madam Chair, I move that Bill 1, Energy Diversification Act, be amended by striking out section 2(2) and substituting the following:

- (2) Financial support made available by the Minister for a program referred to in subsection (1) shall, subject to section 3(2), be limited to the use of royalty credits and tax credits.

Madam Chair, for the reasons I explained in my previous amendment, fundamentally I disagree with handing out grants to businesses. Also, the free money without government having some hold over the business is a recipe for abuse and disaster with the province's finances. Government gets into the business of picking winners and losers. That's what happened. If we allow the minister to use this bill, then it will end up picking winners and losers.

In the normal course, businesses should be able to find financing from a bank or a private lender, but because this government has issues with their economic policies, no one is investing here. That's why they had to bring in these bills to provide grants and loans and all sorts of handouts to keep the businesses in Alberta. I'm against that policy. When governments hand out free money to business, it's called corporate welfare. This party is supposed to be looking after the common people and looking after regular Albertans' interests rather than, you know, helping out their big businesses. That's the reason I would encourage them to look at their economic policies.

The minister mentioned the EDAC report. In that EDAC report the advisory committee actually advised the minister to look at the red tape, the regulatory red tape, and asked her to reduce the regulatory burden on the businesses, and in this Bill 1 that's not addressed.

There are so many things they could do before they give out loans and grants to the businesses. That's why I'm proposing to amend this Bill 1 to remove those options.

I'm asking this Assembly to support the amendment unanimously. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A5? The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Madam Chair. For reasons I mentioned two amendments ago, this would change the intent of the bill. I want to point out that there is a fairness monitor, who is a third-party validator, for the process, so the concern about choosing winners and losers isn't valid. There's a solid set of criteria. Again, this would fundamentally change the bill, so I will be voting against it.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A5?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[Motion on amendment A5 lost]

The Deputy Chair: We are now back on the original bill. Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

Mr. Fraser: Madam Chair, I have another amendment on behalf of the Member for Calgary-Elbow.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member. Your amendment will be referred to as A6. Please go ahead.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Madam Chair. Again it's an honour to rise on behalf of the Member for Calgary-Elbow, to move that Bill 1, Energy Diversification Act, be amended in section 4(1) by striking out "Executive Council" and substituting "Legislative Assembly."

This is a simple amendment which changes the Energy minister's reporting to cabinet to reporting to the House on the progress of programs affiliated with this act. As the amendment states, it's simply just making things more transparent. It's important that we do our best for Albertans by keeping them up to date, through their MLAs, on an initiative as important as this one. This amendment in no way prevents the Energy minister from reporting to cabinet as frequently as the Premier requests. I hope all members of this House support this small but impactful improvement to this bill.

Thank you.

9:50

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Madam Chair. It is similar to, I think, an amendment from yesterday or previously about reporting. I want to point out that there is annual reporting that would be online and could be submitted to the Legislative Assembly, but I think it's more important that cabinet stays in there as the one making decisions. But there certainly is a requirement already. It's called an annual report, and I think that's more than transparent.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A6?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[Motion on amendment A6 lost]

The Deputy Chair: Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 1?

Mr. Panda: Madam Chair, I have another amendment to improve this Bill 1. I have the requisite copies here.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, if you'd like to proceed, your amendment is A7.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move to amend Bill 1 as follows: section 1 is struck out, and the following is substituted: "Definitions" – I mean, everyone has a copy. They can read this.

The reason I brought this amendment, Madam Chair, is that if grants must be handed out to keep the businesses that are running away from Alberta because of NDP policies, we have to make sure that they're there for things that can still be used on the industrial site if the businesses getting the grant go bankrupt. What it means is that when this government picks winners and losers and if some of those business are not sound and they lose money and they go out of business, at least if we are giving out grants, they should be spent on things like roads; railway sidings, spurs, or yards; telecommunications like towers and fibre optics; water and watershed drainage because we can't build on swamps; ground levelling; electrical transmission or distribution to the site to energize it; or natural gas distribution lines to heat the buildings; but not to provide feedstock for industrial operations.

Madam Chair, as I explained, if an industrial site goes bankrupt after receiving grants from the NDP – and we have one in the heartland – at least the site services can be used by someone else taking over that site. When others come forward to take over that business and if the money that we've given as grants is used on infrastructure, that money will be put to use for a good purpose. This kind of infrastructure does not go to waste and can be accounted for.

Another thing we can use the grants for is job training. If the money is spent on job training, then they're also accountable in that the funds can flow directly to the college or trade school to support the workers of the facility who need training. The NDP is supposed to look after working-class people. This way, if we put a condition on when we give grants to these companies that that money should be used for job training, that money is well spent.

For those reasons, I'm just hoping the minister would support this amendment and ask all her colleagues to work in favour of this amendment. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A7? The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, all the criteria that, as mentioned, are part of the application process for these companies: companies are checked for viability, that they are a good, solid company; their records; their means of operating; how many trained staff they have. All of that kind of thing is encompassed in the application process, so I don't feel it's necessary to put it in the bill. It's a bit redundant. Again, all of the health of the company – and there's quite a bit of criteria for them to get the project, and they have to meet milestones before they even get the grants. All of that is in place already, so I will be voting against it.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A7?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A7 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:56 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Cooper	McIver	Smith
Fraser	Nixon	Strankman
Gotfried	Panda	Yao
Hanson		

Against the motion:

Carlier	Horne	Miranda
Ceci	Jansen	Piquette
Connolly	Kazim	Renaud
Coolahan	Kleinsteuber	Sabir
Dach	Larivee	Schmidt
Dang	Littlewood	Shepherd
Drever	Loyola	Sucha
Eggen	Malkinson	Turner
Fitzpatrick	McCuaig-Boyd	Westhead
Gray	McLean	Woollard
Hinkley	Miller	

Totals:	For – 10	Against – 32
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[Motion on amendment A7 lost]

The Deputy Chair: Are there any other speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

10:00

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm getting really, really encouraged in this House to move amendments unsuccessfully. I have another amendment. I'm sending you the copies.

The Deputy Chair: Once I have a copy at the table, you can proceed. It will be referred to as A8.

Mr. Panda: Okay.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, you can go ahead. I now have a copy at the table.

Mr. Panda: Thank you. Madam Chair, this amendment is to cover NAFTA, the North American free trade agreement, and the comprehensive economic and trade agreement in compliance. It's too late in the night, so I'm forgetting the abbreviations.

Any support the government is going to provide to a business should complement our international trade agreements, like NAFTA and CETA. At the same time, we need to make sure that our competitors for the petrochemical sector play fair. When I say "play fair," we don't want this government to pick winners and losers. At the same time, the businesses that are receiving grants and loan guarantees from Bill 1 should not be unfair to their business competitors. That's why our minister needs to stand up and go after Pennsylvania and other states in the U.S. like Texas if they're playing games and using unfair practices to lure businesses to their jurisdiction. When we have trade agreements like that, we have to be fair to our trading partners. That's why I'm asking the minister to go through this amendment and support this, because any new petrochemical facility is of no use to Alberta if they don't play the game fairly with their business competition from other businesses in other jurisdictions that are partners in NAFTA and CETA.

I hope everyone in the Assembly agrees to this amendment and passes this.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Madam Chair. I can assure the House that in the drafting of this bill we did it in conjunction with the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. Canada, as you know, is a signatory to several trade agreements, so we did make sure that all of these programs are trade compliant. We also did through the EDAC report look at jurisdictions like Louisiana and Texas, who have incentives. We may not have the same types of incentives, but we have ensured that they will be trade compliant. This work has already been done.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A8?

See none, I will call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A8 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:05 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Cooper	Hanson	Panda
Fraser	McIver	Strankman
Gotfried	Nixon	Yao

Against the motion:

Carlier	Horne	Miranda
Ceci	Jansen	Piquette
Connolly	Kazim	Renaud
Coolahan	Kleinsteuber	Sabir
Dach	Larivee	Schmidt
Dang	Littlewood	Schreiner
Drever	Loyola	Shepherd
Eggen	Malkinson	Sucha
Fitzpatrick	McCuaig-Boyd	Turner
Gray	McLean	Westhead
Hinkley	Miller	Woollard

Totals:	For – 9	Against – 33
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[Motion on amendment A9 lost]

The Deputy Chair: We are now back on Bill 1. Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Chair. I have another amendment. I'm sending you the requisite number of copies.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, please go ahead. Your amendment will be referred to as A9.

10:10

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Chair. This amendment which everyone has now deals with the economic impact assessment of partial upgrading. Partial upgrading is proposed in this bill, that they would receive about \$800 million or \$1 billion. The Alberta Chambers of Commerce had many questions about the assumption in the Energy Diversification Advisory Committee report that more

refining in Alberta makes economic sense. We have to validate that assumption.

That's why I'm asking for an economic impact assessment of doing refining here versus elsewhere. Madam Chair, we need an economic impact assessment that proves or disproves that there is a greater economic benefit to Alberta as a result of refining in Alberta versus removing the discount on our bitumen products and refining where it makes more sense, where the refineries already exist.

Madam Chair, this has been a huge debate for more than 10 years in Alberta, and it needs to be resolved once and for all. All I'm asking the minister is: "Show us the numbers. If you have done the economic impact assessment on this particular policy, especially how many jobs it would create or how much pipeline space it will free up, if you have that information, please share with this Assembly." We don't want to blindly accept the NDP's friend and the president of the Alberta Federation of Labour's support for such refining projects as a ringing endorsement because of ideological reasons. That's why I brought this amendment.

I have some personal experience. Back in 2008 just north of Edmonton there was an Upgrader Alley created during former Premier Ed Stelmach's time. At that time I was working at Suncor, and I worked on the Voyageur upgrader. That is exactly partial upgrading technology that was employed on that upgrader. It's accepted as full upgrading, not partial upgrading. But after sinking \$5 billion, that project was shelved. The same thing happened with legacy Petro-Canada's Fort Hills north upgrader. The numbers didn't work. It didn't make economic sense for the management of Petro-Canada, so they cancelled that upgrader. Like that there was another one. Value Creation Inc. and BA Energy had their upgrader planned. The economics didn't work. There was no business case, so they cancelled that project.

That's why I just don't want to blindly support this Bill 1 giving out grants and loan guarantees for partial upgrading. I'm asking the minister to present the economic impact analysis if you have it. If you don't have it, why don't you do that and provide that to the members of this Assembly? Till then please accept this amendment as presented.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A9? The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to refer back to the process again. These are incentives of different forms for partial upgrading as one of the things. I want to remind the Assembly here that this is a competitive process. In that process there are a number of criteria, and one is the health of the business. They have to present a business case and a number of things. A reminder that they don't get these incentives until they are building and in production. I think that's already built in. I'm frankly quite surprised that the opposition is so against the diversification of anything in Alberta. It feels like it.

Anyway, I also want to remind that in EDAC a number of those things are all outlined. The expertise of the thing you mentioned, hon. member, one member of a bigger group, EDAC. There were economists and people who had the same expertise as the member across, and there were a number of subgroups all consisting of industry and businesspeople and economists. So I think a number of those things have been well covered. Again, it's a competitive process, a third-party evaluator. They have to be building, and they have milestones to reach before they get any money in particular, so I think a lot of that is covered. Again, I would refer people to the

full EDAC report to look at the biographies of the members of the council and all the subcommittees.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A9?

Seeing none, I will call the question on amendment A9 as proposed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A9 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:16 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Cooper	Hanson	Panda
Fraser	McIver	Strankman
Gotfried	Nixon	Yao

Against the motion:

Carlier	Horne	Miranda
Ceci	Jansen	Piquette
Connolly	Kazim	Renaud
Coolahan	Kleinsteuber	Sabir
Dach	Larivee	Schmidt
Dang	Littlewood	Shepherd
Drever	Loyola	Sucha
Eggen	Malkinson	Turner
Fitzpatrick	McCuaig-Boyd	Westhead
Gray	McLean	Woollard
Hinkley	Miller	
Totals:	For – 9	Against – 32

[Motion on amendment A9 lost]

The Deputy Chair: We are now back on Bill 1. Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

10:20

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just received advice from the Energy minister that I should read the EDAC report, that I've read, and I actually talked about the recommendation in that report that asked the minister to focus on reducing red tape. In Bill 1 I haven't seen any provision to reduce the red tape.

Anyway, having said that, the minister also said that we don't support diversification. That is really rich coming from the party and from the minister who, I mean, were actually not supportive of pipelines until the other day, and now suddenly they're pipeline champions. This is the party which never campaigned on the carbon tax, not even once. Then they implemented the job-killing carbon tax without realizing their actions and the impacts of their actions that are causing businesses to leave Alberta. Actually, they're fleeing Alberta, running away from Alberta because of the economic conditions created by the NDP.

Mr. Cooper: Running just as fast as we can.

Mr. Panda: Yeah. Then, shamelessly, they're pointing to the opposition. We're not the government. Our job is to make their bills better. Tonight everyone watched how hard I tried to make their bad bill a better bill, but they wouldn't support that, so I'll try one more time, Madam Chair. I have one more amendment, please.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, if you could wait until I have a copy at the table, that would be great.

Thank you, hon. member. Your amendment will be referred to as A10. Please go ahead.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Chair. This particular amendment, although it talks about economic impact assessment, is a different economic impact assessment. The previous amendment was about a partial upgrading economic impact assessment. This particular one is an economic impact assessment on each project that's getting support. When we talk about support, Bill 1 is providing grants, loans, loan guarantees, tax credits, and royalty credits, all those things that are received in a particular project. We have to measure the performance of that investment after we hand out grants and loans to those companies. If that business goes under after receiving these grants, that's not a good investment for Alberta and Albertans. That's why we have to measure the economic impact of the business that receives the grants one year after that business is up and running, or after one year if that business goes into bankruptcy, to show the impact of the government's spending. That's why I brought this amendment.

I ask the Assembly to pass this amendment. Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, I won't belabour some points, but I'll just remind that this is a competitive process. When the successful proponents are chosen, there are milestones set, and they must meet those milestones before they get any kind of incentive, whether it's a grant or a royalty in kind or anything like that. If they don't meet the milestone, they don't get the incentive. So I would be voting against this one as well.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A10?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A10 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:25 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Cooper	McIver	Smith
Fraser	Nixon	Strankman
Gotfried	Panda	Yao
Hanson		

Against the motion:

Carlier	Horne	Miranda
Ceci	Jansen	Piquette
Connolly	Kazim	Renaud
Coolahan	Kleinstauber	Sabir
Dach	Larivee	Schmidt
Dang	Littlewood	Shepherd
Drever	Loyola	Sucha
Eggen	Malkinson	Turner
Fitzpatrick	McCuaig-Boyd	Westhead

Gray	McLean	Woollard
Hinkley	Miller	
Totals:	For – 10	Against – 32

[Motion on amendment A10 lost]

The Deputy Chair: We are now back on the original bill, Bill 1. Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question on Bill 1, the Energy Diversification Act?

[The remaining clauses of Bill 1 agreed to]

[The voice vote indicated that the title and preamble were agreed to]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:30 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For:		
Carlier	Hinkley	Miller
Ceci	Horne	Miranda
Connolly	Jansen	Piquette
Coolahan	Kazim	Renaud
Dach	Kleinstauber	Sabir
Dang	Larivee	Schmidt
Drever	Littlewood	Shepherd
Eggen	Loyola	Sucha
Fitzpatrick	Malkinson	Turner
Fraser	McCuaig-Boyd	Westhead
Gray	McLean	Woollard

Against:		
Cooper	McIver	Smith
Gotfried	Nixon	Strankman
Hanson	Panda	Yao

Totals:	For – 33	Against – 9
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[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Chair. At this time I would like to move that the committee rise and report bills 7 and 1.

[Motion carried]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Mr. Hinkley: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bills: Bill 7, Bill 1. I wish to table copies of all of the amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

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

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Acting Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.
The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Speaker. At this time I would like to move that the House adjourn until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 10:36 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday morning, May 30, 2018

Day 35

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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

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Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (UCP)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (NDP)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
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Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (NDP)
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (NDP)
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Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (AP)
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Official Opposition Deputy Whip
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Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)
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Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (NDP)
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Vacant, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake

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Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	Luff
Dang	McPherson
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha
Deputy Chair: Mr. van Dijken

Carson	Littlewood
Connolly	McPherson
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schneider
Fitzpatrick	Starke
Gotfried	Taylor
Horne	

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Goehring
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Orr
Ellis	Renaud
Fraser	Shepherd
Hinkley	Swann
Luff	Woollard
McKitrick	Yao
Miller	

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Shepherd
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Aheer	McKitrick
Gill	Pitt
Horne	van Dijken
Kleinsteinuber	Woollard
Littlewood	

Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Wanner
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Babcock	Nixon
Cooper	Piquette
Dang	Pitt
Drever	Westhead
McIver	

Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms Kazim
Deputy Chair: Connolly

Anderson, W.	Orr
Babcock	Rosendahl
Drever	Stier
Drysdale	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kleinsteinuber	Taylor
McKitrick	

Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	Miller
Cooper	Nielsen
Goehring	Nixon
Gotfried	Pitt
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Cyr
Deputy Chair: Mr. Dach

Barnes	Malkinson
Carson	Miller
Clark	Nielsen
Gotfried	Panda
Hunter	Renaud
Littlewood	Turner
Luff	

Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola
Deputy Chair: Mr. Drysdale

Babcock	Loewen
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Fildebrandt	Panda
Hanson	Rosendahl
Kazim	Schreiner
Kleinsteinuber	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Wednesday, May 30, 2018

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Prayers

The Acting Speaker: Good morning.

Let us reflect, each in our own way. Let us remind ourselves of the great privilege it is to advocate on behalf of the constituents who elected us. Let us remember to respect and accept each other's points of view although they may differ from our own. Let us understand that the price of success is often the result of hard work, dedication to the job at hand, and unwavering determination regardless of the outcome.

Please be seated.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

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

Bill 14

An Act to Empower Utility Consumers

The Deputy Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered in respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to be able to speak on this bill. As I've said before, I am looking forward to supporting a bill that empowers our consumers. Whenever we've got legislation that's going forward that shows that we're serious about bringing clarity and resolution to constituents' ability to be able to deal with water, this is something that I think everybody can move forward with.

Now, what I'd like to say is that while we're looking at something this important, I myself had a complaint come into my office regarding hydro bills. In this case what it was was that a businessman came into my office. The businessman said that he was having a hard time with one of my local municipalities. In this case what it was was that he was looking to get clarity about how his bill could be so high. What it was was that his business literally has three washrooms and a little kitchen, and somehow he was using more water than an entire family. Clearly, something wasn't quite working right. He called the city, again, this municipality, to say: "Something is not right. My bill has got too much water usage. Can you please review this and go over it?" Well, the city sent somebody. They tested the meter. They said: "The meter is working fine. That is as far as we're willing to go."

Then what happened here was that he actually did a little bit of troubleshooting. This meter, I believe, was in litres. He went to his sink, and he poured out a litre of water. He went back to that meter, and it showed that he actually used a metre of water. So you can see that there's clearly a problem with that meter. Now, what happened was that he identified what the problem was. It was clear that a decimal place was put in the wrong spot on that meter. It's literally that simple, right? The meter was working fine, but in the end this specific businessman clearly figured out what the problem was.

What he did was that he contacted the local municipality again and said: "I figured this out. Yes, this meter is working fine. I wholeheartedly agree it's working fine, but the decimal is in the wrong spot." What the municipality did was that they tested the meter again and said: "You know what? This meter is working fine. There's nothing we can do." But it was clear that this wasn't working right. Then he said: well, let me show you. He did the same test. He showed them the litre showing a metre. They said: well, that's just the way this works.

When he went through this process, he was way overbilled. It took him a year and a half to finally resolve this problem. Now, what happened was that he had a several thousand dollars property tax credit, but they said: we don't refund money. You're, like: holy cow, you guys. So they were willing to put it against his property taxes. In the end, it took another six months to get the money out of the municipality. This is an example of somebody that came into my office that clearly had a problem that wasn't being resolved by our local municipality.

Now, I'm not here to put down my local municipality because – you know what? – the men and women that work at my municipality work very hard. But when a problem is identified, it is important that there be a mechanism for the residents of a municipality or a water commission to be able to identify what the problem is and work that through. It was clear that in his case the water bills were not correct. It was clear that the machine, the water meter, was working correctly, so there was something wrong, but nobody was willing to address that.

Now I'd like to move an amendment. If it's okay, I'd like to keep one copy, Madam Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Please. If you could just give me one minute for the original to arrive at the table.

Hon. member, your amendment will be referred to as A1. Please go ahead.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will just read this into the record. I move that Bill 14, An Act to Empower Utility Consumers, be amended in section 2, in the proposed schedule 13.1, in section 3 by adding the following after clause (e):

- (e.1) to disseminate independent and impartial information to consumers relating to the cost of any taxes, levies or charges that may be collected by a distributor, provider or retailer relating to the provision of electricity, natural gas or water;
- (e.2) to collect feedback from consumers with respect to the impact on consumers of any taxes, levies or charges relating to the provision of electricity, natural gas or water, and to publicly disseminate the results of that feedback on an aggregate basis annually.

Now, the intent here. The government says that the bill is meant to empower utility consumers. It is right there in the title if you look at the bill before you. The way that the Utilities Consumer Advocate, the UCA, is meant to do this is by providing information to consumers and providing an outlet to deal with utility issues. While this bill and the current act provide tools for consumers to access information and provide feedback when it comes to the distributors, providers, and retailers, it does not address matters that rest in the hands of government.

This amendment serves to close this gap. It will empower the UCA to provide detailed and impartial information to consumers on the true costs of taxes and levies on their utility bills. It is critical that consumers can see how costs break down on all of their utilities so that if they are dissatisfied, they know to whom to address the concern. What we are trying to do here is to say that – when my municipality had brought forward that there was clearly no problem when it came to that water meter, going back to my original

example of the businessman within my constituency, there was no process.

Now, what happens here is that there are fees being added to our local bills that people should really know are there, and they should also know what that fee is trying to accomplish. What we recently heard was that a fee was added by the city of Edmonton to help with the administration of paperwork, and in the end that fee that was added to each new home was collected and turned into a slush fund for the council. Clearly, this is not the appropriate use of that money. It was never intended for it. What we're trying to do here is to say that if a fee is collected, it is clearly labelled on the bill, and we are ensuring that that fee is being used for what it is shown for on that bill.

9:10

This is a good improvement to this bill. Again, the opposition has already said that we agree that Bill 14 is a good bill, but as opposition we also need to be always looking to make legislation that much better. I would hope that the government would also agree that transparency on a water bill, gas bill, or electricity bill is something that we all want to strive for because this is a necessity of life in many cases. We can't go without heating our home, we can't go without the electricity to start the furnace, and we can't go without water. These are all essential services going into our home, so it's easy to tack on fees for this necessity because we have to pay this bill. It is a necessity of life.

This is something that is important, that we identify that municipalities or businesses may be collecting fees that are not appropriate. I would hope that whenever we have a fee on a bill, there's somebody that is going to be explaining the fee, what it's going to be doing. Then what happens with a fee or a levy or charges from a different level of government or a business, in some cases, or a commission is that we have a consumer that is able to ask the question: is that fee or charge going to be used according to what it was first put in place for?

Now, if it goes out of line, like what happened to the city of Edmonton, we need to reel them back and we need to be focusing on the fact that this fee needs to either be abolished or removed from the bill as it is not being used as it was intended, or we need to make sure that that fee actually is used in the promotion of whatever the fee was intended for. This is really just about getting information to our consumers. I think that by not having this now, we're more or less putting consumers at risk because what happens is that all we end up with is one line number that says: water, sewer, garbage, and recycling. If fees are hidden within those lines, it is important, it is imperative that we know about them.

Let's use recycling, for instance. I have heard that there are municipalities within Alberta that collect a recycling fee. They go and collect it from your curb, and that garbage ends up right back in the local dump. Clearly, that fee is not being utilized for what it was intended for. It is not okay to be charging a recycling fee when the municipality is not actually recycling the refuse that the citizens are putting forward. I think we all see that there is value in recycling, but it is disappointing to see that municipalities added a fee to a bill and that there's no accountability for that municipality to actually show that they're going to be recycling.

Now, there are lots of examples where we can show that it is easy to just be able to put forward some sort of well-intended charge, but in the end it's our seniors, it's our low income, it's all of the disabled people within my constituency that can't afford these things. If it's not there for a purpose and that fee is not being used for that purpose, then we need to protect those individuals. The only way to do that is by bringing clarity, by bringing some sort of responsible

mechanism to be able to have our consumers be able to get this information disseminated to them.

I believe that when you look at this, this is a reasonable amendment. I believe that whenever the government is moving any piece of legislation forward, we should always be trying to move the best piece of legislation forward. Now, I've put other amendments forward against legislation. In the end, the government may or may not agree with the amendment I've got here. But it is going to be hard to say that this is not an amendment that the government doesn't agree with because of the fact that they're actually saying in the name here – and it's important – that we're here to empower utility consumers. Empower utility consumers. We can't do that if they don't have the information.

So, Madam Chair, I encourage everybody in this Legislature to vote for this amendment. It is a good amendment. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Minister of Service Alberta.

Ms McLean: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the member for his comments in support of this bill. I absolutely agree with his earlier comments and think that they really highlight much of the importance of this bill and of it moving forward.

In response to the amendment specifically, there are two parts to this amendment, so I'll deal with the second part first. The second part deals with collecting feedback from consumers, giving the ability to the UCA to aggregate the information in their reporting online – well, it doesn't specifically say online, but that's how they do their reporting – and to be able to provide information about the consumer's experience with respect to the water utilities in terms of the reporting that's being done. In fact, the bill does provide for that. That's one of the pieces that was actually taken from, I believe, Bill 208 last session. There was quite a robust reporting piece and information aggregating function that was included from Bill 208 that was really the catalyst for this legislation. That part, I am confident, is already, in fact, dealt with in the bill.

In respect to the first part this is much more complicated. Firstly, this bill has been in the House for weeks now, and this is the first that I'm hearing of this recommendation. This recommendation would require consultation with the distributors themselves on this particular issue. There simply is not time for that as the member is asking for that to be accepted.

That aside, however, there are other issues with it. We have done lengthy consultation with AUMA and RMA. These are the municipalities. These are elected representatives that are in charge of their own constituencies and that have certain powers granted to them under provincial legislation. It's very important that if the government is taking any steps, we make sure that when we're looking to do something that touches on the responsibility of the municipalities, we do that in a way that is in concert with the municipalities, that is together with the municipalities, that the municipalities feel is something that would be assistive, and that we work together. We've done that in this. In fact, through our consultations on what we initially proposed to them, they asked us to go further. They believe that this is an important piece of legislation, and we agree.

9:20

In fact, when it came to the reporting of discussions around reporting around water utilities, specifically as a nonaggregated piece of information, there were vocal concerns raised from the municipalities. Amongst those concerns they stated that this would start to look like and to be interference in the municipal jurisdiction

over setting water rates. They expressed concern and in fact wrote to me looking for assurance that this bill was not going into the setting of water rates and was not going into the UCA taking a stance in terms of rate hearings, et cetera, because that is their jurisdiction. That would be an overstep of the provincial government into the municipal jurisdiction, so we agreed with that.

Additionally, unlike other utilities like natural gas or power, being electricity, there are other providers that one can choose from. In the city of Edmonton, for example, there are multiple different electricity providers that somebody can turn to, so it makes a lot of sense to provide that information to consumers so that they can make an educated choice as to which provider they're going to go with. However, when it comes to water, each individual is subject to the water provider in their area, and there's only one. There's no competitive ability that it would make sense that this reporting would assist with.

In this bill and what this bill provides for, the UCA is taking a third-party mediation role, one that is not adversarial, that helps the two parties come together. It's really important that this legislation allows them to do that work without creating an adversarial relationship, and the first part of this recommendation, as has been described to us upon consultation, would step into creating an adversarial relationship with the municipalities given the overreach that it would go into.

Additionally, and this is another piece of this, it would certainly be jurisdictional overreach if the UCA is to be auditing the books of municipalities. The UCA is a portion of Service Alberta. It's not a separate body. I know that the term "advocate" can lead folks to believe that it is in fact some sort of legislative office or something that is more independent of government. It is, however, not. It is not at all independent of government. It is within government. It is a portion of the Service Alberta department. The work that the UCA does is government work, so we need to be cautious with respect to government overreach in looking at the jurisdiction of municipalities.

To that end, in summary, the municipalities have expressly asked us to respect their jurisdiction in doing this work, but at the same time they support what this work achieves. We have struck a very good balance, one in which all of the players who are affected by this legislation are willing to play and come to the table. I believe strongly that if this first part of the amendment in particular was passed, it would disrupt that balance and throw off the parties that we actually need to come to the table in terms of the mediation.

Thank you. I would encourage all members to vote against it.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

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

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. First of all, I'd like to thank the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake for this reasonable amendment. I'd like to thank the minister for her words as well in regard to this amendment that has been put forward to this House.

You know, I guess let me start off by saying that I think that what has been proposed by the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake is consistent with the bill's title, which is An Act to Empower Utility Consumers. You know, if I read the amendment, "to disseminate independent and impartial information to consumers relating to the cost of any taxes, levies or charges that may be collected by a distributor, provider or retailer relating to the provision of electricity, natural gas or water," I find that to be a very reasonable component. Why would we not want to disseminate independent and impartial information to consumers relating to the cost of taxes,

levies, or charges? I think that is, again, something that the public has a right to know.

I look at section (e.2), "to collect feedback from consumers with respect to the impact on consumers of any taxes, levies or charges relating to the provision of electricity, natural gas or water, and to publicly disseminate the results of that feedback on an aggregate basis annually." Again, it's something that is reasonable that I believe that the public has a right to know.

The theme that I'm going with here, Madam Chair, has to do with strengthening transparency and clarity for the public because the public has a right to know. These bills are not clear. Many of these bills and specifically the one that we're talking about here, where consumers have to decipher and have to call somebody for assistance just to understand their bill, I think, is very much problematic, which is, of course, why we have this bill before us, An Act to Empower Utility Consumers. I think anything that we can do to strengthen the public's accessibility and their right and their ability to understand what they are being charged is very important, again, for their right to know what is going on.

That brings me, Madam Chair, to something that we call public trust. Any time that there is an erosion of public trust, that's where we start to get the public having an issue with confidence in government or service providers or services that are being provided. Something as helpful as the amendment provided by my friend from Bonnyville-Cold Lake, I think, only strengthens what I believe to be the intent of this bill which, again, is to empower utility consumers – right? – so that they have the ability to know what they're being charged, what is going on. I think that can only be positive for the consumer.

When consumers are informed, then society is just better off overall. They deserve to be informed on the effects of the government and, of course, their policies, just as they have a right to know regarding the details of the utilities and the utility markets. I do not believe that this amendment in any way takes away from this bill. I believe that it only strengthens what already currently exists. Again, just to reiterate, it strengthens the transparency, it strengthens the clarity, it improves the public trust, and it gives the public that right to know, which I think only – only – improves the quality of the service that is going to be provided by that utility.

9:30

In closing, Madam Chair, I just want to say thank you for the opportunity to speak on this. I'd like to thank again the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake for bringing this forward in order to, again, ensure and strengthen public trust. I certainly encourage all members of this House to support this amendment.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1?

Ms McLean: I just wanted to respond to what the member said. In my earlier comments I gave the member moving the amendment the best possible interpretation given his comments and the wording here of what he was saying that this amendment did, and then I argued from that position. I did not realize that you were simply suggesting that one ought to know the taxes, levies, and charges in relation to electricity, natural gas, or water, full stop. I thought it was actually more than that. But given that that's from the comments that were just provided, it seems like that's not really any more than what you're asking for.

I would like to inform you that the fees, taxes, et cetera, are already on people's bills, and the UCA has a web page that breaks it down and explains it for you.

The Deputy Chair: Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1?

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:32 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Barnes	Nixon	Schneider
Cyr	Orr	Starke
Ellis	Panda	Taylor
Gill		

Against the motion:

Carlier	Hinkley	Miranda
Carson	Hoffman	Nielsen
Ceci	Jansen	Piquette
Connolly	Kleinstauber	Renaud
Coolahan	Littlewood	Rosendahl
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Sabir
Dach	Luff	Schmidt
Drever	Mason	Shepherd
Eggen	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha
Feehan	McKittrick	Turner
Fitzpatrick	McLean	Westhead
Gray	McPherson	

Totals:	For – 10	Against – 35
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[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

The Deputy Chair: We are now back on the original bill, Bill 14. Are there any other comments or amendments to this bill?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 14 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Bill 13

An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, are there any members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Madam Chair. To set our system on the right track, I rise today to move an amendment to Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future.

9:50

The Deputy Chair: Minister, if you could just wait until I have the original.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Absolutely.

The Deputy Chair: Please go ahead, Minister. Your amendment will be referred to as A1.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Madam Chair. The amendment is to strike out section 1(2) of Bill 13 and to strike that subsection from the Coming into Force section, section 5(1).

As its name implies, Bill 13 enables the changes needed to modernize Alberta's electricity system to ensure it becomes a more stable and reliable network. As we prepared these necessary changes to our electricity system, we also looked at correcting a long-standing gap in existing legislation that goes back over a decade.

The issue is: who pays for losses and who gets profits when a regulated utility asset is sold, destroyed, or no longer used to provide a utility service? Courts have found that provincial legislation does not provide clear authority for resolving this issue, a problem that stems from 2006.

We discussed this matter considerably with stakeholders, and most agreed that we need to address the gap and to bring clarity. However, since introducing Bill 13, we have heard from stakeholders that we need to undertake more discussion on this. As a result, I am introducing this amendment to remove section 1(2) of Bill 13, which would have added section 17.1 to the Alberta Utilities Commission Act.

We will continue to work with industry, consumer groups, and the relevant government agencies to develop the best possible policy for Albertans. Alberta needs clear policy and legislation on how dispositions of utility assets are treated. We're committed to developing it and to ensuring that it is the best possible policy for consumers and for investors. That is why at this time I am bringing forward this amendment to allow us to continue this important dialogue and to find the right balance.

Now, while this amendment is necessary to get the right balance on a long-standing issue, the rest of Bill 13 needs to move forward. As the name of the bill implies, this legislation lays the groundwork for our electricity future and Alberta's long-term prosperity. We're transforming Alberta's Wild West system to a modern, reliable network, a system that will not only deliver reliable energy, attract investment, and prepare for a low-carbon future but will also protect Albertans from volatile prices.

We understand that the opposition does not agree. They have defended their energy-only market, blaming the growth of renewables for what was already a broken system. So let's take a moment to recall just how poorly that system has treated Albertans.

The archives of our Alberta newspapers are full of examples of price spikes, going back to the very first years of the system, but the opposition has said that it took some time for their market to become fully functional. So let's just review the subset of price spikes that happened fully 10 years after the system was in place. After 2011, where consumers felt the sting of a quadrupling in power prices over just three months, shooting to over 12 cents in August 2011, then came 2012, which kicked off an immediate spike in January.

The *Edmonton Journal* headline on January 20 of that year reads: Power Price Spikes Shut Plants. It described industry shutting down to avoid high prices, including a steel mill east of Edmonton and Whitecourt's pulp and paper mill. Things got so bad that in February the *Calgary Herald* reported that Wildrose Vows to Reform Volatile Electricity Prices, with their leader explaining that power prices are "always [a] No. 1 concern at rural meetings."

The *Fort Saskatchewan Record* had the Wildrose calling for the government to Pull the Plug on Power Deregulation, saying that they would "go back to the drawing board." So let's be clear. The Wildrose at that time noted that electricity "charges to consumers

have doubled over the last year.” So they asked the province to purchase “long-term power contracts as a hedge against increasing rates.”

It was so bad that the Wildrose called for a rebate program to help people purchase more energy-efficient appliances and reduce electrical consumption. By July the *Edmonton Journal* was talking about blackouts. It explained that the Klein deregulation system brought rampant volatility. “There’s no incentive to build anything that isn’t practically profitable. That makes the system less elastic and could lead us into occasional darkness.”

Indeed, while prices spiked, blackouts left Albertans and visitors stranded in blistering sun on the Skyride at the Stampede. A *Herald* headline read: Alberta Power Rates among Highest in Country; Deregulated Market Blamed for Price Spikes. A year later, in 2013, the *Rimby Review* was still talking about rolling blackouts in Alberta, which the Wildrose blamed on “a direct result of a broken system that needs to be fixed,” that “the system is not working, especially given that consumers have been gouged by the system before because of planned power” outages. Once again the headlines pointed to Alberta’s highest prices in Canada, and the Wildrose asked for a change to how the wholesale market operates, calling the PC Energy minister “oblivious to the deficiencies in the power market.”

On to 2014, the fourth straight year of our little jaunt down the price-spike lane, and the *Calgary Herald* warned consumers in April about another price spike as prices jumped to 11 cents. Every single year the headlines were riddled with threats of blackouts and power spikes, which the Wildrose opposition clearly blamed on the broken energy-only market. Once again in October 2014 the Wildrose Energy critic said in the *Edmonton Sun* that “the market is volatile and unaffordable for businesses and families on fixed incomes,” and he pledged to “reduce price volatility for consumers and businesses.”

But somewhere along the line, in cozying up to the same PC Party that put us into this mess, they forgot what the PC’s market put Albertans through. Now they defend the broken market system as working properly, or they blame renewables for breaking it. In this very Chamber they’ve told Albertans that the energy-only market has worked well. One called it “a once prosperous and high-functioning energy-only market.” They even told us that the price spikes are what make it work, explaining that we just don’t understand “the up-and-down nature of the market.”

No, Madam Chair, we do understand it. We, like most Albertans, understand it all too well. Like our constituents, we remember living through the spikes of past years. Alongside our neighbours we endured months of skyrocketing power bills under the previous Conservative governments, and now we’re fixing that problem. They want to make like we broke it, but we know full well that the system was broken. They said as much over and over for the first half of this decade. Then we formed government, and we heard from experts and investors that this system could no longer attract the investment we need for new supply. That would have meant more price spikes and blackouts, just like we saw throughout the five years before we got our chance to fix the system.

That’s why I’m excited today, Madam Chair, to vote for Bill 13, which implements the capacity market. The capacity market will provide consumers with greater stability. Over the past 18 months we’ve been working with stakeholders, including industry and consumer groups, to design our capacity market. Ours is a made-in-Alberta approach to a proven market. It will enable us as a province to get the new, low-cost electricity supply we need to power our long-term economic prosperity, one that attracts investment from industry and makes life better for Alberta consumers.

But while I’m excited, I’m also worried. I’m worried about the amnesia afflicting some members of the opposition about the failings of the system we inherited. Based on what we’ve heard in this Chamber, the other side opposes this transition that is so necessary to ensuring that our electricity supply is secure. The capacity market is a tailor-designed system to track the new investment in generation supply that we need and which the Conservatives’ preferred system was failing to attract. But they have made it clear that they do not support this transition. They want to turn back the clock to a system they now pretend was working, and that scares me, Madam Chair. That scares me for investor confidence, but it scares me even more for Albertans facing price spikes and blackouts, wondering how they’re going to pay their bills and keep the lights on. I didn’t think it would be possible that folks hoping to lead this province would choose to revert to price spikes and threats of blackouts, but that is what we’ve heard in the debate on Bill 13.

10:00

Madam Chair, this legislation ensures that the necessary legislative changes are made to prepare Alberta’s electricity system for the future, a system that is more stable and reliable for consumers, more attractive for investors, and better for all Albertans. We can’t go back to the volatile and unpredictable system that the Conservatives wanted continued. We need to move this bill forward. We also need to move forward with other elements that correct mistakes and oversights of the past.

Madam Chair, consumer protection is a big part of this legislation. An Act to Secure Alberta’s Electricity Future will not only provide consumers with stable electricity prices; it will protect Albertans from poor customer service from electricity and natural gas service providers. When the Conservative government deregulated the electricity sector, they instituted a system that relies on price spikes to attract the investment necessary to keep the lights on. They also failed to put the necessary measures in place to protect consumers. They exempted competitive retailers from the AUC’s service quality rules. We’re talking about basic rules around billing services like billing accuracy and basic customer care rules and rules around call centre services. Bill 13 would hold these service providers accountable for inappropriate business practices.

Moreover, it would provide the AUC with the ability to directly issue specified penalties to electricity and natural gas service providers for particular breaches. The only enforcement tool the previous governments put in place was through a formal hearing process, which can be lengthy and costly. That process is not in the best interest of consumers when it comes to dealing with minor infractions. If your provider has tagged you with an extra \$100 on your bill, that’s a big deal to you. When you’re trying to make ends meet, it’s a big deal. But it’s not a big enough deal to justify the time and resources you’d need for a full hearing process. If you’re persistent, you can get your money back – you can be made whole – but there is no usable system for penalizing the bad actor, to account for your time and effort, or to dissuade them from continuing violations.

Along with the volatile energy-only market, that they continue to defend, the Conservatives also failed to protect consumers from bad service like overbilling. Thankfully, we can make this right by moving forward with Bill 13 as amended, which protects consumers from volatility and bad customer service. I ask that members support the correction in this amendment so that we can move forward with Bill 13’s critical consumer protection elements.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the minister's amendment and thank her for her comments. It is a little interesting – not a little interesting. It is very interesting that we find ourselves yet again in the same spot that we find ourselves in on almost every piece of legislation that the NDP government brings to this Chamber. We talk about this a lot. They bring a bill to the Legislature. The opposition says: "Hey, you haven't consulted with communities. You're moving too fast on this. We're concerned that you haven't gotten this right. Who have you talked to?" We ask some reasonable questions. The ministers across from us stand up and go on partisan rhetoric and on rants along the way.

Then a couple of days later they're in the Chamber trying to amend their own legislation that they just tabled a few days before, proving the opposition right yet again, that this government will not consult with people. They get it right sometimes, but they get it right very, very late into the process because they don't take that step. Sometimes they have to wait for a whole other sitting to be able to come back and fix the legislation that they bring to this House that then ends up damaging and hurting Albertans. We've seen a tremendous number of examples of that, and this is another one. The minister stood up here today, moved an amendment to her legislation, then never spoke about the amendment at all, went on a partisan rant about the bill itself, didn't speak or justify the bill at all.

I see that the Member for Edmonton-Centre is laughing about that. It is kind of humorous, but it's not humorous when you think about the consequences to his constituents or to my constituents of moving legislation forward without consulting about it. Over and over, particularly on this file, the government continues to speed through it. The minister will not – I mean, you see it in question period, and you see it here – discuss the actual details of what she's bringing forward in this place and instead goes on a partisan rant.

The minister herself, just a few moments ago, when she tabled this, Madam Chair, said: we realized, after we tabled it, that we did not consult. She said that more than once. She then said: we've adjusted now that we've consulted. But they were consulting after they tabled the bill.

You know, yesterday there was another bill before this House, and the government wanted to switch over to debate it, which seemed quite reasonable, Bill 10, I believe. Then all of a sudden they started indicating to the opposition: "Oh, we can't switch over quite yet. We have another amendment for this piece of legislation, but it's not out of the photocopier yet. Could you help us keep things going just for a little bit here while we get this amendment out of the photocopier?"

Then this amendment, that was in the photocopier just a few moments ago, comes into the House, and it turns out that it is a three-page, major amendment to a piece of legislation that the Municipal Affairs minister got wrong. Then people across Alberta all of a sudden start phoning – this is what they call consultation – and saying: hey, Minister, you got it wrong. The opposition caught the minister in the fact that municipalities actually will have a significant role to play in that legislation. They panic, they go and make another amendment, bring it forward here, and then try to get it passed.

The problem with that, Madam Chair, is that nobody knows whether they've gotten it right this time. How do we know that this minister has actually gotten it right this time? What has changed this time? How do we know there are not other problems in the bill that she forgot to talk to people about?

Mr. Coolahan: Read it.

Mr. Nixon: The Member for Calgary-Klein says, "Read it." We have read it. This is an extraordinarily complicated bill. The Minister of Infrastructure is laughing, but I can tell you that my constituents, that have to continue to pay out of their own pockets because of the ridiculous ideological behaviour of this government, don't think it's funny. They don't think it's funny that you can't come to work prepared, a minister of the Crown who will table a piece of legislation repeatedly in this place and then ask for us to have to change it within days or hours of them tabling the legislation. They can't get it right. They can't get it right.

The minister then goes on and says: "But don't worry. We had to change this part of the bill, but the rest of the bill is okay. The rest of the bill is fine. Everything is fine." Well, how do we know that she's not going to be back here tomorrow saying: "Hey, I need some help. I actually realized that I never called the people that were involved, never talked to Albertans, and now they're calling me and recognizing that I made a mistake." How do we know that? How do we know that she's actually communicated with all of the relevant people on this section of the bill? Or does it just happen that there have been a few people that managed to be able to get to her to be able to explain this problem? How do we know that she hasn't rushed that?

Maybe, Madam Chair, there's another amendment in a photocopier somewhere that's jammed up right now, and we'll see that in a few moments. I don't know. It's tough to tell from these ministers because they don't come here. We've seen it again with the election finance issues that have come before this House, repeatedly having to fix the mistakes in the bills that they brought forward in their rush to do it.

The most famous of that would be Bill 6, one of the worst pieces of legislation that ever came from this government, something my communities have not forgiven this party across from me for and will never forgive them for, quite frankly. They then had to rush forward – remember that, Madam Chair? – rush into here with an amendment. In fact, they had to bring in time allocation on second reading of their bill to try to force that bill to Committee of the Whole as fast as possible to bring in an amendment to try to fix their legislation because they didn't consult with the people of Alberta.

I used an example last night that really showed that the departments weren't consulting. They stood inside an agriculture community and told farmers and ranchers to not put their bulls out with their cows at nighttime so that the calves would only come in the day. I can assure you that if you consulted with a veterinarian or anybody – anybody – they would know that that is not, in fact, a reality, not something that they should say. It's just not appropriate, and it shows that this government will not consult with people, and then when they get in a jam and they realize they've made a mistake, they have to try to come and fix it. But often it's too late, and already Albertans have paid some consequences.

10:10

The attitude that you have from this government on this issue was very clear last night from the agriculture minister, who spoke against an amendment that would require him to consult with farmers and ranchers and the agriculture industry before he changed significant regulations, within 60 days of doing that. He stood up and said that that was red tape. Talking to farmers and ranchers and the industry that he is responsible for is red tape: that's the attitude.

So I guess my question to the Energy minister would be: was it red tape to talk to these people? Through you, Madam Chair, to the minister: why didn't you talk to them before you tabled this bill? How many other people have you spoken to about this amendment?

What other sections of this bill do you think you have not consulted with people on? Why, when you stand up to speak for this amendment, that the minister is asking our support on, do you not speak about the amendment but can only speak in partisan rants? Why can you not defend this amendment, that you want my support and my colleagues' support for? Instead, you'll talk about your partisan policies.

Why were these people not consulted in the first place? What happened? What broke down within your department that caused this to take so long? You admit, in your presentation to the House on this amendment, that this is an extraordinarily complicated piece of legislation, and it is. The minister is a hundred per cent correct on that. That would show, again, why there would need to be proper consultation. Through you, Madam Chair, to the minister: why did you not consult with these people in the beginning, before you tabled it in this House, and can you please provide some assurances that you have now properly consulted with them and will not need another amendment before the end of the day?

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.
The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Madam Chair. Certainly, we did consult extensively, but in the matter of parliamentary procedure and privilege, as members would appreciate here, the exact language of the bill could not be shared until it was introduced here. We need to make some small wording changes in that one part, and we've agreed to take the time to do that with industry. To be honest, we've heard nothing about any other part of the bill, so we believe that they're very happy with that, as are consumer groups. Again, it was over 130 different groups we consulted with over a period of time.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.
The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, through you, Madam Chair, to the hon. Minister of Energy. I appreciate her answering the question. It seems to me that the assertion that the minister just made for having to cut out an entire subsection to her own bill was that she could not consult with the industry and appropriate stakeholders and people that were involved in it until the bill was tabled in this place. That, I would submit, is a ridiculous answer. While I would agree that parliamentary process means they couldn't have possibly seen the entire bill before, the content of the subsection certainly could have been reviewed with them.

If the minister would indulge us and please answer this question, then: did she talk not about the exact wording of the bill but about the content of the subsection with the people that she has now consulted, that have indicated to her that this should be removed? Were they consulted on the content of it at all at any time during her preparation of this bill?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Madam Chair. Absolutely, we consulted. Going back to last fall, we did an enormous amount of consultation on the content of the bill. We received advice from a number of stakeholders, over 130, in different parts about the capacity market, all the consumer pieces and that. But as I said before, because of parliamentary privilege, we are not allowed to share the exact wording of the bill until it's been introduced in this House, and at that time it was brought to our attention that there is a bit of a problem in one little section with the wording. We're

going to take the time to get that right because we want the best bill possible for Albertans.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Minister.
The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you to the minister for the answer, Madam Chair. The concern I have with that answer – and this does apply directly to this amendment – is the fact that we have heard significantly from REAs that because of some of these legislative changes, there were significant consequences for how they've had to operate their operations. Since then there has been, after several months, a whole bunch of consultation that's happened on the side, with the ag minister and others trying to get those issues addressed. That, though, Madam Chair, indicates that despite what the minister is saying, this is not just one issue in this bill. How many more issues will this bill need to have fixed, like the REA issues or this issue? How many more issues does the minister think will have to be fixed because of this amendment?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to put it on record that I met with the Alberta REAs yesterday, and they actually thanked me for the amount of consultation they had on this bill. We are confident that this is the only piece that needs to be adjusted. Everything else is good. Again, the REAs have been included. Indeed, yesterday morning, when I met with them, they thanked us for the amount of consultation they were granted.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.
The Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Madam Chair. The minister confirmed again what I just said a few moments ago while avoiding answering the question at all. I do agree. That's what I opened up saying, that they have fixed the issue with the REAs, but that issue was there because they did not consult with the REAs. Then they bring this stuff forward, and the REAs call them up and say: "Wait a minute. This is going to have a dramatic impact."

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: No. Not true.

Mr. Nixon: The minister is indicating no, but that's not what the REAs tell us.

In this case she did consult, she wants us to believe, but then in the other case she didn't consult.

The point, Madam Chair – then we'll move on because some of my other colleagues probably have some stuff to say about this – is that this government continues to refuse to consult with the people of Alberta. They bring half-hearted legislation to this place over and over and over and have to change it. They have to change it. That is not appropriate governance. It is costing people that I represent money. It's hurting our economy. They are moving too slowly to communicate with people. You know why? They've already admitted why. It's because they are having trouble finding Albertans that share their world view, and they only want to talk to people in their bubble. It's a shame.

Don't worry, though, Madam Chair. Very shortly, in less than a year, we get to consult with Albertans, and I suspect they will render a very negative verdict on this government.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to rise to speak to the government amendment on this particular bill. The government clearly is floundering here again. They haven't done their homework on this. They really don't understand the complexity of this market, and now they're into another difficult situation, where they're having to amend their own bills shortly after they're put out, removing whole sections of them, simply because of the complexity of what they're trying to dive into. They really haven't done their homework except to listen to their own particular echo chambers of people that tell them what they want to hear.

I'd like to refer, actually, to a March 2018, just a few months old, School of Public Policy briefing paper from the University of Calgary. The title of the briefing paper is Capacity Market Design: Motivation and Challenges in Alberta's Electricity Market. All I need to actually refer to is even just the summary because it makes the points extremely clearly. The rest of the document anybody can read if they want. The second sentence, actually, addressing this move by the Alberta province to move to capacity markets says that "the province should proceed with caution." I don't see this government proceeding with caution. This is an extremely complex process. There are growing concerns, as the briefing paper points out. The challenge here is to make sure that there will be suitable investment for the province in terms of electricity.

It goes on to say in the opening that the switchover to do this "is not as simple as it sounds." Clearly, that's the case. When the government is already into amending its own bills, it has to confess that it hasn't consulted with the right or enough people about this. They're into trouble on this thing already, before they've even begun, because they are rushing ahead. They haven't examined the complexity of this. It is not simple. There needs to be extreme caution used here.

This is a problem, where we're going to Albertans with this and the minister in her presentation tried to make this sound like they're saving costs for Albertans. The reality is that numerous studies already presented in this House over the last weeks point out that capacity markets are actually probably more expensive. They may provide certain trade-offs and benefits, but to say that it's cheaper for Albertans is just patently not correct according to most studies and most experiences where studies have been done on existing capacity markets. Capacity markets aren't new. They've been around a long time, so there are real challenges here.

10:20

The Calgary School of Public Policy says clearly that "a capacity market is more complex and requires that regulators specify numerous parameters that are essential to the functioning of the market." One of the key components that they point out here is that Alberta's electricity demand is actually tied to the demand created by the interconnected ups and downs of global oil prices. When prices are high, the demand for electricity in this province rises; when prices are low, the demand for electricity goes down. So there's a very clear interconnectedness, as pointed out by the Calgary School of Public Policy, on electricity demand and global oil prices.

We have a government that says we want to get off the roller coaster of oil and gas economic impacts on our province, and now we're tying our electricity grid to it as well. This does not make a lot of sense. There are serious concerns here. The real challenge is that consideration has to be given to the reality of outside investors, which is what this is all about, trying to secure and make safe the investment parameters so that we have enough supply so that there aren't shortages or price spikes or any of those kinds of things. But the reality is that outside investors are wary about uncertainty, and

what we're actually creating here is more uncertainty. Political and regulatory uncertainty can undermine the success of a capacity market, and the government has not wrestled with this adequately.

The problem here is that the government needs to not only project what capacity prices and things like that will be, but they also need to be projecting the future demand level for power across the provincial grid, which is inherently tied with oil and gas ups and downs, in order to create that certainty and that future demand curve or graph of how much power we're actually going to need because we can create a capacity market that has a capacity, as we've already seen in studies from other countries, that actually is way more than we may need in the future.

So integral to any understanding of whether the capacity market is going to be right would have to be a study of the projection of our power demands, and the government hasn't even presented anything in regard to that. They have no idea what our power demands 10 and 20 years out are, but we're going to build a capacity market that creates capacity – how much? – and is dependent on oil and gas prices.

There are incredible uncertainties here where the government can get this wrong in terms of projecting how much capacity we actually need, and they may be too high, or they may be too low, as studies have demonstrated. As the Calgary School of Public Policy states, "The capacity market is not a panacea for the potential downfalls of an energy-only market." There are so many complexities here, and capacity markets are inherently more complex than energy-only markets.

I would like to see from the government some sort of study, some sort of indication as to what the actual demand curve is going to be so that we have some idea as to what kind of capacity level we are building. Capacity markets are clearly more complex. The government has not done their homework on this. They are leading Alberta into a worse quagmire than we were in before, and it's not going to save Albertans money; it's probably going to cost them millions if not billions more. We've already seen in the rest of their tinkering and playing with the electricity market that they have not understood, and this has cost Albertans very dearly.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Seeing none, I will call the question on the amendment.

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

The Deputy Chair: We are now back on the bill. Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Chair. So we are now back on the main bill?

The Deputy Chair: Yes.

Mr. Panda: Thank you. Madam Chair, this Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future, is very, very flawed and very, very complex. You know, the NDP have made electricity really expensive, more expensive. Bill 13 will make electricity even more expensive for consumers by transferring more risk away from generators and putting more risk onto the ratepayers and taxpayers.

This minister, the Energy minister, who spoke just before, talked about investor confidence. It's really rich: an NDP minister, an NDP front-bencher talking about investor confidence. If they really look at that \$35 billion of investment that left Alberta since this

government came to power, that would make them realize what their ideological policies are, you know, resulting in. If this government really wants to talk about investor confidence, since they came into power, between them and their federal ally Justin Trudeau, they killed two pipelines, about a \$30 billion investment, and then in addition to that, their federal ally and best friend Justin Trudeau killed another \$40 billion worth of LNG projects on the west coast. That's why when they talk about investor confidence, they should go and talk to people in downtown Calgary. There is still 30, 35 per cent of office space vacant there, and thousands of my former colleagues are still looking for work. No one wants to hire them because of NDP policies.

Now coming back to Bill 13, I consulted so many stakeholders, and I door-knocked a lot in Calgary. People told me that they have zero trust in the NDP when it comes to electricity because of their Whac-A-Mole policies. They blame the Harper government for this electricity problem, but as per the Harper government's plans they were supposed to close out 12 coal-fired generating plants by 2029. This NDP government accelerated the coal phase-out program, and they also brought in the carbon tax, which they never campaigned on. That brought those generators to dump the power purchase agreements. Because the power purchase agreements were done, this NDP government has to pay compensation of \$1.36 billion to shut those coal power plants. That's only the costs that we know as of now. There are so many future costs which are not accounted for by this government, which will run into billions and billions of dollars, that will be paid by future generations.

That's not just the only outcome of this NDP's ideological policy. Because the capacity is taken off the market, now they have to make sure that capacity is available. To the point that my colleague from Lacombe-Ponoka made, currently we have about a 16,000-megawatt capacity, including coal-fired electricity, and then our peak load is only 11,000 megawatts. We still have capacity, but the NDP just want to, you know, fix the problem they created by accelerating the coal phase-out. Instead of going gradually, they accelerated that. To fix that problem, now they have to bring in this Bill 13, which they haven't consulted people on. They said that they did. In other markets usually it takes five to six years to implement a capacity market. Here they want to do it in two years. That's going to cause a lot of problems for the stakeholders.

Then the coal conversion to natural gas: there are some plans for some of the coal-fired power plants to be converted to natural gas. But that won't be as efficient as brand new natural gas powered electricity generation.

10:30

AESO modelling actually showed that the renewable electricity program will decrease the revenue needed for all generators to recoup investment and earn a profit. That's why it is deterring investments. Also, Bill 27 was introduced in 2016 and set the target for 30 per cent renewables. That means 5,000 to 6,000 megawatts of electric power have to be replaced with renewable energy, which is intermittent and not a hundred per cent reliable. We're going to create a capacity market and pay for the capacity, but actually it doesn't generate any electricity. So those assets will be sitting idle, and we pay for their capacity, and they're not actually producing. Those are some of the concerns – serious concerns – that people in Calgary-Foothills have expressed to me.

You know, all these changes they're ramming through when the key personnel, the heads of the Balancing Pool, the Alberta Utilities Commission, and the Market Surveillance Administrator, are not in their positions: this government is rushing through all these bills, so there is no watchdog. There is nothing happening.

Then they bring these bills without consultation, as my colleague from Rocky Mountain House mentioned, and then they have to fix their own bills on the fly. Without any consultation they rammed through these bills. The minister said she consulted. If she consulted – she's saying: "Well, it's parliamentary procedure. We can't share the draft." I mean, it's a common practice. You talk to the stakeholders. You come up with draft legislation. You actually talk to them. If there is no conflict of interest or financial disclosures, if they really consulted, they would have got good counsel from the stakeholders, but I doubt they did.

Under the NDP, without the capacity market, the \$1,000 cap on electricity prices would have risen to \$5,000 per megawatt hour – from \$1,000 to \$5,000 per megawatt hour – to attract investment to make the system reliable. That's why they had to create the capacity market. One mistake after another mistake: to fix one mistake, they're making another mistake, and to fix that, they bring another bill, and then they bring amendments to fix that bill. So there is a pattern there, Madam Chair.

Now the NDP has left Albertans with a choice between high electricity prices with volatility and high risk – I mean, that's the choice people have to make – or higher electricity prices with stability and lower risk. As I said, the capacity market is transferring the risk to the consumers and the ratepayers whereas in the energy market all the risk was taken by the generators. I mean, occasionally there might have been some issues that were temporary issues. The minister talked about temporary darkness, but with the NDP's policies they're creating permanent darkness here for the economy, for the consumers, and for the ratepayers.

This government is following in the footsteps of their close allies the Ontario Liberals, and we know what happened with the Ontario electric system with policies similar to what the NDP is pursuing here. In Ontario they had gone through that part, and now we all know where they're at. Probably they're running third in the polls, the same as the NDP here. Maybe number two here in Alberta, but in Ontario they're number three, the Liberals. So is that what they want to be at in a year's time? I don't know.

Madam Speaker, the devils are in the details, and particularly with a bill as complex as Bill 13, we need more time to consult and to get this bill right. This minister has one chance to get it right, and if she goes through our amendments that we are bringing forward, we can make this Bill 13 less bad. I can't promise that we'll make it better or the best bill, but we can make it less bad.

In that spirit, I have an amendment here. I'll send you the copies, and I'll wait for your instruction to talk about my amendment.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member. Your amendment will be referred to as A2. Please go ahead.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future, be amended in section 2(29) in the proposed part 2.2 in section 41.45(1) by adding "Subject to subsection (1.1)," before "The Independent System Operator shall" and by adding the following after section 41.45(1):

(1.1) The Independent System Operator shall not make a capacity payment to a capacity market participant if at any time during the obligation period the capacity market participant fails to meet its obligations under this Part.

Madam Chair, this amendment will fix the problem we have with the bill. It's wrong to receive a capacity payment and then deny the market electricity. If they're paid for a service, they should offer the service. For the benefit of my NDP colleagues I'll give you a simple analogy. For example, if they hired the Broadbent Institute to submit to them some study and report and if they're paid for that service and they don't provide that report, how do they feel?

Cheated. In the same way, you know, if they hired Tzepporah Berman or Karen Mahon to look after Albertans' interests but they didn't do their job, they didn't provide the service they paid for, how do you feel about it?

That's why denying electricity to the market when they are paid for capacity would actually drive up the electricity prices, too. We want to keep the prices as low as possible for the average consumer. So when AESO asks for electricity and if the generators have signed a capacity contract, then they must offer electricity for sale because they are paid for that. If you do not offer electricity for sale, you do not receive your capacity payment.

That's what this amendment will do, and it's fair. You know, when you are signing long-term contracts that put Alberta taxpayers and ratepayers at risk, then they want to get the service they paid for. This amendment will exactly fix that problem if the minister is serious about making this bill better or less bad. I ask all the colleagues in this House to support this amendment.

Thank you, Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2? The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

10:40

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this amendment. I think it's a really important amendment to be able to do exactly what he's talking about. You know, I'm going back again to what he has stated in the amendment. It says:

The Independent System Operator shall not make a capacity payment to a capacity market participant if at any time during the obligation period the capacity market participant fails to meet . . . obligations under this Part.

Why is that important? You have that ability right now to be able to deny electricity to the market and drive up prices. Madam Chair, we don't want to see our prices driven up.

We've all seen the consequences here in Alberta and across Canada when markets have been denied and prices have been driven up. What I'm talking about is fuel. What we see often is that refineries seem to shut down at the same time coincidentally, and the price of fuel goes up. We have that here in Alberta. That's happened this year, that our prices have been driven up because they have been denying the gas or the fuel for the market. Right now denying electricity would drive up the prices.

I was in Montana not too long ago, and they were charging about 65 cents a litre, would be the comparison. That's still in U.S. dollars, but it was 65 cents a litre. Now we're over here with a buck 30. That American dollar comparison doesn't compute. We're not paying double the amount of money to be able to have that same fuel. That's fuel that should be the same price or relatively close if we had the same tax structure, but unfortunately we have taxes, the carbon tax, that have been put on our fuel here that have driven up the prices.

All things aside, we want to make sure that we're not driving up prices unnecessarily. Like I say, in the case of refineries they're able to make the price in Alberta and Canada go up, but we really want to make sure that we keep prices as low as possible for the average consumer. The average consumer, Madam Chair. We're looking at people that could very well be your moms, your dads, your grandmothers, or kids. In my case, I have my kids, and they're on a tight budget. You have single moms that are in this same market. We want to make sure that we keep this price for these consumers as low as possible. We don't want to see our people that are elderly, that are living in their homes have to bundle up or find alternative

ways to be able to live just because the prices have gone out of control in this electricity market.

It's wrong to receive a capacity payment and deny the market. That's what I want to make sure and I want to make a point of saying. It's absolutely wrong if you're getting money for this product but, on the same token, you're not actually giving them the power. Why are we doing that?

Mr. Gill: It's the carbon tax.

Mr. Taylor: Well, that's part of it. That's part of the problem, this overall plan this government has put in here.

Another part of the problem that I see is that when we have these prices – and I don't know if this government has done a fulsome study. I tend to agree with our previous speakers that this is a very complex bill. The electricity bill and how this whole market works are very complex.

When we see that we don't have enough electricity, we have to take it from places like Montana, and when we're taking it from places like Montana, are we guaranteed what we're getting there? Are we getting coal-fired generation? If we have less electricity in this market, when you look at Montana, they're going to have to amp up how much they're able to give to us. If they're giving us more electricity, well, we're going to see that in the form of coal, something that this government is trying to back away from by 2030 with the renewables. They're saying that they want to be able to take the coal-fired emissions right out of it. However, we're still having coal-fired electricity that's going to be coming to our market as a result of not making sure that we do this bill right and making sure that we have enough electricity for the Alberta market as we'll need.

I don't know if this government has done, like, a long-term study. The long-term study should be looking at – right now we're seeing an increase in the use of air conditioning systems. People that are younger like their air conditioning systems, so consequently we have more and more demand for that system. Going into the future, I know that the demand for electricity should be increasing because the demand for electric cars is rising. Tesla is making billions off the demand for electric cars. I'm asking the government: have you done a projection on how much electricity we are going to need in the future to be able to look after the electric cars and the demands on all the electric appliances? Bitcoin sucks electricity like you can't believe, and there are people that are mining for Bitcoin. As people are demanding more, we have to make sure that we can keep up to that demand and not have to rely on places like Montana.

When AESO asks for electricity, if you're on a capacity contract, you must deliver that electricity for sale. Right now we know that they can't give a hundred per cent of the electricity coming from a renewable such as solar and wind power just because the sun doesn't shine all the time and the wind doesn't blow. We know that that has to happen, so we know that we will have to go to natural gas. I know there is a changeover for that, but again we're still putting coal into this mix regardless of how this government wants to do it.

The important part here is that if you do not offer electricity for sale even though you're being paid for it, you shouldn't receive your capacity payment. This amendment to this bill really kind of states that quite clearly, that we don't want to see price spikes happen here for all the people in Alberta. If they're actually making sure that they're producing the electricity, then they'll get paid, but if they're not producing electricity, they should not be paid. So it's: "shall not make a capacity payment to a capacity market participant if at any time during the obligation period the capacity market participant fails to meet [the] obligations under this Part." To me,

this is fairly simple. Let's keep the electricity prices low and make sure that if a person is not producing, then they're not being paid for it even though that's what would potentially happen.

This is a good amendment, and I would like other members to be able to speak on it, but I encourage them to support this amendment. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am indeed pleased to stand and speak on this amendment, that is basically amending section 2(29) in part 2.2 of An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future. Fundamentally, I think the opposition is avoiding the reality that six months ago we passed legislation in this House to establish a capacity market. We're not here today – and I don't think it's very productive – to be spending a lot of time discussing the pros and cons of a capacity market even though a capacity market is the best way to manage the electricity supply of this province. It's going to ensure that consumers, small business, farmers, and all Albertans are protected from things like rolling brownouts and the volatility that the electricity-alone market caused.

10:50

Getting to the amendment, fundamentally, this is basically not necessary. The legislation actually has provisions in it. It's provided for under section 41.42(2)(c). It's called the rule-making process. This is an AESO rule. Basically, it says that any provider in breach of the system operator rules would be ineligible for inclusion in the capacity market. The member is suggesting that a company that has secured a capacity contract would be able to get paid under contract without producing actual power, and it's simply not the case.

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

Generators need to be able to do maintenance, and we want them to be able to do that to keep the system functioning well. It's particularly true for the old coal plants, which the opposition apparently wants to continue past 2061. Even if they're under a capacity contract, they're going to need to be turned off for maintenance. AESO knows how to manage this. One of the things that the capacity market is doing is preventing economic withholding, that caused so much disruption in the previous market.

Basically, I don't think that this amendment adds anything to the value of the bill, and I would encourage all members of the House to vote this amendment down.

The Acting Chair: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Chairperson. I want to thank and acknowledge my hon. colleague from Calgary-Foothills for his effort and his experience in bringing this forward. I certainly want to disagree with the last speaker. I think this amendment is an important amendment, and I think what it adds to the bill is certainty. It's absolutely clear in my colleague's amendment that the Independent System Operator shall not make a capacity payment to a capacity market participant if at any time during the obligation period the capacity market participant fails to meet its obligations.

I'm sitting here thinking, wondering: why would this bill need certainty? Well, our House leader said it well half an hour, 45 minutes ago. When the government stands up and makes amendments to their own bill and their own people, their own experts, their own ability or their own lack of willingness to consult – they've had three years to get to this point – have time and time

again, Mr. Chair, proved so erroneous, so incapable of getting the job done properly the first time, it's absolutely incumbent on us on this side of the House and it's incumbent on those on that side of the House to give these bills a second look and to make sure that the certainty is there.

An hour ago we had the Energy minister talk about some consultation that developed late in the game that should have happened the first time to get it right the first time. Of course, with the government's majority, that one was put through, so I would just hope that the government intends and the NDP nongovernment members have the desire to input and inject some certainty into Bill 13.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Another reason that I'm thinking that certainty is absolutely necessary – absolutely necessary – is that my colleague from Wainwright just stood up and talked about the capacity market and in that speech and in an earlier speech talked about how it was only necessary because of this government's ideological decision to destroy our competitive advantage of coal-fired electricity generation, because of their ideological decision to shut down coal early even though the federal government was well on the way and what were going to go past 2029 were new coal-fired electric generation plants with strong environmental safeguards.

Here's where the government missed so badly on that, Madam Chair. I think it was about six months ago that the report was out, the articles were out that the Alberta government was actually buying coal-fired electricity generation from Montana. I mean, okay. We're going to change the world, we're going to shut everything down, we're going to cause disruption because we want to get rid of coal, but then we're going to buy coal-fired generation from Montana. Then I'm told that we don't need certainty. When the principle of what this government tried to do destroyed Alberta's competitive advantage, when they made it tougher for families and businesses, and when they missed it so erroneously, so inexperiencedly, and so hypocritically, yes, absolutely, we need to spend time and look at my hon. colleague's amendment here. Let's do everything we can to make sure that we've got it right.

Of course, the other article out at the time was on how Alberta was going to be buying electricity from British Columbia and site C. My goodness, Madam Chair. It will be so interesting to see where that goes.

You know, there are some other areas of uncertainty. I've talked to many, many people around Alberta in the electricity generation business and in the renewable business of electricity generation who tell me that they don't think that this government's plan has enough redundancy. What I mean by redundancy is that we all know that the wind doesn't always blow and that the sun doesn't always shine. We hear about solar farms that take up a quarter section to three sections that are only 4 per cent efficient. We look at the AESO reports that said many, many times that wind or solar is providing zero or 3 per cent of our electricity needs, of course, in one of the coldest climates in the world, where our grandmothers and our grandfathers, our fathers and our mothers have been tremendously successful because of their innovation and because of cheap electricity.

I'm told by many experts that they didn't get the redundancy right. They don't have enough redundancy to make sure that we're not going to have some brownouts or that we're not going to have some of those issues because of their haste to shut down coal, because of their haste and their need to put in a capacity market. You know, here's a colleague who wants to make sure that one part of this bill is a little stronger, and I think we should pay attention to that.

I want to go a little bit further. You know, I'm told that one of the big risks young Albertans have right now is the price of natural gas because natural gas is the backup plan, because natural gas is going to become at least 70 per cent of this market. Can you imagine what happens if the price of natural gas doubles?

Obviously, the ratepayer is protected at 6.8 cents, but, Madam Chair, as we saw on April 8, eight days into our new fiscal year, our spot price of electricity hit, I think, 8 cents. Already the taxpayer had to dip into their pockets to subsidize the ratepayer to a tune of \$9 million. From the budget documents presented to us around that same time, we know that the government has got almost \$74 million of taxpayer money going in to subsidize the ratepayer. If we've already spent \$9 million on the eighth day, my goodness, would anybody be surprised if that number hit \$200 million or \$300 million? Again, I am just back to my hon. colleague, who put the time and the effort and the good thought into trying to make sure that this government added some certainty.

11:00

Madam Chair, I will be absolutely supporting this amendment, supporting my colleague, and hoping and praying that parts of this capacity market do not cause such economic uncertainty as the capacity law has in the market and that, going forward, the Alberta economy and Alberta families have the best opportunities possible.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's always a pleasure to rise in this House and speak on a piece of legislation. Today is no exception as we speak to Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future, specifically to the amendment that my colleague from Calgary-Foothills has put forward.

This movement from an energy market to a capacity market, of course, affects Albertans. We always talk about how it affects them. To be perfectly honest, Madam Chair, I wish this had gone to committee, as was suggested earlier on when we were discussing this bill, to hear if there were indeed some positives that the regular, everyday, downtown Alberta person was thinking about, to listen to and explore what generators may think of the idea, just stakeholders in general. I also think that a lot of the committee members would have been interested to ask questions of those stakeholders to try to get a handle on how they're really affected. But that was a different amendment.

Clearly, Madam Chair, this is something that will affect Albertans to one degree or another. The Alberta Electric System Operator I believe ran many models in its quest to determine how the change to electricity provision in Alberta would shake out, including the use of intermittent renewable to be part of electricity generation in this province. It appears that the Alberta Electric System Operator modelling showed something that may have been expected, certainly by folks on this side of the House. The model showed that the renewable electricity program will decrease the revenue needed for all generators to recoup investment and earn a profit. In AESO's opinion, this will deter investment.

Generators, in the opinion of the Alberta Electric System Operator, their model, show a huge outlay of money. Generators may quite possibly not be able to earn enough revenue to get back the investment that they've made. Getting back money on an investment is, of course, how things really work. Generally speaking, an investor isn't interested in investing in something that doesn't show some kind of a return, and if they can't see their way

clear at the end of the day to see a profit from that investment, they may not be interested at all.

Interestingly, the Alberta Electric System Operator report from October of 2016 also said that system reliability will be compromised. I think we've talked about that in the House a lot. I will quote from that report.

Without investment in new firm generation (or equivalent but alternative sources of firm supply such as demand response, etc.) to replace retiring coal-fired electricity, the market will be unable to support increasing volumes of intermittent renewables and provide a healthy reserve margin to manage through a wide range of system conditions. System reliability will be compromised.

Nonetheless, Bill 27 was introduced in November of 2016 and set the target for 30 per cent renewables in Alberta.

Now, the government purposely compromised the electrical system's reliability, and they did this without a guarantee that the peaker plants would be built to produce electricity when, as my colleagues have all stated, the sun doesn't shine and the wind doesn't blow, hints, I guess, of the need for a capacity market. Electricity stakeholders that deal in Alberta are therefore all demanding a capacity market: generators; the electric system operator, AESO; the Market Surveillance Administrator; investors; and consumer groups. Madam Chair, under this NDP government, without the capacity market, the \$1,000 per megawatt hour cap on electricity prices would have to rise to \$5,000 per megawatt hour in order to attract the investment needed to make the system reliable, meaning lowering the potential of brownouts or, heaven forbid, blackouts due to shortage of electricity, probably at peak times.

I don't know about you, Madam Chair, but myself and my colleagues on this side of the House and, for heaven's sake, all of our constituents, no matter what side of the House you come from, could not and would not stand for monthly power bills that went up by a factor of 5. Now, according to the Alberta Electric System Operator while the \$5,000 per megawatt hour cap on electricity may provide revenue sufficiency, it does not provide any revenue certainty. Revenue certainty, of course, is what an investor would be looking for. Not all investments come with a guarantee – that's understood – but, generally speaking, investment in a utility can generally be viewed as a good investment.

It appears, Madam Chair, that the government has given Albertans a choice between high electricity prices with volatility and high risk or higher electricity prices with stability and lower risk, all because the government is moving to force renewables into the market and close down the coal-fired power plants early. I think it would be fair to say that no Albertan that is watching today or listening wants the absolute disaster that is known as Alberta's electric system. I don't think I can name any Albertans that want power plants, that the ratepayers are paying for, that sit idle and don't run.

Now, I spoke on this bill two, maybe three weeks ago. The last time I spoke, the NDP government announced the conception of the capacity market. Bill 13 is about financing coal-to-gas conversions, new natural gas generation, combined-cycle gas, and backup for renewables, the simple cycle gas peaker plants. As I've said previously, Bill 13 is here to fix some of the confusion and the mess from the coal phase-out that tended to make the grid unstable. Under Bill 27, 30 per cent of renewables were included to be part of Alberta's daily energy use.

The Alberta Electric System Operator contracts renewables capacity through a bid process. Now, when we talk about a capacity market, the Member for Edmonton . . .

Dr. Turner: Whitemud.

Mr. Schneider: . . . Whitemud – thank you very much – suggested that a capacity market does not pay the generator in two ways, which I understand it does. I'm more than happy to be corrected. Even as I looked on the computer here after the member had spoken, I believe it pays companies both for the capacity that they could offer the market – and that would be the case even when the facilities are not operating – plus the price they receive for the electricity they generate when indeed they are in operational mode or generating energy. It's clear Albertans pay for capacity now, but that cost is bundled in with their monthly energy costs.

This is the kind of thing I wonder if stakeholders ever had a chance to give some opinion on. The minister spoke this morning, and I was glad to hear that she had indeed done some consultation with stakeholders in that regard. We'll have to take her word that they all believe that this is the right way to do things. I'm sure they'd love to talk about paying a company that generates electricity and then also paying them when they aren't producing electricity. The minister has made it clear that several changes are going to have to be in place in order to attract investment in energy production after the province shifts away from coal-fired power, by 2030. I guess it becomes a question of: I wonder what companies would invest if it were not for the subsidies being offered.

Presently, when I look at the statistics in Alberta, coal-fired power makes up, well, right around 50 per cent. It's probably a little under that and has been for a long time, of course. That backbone of electricity that we rely on in Alberta, the fallback, will need to be replaced if the coal is gone, and the province will need companies to build new generating stations. Those generating stations will also need to consistently produce a lot of energy. When the math is done, they'll need to produce about 8,000 megawatts of electricity by 2030. Of course, over the same period, since the province has mandated 30 per cent renewables by 2030, the province is also going to be looking for companies to invest in those types of projects.

11:10

Just to speak about the amendment for a moment, this amendment kind of speaks to something that went on in Alberta several years ago when TransAlta withheld electricity when AESO asked for it. At the end of the day, it was discovered that TransAlta had done that, and they were fined millions of dollars. The member's amendment talks about that it's wrong to receive a capacity payment and then to deny the market electricity. I believe that comes directly, if I'm not mistaken, from that case that TransAlta was involved in. Denying electricity, of course, will drive up markets. It cannot help but spike the market. As my colleague from Battle River-Wainwright talked about, of course, our goal here should be to keep electricity as low as possible for the average consumer when you figure that there are several people in this province that live on a fixed income.

When the Alberta Electric System Operator asks for electricity, if you are a capacity contract, you must offer electricity for sale. Simply not offering when the call comes out for electricity is not going to be acceptable. If you do not offer electricity for sale, you really should not receive the capacity payment.

This whole capacity market started when the government implemented a carbon tax. They introduced a carbon tax and levied it on the heavy industrial emitters. The target was coal-fired power plants, that have created a large portion of Alberta's electrical use for some time. Of course, as we've mentioned plenty of times in the House, this tax was not something that was included in the government's election platform. When the tax was levied on those companies that were energy producers using coal power, they opted out of their power purchase agreements because of the contract that

these energy producing companies had with Alberta. It stated that they could do just that, opt out of an agreement with the province if any government made those agreements uncompetitive. So that's what they did, and that's all just facts that we know.

Now, there were six of Alberta's plants that had actually been scheduled to be shut down much later, as late as 2061. Genesee 3 was to shut down in 2055. These were considered state-of-the-art facilities, certainly state of the art in 2018, and as we have seen over the years, our coal-fired plants were leading the world in technology that would clean up the emissions that were given. I'm not saying that they would have gotten anywhere where the government has suggested we need to be, but the opportunity was taken away.

As power generation companies handed their contracts back to the Balancing Pool, now the cost of the Balancing Pool has turned out to be \$70 million per month. At the end of the day, the pool lost an incredible \$2 billion. The government poured a lot of money into the Balancing Pool while they tried to come up with a Band-Aid, something, anything to stop the hemorrhage, a lot of money that generations of Albertans will be stuck paying for many, many years.

On top of the hundreds of millions of dollars that Albertans are forced to pay, we find that several coal communities that were of the understanding, of course, that their coal plants would be operational for some time to come got blindsided – they basically got blindsided – by this government and their coal phase-out under the guise of greening Alberta. Plenty of Albertans have been forced out of work decades earlier than they had planned. Retirement plans have been destroyed, equity in homes lost, and dreams shattered.

So as we speak about electricity here, I think it's fair to say that there's no question that the cost of electricity cannot help but go up. The electricity part is already starting to move up. How far the price of electricity will go is not known. That is a little bit of the scary part. Coal conversion to natural gas for these plants is not as efficient, of course, as brand new combined-cycle natural gas power plants. Conversion to these plants is costing Albertans in the neighbourhood of \$1.36 billion to shut them down early and do a conversion to natural gas.

But, Madam Chair, this government was bent on forcing renewable electricity on the good people of Alberta, and it appears that they were prepared to do that at any cost. This has concerned the United Conservative Party enough that we've written to the Auditor General in regard to the NDP's tampering with the electricity system. We asked for his outlook on the full costs and implications of the power purchase agreement losses as well as on the province's decision to phase out coal-fired electricity and its cap on electricity rates because, as seems common when we deal with legislation in this House, we find that sometimes tangible details are hard to get.

Once again, Madam Chair, most of the details of this bill will be written into regulations. The devil will be within those regulations. Those are the details of this bill that will not be debated in this House. This is the part of Bill 13 that says to everyone: don't worry; we're from the government, and you can trust us.

One more small point I'd like to make, Madam Chair. Bill 13, as it is, allows companies to receive capacity payment, but the companies can then deny the provision of electricity, which, thereby, would allow the spiking of prices in Alberta, which I spoke about a few minutes ago. Sometimes the last point you want to bring up is not the best one.

What we are seeing here and for those Albertans that are playing the home game, they need to realize that this government is trying to implement a capacity market over a period of two years instead of trying to implement this market over a period of three to six

years, which is, according to the stakeholders that have approached us, how it should be done.

Madam Chair, I'm going to steal a few words from my colleague from Grande Prairie-Wapiti, who spoke on this bill probably two to three weeks ago. He stated that Alberta after many years had finally gotten to a point where the electricity prices were down to a cost where Albertans weren't being gouged. Now, I know we heard the minister speak this morning of some spikes with Alberta's energy. All true. I'm not denying anything she said at all. The electricity utility in this province was not hurting the average Albertan. That's supposed to be kind of the goal, I think, when we're creating legislation in this House. We do our best not to actually hurt the folks that pay the freight in this province. The generation market was working before the 2015 government took the reins. Ideology basically changed how we were going to do business in Alberta as far as electricity is concerned.

Madam Chair, I think I'll let it go at that, just to say that I will indeed be supporting my colleague's amendment. I think it adds some strength to the legislation. Anyway, I'll let it go at that.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A2 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:19 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Cyr	Nixon	Schneider
Ellis	Orr	Taylor
Gill	Panda	

Against the motion:

Carlier	Gray	Miranda
Carson	Hinkley	Nielsen
Ceci	Hoffman	Phillips
Connolly	Jabour	Piquette
Coolahan	Jansen	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Kleinstauber	Rosendahl
Dach	Littlewood	Sabir
Drever	Loyola	Schmidt
Eggen	Luff	Shepherd
Feehan	Mason	Sucha
Fitzpatrick	McCuaig-Boyd	Turner
Ganley	McLean	Westhead
Goehring	McPherson	

Totals:	For – 8	Against – 38
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[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

The Deputy Chair: Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to speak again on Bill 13.

[Ms Jabour in the chair]

Welcome back, Madam Chair. Thanks for the opportunity to speak to Bill 13. We talked about why Bill 13 is required. Bill 13 is

required to fix the mess the NDP has created in the first place with their ideological climate change plan that they brought in. They have to accelerate the coal-fired electric generation being shut down. To replace that shortfall of electric generation from coal-fired electricity, they said that they will replace that with renewable energy, with wind and solar, and also convert some coal-fired electric plants to natural gas based electric generation, which would take a much longer time. In the meantime they brought in this capacity market creation bill, which will drive up electricity prices.

Also, if we are short of electricity here because we shut down our coal-fired electric generation in Alberta, the NDP is saying to Albertans: "It's okay. We will import coal-fired electric power from the United States of America, from another country. It's okay to import coal-fired electricity from the U.S.A. into Alberta, but we want to shut down our coal-fired electricity here. We want to accelerate the phase-out of coal-fired electric generation much faster than the Harper government forecasted, in 2029. We are okay, Albertans, to shut down the coal-fired electricity here and kill jobs in Alberta. We want to help the United States of America because we want to import coal-fired electricity from Montana, a state in the U.S.A., and help create jobs in the U.S.A.. We want to kill jobs in Alberta." That's what the NDP wants to do, Madam Chair.

Then they talked about that this bill is required to create investor confidence. Just look at the \$35 billion of investment that left Alberta since the NDP came to power. That's \$35 billion of investment. Companies have disinvested, multinationals have disinvested in Alberta and gone to other jurisdictions. They didn't switch to other business. They're still investing in the same business but not in Alberta. They don't mind going to other locations which everyone else think are more risky for business investments. The investors that are leaving Alberta: for them, it's less risky than Alberta. The Minister of Energy said, you know, that it's about investor confidence. Just go talk to people in downtown Calgary. Those towers are still empty. When I go and walk on the +15 to meet my former colleagues, they say how much space is available in those towers every time.

11:40

Coming back to Bill 13, Madam Chair, all we are trying to do here is to make Bill 13 – because this government wanted to speed up the implementation of Bill 13, which normally takes four to five years. That's what the stakeholders told me, at least four to five years to implement a capacity market in other jurisdictions. But this government wants to do it in two years, which will drive up the prices, and to put an artificial cap of 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour, telling Albertans: "We will import coal-fired electricity from Montana and supply and meet the demand here. If the prices go up, we'll cap it at 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour, but you won't see that on your electricity bill. Taxpayers will cover it, but we'll hide it. We'll be innovative in hiding those costs from Albertans." That's what they're saying. Their consultations were not really meaningful, and they rushed them.

To be fair to TransAlta, who was penalized because they hadn't offered the capacity – the regulating authority found that they were in breach of the contract, so they were penalized – that same TransAlta came and helped me to bring in my previous amendment, which the NDP voted down. TransAlta is an Alberta-based business. They made a mistake. They want to fix it. That's why they helped me to draft that amendment in the first place, to make sure that the capacity participants won't get paid if they don't generate electricity when AESO demands it.

This NDP government, which says that they consulted, which is not true if that is the case – TransAlta told me that they made that mistake. They want to fix that so that in future Albertans are not gouged. That's their intention. That's a business that has the interest of Albertans, not this NDP. This NDP wants to punish Albertans, kill the jobs in Alberta, and import coal-fired electricity from the United States of America. That is the status of this bill, Bill 13, Madam Chair. All I'm trying to do is to make it less bad.

I agree with the minister. This is a very complex bill, Bill 13, even for people sitting at your desk. I'm sure they'll agree that this bill is such a complex undertaking. It's a serious bill. I get that. But the minister has another opportunity here to get it right to some extent. It won't be a hundred per cent right. The timelines for implementation of this bill are really short and tight, so we need all stakeholders onboard providing the best advice so that this can be done a little bit more correctly this time, while we are in the Committee of the Whole stage of debate.

That's why I'm proposing an amendment. I'll give you copies of this, Madam Chair, and I'll wait for your instructions.

The Chair: This will be amendment A3.

Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll read this amendment into the record. I move that Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future, be amended in section 2(29), in the proposed part 2.2, by renumbering section 41.46 as section 41.46(1) and adding the following after subsection (1):

(2) The Minister shall consult with stakeholders for a period of not less than 60 days and consider any comments or feedback provided prior to making a regulation under subsection (1).

Madam Chair, as I explained, a 60-day time period is a fair and reasonable time frame to make sure the regulations are correct. The nature of this bill is very serious and complex, so we have to get that correct before we pass this bill finally in this House and give it royal assent.

Also, the Energy minister said that she wants the regulations to be developed by August, so my amendment is completely within the timeline of the minister's plan, since we haven't done good consultation and the industry stakeholders want in future at least a 60-day consultation time period, which is reasonable. Sixty days is not very long.

We know what happens when we've passed laws and acts in this House like Bill 6 in the past. We know what happens. Those are the unintended consequences of ramming through bills without thinking it through. That's why I think that this amendment will make Bill 13 a less bad bill.

I ask all my colleagues in the House to pass the amendment. Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the member for this amendment. As with the previous amendment, basically the position of the government is that this is not necessary. There have been extensive consultations done in the preparation of this bill. The AESO as well as the ministry continues to consult widely with consumer groups, with producer groups, with the various players in the capacity market. I don't think that this amendment really adds anything to getting our capacity market functioning and making sure that Albertans are protected from the price volatility and making sure that we have a plentiful and efficient, effective electricity market.

I urge all of my colleagues to vote against this amendment.

The Chair: Any other members on the amendment? The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

Mr. Taylor: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm honoured to be able to sit here and, I guess, look at this thing as well. The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud doesn't think that we have to give that extra time, but I think it's really necessary to have that 60 days to be able to consider the comments and feedback provided prior to making a regulation under subsection (1), as this amendment speaks to. This, I think, is a really good amendment. We're setting ourselves up so that we're not giving ourselves enough time for consultation. I have to disagree with the amount of time that's been given for the consultation.

Even if we look at this bill, the government has made an amendment to the bill because they didn't get it right in the first place. We've got to make sure that we have the consultation to make sure there's not something else out there that is going to be problematic for the people here in Alberta as we go forward. What we're doing here is that we want to make sure that we get all of the stakeholders onboard – they will provide the best feedback – so that we can get this done right the first time.

11:50

If we go back to Bill 6 – and we have talked about that this morning – Bill 6 had more pages of amendments than it actually had for the bill. The consultation wasn't done correctly on that bill, and it should have been done beforehand. What this allows is a reasonable 60-day period. That's a reasonable, fair time period to make sure that we get the regulations correct. We're seeing time and time again that we're having bills where the consultation just isn't adequate or that all the stakeholders aren't involved. I'm not sure what stakeholders were engaged in this discussion beforehand. Have all the stakeholders that needed to be, all the co-operatives and the REAs, all been engaged in this discussion as well? Like I say, we need to make sure that we're getting all the stakeholders involved.

We just look at some of the bills that we're looking at right now with the PACE program. I've asked people in my communities and in the municipalities: what are your thoughts on the PACE program? Well, these are the people that we should be consulting. These are stakeholders that are directly affected by that kind of legislation. And when I've talked to the people in municipalities, the most common thing that I hear is: "What's the PACE program? You know, what are you talking about?" The government hasn't consulted with the municipalities specifically. I've had to bring them up to speed, show them what the bill looks like and what the implications could be for the municipality, and give them some of the links to YouTube on the things that are happening in California.

We have to make sure we get these things right in the first place, and that's part of what we were talking about before is consultation. We don't want to be trying to fix something afterwards when we can get it right, or at least as right as we possibly can, the first time. We know that whenever a bill goes through, there are unintended consequences that can be attached to a bill because there's something that was unforeseen. We don't want to have as many unforeseen consequences as possible. So when a member has asked us to just have "a period of not less than 60 days [to] consider any comments or feedback provided prior to making a regulation," I think that is absolutely fair and reasonable. These timelines, in my opinion, are far too short and far too tight.

If we go back again to Bill 6, that we've talked about, the farm and ranchers enhancement or safety – I forget exactly what the name of it was. But that was back in 2015 that we talked about Bill 6. It's still not passed. We're still working on it. The government is

still trying to make sure; they're trying to get through this. Well, if you do the homework ahead of time, there won't be any unnecessarily problematic things that'll happen in the future.

The minister really wants to get this thing through as fast as possible. You've got the one shot to make sure you're getting this one right. We're talking about the capacity market, which is going to affect Alberta for the future, you know. It's a serious and a complex undertaking, and we should be giving it that due diligence that we're looking at it as a very serious and complex bill and making sure that we're getting this right, making sure that we have our consultation done and that it's correct. We want to make sure that we get all the stakeholders onboard and that we can get the best advice. The government has found that they were putting forward a bill and the stakeholders said: here's a correction that you need to make. So if we engage more stakeholders, more stakeholders than we have, the ones that are directly going to be affected as a result of this, we can get the best advice, and that best advice will just make this bill better. I don't see a problem with trying to make a bill better.

So you've got this bill, and we're going to be going to a capacity market.

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

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

Ms Luff: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 14. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 13. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in this report? Say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Any opposed, say no. So ordered.
The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Noting the time and the work accomplished today, we'd like to adjourn until 1:30 this afternoon.

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

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, May 30, 2018

Day 35

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (UCP),
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Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (UCP)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (NDP)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (NDP)
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Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (NDP)
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Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)
Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (NDP)
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP)
Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP),
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Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (NDP)
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (AP)
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Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (UCP)
Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (NDP)
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)
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Schneider, David A., Little Bow (UCP)
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (NDP)
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (NDP)
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (NDP)
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (UCP)
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (UCP)
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (NDP),
Deputy Government Whip
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)
Vacant, Fort McMurray-Conklin
Vacant, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake

Party standings:

New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 25 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent Conservative: 1 Vacant: 2

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, May 30, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Good afternoon. It's nice to see that rain out there. Our farmers can use it.

Please be seated.

Statement by the Speaker

Page Recognition

The Speaker: Hon. members, I have an important presentation to make this afternoon before we commence our usual business. I would like to call forward – please come over here – all of the pages. If they would join me at the dais.

Now, there are some pages, hon. members, who are not with us today, but I would like, on their collective behalf, to read you a letter which they have written to the House.

Dear Mr. Speaker,

The end of Session signifies something different for everyone. For some, it marks the halfway point of the Fourth Session of the 29th Legislature, while for others it represents the end of their time on the Chamber floor. Our time as Pages has bestowed upon us everlasting memories that we will carry throughout the next page of our lives.

Some of you may want to use one of these members to write some of those speeches.

We would like to express our sincerest gratitude for the extraordinary opportunity to serve the Legislative Assembly of Alberta.

The support of numerous individuals has provided us the ability to grow into the Pages we are today. We would like to extend our many thanks to these individuals: the Sergeant-at-Arms for demonstrating the importance of leadership; the Table Officers for passing on their extensive comprehension of parliamentary procedure; the office staff in 315 and 325 for their patience with our never ending questions, and for reminding us of the significance of our position; the staff in 412 for their dedication in being the solid foundation of this Page Programme; and, the LASS for their companionship during long divisions and late night sittings.

Companionship. Hmm.

We would like to extend our whole-hearted thanks to you and through you, Mr. Speaker, to all Members of [the] Assembly, because without all of you, it would not be possible for us to be here today.

The Page Programme has impacted each of us immensely – we have come out of this program with a new sense of identity, direction, and perception. It has been an eye-opening experience serving the Members of this House: each with their own unique speaking styles and gestures, coffee preferences, and comments under 29(2)(a).

The Government House Leader occasionally cheats and eats a cookie.

After countless hours spent under this dome, we have come to realize how much time and energy is given by the many people who work here to better our province and the lives of those who live within it. Through collecting tablings and petitions, delivering Bills and amendments, and listening to [the] Points of Order, we were able to see firsthand each Member's passion and dedication, in leading our province into a better tomorrow. Our time spent in South Members' Lounge has shown us their essential talents in forming relationships, entering negotiations, and resolving conflicts. Not only will the knowledge we gained

here enable us to be informed and responsible citizens, but it will also allow us to engage others in doing the same.

The privilege of joining the ranks of former Pages – whose footprints have forever marked this green carpet – will serve as a reminder of the importance preservation has on the democratic process. While our departure from these four chairs is bittersweet, we look forward to watching the next generation of Pages from the galleries.

Although you may be returning in the fall under Standing Order 3(4)(b), for us this is the dissolution of Session. Once again, we would like to extend our appreciation to everyone who has afforded us . . . an exceptional opportunity.

Yours Truly,

Amanda Porter (Head Page), Jordyn Reed (Speaker's Page), Chris Beasley (Page Peer Mentor), Keegan Colwell, David Draper, Suraj Gill, Savanna Gossen, Mark Jones, Manuel Kong, Maria Ovcharenko, Lara Ozdogan, Marleina Schreiner, Robyn Taylor, and Christian Wigger.
29th Legislature

My apologies again for the pronunciation of names. You've evidence that I've failed at other times.

I would ask the Deputy Speaker if she might come forward and present our head page, Amanda Porter, a small token of our appreciation. [Standing ovation] I know I speak for all of you when I say: while they say that it's a privilege to be here with us, the privilege is ours to be here with them.

Thank you. Don't deliver any more cookies, okay?

Introduction of Visitors

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

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce to you four members that are in your gallery, the former MLA for Edmonton-Manning Mr. Peter Sandhu and his wife, Kamal Sandhu. They have two guests with them from India, Mr. Pritam Kal Sharma and Mrs. Shard Sharma. Mr. Peter Sandhu, if you had the privilege of attending the Nagar Kirtan on the weekend – 40,000 people gathered there – was able to collect the names of 100 people that are willing to donate their organs in the future under the organ donation act. I would ask them to stand and please receive the warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The Minister of Health and Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The first is a school group. I'd like to introduce to you and through you a group of remarkable students who are in grade 6 at Aurora charter school in the constituency of Edmonton-Glenora, which I have the honour of representing. These students are always engaged. They're sharp dressers, and when I spoke to them earlier today, they shared some of their learnings, including learning about Alberta's namesake. I would not be surprised if some of these students end up on this floor as future pages. If I could ask the teachers, who are Mrs. O'Connor and Mrs. Schulz, as well as their chaperone and all the students from Aurora to please rise and receive the warm welcome of our Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly grade 6 students from Landing Trail intermediate school – this is not the same group as yesterday; I'll have another group coming tomorrow – one of my favourite schools. I had a chance to talk to students just as brilliant as the group yesterday. If they could rise along with their teachers, Mr. Jeff Semenchuk, Ms Shauna Bredo, Mrs. Tracy Radkewich, along with their chaperone, Mr. Ross Hunter, so they can receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

1:40

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other school groups here today?

The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Dr. Starke: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me very great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a fourth-generation Albertan who has been farming the same piece of land in east-central Alberta for over 108 years and a former member of this Assembly, Mr. Jack Hayden. Mr. Hayden is a former councillor, a former reeve, and also a former board chair of the school board for the county of Stettler.

An Hon. Member: He doesn't look that old.

Dr. Starke: He doesn't look that old. He'll love that.

He served the county of Stettler. He served the people of Alberta in a variety of capacities, including representing Alberta on the Federation of Canadian Municipalities from 1998 to 2004. He also has served Albertans and Canadians, for that matter, representing rural interests in a variety of capacities both during his time as a reeve and county councillor and afterwards. In 2007 Mr. Hayden was elected as the MLA for Drumheller-Stettler and has served the people of Alberta as Minister of Infrastructure, minister of agriculture as well as minister of tourism, parks, and recreation. He is a dear friend. I dare say that it's good to have you back in the Assembly, Jack. Please give the warm welcome of the Assembly to Mr. Jack Hayden.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions today. First, it is a pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the entire Assembly Mr. Max Méndez. He's the musical ambassador of El Salvador. For over 20 years Max has been the lead vocalist for the Latin rock band Frigüey. His band has gained notable success throughout Latin America and has reached various audiences around the world. In 2017 Mr. Méndez was named the musical ambassador for the country of El Salvador, and he represents the music of his nation on a global scale through tours and outreach. Currently Max is visiting Canada for the first time and has chosen Alberta to explore the music industry and learn more about the local Latino-Canadian culture.

Accompanying Mr. Mendes today is Sandra Moreno, a constituent of mine who is a divisional co-ordinator for the Edmonton Police Service with the victims' services unit. Aside from being incredibly dedicated to her job and helping Albertans, she sits on the board of directors for Sunrise of Life, an organization dedicated to development projects in Tanzania. Currently Sandra is completing a master's of human security and peacebuilding through Royal Roads University. I ask them both to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two sets of introductions. First, as part of Paramedic Services Week it's my pleasure to introduce you to two front-line paramedics who are seated in the members' gallery, and I ask that they rise as I call their names: Justin Nunes, a primary care paramedic with Edmonton metro EMS, and Patrick Scollard, a primary care paramedic with Calgary's own clinical operations interfacility transportation and a constituent of Calgary-North West, which makes him extra special. Thank you for your service and your life-saving care. Please join me in extending the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, also seated in the Assembly are individuals from Pomerleau seated in the members' gallery – and I ask them to rise as I mention their names – Pat Blais, a construction director, and Sean Strickland, the director of business development and industry relations. Now, Pomerleau is a national construction company that maintains offices in Calgary and across Canada. They are currently building the Willow Square continuing care facility in Fort McMurray, a project the community has needed for many years, and it is a lovely facility. We are absolutely thrilled with the pictures of what it's going to look like. I ask Mr. Blais and Mr. Strickland to receive the traditional warm welcome of this House. Welcome.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two additional introductions. The first: it's a pleasure to introduce Caroline and Andreas Schwabe, who are seated in the public gallery. I ask that they also rise as I introduce them. May is Speech and Hearing Month in Canada, and Caroline has suffered from progressive degenerative hearing loss since her childhood. In December 2017 she received a cochlear implant. Once her implant was activated, in January, she completed her rehab in just four days, which is 36,000 times faster than a typical recovery. It is phenomenal. Andreas is her husband, and he's a media and communications consultant as well. Together their blog and podcast My Beautiful Cyborg has provided a window into understanding the nature of hearing loss. Thank you so much for sharing your experiences with so many and helping them navigate the system. Please join me in welcoming them.

My second introduction is also of a group of folks who are in the gallery who are very sharply dressed as well. They are paramedics, and they are here because this is part of Paramedic Services Week. It's my pleasure to introduce them. They are front-line workers as well as members of Alberta Health's emergency health services team, who provide Albertans with expert life-saving and trauma care. I ask that they rise as I say their names: Brad, Darren, and Ian, who are stationed in the Edmonton-Glenora riding, as well as Connor, Jordan, Ian, Jessica, Nicola, Alexandre, Bre, and John. Thank you so much for the work you do to take care of us in what are arguably the most traumatic instances in our lives. We really appreciate all the work you do to care for Albertans.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two members of the Calgary board of education. They were meeting with me this morning; we had a very productive meeting. If the board chair, Trina Hurdman, and Julie Hrdlicka, trustee, could please stand and receive the warm welcome of the Legislature.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Farmer's Day

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with great personal pleasure I rise today to give recognition to the upcoming celebration of Farmer's Day. For more than seven decades this day is still recognized and celebrated in rural communities across the province and by our agricultural industry. Farmer's Day was first established at the UFA's annual convention in 1945. The co-operative passed a resolution to lobby the Alberta government to declare the second Friday of June as a provincial holiday. Although no longer a provincial holiday, the United Farmers of Alberta co-operative has chosen to continue to celebrate this day by acknowledging the hard work and contribution of Alberta's farmers. This year Farmer's Day is slated for Friday, June 8, and throughout the province there will be a daylong celebration.

The business of farming and ranching is not an easy vocation by any stretch of the imagination. Commodity prices, noncapped electrical prices, droughts, fires, and other weather-related issues are far beyond their control. What they also haven't been able to control is this government's love for ideological-based legislation. Their crippling carbon tax severely hampers their ability to compete on provincial and international levels. Farmers and ranchers are not, as many people seem to believe, exempt from the carbon tax. They are greatly impacted by this tax on everything, a tax this government didn't campaign on. Costs continue to soar. Expenses such as transportation costs go up for the trucks and trains that ship the grain, crops, and livestock to consumers around the world. Those costs will have to be absorbed by the producers or passed on to the consumer, leading to rises in food costs at grocery stores and restaurants.

The business of agriculture provides life's necessities, including food, clothing, and shelter, and we should all be grateful for what they do. Farmer's Day is a significant day to honour and celebrate those in the agricultural community, who work tirelessly throughout the year. As the saying goes, Mr. Speaker, if you ate today, you should thank a farmer. An interesting report from the farm manager of Strankman Farms . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Official Opposition and Government Fiscal Policies

Ms Luff: Much has been made of the UCP's dangerous social policy positions, and there are certainly many of those, but I think it's also important to highlight their dangerous economic policy positions. The UCP policy on taxes in Alberta is to restore personal and corporate taxes to a flat rate. This is effectively a \$700 million tax break for the richest Albertans. Why would the UCP want to do this? It's because they believe that if you give tax cuts to the wealthy, they'll create more jobs, and everyone will be better off. Sounds nice. However, this idea is called trickle-down economics, and despite being tried extensively in the last 40 years, it's been found conclusively to be a false and ineffective policy.

Economists at the IMF have found that as the income share of the top 20 per cent increases, GDP actually declines. In other words, wealth does not trickle down. With these trickle-down policies in place in Alberta under Conservative governments, real wages stagnated, the top 10 per cent of earners took an increasingly bigger share of the pie, and income inequality became the worst in Canada. And income inequality has real costs. It has costs to our health care

system and to our social services. It has costs to our children and to our families.

1:50

I'm proud to be part of a government that is working to address this inequality. We've raised the minimum wage. We've invested over a billion dollars in affordable housing. The Alberta child benefit and the Alberta family employment tax credit will help over 300,000 low-income Albertans. We froze university tuition. We lowered school fees. We provided grants to the cities of Calgary and Edmonton for low-income transit passes. And, yes, we have asked folks in Alberta who make over \$125,000 a year to pay a little bit more.

We have done these things because we know that for Alberta to succeed, all Albertans must succeed. This is in stark contrast to the UCP, who just want a \$700 million tax break for their wealthy friends and insiders.

Thank you.

Oral Question Period

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

Trans Mountain Pipeline Public Purchase

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday we saw the spectacle of the NDP high-fiving each other and cheering a decision by a global company to pull out of Alberta, to sell out billions of dollars of assets in Canada. They were cheering a decision that is going to cost taxpayers billions of dollars. We've gone from a \$7 billion private-sector investment to a \$12 billion government risk. While we agree that it is necessary to ensure the construction of the Trans Mountain pipeline, why does the government think that Kinder Morgan's decision to pull out is a reason to celebrate?

Ms Hoffman: Canadians have come together, Mr. Speaker. From coast to coast to coast they're providing support for TMX. The deal reached this week provides greater certainty. TMX adds 15,000 jobs and \$15 billion to the national economy. Members opposite want to throw tantrums and talk down this project of national importance. I instead want to thank those working people who spoke up and who helped us build a nation with yesterday's historic announcement.

Thank you.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the hon. the minister seems to have missed the reality of what happened yesterday. A global company, a company that builds pipelines in third-world dictatorships and kleptocracies, said that they're unwilling to take the risk to build a pipeline in Canada. Does the minister really think that that is a reason to celebrate?

Ms Hoffman: I remember hearing a song: every party needs a pooper. Mr. Speaker, I have to say that what we need to acknowledge is that we have had significant progress. I have to say that if we would have reached Thursday without there being a deal, they'd be complaining. On Tuesday we announced a deal, a deal that adds 15,000 jobs and \$15 billion to the national economy and will stop us from losing \$40 million a day to an economy south of the border. This is an investment in Canada. You bet I'm going to party, and we welcome you to join it.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Energy Pipeline Association said of yesterday's decision that it

is deeply concerned that the government needed to purchase the project . . . [and] about the implications of the government's financial intervention for future . . . pipeline projects. We do not

is deeply concerned that the government needed to purchase the project... [and] about the implications of the government's financial intervention for future... pipeline projects. We do not believe that this outcome will instill investor confidence in Canada.

Does the government believe that the Canadian Energy Pipeline Association is wrong in its assessment that yesterday's decision will not instill investor confidence in Canada?

Ms Hoffman: Well, here's the deal, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday members said that it was good news. They actually congratulated the Premier on the work she did. Today they're saying that this is a huge failure. I know that it is summer, I know that things are getting warm, but I'm sick of the flip-flops. This project is in the national interest. This project is going to put tens of thousands of families to work, paying their mortgages, and get us away from the huge differential that we're seeing. The reduction that we saw on that resource was \$17 last week. The kids in the gallery own this resource, and we deserve to get the best price for them. I'm proud that we will because of this government and our Premier's leadership.

The Speaker: Second main question.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the question was on whether the government agrees with the assessment of the pipeline association that yesterday's decision by Kinder Morgan to leave Canada undermines investor confidence. I take from the Deputy Premier's non answer that she does not agree with the Energy Pipeline Association.

GMP FirstEnergy is the largest finance business in the energy industry. They said yesterday that they view this decision as negative for entities considering large resource-focused capital investments given the inability for the rule of law and regulatory approvals to allow projects to move forward. Does the government agree with that assessment?

Ms Hoffman: You know, Mr. Speaker, I am so proud to agree with the working men and women of this province, like Gil, who wrote in yesterday. He lives in Calgary, and he said to the Premier: every day on the streets all I see is you; we are fighting against this darkness of recession; we are fighting under your wonderful leadership against all odds, and I'm sure you will bring out the best for us. We are on the side of Gil and of all working people in this province. I know that the member has a history of voting billions of dollars for the auto industry in Ontario, but – guess what? – you're in Alberta, and you work for the people of Alberta. Start doing it, start standing with us, and get this pipeline, because yesterday was an excellent day for the Canadian economy and for Alberta workers.

Mr. Kenney: Perhaps it was an excellent day for New Democrats that they got to nationalize a project that otherwise would have been built with private-sector dollars, Mr. Speaker. We had a private company willing to risk shareholders' dollars to build a pipeline, but it couldn't. It couldn't partly because this government was unwilling to lift a finger to ensure respect for the rule of law and free trade within Canada. They talked a good game, but they wouldn't bring in Bill 12. They wouldn't turn off the taps. They repealed their wine boycott, and we ended up with uncertainty that pulled billions of dollars out of our economy. Why didn't they fight back against the B.C. New Democrats' obstructionism?

Ms Hoffman: We have fought, and we have been victorious, Mr. Speaker. The opposition leader supported a \$9 billion bailout for the Ontario auto industry, but now he's unwilling to invest in

Albertans, in an Alberta project that will create 15,000 jobs, \$15 billion to the economy. I won't take his ideas on how to get a pipeline to tidewater because he has none. But – you know what? – he did have a campaign slogan that seems to ring true today: he didn't come back for you, Alberta. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Kenney: It seems the Deputy Premier is using the same writer who came up with the sewer rats line, Mr. Speaker. [interjections] And the heckling continues.

Albertans expect civility. They demand seriousness. The Deputy Premier just said that they were victorious. Mr. Speaker, yesterday John Horgan tripped down on his commitment to do everything possible to stop Trans Mountain. Tzeporah Berman and her associated radicals have said that this emboldens them to do everything they can to stop Trans Mountain. Can the Deputy Premier identify a single group that has gone from no to yes on pipelines as a result of yesterday's announcement?

Ms Hoffman: Again, Mr. Speaker, say one thing; do another. I have to say that the member opposite and his ability to rehash issues from the past is phenomenal. We are investing in the TMX because our country needs this project. We received countless letters and phone calls of support; like I said, the individual named Gil. There was a gentleman in British Columbia. His name is Bill. He owns a utility company, and he's so proud of our Premier. You know what? I'm going to stand with Bill and Gil and the 15,000 Alberta workers who are going to have a job because of the good action that this Premier undertook. Feel free to be disappointed and sit in the corner, but this is good for Alberta. I wish you would join in the celebration, and we welcome you to pick up...

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. leader.

Provincial Response to Pipeline Opposition

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the question that the Deputy Premier did not try to answer is whether she could identify a single organization that's gone from no to yes on the Trans Mountain pipeline as a result of Kinder Morgan withdrawing their \$7 billion investment.

I asked the Premier yesterday, and I'll ask the Deputy Premier today: has the government of Alberta spoken to Premier Horgan? Has he given any assurance that he will down tools and stop his policy of killing Trans Mountain, a policy of obstruction, a policy of death by delay?

Ms Hoffman: You know, 16 out of 16 court cases Trans Mountain has been successful on, and when I sat down face to face with Mr. Horgan just last week, Mr. Speaker, we had a very clear determination of where we are moving with this. And guess what? Yesterday was another very clear sign that we are winning. We won a significant investment. I know the member opposite wants to give money to Ontario for their auto industry, but we've got an investment in a Canadian pipeline to get Canadian products to tidewater so that every single Albertan has the opportunity to benefit from that resource. This is good for working people. Put down your weapons, pick up a tool, and help us...

The Speaker: Thank you. Thank you.

2:00

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, nobody is using weapons. We're simply discharging our responsibility as the opposition to ask questions on

behalf of Albertans and hold the government to account. I would ask the Deputy Premier to exercise a modicum of rhetorical restraint. [interjection] More heckling.

Mr. Speaker, can the government identify a single environmental organization that has announced that it will no longer try to stop the Trans Mountain pipeline as a result of Kinder Morgan's decision to sell out of Canada as a result of this government's decision to replace that company with billions of tax dollars?

Ms Hoffman: Not only did our climate leadership plan get federal government approval; they also backed the TMX and are investing to restart construction in the coming days. Our Premier has been clear that we can balance the economy and climate action. A plan that leaves behind working people is no plan at all, Mr. Speaker. A plan that doesn't care for the environment is no plan at all. I have seen their record, zero pipelines to tidewater. I have seen our Premier's record. I know who I am rooting for. We might not be in the playoffs for the NHL, but we are certainly in the playoffs and in the final stages of getting our product to tidewater.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the government here for four months has issued empty threats about turning off the taps to respond to the B.C. New Democrats' commitment to use every tool possible to stop Trans Mountain. That commitment continues from the government in Victoria. It's part of their agreement with the Green Party that keeps them in office. My question is: will the government of Alberta use the threat implicit in Bill 12 to turn off the taps unless and until we have an assurance from Victoria that the pipeline, that we now are part owners of, will be built?

Ms Hoffman: We stood up to B.C., and we took action. We have a perfect record in court: 16 cases, 16 victories. The opposition leader went on national television to say that no particular pipeline project was a national priority. We are playing our cards carefully and strategically. Bill 12 is a tool still in our tool belt. Bottom line: this pipeline will get built. Yesterday was a very good day for Alberta. I know it wasn't a very good day for people who are cheering against the pipeline for their own political means, but it was a good day for Alberta, and we welcome you to join in the celebration.

The Speaker: Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Trans Mountain Pipeline Public Purchase (continued)

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The historic federal buyout of the Trans Mountain pipeline and expansion is definitely a benefit to Albertans now, but this hasn't addressed the systemic issues with the regulatory process. Governments shouldn't have to buy projects to get them completed. Chris Bloomer, head of the Canadian Energy Pipeline Association, said, "We do not believe that this outcome will instill investor confidence in Canada," sentiments echoed by other industry stakeholders. To the Premier: what about future projects requiring regulatory approval? Will future energy products have to be bought out to move forward?

Ms Hoffman: Well, the Canadian Energy Pipeline Association also said that they're very pleased that the Trans Mountain expansion project will be constructed. Through its completion Trans Mountain will create thousands of jobs, deliver economic benefits across this entire country. Canada will continue to need major pipeline projects to deliver responsibly produced Canadian energy to markets around the world while ensuring a fair price for our resources, Mr. Speaker.

Again, yesterday was a victory. I know people keep wanting to cheer for a defeat, but this side of the House and all Albertans are

excited about the fact that we're finally going to get a fair return for our resource and the first new pipeline to tidewater since the 1950s.

Ms McPherson: I totally agree that it's a great thing that happened, but we have concerns about what's going to happen in the future. As a partner in expansion Alberta is now committed for up to \$2 billion. Warren Mabee, director of the Queen's Institute for Energy and Environmental Policy, expects strong backlash from groups we were supposed to get social licence from. Alberta's carbon tax is intended to reduce emissions, and since pipelines are far more energy efficient and environmentally safe than rail or road for transporting oil to tidewater, to the Premier: how much of Alberta's up to \$2 billion investment will come from carbon tax revenues?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the commitment is correct, up to \$2 billion, but the commitment also is that not a penny of those dollars will be expended until oil is flowing in that pipeline. The pipeline is going to get built. It could be zero; it could be \$2 billion. There's a range in there.

Ms McPherson: Former TransCanada executive Dennis McConaghy recently commented that it does raise a lot of questions about how did we ever get ourselves into this situation where federal approvals aren't sufficient for private-sector capital to want to take on the completion of the project. To the environment minister: please help us understand the disconnect between the Alberta climate leadership plan, the social licence relied on to secure regulatory approval, and the situation we find ourselves in where Alberta and Canada are at the mercy of B.C. in getting the Trans Mountain pipeline built.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. There isn't a disconnect because that pipeline and line 3 were approved precisely because of the climate leadership plan. Now we are in a position due to our oil sands emissions cap where we can say to our neighbours, to our trading partners that the oil that flows through that pipeline is subjected to a carbon price. It is also one of the only energy-producing jurisdictions in the world that has a cap on emissions. More to the point, we're also investing in innovation to reduce the carbon in the barrel, \$1.4 billion worth of investments in innovation. That's something we should all be proud of.

The Speaker: Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

Mr. Piquette: All right. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday saw a pivotal moment in the construction of the Trans Mountain expansion project, a project that our government has fought long and hard for. Now, I've heard a lot from members across the aisle that our plan simply wasn't enough to get a pipeline to tidewater and that we should spend our time fighting against the government in Ottawa. To the Energy minister: how has making it our government's priority to work with our federal counterparts helped us secure the construction of the Trans Mountain pipeline?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I think the Premier said it best yesterday when she said that Albertans don't elect us to put on a play for them, but they elect us to get things done. Indeed, our Premier has shown a lot of leadership in getting things done, and she's gotten things done by being tough and by being smart. She made it clear to the federal government that if they

didn't assert their jurisdiction over interprovincial pipelines, we would use Alberta's jurisdiction over our own natural resources by turning off the taps. She showed real strength in having a better case to make and to capture the hearts and minds . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
First supplemental.

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the significant investment of both the federal government and ourselves, to the same minister: what does the construction of this project mean for government revenues?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the Conference Board of Canada estimates \$46.7 billion will be collected by government treasuries in the form of taxes and royalties from the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion project during the development and the first 20 years of operations. I think that's a pretty good return on investment. It's important to remember that right now the federal government, as they acquire the existing pipeline, that is an asset they are acquiring. It's an investment, and they're getting a revenue stream from that.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that members opposite argue that investment in the energy sector is drying up and that jobs are disappearing, to the same minister: how many good-paying jobs will the Trans Mountain project support?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we support the federal government's decision to go this way because it's important to get people to work right away. Again, the Conference Board of Canada estimates that this pipeline will create the equivalent of 15,000 jobs in construction and the equivalent of 37,000 direct and indirect and induced jobs per year of operations. You know, I live up north, and I see every day the benefit that the energy industry brings to my town when people are working, and Alberta and Canada are going to get working.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Multiple Sclerosis Research and Treatment

Dr. Starke: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today is World MS Day. Multiple sclerosis has sadly been called Canada's disease because Canada and specifically Alberta have one of the highest rates of MS anywhere in the world. Now, this morning we were introduced to some of the world's brightest and best researchers who have come to Alberta because they acknowledge that the work done here is leading the world in MS research. To the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. We also heard from your ministry's director of biopharmaceuticals and life science initiatives. On World MS Day would the minister outline what MS initiatives are being conducted by his department, their costs, and what results they have achieved.

2:10

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Certainly, this is a very tragic situation. The member is absolutely right. Alberta's numbers are higher per

capita than most other parts of the world. This is a disease that impacts women often more than men and often younger rather than older, but anyone can get MS at any age. Certainly, the impacts are devastating. I am so proud of the fact that we have some of the best research and the best opportunities to address and find a cure for MS. One of the youth I met said that MS is his generation's polio.

Dr. Starke: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that once diagnosed, MS is a chronic, lifelong condition, and given that research conducted here in Alberta has shown that the drug minocycline provides very promising results for the treatment of early-stage MS patients and given that minocycline costs about \$600 per year while other MS medications typically cost between \$20,000 and \$40,000 per year, to the Health minister. Minocycline is not approved by Health Canada for the treatment of MS. What efforts are you making to change that situation to benefit the thousands of Albertans who live with this disease?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member as well as the many Albertans who are engaging in advocacy on this very issue. We do respect Health Canada's role in identifying drugs being on label or not being on label as well as the Pan-Canadian Pharmaceutical Alliance and the work they do around drug purchasing and access. We'll continue to make sure that the committees have the appropriate information, and we will continue to be advocates for a fair process so that we can get the best outcome. We appreciate the monetary opportunities here, but the biggest goal is to make sure that we improve people's lives.

Dr. Starke: Well, Mr. Speaker, on that subject, given that advancements in Canadian MS research have increased the number of medications for treatment of this disease from one to 14 and given that different MS medications will have different clinical responses in different patients and given that one such medication, Copaxone, was approved by Health Canada in 2016 but is still not included in the Alberta drug formulary, to the minister. The Alberta Health website still lists Copaxone as requiring special authorization. What is the reason for the delay in its full approval, and when might patients who could benefit from this drug anticipate that happening?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the member for the important question. Again to the MS Society and everyone who's advocating for increased treatment opportunities – all the physicians, family members, and patients who are continuing to do work on this – we honour them and their work while we all work together to find a cure. Making sure that we have the right treatments along that journey is also important.

In terms of the Pan-Canadian Pharmaceutical Alliance piece that I mentioned previously, that's one of the pieces that's still working its way through the system to ensure that we get the best results as well as the best investment for the patients, the citizens of Alberta.

Thank you.

Provincial Debt-servicing Costs

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, borrowing, borrowing, and more borrowing. I'm sure it all sounds so inconsequential to the NDP, but there's a real cost to this misguided borrowing, \$2 billion this year and \$4 billion by 2023. Two billion dollars could have hired 25,000 nurses; instead, Bay Street bankers will pocket the money.

To the Minister of Finance: how can you explain to Albertans that due to your wall of debt, \$2 billion of interest this year will get them nothing?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think it's important to put this all in context, of course, first. Alberta has the lowest net debt to GDP ratio among the provinces, and that will still be the case when we return to balance in 2023-2024. It shows that our plan is working. We've reduced the deficit by \$1.5 billion in November at the Q3 without having to fire thousands of public servants, like that side over there would do any day of the week.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, given that every dollar we spend on servicing our debt is a dollar that cannot be spent on critical services and given that money paid towards interest will not hire front-line health care workers or front-line educators to take care of Albertans, to the minister: what is your plan – what is your plan – to get Alberta back to debt free so we can get back to funding Albertans' priorities?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. First, we need to get to balance, and we're going to do that by 2023-2024. We need to put our borrowing costs in perspective. Again, just to do that, Ontario spends 8 cents of every dollar for borrowing costs; we spend only 3 cents. We're also taking a look at all the expenses and making sure that we're spending each tax dollar in the best way possible. We've cut the salaries and eliminated the bonuses of the highest paid executives. The highest paid executives were put in place by the Conservative government, and we've reduced those by \$33 million over three years.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, given that the Finance minister's benchmark is Ontario, the subjurisdiction deepest in debt in the whole world, and given that by 2023 this Finance minister will be sending \$4 billion annually to Bay Street bankers and given that \$4 billion is more than the operating expenses of the entire Community and Social Services department, to the minister: how can you justify – how can you justify – sending billions to big banks instead of to critical Alberta services?

Mr. Ceci: It's interesting. They run Ontario down some days, and other days they go down to Ontario and they talk about how it's the best place in the world, Mr. Speaker.

Our debt-servicing costs are also lower than British Columbia's, Mr. Speaker. We're doing those things we think we need to get us back to balance. We have a number of actions that we're taking to freeze salaries of management and non-union employees. We strengthened the hiring restraint, and we have cut travel and hospitality expenses, something that side didn't do. They travelled like drunken sailors. We're not doing that. We've cut those expenses significantly.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mathematics Education

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Calgary board of education has had to hire 31 math coaches to cover 61 targeted schools at a cost of over \$3 million. The other 180 schools will be

tasked with appointing math leaders, teachers, or administrators with math expertise. However, we need to ensure that there are enough teachers in Alberta who graduate with this math expertise. To the Minister of Education: what specific actions are you taking, along with Advanced Education, to increase the number of math specialists graduating from Alberta's various educational programs?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. Certainly, we are focusing, as part of a new curriculum development, on strengthening the math skills of our students. I applaud the CBE for their initiative. We're looking specifically with postsecondary institutions in regard to – we have a bursary available for people to take math specialty training. We're working with the postsecondary institutions to help build the curriculum to strengthen the math area, and it's a very productive relationship, that we will continue to nurture.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that last year within the Calgary board of education more than 25 per cent of students in grades 6 and 9 failed their math PATs and given that the grade 12 diploma exam results in math are consistently lower than other core subjects and given that at least some of these poor results can be directly attributed to the heavy focus on discovery math, again to the minister: what specific changes to the way math is taught in Alberta are being introduced in the new curriculum, and how are we going to avoid the fiasco that was discovery math?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, through our work in curriculum, our work in the PATs – in the grade 6 PATs and grade 9 as well we introduced a no-calculator portion of that exam and saw some interesting results and places where we can actually focus to improve. Grade 12 exams: we're having a written portion for those exams now. You know, we're taking the bull by the metaphorical horns here in regard to improving math outcomes, and we're doing that through the curriculum and doing it through long-term, stable funding for our education system.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that parents are concerned that the math curriculum doesn't reflect a movement away from discovery math and given that one parent described this approach thusly, that it's almost as if there is an expectation of failure before students even have an opportunity to show what they are capable of, again to the minister: what specific actions has the minister taken to ensure that basic algorithms and traditional teaching practices are included as the driving force in the new curriculum?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said, the no-calculator portion that I put into grade 6 and grade 9 is an indication that we're looking for fundamental skills, foundational skills in mathematics to be emphasized. Certainly, we have been working hard with teachers in building the new curriculum and so forth. You know, you have to look forward in order to build something that is appropriate, and part of that is to actually have new curriculum. For the Leader of the Opposition to suggest that he would put the

curriculum into the shredder if elected – hopefully not – is definitely not looking forward. It's looking deeply backwards.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

2:20 Premier's Former Chief of Staff's Consulting Contract

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, I've repeatedly asked this government to explain why they felt it was appropriate to hire John Heaney, the former chief of staff to the Premier, as an adviser despite being the subject of an ongoing investigation. Now, twice this week the minister has assured this House that he worked closely with the Ethics Commissioner to achieve an exemption that would allow Mr. Heaney to lobby another government while working for the government of Alberta. To the minister: who authorized this exemption for Mr. Heaney?

Mr. Ceci: To correct the record, I didn't say that I worked closely with the Ethics Commissioner. I said that there was work done with the Ethics Commissioner to find out more about the exemption, that was signed off on by the chief of staff of the Premier of Alberta, who signs the contracts for the Premier's staff and for ministers' staff and their offices. That's the person who did that, Mr. Speaker. We're very happy with the results that Mr. Heaney has helped achieve with the pipeline approval and the government of Canada coming in to buy that pipeline.

Mr. Cooper: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that that is not what he said earlier in the House and that just minutes ago he told a reporter that the Ethics Commissioner had granted the exemption and that now we all know for a fact that the Ethics Commissioner never granted an exemption and that it was merely the chief of staff to the Premier or perhaps even your chief of staff, will he table the exemption in this House and actually reveal who provided the exemption?

Mr. Ceci: I think I've been clear. The Ethics Commissioner was consulted on the exemption. She provided that information. Her office did. It was signed off on by the chief of staff of the Premier of Alberta. Mr. Speaker, you know, this seems like a desperate distraction to take the air out of the room with regard to the pipeline that the federal government has bought on behalf of probably all of Canada now and which will make things ultimately way better in terms of the economy of this province and Canada.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, it's very clear that he implied that the Ethics Commissioner provided an exemption.

Given that the news release from the Premier's office last August claimed that Mr. Heaney would serve as chief of staff, quote, till October 6 before returning to practise law in British Columbia, end quote, and given that his new contract was posted online and claims that he actually started on October 9, to the minister: why did the government announce that Mr. Heaney was leaving on a Friday when he was actually quietly retitled on the next Monday?

Mr. Ceci: Mr. Speaker, he wasn't retitled. He was hired on a contract. We did consult with the Ethics Commissioner on the exemption. We will table the exemption. This is, again, a desperate attempt to talk about anything else but the success of the pipeline approvals.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Educational Curriculum Review Participants

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently I was at two different events on the issue of how representative of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students and visible minority children the current K to 12 curriculum is. Questioners were concerned that the current curriculum did not address their history, culture, and contribution to Alberta. These questioners were interested in contributing to the revision of the revised curriculum. To the Minister of Education: how have First Nations, immigrant, and visible minority communities been involved in and contributed to the revision of the curriculum?

The Speaker: The Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, our government is working with teachers and postsecondary institutions and with expert tables on working on the grade 6 core subject areas. With this rewrite, we are incorporating content on the history and the culture of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people into every single subject in our curriculum so it better represents our province. Our government is providing teachers with lesson plans as well to have that same First Nations, Métis, and Inuit history come to life in our classrooms.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that some, including the Leader of the Opposition, have suggested they would put this government's revised curriculum through the shredder, how important is it to all students that the curriculum is representative of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students as well as visible minorities?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's extremely important that our curriculum represents our province in the broadest way, both the history and what the composition of our population is here today. Students deserve to see themselves represented in our curriculum. You know, of course, some of this curriculum that we are currently using is more than 30 years old, so it's high time to build curriculum, which is what we are doing, instead of perhaps moving back, suggesting that we simply shred that curriculum, as the opposition had suggested.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: since some members, including the Leader of the Opposition, have suggested that the curriculum revisions were done by a small group of socialists, could the minister elaborate: how were Albertan parents consulted, and how were teachers, educators chosen to participate in the work of the curriculum revisions?

Mr. Eggen: I think it's good to clear the air on that one, Mr. Speaker. We have literally, I think, more than 30,000 submissions from the Alberta public in regard to the curriculum. We have an ongoing interaction with parents. We have the K to 4 curriculum right now being looked at by parents and by postsecondary institutions and teachers and so forth and boards as well. You know, it's the most open and transparent process of building curriculum that this province has ever seen. Quite frankly, I'm very proud of the process thus far, and we will build something very strong that will help to define better learning outcomes for Alberta kids.

Trans Mountain Pipeline Public Purchase

(continued)

Mr. Loewen: The complete failure of the Alberta NDP and the Trudeau Liberals along with the obstructionist B.C. NDP and the radical environmentalists has caused Kinder Morgan to pull out and has made it necessary for the federal government to purchase the 65-year-old Kinder Morgan pipeline along with the new project, but this really changes nothing as to the question of certainty. Everyone that was opposed is still opposed. This issue was never about Kinder Morgan not having the money. How does the federal government buying out the pipeline change the fact that the federal government still has to enforce the law and Alberta's constitutional rights?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much. We know that the Leader of the Official Opposition has a history of investing in the Ontario auto industry and that, you know, his caucus seems to be okay with that, but this new federal investment is in Alberta's industry, oil and gas. It's about ensuring that we get fair value from that industry as well. So, Mr. Speaker, I have to say that sometimes you need to pick up the right tools to make sure you get the job done. We have been waiting a very, very long time to get access to tidewater, nine years, when the Leader of the Official Opposition was in cabinet in Ottawa. With our Premier here in Alberta we've been able to get this pipeline, and I'm so proud of it.

Mr. Loewen: Given that that wasn't an answer to the question and given that the Premier's hand-picked OSAG co-chair Tzaporah Berman promises that, quote, all hell will break loose, end quote, with 22,000 protestors and that the Environment minister's good friend and book cowriter Mike Hudema agrees with Berman and is vowing to fight and given that the Premier's good friend John Horgan has said that the purchase changes nothing in his fight against the pipeline, how can the NDP be taking victory laps when the only change is the ownership of the pipeline and the reality is that the federal government still needs to step up and enforce the law and Constitution?

The Speaker: The Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the fact of the matter is that a majority of British Columbians now support this project; a majority of Canadians support this project. You know what? A good 80, 90 per cent of Albertans, maybe more, support this project. It seems to me that the only people who don't support this project are the United Conservative Party.

Mr. Loewen: Given that, Mr. Speaker, we have supported all pipelines all the time, unlike the government members, and given that the Alberta NDP have never applied any serious pressure on the B.C. government and other pipeline opponents and given that the federal government has refused to enforce the law and their constitutional authority, then how can this government claim success when their supposed victory comes as a result of the absolute failure to enable a private company that was willing and able to use its own money to build a pipeline, which only required government to do its job and facilitate construction without unreasonable delays?

Ms Hoffman: Sorry for my laughter there. The support from Conservatives in this country was about as valid as the support for their grassroots guarantee: here one day, gone the next; lots of paper approvals, no actual pipelines to tidewater. This government under

our Premier's leadership has been able to achieve something that Canada hasn't seen since the 1950s, and that's approval and significant progress, construction that is imminent in the days and hours ahead, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that we get our Canadian product to Canadian tidewater and get a fair price for our industry.

2:30

Adverse Possession of Property

Mr. Gottfried: Mr. Speaker, a few short weeks ago this government stood against property rights for Albertans. By allowing adverse possession to continue, Albertans remain at risk of property loss because you did not take the opportunity to do the right thing. My constituent Jim McIndoe, who was introduced during the debate, has since been forced to pay \$14,000 to the individual who legally seized his land thanks to this archaic law. To the Minister of Justice: why did you choose to ignore my constituent's and other impacted Albertans' rights by rejecting this opportunity to appropriately address adverse possession, known as squatters' rights?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Again, this is an issue that was discussed at committee, in an all-party committee. The committee recommended that adverse possession be abolished. The government therefore went to the Alberta Law Reform Institute and asked them to write a report on how it should be abolished to ensure that we weren't just affecting two acts but, in fact, every act that touched on the issue of adverse possession. We've asked them to do that work. The work will be coming back, as I understand, in the fall, and at that time we will examine it.

Mr. Gottfried: Mr. Speaker, given that Mr. McIndoe has lost \$100,000 worth of land which in any other province would legally still be his and given that in addition to this egregious seizure, he has been forced to pay \$14,000 in legal fees to his neighbour, \$5,000 in surveyor's costs, and \$40,000 of his own legal costs, for a grand total of \$159,000, again to the minister: can you explain to me and all Albertans why your government continues to support the current legislation, which has left my constituent \$159,000 in the red because of an archaic law and a land-coveting neighbour?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, I think it's quite clear that the government is not supporting an archaic law. We are moving forward to make progress on this issue. It went to an all-party committee. The all-party committee voted entirely in favour of that. This government is moving forward on getting rid of adverse possession. Those folks over there sat here for 40 years and did nothing about it.

Mr. Gottfried: Mr. Speaker, that committee recommended you abolish it.

Given that the Department of Justice has dithered time and again in taking meaningful action to abolish adverse possession and given that this failure comes despite repeated motions by the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship, supported by strong recommendations from the Property Rights Advocate, and given that both Mr. McIndoe and I have little faith in this government's commitment to abolishing adverse possession before the next election, to the minister: can you tell Albertans specifically when you formally directed the Law Reform Institute to study this issue, and will you commit today to abolishing adverse possession before the next election?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, I'm not sure why we're answering this so many times in a row, but an all-party committee, supported by our members over here and the government, has recommended the abolition of adverse possession. We are awaiting a report to ensure that we get it right since this affects the fundamental property rights of a number of individuals. This government has made significantly more progress on this issue in three years than those folks did in 44.

**Premier's Former Chief of Staff's
Consulting Contract
(continued)**

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the Premier's former chief of staff resigned in October of last year. Just days later he was put on contract to receive \$135,000 from taxpayers while also being a lobbyist for the marijuana industry. The Minister of Finance said earlier today that this was approved by the Ethics Commissioner. That is not possible. The Ethics Commissioner doesn't give approval for exemptions for former senior government staff to become lobbyists. Why did the minister mislead the media on this?

Mr. Ceci: Mr. Speaker, what this Finance minister is endeavouring to do is to say that there were discussions with the Ethics Commissioner with regard to the outside work of Mr. Heaney. Mr. Heaney is working as a consultant on contract to the government of Alberta with regard to other actions not involving cannabis, not involving the outside work that he's doing. He's working for us around the path to balance and the Energy file.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I have no idea what the minister is endeavouring to say. What I do know – I have a transcript of what he said. About an hour ago he said that an exemption was granted for his New Democrat friend Mr. Heaney to become a lobbyist, by the Ethics Commissioner, but no such approval was granted. Why did the minister mislead the media about this?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much. We followed the advice of the Ethics Commissioner with regard to the work that Mr. Heaney was doing outside of government on his own time and his own business. That outside business or undertaking approval: there was a consultation with the Ethics Commissioner around that, around how that should be structured. I have that here, Mr. Speaker, and I'll table it later.

Mr. Kenney: To be clear, Mr. Speaker, the government claimed that it got approval from the Ethics Commissioner, but it didn't.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the minister: is this whole affair a reflection of the NDP standard of public ethics, that they take a chief of staff in a six-figure job and put him on a sweetheart contract with a six-figure income while he's making big money from the pot industry? Is this what Albertans expected from the NDP when it comes to public ethics?

Ms Hoffman: I just want to reiterate that the minister has made it very clear that he spoke – he's clarified that several times, Mr. Speaker.

The other thing I want to make clear is that we did invest in ensuring that we had the best advice to get us approvals and to get us action on the Trans Mountain pipeline, Mr. Speaker. We got that yesterday. We got huge advancements, and construction is

imminent. I want to say thank you to the Energy minister and to the Premier for their leadership on this file and for having the staff to support them in doing that work. Yesterday was very good news for Alberta and for the Canadian economy.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the other day I asked the government if Mr. Heaney received a severance. They said no, but it now appears that he did receive a severance called a \$135,000 contract, a sweetheart golden handshake, while at the same time going out there and becoming a high-priced NDP lobbyist for the pot industry. Isn't the government ashamed of itself for allowing this to happen? Is this really the standard of public ethics to which it committed itself to Albertans in the last campaign?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, I get why the member is asking about severance. Under Conservative government after Conservative government here in Alberta we saw massive severance and payouts. Our government has chosen to do things differently. We've gotten rid of the sweetheart contracts that they used to have. We've gotten rid of the massive golf memberships and other types of perks like that. Instead, we're hiring people to do specific jobs. The specific job that was referenced was helping us get Trans Mountain, get our product to tidewater. Yesterday we achieved that. We are so proud, and we welcome you to help us celebrate that work.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, Albertans can see this for what it is. It's a sweetheart golden handshake for a top, wealthy New Democrat lobbyist. I'd like to ask any minister of this government: has Mr. Heaney lobbied or spoken to any minister of this government about representing his clients in his pot industry, for which he received enormous compensation?

Mr. Mason: Point of order.

The Speaker: Point of order noted.

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, we hire real people to do real work, and we're getting real results for the people of Alberta. Yesterday we saw a huge victory for the Trans Mountain pipeline. I know it isn't a \$9 billion cheque to the auto industry of Ontario. It's an investment in a pipeline and ensuring that we get the very best product and the right jobs, 15,000 jobs, \$15 billion to our economy, because of the work of this Premier and this government. I'm very proud of that.

Mr. Kenney: Is the minister very proud of her government enriching a powerful pot lobbyist who used to be the Premier's chief of staff, and will the minister confirm that said NDP lobbyist has not spoken to a single minister of the Crown in representing his clients?

Ms Hoffman: Well, I can assure the hon. member that I haven't experienced any lobbying in that regard, and I will certainly consult with my colleagues. But, Mr. Speaker, what I can tell you is that we hired somebody on a contract to get us results on Trans Mountain pipeline. Yesterday we saw very good results for Trans Mountain pipeline. This is good for the people of Alberta, it's good for the people of Canada, and I do not need to apologize for that. It's about time that you guys stopped trying to throw shade on yesterday's good news and help us get this pipeline built. This is very, very good news for the people of Alberta.

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

2:40

Accessibility Initiatives

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This week is National AccessAbility Week. This is an important opportunity to

advocate for increased accessibility and inclusion of persons with disabilities in Alberta and across Canada. To the Minister of Community and Social Services: what is the government doing to support this important week?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the important question. Albertans of varying abilities deserve every opportunity to participate fully and meaningfully in all aspects of economic, cultural, social, and political life, and as government we are committed to working to increase accessibility and inclusion, to value and recognize the hard work of countless advocates, leaders across Alberta who champion accessibility each and every day.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What is the government doing to increase accessibility and reduce barriers for Albertans with disabilities? To the same minister.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have made a number of changes; for instance, by improving service dog rules to increase access for Albertans. Five new schools were added to the qualified list, and owner-trained dogs can now be tested. We are increasing access to postsecondary education by funding inclusive post-secondary education. We have increased access to employment through our internship program with government. Twenty new student interns were hired. We have also appointed a 15-member Premier's council to advocate on the issues relating . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.
Second supplemental.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that while these improvements mentioned by the minister have been made, many Albertans with disabilities still face barriers, what is the government doing to break down these barriers so that all Albertans can participate fully in their communities? To the same minister.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While our government has taken a number of important steps, it is clear that there is more work that needs to be done to make sure that Albertans with disabilities are fully included, and that is why we are taking further action by hiring Alberta's first disability advocate. We have introduced Bill 5 to make sure that Albertans with disabilities have greater financial stability. Instead of making reckless cuts, we have increased funding to the PDD and AISH programs, and we are also doing a review of the PDD program.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Hon. members, in 30 seconds we'll continue with Members' Statements.

Members' Statements (continued)

Off-highway Vehicle Users' Public Land Access

Mr. Stier: Mr. Speaker, once again it's evident that Albertans simply cannot trust this NDP government. One week ago an article regarding changes and restrictions regarding access to public lands

for random campers and off-road enthusiasts along the eastern slopes was published in the *Calgary Herald*. This caught the attention of a vast number of extremely concerned southern and central Alberta outdoor recreationalists. After all, in just three short years, despite assurances in a letter in December of '15 to the local Off Highway Vehicle Association and other recreational groups from the Minister of Environment and Parks that off-highway vehicle use would continue to be permitted, the policies since then have drastically reduced the access by almost 70 per cent.

As a result, recreation associations, off-highway equipment dealers, RV dealers, sporting goods distributors, retailers, recreation enthusiasts, people with families, and the general public are all greatly worried in southern Alberta that their leisure activities and recreation choices are now being eliminated, and they now have almost nowhere to go.

This entire situation seems so unfair. For years both federal and provincial governments had agreements and provided \$2.3 million in funding in recognition of value of this form of recreation and the good work accomplished by off-highway vehicle associations like the AOHVA and its member clubs. They have contributed thousands of volunteer hours and the proper use of those funds to educate users, to assist in the stewardship of trails, and even purchase and construct bridges over valuable stream beds. All of that now seems lost forever to them, so it's no small wonder that recreation associations and outdoor recreationists don't trust this NDP government. It's readily apparent that user agreements are not worth the paper they're written on and that taxpayers' money has been wasted again.

Thank you.

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

Climate Leadership Plan

Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In November 2015 our government introduced the climate leadership plan, a made-in-Alberta strategy to reduce carbon emissions while diversifying our economy, creating jobs, and protecting our health and environment. When I go door to door, my constituents are always asking me about the climate leadership plan and how it will affect them. It's a good question. With all the fearmongering from the UCP, it can be hard to get to the truth. The plan is designed for Alberta's economy, and it is working.

First, the climate leadership plan was directly responsible for the federal approval of two new energy infrastructure projects, the Trans Mountain expansion and Enbridge line 3, that are critically important to Alberta's economy. Second, 60 per cent of Alberta's families will receive a full carbon levy rebate, and every penny raised will be invested back to diversify Alberta's economy and create more jobs in infrastructure, energy efficiency, and renewable energy. Finally, all Albertans, including businesses, not-for-profits, and recreational and community centres, will benefit from energy efficiency programs, which will not only help families save on their heating bills but also create hundreds of jobs right here in this province.

These benefits are possible because of the climate leadership plan, and it is made right here in Alberta, not Ottawa. It is designed by Albertans for Albertans. That means that our economy and our communities will see the most benefits from the actions we take. Mr. Speaker, unlike the United Conservative Party, we understand that climate change is a real and man-made problem. Don't believe the fearmongering. With this made-in-Alberta climate leadership plan we are moving forward, taking our place as a global energy leader with new pipelines and new jobs in a stronger, more

diversified economy. This was proven yesterday by the decision on the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion, a well-thought-out economic plan that works hand in hand with our climate leadership plan to ensure success for our families and communities.

Thank you very much.

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

Premier's Former Chief of Staff's Consulting Contract

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the last three years this government has made a mockery of the principles of openness, accountability, and transparency. The NDP have continually shown patterns of secrecy over the course of their mandate, whether it's the deletion of over 800,000 e-mails by incentivizing government officials to clear out their records in return for gift cards or the fact that they currently have not one, not two, not three, but four open investigations regarding their activities before the office of the Privacy Commissioner.

So you can understand my shock at the very public leaving of his post on October 6 of the Premier's former chief of staff to, quote, spend time with this family and return to British Columbia, when Mr. Heaney was immediately rehired on October 9 to serve as the executive adviser to the Minister of Finance, earning a cool \$130,000 a year to provide legal advice despite the fact that he's not able to practise law in Alberta, nor does he reside here. But perhaps most shocking is the fact that Mr. Heaney is a registered lobbyist for Nuuvera cannabis in B.C., which is in clear violation of the code of conduct for political staff. Mr. Heaney reports directly to the Minister of Finance, who is responsible for the rollout of cannabis sales in Alberta, and Nuuvera is currently lobbying that same minister.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I've heard from both the Finance minister and the Deputy Premier several times that Mr. Heaney's contract has an addendum and that he has an exemption for his lobbying, which was approved by the Ethics Commissioner. Given the government's pattern of misinformation, I decided to follow up on that claim and now know for a fact that Mr. Heaney did not receive an exemption from the Ethics Commissioner. This government owes Albertans an apology.

2:50 Supervised Drug Consumption Site in Lethbridge

Ms Fitzpatrick: Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to be in this Legislature to represent my constituency, my city, and the people of Alberta. Today I'm speaking about ARCHES' safe consumption site. Last year as the scope of the opioid crisis continued to escalate, ARCHES took the steps necessary to address it. They formed a coalition incorporating 16 groups with a vested interest in dealing with this crisis, from police to Alberta Health Services. They successfully completed the stringent application process both federally and provincially.

In just over the two months since the site opened, the use and demand at ARCHES is higher than expected. Seventy-plus deaths have been prevented, over 2,000 naloxone kits have been distributed, and over 150 overdose reversals have been reported. We know that there are approximately 3,000 drug users in Lethbridge. Based on our positive results and other evidence-based research, we know that harm reduction works to move people through the spectrum from active use to treatment. This saves lives.

But there is more work to be done to help people move forward. Other services also need to be available so that people who are ready to make the change in their lives don't slip backwards. These

are real people with parents, siblings, children, and loved ones. They are not just addicts who inject poison into their bodies, as the Leader of the Opposition characterized them. I am proud that our government is moving forward with help and, we know, must do more.

I will continue to advocate for more services such as intox to help the citizens of Lethbridge and Alberta . . .

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

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to provide notice that at the appropriate time I will move the following motion.

Pursuant to Standing Order 30 be it resolved that the ordinary business of the Legislative Assembly be adjourned to discuss a matter of urgent public importance; namely, the need to discuss what measures must be taken to ensure that construction of the Trans Mountain expansion project is completed following the withdrawal of Kinder Morgan, the recently announced deal with the government of Canada, and the declaration of continued opposition and uncertainty from the NDP government of British Columbia.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Mr. Speaker, I will be moving the following motion. You have already received copies in advance.

Pursuant to Standing Order 30 be it resolved that the ordinary business of the Legislative Assembly be adjourned to discuss a matter of urgent public importance; namely, details of Alberta's support for the Trans Mountain expansion project.

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have five copies of an article that I referenced today. It's an analysis by the CBC titled Oilpatch Pleased for Pipeline Progress but Concerns about Investment Climate Persist.

The Speaker: Any other hon. members? The Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Yes, The tabling that I mentioned that I was going to provide: this is a tabling of an amended employment agreement with regard to Mr. Heaney, which advice in its construction was from the Ethics Commissioner's office. It is dated February 7.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Ms Gray, Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal, pursuant to the Engineering and Geoscience Professions Act the Association of Science and Engineering Technology Professionals of Alberta annual report 2017, the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Alberta annual report 2017; pursuant to the Agrology Profession Act the Alberta Institute of Agrologists 2017 annual report and conference handbook; responses to questions raised by Dr. Swann, Member for Calgary-Mountain View, and Mr. Hunter, Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, during Ministry of Labour 2018-19 main estimates debate.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I think we had one point of order. Or were there two?

The Government House Leader.

Point of Order

Allegations against a Nonmember

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to raise a point of order. The Minister of Finance was asked questions today by the Member for Calgary-Lougheed. The content of the questions, including the preambles, in my view violate some very important rules and standards of this Assembly.

I'll start by suggesting here that the violations took place, and I have made some notes here. I don't have the Blues, but I think these are pretty accurate. He suggested that the contract that Mr. Heaney signed with the government was "a sweetheart, golden handshake." He accused the government of enriching a powerful pot lobbyist, Mr. Speaker. He actually asked members of the government if Mr. Heaney had lobbied any member of the government on behalf of their clients, being the cannabis company, and that he's been told that Mr. Heaney's role is restricted to the province of British Columbia and is not happening here.

Now, Mr. Speaker, on page 622 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, under rules of order and decorum, it states:

Members are discouraged from referring by name to persons who are not Members of Parliament and who do not enjoy parliamentary immunity, except in extraordinary circumstances when the national interest calls for this. The Speaker has ruled that Members have a responsibility to protect the innocent not only from outright slander, but from any slur directly or indirectly implied, and has suggested that Members avoid as much as possible mentioning by name people from outside the House who are unable to reply in their own defence.

Mr. Speaker, in *Beauchesne's*, page 151, section 493(4) states: "The Speaker has cautioned Members to exercise great care in making statements about persons who are outside the House and unable to reply."

Mr. Speaker, on June 25, 2015, you yourself cautioned members that "members must remember that when they refer to people outside of the Assembly, those individuals have no ability to respond to the allegations" that have been made there.

Previously, Speaker Zwozdesky in 2012 made similar cautions. On November 26 of that year he said: "We should not be referring to people who are not here and not able to defend themselves."

Mr. Speaker, what the Member for Calgary-Lougheed did was outrageous. He asked members of government if Mr. Heaney had violated the ethics laws of this province with no evidence whatsoever that that had taken place. He has no evidence. He is trying to smear an individual whose contract is public and who is providing value for money for the contract that he has been engaged in.

3:00

This is very interesting because these are the very tactics, Mr. Speaker, that were employed by Joseph McCarthy during the witch hunt trials of the 1950s: smearing people by implication who can't defend themselves. The Member for Calgary-Lougheed, the Leader of the Official Opposition, purports to be and upholds himself as the defender of order and decorum, but it is pretty clear that he is very ready to get right down into the gutter and smear individuals with no evidence whatsoever.

Mr. Speaker, it's my view that you in your role as the Speaker of the Assembly have a responsibility to intervene in these cases. It is always most difficult for us during question period to wait until the end while this kind of disgusting behaviour takes place in this

Assembly. I want the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed, the Leader of the Official Opposition, to come into this place and apologize to the House and to Mr. Heaney for smearing and slandering his reputation with no evidence whatsoever. If he has evidence, then he has a responsibility to place it before this House. Otherwise, he needs to desist from this disgusting behaviour.

The Speaker: The Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. That was an interesting rant from the Government House Leader. Let me first start off by being very clear. The Leader of the Opposition nor any member of this party will ever apologize for standing up for Albertans and asking this government questions on behalf of Albertans. That is our job.

It is interesting the reaction that we're getting from the government about a question. At no time did the Leader of the Opposition accuse Mr. Heaney of anything, to be clear. He asked some questions about what the Finance minister said in regard to Mr. Heaney. In addition to that, he asked some questions about what that contract looks like and his role with the government. The Finance minister earlier today told the media that they, in fact, consulted with the Ethics Commissioner during this process. That now turns out not to be true, and the hon. member was discussing that.

Now, I'd like to refer, because the Government House Leader brought it up, to the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* on page 622. Let me be clear. The quote he's talking about says, "Except in extraordinary circumstances when the national interest calls for this." I would submit, without a doubt, that the public interest is at play here. It is the job of the opposition to ask questions on behalf of the public, and this clearly was in the public interest.

Further to that, Mr. Speaker, it is very rich for the NDP to stand up in this House and give an argument like that by the Government House Leader when that party across from me spent the entire fall session, when the hon. Leader of the Opposition was not a member of this place, saying his name in this place and slandering it over and over and over to a record number in parliamentary history. Over and over, no objection. In fact, when we raised a point of order about that to try to bring some semblance of control and pointed out that that hon. member was not a member of this Chamber and did not have an opportunity to defend himself, that Government House Leader stood up and said that they had the right to do that, and you ruled with them. You're the Speaker. You felt that that was the appropriate ruling, and that was your decision. This certainly doesn't change anything.

Now, with all that said, this is clearly a matter of debate. While the government wants to dodge answering questions on their behaviour on this contract, the fact that they hid this contract from the public, the fact that they told the public that this individual had left the employment of the Premier and then just 72 hours later gave this individual a significant contract, which never became public till sometime around April, is really the question. Why the Finance minister told this Chamber that the Ethics Commissioner was consulted is a question. Why the Finance minister told the media that the Ethics Commissioner was part of that process is a question.

There are lots of questions that remain, but what is clear is that this is, in fact, not a point of order. It is an attempt to distract from this government's behaviour and for this government to go out of their way to not be held accountable in this Chamber. And that will not happen, Mr. Speaker. I can promise you that.

Mr. Fraser: Mr. Speaker, I find it very surprising that the government is calling a point of order around questions that need to

be asked of the government. Let's go back a little ways to when the government was the opposition. Right now if the Progressive Conservative Party – when I was part of that government and cabinet, they would have lit their hair on fire with the idea that a registered lobbyist has access to cabinet, looking at finance details and energy details. I'm not suggesting that the government is doing anything untoward or despicable, but it is not a stretch to imagine. It's easy to draw the lines, and it is shaking the public confidence that a registered lobbyist – I'll use this example. How do the people trying to create businesses in Alberta around marijuana and the sale and distribution of marijuana feel about their business plans knowing that a B.C. registered lobbyist is working on behalf of those companies but has access to the government, the Crown, in Alberta? That just does not make sense.

I am surprised that this government has put themselves in this position. I'm surprised that they have put Albertans in this position. We should not even be here.

Mr. Mason: That's not the point of order.

Mr. Fraser: This is the point of order. You're calling the point of order. So I'm saying that this is not a point of order; this is a matter of asking questions where you've put Albertans and Albertans' businesses at risk by allowing a B.C. registered lobbyist access to your government. It's completely wrong, and it's unacceptable.

The Speaker: Hon. member, if I might.

Mr. Fraser: It's not a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Calgary-South East, the point of order as I understand it is whether or not it's appropriate for an individual who is independent from the Assembly – he's a contract employee. Would you believe, in your opinion, that it is fair and reasonable that that person's work relationship could and should be mentioned within the Assembly. Is that correct?

Mr. Fraser: Mr. Speaker, let me clarify. When somebody works for Executive Council and for cabinet but is also listed as a registered lobbyist, in my mind, that is an extension of this government. They're working on behalf of the government, not private members. So it's a matter of debate. I don't feel that it was a point of order. This gentleman has put his name up as a lobbyist, and now he is working for the Crown in Alberta.

I think the questions are valid, and I don't see a point of order here.

The Speaker: Is there any new information, hon. member, new, significant information?

Mr. Cooper: Yes.

The Speaker: You'd better get to it quick, hon. member, because I've had too much experience in this place.

Mr. Cooper: I'll get to it very quickly, and I'll make one point, and that is just to correct the record. Mr. Heaney is not a contracted employee; he is an employee of the government.

The Speaker: Hon. members, this particular one I'd like to defer to a later date. I need to do some more research and thought on this matter.

Requests for Emergency Debate

The Speaker: Are you speaking to the Standing Order 30?

Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion Completion

Mr. Nixon: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for recognizing me. I am rising on the Standing Order 30 that I already gave notice of. I won't reread it to save time. I will point out that according to our standing orders I had to provide two hours' notice for this motion, and we were able to get that to your office well before 11:30 today.

The question, of course, is urgency in regard to Kinder Morgan. I think that all of the province and all members of this House agree on the urgency of that project. But the urgency of the debate that we are requesting today, the reason that that is an urgent situation and that we ask you to provide us the opportunity to have a discussion on behalf of Albertans in this Assembly is because, quite frankly, of the announcement. While all Albertans and all members of this House stand and are focused on making sure we get this project built, and our leader was very clear about that yesterday, our concern still remains that the deadline is essentially here tomorrow. Kinder Morgan has now left the situation. You have already recognized that that was an urgent situation and let us have a debate on that, but clearly the urgency and the certainty for this project has not been handled in the announcement by the federal government.

3:10

Yesterday B.C.'s Premier said: we will continue with the full force of my efforts within the courts and within the rule of law. Yesterday, in addition to that, Tzeporah Berman, the deputy director of Stand.earth, said, "All hell is about to break loose in British Columbia." The Prime Minister, despite promising on April 15, 2018, to reassert and reinforce federal jurisdiction on Trans Mountain, still has not done that, and the government of Alberta still has not given royal assent to Bill 12 nor used it.

What that is doing, Mr. Speaker, is that it's still creating a tremendous amount of uncertainty around this project, now a project that is owned by the taxpayers and something that we need to get fixed. A capital market analyst said yesterday: we maintain our previous concern that the federal Liberal government will likely be highly reluctant to exercise force approaching the window of the next election cycle, expected next fall. GMP analysis said: we view the announcement as negative for the entities considering large, resource-focused capital investments to Canada such as LNG, pipelines, or oil sands projects given the inability for the rule of law and the regulatory approvals to allow projects to move forward.

Mr. Speaker, as you can see, the uncertainty of the situation, the certainty for this project still have not been addressed. No clear action has been taken by either the federal or the provincial government, in this case Alberta, to deal with the main issue, which is that the B.C. government continues to disrupt this project and that the federal government has not taken any action against the environmentalists that continue to block it illegally.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, I will close with this. One of the things that you need to consider, as you know, is whether or not there are other opportunities for us to have a debate on this process. Yesterday the Premier of Alberta stood for eight or nine minutes and talked about this from one angle. Some of it we agree with. Then the Leader of the Opposition only had about three minutes to be able to discuss that, and then that was the end of it. There is nothing else on the schedule for this House to discuss what is, arguably, the most important issue facing this province and this country right now.

This is the opportunity for the people's representatives of this province to have a discussion about the way forward on Kinder Morgan, and I ask that you rule that we can have a debate.

The Speaker: Hon. Member, just to clarify, there was an additional time granted to the leader. I'm bound by the standing orders, which is at three minutes for the response. There is no time limit that I'm aware of with respect to the ministerial, but that was the reason.

Mr. Nixon: I agree with you completely, Mr. Speaker. My intent was not to say that you ruled wrongly on that. My intent is to say that, clearly, this side of the House has not had an opportunity to debate this issue on behalf of our constituents.

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think the deal that was announced yesterday will be a great step forward for our economy and for our province, and it will put people to work building a pipeline to tidewater right away. We're getting closer than ever to breaking our land lock, to getting a better price for our resources, and to creating thousands of jobs.

It is very, very important, Mr. Speaker. The announcement yesterday is extremely important to this province, and I wish to acknowledge that. I am not going to dispute that at all. But as has been stated in this Chamber many times, being something of great importance does not make it a matter of urgent and pressing necessity as required by the standing orders. The standing orders state that a motion brought forward under section 30 must meet a number of conditions, including that it "must relate to a genuine emergency, calling for immediate and urgent consideration."

House of Commons Procedure and Practice provides further guidance. It says that "an emergency debate should be on a topic 'that is immediately relevant and of attention and concern throughout the nation'." It's my view, Mr. Speaker, that that doesn't meet the criteria.

There are very important criteria to be considered, and they have been laid out very clearly. One of them is whether or not other opportunities have existed for the matter to be debated. It must be an emergency, Mr. Speaker, and there must be no other opportunity for it to be debated in the House.

Citation 391 states:

The Speaker [must]... enforce the principle that subjects excluded by those rules cannot be brought forward thereon, such as a matter under adjudication by a court of law, or matters already discussed or appointed for consideration during the current session, whether upon a substantive motion, upon an amendment, or upon an Order of the Day.

Bosc and Gagnon similarly state:

Emergency debate provisions cannot be used to debate "items which, in a regular legislative program of the House of Commons and regular legislative consideration, can come before the House by way of amendments to existing statutes, or in any case will come before it in other ways."

That's at page 700.

This is a principle that has been applied in this Chamber by a number of Speakers; notably, a ruling on November 28, 2012. Speaker Zwozdesky explicitly pointed to some of those other avenues of debate in saying:

Urgency deals with whether or not there are other opportunities available to raise the matter. Now, I want to clarify for you that there are several vehicles available to you to do a [number] of things. One of them is question period, where a well-crafted question that meets the rules and proprieties of this House and of Houses across the world that are part of the Commonwealth parliamentary system – that exists there as one of those vehicles.

Secondly, a carefully crafted motion for return might accomplish something very similar, or a carefully worded written question might accomplish something similar. There is room for some debate within some of these vehicles.

Mr. Speaker, I would note for the House that there have been a number of opportunities for the matters contained in today's motion to be discussed in the Chamber.

There are three separate but related parts of the request; first, "the need to discuss what measures must be taken to ensure that construction of the Trans Mountain expansion project is completed following the withdrawal of Kinder Morgan." Mr. Speaker, the issue of what measures need to be taken to ensure the construction of the pipeline has been discussed probably more than any other matter during the course of this session. We put forward a very substantive government motion on this matter on the very first day of this sitting. The Leader of the Opposition and 11 of his caucus mates, a representative of the third party, and all of the independent members of the House participated in that debate.

The throne speech discussed the importance of the construction of a pipeline. Fifteen members of the Official Opposition spoke in response to the throne speech, Mr. Speaker.

Bill 12, Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act, was presented by the government in April. The bill was directly relevant to the issue of measures aimed at ensuring the construction of the pipeline. All members of the Assembly were afforded the opportunity to debate that bill before it passed earlier this month.

A debate was held under Standing Order 30 on April 9 to deal with a very similar matter, that being the news about the suspension of nonessential spending on the pipeline by Kinder Morgan. Six members of the Official Opposition, including their leader, participated in that debate.

Of course, the opposition have raised these matters at length in question period during the consideration of estimates. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Official Opposition's questions this session have dealt with little else.

Yesterday's announcement was very important, and for that reason, a ministerial statement was made by the Premier. The Leader of the Opposition, a representative of the third party, and independents were provided with an opportunity to reply.

Lastly, the request refers to "the declaration of continued opposition and uncertainty from the NDP government of British Columbia." The operative word here is "continued," Mr. Speaker. Bosc and Gagnon state: "Matters of chronic or continuing concern, such as economic conditions, unemployment rates and constitutional matters, have tended to be set aside" by the chair. The position of the government of B.C. is unfortunate, but it is a continuing one and one that does not need to be debated on an emergency basis.

Criteria two, Mr. Speaker, is whether or not the matter is vital to the public interest. Another criteria is that there must be an adverse effect on the public interest if the matter is not debated. *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules & Forms* is very explicit, stating that the item "must be so pressing that the public interest will suffer if it is not given immediate attention."

When a Standing Order 30 was actually proceeded with in 2013 on the issue of medevac services, Speaker Zwozdesky stated as follows:

I'm taking into account that the move of the medevac [airport]... is occurring tomorrow... Therefore, I find that there will be no other opportunity for this Assembly to debate this issue, which is of importance to many Albertans.

While yesterday's announcement was indeed very important, there is no reason to believe that a discussion of it this afternoon is necessary for the protection of the public interest.

3:20

I would note for members that we do have a number of very important bills set for debate this afternoon, including bills related

to women's right to choose, clean energy improvements for homeowners, financial security for persons with disabilities, and the electricity market.

We talk a great deal, Mr. Speaker, about pipelines in this Legislature, but when it comes to this deal to finally build a pipeline to tidewater, there doesn't seem to be as much to debate as the opposition would like to believe. Our time in this Legislature would be better spent on issues over which we have very genuine disagreement. Yesterday the opposition leader said that he supports efforts to get this pipeline built and even thanked our Premier for her hard work. Now is the time to move beyond talk and towards action. As our Premier said to Albertans yesterday: let's pick those tools back up; we've got a pipeline to build.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: You wish to speak, Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre? Is there something significant you'd like to add to the matter?

Mr. Nixon: Are you asking me?

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a curious situation because we have two very similar notices of motion under Standing Order 30. It's quite curious. I received an e-mail from your office yesterday, and it states that upon your office receiving a hard copy of a motion under Standing Order 30, it is customary for the member or caucus submitting the SO 30 to inform other caucuses or independents once a hard copy has been received by the Speaker's office.

Now, I'm not sure if government members were given official notice by the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, but my office certainly was not. However, we provided significant notice both, actually, in a news release more than 24 hours ago that we'd be putting forward a very similar motion for an emergency debate as well as in an official notice that was given to your office.

Now, I'm speaking . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, we're dealing with the one that the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre dealt with now. I'm sorry. It must speak to the substance of whether or not it should be an urgent matter. So I'd ask that you get to that rather than talk about another Standing Order 30.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Very well. The topic put forward – I'll speak to it here because it's virtually identical to the motion I've put forward as well, to be, I suppose, debated immediately after this – is urgent, and it is timely. There has been no debate yet beyond a few questions in question period on the idea of the government owning a pipeline. We've had lots of discussion on pipelines, but the idea of the government becoming an owner: it is urgent; it is timely.

The government of Alberta has committed \$2 billion of taxpayers' money to backstop it, the federal government more than \$4 billion. I think that constitutes a genuine emergency. These are funds that have not been approved in any budget or supplementals. It has received virtually no debate in this House since the idea of the government owning and buying a pipeline was first proposed by the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition about two months ago.

So far, to date, every single party in this House supports the idea of the government owning a pipeline, except for myself, but it has not received substantive debate. We have only just had a very small series of questions. I've asked the question about it specifically, and it's been indirectly touched upon, I believe, in a question by the

Leader of the Opposition. So it's had a total of about four questions, including supplementals. But while all parties here appear to support the idea of the government buying a pipeline and getting into that business, a clear majority of Albertans do not support the government owning and buying a pipeline. It is urgent, and it is an emergency because this deal was just cut and announced yesterday. There's been no time to debate it. The government is committing \$2 billion without any authorization from this House, without any authorization in the budget. That's a very substantial amount of taxpayers' money.

If they want to go forward with that, however much I might disagree with it, I think it deserves a little bit of debate, even if we were to informally agree to limit the amount of debate so we don't take up the entire afternoon of today's business on this particular matter. If we were to agree to one speaker per caucus or a maximum of two speakers per caucus, we could keep this in a relatively timely manner and go forward.

It will be interesting how you will rule, Mr. Speaker, because you'll have two virtually identical motions under Standing Order 30 before you.

I'm just curious as to why some members might not be able to stand the idea of me doing my job and showing up for debates and not skipping out on votes. I certainly hope that while some members would like to have a debate right now that if this debate does not take place, they will at least stay for the next debate and participate in that debate and vote in that debate.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 30(2) provides that "The Member may briefly state the arguments," which we've had today, and it's the role of the chair to decide "whether or not the request for leave is in order." I am prepared to make a ruling at this point in time on the request for leave for this motion to proceed under section 30(2).

The Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre has met the requirement for providing at least two hours' notice to the Speaker's office by providing the required notice at – it's important that the House hears this – 7:39 this morning. That motion, which I believe has been distributed, reads as follows:

Pursuant to Standing Order 30 be it resolved that the ordinary business of the Legislative Assembly be adjourned to discuss a matter of urgent public importance; namely, the need to discuss what measures must be taken to ensure that construction of the Trans Mountain expansion project is completed following the withdrawal of Kinder Morgan, the recently announced deal with the government of Canada, and the declaration of continued opposition and uncertainty from the NDP government of British Columbia.

The relevant parliamentary authorities on this subject have been cited earlier, pages 694 to 704 of the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* and *Beauchesne's* paragraphs 387 to 390.

Hon. members, let me point out, firstly, that on April 9, 2018, the ordinary business of the Assembly was adjourned to debate a Standing Order 30 matter, the subject of which was somewhat familiar to the application that has been brought forward today by the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

I wish to note for the Assembly that, while similar, the application made today constitutes a different question and therefore on that basis does not contravene Standing Order 30(7)(d).

3:30

On the question of whether or not the matter relates to a genuine emergency, while it is absolutely clear that the Trans Mountain expansion project is of great economic importance to Alberta and indeed to all of Canada, it would be difficult to conclude that a debate on what further measures must be taken in light of the

government of Canada's announcement to purchase the pipeline on May 29 is a genuine emergency. There has certainly been considerable discussion over the last several months and sessions about this subject.

Similarly, I would find that the need for a debate relating to the Trans Mountain expansion project was of a much more important nature in the circumstances facing the province of Alberta on April 9, 2018, when the debate on the previous standing order application went ahead. The circumstances are significantly different, and accordingly the chair does not find the request for leave in order, and the question will not be put.

I think we had a second Standing Order 30, from the Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion Support

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a bit of an odd situation, where I suppose you're going to be making a nearly identical ruling. Perhaps I will move you with my eloquence and . . .

The Speaker: Hon. members, I'd really appreciate that you not leave when I'm speaking to a member. In getting between my eyesight and the other's, it's difficult to watch. Members, feel free to move now.

Member, just hold on a sec.

Mr. Fildebrandt: I suppose some don't want to stay for the next debates.

I'm not sure if I will move you with the eloquence of my arguments, Mr. Speaker, because I suppose your ruling on my motion, my request for emergency debate under Standing Order 30, is virtually identical. As I note . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, you ought not anticipate what I will say. That's up to me. But please continue.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Oh, I'm expecting to move you with the eloquence of my arguments, Mr. Speaker, but the arguments laid out, I believe, in the last round of discussion are very similar.

I believe that there has not been substantive debate yet on how the people of Alberta feel about the federal government owning a key and strategic piece of energy infrastructure for Alberta and about the Alberta government itself putting up up to \$2 billion towards backstopping this in the event that it fails. I believe that this is urgent and has not been substantively discussed, the idea of government ownership of the pipeline, as I pointed out. I asked a single set of questions in question period a few weeks ago, so if you include supplementals, I've mentioned it three times, and I think the Leader of the Opposition mentioned it perhaps once yesterday. So it has not received significant debate in this House.

We're talking about \$2 billion of provincial money and more than \$4 billion of federal money that are not approved by either level of government and a huge change in the strategic lay of the land for Alberta's energy industry in that we are now going to ostensibly support the idea of Prime Minister Trudeau controlling a strategic piece of energy infrastructure. It feeds into a whole lot of other debates. If we believe that we can ever get rid of the carbon tax, we certainly are never going to have a chance of doing that if there is a Trudeau who can turn off the taps on Alberta. If he owns the pipeline, I've got a pretty good feeling that that can be used as a hammer to hit us over the head with.

So I think this is important. It's timely. It's not been appropriately debated in the Legislature. This is a similar motion to what was put forward before. I feel like it's pretty much just that we are standing

in a queue and pretty much just skipping the line. I'm not sure what the point was, but I gave notice to . . .

The Speaker: It's the urgency, hon. member. The urgency matter: that's the thing you need to be talking about, not the substance of the debate, please.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Yeah. It is urgent, but it has not been discussed. There are likely not that many more sitting days left in this Legislature for us to be able to discuss this. I understand that people want to get back to their constituencies and out of here, so I would be – it's certainly an easy thing for me to say that my caucus will only put up one speaker, but if other caucuses were to agree, perhaps we could find a way to truncate the debate somewhat so that it doesn't take up the business of the entire afternoon.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think that to sum up the argument is to say that this was an incredibly important step for Albertans. I think that no issue has been as important for Albertans in a number of years as this issue is, but as the Government House Leader has made clear, importance and urgency are not the same thing.

Mr. Speaker, I am willing to be guided by you. I am happy to go through and reiterate some of the remarks made by the Government House Leader in response to the previous motion, but if you would be willing to simply take into consideration those remarks made by the Government House Leader, again, on this argument, I am happy to sit down and let you simply give that consideration.

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Hon. members, the Member for Strathmore-Brooks has met the requirement of providing at least two hours' notice to the Speaker's office by providing the required notice at 8:42 this morning. I say that in reflection of the earlier time. The Member for Rimbeyst-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre arrived at my office earlier.

The motion from Strathmore-Brooks reads as follows:

Pursuant to Standing Order 30 be it resolved that the ordinary business of the Legislative Assembly be adjourned to discuss a matter of urgent public importance; namely, details of Alberta's support for the Trans Mountain expansion project.

I would begin, hon. members, by commenting on the format and the substance of the application brought forward by the Member for Strathmore-Brooks. I would note that it should be clear from the application what the nature of the emergency actually is. Furthermore, this Standing Order 30 application, again, has to do with the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion project. Specifically, it deals with Alberta's support for the project in light of the announcement yesterday, May 29. Accordingly, this application, while similar to the one that was just dealt with, again, constitutes a different question. Therefore, on that basis, it does not contravene Standing Order 30(7)(d).

On the question of whether this matter is a genuine emergency, I would say that the matter does not meet the test as set out in Standing Order 30 and in the various authorities. As I noted earlier, debate relating to the Trans Mountain expansion project was of a much more urgent nature in the circumstances facing the province on April 9, 2018. In addition, I would find it difficult to make the conclusion that debating details concerning Alberta's support of the project would constitute a true emergency. Accordingly, the chair does not find the request for leave in order, and the question will not be put.

Orders of the Day

The Speaker: Hon. members, I have a request for unanimous consent to introduce a guest.

[Unanimous consent granted]

3:40

Introduction of Guests

(*reversion*)

The Speaker: Please proceed.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you a number of incredible women who've been working to ensure abortion access and reproductive rights for women in Alberta for years. They are from organizations like Planned Parenthood, Woman's Health Options, formerly known as the Morgentaler Clinic, Kensington, and the list goes on. I ask that they rise as I introduce them. I'm not going to say each of their organizations, but I will say each of their names. We are so honoured to have you here today: Celia Posyniak; Sarena Finston Perry; Laura McBride; Erin Bilawchuk; Shirley Goodbrand; Melanie Anderson; Cathy Dawson; Muriel Stanley Venne, who's accompanied by Gwen; Nicole Jones-Abad; Tracey Berry; Donna Sansinsky; Nicole Bounds; Liz McCord; Heather Halpenny; Marie Gordon; Sheila Bellen; Ellen Ticoll; Joanne Combs; Barbara Howell.* I know that there are other women who are here as well and other supporters. Please rise if you're here to witness this debate and this historic advancement for women. Please, colleagues, join me in extending the warm welcome to all of these observers here today.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Service Alberta and Status of Women.

Ms McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly staff from the Department of Status of Women who worked very hard and advised on Bill 9. We have with us today Susan Taylor, our deputy minister; Maryna Korchagina; Kelly Buckley; Michelle Hutchinson; Rabia Naseer; Stephanie Gazzola; Alondra Sanchez; and Cory Habulin. I ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Government Bills and Orders

Third Reading

Bill 9

Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier and Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and good afternoon to everyone. I'd like to begin by thanking all who've taken the time and energy to debate this piece of legislation, that I know will make life better for Albertans. This legislation is important to our government, as are the people this legislation will protect, patients and health care providers, many of whom are joining us today and are seated in the gallery.

It's fitting that we begin third reading of this bill today. Women's rights advocates remembered and recognized yesterday the anniversary of the death of Dr. Henry Morgentaler, who devoted his career to expanding abortion rights in Canada. Further, many of

us were inspired this past weekend watching as Irish women went home to vote in a referendum on one of the world's strictest abortion bans. I know that many of us followed #hometovote and were moved by stories and images of women going to great lengths, literally, to fight for their rights to assert their bodily autonomy. It's difficult to express how powerful it was to see tears of joy and expressions of love, support, and solidarity. These women reminded us, reminded the world that the fight for women's rights continues. Here today we honour that fight, and we move the marker a little bit more forward.

I'm pleased to bring up third reading of the Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act. This bill's purpose is to help protect Albertans from real safety concerns and barriers to privacy when they access health care. Here in Alberta no woman should face bullying or harassment when accessing health care, and no woman should have to live in fear of threats, intimidation, or violence. The legislation will also protect physicians and service providers, because supporting a strong public health care system means supporting the people who work in that health care system. Abortion has been legal in Canada for decades, so there's no reason why women who choose abortion should still feel that they have to face barriers, fear, stigmatization, and judgment.

Over 75 per cent of abortions in Alberta are provided in the two clinics I mentioned earlier, Kensington in Calgary and Woman's Health Options here in Edmonton. I've had the honour of visiting both of these clinics, and I've met with the staff who work there. They told me that they've seen an increase in protester activity, including women and health professionals being shouted at, photographed, and harassed as they enter and exit their doctors' appointments. Currently both clinics rely on injunctions to limit the number, proximity, and activities of protesters, but even with injunctions in place, protester activity at these clinics is increasing. Women accessing health services at these clinics and their supporters are reporting anxiety and fear as they approach and leave the clinic. Staff have also expressed that they feel unsafe while coming to and leaving their place of work. Mr. Speaker, that's just wrong. That isn't what a health care system built for all Albertans should look like.

We shouldn't be making patients go to court to protect themselves and their rights. We need stronger laws in place so that their harassers are the ones that end up in court, not the other way around. So that's why we are taking action. Bill 9 supports women by making this a public health and safety issue. It demonstrates our government's commitment to protecting safe access to all health services.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Some members at a recent political convention may have heard that women's rights are a swear word – I think it was feminism, actually – or that removing barriers for women is socialist garbage. Today I want to make it clear to all Albertans: women's rights are human rights. So I get concerned when members of this Assembly, elected to represent people, including women, from their communities, refuse to even engage in the conversation, and I get really concerned when the Leader of the Official Opposition says that women should just go to court if they want to access health care without harassment and intimidation.

Madam Speaker, Alberta women – care providers, patients – have all told us that the current protections aren't working. During the debate over this bill I've received letters from Albertans working in clinics, talking about what life is like for them under the status quo. One person, a doctor, talked about how painful it is that she can't guarantee the safety of her own patients. Another staff

*These spellings could not be verified at the time of publication.

member, who's a social worker, talked about clients being followed to their cars by relentless protesters. Even maintenance workers and mail carriers visiting the building get harassed and intimidated.

I was troubled to hear that a patient and her mother experienced extreme harassment outside Woman's Health Options just two days ago. This patient was intimidated and videotaped while entering the clinic, inside the current area that is covered by the court injunction. She was traumatized, worried that the protester would continue to intimidate her when she left her appointment or that her face would appear on social media or in an antichoice ad. I'm incredibly thankful to the caring, compassionate staff at Woman's Health Options who spent over two hours taking care of this patient after this horrific incident. But, Madam Speaker, they should not have to. That's not their job. Our job is to ensure that they can do their jobs and that women who exercise their choice can do so safely, without fear, harassment, or intimidation. Their jobs are demanding enough.

I'm dismayed that some critics believe that the status quo, which allows something like this to happen to a woman, is acceptable, because it is not acceptable. This legislation would make it illegal to take photos or record patients who are inside the access zones and would make it illegal to distribute those photos and recordings. With this legislation that woman, that woman just two days ago, and many others will be protected.

Madam Speaker, Alberta women are tired of being bullied and harassed when they access health care. They are tired of extreme special-interest groups trying to control their bodies, and they're tired of waiting – waiting for decades – for a government to finally bring in legislation to protect their human rights. We have heard this from women and health care providers and other allies and patients in the province whom I've met with and who've written and called my office, including Jennifer Berard. You might remember her; her story launched the same day we introduced the bill.

3:50

After refusing to debate or vote on legislation, Alberta women are right to ask the Official Opposition where they stand. Do you stand with Jennifer, or do you stand with extreme special-interest groups that have built your new party? Do you stand with the antichoice groups that encouraged members to vote to defund women's health care at convention, the folks who voted to ensure that parents have to sign off when a minor is accessing a health care service? In a few minutes, when we have another chance to vote, will you stand, or will you hide?

I know whose side I'm on. I know where we stand. We stand with women. We stand with health care providers. That's why on our side of this Assembly we'll be voting yes. This is certainly a pivotal moment in Alberta's history, Madam Speaker.

Thank you so very much.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I will be speaking in general to third reading of the bill, but before I speak to it more broadly, I would like to put forward an amendment.

The Deputy Speaker: Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The amendment I'm putting forward is that Bill 9 be not now read a third time. There's more to it in the words than that, but I do not believe that this bill should move forward.

Now, I want to thank all members of this House who have participated in the debate, who have made their views known in

speech and in their votes, who have participated in one form or another. We may disagree, but this is a place that is supposed to be full of disagreement. At the end of the day, a majority government pretty much always gets its way. Very, very rarely does a government have to back down. There are exceptions like Bill 6, et cetera, but when a majority government wants something, a majority government gets something.

In the Canadian Westminster system of our Parliament the opposition almost never gets to win a battle against a majority government, but what we do get to do is have our say. We get to speak up for our constituents, represent a minority of the Legislature, perhaps a majority of the public sometimes, but certainly the minority of the electorate from the last election. We might not get to change the final outcome of a vote, but we get to have our say. In fact, it is our duty to have our say, to speak up for our constituents on bills that we support, on bills that we oppose, and on bills that we might not even want to talk about. If they're on the floor of this Legislature, it is our duty to our constituents to stand up, speak up, and be counted every time.

Now, on the bill itself, I want to thank the Minister of Health for spirited debate on this. I think we have very different views on the suitability of this particular bill. I think it is well intentioned. It is trying to achieve something that I would . . .

The Deputy Speaker: I'll just interrupt you for a moment, hon. member. I've been asked to clarify something with you. With this type of an amendment – this is a recommit amendment – once you have presented this, you will have your speaking time on that, but then you cannot speak again in third reading. Just so that you're aware.

Mr. Fildebrandt: There's no debate on the amendment?

The Deputy Speaker: This is your third reading debate.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Yes.

The Deputy Speaker: Yeah. You can go ahead, just as long as you understand that this is the one opportunity.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you.

We have different views on the bill, but I do believe that the government's bill is well intentioned in trying to fix something that I think, if we were to deal with it in a more co-operative and nonpartisan spirit, we could actually find some common ground on, but I do not believe that it strikes an appropriate balance.

Now, regardless of how you feel about abortion, whatever you feel about its legal status or from a moral perspective – and I do believe that people can have legitimate different views on the topic. It is a painful and difficult topic for most people, and for most people not in politics it's not pure black and white. They can have honest differences of opinion on it. But regardless of how you feel about abortion from a moral or a legal perspective, we should all agree that if a woman is accessing an abortion, she should not face harassment or intimidation. She should not be photographed. She should not be bullied. She should not be screamed at.

Now, while these things have happened before, they are very rare occurrences. I believe that the government is using a cannon to kill a mosquito here. What this will do is perhaps embolden some protesters to do this because they're told they can't do it. It is not striking an appropriate balance.

No right in the Canadian constitutional and common law tradition is absolute. We have the right to freedom of speech, but that freedom of speech is not absolute. It is as it is justified in a free and democratic society under the Charter. The right to freedom of

speech is not absolute. You can't slander. You can't incite violence. No other Charter right is absolute. Virtually every Charter right comes into at least some conflict with another Charter right, and both legislators and the judiciary are faced regularly with trying to balance competing rights. When we declare that one right does not need to be balanced anymore, that it trumps all others, then the delicate balance of the Canadian Constitution and our carefully constructed liberties begins to fall apart.

Women have the Charter right and all people have the Charter right to security of the person. That is a fundamental Charter right. I think that that is a right that the government is trying to uphold here, and good on them. But we also have the Charter rights of freedom of expression and freedom of assembly. It would not be unreasonable to have some reasonable restrictions placed upon those latter two rights if they could be properly justified and balanced but also applied broadly. I do not believe that government should ever legislate on the basis of someone's race, religion, sex, political views, or social views.

The French philosopher Voltaire has a famous quote incorrectly attributed to him: I may disagree with you, but I will fight to the death for your right to say it. That is fundamental to our understanding of free speech. If you believe in free speech, you don't just believe in it for people who agree with you. You believe in free speech for those who disagree with you. In this case, frankly, I think even most passionate pro-lifers would disagree with people harassing people outside of an abortion clinic. There is nothing compassionate about that, there's nothing productive about that, and I don't believe there's anything even Christian about that. It is not becoming of someone to do so.

I'm not arguing and I don't think anyone here is arguing that people should be allowed to harass and yell at someone. But if we are going to restrict freedom of assembly and speech for one group, we should never single out a group because their political or social views are unpopular either broadly or with the government of the day. As much as some may feel that they'll be in power forever, you will someday be in the opposition, and someone else will be legislating your rights. Someone else, whom you disagree with, will hold a majority of seats in a Legislature, and you will pray that they respect your right to freedom of speech and freedom of assembly when they disagree with you. Governments of all stripes, on the left and on the right, too often forget that. It tends to be not a left/right issue but something that only the opposition of the day tends to remember and the government of the day tends to forget, but I'm sure members, if they ever were to find themselves in opposition again, would be reawakened to the principle.

4:00

There are, I know, in this House different views on the topic of abortion. I know some members here very well, and I know where they stand on the issue of abortion. There are passionate pro-choicers in this House, and there are passionate pro-lifers in this House. I think that there is a place for a public debate on the issue if it's before us. You know, the opposition doesn't get to pick the agenda here very often, as we saw right before this debate, but the agenda before us we have an obligation to deal with. If you are pro life or you are pro choice, if you are somewhere in the middle as a moderate, leaning one way or another, you have a right to express your views.

I am genuinely disappointed that on this issue and, frankly, quite a few more issues than I would have expected but on this issue in particular I've been given the dubious honour of leading the opposition. This corner of the House used to be known as the Valhalla section or Siberia, but I now call it the Alamo. It can be a little lonely sometimes being the only MLA in the entire House to

dissent, and frankly that honour often went to Grant Notley, the father of the Premier, when he had to effectively lead the opposition, I think, with just one MLA by himself sometimes. In that case it was just a giant majority government. It wasn't just that the other opposition wasn't doing its job.

Now, there are some MLAs in the opposition who are supporting the government. They're not abdicating their duties. They're supporting the bill and speaking up. You know, I applaud them for doing so even though I disagree with their positions.

This debate on this bill should be a wake-up call that when the opposition is away, the government will play. That is why the government tripled the size of the no-protest zone in this bill. That would have never happened if there was a vigorous Official Opposition showing up for work, standing up, debating, and voting, but because there has been virtually no major organized opposition to the bill, the government has had carte blanche. That is deconstructing one of the fundamental checks and balances of our system. So while a majority government can pass virtually any bill it wants, one of the very, very few things that check its power is knowing that if they go too far on something, the opposition will at least show up to work, and when that doesn't happen, the government has no check on itself. It has no check on its own power. It therefore has the right to expand the scope and powers of its legislation beyond what it thought it could originally get away with, and that is dangerous. It takes away one of the key mechanisms of accountability in our system of government.

I believe we've had a pretty long debate on this. I think that, short of the budget, we've probably debated this bill more than any other. I'm sure *Hansard* or Parliamentary Counsel can correct us, but I think we've probably spent more time on this bill and certainly had more votes on this bill than any other piece of legislation other than the budget, which is curious. We've also certainly kept our pages up late at night and our security officers as well.

But I want to thank all members who have participated in this debate and made their views known and stood up to vote to represent their constituents, however it is they may vote. I would beseech my colleagues in this House who may be under orders from outside this House to leave here when the roll call is called – I understand. I understand your situation. I understand you don't want to be in it, and I understand that many of you want to stand up and be counted. I certainly won't claim a moral superiority over it because you're in a bad position. It's not your fault. But I would at least beseech you to break the party whip, to stand up if not to debate, to at least vote and represent the conservative majority of Alberta.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane. On the amendment?

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to request unanimous consent of the House to shorten the division bells to one minute for votes pertaining to Bill 9, please.

The Deputy Speaker: We've had a request for unanimous consent to shorten the bells to one minute. I'll ask one question. Is anyone opposed?

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Deputy Speaker: On the amendment, the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I must say I give credit to the Member for Strathmore-Brooks for taking a

strong, principled stand on freedom of speech. Unfortunately, his amendment doesn't address freedom of speech in the act. He is objecting to section 2 and sections 7 and 8. Section 2 deals with restricted access zones, and sections 7 and 8 have to do with the residence of the physician or service provider and the physician's office, by which he proposes to justify removing this bill from the House and having more debate.

I'm unsure of why there's that inconsistency, but I certainly appreciate both his tenacity and his willingness to stand up on an issue of freedom of speech. He has done that very well in this session. We do have to be careful that we protect that sacred part of democracy that has been so badly damaged elsewhere and is always subject to threat by those who have power and those who have the ability to silence or self-censor in some cases out of fear.

Let me simply say – and this probably will also be my statement at third reading – that it's quite clear that this needs to go forward. It needs to go forward in a timely way. There are too many health providers, patients, families that are anxiously waiting to see this increased level of civility, maybe, and security. Again, I've said this in the House. The decision to have an abortion is an extremely difficult one. It rightly belongs to the woman, her family, her physician, her god. We, in the sense of creating a buffer zone around these facilities, are not restricting free speech. We're not restricting the freedom to organize. We are simply providing a measure of security and trying to reduce and even eliminate some of the harassment that occasionally occurs. It's not a regular pattern that I've seen around the Kensington clinic in my riding, but it occasionally occurs, and it cannot be allowed to continue.

Alberta, along with four other provinces, will be leading the country in ensuring that not only the patients but the health providers are not in any way feeling intimidated, harassed, or threatened and do not feel a sense of disrespect because they have a different view and because they're following the Health Act and because they're following the law of the land.

I don't think there's any basis for supporting this amendment myself. At the same time, I appreciate the member for expressing very clearly his views and his stand on behalf of some Albertans, especially in the area of free speech.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

4:10

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, to speak to the amendment, I'll recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: To the amendment. Okay. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just wanted to make a couple of points, speak to a couple of the points that the Member for Strathmore-Brooks made. One of the things that he was concerned about was emboldening protesters by passing the legislation. I believe that the only circumstance where that would actually happen is if the protesters suffer from oppositional defiant disorder. No reasonable person would want to defy such legislation.

Another comment that was made essentially equated morality to Christianity, and I just want to assert that no belief system can claim authority over morality. Morality is definitely a human endeavour. It's not exclusively Christian. It's not Jewish or Muslim or atheist or agnostic or any of the major belief systems. It's something that we all endeavour to incorporate, well, by and large, into our lives.

I also want to disabuse the Member for Strathmore-Brooks of the delusion of being the unofficial leader of the opposition. I for one am not inclined to follow him anywhere.

We're at third reading, and it's taken a while to get here. We owe it to the people of Alberta to put this particular bill to a vote today, and there's no need for this amendment. This bill is not primarily dealing with a free speech matter.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Under Standing Order 29(2)(a) any questions or comments?

Seeing none, any other speakers to the amendment? Calgary-Bow.

Drever: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Speaking to the amendment from Strathmore-Brooks, my message is clear here. Women shouldn't have to wait to be protected from harassment or intimidation and – you know what? – women have waited long enough. Time is up. It's time to get this bill moving forward. You know, we have a gallery full of women here today who deserve a government that will stand with them and will not run into the washroom every time a woman is asking for respect and protection. I'm going to vote no to this amendment, and I encourage all of my colleagues to do the same.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Seeing none, I'll call the vote.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:13 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Fildebrandt

Against the motion:

Carlier	Gray	Nielsen
Carson	Hoffman	Phillips
Ceci	Jansen	Piquette
Clark	Kazim	Renaud
Connolly	Kleinstaub	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Littlewood	Sabir
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Schmidt
Dach	Luff	Shepherd
Drever	Malkinson	Starke
Eggen	Mason	Sucha
Feehan	McCuaig-Boyd	Swann
Fitzpatrick	McKittrick	Sweet
Fraser	McLean	Turner
Ganley	McPherson	Westhead
Goehring	Miranda	Woollard

Totals: For – 1 Against – 45

[Motion on amendment to third reading of Bill 9 lost]

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise and speak to Bill 9 today. I want to start by saying that I'm really proud of our Minister of Health for her leadership on

this bill. It's a long time coming and long overdue, and I'm really pleased to be part of a government who is putting women's rights at the forefront.

I also want to acknowledge that I'm entering this debate with a fair degree of privilege. I'm a cisgendered heterosexual white male. I grew up in a nuclear family, so I pretty much check all the boxes of privilege, and I just wanted to acknowledge that before beginning.

I also don't have any experience or know anyone with experience accessing these health services, but I do want to use an analogy of something that I am familiar with. In my former role as a registered nurse in the operating room one of the most important factors for us was ensuring a good patient experience. If you can imagine that people are nervous going to the dentist, can you imagine how nervous you'd be going to have brain surgery? It was our job to ensure that patients going in for such a procedure knew that they were in good hands and that they'd be well taken care of.

All of the experience that a patient has coming into a hospital from the moment they walk in the doors, when they're going to have surgery, affects their experience. It is a struggle for operating room nurses when we're meeting a patient for the first time and we have to give them the confidence that they're in good hands. So it was very important how we created a relationship with the patients and made sure that they felt they were safe and in good hands and that they could trust us. That was job number one for us, trying to ensure that patients knew that they were protected.

So when I think of a bill like Bill 9, there are a lot of parallels. A woman coming in to access a health care service deserves to have the same experience as though they were coming in for brain surgery. It's an important part of accessing the health care system for them. They may have made a very difficult decision to get there in the first place. To enter a health care facility free of harassment and abuse and intimidation and bullying is so fundamental to having a good outcome. It's about how a patient starts and enters the health care system affects their entire experience and how they view that.

I can't be more proud of supporting a bill that ensures that women can have easy access to a legal health service and be treated with the dignity and respect that every other Albertan deserves. For that reason, I'm going to be voting in support of this bill, and I encourage all members to do the same.

Thank you.

4:20

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Other members wishing to speak to the bill? Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise this afternoon and speak at third reading to Bill 9 – and it took us awhile to get here – to reiterate my complete and unfettered support for this bill and to remind everyone why the autonomy of women to make decisions about their own bodies needs reinforcing with this legislation.

Abortion affects women disproportionately. Abortion is an important element of women's rights because women are more affected by the abortion debate than men, both individually and as a gender. Pregnancy has an enormous effect on the woman involved. As Sarah Weddington put it in the U.S. Supreme Court case in 1973 *Roe v. Wade*:

A pregnancy to a woman is perhaps one of the most determinative aspects of her life.

It disrupts her body. It disrupts her education. It disrupts her employment. And it often disrupts her entire family life.

And we feel that, because of the impact on the woman, this ... is a matter which is of such fundamental and basic concern to the woman involved that she should be allowed to make the choice as to whether to continue or to terminate her pregnancy.

I'd also like to add the perspective of philosopher Judith Jarvis Thomas.

A great deal turns for women on whether abortion is or is not available. If abortion rights are denied, then a constraint is imposed on women's freedom to act in a way that is of great importance to them, both for its own sake and for the sake of their achievement of equality; and if the constraint is imposed on the ground that the fetus has a right to life from the moment of conception, then it is imposed on a ground that neither reason nor the rest of morality requires women to accept.

No one has the right to interfere with a woman's autonomy in seeking legal pregnancy care. Women's right to health care must not be interfered with because equality is too important to compromise. Subjecting women to harassment on the way to see a doctor is wrong. Even in the area of *Home to Vote*, women's autonomy is still under threat. Today's headlines include Arkansas banning abortion medication.

I feel a deep sense of gratitude to every member who has participated in the debate at every step along the way. As a woman, as a woman who at one time needed an abortion, and as a woman with a daughter, I am indebted to you. Thank you for making your thoughts known, for speaking up about an issue that is important.

I'm deeply disappointed that many members have continually absolved themselves of their responsibility in this debate. We are very fortunate to represent the people of Alberta in this Chamber, to participate in democracy in a way that so many people throughout the world do not enjoy. That honour should always be taken seriously. Because I am a feminist and because I passionately believe in equality, I am proud to stand in support of Bill 9.

The Deputy Speaker: Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), any questions or comments?

Seeing none, speaking to the bill, the hon. Minister of Service Alberta.

Ms McLean: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Today I'm proud to be part of a government that since being elected has consistently offered unequivocal support to women in this province. Women in Alberta are strong, talented, and make incredible contributions to our province, and as Minister of Status of Women I'm proud to say that our government stands with the women in our province. Each and every member of this government is committed to making life safer, fairer, and better for women in Alberta. It is because of this commitment that the Minister of Health, our Deputy Premier, has brought forward Bill 9.

Madam Speaker, for too long women in Alberta have faced harassment and intimidation as they make their way to abortion services. Clinics that provide abortion services have told our government that protester activity outside these clinics has nearly doubled. These clinics and their patients have come to us and shared their concerns about the harassment and intimidation that they witness. Our government has a duty to lead. That's why the Minister of Health has tabled this legislation to create a bubble zone around abortion service providers so that those who access these services can do so free from fear and bullying.

Madam Speaker, women have a right to feel safe, and our government has a strong record of standing up for that right. Since taking office, we have boosted funding for women's shelters by \$15

million to help ensure that no woman fleeing violence is turned away. We've increased access to the legal system for survivors of sexual violence by removing the time limit for bringing forward civil claims, and we have made it easier for survivors of domestic violence to get out of dangerous situations by allowing them to break residential leases without financial penalty. Just this year we announced a historic \$8.1 million investment in the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services.

These significant new dollars go directly to more counselling, more crisis support, and more help navigating the justice and court systems in this province so that survivors who take the brave step to come forward have the vital help that they need close to home. We listened to the needs of those who have been ignored for far too long by governments that have come before, just like when on May 1 we proclaimed May as Sexual Violence Awareness Month and announced our government's commitment to ending sexual violence and just like we are doing now with Bill 9.

With Bill 9, like with all of the work of our government, we are doing this to make life better, fairer, and safer for women in Alberta. We say to the women of this province: we hear you, we stand with you, and we will never walk out when you need us. Women in Alberta deserve a government that sees our safety as a priority.

Madam Speaker, the opposition has implied time and time again that this bill is a distraction from important issues. The women who are subjected to bullying and harassment, who fear for their safety just because they are trying to access reproductive health clinics, that they have a right to access, do not see this bill as a distraction, nor do they see it as an unimportant issue. Perhaps the opposition would know that if they chose to participate in these debates, but they refuse to even listen.

Well, Madam Speaker, let me be clear. This government listens, this government shows up, and this government stands with women.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the bill? Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise today and speak to Bill 9, Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care. You know, I've been here in this House and many times heard from the members opposite about the consideration that they feel I should be giving my actions in this House. I've been told that I've failed to consider how the votes that I've cast, legislation that I've supported, would affect farmers and ranchers or businesspeople or seniors or children in care or persons with developmental disabilities. I've watched as the members opposite have called myself and my colleagues out because they felt we were not speaking up enough on a particular debate. I recall in more than one debate, often during votes, hearing the refrain: Albertans are watching. Indeed, Albertans are watching today.

You know, Madam Speaker, I've also watched as members opposite have appeared on and with so-called media organizations that spread vile misinformation and prejudice about various Albertan communities, whether that be individuals from the Muslim community, the LGBTQ2S-plus community. Many have since distanced themselves. Others have continued that association recently. I've watched as the Leader of the Official Opposition has used language denigrating in marginalizing individuals struggling with substance use disorders and encouraging the spread of misleading information about peer support groups for LGBTQ2S-plus youth. I've stood in this House and I've called that out because

that kind of stigma does real damage to real people. To foment discrimination or prejudice is a dangerous, dangerous thing for persons who are public leaders and elected representatives.

4:30

Now, I recognize that on many of these issues people have concerns based on religious beliefs and on convictions of faith. Indeed, Madam Speaker, I grew up in the church. I grew up in a very strict Christian home, and for much of my life I subscribed to religious belief and it was very important to me. As a young man I was quite zealous. That changed over the years as I dealt with my own experiences and I grew to know more of the world, but always what I learned in those years has shaped me as an individual, the code of moral conduct by which I conduct myself, and indeed the types of decisions I make even on legislation such as this.

Indeed, when this legislation came forward and I saw this debate in the House, I was reminded of a story from the Gospel of John, from the book of John that I'm looking at today, a story of Jesus. He had gone to teach at the temple, and as he was sitting there and teaching people in the temple, teachers of religious law and the Pharisees brought a woman in front of him who they had caught in the act of adultery. They put her in front of everybody in that crowd, and they said to Jesus: "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. The law of Moses says that we should stone her. What do you say?"

Now, it notes here that they were trying to trap him. They were trying to get Jesus to say something they could use against him. Well, we're certainly familiar with that in politics. You know, Jesus ignored them and just sat and wrote in the dust with his finger. Then they kept demanding that he provide them with an answer, so he stood up and said: "Okay. Well, let whoever among you has never sinned cast the first stone." Then he stooped down, and he started writing in the dust again.

Every one of those people that were there to accuse that woman, one by one they slipped away, beginning with the oldest – that's an interesting note – probably because they have more memories of their life and the things they've personally done. But every last one of those individuals left. Then Jesus stood up, and he went and spoke to that woman. He said: "So where are your accusers? Didn't even one of them condemn you?" And she said, "No, Lord," so he said, "Neither do I. Go and sin no more."

Now, Madam Speaker, one of the things I have carried forward from what I learned growing up is that the most important principle when we are dealing with other people is that you put the people first. Compassion comes first. Judgment is set aside. Compassion comes first. Whatever my personal conviction, whatever my personal belief, that is the example I see when I read the gospels and when I remember what I have learned. Compassion, the spirit of the law, how we treat other people always comes before making a rule of moral judgment.

Indeed, Madam Speaker, that is at the heart of what we are looking at here today. None of us has the right to stand and cast stones at any woman at the most vulnerable point in her life, potentially, who is facing an incredibly difficult decision. None of us has the right to sit in judgment of that individual and tell her what she should or should not do. Indeed, none of us has the right to increase stigma on that woman and make her suffering worse. That is why we are bringing forward this legislation, to provide that protection and to provide that principle of compassion and understanding. Individuals can hold their personal convictions. They can do so at a respectful distance in a manner which is not going to increase the difficulty for women who are simply trying to access a health care service at a difficult time of their lives.

Madam Speaker, the floor of this Chamber, in between our two sides, is littered with stones cast from glass houses. I will say that I am disappointed. I respect that some members of the opposition are here in the Chamber today to be part of debate and as representatives of their parties, and I acknowledge the courage that takes, but I am disappointed, given, I guess, what has transpired and what has gone back and forth across this floor, that they are not here today to vote on behalf of their constituents and indeed to ensure that a reasonable and compassionate protection like this is provided to Alberta women. I will tell you that I will proudly stand in favour of Bill 9.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. minister of culture.

Miranda: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak to third reading of Bill 9, Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care, and I do so proudly. I say “proudly” because I’m not afraid to have my position on this very important subject matter on the record. Now, I suppose that I could avoid the issue altogether either by not speaking to the bill or, perhaps, by running out of the House and hiding when a vote is recorded, as we witnessed a few minutes ago, but I have no issue whatsoever with standing up for women’s reproductive rights.

Now, as a male I will never be faced with the choice of having to make a decision of this nature. Admittedly, it is much easier to say that you are either one hundred per cent against or in favour of a woman’s right to choose when you will never be the one in that position of having to make that very difficult choice. However, as a feminist I feel it is my responsibility to stand up and defend a woman’s right to choose, especially when others, much to their shame, choose not to. To be clear, for me the question is not about being either pro or antiabortion. The question for me is this. Who should be able to make that decision? Is it the woman, with the help of her doctor, or the government? I think – and I speak for the members of this government – that the question is very simple to answer. It should always be the woman who chooses.

Decades ago women suffered horrifying back-alley abortions or used dangerous methods when they had no other recourse. So when there is any hint of opposition or any implicit attempt to limit a woman’s reproductive rights or, in the case of the UCP opposition, to boycott the debate altogether, I really have to ask: does anyone really think that pushing women back to the back alley is a better outcome? I find it offensive that the UCP opposition has chosen to boycott any debate on this piece of legislation and has opted instead to abandon the legislative duty that they were elected to do and not vote time and time and time and time again. Truly shameful.

Fortunately, we live in a country where the issue was settled by the courts. Women in Alberta and across the country have the right to choose. In fact, on January 28, 1988, the Supreme Court found that Canada’s abortion laws were unconstitutional. The laws were found to violate section 7 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms because they infringe upon a woman’s right to life, liberty, and security of person. The then Supreme Court Chief Justice Brian Dickson wrote, “Forcing a woman, by threat of criminal sanction, to carry a foetus to term unless she meets certain criteria unrelated to her own priorities and aspirations, is a profound interference with a woman’s body and thus a [violation] of security of the person.” On that day Canada became one of a small number of countries without a law that restricted a woman’s right to choose.

I take the opportunity today to congratulate the people of Ireland, who recently voted to repeal an amendment that bars women’s autonomy over their bodies. I bring this up because, like many around the world watching the historic vote in Ireland, I learned of the hardship faced by woman there having to travel out of their country to freely exercise their reproductive rights. That is why I stand here today in this Chamber to tell the women of Calgary-Cross, my constituents, and women across this province that I will stand with them, and so will every single member of this government.

4:40

Now, based on the research and the reading that I have done on this issue, it is very clear to me that absolutely nothing is more important or more imperative than ensuring a woman’s fundamental right to reproductive freedom and that nothing is more odious and offensive than denying women the respect and the ability to live in a society in which they are encouraged to think of themselves as nothing less than first-class citizens and responsible human beings capable of making those kinds of decisions for themselves and, in doing so, ensuring that women have the confidence to exercise their autonomy over their bodies. Now, that autonomy can only be freely exercised by ensuring that women can access those services in a safe and dignified manner.

Shortly after the government introduced this legislation, members of the UCP caucus chose to walk out of the House, an action which has been described by some, and I quote, as political cowardice and a disgraceful dereliction of their duties as MLAs. In fact, members of the opposition went in front of the media to claim that the reason they left the Chamber was due to the heckling coming from government benches. I am certain that that kind of double standard and political game playing by the members of the UCP opposition is not lost on anyone. The very thing that they allege to need, a bubble zone protecting them from the heckling, is exactly the very same thing they would deny the women of Alberta. It is truly shameful. They would stand and still allow protesters to make women feel ashamed for the choices that they make. That, Mr. Speaker, is the pinnacle of irony. While I have much sympathy, compassion, solidarity, and empathy for the women being subjected to derision by protesters, I have none for the members of the opposition who choose not to stand up for the women of this province.

This bill is one that ensures dignity, equality, compassion, and respect for the women of our province, and that is why I stand again in this House today to say to every single one of my sisters: your body, your choice, and I stand with you.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, other speakers to the bill? Edmonton-Manning.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Before I begin, I just want to thank the hon. Minister of Health for bringing this bill, Bill 9, forward. I have not had a lot of opportunities to be able to speak in the House and specifically to this bill, and to be honest, I was contemplating if I would be able to actually do it. But I do feel, as I tell you this story, that it would be disrespectful to the journeys that I have travelled on with some of the people that I will talk about today to not stand here and talk about it.

As many of you know, I was a social worker before I was elected. I worked in child protection, and I worked in the inner city with high-risk youth, a population of women that I don’t think we spend a lot of time talking about. The youngest that I started working with when I worked in the inner city was 12 years old. She’s now in her,

like, mid-20s, so we don't need to talk about how long ago that was. She was 12, she was living on the street, and she was homeless. She had been abandoned by her family, she had been traumatized, she had been shamed, and she had been sexually exploited. She was involved in gangs, and she became pregnant.

I was her social worker, so I had a responsibility to support her through her process, her journey, and for her to be able to decide at a very young age what she was going to do. We spent a lot of time talking about her choices because my responsibility was to give her all of her options. It was hard. She was young. Of course, as an adult you think about her future and you think about this, like, young woman and what her future could be and what I saw her future being as a very resilient, amazing young woman. You know, I had thoughts, right? I had biases. I'm a social worker. We have to acknowledge that we carry our biases with us in our profession. She was a child in care. She didn't have a lot of supports and really had nowhere to go, no home. She had to make this decision, so we walked our journey together. I learned so much from her and how she was going to decide to make this choice.

She ultimately made the decision that she was going to access her rights and have an abortion. I said: "Okay. Well, let's go. I will hold your hand. I will walk with you. I will be what you need someone to be." We were in Edmonton, and we went to go access her health rights. Twelve years old.

Again, we had spent a long time talking about her options. We walked down the street, and there was somebody standing there with a sign telling her that she was a murderer, shaming her for making a choice that she had every right to make. A 12-year-old girl. She looked at me, and she said: "Heather, look, we've talked about this. You told me this was going to be okay and that this was okay for me to do." Of course, I, you know, walked her through it, and I said: "Yeah, this is your choice. This is okay. You need to make your choice."

So we accessed the facility. Of course, she went through all the supports that she gets when she goes to access her supports. She got to talk to her counsellor, and she got her time to sit quietly and think about what she wanted to do and to decide whether or not this is what really made sense to her. And we left because she couldn't do it, because somebody had stood outside that building and had shamed her.

She had been shamed her whole life. She had been victimized repeatedly in her young, young life as an inner-city youth, constantly told that she was a bad person, that she was shameful, that what she did in her life was wrong, that her whole existence in life was wrong. And the one time where she took control of her life, where she made a decision for herself to say, "I am taking control of myself, I am taking control of my body for the very first time in my life, and I am making a decision," someone stood outside of that building and told her that she was wrong.

When we stand here and we have these conversations and we talk about how this is just a political game and we see members of the opposition who love to stand up in question period and talk about the importance of mental health supports for Albertans and how we need to make sure we're taking care of children in care and how important that is and that as Albertans and as this government we need to be doing that work, well, this is doing that work.

I want to thank the women that are in the gallery, because we went back, and this young, very powerful, resilient woman, who is now an adult and is doing amazing things in her life, was able to access the supports that she needed with the support that she needed.

This bill is extremely important, and this bill is not just important for adult women who are accessing the health care that they deserve. This is about allowing vulnerable people, people that as

legislators we have a responsibility to protect and to take care of, to be able to access this, to be able to make a decision, to be able to follow through on the decision that they have struggled so hard to make, to be able to do that in a safe space, to be able to go and access that without someone retraumatizing them, reshaping them, making them feel that they don't deserve to honour their own bodies. [Noise in the gallery] I hear you. That's how I feel, too.

I wholeheartedly support this bill because if this bill had existed when I had to go take that 12-year-old girl, we wouldn't have had to go back a second time, because she would have been able to make that decision, be confident in herself, be able to access that support the first time, not the second time.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

The hon. Minister of Health to close debate.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker and to all members who have taken the time to engage in today's discussion, the discussion of the past several months, the discussion of the past 30 years here in Alberta. We are so grateful for the courage and leadership of so many in this province who brought us to where we are today. I am proud that when we leave here today, we will be taking Alberta one step further, and we need to keep ... [some applause] Yeah. Thank you. I'm proud that we continue to move forward and not backward in women's rights and in ensuring that all of us feel safe and respected in this place.

4:50

I do want to tell one personal story and to thank the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning, who just shared her experiences. The story that I'm going to share isn't mine. Again, I mentioned in committee – or maybe it was in second – a number of stories that I heard from women at Kensington.

I want to share one from a woman at Woman's Health Options who talked about how she got pregnant while in an incredibly abusive relationship. The abuse really escalated once her partner realized that he had a fetus in her body, and he felt that he had extra authority over her body. She had been in this relationship for a while and knew that she needed to get out for her physical safety and for the well-being of herself. She knew that it wasn't going to be easy, and one of the things that she also decided was that she needed to exercise her right to have an abortion. When she showed up at the clinic that day, fleeing an abusive partner, she experienced new abuse and new disrespect and new taunting and intimidation. So just like the 12-year-old girl who was trying to exercise her autonomy, even a 30-year-old woman can experience the same sense of fear and disrespect and distrust.

Some people said: well, people on the sidewalk are trying to counsel people about their options. It is not about counselling. It is about shame, harassment, intimidation, and bullying. Counselling is what happens inside the clinic. Counselling is what happens in our community. Counselling is what happens when you call 811. Counselling is what happens when you exercise your options. When you have chosen to make that decision, it needs to be respected, full stop, the end.

We respect the workers, we respect the patients, and today I ask that we all respect Albertans, who've been asking for this legislation for 30 years, and move Alberta forward, not backward, not into the hallway. Let's stand here, let's do our jobs, and let's show women that we stand with them.

Thank you.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:53 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Carlier	Gray	Nielsen
Carson	Hoffman	Phillips
Ceci	Jansen	Piquette
Clark	Kazim	Renaud
Connolly	Kleinstein	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Littlewood	Sabir
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Schmidt
Dach	Luff	Shepherd
Drever	Malkinson	Starke
Eggen	Mason	Sucha
Feehan	McCuaig-Boyd	Swann
Fitzpatrick	McKittrick	Sweet
Fraser	McLean	Turner
Ganley	McPherson	Westhead
Goehring	Miranda	Woollard

Against the motion:

Fildebrandt

Totals: For – 45 Against – 1

[Motion carried; Bill 9 read a third time]

Bill 6

Gaming and Liquor Statutes Amendment Act, 2018

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to move third reading of Bill 6, Gaming and Liquor Statutes Amendment Act, 2018.

If passed, this legislation would bring us closer to putting in place a system for legalized cannabis that reflects the views and values of Albertans as well as strengthening the AGLC and creating a new opportunity for the liquor industry.

Madam Speaker, we began developing the system for legalized cannabis after the federal government announced, in 2017, that cannabis would become legal across the country the following year. As we've developed our system of legal cannabis in Alberta, we've engaged thousands of Albertans. Through that engagement we developed four policy priorities that our system is built on. Those priorities: keeping cannabis out of the hands of children and youth; protecting public health; promoting safety on roads, in workplaces, and in public spaces; and limiting the illegal market.

Madam Speaker, at every step we have taken on this file, we have taken that with the input of Albertans. It may not have been our choice to legalize, but we have put in place a plan that reflects the views and values of Albertans. I would like to thank everyone who has participated in providing input, whether through the survey, submissions, or by participating in the round-tables. Legalization will not mark the end of this process. We will continue to monitor this emerging industry as we move forward.

This legislation would bring further clarity to retailers and the public about the use and sale of cannabis in Alberta. The proposed changes would build on the important work we've done to date. These changes would modernize the act and the AGLC to adapt to a marketplace that includes legalized cannabis. This would also

give the AGLC and law enforcement tools to better enforce the rules. There's been a good discussion about these changes so far.

5:00

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, legalization of cannabis represents a major shift for our province and our country. Passing the legislation will allow us to meet the expectations of Albertans as we continue to work towards putting in place a system that prioritizes public health and safety.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I would ask that all members support me in moving third reading.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak in support of third reading of Bill 6, the Gaming and Liquor Statutes Amendment Act, 2018. This bill is the third one to make changes to various acts to create an Alberta-made framework to deal with the legalization of recreational marijuana. Curiously, after years of hearing that legalization would come on Canada Day 2018, the federal government has suddenly gone quiet about the date marijuana will be legalized. But regardless of that date, Alberta has to be ready, so we have Bill 6 before us today for third and final reading.

I will point out that this bill is a bit of a hodgepodge as it also includes completely unrelated amendments to the liquor sales, but I'll keep my remarks focused on the cannabis-related sections. This bill includes marketing restrictions for marijuana and has provisions to assist the Alberta gaming, liquor, and cannabis commission to handle a higher caseload of appeals. Bill 6 also fills holes in the act introduced last session, and as legalization comes closer, we will no doubt see the government introduce other amendments as more holes are discovered. We hope that that does not mean that the government is simply writing legislation as quickly as it can to get it on the table. This is a complex issue, and due diligence needs to take place.

This government claims its top concern is the safety of children and public health, but when reading Bill 6, it is clear the government has failed Alberta's families by refusing to align its public consumption rules on marijuana with alcohol rather than tobacco. At this point, when marijuana becomes legal, people will be able to walk down the road smoking it. I've said this before: you cannot walk the road with a beer. That's why so many municipalities are scrambling right now to consult with their citizens to pass bylaws with stronger restrictions. In the end, we'll see a patchwork of consumption rules around the province, making it hard for citizens to know if it's permissible for someone to be consuming marijuana in any given place such as parks and festivals. We've been trying to highlight this problem for months, and the government has chosen to ignore it.

Bill 6 does contain some positive sections, most particularly allowing prosecutions based on evidence that a substance had an odour of cannabis or appeared to be labelled or packaged as cannabis. This section does align with the rules for liquor and is particularly important for the strict rules regarding transporting marijuana in vehicles. When the federal government legalizes edible cannabis products, allowing officers to identify them through packaging and smell will prove particularly important. The addition of this section is a common-sense amendment, likely inadvertently left out of last fall's Bill 26, and will be important when enforcing the minor ticketed offences of youth possessing cannabis, improper transport in a vehicle, and consumption in the public and restricted places identified in Bill 26.

This government has been silent, however, on the issue of possessing marijuana in schools. The problem is that students aged 17 and under can't possess marijuana at all, but students 18 and over can possess up to 30 grams, and although last fall's Bill 26 restricts anyone from smoking it on or comparatively near school grounds, there's nothing that prevents them from having it in their possession at school. This is the kind of public safety issue that I believe the government has failed to address. Perhaps it plans to address this issue in some other way, but I ask the government to let parents and school boards know now. Alberta United Conservatives will continue to monitor marijuana use in our province and deal with concerns such as this one and bring them to the government. We cannot take for granted that laws enacted today, prior to legalization, will take care of all of the issues that may arise. While this government has told us that its priorities are children and public health, we want to see those assurances reflected in legislation.

Madam Speaker, I now want to address another serious public safety issue relating to driving. Police chiefs are telling us that there are deficits in training and the tools to keep Albertans safe on our roads postlegalization. A special concern is that, unlike with alcohol, there's no roadside device that has been approved for reading levels of THC. We keep hearing about public safety being the most critical aspect of all legislation that is going through Ottawa and here in this Legislature, yet we know our roads will become more dangerous when marijuana is legalized. The Transportation minister, to his credit, admitted that when he unveiled amendments to the Traffic Safety Act in Bill 29 to include drug impairment administration sanctions. Ensuring that police are prepared to handle legalization is a critical component.

This government has admitted that the lion's share of the cost of implementing legalized marijuana will fall to municipalities. Edmonton and Calgary, for instance, have both pegged the cost of planning, zoning, and administration as well as bylaw policing and inspection services at \$9 billion to \$12 billion. The outstanding question, Madam Speaker, is just how much of the tens of millions of dollars the province will collect through the recently approved excise tax and how much of it will go to the municipalities. The Premier has stated that the first few years of legalized marijuana will likely be a net loss despite these revenues from this tax estimated to reach \$80 million in the first full year of legalization. I urge this government not to dismiss municipalities. They are carrying a huge burden, and they want to do everything right for their citizens. For instance, they are having to step in and create public consumption bylaws for parks and streets because this government would not do so.

Another aspect of public safety includes ensuring that a retail regime stamps out the black market. The black market means organized crime, and that brings deep-seated trouble for Albertans. A goal of legalization is to erase the black market, which they control by offering a safe product by legitimate retailers. Price, however, must also compete with the black market. That's why the tax on the sale of each gram is important. Ironically, thanks to the previous Conservative government, which refused to implement a sales tax, Alberta will have the lowest cost marijuana in Canada since the price of a gram has been set at \$8 by the federal government, with the dollar excise tax added on. The only variables are the various sales and harmonized taxes.

Bill 6 also allows the AGLC to add a markup to the price of cannabis. It is something we'll have to watch carefully if we want to make and keep the black market irrelevant. I certainly hope that this NDP government, which likes to surprise Albertans with unexpected taxes, does not look at the markup as an opportunity for revenues. For although legalized marijuana may not have been the choice of everyone, eradicating the black market and organized

crime that controls it can be one of the positive effects to come out of this process.

Clearly, Madam Speaker, legalizing a new recreational drug is a complex, multilayered issue. We hope that when legalized marijuana rolls out in a few months, the government does not hesitate to address any outstanding issues. In closing, I urge the government to view municipalities as partners in the rollout of this cannabis framework and always hold up the safety of children, families, and citizens as the most important objective when crafting legislation and then monitoring how legislation and regulations are affecting their lives for the better.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

5:10

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

Seeing none, the hon. minister to close debate.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I think a great deal has been said about this bill, so I will be brief on this one. Just to address the comments made by the hon. member opposite, I think that in terms of the saliva-testing devices I would reiterate that we, too, have concerns around that. Unfortunately, we don't have jurisdiction to alter the legalization date, which is a bit of a moving target at this moment, as I am speaking. What we did commit to do as a government is to ensure that we had an Alberta-specific model in place in time for that legalization, whenever it may turn out to be, and we will do that.

Madam Speaker, I think the other comment I would like to make is that when this decision was made by the federal government, this government, our government, committed to taking into account the views and values of Albertans, so we went out with one of the largest consultations I think that we have ever had. We came back, and we implemented the model that Albertans told us they wanted to see implemented.

I know the hon. member had indicated that potentially there's a problem with parks. I did want to reiterate that our model ensures that there are restrictions around anywhere you would ordinarily find children, so things like play parks, splash parks, that sort of thing, that restrict smoking in those areas. That model was very well supported by Albertans. When we went back to them and said, you know, "Is this the model that you support?" we received 73 per cent support for that. We said that we would do it, and that is what we did.

With that, I will close debate on this issue. Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 6 read a third time]

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

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

Bill 5 An Act to Strengthen Financial Security for Persons with Disabilities

The Chair: Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. You know, as we get back into this after having a long break, I just wanted to take a quick moment as we get going with debate, and I'm sure we'll have comments on what I'm sure will be some expected

amendments. I want to just start off on a real positive note that thus far in this debate the debate in this House has been quite good. It has been wholesome, and I think we've done a really good job of considering the various parts of this bill. Of course, I have to admit to a certain bias for this bill because it is pretty much verbatim my private member's bill, Bill 211. I wanted to thank all members of the Chamber for the great debate we've had on this thus far.

With that, I look forward to hearing more debate on this bill in Committee of the Whole. Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Cooper: Well, thank you. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 5, An Act to Strengthen Financial Security for Persons with Disabilities. As I've said in the House on a number of occasions, I'm pleased to support the legislation.

You'll know, Madam Chair, that I was a little bit disappointed to see the amendment that we had proposed that would have provided for a little bit of additional flexibility amongst those who have the benefit of a trust as well as receiving AISH to not have an amount of money that would be drawn from the trust on a monthly basis have a negative impact on their eligibility for AISH – I was a little bit disappointed to see that the minister was unable to create a pathway where that could be possible. While the amendment may not have been perfect, I think that certainly the minister has the ability and has the capacity to do so, and it was unfortunate to see him not make that possible. I know that I heard from a lot of stakeholders who certainly would have preferred to see that.

As well, there is essentially no net cost or impact to the taxpayer, so it's unfortunate that we weren't able to find a win-win situation, a win-win for those who are both eligible for AISH and have a Henson trust. You know, these are the types of things where we should be looking to find ways to say yes, but unfortunately in this case the government found a way to say no and didn't endeavour to find a way to say yes on something that we could have got accomplished here during this period of debate. So that was a bit disappointing.

I know that I heard from some stakeholders afterwards who were appreciative of the advocacy that we had done, just like they appreciate the advocacy that the Member for Calgary-Currie has done on this particular piece of legislation. You know, he's done a significant amount of work, and I appreciate the work that he's done and will continue to do on not only this bill but also this very important issue.

We're happy to support this legislation, that will give much-needed peace of mind to families of disabled Albertans, knowing that any inheritance they leave to their children will not disqualify them from AISH benefits. You know, as a matter of fact, it's a little bit surprising that that wasn't the case already, so I appreciate that we've made it to be the case.

Advocates in the disability community have made it clear that they support this legislation, and we are committed to amplifying their voices here in the House. I think it's important that we listen to stakeholders, that we consult. I know that this government hasn't had the best track record on consultation, but on this particular piece of legislation I think that they've done a fair and reasonable job, with the exception of the amendment that they refused to pass, that would have had a major impact and benefit on the quality of life of so many Albertans that have the benefit of a Henson trust as well as receiving AISH benefits.

We're pleased to see that the government has included the one-year grace period to allow AISH recipients time to navigate the financial system, to make informed choices as they inherit funds in discretionary and nondiscretionary trusts without their monthly

AISH benefit being impacted. You know, any time that individuals suffer loss and, as such, have an inheritance, particularly in the form of a trust, we need to be able to give them some time and ability to make the best available decisions for them and their families.

The government has done a fair and reasonable job with respect to this piece of legislation. You know, it's not perfect. Unfortunately, it's difficult to make legislation that is perfect. There are certainly some cases that we raised some concerns around with respect to cognitive ability and the type of discretionary or nondiscretionary fund and whether or not there need to be checks and balances. I don't believe that those have been addressed in the legislation. I'm not sure if we can legislate for every inevitability, but we certainly should be endeavouring to do so wherever possible.

5:20

I'd also just like to briefly remind the House on some of the challenges of the exempt and nonexempt considerations and that we need to be aware that these exist going forward. You know, I believe that it's reasonable for us to review these types of legislation over a period of time to make sure that we have the exemptions correct. I think it's reasonable that we do that as governments on a regular basis, that we review the types of things that are exempt. Perhaps in the future there would be an opportunity to correct this issue around individuals who have the trust as well as are on AISH benefits, for them to receive an exemption for a monthly amount that they could withdraw from the trust.

On balance, I think that we have a good piece of legislation here. Albertans have been asking for it for quite a significant period of time, so I look forward to supporting it here in Committee of the Whole.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise for my final comments on a progressive piece of legislation that I think will not cost the government anything and will help clients significantly. I presume, having said that, there will be more people coming on the roster who weren't eligible before because this is extending the capacity of these individuals to receive monies while being on AISH, which is good, some of those folks who formerly were excluded. It's going to be interesting to know how many the minister is expecting to come on and what that might mean for the program.

I realize that he is expending more dollars for AISH this year with the new budget – all good – but the living allowance has not been increased since 2012. There's been a significant increase in the cost of living and inflation since 2012. As the government in opposition railed against the Conservatives at the time, and as I have raised more than once in the House, we need to index the AISH benefits. These folks deserve to be able to stay abreast of the significant cost of living in Alberta today and the inflation that goes along with a growing economy such as we have.

Under current law Albertans with assets totalling more than \$100,000 weren't eligible to receive AISH, although there are exemptions for such things as a residence and vehicles for disability. It's important to remember that the AISH benefits end at age 65, and this is an important added support for people and their parents and their other extended family who want to see more stability and security for their future. Close to 62,000 Albertans receive AISH benefits today if my numbers are still accurate.

There's no question, in my mind, Madam Chair, that this is positive for Albertans and especially for those who need some

security into the future. Like many, particularly without the added resources to these folks since 2012, I was disappointed that the government did not accept some increase in the eligibility of supplementary funds beyond the \$800 a month to allow these folks to enjoy a higher standard, especially at this time.

I am certainly hearing from people in my community on AISH who are struggling with the current monthly income, so I hope the government will take under advisement the important steps towards indexing our AISH payments and show the world, especially those people who are on disability. Most of the people on disability obviously don't have this kind of a legacy opportunity. This is a small proportion of all the people on AISH who can benefit from a trust fund. Let's take a serious look at the needs of the majority of people on AISH.

To give credit where credit is due, this government has done a lot for people on the margins, for those families and those individuals. Certainly, it's the legacy of the Conservative government before that really neglected services for many of these disadvantaged people. I do recognize that this government has done more than governments in the past, but we're falling behind. These folks at the very least need to have their income indexed to protect them against the inflation and cost-of-living increases that we're all absorbing, but for many of us it hasn't caused serious quality-of-life changes.

I'll certainly be supporting this, Madam Chair. Thank you for the opportunity to speak at this time.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to Bill 5? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today to introduce an amendment to Bill 5, which seeks to improve quality of life for persons with disabilities by allowing them to keep more of what they earn due to increases in minimum wage. I move that Bill 5, An Act to Strengthen Financial Security for Persons with Disabilities, be amended by striking out section 1(3) and substituting the following:

- (3) Section 12(1) is amended
 - (a) by striking out clause (c) and substituting the following:
 - (c) respecting the determination of the income of an applicant or client and his or her cohabiting partner, including providing for an increase in the amount of the allowable deductions from employment income in circumstances where an increase in income is attributable to an increase in the hourly minimum wage established under the Employment Standards Code;
 - (b) by adding the following after clause (d):
 - (d.1) designating assets for the purposes of section 3.1(b)(ii).

The Chair: This will be amendment A2.
Go ahead, hon. member.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Chair. Unlike most minimum wage earners, who get to keep most of their minimum wage increases, when the minimum wage increases for AISH recipients, it counts against their benefits. When the minimum wage increases, those who work face the choice of being able to work and contribute less to their communities or having their government support reduced. In both cases they lose purchasing power and quality of life as the prices of basic household goods increase due to inflation. While other minimum wage earners at least have a chance of keeping up with inflation, the total maximum of earned and supported income for AISH beneficiaries has not increased since 2012.

This amendment would index the amount that an AISH beneficiary can earn to increases in minimum wage so that they do

not lose out on purchasing power every time the minimum wage increases. This isn't a perfect solution in that AISH beneficiaries earning above minimum wage may not benefit directly from this indexing, but we can do better for Albertans by ensuring that those many AISH beneficiaries who earn minimum wage can do so without worry that their spending power will be continuously eroded. It also bolsters the ability and pride of AISH beneficiaries in working and contributing to their communities.

I know this amendment would mean a lot to AISH recipients, who often struggle to get by. Madam Chair, I urge all members of the House to support this compassionate amendment for an important group of Albertans.

The Chair: Any members wishing to speak to amendment A2? Calgary-Mountain View.

5:30

Dr. Swann: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. This is a very creative and timely option, particularly as it's been six years since there's been any increase in the monthly income for AISH people. This provides a very rational and income-based alternative to the earlier comments I made about indexing this monthly stipend they receive. It's something that I hope the government will seriously entertain and adopt because it's truly adding to the support, that these folks, who are actually below the poverty line – the reality is that they live below the poverty line; these folks are not getting away with anything – have supplements to what they're currently getting. Even once their income is brought up with the cost of living, if it ever happens that they get indexing, this particular adjustment will simply be a part of that calculation when costs of living and inflation are brought into the considerations for these folks. It's eminently sensible and helpful, and I think we should be adopting this amendment.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Chair. First, I would like to thank the member opposite and, in fact, all of them for their contribution to the discussion on Bill 5. We have discussed Bill 5 over the last few weeks. I continue to be proud of the strength of this legislation. The foundation of this bill comes from the important work, important consultations that were done by my colleague the MLA for Calgary-Currie and the contributions of disability advocates and Alberta families across this province. Bill 5 would allow Albertans with disabilities and their families to plan for the future. It will provide them access to the same tools all Albertans have to save and provide for their families.

While the amendment that has been proposed is outside the scope of the intent of the bill and not what individuals and families were consulted on, I value its intent. Unfortunately, however, this amendment doesn't actually accomplish what it intends to as it wouldn't change anything for AISH clients for the most part. What this amendment does is to refer to an authority which already exists. This amendment doesn't speak to what the threshold should be or to what kind of change is needed, and passing this amendment would not make a huge difference in the lives of Albertans who count on AISH. Regardless, as I said, I value what I think the intent was, to make this program better.

There are 60,000 Albertans who rely on this program, who get supports from this program: a living allowance of \$1,588 and other benefits, including health benefits – the costs of dental, optical, prescription drugs – and some of the costs of child care. It's a comprehensive program. Any changes that should be made: I believe that we need to make them in a thoughtful manner and in

consultation with the community. Right now, with whatever information we have, we know that a little over 15 per cent of people who receive support from AISH have employment income. As I said, any potential change would need consultation and would need to ensure that it benefits all Albertans and wouldn't create any unintended consequences. I'm sure that members opposite will understand that there is a need for more analysis, and I have heard a suggestion from other colleagues as well.

We have done a number of things to improve this program. Like, in the last four budgets we have added \$103 million to make sure that Albertans get the support they need. We also put forward an AISH action plan, which will make sure that this program is accessible to Albertans.

I can say that these are all very good suggestions. As government we have always said that we are absolutely committed to looking at our programs to make sure they respond to the needs of Albertans. I thank the member. I will certainly take back their suggestion and will look at that at a later time.

Thank you very much. I will ask members at this point to vote against this amendment.

The Chair: Any other speakers to the amendment? Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the input from my colleague from Calgary-Mountain View and the minister. I would question: if the authority already exists to increase the amount of money that an AISH recipient can earn without being penalized, if the power to increase that allowance already exists, I wonder why it hasn't been done already. AISH recipients are the least able to be able to do anything about their circumstances. As my colleague pointed out, many people who receive AISH are living below the poverty line, and they're dealing with disabilities on top of being impoverished. That seems like incredibly unfair circumstances to leave people in if you have the power to make it different for them.

Dr. Swann: Even a small improvement.

Ms McPherson: It is indeed a small improvement.

Bill 5 is a good bill. However, my understanding is that the number of PDD recipients that would actually be positively impacted by this bill is less than 1 per cent. If we have the opportunity today, to use the minister's statistic, for 15 per cent of AISH recipients, if we can improve their quality of life today, I cannot think of any good reason to not go ahead and approve this amendment. I wonder if there are any AISH recipients that would disagree with me. I am very confident that if we were to poll AISH recipients, we would get close to a hundred per cent support for this sort of amendment today. For those reasons, I implore all MLAs to please vote in favour of this amendment.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? Seeing none, I'll call the vote.

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

The Chair: Back on the main bill, are there further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to the bill?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

[The remaining clauses of Bill 5 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. At this time I would move that we rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

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

Ms Woollard: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 5. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Any opposed, say no. So ordered.

5:40

Government Bills and Orders

Third Reading

(continued)

Bill 17

Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2018

[Adjourned debate May 10: Mr. Panda]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to move third reading of Bill 17, the Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2018.

I also want to thank the members of the Assembly for their thoughts and debate in regard to this bill. As we've heard, Alberta's tax laws are typically reviewed every year and amended to ensure that government policy decisions are implemented and that the integrity of our tax system is maintained. This bill will maintain consistency between federal and Alberta legislation, align provincial legislation with administrative practices, address technical deficiencies, and repeal expired provisions.

I'd encourage all members of the House to support the bill. Thank you very much.

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

Seeing none, the hon. minister to close debate.

Mr. Ceci: Closed.

[Motion carried; Bill 17 read a third time]

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

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Seeing the excellent progress we have made today and over the last several days, I would move that we call it 6 o'clock and adjourn until 7:30 this evening.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:42 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday evening, May 30, 2018

Day 35

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (NDP)
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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, May 30, 2018

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: Good evening. Please be seated.

Government Bills and Orders

Third Reading

Bill 7

Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to move third reading of Bill 7, Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act.

The Deputy Speaker: Any others wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a fine day in Alberta, and we're getting a bunch of liquid sunshine. It's a great day. For those bike riders out there, it's rain. It's an honour to rise to speak and give some final thoughts on Bill 7, Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act. I've spoken at length about the bill and concerns. We've tried to make amendments. The minister felt that we may have been a little bit over the top or whatever, but we're trying to go forward with it. Some of my concerns have been expressed by the producers that we've reached out to. I don't know if the minister has or those of his caucus that are involved in the rural ridings have, but then I guess rural ridings in the government is kind of a stretch.

As I've said numerous times, this bill is primarily about the local food scene and, more specifically, organic foods. Focusing on the overall purpose of this act would be to encourage the development of a local food sector throughout the province and to regulate agriculture products that are produced or processed in the province and marketed and sold as organic products within the province. We tried, Madam Speaker, to get a more accurate description regarding organic products or all products, and it wasn't met with great reception.

I don't have any issues with the concept of developing organic products. The primary focus would be to standardize the use of organic labelling and certification. In this case I believe it makes sense regarding those products grown and produced in the province. I'm hoping that the concurrence with CFIA standards in labelling and certification is important. Food safety is of the utmost importance, and we saw that go forward in the province when the tuberculosis outbreak happened in the southern portion of my constituency and that of the constituency of the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Madam Speaker, it's all well and good. There is no one recognized threshold for products produced locally for sale within Alberta. This act will now make a uniform minimum standard even though the verbiage and potentially the regulations leading from that verbiage may or may not be awkward at some point in time. As we've discussed numerous times, previous to this act products sold within Alberta had no established common criteria for organic labelling or the standards thereof. However, if you exported those same products outside Alberta, you had to comply with CFIA standards for labelling and certification. Going forward, these CFIA standards will have to be met within Alberta in order to use the term

"certified organic" on these products. Everyone will understand the rules, and the playing field will be level for everyone who wishes to participate with the organic labelling standard.

One thing we never talked about, Madam Speaker – I see the Government House Leader listening intently, and I'm pleased at that because he knows that there are some who transgress outside the regulations and receive their penalties and fines for that in federal legislation. There's been no regulatory talk about anything for anybody who produces anything outside these regulations, but possibly we could have organic producer police formed as a new regulatory body. It would be a good job-creation project, and I know the economic development minister would be appreciative of that.

An Hon. Member: Do some hard time.

Mr. Strankman: Yes. It has happened, Madam Speaker, that some of us have done some form of hard time, and many members of the government have that to look forward to in their future when they are in opposition.

But then abiding by these regulations developed by the CFIA would be a necessary expense. The minister hasn't talked about any expense or the creation of these regulations and who will pay for that, but it may just become another known line item as we approach three numbers of deficit going forward. Once there would be a fee, collected or certified, approved associated with using the certified organic label, the question is: how would this be adjudicated and returned to general revenues? Because it would appear that the government does need a lot of funding for the general revenue to spend in their own fashion. The question, Madam Speaker, is: how long would this process take, and is there an overbearing bureaucratic process involved? We haven't really seen how that could take place.

Madam Speaker, in other circumstances, in other jurisdictions outside this place I've talked and others have talked about the unintended consequences of legislation going forward. These are important questions that producers and the producers that we've spoken to may want answers to. It's part of the due diligence that they will have to embark on as part of their business model.

Madam Speaker, I have many friends in the diverse constituency of Drumheller-Stettler who are bee producers, and the organic products that they produce don't necessarily fall within this criteria because the legislation talks primarily about animals and food products only from plants and/or animals, but it doesn't actually specifically talk about insects, so insects are certainly of a consequence. These are important questions that producers need answers to. [interjection] I appreciate the input from the hon. minister. He'll get his opportunity. He's had his opportunity, and he'll get his opportunity in the future to speak more towards lucky number seven here, Bill 7, as we go forward.

Like I said, we have no issue with the volunteer program. Producers have a choice one way or the other, but there's been no conversation regarding penalties or potential infractions as people come forward and find out whether they are or are not included in the organic producer realm. These issues were made up under the brunt of my amendments last night, amendments that were brought forth in good faith, Madam Speaker, amendments that sought clarity, openness, and transparency. Unfortunately, once again, a government bereft of any practical farming experience has decided that these amendments were unnecessary, not only unnecessary but burdensome in some way.

At some point, you know, the minister talks about more red tape, but it's only red tape when we talk about it; it's not red tape when the government talks about it. We discussed it at some length, the

amendments that ensure that the minister shall consult with producers and processors for a period of not less than 60 days and consider any comments or feedback prior to making a regulation.

Everyone that has had experience in this agriculture sector understood the need for this amendment, and several of my colleagues, including the bee producers that we reached out to and also the egg producers from Nobleford, talked at length about how important it was to consult with the very producers that could be impacted by this act prior – capital p-r-i-o-r – to enacting regulations that could do them harm. It seems like a proactive and forward-thinking concept, but sometimes the minister believes and has stated that this consultation would be a burden.

I do remember vividly the conversations in this Chamber in regard to Bill 6 as it was coming down to this stage, the third reading stage, of passing the legislation, when there were some 1,800 producers or approaching 2,000 on the steps of this Legislature and causing great consternation to the security of this facility.

This government complaining about red tape, Madam Speaker, defies logic. It's something out of the twilight zone. Thinking that proper consultation is somehow a burdensome and obscene reality is, quite frankly – and I'm inclined to give the minister the benefit of the doubt – not necessarily a problem. Perhaps he simply misspoke and was making a point in a poor fashion, and I've been guilty of that. I'll openly admit to that with good faith to the minister that he would receive my input without umbrage and possibly allow the regulations that come forward or his bureaucrats that allow the regulation to come forward would be benevolent to those producers that it affects.

7:40

As a group this government hasn't exactly endeared themselves to rural folk. In fact, we heard a great deal of conversation about the discussion about attendance at the Beef Industry Conference and how actual processing of cattle does and does not take place and the understanding of what some of that processing actually is and how it really affects the development and processing of cattle for their place to be put into the food market. My friend from the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills pointed out last night when he referred to several cattle producers in the gallery watching last night's debate in a similar fashion, Madam Speaker: consultation is never a burden, nor is it red tape.

The Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills stated in confidence that if he were to go up to the gallery and poll those producers, 10 out of 10 times he would be told that, yes, they would like to be consulted before regulations. Madam Speaker, I too, along with the minister and several others from the government caucus, attended the beef and beer presentation last night, and they did have a chance to have open conversation directly with producers. That could have been considered. I know there are other members of government that consider a coffee session or a hallway conversation as a consultation, but it's a beginning at least.

Common sense needs to be a part of this place, and it's not always the thing that happens here, but we are all here with a gentlemen's agreement about a form of democracy. The government has the numbers to defeat these amendments, and however they do that is certainly their will or wish. Sometimes we feel that it's done with alarming frequency, alarming because I can't help but wonder if they truly understood what they were voting against. Three common-sense amendments in my case were deemed unnecessary and burdensome and adding a level of red tape. The minister talked about a committee to form a committee. Well, that's his interpretation, but possibly if the producers would have been demonstrated a form or any form of good faith in the presentation

of previous legislation, we wouldn't be necessarily so sensitive about how this could go forward.

Madam Speaker, I stand before you as a farmer first and a politician second. I looked at this act from the viewpoint first of a farmer. I spoke today in my member's statement about farmers, and that is where my heart is. That's where my role is, the defence of farmers from government, onerous, overbearing, overreaching government dating back before I came to this place, from legislation, outdated legislation that was created for World War II in 1943.

Through certain alignment I'll call it of the political constellations that policy has been changed, and many of the government members that were here last night that were at the beef and barley presentation heard about the fantastic exponential development and growth of the barley and the malt processing industry in this province. It's almost in the double or triple digits of expansion, and the economic development minister would take well to those kinds of self-supported initiatives, not necessarily doing it with a government handout but more or less of a place of the government getting out of the way of the regulation and being given a hand up, which is the Alberta model and the Alberta way.

I've seen that, Madam Speaker, from my vast experience of living within six miles of the social experiment politically created in 1944 in Saskatchewan, the social NDP experiment known as Saskatchewan. At that time the population of Saskatchewan was greater than it was in Alberta. Within two years of that we had oil discovery in Alberta because those oil explorators from the Regina area were driven out by the fear of nationalization of their industry.

Madam Speaker, we developed amendments that we believed added to transparency, openness, and accountability and would have also reduced the optics of the minister, through this act, having way too much authority over agricultural products of a nonorganic nature. This was a major concern of some of the producer stakeholders that we reached out to and still was when we spoke to them this morning. It seems like a rational and measured fix to a possible problem. But once again we find ourselves in a situation where the minister has said: don't worry; it's fine; be happy; the council will ensure government overreach does not happen.

My colleague quoted a famous line from the late President Ronald Reagan last night, and it bears repeating: "trust, but verify." Another comment that he made, I believe, Madam Speaker, if I could get it right, again by former President Ronald Reagan, was where he talked about: "If it moves, tax it. If it keeps moving, regulate it. And if it stops moving, subsidize it." In many ways that's the Canadian way, and it's frustrating in many regards.

We have seen the idea of regulating it and subsidizing it in the province because we have seen vast growth of bureaucratic employment in the province. It certainly has been wonderful for those government employees who simply think that the creation of their government job is the development and the beginnings of economic wealth creation. But, Madam Speaker, they need to realize that their taxpayer dollar subsidized wage that they get comes from people who don't necessarily always work in government.

The percentage of the people that create wealth in government is probably in the single digits, and those people who are not receiving government subsidy is well in the double digits, approaching 90 per cent. You may know that the Canadian Federation of Independent Business has a motto that says that small business nation-wide is big business. That's who these agriculture producers are that we talk about, faced with overbearing electrical costs, overbearing taxes on the natural things that they do to produce food.

You know, Madam Speaker, I was able to receive a pleasant note from one of the legislative staffers here today after my member's

statement when I made the quote that if you eat, you're involved in agriculture. One of the staffers sent me a kind note saying that he had eaten that day, and he said: thank you very much, Mr. Strankman, for making that comment.

I'll leave it at that, Madam Speaker. I've covered a lot of ground here. It would have been much better if the government would have allowed us to have some positive input – we've given what input we can – but it would appear that that ship has sailed. So I'll leave it at that.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other speakers to the bill? Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Before I begin, I want to cite one comment from my colleague from Drumheller-Stettler about the knowledge of our members in rural communities. As I look over at the government benches – those who are watching at home know that I get to sit in this little corner of government members on the opposition side – I see members who know many things about rural communities, who represent rural communities, from the Minister of Energy to the Member for West Yellowhead to the agriculture minister.

But the fact of the matter is that many of us have become citizens of Alberta because our families moved here to become farmers, and that was the case for myself. My grandfather settled in this area from Slovakia to be a farmer in the Innisfail area. My cousin still carries on that tradition today. While I recognize that sometimes it's hard to lose sight of the fact that I'm a member from a big city, the fact of the matter is that I know a lot about farming. I know a lot about that. I have constituents of mine who work on farms who live in the city. So the fact is that we really reflect the knowledge that the reach of farming isn't just a rural Alberta thing, living in a county. Many people who live in cities and towns also work on farms, are impacted by agriculture.

The fact, too, is that we also recognize that local food ties in to local and large communities. When you look at farmers' markets, a lot of these are opening up in the urban settings. Cities like Calgary, cities like Edmonton have large farmers' markets, and that's where a lot of the organic and the bio-organic movements are occurring. We want to help encourage and set policies in place that will allow for these industries to thrive and grow.

7:50

As I alluded to when we were in Committee of the Whole yesterday, the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future struck a committee that reviewed the agrifood and agribusiness sectors. This was supported by all members of the committee from, at the time, all three political parties. All of the motions that were brought forth there were unanimously passed.

Of those motions, one of them was that the government expand on exploring local food initiatives. I will say that again, that the, key word, government expand on exploring local food initiatives. The government, therefore the ministry of agriculture, should be expanding to find ways to support local food initiatives. That's what appointing this council does. That's what this bill does. That initiative, that policy that was struck in the report by the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future received support from members who currently sit in the UCP caucus.

I must encourage and support the minister on the fact that he is following the mandate of that committee that wants to look at other ways to expand on this. He is seeking advice from the local food council that's going to look at ways that we can really explore

within there. I hear laughing coming from the opposition bench side, but I'll dismiss that. You know, it's a late night.

I don't know if we're still feeling the hangovers from the beef and barley meeting that we had, but that's a sector that we can look to on what this current government has done to help expand. At the end of the day, we saw an industry, which was the craft brewing industry, hurting. It had a hard time actually expanding and growing within this province. I remember specifically – and this would actually impact a UCP member – that the town of Vulcan wanted to establish their own beer. It was the Vulcan beer. They couldn't source a local distillery to make that beer. They had to outsource it to the United States because there was no craft brewing industry that could actually produce it in the right volume without having to deal with the red tape and the challenge that happened.

But now here in Alberta we have over 60 distilleries and 60 craft breweries because of the actions of this government. They've been doing things to support the local craft brewing industry. The fact is that these craft brewers are buying local. They're buying from barley producers. They're buying from hops producers here in Alberta. They're supporting the agrifood and agribusiness sector here in Alberta, and they're starting to now look at expanding past Alberta's borders into other markets. That's because of a lot of initiatives that we have done to support local food initiatives.

Now, I heard from the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster who said that these things are naturally emerging on their own. Well, that's right. Craft brewing has been emerging for the past 10 years. When I was a restaurant manager by trade, I saw that occurring. But the downside was: do you know where we were buying our craft beer from? We were buying it from Idaho. We were buying it from Montana. We were buying it from B.C. We didn't have the policies in place here in Alberta to help support that industry in emerging. So at the end of the day, we had other jurisdictions that were capitalizing on our inability to support these local sectors.

I praise the minister for finding a way to start one of many processes in which we can help support the local industry. We can help them grow, and we can establish councils that will help advise the ministries on what policies they need to bring forward to help these sectors and help this industry emerge. They can work with multiple players, from small producers to people within the distribution industries and even to people within the restaurant industries, to really find ways to best promote this.

If we don't follow through on these processes, we're going to allow other jurisdictions to come in and hedge their bets on this. When we don't have policies like organic standards in place here in Alberta, when we don't help these sectors emerge, it allows other markets to move into Alberta and to grow and flourish here. While I support, you know, the Canadian economy and Canadian industries, I do want to see success coming from Alberta, and I think the best way for us to help it succeed is by starting it from the grassroots and allowing it to expand the way it is, similar to what we're seeing in the craft brewing industry.

So I encourage all members to support this bill in third reading, and I want to thank the minister for bringing this bill forward.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Calgary-Shaw for his presentation. It was interesting. I'm sure the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler, whom the Member for Calgary-Shaw was referring to in his speech, was very interested in being educated on the agriculture industry. He's only

been a farmer for 65 years, but I'm sure that Calgary-Shaw has got lots to teach him, and he's listening with an open mind.

What I did notice, though, is that it's interesting, Madam Speaker, through you to the Member for Calgary-Shaw, that he glossed over everything that the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler pointed out with this piece of legislation, completely ignoring his 65 years of experience in the agriculture industry, a member who's a hero in the agriculture industry, not a wheat smuggler. Let's be clear on that. He is a famous wheat smuggler, though, without a doubt, who stood up to a ridiculous regulation that was impacting him and his colleagues. He's a hero, without a doubt, in that industry, and to completely ignore what he has to say seems disappointing.

The question that I have, though, for the member is how he feels about the fact that he belongs to a government and is supporting a bill that has been brought forward by a minister of agriculture who stood in this House yesterday in front of people from the industry and said that consulting with farmers or ranchers was too much red tape for him and his government. Is it your opinion that it is not appropriate for the government to spend some time consulting with farmers and ranchers when they make decisions on their industry, or is it your opinion that they should?

We know that your minister thinks it's red tape to talk to farmers and ranchers, something that I know that the farmers and ranchers in our caucus were disappointed to hear, that the farmers and ranchers in the gallery were certainly disappointed to hear. They were not surprised, though, Madam Speaker, given the track record of this minister and this government when it comes to the agriculture industry and their disdain for my neighbours and my friends that they've shown over and over in this place.

Particularly what I would like you to focus on is the fact – you refer to a council that would advise the minister. But when the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler brought forward a very reasonable amendment that would make sure that those people were selected from across the wide variety of industry that makes up our agriculture industry in our province, were selected by industry stakeholders that could put forward names that would be able to help the minister do the job, that was too much red tape for this minister. I suggest that that would be certainly disappointing.

Now, you talk about local food. Local food is good. I like to go to the farmers' market every week in Bergen, just outside my farm, and I enjoy it. Those who produce the food there are part of the agriculture industry, so are the farmers and ranchers that are in all of our communities, and the idea that your government seems to think that they can continue to make legislation and regulations and refuse to talk to the people that are in that industry is extremely disappointing to rural Alberta. I can tell you that. It's very disappointing to the agriculture industry.

It's another reason why this government – an NDP government who, let's be honest, in this province and certainly other provinces have their roots in rural Alberta – after the actions of this government in this term, the first NDP government in Alberta's history, in a very short period of time managed to wipe themselves completely from existence in rural Alberta because they've shown complete disdain for agriculture.

I know that members – they'll find out soon enough. I go to rural Alberta every day. I live there. I can tell you that people are still furious about how they have been treated by this government. You saw it again last night from your minister, that it's too much red tape to talk to farmers and ranchers.

Member, is it too much red tape to talk to farmers and ranchers, or do you disagree with your minister?

Mr. Sucha: Well, the amendment that we saw from there was the fact that you wanted to establish a council to establish a council. The council's process is to consult with farmers and ranchers, similar to what the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future did. So when I see the opposition to this bill and the challenges that we're seeing to this local food council – it was the committee that we struck, that consulted with farmers and ranchers, that advised us to establish this, and this was supported by all members of that side of the House.

Now, with my limited time I will say, you know – and this alludes to some of the comments that I heard from the Member for Drumheller-Stettler. One of the biggest things that I heard was feedback in relation to Bill 6. Well, one of the first visits I had in the new year was with a constituent of mine who was injured at a farm. He was injured in a vehicular accident. He was a farm worker who said: "If you hadn't passed that bill, I would not have received compensation. I would not be receiving a paycheque. I would not be able to pay my mortgage." I will, number one, say that it was because of that that he could support his family and support his loved ones.

8:00

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak? Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'd like to take some time tonight here and talk about Bill 7. It was just interesting hearing the Member for Calgary-Shaw talk about his rural constituency. One thing I should remind him of is that even the people in urban Alberta didn't like Bill 6, and the farmers, of course, liked it even less. So I guess that when we hear the Member for Calgary-Shaw talk about, you know, some of their members, the NDP MLAs representing farmers, I would like to see how many of them represented farmers when we were dealing with Bill 6. I think we know the answer to that. It was actually zero.

But getting back to Bill 7 here, one of the biggest problems with Bill 7 is the vague wording. I mean, there are just so many things that are open to interpretation, open to the minister's discretion, that I think it's alarming. We see this over and over with this government, where they want a blank cheque, where they want to pass a skeletal bill and then fill in the details afterwards. Of course, that's just not what we're here to do. We're here to discuss legislation and discuss what's in this legislation, and when big details are left out, I don't think it's something that we can – you know, we don't have much to discuss, then, if we don't have the details of what's happening.

One thing that this act does is that it gives power over all agricultural products produced or processed in Alberta. Of course, Madam Speaker, I don't know if that's what the intent of this bill was, but that's what it does do. That's obviously alarming, and it gives tremendous powers to the minister. Again, we talk about how these bills that this government brings forward leave all the details out and leave it all up to the minister to decide afterwards, and of course that makes it hard to decide whether our constituents want us to support something like this or not.

Another issue is the certification process. We don't know how long it could take. It could take years, and of course if we have farmers or people growing on their land that want to be involved in the certification process, we don't know how long it takes. We don't know how much it's going to cost. Things like that add more uncertainty to a bill like this.

Now, it says here, "The Minister shall ensure that the members appointed to the Council are representative of Alberta's local food sector, including small producers and processors." Well, Madam

Speaker, we did have a chance here to pass amendments that would really identify who would be selected to be on this council, but obviously the government didn't want to have any specifics to that. They wanted to leave it vague, leave it up to the minister to pick and choose whomever they wanted. Of course, I think that's somewhat disrespectful to the agricultural producers themselves, who have organizations, who already have groups together. They could pick people that they wanted to have represent them on a council like this.

The costs associated with the marketing council are unknown. We don't know if it will be self-funded, if it is something that's government funded, or how that's done. We don't know with this bill.

Now, it is important to have the organic label mean something to Albertans, more than just a marketing ploy, so there are some benefits here. But, obviously, again, how this government gets to some of these decisions on what they do: there is maybe not always the best process involved.

Now, this legislation will use federal guidelines under the CFIA. Of course, you know, that's a standard set-up. You know, those are some Canadian standards that they want to go by. Whether these standards are something that the producers in Alberta want to have to go by or not is something that needs to be discussed.

I look at some of these other issues here, you know: the uncertainty of who's going to be on the council, concerns that maybe the council will be dominated by one sector and not be representative of all the different sectors that could be represented, and, of course, again, the costs associated with the marketing council.

Again, a lot of the producers we've talked to worry about the vagueness of the language in this bill. One of the things they wonder about is this definition: "a product, including any food or drink, wholly or partly derived from an animal or a plant." What does that actually mean? There's obviously a lot of vagueness here.

Again, I think a previous member brought up bees and honey. Is that included in "any food or drink, wholly or partly derived from an animal or a plant"? We don't know exactly what's included in some of this.

Now, I think it's proven that Albertans already support local food. In a 2016 survey 92 per cent of households bought locally at farmers' markets. Obviously, I go to farmers' markets myself, and I buy produce there, as do, obviously, lots of Albertans. We have a situation here where these producers are already being supported by the local people, and that's great. Would we like to see more? Of course we would like to see more. But we're not sure if this bill is getting there or not or if it's actually going to exclude different people from being able to market their produce, you know, in the way that they would like to.

Now, when I look at the bill itself, it says here:

12 The Minister may, on terms and conditions specified by the Minister, designate any person or class of persons to act as an inspector for the purposes of this Act.

Madam Speaker, we have a situation here where the minister, on terms and conditions specified by the minister, basically can do whatever he or she wants as far as designating any person or class of persons to act as an inspector. Without any kind of guidelines or whatever, the minister is going to decide who gets to be an inspector for the purposes of this act. I guess I don't know what that really means. I don't know who that would include or not include.

Just to give you an idea of what it entails for a person, obviously, if a complaint comes in:

Complaint

10 A person may, in accordance with the regulations, make a complaint to the Minister regarding the advertising, labelling or

offering for sale of an agricultural product that the person suspects is not certified in accordance with section 8.

The minister, of course, has designated somebody to act as an inspector. Then this is where it comes in, okay?

11(1) On receipt of a complaint under section 10, an inspector must verify that the producer or processor of the agricultural product that is the subject of the complaint holds the appropriate certification in accordance with section 8.

It goes on:

(2) If the producer or processor of the agricultural product holds the appropriate certification, the inspector must notify the complainant of the producer's or processor's certification status and conclude the inspection.

Well, that makes sense. It's pretty simple.

(3) If the producer or processor of the agricultural product does not hold the appropriate certification, the inspector must conduct an investigation.

Now, going on to 13(1), it talks about inspections and investigations.

13(1) On receipt of a complaint under section 10, an inspector may conduct an inspection or investigation to determine whether a person is complying with this Act, the regulations or an enforcement instrument.

(2) In conducting an inspection or investigation, an inspector may do one or more of the following:

- (a) subject to subsection (4), enter, at any reasonable time, any place, including any means of conveyance or transport, where an inspector has reason to believe that
 - (i) agricultural products are sold,
 - (ii) advertising materials, packaging or labels for an agricultural product are created or kept,
 - (iii) a certification record is kept, or
 - (iv) a record related to the sale of an agricultural product is kept.

So this person whom the minister designates – we don't know what person or class of persons this will be – has the power at any reasonable time or any place to go to where the agricultural products are sold, where the materials or packaging or labels may be, where the records are kept, or where a record related to the sale of the agricultural product is kept. Obviously, this opens up a whole issue, of course, around the powers of this inspector, who – we don't know, again, what person or class of persons the minister may designate – has this enormous amount of responsibility to be able to go into probably a person's place of residence, I would suggest, because a lot of these small producers would be doing this out of their home, and would be able to search through a person's place of residence or work or wherever they happen to be doing this and search through all these things.

Furthermore, they can:

- (b) examine a certification record, a record related to the sale of an agricultural product, any other relevant record or advertising material, packaging or label of an agricultural product.

Again, just more things that this inspector may or may not do.

It goes on:

- (c) by written notice, require a person to provide, at a time, date and place specified in the notice, a certification record, a record related to the sale of an agricultural product, any other relevant record or advertising material, packaging or label of an agricultural product.

8:10

So after they've been in and searched and done all that work, then they can still require by written notice that this information be provided. I'm not sure why they would be able to do both: go into a person's residence or whatever, dig out all this material, or just

ask for it by written notice. I mean, I would suggest that asking someone to provide it by written notice would be far less intrusive.

Going on:

- (d) subject to subsection (3), remove for review and copying a certification record, a record related to the sale of an agricultural product, any other relevant record or advertising material, packaging or label of an agricultural product.

Obviously, at this point they can start confiscating possessions of people that are suspected of something here.

This isn't just a simple bill to, you know, support Alberta's local food sector, as it suggests in its name. This is a far-reaching bill. It isn't just as simple as encouraging people to shop local and buy local produce.

Now, it goes on.

- (e) use data storage, information processing or retrieval devices or systems that are used by a processor, producer or vendor in order to examine a certification record or other record in readable form;
- (f) question any person on matters the inspector believes may be relevant.

Obviously, they'd be able to, you know, do an investigation where they're interviewing other people.

- (g) require a person to provide oral or written statements, whether under oath or otherwise, at a specified time, date and place.

Obviously, the inspector would be gaining information to be used, I guess, to prosecute somebody, with written statements under oath.

Again, I'm a little uncertain why there couldn't have been some sort of designation of who would be an inspector rather than just "any person or class of persons."

Let's go on here.

- (3) An inspector who removes a record or advertising material, packaging or label under subsection (2)(d) must provide a receipt and return the record or advertising material, packaging or label to the person who provided it within a reasonable time.

They, of course, have to provide a receipt when they confiscate something, I guess, from an individual.

It says here:

- (4) An inspector may enter a private dwelling under subsection (2)(a) only with the consent of the occupant of the private dwelling or pursuant to an order under subsection (5).

Of course, then under (5) it says:

- (5) If the consent required under subsection (4) is refused or cannot reasonably be obtained, the inspector may apply to a justice as defined in the Provincial Offences Procedure Act for an order directing the occupant to permit the inspector to enter the private dwelling to exercise the inspector's powers and perform the inspector's duties and functions.

Obviously, Madam Speaker, this person is not just any person that is going to be doing this. I would hope that the minister already has some idea who might be qualified or who might not be qualified to do this kind of work, where they're, you know, entering private dwellings or, if they can't, then of course applying to a justice for an order to be able to enter the private dwelling.

Obviously, I think there are some pretty big issues here as far as who would be doing investigations, how these investigations would be handled, and why couldn't we have had that in this bill rather than leave it up to the minister's discretion afterwards?

Of course, I just want to go into offences here. Now, these are obviously some serious things. It says:

- 18(1) A person who contravenes section 9, 14, or 15(3) or the regulations is guilty of an offence and is liable
 - (a) in the case of an individual, to a fine of not more than \$5000, and

- (b) in the case of a corporation, to a fine of not more than \$20 000.

- (2) Where a corporation is guilty of an offence under this Act, an officer, director or agent of the corporation who directed, authorized, assented to, acquiesced in or participated in the commission of the offence is a party to and guilty of the offence and is liable to the fines provided for the offence, whether or not the corporation has been prosecuted for or convicted of the offence.

Madam Speaker, you know, these aren't light fines. These aren't slaps on the wrist. These could become very serious. We see that this isn't just: "Let's help the local farmers. Let's help local produce do well and get people to buy local." This is pretty serious stuff here.

I guess maybe the government's plan here was to try to make up for the failure of Bill 6 and how they drove so many farmers and so many rural people away from themselves and really did let people know that they didn't do the consultation that . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow. Is this under 29(2)(a), or are you speaking to the bill?

Mr. Clark: No, it's not.

The Deputy Speaker: Speaking to the bill. Go ahead.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise to speak to Bill 7. You know, we've had some conversations about this bill within our caucus, and I've certainly given a lot of reflection on this bill. The first question I ask is: well, who doesn't like local food? Of course we do. Alberta farmers are remarkable; they're innovative. The local food movement is taking off, not only here in Alberta but, of course, around the world. It's one of the great gems of our province that we have such remarkable producers in this province.

We've looked at the costs that are associated with the bill. There don't seem to be massive costs here. But at the same time, whenever I look at legislation, I ask myself: well, what problem are we seeking to solve here? How do we quantify the challenges? And if there are certain problems to overcome or certain opportunities to take advantage of, is legislation, in fact, the best way to do that, or is government overreaching for one reason or another?

You know, one of the aspects of this bill that I suppose would be favourable would be the organic certification piece. It's certainly potentially valuable. But my understanding is that I don't believe we necessarily need legislation to close that gap. There are other ways of addressing that particular concern.

So it is with hesitation that I will be voting against this bill because, of course, I think that local food is an important part of the vibrancy of the province, but when I look at the problems that this bill seeks to solve, I actually don't see that there's an enormous challenge to overcome. There is some risk here that this bill overreaches and that local producers may feel put upon.

You know, I look at Grow Calgary and the work that they're doing. They do remarkable work, and they've been doing that for many years without this bill in place. I feel that there are many producers that are already doing great work. Certainly, I don't feel that that work will be constrained if this bill does not pass. I also don't see, necessarily, a direct line of sight between how that work will be enhanced should this bill pass.

It's my view that unless there's a compelling reason, a substantially massive positive to moving forward with a bill or a huge problem to overcome, legislation is a pretty blunt instrument.

It's a pretty big thing to do. So while I am a big supporter of local food, I feel that at the end of the day, this bill solves a problem that Alberta doesn't have. As a result, I will be voting against Bill 7.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to third reading of Bill 7, Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act. I must confess that over the last few weeks I've been doing a lot of thinking about what's being proposed here with Bill 7. There are parts of it that I can agree with, but there is an underlying theme here that prevents me from being able to support Bill 7. I believe that there were a few very reasonable amendments that were proposed to try and help improve Bill 7. They were rejected by the majority here, and because of that, I believe that I am in a position where I cannot support Bill 7 in its current wording.

8:20

One thing, I think, that needs to be recognized here is that the more and more that I go through the bill, the underlying theme that comes out to me, especially with regard to the local food council and the impacts that may have on the development of that industry and the advancement of that industry and the possible encumbrances that could come on that industry, brings great concern to me. It seems like the government, the minister are essentially saying to us and to other producers to just trust them: just trust us; we will do what's right for the industry. I've got to admit, Madam Speaker, that I'm not comfortable in doing that.

I believe that there may be good intentions involved with developing the local food industry, but I also understand that good intentions don't always come without unforeseen circumstances. The point in time where it really became obvious to me that I could not support how we were moving forward with Bill 7 was last night, when an amendment came forward to do 60 days of consultation before putting regulations in place, the fact that that was not acceptable to the minister, to the government to consider. That's a very reasonable thing to do, to approach the industry, whatever industry that is, whether that's cereal grains, canola, beef, the hog industry, the chicken, the dairy, the vegetable growers, all of these different types of industries.

For the minister to have the kind of power that is being given the minister through Bill 7 I believe is somewhat dangerous ground. I can't come to a position of just saying: I trust you. I think if there was a chance that that amendment would have passed, I think there was a good chance that I could have supported Bill 7. But the fact that the minister and the government are saying: "We know what we're doing. We don't need to consult. We don't need to go through that stage of actually asking the industry if this is going to work, if this is not going to work, getting the input," there are many times where – and we talked about it last night, about how the hog industry developed their quality assurance program at the industry level.

The government facilitated some of that, assisted in developing that. There were many times through that development that industry association representatives learned from producers why this will work or why that will not work, and we had to adjust as we went. That was a very healthy maturation of a quality assurance program. That could have been something that would have helped here, to have a 60-day consultation where one person in the industry can come up with the understanding that, you know, if we do this, then

this is likely to happen. Has anybody thought of that? Then we can stop a potential disaster from happening.

I have no problem supporting the local food week. I think that's a great part of Bill 7, but I do have significant concern with how, you know, the act talks about local food. Well, what is local food? It defines local food as essentially "agricultural products produced in Alberta" and, according to the regulations that come forward, "agricultural products processed in Alberta." So this is an act that will take into consideration all agricultural products. Some people think that, well, this is just going to be the local food sector, which will be small producers and small processors. No. It definitely has the potential to be a very large impact on the food production industry. For the minister to say, "Well, just trust us; we'll do what's right," concerns me.

We talked about: "The Minister shall ensure that the members appointed to the Council are representative of Alberta's local food sector." Because we've identified that the local food sector would be all agricultural products, I'm not sure why the line in there "including small producers and processors" was necessary. Local food. We have beef that we have on our dinner table. We have chicken, eggs, dairy, pork, all of these products. The majority of these products that we're consuming within Alberta are locally produced. They're local food. So if there was some kind of a definition that would be different than all of those products. Are we giving the minister the ability to actually step into a lot of what is already happening?

And government getting their fingers into forcing industry to move down a branding exercise – because largely I look at this as a branding exercise. Even some of the quality assurance programs that were being done by industry, whether that's the vegetables, whether that's the pork, whether that's the beef, all of these types of quality, food safety assurance programs: a lot of it is about ensuring that the consumer can feel confident that the food they're going to consume is safe. Also, there are many of these products that are developed as specialty products, where the food is of high quality or higher quality possibly or of a differing quality, different aspects.

You know, I was optimistic that we would be able to come to a point where I can vote in favour of Bill 7. I want to try and promote and have the ability that the industry is able to move forward in a healthy manner, in a manner that I feel it will succeed, that it'll succeed in a way that does not have a lot of regulations put in the way of being able to succeed.

Last night at our beef and beer event I had a conversation with one gentleman. That gentleman and his partner run a feedlot in my constituency. They had discussions last week with regard to: would they start a feedlot now? Would they be able to, for one thing, or would they want to based on all the things that have changed over the last 30 years that they've run a feedlot? It's one thing to run a feedlot now or to run a confined feeding operation or to run a large farming operation, but those operations don't just spring up out of nowhere. These gentlemen: I'm not sure how many cattle they're running, but say that they have a 25,000-head feedlot. That didn't just happen overnight. That likely started as maybe a 200-, a 500-head feedlot. And they grow and they mature and they advance over time, and they get the ability to do all the paperwork that's necessary. He said that they have two secretaries and that probably a third of their time is just dealing with the paperwork for government programs and assurance programs that's necessary to ensure that they're following all the guidelines.

So we don't want to get to a point where regulations actually get in the way of individuals moving on an opportunity that they see, but the regulations are too large that they can't see their way past that. I believe that we need to have a certain number of regulations

in place to ensure that the food that is being offered to consumers can be guaranteed safe, that the quality is of a standard. We have a lot of that in place now.

8:30

Bill 7 allows just too much – there's too much leeway, in my opinion, that the minister can move one direction or the other. I just can't come to the point where I can say: yes; I'll trust you with that. I believe that the minister has very good intentions, but if the minister is not prepared to take a regulation that he's been advised by the food council to move forward with, a regulation that the food council thinks will actually help the industry, and to consult then with producers in general – for one thing, we don't even know who's going to end up on this local food council. Like, we have to trust that also. Is that going to be an open nomination? Is that going to be where people can apply and where they can look at many different individuals from across many different sectors? I believe that's important, but will that happen? I don't know. Bill 7 doesn't tell me.

Another thing that does concern me is when we move into part 2 on organic agricultural products. This is all fine and dandy. But I look at all of the industries, whether they're the chicken, the dairy, the wheat, the canola, the beef, or the pork, the quality assurance programs, the inspection programs, and all of these other areas. A lot of that is industry led and industry administered and funded by industry. We don't know from Bill 7 if that will happen here.

We do see that we have inspectors being designated, inspections being authorized, investigations being authorized, all in the name of brand protection. Organic food is a brand. It's all in the name of brand protection. But at the end of the day the recovery of all these fees and charges and so on: is that going to be on the taxpayer to foot that bill, or is that going to be on the industry? Now we have a brand, the organic brand, that possibly has a leg up on the rest of industry because government is going to cover off all of these costs of validation and the auditing of farms and the auditing of processors.

The recovery of fees. It says, "The Crown may recover . . ." I would suggest that the Crown probably should recover the costs from the industry based off the other industries there. They're brand protection types of programs. They're administered by the industry, and those costs are incurred by industry.

Offences with regard to organic food. In the case of an individual . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Mr. Hunter: I was very intrigued by what the member was saying and would like to find out a little bit more about his comments and his thoughts on this matter.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you. I just have a couple more points to finish off with, Madam Speaker. Thank you to my colleague for allowing me to continue.

Under the offences in the organic food portion of Bill 7 we have: in the case of an individual a fine of not more than \$5,000, in the case of a corporation a fine of not more than \$20,000. You know, like, I'm not sure why the individual and the corporation are considered to be two different fines; why the corporation is a \$20,000 maximum and why the individual is a \$5,000 maximum.

My farm is a corporation, but it's run by an individual. So it makes me wonder: if I was to move into the organic production of grains or others, milk or any kind of organic production, would I be considered as an individual or as a corporation? Would the inspector, then, consider me as an individual even though I'm a

corporation and limit the fine to \$5,000? These are the kinds of things that I think are a very weak part of Bill 7, where we delineate those two. I don't understand why we would delineate those two. If there was a delineation based off gross sales or something like that, maybe there's a reason for that, but I don't necessarily believe that that's a necessary type of delineation.

Overall, Madam Speaker, it does disappoint me that I have to vote against Bill 7 and that I cannot support Bill 7. I believe that the minister has good intentions here, but they have put forward a bill that allows way too much leeway for the minister to have power over industry, that I would not be comfortable with and I believe that many Albertans are not comfortable with.

It's interesting. In the conversations last night I mentioned to the individuals at the beef-and-beer event that, yeah, I was going to be back in the Legislature that evening and talking about Bill 7. One of the gentlemen said to me, "Oh, that's a nothing bill." I said, "Well, have you read it?" He said, "No, but I've heard that's a nothing bill." I brought up the time when we had Chops and Crops, and Bill 6 was introduced that week.

I went to Chops and Crops and the Alberta pork producers association. I had close connections with Alberta Pork at the time. I had a hog operation. I said, "So what's your guys' take on Bill 6?" And the individual said: "Oh, yeah. We're fine with it. They came and talked to us, that they were going to do a workers' compensation bill. And, yeah, that's all good. Most of our guys are on workers' compensation or the like." I said, "Well, did you read the bill?" He said: "No. No, we haven't." I said, "You should read it, and you should get your producers to read it," because that's what the consultation does. People read it, and they say: okay, now this is going to affect me in this way.

Right away, you know, within a short period of time all of a sudden we started to hear from producers that had concerns over the initial draft of Bill 6. I must admit that we were able to improve Bill 6 dramatically from when it was first introduced. But that being said, the fact that it was introduced in the way it was caused the rural communities, the producers of Alberta, of agricultural products to have grave concern with giving the minister or giving this government excess power over the ability to regulate their industry, and we need to be cognizant of that.

If we're going to have producer buy-in and if we're going to have healthy industries, we need producer buy-in. If we're going to move forward in a way that government and producers can work hand in hand, we have to consult, consult, consult. It's very much like building a home or doing any kind of carpentry work. Measure twice, cut once. It's standard. You can never consult too much.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Speaker. To tell you the truth, I wasn't actually going to speak to this bill. I think that the issues have been clearly delineated by my colleagues, but after listening to the Member for Calgary-Shaw, I just had to get up. First of all, I have to say that the audacity, I guess, of the Member for Calgary-Shaw to start lecturing a seasoned farmer: it shocked me. Well, actually, I shouldn't be shocked in this House, but I was a little shocked.

8:40

I have another point that I want to make. Now, the Member for Calgary-Shaw said that when he was the manager of a restaurant, I believe, he was always concerned about the fact that he had to purchase, you know, alcohol from microbreweries down in the States. I think that's what he said. I want to go on this for a little bit.

If I understand correctly, the name of the bill is: Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act. Let's just think about this for a second, Madam Speaker. Their solution, in their great wisdom, in order to be able to support Alberta's local food sector is to regulate the whole industry. If we just follow this through, I guess that means that they need to make sure that the organic foods that are coming into this province, that already have to follow the rules, these extra certification rules, which obviously is a cost, they have to make sure that the playing field is fair. So how is it that these guys saying that they're supporting Alberta's local food sector, creating regulations for our local producers so that it can be a fair, equal playing field with those foreign producers, how does that actually support Alberta's local food producers?

The argument that they make – you know, it goes back to this whole thing that we've been talking about for a while now, which is this. This government is a government of unintended consequences. Constantly. [interjections] I know that they're chirping over there on that side. You know what? The truth hurts. I know.

But here's the reality. The reality is that if they really wanted to be able to give a competitive advantage to our local suppliers and local producers, they wouldn't regulate them. They'd get out of the way and let them produce it, because every time you regulate an industry, that industry has to pay for it. There's a cost to it. If there was any comparative advantage that our local producers had in Alberta, they are now taking it completely away by adding this.

So, Madam Speaker, the whole argument that the Member for Calgary-Shaw was making earlier about how he was so upset that he had to buy from foreign producers, microbreweries – he is creating, supposedly, at least the minimum of an equal playing field, which could easily drive people out because they can't compete now or because they just don't have the economies of scale. There are so many factors involved. Did he ever think about that? Did the members opposite ever think about that? I doubt it.

Here we are in a situation where they are once again in over their heads, creating policy without thinking about the ramifications and the cost to the very people that they are supposed to be supporting. That's why I think it's absolutely ironic that they would say: Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act. I love how they say these things, yet their bill is doing the absolute opposite.

Anyways, Madam Speaker, I felt it was important to get up and set the record straight. I will not be supporting this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

Mr. Nixon: Madam Speaker, I'd like to move a motion to move to one-minute bells for the remainder of the evening.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. minister to close debate.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I enjoyed listening to the discussion, I think, from both sides. I find some of it somewhat useful. I do. Some of it I find amusing.

It is my pleasure today to rise and speak to third reading of Bill 7, Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act. This legislation is an opportunity for our government to help the local food sector realize its full potential through a more focused and deliberate approach. Alberta and Saskatchewan are currently the only provinces that have not implemented a local food strategy.

There are several key points in this legislation, including setting standards for local organic food, designating a local food week, and creating a local food council. Continuing to support the growth of this industry is an important step in achieving our government's economic diversification and job creation goals. This legislation will help create opportunities to promote the local food industry, enhance consumer awareness and education, and reinforce consumer confidence. Food and beverage processing is one of the largest employers in our province's manufacturing sector, with record sales of \$14.6 billion in 2016. Consumer interest in and demand for local food continues to grow, making this an important market opportunity for rural sustainability and for Alberta producers and processors. In Alberta local food sales and direct-to-consumer channels, farmers' markets, and farm retail have more than doubled since 2008 and exceeded \$1.2 billion in 2017. Alberta has a vibrant farmers' market industry, with more than 120 Alberta-approved farmers' markets, contributing more than \$850 million in 2017 to the growth and diversity of our provincial economy.

This legislation, Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act, is the result of widespread and robust consultation. I have hosted round-table discussions with more than 70 people in the local food sector, including individual producers and commodity group representatives, processors, farmers' market managers and retailers, board members of municipal and district associations, Hutterite colonies, and indigenous people. Furthermore, we received feedback from 170 stakeholders and members of the public through online consultations. Participants were supporting local food and promoting it through a local food week. They were also supportive of enhancing the integrity of organic products and building consumer awareness and confidence around what is and what is not organic food.

They also indicated other ways to promote our province's world-class local food systems such as enhancing local food aggregation and distribution; working with food processors to meet the needs of various market channels such as direct to consumer, retail, and food service; and financial tools through the publicly owned Agriculture Financial Services Corporation, to name just a few.

Bill 7 spells out in detail the aspects of the local food market that the local food council will be asked to explore. The council will provide advice and recommendations within a year. From honey to mead – yes, Madam Speaker, from honey to mead because bees are animals and, actually, within the Department of Agriculture and Forestry they're considered livestock. So honey to mead, barley to beer, pork to bacon: we are blessed with some of the best food in the world.

An Hon. Member: Food is good.

Mr. Carlier: Food is good.

This government is proud to work arm in arm with producers, processors, retailers, and consumers to support Alberta local food. I encourage my colleagues on both sides of the House to support this important bill, that will help ensure a sustainable and diverse local food sector for Alberta's future.

Thank you.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 8:49 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Bilous	Jansen	Phillips
Carlier	Kazim	Piquette
Carson	Kleinsteuber	Renaud
Ceci	Littlewood	Rosendahl
Connolly	Loyola	Sabir
Cortes-Vargas	Luff	Schmidt
Dach	Malkinson	Shepherd
Drever	Mason	Sucha
Feehan	McCuaig-Boyd	Turner
Fitzpatrick	McKittrick	Westhead
Hinkley	Nielsen	Woollard
Hoffman		

Against the motion:

Aheer	Fildebrandt	Nixon
Anderson, W.	Gill	Stier
Clark	Hunter	Strankman
Drysdale	Loewen	van Dijken
Totals:	For – 34	Against – 12

[Motion carried; Bill 7 read a third time]

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

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

Bill 10 An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements

The Chair: Any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: It's a pleasure to rise to speak to Bill 10.

The Chair: My apologies, hon. member. We're still on an amendment.

Mr. Clark: Fair enough.

The Chair: Amendment A1. Are you speaking to the amendment?

Mr. Clark: No, I will not. I've got another amendment to propose, so we'll park that. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. On amendment A1, the hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Stier: Good evening. Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to everyone that's come forward tonight to have a listen to what I have to say once again about another great municipal affairs topic. It's a pleasure to visit with you all here tonight on this wonderful evening.

Madam Chair, I've spoken to this bill on several occasions already, both originally in second reading and also on a reasoned amendment that we launched earlier on in this process. It has been interesting to see how the various comments have come forward from the various speakers that have contributed to Bill 10. With that – I've already spoken to it so many times – I will be brief, but I will try to get a few points out tonight that I think are important with respect to the amendments that have suddenly been brought forward by the ministry.

When we first started working with Bill 10, we came across the technical briefing that was provided by the ministry a few weeks ago. During second reading we mentioned a number of concerns that we had after that briefing and especially after we had looked through Bill 10 itself. Members in the House may remember when I first spoke to Bill 10 that one of the major concerns that we had with the bill was that the darn thing was only seven pages long but it contained a vast change in the way municipalities might be doing business in the future, especially in terms of municipal tax and assessments. All of this was based solely on, it seemed to be, bringing in these energy-efficient types of home improvements.

What we noticed there, though, at the same time was that in those seven pages there was an awful lot of information that was missing. Members in the House may recall from when I have spoken to this bill before that I take municipal affairs as being a fairly serious topic, with my background and so on. I've always taken the time, I've thought, with this portfolio to try to ensure that if legislation is brought forward, it should be something that is scrutinized carefully. There is no other portfolio, I believe, in the government of Alberta that affects more people throughout all of these communities than Municipal Affairs. When I see a bill that seems to be vague, which seems not to have a lot of information in it, it makes it very difficult for those of us as legislators to actually be able to give it the proper scrutiny it deserves and be able to look upon it fairly and actually get a good idea of what's being presented and what is really being conveyed in the briefings that we receive and in the comments that we get from the ministry.

You know, it's something that needs to be worded correctly, I believe. It's something that needs to have a good purpose, and it's something that needs to have all of the legalese in it that is required so that if this is handed down to municipalities – that is what Municipal Affairs is about and the Municipal Government Act is about, trying to help municipalities in governing locally – it has all the meat on the bone, it has all the details so that the chief administrative officers, or the CAOs, and their councils and their staffs can work with these new ideas and programs and services that are brought forward and they can do so with the least amount of problems and to a degree of success so that everyone is treated fairly.

In my mind, my question as I read Bill 10 originally was: how could we possibly in all fairness support the bill? This was mentioned again before this amendment came out. How could we give this our support if it was missing so much information?

9:00

It's true that usually during these types of legislations that are brought forward, they do seem to be vague at first, and they do miss a lot of information. One of the problems that we've been complaining about in this House for two to three years now is that a lot of times they've left too much of the meat on the bone to the regulations. Of course, as most people know in the House, we don't debate regulations in the House. We don't have any involvement with that. The folks over on the government side do that. It's hard for us to come up with really, really good, important debate topics and subjects when the legislation itself does not contain sufficient information. You know, it's hard to give it that scrutiny when it's missing.

With the amendment that's come forward now, I was pleased actually to see the amendment come forward. I heard about it last night when I was in my office working. It turned out it was a government amendment that actually looked like it was three pages long, which is a lot larger and heavier than what we normally see in terms of an amendment that comes up during debate in this House. Normally it's a three-sentence amendment from one of the

members, and either it passes or fails. Most often it fails. This one, I was told, was a government amendment, so I was quite interested in that because the original bill is only seven pages long. Well, it has a lot of pages, physical pages, in it, actually. The actual pages themselves, as most of these bills are written, are duplicates. There were only seven pages of information there in its original content. With the amendment we now see it's three pages long, so it's almost fair to say that almost 50 per cent of the legislation that was proposed in Bill 10 is being replaced, totally deleted, or amended.

We went and had a look at that, and this morning, after looking over that the night before, I attended another briefing that the department was quite kind enough to provide to us on our side of the House here. I met with one of my long-term acquaintances in the ministry, one of the assistant deputy ministers, and a couple of the staff. They went through and were kind enough to point out some of the things that are in this amendment. It was, quite frankly, satisfying to me that some of the concerns that we had and some of the missing information that we had concerned ourselves about before were now actually being somewhat addressed. I say "somewhat addressed" because, of course, with my way of thinking and being analytical most of my life, I like to see as much detail as possible, but certainly there are some things in the bill now that seem to be there that weren't before.

Just a few to mention here tonight before we get too far along. We now see that we've got actually some information with regard to key segments and key segments that were missing before, by the way, including some of the serious topics that I thought should have been there, the lending details. Some of the key topics were the topics that were sort of vague in how the municipalities would put these bylaws together. Some of the key topics were talking about how they would administer this and how they would proceed with the actual set-up of changing the tax rolls and putting in a new figure on their assessments. A new tax bill would come out with a new line on it to include a new proposed tax amount that people would pay if that municipality went ahead and proceeded with this new program.

It was actually a pleasant meeting this morning. The key segments now seem to have things. In terms of lending, as an example, they are now finally including some comments about the interest rate. They're now including some comments about the terms of repayment. They're now including some comments with respect to sources of funding, et cetera. This was key stuff, and it looks to me as if the government has admitted through the process that we've done here in the past few weeks that they were indeed perhaps at fault and hadn't quite got enough detail into the legislation, and they felt now that it's necessary to put it in. That's the only thing that you can conclude from that.

The other part that I mentioned a moment or two ago was the clarification to municipalities on the bylaw process. It was interesting to hear from the ministry this morning. They said that they had now gone out and talked to some of the key administering groups that are involved in municipal affairs, and they had realized that there was not a lot of information in there for those people themselves to work with.

I was, Madam Chair, fairly reasonably surprised and somewhat satisfied with the content of this amendment. We thought that there was some progress made here after this morning's meeting. We wonder, though, why the government didn't do this to begin with. We wonder why the government didn't go ahead right from the start with this new change in how people can actually borrow money through this system, why they didn't take the time to get it right to begin with. We find fault with that. We think that that information was key, and it should have been there.

We also find fault when the government brings forward a program that changes the way credit is going to be dealt with for homeowners, with the lending system. We find fault that the government hasn't included an awful lot of detail about how the different types of programs that are already out there today for borrowing for home improvements are going to be affected.

With that, Madam Chair, while this amendment does address a lot of things that we felt were missing, we do not support this idea as yet. We do feel the whole program is incomplete as being presented. We do not think that this government did their homework prior. We noted in our earlier comments that this same type of program is under class-action lawsuits in the States. We think that there needs to be an awful lot more work done yet. We are, unfortunately, unable to get a chance to look at what is possibly going to be in regulations. Perhaps we could be convinced in another way, or some other form of amendment might come forward again from the government or some other member. But as it stands right now, while we think it's worth while – we're not going to necessarily be very unsupportive of this amendment. We don't find that it's that bad. We think that there is some good information in it, but certainly, when it comes to the regular bill itself, we still find it to be problematic.

Those are my comments for now, Madam Chair. Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you very much, Madam Chair. I appreciate the comments from the Member for Livingstone-Macleod, who, I know, has worked very hard on this legislation. His comments about this amendment are very, very realistic.

Mr. Kenney: They're on point.

Mr. Nixon: They are certainly on point.

You know, that member and myself a few nights ago in this very Chamber spent several hours interacting with the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs about this legislation. We asked the hon. minister several questions about this bill. At the time, Madam Chair, you may recall, the minister had indicated that municipalities would have almost nothing to do with this legislation, that we should not worry about the municipalities that we represent. Then I brought forward some screenshots of the minister's website in regard to this bill, and every task that was associated with this bill had the word "municipality" in it. So we had that long conversation. But he assured me that he had consulted with everybody, and it was all going to be okay.

Then, much to my surprise, yesterday when I was in the Chamber, the Deputy Government House Leader reached out to me and said: "We can't quite switch over to Bill 10, this bill that we're doing today, because we need to move forward an amendment on our own legislation, that we consulted everybody on as soon as possible, but it's still inside the photocopier. Could you please hold back this legislation while the photocopiers can get it out?"

Mr. Kenney: Stop making it up.

Mr. Nixon: I know. I mean, I was quite surprised by that. But, you know, I'm a patient guy, so we held a debate on another bill, and we waited patiently for this amendment. When it finally arrived, Madam Chair, it was still hot. It had just arrived off the photocopier, hot off the presses, if you will. I was then quite shocked to realize that we were debating a four-page bill. When I was telling the Leader of the Opposition about this earlier today, I said that the

amendment was the exact same length of the bill. I apologize. I was off on that. For a four-page bill the government has brought forward a three-page amendment. As the hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod points out . . .

9:10

Mr. Kenney: What? They're not that incompetent.

Mr. Nixon: Well, it appears so. As the Member for Livingstone-Macleod points out rightly, this amendment changes three-quarters of the legislation that the minister brought forward to this place and is asking for support from my colleagues and myself in this Assembly.

This is the problem that we continue to talk about. We've talked about this on several other pieces of legislation today. This government continues to come to this Assembly with legislation that, shortly after they've tabled the legislation, they come back and try to fix, but before they do that, before they come with their three-page amendment to the four-page bill, they stand in the House, and they ridicule me and my colleagues, my colleagues and I. Sorry; that's a little more grammatically correct. They ridicule us. They tell us that we are fearmongering. They tell us that we're making things up, but then when we confront them with evidence like the screencaps of the website that show what we're saying is true, when we come with, you know, communication from our constituents or from municipalities, the Municipal Affairs minister finally brings forward an amendment to fix it. Sadly, though, Madam Chair, as you know, most often that doesn't happen till the next sitting, so people that are impacted by this legislation have to wait months and months and months under this government's mistakes over and over.

There are so many examples of that. One of the most common examples, I think, is actually on electoral reform legislation, which we have seen in this House every sitting since I have been elected. Every sitting since this government took power they have brought a bill to this House to change things within our election system, some of it good, some of it that we have supported. You know, getting union and corporate donations out of our system this side of the House certainly supported. But then each and every time when we talk to them, we say: "Guys, have you really talked to everybody about this? This section of the bill is going to cause this problem."

Or a great example: during the first sitting in this place when, of course, the government spent most of their time on electoral reform trying to get their campaign expenses paid for by Albertans, we continued to say: whoa; we think this is not a very good idea. I don't know how the constituents of Peace River, Madam Chair, felt about it. I can tell you that the people in Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre were not thrilled about the idea of paying for NDP candidates' campaign expenses. It was interesting. You know, the Minister of Infrastructure was with us at that time before she had joined the NDP Party, and she spoke a lot about this issue at the time. It was a serious concern, just like this.

Now you're asking us at 9:15 at night to support an amendment brought forward by the minister. The minister has not spoken to the amendment. That's also interesting to me.

Mr. Westhead: The minister moved that amendment.

Mr. Nixon: I hear the deputy whip is heckling me that the minister moved the amendment, but he did not. Maybe the deputy whip should double-check that. It was moved by the hon. Minister of Children's Services, who moved it with a great speech. I enjoyed the speech. It was interesting. Lots of the stuff that she brought up within this amendment, interestingly enough, is the stuff that was brought up by my colleague from Livingstone-Macleod, who is our

critic on this issue. So I'd like to briefly take a moment and thank him for all of his hard work on this amendment. I think that the constituents of Livingstone-Macleod should be thrilled with their representative, that he was able to catch three pages of mistakes inside the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs' four-page bill.

I do think that at some point it would be helpful if the Minister of Municipal Affairs would rise and explain how we ended up in this situation but also spend some time assuring the opposition that if we were able to support all these changes, he has actually been able to catch everything that he made a mistake on along the way to this place. I'd be interested to see how many mayors he's spoken to about this, whether or not he's talked to the RMA or AUMA, what their thoughts are on this bill. I continue to be very, very concerned that this government does not consult the people that are impacted by this legislation.

This is very relevant to the amendment, Madam Chair. Yesterday when we were discussing an amendment brought forward by the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler that would require the agriculture minister to actually consult with people in the agriculture industry before changing the regulations in the Bill 7, the local food act, which I thought was a very common-sense amendment – I was happy to support it. The agriculture minister, with a gallery full of beef producers who were visiting with us, rose in this House and said – and everybody needs to get this. You have to understand this because this really articulates the problem. The agriculture minister rose and said that consulting with farmers and ranchers and the industry about changes to their industry is too much red tape for the agriculture minister. The irony of an NDP minister talking about red tape, we'll talk about that later tonight, maybe, but that is what we get from this government.

You know, the other side of the House gets usually frustrated when we bring this up, but it would be very, very helpful for me as I try to represent my constituents – I represent something like 25 towns and counties; this Bill 10 will significantly impact them – you know, if the minister would stand up and explain why he needs to change this piece of legislation they just tabled in this place last week, why he has basically rewritten it. At the time, though, that it was rewritten and it came off that photocopier hot to touch, the minister did not rise and discuss his bill; he had the Minister of Children's Services speak about this legislation.

Now we're in a spot where you're again asking us tonight to vote on this legislation that impacts our constituents. We have not heard from the minister. We have not heard any explanation on why basically this entire piece of legislation has been redone. The minister adamantly got very, very upset when we tried to send this bill to committee last week during second reading, when we pointed out the mistakes inside this legislation. He told me personally, Madam Chair, that I was fearmongering. Fearmongering. I was deeply insulted by that at the time, but that's fine if the minister felt I was fearmongering. But then I was proven right and so was the hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod proven right, not by any magical force or luck. It was the minister sending an amendment back in that shows everything that I and my colleague presented in this place. It was fascinating to me. [interjection]

You know, the Deputy Premier is heckling away but no explanation from that side of the House on why they have to change this entire piece of legislation, no explanation on why I should encourage my colleagues to vote for this drastic change. I mean, this is a technical bill, while relatively short, that has significant impact on constituents and municipalities in particular but also on real estate agents, mortgage companies that will be drastically impacted by this. I don't want to go back to Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre and find out that there are more mistakes that the Municipal Affairs minister missed inside this legislation.

You know, the hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod is very good at these types of issues. He's done a great job. You heard it just in his speech a few moments ago and last week as we were discussing this piece of legislation. But he's not the minister. He doesn't have access to the same level of resources. He can't fully explain what's been taking place here. We need the minister to do that. The question then becomes: where is the minister to discuss this? Why would the Minister of Children's Services – I don't know, Madam Chair, if you find that a little bit alarming. The Minister of Children's Services, I know her well. I've done lots of work with her. She's a very competent minister, but she's not the Minister of Municipal Affairs, you know, and I suspect that she won't fully know or maybe has not been fully briefed on it.

Interestingly enough, too, Madam Chair, when they brought this amendment in hot off the presses, the Minister of Children's Services rose and read the amendment and then adjourned debate and then had no other discussion. There has been no opportunity for the government to respond to that. So I will for this moment in Committee of the Whole yield the floor with a simple question to the government, hopefully to the Municipal Affairs minister, but if anybody from cabinet could answer: what went so terribly wrong that at the eleventh hour they need to rewrite this entire piece of legislation?

The Chair: Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I won't be able to answer the member's direct question. I'm not yet a minister of the Crown. I sure hope someday that will be my future. But I just want to make a few comments on what the hon. member is talking about.

9:20

I'm not here to defend everything the government does. I'm just fresh off voting against their Bill 7, and I have grave concerns about a lot of things this government does. But what I hear from the opposition all too often is: "We want you to go away and consult. We want you to go ask stakeholders what they think. You don't do enough consultation." So this government goes out, consults with municipalities, gets some significant feedback from municipalities on how this bill can be improved. They present the amendments, table them, and adjourn debate so that all of us in this House have an opportunity to review those amendments and then come back. [interjection] The Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner is telling me that's not how it happened. I was here; that's exactly how it happened.

The Official Opposition wants, on one hand, for the government to go and consult with stakeholders, to incorporate their changes, and then put those into legislation, and when they get that, it's too complicated. It's just too much, information overload. It's big changes to a relatively small bill.

Look, this bill will enable Albertans to use an efficient and effective means of financing solar panels in their homes. That's a good thing. That's a very positive thing. I would challenge the Official Opposition to tell us, please: what is your environmental platform? I'd love to see it. I would love to see it. Let's see it. Do you believe in renewable energy at all? Is there any plan there whatsoever? I certainly didn't see anything coming out of your convention in Red Deer. So this, to me, is a thoughtful bill that improves the ability, that enhances the ability of Albertans to install solar power.

Now, when we get a chance, if I do get an opportunity, I'm going to move an amendment later that I hope even further improves the bill. But, you know, in this case I just find it a bit disingenuous. On

one hand the Official Opposition is asking for consultation and change, and when they get that, they don't like it. So what I see is an Official Opposition that is trying to find every possible way to oppose anything that the government tries to do on renewable energy. When the government does come up with what I think is thoughtful legislation that is worth while and helps Albertans in a way that has very little, if any, cost to taxpayers, this is the sort of thing. This is not the first and only time that PACE legislation has been implemented anywhere in North America, anywhere in the world. This is based on requests from municipalities.

Look, I have lots of concerns with what this government does. I have lots of concerns with the way they've gone about many things. But I have to say that in the Ministry of Municipal Affairs in particular they seem very adept at going out and consulting with the municipalities very openly. They've multiple times tabled changes to major legislation like the Municipal Government Act and allowed for consultation through the summer. We have Bill 8 before the Assembly here again, where the minister has proposed some changes to the Emergency Management Act, tabled the legislation, brought it up to second reading, and given us all an opportunity all through the summer to consult. I'm doing that actively within my constituency. In fact, I'd like to see the government do more of that. In this case it is a response, not just the bill itself, to requests from not only Albertans but from municipalities. The changes that we're talking about here in this amendment are a response to requested changes from municipalities.

Again, I see absolutely no reason for the opposition to be so steadfast against this unless they just don't like the idea of Albertans installing solar panels and doing so in an economically effective way. Clearly, I'm in favour of the amendment that the government has brought forward, and I look forward to hearing what the Official Opposition has to say.

Mr. Nixon: Well, always interesting to hear from the Member for Calgary-Elbow. One of my favourite things about the Member for Calgary-Elbow is that he always makes a tremendous number of assumptions when he speaks. Interesting that he always does that.

Nowhere in my comments just a few moments ago did I even indicate whether or not I would be supporting this piece of legislation. In fact, I was speaking about the amendment that we're debating right now, that the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow just glossed right over and then started to try to take a guess on how we were going to vote on this piece of legislation. I will help him out. My colleagues in the United Conservative caucus have full intention, actually, of supporting this amendment. From the looks of it, it has primarily been written by the hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod, who has come to this Assembly and managed to save the minister from making a terrible mistake that would have cost Albertans significantly and would have hurt the people that he supposedly was trying to help.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow has lots of questions that he'd like to ask. I think I've answered them, so how about I ask him a question. If he was fortunate enough to ever have a chance of forming government, would he bring legislation to this House that he would then have to switch one hundred per cent just a few short sitting days later in front of this Chamber? Is that how the Alberta Party would govern the province of Alberta?

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Under 29(2)(a)?

The Chair: We're in committee. Do you wish to speak to the amendment?

Mr. Loewen: Yeah. Under 29(2)(a)?

The Chair: We're in committee. There's no 29(2)(a).

Mr. Loewen: Oh. Okay. Madam Chair, we're sitting here, of course, looking at this amendment that the government has brought up. I see that what's happened here is the government has finally – you know, it just seems a few short days ago that this government was defending this bill and saying how great it was and how anybody who was seeing anything wrong with it was obviously just crazy and wasn't paying attention. Then all of a sudden, out of the blue, they drop in a three-page amendment on this bill.

Of course, we just heard the Member for Calgary-Elbow get up and talk. We heard him talk about how great this bill was before. Now the bill has substantially changed, and, believe it or not, he still supports it. So I'm not sure. He supported it before in its failed form – even the government recognizes it was a failed form – and now he's still supporting it. I got a kick out of his little rant talking about the Official Opposition. We were sitting here trying to make this bill better and trying to point out the mistakes in this bill and things that could be improved. The government of course wanted nothing to do with that. They called it fearmongering, in fact. Now they've finally realized the error of their ways and decided to change it. It was interesting that the Member for Calgary-Elbow, who thought it was great before – I don't know if he thinks it's bad now or if it's better or what, but obviously he supported it in its previous failed form, too, just like the government.

Now, Madam Chair, there are just a lot of problems with this bill. Where this is tried – I mean, they use California as an example of how great this program is, and of course now there are lawsuits all over the place in California regarding the PACE program there. I don't understand how this government can keep on bringing things forward like this. Now we're talking about all these amendments and everything. They're trying to fix their mistakes. There are just a lot of different things going on here.

The government at least at this point has decided to fix some of the problems. Again, these were problems that were pointed out by the Member for Livingstone-MacLeod and his good work. It's good to see that the government is actually willing to admit they make mistakes. It'd be great if they would do this more often and maybe fix more of their legislation. We bring forward a lot of good amendments, and this government just votes them down. We'll see what happens with this amendment. We'll see what the government has to say. Hopefully the minister will have something to say about it, too.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

The Chair: Back on the main bill. Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments? The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I rise to table what I hope is an amendment that will improve Bill 10. This amendment I move on behalf of the Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill, who, I will say, has done a great deal of work on this and given a lot of thought to it. I would sincerely hope that the House would consider this.

The amendment that I propose on her behalf enables municipalities to finance or refinance energy efficiency improvements that are already under way or improvements that

have already been completed. Before I move on, I will hand over the amendment to a page and will wait till the table receives it and then move on.

9:30

The Chair: This will be amendment A2.

Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Member McPherson to move that Bill 10, An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements, be amended in section 7 as follows; (a) the following is added after the proposed section 390.3:

Exception

390.31 Notwithstanding section 390.3, a clean energy tax improvement bylaw may authorize a council to impose a clean energy improvement tax in respect of renovations, adaptations or installations commenced or completed prior to the passage of the bylaw if the renovation, adaptation or installation, other than the date on which it was commenced, meets all other requirements for clean energy improvements under this Division and any other conditions deemed necessary or appropriate by the council.

And (b) the proposed section 390.4(1) is struck out, and the following is substituted:

(1) A municipality and the owner of a property shall enter into a clean energy improvement agreement before a clean energy improvement tax is imposed on the property.

I could just say that that's self-evident, but I suppose I should probably keep reading the rest of the statement.

This amendment is broken into two main parts. The new 390.3(1)(a) allows municipalities to refinance improvements started or completed before a PACE bylaw is passed, and the new section (b) requires the property owner and the municipality to complete an agreement before an improvement tax is imposed in parallel with section 390.4 in the bill. There are two reasons for this.

The first: solar and other energy efficiency improvement installers have told us that business has already slowed down as a result of the announcement of the PACE program. A lot of Albertans are eager to undertake energy efficiency improvements that are financed by a municipality rather than the banks. I think we should incentivize Albertans to delay their energy efficiency upgrades for the months or years that some municipalities will require to spin up their own PACE programs. This, I believe, is an unintended consequence of this bill. Not all municipalities will in fact implement those PACE programs, but we can reasonably expect that certainly the major centres, whose mayors support this program, will work quickly to pass relevant bylaws that will make this program available on behalf of Albertans. I have to say that I believe many municipalities, large and small, are very likely to follow.

I also think it's important that we don't punish property owners who took the initiative early on to install energy efficiency upgrades. They're now, unfortunately, at a disadvantage compared to those who install upgrades as a result of this program because they were the early adopters and did not have the benefit of low-cost financing that would be available through the municipalities. Forward-thinking landlords are especially disadvantaged without this retroactivity because those who build or renovate with the PACE program can offer more energy- and cost-efficient spaces to potential tenants, that first-mover home and property owners alike are more likely to take on costs of further energy efficiency improvements.

I would suggest that it's important we help those champions lead the way to spread energy efficiency improvements to as many buildings as possible by allowing them to refinance their improvements at the lower cost we're determining through this bill.

Even if they use the proceeds from refinancing existing improvements for investments unrelated to energy efficiency, Albertans will still benefit from more value-added activities, jobs created in renovations, et cetera. Since this program, whether retroactive or not, will draw primarily upon private financing, looking for secure, long-term returns, there is little risk that adding a retroactive aspect to it will reduce funding available to new improvements.

In summary, this bill opens the door to municipalities to offer retroactive financing for existing energy efficiency improvements or improvements all under way. It does not require municipalities to offer a retroactive program. With or without this amendment, municipalities will still need to decide, with public input, whether and how to implement their PACE programs.

So I would encourage all members of this House to support this amendment because I truly believe it does make what is a good bill that much better.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2? Calgary-East.

Ms Luff: I'd just like to respond quickly to this amendment, and I'd like to thank the Member for Calgary-Elbow for bringing it forward. Certainly, we recognized that there are some concerns that have been brought forward regarding retroactivity and the possibility of business not picking up because people are waiting for this to be implemented. However, there is some concern on behalf of municipalities. Basically, if we're making the PACE program retroactive, what it means is that municipalities would have to give out a loan on a program that doesn't exist yet before they're actually able to come up with the mechanism to collect the money. This would reduce public transparency and accountability and place the municipality at risk of misalignment with to-be-determined program criteria as developed by Energy Efficiency Alberta or by municipalities.

Basically, it is possible that the program that – you wouldn't want the program to not align with the regulations and the bylaws put in place later. Just suddenly starting to pay people for things that they've put in place already, before the program has even been instated or before the bylaw has been passed, could create misalignments, so I would encourage all members of the House to vote against this amendment.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

The Chair: Any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill?

Some Hon. Members: Question.

The Chair: You're ready for the question? All right.

[The voice vote indicated that the remaining clauses of Bill 10 were agreed to]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:37 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For:		
Bilous	Hinkley	Miranda
Carlier	Hoffman	Phillips
Carson	Jansen	Piquette
Ceci	Kazim	Rosendahl
Clark	Kleinsteuber	Sabir
Connolly	Littlewood	Schmidt
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Shepherd
Dach	Luff	Sucha
Drever	Malkinson	Turner
Feehan	Mason	Westhead
Fitzpatrick	McCuaig-Boyd	Woollard
Gray	McKitrick	

9:40

Against:		
Aheer	Gill	Nixon
Anderson, W.	Hunter	Stier
Drysdale	Kenney	van Dijken
Fildebrandt	Loewen	

Totals:	For – 35	Against – 11
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[The remaining clauses of Bill 10 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

Bill 2 Growth and Diversification Act

The Chair: Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. For members joining us this evening and those of you watching from home – I'm sure we have a wide audience this evening – I've got a series of amendments going forward here to Bill 2. I'll speak to the bill more broadly right now, adding to some of my previous comments, and then speak to the amendments specifically.

The bill before us right now has been framed by the government and in the media as a regular corporate welfare bill, that we're going to take the resources of government, pick winners and losers, one industry over another, and subsidize that industry. Now, Ronald Reagan said that the . . . [interjections] I'm shocked to hear that New Democrat members don't love it when I quote Ronald Reagan.

Ms Hoffman: It's the same quote every day.

Mr. Fildebrandt: I was going to give you the same quote. It's such a damn good quote because of where we're at. He said that the government's approach to economics is that if it moves, tax it; if it keeps moving . . .

An Hon. Member: Eat it.

Mr. Fildebrandt: . . . regulate it – enough from the peanut gallery – and if it stops moving, subsidize it.

An Hon. Member: Shoot it. Shoot it on somebody's property.

Mr. Fildebrandt: I'm going to have to concede that point. I can't think of a good comeback, but I tagged it.

Now, this approach has certainly applied to the government's economic approach broadly. It's applied to their approach to pipelines. They've taxed our economy and our industries. That didn't stop them from moving. They brought in heavy regulations. That didn't stop them from moving. But when it eventually did stop, now we're in the business of buying pipelines. This bill specifically, though, is not dealing with pipelines; it's dealing with two very different things. It's dealing with, generally, digital economy. That's a sector of the economy we should be supporting but not at the expense of any other sector. This brings us to the broader argument of reforming the tax code to do away with tax credits and subsidies for any particular industry. We shouldn't be doing it for just this industry; we should be doing it more broadly.

But in addition to corporate welfare, this bill more specifically gets into a very different kind of economic diversification. It gets into trying to micromanage the workforce, not just trying to pick winners and losers in the economy but trying to pick winners and losers in the labour force. This bill prescribes very clearly, not just in digital media but in the entire economy, that they are going to provide subsidies to businesses that meet quotas on race and gender. Now, they're not hard quotas. Businesses aren't forced to meet them, but they will be given a subsidy from the government if they do. So businesses that do not or cannot meet these quotas will be paying taxes to the government and not receive that back, but their competitors who do meet the government's quotas will, creating an uneven playing field.

Now, I believe that any legislation that categorizes people on the basis of their race or their religion or their sex or their beliefs should not be passed by this House. It is incompatible with our beliefs. It's incompatible with the values that are supposed to be behind the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

I've been surprised to see that I've been the only member voting against removing requirements for race and for gender from this bill. I'm not quite sure what the reasoning is. It is perhaps the least conservative thing we can do, to be supporting an element of legislation that subsidizes businesses for hiring one group over another. Now, some people are born with advantages and a head start in life, and some people are not. But those things are far more complicated, far more diverse than what the government is able to box people into, in neat little categories. Being born – you know, if we're talking about just hiring visible racial minorities, some minorities face greater disadvantages than others. Some visible minorities face relatively no discrimination at all while some suffer more, but this bill will lump them all together as one large category. Essentially, you may as well put a bar code on every employee in the province and assign them a score about how much help this government believes that they need.

Now, this bill itself I don't believe should be passed, period, but I'll be putting forward a series of amendments here to try and clarify a few things. But before I do that, I'm going to give members the opportunity to remove entirely all references to subsidies for race and for sex whatsoever from this bill. I'm opposed to the bill generally. I don't think we should be in the business of corporate welfare, but more specifically we should be focused on making legislation as least bad as possible where we have the opportunity.

I'll put forward this amendment now before continuing.

The Chair: This will be known as amendment A4.

Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. The amendment before members right now would strike in its entirety section 2 and

schedule 2 from the amendments to the Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act.

Now, when the NDP talked about economic diversification in the past, generally I always took that to mean that they don't like that we produce such a high proportion of beef and of agricultural products and of oil and gas products, and they want us to do other things. Now, in the area of economics we should be doing other things, and Alberta's economy has become increasingly diversified over the last three decades without the power of government trying to force businesses to do it.

9:50

But the NDP campaigned on a platform of increased government activity in the economy. That's generally what I thought they meant by economic diversification, but I never thought that they took this to mean that the government needs to decree diversity in the workforce. It seems to me entirely beyond the reasonable scope of government for the government to be deciding who should be working at companies. As I said, it's not a hard quota. Businesses are not forced, compelled by the law to meet the government's quotas, but they will receive an incentive, a subsidy, if they do.

But every carrot the government wields is also a stick, so when the government incentivizes one business to meet these quotas, businesses that do not meet the quotas – and some of them might have good reasons for it; they might be in an area that doesn't have large minority populations – will be paying taxes to the government, which will see subsidies go to their competitors, their competitors who have met these quotas. So every carrot the government wields is also a stick at the same time.

The amendment before you now is quite clear: strike section 2 and schedule 2 of the bill, entirely removing all references to race and gender in this bill.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A4? The minister of economic development.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I rise to encourage all members to vote against this amendment as it very much is against the spirit and intent of this bill.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A4?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[Motion on amendment A4 lost]

The Chair: Any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? Strathmore-Brooks, did you wish to speak again?

Mr. Fildebrandt: Yeah.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. Fildebrandt: All right. Well, seeing as how all members of this House seemingly support the idea of government subsidies for businesses meeting race and gender quotas, I think we should at least try to clarify something here.

I'll distribute this amendment before going further.

The Chair: This will be called amendment A5.

Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. The amendment before members here will keep the bill intact. Since members wish to see subsidies for meeting gender and racial quotas, I think we at

least need to clarify what constitutes the groups that make up that quota.

This would add a section to the bill stating:

(l) “under-represented employee” . . .

the government’s own term here,

... means an employee belonging to a group whose representation in that line of employment is significantly lower relative to that group’s representation in the general population.

Now, that would seem to be, I think, a reasonable definition of what they’re trying to meet. I think it’s ridiculous that we’re trying to meet quotas, period. But if we’re trying to meet quotas here, we should be defining it. Right now it just says “under-represented employee” and leaves that up to the minister. Now, the minister can make that whatever he or she so chooses. They can decide that there are not enough people with red hair in an industry. Perhaps we need to encourage people with red hair to be more involved in the digital business. Perhaps we need more people with green eyes in a different business. I see all the green eyes are cheering right now. You know, I personally like six-two, bearded men. I think there are a few who will go for that one.

But right now, leaving the definition, though, of underrepresented employee entirely up to the minister: now, what are they going to mean by that? Are they going to carry that into religions? Not all religions are disproportionately of a visible minority. Is it going to mean sexes? Right now, virtually, there are very few places other than the government’s caucus – I have to give credit – where it’s perfectly gender balanced. But very few areas in the private sector are perfectly 50-50. There can be very few areas. But, as I said the last time we debated this, some industries or some businesses are going to tilt one way or another, and sometimes there are good reasons for that. Sometimes there are no reasons for that. Sometimes there might be a bad reason for it. You know, in some industries there might not be as many men working there. Does that mean a business needs to have more men there? I personally don’t think so, but if we’re talking about underrepresented employees, then perhaps so.

What this amendment does is that it attempts to clarify. “Under-represented employee” would be defined in this – it’s just saying: “an employee . . . whose [group’s] representation in that line of employment is significantly lower . . . to that group’s representation in the general population.” I think that on the surface that should mean what they’re trying to get at, but it would at least put it on paper here so that it’s not just simply up to the minister to come up with whatever categorizations and little boxes they seek to put people into in assigning who gets subsidies and who does not.

The Chair: Anyone else to speak to amendment A5?

Seeing none, you’re ready for the question?

Hon. Members: Question.

[Motion on amendment A5 lost]

The Chair: Strathmore-Brooks, go ahead.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. I’ll distribute this before speaking.

The Chair: This is amendment A6.

Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. If the government’s goal here is to have quotas for businesses to meet, gender and racial quotas, in the private sector, they should at least allow for some degree of flexibility for businesses to be able to meet this. They’ve determined that this is a desirable goal that they wish businesses to

meet, and they’re going to bribe businesses with their own money to meet it, but a business’s ability to meet these quota targets will depend on the community that they’re in, in particular smaller communities.

10:00

What this amendment I’ve put forward will do is to ensure that businesses in communities that can prove that they simply don’t have enough of the groups identified in the quotas to hire are not penalized for it. A lot of our smaller communities in many cases are not as diverse as our larger communities, but there are certainly exceptions to that. In Brooks we have a very diverse and multicultural community. We have a lot of people from Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan. We have some East Indians. We have a lot of Filipinos. Brooks is a very diverse community, especially for its size. It’s one of the most diverse communities per capita in the entire country. So if we’ve decided that we want to go down this road of quotas, a Brooks business would have a significantly easier time meeting these quotas than a business, say, in Bassano or in Strathmore.

It is just a fact that many of our smaller communities are not as culturally or ethnically diverse as others, so what this will do is ensure that businesses in communities that simply do not have a high proportion of groups identified by the minister for these quotas are not penalized. Strathmore is a significantly less culturally and ethnically diverse community than Brooks. They’re almost the same size – Brooks is just a little bit larger than Strathmore is – but a business in Brooks would have a significantly easier time meeting the government’s requirements to get these subsidies for meeting quotas than a business in Strathmore.

I think that that would be a pattern that you would see repeated across Alberta. In particular, our two larger cities are, on aggregate, more diverse. They have a larger proportion of ethnic and minority communities than smaller communities, and I think we would be well advised to ensure that smaller communities or communities that do not have as high a proportion of minorities and these other groups identified for subsidies here are not penalized as a result. This will ensure some level of fairness across Alberta so that a business in Strathmore is not penalized just because they don’t have the population around it to be able to meet these quotas.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to A6? The hon. minister of economic development.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I merely rise to make a very brief comment that, in fact, I think the Member for Strathmore-Brooks has missed the mark when it comes to his comments on this bill. We’re not talking about quotas; we’re talking about a very small diversity top-up rewarding businesses that are employing underrepresented groups. Clearly, there are barriers to employment for those groups. This bill seeks to address that by providing an additional incentive in addition to levelling the playing field with other jurisdictions that have enjoyed a tax credit of this nature for some time.

For that reason, I encourage all members of the House to defeat this amendment. Thank you.

The Chair: Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. Now, I appreciate the minister’s comments although they didn’t speak to this amendment specifically. This amendment would leave the government’s quotas in place, but it would ensure that communities, particularly smaller communities, that might not have the same diverse proportion of their population as larger communities in Alberta do are not

penalized for it. Many of our smaller communities in Alberta simply do not have large cultural or ethnic minority communities, and this bill would penalize them.

These are, in fact, quotas. There are hard quotas, and there are soft quotas. A hard quota would be saying that they must hire X per cent. That's not what this does. It is a soft quota, saying that if they hire this per cent, the government is going to give them a subsidy for doing so. That is a quota because businesses that do not meet this government's quota will still be paying taxes to the government but will see a proportion of their tax dollars go to their competitors. They will go to their competitors and not to themselves, putting them at a comparative disadvantage. But beyond that, what it does is that it discriminates against many Albertans simply because of the colour of their skin.

Frankly, I think that any quota denigrates the work of people who have got there on their own. I've spoken to many women in my constituency about this bill, and I haven't found one yet who supports it. The women I've spoken to in my constituency have achieved what they have without handouts. They have achieved it themselves. I think when we attach quotas to people's races or to their sexes or to their cultures, we are denigrating those in those groups who have got there on their own. We are saying that you're not good enough to do it yourself, that the government needs to step in.

If we are saying that we need to give a subsidy to hire women – even if it's 5 per cent – this is the government tacitly saying that women must be 5 per cent poorer employees, and that's just not true. Women can do any job just as well as a man, and they don't need a subsidy to do it. When we offer them a subsidy for it, I think it takes away from the women who have achieved what they have without a government handout to do it.

The same applies to minority communities: ethnic, religious, cultural. We are saying that they are not good enough to do it on their own, that they need a handout from the government. It takes away from all of those being singled out for special help in the categories that will be established by this bill. We are telling those people that they are not good enough to do it on their own, that they need the big hand of government to help them out, that they couldn't do it on their own.

So for the dignity of work, the dignity of people who have achieved what they have on their own merits, I would ask members to vote for this amendment and then against this bill on the grounds that we would be taking away from the achievements of women, the achievements of minorities who have gotten there on their own without a handout.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A6?

Seeing none, I'll ask the question.

[Motion on amendment A6 lost]

The Chair: Any further questions, comments, or amendments?

Mr. Fildebrandt: I just want to vote.

The Chair: You're not speaking, Strathmore-Brooks?

Any other speakers to the bill?

Are you ready for the question?

[The voice vote indicated that the remaining clauses of Bill 2 were agreed to]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:08 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For:

Bilous	Hinkley	Nielsen
Carlier	Hoffman	Phillips
Carson	Jansen	Piquette
Ceci	Kazim	Renaud
Clark	Kleinsteinuber	Rosendahl
Connolly	Littlewood	Sabir
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Schmidt
Dach	Luff	Shepherd
Drever	Malkinson	Sucha
Feehan	Mason	Turner
Fitzpatrick	McCuaig-Boyd	Westhead
Gray	Miranda	Woollard

Against:

Aheer	Gill	Nixon
Anderson, W.	Hunter	Stier
Drysdale	Kenney	Strankman
Fildebrandt	Loewen	van Dijken

Totals:	For – 36	Against – 12
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[The remaining clauses of Bill 2 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

Mr. Mason: Madam Chair, I move that the committee rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

Mr. Kleinsteinuber: Thank you. Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 2. The committee reports the following bill with some amendments: Bill 10. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Any opposed? So ordered.

Government Bills and Orders Third Reading (continued)

Bill 11 Lobbyists Amendment Act, 2018

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Labour.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. The Lobbyists Amendment Act, 2018, aims to make lobbying more transparent in

Alberta. The underlying principle is that all Albertans should be able to see who is being paid to actively try to influence government. At the same time, the legislation recognizes that lobbying is a legitimate activity. It's critical that Albertans, including businesses and organizations, have reasonable access to public office holders and an opportunity to provide feedback.

On that note, I would like to say thank you to all who have spoken on this bill to date. The Lobbyists Amendment Act, 2018, and the changes within came from the work of a legislative committee. So thank you to the members of the committee for the work that they did and the recommendations that they made to government, which allowed us to bring forward this important change to how lobbying is conducted here in Alberta.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As always, it's a privilege to stand and speak in the House on the Lobbyists Amendment Act, 2018. There are a couple of things I want to chat about. One of them is specifically around red tape. We've been talking about red tape quite a bit this evening. That's one of the concerns that I have with this bill.

I just want to give an example. We've talked about this a few times. I understand where the 50-hour number came from. We started at 100. The office of the Ethics Commissioner talked about zero. I see how you ended up in the middle. It makes sense. I'm sure you've heard this, too, Minister, but that is a very, very small amount of time for folks that are going to be talking. One of the major concerns is, of course, when a group of people is reaching out to government to have those discussions and you are completely minimized by the amount of time that a lobbyist can come in and speak to you about their cause.

This is a very, very difficult thing for lobbyists to be able to do, especially if there are several people that are coming in to talk to you about any particular thing. It could be as simple as wind and solar. We have groups coming in to speak to you about particular types of energy, anything, whatever it is that government or opposition spends their time doing and learning about particular things that are going on in the province. We are very much limiting especially for some of these small groups when they are trying to be able to speak with government or with the opposition about things that are important to them. Then imagine if they're talking to both of us. It's a ton of their time.

There are a lot of things in this legislation, I think, within the regulations that need to be clarified. What counts as lobbying, what pieces of that? Is that the phone calls? Is that the preparation? I mean, preparation is included in this legislation.

I wanted to give an example. If you look at a personal circumstance of an advocate – I'll use myself as an example. I am a mother of a special-needs child. That obviously makes me an advocate. If I put together a parent group in Chestermere, where I live, this group of people is going to be getting together to advocate on behalf of a particular group of children in this particular situation, these special-needs children. Therefore, when I create that group, now I am subjected to rules and a massive amount of paperwork in order for me to be able to lobby because now I'm considered a lobby group.

There are many, many families – I mean, it's not even necessarily a disability. It could be an illness. It could be a lot of different things. You set up a support group for the parents and the community members around those people. Maybe you set up a mailing list, or you set up a method to communicate, and you

become a not-for-profit. Maybe you're setting up a group that you put these families together so that they can talk about their experiences and what they're going through so they become a stronger community, so they're able to support at the community level these children, these people that are an important part of their community. So they put together a not-for-profit. They start having meetings. They're running – I don't know – some sort of funding in order to pool their funding to be able to run programming.

This is normal. I'm not talking about something unusual. We all live in communities. We all know that these things go on. I can tell you about a thousand different things that I've participated in. This is a grassroots type of communication, but because I fall under the auspices of certain things that are being laid out by the Lobbyists Act, I suddenly become part of a group – it's making it very difficult for me to be able to provide those supports for that particular group of people.

I think that in looking at maybe the hours of the organization – I do appreciate the bill. I realize the importance of this. I do realize the importance of the transparency, but I think we've overlooked some of the important fundamental ways that families, communities, and people just in general gather to make sure that they make their communities better. I think that fundamentally we have to look at how it is. Are we actually stopping those groups from happening? There is so much good work that is done by so many of these people that work together to make their communities better. We just have to be careful that the red tape in this particular type of legislation isn't stopping this from being able to happen. This is one of my concerns.

10:20

I think that every single person in this House is a passionate advocate. We are surrounded by a lot of people who are passionate advocates. I'm not saying that paperwork shouldn't be done. I believe that that's a necessary part. But when we are burdened with paperwork – I really don't believe that this is the intention of this legislation, but there will be a burden of paperwork. Again, you are putting up barriers to excellent work that is being done in the communities, and I would just recommend that there may be some flexibility.

There was a letter that came in from the Alberta Chambers of Commerce. I'm not sure, Madam Speaker, if the minister received this as well. I'd like to read this quote out.

Reduction of the lobbying time threshold, from 100 to 50 hours, and the inclusion of "preparatory time" and "grassroots communication" as lobbying activities, would dramatically change the reporting requirements for many community-serving organizations. In turn, the proposed requirements would increase administrative burdens on organizations with limited staff resources, including local chambers.

Changes to the reporting requirements may force chambers to limit activities which benefit their local community by . . .

This is the most important piece here, especially in instances where you're

. . . connecting government with constituents. Organizing traditional community activities like luncheons with elected officials is one important example.

Oh, this is another really, really important piece. Madam Speaker, in the legislation why is there no ability to let the lobbying groups know what's going on? I'm going to go into that a little bit more. This was actually one of the pieces that was put forward by the Ethics Commissioner, to be able to let lobbying groups know of changes and anything that's happening so that they do not break the rules of what it is that they're allowed to do. But I'll get into that a little bit later.

Developing and circulating regular newsletters to local chamber members and community partners is another.

This is a way that is preparatory time. It is a methodology, Madam Speaker, of communicating with grassroots communication. If that's considered part of the 50 hours – I mean, we lose a lot of time in prep time. I write between nine and 12 articles a month for the various local newspapers that are in my area. I can't imagine if I was advocating for something and the amount of time that it takes to write those articles was also considered part of my lobbying. That could take a tremendous amount of time away from me as an advocate from being able to do good work with people physically. It's just something to think about.

Often, at the request of government, these communications include educational content and resources directed at the business audience.

It is essential that government engage with business at the local level. Grassroots communication is critical to that engagement. As such, in amending legislation, it is critical to avoid the creation of red tape . . .

This is coming from the chamber.

. . . that could unnecessarily limit healthy communication activities which support an informed and civically engaged public.

That's why we're all here. Fundamentally, that's why we're all here. I don't believe it was the intention of this legislation to put those kinds of limitations on things, but we are looking at actually shutting down communication not just amongst the grassroots but to us as well, right?

I have this wonderful fellow who's in Langdon who's trying to start a bus service. We're going to be having meetings to talk about how that happens. Especially out in Chestermere, which is just outside of Calgary, we've never been able to create a transit to be able to get our youth into town or even just to the boundaries, you know, when they're not quite driving yet, to be able to go and work at, like, the movie theatre or Winners or whatever, any of those kinds of things. There's been a lot of talk about doing some sort of bus service. This fellow who works in Langdon is just a great guy, and he's got this service going. We've had a couple of meetings together just to talk about what's available or how to get him organized, all these kinds of things, who to pass him on to.

You know, these are fundamental pieces. As an MLA in an area that is as diverse as Chestermere and that area, I have to be able to have the ability to talk these things out. I can't just say: "Well, you have a half an hour, and that's it. That's all I can offer you." It's not because of me but because he might want to be able to talk about this with various other people. He's going to need to do his outreach. He's going to need to do his stakeholder outreach. He's going to need to be able to provide recommendations in order for anybody at any government level to be able to support him, if that's possible, to be able to procure what he needs to be able to do his business. It's not because we as government can help him with his business, but we can certainly find out if there's even a need for that.

Now, this is more of a municipal thing, but as a provincial legislator my responsibility is to make sure to close those gaps so that that municipality and that fellow can have that conversation. Is he going to have to put that into his work pieces, having done outreach and stakeholder outreach for his own thing that he's trying to accomplish, because he's talked to a government member? These are the things where I think we're lacking a little bit of clarity. I'm not sure how that applies.

I don't think anybody who is reading this legislation who's a small group – I think the larger groups will understand how to do

this, but we're talking about a small group of people. I'm just talking about one person, but if he starts a group of people, a network of people that are wanting to do this bus thing, and they start a group that is lobbying the municipal government or anything like that, how does he do that? That's just one example. The minister is, I'm sure, able to answer that for me.

But that's just one example. We have so many municipalities. I use Langdon as an example. They're a very, very high-functioning group of volunteers. They have a group called the collaborative. They meet with the chamber. They work together all the time. They're trying to build a school there that has a recreation centre attached to it. They've done a tremendous amount of work, and they are working together to support between three other groups trying to make this thing happen. Again, if they're lobbying for information about how to do this to make their community better and they're speaking with their municipal and provincial politicians, if I write a letter of support for them to be able to ask for this grant or that – their preparation time that went into that to ask me to do that: how much of that is taken out of their 50 hours of lobbying? How do you account for that, and how are you going to follow up with that? I'm just asking simply because I think there needs to be a flexibility here.

I would assume for the government members, with the outreach that they do as well, that it's imperative, for the government especially. You're going to get lobbied on absolutely everything, so how are you monitoring that? How are you making sure that's working out? You have these wonderful small communities, these groups that work so hard to make their communities better. I'm quite concerned by the addition of preparatory time. I'm very concerned about the way the communications go, that if you're circulating a newsletter, that's considered part of your lobbying piece, that's considered part of that 50 hours. I would highly recommend that the minister look at this and see if this is the right way to go.

I fully understand that necessary things are being done here. I mean, we've all had the privilege of being within those committees and talking to the Ethics Commissioner. We know what's necessary, but red tape is certainly not a necessary piece of this. We want healthy communication. We want that to happen. I don't know about you guys, but on this side of the House we are in need of that feedback. We rely heavily on feedback from our stakeholders. What if the lobbyists become less generous with their time, right? What are we going to do at that point in time if they're not able to do that? I don't want us as a Legislature on both sides of this – because it's not just us. I'm just talking about our side, but I don't want us to be penalizing the people that we're supposed to be representing. I think that this could do that. I think there's a distinct possibility that we would be absolutely penalizing not only stakeholders but people that have lines of expertise that are necessary for us.

10:30

I know that, for me, I've had the privilege of having four portfolios. There are a lot of acronyms in those portfolios. I'm acronymed out. However, I've had the privilege of meeting some of the most incredible people in my life throughout all of those portfolios, and I can't imagine if they're limited by the time that they'll be able to spend with somebody like me to educate me on the things that I need to know in order to represent them appropriately in this House. It's an imperative part of what needs to happen. I do understand the need for transparency, and I do understand the need for accountability, but we do not want to also stop that flow of information.

I mean, I actually know that for any of us who've worked on volunteer organizations or advocacy groups, 50 hours goes by like

that. Think about how long – I don't know about you, but I try to create these flyers and stuff in Vistaprint. I'm horrible at this. It might take one person an hour; it takes me, like, 10. If I was the person who was in charge of that in an advocacy group, they would use up that time in a millisecond. It's because that's just not my gift and not my talent. But if that's considered part of the prep time – in order to send out a flyer to talk about a group for special-needs families that's a support network and a charitable foundation that I'm trying to bring people together for in the little rec centre in Chestermere, it took me 10 hours to do my Vistaprint thing. I think I've just wasted a whole bunch of lobbying time and imperative time to actually be able to help my community. I'm just using myself as an example. Don't hire me to do your Vistaprint posters. I'm terrible at that.

Mr. Nixon: Give it a try.

Mrs. Aheer: Vistaprint is easy, I know. I'm horrible at that stuff.

Anyways, the other thing, too, is that there are going to be additional funds that are going to have to go to the Ethics Commissioner in order to be able to handle all the influx of information that's going to come in. There is a potential for an onslaught of inquiries that they will receive as small organizations didn't have to file previous to this, and on top of that, they're going to have to try and figure this out under new legislation. Now we're bringing them under the Lobbyists Act, which they weren't part of before.

It's a bit disappointing that the government didn't follow the office of the Ethics Commissioner's recommendation to change the filing system. The recommendation was that they change it from a semiannual to an annual filing because in any sort of small groups, small organizations the first six months are really similar to the last six months. There are not a whole lot of changes. We've seen that consistently over the years. All of us have been involved in that long enough.

Again, to the minister: if there's a possibility to change that and follow the OEC's recommendation on that, I can tell you that the lobby groups would be extremely, extremely grateful for the time. Also, it gives them that year, if they have the burden of this red tape and of this paperwork and if they're a small organization and there are volunteers and if the supports around them are small, to have the ability to be able to do that. That's on their annual filing. Just something to consider.

Also, I think we need a little bit more clarity. There are a large number of lobbyists that are going to be having to register for the very first time. With the threshold being brought down from 100 to 50 hours, is their application and all of the work that they do to become a registered lobbyist part of that 50 hours that they have to use up? Is that part of the 50 hours in their lobbying allocation? I think this is an important piece of clarification that needs to happen.

There was one other thing I wanted to chat about, too, the piece where it talks about communications to smaller organizations. How is the government planning to roll out the legislation? This is just about what I was talking about. You've got a whole bunch of new groups that are going to be coming in, a whole bunch of new, small organizations that are going to be under the umbrella of this new Lobbyists Act. I'd like to understand some clarity on how the government is going to roll out this legislation with so many new organizations that fall under this act now.

The other piece, Minister, through the Speaker, is: how are we going to be able to make sure that these small groups know what they're supposed to do? I mean, they're all of a sudden supposed to decipher and understand these new regulations.

Thank you.

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

Seeing none, the hon. Minister of Labour to close debate.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Thank you very much to all who spoke to this bill. As I close debate, I hope to elicit the support of all members of this House for this important piece of legislation by answering some of the final questions that were asked. I think the most important thing to state right off the bat is that this does not apply to nonprofits. If you are not paid as a contractor or if you are not employed to do whatever lobbying activity you are engaging in, this does not apply to you. If you are a group of parents or a support network or volunteers and you get together to advocate for a cause, you are not lobbyists because you are not paid to be lobbyists, and therefore this act does not apply to you.

That being said, Madam Speaker, I want to make clear that registering as a lobbyist is not an onerous task. It's a very simple form with minimal information required. It is not a burden or a barrier to an organization. But there has been some concern from organizations like the Alberta Chambers of Commerce who don't want to see having to register as a lobbyist preventing people from engaging in conversations with government, and we agree. I was very pleased to sit down with the chair of the Alberta Chambers of Commerce and an example small chamber who has a paid staff, and we talked about the small amount of time that would be required to register and the fact that the Ethics Commissioner is there as a resource to help anyone who has questions about the application of this law, whether they themselves are lobbyists, how they fill out the forms. The Ethics Commissioner is a resource, so I would encourage anyone with concerns to be reaching out to the Ethics Commissioner, and that's exactly what a lot of these small groups will find help from.

The Ethics Commissioner is also going to be the one responsible for rolling out this information, updating the websites, communicating with groups and helping them. The Ethics Commissioner is there to assist organizations who may fall under that legislation. We will not, with this legislation, be stopping the flow of information. Rather, we're increasing transparency, and it's under the guise of increasing transparency that we chose to keep semiannual filings, because annual filings would reduce transparency.

Making sure that we continue to engage with people to do the job that, as MLAs, is so important to us is all about what this legislation is doing. Again, people who are not paid like contracted-out lobbyists are or people who are not paid lobbyists for their organizations will not be captured by this. We deliberately did not change who was captured by the Lobbyists Act, Madam Speaker. I really do want to be clear. The impact of this bill on everyday Albertans will be that they will have access to more information about who is paid to try to influence government.

With that being said, Madam Speaker, I hope I've answered the questions that were asked, and I would invite all members of this House to support this work that was done by a Legislative Assembly committee, where all members had time to hear presentations from the Ethics Commissioner and to discuss and debate these issues. I appreciate the work that they did and the recommendations that they made to government. I'm very pleased to close debate on the Lobbyists Amendment Act, 2018, which I know will make lobbying more transparent in Alberta while still making sure those important channels of communication remain open.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 11 read a third time]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Well, wonderful progress tonight. A little later than we thought but good

results. I want to thank all members on both sides of the House for their contributions tonight.

I will move that the House adjourn until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning, Madam Speaker.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 10:40 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday morning, May 31, 2018

Day 36

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Thursday, May 31, 2018

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Deputy Speaker: Good morning. As we draw near to the conclusion of our work for this legislative session, let us continue to focus on our shared goal, to make life better for Albertans.

Please be seated.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders

Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

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

Bill 18

Statutes Amendment Act, 2018

The Chair: Questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah, it's my pleasure to rise here this morning and talk about Bill 18, Statutes Amendment Act, 2018. I guess it's intended to be just kind of like a bit of a cleanup of some of the other acts and that sort of thing. When I look through and see what's included in it, I see there are parts that deal with the A Better Deal for Consumers and Businesses Act, the Alberta Corporate Tax Act, the Alberta Human Rights Act, An Act to Strengthen Municipal Government, the Auditor General Act, the Conflicts of Interest Act, the Consumer Protection Act, the Election Act. So there are lots of different parts of this bill. Again, I guess it's not supposed to be too technical in nature other than to clean up some of the administrative parts of these acts. I see the Electronic Transactions Act, the Employment Standards Code, the Financial Administration Act.

Again, it covers a lot of different things, but most of it seems to be fairly straightforward. I guess that, you know, overall, it's something that we can support on this side of the House as most of these changes are minor. But we did notice the need to add the Election Commissioner to the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act.

I don't know if you recall, Madam Chair, that we had quite a discussion over the Election Commissioner and, of course, how much he's getting paid. On this side of the House we asked that the Election Commissioner's wages be disclosed and brought forward immediately so that the public could see how much this person was going to be paid. Of course, the government didn't support that. They ridiculed that and thought, "Okay; you're picking on this person" and all these different things that they accused us of at that time.

But, obviously, Madam Chair, here we have this stuck into Bill 18. Now, I guess the government has realized that maybe they should actually disclose the salary of the Election Commissioner. So all those allegations that were brought to us from the government when we brought this up earlier: obviously, the government is, I guess, backtracking on this a bit. Like I say, they accused us of singling out this person. Well, now, of course, they brought forward a bill where they are singling out this person to have their wages

disclosed. This is something that we wanted all along. We'd like to have it happen immediately and not wait. That was something that we argued for, and of course we spent a lot of time in this House discussing that.

You know, when we talked about the Election Commissioner and, of course, his role, we covered a lot of different topics on that. What we realized is that the government created this new position of Election Commissioner, and we know that the job that the Election Commissioner is supposed to do is already being done. There are already investigations being done on any kind of financial complaints that come in under the elections finance act and how people are spending money for elections and for nominations and that sort of thing. We realize that this person is just going to be doing the same job that was already being done. The government thinks this is something new that the Election Commissioner is going to be doing, but of course we all know that this is a job that has been done for years in Alberta and was already being taken care of.

Of course, we also know that the person that they've chosen to have this position is somebody that actually sued the government in the past. So here we have somebody that has sued the government and lost the lawsuit because they had no grounds for the lawsuit. It was for wrongful dismissal, but there was nobody dismissed. It was just a contract not renewed. But this government, of course, has chosen to hire this person back.

We just talked about somebody yesterday that quit their job and then was immediately rehired by the government and is working and living outside the province and being paid, you know, a five-figure salary or a six-figure salary to do who knows what for this government.

On and on this government is doing things like this, that I think have Albertans wondering how they are spending their money and what benefit they're getting for that money that's being spent. What isn't happening, though, with Bill 18: you know, obviously, the salary is going to be disclosed, but we still don't know exactly the details of this deal, and we probably won't know, I guess, till after the next election. I think it's important. If this person's job is so important in elections, why can't we find out all these details before the next election? Why do we have to find out after the next election the details of this person's deal, you know, all the different things that should be disclosed to the people of Alberta? Why don't we have that?

I guess it's good that the government will at least admit their mistakes, in this situation anyways, realize that "Okay; we do need to disclose this person's salary," and have brought this forward. I mean, we could have taken care of this a lot easier, you know, a couple of weeks ago, when we had this opportunity in the House. But, of course, at that point the government would have had to admit that and support an amendment that we brought forward. I guess that maybe they can't bring themselves to do that even when it's right or even when they have to admit it's right afterwards by bringing in the same legislation at a later date.

Madam Chair, I think, again, overall, there are not a lot of big changes in here. It covers a lot of different legislation. We hope this is a good cleanup for what the government has done in some of these acts. Of course, there are lots of other things that we would love to see changed in some of the bills that the government has passed. Over and over again they prefer not to accept our advice or our amendments. We see over and over again how much trouble that gets the government into, and when the government gets into trouble, of course it costs taxpayers money. We see that over and over again with electricity, for instance, where the government keeps changing things and trying to patch up their mistakes of the past, and each time it costs Albertans money.

I'll leave it at that, Madam Chair, on Bill 18, the Statutes Amendment Act, 2018, and thank you for your time this morning.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today to speak to Bill 18, the Statutes Amendment Act, 2018. In this House we have often met over the last three years to talk about how we can make our government better. I can remember that in 2015, 2016 we addressed several bills that have helped us to try to ensure that the government, that serves the people of Alberta, does so in an open and transparent way.

One of the issues that we've talked about in the past was the need for transparency when it comes to a sunshine list. Governments in the past in this province have had problems with hiring people and placing them on contracts where it is nothing more than, really, political pork-barrelling or political patronage. We've come to the decision in this House that as a part of having good government, we need to ensure that people's wages that reach a fairly substantial level have to be placed on a sunshine list.

Now, why do I talk about that with Bill 18? This bill is primarily a housekeeping bill, where government departments like the Solicitor General and Labour and Municipal Affairs and Service Alberta are just doing some housekeeping rules and housekeeping amendments to make the government run a little more efficiently in these departments.

9:10

There's at least one part of this bill that needs to be discussed and brought to the people's attention and to this Legislature's attention, and that's with regard to the salary of the Election Commissioner. Madam Chair, we understand that this is a new position that's just been brought forward, and there's been a great deal of discussion in this past session over who that should have been and whether we even had need for the Election Commissioner. We've had a Chief Electoral Officer. We've had a system of government and a process for ensuring that elections were done fairly and wisely and that people followed the rules, so there has been discussion and question as to whether there was even a need for an Election Commissioner. Well, we've made the decision to have one, and we've had the discussion about whether we've made a wise choice in offering a particular gentleman that position.

But that's not really what I want to talk about today. What I really want to talk about is the whole process of transparency when it comes to the salary of the Election Commissioner. We broadly support these changes in this piece of legislation, in Bill 18, because most of it is just housekeeping, but we do want to bring to notice that in adding an Election Commissioner to the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act, we suggested the need to publicly disclose the salary of the Election Commissioner. We brought that into this House.

On May 1 the MLA for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock proposed an amendment, an amendment that would have required the disclosure of the Election Commissioner's salary, and the government voted that amendment down. The government MLAs voted against it, and they asked: why is it necessary to single out this particular legislative officer for their salary? Well, the reality is, Madam Chair, that we have already agreed as a House on the need for a sunshine list and the need for transparency when it comes to salaries. This had been overlooked by the government, so we felt the need to make sure that this was a part of the process when we were debating the bill. The MLA for Barrhead-Morinville-

Westlock proposed this amendment, yet it was turned down by the government.

Now we know, actually, that the amendment was a very necessary amendment, because the Government House Leader admitted on May 8 that he provided some inaccurate information to the House about the public disclosure of this officer's salary, and he admitted that legislative changes would be needed to make that happen.

Often, Madam Chair, we're wondering if this House is an effective House, and the people of Alberta sometimes wonder if the government or the opposition are actually doing their jobs effectively here. I think that what we're seeing with this particular bill is that the opposition has actually done its job effectively. We brought forward a concern, and in bringing forward that concern, we have encouraged the government, through the amendment that was rejected, for the salary to be brought forward and to be made transparent and open.

This Bill 18, the Statutes Amendment Act, 2018, is doing that, and we're glad to see that the government is actually following through with our concern and recognizing our concern. Of course, it still won't affect Albertans by letting them know before the next election what this individual will be making. That will not become apparent to Albertans until after the next election. But having said that, we can support this bill. The government has come late to the game in understanding the need for this, but we applaud them for finally understanding and recognizing the importance of this, so this bill will have our support.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Yeah, I just wanted to add a few things here, too, that maybe I didn't cover quite clearly enough in my previous comments. I talked about, you know, including the Election Commissioner's salary in this bill, and I talked about that we had proposed an amendment to require the disclosure of the Election Commissioner's salary. Of course, the government MLAs voted against this. We brought that forward. In fact, it was the MLA for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock that proposed that amendment on May 1. Again, they talked about all the different reasons why that shouldn't happen and why we'd be singling out this person and that sort of thing. Then, of course, on May 8 the Government House Leader admitted that he provided inaccurate information to the House about the public disclosure for this officer's salary, and he admitted that the legislative changes wouldn't be needed to make that happen. Of course, that's what's happened in this Bill 18. I guess they tried to kind of bury it with a bunch of other kinds of housekeeping things and add it in there.

We know that this Election Commissioner position is a position that was just created by this government. We know that the job was being done previously, but this government felt that we needed an extra person or an extra officer or whatever to do this job. Of course, also on this side of the House, we're all for having transparency and accountability and democracy. We agree a hundred per cent with that thought process, where elections need to be fair and there needs to be people looking into different complaints and allegations. Of course, we did have that, and we do have that presently even before this position was created.

Now, we also know that there was a very expensive job listing that was done. It was done through the Christmas holidays. I think it's fairly apparent that the government had a candidate in mind for this. There were other very well qualified people that applied for this job. This person may well be qualified, too, but of course, as I

mentioned before, this person has a history of suing the government, and I think that's a little alarming. I know that in my business if I have an opportunity to hire somebody and I have a couple of qualified people and one of them has previously sued me wrongfully and another hasn't, I think I know which one I'm going to take. I wouldn't be taking the one that had made a wrongful lawsuit against me.

Mr. Hanson: Suing the employer?

Mr. Loewen: Yeah. You know, suing your employer is something I think you would want to think twice about. Of course, with this government, I guess, it maybe doesn't matter to them. But it matters to me, and I think it matters to Albertans when we hire people that have sued the government in the past and wrongfully.

Now, if transparency and clarity are what this government wants, then obviously this is a step in the right direction, to have this person put on the sunshine list and everything. But it is funny that this government fought so hard against having this person's wages brought out into the sunshine because the government has claimed that this person was hired to take the dark money out of politics, quote. So a person is hired to take the dark money out of politics, and this government seems to have a problem and seems to have really had to be dragged, kicking and screaming, to the point where they're going to make this person's wages come onto the sunshine list. We have the dark money on one side, and we have the sunshine list on the other. Like I say, some of these things you just can't make up, the stuff that goes on in this Legislature.

Madam Chair, I think Bill 18, I mean, like I say, a lot of it is just housekeeping. A lot of it is just cleaning up things and trying to get things, you know, kind of a little easier to understand in some of this legislation. That's fine, and I think it's great that we finally got the government to the point to bring the dark money out of politics fellow onto the sunshine list. I think that's a great addition there. It's too bad. Like I say, we could have done this back on May 1. We had an opportunity to have that amendment passed in this Legislature, and of course the government voted against it and fought it kicking and screaming all the way. Then all of a sudden here we are almost a month later, and we're at the same point we were a month ago. We, obviously, could have had this solved a long time ago.

Mr. Nixon: They do that a lot, don't they?

Mr. Loewen: They sure do this a lot, actually. Like I say, we see it over and over again, where this government passes legislation and then spends an incredible amount of time doing damage control afterwards. They tend to have this problem with going on and not being able to see the results of their actions until it's too late. Albertans have already suffered, there have already been costs incurred, and then this government decides: oh, I think we need to do something to fix this. Unfortunately, a lot of times they end up having to pass three or four or five sets of legislation in order to solve the problem they caused with their initial legislation.

9:20

A lot of that legislation that they pass has to do with an ideology that they seem to want to force. A lot of times it's like, you know, trying to force a round peg into a square hole. I mean, it just doesn't work, but they keep pounding away at it and pounding away at it and think it's going to fit, but it never fits, Madam Chair. This government tends to, like I say, keep pounding away on these things. All the time it just costs more money. It costs more stress and more aggravation. It drives investment out of Alberta. A lot of these things drive investment out of Alberta.

We sit in a situation here, for instance, with a pipeline where we have a government that's messed around with the system and created so much trouble and so much uncertainty that in the end they had to buy the pipeline. Of course, there were other ways. There was a company that was more than willing to spend the money to build the pipeline. They've been trying to build the pipeline for years, but have had nothing but obstructions and roadblocks put in the way. The government keeps moving the goalposts. In the end what has to happen? Well, the government has got to come and buy it out when really all they needed to do was facilitate the company to do the job that it wanted to do.

Madam Chair, we see this over and over again. I think Bill 18 is a classic example. They had an opportunity to bring the Election Commissioner's compensation to the sunshine list over a month ago. They fought it. They fought it. We spent hours in this Legislature debating that very thing, and now we sit here today with an amendment to do the exact same thing that we tried to do almost a month ago.

Madam Chair, I think it's just another situation where this government – we wish they would listen to us once in a while. We're sitting here on this side of the House. We're trying to do our best. We're trying to look at their legislation and trying to make amendments that are positive and that'll help the things that are going on here in Alberta and help Albertans. Again, I guess that maybe this government doesn't want to admit that we have good ideas over here. Maybe they don't want to take our advice for whatever reason, but I think they need to sit and look at what our ideas are and what our recommendations are and what our amendments are and view them with an open mind, an open mind that we do have good ideas on this side of the House. They have good ideas on their side of the House, too, and sometimes we agree with them completely, and we facilitate things and pass things through as fast as possible.

Other times, like I say, they have to be dragged kicking and screaming to the end, and that's where we're at here today with that part of Bill 18 with the Election Commissioner's ...

Mr. Nixon: It's like the huge amendment to Bill 10.

Mr. Loewen: Yeah. We just had a situation in the last two days here where we had a bill brought forward before this House. I think it was a four-page bill. The government defends the bill. We come up with ideas, amendments. We discuss the different issues with this bill, and the government, you know, calls us fearmongers and all these sorts of things. Then, of course, what happens? All of a sudden a three-page amendment shows up, a three-page amendment to a four-page bill. [interjection] We see these things all the time.

In fact, I hear the minister muttering over there on the other side about this. You know, we gave them plenty of opportunity to listen to us and to listen to our ideas and what we've said, and of course the government, in fact, the minister himself, would just steadfastly ...

Mr. Strankman: Stonewall.

Mr. Loewen: ... stonewall, stop, wouldn't accept any sort of discussion or advice on that.

He had everything under control. He had it all sorted out. There was no way that he could have done anything wrong. Of course, how do you come up with a three-page amendment to a four-page bill when there's nothing wrong? I remember at the time we were discussing that the government's website didn't match up with the government's points.

The Chair: Hon. member, are you speaking to Bill 18?

Mr. Loewen: Yes. Bill 18.

The Chair: Please continue.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much.

I know the government doesn't want to hear about any of these other bills, but again what it does is it shows a pattern. Bill 18 shows this pattern again, where the government doesn't want to take our advice. They swear up and down that everything is perfect and that they couldn't have made a mistake. They've done all the consultation in the world, and they've got it all under control. Of course, we sit here weeks later with a situation where the government all of a sudden has to backtrack and say: "Okay. I guess you were right. I guess we have to do something different here."

Madam Chair, I'll leave it at that on Bill 18. Thank you for your time today.

The Chair: Any other questions, comments, or amendments? Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Chair. I thought that I probably needed to stand up and talk a little bit more about just how this Legislature is supposed to work and should work. I actually believe that to a degree we see that Bill 18 is highlighting how a Legislature actually should work. We could highlight that the hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock proposed an amendment on May 1 and that the House was told by the government that disclosing the salary was singling out a particular legislative office. Yet in their denial of our point and the voting down of our amendment, they clearly made a statement that they didn't believe that there was any credibility in the points that we were trying to make in this House. It is a little bit interesting – I guess that's the word I would use – to see now in Bill 18 that they have recognized the validity of our points, the validity of our suggestions, and they have now brought it forward in a housekeeping bill.

Madam Chair, I've never truly really understood why it has to be this way. I guess, from my perspective as a former educator and talking about the process of passing legislation and bringing forward points and having debate in the House, the opposition shouldn't just be opposing for the sake of opposing and the government should be actually listening to the position and the points of the opposition. In theory, I guess, that sounds great, but one of the realities that I've found after having been here for three years now is that often egos get involved and sometimes the government isn't prepared to actually listen to some reasonable amendments. Many of the amendments that we've done through this House over the last three years coming from the opposition have been sincerely placed before this House, would have made bills substantially better.

Here's an example of one that fits that bill: expecting the Election Commissioner to actually have his salary brought before the people of Alberta and placed on a sunshine list, where we would know how much this individual is being paid. It doesn't take a particular individual and just make them sort of in the spotlight. We've done this for many, many, many people that receive a salary from this Legislature and from the taxpayers of Alberta. So the response that we received to that amendment was obviously incorrect from the side of the government, and they've recognized that now. While we would have appreciated if they had supported the amendment and had listened to the wisdom of the opposition on this issue, I guess we're happy that eventually they took it back to their caucus and the minister began to realize that maybe there were a few things that could be changed in this piece of legislation that would make it better, that the opposition idea of placing the Election Commissioner's salary so that it would be open and transparent to

the people of Alberta is actually, really a very good idea and consistent with what we have done for other legislative officers in this province.

I guess I would like to take just a second or two to address the fact that it would have been nice if this would have happened before the next election. It's our understanding that the details of their agreement with the Election Commissioner will not be made transparent and will not be available to the people of Alberta until after the next election, so we've got some concerns about that. But, you know, the government has at least taken a partial step and has agreed that we and the people of Alberta will eventually know what the details of that salary are. Therefore, I would just once again say that we will support this piece of legislation.

9:30

We understand that the government is a little late to admit their mistake, but they have admitted it, they have moved forward, and they have listened to the opposition. I guess, at the end of the day, we would argue that that shows you the strength of our parliamentary democracy, where the opposition is capable of bringing forward ideas and an NDP government is capable of actually listening once in a while.

Thank you very much for the time. I rest my comments.

The Chair: Any other comments? Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to stand and speak on Bill 18, the Statutes Amendment Act, 2018. You know what? For the most part, it's a good act. Traditionally statutes amendment acts usually are. Every government does it, so this government is not unique. It's not a bad thing that they're doing; actually, it's required. Sometimes you've just got to do some housekeeping, clean up some things that need to be corrected. Sometimes it's not due to the government's doing. Sometimes it's spelling errors and little minor things. Any government can make mistakes. This one would, and any other previous or past ones would, so that's not unusual.

I understand that this has to be done, but this one is interesting. Usually these things go by without being discussed much because of the fact that they're largely housekeeping. But the government, in between doing the normal housekeeping, has chosen to sneak a couple of things in that they're probably a little embarrassed about, hoping that it'll go by the boards without being talked about because it's a statutes amendment act. But because of that, I think it's right and proper that I should stand up and talk about those things, Madam Chair.

We had a lot of discussion in this House about one section of the Statutes Amendment Act, about the Election Commissioner. The government was – what's the word? – sanctimonious or kind of high and mighty in their attitude when it was suggested that they publicly disclose the Election Commissioner's salary. They spoke as if it was a personal affront to the commissioner. Of course, they actually changed their story mid-debate back then. They talked about how it was a personal affront, and then later on they said: well, we'll disclose it later. So it couldn't be both. It was either a personal affront, or they just hadn't gotten around to it yet. They couldn't quite bring themselves at that point to admit the Official Opposition was correct in suggesting that the commissioner's salary needed to be disclosed and, in fact, went so far as to say: it's already in legislation, and it will be disclosed. Then a minister had to come back and admit he was wrong and say that it wasn't in there.

Okay. You know what? I guess the point, Madam Chair, that I would say is that if the government would realize that when we're

speaking on this side of the House, most of the time we're the best friends they've got, if they would listen to some of the suggestions that we have and solve the things that we try to help them solve at the earliest possible stage, then they wouldn't have to come back and kind of eat crow and do what they're doing with some of the sections of this act and admit that they maybe should have listened in the first place. But here we are. Here we are.

To that extent, I'm pleased that the government is – they tried to sneak it through by putting it in the Statutes Amendment Act, but essentially they've admitted they were wrong, and they're correcting their mistake. I congratulate them for that because that's always a positive thing when mistakes can be corrected, and I think that'll be to Albertans' benefit to have that mistake corrected. Again, it would have been easier to do it when the Official Opposition first suggested it, before we were told that we were wrong and that we were picking on people and that we were mean-spirited. Here it is, and the government is doing the exact same thing that we suggested, though they accused us of having ill intent when we were suggesting the same thing ever so recently.

So here we are with this act. Again, unfortunately, it's a pattern. You know, there have been other bills this session with the same pattern, where you've got a four-page bill with a three-page amendment after a minister stands up and says that that bill is just fine and that, really, nothing has to change much. Then an amendment comes that's almost the size of the bill, and you know that perhaps that was another – and I only raise it as a comparison, Madam Chair, because it's just an indication that when the Official Opposition is making suggestions, perhaps the government should listen carefully because, again, when we're making many of these suggestions, we're the best friends the government has got because we can stop them from the type of embarrassment that they're having this morning with this bill.

Mr. Nixon: Just like the Municipal Affairs minister. He's got a three-page amendment.

Mr. McIver: Indeed. Certainly, you're right. My colleague is reminding me that it was Bill 10 where a four-page bill had a three-page amendment, though the government protested that it was all fine. Again, that would have been another opportunity like this one this morning where had the government listened to the Official Opposition, taken our suggestion, recognized that we're often the best friends they have by making these suggestions, then their lives would actually be easier.

I would say that I'm overall in support of this bill. I think this is a learning opportunity for the government that when the Official Opposition makes suggestions, they probably should consider them carefully on behalf of Albertans. If those suggestions are to Albertans' benefit – there are parts of this bill the government could have avoided by listening to the Official Opposition at an earlier point. But at this point I think the government will find that we're happy for the corrections at whatever point they happen, and it appears it might even be now.

Thank you, Madam Chair, for this opportunity to speak to Bill 18.

The Chair: Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to rise today to talk about Bill 18, and thank you to the hon. opposition whip for his enlightening comments on this piece of legislation that's before us this morning. I would like to start off by saying that, clearly, we in general support this bill. It makes minor changes, as the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays pointed out, most of them of a housekeeping nature, which, of course, needs to be dealt with from

time to time by any government. Our concern, though, falls to the fact that we continue to see this government over and over and over having to make changes in legislation, sometimes changes to other legislation, to fix mistakes that they made in previous legislation.

This example of Bill 18 and what is happening right now in the House is a prime example of that. On May 1 the MLA for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock proposed an amendment that would have required the disclosure of the Election Commissioner's salary, and government MLAs voted against it at the time. At that time, Madam Chair, they asked why it was necessary to single out a particular legislative officer. In fact, that's what the government asked at that time. However, we know that that amendment did turn out to be necessary because the Government House Leader then admitted seven days later, on May 8, that he in fact provided inaccurate information to this Assembly about public disclosure for the officer's salary. He admitted that legislative changes would be needed to make that happen.

So here we are. We passed another piece of legislation that we debated in this House, Motion 16, I believe, at the time. I could be off on the number, Madam Chair. The Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock provided an opportunity to be able to address the issue. The government automatically refused to address the issue in their headlong approach, just running to make sure that, for whatever reason, they could continue to keep their secret deal or their secret salary with the commissioner a secret. And now here we are with the bill that's before us today, and they're doing exactly what the Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock put forward at that time, seven days later.

Now the reason, Madam Chair, that this continues to become a problem is because this is the behaviour of this NDP cabinet on almost every piece of legislation that we've debated this spring sitting and beyond. We continue to have to come and try to make this legislation better. The government doesn't listen. They call us names; they call us fearmongerers; they say that we're wrong. Then they come back to the Assembly and try to gain our support to do that. Well, in general we support it because, obviously, it was our idea, but the concern then is: how do we know Bill 18 has got it right now, a hundred per cent? The minister has not stood up and spoken to this legislation. He has not explained it, not answered questions of the opposition on this issue.

9:40

Again, we know that it was on May 1 that the minister gave to this House misleading information. He came back and corrected it seven days later. We know that we saw not yesterday but a few days before that the Minister of Finance, in answer to a question from the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, implied for a government employee a situation that he worked with the Ethics Commissioner on an exemption around the Lobbyists Act. Then yesterday we find out that the Finance Minister told a reporter that they did get one from the Ethics Commissioner. And 10 minutes later they came into question period and said: oh; in fact, that's not true. A very similar example to this.

Now, I understand, Madam Chair, that the government, the NDP, don't want to hear that, but that is what the NDP government continues to do. It is shameful. It is shameful behaviour by this government, and they will not stand up and answer for it. In fact, they'll use procedural points of order and all that stuff and try to hide from Albertans their behaviour. It's extremely disappointing. We see that exact same behaviour with the core of this portion of Bill 18 which we debate today. They continually have to come and change their mistakes.

This is a government that is becoming known across Alberta, certainly, but across the country and probably the world as the

government of mistakes. A government that has to continue to change their own mistakes over and over and over is not healthy. It's very, very apparent in Bill 18 that this NDP government has still not learned their lesson. They still have not learned their lesson. Their cabinet will continue, just like they did in this bill, to stand up in this House, provide inaccurate information, and then not address the fact that they have to change it. We saw it with Bill 10 yesterday, a similar example, where the minister would not stand up and acknowledge or even answer any questions about the fact that he had to change his entire piece of legislation. He had to change his entire bill with an amendment to his own legislation a few days after he called the opposition fearmongers.

Of course, Madam Chair, it's not surprising that the NDP have become known as the party of fear, the anger machine, without a doubt, and have just resorted to simply calling the opposition names. That's how they've handled this legislation. It's extraordinary that we continue to see this behaviour from this government.

Now, Madam Chair, we know that the amendment was necessary because the Government House Leader, as I said, admitted on May 8 that he provided inaccurate information to this House about the public disclosure of this officer's salary. He admitted then that legislative changes would be needed to make that happen, which is what we're dealing with now in Bill 18. So in seven short days we went from, "The opposition is fearmongering; the opposition doesn't know what they're talking about; they're wrong" to "Oh, oh; I've got to try to get this done at the end of the spring sitting because it turns out that the opposition was right and I was wrong; it turns out that yet again I came to this Assembly" – "I" being the Government House Leader in this case – "and provided inaccurate information, and now I need to get this legislation fixed."

How many times, Madam Chair, is this government going to have to come to this Assembly to get their mistakes fixed? You know, it's going to happen. As the Member for Calgary-Hays said, nobody can be a hundred per cent perfect. Nobody can get everything right, particularly when you're dealing with this much legislation. But you can't get it wrong every time. If you want to be the government of Alberta, you cannot continue to get it wrong every time. The people we represent are being hurt because of your mistakes. They're being hurt because of this government's mistakes and inability to get it right.

I can think of no other example of a government that has to have every bill that they bring to this Legislature changed by themselves. They have to bring their own amendments over and over and over to fix their legislation. They continue to show up in this place not ready to go to work. They continue to show up in this place not ready to get their job done for the people of Alberta. Bill 18 is a prime example of that, again trying to fix a mistake. Trying to fix a mistake. It's shocking that it continues to happen.

Now, I'd like to further note that this change for public disclosure still won't have the effect of letting Albertans know the details of the secret deal with the Election Commissioner until after the next election. But I suppose we're not surprised by that given that this government has only brought in time allocation twice in their time inside this Chamber. Once was for Bill 6, the biggest debacle this government ever had, an absolutely brutal attack on rural Alberta. They finally brought in time allocation because they realized they had made a mistake, and they wanted to get out of it. Instead of doing the right thing, which was to vote against the legislation and actually talk to people, they brought in time allocation to try to get around it politically.

The second time they did that was a couple of years later and just a few weeks ago – and it's directly related to this bill – and that was around the motion associated with the Election Commissioner.

They're now trying to fix the mistake that they made during that motion in this bill. During that motion they brought in time allocation because they were so frustrated and scared of Albertans understanding what they were doing in regard to the Election Commissioner.

It's no different than with Bill 6. The only other time that they brought in time allocation was when they were under enormous political pressure because of their behaviour on Bill 6. Then they came under political pressure again under the secret deal with the Election Commissioner, where they would not tell – they will not tell – Albertans that salary. Why not? It's very interesting. Even now, as they go to fix that problem with Bill 18, they still have managed to rig up the system in such a way that they won't have to disclose how much they're paying the Election Commissioner until after the next general election.

What is the main role of that Election Commissioner? It is, of course, to deal with things associated with the election, which is important. But it's a little bit interesting that the details of that secret deal would not be made public until after the election, and it's directly related to this bill. I think it's very shocking and disappointing that the government continues to not stand up and address that issue. They continue to try to hide from that issue.

Mr. McIver: I feel sorry for the commissioner.

Mr. Nixon: It's not fair to the commissioner. It's not fair to Albertans. It's not fair to anybody. But why do they want to? That question has to be asked, particularly when you shine the other light on it, that every piece of election legislation the government has brought forward lately has portions of it that are good but also has other portions of it that are deliberately designed to stack the deck for this government. How do we know that that's not what's taking place here? What reason would there be to hide that fact from Albertans, to hide that number from the people of Alberta? I can think of no reason. Maybe there is a reason, Madam Chair, but the government, then, should address that reason in this place instead of bringing in time allocation and then trying to swoop into another bill, a statute amendment act, to try to fix the mistake they made in the last bill.

Albertans are becoming very, very concerned about the secretive nature of this government. My good friend the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays and some of his colleagues from before, in the last government, would agree with what I am going to say now, and that is that one of our great legacy parties, the PC Party, went down that road a little bit near the end of their time. That's probably one of the reasons why we are sitting on this side of the Assembly. The difference is that it took them 44 years to get there. It took this government less than three.

Mr. McIver: Six months.

Mr. Nixon: Yeah, probably about six months.

We continue to see this behaviour. It is not appropriate for democracy. It does a disservice to the people of this province. It's problematic that it continues. While we are a while away from an election – and I suspect that in that election Albertans are going to render a very significant judgment on this behaviour that you see in Bill 18, in the portion of Bill 18 that I'm referring to. The reality is that this government will continue for a while and is going to be able to continue to hurt Albertans on a daily basis if they're going to continue this behaviour.

So here we are in committee. The government has an opportunity to be able to stand up and go through why they've had to go through this process, to ask for our support, to explain why on May 1 they said one thing, why on May 8 they said another thing, why they

refuse to deal with it in the bill that they time allocated. Now they have to try to come and fix it in this bill. Sadly, so far – we’ve been talking about this since we got in this morning, so almost an hour – we still haven’t heard from a government member on it. We still haven’t heard from a government member to explain why they’ve chosen to go this route and what the process was that went into that. It becomes just ever more alarming, this behaviour by these cabinet ministers, not wanting to be accountable to Albertans and not wanting to be transparent to Albertans. This is a prime example.

Madam Chair, why did the Government House Leader tell us on May 1 that this was not required and then all the way on May 7 say, “Oh, maybe I did make a mistake” but then still did not deal with it in the motion that we were dealing with and then came back and tried to put it inside a housekeeping piece of legislation? Why is a very reasonable question.

9:50

The second and more important question is why they continue to make sure that the Election Commissioner’s salary will remain a secret, their secret deal. The NDP’s secret deal with the Election Commissioner will not be made public until after the general election. Even when they try to fix their mistake inside this legislation, the NDP still continues to go out of their way to be able to prolong it. They still continue to go out of their way in this legislation. It’s this bill. This is very relevant to this bill. They go out of their way to make sure the Election Commissioner’s salary will not be disclosed till after the general election.

Albertans need to ask themselves why this government has only used time allocation twice, one of them for an obvious historical – it will go down in the history books – political problem. There’s not an NDP pundit, there’s not anybody on any side of the aisle in politics that will say that that was not used at that time, as a political problem in the winter of 2016, to try to deal with Bill 6. That’s how the government chose to deal with it. It’s in the history. But the only other time that they go and do that is on a simple motion associated with an Election Commissioner to, obviously – and, again, it’s proven here in Bill 18 – try to hide their secret deal on the salary with the commissioner.

If I was the commissioner right now, I would be after the government and saying: get this open and transparent to Albertans.

Mr. McIver: He deserves to get paid.

Mr. Nixon: Of course he deserves to be paid. He deserves to be compensated significantly. It’s a hard job. It’s a tough job. There are a lot of qualifications needed to do this role. But by the government continuing to keep it a secret, they continue to cause that commissioner credibility issues, not by us but by this government, who’s keeping it secret. We’re in Committee of the Whole. Why won’t we fix that? The Minister of Municipal Affairs rewrote his entire bill this week, but we can’t have an amendment from the government to fix their mistake, that they’re continuing to keep this nontransparent process in this legislation?

Mr. Strankman: More unaccountability.

Mr. Nixon: That’s exactly what it is.

Then I have to ask myself why on behalf of the people that I represent, and so do all of my colleagues. Why? I mean, I would assume that there’s nothing here. I hope there’s not. I hope that it’s simple and that everything is up front.

Mr. McIver: They time allocated a bill and then talked more about it.

Mr. Nixon: Yeah.

I have no reason to think anything different other than the fact that the government continues repeatedly to take steps to try to keep it hidden. It’s no different than Mr. Heaney and the situation that we were talking about yesterday. They announced to the press that he has left as chief of staff and that he’s gone back to his province, and then in only, like, 72 hours, I believe it was, Madam Chair, he signed a sweetheart contract, a six-figure contract, that still allows him to live in another province, lobby about issues that are associated with our government – we don’t know if he’s lobbying the government, but there are issues that are associated with our government, for sure on the marijuana file – and then not let the public know.

Mr. Strankman: That’s a bigger kettle of fish.

Mr. Nixon: Yeah.

I mean, why does this government continue to do this? Why do they continue to go out of their way aggressively and spend so much effort to try to not let one salary – and every other salary associated with that position, the Minister of Transportation has now admitted . . .

Mr. McIver: Maybe it’s too small. Maybe he’s underpaid.

Mr. Nixon: Well, if the salary is below the limit, then that would be very simple. The minister could stand up and say that, and off we would go. But why would they continue to take steps to avoid discussing that situation?

But, Madam Chair, I suspect that, sadly, we will continue to not see any answers. In fact, if I continue to talk about this for too much longer, I suspect that very quickly the government will run and bring in another time allocation motion because they don’t want to have it discussed here, which is disappointing.

Therefore, I will make clear again that we support the bulk of Bill 18, I think all of Bill 18, quite frankly. We support the fact that we have to change these housekeeping issues. We certainly support the portion of it which was brought forward by us as an appropriate motion but shut down by the government as they scrambled, again, to protect their secret deal and that now they’re trying to fix. We certainly support that. What we don’t support is that the government continues, even with this legislation, to go out of their way to keep their secret deal with the Election Commissioner secret, to not be transparent, even with this new legislation that they brought forward to the people of Alberta, to make sure they don’t have to be held accountable for whatever decisions are in that deal until after the general election.

I mean, that is really troubling. You know, colleagues, when you think about that, that the government of Alberta is going out of their way – out of their way – using procedural motions that they very rarely use, dodging the issue, refusing to speak about the issue, to keep an issue associated with our election a secret till after the general election even though they admitted that this is something that should not be kept secret, why? What possible reason could the government of Alberta, the NDP, have for going out of their way to keep this a secret, for not wanting to be held accountable for whatever decision they made until after the general election? What possible reason could there be for that?

Mr. Strankman: We should hear from a government member.

Mr. Nixon: We should hear from the government. We won’t. We won’t. I mean, I don’t want to presume, but if the pattern continues, I suspect we will not hear from a government member.

If they rise on it, Madam Chair, they won't talk about this issue. They'll talk about other issues. They'll bring up fearmongering issues, and they'll bring up all that type of stuff, but they will not talk about the secret deal that this legislation still will put off till after the general election, a deal that is associated with the general election. Why would you want to know about that deal after the general election? It seems to me that the public deserves and would want to know about that before the general election. Now, if the government is willing to allow that deal to be known by the public after the general election and not before the general election, then one again has to ask themselves: why? Why? Why?

I will close with this, Madam Chair. This government wants to continue to be secretive, wants to continue to avoid being accountable to Albertans, wants to continue to try to stack the deck in the election system and to not be clear about contracts and deals that they're making that are associated with the election system.

The Chair: Any other hon. member wishing to speak? Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I just wanted to add a few things here. We're talking about the Election Commissioner and how the government has had to bring in legislation, Bill 18, to make the Election Commissioner's salary public, of course. The job of the Election Commissioner, of course, is to make sure that elections are fair, to make sure that political parties and politicians are held accountable, and to bring transparency to the elections process. So I think it's rather alarming to think that the government, though now they've admitted that they've made a mistake and that they have to bring this into legislation, still won't allow for the details of this agreement with this person to be brought into the sunshine or for the salary to be brought into the sunshine before the next election.

Now, obviously, you know, when you talk about the Election Commissioner, one of the most important jobs, I would presume, of the Election Commissioner would be during an election and the process during the election, with complaints and different things like that to deal with. When we have somebody that's hired to specifically deal with that, I would think that we would want to know the details of this person's hiring and their duties, the deal with their contract, how much they're getting paid and everything. I think it's only reasonable to have those details before the next election, because after the next election it's basically too late. Albertans don't have a chance to look at what's happening and make a decision on whether they think it's right or wrong before the next election.

Of course, it's also odd that the government time allocated the debate on Motion 16. They wanted to shut down debate. They didn't want to have the discussion anymore. They didn't want us in opposition to have any more chance to speak on that. Of course, now they've realized: "Okay. We actually did make a mistake. We didn't take the amendment that the Official Opposition brought forward." They time allocated. They thought that their job was finished, so they time allocated. They wanted to shut down debate. Of course, now they've had to reopen it again because they realized they had made a mistake.

10:00

Now, I think that this government has a hard time admitting when they make a mistake and when they do anything wrong. It would be humorous if it wasn't true and so alarming. Just the other day the Member for Highwood was asking the Deputy Premier questions on a plane that was stuck. Of course, the Member for Highwood said that the plane was stuck for almost two hours or more, and the

Deputy Premier said: no, it was only 10 minutes. Then the Member for Highwood said that we actually have timed video footage of the plane and how long it was sitting there. What did the Deputy Premier do? She still swore up and down that it had only been 10 minutes.

An Hon. Member: Doubled down.

Mr. Loewen: Doubled down, tripled down.

I mean, you can't make this stuff up. This government is so obstinate that they can't admit when they make a mistake. They can't admit that they could ever be wrong. Even with timed video evidence the Deputy Premier could not admit a mistake, that she could be wrong.

You know, we've seen it actually with the Municipal Affairs minister. I mean, on Bill 10 we brought forward information that the website had differing information than the bill that was brought forward. The Municipal Affairs minister doesn't often holler in the Legislature, but he often mutters and grumbles and complains about things audibly, that we can hear on this side of the House, so we hear him muttering and grumbling about that. Of course, then on May 17 he has to get up and say this.

There is one sentence that I've been made aware of from the member that on the website does kind of give a little bit of – it's not clear, and it seems like a contradiction. I do apologize for that. It seems like it's a little bit of a mixed message.

Then he goes on to say:

So I appreciate that. There was a mistake on the website. But, again, the legislation is the number one source, so just to make sure that we always follow that.

Madam Chair, here we have the Municipal Affairs minister. You know, we bring something up. He grumbles, complains, says: that's not true; that's not right. Then, of course, he has to come in and apologize and say: no, sorry; I was wrong; there was a problem with the website. We see this issue over and over again with this government. Quite often we hear them making wild allegations about the opposition. They do this fearmongering thing that anything that we say over here has to be wrong and has to be crazy and everything, and over and over again we're proved to be correct.

Madam Chair, I think we have a situation here where the government has had to backtrack again. I just wish that they would take this one step further and make the deal with the Election Commissioner public now and the wages public now so that Albertans have an opportunity to see what's going on here. I mean, this is a person that was hired to make sure there's accountability, to make sure things are fair, to make sure things are transparent. The irony here is not lost on this side of the House, where somebody that's hired to take the dark money out of politics can't be brought onto the sunshine list until after the next election. Like I say, with Bill 18 a lot of housekeeping things have got to be done. It's good to see that the government has admitted they've made a mistake and that they actually decided: okay; we need to actually pass legislation to bring this Election Commissioner's wages onto the sunshine list. Obviously, it only makes sense that we have this information immediately, that Albertans have this information immediately. They have the details on the contract with this person. I think it's only right that that's brought out before the election because that's the only thing that could be fair and transparent and have any chance of holding the government to account on this. Obviously, I guess they feel that's not necessary.

We've seen this government over and over and over again fail on consultation with Albertans. They talk a good game, but the proof just isn't there in reality. Again, you know, like I say, I go back to the debate on Motion 16, where they said, "How could you be singling out this person? It's just not right to single out this person,"

and here we have a bill where this person is singled out specifically, and that has to be. I mean, over and over again we see these things with this government.

We need to have these things brought out in the open. We need to have fair and transparent elections. People and politicians and political parties need to be held accountable for their actions. We believe in democracy here. We believe in accountability, transparency inside and outside of election periods. I would hope that's something that we could all agree on in this Legislature. We need to have that.

Why not go all the way, Madam Chair? Why not go all the way? Why don't we just make sure that the details of this person's agreement with the government, the contract and the wages – bring them forward now. Let's do this. Let's show Albertans that we're transparent here. Let's give this an opportunity to happen. I think there's plenty of opportunity for this government to do this, and if they don't take the opportunity to do it, obviously we can only assume that there's something to hide. We argued about this almost a month ago. They steadfastly refused. They bring it forward now and realize that, yes, they need to do some changes here. Now, just admit that this needs to be done. Bring it forward. The government has the power to do this. Let's bring some transparency to this so Albertans have a chance to look at this before the next election.

I'll leave my comments at that. Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Any other questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill?

Mr. Clark: I don't have a lot to say. It's the Statutes Amendment Act, ordinarily called a miscellaneous statutes amendment act.

But here's what I want to know from our friends in the Official Opposition. If the Election Commissioner's salary was 10 grand a year, would that be okay? Would that make the Election Commissioner okay in your mind? If it was 500 grand a year, maybe we'd all be upset, but is it really about how much the Election Commissioner gets paid? This particular line in this particular, very miscellaneous statutes amendment, which is amending commas and typos and some pretty inane kind of stuff: really, here we are spending an hour or more of the Legislature's very valuable and, frankly, quite expensive time debating something that – I don't understand, frankly, why you're on and on about this unless there's some worry amongst the UCP that the Election Commissioner is going to find something untoward in the way that you conduct yourselves during an election. That's the only possible thing I can think of. The rules are what the rules are.

Now, I've been very clear that I don't agree with everything this government has done to change the election finance rules. In fact, I did some calculations the other day. It's the second-most commonly legislated topic in this place since this government has been in power, so I have some critique for the government in terms of their obsession with changing election laws. Fair enough. But can we just move on and actually get to some substantive legislation that we need to actually address, that's going to help move our province forward?

Thank you.

The Chair: Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. It's good to see at least one member who will stand up and have a conversation in regard to this legislation although the government will not. I do appreciate the Member for Calgary-Elbow participating in the debate. It's unfortunate that he seems to think that debating some sort of piece of legislation is not important. I do know that in the past he's

struggled to come to work. Maybe that's what it is. Maybe he's feeling tired and doesn't want to do his job.

As for this party we're quite content to debate every piece of legislation fully, particularly... [interjections] Again, the government wants to heckle because they continue to want to hide their secret deal. That is what this is about.

The Member for Calgary-Elbow: we know, if he actually paid attention to anything that was being said from this side, that we already said, Madam Chair, through you to him, that we have no concerns with the rules. We think the Election Commissioner can do his job. In fact, actually, we're concerned this behaviour by this government is making it harder for the Election Commissioner to be able to do his job because it's causing concerns. It's not about how much the Election Commissioner makes. No matter what, those rules need to be enforced. No matter what, there needs to be a person that's involved enforcing those rules.

What is concerning, though, is why the government would want to keep that secret. Any time that the government keeps things secret, that's concerning. That is our job as the Official Opposition, to try to hold accountable a government that continues to hold things secret, a government, again, who tells the press that a chief of staff who is under investigation has left, and it turns out that within 72 hours they give him a sweetheart deal of a contract, and they don't let the public know about it.

10:10

That's the job of the Official Opposition, something the Member for Calgary-Elbow and the Alberta Party clearly don't understand. They don't understand their role as the opposition. It's clear if you watch them. They rarely do anything to hold the government accountable. In fact, the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow spends most of his time, from what I can see, trying to make himself sound good on Twitter, which is not what Albertans want him to do.

So the question for the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow is: do you think it's appropriate for the government to continue to hide things from Alberta? Is that what we could expect from an Alberta Party government, a government that would come in and go out of their way to hide contracts from the province? Maybe they would bring in time allocation on motions like this to go out of their way to hide their secret deal. [interjection]

I see the hon. Minister of Infrastructure is heckling away on this issue. It's shameful to hide things like that from the people of Alberta.

Ms Jansen: You're shameful.

Mr. Nixon: You know, I'm not the one who has brought in time allocation, who has misled the House and then had to come back and say that it's different and then bring in a procedural amendment to try to fix my mistakes. That's that member's government. That is that member's government.

Miranda: But you are the one who'll run out of the building when we debate Bill 9.

Mr. Nixon: The hon. minister of tourism is heckling away about it but won't stand up and explain why he continues to go out of his way to help hide the secret deal from the people of Alberta. [interjection] The Minister of Municipal Affairs is heckling now, who won't stand up and talk about his own amendment that changes his entire bill, but he'll heckle in this House. It's shameful.

Now, I'm glad that the Member for Calgary-Elbow rose and spoke. It's clear what I've always thought, which is that the Alberta Party is very similar to the NDP Party and that an Alberta Party government, as has been just made clear by the House leader of the

third party, would do the same thing. It would hide secret deals from the people of Alberta. It does not want to be held accountable to the people of Alberta, and it thinks coming to the Legislature to do their job is too hard and would like us to accelerate so that they can go home. That is shameful.

The Chair: Any other questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Strankman: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. It's interesting to hear the comments from the Member for Calgary-Elbow. I think he's missed the mark even though he does have various times to interlude and make comments responsibly from the position of his party. But he's talking about the dollar values, and he seems to be focused more around the ground or the horizon directly in front of him, where he might put his foot next, and that may be forward or it may be backward or it may be – I'm sorry – where the pie enters his face.

The Chair: Hon. member, are you speaking to this legislation?

Mr. Strankman: Madam Chair, to the amendment, yes. It's regarding democracy, and that's the bigger picture here. We're talking about democracy and the fair effect of a democracy. That's what the Member for Calgary-Elbow is not recognizing, a bigger picture here. The unaccountability, the unapproachability of the government to recognize – publicly recognize – and effect the Election Commissioner's wages and such like that is unacceptable. The Member for Calgary-Elbow needs to recognize that.

The Chair: Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to address one small thing. I think I would want to ask the Member for Calgary-Elbow why he also is not asking this question. It's one thing if the Member for Calgary-Elbow has issues with the way that the opposition is bringing forward questions. That's fair. I mean, he's allowed to have that opinion. I guess the question that I would have is why he wouldn't have the same concerns we do. There is a huge difference between having an issue with discussing legislation and all that kind of stuff. That's fair. You're entitled to your opinion on that. This is not an opinion. This is a question about transparency.

I will be completely clear, Madam Chair. I have been extremely clear about my position on the Election Commissioner from the get-go, from Bill 32 right through to the amendments that are going to change the way that elections are done, especially because this person is going to be on the ground in the next election. We've asked many, many questions. We've spoken with the elections officer with him saying specifically that this particular position wasn't even needed.

When you go through the process of the fact that this position was not even needed and then on top of that, Madam Chair, it is not being disclosed to the public, that's the issue that I have with the Member for Calgary-Elbow, the fact that he wouldn't be concerned. It could be \$10,000. It could be a million dollars. It's irrelevant. That's taxpayer dollars. If there is a price that the Member for Calgary-Elbow is comfortable or not comfortable with, that is truly his opinion, but the fact that he wouldn't be asking the question as to why: that is the problem. That is the problem, and it's a question that I believe Albertans are very interested in finding out, especially because the mechanism for how this will go forward is changing. We have a new position that now will span not only this time but over the course of the next election and over the course of the contract of the elections officer. We've asked many, many

questions in this House as to why that's happening and what the mandate is and what the government is wanting to do with this.

On top of that, the lack of disclosure is a concern. It concerns me that the Member for Calgary-Elbow is not interested in that disclosure. I've heard him speak many, many other times on other disclosures that are important to him. I would question and ask why this one is not.

Thank you.

The Chair: Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah. I guess I was also kind of struck by the Member for Calgary-Elbow's comments there. I think he totally missed the point of this discussion here. This discussion is about transparency to Albertans. It has nothing to do with the dollar figure. That's irrelevant. This is all about transparency, and this is about transparency in a timely manner. He made some wild suggestions regarding the Official Opposition that are just totally untrue, but if he wants to throw around wild suggestions, obviously, he must want to hide with the government on this issue. What does he have to hide? Why doesn't he want to see transparency for Albertans?

I don't understand. The government has hidden this in this bill. You're right. The bulk of this bill is just basic things that are nothing to discuss, but of course the government has put this in this bill. They could have put it somewhere else. They could have had a bill of its own on this to take care of what they thought they had taken care of earlier, which they had a chance to take care of with our amendment but didn't. Now they've had to put this somewhere. They've tried to drop it into this bill. You know, it's got a whole bunch of other things. It covers a whole bunch of other topics and a whole bunch of other acts and everything. They put it in there to hide that.

Now, of course, we hear all the heckling and stuff like that that's been going on this morning from the other side and everything. Even the minister of tourism, who's usually pretty quiet, is heckling. I guess maybe it's because he's all alone there in the front row today. I'm not sure why, but I think it's . . .

The Chair: Hon. member, it is not appropriate in this House to be referring to the absence or presence of members. I would ask that you please do not.

Mr. Loewen: Okay. Thank you. I'll withdraw that.

But I think it's ironic to listen to the Member for Calgary-Elbow talk about how we're wasting time here. Of course, this is what we do in this Legislature: we discuss things. We debate things and everything, but he decided to take time to say that we are wasting time. Obviously, there's quite a bit of irony there.

I'll leave my comments at that. Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to this bill?

Seeing none, we're ready for the question?

[The voice vote indicated that the clauses of Bill 18 were agreed to]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:20 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For:

Aheer	Horne	Miranda
Anderson, S.	Jansen	Nielsen
Bilous	Kazim	Nixon

Carlier	Kleinstauber	Phillips
Carson	Larivee	Renaud
Clark	Littlewood	Rosendahl
Connolly	Loewen	Sabir
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Schmidt
Dach	Luff	Schreiner
Dang	Malkinson	Smith
Drever	Mason	Strankman
Fitzpatrick	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha
Goehring	McIver	Turner
Hanson	McKitrick	Yao
Hoffman		

Totals: For – 43 Against – 0

[The clauses of Bill 18 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

Bill 13 An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future

The Chair: We're currently on amendment A3. Are there any members wishing to speak to this amendment?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A3 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:37 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Loewen	Strankman
Clark	Nixon	Yao
Hanson	Smith	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Horne	McKitrick
Bilous	Jansen	Miranda
Carlier	Kazim	Nielsen
Carson	Kleinstauber	Phillips
Connolly	Larivee	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Littlewood	Rosendahl
Dach	Loyola	Sabir
Dang	Luff	Schmidt
Drever	Malkinson	Schreiner
Fitzpatrick	Mason	Sucha
Goehring	McCuaig-Boyd	Turner
Hoffman		

Totals: For – 8 Against – 34

[Motion on amendment A3 lost]

The Chair: Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to Bill 13? Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to talk, of course, about Bill 13. At its core it is another ... [interjection] Well, the

hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View says that it is another bill of this government trying to fix stuff, but in this case it's extremely alarming because it's another piece of legislation where the government is messing with our electricity system.

Madam Chair, I'm sure you've heard from many of your constituents – I know that I hear from mine on a regular basis – who are extremely disturbed that under this NDP government electricity continues to become more expensive. It's probably one of the number one things we hear about at my three constituency offices. And it's become even more alarming because the government continues to want to go down this path, appears to be ignoring many of the lessons that were learned from Ontario.

It was interesting. I was reading an interview with Ontario's Premier, a Liberal Premier of course, who's in a general election right now where things don't look very good for her. She was talking about how her greatest regret is how badly they messed up the electricity system. Of course, she was probably recognizing it because of the extreme political consequences that it looks like the Ontario Liberal Party is about to pay for that mistake and others. But it was interesting that as she's looking back at her time as Premier of our largest province, that that is, hands down, her greatest regret, how the Ontario Liberal Party handled the electricity file in that area.

As we now see, the NDP government of Alberta is continuing to go and mess in that area and seems to be completely ignoring what has happened in Ontario and the consequences to Ontario. Certainly, I know that the people of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, when we talk about this issue, are deeply concerned about the NDP government's work and the process they've taken so far, the action they've taken so far on the electricity file and the cost that it will be to consumers: fixed-income seniors, manufacturing organizations, farmers, ranchers. Electricity has a tremendous impact. It's a very important issue for our economy. The fact that the NDP continues to make it more expensive for Albertans is extremely troubling.

Bill 13 will make electricity, as I said, more expensive for consumers by transferring more risk away from generators. Making the consumer or taxpayer ultimately have to pay a larger expense for the NDP's ideology is disappointing and extremely concerning for the people that I represent. As such, our Energy critic, the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills, has done a tremendous amount of work on this file. As you know, Madam Chair, the other day he moved several reasonable amendments, attempting to address some of the issues that are wrong with this legislation. He was clear that the legislation is so significantly flawed that it's impossible to fix it all, but he was at least attempting to try to make the bill less damaging to the people of Alberta and to have less of a negative impact on their daily lives. So far the government has not listened to any of those amendments.

However, on behalf of the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills I will move another amendment. I have the appropriate copies for the pages, and we'll have a discussion about that, Madam Chair, after you give me permission to start again.

The Chair: This is amendment A4.

Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. This amendment simply ...

The Chair: Just a reminder, hon. member, that you do have to move the amendment on behalf of the hon ...

Mr. Nixon: I thought I did that.

The Chair: You may have.

Mr. Nixon: I am certainly moving it on behalf of the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills, in case I need to clarify that.

The Chair: Yes. I think you did mention that. Thank you.

Mr. Nixon: Without a doubt – I don't have a copy back yet – the issue, Madam Chair, that this amendment is attempting to deal with is in a couple of places in the bill where fair, efficient, and openly competitive language has not been accorded to the capacity market or the standard FEOC language was not used. It's trying to clean that up. The amendment itself will clean up the bill and ensure consistency throughout the bill. It also provides certainty to electricity stakeholders who do not want legal manoeuvring to allow the government or the AESO to skip out on commitments, and it helps restore trust to the bill at its core.

One of the issues that we've had is that when the NDP provincial government of Alberta came into power, they started out by actually breaking government contracts and ended up in some significant lawsuits and negotiations as a result of that. It certainly created a situation, you know, in addition to many other things that the NDP government has done, of instability for the generators but also instability for investment markets because people don't want to invest, of course, in a province that has a government that is willing to break contracts that the government already had and to sue sometimes itself, which was bizarre. The point is that the amendment helps restore trust in this bill with the people of Alberta and the people that are involved in the electricity market.

11:00

Trust, of course, is the biggest issue that this government faces. You don't have to go too far away from the Legislature and talk to too many people, but from north to south, Edmonton to Calgary to Red Deer, the number one consistent thing you hear about the NDP is that the people of Alberta don't trust them. They don't trust them because of their record on the electricity file and on other files. They have lost Albertans' trust. Certainly, the majority of Albertans have lost trust in the NDP because they often say one thing and commit and promise things to Albertans, and then very shortly afterwards it turns out that those promises don't come true.

Sometimes the government itself, to their credit, will stand up and say: hey, we got it wrong. It's sad, unfortunately, because they were warned often along the way that they were going to get it wrong. Then they attempt to fix it, but when they attempt to fix it, they continue the same habits that got them into the situation in the first place, which, of course, is that not consulting the people that are involved, only working within the bubble of the NDP world view. You know, as the Minister of Health, the Deputy Premier, once famously said in this House: we couldn't hire as many people from the province of Alberta because we couldn't find anybody that had our world view, which is why we went and hired people outside of the province. When you're consulting only with people that have that ideological bubble view, you end up in a situation where you get things wrong.

Certainly, when it comes to the electricity file, which is extremely complicated – there's no doubt that the legislation around this file is very complicated – the people of Alberta, at their core, evaluate it on a couple of things. One is: does it cost them more money? Under the NDP government it's cost them more money. That's without a doubt and something that they talk about. Second, they don't trust the government to get this important issue right because they've gotten it wrong. Then when you put inconsistent language inside the legislation and you leave it open for legal manoeuvring to allow the government or the AESO to skip out on commitments,

that just increases that lack of trust out there in the province for a government that's already lost trust.

By supporting this amendment, you make the bill more consistent, you make the language more consistent and efficient, but you also help restore trust. Again, as often is the case in this Chamber, Madam Chair, as you will know, the opposition is coming forward with a way that could actually help the government be able to get some trust back with the people of Alberta that they've lost the trust with. By supporting an amendment, a simple amendment, along these lines, that helps them do that.

Now, Madam Chair, I do have a copy of the amendment back, so I will be clear on what it says. Of course, on behalf of the Member for Calgary-Foothills I move that Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future, be amended in section 2 by (a) in subsection (4), in the proposed section 5(c.1), striking out subclause (i) and substituting the following:

- (i) that the capacity market is fair, efficient and openly competitive and is not distorted by unfair advantages of government-owned participants or any other participants, and

And (b) in subsection (14), in the proposed section 20.21(2)(b), by striking out "and" at the end of subclause (i) and adding the following after subclause (i):

- (i.1) supports the fair, efficient and openly competitive operation of the capacity market, and

I can't think of any reason why the NDP government, why any government would not want to support the fair, efficient, and openly competitive operation of the capacity market. That would certainly go a long way to restoring trust. It would go a long way to giving a clear indication that this government and the province of Alberta will support a fair and efficient and openly competitive process in the market.

By the government voting this down, if that's what they decide to do, and by the way that they have written this bill, they have essentially said that they don't support fair, efficient, and openly competitive operations of the capacity market. If that is the case, it certainly, as I said earlier, Madam Chair, causes concerns, great concerns for the market, certainly, but also for the people of Alberta that, in the end, the NDP will be messing with the electricity and that it will in the end cost them more money and they'll end up in a similar situation to what Ontario has. I think that all of us, all members of the House, would agree that the electricity rates that the people of Ontario have had to pay are significant and certainly detrimental to their economy and to their daily way of life.

You know, Kathleen Wynne, the Premier of Ontario, I thought in a very open and transparent way, interestingly enough, inside that interview that she did the other day, was very, very clear that that was the biggest mistake that her government had made, that the Liberal government had made in Ontario, and the thing that they regret the most. Sadly for them, they realized that they regretted it the most when they're in the middle of a general election that appears to be ready to wipe out their entire political party as a consequence of that. But it is even more sad for the people of Ontario, that have had to pay that consequence over and over.

Madam Chair, with this amendment the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills is trying to give an opportunity for the NDP government to avoid a similar situation, where they're doing interviews in a year's time or two years' time or whenever that opportunity would come and reflecting back and recognizing: we made the same mistake as our friends in Ontario. Learning from other jurisdictions, I think, is wise.

Of course, also, this amendment provides an opportunity for the government to show that they support a fair, efficient, open, and

competitive market. As such, I encourage all of my colleagues and all members of this Assembly to vote in support of this amendment.

The Chair: Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. It's great to have an opportunity to speak in favour of this amendment, especially the clauses that we're looking for: "fair, efficient and openly competitive." I think that finding an argument against those words is pretty tough for any party.

Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future, is just kind of – what concerns me is that up until 2015 we had a fairly secure electricity market and future here in Alberta. We had the cheapest power rates in North America, but now we seem to be going down a path that follows other jurisdictions that have made mistakes in their power purchase agreements. The capacity markets that we're entering into: you know, I did a little bit of quick research here on other jurisdictions that are following a capacity market, the United States, where they're averaging 14 to 22 U.S. cents per kilowatt hour, which translates to anywhere between 18 and 28 cents Canadian; the U.K., at 26.6 cents per kilowatt hour. [interjection] Excuse me. There are just some distractions there in the front.

Anyway, also looking at Ontario, I looked at their electricity rates and prices. They talk about things like off-peak, mid-peak, and on-peak. Is that really the direction that we want to go here as a province, where on-peak they're paying 13.2 cents per kilowatt hour? People are having to stay up after nonpeak hours to do their laundry or to have a shower. I guess that's the concern of why we would mess with a system. We had good, clean, coal-fired generation going. We're shutting that down, going to green energy and unpredictable solar and wind energy. Now we're changing to a capacity market to protect those industries. I guess that's the point.

I just think that even the government members, you know, if you look at the clauses we're trying to change – and we're trying to add in a few words: "fair, efficient and openly competitive." I don't think anyone should have a problem with that. So I would urge all MLAs and all parties to support this very important amendment to An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm here to speak on the amendment as proposed by my colleague from Calgary-Foothills and presented by my colleague from Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. This is a fair amendment, and I hope the government side truly considers it.

We found issue with this bill whereby in a few places fair, efficient, and openly competitive language was not used. Madam Chair, it is imperative in order to restore trust in this bill that proper language in accordance with the industry must be used. This type of language had not been accorded to the capacity market. To ensure the process complies with industry regulations, fair, efficient, and openly competitive language is imperative. This amendment would provide certainty to stakeholders in the electricity industry, who do not want legal manoeuvring which would allow the government or the AESO, the Alberta Electric System Operator, to skip out on commitments. This amendment is crucial in order to restore trust in this bill.

11:10

Madam Chair, it's about the messaging; it is about the language used. If we might look at how such nuances can affect us, we need only look at the purchase of the pipeline by our federal Liberal government. They didn't have to do that, but they absolutely gave

no confidence to industry that they would be able to get this pipeline built without dealing with cost overruns due to illegal protesting and other ways of impairing the project by the B.C. government. It's about confidence.

Madam Chair, when this government decided to do a royalty review instead of simply reading the other two royalty reviews that had happened in the five years prior – and it took them eight months to reconsider that: oh; wait a minute; it was good; we need the revenues. During those eight months, during that time, every international company looked at an escape plan, and most of them followed through with that. We lost some fantastic, fantastic investors, international investors, in our industry. I hope that when the members from across the way go up north to Fort McMurray-Conklin and door-knock, they ask them questions about this. I can guarantee you that they will get some very frustrated responses because the international companies, truth be told, were of very high calibre, very good quality. You know, one side claims to want to ensure employee rights and whatnot. The internationals were the pinnacle of providing those necessary tributes that labour organizations want to see and that people in general want to see. They were leaders in it. There's a certain irony in chasing those international companies away.

You know, this piece of legislation is an example of our government trying to recover after forcing through bills that we warned them would have negative implications on our economy, and they did not listen then. The end result was that our electricity market was put into disarray. There was volatility and unpredictability.

Now, the virtue of this bill, I suppose, is that it's this government's way of acknowledging that the opposition was correct and that they were wrong. It is good that they are taking ownership. Certainly, the passing of bills 27 and 34 from last session fundamentally changed the way our electricity market operated. Again, instability, unpredictability. In an industry where they have to invest millions and billions of dollars in their production, in their facilities, you know, they need strong words to ensure that they can remain competitive.

Right now electricity prices are more expensive for all Albertans. Quite honestly, there are not too many Albertans that have faith in this government, if you read the polls, that they can fix such things. You know, our general public looks at provinces like Ontario, and they see the debacle that occurred over there, and they see our government following the lead of the Wynne government. They see that association and that it hurts us all.

Closing six coal-fired plants early, which cost the taxpayer \$1.3 billion, you know, was reckless and thoughtless. These were new facilities. They had long lifespans. They were creating energy in a reasonably efficient way. It's disappointing that they'd want to change them so dramatically.

The policies that this government has put up have driven up costs for all Albertans, whether it's the taxes on our bills, at the pumps, and pretty much everywhere else. Life has been more expensive for Albertans. Period. Thank you, government. Thank you for that. That's sarcasm if you haven't figured that out yet.

In closing, Madam Chair, this amendment would provide certainty to stakeholders in the electricity industry, who do not want the legal manoeuvring which would allow the Alberta Electric System Operator to skip out on commitments. This is a good amendment. This amendment is crucial in order to restore trust in this bill. So I urge all members of this House to vote in favour of this amendment and consider what this amendment is about. I see disinterest, but deep underneath perhaps they recognize that this is a fair amendment, because it is about building confidence in an industry that this government has absolutely ripped apart.

Again, Madam Chair, I plead with the government side to consider this amendment. Thank you very much.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Madam Chair. Now, I think this is a really fascinating amendment from the members opposite, from the opposition here. I just want to address the meat of the amendment, what meat there is anyways. I want to just point out that if we look at what it asks to do in section 2(a), all the words that they're using are actually already in the bill. They've actually just reordered those words. We're sitting here debating, basically, the grammar and the order in which we should have this bill, and I think that's sort of superfluous and maybe something that we don't necessarily have to look at in here. It changes the order of the words, and I don't know how that's a valuable use of the time in this Assembly.

The act clearly brings the capacity market under fair, efficient, and openly competitive requirements, or FEOC, and that's clear throughout the act. There's no need for this amendment. The government is committed to FEOC, and the bill reflects that. It's actually written into the bill throughout, in multiple places. So I'd urge all members: let's just get on with it. We'll vote this down, so we can continue doing the good work that Albertans expect us to do.

Thank you.

The Chair: Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I rise to speak in favour of this amendment. You know, the FEOC principle of fair, efficient, and openly competitive is, obviously, a very important principle in the electricity market. It's troubling to me how it is that we managed to get ourselves to this point, where here we are, looking at Bill 13, which has to do with creating a capacity market and some other aspects. I appreciate that the government has amended out some of the asset retirement pieces. I know there was some concern from stakeholders and industry, so I appreciate them having done that. But if this amendment can improve what is a flawed concept in the first place, then I certainly would happily support this amendment.

I'm wondering and asking myself: well, how is it that we got here in the first place? It started off with a government that knew or ought to have known that changes they were making to the specified gas emitters regulation were going to trigger an existing contract provision in power purchase arrangements. That is something that you know or ought to have known. From that mistake, with every single opportunity they had to fix it, instead of fixing it, they doubled down on that decision. Unfortunately, that is because, I believe, this government went into this whole question with a political lens, an ideological lens, and said, you know: we believe certain things to be true, and there's no evidence on earth that's going to change our mind on what we think is true. And every single time information, evidence, data was presented to them that something was not as they believed it to be, it didn't matter. Off they went just hell-bent for leather, as they say.

11:20

So here we are. We continue down this uncertain path of this capacity market. It's not to say that capacity markets don't exist in other places. It's not to say that they haven't worked in other places. The question is: will they work in Alberta? The bigger question is: what problem does it seek to solve? The market was working. We had a situation in Alberta with the lowest electricity prices in North America, or certainly among them, and we also had a situation where coal-fired power producers were very much willing to work

with the government to ramp down that production, to find ways of ramping up renewable energy.

So to say that the only possible way of bringing renewables on and ramping down coal-fired power in Alberta was the path that this government has chosen to put us on, the path that's going to cost at least \$2 billion in taxpayer dollars – at least; probably more – is false. It is false that that is the only possible way of achieving that outcome. There were many, many other, better ways of doing it, ways that would not have created chaos in the regulatory piece of the electricity system: in the MSA and the AUC and the Balancing Pool and the AESO.

That whole ecosystem has been turned upside down by the changes that this government has brought in, by the hasty and ill-thought-out changes this government has brought in. It's created a leadership vacuum within those organizations. It's created infighting within those organizations. It's created lawsuits between power producers and the provincial government, lawsuits this government seems to be adept at losing, which cost millions of taxpayer dollars to Albertans, which caused the province to have to sign deals that perhaps are not necessarily in the best interest of Albertans or of taxpayers. As usual in these situations the only ones who benefit, the only ones who are enriched are the lawyers, and that does Albertans no good at all. I can assure you that there are many lawyers on the power producers side, on the energy companies side who'd much rather be doing other things than having to fight the government.

It really is a shame, because it didn't have to be this way. There were many, many other options this government could have chosen. There were options that were presented along the way that could have prevented all of this cost, \$2 billion. Two billion dollars. How many ring roads is \$2 billion? How many nurses? How many cancer centres? How many schools? How much debt repayment? That's a shocking amount of money.

I say without hesitation today, here and now, on the record that this is the single biggest scandal that this government has faced. It's unfortunate that it is such a complex, complicated area, that it is very difficult to make it understood to Albertans. It's very easy, frankly, for the government to throw around things like: "No, no. Enron clause. You see, it was Enron's fault." That simply isn't true. It is demonstrably untrue that there was some backroom deal, but politics dictated that they were able to use that to spin. But make no mistake. This whole file is by far the single greatest scandal that has befallen this government.

When the Alberta Party is in control, in a little less than a year's time, I can assure you that this is one area where we're going to do our utmost to unring the bell, to undo a lot of the damage that this government has done.

Speaking specifically to the amendment, to the degree to which it's possible that this amendment can improve a situation that is – I was going to say: an unfortunate situation. It's not even unfortunate; it's far worse than unfortunate. It's tragic. It doesn't need to be this way.

Again, to be very clear, the Alberta Party stands very much in favour of bringing on more renewable electricity, in diversifying our grid, in local options, in local microgeneration. You know, the Minister of Municipal Affairs knows how strongly I feel in favour of Bill 10. I think it's a good piece of legislation. There are options for bringing on more renewable electricity and ramping down coal-fired power to address the carbon emissions that come from coal-fired electricity, the other pollution that comes from coal-fired electricity. I think it's important that we move beyond coal-fired power in this province. I'm absolutely all in. Absolutely all in. Let's do that. But let's do it in a way that doesn't cost taxpayers \$2 billion, that doesn't waste \$2 billion. Let's find a way to ramp down coal-

fired power, to ramp up renewable power, and let's do it in a steady and responsible way.

Unfortunately, this government has picked a very ideological path. I hope the House recognizes that I don't often accuse the government of gross ideological decision-making. That's not something I take lightly. But in this case the evidence tells us that that's exactly what has happened. There have been many, many opportunities for this government to take facts that have been presented to them and make a different decision, that would have the same or better outcomes. Unfortunately, they went in with a preconceived idea of what needed to happen based on incorrect, inaccurate information that was shaped entirely by the way they saw the world. It's unfortunate because that's not the way government ought to operate. There were so many other options, so many better options.

So if this amendment can take a tiny step towards improving that situation, I'm all in and will be supporting the amendment. Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to speak to this amendment put forward by my very good friend from Calgary-Foothills. There's so much that I want to say, but I need to address something, first and foremost, and that is in regard to the comments of the Member for Edmonton-South West. I just want to make sure and just be clear here that I understood this: that we're to get on with it, that the language that is in this amendment is superfluous and doesn't add value, isn't useful, and that it's fascinating, and that we're just changing grammar.

I'd like to point out a couple of things that are imperative in this discussion. Maybe – I don't know – I look at this slightly differently than the member, but “fair” and “efficient” are extremely, extremely directive words. Actually, the language, to be clear for the member, in the bill actually states that the capacity market is to have reliable and reasonable cost to consumers. In the legal department, just to be clear, it does not mean the same thing. Not even close. In fact, to go a little bit further, it says within the act that to make the FEOC not applicable to renewables places wind and potentially future renewable electricity program projects at risk. So for those of us who actually really like renewables and would like to see the market decide and like to see them come online, this is a completely unfair mechanism that has been put in this legislation by this government literally word for word.

This is not a grammatical change. This is not a language change. This is about actual transparency and fairness, Madam Chair, in this piece of legislation. This amendment actually could save the government a whole lot of trouble and would provide some trust in a bill that was created as a result of the debacle on the PPAs in the first place. If you don't care about proper legal language, if that's the issue here, fine. I'm so grateful that I am here today to see that the Member for Edmonton-South West states that this is superfluous. This is legal language, actually. There is a massive difference. With the extraordinary powers of the Minister of Energy and her ability to bring these pieces on without any debate in this House, I find it absolutely amazing and “fascinating,” to use his word, that that would be the issue here, that this is not important.

Well, I was just looking at Alberta's total capacity right now. We're at 16,390 megawatts right now. Guess how much of that is wind? Anybody? It's 1.8 per cent. One point eight per cent. This is the total capacity – this is coal; this is natural gas; it's everything – 1.8 per cent. Guess what? Any time that drops, guess who's on the hook for that? The taxpayer. To the member: under the new legislation that comes forth – I'm excited to see what his

constituents say to him on August 1 when this comes to be. August 1 isn't that far away. I'm interested to see what his constituents say when the price of their electricity starts to spike. I'm interested to find out.

I asked the Minister of Energy in question period the other day about the industrial users in the farming areas. She answered with respect to residential. That's not what I was asking. I was actually asking about industrial capacity. There is no ability for industrial users to have any part of this capacity market. In fact, it's up to them to make sure that they go and fix their rates really quickly. Enmax is calling them, actually, which is what the government should be doing, to tell them that they should probably fix their rates really soon because they're going to spike. They don't get to fall under this smoke and mirror 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour.

11:30

Let's go to a couple of other things. If we look at the compensation numbers, \$74,310,000 of the carbon tax has been set aside in order to compensate or subsidize for anything that happens with respect to electricity prices once they're capped at 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour, until 2021, which isn't part of Bill 13. But if that retail rate exceeds that amount, the government has to use the carbon tax to subsidize that, that \$74 million. I mean, we've said this before: why go after the retail market? That was not the part of this that needed help. There are lots and lots of pieces of the electricity market that could have certainly used some legislation. This was not one of them.

I mean, Bill 13 had to happen. The minute that the coal phase-out happened, the grid became unstable. Bill 13 had to happen, the capacity market had to happen in order to stabilize the grid. There was no other choice after Bill 27 was passed.

One thing I'd love to be able to find out from the government: why are you risking your own program? Madam Chair, they're risking their own program. The AESO themselves had showed that the renewable electricity program will decrease revenue needed for all generators to recoup their investment and earn a profit, thus deterring investment. That is from the AESO.

Again to the Member for Edmonton-South West: how can this be an issue of superfluous language? How is that possible? This isn't about language or grammar. This is legal language that holds the government accountable for their transparency to Albertans in a market that they have completely altered, Madam Chair. How is that possible? Honestly, I'm so glad that it's on the record that this amendment is not useful, that it lacks value, that we should just get on with it. Interesting. That is fascinating. Like I said, I just have so much to say. I just don't even know where to start sometimes.

I wanted to talk, too, about the piece of this where it says, in the capacity market, that Bill 13 is not about renewables per se; it's about financing coal-to-gas conversions, new natural gas generation, combined-cycle, and backup for renewables. So in that, that piece of information right there, is the fix that had to happen as a result of Bill 27. That's what Bill 13 does.

In amongst that, with all of that complexity and all of those variations that are coming online right now, comes the need to make sure that that is transparently transferred to all Albertans. Right now on your bill, you might not be happy with what you're paying, but you know exactly what it is. You know your rate rider, you know what you're paying in taxes, you know what you're paying to providers, all of those different things, on the 120 kilowatt hours per year that the average family uses. We might not be particularly happy about what we're paying, but we know – we know – every single piece of how that works out.

Under that, we will not. This is a massive boondoggle. Like I said, if you – on August 1, with the regulations coming in by the

end of 2018, it's going to be interesting to see how Albertans react to the cost of living in this province under this government in this particular market that they've put forward. We're already getting feedback on this side.

Like I had said to the minister earlier this week in question period: what about the industrial farmers? What about them? There is nothing for them in this electricity bill anywhere to protect them from spiking costs in their industries. They're already having to pay extra with the carbon tax. They have to feed cattle. They have to bring water. There's so much that's involved with making sure that our farmers, that feed us, are able to do those things, and they're already paying extra. On top of that, they're not protected in this bill or any other bill for what they pay in the industrial market.

On top of that, the government hasn't even had the foresight to make sure that they reach out to our farming communities and say to them: "You know what? We're going to be on an upswing, this is going to be all over the place. We're going to be fluctuating. You should get into a fixed market." The minister had mentioned something about there being some educational pieces going out. Really? Well, the farmer who I spoke to last week had no clue. Enmax called him. Enmax called him.

I'd love for you to take a poll in this House, especially on this side with our farming communities, to find out how many of them have had a letter from the government saying: "Uh-oh. We should probably take care of this. You should probably get on a fixed rate." In fact, I believe I've heard from the government many times that part of the issue is that people were confused by fixed rates and floating rates, that it was difficult, and that the government was going to try to make it easy for them – that's interesting; by charging them more, of course – but then on top of that you've left out a major portion of our population, our wonderful farmers, who are stuck with industrial prices on electricity. That's just one group of people. There are many, many other industries. I'm just talking about the farmers because that was one person that I spoke to.

It opens up an entire other group of people that are impacted by fluctuating electricity prices, and obviously the government has no clue to care about these people or at least to educate them on how to make sure that they're saving money and can efficiently go forward with their companies. Already every single business in this province will become less competitive simply because of more money that they're having to pay in carbon taxes and other things in order to maintain and be able to sustain their businesses. Adding in this piece, of not being part of some sort of capacity market to be protected like supposedly they're protecting the rest of Albertans, is thoughtless to say the least.

I mean, I will repeat this again. The AESO modelling showed that the renewable electricity program will decrease revenue needed for all generators to recoup investment and to earn a profit, thus deterring investment. Bill 13 had to come to fruition in order to separate the capacity market and electricity, and in doing so, has blatantly attacked industry, straight up. In doing so, in separating that, the smoke and mirrors of protecting everyday Albertans under 6.8 cents will blow up in the industry. There is no protection for industry, the fabric of this province, especially farmers.

This amendment gives an opportunity for the government to look inwardly and say: did we use the right language? Is this of value? Is this important? Do we force this through at a massive speed, something that is going to happen in under two years, that should have taken at least three to six years for the industry to be able to prepare for it?

Are we actually going to sit here and talk about the fact that language is not important? Really? How disappointing. How disappointing. Fair and efficient: I would think that that should be

at the very top of the list of things that would be necessary for this government to prove to Albertans that this is the right thing to do.

You know, Albertans are totally into renewable energy. They love the idea. Absolutely. But there is a mechanism to be able to inspire people, to be able to bring these things online. One of those things is making sure that the market is able to decide. This is a false market. It's being subsidized, and it's being subsidized in every way possible. At 1.8 per cent of capacity for wind, wind gets paid out at one hundred per cent by the taxpayer regardless of whether it's producing or not. How is that fair to the taxpayer and the ratepayer in any capacity?

Madam Chair, maybe that's why the words "fair and efficient" were removed from this legislation specifically with regard to renewables. Maybe that's why. If you use the words "reliable and reasonable," I'm not quite sure what that means, reliable and reasonable cost to consumers. Fair and efficient: very clear.

11:40

Interestingly enough, the capacity market is not necessarily being applied in tandem. So how is it that we reconcile this for Albertans? To echo the language from the Member for Calgary-Elbow, this is the biggest mistake that this government has made. On top of that, they just keep doubling down on their decisions and keep coming up with new legislation to try and fix the mistakes of all of the other legislation that came before.

It's interesting. When you're out and about and you're chatting with people, I don't think that many people talked about PPAs before, power purchase agreements. It kind of seems boring. It is a major topic of conversation with about probably 60 to 70 per cent of the people that I meet with. I'm not kidding. Maybe it's because I talk about it all the time. I find this, for lack of a better word, to use the language of the Member for Edmonton-South West, fascinating. I find this absolutely fascinating, to be able to discuss with everyday Albertans what is happening in this House with regard to electricity. Fascinating.

I find it interesting when we sit down and we talk about and crunch the numbers of what it looks like right now and what it could look like and what's possible. The most interesting piece of this is that we don't really know how much this is going to cost us. We know about the \$2 billion in stranded assets, we know about the payments to the Balancing Pool in order to keep them running, we know about some of the generators that are coming online with wind and solar, but we have no idea how much this is actually going to cost taxpayers.

To bring up, we were talking about Ontario a little earlier. Do we really want to get to the point of heat or eat? Right? Is that what this government wants? I doubt that. I don't think that that's the intention. But the taxpayer, Madam Chair, is going to be on the hook for millions, possibly billions of dollars. Is the government proud of subsidizing electricity in a province that was – we were debt free with our utilities. Debt free. Is that something that this government is proud of? I mean, the timeline for this is just crazy.

I don't know. Again, I remember when we were going through Bill 27, and the words "accountability" and, I think it was, "transparency" were removed from the legislation. That was a real eye-opener as a new MLA at that time. You know, you spend a lot of time as an everyday Albertan hoping and praying that that's what your government does for you, and then you see language like that removed from legislation. Now we're seeing "fair and efficient" removed, and supposedly it's just useless language. I can hardly wait to tell my constituents that the government thinks that the words "fair and efficient" are useless language, that the Member for Edmonton-South West thinks that it is useless language, it has no value, and we should just get on with it. I can't wait.

Did you know that zero power is produced at the solar place in Brooks. Zero power is produced 64 per cent of the time. Zero power is produced 64 per cent of the time. I don't know. I would call that unstable, maybe, but that's obviously not important for fairness and efficiency. That can be covered under reliable and reasonable. I don't know how zero power produced 64 per cent of the time can be – is that reliable or reasonable? And that's the language that this falls under. Isn't that interesting? How is that possible?

Mr. Strankman: It stretches the imagination.

Mrs. Aheer: It does stretch the imagination.

Then to not have the FEOC language applicable to renewables? The government, they're putting their own program at risk to fail. You're setting up Albertans to fail. This amendment puts trust back into this whole thing so that the minister can go to the people and say: "Yeah. We're fair, we're efficient, and we're openly competitive. Yes. I'm going to do that." That would be an amazing day to hear the minister stand up and say that, but that's not her language.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A4? Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Yeah, I'd like to speak to this amendment. I enjoyed the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View's comments here on the language. I mean, this government continues to champion itself as being fair and open and transparent and all these different things. But time and time again we see the opposite happening, and when we provide them an opportunity to be more fair and efficient and transparent, then they – I don't know – don't take advantage of those opportunities anyways.

That leads us to situations where we're sitting here again trying to make an amendment to add in a phrase. Listen to this phrase: "that the capacity market is fair, efficient and openly competitive and is not distorted by unfair advantages of government-owned participants or any other participants." Now, Madam Chair, I just can't understand what anybody could find wrong with the phrase "that the capacity market is fair, efficient and openly competitive and is not distorted by unfair advantages of government-owned participants or any other participants." It just doesn't stand to reason why this government would not accept an amendment that, clearly, just makes things better, more open, more transparent, better for Albertans. These are very simple things.

I mean, this government has obviously totally messed up this electricity market with all the manipulating they've done, with all the bills they've passed to change the system around. They pass one bill, and then they pass two or three more bills to fix the damage from the first bill. They're continually doing patchwork to fix the problems that they've created. Madam Chair, that's exactly it. They've created these problems. Were there some changes needed? For sure. There are always changes needed. There are always ways to make things a little better. But when you take something and you come up with ideological ideas that substantially change things and that drive the cost of electricity up and make the system less stable, then you spend more time and energy trying to solve the problems that you've created yourself.

Madam Chair, we sit here again with an amendment that is very simple, that's very straightforward, that's very acceptable. I can't imagine anybody, any Albertan, looking at this and suggesting that there's anything wrong with an amendment like this. I really just can't see it. But I'm going to presume that the government is going

to vote against this, I guess, because it wasn't their idea. I'm not sure why. It's very simple: fair, efficient, and openly competitive.

Now, we've heard today here, you know, what's happened in Ontario and how the cost of electricity under the Liberal government there has skyrocketed and how much trouble it's caused and how much damage it's caused to the Ontario economy. Recently we've heard that even the Liberal Premier has said that one of her greatest regrets in her time in power was the problem that she created with electricity in Ontario, with the cost and everything being driven up so high. There's somebody that's had a chance to reflect on the damages, created by government, to the electricity market, to an economy and that now regrets it.

But we sit here in this Legislature, and this government keeps going down the same road. Now, they say: well, we're totally different here. I mean, they say: okay; we're going to have a competitive market, so it's totally different than Ontario. But, Madam Chair, that's not completely true. We've seen this government go through the same things that the Ontario government has gone through.

11:50

Again we have an amendment here where we're suggesting that the phrase "openly competitive" be in this bill. Openly competitive. This government claims that this is a competitive process, the things that they're doing with electricity here, so we're giving them an opportunity to put it in writing, put it right in the bill, and they're going to vote this down. Madam Chair, it doesn't make sense that we're where we're at right now, discussing something that's so simple.

The second part of this amendment is the phrase: "supports the fair, efficient and openly competitive operation of the capacity market." Madam Chair, another opportunity here: "fair, efficient, and openly competitive operation of the capacity market."

Again, we sit here in this Legislature. We talk all the time. I mean, the government claims that they're the most transparent government ever, but over and over again we see this government hiding things and we see this government refusing to be transparent. We give them opportunities. We talk about Government Motion 16, where we gave them the opportunity to be transparent with the Election Commissioner, and what do they do? They argue about it, they stop the debate, and then they vote it down. Here we are almost a month later, and what are they doing? Well, they're admitting that they have to do something different to bring about some transparency. But when we provide them an opportunity to take it one step farther, what do they do? They don't accept it. Madam Chair, I mean, we're seeing this over and over again.

This amendment is a great amendment. We need to be able to have these things. This capacity market needs to be fair, efficient, and openly competitive. Again, this government has brought so many changes to the electricity market, changing things substantially in just about every part of the electricity market with multiple bills that they've brought before this Legislature, and what do we have? We're sitting here again. We're, you know, discussing more electricity bills where this government is continuing to try to fix the mistakes that they made in the past.

We know that prices are going up because of this government, how they've handled the electricity market. They put a cap on electricity rates that was double the existing rates. Obviously, they had to put the caps in because they knew the prices were going up because of what they'd done, so they had to put a cap in. Of course, what happens with a cap? Well, somebody has got to pay for that, Madam Chair. The electricity companies just don't quit charging at a certain rate and then lose money and go bankrupt. Somebody has to pay for that. Obviously, there's only one person to pay for

electricity in Alberta, and that's Albertans. There's only one taxpayer, and that's Albertans. It doesn't matter if the electricity bill is where you pay it or the tax bill is where you pay it; it's still the same person paying for that electricity. When you drive the prices up, the same person pays, whether it's subsidized from a tax end or it's paid through the electricity bill.

Now, another thing this government has done is that, you know, they've tried to do the same thing, I guess – I mentioned before this morning that they tried driving the round peg into the square hole, and they just keep pounding away at it to see if they can get it to fit. Well, Madam Chair, it's not going to fit. You can't force these things to happen. There are ways to encourage people to do renewables and everything, but you can't force it. To listen to this government, you'd think that we'd never had wind power in Alberta. You'd think that nobody ever had a solar panel. I have solar panels. The Member for Chestermere-Rocky View has solar panels.

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

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Dr. Turner: Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 18. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 13. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report? Say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Any opposed? So ordered.

Cortes-Vargas: Seeing the progress that we've had this morning, I move to adjourn the House and come back at 1:30.

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

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, May 31, 2018

Day 36

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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

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Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (UCP)
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Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (NDP)
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New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 25 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent Conservative: 1 Vacant: 2

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, May 31, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Please be seated.

Statements by the Speaker

Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms' Retirement

The Speaker: I have a couple of announcements I would like to make before we commence our usual business today. I would request that the Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms please join me up here at the dais, if you might.

As many of you are probably already aware, one of our Assistant Sergeants-at-Arms, Gareth Scott, will be retiring following the end of this session, and he's hoping that might be very soon. Prior to his service with the Assembly, Gareth served for 25 years with the Edmonton Police Service after emigrating from London, England, in 1985. While serving in the Edmonton Police Service, he worked in a number of areas, including the patrol/response division, as a school resource officer at Bonnie Doon high, as well as serving with the tactical team from 2001 to 2007, where he specialized in executive protection of notable individuals, including three Prime Ministers and Her Majesty the Queen during her visit in 2005.

Following his retirement from the EPS, Gareth joined the Legislative Assembly security service in March 2013 and was appointed Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms in August 2016. Gareth's tireless efforts and dedication to the Assembly have been evident to all, and he as well as his colourful sense of humour will be missed.

I will personally look back fondly on the three outreach trips on which he accompanied me throughout the province as the protector of our Mace. I will particularly remember – and I know that it was with him as well – that our Mace was smudged. It was quite an event for the two of us.

Following the end of session, Gareth and his wife, Heike, are off to Qualicum Beach on Vancouver Island to start enjoying a new phase of their life. I want the members to know that I have advised him that he should consider getting a B.C. licence plate before he departs.

On behalf of all members of this Assembly and all of the Legislative Assembly Office staff I would like to express my appreciation for your committed service to this House and wish you all the best in your retirement.

I would also now invite our Deputy Speaker to present Gareth with a small token of our appreciation. [Standing ovation]

Flag of Alberta 50th Anniversary

The Speaker: Hon. members, I do also have another announcement I'd like to say today. I want to take this opportunity to make a statement to recognize that tomorrow, June 1, will be the 50th anniversary of the provincial flag of Alberta, which was adopted by this Legislature in 1968. After much debate about whether Alberta should have its own flag in the years leading up to Canada's centennial, a banner was commissioned in 1967.

The following year the flag act was passed by the Alberta Legislature, making the banner our province's official flag, which according to the legislation may be used by citizens of the province and others in a manner befitting its dignity and importance, but no other banner or flag that includes the Alberta arms may be assumed or used.

The Alberta flag shows the provincial shield of Alberta on a blue background. The shield features azure in a range of snow-capped mountains with green hills, prairie, and a wheat field in front, capturing – and I know you'll all agree with me on this – the natural beauty of our province with one of our provincial symbols.

I think they did a pretty good job. You will find on your desks a lapel pin to commemorate this occasion.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

Mr. Piquette: Thank you. M. le Président, c'est avec fierté que je me lève à la Chambre aujourd'hui pour introduire immersion grade 6 students from beautiful Landing Trail intermediate school. Les étudiants sont accompagnés par leurs enseignantes, Mme Jennifer Jones et Mme Janet Kamelchuk, ainsi que par leur chaperon, Mme Dawn Safar. I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my distinct pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a remarkable group of grade 6 students from the town of Vauxhall, which resides in the southeast corner of the Little Bow riding. I had the privilege of meeting with this impressive group of young minds, their teacher, and the chaperones that accompanied the group while we were getting our picture taken out on the steps that lead to the Chamber. They completed the mock Legislature this morning, and two gentlemen got to wear the chapeau, or hat, that you generally wear into the Assembly. I'm not sure what you call it, sir. I'm sorry about that.

They're looking forward to watching part of our question period today, and then they're on their way back home. They are behind me in the members' gallery. As I say your name, I ask that you would please rise, and please forgive my pronunciations in advance: Mrs. Leslie Wolowidnyk-Vogel, teacher; Mr. Dale Cummings, the principal; Mr. Matt Hawke, teacher; along with chaperones Mr. Kerby Redekop, Mrs. Lori Van Hal, Mrs. Annie Klassen, Dr. Sara Klassen, Mrs. Betty Wall, Mrs. Eva Bergen, Mr. Daniel Loewen, Mr. Curtis Cawley, Mr. Jaarno van der Wielen, and Mrs. Emmie Rijkens. I ask that the class now please rise as well and that you all receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I believe I have two school groups here today. The first is from Edmonton-Glenora – actually, my apologies; a couple of sheets here. They're from Aurora charter school, which is also in Edmonton-Glenora. Part of their class was here yesterday, and the remainder is here today. This is a group of smart, hard-working students who taught me a little bit about the solar panels on the roof of their school when I was there for a visit last year. They're accompanied by their teacher, Mr. Duncan Charlton, and chaperones Mrs. Senait and Mrs. Saba. I ask that they along with the students please rise and receive the warm welcome of our Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Was there a second introduction? No.

The hon. Member for Peace River.

Ms Jabbour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my great pleasure to introduce today the second half of my group from my constituency from Ridgeview central school in La Crête. I had the honour of spending some time with both of these groups this week, and I can share with the Assembly that these kids are brilliant. They also have wonderful teachers, amazingly supportive parents, and a really strong community, so I know that together these kids are going to do some fabulous things in the future. I'm going to first of all introduce their teacher, Mr. Fred Kirby, and the parent chaperones who've come along: Mr. Ernie Wall, Mr. Herman Doerksen, Mr. Glenn Peters, Mr. George Neustaeter, Mrs. Katherine Martens, Mrs. Vanessa Wiebe, Mrs. Barb Martens, and Mr. Jake Janzen. I'd like them all to rise and please receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

1:40

The Speaker: Welcome.

I'm told, hon. members, that we do have a number of introductions today, so let us all be conscious of the time.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For several years the Legislative Assembly has supported the Edmonton Regional Heritage Fair, which provides an opportunity for students in Edmonton and the surrounding area to research and present projects celebrating Canada's heritage. The Legislative Assembly Office recognizes one outstanding presentation that significantly relates to history, politics, or governance. It is my pleasure to introduce this year's award winners: Raqiya Kulmie, Yasmin Irobe, and Hayat Ali, grade 7 students at Londonderry junior high school. Their presentation, entitled Black Female Freedom Fighters, was well researched and delivered in a clear and captivating manner. While Hayat is not able to join them today, Raqiya and Yasmin join us with their teacher, Colleen Fraser; their mothers, Keyf Farah and Nadifa Omar; and Yasmin's older sister, Asha. They are seated in your gallery, and I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I do have three introductions today. It's my pleasure first to rise and introduce to you and through you a number of friends and leaders from Alberta's business and industry community. Tomorrow, June 1, new occupational health and safety regulations come into effect, and on Monday these guests stood with me as leaders to show how together we can make sure all of Alberta's workplaces are safe for all. Thank you to my guests for coming today, sharing your story with us and the media, and leading by example. I'd ask you to please rise as I say your name: the project manager for Key-May, Tara Chahl; the safety manager for Key-May, Jeff Prodahl; the owner of the Empress Ale House, Sue Kiernan; and the Empress manager, Thea Bowering. I'd like to now give you the warm welcome of the Assembly. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, it is also my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House members of the Public Works Association, Alberta chapter. Last week I met with Patty Podoborozny here in the Legislature to declare May 20 to 26 National Public Works Week. This declaration recognizes the important work of the APWA. Thank you to the APWA for all you do, and congratulations on your well-deserved declaration. Please stand as I say your name to receive the warm welcome of the House: President Peter McDowell, Past-president Patty Podoborozny,

Executive Director Jeannette Austin, and directors Mike Haanen, Joe Guido, and Risha Rushton.

Mr. Speaker, finally, it is my honour to introduce to you and through you to the rest of the members of the Assembly Maya Azocar, who attends kindergarten at John Paul I in the fabulous constituency of Edmonton-Mill Woods. Maya likes cats, her favourite superhero is Wonder Woman, she loves Rachel Notley, and she told me her favourite word is "feminist." I ask that she please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the entire Assembly Mr. Umang Taneja, a teacher from India who is visiting our fine province. Being from India, he's visiting Alberta and connecting with the local Indian Canadian community. Accompanying him today is my good friend Mr. Jarnail Basota, anchor of *Focus Punjabi* on OMNI Television as well as a host of Radio South Asia. Also joining Mr. Basota are local community members Navjeen Kaberwal, Akash Sharma, Kanwaljeet Dhillon, and another very good friend of mine, Jagdish Nischal. I ask that they all rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Nielsen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. With your indulgence I have two introductions today. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Mr. Thomas Greenlaw, operations warrant officer with the 3rd Canadian Division Training Centre in Edmonton. Thomas joined the Canadian Armed Forces in 1990. He has served on seven operational tours overseas, including two tours in Afghanistan. In Canada he has served on domestic operations such as the Manitoba flood of the century, the Quebec ice storm, and the Vancouver Olympic Games. Currently he is responsible for organizing training requirements and assets for courses that the training centre conducts. Thomas and his wife, Lisa, and their three children are proud to call Edmonton-Decore home, and I'm pleased that he could be here today to see how the political process works here in Alberta. I ask that he now please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Mr. Nielsen: Also, Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly some very special superheroes that I will be speaking more about in my member's statement. Please rise and remain standing as I call your name: from Edmonton fire rescue, Cole Chapelsky, Kyle Wilkinson, Brian Wilfert; from Dickinsfield Amity House, Tracy Patience, Ursula Jayasuriya, Michelle Yang, and Kaiden Kalynchuck. Also joining them today is my daughter Marissa. I would ask that they now please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to introduce to you and through you to all members a couple of constituents of mine who have been advocating for angel cradles – I'll be

presenting a petition that they provided me later today in the Assembly; this is in light of the recent incident that happened in Bowness just last Christmas Eve – Jaden Barager, who was the valedictorian at St. Mary's University this year, and Trisha McIntosh, who is a mother of four and a strong advocate for her community. Trisha is accompanied by her father, Gary McIntosh. I'd ask that they rise and please receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Health and Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce a number of paramedics from across the province as we celebrate Paramedic Services Week. They are seated in the members' gallery. I want them and all members to know that we are so proud of the work that paramedics and all EMS professionals do every day providing high-quality, life-saving care to Albertans. I ask that they rise as I say their names: Nate, Tia, Thomas, Crystal, April, Kenton, Todd, Keegan, Adrienne, Melanie, Patrick, Carey, and Debbie. If I missed any others, please join them in rising and receiving our warm welcome to this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ms Hoffman: I also have the pleasure of introducing members who are here today from the Canadian Liver Foundation, Alberta chapter, who are also seated in the members' gallery. They work to improve the quality of life for those living with liver disease through education, patient support, life-saving research, and public awareness. Thank you for your advocacy and partnership. I now invite Tracy Patience, who is the president, as well as Georgina Macintyre, Deb Troppmann, and Tyler Wiebe to please rise and receive the warm welcome of our Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Mr. Rosendahl: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my absolute pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Mr. Mike Janeczko and his daughter Ali. Mike is a long-time family friend and supporter of the New Democratic Party. For many years he served as the president and secretary-treasurer of the West Yellowhead NDP riding association. I want to take this opportunity to thank him for his support and his hard work over the years. I really appreciate it. I ask Mike and his daughter – they're standing already – to receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Any other introductions, hon. members? The Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a bit of a surprise to me, but I spy with my little eye in the gallery a good friend of mine who has made the long trip from Alberta's most humble constituency, Edmonton-Gold Bar, to visit us today, Ms Jennifer Klimek. Jennifer has been a long-time friend and supporter, and I'm very glad to see her in the gallery this afternoon. If I could ask my hon. colleagues to give her the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

1:50

The Speaker: Welcome.

Point of Order

Allegations against a Nonmember

The Speaker: Hon. members, if the table would hold the clock, I would like to now give a ruling on the matter that was in the House yesterday during Oral Question Period. The Government House Leader raised a point of order relating to comments made by the Leader of the Official Opposition. This exchange can be found on page 1344 of yesterday's *Hansard*. In the questions giving rise to the point of order, the Leader of the Official Opposition raised concerns regarding an employee of the offices of the Minister of Energy and the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance and that employee's work outside of the province and separate from his duties in those offices. The Leader of the Official Opposition asked whether the individual had engaged in lobbying of cabinet ministers.

The Government House Leader argued that these questions were an attempt to "smear an individual whose contract is public" and further stated that they violated the rule found on page 622 of the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, which provides that "Members are discouraged from referring by name to persons who are not Members of Parliament and who do not enjoy parliamentary immunity, except in extraordinary circumstances when the national interest calls for this."

On November 17, 2011, at page 3224 of the *House of Commons Debates* the then Speaker cited this same passage from *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* and noted that he was cognizant both of this fundamental principle as well as the fact that there is no rule that prohibits mentioning individuals by name in the House.

On June 25, 2015, at page 288 of *Hansard* for that day I made a ruling concerning a point of order also raised on the topic of reflections on nonmembers. While recognizing the freedom of speech that all members enjoy in the Assembly, I also commented that in exercising this privilege, members must be responsible for their remarks and bear in mind that they reflect on the institution as a whole. In that ruling I did not find a point of order but did question whether the topic raised at the time was truly a matter relating to the government's actions or policies.

In this circumstance I find that the questions were more closely related to the activities of the government. While maybe unnecessary I do not find that the comments relating to a person outside the Assembly do in this case give rise to a point of order. However, as I did on June 25, 2015, I would encourage all members to tread carefully when making comments about individuals outside the Assembly and to recall that any allegations or assertions made in relation to those individuals will form a part of the public record without an opportunity for the individual to respond. As Speaker Fraser of the House of Commons ruled on May 5, 1987, the freedom of speech that members of the House enjoy is "awesome and far-reaching . . . Such a privilege confers grave responsibilities on those who are protected by it."

Oral Question Period

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

Trans Mountain Pipeline Public Purchase

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Two days ago Kinder Morgan walked away and cashed out at the expense of taxpayers from the Kinder Morgan pipeline because the uncertainty that has been created on that project in B.C. made it too risky for their investors. They have now transferred that risk, essentially, to the taxpayers of

this country and of this province. That means that the taxpayers of Canada and Alberta are now ultimately on the hook for that same uncertainty that Kinder Morgan was facing. What is being done right now to be able to actually address that uncertainty that is still facing this project?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, we pushed to secure a pipeline to Canadian tidewater, the first since 1953. For the children in the gallery, that's the same time the first colour TV went on sale, the same time the first climbers reached the summit of Mount Everest. It's been far too long, 65 years, and the Conservatives were in power for 44 of those. They didn't get the job done, but because our Premier did, 15,000 people will be able to pick up their tools and get to work on this pipeline. We will never stop fighting for the hard-working people of this province.

Mr. Nixon: The rhetoric of the Deputy Premier, while interesting and sometimes amusing to watch, is not helpful to the taxpayers of this country and this province, who are now ultimately responsible for the same risk that just a few short days ago Kinder Morgan's shareholders were responsible for. We all want this pipeline built. The question now is this. Alberta taxpayers, Canadian taxpayers are now the ones who have that risk. What is being done to deal with the uncertainty that is being created by B.C., who is illegally blocking this pipeline, and the environmental activists that are standing with them?

Ms Hoffman: On Tuesday the opposition leader had one position; he supported the pipeline and congratulated the Premier on the deal that she got for the people of this province. On Wednesday not so much. On Thursday, well, I guess we can see where this hon. member is standing on this issue. Mr. Speaker, one day they support the pipeline deal; the next day they don't. Perhaps they should start making up their own mind. Instead of looking to Ottawa for leadership, look at Alberta. We've seen it. One order of government can't sue another order of government. This pipeline is moving forward. That's why we're so proud of our Premier and the fact that she got real results for the people of Alberta.

Mr. Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, this side of the House and the Leader of the Opposition certainly support the Kinder Morgan pipeline, the Trans Mountain pipeline. We want it built. That's not the question that is being discussed. We're not discussing the details of the deal though I know that the Deputy Premier wants us to ask it. We're asking what her government is doing to deal with the uncertainty that was so significant that private investors walked away from this pipeline. This pipeline is now the responsibility of taxpayers, so what are you doing to clear up that uncertainty? At this point it looks like you're doing absolutely nothing on that file except for standing up and grandstanding. What are you doing?

Ms Hoffman: What we're doing is getting real results, Mr. Speaker. That's exactly what happened on Tuesday, when we got this project secured, the investment on behalf of the people of Canada. I know that the member opposite was fine with investing \$9 billion in the Ontario auto industry. This is an investment in the people of Alberta. Again, the federal government has taken ownership of this project. The provincial government can't sue the federal government. This project is going to move forward. This pipeline will get our product to tidewater for the first time in many, many years. This is good news for Alberta. Certainly, talking about risks when we've been able to address those isn't helpful.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Physicians' Disciplinary Policies

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are outraged that the College of Physicians & Surgeons has failed to revoke a doctor's licence after he was convicted of sexually assaulting a patient and a nurse. When the situation was called to the minister's attention, she responded by saying that she would look at the legislation to provide the college with more teeth. Section 82(1)(iv) of the Health Professions Act, however, does give the college the ability to revoke Dr. Taher's licence. Minister, you could have simply used your authority to direct the college to review Dr. Taher's case. Why didn't you do that?

Ms Hoffman: Well, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that the member is asking the question. Certainly, as a woman and as a concerned citizen I want to ensure that every single Albertan can go to their doctor's office with confidence that they are in safe hands. That's why we reached out immediately to the college. That's why we've looked at the legislation we have here in Alberta. While I appreciate her reading of it, the lawyers who are deeply connected to this case are working with us to make sure that we can update legislation to ensure that we can protect every single person, that we can expand the notification periods and so forth. I appreciate your advice, but we do need to work with the professionals to make sure that we get this right.

Mrs. Aheer: This isn't advice. These are actual pieces that exist already.

The college has announced that it actually will now look at stricter sanctions, including revoking a medical licence when a doctor is convicted of a sexual offence. The new principle of "no tolerance" amounts to an admission that the college was not dealing appropriately with sexual abuse. Minister, why was this oversight on this self-regulated body so lacking that you did not know that it was handling sexual assault in such a dismissive manner?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, I have to say that the articulation of this situation doesn't reflect the reality. The college takes this matter very seriously. They are working within the confines of the current legislation. We are also working with them to ensure that we can have legislation that reflects the values and the practices that all Albertans should be able to experience, which is having full confidence that when they go as a patient or as another staff member to any health care provider, they have the assurance that they aren't dealing with somebody who has a history of assault. We're working with the college to ensure that that's the case, and we certainly appreciate the member's passion on this issue.

2:00

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is a reality here. There is a doctor who is a sexual predator who can continue to see patients. That is the reality. The act actually allows the minister to give direction to the college in matters of public interest. In this case it would be public trust. To the minister. You are responsible for upholding the trust for the bodies that function under your ministry, and leading by example is imperative. What are you going to do to ensure that no patient is ever subjected to this type of abuse ever again?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, there was certainly an incident, and there was a decision that was made through the courts on that matter. The college today doesn't believe they have

the right tools with regard to this one specific case. That's why we need to pick up tools, including those from other jurisdictions, to help us ensure that the college has the proper conditions to be able to remove licences as quickly as possible should they feel that that's in the public interest. We take our responsibility very seriously, and we look forward to being able to present something to this House that will be able to help us give them the proper tools.

Premier's Former Chief of Staff's Consulting Contract

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, this government has continued to double down on their secretive dealings with former chief of staff John Heaney. Let's quickly review the facts. August 31 the Premier announces that Mr. Heaney will be resigning as the chief of staff on October 6. October 9, three days later, Mr. Heaney is immediately retitled as the executive adviser to the Minister of Finance. January 2018 Mr. Heaney registers as a lobbyist in B.C. On February 7 the Premier's office signs off on a lobbying exemption. To the Premier: do you not see a problem that the exemption was granted after he began lobbying?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our government consulted the Ethics Commissioner as we transitioned Mr. Heaney from chief of staff to an executive adviser. He played an integral role in the pipeline that we secured last week, a deal that will put 15,000 people to work and will generate \$15 billion for our national economy. This is the first pipeline to tidewater in 65 years. That side had 44 years to do it; they couldn't. I think Mr. Heaney worked well with us.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, we're talking about this government's ethics, not pipelines. This week they continued to refuse to come clean to Albertans about their secretive dealings with the former chief of staff to the Premier. Mr. Heaney left the office on Friday to return to B.C. and was immediately retitled on Monday. He then registered as a pot lobbyist a full month before he was issued an exemption from the Premier's office, was enabled to lobby one government while being employed by another. To the Premier: on what date did you first become aware of this glaring conflict of interest?

Mr. Ceci: Mr. Speaker, I've already said that we consulted the Ethics Commissioner with regard to the transitioning of Mr. Heaney from the Premier's chief of staff to the executive adviser. There was some discussion about how best to structure that contract based on the advice from the Ethics Commissioner, and we wanted to make sure we took the time to get it right. Once it was signed, it immediately went up online. Mr. Heaney is on contract with the government of Alberta. As such, he's not permitted to lobby government or employees of Alberta.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, there are many misfacts in that answer. The contract did not go up online immediately because your office confirmed that it went online in May. At every turn this government is scrambling. Yesterday they finally admitted that it was the Premier's chief of staff that issued the exemption and not the Ethics Commissioner. The question is simple. To the minister: is it acceptable for your closest advisers to act first and then ask or receive or grant themselves permission later?

Mr. Ceci: Mr. Speaker, I've already said that the Ethics Commissioner was consulted with regard to the exemption, and

when it was signed, the contract went up online immediately. We're doing the things that we need to do to be clear about this. Mr. Heaney has played an integral role in getting that pipeline secured. Fifteen thousand jobs, \$15 billion for the economy: we think that's good value for Mr. Heaney's time.

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

Trans Mountain Pipeline Public Purchase (continued)

Mr. Clark: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, Tuesday's announcement that the federal government will purchase the Kinder Morgan pipeline had the NDP celebrating – we saw them trot out dozens of staffers to stand triumphantly behind the Premier – but Tuesday was just one step on a very, very long road. The NDP should be careful about taking a victory lap too early. There are so many unanswered questions about this project, and I'm going to ask some of them right now. Now that Alberta is investing in a pipeline, what will you do to win over B.C. and those who will use any means to block this pipeline?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thanks, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I do want to say very clearly that we absolutely believe it's good news that this project is moving forward. Construction is beginning within days, and that is certainly very good news for the 15,000 people who are going to be working on this pipeline, 15,000 men and women who are going to be literally building this pipeline, the first one to tidewater in over 50 years. This is good news, and there is reason to celebrate the construction moving forward. Of course, we will not let down our pressure on B.C. We continue to have public awareness campaigns there, and we continue to reserve the right to use Bill 12 should we need it.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Clark: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I very much want to see that pipeline built, but that \$2 billion investment is still very much shrouded in mystery. We don't know under what unforeseen conditions this money will be triggered, we don't know if the investment will be transparent, and, most importantly, we don't know if any Alberta taxpayer dollars will go directly to the B.C. government as part of their revenue-sharing agreement. These are the sorts of questions that would be answered by a fairness opinion prepared by neutral financial experts, which happens to be exactly what Kinder Morgan and the federal government have done. To the Premier: will you ask the Auditor General to prepare a fairness assessment so the people of Alberta know exactly what we might be getting ourselves into?

Ms Hoffman: Well, let me clarify right here. What we do know is that no money will be invested by the people of Alberta until the project is complete, Mr. Speaker. When money is invested, it will be an investment. There will be the opportunity for equity to be returned to the people of Alberta. In the meantime we have 15,000 people hard at work, having jobs, ensuring that when that pipeline is completed and we do get our product to tidewater, we can get the very best price on the international market. This is a win-win-win, and we certainly are proud of the success our Premier has seen with regard to this pipeline.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Clark: Why, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, it seems that the plan is for the federal government to get this project through the uncertainty caused by the multiple lawsuits Kinder Morgan is facing and then sell it back to private investors. Now, that creates an opportunity to include some of the growing number of indigenous businesses in this project. To the Premier: what specifically will you do to push for indigenous participation in the ultimate end result of this project, and will you make any investment that Alberta would make conditional on ensuring indigenous participation going forward?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again for the question. This is a project that's in the national interest. To no surprise, there are many indigenous communities and leaders who want to be a part of that project as well, and we certainly are excited about that opportunity. The Minister of Energy from Alberta has definitely been in conversations with the ministry of energy for Canada around that very aspect. This is good news for the indigenous people of this country. The Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain project is one of those critical components to ensure that Alberta and Canada remain competitive in getting their products to market. We thank the Premier for her courage on this project, and so does Gale Katchur, the chief of Alberta's Industrial Heartland.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Deputy Premier.

Workplace Safety Legislation

Mr. Westhead: Mr. Speaker, only a few weeks ago there was a gas-and-dash incident resulting in a car accident at Ghost station, just west of Cochrane. These situations can too easily become dangerous for workers and innocent bystanders, which is why we passed legislation last fall to keep them safe. To the Minister of Labour: given that this act comes into force tomorrow, can you please provide the House with an update on these changes?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Labour.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to my colleague for the question. I'm very pleased to say that I was at a Husky gas station this morning, reminding Albertans that as of tomorrow, June 1, there will be prepaying for fuel and it will be mandatory. At that announcement, Edmonton Police Service was able to share that they've seen a 26 per cent decrease in gas-and-dash incidents this year as stations have already started implementing prepay measures at their stations. This is good news for Albertans. We will be able to save lives, having put in this legislation.

2:10

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That is indeed some good news.

Last fall we also passed An Act to Protect the Health and Well-being of Working Albertans, which updated the Occupational Health and Safety Act and the workers' compensation system. What has the ministry been doing to implement these changes since the legislation was passed?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. An improved occupational health and safety system comes into effect June 1. Our

ministry has been working with employers, employees, stakeholders across the province to ensure that they have the supports they need to implement these changes effectively. In addition, there are supports available online, but I would encourage all those interested to sign up for the online bulletins. As well, you can reach out to Labour. We will provide in-person presentations. We have delivered more than 100 to more than 5,000 participants, both in person and online, prerecorded and live webinars.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister and her department for working so hard on that legislation. I've heard a lot about what these changes mean for employees, but what do they mean for employers? Isn't this just a burden on them?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our government has the backs of all working people and business owners. We are focused on keeping workers safe as well as making sure that we're not creating unnecessary burdens for employers. What I heard during consultations was that our employers here in Alberta care deeply about their employees, care deeply about making sure that everyone comes home safe at the end of the day, and have been welcoming of many of these changes. Making sure we have strong health and safety laws prevents injury and death, and that is something that all Albertans can get behind.

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

Premier's Former Chief of Staff's Consulting Contract (continued)

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Finance minister originally said that the Premier's former chief of staff John Heaney is not lobbying his ministry about cannabis on behalf of his clients in his current role with the government of Alberta, but he is lobbying in B.C. on behalf of this client while also working for Alberta taxpayers here. Minister, please tell Albertans how it is not a conflict of interest to simultaneously work for the Alberta government and a private company which could have a commercial interest in Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Heaney is on contract with the government of Alberta. As such, he's not permitted to lobby government members and employees in Alberta. He was working and is working with us with regard to advice on the pipeline, with regard to energy and other files. He's not working on the cannabis file. That's something he's doing outside of this work, and that's something that there is an exemption for, that the Ethics Commissioner assisted with in consulting her.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that he is a government employee, Minister, and given that the Leader of the Opposition asked the Deputy Premier yesterday to confirm that Mr. Heaney has not spoken to a single minister on behalf of his clients and given that the Deputy Premier promised to consult with her colleagues so she could answer that question, Deputy Premier, my question is for

you. Now that you have had time to consult, can you please provide a definitive answer to that important question?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I certainly will confirm, but again my experience is that this has not been a matter that's been brought up. It hasn't been brought up with me and, I don't believe, anyone else who's connected in any way to any of these topics. I understand that there is a desire to create some fog and accusations in this regard, but this has not been our experience. We're certainly happy to discuss government policy in this House, and our government policy is that we are moving forward on the 15,000 jobs. That got this pipeline, and this is one of the pieces that Mr. Heaney was hired to help us work on.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this government claims that the carbon tax and this Premier got the pipeline built and that now, all of a sudden, Mr. Heaney single-handedly got the pipeline built, the real question is this: on behalf of Alberta taxpayers, do you think the optics here are good? Can you please explain the optics here, and can you justify this to Albertans?

Ms Hoffman: Let me tell you about what happened on Tuesday, Mr. Speaker. On Tuesday we got the clarity that the folks opposite have been rallying for for so long. Let's make sure this pipeline moves forward. Guess what? On Tuesday our Premier led us to that point, and we couldn't be prouder. As a result, 15,000 people will have jobs directly working on that pipeline; \$15 billion will be inserted back into the Canadian economy. We are incredibly proud of the work of this government under the leadership of our Premier, and we will not apologize for that. This is good news.

Carbon Levy and Pipeline Development

Mr. Loewen: When this government came to office and introduced the largest tax increase in Alberta's history, the job-killing carbon tax, that was mentioned nowhere in their election platform, their excuse was that it was needed to buy social licence to build pipelines and gain expanded market access. Here we stand three years later, and what are the results? The approved Northern Gateway pipeline was cancelled, the Energy East pipeline has been killed, Keystone XL was vetoed, and despite the announcement of its nationalization the Trans Mountain project faces major obstacles to construction, all this under the watch of the NDP and their Trudeau Liberal allies. Will the government finally stand up and admit to Albertans that the carbon tax and their myth of social licence were a pipe dream?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
The Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that the opposition was just waiting for this day, hoping that they could laugh in our faces and cheer that we didn't get the pipeline, but you know what? We got the pipeline another step forward on Tuesday, and we got that pipeline because of the climate leadership plan. There wouldn't have been a pipeline to argue about had we not had a robust climate leadership plan because we wouldn't have gotten the approval from the Prime Minister and the federal cabinet.

Mr. Loewen: Given that the minister said that it was because of the carbon leadership plan and that we just heard that it was Mr. Heaney that got the pipeline and that we've heard previously that it was the

Premier that got the pipeline and given that since the government came to the private realization that the social licence myth would not come to fruition, they have taken other steps to try to get the construction of Trans Mountain and given that they've been no more successful in gaining ground with the wine boycott, bowing to the Trudeau carbon tax, and the turn-off-the-taps legislation, that they've all but said they'll never use, will the government commit to doing what actually needs to be done to convince their ally Justin Trudeau to use the full weight of his constitutional authority to enforce the rule of law and get this pipeline built?

The Speaker: Hon. member, I thought I heard several preambles in there. I had difficulty actually finding where the question was but, I think, right at the end. You do have a second supplemental, that will soon be up, but I want to be assured that you will not repeat a preamble yet again when you take that.

The Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Okay. Despite the lack of a question – the Conservative leader and the opposition “can't have it both ways.” That's not me talking; that's the *Edmonton Journal*. Their columnist wrote that it would be “difficult, if not impossible, to imagine” any pipeline being approved under his so-called plan. He described their leader as performing a contortionist act. Trust me, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are buying tickets to watch that.

Mr. Loewen: Given the contortionist act of this government trying to give credit to everybody for this pipeline – Heaney, the Premier, the carbon tax – and given that in recent days the NDP has been celebrating the flight of billions in private capital from the Trans Mountain project and as last resort needed to have Ottawa nationalize a critical part of our energy infrastructure and given that we are still in an uncertain situation regarding a pipeline in our vital economic interests and that the opponents of progress are no less determined to stop the construction of this energy infrastructure project of critical national importance, with the Premier of British Columbia promising to continue his obstruction and radical environmentalists threatening . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. Hon. member, I'd just have a higher level of assurance that you understood what I was asking you not to do. Did you understand that?

Mr. Loewen: You might not be hearing me, but we can go to *Hansard* if you'd like.

The Speaker: I'm sorry; I didn't hear what you said. Yes or no?

Mr. Loewen: Mr. Speaker, I did my best to follow your directions.

The Speaker: You might want to work on that, then.
The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know what? Let the numbers speak for themselves. Over the past year, because of our government supporting the private sector and industry and entrepreneurs, jobs are up, 90,000 new full-time jobs, mostly in the private sector. GDP is up, manufacturing is up, exports are up, wages are up, retail is up, wholesale is up, housing construction is up, building permits are up, new vehicle sales are up, businesses and corporations are up, restaurant receipts are up, ATB's profits are up, EI numbers are down, and a pipeline is about to begin construction.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

2:20 Chronic Wasting Disease Testing Timelines

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the ag minister. Ranchland Meats in Lacombe is a bison and elk processing facility. The elk market is seasonal. Their goal is to harvest 40 to 60 animals a week over the next couple of months, but the CWD inspection facility in Edmonton is putting that in jeopardy. The lab first required a three-day turnaround, which is workable, but now they say that it's up to seven days, which is not reasonable. Minister, would you look into this and broker a solution, as I believe you successfully did last year?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka very much for bringing up this real question. It is a concern. He's absolutely right. You know, the CWD process: the regime that we have in Alberta now is quite robust. I'm happy with what we're doing. All cases of farmed elk, deer, and reindeer older than one year are tested. Because of that, we have had an opportunity to stop the very few cases of CWD we had. Carcasses are held as the results are received. Now, out of the letter of understanding with Ranchland – we're working for another this year.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Orr: Thank you to the minister. Given that Ranchland processes elk from both Alberta and Saskatchewan and given that the Saskatchewan lab returns the results to Ranchland within 24 hours, why does it take four to seven days in Alberta for a test that Saskatchewan provides in 24 hours?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I can't speak on the protocols for Saskatchewan. I know that ours have been very successful and continue to be so. My understanding from the letter of understanding from last year is that the lab would guarantee results within 72 hours. The new letter of understanding this year will be something very, very similar. Even last year some of those results were returned in 60, even 48 hours, so I think, you know, that the new letter of understanding will be very helpful to Ranchland and be acceptable to them.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Minister, for that work on that.

Food safety is of utmost importance, but the regulatory delays are driving business out of Alberta or potentially. Given that producers ship elk to the U.S. without time-delaying CWD inspections – hence, most of the elk that should be processed in Canada are actually shipped to the U.S. – and that processing here in Alberta would be more efficient than Saskatchewan and that we are driving some business to diversify regulatory risk out of the province, Minister, what will you be able to do to ensure this industry survives and is not another casualty of regulatory delays?

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for his questions and concerns. The animal health and assurance branch and food safety branch of Agriculture and Forestry are doing a good job. I'm very thankful for their technical expertise on this matter. I'm looking forward to them, again, working with Ranchland and other producers right across the province to do what they can to ensure that our products continue to be safe. I think that we have one of the most robust CWD detection protocols on the continent,

and it continues to be so. I'm happy with that. Food safety, without a doubt, is a concern, as is market access.

Connect Care Clinical Information System

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, the 2017 government rollout of the clinical data system, connect care, saw a \$1.6 billion investment for the integration of health records, but the flaw is that doctors, the gatekeepers of our health care system, were not included. The Auditor General says that the benefits are undetermined due to the exclusion of family physicians. They are key personnel in our health system, and they're being shut out from opining on the software being developed by Epic. Could the minister please explain why physicians were not a part of the software development?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Just to reiterate the way the different pieces within the health care system work, there are the AHS components, and then there are, of course, private offices that are run by physicians. We do have Netcare, and we are now developing connect care, and it is about integrating those two pieces. But first we need to address the 1,500 different software systems we have within AHS because of all the fragmentation and breakdown in silos that there were in Alberta for many, many years. That's step one. We are very proud of that, and we've worked with many physicians on connect care.

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, physicians dictate what medical tests we get, what diagnostic imaging we use. We even rely on physicians to access the primary care networks. Stateside, where the Epic software is prominent, physicians have expressed their discontent with the usability of this software. Does this Health minister not understand that physicians are a key part of our health care system and need to be part of the discussions? They may be contractors, but quite honestly they're the only physicians we have. Do you understand the importance of ensuring that these physicians are part of the software development rollout?

Ms Hoffman: I wish my critic had a greater understanding of the way the health care system works, Mr. Speaker, is what I really do wish. What I am very proud of is the fact that we are, after many, many years of failure to invest in systems – the IT system that is at the Royal Alex hospital, for example, is as old as I am. That is not fair. That is not contemporary. I get why Conservatives failed to invest in this year after year after year. You can't cut a fancy ribbon on an IT system. But it's fundamental to good, safe operations for the people of Alberta, and that's why we are going to move forward on ensuring that we can connect patients, providers, including physicians, and health care facilities to the right information to get the right care.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, despite the concerns expressed by other users of this product, this government still chose the software and didn't include family physicians while they customized it for Alberta. Not only that, but the initial investment was supposed to be for half a billion dollars. In Public Accounts this government mentioned a \$1.6 billion investment. Can you clarify the cost of the software, and what assurances do Albertans have that this software will be ready on time and on budget?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Again, this is a massive project, and the reason why is because for longer than I've been alive, the previous government failed to invest in these types of systems to ensure that patients, no matter where they were in the province, could have their information travel with them and make sure that their health care providers could get the right information to support them in their care. Fifteen hundred different systems merging into one is very complex. It is the right place, though, to make sure that we're moving forward to give patients the very best information to their providers so that they can have the very best outcomes.

Again, the member tries to take one year's line item and then say that projects have run over, Mr. Speaker. That's not true. He knows so. I'm proud to defend our investment.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Child Abandonment and Neglect

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When a newborn infant is abandoned, it sends shock waves across the community and this province. It impacts those who find the infant, first responders, and also causes risk to the life of the mother if she has just given birth. Currently there are angel cradles at the Grey Nuns and Misericordia hospitals here in Edmonton, where parents can safely leave an infant they can't care for. Can the Minister of Health update the House on how many babies have been dropped off at these cradles?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for this important question. The situation where a baby was found in December in Calgary is absolutely tragic. I want to thank the member and his constituents for raising their concerns. We want every mother, every parent to feel that they can make the safest choice for themselves and for their baby. Since the angel cradles opened in Edmonton, about five years ago, one baby has been received, and that was at the Grey Nuns hospital.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that there are no angel cradles in Calgary and given that we have seen a safe recovery in Edmonton and also in provinces like B.C. and given that there are many reasons that can leave a woman in desperate circumstances, can the Minister of Health please tell the House what they're doing to support vulnerable women in Calgary?

Ms Hoffman: Thanks again for the question. Mr. Speaker, we know that someone who feels that they are in a position where they need to abandon their infant is in a very desperate state, and they deserve compassion and care as well. That's why we're working to improve education and support resources for women earlier in their pregnancies. Much of the work in Calgary happens at the sexual and reproductive health clinic at the Chumir. Vulnerable women can go to this clinic to get comprehensive, no-judgment care as well as counselling and support on the options available to them and their babies, or anywhere in Alberta you can call 811.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the recent Ministerial Panel on Child Intervention recognized that child abandonment and neglect can be caused by several underlying root causes that the mother has faced, to the Minister of Health: can you

update the House on what resources are available for new mothers who could be at risk?

Ms Hoffman: The health and safety of children and families is a top priority for this government, and that's why we support programs like the Alberta Vulnerable Infant Response Team, which works with public health nurses, caseworkers, and police services to work regularly with families who may be at greater risk. We've also supported organizations like the Calgary Catholic Family Service, who provides mental health supports for pregnant and parenting teens, Mr. Speaker. Our government is dedicated to making sure that vulnerable Albertans have the supports they need to live safe and healthy lives.

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

Long-term Care and Supportive Living Spaces

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks for the nice pin, too. The need for supportive living in long-term care beds for aging seniors is growing year after year. I give credit to the government for directing additional funding toward building these much-needed facilities. However, I'm concerned that the additional funding is being eaten up by skyrocketing per-bed costs, with current projects costing up to six times as much per bed. This means that additional funding could well not result in additional beds. To the Minister of Health: what is the average per-bed cost of the government's most recently announced facilities, and how does this compare to past facilities?

2:30

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We're making an important investment in Alberta's continuing care system, and we're on track to build 2,000 long-term care and dementia care spaces by 2019. Since coming into government, we approved 3,002 net new long-term and dementia spaces. That includes beds beyond the 2019 commitment. Those are different types of beds, with different types of support, so the costs are varying. We want to ensure that no matter where you live in the province, no matter what the economics are for the functioning of that system, you have the ability to have the right care in the right place, where you are best supported.

Ms McPherson: Given that nonprofit and private-sector organizations have reduced costs and improved services through innovation and given that their facilities have always been constructed to the same high standard required of all long-term care and supportive living facilities and given that industry experts have said – and I quote – that the government cannot build the needed beds at a cost of \$650,000 per bed; this is not sustainable, to the same minister: why is the private sector being excluded from RFPs for long-term care and supportive living facilities?

Ms Hoffman: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, the assertion that's just been levied there isn't factual. We have worked with a number of different organizations to expand opportunities to serve families and those who are in need of greater care, including in Fort McMurray, for example, where, yes, even though it costs more to bring in supplies, even though the costs of labour are higher, we believe that it's about time that Fort McMurray got a long-term care facility. I'm not going to say that that was a bad investment because it's an improvement investment for the people who live in Fort McMurray. We're proud of it, and we are going to make sure that that long-overdue facility gets built.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Ms McPherson: Given that older facilities will have to be upgraded or replaced to accommodate the ever-increasing number of seniors in our province requiring supportive living and long-term care and given that in light of this it is simply not sustainable if costs continue to be so much higher than necessary per bed, to the same minister: what is the plan for reducing the cost per bed so that the province can adequately respond to increasing demand for supportive living and long-term care beds?

Ms Hoffman: Well, I'll tell you what our plan won't be. That's the plan that was put in place by that member's now leader, which was about finding ways to sign sweetheart contracts with folks who weren't necessarily going to be able to provide the right levels of care. We've worked with all providers to ensure that where there is need, we brought it up to the highest level of care, Mr. Speaker. We're keeping the patient at the centre, not pushing for seniors to be paying exorbitant costs for drug copays or for private operators to have additional opportunities to make profits. We're keeping patients at the centre, and I'm proud of that.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Seniors' Mobile Blood Collection Service Long-term Care Facility Food Service

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Last week I brought forward concerns about the cancellation of a very convenient and efficient use of mobile lab services at the Sunnyside Manor in St. Paul. I've heard that as many as 15 to 20 patients are processed in less than an hour there. I now find that this efficient service for seniors is being cancelled at facilities province-wide. Minister, why are seniors being targeted by your government and forced to go to hospital ERs to get a service that has been efficiently supplied on-site up until now?

Ms Hoffman: Well, Mr. Speaker, again the members are trying to contort facts. What is happening is that for those folks who are living independently, if their doctor believes they need to get the service provided to them in their home, with the doctor's direction, the service will continue to be provided in their home. But for folks who are living independently who are able to go to the lab site, they're asked to do so. I did look into the specific community, and it is about a two-minute drive. We appreciate that that is different than somebody coming into your home, but we also want to ensure that instead of moving for rash, ideological cuts like the members opposite are doing – we want a sustainable system.

Mr. Hanson: I'd like to thank the minister for confirming that that service has been cut.

Given that although AHS management claims that no service has been cut, a service has been cut, and seniors that do not have a special requisition will have to find transportation to and from the ER and expose themselves and all the residents they come home to to whatever virus is in the ER that day, Minister, why are you allowing AHS to force our seniors living in long-term care facilities to have to bundle up, pay out of their limited funds, and risk exposure for themselves and other residents?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, again, for patients that are deemed as being in need of having the service come to them, it will continue, but for those who are able to go to the lab itself, which, again, is about a two-minute drive, we do ask them to do that to ensure that

there are the resources available for all who need to access these services.

Mr. Speaker, I'm really proud of the fact that we've been able to sit down and work with members, including the member opposite who's asking this very question, to do things in communities like expand dialysis services in the community of Lac La Biche or the new long-term care facility in Fort McMurray. I'm very willing to sit down and work through these challenges. Gotcha politics isn't the way to do it.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Hanson: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that on May 16 I asked the Health minister a question regarding the quality of food in seniors' facilities and given that her response indicated that long-term care, of course, is a priority and given that I was actually referring to a long-term care facility that is still serving preprepared, not on-site, meals that a lot of people here probably wouldn't want to eat, Minister, why does it appear that your department and AHS are targeting seniors in this province? Don't they deserve the best care possible?

Ms Hoffman: We are very proud of the fact that we're investing in things that seniors care about, investing in things like reversing the kinds of cuts that were proposed by the members opposite, investing in building 2,000 new long-term care spaces, investing in ensuring that they have health care providers who are available to provide those services. Instead of pushing for rash ideological cuts like the members opposite continue to do, we're investing in the things that keep seniors safe, well, and independent as long as possible, including home care, Mr. Speaker. This side of the House is investing in seniors in our communities. If there are specific questions that the hon. member would like to ask, I encourage him to approach my office. I think I've proven that we get good results when you approach me in a respectful way.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Backcountry Land Use

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Environment and Parks has repeatedly stated that her decision impacting changes to land use across Alberta, including the Castle parks and Livingstone-Porcupine Hills areas, was based on science, as were decisions about the Bighorn area. Stakeholders have raised concerns that the data being used by the minister is taken from out-of-country studies which do not accurately capture the geography of Alberta. To the minister: what relevant, Alberta-based scientific data is being used to drive these decisions, and will it be provided to the public?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The question is somewhere in the neighbourhood of about six or seven months late because the scientific studies that underpinned some of the analysis around the headwater protection that we brought in for the Castle region were released by the two scientists in December and have been available publicly since that time.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that it seems as though decisions made by the government under the guise of science are really being driven by ideology influenced by foreign-funded

environmental groups as opposed to members of the public who responsibly enjoy the backcountry and given that these environmental groups are pushing for the systematic removal of human activity from Alberta's backcountry, again to the minister: when will you personally meet with the general public in order to capture a balanced vision of what kind of backcountry access Albertans want?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, the dozens of scientists who contributed to the analysis that underpinned many of our decisions in the Castle area will be pleased to learn that the folks across the way dismiss their life's work as somehow being tainted or ideological. I'll be clipping this *Hansard* and sending it to all of them because it is just beyond the pale to undermine our professionals in this province who contribute every day to what we know about science, what we know about ecology, what we know about the world around us. It's not surprising at all given that these folks . . .

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

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister seems to be playing favourites again by promoting certain types of camping while restricting access for other types of camping and given that motorized access provides an excellent opportunity for families to include everyone in the backcountry experience, including those who may have physical disabilities or mobility issues, again to the minister: will the minister commit to reviewing her plans and decisions to provide fairness and balance for all types of backcountry use?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, there are ecological limits. Certainly, we've invested in our campgrounds and our trails and so on to manage those limits, but there are also limits with respect to the patience of the neighbours. In particular, ranchers in Livingstone-Porcupine Hills came to me and said: please, could you do some planning in these areas? And we did that. We delivered for those Conservative constituents. On this side of the House we listen to communities when they ask us to do something, and then we take action.

2:40 Property Assessed Clean Energy Program

Mr. Stier: Mr. Speaker, recently the NDP government introduced legislation that would enable Alberta municipalities to create a property assessed clean energy program, called PACE. It's a financing tool whereby property owners pay for energy upgrades through their property taxes. Since California adopted PACE in 2007, though, it has experienced legal problems, class-action lawsuits, and homeowners losing their homes. To the minister: why would the NDP propose a program in Alberta that has been so problematic and controversial that it has resulted in horrendous legal actions in other jurisdictions?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. PACE has been used in multiple jurisdictions with very positive results. It provides an opportunity for everyday Albertans to make the kind of energy efficiency upgrades that they want for their homes so that they can save money and reduce emissions. Once again, this provides an

opportunity and empowers municipalities to establish a PACE program, to work with their residents to ensure that this can happen. The bottom line is that PACE is good news for Albertans.

Mr. Stier: Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't agree.

Given that in Alberta there are already a number of financing options for property owners who want to install energy upgrades that require the borrower to undergo a credit check and given that Alberta's PACE legislation appears to intentionally circumvent this industry best practice altogether, to the minister again: why are you proposing that Alberta municipalities become primary lenders that don't require that a borrower's creditworthiness be confirmed as a prerequisite to obtain financing?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let's talk about the PACE program. Increased demand for energy efficient upgrades means more opportunities in Alberta's green jobs sector. Alberta's building and development community is very excited about the legislation and expect to see increased economic activity as a result of PACE. Similar programs across the U.S. have resulted in nearly \$6 billion in economic activity, and I'm so looking forward to seeing how these programs impact our economy here in Alberta.

Mr. Stier: Mr. Speaker, despite what was said, given that existing PACE programs in the U.S. have resulted in class-action lawsuits, homeowners losing their homes due to foreclosures, and that in Alberta's proposed legislation there doesn't appear to be any requirement for borrowers to undergo even a basic credit check, to the minister again: why hasn't the legislation that you're proposing included safeguards to ensure that Alberta's PACE program doesn't experience the same disastrous results it met elsewhere?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Larivee: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Again, this is empowering legislation supporting municipalities to establish a PACE program within their communities, should their residents want it, in order to give those Albertans access to financing to cover the cost of energy efficiency and renewable energy projects. Our municipalities play a key role in advancing Alberta's climate leadership roles, and this will empower them to take further actions. As it's a voluntary program, again, the municipalities will need to pass a PACE bylaw before the program becomes available. I cannot state strongly enough that PACE is good news for Albertans . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The Member for Edmonton-Manning.

North Saskatchewan Heavy Load River Crossing

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am proud to be part of a government that supports the oil and gas industry and the need to reach new markets for our products while also recognizing the importance of the agricultural industry and rural Alberta as important contributors to Alberta's economy. I've received many positive comments from members of both of these industries in my riding due to the recent announcement by the government. The Vinca Bridge, northeast of Edmonton, will be upgraded and will provide a critical link to the areas to the north of the city. To the Minister of Transportation: can you please tell the Legislature how this project will support the energy industry?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member. The Vinca Bridge will provide a critical link over the North Saskatchewan River for heavy and oversized loads. Once it's complete, the bridge will be able to handle heavy loads that will service the Industrial Heartland near Fort Saskatchewan or on to the oil sands. The bridge will allow industry to trim 200 kilometres off the route that currently has to be used. This will save companies time and money and will provide for a much more efficient and strategic route for these projects.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Producers in the agricultural industry are concerned about the preservation of prime farmland for their businesses and the economic future of their families. To the same minister: can you inform the House about how the Vinca Bridge supports these projects and agricultural land?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, the selection of this particular site for the bridge negates the need to build another bridge location that was under study that would have destroyed some of the best remaining agricultural land in the Edmonton region and would have deprived a number of farmers and greenhouse operators of their livelihoods. It's a better route for industry, but it certainly takes the pressure off our farmers and preserves vitally needed agricultural land.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This project is significant in the support of the expansion of the Industrial Heartland while supporting the agricultural producers and rural Alberta. To the same minister: can you please update the Legislature on the timeline and details around the bridge upgrade?

Mr. Mason: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to do so. Design work will get under way this year, preliminary construction will be started in 2020, and it will take about three years to complete. Ninety million dollars was included in Budget 2018, and almost 500 direct and indirect jobs will be created. I want to thank this member and other members from the region for their support of this project, which is so essential to our oil and gas industry and which protects valuable farmland.

The Speaker: We'll proceed in 30 seconds.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Indigenous History Month

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to speak today about National Indigenous History Month in Canada. June is National Indigenous History Month, and it is the perfect opportunity for all of us to learn more about the history of this province and the people who lived here long before European settlers arrived.

As we focus on a renewed relationship with indigenous peoples, one based on reconciliation, mutual respect, and co-operation, it is essential that we understand the past and our role in it. Facing up to the wrongs we have committed or have enabled to continue is a necessary part of constructing a better relationship.

This is also the time to celebrate the rich and diverse culture of indigenous peoples living in this province: the vibrant art and music, the brilliant dances and regalia, and the rich tradition of storytelling. We can also celebrate a culture based on community, friendship, connection, and wisdom.

This month I encourage all Albertans to take the opportunity to learn about and experience the rich indigenous culture present in our province. Talk to your neighbours and community members, attend a local powwow or celebration, or visit a native friendship centre or a local library and learn more. And please join your fellow Albertans in the celebration of National Indigenous Peoples Day on Thursday, June 21. Alberta is made stronger and more beautiful when indigenous history and identity is recognized, and that is something we can all support.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Trans Mountain Pipeline Public Purchase

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My grandmother Smith was a very practical, no-nonsense teacher and farm wife. She understood that life could be hard, so quit your complaining, figure out your options, and move towards a solution. As a teacher and a farm wife she also didn't suffer fools lightly and expected people to take responsibility for their actions. So it's not surprising that some of my grandmother's approach to life has rubbed off and affected my response to the Kinder Morgan fiasco.

We are in this position because of a lack of political leadership of epic proportions, both provincially and federally. The combined poor decisions of the present provincial and federal governments have made the purchase of the pipeline the only option left on the table. While we continue to support the much-needed Trans Mountain project, it should never have come this far.

2:50

The withdrawal of Kinder Morgan continues to send a negative message to the world that Canada cannot defend the rule of law and that special-interest groups funded from the United States will continue to disrupt our economy. Even with the purchase of the pipeline project and infrastructure, the way forward is uncertain. The same scenario that paralyzed the provincial and federal governments is still there. If the federal government was unwilling to deal with a so-called war in the woods before, it has not gone away. If Prime Minister Trudeau was unwilling to uphold the rule of law and jeopardize votes and seats in B.C. in the national interest, there is no reason to believe that buying the pipeline has changed that political reality.

Purchasing Trans Mountain thankfully ensured that the expansion was not permanently cancelled. However, there are a number of actions that the federal government can take to better ensure certainty for the project, and the time to act is now. At least, that is how the many no-nonsense farmers and businesspeople that think like my grandmother see it.

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

Alberta Party Achievements

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The time we spend together here as legislators to debate Albertans' concerns is so important to the people who we are elected to serve. I'm very proud of the work my Alberta Party caucus colleagues and I have done here in the last three months.

We listened to the most vulnerable Albertans. We brought the choking game to parents' attention. We pushed to increase protection and support for AISH recipients and a PDD review. We brought critical home-care gaps to light. We represented concerns of those relying on assisted reproductive technology when support was withdrawn. We highlighted barriers to accessing free naloxone kits. We brought forward concerns by people with rare diseases that had been previously overlooked. We proudly showed up to debate safe access to abortion services.

We supported innovative Albertans and highlighted rural Internet access as key to economic and social development. We brought attention to the carbon trunk line, which is critical to new business.

We reminded the government of its overdue antiracism strategy, and we sought modernization in paramedics' scope of practice.

We called for support for a coal innovation cluster to provide our coal workforce with something to transition to. In fact, we recognized the importance of keeping Alberta's rural and remote communities vital by proposing \$100 million more for economic diversification and education in our shadow budget. Oh, yeah. We produced a shadow budget.

I don't have enough time to list all of the good work we've done in three months. We listen to and stand with everyday Albertans, whose daily challenges do not have partisan labels. We are proud to have addressed and advocated for positive change for Albertans all across the province as the third party.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Accessibility and Inclusion

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. May 27 to June 2 is National AccessAbility Week in Canada, a time to celebrate the important contributions of people with disabilities and a time to celebrate communities and workplaces that actively remove barriers for people with disabilities. Inclusion requires action. It requires intentional planning, investment, and vigilance. I'd like to thank the Rick Hansen Foundation for their work around universal access and the development of a rating certification program.

We have many people and organizations in Alberta that deserve recognition and celebration, but today I'd like to celebrate two that have affected me personally. My friend Jonathan Hamilton recently celebrated 30 years of employment with McDonald's in St. Albert. He plays the piano, he volunteers, he climbed Kilimanjaro a few years ago to raise money for a charity, and he's a deeply religious man, involved in his church community. He loves his home and St. Albert, and he's one of the most informed voters I've ever met. He has a developmental disability. By simply living his life in his community, he's taught many people about how great diversity is.

Yesterday I attended a funeral for a young man, Steven Irsheid, who I'd known and supported since he was about 17 years old. His early life in care and the many barriers placed in his way because of his disability could have defined his life, but they did not. My friend Steven lived his short life to its fullest, having all kinds of adventures he had only dreamed of. He also graduated from Bible college, another dream. Most important of all, he was loved, included, and appreciated. He created awareness about the beauty of diversity and inclusion by living his best life.

I'm very proud that here in our own Legislative Assembly we're home to the associate page program, that creates a unique opportunity for inclusion.

I challenge each and every one of you to think about what you can do in your community to support people and organizations working to ensure access and inclusion.

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

Super Hero Day in Edmonton-Decore

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to speak about an event that will take place in the super-fantastic riding of Edmonton-Decore on June 10, the second annual Super Hero Day. The event is being organized by Dickinsfield Amity House and Northmount Community League with the participation of my constituency office.

Amity House is truly a home of humble superheroes who have been working to support residents in the area for over 45 years. Northmount Community League was established in 1971 and has been providing a super venue and support to the community since that time. Last year Northmount Community League park was filled with a whole bunch of other superheroes from all types of comic books. A fun-filled afternoon of super activities was held, complete with a free super barbecue.

This year's event will be super bigger and super better. In fact, it will also include some of our real-life superheroes. On a daily basis members of the Canadian Armed Forces, Edmonton Police Service, Edmonton fire rescue, and emergency medical services put their lives on the line to keep every one of us safe. They are our true superheroes. So for this year's event we are pleased to have Edmonton fire rescue station 14, EMS, and EPS participate in this event.

I would like to extend a huge thank you to all of our real-life heroes for their outstanding work each and every day. As it is Paramedic Services Week I would like to extend a special thank you to all the EMS in the Legislature today for their dedication to their work and for helping numerous Albertans on a daily basis.

Finally, I would like to extend an invitation to everyone to attend this super event June 10, 1 to 4 p.m., at Northmount Community League. All ages of superheroes are welcome, and I hope to see you there.

Official Opposition Voting Practices

Mr. Fildebrandt: The single most important qualities for elected office are principle and consistency. It means sticking to your guns even when you're outgunned. It means making the right choice, not always the easy choice. I wake up on the right side of the bed every morning. But many career politicians tend to toss and turn all day long, blowing in the wind, making their decisions rooted in tactics and political strategy and not in what they just feel is right. There are many good and principled conservatives who sit in this House today, and I feel genuinely sorry for them when I see them bridled, muzzled, and whipped from speaking their minds and voting their conscience.

I know the hearts of my conservative colleagues. I know that you have been forced to vote for legislation that you oppose, abstain from votes that you care about, and stay silent on issues that are contrary to your core beliefs. You have been forced to stay silent and flee the House on 15 different votes on a bill that attacks freedom of speech. You have been whipped to vote with the NDP to support race and gender quotas for the entire private sector on five separate occasions. You've been forced to vote with the NDP against the 5 per cent pay cut for MLAs. And you've been forced to side with Trudeau and the NDP in support of taxpayers buying a pipeline.

I don't know what happened to the party that I believed we were founding a year ago. I don't know what happened to the promise of principled conservatism, of open nominations, of grassroots guarantees. But I do know where I stand. I will show up for work

every day. I will not bend when the wind blows. I will not give the socialists an inch. I will fight until I have no more to give, and I will do it every day until the job is done. [some applause] Stop doing that. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

The Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I would like to give notice to the House now under Standing Order 7(8) that the Routine shall be extended beyond 3 p.m.

3:00

Presenting Petitions

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to present two petitions today that have been approved by Parliamentary Counsel. The petitions are on angel cradles, which are safe, anonymous drop-off spots where babies can be left when no one is able to care for them. The first petition prayer states:

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government to adopt a policy to ensure that all new hospitals are required to provide Angel Cradles.

The second petition prayer states:

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government to establish at least one Angel Cradle in a central hospital in Calgary.

I want to thank my guests and congratulate them on their hard work. They met with the ministry earlier today to discuss this item as well.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Bill 207

Municipal Government (Legion Tax Exemption) Amendment Act, 2018

Mr. Rosendahl: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to request leave to introduce Bill 207, the Municipal Government (Legion Tax Exemption) Amendment Act, 2018.

Mr. Speaker, legions have a long history in Canada, and our veterans deserve our support and respect. Bill 207 will support legions and the good work they do in our communities by exempting them from property taxes. I will be consulting with legions and others in Alberta this summer to gather feedback on this important bill, and I look forward to debating this bill with my colleagues in the House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 207 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Bill 208

Public Recreation Areas Consultation Act

Mr. Westhead: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is a great pleasure today to request leave to introduce Bill 208, the Public Recreation Areas Consultation Act.

Recreation areas on public land are important environmental and economic assets, to be enjoyed by all Albertans. Community stewards play an integral role in the development, maintenance, and protection of these recreation areas throughout the province. If

passed, this bill will ensure that community stewards, who often invest significant time and money into the creation and enhancements of these recreational assets, can file a consultative notation on those lands and that they will be consulted when land-use changes related to that public land are considered.

I have heard loud and clear from constituents and from Albertans across the province that they want to have a seat at the table to ensure their hard work is taken into consideration when making land-use decisions. I would like to thank all those who provided ideas and suggestions as I drafted Bill 208, and I look forward to consulting further over the next several months. It is my hope that it will create a process that works in everybody's best interests.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 208 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of a letter written by Brigitte Sakaluk, CAO of the MD of St. Paul Foundation, to Wendy Corbiere, the director of laboratory services, north zone, regarding the cancellation of on-site lab collection services to our seniors.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders

Third Reading

Bill 5

An Act to Strengthen Financial Security for Persons with Disabilities

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to move third reading of Bill 5, An Act to Strengthen Financial Security for Persons with Disabilities.

The intent of this bill is to ensure families are able to plan for their children's future and that Albertans with disabilities have access to financial security, as all Albertans do. This legislation ensures Albertans can establish trusts for family members and loved ones who are receiving AISH benefits without impacting their AISH eligibility. It also provides a one-year grace period, if someone receives a large payment, to make thoughtful decisions and plans. It has been incredible to hear the overwhelming positive response to this bill. Self-advocates, families, workers, organizations, and community leaders have said that this is a long-overdue change that they have been calling for for years.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

I want to recognize the MLA for Calgary-Currie for his great leadership and work on this bill. He has been a true champion for this issue. He consulted with hundreds of self-advocates, families, and organizations across this province. Individuals and families shared their stories and hopes and said that this change would make a meaningful difference in their lives. That is why we are here today. We are here because we are listening to the community and want to make life better for Albertans with disabilities and their families. We are here because we want to correct a wrong, a wrong that occurred when the previous government disallowed trusts. Because of this bill, parents and guardians will be able to make thoughtful decisions to plan for the long-term care of their children and loved ones who have disabilities.

Albertans who count on AISH will not have to deplete their savings to continue to receive benefits, including health benefits. This bill corrects an injustice against people with disabilities and their families. Our government's commitment to correcting injustices and making life better underpins much of our work. We stopped the PDD safety standards, we removed the supports intensity scale, and we have refused to make reckless cuts. We have established a new relationship with the community, one that is based on listening and working collaboratively together instead of imposing changes on the community.

Once again, I want to thank every self-advocate, family member, worker, Albertan, organization, and community member that shared their support for this change. I encourage every member of this House to join with them and support this bill.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yes, I rise to speak to Bill 5, An Act to Strengthen Financial Security for Persons with Disabilities. This is an important piece of legislation that will exempt discretionary and nondiscretionary trusts as assets when determining AISH eligibility. As well, it will provide a one-year grace period for AISH recipients who receive an inheritance or a lump-sum payment to give them an opportunity to take advantage of discretionary trusts.

I think this is important because, quite honestly, family members care deeply when one of their own is severely handicapped. They often love them with even a more intense love. They have a loyalty and honour to care for their own, to stick with them and look after them, and government policy should actually support that, not dissuade family participation and family ability to care for their own and should not make it, really, a discrimination against the person who needs support and help. Rather, we should have legislation that actually enhances family support and treats those with disabilities with full equality before the law and full fairness before the law.

3:10

Most of all, the most important thing, I think, is that AISH recipients should not be disenfranchised from the rights of family inheritance, family property. They should not be cut off, as it were, from family support. There are already a number of exemptions for AISH recipients so that their AISH payments are not disqualified. I'll just list some of those AISH exemptions: a home or a quarter section that they live on, a vehicle, a second vehicle adapted for disability, clothing, reasonable household items, a registered disability fund. What this bill does is that it simply adds the additional item of discretionary and nondiscretionary trusts to that list of exempted funds or exempted inheritances and rights. I think that's important because it treats them, then, with fairness and equality before the law.

The value of AISH is already very minimal on a monthly basis for people to live on. In fact, I received a call just this morning from a husband and wife receiving the \$1,588 a month. By the time they pay their rent of \$1,000, food at \$600, the cost of rapidly rising utilities, they're struggling. For families to be able to backstop them, for families to be able to engage with them and support them and be partners with them is not a bad thing. It's a good thing. The goal really should be not to exclude family support but to actually enhance it and support it. We don't want to keep AISH recipients on a poverty line deliberately. We don't want to put them in a

position where the only supports they can find are from government supports. I think that's important.

I'd like to just tell a brief story about a gentleman in my riding that I've had very close experience with. I count him, actually, as a close friend. A few years ago – well, let me back up. He was born with some developmental disabilities and lived with his parents as long as he could. They had a house at the time, an interesting house, actually, built in about the 1920s, I think. It had been many different things in the community over the years. But when they passed on, they willed to him this house as a place to live. He's lived in that same house since he was born. Thankfully, a home, as I just read a moment ago, is included in that list of exemptions. Otherwise, he would have lost a place to live and/or he would have lost his AISH payments, which he depends on for his monthly living.

I think it's a great boon and a great gift that he has been able to have both a place to live and a means of support monthly throughout his lifetime. The very important part of this here is that his parents, as they became older and then eventually passed away, had the anxiety and the worry and the concern about how their son is going to be looked after after they pass away, how he is going to survive after they pass away. It's something that many families truly, truly agonize over. This is one of the things that I think will help them to be able to have the assurance that their son or daughter will be cared for, will be able to survive, will have what they need for an adequate and a reasonable life in this world.

The gentleman that I've been speaking about is well known in his community. Everybody likes him. A few years ago that house he was living in was getting very tired, as you can imagine. He's been living in it his entire life, as I said, built about the 1920s. I was very proud to be able to lead a community effort to do, basically, about a \$25,000 home makeover project for him in the community, to completely redo the interior and some of the exterior of his house, put a new roof on it, new windows in it, make sure the furnace was safe, reinforce the foundation to a very old house. Again, it continues to be a place where he can live safely, live with security and without fear and anxiety.

In his case, because they were able to give him the house that he lived in, it worked out well. For other people, they don't have the house to give them. For other people, they put together a trust. They may have the money in a different format, and they would like to ensure that their son or daughter has some means of additional support, so they go and put together a trust. It's much the same as for this gentleman a house.

But I do think it's extremely important that we show the dignity and the respect of allowing families to participate and to contribute and to create that kind of economic security for their family member, that may struggle otherwise and not be able to find employment. It just gives them peace of mind to be able to leave an inheritance, that they have worked hard for, that they have earned, that they've probably scrimped and saved for, in order to provide something for their son or daughter. To assure them that they will not be disqualified from AISH I think is extremely important. The one-year grace period for those who receive funds that are not protected or secured I think is also important so that there's time for that to happen.

I am a little bit concerned, though, for folks who may be cognitively impaired who receive those kinds of funds and don't have the knowledge or the ability to put them into a safe, legal vehicle. I trust that there will be some kind of support, some kind of advocacy on their behalf, that they will not lose this benefit simply because they are not aware or do not know how to proceed with those kinds of complicated details of setting up a trust.

I really believe the government should not treat people differently based on their family situation. It's not always their choice. It's

never their choice, in fact. We ought to support them, we ought to inform them, we ought to encourage them, and, above all, we ought not to treat them as being less than human.

I fully support this bill and encourage the rest of the House to do so. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd also like to thank the member who spoke before me. He certainly did a good job of addressing the issues that are identified and addressed through this bill. I rise in support of this bill, An Act to Strengthen Financial Security for Persons with Disabilities, and I do so for a number of reasons. I was a single parent for a long time in my life, and I worried about my children, what would happen as they grew older. In fact, one of my daughters has some medical issues right now and, in fact, may eventually have to depend on AISH.

Even before I was elected and I had notified that I was interested in running, a number of people came to see me, who turned out to be constituents of mine. They met me to discuss their concerns around AISH, and one of the issues that came up over and over and over again was just this issue in terms of the Henson trust, as my colleague had brought forward for his private member's bill. In this area, when families are making such decisions, normally you wouldn't have to consider how you would leave an inheritance to your children. If you have two children, you could divide it in half. If you have five, they all get a fifth of it. But in the case of a disability this would have made a difference if that child or that adult child had a disability and was receiving AISH. The people who came to see me, the constituents, said: why should that child be treated any differently than the other children in my family?

In the fall session my colleague from Calgary-Currie brought forward his private member's bill, and it addressed that issue. The constituents who had spoken to me were over the moon. They were so happy that he had brought it forward. In fact, he came down to Lethbridge, and he did a session on what the bill was going to do. I don't remember exactly how many people were there, but certainly the room was packed. They listened to the presentation. Suffice to say that at the end of the presentation, no one in the room opposed that proposed bill. When the bill died on the floor, however, they came to my office, and they expressed their disappointment and their concerns about this bill dying. And I have to say that I shared that disappointment.

3:20

I was, however, very pleased to hear when the minister introduced his bill. Certainly, when they heard it, I had visits in my office again because they were pretty happy it came forward. If this bill passes, and I certainly hope that it will, it will provide persons with disabilities the same opportunities as those without disabilities in terms of their financial stability within their families.

Currently if a person with a disability who is receiving AISH were to receive an inheritance, as my colleague across the floor has said, they may well lose their eligibility to receive AISH. AISH does provide benefits to help persons with disabilities with things like their daily needs and health-related supports. An inheritance might well put them over the threshold, and they would possibly lose those supports for a period of time until the inheritance had been exhausted. This person would then have to reapply to again establish their eligibility for AISH. Depending on when it was exhausted, that may mean having to wait months before they meet the threshold of an annual income.

Before my children were born, as I said, I began planning for their futures, and as a single parent that planning really played on me in terms of: what would happen if I died, and how would my kids be taken care of? They're adults now, but it still plays on my mind. I thought about what they needed for now but also for the future. I didn't have much, but I put away a little or as much as I could. I bought insurance policies just in case, God forbid, anything should happen to me or happen to them. I didn't have enough money to bury them, so I made sure I had insurance policies that would cover the cost of a burial if either one of my kids died. All of those things played in my mind as a parent.

Certainly, this bill is a bill that I wish had been around when my kids were little so that I wouldn't have been real worried about them and certainly when I realized that my daughter had some issues that may put her in this position.

When I talk to other parents, many – and probably many of you in this room have done the same thing. You've worried about your kids. You've gotten the insurance policy. You got an insurance policy on your house so that if you died, the house is paid for, all of those little things, everything you can do to protect your children. This particular bill I think takes some of that worry away from parents, not all of it, but it certainly takes a big portion of that worry away from the parents. It doesn't mean that, you know, they won't continue to love and protect their kids, because they will do that until the day they die.

My question about this is: why has this not always been in place? I know that there was something in place before, and then it was changed, and I was kind of shocked that it had changed. Why should someone who is disabled be treated any differently than someone who isn't disabled or, I should say, maybe ably challenged? If a parent is in a position to be able to leave something for their children, why shouldn't it be divided equally between them?

On that note, I am supporting this bill because it is the right thing to do. I am representing my constituents who have spoken to me about fixing this issue. Now, there are many other issues that also came up, and every single one of them I've brought forward to the minister. I am really happy that this piece can move forward, and I certainly hope everybody in this House is going to support this bill.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, would the hon. minister like to close debate?

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to everyone who participated in the discussion of Bill 5. I will really briefly address the concern raised by the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka around cognitively disabled individuals and family members. I think similar concerns were raised by the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View and the Member for Calgary-Greenway. Under the Adult Guardianship and Trusteeship Act there are different mechanisms available, and those protections are available. They can appoint a trustee, and the trustee will have oversight by the court, specifically if they are dealing with financial matters. If there is no one available to act as a trustee, the Public Trustee can be served the notice, and the Public Trustee can be appointed to deal with those matters.

Another question raised was around: if cognitively impaired Albertans receive funds in inheritance, what protection will be available to them? In that regard, I think the personal representative of the deceased's estate is required under the Estate Administration Act to ensure that a cognitively impaired individual is properly represented. They would have to notify the court, in the application to become the representative, of that concern. Under different

statutes there are protections that are afforded to cognitively disabled Albertans.

With that, again I thank each and every one who participated in the debate, and I close debate on Bill 5.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

[Motion carried; Bill 5 read a third time]

Bill 14

An Act to Empower Utility Consumers

The Acting Speaker: Is there a member wishing to speak to Bill 14? The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Mr. Hinkley: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to rise and move third reading of Bill 14, An Act to Empower Utility Consumers, on behalf of the Minister of Service Alberta and Status of Women.

I would like to speak one last time about Bill 14 and the provision related to the dissemination of information related to utility providers. We have heard from Albertans that more information needs to be shared about utility providers in order to educate consumers about services provided to them. The Utilities Consumer Advocate is ideally positioned to provide this service as they have both the expertise in this area and the means to make this information publicly available. Having compliance and service-quality information available for public review will motivate businesses to improve their practices in order to attract and retain consumers. Where consumers become aware of providers, retailers, or distributors that are frequently receiving complaints under the Consumer Protection Act or other legislation, they can take steps to protect themselves. This will be particularly useful in a utilities context, where some information is highly technical and can be made more user friendly by the UCA.

To conclude, this government has heard from Albertans that they want greater transparency in the electricity and natural gas sector. I believe that was originally in Bill 208 to help meet this demand, and I am delighted to see that what I proposed last fall is being carried forward.

3:30

Lastly, I'm very proud that the mandate of the Utilities Consumer Advocate will now include mediation for water services. This means that Albertans will not be alone and will have somewhere to turn if they have questions about their water bill, and it means that they can rely on the trusted expertise of the Utilities Consumer Advocate to help them address concerns or resolve a dispute. As a result, this increased transparency and the inclusion of water in the UCA's mandate will empower Albertans when interacting with their electricity, natural gas, and water utilities.

I have no doubt that Albertans stand to benefit, and I'm looking forward to seeing this bill implemented. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate that. I will speak on Bill 14. I am looking forward to supporting this bill. This is a good piece of legislation that has been put forward by the Minister of Service Alberta.

During my last couple of speeches I used an example of a wonderful woman in Calgary that had a \$2,700 bill. She couldn't seem to get through that there was an error. I also had another example where a local businessman in my constituency had a

decimal point out on the meter that he had, and he had excessively high bills that also weren't addressed by that municipality. So we have water bills that are being put forward by municipalities that seem to have no mechanism to be able to facilitate a good dialogue on, if you will.

The only thing that I will say that I'm very disappointed on with this government is that I put forward an amendment that said: let's bring some clarity to the reporting of what exactly is put in a bill; that is, the charges, the fees, the levies. What we need to do is to be able to have an explanation of exactly what those charges are for.

I gave examples of the city of Edmonton, for instance. This is not a water example; this is a new home example. New homes in Edmonton were charged an administration fee that was meant for creating efficiency within the city of Edmonton to be able to accelerate new homes through the system. What we ended up seeing was a system where it became a slush fund for the city of Edmonton. Clearly, that wasn't the intent. Clearly, that's wrong.

But other than that, other than the minister and the NDP caucus voting down a reasonable amendment, I will support this bill, and I encourage all of my colleagues to do the same. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose, would you like to close debate?

Mr. Hinkley: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yes, I would like to bring the debate on Bill 14 to a close. Thank you to the opposition for your support of this bill. Thank you to the Minister of Service Alberta for championing consumer protection. It is an honour to have my private member's bill, Bill 208, come to fruition.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

[Motion carried; Bill 14 read a third time]

Bill 16

Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Statutes Amendment Act, 2018

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour to rise today and on behalf of the Minister of Labour move third reading of Bill 16, the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Statutes Amendment Act, 2018.

Now, the minister asked me to convey her thanks to the members of the House for their comments on the bill. They've been extensive and indeed colourful.

I'd like to take this opportunity to address a few concerns that were raised during Committee of the Whole. Bill 16 will guarantee a level playing field by ensuring that parties that are closely connected be subject to a single spending limit. It will also increase transparency by enhancing reporting requirements. Our government continues to act on our commitment to ensure that our electoral system is fair, accountable, and transparent. Elections, after all, should be decided by ideas and not money, which is what Albertans expect. These amendments preserve the fairness and integrity of Alberta's democratic electoral system.

In regard to spending limits the intent of our amendments is electoral fairness. Bill 16 requires that associated parties be subject to the spending limit of a single party. Concerns have been expressed to this House that the definition of associated parties may be a bit too broad. Well, when determining whether or not a party

is associated, the Election Commissioner must consider multiple criteria. Those criteria would include whether the parties have common leadership, political programs, or policy statements; whether one party controls another; whether parties have the same advertising material and branding; and the nature of agreements or interactions that might exist between the parties.

The Election Commissioner will have the authority to consider all relevant information. This approach provides an appropriate level, I believe, of guidance in terms of how to interpret the amendments while at the same time it does not hinder the normal interaction or discussions between parties. We believe this provides a workable and a fair process that will apply to all parties now and in the future.

In regard to government advertising another concern that was raised was whether there will be restrictions on government spending in advertising. Now, we kept our promise that public dollars cannot be used for electioneering. That's why we addressed government advertising in Bill 32, An Act to Strengthen and Protect Democracy in Alberta, which passed last fall. It's imperative that the public service be able to provide Albertans with the information they need even during an election, and Bill 32 contained provisions that prohibit taxpayer money from being used in ways that could influence elections while preventing a total shutdown of all government communication with the public.

During the election period the following types of advertisements and publications would still be allowed: those required by law, those required for procurement or employment purposes, important public health or safety messages, and continuing advertising about an ongoing program. Albertans can be reassured that they will have access to important nonpartisan public information and that they will hear from the government when it comes to essential information on health and safety and continuing advertising about ongoing programs.

These amendments would enhance transparency and protect fairness in election spending. Fair elections depend on all parties and candidates having a level playing field so ideas and not money decide who wins. Bill 16 is another step to preserve the fairness and integrity of all future elections within our province.

I look forward to the continued high quality of debate on this bill. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 16, Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Statutes Amendment Act, 2018. Here we are again dealing with another bill to deal with election finance law. Bill 16 deals with a lot of little things, little things that probably should have been looked after in Bill 32. But that's okay. Here we are dealing with them now. I think if the NDP would have in fact conducted proper consultation and done good consultation before introducing Bill 32, we maybe would have been able to skirt this process, but we're where we're at now. When it comes to issues of democracy and accountability, which the NDP are infamous for standing up to defend, it is incredibly ironic that the NDP can't seem to get this basic consultation correct yet.

We see where implications of Bill 32 have caused Elections Alberta to now request an additional just about \$9 million this year

to cover off the expenses of implementing that legislation. The door-to-door enumerations do cost money. The UCP did let the NDP know that this was a concern, but I guess they didn't listen. It was not even included in the 2018 budget. So we look at this and start to wonder: well, are the NDP even listening?

3:40

Under Bill 16 the newly appointed Election Commissioner would be able to initiate an investigation of their own at the request of the Chief Electoral Officer or at the request of an elector or registered party in order to determine if two or more registered parties are associated. If two parties are found to be associated, they must share the \$2 million spending limit for a single party.

I would suggest that, clearly, this legislation is targeted at the United Conservative Party, the NDP concern that the United Conservative Party would possibly stretch the rules and use the legacy parties – the legacy PC Party, the legacy Wildrose Party, and also the United Conservative Party – to be able to spend \$2 million. But, you know, we're going to comply. Our legacy PC Party and the legacy Wildrose Party outlined in their unity agreement, in their agreement in principle that established our United Conservative Party, that that would be the case, so I think we were one step ahead of the game even on what's being proposed in this bill.

Bill 16 has some positive housekeeping measures such as increasing the fines for registered parties, registered candidates, registered nomination contestants, and the chief financial officers of these entities who exceed spending limits. I believe that the current fines were too small to really be any kind of an incentive for those who wish to take advantage of the law to not do so. So I believe that's a good move, to increase those penalties.

The legislation will also mean that election advertising period rules will now also apply to by-elections, which will bring advertising done by third parties during a by-election under election rules as opposed to political advertising, where they currently fall. Election advertising rules apply starting December 1 prior to an election year and end on polling day whereas political advertising is year-round.

Madam Speaker, if the NDP had done their job right the first time and listened to the UCP opposition, the Chief Electoral Officer, and others, Bill 16 would not be needed, but here we are again. Bill 16 is filled with small fixes and could have been handled much better earlier.

I will support Bill 16 and vote in favour. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

Is there anybody wishing to close debate?

All right. Seeing none, I will now call the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 16 read a third time]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. That is indeed wonderful news, and I want to congratulate the House on the great progress that we've made this afternoon. It's been a long week, and I am glad to say that it is now coming to an end. I will move that we adjourn the House until 1:30 on Monday afternoon, and I would like to wish all members a safe trip home.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 3:44 p.m.]

Bill Status Report for the 29th Legislature - 4th Session (2018)

Activity to Thursday, May 31, 2018

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

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

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

Bill 1 — Energy Diversification Act (McCuaig-Boyd)

First Reading — 6 (*Mar. 8, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 50-51 (*Mar. 13, 2018 morn.*), 184-87 (*Mar. 15, 2018 aft.*), 233-43 (*Mar. 20, 2018 aft.*), 301-08 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft.*), 919-27 (*May 9, 2018 morn.*), 981-84 (*May 9, 2018 eve.*), 1054-59 (*May 14, 2018 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1280-87 (*May 29, 2018 aft.*), (*May 29, 2018 aft.*), (*May 29, 2018 eve.*), 1311-18 (*May 29, 2018 eve., passed*)

Bill 2 — Growth and Diversification Act (\$) (Bilous)

First Reading — 118 (*Mar. 14, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 243-46 (*Mar. 20, 2018 morn.*), 294-96 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft.*), 314-25 (*Mar. 22, 2018 morn.*), 411-12 (*Apr. 4, 2018 aft.*), 702-05 (*May 1, 2018 eve.*), 928-33 (*May 9, 2018 morn.*), 1061-68 (*May 15, 2018 morn.*), 1101-04 (*May 15, 2018 eve.*), 1163-67 (*May 16, 2018 eve.*), 1202-06 (*May 17, 2018 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1253-58 (*May 29, 2018 morn.*), 1288-97 (*May 29, 2018 aft.*), (*May 29, 2018 eve.*), 1379-82 (*May 30, 2018 eve., passed*)

Bill 3 — Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2018 (\$) (Ceci)

First Reading — 184 (*Mar. 15, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 221-26 (*Mar. 19, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 261-68 (*Mar. 20, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 296-98 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 28, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force Mar. 28, 2018; SA 2018 c1]

Bill 4 — Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2018 (\$) (Ceci)

First Reading — 165 (*Mar. 15, 2018 morn., passed*)

Second Reading — 226-32 (*Mar. 19, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 268-75 (*Mar. 20, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 298-301 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 28, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force Mar. 28, 2018; SA 2018 c2]

Bill 5 — An Act to Strengthen Financial Security for Persons with Disabilities (Sabir)

First Reading — 200-201 (*Mar. 19, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 360-62 (*Apr. 3, 2018 morn.*), 482-87 (*Apr. 10, 2018 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 847-54 (*May 7, 2018 eve.*), 1084-88 (*May 15, 2018 aft.*), 1361-64 (*May 30, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1418-21 (*May 31, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 6 — Gaming and Liquor Statutes Amendment Act, 2018 (Ganley)

First Reading — 448 (*Apr. 9, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 533-34 (*Apr. 12, 2018 aft.*), 669-79 (*May 1, 2018 aft.*), 1010-13 (*May 10, 2018 aft.*), 1101 (*May 15, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1158-63 (*May 16, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1360-61 (*May 30, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 7 — Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act (Carlier)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 491-97 (*Apr. 10, 2018 aft.*), 534-36 (*Apr. 12, 2018 aft.*), 679-83 (*May 1, 2018 aft.*), 908-09 (*May 8, 2018 eve.*), 913-14 (*May 8, 2018 eve.*), 1097-98 (*May 15, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1299-1311 (*May 29, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1365-74 (*May 30, 2018 eve., passed on division*)

Bill 8 — Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2018 (S. Anderson)

First Reading — 374 (*Apr. 3, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 9* — Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act (Hoffman)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 497-502 (*Apr. 10, 2018 aft.*), 785-93 (*May 3, 2018 morn.*), 775-76 (*May 3, 2018 morn.*), 807-08 (*May 3, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 909-13 (*May 8, 2018 eve.*), 957-61 (*May 9, 2018 aft.*), 992-94 (*May 10, 2018 morn.*), 1088-96 (*May 15, 2018 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1352-60 (*May 30, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Bill 10* — An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements (S. Anderson)

First Reading — 528 (*Apr. 12, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 611-12 (*Apr. 19, 2018 aft.*), 643-50 (*May 1, 2018 morn.*), 761-72 (*May 2, 2018 eve.*), 973-81 (*May 9, 2018 eve.*), 1049-54 (*May 14, 2018 eve.*), 1180-87 (*May 17, 2018 morn.*), 1242-47 (*May 28, 2018 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1287-88 (*May 29, 2018 aft.*), (*May 29, 2018 eve.*), 1374-79 (*May 30, 2018 eve., passed with amendments*)

Bill 11 — Lobbyists Amendment Act, 2018 (Gray)

First Reading — 505 (*Apr. 11, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 612-13 (*Apr. 19, 2018 aft.*), 650-56 (*May 1, 2018 morn.*), 772-74 (*May 2, 2018 eve.*), 967-73 (*May 9, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1157 (*May 16, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1382-86 (*May 30, 2018 eve., passed*)

Bill 12* — Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act (McCuaig-Boyd)

First Reading — 547 (*Apr. 16, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 736-46 (*May 2, 2018 aft.*), 854-55 (*May 7, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 961-65 (*May 9, 2018 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 994-96 (*May 10, 2018 morn.*), 1135-54 (*May 16, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 18, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2018 c P-21.5]

Bill 13* — An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future (\$) (McCuaig-Boyd)

First Reading — 606 (*Apr. 19, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 746-53 (*May 2, 2018 aft.*), 808-16 (*May 3, 2018 aft.*), 855-64 (*May 7, 2018 eve.*), 947-57 (*May 9, 2018 aft.*), 1169-80 (*May 17, 2018 morn.*), 1247-50 (*May 28, 2018 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1322-34 (*May 30, 2018 morn.*), 1397-1404 (*May 31, 2018 morn., adjourned on amendment*)

Bill 14 — An Act to Empower Utility Consumers (McLean)

First Reading — 590 (*Apr. 18, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 718-24 (*May 2, 2018 morn.*), 915-19 (*May 9, 2018 morn.*), 1098-1101 (*May 15, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1319-22 (*May 30, 2018 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1421 (*May 31, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 15 — Appropriation Act, 2018 (\$) (Ceci)

First Reading — 610 (*Apr. 19, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Second Reading — 683-89 (*May 1, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 753-56 (*May 2, 2018 aft.*), 757-60 (*May 2, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 776-85 (*May 3, 2018 morn., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*May 14, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 14, 2018; SA 2018 c3]

Bill 16 — Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Statutes Amendment Act, 2018 (Gray)

First Reading — 879 (*May 8, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1010-13 (*May 10, 2018 aft.*), 1105-22 (*May 16, 2018 morn.*), 1155-57 (*May 16, 2018 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1258-64 (*May 29, 2018 morn.*), 1299 (*May 29, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1421-22 (*May 31, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 17 — Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2018 (Ceci)

First Reading — 806 (*May 3, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 864-65 (*May 7, 2018 eve.*), 1014-15 (*May 10, 2018 aft.*), 1058-59 (*May 14, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1157 (*May 16, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1364 (*May 30, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 18 — Statutes Amendment Act, 2018 (Mason)

First Reading — 1201 (*May 17, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1251-52 (*May 28, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1387-97 (*May 31, 2018 morn., passed*)

Bill 201 — Employment Standards (Firefighter Leave) Amendment Act, 2018 (W. Anderson)

First Reading — 118 (*Mar. 14, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 201-14 (*Mar. 19, 2018 aft., referred to Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future*)

Bill 202 — Alberta Taxpayer Protection (Carbon Tax Referendum) Amendment Act, 2018 (Kenney)

First Reading — 179 (*Mar. 15, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 549-63 (*Apr. 16, 2018 aft., defeated on division*)

Bill 203 — Long Term Care Information Act (Schreiner)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 632-40 (*Apr. 30, 2018 aft.*), 829-33 (*May 7, 2018 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — (*May 28, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 204 — Land Statutes (Abolition of Adverse Possession) Amendment Act, 2018 (Gotfried)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 833-41 (*May 7, 2018 aft., adjourned*), 1031-37 (*May 14, 2018 aft., reasoned amendment agreed to*)

Bill 205 — Supporting Accessible Mental Health Services Act (Jabbour)

First Reading — 1008 (*May 10, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1037 (*May 14, 2018 aft., deferred to Monday, October 29, 2018*)

Bill 206 — Societies (Preventing the Promotion of Hate) Amendment Act, 2018 (Coolahan)

First Reading — 1008-09 (*May 10, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1037 (*May 14, 2018 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 207 — Municipal Government (Legion Tax Exemption) Amendment Act, 2018 (Rosendahl)

First Reading — 1418 (*May 31, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 208 — Public Recreation Areas Consultation Act (Westhead)

First Reading — 1418 (*May 31, 2018 aft., passed*)

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, June 4, 2018

Day 37

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (NDP), Speaker
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Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (UCP)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (NDP)
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Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (NDP)
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Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP)
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Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (UCP)
Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (NDP)
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)
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Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP)
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)
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Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)
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Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (NDP)
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (UCP)
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van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (UCP)
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (NDP),
Deputy Government Whip
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)
Vacant, Fort McMurray-Conklin
Vacant, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake

Party standings:

New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 25 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent Conservative: 1 Vacant: 2

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Drever	Stier
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Kazim	Schreiner
Kleinsteinuber	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, June 4, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Hon. members, as some of you may be aware, on May 29 it was International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers, and yesterday, June 3, was Canadian Armed Forces Day. Let us each in our own way pray or reflect on those who serve in our military and our peacekeeping forces and their families, who, in so doing, afford us the privilege of serving as democratically elected representatives.

Hon. members, ladies and gentlemen, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Mr. R.J. Chambers, and I would invite all to participate in the language of their choice.

Hon. Members:

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

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal.

Ms Gray: Merci. M. le Président, c'est avec fierté que je me lève à la Chambre aujourd'hui pour introduire les étudiants de l'école Frère Antoine. The students are from a French immersion school in the Catholic school system located in the Tipaskan neighbourhood of Mill Woods. They are here participating in School at the Legislature this week, and I hope their Monday morning has been off to a great start so far. We have 26 students with us and their teacher, Georgette Alwan. They are in our members' gallery, and I would like all of the students to please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Bonjour.

The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud to recognize guests who are seated in the members' gallery, who are here from the policy, special projects, and communications unit in the Department of Health. These staff and this unit work hard to develop operational Alberta health care insurance plan policy according to government legislation and act as a liaison with federal, provincial, and territorial governments to optimize and uphold our interprovincial agreements. I'm proud to recognize the work they do behind the scenes to support the health care system in making lives better for Albertans. I now invite Ekua Affum, Jan Robertson, Sharon Romanowski, and Lorraine Smart to please rise and receive the warm welcome of our Assembly.

Secondly, I have additional guests who are here today from the Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus Association of Northern Alberta, who are seated, again, in the members' gallery. They work to

provide the best possible health and quality of life for those living with spina bifida and hydrocephalus through education, support, and advocacy, and I want to thank them for their advocacy, dedication, and partnership with our government on this work. Their support and compassion are essential to the health of our communities. I ask that they rise or wave if they're unable to: Cindy Smith, Nathan Smith, Danielle Schmidt, Alexandra Karatairis, Sean Bouffard, and Ken Godbeer. If there are any others, please join me in recognizing them in the gallery.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Mr. Carson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce the Estigoy family, who own and operate GoldenBucks bakery in the La Perle community. Earlier this session I had the opportunity to share their story. After being laid off in 2016, Evan and his wife, Edna, turned to their passion of baking and cooking and to their Filipino heritage for inspiration. Today the Estigoys shared an update with me that they have been offered the opportunity to produce their delicious empanadas at the Food Processing Development Centre in Leduc and have also expanded distribution into Manitoba. Congratulations to them. I ask Edna, Evan, Erin, and Elie Estigoy to now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to all members of the Assembly a guest from the most humble constituency of Edmonton-Gold Bar, Ms Cheryl Purpur. Cheryl Purpur is a constituent. She has a background in special education. She did groundbreaking work in the field of special education and has been a consultant with Alberta social services in the past. For eight years she's advocated to the Alberta government to change the regulations regarding service dogs. I'm pleased to be part of a government that finally got that work done. She wants to make special mention of her relationship with the hon. David Russell, former Deputy Premier of Alberta, for guiding her in how to advocate to the government on this very important issue. With her today is her dog companion, Scarlet O'Hara, who carries a number of titles: best puppy in special show and grand Canadian champion. I'm sure that she's a very good girl. I want all members of the Assembly to please give the warm welcome of this Assembly to Cheryl and her pet, Scarlet.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Canadian Armed Forces Day

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm honoured to mark Canadian Armed Forces Day, which occurred on Sunday, June 3. In my role as Alberta's liaison to the Canadian Armed Forces I've been privileged to meet with serving members of the Canadian Armed Forces, veterans, and cadets. I have always been impressed by the remarkable sense of duty, outstanding professionalism, and the sacrifices that they have made and continue to make to defend the values that we cherish.

Alberta is home to the Canadian 3rd Division, the largest military division in Canada. Headquartered out of the Edmonton Garrison,

it commands from Thunder Bay to Victoria and north to Yukon. Tens of thousands of regular and reserve CAF members, civilians, and their families lives and work throughout Alberta. In Canada and around the world, whether restoring peace and security in conflict zones or providing relief in response to natural disasters, we know that we can count on the sense of duty and unwavering dedication of our women and men in uniform.

It is also a time to recognize the greatest supporters of our Canadian Armed Forces, their families. Their efforts behind the scenes often go unrecognized. Canadian Armed Forces Day is a time to recognize them, too. Yesterday the annual Loops for the Troops at Edmonton's Military Family Resource Centre on the base raised money for the MFRC. Participants have raised more than \$120,000 over the past decade. It allows the MFRC to provide programs and services that enhance the strength and resiliency of our military families.

It gives me great pleasure to join with all Albertans in offering our sincere thanks for your outstanding service. My thoughts also turn to those that are no longer with us and to their loved ones. I know I speak on behalf of all in expressing the utmost respect and appreciation for our military personnel and for their families.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

1:40 Off-highway Vehicle Users' Backcountry Access

Mr. Schneider: Mr. Speaker, due to circumstances, I didn't have any opportunities as a kid to embrace the freedom of the backcountry that we could actually see from where I lived. Since becoming an adult, though, I have spent many decades enjoying the Livingstone Range. My family spent many summers random camping out there, and I learned to leave it better than I found it. Admittedly, there are some people that use this beautiful area, then leave their garbage strewn around for the next responsible camper to pick up. It's a minority of campers that act this way, but I believe it's something that can be fixed.

For the last 10 years I've been riding a quad or side-by-side on trails in the areas of Dutch Creek, the Oldman, and Racehorse. Those that I ride with respect the area and stay out of creeks and off areas that don't have trails and certainly stay away from wetland areas, but admittedly there are some that don't. Have things gotten out of hand with regard to OHVs back there? Maybe. But maybe they haven't either. Maybe it's a small percentage that have abused the area while the majority of responsible users have been ignored and lumped in with the irresponsible.

Federal and provincial governments have partnered with and given grants to organizations like the Quad Squad down south for many years. They and other OHV groups have spent thousands of volunteer hours in stewardship of the trails, education of users, and construction of bridges over creeks and streams that are of concern. It seems so short sighted to take it all away. The area needs a balance so that all Albertans can enjoy it. In this government's eye the pendulum has swung too far one way, but this same government is determined to swing it too far the other way. Isn't there something in the middle that works for everyone? My constituents have said this: the best path forward is to ensure the existing laws and get rid of the troublemakers. Strict enforcement.

Responsible users are being punished here. It's up to everyone, including government, to make sure that users now and in the future get a chance to recreate in these areas responsibly.

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

East Town Get Down Calgary Music Festival

Ms Luff: Thank you. On May 26 I had the opportunity to attend an incredible new music festival in the heart of east Calgary, the East Town Get Down. This festival brought over 70 bands to eight venues along International Avenue and hosted over 1,000 fans. It was copresented by the Major Minor Music Project and the International Avenue BRZ. Over 100 volunteers went above and beyond to ensure the success of this festival. It's inspiring when people come together. Each gives so much more in collaboration.

The festival focused on inclusion. Seven of the eight venues were all ages, and the music ranged from hip hop to punk rock to heavy metal, soul, and singer-songwriter. There was also an indigenous resilience in music showcase featuring traditional group Eya-Hey Nakoda and a hip hop duo from Vancouver, the Snotty Nose Rez Kids. Also, the price point made it possible for anybody to attend, with wristbands going for only \$30.

The venues were eclectic and a true representation of everything International Avenue has to offer: the back lot of Fuse 33 makerspace, Paradise Lanes bowling alley, Jane Bond BBQ, the Border Crossing Pub, and three Ethiopian restaurants – Fassil's, Ensira, and TG juice – because it's not a party in east Calgary without injera.

Highlights of the night for me included the Tamil Calgarian hip hop duo Cartel Madras; teenage rockers with my favourite name ever, Gratuitous Platypus; and the Edmonton 11-piece funk-punk ensemble Klusterfunk, who are amazing. You should go see them.

Everyone I spoke with had an amazing time, with folks from Forest Lawn commenting on how proud they were to have this in their neighbourhood and folks from elsewhere in Calgary talking about the experience of finding new venues and new bands they'd never heard before.

I have so much appreciation for the International Avenue BRZ team for the great work they've done in Forest Lawn building an exciting, vibrant, and safe neighbourhood. The people, communities, and businesses I see every day make me proud to live in east Calgary. Amazing things are happening in Forest Lawn, and I urge everyone to come visit and to mark the last weekend in May on your calendar for next year to come to the East Town Get Down.

Thank you.

Parental Choice in Education

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, Airdrie is a vibrant community, home to many families with school-aged children, my family, too. Some of the most important and difficult decisions that parents make in the course of raising their children are decisions pertaining to their education. I'm proud of the freedom that parents have in this province when it comes to these decisions, whether they end up pursuing public, private, charter, or home-based education. Parents know their children and their needs better than anyone else.

Since I was elected, three years ago, I've been proud to work alongside my UCP colleagues supporting parental choice in education. Unfortunately, this NDP government has made several decisions that have prompted parents to reach out to me with concerns that the government is undermining our education system. For example, I received numerous calls from Airdrie's home-schooling community when the NDP abruptly shut down the province's largest home-school program. This left thousands of students hanging and resulted in a messy court dispute. The NDP also changed school busing fees for the worse, and they brought in a costly carbon tax, that schools need to divert funds to pay for.

The Rocky View school board recently had to make a difficult decision on how to address a \$1 million transportation shortfall caused by this NDP government's policies.

Moreover, the NDP government announced in 2016 that they are rewriting our school curriculum for all grades and all subject areas. The government has been less than transparent about this process, and Albertans have reason to be uneasy that the NDP are using this as an opportunity to infuse the curriculum with their ideologies.

Mr. Speaker, I will continue to celebrate and defend choice in education in this province. I will continue to stand up for the loving moms and dads raising their children the way that they think is right.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Rural Economic Development

Mr. Hinkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Almost every day we hear the opposition members give their version of reality, and that version almost always contains doom and gloom. Maybe if they looked beyond their own narrative, they would see the evidence of things going well in our rural areas, evidence like what was said at a recent Wetaskiwin Regional Chamber of Commerce meeting, May 2, and reported in the *Leduc-Wetaskiwin Pipestone Flyer*.

The county of Wetaskiwin reeve, Kathy Rooyakkers, spoke about the 284 development permits, valued at \$30 million; 14 new business approvals; and the G3 grain terminal, worth millions of dollars, which will create jobs and benefit farmers. Also, she mentioned that \$1.8 million of our government funding is provided for work on a bridge that had been a concern for years and that the Pigeon Lake waste-water system's second phase would be starting soon, a project also funded with \$12.8 million through our government's water for life program.

At the same time, Mayor Tony Wadsworth of Millet spoke in glowing terms about how great the town's last year, 2017, had been, including the new Lakeside Meadows development for 1,200 new homes, the annexation of industrial land from the county, and the potential for new industrial development.

The mayor of Wetaskiwin, Tyler Gandam, spoke about a business retention and expansion program that was meeting with success and that its main street and Jubilee park projects were completed and that the new fire department training facility was operating, an important plus for the city.

Again and again, Mr. Speaker, we hear optimism from the people who run our rural towns and municipalities. We know that total farm cash receipts hit a record high in 2017. We know that our deficit is going down. We know that the Trans Mountain expansion will help our economy and our energy sector expand even more. I, for one, am proud of rural Alberta, its dynamic people, and its potential.

Thank you.

Port of Churchill Oil and Gas Transport Project

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, given the deteriorating trade relationships between Canada and the U.S.A. the UCP caucus is committed to exploring alternative market access, pipelines or no pipelines. That's why last week I travelled to Winnipeg and Churchill, Manitoba, to meet Premier Pallister's team and the locals to discuss market access via the port of Churchill. I'm most pleased that there are not one but two private-sector offers to purchase the Hudson Bay Railway and the port of Churchill from OmniTrax.

The first one is a letter of intent between Alberta-based iChurchill and the Peguis First Nation. The second is an agreement in principle

between the consortium led by Toronto-based Fairfax and the First Nation businesses. But, Mr. Speaker, it appears that Ottawa is meddling in the transaction between private enterprises, again picking winners and losers and favouring one proponent over another. It means another year will be missed repairing the railway and the shipping window. No matter whom OmniTrax decides to sell to, Ottawa needs to act fairly, impartially, swiftly to keep their promises to Manitoba's First Nations.

The port of Churchill is two days shorter sailing time to going over the St. Lawrence to Europe. Alberta shippers of grain, canola, pulses, and forest products will be interested in exploring this gateway to the world, but it is the energy products that will provide the new sources of revenue to keep the port and the railway open and sustained. Alberta stands ready to meet the world's growing energy demand for petroleum in 2018 and beyond.

Canada's current reputation is that we can't get anything done. Let's prove it wrong. Let's get the railway repaired and get moving our exports.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

1:50

Oral Question Period

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

Eagle Spirit Pipeline Project

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's a consortium of First Nations groups proposing an alternative coastal pipeline, called the Eagle Spirit project, that would take Alberta oil to the northwest B.C. coast and from there to global markets. Will the government of Alberta agree with me that this is an excellent initiative, and will the government reach out to the Eagle Spirit proponents to seek ways in which we could help them with this nascent proposal to get market access for Alberta oil under aboriginal ownership?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Certainly, this is an interesting project. Our Minister of Energy has been in meetings with the consortium, and we certainly are interested in the work that they're proposing. This won't back down on the fact that we've never been as close to tidewater as we are today and the success that we've seen with Trans Mountain, especially last week, with the significant signal and the investment by the federal government. We're proud of the work we've done to access new markets, and that will continue.

Mr. Kenney: I'd like to thank the hon. the Deputy Premier for her comments and the government's apparent interest. The challenge, however, Mr. Speaker, is that the Premier told us in this place a few weeks ago that she indicated to Prime Minister Trudeau that this government was only seeking one coastal pipeline, not two. It seems to me that two is better than one or none.

But, Mr. Speaker, the real problem is Bill C-48, the federal bill that would seek to impose a tanker ban on the northern B.C. coast, that would kill this vital aboriginal initiative, the Eagle Spirit pipeline. Will the government agree with me and the proponents of Eagle Spirit that the federal government should reconsider the legislation banning tanker traffic on the B.C. coast?

Ms Hoffman: The real problem, Mr. Speaker, is that the member opposite keeps cheering for Trans Mountain to fail instead of getting onboard and supporting it. Canadians are behind Trans Mountain because they know it will help put people to work, 15,000

people, and lead to billions annually for roads, schools, and hospitals. National support for this project rose 11 per cent from April to May. We aren't going to back down on the good work that's happening with Trans Mountain. It's as close as we've gotten. We know that the member opposite had nine years in Ottawa and failed to do it, but under our Premier this project will get built.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the hon. the minister's answer had precisely nothing to do with the question I asked, which was about the proposed Eagle Spirit aboriginal pipeline project to take Alberta oil to the northern B.C. coast. This is a wonderful initiative of our First Nations communities to pursue economic opportunity, allowing their people to move from poverty to prosperity while allowing Albertans to get a full, fair price for our energy products. So I would invite the minister to try to answer this question. Will she agree on behalf of the government with the concerns expressed by these aboriginal leaders about federal Bill C-48 and the tanker ban?

Ms Hoffman: Well, Mr. Speaker, what I absolutely committed to and will again is that the Minister of Energy has met with this organization. So has the Minister of Indigenous Relations. You know what? On Trans Mountain 43 First Nation communities along the pipeline support that project. They support it because they know that it balances and reaches the appropriate environmental protections and supports jobs and economic prosperity. With regard to the comments from the member opposite, fighting for Alberta's interests and delivering results will always be our Premier's focus. We know the leader has more interest in promoting himself than he does Alberta.

The Speaker: Second main question.

Mr. Kenney: Did you see what just happened there, Mr. Speaker? A serious question, a policy related to an aboriginal initiative; the response was partisan and personal attacks: par for the course.

Pipeline Approval

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, there's a motion on the Order Paper, Motion 505, that would seek to call on the federal government to respect Alberta's jurisdiction over the regulation of upstream oil and gas emissions and not to regulate pipelines for downstream emissions. Does the government agree that the federal government should respect the provision of the Constitution which gives exclusive jurisdiction over the regulation of oil and gas production to the province of Alberta?

Ms Hoffman: Well, Mr. Speaker, debating motions in this House doesn't get a pipeline built. If it did, we would have done that long ago. Our climate leadership plan already addresses upstream emissions, and we've been clear that downstream emissions do not apply to pipelines. The opposition leader is just trying to score cheap political points, but his own strategy to get this project done is about as credible as his grassroots guarantee. It looks a lot like Astroturf to me.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, another nonpartisan policy question with a series of partisan and personal attacks.

Let me try this again, Mr. Speaker. Motion 505 really addresses the problem with Energy East, where it was cancelled because the National Energy Board announced that it was going to begin regulating up- and downstream carbon emissions indirectly associated with the pipeline. Does this provincial government continue to support federal Bill C-69, which would make it even more difficult to get approval for future pipelines?

The Speaker: One moment. Hon. members, I just want to make a reference to both sides of the House. This is with respect to an item that will be dealt with later in the agenda, and I would caution that you avoid the . . .

Mr. Nixon: Point of order.

The Speaker: A point of order.

Ms Hoffman: With regard to C-69, Mr. Speaker, we share the industry's concerns and are working – we're fighting the federal government – to address them. In fact, the environment minister is in Ottawa or has been in Ottawa very recently to direct the federal counterparts on this issue. We believe that the new rules must not stand in the way of developing our resources and getting our products to market. Putting words in our mouths won't work, hon. member. We certainly have a record, and we're proud to stand on it.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, just for the record the question was on Bill C-69, which is at the federal Parliament, not this Legislature, but it impacts very directly on our constitutional jurisdiction, jurisdiction that was fought for and won by former Premier Lougheed in 1982. If the provincial government does not support the new federal pipeline regulation, Bill C-69, does it oppose the bill? Does it support it, or does it oppose it? I hope the answer is not a series of partisan attacks but an actual answer.

Ms Hoffman: Well, Mr. Speaker, I made it very clear that there are a number of components within it that our Minister of Energy and minister of environment are standing up to Ottawa and pushing on continuously because we stand up for the people who elected us here in Alberta. I know the member wants to debate federal legislation. He had that opportunity. He gave up his seat. He said he was coming back to Alberta for a number of reasons, but it doesn't feel like he came back for Albertans. It feels like he came back for his own interests.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, sadly, my prediction was proven true. It was a series of partisan and personal attacks. The Premier, the Deputy Premier could of course clarify whether the government supports or opposes Bill C-69, which has a huge impact on this province.

Full-day Kindergarten in Calgary

Mr. Kenney: On a different matter, Mr. Speaker, I must correct myself. A month ago I said that the Calgary board of education was spending \$1 million on the carbon tax. It turns out, according to new documents just released, that they're spending \$3 million on the carbon tax while cutting \$1 million in kindergarten funding. Is the government pleased that their carbon tax is resulting in a reduction of access to full-day kindergarten in Calgary?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, we are very proud of the investments that we're making in education, which includes funding for enrolment in four straight budgets, plus now a \$77 million classroom improvement fund, which is hiring teachers and support staff and making sure that we make life better for our kids in our classrooms as opposed to the cuts that the members opposite are proposing.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the Calgary board of education released its Investing in the Future: Facilities document two weeks ago, which says, "We anticipate the annual cost of the carbon levy to be

over \$3 million and growing.” In April they announced that they’re reducing \$1 million of expenditures on full-day kindergarten. Does the Alberta NDP government not understand that this massive tax imposed on the school board is resulting directly in service cuts for full-day kindergarten in Calgary? If not, why don’t they understand this?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Clearly, the member opposite should read the news because, in fact, the Calgary board of education is investing in full-day kindergarten, as they have done for many, many years. They’re doing it again this year. You know, this idea of somehow putting fissures between government: we work closely with the Calgary board of education on their facilities, on improving their facilities – we’ve built dozens of new schools there that are very energy efficient – and focusing on not just reducing carbon footprint but actually saving money.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, with respect, the minister, I think, is misinformed. The Calgary board of education issued a report earlier this year which said, “Full-day kindergarten will continue to be offered but the scope will be reduced” as they seek to reduce \$1 million of expenditures. It just so happens that they’re spending three times that on the NDP carbon tax, \$3 million, according to their most recent budget document. Why did this provincial government decide to punish school boards simply for heating their schools and undergoing their daily operations in Alberta?

2:00

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It seems like the member opposite is trying to practise his closure policies that would certainly come true if they ever formed the government, which I sure hope never does happen. You can’t just say that they are clearly closing programs. In fact, CBE is carrying on with their full-day kindergarten program. They’re very proud of the results that they get, and we help to fund and support that every step of the way.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Mental Health Supports for Front-line Health Workers

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mental health supports are vital in any workplace, but they’re especially important for high-stress, front-line public health care jobs like EMS. Albertans need to be able to trust that the paramedics showing up at the door in a medical emergency are ready to give it a hundred per cent. As legislators we are responsible for public health care, so we need to do everything we can to ensure that front-line health care workers have the supports that they need. To the Minister of Health: what has your government done to improve access and awareness of mental health supports for front-line health care workers?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We are incredibly proud of all the work that our paramedics and all EMS professionals do every day. Just last week we celebrated them and their contributions. One of the things we had a chance to do was meet with some of the staff over at the Alberta Health building and meet with the service dog that actually works to provide additional supports to people on the scene of horrific events as well as to paramedics who are doing the follow-up after. The path to mental

readiness is a big piece, and we’re continuing to invest in it and in our front-line workers instead of moving for deep cuts, that would certainly cause additional stress for front-line workers.

Mr. Fraser: A report in 2015 on the mental health and morale of AHS showed that there was a lot of work that needed to be done to address gaps in mental health support. We’ve learned that another report has been prepared, but that has yet to be released by Alberta Health Services. We need to see that report and evaluate it to make sure that the measures this government has taken have been effective and what our next steps will be. To the same minister: if you’re confident that the measures your government has taken have been effective, will you direct AHS to release these reports they currently have on the state of mental health support in the health care system?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We certainly know how important it is to provide the right supports and empathy and understanding for everyone who’s dealing with mental health situations in their lives. Of course, that stands true for our front-line health care workers, including paramedics. I have to say that many of them that I met recently either had the semicolon on their hand or talked about mental health in a very open way, and they said that it creates a greater opportunity for them to speak to their patients and to their co-workers about it as well. We stand by paramedics, and that’s why we’ve increased investment by \$23 million to ensure that we can expand supports for them moving forward as well.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Fraser: Front-line health care workers face an incredible amount of stress day in and day out, but unfortunately these issues only come to attention in the wake of a tragedy. We need to do better. We need to take steps to safeguard the mental health of our health care workers before more lives are lost. To the same minister: will you commit to reviewing the mental health supports and guidelines of Alberta Health Services either by referring them to committee or striking an all-party working group to make sure that paramedics are safe?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, I’m proud of the work that we are doing as a government and continue to do. We regularly meet with Alberta Health Services to discuss items just like the one the member just mentioned. What helps arguably the most is ensuring that you give the right supports, including front-line resources, to folks who are working in the profession. That’s why I’m proud that our government is investing \$23 million more to help address some of the pressures that paramedics and all EMS providers are facing on the front lines and why we will stand up and won’t give in to the calls from the opposition for deep cuts. We stand with our front-line workers.

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

Affordable Child Care

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’ve heard from constituents in Edmonton-McClung that child care is a major concern, a huge financial burden every month. Given that child care for one child can cost as much as a mortgage payment and given that many parents have to make difficult decisions about child care, to the Minister of Children’s Services: how are the early learning and child care centres making a difference in the lives of children and their families across Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Children’s Services.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's true. In Edmonton parents can expect to pay nearly \$1,000 per month per child. Even most families that can afford child care can't really afford child care. Conservative governments have done little to help in the past, but the good news is that the monthly bills have changed for 6,000 new \$25-a-day spaces. Parents tell me that it is life changing. We're helping parents make good decisions for their families and Alberta's economy.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that there are hundreds of daycares throughout Alberta, to the Minister of Children's Services once more: what kind of applications are you looking for?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government wanted to demonstrate what universal \$25-a-day child care could look like. Through an expression-of-interest process we found trusted nonprofits with proven track records. The YMCA, for instance, now has \$25-a-day child care at 25 locations across Alberta. That's more than 1,700 total spaces at the Y, including 195 new spaces and 247 licensed spaces they haven't been able to staff until now. In the member's own riding the Jamie Platz YMCA now has 48 affordable spaces.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that this program does not come with an income test, what should I tell parents in my constituency of Edmonton-McClung about how the early learning and child care program is helping those who most need it?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're already helping newcomers, military families, and hundreds of moms hoping to re-enter the workforce. We're adding curriculum improvements to help kids learn and grow, and we're working to ensure vulnerable families have access to other supports. This pilot is allowing the Jamie Platz YMCA to add flexible, part-time child care plus a family resource worker. Affordable child care is a priority for families, and we believe that every family deserves affordable child care.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

McMurray Métis Land Purchase

Mr. Horne: Last week the government announced the sale of 9.17 acres of land to the McMurray Métis. As a member of the Métis Nation of Alberta I was very excited to see the government working with the McMurray Métis to make strides in our reconciliation with our indigenous peoples. To the Minister of Infrastructure: can you tell the members of this Assembly why this sale was so important and what it will achieve?

Ms Jansen: Thank you to the member. When the McMurray Métis shared their vision to purchase a piece of land for a cultural centre and a place to celebrate Métis culture, I was very impressed with their plan. The association's plans for the cultural centre include an elder gathering space, a community meeting room, an outdoor healing centre, a youth room, and educational spaces and offices. This land sale is in the spirit of reconciliation. It also supports the

McMurray Métis in participating in the rebuild and recovery of Wood Buffalo.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Horne: Thank you. Now, I know that my family has historically had some connections to that land. Can the minister tell the House what the history of this site has been?

Ms Jansen: Thank you to the member. The McMurray Métis have been leasing this site from the provincial government for decades. All of the structures on the site were destroyed by the wildfire in 2016. This quote from Gail Gallupe, the president of the McMurray Métis, sums up the history.

The sale of the land we have been leasing from the Government of Alberta was a long-term goal of the McMurray Métis. It was something that we had requested and couldn't achieve over the course of seven previous governments... This government delivered and we are extremely happy.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the minister for sharing the comments from the president of the McMurray Métis about just how responsive this government has been. To the same minister: can you please elaborate on why this is such a priority?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to be on this side of the House with a cabinet and a Premier that take reconciliation seriously. At a recent UCP convention racist comments were made without a reprimand from the leader, who is actually not even listening right now even though a few minutes ago he professed to be very interested in indigenous rights. Let's not forget that the leader's protege in the federal Conservatives high-fived another Conservative after voting against the UN declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. Even though he's not even paying attention, he's certainly...

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

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

2:10

Government Announcements

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, last week this government made a b-u-y by-election spending announcement in Fort McMurray. This week it announced it will open the Sylvan Lake ambulatory care centre with a ribbon-cutting ceremony, surprise, surprise, the site of an upcoming by-election. The Premier used to speak strongly against these sorts of by-election announcements. This is just one other example of the NDP's sliding scale on ethics. Why did the NDP oppose these shady ethics in opposition but now seem totally okay with them?

Ms Hoffman: Well, I have to clarify some things here, Mr. Speaker. We announced these projects well over a year ago, when your members who are no longer in this House were still sitting in this House. We invest in communities throughout Alberta. We invest in building long-term care in Fort McMurray, we invest in building urgent care in Sylvan Lake, and I won't apologize for investing in ridings that your members used to represent. We are moving forward on protecting and improving health care throughout this province while members opposite would cut it. Musing about 20 per cent cuts? Not under this government.

Mr. Cooper: Given that a mere six months ago this government passed Bill 32, which placed restrictions on advertising or publishing information during a by-election that “disproportionately affects voters in the electoral division in which the byelection is taking place,” my question to the Premier is one that she asked in 2014 when speaking about by-elections: “to regain integrity and trust with Alberta voters, will [you] commit to amending our elections law so that this can’t ever happen again, and if [you] won’t commit to it, why won’t [you]?”

Ms Hoffman: Well, thanks for that trip down memory lane. At the time the Premier made that comment, there was a sitting member of cabinet who wasn’t elected who decided to do political announcements in the by-election period in the riding he was running for a seat in, Mr. Speaker. We certainly have fixed that. We announced these projects a year ago. We’re moving forward on them. We aren’t in the by-election period yet. It hasn’t been called. We know that members have resigned, but we aren’t in the by-election period. We’re very proud that we’ve amended the laws to reflect that.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, given the fact that Albertans don’t care if the by-election hasn’t been called today but that it’ll likely be called tomorrow – they know that you’ve been caught stacking the deck in your favour; that clearly disproportionately affects voters in the electoral district in which a by-election is about to be called, according to your newly passed Bill 32 – and given that you’ve been caught bending the rules in your favour just minutes prior to the actual announcement of the by-election and given that every single day we see a new questionable ethics story from this government, the question is: why won’t this government follow . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Ms Hoffman: The questions I’ve been asked over and over and over again are: “Why when Conservatives were in government and we had Conservative MLAs in these ridings did our urgent care not get built in Sylvan Lake? Why didn’t our long-term care get built in Fort McMurray?” Mr. Speaker, our government made good on these communities. We moved these projects forward while members of your own caucus at the time were lobbying for them. We’re proud that we’re moving forward on these projects, and we aren’t going to back down. [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. members, we have been with each other for many weeks now, and my sense is that that is leading to a certain tone and anxiety in the House, which I would hope that you would keep in check.

Amazon Distribution Centre in Balzac

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, at the start of the year the Premier expressed disappointment that Calgary was not on the short list of communities that Amazon was considering for their second North American headquarters. However, it was announced last fall that Amazon would still be opening a 600,000 square foot distribution centre in Balzac. Construction was to be completed this year. Some residents are getting anxious because they have not yet heard when Amazon is actually moving in. To the minister of economic development: are you able to state unequivocally that the Amazon fulfillment centre in the Nose Creek Business Park is still a go, and when is it set to open?

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I’m very proud of the work that our government has done and continues to do on a daily basis attracting key international investments back here into our province. We know that Alberta is the best province in Canada to invest in. We maintain the lowest taxes. We have the highest talent, the most skilled workers, incredible postsecondary institutions, a high quality of life. Businesses from around the world see Alberta as a key province to invest in. The Amazon fulfillment centre is going ahead.

Mrs. Pitt: Now, Mr. Speaker, given that it’s been more than half a year since the announcement was made – so this is a fair question – and given that this project has received great community support and is something the Official Opposition supports and given that this government has previously declared victory on job-creating projects the taxpayers then had to buy to prevent them from being cancelled, Minister, what assurances can you offer us that this government’s policies won’t send Amazon running away, too?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, I will remind the hon. member that Amazon is one of many companies that have chosen to invest in Alberta. We have Cavendish Farms making the largest investment in the company’s history and in Lethbridge’s history, in that area in southern Alberta. We have Champion Petfoods. We have Swoop. We have Google DeepMind, that is investing in the AI lab here in Edmonton because Alberta, Edmonton, is the third-best artificial intelligence community in the world. Why is that? Because we continue to invest and diversify our economy, something the opposition . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, given that investment has been fleeing Alberta, evident with the pipeline, under this NDP government’s watch and that there are still many unemployed people in Airdrie and area that are still looking for stable jobs and given that commercial property vacancies in southern Alberta are at an all-time high and given that the carbon tax and minimum wage increases are shutting down small businesses – Airdrie residents have a right to remain skeptical about future investments based on this NDP government’s broken promises – Minister, what specifically have you changed to give investors certainty and to stop their flight from our province?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, first of all, there isn’t a flight; there’s actually an influx of new capital in our province. That’s, first and foremost, because our government listened to industry. We listened to the Chambers of Commerce and introduced two different tax credits, tax credits which the member opposite, who’s asking me, actually voted in favour of when we were on Bill 30 a year and a half ago. But under the new leader suddenly the opposition doesn’t believe in the tax credits and wants to kill these programs, that have resulted in billions of dollars of investment in our province, have provided an opportunity for Albertans to invest in their own backyard, and are helping to diversify our economy.

Occupational Health and Safety Code Changes

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, no one can argue that Alberta businesses haven’t had a very difficult time during this recession. That’s why I was left scratching my head after reading a recent news release

from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. According to the release on June 1, just three days ago, penalties for the new occupational health and safety rules came into effect. What's surprising is that 84 per cent of Alberta businesses feel that they have not received adequate information about the new safety rules. To the Minister of Labour: do you feel that businesses have had adequate notification on these new rules?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Labour.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud that just last Friday, on June 1, our new occupational health and safety rules, that will better protect workers and employers, came into effect. This is a change, particularly given that a major review of this had not happened in 40 years. To support employers, we've made information available online. We've also been doing in-person sessions with anyone who requests, whether it's four people or 250. The occupational health and safety contact centre is available for anyone who wants to call and ask questions. We will continue to support employers as they adapt to these new legislative rules.

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, given that businesses are saying that the minister has not given them adequate time to read about let alone digest and implement these new changes, will you be willing to release timelines, and if not, will you take our job creators' advice and delay implementation for six months?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. These rules are in place today. We are interested in working with employers to help them adhere to the new legislation to make sure that the rights of workers – the right to know about hazards, the right to participate in health and safety at their work site, and the right to refuse work – can be protected. We have also implemented rules that will protect workers from bullying and harassment, things that employers have asked us to assist them with. Any employer who would like further assistance in implementing this can download example plans from our website or can contact us for assistance. These rules are good for Alberta.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, given that the minister is unwilling to delay the implementation of the new OHS rules, will the minister at least commit to the members of this House and to concerned business owners across Alberta that OHS offices will be judicious in their writing of fines for another six months, until businesses have had time to digest and implement these new rules?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The question is misleading. Occupational health and safety officers have always worked with employers. When they come to a work site, they are there as a partner in health and safety. I can tell you that Alberta has some fantastic employers, who care about the health and safety of their workers, so it is a great partnership. What is likely to happen when an occupational health and safety officer visits is a conversation, perhaps an order asking them to follow a plan or to create a procedure. Our officers have never and will not use punitive fines. Rather, we will be working with . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

2:20 Highway 3 Oldman River Bridge Repair

Ms Fitzpatrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Highway 3 is an important corridor in the Lethbridge region. To the Minister of Transportation: what is the cost of the current project to repair the bridge over the Oldman River in Lethbridge?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. The current estimated cost of the project to repair the bridge is \$4.2 million. We want to make sure that our infrastructure is maintained and that it's safe. We want to make sure that industry can get their products to their markets and families can get home safely and to work safely. The project to rehabilitate the bridge over the Oldman River in Lethbridge will make sure that the bridge is safe and reliable for another 15 to 20 years.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: what is the cost of adding the third eastbound lane in five years?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Well, thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, it's a rough estimate. The estimated cost could be up to a hundred million dollars, and that would include changes to the Bridge Drive interchange. It would take a considerable amount of time. We're working to make sure that the bridge is safe for the next 15 to 20 years or until a widened bridge is needed.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: why is the government proceeding now with restoration of the 1960 bridge rather than implementing the recommendations of the 2009 AE engineering report to enhance the Bridge Drive on-ramp and widen the eastbound bridge to three lanes?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and for that question. The simple answer is that traffic volumes have not risen except slightly since that report was written. Replacing and widening the bridge would cost up to a hundred million dollars, and the timing of construction will depend on available funding and need.

Access to Information

Mr. Loewen: Transparency and openness are critical to good government, and the people of this province deserve nothing less. Unfortunately, under this government these values have all too often been pushed aside. An affidavit from one sheriff has shown us that at least some sheriffs have been internally directed to delete their e-mails to avoid FOIP requests. Quote: delete everything you have because if someone FOIPs it, nothing is there; you can't FOIP what you don't have. End quote. To the Minister of Justice: is avoiding transparency and accountability standard practice in your ministry?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, I'm not familiar with the specific situation the member references, but

it certainly isn't our policy to avoid transparency. In fact, the biggest challenge in the Justice ministry when we took government, coming into it, was the fact that we had very insufficient staff to handle the number of FOIP requests we were getting. In order to clear that backlog, we've been hiring individuals to make sure that we can process those requests and make sure that we are delivering the transparency that the people of Alberta deserve.

Mr. Loewen: Given that this is not the only example of wilful suppression of transparency within the Ministry of Justice and given that in relation to the same case of bullying FOIPed e-mails show that Ministry of Justice officials, quote, were going to share the full report in the beginning, that we just decided not to, end quote, to the minister: is this aversion to transparency something inherent in the bureaucracy, or is it a result of a directive from political leadership?

Ms Ganley: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's certainly the case that our government would never direct anyone to be less transparent. Certainly, we've taken a number of steps, including ensuring that we have the appropriate number of staff to process those requests, to increase transparency as well as a number of other legislative changes. Again, it's often the case that these things coming from the opposition are not completely grounded in fact, so I'm absolutely happy to look into the situation and get back to the House.

Mr. Loewen: Given that in just this case there are two clear examples of government employees going out of their way to avoid accountability and given that this hurts Albertans like the sheriff, who was simply trying to access records from his own file, and given that this government was already investigated by the Privacy Commissioner for the deletion of more than 800,000 e-mails and given that we received a FOIP last week that was outstanding for more than three years, not to mention many exceeding one year, can the government tell us what actions they are taking to deal with this culture of secrecy and lack of accountability that is growing under their watch?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Service Alberta.

Ms McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We believe that government should be open and transparent. That's why we're taking this issue seriously. We've improved turnaround times for FOIP requests, and we're proactively sharing more information than has ever been shared in the history of the government of Alberta. We're very proud of the work that we're doing, and we're continuing to do it.

The real question, Mr. Speaker, is why the Leader of the Opposition won't even disclose his campaign contributors nor why they intend on keeping their election plans extremely secret.

Time-share Lease Consumer Protection

Mr. Gottfried: Mr. Speaker, the Consumer Protection Act applies to unfair business practices if the supplier or consumer is a resident of Alberta. Northmont Resort Properties Ltd. is an Alberta-based and registered company dealing in resort time-share with Alberta residents, with its head office in Calgary. In a February 7, 2018, letter to my constituent an assistant deputy minister concluded that the matters of concern to him and hundreds of other Alberta consumers were "outside the mandate and jurisdiction of Service Alberta's Consumer Investigations Unit." To the Minister of Service Alberta: what can I tell my constituent about your apparent lack of interest and failure to protect consumers?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McLean: Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, this is the first conversation that I've had with the hon. member with respect to this particular issue. I'd be happy to follow up with him on this specific issue and get him information, though he has not personally contacted me for information outside of question period.

Thank you.

Mr. Gottfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This follows on many, many letters from my constituent.

Given that the company referenced sells time-share lease contracts to Alberta residents – transactions are conducted in Alberta, sent to the consumer by supply representatives in Alberta, with offers and incentives also taking place in Alberta – and given that this would clearly indicate that the Alberta Consumer Protection Act should apply to these transactions and given the company in question has allegedly engaged in unfair practices as defined in the act, again to the minister: how can you say that the consumer concerns expressed do not fall clearly within both your jurisdiction and your mandate?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McLean: Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. We take consumer protection very seriously. That's why I've overhauled the prior Fair Trading Act to make it the Consumer Protection Act. I've done a lot of work on this front. The member is now putting words in my mouth that I never said. I think that's very untoward behaviour, not appropriate for this House. Furthermore, I would appreciate it, if the member is getting letters, that he actually transmit them to my office so that I can help his constituents, instead of using them for cheap political points.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Gottfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Actually, many letters came from your office, and many, many came to your office.

Mr. Speaker, given that the Consumer Protection Act would apply if a company was engaging in unfair practices such as performing unilateral amendments to contracts without the approval of Alberta consumers or imposing cancellation provisions that were not in the original contracts and given that if the Alberta government has a law on its books to protect consumers from unfair practices, surely it also has a responsibility to enforce such laws, again to the minister: what justification can you provide for not enforcing the Consumer Protection Act to actually protect Alberta consumers in this case?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I've said, if there's information that the member has, I would be happy to look at it.

Additionally, I'm not sure what he's talking about when he says that I have sent him letters as I have done no such thing. However, Mr. Speaker, I do know some general details about the situation, and to my knowledge this falls under B.C. jurisdiction. Again, if he has issues that he would like to bring to me to actually receive help with instead of trying to achieve cheap political points, I would love to help his constituents.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Rural Crime Reduction

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I recently received a disturbing first-hand account of how this rural crime epidemic is getting out of hand. Just over a week ago a band of thieves converged on a small community, with no other purpose but to wreak havoc. These perpetrators went on a robbing and destruction spree, the tally of which was over \$100,000. Despite repeated calls to the RCMP, hours away they were unable to help. Minister, you recently stated that almost half of the 39 new RCMP are already in place in Alberta. Can you share with us where these members have been stationed?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. It is absolutely critical to our government and, I think, to all members in this House that all Albertans feel safe in their homes. That's why we're investing in ensuring that we can respond to rural crime. A great many of these individuals are in what are called crime reduction units, which are intended to target exactly what the member is raising. These units are able to focus on prolific offenders who are creating havoc in our communities, and they are already achieving results, as I've illustrated just recently. I'm sure I'll have more to say in just a moment.

2:30

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Given that over the course of the day these thieves were spotted at various locations, but with the RCMP an extensive time away, they were not to be apprehended and given that sometime over the course of the day they showed up at another farmer's yard and threatened his life over a tank of gasoline and given the community was understandably on edge until they were arrested with the community's help, again I ask: Minister, you continually talk about boots on the ground; of the 39 new RCMP slated for Alberta, how many have been assigned duties in rural Alberta on a permanent basis, and were they actually able to improve . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Just to clarify, those RCMP officers as announced in the rural crime strategy are all in rural Alberta. Many of those individuals are being put into what we call crime reduction units.

The member has illustrated some incredibly disturbing events. Those are exactly the sorts of events that I've been hearing about and that our MLAs have been hearing about as well. That's why we've taken this proactive step to create these crime reduction units that can target exactly the sorts of prolific offenders that the member raises.

Mr. Strankman: Mr. Speaker, given that in the incident I just referenced, these perpetrators were out of jail days after, on \$3,000 bail, and given that this catch-and-release philosophy is simply compounding this rural crime problem, Minister, when will this government and your ministry get tough on rural crime?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, the episode that the member is illustrating is the same as many episodes that we've heard about from many rural Albertans. That's why

we've taken the steps to ensure that we are making the necessary investments in these crime reduction units so that they can gather evidence on these individuals and build a stronger case. This is about proactive policing, about ensuring that we have the requisite number of resources in place to ensure that we can target these offenders, because all Albertans deserve to feel safe in their homes.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Northern Lights Gas Co-op Capacity

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, on March 22 I asked about a very good situation that resulted in a very significant problem in Mackenzie county. It seems the population growth has been so great that it has outstripped the ability of the Northern Lights Gas Co-op to finance the \$45 million needed to construct a 65-kilometre second natural gas line in a timely manner. Residents already faced almost a week-long low-pressure emergency this past winter. To the Agriculture and Forestry minister: since March what progress has your government made to help fix this problem?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I've actually been up there and discussed that with Mackenzie county before. We do know that over the last few winters the gas supply has become a vital issue up there with the growth, which is a good thing. We do understand that, you know, the heating fuel in the winter is super important. It's the reason we fund the remote area heating allowance program and why we invest capital grants into gas co-ops. We've been having conversations with the stakeholders and folks in the area, in the region. I know the minister of agriculture has been personally engaging on the issue in conference calls and meetings up there and will continue to do so.

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, given that the government did not budget for any financial assistance for this situation despite knowing about it since at least the end of December and given that the minister said that ministry colleagues would work together to ensure that we do have a plan and that they would have the gas they need, Minister, what other resources have been made available to Mackenzie county to help the Northern Lights Gas Co-op fix this critical infrastructure so that residents can be certain they will have the gas that they need?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you. Thank you to the member for the question. Together with the co-op and the county we are developing short-term, medium-, and long-term solutions so that northwestern Alberta can continue to grow and prosper, as it has been. We are continuing these conversations, and we are now identifying low-interest financing through AFSC and other sources. We are connecting local stakeholders with federal and provincial agencies that may be able to help and encouraging stakeholders to approach those agencies like Western Economic Diversification Canada or Indigenous Services Canada to understand what's available to them.

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, given that other regions are fighting for improved broadband Internet yet Mackenzie county is being left behind on this basic need that other regions take for granted and given that Mackenzie county has been forced to turn down business proposals because there is not enough natural gas to support the

demands of any development, to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade: what has your department done to look after making sure this basic energy infrastructure is in place for economic growth in Mackenzie county?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, and thank you to the member for the question. You know, being in Municipal Affairs, everything happens in municipalities. One of my interests is rural broadband and, you know, economic development, gas, and working with the co-ops. This is kind of a crossministry endeavour, I would say, an initiative for one broadband across rural.

For the gas in particular we are working with stakeholders in the region to help enhance the gas network. AltaGas is planning to install two new compressors by November 2018, which I think is really good news. There are also plans to include other compressors in the system to keep pace with the growth over the next 10 years.

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

Filipino Community

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today Alberta is home to over 175,000 Filipinos and Filipinas, making up more than 4 per cent of our province's population. That's the second-largest Filipino community in Canada. With over 60,000 Albertans of Filipino descent calling Edmonton home, many of them who live in the constituency of Edmonton-Ellerslie, I've heard from many of them asking our government to celebrate their contributions to our province. To the Deputy Premier: how is our government recognizing generations of Filipinos enriching Alberta's culture?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: [Remarks in Tagalog] Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. I was honoured this past weekend to join Filipino community leaders both in Edmonton and Calgary as our government officially proclaimed June Philippine Heritage Month in Alberta. That means that every June in the future will be a time for Albertans to celebrate the tremendous contributions of generations of Filipinos. Whether it be faith, civic, and cultural contributions, Filipinos make this province a brighter, more caring, and vibrant place to be, and we're proud to work with them to do that.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Loyola: Thank you, and thank you to the Deputy Premier for this historic proclamation. I know that many Filipino Albertans across Alberta will be very excited. Given that the Filipino community embraces the values of compassion, hard work, family, and fun, which are values our government shares, to the Deputy Premier: what is our government doing to support Alberta's Filipino community?

Ms Hoffman: Our government knows that family is one of the core tenets of many Filipino Albertans when they talk about why it is that they're here and what they believe is most important moving forward. Mr. Speaker, when I heard from a number of Filipino leaders shortly after election that temporary foreign workers weren't bringing their children to health care facilities because they didn't think they were entitled to, I worked diligently to ensure that that was no longer the case. We're proud that every child who lives in this province has access to health care, whether their parents are

here permanently or not. That's one example. We're also investing in families through daycare, education, seniors' care ...

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

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that Filipinos run hundreds of organizations that reach out to Albertans of all ages and backgrounds, guided by the values of [Remarks in Tagalog], or empathy and solidarity, to the Deputy Premier: how will our government work with the Filipino community, guided by our shared values, to make life better for all Albertans?

Ms Hoffman: You know, Mr. Speaker, they've taught me a phrase in Tagalog. [Remarks in Tagalog] It means strength and unity. We know that we are stronger when we work together, and it's something that we all believe. When we work together, when we support one another, when we support communities, we have stronger outcomes. One of the things that the members of the Filipino community have raised with me is how disappointed they were when the now Leader of the Opposition was in the federal government that grandparents were no longer able to come and provide child care when their families moved here. That's shameful. We're working with the community to try to unite families and keep them supported and stronger together.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Kenney: Personal attacks even when I'm not asking the questions, Mr. Speaker. That last comment was untrue.

Canadian Senate Vacancies

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the Hon. Claudette Tardif for her service representing Alberta in the Senate of Canada. She retired in March of this year, so there's a vacancy for Alberta's allotment in the Senate of Canada. Will the government of Alberta agree with me in encouraging the federal government to appoint Mr. Mike Shaikh, who was the third-place finisher in the last Alberta Senate election, in which he received 310,000 votes?

2:40

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, we have removed the election process. Certainly, this is a question, again, that's geared towards federal politics and federal appointments. I understand that the member wants to spend a lot of time discussing federal issues in this House. We're keen on discussing Alberta issues.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, Mr. Shaikh was elected in an Alberta election, held under an Alberta statute, to represent Alberta in Ottawa in a seat that is now vacant. Does the government agree with the basic principle of democracy insofar as Senators Doug Black and Scott Tannas, the first- and second-place candidates in that election, were appointed to the Senate by Prime Minister Harper? Does she not agree that this precedent should be followed by appointing Mr. Mike Shaikh, who won 310,000 votes in an Alberta election conducted by the government of Alberta?

Ms Hoffman: I'll take this one again, and then I'll turn it to my colleague for democratic renewal. Mr. Speaker, again, this is a federal appointment, not a provincial appointment. I understand the member has spent a great deal of time in Ottawa, but these appointments are made by the federal government. They're the ones that appoint these folks. I understand that you want to discuss federal issues, hon. member, but again I urge you to consider

discussing the matters at hand that relate directly to the province of Alberta, our polices and what we do to move this province forward.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I'll take it from that answer that the government does not believe that the election should be respected.

Mr. Speaker, another vacancy will be occurring as a result of the hon. Senator Unger reaching the age of 75 later this year, so will the government agree with us that this Legislature should renew the now-lapsed Alberta senate elections act so that Albertans can have an opportunity to propose to the federal government the next Senator to be appointed to represent the people of Alberta in the upper Chamber?

The Speaker: The hon. minister of democratic renewal.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I and this government are very proud of what we've done to renew democracy here in our province, getting big money out of politics and a number of other changes. I believe that the member asking the question was a member of government while vacancies were available and did not appoint the person that he is referring to. That seems to contradict his statement that all governments should react so strongly to the elections as he's put forward. But I will say that this government will continue to make sure that democracy in Alberta remains strong by getting big money out of . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Hon. members, we will proceed in 30 seconds.

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two letters today from concerned parents regarding the situation at l'école du Sommet that I've brought up in the House. I would urge the Minister of Education to read them and please respond to these folks. They've been waiting for answers for over 75 days.

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

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the appropriate copies of hundreds of letters to the minister of environment in regard to her land-use framework policy changes, all of which have not been responded to by the minister or her office despite the minister saying to this Assembly that she is consulting with Albertans on this important issue.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the five requisite copies of three articles that I referenced in my question period questions on Wednesday, May 30. The first is an article from the *Edmonton Journal* containing the quote from the UCP convention equating the issues that hold women back to socialist crap. The second article, which fits in very well with the question from the MLA for Airdrie today, is from the *Calgary Herald* and contains a quote from the Leader of the Opposition about putting Alberta's revised school curriculum through the shredder. The third article, from the *Ponoka News*, cites the Leader of the Opposition stating that Alberta's revised curriculum is being written by committed socialists.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of a letter from Mary MacDonald, who is the assistant deputy minister, resolution and court administration services, at Justice and Solicitor General, in which she says that they conclude that the matters with respect to the issue I raised earlier "were outside the mandate and jurisdiction of Service Alberta's Consumer Investigations Unit." This letter was copied to the Premier, to the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General, to the Minister of Service Alberta, and to the MLA for Calgary-Shaw.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I believe there was a point of order, but I'm advised that it's been withdrawn.

Orders of the Day

Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

Bill 203

Long Term Care Information Act

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

Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to rise in the House today on behalf of my colleague from Red Deer-North and move third reading of Bill 203, the Long Term Care Information Act.

This private member's bill focuses on creating a one-stop shop resource for those looking into long-term care options. It serves to provide a tool for those who are looking into which facility may serve their needs according to their preferences. Mr. Speaker, when you're looking at deciding which facility is your forever home, that is a very important decision. Fellow members, we have heard many members speak to this bill before in terms of having witnessed first-hand the tremendous stress that this decision can cause. Without this tool the options currently available do not assist with easing the stress but, rather, contribute to it. I have seen families look at specific long-term care options. I have seen them having to physically visit facilities because the ability to compare them online is a very difficult process. When families or individuals are looking into long-term care options, the time frame is limited and having an online resource would ease the stress of making these incredibly important decisions.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the Member for Red Deer-North held public consultations in her community of Red Deer to hear about the perspectives of individuals she was elected to serve. Suffice it to say, the support for this private member's bill was very strong. This highly correlates with what I've seen myself, with what people are saying in terms of the difficulties our current options are presenting.

Mr. Speaker, I did hear that there was no need to make this a private member's bill and that the Member for Red Deer-North could just simply ask the minister to establish this. In fact, I believe that it was coined as a squandered opportunity recently in this Chamber. Establishing private member's Bill 203, the Long Term Care Information Act, gives a stronger backing to the focus of providing reliable, up-to-date information that is centralized to one spot. It provides a strong commitment to providing an invaluable resource to those who are making decisions regarding their forever home. It allows for easy navigation of long-term care facilities that can be compared based on information that is important to those who are looking for specifics which are important to them and their lifestyles. This is sound governance that not only supports that we are listening to the needs of Albertans but that we are willing to provide easy and accessible answers to them as well.

2:50

I know that the Member for Red Deer-North also did some research on other jurisdictions, and each province has recognized that data regarding long-term care is important. The amount of information that each province requires varies. However, there are attempts to support those investigating long-term care options within each region. In B.C., Saskatchewan, Ontario, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland website access is presented in a drop-down menu form, but it also includes all types of continuing care facilities. With such information available, it is imperative that those searching have a strong understanding of the language used to designate which facility is best suited for the care required.

Each province presents by region to enable ease of search. Within each link the information extent varies from basic address and contacts to what extra services are provided, amenities on-site, if it is pet friendly, or whether smoking is permitted and where. Additional costs are detailed. However, the amount of specific information about costs is not reported on a consistent basis. For example, B.C. includes information about extra meal costs. Inspection reports are available and updated regularly but are available through a link that is not specifically connected to the website or long-term care options. As a result, information is piecemeal and difficult to navigate.

Recognizing the importance of this information, Saskatchewan is currently revamping its website but has kept links to regional health authority websites, which provide this information. This information overhaul has taken the responsibility from regional health care authorities and made it the responsibility of the province. Manitoba, P.E.I., and Nova Scotia have listings of facilities, but these facilities deliver all kinds of health care, so a one-stop model for long-term care is not in place.

The information presented by region. Some are presented as a PDF directory, with access to varying information. What we know is that there is a strong need to make this information available and easy to understand. Currently data available in Alberta is available in a piecemeal style and is listed by diagnosis. It is the goal of this bill to simplify the process by choosing a facility that meets individual needs and to ease the burden of stress that can accompany this highly delicate decision.

Additionally, the Member for Red Deer-North has sought out feedback from agencies that serve to assist our seniors and their families and received resounding support for this tool, and they agree on the difficulty of accessing information regarding long-term care facilities.

This opportunity for the Member for Red Deer-North to present a private member's bill echoes the needs of her community and, I am sure, many of the communities represented in this House. This bill will enable and empower Albertans to make sound choices based on current, reliable, and transparent information, and, Mr. Speaker, that serves to make life better for all Albertans.

On behalf of the Member for Red Deer-North I welcome the response and debate in third reading. Thank you.

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

Mr. Cooper: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and speak to Bill 203, the Long Term Care Information Act. I want to take just a brief moment to thank the Member for Red Deer-North for her work on this file and her advocacy on behalf of our seniors. You know, I think there's not too, too much that every single member of the House can agree on, but certainly on this there isn't a single member in the House who isn't willing to try to do everything that we can in our power to support our seniors, who deserve the very best that this province can offer as they enter their

golden years. These are the folks that have built our province through hard work, grit, and determination, and we owe a great debt of gratitude to them for those efforts. They have given this province so much, and the very least that we can do as they transition into the next phase of their lives is to try to make that seamless, to be supportive, and to allow them as much choice as possible.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this bill has the right idea, and I thank the member for her reasoning behind it. I think that any opportunity we have to look at ways to improve access to information, accountability, and to make life easier for Albertans is worthy of supporting, which is why my colleagues and I on this side of the House are in fact supportive of Bill 203. But in the interests of fulfilling our role as the opposition, I want to take an opportunity to have an informed discussion and perhaps suggest some additional pieces that could have been added to strengthen the legislation and truly further ensure that it serves the purposes that it was set out to conclude.

The purpose of this legislation, from what I see, based on my reading of the bill, is to create a publicly accessible online registry for long-term care facilities in Alberta that is updated periodically to ensure that seniors and their families have all of the information that they need to make informed decisions about their futures as they access the different options available to them.

Now, as my colleagues have noted, this does to some extent already exist online. The Alberta Health website does in fact have a search engine for information regarding supportive living or long-term care accommodations that has the following information: accommodation name; operator contact address; accommodation type as well as a button for each housing option which lists how facilities are funded; details on licensing information, including the licence issue and expiry date; detailed inspection reports. There is also a helpful function which allows you to compare, side by side, different facilities that families may be interested in.

So, Mr. Speaker, I just want to ensure that this private member's bill, which has had such great intent and highlights a really important issue, expands on the great work that's already been done rather than reinventing the wheel that already exists. On behalf of stakeholders that I have reached out to or have reached out to us regarding this legislation, I would have liked and continue to make the following suggestions that would have enhanced this great piece of legislation.

The registry should include all facilities, whether private, public, nonprofit, voluntary, or any other designation. I think this is a really fantastic point, that there are so many different options when it comes to supporting our seniors. Some families want to be able to care for their elderly within their own home and simply need an extra hand, some seniors are fully independent but unable to drive, some seniors function best in a community environment such as a lodge, and some prefer to live independently, away from others.

The point is that seniors are diverse and their needs are diverse and that the options for care facilities should also be diverse. That's why having this bill mandate all continuing care options that are available to families and seniors and their families – given that all the above, from public to private to voluntary, are options in Alberta, I feel that all of those options should be built into the registry so that seniors and families really can compare those options side by side and make the most informed decision for them and their families.

The registry list should provide information specific to palliative or respite care. It would also be helpful to track the number of facilities offering palliative and respite care and see what other types of fees they may or may not be charging for palliative residents. The registry should have a description of palliative care options included in the online registry.

The registry should include information on specialized training and staff levels; for example, dementia-specific training or qualifications as well as details on types of staff as well as numbers at each facility. As you can imagine, if my mother has Alzheimer's and I'm looking at different facilities, it would be helpful to know if there are nurses or other staff in the facility that are particularly specialized in handling those specific needs. Personally, that would be a large factor in deciding what kind of care facility to place a loved one in. It is important for families to be able to select a facility that can best provide the specialized care that their loved ones may require. This would provide additional peace of mind for families.

It was suggested that regulations could flesh out the details of the services provided that must be disclosed in the regulation. Examples are: if they provide palliative care, the number of rooms or beds designated for complex patients, if they provide respite care, et cetera. This would have given a very clear breakdown of any individual strengths, the pros of each facilities, and allowed families to choose facilities that specialize in the care that their loved ones may specifically require.

3:00

If we look at this example in other areas of society and health care, we see it at work. For example, if I live in the Edmonton area and I have a sick child, yes, I could realistically go to any hospital to receive treatment for my sick child, but I would probably go straight to the Stollery hospital because I know that they specialize in children.

Similarly, most of our seniors could probably live in any continuing care facility, but if there's a particular facility that specializes in a particular area that is important to them, don't we owe it to our seniors and to their families that this information on the facility's specialization clearly be listed on the registry so that they can help make that choice earlier on in their decision-making process?

The registry could provide a further description of what an accommodation charge or additional charge means. Providing transparency around pricing is so important with respect to facilities.

Smoking policies at each facility should be included in the registry. Just as we see in hotels and other public facilities, the requirements around smoking should be made available on the registry.

I think the point that I'm trying to convey, Mr. Speaker, is that this bill had such a fantastic opportunity to really provide our seniors and their families with much-needed information and as many tools as possible to inform their critical decision. The more information that we can provide to them, the better. There is already some great info out there, and the bill provides us with a fantastic opportunity to expand on that information and really take a look at what additional information could be provided to enhance transparency to families.

I would like to thank again the Member for Red Deer-North for her advocacy and her work and hope that collaboratively we can continue to work across party lines to ensure that legislation like this, that will additionally help our seniors and their families, will make that information as accessible as possible and that the registry in its final form will be as full and robust as possible, as such providing the best possible information to Albertans.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

Ms Kazim: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased to rise in the House today to support Bill 203, the long-term care transparency act, presented by the Member for Red Deer-North. I would

like to commend her for her work and for standing up for our seniors, who have played such a vital role in our communities and in our society. I've got many long-term seniors' care homes in my riding, and I interact with seniors quite a lot. Based on my interactions with them, I continuously hear how they are seeking information about different services available to them, different options that are available to them.

One of the challenges that they experience is to have access to the information, and to provide that platform is necessary so that they can have all the resources they need to make decisions for themselves. As human beings we all have individual needs. All of us have choices based on our individual needs, and we look for opportunities to make those choices. In this bill the platform that is being provided will allow seniors to make the best choices about long-term care. Albertans need information about options in an easily understandable and accessible format. The easier the information is to comprehend, the better it will make sense to people, and that's when they are able to make the right choices for themselves.

I would like to read a quote by Bertrand Russell. He says, "The good life is one inspired by love and guided by knowledge." If we have the knowledge, we are able to make good decisions, we have better inspirations, and then we can move forward in the right direction for ourselves, whatever that is.

Also, I was reading a blog about how it is important for human beings to have the ability to make a choice. This blog I'm referring to is from huffingtonpost.ca, and it talks about Having the Freedom to Make Choices Can Empower Lives. In this blog they are referring to studies that show that feelings of powerlessness can lead to depression and anxiety. In 2011 researchers at the U.K.'s London Business School found a fascinating link between choice and empowerment. Study participants were presented with scenarios where they had various amounts of power, such as being a boss versus an employee. They were then asked to make decisions with varying options. The researchers proved what has long been suspected, that having more choice counterbalances feelings of powerlessness and also improves psychological well-being by giving people a greater sense of control over their lives.

A person could be living in different circumstances, in different situations, and as long as they have the sense of being empowered, then they define a good quality of life, they feel they are having a good life. That empowerment, as we can see from the research, is very much linked to their ability to make choices. When they have that sense that they can make a choice, then they feel more empowered. Recognizing the importance of having options, some charitable and community groups across North America are giving the most vulnerable a say in the aid and little comforts they receive and discovering that it can have almost as much impact as the hand up itself.

Basically, this research is very much relevant to this bill as well because when we are talking about our seniors, all seniors have got different needs based on their situation and what phase of life they are in. By giving them the option to make choices, we are empowering our seniors, and we can only do that when we provide them the information, the knowledge they need to make those choices. Through this bill, what will happen is that all long-term care facilities in Alberta will be required to provide information about services and costs to all Albertans. This will allow Albertans to make decisions about long-term care that are suitable for them. This will basically be a helpful tool for the seniors and their families to identify what kind of lifestyle they can have and, once they select a long-term care facility or the care that they are seeking, how it is going to make a difference in their lives.

Long-term care is something that most of us are going to need in our lifetimes. For example, my parents are aging as well, Mr. Speaker, and I currently think about what their future is going to look like, how their needs are going to change over time. Even today I'm concerned about what would be the best option for them. Being a family member, it is very important for me that they have a comfortable life and for me to gather that information in terms of what is available to them. I won't be able to figure out what would be the right decisions to make down the road or how their planning process could be started in the first place if I do not have enough information for them.

If seniors themselves are looking for options, they are confused or perplexed most of the time because they don't know where to go, how to access information, and what's available to them.

The programs that Seniors and Housing offers – for example, the Alberta seniors' benefit program, special-needs assistance, property tax deferral, seniors' home adaptation and repair program, and seniors' housing – really make a difference in the lives of all Albertans because we either have seniors in our families now or will be seniors ourselves someday.

3:10

Having that information in one place, in an organized manner, and making sure that there is a standard in all the institutions that are providing services to seniors gives certainty to our seniors that they will have a good quality of life and that they will be provided whatever they're being promised in the first place. If this bill is passed, Mr. Speaker, the long-term care transparency act will create a publicly accessible online registry to provide Albertans with information about auxiliary hospitals and nursing homes in the province. This would include type of operator, facility capacity, services provided, additional charges if applicable, and results of any inspections or investigations conducted under the Nursing Homes Act or the Hospitals Act.

The Member for Red Deer-North has consulted with Albertan families, long-term care residents, and stakeholder groups, who are widely supportive of the proposed changes because there have been many incidents, Mr. Speaker. After engaging with seniors, I hear quite often that when they sign up for a long-term care facility or for a certain service, they have a certain picture in their mind, but once they are experiencing it themselves, it's different from what they thought. This adds more pressure and more stress to their lives, and it does not really help with their transition or their well-being overall.

Basically, they feel a lack of empowerment. Again I refer to what I was talking about in the beginning, that we want to ensure that our senior citizens feel empowered, and that empowerment comes through the options that are given to them and letting them have the ability to make choices. They can make those choices once they have the information available to them, once they have that knowledge.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I would highly encourage all the members in this House to vote in favour of this bill so that we can empower our senior citizens and their families to ensure that they have access to quality services and that they can make choices that will fit their individual needs.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-Decore. Sorry; Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Nellie. Think Nellie McClung.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure this afternoon to rise to also speak to Bill 203, the long-term care transparency act,

to add what I think is a bit of a valuable addition to some of the arguments that have been made, to applaud the introduction of this bill and be glad that it is actually going to become, if passed, another addition to the tool box for families who are looking to serve their elderly members while they look to transition from either one level of seniors' care or from their own home into long-term care.

At an early age and over a number of phases of my working career, Mr. Speaker, I was exposed to the decision-making process that many families and, in fact, most families in Alberta will have to go through to determine where to place a family member into long-term care once they're no longer able to function at the level of care that they're at or in their own home.

First of all, at age 17, as some members will know, I actually trained as a nursing orderly. I trained and was in a practicum at the old Colonel Mewburn vets' home. It's no longer in existence. It's been replaced, really, by the Kipnes Centre here in Edmonton as a home for veterans. With that particular location, the choice was a bit of a no-brainer for families of veterans, and they were very happy to have the option to place their family member in long-term care in the vets' home. Now, of course, the Kipnes Centre, back then the Colonel Mewburn, had a high level of care, and it was dedicated to veterans, and they knew that the needs of those veterans would be looked after. In my case, it was only male veterans who were in the Colonel Mewburn.

They actually had special needs looked after there. I know that when I was operating there, they actually could still smoke – in fact, I remember helping people with Parkinson's disease smoke their afternoon cigarette – and on Thursdays they got to have a beer as veterans in their own facility. So people were happy to have their family members in the veterans' hospital, the Mewburn, back in 1977, when I worked there, because they knew that there were levels of specialized care that they wouldn't get elsewhere.

Mr. Speaker, I also knew, from families even at that point in time who didn't have the option to get their family member into a veterans' hospital because they weren't a veteran, that the opportunities were difficult to decipher because there wasn't a system of registration for the long-term care facilities, that this bill contemplates putting in place. That early exposure to the decision-making process, though, made it abundantly clear to me how necessary it was for families to know what all their options were.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The second phase at which I became aware of the importance for families to have good information when they're making a decision about where to place their loved one in long-term care came, of course, as a result of my 30-year career as a real estate agent. One of the major reasons that a family member, an individual, a homeowner will sell their property or, if they're renting, will decide to move away from a rental situation is that they, of course, no longer can function properly in the accommodation that they're in. Often real estate agents were called upon, as I was, to counsel a family member on what the next steps would be. I found, as I mentioned in the House before, I believe, that it was something that was a little more complex than I had first contemplated when I met with families who were making these decisions.

When you talk to a family who's relying upon you for advice as a real estate professional, you soon learn that you'd better do some research. That research was fairly extensive and wasn't the easiest thing to accomplish and still isn't because the registry is incomplete. It doesn't necessarily have all the information in one place, that Bill 203 contemplates, making it much easier for real estate professionals and family members to access a full array of all of the facilities that might be available to suit their family member's

needs in one place. That's one of the major successes of this piece of legislation, Bill 203, that it will be a one-stop shopping centre for not only real estate professionals but family members, who don't want to miss any potential opportunity to make the best decision for their family member when they're looking at a long-term care choice.

Now, of course, a third phase that I went through in this decision-making process and understanding what the benefits of Bill 203 would be was, of course, as a family member myself, trying to place parents and grandparents in long-term care. That direct experience was helped by my real estate experience in that I'd been down that road many times with other members, my clients' families, but it's a different kettle of fish when you're dealing with your own parents or your own grandparents. I found that even though, of course, you have a high level of care and concern for your clients, other things come into play when it's your own family member, because you know intimately what that family member's needs are and what things will no longer be available to that family member in a long-term care situation. You want to know, you know, if there is a particular need that may or may not be addressed in a given long-term care facility.

This registry will go a long way towards allowing those family members to feel some peace of mind by investigating properly an institution that is in the registry and knowing for sure that their family member's needs are going to be met to the best of their ability as they've done the research. Now, finally, Madam Speaker, as an MLA I actually get to help this process along. I'm really proud to be here and to assist with the debate and promote the adoption, I hope, of Bill 203. As I mentioned before, this bill would require all long-term care facilities to provide information about services and costs to all Albertans.

3:20

Now, after four decades in power, Madam Speaker, the Conservatives never introduced legislation to help Albertans make this kind of difficult decision. The opposition is calling for deep cuts to core services across the board, and that would create and have a direct impact on Albertans receiving and who need long-term care.

Mr. Malkinson: That doesn't help seniors.

Mr. Dach: No. I agree that it doesn't help families in the deepest time of need when the consideration is to get a family member placed in a long-term care situation that's going to be helpful and that's going to extend their lifespan. Really, what the family member is looking to do is to make sure that they have the highest quality of life and the longest life possible once they have to leave their family home or their rental accommodation.

I'm proud today to stand in support of Bill 203. I've had the opportunity now to work beside my colleague from Red Deer-North for three years, and I've come to respect her greatly. I know the dedication and the integrity that she expresses every day in this House and how much she cares deeply for the people in her constituency. I know that her background in the health care system has certainly driven her to do her very best to find these gaps that are in the legislation, that she's addressing now with Bill 203 to ensure that family members have the one-stop shopping registrar that this bill will put in place.

Now, despite the work that our government is doing to make it easier for seniors to stay in their homes as long as possible, we all know that the demand for long-term care is going to increase over the next 20 years. Some of the things that our government has done

I've actually been able to participate in, as a cosponsor, for example, of the SHARP program, the seniors' home adaptation and repair program, whereby seniors are able to access their home equity and invest it in their property to make renovations and repairs which make the house more accessible and allow them to live in it longer, thus prolonging the decision-making process that Bill 203 contemplates. But at a certain point in time, even with all the renovations and adaptations and repairs and so forth that the seniors' home adaptation and repair program allows seniors to do, many seniors will no longer be able to live in their own homes.

We do owe a debt of gratitude to those seniors, to our aging population, assisting them in living in their homes as long as possible, but when the decision has to be made to leave that home of theirs to go to long-term care, I'm very happy to know that Bill 203 will be in place.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to Bill 203? The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

Ms Luff: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm very pleased to be able to rise today to speak in favour of Bill 203. I haven't yet had the opportunity in the House to speak to this, and I'm very pleased to do so. I want to take the opportunity to thank my colleague from Red Deer-North for bringing this forward. I know that this is an issue that she's absolutely passionate about and has a lot of experience in and was able to look for something that is maybe a small change, but it's a change that will certainly make a large difference in the lives of people in Alberta and will make a positive change for folks. I really want to thank her for her efforts on this piece of legislation.

[The Speaker in the chair]

This is absolutely an issue that I hear about in my community. It's something I hear from constituents and friends. I have many health care aides who work in my constituency, and it's something that I hear about from them.

When folks are looking for long-term care for their parents or their relatives, it's often a very challenging decision, and people making those decisions make them for a wide variety of reasons. Everybody is unique. As people have said before, all of our seniors are diverse, and people are looking for different things. Some people want their parents to be close to them and so want to try and find a facility that's in their neighbourhood. Some people want their parents to be able to live in the community where they've always lived. I know that some folks want to continue to live in their community rather than move close to their children because that's where they've always lived and that's where they're comfortable. Those are certainly things that people consider.

People also consider – the issue of extra charges is something that I hear about a lot because, depending on where you're located, you could be charged for any number of extra things, whether that's extra care time or whether it's for someone to cut your mom's toenails or whether it's for a bath. Having those extra charges as something that's included in this database, I think, is really important and something that will be really helpful.

This is something that my family has had to deal with, not here in Alberta but in British Columbia, with my maternal grandmother, who was a wonderful, wonderful lady, who is, sadly, no longer with us, and I miss her very much. When the time came for her to have to move out of her house – you know, she lived in a lovely house on a lake, so it had a view, so something with a view was really important to her. And she was notorious. We would often thank her

for meals and say, like, “Oh, Grammy, that was delicious,” and she would say: “Of course it was. I cooked it myself.” Food was something that was also really important to her.

We spent a lot of time looking. At that time, when we were looking, you often heard about things via word of mouth – you had friends who had had a good experience – or you had, you know, just driven by a place that looked good and you needed to check into it, but it wasn’t all available in one spot. Certainly, as a younger person myself I like to be able to find information all in one spot, so the idea of having a database where you could just look for these things relatively quickly is extremely appealing.

You know, after my grandmother moved out of supportive living and had to move into long-term care, we were fortunate to find a place near our home, but I know that my mom still spent many hours travelling back and forth to do things like laundry and to cook my grandmother poached eggs on toast because she, again, was picky about food.

It can be a really difficult situation for a family to be in, and it can be something that is extremely personal and a lot of work and something that many, you know, baby boomers are starting to deal with right now, where they have parents who are needing this extra assistance. Certainly, I was fortunate to be able to help a little bit. I was in university at the time that this was happening, so I was able to help out where I could, but I know that it was a lot of burden that was placed on my mom to look after her mom. It’s something that a lot of people are going through right now.

Having quality long-term care facilities near your house or in a community of choice is very important. There are, as was mentioned, over 170 such facilities here in Alberta. Making this decision is an incredibly difficult decision for people, and this is something that, you know, just makes a little bit of a difference.

I know that navigating the health care system in general in Alberta can sometimes be challenging, challenging to find the information that you need. You know, recently I went through having a couple of children. All of the decisions that are available within the health care system in Alberta in terms of having children, whether you want to have a midwife or whether you want to have an ob-gyn, whether you want to have a home birth or a birth in a hospital, what other facilities are available, what classes you want to take – there are any number of decisions that you need to make, and those decisions aren’t always able to be found in one spot.

Something as important as putting a parent in or having a parent choose a long-term care facility: having all that information in one spot is really, I think, something that’s essential and important and will make a difference. You know, moving forward, I think that more information being available is always better. The more transparent we can be, the more information people can have accessible at their fingertips, it is always a better thing.

I just want to, you know, congratulate my colleague from Red Deer-North for bringing this idea forward, and I want to congratulate her for the extensive consultation that she did. From what I understand, this is something that’s widely supported. Certainly, when I speak to my constituents about this idea, it’s something that I hear is widely supported, so I would encourage everyone to vote for this. Again, thank you to the Member for Red Deer-North for bringing this forward.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s my pleasure to also stand up and speak to Bill 203, Long Term Care Information Act, for the first time. I have been a fan of the Member for Red Deer-North for a long time. She is very quiet, but she has a wealth of

knowledge, and she brings years of experience in this particular sector. I think this bill is perfect. I couldn’t imagine a more perfect bill, so I’m so happy to be able to support it.

3:30

Last week we heard I think it was the Member for Battle River-Wainwright tell the Member for Red Deer-North that this was a squandered opportunity. He couldn’t be more wrong. This is absolutely essential. Part of the reason that it is essential is that any time that you can compile information and keep it together in one place so that it’s easily accessible, it’s a win.

I wanted to go through some of the points that the member put together for the online registry and just talk a little bit about them. Once this bill is passed, if it’s passed, there will be an online registry to disseminate information. Some of that information includes, obviously, the operator name, contact information, mailing address, phone number, and the description of the type of operator. Now, you might not think that’s too important, but it actually is. There are people out there that are looking for private operators, for-profit operators, and there are some that are looking for nonprofit operators. The reason that they might be looking for a nonprofit that offers this sort of support is because there’s a different framework. It’s managed in a different way. There are different opportunities for families or for people receiving support to become involved. So there’s a general membership, there are meetings, there are bylaws that are easily accessible, and there’s quite a bit of information.

Obviously, (c) is description of the facility.

Then (d) is also really quite interesting. It’s the “total number of residents that may reside at the operator’s facility and a description of the intake process.” First of all, I think it’s really important, when people are looking for a place to live or looking for a place to assist their loved ones to move into, to know how big it is. Some people are quite comfortable living in a setting where there are a lot of people to interact with – there are a lot of staff; it’s obviously noisier, busier – and some people are looking for a small environment, a quiet environment.

The intake process is very important. I’m speaking to this because I was obviously heavily involved in the intake process in my previous role. I was the director of an organization that provided support for people with disabilities, and why the intake process was so key was that it was the time to assess the types of supports that people needed. Does the intake process in the organization that you’re looking at putting your loved one in take the time to actually assess the medical needs, the emotional needs, the mental health needs, the family needs? Do they look at all of these things in the initial process? Also, is there a matching component at all? Are people perhaps paired up or put next door to people with similar interests? All of those things are actually quite important.

Clauses (e) and (f) talk about details of the services provided. I think we’ve all spoken at length about that, which is really important. Some people are looking for personal care services or recreation services, and then, certainly, people with complex medical needs are going to be looking for specific medical assistance.

Additional charges. That’s vital. We know that, for the most part, there are a lot of people that are doing quite well in their retirement or when they get to the point that they need long-term care, but a lot of people are not. A lot of our seniors are living on a very fixed income, so they really do need to know what those extra charges are.

The date that the operator was established is, of course, important. It might not seem like it, but it is. It’s good to know that there’s a track record. I’m not saying that new ones aren’t good, but it is good to know.

Description of the status of the resident and family council. We did pass some legislation that talks about the resident and family council. But was there one ahead of time? Was there one before that, or did it just start now? There are many, many, many organizations that have been undertaking activities like this for a very long time. Organizations that identify the need to give input into the daily operations of the facility to the people that are living there through either their friends or family is key.

Finally, we get to the sort of more specifics around accreditation and oversight, and that's where I think this is so important. Now, it is possible to get this information in other places online, but to have this information all together is absolutely vital.

At one time the organization that I used to work for, obviously, had to comply with a number of levels of accreditation, licensing, inspection. And it's important, particularly for long-term care facilities. It is vitally important that every aspect of the facility have some oversight. This will allow people to see right away. It's as important as looking at how the menu is decided. Who gets to decide about the menu? Is there a family council? How big is it? Where is it? How old is it? How did they do in their inspection? You will learn pretty much everything you need to know about an organization by looking through their inspection report. What were the recommendations that were made? What was the laundry like? Were things kept separately? Was there infection control? All of these things are so incredibly important. They also will talk about staffing. What are the staffing ratios like in the long-term care facility? What are the additional medical supports? All of these things are very important.

Under the accreditation they also look at things like – I'm sure you've heard of the tragic cases of people being scalded. So it also looks at: are the staff trained with the equipment that is used to bathe people? Are there protocols in place to address water temperature? More than that, are there protocols, training, and oversights in place to prevent any kind of abuse? That's really key, and that information can also be found there.

I could go on and on thrilling people with all of these specifics, but I'm going to stop here. I would just like to thank the Member for Red Deer-North for using the opportunity with her private member's bill to truly give a gift to Albertans who are for themselves or for their families or friends looking for the right facility. To have all of this information in one place is so incredibly vital, and I'm thankful for that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Are there any other members who wish to speak to Bill 203, the Long Term Care Information Act? The Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

Mr. Piquette: All right. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to say that I'm gratified that you've consistently gotten my riding right since the very beginning, so thank you very much.

It's my honour and privilege to rise today in support of Bill 203. You know, like my colleagues, I would also like to commend the Member for Red Deer-North for bringing this forward. I think that it really speaks well of, you know, how close she is to her constituents that she was able to identify this issue. I think it also speaks to the kind of value that having, actually, a diverse caucus brings to the province in general, because the MLA for Red Deer-North does have a background in nursing and long-term care, and I'm quite sure that her original expertise in this field has also informed this. That's the benefit of having people from diverse walks of life and having a government that's actually representative of the people that they serve. You get good policy out of it, and I think that this is good policy.

I guess I'd also like to concur with the opinion expressed by my colleague from St. Albert. I'm also a fan of the MLA for Red Deer-North. She's been really helpful to us rural members by taking an active role in issues that impact rural residents. As I'll talk about in a couple of moments, I think this is one that has particular resonance for seniors in rural areas.

Of course, what Bill 203 does, basically – and details have been expressed by other members – is that it does provide a central sort of one-stop shop for seniors looking for long-term care and families helping to advise them, where they can find all the pertinent information they'd need to be able to make the correct choice for themselves.

3:40

I think this is something that is really, really helpful and particularly helpful in situations such as I encountered more than once in my own previous career as an insurance agent in small rural communities. You know, as an insurance agent sometimes you end up being almost the early warning for seniors that need to be looking at long-term care. When you have, say, clients that phone you every month asking if they've paid their annual insurance premium, for example, that sometimes can be a real sign that perhaps something is amiss.

There's been more than once where you'd have to talk to families about the situation that their parent or a loved one is in. What you'll find is that these families very often really want to have a constructive role to play in this decision, but it's something that can be quite difficult for them to do and can actually cause acrimony among them because what you'll see is that very often with these families, you know, the senior may live in this local area, but their family is going to be spread all over the province. This family has to somehow get information. Somehow they have to find a way to be on the same page when they're trying to get the best advice for their loved one. By having it where they don't have to go to many different places to find disparate pieces of information, where it's becoming not even just an organizational challenge to provide that information, I think is maybe an extra benefit of having this there.

Of course, for seniors that make their own minds up, make their own decisions and don't look for consultation, it's also helpful as well because, of course . . . [Mr. Piquette's speaking time expired] Oh, jeez. I guess we're out of time.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 8(7)(a)(iii) provides for up to five minutes for the sponsor of a private member's public bill to close debate.

I would invite the Member for Red Deer-North to close debate on Bill 203.

Mrs. Schreiner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very proud and honoured today to stand and close debate on Bill 203, the Long Term Care Information Act. Some of the members opposite do not believe that we need this legislation to protect and help our seniors, but I have heard loud and clear from my constituents, from my colleagues, and from associations who deal with seniors' care that this bill is worth while and necessary.

A piece of legislation like this provides consistent and accurate information that enables those searching to have the majority of their questions answered easily and online. From the cross-jurisdictional research we can realize the importance of having this information available within a one-stop resource, and I'm sure the Minister of Health will look at the variety of approaches in other jurisdictions when building our service.

Mr. Speaker, this bill serves to support a framework that enables Albertans looking into long-term care to identify the qualitative

information immediately. This bill serves to provide the basic contact information, operator and facility type, total resident capacity, additional fees and services, inspections and results, as well as accreditation status. Additionally, regular updates will be legislated to ensure the integrity of the information is accurate.

The ministry will also have the flexibility to include additional information that Albertans deem necessary and required. Transparency regarding inspections and outcomes also serves to provide opportunity for corrective measures to be implemented.

My Long Term Care Information Act is aimed at easing the stress and streamlining the information required when a loved one is determining which long-term care facility best serves their needs, and that, Mr. Speaker, makes life easier for Albertans. As individuals choosing their forever homes, the individuals' needs are the most important criteria in making the best decision, and having that information available in one location enables and empowers the right decision-making process. I have completed the research, spoken to governing agencies as well as enlisted feedback from constituents, and there is strong support for a resource that provides ease of access to this information.

My Long Term Care Information Act is an opportunity to make important information available to those who need it and to the general public. What it also does, Mr. Speaker, is ensure that information about long-term care is standardized and that comparisons between facilities are made easier. While there are numerous items that this website will disclose, it is important to remember that the availability of specific items such as special diets or cultural or language amenities can also be included at the discretion of the ministry. We should also remember the great work that has already been done by enabling and supporting resident and family councils.

I was glad to debate this bill in the Chamber with my colleagues. Those of us who are private members do have opportunities to make a positive change in the lives of Albertans, and I am proud that I had a chance to do so. All of us should work every day to make life better for Albertans in the way we know best. This is what I have done through bringing this bill forward, and I am proud of my work. I sincerely hope that every senior, their families, and their caregivers will be able to find the information they need with ease and accuracy and without hassle.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:47 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, W.	Goehring	Miller
Bilous	Gray	Nixon
Carlier	Hinkley	Piquette
Ceci	Horne	Renaud
Clark	Hunter	Rosendahl
Connolly	Jabbour	Sabir
Coolahan	Kazim	Schmidt
Cooper	Kleinsteinuber	Schreiner
Dach	Larivee	Shepherd
Dang	Littlewood	Stier
Drever	Luff	Sucha
Drysdale	Malkinson	Swann
Eggen	McCuaig-Boyd	Sweet
Feehan	McIver	Turner

Fitzpatrick	McKittrick	Woollard
Ganley	McLean	Yao
Gill		

Totals:	For – 49	Against – 0
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[Motion carried unanimously; Bill 203 read a third time]

The Speaker: Hon. members, I continue to be impressed by democracy and how it works.

I've had a request for unanimous consent to introduce a guest.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests (reversion)

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly my best friend's sister Anne Cataford, who is here visiting from the beautiful, remarkable, tremendous constituency of Calgary-Elbow. Anne is an engineer with the city of Calgary, working in the transportation department, helping to make sure that Calgarians get to where they need to go. We're tremendously privileged to have Anne's incredible engineering skills in the city of Calgary. I'd ask Anne to please rise, and I'd ask the members to please give the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 206 Societies (Preventing the Promotion of Hate) Amendment Act, 2018

[Debate adjourned May 14: Mr. Shepherd speaking]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I often reflect on my role as an MLA, and one of the things that I often say is that the things that have the most impact as an MLA sometimes are the little things. The bill that my colleague from Calgary-Klein has proposed is one of those things that only require a three-sentence addition to the Societies Act. It's a little thing, just three extra sentences in the Societies Act, but it's going to have a profound impact in our communities to prevent hate.

Bill 206 proposes adding wording to prevent groups that advocate or promote genocide, as defined in section 318(2) of the Criminal Code of Canada, or publicly incite hatred in a manner which could constitute an offence under section 319(1) of the Criminal Code of Canada from registering as a not-for-profit society. They are very small sentences. It's not a great deal of change. It's one of those little things that we as MLAs have the chance to do that is going to have a huge impact in the lives of our communities.

I want to thank him for doing this because Alberta has seen a rise in organized hate groups with racist and extremist views. I am constantly flooded by hateful and racist letters to the editor, including in my own community, social media posts, comments and discussions, and racist incidents in our communities. I'm also very weary of how some politicians use the fact that we're a very diverse

community to really incite people who may have racist and extremist views.

I was really amazed, through the work that my colleague had done, to discover that the KKK was actually registered as a not-for-profit society here in Alberta, something that just floored me. I personally didn't even know that they existed in Alberta or in Canada. It appears that they lost their status not because somebody in the registrar's office recognized it was wrong for them to be a not-for-profit society but only because they failed to file the proper documents three years in a row.

Mr. Speaker, our government has been proactive in addressing systemic racism, and we have done a number of initiatives from addressing the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to working with police officers and judges to ensure that officers are trained to recognize bias and cultural competency. We have acknowledged past wrongs such as the '60s scoop, and we are honouring days that are important to our diverse ethnocultural communities.

The Minister of Education was charged by the Premier to lead an initiative consulting groups and Albertans throughout the province to establish what needs to be done to combat racism and discrimination. His leadership not only in the consultation but in ensuring that the revised curriculum reflects students in ethnocultural communities, including the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities in Alberta, should provide or help to provide students with tools and strategies to combat racism.

Like the MLA for Calgary-Klein, my own family consists of children who are not white and who have faced name-calling and unpleasant remarks. When your children face hatred, you know the importance of removing the possibility of groups that promote hate, like the KKK, from being registered as a not-for-profit society. Even though I chose to live in that community on purpose, which was a very, very mixed community, it did not prevent hatred and really horrible remarks from being addressed to my children.

4:10

I felt that the initiative of the Minister of Education to revise the curriculum so that it really reflects everyone in Alberta, especially the contribution of everyone in Alberta, including our black pioneers, is a really good step. And I wanted to thank the MLA for Edmonton-Centre for his advocacy to have the province promote Black History Month and reflect the importance of our black pioneers here in Alberta. I'm also really so supportive of the way that our new curriculum will see our First Nation, Métis, and Inuit contribution and culture reflected in the curriculum. Students throughout Alberta will also understand how discrimination, violence, and name-calling were part of the history of how settlers treated First Nations.

Mr. Speaker, apart from the efforts that our government has been doing to ensure that racism and the promotion of genocide and violence towards those that are different from us isn't happening and isn't being supported by the work of the government, I think it is important for us to recognize that in Alberta we have a diversity of not-for-profit organizations and that these not-for-profit organizations are key community builders. They provide social services, affordable housing, seniors' lodges. They do advocacy work. They run hockey teams and recreation teams for our young people. We have such a great wealth of not-for-profit organizations. This bill has nothing to do with the work that not-for-profit associations are doing and how we need to continue to support our not-for-profit associations. Really, what this bill is all about is just ensuring that those organizations that are registered do not promote those purposes of hate or genocide.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I've shared in this House that my own father was Jewish and the impact that had on my family and how the kind of stuff that was rampant in Europe at the time when he grew up really impacted him and my own family. This is why it's so important that we don't have any not-for-profit organizations in Alberta whose purpose is to promote genocide or hatred.

I know that some religious groups may be a bit worried about this bill, and I just wanted to emphasize that this bill, again, is not against religious groups. This bill would only limit registration for groups that promote hate against a person or a class of persons as the core principle of their organization or engage in activities that break federal hate speech laws. Groups that advocate for a policy change on a particular issue within the bounds of the law will not be affected. Religious organizations would be free to continue to preach and operate as they see fit as long as their activities are not in violation of federal hate speech laws.

I think it's really important to emphasize that this bill always refers to the federal Criminal Code, section 318 of the Criminal Code of Canada and section 319 of the Criminal Code of Canada, as the activities or the purposes that will be limited by this bill. I think it's always important because when bills like this come to the House, very often we see so much more in the bill than what is really the purpose of the bill.

Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of my speech I mentioned how small things can have a really great impact, and I want to emphasize this point because as MLAs we have the opportunity to do great things for our communities through very small things.

Some of the small things that we need to do are to make sure that when we are able to make some changes that will reflect who we are as Albertans and the values that we have, we do those things.

Mr. Speaker, I also think it's really important, in the small things that we do as MLAs, not to get caught up in a lot of thinking about something and not move forward with voting positively about this change with the bill. I want to remind members, as we start discussing this bill, that you have the possibility, by voting for this bill, to ensure that we no longer have in Alberta groups like the KKK that have destroyed so many lives and continue to destroy those lives in the U.S. and possibly in other parts of Canada.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there other members who wish to speak? The Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure once again to rise in the Assembly this afternoon to speak to Bill 206, the Societies (Preventing the Promotion of Hate) Amendment Act, 2018. I'm reminded of a stunning moment that I had last year while driving to an event in Rundle park in Edmonton. It was in 2017. I was participating in the closing ceremonies of the Alberta Indigenous Games. On the way to that ceremony in Rundle park I passed a number of vehicles that were parked, with people milling around and gathered around the vehicles that I had to pass by in order to get to these closing ceremonies for the Alberta Indigenous Games. I won't mention the name of the organization because they certainly don't deserve any more oxygen than they might already have, but it was an organization which festooned the pickup trucks that they were driving with banners describing their name and that had some flags with their name emblazoned on them as well.

I found out later that it was one of these hate groups that have surfaced in our province in recent times. I thought: my goodness, individuals who are going to attend the Alberta Indigenous Games, hundreds and hundreds of them – in fact, last year there were 1,427 athletes and their families and so forth – have to pass by this group

of individuals who at that time, without the legislation now being promoted as Bill 206, were able to legally organize themselves under the Societies Act and legitimize their hatred within the Societies Act as a group that would receive the benefits of those who have registration under the Societies Act. That group could legitimize themselves under the Societies Act and promote themselves in a way that would really be a travesty.

It was shocking enough to me to know that they existed, period, and to know that the hundreds of young people participating in the Alberta Indigenous Games had to pass by that group, knowing what they were, knowing that they were hoping to have a society that was one that discriminated against people of colour or people of different cultures than their own, that they were looking to maybe go backward to a time when there were no people other than Caucasian people in Alberta.

That's not the type of thing that we in Alberta ascribe to. We are very much an inclusive and a diverse province, and this province and 99 per cent of the people in this province think that that diversity is a strength. That strength is something that we herald and we will enshrine by passing Bill 206, making sure that anyone involved in an organized hate group with racist and extremist views knows that these views are not welcome in this province, knows that they will receive no legitimization by any legislation that we have in this province, and that means the Societies Act as well. If passed, this bill will also prevent new hate groups, that may seek greater legitimacy, from being incorporated under the Societies Act.

4:20

I certainly have lived a privileged life in this province, Mr. Speaker. Coming from a Caucasian background, I didn't have to suffer the slings and arrows that many of my colleagues in this Legislature and many Albertans have had when they are visible minorities or from the non-WASP culture, the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant establishment culture. That's something that I'm very much aware of as I stand here to ensure that anybody who wishes to promote hate based on their desire to discriminate on the basis of race or colour is untenable in this province.

The closest, I guess, I can come to personal experience is with my dad's parents, of Ukrainian background, where they did suffer, you know, significant discrimination in small-town Alberta as an underclass, as they were always reminded they were. Those family stories I can certainly relate to, but to know that in this province the KKK still exists and that it actually had a large presence in this province in the area where my father's parents were homesteading was something that I'm sure in the back of their minds made them feel pretty uncomfortable and wondering, really, how welcoming this western Canadian province was.

We look to really make a statement with this piece of legislation. As my colleague from Sherwood Park has indicated, it may only be three sentences, but they speak very loud and very proudly that the province of Alberta is a defender of diversity, and whenever we do find elements who are looking to separate us by way of following through with their notions of hatred and indicating that no one in Alberta is welcome other than their own creed, their own background, we'll stand up to that by eliminating the anomalies in legislation such as the Societies Act, where people will no longer be allowed to promote hatred and belong to an organization that seeks to be governed under the Societies Act.

Societies exist in Alberta, Mr. Speaker, as a way to help people do good things, whether that's through sport, arts, culture, or a myriad of other things, and I don't see how giving legitimacy to an organization like the Ku Klux Klan does any good for Albertans.

This bill would not impact the free speech rights of these organizations. The Klan can keep being the Klan, but they should not get the same recognition from the government as your child's soccer team or your local curling club.

I'll never forget driving past that group of pickup trucks with their banners emblazoned on them as I went to the Alberta Indigenous Games in Rundle park last year. This year, when we're working on having them situated in my riding, Edmonton-McClung, in the west end, I'm going to do everything I can to make sure that there are no such demonstrations around that particular location. I would be remiss if I didn't make every effort possible to know that those students, those athletes who attend – and there are expected to be well over 1,500 this August – shouldn't have to run a gauntlet of hate as they go to participate in games that are meant to bring people together, to demonstrate the diversity of our province, and to celebrate the indigenous culture that is part of our community, in our urban areas as well as our more rural parts of the province. That goes for any identifiable group who might suffer at the hands of people who wish to promote hate in our province.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot allow this hate to spread in this province, and the government has a role in preventing that. I remember growing up, and in my elementary school there were virtually no people of colour, maybe one or two in the whole school out of 300 or 400 students. The province has changed. We welcome people from all over the world with open arms, and that is the way we want to continue to be seen throughout the world, as a very welcoming place. Those that would counter that attitude and who would besmirch our reputation with hatred and discrimination are people that we should be opposing without hesitation at every step of the way. This is one small way that Bill 206 does that. It makes a statement of saying that we will not stand for hate in this province.

If passed, this bill will deter hate groups from gaining society status in two ways. First, it'll require, Mr. Speaker, that societies that are applying for status have to have a lawful purpose, meaning that the stated purpose on their application must be legal. This means that any group that exists for the purpose of promoting hate speech will not be allowed to register because they would violate federal hate speech laws.

Second, it would require the directors of a society to ensure that the activities of their society are lawful and continue to be lawful. Mr. Speaker, organizations such as the KKK and the other that I referenced, who were demonstrating in the parking lot of Rundle park last year, clearly do not stand up to the scrutiny that this legislation suggests will be in place, and they would not be allowed under the Societies Act to register.

Beyond the registration, Mr. Speaker, we have all got a responsibility to stand up to racism and hatred in the Assembly and in our daily lives. As I mentioned before, if passed, private member's Bill 206 would require application for society status.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Clark: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It really is an honour to rise to speak to Bill 206, the Societies (Preventing the Promotion of Hate) Amendment Act, 2018. One of the great strengths of our society, without question, is our diversity and multiculturalism. I don't think it's a stretch to say that Canada, and Alberta in particular, is one of if not the most successful multicultural communities in the entire world. It is a source of great pride in my constituency. It's a source of great pride – I think it should be for all of us – that people will choose to make Canada home and choose to raise their families here, choose to contribute to community, choose to start a business. This is, you know, one of

the things that I think would cause rare unanimous consent in this Assembly. We would all absolutely agree with that.

But, troublingly, racism in Alberta and around the world seems to be on the rise. I met recently with representatives of Calgary's Muslim community who were deeply unsettled by a hateful rally that took place on the steps of Calgary city hall and were shocked by, frankly, the number of people who attended that rally. The, I suppose, positive aspect of that was that the antiracism protesters far outnumbered the anti-Muslim protesters, but it doesn't change the fact that that had a real, real chilling effect on the Muslim community. We sat, and they asked that I bring that before the Legislature. I've done so previously, but I'll do it again.

As much as we may think that debating a bill that is relatively short, that would simply ensure that any society incorporated under the Societies Act, in fact, has a lawful purpose – so far as we know, currently no organizations like the KKK, as the Member for Calgary-Klein has talked about previously, are in fact registered under the Societies Act. They were at one point in this province registered under the Societies Act, which gives them a level of legitimacy which, frankly, they do not deserve. This bill prevents that from happening in the future. I commend very much the Member for Calgary-Klein for bringing this forward. I think it is very, very important that we provide that protection. It sends a strong message from the Assembly that hateful behaviour is not acceptable. If it just creates one more barrier for any organization that has a hateful purpose from being provided any sort of legitimacy, which they absolutely do not deserve, then I think the bill has served its purpose.

The member previous had talked about the racism his parents suffered growing up as Ukrainians. Those of us of Ukrainian heritage living in 2018 may think: how could that possibly be? But my mother will tell many stories of actively being discriminated against. You know, for a good long time she did everything she could to try to fit in, to not celebrate her heritage as much as she may otherwise have. That was really upsetting to observe. It's been nice, as the years have moved on, that she's able now again to embrace her cultural heritage. It's unfortunate that she didn't teach me any Ukrainian, but I could always still learn.

4:30

You know, it's something that we need to remember, that it is never that far away and it's there below the surface. That level of racism can bubble up. Fortunately, I think we're safe to say that it is not rampant in our society, but it's not nonexistent either. Anything we can do to prevent racist organizations from existing, from being legitimized, I think we absolutely need to enthusiastically pursue. I again commend the member for bringing it forward.

I will say that I have heard some concerns from organizations that this may present a chilling effect on legitimate free speech. I think that's not the case. When we look at the definition in the bill itself, it's actually a very narrow definition: "advocating or promoting genocide, as defined in section 318(2) of the Criminal Code (Canada)" or "publicly inciting hatred, in a manner which could constitute an offence under section 319(1) of the Criminal Code (Canada)." That's a very stringent test, which would capture only very specific, overtly hateful activities. So any organization that has a lawful purpose, be that a religious or a civil society organization, has nothing to worry about from this bill.

I have no concern that this will overburden the system in terms of the registrar being required to retroactively look at every single one of the applications. I don't believe that. In fact, I know that's not part of the bill, but it would apply as new registrations are made

or registrations are renewed. The registrar would ensure that there is a lawful purpose.

I feel that the bill is welcome. I feel that it takes Alberta forward, and really the cost, if any at all, is absolutely worth it. So I encourage every member of the Assembly to support the legislation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Also pleased to speak to Bill 206, Societies (Preventing the Promotion of Hate) Amendment Act, 2018, and commend the member for bringing this forward.

A couple of concerns that have been raised with me that could have made this a more comprehensive bill and that have to do with the Societies Act in general, which has very little ability for recourse: if a society, for example, is following its own bylaws even if they're not very legitimate issues within the realm that they have chosen as targets – fundraising, recreation, sport, whatever – if they're not holding proper elections, if they happen to be using public funds for purposes that are not actually intended by the spirit of the act, it's very difficult to hold them to account. They have internal audit procedures that are allowed under the Societies Act.

What I have learned since having some connection with societies over the years is that the whole Societies Act needs to be reviewed and given a more robust oversight because there have been a number that limp along because either the members don't have the courage or the opportunity to blow the whistle on some things that are going on in their society. Indeed, apart from breaking the law, there doesn't appear to be robust accountability for many of these societies. We have thousands of societies in Alberta, some of which are not fulfilling either the spirit or the letter of their own bylaws and may be self-serving, may be serving the executive and, to some extent, contracted employees but not actually serving society or the full purposes of the Societies Act. So that was one question, that I would have liked to see this bill be a little broader and ensure that we do a full review of the Societies Act. At some point I hope this government will consider that.

Apart from that, I think it's eminently appropriate that we have strong proscription and block the ability of such organizations that promote hate and violence, that they not be registered once that's proven. I would certainly support this in the event that either they are already registered and they can then be revoked or they are proposing to be registered. It's a pretty common-sense issue, I think, especially having learned about the Ku Klux Klan in Alberta and the supremacists out of central Alberta. I don't know if any of them were actually registered or not, but it certainly raised questions, and this limited bill will go some distance, a great distance, in fact, in ensuring that these organizations don't go very far at all.

Apart from those minor concerns, I think it's very appropriate for us as a Legislature to support this and take one step further in trying to quell, in some cases, the ethnic groups that have historic challenges from their countries of origin or, indeed, folks within this country that have inappropriate, alienating approaches to new Canadians or, indeed, to indigenous people.

Very often, of course, these are individuals who are doing things that are hateful and smearing cultures or religions or ways of life, and I wonder if it's possible, then, to link individuals in some cases to their society. If they say that they're not speaking on behalf of their society, how, in fact, does one make that connection? If there are individuals who are members of certain societies yet as an individual they're speaking in ways that incite hatred or, in fact, violence, that may be a wrinkle that one would have to work

through the Human Rights Commission or, in fact, legal channels. There are a number of people who continue to incite such abhorrent language and activity and are in fact associated with certain organizations but are not speaking on behalf of those organizations. So we do need to have ways of, I guess, taking that next step, if not at an individual level, helping to make the connections between an organization and an individual who's outright speaking hatefully and vengefully.

Apart from those concerns, I think this is progress, and I'll certainly be supporting this bill. Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Are there any other members? The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Dr. Turner: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed an honour and a pleasure for me to rise to speak to this private member's bill, Bill 206, the Societies (Preventing the Promotion of Hate) Amendment Act, 2018, sponsored by my colleague from Calgary-Klein. I actually want to express my appreciation to the previous speakers, particularly the last two speakers from Calgary.

I'm reminded, actually, of the debate on Bill 9 here. We seem to have a consensus among this side of the House and perhaps that end of the House over there about the value of it, but I don't hear anything from the Official Opposition. I'm actually wondering, when it comes time for a vote, whether those folks there will disappear into the cloakroom, but let's wait and see.

I said that this is a really important piece of legislation. Alberta has seen a rise in organized hate groups with racist and very extremist views, and it's something that we have to be vigilant that we stamp out. We can't be supporting that or facilitating that in any way. The bill is going to make sure that organizations that exist solely to promote hate, like the KKK, will not be able to be revived as Alberta societies. It's already been spoken to, that there are two societies that are sort of KKK-related that are on the books, that could be revived with the filling in of a piece of paper.

It's also true that there are groups – and my colleague from Edmonton-McClung brought this up – operating in this province right now that are basically hate groups. We should not be in a situation where those folks can become a society, where they wouldn't be responsible for their debts. Certainly, if they were to become a society, the directors of that society should be held responsible for their vile and pernicious views.

4:40

You know, this government, our government, that I'm very proud of, has been active in addressing systemic racism, including Islamophobia, that was brought up by the MLA for Calgary-Elbow. Islamophobia is relatively recent in this province, largely because there haven't been a lot of targets of that particular faith living in Alberta, but as we are becoming a more multicultural province, there is a need to protect that very valuable part of our population, our citizenry, from this kind of hate activity. Any group that espouses Islamophobia should not become a society and should be held accountable for their views.

One of the most emotive episodes in my work as an MLA this past year was attending, with the MLA for Edmonton-Centre, a very impressive event at city hall here in Edmonton, and this was to recognize, I believe, the 15th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide. You know, I'm sure that all of the MLAs in the House are generally familiar with that, but basically this was a civilized country that fell into a miasma of ethnic hate based upon politicians and societies within the Rwandan nation fomenting hatred and, ultimately, genocidal activity between the Tutsis and Hutus.

You know, there is a Canadian hero in all of this, and I would really recommend that all of us heed the words of General Dallaire. General Dallaire is a hero to me and, I'm sure, to all members here. He wrote a memoir in 2016 that's called *Waiting for First Light*. Even that title gives me a shiver. The memoir was largely about PTSD and about how he had to deal with that. In fact, he got to the point that he considered seriously and, I think, actually made the first steps towards suicide but then pulled himself back from that and has made tremendous contributions since that time. General Dallaire basically pointed out that these were recognized individuals with some social power within the community that had decided, for reasons that still I personally do not understand, that they would basically vilify and demonize their opposition.

I mean, I can't think of it here in Alberta, how it would happen, but it would be as if the Official Opposition decided to say that socialists were evil and were non-Christian and didn't deserve to live. Have I heard that comment? I don't think I have heard that comment before, but I sometimes get that impression, that sort of thing. That sort of speech can be magnified. I'm not saying that that's hate speech, but that kind of speech can be magnified. We need to have things in place that will make sure that groups or associations or fraternal organizations or whatever you want to call them cannot get registered under the Societies Act of this province.

The Speaker: Hon. member, you were making very eloquent remarks, but the comments about the opposition were a little over the top.

Please continue.

Dr. Turner: Well, I will certainly withdraw any portion of that that was over the top. I sincerely apologize if there was that implication. I was trying to avoid doing that, actually.

This comes back to this situation where this act is necessary. It has been said and I've heard commentary that, really, this isn't necessary: "We're good people here in this province. Why should we have this on the books? This is another regulation, perhaps, that really isn't necessary, and maybe it's going to cost a little bit of money to set up the administration of this act." In fact, I don't want Alberta to become a Rwanda. I know that's a bit over the top, too. That's a bit hyperbolic.

We do have an example in this province where well-meaning people went far beyond reason, and that was in what I call the Leilani Muir situation, where people that were considered to be mentally defective were sterilized. This was done by the government. In fact, it was defended by the Progressive Conservative governments right up until the 1990s. Fortunately, the Supreme Court of Canada helped Alberta get out of that trouble.

I mean, I'm just using that as an example of where we Albertans might need to have some limits on what we're doing. I believe that the bill proposed by my colleague from Calgary-Klein really does help with that.

What I do want to do is talk a little bit more about this situation that the Member for Edmonton-McClung was talking about. There is a group of people in this province that call themselves a militia. I think that they pattern themselves on American militias, on the situation in the States, which has a very different – you know, their second amendment, that protects . . .

The Speaker: Are there any other members who'd like to speak to Bill 206? Edmonton-Mill Creek.

Ms Woollard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The first thing I'll do is applaud everyone who has spoken already on this bill, the Societies (Preventing the Promotion of Hate) Amendment Act, 2018, because

there were a lot of really good points having to do with this bill, and it sounds generally very supportive.

I come at it, maybe, from a slightly different point of view. I think back to teaching, especially junior high, where students are getting the idea of free speech and their right to have free speech, without understanding any consequences and limits on it. That's an interesting stage in people's development and one that's really important to deal with.

One thing you learn very quickly – and in being a parent or a teacher, you learn it – is that you cannot make everyone think the way you'd like them to think or believe what you'd like them to believe. But you can teach them that every action has a consequence and that the only people in charge of their actions are themselves. You can't do something and say: well, I didn't mean to. You did it, and therefore you've got to deal with it.

4:50

One of the things you also learn along the way is that when people group together with similar beliefs and similar mindsets, it gives them a feeling of rightness and a feeling of legitimacy, and that can be very dangerous. That kind of amplifies the rhetoric. So anything we do here that can help to make sure that people are not legitimized and are not given the feeling that this is acceptable and they have – what is it? – the right to belong, to be a legitimate group, that they can speak what they like, and that that's all protected under free rights legislation is really important.

I noticed in some of the comments made that nowadays the hate groups, the ones that basically preach negativity about others, whatever their others are, are becoming emboldened. There's a lot of feeling that it's acceptable to be anti this group and anti that group, that group of people based on their race, their religion, their ethnicity.

When the member was talking about his grandparents coming here as homesteaders from Ukraine, I was thinking that people who were here before the homesteaders would sometimes be very critical of them because they were different. They spoke a different language, they had different customs, and therefore they were regarded negatively. It took a long time before people learned to be able to see what was the same, that they had the same goals in mind and the same reason for being here.

When groups become, as I said, legitimized, they get a gain in confidence and a desire to entrench themselves, and having recognition from the government makes it easier for them to do that. The government has such an important role to play in preventing the spread of hate and in making sure that people understand that this is not okay, that this is not a legitimate reason for getting together: get together if you like, but don't want outward legitimizing of your endeavours. The bill doesn't infringe on anyone's ability to say what they want to say. It just prevents them from forming an association expressly for sharing their hatred or figuring out a way to express it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to stand on Bill 206. Now, as I understand this bill, if I understand it correctly, it purports to be against the promotion of hate and bigotry in our society. I can tell you that on this side of the House we believe that hate and bigotry are unacceptable at all times and without exception. The United Conservative Party stands resolutely against hate and bigotry.

Let me just say that my experience is that this province has been a welcoming place for people of all backgrounds for a long time.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to suggest that the experience in Alberta has been perfect because it has not. There have been cases where people have been badly treated. As has been said in this House, at one point the KKK was apparently even registered here, which seems completely – I understand it's a fact, but it's not a fact that I believe anybody in this House should be proud of or is proud of or ever would have been proud of.

Mr. Speaker, I have to also say that this is an issue where we should stand together. When it comes to being against hatred and bigotry, I think it's a nonpartisan issue. I think it's something where people on all sides of this House and of all stripes in this House should make sure that we stand against hatred and bigotry together.

I have to say that I was pretty disappointed a few minutes ago to hear what I thought was a member of the House talking right on the edge of hatred and bigotry, perhaps suggesting that members of this House might think that other members of this House didn't deserve to live. Beyond the pale. Mr. Speaker, I'm grateful that you called the member to account. I thought you did your job well when you did that, and I compliment you on that. I have to say that those comments were entirely, in my view, against what I believe the spirit of the bill brought forward by the hon. member was, entirely against it. To suggest that any member of this House, because of a political disagreement – to even suggest that it's possible that they might think that somebody with a different political background or agreement doesn't deserve to live is shameful. I was ashamed to hear those remarks uttered in this House, where I serve.

Mr. Speaker, if we are going to build the Alberta that I believe we all want, where every Albertan is welcome and equal and is able to live their lives securely, without fear, and is protected regardless of their background, their race, creed, colour, religion, sexual orientation, or any other difference that somebody can add onto how you describe a human being, then we need to be part of a positive conversation about those things. I'm not suggesting at all that we should deny negative historical things that have happened. I'm not suggesting that at all. In fact, that's one of the ways that we learn from the negative past and create a more positive future.

Mr. Speaker, while we consider this legislation – on this side of the House we obviously are of the strong, strong opinion that any piece of legislation that stands resolutely against bigotry and hatred is a positive thing and something that we feel strongly about – we need to make sure that as we have this debate, we can make the bill as good as it can be. On this side we commend the sponsoring member. I think what he's saying is that we must be vigilant. Even in some of the speaker's comments and in some of the comments that I've heard – he's actually made reference to some of the negative past, and I compliment him on that, too, because the hon. member did it in a way to point out what was wrong in the past, to point out . . .

An Hon. Member: Make things better.

Mr. McIver: We need to make things better. Exactly right.

. . . why we need to move to a positive future.

This is something where I think that when the Legislative Assembly sets a positive example, it puts us in a position where we can set an example for our children, those in school, to learn lessons. You know, just the other day, Mr. Speaker, I was at an event with the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View at the Boys & Girls Clubs in Calgary. He might remind me of what the program is. It's one that I went to learn about – roots of empathy – where they bring young mothers with their children into a classroom. The children watch the mother and the young child, sometimes a toddler, sometimes brand new babies, react and talk about empathy; for example, you know, having discussions about:

if the child cries, is the child bad? Well, no, the child is not bad; that's how the child communicates. The whole idea is to get people thinking about other people's feelings, too.

I think that's at the root of fighting hatred and bigotry: people caring not just about themselves but about the other human being in their presence, the other human beings that they are with here in Alberta, having concern and care for the other person's feelings, the other person's place in society, the other person's place in the room and not just their own. These are things where, frankly, the more we get people to think about these things, the better our society will be, the safer our society will be, the more secure our society will be, the more proud we can be of the society that we are and the society that we can be in the future.

As we continue with the debate on this bill, I would like to make it clear that those things are important to members on this side of the House and, I believe, on all sides of this House, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I need to interrupt the discussion on this as the time has lapsed and we need to move on.

5:00 Motions Other than Government Motions

Upstream and Downstream Emissions

505. Mr. Kenney moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to immediately demand that the government of Canada introduce any necessary legislative changes that would prohibit the consideration of upstream and downstream emissions by a federal energy regulator at any stage of the pipeline approval process.

[Debate adjourned May 28: Mr. Shepherd speaking]

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak in favour of the motion brought forward by the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed. The reason it was necessitated is that the NDP's federal allies the Trudeau Liberals are attacking Alberta with bills like bills C-48 and C-69. The Leader of the Official Opposition and all of us on this side of the House asked the government to actually table if they have written to the standing committees in opposition to those bills and in support of Alberta. They didn't table any of it, other than partisan rhetoric, in this House.

Mr. Speaker, even if and when the Trans Mountain is built, it's only 600,000 barrels that we can ship to the coast. The other 4 million barrels we are selling to one single customer. Based on the current trade relationships we have with the U.S.A., if the U.S. decides to turn the tap or shut the wall, the inlet down, we will need alternate pipelines. With bills like C-48 and C-69 we can never get any other pipeline built to the coast, to tidewater in Canada. That's why this Motion 505 is really important.

When the Minister of Energy spoke – when she said that she's going to oppose without any valid reasons, that means she's opposing, and she's supporting when the Trudeau Liberals are attacking Alberta, so that means she's supporting the attacks on Alberta. She has to decide, she and her caucus, whether they stand up and fight for Albertans or not.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 8(3) provides for up to five minutes for the sponsor of the motion to close debate.

I would invite the hon. member to close debate.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank all members who participated in debate on Motion 505 for their thoughtful interventions. As I said at the beginning of this debate last week, this motion speaks to an issue that is existential for

Alberta and our economic future. Our jurisdiction in the Constitution to regulate the production of oil and gas is something I spoke to at great length, a right – a hard-fought right – won by the late, great Premier Peter Lougheed in the repatriation of the Constitution in 1982.

Mr. Speaker, I thank, commend, and appreciate the NDP government for having raised some objections to the intrusion of the federal government, through the National Energy Board, into the indirect regulation of downstream carbon emissions in the assessment of proposed pipeline projects. I wish, however, that their opposition to that were more vigorous. The government, for example, while it says that it has, quote, raised concerns with the federal Minister of Natural Resources with respect to Bill C-69 before the federal Parliament, has refused to state outright opposition to that bill or call on the federal government to repeal it even though it makes worse and cements in law the policy adopted by the National Energy Board in 2017 with respect to downstream emissions.

I think they are missing the target in defending Alberta given that the Canadian Energy Pipeline Association and virtually all other major voices in Alberta's energy industry have indicated that the more burdensome process represented by the Trudeau government's Bill C-69 effectively means that we will not be able to get approval for another major pipeline in the future. This makes us even more dependent on now federal ownership of the one and only prospective coastal pipeline project.

Earlier today, Mr. Speaker, I raised a wonderful initiative by a consortium of First Nations groups to build an alternative coastal pipeline, called the Eagle Spirit pipeline, to the west coast from Alberta. The problem here is that even that pipeline proposal, if it were to come to fruition, would be assessed today based on the expanded writ of the National Energy Board, as articulated in its August 23, 2017, interpretive letter to TransCanada PipeLines with respect to the proposed Energy East pipeline route, where the NEB got into the business of up- and downstream carbon emissions. If the Eagle Spirit pipeline were to be proposed, say, a year from now, following the prospective adoption of Bill C-69, the federal environmental impact assessment act, it would become virtually impossible to get approval.

You see what this is doing? The opponents of our energy wealth, Mr. Speaker, are trying to land lock us. One way in which they are doing so is through these new regulatory mandates, currently, I believe, arbitrarily imposed by the National Energy Board but now, worse, sanctioned by legislation under Bill C-69. That is why this Motion 505 is so important, and that is why I regret that the government appears to oppose it.

I've addressed so far the question – I thank the government for their kind of, I would say, modest opposition to the National Energy Board's intrusion into downstream emissions and the regulation of pipelines. But what really puzzles me, Mr. Speaker, is their stubborn refusal to object to the Trudeau government and the National Energy Board intruding into the regulation of upstream oil and gas production. I've quoted at length the relevant section of the Constitution, which says under section 92A, "In each province, the legislature may exclusively make laws in relation to... development, conservation and management of non-renewable natural resources." Not partial or shared jurisdiction but exclusive jurisdiction.

Mr. Speaker, I would call upon our friends in the New Democrat Party to reconsider their position, to stand in the defence of these hard-fought and historic rights, which are essential for our economy and our future. Please join with us in defending section 92 of the Constitution, join in the legacy of Peter Lougheed and the defence

of our right to regulate our natural resources without unjustified federal intrusion by voting yes on this motion today.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion Other than Government Motion 505 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:08 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Fraser	Nixon
Anderson, W.	Gill	Panda
Clark	Gotfried	Schneider
Cooper	Hunter	Smith
Cyr	Kenney	Stier
Drysdale	McIver	Yao
Ellis		

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Gray	Piquette
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Bilous	Hinkley	Renaud
Carlier	Horne	Rosendahl
Ceci	Kleinstauber	Sabir
Connolly	Larivee	Schmidt
Coolahan	Littlewood	Schreiner
Dach	Luff	Shepherd
Dang	Malkinson	Sucha
Feehan	McCuaig-Boyd	Swann
Fitzpatrick	McKitrick	Turner
Ganley	McLean	Woollard
Goehring	Miller	

Totals:	For – 19	Against – 35
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[Motion Other than Government Motion 505 lost]

The Speaker: The Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this time, seeing as we've completed our agenda for the afternoon, I'd like to move that we adjourn until 7:30 this evening.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:26 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday evening, June 4, 2018

Day 37

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (NDP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Anderson, Hon. Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (NDP)
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (UCP)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (NDP)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (NDP)
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Cortes-Vargas, Estefania, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (NDP),
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Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (NDP)
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (NDP)
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)
Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (NDP)
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Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (AP)
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (NDP),
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Official Opposition Deputy Whip
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Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (NDP)
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Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)
Vacant, Fort McMurray-Conklin
Vacant, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake

Party standings:

New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 25 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent Conservative: 1 Vacant: 2

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Shaye Anderson	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Sandra Jansen	Minister of Infrastructure
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Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Community and Social Services
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Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

Parliamentary Secretaries

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Kazim	Schreiner
Kleinsteinuber	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Monday, June 4, 2018

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: Good evening. Please be seated.

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

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

Bill 13 An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future

The Chair: We are currently considering amendment A4. Any members wishing to speak to that amendment? Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. Great to see everybody on this fine, wet evening. I am rising, of course, to speak to amendment A4. I believe it was moved by me on behalf of the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

The point of the amendment is that the legislation as proposed says that the capacity market “supports ensuring a reliable supply of electricity is available at reasonable cost to customers.” This is not the same thing as: “supports ensuring a reliable supply of electricity is available at reasonable cost to customers” and “supports the fair” – Madam Chair, the fair – “efficient and openly competitive operation of the capacity market.”

Again, under the current legislation it says: “supports ensuring a reliable supply” – reliable and the NDP don’t often go together; that may be some of the confusion – “of electricity is available at reasonable cost to customers.” This amendment would change it to: “supports ensuring a reliable supply of electricity is available at reasonable cost to customers.” Same thing. It doesn’t change what is in the current legislation brought forward by the government, but then it adds: “supports the fair, efficient and openly competitive operation of the capacity market.”

Now, the government has indicated that they will not support that. It is a little troubling – troubling, Madam Chair, but I should say not surprising given this government’s history – that this government would not support a fair, efficient, and openly competitive operation of the capacity market. For what possible reason will the government not support a fair, efficient, and openly competitive operation of the capacity market?

Madam Chair, this is a major change to bring trust back to the capacity market. That is what we’re trying to do. We talked about this last week, before we left for our constituencies, about the need to bring trust back, particularly around the capacity market – that’s what we’re talking about right now – but trust in general because this government has lost the trust of the majority of Albertans. When it comes to the electricity market, because of that lack of trust Albertans are scared. They’re very, very scared. They will probably be more scared of this NDP government when they find out that they’re voting against supporting a fair, efficient, and openly competitive operation of the capacity market.

I think for many Albertans that will reaffirm their fear and the lack of trust in this government because by their vote they’re proving Albertans right. They’re proving Albertans right that they have not changed their ways, that they’re still the NDP government that we

have seen here for the last three years that ignores Albertans and that bullies their way through legislation despite the consequences, sometimes devastating, to the people that they’re supposed to govern. By supporting this, though, then there’s an opportunity for this government to be able to regain some trust with Albertans.

Now, Madam Chair, why wouldn’t you want – not you, of course. I’m sure you would want to support the capacity market to be fair, efficient, open, and competitive. But why wouldn’t the government want to support the capacity market to be fair, why wouldn’t they want it to be efficient, why would they not want it to be open, and certainly why would they not want it to be competitive? We know that the NDP have focused most of their time in office on stacking the deck to their advantage, but they should not do that in this capacity market because there’s no advantage to them. As they try to rig the election system and do those types of things, that won’t be here. All that will happen, if they continue down this path, is that we could end up in a place like Ontario has found themselves, with an electricity market that is devastating their economy, that is devastating investment in their communities, that is devastating manufacturing in their province, and that is devastating everyday people inside the province of Ontario.

The soon-to-be former Premier of Ontario in less than 72 hours: she herself has acknowledged in probably a most unprecedented statement from a sitting Premier in our country’s history that she will not be the Premier in 72 hours. One of the things that she has acknowledged when acknowledging that fact, that she is about to lose the election, was that one of the biggest reasons why she and her provincial Liberal Party have found themselves in this situation is because they messed with the electricity market so much that the people of Ontario seem prepared to wipe the entire Liberal Party down to one or two or zero seats. Possibly the current Premier will even lose her seat. Premier Wynne has said that her greatest regret is how the Liberal Party has handled the electricity market and that this has had devastating consequences.

You know, those are the political consequences to that party, and maybe there will be similar political consequences to the provincial NDP. The problem, though, is that while that was happening, while the Liberal Party in Ontario blindly pushed through their ideological agenda, everyday Ontarians were being punished. You’d watch the news in Ontario and see people that were paying \$1,500, \$2,000, ridiculous amounts of money for their power bills.

Now we have a government in this province who seems determined to do the same types of things or certainly seems determined to continue down the path of not consulting people, not listening to their boss, which are Albertans. I know the NDP forget that. They think it’s the bubble of all their little NDP ideological friends that all hang out together on the weekend. That’s not who they work for. They work for the people of Alberta, from north to south, from east to west.

Mr. Bilous: We don’t hang with them.

Mr. Nixon: Well, you know, the Minister of Economic Development and Trade says: we don’t hang out with them. But that actually is the problem. They only hang out with themselves. They only go home. They don’t talk to people. Because if they went home on the weekend and they talked to actual constituents, if they stepped outside of their bubble, they would find out that this is one of the number one concerns. They would certainly find out. I know the minister is laughing and smiling, but I would be devastated if my party had lost all that trust.

This party managed, this party being the NDP Party, because of a situation where Albertans were frustrated with the current government – the legacy Wildrose Party crossed the floor and

created a perfect storm where this government could come in and do all their ideological changes. But you would think that because the NDP were able to get power through that, they would've learned a lesson from the former PC Party. My colleagues who were part of the former PC Party have spoken about that lesson very often, which is to not stop listening to the boss. Do not stop listening to Albertans.

The late Premier Ralph Klein used to call it dome disease, and there is no doubt when you're talking about Bill 13, this electricity capacity legislation, that this NDP government is suffering from the worst case of dome disease probably in the history of this province. They've lost complete contact with Albertans. If they talked to Albertans, they would understand that Albertans are very concerned about this. They also are very concerned that this government will not even put in simple words to ensure that the language around this legislation will ensure the fair, efficient, openly competitive operation of the capacity market. For what possible reason would the government not want it to be fair, would not want it to be efficient, would not want it to be openly competitive when they try to make these large changes to the capacity market?

7:40

You know, we've been debating Bill 13 for a while in this Assembly. My colleagues and I primarily are the only ones who have been speaking to it. A simple look through *Hansard* will see that that fact is true. While the NDP members have been in the Assembly during the debate, they have not participated in it, particularly the Minister of Energy, who has not risen to discuss those concerns with the opposition and has not answered some of those simple questions, particularly why they would not want a fair, efficient, and openly competitive operation of the capacity market they're trying to create.

Albertans cannot be blamed for being concerned about the hidden agenda of this government. This government, from the very moment that they took office, has operated under a hidden agenda. The carbon tax, another thing that has devastated our communities, was another hidden agenda, something that none of these members campaigned about when they were running to be this government, something that they hid from Albertans. Then they came in, and they made it the law, made it one of their primary laws.

That applies, certainly, to the amendment because the amendment is about trust. The amendment is about trust. Why would Albertans trust a government that continues to hide things from them, that campaigns and doesn't tell them about their ideological policies, that focuses their time on stacking the deck on electoral reform and trying to make things work better for them, and as we heard today in question period, that skirts around the law to do campaign announcements in Fort McMurray and Sylvan Lake despite finally passing a law after a long fight by this opposition in this Assembly to stop the government from using the taxpayer purse to participate in elections, you know, something the Premier and the hon. Government House Leader very clearly were against when they were in opposition, very clearly were against? But now that they're in government, that's all changed. They can skirt those rules. They can skirt those rules, and they lose more trust, which is why the opposition has to bring an amendment like this, because Albertans don't trust them.

If this government's goal with this bill is not to take away a fair, efficient, and openly competitive operation of the capacity market that they're creating, then they should support this amendment. If they don't support this amendment, then the Energy minister should rise and explain why she and her government do not support a fair, efficient, and openly competitive operation of the capacity market. Asking Albertans just to trust you is no longer acceptable to the

people of Alberta. It is no longer acceptable. They're totally tired of the NDP's behaviour, their blatant, partisan, rhetoric, ideological behaviour focused on themselves – selfish behaviour, I would say – and completely ignoring the people of Alberta.

Now, Madam Chair, instead it appears that the NDP is focused on a capacity market under the NDP that will only be about reliable supply and reasonable cost. This is not the consistent language that the industry uses. The other thing that this amendment does, as the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills, who's worked very hard on this issue, points out and rightly so, who brings this amendment because of that, which I moved on his behalf, is that it brings consistency to the language inside the legislation.

One of the big struggles that the NDP government in Alberta have had during their time in office is that they have very, very much struggled to make legislation that works. They have to revise almost every piece of legislation that they ever bring to the Chamber.

I see the Minister of Labour, who's brought a lot of electoral reform pieces of legislation to this House, and then she has had to change them every sitting afterwards because they got it wrong.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs is here tonight. Great to see him. We had a piece of legislation the other day around Bill 10 where he had to amend three-quarters of the legislation just three or four short days after he tabled it in the Assembly. He struggled to get that legislation right. Now, I'm glad he's working to get it right. It's a good thing the opposition was here to catch the mistakes. Despite the fact that the minister ridiculed the opposition over and over while they were catching it, he still came with, you know, an amendment to his own legislation that replaced three-quarters of it only a few short days after he tabled it in this Chamber.

It was such an interesting debate at the time, Madam Chair, because the government had to reach out to the opposition to have us carry on debate on another bill because they were having trouble getting their amendment for this Bill 10 photocopied. This is what the government does to legislation. They're in a mad panic in the backroom trying to photocopy an amendment that ends up in the hands of people in this Legislature that's still hot, hot off the presses, hot off the photocopier.

You know, they get legislation wrong. They have a terrible habit of that, and there are probably a couple of reasons for it. One is because they're trying to go at such a rapid pace to get their ideological agenda in that they will not listen to the opposition, just like they will not with Bill 13 or this amendment. Second, they won't talk to Albertans, which is why Albertans don't trust them. And that's why you see governments who have to come and replace their entire piece of legislation.

I mean, I would not hold my breath as we're working through Committee of the Whole that at some point the pages will not come running in here with a whole bunch of hot amendments to Bill 13 because this government finally realizes: oops; we made a mistake on this one, too. Now, when it happens that way – which if it's going to happen, I hope it happens that way for Bill 13 – that at least allows us to catch it before Albertans are punished. Most of the time this government catches it well after the sitting is done, and then they have to wait all the way to the next sitting to come and change their own law, because they're incapable of writing legislation that they don't need to have fixed.

Now, Madam Chair, when it comes to Bill 13, everybody that we are talking to in the industry says that they need a fair, efficient, open, and competitive capacity market, or FEOC, through and through, without any exemptions. There has to be a fair, efficient, open, and competitive market. It has to be consistent language throughout Bill 13. It's essential to prevent legal challenges, something that this government has had trouble with as well. In fact,

they had to sue themselves when they were dealing with the electricity market. They sued themselves. They also sued Calgary's electricity provider, which is owned by taxpayers in the city of Calgary. They ultimately had to do a settlement, which they still have not, you know, from what I've been able to tell, come clean with this Assembly on what it is despite being repeatedly requested to by the opposition. It will come out. It's not something that they're going to be able to keep hidden forever. It will come out.

But why not make sure that this legislation is right this time? Why does this government continue to do things like Bill 10, realize that they made a mistake because they won't listen to anybody, and then rush to fix it and still make more mistakes? It's shocking to many people that this government continues this behaviour.

I will close with this, because I'm looking forward to hearing some more comments from my hon. colleagues tonight. I may have more to say a little bit later. The biggest issue that I hear on this bill back home right now – and it was great to be back in Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre this weekend. This was one of the number one things that, actually, people were discussing with me back in my constituency because of that trust issue, that they don't trust this government. They're also scared of the day-to-day consequences that could come as a result of this government making a mistake. They also know that this government doesn't care about them, because the government has shown over and over and over that they don't care about Albertans. They do not care about Albertans. That's why they get their legislation wrong. They just don't care. I mean, they come in and make fun of a significant portion of this province's representatives, telling them that they're fearmongers, and then have to come in and actually fix the legislation as was pointed out about it.

But their biggest fear is that this NDP government, which has shown itself to be extraordinarily incompetent on almost every file, is going to get this wrong and that we are going to be like Ontario. We are going to end up like Ontario. We're going to end up in a situation where we're going to make it harder for small manufacturing in communities like I represent: Sundre, Rocky, Rimbey, Bentley, Caroline, Buck Lake, Pigeon Lake, on and on, Winfield, Eckville. All those communities are very scared that this government is going to get it wrong and that it's going to cost manufacturing, which, in particular, rural communities are depending on attracting to their communities right now, too much and that they're going to go to other jurisdictions, Montana or Saskatchewan or elsewhere.

Then, secondly, they're absolutely petrified about their electricity bills, which are already crippling, in some cases, in an economy that has been struggling under this NDP government's watch, under a government that has raised their taxes, under a government that has brought in a job-killing carbon tax to the point of hurting seniors in our communities, hurting our community centres, hurting our nonprofits, devastating them. Then their only answer to them when they come and ask questions is: go and fund raise for your carbon tax. That's all this government will tell them. But they're scared that government, that same government who's lost the complete trust of Albertans, who has no trust, is going to bring in and continue to mess with the electricity system so bad that it's going to raise their bills even more. It's going to make it harder for them to raise their kids. It's going to make it harder for them to go on vacation. It's going to make it harder for them to live their lives, every Albertan.

7:50

Particularly, though, I think right now as I'm speaking of the fixed-income seniors, many of whom I represent, who are living on tight budgets, who have built our communities, who we want to stay

in our communities because communities are better with grandma and grandpa there. They're better with our seniors, the people that have built our communities, but they are struggling to stay afloat under this NDP government, a government, when you're talking about seniors, Madam Chair, who took away 30 per cent of their carbon tax rebates and then shrugged their shoulders and said to them: it's okay; you've still got 70 per cent. That's how this government treats seniors. They are scared. They are scared of the consequences that will come as a result of this legislation.

Now, the NDP may think that's humorous. They may think that it's okay, that people will forget, that seniors will forget in the next election, that other people will forget the damaging policies that this government continues to force upon them, but I can tell you, Madam Chair, that they will not forget. They will not forget. This government would be good to remember that.

But that should not be the reason why they should fix this. They should fix this because they don't want to continue to hurt the people they say that they're here to govern, to hurt the people they say that they're here to help. Time and time again in this Assembly this government proves that they do not care about Albertans.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise tonight to speak in support of the Member for Calgary-Foothills' amendment to include the words "fair, efficient and openly competitive" in the language of this bill. There are a few reasons why I think this amendment is needed, the main reason being that adding in the language would simply restore confidence to the investors that we so desperately need in this province. Our caucus has heard on a number of occasions from various electricity stakeholders that there is great concern and mistrust in the absence of fair, efficient, and openly competitive that had not been accorded to the capacity market, where the standard FEOC language was not used, especially given this government's track record of making changes after the fact.

We've just heard plenty of examples, so I won't indulge in stating those examples again, but as I've stated many times before, I think that if this government would take the time to be able to do the proper consultation, to properly ask Albertans what's going on and what's happening, I think they would be in a situation where they wouldn't have lost the trust of Albertans. They wouldn't be in this situation where they've messed things up so badly that they're sitting where they are in the polls right now.

Now, the members from the other side would like to say that there is absolutely no reason for the amendment and that it is a complete waste of time, but, Madam Chair, I would like to ask those same members: when has it become the practice of this Assembly that restoring confidence in the electricity market or any market, for that matter, is simply a waste of time? This Assembly was established so that legislators can come to this House to discuss concerns brought forward by the people. To say that that is a waste of time is completely appalling. If that is the case, then I think those members should rethink the reason they even started to get involved in politics in the first place.

Trust in the process and trust in this House needs to be restored, Madam Chair. Trust is the biggest problem that this government faces. It is no wonder that the people have lost confidence in this government when members make comments such as: these are a waste of time. Like the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre said last week, "When the NDP . . . came into power, they started out by actually breaking government contracts and ending up in some [huge] lawsuits and negotiations as a result of

that... instability for the generators but also instability for investment markets" due to investors not trusting this government's word.

And how, really, could they trust their word? They change the rules as they go. After all, this government is willing to break contracts that the government itself had and has the willingness to sue even itself. Who can know the mind of this government? This amendment would help to tidy and clean up the bill. It would also ensure consistency. Taking this government's word is obviously not good enough.

Now, I know the members on the other side would rather have people believe that this amendment is just a waste of time, but truth be known, it's rather simple to include and gives electricity stakeholders confidence and certainty. I know for a fact that they don't see it as a waste of time. It would also instill confidence and certainty in the stakeholders who are worried about legal manoeuvring that could potentially allow the government or the Alberta Electric System Operator to skip out of commitments.

Now, you would think that this government, seeing what we saw with the PPA debacle, would understand this point and understand this principle that you need to make sure that the legal contract, in this case the legislation, is ironclad. To take a little longer to be able to make sure that we get it right or that they get it right would save the government and, obviously, taxpayers a lot of money in terms of legal costs, again, as we've seen with the PPA debacle.

I couldn't tell you enough how extremely important it is for this government to restore some essence of confidence and instill trust in the bill. If they did so, investors would feel much more confident in the process. Members on the other side of this aisle claim that the words we are using in the amendment are already in the bill, that it's superfluous and perhaps something we don't even need to look at. Restoring confidence is considered superfluous and something we don't need to waste our time on? That is what happens, Madam Chair, when you have a government who lives under an NDP world view and does not consider consultation with anyone outside of the view valuable. Actually, they perceive it as a complete waste of time.

If this government really wants investors to receive this bill in good faith, then I suggest that this amendment be supported. Eroding investor confidence will not lead to the future growth of this province. This is a rather simple amendment that would very well restore that confidence. Like other members have mentioned before, this is not simply a grammatical change. This isn't simply adding words to make this just sound better to investors. This is about actual transparency and fairness. It also incorporates words that industry understands, using legal terminology that cannot be mistaken.

The Member for Calgary-Foothills used foresight when drafting this amendment. He decided to look ahead to make sure that the same issues that happened previously with the PPAs does not happen again. This is something that the government side of the House and their thousands of employees should be very concerned about. I give him credit for this kind of forethought. I think that the other side of the House should peacefully and humbly accept this amendment because – you know what? – he's right. This very simple amendment could save the government a world of trouble and save taxpayers a world of trouble. Not only could this be a potential problem down the line, but let's look at the electricity capacity any time capacity drops. Who is on the hook for the bill? That's right. It's the taxpayer, Madam Chair.

The legislation as proposed says that the capacity market supports ensuring "that a reliable supply of electricity is available at reasonable cost to customers." Reasonable according to who? Who determines that? The value of being able to put this kind of

verbiage into the legislation establishes that there are going to be competitive processes at play, that there are going to be fair processes at play, that they are going to focus on efficiencies and that they are going to make sure that it's open and, as I said earlier, competitive.

This is standard practice in good or best practices. I think the sad thing that I hear is that the NDP will not be supporting this amendment. This is a very common-sense amendment that does not change their need or desire to be able to move to a capacity market. This actually takes, in my opinion, a very bad bill and makes it less bad, and yet again we're seeing complete stubbornness from this government. This is just not the same as it saying that the capacity market "supports ensuring a reliable supply of electricity is available at reasonable cost to customers" and "supports the fair, efficient and openly competitive operation of the capacity market."

8:00

Let me ask the members on the other side of the House this question. Why wouldn't you want the capacity market to be fair, efficient, open, and competitive? I imagine that if they were sitting on this side of the House, they would be championing that kind of an idea. As we've seen in *Hansard* in the past, that is something that they've been supposedly champions of in the past, and I'm not sure exactly why they're not now.

Since this government's phase-out of coal generation, the need for Bill 13 became apparent when the grid became unstable. The capacity market had to happen in order to stabilize the grid, or else we would have seen the same sort of thing happening in Ontario happening here. Now, it's not to say that that won't happen here. As we can see, especially with the election in Ontario, Premier Wynne is suffering the consequences of a policy that has taken down a complete government. I think that, once again, making sure that this bill has the right mix, learning from the mistakes that were made in Ontario, would be something that this government would embrace, yet again they're completely uninterested in applying these best practices.

Now, the reason they had to do this was because the NDP decided to implement changes too quickly. What an American company did in three years across 13 states should have taken six. Then there's our government. They decide that if this American company can do it in three, they can beat that and do it in two.

Here we are back in the House, and if you want to talk about wasted time, let's discuss how this government, through their own fault, now have to bring in capacity markets and waste everyone else's precious time and money. It's a real shame, Madam Chair, that it went this way. In fact, it can all stem back, in my opinion, to the carbon tax. Because they implemented the carbon tax, there was just a snowballing effect of one more legislation that needed to be introduced and presented so that they could fix the original problem, which is the carbon tax, the original fault of not thinking about things and just rushing headlong into policies that had not been properly thought out, in fact not even just properly thought out but not even campaigned on, the largest tax grab in Alberta history. We're in a situation now where we're seeing that not only affecting Albertans in the pocketbook from the carbon tax but actually affecting Albertans because of the constant new policies that have to be presented by this government in order to be able to try to fix the original problem.

Well, I know what the fix is, Madam Chair. We've said it many times. Our leader has said it. We need to get rid of the carbon tax, get rid of the original problem, and start working through these issues that this NDP government has introduced to a fantastic economy and to a fantastic province, a place that used to be the light in Canada. In fact, many people from all over the world came to

this place because of this thing that we used to call the Alberta advantage. It's been dismantled now. Now we have businesses that are saying that they have no interest in being able to stay here. The only reason why they do is because they believe that this will be a one-and-done government, and if they believed that there's going to be a second term, they would not stay. We would see a complete exodus of businesses.

Now, look, I'm not trying to be a fearmonger here. I'm not trying to say something that I haven't heard. I've heard this everywhere I go. From north to south, from east to west in this province businesses are scared to death of this NDP government. They keep on changing the rules. You know, what's interesting about this, Madam Chair, is that businesses can adapt to a lot of things, but when it happens so quickly, they have a very hard time adapting.

I'll give you a case in point. Recently, June 1, the new OH and S rules, occupational health and safety rules, were applied and also the fines and penalties associated with those. Now, what's interesting about that is that as I read through some of the feedback that we were getting, that feedback showed that the businesses had not even been told about these changes and the scope and magnitude of these changes until just weeks ago. It started being posted on the website, and the government started being able to tell people. But how do they expect businesses to be able to adjust? They need to have that certainty, that certainty that if they invest, if they bring their hard-earned capital and they invest it in this province, they will be able to see a return on investment, or else they wouldn't do it. They'll go somewhere else, where they can have that certainty.

In this situation we've seen time and time again where they have introduced bills, introduced legislation based upon a world view or a view of how they think the world should be, and the outcome, the cost to society, has not been fully vetted, has not been fully understood.

You know what? For three years now I've been sitting on this side of the House trying to figure it out, and I have to say that the only thing that I can see as the reason why we're seeing this kind of legislation coming out is because the NDP government, the people who make up the NDP, do not know how money flows. They don't know how investment works. Because of that, it's like shooting in the dark. They're in a situation where they think this is the utopian way that it needs to be, and then they move forward with legislation that has never been proven. There are no precedents to show that it actually can work, but there's a belief that they can do it.

You know what? Even with this whole concept of electricity, the capacity market, they're doing the same thing that has been done in Ontario – the same thing that's been done in Ontario – yet what do we hear from them? “We'll get it right this time. We've figured it out. We know how it can work.” Well, I've said many times, in talking about Bill 13, that of the three parts of the electricity market – you've got the transmission, the distribution, and the retail – the one part that was the shining light in this whole electricity market was the retail side. That's the one part that we've done well. Yet they're changing it. They're moving that into a capacity market. They're moving that into a model adopted by Ontario. Why? Why are they moving to that kind of a model? Because it is working? Once again, why would they want to fix the things that are working? They don't need to be fixed. If they would think about this, if they would think about the consequences of their actions, I don't know why we would have something like this come about.

I think that they should have addressed the issues of transmission and distribution – I've said that many times in this House – where we have a threefold increase in cost. When I talk to people and they talk to me about the increases in their electrical bills, they say: I'm

concerned about the transmission and the distribution costs going up. Those are the types of things that we need to be addressing. Instead, what do we see in Bill 13? We see them trying to fix something that was already fixed, which is the retail side. We've seen, actually, a few bills come forward which, in reality, just restrict that supply. If you restrict the supply, you're going to drive up the equilibrium price. This is economics 101. Very simple.

Anyways, Madam Chair, I have been opposed to this bill, but the amendment takes a bad bill and makes it less bad. This is why I'm in support of this amendment. It brings in the verbiage that will hopefully bring a little bit more certainty to those investors that we desperately need in our province. We don't want to be driving out any more investors. Now, I would like to reiterate that the members from the other side like to say that there is absolutely no reason for this amendment, yet I hope that I've been able to clearly articulate the value and the reasons why this is important, that this is something that actually can bring that certainty.

8:10

Even if it's just that one part that makes this bad bill just a little bit better, I think it's something that this government really should take a look at. They really should be able to try to get their head around it and figure out what it is about this idea of “fair, efficient and openly competitive.” What is it about that? What is it about that verbiage that makes sense and will help to make this even better?

I don't know why the government would be concerned about adding those words: “fair, efficient and openly competitive.” Maybe the competitive part would scare them. It seems like in every area where they can get rid of competition, they have been picking winners and losers. But what about fair and efficient and open? I mean, the NDP government has often said in this House, many times, how open and transparent they are. What about that?

Now, in the event that this is not something that they'd be willing to do, why wouldn't they amend this? Why wouldn't they just take a look at this and say: “Well, you know what? We do want to be able to carry on with this idea that we're open and transparent, so we are willing to take a look at this”?

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A4? *Chestermere-Rocky View.*

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for the opportunity to speak to this this evening. It's interesting. Lots and lots of opportunities to fix things here.

I just want to talk for a moment about language again. This is sort of where I was at when we ended last week. There is a humongous difference in language when you're speaking about what you're actually trying to produce. There is also an imperative piece about trust, an imperative piece about making sure that when large, large changes happen like this, you have the trust of the people that have put you here and that you're able to make sure that they have that trust going forward because you've been very clear about the mechanism that you're trying to change.

When we talk about fair, efficient, open, and competitive, it's actually not just language, Madam Chair. Those were the rules that were set out in the original language with regard to electricity and capacity and how those things are distributed. That language is actually the rule. It's the legal jargon that was put in there in the first place to make sure – those words are not just words. They're actually things that you have to do in order to make sure that you are doing right by the people of Alberta when it comes to their electricity, their quality of life, their ability to keep the lights on, and the ability to make sure that they can take care of their families. Also, if you're going forward with green technology, that language

would help them to understand what is happening with the new things that are coming online.

When we talk about that, the legal departments say that the words “reliable” and “reasonable cost to customers” do not even fall into the same category as “fair, efficient and openly competitive.” You cannot in any way prove “reliable.” “Reliable” has to follow with metrics. It has to follow with baseload. It has to follow with capacity. It also has to fall in line with what people can pay for, not hidden behind the smoke and mirrors of a number that the government has set in order to subsidize electricity coming to Albertans instead of allowing them to know what they’re actually paying for.

Like I’ve said before, not everybody appreciates what’s coming to them on their power bills. However, the rate riders on there have always handled the volatility. Sometimes you’re getting money back; sometimes you’re paying into the system. But we understood what it was that we were paying for. That piece has been removed by this government with the cap and also by removing this imperative language.

To reiterate, Madam Chair, this language was also removed in Bill 27 and Bill 34. The words “transparent” and “accountable” were removed from the Market Surveillance Administrator and from all of the aspects of those bills and what was changing there, which again gives extraordinary power to the Minister of Energy to bring on whatever capacity she wants without it being talked about in this Legislature on behalf of Albertans. When we look at that part of the puzzle and then we look that the government is changing the language, the assumption is that they don’t believe that Albertans are savvy enough to understand what’s being done.

If we look at REP 1, in that auction it came in with three wind projects. These three wind projects, that average 3 cents per kilowatt hour – and this is for the 600-megawatt project. I’ve said this before, but I think it bears repeating. When the electricity price drops below the average, the NDP government carbon tax subsidizes these wind projects. Boy, that carbon tax is going far, subsidizing wind projects. It’s subsidizing the cap on electricity, I mean, all sorts of things. Evidently, this \$3 billion is going to go a long ways. Of course, now it’s not going towards green initiatives. It’s been put into the general coffers, but this was before. The NDP government carbon tax will subsidize wind projects. What happens when it goes above 3 cents per kilowatt hour? Wind projects pay back the NDP government. Sounds good.

By comparison, the Independent Power Producers Society of Alberta indicated – and this is the interesting part, Madam Chair, and the part that doesn’t get explained by the government at all in any capacity. The 2016 wholesale price of electricity averaged – get this – 1.7 cents per kilowatt hour. How much subsidy is that, hmm? It sounds really good for the taxpayer and ratepayer, doesn’t it? That’s the average. That means that even more could have gone below that, which means that the subsidy increases by this government, supposedly by the carbon tax, supposedly to come in and help Albertans: I would like an explanation of that and how it is that – on top of this, how are we going to pay for the infrastructure that’s going to be required?

That’s just REP 1, Madam Chair. That doesn’t even include other projects that are coming online. We can talk about that, too. The question always, always has to come to: fundamentally, who is paying for this, and how much is it going to cost? Those are two fundamental questions we cannot get answers for. The total cost to the taxpayer? Unknown. How is it that in this House we can sit and do that to Albertans and say that we have their backs? That’s not appropriate, not even close. This could mean energy poverty for people in this province. We’re already going to see those spikes in electricity. Everybody in this House has probably had somebody

come to their office telling them that they’ve seen their energy costs increase, and I can bring in a whole bunch.

Again, the interesting thing about this and the 6.8 cent cap for residential users – and I’ve asked this on several occasions. There is no part of the capacity model that works for the industry. What about the farmers, Madam Chair? What about our farmers, our food producers, the people that put food on our tables every single day, who have to feed their cattle, haul water, use their trucks the same as they do plus pay the carbon tax and then, on top of that, are paying based on a rate rider different than what we are getting under this supposed capacity market and are not being informed by the government in any way, shape, or form as to what would be the best deal for them?

The minister sort of slightly said the other day that they’re sending out information and education. Really? Well, I have to tell you that I have a lot of farmers in my area. I phoned them after that conversation. I phoned 15 of them who happen to be my close friends, who I’ve known my whole life. Not one single one of them, Madam Chair, has received a letter saying: “Oh, you know what? You should probably go to Enmax, and you should probably get a fixed rate because these prices are going to spike.” Not one. If I could have gotten one or two out of those people – okay – I can understand. The information doesn’t always get out to people. I have the same problem. Not one. And I have them actually reaching to all of their friends right now, too, to see where this education piece is coming from.

8:20

Let’s talk about this again. We have REP 2 and 3, that are now being bid on, for additional renewable electricity. REP 2 is about 300 megawatts – this one has other equity ownership in it – and REP 3 is 400 megawatts. Do we know what the total cost to the taxpayer is? No. Nothing. Nada. Why, Madam Chair? Why is it that if this is so good for us, the government isn’t willing to be fair, efficient, open, and competitive, first of all; second of all, transparent or accountable? All of the words – there are six words there, superimportant words, that have been removed by this government in their own legislation. Well, it’s pretty easy to see why, because then they can legitimately make these decisions without actually talking to Albertans or debating it in this House.

Let’s talk about solar. The government of Alberta is planning to tender into June 2018, and evidently it’s to procure over half of its energy from solar power electricity. According to the solar industry it comes in at about 6 cents per kilowatt hour. Let’s talk about what the Independent Power Producers Society says. The 2016 wholesale price range: guess where that averaged, Madam Chair? One point seven cents per kilowatt hour. That’s interesting.

So, Madam Chair, do we know what the costs to taxpayers are? No. Nothing, because the language “fair, efficient, open, and competitive” has been removed, and so has “transparent and accountable.” I guess there’s no need to tell our fellow Albertans what’s actually going on here, is there? The government is just going to make that decision for them.

Let’s talk about the capacity market. As we know, Madam Chair, the sun doesn’t always shine; the wind doesn’t always blow. In order to keep our baseload – electrical generation has to stand on the back of some baseload that needs to be built. The reason why we got a capacity market, the reason why this has come in and impacted every single Albertan, why Bill 13 exists is to supposedly stimulate investment.

But guess what happens with a capacity market? Electricity prices will rise, supposedly because we have less volatility. You know why? Because it’s been capped. Therefore, anything that is happening volatilitywise will happen under the smoke and mirrors

of the cap, so Albertans just don't need to know. What we have right now, where we have zero utility debt, will soon grow to be a massive debt in this province because of subsidies, because of lack of understanding, and because the rate riders aren't there to balance off what was happening in the first place.

Like many of the other members on this side have said, there were so many things with the electricity market that could have been fixed. The retail part was not that piece. So many other things that could have been fixed, that needed help, that should have been looked at: no, no, no. We're just going to attack and bring up the cost of the specified gas emitters so that the PPAs get overturned and cost billions of dollars to Albertans and then, on top of that, build all of this other legislation to fix that mistake that happened in the first place, that evidently wasn't in the binders of the ministers when they first got this portfolio.

An Hon. Member: You've seen the binders?

Mrs. Aheer: I can actually answer that because actually that was language that was used by your Minister of Energy specifically in this House, in *Hansard*. I have it here. That was not my language; that was the minister's: it wasn't in the binder. Fair enough. Walking in as a brand new government: so much information, for sure. But when the energy companies come to you, saying, "Uh-oh, you probably shouldn't do that" and that this is what's going to happen and it still happens – and we know that that discussion happened well before the PPAs were overturned – it calls into question not even the understanding but the purposefulness of what has been done here.

Here's the thing that's interesting. We know that electricity prices will rise. We know that there's a cap. We'll presume that there's less volatility because we don't know any different, because it's not on our bill anymore. But guess what again? The cost to the taxpayers and the ratepayers is unknown.

Let's talk about the power purchase agreements for just a moment. We have a bit of a timeline here. The NDP raises the carbon tax on coal-fired power plants. It made the power purchase agreements more unprofitable. That cost the taxpayer \$2 billion to buy back the PPAs. That full cost is still not fully known. It's another thing that Albertans are very interested in.

You know what's really interesting, Madam Chair? How interested Albertans are in this right now, completely interested. I've never had so many questions about electricity. I love talking about it. It was something that I learned from the very beginning to here. I had very limited knowledge about this. It's one of the beautiful things about being in this House, how much you learn, how much you learn about these particular pieces of information, especially when you have to explain it to people, what's going on. I find it very interesting because I'm interested in it, more people talk about it, and then you have a lot more interesting discussions about it. What every single person says to me is: "I don't understand it. I don't get it." Whether they love renewables or whether they're against or they're coal-fired people, whatever it is, nobody seems to understand this mechanism or how this has been done.

Let's talk about that first. We've got approximately \$2 billion to buy back the PPAs, but we don't know what that full cost is yet. Then – whoa – here's even more fun. The coal phase-out agreements: the cost to taxpayers is \$1.1 billion in 2016, \$31.9 million in 2017, \$29.9 million in 2018. And that will continue to cost taxpayers tens of millions until 2029. Wow. Congratulations. That's a real winner of a piece of information there, especially when you consider that there's absolutely no information going out to the taxpayer and the ratepayer about what the cost actually is going to be to Albertans.

If we talk about subsidized electricity prices, consumers on the regulated rate option for electricity will have their bill subsidized when electricity prices climb over 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour. The government has budgeted \$74.3 million in 2018-2019 to subsidize this decision. That decision, just the decision alone, aside from the \$74.3 million, cost the government \$9 million. Does the government know how much this is going to cost taxpayers? No. Absolutely no clue. The only thing that we have information on right now is REP 1.

REP 1 proves to us that at this point in time not only is it subsidizing the taxpayer, but we're having to subsidize for capacity as well. How does that work, Madam Chair? How is that okay? People love the idea of renewable energy, but you don't do it under smoke and mirrors. You don't make decisions and then have Albertans pay for that because people think that that's the right thing to do. You can't do that and not tell the taxpayer what they're on the hook for. We are here spending hard-earned taxpayer dollars on things. We have a responsibility, at least to some degree, to explain to them why this is happening.

I mean, we know that the total cost to Alberta taxpayers for these changes to the electricity system is going to be north of \$3.2 billion, but we don't have an exact number. That's the entire cost of the carbon tax for this year. Now, even better, Madam Chair, those dollars are being taken out of green initiatives and put into the general coffers. In the government coffers there's even less transparency over what is happening to the money that was promised by this government that was going to be used for green initiatives.

8:30

The hon. members for Calgary-Foothills and Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills have written to the Auditor General asking to have all of this audited. Why? So we can actually go to Albertans, Madam Chair, and say: "This is how much this is going to cost you. This is what the government has put on your shoulders." They didn't ask. They brought this forward. They didn't campaign on this, and this is the result. These several bills that build this puzzle of a lack of accountable language and that puts together all of this legislation that had to be built as a result of the mistakes that were made when the PPAs were overturned in the first place in order to subsidize – you have to be able to subsidize renewables to bring them online in order to track that investment. It can't happen by itself. They are not capable of making money by themselves. It has to be subsidized. There has to be a capacity market in order to subsidize renewables coming online right now because they cannot pay for themselves. It's not even like they produce at 100 per cent capacity, Madam Chair. Anything outside of that is paid for by the taxpayer.

So when you hear members say that language is superfluous and lacks value and "Is it useful?" and they find it fascinating and that we're just reordering words for grammar reasons, I have to say, Madam Chair, that that is absolutely mind-boggling, that that's the kind of language that is being used when we're trying to find out why Albertans are on the hook for this, that a member of the government would use that language to explain the necessity for fair, efficient, open . . .

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Highwood.

Mr. W. Anderson: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. It's so exciting to be here tonight. It's 4-1 in the hockey game.

Madam Chair, I rise today to speak in favour of my colleague from Calgary-Foothills' amendment on Bill 13, An Act to Secure

Alberta's Electricity Future. You know, this amendment could change the wording in a couple of subsections, where it should be fair, efficient, open, competitive, and not being used to describe the capacity market.

Madam Chair, before I get into the specifics of this amendment, I'd like to touch base on a couple of points on Bill 13. Bill 13 is not a simple piece of legislation. It would change Alberta's electricity market from an energy-only market to a capacity market. What does this really mean? From my understanding, this means that there'll be two markets, one for the ability to produce energy and one for the ability to deliver energy. It's a fundamental change to our electricity market. Has the government done proper consultation with the consumers and industry stakeholders? Well, if industry stakeholders are taking you to court and there are some legal issues, obviously, you didn't talk to them. In the past we've seen that this government has brought through different items on their agenda without proper consultation, and this piece of legislation isn't that different. I think it's unlikely that they're going to do that.

Was there any reason to change our electricity system in Alberta? The fact of the matter is that the previous market, the previous system, was working pretty well in Alberta. We had no debt, prices were low, consumers were happy, and the risk was carried by the electricity market, or the producers and the providers. So why did the government introduce this legislation? The reason was because of this government's ideological plane and a shift from a reliable market such as coal to other forms of electricity. They wanted to take that away and move it towards what we think is an unreliable market such as wind and solar.

Well, Madam Chair, while there are many issues with this legislation, what we can do right now is propose amendments – and that's what my hon. colleague has done – that can make this legislation better for all Albertans. The amendment proposed by my colleague from Calgary-Foothills does just this. This amendment cleans up and adjusts the language in Bill 13, just for the mere fact that it creates some consistency. There were a few places in the bill where fair, efficient, open, and competitive had not been accorded to and brought through in the capacity market, or the standard language just wasn't used. It wasn't business language.

This further makes it such that the government just can't skip out on its commitments. Some stakeholders have expressed concerns about whether the government could use legal manoeuvring to not live up to its commitments. Perhaps the language in the contracts is somewhat nebulous.

My colleague's amendment would help restore the trust in the bill. If the last three years have shown us anything, it's that Albertans have very little reason to trust this current government, from its tax hikes, which were never campaigned on, to the increased level of government debt, which has given Albertans plenty of reason to be skeptical. Considerable debt. Even regarding electricity this government has gone from a system that served Alberta and Alberta's best interest to a system that was costed by Albertans – even better – more so.

While this amendment doesn't solve all the problems – I'm sure my hon. colleague had thought it through well, this amendment – he was trying to solve one problem, some of the language. It makes sense. It doesn't solve all the problems that we've created, the lack of trust in this government, but it does help the public trust in this particular piece of legislation. Adding the words "fair, efficient, open, and competitive" to this legislation restores the trust.

Why wouldn't we want capacity markets to be fair, efficient, open, and competitive? Why wouldn't the members vote in favour of this amendment? Hmm. This government hasn't shown its commitment to fair, efficient, open, and competitive markets in the past, but now it would be a good time to show that commitment.

Let the people think and know exactly what you're doing. Put it in the language of the law. Put it in the contract. No.

However, the language the NDP uses in this legislation regarding the capacity market is only about reliable supply and reasonable cost. Pretty simple terms. Not much there; not much of a commitment. It's just not consistent language that the industry uses. I haven't seen it in the contracts. We need the consistent language in this legislation. It only makes sense. The industry needs to be seen to be fair, open, efficient, and have competitive operations of the capacity market without exception. This will prevent legal challenges and will allow us to enable an industry to trust the government to get the capacity market right.

Madam Chair, while this amendment does not allow improvements to be made to Bill 13, I still have many reservations about the capacity market that is being created. You see, government works best when there is less of it, less red tape, less infringement. We had a little government electricity sector prior to this government taking over, prior to the NDP taking over, and it worked well, but now look. Now the NDP seems to think that adding more government to the electricity sector is something that's going to make things better, more red tape.

The NDP got involved in the electricity market by shutting down coal-fired power plants and trying to promote their green energy ideas in a very short period of time. Then, to compensate for this intrusion, the NDP introduced Bill 13, which we are debating today, just to try and solve some of the issues of their initial intrusion and what it's caused. When will it stop? When will this government learn that the best thing they can do is simply get out of the way of the private market?

As I mentioned before, Bill 13 is no simple piece of legislation. Fundamental changes are being made to the electricity sector. Is the time that we have spent debating this bill in the House sufficient? I think not. My UCP colleague and I have previously made referral amendments so that this bill could be studied in depth in committee – and, believe me, I'm getting used to the committee – with input from most stakeholders, but unfortunately, of course, it was defeated.

Madam Chair, while I do see many issues with the shift to capacity markets, I would encourage all members to vote in favour of this amendment. I think it's a good amendment. I think my colleague thought it through effectively and efficiently, and I support this amendment.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Chair. It seems that I'm really, really encouraged by the Deputy Premier and her colleagues there. They really want to hear me speak on Bill 13 and my own amendment, amendment A4, which is an important amendment. While I was away in Manitoba learning about market access issues, my colleague from Rocky Mountain House introduced this amendment on my behalf, and I would like to thank him for doing so.

8:40

I also understand, Madam Chair, that the Member for Edmonton-South West sparked some heated debate on this amendment of mine. I understand that the member said, "All the words that they're using are actually already in the bill. They've actually just reordered those words." I'm really happy at least that he did some research and found that I drafted the amendment using the words which are already in the bill. I compliment him for taking some time and

reading that bill, at least paying attention to my amendment. Thank you for doing so.

Yes, that's true. All of the words that I used to draft this amendment are actually in the bill, and, yes, that's exactly what I'm doing. We are reordering them. The member then went on to say, "I think that's sort of superfluous and maybe something that..." Did I get that right?

Mrs. Aheer: You did awesome.

Mr. Panda: Okay. Whatever that is, superfluous.

"... we don't necessarily have to look at in here. It changes the order of the words, and I don't know how that's a valuable use of the time in this Assembly."

I heard that the Member for Edmonton-South West – I just saw him saw him there – is a computer programmer, and he should know better. The law is not much different than writing a computer code. If you write the code in the wrong order or if you forget to write a line of the code, the program doesn't work; it crashes or it produces the wrong answer. The same is true with the law. If the words are in the wrong order or if the words are missing from a line of the bill, when that bill becomes the law, the law doesn't behave as it was originally intended.

Now, the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View, my good friend here and my seatmate, rightfully pointed out that part of this amendment changes the section of Bill 13 where the capacity market is to have reliable and reasonable cost to the consumer. Being reliable and a reasonable cost to consumers is all well and good, but it's not the same thing as also being fair, efficient, and openly competitive in its operation. This amendment is a major change in Bill 13 to bring trust to the capacity market.

Madam Chair, here I'm talking about bringing trust back to the capacity market. Just now my colleague from Highwood spoke about that trust. Trust is really important here because when the NDP ran in the 2015 provincial election, I looked at their election platform, their election manifesto. They never told Albertans that they were going to bring in a job-killing carbon tax, not even once. They hadn't mentioned it. They also didn't tell Albertans that they were going to take on a \$96 billion debt on behalf of Albertans. They never said that to Albertans. They didn't ask Albertans for the mandate, not even once. I looked at their campaign platform. So then they brought in these earth-shattering changes to the electricity market, actually changing the livelihood of rural Albertans where that coal-fired electric generation is happening currently. The NDP, for their ideological reasons, wanted to shut down those coal-fired power plants. That means there is a deficit in electricity generation, so they want to replace that with renewable electricity, with wind and solar.

Since wind and solar are intermittent and they're not a hundred per cent reliable or dependable, they have to have a backup baseload to backfill that shortage, so they came out with this idea of Bill 13 to create a capacity market, which transfers the risk now to the consumers and the ratepayers. Earlier the private investors like ATCO, Enmax, and Capital Power took the risk of investing into this business and providing electricity at a reasonable cost. Now with the NDP's Bill 13 the risk is transferred to the consumers and the ratepayers.

Then they also capped it. They thought they were hiding that by capping the electricity at 6.8 cents per kilowatt. The difference is that somebody has to pay. In the month of April this NDP government has spent \$9 million more to pay for the differential, so about 6.8 cents. There are so many hidden costs that this government wants to hide or transfer to other, you know, accounts, but in the end it's coming from the same pocket, Madam Chair. It's

the consumers and the ratepayers. Albertans are paying for it. That's why the trust is really important.

That's why I thought through and brought in this amendment. There were a couple of places in Bill 13 where "fair, efficient and openly competitive" had not been accorded to the capacity market. The standard FEOC language was not used. FEOC is an industry standard language. People in the industry use it regularly, so you don't go messing around with that. By putting this back in, with this amendment, this will clean up some sloppy legal drafting in the bill and ensure consistency. Why? Because it's all about trust, Madam Chair. We just talked about that. Electricity generators want to be able to trust that this NDP government will get this bill right the first time. In that way, the government or the system operator will not have legal wiggle room to skip out on their commitments.

Madam Chair, I simply don't understand why the Member for Edmonton-South West does not want the capacity market to be fair, efficient, and openly competitive. It's not just the Member for Edmonton-South West. I don't understand why the minister or her cabinet colleagues or the NDP MLAs don't want this in the system. I just don't get it. But people want to invest in trust and confidence that the NDP government is not going to change the rules midstream or use the courts to force contracts open or amendments because they left a legal loophole.

Madam Chair, I mean, we know what happens when rules are changed midway. We have seen that when the federal government, this NDP's federal allies, the Trudeau Liberals, changed rules midway through with TransCanada, that has withdrawn their investment in the Energy East pipeline and cancelled the project. With that, they killed thousands of jobs and billions of dollars of investment. That's why I would ask the NDP members: do you want backup generation for wind and solar or not? If so, give the industry trust and confidence in the market rules.

8:50

Madam Chair, this is a good amendment. It strengthens the bill and helps the minister. I tried to make this bill, which is really, really complex – I'm sure the Energy minister will agree with me and I agree with her that Bill 13 is really complex. We're trying to help her make the bill better, myself and my colleagues here. We're doing our job. As the critic I'm doing my job of reviewing the bill and offering constructive criticism and offering alternate suggestions to make this bill better.

The NDP government has a record of rejecting the reasonable, common-sense amendments that we've brought forward to make their flawed bills – I mean, rarely, probably about three or four times in three years they've accepted opposition amendments. That really reflects badly on them. Today we have seen another example, Motion 505, a private member's motion brought forward by the Member for Calgary-Lougheed and Leader of the Official Opposition. The NDP, without even applying their minds, just rejected it.

On the other hand, the opposition, every time we thought that the government was fighting for Albertans, stood with them. We supported their bills wherever we thought they were in the best interests of Albertans. Like my colleague from Calgary-Elbow said, the NDP is acting silly, and they don't want to give the wins to the opposition just because they don't want to give any credit to the opposition for doing their job.

It was not the same story when the NDP Government House leader and the current Premier were in opposition, when they were sitting in that corner. For them, the world looked differently then. But once they occupied the other side of the aisle, their world view changed. They just want to suppress the opposition, and they don't want to accept reasonable, common-sense amendments. Well, I

think power corrupts people. It has gone to their heads. That's why Albertans are ready to send them back to where they belong very soon. They're losing common sense. They're not accepting good suggestions. Even reasonable – reasonable – amendments they simply don't want to look at. They just want to reject them.

I mean, on this particular amendment why can't the NDP members speak up and give their input? If they don't like this, I'm open to amend my amendment if that's what they want to do. I don't know if it is allowed or practical or not, but I'm open to listen to their suggestions for my amendment. They can tell me, other than saying: oh, he used the same words. I gave them my justification for why I used the same words. If they have any issue with that, I encourage them to speak up. I'm open to listening to them. If not, if they don't want to do that, then at least take our suggestion and accept this amendment, approve this, bring the trust back. Today people are not trusting the NDP.

This particular bill, Bill 13, if approved as it reads is going to increase the prices for electrical consumers. Seniors can't afford to pay. Seniors who are on fixed incomes can't afford to pay higher electricity prices, the carbon tax. Then regular people, the middle class, can't pay all those tax increases that this government brought in with their ideological agenda. They're not making life better, Madam Chair. They are making life hard for Albertans. If they believe in making life better for Albertans, let's try with this amendment with simple steps, baby steps. Let's take one step at a time. Make Bill 13 better by accepting this amendment.

With that, Madam Chair, I ask all my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support this reasonable amendment and make this bill better.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to follow up with some commentary based on what the Member for Calgary-Foothills was talking about. I guess I just need to ask the question: why? Why would you not want the words “fair, efficient and openly competitive” in the legislation? Is there a really good reason for that? Why would you choose to not have that wording in there?

I mean, the legislation says that the capacity market supports “a reliable supply of electricity [that] is available at reasonable cost to customers.” That is a very good mission statement. It's a good idea, an ideology to follow. However, it's not legal language. Saying that it's going to be reliable and a reasonable cost to customers is a very nice thing to say. It's a good sales pitch. But it doesn't have the legal language required to make sure that those things actually happen.

I just want to talk a little bit about energy poverty. Here's the interesting thing. When you look at Ontario, for example – and I know the government doesn't like talking about Ontario, but we have a similar story being created here, Madam Chair. If you look at Ontario and you look at the issues that they're having, they say specifically that today's high prices are largely a result of provincial policy decisions that were made in the 2000s. The system is different because in Ontario they went to a large capacity of nuclear power.

Here's the interesting thing. I want to talk a little bit about some of the important factors around what it is that Albertans are going to be paying for. Now, Ontario, like I said, has a slightly different mechanism, but here's the thing that I find particularly interesting. Facing low approval ratings, the Premier of Ontario decided to add in an 8 per cent subsidy for residential and small-business bills, which took effect that year in January. Isn't that interesting? It sounds very, very similar to what's going on here.

Then if you look at the actual numbers – so let's talk about this for just a minute. This is one thing that I think this government is going to run into as this capacity market starts to take hold is that you have your baseload power, and you have your peaking power. The gap between those two things is when we talk about installed capacity and actual production. The interesting thing is that your installed capacity – like, for example, in Ontario almost 60 per cent of the electricity is supplied by nuclear power plants even though it's only a third of Ontario's capacity. So what does that mean? That means that other sources, for example, natural gas in Ontario, those plants are running nonstop, the 60 per cent, while other power sources often go unused.

So what happens with that gap? What happens in that? That's why the fair, efficient piece is in there. That's part of the mandate of transparency, to be able to let the ratepayer know what is happening in the gap between installed capacity and actual production and who actually is getting paid for not producing at that time.

It's interesting. I was mentioning this last week. Let me see if I can find this. Oh, right. In Brooks did you know that zero power is produced 64 per cent of the time? Zero power. So when you talk about that, 64 per cent of the time nothing is coming from there. There is no production coming from that particular type of energy, but it is subsidized at a hundred per cent. [interjections]

9:00

It's interesting that you have an entire capacity – I mean, the point of bringing that up is that it's unstable. How do you have stability in electricity when the wind doesn't blow and the sun doesn't shine and it's producing zero capacity? You have to have a baseload power that is coming from somewhere else, that is running all the time and is being paid out for capacity while other things are being subsidized even when they're not producing. I'm sure the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud will have something to say about that shortly, or at least that's my understanding based on what just happened there.

I'll just continue on with my story. Unfortunately, this isn't a story. It's actual things that have happened in other provinces that we could learn so much from. One of the things that was really interesting was the transmission in Ontario. Hydro One is a government company. It was in the process of being privatized. Anyway, the Premier of Ontario had a plan to sell 60 per cent of hydro in a bid to raise \$4 billion to fund transit and \$5 billion to pay down the debt. Did you know that since 2015 only 30 per cent of the company is on the stock market? Why is that? If that is the plan of this government, to be able to bring this on and then sell it off, what is the plan for that if that doesn't work? The taxpayer and the ratepayer are still on the hook for that money.

We have another interesting piece of information that's very similar, too. The province of Ontario was haunted by the memory of the disastrous over budgeting on the nuclear construction between the 1980s and the 1990s. Then at that time the Liberals were elected on a promise to close down coal-fired power plants. It's interesting. It sounds very similar to what's happening in this province except that our capacity that we're bringing online is solar and wind and without, actually, any ability of understanding how we're going to get those megawatts and are going to get them to be sustainable.

The first major wave of power plants – this was all tied to the Green Energy Act, Madam Chair. But do you know what happened? It's the same thing that's happening here. The government provided lucrative terms for wind and solar to build a renewable-power industry. What ended up happening? The cost of all of this was passed on to the ratepayers in the form of – guess

what? – higher electricity bills. That is why the Member for Calgary-Foothills and the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills were asking for the Auditor General to find out what this is actually going to cost the taxpayer. We have no information on what this is going to actually cost the taxpayer.

Anyway, I just wanted to chat about that, and if somebody on the government side wants to talk about capacity or wind capacity or how that's being subsidized or not being subsidized, I'd be very grateful for any information. If I'm wrong, please correct me. I would love to be wrong about this. I would absolutely love to be wrong. So I'm hoping that the member will stand up and explain about the wind capacity and how that is not being subsidized by the government and about how it's okay with him that the language "fair, efficient and openly competitive" has been removed from the legislation that he is standing behind instead of explaining why it is that the capacity market provides smoke and mirrors to be able to bring on capacity where the taxpayers themselves will not know what they're paying for.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to the amendment today. I think that, you know, it's a good amendment that provides some assurance, provides some transparency. I think we've heard somewhat from my colleagues this evening on the fact that this is about instilling trust. It's one thing that this government has done a very poor job of; that is, establishing trust with Albertans. On this particular file with respect to electricity this government has done anything but that.

You know, my colleague from Calgary-Foothills and I recently wrote a letter to the Auditor General asking if he would be able to provide some sense of the extreme costs that are going to be incurred by Albertans. We've literally seen the government spend billions of dollars already on the electricity market, yet we don't know what the future costs will be. There really is a lack of trust, a lack of understanding of exactly what direction this capacity market is going in and where it's going to end up.

This particular amendment supports ensuring a reliable supply of electricity that is available at reasonable costs to customers. This is not the same thing as "supports ensuring a reliable supply of electricity is available at reasonable cost" and "supports the fair, efficient and openly competitive operation of the [capacity] market." This is a major change that brings back trust to the capacity market. The real question, as has been stated, is: why wouldn't you want the capacity market to be fair, efficient, open, and competitive? One can only ask themselves the question on why the government wouldn't want that.

You know, if we look at the track record of the NDP, we've seen them make a whole bunch of different decisions that communicate that they don't actually want a fair and open and transparent and competitive market, whether it's bringing decisions back into government or whether it's something as simple as the rollout of the \$25-a-day daycare program. Madam Chair, you'll know that the government made the decision to only allow \$25-a-day daycare with very specific providers, providers that the government has selected. In this case it's only around nonprofit daycare centres. They don't even allow for nonprofit day home providers to have access to that \$25-a-day daycare program. In my opinion, it's all about minimizing fair, efficient, and openly competitive markets. They're doing that in all sorts of different scenarios, including daycare and including the electricity market.

It really comes down to an ideological bent that the NDP has that they know best. It is that they will be driving the market forces, that they will be minimizing choice, and that they will be taking steps to minimize the opportunity for fair, efficient, and openly competitive operations. We've seen that in so many different avenues that the government has touched. It's certainly concerning. It's concerning that we may in fact have a less open market, a less transparent market, a less openly competitive market because of the decisions that the government makes. Really, at the end of the day, it comes down to trust.

9:10

When we look at other jurisdictions that have lost control or have headed in the same direction as this government is heading, particularly in the case of Ontario, in every other jurisdiction that has transitioned to a capacity market, they've done so on a much more reasonable timeline. But this government is insistent on rushing this particular decision. We've seen in a number of situations significant cost increases and a real lack of trust with respect to what the government is doing on this particular file in other jurisdictions as well as here in Alberta, so it's widely expected that there will be a significant increase in costs with respect to the capacity market.

You'll know, Madam Chair, that I have the opportunity of serving the outstanding constituents of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, and you'll know that that's a very rural constituency and that these particular changes often have a more significant impact on rural Alberta, particularly because of the way that they engage in energy and in electricity.

Mr. Nixon: So another attack on rural Alberta.

Mr. Cooper: It is another attack on rural Alberta.

I think that, you know, we're wise to heed the advice of those who've gone before us. We look at rural Ontario. I was interested to read earlier today about a story that came from rural Ontario: Rural Ontarians Left in the Dark as Electricity Bills Skyrocket. The story is a Global News story.

So-called "energy poverty" is getting worse in rural Ontario, a Global News investigation has found, with even small households paying hundreds of dollars a month [just] to keep the lights on.

Mr. Gill: How much?

Mr. Cooper: Hundreds of dollars a month just to keep the lights on.

Officials, residents and experts are all sounding the alarm after electricity rates in the province rose 100 per cent in the past decade.

A range of factors are fueling the increases, including subsidies for clean energy.

Subsidies for clean energy. I think that this government has been well and truly on the record about their significant commitment to subsidies for clean energy, and while it's important that we are managing our environment and doing everything we can, we need to make sure that we're doing it in a manner that isn't going to create energy poverty in rural Alberta, as it has in rural Ontario.

A range of factors are fueling the increases, including subsidies for clean energy, dealing with aging nuclear plants and maintaining and modernizing the province's vast transmission and distribution system. But the problem is especially acute in rural Ontario, where steep delivery charges are the norm.

Madam Chair, it is a very large concern. I have heard from a lot of constituents – a lot of constituents – who are concerned about the way that the government is mismanaging this particular electricity

file. We've seen them make a lot of decisions – and I know that when we've asked questions in the Chamber about the costs of the PPA contracts, people from right across the province have reached out to us and expressed some concern about that particular problem, in particular, you know, the mismanagement, the expenses that have been incurred, the \$1.96 billion that are included in this budget that were losses because of the PPAs. That doesn't include the money that the Balancing Pool lost in advance of this year's budget. So it's yet unknown exactly what the costs are, but what Albertans are certain of is that at the end of the day the chickens will come home to roost, and someone has to pay that bill. Who is it that has to pay that bill? Well, it'll be the taxpayer at the end of the day.

More often than not, rural Alberta seems to be the place that winds up feeling the decisions of this government the worst. Time and time again they've shown that they don't understand rural Alberta, and rural Alberta is not treated as equally and as fairly. So they're concerned, just as they were in Ontario.

Fay Knox, who is mentioned in the article,

knows what it's like to live off the grid. Unable to cope with rising power rates, she has been disconnected twice because she couldn't pay her hydro bills. She lives by herself in a small house in the Eastern Ontario town of Lancaster, but her electricity bills run into the hundreds of dollars. For the month of March 2016, it was \$299.67. Knox, who receives a disability pension, says, she simply can't afford to keep her lights on.

This is the challenge. When the government makes decisions like this, including the carbon tax, they often have a disproportionate impact on those on fixed incomes and low incomes and disability pensions or AISH. You know, we've heard the government speak at length about the rebates that were coming from the carbon tax. But here is the challenge, isn't it? They actually are rolling back rebates for seniors and taking 30 per cent of their rebate cheque to go to their seniors' housing.

This is the challenge. We've seen it in other jurisdictions, and there's no reason to believe that it won't happen here, because we're moving to a capacity market, but we're doing it at an even faster and more alarming rate than they did in other jurisdictions, including in Ontario.

So when we see the government doing things that are going to create a less fair, less efficient, less open, competitive operation of a capacity market, we should all take pause. We should pause because why wouldn't you want all of those things: a fair, efficient, and openly competitive operation of the capacity market? But the problem is that this government continues to make decisions that don't reflect fair, open, and competitive markets.

Industry needs to see fair, efficient, open, and competitive markets throughout without exception, and I think of industry in rural Alberta, in particular. There are a number of greenhouses in the constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, a number of large agricultural operations, including dairies. I think it was actually just World Milk Day here in the last few days. The dairies, I know, are feeling the pinch. As electricity prices will increase because of this government's mismanagement of the electricity file, we're going to see dairies, greenhouses, and other large industrial users all suffer significant consequences because of this government.

This is exactly why we should be supporting this amendment. It is so that we can establish trust, that we can continue to promote trust, that we can continue to support fair, efficient, and openly competitive operations of the capacity market. It is a very small, small step that the government could take to really advance the cause to provide a little bit of certainty to industry, to provide a little bit of certainty to rural Alberta and the things that they can come to expect. Because what they have come to expect from this government is not those things; it's the opposite of that. Certainly,

in the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills there is a lot of mistrust, in fact, of the government, and this would be just a very small gesture that would allow a little bit of trust back into this particular piece of legislation, and I encourage all members of the government to support it.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway, on the amendment.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Madam Chair, for giving me the opportunity to speak on this amendment for Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future, an amendment brought by my colleague from Calgary-Foothills. I want to thank him for his work on it, his research on this amendment to make this bill actually a stronger bill.

9:20

I think it's a very simple amendment. The speaker from Olds-Didsbury, the Opposition House Leader, and the Member for Chestermere Rocky View, they all spoke at length about this amendment. As they all said – and I would echo that, Madam Chair – there are a couple of places in the bill where fair, efficient, and open competitiveness had not been accorded to the capacity market or the standard FEOC language was not used. I mean, I understand that, like, fair, efficient, openly competitive is not this government's style. I get that, but I think it will make this bill stronger. It will help restore the trust to the bill, which this government, I think, in my humble opinion, desperately needs because that's what the fine people from Calgary-Greenway tell me every time I'm on the road and talking to my constituents.

I think this amendment will clean up the bill and ensures that consistency, to make sure that nothing is left behind. This amendment will provide certainty to the electricity stakeholders who do not want legal manoeuvring to allow government or the AESO to skip out on the commitment.

I think we should all support this amendment. It'll strengthen the bill. It'll restore the trust. I don't understand, like, why we would have any challenge or opposition to this simple amendment, which would strengthen this bill. I mean, I don't think the government wants to look like they're not fair or they're not efficient or they do not support being openly competitive, right? Those are all good things that strengthen the bill, and we should all support it because the trust is the main thing. The people of Alberta sent us here to represent them and do the best job we can do on their behalf, the taxpayers. I think it's incumbent upon us, Madam Chair, that we all work together above the party line and accept the common-sense amendments to strengthen these bills, amendments like my colleague from Calgary-Foothills has introduced.

I think we had four or five speakers before me who spoke at length about this very simple amendment. I mean, we had seen, Madam Chair, that legal battle with the PPAs. The government had to deal with that, the whole embarrassment and everything like that. We could potentially have legal consequences in this bill as well, so I think this is a simple amendment. As I said, it'll help restore the trust to this bill. At the end of the day, the whole idea is An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future. If the government's attempt is to secure Alberta's electricity future, I think we should do the right thing and accept the common-sense amendment, which will strengthen the bill.

You know, the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills spoke about the impact of the electricity market on rural Albertans. I mean, the hard-working people of his riding and, of course, my riding and a majority of Albertans are not happy with the direction of this government. I think it's in our best interests, Madam Chair, that we all work together to do the job we're here to do, to represent

our people, the hard-working Albertans, and wherever we see common-sense solutions, to rise above the party lines and accept those very simple amendments.

Once again I want to congratulate my hon. colleague from Calgary-Foothills. I think he may have, like, Madam Chair, six or seven more amendments. That's what he's so passionate about. If the government believes that it's an Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future, let's act on it. Let's not just put it on paper. Everything that this government does: it's always an act. I think they're just only acting. They're not actually acting to make it better. You know what I'm saying? It's okay. It was confusing, anyways.

My point was: let's act, accept this common-sense amendment. It restores trust to the bill. It's a simple amendment, Madam Chair. It's like "fair, efficient and openly competitive" had not been accorded wherever in this bill, in a couple of places, to the capacity market, or the standard FEOC language was not used. So let's fix that. Let's add those important words because we do have the potential of legal ramifications. I was speaking to my colleague from Calgary-Foothills, and I was asking him about the impact. He's very passionate about this thing, and he told me about, you know, the ramifications, the potential political issues that we may face if we don't have these simple wordings.

I don't think we're asking too much. I don't think, Madam Chair, that the Member for Calgary-Foothills is asking too much. This is not about scoring points like we were hearing today in question period, that the opposition is always looking to score cheap political points and all those things. I don't think it's about those things. I think it's about restoring the trust to this bill, strengthening the bill. You know, I think this NDP government could use that trust right now, especially when we're looking at the poll numbers, especially in my colleague's riding of Calgary-Foothills. I'm sure that the numbers are pretty dismal, and I'm sure, you know, the NDP supporters are, like, watching this House and saying, "Yes, government, support this amendment," so they may hold on to their support.

I think it's a fairly simple amendment, and we should all work together above the party line. If the government members have any issues about this amendment, let's debate that. That's why we're here. That's why we're here.

When the Leader of the Official Opposition had his maiden speech, Madam Chair, he spoke of the word "Legislature," and he broke it down. I believe it was a French word. It means the place where we debate. So let's debate these things, and if there's anything we can improve in this amendment, let's do it together because we owe it to Albertans. We all owe it to Albertans. That's why we're here. That's why we all left our families and everything. We're here to make this place better.

You know, once again I want to say thank you to my hon. colleague from Calgary-Foothills for bringing maybe, like, six more amendments. I don't know. He's been working very passionately, very hard on this file. I truly hope, Madam Chair, that the government side will support this very simple amendment and that it will help restore trust to this bill. Again, I mean, this government can use the trust really, really badly right now because Albertans don't trust this government.

With that, I encourage all the members of this Assembly to support this very simple amendment. Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Hon. Members: Question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A4 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:30 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Fraser	Nixon
Anderson, W.	Gill	Panda
Cooper	Hunter	Starke
Drysdale	Kenney	Stier

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hoffman	McLean
Bilous	Horne	Miller
Carson	Jansen	Phillips
Connolly	Kazim	Piquette
Coolahan	Kleinsteinuber	Rosendahl
Dach	Larivee	Sabir
Dang	Littlewood	Schreiner
Feehan	Loyola	Shepherd
Fitzpatrick	Malkinson	Sucha
Goehring	McCuaig-Boyd	Turner
Gray	McKitrick	Woollard
Hinkley		

Totals:	For – 12	Against – 34
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[Motion on amendment A4 lost]

The Chair: We're back on the bill. Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Madam Chair, thank you for the opportunity to speak again on Bill 13, the electricity bill. Bill 13 is really complex, and on behalf of my constituents of Calgary-Foothills, the outstanding riding of Calgary-Foothills, they sent me here to do my job, to hold the government to account, and to improve their legislation. I know that the minister there is laughing.

An Hon. Member: About Bill 9.

Mr. Panda: Yeah. We can debate that in her own constituency if she wants to choose to debate.

Also, Madam Chair, when the Leader of the Official Opposition named me as the critic for Energy, he didn't expect me to be here and rubber-stamp everything that the government did. That's why I looked at the bill, I brought in three amendments so far to make this bill less bad and make it better, and then they rejected every single amendment we brought forward. These are common-sense, reasonable amendments.

To make this parliamentary democracy and this Legislative Assembly work and to deliver the value for our shareholders, who are the people that elect us, we have to do our job. We have to do the critical analysis of every bill that comes in front of us. That's what I tried to do. Most of my colleagues on this side of the House, all parties, have supported my amendments so far, but the government rejected them. I see a pattern here.

Today we saw that Motion 505, a private member's motion, which, if passed by this House – although it is symbolic, this government blindly rejected it for ideological reasons because they want to keep their federal ally Justin Trudeau happy. They chose Justin Trudeau but not the people of Alberta. It's a shame because federal Liberals are attacking Alberta with draconian bills like Bill

C-48 and Bill C-69. If they are passed as presented in the Parliament, no investor will invest in any major energy project, not only pipelines but also the resource development projects up north. With that go thousands of jobs and billions of dollars of investment. That's a common-sense motion, private member's motion.

In this House when this government brought in any bill or legislation that supported Albertans and if we felt that it was in the interest of Alberta, we actually supported this government. But the NDP don't want to work with the opposition. They're not open to take our reasonable, common-sense amendments. They keep rejecting them, but I'm not giving up. I'm trying again.

I'm bringing another amendment to make this bill better. Madam Chair, with your permission, I have the requisite number of copies, and I'll give it to the page and wait for your instructions.

9:50

The Chair: This will be amendment A5.

Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. Panda: Thank you. Madam Chair, I rise to read this amendment into the record. I move that Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future, be amended in section 2 (a) in subsection (14) by striking out the proposed section 20.21(3) and (b) in subsection (29), in the proposed part 2.2, in section 41.42(5) by striking out "unless the Commission makes an order under section 20.21(3) providing otherwise."

Madam Chair, I will discuss my amendment here. When Bill 13 sets up the capacity market, there will be an initial set of provisional rules prepared by the Electric System Operator and approved by the Alberta Utilities Commission to get the capacity action started. It's also my understanding that there will be a period of haggling, where the Market Surveillance Administrator, MSA, may challenge some rules, and so will some generators. This means that the full market rules won't be ready until 2021. The industry and the regulators need time to sort this out.

Madam Chair, when I say that there will be challenges, I mean it. We have seen recently, when the NDP brought in this climate change plan and carbon tax, which they never campaigned on, that most of the generators and other stakeholders who had PPAs, power purchasing agreements, dumped them onto the Balancing Pool, and Albertans ended up paying billions of dollars. We don't know how much it would be. We only know of a couple of billions as of now, but there will be lots of future costs, which this government has not accounted for. They're hiding this. That's why I'm bringing this amendment, to make sure that we know all the costs and also that there is some certainty for the investors to come and invest in renewable energy options to provide stability to the grid. Generators in the capacity contract under the provisional rules before 2021 do not want the provisional rules changing on them until their contracts under the provisional rules expire.

The bidders are bidding now based on some provisional rules, and the regulations and other information would come into force before 2021. So investors really don't know what those regulations are going to be, what changes the government would make during the course of time. How can you award a contract and then change the terms and conditions after signing the contract? A contract is supposed to be a sacrosanct document. Generators want to bid for capacity with confidence. If the terms and conditions under the provisional market rules change after a capacity contract is signed, the old rules must apply to the capacity contract until the contract runs out. It's just common sense, Madam Chair.

This means that the first capacity contracts will have to be short in order to align with the finalized rules, which will come in around the end of 2021. That's fine. The industry can deal with that. But

the provisional rules have to be like a trial run and allow the trial run to run out. They can't be temporary rules. Temporary is not the same as provisional. The rules can't be interim either. Interim is not the same as provisional. Provisional means provisional, Madam Chair.

I cannot emphasize enough that the minister and the Electric System Operator and the Alberta Utilities Commission can't go changing the provisional rules midstream and expect people to bid and invest in capacity. It just won't work, and this amendment, amendment A5, would strengthen Bill 13 and help the minister to avoid a potential pitfall in implementation of the capacity market. This amendment gives investors, who will supply backup generation for renewables, the confidence to invest in Alberta.

Madam Chair, I discussed why I brought this amendment. I'm hoping that common sense will prevail, and I'm urging the members of the government party here to be, you know, receptive of good, common-sense ideas coming from across the aisle and to make their bill better and regain the trust of Albertans because today nobody trusts them. If you look at the polls in my riding in Calgary-Foothills, the NDP are probably in single digits. That's kind of the sense I got at the doors when I was door-knocking in the last several months.

If they want to regain the trust of Albertans, make this bill better by adopting these amendments that I proposed, and also respect democracy. You know, just don't blindly reject the good ideas coming from the opposition. I wonder. The Leader of the Official Opposition was in Parliament for 19 years. I don't know if you had the same experience of being rejected while you were in opposition or while you were in government, simply rejecting common-sense, reasonable amendments from the opposition.

I have been trying for three years now, and this government: every time we ask them for economic impact analyses of their bills, they simply reject that. They say, "No, we won't share that with you," or they won't even tell you if they have that information or not.

They brought in so many – so many – bills that changed the economics of this province and that are going to, you know, land us at \$96 billion of debt in three short years, three more years. Albertans are not ready because that's not what they were told before they elected this government. When this government presented their election platform in 2015, they never talked about a carbon tax, they never talked about the \$96 billion debt that they're going to cause to Albertans, and they didn't talk about the potential \$3.7 billion to service the debt of \$96 billion.

This is about trust. This government is attacking Albertans with higher taxes, with red tape regulations, and then they're actually siding with the federal Trudeau Liberals, who are attacking Alberta with bills like C-48, C-69. We keep trying with this NDP to work with the opposition and, you know, at least debate with us on these kinds of amendments. None of them stand up and talk about these things. Their only interest is in partisan personal attacks.

10:00

I'm actually losing interest in this House by hearing this kind of negative approach from the government. I mean, I tried to talk to the Speaker a few times. At least it's not working for me because the people of Calgary-Foothills sent me here to do my job, and then this government is not giving me any opportunity to do my job in a reasonable way. I'm really thoroughly getting, you know, disillusioned in electoral politics because that's not why the people sent us here. They sent us with hopes that we'll contribute to the debate here and make the legislation better and make life affordable for Albertans.

Today with all these taxes and tax increases and you name anything – minimum wage, carbon tax, higher income taxes, and all

these ideological regulations they bring in which have unknown costs – I can't even account for it. I can't even size it up to my constituents. When I'm door-knocking, they're simply asking me: how much will it cost? I say that I keep asking the government, but they're not telling. They're not sharing the economic impact analysis of their policies, so I'm not able to answer my constituents.

But, anyway, I'm not giving up. I keep trying because I'm paid to do my job. I hope and I urge members of the other side to actually debate this amendment and make this bill better so that electricity prices won't go up unreasonably. At least we should take control of that file. We can't leave it open because the NDP is not telling them. They're saying that they will cap the power prices at 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour, but in April the taxpayers paid \$9 million extra to cover the cost, the differential cost over 6.8 cents and the actual cost. Just in that month of April the government of Alberta paid \$9 million.

During the budget estimates I asked the Minister of Energy so many questions. I didn't get any answers so far. I even asked the minister: Minister, if you don't have the information, at least commit to table it later or write me a letter or send me the information in whichever mode you want to use. No. I haven't heard back till today.

Madam Chair, tell me: how can I serve my constituents if this government keeps ignoring reasonable requests on behalf of my constituents of Calgary-Foothills and the Calgarians who sent me here? We're here to do our job, not to rubber-stamp this government's ideological policies without assessing the impacts of the bills and legislation they bring forward in this House.

I'm asking all members of this House to at least review this amendment. Tell me why they agree or why they can't agree. If they agree, let's pass this amendment. If they don't agree, let them give me some reasonable answers why they oppose this and just don't blindly oppose it.

Investors are looking for confidence in this new electricity operating system. Today they don't have that confidence. If they keep changing the rules midway through, after signing the contract, then they are going to lose money and they are going to drag us to the courts and Albertans will be on the hook to pay for it. That's why, to avoid that, I brought in this amendment. If the government says, "No; that's not the intent of this amendment," let them speak up and let them tell me how they want to address the problem I raised via this amendment.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A5? Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to speak to another excellent amendment brought forward by the Member for Calgary-Foothills. Thank you so much again.

There are a lot of reasons that many of these amendments have come forward. We just had the government vote against an amendment that gave them the opportunity to bring language back into this legislation that would allow Albertans to feel that they could have gained trust in the government, that would tell them that they had the fair, efficient, and openly competitive ability to make sure that as things come online, that is the mechanism that is being used.

I was mentioning earlier that we had language in previous bills that have led up to this bill that we're dealing with right now that removed the words "transparency and accountability" from the language that was used within that legislation in order to give extraordinary powers to the Minister of Energy to be able to bring

renewables online without debating or bringing up any of that legislation in this Legislature to allow Albertans to understand what is happening. Instead, we've had a cap brought in that basically hides from Albertans what is going to be happening to them with respect to paying for energy.

There are a couple of things that I wanted to bring up. Mostly, when we're talking about making sure – it's one thing to be able to say that it's fair, efficient, and openly competitive to the average Albertan, but where that's really, really important is when you are wanting to attract investment. The assumption in Bill 13: the capacity market was brought online because in order to attract investment, you have to subsidize these particular markets coming on because they are not able to hold their own in an open and free market. So you have to be able to create legislation to be able to allow the minister to subsidize these items coming on. This particular amendment brings to light what has to happen in order to make sure that investors feel confident that should they invest, that contract is not going to change at the last minute, because they can't trust that the government is going to keep their word.

We simply have to look at what's happening federally with the pipelines and at what happened provincially here when the entire concept of social licence was used and thrown out on the shoulders of Albertans to make the assumption that that would buy them a pipeline. Well, not only are they paying a carbon tax, but now they have to pay for the pipeline. The social licence didn't work, and it was sold to Albertans to make the assumption that that would be what would happen.

Now we have an entire new market, Madam Chair, that is coming on, a capacity market, that requires buy-in from folks that require subsidies in order for them to be able to function and to be able to bring their electricity online. But then, on top of that, there is no protection of any contract that could be brought on. That could change at any moment, which could cause another boondoggle. I mean, we were just talking earlier about the cost to Albertans, that we actually understand, from the PPA debacle and everything that came from that.

I'm going to go back in time, just for a little bit of fun, when we were talking about Bill 34, which is the precursor to many of these bills that have come after this as a result. So we had the PPAs, and we had the fact that the carbon tax triggered the "more unprofitable" clause within the PPAs, which triggered an entire situation where not only did the PPAs have to be returned, but the government ended up suing itself and Enmax in order to try and get this boondoggle back on track. So we have that, but then we also have the fact that Bill 34 basically made a loan to the Balancing Pool and guaranteed obligations to the Balancing Pool. It was a blank cheque, a blank cheque that the government signed to the Balancing Pool in order to compensate for the rate riders that were there initially, that actually solved that problem all on its own in the deregulated market.

So we have the PPA debacle, we have the PPAs being turned back, we have the stranded assets, we have the suing of Enmax and the government basically suing itself, we have Bill 34, which had a blank cheque going to the Balancing Pool in order to be able to compensate for dollars that actually were brought in by rate riders in the past – it's an unchecked loan – and now we have Bill 13, which had to come in for the capacity market in order for investors to be able to come in line to be subsidized.

10:10

We have the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills trying to make amendments to help the government show that it can gain trust back from Albertans, which they voted against, and now to protect the investors that are actually coming in so that their contracts will

actually be honoured by this government, which is very hard to believe given the fact that they have already sued people that were involved in the original contracts in the first place. I would assume that this amendment would be very good for the government because it gives them the opportunity to say: "No. When these contracts come online, we will honour those contracts. We will make sure that we honour what we have told the consumers." But the government is not willing to do that.

You know, it's amazing. I was talking about Ontario Hydro before. Did you know that "hydro" is a dirty word in Ontario now? It's a word that's used for all of the various kinds of electricity that are online there. It doesn't just mean hydro. When you say hydro, it means nuclear, it means all of the very, very complex and very diverse types of electricity that are in Ontario. Why is it a dirty word? It's because of the cost to the people in Ontario.

I have a couple of stories here, and I will table these articles. This is an interesting article from the *Windsor Star*: The Highest Electricity Rates in North America. It says, "Thanks to 13 years of Ontario Liberal scandal, mismanagement, and waste, our province's Hydro One customers officially pay the highest residential electricity prices in North America, surpassing the tiny island state of Hawaii."

An Hon. Member: You're kidding, right?

Mrs. Aheer: No. I'm not kidding.

And put in the perspective that Hawaii is in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. It is thousands of miles away from generation. This is how unbelievably mismanaged this file has been in Ontario, and Alberta is headed down the same track because of this government. The exact same track. On top of that, it's hidden. It's hidden.

To continue on with this article: "Since the Liberal Government first took office, average households are now paying more than \$1,000 extra on their annual hydro bills."

An Hon. Member: Wow.

Mrs. Aheer: Yeah.

Think about that. We're not there yet. I have one constituent who said that theirs had already gone up \$302 – this was a farmer – \$302, and that is just on a small piece. That doesn't include the industrial piece, which is not protected by the capacity market.

How is it that as a government you can just shift the cost to the taxpayer, wipe your hands of it, and just say, "Albertans are on the hook for this," but you're not willing to be honest and put a rate rider on there so that when the customer sees the bill, they understand what they're paying for? We have zero utility debt in this province right now. This government is going to change all of that. Our children and grandchildren are going to be paying for this capacity market long past the time that I will be here.

On top of that, they don't even take into account the build that is going to be necessary to bring on this new capacity, new generation. To speak even more to what the hon. member was saying about this particular amendment, it doesn't even talk – and this is actually super important – about the contracts that are going to be made for the people who are building this capacity. Is that even taken into consideration? I don't think so. It's certainly something that you would need to talk about, especially if you're making contracts with these folks.

In Ontario do you know what Andrea Horwath said? She said that if she's elected, she's actually going to shut down the Pickering nuclear power plant. That's 3,000 direct jobs and 15 per cent of their capacity. Isn't that interesting, considering that the Liberal government spent billions of dollars? People have to choose between whether to heat or to eat in that province, and the NDP, that could

possibly be in government, is willing to take electricity offline. Why? That's over 3,094 megawatts taken offline. Sixty per cent of the capacity in that province comes from nuclear.

I'm curious. Is that what we have in store here for this province, that they're going to do all of this with smoke and mirrors, bring it online, and then just decide one day that they're going to take it offline because it didn't work? You can't supply the capacity that you're promising because when the wind doesn't blow and the sun doesn't shine, it's not possible – you have to have baseload capacity, so the taxpayer is paying for that – then on top of that you have no ability to be able to promise Albertans that they are going to be able to get what they deserve from the other capacity that's been online because the minister, with her extraordinary powers, can bring that on without telling anybody how, where, when, and how much it's going to cost.

In fact, aside from some of the base numbers that we have from stranded assets, what happened with the PPAs, and any of the other dollars that have gone to the Balancing Pool, the \$750 million that was paid off to the Balancing Pool in the initial debacle with the PPAs, those are the only dollars that we know about. The rest of that: we have absolutely no knowledge about what it's going to cost the taxpayer, and the government thinks that that's okay and then on top of that is expecting investment to come in and can't make any promises that those investors will be respected with their contracts because that's not what they did with the previous contract holders.

They turned the PPAs over, cost the taxpayer billions of dollars, reneged on the contracts that were there for the 20-year period, said that they didn't understand it even though we know from everything that we've read and put together that they knew what would happen once they turned the PPAs back – we absolutely know that that was the case – but still reneged on those contracts. So how are we supposed to convince new investors that are coming online that they will have an honest contract with this government when at the flip of a switch when it suits them, they're just going to turn them over?

That's why the Member for Calgary-Foothills has brought this amendment forward. At the very least if they're not willing to take amendment A4 and put back fair, efficient, and open competitiveness into the language of renewables coming online, if they're not willing to bring back accountability and transparency into the language from bills 34 and 27, that were done in the previous session, in order to bring this capacity market to light, they're not willing to bring that language on, at the very least they might want to protect the very investors that they're asking to trust this government with the investment that they're bringing online. As I've said, the market isn't deciding on this. This is a false market. This is something that is coming on because the government has decided that they are the decision-makers. They're going to make this decision on behalf of Albertans regardless of how much it's going to cost them. Then, on top of that, we don't even know what kind of legislation is going to come out for the industrial users like our farmers because they're not protected under this cap. Then what happens?

A user is bringing this online to bring to the government with absolutely no promise from them that they will uphold those contracts, whether that is bringing on generation, whether that's in retail, whether that's distribution or the building of the infrastructure. As I understand it, it could be possibly as much as \$800 million minimum to bring on new infrastructure to tie in different kinds of generation.

I have 40 solar panels on my house. It's wonderful. I love it, wouldn't change it for the world, but let's talk about that for a second. They have a 25-year life. There's no way to recycle those in this province. In fact, I'd have to send them back to China in

order for that to happen. It's cheaper to actually ship them from China than to get them from anywhere else. On top of that, do you know how much coal-fired intensity it takes to make silicon in order to make those solar panels work?

There is so much new technology out there, but that new technology needs to be inspired by a government that allows that technology to happen so that the market decides, so that they inspire people to make renewables part of their life. That's a wonderful idea, but the government is not the one that makes the decision on behalf of Albertans, hides it in a 6.8 cent cap and tells us, "Oh, we're protecting you" even though for anything that happens remarkably over that cap we pay a humongous amount. For every cent we go over that cap, it's a million dollars. Then if wind capacity goes below 3.7 cents per gigawatt hour, the taxpayer is subsidizing that, too.

10:20

Just to reiterate, earlier I was mentioning about how much that actually costs. Just to be clear, this is the average and this was for REP 1. The Independent Power Producers Society said that it indicated that the wholesale price of electricity averaged 1.7 cents per kilowatt hour, way below the 3.7 cents. That's a whole lot of subsidy, a whole lot. But the government doesn't tell you that, nor do they phone farmers or anybody else in this province that happens to be in rural Alberta to tell them that they'd better tie into a fixed rate real soon because if they don't, their prices are going to be out of control. Enmax did that. Enmax phoned a bunch of my farmers in my area and let them know: "You know what? You might want to get on fixed rate." Very nice of them. But they also know what this government does because they've been sued by them.

Mr. Nixon: I guess they forgot about the REAs.

Mrs. Aheer: Yeah. Well, it's interesting. The REAs are an interesting thing. They figured out their situation, but how much negotiation did that take? On top of that, it wasn't considered within this capacity market at all. The REAs had to go to the government, negotiate for a contract in order to not pay more than the average person so that they could keep their REAs going. That didn't happen because the government reached out to them. The REAs reached out to us. We put it in front of the government.

Mr. Nixon: It's true.

Mrs. Aheer: It's true.

I don't think it's very funny. If the government did listen to the REAs, then why wasn't it in their legislation to start with? You can laugh all you want. If you truly believe that you're the ones responsible for that, why wasn't it in the legislation in the first place?

Mr. Nixon: Oops.

Mrs. Aheer: Oops. I can honestly tell you that every single person I talked to did not say: oh, the government came to me and told me, "This is how we're going to work this out." No, no, no, no, no. Actually, it was the member from Sundre that talked to the REAs, that actually pushed to make sure that the government did their job and did right by the REAs in the first place, so congratulations.

Madam Chair, we are giving a massive amount of help here to make this horrible policy better. You know, sometimes when I go back – I have all my *Hansards* here from Bill 34. I mean, we were in here for hours and hours and hours and hours debating.

But we have moms and dads and families out of work. They're genuinely afraid. They're afraid for their children and their grandchildren. It appears the government doesn't seem to grasp the

overwhelming burden of the lack of understanding of fiscal policy. They don't seem to understand that the impact – and we've seen this in other provinces. We have other jurisdictions to compare this to. Yes, the combination of energy is different, but the mentality and the mechanism is the same. Government does not know better than people how to spend their money, and it is our responsibility that if we're going to change the mechanism, Albertans understand that.

The carbon tax was brought in with absolutely nothing coming from this government when they were running their campaign. They said that they would use it for social licence to get a pipeline. That did not work, so they have misled Albertans. On top of that, they're attacking our energy. Look at the cap on the oil sands. The cap on the oil sands: bills 37 and 34 all came in at the same time, a complete and utter attack on our industry at all levels, yet – yet – the government keeps saying that they have Albertans' backs.

What's going to happen once those prices start to spike, once all of these renewables come on? When we get to REP 2 and REP 3 and their bidding for the extra 300 and 400 megawatts, we have no idea of the total cost to the taxpayer. Like, these are coming on without any transparency for the ratepayer or the taxpayer, absolutely none.

I mean, we have Bill 34, that gave a blank cheque to the Balancing Pool; Bill 27, that took the MSA's ability to investigate the market away. We have Bill 13, which basically had to happen in order for the capacity market to actually happen and to attract investment, yet when we give you some much-needed advice on how to attract investment, you're saying no. When we give you advice on how to use your language appropriately, the words – like I said to you earlier, when you use the language "reliable," I mean, it sounds nice. It's a great mandate, but it doesn't stand as a legal term.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A5? Edmonton-South West.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think it's really important that we take a meaningful look at this and we actually address what's going on in these sections that are being amended here.

I think this section allows the commission to allow an AESO rule change to apply to an auction that has already occurred only if the auction meets two very specific criteria: if it supports the fair, efficient, and openly competitive operation of the capacity market and it is in the public interest. I think that combined, when you look at those two criteria, it sets a very high bar. I think we expect that this test will only be met in certain situations where retroactive change would really be in the best interest of everyone, generators and consumers. An example could be an administrative change to a rule that improves clarity in such a way that generators can operate more efficiently, thus saving consumers money.

I think it's really important that when we look at this, we reiterate that the corrective power here is clearly restricted, and it's a rule that would only apply backward where the AUC makes a clear order on the basis that this application was to support the fair, efficient, and openly competitive, or FEOC operation, of the capacity market and is in the public interest.

I think it's a little bit interesting when we've listened to the opposition for the last two, three hours talk about how important it was that we put the words "FEOC" in that order into this bill, and, Madam Chair, here they are. They're right here in this bill, right there, and the opposition is asking us to strike them out in two places. I think that when we move forward with this, we have to look at it in a really clear light and say that, in fact, these sections add FEOC standards to the capacity market, and they have the

intention to provide a market that works for everybody, consumers and generators. That's why those two very high standards and criteria are set.

Bill 13 I think very clearly does demonstrate those FEOC principles, and when we remove instances like this from the bill, I think we degrade from them. When we move forward and change these very narrowly defined corrective rules that are in place that allow FEOC principles to be used in certain circumstances – and it's not just once in this amendment, but it's actually twice that they're removing the words “fair, efficient, and openly competitive.” They're removing those words twice from the bill. I think it's something that we need to be really clear about.

To be very clear, members opposite have spoken about how these concerns can cause political uncertainty for investors and market participants, and that's simply not true. These clauses have nothing to do with the political level. The flexibility is provided to the regulator, which is the AUC, if adjustments are needed to meet that FEOC principle and public interest that the opposition wants to keep talking about. I think it's a shame that they're suggesting that the responsible, expert commissioners of the AUC would try to apply politics to decisions. I mean, the opposition is free to cast those aspersions if they would like.

I think that when we look at this amendment, we see that it doesn't support an efficient marketplace, it doesn't support a fair marketplace, and really we need to reject this amendment. I encourage all of my colleagues to vote against it.

Thank you.

The Chair: Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I am not sure if the hon. member is on the right amendment. The hour draws late, and maybe that's why he may be confused. Just a few short moments ago he stood in this Assembly and voted against an amendment that would have changed the language to include a sentence that says, “supports the fair, efficient, and openly competitive operation of the capacity market.” That was the last amendment that we were debating.

I'm glad to see that now he is concerned about a fair, efficient, and openly competitive operation in the capacity market with the amendment that has now been moved by the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills that's before us now, Madam Chair. I'm a little bit concerned and would have some questions to the hon. member why he was not concerned about an open, fair, efficient, and openly competitive operation of the capacity market about 15 minute ago, when he stood in this Assembly and voted against that exact thing. It is a little rich to now stand up in this Assembly after you voted no to that, sir, and then say that you're concerned with making sure that the market is fair, efficient, and openly competitive. Why did you vote against that? But I digress.

10:30

Amendment A4, which has been brought forward by the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills, talks a lot about the need to honour contracts. It talks about the need to not change rules halfway through. The impact that that has on investors is significant. I think that the hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View did an excellent job of articulating that. Through you, Madam Chair, to the hon. member, he did not do a very good job of countering that argument by speaking about something just voted against and did not take any time to address some of the serious issues with very well-thought-out examples, I thought, that the hon. member brought to the Chamber this evening.

You know, I was watching my 11-year-old twins play a board game when I was back home last weekend, on Sunday afternoon before I drove here. I don't know what the game was, but they were playing this board game, and I could hear, as many of the parents in this Chamber from all aisles will understand, that things were getting a little bit angry over there. There was something going on, so as a dad you kind of perk up and start to watch what was going on.

My 11-year-old son was playing this game with his 11-year-old twin sister, and each time he would pull a card, he would say that the rule for this card meant this, and it would go very good for him. Then, shortly after, his 11-year-old twin sister would pull the same card, and my 11-year-old son, Austin, would say: “No, no, no. That's not how it works now. The rules have changed.” She was becoming very animated and upset. I don't really blame her. It's pretty frustrating to play a game if the rules are changing the whole way. In the end, she threw the board game on the floor, and that was the end of the board game. I stand with her on that. I mean, I think that it's not fair to have the rules changed. In that case, though, she was able to go elsewhere and enjoy the rest of her afternoon.

The problem is that with what we're talking about here, investors may throw the board game on the ground, but in the end they're not going to come back to our province because they don't trust this government, who is changing the rules halfway through. The consequences are, really, not to the investors, because they're going to go to other regions that don't change the rules, that are more open to them and to making sure that they can do the important work they do of creating jobs in our communities. The people of Alberta will pay the consequence for that.

We saw that in a different context but a pretty big example of that just a few weeks ago, when Kinder Morgan pulled the plug. A private investor pulled the plug on a significant project, billions of dollars of investment that they were going to put into our economy, and then left. Of course, Madam Chair, I'm sure you were as offended as I was that the NDP stood outside and high-fived each other out of excitement that that investor left. That's what they did. They celebrated a job creator who was going to put billions of dollars in our economy leaving and the taxpayer having to bail out an emergency situation because they left.

I can tell you that the investor, Kinder Morgan, did not pay a serious consequence for that, nor should they. They are a private company that ran into a political problem that was created by the NDP government and the Liberal government and the B.C. NDP, but you see in the newspaper today that their leadership received a \$1.5 million bonus because of the deal that they were able to negotiate on the way to cash out of that situation. Clearly, it didn't negatively affect them, but it did affect us because now we have to go and fix that situation.

The hon. member wants to talk about a fair, open market. I'd be curious – and I do appreciate that he has risen because I note that the Energy minister still has not risen to discuss this. So I will ask him: how can you award a contract and then change the terms and conditions? Maybe he'll answer that.

The Chair: Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you so much, Madam Chair. I actually would like to try and unpack what was said by the hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

A couple of things. When you're creating policy on such a complex issue, broad statements that the FEOC is only changed under certain circumstances – when you talk about all of a sudden that the AESO will make decisions based on the public interest in

certain situations and retroactive charges, that the rules are going to be changing based on that, that's a pretty subjective group of rules.

Just to be clear, if you're removing fair, efficient, and openly competitive from any part, whether that's one or 15 items, that actually makes sure that the AESO can meddle with the capacity contracts if the meddling is compliant with the FEOC. Basically, when you remove that, you're giving the AESO the ability to meddle because it's not in the contract in the first place. On top of that, the most interesting part is that the AUC is the one that approves the meddling.

I don't understand how the member can say that this amendment degrades the legislation. We're trying to help the legislation. By what the member just said, if I understand correctly, he is okay with the AESO meddling with fair, efficient, and openly competitive as long as that meddling falls within the auspices of what their general legislation says about the public interest in certain situations.

Then he goes on to explain about flexibility and responsibility. This is not legal language. Flexibility and being responsible fall under the mandate and the vision of what a piece of legislation looks like. We need to have clear, concise language and then, on top of that, clear and concise promises from the government regarding their ability to actually follow through with the promises that they are saying they're going to do.

If the member would like to respond to that, that would be wonderful. I don't understand how the member could be okay that the AESO meddles in capacity contracts as long as the AUC deems that that meddling is okay.

Thank you so much.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'd like to get up and just say a few words on this, too. Here we are again talking about electricity. This government has been working on electricity since they were elected, since 2015. They've been passing bills in this Legislature, and from the time they first started and created their first problems by messing with the electricity system, they've been here time and time again passing legislation as damage control for the legislation that they previously passed. Obviously, if they had left it alone to begin with or maybe just tweaked a few things here and there, they would have saved themselves a whole pile of work and saved Alberta taxpayers and ratepayers a whole pile of money.

Now, when I look at this government and how they operate, I'm thinking about the Trans Mountain pipeline. You know, this government swore up and down that if we do a \$3 billion carbon tax to Albertans, we're going to get a pipeline. Then they said: well, if we do a wine boycott, then maybe we'll get a pipeline with that. That didn't work either. Then they thought: "Well, maybe a \$5 billion carbon tax will work. If we agree with Prime Minister Trudeau on his, then maybe that'll work." No, that didn't work either. "Oh, we'll pass Bill 12. We'll tell everybody that we won't use it. Maybe that'll work to get a pipeline." Of course, that didn't work either. What did we find out that works? Well, if you buy a 65-year-old pipeline for 4 and a half billion dollars, that's a good start. Then if you take another \$8 billion to \$10 billion to build a pipeline, then I guess that works. This government over and over again is – it's like they're practising on Albertans instead of actually governing and doing things right.

10:40

You know, the Member for Edmonton-South West got up and said: "Oh, there's no uncertainty in the market. There's no

uncertainty here." Madam Chair, that's just not true. I mean, there's a lot of uncertainty in the marketplace because of what this government does. I think what's most frustrating a lot of times with what this government does is that it moves the goalposts. There'll be rules in place, and a business will come along and say: "Okay. This is what I've got to do; this is what we'll do." They go through that whole process. Then all of a sudden government comes along: "Well, no. That's not good enough. We're going to do this. We're going to change the rules as we go along." There's no way there could be certainty in the marketplace when a government keeps changing the rules as they go along.

Madam Chair, I do want to point out that there isn't one member of the government side right now paying attention to any of this debate, not one. We have the Infrastructure minister, the Health minister, Environment and Parks minister, Service Alberta minister all here. Not one of them is paying attention to this debate.

The Chair: Hon. member, we do not mention the presence or absence of any members. I would ask you again: please refrain from doing that.

Mr. Loewen: Okay. Thank you very much.

Now, Madam Chair, the only thing we know for sure is that the prices of electricity are going up. Everything that this government has done with the electricity market has caused prices to go up.

Now, another thing we have to say here, too, is that this government, you know, has tried to incent all of this renewable resource, renewable power generation coming into Alberta, wind power and solar power and everything. They talk about this like it was never happening in Alberta before, but of course, Madam Chair, we know that there was wind power here in Alberta before. That was long before the NDP government came into power. Of course, this government comes along, and they want to change the system. They want to take taxpayer dollars to incent things. There are just a lot of things that this government is doing that have been hurting Albertans.

Again, Bill 13 is something that will make electricity more expensive for consumers by transferring more risk away from the generators. So I think Albertans have lost their trust in the NDP government when it comes to electricity because time and time again they've done these changes over and over again. They've done changes to the electricity market, and every single time it's cost Alberta taxpayers more money.

They even put a cap on electricity. Obviously, they knew that the price of electricity was going up, so they would have to put a cap on it to make it look like it wasn't as expensive as it really was. Of course, we know what happens with caps. The electricity might not have cost that much, but obviously somebody has to pay for that, and the only other way to get the money is to take money from the taxpayer. Well, Madam Chair, the taxpayer and the ratepayer are the same person. They're Albertans. So it doesn't matter how it's paid for; it's still them paying.

Now, we've even written to the Auditor General asking for a full cost accounting of all the electricity changes this government has done. It's going to be interesting to see what happens there, I think. We know it's cost billions of dollars; we're just not sure how many billions of dollars.

We talk about the phase-out of coal-fired generating plants that this government has done. Now, we were to phase out 12 of the coal-fired generating plants by 2029. That would have been on their natural cycle, wouldn't have cost taxpayers anything to do that. Of course, this government comes along, and they want to phase out the six remaining coal-fired generating plants sooner than their life cycles would have run out. Of course, that's what costs money,

when you do something sooner than the company that's built that infrastructure has had a chance to recover their costs and make some money at it. So this phase-out is costing somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$1.3 billion to shut them down early or convert them to natural gas.

Some of these plants were practically brand new. Keephills 3 was supposed to run until 2061. Genesee 3 was to run till 2055. I mean, that's a lot of years of lost production of these generating plants. Of course, some of these newer generating plants were far better at burning coal clean than the older ones. Of course, some of them will be converted to natural gas, but those conversions probably aren't going to be as efficient as the brand new combined-cycle natural gas power plants. Of course, the NDP wanted to force renewable electricity on the Alberta market, so they've forced these things to happen.

Now, the AESO ran many models, including for high use of intermittent renewables to generate electricity in Alberta, and their modelling showed that a renewable electricity program will decrease revenue needed for all generators to recover investment and earn a profit, thus deterring investment. That's AESO. That's not the Official Opposition here doing these things. This is an independent organization that's done this modelling to show this. But, of course, the government has ignored these things and has gone ahead with their plan and their ideology and pushing it through.

Now, the AESO report from October 2016 also said that "system reliability will be compromised." Of course, this government talks about that all these changes are to increase reliability, but AESO is suggesting that it's actually the opposite. So, Madam Chair, obviously, this government needs to take a little time to think about these things, and when we bring forward amendments to their bills, that's the thing we're suggesting. We're suggesting they take a little bit of time, pay attention to what we're suggesting, give it a chance, and see if there's something there that we could use to help relieve the cost and the burden to Albertans.

Now, the NDP, you know, purposely compromised the electrical system's reliability and did this without a guarantee that the peaker plants would be built to produce electricity when the solar and the wind isn't generating electricity. That's why they've come up with this idea of the capacity market.

Madam Chair, I think that when we look at all these things, we see that there's no doubt that these things that this NDP government has done will increase the cost of electricity to Albertans. Nobody is fooled by the electricity cap because they know that if the cost of producing electricity rises above the cap, then that money has to come from somewhere. If these generating plants can't generate the electricity based on the government rules for the 6.8 cents a kilowatt hour, then somebody has to pay for that. Of course, we know that the government is planning on backstopping those costs and, of course, with taxpayer money. So even though it may not show up on the electricity bill, it'll show up in the tax bill for Albertans.

Madam Chair, I think that if this government would look at this amendment and realize that it is a good amendment – it's one that could help this bill and help Albertans – then I think they should do that. I mean, we've just had them turn down amendments. We're talking about a fair, efficient and openly competitive operation. So I guess we should never be surprised in what this government will or won't accept in an amendment when they won't accept fair, efficient and openly competitive markets.

Madam Chair, I'd encourage all my colleagues here in the Legislature to support this amendment today. Thanks.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to be able to rise and speak in support of this amendment by my hon. colleague from Calgary-Foothills. As I've been listening tonight to the debate, I've had the opportunity of being able to read through an article from the *Globe and Mail*. It's entitled Why Does Ontario's Electricity Cost So Much? A Reality Check. This is a very interesting article.

One of the things that I've found interesting about this job as an MLA is that we are required to understand or learn about a lot of different industries and get our heads around these industries. Now, look, that can be dangerous, Madam Chair, because we're not gurus in our area. We don't have 40,000 hours' worth of experience in this industry. At least, I certainly do not. But as I've taken a look at this whole bill, Bill 13, in general, I've seen that this government is trying to figure out how to fix an original problem, the original problem being the carbon tax.

10:50

Now, what's interesting is that if you take a look at this article in the *Globe and Mail*, it goes through and talks about their experience. I imagine that after reading this article here, the NDP took a look at what was going on here in Alberta and decided that they need to actually go to a capacity market and follow something similar to what Ontario did. The disturbing thing about this is that our situation, Madam Chair, could be substantially worse because of where we started from. Ontario started with 30 per cent, a third, of their capacity as nuclear, yet it produced 60 per cent of the electricity for Ontario. Here's what's interesting. In Alberta a majority, two-thirds of our electricity, is produced from coal. The outcomes are going to be so much worse because our starting point has been so much more in terms of coal. So Ontario's goal was to be able to go green, to be able to decrease the reliance on coal, which was only a third of what they were using to produce, yet we're two-thirds.

It's interesting because there's a part here where it talks about where they were able to get to after years and years of trying to be able to go green. It says here that "the second-largest source is hydroelectricity, which accounted for 24 per cent of generation in 2015, followed by natural-gas plants (10 per cent) and wind power (6 per cent)." Then it says that 1 per cent was solar. So the total between wind and solar: 7 per cent is what they were actually able to produce.

Now, our government is trying to be able to get to 30 per cent between solar and wind. The cost to Ontario to try to be able to make that transition has almost bankrupt that province, yet we think – I shouldn't say "we" because I take no credit for this. The NDP government believes that they can go to 30 per cent in renewable electricity and somehow figure out how to do it without causing us to go bankrupt.

The concern that I have is that during PAC, I asked how much of the producers' capacity we would have to pay for. So we've moved into a capacity market, and the question that I wanted to know was: if a wind company has a capacity of 50 megawatts but only produces 10 megawatts, will they be paid for their ability to produce the extra 40 megawatts? The answer was no. So I asked them how much they would pay. After a lot of stalling, they said that they didn't know but that they thought it would be around 20 per cent.

Now, it sounds like a great deal, right? You build it, and the government is guaranteeing 20 per cent more than you can produce. If you just set up a wind farm and you're only going to produce, you know, a tenth, it may be very profitable. They don't even know what the percentage is going to be, but it may be very profitable for them. I think that is the only reason why we're seeing people come

into this market, because of that payment by the government for what their capacity is versus what they can actually produce.

Now, my hon. colleague is proposing that the provisional rules don't change, that there is a modicum of certainty that these companies can have. But I would have to submit, after taking a look at this article, that the certainty that they're going to get or that they feel they can get is in those 20-year contracts, where they can get payments for capacity versus what they're actually producing. Once again during PAC, when we asked the question, "Well, how much are they going to be paid of their actual capacity?" they didn't know. Either they didn't know or they weren't telling us. They refused to tell us.

Now, I would think that if you're going to create a capacity market and create something that is going to be sellable to Albertans that at least you'd be in a situation where the government would know what the final costs are going to be to Albertans. After seeing the debacle in Ontario, which cost the Liberal government there this election – Premier Wynne said it herself the other day, that she's not going to get elected, and the main reason is because of these out-of-control electricity prices. In fact, this article says that in some places they saw almost a hundred per cent increase in the cost of electricity.

Now, it goes on to talk about why the electricity is so expensive. It gives a historical background, then it goes on to talk about why it's so expensive, and then it goes on to talk about what the solutions are. In talking about the electricity, why it's so expensive, as I read through this section, it's almost identical to what is being proposed by this government. It says, to start out with, that

the Liberals had been elected in part on a promise to close down the province's coal-fired power plants.

Very similar to what this government, the NDP government, has stated as well.

So the government went on a building spree, upgrading aging infrastructure and commissioning new natural gas, wind and solar plants to replace the coal plants.

Again it sounds very similar to what this government has been doing. However, it's interesting. In this article it says:

Ontario Hydro [a government organization] decided [that they were going] to outsource the work of building and running the new power plants to the private sector.

Now, when I asked the government in PAC why they felt that this was going to work, where was their magic bullet or silver bullet, they said: well, we're doing it differently because we're going to outsource and have a competitive bid.

It says here that they went for 20-year contracts, the same thing that's happening here. We're outsourcing to have these things built and managed by the private sector. I don't see the difference. Then it says:

The contracts essentially guaranteed that the companies would receive a certain amount of revenue – no matter how much electricity their plants produced.

That sounds like a capacity market, Madam Chair.

What's interesting is that, again, back to the history of this, in Ontario ultimately the province built more than it actually needed. Go figure, Madam Chair. You have a situation where they're going to receive a guaranteed return on investment anyways no matter how much they built. Well, how much did they build? Actually, on an average day the average Ontario electrical need is about 15,959 megawatts. They built 30,203 megawatt capacity. What is to say that we won't be having the same kind of thing happen here in Alberta, where this capacity market will be overbuilt to the point where we no longer have control over the building costs and now we're in a situation where we're paying for way over capacity to what our needs are?

11:00

This is very disconcerting. As I've read through this article, I've seen how similar the program that this NDP government has established and set up is to what the Liberals in Ontario set up. What I'm amazed at is that the media here has not covered this more. This is a disaster waiting to happen. In fact, it's a disaster in the process of happening. We've got fixed-income homeowners, fixed-income seniors, people on AISH, people in the margins that will be affected by this far more than anybody else. This is the government that was supposed to be the champions of these people, yet they're creating a system that is going to be helping to hurt these people on the margins. I don't understand it. As I've tried to get my head around these different bills and the capacity market and how it works, I am shocked to see that after having seen this whole thing play out in Ontario, we're doing almost the exact same thing. This government is blindly moving forward doing this.

This amendment, once again, is making a very bad bill less bad. The reason why I'm in support of this is because the NDP government up until this time has refused to even listen to our voice of warning, our voice of warning that this is a train wreck in the making.

Is this the silver bullet? Is this what's going to fix this thing? Absolutely not, Madam Chair. This is just going to make it less bad. But in the hope – in the hope – that we can at least have companies that are willing to actually get in here and invest and have that certainty for investment, I think that this is a reasonable amendment. I have no doubt that the Member for Calgary-Foothills has put a lot of thought into this, realizing that the government is not willing – absolutely not willing – to take a look at what really should be happening, and he is trying to make it the least bad that he can. That's his job as the critic for Energy, to try to critique these bills and to be able to figure out: what is the best solution out of a slate of bad options? That's all I can see here.

Like I said, Madam Chair, I'm shocked that this government is taking our Alberta down this road knowing full well what has happened in Ontario and is not willing to address this issue and even let Albertans know what's going on. I speak in favour of this amendment, not because it is an amendment that makes this bill better, but at least it is an amendment that says, you know: let's create some kind of certainty for our investors so that they will come in and, hopefully, will drive the price down when they bring in the contracts.

With that, Madam Chair, I will be supporting this amendment.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Well, thank you. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to the amendment that was so aptly proposed by my colleague from Calgary-Foothills. I think it's an important amendment, particularly when it comes to creating fairness in the marketplace and ensuring that there is one very clear set of rules.

You know, one of the things that we've seen time and time again, even with respect to the PPAs, is that this government essentially changes the rules midstream. Why they got into this whole mess in the first place was because they either should have known or knew and acted anyway about clauses in the legislation. Then they changed the rules on the providers. As such, it provided them the ability to turn back those PPAs, and now we're in the bad spot that we're in, all because the government made a poor decision about the PPAs and changed the rules mid-game. That's exactly what this amendment will propose, will ensure, that the rules will continue throughout the length of the contract and don't change the terms and conditions associated with that contract, particularly with

respect to generators. Generators who win a capacity contract under the provisional rules don't want those provisional rules changing on them.

You know, Madam Chair, it's a bit like a hockey game where you've played the first period and the second period and the third period all under one set of rules. Then you go into overtime, and without letting either of the teams know, you set out a set of rules that is going to take place only for overtime. But you fail to let the teams know, or in fact a worst-case scenario would be that one team gets to play with five players and the other team gets to play with four or whatever the case may be. Everyone – everyone, every Canadian – would know that that's unfair. Changing the rules in the middle of a hockey game: what could be more un-Canadian than that?

But here we see inside the legislation the opportunity that the provisional rules could be changed. The amendment, then, would ensure that those rules would not change and that, in fact, the provisional rules would remain for the duration of the contract. If the terms and conditions, the provisional market rules, change after the capacity contract is signed, then the old rules must apply to the capacity contract until that contract runs out. This means that the first capacity contract will have to be shorter in order to align with the finalized rules, which will come in around 2021. The minister, the AESO, and the AUC can't go changing the rules midstream and expect people to bid and invest in the capacity market.

We've seen the government – this isn't the first time that industry will be concerned about them changing the rules. In virtually every aspect of Albertans' lives, in some respects, the rules have been changed by this government. Whether it's the labour rules, whether it was the rules around farm workers, whether it was the rules around the minimum wage, whether it was the rules around PPAs, whether it was the rules around carbon taxes, time and time again this government has a habit of changing the rules. In this case the thing about this rule change is that the rule change will not even have to come back to the Legislative Assembly. They can just change it, essentially, at the whim of a minister.

11:10

Any time that you're creating legislation that gives such authority, ability, and powers to the minister to make changes to provisional rules or any other term of a contract, it creates uncertainty in the marketplace. Those who are investing: one of the key things that they look for and require is investor certainty. When you pass legislation that creates, potentially, confusion or doesn't provide them with the certainty of the rules not being changed, it certainly causes industry to take stock of that and to potentially even make other decisions. We've seen a significant amount of investment flee our province, particularly in the early days of this administration, when folks were unsure of what was going to happen. We saw major, major, major investments leaving the province. In fact, just this past week we saw another major oil and gas producer, in the form of a pipeline company, divest their assets here because of political uncertainty in the province of British Columbia.

So now the federal government has needed to step in and bear some of that risk of uncertainty, and we will continue to see this all across a wide variety of industries. In this case we'll see this in the electricity marketplace, that rules that have the potential of changing do not encourage investment. They do the opposite of that. It's unfortunate that the government, with a very simple amendment, would be able to provide the sort of certainty that industry is looking for, that the rules provided under the initial capacity contract, those provisional rules, would not change. The terms and the conditions of the contract that they have believed to

be true would then, in fact, be true, and this amendment would provide the legislative certainty that that, in fact, would be the case. If the government made a decision, then, to change that legislative certainty, at least they would have to come back to the Assembly and have the scrutiny that the Assembly could provide.

It's not just this government that's the problem. Potential governments down the road, all the way to 2021 – that has the potential of being a couple of governments – in fact, may want to change those rules. While this government may have good intentions – although I'm not entirely sure that they do – it is unclear as to what will happen in the future. So we need to create a legislative framework that provides that certainty into the future and on a go-forward basis. It is a reasonable amendment. I think that most members of the government will agree that keeping these contracts in an investment climate like Alberta's is important. I think that most members of the government can now see what happens when you change the rules midstream. It literally costs Albertans billions of dollars.

That's what happened the last time they changed the rules without coming back to the Assembly, essentially turning the dials on the electricity market. They turned one dial, and it created a whole cascade effect, all down across the market and across the grid. That created such, such, such chaos within the electricity system that we are well and truly on the way to replicating the damaging impacts of the Ontario electricity market. You know, literally, an election is going to be won and lost on this very issue. This sort of certainty, a small amendment, could have a positive impact on the government's poor decisions.

It was interesting to see the Premier of Ontario concede the next election well before – well before – the actual voting day. I wondered if that is a path forward for this particular government as well as we move towards the next election. What might in fact happen with the stack of poor decisions that this government is lining up? In fact, perhaps they will be willing to concede the election prior to the next election, just like we saw in the province of Ontario early this week when what we could almost say is former Premier Kathleen Wynne conceded the election five days prior to the actual vote taking place.

Every day in the Assembly the Official Opposition provides ideas and amendments that the government ought to heed to prevent some of these challenges for them in the future. Unfortunately, it is on very, very, very rare occurrences that they heed our advice.

Tonight would be a great night for them to do that as it would make a bad bill a little bit better and provide a little bit of additional certainty to the marketplace. I encourage them all to support it.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? *Chestermere-Rocky View.*

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Chair. Happy 11 o'clock – what time are we at? – 11:16. I just wanted to again mention that I just think that it's imperative that we – sometimes if you can talk about something enough and maybe come up with enough arguments, we'll be able to convince the government at least to consider some portion of what it is that we're trying to accomplish here.

Again, just to reiterate, we just need to make sure that I would be – it's very important to understand that so much of why we're here and why we're discussing this is because of some very, very seriously poor and very dangerous legislation that has come before this that puts our taxpayers, our ratepayers, the Albertans that we represent on the hook for every mistake that is being made by this government. It's interesting because the government has no problem pointing out previous government boondoggles and all those kinds of things. You know, every government is going to

make its mistakes, for sure. There's an immense amount of things to pull from from any government anywhere at any time.

The interesting thing, though, is that the government campaigned on doing things differently. It campaigned on being transparent and making sure that it protected the families in Alberta. It campaigned on being a completely different group of people. People bought into that change, and here we are discussing a bill that, within three years, has completely changed the way that we do things in this province, faster and at a worse pace than any other government before.

The government can stand there and say that they're coming in and trying to change things and fix things that other governments have, but they wear this one. This will be part of their legacy going forward. We're trying to help with the legislation, to make it better than it is, but this will be something that this government wears. You know, everybody has that. We're all going to have our history in here, for sure, but this one in particular, which actually hurts families, hurts families as much as not building a pipeline hurts Canadians. It hurts families the same way not that protecting the federation and our own prosperity in Canada hurts Canadians and Alberta families.

The worst part about it is that the government could have fixed it. There were so many opportunities along the way to just slow things down a little bit. You know, when we were talking about Bill 34 in 2017, we did referral amendments on those specifically to be able to go to committee and discuss, especially with the stakeholders, what that was going to look like.

I remember the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud talking about how it wasn't a big deal that Enmax was – he said that Enmax was hiding costs from Albertans and that suing Enmax was what that was about and that that's what helped to get two pipelines built at that time. I don't know if you remember that, but the answer for everything was “two pipelines.” It's interesting because Bill 34 was this unchecked loan, this ability to have a blank cheque that goes to the Balancing Pool to keep it functioning, when it didn't need any help before on that because the Balancing Pool was able to cover its losses with the rate riders, and it didn't compromise the fiscal responsibility of governance.

11:20

You know, removing checks and balances that are put in place to protect families, to protect Albertans is irrational. We're at a point right now in this bill where the Member for Calgary-Foothills is bringing forward really rational and thoughtful legislation to help make this bill better, and the government keeps voting it down. This will be your legacy, your legacy that actually hurts Alberta families, that costs them money that they don't have right now, that may cost them the difference between heating and eating, that could have been avoided.

Like, I mean, I've said so many times that there were things that absolutely needed to be fixed in the electricity market, lots of things, but this wasn't one of them, certainly not the retail piece of it. To shift that cost to the taxpayers wipes Albertans out. You wipe your hands of it. It's exhausting for the average Albertan to try and understand what is behind this other than an ideological push to bring things online that the government thinks Albertans need, but it's willing to sacrifice the dollars that come to them in order to prove their ideology.

It's interesting because objecting to a bill is one thing. I mean, sometimes I look at this bill and I think: we should just object to it outright. But there are things that we can do to improve it since this is what's going to happen. The government has the majority. They can pass these bills. They don't need our permission to do that.

But when you actively seek to take language out not only that is legal language but is language that gives Albertans hope and gives them that ability to feel their morale lift because the government is making legislation that will help them, especially at a time of need, that is a significantly different thing than a government that chooses to profess that a carbon tax and the ideology that comes along with the climate action plan are actually helping them, especially when it's costing them so much more and not just in one part of it. There's the carbon tax. There is now the pipeline, especially if the indemnity is brought forward, that \$2 billion, and then also, on top of that, the fact that the policies that have led us to these positions could have been dealt with so much earlier on.

You know, the government keeps saying that the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed could have built a pipeline nine years ago. If you think about it, this government has been in power for three years and within that three years has managed to destroy our electricity market and, on top of that, has created policies that have hurt the industry that they say that they profess to protect by building a pipeline. Isn't that interesting? If you look at a couple of different things, you have – I mean, a pipeline, for me anyway, is a part of our federation. It's something that unifies us across the provinces and across Canada, something that we all do together to make sure that Canadians are able to prosper from these amazing resources that are literally under our feet. It's pretty spectacular if you think about it, and I can't imagine anybody who would be against that idea.

But if you look at what that means for the morale of the people of this province, what it means when people do what they say and mean what they say and follow through with not only – I mean, it's one thing to say that you're getting pipelines built and all of that, but there's a whole other piece of it when actually your actions don't align with that process. The reason why I'm comparing it to this is that if you consider the fact that, you know, we're going to be paying for this pipeline through tax dollars federally and provincially but we haven't done anything, Madam Chair, to make sure that there are solutions to actually get to tidewater, which is what stopped Trans Mountain from being able to do that in the first place – Trans Mountain was ready to invest. They're ready to do the work. The terrain to build the Trans Mountain pipeline is not easy terrain. It's a really, really tricky and difficult place to be. There's 11 per cent disturbance. Most of it is built along the same pipeline.

However, the interesting thing is – I mean, the pipeline is one piece of it, but we're not fighting to make sure that we actually have somewhere now to take what is in that pipeline somewhere because of the bills that are coming from the federal government. This government keeps saying, “Well, you know, the hon. member the Leader of the Opposition would rather be in Ontario still and doesn't care about Albertans” and other language that they've used, really, really, actually very terrible rhetoric.

What's interesting about that is that in order to understand pipelines, you have to understand the federation. You have to understand what goes on in Canada. You have to be willing and reasonable to be able to talk about those kinds of things. You can't just talk insularly about Alberta when it comes to pipelines because it doesn't just traverse our province. It's about going across many provinces. It's about engaging with all of those provinces to make them understand their responsibility in the federation, to make sure that they understand how that works in order for Canadians to receive what comes from having that prosperity in a pipeline. It's so much bigger than just a piece of infrastructure. It's actually about who we are. It's part of an identity of being a responsible developer of resources, of being people who do it better than anywhere else in the world.

It's funny. People always ask me: well, what would you do differently? You know what I would do differently? I'd make sure that we produce more. You know why? Nobody else should be producing other than us. You want to talk about green technology? You want to talk about who does better on carbon leakage? Nobody should be producing except for Canada if we were to follow those rules. You know, when you talk about the Paris talks and COP 21 and all of this kind of stuff, we have ministers in this House that go and allow people in those countries to call us dirty oil and tar sands, yet we're then supposed to expect them to come in and invest. That's funny. It's actually not funny; it's disturbing.

Then on top of that, you have the fact that we've been fighting about this pipeline for so long. How is it that pipelines became politicized? How is it that our national infrastructure, that brings us together as a country, that provides prosperity for us, that uplifts every single Canadian, provides thousands of job directly and indirectly, everything from working on the pipeline to the hair stylist that's in that area where that construction is going on – how did that piece of Canada become politicized to a point where it's not even about the pipeline anymore? It's about the ideology around that and about aligning with activists and pandering to that as opposed to the rest of Canadians, that are suffering as a result of waiting.

You keep criticizing other governments for not getting to tidewater when in reality all of the pieces that led up to being able to get this pipeline built were done by previous governments in order to get to this point in the first place. Capacity comes online as capacity is needed. You don't build capacity until it's necessary. Now it's necessary.

We have the ability to be able to be globally competitive at a larger level. As the Leader of the Opposition has said on many, many levels, we have pipelines that have been cancelled in all directions, and now we're looking at an electricity bill that is, to our province, about our prosperity, about taking care of our families, about making sure that we are the ones that make sure that that transparency is there. This is what this government ran on. They ran on that language – I mean, all of us do, right? – transparency, accountability, taking care of Alberta families, making sure that that's first and foremost in their minds. How can they say that and then hit Albertans with an unknown amount of dollars for something that is unknown? We don't know how it's going to work, how it's going to come online, how we're going to maintain it.

You know, it's interesting. If you look at Ontario again – I'm sorry to bring this up again – they are in such a crisis when it comes to brownouts and all of these kinds of things. Do you want to know why? It's because they are unable to keep their electricity functioning, first of all, because of dollars but, second of all, because it's unstable.

11:30

There is a family. Sherry-Selena Hucul, a single mother of four, has been dependent on a food bank and works part-time. She both hears from food bank clients and deals with her own struggles with hydro bills. She's the one that says: hydro is a dirty word now; even if you get paid off within a very short amount of time, you end up owing more because the rates go up. Did you know that her monthly bill, a single mom with four kids, is \$309 even though she doesn't heat with hydro? She doesn't have a dishwasher, dries her clothes by wood stove, and doesn't leave the lights on. Eight years ago her bill was \$80.

Mr. Kenney: This is Ontario?

Mrs. Aheer: This is Ontario.

Mr. Kenney: Wow. Wow.

Mrs. Aheer: On top of that, now they've had to start these support programs in Ontario to be able to pay for folks that can't afford it.

Mr. Kenney: Energy poverty.

Mrs. Aheer: Complete energy poverty. And think about this from a long-term perspective, too, if we're comparing it to pipelines. Pipelines not only help Canadian prosperity, but think about the energy that gets to go to countries that are also in an energy poverty state and what we're able to do with them with our remarkable resources that we're able to get to the pipeline, places like India and China, who are desperate for our natural gas. Can you imagine what that would do for their burgeoning middle class, to be able to get access to our resources? It's pretty incredible.

I think that there are a lot of things where the government hasn't seen what the ripple effects will be of this level of legislation. Moreover, when the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills is very thoughtfully bringing forward legislation to try and help and to save this government from some really, really bad legislation, it's quite frustrating when none of that is being taken into consideration. I mean, really, if you don't want to pass this legislation, take his advice and make your own. Bring it in. We'll debate it, and we'll pass it. Even that, that's okay.

You know, if you don't want to give credit to the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills, he doesn't care about that. He cares about Albertans. He doesn't care about who. There's no shortage of good ideas. It doesn't matter which side of the House they come from, but perhaps the government will listen to an excellent, excellent group of amendments. Of course, they've already voted down a bunch of very good ones. At the very least, take into consideration that if you're not willing to pass something that we're bringing forward, that's fine. Make your own, bring it to the House, and we'll work on that.

Government keeps talking about bringing in investment. Well, how are you going to do that if you can't guarantee that that investment has a safe place to land? I mean, the government was always saying that the carbon tax and the social licence wasn't worth the paper it was written on. Do you remember when the government was saying that they wanted to make sure that that legislation was worth the paper that it was written on? That's because the expectation was that when they did what they said that they were going to do with their friends in Ontario, with Justin Trudeau in Ottawa, this would somehow buy us social licence – right? – with the pipeline. But we know that it wasn't worth the paper it was written on. Now investors in Alberta are going to know, because they're not willing to pass legislation to protect that, that their contracts are not worth the paper that they're written on.

I would completely suggest, out of tremendous humility for this process, as I realize that my language in here is used simply to debate, I have no power to pass legislation. The government has the power to do that. You're the majority. You carry the burden of passing this legislation, and you carry the burden of those decisions and the legacy that that leaves behind, which will truly be your legacy, but Albertans pay the consequences.

I would ask that at the very least you consider what it is that we're saying here. Consider this excellent amendment coming forward from the Member for Calgary-Foothills, and consider the ripple effects that your legislation is having on the very people that put you here in the first place.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

Hon. Members: Question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A5 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:35 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Fraser	Loewen
Anderson, W.	Gill	Nixon
Cooper	Hunter	Panda
Drysdale	Kenney	

Against the motion:

Bilous	Hinkley	McKitrick
Carson	Hoffman	McLean
Connolly	Horne	Phillips
Coolahan	Jansen	Piquette
Dach	Kazim	Rosendahl
Dang	Kleinstauber	Sabir
Feehan	Larivee	Shepherd
Fitzpatrick	Littlewood	Sucha
Goehring	Loyola	Woollard
Gray	McCuaig-Boyd	

Totals:	For – 11	Against – 29
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[Motion on amendment A5 lost]

The Chair: Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to Bill 13? Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Chair. We are back to Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future. I understand that the minister is just trying to do the right thing here, and the point is that the NDP broke the electricity system by fooling around with the early phase-out of coal. Madam Speaker, I'm just going to summarize, I mean, how we got here, and then I leave it to the members of this House to decide how they want to vote on this bill.

11:40

Now, the NDP have used a number of Whac-A-Mole policies in order to try to put humpy dumpty back together again. This is the last one, and the final Band-Aid, but the electricity system will never be the same.

Let's review some of this NDP's actions here, Madam Chair. The first one is the power purchase agreements. When the NDP raised the carbon tax on the coal-fired power plants, it made the power purchase agreements more unprofitable. It cost the taxpayers at least \$2 billion to buy back the PPAs, and the full cost is still not known. There are many, many costs that are not known. You'll hear that from me a few times tonight. The costs are not known. The coal phase-out agreement is another one. This cost taxpayers \$1.1 billion in 2016 and then \$31.9 million in 2017 and \$29.9 million in 2018, and it will continue to cost taxpayers tens of millions of dollars until 2029.

The next one is the capacity market, Madam Chair. Because the sun does not always shine and the wind does not always blow, electrical generation on standby needs to be built. The NDP is changing the energy-only electricity market to a capacity market with Bill 13 in order to stimulate investment. This means that electricity prices will rise, but we'll have less volatility. The cost to taxpayers and the ratepayers is unknown, but we know the power bills are going to go up.

The next one, Madam Chair, is renewables and wind and solar. The renewable electricity program action 1, which is REP 1, came in with three wind projects that average 3.7 cents per kilowatt hour for 600 megawatts.

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

When the electricity price drops below that average, the NDP government's carbon tax subsidizes the wind projects, and when the price is about 3.7 cents per kilowatt hour, the wind projects pay back the NDP government.

By comparison, the Independent Power Producers Society of Alberta indicates that the 2016 wholesale price of electricity averaged at 1.7 cents per kilowatt hour. REP 1 is not participating in the capacity market, which leads to the questions about existing merchant wind power. REP 2 and 3 are now being bid for additional renewable electricity. REP 2 is for 300 megawatts with the minimum 25 per cent indigenous equity ownership. REP 3 is for 400 megawatts. The total cost to the taxpayers, again, is unknown.

Next is solar, Mr. Chair. The government of Alberta is planning to go to tender in June 2018 to procure over half of its energy needs from solar power electricity. According to the Canadian Solar Industries Association, solar comes in at 6 cents per kilowatt hour. By comparison, the Independent Power Producers Society of Alberta indicates that the 2016 wholesale price of electricity averaged 1.7 cents per kilowatt hour. One more time: the total cost to taxpayers is unknown.

Subsidized electricity prices is the next one now, Mr. Chair. The consumers on the regulated rate option for electricity have their bills subsidized when electricity prices climb above 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour. The NDP government has budgeted \$74.3 million in the 2018 and '19 budget for the subsidies. But in April 2018 that decision cost the NDP government \$9 million, and the government has no idea how much this will cost taxpayers. Again, the total costs are unknown. We know that the total costs to the Alberta taxpayers for all of these changes to the electricity system are going to be north of \$3.2 billion at a minimum, but we don't have an exact number, again.

Myself and my colleague from the outstanding riding of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills have written to the Auditor General asking to have all of this audited because in this House we tried by all means, you know, using the committees, using this House, Public Accounts Committee. At every opportunity, through all of the avenues that are available for us, we have tried to get that exact number, how much it costs Albertans, because those are the questions we face at the doors in my riding and in every riding we represent. Because we didn't get any answers, as another, you know, tool at our disposal we approached the Auditor General and asked him to audit this whole file.

We in the official opposition did our job to try and make Bill 13 better, but again the NDP rejected our advice. Let's review the mistakes the NDP made in Bill 13. An electricity generator should not be receiving a capacity payment and then deny the provision of electricity, thus spiking electricity prices when the system operator demands electricity. In other words, if on a capacity contract a generator must offer electricity, every minute of every day the Electric System Operator asks generators to bid to supply electricity and the generators comply, and the lowest price electricity is bought. Now, if the generator is allowed to receive a capacity payment without being forced to bid the electricity, then the electricity price will rise. Soon it will spike because not enough load is being offered to the grid. This is how TransAlta . . . [interjections]

Mr. Chair, this is not a laughing matter. We are almost at midnight here, and we are talking about serious issues that are going

to cost Albertans, that are going to impact the livelihoods of many Albertans. Because this government chose to phase out coal-fired electric generation, thousands of people lost their jobs, and these NDP members are laughing. This is not a laughing matter.

Connolly: Yeah, Jessica.

Mr. Panda: Then my neighbour there from Calgary-Hawkwood is heckling me.

Back to this discussion on Bill 13, Mr. Chair. If the generator is allowed to receive a capacity payment without being forced to bid the electricity, the electricity price will rise, and soon it will spike because not enough load is being offered to the grid. This is how TransAlta, one of the main companies, got caught and got fined \$56 million by the Alberta Utilities Commission for market manipulation. TransAlta was denying the provision of electricity in order to drive prices up. It is fundamentally wrong to receive a capacity payment and then deny the market electricity. Denying electricity to the market drives up electricity prices. We want to keep the prices as low as possible for average Albertans.

To put it on record, Mr. Chair, I want to compliment TransAlta, actually. They came and gave me input to bring some of the amendments I brought from their own experience. They didn't want to make the same mistake again, they didn't want other bidders to make the same mistake, and this NDP government shamelessly rejected all of those amendments. TransAlta learned their lesson. That's why they didn't want future bidders to make that mistake. They don't want others to, you know, end up paying penalties. That's why they gave input to me to improve this legislation, so that's why I brought the amendments.

11:50

You know what happened? When the Alberta Electric System Operator asks for electricity, if you are on a capacity contract, you must offer the electricity for sale, and if you do not offer electricity for sale, you do not receive your capacity payment. That was the amendment, and the NDP rejected that. The NDP wanted to pay for capacity whether electricity is offered or not. That is wrong, simply wrong, and it will drive the prices up.

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

Next we wanted to make sure that the NDP had a minimum of 60 days to consult on the draft regulations. Such a timeline would put the draft regulation out now so the NDP can have the final regulations done for August. Setting up the capacity market is a serious and complex undertaking, and the minister only has one shot to get this right. The timelines for implementation are short and tight, and all the experts have said: take more time and get it right. We need all the stakeholders onboard, providing all of us the best advice so that this can be done correctly the first time. A minimum 60-day time period is a fair and reasonable time frame to make sure the regulations are correct. In the long run it would be better, much better. But by voting the amendment down, the NDP have signalled that the draft regulations are not ready. Power companies are going to have a mad scramble this summer in August, when the final regulations are released.

The next amendment was FEOC. Fair, efficient, and open competition was not applied evenly to the capacity market in the legislation. The Member for Edmonton-South West, with his vast computer programming skills, could not see the syntax error in the computer record of this legislation, and there were a couple of places in the bill where fair, efficient, and open competition has not been accorded to the capacity market or the standard FEOC language was not used.

The amendment cleans up the bill and ensures consistency. It would have provided certainty to electricity stakeholders, who do not want legal maneuvering to allow the Alberta Electric System Operator to skip out on commitments. Instead, the NDP shows sloppy drafting and wiggle room. This does not bode well to instill confidence in the suppliers.

So we come to the fourth suggestion of the Official Opposition. Generators who win a capacity contract under the provisional rules do not want the provisional rules changing on them. How can you award a contract and then change the terms and conditions, FEOC or not? If the terms and conditions of the provisional market rules change after the capacity contract is signed, the old rules must apply to the capacity contract until the contract runs out. This means the first capacity contracts will have to be short in order to align with the finalized rules, which will come at around the end of 2021. The minister, the system operator, the Alberta Utilities Commission can't go changing the rules midstream and expect people to bid and invest in capacity.

Madam Speaker, the NDP rejected these suggestions for improvement. I fear we have a flawed piece of legislation that will give rise to a broken capacity market. Albertans suffer because of this. Electricity prices will rise higher than they need to rise, and as such the minister touts an electricity price subsidy to consumers. At the end of the day those consumers will pay for it with higher taxes because the ratepayers and taxpayers are one and the same, Madam Chair.

Now, we talked about the consequences to Albertans. The electricity prices are going to go up, and the investor confidence won't be stable because they want some certainty. That means that we're going to go on the same path that Ontario went, and you know what's going on in Ontario. We'll see on Thursday what happens because the Premier of Ontario already conceded the election.

You know, earlier we were thinking that only the day of the election matters, but now it seems that every day matters. That means that this NDP government in Alberta is on the same path, and they're likely to concede their defeat in the next election already. That's how I take it because if they're serious about listening to Albertans and making their legislation better and making electricity prices affordable and reliable, then they would have taken a serious view of these amendments and all the discussions in this House and at least made their bill better. Since they chose not to, I am assuming that they're ready to switch their seats back to this side of the aisle. I look forward to that, Madam Chair.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to thank all members engaged in debate at this late hour, in particular the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills, the Official Opposition Energy critic, for his tremendous research and detailed work on this critically important issue.

Madam Chair, this bill and the policy area of power production which it addresses is essential to Alberta's economic standing and its future. I'd like to pull the camera back a bit to discuss that strategic importance because it's easy on such a complex issue as power policy sometimes to get lost in the details and the myopia of it. I think we need to understand that when we talk about prosperity and job creation, so much of this is dependent on our ability to attract and retain investment capital, that increases productivity and wealth in Alberta. That doesn't happen by politicians giving speeches or good intentions or, you know, by accident. It only

happens through having the right overall macroeconomic policy setting, which, I would submit, this province did have for many decades. It's not perfect, but the record speaks for itself.

We had, generally speaking, the highest rates of growth in the country, the highest labour force participation rate, the highest level of employment, the lowest unemployment in the country, and, most happily, the highest labour force participation rate amongst underrepresented groups in the labour force such as younger people, aboriginal Albertans, immigrants, persons with disabilities, and other groups that are facing very high levels of unemployment in other parts of the country. They did quite well over recent decades here in Alberta, a province that also had the highest levels of disposable income, the highest incomes by far, which according to some recent economic research was really the bulwark of the middle class in Canada, particularly for many people with more modest levels of education or skills who were able to find gainful and secure employment in this province. That's a record about which we should be broadly happy, Madam Chair.

It collectively is something that we used to call the Alberta advantage. That advantage was made up of a number of key policies, one of which was a stable fiscal environment. Since 1995 until recent years having had a balanced budget and since 2004 having had zero net public debt, it's thanks partly to that, allowing us to have the lowest tax rates in Canada and at times amongst the lowest tax rates in North America, which incentivized the kind of activity which creates wealth: working, saving, and investment.

12:00

But the Alberta advantage was also, Madam Chair, in part attributable to Alberta having low and affordable power prices because power is, obviously, something that everybody depends on in their normal lives in this modern world and therefore constitutes an important part of the average household budget, so from a consumer point of view it's important. But it's hugely important as well for heavy industry. Very often power costs are the number one or two input cost for major industrial employers. I think, for example, of the pulp mill in Whitecourt. Whitecourt paper is what it's called. They are, I think, the largest industrial consumer of electricity in the province of Alberta. It's an enormous amount of power that they buy. There you have several hundred people in and around the community of Whitecourt whose livelihoods depend on the competitiveness of that plant in what is a very competitive industry around the world. When power prices go up appreciably, that jeopardizes the ability of a company like Whitecourt paper to produce, to compete, and to protect those jobs.

This applies, of course – we often talk about the importance of diversification, Madam Chair. I think that's one thing that all parties in this Chamber have in common as a goal, which is continued diversification of the Alberta economy. Practically what does that mean? Well, it means expanding outside of oil and gas. Happily, we have seen that happen. In fact, oil and gas has declined by about a third as a relative share of the Alberta economy in the last 30 years even while it has grown in absolute terms quite significantly. This effectively means that other sectors have grown more quickly, other sectors like services and construction but also manufacturing. Manufacturing has as typically one of its top two or three input costs power, so this is not just some sort of marginal technical issue that maybe some people find boring. It's essential for our economic future. It's essential for us to restore an Alberta advantage to have affordable power prices.

Madam Chair, let's face it. When we talk about the Alberta advantage, there are also certain Alberta disadvantages, one of which is our relative remoteness from major markets. Here we are as a landlocked province, far from any other major population

centres. We're not on the eastern seaboard. We're not on the Pacific coast. We have a high cost of production generally as a big, cold, northern climate. You can't do construction in most places year-round. Labour costs are higher. Now, under this government regulatory and tax costs are higher, so we need certain competitive advantages if we are to attract manufacturers in other industries here to help us to further diversify Alberta's economy. For that, we must have affordable power prices.

We must avoid the disastrous model of the Ontario Liberal government, which, as my colleagues have pointed out, is on the brink of an electoral disaster, according to their own leader, Premier Wynne, because they pursued, Madam Chair, not a practical power policy based on the interests of consumers or of industry and employers but, rather, an ideological approach to power policy, which rushed to shut down coal generation as part of the power grid in Ontario. They refused to invest in renewal of their nuclear power generation capability. They went headstrong into long-term contracts for – some people call them renewable; I call them intermittent and unreliable – forms of power production such as wind and solar, in fact, assigning, in some cases, contracts that were for production as high as 40 cents a kilowatt hour.

Now, Madam Chair, the effect of this has been a hollowing out of Ontario's industrial capabilities as those power prices have gone up. They have this bizarre situation – I offer this as a cautionary tale relevant to this bill – where in order to privilege intermittent forms of power production, they require that consumers buy expensive so-called renewable power sources first and very inexpensive hydro electricity power last. Effectively what this means is that Ontario factories trying to operate all night, you know, 24/7, are paying up to 40 cents a kilowatt hour, but there's excess capacity on the grid being generated by Ontario's enormous hydroelectricity capacity, excess power which is dumped on U.S. markets at less than 5 cents a kilowatt hour. Ontario is literally subsidizing their industrial competitors south of the border, so is it any wonder that jobs and business have gone south, too? I mean, you can move your business south of the border and get lower taxes, lower labour costs, less regulatory burden, and now substantially lower power prices.

I offer this cautionary tale to say that we must not replicate any dimension of this failed policy, which the Member for Chestermere- . . .

An Hon. Member: Rocky View.

Mr. Kenney: . . . Rocky View – I'm still learning the names of the constituencies, Madam Chair – has so eloquently articulated as energy poverty.

Some members may recall – I think it was in the spring, about March 2017 – when the Rt. Hon. the Prime Minister was doing a town hall meeting in Peterborough, Ontario. A lady came up to the microphone and broke down in tears in an emotionally wrought statement. You could tell that she wasn't somebody used to speaking in public or in front of TV cameras, but she suddenly found the courage to stand up to the Prime Minister of Canada in front of national television to tell her story about how she was having to choose between buying groceries and heating her home. She was talking about how she was, you know, cutting her food budget because her power budget had become higher than her mortgage payments.

That's the real world. I find this perverse, that this is imposed by parties that pretend that they have a monopoly on compassion. Compassion: where's the compassion for that woman and the hundreds of thousands of other Ontarians of modest incomes who have been the victims of the kinds of policies that are implicit in this bill? That is my concern fundamentally, Madam Chair. It

undermines our economic competitiveness, one of the key planks of the Alberta advantage, which was affordable power prices, but it also drives us towards greater energy poverty for people who are at the margins, people who can't afford to pay an extra \$20 or \$50 a month on their power bills. They already are paying more to heat their homes with the carbon tax, that the NDP increased by 50 per cent on January 1 and plans to increase by a further 67 per cent in order to please their close ally Justin Trudeau, so people are already being forced into increasingly a form of energy poverty in many cases to heat their homes. Now this will be the case increasingly on their electricity bills as a result of the higher costs implicit in this bill.

More than that, Madam Chair, is my concern about investor confidence. I was just down in Toronto a couple of weeks ago. I spent a day meeting with national business leaders on Bay Street in the financial, real estate, and other industries, and they all told me – I heard the same thing over and over again – that as far as they're concerned, Alberta is not a place in which to invest right now. To quote one very senior Canadian business leader who is responsible for a portfolio that invests \$45 billion globally, this gentleman, who loves Alberta, told me that there is a red X on Alberta in terms of investment right now.

12:10

Now, I understand that if you come from a social democratic party, maybe that sounds like: oh, that's just the evil fat-cat capitalists. Maybe it's easy to objectify, dismiss, ignore those kinds of comments that we're hearing. For example, on April 1, 2018, the chief executive officer of the Royal Bank of Canada, Dave McKay, told the Canadian Press that a significant investment exodus to the United States is already under way, especially in the energy and clean technology sectors. Especially in the energy and clean technology sectors: isn't that ironic? All of these subsidies, all of this talk, all of this rigging the system to privilege clean technology, and guess where it's going? To a friendlier investment environment according to the CEO of the largest financial institution in Canada. Madam Chair, this is not an opposition MLA speaking. This is a guy responsible for hundreds of billions of dollars of assets here. It reminds me as well to further quote Mr. McKay, quote, in real time we are seeing capital flow out of the country, but if we don't keep the capital here, we can't keep the people here, and these changes are important to bring human capital and financial capital together in one place, end quote.

I would go on to this question of investor confidence with direct relevance to this bill. To quote Nancy Southern, the chair and CEO of ATCO, a great Alberta company built from scratch in this province, started in the 1950s. She recently described as, quote, heartbreaking, the policies of this government and the federal government in driving away capital and investment. She said, quote, how heartbreaking it is to see our wonderful resource-laden province so constrained by regulatory policy and politics.

I would further quote Siegfried Kiefer, president and chief strategy officer of ATCO. He described how governments in Canada, quote, are busy bringing in multiple and compounding policies and regulations that are layering considerable costs on businesses and individuals alike, undermining the confidence of investors, eroding the attractiveness of our industries, and weakening the confidence of the public. It goes without saying that in our increasingly globalized economy, capital flows will continue to seek certainty. Close quote.

Does this bill offer that certainty, Madam Chair? The answer is manifestly not. What the bill does is create even greater uncertainty for power producers that have already been shaken by this government. I will in a moment enumerate the reasons why.

First, Madam Chair, I'd like to enter into *Hansard* a quote, a citation at length from a speech recently delivered by James Pasioka, a partner at McCarthy Tétrault, a major national law firm in Calgary. Mr. Pasioka is one of Alberta's leading experts on the energy industry and power production and has been highly recognized and, in fact, has taught courses at the University of Calgary. I just read this speech that he recently delivered to the C.D. Howe Institute. I think all members would benefit to hear this, I think, prescient summary of the NDP government's approach to power as summarized in Bill 13.

Mr. Pasioka said, quote, let me give you one very significant example in Alberta of deleterious government actions of the Alberta NDP, that Nancy Southern is talking about, and that is as relates to the backbone of Alberta's infrastructure, the province's electricity generation sector. The Alberta NDP, shortly after it took office in 2015, lurched into a series of ad hoc political moves to ultimately remap the entire electricity generation sector in Alberta with the NDP's determination to eliminate all coal-fired electricity generation in Alberta from and after 2030. By the way, none of this was in the NDP's election platform. To demonstrate the very significant impact of this, it is important to remember that Alberta gets 60 to 65 per cent of its baseline power generation from coal. Point one, it all started after the province boosted its carbon tax on heavy industrial emitters such as coal-fired generating plants.

The Alberta government tripped on an opt-out clause contained in existing power contracts. This allowed holders of the unprofitable electricity deals known as power purchase agreements, PPAs, to return them to the government agency called the Balancing Pool. That government agency backstops all PPAs and was soon holding the bag on losses of up to \$70 million a month as electricity prices fell to decade lows. The NDP government lent the Balancing Pool hundreds of millions of dollars, money that must be repaid by consumers later through a surcharge on their monthly power bills, with this loan being made so that the government's actions would not be noticed, or at least not felt, by taxpayers or consumers in the short term.

This situation, however, was hugely exacerbated by the Alberta NDP government seeking to cover up its mistake in tripping on the opt-out clause. Here is what happened. Bizarrely, in what the *Financial Post* called a Monty Python like script, the Alberta NDP sued one of its own government departments, effectively the Alberta government, dating back to the year 2000, claiming foul on the so-called Enron clause, that the opt-out clause had somehow been slipped into the PPAs by Enron at the last minute, an utterly nonsensical lawsuit. But by holding on to this frivolous lawsuit for two years, the Balancing Pool and, ultimately, the taxpayers of Alberta had to cover the losses on the PPAs while the PPAs were extant for those two years. Losses under the PPAs would of course terminate when the PPAs were terminated.

The last of the lawsuits dealing with the termination of the PPAs was settled in March of this year with Enmax, but the significant costs on the return of the PPAs had been manifestly made worse because the NDP government hung onto the PPAs for those years instead of permitting the process under the PPAs to take its natural course.

So what's the cost here? Well, it's still to be tabulated. [Mr. Kenney's speaking time expired]

I'd be happy to continue in just a moment, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. Cooper: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I look forward to continuing to hear the remarks of the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Kenney: I thank the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. So what's the cost here? Well, it's still to be tabulated. After PPA holders gave the underwater agreements back to the Balancing Pool two years ago, the Balancing Pool quickly burned through more than \$700 million from its investment portfolio to cover the losses in the PPAs due to the government's actions. After burning through its \$700 million portfolio, the Balancing Pool has borrowed a further \$566 million from the province as at year-end 2017, kicking the can down the road so that electricity consumers don't see the real cost at present of this disaster. Do you see a pattern here?

In addition, in 2018 all Alberta electricity consumers will pay a surcharge, instigated by the Balancing Pool in order to help pay for these losses, of a further \$190 million. More Balancing Pool charges like this in the years to come are reasonably foreseeable on this matter.

Two, when coal-fired baseload generation is shuttered before scheduled by government policies, electricity prices will go up. To help mask this, the NDP government is borrowing from the playbook of the disastrous Ontario experience and has instituted a residential price cap, a subsidy paid for by all taxpayers, at an estimated cost of \$74 million for this fiscal year, to cover the cost of limiting electricity rates for residential consumers to 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour. The price ceiling remains in place till May 2021, meaning that the price tag could still grow.

Three, what happens when a very significant change in government policy and framework is made after the private sector has made its investment decisions and spent capital relying on the existing ground rules? And this is the point I was making about investor confidence, Madam Chair. Will you have stranded assets?

12:20

In our system compensation would ordinarily be due to the parties that spent the capital. Twelve of Alberta's 18 baseload coal plants were scheduled to close down one way or another by 2030. The other six plants are merchant plants designed and built to be in operation as late as 2061. Thus, the NDP government under its climate leadership plan had to compensate the existing plant owners, who were to operate their six plants well past 2030, with taxpayers' money for the owners' stranded capital costs. The province will pay three of the four affected parties – TransAlta Corp., ATCO Ltd., and Capital Power Corp. – a total of \$97 million annually, or \$100 million to round up, over 14 years beginning last year, in 2017, for a total cost of, get this, \$1.36 billion. Whoops. That's a lot of hospitals. In fact, I think that is more than the entire budget of the Calgary South Health Campus.

Settlement with the last of these four affected plant owners, Enmax, took place just in March of this year, and the cost of that compensation settlement with Enmax will push the overall total significantly upwards from that initial \$1.36 billion. So that's a minimum, not a maximum. Imagine how many hospitals you could build in Peace River, Madam Chair, or in La Crête or in any part of northwestern Alberta for a billion and a half dollars.

The craziness of it all is that the six coal-fired electricity generation plants in Alberta to be closed by 2030 were among the most advanced coal-fired facilities in the world, utilizing supercritical boiler technology, which operates at higher steam temperatures and pressures to drive a high-efficiency steam turbine. CO₂ emissions per megawatt are lower than those from conventional coal-fired power plants in the rest of the world by 18 to 20 per cent. This is important stuff. Canada generates approximately 1.6 to 1.8 per cent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions, so those six modern coal-fired plants were an infinitesimal contributor to Canada's world-wide total. But over the next 10 years some 1,600 new coal-fired plants are being built

world-wide, 700 of those in China alone. That is a rate of two to three a week.

I would add, parenthetically, Madam Chair, that even in the putatively greenest economies on Earth, in Germany and Japan, guess what they're building more capacity for? Coal. Thus, we're closing down Alberta's six cleanest coal-powered plants early at a tremendous cost to Alberta taxpayers. Somewhere in the world three weeks from now there will be another six plants to replace those and growing at that rate every three weeks for the next 10 years. This doesn't make any sense.

Four, the Alberta NDP government, in its complete remake of Alberta's electricity generation sector under its climate leadership plan, has to incentivize or rebuild all the province's baseload power generation, replacing coal with other alternatives. Allow me to pause to explain baseload power, Madam Chair. When you bring increased capacity onto the grid from intermittent sources like wind and solar, you need to match every kilowatt hour of that capacity with baseload. That means that, effectively, in terms of the capital expenditure you have to pay twice for the same power.

Mrs. Aheer: Double billing.

Mr. Kenney: Yeah.

As usual under the climate leadership plan, there is a cost with these alternatives. The AESO, the government agency that oversees the province's power grid, estimates that it will cost \$25 billion to replace coal plants, meet the government's targets for nonrenewable power generation, and meet future customer demand. A U.S.-based electricity expert hired by the Alberta government as a consultant on the coal file pegs the cost at between \$20 billion to \$30 billion. That's billion with a "b," Madam Chair. All of this massive remapping occurs amid concerns that the province has caused much more uncertainty about the future of the power market at a time it's trying to attract investment.

A Calgary city councillor said recently – I think this is Diane Colley-Urquhart – quote: the implementation of this program has sparked legitimate concerns regarding the stability and sustainability of Alberta's current power market design, infrastructure, and transmission. Unquote.

Now, enough said about what not to do if you want to attract private-sector capital for infrastructure or project spending. I want to contrast what I have said about the Alberta NDP government and the electricity generation sector in Alberta and pivot 180 degrees, and this is very interesting. This one is really a good-news story – and don't we need some good news? – from a local Alberta government jurisdiction, the city of Medicine Hat. Unfortunately, the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat is in his constituency tonight, but we'll make sure that he . . .

The Chair: Hon. leader, we do not refer to the presence or absence of members, please. Thank you.

Mr. Kenney: Oh. That's right. I shouldn't have. Quite right, Madam Chair. Duly reproved. I did that inadvertently, and I apologize to the member.

Here's a great story about Medicine Hat. It's a great story on how governments can and should work to encourage, foster, and partner with private capital to create project and infrastructure spending and thereby create sustainable jobs and bolster the economy for many years in the future.

The city of Medicine Hat has some unique competitive advantages. Number one, it's the sunniest city in Canada, with over 2,500 hours of sunshine per year. That must explain why the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat has such a sunny disposition. It ranks in the top 50 municipalities in Canada in terms of the ability

to generate solar energy. It has abundant gas reserves in a large, shallow gas reservoir located directly below the city. It reminds me of the heavy oil reservoir under the city of Los Angeles. Using this as a base, the city developed and fostered a natural gas and petroleum resources department. Smart. The city's oil and gas assets were developed through existing ownership of gas properties and by several acquisitions of various private companies' oil and gas interests.

The city partially used its oil and gas revenues to eliminate homelessness in 2014. Bravo. I think they followed the housing first approach, the first and only city in Canada to do so. But then the downturn in commodity prices came. The city was hit hard by a drop in oil and gas prices, losing a thousand jobs in under three months in 2015. In the face of this adversity, the city decided that it would have to increase its efforts to work with business and diversify its economy, coming back to my earlier point about using smart power policy as a lever for diversification.

The city responded to this much like a business would. They set out to increase their marketing efforts to promote their competitive advantages and formed an internal Development Investment Readiness Team to bargain with private industry and convert tangible investments to profits. The combination of a business-friendly government, municipally owned utilities, abundant gas reserves, and sunny skies have led to massive investment in the city, facilitated by this initiative.

For example, Hut 8 Mining Corporation – and I met with the CEO of Hut 8 Mining in Toronto 10 days ago – doing fascinating work in partnership with the Bitfury group, arguably the world's leading full-service block chain technology company, announced plans to construct a flagship cryptocurrency mining facility in Medicine Hat. This is pretty cool stuff, Madam Chair. Basically, to break it down, with the whole block chain economy, these block chain transactions require enormous amounts of power, and Medicine Hat has cheap power. They've gone the market route in harnessing natural gas, for example, to sell that to companies involved in block chain and in cryptocurrency. Negotiating a 10-year electricity supply agreement and a lease of over 11 acres of land, the city has landed a \$100 million facility that will create 100 construction jobs and over 40 additional jobs at the facility.

He goes on to describe helium liquefaction. The city continues to explore alternatives with the Whale Group, which is a U.S. helium producer, to construct the first Canadian helium liquefaction plant in the Medicine Hat area. That's a great success story in its entirety.

In closing, I have thus left you with two profoundly contrasting stories, he says, of government actions as it relates to private capital spending on projects or infrastructure, with two dramatically different results and consequences.

12:30

I'd like again to acknowledge and thank the C.D. Howe Institute and James Pasioka for that very informative paper about what we're facing in Bill 13 and the legislation which preceded it.

Madam Chair, it's important for me to underscore what my colleague the Official Opposition Energy critic has discussed in this bill, a number of provisions such as, for example, economic withholding, which is of great concern. Essentially, this means that a company should not be receiving a capacity payment and then be denying the provision of electricity when the AESO wants electricity in order to spike electricity prices. This is a very concerning element of the bill.

We're also concerned that real powers for the capacity market will be enacted through regulations by the minister without reference to this Legislature. My colleague has already outlined our concerns with respect to rules for a fair, efficient, open, and

competitive market and has brought forward amendments, that unfortunately have been rejected, in this respect. I can't understand why the government would be opposed to fairness, efficiency, openness, and competitiveness as governing elements of the capacity market proposed in this bill.

Madam Chair, in closing, I would ask the government to seriously reflect on where they are taking us, not only to higher power prices for ordinary consumers but to less competitiveness and less ability to attract capital investment that would allow us to diversify in industries not related to oil and gas and, finally, the overall impact on investor confidence about changing the rules midstream. That's the basic concern that we hear from the industry that invests billions of dollars in power production in Alberta, that Bill 13 creates even more uncertainty just when we need that certainty the most.

For those reasons, it is my intention to vote against the bill.

The Chair: Any other questions or comments with respect to the bill?

Some Hon. Members: Question.

[The voice vote indicated that the remaining clauses of Bill 13 were agreed to]

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

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For:

Bilous	Hinkley	McKittrick
Carson	Hoffman	McLean
Connolly	Horne	Phillips
Coolahan	Jansen	Piquette
Dach	Kazim	Rosendahl
Dang	Kleinstauber	Sabir
Feehan	Larivee	Shepherd
Fitzpatrick	Littlewood	Sucha
Goehring	Loyola	Woollard
Gray	McCuaig-Boyd	

Against:

Aheer	Gill	Loewen
Anderson, W.	Hunter	Nixon
Cooper	Kenney	Panda
Drysdale		

Totals: For – 29 Against – 10

[The remaining clauses of Bill 13 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

[The voice vote indicated that the request to report Bill 13 carried]

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

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For:		
Bilous	Hinkley	McKitrick
Carson	Hoffman	McLean
Connolly	Horne	Phillips
Coolahan	Jansen	Piquette
Dach	Kazim	Rosendahl
Dang	Kleinstauber	Sabir
Feehan	Larivee	Shepherd
Fitzpatrick	Littlewood	Sucha
Goehring	Loyola	Woollard
Gray	McCuaig-Boyd	

Against:		
Aheer	Gill	Loewen
Anderson, W.	Hunter	Nixon
Cooper	Kenney	Panda
Drysdale		

Totals:	For – 29	Against – 10
---------	----------	--------------

[Request to report Bill 13 carried]

The Chair: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Chair. At this time I'd like to move that the committee rise and report.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion that the committee rise and report carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 12:42 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Carson	Hoffman	McKitrick
Connolly	Horne	McLean
Coolahan	Jansen	Phillips
Dach	Kazim	Piquette
Dang	Kleinstauber	Rosendahl
Feehan	Larivee	Sabir
Fitzpatrick	Littlewood	Shepherd
Goehring	Loyola	Sucha
Gray	McCuaig-Boyd	Woollard
Hinkley		

Against the motion:

Aheer	Gill	Loewen
Anderson, W.	Hunter	Nixon
Cooper	Kenney	Panda
Drysdale		

Totals:	For – 28	Against – 10
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[Motion that the committee rise and report carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

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

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

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report? Say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Any opposed, say no. That motion is carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Speaker. At this time I would like to move that we adjourn until 10 o'clock tomorrow morning.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion to adjourn carried]

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

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Carson	Hoffman	McKitrick
Connolly	Horne	McLean
Coolahan	Jansen	Phillips
Dach	Kazim	Piquette
Dang	Kleinstauber	Rosendahl
Feehan	Larivee	Sabir
Fitzpatrick	Littlewood	Shepherd
Goehring	Loyola	Sucha
Gray	McCuaig-Boyd	Woollard
Hinkley		

Against the motion:

Aheer	Gill	Loewen
Anderson, W.	Hunter	Nixon
Cooper	Kenney	Panda
Drysdale		

Totals:	For – 28	Against – 10
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[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 1:16 a.m. on Tuesday]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday morning, June 5, 2018

Day 38

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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

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Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (UCP)
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Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (NDP)
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Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)
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Vacant, Fort McMurray-Conklin
Vacant, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake

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New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 25 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent Conservative: 1 Vacant: 2

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Kleinsteinuber	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

10 a.m.

Tuesday, June 5, 2018

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Prayers

The Acting Speaker: Good morning.

Let us all pray or reflect, each in our own way. As today is the second day of Seniors' Week in Alberta, I would like us to take time to reflect on the contributions of our elders. They make meaningful contributions to our communities each and every day, working to make a better Alberta through the incredible support they provide to their families and to our province as a whole. Amen.

Please be seated.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

Bill 18 Statutes Amendment Act, 2018

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. On behalf of the Government House Leader I move third reading of Bill 18, Statutes Amendment Act, 2018.

As has been discussed at second reading and at committee, this bill makes a number of minor changes to various statutes. I encourage all members to support it.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 18? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Yeah, it's my pleasure to stand today and talk regarding Bill 18, Statutes Amendment Act, 2018. Of course, it's intended as a miscellaneous statutes amendment act. It's to bring about minor word changes to a number of different statutes. I mean, it covers a lot of different things in this bill. It covers A Better Deal for Consumers and Businesses Act, the Alberta Corporate Tax Act, the Alberta Human Rights Act, An Act to Strengthen Municipal Government, the Auditor General Act – I'm just trying to think which other ones are here – the Conflicts of Interest Act, the Consumer Protection Act, the Election Act, the Employment Standards Code, the Electronic Transactions Act, and the Financial Administration Act.

There are a lot of different things that are covered in this bill: the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act – let's see here – occupational health and safety; public interest disclosure, which is the whistle-blower protection act; the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act; the Public Service Act; the Public Service Employee Relations Act; the Vital Statistics Act. There are several different things that are covered in this. Of course, it's meant to just be some minor changes to wording and that sort of thing.

I think what's caught a lot of people's attention is the Financial Administration Act. It says here:

Amends RSA 2000 cF-12

11(1) The Financial Administration Act is amended by this section.

(2) Section 1(1) is amended

(a) in clause (f) by adding the following after subclause (vii):

(vii.1) the Office of the Election Commissioner,

(b) in clause (u) by adding the following after subclause (vii):

(vii.1) the Election Commissioner.

Madam Speaker, what this does is that it brings in the public disclosure of the Election Commissioner. Of course, the Election Commissioner is a new position that this government brought forward. They brought it forward, I think, trying to tell everybody that this was something new and great, that all of a sudden we would have some accountability and somebody to look after the rules and regulations taking place in elections and to do some investigations and stuff like that.

But, Madam Speaker, this is something that's been going on for quite a while. We have a chief electoral office and a Chief Electoral Officer, whose job – I'll just read here from one of the documents in this regard: Elections Alberta is a nonpartisan, nongovernment agency that facilitates provincial elections, enumerations, plebiscites; we ensure that the election events are open to all those eligible, that all processes are transparent to maintain integrity and public confidence, that events are as accessible as possible, and that the laws are communicated and enforced. That phrase right there, Madam Speaker, shows that the job of this Election Commissioner has been going on previously. There have obviously been things that have been brought forward to the Chief Electoral Officer in Alberta, and the Chief Electoral Officer and the staff there at the chief electoral office have dealt with these issues. They've brought about, you know, different things, bringing things to the public as far as things that they felt were wrong. That's been their job.

The office of the Chief Electoral Officer, at least up to the date when this was printed, had 16 permanent staff supports for the Chief Electoral Officer. The Chief Electoral Officer was appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council on the recommendation of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. Similar to other independent officers of the Legislature, Elections Alberta does not report to a minister but, rather, to the Legislative Assembly through an all-party standing committee.

Madam Speaker, if we look at the Election Commissioner – of course, they put out some ads. They put them out around Christmastime, which, of course, maybe isn't the best time to be putting out ads to get people to apply. It was kind of an expensive process they went through. I think they ended up having to extend it because of the process that they initiated to start with. I just want to read here, from Alberta's Election Commissioner, the ad to get people to apply for this job.

Alberta's Election Commissioner will be a nonpartisan officer of the Legislature appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council on the recommendation of the Legislative Assembly.

Exactly like the Chief Electoral Officer.

As Alberta's first Election Commissioner, you will be responsible for ensuring compliance with, and enforcement of, certain obligations of entities regulated by the Election Act and Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act.

Madam Speaker, I just read here from the roles of the Chief Electoral Officer, and it sounds very much like the same thing. To make sure that laws are communicated and enforced is the responsibility of the Chief Electoral Officer. So there's obviously a lot of overlap here. Of course, like I say, this government came in and thought this was some great new thing that they were doing, but obviously, like I said, things have been going along just fine previous to this.

In this capacity, the Election Commissioner will be responsible for fully investigating complaints, levying administrative

penalties, issuing letters of reprimand, entering into compliance agreements, and recommending prosecutions.

Now, Madam Speaker, I think that when we read through the roles of the office of the Chief Electoral Officer and their duties, it deals with all these exact same things.

It says that

this position requires you to investigate potential wrongdoings by political entities including candidates, political parties and third parties.

Obviously, everybody that's involved with elections is subject to the Election Commissioner's responsibilities.

It says:

Drawing upon your strategic leadership skills and executive management experience you will be responsible for establishing, overseeing and building a strong team of professionals for a new independent office of the Legislature.

Obviously, Madam Speaker, this isn't just: hire one person, and we'll help take care of some of these issues that the Chief Electoral Officer was already doing. We're going to create a whole new, strong team of professionals for a new independent office.

Obviously, we had these discussions. In this Bill 18 it talks about bringing the Election Commissioner into the sunshine list so we know how much the Election Commissioner is getting paid. That's the right of Albertans, to know this, because this is in legislation for others that are making this kind of salary. What's interesting is that, again, the full cost of this isn't just how much this officer, the commissioner, is going to get paid; it's the cost of how many people in this strong team of professionals that this person is going to be responsible for. We don't know how many more people will be hired with this job and if there are any kind of restrictions or any kind of guidelines that this person has on how many people they can hire and what kind of work they'll be doing.

So, you know, bringing this into this Bill 18: I think it's great, obviously. In fact, we made an amendment to the original motion, that was to hire this Election Commissioner, to bring this person's salary into the sunshine list immediately. Of course, the government voted that amendment down. They don't want this salary to see the sunshine list until after the next election, and I think that's unfortunate because we have a person here whose responsibility, the government has said, is to take the dark money out of politics.

10:10

Of course, anybody that has the job of taking the dark money out of politics: I think their money should hit the sunshine list. I think it only makes sense. In fact, I guess it's somewhat contradictory to think that the person that's responsible to take the dark money out of politics is – their wages and their staff, whomever they're going to hire, the total cost of this we won't know until after the next election. I think that's something that needs to be looked at.

Obviously, we tried to make this happen. But the government for some reason doesn't want this person's salary to hit the sunshine list until after the next election though at least they did admit that they made a mistake in not actually having legislation to get them on the sunshine list even after the next election. Of course, we could have taken care of that right off the bat with the amendment to the original motion, which is what we, you know, wanted to do at that time.

When I look at the roles of the chief electoral office, their duties are to look at the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act, and that's carried out by the Electoral Boundaries Commission. The chief electoral office actually oversees that portion, too. They also oversee the Senatorial Selection Act, which, of course, this government has let die, I think.

We even had a discussion on this yesterday, about Senators and how Alberta has been selecting their own Senators to put their

names forward to the federal government for the federal government to select. I'm just going to read that section here.

The Senatorial Selection Act was last used in conjunction with the 2012 provincial election to select Senate nominees. Names of elected nominees were submitted to the Queen's Privy Council for Canada as persons who may be summoned to the Senate of Canada for the purpose of filling vacancies relating to Alberta. Senate Nominee elections may be run in conjunction with a general election under the Election Act, in conjunction with municipal elections, or as stand-alone events. The last Senate Nominee Election saw a record of 13 candidates run for three vacancies.

Madam Speaker, this is something that we had in Alberta that I think was a great part of democracy. Instead of somebody in the federal government – the Prime Minister, whatever – just picking whomever they wanted to be in the Senate to represent us in Alberta, we actually had the opportunity to choose whose names we would put forward to the federal government to choose to be in the Senate. I think that was a great part of democracy here in Alberta. Of course, under this government's watch they've let that kind of die and seem to be unwilling to entertain that idea again. Like I say, it was something that was special to Alberta as far as having this kind of democracy that others didn't have.

I can't see any problem with the people of Alberta having a say in who gets to represent them in Ottawa. I mean, we elect our MPs here, and that's how we choose who goes to the House of Commons to represent us. Why would we not want to continue? Like I say, this is something that we've been doing. Why would we not continue doing something where Albertans have an opportunity to choose who represents them in the Senate? Obviously, this is something, I think, that needs to be looked at. I would encourage the government to look at that section of the act and see if we can get that going again.

Now, as far as the chief electoral office, it talks about the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act. It provides direction to political entities and third-party advertisers for registration, financial reporting, and disclosure. This act also prescribes the means for the Chief Electoral Officer to monitor compliance of political entities, including political parties, candidates, constituency associations, and, most recently, third-party advertisers. Elections Alberta is assigned the responsibility for ensuring filing, examination, and public disclosure of financial documents submitted by political parties.

Again, Madam Speaker, when we look at the role of the Election Commissioner and the responsibilities that that individual will have – and, of course, not just that individual but their "team of professionals," the quote that it says here in the act for, you know, getting people to apply for this position – there seems to be some overlap here, obviously, because Elections Alberta is assigned the responsibility for ensuring filing, examination, and public disclosure of financial documents submitted by political parties, constituency associations, and candidates.

So, I mean, obviously, this job was already being done by Elections Alberta. Of course, I just saw in here that at the time this was printed they had, I think, a team of 16 people, 16 permanent staff, whose duties were the same as this person's.

Here's another part. It says: another part of the finance regulation is enforcing the legislation relating to the collection of contributions. Again, enforcing the legislation, investigating complaints of breaches of the act. When we look at the ad posting here: "investigate potential wrongdoings by political entities." I read here on the Chief Electoral Officer responsibilities: investigating complaints of breaches of the act, applying

administrative penalties or consenting to prosecution if warranted. This is, again, for the Chief Electoral Officer.

Then, of course, we read in this ad: “levying administrative penalties.” We have one that says, “levying administrative penalties,” and then the Chief Electoral Officer: applying administrative penalties. Obviously, there just continues to be more and more overlap of these two jobs.

Now, the Chief Electoral Officer says: it is important to note that we serve in an advisory role as well as a regulatory one – so, obviously, they try to give advice on how they feel the rules apply to political parties, constituency associations, that sort of thing, but they also regulate – assistance is provided to the staff and volunteers involved in the process to assist them in understanding and complying with the legislation; we maintain a register of political parties, constituency associations, candidates, and third-party advertisers and assist groups in forming new political parties. So they have kind of a wide-ranging mandate, the Chief Electoral Officer. Of course, it includes everything that the Alberta Election Commissioner is doing.

Of course, when we look at Bill 18, to bring this person’s wages or what this person is being paid to the sunshine list so that Albertans can find out exactly what this person is getting paid, we sit here at this time and we know that unless the government decides to accept some of our amendments or change something, we will not know how much this person makes until after the next election. I think that’s what’s missing out of Bill 18, that opportunity.

This government, when they brought forward Motion 16 about hiring the Election Commissioner, told us that everything was fine and everything was great, and any time that we brought up or suggested changes or amendments or anything like that, you know, we were fearmongering or whatever. I think one time they said that we were picking on this person, singling this person out. Now, of course, the government has realized that they had to single this person out and actually put him in Bill 18, specifically list this position in Bill 18, to make it so that this person can hit the sunshine list, even after the next election.

Madam Speaker, I mean, we had the opportunity back when this motion first came forward, with the amendment that we brought forward, to bring this person to the sunshine list immediately. Of course, the government voted that down. They didn’t want to do it. They told us that everything was fine and that they had everything under control, but obviously they didn’t. Now they had to bring this forward in Bill 18. This gives them another opportunity to not only bring this person to the sunshine list, which is what they had to do, but also they had the perfect opportunity to make sure that this person’s salary was made immediately available to Albertans, before the next election.

Obviously, this person’s position is related to democracy and related to transparency. It’s related to, as they say, taking the dark money out of politics. When we look at that and we realize that this person’s responsibility has to do with the actual election, what goes on with the election before and after and that sort of thing, we have an opportunity to amend this and to ask that this be brought forward immediately so that we can see how much this person’s salary is immediately and take a look at the contract and see what it says there. We have the opportunity to do this now.

10:20

The government had this opportunity with Bill 18. They realized that they had made a mistake earlier and that they should have brought this forward right from the start, but they didn’t. So now they’ve had to throw this into kind of a housekeeping bill. By doing that, they had an additional opportunity to bring sunshine to the

person that’s to take the dark money out of politics, but again they failed to do that.

I’m not sure why they have a problem with bringing light to this issue, but it seems like at every turn they have an opportunity to fix this, and they don’t take advantage of it. Again, we see that this person’s responsibilities are an overlap of the Chief Electoral Officer and the Chief Electoral Officer’s office and the staff that they have, who have been performing these duties already.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It’s my pleasure to rise today and speak on Bill 18 in third reading. We see time and time again in this place that the government needs to bring legislation forward to fix some other piece of legislation that they’ve already passed. In this case Bill 18 brings in some rather administrative housekeeping proposed amendments. For the most part, these changes are rather minor and don’t evoke much concern from me.

But there is a particular portion of this legislation that I do want to discuss at length, and that is the portion that deals with the Election Commissioner. Really, in my opinion, Bill 18, that is called the Statutes Amendment Act, 2018, should actually be changed to the Election Commissioner Act because out of the 20 pages in this act, the Election Commissioner is not mentioned on only three of those pages. I’ll just quickly go over a couple of them here.

It’s on page 2, under Alberta Corporate Tax Act – it’s not mentioned in the Alberta Human Rights Act for some reason – and again on page 3, under Auditor General Act; page 4, Conflicts of Interest Act, and it continues to page 5; but it is not mentioned under the Consumer Protection Act. Then, of course, under Election Act, it’s very extensively mentioned there. Even under the Electronic Transactions Act, the Election Commissioner is mentioned and under the Financial Administration Act, but it is not mentioned under the Employment Standards Code. It goes on to list it a number of times on page 9, quite extensively. Then on page 11 again is a very long section. Under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, it mentions it.

Then we have page 12, the Municipal Government Act, and he’s not mentioned there. So those are the three pages – 12, 13, and 14 – where I haven’t seen any mention of him. He’s not mentioned under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, but when we get to the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act, he pops up there a number of times again. The Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act: it’s interesting that he’s mentioned there. Most of my colleagues have been standing up and asking about his rate of compensation, and it seems to be a big secret, although he is mentioned in the transparency act. He’s also mentioned numerous times under the Public Service Act, the Public Service Employee Relations Act, and they managed to skip him under the Vital Statistics Act.

You kind of get my point, Madam Speaker. You know, out of 20 pages, only three of them don’t include the mention of the Election Commissioner, so we should really change the act’s name from Statutes Amendment Act to Election Commissioner Act.

As my fellow colleagues before me have mentioned in the House, the issue of salary disclosure in relation to the commissioner has been long discussed, and few of our words have been heeded. We will continue to fulfill our duty in this House as the Official Opposition and keep the government accountable when we see that it is taking actions that will not do right by Albertans. We have

urged the government to add the Election Commissioner to the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act, which this actually does on page 17 of the act, but the government doesn't recognize that that means that they should disclose the salary.

On May 1 my colleague from Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock proposed an amendment which would have required the salary of the Election Commissioner to be disclosed, which would have fallen very nicely under the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act, on page 17 of this bill. The government voted down the amendment that would bring more disclosure to this position. Madam Speaker, these are not the markings of an open and transparent government. Just because, you know, you talk about public-sector compensation transparency in a bill like Bill 18 doesn't mean that you're actually committing to being transparent.

As legislators we have a duty to be accountable to those that we have been elected to represent. However, we see a pattern shrouding accountability with this NDP government. When my colleague from Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock brought this amendment, the government members asked why we thought it necessary to single out this one particular legislative officer. Yet we see that – again I'll mention it – out of 20 pages in Bill 18, only three of those pages don't mention the commissioner. It kind of looks to me like they're singling out the commissioner here or trying to correct an error that they made when they put their other bills forward.

For this to be explained and for the issue I take with the current portion of the legislation in this bill that deals with the Election Commissioner, it is necessary to recall what has been said previously. Madam Speaker, my colleagues and I have taken issue with the creation of this position from the get-go. During the discussion about the creation of the Election Commissioner position my colleagues on the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices voiced their staunch opposition numerous times on numerous occasions. We heard reluctance from external voices as well, being the Chief Electoral Officer. It seemed like there was so much outright opposition. In fact, it became clear that the NDP came in with an unwavering plan, not looking to create an open dialogue or discussion in these committee meetings. They were looking to execute their plan. After the creation of the position, upholding the spirit of the position itself, we took great opposition to the chosen candidate.

When Motion 16 was before the House, we proposed some reasonable amendments which would lift the veil on this process even a little bit. Madam Speaker, as our thoughtful amendment was stricken down then, Bill 18 now includes it. I'm glad to see that the government is heeding our words and implementing what we have been proposing. It is notable that they are now passing what should have been passed awhile ago and they're admitting their mistakes. I think that's quite clear by the 17 pages in Bill 18 that mention the Election Commissioner.

Beyond simply this, it became quite evident during the debate that the government was executing their plan when the Minister of Justice, with a government motion, invoked time allocation. This would mean that rather than carefully considering a motion which has a great deal of influence on the future of our province, the NDP decided it would suit them more to shut down debate altogether. This meant that neither side could have an open and productive dialogue, nor could the government continue to be held accountable. Debate was over. Democracy at its finest.

To add to this, almost all the work of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices in regard to this commissioner took place behind closed doors. There was no public footage available of anything that happened behind closed doors, nor was there a transcript available in *Hansard*. The majority of work that went into the candidate selection was not able to be viewed by Albertans. This

was until the final day on which the decision-making happened. The public could simply see the strong split that occurred along partisan lines in this traditionally not-too-partisan committee.

Although the majority of Bill 18 is minor in nature and mostly housekeeping, the Election Commissioner is an item in this bill that is worth taking this deeper dive into for the sake of transparency, which we will continue to fight for on behalf of Albertans. In the opposite of this, it was very clear with the NDP's choice to fill the Election Commissioner position that it was made for a partisan reason. Our caucus was fighting to ensure that Albertans could have accountability, trust, and transparency while the NDP was busy fulfilling their plan.

10:30

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt. We are in third reading, so if I could just remind everybody to find their seats, or if you need to speak, please leave the House.

Hon. member, please continue.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Our caucus was fighting to ensure that Albertans could have accountability, trust, and transparency while the NDP was busy fulfilling their plan. It was clear that the NDP side was more focused on stacking the deck and that the UCP side was focused on upholding our democracy and transparency to Albertans.

Another troubling aspect of the Election Commissioner debacle was that there were, in fact, a number of qualified candidates who did not present a history of concerning behaviour, as was the case with the NDP's chosen candidate. Madam Speaker, the Chief Electoral Officer himself said that he was already performing this job and fully capable of continuing to do so, and we on this side of the House have full faith in him. We do not cast doubt on his demonstrated ability to perform his duties. We believe that the motives of the NDP in appointing their chosen candidate were elusive and uncertain. After much debate and opposition I'm glad to see that the government has taken into account at least a portion of our recommendations on adding the Election Commissioner to the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act, which falls on page 17 of the Bill 18 document.

Further to this, it appears that this change will still not have the effect of disclosing the details of the government's secret deal with the Election Commissioner until after the next election. This is quite characteristic of the NDP. Of course, this goes to show the lack of transparency continuing to veil government. We on this side of the House will continue fighting on behalf of Albertans for transparency and accountability. I'm glad to see that this government is finally heeding the words of the United Conservative Party on this side of the House. However, it is disconcerting that the government is only about to admit their mistakes when held to account by the Official Opposition.

Therefore, I will be voting in support of this bill because, like I said, it does deal pretty much specifically with the Election Commissioner and bringing transparency to the House. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Yes. I was interested in hearing the hon. member as he was dealing with Bill 18 here. I'm really interested to see his analysis of the bill and how often the Election Commissioner is referred to in this bill, so much so that as I began looking at the bill myself, I began seeing just how many times it's in here: page 3, under the Auditor General Act, "the Election Commissioner and the staff of the Office of the Election Commissioner" referenced; page

4, the Conflicts of Interest Act, “the Office of the Election Commissioner.” Let’s see. On page 5:

(3) Part 2 of the Schedule is amended by adding the following after item 7:

8. The Election Commissioner under the Election Act.

Finally, again, I think you referred to page 17 and the Public Service Act. “The Public Service Act is amended by this section.” No. I’m sorry. It was the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act, where it’s amended by adding “the Office of the Election Commissioner” in there.

So I just thought I would ask the hon. member if he could explain why it is added in here. You know, why was it missed in the first place, and why was it not addressed by the government when we first began talking about this?

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yeah. It is interesting. You know, I think that quite possibly we wouldn’t even need a Bill 18 at this point if it wasn’t for the selection of the Election Commissioner, or if we did have it, it would be a very, very short document because only three pages don’t mention the Election Commissioner.

Yeah. It is very interesting, to my colleague there, that, you know, when we look at all of these pages where they had to add the Election Commissioner into different acts all through the legislation here, everything from the Election Act – it’s funny they didn’t find some spot in the Consumer Protection Act to throw him in there. He’s definitely under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and then, again, like I said, on page 17, the most important one that we had asked to have amended. Curiously enough, the government voted against the amendment, but then suddenly we find it on page 17 under the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act. It says that he is added under section (2)

by adding the following after subclause (iv):

(iv.1) the Office of the Election Commissioner.

Then again under the Public Service Act:

(2) Section (1) is amended

(a) by adding the following after clause (c)(iv):

(iv.1) the Election Commissioner with respect to the Office of the Election Commissioner,

(b) by adding . . . after clause (d)(iv):

(iv.1) the Election Commissioner with respect to the Office of the Election Commissioner.

Thank you for the question. I do agree that it’s very curious that we have a Bill 18 at all considering that – you know, we could have had a very, very short discussion on a three-page document, but here we are on third reading of Bill 18. The opportunity exists again for all members of the opposition and the government to stand up and speak to Bill 18. Maybe one of them could stand up and explain to us why suddenly they found the need to add all of these sections, to add the Election Commissioner into all the other acts in the province. I find it very curious. We simply could’ve got by with them passing a motion that we had on a previous bill when we were dealing with the Election Commissioner, and maybe we wouldn’t have to be here today. We could all be out in the sunshine.

Thank you for the question, Member.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Anybody else wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Yeah. It was interesting, of course, listening to the discussion here on how much of this bill actually refers to the Election Commissioner. I know that my colleague here in his previous private-sector employment worked for large companies.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 18? The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It’s a pleasure for me to rise today to speak to Bill 18, the Statutes Amendment Act, 2018. There are times in every Legislature where the best laid plans of mice and men sometimes go awry, where printers will sometimes forget a word, where spelling mistakes occur, where we realize that a minor change or something has been forgotten in a piece of legislation, and where at the end of a session we try to put all those things into a bill that just deals with the miscellaneous and minor changes that are sometimes needed for every piece of legislation. You know, this just, I guess, speaks to the humanity of this Legislature, to the reality that we are but human and that we are prone to error and that even in our best efforts sometimes we need to address these small, minor, but nonetheless important changes if we want to remain consistent in the legislation that we have in this great province of Alberta.

Bill 18 does that. Bill 18, for much of it or for portions of it, simply makes minor word changes to a number of different statutes. A bill like Bill 18, as I’ve said, is often needed and should not take a significant amount of time in debate or in discussion in this House. Unfortunately, I think that Bill 18 needs a little bit more thought and a little bit more diligence brought to it simply because it’s not always just simply a minor word change in this bill.

10:40

Bill 18 amends a long series of acts; for instance, A Better Deal for Consumers and Businesses Act. It amends the Alberta Corporate Tax Act. It amends the Alberta Human Rights Act. If we take a look at page 2 of Bill 18, it says:

3(1) The Alberta Human Rights Act is amended by this section.

(2) Section 5(1) is amended by striking out “commercial unit, self-contained dwelling unit or mobile home site” wherever it occurs and substituting “commercial unit or self-contained dwelling unit.”

You know, that would be an example of a relatively minor change to the act, one that we probably don’t need to dwell on very much.

It talks about An Act to Strengthen Municipal Government. It amends that.

It amends the Auditor General Act. On page 3 it says:

(2) Section 1(1)(b) is amended by adding the following after subclause (iii):

(iii.1) the Election Commissioner and the staff of the Office of the Election Commissioner.

That’s one of the first times that we see in this bill a reference to the Election Commissioner, and we’ll talk more about that a little later on.

It talks about the Conflicts of Interest Act. It amends the Consumer Protection Act. It amends the Election Act. It amends the Electronic Transactions Act. It amends the Employment Standards Code. In many of these, they’re just minor references and minor changes, spelling errors, et cetera. As you can see, Bill 18, while it’s primarily about or consistently about correcting minor changes to various bills and acts that had minor errors, there are at times some actually important information or amendments in this bill that need to be discussed a little bit further.

At least one part of Bill 18 is not simply a minor change, Madam Speaker. While we broadly support the changes in Bill 18, we also as the Official Opposition have noticed the need to add the Election Commissioner to the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act. Now, this part of the amendment addresses the need to publicly disclose the salary of the Election Commissioner.

Now, we've had a lot of conversation and debate in this House when it comes to democracy and to bringing transparency and openness, and sometimes we've had great success and we've come to agree on both sides of the House about how to move forward. For instance, Madam Speaker, there was a broad amount of agreement when we debated and discussed the concept of having a sunshine list and of openly and transparently publishing the salaries of people on agencies and boards and commissions, people that work within the confines of government, so that we can ensure that these people are being compensated fairly but not overly generously and that we aren't just simply providing someone with a job and a high-paying salary without making sure that they are performing a valuable service for the people of Alberta.

Now, at other times we've had a little less agreement in this House over how to make our democracy function better. I remember standing in this House and being a little upset over the fact that this government had not renewed the Senatorial Selection Act. Now, I understand that there are probably some in this Legislature and some in Canada that would take a look at the Senate and say that the best thing that we could do is to put it out of its misery. Madam Speaker, I would respectfully disagree with that.

I believe that the Senate plays a valuable role in our Canadian Confederation, that there are some realities in this Canadian Confederation that make a Senate actually very important. The fact that a clear majority of the seats in our House of Commons can be dominated by those people that have been elected from Ontario and Quebec can often imbalance this Confederation and the decisions that are coming out of our Parliament. A Senate is important in order to be able to protect the smaller, less populated provinces in this country, where the Senate can be appointed from people that represent their province or their region and have the capacity to be a second body of sober thought when it comes to passing legislation at the federal level.

It was very disappointing to me, Madam Speaker, when a province like Alberta can move so strongly and so forcefully towards trying to improve our Canadian Confederation by having our Senators elected, to then not renew the Senatorial Selection Act. That was very, very disconcerting, the fact that Albertans have for many years had the capacity to vote in a general election to be able to choose the Senators that we would put forward as names to the Prime Minister.

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

As a matter of fact, the last time we did this was around 2012, in the general election. I believe there were 13 candidates that ran for the senatorial election seat. As a committed democrat I believe that every time we allow our people to have a choice in democracy to be able to choose the people that will represent them, that is a positive thing. I was very strongly disappointed when this government, I believe for the first time in Canadian history, actually took the vote away from their citizens by refusing to renew the Senatorial Selection Act. That's a very, very serious thing that this government has done.

So there's been disagreement. I will gladly stand on this side of the House and I will gladly stand on the side of democracy and I will gladly stand on the side of electing Senators. I realize that the government in its wisdom or lack thereof chose not to support and

to renew the Senatorial Selection Act. We would counsel today that if the government would listen a little more closely to its opposition and not just with a knee-jerk reaction dismiss the amendments and the advice brought up by the opposition, we would have better government.

Mr. Speaker, we have brought forward this idea of publicly disclosing the salary of the Election Commissioner. It was first brought up to the government by the United Conservative Party. On May 1 the MLA for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock proposed an amendment. He proposed an amendment that would have required the disclosure of the Election Commissioner's salary.

Needless to say, the government refused to support that amendment. They argued against this amendment. They argued that the opposition was unreasonably focusing on an individual and an officer of the Legislature that we did not support. Now, that was correct to this extent, that as the opposition we believed that there were other candidates for the office of the Election Commissioner that were just as qualified and that had not sued the government of Alberta in the past and that it wasn't all that wise for the government to hire an individual, especially for the first time into a seat like the Election Commissioner, that has actually tried to sue the government and lost.

As the opposition I believe we rightly questioned the creation of this office of the Election Commissioner. We've had many people stand in this Legislature and bring to the attention of the government that the Election Commissioner appears in many aspects to do exactly the same duties as the Chief Electoral Officer, that the Chief Electoral Officer and the Election Commissioner were doing the same job. Why in the name of the taxpayers of Alberta should we create a redundant job?

10:50

Of course, the government chose again not to listen. That's their right, and they have the votes to be able to ensure that they can pursue the agenda that they have. But it is also their responsibility to listen to the opposition and to consider the counsel of the opposition. We counselled that perhaps they should reconsider the entire office of the Election Commissioner simply because it was already being done by the Chief Electoral Officer.

Well, as we said, on May 1 we counselled the government that the Election Commissioner's salary should be disclosed publicly, that it should be transparent along with all the other officers that we've already done through previous legislation of this House. It's not an unreasonable amendment. So it was once again frustrating to see that when the opposition actually does its job and does it effectively and does it well that the government does not have the capacity to understand its role and listen and consider and support an amendment that is reasonable and that will actually make a piece of legislation better.

So we find ourselves here today. When the opposition attempts to help the government craft better legislation, this government, rather than doing its job of considering amendments, instead votes them down and then later on puts forward pieces of legislation that actually address the amendments that we brought forward, as is the case here in Bill 18. We see once again that after having rejected the MLA for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock's amendment on May 1 to disclose the Election Commissioner's salary, to be publicly and openly transparent, after having rejected that, this government now is coming back, through Bill 18, saying: you were right, but now we want to take the credit for it. I think that's just about as far as it goes.

You know, we in the opposition were not trying to single out a particular officer when we had questions about the wisdom of hiring a particular individual. Rather, we were trying to ensure that

openness and transparency and accountability were being placed before the House regarding an officer of the Legislature.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Madam Speaker, you're back. Welcome.

We are on record that we believe that the Election Commissioner is a redundant office, already being done by the Chief Electoral Officer. But now that we have an Election Commissioner, we believe that they should fall under the same constraints and the same expectations for disclosure of salary as the other legislative officers that this Legislature oversees.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate this opportunity to rise and speak on Bill 18, the Statutes Amendment Act, 2018. We're here at third reading. What's interesting about this is that a good amount of the bill is, in my estimation, the way that a statutes amendment act ought to be, and that is housekeeping, but alas it is not, in my estimation, all housekeeping.

In fact, there's certainly a piece of it where, when it comes to the referral to the Election Commissioner, the government actually put time allocation on an earlier bill talking about the same subject matter. This is regrettable, particularly when we're talking about an officer that will have a great deal to do with the next general election and perhaps the next five or 10 or 20 general elections. Who knows? That matters because when these things come up with the independent officers of the Legislature, all of them need to be respected by all sides of the House and to be, when possible, agreed on by all sides of the House, particularly when you're talking about an independent officer who is responsible for the conduct of a fair and impartial election.

If there was ever a place in our democracy, for those that believe in democracy, where the process should have been nonpartisan, with co-operation across the aisle, with everybody signing off on it because it's obvious that it was all sides of the House that had a good and reasonable and respectful debate and came to a consensus, if there was ever a place – I appreciate the way that we settle things in this House when we disagree. It's a nice, nonviolent way called voting. That's the beauty of democracy. You settle your differences in a nonviolent way that you've agreed to in voting. So that's a beautiful thing.

The problem is that in this case there was an element of democracy, in my view, that wasn't respected. Democracy allows for disagreement. You could say that just by virtue of the fact that the largest group of people in this House that's not in government is called the Official Opposition. Just the word "opposition" indicates that disagreement isn't only allowed, but you could say, in some cases, that it's encouraged because it's the opposition's job to hold the government to account. It's an important part of democracy on behalf of the citizens to have a check and balance built into the system.

One of the rare examples where, in my view, that's not the case, where consensus should be the call of the day is when you're appointing an independent officer with responsibility over elections. Now, there's a place where you really ought to look for a way to build consensus across the aisle on all sides of the House. Clearly, this government didn't find that necessary, which is unfortunate.

I've been on committees with members of the government, and I can tell you that they actually know how to do that. On the

Members' Services Committee I would say that when we disagree, with a little bit of enthusiasm and a little bit of emotion and a little bit of rancour, it's the rare event. The common event is when members on all sides of the House from all parties have a nice, respectful discussion and come to consensus, an agreement based on an agreed-upon set of facts and some common goals. We work together, and we try to think of what's best for Albertans. So we know how to do that. I know that the government side knows how to do that, and I compliment them for when they have done that.

Unfortunately, on one of the very most important times when they ought to have done that, they chose not to. It's actually disappointing. What's actually sad about it, Madam Speaker, is that the person hired for this very important job is, in my view, the person that's unfairly paying the price for the government's unwillingness to look for consensus, to work with the opposition, work together to find someone to control the conduct of the next election. If ever there was a place where consensus should have been the order of the day, this was it. Yet the government chose to go the opposite path. This is an issue.

Of course, because of that, here's the other thing about it, too. Independent members of the Legislature are pretty senior positions. You could in many ways say that they work fairly directly for the public. If not, then they certainly control the conduct of members of this House, and members of this House definitely work directly for the public. They're senior enough roles that the public has the right to have an idea of key details like how much money those officers of the Legislature make. The Official Opposition, of course, pushed, you know, and through an amendment asked the government to disclose that, asked a number of different ways.

The government at one point claimed that this position was on the sunshine list and then had to come back. It was the Government House Leader that had to come back and admit that they were wrong and that they gave incorrect information to the House. Madam Speaker, that can happen. That can happen. I'm not going to accuse the Government House Leader of doing anything untoward. We all make mistakes. Sometimes we don't remember the details a hundred per cent accurately, and I'm not going to pick on him for that. In fairness to him, he did come back and admit that he was wrong.

11:00

Nonetheless, that wasn't enough to spur the government to do the right thing and say: yeah, we'll disclose the salary of the person in charge of the next election, you know, the person that's just become one of the people in charge of the next election. The right thing to do would be to say: no; we're going to actually disclose that before the next election because the public has a right to know before the next election. It seems pretty normal, it seems like a natural thing to do, it seems like it's consistent with the democratic system that we all depend upon for our positions here, yet the government has gone exactly the other way.

As a result, one of the things the government has had to do to correct that mistake is to add it into a piece of legislation. Instead of putting it in a free-standing piece of legislation, which in this case would have been the right thing to do, they tucked it in the middle of a statutes amendment act. Madam Speaker, I don't know what the government would have to hide, but it would be reasonable for one to ask and it would be reasonable for Albertans to wonder – and I'm sure many of them do – what the government has to hide by trying to sneak this piece into a statutes amendment act. Even on this side of the House – and we are called the opposition – we agree that the vast majority of this bill is housekeeping, things that need to be done in some cases because they're matching up with changes in federal legislation, some technical things, a few spelling errors,

a few grammatical errors that can make a difference if somebody challenges legislation. That's what, in my view, statutes amendment acts are for, cleaning up these anomalies.

Yet there's this unfortunate piece hanging out. It's unfortunate that the new Election Commissioner is paying a price for the government's unwillingness to be transparent with Albertans about how the elections are being run. Here we are, stuck with a piece in a statutes amendment act that should never have been put into a statutes amendment act. Madam Speaker, I will say that it's a shame. The government could have done better, the government should have done better, and for some reason, that Albertans have the right to ask about, the government chose not to do better.

Madam Speaker, that's what I have to say about that, so at this point I will cease my remarks. But just before I do, I will move to adjourn debate.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 1 Energy Diversification Act

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Welcome back. It's déjà vu all over again. I mean about last night.

Anyway, on behalf of the Minister of Energy I'm pleased to rise today to move third reading of Bill 1, the Energy Diversification Act.

Madam Speaker, I am excited about this bill. I'm excited and proud to be part of a government that is finally moving on diversifying Alberta's economy and helping to diversify Alberta's energy sector. Albertans deserve to get the best possible value for our resources, the resources that every Albertan owns, and that means adding more value here at home. Now, over the last 20 years, you know, people in my circle, which is made up of a lot of different demographics and a lot of different professions, have always believed that we should be upgrading and refining our bitumen right here and not shipping it to Houston, getting low value for it and then buying it back, again at a discount. We simply took this cue from the B.C. forest industry, which used to do the exact same thing with its raw forest products. It nearly ruined them. It nearly ruined that industry. The money is in the refined product, not in the raw resource, as we know in both cases.

Now, I fail to understand why there hasn't been any real effort from the previous governments to move on upgrading. I mean, the opposition and the previous governments do tout themselves as the big thinkers, the economic geniuses, if you will, but they weren't able to see the value in this. I don't know the precise answer on why they didn't want to move on this. I mean, pretty much everything after Premier Lougheed ceased.

I do have an anecdote that might help explain this a bit. I talked to a very senior, very well-known financial investment individual in Calgary about bitumen upgrading, including about the PDP, the first round, and this bill as well. You know, they're onboard with the movement on PDP and this bill and very enthusiastic about the government's direction on this. My simple question to them – maybe it's not simple to answer, but it's a simple question – was: why didn't this happen 20 or 30 years ago? Their answer was: we were too busy stuffing our pockets full of money. Now, I know that's a bit of a flippant response, but there is some truth in that response. It demonstrates how the previous governments viewed wealth in business, that it must be concentrated in the hands of a few to be effective. They would just wait out the busts and wait for

the next boom. Wealthy people and politicians can afford to ride a boom-and-bust roller coaster economy, but ordinary Albertans cannot.

Now, I know upgrading is expensive. It takes collaboration with many in the industry, and government needs to be onboard as well. The previous government and, it would seem, the UCP were not willing to get out of that comfort zone, not willing to concede that the unwillingness to change, to diversify, to upgrade was a problem. And it's a shame. We should have been getting fair value for our resources many years ago, we should have been diversifying our economy many years ago, we should have had more than one customer many years ago, and we should have been off the resource roller coaster many years ago. Well, we're trying to get there.

But that's okay, Madam Speaker, as we now have a government that understands that the world is changing, that you cannot run a business with one customer, and that we have foresight in regard to the energy industry, both in petrochemicals and in renewables. The petrochemicals diversification program was created as part of the Alberta government's continued action to create jobs, attract investment, and diversify Alberta's economy. It encourages companies to invest in the development of new Alberta petrochemical facilities by providing incentives through royalty credits.

In February 2016 the first round of the program was announced, targeting methane and propane upgrading. After a competitive application process two projects were approved to receive up to \$500 million in royalty credits. These projects will capitalize on the abundance of propane available in the province to establish a propane-based value chain in Alberta, the first of its kind in Canada.

In December 2017 Inter Pipeline, based in Calgary, announced that it had approved the construction of the company's proposed \$3.6 billion heartland petrochemical complex. One of the facilities in this complex, the propane dehydrogenation plant, was approved to receive up to \$200 million in royalty credits under the PDP. The other successful project, Canada Kuwait Petrochemical Corporation's propane dehydrogenation and polypropylene complex, is a \$4 billion project that is expected to make a final investment decision in early 2019.

This bill is about round 2, Madam Speaker, and is part of the Alberta government's response to the report from the Energy Diversification Advisory Committee. Now, the second round of the program is moving forward through this bill, with around \$500 million available in royalty credits. This new program is similar to the first, with one major change, broadening the scope of the program to include ethane in addition to methane and propane. The PDP and feedstock infrastructure programs are complementary in that investments in new ethane processing will likely require investments in new ethane supply in Alberta. This is because Alberta's ethane supply and demand are currently balanced. This change is designed to expand Alberta's petrochemical sector, to increase the supply of natural gas liquids to encourage investment in additional petrochemical processing, and ultimately to diversify Alberta's energy sector.

11:10

Now, Alberta's natural gas industry competes with a flourishing, export-oriented industry in the United States. Alberta can get its gas to market through petrochemical processing to create value-added products for export. This comes with new investment and new jobs in Alberta. Demand for petrochemical products continues to grow globally. There is intense world-wide competition to attract petrochemical investment because of the large economic benefits. Governments around the world, including along the Gulf coast of the United States, routinely offer aggressive incentives to

companies considering new projects in their jurisdictions. Other Canadian provinces, including Ontario and Quebec, also offer generous incentives to attract these large investments and new jobs. In order for Alberta to remain competitive on the global stage, the petrochemicals diversification project is an important step forward.

Madam Speaker, according to the Chemistry Industry Association of Canada Alberta's chemical sector employs over 7,500 people directly, with an average salary of over \$90,000 per year. Exports are valued at \$8.2 billion, the largest exporting sector in manufacturing industries in Alberta. The new round of the PDP is expected to see similar results to the first round, which had applications worth a collective \$20 billion in private investment. The construction of the new petrochemical manufacturing facilities will create thousands of construction jobs and hundreds in operations later. Processing Alberta's natural gas into a wide variety of in-demand consumer products substantially increases the value of the raw resources and allows Alberta to get the most out of it, whether through investment capital, jobs, increased economic activity, or exports.

Now, Madam Speaker, this is about investing in good jobs and a stable economy by supporting diversification in our energy sector. As the economy gets stronger, it's time to talk about how we secure the recovery for the long term and build an economy to last, one where no Albertan is left behind. The Energy Diversification Act builds upon Alberta's traditional strengths. It moves us away from the boom-and-bust policies of the past without sacrificing our leadership in oil and gas.

Madam Speaker, the benefits are clear. By being able to take diluent out of some shipments of bitumen, we could move about 30 per cent more oil through existing pipelines and have access to refineries that right now cannot take our bitumen product. This will mean lower costs and greater value, so ultimately that's more revenue for the industry and more royalties for the people of Alberta. One study has shown that partial upgrading could add up to \$22 billion a year to our GDP over 20 years.

In closing, Madam Speaker, I will say that upgrading our raw resources into higher value products is at the heart of Alberta's energy diversification vision. To see more private investment in petrochemical manufacturing, we need to ensure that companies have access to the natural gas liquids that they need. This program complements the PDP by investing in ethane supplies.

Alberta currently has a surplus of ethane, that is not being recovered. By encouraging investment in facilities that extract these components of natural gas, we'd go a long way in supporting the creation of new, world-scale manufacturing plants. Madam Speaker, right now we are closer than ever to getting fair value for our resources and stabilizing and growing our energy sector.

With that said, Madam Speaker, I will urge everyone to vote yes on Bill 1 and continue to help move our energy sector forward. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Bill 1, the Energy Diversification Act: if I might just read the preamble here because this is very interesting to note.

Whereas Alberta's bitumen production can realize better overall value for upstream producers through large-scale partial upgrading technologies.

And then it goes:

Whereas Alberta will benefit from a stronger and more diversified economy if it takes full advantage of the opportunities

its hydrocarbon feedstock provides to create value-added processing and the production of secondary and tertiary non-energy products.

Here's the interesting one here, Madam Speaker.

Whereas the Government has received recommendations from the Energy Diversification Advisory Committee to diversify Alberta's energy sector by expanding the downstream oil and gas sector using a variety of financial tools, including royalty credits, grants, loan guarantees and equity investments.

See, that's the interesting part of this whole preamble to Bill 1, the Energy Diversification Act. It's a government saying: we'll do whatever it takes; we'll provide all sorts of funding through all sorts of creative ways.

But why, Madam Speaker? It is about confidence. What is the definition of confidence? The feeling or belief that someone can rely on someone or something. That's interesting because when a new government goes in and says, "We're going to do a royalty review," you know, in my mind I wonder if they could not have read the other two royalty reviews that were written just a couple of years previous and a few more years previous to that. But they chose to do a royalty review that took eight months.

Not only that, Madam Speaker. When the oil companies were having some discussions but for the most part sitting back because they were waiting to see what this government thought, do you know what the petrochemical industries were looking at? They were looking at and reviewing a government, and they had photographs of everybody, photographs of all these people who are now in command, in charge, with signs that said: "Stop the oil sands. Stop the tar sands. No more pipelines." They realized that these were the people that were doing a royalty review of their industry. When we talk about confidence, there's not much more that kills confidence than knowing what the motivations of a government are.

Madam Speaker, if hindsight is one hundred per cent, we saw it when every international company that stood up with this government and said, "Hey, this is a great deal," said whatever the government wanted to, and then they left. That goes to show you how much confidence they had in this government. It is a shame.

Now we see a pipeline that had a private company funding it and ready to build that thing and were trying to. When this government here in Alberta doesn't really provide much support for them, when supposed allies in British Columbia in these municipalities are trying to express their concerns that, "No, we don't want this pipeline," and this government doesn't do anything about that and our federal government doesn't do anything about that and says some weak words, those things kill confidence.

It's interesting to see where this Bill 1 – you guys must have seen this coming, that we would have to do things like invest in pipelines and stuff, because you knew that you killed the confidence in everyone and in every industry, every corporation that would invest here and employ hundreds if not thousands of people in Alberta. You killed the confidence of so many. You know what? When those decisions are made, you should have surely known what was going to happen and come, and there will still be more announcements about the negativity that has happened because you killed the confidence of so many industries.

Certainly, when we look at Shell's sale to CNRL, what we will find is that Shell had a higher ratio of employees per barrel. A friend of mine who works for another oil company, when Shell sold to CNRL, said: "You watch. In a year or so, give or take, two years, they will start to cull the employees that they hired from Shell." I said, "How do you know that?" He said: "Well, you can look at the number of employees they have and divide it by the barrels per day that they produce. You can go on here, and you look at Shell and see what their ratio is." And then he said, "Look at CNRL's ratio."

It was a far lower ratio of number of employees per barrel. He worked for another oil company, but that's his job, to evaluate and assess. He said that within X amount of time we can anticipate, and he ballparked it at 1,000 jobs that CNRL will slowly let go.

11:20

Talking to my friends because – they don't publicize this, but CNRL is up in my neck of the woods, up in Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo. I've many friends that work for them, and they've all started to sweat bullets now because – guess what? – they've been receiving some notices. They've been receiving some underlying commentary about their positions, and my friends have all now started to apply elsewhere because they are unsure of their job security. It's disappointing that they have no confidence because there's a chance that they might get pushed out. That is disappointing, Madam Speaker.

The Energy Diversification Act, in killing confidence in our industry – you know, it is great. Certainly, our previous government invested, maybe not necessarily because they wanted to, but it was about providing that confidence in industry. They helped invest in that North West refinery, that the Member for Calgary-Klein forgot to mention. So there have been previous investments in our refineries, in our objectives of what you would call diversification of our oil industry, petrochemical industry. I just look at it as just trying to provide a better quality product and something that we can make more money on. Certainly, if we can refine it – you're right – we can ship it with much less diluents and whatnot and hopefully make more money and use what limited pipelines we have more efficiently. There's another word that would elude you guys, "efficiency." But I digress.

You know, energy diversification: there are some other industries that we could look at, and I wonder if the hon. member in charge of diversification and job creation has looked at groups like the plastics industry to use these oil products that we have, these petrochemical products, to see if we can't attract those companies. Certainly, when we look at the medical industry, biomedical products are very lucrative. There's a lot of money spent on that, and plastics are a key part of that because a lot of plastics are resilient, depending on how they make them, against certain bacteria and other contaminants. There's always that opportunity for us to produce things that we create from our oil.

Madam Speaker, it is so important that we diversify, but at the same time as we're looking at refining things, as per this bill, again it's about – I'm curious if you guys knew that this pipeline was going to fail, because you have these clauses in here that demonstrate that you need all the openings you can to invest money or provide some grants or any incentive that you possibly can in order to ensure that you don't completely kill our industry. You know, it's hopeful that you guys have done this one-eighty, from holding picket signs that said, "Down with oil, down with the tar sands, destroy Fort McMurray" to "Hey, we love this community, and we love our product, and we want to get that shipped out." I love that one-eighty that you guys did there.

It's lovely to see, and I look forward to it in the by-election coming up. By the way, when are you going to call that anyways? It is good timing for that by-election, too, I might add, because, like I said, CNRL is about to make some announcements. Actually, they don't make big announcements. They just do it, and it's disappointing. I can't wait to see you guys all door-knocking up there. It'll be a wonderful, wonderful experience for everybody here.

Madam Speaker, as I look at the time here – with that, I'll sit down. I see Calgary-Elbow wants to say a thing or two, so I'll leave it to him.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

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

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I realize that we're running a little short on time this morning. We're trying to get through a few things, but I would like to offer my comments on Bill 1 at third while I have an opportunity. We have had a lot of interesting perspectives on this topic over the last couple of months of debate. I've learned a lot. I haven't agreed with everything the government has done. I certainly haven't agreed with everything on the opposition side. You know, we have had some brief discussions amongst ourselves in caucus and with our research team, and we've gone back and forth on exactly what our perspective is on this bill.

One interpretation is that it will create a boon of oil and gas jobs in Calgary, where those management decisions are made, and in Edmonton and rural Alberta, where the petroleum is extracted and processed.

But there's another interpretation, and that is that the bill grants the minister remarkable, extraordinary, and really arbitrary power to hand out royalty credits and grants, as the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo talked about previously on the preamble of the bill, talking about those royalty credits and grants and other financial tools that are made available to this government and this minister without, I believe, appropriate transparency or accountability. It's very clear that the minister has said that she prefers the Alberta Petroleum Marketing Commission, APMC, frankly, to work in secret from most Albertans. I don't understand how keeping that knowledge from Albertans really strengthens team Alberta or our economy.

Now, the Alberta Party supports the general principle of energy diversification, but we certainly have questions and, more than that, concerns about this bill and the NDP's approach. I would say that Bill 1 really is a story about missed opportunity. We understand that it's prudent to build on the energy resources we have, but we know that we can do better in the face of the undeniable global shift towards new energy and new transportation technologies.

Now, one of the most important aspects of this bill, of course, is that it comes out of Alberta's Energy Diversification Advisory Committee, or EDAC. Now, EDAC acknowledges that oil and gas may not always be primary to the global economy and that there is a transition coming, so I'm going to spend a bit of time just reviewing some of the key recommendations that EDAC made that didn't find their way into this bill. When we really started digging into those recommendations, much as the government has touted the fact that this bill is an outcome of their work, there's a lot that EDAC suggested and recommended that never showed up in the bill. That's a grave concern to us.

I'm going to start on their executive summary on page 6. They report that there are six signs the global energy system is transforming.

1. The sheer volume of clean energy technologies being developed and adopted.
2. Rapidly declining cost curves for the new technologies, which suggest adoption will begin to accelerate even faster over the next decade or two.
3. The evolution of the power grid, which will be needed to handle the [additional] demands of an electric economy.
4. New business models that add new value for consumers and change the way we live and work.
5. Changes in policy at the global, national and provincial level in response to the climate change challenge.
6. Acceptance by Canadians that the global energy system is changing, with continued support for energy development

while also favouring policies that reduce greenhouse gas . . . emissions and speed up the energy transition.

Now, this bill completely ignores recommendation 2.1, that “the Government of Alberta transform Invest Alberta [which is an agency] into a world-class organization that has the capacity to secure multibillion-dollar projects when competing with the best investment agencies in the world.” It sounds like a winner when it comes to making commitments to new energy. Certainly, that would have been handy when the feds successfully negotiated for the Trans Mountain pipeline. Really, what that speaks to is the fact that there’s a tremendous amount of capital available for energy projects, both traditional energy and new energy, and Alberta is doing a very poor job. In fact, we’re seeing a significant flight of capital away from the province of Alberta and away from Canada, which is a great, great concern to our province in particular and to our country as a whole.

Now, recommendation 2.3:

EDAC recommends the agency have access to a dedicated, robust Diversification Fund that would provide clarity to the business community on the kind of support available from the province [that] would enable the agency to effectively execute on its investment attraction strategy.

Now, that sounds remarkably like the Alberta Party’s shadow budget pledge to spend \$100 million more in economic diversification and trade investments than the government proposed themselves in this most recent budget; again, a story of missed opportunity.

11:30

Recommendation 2.4 explicitly empowers a different body than the APMC, which this government and this minister have also ignored. The recommendation is

that the agency be structured similarly to the [APMC.] [It] should take strategic direction from government. To promote transparency, efficiency and a long-term view, the agency should ultimately be structured at arms-length, with a mandate, in alignment with government policy, to negotiate and recommend deals for final government approval. A governing board with clearly defined financial authorities should provide oversight.

That would minimize the risk of political interference, which is a significant risk.

We also feel we can do better by following the committee’s observation that it is inefficient to task experts and professionals in petroleum with figuring out how to do energy beyond petroleum.

EDAC then goes on to make several recommendations concerning how the government should structure its investment, regulatory and resource management, and transparency policies – there’s that word “transparency” again – and mechanisms, all of which are ignored in this bill. We absolutely could do better if this government had chosen not to ignore EDAC’s recommendations.

Their recommendation 4, also missing, is particularly telling since it would have the greatest potential to actually create new sustainable jobs.

EDAC supports the concept of establishing new infrastructure and energy corridors around existing or likely sites for downstream energy clusters – in particular, Alberta’s Industrial Heartland, Joffre, Grande Prairie and Medicine Hat.

We can do better by supporting new infrastructure that sustains investment and growth, not just infrastructure that expands what we’re already doing.

Recommendation 5.1. “EDAC recommends the Government of Alberta ensure the hydrocarbon value chain remains a strategic priority within the innovation funding [system].” That whole hydrocarbon value chain, even in an evolving world and an evolving energy economy, will continue to drive value for the province of Alberta for the core products that we produce. So it’s not just us recommending that the government develop an innovation funding

strategy and that ministers start working together instead of continuing in silos. We’ve talked a lot in many different contexts about knitting together different government departments.

We agree with EDAC that a modern innovation ecosystem needs to be supported and expanded with a long-term innovation fund that is “independent from political and budgetary cycles,” which is stated in recommendation 5.5. That, I think, is probably the single biggest issue for this government and, frankly, all governments in this province to grapple with; that is, making agencies and decisions that are going to be independent from those political and budgetary cycles and from the winds of political whim.

Recommendation 5.2 from EDAC highlights the skills gap this government has not been able to address despite what we’ve seen here in Bill 1 and also in Bill 2. EDAC says:

Successfully bringing technologies from conception to commercialization requires a unique skill set, pairing technical talent with financial skills and business acumen. EDAC recommends the Government of Alberta optimize its system and programs to support both the technical and business development aspects of innovation.

That feels a little bit like the challenge that we had in attracting Amazon in terms of not just having the business acumen but also the technical skills. Now, in the petroleum industry we certainly do have the technical skills. I’ve talked about pairing those things up. Again, there’s really very little in this bill that addresses that directly. Supporting the intersection of technical and business skills does seem like something local grassroots collaborations like EvolveU can address. We can do better for Albertans if this government would agree to work with partners instead of taking years and years to roll out their own solutions.

Finally, recommendation 5.3 highlights the regulatory barrier to actually getting innovation into the field. Again, this bill fails to address that challenge. EDAC recommended “that the Government of Alberta create an enabling mechanism within the regulatory framework to provide the necessary flexibility and speed to properly test technologies at scale in the field.” Now, some of those sorts of things are happening. We see the work going on at the Shepard power plant outside of Calgary to repurpose carbon. Those are the kinds of things that I would have hoped to see in this bill but that aren’t there.

Recommendation 7.2 is missing.

EDAC recommends the Alberta government continue to lead on advocacy for equitable rail services that address the needs of downstream . . . industry players in regards to access, cost and reliability, with active participation by downstream energy industry representatives.

There’s a lack, surprisingly enough, of proper GBA plus consideration informing this bill, and it ignores completely recommendations 6.1 through 6.4, which include recommendations about explicitly including indigenous communities in energy diversification and also working with the federal government. This has become both a challenge and an opportunity with the Trans Mountain pipeline.

So this government’s own metrics of implementing EDAC recommendations: the bill fails on almost every count. We’ve tried through our amendments in committee to amend the bill so that it aligns more closely with those EDAC recommendations, and even with the limited and short-sighted scope this government has chosen, regrettably, the government has chosen to ignore most of that EDAC report and most of the opportunities for the opposition side and the Alberta Party in particular to improve the bill. It is with great regret that I see this bill as such a tremendous missed opportunity that we simply cannot support it.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I would move that we adjourn debate on this bill.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 2 Growth and Diversification Act

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to move third reading of Bill 2, the Growth and Diversification Act.

Our government has proven repeatedly that we deliver legislation that invests in people, diversification, and an economy that works for all Albertans. We're committed to delivering fair legislation that makes life better for all Albertans. The proposed Bill 2, the Growth and Diversification Act, will continue our tradition of achieving these goals. This bill will boost education and training for the high-tech sector, add new supports for digital media, and bolster two successful tax credit programs to support an economy built to last. Our government has worked hard to spur innovation and drive job growth, and this bill will help continue our trend of creating an economy that is diversified and ready for future success.

The Growth and Diversification Act includes a number of proposed changes that directly benefit the postsecondary system in our province in a very exciting and positive way. This legislation includes supports for 3,000 new tech spaces in Alberta's postsecondary system, increasing educational access for learners across the province. Two hundred of these spaces will be in place during the upcoming 2018-2019 academic year once this bill passes the Legislature and receives royal assent. An additional 550 spaces will be made available in the 2019-2020 academic year, with 750 spaces being added each of the following three years. By 2022-23 all 3,000 new tech spaces will be available to students in Alberta. This bolsters our existing strong programming in the tech sector currently being offered by our province's excellent postsecondary institutions.

We know that our postsecondary graduates are highly skilled and coveted by businesses across North America, and we've heard from industries across the province that access to a highly skilled talent pool is one of the determining factors that high-tech firms consider before making major investment decisions. Keeping pace with the demands of a new economic reality requires additional tech spaces. This bill is a win for students, a win for industry, and a win for our province's economic future.

The Growth and Diversification Act will take unprecedented steps to increase our existing talent pool so that our province can support local start-ups and establish tech firms. To ensure that our graduates are entering the workforce as quickly as possible and meeting industry demands for today's skilled workforce, the initial 200 spaces may be supplemented by the delivery of a number of short-term skill development opportunities. If implemented, these skill development programs could help Albertans, particularly those with existing credentials, acquire the tech-related skills they need in the transition to permanent employment.

Short-term skills programs developed in collaboration with industry partners are a way of engaging the many young Albertans who are unemployed or underemployed and teaching them the in-demand skills needed to succeed in careers across the province. These short-term skills programs will help Albertans enter the job

market quickly so that they can participate in Alberta's growing economy. Additional programs could be developed in areas such as information and communication technologies, clean and renewable technology, artificial intelligence, and quantum computing.

In addition to increasing access to tech programming, we will also be adding supports to ensure that education remains affordable. This legislation will create \$7 million in new scholarships over the next five years to encourage young Albertans to join the high-tech workforce that will sustain our province's economy now and in the future. Many of these spaces will include a work experience component to help Albertans train in industry-relevant positions and acquire the skills needed for Alberta's tech sector. The government of Alberta will be working with local tech companies to ensure these placements happen and that Alberta industry builds the jobs for Albertans.

11:40

In collaboration with our crossministry partners, including Indigenous Relations, Status of Women, Community and Social Services, we will work to ensure underrepresented groups have access to exciting future-focused training. A portion of these new scholarships will focus specifically on women interested in entering tech-related training programs. As with the 3,000 additional spaces, the scholarships will roll out over a five-year period starting next year.

To help guide the development of these additional tech spaces, we will develop a talent advisory council on technology, or TACT. TACT is an innovative initiative that brings together the smartest minds from Alberta's tech industry and our postsecondary system. Together government, industry, and our postsecondary system will work hand in hand to create growth in the tech sector and to ensure that Albertans are highly skilled and adaptive to the rapidly evolving tech-driven economy. An open and transparent recruitment process will be used to seek interested Albertans as members of TACT. We will work with our partner ministries to select knowledgeable representatives from the tech industry, labour organizations, and academia who are committed to helping our economy diversify and grow. TACT will also include student representation and representatives from organized labour. TACT members will play a key role in ensuring that our tech-related skills and training meet the needs of students, industry, and our communities and remain relevant now and as the industry grows. We're hoping to have TACT members selected by this summer.

In addition to the postsecondary implications, this bill will also create a new interactive digital media tax credit to encourage the growth of the digital media industry, a sector which has the potential for substantial growth in our province and could grow to accommodate many Alberta-based jobs for tech graduates. By supporting our interactive digital media sector, we can ensure that talented Albertans can remain in their home province and don't have to move to less desirable places like Ontario or B.C. to participate in the tech economy.

Our government will be able to bolster two successful tax credit programs that currently support innovation, diversification, and job creation in Alberta by enacting Bill 2. The Alberta investment tax credit program supports up to \$100 million in investment in new and growing small businesses each year. This tax credit gives an additional 5 per cent for people who invest in companies where the majority of the board of directors, including the CEO, are members of underrepresented groups. Continued support for the capital investment tax credit program will keep Alberta competitive in attracting and retaining investments while creating jobs for tech graduates. The capital investment tax credit program has already stimulated more than a billion dollars in capital projects for manufacturing, processing, and tourism infrastructure and could

stimulate considerable growth in the tech sector. Combined these tax credits spur investment in new services, new products, and new capital projects and bring increased opportunities for economic and employment growth.

The Growth and Diversification Act will also see Alberta expand in our burgeoning unmanned aerial systems sector. Unmanned aerial technologies have economic applications in a number of sectors important to our province, including oil and gas, agriculture, resource management, wildlife tracking, transportation systems, and emergency response processes. This initiative would position Alberta as an attractive investment location and create new jobs in the sector so that Alberta graduates can be employed in Alberta.

Our government knows that investment is the key to economic growth and diversification. This includes investment in businesses and in the people in our workforce. This proposed bill continues our government's commitment to increasing economic diversification, to supporting employers and entrepreneurs in creating sustained job growth, and to improving access to high-tech training opportunities in Alberta. With the Growth and Diversification Act we will create a province with a vibrant tech sector, where Alberta-based firms can take advantage of the highly skilled graduates coming out of our postsecondary system. We've heard from industry that there is a need for tech-trained talent in this province. The initiatives in the Growth and Diversification Act create the learning and training atmosphere needed to fill industry's talent gap with talented graduates from our postsecondary system so that Albertans will not need to leave their home province.

The many measures in the Growth and Diversification Act will ensure that Alberta's economy continues to grow for many years to come. I encourage all members of this House to support Bill 2, Growth and Diversification Act.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gottfried: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you for the opportunity to speak to Bill 2, the Growth and Diversification Act, today again. This is an opportunity for us to talk about diversification, a topic that comes up not only in this House but across this province. We've talked before about statistics and how to tell the truth with statistics and how to bend and how to lie with statistics, and we also hear, I think, rhetorical comments of up, up, up in this House as well.

But we've also talked in the past, Madam Speaker, about the fact that this province actually has diversified significantly over the last 20 to 30 years – in fact, we've moved from about 37 per cent of our economy being in the oil and gas sector to only 25 per cent – the fact, if you exclude that 25 per cent of oil and gas energy sector activity, that we're still the third-largest economy in Canada, ahead of British Columbia in the most recent statistics we have. We are a diversified province, and a lot of that has been done on the strength of what we know as the Alberta advantage – the power of entrepreneurial spirit which this province is renowned for, the power of the prairie work ethic, which we are so proud of, and the pioneering spirit which has driven the province since it was first formed – in fact, preceded by the spirit of our First Nations people.

"How do we diversify?," I think, is the question here. Do we diversify by micromanaging and trying to incentivize and trying to pick winners and losers and trying to throw carrots at people or, as I've said before, throw candy back at people we've stolen the meat and potatoes from, putting a Band-Aid on the critical illness, and so many other visions that we can look at, Madam Speaker?

Do we do it by shrinking other industries so that that pie chart looks better, so that we can say, "Oh, look at that. It's increased in

the size of our total economy. We've diversified. Isn't it great?" as we shrink that pie, which is the Alberta economy?

Do we chase away investment? Have we so damaged our economic fundamentals that we're now becoming famous not for the Alberta advantage but some of those disadvantages which are driven by policy, ideology, and a regulatory framework which is actually detrimental to a broad-based diversification? Madam Speaker, there is nothing better than broad-based diversification.

Are we killing the entrepreneurial class? Is this government failing to recognize that for people to take risks, there need to be rewards and there needs to be a balance between those risks and rewards because those risks that are taken do not come with a guarantee of reward? They come with a hope and a vision and a drive and an entrepreneurial spirit, which, on a good day, with great luck and hard work and great ideas and good products sometimes yield a reward.

When those rewards are earned, where do they end up? Do they end up back in the economy? Do they end with the staff? Do they end up with those investors, or do they end up with a deeper hand in their pockets from a government which believes in bigger government and taking all that money and spending it, oh, so wisely as they write their transcripts with red ink? Maybe they write their eulogy with red ink. It would be so fitting, Madam Speaker.

Do they, in doing so, decimate the venture capital ecosystem for the 1 per cent that is disparaged almost daily in this House, Madam Speaker, who actually make up much of that class? It's not 1 per cent; it's probably 20 per cent of people that say: "You know, I think that's a great idea. I'm going to invest with you. I like your idea. I like your plan. I think that's a fair risk. I'm going to put money into your venture. It's outside of my core business. Maybe I made my money in oil and gas. Maybe I made my money in another sector, but you know what? I like to diversify my portfolio, too, so I'd like to give you some money to develop something that is completely out of my sector, whether that's something in the hospitality industry, the tourism sector, technology, agriculture, forestry, renewables, the energy sector."

Have we decimated that ecosystem, which is not driven by government? It's driven by the entrepreneurial spirit which is so renowned, which we, once upon a time, were renowned for in this province as part of that broader Alberta advantage, that I sadly say is at great risk in this province today, Madam Speaker.

11:50

Are we talking to people about the social licence and what that's going to earn us in terms of attracting investors here? I reflect back and this argument and this discussion relate back to Bill 1 and Bill 2. What is the signal we are sending to the world from Alberta, Madam Speaker? It frightens me as not only a born-and-raised Albertan but somebody who's spent a lot of time in the global scene.

I'm always proud when I'm around the country and around the world here, whether I'm in Hong Kong or Singapore or Beijing or Guangzhou or Shanghai or Jakarta, talking to people there about how proud we are to have this province, that has always stood head and shoulders above almost every jurisdiction in North America to attract the investment, to attract people not just to the bounty of resources we have in this province, Madam Speaker, but to the spirit we have in this province, the can-do spirit that we have been renowned for under the Alberta advantage, that has allowed us to attract that investment not with incentives, not with candy, but with a solid plate of Alberta-grown beef and Alberta-grown potatoes and probably some vegetables and legumes that we grow proudly in this province as well. That is the Alberta that we have been able to sell across this country, across North America, and around the world. That is the

message that investors are looking for, not how many points we are ahead of somebody else and the race to the bottom of incentives.

Madam Speaker, the minister of economic development said that we were the first government – and I'm paraphrasing here: thanks to us, we now have levelled the playing field. Well, actually, it's quite ironic because the playing field was not level before. It was in our advantage. We actually were at the high end of that playing field – the high end of that playing field – that allowed us, without incentives, to go to the world and say, "You need to invest in Alberta." Not "We want you to invest in Alberta"; "You need to."

Madam Speaker, I see that in our future again. I see a time when Alberta can go around the globe. First, around North America we need to be the most business- and investor-friendly jurisdiction in North America, full stop, and we will achieve that. In doing that, it will give us the strength and the fundamental economics we need, which this government has destroyed, to allow us to go around North America first and tell people that we are the best jurisdiction for them to invest in, for them to build a business in, for them to create jobs and wealth in.

That will allow us to dig ourselves out of that \$96 billion hole that this government is digging for us. We will not tax our way out of that debt, Madam Speaker. We need to grow our way out of that debt, and the only way to do that is through improving the fundamental economics of this great province to ensure that we deliver competitiveness, regulatory competitiveness, an ideology where people go: "Those people are the kind of people I would like to do business with. That province has a bounty of resources which are so attractive to the world, whether that's energy, oil and gas, forestry, agriculture, tourism." We need to have an open-door policy to bring people from around the world to spend their money here, to buy our exports but to invest here as well.

Madam Speaker, I've looked at some recent articles. We're seeing that the investment market is diversifying. They're diversifying. They're diversifying away from Alberta and Canada, \$40 billion of investment from fund managers now moved out of this country, diversified away from Alberta and Canada, a net loss of close to \$40 billion of foreign direct investment.

We're seeing more today. ConocoPhillips is preparing to sell their stake in Cenovus. They became the largest shareholder. That's not talked about here. We talked about: oh, isn't it great; a Canadian company bought it. No. Actually, in that transaction ConocoPhillips became the largest single shareholder of Cenovus. Now they are divesting themselves of that interest, \$2.7 billion, and they're willing to take a discount on that because of what? It's a distressed asset because of the two words that I never thought in my lifetime I would hear used in the same sentence, "political risk" and "Alberta." Shame on us that anybody has been able to use those – and I hear it. I hear it across this province, I hear it in Calgary-Fish Creek, I hear it on the streets of Calgary, and I hear it in backyard barbecues. I hear "Alberta" and "political risk" in the same sentence.

I hear: "What am I going to do? Where are we going in this province?" I hear, sadly: "Where will I move if we continue on this path? Where will I move?" I hear that from born-and-raised Calgarians that I've known since childhood, and that saddens me. It saddens me to the point that I and my colleagues are prepared to fight for this province to ensure that we actually get the economic fundamentals right, that we can go to the world and we can tell them, not ask them or beg them – we can tell them – that they need to be in Alberta, they need to invest in Alberta if they're smart. If they're smart money, they will come to Alberta. Madam Speaker, before the next election I can tell you that we'll be out there telling them to get their chequebooks ready because on the day after that election they will want to be in Alberta. They will see that this

province is open for business, that it is going to be the most competitive jurisdiction in North America.

As I say to many of my friends in Hong Kong – Hong Kong has been voted, 26 years in a row, the most entrepreneurial economy in the world – "We're putting you on notice. Once we become number one in North America, we're coming after you guys." They laugh, and I say, "Watch out," because we will do that. Hong Kong is a special administrative region of China, 7 million people, not a speck of resources hardly, a quarter of the GDP of Canada. Madam Speaker, we have those bridges. We have those relationships not just with Hong Kong but with China and Southeast Asia and around the world. We have those relationships.

We have our best trading partner, our biggest trading partner to the south, the United States, and we need to start treating them as friends and partners, as our best neighbours, not as somebody to disparage and somebody to try and move away from. This is not a net zero game. It's not a zero-sum game. We can expand other markets around the world, making new friends and new partners and new customers, and still trade with our biggest trading partner to the south. I think that they need to hear that from us. Maybe that's why we're having trouble with some of our negotiations today. Maybe we've disrespected them as we demand respect for ourselves, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I think that we have a great opportunity here. I think it's been squandered by this government. I think that they're now trying to put those Band-Aids on. They're trying to throw candy at people through this legislation. What they fail to admit, fail to realize is that they've damaged the fundamental economics of this province so seriously that people are leaving here. The flight of capital is real. You can read about it every day in the newspaper, not from politicians but from economists, from pundits, from people who are in the financial markets, who are telling us where their money is going and not going. That frightens me because we should be a great place to invest. As I've said many times, you don't create a job until somebody puts a dollar at risk, unless it's a government job. And guess what? You need wealth to create those government jobs unless you have a pen loaded with red ink to the tune of \$96 billion.

Shame on us for not understanding that we need to live within our means, and shame on us for not passing on wealth to the next generation, Madam Speaker. That's what I think every household, every person in this Legislature – I would hope that they would hope to pass on wealth to their next generation. I know I do. I'm not going to pave the road for my kids, but I want to be in a position to be able to give them a small hand up, as I think we should with all Albertans. Shame on us to pass on debt. We should be passing on wealth, not debt, to our next generation and the generation beyond that and possibly the generation beyond that, as we've seen in Ontario, with the largest nonsovereign debt in the world. Do we want to be that? Are we following this on a race to the bottom? I hope not.

I hope that we create an opportunity here to actually live within our means, to invest wisely in infrastructure, to be able to have a plan to pay it off, not a path to balance, a \$96 billion path to imbalance, Madam Speaker. We have an opportunity to do the right thing here.

You know what? I will not be . . .

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Pursuant to Standing Order 4(2.1) the Assembly will stand adjourned until 1:30 this afternoon.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, June 5, 2018

Day 38

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 25 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent Conservative: 1 Vacant: 2

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, June 5, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Dr. Starke: Well, Mr. Speaker, thank you. It gives me great pleasure today to introduce to you and through you a group of nearly 50 seniors who are here today visiting the Legislature in honour of Seniors' Week June 3 to 9. These seniors boarded buses in Lloydminster and Vermilion early this morning, and they have spent the day participating in a program that's been co-ordinated by visitor services. While it's dangerous to single out one senior because they're all special, I do want to make special mention of one of the seniors who has actually been a leader of the group, and that's Mrs. Judy Woyewitka. Judy, where are you? Stand, even if you don't want to. Mrs. Woyewitka has a long and very illustrious service in the public. She was Vermilion's first female mayor and served on Vermilion town council for 21 years total as well as 12 as mayor. Last Friday Judy was awarded an honorary degree at the convocation ceremonies at Lakeland College for being Lakeland College's distinguished citizen. My congratulations to Judy. I'd like to ask my entire group to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Stony Plain. Nice to see you here.

Ms Babcock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of our Assembly guests from the Acheson Business Association, which represents over 350 local businesses in the Acheson industrial area. Acheson is a thriving industrial hub employing over 50,000 people every single day. Here today are President Roger Ward from Morgan Construction and Environmental Ltd.; Past-president and Director Dale Allen, Sci-Tech Engineered Chemicals; Vice-president Terry Janzen, Strongco Corporation; Treasurer Cathy Dool, Hayworth Equipment; Secretary Jo-Ann Willis, Willy's Trucking; Associate Director Sheldon Jacobs, KPMG LLP; Director Chris Konelsky, United Construction Company; Director Darren Boyde, Jen-Col Construction Ltd.; and the executive director of the Acheson Business Association, Natalie Birnie. I thank them all for the great work that they do supporting Acheson businesses, our entire region, and I ask them all to rise and receive the warm welcome of our Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the House, especially the Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert, members of the Alexander First Nation council on health services. We have here today Councillor Joe Kootenay, Councillor Anita Arcand, Councillor Cheryl Savoie, as well as Executive Assistant of Health Susan Budnick. They are members of the council and are working very hard to improve the lives of the people they represent out at Alexander. I have invited them here today to attend question

period and ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the best volunteers in all of the province of Alberta, from Edmonton-McClung, whose help, support, and friendship I so greatly appreciate. Stand as I mention your names, please. I am proud to introduce Francine Bérubé, Patrick Barbosa, Carla Drader, Ramona Sather, Alan Sather, Selam Beyene, Leah Naicken, Adrienne Arnott, Michael Arnott, Joscelyn Proby, and Usha Bachhu. I ask my guests to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you two nominees of the 37th annual Ernest C. Manning innovation awards. The Manning awards recognize innovation and discover, encourage, and reward Canadian innovators. Today on behalf of BioNeutra North America Inc. we are joined by Bill Smith, chair of the board and former mayor of Edmonton, who is representing nominee Dr. Zhu for creating a low-calorie natural sweetener, and on behalf of Run-Withit Myrna and Dean Bittner, who were nominated for their innovation in synthetic customer environments. We are also joined by my friend and chair of the Manning awards board, Sol Rolinger. I would now ask my guests to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you members of the Strathcona county chapter of the Canadian Federation of University Women, which is a nonpartisan, voluntary, and self-funded organization with clubs across Canada. Since 1919 CFUW has worked to improve the status of women and promote human rights, public education, social justice, and peace. The MLAs for Edmonton-Mill Creek and Lethbridge-East as well as myself are proud to be CFUW members. It is an honour to represent active and engaged citizens like my guests in the gallery today, who work to support the well-being and success of women both here at home and around the world. I now ask Lesley Ratcliff, Tammy Irwin, Amy Macleod, Ruth Eckford, Carol Wilson, Carol Hare, and Shirley Reid to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly guests from Sustainival, the world's first green carnival. Here today, Founder and CEO Joey Hundert, Executive Director Odette Hutchings, and Director Dominic Mishio. Sustainival operates a full-scale carnival midway that runs entirely on renewable energy. It's going to be taking place in Edmonton, Fort McMurray, and Lethbridge. It's in Edmonton this weekend at the Edmonton Expo Centre June 7 to 10 and then in Fort McMurray at McDonald Island park from June 14 to 17, thanks in part to support through our

climate change office. Sustainival provides an important opportunity for Albertans to join the conversation on sustainability, the potential of exponential clean technologies, and the inspiring sustainability initiatives taking place in our province. I see that my guests have risen. I ask them to receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. members, any other introductions? The hon. Minister of Health and Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: [Remarks in Tagalog] Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce to you and through you many members who are strong advocates and leaders from Alberta's Filipino community. This past weekend I was pleased to celebrate with Filipino Albertans in Edmonton and Calgary as our government proclaimed each and every June forevermore as Philippine Heritage Month in Alberta. Today Alberta is home to more than 175,000 Filipinos, making Alberta the second-largest Filipino place in Canada. I hope that all members of Alberta will join us in celebrating the tremendous contributions of generations of Filipinos to Alberta's faith, civic, cultural, and economic communities, of course, as well. I ask that my guests rise as I say their names: Ida, Marco, Grace, Erica, Lucy, Annie, Jun, Swee-Hin, Virginia, Josephine, Tess, and Kehrl, and if there are any others, please also rise. [Remarks in Tagalog] everyone, and please, colleagues, join me in extending the warm welcome to our guests.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

Acheson Industrial Area

Ms Babcock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am so proud of the part of Alberta that I represent, and I am so proud of our region, which is prosperous in large part because of the Acheson industrial area. The Acheson industrial area is one of Alberta's largest economic engines. Consisting of 10,600 acres, it is the largest medium industrial area in Alberta. Three hundred businesses from small to large call Acheson home, and 50,000 people every day come from all over the Edmonton region and beyond to do work and business. Seven hundred and fifty billion dollars flow through Acheson annually, and it provides \$15 million in taxes to help fund the services all Albertans need.

1:40

Acheson is also in a strategic location. It is serviced by three main highway corridors and by main line rail, is near three airports, and is only 35 kilometres north of the EIA. The success of the Acheson industrial area is due in part to the great work that has been done by the Acheson Business Association, members of which are present today and have been introduced. The association is made up of businesses and professional people with the primary purpose of promoting the commercial, industrial, social, and civic interests of the Acheson industrial area and the surrounding communities. Since its inception in 2004 the association's unwavering business vision and commitment to our community have helped it to achieve much for Alberta.

Looking to the future, sustainable development and balancing industry and environmental stewardship is the association's mantra. Energy efficiency and green buildings and technologies are front of

mind as the Acheson industrial area moves forward. Their community efforts include numerous fundraising events like Make a Difference Christmas Campaign and the new Hockey for Hampers, and proceeds from their annual golf tournament and participation in the Coldest Night of the Year go directly to the Parkland Food Bank Society.

Mr. Speaker, we are fortunate to have the Acheson industrial area and the Acheson Business Association not just in my region but in Alberta. Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Union Certification

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last spring we warned this NDP government that the Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act could open the door for union abuses. We warned that secret ballots are a fundamental pillar of democracy, consent, and transparency, which this bill eliminated. We now see that the extended powers the Alberta Labour Relations Board has been given are most definitely being used to support the unionization of Alberta's workforce. Quotes taken from workers in a news article in February 2018 say, and I quote, that the labour law in Alberta designed to empower workers has left labourers in Calgary saying they felt tricked, bullied, and voiceless. Workers allege that they were deceived into signing union cards and unwittingly made history in what's believed to be Alberta's first union certification without an employee vote.

Workers at Icon West Construction were approached by union officials at the gate of their secured company workplace. One worker said that he was approached by a union official who said that he owed \$250 in past dues, but if he paid \$2 now and signed, his dues would be wiped clean. The duped worker said: instead, he used my signature not for a receipt but to sign me up for the union.

Others were taken advantage of due to their poor English, and yet others were told that they would never work in Calgary again if they didn't sign these union cards. Then to add insult to injury, when 90 per cent of the workers wanted a secret ballot vote, at an ALRB hearing they said no. One of the workers complained that the board didn't want to hear the stories of bullying or how they were misled by union officials.

Last year we warned that the NDP plan to take away the absolute right to a secret ballot for union certification votes would hurt workplace democracy and hurt both Alberta workers and employers. The right to a secret ballot for workers must be restored, Mr. Speaker.

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

Agriculture in Edmonton-Manning

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituency of Edmonton-Manning is very fortunate to have some of the best agricultural land in the province. Places such as Riverbend Gardens have been family owned and operated for three generations. Riverbend Gardens played a crucial role in the creation of both the Edmonton downtown farmers' market and the Old Strathcona Farmers' Market. They also support our communities through their community-supported agriculture program.

Horse Hill Berry Farm offers four varieties of raspberries at their U-pick farm in northeast Edmonton, which is another sweet addition to our constituency. Norbest Farms has served the greater Edmonton area for generations. You may be familiar with Norbest Farms from their famous Great Potato Giveaway, where they gave away over 45,000 kilograms of potatoes in 2009 to thousands of

Albertans. We are extremely grateful to our family-owned and -operated growers and gift shops such as Kuhlmann's greenhouse and the Root Seller. Mr. Speaker, Edmonton-Manning is also home to our tree nurseries such as Sunstar Nurseries and Arrowhead Nurseries. Last but not least, northeast Edmonton is home to Lady Flower Gardens, which provides supervised access for experiential learning opportunities on 93 acres of land to nonprofit partners and donates to our local food banks. You can find many of our local producers at the Miller Crossing Farmers' Market, located at our Kingsway Legion every Sunday with over 50 vendors.

Mr. Speaker, demand for locally produced food continues to grow in Alberta. Alberta's local food industry is a key part of our economy. Farmers' markets and direct farm purchases exceeded \$1 billion in 2016. Our government recently passed the Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act. This will help support those local growers. We also established a heavy transport corridor northwest of Edmonton, that will help maintain the integrity of this vital agricultural land.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be part of a government which values local agriculture and to represent Edmonton-Manning, a special constituency where agriculture is cherished and where we do not take the land we have for granted.

Thank you.

Alberta Advantage and Government Policies

Mr. Gotfried: The Alberta advantage: it rolls off the tongue so easily, so familiar to us all, yet somehow in these days of the NDP world view it seems but an elusive concept. Investors take flight, small businesses struggle, unemployment lingers, confidence wanes, people leave, yet talk of incentives is touted as a panacea for all of our economic woes.

But the failure is not of Albertans, not of the entrepreneurial spirit that still flows through our veins, not of the rich bounty that we have been blessed with. It is the failure of this government to understand and appreciate that their ideology, attitude, and the heavy hand of socialist dogma are real and have so severely damaged our economic fundamentals as to have stolen something that can only be described in the most technical of terms. Yes, the Alberta NDP have robbed us of our provincial mojo. I hear it from my neighbours in Calgary-Fish Creek, I hear it in downtown Calgary, I hear it at backyard barbecues, and I hear it across our great province: "What happened to the Alberta we love? Where will I go if this continues?"

Mr. Speaker, I also hear from Albertans that they want responsible government, they want accountable government, they want effective and efficient government, they want a compassionate government. But they also want to pass on a legacy of wealth and prosperity, not the burden of debt, to future generations. That is a sense of right and wrong we know as Albertans, part of the prairie work ethic we are proud of and the pioneer spirit that built this province. I hear from Albertans that they expect a government that provides an opportunity to all Albertans to reach their greatest potential.

Mr. Speaker, in 2019 Albertans will have an opportunity to choose that government. My colleagues and I are committed to earning their confidence and trust to lead them not on this government's unconscionable \$96 billion path to perpetual imbalance but on a confident, visionary, inspirational, can-do path back to the Alberta advantage.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

Seniors' Week

Mr. Horne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As many of you know, June 3 to 9 is Seniors' Week in Alberta. We all have seniors in our lives, and seniors are vital members of our communities as parents and grandparents, mentors and friends, and colleagues.

Alberta seniors are actively engaged in their communities. According to recent statistics almost 20 per cent of Albertans over the age of 65 are active in the workforce, and nearly half of seniors aged 65 to 74 volunteer in their communities. Because seniors contribute so much to the lives of their families, friends, and neighbours, it is important that they are able to age in their communities. The latest numbers show that more than 90 per cent of seniors live in their own homes. That means that the supports and services that government has put in place to help seniors stay in their communities are working.

But we have more work to do to ensure Albertans can age in dignity close to their loved ones. Our government is committed to this work. Each year we provide close to \$3 billion in services and supports for seniors. In Budget 2018 we protected the Alberta seniors' benefit so that thousands of seniors have up to \$280 a month when they really need it. We also launched a home repair and adaptation program to help seniors age in their homes close to loved ones. We passed legislation that protects seniors in the workplace by prohibiting discrimination based on age through the Alberta Human Rights Act. Those are just a few examples of the supports for seniors that our government has invested in.

For more than 30 years Alberta has celebrated our seniors. This week and every week I hope everyone takes a moment to spend quality time with an older person, to recognize them, and to thank them for all they mean to us and to our communities.

Thank you.

Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion Project

Mr. McIver: We live in hope, Mr. Speaker. On this side we really want the Trans Mountain pipeline to be built. Our NDP government has promised to put Alberta up to \$2 billion more in debt to help buy an old but profitable pipeline. They promised to pay up to that \$2 billion to solve not a money problem but a rule of law problem. It's like taking your car to the mechanic, saying that it runs great but has a flat tire, and the mechanic gives your vehicle a tune-up and forgets about the flat. The driver is now stuck on the side of the road after paying the \$2 billion tune-up bill, broken-hearted about the fact that the tire is still flat and they can't drive. This is where we are now on the Trans Mountain pipeline file.

For a year the United Conservative Party has asked this government to confront illegal protesters. Our leader has offered many ideas to put pressure on B.C., most of them ignored by the government. The Alberta NDP and federal Liberals instead chose to ridicule great ideas offered up by the Leader of the Official Opposition. They focused on a crisis of financing when it was always a crisis of confidence, in hopes that Albertans and Canadians would not notice the cowardly way these governments failed to push back the illegal protesters. They put their own political convenience in front of the real interests of Canada and Alberta.

1:50

Mr. Speaker, this Alberta NDP and their allies the Trudeau Liberals have left Alberta and all of Canada in the ditch so that they can pander to their real friends now protesting against the Trans Mountain pipeline. The B.C. NDP are still not onside. The uncertainties that made the project unviable for the private sector

still exist. Meanwhile, the rest of us are stuck on the side of the road with a flat social licence tire, having paid for an unneeded tune-up.

This is how the NDP has solved our pipeline problem, but we can still hope for better. We hope that the Prime Minister while in Alberta today will promise to push the illegal protesters back. We hope the NDP will save their high-five media conferences until it really is mission accomplished. Then and only then can all of Alberta and Canada join in that celebration.

Oral Question Period

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

Deaths of Children in Care

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today sad news about an increase in the number of deaths of children in care of the province of Alberta. It is sad for, I'm sure, all of us to learn of an increase of seven deaths of children in care, an increase of 26 per cent for 2017 over the previous year. Can the government explain why these numbers have increased given the great focus on protecting children in care and what plans the government has to address what appears to be a deteriorating situation?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. We know that, frankly, any deaths of children in care are too many deaths, and it is an issue with which we have been incredibly seized, as have members on both sides of the aisle. We are continuing to move forward as quickly as we can with as many plans as we can to improve the situation and to protect kids in care. We've moved forward already on phase 1 of the committee's recommendations, and we are very close to completing phase 2. In addition, we are continuing to invest further in child protection.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Kenney: I thank the hon. the Premier for her answer, Mr. Speaker. The ministerial panel on children in care reported back several months ago. We're now at the end of this Legislature session this week, and no legislation has been brought forward by the government to give effect to those recommendations. Why has the government not brought forward legislation, and will it commit to do so as soon as this House resumes?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact, we did bring forward legislation with respect to the first phase of the committee's work, so we moved as quickly as we could. In addition, in the interim what we've done is we've significantly increased resources to the ministry that is engaged in the work of protecting children in care. As well, we've been working with the federal government to improve the level of services that occur in First Nations communities. We will continue to do that work, and we will absolutely do whatever is necessary legislatively or otherwise.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Premier. Unfortunately, the ministerial panel was prevented or precluded from exploring the tragic Serenity case in detail. Such an exploration would have allowed for, I think, more detailed recommendations and lessons to

be learned from the atrocious mishandling of Serenity's case. Why did the government preclude the committee from that detailed investigation of Serenity's case, the failure of which handicapped the entire process?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact, we don't agree that it did handicap the entire process. It was a very broad-based consultation where all members of the House were able to engage and stakeholders and people impacted by the issue were given a great range within which to engage. During the course of the work of the committee the Serenity case was before the courts. In fact, having it go before the committee would have prevented the courts from doing their work, which was absolutely not in the best interest. That's why we didn't do it. Members opposite who were here at the time were fully aware of that. At the same time, I believe that the committee was able to get good work done.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.
Second main question.

Surgery Wait Times

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are more reports today about growing wait times for Albertans seeking critical health care. The CBC reports that Judy Wales waited an agonizing 76 weeks for shoulder replacement surgery. She sought out an Edmonton chronic pain management clinic but ended up on yet another wait-list. Why are wait-lists growing for people like Judy Wales, causing them to live in pain as their health deteriorates and often as they are forced to take painkillers, which can also be harmful to their health in the long run?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will say that, you know, we empathize with all Albertans who are forced to be on wait-lists to wait for surgeries. We know that it's absolutely very difficult for them and for their family members who are watching them wait. That's why we're doing everything we can to continue to invest in our health care system to ensure that we can get better outcomes with respect to that. As part of Budget 2018 we've allocated \$40 million to address wait times for surgeries, and we'll continue to do the work that is necessary to ensure that Albertans' health care needs are well met.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Data from the Canadian Institute for Health Information indicates that wait times in Alberta for hip replacement surgery, knee replacement surgery, cataract surgery have all grown since 2015 even though the government is spending more money on the health system, a significant increase in health spending. My question for the Premier is: why are Alberta patients getting less for more money?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would suggest that we are in fact making progress overall with respect to wait times, and we will continue to invest in our public health care system to make sure that we bring those wait times even lower. What I will say, however, is that what will not help reduce wait times are the privatization plans, either of funding or of delivery,

that have been offered up by the members opposite. What those will do is create two wait-lists, one for the very wealthy and one for the rest of us. Absolutely not the solution to improving this problem.

Mr. Kenney: In fact, Mr. Speaker, the wealthy and the desperate very often end up taking their pain and their dollars to the United States for care because they aren't willing to wait two years for surgery here in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, heart valve surgery wait times, according to AHS, are up by 40 per cent since 2015. Interventions on the stomach have increased by 12 weeks since 2015. Interventions on lymph nodes have increased by 35 per cent in terms of the time it takes, increased by four weeks since 2015. Again, why is the government spending – where is the money going? Is it going to bureaucracy? Why isn't it going to patients and reducing wait times?

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, what we've been able to do is make progress in some areas, yet we know there is still work to be done in other areas. Our government has premised that work on a couple of foundational principles. First of all, we need to finally ensure that there is stability within the health care system as opposed to having it become a political football, which is what happened under the previous government. Nor should it be the place for experimental privatization opportunities, which also created problems. We have also ensured that it's received stable funding. These are the things that will ensure that we're able to make better progress and deliver better health care in the long run.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Eagle Spirit Pipeline Project

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to come back to an issue I raised yesterday, which is the proposed Eagle Spirit pipeline, a proposal of a consortium of First Nations to create a pipeline to ship Alberta oil to global markets through the northern B.C. coast. Will the Premier agree with me that this is a project that we should in principle support as we pursue multiple options for global market access for Alberta energy and that we ought to support any good-faith initiative by First Nations to participate in our energy industry?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I believe the member heard yesterday when he asked this question, our Minister of Energy has met with the proponents of that particular project, and we're certainly very interested in continuing to work with them on that project. We are, in fact, also very supportive of a number of different consortiums of indigenous groups that are looking to engage more effectively or more prosperously in pipeline construction, either with the Eagle Spirit or with the Trans Mountain. We'll continue to do that work because we know that it will ultimately result in better returns for Albertans.

2:00

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that the minister has met with the proponents. The problem is that the federal government has a bill before Parliament, Bill C-48, that would make it impossible, illegal to export oil through the northern B.C. coast with a tanker traffic ban. Will the Premier on behalf of the government of Alberta and in solidarity with the First Nations consortium proposing the Eagle Spirit pipeline call on the federal government

to withdraw Bill C-48 to allow the prospect of the Eagle Spirit to proceed?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact, what we have done already and what the Minister of Energy has done is written to the federal government indicating that we think that the tanker ban in its current iteration is too broad and may well limit opportunities that may at some point in the future exist. We know that that work has to continue, and we will continue to work collaboratively with indigenous partners.

Quite honestly, we know that it was the former federal government's failure to do that that resulted, ultimately, in the death of Northern Gateway, and we know that they can't make that decision again.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Kenney: It was actually the federal government's stated intention of introducing Bill C-48 that led to their veto of Northern Gateway. It was a decision of the current government of Canada.

I'm glad to hear that the government of Alberta has raised concerns, but could we maybe get a little bit of clarity on that, Mr. Speaker, and move that from an expression of concern to actual opposition to an unnecessary ban on northern tanker traffic? Does the Premier not understand that it would be beneficial to our industry, our jobs, and our economy and to these First Nations pipeline proponents if we could at least potentially get northern coast access?

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, the member opposite has displayed his very high level of talent at rewriting history, but I'm pretty sure that the court decision that killed Northern Gateway rendered its decision on the deliberation process of the former Conservative federal government.

That being said, Mr. Speaker, what we will do is continue to engage with the federal government. As I've said, we've articulated that we have concerns about it. We're not going to do gratuitous insults. We're not going to tweet things at them. We will however engage on how this is a problem. We need to be respectful of indigenous partners along the coast and on the path.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

AHS Report on Health Worker Mental Health Supports

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Minister of Health, yesterday I asked you about a report done on mental health supports and morale within AHS, and I asked if you would direct them to release that report. Your response talked about some of the things that your government is doing, which is fine, but you didn't answer the question, and you didn't even mention the report. Minister, I'll ask you again. Will you direct AHS to release any reports that they currently have on the state of mental health supports in the health care system?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am so incredibly proud of the work that our front-line paramedics do in our province and all of those who work in terms of emergencies. When I

talk to Albertans about EMS, they talk about how it's the scariest time of their life when they need to call 911 and wait for that help and how much they appreciate the front-line support. In turn, we certainly need to give that support to the front lines as well, including supporting the path to mental readiness and increasing opportunities for mental health supports for all front-line workers. I receive regular updates from AHS and look forward to receiving their advice on how we can continue to support front-line responders.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Minister, I've always commended your government for the additional resources and supports for EMS, which you talked about yesterday. However, I spoke to many paramedics yesterday after question period, and they don't feel that those measures are making enough of a difference. Minister, have you read the report? Does it identify where we're failing front-line health care workers?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, I believe that the member referred to a report that was commissioned by Alberta Health Services. I have not received said report, but I do regularly communicate with their employers, whether it's Alberta Health Services or any of the contracted employers in Alberta that work with our paramedics as well. I have to say how grateful I am for their front-line services and the work they do, how proud I am that our government invested \$23 million more to expanding supports and expansion of those services. I understand that the caucus that asked the question – I think one person voted for it, one person voted against it, and one person didn't vote. I have to say: where do you stand on front-line services and the people of this province, hon. member?

Mr. Fraser: Minister, your refusal to share vital information with this House is troubling. Whatever your reasons for not directing the release of this report, they have to be weighed against the potential to save the lives of front-line health care workers. Any potential political liabilities that you may have in this report or that this report may present your government aren't worth the delay. To the same minister: will you direct the release of this report before it's too late?

Ms Hoffman: Again, hon. member, I am very proud to work with the employers, with the unions, and with the workers that provide this important service across Alberta. I look forward to hearing advice from all parties on how we can continue to strengthen and support folks. The number one thing they've said to me is, "Get us more resources," Mr. Speaker, and that's why this government invested \$23 million additional dollars to ensure that we have the right supports. That's why this government is working with AHS to make sure that we install power stretchers in all AHS ambulances. We're proud to work with front-line responders and to make sure they have the supports necessary, and we will continue to work to help support them in their mental health journey as well. We've got the side of workers on this side of the House.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Steel and Aluminum Tariffs

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week the U.S. government announced new unfair and discriminatory tariffs on Canadian steel and aluminum. I've already heard from folks in my

constituency who are deeply concerned about the impacts that these new rules might have on our economy. To the Minister of Economic Development and Trade: what are you doing to fight for Albertans and get these tariffs reversed?

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We always stand up for Alberta workers and Alberta companies, whether it's licence plates, pipelines, lumber, or steel. President Trump's tariffs are ridiculous, and they're insulting and will hurt workers and families on both sides of the border. We support the federal government approach for strong retaliatory measures and also their commitment to consulting Alberta companies and workers to hear their ideas and concerns. Now, there is a 30-day period which provides the President an opportunity to walk back these dangerous and protectionist measures.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we are already seeing stories about the negative impacts these tariffs might have on producers and consumers, to the same minister: what are you doing to advocate for Albertans who might be unfairly impacted by these new, costly increases?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Immediately on learning about these tariffs, I had a conversation with the CEO of AltaSteel, which is Alberta's largest steel producer. We convened a round-table that afternoon with the largest steel consumers as well to talk about the impacts, not only to the steel industry but, quite frankly, to the livelihoods of other sectors and other families. I can tell you that our government will not stand by as these workers and families and their livelihoods and jobs are put at risk. I can tell you that we're assessing the impacts of these tariffs, and we'll be in constant dialogue with the federal government. Just yesterday I spoke to the Prime Minister to voice Alberta's concerns.

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

Mr. Sucha: Thank you. Given that construction of the Trans Mountain pipeline is going to be started any day now and given that builders will need an incredible amount of steel throughout the project, again to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade: can you confirm whether or not this pipeline will be in fact impacted by these new tariffs?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to report that the tariffs will have no impact on the Trans Mountain pipeline. The majority of steel needed for the pipeline is coming from a plant to the east of us, and the rest is going to be sourced from outside of the U.S. So we're not going to be subject to any of these tariffs. I can tell you that we're working incredibly hard to ensure that this pipeline is built as soon as possible. The Premier has been a steadfast advocate and has said that we will do whatever it takes to get this pipeline built. We know that 15,000 jobs are significant, not only for Albertans but for all Canadians, and we stand behind this project.

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

Hillview Park Condominiums in Fort McMurray

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Fort McMurray's Hillview Park condominium complex was among the many destroyed in the 2016 wildfire. Since then owners have struggled with significant financial hardship and personal challenges as they attempt to rebuild their homes and their lives. Rebuilding has been stalled, but they still have to pay monthly, and they're now faced with new special assessments to pay for what? The owners are getting lost in stonewalling by their own condo board. To the Minister of Service Alberta: we're approaching four years now since the Condominium Property Act was amended, so why in 2018 are condo owners still facing significant barriers to obtaining basic general information or documents?

Ms McLean: Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, our government is focused on the priorities of regular Albertans, protecting them when they make a purchase, and no purchase is more important than buying a home. That's why our government took action to protect the residents of Fort McMurray from being scammed or gouged. We stationed experienced investigators in Fort McMurray to assist residents during the rebuild phase by providing advice for dealing with contractors and landlords. We continue to work in the community, and we're making sure the home builders and contractors who are taking deposits for their work have proper business licences. We're also working very hard on updates and regulatory amendments and changes to the Condominium Property Act. However, the issue that . . .

2:10

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
First supplemental.

Dr. Swann: Well, thank you. I hope we'll hear the rest of that answer, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister, the Hillview Park condo issue demonstrates why a quasi-judicial condominium dispute tribunal is so desperately needed in Alberta, yet your government has failed these affected owners by not finalizing the regulations to bring such a body into being. Will you quickly establish a condominium dispute tribunal as a much-needed, low-cost way of resolving or preventing some of these issues?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To complete my earlier answer, I did want to say to the member that this is a legal dispute between Viceroy and Hillview. It's currently before the courts, so we're unable to comment in detail about that particular issue. With respect to the tribunal, we went across the province and consulted with Albertans on the regulations for the Condominium Property Act and heard clearly that there is a strong appetite for a tribunal. We are bringing these out in phases. The next phase is to deal with the relationship and governance of condominium boards, and after that a tribunal is in the plans. Thank you.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, we're four years and counting. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: why doesn't the government's postdisaster responsibility to victims include making some kind of pro bono or low-cost legal services available to people whose lives have been totally devastated and cannot afford legal consultation?

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you very much to the member for the question. I'm aware of what is happening up there, you know, as

the Minister of Service Alberta stated as well. For my part in Municipal Affairs, one of the things that we did up there for the rebuild was put in a pilot program to try to give people more information about builders so they knew beforehand who they were dealing with. We did bring in builder licensing on December 1, 2017, to make sure people understood who was building their house, their contacts, their history, their qualifications to make sure in case something like this happened that they were covered. I mean, we do have warranties, which are after the fact, things like that, but builder licensing . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The Member for Calgary-West.

Criminal Code of Canada Penalty Provisions

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill C-75, which is being fast-tracked through the House of Commons, purports to modernize Canada's criminal justice system. The proposed changes include watering down sentences for many serious crimes, such as using the date-rape drug and forced marriage, in an effort to reduce crowding in jails. Minister, do you seriously support a plan that allows a court to slap someone on the wrist for these crimes as well as for impaired driving causing bodily harm and leaving Canada to participate in the activities of a terrorist group?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the member has correctly identified, it is within the jurisdiction of the federal Parliament to deal with those sorts of issues in the Criminal Code. For our part, we are doing what we can here in Alberta to ensure that we have the necessary officers in place in order to get the proper cases forward to Crown prosecutors. We're investing in those Crown prosecutors so that they can make the appropriate applications to ensure that individuals who belong in jail stay in jail.

Mr. Ellis: That's interesting, Mr. Speaker, given that in Ottawa last week the federal Justice minister indicated that she held meetings with provincial justice ministers, "all of whom are supportive of the bold reforms" in C-75. Minister, can you confirm the federal Justice minister's statement that you are onboard with the Trudeau government's plan to reduce penalties for abducting a child under the age of 14, disguise with intent, participating in organized crime, advocating for genocide? I could go on and on. Do you actually support these changes?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the member well knows, discussions that occur at federal-provincial-territorial meetings tend to have certain aspects which are confidential. That being said, justice ministers were able to come together across the country to talk about the issue of Jordan. One of the reforms that was brought forward was reforms to preliminary inquiries. There are a number of other reforms having to do with hybridization of offences. There were a variety of views in the room, and I'm sure I'll have more to say about that in just a moment.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we really just want to know if you agree with the federal minister's statement in Ottawa and given that, you know, this is a revolving-door justice system that is spinning faster and faster all the time, Minister, how can you

support these catch-and-release proposals in the face of Alberta's current rural crime epidemic?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, we here in Alberta are focused on those things which are in within our jurisdiction. The province of Alberta has an enormous number of tools at its disposal to ensure that we are addressing the rural crime issue. That's why we're investing in police. That's why we're investing in Crown prosecutors. We're ensuring that we're taking a more proactive approach to crime. We've also been working with a number of organizations like Alberta Citizens on Patrol to ensure that all Albertans who have a great interest in this issue can be invested in making progress, and we are making progress.

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

Physicians' Disciplinary Policies

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Health insists that the College of Physicians & Surgeons needs more legislative tools to revoke the licence of Dr. Ismail Taher, who is convicted of sexually assaulting a patient and a nurse, yet three years ago the college revoked the licence of a physician convicted of sexually assaulting three patients, so clearly the college does have the authority to revoke licences for these offences. The irony is that Dr. Taher has now stepped down due to public pressure. Minister, given this information why are you not directing the college to revoke the licence?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and to the member for the question. I, too, share concerns around wanting to guarantee that any time anyone goes to a health professional, they know that that professional doesn't have a record and that they wouldn't have a history of abuse. That's why I have worked within my responsibility and my area of rights as the Health minister to meet with the College of Physicians & Surgeons and really push this, because it is a regulatory college and a body that has authority over licensing for their members. It is an area where I don't believe I have the ability to revoke a licence.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mrs. Aheer: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that the college posts the names of all practising physicians on its website and Dr. Taher is on that list and given that this family physician admitted that he thought his 18-year-old victim's clothing choice was an invitation for him to touch her sexually during an examination, Minister, why are Albertans having to rely on ratemds.com to warn patients away from sexual predators?

Ms Hoffman: Well, certainly those remarks are very concerning. It is never appropriate for anyone to violate anyone's bodily autonomy without their full and active consent, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, when you're in a position as a patient, you aren't in a position to be able to consent, so that is deeply troubling, those remarks. Women and Albertans should feel safe while accessing medical care. When I was made aware of this situation, as the member knows, we ensured that we reached out to the college immediately, wanting to ensure that they moved with the greatest accountability they could for all Albertans.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, this is the problem, that we are hit now with the ability to not be able to tell people that they're safe. Public safety is the issue that's here. Given that the college recently introduced a no-tolerance policy for doctors sexually abusing patients, but the minister claims that the college needs new legislative tools before it can deal with sexual predators, and given that for the sake of public confidence in the health system, no tolerance means that it has to start today, Minister, if the college simply has a lack of tools when it is confronted with sexual abuse, that means nothing has changed, so when are you going to step in?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thanks again, Mr. Speaker. Again, this was very troubling. We want to ensure that all disciplinary action is made available for Albertans. We're going to expand the time limits, and we've worked with the college to make some progress on that. Some jurisdictions are ahead of Alberta because they have been addressing issues over the past number of years, including the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, who post criminal convictions for doctors and also keep disciplinary decisions on their website longer than Alberta. Ontario has recently taken legislative steps to prevent sexual abuse by amending the Regulated Health Professions Act. These are some of the tools the college wants, and I'm going to work with them to make . . .

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Alexander First Nation Supportive Living Grant

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, in light of his member's statement I would ask the Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert to pay special attention to my question today. On January 19, 2016, a letter was sent to the Alexander First Nation from the current Health minister confirming the approval of a \$1.2 million ASLI grant for expansion of the Keechewkamik home. Disabled residents were removed from their homes so renovations could begin. Almost two and a half years later the residents are still displaced. Minister, why have you not released the funds as promised?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

2:20

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll be very happy to follow up with the member opposite with regard to his specific concerns and with the local MLA as well. It's certainly our intent to make sure that there are as many long-term care beds and supportive living beds as possible for the people of this province and that we keep people as close to home as possible as well, including on-reserve, especially where we have willing partners. I know the department has been working closely with the grant recipients, and we look forward to being able to update the House very soon.

Mr. Hanson: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that the minister met with council in January 2017 and assured them that funds would be released by March 2017 and given that the government of Alberta sent a letter in September 2017 confirming an increase to the grant to \$1.4 million, Minister, you state in your letters how pleased you are to be able to respond to the supportive living needs of vulnerable Albertans, allowing them to age in their communities, much as what was said in the statement today. Why have you not released the promised funding?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll be happy to follow up with regard to the specifics. I think we have a proven track record working with you, hon. member. I certainly have delivered on the dialysis beds in Lac La Biche, something that Conservative governments failed to do for many, many years. I welcome the hon. member and all members to contact my office directly and be able to problem solve these kinds of things. On the floor of the House is certainly a challenging place to do that, but I do understand that there is some back and forth with legal and with other folks within the department and within the nation to make sure that the funds can be appropriately released. It is a complicated process, but I'll be happy to look into further details in a respectful way.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Hanson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister, for that answer. Given that the people living in this home have been removed to allow for renovations, which were started but stalled due to the lack of funding, over two years and waiting, Minister, council is here in the Chamber. Will you agree to meet with them today and come up with a solution? This has gone on long enough. And bring your chequebook.

Ms Hoffman: Thanks so much for the gotcha politics, Mr. Speaker. This is always fun when members in one breath ask for us to make cuts and in the next breath ask us to bring our chequebook. We are absolutely committed to working in partnership with First Nations, with local leaders around our province to make sure that we get beds built in the right communities to support the right care in the right place. Certainly, moving forward on projects on-reserve is a deep priority of mine, and I've made that very clear to my department. We'd be happy to troubleshoot, and I'd be very happy to meet, of course, with the folks that are here. Doing the "come today and bring your chequebook" is not exactly the most diplomatic way, but obviously I will meet with the constituents.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Provincial Fiscal Policies

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, Royal Bank's recent provincial outlook confirmed what Albertans already know. We are worse off today than when the NDP took power. One indicator is called the discomfort index, a combination of unemployment and inflation. Alberta's discomfort index when the NDP took office was 7. By 2016 it had risen to 8.4, and this year it's rising to 9. To the minister: why do you continue to push critical investment out of Alberta, resulting in Alberta families and communities being worse off?

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. I think he's a little confused because over the past year over 90,000 new full-time jobs have been created, mostly in the private sector. As well, there are a number of other indicators. Our GDP growth is up. We led the country last year with 4.9 per cent growth. We're on track to lead the country again this year. Our manufacturing numbers are up. Our exports are up. Wages are up. Retail is up. Wholesale is up. Housing construction is up. EI numbers are down. Alberta recorded the fastest year-over-

year decline in the number of beneficiaries among all provinces, down 26 per cent.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Barnes: Given that a recent Fraser Institute report found that before 2015 Albertans were each paying \$58 annually to service the province's interest, an Albertan in 2020 will pay \$655 in NDP interest, and hard-working Albertans have received longer wait times, six credit downgrades, and decades now of debt and interest, to the minister: Your wild spending has resulted in a 1,000 per cent increase in interest costs per capita. Yes, that is up, too. What do you have to say to hard-working Albertans who must pay this back?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, what I would say to these Albertans is: look at the record of the Conservative Party over there. They had increases to the operating lines of 10 per cent some years. We're flattening that out. What wouldn't help Albertans out is the flat tax that that side keeps talking about. It's really exposed for what it is, a handout that benefits only the rich in this province, and all of us pay for it. Why don't they talk about that, how the flat tax would hurt every Albertan except the 1 per cent, which are their friends?

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, Alberta's current annual interest of over \$2 billion doesn't help anyone out. Given that the same institute report found that by 2020 Alberta's ever-increasing interest payments per capita will surpass British Columbia's and be 70 per cent of Ontario's and all the while services Albertans receive diminish, to the minister: why have you reduced Alberta's future prosperity, destroyed investment, and jeopardized every single priority that Alberta families and communities care deeply about?

Mr. Ceci: Mr. Speaker, you know, on this side we're carefully and prudently reducing the deficit without making the reckless cuts that the UCP Party would make across Alberta. They would fire thousands of teachers and nurses and leave us all without the programs and services we need. The Leader of the Opposition has no record to stand on as he was part of six straight deficit budgets, the largest of which was \$56 billion in just one year alone; \$145 billion to our national debt: that's what he added.

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

Workforce Education and Training

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hear from many constituents who were laid off two or three years ago that they haven't been able to find work or, if they do find a job, it doesn't use their skills. They want to retrain but can't find short-term programs that will get them back to work quickly to pay their bills. What government strategy ensures that education programs offered by community and employer collaborations are supported through economic diversification, coal community transition, and other programs to increase opportunities for people to get back to work?

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll thank the member for the very timely question, an important question. There are a number of initiatives that our government has been rolling out through not only my department but also the Ministry of Labour and others to help especially workers, whether it's in retraining,

developing the right tools and skills to be able to go back into the workforce as well as a number of initiatives to support our job creators, our businesses around the province to get back on their feet. We know that small business is the economic engine of this province. Our government has been steadfast in our commitment, and we will continue to look at ways to support workers through a variety of tools moving forward.

Ms McPherson: Given that Rainforest Alberta and Calgary Economic Development have worked with employers to create a program called EvolveU that meets employers' needs for work-ready developers now and given that there is currently no government funding to address the immediate needs of the tech sector for full stack developers, not coders, will the Minister of Advanced Education commit to covering all or part of the tuition for innovative programs such as EvolveU that have been designed to address the ongoing shortage of tech workers, as identified by Amazon and others?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Of course, this Legislature has before it Bill 2, the Growth and Diversification Act, which commits to creating 3,000 new technology spaces in postsecondary institutions. In our budget that we brought forward, we committed millions of dollars to funding those spaces and funding the short-term training programs that the member referred to in her previous question. As far as the details go for providing additional funding, I advise the hon. member to stay tuned.

Ms McPherson: Given that EvolveU is a great example of GBA plus focused program development that is intentional about inclusivity and given that speaking to underrepresented communities in tech reveals that they have the largest hurdles to overcome and given that diversity offers a distinct competitive advantage to anyone looking to diversify in export, why have there been no reported metrics and no tabling of gender-based analysis of legislation passed over the last three years?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Service Alberta and Status of Women.

Ms McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For too long women in our province have faced barriers to work, unequal pay, and high levels of violence. This is no different when we look at the STEM sector. In fact, there are additional barriers to women getting involved in the STEM sector, and that's why we include GBA plus analysis in all of our ministries and all of our departments. There is an incredible number of examples where GBA plus has contributed to the work being done, including the legislation brought forward by the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, which includes additional incentives and credits for hiring diverse populations of individuals into exactly those STEM sectors.

Thank you.

2:30 Air Ambulance Service in Peace River

Mr. W. Anderson: Mr. Speaker, previously I asked the Minister of Health about an incident that occurred at the Peace River airport on April 29 where a medevac plane was stuck in the mud for almost two hours. The minister disputes this claim and has said, "I'm sick of the mudslinging in this House." Ironical. Given that the documents I tabled last week demonstrate a delay of almost two hours, would the minister like to rescind her comment and admit that the

procurement process for our air ambulance service has resulted in an actual reduction in the services?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thanks again, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are getting an upgraded and modernized air ambulance system, and this means newer, faster aircraft equipped with the latest technology. CanWest Air charters began operating in 8 of 10 base communities on September 1, 2017. What I did say was that the air ambulance I believe was stuck for approximately 10 minutes – the hon. member said two hours – and that it was considered a stable transfer, nonemergency, so a new air ambulance was sent rather than risking anything by flying with the old one. I'm simply putting the facts . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Mr. W. Anderson: Well, given that the air ambulance service provider did not meet AHS service obligations on April 29 by not departing within 30 minutes of the transfer, what did the minister do to hold the provider accountable for this breach of their contract?

Ms Hoffman: Again, hon. member, it was deemed not be an emergency transfer. That's why the backup plane was brought in rather than departing with a plane that had been in the mud. Certainly, if we want to enforce contracts and if it had been an emergency, they would have been able to do that, but what was deemed better by the experts in the community was to send the backup plane rather than fly the one that had been in the mud more recently. Patient care will always be the number one driver in making sure that we have safe transfers. Safe transfers are our priority and making sure that happens in all parts of the province.

Mr. W. Anderson: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that if the incident on April 29 was actually an emergency, there could have been life-threatening consequences for the patient involved, will the Minister of Health ensure that this type of incident does not happen again and patient care is not at risk for residents of not just northern Alberta but all of Alberta?

Ms Hoffman: Just to clarify – I may have misheard – the transfer was seen as nonemergent. It was seen as a routine, nonemergency transfer, and that's why the second plane was called rather than flying out with the first one. Of course, if there's anytime an emergency, first responders would work as urgently as possible to ensure as quick a departure as possible. This is why we are grateful that we have an upgraded fleet that's got the most efficient, effective tools on board, and we will continue to work with Alberta Health Services to ensure that all parts of the province have the very best air ambulance service available.

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

Supportive Living Accommodations for Rural Seniors

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In light of Seniors' Week I would like to inform the House about a remarkable constituent of mine. Her name is Zoe Bleau. Zoe has been a resident of Bonnyville for 46 years. In those five decades she has made many contributions to our community and has raised seven children. Now, however, Zoe is at a later stage in her life. She is 86 and is dealing with many issues that come with age. Zoe has been waiting nine months to move into the Bonnylodge. She has been bumped down the list, being told that she exceeds the income threshold. To the minister: is it fair that Zoe will most likely never get into this local facility?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. We believe that all seniors should have a safe and affordable place to call home. I can certainly look into the particular details of this issue, but I can assure you that it's a priority of our government to make sure that seniors have the supports they need to live in a dignified manner. In the next question I will expand on the investment we have made so far.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for that answer. Given that Zoe has been made to wait because she exceeds the \$28,000 per year priority threshold and given that Zoe's doctors have written that she is in immediate need of the kind of care that Bonnylodge can provide and given that Zoe has previously written the government about this issue, will the minister please consider Zoe's individual circumstances, consider waiving the income threshold, and take action necessary to immediately place her in the Bonnylodge, ensuring that she has adequate, medically necessary care?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. As I mentioned, I will look into the specifics of this issue.

We are investing in seniors' programs to make sure that seniors have the support they need. In just the last three years we have invested in affordable housing to make sure that there are housing options available. We have made sure that seniors have access to the Alberta seniors' benefits. We have invested almost \$3 billion in seniors' programs to make sure that they have the supports they need.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that I've provided the minister a hand-delivered document that was from this constituent and given that Zoe's family has been told that the income guidelines are the only barrier to the admission and given that the staff of the seniors ministry told the family that she had the choice between being safe or being near family members and friends and given that this sets a dangerous precedent for many aging Albertans who may have pension income or the like, will the minister review this kind of situation that Zoe finds herself in and commit to taking immediate action so that she can age safely, in dignity, near her family?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and to the member for the question. I do want to clarify that lodge living is still independent living and that home-care services are usually what provides additional wraparound health supports. If there are specific questions with regard to individuals receiving health services, I'd be very happy to respond to this on a health component. Folks who do live in a lodge are living independently still. They do have their meals provided and their housekeeping provided, but they are still independently living. If it's about health care services, hon. member, I'd be happy to discuss this, whether it's home care or whether it's about moving into a facility that has additional supports. These are some of the options that are available.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Health Care Wait Times

Mr. Yao: Since this government took power, the Health budget has continued to grow, and so has the government's boasting about hiring front-line workers to, quote, improve the standard of care for Albertans. In fact, Mr. Speaker, AHS has grown by approximately 8,000 employees, and we're still waiting for a response from AHS on how many of those are front-line workers.

What is disappointing is that wait times have steadily increased. Hip replacements, knee replacements, cataract surgeries have all risen a month in wait times since this group has come into government. Why have these wait times dramatically increased under this Health minister's watch in the last three years?

Ms Hoffman: Again, Mr. Speaker, anytime anyone is waiting for health care services, we want to provide better, more efficient, more effective local services as close to home as possible. What wouldn't help with that is deep, ideological cuts and moving towards privatization and two-tiered health care. That certainly would hurt everyday folks living in this province. While the member has identified a number of areas where there is still more work to be done, I have to say that we are making significant progress and reducing wait times in a number of areas, including GI in Calgary. Essentially, there are zero wait times now to see a GI specialist, and that's certainly a good thing, and we're going to continue moving to address wait times in other areas as well.

Mr. Yao: The failures of this ministry are not just limited to things like hip and cataract surgeries, Mr. Speaker. Mental health is a very real issue in today's society. Timely mental health supports for children are crucial for their development. In Edmonton only one in four children got in to see a therapist within 30 days. To the Minister of Health. The federal government has budgeted a substantial amount of money to the provinces specific to mental health, yet AHS's own statistics do not lie. Why have Albertans, especially those most vulnerable, been stuck in longer and longer health care queues since your government took over?

Ms Hoffman: Well, Mr. Speaker, I have to say that for any family that is reaching out asking for help, I want to honour that fact. I am so grateful that they're asking for help. We've done a lot over the last few years, I think, to address the stigma around mental health and create a more compassionate, caring society. Folks are asking for help at greater levels. That's why we're increasing funding to greater levels. We've increased the funding for school interventions by 50 per cent this year alone. That is certainly a step in the right direction. Is there more to be done? Absolutely. Is cutting 20 per cent from the Health budget the solution? Absolutely not. We need to invest in these families and make sure that children get the supports they need.

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, it's a question of outcomes for Albertans, not just spending. This government's justification for increasing the Health budget is to hire more front-line workers. Despite the increase of \$2 billion in the Health budget since you got elected, wait times have not improved and outcomes for Albertans are deteriorating. To the Health Minister: rather than deflecting, will you take ownership of the irrefutably deteriorating wait time performance measures?

2:40

Ms Hoffman: Well, Mr. Speaker, in a number of areas the wait times have improved. As I mentioned, in Calgary, for example, GI

wait times are essentially eliminated. That is nothing to laugh at, hon. members. Those are people who are not living in pain anymore because this government invested to make their lives better. I'm proud of that. What I am also proud of is that we stopped regressive cuts that were being proposed by the members opposite. Is demand going up in a number of areas? Yes. Is there more need for investment in these areas? Absolutely. And 20 per cent cuts and laughing at people who are in pain is no way to do that, hon. member.

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

Women's Political Participation

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the recent UCP convention a member of that party and a former MLA in this House suggested that it was humiliating and patronizing that Executive Council currently has more women than men. She implied that women who currently serve as ministers were apparently, unlike any men who had served in those roles before, appointed merely for their gender rather than their qualifications and experience. Now, if true, that's very troubling for the Albertans who depend on them to govern our province. So on behalf of the Premier, to the Minister of Status of Women: can you please clarify the policy of our government in choosing who will serve on Executive Council?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the important question. Our government is taking concrete steps to make life better, fairer, and safer for Alberta's women. The Conservatives have the wrong priorities. They would make life harder for women in Alberta if given the chance. You know, it's not difficult to name a gender-balanced cabinet when you have an embarrassment of riches when it comes to our members' qualifications, and because of the strong women's presence in our caucus and cabinet women have been at the heart of all our decision-making. That's why we're investing in affordable child care, making historic investments in funding for women's shelters and sexual assault services, and introducing legislation like Bill 9 that ensures ...

The Speaker: Thank you.
First supplemental.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the same individual derided the suggestion that women face economic, social, or other barriers to choosing to run for political office as socialist crap and given that the former interim leader of the federal Conservatives suggested that the issue is simply one of women not being invited to get involved or offering them mentorship, to the Minister of Status of Women: have you considered directing any of your grant funding to supporting such a unique and novel initiative?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the member for the question. Increasing the democratic participation of women is an issue that our government takes very seriously. That's why we launched programs like the ready for her initiative and supported community-driven initiatives like Ask Her in Calgary. We also gave grants to a number of organizations like the Altview Foundation for Gender Variant and Sexual Minorities, where we provided a grant for conferences to empower and mentor women

and gender-diverse persons with their political goals; the Grande Prairie Friendship Centre, where we gave \$50,000 for a program to encourage indigenous women to run for office or be active in politics; and the IAAW, where we provided \$100,000 for the development of a strategy ...

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

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that at this same convention the former interim leader of the federal Conservative Party derided thinking of women as tokens, saying that they don't want any special treatment, and given that the former interim leader of the Wildrose suggested that quotas to recruit women are condescending and paternalistic, to the Minister of Finance: given that the number of women on Alberta's agencies, boards, and commissions has gone from 32 per cent to 50 per cent, can you clarify how our government's policy has accomplished this without condescending to or insulting women?

The Speaker: The Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To answer that, let me take you back to a time when Conservative Premiers with their aura of power reigned supreme from their sky palaces, a time when only Conservative friends and insiders were eligible for board and executive roles and were handed taxpayer-funded perks like golf club memberships. Today we make appointments based on what you know, not who you know. Government appointments are now posted online and open to all Albertans. We are putting people with the right skills into those roles, and we are proud to have achieved gender parity on our boards, just like we have in cabinet. That's something we're proud of.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we'll begin again in 30 seconds.

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Mr. Cyr: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. I have several documents I'd like to table. The first one is regarding the question that I had earlier about a request from an 86-year-old constituent that I'll quote here. It says, "What is a reasonable time frame to await placement while at risk? I think that 9 months is too long!" This is obviously problematic.

Then what I have are two letters, one from an ADM from the government, from John Thomson. He says in this, "Bonnylodge is currently at capacity and has an extensive waitlist. The waitlist is based on priority of need and, unfortunately, it is not possible to expedite your mother's placement on the waitlist." It's clearly because of an income threshold, not because of need. Her response was that when she had contacted the ministry, they didn't even have a file for them even though she had sent a letter and a hand-delivered one was given by myself to the minister – that original letter; sorry.

I have three doctors that have written recommendations that she be admitted into the local lodge. Again, this is for the safety of a senior who is 86 years old that wants to reside near family and friends in a place that she has resided in for over 46 years. I also have a picture of where she was injured. It is a terrible set of pictures where you see that she is all bruised from a fall that she had had. This is a clear reason why we need to really help this ...

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, sir.

The Speaker: Any others? The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have five copies of all of the correspondence between the Health minister and Alexander First Nation on their project.

Thank you.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Ms Jansen, Minister of Infrastructure, responses to questions raised by MLA McPherson, hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Hose Hill, and Dr. Starke, hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster, Ministry of Infrastructure 2018-19 main estimates debate.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

Bill 18 Statutes Amendment Act, 2018

[Adjourned debate June 5: Mr. McIver]

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

Mr. McIver: How much do I have left?

The Speaker: Five minutes left to speak.

Mr. McIver: Five minutes left. Okay. Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to continue on Bill 18. As I say, it's the Statutes Amendment Act, 2018. For the most part the bill truly is housekeeping, and since the government put time allocation and limited debate on the hiring of the Election Commissioner, I think it's important to remind the House that the process of hiring an independent officer that oversees an election should be the most nonpartisan piece of business that this House does. It should be a place where all parties should come together, where the government should actually do their best to look at the opposition – we get it. The government has the majority, and they can do whatever they want, rightly. I'm not saying that it's wrong. That's the definition of democracy. They can do what they want because they have the most votes in the House, but they need to have respect for the core principles of democracy.

2:50

The core principles would be that it should appear to Albertans that there is a fair, unbiased process for running an election, and of course that would include the fair, unbiased process for hiring those officers charged with the refereeing, if you will, the elections, monitoring the fairness of the elections, making sure the rules governing the elections are enforced in a way that's even-handed towards all parties and not stacking the deck for one side or another. I have no doubt that the commissioner hired will do that or do his best to do that.

The problem is that the government has put the commissioner in a bad place by not going about the hiring process in a way that is unbiased and in a way that values the opinions of the opposition parties. They didn't do it in a way that looks fair. They didn't do it in a way that seeks consensus. They didn't do it in a way that looks

to anybody that measures the government's actions against the principles of democracy. They did it in a way that is open to criticism, and that is a shame.

Mr. Speaker, this is a House where we can disagree on a lot of things, and indeed that is our job. But when the government takes one of the core things that we shouldn't disagree on and turns the process into a partisan one, then of course we are left with questions, not the least of which is at this point the sunshine list, the fact that this adds the sunshine list. But what's interesting here and disappointing in the legislation is that Albertans won't find out the pay rate of their new Election Commissioner until after the next general election probably.

There you go, Mr. Speaker. The government had an opportunity to get it right. They did something else. They didn't get it right. They limited debate because they didn't want to hear about how they didn't get it right. And then when they found out that they got it wrong again and didn't get the commissioner on the sunshine list in legislation, they attempted to sneak that little detail into a statutes amendment act, which is in my view just one more admission that they didn't get it right. I'm happy to stand up and remind the government of that. All Albertans should be aware of that, and all Albertans should be very disappointed in this government and the way that they have added this section into Bill 18.

The Speaker: Are there any questions under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Calgary-Hays?

Seeing and hearing none, the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, talking about a house-keeping bill is one of those things that, clearly, isn't probably a lightning rod, if you will, for many of our constituents. But I will say that the last time I had spoken on Bill 18, I had several questions that I have not heard answers to, and if I have, then I apologize. One of them was the fact that on Bill 18, if we go – the name of the bill is Statutes Amendment Act, 2018; again, this is a thrilling name for a bill, here – to

(2) The heading "Fair Trading Act" preceding section 1 is struck out and the heading "Consumer Protection Act" is substituted.

What we're doing here is more or less renaming an existing act, it appears to me. I'm not sure what we had as a problem, when it came to the fact that the Fair Trading Act seems to be very clear on what it was for. It was to promote consumer protection if you will.

Now, I do know that that's what they're naming it, Consumer Protection Act. Were there stakeholders out there that had said that they are unclear what the Fair Trading Act stood for? And if there were stakeholders out there, when it comes to this Fair Trading Act, what concerns exactly did they have that would actually reinforce this need for the government to want to change this act's name? What are the advantages? Is it bringing clarity to what is inside of the bill? Has the government done something that clearly has changed the intent of the act to something different?

Now, the Fair Trading Act is pretty straightforward, in my opinion. It appears, too, that this renaming of the act could be used to promote that the government has actually done something. I would say that renaming an act isn't actually doing anything other than potentially misleading Albertans into the understanding that this government is out to protect them. I'm not saying that they're not. Obviously, I believe that every member of this Chamber is out to protect the public, but we do need to be cautious that we're not promoting that we're doing something just by changing its name. It would be like me taking off my Ford nameplate, putting on there GMC, and saying that it's now a GMC truck, going out and saying to everybody that it's a brand new truck. Clearly, that would be misleading. If that is not what the government is intending to do,

then I apologize, but it does seem that what we're trying to do here is to more or less tell Albertans that this government is out to do consumer protection, which is admirable, I have to say. Again, I believe every member here – I don't want to speak for everybody, but I'll speak for myself and my caucus – is out to actually protect consumers.

Now, another one that I had as a concern is on page 2 of the bill. What we're doing here is that the Alberta Corporate Tax Act is amended by this section. What we're seeing here is that the government is more or less adding the new Election Commissioner into the Alberta Corporate Tax Act. I had questioned before: are these powers that this new position actually needs? This is not something that is to be taken lightly, to be going out and just suddenly empowering an independent office with being able to go in and see corporate tax records. What exactly is this new position? What are they going to be doing with access through the Alberta Corporate Tax Act?

The way I can really look at it at this point is that corporate donations and union donations are exempt from donating to a nomination race, to a campaign, a leadership race. So when we've disqualified these corporations from contributing or creating an active role because we've actually brought forward third-party limitations as well, what happens here is that there's a question about why exactly it is that this new position, the Election Commissioner, needs access to corporate records. Now, I'm not saying that it's an unreasonable thing that the government is doing, but I want to understand what it is that they're trying to accomplish with that. I think that's a reasonable question. Why does this new position need that access? Can the existing CEO, the Chief Electoral Officer, not accomplish this through his access as well? The Chief Electoral Officer has access through the Alberta Corporate Tax Act, and he's able to go in and do the things that he needs to do there, so we do have a mechanism for ensuring that Alberta corporations are not donating inappropriately.

Again, it seems that there's a lot of duplication when it comes to the roles of this new position with our Chief Electoral Officer, and it's this duplication that is something that we need to acknowledge as a consistent problem within the government of Alberta. We need to find efficiencies, and we need to ensure that those efficiencies are brought forward because we are ultimately accountable to the taxpayer. We are ultimately trying to make sure that when every dollar of taxpayer money is spent, it is spent responsibly.

My question, again, on this next one here is: why is it that we have a new independent agency getting this access? Is it going to be something that is problematic later on, in the future, because we're going to find that we have competing roles between these two independent agencies? That is very troublesome, when you've got one agency competing with another agency for the same resources. My concern, as always, is: are we ensuring that we have an absolutely fair electoral process?

3:00

When we have the government getting up and saying that, you know, we're trying to pick on this new position, it clearly is not the case. I just want to understand why we're giving them that power. It seems that they're duplicating something that they don't need to. They're deeming this as a miscellaneous change or a statutes amendment act, so they're kind of sneaking this in and hoping that nobody asks the question so that they don't have to answer it.

When we've got this new position, the new Election Commissioner, in place, they're going to be going around and potentially going into areas where they're actually, maybe, not allowed to go. I don't understand. If the Election Commissioner

gets a complaint, just because he has this act, it doesn't mean that he actually has the authority to investigate that.

Now, the problem here is that when we looked at the job description for this new position, it was very vague, so I really am unsure what the new Election Commissioner is going to do. I would say that that was one of my concerns when we brought it forward. This is a position that could potentially change the direction of an entire election because of the fact that we have a conflicting role, potentially, between the two independent agencies.

Clearly, I want to ensure that we're not duplicating with the money that our taxpayers are giving us. But we also need to make sure that the goal of bringing transparency and reliability to our electoral process isn't impaired by having duplication. Normally what happens when you have duplication within a system is that the two systems create holes in areas that weren't there before. Let's say that one thinks that one is doing it, and the other one is thinking that the other is doing it. And guess what? Nobody is doing it. A lot of times what happens is that the thing that is being missed or the gap in the system is usually very costly for the independent department or that group, so then in the end it's better for them to step back and say: let the other guy do it.

Now, we have seen that in other places. A good example would be our school system. I have a nephew who, as many of you know, has autism, a wonderful young man. I think he'll be an incredible Albertan when he gets a little older. What happened here was that we had three different organizations: the school board, FCSS, I believe, and a special board for children with disabilities. All three of them were pointing to each other, saying that his specific problem, which was language, being able to speak to others, was each other's problem, somebody else's. All three of them were pointing in different directions. None of them were taking responsibility for the fact that, in the end, my nephew wasn't getting any help. Clearly, there's duplication within that system. Clearly, it's not working the way that you would hope.

This is where my concern is when it comes to the new position that we've got, the Election Commissioner. If there's duplication there, are we going to be creating gaps that were never there before because the CEO, the Chief Electoral Officer, would have automatically taken responsibility for it because he was the only one there and he would've been the only one held accountable? When something bad happens, are we going to end up with two independent offices pointing at each other, saying: it's his fault or her fault? Clearly, that is not good for us. That's not good for Alberta's well-being because we depend on an impartial, reasonable, accurate election going forward. This is clearly something that we need to be cautious of when we're doing anything with that.

Again, I will get back to these miscellaneous changes. Does this new commissioner require access to the Alberta Corporate Tax Act?

Now, I will also ask the question – and, you know, I probably am going to get an answer that I'm expecting – that I don't understand why we are putting the Election Commissioner as a subclause to the Chief Electoral Officer. Does this matter? Does this mean that one office is subservient to another office? I see in other examples that we've got in here that that does happen with other commissions. That's been pointed out to me. But this is an important point. It's good that we clarify that if it is under the independent office of the Chief Electoral Officer, then really what we've done is created an office within an office, which is going to cause us immense grief because then we're going to have two offices, one trying to give direction to another office, which is not the intent of this House, I believe, that they're trying to create two independent offices.

Now, again, when it comes to this legislation, I will definitely lean to what the government is saying. If they say that it's not what their hope was and that it is not what that means, that's good to know. In the end, all I'm looking for are clear, concise, on-the-record responses from the government should a judge ever need to go back and look over these debates. Because in the end, it matters. It matters that we're clear and concise whenever we're discussing legislation what the intent of the government was at the time, not what the judge is trying to interpret that the government means.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, are there any questions under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake?

Are there any other members who wish to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is always a pleasure to rise in this House to speak to legislation that affects all Albertans. Today is no exception, of course, as we speak to Bill 18, the Statutes Amendment Act, 2018. Now, Bill 18 was originally intended as a miscellaneous statutes amendment act, but it does make minor wording changes to a number of different statutes. The proposed amendments are administrative, of course, or technical in nature, certainly not complex, not intended to deal with any controversial matter, and Bill 18 doesn't authorize the direct spending of money and does not create offences.

You know, Mr. Speaker, for the most part, I think this is a good act. I think that traditionally statutes amendment acts generally are good pieces of legislation. I think that probably most governments find that they need to do something like this as far as amendments are concerned and that it is something that is actually required now and then.

I believe that in the brief I looked at, the following departments have legislation included in Bill 18: Justice and Solicitor General, Labour, Municipal Affairs, and Service Alberta. Members of the Legislative Offices Committee would like to highlight the legislative change required to the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act. This change is necessary to allow the public disclosure of the Election Commissioner's salary, which I'll speak to later.

3:10

The bill also deals with some pieces of legislation: A Better Deal for Consumers and Businesses Act, the Alberta Corporate Tax Act, the Alberta Human Rights Act, An Act to Strengthen Municipal Government, the Auditor General Act, the Conflicts of Interest Act, the Consumer Protection Act, and the Election Act. I believe also that the Electronic Transactions Act is thrown in there, the Employment Standards Code, and the Financial Administration Act.

Usually with a bill like a statutes amendment act things go in the bill and they go by without too much discussion. Of course, most of the things in the bill are traditionally housekeeping measures, responsibilities of the government, perhaps a misspelled word or two within some of the documents, like I would have just mentioned there. Things like that. But it kind of looks to me like the government has chosen to slide a few things into the bill that they may not necessarily have wanted – I'll put it this way: maybe they didn't want the opposition to talk about anymore, kind of hoping that the bill would go through the House with some of that content not talked about. But because some of the content that I would suggest perhaps the government does not want to hear anymore about – understood – is the content that the Official Opposition talked about at length during our sitting last month, I think that it should indeed be talked about before Bill 18 passes.

I just want to make it clear that I and my colleagues will be supporting Bill 18, but because of the content of one particular issue, I think that many of my colleagues prior to today and today will probably be saying a few words to that particular issue, just as I'm about to do.

I guess I'd like to address the fact that I did notice that the Election Commissioner, the new position, is part of the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act. I do remember rather well that government MLAs were rather, I guess I would say, sanctimonious when we suggested the need to publicly disclose the salary of the Election Commissioner last month. They certainly had a bit of a holier-than-thou attitude when we suggested that the new Election Commissioner's salary be publicly disclosed. You know, Mr. Speaker, the government side of the House almost – well, not almost. The government side actually took the position that asking them to provide the salary of this new position, the Election Commissioner, publicly was some kind of an insult to the commissioner himself. The government was somehow appalled that the Official Opposition would actually ask for the salary of a new position of this government to be publicly disclosed.

Mr. Speaker, I think that you will remember that in this Chamber there has been a lot of discussion about the Election Commissioner position and what, indeed, that position was getting paid. The question was why the salary for the new position couldn't be posted on the sunshine list. That was an issue that the Official Opposition talked about in this Chamber several times last month. We truly do believe that there is a need for transparency on that sunshine list. We've come to that decision in this House, you will recall, that everyone in this House determined that part of having a good government was to disclose people's wages that reach a fairly substantial level, I guess I would say, and that those salaries would be added to the sunshine list. The Official Opposition wanted the Election Commissioner's wages to be disclosed and brought forward immediately so that the public could see just how much this person was going to be paid. Now, of course, we all know that the government did not support that idea.

Now, as we look at Bill 18, the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act has been added to this bill, the Statutes Amendment Act, which just happens to include discussion about the Election Commissioner. Mr. Speaker, I think we all remember the discussions about the individual's salary and the fact that the government didn't want to make it public until some time in the future. In fact, all members kind of got to learn a little more about this position as the discussion continued, how the committee recommended his hiring and the government members, that held the majority, pushed that idea through that same committee. I believe that the members of the House will remember that four members that sat as Official Opposition on the committee, that actually sit on the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices, produced a minority report that explained all of the issues pretty much that I've just explained here and then some.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I ask you to remember that my good friend from Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock proposed an amendment to Government Motion 16. I think the date of that proposed amendment was May 1. Now, you remember Government Motion 16. It was the motion that the government brought forward which recommended hiring Mr. Lorne Gibson as the Election Commissioner. I recall the Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock telling the House how the opposition members of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices fought the appointment of Mr. Gibson at the search committee level for various reasons and then determined that some additional opposition to the government motion should be added when indeed Government Motion 16 came to the House.

As I said when I spoke to this last time, I understand that members of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices have been involved with a number of search committees over a period of time, and in all of those cases all members had a very good working relationship and, most importantly, were in all of those instances able to come to unanimous consent, unanimous support. So if you consider the Auditor General position or the Ombudsman position, those were all passed unanimously, the decision of who that person would be. I just believe that there was some good communication between all party members, that all the voices at the table were heard, and there was more of a robust discussion that led to a unanimous decision.

What happened with the proposal to appoint this election officer was a little more partisan, as our friend from Westlock – what is it?

The Speaker: Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. Schneider: There you go. You've said it more times than I have.

The Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock – there you go – told us in the House of discussions that were held in the standing committee, certainly not discussions that were held in camera, but in discussions that they had with Mr. Gibson during his interview on the fact that he may have somewhat of a bias against the government of Alberta. Mr. Speaker, you'll recall that the reason for that bias was the fact that the contract that Mr. Gibson had with the Alberta government was allowed to expire in 2009. Subsequently Mr. Gibson determined to sue the government of Alberta for wrongful dismissal. You'll recall that when that case got to court, the judge determined that the government of the day had indeed not dismissed or fired Mr. Gibson, as today's government would like everyone to believe, but that, rather, his contract had simply been allowed to expire. This is something that happens in business. It happens all over the place. Those are actually two different things.

Now, this government has gone to a lot of work to see that this same individual is now hired again by the government of Alberta to fill a newly created position called the Election Commissioner. You know, it seems that, Mr. Speaker, actions like this almost seem to be becoming habitual for today's Alberta government.

3:20

Just last week my colleague from the outstanding riding of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills asked a question just about every day during question period about a person that quit their job with the government of Alberta and within 48 hours was immediately rehired by the government of Alberta even though he is working and living outside of the province and being paid a five- or six-figure salary. We're not exactly sure about that one because their job description certainly hasn't been made public. There are a lot of things that we don't know about that particular job and its salary, and I commend the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills for the good work that he did on that file.

You know, Mr. Speaker, that's just another faux pas, it seems, of a government that hasn't dotted its i's and crossed its t's. Albertans that talk to us are wondering how the government is spending their money and what benefit they are getting for the money that is being spent. They are concerned and rightfully so, it seems.

What we do know, Mr. Speaker, is that the amendment to the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act was indeed necessary. We know that Bill 18 is bringing the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act into the Statutes Amendment Act and is indeed absolutely necessary because, you see, the Government House Leader on the 8th made it clear to the House

that he'd actually provided inaccurate information to the House with regard to the public disclosure of this officer's salary. He admitted on that day that legislative changes would indeed be required in order to make that happen. You know what? Everybody makes mistakes. Everybody makes mistakes.

I remember speaking to Motion 16 in the House last month. I remember the whole discussion that revolved around this new position and, certainly, the salary of the position. We know that this Election Commissioner position is a position that was just newly created by the government. We also know that the job this new Election Commissioner will be doing is already, for the most part, being done by the Chief Electoral Officer. Now, the Chief Electoral Officer, Mr. Glen Resler, reminded the committee while he was there to report to the committee that he had not had a chance to comment on the bill that actually created the position of Election Commissioner, so you can imagine how the Chief Electoral Officer may have been feeling.

Now, I think it would be fair to say that the Chief Electoral Officer of Alberta has been held in high regard throughout this province. He's done his job very ethically. I think there would be not too many that would be able to challenge that statement. He has served the electoral process in Alberta well. Now, he stated, when he was asked to present to the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices in regard to election investigations, that he actually had no issues handling current complaints that came into his office in regard to investigations, that he was able to handle all of the complaints in his regular duties as Chief Electoral Officer. So just to recap that, the Chief Electoral Officer made it clear that he had no problems or issues.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any questions for the Member for Little Bow under 29(2)(a)?

Do any other members wish to speak?

Hon. Members: Question.

[Motion carried; Bill 18 read a third time]

Bill 2 Growth and Diversification Act

[Debate adjourned June 5]

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

Mr. Ellis: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise here to speak on third reading of Bill 2, the Growth and Diversification Act. This bill is proposing, of course, to use a mixture of incentives, also called taxpayers' money, to encourage diversification in Alberta's tech sector. Alberta's United Conservatives do not support this type of approach. What we see with Bill 2 and why we are not supporting it is that the NDP is trying to put a Band-Aid on cuts created by the sharp knife of the carbon tax and all of their, you know, other fiscal policies that have not really, necessarily, had such a warm reception from many of the public-sector folks that I've spoken to.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 2 is another one of those pieces of legislation the NDP proposes because it continues to err with its economy-killing policies. So what does it do? In typical fashion it plays the game of trying to make winners by offering a suite of tax credits in this particular bill. Albertans have never liked that approach. In fact, as a fourth-generation Albertan and somebody who has spoken to many business owners in Calgary-West, that certainly isn't an approach that they appear to like or enjoy. You know, they see right through it, the folks that I've been speaking with. What they want

is, of course, a strong economy, an economy that is freed from the chains of the poor fiscal policies such as the carbon tax.

Let me point out an example of the problem with Bill 2, which it purports to be fixing. This proposed legislation continues the Alberta investor tax credit, yet that targeted tax credit left \$1.4 million on the table, Mr. Speaker. This might indicate that the government has had a lower than anticipated interest in this tax credit because it is narrow and very sector specific. Another possibility is that the government has not been able to efficiently and effectively distribute this money to investors.

Clearly, there are questions about this tax credit and how it's performing. Why serve up millions of dollars of taxpayers' funds before understanding if the sector needs that extra bit of offering? As we've, you know, seen over and over again, Mr. Speaker, this government has not provided any analytics to show whether it's even performing as it had anticipated, perhaps because it didn't set any benchmarks to begin with. Benchmarks, of course, are very important when putting policies forward. That, too, unfortunately, is typical of this government.

The UCP members tried in the standing committee on economic development to convince this government to do an economic impact study on the carbon tax, which, of course, is very, very important. It certainly made sense and could have warded off bills like this one that just offer a fix for something that needs axing, not fixing, and that is, of course, the carbon tax, Mr. Speaker. As the government raises the carbon tax, which the NDP is happy to do at the behest of their friend Mr. Justin Trudeau, the Prime Minister of Canada, they will have to increase the Alberta investor tax credit. That is a question, of course, that we have to ask.

What about the others, Mr. Speaker? The AITC is only one of a suite of tax credits adjusted or introduced in Bill 2. A concern is that the government is playing favourites by keeping the focus of the tax credits on a relatively narrow sector of industries, and that, of course, again is a concern. Is this the right approach for Alberta? The folks that I've spoken to in Calgary-West don't believe that it is.

Now, we maintain that the government should place its focus elsewhere than in creating boutique tax credits like the ones in Bill 2. A good example of a more fruitful way to assist businesses is by reducing red tape. It may seem obvious, Mr. Speaker. If the NDP were actually to ask industry what would benefit them the most, they would hear about the benefits of getting rid of or eradicating the regulatory burdens that are placed upon many of these businesses. Allow me to note what the CFIB said about the red tape.

3:30

Alberta is the only provincial government in Canada that refuses to be publicly accountable for the regulatory burden . . . Last year, a private members' bill to put constraints on regulators was voted down. While taking responsibility for red tape can be challenging, experience shows that it can be done if there is the will.

The bill that the CFIB was referring to was introduced by my colleague and friend the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, a very good and common-sense bill that would have ensured that any time the government introduces a new regulation, it deleted one on the books, maybe too common-sense for this government, Mr. Speaker. I know that my friend from Cardston-Taber-Warner put a lot of, you know, effort into that bill and a lot of thought and consulted with businesses, and it was certainly what he believed to be a good, common-sense bill that I think would be able to assist businesses in dealing with, of course, the regulatory burdens that have been placed upon them.

As evidenced by Bill 2, they prefer to introduce unnecessary means to supposedly help business instead of taking measures that

actually do help them. Instead of reviewing the technology sector's real needs before introducing tax credits or increasing and adjusting others, the NDP goes forth and multiplies, sadly, its mistakes.

The minister spoke of levelling the playing field in a speech referencing the fact that this government has now put Alberta in competition with the rest of Canada. Mr. Speaker, I'm happy for Alberta to compete for economic investment. Of course, that's something that is welcomed in Alberta. But the point is that before the government came into power, Alberta had already been dominating that field for a great deal of time. Before the NDP came into power, Alberta was a key player on that field. Then this government implemented numerous policies, some of which were misguided, and blew up that particular field. Now they are trying to level it again. It doesn't make sense to me. They should have been more careful not to destroy, you know, a field that they were playing on in the first place.

What this government does not seem to realize, even after all of this time, is that industry does not need government to hold its hand. In fact, many of the businesses which I have spoken to and many of the business owners in Calgary-West want government to essentially leave them alone. They want to pay their fair share of taxes, but they are not looking for increased burdens or incentives or handouts. They just want the ability to, you know, have a business, grow that business, employ people, provide a positive impact on the economy not only in their local area but, of course, in Alberta as a whole. Many of these businesses and entrepreneurs provide a positive impact to Canada as well.

Industry just needs government to stop, you know, tripping them up at every turn, every stop. Before Bill 2 moved to its final stage in this legislative process, we urged this Assembly to send this bill to committee for review. They would have none of it, sadly, which I think is very disappointing. I think it's very important that we have that consultation, that review, hearing from those necessary stakeholders in order that we provide a really sound decision for the people of Alberta. This government, sadly, appears to be very happy just to write cheques, never knowing whether they make that difference or not. That goes back to what I was saying earlier about having those benchmarks. It's important to have those benchmarks so that you know if what you're investing in is successful or not successful.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta has had six credit downgrades since 2005, all after the NDP formed government. I've had this unique opportunity in my second term. Although my first term was very short, just six months, I can tell you, from the people that I spoke to during the massive number of doors that I knocked on, whether it be in 2014 or whether it be in 2015, that there was a huge sense of pride in having a triple-A credit rating, and it was one that actually took me aback a bit.

My background, Mr. Speaker, as you know, is in law enforcement. I'm not necessarily a businessman, we'll say, although I do have some management background. I was surprised when going to those doors. Knowing that we had that triple-A credit rating, many people just appeared to wear that as a badge of honour. So I feel that, sadly, the multiple downgrades, if I was to talk from my perspective in law enforcement, have had a serious impact on what I would call morale of what we would call in this case the people of Alberta. I think that the downgrades and the lowering of those credit ratings has had more of a significant impact on the people of Alberta than maybe this government tends to even realize.

Thanks to our Finance minister we know that Alberta's debt is projected to reach \$96 billion. And our six downgrades, right? [interjections] Yeah. Thank you. Should the NDP continue in government, of course, until 2024, you know, I certainly would

have some concerns about any further increases to debt and forecasting and going down this particular path, Mr. Speaker.

So while Bill 2 isn't the most expensive policy decision the NDP has made, it's typical of its practice of Band-Aiding on top of Band-Aiding, and this, Mr. Speaker, has got to stop. You know, we can send a strong message by voting this bill down together, collectively, as a group, as Members of this Legislative Assembly.

The CFIB tells us from its surveys with the business community that 92 per cent of business owners are not confident that this NDP government is committed to improving the business climate. We have all kinds of examples of, you know, business-killing policies that have been put forward over the last several years. One of its first moves was to increase taxes on larger businesses and high-income earners, then it piled on environmental and other regulations with little, if any, consultation with those affected, and then it focused on measures such as the minimum wage, that increased labour costs. Sadly, again, many of the businesses I have spoken to have had to cut corners, lay people off, raise prices as a result of those increased labour costs, which is very disappointing, Mr. Speaker.

What does it have to deflect from? It chooses specific sectors to hand out its tax credits to. [Mr. Ellis's speaking time expired]

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Any questions to the Member for Calgary-West under 29(2)(a)?

Mr. Nixon: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. Member for Calgary-West for his comments on this bill. His presentation I found interesting. I do have a question that follows up on some of the content that the hon. member discussed. He brought up some of the concerns that are happening in his constituency. In fact, actually, I have a quote here that is very applicable to the Member for Calgary-West's constituency. It's from the Calgary Chamber of commerce. It says, "It's becoming harder to run a successful business in Calgary." The reason that the Chamber cites for that is the carbon tax in addition to rising labour costs, increasing personal and corporate taxes, and the layers of government costs associated with government policy.

3:40

In another one, which the hon. member spoke about – but I think it's worth repeating – the Finance minister just a few moments ago confirmed this statistic, which was very helpful. The CFIB says that 92 per cent of business owners are not confident the Alberta government is committed to improving the business climate.

Certainly, in the member's constituency and in the member's hometown, the city that he comes from, things are still not well. I know that's how it is in the communities that I represent. There's still no confidence in this government. I think a lot of that has to do with the fact that this NDP government implemented several economically damaging policies. Alberta was already an attractive place to invest, but when this government came into place, they focused so much on their ideology and did not listen to the people that were being hurt as a result of that ideology. Now we see the results.

Here they come, and instead of fixing those damaging policies, instead of recognizing that the decisions that the NDP government in Alberta has made over the last few years have had significant consequences for job creators in our communities, they want to gloss over that and hope that Albertans will forget that. They want

to bring in a very limited program instead of doing what they should do – and I want to see if the hon. member agrees with me – which is reduce regulatory and tax burdens for businesses, reduce them for investors, and get out of the way. I think the hon. member said that his constituents just want the government to get out of their way.

Since this NDP government has come into power, in 2015, all this party across from me can do is get in the way of job creators. It's caused devastating impacts on Albertans and on the people we represent. I wonder if the member would expand on that.

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

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you. Thank you to the hon. member who just spoke, as well as to you, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, certainly, as I previously mentioned, we do have many business owners in Calgary-West who are having challenges in getting money from investors. We have a government that is essentially getting, you know, in the way. We talked about labour costs there with some of the restaurant owners that I was talking to. I'll just be very brief, Mr. Speaker. I had an opportunity to go out with some stakeholders to a restaurant, and in speaking with the server, she was very excited to show me an iPad that she was using in order to conduct her business as a server. She indicated that when she became proficient on that iPad, she would be given a larger section. A result of that larger section would be that some of her colleagues would be laid off. That was very disappointing to hear.

We're seeing the increased costs and burdens on these businesses. Again, many stakeholders in Calgary-West are really just wanting this government to, you know, kind of get out of the way and allow them to be the job creators and that backbone of industry in order to continue to support the people in the community, in order to provide good jobs, good, mortgage-paying jobs for other people not only in Calgary-West but in Calgary as well as Alberta as a whole.

I think it is very, very important that the regulations be, you know, taken back a bit and that we really just allow businesses to flourish.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House . . .

Mr. Nixon: Let's not forget Sundre today, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: . . . Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: We can't forget about the good people of Sundre.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to talk about Bill 2 in third reading. I think it's important that we acknowledge as we discuss Bill 2 the reason that we find ourselves in this situation. Alberta was one of the greatest districts in the world to invest in. We had the Alberta advantage. We were the envy of the world in many aspects. Then in 2015 the NDP government was elected, and they took that Alberta advantage and just basically threw it out.

They came into this place, and from the moment that they arrived in Edmonton, from the moment that they were sworn into government – Mr. Speaker, I know that you've had a front-row seat to watch it for the last three years – they focused on their ideological agenda. They focused on implementing ideological policy and legislation that did not benefit Albertans, that sometimes maybe benefited friends or people associated with the NDP. It certainly did not benefit everyday Albertans, not the Albertans that I represent. They brought in these ideological policies, damaged our economy at the worst possible time, during a terrible recession, refused to listen to anybody, including their own constituents – we hear all the

time everywhere we travel in the province, in NDP ridings how frustrated they were about that – and then blindly followed their ideology.

A couple of examples, Mr. Speaker. Let's start with the first. They brought in a royalty review right in the middle of one of the worst recessions, the worst recession in my lifetime and in the lifetimes of many people in this Chamber. They focused on a royalty review, which did what?

Mr. Speaker, I actually should back up. What happened when they started to talk about a royalty review? What did the opposition tell them? "This is going to scare away investment. You're going to scare away investment at the worst time, when our constituents are losing their homes, losing their cars, or having trouble getting their children into university. You're going to make a terrible situation worse. You're going to scare away our job creators and send them to places elsewhere, where they're going to be treated appropriately. You're going to create instability within our system at the absolutely wrong time."

Now, what did the government do? They went ahead, and they did it anyway. They did a full royalty review, and in the end, Mr. Speaker, they barely changed anything. But during that royalty review, just as the opposition predicted, billions and billions and billions of dollars of investment left this province, and it hasn't come back. It has not come back.

In fact, the hon. Leader of the Opposition was in Toronto not too long. He was talking about this the other day in the Chamber. Mr. Speaker, I don't know if you caught that. He was meeting with some investors on Bay Street, big investors who like Alberta, who made it clear that they put one big red X on investing in Alberta until one condition is fixed. You know what that condition is? That this NDP government is no longer in power. That's how badly they screwed up doing stuff like the royalty review.

Billions of dollars in investment gone; my constituents and your constituents, many of them struggling to make home payments, sitting in the unemployment line for well over years; record – record – unemployment out of this government: they're proud of that? Sometimes they want to stand up and high-five each other and declare victory on different things, like they tend to do in this Chamber, although there is no victory. You know, the Deputy Premier on that issue rose not too long ago in this Chamber and said that those couple of hundred thousand people who've lost their jobs under this NDP government's watch were just an opportunity cost for them to bring in their ideological agenda. It's shameful, Mr. Speaker. It's shameful.

Bringing a bill like Bill 2 to the floor, you know, that goes nowhere near beginning to fix the issues that this government brought forward or have caused as a result of their ideological agenda, is also shameful. This government knows what they need to do if they want to fix some of the damaging policies that they brought forward, but they won't because, as you know, Mr. Speaker, they can't see beyond their ideological views. They can't see beyond them. They're so focused on that bubble of the NDP world view.

Again, this is a government who has stood in this Chamber and admitted that they had to hire tremendous people that did not live in this province, in the Deputy Premier's own words, because she could not find people in the province of Alberta that shared her world view. That shared her world view. She had to go hire other people. She's admitted it on *Hansard*. I was shocked. I'm sure you were shocked, Mr. Speaker, when she said that.

3:50

Ms Jabbour: She didn't say that.

Mr. Nixon: Folks, the Member for Peace River is saying that the Deputy Premier did not say it. She did say that.

But let's talk about Peace River for a while. Let's talk about the damaging policies in Peace River, in that member's constituency. Not too long ago I had the privilege of visiting La Crête. Devastated by the decisions of this government. Devastated by it – they talk about it all the time – and frustrated with the lack of representation that they get from this government on these important issues.

The royalty review, and now another example. Then this government focuses on raising taxes. Often when we talk about them raising taxes, they want to point out that Alberta has, you know, the best tax advantage in the country. That may not be true anymore, but if it is true, I want to thank the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays and the hon. Member for Calgary-West, who are here today from the former government, who created that tax advantage.

This government began to systematically take it apart the moment that they took office. Again, scaring away investors, scaring away job creators, costing Albertans more money at the worst possible time, when they were dealing with the worst recession in the history of this province.

Now, where do they go after that? They bring forward a bill, a bill that has become – I don't even know what to call that bill. It was so outrageous.

Mr. McIver: Notorious.

Mr. Nixon: Notorious. Thank you, hon. member. Notorious.

A bill that attacked rural Alberta, a place that is near and dear to me. I'm proud to be a rural Albertan, Mr. Speaker. We stood here, and one of the first – I think it was in the second sitting of this government when they brought forward a piece of legislation that outraged rural Alberta. The NDP will never win a seat in rural Alberta for a very long time because of that bill, I predict. We'll see if I'm right. It outraged farmers and ranchers across this entire province. Without even talking to them, they brought in legislation that changed their whole way of life, that would not fit, and still – still – they haven't been able to get the regulations to work because they won't talk to farmers and ranchers. Farmers and ranchers need to be consulted before you change the rules of their operation.

Worse than that, Mr. Speaker, they went far enough that they almost collapsed the entire family farm, which is the majority of the agriculture industry in our province. If it was not for the opposition, supported by constituents from every corner of this province, who came to this place, who rallied on the steps, who said, "We will not accept this," kids in 4-H, farmers and ranchers, my neighbours and friends, who watched this government stand in this House and even accuse them of deliberately trying to hurt workers – they stood up, and in the end the government brought in an amendment that was able to save the family farm but still left the rest of the bill in place, that they have not been able to implement.

They haven't been able to implement it because it's just a mess. But it left the rest of the bill in place and created a tremendous amount of red tape, hurting our second-largest industry at the exact worst time that you could ever think of because our first-largest industry was in a crisis situation during the recession.

In the communities that I represent, Mr. Speaker, if it was not for the agriculture industry over the last few years, we would have been in significantly worse shape. As the energy industry crashed around us, our agriculture industry carried us forward. Not only did they carry us forward economically, keeping our towns operating, they still continued to feed us and feed the world despite this government working against them each and every day. The worst part about that is that the rural members of their caucus supported that. That's what they brought forward.

If you were an investor in the agriculture industry, would you want to come and invest right now inside this province when you know that you have a government that is willing to completely attack that industry and the people that work in it so savagely, that shows so little regard for that industry? Of course not, Mr. Speaker. You would not want to come and participate in that.

Another example, Mr. Speaker. This is in some ways probably the most terrible thing that this government did. They brought in a carbon tax that not one of these members – not one of these members – when they campaigned to come to this place talked about with their constituents, not at one door, not in anything, not in any document, didn't bring it up at all, hid it completely from Albertans, part of their hidden agenda.

Then they came into this place, put in a carbon tax that absolutely damaged our economy, continues to damage our economy. But further than that, not only damaging our economy and hurting everyday Albertans as they pay their bills, they went and attacked the very social fabric of many of our communities: seniors' centres, swimming pools, arenas, schools, municipalities, on and on and on, nonprofits, food banks, women's shelters, on and on. This government won't do anything about it. Nothing. So, again, they created a situation that is not great for investors.

Then, of course, we know that the minimum wage increases that this government has done under their watch have resulted in tens of thousands of jobs across this province going away, you know, and are having significant impacts on some of the other small employers in our communities, on youth employment as well. It's so disappointing.

Now here we are. The NDP realizes that they completely made a mess of this situation. Maybe they don't even realize it – who knows anymore at this point with this government – but they certainly did create a mess of it. The record is clear. The majority of Albertans certainly agree. Instead of doing what they should do, which is reverse their damaging policies, reduce the regulatory and tax burdens that they put on businesses and on investors, Mr. Speaker, what do they do instead? They bring in Bill 2, that is focused on very limited sectors, that does not help the broader province. For significantly less money they could just reduce their damaging policies and let businesses come and do their job.

Mr. Speaker, this is a government that under their watch has seen that 92 per cent of business owners – 92 per cent of business owners in this province – are not confident that the Alberta government is getting this right. Entrepreneurs in Alberta are the least confident in the entire country under this government. Entrepreneurs in Alberta are the least confident in the entire country. Alberta used to be the most entrepreneurial in the entire country. It used to be the beacon of that to this country. Now our entrepreneurs are the least confident in this entire country. Why? Because of the NDP's damaging ideological policies.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

You know, I talked about this with the Member for Calgary-West. When I was speaking after his remarks, I asked him a question on a quote from the Calgary Chamber of commerce, inside our largest city, that it's becoming harder to run a successful business in Calgary under this NDP government's watch. Why do they say that? You know, all those members there want to roll their eyes over this, but the Chamber of commerce, who is not partisan, says that it's because of the carbon tax – I think I brought that up – rising labour costs, increased personal and corporate taxes, and the layered cost of government policy. That's what this government did.

It is further concerning to me with this legislation given that the NDP's track record on programs such as what's in Bill 2 has not been promising so far. There were difficulties and delays in providing the Alberta investor tax credit funding in a timely fashion last year. Everybody remember that? Meanwhile the interactive digital media tax credit program will not have any program or application details until the summer of 2018.

Madam Speaker, I do not know about the constituents in your constituency, but my constituents don't have time to wait anymore for this government to continue to play these games. Instead of trying to fix the mess that you created, the absolute devastation that you put on the people of Alberta, with a Band-Aid solution that only picks winners and losers – the government only gets to pick winners and losers for select groups – you should do what's right and immediately do what the large majority of Albertans are calling for and reverse the carbon tax immediately. This would be the first thing you could do. That's the number one thing you could do, and it would have a bigger impact than this bill.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Under these members' watch, Madam Speaker, they've watched investment flee – we saw it – because they won't take action beyond their ideological agenda. Kinder Morgan is a prime example. Everybody wants Kinder Morgan built in this House – it's good – but this government would not do the simple things that it would take. Actually, I shouldn't say that they'd be simple; they'd be hard. But they would not take the time to do the hard things. Get the protesters out of the way, shut the taps off to B.C., and say: build this pipeline instead of breaking the law.

Now, because they could not do that, we see a large investor, a private investor, taking billions of dollars out of our economy and elsewhere. This government failed, Madam Speaker. They failed, and you know what they did when they failed? They went outside the Legislature and high-fived themselves about billions of dollars of investment leaving this province. It was disgraceful. And still we're here with no clear explanation of how they're going to address it.

Instead they're bringing in a bill that has limited potential. While there are some good things within it for some good people and some good job creators, it certainly cannot turn around the mess that this government has made of the economy. It cannot turn around the mess that they have made of this economy.

4:00

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you very much. I'd like to thank the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre for his comments. Madam Speaker, you know, as he was talking there, he made me think of our friend the late, great Manmeet Bhullar, former Member for Calgary-Greenway and, certainly, a football colleague of our friend from Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. I'll never forget when Mr. Bhullar said to the Minister of Finance: "Minister, 30 per cent of our income that comes in for Alberta comes from people who choose – who choose – to pay their taxes here in Alberta. If you raise the cost of personal income tax, if you raise the cost of corporate taxes, if you raise the overall cost to just do business, those people are going to choose to pay their taxes somewhere else." And from the numbers I have seen, those particular holes, I think – as we can see with our 9-plus billion dollar, it seems to me, annual deficit, those people have chosen to go somewhere else. The Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, I think,

would probably love the opportunity to expand on our good friend Manmeet Bhullar and the wise words that he had.

I'll add one more thing. The response from our Finance minister was that those people are going to stay here because of the mountains and lakes and this beautiful sunshine that we have here. If he can expand on that, I'd appreciate that.

Thank you.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, hon. member. I'd be happy to expand on that. I'm always happy to talk about my friend the late, great Manmeet Bhullar. His comments were exactly right, and the Finance minister's comments were wrong. The Finance minister wanted to talk about staying here because of mountains and lakes. I have the privilege of representing one of the most beautiful mountain areas in not just the entire province or country but the world, hands down.

Mr. Carlier: Or the universe.

Mr. Nixon: The minister of agriculture says: the universe. If he takes a ride up highway 11 and goes to the Columbia Icefield, he may actually say that by the end of that ride on his motorcycle. Absolutely, it's a beautiful place.

I can tell you that people fled our communities not because they wanted to but because the job creators in our communities left. Our population started to drop underneath this NDP government more significantly. Our employers left and went to other jurisdictions in the world, sometimes to dictatorship jurisdictions, because of the decisions that this government was making.

Madam Chair – I got used to committee the last few days. Sorry, Madam Speaker. If the Finance minister of Alberta thinks that he can destroy the entire economy and that the mountains and the lakes are going to keep everybody here, that probably shows you what the biggest problem we have here right now is, that the NDP are completely out of touch and they don't care. That's the biggest thing that I hear right now, and I'm sure the hon. member would agree with me right now. Everywhere I go in this province right now, they say: "The NDP government does not care. They don't care about us. They tell us to finance to pay for our carbon tax. They tell us to shut our swimming pools and not let our kids have a place to recreate to pay for their ideological carbon tax." They attack farmers and ranchers. They attack rural Alberta. They do not care about our province. Certainly, the way they act shows that they don't care.

The comments from the Finance minister saying that the mountains will be able to overcome his \$10 billion deficit or \$9 billion and change deficit, his budget that puts us on track for \$96 billion in debt, borrowing money against my children's and my grandchildren's and my great-grandchildren's futures – I mean, as I said before, one of the largest intergenerational thefts, in my perspective and in many Albertans' perspective, is being undertaken by this Finance minister and this government.

And what happens? If Manmeet was here today, I know what he would say. He would say to the backbenchers of this government: "Shame on you. Why have you not stood up – why have you not stood up – to this cabinet? Why have you not stood up for the people that you represent?" That's what he would have said. In fact, I watched him say it in this Chamber many times. He would have said: shame on you. He would have. That's what he would have said. He's not here to say it, so on behalf of Manmeet I say it: shame on you. You have a responsibility to stand up for your constituents.

Instead, you have continued – the Minister of Education: he has a responsibility to stand up for his constituents, too. He does,

Madam Speaker. Through you to him: stand up for your constituents. But you won't. Instead, you come here and heckle and continue to bring in brutal, damaging policies to the people I represent. You continue to attack the communities that I represent, and that's what the opposition is frustrated about, and that is what Albertans are frustrated about. They've had enough of this government and their ideological agenda. They've had enough of it.

As for the Member for Calgary-West's point . . .

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure for me to rise and offer a few comments, if I can, on some of the statements that we . . .

The Acting Speaker: Hon. minister, did you move third reading of this bill?

Mr. Schmidt: I did. This is 29(2)(a).

The Acting Speaker: No. The time is up under 29(2)(a). You'll have to wait till the next time.

Mr. Schmidt: Oh.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

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

Mr. McIver: All right. We're back on focus here. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate that. Bill 2: my colleagues have made some very good comments that I hope the government is paying attention to, but they have only touched, scratched the surface on the damage that this government has done to this province, damage that Bill 2 is not going to come anywhere near fixing.

Since this government has come to power, they have – you know what? Here's the thing. Some of my colleagues talked a little bit about some of the things that this government has done, and one of the things that they touched on was the royalty review. They're correct in what they said. Having a royalty review at a time when the industry was under great stress was a really bad idea. Again, as my colleague said on this side of the House, billions of dollars of investment have flown, have left Alberta, and have not come back.

But here's the thing. This is what's really interesting, Madam Speaker. Even when they did that, they almost didn't get it all wrong. Almost. What I mean by that is that when they – I was there the day that they announced the results of the royalty review. Frankly – and I've said this publicly before, so no one should be shocked – I said that I was pleasantly surprised with the recommendations from the royalty review, which is to say that they didn't really change anything much. They tinkered with a couple of things, tried to make it better, but they didn't really make anything bad. The problem was the months that they went through leading up to that, letting industry and business think that they were going to get damaging policies coming in. It drove a bunch of investment out.

Here's the thing. When they released the recommendations from the royalty review, they weren't bad, because what the government realized is that all the bad things they said about the system before and how Albertans weren't getting their fair share – essentially, the conclusion was that Albertans really were getting their fair share, which is why they didn't have to make a big change. As much as there was damage that was inflicted upon Alberta's economy for months on end before they gave the – because, of course, the

government members, through the election and then after, were saying: "Oh, we're going to get our fair share. We're going to take a lot more out of the industry."

Of course, the industry is saying: well, these people are going to fleece us like crazy. No wonder they left, because margins, in many cases, were tight. A lot of business is tough to do. Business was having a hard time making the type of money that they would like to make, and then you've got a government standing up saying: we're really going to give it to you with the taxes now. Then at least at the royalty review part: they got them with the taxes in a lot of other areas, but in the royalty review part they didn't. You know what? I would say that confidence was restored to a certain degree in the industry.

The problem is that it was restored for 10 seconds, and then the Premier and the Finance minister said: we are not going to raise your royalties – wait for it, Madam Speaker – yet. All that goodwill: out the window. They had 10 good seconds, though. They were a glorious 10 seconds when the industry thought the government got it right.

Then the Finance minister and the Premier stood up and said: "We won't raise the royalties yet. In other words, we know you're not making much money now. We know you're hurting. We know you're having a hard time staying in business. We know you're having a hard time to afford to employ Albertans. But we're just putting you on notice that the minute it gets better, we're going to take that away from you and make sure you're always just barely making a living. We're never going to let you live. We're never going to let you have a decent return to your shareholders. We're never going to let you thrive. We're never going to let you have enough profit left over to invest in new jobs, new technology, new inventions, new employment, a future for Albertans, for our grandchildren."

But they were a glorious 10 seconds before the government shot itself in the foot, Madam Speaker. I was cheering for those 10 seconds. I remember it so well because in the three-plus years that the gang across the aisle has been in office, there have been very few opportunities to cheer them on. Those were a glorious 10 seconds, and I want to thank the government for those 10 seconds. Fabulous. Fabulous.

4:10

What I didn't know is that while I was so happy during the 10 seconds, they were loading the gun, figuratively, to shoot themselves in the foot because, of course, all that confidence that the industry had went away about 10 seconds later, when they used the word "yet." We're going to hurt you later, not today, but as soon as we think you're doing well, we're going to hurt you again financially: that was the message from the Finance minister, the message from the Premier. All that goodwill, the fabulous, glorious, wonderful, outstanding, stupendous, exciting, good, great 10 seconds: it all went whoosh in about half a second after the 10 seconds. But I just have to say it again: those were a fantastic 10 seconds, really, really good. I will say my whole life that I was there in person – in person – in the same room to enjoy those 10 seconds. Man, that was great. That was fantastic.

Now the government wants to undo all of that damage with some boutique tax credits. You know what? I will agree with what some of my colleagues said: they're not all bad. The problem is that they're not going to undo the damage that this government has done. They're not going to undo the corporate tax increases. They're not going to undo the personal tax increases. They're not going to undo the job-killing, spirit-breaking carbon tax, that makes it more expensive for kids to swim in warm water, that makes it more expensive for kids to skate on cold ice because they get nailed

with the carbon tax both ways. It's more expensive either way with this government. There's no getting around it. Everything that people pay for is more expensive.

In fact, the government pretty much acknowledges it constantly in, you know, the fact that they spend a good part of what they collect in the carbon tax to undo the damage of – wait for it – the carbon tax. They're giving 40 per cent of it, a large percentage, back to people in rebates. In other words, they're spending money from the carbon tax to undo the damage of the carbon tax. Well, maybe you just don't put the carbon tax on in the first place. You don't have to undo all the damage. Then you caused whole towns with coal mines to be damaged and have a big hole put in their employment. Then they spend more millions of dollars out of the carbon tax to – wait for it – undo the damage of the carbon tax. This is the track record of this government: make a big old mess, and then throw money at it to try to have people forget that they made the big old mess. It's really, really, really unfortunate the way they're doing this.

Here's the problem. We're hoping that we're going to have a different government in Alberta next year. None of us know that. But even if we do, the way I look at it is that it's like, Madam Speaker, if I give you a shoelace and give you 10 minutes to tie knots in it, or if you give me a shoelace and you give me 10 minutes to tie knots in it. You and I won't be able to untie each other's knots in the same 10 minutes. It'll take hours. The whole problem is with the gang across here. They've made a mess of Alberta's economy, they've made a mess of everything in Alberta over four years, and it will take decades to undo the damage, the mess that this government has made. I believe that all Albertans will be in a big rush at election time to stop the mess that this gang is making and to look for somebody else to start fixing the damage that has been done in the last three years and will be done for four years by the time the next election comes.

Madam Speaker, that leads me to the place where I would like to move an amendment, please.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, can you just wait till I have a copy at the table, please?

Mr. McIver: Of course.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. McIver: I'll stand silent until you give me permission, okay? Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, please go ahead. Your amendment will be referred to as amendment HA1.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate that very much. If it's okay with you, I'll start by reading the amendment. I move that the motion for third reading of Bill 2, Growth and Diversification Act, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 2, Growth and Diversification Act, be not now read a third time but that it be read a third time this day three months hence.

Madam Speaker, based on this government's track record, I can't think of a more sensible amendment to make because, remember, this is a government that can't shoot straight. They get almost everything wrong that they do, and this legislation is another example. These things that they're trying to do for business, some of them are very good. The problem is that they're ignoring all the bad things they did. With some of these things the support for business would come in if they just hadn't killed and slowed down and damaged the amount of business that's already being done.

When hundreds of thousands of jobs left after this government came to power, a lot of those jobs were good, mortgage-paying jobs.

Here's the problem with that. Diversification is a good thing, and every government wants to bring in diversification. It will never be enough no matter how much is done because that's just the nature of the world. The fact is that it seems that almost every time the government makes a piece of legislation, they get it wrong, and many times they have to come back with one or two or three other pieces of legislation to fix all the things they got wrong the first time to get it right. This amendment would give the government three months to actually think about what they've done here and get some of the things right that they might have gotten wrong.

I know there will be members on the government side who say, "Oh, no; we don't do that," but, yeah, they do. Just this session they brought forward a bill that was four pages long. We on the Official Opposition side started pointing out that there were problems with the bill. They stood up, they stuck their chests out, and they said: "You people don't know what you're talking about. This is fantastic. It's fine. We've got it right. Why don't you just vote for it? If you love Alberta, you'll vote for it." Then we pointed out that there were things on the website that said three different things on the same topic, and then the minister, that two minutes before was saying that everything was perfect, said: "Well, yeah. Maybe this isn't right. Maybe we've got to do something different with that."

But wait. It gets better. A week later, a few days later, the same minister or another member of the government walks in and drops a three-page amendment on a four-page bill. Three pages of amendments on a bill they said was perfect. It was obviously not by our reckoning. But by the government's reckoning it was three-quarters wrong. Not just a little wrong. It didn't just miss dotting the i's or didn't just miss crossing the t's, didn't make a little mistake on page 2 that could easily be corrected. Three out of four pages of the legislation were wrong, not because I say so, Madam Speaker, but because the government said so, right after thrashing the opposition for criticizing their bill. "It's so great. It's perfect. We got everything right. Why don't you people listen? Why don't you pay attention? Why don't you do it our way?" Good thing we didn't pass the bill in one day because then they would've had to go and have a second bill with those three pages of amendments to correct the first bill.

So you see why this amendment is so important, Madam Speaker, because that gang can't shoot straight. They haven't been able to shoot straight for the whole three years they've had here, and they still can't shoot straight now. It's the way they operate. I don't know why that is. They are not able to get it right the first time. So I think that any time we give them a little bit of time to think about what they've done – and here's a great idea: talk to Albertans about it.

That's really one of their big failings. They don't actually talk to the people that their legislation affects. I know they sometimes go through the motions. We hear about meetings with the ministers, where they'll come in and the minister is answering e-mails or something while the staff is trying to carry on a conversation. Then: "All right. Your 30 minutes are up. Check. We met with that industry group." They didn't hear a thing they said, but they met with the industry group. That is the track record of this government in the way that they have operated for the last three years. And it's not once or twice. It's not one ministry or two ministries, Madam Speaker. It's just about the whole gang on the front bench. That's how they operate. Why?

4:20

We actually talk to Albertans, and Albertans tell us that. I know the government, some of them are probably a little bit embarrassed to hear this now, but that is what we constantly get told about the

way that they operate when they talk to Albertans who are stakeholders and who legislation affects. It's dismissive, it's disrespectful, and there's not enough listening to know what is good, what Albertans want and what they don't want, which is why they're constantly getting themselves in trouble.

Now, Madam Speaker, every government gets themselves in trouble. The last government, the one I was part of, got themselves in trouble sometimes. You know when we got ourselves in trouble, in my opinion? In most cases it was when we were in a hurry. Because when you're in a hurry, you don't take the time to talk to Albertans as much as you should. You don't take the time. Because you know what? Everybody is entitled to bad ideas, and sometimes people have great ideas, but whether your idea is great or bad, you actually ought to test it out with the people it affects and maybe ask them before you commit it to legislation. When the old government sometimes didn't take the time to ask Albertans, they got in trouble, and the same is true with this government.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you. I was listening to my colleague speak on the lack of consultation by this government, and what kept popping to mind every time he would say lack of consultation was Bill 6. That was where we more or less slapped all of our farmers and ranchers across the province in the face.

Now, why that is relevant here is that had we put forward a hoist like what my hon. colleague is doing right now, it would have given us some time to go out and talk with the farmers and ranchers that were clearly sending signals to this current government that they were very unhappy with the legislation that was being put forward. Had we been able to move that legislation forward in time just a little bit, do some consultation with those people that were going to be affected by it – you know, I can understand that the government had some concerns – I believe that what happens here is that they can work together and come up with a compromise that both the industry and government can move forward with.

But what we end up seeing is a government that moves head-on right into the empty pool, if you will. They go off the highest diving board they can find. They dive and do all their tricks all the way down, and when they hit the bottom, there's nothing there to catch them, just a cement bottom. What we've got here is a government that continues to follow that pattern of lack of consultation.

My question to my colleague. Bill 6 was one of the big failures of this government, and I would say that we still haven't seen the regulations come through from the government after. This was the first thing, one of the cornerstones, that they had brought forward to keep the farm workers safe. Now, to the member: do you think that had they not moved so quickly on it, that potential of this incredible incitement of all of our farmers and ranchers would have happened? Like with what's happening here, do you think that if they weren't rushing headlong into legislation, they might get it right?

The Acting Speaker: Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank my hon. colleague for this question because he puts his finger right on the problem and the reason why everybody in this House should support this amendment. On Bill 6 it has been – what? – a year and a half, two years since they passed the legislation, and the government still hasn't come out with the regulations because they got the bill wrong. There are still regulations that are waiting to come out. Farmers and ranchers, afraid for their living, still don't

know all the rules that are going to change under this government. When they brought it out, it was obvious. I mean, we had thousands of people from all over Alberta on the front steps of the Legislature with signs, yelling and screaming and singing and dancing and chanting and telling this government to stop. All those signs: kill Bill 6.

Meanwhile the government actually had the audacity to say: we are going to create a culture of safety. Albertans have been safely farming for over 100 years, maybe over 200 years, for a long, long time. I don't know when the first farm was. Yet this government had the courage, the audacity, the incredible lack of respect for the people that feed the rest of us to say that they needed to create a culture of safety, as if the farmers and ranchers were treating their staff like chattel or not caring about whether they lived or died or whether they went home safe at the end of the day, and exactly the opposite was true.

They also talked about how many farms and ranches didn't have any insurance. Well, a lot of them had insurance. They just didn't have the government-forced insurance, the WCB. A lot of farmers and ranchers that I've run into since – and I'm a city boy, so I don't talk to as many farmers and ranchers as some of my rural colleagues – have told me that they had better insurance for themselves and their employees and at a better price before the government forced them into the government insurance plans. If the government had actually talked to them in a respectful dialogue, a two-way dialogue, they would have realized that before they forced this legislation down their throats.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It is a pleasure to rise and speak to the amendment that was brought forward, that: "Bill 2, Growth and Diversification Act, be not now read a Third time but that it be read a Third time this day three months hence." In listening to the speech from the Member for Calgary-Hays, there were a number of thoughts that occurred to me, some of them that I will willingly share in this House.

First of all, the Member for Calgary-Hays described with a great deal of energy and enthusiasm the 10 seconds in which he felt affection for an action of this government. Certainly, nothing is more disappointing to me than to know that there's something that we've done to lose the Member for Calgary-Hays' affection. That is something that weighs heavily on my mind, every time I make the Member for Calgary-Hays unhappy.

The other thing that occurred to me, though, is that he repeatedly referred to us as a gang, referred to us as this gang over here on this side, and said that we're certainly not a gang of straight shooters. Madam Speaker, I do have to express some dismay at being referred to as a gang although certainly if we were a gang, I'm sure our gang colour would be orange. We are nothing but a friendly and approachable group of people, certainly not the kind of people who would shoot. Although many of us have fired firearms, it's definitely not our preferred method of engaging with people. In fact, if we were a gang, it occurred to me that maybe we would be a gang like from the movie *West Side Story*, that instead of, you know, shooting or stabbing our opponents, we would just engage them in a dance-off.

Anyway, moving on from that. Of course, the Member for Calgary-Hays has referenced, as the members opposite are wont to do, the lack of consultation that we've engaged in on all of our bills. It doesn't matter what bill we bring forward or how much actual consultation we seem to engage in, the members opposite accuse us

of not listening to Albertans and not engaging in consultation. In fact, that is the spirit with which this amendment has been moved, that the three months between now and when we read this bill a third time would give us time to consult with Albertans.

Two points on that, Madam Speaker, that I'd like to make. First of all, this bill was, in fact, the result of extensive consultation that we undertook with many stakeholders across Alberta. The Alberta investor tax credit and the capital investment tax credit were things that were good suggestions that were offered by many businesses, many chambers of commerce, and people interested in economic growth and development across Alberta. We heard loudly and clearly that the development of these kinds of tax credits was something that was long missing from Alberta, that actually existed in other jurisdictions, that if implemented here would enhance the growth and diversification of our economy. Since these tax credits have been introduced, I think it's fair to say that they've been successful in achieving their objectives. We're grateful for the advice that we received from all of the stakeholders in implementing these tax credits, and that's why we're so pleased to continue with these tax credits as we see here in this bill.

4:30

With respect to the development of the tax credits I don't see any particular reason that we would need to engage with stakeholders on this issue. We've already done so, Madam Speaker. We've taken their good advice, we've enacted it, and it's actually yielding positive results for the people of Alberta. So I'm not sure why the members opposite seem to think that we need to delay making a decision on whether or not those tax credits should be extended. It seems to me that if a good idea is working, we should keep it working.

On the issue of the interactive digital media tax credit as well as the technology spaces that are mentioned in the bill, this was the result of, again, extensive stakeholder consultation that we conducted, particularly with members of the interactive digital media world and in the high-tech world. They told us loudly and clearly that, again, this interactive digital media tax credit is something that exists in other jurisdictions, that has been very helpful in developing those industries in those jurisdictions, and that it would be beneficial to Alberta if we implemented that kind of program here in this province. Again, like we did with the investor tax credit and the capital investment tax credit, we've taken their good advice, and we've sought to implement it.

Members of the high-tech industry have also told us that they can't find people who have the skills they need to go to work in this industry, and that's why we're investing significant dollars in expanding the number of tech-related education seats in our postsecondary education system.

To say that we haven't engaged in any consultation with Albertans is not true, Madam Speaker. In fact, we have engaged extensively with the people of Alberta. You know, our success with the Alberta investor tax credit and the capital investment tax credit we hope to duplicate with the interactive digital media tax credit and the expansion of the tech spaces. We've relied previously on stakeholders' good advice to implement those two tax credits. We're relying again on their good advice to implement this further tax credit and expand these seats. This bill before us is a product of extensive consultation. Certainly, I think that that work has been completed, Madam Speaker, and there's no need to conduct any further consultation over the next three months.

With respect to consultation there are a couple of other points that I'd like to make. Certainly, you know, we get lectured all the time from the members opposite about our failure to consult with real Albertans. It was with great interest that I read the news today,

Madam Speaker, that, in fact, the Leader of the Opposition won't be appearing in the Edmonton Pride Parade but is having an invitation-only breakfast event Pride adjacent, let's say – I don't know where exactly that's going to be – which strikes me as odd. It's odd that they would come into this House and accuse us of not talking to real Albertans, yet when it comes to talking to real members of the LGBTQ community, they're not interested.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, you are deviating from the amendment that has been put in front of us. If you could please refer back to the amendment.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, with respect, Madam Speaker, I, of course, am referring to the amendment because the amendment was offered in the spirit of consultation. I'm just taking steps to poke holes in the authority that the members opposite seem to claim when they claim that they have some superior ability to consult with Albertans when, in fact, they've demonstrated time and again that they don't want to listen to Albertans that they feel disagree with their outlook on how the province should be run. So I raise that issue as well, that the members opposite are not exactly models that we would want to follow in terms of how to consult with the people of Alberta.

Mr. Westhead: Just like Bill 9.

Mr. Schmidt: Yes. Certainly, with respect to other issues that have been before the House, the members opposite have failed, in fact, to express any opinion whatsoever regardless of what they've heard from the people of Alberta.

Now, the timing of the amendment. Of course, it says that this bill be not now read a third time but be read three months hence. The Member for Calgary-Hays brought this amendment forward, saying that perhaps we would take the next three months to go home and think about what we've done and perhaps change our minds. It's interesting, Madam Speaker, because three months is approximately the same amount of time that we've been debating this very bill in this House.

Of course, we've heard a number of complaints from the members opposite about what they think are economy-destroying policies that our government has enacted, so economy destroying, in fact, that we have the fastest growing economy in the entire country, Madam Speaker. We created 90,000 jobs over the last year. The outlook, economic forecasts continue to be excellent.

What we've heard from the opposition are, of course, extensive complaints about what they imagine the state of the Alberta economy to be, yet all they've brought forward in terms of the counterproposals to the policies that we've brought forward is a reverse of the personal and corporate income tax increases that our government brought forward.

Of course, our goal here with this bill is to diversify the economy, something that Albertans told us loudly and clearly needed to be done and that the previous government had failed to act on. In fact, Madam Speaker, I think it could be fairly argued that, you know, reverting to the old tax regime would do as much to diversify the economy in 2018 as it did prior to 2015, which is nothing. The previous tax system in this province was not a terribly effective tool at diversifying the economy. The members opposite have really failed to explain to us or anybody why reverting to the old tax rates would be any more successful in growing and diversifying our economy than the measures that have been put forward in this bill. We've been arguing about this for three months. I suspect that if we were to come back to this bill in three months' time, we would be no further ahead in reaching a consensus on this issue.

You know, time and again when members opposite raised taxes as an issue, I've brought up the fact that our goal here is to stimulate investment using measures that have been successful in other jurisdictions. I've listed B.C. and Ontario and Quebec as jurisdictions that have similar tax structures, actually, to Alberta now. They also have prices on carbon. They also have corporate income tax rates that are similar to our own. They also have personal income taxes that in almost every case across the country are much higher than ours. Yet the members opposite have failed to explain to anybody why lowering personal and corporate tax rates here in Alberta would be any more successful in doing the thing that we're trying to do with this bill than it has been in any other jurisdiction. They have yet to explain to any of us why it is that Quebec has such an excellent interactive digital media economy even though their corporate tax rates are the same as ours. They also have a price on carbon. They have personal income tax rates that are much higher than Alberta's. They also have a provincial sales tax.

The members opposite have repeatedly failed to explain to us what their plan is, why they seem to want to vote against these particular initiatives and have nothing to offer.

Madam Speaker, this process has taken three months. We've been debating this bill for that time. Nobody's opinions have changed. Certainly, their opinions haven't changed. It doesn't make sense for us to delay this bill another three months when we suspect that in coming back to this bill in three months' time, we'll be no further ahead in resolving some of the differences that we've seen expressed in this House on our approaches to economic growth and diversification.

4:40

Madam Speaker, I must reiterate the importance with which we must act urgently. Certainly, the failure of Calgary to be included on the short list of the Amazon second headquarters was a wake-up call to the people of Alberta that we need to do something more to stimulate the growth of the high-tech sector here in the province. In fact, that's exactly what this bill accomplishes. That's why I urge all members to defeat this amendment and get on with passing this bill so that we can take effective and timely action to diversify the economy of Alberta.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Is there anybody wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to thank the Minister of Advanced Education for asking us to explain certain things. First, I appreciate him keeping the tone in a civil manner, unlike his usual style. He tried to drift, and you tried to bring him back to the amendment.

He asked us why we are not explaining that lowering taxes will benefit. One point I want to mention to the minister is that if he looks at his government's record, when they actually increased the taxes for higher income groups and also businesses, the revenue came down. If your purpose in raising taxes is to collect higher revenue, but on the other hand, when you increased the taxes, the government's revenue has come down – I would like to ask him about that.

Also, I would ask him why businesses are actually leaving Alberta and going to other jurisdictions and investing in the same business. They are not taking their money away from Alberta and Canada and investing in different types of businesses. They're still investing in the same types of businesses. During their three years

in office \$35 billion of investment has left Alberta. If he and his front benches would reflect on that, then they'll find the answer, I guess.

Also, the fact he is forgetting is that I was the critic for economic development for two years. I tried to meet with the minister, the economic development minister, many times to actually talk to him on the impacts of some of these programs, including AITC and CITC, and he wouldn't meet me. I approached the Speaker and I asked the Speaker for help, and Mr. Speaker actually talked to him three times. Three different times. He still wouldn't meet his critic. It's not the case with other ministers. I could meet with the agriculture minister, the Health minister – it seems she meets people – but that particular minister was not interested to hear what Albertans were telling me as the critic. Then I used other avenues like budget estimates and other opportunities to ask him about AITC, CITC and what the economic impact is of those policies and how many jobs they actually created.

Coming back to this amendment that we are talking about, why we are asking for a three-month consultation period is that stakeholders are telling us: this minister always rushes things, and then he realizes. For example, in April 2016 there was a \$170 million job-creation grant program, that this government brought in with much fanfare, and then they had to abandon that. Probably they heard their stakeholders telling them, and they might have done the right thing. That's the benefit of consultation.

My colleague from Bonnyville-Cold Lake talked about Bill 6. With that type of ramming through of legislation, that left scars on those rural farmers. I don't think any of the NDP rural caucus are happy about it because I'm sure they heard it from rural Albertans. They should be worried about their seats.

Also, another reason we are asking them to step back and look at this policy is because of the credit downgrades we are getting. The only things that are looking up: the deficit is going up, debt is going up, and the Calgary office space vacancy rate is going up.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. My colleague was going down a path of saying that consultation has been lacking when it comes to this government, especially when it comes to labour. To what the minister of postsecondary was saying, that on every bill that comes through, we criticize about lack of consultation, I would say that when it came to Bill 14, I never criticized that, and I didn't hear any of my colleagues criticize that specific bill. I actually even complimented the Minister of Service Alberta on that bill. That's the bill that deals with including water commissions and water services for municipalities. So to say that we criticize about consultation on every bill is very wide.

But I will say that what we do as opposition is that we try to make a bill better. When we get to the point where the government has more or less shot down every amendment that we bring forward, not giving the opposition the ability to be able to reinforce a bill like Bill 2, that's problematic.

The fact is that when it comes to Bill 2, what we're seeing is that the government has said that they've been moving this through and that it's been three months. Well, again, whenever we start to move legislation through the House at the rate that we're going, you're going to find that we're not perfect. We heard clearly from the Member for Calgary-Hays about the fact that the government is putting through legislation and coming in with amendments to fix their own legislation because it's so flawed. That clearly means that we're moving this legislation through the House too fast.

Now, what I would like to say – I'm going to pull up an article. Mark Milke is the author of the article. The title of the article is Alberta Already Tried to Diversify Her Economy – and Failed. This article is posted on the Fraser Institute web page. I know that the government may not like the Fraser Institute, but it does have a lot of valuable information there that highlights the government in what it's doing right and what it's doing wrong. A lot of times what happens is that our media focuses on the negative stuff, but in this case what we've got here is an article that's about diversification. I'd like to start with the very first sentence.

With the price of oil plunging to below \$50 per barrel and the outlook for Alberta's economy and provincial budget revenues falling in tandem, an oft-heard piece of advice is being recycled: Alberta should diversify its economy.

4:50

Diversification isn't a new idea. Actually, I would say that every government comes out and says: we should diversify. I think that if you were to poll Alberta as a whole, you are probably going to get 96 per cent of Albertans or even higher saying that they would like to see more diversification within Alberta. So there's clearly a desire there. The question is: how do you get there?

Now, we've got the NDP, that has decided that corporate welfare seems to be the path that they want to go down, and you've got the Conservatives, who are saying that a low tax regime will promote diversification. One says: we need to use taxpayer money, and we need to pick winners and losers. The other says: allow the market to dictate diversification; they'll find the best place for it, and they will be driven to our economy here because of the fact that they can make profits. Whenever government gets into business, we always see that there's a failure at some point. Governments were never meant, in my opinion, to be in business, and it's because we're very inefficient. The bigger we get as a government, the more inefficient we become.

When we look at these tax credits – and I'm going to go to a different article. I'll be flipping between the articles if time allows. "New Alberta Tax Credit Off to Slow Start with No Money Awarded Yet." Now, this was written on June 19, 2017, and this was specifically about the tax credits. What we've got here is an article that is showing that when they first announced this, there wasn't a whole lot of uptake from the industry, and that is because what we end up with in the end is a government picking winners and losers.

I just want to get to the point here. What we're looking at here is an article that is more or less saying in the first sentence here:

The Alberta Investor Tax Credit, which formally launched in January, offers a 30 per cent tax credit to private investors who put [their] money into companies doing work in non-traditional sectors such as information technology, clean technology, health technology, interactive digital media and game products, and digital animation.

It's clearly saying what its focus is.

Now we're seeing a second tranche or a second phase of the same one, and they're retargeting the same groups and with a lot of money. We don't even know if the first one was successful. The reason: the way that tax credits work, in order to receive a tax credit, you have to actually earn profits. It takes time for these businesses to earn the profit in order to be able to get the tax credit. Now, sometimes what happens is that it may take several years for a company to be able to have this tax credit pay out.

Moving on to where I'm going with this – and I'm going to be going through the different articles because they're all relevant – what we've got here is a Manitoba article from *agcanada.com*: "Manitoba Pulls Less-loved Ag Tax Credits in Budget." Underneath it says – and I know this might have some humour

involved in it – “Manure management, riparian tax credits end immediately.” What happens here is that in this article it goes on to talk about how the government brought forward tax credits in Manitoba with clear expectations on what their intent was, but nobody was actually seeing if the results were there for the tax credit.

Now, in this same article:

Friesen, in his speech, also announced the province is “eliminating boutique tax credits that had little uptake and failed to meet their objectives.”

Manitoba, with over 30 provincial tax credits, has had “among the most complex and diversified” tax credit system in the country, he said.

Among the tax credits that end effective Tuesday for farmers and agribusinesses are the odour control tax credit, the nutrient management tax credit and the riparian tax credit. All three cuts were listed as having “negligible” budget impact.

The odour control credit was an income tax credit for businesses that invested in capital projects to control “nuisance odours that arise or may arise from the use or production of organic waste.”

Now, it goes on to talk a little bit more specifically here, but what we have here is an article that says that there was a target of eliminating odour, and they created a tax credit. Inside of that tax credit was the intent to more or less move the economy in a different direction. Nobody took it up, and the government realized that they were managing something that wasn’t efficient.

Now, to hear the minister for postsecondary say that this is a wildly successful tax credit from the first phase, there’s nothing that actually can show that because it takes a long time for these tax credits to go through the system. It all derives from profit. They need time to build the capital. They need time to move forward with the project that the government is trying to diversify to.

Now, we’ve heard the government putting forward all of these success stories. The fact is that whenever we’ve got a success story, I’m glad to hear that, because I want to see Alberta succeed as much as any one of the other members do. But it’s a little soon to be bringing out a second phase of a tax credit system when we are not even sure that the first one worked. That is clearly problematic. The fact is that we had articles stating that the first phase wasn’t as successful as the government makes it sound like. The first phase sounded like it was failing, but over time – it took time to build that up. But we don’t know if it’s successful at this point yet, and I don’t believe the government has that information. If they do, they should share it. I am sure that if they did have that information, you can bet it would be on every billboard across Alberta.

Again, with this government, what happens is that they look at the immediate need, and they say: “Okay. We want to diversify, so we’re going to throw money at it. You know what? Maybe the first phase worked, maybe not – we don’t know – but we’re going to try throwing more money at it and, when the third phase comes along, throwing more money at it.” We find out that the first phase didn’t achieve what they had hoped. That is problematic. That is something where we need to ensure that our taxpayers, Alberta’s taxpayers, are respected.

Whenever we’ve got something as large as these tax credits, I think it’s admirable that the government is trying to find a way to diversify our economy. But why do we always need to throw money at it? Why do we always need to ensure that Alberta’s money is thrown into a bottomless pit, with nobody being held to account?

5:00

Now, I have to say that once we’ve gotten to the point where we’ve verified that the intent to create diversification happened, then maybe we can look at it, but we’re talking large windows of

time here, not just a year, not just six months. It takes decades to find out if this stuff works. I understand that the government wants to rush headlong into this stuff. Like Bill 6, if they get it wrong: well – you know what? – we can try, try again or put the regulations on hold. Hopefully, once we’ve got something that would be a compromise with the consulting – again, this minister for postsecondary has been very clear that it seems like they feel they’re doing an appropriate job. I hear from my own constituents that that would be something they would dispute.

What we have here is this hoist amendment saying: “Let’s give this some time and let the government go back and actually do some economic impact studies or income research in trying to work out: did the first phase work? How far along is this?”

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Yes. I enjoyed listening to the comments here from the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake. I guess I was interested in hearing – he was kind of comparing these two different articles and quoting from each one. It was interesting to hear the comments and what was going on there, and I think it would be great to hear him continue on in that vein.

Thanks.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I’m going to go back to – thank you, again – Mr. Milke’s article. This specific article is Alberta Already Tried to Diversify Her Economy – and Failed. Now, what happens here is that I will continue on from the first one, which is saying that Albertans have for many years been saying that we should diversify. This is something that I believe the government is trying to hear Albertans on and move forward.

Moving on, it says:

The advice is well-intentioned. But local economies, like businesses, often make money selling what’s nearby. Hawaii peddles vacations with warm weather attached. Alberta (along with Saskatchewan, Newfoundland and Labrador and northern British Columbia) sells oil and gas.

The oil, gas and mining sector is the largest contributor to Alberta’s economy at 23 per cent of the province’s GDP. That is significant for employment and income. That sector also matters to the provincial budget: resource revenue provides about 24 per cent of the Alberta government’s own-source revenue.

In theory, diversification would allow Albertans to be less reliant on resources. However, it is not clear how Alberta could diversify simply by everyone wishing to that end, including via government policy.

He makes a good point.

What we’re looking at here is that there are going to be things that Alberta has as competitive advantages. We need to be focusing on those competitive advantages to diversify our economy because when we have competitive advantages, you will find that we will be able to find private investors to be able to fund that without risking taxpayer money.

A good example in my constituency is that I was told – and I’m sure that I could be corrected – that in my area there is a competitive advantage for growing hemp. We are in a band where we get the perfect amount of light, and it’s the perfect season for growing hemp. So the government, if they were looking at diversifying Bonnyville-Cold Lake, would look at: how do we get more diversification when it comes to my area? Now, the problem we’ve

got here is that a number of years ago the rail line was taken out of my whole area, so now we don't have a way of being able to transport the different agricultural, grown resources that we've got up in my area. We have no way of getting it out efficiently. That's problematic because what happens is that we will have other industry players in other provinces across Canada that have that access to rail that'll be able to get that hemp out.

A good example would be for the government to be working at finding a diversification plan, trying to work out how to get hemp out of Bonnyville-Cold Lake. We would be looking at maybe bringing more rail back to my constituency, that gives the ability for farmers to get their agriculture to market. That is good for Alberta; that's more diversification. Instead, what we're doing is that we are creating a tax credit for industry that probably would have done it anyway. What happens here is that every time we have a tax credit, that means that fewer royalties, in this case, are going to be collected or less tax income is going to be . . .

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. Hon. member, just a reminder. If you could please table your two articles tomorrow.

Mr. Cyr: Okay.

The Acting Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Yes, I'd like to speak to the amendment. During the discussion here that we've had on this amendment, there was some discussion about consultation and how the government had done extensive consultation on this. I guess I was thinking: okay; if I went to a certain industry and said, "We're thinking of giving you guys a tax credit; what do you think?" I'm going to suggest that they would probably say: "Yes. Yeah. Let's do this. In fact, while you're at it, why don't you get rid of the carbon tax, and we'll save even more money." Of course, that doesn't necessarily mean that this is all good for Albertans because I'm sure we could go to any industry, any business in the province of Alberta and say, "Hey, how would you like to pay less taxes?" and they'd say, "Yes, of course."

What I find a little ironic, I guess, is that when we on this side of the House say that we should have lower taxes here in Alberta and we suggest that that's good, of course, the NDP light their hair on fire, saying, "How could you do that? That's going to cause all these problems, and this is going to be horrible," you know, all the different things that they accuse us of when we talk about lower taxes. But, of course, when the government comes along and says that we're going to lower taxes for these guys and we're going to lower taxes for those guys and we're going to lower taxes for those guys over there, this is diversifying the economy and making life better for Albertans. It just does seem to be a little bit of a double-edged sword there. No, I shouldn't say a double-edged sword. But it just seems to be that one side says, "It's great," and the other side says, "It's horrible."

Now, when we talk about consultation, you know, on this side of the House we had town halls for rural crime. I don't think the government had any. We had town halls for Bill 6. We travelled all across Alberta with Bill 6, having town halls. Did the government have town halls for Bill 6? I don't think so. We had town halls for the parks they were creating on the eastern slopes, for discussions on that. We've covered a lot of ground in Alberta doing consultation when this government, of course, wasn't doing any, except maybe going to certain companies and saying: hey, do you want a tax break? Of course, they say yes, and that's what the government says is consultation. They say: well, if they say it's great, then it's great.

Now, obviously, the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar talked about that Alberta was the fastest growing economy in Canada. Alberta was the fastest growing economy in Canada. But I looked on the Conference Board of Canada website here, and I actually found out that, unfortunately, that's not true. Alberta actually kind of sits in the middle of the pack, and B.C. and Prince Edward Island are actually the fastest growing provincial economies in 2018. Of course, we would love to see Alberta at the top of that as far as the fastest growing economy, but that's just not the case. Of course, the government keeps talking about this – we hear this almost every day in question period – how fast the economy is growing in Alberta and it's the fastest in Canada, when obviously it's just not true.

5:10

It goes on to say here, "Alberta's economy is performing well but a lack of investment in the energy sector is dimming economic prospects." That's another thing that we talk about on this side of the House. You know, we tell the government, "You're driving away investment." They come back and say: "No, no, no. Investment is just flooding into Alberta. I mean, you wouldn't believe all the investment that's coming in." But, of course, when we pick an organization that's not involved politically, the Conference Board of Canada, they actually support our view, that the investment isn't flooding into Alberta like the government suggests. Now, it goes on to say here, "While Alberta bounced back from recession in 2017 growing by 4.9 per cent, economic growth is expected to be weaker this year, at 1.9 per cent."

Now, Madam Speaker, once the government had driven the economy to the very bottom that they possibly could drive it, then there was actually nowhere for it to go but up. When you have 4.9 per cent growth, that's actually – well, it's good. We're not going to complain about having 4.9 per cent growth. But the only reason that it was 4.9 per cent growth is because they'd driven it so far down. It had nowhere to go but up.

I also wanted to mention, too, that this government, during the economic downturn, of course, blamed the price of oil. The price of oil has a lot of effect in Alberta. We agree with that, that the price of oil does have a great effect on our economy. We never blamed the government for the price of oil going down, but we do blame the government for how they reacted to it and the different things that they did to make matters worse at that time. Of course, the price of oil goes down. The government says: it's not our fault. Agreed. But when the price of oil goes up, I mean, emergency rooms are flooded with NDP members with dislocated shoulders trying to pat themselves on the back. It just doesn't make any sense, how this government can sit here and when the price of oil goes down, "Not our fault"; when the price of oil goes up, the economy comes back a bit: "Hey, thank us. We're here. Just pat us on the back and turn us loose here." I think there are some things here that just don't make sense.

Now, we want diversification in our economy, but it doesn't always take government intervention to get there. In fact, all we have to do is that we have to create a business-friendly environment in Alberta – that's what we need to do, create a business-friendly environment – so businesses will come to Alberta, invest money, take their jobs and everything and move them here so that Albertans can be employed and working. Of course, what happens when you do that is that the economy builds naturally. These businesses will come in and set up business. They don't need to be paid to come in and do business in Alberta. They can come to Alberta and know that they're going to make money, and they'll bring their investment here, bring the jobs here. That's how you diversify the economy, but of course this government figures that they have to interfere with everything.

Now, we talk about a business-friendly environment. Well, a business-friendly environment doesn't include things like a carbon tax, that our neighbouring jurisdictions don't have, the places that we have to compete with. Like, these companies compete in a global market, and if we don't have, you know, an opportunity to show them that they can come in and do business and make as much or more money than anywhere else, they're going to go somewhere else. So we have to give that opportunity to do that.

Another problem we have here is regulations. We've got companies that want to bring investment to the province, and when they go to set up, of course, they're met with barriers and years and years and thousands, hundreds of thousands of dollars to set up their businesses.

Madam Speaker, that's what we need to do. Bill 2 is obviously something where it's meant to try to force investment to happen when really it could happen naturally if we just create that business-friendly environment in Alberta.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Seeing none, I will now call the question on the amendment.

[The voice vote indicated that motion on amendment HA1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:15 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Cyr	Hanson	Nixon
Ellis	Loewen	Panda
Fraser	McIver	Schneider

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hinkley	Nielsen
Carlier	Horne	Renaud
Carson	Kleinstauber	Rosendahl
Ceci	Larivee	Sabir
Coolahan	Loyola	Schmidt
Dach	Luff	Schreiner
Drever	Malkinson	Shepherd
Eggen	McKittrick	Sucha
Fitzpatrick	McLean	Turner
Ganley	Miller	Westhead
Goehring	Miranda	Woollard

Totals:	For – 9	Against – 33
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[Motion on amendment HA1 lost]

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, we will now call the question on third reading.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:32 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hinkley	Miranda
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Carlier	Horne	Nielsen
Carson	Kleinstauber	Renaud
Ceci	Larivee	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Loyola	Sabir
Dach	Luff	Schmidt
Drever	Malkinson	Schreiner
Eggen	Mason	Shepherd
Fitzpatrick	McKittrick	Sucha
Ganley	McLean	Westhead
Goehring	Miller	Woollard

Against the motion:

Cyr	Hanson	Panda
Ellis	Loewen	Schneider
Fraser	Nixon	

Totals:	For – 33	Against – 8
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[Motion carried; Bill 2 read a third time]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Pursuant to Government Motion 20 at this time I would like to notify the Assembly that there shall be no evening sitting today.

Bill 1 Energy Diversification Act

[Adjourned debate June 5: Ms Ganley]

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, are there any members wishing to speak to Bill 1? The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 1, the Energy Diversification Act. There are some very interesting aspects of this bill, interesting in the sense that the minister did not need this bill to do what she intends to do. The minister already has the power to do what Bill 1 does. This reminds me of another Bill 1 from another session, one in which that Bill 1 outlined the Minister of Economic Development and Trade's job description. Bill 1 is symbolic and symptomatic of the NDP government and the policy choices it's making.

5:50

The NDP went to great lengths before bringing in Bill 1 by striking a committee – yes, another committee, Madam Speaker – and this one is the Energy Diversification Advisory Committee. It was stood up on October 13, 2016, and the membership was made up of several people, including Jeanette Patell from GE, Gil McGowan from the Alberta Federation of Labour, Leo de Bever – that member only lasted until March 13, 2017 – Warren Fraleigh, Carol Moen, Marie Robidoux, and Rocky Sinclair. It makes me wonder why Leo de Bever only lasted five months on this committee.

All manner of recommendations came forward, but only a subset of recommendations made the cut into Bill 1. Although there were many more recommendations, only a subset made it into Bill 1. It was the recommendations that played to the NDP stereotype – grants, loans, and loan guarantees – and the NDP's big-spending ways. Yeah, Madam Speaker, this government is willing to give billions to corporations but doesn't want to bring natural gas to La Crête. I don't know why, but they can't get it.

Yet there are other recommendations that could have been chosen that would have had a greater impact on the petrochemical sector in Alberta. I actually like the petrochemical sector because at the beginning of my career I started at Reliance, which built over a

period of time the world's largest petrochemical complexes, in India, actually.

The recommendations of this EDAC committee include – I'll read some of them.

Recommendation 3.1:

EDAC recommends the Government of Alberta strive for the same levels of regulatory transparency, efficiency and predictability in the downstream [same] as in the upstream.

Recommendation 3.2:

EDAC recommends the Government of Alberta ensure regulatory timelines are in line with comparable jurisdictions such as Texas and Louisiana, while not compromising Alberta's high standards.

Recommendation 3.4:

EDAC recommends the Government of Alberta work with industry to support timely review processes by exploring opportunities to reduce duplication of efforts, use existing data and create shared value by bringing the environmental assessment process more fully into the digital age.

Recommendation 3.5:

EDAC recommends the Government of Alberta, as part of its land management policies, take steps to enable preapproval of project sites and/or zones within existing or emerging downstream energy clusters.

Recommendation 4 of EDAC's report reads:

EDAC supports the concept of establishing new infrastructure and energy corridors around existing or likely sites for downstream energy clusters – in particular, Alberta's Industrial Heartland, Joffre, Grande Prairie and Medicine Hat.

Recommendation 7.2 of EDAC's report says:

Due to the fact that Alberta's downstream energy industry relies on rail access for its movement of product, EDAC recommends the Alberta government continue to lead on advocacy for equitable rail services that address the needs of downstream energy industry players in regards to access, cost and reliability, with active participation by downstream energy industry representatives.

In 7.4 it says:

Seek the permanent extension of the existing accelerated capital cost allowance for manufacturers such as the petrochemical industry to provide certainty to those interested in investing in the downstream.

Madam Speaker, these policy options were not chosen by this NDP government. Instead, we have grants, loans, and loan guarantees, and the industry smiles politely and says: hurray. Who doesn't want money? The Energy minister and the economic development minister and everyone in this House told us that their Bill 1 is based on the recommendations from the EDAC report. Now, I've read so many of them which have suggested alternate ways to help the industry, to grow the economy and bring jobs, but the NDP government conveniently ignored them, and they just chose the handouts.

Meanwhile just yesterday the executive director of Alberta's Industrial Heartland Association had something to say. Lynette Tremblay said, quote: globally integrated companies do not necessarily need repayable loans from government. End quote. Madam Speaker, it looks like the NDP might be getting this wrong if the organization that stands to benefit the most from new investment in petrochemicals in Alberta is not liking the policy tool chosen by this NDP government.

Lynette went on to say that Alberta's Industrial Heartland Association is, quote: also advocating for more competitive capital cost allowance; Canada's 50 per cent deduction for capital cost depreciation is only available until 2025 while the United States has implemented a permanent 100 per cent capital cost allowance. End quote. This capital cost allowance at 100 per cent was placed in President Trump's last budget, and Wall Street loved it. EDAC recommended it, too, but there's nothing here in this Bill 1 about that particular recommendation.

The executive director of the Industrial Heartland Association went on to point out, quote: additionally, recent corporate tax cuts in the States have resulted in a 21 per cent tax compared to Alberta's 27 per cent corporate tax, 12 per cent provincially and 15 per cent federally. Madam Speaker, our federal and provincial taxes are out of synchronization with the U.S.A.; again, not the variable but certainly a variable.

Madam Speaker, also, there was a quote from the heartland association. Basically, they want a reduction in red tape and regulatory times; again, a recommendation from EDAC but not found in Bill 1.

Further issues plague Canada's investment attraction such as the B.C.-Alberta pipeline dispute. Foreign investors take a look at the pipeline dispute. Quote: the signals that we send globally do impact our sector regardless of what the nature of the dispute is. So it's really important that the perceptions of Alberta and Canada are that we welcome investment, that it is easy to do business here, and that we recognize the benefit to the community. The pipeline fight is creating uncertainty.

You know what else is creating uncertainty? The federal carbon pricing being layered on top of provincial carbon taxes. Madam Speaker, if you remember, Shell has decided to invest in Pennsylvania over Alberta, and they're constructing a \$6 billion ethane cracker facility estimated to create 6,000 construction jobs and 600 operational jobs in Pennsylvania but not in Alberta.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(2) the House will now stand adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday morning, June 6, 2018

Day 39

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Wednesday, June 6, 2018

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Prayers

The Acting Speaker: Good morning.

Let us each pray and reflect in our own way. As we gather today for another day of considered decision-making, I would ask that each of us reflect in our own way on what we can do to be seen as leaders for the LGBTQ community. As members of this Assembly it is our responsibility that all Albertans are welcome and feel welcome.

Please be seated.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders

Third Reading

Bill 1

Energy Diversification Act

[Debate adjourned June 5: Mr. Panda speaking]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Yeah. Thank you, Madam Speaker. Last night we were talking about Bill 1, and I'll start where I left. Just as a recap, we were talking about what led to Bill 1. EDAC, Energy Diversification Advisory Committee, consisted of different members from General Electric, Alberta Federation of Labour, Building Trades representatives, and so on. They were all involved in this committee, and they gave a report. That committee recommended many other important recommendations to the government like reducing the red tape and looking at other measures that make our businesses more competitive, but this government just picked handouts rather than looking at other important tax credits and other incentives that will encourage businesses to stay in Alberta.

I was talking about that when we had to leave last night. Madam Speaker, there are a few quotes that I mentioned last night from the executive director from the Industrial Heartland. The quote was: additionally, recent corporate tax cuts in the States have resulted in a 21 per cent tax compared to Alberta's 27 per cent corporate tax, which is a 12 per cent provincial tax and 15 per cent federal tax. Also, our federal and provincial taxes are out of synchronization with the U.S.A. Again, not the variable, but certainly a variable.

The heartland association also hears from investors on how they see Alberta. Quote: while we were in Texas recently, we heard from investors that the U.S. regulatory environment is more consistent than Canada's, and they felt more driven by economics. On average it takes about twice as long to navigate Canada's regulatory process than it does in the U.S. That adds significant cost and uncertainty to a project.

Red tape and regulatory times: again, recommendations from EDAC not found in Bill 1. Further issues plague Canada's investment attraction such as the B.C.-Alberta pipeline dispute. Foreign investors take a look at the pipeline dispute and, quote: the signals that we send globally do impact our sector regardless of what the nature of the dispute is. So it's really important that the perceptions of Alberta and Canada are that we welcome investment, that it is easy to do business here, and that we recognize the benefit to the community.

Madam Speaker, if you remember, Shell Canada chose to invest in Pennsylvania over Alberta. I talked about that briefly last night. Taxes, tax incentives, tax credits, royalty credits: they all appear to be the language that the industry likes to hear. That's why the demand for royalty credits exceeded the supply in the petrochemical diversification program, PDP 1.

But while the NDP have chosen to do a second round of PDP, they also decided to create a feedstock infrastructure program with \$500 million in loan guarantees for industry to construct more straddle plants needed to capture more natural gas liquids to feed the petrochemical industry in Alberta, namely to obtain propane and methane. The NDP have also decided on \$800 million in loan guarantees and \$200 million in grants for a partial upgrading program. Industry is most interested in this program, but in our conversation with them they said that they would prefer a tax credit. While partial upgrading supports freeing of pipeline space on existing pipelines and using them more efficiently, the Alberta Chambers of Commerce questions the assumption in the Energy Diversification Advisory Committee report that more refining in Alberta makes economic sense.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The member, I think, when the time ran out, was midsentence. I thought he was onto something important that the House should hear, so I was wondering if the member could complete his thoughts.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Yeah. Thank you to my colleague from Calgary-Hays. Yes, I was talking about partial upgrading, which actually supports the freeing of pipeline space on existing pipelines and using them more efficiently. But Alberta Chambers of Commerce: their question is whether more refining in Alberta makes economic sense or not. That's why we need an economic impact assessment that proves or disproves that there is a greater economic benefit to Alberta as a result of refining here versus removing the discount on our bitumen products and refining where it makes more sense, where the refinery is already there.

We don't blindly accept the president of the Alberta Federation of Labour's support for site refining projects as a ringing endorsement for more refining here. Of course, he's going to say that he has a vested interest. But, Madam Speaker, we tried to make Bill 1 better with a series of amendments. We wanted some accountability to bring the reports of the APMC to the Legislature, and we wanted to eliminate the loan guarantees and the equity stakes. We wanted to eliminate the grants. Then we tried to make the grants less risky by limiting them to site preparation and job training. We also asked for NAFTA and CETA compliance, and we tried to get an economic impact assessment on refining here versus elsewhere as well as an economic impact assessment on each project getting support. The NDP rejected all of those amendments, preferring their ideological approach and not wanting to consider other factors.

There will not be support for this bill from our caucus for the reasons mentioned above. As I said, although we like petrochemical diversification – personally I worked on those projects, and it makes sense – before we take this route of handing out to the industry, there are other measures EDAC recommended, and this government ignored them. We tried to bring them back through amendments to make this bill better, but the government blindly rejected them. There is a pattern here. They keep rejecting every

common-sense suggestion from the opposition. I'm really getting tired of repeating the same thing. I don't understand why the government when they were in opposition tried to make the legislation better using their legislative options, but when they went into the government, you know, the power went to their head, and they started ignoring common-sense constructive criticism from opposition and also the co-operation offered by opposition.

That's where Bill 1 is now, Madam Speaker. Government still has the opportunity if they want to make it better. If not, they have to explain to Albertans why they're overlooking EDAC's other recommendations to make businesses more attractive without taxpayers' money.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

9:10

Mr. Stier: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Good morning, everybody. It's good to see everyone here in the House again on a bright, bright sunny day in the beautiful city of Edmonton to listen to very, very important information and solid debate on Bill 1.

I've got a few prepared remarks and things about Bill 1. Some of you may know that I spent a little time in the oil and gas industry, but it was in a different segment than this. Certainly, it's something I always keep my ears to and my eyes peeled for in the news, and it's something that goes to my heart, and one day – who knows? – I might even find an office downtown again just to consult some more.

But anyway, today we're talking about the Energy Diversification Act, and it's something that I actually haven't had a chance to speak on too much up to this point, just the way the rotation goes. Nonetheless, you know, it's something that I think the government has not exactly been, over the course of its three-and-a-half-year mandate so far – they really haven't been too favourable to the oil and gas industry in many respects. For the first three years there's been the raising of taxes on job creators by 20 per cent. There's been an awful lot of extra red tape put into the system. As we all know, we speak about in this House time and time again on the matter of a related topic, how much extra red tape has been put into the industry in terms of regulations and processes.

You know, from what we've seen and read in the papers, not just myself and my own remarks – it's what people have said in articles by knowledgeable journalists across the country – it really has driven a lot of investment elsewhere. The day before yesterday in *Sherwood Park News*, in fact, it was revealed that over the past five years, according to that article, Canada has lost 80 per cent of its historical energy investment. The country has only received \$250 billion in investment over 10 years when we should have received, in the normal course of business that history has shown us, over 1 and a quarter trillion dollars. That's a big number. I don't even know what a trillion dollars really means, actually. Nonetheless, there are a lot of examples.

Sasol, as an example, which is the South African synthetic oil liquid company, moved their investment of \$8.1 billion, which was an ethane cracker, from Fort Saskatchewan to Louisiana. There they created 5,000 construction jobs and 500 operations jobs. That plant apparently is accompanied by plans for a further \$14 billion gas-to-liquids facility to complete a \$21 billion petrochemical complex. Just imagine if we could have had that here.

The package from the state of Louisiana was worth over \$135 million, which aided Sasol investment, including a one-time tax

credit of \$2,500 per net new job created, a research and development credit of up to 40 per cent, and a retention and modernization tax credit as well. So they were pretty innovative in how they put their plans together to attract business down south. That's for sure. As we all know, the new president there has been innovative, to say the least, in how he approaches business and how he has changed the models down there.

It looks like our NDP government here has looked at this, and they want to go down a similar path in providing some sort of market change. I think that there was a large, large committee struck by the NDP. They created the Energy Diversification Advisory Committee, and it produced a report. I've seen the report. It's actually quite thick. I've got a copy of it. The work of EDAC, the Energy Diversification Advisory Committee, is not, therefore, some fly-by-night operation. It looks like they have done quite an intense job of studying this whole situation. It has the hallmarks of something quite substantial, actually. I say this because I know there were policy options recommended in that report that would seem the current government hasn't acted on at this point in time.

There are some policy options in there that remove the regulatory roadblocks that we were seeing and some red tape holding up project permits. In fact, I could mention item 3.2 in that report, and 3.2 says:

EDAC recommends the Government of Alberta ensure regulatory timelines are in line with comparable jurisdictions such as Texas and Louisiana, while not compromising Alberta's high standards.

Now, I remember in this House a few years ago, when the former government was here, and the Energy minister at that time spent a lot of time in refining some of the energy act at the time with amendments. A lot of red tape was reduced at that time, and I'm not sure myself what exactly has taken place since that time. Another writer, Lynette Tremblay of Alberta's Industrial Heartland Association, said in that same *Sherwood Park News* article that I mentioned a moment ago:

While we were in Texas recently, we heard from investors that the U.S. regulatory environment is more consistent than Canada's, and they felt more driven by economics.

She went on to say:

On average, it takes about twice as long to navigate Canada's regulatory process than it does in the U.S. That adds significant costs and uncertainty to a project.

It seems to me that we're facing an uphill battle if our main competitor has seen the light of day and they've reduced a lot of these costs and red tape situations, yet here in Bill 1 it looks as if they have not done much in terms of addressing red tape and the regulatory timelines. When that is the case, how can you be competitive with our major competitor to the south? If we had something there, some sort of red tape repeal, it would do much to unleash the economy that we're in right now and put people back to work, in our opinion.

I guess it's telling that the NDP is only introducing Bill 1 after three years. Governments are setting up good-news stories all the time, and, you know, as we approach the election, I'm hoping that some of these things might become something that can be addressed. If it's missing here, I'm wondering when it's going to come out. Is it going to be addressed soon?

Let's just take a moment and review what the policy options are that the government is going to use to diversify the economy through the petrochemical sector and just see what we can discover. It's kind of hard to comparatively look at modest loan guarantees and grants spread over eight years. It will hopefully draw some much-needed investment back to Alberta in a meaningful way, but we have yet to see that happen.

Again, to quote another portion of that article, Lynette Tremblay said in that same article:

Globally-integrated companies do not necessarily need repayable loans from government.

But it seems that that is what the NDP government is doing with this bill. They plan to use grants, loans, and loan guarantees as outlined in Bill 1. Generally speaking, what my experience has been is that Albertans generally do not support grants to businesses in a big way. They don't like to see government involved in business. A lot of times you hear about it, and it's called corporate welfare. Time and time again we've heard about the latest refinery that would finally come online and how that had to be heavily supported by government. Corporate welfare came up time and time again in the previous term, I can assure you.

Nonetheless, if the government is handing out free money, the problem is that everybody wants free money. We have to be careful not to be picking favourites all the time. We have to be careful that we're doing this in an appropriate way across the board.

Albertans like competition. It keeps the costs low. That's a basic principle. Companies going bankrupt because one gets a grant or a loan or a backstop and the other does not is not encouraging competition. It would be, I think, far more effective to start repealing these harmful policies that have been brought in by the NDP government and to create an investment environment that is going to drive competition. Instead, this bill, Bill 1, reads like a distraction. It looks like the NDP are going to bring in \$800 million in loan guarantees and \$200 million in grants for a partial upgrading program. This process reduces bitumen thickness, making it easier to flow in the pipelines. No diluent is needed, and it opens up pipeline capacity and enables more refineries to access Alberta oil. Certainly, those sound like great improvements.

9:20

There are multiple players, though, trying to get partial upgrading under way, and this seems kind of problematic. One person getting money over the other would have a competitive advantage over their competitors. Maybe the loser would go bankrupt and the industry would consolidate. It's hard to tell. But we already have banks, both commercial and investment banks, and other financial institutions and other capital funds available through the capital markets. Why as the Alberta government do we need to backstop commercially viable projects with Alberta's credit rating to act as a cosigner on loans? It didn't look like that's what they were doing down south, where they were quite successful. Could it be because the NDP have actually changed the way we operate so that it's so visible to investors that the fundamentals of the province have changed? Hence, they have to financially backstop the projects; otherwise, people aren't interested. This makes no sense, Madam Speaker.

I also understand that the NDP plans to bring in a \$500 million loan guarantee for what's called a feedstock infrastructure program. Apparently, our natural gas industry needs financing assistance in order to build what they call straddle plants to separate gas into its separate components. Those typically are ethane, propane, and methane, which, in turn, feed the petrochemical plants that will make plastics and other products. I would think that the companies would have sense enough to separate those streams if the separate streams are worth more money. Why do we have to go in and offer loan guarantees to have this happen? What is the main crux of the problem? Have we done a cost-based economic analysis of this to ensure that that's the right path?

They also plan – and I'm speaking of the NDP government again – to bring in round 2 of the successful petrochemical diversification program. The first round of that program had \$20 billion over 16

projects bid for \$500 million in royalty credits. Two projects won. They're expected to create 4,000 construction jobs and over 200 full-time operating jobs.

One can note the royalty credits in Alberta versus the tax credits in Louisiana. One can also note what incentives Louisiana did not use. They didn't use grants or loan guarantees and royalty credits. They did it in a more creative way. Could it be that Louisiana knows that grants, loans, and loan guarantees will not have the bump in activity that the other policy programs have? Could that be the case? Has anyone looked at and really analyzed what has taken place in that state and how they've been so successful, as they've been so successful across that nation? I read this morning in the paper while I was having breakfast that the U.S. is now providing a new gas line into southern Ontario or Quebec – I can't remember which – and instead of our gas being supplied to eastern Canada, they're now going to be supplied mainly from the U.S. Something is wrong with this situation, folks.

Locally the Alberta Industrial Heartland Association is also advocating for a more competitive capital cost allowance. Canada's 50 per cent deduction for capital cost depreciation is only available in 2025 while the United States has implemented a permanent 100 per cent capital cost allowance. This is another thing that needs to be looked at in a very serious way.

Interestingly enough, though, the EDAC report, which I mentioned earlier, in recommendation 7.4 stated that Alberta should "seek the permanent extension of the existing accelerated capital cost allowance for manufacturers."

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The Official Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod for his comments today. I was on the edge of my seat during that entire speech, and I would like to give him the opportunity to be able to finish his remaining comments.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Stier: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I appreciate that from the hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. I was saying that, interestingly enough, the EDAC report in recommendation 7.4 stated that they wished to

seek the permanent extension of the existing accelerated capital cost allowance for manufacturers such as the petrochemical industry to provide certainty to those interested in investing in the downstream.

But there's nothing in Bill 1 about that. Why didn't you follow up on that idea? It makes so much sense. You know, there are a lot of economists that agree with us, and they note that this tool can be more powerful than any tax-based incentives, actually.

Let's talk about taxes now. Recent corporate tax cuts in the United States have resulted in a 21 per cent tax compared to Alberta's 27 per cent corporate tax: 12 per cent provincially and 15 per cent federally is how that's made up. Taxes are actually the big deal now. We must pay attention to this, folks. We pay 6 per cent more corporate tax in Alberta than in some parts of the U.S.A. Why is that? Why can't we match these things?

Madam Speaker, I know that the government means well in trying to do something to spark growth in the industry. The minister on this file is a good acquaintance of mine. He served over here on the opposition side with me and with three others for some time in my first term, but it looks like we're playing to the stereotype and

the ideological inklings to spur development that is common with the NDP.

To recap, the NDP plan to use grants, loans, loan guarantees, and royalty credits to spur development. While there might be some success, I suppose, with these support programs, I don't think they would be as successful as reducing the red tape, shortening the permanent approval timelines, reducing the taxes, and increasing the accelerated capital cost allowance. These are all policy options recommended by the panel of experts assembled by the NDP who wrote the report. Why aren't these recommendations in Bill 1? That's the key question. Why aren't they in Bill 1?

For those reasons, Madam Speaker, for choosing the ideological shortcut over the proper, long road that is there that makes common sense, I'm sorry, but the NDP will not be receiving my support for Bill 1. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is a pleasure to be able to rise and speak in third reading on Bill 1, Energy Diversification Act. I have been listening to the debate on this bill for the past few months, and what I'd like to do is that I'd like to be able to just kind of review, first of all, the background of how we got to this point where we have a need for this. Then I'd like to talk about some of the pros that we see in this bill. I know that the NDP government would be surprised to hear me talk about the pros, but I do actually think there are some pros to this bill. Then I'd like to talk about the things that we feel are not so positive about this bill and then finish up with some of the recommendations that we've brought forward.

To be clear, when we had a drop in the natural gas prices, there was a spur in global petrochemical demand. Historically, as we looked at this petrochemical industry, the first wave of investment in North America totalled, I believe, around \$240 billion Canadian. Now, what's interesting about that is that of that investment, 62 per cent came from foreign investors, which is a very good sign saying that the private market has been able to assess that this is a growth industry, that they can actually make a profit on it and is something that they're interested in.

9:30

We then move on to what happened here in Canada. Now, traditionally the foreign investors of whatever amount, the \$240 billion: we would have seen traditionally about 10 per cent of that foreign investment coming into Canada. However, Madam Speaker, it's interesting to note that only 2 per cent of that \$240 billion came into Canada. The question then becomes: why? Why did we only see 2 per cent of that initial tranche of investment? I believe that the reason why is because of some fairly aggressive incentives that were offered in the United States. The United States, from what I understand reading through some of the materials, had been offering, in some of the states, 10 to 15 per cent of the capital costs of a project. In places like Louisiana, Pennsylvania, and Texas they were very successful at being able to lure these investment dollars into their states in order for them to be able to have them build those projects there.

Now, there's an IHS Markit analysis, and in this it talks about our competitiveness in terms of this petrochemical diversification. What it said was that our ability to bring in those investment dollars has eroded, and it talked about the reasons why. One of the reasons that it talked about was that we had no incentives to counteract the high labour and capital costs. When a business, an organization

looks at where they're going to invest, they're going to take a look at all the factors, and then they're going to say: well, this is the cost of labour, this is the cost of feedstock, this is the cost of transportation to market, and this is the cost of the taxes. They'll take all those things into consideration. One of the things that this report said, which I've spoken about many times in this House, was that the regulatory burden within Canada was restricting the ability to be able to incent that capital to come to Canada.

Now, specifically in Alberta we have talked about this concept of regulatory burden, red tape, as it's often called, and we've talked about just being able to drill an oil well. In Texas it takes a couple of weeks to be able to get the permitting; Saskatchewan, you know, two or three months. In Alberta it can take over a year. What's happened is that we've driven away business. We've driven away the opportunity for businesses to be able to come into our province and say: this is a place that we can set up, we can quickly get the investment going, and we can be in a situation where we can start creating jobs.

This is something that I believe the committee, the EDAC, was set up to try to be able to address. Now, what's interesting about that, though, is that when they set up this EDAC committee, there was a mandate put in that, and the mandate was "to explore opportunities for increasing the value of Alberta's resources and creating more jobs." The concept of being able to create more jobs, according to a Conservative side, is that when you incentivize through lower marginal tax rates, lower size of government, and lower regulatory red tape, then that will create the scenario where investors can say: we can make a good return on investment; we'll go into that jurisdiction. This we used to call the Alberta advantage, and when we had that Alberta advantage, we had for a 10-year period more foreign investment coming into Alberta than Quebec and Ontario combined, with only 11 per cent of the population of Canada here in Alberta.

Here's what's interesting about that. There are jurisdictions down in the United States that have taken the approach that if they will put 10 to 15 per cent of the capital cost into a project, they can incentivize those companies to come into their state. The problem is this, Madam Speaker. It becomes a shell game because you have other states or other jurisdictions, even different jurisdictions throughout the world, that say: okay; well, they're offering 10 to 15 per cent; we need to offer 17 to 20 per cent. Then the next tranche of investments doesn't go into those areas. It goes into other areas that are offering more.

There is actually a better way, Madam Speaker. The better way is to offer, as I've stated many times in this House, a Reaganomics approach. This, again, specifically talks about creating not a vehicle but the environment where businesses can thrive. This concept here – I mean, the bill is called the Energy Diversification Act. Now, this government has oftentimes said that the whole approach of this government is to be able to try to get us off the oil roller-coaster ride, so they talk about diversifying the economy. The absolute best way to be able to diversify the economy is by applying Reaganomics.

Rather than actually taking a look at a tax boutique, which is what we've kind of seen with – actually, that's what we've seen with the bills that have come forward from the NDP, which is picking winners and losers, saying: we believe that this is actually the area that we need to expand and put money into so that we can actually build out that sector or that portion of the economy.

Here's the problem. The problem is that throughout the couple of hundred years that we've been able to kind of focus and really learn about what market economies are like, what we've seen is that any time people think that they're actually smarter than the market or that they can actually gerrymander or mess around with the market,

it has always ended up being unsuccessful. There's a plethora of examples out there. We've got history on our side to show that the absolute best way of being able to create a strong, robust, diverse economy is to allow supply and demand to be able to create the equilibrium price.

If we do that and we do that effectively, then that diversification will happen organically, the creation of jobs will happen organically because the fundamentals – the fundamentals – are strong. So you build the proper fundamentals, the proper foundation of any economy, and it will thrive. This is why in North America we have seen such amazing growth and wealth creation, because of our ability to be able to embrace those principles or those policies that actually create that wealth and create that diversification, create those well-paying jobs, those well-paying businesses.

When we move away from that model, Madam Speaker, we move to shaky ground. We move into an area that has never been proven in the past to work, yet I hear from this government on a regular basis that they have figured it out this time, that even though it hasn't worked in the past, they have the ability to be able to figure it out this time, and that it will work. There is an arrogance in that – and I've spoken about that before – where the arrogance is that we believe that we have a better idea about how to be able to fix the economy or how to be able to make it work.

9:40

I've said this before, Madam Speaker. I think that if this government was to be judged on intent, they would have a gold star, absolutely, an A, grade A. Intent? Absolutely. The problem is that outcomes are how every government is judged, and the outcomes that we've seen from this government have been lacklustre at best. We've seen an increase, an uptick, in the price of oil, which naturally is going to see an uptick in some of your economic drivers. For the NDP to say that that's because of their policies, I think that that's short sighted.

But I will say that I recognize the intent of this bill. The intent was to say: look, we're only getting 2 per cent of this petrochemical industry investment; we need to try to be able to address that issue. There are certainly historical background and precedents to show that when states like Louisiana and Texas and Pennsylvania do this, they do incentivize these investment dollars to come in.

But once again I've said, Madam Speaker, that that is short sighted because it's a shell game. At one point you can be able to incentivize them with a 10 to 15 per cent capital injection into the project, but when the next tranche of money comes in or when the next petrochemical facilities need to be built, at that point you're in competition with other jurisdictions that say: we'll give you 17 per cent or 18 per cent or 20 per cent to be able to come in. Then where does it end?

This is why, in my opinion, this approach is folly. It is not long-term thinking, nor is it actually an approach that, in my opinion, is good for our children and grandchildren. Let's create an environment – and this is the reason, Madam Speaker. This is the reason why I came to this House. This is why I ran, because Alberta was good to my family. We had a charmed life here. It was fantastic. Being able to live . . .

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The Official Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Thank you very much to the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, who had a great presentation. I was very interested to hear his comments that he was speaking about at the end in regard to his family and would love if he would elaborate on that a little bit more.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Would the member like to respond?

Mr. Hunter: I would love to respond, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Please go ahead.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you. Look, the truth is that I got into this, I ran to become a politician to become a Member of the Legislative Assembly so that we could try to be able to get Alberta back on track with this thing that we used to call the Alberta advantage. Really, the Alberta advantage is an application of Reaganomics. It is an application. It's a proper application of Reaganomics. You know, it was interesting because I heard one of the members a few days ago talking about how trickle-down economics didn't work, and this is actually another word for Reaganomics. She quoted the IMF as her source for saying that it didn't work. It's interesting that she would use that as the source.

But I will say this much. If you take a look at wealth creation as the indicator of a system's success, trickle-down economics has worked very, very well throughout the world. The members opposite can laugh all they want, but they need to read history, and they need to read some economic journals rather than just the IMF. That they would be able to say – you know what? Again, I could quote lots of stuff the IMF has said that is absolutely – what can I say? It's the IMF.

But I will say this much. When it comes to Alberta's approach to being able to actually get us back on track, Alberta's approach to being able to say, "How do we make it better in a sustainable, diversified, robust economy?" this is what I would have to say. Picking winners and losers through a boutique tax break style really doesn't work. [interjection]

Mr. Nixon: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: A point of order has been called.

Point of Order Parliamentary Language

Mr. Nixon: I rise on 23(h), (i), and (j). I hesitate to rise on it. I was hoping the minister would just handle that issue herself, but I'm wondering, through you, Madam Speaker, if the minister would just like to rise and apologize and withdraw her language in this Assembly. I won't repeat it, but it's inappropriate. I know you acknowledged it and looked at her. I thought that she'd handle that in a more appropriate way, and I'd like to give her an opportunity to do that.

The Acting Speaker: Is there someone wishing to respond to the point of order? The hon. Minister of Labour.

Ms Gray: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The member is absolutely correct. I would like to apologize and withdraw.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, would you like to continue?

Mr. Hunter: Yes, I would like to. Thank you.

Debate Continued

Mr. Hunter: As I was saying – and I know that the members opposite were riveted by what I was saying – the concept is that if we get back to the fundamentals that actually build a diverse

economy, a robust economy, our children and grandchildren will be the benefactors of that. The value to us in being able to do that is that when the petrochemical industry decides that they're going to do another tranche of investments, at that point they can take a look at all the fundamentals of Alberta and say that Alberta is the place to invest petrochemical – whatever the industry is, it will invest.

This is why I am opposed to this bill. It doesn't get the fundamentals right. If you want a diverse economy and you want to be able to diversify the economy, then you've got to get the fundamentals right. This government continues to focus on tax boutiques. Tax boutiques do not work, Madam Speaker. Actually, to put this more succinctly, tax boutiques only work for a short period of time. Then what happens is that the government is in a position where they have to rethink their situation.

We're now, I think, \$45 billion in debt and, according to this government, moving towards \$96 billion. We're in a situation where if we don't get the fundamentals right, Madam Speaker – this is a perpetual problem that lots of economies have. They believe that they can spend their way out of the problems with their fundamentals, and that is not true. You have to get back to the fundamentals that actually make an economy work. Once you do that, then you're in a situation where that economy can now – because it does not try to gerrymander or rig what happens with supply and demand creating the equilibrium price, the market moves where it needs to move, and it will diversify, as that market will. We will see the people starting to net migrate back into Alberta. We'll see all the indicators starting to fire on all cylinders.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's a beautiful June morning, and I do appreciate the opportunity to talk about Bill 1. I really enjoyed the comments from the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, who just went before me. I think that he did an excellent job of articulating some of the concerns about this piece of legislation that's before us today. I'd like to pick up on a few of the main points that he raised, actually, in my time today.

While the concept of this bill and, certainly, the title of the bill, the Energy Diversification Act, are something that all members of this Assembly, I think, would support – certainly, broad amounts of public would support the idea of diversifying our industry – the problem, though, is that like with so many things with the NDP when they bring legislation here, they have cute and fancy titles, but then when you go and look within the bill itself, it starts to fall apart and it falls short. In this case it certainly does fall short of that goal and does very little towards the act of actually trying to diversify our economy in this province.

9:50

I think, Madam Speaker, as was pointed out by the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, it is interesting – in fact, I would say that it's telling – that this government, the NDP government of Alberta, has only brought forward this legislation three years into their mandate. Prior to this legislation – even if you look at some of the ideological policies that are coming out of the NDP government currently, over the last three years the NDP was doing everything possible, it seems, to be able to prevent investment inside our province. Sadly, they did that successfully. They successfully chased away billions upon billions upon billions of dollars out of this province. We now know from the majority of large investors with billions of dollars to be able to invest in an economy like Alberta's that they have put a big red X on Alberta, and the

condition before they will consider coming back to our province is that the NDP government has to be gone.

Those are the policies that they've brought forward in the last three years. They raised taxes on job creators, really slowing down the diversification of our economy, not to mention increasing the consequences of the economic downturn that we were facing. We now know that we have higher taxes in our province but less income under the NDP government because they chased away job creators who left our province.

They imposed a carbon tax, brought in the largest tax increase in the history of our province, something they did not campaign on, something they actually hid from Albertans as they campaigned through the last election. You know, typical of the NDP: run on a hidden agenda, come through, then force through a tax on the province, a tax that the large majority, a huge majority of Albertans do not like, do not want. This carbon tax is a backdoor PST. As you know, if they had brought in a provincial sales tax, they would have had to call a referendum and they would have had to consult with Albertans, so they had to sit in the backroom and come up with a devious way to be able to move around that. They used the carbon tax. They like to call it a levy, as you know, Madam Speaker – I know you would not – but it is clearly a tax. That's what they brought in, again further damaging our economy.

As the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner points out, if this government truly has seen the light and actually wants to be able to help Albertans – so far their record is attacking Albertans and making life harder for Albertans. But if they've seen the light finally – and maybe it's been the great work by the Member for Calgary-Foothills, who's worked so hard on these files. Maybe they've finally seen the light, Member. Maybe they have. But if they've seen the light, then they should take some immediate actions that would have way more effect on our economy, way more positive effect on the people of Alberta and our economy than this bill would, because this bill falls well short of that.

The number one thing they should do is to remove the carbon tax if they want to help diversify our economy immediately. In fact, they may even help themselves politically, but that's not why they should do that. They should do it because that's what Albertans want them to do. They should do it because it's good for our economy. They should do it because it will attract investors back to our province.

But they won't. They won't. I don't want to always predetermine the outcome of the government, but clearly their record on this issue is clear. They will double down, triple down, and continue to go on with their ideological agenda despite the fact that they're devastating communities, that they're hurting people that you represent and that I represent. Instead, they'll come here and attempt to distract people, Albertans, from this government's hideous and ridiculous record on these issues. They'll try to come forward and say: hey, look, we'll bring in a couple of these tax breaks, we'll call the act a fancy name but not really have any content within the act that actually does what that name says, but we will not actually do what it takes to fix the economy.

The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner talked a lot about how much easier it is in other jurisdictions to be able to do certain activities, you know, oil and gas activities. If this government truly wanted to diversify the economy, truly wanted to spur things on, get things going, they would actually look at the red tape side. Instead, this government has made it worse. The example of Texas was raised earlier this morning, you know, three, four weeks to be able to get a project going; in Alberta and in Canada, unfortunately, sometimes well over a year.

In the case of what we're seeing right now with the Trans Mountain pipeline in B.C. being blocked indefinitely by NDP allies

in B.C., including the NDP government in B.C.: individuals blocking that pipeline illegally without any consequences from the Premier of Alberta – in fact, she went out of her way to be able to avoid actually having that conflict with them and continued to allow them to do that illegal behaviour up to the point that she and the Prime Minister, her close friend Justin Trudeau of the federal Liberal government, had to go buy that pipeline and then had a party high-fiving each other.

It's shocking, Madam Speaker. I know you'll be shocked by this. The members across the way stood outside a couple of weeks ago or a week ago – time blends together in this room – on a beautiful sunny day and high-fived each other repeatedly, celebrating billions of dollars of investment leaving our community, billions of dollars of investment leaving our province. As the executive of Kinder Morgan got to go home to Texas and get a million-and-a-half-dollar bonus, this NDP government was high-fiving each other, but they still haven't dealt with the issue, which is that they have to address the protesters and the municipalities that are blocking that pipeline illegally. But this government, rather than deal with that, would rather put their head in the sand than confront people that have the same ideological agenda as them.

I can say that, Madam Speaker, because one of leads of the protest movement against that pipeline is Tzaporah Berman, an appointee of the NDP government, who has been quoted recently saying that all hell is going to break loose because the federal government tried to buy a pipeline and that, basically, they will not stop blocking this pipeline from being built. That's an appointee of this government.

Instead of changing red tape and adjusting to it – you know, the red tape argument actually is significant. There's an organization in Sundre, my hometown, called black gold, and they do a lot of great work on emissions, on technology.

Mr. Cooper: Dallas Rosevear.

Mr. Nixon: Dallas Rosevear. You're correct. Dallas Rosevear, for sure.

But they do a lot of work on technology that can address emissions on current oil wells and those type of things. Really great stuff. If you ever have a chance, Madam Speaker, if you're ever in Sundre, call me, and we'll go for a tour of their shop. It's pretty fascinating. Their head office is in Sundre, and they have shops in Oklahoma and across the United States, but Alberta is where they are from. The owner of it is a lifelong resident of the great town of Sundre. In fact, he actually lives out in Bergen, just a few miles away from my home.

Mr. Cooper: He just planted 36 trees in his yard.

Mr. Nixon: I did not know that, hon. member. He just planted 36 trees in his yard. That's excellent.

I went and visited with him the other day. Like, something like 80 per cent of their current business, including what's coming out of the shop in Sundre right now, is on its way to the States, places like Texas and Oklahoma, because they can get projects off the ground effectively, through the red tape, at significantly, I mean, astronomically faster speeds to be able to get their projects built than what's happening here in our province.

What's happening is that all of the investment is going down to the United States. The only thing that's still saving our communities is that the United States and those areas still do not have the same level or the same amount of experienced workforce in these issues, so they have to come up to places like black gold in Sundre to be able to access our skilled labour. But the United States is catching up in these areas very, very fast. Many people, particularly

Albertans of late: I know many of them who have moved down to Texas and those other areas to be able to provide their skills because they don't have to pay the carbon tax down there. They don't have to pay the increased tax rates from this government. The point is that that much work is coming from our communities and having to go to the States or other jurisdictions because this government and the federal government have made the red tape so significant that they can't operate inside these environments.

Now, I'm sure that this government will try to put a spin on it. In fact, maybe at lunchtime we'll all go outside, and we'll see them all jumping up and down high-fiving each other in the sun and getting some nice photos. But the problem that they created, the problem that exists in this province, will still exist after those high-fives. The people that this government is supposed to represent and should be concerned with when they're in this Chamber, though they're not, are still going to be suffering as a result of this government's policies.

10:00

The number one thing the government can do right now to work on diversification is to create an environment, as the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner said, where businesses can succeed. But this government, from the moment they came into office, have worked hard to attack businesses, to make things harder for businesses, to make the rules harder, to focus on their ideological beliefs, to damage job creators, and to chase job creators out of our province. You know, when we talk about that here at a high level, it's easy for us to forget what that really means. What that means back in communities like mine and yours, Madam Speaker, is that people lose jobs. People stay on the unemployment line longer.

Now, I guess this government doesn't care about that, according to the Deputy Premier of Alberta, who has said in this Chamber in *Hansard* that those several hundred thousand people who have lost work under this government's watch are just an opportunity cost so that this government can push forward their ideological agenda. They're just a cost. Don't worry about them. They're struggling to pay their mortgages. It's ridiculous of that minister to say that. It's ridiculous that this government acts like that and thinks like that. Those are real people: my friends and my neighbours, your friends and your neighbours. Those are moms and dads. Those are people that are trying to make ends meet, and this government thinks that they are just an economic opportunity cost on the altar of their ideological agenda.

When they bring forward legislation into this place, they just confirm their own words. All they want to do is distract from their ridiculous record. All they want to do is distract from their shameful behaviour towards Albertans. Distract. It's a great idea to diversify the economy. It's a great idea to try to fix the mess that the NDP have created in their time in government. Why won't they do it? Why do they continue to double down on their ideological policy? Why do they continue to punish everyday Albertans, to scare away job creators? Why? What you'll notice is that there have been a lot of bills in this session associated with energy and with the Energy minister's files. What I have noticed – I don't know if you have noticed this, Madam Speaker – is that the Energy minister almost never rises to discuss them. She won't discuss them. She won't stand up in this Chamber, and she won't defend them.

The Energy critic for the United Conservative Party, the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills, has done a great job through all these bills. He's come forward with reasonable changes, well thought out, after broad consultation with the industry. He's also worked in the industry, is very educated, an engineer, and understands the process. He stands up in this House repeatedly and brings forward ideas on how they could at least make their bad bills

better. And from the Energy minister what do we hear? Crickets. Crickets. They know that they can't defend their behaviour. They can't defend their behaviour. If they could defend their behaviour, the Energy minister would stand up right now and defend it. She would stand up and say: "This is why this bill is okay. This is how this bill will actually fix the problems that have caused the economic downturn," you know, like raising taxes on job creators by 20 per cent or increasing red tape, the issues this government did to those job creators. She could show us how this bill would do it, but she won't.

Because of that, Madam Speaker, I will move an amendment. I have the appropriate copies for the page.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. If you could please just wait until I have a copy at the table and at my chair.

Hon. member, just for a point of clarity, you are out of time, so any other member can speak to the amendment.

The amendment is in order. The amendment will be referred to as REC.

We will be under 29(2)(a). The hon. member.

Mr. Cooper: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise under 29(2)(a) and ask if the hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre wouldn't mind informing the House a little bit more about what the amendment would do.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you to my good friend and neighbour the MLA for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, who, as you saw earlier, Madam Speaker, seems to be paying particular attention to the Bergen road, where I live, and seems to know when my neighbours are planting trees more than I do, which is great. I'm a little worried.

An Hon. Member: Just scoping out the area.

Mr. Nixon: Just scoping.

I'm moving the following amendment, that the motion for third reading of Bill 1, the Energy Diversification Act, be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 1, Energy Diversification Act, be not now read a third time but that it be recommitted to Committee of the Whole for the purpose of reconsidering sections 2, 3, and 4.

The reason I move this amendment – I think I made it fairly clear in my comments earlier on the main bill – is that this government is avoiding dealing with the real issues that are preventing the diversification of our economy and are making our economy worse, issues that mostly they created during their time in government. They need some time to be able to reconsider the legislation that they've brought here to be able to actually bring in some concrete action in those sections, to be able to fix the mess that they created, and to be able to get our economy back on track for Albertans.

We know that this government struggles with legislation. The record is extremely clear that when it comes to bringing forward bills to this Assembly, the government has repeatedly shown themselves as incompetent. They most of the time have to amend their own legislation, sometimes during the session. Fortunately, sometimes the public is able to put enough pressure on them, and they realize that they made a mistake. A great example would be the Municipal Affairs minister with Bill 10, having to bring in an amendment that basically rewrote his entire bill because of the mistake that he made. It's very disappointing, but at least he caught it and caught it during the session, before everybody had to go home for the summer. But most of the time under the NDP government they don't catch it till the following sitting. Albertans have been having to pay the consequences as a result of the NDP's incompetence when it comes to writing legislation.

Clearly, I think that the Energy minister won't even address her own legislation in this place. We don't know if she has gotten it right. Clearly, when you read this bill, the NDP do not have a plan to actually diversify our economy, do not have a plan to address the job-killing policies that they've brought forward, do not have a plan to address the fact that they scared away billions of dollars of investment from our province and that nobody will come back as long as they're still in power because of the policies they do. This amendment gives them an opportunity to be able to bring it back to committee and try to get it right so that, one, we can catch all the mistakes that they probably made within this bill, because that's every bill, and two, we can make sure that they're actually bringing in changes that will help the economy.

Now, I predict, unfortunately, Madam Speaker, that the NDP will vote against this amendment because they actually do not care. They just want to focus on driving through their ideological agenda and distracting people from the fact that the main problem with diversifying our economy, the number one problem with getting investment into our economy, is them. That's why they'll vote against it, because they don't want to admit it. Now, I get it. If I was in government and my government was the main thing that was chasing away billions of dollars of investment for the province, I probably wouldn't want this to go to committee to discuss that. But they should care about your constituents and my constituents and their constituents enough to recognize: "We have a problem. This government keeps messing up. We better go to committee and get some help. We can't even write a bill without any help, and we've proven it, so let's go to committee and get this right for the people of Alberta. They're depending on us."

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

There's some time remaining under 29(2)(a). Are there any other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any members wishing to speak to amendment REC? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

10:10

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to the amendment today moved by my colleague from Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre with respect to Bill 1, the Energy Diversification Act. In this particular amendment today we are proposing that we go back to Committee of the Whole for the purposes of reconsidering section 2, section 3, and section 4. I think that it is reasonable for us to have a bit of a discussion around exactly what that would allow us to do.

In section 2 of the legislation it speaks about:

The Minister shall establish programs that have the primary purpose of supporting economic growth and energy diversification, including, without limitation, programs that

- (a) support innovation and diversification in the energy sector by renewing the Petrochemicals Diversification Program and by allowing projects that consume ethane to be considered under that program,
- (b) increase access to capital,
- (c) increase the development of value-added upgrading in Alberta through a partial upgrading program under the Petroleum Marketing Act,
- (d) encourage more investment and jobs in upstream, midstream and downstream energy sectors by creating a petrochemical feedstock infrastructure program under the Mines and Minerals Act,
- (e) encourage increased participation from under-represented communities in the energy sector, and
- (f) support energy export and development.

You know, I find a number of these particular sections curious because many of them the minister actually has the ability to do already. One thing that I think is a little bit disappointing and a good reason why we should recommit it to Committee of the Whole to have a much more robust discussion around these particular issues in section 2 is particularly around this issue of encouraging participation, increasing participation from underrepresented communities in the energy sector.

I know that the Leader of the Official Opposition in this House both this week and, I believe, last week, if I'm not mistaken, asked specific questions about the Eagle Spirit pipeline project in northern Alberta – that is a project predominantly of indigenous leaders, indigenous communities, and indigenous organizations – proposing engagement and increased participation, one might say, in the energy sector. Unfortunately, due to the federal government's tanker moratorium and ban off the northern coast of British Columbia, they are unable to proceed with their efforts.

We have literally asked the government on I believe it is half a dozen occasions: will they speak strongly, against their opposition, to remove the tanker moratorium? Every single time the minister, the Premier, the Deputy Premier duck, cover, weave, bob, move all around the place but actually say that their good friend and close ally Justin Trudeau should in fact remove the tanker ban from northern Alberta. In a single act of him doing that, it would allow a whole group of individuals who are from, as the bill says, underrepresented communities to proceed on that very issue of engaging in the energy sector in a much more meaningful and important way.

The amendment before us here actually would give the government the opportunity to come back into the Chamber, speak strongly about this particular issue. They could set the record straight, actually communicate, put into actions the things that they say they want to do in this legislation. They would be able to support Alberta entrepreneurs. They would be able to support members of the indigenous community. They would be able to support this very vital project. All that we've seen from this government is that the government has said: "Don't worry. We've written a letter. We've written a letter and expressed our displeasure." But they have not publicly spoken against the tanker ban.

I think you'll find if you go back into *Hansard*, Madam Speaker, that in the spring session or the last fall session the Official Opposition asked tens and tens of times this particular question about the tanker ban, prior and then after, and at every single turn the government has refused to take a strong position that supports Alberta entrepreneurs with respect to pipelines in northern Alberta. They won't commit publicly, yet they profess in this piece of legislation to want to be encouraging increased participation from underrepresented communities in the energy sector. Well, the spirit energy pipeline and the group that is associated with that are individuals who are passionate about the energy sector, but there is a significant barrier to the project in which they would like to engage, and the government has virtually said nothing.

You know, the legislation also talks about supporting energy export development, and I think it's a perfect reason why we should go back to Committee of the Whole just to talk about what that means. If that means the current plan of chasing away private capital so that it can be replaced with federal government capital in the form of Kinder Morgan, so that their senior executives could get a \$1.5 million bonus payout from the Alberta and the federal governments, if that's their idea of supporting energy export development, I think Albertans want to have a more robust conversation around that.

You know, the amendment before us speaks specifically about recommitting this legislation to reconsider section 3.

Regulations

3(1) The Minister may, if regulations are necessary to give effect to a program referred to in section 2, make regulations respecting the program, including its implementation.

(2) If the Minister wishes to establish an investor tax credit program or a capital investment tax program, the Minister shall introduce in the Legislative Assembly a bill to establish that tax program.

Well, I think it's important that we have a discussion around what some of those regulations might look like.

You know, this government has an amazing track record, and not in a good kind of amazing way but in the way of establishing rules and regulations inside the cover of a minister's office. Essentially, under the regulations section, section 3 of the legislation, it allows the minister to create any program and any regulation to support that program. But part of the problem is that even if we want to FOIP information about this in the future with respect to the e-mails that might go around the minister's office on what those regulations might be, Madam Speaker, you know what kind of record this government has when it comes to deleting e-mails. You know the kind of record this government has when it comes to the FOIP process. There are currently four investigations with respect to breaches that this government has been involved in. So any time that ministers are providing themselves carte blanche abilities, you know, the Official Opposition and Albertans have some concerns around that.

The most senior official in the Premier's office, Mr. John Heaney, the former chief of staff, you'll know is involved in an investigation of political interference with respect to FOIP. He also has, you know – the government's track record on transparency has been terrible.

Mr. McIver: He was laid off for a weekend.

Mr. Cooper: He took a weekend off before they retitled him with a \$130,000 contract. This is exactly the problem with regulations and why it's so important, and how it's related directly to Bill 1 is the government's track record on creating regulations in a fair, open, and transparent manner.

10:20

I think it's important that we reconsider section 4 of the legislation.

4(1) The Minister shall annually, and more frequently if the Premier directs, report to the Executive Council on the Minister's progress in establishing and implementing any programs under section 2.

(2) The Alberta Petroleum Marketing Commission shall annually, and more frequently if the Minister directs, report to the Minister on any project supported by the Commission through any programs established under section 2.

You know, Madam Speaker, I have a philosophy in politics: trust but verify. The problem with this particular section is that the minister can go a whole year without any accountability to Executive Council, let alone any accountability to the Legislative Assembly. Now, fortunately, the Premier can tell the minister to do his job in a more efficient manner by directing him to write a better report or more frequent reports to Executive Council. My colleague here from Calgary-Hays has been a minister before, and he'll tell you that reporting to Executive Council should happen frequently. There's no reason, if the minister is reporting to Executive Council frequently, that he can't then report to the Legislative Assembly at least on an annual basis. It would make sense. The chairs of most committees in our Assembly report to the Assembly annually.

We're talking about spending millions of tax dollars, with virtually no accountability with respect to reporting to the Assembly.

Those are just a few of the reasons why it's important that this bill gets recommitted to Committee of the Whole so that we can correct the errors of the government and so that they can recognize their folly with respect to transparency and accountability. We can do them a favour, help them out of a political jam, and make sure that this bill is as open and transparent as possible.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? Hon. member, under 29(2)(a)?

Mr. Panda: No. I'm speaking to the motion.

The Acting Speaker: Okay. There are no members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Are there any members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd just like to rise to urge my colleagues to vote down this amendment. The time to get Bill 1, you know, out of the Assembly and into action I think is now. This is a bill that has been given a great deal of thought and has had the benefit of experience with the first round of incentives, speaking specifically about the first PDP program, which was a resounding success. That's one thing that I think we need to be really clear on is just how well received that first round of the petrochemical diversification program has been.

I mean, it just so happens that yesterday I was out visiting Pembina with our Minister of Energy and had a chance to speak with the administration and the staff there. They're really excited and raring to go. You know, this is a development that, as well as the IPL one, wouldn't be going forward if we hadn't made the prudent decision to level the playing field here in Alberta so that companies could make that investment decision. Playing on the experience and the success from that first round, I think that this bill is a very well-informed sequel to it and should have a substantially positive effect on our diversification efforts, which are also immensely popular not only within the industry but within the public at large. This is what Albertans want to see. They want to see us moving up the value chain as a province. This is something that we promised to do, and we're keeping our promise. So I'm really a bit nonplussed about the level of opposition we're seeing on this bill when I get out and talk to people in the field.

I also had an interesting conversation with a gentleman in Sturgeon county who works for a large international engineering firm. He made a point to thank me personally for what our government has done. He said, in his words: you know, it helped to keep us working, and we think it's a really well-designed program; we're really happy to see that, and we hope to see more. That's really what the consensus is out there. It's the time for greater diversification, the time to move up the value chain, the time to, you know, stop burning ethane and to be able to use it as the viable feedstock that it is. That time is now.

So it's for those reasons that I think we should defeat this amendment and pass this motion and, you know, get these programs to work for us.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, now I can recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for allowing me to speak actually in favour of this motion from my colleague from Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. Having said that, although I support his motion, I'm not against petrochemical diversification. My colleague here from Calgary-Hays can confirm that within my own caucus I've spoken very passionately about energy diversification many times.

There are many, many good points in this bill. To the previous speaker from Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater: thank you for saying what you said, but you're being selective. If the intent of this bill is to increase the value of our resources, there are other ways to do it, too. If you look at the report submitted by the EDAC, you will realize that there are many other aspects of the recommendations that were not considered in this bill. That's why I worked with my caucus colleagues and I moved seven amendments, not one. Unfortunately, none of them were accepted by the NDP caucus.

We are all agreeing that energy diversification is important for maximizing the value of our resources. But having said that, the EDAC dealt with a few other recommendations. The fundamental difference here, Madam Speaker, as you heard from my colleagues from Cardston-Taber-Warner and Livingstone-Macleod, is that everyone talked about the EDAC report and how we can fix this bill and how we can have a fulsome discussion and then upgrade this bill. Some points we differ on. The NDP prefers grants, loans, and loan guarantees while industry preference, although they don't mind receiving them, and if the government offers them, they won't say no, is for tax incentives, tax credits, and royalty credits. That's where the difference is.

Like my colleague from Cardston-Taber-Warner said: New Democrats are not my enemies; they're my rivals. That's how I view them. They have some great ideas. In other provinces the likes of Gary Doer and Roy Romanow actually balanced budgets. They did a lot of great things for the people they served, and I'm sure that's the same intention of my NDP colleagues here. But where I differ from them is when they take a selective approach.

I also pity them because they have to fight their own NDP fellow travellers. Unfortunately, they put trust in people like Tzeporah Berman and Karen Mahon and all those people. Not only that; now they're in danger in Ontario. God forbid if the people give the mandate to the NDP there. They're going to side with the B.C. NDP, not with the Alberta NDP. And their own leader, Jagmeet Singh, the federal leader, already declared his intention to support B.C., not Alberta. So I know what a difficult situation the Premier and her colleagues are in, and I have some sympathy for them on that front because they have to fight their own NDP fellow travellers.

10:30

But the issue here is that the EDAC recommended many other things. I read into the record a few times and my colleagues read into the record many recommendations, and stakeholders like the Alberta Industrial Heartland talked about other ideas where we can improve this bill. All those recommendations were ignored. That's the issue I have in supporting this bill.

I talked to the stakeholders, and they still prefer other incentives than – I mean, those businesses don't want the public to view them as receiving corporate welfare. All they want is the government to get out of their way and let them do their job. They want a reasonable return on their investments, and then they want to take that risk. But if government is adding layers of regulation and putting up hurdles, that's not what they want.

That's why although I like some parts of the bill, I and my colleagues from Calgary-Hays and ... [interjection] Yeah. Calgary-Fish Creek. He had the same challenge on Bill 1. We talked

about this in our caucus. When the NDP is selectively applying these things, we're not able to convince our constituents who are asking me: why would the NDP give billions to corporations, but they won't bring natural gas to La Crête? Those kinds of questions.

Also, people are asking that if we had to maximize our value for the resource and also, you know, the benefits to all Canadians, the NDP should be fighting their federal ally on the tanker ban, C-48. If we don't remove that tanker ban on the west coast, we can't export our product to Asian markets. So that means we continue to ship to only one market, in the U.S.A., and then we have to discount that product.

We are losing \$43 million per day due to lack of pipeline space, and the Premier knows it. She said it many times, that we are discounting to the U.S.A. and they are exporting. They're using our heavy oil that they're refining in the Gulf coast of Mexico. They're getting full value for the product, and we are losing, in terms of the differential, \$43 million a day. It adds up: every day \$43 million, which is \$15.6 billion per year. That money could have been used for all the social programs this government wants to champion. That's a lost opportunity.

Then C-69 is the other bill that their federal ally Justin Trudeau brought in. If that bill is passed as presented, there won't be any energy development projects, resource development projects in this province in the near future. There are only two, three projects that are wrapping up like Suncor's Fort Hills, and there are a few expansions to Cold Lake and other projects. But other than that, there are no in situ projects, there are no mining projects.

So how do we maximize the value for our resource if we don't fight those two bills? I asked the Energy minister many times in this House and the environment minister that if they have written to the standing committee, they should table those documents if they oppose those bills. Until today I haven't seen it. I tried to engage the Energy minister's staff, chief of staff. He gave me his cell number. I called, left a message; no answer.

We do want to work with them and co-operate, but they don't want to co-operate. When the Premier talked about all of us working together with one voice to send out the message, we supported her many times in this House. But when the Leader of the Official Opposition brought in Motion 505 to oppose those two changes, you know, to those federal bills, C-69 and C-48, the NDP voted against it. I was so surprised. While I thank them for passing my previous Motion 505, which was to phase out imports on the east coast and bring in energy independence to Canada – the NDP passed that private member's motion – to show solidarity, again, they could have voted in favour of the new Motion 505 from the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed, but they decided to vote against that. That is not giving certainty to the industry.

When the NDP blindly reject our amendments and our ideas, industry is watching this, and then they're not feeling confident to invest in Alberta. That's another issue. That's why this Premier and her front-benchers need to work with the opposition so we send the right signals to the stakeholders. Otherwise, they'll be very, very scared to invest in Alberta. They know that governments come and go. That's part of democracy. Governments do change occasionally. You know, the PCs had a dynasty for 44 years. Then you know what happened. The same thing could happen to the New Democrats in less than a year. That's why they have to be careful.

Also, this bill didn't talk about geographic diversification. When I was the economic development critic, I travelled across all of this province, and I met with stakeholders like the Chambers of Commerce and others. What they told me is that although – I mean, we are concentrating on petrochemical diversification projects mostly in the Industrial Heartland, but then there are places in Alberta, like Grande Prairie, Whitecourt, Medicine Hat, and these

days even in Rocky Mountain House, where there is a lot of natural gas and other resources that we can use as feedstock to produce value-add products. From methane we can produce polyethylene, and from propane we can produce polypropylene and so on. But in this Bill 1 that aspect, geographic diversification, is missing.

It's going to be hard. I know how people feel. In Calgary thousands of my former colleagues can't find work anymore. Although the economic development minister here and also the Finance minister get up and talk about things looking up, up, up, the reality is that there is still about a 30 per cent vacancy rate in Calgary's downtown towers. When I walk on the +15 Skywalk during lunchtime these days, it's not as busy as it used to be. That is the reality. If they want to check on that, they can. But they have to be realistic when they say that things are up, up, up. It's a jobless recovery. It's hurting Albertans. You can't ignore that.

You can sit in this House and say what the projections are. Yesterday the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky actually said it nicely: things went to the bottom, so now the only way, you know, it reacts is to come back up. We can't go any further down, so it has to come back up. If you want to take credit for it, take it. I compliment you for that, if you have any contribution to bring things back, but at the same time, then, you have to take accountability for things that are not working well.

10:40

So when we are talking about the \$96 billion in debt that is projected, that's scary to many people. People like me who came for economic opportunity here, for a better quality of life and standard of living for my son and his future children, I mean, those dreams have shattered now because on that \$96 billion we are going to pay \$4 billion just in interest to the banks and bondholders, who are not even in Alberta. They are in other countries and other cities in Canada. So that's scary. And all those 100,000 jobs that are lost, somehow we have to bring them back, and the only way we can bring them back is if the NDP is willing to ...

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you. The hon. member made several comments that I thought he was in the middle of when the time ran out, and I was hoping that he might complete those thoughts because I know members on all sides of the House were anxiously hoping to hear the end of his comments.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I said, our caucus and our party support energy diversification. We are not against it. All we are saying is that we differ from the NDP on the approach they are taking on this bill. Things like diversifying and looking at doing value-adds in ridings like Rocky Mountain House will actually help in the geographic diversification of these energy projects. The intent is good. The bill's intent is good, to maximize the value for our resource. The best way to do it is to leave it to the market. Let the market decide where to upgrade and where to refine.

Also, this government, you know, is inconsistent. Last year or the year before – I don't remember – when we were talking about bills 27 and 34, I actually moved an amendment to exclude partial upgrading from that 100 megatonne cap. Even that amendment was defeated by this government. The Government House Leader and the Premier, when they were in opposition, always opposed pipelines like Keystone, saying that that's going to export jobs to south of the border, but today conveniently they forget that. You

know, when I asked them to exclude partial upgrading from the 100 megatonne cap, they voted against it.

So that's why I'm really concerned, Madam Speaker. If the NDP is really serious about maximizing the value for our resource, we should allow the market – if companies like Suncor, Syncrude, and all those, CNRL, if they want to invest in petrochemical diversification, let them take the risk. They will invest. If they think there is no market case and the best way to maximize the value for our resources is shipping bitumen to refineries south of the border, it's up to them.

Or we should actually ship it to other markets. So to ship it to other markets, the capacity in pipelines is not there. Government is trumpeting Kinder Morgan, if and when it gets built, the expansion, when we are only adding 600,000 more barrels to the international markets, but almost 3 million barrels are still going south of the border. One day, if President Trump gets up on the wrong side of the bed and he decides to shut down the wall, the inlet to the U.S., then we are hooped. That's why the NDP has to fight their federal ally Trudeau to remove the tanker ban and to let Bill C-69 die on the Order Paper. Federal bills C-48 and C-69: if they are passed, then we are doomed.

This NDP put all of their eggs in one basket by letting Trudeau kill Energy East, by letting Trudeau kill Northern Gateway. Now we are left with only one project, Kinder Morgan, which is very important but is only going to add 600,000 barrels. We need more than that. That's why the Leader of the Official Opposition talked about Eagle Spirit and I talked about using Churchill's port. Why is the NDP silent on that? Why would the Energy minister not engage me or my colleagues on those ideas? If your intention is to maximize the value for the resource, then do those things.

Also, apply your mind to the EDAC report, where they strongly recommended looking at red tape and other issues. They were all read into the record many times by me and my other colleagues.

I strongly encourage my NDP colleagues to understand our point of view. We are not against energy diversification.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment REC? The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to rise today and talk in support of this amendment. The amendment asks us to take a look, have a sober second thought about the approach that this NDP government is taking. Earlier in the day I talked about some of the concerns that I had seen with their approach, and those concerns haven't changed.

What I will say is that there was an interesting article that I was perusing yesterday and today from the School of Public Policy at the University of Calgary entitled *The Siren Song of Economic Diversification: Alberta's Legacy of Loss*, a very interesting article, produced March 2015.

What's interesting about this article, this paper, is that it actually goes through historically to describe some of the problems that we've faced. There have been many efforts in Alberta to diversify the economy away from the dependence upon our oil and gas industry, not even just to move away from it but actually just to diversify it so that, because the commodity is actually quite volatile, we wouldn't have that roller-coaster ride. This government's approach has been tried by past Conservative governments. The concern is – and it was clearly articulated in this article, Madam Speaker – that when any government tries to approach this from a tax boutique concept, a tax boutique idea that they know best about where the economy should move to, it can result in the loss of taxpayer dollars.

Look, our responsibility in this House is to try to make sure that the economy that we are supposed to be championing is robust and is as sustainable as we can make it. It is not our responsibility nor role to pick winners and losers. It is the responsibility of the market to be able to pick those winners and losers. The market will decide whether or not there is a business case, whether it's petrochemical or whether it's for oil and gas or whether it's for whatever. Whatever the industry is, Madam Speaker, the market will decide. When the government, any government, whether it's left leaning, right leaning, whatever, decides that they feel that they know best how to be able to create jobs and establish more market, this is usually when we see the problems.

Now, I have indicated in this House before that there have been some times where we've gotten it right. There have been. Down at my . . .

10:50

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, I hesitate to interrupt. I just want to remind the House and all members of the House that we're actually on a referral. Like, we're on an amendment that is asking us to go back to Committee of the Whole. I've been hearing a lot of debate, and I'm trying to give as much leeway as possible, but we seem to have shifted back to the content of the bill, not necessarily why we are asking for an amendment to refer. If we would just try to refocus on the actual amendment itself and not the content of the bill, I would appreciate it.

Please go ahead.

Mr. Hunter: I appreciate that clarity that you gave me, and I will endeavour to make sure that I do that. With your indulgence, though, Madam Speaker, what I would say is that in order for me to be able to make my case, the case for being able to move this back into Committee of the Whole, I have to be able to help, hopefully, my colleagues on the opposite side, who do have a majority in this House, with the reason why I believe that we have to go back to Committee of the Whole. In order for me to be able to get to that point, I have to be able to give you context, and I'm hoping that you will indulge me to be able to give the context of that argument. Feel free to stop me if you feel I'm going off on a tangent that I shouldn't be.

Madam Speaker, the point is that in this paper, that I felt was actually a very sober look at this, it was fairly damning of the past Conservative governments, that we've had for 44 years. It's not saying that they were all wrong, but it is saying that we did make mistakes. We should be big about saying that we made mistakes. We should be big about it and say: "You know what? Look, we've tried, with the best of intentions, again, but we made some mistakes. How can we learn from those mistakes?"

The area that this paper talks about showed how we can actually fix the problems that we have. It talks about getting back to the fundamentals. The fundamentals that we saw were effective in being able to move us away from unsuccessful diversification efforts were during the Lougheed era and during the Klein era. The fundamentals that they were successful at – they didn't call it Reaganomics; we call it the Alberta advantage – were very similar to those Reaganomics principles, which are, again, lower marginal tax rate, decreasing the size of government so that it's sustainable, and then the third part was a lower regulatory burden, which allows the economy to be able to be robust and sustainable.

This motion is designed to be able to give us, again, that opportunity to be able to take a look at some of the historical evidence that I've had a chance to be able to peruse. I would love for the members opposite to give us their feedback. Let's go back to Committee of the Whole. Let's take a look at some of the points

that were made in this well-thought-out research paper from the University of Calgary, take a look at that, figure out whether or not there are some things that we need to do better, and then get back on track.

The truth is, Madam Speaker, that we have got to get this right for our children and grandchildren. I've got children. I've got grandchildren. I desperately want to get it right. I know that the members opposite also have children and grandchildren.

So what is it that is going to be able to make it right for them? Is it going to be tax boutiques? Is it going to be petrochemical diversification? You know what? It actually could be, Madam Speaker. It could be. However, some of the concerns with this – I think history is replete with examples of how it doesn't work – are that the loan guarantees, the equity investments, the grants in the past have proven to be unsuccessful a majority of the time.

Again, there are some times when they have actually been successful. One of the times where I've seen the success and still to this day see the success is in the development of our irrigation systems down in southern Alberta, where I'm from. That has actually been a success. I can say that for the farmers the growth in GDP down in my neck of the woods is very consistent and very stable due to that infrastructure development. That actually was due to those loan guarantees and equity investments and grants. I would have to say that . . .

Mr. Piquette: How about the oil sands?

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member.

Mr. Hunter: You know what? There are a couple of other examples as well.

In context, I'm trying to say that the idea that we have gotten this right at this juncture, I believe, is folly and again strikes at that arrogance that we know best about where economies and where markets should be going.

I think that the value of this amendment is that it gives us an opportunity to go back, in the dying days of this session, and to be able to just give it one more opportunity, one more sober second thought so that we can give the best chance to get it right for our children and grandchildren, the best chance to be able to get Alberta firing on all cylinders and make sure that this is the type of legislation that, in reality, will be good.

You know, the money that they're going to be spending, again, in order to be able to incentivize them to Alberta, not away from Louisiana, the new petrochemical investments: look, this is going to be a rolling of the dice. Are we going to be successful at it? Are we going to be able to actually incentivize people away from these other jurisdictions? I know that when I talked to the people in the petrochemical industry, they had some very deep concerns about those fundamentals being wrong. They did say that they need to see this similar investment. Well, of course, the businesses are going to say that. But they also said that it's the big picture as well. They need to take a look at the full package to see whether or not it's actually going to be in the best interest of those petrochemical companies to be able to come to Alberta.

Once again, going back to the amendment, the amendment allows us the opportunity to be able to get some more feedback to make sure that we've got the equation right, again, for our children's and grandchildren's sake. Madam Speaker, we have tried many times in this House to give the government ample opportunity to do this sober second thought. What we have seen in the past is a complete abandonment of that sober second thought and a rush, a headlong rush, into legislation that was poorly thought out, and then we're in

a situation where they had to bring forward massive amendments or even change the legislation in following sessions.

This is not an unreasonable ask, Madam Speaker. This is not an unreasonable request. In fact, it's an olive branch to help this government be able to get something right, to give them an opportunity to be able to take a look at a little bit more of the evidence that we've seen. The historical evidence is always a good thing to be able to go on.

You know what, Madam Speaker? I would imagine that in the event that this petrochemical diversification works, I would be the first to say, "Congratulations; you actually got this one right," because Albertans need jobs. Albertans definitely need to have those jobs. We need to make sure that they have the opportunity to be able to get back to work and have the dignity of being able to have full-time employment, gainful employment. This is the sort of thing that Albertans expect their legislators to get right, and if we don't have the opportunity through this sober second thought, then we potentially could get it wrong. I think that that is really the danger to being able to push this forward.

11:00

What's interesting also, Madam Speaker, in just a little bit of a side note – I hope that you're okay with this – is that we're in a situation where Bill 1, in the dying days of this session, is now just being finished up. If it was so important to this government, why would they wait until three months later to be able to actually finish this bill up? This is actually a little bit of an indictment on them in Albertans' eyes because, again, I think that they used to say – let me see here; I've just got a little note here – that this was making life better for Albertans. That was kind of their call to action.

Now what we're seeing is, I think, building a plan that'll last or something like that. I think that's what the new call to action is. You know what? If you're going to make it last, if you're going to make it work, then . . .

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:02 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, W.	Hunter	Nixon
Cooper	McIver	Panda
Drysdale	McPherson	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Jansen	Piquette
Carson	Kazim	Renaud
Connolly	Kleinstauber	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Larivee	Sabir
Dach	Loyola	Schmidt
Drever	Luff	Schreiner
Eggen	Malkinson	Shepherd
Feehan	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha
Fitzpatrick	McLean	Turner
Ganley	Miller	Westhead

Gray	Miranda	Woollard
Hoffman	Nielsen	
Totals:	For – 8	Against – 35
[Motion on amendment REC lost]		

The Acting Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise to speak to Bill 1. While I am disappointed that the amendment did not pass in terms of the government showing its lack of care and consideration for ensuring that they get this piece of legislation correct, I still am pleased to rise and speak at third reading on Bill 1, the Energy Diversification Act.

Madam Speaker, I'd just like to pick up on a few points that I made in the amendment discussion, particularly around section 2 of the legislation and exactly what the legislation is intended to do. One of the big, big, big concerns that I know I have is this government's track record of saying one thing and doing another. Really, in many ways, that's exactly what the Energy Diversification Act is.

11:20

We've seen politicians all across North America getting into this habit of saying one thing and doing another. Certainly, this NDP government, you know, is very, very similar to other NDP governments that we've seen in the past. Right now in Ontario there's an election taking place, and there's a small chance that the NDP in Ontario, under Andrea Horwath, are going to win. I don't know if I would be clapping for that because we all better hope that they're a say one thing and do another government. They've promised a lot of very, very, very problematic things. They would in fact be problematic for this government, who pretends not to like the federal NDP, pretends not to like the British Columbia NDP.

Mr. Nixon: They're the same party.

Mr. Cooper: They are the same party.

Whether you like Doug Ford or not, I think we can all hope that there's actually a Conservative government in Ontario so that we have somebody who can advocate for our energy sector from right across our country. Whether you like Donald Trump or not, he certainly has done things to promote pipelines in this country. Now, I am not a fan of his in many respects . . . [interjections]

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members.

Mr. Cooper: . . . but with respect to energy he's certainly done a lot of work. That's exactly what the Ontario Conservatives would do as well. We need governments right across our country and around the world that are going to promote our energy industry and are going to promote the fact that we need to make sure that this is a growing sector.

The unfortunate thing is that this NDP likes to sputter and start and putter and patter in all sorts of different directions. They wind up saying that they support energy diversification, but their actions communicate otherwise to the marketplace, so we see a significant flock of investment out of the country and the province. I mean, we saw it just last week in the form of Kinder Morgan divesting their assets in Canada and the federal government needing to step in and engage in that project in an unprecedented manner. These sorts of policies from the past that the NDP have implemented: now they're coming to try to clean up the mess that they've created.

But they continue a pattern of saying one thing and doing another. One particular place that I would like to highlight this – I mentioned it earlier, but I think there's some merit in mentioning it again – is in section 2 of the legislation, where it speaks about the establishment of programs. Then it outlines what the minister's job is already, which I find a little ironic. You'll remember, Madam Speaker, that Bill 1 just a few sessions ago – I think it was the job-creation act or whatever – was really a job description for the minister, and in some respects that's what this legislation is as well.

With respect to the establishment of programs

2(1) The Minister shall establish programs that have the primary purpose of supporting economic growth and . . . diversification, including, without limitation, programs that . . .

And then it goes on to list those programs that it might include.

You know, it's almost like it's another job description for the minister. Never in Alberta's history has the minister had his job described so many times in legislation. But it's good that he has clear direction. I'm glad that the Premier has provided clear direction to him as to what he should do. I also am glad that the Premier in this legislation provided the Premier's office the opportunity to require more of the minister, like more reporting to Executive Council. We all know that Bill 1 the last time around or two times ago, whatever it was, created one job, and that was the job of the minister. We hope that this bill will in fact create more.

In section 2, as I was saying, it talks about a number of different programs:

(b) increase access to capital,

something the minister should be doing already.

(c) increase the development of value-added upgrading . . .

This is a fair point in this piece of legislation.

(d) encourage more investment and jobs in upstream, midstream and downstream energy sectors by creating a petrochemical feedstock.

This is a good thing.

I do find it interesting how they're willing to address upstream and downstream jobs, but they're not willing to defend upstream and downstream emissions on this particular point. Again, it's a say one thing and do another government, where they'll say that they want to defend Alberta's interest, but when it comes to upstream and downstream emissions, essentially, that killed Energy East, they want to say nothing.

So I'd like to move an amendment. It's a good, solid amendment. If it's okay with you, I'll proceed while they're being handed out, or would you prefer me to wait?

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, if you can just wait till the table has the original and I have a copy, please.

Hon. member, please go ahead.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you. I move that the motion for third reading of Bill 1, the Energy Diversification Act, be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 1, Energy Diversification Act, be not now read a third time but that it be read a third time this day three months hence.

Madam Speaker, this is a motion that will allow the government to put this particular program on hold. There was so much opportunity that Bill 1 had that they missed. You know, the Energy Diversification Advisory Committee, that reports directly to the minister, produced a great report, a number of recommendations, on many of which the government said: "Thank you for your expertise, but no thank you. We'll create a bill that is a job description for the minister instead." They created a bill that says: "encourage . . . participation from under-represented communities in the energy sector."

But while they say that, they're actively working against or, at minimum, not doing enough to protect great projects like the energy spirit project in northern Alberta, that is spearheaded, led, organized, orchestrated, capitalized by members of our indigenous community that are from underrepresented communities. This government hasn't said boo about the tanker ban in northern British Columbia, which is preventing the energy spirit project from moving forward, yet they say that they want to encourage participation of underrepresented communities in the energy sector.

At every single turn, whether it's on accountability, transparency, realistic points in legislation, they say one thing and do another. That's exactly why this bill should be amended to not now be read a third time and to be read three months hence, and I encourage all members of the government in the Assembly to vote in favour of that.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

Cortes-Vargas: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour to stand up and to speak to the hoist amendment, especially because we actually started debating this bill earlier in March, essentially allowing them months to debate this bill, and in those months of debate we have seen that the Official Opposition has failed to actually speak to the bill. I can say that because I was there the day the bill was announced. In fact, I wasn't just there; the MLA for the Industrial Heartland was there, and most of the Strathcona county council were there. The mayor of Strathcona county was there.

Just yesterday I was reading the *Sherwood Park News*, and they were talking about \$30 million of potential investment within the Strathcona county industrial area. This is because we have the ability to bring investment in through our industrial sector. The thing is that there is a past history on the ability to attain that investment, a history that the former government demonstrated that they failed to do.

11:30

That is why a lot of the industry leaders throughout that area have been very vocal about the fact that our government has turned the dial in a way that the former government was never able to do and, in doing so, has actually seen announcements like Inter Pipeline. When Inter Pipeline announces that they're going to be bringing their petrochemical and polypropylene plant there, they're talking about real jobs for the people of Strathcona county.

When we're talking about these kinds of things – and the members opposite are talking about delaying this for a counternarrative; they actually failed to provide a countersolution and a counterapproach – what are we waiting for? Madam Speaker, there's actually more to be lost right now in not moving forward on this bill. I think that we have done our due diligence in making sure that the industry understands where we're moving to and seeing that we really do need to address the difference in capital costs in Alberta and invest in Alberta rather than go somewhere else, and that's what this goes down to.

That's what the petrochemicals diversification program in its first iteration did. By putting forward royalty credits that a company could use once it's up and running – they don't actually even get to use that until later on – it addresses the competitiveness factor, that really impacts our ability to get that investment into our area. That's what was stated by many folks from Inter Pipeline as to making a difference in petrochemical diversification, the first iteration.

That's why, Madam Speaker, in the time that the energy diversification panel released their report, they spoke to doing

similar actions like the petrochemicals diversification program. We put that in place early on in our term, knowing that we needed to do more work as to finding out how best to move forward. That report was released in I believe it was early March, and we moved quickly because we know the urgency, that we need to be putting this work forward. We know that Albertans need to be able to rely on job stability, and we cannot do that if we continue to rely on just one area in oil and gas, and that's the extraction of oil and gas. We must be able to diversify within our energy sector the areas in which we're adding value to our oil industry. That's what we're doing when we're attracting petrochemical sectors like the ones that bring polypropylene. They take excess feedstock like propane and turn it into a value-added part like plastic pellets.

I think we need to really talk about the issues at stake. I've listened for the many hours that we've been debating Bill 1 at the end of the session, and the members opposite have spoken to anything but the actual bill on debate. They've spoken to past record. They've spoken to rhetoric, Madam Speaker, because I think it's more convenient for them to keep talking about this ideal economy that they never actually changed, because the people that are there in the Industrial Heartland – the industry members, the economic development executive director within Strathcona county – will tell you that the previous government was unable to turn the dial on investment when it came to attracting this kind of sector to that area. And they'll say that programs like the petrochemicals diversification program did exactly that.

As the Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park, not only has this been an important thing that I've been working on throughout my term, but it's something that members all throughout the government have worked on because we know that attracting these different sectors is not something we just promise but something that the workers in this province depend on. We can't continue to expect workers across Alberta to have job instability through every boom-and-bust cycle. I think that's the element where having things like polypropylene, that goes into feedstock, is extremely important because they actually do better when the feedstock is lower. That usually happens in a bust cycle, so they actually run countercyclical, meaning that the people that work in the area have more ability to have jobs within the energy sector regardless of which part of the cycle it's in. It doesn't prevent the problem in its entirety. It means that there's still more work to be done, but I believe it is an essential step to creating job stability for workers, Madam Speaker. So I'm proud to stand with a government that is doing this and that is going to move forward on this work.

I know that in the past few months of being in session, every time I'm out in my constituency, the first question I get asked is: "When is Bill 1 going to be passed? When is that going to happen?" That is a question that, as I'm going through the chamber of commerce and as I'm talking to members of the chamber of commerce – they know, because they have a very direct line to the folks that are creating jobs in that area and a lot of them have to do with the industry, that programs that are coming out of Bill 1 will be extremely important in our ability to move the investment.

Madam Speaker, for those reasons and for making sure that we're standing up for Alberta workers, I don't think that this amendment is anything but a delay tactic.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to respond under 29(2)(a). The hon. member made some interesting points. I found the newspaper item, I believe, that the hon. member was

referring to, and the hon. member, respectfully, left a few details out. Here's what the local folks said: the big change is that our biggest customer became our biggest competitor. The United States is now our major competitor, and that largely happened due to the shale oil. It was exacerbated by the fact that this government made our industry less competitive by raising corporate taxes by 20 per cent, by adding the carbon tax, making it more expensive for everybody that's in that hon. member's riding to do business. They've actually made it harder for them to compete, less competitive against the United States, their major competitor. That's what the article talks about. The hon. member left some important details out in her comments.

The hon. member and, unfortunately, the whole government over there also seem to believe that nothing happened before 2015. Well, news flash for the government: the previous government had been talking to Inter Pipeline for some time, and they were coming anyways. It happened on your watch, so take credit. Good for you. But they were coming anyways because this is a great place to do business.

If anything, this government has made it more expensive for Inter Pipeline to come. They've made their corporate taxes 20 per cent more expensive. They've added carbon taxes to them. Even for the staff that they're trying to attract to work there from other jurisdictions, they've made their personal taxes more expensive, higher prices for everything that they do. This government has actually crippled the ability for new companies to come here, and not just evidence – yes, the new investment that does come is great, but the hon. member left out the fact that over 35 billion with a “b” dollars have left, largely because of this government's policies. Madam Speaker, the energy price has been low before, many times, but we never had the mass exodus of major capital investments until this government made it so that companies didn't feel welcome here anymore. They felt that the government didn't have their back. They felt that the government wasn't on their side, that they weren't going to support workers, that they weren't going to allow companies to live.

Even after they did the royalty review and they got that kind of right – again, I talked about this yesterday, but it's relevant to this conversation today – they couldn't stand the prosperity 10 seconds later. After they released the royalty review, which was actually fairly well done, the Premier and the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board stood up and said, “We won't raise the royalties yet,” in other words, telling industry that if they ever start making money, this government will take that money away from them. They will not let business survive and thrive and create profit and return for their shareholders. Yet the hon. member stood up and tried to make it sound like this government is the saviour of business when exactly the opposite is true.

The hon. member talked about the first question she gets asked. The first question I get asked is: “When are we going to have an election? When are you going to do something about the current government?” That's what I hear everywhere I go in Edmonton, in Sherwood Park, in Calgary. Everywhere I go. When I talk to people from Sherwood Park, I get that question from them, too.

The hon. member, I'm sure, meant what she said, but the hon. member seems to have misplaced some of the facts. I think that's a polite word, “misplaced.” I'll stick with that. I'm sure the hon. member was intending to give accurate information to the House. I would never suggest otherwise. But the fact is that the hon. member left out a few details that were pretty important to this discussion.

Now, again, the same article talks about: the corporate tax cuts in the United States have resulted in a 21 per cent tax compared to Alberta's 27 per cent tax, 12 per cent provincially and 15 per cent federally. So 20 per cent of that provincial tax was added by this

government on this government's watch, making them less competitive against the major competitor that they have. It really, really, really has left Alberta companies in the lurch, less able to compete, yet the hon. member would stand up and try to have this House believe that this government has been in any way a friend to business when it's a well-accepted, well-understood fact across this province that exactly the opposite is true.

I would be interested in any comments that the member would care to reply on that.

11:40

The Acting Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Seeing none, I will call the question. Oh, sorry, hon. member. The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'll wear bright colours in the future. I am rising this morning to speak in favour of this amendment but not because I think trickle-down economics work. I did want to make the point that there are many, many people that do not benefit from the idea of Reaganomics, that wealth would trickle down. If you're of a particular gender or race, it is a very successful system. If your name is John, you could probably do very well. But globalization has fundamentally changed economies. Just this morning I was reading about how the happiness index in Scandinavian countries, who do not subscribe to Reaganomics or trickle-down economics, is the highest in the world. Many Scandinavian countries are in the top 10. GDP is certainly not the only measure of success.

But I am voting in favour of this hoist because the EDAC report includes a number of recommendations that aren't included in Bill 1. Around two-thirds of the EDAC report recommendations are not incorporated in Bill 1.

The member opposite was speaking about questions that she's asked, the first questions that she's asked. I know that in Calgary a couple of questions that I'm asked quite often are: when are jobs coming back to Calgary in particular? And how are we going to fill the office towers in downtown Calgary, which are sitting at about a 30 per cent vacancy rate right now? That is a lot of revenue that isn't moving within the city of Calgary.

Bill 1 seems to focus primarily on Strathcona county, the Industrial Heartland, and while that's a really important part of Alberta's economy, I believe that energy diversification needs to be inclusive of the whole province. A lot of the activities that are listed within the EDAC report, the infrastructure that already exists are in the Edmonton area, in the Lloydminster area, in the Fort McMurray area. To be able to see that benefit be spread further across the province, I think, would be a huge positive for the province.

For all of those reasons, I urge everyone to vote in favour of this amendment. Thanks.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Seeing none, I will now put the question.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:44 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, W.	Hunter	Nixon
Clark	McIver	Panda
Drysdale	McPherson	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hoffman	Nielsen
Carson	Jansen	Phillips
Connolly	Kazim	Piquette
Coolahan	Kleinsteinuber	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Larivee	Rosendahl
Dach	Loyola	Sabir
Drever	Luff	Schmidt

Eggen	Malkinson	Schreiner
Feehan	McCuaig-Boyd	Shepherd
Fitzpatrick	McLean	Sucha
Ganley	Miller	Turner
Gray	Miranda	Woollard
Totals:	For – 8	Against – 36

[Motion on amendment HA lost]

[Motion carried; Bill 1 read a third time]

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, pursuant to Standing Order 4(2.1) the Assembly will stand adjourned until 1:30 this afternoon.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12:01 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, June 6, 2018

Day 39

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (UCP),
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Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (UCP)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (NDP)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (NDP)
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (NDP)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (NDP)
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Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (UCP)
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (NDP)
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (NDP)
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)
Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (NDP)
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP)
Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP),
Deputy Government House Leader
Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (IC)
Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (NDP)
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (AP)
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (NDP),
Deputy Government House Leader
Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (UCP),
Official Opposition Deputy Whip
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (UCP)
Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (NDP)
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)
Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (NDP)
Hunter, Grant R., Cardston-Taber-Warner (UCP)
Jansen, Hon. Sandra, Calgary-North West (NDP)
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Malkinson, Brian, Calgary-Currie (NDP)
Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),
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Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (NDP)
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP)
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)
Schneider, David A., Little Bow (UCP)
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (NDP)
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (NDP)
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (NDP)
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (UCP)
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (UCP)
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (NDP),
Deputy Government Whip
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)
Vacant, Fort McMurray-Conklin
Vacant, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake

Party standings:

New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 25 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent Conservative: 1 Vacant: 2

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, June 6, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Mr. Alfred Macyk
March 2, 1924, to May 1, 2018

The Speaker: Hon. members, as is our custom, we pay tribute to members and former members of this Assembly who have passed away. Mr. Alfred Macyk was elected as the Liberal Member for Redwater on June 29, 1955, and served for the duration of the 13th Legislature. Prior to his election he served in the Royal Canadian Air Force from 1942 to 1945 and served as a councillor for the municipal district of Smoky Lake from 1953 to 1955. Mr. Macyk passed away on May 1, 2018, at the age of 94.

In a moment of silent contemplation I ask you to remember Mr. Macyk as you may have known him.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: Hon. members, with our admiration and respect there is gratitude to members of the families who shared the burdens of public office and public service. Today I would like to welcome members of the Macyk family who are present in the Speaker's gallery. Please rise if you might as I call your name and remain standing until all have been introduced: Rose Kleparchuk, Peter and Faye Macyk, Doug and Paulette Macyk, Gary and Bernice Macyk, Don and Marilyn Macyk. Thank you for joining us today and for your service to our province. Thank you very much.

Introduction of Guests

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

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, it's my real pleasure today to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a couple who I literally could not be here today without. It's Cindy and Daniel Dang, who are my parents. They are in the gallery today. I want to tell you a bit of a story if the House would indulge me. They have two children, one very successful, who's done great things, just graduated from Harvard with a master's in landscape architecture. The other one is an MLA. My mom and dad are here to visit, and as they can finally see, I actually have a job. Here I am. Here we are. If they could please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome. I need to let you know that the first week I met this young man, I gave him some advice and said: listen to your parents.

The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

Cortes-Vargas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly family members of a constituent of mine and our current page Jessica Hermary. They are seated in the Speaker's gallery, and I ask them to rise as I say their names: her mom, Nadine Hermary; grandmother Erika Auton, great-grandmother Sofia Lochner, and great-aunt Margaret Lochner, who are here visiting from Hamilton, Ontario; and grandmother June Hermary and her husband, Lorne Cain, visiting from Parksville, B.C.

Jessica's family is here in the Speaker's gallery today to watch Jessica in her role as a page. She's been positioned here since 2016. I know I say on behalf of all members that it's our pleasure to work with her. I invite all members of this Assembly to give the traditional warm welcome, please.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour today to rise and introduce to you and through you some humble, hard-working, law-abiding Albertans, who happen to be unitholders of time-shares of Northmont Resort Properties in Fairmont, B.C. I'd ask them to rise as I call their names and remain standing to receive the warm welcome of this House: Helen Engels and her son, Richard Engels, who have a claim against them for \$31,000; Randall Dodds of Edmonton, a claim against him for \$24,000; Jerry Kucharzow of St. Albert, a claim of \$54,000; Dennis and Rosanna Loughlin of St. Albert, \$30,000 for collectively \$139,000. Unable to join them today were their daughter and son-in-law, who have a claim against them for \$50,000. I would like the House to give them a warm welcome, as is typical in this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you and to all the members of the Assembly four guests who attended the Seniors' Week tea earlier today: Shari Hallam and Susan Parr, who live in Edmonton-Rutherford; Sharon Chadwick, who lives in Edmonton-Gold Bar; and Bonnie Albrecht, who lives in Sherwood Park. I'm pleased that they're able to join us today to watch question period. I ask them to rise, as they have, and receive the warm traditional greeting of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly one of my fantastic constituency assistants, Adiatu Kuyatah, and her son, Hamzah Koroma. Adiatu is a social worker in my constituency, and I could not do without her. Hamzah is a student at Dickinsfield junior high school, where he is also president of the students' union. His keen interest in politics led him to apply as a page here at the Legislature, and I hope he's interested enough after today's proceedings to want to become an MLA as well. I ask Adiatu and Hamzah now to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Nick Dira. Nick is a spinal cord injury survivor who has had an experience in navigating the bureaucracy of our Alberta Health Services as he tries to get the supports that he requires, at points in his treatment and rehabilitation funding his own treatments during the gaps in our system. I ask that the House please acknowledge Mr. Dira and give him a warm welcome.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. June is recognized as stroke awareness month in Canada, and it's an important opportunity to build awareness about the signs of strokes and empower Albertans to live healthier lives. I want to commend the Heart and Stroke Foundation for its work raising awareness, helping support survivors, enhancing research, and improving stroke care here in Alberta as well. I invite Donna and Owen from the Heart and Stroke Foundation – they're seated in the members' gallery – to please rise and receive our warm welcome.

And [Remarks in Tagalog] Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce some strong advocates who are leaders in our Filipino community to join us in celebrating as our government proclaimed June as Philippine Heritage Month in Alberta for every June moving forward. I ask that my guests who are here today please rise as I say their names: Marilda, Edwin, Aimee, Celso, Genevieve, Julie, Tony, Jo-Ann, Beatriz, Nicky, and if there are any others. [Remarks in Tagalog] Thank you all for all of your work in supporting Filipino Albertans and all Albertans and getting to know Filipino Albertans as well.

Thank you for being here.

Members' Statements

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

1:40

Filipino Community

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to join with other members in celebrating Philippine Independence Day. Alberta is fortunate to be the home to tens of thousands of Canadians of Filipino origin. In fact, I was proud as minister of immigration to oversee a period when Philippines became for the first time in Canadian history the top, number one source country of immigration to Canada. Partly through the expansion of the Alberta immigrant nominee program during my tenure we managed to see a significant expansion of the size of Alberta's Filipino community, people who for the past several decades have brought tremendous compassion, work ethic, devotion to family and community that have helped to build our prosperity and contributed in every walk of life.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things as a former federal immigration and multiculturalism minister that I appreciate most about the Filipino community is how it has sunk roots in communities large and small in every part of our province and country. It is often true that immigration patterns tend towards big cities, but we can visit some of our smallest towns and even villages in some of the most remote parts of Alberta and see nascent and growing Filipino communities who are reviving their local community, their charitable organizations, their churches, their schools, and their local economies.

This is an opportunity for us to celebrate our friends in Philippines, a country I've had the opportunity to visit on several occasions, and to wish them on this important day peace and prosperity but also an opportunity to thank Albertans of Filipino origin for the sacrifices that they have made and make every day to make Alberta a better place. To all of them, [Remarks in Tagalog].

LGBTQ2S Rights

Connolly: Mr. Speaker, 2018 Edmonton Pride Festival kicks off this weekend. I have to say that it is one of my favourite events of the year, and I know it's one of our Premier's favorites as well. I'm also excited and honoured to be able to march alongside the

Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park and the Minister of Culture and Tourism as three of this year's parade marshals.

Our government is proud to support all of Alberta's pride festivals, including Taber Pride, which the Minister of Environment and Parks and I had the pleasure of attending just last weekend. These events are an opportunity for Alberta to showcase the best qualities of our province: love, respect, and freedom to be yourself.

Pride is also a celebration of strength and courage. For many people pride is about remembering those loved ones lost during the AIDS crisis. People have fought long and hard to be able to celebrate and take pride in our LGBTQ2S community.

We know that all societies, even in Alberta, still have work to do to ensure that we are inclusive and providing safe environments for everyone. Every member of this House can take steps to ensure that every person, whether gay, straight, bi, cis, queer, questioning, intersex, pansexual, asexual, two spirit, and/or transgendered, knows they are welcome and safe in our province.

The NDP has always fought for the LGBTQ2S-plus community. Several of us are proud members of it. In fact, the first time I met our Premier was at Calgary Pride in 2011, before I was even out. This past year we defined in law that students have the right to form GSAs without having to seek permission. The opposition stands against this, and they recently reaffirmed this stance at their founding meeting.

Mr. Speaker, this is discrimination and just goes to show that there is still work to be done. I want Alberta's LGBTQ2S community to know that our government and our party have your back, and we will fight for your right not just during Pride Week, not just by paying lip service by flipping a couple pancakes, but every single day. LGBTQ rights are human rights, and we will defend them.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Seniors' Issues

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. While we sit here in the House and listen to this government continuously pat themselves on the back, most Albertans see it for what it really is: lip service. During this week, proclaimed as Seniors' Week to recognize the contribution of our great seniors, I can't help but think of issues that have come forward in the House recently and some that have been raised for years.

Recently I brought forth an AHS decision to cancel mobile lab services to seniors' lodges in Alberta. Previously a lab tech would come to a site on a scheduled basis. Seniors, often fasting prior to their bloodwork, could get the collection done and then head directly for breakfast. Apparently this was seen as too convenient for seniors and too inconvenient for AHS. Now these same seniors, most on fixed incomes, will have to find their own transportation to a health care facility, stand in line to be processed, sit in a waiting room with people who may have a contagious condition, and then find their own way back to the lodge. How does this make sense even to AHS?

Meanwhile, seniors in some long-term care facilities in Alberta are still subjected to what I like to call sourced lunches from off-site procurement, or SLOP for short. For those people in long-term care often the main thing that they have to look forward to are the daily mealtimes. How disappointing when the same tasteless mass is served over and over. This is definitely not the case in all facilities. Most that I have visited have great-quality, fresh-prepared

on-site meals. All of our seniors deserve the best quality treatment and the best quality food.

Both of these issues have only been met with lip service from this government. We hear: my office is always open; call at any time if you have specific issues. How many times do these issues have to be brought forward before they're dealt with? These are not random issues; these are province-wide. These are real people. Simply proclaiming something like Seniors' Week does not mean anything unless you actually act. These issues are a simple fix for this minister, and this would be a great week to take care of it. Our seniors deserve nothing less.

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

Filipino Community

Mr. Carson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This June 12 marks 120 years since the Philippines was declared independent from Spanish colonial rule. I'd like to take this opportunity to salute the local Filipino community and the people of the Philippines on the celebration of their independence.

On June 3 I was proud to join the Deputy Premier in announcing June 2018 and every June to follow as Philippine Heritage Month in Alberta. This month is a time to celebrate and recognize the significant contributions of Filipinos and Filipinas to our province.

Alberta is home to the second-largest Filipino population in Canada, and the over 175,000 Filipinos which call Alberta home contribute enormously to our culture, our society, and our quality of life. Like anyone who chooses Alberta as home, they come to our province to work hard and to make lives better for their families and loved ones. But in some cases new Canadians of Philippine descent were not treated fairly, having their rights as workers ignored.

Mr. Speaker, in my capacity as an MLA I've had the opportunity to learn about the organization Migrant Alberta, an education and advocacy group based in Edmonton. Migrant Alberta was formed to help address the issues facing migrants and provide assistance where they can. It's a sad truth that many people who come to Canada from the Philippines under the temporary foreign worker program have not been given the same rights as other workers.

Last week I was able to join them for the launch of their new book, titled *Bridging the Gap*, which was made possible due in part to a grant provided through the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. The book chronicles the life of several immigrant communities as they struggled to make a new home here in Canada and the structural injustices that they faced.

During Philippine Heritage Month let us all celebrate the wonderful things that Alberta Filipinos have brought to our province and continue to work to bring fairness and justice to all Filipino and Filipina workers. [Remarks in Tagalog]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Economic Indicators

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've sat here day after day listening to the NDP government throw out all sorts of numbers. Well, it's time to set the record straight. Let's start with the whopper that Alberta has been broken for the past 44 years. Well, here are the facts. If you look at a longitudinal graph showing Alberta's gross domestic product, there have only been two times where we have seen a drop, in 2008 and after the NDP took office. You will remember that the 2008 crisis was one of the worst financial crises the world has seen in 80 years.

Let's look at another indicator, average weekly earnings. The NDP's 2018 budget is called A Recovery Built to Last. Well, not

when you're racking up \$96 billion of debt. How is that a recovery to last? But I digress. Fact check: in the three years this government has been in power, Albertans have seen a three-quarters of 1 per cent increase, .74 per cent, in average weekly earnings. With inflation at 4.56 per cent over the same period, it is easy to see why the NDP had to change their motto from making life better for Albertans.

Let's end off with the whopper that the NDP continue to say that they have added 90,000 new jobs. Fact check, Mr. Speaker: we have only seen an increase of 17,800 new jobs since this government was elected, in May of 2015. Put another way, that only employs 25 per cent of the 70,000 new people that have moved into Alberta in the past three years.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I invite the members of this government to stick to the facts. If not, I can always do another fact check in the future.

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

Health Care for Transgender Persons

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to speak about the challenges transgender individuals face while seeking medical care. In no other community is the link between rights and health so clearly visible as in the transgender community. Transgender individuals often face significant barriers to health care. There are medical professionals who have no training on transgender health and aren't familiar with the basic issues that transgender patients face.

Our health care system should be a place of understanding and compassion, yet when trans individuals reach out for help, they often find doctors, nurses, and other health care professionals who are poorly informed. This lack of medical care leads to fear and isolation. About three-quarters of trans youth were uncomfortable or very uncomfortable discussing their trans status and specific health care needs with doctors at walk-in clinics. This is unacceptable. All Albertans are entitled to quality, judgment-free health care. There should never be a barrier between a physician and a patient.

1:50

However, I am pleased to say that some things are getting better. In 2015 our government amended the Alberta Human Rights Act to make it illegal to discriminate on the basis of gender identity and gender expression, and in February of this year the gender health program at the University of Alberta opened its doors, the very first of its kind in the prairie provinces. But we know it's not enough. We need better medical and sensitivity training for doctors and medical staff so that they understand the health needs of transgender people, we need more psychiatrists who are qualified to diagnose gender dysphoria, and we need better access to gender-confirming therapy and better gender-affirming care.

It's a simple fact that when we as a society respect and normalize the rights and choices of others, including the right to determine one's gender, we are all healthier for it.

Thank you.

Oral Question Period

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

Calgary Crime Rate

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, today there was troubling news from the Calgary Police Service about a shocking

increase in crime, including violent crime, in Calgary over the past five years. The report indicates an increase of 43 per cent in the incidence of sexually related crimes in Calgary in the last five years. Child abuse is up by 29 per cent and domestic abuse is 41 per cent higher over the past five years. Does the Premier agree with me that these are disturbing statistics, and what actions does the government intend to take to help protect Calgarians and other Albertans from these higher levels of crime?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Of course, these are very troubling statistics, and of course we will be working and continue to work very closely with our law enforcement officials to find the best path towards bringing those kinds of statistics down. I've not had a chance to review them as of yet, but I certainly anticipate doing that. It's fundamentally important that Albertans can know that we are living in safe communities and that they will be kept safe, so we'll do what is necessary to ensure that we can work with those law enforcement officials to meet that goal.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Premier for her answer. The same report from the Calgary Police Service indicates a 33.6 per cent increase in assault crimes, a 22 per cent increase in home invasions, and a 25 per cent increase in financial robberies over the past five years. Will the Premier agree with me that the federal government reducing and eliminating mandatory minimum sentences in the Criminal Code is unhelpful and sends the wrong message to those who are victimizing innocent civilians in our society?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Of course, the statistics are always troubling. That's why our government is taking the steps of ensuring that we are investing in our law enforcement professionals. It's also critical at these times – and our police would agree with me – that we continue to invest in social services, in health services, and in many other services to ensure that we're moving forward in a number of areas. I think all levels of government have acknowledged that they have a role to play in this. We'll continue working to move the needle on this issue.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. the minister, but we're not moving forward. Maybe we're spending more money, but we're moving backwards in terms of results, with a 42 per cent increase in sex offences in our largest city over the past five years. Will the minister agree with me that if more money has not resulted in lower crime levels – we're actually seeing an increase in crime – that perhaps we should have tougher laws that ensure that, in this case, sex offenders actually stay behind bars and don't manage to get out on suspended sentences or conditional release? Would she not as the Attorney General call on her federal counterpart to support such measures?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, we have not reviewed these numbers in depth, and we're happy to take a look at them and to consider them thoroughly. We are always concerned about any increase in crime statistics. Certainly, this government has taken some steps to ensure that we're making

progress on the issue of sexual violence. I had the honour of introducing a bill to remove the limitation period for women seeking recompense for such things. In addition, we've recently introduced police guidelines for sexual violence crimes. These will help police to understand and to work with those survivors to make sure that everyone gets the supports they need.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
Second main.

Union Certification

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On a different matter, it's come to light that changes made by the NDP government to the labour code in fall of last year have resulted in a bizarre situation where people can be unionized without their knowledge or consent. This is a result of a recent Labour Relations Board ruling, which says, "The possibility of certification without a representation vote is now a feature of Alberta's labour [regulations] legislation." Why is it now possible under NDP rules to force people to unionize with neither their knowledge nor their consent?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It didn't exactly come to light, Mr. Speaker; it was actually a featured element of the changes that were made to the labour code by our government some time ago. This is called an automatic certification, something that happens in almost every jurisdiction across the country. In fact, the threshold for that presumption here in Canada is much higher than in other jurisdictions, but it is a long-standing mechanism that's in place to ensure that there is not a case – anyway, ultimately, it's a standard feature of labour relations codes across the country.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Premier for admitting that they actually want a province where people can be forced into a union with neither their knowledge nor their consent, but I think Albertans disagree. They want the right to make their own decisions for themselves in their workplace. Rose and Joe Visser, two employees at a small family business, ended up being members of a union without their knowledge or their consent, and they wonder why. They complained to the Labour Relations Board, which said: so sad; too bad; these are the new rules under the NDP. What does the Premier have to say to Rose and Joe Visser, who were forced into a union without their knowledge or their consent?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That particular element of union organizing has been upheld by the Supreme Court of Canada and, in fact, was upheld as a fundamental component of labour rights by the Supreme Court of Canada decades ago as part of an overall regime of understanding international human rights. So that is how labour relations works. That's how organizing works. The majority rules. That's how you get a certification. This is not new, and it is about time that Alberta finally join the rest of the country with modern labour laws that protect working people.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I can't think of a better example of NDP ideology than imagining that forcing people to do something without their knowledge or consent is a, quote, international human right.

Now, the same law the NDP brought in has resulted in intimidation of people to force union certification cards against their wishes. Vulnerable immigrant workers in Calgary on a job site last year were told that if they didn't join, they could be deported. Mr. Speaker, does the Premier stand behind the law that is resulting in the intimidation of vulnerable workers?

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I stand behind is a law that protects workers from intimidation in a work site where their employers use the control of the work site that they have to prevent workers from exercising their fundamental human rights as recognized by the Supreme Court of Canada. It is something that we were very proud to bring forward because Alberta had for a very long time been well behind the rest of the country, failing to recognize fundamental human rights and worker rights, and we are proud to have changed the record.

The Speaker: Third main question.

Mr. Kenney: So, Mr. Speaker, now according to the Premier it's a fundamental human right to be intimidated by unions in order to sign a certification card. According to one vulnerable immigrant worker on a Calgary work site he said that the organizer, quote: used my signature not for a receipt like he said but to sign me up for the union. Is it now the Premier's position that committing fraud and getting somebody to sign a certification card under false pretenses is a fundamental human right?

Ms Notley: No, Mr. Speaker. I would suggest that it is a fundamental human right to have those kinds of issues adjudicated by a fair and impartial panel, and that's exactly what the laws that we brought into place would ensure happens. So if an employer, who the member opposite is speaking on behalf of right now, is not happy with the fact that 60 per cent of their employees signed cards, then they can challenge those cards. They can challenge whether they were appropriately signed, and if they are successful at challenging them, then the certification will not happen. That's a fair process. That's what we brought into the province of Alberta finally, after decades of failure on the part of the Conservatives.

2:00

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, there the Premier is owning and defending intimidation of vulnerable immigrant workers by union organizers who committed fraud in order to get people to sign cards under false pretenses. [interjections] One of these vulnerable immigrant workers – you hear the heckling? That never stops. One of the vulnerable immigrant workers said, quote, my last paycheque was short \$700 thanks to this union certification, that I opposed. Why is the Premier justifying coercion and intimidation as tactics that have resulted from her government's attack on workplace democracy?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I guess I'd start by saying: why is the member opposite making stuff up like he just did? That is not at all what I said. I wish he would stop suggesting that I said things that I did not. The fact of the matter is that for many, many years the International Labour Organization, the United Nations, had actually looked at Alberta's labour laws and acknowledged that they were in breach of the International Labour Organization's international standards for a fair workplace. We are pleased that finally the province of Alberta has come into line with

the rest of the country and, quite frankly, is leading countries and the rest of the world.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, this is slightly Orwellian to hear the Premier justifying these kinds of intimidation tactics, this absence of workplace democracy under the aegis of human rights. Effectively, what the NDP has done is to say that it is no longer a requirement to have a secret ballot vote that protects workers from intimidation either from employers or from union organizers. Why does the Premier have such a problem with the basic principle that workers should through a secret ballot vote be able to determine their own future democratically?

Ms Notley: You know, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that the member opposite has some very interesting ideas, perhaps even slightly paranoid ideas, about the labour movement and about unions. It's that same kind of ideology, speaking of ideology, that resulted in us having labour laws and employment standards laws that allowed a woman who was trying to care for her sick child to be legally fired from her workplace because nobody would stand up for her in her workplace and she had very little access to anyone else who would stand up for her. We are proud that we have . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Trans Mountain Pipeline Public Purchase Agreements

Mr. Clark: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Now, it's been a week and a day since the deal was announced to purchase the Kinder Morgan pipeline, but details about Alberta's participation remain a mystery. Today the Alberta Party obtained the 121-page agreement between the federal government and Kinder Morgan and also a separate, shorter support agreement. I will table both of these documents at an appropriate time. One of the big questions I've been asked by my constituents is whether any Alberta taxpayer dollars will go directly to B.C. as part of their previously signed revenue-sharing agreement. To the Premier: will you release Alberta's agreement so Albertans can know that detail as well as all the other details of this agreement?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What I can say very definitively is that once all the ink is dried on the agreements – of course, the Alberta agreement needs to be finalized after the original agreement, that the member opposite just talked about. Once ours is complete, we will be happy to release it, subject, of course, to commercially sensitive information concerns, but we're pretty clear that we're going to be releasing the whole thing. I can also say that we've been very clear that any of the terms that would result in us paying anything under that amount that we discussed before – we had to be very clear that none of it was going to the province of B.C.

Mr. Clark: Well, thank you. I'm very glad to hear that. I look forward to seeing the full details of the agreement to confirm it.

Mr. Speaker, if the federal government can release their contract, there can't possibly be commercially sensitive information preventing the NDP from releasing the details of what Alberta's participation might mean. We deserve to know as Albertans the conditions that will trigger the \$2 billion investment and what exactly we will get for that money. Again to the Premier: do those details just not exist yet, or do you not want to release them?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. No. In fact, those details do exist, and we will release them once the final agreements are crafted and signed off. As I said, it comes secondary to the final agreements that occur with respect to the federal government and Kinder Morgan. So the member opposite can expect that information to be released. It was a fundamental element of our engagement that what we did would be absolutely transparent to the people of Alberta, and we are committing to ensuring that that's exactly what happens.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Now, I want to be absolutely clear that the Alberta Party wants the Kinder Morgan pipeline built absolutely as soon as possible. Of course, we know the risks of that pipeline not going ahead, but there are risks inherent in any financial arrangement that the NDP will have signed on Alberta's behalf. It's been nearly a week since I asked the Premier whether the NDP has hired a neutral third-party expert to prepare a fairness assessment of the deal that Alberta signed. Premier, given that both the federal government and Kinder Morgan have hired outside third-party experts to prepare what's called a fairness assessment, will you ask either the Auditor General or a third-party expert to prepare a fairness assessment?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We'll certainly do whatever is necessary to ensure the integrity of our agreement. Of course, we had outside independent experts who were advising all of our engagement thus far. Obviously, the thing in our case is that our engagement is very conditional. It's much farther down the road, and it's for a much lesser amount. But that being said, we'll certainly look into the matters that the member opposite identifies, and as part of our overall commitment to transparency we will ensure that all the information that he is seeking is provided.

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

Executive Compensation Review

Ms Luff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under the previous government executive pay was wildly out of whack with the rest of the country. This extended to school superintendents. That's why I was pleased to see this week, after an extensive review, that superintendent compensation will be changed to be more reflective of the national norm. To the Minister of Education: how much is the government saving as a result of this review, and what kinds of outrageous perks are being eliminated?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Superintendents do play an important role in our education system. They support elected boards, and they help with school divisions that are sometimes between hundreds or even tens of thousands of students. We know their work is invaluable, but we also know that public positions deserve fair and reasonable compensation but not excessive. So this new compensation framework will put \$1.5 million back into the classroom, and we'll no longer be paying for things like children's tuitions or for spouses to go to social events and so forth.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Luff: Thank you. Postsecondary presidents' compensation has also been changed under this government, again after an extensive review. To the Minister of Advanced Education: how much money is the government saving as a result of this review, and again what outrageous perks are being eliminated?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. She's quite right. Under the previous government compensation for university and college presidents was way out of control and way out of touch with the expectation of Albertans. Our government expects that the majority of public money that we spend on universities and colleges goes towards the students as well as supporting staff and keeping education affordable and accessible for everyone. The changes that we brought to presidential salaries bring compensation in line with the rest of the country, and we expect that it will save about \$5 million a year. We've also prohibited sports memberships and . . .

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

Ms Luff: Thank you. Finally, to the minister of the Treasury Board and Finance. Many of Alberta's agencies, boards, and commissions received exceptionally high compensation prior to the reviews undertaken by this government. How much money is the government saving as a result of this review, and for the last time what kinds of outrageous perks are being eliminated?

Mr. Ceci: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We on this side of the House eliminate Conservative waste wherever and whenever we find it. Under the Conservative government salaries and perks were out of control and out of step with what Albertans expect comes to the public service. We challenged all of that. Our government eliminated and amalgamated some boards, saving \$33 million over three years. We also cut salaries for agency executives and eliminated taxpayer-funded perks like golf club memberships, saving another \$16 million. We did all of this on top of opening up the application process to boards so that Albertans can apply on a selected . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon minister. [interjections] Thank you, hon. minister. Heard that.

The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

2:10 Trans Mountain Pipeline Public Purchase Agreements (continued)

Dr. Starke: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past weekend the number one question I heard was: so how does it feel to be a pipeline owner? Yes, the federal government has spent \$130 each on behalf of every man, woman, and child in Canada to buy a 60-year-old pipeline and unknown hundreds more each to build a pipeline expansion that faces exactly the same obstacles and opposition that it did when Kinder Morgan owned the thing. To the Premier: now that we own this asset, how much is Kinder Morgan being paid both to manage the existing pipeline and to supervise building the expansion?

Ms Hoffman: You know what feels great, Mr. Speaker? It's having 15,000 people know that they're going to be able to work on this project. It also feels great knowing that there's \$15 billion coming back into the Canadian economy instead of sending that money

directly south of the border. I do want to clarify that there are many things that are different now that it's under federal ownership, including the fact of investor certainty, that the investors at the table, the investors committed to this project, and Canadians care about it. We're sure going to get our product to tidewater. Finally, after Conservative governments had many years to try to do it, this government is making it happen.

Dr. Starke: Mr. Speaker, with the exception of the employment, everything else the Health minister said I totally disagree with.

Given that the federal government bailout of Kinder Morgan has actually sent shock waves of uncertainty throughout the capital investment market and given that this flight of capital will mean that large-scale projects and the jobs they create will simply not go ahead, to the Premier: now that the federal government on behalf of the people of Canada owns the existing Trans Mountain pipeline, how does Bill 12 give Alberta the power to turn off the taps on this now federally controlled piece of infrastructure?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to reiterate that it's great to see the progress for the pipeline. Certainly, Bill 12 was one of the pieces of legislation we passed. It's currently back in the tool box, but it will be brought out should we see frustration at any point along the way. As the Deputy Premier said, you know, we see a lot of progress. We see work coming. And I have to say that up where I live, people are very excited that this project is going ahead.

Dr. Starke: Mr. Speaker, given that the federal bailout of Kinder Morgan sets a troubling precedent for large-scale energy projects here in Canada and given that the Trans Mountain expansion met all the legal and regulatory requirements but was blocked by forces using means both illegal and unconstitutional and given that the federal government has shown that they will step in and buy major projects rather than deal with the illegal resistance, to the Premier: do you in principle support taxpayer-funded buyouts of projects that encounter opposition, and are you at all concerned about the message that this sends to private investors?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, both the federal government and ourselves pushed ahead to secure a deal to build this pipeline to tidewater. I have to say that it's an investment. The federal government currently will own the existing pipeline, which, honestly, is a money-maker. It's full to capacity. The new pipeline as well is going to be an asset and an investment, and if they decide to sell it, they will make money off it.

Child Intervention Panel Recommendations

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Leader of the Official Opposition asked the Premier why the number of deaths of children in care in this province is, sadly, increasing. I sat on the child intervention panel and often had to remind people that it was created because of the horrible death of four-year-old Serenity. I continue to regret that the NDP refused to let us examine her case specifically. Paula Simons, the journalist credited with bringing Serenity's story to light, said about the panel's draft recommendations, "They won't save the life of one single child." Will the minister please explain how implementing the recommendations of the panel will save the life of a child?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The death of any child is a tragedy. That's why we're committed to ensuring that children and youth get the supports that they deserve. The panel's recommendations and the upcoming action plan are a critical part of the work that we are doing to fix the system. For too long in Alberta previous governments dragged their feet on essential and long overdue improvements, and we are not going to let that happen again.

Mr. Nixon: Given that UCP members were firm in our criticism that the recommendations were too vague and high level, given that our request to review the final wording of the recommendations and subsequent action plan was outrageously blocked by NDP panel members, given that what the panel members were allowed to release at the end of the day were described by Paula Simons as "grand, overarching philosophical principles of the most high-minded sort" – when it comes to improving the nuts and bolts of the child welfare system itself, the report is sorely disappointing – Minister, why were the NDP panel members insisting on leaving the finer details to the very department that failed four-year-old Serenity?

Ms Larivee: Mr. Speaker, we know that the panel's recommendations are just a start. What really matters is that we take action. That's why we moved legislation within a month of the first phase of recommendations, and that's why we're working to implement the panel's latest recommendations as quickly as possible. We are working closely with indigenous leaders and communities, who know what work needs to be done. I very much look forward to sharing further information on the action plan later this month.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the minister has done nothing on the second phase in front of this House. That's for sure. Given that the panel's phase 2 recommendations don't include timelines for implementation, as the NDP kept insisting that those be left for the department, and given that, as Paula Simons has pointed out, there is no discussion of accountability in the panel's final report, released quietly on a Friday afternoon, right after the government announced its budget – she wrote at the time that a person "might be inclined to think the government was hoping no one would notice." I agree with that statement. Minister, why should Albertans believe that this panel was somehow different from all of the other panels? What will real change look like?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Conservatives like to talk a big game, but when it comes time to take action, one member fell asleep during a panel meeting, and their most vocal critic didn't even show up to review the recommendations. It's clear where the Conservatives stand, and it's not with everyday Alberta families and children. Instead of working with us on solutions, as we see, they politicize the panel for partisan gain. They even chose to vote against essential funding to support child intervention. I know that Conservatives don't like showing up to work, but I'd like to hope that when the time comes to vote another time, they can actually bring themselves to do the right thing.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Educational Curriculum Redesign

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've spoken with multiple parents who attended the draft curriculum meetings which began

this past week. These parents indicated that the pattern of ministry secrecy continues, as it was made explicitly clear that there were to be no pictures or social media posts about the session. These parents felt intimidated by the staff present and described the staff as being openly hostile to questions they asked. Minister: is this the level of engagement we can expect from your staff as this process continues?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As everyone knows, we are engaging in building curriculum for all grade levels and six subject areas. As part of that commitment we have prototypes of the K to 4 curriculum out now. We've been looking at it with school boards and postsecondary institutions and parent focus groups and teachers as well. We're conducting a series. I think there are seven or eight different zones and meetings where these are taking place. We're looking at the draft. When people make recommendations, then we will make adjustments along the way. This is very much a transparent process that's never . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
First supplemental.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that these parents described their frustration with the process because the staff involved seemed uninterested in actually listening to the parents and given that these parents noted that this session did nothing to dissuade their fears about how mathematics will be taught at the K to 4 level in Alberta when the new curriculum is rolled out in 2019, again to the minister: for the record can you once again make it abundantly clear that algorithms and memorization will form a fundamental aspect of the instruction of mathematics in the new curriculum?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, what I will do is to make sure that we organize and have the very best people working on the curriculum around mathematics. That's why we have, in fact, the focus groups right now on the curriculum looking at mathematics and all of those other things. It's part of a process of moving towards building the curriculum prototypes for K to 4 by the end of the year. We're making adjustments as we go along. Certainly, the hon. member opposite, who seems like he's an expert in mathematics suddenly, can make a submission to the very same program.

Mr. Smith: Thanks for the invite.

Given that the parents I spoke with who attended different sessions all described the process as being overly secretive and given that this process will inevitably force parents to surreptitiously take pictures of the documents to share with other concerned parents and given that any parent who attended these sessions or future sessions will obviously have seen the draft curriculum, again to the minister: will you do the right thing and allow all Alberta parents to provide your ministry with feedback by posting the draft K to 4 curriculum online and soliciting feedback directly from parents?

2:20

Mr. Eggen: Well, Mr. Speaker, I mean, we are doing that very thing now, which is to have parents and focus groups scoping out this information.

You know, this whole idea of a conspiracy theory, a bogeyman around the curriculum, is just generated by the members opposite

in order to try to subvert the very public education system that we have been building over these last number of years. To suggest anything around secrecy and conspiracy theories not only undermines the integrity of what we're trying to do; it undermines the integrity of the members of the UCP.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Rural Crime Reduction

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this week I presented the rampant problem of rural crime. A roving band of thieves went on a robbing and destruction spree, doing over \$100,000 of damage, and despite repeated calls the RCMP were hours away and unavailable to help. Minister, I asked you to provide details about where these 20 new RCMP you referenced have been stationed and have received no answer. Can you now table exactly where these officers were deployed?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I stated last time in answer to the exact same question, many of these new officers are in what are called crime reduction units, crime reduction units that are intending to focus on exactly the sort of offenders that the member referenced. These offenders don't stay in one jurisdiction. When they're discovered, they move to another jurisdiction. That's why we've created these crime reduction units, that are able to respond to that by moving like the offenders do.

Mr. Strankman: Given that only with the community's help were the accused eventually caught and then released on \$3,000 bail and given that when five police officers, two mayors, victims, and community members showed up at court, the accused defenders did not and given that a typical penalty for failing to appear in court has been embarrassingly reduced to a simple \$300 fine, Minister, isn't the forfeiture of bail and a token fine simply the cost of doing business for these criminals?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There was so much wrong with that question that I'm hardly able to address it all. It's absolutely the case that we're concerned about this issue. In fact, we have increased grants to organizations like Citizens on Patrol and rural crime watch to ensure that these citizens are able to help the RCMP, and they're happy to do so. In addition, we've increased funding to the RCMP to ensure that they can fight exactly these sorts of criminals. If only the members opposite had voted for it.

Mr. Strankman: Given that Bill C-75, which the federal minister says that you support, Minister, actually provides more opportunity to release offenders and allows judges to dismiss those who breach release conditions and given that that just props up the current catch-and-release judicial system, Minister, why are you knowingly supporting federal laws that make it easier for criminals who are plaguing rural Albertans to get back on the streets?

Ms Ganley: Mr. Speaker, nothing could possibly be further from the truth. We are engaging in a smart-on-crime strategy. That is a strategy that allows us to capture offenders and to build better cases against them in instances in which they should spend more time in jail. At the same time it's important to invest in social services. I know that the members across the way think that these services that allow addicts to be treated appropriately instead of thrown in jail,

which save money and increase safety, are just people putting poison into their veins, but we know that they're . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
Calgary-Glenmore.

Environmental Science Curriculum Redesign

Ms Kazim: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my constituency of Calgary-Glenmore there is a wide variety of schools giving parents a choice in education that meets the needs of their children through quality education. I continuously hear from my constituents about how a curriculum update has been long overdue to teach children to be stewards of our environment. To the Minister of Education: what changes are being considered to ensure that our education is promoting environmental stewardship in Alberta schools?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you for the question. Certainly, we are always looking to ensure high-quality education through our curriculum, and we're focused on the priorities of regular Albertans, protecting and supporting education and the front-line services that their families depend on. We know that schools have some of the brightest, highest academic performers in the country and that we have one of the best education systems in Canada. The curriculum is a key component of that, keeping it updated and current and working closely with parents and students and teachers and postsecondary institutions to build a curriculum that's as high a quality as what we expect for . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
First supplemental.

Ms Kazim: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that a lot has changed since the curriculum has been revised, to the same minister: what kinds of changes could we expect in the science curriculum that will teach children about the very important and real issue of climate change both in and outside of the classroom?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we've been working with our curriculum working groups, but we also have round-table discussions in regard to the energy industry, for example, agriculture and forestry, talking about working with energy systems and working with modernizing and developing each of these industries here in our province. So we work with postsecondary institutions, we work with industry, we work with teachers, and we work with parents to make sure that we build a solid curriculum that reflects both reality and the future of our province in a fundamental way.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Kazim: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that our understanding of climate change has evolved quite a bit since the last time the elementary school curriculum was updated, in 1996, to the same Minister of Education: what new information has been added about climate change?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As pointed out before, some of our curriculum is more than 30 years old. The elementary science curriculum is more than 20 years old. At the time, I think, Windows

95 was kind of the latest thing, and we've moved on since then. The modern K to 12 curriculum will make sure that we have the skills for students to understand both the changing environment in which we live but also the changing industrial environment in which we live. So working together with both industry and postsecondary institutions, we are ensuring that we have modern concepts around climate change and around diversifying our energy . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Trans Mountain Pipeline Public Purchase Agreements (continued)

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, last week we learned about the government of Alberta's plan to backstop construction of the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion up to \$2 billion in case the project goes over budget. Since so many energy projects in this province experience schedule delays and cost overruns that can double a project's cost, will the Premier table the cost-benefit analysis that shows that Alberta will not go over the \$2 billion backstop? How will they recover this investment? And when will they get this project built?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, Alberta worked hard with Canada to come to this agreement. It means 15,000 construction jobs, you know, 37,000 jobs once in service, and \$15 billion back into our economy. We're very proud of that. We've been very clear that our investment would be up to \$2 billion, but only once oil is flowing in the new pipeline.

Mr. Panda: Given, Mr. Speaker, that the government of Alberta will receive an equity stake in the Trans Mountain pipeline if the \$2 billion backstop is used and given that the NDP has assigned Alberta's growth mandate to the Alberta Investment Management Corporation, AIMCo, to the Premier: has AIMCo been named the lead in the assessment and management of the backstop funding agreement, especially if the funds are to be converted into equity?

The Speaker: The hon. Energy minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As our Premier indicated earlier, the federal agreement has to come first. Once our agreement is in place, it will be public. But, again, we are contributing up to \$2 billion – it could be zero; it could be \$2 billion – once and when oil is flowing in the pipeline. Again, this is an investment, and all the details will be public once all of that is done.

Mr. Panda: Given, Mr. Speaker, that everyone needs a plan B, like additional pipelines or new market access locations, and given that the NDP does not oppose their federal ally Justin Trudeau's Bill C-48, the tanker ban, and Bill C-69, the impact assessment act, can the Premier please explain if there is a remote chance of cost overruns on the pipeline project that exceed the \$2 billion backstop, and what's her plan B to get this taxpayer mountain pipeline completed?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As was previously said a couple of times now, the federal government contract will be in put in place. Our details will follow once that is inked. But our commitment is \$2 billion – it could be zero – once and when oil is flowing. That is the commitment we've made, and that's the commitment we're sticking to.

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

2:30 Time-share Lease Consumer Protection

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have heard that consumer protection is of utmost importance to this government, yet the experience of the time-share unitholders of Alberta-based Northmont Resort Properties does not reflect that. In fact, the minister and other members or representatives of this government have stated that the concerns of thousands of Alberta were “outside the mandate and jurisdiction of Service Alberta’s Consumer Investigations Unit.” Minister, I’m not here to make, in your words, “cheap political points.” I’m here to look out for the best interests of Alberta consumers. When will you stand up for Albertans and do the same?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Service Alberta.

Ms McLean: Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. I’m always disheartened to hear of this kind of hardship. That’s why our government has taken intensive action to strengthen our consumer protection laws. This particular matter occurred outside of Alberta and, unfortunately, isn’t within our scope but within British Columbia’s.

Mr. Gotfried: Mr. Speaker, given that from my personal discussions with many aggrieved Alberta consumers and my own common-sense review of the evidence and issues received, it is clear that there is both mandate and jurisdiction worthy of investigation by Service Alberta under consumer protection legislation and given the amount of correspondence and advocacy across the province to your department and to members on both sides of this House calling for an objective investigation, Minister, will you commit to Albertans today in this House to order an objective, independent investigation into claims of breach of the Consumer Protection Act?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For too long Alberta’s consumer protection laws lagged behind the rest of the country, and that’s why we’ve updated them. We take this issue, the issue of consumer protection, very seriously. In fact, this issue that the member is bringing up was investigated in 2012 and closed under the previous government. The Member for Calgary-Fish Creek was in that government, so frankly it’s a bit ironic coming from him.

Mr. Gotfried: Not seriously enough, Mr. Speaker, and I stand up for my constituents irrespective of what happened in the past.

Given that I’m hearing from Albertans from all walks of life on this issue, many of them seniors on fixed incomes hoping to enjoy their prepaid time-shares in retirement, and given the frustration of Alberta consumers, many of whom have settled, allegedly under duress, in feeling dismissed and ignored by this government, Minister, will you also commit today to a meeting with key representatives of the last few 100 holdouts who refuse to believe that your government will continue to shirk responsibility for their own legislation?

Ms McLean: Mr. Speaker, I’m always happy to meet with Albertans concerning consumer protection issues. This issue has been decided by the court, so I cannot specifically comment on it. However, that member and his party do not take consumer protection very seriously. They never have. My office has received no – no – correspondence from him at any time on this issue. He is selling a bill of goods saying

that he cares about this. As the minister of consumer protection I’ll advise Albertans not to buy it. It’s a scam.

Mr. Nixon: Point of order.

The Speaker: Point of order noted.

Economic Indicators

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, Alberta has only had two substantial dips in gross domestic product since 1997, one in 2008 and one when this government was elected. Does the NDP believe that adding a costly carbon tax, increased taxes, and increasing government size and red tape make life better for Albertans in these difficult times?

Mr. Ceci: Well, Mr. Speaker, the dip in gross domestic product that the hon. member talks about was as a result of the world price of oil crashing in late 2014 and 2015. We had two years of significant recession in this province at minus 3.5 per cent in ’16 and ’15. In ’17 we grew 4.9 per cent. We’re going to lead the country again in growth. Alberta is back on track.

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, given that Alberta weekly earnings have increased less than 1 per cent in the past three years and inflation has increased over 4.5 per cent in that same period, does this minister believe that that’s on track?

Mr. Ceci: I’ll tell you what this minister believes, Mr. Speaker: 90,000 new full-time jobs were created in the last year. This minister also believes that GDP growth was 4.9 per cent in 2017. It’s going to lead the nation again in 2018. This minister also believes that manufacturing is up, exports are up, small-business confidence is up, wages are up, and on and on and on. Yes, I do believe that.

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, Albertans don’t.

Given that the government continues to maintain that they have created 90,000 jobs and given that according to their own website Albertans have only seen 17,800 net new jobs while there are 30,000 more unemployed Albertans today than when they took office, would they be willing to restate their claims?

Mr. Ceci: I’ll continue on the things that are up in this province, Mr. Speaker. Restaurant receipts are up. Housing construction is up. Building permits are up. New sales are up for vehicles. Retail is up, business incorporation. I hope you get the theme here. It’s up, not down.

Federal Energy Policies

Mr. Loewen: When the federal government announced the purchase of the 65-year-old Trans Mountain pipeline for \$4.5 billion, the NDP were celebrating despite uncertainty on whether the expansion would be built. We have not heard a plan to deal with the obstruction from the B.C. NDP and the environmental radicals. While Albertans are happy that TMX was not cancelled, there is concern that a key piece of infrastructure will be controlled by the Trudeau Liberals. Has the government secured assurances that the federal ownership of the pipeline will not be used as leverage to interfere in areas of provincial jurisdiction like upstream emissions, carbon taxes, or even to silence Alberta’s voice on equalization?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, we often hear the opposition fixating on an increasingly shrinking group of opponents to the pipeline and ignoring the fact that a growing majority of Canadians are in fact behind this Trans Mountain expansion project. Now, I know the opposition likes narrow and extreme special-interest groups. They did, after all, roll out the red carpet for extremists to take over their party, but on this side of the House what we're looking for is to put 15,000 people to work and grow the economy across the country.

Thank you.

Mr. Loewen: Given that we also know that pipeline opponents in B.C. are threatening a war in the woods and given that they are to be led by the likes of the Premier's hand-picked chair of OSAG, Tzeporah Berman, and the environment minister's friend Mike Hudema and given that Berman said about the Premier and her ally Trudeau that, quote, they're either making a terrible calculation and fooling themselves or they're being dishonest in their public relations in order to create a false sense of certainty and security, end quote, to the Premier, could you respond to your former adviser's suggestion? Are you fooling yourself or being dishonest to create a false sense of certainty and security?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the opposition does fixate on a shrinking group of opponents. That's because they want this project to fail. They're not interested in putting Albertans back to work. They just want to score cheap political points. On this side of the House we know that support for this project has grown by double digits over the past year, including a majority of British Columbians. This pipeline is going to get built despite the fact that they're cheering for it to fail.

Mr. Loewen: Given that nothing could be further from the truth as far as us wanting the pipeline to fail and given that Albertans are hopeful that Trans Mountain will be built as they know that we still need greater market access and given that there is a great potential and widespread support out there for projects like the proposed Eagle Spirit pipeline, not to mention the pipelines that have been cancelled under this government's watch, will the Premier demand that the Prime Minister end his agenda of obstructing and bottlenecking Canadian resources by withdrawing Bill C-48 and abandoning the B.C. tanker ban, which exists only to please radical opponents of progress?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think it's unfortunate that the members opposite want to continue to cheer for this pipeline to fail, to continue to fixate on opposition to this pipeline when, in fact, a majority of British Columbians, like a majority of Canadians, support this project. It was approved due to the merits of the climate leadership plan. On this side of the House we are moving forward and investing in indigenous communities, investing in municipalities, and diversifying this economy while we put Albertans back to work.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Employment Supports

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When I logged onto social media today, I was thrilled to see former employees of mine, from Mary to Courtney to Emily, who are graduating from the University

of Calgary this semester. Many of them relied on placement programs that were supported by our provincial government, programs like the student temporary employment program, commonly known as STEP, which our government brought back. To the Minister of Labour. This program is very important to my constituents, to employers, and to even the students that I employed as an employer. How has STEP improved and helped better support Alberta's growing economy?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Labour.

2:40

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We're really excited about the upcoming summer. I've already heard from a number of businesses who are thankful for the support that STEP has given them in the past and again this summer as we've sent those approvals out. When I was running for office, I heard from people who were disappointed that the summer temporary employment program had been cut by the previous government in a fairly heartless move. We can see from policy conventions and their plans going forward that they have not changed their tune at all. Our government is very proud . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
First supplemental.

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that STEP has been one of many programs that the government has invested in to ensure that Albertans are getting access to good, safe, fair, and healthy jobs, again to the minister: what are some other programs that the government is focusing on that help Albertans access the good jobs they deserve?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our government is focused on Albertans' priorities, and those include creating good jobs and diversifying the economy. On top of expanding the STEP program, we've increased funding for skills training and support programs, programs that support even more Albertans in making sure that they have the supports they need to get back to work. We are also supporting entrepreneurs who are starting their own businesses through the self-employment training program. Most importantly, we're closer than ever to getting our pipeline to tidewater built, and that is 15,000 good jobs for Albertans. Our government is hard at work to create . . .

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

Mr. Sucha: Again to the Minister of Labour: given that critics have promised cuts and pain to Albertans, what is this government's strategy for supporting Albertans in what Albertans care about, that is to say, their jobs?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our government has the backs of everyday Albertans. While some only seem to care about making life easier for the very rich or their Conservative insiders, we are hard at work. We know there's still more work for us to do, but it's clear across the province that things are looking up. Our plan is working. GDP growth is up. Small-business confidence is up. Manufacturing is up. Wages are up. Exports are up. Most importantly, jobs are up, and more and more Albertans are

getting back to work each and every day. We are so proud to support that success.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, in 30 seconds we will continue the Routine.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to provide several notices of motions to the Assembly. First, I will be moving, the government will move:

Be it resolved that notwithstanding Standing Order 3(1) on Thursday, June 7, 2018, the Assembly shall sit beyond the normal adjournment hour of 4:30 p.m. that day until such time that the Government House Leader advises the Assembly that the business for the sitting is concluded.

The second one, Mr. Speaker:

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Government Motion 25 is resumed . . .

That's the motion that I just gave notice of.

. . . not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the motion, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the motion shall be put forthwith.

Third, Mr. Speaker:

Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 3(9) the 2018 spring sitting of the Assembly shall stand adjourned upon the Government House Leader advising the Assembly that the business for the sitting is concluded.

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of two documents, the first being the agreement between Kinder Morgan Canada and Her Majesty in right of Canada and other parties to purchase a share in a unit purchase agreement, which is the agreement to purchase the Kinder Morgan pipeline between the federal government and Kinder Morgan Canada.

The second is a support agreement between some of the same parties, both documents dated the 29th of May, 2018.

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

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was asked by Madam Speaker when we were debating Bill 1 to table three articles. The first one, which was published by the Fraser Institute, is done by Mark Milke, Alberta Already Tried to Diversify Her Economy – and Failed.

I've got a second article. This one here is a *Calgary Herald* article, New Alberta Tax Credit Off to Slow Start with No Money Awarded Yet. This was written by Amanda Stephenson.

The last one is an article that is titled Manitoba Pulls Less-loved Ag Tax Credits in Budget. This one here is an online source.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the requisite number of copies of the 2017 Horse Racing Alberta annual report. Horse racing employs 7,000 Albertans across racing and breeding programs and is growing in Alberta. The Century mile track south of Edmonton will be completed and accommodate some great racing very soon. I was pleased to be at the Century Downs

track near Calgary last November to watch the return of thoroughbred racing to Alberta. This return would not have been possible without our government's long-term investment, a 10-year agreement that continues to support the industry in rural Alberta.

Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Gottfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table numerous documents here today, the first one being an article from the *Columbia Valley Pioneer* in February 2018 by Lorene Keitch referencing the Northwynd Resort Properties issue since 2013, in which she quotes, "It is a mess for all involved."

Secondly, I'd like to table communications to the Ministry of Justice in which 53 people's names were listed referencing communications with Service Alberta – this was sent directly to the Ministry of Justice – including e-mails and telephone numbers.

Lastly, I would like to table the requisite copies of numerous communications with both Service Alberta and the Ministry of Justice in relation to the Northmont Resort Properties issue. These letters and many others received, I'm sure, by all members of this House from their constituents include those from Edmonton, Leduc, Olds, Calgary, Airdrie, St. Albert, Taber, Barrhead, Red Deer, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Fort McMurray, Fort Saskatchewan, Sherwood Park, Spruce Grove, and many more, as I'm sure could be confirmed by many members of this House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Any others? The Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table five copies of Capacity Markets 101: Understanding Options for Alberta, published on February 1, 2017, and presented by the Pembina Institute.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I believe we had a point of order today. The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Point of Order Insulting Language

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on 23(h), (i), and (j) today, all of which are applicable to this point of order. At the time that I called the point of order, a question had just finished. The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek and the Minister of Service Alberta were having an exchange during question period. At the end of a response to the question from the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, the minister said something to the effect – and I don't have the Blues. You may be in a better position than I am to get the exact wording, plus it was, granted, a little loud. My colleagues across the way still like to bang their desks, and sometimes it's a little hard to hear over that, so I may have missed it slightly. But the gist of it and the context of it was this. The minister said that she would like to advise Albertans not to buy what the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek was saying but went further than that and said that what he was saying was a scam.

2:50

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would say that 23(h), for sure, "makes allegations against another Member," would be in that, saying that he was scamming people. I would say that (i), "imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member," certainly falls under that.

And then (j) I would also say, “uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder.”

Mr. Speaker, I don’t know about you, but being accused of undertaking a scam on Albertans would probably make me upset. It certainly does for us as the colleagues of the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, and it does create disorder in this House. Further to that, I think there is a decent argument to be made that “scam” and the context that she used the word “scam” implied that the hon. member was lying, not only lying in this Assembly but lying to Albertans, which is not true because he went on to table 52 letters that showed that what he was saying, in fact, was true, that the minister was mistaken. I would not say that she was scamming or lying. She must have been mistaken about not receiving those letters because he took the time to table them.

I think the simplest way to deal with this would be for the minister or the Government House Leader to withdraw and apologize for that comment. If not, I would ask that you rule that this is a point of order and ask the ministers, particularly, but also the government to please watch what they say to hon. members in the future.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m tempted to refer to some of the preambles of the hon. member’s leader today as evidence that it’s a two-way street in here, but I will refrain from that and merely say that there was a disagreement between the minister and the member about correspondence received. I suggest that no allusion was made towards the hon. member, but certainly in terms of the difference of opinion on whether correspondence had been sent or received from that member to the minister, I think it comes down to simply being a disagreement between two members on the facts.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I do have a copy of the Blues. I will not read all of the comments. “My office has receive no – no – correspondence from him at any time on this issue. He is selling a bill of goods saying that he cares about this. As the minister of consumer protection I’ll advise Albertans not to buy it. It’s a scam.”

Hon. member, in this particular instance I would ask that the Government House Leader on behalf of the minister withdraw the comment.

Mr. Mason: I will do so, Mr. Speaker, at your direction.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders

Third Reading

Bill 10

An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s an honour to stand here and open and move third reading of Bill 10, An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements.

I’d like to start by taking a few moments to address some of the concerns raised by the opposition last week. Everyone who knows me knows that I don’t like to play politics. I believe in working across the aisle, in ensuring that the opposition is briefed on what we are presenting, and in constructive debate of our bills. As has been mentioned many times by opposition members in the House,

my ministry has gone above and beyond to reach out to affected stakeholders. The Municipal Government Act was labelled the gold standard of consultation, and we’ve repeated the formula again and again with builder licensing, the Emergency Management Act, and now with PACE.

Because stakeholder feedback is so important to us, last week we tabled an amendment to Bill 10 to address concerns raised by the city of Edmonton. Now, it is not typical to give a briefing on an amendment, but we’ve developed what I thought was a good, nonpartisan relationship with our critic, so when he asked for a briefing on the amendment on very short notice, we happily obliged. The very next day my staff went line by line through the amendment and explained the reasoning behind each line item of the amendment and showed how these amendments were clarifying in nature and do not change the overall intent of the PACE program.

It was my understanding that the briefing went very well. Imagine my surprise when member after member of the opposition stood up to claim that the bill had now substantially changed. Not only is this untrue, but I believe it does a bit of a disservice to our Albertans who stand to benefit from this legislation and a disservice to the spirit of co-operation and honesty that we need to operate earnestly in this House.

So allow me to dispel some of these assertions by sharing with this House the briefing that was given to the UCP opposition, if you’ll indulge me. The first amendment removed a redundant clause that required the clean energy improvement tax to be shown separately on the tax notice. Since section 334(1)(a) of the MGA already requires this, the line was deemed redundant and removed.

The second amendment dealt with removing a redundant reference to property and changed the term from “agricultural property” to “farm land” to standardize the language across the Municipal Government Act.

The third amendment and largely the most significant clarified for municipalities that the clean energy improvement bylaw acted as a borrowing bylaw and that there was no need to pass a second borrowing bylaw for the program. It also clarified the required contents of the bylaw and clarified that the bylaw must identify the repayment period and not the set tax rate.

The fourth amendment clarified the ability to appeal and that appealing the agreed upon tax rate could only occur within one year of the tax being first imposed.

The fifth amendment clarified property owners’ ability to prepay the remainder of the clean energy improvement should they be in a financial situation to do so.

The final amendment clarified that should there be a public petition to conclude the program, existing property improvement agreements would be grandfathered and would not require the owner to come up with the remaining cost of the improvement should the program conclude.

The opposition members know full well that a bill isn’t measured in the number of pages; it is measured by the words contained on those actual pages.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

The Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre also raised questions around how many mayors and stakeholders I spoke to regarding this legislation. Well, allow me to read you some letters of support I’ve received from my municipal stakeholders. Here’s a letter we received from the city of Edmonton and Mayor Iveson, quote: I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for considering the city of Edmonton’s feedback in bringing forward amendments to the drafting of Bill 10, An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements, which will help enable successful municipal

implementation of the proposed property assessed clean energy legislation in Alberta.

The City of Edmonton looks forward to continued partnership with your government in the development of the associated Regulation and design of the [PACE] loan program in the coming months following successful passing of Bill 10.

From the AUMA:

This is a proposal that AUMA has advocated for since 2017, and we thank you for bringing our idea forward for consideration.

In reviewing the legislation, AUMA was pleased to see that Bill 10 will enact a voluntary and flexible PACE program for municipalities that are interested; furthermore, we appreciate that it will respect local decision-making and allow municipal councils to determine the best program design for their community . . .

AUMA looks forward to working with your ministry on fine-tuning the legislation and on developing accompanying regulations.

Here's one from the RMA.

[We] support[t] the opportunity for those members that are interested in using the PACE tools to their best interest with the understanding that it will [be enabling legislation]. We look forward to continuing the consultation process on the regulations to seek clarity on how the program will be administered and utilized.

We also heard and spoke to industry leaders. Here's one from EllisDon.

Providing this financial tool for Albertans to add renewable energy systems while improving their energy performance will be of great benefit to our communities and province.

[PACE will help] Alberta become an economic leader and job creator in the sustainability sector.

Another, from Clark Builders, which also highlights the economic impact that the program will have.

Tools and mechanisms such as PACE will encourage more investment in renewable energy, energy efficient and high performance buildings, and renewal and repositioning of buildings in the market . . . As an asset-backed form of financing it allows property Owners to open up a viable source of financing which will encourage owners to undertake retrofits.

Here's one from the Canada Green Building Council.

[The council's] research has shown that upgrades such as deep retrofits and installation of on-site renewable energy generation systems, will provide the greatest energy efficiency improvements and emission reductions in Alberta.

The PACE model is focused on addressing the challenge of affordable and more long-term financing . . . [PACE] is critical because it opens up a viable source of financing, which is helpful for encouraging more owners to undertake retrofits.

[PACE can] improve energy efficiency . . . and help the Province meet its climate change targets.

To our hon. Official Opposition, who rushed to oppose this bill over what appears to be politics and ideology, I do ask: how many of these stakeholders have you spoken to about this bill? At the end of the day, this bill is enabling in nature. Municipalities will choose whether or not they want to enact the program, and they can choose the scope of their program through their bylaws.

3:00

The opposition has also been talking a lot about the class-action lawsuit in California but appear not to have read past the headline. Let me be clear. There will be no door-to-door sales as our government has banned that. Homeowners will choose whether or not they will want a clean energy improvement to the property, and once they've made their choice, they will sign an agreement with the municipality. This entire program is voluntary.

I have stated again and again that we will continue to consult and work with our municipal and industry stakeholders throughout the summer to develop the regulations and the administration of this program. On this side of the House we listen to our stakeholders, so when I was approached by municipalities about a desire to have a PACE program, I listened. We came forward with a bill that reflected municipalities' desire to implement such a program while ensuring it was enabling in nature so that all municipalities have a choice. We studied other jurisdictions that have implemented the program, took note of best practices, and worked to address any of their shortcomings, and we ensured that our program would have a strong consumer protection component.

I've said this before, and I will say it again. The bottom line with PACE is that it's good news for Albertans, it's good news for our climate leadership plan, and it's good news for our economy. It gives homeowners, residential building owners, farmers, and businesses access to affordable clean energy upgrades. It will help those folks save money and take care of our environment and will create jobs in Alberta's clean energy sector because we will need a lot of skilled tradespeople and technicians to make these types of upgrades.

I encourage all of my colleagues here in the House to vote in favour of this bill. Put aside your politics and listen to the stakeholders and to the Albertans who have been asking for this program. I hope all members will vote in favour of passing Bill 10.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

I will now recognize the Official Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. This is 29(2)(a), correct? Or he's the first speaker. Well, then, I guess, I'm excited to speak to third reading. I was looking forward to asking the minister a question in my comments, but I did forget that he was the first one to address the Chamber on third reading, so I can't ask him through 29(2)(a). I will ask him in my speech, though. It was interesting to listen to the minister's comments.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Speaker, it's great to see you.

It was very interesting to listen to the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs' comments, I would suggest, a little bit defensive, starting off very aggressive towards the opposition. He seems to be, Mr. Speaker, through you to him, extremely frustrated with the fact that the opposition called him out for bringing forward a piece of legislation to this Assembly when he then had to come back a few days later and rewrite, basically, the entire piece of legislation. I am sorry to hear that the minister was hurt by the opposition pointing that out, but I am not sorry that the opposition did it. That is our job.

I do notice that the minister at no time in his comments took even a moment to address the fact that he brought a piece of legislation to this House that had to be almost completely rewritten, and the reason that he noticed that was because the opposition pointed it out, asked him to slow the process down, take some time to make sure he got it right.

Evidently, the hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod, the Municipal Affairs critic for the opposition, was correct in many of the assertions that he presented to this House when we started the debate on this important piece of legislation. Instead of the minister then coming back after all that and saying nicely to the hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod, "Thank you for your help; we appreciate the role that you play in this place and the fact that you've prevented me from making a mistake on my legislation," he got up and took a partisan jab at the member, implied even at one point that the member

or at least somebody over here was not being truthful. And it's disappointing.

This is relevant, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. member, speak to the policy matter and governance if you would.

Mr. Nixon: Well, the policy matter is this. The government is asking us yet again to vote on a piece of legislation that the minister will not discuss with this Assembly the details of or answer any of the questions that have come from this Assembly.

The minister says that he consulted to change things that would make it better and to fix the points that were pointed out in Committee of the Whole, Mr. Speaker. Then he came here, and he never talked about any of them in his address to this House. He did not talk about the policy of this bill at all. He took partisan jabs at this side of the Assembly for his entire comment, and we heard nothing different from the minister, not one thing different from that Municipal Affairs minister that would cause us to want to be able to support this piece of legislation. Not once did he talk about his bill other than to attack opposition members.

He talked about a couple of mayors that he did speak to and their comments about it, but he did not talk about the important issues that are wrong still with this legislation and how he was going to be able to fix it. He did not talk about the municipal issues that would come and the fact that he originally told this Chamber that municipalities would not be on the hook for any of this. He has not addressed the fact that his own website says that they will. So it becomes hard to talk about the details of this legislation because the minister continues to avoid it.

The minister says that the reason this legislation is here is because he listened to some Albertans that told him they wanted it. That's hard for us to be able to follow, Mr. Speaker, when we're talking about a minister who's part of a government that refuses to remove the carbon tax despite the fact that over three-quarters of Albertans are asking them to remove it. What is different on this piece of legislation that he would bring into this House?

The point, Mr. Speaker – and then I will close, because I just rose to ask a question – is that this Minister of Municipal Affairs will not rise and defend his own legislation. He brings it to this Assembly, asks for us to vote for it on third reading despite the fact that he's already had to rewrite the entire thing overnight at one point. He asks us to trust him, but his track record with Albertans is not good, and it's not something that we would trust. He has not answered the questions, and there is no way that the Official Opposition could support this legislation until he does.

The Speaker: The Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Stier: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good afternoon. It's my pleasure this afternoon to rise to speak on Bill 10, which is called An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements, at this third reading. If passed, Bill 10 would empower municipalities to establish something called a property assessed clean energy program, or PACE, as it's known. Apparently, the way it works is that once a municipality establishes a PACE program through passage of a bylaw, the municipality would then take on the role of lender to property owners who wish to make improvements to their property such as improved energy efficiency, incorporating renewable energy into their property, and increasing their property's water conservation. Since the municipality is the lender, apparently, it is able to collect repayment through the property tax bill under this proposed legislation.

This concept of PACE loans actually first started in California in the mid-2000s, Mr. Speaker. Since then, it has spread to 33 other

states and at least two provinces in Canada. While it has been touted with many accolades by the members across the aisle, there are a number of concerns that my colleagues and I have raised over the course of debate throughout the past few weeks on this very legislation. While the government did propose an amendment, which I supported, in fact, last week, that does improve the bill, there is simply too much left yet unaddressed. There is too much being left to the regulations, which is usual. Unfortunately, that is a repeating theme with this government.

I think many of you may recall one of the first times I spoke at second reading, as a matter of fact. My major concern then was that so much of the meat and potatoes of the bill was left out of the legislation. It's fewer than 10 pages long, this Bill 10, but it proposes to enable municipalities in Alberta to actually become moneylenders, for the first time that I recall. Frankly, if you're proposing to create a whole new kind of a loan program, Mr. Speaker, the government should be prepared to offer substantial details.

Not only is there not enough detail in the legislation now after the amendment; the other jurisdictions that have brought this type of legislation forward have since faced some pretty serious issues with them. If members will recall, I had mentioned that California municipalities are now facing class-action lawsuits because they didn't do their due diligence and ensure there wouldn't be any issues. The lawsuits claim that in Los Angeles county they failed to protect consumers who entered into these loans with the municipality, that L.A. county failed to fully inform those applying for PACE loans of all their obligations, that it has resulted in property owners being unable to pay back their PACE property taxes, and that the PACE loan was directly responsible for ruining their finances. Furthermore, the suit claims that seniors were particularly susceptible to abuse under the program from overeager contractors who promoted the program as an easy way to get home upgrades. That program has resulted in a number of those involved in the lawsuit ultimately losing their homes because they were unable to afford to repay the PACE loans.

To say that it's become a boondoggle for that area and their residents would be putting it mildly, Mr. Speaker. My concern with this policy is that making this same program accessible to property owners in Alberta would do nothing more than expose them to the same unneeded and undeserved risks as it did there. I don't want Albertans to risk losing their homes, to ruin their personal finances and be plagued with the burden of this debt for a decade or more.

3:10

At the very least I would have hoped the government would have undertaken, Mr. Speaker, a round of thorough consultations in the same vein as they did with the MGA review, much like they are doing with Bill 8, that is in that process now, where the minister is taking the summer to consult with stakeholders, and then he will propose amendments based on the feedback once the legislation apparently returns in the fall. It's a model that worked marvelously for the previous Bill 21 – I complimented the government on that – the Modernized Municipal Government Act.

It's not just homeowners that expressed concerns about this PACE program, though, Mr. Speaker. Over the course of the past month I have reached out to the Alberta Real Estate Association, or AREA, to get their feedback from a realtor's perspective. I'd like to share a quote from our correspondence.

While it appears that [some] home buyers are attracted to properties with energy-saving features and may even be willing to pay a premium for them . . . the financing structure of PACE projects may be a deterrent for resale of properties with an outstanding PACE loan. Specifically, the design of PACE programs in California has resulted in some financing

institutions' ... decision not to lend monies to [homeowners] when the property has [one of these outstanding loans]. This is due to the fact that PACE [program] loans are recorded against the property [tax] as a tax lien that assumes the first position in case of a mortgagee's default.

I also spoke to a friend who works as a mortgage specialist for one of the major banks here in Alberta to gather her perspective. What I learned is that Canadian banks, like their counterparts in the U.S., do not like to issue mortgages to people when the bank is not the first creditor to be repaid in the event of a bankruptcy or foreclosure. In fact, many banks won't consider issuing a loan if there are other outstanding liens on the property, regardless of whether they end up behind the bank in the line of creditors. That's an important point that hasn't been raised to date. In fact, my friend mentioned that certain types of mortgages, specifically a home equity or a home line mortgage, would fail to qualify an individual planning to purchase a property that has an existing lien on it, regardless of whether it is a PACE lien or a judgment lien.

After getting feedback from AREA and my friend the mortgage specialist, I went back further and tried to find out how California addressed this particular problem. What I found was very interesting, Mr. Speaker. According to the California State Treasurer's website the state of California established a PACE loss reserve program in 2014 to address this problem. It says that it's "to mitigate potential risk to first mortgage lenders by making them whole for losses incurred due to the existence of a first-priority PACE lien on a property during a foreclosure or forced sale." While it's not clear if this will be something that Alberta needs to adopt in order to maintain mortgage eligibility for Albertans in this case, it certainly raises serious concerns that this aspect is not even mentioned in the proposed legislation yet to date even though we had the amendment. That is a very big concern, I think, that remains completely unaddressed and is one of many reasons I will not be supporting Bill 10 at third reading.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take a moment also to reflect back to one of my previous speeches on this bill, where I mentioned how as an opposition member I look upon the task of reviewing proposed legislation seriously – and I think a lot of members in this House will know that I've said that before – as it's our role in this House to ensure that what is proposed for the benefit of Albertans is worded correctly to ensure that the purpose and intent are achieved and that it prevents unintended consequences from occurring. In that regard, I mentioned at the time that there was a disconnect, obviously, between some of the briefing documents that we had received during the government's two tech briefings and the bill being presented in the House.

For example, during the briefing from the government initially it was announced that the Energy Efficiency Alberta agency would be taking the lead as the administrator of the program. This apparently would have allowed municipalities to forgo any risk of additional cost to running the program. The municipality would ultimately be responsible for lending the money to the property owner and for collecting the repayment during property tax requisitions. However, the legislation still does not establish that the Energy Efficiency Alberta agency is going to be the administrator. In fact, it doesn't even mention it anywhere in the legislation. The legislation does mention on page 7, under MGA 390.9(h), that the minister can establish regulations that outline which body is ultimately responsible for the program, yet it still comes down to the government saying: trust us; we'll get the regulations right. The agency is not specified. I have an immense amount of respect for the Minister of Municipal Affairs, Mr. Speaker. I really do. But my question is: if Energy Efficiency Alberta is in fact intended to be the administrator, why is it not included in the legislation?

Finally and most importantly, the most troubling thing I find is that there isn't any clarity on who is eligible for the PACE loan. Currently in the U.S. example and in Canada the PACE loans do not normally require any of the usual creditworthiness checks that are normally considered the industry standard best practice at a bank. In fact, it appears the only qualifier for a PACE loan will be based on the property information. Although this would make the program easy, I suppose, to qualify for, I believe that a proper loan should only be considered through proper risk assessment, with a repayment plan in place, and the basis would normally be an individual's history with finances in almost any other setting.

It would appear that the government is so eager, instead, to get their green spending out the door that, by not following normal lending qualifications, they are prepared to march along with this program. That can put Albertans at risk, Mr. Speaker. If a family can't pay, they risk losing their home, ruining their finances, or being plagued with a burden of debt for a decade or two. Of course, this presents another problem for the municipality. If a property owner cannot repay the loan, the municipality will not be getting its money back either. But it's an exponential problem for the property owner, who now risks losing everything.

This is especially so since there already exist several types of lending services for home improvement, from lines of credit to second mortgages plus the CHIP program, which involves proper qualification standards that protect the homeowner and the financing companies. Why aren't we doing this with this program, or why are we bringing this program in? That's what I have to ask, Mr. Speaker. This makes PACE loans totally unnecessary if all the normal financial institutions offer this already.

To conclude, I've shown in previous submissions, Mr. Speaker, during the second reading debate of this bill, that the legislation still remains vague and has insufficient details that would be pertinent to prevent future unintended financial consequences or potential litigation. I've also shown how many municipalities have serious concerns over implementation, administration, and financing aspects of this program. That was clear in the ministry briefing document that we received. I've shown how this same program in L.A. county, in California, has caused serious problems for its citizens. It has led to class-action lawsuits. Therefore, I can only conclude that Bill 10 does not provide sufficient detail to ensure that there is adequate protection for property owners to avoid the type of litigation that has arisen with the PACE program in these other jurisdictions.

Given all of the above, Mr. Speaker, I urge all members of the House to protect Albertans from the same fate as what has happened there by voting against this bill so that it does not proceed. For that reason, I will be voting against Bill 10, An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements. I encourage all of my colleagues to think this over more carefully. Bring it back if you wish, but I encourage all people to vote against this bill.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there any questions under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Livingstone-Macleod?

Mr. McIver: Yes, Mr. Speaker, under 29(2)(a). I listened carefully both to the minister's comments and to my colleague from Livingstone-Macleod, and I'm left with several questions. It's clear to me after listening to all of that that the minister's work was, really, inexcusably sloppy. It was sloppy by the fact that he brought a four-page bill and brought three pages of amendments. So I wanted to get the hon. member's impression, amongst other things, on how he feels about the fact that the minister claims that he did lots of consultation before yet admitted about two sentences away from stating that he did the consultation that he talked to the city of Edmonton after he

released the legislation, which means he had to go back and change it. So, clearly, he either didn't talk to the city of Edmonton before he brought out the legislation or he didn't listen because what Edmonton would have liked wasn't in the original legislation. So I would like to get my hon. colleague's impression on what seems like the obvious lack of consultation despite the minister's protestations.

3:20

Beyond that is just the fact that there was a second briefing, which the minister tried to say was a big favour to the opposition, yet it was actually the minister covering his own tracks, Mr. Speaker, because when the government brings out a four-page piece of legislation and then has to have a three-page amendment, that's essentially a complete rebuild of the whole legislation, it means that a briefing for the opposition critic isn't a big favour, as the minister would have us believe, but, rather, a necessary step based on the sloppy, sloppy work that the minister did the first time around in putting the legislation together.

Also, when the minister talked about the risk to people for a class-action lawsuit, like everything that he did when he was on his feet, Mr. Speaker, he glossed over it like: "Nothing to see here, folks. Look away. Look away." The only thing he said was: well, there are no door-to-door sales. Now, Mr. Speaker, I acknowledge that door-to-door sales can be a problem in some cases, not always, but there are a lot of problems that occur from marketing and sales efforts other than door-to-door sales, and the minister did not address that at all. In fact, he left that wide open.

When you're dealing with putting burdens on people's homes that could cause seniors and other vulnerable Albertans to lose their homes in the event where someone is not a hundred per cent honest and they don't make a great business deal, I'm interested in my hon. colleague's thinking about that and how the minister really failed in a very big way to address the risk to people, as brought out in the class-action information from the States.

Further to that, I'd like him to comment on the fact that, as my colleague said, there was nothing in the legislation talking about how the financing was done. I'm sure that the minister would say, "Well, then refer to the website," except the problem with that is that when we talked to the minister in the earlier part of the debate, Mr. Speaker, and said, "Your website is wrong," he said, "Well, everybody looks at the legislation." So I guess he can't really say that everybody has to look at – now, I disagree with the minister. I think everybody looks at the website before they look at the legislation if they're buying something. I know that if I'm going to buy a fridge from an appliance store, I don't go to legislation about appliances. I go to the website of the store I'm buying it from and see what their terms and conditions are.

There's quite a bit there to unpack and not much more than a minute to unpack it, but I think I've asked some legitimate questions based on your comments here, hon. member. Mr. Speaker, I'd be grateful if my hon. colleague for Livingstone-Macleod would stand up and try to answer some of these amazing reflections on the sloppy work done by the minister.

The Speaker: I'm only sorry that you didn't give him more time to answer some excellent questions.

The hon. member.

Mr. Stier: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to my colleague from Calgary-Hays, who has a large, large amount of experience as a former member of AUMA, on their board for many years, and a former council member from the city of Calgary. He's

very qualified in what he does here, and I think we've seen that throughout the past three years.

But he asked several questions, and he first started talking about consulting. It was interesting to me how in the first briefing that we attended, we noted that municipalities had indicated to them that they had concerns about being responsible for administration or looking after this new program. It was on one of the pages in their briefing document, and I'm happy to table that if necessary, Mr. Speaker. But it was interesting that they had those concerns, yet even just a few minutes ago we heard to the contrary.

Secondly . . . [Mr. Stier's speaking time expired] Oh. Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Yeah. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll just start by thanking you for the note that you sent where you mentioned that you had met Alex Janvier last night. You're absolutely right. He is quite a guy, not only in artistic ability and talent that's second to none, but his sense of humour is also right up there, and he's very sharp. Thank you again for that.

It's my pleasure to stand today and speak to Bill 10 at third reading, An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements. As I've mentioned in the House before, one of the biggest barriers to microgeneration investment is the large initial cost to the property owner. This bill intends to assist property owners with this financial burden. It will introduce the PACE program; that is, the property assessed clean energy program. It would help Albertans in financing renewable energy projects as upgrades to their homes, and the repayment would be collected through the property owner's municipal tax bill rather than the traditional loan channels.

Renewable microgeneration is often a luxury more frequently afforded by the wealthy, with little to no affordable substantive options on the market. So consumers are left with the choice between a big investment or no purchase at all. Insulated windows, likely on every Albertan homeowner's wish list, especially in the wintertime, would help keep energy bills down and outlast dreaded Alberta winters. But when asked to prioritize where their money will be going when they have mortgages on the line and families to feed and carbon taxes to pay, it's not easy to make the leap into renewable microgeneration. Thus, Bill 10's PACE program appears appealing and accessible to the Albertan concerned with reducing his footprint and looking for an easy financing option. That is precisely what our American neighbours thought in L.A. county prior to almost losing their homes and filing a class-action lawsuit against the county's PACE program.

Now, the hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod mentioned unintended consequences. We've often in the House warned the government to make sure that they take their time and get things right and avoid the unintended consequences of many of their policies and bills because it is difficult, basically, to put the toothpaste back into the tube once it's out. A person realizing that they got into a bad deal and ending up losing their home over this: again, it's too late for them.

Mr. Speaker, the government would like us to give blanket acceptance to this bill in which we have no ability to see, debate, or vote on regulations. We have no way of foreseeing what the rolling out of this bill would actually look like since that is all left to the regulations. We do not have a way of voicing our concerns or advocating on the part of Albertans, which is our duty as legislators. This does not show transparency and accountability by our government. I do not feel comfortable granting my approval to something I cannot study and that cannot be properly brought forth to the people that will be involved in it like the municipal governments around the province.

Among the many items that are not clarified within this bill are the operation and administration of the PACE program. That has been a concern that was brought forward by a lot of the municipalities out in my area, especially when they saw the clause on the website that said that they would be responsible for providing not only the funding for it but the installation of these projects. The government has put out contradicting statements on several different occasions. Municipalities have stated that they do not want an administrative role in this program, and the government acquiesced to this. Municipalities had no interest in taking on the cost burden of this provincial program either, but according to the website it looks like they will be.

Thus, the government envisioned that the administration would instead fall to Energy Efficiency Alberta, a governmental body. This would alleviate municipalities' concerns and introduce an extra round of regulatory bodies to the program. This would also raise various concerns about funding: where the money would come from, how Energy Efficiency Alberta would go about incurring the cost, and whether this, in fact, is a regulation or not.

Although this was a roundabout answer to municipalities' concerns, the government then put out conflicting information, and I've mentioned that before. The government of Alberta web page, that explains the PACE program itself, has a line that contradicts the previous statement. It reads, and I quote: under PACE municipalities will install and pay for upgrades on private property and recover costs through the owner's property tax. Mr. Speaker, I believe this very clearly and openly states that municipalities would be responsible for incurring the cost burden, something that they had been assured they would not have to do. Also concerning is that they would be responsible for the installation of this equipment as well.

On the same web page a further section states, and I quote: the municipality installs and pays for the upgrades. This is in relation to accessing a PACE loan. There seems to be no clarification on this matter. Will the municipality be administering and paying for this program or not? They have stated very clearly that they do not want involvement in the administration nor in taking on the cost burden, and clarification needs to be made.

3:30

Mr. Speaker, one of the things I found most troubling in the way this program will be rolled out is the eligibility criteria and the administrative dispensing and collecting of the program. Most loans, home loans in particular, base their eligibility criteria on income and credit information, where they can get a rounded look at someone's spending history, how they go about paying back loans, and if they're financially capable of taking on the debt. Nobody wants to see Albertans put into a spot where they can't afford to put clothes on their kids' backs or send them out to different events or, you know, buy groceries, for that matter.

The eligibility criteria for this program appear to be based on property information alone. Mr. Speaker, this would undoubtedly make the program easy to qualify for and paves the way for possible reckless lending. A loan should be considered through careful risk assessment. There should be a repayment plan in place, and there is normally a consideration of the person's past management of finances. That is not the case here. It seems, quite obviously, that the government is eager to get their green spending out the door, and Albertans are being put at risk in the same way that the residents of L.A. county have been, which ended disastrously. Why do we continue to follow bad examples?

In L.A. county a family that was not able to pay off their loan in adequate time would risk losing their home, ruining their finances,

and being plagued with the debt for the next couple of decades. If a loan is given out that has a greater value than the home itself or if an individual undertakes a loan that they are unable to pay back for any number of reasons, this is an enormous cause of problems.

There need to be preventative measures that analyze a person's situation from the get-go rather than being so eager to get money out the door for green spending that Albertans are being put at risk. The greatest issue here is of families losing their homes. However, there is also the problem of the government recouping its money.

In L.A. county there were not enough protections put in place. Even more so, there were no special safeguards for our most vulnerable populations, our seniors, and many were left living hand to mouth to hold onto their homes. L.A. county's class-action lawsuit is a caution on what could happen when government legislation is not fully thought through and adversely affects residents, all due to the NDP's nature of proceeding without foresight and not heeding warnings from the opposition.

A government program that is inherently designed to promote the taking out of loans should not be responsible for Albertans being fearful of losing their homes and irreparably ruining their finances. This bill simply does not provide enough safeguards to ensure that Albertans do not face the same fate as the residents of L.A. county. Our seniors, particularly, need special safeguards put in place. In recognition of that and it being Seniors' Week, I think we should be taking them into special consideration.

I know I recently found out that, being over 55, I'm actually a senior in a lot of places. I imagine, Mr. Speaker, that you're considered a senior as well.

There is no further clarification in this program on what would happen if a property owner with a remaining loan balance, that he is paying through his municipal taxes, decides to sell his house. There is no mandatory disclosure of PACE loans, and this could lead to distrust in the housing market. If a buyer does not know whether his home purchase has a significant amount owing that has been transferred over, housing scams could run rampant.

In closing, I believe this bill does not offer enough safeguards for Albertans, especially seniors, to feel safe in taking out PACE loans. There is no clarification on the regulations, which are also not debatable or votable, on how the program will be administered, and no clarity to municipalities about who will take on the administration and cost burden of the program.

Finally, we have seen this program in action in L.A. county, and we have seen what can happen. I urge all members of this House to vote against this bill at third reading.

Thank you very much for your time.

The Speaker: Any hon. members under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was listening to the previous speaker talk about this bill that we're discussing here today, Bill 10, the property assessed clean energy legislation. He talked about the lack of clarity with this legislation as far as that a lot of things are left up to regulation, so it leaves, I guess, a lot of unknowns as to whether a person could support a bill like this or not. I think, you know, the Minister of Municipal Affairs got up and talked about how the Rural Municipalities association had support for this legislation, but when he read that support letter, the thing that really stood out to me was that they were looking for clarity on regulations. Obviously, I don't know that it stands to really add a lot of credence to support for this legislation when, really, the biggest thing that they're saying is: we would like some clarity; we'd like to find out what's going on here in this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I think that was kind of a key takeaway that I had from the previous member's speech about this bill, the lack of clarity and how, you know, we're sitting in here, having discussed this legislation for quite some time now, and, of course, are going to be discussing it some more, too. As long as there are kind of these unknowns about this bill, then obviously we need to be discussing this.

I'd like to maybe just query him a little bit more about this lack of clarity and the suggestion, I guess, that the minister and the government really want just a blank cheque here on this legislation: you know, let's just pass this, and we'll figure out the details later. Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't know that our job here is to pass blank cheques for this government and hope that what they do in the end is going to be right and going to be representative of what Albertans want to see.

We've seen a lot of different, you know, concerns expressed here regarding this. I mean, it's vague. There are no details. Some of the regulations are contradictory or nonexistent. We know that the government brought in a bunch of amendments on this. Of course, the minister suggested they were clarifying and not changing, but obviously there are a lot of people looking for clarity on these regulations still, even after these amendments have been brought forward.

I wanted to maybe have the member just follow up a little bit along those lines as far as clarity and where we'll end up on this at some point down the road and if there's any kind of idea what the government has in mind for regulations.

Thanks.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you for the question from the member. You know, you spoke of lack of clarity, and I think that is one of the major concerns. Any of the mayors or councillors or reeves that I've spoken to are quite confused and concerned about this. I guess the proof will be in the pudding. I don't know how many municipalities are actually going to put forth bylaws to allow their ratepayers and the municipalities themselves to take on this risk. Yeah, I think the minister could be more forthcoming with the regulations and discussing and clearing up some of these issues.

You know, I've talked to folks that are very concerned about what happened in L.A. county, and they don't want to see that happen to their own ratepayers. I talked to a lot of folks out in my constituency, farmers and people that live on acreages or lake lots, and their feeling is that their tax burden is already high enough, not only with income tax and carbon tax, but you slap on the property tax, and the bills really add up over the year.

So while it may sound like a good idea to begin with, I think a lot of people will look at this and initially say: "Yeah. Okay. We'll get on with this and just slap this onto our tax bill." But, you know, two years down the road, when they get that additional tax on their bill, I don't think they're going to be quite as enamoured with the whole program. Also, the other concern is the resale value of the house or the availability of buyers that are going to be interested in buying a house and taking on that extra burden.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

3:40

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak to Bill 10, An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements. First, I'd like to thank the Minister of Municipal Affairs. I believe that he does good work, and he works hard, and I do think that he has brought forward some reasonable legislation in the past and actually has done some consulting, but I think he's fallen more than somewhat short of the

mark on this. We've talked about this before, but I wanted to go over some of the issues and some of the concerns that have been raised with me by some of my constituents. We've also heard from various municipalities and various other organizations, both professional and community organizations that I've spoken with.

You know, in missing the mark on this and failing to do that consultation, there are some real fundamentals that we need to think about here. Of course, Bill 10 enables municipalities to pass a bylaw creating this property assessed clean energy, or PACE, program. That's quite clear. But it's interesting that some municipalities have said no thanks already and are backing away from this because they see it as a mess of regulation, and possibly they foresee some of the problems down the road that, unfortunately, this government has failed to do adequate consultation around.

You know, this mechanism for property owners to finance their energy efficiency, renewable energy, water conservation projects, or upgrades to their property: that all sounds great. In some cases, if it was structured well, it could be a great thing for Albertans to save some money in the future, particularly under the burden of the carbon tax that they're already feeling, not just individuals but other groups as well. But this one is focused on those residential customers.

This program does so by allowing repayment through the property owner's municipal tax bill. Isn't that a wonderful thing? "I don't have to pay for it today. Just put it on my tax bill. Just send it to me. Just put it on my credit card, put in on my tax bill, put it somewhere I don't have to deal with it today, and we'll push that down the road as a caveat on my title that I can't get rid of." That concerns me because we live in volatile times. We've been through the roller coaster we hear about, the roller coaster that we hear about economically, where people may do things and they may make decisions, and we don't always make great decisions.

Particularly, you've got homeowners and maybe new homeowners that don't have the experience of managing their budgets as well. They're doing well and they've got two jobs, but then one of the members of the household loses their job. All of a sudden paying that extra burden on their tax bill actually puts them under severe distress. We're seeing that across our province, Mr. Speaker. We're seeing that stress. I'm seeing it in my communities, and it has no boundaries across any socioeconomic strata. It's actually everybody in this province. They're feeling that, and they're feeling that pinch, and they're trying to reset their burn rate, as it were, their spending on everything: on utilities, on their tax bill, which they have no control over.

But with this one, if somebody were to have done this, they would have no control over this one with respect to things like food, putting food on the table. We're seeing an increased number of people going to food banks. This could add another layer of stress onto an already stressed community, and I'm not in favour of adding stress onto my constituents. I don't know about you, Mr. Speaker, or the rest of the members of this House.

You know, I think we're all in favour of green technology. I'm a big fan of renewables. I'm also a fan of hydrocarbons as well. But I'm a fan of an orderly transition, and I think that orderly transition has been breached in this province to a disorderly transition, which is now hurting us, and it's going to cost Albertans, taxpayers and consumers, millions and millions if not billions of dollars going forward. We're seeing these investments in things that we should never have had to invest in. There's an orderly transition, and I think that that orderly transition also translates back to the household, that orderly transition where people will adopt new technologies and new opportunities to improve their lot, to improve their home, to improve the efficiency of their homes.

But, Mr. Speaker, we all know what happens with technology. There's a rapid decline in prices over a short period of time, and technology and in some cases appliances and various other things are a case in point. I mean, I think that a generation ago you couldn't go into these big box stores and buy the latest, greatest energy saver, energy efficient appliances. They were maybe only available through the high-end boutique stores, but now virtually every product carries those labels to let us know what the energy efficiency is.

But I worry that people are going to rush into this and take on a burden which has no return in five years, let alone in 10 years, that they'll find out that that \$30,000 investment today is worth \$10,000 in five years, yet they're still paying back \$15,000 that they still owe on it, the age-old story of buying something that depreciates and which is devalued much more quickly than you can pay it off. It kind of sounds like Alberta with a \$96 billion debt – doesn't it? – that debt that we can't pay off. We're not going to receive the value of that in our lifetime, so we push that down the road to the next generation.

We live in a province now where we see that there's going to be – I suspect and I'll predict that we have a government that has actually taken every conceivable opportunity to make electricity and home heating and gasoline and so many other things more expensive. But that's other legislation, so we'll try to stay on topic here, Mr. Speaker.

You know, taxpayers shouldn't get stuck with this. I'm worried that if this plan fails, municipalities are stuck with these bills. People are foreclosing on homes, you've got a home which has gone to unpaid taxes, and all of a sudden, who's paying for that? What if that happens? What if the unexpected happens? What about the unintended consequences that we may be left holding the bag on? We've heard again that some municipalities are saying: thanks but no thanks. So what does that tell you? Does that tell you that there's a lack of consultation? We don't want to put extra burden on these municipalities. Some of them are choosing not to take that as an extra burden. It's very, very interesting that that's the case. Mistakes and unintended consequences, Mr. Speaker. Mistakes and unintended consequences.

Energy Efficiency Alberta is supposed to administer the plan, so municipalities are not responsible for the administrative costs. That's interesting because, you know, Energy Efficiency Alberta is so efficient and so effective. We know that. They even help us to change our light bulbs, Mr. Speaker: you go like this. Maybe next time they're going to teach us how to pat our dog on the head, and we're going to have a Bollywood dance here. Wouldn't that be exciting, to have Energy Efficiency Alberta teach us all how to do the Bollywood dance by changing light bulbs and patting our dog on the head at the same time? Highly efficient. Looks like we've got a few light bulbs up here I could change while I'm doing my dance. It would be very exciting. I know that Brian has picked out a few for us to change here already. [interjection] I knew you were. I knew you were. It's a scam, I'm sure.

Additionally – you know what? – we have homeowners here that are going to take on the opportunity to do this. You know, Mr. Speaker, one of the more popular programs of the previous federal government was a home renovation tax credit. A tax credit, not: we're going to stick this on your tax bill for the next 10 years. A tax credit. People can make a reasonable and responsible decision: if I buy this, I'm going to get a little bit back, so this makes my purchase, my well-reasoned purchase, more reasonable. We saw that work in the past. Maybe this is a compliment to the past government of Stephen Harper, who put that in place. I'm not sure that the minister would agree that he's paying a compliment to the former Prime Minister. A tax credit is a far cry from a permanent

long-term caveat on someone's title: "Stuck with it. Sorry. You're stuck with that on your title for ever and ever."

Who wouldn't want to have solar panels or other upgrades, you know, solar panels on the roof to put electricity back on the grid? But, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting because it's not just putting those panels on the roof. A friend of mine, a former MP for Red Deer, Bob Mills, has got solar panels on his roof, but – you know what? – it cost him \$27,000 to put in the power line that allowed him to put it back on the grid. So it's not just automatic that you get the solar panels and all of a sudden you can put it back on the grid. This is again lack of consultation, lack of what the costs are, lack of what the risks are.

You know, upgrading appliances, I think, is a great idea. But, again, are these well-reasoned purchases for the individual? Mr. Speaker, I was in the home building business. I've mentioned this before. Many of the buyers over the last decade – and it scares me when I see it, but it is the reality – are coming in with 5 per cent down on a \$400,000, \$500,000 home. That's what they come in with, 5 per cent down. Now, I'm looking around this room, and I suspect that there are a number of us that probably didn't go and buy our first home until we had 15 or 20 per cent, maybe 25 per cent. See, I'm getting a nod from the Minister of Transportation over there. I know he's a very responsible man himself personally. Too bad about his party, but that's another story altogether. I know he's a responsible man, and he did that.

3:50

It worries me that we may be in a situation here where somebody has a \$400,000 house that they bought with 5 per cent down. They get this PACE program, which looks really good. They're kind of new adopters, and they like to try new things, so they take on a \$30,000 caveat on their tax bill, which is more than the equity that they have in their home. That's crazy. That's bad financing. Yet we may be counselling people to make bad decisions. Mr. Speaker, I would rather we do more financial literacy consulting with Albertans to help them make good decisions, and we could have a remedial program for the members on the other side as well. But I digress.

You know, the PACE program could be a good thing. It might be a good thing. I regret that I think that in its current state it will not be a good thing because of lack of consultation, Mr. Speaker.

You know, we've talked about the risk to seniors. This program is there, and there are people that may take advantage of seniors and tell them: "Well, no. You have to change this. You have to change your furnace. You have to change the products. You have to do these things." By the way, they may be misrepresented on how much it's going to save them. They may not live long enough to enjoy those upgrades and those things, and then it's a caveat on their house.

I know that many seniors, number one, won't even take reverse mortgages, let alone the SHARP program, because they don't want to have any lien, any caveat against the equity that they have worked so hard for. They burned that mortgage back in 1967, and they want to make sure that they hold that equity. Maybe not, you know, the best thing for them to do personally, but they believe that they want to pass on wealth to the next generation. We've spoken about that in this House as well. But, again, I won't digress into that particular issue.

We've got some other concerns here. We've heard about this huge scam, this issue in the United States that is now turning into class-action lawsuits, Mr. Speaker, and that concerns me as well.

We've talked about new homeowners, about the new homeowners that could take these. I understand some of the builders are saying: "Well, that's great. We can put all these

upgrades in the house, and you don't have to pay for it today. We'll just put a caveat on your tax bill." I was in the home building business, Mr. Speaker, and these are business decisions that they may make because it may appear to keep the sticker price on a home down, which is being escalated by – guess what? – an overburden of taxation at all three levels of government, new regulations on mortgages, et cetera. They may try to do that because that might help people to invest in a new home that has a few more bells and whistles of energy efficiency, which I'm all for, but we have to be able to afford these things when we're doing it. Did the government consult with those homeowners, the home builders?

What about with the SHARP program? I know that with the SHARP program, back when that was being launched, one of the first calls I made was to Bob Dubask, who, I mentioned before in this House, is known as Mr. CHIP. He was one of the early adopters, early proponents of reverse mortgages, the Canadian home income program. Essentially, the SHARP program is kind of like the Canadian home income program, which has been around for almost 30 years now, and they didn't even call him to find out any suggestions he might have on making that program better.

Or maybe they would have taken that entire program on. Only the portion that was eligible for what is now called the SHARP program could have been taken on by them and administered by a third party at no cost to the taxpayers and no administration by taxpayers other than possibly the component where they maybe were buying down a percentage of that Canadian home income program, maybe buying down part of that mortgage for them. But that wasn't done.

Did they consult with CMHC or Genworth, the two largest home mortgage insurance companies, on how they would deal with it, how they would treat that income? I can tell you that anybody here who's worked with a mortgage broker knows that there are various line items that you have to include, including condo fees and utility bills and mortgage payments and other things. I am pretty doubtful that CMHC is not going to include the PACE program on one of those line items, which basically allow them to do a stress test on the purchaser when they are setting the premiums on home mortgage insurance.

Thankfully, we have that program. We have that to guard against meltdowns in our housing economy. Thankfully, we have not seen any huge runs on that, and we should all be thankful for that, even in a down economy in Alberta. We've seen some depression of land values and housing values, but not a deep, deep cut like we saw in 2007, '08, and '09 in the United States, which, of course, unravelled almost the entire financial system.

What about the chartered banks? Did anybody talk to the chartered banks? Did the minister talk to the chartered banks? My guess is that he did not.

Mr. Speaker, I will not be supporting this bill. Thank you.

Dr. Starke: Mr. Speaker, point of order.

The Speaker: Point of order.

Point of Order Decorum

Dr. Starke: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I didn't raise this point of order earlier because I didn't want to interrupt the hon. member's speech, but I've noticed with alarm the increasing frequency of a breach of part of the protocols of this House that have long been established – page 449 of *Erskine May*, 24th edition, articulates it as well as paragraph 458 of *Beauchesne*, sixth edition – and that is that members are not to pass between the member speaking and the

chair, nor are they to pass between the chair and the table or the chair and the Mace.

Now, I noted that you nodded your assent for the Member for Rimbeby-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre to return to his seat, but it bothers me that we're breaching this rule. This is a fundamental rule that has been in place in parliaments for a long, long time. It's a gesture of respect both to the chair and to the Crown, represented by the Mace. I would ask, Mr. Speaker, that you remind members, just by way of reminder.

You know, I see the pages, and it's always fun to watch the pages in this dance they do around the Chamber to avoid breaching that very rule. They never pass between the member speaking and the chair, nor do they ever pass between the chair and the Mace or the chair and the table. I think we could learn well from our pages to follow that very basic and very long-standing parliamentary tradition.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. The Member for Rimbeby-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre did ask my permission, and I did indicate to him that it was appropriate. I have, I believe, also undertaken that several times in the past. But I take the point that you are making under advisement. Your reminder to all of us of the respect for the Chamber and the House is important and ought to be given.

I also would ask, now that this topic is raised, that when members enter and exit the Chamber, they acknowledge the chair out of respect for the position and, as you say, for the Mace.

Noted, and we'll most probably be practising that into the future.

Debate Continued

The Speaker: I believe we are at 29(2)(a). Any questions to the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek?

Anyone else who wishes to speak? The Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak to Bill 10, An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements. I want to thank the Minister of Municipal Affairs for bringing forward this legislation. I understand what he's trying to do here, and I want to first put forward that as a Member of the Legislative Assembly and as somebody that tries to represent his constituents, I am in favour of the concept of renewable energy and of trying to diversify the Alberta economy. It is a laudable goal. While there are times when we may perhaps disagree on how we achieve that goal, it's one that I think is a laudable goal to move forward on.

You know, I would bring to the attention of the House, for instance, the county of Brazeau in my constituency, that is putting forward a municipal plan and program to help subsidize renewable energy projects within my constituency, subsidizing the cost of things like efficient washers and dryers and fridges and furnaces. These are all worthy goals, and if it's done in a fashion that is economically sustainable, it should have our support, I would argue.

As I said before, I believe in the pursuit of a diversity of energy options within this province. When I take a look at some of the things that have been happening in my constituency, I've been quite excited about some of them; for instance, the movement towards geothermal. I know that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and I have had an opportunity on many occasions to sit down and talk about geothermal energy and the opportunities that are there for the citizens and the people of Alberta. I believe that there are companies in this great province of ours that are moving forward on these kinds

of endeavours. It's been very interesting to me to be able to see where we can take the concept of geothermal.

4:00

I can think of one Alberta company where they have identified thousands of abandoned and orphaned wells across this province, wells that are going to create a problem for the people of Alberta in the future as we try to figure out how to clean them up, with the Orphan Well Association, et cetera. If we can repurpose these wells to ensure that we produce renewable, green energy, it is a benefit to the people of Alberta, especially if it can be done without subsidies by the state. These companies believe they can do that.

In line with this Bill 10, which is encouraging people to pursue renewable energy, here's an example of several companies that I'm aware of that are in pursuit of not only peak power, which would be your wind and your solar, but baseload energy through geothermal. I had the privilege and the pleasure of attending the ATCO AGM the other day. In that AGM the CEO referred to a project that they are doing in Australia where they are taking solar energy and when that energy cannot be used by the grid, using it, through the process of electrolysis, to produce hydrogen. That hydrogen is then stored in abandoned pipelines, and when they need the energy, that energy is then used to produce electricity through a power plant.

I had the privilege of being able to talk with one of the vice-presidents and say: "Listen, when I look at my constituency, I see an abandoned Esso plant where the town of Devon has talked about wanting to have solar put on that brownfield. I have in Thorsby a water treatment plant that is working at 17 per cent efficiency and is looking for how they can use that water to be more efficient and to raise the money that they're getting. Then I have a power plant that was running on biowaste from the Weyerhaeuser plant in Drayton Valley, and when the government took the subsidies off, the biomass had to shut down." We're going to be having ATCO come out to my constituency, I believe, on June 20, and we're going to show them these opportunities and see if maybe there is a way of moving forward with something like that.

Again, I stand here not against the concept of renewable energy. Where it can be done efficiently and where it serves the purposes and the needs of the people of Alberta and where it starts to diversify our economy, then we should move forward where it's economically possible.

Bill 10 speaks to municipalities and speaks to municipalities' capacity to create through bylaw a property assessed clean energy, or PACE, program. This property assessed clean energy program provides a mechanism for property owners to finance energy efficiency and renewable energy and water conservation projects or upgrades to their property. Again, on the outside, just on a surface level, it sounds like a good idea. I think we need to scratch down a little deeper. I think we need to take a look at whether this is actually going to be good for the property owners or the people of Alberta and whether or not municipalities need to be involved in this.

In general anyone who owns property is probably going to be looking forward to trying to save some money on their power bills or their water bills, the former of which are becoming much more expensive, as we know, due to some of the policy shifts made by the NDP. The PACE program is going to provide a funding mechanism for financing these types of projects, as I have previously mentioned, by allowing repayment to be collected through the property owner's municipal tax bill. Now, in theory, we could see that this would be an innovative way to pay for these upgrades, that a new avenue of financing has been created, if you will.

However, if you drill a little bit deeper, there are some concerns that begin to arise. You know, having listened to some of the debate

in the House here, one of those was highlighted by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek when he asked the question: what happens in the case of a foreclosure? A simplified example would be if you have spent, through the PACE program, \$30,000 on a solar panel installation built onto the top of your house. Through the PACE program this individual would finance this \$30,000 project over 10 years for, say, \$3,000 a year. However, let's say that this individual maybe overextended themselves or lost their job or some unforeseen event occurs where they have been unable to maintain payments on their mortgage, where essentially life has happened and where that individual has missed significant or so many mortgage payments that their house has had to be foreclosed upon.

It's a sad situation and one that is not unusual – well, maybe not "unusual." Maybe that's the wrong word to use. But that has occurred in my constituency over the last three years. I know that I've sat down. I had one lady come into my office just in tears because she knew that she was in her last capacity to be able to keep her house and she was very scared of losing her house. I know that I was concerned for her, but there was not a lot that, really, we could do or I could do as her MLA. I remember that a month or so later at the parade in Drayton Valley I saw her in the crowd and walked over to her, and we had the discussion about how she had lost her house. This has been an issue in the bad economic times that we've had over the last three years, and it has not been unusual in my constituency for people to have to walk down this path.

So it's concerning when we start thinking about the PACE program: well, what do we do when an owner has met this unfortunate reality? Sometimes we've seen, in these kinds of cases, where owners have stripped whatever they could out of the house to try and take whatever they could to deal with their financial problems. Of course, when you've put \$30,000 of renewable solar panels on your house, it's not unreasonable to think that perhaps that's one of the things that an individual might look at trying to take.

Well, what happens to the remaining money, which has to be paid through the property taxes to fund that installation? Who's on the hook for that money? Is the municipality really going to have to go after an individual who clearly does not have the capacity to pay and maybe not even a regard for the financial contracts that they've signed? This and many other questions continue to abound with this legislation.

Now, that doesn't mean that there aren't some positive aspects to Bill 10, and we've recognized those as we've gone through the debate on this piece of legislation. You know, Energy Efficiency Alberta will administer the plan, so municipalities are not necessarily responsible for the administrative costs, which is a key factor that we all need to be wary of because all orders of government need to be committed to working together. We shouldn't be trying to add additional burdens on other levels of government through legislation that passes through this House.

You know, an additional strength of this legislation is that it does not impact property owners' ability to borrow from lending institutions. Lending institutions will be involved, but the money is not coming from municipalities, another positive aspect of this bill.

Now, who would not want to have solar panels on their roof and put electricity back onto the grid or have hot water heated by solar or maybe have a windmill on their property? Maybe you have appliances or machines drawing a lot of current and driving up your power bills. A PACE program could potentially help to replace some of these less energy efficient situations. Or maybe you're trying to protect the wetland on your property in order to conserve the drinking water, or maybe your home needs an energy audit to find the leaks in it and then some renovations to help keep the heat

in during the winter. This program, if executed properly, could help address all of these issues.

4:10

However, this bill seems to be one of those bills where when you start to dig deeper into it, you start to ask some questions and you get into a further debate on the merits of the bill. Now, one of the major concerns with this legislation is that it leaves most of the details up to regulation. These regulations are not debated in this House, nor are they voted on by this Assembly. Essentially, the government is once again suggesting that we need to just simply trust that they have the situation under control and that they will provide the regulations necessary to protect the people of Alberta. Mr. Speaker, sometimes over the past three years we've questioned just whether the government has the capacity to do that. Sometimes when we go forward with legislation, we want to trust, but we also want to verify, and we want to dig a little deeper.

For example, the requirement to disclose a PACE program property tax to prospective buyers is left to regulations. Now, there's nothing in the body of this legislation which ensures transparency when selling property of a PACE program property tax owner. [Disturbance in the gallery] Let's go back to our earlier example. While it's oversimplified, I still believe it's relevant. Instead of being foreclosed on, the individual, I'd suggest, is actually doing quite well and decides that they can upgrade or they can sell their house.

Let's say that it's just two years after they have placed solar panels, had them installed on their house, and have been part of the PACE program. Remember, they've financed this through the PACE program for 10 years. This means that the \$30,000 installation is spread out in a series of yearly payments of \$3,000 on their tax bill in addition to the regular property tax that the homeowner would be paying regardless of whether they had the PACE program or the green energy upgrades at all. Now, two years into that payment plan, the home is sold. That means that there are eight years and approximately \$24,000 left to pay off. [Mr. Smith's speaking time expired]

The Speaker: Hon. member, I just would like to point out that the stranger in the House was not in any way intending to interrupt your presentation.

I have a request for unanimous consent for an introduction.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests

(reversion)

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's very proudly that I stand to introduce to you and through you two young ladies that hold a very special place in my heart, the first being my daughter-in-law Dr. Sarah Hanson. She's a doctor of veterinary medicine and very proudly studied at the University of Saskatchewan. With her today is my one and only granddaughter, Lilly Charlotte Hanson, who just turned nine months yesterday. She's very happy to be here in the House to wave at grandpa and make noise up in the gallery. I would ask that they stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House, please.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. members.

Government Bills and Orders

Third Reading

Bill 10

An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements

(continued)

The Speaker: Any questions under 29(2)(a) to the member?

Any members who would like to speak to the bill? The Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 10, An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements. Now, while we haven't been supporting this bill, I think you've heard from several of my colleagues that we don't have any trouble acknowledging that the general idea behind it may even be a good one. The execution, on the other hand, has been sloppy at best. Let me go through that here. Of course, when the bill came out, we pointed out to the government and to the minister that the bill said one thing and the government's website said a couple of different things about who the lending was going to be through, whether it would be through municipalities or not or whether it would be through Energy Efficiency Alberta. I know that the minister along the way finally had to acknowledge that, and I'm grateful to the minister for doing that.

But there's more to it, Mr. Speaker. I know that when the minister spoke earlier, he seemed to be unhappy with the Official Opposition for pointing out all the shortfalls caused by – I don't know who did the sloppy work – the sloppy work done on this legislation. We talked about the fact that on – I appreciate that the minister said that he gave the critic from the Official Opposition a second briefing. Again, he made it sound like he was doing a big favour for the critic from the Official Opposition. Giving briefings to the opposition for any government is common practice. It's a common courtesy. I know that it's not necessary. We appreciate it on this side of the House when we get the briefings.

In this case the second briefing wasn't just: oh, yeah; there's another i to dot and another t to cross. It was actually three pages of amendments to a four-page bill, so essentially a complete reconstruction of the bill, a complete rewrite of the bill. You know, I know that the minister tried to make it sound like it was a courtesy for a slight amendment – nothing to see here, nothing to worry about – but in fact when you change three pages of a four-page bill, it's more than that; it's actually a reconstruction of the bill and a rewriting of the bill and a do-over.

Mr. Strankman: It's a lot of typographical errors.

Mr. McIver: Well, in fact, I think it was more than typographical errors.

Mr. Speaker, what we have here is a bill that's been rewritten, and we have a lot of questions that haven't been answered yet. For example, when we pointed out to the minister that the web page said two or three different things, of course, the minister said: well, everybody looks at the legislation. I'm sure that the minister meant that when he said it, but I couldn't disagree more than I do. If I was to look at a government program to see how to take part in it and how to participate in it and how to get money out of it to, say, perhaps, put solar panels on my house, I'll tell you that where I would not go first is to the legislation. I think that most Albertans watching and listening today will agree with me that the first place they would go would be the government's website because that's what people do. They would say that. The minister's argument at the time, that if the legislation was right and the website was wrong,

it's okay: I couldn't disagree more because I think that most Albertans would actually go to the website.

However, in the minister's submission earlier today he talked about a number of things. I guess he was paying attention to some of it. He made reference to the fact that the opposition was concerned about the class-action lawsuits down in California and in different places in the United States. The minister presented to this House that the answer, the complete answer, to that question was that door-to-door sales aren't allowed. Okay. I can accept that door-to-door sales aren't allowed, but that hardly answers the question.

Mr. Speaker, certainly, people can be misled and pressured into a business transaction on a door-to-door basis. That can lead the consumer – misled, pressured, pushed, whatever you want to say – into a deal that's not good. But the problem is that that's not the only way that can happen. In any other way you can do a transaction, people can be misled and pressured and pushed into doing the wrong thing. I think we all know in this House, because we talk about it all the time, that some Albertans, for various reasons, are more vulnerable than other Albertans.

4:20

When we do legislative things, we can't just think about the sharpest business dealers amongst Albertans. We can't just think about those with the most experience with business, the most sophistication with negotiating. We actually have to think about those with the least business experience, perhaps with the least sophistication and the most vulnerable to unfair business practices. The minister gave no details on any of those things other than to say that there are no door-to-door sales. When the opposition was asking these questions, I think the questions have been legitimate since we started asking them, and I would say that they're still legitimate now, and, Mr. Speaker, they haven't been answered yet.

Now, further on the topic of consultation, when the minister stood in this House not long ago, he talked about how he met with the mayor of Edmonton and that that's where a good part of if not all of the three pages of amendments came from. Well, that's good. I'm glad the minister talked to the city of Edmonton and the mayor. That's good stuff. But my question and the question for a lot of Albertans is: why didn't that meeting take place before the minister brought the legislation to the House in the first place? Again, that's more evidence of sloppy work, Mr. Speaker. And if he did go talk to Edmonton before he brought the legislation to the House, I guess, why didn't he listen? Clearly, if indeed he did talk to Edmonton before, he needed to have a second talk before what the city wanted was right. So I'm not sure whether it's a matter of that the minister didn't talk to Edmonton before he brought the legislation in the first place or whether he did, and he didn't listen. Perhaps at some point before we're done the debate today, the minister may rise and clarify that, although both answers are kind of embarrassing, so maybe he won't, but we'll see.

Now, Mr. Speaker, again there have been some inconsistencies here along the way on the government's side. Municipalities aren't banks. I know a lot of municipalities do a lot of financial transactions. You know, they collect taxes, they collect fees, they do lots of other things, but when it comes to banking and checking credit worthiness and one thing and another, of course, then you're in a situation where not all municipalities are created equal. They're all staffed by good people that do a great job, but in fact I know that, for example, a very large municipality almost for sure will have a very large department of what I used to call when I was at the city of Calgary "hot and cold running lawyers, hot and cold running accountants," lots of them.

I think, Mr. Speaker, that at one point you were with a municipality, and you would probably know a little bit about hot

and cold running accountants and lawyers. I'm not sure how many your municipality had. But I think you would agree with me that some municipalities, smaller ones, for very good reason don't have a big staff of lawyers and accountants to be able to make assessments about individual lending practices. Maybe they do, but there's no guarantee that the expertise will be in-house to assess a homeowner on their credit worthiness when they're going to borrow, for example, up to \$30,000 for solar panels. That assessment of the municipalities is not in the legislation, and I'm not aware that it's on the website. That's, I think, another legitimate question which remains unanswered.

Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of other questions about this, too. What happens, for example – this is another thing; some of my colleagues raised this – if there's a foreclosure? The legislation is silent on what would happen then, who would be responsible for that. Or would the Albertan just lose their home? That seems like it probably would be the answer to me. But if we're passing legislation that's going to cause a lot of Albertans to lose their homes or even a few, that's something we should be thinking twice about.

I appreciate again that while door-to-door sales won't be allowed, what if somebody makes a bad business deal? Let's just say that an Albertan in their home buys, again, that classic \$30,000 solar panel and let's say it's from a reputable dealer. But what if it turns out that, in the same way that they used to say that cars made on a Wednesday will be better than cars made on a Monday or Friday, they get a bunch of defective solar panels, and then the business isn't in business anymore? It may not even be their fault. Maybe they leave the province for a bigger opportunity. Maybe they have health problems. Maybe they retire. There are a whole bunch of reasons why that could happen, Mr. Speaker, and you get somebody that's under the strain of making payments as part of their tax bill on a \$30,000 purchase that's no good to them. Then how do we protect consumers against those types of things? I haven't heard the government explain how Albertans will be protected against those circumstances.

Another question that occurs to me that I haven't heard an explanation of is: will this or could this be used to end-run the current mortgage rules? Now, we all know that the CMHC, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, just tightened up the lending rules. Listen, a lot of people aren't happy about it, and I'm sure the CMHC would say that those rules were tightened up in order to protect consumers. Taking that at face value, if somebody uses this program to end-run those rules that are to protect the consumers, the homebuyers, so that the homebuyers between what they get approved for and their mortgage when they max it out and then take on another \$20,000, \$30,000, or \$40,000 through the PACE program, what protections will there be so that consumers won't find themselves on the short end of being able to make the payments when their tax bill comes and lose their home over something that they got talked into? Or perhaps they talked themselves into it. Either way, we don't want to see Albertans lose their homes.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the government has said that they want to consult more over the summer, and that's a good idea because in my humble estimation that hasn't been done well enough yet, which leads me to want to make an amendment. I have the requisite number of copies here, if you would be kind enough. I'll wait for your permission to continue speaking, if that's acceptable to you.

The Speaker: Continue, hon. member.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This amendment, in my view, is actually very much in co-operation with the government. I

move that the motion for third reading of Bill 10, An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements, be amended by deleting all the words after “that” and substituting the following:

Bill 10, An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements, be not now read a third time but that it be read a third time this day three months hence.

Three months, Mr. Speaker, is about a season. The government has said that they want to consult over the summer. The opposition has pointed out many, many, many legitimate shortfalls. The government has already come with a big amendment. We’re saying that we don’t hate the idea of helping people add energy efficiency to their homes. In fact, we kind of like the idea. What we don’t like is the sloppy way in which it’s been done so far. The extra three months would give the government the time to go out and talk to Albertans, maybe talk to the opposition, find out what the concerns are about the shortfalls of the legislation, come back, maybe make some additional amendments that’ll improve the legislation, get it right, and – who knows? – in the brave world that we’re in perhaps have unanimous consent in this House by all sides to support this bill. Wouldn’t that be nice? It does happen here sometimes. It doesn’t happen every day, but when it happens most is when the government has an open, listening attitude to well-thought-out, good ideas from the opposition and looks for ways to improve their legislation. I see this as the Official Opposition presenting a well-thought-out way.

Mr. Speaker, it ought not get in the way of what the government has stated that they’re going to do anyways. The government has said in this House that they’re going to go out in the summer and consult, and we’re saying: good idea. We’re saying: good idea. Here’s the real benefit. Right now, if they pass the legislation, they can only make adjustments to it through regulations. If they pass this amendment, they could actually change the regulations or the bill itself. We’re offering the government a great opportunity to do as good a job as they can.

4:30

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Any questions under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Calgary-Hays? Calgary-Foothills on the amendment.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak in support of the notice of amendment served by my hon. colleague from Calgary-Hays. I have some concerns about Bill 10. The property assessed clean energy, or PACE, program is supposed to be a financing tool which building owners and developers can use to upgrade their building’s energy performance and install renewable energy systems and reduce resource consumption with no money down and with financing repaid through their property tax bill.

Now, a lobby group called PACE Alberta was stood up in 2017, and it seems to be endorsed by lots of green energy companies and green lobby groups. It is even endorsed by the NDP world traveller the Pembina Institute. The environment minister has good friends at the Pembina Institute. Former Ontario Liberal minister Glen Murray is the executive director there, and Glen was around the cabinet table when disastrous policies were brought into Ontario trying to force the green economy and drove little old ladies out of their homes because of sky-high electricity prices. Glen has a team of 44 people working for him at that think tank and a board of nine people.

Now, the first entry on the PACE Alberta blog is from April 10, 2017, announcing that PACE is coming to Alberta. How would PACE Alberta know in April 2017 that PACE is coming to Alberta when the bill didn’t come out until April 2018? Clearly, it shows that NDP world travellers were advocating for this program for a

year and knew that it was coming a year before it was announced in Bill 10. I wonder if the Ethics Commissioner has PACE Alberta properly registered in the lobbyist registry. After all, PACE Alberta knew about Bill 10 a year before there was a Bill 10.

The government still got it wrong, Mr. Speaker. The government had to amend their own bill. A person named Jerry Flaman wrote in to PACE Alberta’s blog. He said on May 2018 at 08:28:

Just a few questions. I live in Summerland BC and am party to several organizations promoting awareness of Green Energy initiatives. I have been following PACE in the US for several years and have seen that as the programme developed many hiccups were encountered. I have just recently learned of the Alberta PACE initiative and am wondering if AB is the only province initiating a PACE programme or if other provinces are also jumping on the wagon? I haven’t yet thoroughly researched the government Website nor PACE Alberta. However, I am just wondering how your initiative is progressing and what roadblocks or pitfalls are being experienced and how those situations are being addressed?

Jerry is quite right. People in the U.S.A. are losing their homes over PACE. I tabled a number of stories about those home losses here in this House. California is particularly hard hit. There are class-action lawsuits, people who owe more money than their mortgage or PACE. I tabled their stories in here a few weeks ago. Bill 10 has a lot of hidden dangers for consumers, Mr. Speaker. California has mixed results since they implemented a PACE program in the late 2000s. Due to the design of California’s PACE program, some financing institutions, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac – it sounds familiar – decided not to lend to homebuyers when the property has an outstanding PACE loan.

Mortgage rules in Canada were recently tightened, and for many Albertans this resulted in smaller mortgages and being priced out of the market. If Alberta’s PACE program follows California’s example and PACE loans are recorded against the property as a tax lien, the PACE loan would assume the first position in case of a mortgage default. In California the result for PACE homeowners was that they had to repay the loan first to attract buyers, or for those unable to pay off the loan, they were unable to sell their home. In other words, Mr. Speaker, people are tied down, they are no longer mobile, and labour needs to be mobile. There is a real danger here of people getting overextended in the amounts they owe to get solar on their homes up and running. Albertans are already the people with the highest grossing personal debt per capita in all of Canada.

And that is before we talk about the \$96 billion in debt that the NDP will have created by 2023. I don’t understand how the NDP can get people tied up into more debt when the banks will have to approve those people for more loans. It feels like a program to help people lose their homes, Mr. Speaker. It’s scary. It’s very much buyer beware going into this PACE program. I can’t see the difference here between PACE and taking out a bank loan to do the job. That’s why I will not support Bill 10, and that’s why I support the notice of amendment served by my hon. colleague from Calgary-Hays.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader under 29(2)(a)?

Mr. Mason: Yes, please. I want to thank the hon. member for his comments. Certainly, his concerns about the Pembina Institute were very interesting to me, and I wonder if he would care to comment on the fact that a member of the Pembina Institute advisory council is Preston Manning. Do you believe that this is representing a shift among Canadian conservatives?

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd also like to thank the Minister of Transportation for asking me that wonderful question. Preston Manning is an individual Albertan. He's entitled to his opinion. In other words, you know, the NDP's fellow-travellers in B.C. are opposing pipelines, and the NDP's national party president, the stylish Jagmeet Singh, supports the Leap Manifesto and so on, and now you're in danger of seeing an NDP government tomorrow in Ontario who might support B.C. rather than the Alberta NDP. Within the parties people may have individual opinions.

4:40

I know that Preston Manning supported the carbon tax. I agree with that. To your point, he's not on the same page as us. We oppose the carbon tax. Our leader was very vocal in saying that if and when we get the mandate, that will be the first bill we will repeal. We are on the record. We are saying that every time in this House. It doesn't mean that Preston Manning doesn't have his own opinion as long as it is not against the interests of Albertans. Some of your fellow-travellers, interestingly, are working against Alberta's interests. The minister of environment's close friend Mike Hudema: every day he's fighting against the interests of Canada. If it was in any other country, like Saudi Arabia or other countries I dealt with, he would be in danger of being behind bars if it is treated as antinational. At least, Preston Manning is not antinational.

I'll leave it there, Minister. Thank you.

The Speaker: Under 29(2)(a)?

On the amendment, the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the opportunity to support the amendment, given by my hon. colleague from Calgary-Hays, to send this bill for further consultation. Three months is not a long time. Three months, I think, is the time that maybe this bill was rushed.

I'd like to thank the minister for bringing this forward. Again, I think there is some good content in this bill and, I think, some valid content to help Albertans. I'm all for helping Albertans themselves to be in a position to save on their heating bills, on their electricity bills, on various things that might have impacted their own power consumption. I'm concerned – I think all Albertans are concerned – about what's going to happen with the power prices, electricity prices as we go forward. That, I think, in itself is causing a great deal of angst and fear amongst Albertans and, hence, a drive towards this. Hence, this bill may, in an improved form, be something that might be viable and might have some traction with Albertans without hurting Albertans.

I mentioned a little bit earlier – and I'll mention it again – you know, that there are many groups that we don't seem to have talked to. The financiers and the mortgage holders of Canada basically facilitate the purchasing of and long-term investment in housing stock in our country. Realtors, for the most part, are involved with the transactions to purchase these homes and will have to deal with these caveats if they go wrong, if there are unintended consequences. We need to talk to those people and understand what concerns they may have, and I think this will give us the time to do that over the summer, Mr. Speaker. The property assessment community, in looking at these, can tell us what the impact might be, particularly if there's something that goes wrong with these systems. Yet there's still \$10,000, \$15,000, \$20,000 on the books under the PACE program on somebody's title when they go to purchase that house. How are we going to deal with that?

The insurance companies. Has the minister spoken to insurance companies? What happens if somebody installs \$30,000 worth of

solar panels and we have a hailstorm, which we are prone to do a little bit in this province? That purchaser has purchased it but doesn't have enough money to get adequate insurance on their homeowner's insurance. Maybe they forgot to call, or maybe something has happened where we haven't required it to be properly and appropriately insured, not just to protect them but to protect that housing unit going forward and future purchasers. If it gets smashed and damaged and they don't have another \$20,000 or \$10,000 to replace and repair, you then actually have this white elephant on your roof, which used to look pretty, probably covered with shattered glass and that is inoperable yet is still on the bill. They're still subject to that, and if they go to sell that home, it's going to be, "By the way, did you know you have to reduce the price of this home to the tune of \$20,000 so I can repair it and fix it?" or "I'm not buying it until you repair it and make sure that it's fully operational." We haven't thought about that.

I talked earlier, Mr. Speaker, about the fact that we may end up with some purchasers who owe more on PACE than they have equity in the home, and that scares me deeply, having been in the home building business and having seen that we live in a generation – I think and I hope that people are changing because we've been through this tough economic time. But we had many people that were buying homes that hadn't seen the downturn in the economy back in the early and mid-2000s. They hadn't seen a downturn for a long time, and many of those people were hurt. We saw a lot of foreclosures in 2008-2009 because that 15 per cent drop in the value of properties was, again, triple the amount of equity those people had. Some of them were starter homes, and some of them were starter castles. People just overextended themselves based on the cash flow of the day, not thinking that things would ever change. Again, it concerns me, both from an individual standpoint and from a provincial standpoint, that we do that.

So I think this is an opportunity for us to take a sober second thought with this bill, to give the minister and his team and to give Albertans and to give this Legislature time to ensure that this legislation comes back to us complete and with full consultation and with full disclosure and full knowledge, having consulted properly to know what the intended and unintended consequences of this legislation are. Mr. Speaker, that, I think, is a reasonable request, it's a prudent request, and I think it's one that actually bears a strong sense of responsibility and accountability for this Legislature, for this House, and for the government and members opposite to consider.

Three months is not going to change anything other than maybe some opportunities for some renovators to get going on this. And, yes, we could use that economic activity, Mr. Speaker, but the people that are already going to do that are going to do that anyway. Maybe that will give us some time to build up that expertise through contractors, that may or may not need to go through an approval process with Energy Efficiency Alberta to be able to install some of these products.

I think that that would be, again, a prudent approach to do that consultation: talk to the mortgage brokers, talk to mortgage insurers, talk to the realtors, talk to the property assessors, and talk to the insurance companies. I'd be curious and interested if the minister would share with me and share with us: has he done all of these things? I'm sure I'm not the first person to think that these are some of the people we should be consulting to ensure that this legislation is whole, that it is done with full consultation, that it is done with full knowledge of what the intended and unintended consequences are in this marketplace, and that it's done in consultation, again, with home builders, that we've talked to them.

I think it's a great idea. They may say: "You know what? This is an opportunity for us, so we can maybe go into a starter home

market, and normally we wouldn't be able to afford that. Maybe the mortgage holders wouldn't be able to qualify for a mortgage on this house, but maybe we can do this." And maybe the mortgage insurance companies and maybe the lenders will say: "Yeah. That's okay. We'll let you do that." We're not going to take that full – very often you take a percentage of qualifying expenses when you're qualifying incomes for people, and maybe they decided that PACE will only take half of that and put that as a qualification or one of the calculations in terms of the stress test for applying for a mortgage.

Mr. Speaker, I think we're all concerned. We want Albertans to be able to – for those that have a stable income and have the wherewithal and the interest in doing so, we would like them to be able to purchase a home without any major impediments to doing so. But we want them to do that with their eyes wide open, understanding what the consequences are, what the impacts are, and what factors they need to consider as they're purchasing homes.

Mr. Speaker, I've spoken in this House before about that I was very instrumental in starting Calgary's first attainable home ownership program, which provided down payment assistance and some subsidy financing for low- to middle-income Albertans to be able to purchase a home. I'd like to think that those people may be in a certain situation and may be able to qualify for those. Maybe there's even another way to assist those people to achieve those and to work with the builders that are working with them to give them also a hand up of that extra energy efficiency. Those are the people that, if we're helping them with a hand up to achieve home ownership, maybe we need to also give a hand up to make sure that they can sustain homeownership even through a downturn in the economy.

Quite frankly, we were taking people that were paying, at that time, a high rental demand, paying \$1,800 a month in rent to a landlord, and then putting them into ownership of a nice three-bedroom townhome for \$1,400 a month, Mr. Speaker, \$400 less. That gave them \$400 to put better food on their table, to maybe invest in some RESPs for their children, to pay down some debt that they may have accumulated somewhere along the way, and/or to put some extra money down on their mortgage so that they'd build up equity over time and create a more stable home and stable household and a stable place to live, which I think we all would agree is a good thing.

4:50

I'd like to think that we can bring this program through consultation, again, with the people that are doing that, Attainable Homes Calgary, the PEAK home ownership program. I'm sure there are similar programs. I know that Habitat for Humanity here in Edmonton has some similar programs that are attainable home ownership programs, not their traditional builds but a different program that they've done to give more families a hand up within the community. I'd like to think that we could blend that and take these kinds of programs forward in an opportunity to help all homeowners at every stage of home ownership, from their very first starter home up to their first and second move-up homes, and also to create some opportunities for greater energy efficiency across the entire province, including in the rural areas.

I mentioned earlier that there are some challenges in the rural areas because of the ability to put back on the grid and off the grid when, in fact, in urban areas that's a little less expensive to do. It may actually be already embedded into the delivery systems there for electricity that they can do so.

Mr. Speaker, I think that what has been proposed by my hon. colleague from Calgary-Hays is a reasonable amendment, a very reasonable amendment for us to consider. This really gives us an

opportunity as legislators to ensure, again, that we are not moving towards unintended consequences. Again, I think most of my colleagues have spoken here, and we've said that there is some good in this bill. There are some well-intentioned moves forward. There are some well-intentioned opportunities here for Albertans to increase their personal energy efficiency and to reduce their costs and, quite frankly, to help the environment individually, and I think Albertans feel good when they have an opportunity to do that.

But this is an opportunity, Mr. Speaker, I think, for us to ensure that we can do this with full diligence. I think we owe it to Albertans to be diligent in the legislation that we do in this House. We're here as the opposition, as the Official Opposition, to ensure that accountability is something that we bring to the table. We try and do it respectfully, and we try and do it in the name of talking about policy and not attacking individuals. Again, I've said that the minister here is, I'm sure, very well intentioned and I think has done some good work in bringing this forward. We would like that to be done in the spirit of achieving an optimal result for Albertans, and I think we have the opportunity to do that here.

I would ask the members opposite to think of it in that light, to consider it in the light that this is not meant to derail this legislation. This is meant to ensure that it is of the highest possible quality and calibre that we can do. I'm sure that the hon. Minister of Transportation would love to see that level of accountability. I know he does. I can see the smile on his face. He really wants us to be accountable, and he wants us to certainly be there.

Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting this amendment wholeheartedly. I hope that the members opposite will consider doing that to ensure that we can also bring the best possible legislation to this Assembly and that we can bring the best possible legislation to Albertans.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Any questions to the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek under 29(2)(a)?

Are there any other members who wish to speak to the amendment as proposed by Calgary-Hays? The Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to speak to this amendment. I think we've had an opportunity here to discuss some of the shortfalls of this bill. I think it's always great to have sober second thought in these matters. You know, we've seen this bill all of a sudden receive three pages of amendments to a four-page bill. Of course, that right away kind of sets off the alarm bells as far as: okay; have we really done our due diligence with this bill as far as making sure that it's been properly worded, properly brought forward, properly consulted on?

Now, when we first got this bill brought forward to us, we were kind of alarmed because we'd seen different things on the website as opposed to what was in the bill. Of course, the suggestion was made: don't look at the website; look at the legislation. But what happened then was that, okay, we quit looking at the website, and we started looking at the legislation. Then the legislation changed, too. It leaves us kind of open to some wondering and a little bit of dismay, of course, in the process that got us to this point.

Now, we look at the amendments, and I know the minister called them – that they were clarifying and not really changing anything. Of course, any time we have so many clarifying amendments, let's say, brought forward to the government's own bill, that they brought forward themselves, I mean, it's a little bit like damage control rather than, you know, actually clarifying things.

The minister talked about one of the mayors and read kind of a support letter from one of the mayors. What was interesting about

that support letter was that the mayor thanked the minister and the government for the amendments. Obviously, it wasn't that the mayor was consulted ahead of time and said: "Boy, this is great. I can't wait to see this hit the Legislature." He wrote his support letter thanking the government for the amendments. That sort of thing right there just shows that, you know, there had to be a lot more consultation done beforehand rather than after the bill was introduced and, in fact, after the amendments were actually brought forward.

Now, the minister also read the Rural Municipalities of Alberta support letter. Of course, they were looking for clarity on regulations, so I'm not sure that the letter was that much in support as opposed to wondering what it really means and where this legislation is going to end up.

I know the government also brought forward some builders and stuff like that in support of this legislation. Of course, it only makes sense that builders would support something like this because it gives them another opportunity to have people be financed to get projects done, you know, other than just going to a bank.

I guess one thing I wasn't sure of was if the government had consulted any seniors' groups and stuff like that. A lot of times seniors fall prey to, you know, situations like this where somebody could come in and say: "Wow. This is a great idea. This is going to save you all sorts of money." Seniors may not have the opportunity to do the research and realize whether it's a good deal or not.

Now, when the government brought this forward – I'm looking at some of the documents they used in support – they talked about how it was first implemented in California in 2008. In fact, two different documents the government put out talk about this. To try to sell the bill to Albertans and to us, it was: California has done this, so we should do this, too; it's been great for them. Well, Mr. Speaker, we found, of course, that there are lawsuits filed in California over this very same program. I just want to read here from an article a little bit.

Attorneys representing homeowners filed lawsuits Thursday against Los Angeles County, alleging a county program that funds solar panels and other energy-efficient home improvements is a "plague" . . .

That's in quotation marks.

. . . that's ruined the finances of many borrowers by saddling them with loans they cannot afford.

Mr. Speaker, I think some of the problems with this kind of legislation – and that's why if we could have some more time to consult on this – are that municipalities are not often in a situation where they can analyze whether certain people, you know, could handle the payments that would result from any of these kinds of improvements. Obviously, that kind of leaves a situation that leads them to the possibility of failure. Failure, of course, is a very serious thing in a situation like this because this could mean that you lose your home. It's not just a failure of: well, maybe they won't get the clean energy program or additions to their home that they want. They could lose their home and not have a place to live afterwards. Of course, people later in life, if left in a situation like that, will have a hard time recovering.

5:00

Now, some of the complaints that they've brought forward in this lawsuit are that

borrowers are now at risk of losing their homes because the loans are liens on a house, lacked adequate consumer protections, and were marketed and sold by unscrupulous contractors that were not properly monitored.

You know, a lot of people won't realize that these are liens on a house, that if these aren't paid back when they pay their taxes, they will lose their home.

It also goes on to say:

Specifically, the lawsuits allege the county and lenders have committed financial elder abuse, while the lenders charged inflated interest rates and broke a county contract that said they were to provide "best in class" protections against predatory lending and special safeguards for seniors.

So, Mr. Speaker, we sit here today, and we don't know what these regulations are going to be, what kinds of safeguards there are going to be on this. It leaves us in a situation where it's really hard to support something that you don't know where it's actually going to end up.

Then it goes on to say:

While the lenders have said they checked borrowers for previous bankruptcies or missed mortgage payments prior to approval, they did not ask for their incomes until recently, basing approvals largely on home equity.

When you base your decision of whether you do this kind of work for somebody on their home equity and not on their income, that doesn't tell you what their opportunity is to pay back these kinds of loans. All it says is that by selling their home, you will be able to recover the money that you've put in. I don't know if that's the best way to operate. Obviously, banks don't do that. Banks have to go through the paperwork with the people and say, "Okay; let's see your income, let's see your expenses, let's see other loans that you have, and let's see your credit card account and that sort of thing" so that they can get an idea that there's an opportunity to pay back these loans.

It talks about a fellow here, a 58-year-old former bus driver.

He took out a Renovate America loan for solar panels and attic insulation in 2016. [He] said before a contractor handed him a smartphone to sign, the individual didn't explain to him exactly how much he would be paying. He said he was told he'd qualify for a \$7,000 government check for going green, but found out it isn't available to him.

Then it went on to say:

He wasn't told he could lose his house if he didn't pay and only found out the true cost when paperwork arrived in the mail after the loan was finalized. He now owes roughly \$240 a month for 25 years, even though he said he and his wife, who suffers from multiple sclerosis, sometimes only have \$50 or less in their checking account each month.

So there's an example right there of, you know, somebody who was put in a situation that was very dire.

Mr. Speaker, we've got a situation here. There are other ways to borrow money. There's the opportunity to go to a bank, to go to different lending organizations, or there are other programs available to get money without a situation of going into this and going into your taxes and not having that safety check there to prove that these people, you know, have an opportunity to pay this back. Of course, again, it's a situation where we sit here with a bill where the regulations aren't being brought forward, just the bill itself, and we don't know where this is going to end up, so we're sitting here with this opportunity where we could be setting people up for failure.

Now, there's an organization called the National Consumer Law Center. These are some of the things that they've said about it.

While well-designed PACE programs may save energy and/or money for higher-income households, they are inappropriate for homeowners eligible for free or lower cost efficiency programs. Further, PACE has few consumer protections. Expensive loans that are often pushed by aggressive contractors for projects with questionable savings pose serious risks of predatory lending. Reports are already surfacing of problems that mimic the home equity scams and subprime abuses of the 1990s and 2000s.

They go on to say:

There are several PACE models, but typically PACE loans are first-priority liens that jump ahead of existing mortgages.

Obviously, this a situation here where some of these loaning institutions aren't interested in loaning money to somebody that has a PACE loan on their property because there's a chance that in a foreclosure the PACE loan will be paid out before the mortgage lender's loan is paid out. So some of these lending institutions aren't that excited to be involved with a property that already has a PACE loan on it.

Now, this same National Consumer Law Center goes on to say:

Underwriting does not check whether borrowers can afford the loan; there is no guarantee that energy savings will pay for the improvements.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's pretty clear that if the borrowers can't afford the loan, that's a problem right off the start, but if the energy savings don't cover the costs, then we definitely have a serious situation there.

They go on to say:

Taking on a PACE lien may violate existing mortgages (even if payments are made); and may cause problems when selling or refinancing the house.

Obviously, there are a lot of unknowns that aren't covered in this legislation. We don't know how this is actually going to affect different things as people go down the road as far as maybe refinancing their home or something like that down the road.

Now, it says here:

Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, which are, of course, organizations in the U.S., will not purchase loans on properties with PACE liens so it can be hard to refinance or sell those properties.

These are some of the situations that people can find themselves in as they go through and try to take advantage of, you know, a PACE loan.

Mr. Speaker, again, I just want to encourage everybody to support this amendment. I think that there's plenty of opportunity to do a little more research on this, maybe include a little more information in the legislation so that we know and people will know what we're actually doing with Bill 10 and what's going to be in there as far as some of the regulations and that sort of thing so that we can have a little bit of clarity and so that people can make a decision based on that.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Any questions under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky?

Any other members who wish to speak to the amendment?

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:08 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Gotfried	McIver	Strankman
Hanson	Smith	Yao
Loewen		

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hinkley	Miller
Carson	Horne	Miranda
Clark	Jabbour	Payne

Connolly	Jansen	Phillips
Coolahan	Kazim	Piquette
Cortes-Vargas	Kleinsteinuber	Renaud
Dach	Larivee	Rosendahl
Dang	Loyola	Sabir
Drever	Luff	Schmidt
Feehan	Malkinson	Sucha
Fitzpatrick	Mason	Swann
Ganley	McCuaig-Boyd	Turner
Goehring	McKitrick	Woollard
Gray	McLean	
Totals:	For – 7	Against – 41

[Motion on amendment HA lost]

The Speaker: On the motion for third reading of Bill 10, An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements, as proposed by the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:25 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Gray	Miller
Carson	Hinkley	Miranda
Clark	Horne	Nielsen
Connolly	Jabbour	Payne
Coolahan	Kazim	Phillips
Cortes-Vargas	Kleinsteinuber	Piquette
Dach	Larivee	Renaud
Dang	Loyola	Rosendahl
Drever	Luff	Sabir
Feehan	Malkinson	Sucha
Fitzpatrick	Mason	Swann
Fraser	McCuaig-Boyd	Turner
Ganley	McKitrick	Woollard
Goehring		

5:40

Against the motion:

Gotfried	Nixon	Strankman
Hanson	Schneider	Yao
Loewen	Smith	

Totals:	For – 40	Against – 8
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[Motion carried; Bill 10 read a third time]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Government Motion 20 I would like to notify the Assembly that there will be no evening sitting today.

Further to that, I will now move that the House adjourn until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:44 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday morning, June 7, 2018

Day 40

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (UCP),
Deputy Leader of the Official Opposition
Anderson, Hon. Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (NDP)
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (UCP)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (NDP)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (NDP)
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (NDP)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (NDP)
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Alberta Party Opposition House Leader
Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawkwood (NDP)
Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (NDP)
Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP)
Cortes-Vargas, Estefania, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (NDP),
Government Whip
Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (UCP)
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (NDP)
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (NDP)
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)
Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (NDP)
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP)
Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP),
Deputy Government House Leader
Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (IC)
Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (NDP)
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (AP)
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (NDP),
Deputy Government House Leader
Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (UCP),
Official Opposition Deputy Whip
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (UCP)
Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (NDP)
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)
Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (NDP)
Hunter, Grant R., Cardston-Taber-Warner (UCP)
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Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (UCP)
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Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (NDP)
Malkinson, Brian, Calgary-Currie (NDP)
Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),
Government House Leader
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Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (UCP),
Official Opposition House Leader
Notley, Hon. Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),
Premier
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (UCP)
Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (UCP)
Payne, Hon. Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (NDP)
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (NDP)
Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (NDP)
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (UCP),
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader
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Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (NDP)
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP)
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Schneider, David A., Little Bow (UCP)
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Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (NDP)
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)
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Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (NDP)
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (UCP)
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van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (UCP)
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (NDP),
Deputy Government Whip
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)
Vacant, Fort McMurray-Conklin
Vacant, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake

Party standings:

New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 25 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent Conservative: 1 Vacant: 2

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Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

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Dang	McPherson
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha
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Carson	Littlewood
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Dach	Schneider
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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Thursday, June 7, 2018

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Deputy Speaker: Good morning.

Let us reflect. As we prepare to conclude another legislative session, let us reflect on the great responsibility and privilege we have in holding public office. As we return to our constituencies, let us always remember that we are accountable to the people of Alberta for the decisions we have made and the words we have spoken. Safe travels. Have a wonderful summer.

Please be seated.

Orders of the Day

Government Motions

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Adjournment of Spring Session

27. Ms Ganley moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:
Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 3(9) the 2018 spring sitting of the Assembly shall stand adjourned upon the Government House Leader advising the Assembly that the business for the sitting is concluded.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

[Government Motion 27 carried]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Afternoon Sitting Adjournment

25. Ms Ganley moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:
Be it resolved that, notwithstanding Standing Order 3(1), on Thursday, June 7, 2018, the Assembly shall sit beyond the normal adjournment hour of 4:30 p.m. that day until such time that the Government House Leader advises the Assembly that the business for the sitting is concluded.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any members wishing to speak to the motion?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[Government Motion 25 carried]

Government Bills and Orders

Third Reading

Bill 13

An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise on behalf of the Minister of Energy to move third reading of Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future.

This proposed legislation will ensure that the necessary legislative changes are made to prepare Alberta's electricity system for the future, a future that will help to ensure Alberta's long-term

prosperity. Madam Speaker, Alberta's electricity system needs to change. The current system is volatile and not sustainable. It doesn't work for consumers or for investors. This bill lays the groundwork for a system that is more stable and reliable for consumers, more attractive for investors, and better for all Albertans. It will also bring better measures to protect utility consumers from bad utility services and billing practices.

I'm proud to support this important legislation and bring stability, affordability, and protection for Alberta's utility consumers. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for this opportunity to speak before the House. It's disappointing to see that we've got this bill in front of us. The government broke our electricity markets, and they're attempting to fix it with taxpayer money. That is the essence of this. When the government came in, in 2015, nowhere did they mention that they were going to bring in a carbon tax. Then what happened is that the government moved forward with a carbon tax, the single largest tax in Alberta's history, and what ended up happening is that they committed to shutting down our coal plants. Now, our coal plants are responsible for more than 50 per cent of the energy produced within Alberta. Clearly, there's going to be an impact.

Now, what this does, this Bill 13, is that it moves to a capacity market. What they're trying to do is that they're trying to pave the way for renewable energy. While I believe every member in this House does see a value in moving towards renewable energy, making sure that we do it in a responsible way is always something that we need to be very clear, taking that clear path.

Now, whenever we ask this government for an economic analysis or an impact study, the government deflects our questions. They say that the opposition is fearmongering, that really they're making things better. In the end, what happens is – and we've seen this repeatedly come through the House, where they put forward a piece of legislation or change the direction of how Alberta has been typically going in in a radical U-turn and then suddenly are fixing it down the road. Bill 13 is one of those fixes.

What we've got here is that Bill 13 is moving towards a capacity market. What's important here is that because the sun doesn't always shine and the wind doesn't always blow, electrical generation on standby is needed to be built. The NDP changed the energy-only market to a capacity market with Bill 13 in order to stimulate investment. This means electricity prices will have nowhere to go but up.

The fact is that the stability the government has brought forward – the one thing that they continue to say repeatedly is that they've brought stable electricity rates to Alberta. I wholeheartedly agree with that. What happens here is that we have a government that put 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour as a cap, and we are most certainly going to be over that cap going forward. That means Albertans can expect 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour into our future, and that's disappointing because a lot of times we saw markets right at about 3 cents or 2 cents per kilowatt hour. So we're adding a lot of cost to the cost of electricity.

The problem, too, is that we also have delivery and transmission charges on our electricity bills. Now, that is for building up the infrastructure that we need to be able to get that electricity to residents and commercials and industry. What happens here is that if you look at your electricity bill now, you're going to find that more than half if not three-quarters of your bill is transmission or distribution charges. Clearly, that was never the intent.

The problem that we've got here is that once we move away from coal and towards renewables, we're going to need to have more infrastructure put in place, so what we've got is a spike that is most likely going to be coming from our distribution and transmission fees. Now, it is already unacceptably high, and a case can be made that – the fact is that I believe we need to actually review in depth what makes up the cost when it comes to our bills when it comes to electricity. When we see that our transmission and distribution charges, say, double – and I don't know what the cost is, but I can only assume that it's going to be significant because we need to get those solar farms and those wind farms connected to the grid – in the end our middle class is going to suffer.

Now, we've already suffered because we're shutting down the coal plants. We've already suffered because we've got the carbon tax. We've already suffered because our oil sands have been hammered with this government's decisions, whether it's the methane reduction – that's currently the big hurdle that's in front of us right now, which means that should the rules and regulations go forward as the government has proposed, I am looking at about 1,000 people within my area losing work. That's shameful. But to make matters worse, we're looking at probably 7,000 people across Alberta that are going to be put out of work. So now what we've got is well-paying jobs that are going to disappear from decisions and policy that this government is making.

Now, I would like to say that at least the government didn't surprise us with capacity markets. They didn't put it in their platform, but I believe that at the time they didn't know they were going to destroy our electricity market by implementing a carbon tax.

9:10

But what happened is that this Speech from the Throne – it's actually listed in here, and I like going back to what the agenda is for the government when they are moving forward with the new session. On page 8 of the throne speech it says, "Diversifying our electricity sector," and the very first sentence is: "Your government will create new jobs and protect people from wild electricity price swings." Doubling the cost of electricity and keeping it there doesn't seem to be a solution that I believe my constituents accept as a plan from this government. What'll end up happening is that in many cases you're going to find that the government is going to have repercussions from this going forward because once you go to a capacity market, it is very hard to undo if it doesn't work for you.

Now, I've heard from the government when they've been doing Bill 13 speeches. They're saying that other provinces or jurisdictions across the world have tried capacity markets. I would like to hear in detail on how it's working for them. I'll tell you that for me it seems strange that we would pay any energy producer to not produce energy. That essentially is what this is doing. Now, I understand that what they're trying to do is that they're trying to build renewable and they're trying to ensure that they have the ability to be able to supply power to Albertans. But here's the problem with capacity markets and renewables. When the sun doesn't shine and the wind doesn't blow, you need an alternate power source, so we need to always have something on the side ready to go. Duplication is what we've got right now.

Now, I don't remember the exact numbers, but from an article I remember reading, what we saw was that Ontario, for instance, is buying power – and I can be corrected on this – at 13 cents to 16 cents per kilowatt hour. This is from their solar farms and wind farms. Then what they're doing is that they're selling that same power to the United States for 4 cents per kilowatt hour. Now, what happens is that while the sun shines and the wind blows, you've got a ton of power. What happens here is that we always need to be

ensuring that we have the appropriate number of wind farms and solar farms but that we're not subsidizing something just to have it in place.

Now, Ontario and, I would say, the Ontario government is a prime example of what not to do when it comes to energy. They have ruined their energy system. They have incredible burdens put on their rural residents right now, where people are choosing between heating and power to their homes and paying mortgage payments. That's energy poverty or energy, more or less, denied to rural residents . . .

Mr. Strankman: And it's shameful.

Mr. Cyr: . . . and it is truly shameful that the Ontario government has gone down that road.

Now we've got the Premier of Ontario. She has outright said – and I don't have the quote in front of me – that she's not going to win: please vote for somebody else so that the Conservatives can't form government. That is because Ontarians have learned the lesson when it comes to energy, and we continue to go down the road where Ontario has proven that it doesn't work. Now we're getting a government that is going to be punished when it comes to the election that's coming up here. Punished. The question is whether they're even going to have a party left, an official party left, once that election is done because of how poorly they've managed their government there.

Mr. Strankman: We'll find that out tonight.

Mr. Cyr: And – good point – we'll find out tonight exactly where that's going.

I would wish everybody in Ontario fortune in whatever party they choose, but I will tell you that it is a telling tale when your Premier who has a majority government is looking at going down to no official party.

This is important because when we look at what happened in Alberta's past, we had a government, a Progressive Conservative government, for 44 years. This government, some will argue, did very well. Some will argue it didn't do well. But in the end what happened was that the people of Alberta decided to give the NDP Party a chance. The NDP Party promised not to be radical, in my opinion, and in the end we're seeing radical bills like Bill 13 coming forward. This is a radical bill because it is a radical change to our electricity system. We are going to be subsidizing this from Albertans most likely for generations. This is something I am passing on to my children and their children. It is shameful that we are debating this and the government is going to supporting this.

To move on to the throne speech again, I would like to say that the next sentence to this is:

Since Alberta's electricity system was deregulated, families, businesses, and investors have been subject to volatile electricity costs. That volatility was keeping investors on the sidelines.

Markets do that. What happens here is that when there is a need for energy, we would have somebody provide that energy. It's a simple system. That is the value of that. We never were short of energy, so it was a good system that we had in place. Was there volatility? Absolutely. But you know what? Your cap does more or less the same thing under both the market system and the capacity system, and it also does it through the other system as well. If you were trying to take volatility out of it, you could have done it in both market systems by putting the same cap on there, yet you chose to go with a more costly route, which is to pay our energy industry for actually not producing any energy. That seems strange to me. That's something that I can't see as an option that we should have moved forward with.

Now, it goes on:

At the same time, the electricity system generated harmful air pollution, with Alberta burning more coal than every other province combined.

We've got coal here. We've got clean coal here. I am waving my hands around too much, but I will tell you that what we've got in Alberta is an abundance of energy. We have the ability to create clean coal burning facilities. Why wouldn't we want to take advantage of that?

When you see Germany, for instance, which, from my understanding, has some of the worst coal on the Earth, when you compare us to them, we're phasing out coal and they're moving toward coal. That's a strange thing to be seeing. They've tried this renewable energy route that you're trying to move us towards, and it failed for them. Now what happens is that they've got incredible energy poverty happening in Germany.

We've got incredible energy poverty happening in Ontario. It is a common path when it comes to electricity that it seems everybody wants to fix our energy system, yet they don't want to do it with their own money; they want to do it with taxpayer money. They want to do it with debt. Debt is one of the things that we will pass on to future generations, and debt interest is something that will mean that we will have less money or less ability to provide programs in the future. Obviously, this is troublesome, and obviously this is not the direction that Albertans were hoping that we would go in. We need to be making sure that Alberta always has a stable energy source, that Alberta always has the ability to be able to provide energy in a way that Albertans are able to heat their homes. They'll be able to spend time with their families, with entertainment. They'll be able to drive their cars to get to and from work or to and from activities. In the end, Albertans depend on energy, and Albertans depend on cheap energy. This is one thing that has allowed Alberta to thrive.

9:20

Yet here we've got a government that continues to slap more and more taxes on our energy, making it harder and harder for our middle class and those that are, unfortunately, low income or seniors, all of those that have lower incomes, to be able to move forward with their lives. We're moving forward with making it more costly for them. Then we hand them an energy rebate or a carbon tax rebate. That rebate is meant to subsidize them for all of the costs. From what I've heard from my local seniors and my local middle-class families, the money that the rebate reimburses isn't anywhere near the cost that is being levied against their families. We are actually seeing people that are worse off because of this government.

It comes down to that they need this energy to live. This is not something that Albertans can do without. A lot of times what happens is that you'll have people compare us to other provinces or other states. Well, it is tough to compare us to, say, California when we require heat going into our homes in order to live whereas for Californians some may argue that down there they could do without any power if they were needing to because in the end they don't depend on power for their livelihood. Now, some could say that heat for seniors is a necessity down in California, and I think that argument could be made. What we can't do is ignore the fact that cheap energy in Alberta has allowed us to prosper.

We're seeing more and more businesses being put out of business because of the decisions this government has made. One of them is the carbon tax. The other is the incredible cost that is being levied on them, whether it's the minimum wage increase, whether it is – in some cases in my constituency we've seen the emissions cap, we've seen the methane reduction, and we've seen a lot of things

that this government has brought forward. Yet all of them seem to be putting people in my constituency out of work. The government knows this is going to happen, yet it still pursues those options. That is not consultation, that is not working with our industry, and that is not finding balance.

Now, I understand that the government wants to see radical change, a U-turn, if you will. Albertans aren't there yet, and I don't believe that Albertans should be responsible for that.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Mrs. Schreiner: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm honoured to stand in support of Bill 13 as a cosponsor of this bill. Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future, will implement the capacity market. We are excited about the made-in-Alberta approach we are taking to what is a proven market system. Over the past 18 months our government has worked with stakeholders, including industry and consumer groups, to ensure that we have designed the best possible capacity market for Alberta. Our new market system, once fully implemented in 2021, will make life better for Albertans. It will ensure that Albertans continue to have safe, reliable, sustainable, and affordable electricity, and it will attract investment from industry.

Madam Speaker, I need to speak to some comments made about the Brooks solar facility. It was stated in this Chamber that that facility was unstable and unreliable and that it was subsidized at 100 per cent. Comments were made suggesting that it produces too little energy, as if the project's developer did not account for solar's capacity factor when deciding whether the project was economic. This facility is privately owned, privately developed, and privately financed. It's important for us to defend private industry that has brought investment and jobs to Alberta.

I know that many in Brooks and the county of Newell are proud to be home to western Canada's first utility scale solar project. It is private investors who brought this facility to reality after securing innovation funding through the competitive application process back in 2014. It is an important early leader for working through the approvals and regulatory process and will set the industry up well for further solar investment in Alberta. The project used a significant amount of local labour and subtrades in a variety of roles, which not only represents economic development for the Brooks area, but it also builds local capacity in this growing renewable energy sector. This is good for Alberta.

We know that solar energy costs have come down substantially and that it produces energy well in line with higher demand and higher priced hours in Alberta. For that reason, solar energy is poised to bring a lot of benefit to Alberta, and people in and around Brooks can be proud to pioneer this trend. The county reeve is rightly excited about the opportunity to diversify the county's income streams. For these reasons, it is important to set the record straight and address comments that unnecessarily bashed private investment in Alberta.

Madam Speaker, I'd like to address another misconception raised repeatedly during second reading and Committee of the Whole debate. The statement has been made by members opposite that under this bill companies could be under contract for capacity, receive payments for that capacity, and could deny the provision of electricity. This is simply not so. Companies that deny providing electricity to the grid would be in breach of system operator rules. Alberta's existing energy market rules have must-offer requirements. This means generators that are connected to the electricity system must provide electricity when told to do so by the

Alberta Electric System Operator. Should a generator fail to provide electricity, they would be subject to investigation by the Market Surveillance Administrator and potential penalties from the Alberta Utilities Commission. This requirement will continue to apply with the capacity market.

Generators who receive a capacity payment will be required to be active in both the energy and capacity markets, and generators who win a capacity auction will be obligated through system operator rules to provide that capacity similar to the current requirements in the energy market. Be assured: Alberta's agencies will ensure that generators comply with all rules.

Madam Speaker, in addition to enabling the capacity market, Bill 13 will also protect Albertans from poor customer service. Bill 13 will hold electricity and natural gas service providers accountable for inappropriate business practices or breaches of customer service such as late or inaccurate bills. With this legislation the Alberta Utilities Commission will be able to directly issue specified penalties to electric and natural gas service providers for infractions. Currently the only enforcement tool the commission has is its formal hearing process, which can be lengthy and costly and is not in the best interest of consumers. It is past time to repair that gap. I am glad to support legislation that gives all members the opportunity to support this important piece of consumer protection.

This bill enables the changes needed to modernize Alberta's electricity system to ensure that it becomes a more stable and reliable network. Not only will it provide consumers with stable electricity prices, one of the key benefits of implementing a capacity market, but it will protect them from poor customer service by enabling the Alberta Utilities Commission to directly issue specified penalties to electricity and natural gas service providers for particular breaches.

Madam Speaker, I'm proud to support Bill 13, legislation that ensures Alberta's long-term prosperity while protecting Albertans and putting consumers first. Thank you.

9:30

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's with the greatest of respect that I ask my friend from Red Deer-North some questions in regard to her comments. My understanding was that her comments were directed and concerning the county of Brooks. There really isn't a county of Brooks; it's the county of Newell. I was actually speaking just yesterday to the Alberta Irrigation Projects Association manager about the development of irrigation in the county of Newell by the Eastern irrigation district. They have great concerns about the use of irrigable land for solar farms.

Madam Speaker, I was wondering if the Member for Red Deer-North could explain, where she talks about the infusion of solar panels, how that would negatively affect the irrigable land that's associated with the coverage by solar farms, because that coverage is not unlike suburban sprawl that's taking agricultural land out of production. If the Member for Red Deer-North would expound on that a little bit, please, I'd be greatly appreciative.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other comments? Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I did a quick look on some of the concerns that the hon. member from the NDP had brought forward, specifically about misinformation that may have come from the opposition side. You know what? Whenever there's

misinformation, we need to clarify it on the record. That just needs to happen.

I'm thankful that the member, if there's something that came forward – I do have an article, though, Alberta Renewable Revolution Begins with Launch of Largest Solar Project in Western Canada. This is an article that was put forward by CBC News on December 22, 2017, by Kyle – and I'm sorry, Kyle, whoever you are – Bakx. Now, in this article it says, "The project cost \$30 million and developers received \$15 million in grant funding." Now, in this case – the member from the NDP can clarify this, but what I understood from her comments was that none of this project was subsidized by the Alberta government. Clearly, this article says something very different from information that she may have provided.

Again, if the case is that there's an error in the record, it is important that we clarify this, because I do believe that any of these renewable projects that go forward that are put in place by Alberta, a lot of them are subsidized by the Alberta government. When we start seeing the capacity model come forward, we're going to see that these renewable projects will also be subsidized when they're not making power. That is troublesome as well. So to hear the member – I have nothing but respect for private investment. Absolutely, this is the way to go. But to make it sound like private investment is the only thing that holds this project up: I'm having a hard time jumping to that conclusion. The fact is that whenever we've got a renewable project going forward in Alberta, most likely you can always tie it to taxpayer money. Going forward, you can also tie that same project to some sort of subsidy.

If my colleague across the aisle had put some information out that said that it was a hundred per cent subsidized by the Alberta government – and, clearly, from the article that I have in front of me that says that maybe 50 per cent of it was subsidized by government, that sounds like there may have been an inconsistency. If that's the case, then I will apologize for my colleague because I don't believe that they ever meant to mislead to the House. But I do believe that it is a little misleading to say . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future. This bill is very complex, as we all spoke in this House many times. Today you'll hear more and more about our concerns and how we got here and what we told the NDP on how they can improve this bill and what other stakeholders told them. I'll bring up some points here, and we can discuss that later on in the next speeches. My colleagues here all have lots of information to share this morning.

After all of these ad hoc changes to the electricity system by the NDP, Bill 13 certainly takes the cake. This bill, Madam Speaker, is 50 or 51 pages. Even the numbering, you know, is not proper. It's a little bit weird. Anyway, it hides more information than it reveals. When I asked more questions, I was told: it will all be in regulations. When we ask when the regulations would come, nobody can give us a convincing answer.

Bill 13 was supposed to be all about bringing in and installing a capacity market, and while Bill 13 does that, there are a couple of other things Bill 13 also does. The NDP tried to change the laws – when I say "laws," it's not "loss"; it's "laws" – around utility asset disposition. The electricity distributors – EPCOR, Enmax, Fortis, AltaLink, ATCO, and AltaGas – all successfully lobbied to have this part of the bill amended, and the offending parts that were meant to close the gap created by the 2006 Stores Block decision were removed. It's not very often that government, let alone an

NDP government, amends its own bills. Now, the NDP government must have got utility asset disposition very wrong.

The NDP have also made a move to slip natural gas retailers under the Gas Utilities Act as a body that can be taken to the Alberta Utilities Commission and assigned specified penalties for not doing their job. I'm surprised the NDP tried to put utility asset disposition in this, the capacity market bill. Same with adding natural gas retailers and specified penalties to the Gas Utilities Act.

As I said, Madam Speaker, it's really complex. We in the Official Opposition did our job to try and make this Bill 13 better based on the stakeholder consultations we had and the input they gave to us. Not surprisingly, the NDP rejected our advice.

The UCP did not think an electricity generator should be receiving a capacity payment and then deny the provision of the electricity, thus being allowed to spike electricity prices when the Electric System Operator demands electricity. Now, we want the generators on a capacity contract to be forced to offer electricity to AESO for sale. Every minute of every day AESO asks for and buys the lowest price electricity. If a generator is allowed to receive a capacity payment without being forced to bid their electricity to the ISO, the Independent System Operator, the electricity price will rise.

9:40

How high does it have to rise before people are being forced to the food banks like they are in Ontario? That's shameful, Madam Speaker. Within Canada it's happening, and it's in the largest province of Canada. It has its own electoral implications, and we'll see that tonight. The Alberta NDP, probably by passing this Bill 13 today, is actually conceding the next election.

TransAlta got caught and fined \$56 million by the Alberta Utilities Commission for market manipulation by denying the provision of electricity in order to drive up the prices. Is this a practice the NDP wants to continue? I asked them, and I didn't get any convincing answer. It's fundamentally wrong to receive a capacity payment and then deny the market electricity. We want to keep prices as low as possible for the average Albertan, for the regular Albertans, and the NDP wants to drive them up. The NDP rejected that amendment to protect consumers, and the NDP wants to pay for capacity whether electricity is offered or not.

The UCP wanted to make sure the NDP had a minimum of 60 days to consult on the draft regulations. Such a timeline would put the draft regulation out now so the NDP can have the final regulations done for August as per Bill 13. We know the ministry is consulting. Setting up the capacity market is a serious and complex undertaking, but the NDP rejected this amendment. All this tells me is that the draft regulations are not ready. Otherwise, the NDP would have accepted the amendment. Electricity companies are going to have a mad scramble this summer in August when the final regulations are released.

The next amendment was FEOC. "Fair, efficient, open, and competitive" was not applied evenly to the capacity market in the legislation. In some cases it was just sloppy wording by the lawyers; in other cases, it was omitted. FEOC is standard language in the electricity sector, Madam Speaker, and cleaning up the bill's language ensures consistency and would have provided certainty to the electricity stakeholders, who do not want legal manoeuvring to allow the government or the AESO to skip out on commitments. But the NDP chose sloppy drafting and wiggle room. This does not bode well to instill confidence in the suppliers.

Our final suggestion was that the generators who win a capacity contract under the provisional rules do not want the provisional rules changing on them between the provisional rules and the final rules coming out. How can you award a contract and then change

the terms and conditions? The minister; the AESO, Alberta Electric System Operator; and the Alberta Utilities Commission can't go changing the rules midstream and expect people to bid and invest in capacity. But even this, Madam Speaker – even this – was rejected by the NDP. The NDP seems to believe that as long as the rule change is within the bounds of fair, efficient, open, and competitive, the AUC can force the change in the provisional market.

Madam Speaker, the NDP rejected these suggestions for improvement. I fear that we have a flawed piece of legislation that will give rise to a broken capacity market. Albertans will suffer because of this. Electricity prices will rise higher than they need to rise, and I fear energy poverty in Alberta because of what the NDP has done, everyday Albertans unable to afford their power bills and having to make decisions on whether to eat or heat their homes. We have people in Ontario, where Liberal electricity reforms for green energy have taken power bills from \$80 per month to \$309 per month – it's almost a fourfold increase – and that is without dishwashers, without clothes dryers, and without leaving appliances or lights on. That's a 386 per cent increase over eight years. That's Ontario.

What about Alberta? Borrowing from the Official Opposition leader's dissertations Monday night and early Tuesday morning, the NDP started down this road when they increased the carbon tax on heavy industrial emitters like the coal-fired generation plants. Alberta gets 60 to 65 per cent of its baseline power generation from coal, Madam Speaker, as you know, and this action tripped an opt-out clause contained in existing power contracts. This allowed holders of the unprofitable power purchase agreements, PPAs, to return them to the Balancing Pool. That was the starting point, because of that ideological decision the NDP has taken that triggered dumping of the PPAs. That's the starting point.

Now, let's follow this trail here carefully. The NDP government did not like this, so they sued themselves, claiming foul under the so-called Enron clause being slipped into the PPAs at the last minute. The taxpayers of Alberta had to cover the losses on the PPAs while the PPAs were extant for those two years of the court case, and the losses kept mounting.

Also, it's funny, Madam Speaker. Neil McCrank, who was a former deputy minister and a former AUC chair, was blamed for that Enron clause, through no fault of his own, and he challenged it. All he asked was: hey, I'm in no way connected with that; you're mistaken; let's talk; withdraw your allegation, and apologize. And this government refused to engage him. Then he went to court, because he had to defend his reputation, and he, being a former bureaucrat, was indemnified by AUC. Then we, taxpayers, Albertans, ended up paying for his legal fees. Shame on this government.

The Balancing Pool spent more than \$700 million from its investment portfolio to cover the losses on the PPAs due to the government's action. Then the Balancing Pool borrowed a further \$566 million from the province at year-end 2017, last year, hiding the true cost from the consumers. That's how the NDP is hiding the true cost, Madam Speaker. In 2018 all Alberta electricity consumers will pay a surcharge, instigated by the Balancing Pool, in order to help pay for these losses of a further \$190 million. This list is, you know, endless, and someone like the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake, who is a professional accountant, hopefully can help me in adding up all these losses. They are mounting up, and the taxpayer is on the hook to pay for them.

9:50

Then to hide the cost to consumers again, Madam Speaker – you see, there is a pattern here – the NDP instituted a price cap on the

regulated rate option for residential electricity, at an estimated cost of \$74 million for this fiscal year, or 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour, and the price ceiling remains in place till May 2021, meaning that the price tag could still grow. If you talk to my colleague from Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, he has lots of consultations with the rural electrification agencies, the REAs. When he speaks next, you can hear from him what they told us.

Twelve of Alberta's 18 baseload coal plants were scheduled to close down, one way or another, by 2030, and the other six plants are merchant plants designed and built to be in operation as late as 2061, which is four decades away from now, more than 40 years away from now.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I really was interested in hearing the rest of my colleague's speech, and if he wouldn't mind continuing, I would appreciate that.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Member. I will continue here. Those power plants which were meant to be closed in 2061: the NDP accelerated the phasing out of those coal plants. The NDP government, under its climate leadership plan, had to compensate the existing plant owners, who were to operate these six plants well past 2030, for stranded capital costs. Alberta will pay three of the four affected parties – TransAlta, ATCO, and Capital Power – a total of \$97 million annually, or \$100 million to round up, over 14 years, beginning last year, in 2017, for a total cost of \$1.36 billion. I don't know if anyone is adding up all these numbers. It keeps adding.

You heard that right, Madam Speaker and members. The NDP are paying more than the cost of the south campus hospital to close down perfectly good coal plants. The NDP could have used that money to pay for the new south Edmonton hospital, but they chose the ideological coal shutdown over the new hospital. These six coal-fired electricity generation plants in Alberta were among the most advanced coal-fired facilities in the world, utilizing supercritical boiler technology, which operates at higher steam temperatures and pressures to drive a high-efficiency steam turbine, and carbon dioxide emissions per megawatt are lower than those from conventional coal-fired power plants in the rest of the world by 18 to 20 per cent.

Here we are today, Madam Speaker, with a capacity market, Bill 13, to raise the power rates to stimulate the generation build-out needed to provide the backup power for all the wind farms and solar farms the NDP are foisting on Albertans. Bill 13 represents the culmination of the NDP ad hoc electrical system redesign, that has cost Albertans billions of dollars and keeps costing Albertans more and more. In the following discussions today I'll bring up how much it cost in total. The NDP ruined the low-cost electricity advantage we had for ideology.

As a result, I cannot support Bill 13. I don't think Albertans have any appetite to support this Bill 13, and I don't think my colleagues on this side of the House have any inclination to support this bill. We might have thought about that if the NDP had accepted at least one amendment or a couple of amendments that we brought in, but they chose not to because they don't want to improve the bill. They just want to punish Albertans, who elected them. Now Albertans will be ready to punish them in less than a year.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other speakers to the bill? Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to talk about section 3 of Bill 13, which, of course, deals with the Gas Utilities Act. Section 28.3 of the Gas Utilities Act deals with how to handle poor-performing gas distributors, default supply providers, and now under Bill 13 it will add retailers to the legislation.

Now, in addition to administrative penalties, the Alberta Utilities Commission will now be allowed to levy a specified penalty under the new proposed section 63.1 of the Alberta Utilities Commission Act, found in section 1 of Bill 13, the bill that we're discussing in this place today.

Now, I'm concerned about this. Madam Speaker, up in Mackenzie county along the Peace River, in La Crête, an area, I'm sure, you know well – Buffalo Head Prairie, Paddle Prairie, Keg River – growth is great. It's been growing significantly up there. You may or may not be aware that there's a local natural gas shortage in that area. Now, in December 2017 there was an emergency as temperatures reached minus 40. People could not get enough natural gas to heat their homes due to low pressure of the gas line in those communities. Demand exceeded supply.

Mr. Strankman: Direct it to the Speaker so that the Speaker knows.

Mr. Nixon: For sure. Thank you.

Demand exceeded supply in those communities, a pretty concerning, I would say, situation, definitely scary if you're in a situation where you're trying to heat your home at minus 40. But it's also creating a situation where it's stifling development. It's stifling development in those communities because of the lack of gas. If you're hearing stories in those communities about not being able to get gas at a time of year when it's minus 40, in communities where it's minus 40, as you know, Madam Speaker, a lot; I assume you know, because you are the MLA in that area, that it gets cold there a lot – you would probably not be as encouraged to develop in those areas because of that gas shortage.

Further to that, though, even new businesses that want to come to those areas despite the challenges are now being turned away because of the lack of gas. It'll take the Northern Lights Gas Co-op 10 years, Madam Speaker – I don't know if you know this – to raise the \$45 million from ratepayers needed to build the new 65-kilometre pipeline. And now we find out – this is why it's relevant to this bill – that the NDP have snuck into Bill 13 some amendments to the Gas Utilities Act where the AUC can order a specified penalty against a retailer like the Northern Lights Gas Co-op in Mackenzie county for failure to deliver natural gas. Shocking that not one northern Alberta NDP MLA has even risen in this House to speak on behalf of these poor people that are about to experience this inside their communities or are already experiencing this inside their communities. It's very concerning to me.

I was talking to some people in Mackenzie county the other day, and they're disappointed in that, which is why we're rising on their behalf to represent them in this Assembly on this issue. This has been snuck into Bill 13. This is the behaviour that we get from the NDP government: the lack of regard at all, the lack of concern, even for communities that they represent. I mean, it's one thing when they come to this Assembly, and we talk about our communities. They seem to want to ignore the concerns of those communities, but even for communities that they represent, nobody from northern Alberta in the NDP caucus has spoken about this.

Mr. Piquette: Oh, that's not true.

Mr. Nixon: They have spoken about it. They've spoken about it in defence of it. The Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater is now heckling me because he's a northern Alberta MLA who has not spoken, defending his constituents on this issue, a prime example of that.

The question, then, becomes: why did the NDP sneak these amendments into Bill 13 despite the concerns that would be happening in northern Alberta communities? I would suggest, Madam Speaker, that it is yet another example of the NDP falling short, at the very least, maybe not doing their job. The members that represent northern Alberta in the NDP caucus, I'm sure, do respect and care for their communities. It may be that they just have not taken the time to actually understand the legislation that they are voting for because the government just asked them to.

I will move an amendment to give them another chance. I have the appropriate copies for the pages.

10:00

The Deputy Speaker: Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I move that the motion for third reading of Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future, be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future, be not now read a third time but that it be recommitted to Committee of the Whole for the purpose of reconsidering sections 2 and 3.

Now, the reason I move this amendment, as articulated in my preamble before the amendment, is out of concern for all Albertans, particularly some concerns around what is taking place in northern Alberta and some of the counties up there and the tremendous impact that this legislation may have on them – it may continue to make the situation worse out there – and the fact that none of their representation will speak on their behalf on this issue.

The NDP, who are the government right now, need to be trying to help the county up. We need to be trying to help these areas out. Instead, what we have right now is that the NDP are lining up to kick the county when they're down. Instead of helping the county get up, the NDP are lining up to kick the county when they're down, which is why this needs to go to Committee of the Whole and be reconsidered to make sure that we are getting it right. I certainly hope that no member would want to continue to watch large portions of our province be kicked when they're down.

You know, Northern Lights Gas Co-op is adding two compressors to its pipeline to increase pressure to the system to try to deal with some of the situations I've discussed, which will boost capacity, but it's a Band-Aid until the new pipeline is built. Lenard Racher, who's the chief administration officer for Mackenzie county, says that if action is not done now, the county will be in trouble in two to three years. The county is going so far as to now consider not hooking up natural gas to new homes, which, of course, stifles development again, but it also means that there are more trucks with propane, et cetera, driving on the roads.

Mr. Strankman: It's dangerous.

Mr. Nixon: For sure.

This is what happens, though, Madam Speaker, when you have a governing caucus that continues to just provide a cabinet and their leadership a blank cheque without looking through legislation or taking the time to be able to defend their constituents and ask questions. It is a very reasonable question for any MLA, but particularly an MLA from northern Alberta, to ask why these clauses have been snuck into Bill 13.

I know that counties across northern Alberta, that are talking to us, and constituents across northern Alberta are concerned about these clauses. We still have not seen – even today during third reading the minister has not risen to speak to her own piece of legislation. She has refused to communicate at all about this legislation. I would encourage the minister to today. During the debate on Bill 13 I would hope that she would finally get up and address some of these concerns, to give the answers.

While I get that the NDP has complete disdain for the Official Opposition – that's fine; that's their choice – they should not for the people that we represent, and they certainly should not for the people that they represent who are asking questions. This is not a county or an area of the province that I currently represent though I do enjoy visiting from time to time. This is an area that is represented by the NDP caucus, and nobody in this House on the government side will take a few moments out of their day to talk about legislation that this minister is asking us to pass. This minister is asking us to vote on Bill 13, to support it, but will not stand up and answer simple questions about the bill itself, will not address the concerns. You know, this goes back to the trust issue. It's a problem.

I do not know, Madam Speaker, if you know:

If the [AUC] is of the opinion that the gas distributor, default supply provider or retailer has failed or is failing to meet the service standards rules, the [AUC] may ...

- (a) direct the gas distributor, default supply provider or retailer to take any action to improve services that the Commission considers just and reasonable.

Inside Mackenzie county they can't accomplish that at this moment. They just don't have the capacity, and if it gets cold, they're in a situation.

They could

- (b) direct the gas distributor, default supply provider or retailer to provide the customer with a credit, in an amount specified by the Commission, to compensate the customer for the gas distributor's, default supply provider's or retailer's failure to meet the service standards rules.

Well, that, at face value, seems entirely reasonable. When you go and look at the gas co-op in Mackenzie county, they literally can't right now because there's no capacity.

Instead of the government focusing on how they could help that municipality get through that issue and be able to take care of their constituents, they come to this place and focus on an ideological agenda, completely abandoning the county, kicking the county when they're down, and not having a serious talk about what the consequences could be to this community. I can think of no clearer example of what we've been talking about repeatedly inside this Chamber, over and over and over. Sadly, this is the NDP's track record, focused on their ideological agenda, you know, spending time, obviously, just talking to each other and to a tight bubble.

I can say that, Madam Speaker, because if they weren't, they would know about what was going on in Mackenzie county. They would be standing in this Chamber and they'd be saying: "Minister, I'm on your team. I'm part of your government." I'm not, and I want that clear in *Hansard*. But they would be saying that and saying: why is this not being fixed? They would be bringing amendments in Committee of the Whole right now to be able to defend the people that they represent. Instead, they continue just to rubber-stamp the process.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

So that's why I brought forward this amendment. I certainly hope that all members of the Assembly will consider supporting that

amendment and making sure that we can get this piece of legislation right for all Albertans.

I thank you for your time, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Peace River.

Ms Jabbour: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I really felt like I had to get up and correct the record based on some of the comments made by the previous speaker. I represent the constituency of Peace River, and I'm very proud to represent that constituency. That constituency includes Mackenzie county, which is the largest county in the province.

Back in December, when we first became aware – in fact, I've been aware of the gas shortage problem for quite a while. I have a very good relationship with Northern Lights Gas Co-op. We even meet on a regular basis. My assistant attends all of their meetings and gives me feedback, so I always know exactly what's going on. When the crisis came up in December, when we were at minus 40, that week – I think it was Christmas or right after Christmas – immediately the Premier's office contacted me and said: "What's going on? What can we do to help?" I immediately contacted the reeve and the county. We followed through.

Shortly after that, we had a meeting with the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, with a number of the gas people, including ATCO, with members of the community, with the county, and we talked about solutions. We put everything on the table. The minister at that time made it clear that there was only one desired outcome, that we were going to fix this problem. It didn't matter what had to be done – we were going to look at different solutions – but the problem needed to be fixed before another crisis came up. We've been working very hard on this issue, and the community knows that. Mackenzie county knows that.

I received an e-mail from the reeve this morning. He wanted to get my feedback because CBC just did a flyby and an article about the issue. He said that, you know, he wanted to know my feedback, what I thought about the article. He expressed his concern that even though he had told the reporters how much he appreciated all of my hard work, all of the Minister of Energy's hard work, and the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry's hard work to solve this problem, the reporters had chosen to eliminate that from the article. They all recognize it. They all see it. They know I'm working hard for that constituency.

I don't appreciate having incorrect information being brought forward to this House that implies that I am not doing my job. I am.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Any other members under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I, too, have the same problem in my constituency of Bonnyville-Cold Lake. I would ask the Member for Peace River, who chairs the NADC, to realize that this is an actual northern problem. Maybe it needs to be addressed as a concern that is brought forward for our entire area. I have had my office reach out to Agriculture, and we haven't so far had a response. But the fact is that when it comes to gas in my area, North East Gas is the gas distributor in my area. They can't get gas, and we are actually losing commercial projects in my constituency right now because we cannot get the supply.

10:10

With North East Gas, what happens here in my constituency – this is why it's disappointing to see that sections 2 and 3 are slipped into this specific bill – is that they can't get the gas. They have to accept every application that comes in, and then when the application gets processed, they have to tell them that they have no gas. It's the craziest system ever. But now what will happen is that when they deny them, it's going to open it up to other companies that are larger in Alberta, more or less forcing these REAs out of business. It is shameful that they cannot get the supply they need in order to supply northeastern Alberta.

This is not just a northwestern problem, and I would ask the Member for Peace River: will she bring this forward as an NADC concern for northern Alberta?

The Acting Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Peace River.

Ms Jabbour: I just want to briefly comment that, yes, absolutely. NADC has discussed this, and it's something we will continue to discuss.

Thank you, hon. member.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to thank the MLA for Peace River for her advocacy on this. She's not the only one advocating for that.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the motion? The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a fine day in Alberta here, and it's a fine day in the Assembly. It's a fine day outside as well. In the Chamber today I'm sensing an urgency for the business to be proceeded with, but I'm also smelling in the air the smell of fresh-cut grass, and it's an honour to be speaking here in this Chamber but also a pleasure to smell those odours inside the place rather than some of the normal atmosphere that we have of hot air.

Madam Speaker, I believe that when discussing Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future, it's important to take caution when looking at the bill. I believe that if we step back and we're able to take a bit more time, which we attempted to do several times in this opposition's proposed amendments – we have had quite lively discussion recently on I believe it was amendment REC, proposed by the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, and we've had some quite lively, informative discussions under section 29(2)(a) – we could see more clearly that there are consequences or in some cases unintended consequences that may happen as a result of passing the bill.

Madam Speaker, we owe it to ourselves and we owe it to Albertans to make sure that we get this bill right. Some of the legislation that's passed in here is a hallmark of longevity. In my riding there are people who are still looking at – and many know in this Chamber that I've fought it – outdated federal legislation, dating back to 1943. As a result of that repeal, in Alberta we see a marvellous economic development going forward. I believe that it's never wrong to take time to consult. It's been suggested by this government that at some points consultation, as believed by some, is simply burdensome red tape.

I think that it's important to speak about components of this bill that truly change how our electricity market works. This bill takes us from an energy-only market to a capacity market. Madam Speaker, that's a significant set of words there: energy only to capacity market. In doing so, those electricity prices will be more expensive. My compatriot from Bonnyville-Cold Lake has talked about the unsuccess of the Premier in Ontario and now her abandonment, it would appear, of her political career based on a lot of the unforeseen, unintended consequences of legislation. Here in Alberta, though, this NDP government would argue that the cost to the consumer is capped and that the price cannot go beyond 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour until 2021. Well, Madam Speaker, that's what is said on the one hand, but on the other hand the government had to offset this and create an offside that had to be covered by some \$74.310 million. Those are not small numbers. It's certainly about more than 100 times the spring budget that my son uses on our farm to put the crop in the ground, and we're quite aghast at the small numbers that our operation uses. So this has been set aside in the budget to look after the potential shortfall of the revenues to pay for the misguided agenda proceeds from the carbon tax. But another question going forward is: with increased costs, what if this 74-plus million dollars isn't enough to cover the costs?

I'd like to go back a couple of years so that we can see that there was the formation of a plan by this government so that this overage cost could be paid for not by the consumers necessarily but by all Albertans. Unfortunately, how Albertans will pay for that is with excessive, long-term, significantly large, approaching three digits now, \$100 billion of debt.

Madam Speaker, I'd like to take a trip back to Bill 10, the Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016, which at the time took away the accountability of this Legislature with regard to how much it can borrow. Just four months prior to that, this very government said that they wanted to raise the amount that they can borrow to 15 per cent of the gross domestic product, an amount that they've since blown through and why they want an unlimited debt ceiling. It's beyond the pale. Looking back then, we knew that this was a problem that the government didn't altogether plan for. We had a gigantic problem that we're heading for. It would certainly appear that some of the cautionary presentations by this side of the Chamber are coming true.

Going back to 2016 and a bill that, arguably, is one of the smallest bills that I've seen go through this floor but with tremendous consequences, Bill 34, Electric Utilities Amendment Act, 2016, assented to in 2016, reads:

Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, enacts as follows:

Amends SA 2003 cE-5.1

- 1 The Electric Utilities Act is amended by this Act.
- 2 The following is added after section 82:
Loans to the Balancing Pool and guarantee
82.1 The President of Treasury Board, Minister of Finance may, on the recommendation of the Minister of Energy, make loans to the Balancing Pool and guarantee the obligations of the Balancing Pool.

So, Madam Speaker, we're seeing the verification of some of our concerns about the presentation of a supposedly low, locked-in price, but on the other side of the shell game we see the guarantee by the requirement for debt covering north of \$74 million. We see the guarantee of the obligations of the Balancing Pool by the Minister of Energy so that no matter how badly they messed up this file, they would always have a way to cover it. This is covered in this legislation I've just described. This would not be covered by the consumers of the electricity but by the average taxpayer, taxpayers in general. They would be on the hook for whatever has

been run short because the government can borrow, by the legislation just described, whatever it takes for this or any of its projects and leave the taxpayers on the hook for the bill. Why, I ask, is the government short? Well, let's just dip into the seemingly unending pot of debt that the government has set up through Bill 10, as previously mentioned.

10:20

This brings us to today, Madam Speaker. As a result of the coal-fired generation phase-out and the push for 30 per cent renewables generation by 2030, the reliability of our electrical system would appear to easily be compromised. The phase-out of coal-fired electricity: the federal government under Mr. Harper had said that existing plants built in the last 50 years are grandfathered, meaning they would have up to 2030 to close or – they give an option of choice; Mr. Harper and I get along famously on the use of the word “choice,” because he was one that provided significant choice to Canadian farmers, of which I was one – to introduce carbon capture and storage technology to reduce those emissions. As you can see, there was an option for these plants to continue on.

In my riding, the riding of Drumheller-Stettler, in the community and the town of Hanna near the Sheerness plant operated by ATCO, they've explored many various ways to reduce the pollution, or perceived pollution by many, to an acceptable level. They've been ongoingly doing these experiments. What effectively is happening here close to home and in communities like Hanna, Forestburg, or Keephills, for that matter, is the premature closure of their coal-fired plants, and that is, frankly, openly harmful to their communities.

This bill is a reaction or a result of this government's plan to phase-out coal and push for renewables. Many Albertans have no problem with new technology and no problem with the influence of renewables, but they want to know that it's going to be a fair and economical process going forward, with highlights on the word “economical.” In doing so, this government, Alberta's newest government, the NDP government, has compromised the reliability of the electrical system and has made it so that the electricity prices are or will be more expensive and less reliable. We see that we may – I should remove the word “may” from the *Hansard* records. They've done this without consulting communities directly affected. They've done this after. They've consulted after the fact.

I'd like to draw your attention to the communities of Hanna and Forestburg or the power-generating plant at Keephills 3, which was to close in 2061, or even Genesee 3, that was to close in 2055. Coal-fired electricity has made up over half of all electrical generation up to this point in Alberta and has provided us with safe, stable, inexpensive base power, base generation, that Albertans could rely completely, predictably upon. They were paid for what they produced.

Under the capacity market and using renewables, there seems to be a problem because the wind doesn't blow all the time and the sun doesn't always shine even though in the summertime we have more daylight hours. There are some new efficiencies to solar panels, but the backup plan is simple cycle peaker plant generation to cover off for the wind. Madam Speaker, these plants are considerably more expensive than the long-term, stable generation of the base power units that we have presently on hand. The AESO demands that there be a 15 per cent reserve margin, and neither wind nor solar can be used in that factor.

The good folks, my constituents in Hanna and in the Battle River-Wainwright constituency, Forestburg, in fact, all the Albertans that I've talked to have zero trust in the government when it comes to this electricity generation program and delivery model. In fact, reliability is a factor in why these folks have no confidence in their

ability to deliver reliable power, not to mention the emotional and financial harm that they're inflicting on these communities. This is why we have pushed so hard to make amendments like the one previously before us, A1. It's important that these communities have been brought to a position in time. The government needs to fully consider what additional trickle-down effects or unintended consequences – and I repeat myself: trickle-down effects – these communities may experience.

Now, there are other interesting ways, and the government needs to take the extra time to consult and get all stakeholders on the same page. There have been some consultations, Madam Speaker, and it's been basically involved with the communities and the adherents to the delivery of some grants. Those communities are left beholden. Not unlike an old storied fable where the young lad was asking for another cup of porridge, these communities are asking for some form of extra patronization and being patronized in some cases by the government to get their funding.

Hanna, for example, will be losing approximately 200 full-time jobs, great wages, Madam Speaker, that a family could easily be raised on. Those 200 jobs are paid an average of \$90,000 per year per job, and that's a tremendous loss for the families and the town. These are great-paying jobs. My Hanna constituency office manager: her husband drives a coal truck out there, and they're pleased, proud, and happy to be residents of the area. They're wondering how their mortgage is going to be paid as this phase-out goes forward.

Madam Speaker, \$90,000 per worker for 200 jobs is \$18 million, and the patronizing way that the government has approached the community so far has been far, far, far less than \$18 million. That would not be a huge loss of income for the city of Edmonton or Calgary in pure numbers, but for the town of Hanna that's 7.5 per cent of their population.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you. You know, I was curious on how Hanna is being impacted by this potential legislation. If the member wouldn't mind continuing to explain to us how it's going to impact Hanna, I would appreciate that.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I hope it wasn't too boring a regaling, but the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake seems to think that I have some credence here, so I'll continue.

Like I was saying, if you did the same comparison to the city of Calgary, if you did an initiative that would cost the city of Calgary 7.5 per cent at the stroke of a pen, then Calgary would lose 90,000 jobs. That would be using the same comparative number to Calgary. The economy of Calgary would be staggered, and the housing market would be staggered. Beyond the tanking of the whole economic environment there, I think that this government needs to realize and Albertans in general need to realize that Hanna would be flooded by this. These good-paying jobs are serious for the region. There are other economic development opportunities, but it's important. It just kills the economic incentive for anyone to even live there.

I'm concerned about what this government has done for a backup plan, as I said, Madam Speaker, for the \$18 million of job income lost. So far they've come forward with \$455,000. To the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake, \$455,000 isn't even hardly interest on \$18 million. So it's a staggering comparison, and it's a reality check

of the numbers that are going forward, but it also is an extreme ripple effect of what happens in these communities like Forestburg, where the power is generated as well, towns like Halkirk, Castor, Coronation, Donalda, even reaching out closer to my district in Oyen.

These people feel the loss of the money that normally would be created, and \$455,000 in a handout – or recently there was some \$270,000 in a handout – doesn't necessarily equate to the \$18 million of good, honest-paying jobs where people have enthusiasm in reality to go to work for. This pain is hitting hard, Madam Speaker, in the area, and it will further hit these small communities throughout rural Alberta and somewhat in central Alberta, and this cannot be recovered in those low agricultural production areas by more agriculture in the present form. There need to be other forms of economic development, and that isn't necessarily by the construction phases of solar panels or wind farms.

10:30

What seems to be missing from Bill 13 is the economic withholding, Madam Speaker. Economic withholding is the ripple effect or the countercycle of job removal. Companies that set up shop in Alberta should not be receiving a capacity payment and then at the same time reject or deny the supplying of electricity when AESO wants electricity in order to spike those electricity prices. This practice of unintentionally pricing power generation out of the market to deliver price spikes in many jurisdictions is regarded as illegal, but without addressing it here in Bill 13, is the government accepting this behaviour? Is it considering it permissible?

Another strong argument right here for hitting the pause button, as my good friend from Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills attempted to do with his prior amendment, is that it's never too late for the government to start doing the right thing and take a step back and make sure we have this right. This consultation period before enacting regulations was a good idea, and the government should have embraced it, but this government purports to be a fan of new technologies and new ideas and are putting more money into them through their carbon emission reduction plan, picking winners and losers.

Now, given that coal is being used for power generation here in Alberta until 2030, that's another 12 years from now that these plants will be operating. It seems odd for a government that claims to care about the environment and makes me wonder why there seems to be no investment and research in the development of clean coal technology. The environment minister talks about it. They talk about exporting it, but we haven't seen that in any great capacity. Technology advances could reduce Alberta's emissions over the next 12 years. [The time limit for questions and comments expired] Excuse me.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to be able to rise today to speak to the amendment put forward by the hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, in which he moves that the motion for third reading of Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future, be not now read a third time but that it be recommitted to Committee of the Whole for the purpose of reconsidering sections 2 and 3.

Madam Speaker, I know that we're all familiar with the term "to err is human," and I would argue that the purpose of this amendment, this recommittal, is to address an error and to address

some concerns that have been discovered in Bill 13 and to bring it back to Committee of the Whole, where we can perhaps provide for the government some amendments that would create a better bill. I think that's what the purpose of this Legislature is, to make sure that whatever legislation we pass through this House is indeed good for the citizens of Alberta.

In this notice of amendment we see clearly that they've identified some sections of the bill that need to be reconsidered. Madam Speaker, it references sections 2 and 3, and if I turn to page 45 of Bill 13, *An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future*, I can see that in section (3) it says:

If the Commission is of the opinion that the gas distributor, default supply provider or retailer has failed or is failing to meet the service standards rules, the Commission may by order do all or any of the following:

(a) ... take any action to improve services that the Commission considers just and reasonable.

Let's see. It says here that they can

- (b) direct the gas distributor, default supply provider or retailer to provide the customer with a credit, in an amount specified by the Commission, to compensate the customer for the gas distributor's, default supply provider's or retailer's failure to meet the service standards rules;
- (c) prohibit ... any activity or conduct that the Commission considers to be detrimental to customer service;
- (d) impose an administrative penalty under section 63 of the *Alberta Utilities Commission Act*;
- (e) impose a specified penalty under section 63.1 of the *Alberta Utilities Commission Act*.

If we take a look on page 10 of Bill 13, we can see that under section 63.1, specified penalties, they can prescribe contraventions of Commission rules, orders or decisions in respect of which a specified penalty may be imposed and prescribing the amounts, or the manner of determining the amounts, up to a maximum of \$10 000 per contravention, or if a contravention continues for more than one day up to a maximum of \$10 000 per day, of the specified penalties that may be imposed.

Madam Speaker, this amendment asks us to reconsider because we've seen that there are some errors throughout Bill 13, that we've brought to this government's attention. We understand that Bill 13, in some ways, was an absolute necessity once you have gone away from an energy-only market. The energy-only market produced the lowest prices in North America without any government subsidies in the production of electricity.

Madam Speaker, we have an energy system that, while prone to price swings, was working and functioning very well. The interference by this government with things like the specified gas emitters' agreements or the generators' contracts and the PPA agreements have thrown the electricity market into crisis to the point where it's cost the citizens of Alberta somewhere around \$2 billion to move from an energy-only market to a capacity market. When you do that, when you move to a capacity market when an energy-only market provided the lowest prices in North America, you've got to start asking some questions.

Now, we know that the purpose or the reason that they've moved towards this is because they wanted to enhance the renewable energies component of electricity provided in Alberta. That in and of itself is a laudable goal, assuming that you are not burdening the taxpayers of this province excessively. When you start to provide energy alternatives which cannot provide a reliable electrical system for the province of Alberta and for the people of Alberta, you are going to have some significant issues arise. For instance, you know, the sun shines and the wind blows but not always. We know that when it comes to solar power or wind, almost 64 per cent

of the time zero power is produced. That creates a problem with the electrical grid because it's no longer reliable.

Is this reasonable? As the opposition we've questioned the wisdom of this government as it moves down this path. It's not that we're against renewables, but we need to have an electrical system that is reliable and is not unreasonably attacking the pocketbooks of the citizens of Alberta.

Because we are moving away from coal and towards more renewable energy, we need to have things like peaker plants that can provide energy that's ready to go when the wind doesn't blow and when the sun doesn't shine. That's an additional cost to the system. In many ways we have to question why we're creating a capacity market which is going to be paying for energy that actually isn't going to be produced. But we are paying for the capacity for that to happen because we are moving towards renewable energies that are not baseload energy. This is a concern, and as the opposition we felt that we needed to bring this forward to the government's attention.

Madam Speaker, that's not the only other option or problem that we sometimes face. Sometimes we face a situation when the sun is shining and when the wind is blowing, with renewable energies like solar and wind, where energy is being produced when it's not actually needed. What do we do with that excess energy? Again, there's a cost.

10:40

I know that when we were working on coal in my constituency, where we have the Genesee power plant – it's a stable, reliable source of energy that had some of the best not only energy efficiency but also environmental efficiencies anywhere in the world, and the environmental costs and the greenhouse gas costs to these coal-fired burning plants, while slightly more than renewable energy, were by many Alberta standards within acceptable and reasonable norms, at least to the point where we could have followed an already set-out path for taking coal offline without stranding assets, as we've done under this government, which, again, has come at a cost to the citizens of Alberta and to the taxpayers of Alberta.

But when that sun shines and when that wind blows and when we have excess energy, what do we do? Well, again, we have to spend more resources. If you take a look at the Brazeau Dam, that's out in my constituency, in Drayton Valley, they have a project whereby they will be using the old river channel. When electricity prices are low, they will use that to pump water that has come out of the dam back into the second channel, and then they will open up the sluice gates again when electricity prices are high. Essentially, if you can just think of that second channel as a battery that stores energy, that is one way of dealing with some of that excess electrical capacity when the sun is shining and when the wind is blowing.

I mentioned the other day about ATCO and their Australian project, where they are using excess energy when the wind blows and the sun shines to produce hydrogen, which they store in abandoned pipelines and which, when they need the energy, can be used to produce energy through an electrical power plant. There's a loss of energy in conversion of that. They're telling me that they can achieve about 60 per cent efficiency, but it is one example of how we can find alternatives when we are looking at the whole issue of the unreliability of renewable energy. But it comes at a price, usually to the taxpayers of this province.

There are problems with this vision of the government as they move forward, and this amendment actually helps us to address that. We referred to section 3 of Bill 13, that deals with the *Gas Utilities Act*. We've read page 45 in here, which talks about – let

me just find it here – the commission and what it can do when a “retailer has failed . . . to meet the service standards rules.”

Now, in section 28.3 of the Gas Utilities Act it deals with how to handle poor-performing gas distributors and default supply providers, and now under Bill 13 we’re adding retailers to the equation. In addition to the administrative penalties that are set out by the Alberta Utilities Commission, they will now be allowed to levy a specified penalty under the new proposed section 63.1 of the Alberta Utilities Commission Act. We found on page 10 of Bill 13 that it read that they can levy a fine of \$10,000 per contravention and \$10,000 per day per contravention. This is a significant penalty that is built into a bill that styles itself as Alberta’s electricity future yet is dealing with gas.

Now, we know that recently, and it’s been referred to by other MLAs in this House, there was a CBC article – I believe that it came out on Monday – talking about the problems that are being felt in Mackenzie county. Along the Peace River and in the La Crête area and Buffalo Head Prairie and Paddle Prairie and Keg River the population growth has been very large. In the good economic times that we had prior to this government, the population in this province was growing as economic opportunity was here in Alberta, and they have experienced significant growth. One of the things that has happened as a result of that is that it’s put a stress and a strain on the provision of local natural gas, that there has been a shortage.

In December 2017 we saw this shortage and what it means to real people and the average individual in Alberta when they do not have access to proper supplies of natural gas. In December 2017 the temperatures reached minus 40, quite common in Alberta for the winter. I know that when I travel down south sometimes and we talk about minus 40, they can’t wrap their heads around minus 40. But you and I know, Madam Speaker, that in minus 40 weather we don’t want to have our furnaces go out, and we actually do have to have a product like natural gas if we’re going to be able to go through the winter in any kind of comfort and safety.

Now, the people could not get enough natural gas to heat their homes due to low pressure in the gas lines because demand was exceeding the supply of natural gas. This not only is, obviously, an issue of safety – I mean, think about it, Madam Speaker; we’re talking about Albertans having to worry about their safety – but this also has developed a problem in that business has been stifled because of this lack of natural gas. New businesses are being turned away. It will take the Northern Lights Gas Co-op, which provides the supply of gas, 10 years to raise the \$45 million from the ratepayers that will be needed to build a new 65-kilometre pipeline. Ten years: cold comfort, isn’t it?

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, when we hear that ratepayers are not going to have safety for 10 years, that seems to be a hurdle that is significant for northwestern Alberta. I’d like to hear some more of my colleague’s speech that describes how the 10 years of potentially unsafe circumstances that these Albertans are being put in is unacceptable.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the MLA for Bonnyville-Cold Lake for his question. You know, if there’s a reason to vote in favour of this amendment, which asks us to reconsider sections 2 and 3 and to go back to the Committee of the Whole to address this, I can’t think of anything more important

than this right here. We have a problem, and we need to be willing to address this because there is going to be a problem with providing natural gas not only in this county but across northern Alberta. It’s going to be important for us to address in this bill whether or not we’re going to allow the Alberta Utilities Commission to be able to fine a company that is trying to provide natural gas but is just going to be restricted from being able to do so. That is why we need to go back to the Committee of the Whole. We need to reconsider this bill.

Madam Speaker, I said that it was cold comfort because it’s going to take 10 years for them to raise the currency from their taxpayers, from their ratepayers to be able to build the capacity. Yet we understand that the NDP have snuck into this bill some amendments on the Gas Utilities Act where the AUC can order specified penalties against retailers like the Northern Lights Gas Co-op in Mackenzie county for failing to deliver natural gas. If the AUC

is of the opinion that the gas distributor, default supply provider or retailer has failed or is failing to meet the service standards rules, the [AUC] may . . .

- (a) direct the gas distributor, default supply provider or retailer to take any action to improve services that the Commission considers just and reasonable.

That’s a very broad power to be giving the AUC, where they have the capacity to fine a company because they simply cannot provide the natural gas that is necessary.

10:50

They can:

- (b) direct the gas distributor, default supply provider or retailer to provide the customer with a credit, in an amount specified by the Commission, to compensate the customer for the gas distributor’s, default supply provider’s or retailer’s failure to meet the service standards rules.

So not only can they fine the company, but now they can also force the company to provide the customer with a credit.

They can also:

- (c) prohibit the gas distributor, default supply provider or retailer from engaging in any activity or conduct that the Commission considers to be detrimental to customer service.

And they can impose an administrative penalty, as we’ve already addressed.

These are extraordinary circumstances in Mackenzie county and across northern Alberta. They’ve had rapid growth in population that has far exceeded their ability to pay, and to look at Mackenzie county and communities like La Crête, they need the NDP to help find a solution to this problem. We need our government to help the county up, but instead we have a case in this Bill 13 where they are lining up to kick the county when they are down.

Northern Lights Gas Co-op is adding two compressor stations to its pipeline to increase the pressure – we’ve already addressed that earlier in this House – but it’s not a long-term solution. We need to listen to people like Lenard Racher, the chief administrative officer of Mackenzie county, when he says that if action is not done now, the county will be in trouble in two or three years. The county is now considering not hooking up natural gas to new homes. That means that homes are going to have to be hooked up to propane. That puts more trucks on the road.

The NDP are handing out hundreds of millions of dollars in grants and loan guarantees under Bill 1 to industry to grow the economy, yet somehow they can’t do their job to make sure that people are not frozen out of their own homes.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I would ask for the unanimous consent of the House to go to one-minute bells.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Acting Speaker: Are there any members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm speaking in favour of the recommittal amendment, which will recommit Bill 13 to Committee of the Whole, as proposed by my good friend from Rimbe- Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Bill 13 has been a debacle from the get-go, and now we need to talk about the Gas Utilities Act, which is dealt with under section 3 of Bill 13. In the Gas Utilities Act itself section 28.3 talks about the handling of poor-performing gas distributors and default supply providers. Bill 13 endeavours to add retailers to this section of the gas utilities legislation. The Alberta Utilities Commission, the AUC, would be able to levy administrative penalties as well as a specified penalty under the proposed section 63.1 of the Alberta Utilities Commission Act. This is found in section 1 of Bill 13. Madam Speaker, I would like to elaborate on why this is such a grand issue, that this government would be doing wrong by Albertans if they do not recommit this bill to Committee of the Whole in order to have an open discussion on this matter.

In Mackenzie county, along the Peace River, in La Crête and Buffalo Head Prairie and Paddle Prairie and Keg River and Carcajou, they have experienced a shortage of natural gas. This shortage has been caused by the massive population growth in the region. Back in December 2017 they encountered an emergency situation in the grips of our freezing Alberta winters. Temperatures reached minus 40, and people were not able to heat their homes due to low pressure in the gas line. This region is having its development stifled by the shortage of gas. They are unable to promote an appealing business environment because of the lack of gas.

Madam Speaker, it would take the Northern Lights Gas Co-op 10 years to raise the \$45 million from ratepayers that it would need to build a new 65-kilometre pipeline in order to help alleviate this shortage. That's a lot of money and a lot of pipeline that they need up there, and they're going to require some help. You know, they're going to need some help here.

Bill 13 had plenty of faults on its own, to which we proposed amendments. However, now we find out that this government has tried to pull yet another fast one in regard to this bill. They have snuck in some amendments to the Gas Utilities Act where the AUC can order a specified penalty against the retailer for failing to deliver natural gas. That's an interesting concept, isn't it? I wonder if that can relate to bigger projects or if those rules could be used in our much larger projects and the bigger threats we have in B.C. Anyway, this would apply in a case like the Northern Lights Gas Co-op in Mackenzie county.

If the Alberta Utilities Commission believes that the gas distributor, default supply provider, or retailer has failed to meet the service standards rules, they have several options as to what they may do. They could:

- (a) direct the gas distributor, default supply provider or retailer to take any action to improve services that the Commission considers just and reasonable;
- (b) direct the gas distributor, default supply provider or retailer to provide the customer with a credit, in an

amount specified by the Commission, to compensate the customer for the ... failure to meet the service standards rules;

- (c) prohibit the gas distributor, default supply provider or retailer from engaging in any activity or conduct that the Commission considers to be detrimental to customer service;
- (d) impose an administrative penalty under section 63 ...
- (e) impose a specified penalty under section 63.1 of the Alberta Utilities Commission Act.

The emergency situation that Mackenzie county encountered last winter was an extraordinary circumstance, and such communities need the NDP's help in finding a solution to the problem. Their rapid growth far exceeded their ability to pay, and demand exceeded supply, simple enough concepts. Instead, when the county is in a position where it needs help when experiencing a shortage that affects its residents, the government is lining up to kick the county when they are down.

The Northern Lights Gas Co-op is in the process of adding two compressors to its pipeline. This will increase pressure in the system, which will, in turn, boost capacity. However, this is only a Band-Aid until the new pipeline is built. Mackenzie county's chief administrative officer has said that action needs to be taken now or else the county will be in trouble in two to three years. The people of Mackenzie county should not be in a position to face inevitable trouble down the road, Madam Speaker. The county is now considering not hooking up natural gas to new homes. This would mean more trucks with propane on the roads.

The hypocrisy of this government is that they're handing out hundreds of millions of dollars in grants and loan guarantees under Bill 1 to industry in order to grow the economy. However, the NDP can't ensure that the people in Mackenzie county aren't freezing in their own homes in the cold Alberta winters. We have no trust in this government's ability to get the basics of economic development correct. This bill needs to be recommitted to Committee of the Whole and thoroughly reviewed.

We expressed to you in previous sessions, when you were putting in all those other related bills, what would happen. We described it quite accurately. We told you to even look at Ontario and see what they were doing. If anything, you were just mimicking what they were doing. We'll see in today's election what the repercussions are in Ontario of putting in bad energy policies. Remember that a year from now. Or, better yet, remember it when there is a by-election up in my community of Fort McMurray.

Madam Speaker, in the end, this bill does need to be reviewed. It needs to be thoroughly discussed. It needs to be recommitted to Committee of the Whole. We need to discuss this. We need to talk to more people about getting this bill right and fixing what is going to lead to long-term repercussions for all Albertans.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:01 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Cooper	McPherson	Stier
Cyr	Panda	Strankman
Ellis	Schneider	Yao
Hunter	Smith	

Against the motion:

Carlier	Horne	Nielsen
Ceci	Jabbour	Payne
Connolly	Jansen	Piquette
Coolahan	Kazim	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Kleinstauber	Rosendahl
Dach	Larivee	Sabir
Dang	Littlewood	Schmidt
Drever	Loyola	Schreiner
Eggen	Luff	Shepherd
Fitzpatrick	McKittrick	Sucha
Ganley	McLean	Turner
Goehring	Miller	Westhead
Hinkley	Miranda	Woollard

Totals:	For – 11	Against – 39
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[Motion on amendment REC lost]

The Acting Speaker: We are now back on the original bill. I will recognize the hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I rise to request unanimous consent of the House that we move to one-minute bells for the remainder of the morning.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Acting Speaker: I will now recognize the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise this morning in the last hours of a session, perhaps. I would never presuppose the direction of the Assembly, but there's not an incredible amount of debate left to be had, I believe. I think it's been . . .

An Hon. Member: Boisterous.

Mr. Cooper: . . . a boisterous session that has seen the government make a whole ton of terrible decisions. I think that's what has happened here this session.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

If you reflect back – and I think that it's a good opportunity to do that. While we debate Bill 13, reflect back on just the negative impact that not only this bill, Bill 13, has had on our province, but, you know, this was a session where the budget was passed, a budget that has set the province on a course, a crash course, you might say, for \$96 billion in debt and a crash course of massive amounts of debt for our children and our grandchildren and, in fact, our grandchildren's grandchildren.

Bill 13, in many respects, is part of that crash course, particularly when we look at the massive amount of debts that are going to be incurred because of this government's ideological decision to enter into a capacity market. The debts that we know of already are in excess of \$1.96 billion because of this decision, because of this government's lack of knowledge or willingness or knowingly making decisions that were going to cost Alberta taxpayers \$1.96 billion with respect to the PPA contract cancellation.

Since the beginning that this government was elected – now, I will have a small prequalifier in my statement here in that, you know, there are half a dozen things or so that I have supported, particularly around some election reform legislation and finance, et cetera, so there are a couple of exceptions to the rule here.

But since 2015 we've seen a government that has made rash, ideological decisions that have had a significant impact on Albertans, and I don't mean in a positive manner; I mean in a way that has made things worse for Albertans, that has created stress, disdain, financial hardship for so many, job losses, business closures. Crime is up all across the province, including in Calgary, not just to mention rural Alberta, where there is a crisis. I think that Bill 13 is really a reflection of those poor decisions. It is a continuation of a commitment to making decisions that are certainly going to turn out to not be in the best interests of Albertans as well as not being in the best interests of Albertans today.

That's one reason why I would like to propose an amendment this morning, and I'll be happy to talk at some length about a number of other reasons why this is a good amendment as well. I'll wait until you have your copies.

11:10

The Deputy Speaker: Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I move that the motion for third reading of Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future, be amended by deleting all the words after "that," and substituting the following: "Bill 13, An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future, be not now read a third time but that it be read a third time this day three months hence."

Madam Speaker, I move this hoist motion as my continued commitment to the outstanding constituents of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills to hold this government to account. My expectation is that the government will rise in its place this morning and talk about how, whether or not the Official Opposition likes it, a capacity market is well and truly under way and that this hoist motion would derail that process, which is my exact point, that this government needs to reconsider its decision to proceed down the path of this capacity market.

If nothing else – if nothing else – this government needs to reconsider its timeline in which it intends to implement this capacity market. I have heard from stakeholders, whether its large power producers and deliverers of power or small REAs or microgenerators, their concerns, from all across the province, as they engage in the grid. While some of them will speak positively about the capacity market because, in fact, it's going to have a net benefit on their business – it may not in fact have a net benefit on Alberta consumer powers, but it certainly will have a positive impact on their business. So it's possible to find people who will say good things about a capacity market.

What they all say universally is that the speed at which we are heading over this cliff of the market is way too fast. Even if the government continues their ideological position to have a capacity market, this amendment this morning, in defeating this piece of legislation, which is essentially what the hoist motion would do, would allow them to reconsider their timelines and bring this back in the fall, when we can expand that, extend that, and really deal with a lot of the negative ramifications that will come from the capacity market.

We don't have to look very far, Madam Speaker, to see the pain and the consequences that these sorts of decisions can have. You know, there's an election in Ontario today. Literally, one of the main reasons why it's being fought is power prices. I know that when I speak to folks in the outstanding constituency of Olds-

Didsbury-Three Hills and right across the province of Alberta, they are concerned that we are replicating that marketplace.

The government will say: “Oh, no, no, no. Don’t worry. We’ll do better.” But the fact of the matter is that this government’s track record when it says, “We’ll do better,” is not that. They aren’t doing better. They are putting Albertans at risk, whether they continue to put them at risk with the large increases in carbon taxes, whether they put small businesses and the economy at risk with their sweeping changes to labour legislation, whether they’re putting nonprofits at risk.

I had a wonderful conversation just last week with some nonprofits in central Alberta that employ 700 or 800 people and are currently taking steps to consider how they may in fact wind down their nonprofits because of the legislative changes, particularly around labour legislation, that are ultimately going to be imposed by the minister of community services. In this case, they fall under his ministry, and I know that the minister has asked them what their contingency plans are if they have to close their doors.

The government isn’t doing better. They say: trust us. You know, when the government arrives at your door and says, “We’re here from the government; we’re here to help,” people have the right to be skeptical of this government, because they haven’t been helping. Bill 13 is not going to help. The capacity market is going to make things worse. We’re going to see an increase in power prices. We’ve already seen it. The government’s rate rider, essentially a cap, is now in place. They are literally paying more. It’s not “they,” Madam Speaker. At the end of the day, the “they” is us. It is the good people of Alberta, it is the outstanding people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills that are paying more.

It’s exactly why this government should heed the Official Opposition’s advice, take this amendment seriously, vote in favour of it, and postpone this legislation while they go back to the drawing board and get this right. I encourage all members of the Assembly, on what is quite likely to be the last day of the session, to make one good decision this session, and that can be this morning.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any others who wish to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Stier: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. A pleasure to see you this morning, and a pleasure to see everyone today. I have a few comments with respect to the moving of a hoist amendment this morning on Bill 13, which is An Act to Secure Alberta’s Electricity Future. I’m supporting this amendment, and I encourage all members, on both sides of the House, to support it as well. I’m doing so for a number of reasons, but chief among them is the fact that the system of power production in Alberta was working totally fine before the NDP decided to accelerate the coal phase-out by decades and force-feed renewable generation despite lacking any ability to store the power long term.

Make no mistake; the cost of electricity in the province will be more expensive once we have moved from our current energy market to a capacity market. Why? The answer is risk. In an energy market the consumer assumes very little of the risk, but it can result in price jumps, depending on the supply and demand of producers and consumers at any point in time.

Alberta’s current electricity generation industry is in an energy-only market, which means that generators are paid for electricity they produce based solely on the wholesale price of electricity, which fluctuates. These companies decide on the type of generation they produce and on the location of facilities. On the other hand, we have a capacity market, which, to paraphrase Alberta’s Electric

System Operator, or AESO, uses competitive forces to incent suppliers to provide innovative and low-cost solutions.

Alberta was doing just fine in an energy-only market, Madam Speaker. Prices for electricity were low, and most importantly, when an Albertan turned on the light switch or started the coffee maker, there was always consistent, stable, and reliable power. So why is Alberta considering changing to a capacity market? The answer is ideology. The NDP have been dead set against any hint of a free-market solution in the power generation industry since Premier Klein deregulated the industry in the ’90s. But, ultimately, it was their breakneck speed to phase out coal that made the transition to a capacity market necessary.

Members on this side of the House routinely talk about making sure we get legislation right the first time. I’ve said that about many bills we’ve talked about in the past few weeks. With Bill 13, this is doubly important. There are no do-overs. Our Ontario cousins are a prime example of what happens when you rush through legislation. Because the Ontario government didn’t ensure that all the kinks were worked out beforehand, Ontario citizens are experiencing horribly expensive power bills. We’re now hearing stories about Ontario consumers having to choose between buying food and paying their power bill. Imagine that. It’s absolutely imperative that this does not happen here.

In our effort to improve the bill and ensure that the legislation leaves no detail, my colleagues proposed a number of well-reasoned amendments in previous readings and in previous discussions on it. We originally proposed an amendment that required power generators that were paid capacity payments to offer electricity when AESO requests it. First of all, it is simply wrong to promise electricity and then, when it is actually needed, claim that you don’t have any to give. The capacity payment is essentially that promise. The power generator receives a payment based on the capacity to produce power. To then deny the market electricity is unacceptable. First of all, it drives the cost of electricity up, and the new capacity market is supposed to keep prices as low as possible for the average consumer.

11:20

In the past generators have been found attempting to manipulate the market by starving the market of supply in an attempt to artificially drive the price of electricity up. It is naive to think that it cannot happen again. We proposed the amendment to close that loophole, but unfortunately the NDP members across the aisle thought ensuring that power generators that receive capacity payments supply power when AESO requests power was unnecessary and didn’t add anything to the bill and defeated that amendment.

Our second previous amendment regarded consultation by government during the regulation development process. If passed, it would have required the government to consult with stakeholders for a full 60 days. Frankly, capacity markets are complex, and we must get it perfect the first time, right from the start. There are no do-overs, no mulligans, and no opportunities for redos. Because of this, it is absolutely paramount that we consult the experts, the power generators.

The unfortunate part about that amendment was that it was even necessary, frankly. Consultation should be the first and last thing a government ever thinks about when it considers legislation. Unfortunately, though, this government seems to have a very broken relationship with consultations, making our amendment absolutely essential to the proposed bill. Not only is it important to hear the feedback first-hand from stakeholders, Madam Speaker, and from those working in the industry.

It would have also brought the stakeholders, the ones being impacted by the legislation, onboard and gotten their buy-in, the public. The success of Bill 13 is really counting on stakeholder buy-in, and nothing ensures stakeholder buy-in on a project like thorough and meaningful consultation. How did the government respond to our previous proposed amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud claimed that the amendment was redundant, that extensive consultations had been done, and that the amendment didn't add anything to the value of the bill and therefore, again, rejected it.

Our third previous proposed amendment was basically housekeeping issues with the bill. Throughout the bill, language that would have accorded the capacity market the standard "fair, efficient and openly competitive" theory was not included, which is inconsistent with other legislation Alberta has on the books. By including the reference specifically, it would have provided to electricity stakeholders certainty that AESO and the Alberta government would never skip out on their commitments. That amendment would have helped restore trust in the government among stakeholders. Not to sound like a broken record again, but you'd think that a government and a government agency wouldn't renege on their promise. But as we see with the government's handling of the coal phase-out, as an example, what was once thought impossible, this government has shown to be very possible.

Finally, my caucus colleagues and I proposed a further amendment that would clarify that when a generator wins a capacity contract under the provisional rules, the provisional rules remain in place on those contracts. It is foolish to believe that offering a contract with the proviso that the rules outlined in the agreement will change won't have a negative effect on the price being offered for the deal. The minister, AESO, and the Alberta Utilities Commission, also known as the AUC, can't go changing the rules midstream and expect generators to invest in the capacity market.

Instead of demanding that generators remain flexible and receive a lower price for the capacity market, we should have passed that amendment and extended a little bit more assurance to generators that we wouldn't continue to move their goalposts even after they signed a contract. Did the NDP support that amendment? Of course not. They claimed it wasn't necessary and, once again, rejected it.

While we tried to work with the government to improve the bill, they continued to reject our suggestions. Albertans are the ones who will suffer for it.

As I mentioned earlier, in Ontario there are many people who have become energy poor. They are left with the choice of paying their utility bill or buying groceries now, Madam Speaker. What a horrible crisis they've had in the power situation in Ontario. Canada, though, is a first-world country, rich in natural resources, whose populace is highly educated and boasts a 99 per cent literacy rate, yet we have thousands of people in Ontario who cannot afford to keep the lights on and feed their children. What a crime. I've read accounts of people in Ontario that have had their utility costs increase by nearly 400 per cent in just a matter of a few years, and we have a government that seems intent on bringing that same failed power generation system to our province.

I can't believe that we're going down that same path, Madam Speaker. In fact, it has already started. Due to the government's disastrous bungling of the carbon tax on heavy industrial emitters, Alberta's coal-fired power plants returned their power purchase agreements, or PPAs, to the Balancing Pool, the government body responsible for managing the risks and maximizing the value of certain generating assets held on behalf of Alberta's electricity consumers. The return of the PPAs to the Balancing Pool resulted in \$700 million being spent to cover the losses, and starting this year, all Alberta electricity consumers will pay a surcharge to help

pay for a further \$190 million in losses by the Balancing Pool. A hundred and ninety million. Due to the NDP's ideological agenda, they have cost Alberta taxpayers over \$1.3 billion to shut down the province's coal plants early and convert them to natural gas. That's real money, \$1.3 billion. I don't even know how much that is.

To conclude, I've outlined many of the reasons why I support this hoist amendment that we are making today, and I hope my fellow members will consider the impacts of this bill and, likewise, will support this amendment. We need to send it back, have another look at it in the fall, make sure that we're doing things right. That's our challenge as the opposition, to ensure that these bills are right before we support them. We have trouble with this bill. It was unjustifiable, and we'll look, I think, at this as something that will be reflective of what this government has done for years and years if it proceeds as is. I strongly urge both sides of the House to support this amendment. Bring it back, we'll look at it again, and let's make it right this time.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any others wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to rise to speak on this amendment. I will not be supporting this amendment. The reason I am not supporting this amendment is because there are many people in our communities in Alberta that are waiting for this bill to pass. The bill speaks about the changes that will enable community generation and that community generation projects will be able to feed electricity back to the grid. This is an area that many in our communities have been waiting for.

I could list the projects, which I think I did previously, that are really waiting for this bill and the number of e-mails and discussions that I have had around this part of the bill, that is really important. I think we have to be fair to this community, that has worked really hard around generating electricity from a community perspective. Projects can be found in places all throughout Alberta, north and south. I think it's really important that as MLAs we do not delay the passing of this bill so that those persons who have invested in those communities and those co-ops that have invested in community generation can move forward and know that they have a path towards their relationship with the electricity grid.

I would like to urge all members to vote for this bill so that the needed changes can be made and these projects go ahead. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise this morning to speak to Bill 13, specifically to the amendment put forward by my good friend from Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, which states that we should possibly read this bill three months from now. I understand his reasoning. Even our colleague from Bonnyville-Cold Lake agreed with that. Now, he's walked out, so I'm not going to talk about him. But we can kind of see unintended consequences that happen as a result of this bill.

11:30

We've been talking about this bill in the House for a long time. There have been a lot of questions by this side of the House and a lot of amendments put forward that would have made this

legislation a little better, certainly from our opinion, certainly from our stakeholders' opinion. It makes some sense, certainly to this side of the House, to look at things a little closer and consider some of those comments. It's never wrong to take some time to consult.

What is happening in Alberta right now, as we speak, is that the government is in the process of radically recreating our entire provincial electricity system. Now, that is what this bill is all about. The NDP government was elected in 2015, and there have been a few policies that have been created that have been, shall we say, expensive for Albertans. Part of this radical change to the electricity system in Alberta is the change from the energy-only market to a capacity market. The decision to add a capacity market is pretty much the culmination of a plan that the government basically introduced when they pushed forward their climate leadership plan in May of 2016, one year after they were elected.

Madam Speaker, this government was elected on May 5, 2015. I don't believe they expected to be elected, so of course they were not quite ready. I don't think they had enough staffers. As I recall, they had a bit of a platform – now, that was a national platform, not something that would have been created specifically for Alberta – and found themselves in a position that they were governing a province now. You know, I don't know that they considered that they had to have a budget ready, possibly. We had a budget that had been debated and passed, I think, before the election, but that wouldn't have been a budget that the government would have been happy with.

There was a lot of stuff going on, a lot of things that the government had to get ready before the fall session. That session is where we began to see a lot of what we would be seeing from that point on with this government, things like Bill 6. That was kind of the flagship bill in the fall of 2015. I think the government learned a lot from that bill, learned a lot about putting a piece of legislation forward to a certain, specific portion of society that did not agree with the legislation. They found that there is some push-back at times.

Anyway, along came the climate leadership plan. Something within that plan that also came along with the climate leadership plan was something that the government did not talk to people about as they campaigned in 2015, something that the electorate knew nothing about, a carbon tax. As much as the government would like us to believe that Albertans have no problem with this tax, the polling certainly shows exactly the opposite.

Of course, the carbon tax was levied on heavy industrial emitters as per the government's plan, with the target really being the coal-fired power plants in Alberta, that have been generating the heavy load of Alberta's electricity for some time.

Mr. Yao: Some time.

Mr. Schneider: Some time.

As I mentioned last time I spoke on Bill 13 – I think it was last week – when this carbon tax, that was hidden from the people of Alberta, was charged to the companies that owned and operated the coal-fired plants in this province, those companies immediately invoked the portion of the contract that they held with the province of Alberta which allowed them to opt out of their contracts. I think each of their contracts indeed had verbiage that allowed them to opt out if at any time during the life of those contracts any government made those arrangements uncompetitive. Argue as you will, it was a contract that was signed and a deal that was made with all the power companies. Of course, they took the opportunity to opt out of those contracts.

This was all part of the grand scheme, not the handing back of the contracts but the grand scheme of the government to hurry up

and shut down coal-fired plants. Now, there were 12 of Alberta's plants that had actually been scheduled to be shut down, as per the federal government, by 2029. Madam Speaker, there were six of Alberta's plants that had actually been scheduled to be shut down much later, as late as 2061. That was the Keephills plant. Genesee, I believe, was 2055.

Now, these plants, of course, were considered state of the art, and I think everyone here knows that we here in Alberta have been scrubbing our coal plants' emissions better than anyone else in the world for some time now. We've learned how to do that here, and I've always wondered, to be perfectly honest, why part of the climate leadership plan did not include a plan to take the opportunity to see that the technology that we use here in Alberta was taken to or sold to or used as an education tool in countries all over the world that are building plants continuously as we speak, China being a good example.

Anyway, as the power generation companies handed back their contracts to the Balancing Pool, the cost to the Balancing Pool turned out to be \$70 million per month. At the end of the day, the pool lost an obscenely incredible \$2 billion. Now, the government poured a lot of money into the Balancing Pool while they tried to come up with a Band-Aid or something to stop the bloodletting.

Anyway, as a result of the coal-fired generation phase-out and the push for renewable generation, the government has compromised the reliability of the electrical system. In order to replace this backbone of electricity that Alberta has had for many, many years and implement the renewables for up to 30 per cent of the electrical generation, that this government has implemented by the passing of Bill 27 in 2016, Bill 13 strives to change Alberta's electricity market from the steady power that we are all used to, known as the energy-only market, to the capacity market.

Bill 13 is not about renewables per say, but this bill is about financing coal-to-gas conversions. This bill is about new natural gas generation, which is called combined-cycle gas and simple-cycle gas peaker plants, which is required to be the backup for renewables because, of course, wind and sun are intermittent and therefore cannot be considered as a baseload for Alberta to generate the roughly 10,000 megawatts that this province uses every day.

The Alberta Electric System Operator did some modelling in this regard, and that modelling showed that the renewable electricity program will indeed decrease the revenue needed for all generators to recoup their investment and earn profit, and rightly so. Generators that would be spending huge amounts of money, that would not see a return on investment, would of course be likely to not become involved in Alberta's new electricity market at all. Investment would be deterred. Makes sense.

Under our current energy-only market our electricity and our capacity are bundled. This bill and the changes within it maintain the competitive market but separate the markets for capacity and electricity. You see, Madam Speaker, in the electrical system that we now enjoy, the distinguishing characteristic of that energy-only market is that electrical generation is only rewarded or electrical generation is only paid for when that electricity is used. Those systems are designed to meet peaks in the demand throughout an average day in this province. The pool price therefore must be able to recover not only the operating costs of that facility when it is actually generating but also the fixed costs of that facility not only when it generates but for all those hours during the year when it's not generating.

The basic idea of a capacity market is fairly simple. Generation should be compensated, of course, for making electricity available to the market, but capacity is also compensated, that being that generators built for Alberta's electricity market are actually paid just for the capacity in generation that they have, whether they're

running or not. Two streams of payment: generation and capacity. This creates the ability to meet the requirement at any given time, mostly peak times. All that being said, Madam Speaker, it means that Bill 13 cannot help but make electricity more expensive for consumers because the risk is being transferred away from the generators and, of course, onto the backs of ratepayers and the backs of the taxpayers in Alberta.

Wrap it up. That's the signal I'm getting.

You know what, Madam Speaker? I did receive a pamphlet in the mail yesterday, when I checked, sent by efficiency Alberta, that talks about electricity prices. They're expected to increase this year, from the historic lows of the last three years back to a range that is closer to the historical average price. It states that if the market goes above – this is for household consumers – 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour, the government of Alberta will cover your costs above that price. The government of Alberta is made up of 4.3 million people, and we know who pays the freight around here and where that money comes from. Hopefully, the people that read the pamphlet – this government wants everyone to believe it's being so friendly to them to give them money back. They're giving their own money back. So it was \$74 million that it was going to cost to keep that project going.

11:40

Madam Speaker, we have before us an amendment that asks us to consider speaking to this being read a third time three months from now. It is an amendment that I intend to support. I suggest that everyone within the building, this Chamber, this Legislative Assembly, also support this amendment – I believe it's a good one – put forward by my good friend from Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), any questions or comments?

Seeing none, any others wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you. I rise to speak in support of this great amendment from my colleague from Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, the second-best riding in Alberta, the reason being, Madam Speaker, as you know, that I'm the critic for this file, and I've been consulting stakeholders across the province. The government did engage some stakeholders selectively, but they haven't considered all their input. That's why our job here is to get some more time to get this right.

We did everything we could as the Official Opposition. We moved amendments, and we were not successful in getting the government's approval of any of our amendments. That's why we need some more time to look at this issue and size it up and explain to people in our constituencies how it's going to impact, because this government didn't present any economic impact analysis of this policy. This policy is derived from their big climate change plan – that's the overarching driver for this capacity market – because this government wanted to actually completely remake Alberta's electric generation system under its climate leadership plan.

That's why they have to incentivize or rebuild the province's baseload power generation, because they want to replace safe and reliable and cheap coal-fired electricity with other alternatives. Those alternatives come at a cost, and when Albertans are asking, "How much would it cost?" the Minister of Energy didn't get up in this House and tell us how much it costs. We asked the minister many times: tell us how much it costs. She doesn't know, I guess.

You know what, Madam Speaker? The Alberta Electric System Operator, the Independent System Operator, the government

agency which the minister oversees: that agency told us that they estimated that it will cost \$25 billion, billion with a "b," to replace coal plants and meet the government's targets for new renewable power generation and meet future customer demand. That's what AESO said, but the minister didn't get up to tell us that. Her own department, which oversees AESO, has this information that the minister tried to hide.

What else did they try to hide, Madam Speaker? There are so many costs. I'm trying to put a bow around it and trying to, I mean, summarize and size it for all my colleagues here. I might need help from the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake to actually add up these numbers for me if he can because it's going to be tough. AESO says: \$25 billion to replace coal-fired power plants. Now, let's look at different costs here. Renewables: there are wind and solar. First, let's talk about wind. They signed 600-megawatt deals with three proponents for wind in the first REP 1, and when the price is about 3.7 cents per kilowatt hour, the wind projects pay back the NDP government, whereas the IPPSA indicated the 2016 wholesale price of electricity averaged 1.7 cents per kilowatt hour. So there's a difference between 3.7 cents and 1.7 cents.

We don't know, actually, how much it's going to cost because REP 2 and 3 are now being bid. REP 3 is for 400 megawatts, and REP 2 is for 300 megawatts. So we don't know the total cost. I can ask one of these guys here if they can just guess a number out of the \$25 billion, put some number. We'll add it up at the end by the time I finish. We don't know the cost there, but my colleague is going to guess. Then solar is the other renewable energy program, their round 2, and it's the same thing. In 2016 as per IPPSA's estimate it's 1.7 cents per kilowatt hour. So we had to make a line item there and guess how much that would be.

Now the capacity market. Why do we need the capacity market, Madam Speaker? Because the NDP decided to phase out the coal power plants, which are low-emitting power plants, which are good to go till 2061 but which for their ideological reasons they phased out sooner. So that's going to cost us \$25 billion.

Then the power purchase agreements debacle. When the NDP raised the carbon tax, the coal-fired power plants dumped their PPAs, and it cost taxpayers at least \$2 billion to buy back the PPAs. Again, the full cost needs to be confirmed.

Madam Speaker, then there are the subsidized electricity prices. For customers on the RRO, regulated rate option, the price is capped at 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour, but in April 2018 that addition cost the NDP \$9 million. Originally in the budget they made an estimated \$74.3 million to subsidize the consumers, but if you go by that \$9 million that we just paid in April times 12 months, again, I'll ask my colleague there to use the calculator and count that.

Madam Speaker, with all that, this is the number that I spoke. It's more than \$30 billion, north of \$30 billion, which we still don't know if that stops there or not.

Then throw in the jobs, throw in the economic diversification, these policy costs. There were thousands of jobs lost in the ridings of my good friend from Drumheller-Stettler and Forestburg and other places. Thousands of jobs were lost because of this ideological policy to revamp the electric generation system and destabilize the reliable power grid.

We're not done there yet, Madam Speaker. Then look at the \$96 billion debt we talked about. Then add the \$35 billion of investments that left Alberta. These are all billions. We are talking about big money here. That's why the amendment brought by our colleague from Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills makes sense, because this government lost its direction. Their intentions are good. I'm not doubting their intentions.

11:50

We are cautioning them. The other party in Ontario tried this policy. I mean, we don't have to look outside at Germany or Japan or other countries where they came back to coal-fired power. It's reliable. It's cheaper. Then they can handle the emissions. If the government's intention is to reduce emissions, this policy has not served that because there is no tangible reduction in the emissions when they shut down the coal power plants, which are actually very efficient. Keephills and others, those two or three power plants which are supposed to be operational until 2061: this government closed them. They accelerated their phase-out. Because of that, now they have to rely on unreliable and unstable intermittent renewable energy, which is going to be costly. That's why we asked for an economic impact analysis. They said that they don't have it, or they don't want to tell Albertans. They just want to hide it and pass it on to future generations. We can size it up. We asked the minister to stand up and explain to this House. She won't. Even today, on the last day of this session, she didn't stand up to explain to the members.

Madam Speaker, that's why I and my colleague, who's the author of this amendment that we are discussing now, actually approached the Auditor General, an officer of this Legislature, to help us. That's why I'm also asking my colleague who's the chair of PAC and who's a professional accountant to help me actually understand. In summer – we have a four-month recess now – when we go door-knocking in our ridings, people are going to ask: “How much is Bill 13 going to cost us? How much will we see on our electricity bills?” And I will say: well, you won't see anything on the electricity bills because it's capped at 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour, but you will see that as a taxpayer. Then they'll ask me: how much? I don't know. That's why we need time to study this further and bring more stakeholders, bring those that are responsible for this file – like the Alberta Electric System Operator, Balancing Pool, and others – to come and explain to us.

That's why I ask all the members of this House to support this amendment and get this bill right. You're going to be in your ridings for the next four months, and you'll have a tough time answering these questions. We can't squander the wealth of future generations. We have to get this right. If your intent is to reduce emissions, this policy is not going to help that. The Premier keeps saying that the economy and the environment should go hand in hand. We didn't gain anything on the environment, and we didn't get any social licence by shutting down those coal-fired power plants. At least on the economy side it's devastating. We talked about billions, the impact of this policy. Again, the ministry is silent. The minister wouldn't tell me how much it costs. That's why I encourage everyone to vote for this amendment.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Yeah. I would appreciate a brief comment on the bill and on the amendment.

The Deputy Speaker: Go ahead.

Dr. Swann: I struggle with this bill, frankly. It's been clear to me from the outset that there is an inconsistent approach to this important or, rather, essential service, electricity, and I'm concerned that we're prioritizing climate change on the one hand but we're not sending messages to our consumers that the price is going to help them make better decisions about their electricity. We're

interfering with the market and therefore undermining to some extent investor confidence. We're certainly not incenting behaviour change.

On the other hand, I see an important shift from coal, the dirtiest possible energy source on the planet, going to renewables and reasonably good prices that we're getting for renewables. I see a continuing growth in renewable priorities, and I see protection for consumers against gouging by industry. So it's a very mixed bill.

I'm struggling with whether to give us more time on this or whether to support this bill entirely and not support the amendment. But I needed to say that for the record it's been a very mixed bag on electricity, and I have not developed the confidence in the government in relation to managing the electricity system as yet. One of our proposals around the regulated rate option was rejected outright by the government, and it would have saved up to a billion dollars in 10 years in consumer prices.

I'm still unsure of how I'm going to vote on this. I guess I've got to decide in the next 30 seconds or so, but I needed to register my concerns about the bill and would have liked to see more time to deal with this.

On the other hand, I want to get on with more stability in the system, more investor clarity about where we're going, so I will likely support the bill.

Thanks, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other speakers to the amendment?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:57 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, W.	Hanson	Smith
Clark	Hunter	Stier
Cooper	McPherson	Strankman
Cyr	Panda	Swann
Ellis	Schneider	Yao

12:00

Against the motion:

Carlier	Hinkley	Nielsen
Carson	Hoffman	Piquette
Ceci	Horne	Renaud
Connolly	Kazim	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Kleinstaub	Sabir
Cortes-Vargas	Littlewood	Schmidt
Dach	Loyola	Schreiner
Dang	Luff	Shepherd
Drever	McKittrick	Sucha
Eggen	McLean	Turner
Fitzpatrick	Miller	Westhead
Ganley	Miranda	Woollard
Goehring		

Totals:	For – 15	Against – 37
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[Motion on amendment HA lost]

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 12:02 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Carlier	Hinkley	Piquette
Carson	Hoffman	Renaud
Ceci	Horne	Rosendahl
Connolly	Kazim	Sabir
Coolahan	Kleinsteinuber	Schmidt
Cortes-Vargas	Littlewood	Schreiner
Dach	Loyola	Shepherd
Dang	Luff	Sucha
Drever	McKitrick	Swann
Eggen	McLean	Turner
Fitzpatrick	Miller	Westhead

Ganley
Goehring

Miranda
Nielsen

Woollard

Against the motion:

Anderson, W.	Hanson	Smith
Clark	Hunter	Stier
Cooper	McPherson	Strankman
Cyr	Panda	Yao
Ellis	Schneider	

Totals: For – 38 Against – 14

[Motion carried; Bill 13 read a third time]

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, the House stands adjourned until 1:30 this afternoon.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12:06 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, June 7, 2018

Day 40

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (UCP),
Deputy Leader of the Official Opposition
Anderson, Hon. Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (NDP)
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (UCP)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (NDP)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (NDP)
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (NDP)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (NDP)
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Alberta Party Opposition House Leader
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Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (NDP)
Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP)
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Government Whip
Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (UCP)
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (NDP)
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (NDP)
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)
Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (NDP)
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP)
Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP),
Deputy Government House Leader
Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (IC)
Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (NDP)
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (AP)
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (NDP),
Deputy Government House Leader
Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (UCP),
Official Opposition Deputy Whip
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)
Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (UCP)
Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (NDP)
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)
Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (NDP)
Hunter, Grant R., Cardston-Taber-Warner (UCP)
Jansen, Hon. Sandra, Calgary-North West (NDP)
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Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (NDP),
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Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (UCP)
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)
Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (NDP)
Malkinson, Brian, Calgary-Currie (NDP)
Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),
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Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (UCP),
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Premier
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (UCP)
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Payne, Hon. Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (NDP)
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (NDP)
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Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (NDP)
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Schneider, David A., Little Bow (UCP)
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (NDP)
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (NDP)
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (NDP)
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (UCP)
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (UCP)
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (NDP),
Deputy Government Whip
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)
Vacant, Fort McMurray-Conklin
Vacant, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake

Party standings:

New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 25 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent Conservative: 1 Vacant: 2

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, June 7, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Good afternoon. I truly mean good afternoon. Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The Minister of Culture and Tourism.

Miranda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all the members of the Assembly some special guests. Mr. Luis Enrique Cruz Mora is the executive director of Fundacco, a charity in Nicaragua that works in some of the poorest neighbourhoods in the country of my birth to help with health needs and to set up co-op units to improve the local economy. Unfortunately, the current situation in Nicaragua is very similar to when I was forced to leave, and peaceful protests have been met by violent reprisals, leaving many civilians hurt, jailed, disappeared, or killed. It is my hope that peace returns soon to this country and that justice prevails. Fundacco, of course, could not be doing their important work without the help from a local Alberta organization, the Roots of Change Foundation. Joining us today from the Roots of Change are Jocelyne Durocher and Cindie LeBlanc. I thank you all for supporting this much-needed international work in community development, and I ask all my colleagues to give them the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly someone I think many of us know by sight, Mr. Doug Brinkman. He is a citizen journalist with the Citizen Free News. I know many of us probably chatted with him on the way into the House. I'd ask Mr. Brinkman to please rise now and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Health and Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you and [remarks in Tagalog], Mr. Speaker. This past weekend I was honoured to proclaim June as Philippine Heritage Month in Alberta, as you may have heard. I want to recognize that Filipinos across the world are known for their hospitality, for their values of compassion, and for taking care of one another. Today I'm honoured to introduce a group of Filipinos who take care of the members in this Chamber every day. They're here from the staff in facilities and maintenance at the Legislature and at the Federal Building. I ask that my guests rise as we say their names. They're enthusiastic. I like it. My smaller but distinguished Ate Nimfa as well as Limuel, Geofrey, Nathaniel, Reynaldo, Jesu, and Erwin. [Remarks in Tagalog] to all of you, and thank you so much for taking care of us all year long. Colleagues, please join me in extending our gratitude.

The Speaker: Welcome.

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

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the

United Conservative Party intern team that has been with us this late part of the session and will be with us for the remainder of the summer. The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills has taken to affectionately calling them tiny Tories. I think that, well, the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills is probably a tiny Tory himself, so that probably makes sense. They're doing a great job, and I'm looking forward to working with them for the rest of the summer. As I say their names, I'd like it if they would stand: Ethan Williams, Justin Laurence, Andrea Farmer, Kyle Paterson, MaryAnne Spiess, Quinn Hironaka, Cline Borle, and Arsh Singh. I'd ask that they receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly a guest from Futurpreneur Canada, a unique nonprofit which supports young entrepreneurs through financing, mentoring, and other support tools. Here we have today with us Ismail Attitalla, the owner of Edmonton Brewery Tours. It was an absolute pleasure to meet with Ismail earlier today and hear about how Futurpreneur has helped him in starting his own business, which was born out of a passion of his own family's business. Our government is an enthusiastic and proud supporter of Futurpreneur and indeed all young Alberta entrepreneurs like Ismail. I ask him to now rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other introductions? Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'm very glad to introduce to you and through you to the House at least a couple of Liberals from both the Calgary and Edmonton constituencies. Actually, I'm waiting for the leader to arrive. Could I possibly delay this introduction? He's just held up briefly. Would that be acceptable to you?

The Speaker: Only because it's today, but you'll have to test the House at some point.

Dr. Swann: Thank you. That's very gracious of you.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Farmer's Day

Ms Jabbour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bacon and eggs for breakfast; mixed salad greens, assorted cheese, and fresh vegetables for lunch; steak and baby potatoes for dinner: we eat meals like these every day. But where do they come from? Many Albertans have never seen the process of farm to fork.

Agriculture is one of Alberta's most important industries, and we are the second-largest agriculture producer in Canada. We lead the nation in beef production and are one of the largest producers of honey. Grains, pulses, poultry, eggs, dairy products, berries, and much more are all produced in this province. Our value-added food and beverage industry is worth over \$5 billion. In the north we have over 30 per cent of Alberta's agriculture community, including many smaller family farms. I'm proud to represent a constituency where agriculture plays a key role.

Farmer's Day was established in 1951 after the United Farmers of Alberta, or UFA, passed a resolution urging the Alberta

government to declare the day a provincial holiday. For more than 20 years the second Friday in June was a provincial holiday; schools were closed, and communities across the province celebrated the importance of agriculture. In 2010 the tradition of Farmer's Day was resurrected by the UFA, and the event continues to recognize and celebrate the men and women who tirelessly drive our agriculture industry. These are farmers like my grandparents, who came to Alberta for new opportunities, to break ground and grow food to meet the needs of an expanding population.

My constituency is one of the last parts of the province where new agricultural land is available. Hard-working farmers continue to clear the land and plant crops in the north. Because the soil has not been previously cultivated, it is ideal for organic farming, which is one of the reasons the Peace River constituency has the largest number of organic farms in the province.

There are so many reasons to celebrate our farmers, so I encourage everyone to reflect on the meaning of Farmer's Day, take time to learn about where your food comes from, and thank a farmer. Knowing that your meal was grown or produced right here in rural Alberta will make it that much tastier.

Official Opposition Policies

Mr. Loewen: There's a reason why we call question period question period. Well, we can't call it answer period as the government almost never answers questions but, instead, uses question period to spew partisan rhetoric that never resembles reality.

Let's review some of this bizarre commentary. They say that we would cut taxes only for the rich, not ordinary Albertans. The fact is that the NDP raised taxes on every Albertan. We would cut taxes for everyone by just repealing the carbon tax alone.

They claim that we cheer for the failure of pipelines. Nothing is more absurd. We have never wavered in our support for all pipelines. Back when NDP members were protesting every pipeline proposal, we were in steadfast support. No one even believes they support pipelines now, only that they want to be re-elected.

They say that we want to fire teachers, nurses, and doctors. This is absolutely untrue. We want to protect front-line workers while making government more efficient and responsive to the needs of Albertans.

They say that the UCP doesn't care about the environment. The reality is that we can protect the environment without destroying our economy.

They say that a vote against the budget is a vote against the valuable and worthwhile functions of government, but they conveniently forget that when they were in opposition, they voted against every budget every year.

They even claim that the previous government blew up hospitals, when actually it was the demolition of an old hospital that was replaced with a brand new medical facility. They ignore the reality that some of the newest and most advanced hospitals in this province were built by Conservatives. Meanwhile under their watch they have closed multiple seniors' centres in the Peace Country alone.

I guess that when you're 30 points behind in the polls, you get desperate and use hyperbole and misdirection at every opportunity. Frankly, this NDP government seems a little confused when it comes to reality, and on top of that, they certainly have an interesting relationship with the truth. Mr. Speaker, with all of this, the biggest mistake the government members make is thinking that Albertans buy what they're saying. Saying it over and over again doesn't make it true. On this side of the House we know that the people of this province are wise and that they see right through this

government and will have the opportunity to send a message loud and clear in election 2019.

1:40

Indigenous Relations

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to stand today and call our attention to the 22nd anniversary of National Indigenous Peoples Day, celebrated every June 21. This day calls on all Canadians to celebrate and learn about the unique histories, diverse cultures, and significant contributions of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people all over Turtle Island.

Mr. Speaker, I've had the privilege of participating in ceremonies with indigenous people around the province, including the Dene, Cree, and Blackfoot. We have so much to learn from these nations, but for far too long they were oppressed by previous governments. We have so much more to do to correct the historical injustices of the past, but I'm proud that our government has made a commitment to developing meaningful and ongoing relationships with indigenous people.

To that end, our government has committed to ensuring that all Alberta students will learn about the history of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people, including the history and legacy of residential schools. We know that learning about the past is only one aspect of a renewed relationship. We're also committed to working with indigenous leaders to implement the objectives of the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action.

As the youngest and fastest growing segment of our population, indigenous people will help lead Alberta forward. Together we'll build an inclusive society, where indigenous people are full participants in the social, economic, and cultural life of this province.

Throughout June communities across Canada host events to celebrate indigenous people. On June 20 Alberta will host a National Indigenous Peoples Day celebration at Edmonton City Centre mall from 11:30 a.m. to 1:15 p.m., and I encourage all members and members of our communities to attend. Let us take this day and every day to celebrate the heritage, contributions, and cultures of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities across Canada. Let us all look forward to a future that is richer because of our increased understanding of indigenous cultures and stronger because of a renewed, respectful relationship with indigenous people.

Thank you.

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

Crime Prevention

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Crime is on the rise in Alberta. Yesterday we heard some sobering statistics about spikes in domestic violence, child abuse, and sexual assault in Calgary, and last night the Alberta Party team held a large round-table meeting with rural Albertans to discuss the rural crime epidemic. Rural Albertans all too often face the very real fear that comes from unauthorized access to their property, often when they're home, by emboldened criminals who don't seem to fear any consequences.

Now, the Alberta Party voted in favour of the Justice budget because we agree that more needs to be done and that more resources need to be committed. We need more officers in communities to respond to criminal activity, and especially in rural Alberta we need more police to reduce response times that can be 45 minutes or more. The Alberta Party knows that we need more

police to catch criminals and keep communities safe, but we also know that spending more money isn't the only answer. The roots of crime are complex, and we will never deal with the problem if we don't tackle those roots. The opioid crisis has had a devastating impact on communities in rural and urban Alberta. We heard last night that cannabis legalization is impacting property owners who are adjacent to cannabis production facilities. But the single biggest reason for rising crime rates is the poor economy. If people are able to make a good living, to provide for their families, to have a stake in society, they are far less likely to commit a crime of any kind.

There's absolutely no excuse for any criminal activity. It is never okay to assault someone or to steal their property, but until we tackle the root cause of crime, we will never address it. The job of government is to provide the law enforcement resources needed to protect communities, and it is also government's job to enable the innovation needed to fix this problem. We need to invest in prevention programs to address the opioid crisis, we need to empower front-line workers to work differently, we need to invest in technology and in social supports, but more than anything, we need to improve Alberta's economy to ensure more good jobs are available for more people. It is on this last and most important point that this government has let Albertans down.

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

Weaselhead/Glenmore Park Preservation Society

Ms Kazim: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud to rise in the House today to congratulate the Weaselhead/Glenmore Park Preservation Society for being one of the finalists for the 2018 Alberta Emerald awards. The Emerald awards have been recognizing and celebrating environmental excellence across all sectors of the Alberta economy for 27 years.

On Tuesday night I attended the award ceremony with volunteers of the Weaselhead/Glenmore Park Preservation Society to support the tremendous work they do. This organization has been active for over 20 years in the preservation of three parks that surround the Glenmore reservoir, and they run outdoor educational programs attended by 4,000 schoolchildren and 400 adults in Calgary every year.

I would like to thank the Emerald awards for acknowledging and recognizing our amazing environmentalists in Alberta at this ceremony. It was excellent to see the Minister of Environment and Parks sponsoring and presenting the awards on behalf of the government. It was fantastic to see the support of the energy industry for environmental stewardship side by side with awards given out to grassroots environmental groups and educational institutions.

What I did not see or hear, Mr. Speaker, was anyone complaining about the carbon levy or bringing up ridiculous arguments against programs which will help Albertans save energy and protect the environment. What I did not see was people like the members opposite, who question the influence of human activity on climate change. What I saw were citizens, schools, governments, and businesses working together to help preserve our precious environment.

As a very inspiring American businesswoman said, "We are each other's destiny." I'm hopeful, Mr. Speaker, when I think about our common environmental destiny being in the hands of groups like those recognized at the Emerald awards. I'm terrified when I think about our common environmental destiny being in the hands of the United Conservative Party.

Thank you.

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

Dr. Swann: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for indulging me in an introduction. I presume that's what you're inviting me to do?

The Speaker: No. You have two minutes, and then we'll go to the introduction.

Cannabis Legalization

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our legal cannabis experiment is nearly a reality in Canada, with the twin goals of reducing illegal sale and protecting public health. It's clear that the business of producing and selling cannabis, especially in Alberta, is extremely attractive, but we have a critical role in ensuring health and safety, especially among children and youth. The ND government has addressed some issues, but there is much more to be done in relation to public health notwithstanding the clear benefits of cannabis in medical conditions.

In Canada about 30 per cent of 11- to 15-year-olds reported using cannabis in the past year, the highest rate in the developed world. Public health risks are widely recognized, especially in the younger generation, where most evidence of problems occurs in the developing brain. There are also risks in relation to public safety, and both areas deserve a higher priority in planning and policies at our schools, institutions, community gatherings, and workplaces.

We don't have all the answers now, but we need to ensure that we provide to the public what we do know, monitor impacts, and prepare to research answers to key questions going forward. How will cannabis use and impacts be monitored, for example, in mental illness rates, emergency room visits, school attendance and achievement, injury rates, and deaths? What research will assess the short- and long-term impacts on individual and community well-being? What health expertise exists in the AGLCC to provide timely updates and evidence on which to base changes in policy? With incredible claims already emerging from the business marketers, how will dubious marketing claims be handled? What is the public understanding of risks and benefits currently, and how will public education reach into rural and remote communities? With every municipality setting its own bylaws related to safe use and enforcement, how can we reduce conflicting policies and enforcement practices?

Time is running out. Let's ensure we establish a body of experts with the best evidence so that public health is a consistent priority and not private profits or government tax revenue.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, unanimous consent has been requested for an introduction.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests

(continued)

The Speaker: Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. A real pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you our now well-known and well-respected leader, David Khan, with a couple of colleagues, one from Edmonton and one from Calgary. David will be one of the grand marshals in the upcoming Edmonton Pride Parade on Saturday. With him is Gwyneth Midgley, the Liberal Party

executive director and an advocate for environmental and educational issues in Alberta; also Kerrie Johnston, a Liberal organizer in Edmonton-McClung and a university administrator fiercely committed to fiscal responsibility and equality of opportunity. As a political leader David Khan is unrivalled in his commitment to freedom, equality of opportunity, and fairness to future generations. I'll ask them to rise, and we'll give them the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

1:50

Oral Question Period

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

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As this will be our last day of the spring session, I wish all members, particularly our Premier, a productive summer ahead.

Calgary Crime Rate

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, yesterday I raised the growing problem of crime in our communities. I cited statistics about a 42 per cent increase in sexual offences in Calgary and a 34 per cent increase in assault crimes in that city. The Premier undertook to look at these statistics. I would like to ask if she's had a chance to do so and whether she has any further ideas about policy responses either through advocacy with the federal government's Criminal Code authority or with provincial enforcement responsibility.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, and thank you to the member for that question. You know, as I said yesterday – and I think it bears repeating – we are always very concerned to hear about the kinds of increases in crime, violent crime in particular, understanding, of course, what it means to the families and the communities who are affected by it. Of course, we have to redouble our efforts to ensure that we combat crime at every level. I think that, having had a chance to look at this, what we know is that in the course of presenting those statistics, the chief of police in Calgary identified that we have a broad range of concerns arising from things that I will talk about in . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

First supplemental.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the Premier. In particular, we've seen a significant increase in the number of auto thefts: in Calgary over the past five years a 54 per cent increase in vehicle thefts, 1,800 incidents in the first quarter of this year alone, and in Edmonton the police report that there are 12 to 15 cars stolen each day in this city. Does the Premier share my concern about this growing pattern of auto thefts, and what policy response does the government have to this serious problem?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Just to go back to the last point, I think what's really important to understand is that we have to redouble our efforts to focus on job creation and economic stimulation, because we do know that there is a very clear link between the significant difficulties experienced, in particular in Calgary and by families in Calgary, as a result of the unprecedented

drop in the price of oil. That's something that our government has been focused on all along.

With respect to auto theft we know that there is a gang element in that, and that's why we have increased resources to focus on that kind of crime prevention activity.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Second supplemental.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I concur with the Premier on her points that economic growth must be the priority to address some of these deep social problems we're experiencing and that there is a gang element in auto thefts. Indeed, the Edmonton police say that they believe that 70 per cent of auto thefts are related to organized crime. Will the Premier join with me in calling on the federal Attorney General to use their authority to strengthen criminal penalties for those found guilty of being involved in organized crime, particularly the auto thefts?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. For one thing, what I'd like to do is to correct a bit of the impression that was left yesterday. The changes that the federal government is contemplating making to the Criminal Code have not even come into effect. In fact, they would not necessarily have been linked to the statistical increases that the member opposite described yesterday or today.

With respect to organized crime activity one of the things that we know we need to do is to invest in the kinds of programs, like ALERT, which actually focus on stopping gang activity. That's one of the things that was actually cut under the former federal government and something that we . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Government Policies

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, since the Premier has raised it, Bill C-75, before the federal Parliament, reduces criminal penalties for a number of offences. In fact, it moves a number of offences from potential imprisonment to merely summary conviction, including impaired driving causing bodily harm, abduction of a person under the age of 14, administering a noxious substance, et cetera. The federal minister says that she has the support of the government of Alberta and all of the Attorneys General for weakening these criminal offences. Why is this government supporting a weakening of criminal penalties when we have a crime wave in this province?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What we need to do is to focus the issue of penalties on the most serious and violent of crimes. Meanwhile what we have to be able to do is to focus our resources on crime prevention and, in particular, supporting our police, which is something that our government has done. Since we were elected, we've increased, just in Calgary alone, roughly \$80 million to almost \$100 million in resources to the Calgary Police Service. These were increases that were actually voted against by the members opposite each time they were brought forward as part of our budget, and these kinds of investments are what are going to reduce crime.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, of course, the opposition voted against the government budget, just as the NDP voted against increases in

funding in a number of areas when they were in opposition, because of the overall fiscal disaster of the government, headed to a \$100 billion debt.

Since we're closing out the session, let me ask the Premier whether or not she's happy to have as a potential legacy a \$65 billion debt, headed to a \$96 billion Alberta public debt.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, I mean, I know the member opposite would have some familiarity with those kinds of legacies given that the Conservative government left a \$145 billion debt at the end of their term and, in fact, ran six consecutive deficit budgets. We took over at an unprecedented time, an unprecedented drop in the price of oil, and since we've been managing the economy, we've seen 90,000 jobs return to the province of Alberta because that's the way we address those kinds of crises.

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, unemployment is higher today than it was in 2014, the provincial economy is smaller today than it was in 2014, the debt has gone from \$13 billion to \$56 billion, headed to \$96 billion, but today is also the second anniversary of the NDP's adoption of the carbon tax. They promised that 100 per cent of those carbon tax revenues would go towards dedicated environmental funding. Now we know that with the increased carbon tax, that is no longer the case. I'll ask again as we close out today: why has the government broken its promise to Albertans about the dedicated nature of carbon tax revenues?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact, the full amount of the carbon levy that the government of Alberta has introduced is in fact focused on efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. That's exactly what we said we would do, and that's exactly what we've done.

But, moreover, you know, when we're talking about anniversaries, it's interesting. It's, for instance, almost 23 months since the Leader of the Opposition was fined \$5,000 by his own party for breaking campaign rules, a two-month anniversary since the entire UCP opposition walked out on a bill to protect women's health issues, a 35-day anniversary...

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, there was a little sleight of hand there in the Premier's response when she said that the carbon tax revenues have been dedicated to notional environmental spending. The problem is that she's forgotten the proposed 67 per cent increase in the carbon tax, the revenues for which are baked into their budget, zero dollars of which are dedicated to environmental funding, and there is a zero increase in the rebate for Alberta taxpayers. So why did the NDP break their promise to Albertans about the rebates and green funding coming from the carbon tax?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact, the additional amounts that the member opposite is referring to are the additional amounts that were subsequently introduced by the federal government. When we talked about the carbon levy, we talked about the \$30 that the government of Alberta introduced, and that still applies.

But on the issue of, you know, anniversaries, I just want to say that it's about the six-month anniversary since the members opposite released their plan to give a \$750 million tax break to the

top 1 per cent. Mr. Speaker, when it comes to anniversaries, I will say that we're proud of ours. The members opposite should not be of theirs.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the 67 per cent increase in the NDP carbon tax, that's baked into their budget, was proposed before the federal government even introduced legislation on this, legislation which the government of Saskatchewan is now challenging in court. The question is simply this. Since that revenue will be raised by the Alberta government for Alberta purposes, why won't Alberta taxpayers get a rebate when the NDP carbon tax goes from \$30 to \$50 a tonne? Why are they breaking their word on the rebates for the 67 per cent increase in their carbon tax?

2:00

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Ms Notley: Again, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the \$30 per tonne price on carbon we are following through on exactly every element that we committed to Albertans when we introduced the plan. In addition, what we are doing is that we are part of a larger pan-Canadian framework, the result of which has resulted in the federal government approving a pipeline to tidewater, which is actually going to increase revenues to the province of Alberta, increase jobs for Albertans, and increase money in our overall economy. Getting a pipeline to tidewater: nine years, couldn't get it done; three years, we're on our way.

Mr. Kenney: Well, it's sad to see the hon. the Premier continuing her victory lap to celebrate the withdrawal of billions of dollars of investment from a private corporation after tens of billions of dollars have already fled this province under NDP mismanagement. Mr. Speaker, the Premier never addresses this, but is she the least bit concerned that nearly \$40 billion of investment in our energy sector has moved from Alberta to other jurisdictions at the same prices? It's clearly not because of price; it's the same price. It's because of policy. Is she happy to have helped drive nearly \$40 billion of investment capital out of this province?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, what I'm happy to do is something that the member opposite and his party could not do when they were in Ottawa for nine years or, frankly, the previous Conservative government, their legacy party, couldn't do for 44 years, which is get a pipeline from Alberta to Canadian tidewater. It's been over 60 years. We've been in charge for three years. We're going to get that pipeline done. It's going to bring back investment, it's going to grow money into our economy, it's going to grow jobs, it's going to grow revenue, and it is long, long, long overdue.

The Speaker: Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Rural Crime Prevention

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can't imagine how frightening it must feel to be a mom at home with preschoolers, alone without neighbours around for miles, and have someone drive into your yard, look in your shed and your barn, and watch them take your equipment and drive away. I listened to a woman describe this experience last night, and I wondered why the government has not delivered a plan to deal with the realities of rural crime. To the Minister of Justice: how many of the seven stages of the rural crime reduction strategy announced in March have been executed?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's precisely because we have been out there listening to stories exactly like the one the member described that we've taken action to ensure that Albertans can feel safe in their homes. Many of those employees are already in place. Obviously, the RCMP has direct jurisdiction over deployment. When it comes to this strategy, we're already starting to see the effects of those rural crime reduction units, and that will have the effect of making Albertans feel safe in their homes.

Ms McPherson: I also heard reports of farmers going to great lengths to prevent their property from being stolen, triple-locking tools in Sea-Cans and installing gates in places they never needed to fence off before, and it's clear that a determined thief with an angle grinder can get through pretty much anything. Farmers are often told that their security camera footage cannot be used in court, so cameras aren't deterring thieves either. To the same minister: when will you expand education to address crimes in progress rather than just prevention? How are you improving prosecutors' understanding of the impacts and constraints rural Albertans are facing?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I've said many times, the impacts of Alberta's geography on policing mean that sometimes RCMP have to travel longer distances. We can't change Alberta's geography, but what we can do is work with our RCMP partners to ensure that we're putting in place effective strategies to deal with these issues. That's why we've rolled out a crime prevention strategy that focuses on proactive policing, targeting those offenders that offend over and over again to ensure that we can get them behind bars where they belong.

Ms McPherson: Another woman I spoke to described how a recently approved cannabis production facility near Fort Saskatchewan, which hasn't been built yet, meant that her family had to install gates to prevent people from crossing their property to get to the cannabis facility site and how farmers adjacent to the Cremona cannabis plant are dealing with employees from that facility trespassing on their land to smoke pot during their breaks. To the Minister of Justice: have you worked with rural municipalities, property owners, and cannabis producers to plan and ensure that new facilities do not generate or attract crime?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Again, as we move forward in ensuring that we're addressing not only current crime but potentially future trends, I think it's important to continue to invest in those proactive policing strategies, and our police partners absolutely agree with us. When it comes specifically to the location of facilities in terms of production of cannabis, that's in the jurisdiction of the federal government and municipal governments. Our government has been working to ensure that we're providing support to municipalities so that they understand their roles and what their powers are, and we will continue to do that going forward.

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

Liquor Service Regulations

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Football, or soccer as it's known in North America, is the most popular sport in the world, with

hundreds of millions of fans. The beautiful game requires only a ball, which allows a good majority of people to play. Being originally from South America, I'm a huge soccer fan and excited for the World Cup, which begins next week. My constituency of Edmonton-Ellerslie is incredibly diverse and full of soccer fans. One constituent, James Aubrey of Summerside, would like to enjoy a cold one while watching games at his local pub. Given that many games will be played in the morning local time, will the Minister of Finance allow for bars to open and serve early to accommodate this world-wide event?

Mr. Ceci: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie for bringing this forward. This member is as good at advocating for his constituents as Cristiano Ronaldo at free kicks. You know, I had thought about this, but I figured that no one would be watching without the best team in the world, Italia, being in it. I will commit to explore this idea with the AGLC and will follow up with this member. We won't Messi around.

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While being able to go and enjoy a beer while watching some great soccer makes sense, we must also ensure that people do so responsibly. How will the AGLC ensure that minors are not served and that people do not overconsume, Minister?

Mr. Ceci: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Extension of liquor law hours has been previously done for Olympic hockey games and other events. The only thing that changes in those cases is the hours of service. The World Cup would be no different should hour extensions occur. Everything else remains in place, like restrictions on serving minors and overconsumption. Should we move forward with this, I will have full confidence in the AGLC folks and our business owners in Alberta that this will be done in a socially responsible manner.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Loyola: Thank you. Can the minister speak to the work our government has done in partnership with the AGLC to modernize liquor rules in our province?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you – and good luck, Iceland – Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the member for this question. Our government has overseen the largest increase in craft brewing in Alberta's history, with the industry tripling in three years. On top of that, we have made it easier for bars and restaurants to have a patio, allowed for the sale of great Alberta liquor products at farmers' markets, and cut the markup on our province's distillers. All the while we have ensured that the highest standards of social responsibility through the DrinkSense and Bar None programs remain.

Thank you.

Carbon Levy

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, not a week goes by that I don't receive another letter or hear another story about a business or a nonprofit struggling because of this NDP's carbon tax. The carbon tax is draining their limited resources, and my constituents are not seeing any benefits from paying into it. The NDP's carbon tax is obviously not putting people first. People are being forced to pay for someone else's ideological agenda. Minister, why won't you repeal the carbon tax, that is hurting our communities and killing jobs?

The Speaker: The Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, our carbon levy is designed for the Alberta economy. That's why it has two-thirds of Albertans receiving a rebate. That's why we have the programs for nonprofits, for churches, institutions, and others. That's why we have \$1.4 billion worth of investment in clean tech to lower the carbon in the barrel. If it wasn't this plan, it would be Justin Trudeau's plan, and we know that the Conservatives prefer that, but on this side of the House we prefer a plan that is designed by and for Albertans.

Mr. van Dijken: Given that today marks two years since the NDP passed their carbon tax legislation in this House and given that over the past two years the carbon tax has been shown to do nothing more than to make life, business, and charitable efforts more expensive for everyday Albertans and given that the carbon tax did not even give us a so-called social licence, with two cancelled pipelines and a third pipeline just bought by taxpayers to prevent it from being cancelled, Minister, would you at least acknowledge that your carbon tax isn't all it's cracked up to be but, in fact, is having a negative impact on real Albertans' lives?

2:10

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we put in place our climate leadership plan so that one would not be imposed on us by Ottawa. This matter has been examined by the courts. The province of Manitoba asked the courts to examine this, and here's what the Premier of Manitoba said in response to that court decision. He said: it's either our plan or one that comes from Ottawa. So these matters have been settled. I know that the members opposite are interested in make-work projects for lawyers. On this side of the House we're interested in rolling up our sleeves, having a climate leadership plan that leads to two pipelines, and getting 15,000 people to work. That's the priority on this side of the House.

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, given that the Premier of Manitoba has stated that he'll see Trudeau in court for raising the carbon tax, I do not believe that he is as fully on board as the minister expects, but given that Albertans are leaders when it comes to environmental stewardship and we have been proud of our record long before the NDP formed government in Alberta and called us the embarrassing cousin that no one wants to talk about, Minister, will you admit that the NDP government was wrong to introduce a carbon tax they didn't campaign on, or will you continue with tone-deaf grandstanding?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Just yesterday we heard from the CEO of Canada's largest oil producer. He called on the carpet Conservatives and their studied opposition to the fact that climate change is real, the fact that this matter has been politicized as it has been by Canadian Conservatives, and how regrettable that is to Canada's reputation as a responsible energy leader. It is these Conservatives that drove us into the dead end of not having market access, of having one product, one market. That's not the way forward for this province.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Premier's Former Chief of Staff's Consulting Contract

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, the NDP has been playing fast and loose with the facts when it comes to the Premier's former chief of staff John Heaney. In August they announced that he was resigning to return to B.C., only to be retitled and rehired the very next Monday. Then they claim that the Ethics Commissioner issued an exemption for Mr. Heaney to be a B.C. lobbyist while advising the Minister of Finance here. Then they changed their tune and said: well, the exemption actually came from the Premier's chief of staff. We have seen nothing but dishonesty from this government on this issue. What do the NDP have to say to Albertans who expect transparency and accountability from this . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Mr. Ceci: Mr. Speaker, with regard to Mr. Heaney, of course, the former chief of staff to the Premier of Alberta, he is now an executive adviser. We have consulted with the Ethics Commissioner with regard to that transition that he played from going from the chief of staff to being an adviser. He's played a role in the Trans Mountain pipeline, in the path to balance in Treasury Board and Finance, and in other matters. He's done good work for us, and we're happy with his service.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, don't worry if he's unethical; he's done good work. It makes no sense. On May 31 the Finance minister said in this House, "When it was signed, the contract went up online immediately." Mr. Heaney's contract was not posted online. It was posted online in May. To the minister: why are you not telling the truth?

Mr. Ceci: Mr. Speaker, there had been discussions with the Ethics Commissioner. The consultation gave some directions in terms of what that exemption would look like. There was time taken to make sure it was right, and when it was right, it was put online.

The Speaker: Hon. member, you're a very experienced member of this Assembly, and you know the boundaries as to when comments and accusations are made, so I would hope that as you make your second supplemental, you are conscious of that. Thank you. Please proceed.

Mr. Cooper: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that the minister said one thing on May 31 in this House that was in fact not honest because since then his office has confirmed that the contract was not posted immediately but was posted on May 15, to the minister: who is telling the truth, you or your office?

Mr. Ceci: Mr. Speaker, you know, the kings of questionable contracts are sitting on that side of the House: things like golf club memberships, limo rides, salaries, the palace over there that they wanted to install their Premier in. [interjections] We have done the job of making sure that we've got pipeline access to tidewater. We've had consultants helping us in that regard. We got feedback from the Ethics Commissioner about how to structure that contract. I'll stand behind all of that.

The Speaker: Just a few more minutes, folks, just a few more minutes.

The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Wheat Varietal Classification Changes

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In February 2015 the Canadian Grain Commission announced the Canadian wheat class modernization process. Later that year the CGC announced the creation of the Canada northern hard red and the Canada western special purpose wheat classes. To the minister of agriculture: what have you done to ensure that Alberta ag producers are aware of and ready for this classification change?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the very good technical question. Our office continues working with producers, cereal and oilseed producers, right across the province on discussions on any changes the federal government proposes. There are a number of changes as well, not just in seed grading. So we're continuing that good work with the producers. They're well aware, well versed, and well trained, some of the best producers in the world, as you know. We'll continue working with them as we go through these regulatory changes.

Mr. Strankman: Mr. Speaker, given that Alberta farmers are already experiencing a backlog from full elevators and a looming hopper car shortage and given that the federal government has already said, and I quote, that the CGC is not allowing any grace period for producers after the July 31 deadline, unquote, minister: what plans, if any, are in place if farmers aren't able to get their grains shipped regardless of whether they have had their wheat varieties reclassified or not?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do really appreciate the question. It allows me the opportunity to update the House on changes that have been made. Recently the federal government has passed changes to the Canada Transportation Act that will go a long ways. It's one more tool in the tool box for producers to be able to get their products to market. As well, we've had good news in the past few weeks. Both of the large carriers, CN and CP, have announced a thousand new hopper cars each, that they're going to buy, so that's 2,000 brand new hopper cars that are going to be online there shortly. As well, CN has announced a large number of new locomotives they're going to be hiring, infrastructure, you know, changes as well with sidetracking, and new terminals . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Strankman: Mr. Speaker, given that producers who have a delivery date after August 1 for transitioning varieties should be already contacting their grain buyer to ensure that their grain will be accepted as Canada western red spring or prairie spring red and given that wheat varieties classified as Canada northern hard red are expected to sell at a discount, again to the minister: are there any programs available for these farmers as they transition to these new classes of wheat given the possible negative financial ramifications?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Just yesterday I had the opportunity to meet with representatives from GrainsConnect and Viterro on the new facilities that they're building across the prairies, including in Alberta. There are many reasons to feel optimistic about farming in Alberta. Last year was one of the best years on record on cash

receipts. I'm looking forward to working with producers, working with processors, marketers, and transport companies as we continue the good work we do here in agriculture.

Health Care in Fort McMurray

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, a by-election is around the corner in Fort McMurray, and with that are the government's conveniently timed announcements on spending, not to mention visits from the front bench. But there was radio silence about the concerns of residents who must continue to commute to Edmonton for dialysis treatment, and we've also seen no improvements in accessing pediatricians. Minister, it's been three years, and these vital issues have not been addressed. Will this government be dealing with these issues in the north, and how?

2:20

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. It certainly is my honour to be part of a government that even during one of the most difficult economic downturns in our province's history chose to invest. We chose to build and hire instead of cut and fire, and we're seeing the results of that in Fort McMurray right now. I certainly won't apologize for investing in long-term care in Fort McMurray and mental health in Fort McMurray and making sure that we have the right supports to support our communities as they continue to recover from a devastating wildfire. We're proud of the work we've done in Fort McMurray, and we're proud to serve those folks.

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, the question was about pediatric care in Fort McMurray.

The Stollery foundation is willing to work in partnership with Fort McMurray to help get access to pediatricians through teleconferencing. Not only would this option be cost-effective, but it would contribute to improving overall health outcomes by expanding access to pediatric care in the very underserved region of Fort McMurray, where demand vastly exceeds service. Will this government consider facilitating this sensible option as opposed to a total shortage of pediatric care?

Ms Hoffman: Well, Mr. Speaker, we absolutely have continued to expand telehealth opportunities. We also recruited 10 new doctors in 2017 to Fort McMurray, including pediatricians, anesthesiologists, family physicians practising low-risk obstetrics, and psychiatrists. These are important investments. We're going to continue to move forward on investing in the folks of Fort McMurray and in health care. The members opposite talk about 20 per cent cuts. That would devastate communities. Instead, what Albertans are telling us is that they want to see improved access and improved supports, and that's what they're getting from this government rather than the deep cuts being proposed by the opposition.

Mr. Yao: Even if you did actually fill all of those positions, we still wouldn't be in the same state as the rest of the province.

Mr. Speaker, using technology such as teleconferencing to allow patients to access specialists would be exceptionally useful in rural regions, where long commutes are often necessary to get specialized medical attention. To this day the only place that AHS utilizes teleconferencing is in their boardrooms. To the Minister of Health: why is teleconferencing of health specialists not being done to increase the accessibility of health care for all Albertans?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, let me repeat that we have absolutely invested in increased capacity and in the telehealth system. But what we've also done is that we have recruited 10 physicians to Fort McMurray, hon. member. Those aren't positions; those are people. These are people who are practising in a number of areas in Fort McMurray, including, again, pediatricians, anesthesiologists, family physicians practising low-risk obstetrics, and psychiatrists. We have on-call pediatric care 24/7.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'm so proud that this side of the House invested in Willow Square. We know that the PCs bungled the project for years. We know that the Wildrose criticized them for that, and now they're sitting as dance partners on the opposite side of the House. This side of the House . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Taber Pride Flag Raising

Ms Goehring: Mr. Speaker, over the weekend, on June 2, the LGBTQ2S folks in the town of Taber celebrated pride. As members of the House must know, the Taber Equality Alliance has endured significant harassment at previous celebrations, with their rainbow flag being stolen and vandalized. To the Minister of Infrastructure: can you tell the House how the pride flag came to be raised on a flagpole outside the Taber professional building?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member. You know, in January I received a phone call at about 6 a.m. from the Minister of Environment and Parks. I always answer those phone calls; she's a very insistent minister. She told me that the town of Taber had voted against raising the pride flag. So after everything that the Taber Equality Alliance had gone through with their flag last year, it was a no-brainer that the province had to step in. We were delighted to do that. Alberta Infrastructure was delighted to have the pride flag raised at the Taber Provincial Building to show our support for the Taber Equality Alliance.

Ms Goehring: Thank you to both ministers for your swift response and for being head and shoulders above in your support for pride in Taber.

Again to the Minister of Infrastructure: why was it a priority to make sure that the flag was raised on a provincial building?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, our government is going to continue to stand up for the LGBTQ2S community and continue to ensure that they are treated with respect. In many parts of the world raising the rainbow flag is still a provocative act. We want the LGBTQ2S community in Alberta to feel safe and proud of who they are. We want them to know that this government is here for them to fight for their rights.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Minister, why is the pride flag such an important symbol at this time?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There has never been a more important time to recognize how important the pride flag is as a symbol. Not only are the opposition parties intent on removing the rights of LGBTQ2S citizens, but they are also intent on putting

young people in harm's way. What a shame. The powerful act of flying a pride flag over a government building tells the community and its allies that we support them and that we will ensure that they are safe.

LGBTQ2S Rights

Mr. Fraser: Well, Mr. Speaker, what kind of session would it be without me getting a little verklempt or misty eyed? I want to talk about my oldest son, Carson, who's incredibly brave. He's one of the strongest people that I know. It's for people like him that we raise the pride flag. It's because of the other brave people who paved the way for him to come out to the world. Because of him and those other brave people, they changed me. They inspired people like me to show us that God created us in His image, and He doesn't make mistakes. Premier, how is your government protecting people like my son and trying to bring people together on the issues of gay rights rather than drive them apart for political benefit?

The Speaker: The Minister of Culture and Tourism.

Miranda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to commend the member. I have known him for three years now, and before that, we've had the opportunity to converse. I know that he has come a long way himself in understanding and embracing and ensuring that not only his son but every single LGBTQ Albertan feels safe and secure, and for that, I thank him very much. I will say to the member that the members on this side of the House have always and will always continue to fight for every single LGBTQ Albertan and ensure that their rights are never taken away from them despite what others would like to see.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Fraser: Mr. Speaker, as a family of faith we raised our kids not to subscribe to organized religion but to find their faith in Christ and develop a relationship with Him that's not based on traditions or boundaries. We taught our kids to love one another. I want to thank those in the government caucus, the United Conservative caucus, my independent friends, and the Alberta Party caucus that have supported my son and my family. And for those in this House that aren't there yet, I hope that you get there. Like I said, I taught my kids to love one another. Premier, what is your government doing to bridge the political divides so that gay rights can flourish across the political spectrum?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Miranda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. You know, we have spent a lot of time going throughout this province and meeting Albertans in every single opportunity where pride celebrations are taking place but also ensuring that they feel safe in their schools, and that's something that is extremely important. Unfortunately, what we have seen is the politicization of the issue of having GSAs in schools, for example, and that doesn't help. We will not stand for that. What we will do is ensure that every single student in this province can feel safe when they go to school, and we're going to make sure that any . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Fraser: Happy Pride Month to all Albertans, especially to the brave ones who are teaching us about love and acceptance; to my precious son Carson, my wife, Mishelle, my son Thaine, who loves and defends his brother; and to all proud families.

How does this government support families that are out and the ones that just need a little help getting there?

Miranda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the member for his very brave question. One of the things that we have been very clear about is that we will not stand for kids to be outed before they are ready. Everybody goes through a journey, and when they get there, some of us will struggle, absolutely, and may not be able to have these kinds of discussions. But what doesn't help is having people in political power not having the conversations, not even wanting to have face-to-face meetings with the community. We understand the needs of these young people because we ourselves, from my own experience and that of a couple of my colleagues, have seen it first-hand.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

2:30

Union Certification

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, an employee was fired for habitual tardiness. When that same employee complained to the Alberta Labour Relations Board, it found no direct evidence that the employer terminated the employee because of his union activities. However, the ALRB inferred that the employer's decision was tainted, and a remedial certification order was issued, immediately unionizing that company. No employee vote was needed, just the ALRB ruling. Does the minister think it's fair and democratic that a labour board can decide who is unionized and who isn't?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Labour.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud of the work that our government has done to update workplace legislation laws, laws that hadn't been updated in 40 years, 30 years, including our labour relations laws. What we've done is to make sure that we have brought Alberta into the Canadian mainstream using items like remedial certification, which exists in other jurisdictions and deters both parties from playing games or treating workers unfairly when they try to use their Supreme Court protected right to join a union.

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, given that we have also heard of situations where union officials harassed new immigrants and used trickery to get them to sign union certification cards, does the minister condone these heavy-handed tactics, and was this the intent of her union bill?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The member wants to talk about harassment and intimidation – let's talk about it – after their caucus colleague fired a mom who was sexually harassed when the harasser asked him to, without so much as a peep from their leader. It really doesn't get much more shameful than that. We know that workers experience harassment and intimidation in many forms. Our government has updated workplace legislation to protect workers in this province. It is a priority for us, and it should be for you.

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, given that the minister said that she was moving the labour laws in line with the rest of Canada, wouldn't the minister say that harassing and tricking vulnerable workers who do not have a good grasp on the English language is taking a step in the wrong direction?

Ms Gray: Again, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite and his party should look in the mirror when they want to talk about bullying and harassing.

What we have done is that we've brought in balanced labour relations laws that return some of the proper responsibility and power to the Labour Relations Board. When employers are abusing the system and harassing their workers, the Labour Relations Board has remediation for that. When unions perhaps are bullying and harassing, the Labour Relations Board has remediation for that. They are the arbitrators. This is a fair and balanced system. This is what the Supreme Court guarantees Canadians because they have the right to join or leave a union.

Environmental Assessments and Project Approvals

Mr. Loewen: Mr. Speaker, there's a chronic problem in Environment and Parks when it comes to issuing permits for projects, and this has consequences. Fort McMurray has been unable to open a new gravel pit in order to make up for the imminent closure of the current pit at Susan Lake. This threatens the supply of gravel in the area, and that is the beating heart of our primary industry. This is a problem caused by the inability of government to officially approve permits. Will the minister take action now to ensure that Fort McMurray has the gravel supply that it needs and review the Alberta Environment permitting process to slash needless red tape?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We've been in touch with the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo and a number of the affected folks with respect to this aggregate issue in Fort McMurray, and the department is working on a resolution to this matter.

As to the broader matter of regulatory approvals I am sure I will get to it in the supplementals.

Mr. Loewen: Given that this problem with overregulation is far from an isolated incident, impeding job-creating private industry around our province every day, and given that in my constituency we have seen an example of this where Fox Creek has been trying for six years to obtain adjacent land from the province for their business park and given that it takes six years to get something like this off the ground, impeding the growth of Alberta communities, can the minister explain to the House why the government sees the need to stand in the way of this kind of wealth-creating local development?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact, around the Water Act absolutely no regulations have changed since this government took office, so if the hon. member has a quarrel with the way that the Water Act was written or with its associated regulations or policy, I suggest that he bring it up with his new colleagues, the folks that he ran against in the 2015 election, because it's actually that framework that's in place here for that.

As for processing approvals, we are working on making sure that there are enough resources for that matter, Mr. Speaker. I take it from the hon. member that it's a spend day over on the other side of the House.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Loewen: Given that the bizarre answers continue and given that the problem of red tape is ingrained and pervasive throughout

this government and given that this government piles on more and more regulations every day, inhibiting economic progress, and given that south of Grande Prairie industry has been hampered from developing in the Industrial Heartland due to lengthy approval processes and given that we know that it is possible to get projects built promptly – when the CN train bridge burned at Mayerthorpe, they had a replacement built and ready in 20 days – will this government finally take steps to kick the habit of overregulating everything and take our advice to develop a detailed strategy for red tape reduction?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact, the issue here with respect to timeliness of approvals – and I will grant the hon. member this: we do hear from municipalities on this, and that's why we've streamlined a number of these things. We've done blitz approvals. We've worked with municipalities. We've been hearing from them. But there weren't enough resources in Environment and Parks due to the serial cuts that came from the folks across the way. Now, we have tried to work within our existing budgets to make sure we've got the resources in place. We'll have more to say about that over the coming months. The fact of the matter is that we are focused on getting this economy . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

FOIP Request Wait Times

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this week when the Minister of Justice answered questions about unacceptable delays with FOIP requests, she told this House that the problems were due to backlogs and insufficient staffing left by the past government. I thought this was confusing because in 2015 and 2016 in the main estimates the same question from me was answered by the minister, and her quote was: yes, we believe it's appropriately staffed. To the minister: which is it, staffing issues that you refused to address two years ago or a failure of the ministry to manage FOIP under your watch today?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Service Alberta.

Ms McLean: Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. We believe that information should be open and transparent, and access to information is an important issue that we all take seriously. There's certainly more work to do, but we have improved turnaround times for FOIP requests and are proactively sharing more information than the government of Alberta ever has before. We're hiring more people to clear the backlog. This is necessary in many of the departments. In Justice we've increased the number of full-time FOIP employees to 18, and Executive Council has two more staff seconded from other departments.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that if the minister is having trouble deciding, I would be willing to provide her a copy of *Hansard* and given that during the very next estimates the minister implied that any delays to FOIP requests were due to normal circumstances such as vacancies and people who went off due to illness or maternity leave, I have a simple question. To the minister: are these inconsistencies proof that you refused to address FOIP delays within your ministry, and will you commit today to correcting this?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McLean: Thank you very much for the question, Mr. Speaker. Under the past government FOIP was not a priority. Transparency was not a priority. We've seen this time and time again. When the people of Alberta elected this government, they elected a more transparent and honest government. That's why we are proactively disclosing more information than has ever been disclosed before. Each week we're feeding the open government portal with new data that Albertans would not previously have had access to without having to file a FOIP request. We're adding additional people. In addition to better turnaround times, we're taking action in a number of areas, posting all sole-sourced contracts over \$10,000 online. We opened up the ABC appointment process to all . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Second supplemental.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister simply wasted the time of my colleague from Grande Prairie-Smoky by playing politics and refusing to answer addressed questions about transparency and access to information and given that this is something Albertans genuinely care about, can the minister stop throwing her staff under the bus and articulate a coherent plan to process FOIP requests in a timely manner to get Albertans the information they require?

2:40

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There's so much in there that it's hard to address in the amount of time allotted. We've seen a 154 per cent increase in requests coming into the Ministry of Justice over the last several years. That's exactly why we took action and put in additional employees. We increased that from 10 employees to 18 employees. The members opposite voted against that funding. It's clearly this side of the House that's committed to transparency.

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this time I will table the requisite five copies of outstanding questions from the Children's Services consideration of main estimates.

The Speaker: Any other tablings, hon. members?

Mr. Loewen: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table the 2018 Bighorn Backcountry Recreational Survey, that was done by a group called Love Your Trails. It shows that they surveyed people that actually use the Bighorn backcountry about what they felt about what was happening as far as the Bighorn backcountry being made into a wildland park.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I am rising to advise the Assembly that the business of the day and of the sitting is now complete. [some applause] Thank you. As such, I move that the House adjourn until Monday, October 29.

The Speaker: Hon. members, if I might, with your indulgence, I would on your behalf show compliments and thanks to the staff, many of whom you see in this room on a constant basis but many, many more whom you do not see. [Standing ovation]

I also want you to know that Roger, as I've affectionately been

told to say, has the endurance that multiplies by all of us together.
He is always there. He never leaves. [applause]

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 2:44 p.m. pursuant to
Standing Order 3(4)]

Bill Status Report for the 29th Legislature - 4th Session (2018)

Activity to Thursday, June 7, 2018

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

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

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

Bill 1 — Energy Diversification Act (McCuaig-Boyd)

First Reading — 6 (*Mar. 8, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 50-51 (*Mar. 13, 2018 morn.*), 184-87 (*Mar. 15, 2018 aft.*), 233-43 (*Mar. 20, 2018 aft.*), 301-08 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft.*), 919-27 (*May 9, 2018 morn.*), 981-84 (*May 9, 2018 eve.*), 1054-59 (*May 14, 2018 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1280-87 (*May 29, 2018 aft.*), (*May 29, 2018 aft.*), (*May 29, 2018 eve.*), 1311-18 (*May 29, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1488-92 (*Jun. 5, 2018 morn.*), 1523-24 (*Jun. 5, 2018 aft.*), 1525-41 (*Jun. 6, 2018 morn., passed*)

Bill 2 — Growth and Diversification Act (\$) (Bilous)

First Reading — 118 (*Mar. 14, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 243-46 (*Mar. 20, 2018 morn.*), 294-96 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft.*), 314-25 (*Mar. 22, 2018 morn.*), 411-12 (*Apr. 4, 2018 aft.*), 702-05 (*May 1, 2018 eve.*), 928-33 (*May 9, 2018 morn.*), 1061-68 (*May 15, 2018 morn.*), 1101-04 (*May 15, 2018 eve.*), 1163-67 (*May 16, 2018 eve.*), 1202-06 (*May 17, 2018 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1253-58 (*May 29, 2018 morn.*), 1288-97 (*May 29, 2018 aft.*), (*May 29, 2018 eve.*), 1379-82 (*May 30, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1492-94 (*Jun. 5, 2018 morn.*), 1510-23 (*Jun. 5, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Bill 3 — Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2018 (\$) (Ceci)

First Reading — 184 (*Mar. 15, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 221-26 (*Mar. 19, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 261-68 (*Mar. 20, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 296-98 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 28, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force Mar. 28, 2018; SA 2018 c1]

Bill 4 — Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2018 (\$) (Ceci)

First Reading — 165 (*Mar. 15, 2018 morn., passed*)

Second Reading — 226-32 (*Mar. 19, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 268-75 (*Mar. 20, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 298-301 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 28, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force Mar. 28, 2018; SA 2018 c2]

Bill 5 — An Act to Strengthen Financial Security for Persons with Disabilities (Sabir)

First Reading — 200-201 (*Mar. 19, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 360-62 (*Apr. 3, 2018 morn.*), 482-87 (*Apr. 10, 2018 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 847-54 (*May 7, 2018 eve.*), 1084-88 (*May 15, 2018 aft.*), 1361-64 (*May 30, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1418-21 (*May 31, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 6 — Gaming and Liquor Statutes Amendment Act, 2018 (Ganley)

First Reading — 448 (*Apr. 9, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 533-34 (*Apr. 12, 2018 aft.*), 669-79 (*May 1, 2018 aft.*), 1010-13 (*May 10, 2018 aft.*), 1101 (*May 15, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1158-63 (*May 16, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1360-61 (*May 30, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 7 — Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act (Carlier)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 491-97 (*Apr. 10, 2018 aft.*), 534-36 (*Apr. 12, 2018 aft.*), 679-83 (*May 1, 2018 aft.*), 908-09 (*May 8, 2018 eve.*), 913-14 (*May 8, 2018 eve.*), 1097-98 (*May 15, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1299-1311 (*May 29, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1365-74 (*May 30, 2018 eve., passed on division*)

Bill 8 — Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2018 (S. Anderson)

First Reading — 374 (*Apr. 3, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 9* — Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act (Hoffman)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 497-502 (*Apr. 10, 2018 aft.*), 785-93 (*May 3, 2018 morn.*), 775-76 (*May 3, 2018 morn.*), 807-08 (*May 3, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 909-13 (*May 8, 2018 eve.*), 957-61 (*May 9, 2018 aft.*), 992-94 (*May 10, 2018 morn.*), 1088-96 (*May 15, 2018 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1352-60 (*May 30, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Bill 10* — An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements (S. Anderson)

First Reading — 528 (*Apr. 12, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 611-12 (*Apr. 19, 2018 aft.*), 643-50 (*May 1, 2018 morn.*), 761-72 (*May 2, 2018 eve.*), 973-81 (*May 9, 2018 eve.*), 1049-54 (*May 14, 2018 eve.*), 1180-87 (*May 17, 2018 morn.*), 1242-47 (*May 28, 2018 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1287-88 (*May 29, 2018 aft.*), (*May 29, 2018 eve.*), 1374-79 (*May 30, 2018 eve., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1555-71 (*Jun. 6, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Bill 11 — Lobbyists Amendment Act, 2018 (Gray)

First Reading — 505 (*Apr. 11, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 612-13 (*Apr. 19, 2018 aft.*), 650-56 (*May 1, 2018 morn.*), 772-74 (*May 2, 2018 eve.*), 967-73 (*May 9, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1157 (*May 16, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1382-86 (*May 30, 2018 eve., passed*)

Bill 12* — Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act (McCuaig-Boyd)

First Reading — 547 (*Apr. 16, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 736-46 (*May 2, 2018 aft.*), 854-55 (*May 7, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 961-65 (*May 9, 2018 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 994-96 (*May 10, 2018 morn.*), 1135-54 (*May 16, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 18, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2018 c P-21.5]

Bill 13* — An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future (\$) (McCuaig-Boyd)

First Reading — 606 (*Apr. 19, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 746-53 (*May 2, 2018 aft.*), 808-16 (*May 3, 2018 aft.*), 855-64 (*May 7, 2018 eve.*), 947-57 (*May 9, 2018 aft.*), 1169-80 (*May 17, 2018 morn.*), 1247-50 (*May 28, 2018 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1322-34 (*May 30, 2018 morn.*), 1397-1404 (*May 31, 2018 morn.*), 1449-79 (*Jun. 4, 2018 eve., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1573-92 (*Jun. 7, 2018 morn., passed on division*)

Bill 14 — An Act to Empower Utility Consumers (McLean)

First Reading — 590 (*Apr. 18, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 718-24 (*May 2, 2018 morn.*), 915-19 (*May 9, 2018 morn.*), 1098-1101 (*May 15, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1319-22 (*May 30, 2018 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1421 (*May 31, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 15 — Appropriation Act, 2018 (\$) (Ceci)

First Reading — 610 (*Apr. 19, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Second Reading — 683-89 (*May 1, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 753-56 (*May 2, 2018 aft.*), 757-60 (*May 2, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 776-85 (*May 3, 2018 morn., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*May 14, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 14, 2018; SA 2018 c3]

Bill 16 — Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Statutes Amendment Act, 2018 (Gray)

First Reading — 879 (*May 8, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1010-13 (*May 10, 2018 aft.*), 1105-22 (*May 16, 2018 morn.*), 1155-57 (*May 16, 2018 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1258-64 (*May 29, 2018 morn.*), 1299 (*May 29, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1421-22 (*May 31, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 17 — Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2018 (Ceci)

First Reading — 806 (*May 3, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 864-65 (*May 7, 2018 eve.*), 1014-15 (*May 10, 2018 aft.*), 1058-59 (*May 14, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1157 (*May 16, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1364 (*May 30, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 18 — Statutes Amendment Act, 2018 (Mason)

First Reading — 1201 (*May 17, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1251-52 (*May 28, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1387-97 (*May 31, 2018 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1481-88 (*Jun. 5, 2018 morn.*), 1507-10 (*Jun. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 201 — Employment Standards (Firefighter Leave) Amendment Act, 2018 (W. Anderson)

First Reading — 118 (*Mar. 14, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 201-14 (*Mar. 19, 2018 aft., referred to Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future*)

Bill 202 — Alberta Taxpayer Protection (Carbon Tax Referendum) Amendment Act, 2018 (Kenney)

First Reading — 179 (*Mar. 15, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 549-63 (*Apr. 16, 2018 aft., defeated on division*)

Bill 203 — Long Term Care Information Act (Schreiner)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 632-40 (*Apr. 30, 2018 aft.*), 829-33 (*May 7, 2018 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — (*May 28, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — (*Jun. 4, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Bill 204 — Land Statutes (Abolition of Adverse Possession) Amendment Act, 2018 (Gotfried)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 833-41 (*May 7, 2018 aft., adjourned*), 1031-37 (*May 14, 2018 aft., reasoned amendment agreed to*)

Bill 205 — Supporting Accessible Mental Health Services Act (Jabbour)

First Reading — 1008 (*May 10, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1037 (*May 14, 2018 aft., deferred to Monday, October 29, 2018*)

Bill 206 — Societies (Preventing the Promotion of Hate) Amendment Act, 2018 (Coolahan)

First Reading — 1008-09 (*May 10, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1037 (*May 14, 2018 aft.*), (*Jun. 4, 2018 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 207 — Municipal Government (Legion Tax Exemption) Amendment Act, 2018 (Rosendahl)

First Reading — 1418 (*May 31, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 208 — Public Recreation Areas Consultation Act (Westhead)

First Reading — 1418 (*May 31, 2018 aft., passed*)

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, October 29, 2018

Day 41

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (UCP),
Deputy Leader of the Official Opposition
Anderson, Hon. Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (NDP)
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (UCP)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (NDP)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (NDP)
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (NDP)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (NDP)
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Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (NDP)
Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP)
Cortes-Vargas, Estefania, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (NDP),
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Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (NDP)
Dreeschen, Devin, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UCP)
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (NDP)
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)
Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (NDP)
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP)
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Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (NDP)
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (AP)
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (NDP),
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Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)
Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Conklin (UCP)
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)
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Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (NDP),
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Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (UCP)
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (NDP),
Deputy Government Whip
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)

Party standings:

New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 26 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Freedom Conservative: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent: 1

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, October 29, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Welcome back.

Let us reflect or pray, each in our own way. We have to remind ourselves that the vast majority of the population, the people who we are elected to serve, don't live in this political world. They live in the real world. They live in a world where all conversation does not turn to confrontation, where common solutions are sought, where there is give-and-take, and where plans are made.

Hon. members, as is our custom, we pay tribute on the first day to members and former members of this Assembly who have passed away since we last met.

Mr. Thomas W. Chambers
July 7, 1928, to June 23, 2018

The Speaker: Mr. Thomas William Chambers was elected as the Progressive Conservative Member for Edmonton-Calder for four consecutive terms, from 1971 to 1986. After graduating from the University of Toronto, Mr. Chambers came to Alberta to commence his career as a petroleum engineer in 1952. From 1978 until 1982 Mr. Chambers served as minister of housing and public works and from 1982 until 1986 as minister of public works, supply, and services. As minister Mr. Chambers worked toward affordable housing for all Albertans and oversaw the development of the Kananaskis Country. Mr. Chambers passed away on June 23, 2018, at the age of 89.

In a moment of silent prayer and reflection I ask that each of you reflect upon the contributions of those members who have served before us.

Statement by the Speaker

Gordon Munk
Jacqueline Marie Breault

The Speaker: Hon. members, it is with sadness that I stand before you today to share the sense of sadness felt by the Legislative Assembly Office following the deaths of two highly respected, genuinely kind, and truly wonderful people who were more than simply colleagues to those who worked with them side by side every day. They were in fact dedicated public servants who made this province and this Assembly effective.

Mr. Gordon Munk joined the Legislative Assembly security service in February 2000, after having spent 30 years with the Edmonton Police Service. He served as the Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms from 2009 to 2016. During his tenure Gordon served six different Legislatures through five elections. Gord discharged his duties with the utmost proficiency and professionalism. He embodied the dignity and esteem that this place commands. He had the deep and abiding respect of his peers, the members, and his colleagues within the Legislative Assembly Office. More importantly, he was a kind and caring man.

One other dedicated public servant, Jacqueline Marie Breault, who passed away on September 7 at the age of 52, had spent more than half her life working at the LAO. She started out as a summer student in 1987 and worked hard over the course of her service to become the manager of corporate services and senior records

officer with finance. She, quite simply, was the person everybody went to when they wanted to know the story behind the corporate history. It was more than her work ethic that endeared her to people. It was her light, her generosity, and her warmth that drew others to her. She had a sense of humour and a zest for life that we all wish could have graced us for many more years.

Could I ask, hon. members, if you would just take a moment to honour and reflect upon these two dedicated public servants.

Thank you, hon. members. We will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Mr. R.J. Chambers. I would invite all to participate in the language of their choice.

Hon. Members:

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

The Speaker: Thank you. Please be seated.

Presentation to the Assembly of Ms Laila Goodridge Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin

The Speaker: I would now invite the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition to proceed to the main doors of the Chamber.

Hon. members, I have received from the chief electoral office of Alberta the report of the returning officer for the constituency of Fort McMurray-Conklin containing the results of the by-election conducted on July 12, 2018, which states that a by-election was conducted in the constituency of Fort McMurray-Conklin and that Ms Laila Goodridge was duly elected as the Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin.

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, Mr. Kenney escorted Ms Goodridge to the Mace]

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present to you Ms Laila Goodridge, the new Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin, who has taken the oath as a member of this Assembly, has inscribed the roll, and now claims the right to take her seat.

The Speaker: Let the hon. member take her seat.

Presentation to the Assembly of Mr. Devin Dreesen Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake

The Speaker: Hon. members, I have received from the chief electoral office of Alberta the report of the returning officer for the constituency of Innisfail-Sylvan Lake containing the results of the by-election conducted on July 12, 2018, which states that a by-election was conducted in the constituency of Innisfail-Sylvan Lake and that Mr. Devin Dreesen was duly elected as the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

[Preceded by the Sergeant-at-Arms, Mr. Kenney escorted Mr. Dreesen to the Mace]

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present to you Mr. Devin Dreesen, the new Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, who has taken the oath as a member of the Assembly, has inscribed the roll, and now claims the right to take his seat.

The Speaker: Let the hon. member take his seat.

1:40

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: Hon. members, with our admiration and respect there is gratitude to members of the families who share the burdens of public office and public service. I would like to welcome members of the Chambers, Munk, and Breault families who are present in the Speaker's gallery. I would call upon the Member for Peace River to call the names.

Ms Jabbour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's certainly an honour and a privilege to introduce the families of Jacqueline and Gord. I had the privilege and the honour of working with both of these individuals, and it was wonderful to have known them.

I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the family of former Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms Gordon Munk: Gord's wife, Cecilia Munk; Gord's daughter Tracey Neufeld, and her husband, Cody; and Gord's grandsons Austin and Ethan Neufeld. I'd ask that they please rise, as they have, and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

As well, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the family of Jacqueline Breault, who was the manager of FMAS at the Legislative Assembly Office: Jacqueline's mother, Elaine Breault, and Jacqueline's LAO colleagues and long-time friends Elsie Yeremiy and Colleen Smith. Would you please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: I would also like to invite the members of the Chambers family to please rise: Andrea and Hannah Robb, Colin Robb, Susan Peachment, Rhys Webster, and Kevin Malinowski. Welcome. Thank you for your service to this province.

The Member for Calgary-Hawkwood.

Connolly: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you Arne Lietz, Member of the European Parliament from Germany. Arne is a member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, a member of the Committee on Development, and a substitute on the Subcommittee on Security and Defence. He is currently touring Canada with the Friedrich Ebert foundation to discover more about Canada. I also want to introduce Raoul Gebert, who is the project manager for Canada with the Friedrich Ebert foundation. He was also the chief of staff to former NDP leader Tom Mulcair. If the Chamber can give them a warm welcome today.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On your behalf I'd like to introduce two of your guests who are seated in the Speaker's gallery. I'd ask that they please rise when I call their names. As the MLA for Medicine Hat during the 28th Alberta Legislature Blake Pedersen preceded you in your home riding and served the city with pride. Blake continues to serve the people of Medicine Hat in a number of capacities, including president of the board of directors of the Medicine Hat Community Housing Society, vice-chair of the Palliser Triangle health region, and Medicine Hat Exhibition and Stampede parade committee member. Blake is joined by his long-time partner, Angela Kolody, who continues her work in southeastern Alberta as a real estate agent. I'd ask the House to please give your guests the traditional warm welcome of the House.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Hon. member, did you also have a school group?

Ms Sweet: I do. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to introduce to you and through you 37 students from the McLeod elementary school. The students are accompanied by their teacher, Kercelyn Pasternak, along with their chaperones Joseph Kolacz, Kiersten Jackman, and Kelsey Quinney. If they could all please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: I'm still readjusting a little to the pace around here. I'm sure that none of you are suffering from that.

The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 10 teachers who are now working to help build the curriculum for the Department of Education. I have Robyn Boisvert, Aaron Chute, Pearl Wielki, Vilma Irasga, Derrik DeGagne, Rhonda Stangeland, Bill Jacobsen, Ash Bhasin, Kristel Zapanta, Lori Whillier, and Leslie Campbell. If they could all stand, please, and receive the warm welcome of the Legislature.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two separate introductions today. I'd like to introduce to you and through you a group of four very keen Alberta Party supporters, and I will ask them, the four of them, to please rise as I say their names. Serena Moar is a very, very keen volunteer who does a tremendous amount of work in the city of Calgary. She was a Legislature page, goes to the University of Calgary, studying political science and women's and gender studies. Gurjot Mand is a student at Mount Royal University, in the beautiful constituency of Calgary-Elbow, studying athletic therapy. Griffin Brown is a graduate of the University of Lethbridge, also a very keen member of the Alberta Party's provincial board. Last and absolutely not least is the next Member of the Legislative Assembly for Calgary-Lougheed, Rachel Timmermans. Rachel is a MRU policy studies student and is also the nominated Alberta Party candidate in Calgary-Lougheed. If the four of them please could rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View – do you have another?

Mr. Clark: I do, Mr. Speaker, briefly. Thank you very much. I'd like to introduce to you and through you two members of the leadership team of the Boys & Girls Clubs of Calgary. Mr. Jeff Dyer is the CEO, and Nicole Jackson is manager of research and evaluation. For over 75 years the Boys & Girls Clubs have served over 10,000 vulnerable children and youth every year in the city of Calgary. They are an important part of ensuring a bright future for children in our city. I'd ask the two of them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: I wonder if the Government House Leader might entertain a motion for unanimous consent to go past 1:50, if you would consider that?

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, that's a wonderful idea, and I so move.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: Now the Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and welcome back to everyone in the House today. It's my great pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly some of the strongest citizen advocates I've known in my 15 years in politics. Jenn Thompson is a leading community activist with the Serious Spectrum Sensory Support Group who once again rallied Albertans on the steps of the Legislature to push for much-needed change to the use of seclusion rooms in our public schools in this province. With Jenn are some fellow activists who joined her at today's rally – if they could stand as I mention their names – Angela McNair, Claire Wilde, Shannon Childers. Their advocacy on this issue of seclusion rooms is a true credit to our children and to this province. With them today is Leah McRorie, a lifelong activist for persons with disabilities, passionate about creating a more inclusive society that promotes equality of opportunity for all Albertans. Please join me first in welcoming them to the Legislature.

The Speaker: Welcome.

1:50

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a great pleasure to rise today and introduce to you again and to all the Legislature a prominent group of Liberals building our party and providing Albertans with a moderate, forward-thinking option for the next election. Among them is our incredible leader, David Khan, a powerful voice for social justice and fiscal responsibility in our province, who I'm confident will be taking my place in the next Legislature in Alberta. Accompanying David is Edmonton-Mill Woods Liberal candidate Abdi Bakal and Alberta Liberal Party president Graeme Maitland as well as former Liberal candidate for Edmonton-Gold Bar Ron Brochu. Let's give them the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Before I introduce my special guests, I just wanted to thank the members of the Assembly on both sides. Since my diagnosis earlier this year with leukemia I've received so much tremendous support from the House. I am so grateful to everybody, and I just want to thank them so much and, certainly, thank all Albertans who sent me so many cards and gifts and support. I'm so grateful. I just want to let you all know that my prognosis is great and my treatment continues. [Standing ovation] Yes. Thank you so much.

Today I have the great pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Parviz Walji and Betty Zapata. Parviz is a small-business owner, and she runs Hands Feet & Face, an aesthetics business here in Edmonton. Betty has cared for me lovingly over the years, and I always feel like a million bucks after I finish with her services. I'm glad you've risen. I'd ask you to please join me in giving them the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: To the members of the gallery, I think that statement of one of our peers speaks to the importance and respect that exists across the House. Our best to have you back.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you a promising and inspiring young Albertan from the constituency of Calgary-Fish Creek. Matthew Melbourn is a second-year student at the University of Alberta, pursuing an

honours degree in history and political science. Matthew is currently part of a leadership team and is the events co-ordinator for the United Conservatives at the University of Alberta. Matthew spent this past summer working in the nonprofit sector for the Terry Fox Foundation, aiding in donor relations and organizing a number of annual Terry Fox runs throughout the province. He's active with the UCP in Calgary-Fish Creek and across the province in promoting engagement of young Albertans in the democratic process. I would ask – he's already risen here – all members of the Assembly to join me in extending the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly to Matthew on his first visit to this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Health and Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions, both in the members' gallery. First, it's my pleasure to introduce Barb Furler and Dr. Marc Moreau, who are seated in the gallery. Barb works as a physical therapist at the Glenrose rehabilitation hospital, and Marc is a pediatric orthopaedic surgeon at the Stollery children's hospital and a founding member of the Canadian Association of Medical Teams Abroad. They work with a team of volunteers to provide orthopaedic surgeries, education, and therapy for people in Ecuador who would otherwise be unable to receive medical care. We are so proud to honour your work, and thank you for being here today. Colleagues, please join me in extending the warm welcome of the Assembly.

My second is members from the Society of Alberta Occupational Therapists who are seated in the members' gallery. October is dedicated to occupational therapists as they have dedicated their careers to the well-being of others. OTs work to help enable and empower Albertans to care for themselves and have active, inclusive, fulfilling lives. I'd ask that Caryn George, Lauren Barrett, and Robin Telasky please rise and receive the warm welcome of our Assembly and our gratitude.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I have the pleasure of introducing to you and through you three constituents and community leaders from the fabulous constituency of Edmonton-Mill Woods. Born and raised in Pakistan, Chand Gul's passion for human rights and giving a voice to those who have faced oppression and discrimination is truly from her heart and her own personal journey. She is the founder and president of the Alberta Pashtoon Association, on the board of the Pakistan Canada Association of Edmonton, and was a community connector with the immigrant women's integration network. She is a strong supporter of Minister Sohi, and I'm so pleased she is also contributing her expertise and passion to my team in Edmonton-Mill Woods. I was very pleased to spend time with her at the NDP convention this weekend, and she's one of the newest members of our brand new race equity caucus in our party.

Parvin Sedighi came to Canada with her family as a refugee from Afghanistan more than a decade ago. She is now the president of the students' association of MacEwan University as well as a writer for the student newspaper, *The Griff*. Parvin is also the VP of communications at the Alberta Muslim Public Affairs Council. Finally, Cynthia Luna-Pasagui is an active member of Edmonton's Filipino community. She works with the Filipino Retirees' Association, can often be found performing with her local choir and band at the Mill Woods seniors activity centre and volunteering in my office. Thank you, ladies, for rising. I would now like to ask everyone to extend the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Now I would invite the Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin.

Ms Goodridge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two important guests that I have seated up in the gallery, Iris Kirschner and her grandson William Gordon. Iris has been introduced countless times in this House, but it's truly an honour to be able to introduce her today. She has played such a monumental role in getting me to where I am right now, and I want to sincerely thank her. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

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

Mr. Cooper: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today and introduce two outstanding constituents from the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. Both of these fine folks are young, passionate Conservatives, part of a new generation of leadership in the Conservative Party. They are Ashley Stevenson, who serves as the vice-president, membership on the United Conservative Party Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills Constituency Association, and Shaun Holtby, who is also a director at large of that constituency association. I'd invite them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce a set of other guests that are not quite as outstanding because they're not from the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, but they are incredible in their own right. Recently these three individuals were influential in putting on the Energy Relaunch conference in the city of Calgary, a conference that brought people together from all walks of life and backgrounds, including the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, the Premier of Saskatchewan, and the leaders of the Official Opposition both federally and provincially here in Alberta. They are with New West Public Affairs. Many of you will know Matt Solberg, his brother Mike – I'm sure he couldn't be more proud right now – and their colleague Sonia Kont. I'd invite them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Children's Services and of Status of Women.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On this first day back in session it's my honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly three guests from the most outstanding constituency in the province, Lesser Slave Lake, who make it possible for me to do the critical work that I get to do here. I'd ask my guests to please rise as I say their names: my inspiration, my role model, my support network, who also happens to be my mom, Marilyn Larivee; the membership secretary for the Lesser Slave Lake constituency association and friend, Val Marshall; and member at large of the Lesser Slave Lake constituency association and also a friend, Lloyd Marshall. Thank you for supporting the work that I do, the work that our government does, and our fight for everyday families. Please accept the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

2:00

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I have the pleasure of introducing Marcy Oakes, Allison Pike, and Kristi Rouse, parents who are serving on the working group on the use of isolation and seclusion rooms and physical restraints in schools. Last week I met with Marcy, who shared with me about the urgency of this work, and quite frankly I couldn't agree more. As a parent and as a teacher myself I was very disturbed by many of the things that we have been learning about families' experiences with seclusion rooms in Alberta schools, and we can and must and will do better for the sake of our kids. The status quo is simply unacceptable, and all children's safety is paramount. Allison, Kristi, and Marcy are seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask that they now please stand. Please, everyone join me in giving them the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other guests for introduction? The Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Introductions seem to be the latest in the renewable resources industry of Alberta. I rise today to introduce to you and through you many of Alberta's postsecondary student leaders. They've joined me here today to witness the introduction of Bill 19, An Act to Improve the Affordability and Accessibility of Post-secondary Education, which I will be tabling later today. Over the past couple of years I've had the pleasure of meeting and working with students from across the province, and I'm proud that our work together has led to legislation that reflects the priorities and protects students.

I ask that they please rise as I state their names. With us today are Marc Waddingham, Sasha van der Klein, Lindsay McNena, Nicole van Kuppeveld, Mostafa Sakr, Jon Mastel, Kera Forbes, Alysson Torres-Gillett, Brandon Vollweiter, Jonas Bystrom, Chaise Combs, Naomi Pela, Garrett Koehler, Andrew Preiss, Shifrah Gadamssetti, Adam Brown, Reed Larsen, Sagar Grewal, Anayat Sidhu, Parvin Sedighi, Victoria Schindler, Andrew Bieman, and Amanda LeBlanc. I ask that all of my colleagues give them the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With your permission, I have two introductions today. It's an honour to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a group of individuals representing the Sierra Leone Association of Alberta. Today we have Kemoh Mansaray, president, and he's joined by his wife, Iyesatu Jalloh. They are also joined by Theresa Goba, secretary general; Kai Ngegba, assistant secretary general; and community member Aly Kamara. I would ask that they now please rise to receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

It's also very exciting to introduce to you and through you today to all members of the Assembly Sandra Stemmer. Sandra is the newly appointed executive director for the North Edmonton Business Association. NEBA is a membership-based organization looking to create opportunities and interactions and engagement between entrepreneurs, businesses, communities, and government, and I would like to thank NEBA for strengthening the partnerships between those businesses, professionals, communities, and government and for creating business opportunities in the vibrant community of north Edmonton. I would now ask that she please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ministerial Statements

Pittsburgh Synagogue Shooting

Miranda: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of our government to offer our deepest condolences to the family, friends, and all those affected by the synagogue shooting, the horrific murder of 11 Americans in Pittsburgh on the weekend, said to be the worst attack on Jews in the history of the United States. Our hearts break for the Jewish community in Pittsburgh, and we stand united with Jewish people around the world.

Let it be said that no one should have to worry about their safety when they go to their place of worship. No family should have to worry that their loved ones might not make it home because of where or how they pray. When a community of family and friends gathers to celebrate a bris, they should not have to look over their shoulders in fear. As a father and a member of the Jewish faith, I am utterly heartbroken by this vile, unconscionable act.

To the Jewish community of Alberta, my sisters and brothers: I stand with you. Our government and, I know, everyone in this House stands with you as we all grieve. We must not allow hate and intolerance to divide us. Our government will not allow the rise of anti-Semitism, that we have seen elsewhere in the world, to flourish in Alberta. The fact that this has to be said in this day and age is deeply troubling. All of us must continue to denounce hate. As the Premier said yesterday: anti-Semitism is a dark reality that must be confronted directly; it has no place in a civil society.

We must continue to ensure that Alberta is a place of welcome for all people and all faiths where there is no room for hatred. We will continue to ensure that Alberta is a place where our Jewish community, who have helped to build this province, can go about their daily lives and can practise their faith in safety and in solidarity with their fellow Albertans.

Mr. Speaker and all of us in this House today, as we reaffirm our commitment to stand up against hate and in standing with Alberta's Jewish community and the Jewish communities around the world, I now ask you all to please stand as I recite the Kaddish, the traditional Jewish prayer for the dead, followed by a moment of silence in remembrance of those killed at the Tree of Life synagogue. [Remarks in Aramaic and Hebrew] Amen.

Glorified and sanctified be God's great name throughout the world, which He has created according to His will. May He establish His kingdom in your lifetime and during your days, and within the life of the entire house of Israel, speedily and soon; and say, amen.

May His great name be blessed forever and to all eternity. Blessed and praised, glorified and exalted, extolled and honored, adored and lauded be the name of the Holy One, blessed be He, beyond all the blessings and hymns, praises and consolations that are ever spoken in the world; and say, amen.

May there be abundant peace from heaven, and life, for us and for all Israel; and say, amen.

He who creates peace in His celestial heights, may He create peace for us and for all Israel; and say, amen. [As submitted]

Thank you.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the hon. minister for those profound words and especially for offering the Mourner's Kaddish for this Assembly on behalf of the victims of the odious act of anti-Semitic violence in Pittsburgh this weekend, when 11 elderly American Jews were murdered in cold blood for the crime of being Jewish, in what was an expression of the most ancient and pernicious form of hatred in human history, anti-Semitism.

Mr. Speaker, it is disturbing to imagine that amongst the victims were those who saw the Holocaust, that during the Second World War nearly obliterated the Jewish population of Europe.

The alleged shooter, murderer, of the Tree of Life synagogue attack said that, quote, he wanted all Jews to die. Mr. Speaker, this is the perverted, dystopian dream of anti-Semites all through human history.

I've stood at the ravine of Babi Yar near Kiev, where Nazis, the Einsatzgruppen, mowed down 30,000 Jews, motivated by this same ancient hatred. I stood at the Chabad house in Mumbai just weeks after terrorists killed Rabi Gavriel Holtzberg and his family for the crime of being Jewish. I stood outside a pizzeria in Ben Yehuda in Jerusalem just days after a suicide bomb was planted to kill Jews. That was exactly the same hatred that invaded the Tree of Life shul during Chabad services this weekend in Pittsburgh.

While we denounce this particular crime, we more profoundly, all of us as Albertans and Canadians, denounce this singular hatred which underscores it. Elie Wiesel, the great chronicler of the Holocaust, said: we must always take sides. And so we do so in denouncing anti-Semitism in all of its forms.

2:10

I would like to read into the record the names of those whose lives were taken this weekend: Joyce Fienberg, Richard Gottfried, Rose Mallinger, Jerry Rabinowitz, Cecil and David Rosenthal, Bernice and Sylvan Simon, Daniel Stein, Melvin Wax, Irving Younger.

Mr. Speaker, in the face of this and the sad history of anti-Semitism, the Jewish people always respond with their devotion to the Covenant and to the dignity of the human person. So let us say that the haters, the anti-Semites, never win. [Remarks in Hebrew] The people of Israel live. And as it says in the English translation of the Mourner's Kaddish: may the one who creates harmony on high bring peace to us and to all Israel, to which we say amen.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, if I may, I would like to ask the House for unanimous consent to allow a representative of the Alberta Party to respond. I have not received notes from any of the other independents, so I presume that that will be all.

Thank you.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of the Alberta Party opposition and our leader, Stephen Mandel, to commemorate the victims of the terrible attack this past Sabbath morning in Pittsburgh. I'd like to thank my colleagues the hon. Minister of Culture and Tourism and the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition for their heartfelt remarks.

I want Alberta's Jewish community to know that we stand with you. We denounce in no uncertain terms this horrific crime and the anti-Semitism that caused it. This serves to remind us that anti-Semitism and hatred continue to plague our society, and by all accounts it is getting worse. This horrific incident has left a hole in the Jewish community and has ripped the illusion of peace away from Jewish communities all over the world and here in Alberta.

Tonight the Edmonton Jewish community will be hosting a memorial for those who were slain or injured in order to stand with the community in Pittsburgh, and the Alberta Party will be there with you. Our hearts ache at the loss of innocent lives. Today we remember those who were injured and those who were lost. Among those who were slain were Holocaust survivors, professionals, an

HIV specialist, and too many people who left us suddenly and far too soon.

Like many parents, I'm left wondering how I talk about this with my daughters. How can we ensure that the world they inherit is free from hatred, a world where anti-Semitism no longer exists? The answer, at least in part, is to be vigilant, to call out anti-Semitism wherever we see it, to build community, to build bridges, and to educate, and as leaders we must remember that it is us who set the tone.

Today we wish a full recovery to those who were injured in the attack, including the police who ran towards danger, and we mourn the loss of 11 innocent lives. May their memories be forever a blessing.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 7(8) I wish to inform the House that we will be extending Orders of the Day past 3 o'clock until its completion.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Statement by the Speaker

Rotation of Questions and Members' Statements

The Speaker: Hon. members, before we proceed to Oral Question Period, I'd like to inform all hon. members about changes to both the Oral Question Period and the Members' Statements rotations. My office received a signed House leaders' agreement on October 24, 2018. After reviewing the document and the changes proposed in it, I've decided to accept it. I have noted the agreement and the rotations in the memorandums that I sent to all members on October 26, 2018.

The changes to the Oral Question Period rotation, indicated in the agreement, as compared to the rotation used during the spring sitting of the Fourth Session in the 29th Legislature, are as follows. The Member for Calgary-Greenway may ask question 6 on days 3 and 7 of the eight-day rotation. These questions were previously allocated to the Official Opposition.

The House leaders' agreement has also added a question 17 to the rotation. The question has been evenly allocated between the Official Opposition and the government caucus, with each caucus receiving four questions total on alternating days, starting on day 1 with the Official Opposition.

Turning to the Members' Statements rotation, the House leaders' agreement stipulates that the Member for Calgary-Greenway receives one member's statement every three weeks on a Thursday, starting on November 8, 2018.

I've asked that copies of both the Oral Question Period rotation and the projected sitting days calendar which contains the Members' Statements rotation, among other things, be placed on members' desks. Please consult these documents for further information about the rotation.

Also note that as the Assembly commences the fall sitting today, members are on day 8 of the Oral Question Period rotation and week 2 of the Members' Statements rotation.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to, through you, wish all members back to the House. I hope they've had a productive time in their constituencies, and I hope our friends opposite in particular enjoyed their party convention this weekend.

Carbon Levy Increase

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, does the planned 67 per cent increase in the carbon tax continue to be embedded in the government's fiscal plan?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to welcome everybody back to the Legislature. It should be a very interesting few weeks: two very different versions of, I think, and two very different visions for the province of Alberta, one that works for all Albertans and one that works for the top 1 per cent.

In answer to the member's question, as he knows full well, we have indicated that until we see a definitive conclusion to the pipeline issue that was disrupted by the Federal Court of Appeal decision, the additional changes to the climate leadership plan . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, in the government's spring budget it projected a balanced budget in 2023 based on a 67 per cent increase in the carbon tax. In his quarterly fiscal update the Finance minister confirmed that the government was on track with the same fiscal plan. This was after the Premier indicated that she does not intend to proceed with the increase in the carbon tax, so there is an apparent contradiction here. I invite the Premier to clarify this. Does the government's fiscal plan continue to count on additional revenues from raising the carbon tax from \$30 to \$50 a tonne?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact, we have not yet had the opportunity to release our revised path to balance, but I can assure the member opposite that we still plan to meet our targets with respect to the path to balance. We do not currently have a path to balance which incorporates additional revenues coming as a result of signing on to the federal government's additions to the carbon levy, for the reasons I've already outlined, because we are focused on getting a pipeline built. Until that happens, we're not part of the plan.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, Albertans would understandably be confused trying to understand that answer because the NDP's projected 67 per cent increase in the carbon tax would generate about 2 billion additional tax dollars per year, which was the basis of their claim to have a balanced budget in 2023. If it's not 2 billion extra dollars from an increase in the carbon tax, what other tax are they planning to increase in order to maintain their fiscal plan?

2:20

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can assure the member opposite – let me be very clear so there's no opportunity for sort of misrepresentations to occur – that there is absolutely no plan to bring in any other kind of tax. We are fully on target to meet our path-to-balance commitments that were introduced in the last budget, and of course the people of Alberta will see that in the next budget. What we won't do is blow a \$700 million hole in the budget to give a tax break to the top 1 per cent of Albertans like the member opposite seems to think is . . .

The Speaker: Second main question.

Mr. Kenney: Well, you would forgive Albertans, Mr. Speaker, for being skeptical about that answer given that the NDP imposed a job-killing carbon tax on Albertans without having mentioned it in the last election. We have a huge hole in the NDP's fiscal plan, which is either being met by an increase in the carbon tax, that they're now pretending not to do, or by another tax increase. I'll be interested to find out which it is.

Federal Bill C-69 and Pipeline Construction

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, in the spring the opposition proposed a motion calling on the government to join us in calling on the federal government to withdraw the no-more-pipelines bill, Bill C-69. The NDP defeated that motion. Why?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows full well, our government has been fully committed to standing up for Alberta's energy industry on matters of development, including, of course, getting a pipeline to tidewater and ensuring that the new legislation that comes forward facilitates that and doesn't bar it. That's why we've been engaging in a year and half of advocacy with respect to the federal government, up to and including just last week, when our minister of environment went and met with copious numbers of federal officials to outline the clear problems with Bill C-69 because we are standing up for Alberta's energy.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, in the spring, when I suggested that the government send ministers to Ottawa to speak out against the no-more-pipelines act, they mocked and ridiculed us for that suggestion. The Deputy Premier said, "How is it standing up for Alberta to hop on an airplane and jaunt off to Ottawa?" Why didn't the government accept our constructive advice then to intervene against the no-more-pipelines law when it was before the House of Commons energy committee? Why did they wait five months to finally act on our advice?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I said before, our government has been standing up with respect to Bill C-69 for a year and a half, so the member opposite once again is taking some liberty with the facts. What I will say, however, is that we are not going to take advice on how to stand up for Alberta, Alberta's energy industry, and Alberta pipelines from someone who actually, when in Ottawa, said that no pipeline is a national priority. That's the member opposite's record. Our record is clear. It's out there. We're going to continue fighting for Albertans, and I suggest that he join us.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, in August the energy ministers of all the provinces and the federal government came together, and they issued a communiqué. Two provinces resiled from that communiqué with a minority communiqué. They said that, quote, the no-more-pipelines law of the Trudeau government effectively hinders natural resource related economic development within the country and could erode Canada's economic competitiveness. Close quote. Alberta was not one of those two provinces. Why didn't Alberta sign on to this statement against Bill C-69 with Saskatchewan and Ontario?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, as I've said very clearly, our ministers have very definitively advocated on behalf of Alberta's energy industry. The federal government is fully aware of our position on Bill C-69. We have talked to them about how, while we support the intention of Bill C-69 to create greater clarity for everybody and to

ensure that we instill confidence on all Canadians' parts, what they have proposed is not acceptable to Albertans. We will continue to push forward, and we will get results.

The Speaker: Third main question.

Mr. Kenney: Well, the truth is that they failed to lead. They let the opposition, the governments of Saskatchewan and Ontario lead the fight against a bill which they still do not oppose, Mr. Speaker. Ottawa is not clear because they will not express their clear – this government will not call on the federal government to kill the bill, so I will invite the Premier to stand here in the Legislative Assembly and clarify for all Albertans: is it the position of her government that the federal government should withdraw the no-more-pipelines act, Bill C-69?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, again I will be very clear. We have said that Bill C-69 in its current form is absolutely unacceptable to this government and it will not support Alberta's energy industry, something that we are focused on doing. I literally cannot take advice from someone who sat in Ottawa for well over 10 years, with a Conservative government here, a Conservative government in B.C., a Conservative government in Ottawa, that didn't get a pipeline built. You know what? We're going to continue doing the work that we're doing, and we are going to get the pipeline done.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the Premier literally does take my advice. The no-more-pipelines law that I proposed in July of last year she mocked and ridiculed, and then she made it Alberta government policy this spring. The suggestion that we fight Bill C-69: they mocked and ridiculed the idea of sending ministers to Ottawa to combat it, and now she's followed our lead. When we said, "Stop the increase in the carbon tax," they mocked and ridiculed the idea. Now they claim that they're going to stop the increase in the carbon tax. Instead of following, why doesn't this government lead in fighting for Alberta jobs and resources?

Ms Notley: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is absolutely entitled to his own opinions, but he is absolutely not entitled to his own facts. The facts are that our government has been fighting with respect to Bill C-69 for well over a year. The facts are that since we've been elected, we have done nothing but advocate for the Trans Mountain pipeline, for KXL, for line 3. You know what? We've got 2 of 3, and we are very close on the third one. Meanwhile the member opposite has nothing but failure on his resumé. Thank goodness we're the ones that are going to get it done.

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's rather ungrateful of the Premier not to thank the opposition for providing her government with its agenda on these issues. Now maybe she could explain. If, in fact, we just didn't understand, why did she mock and ridicule our suggestion that we be prepared to turn off the taps to British Columbia in response to its obstructionism? Why did she mock and ridicule the idea that we send ministers down to Ottawa to oppose Bill C-69? Why did she mock and ridicule the idea that we freeze the carbon tax rather than increasing it in the face of the federal government's failure to lead on pipelines? Why is this government following and not leading in the fight for Alberta?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, again, the member opposite has a very creative understanding of history. Perhaps when he's sitting around with his friends in his room, they talk to each other and they rewrite history. That's very lovely, but what he's describing didn't happen. What, in fact, did happen is that since our government has been elected, we have worked hard to get a pipeline to tidewater, and –

you know what? – we’re succeeding. When our government came into power, there was not a lot of support for this, but as a result of the work that we have done, talking about the importance to our energy industry and to Alberta workers of a pipeline, in B.C., in Ottawa, in the Maritimes . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.
The Member for Calgary-South East.

Bitumen Upgrading and Refining

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are facing a per-barrel discount of \$50, trying to sell our raw product to the United States. We desperately need pipeline capacity and pipelines capable of delivering that product to other international customers. In the meantime we need to be smart about getting the most value from the pipeline space we do have. Upgraded products such as diesel not only deliver much more value per barrel; it also doesn’t require shipping diluent along with it. To the Minister of Energy: with the failure to secure expanded pipeline access, will you commit to doing more to support upgrading and refining in this province, where it makes sense for taxpayers?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the differential lately has highlighted absolutely the need for pipelines, the need for more rail, but it also has highlighted that we need to keep value here in Alberta for the resources that Albertans own. We’re doing that. Last year we had Bill 1, that provides support to industry who wants to build here for things like upgrading, straddle plants, more petrochemical diversification, because we know that that’s what matters to Albertans.

Mr. Fraser: Our caucus recently had the opportunity to visit the North West refinery, and some of the good news that we heard: progress has been made on the carbon trunk line. This means that the refinery will be able to significantly reduce its carbon footprint, but the line also has the capacity to transport even more than that one facility can produce. To the same minister: with the carbon trunk line on the way and the North West refinery nearing completion, when can we expect your government to finally make a decision on phase 2 of this project?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, again, we’re working very hard every day for Albertans, for those good Alberta jobs that are provided by the energy and the diversification that keeping value here in Alberta will provide. We’re fighting for pipelines. We’re looking at all projects that will keep value here in Alberta for our industry to get a better price. This was a vision that long ago Peter Lougheed had. It was dropped for whatever reason over a number of years and – you know what? – as this government is doing, we’re picking up that vision, and we’re running with it.

2:30

Mr. Fraser: With increasing global demand for less carbon-intensive fuels there’s an opportunity here for Alberta, but we must be innovative. For example, the international marine organization has mandated that marine fuel must have a sulphur content less than .5 per cent by 2020, a standard that we’ll be meeting in Alberta thanks to the North West refinery. If we’re forward-thinking about the world’s energy needs, we can create more demand for our products and continue to grow our energy industry. To the same

minister: have you done any work to identify any new opportunities and energy products that Alberta can take advantage of? If not, would you please explain to this House why not?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the hon. member for the question. It is true that there are new marine sulphur guidelines coming in on the international level, which speaks to the fact that Alberta must remain competitive not only within our own national emissions and pollutions controls but also the international protocols governing those things. That’s why, for example, we’re investing in clean tech and in innovation. Of that \$1.4 billion that we committed to reinvestment into clean tech in oil and gas, part of that was a test project just over here in Fort Saskatchewan that manufactures that low-sulphur diesel to solve exactly the problem that the hon. member has described.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

H.A. Kostash School in Smoky Lake

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m proud to be part of a government that has built and modernized more schools than any other administration in Alberta’s history. However, much still needs to be done and nowhere as much as in the community of Smoky Lake, whose K to 12 school has outlived its usefulness and faces a multitude of serious issues. To the Minister of Education: is he aware of the present state of H.A. Kostash school?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thanks for the question. Yes, I am very much aware of the situation in Smoky Lake. In fact, I met a student just last week that goes to this school at the public school board student voice meeting, and he laid out in no uncertain terms exactly how the school was definitely needing some help. You know, there are many schools like this across the province. To date our government has funded 240 school projects across the province, the biggest infrastructure build in the history of this fine province. Again, this example from Smoky Lake . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
First supplemental.

Mr. Piquette: Thank you. To the same minister. Local parents have organized a letter-writing campaign to advocate for a replacement school. Can the minister comment on the types of concerns parents have raised with his ministry?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, I am aware of the state of the school, and I’m really glad for his advocacy to make sure that we’re getting a clear picture of what capital project priorities are across the province. We’ve been building across the province. We’ve been doing renovations across the province, and we will continue to do so. You need to invest in education because our population is growing. You can’t cut and fire; you need to hire and build more schools.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: considering the issues with this school, is the minister looking at approving a new school for Smoky Lake, and if so, when?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we work through a process using the priorities of capital builds from different school boards, and in due process of time that's what we do. We make these decisions together with school boards to make sure that our kids are safe and that we're building something that we can all be proud of here in the province of Alberta.

Government Policies

Mr. Fildebrandt: Mr. Speaker, after the last election all members of this House worked together to pass campaign finance reform legislation to get big money out of politics. Nearly every session afterwards, though, the NDP have brought forward changes to that legislation to try and plug holes in their original bill. In the last week the Premier has expressed her indignation that in exchange for political favours, political action committees are campaigning for the Tories: PACs bad. But 4 out of 5 active PACs in Alberta are explicitly backing the NDP: PACs good. Which one is true?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Labour.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Albertans deserve to know who is trying to influence their opinion, and that is why I'm so proud that we brought forward the strongest third-party legislation system in the country and one that will stand up to court challenges. Now, it's clear from what we've seen lately that the Conservatives are still hell bent on getting around the rules and returning Alberta to the same system of entitlement that Alberta rejected in the last election, but I am very proud of the third-party election system that we have passed and that Albertans have more transparency.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Mr. Speaker, Albertans are looking forward to their chance to scrap the NDP's carbon tax, but the Premier threw a wet blanket on the excitement when she stated that if Alberta scraps her carbon tax, the Trudeau government has the power to just impose his. When a court ruling put the TMX pipeline on ice, the Premier righteously proclaimed that Alberta was pulling out of Trudeau's plan and would therefore not raise the carbon tax from \$30 to \$40 per tonne. In short, opposition noncompliance with Trudeau: not possible. NDP noncompliance with Trudeau: possible. Which is true?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The issue here is the escalation of price starting in 2021, which we have said we are not doing. Alberta's climate leadership plan will be adequate pending the economic uplift that we can enjoy from market access for our products. Every other piece of our work on climate leadership with respect to efficiency, renewables, growing the economy, broadening the economy will remain in place, but that price escalation will not until we see concrete action from the federal government.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I think you have a second supplemental left. Is that right? Just remember to stay close to the first topic that you entered into. It is supplemental to the main question, so if you could keep that in mind.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Mr. Speaker, I assure you that the questions are on topic even if the answers are not.

Mr. Speaker, in the half-dozen or so times that the government has moved back the date of its balanced budget, the Premier and Finance minister have repeatedly stated that there's no need to cut spending because the TMX pipeline will solve everything. It's this one weird secret deficits don't want you to know about. But when the now taxpayer-owned TMX pipeline was kiboshed in court, the government insisted that there would be no effect on the deficit. TMX will balance the budget. TMX will have no impact on the budget. Which one is true?

Mr. Clark: Point of order.

Mr. Ceci: You know, Mr. Speaker, three different questions on three different topics. On this one I can tell you, though, that we have many savings that have been achieved. We've cut the salaries and perks of the highest paid executives, and that's \$33 million. The Conservatives on that side want to continue the culture of entitlement. We won't let them. We're rolling back, and we're saving on all sorts of things. We've strengthened hiring restraint. We have saved \$107 million on that since 2015. On that side they just want to give bonuses to their friends and insiders.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow, did I note that you had a point of order?

Mr. Clark: Yes.

The Speaker: Thank you. Noted.

The Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Federal Bill C-69 and Pipeline Construction (continued)

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Thursday the Minister of Economic Development and Trade said that the NDP told the federal government that significant changes need to be made to Bill C-69 or it will doom our energy sector. Now, I completely agree and have said so in this House many times. The question to the minister then becomes: why did you and your government not propose these changes before Bill C-69 passed the House despite this side of the House repeatedly warning you that we needed to do that?

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll thank the member for the question and for the opportunity to stand up and say that the Premier and my colleagues the ministers of Environment and Parks and of Energy and I along with other ministers have been engaged with the federal government for quite some time, in fact about a year and a half, communicating at every opportunity the implications of C-69 on Alberta's energy sector and, therefore, on the Canadian economy if that bill were to pass in its current state. The reality is that we have been fighting. We've been fighting for Alberta's energy sector and for Alberta workers and companies, and we will continue to fight on their behalf.

Mr. Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, I hope the minister will table those communiqués to this House, but let's talk about what this government has said about this issue. When we were pushing on Bill C-69 earlier this year in the House, the Minister of Energy said: "I am somewhat puzzled why you guys are so obsessed with the federal government and what they're doing." Through you to the minister: Minister, does your government now understand why we need to stand up to your close personal allies Justin Trudeau and the

federal Liberals? Does your government finally understand the significant damage that they're doing to our energy industry and that it is your job to stand up for it?

2:40

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There have been, in fact, a number of tablings in this House and other ways that we have communicated with the federal government, just to correct the record there.

Mr. Speaker, this is too important to get wrong. We have seen what happens when environmental assessment fails. We saw that with the Federal Court of Appeal decision. CEAA 2012, that the hon. Leader of the Opposition brought in when he was part of government, was part of the rejection of the TMX pipeline. We can't fix a broken system with another broken system. There are specific things that we are looking for to fix this legislation, to work with industry to . . .

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

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, as the Leader of the Opposition asked earlier today in question period or pointed out, the Saskatchewan government and the Ontario government recently put out basically a minority report at a convention, an energy and mines ministry conference, in August. The Alberta government, who should have the most to lose when it comes to Bill C-69, did not side with Ontario and Saskatchewan. Instead, they sided with their close ally Justin Trudeau again. This government continues to prop up Justin Trudeau despite him not coming through for Alberta over and over. Why?

Ms Phillips: Well, Mr. Speaker, we have been very clear on the types of changes that we want to see to Bill C-69. We have been for at least 18 months, as long as I can remember, since this conversation began with the first discussion paper in the summer of 2016.

Now, let's talk about who's the ally of Justin Trudeau. The Leader of the Official Opposition has said that he wants to scrap Alberta's climate leadership plan and roll out the red carpet for the Prime Minister to impose his plan on Alberta. That doesn't work for the big projects that would be regulated by C-69 or even the small projects, Mr. Speaker. It doesn't work for Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Alberta Review Board Decision on Patient Transfer

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In April of 2014 Matthew de Grood viciously attacked and killed five university students at a house party in Calgary. The Alberta Review Board decided to transfer him from the Alberta forensic psychiatry centre in Calgary to Alberta Hospital Edmonton, where he could be granted supervised visits in the community. Five people, just five years ago. To the Minister of Justice: will you review the decision to put De Grood on the fast track to freedom?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, all Albertans and all Calgarians were moved by this particular case. The losses that those families have suffered are absolutely unimaginable. As the hon. member opposite is well aware, the review board is governed under federal legislation, and I don't have the power to review their decision.

Thank you.

Mrs. Pitt: That's not correct, Mr. Speaker.

Given that families of victims are taking this particularly hard and fundamentally disagree with this decision and given that De Grood obviously has manic, violent tendencies, it's hard to believe that he could be walking around on our streets. Minister, are you worried about the message that this decision sends to Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I've said, everyone was deeply moved by this particular case. I'm aware of the concerns that the families have surrounding this particular process. Again, it is a process that is governed at the federal level. Certainly, I will continue discussions with those families on ways that we can work on that process or work on advocating together to the federal government. As the hon. member well knows, it's out of my jurisdiction to overturn the decision.

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice had it in her purview before October 15 to appeal this decision. She let that window close. I would ask the minister why Albertans should feel confident in our justice system and their safety with decisions like this and a minister who refused to act in time to appeal this decision.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I've said before, the law surrounding this issue is governed at the federal level. Crown prosecutors make decisions on when to appeal cases based on the facts of the case and the law as it stands. Those decisions are made independently to avoid political interference with those types of decisions. I am certainly well aware that the families have concerns around this process. It has been incredibly difficult for them, and we will continue to work as best as we are able to at our level on that.

Carbon Levy

Mr. Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, due to a difficult harvest farmers across Alberta are using grain dryers day and night to help salvage their crops and to finish before winter. These grain dryers are fuelled by natural gas and propane, both subject to the Trudeau-NDP carbon tax scheme. That works out to about \$1.50 a gigajoule for natural gas and over 4 and a half cents for propane. That represents a 50 per cent increase in the NDP's original carbon tax scheme. Given this difficult harvest and counties declaring a state of emergency, what is this government's support for farmers who are paying even more in carbon tax?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. From the implementation of our climate leadership plan farmers have taken the bull by the horns, if you will, and have asked me: what can they do? What can they do to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions? What can they do to take part in the lower carbon economy? And they have. As for the grain drying, most certainly we've had some wet weather this year where they've had to use grain drying, and I'm happy to report that those farmers are much further along in the harvest than they were even a few weeks ago.

Thank you.

Mr. Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, given that it's been estimated that an average 2,000-acre farm will pay roughly \$30,000 in carbon taxes and given that the carbon tax is higher than any rebate a farmer

would receive, especially accounting for indirect carbon tax costs on fertilizer, transportation, and equipment, why does this government think it's acceptable to impose a carbon tax on our farmers?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question, a good opportunity to inform the member and others as well about what we have done for farmers to ensure that their operations are sustainable and they're successful, as they have been over the generations. One is to ensure that their marked fuel is exempt from the carbon levy – perhaps the member didn't know that, but he does now – and as well the opportunities we've had from the carbon levy funds, \$81 million to help farmers to take advantage of the lower carbon economy, to be able to make their operations more efficient both on energy and financial.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Dreesen: Mr. Speaker, given that there's a growing opposition to the carbon tax as Canadians are realizing its purpose, which is to increase the cost on everything and is just a tax grab by governments, and given that most industries in Alberta compete on a global stage and the carbon tax is a government-imposed economic disadvantage to Alberta businesses and families, can this NDP government commit to repealing their job-killing carbon tax scheme?

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll thank the member for his question and welcome him to the Assembly. What I will clarify for the member is that Albertans continue to pay the lowest taxes in the country, \$11 billion less than the second-lowest taxed jurisdiction, which is Saskatchewan. Why is that? Well, I'm glad you asked. It's because we don't have a PST. We don't have health care premiums. We don't have a payroll tax. Even with the price on carbon Albertans pay \$11 billion less in taxes. What our government is doing is reinvesting the carbon pricing back into the economy, supporting innovation, and supporting our companies to grow the economy.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Persons with Disabilities' Workforce Participation

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This year Alberta joined other Canadian provinces and countries around the world to proclaim international Disability Employment Awareness Month for the first time in our history. To the minister: can you please explain how awareness contributes to the promotion of inclusive employment?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. We are very proud to be the first government in Alberta to proclaim Disability Employment Awareness Month. This month and every month we are committed to working with our partners, advocates, and with employers to promote inclusion and break down the barriers for the person with disabilities. Building awareness is important but only part of our work. We have made

investments and taken action to improve the services that Albertans with disabilities rely on.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister. Can you please explain what our government is doing to assist people with disabilities to be better prepared and supported to participate in the economy via supported employment?

2:50

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. We are expanding disability-related employment services to support part-time workers. For instance, this year we announced \$600,000 in new funding for inclusive postsecondary, and we are creating jobs through our internship program within the Ministry of Community and Social Services. Instead of making cuts, as that side has suggested, we are investing in supports and services that Albertans with disabilities need and rely on.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We all have constituents, friends, family, neighbours with disabilities, and we all know how important it is that we continue to listen and make progress to support this community, particularly related to employment. To the minister: would you please further expand on the work that is being done to support inclusive employment?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Colleague. We know that Albertans with disabilities face multiple barriers to employment, but at the same time we do know that they contribute tremendously to our workforce and to our communities, and we believe that every Albertan should have the opportunity to achieve their full potential. This is why we proclaimed DEAM. It is why instead of making cuts, we have invested in supports and services that make a difference in the lives of the people of Alberta, and Alberta can always count on this government to fight . . .

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Municipal Sustainability Initiative Funding

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, in the final quarter of 2017-18 the government paid out about \$800 million of capital funding for the municipal sustainability initiative. Annual funding was promised at \$846 million. Then at the tail end of the year's budget cycle it jumped to \$1.65 billion, but the government clawed it back this year, because the amounts to municipalities fell by the same amount in the budget. To the Minister of Finance: would you agree that if those funds had not been prepaid at the end of last year's deficit, last year's deficit would have been \$800 million lower than reported and this year's deficit \$800 million higher?

Mr. S. Anderson: Well, welcome back, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I'm proud to speak about municipal funding to our 342 municipalities across this province, who are the feet on the ground. This government, through the downturn, made sure that they had the money for their big infrastructure projects and small infrastructure projects because we

know it's important to have jobs in our communities. It's important to take care of crumbling infrastructure. It was something that was left by the wayside by the last government. Our government will always be there to support our municipalities across this province.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. McIver: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Given that in August, when releasing the 2018-19 first-quarter fiscal report, the Minister of Finance crowed about the deficit dropping by a billion dollars and given that I will table documents today showing that this, quote, deficit drop was simply a matter of their government slipping money from one budget fiscal year into another, to the Minister of Finance: was the only purpose of shuffling MSI money into an earlier year for the purpose of manufacturing the illusion of a dropping deficit right before an election?

Mr. Ceci: Actually, nothing could be further from the truth, Mr. Speaker. We've cut the deficit by \$3 billion without firing thousands of teachers and nurses, and we've done that in extremely difficult times. You know, our government was dealt a really tough hand with the collapse of oil prices. We have stabilized spending so that it's reduced from the previous government spending like drunken sailors. When they had money, they spent it; when they didn't, they cut deeply into the programs and services all Albertans count on. We're not manufacturing anything. We are managing a crisis, and we're coming out of that crisis into recovery.

Mr. McIver: Well, Mr. Speaker, Albertans deserve a government that makes announcements based on reality, not one that plays shell games designed to hide their gross financial mismanagement.

To the Minister of Finance: since you have been caught declaring a nonexistent deficit decrease, will you now apologize to Albertans for mismanagement so bad that you had to create this smokescreen?

Mr. Ceci: Mr. Speaker, you know, we have been fighting for Albertans every step of the way through the deepest recession in two generations. We're in recovery now. We've dropped the deficit \$3 billion. We will balance the budget by 2023, something that side couldn't do when oil was a hundred dollars a barrel. We are going to stick up for Albertans. That side wants to continue to make Albertans hurt because that's what Albertans can expect from the Conservatives.

Labour Legislation and Heavy Construction

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, I've heard from concerned employers and job creators that with winter around the corner and limited time to finish certain roadwork and heavy construction projects, employers in my constituency are concerned. They are concerned about the changes this government has made. Up until this year associations could make applications for member companies and their employees to alter the daily hours and consecutive days of rest rules to accommodate the weather-dependent nature of the road industry work. This has all changed with the new rules. To the Minister of Labour: are you aware of any problems occurring due to the change in this process?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Labour.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. When we came into office, we did inherit a set of labour laws that had not been updated in decades. Workers were being denied the same basic rights as workers in every other province. So I'm very proud of the work that we have done to update and modernize our labour laws. With those

updates there is a process for us to work with employers or associations when exemptions or specific adjustments need to be made for those rules, and I'm very pleased to be able to say that my office has been working with the Alberta Roadbuilders as well as others who do need to factor in time of day, temperatures, and seasons.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, given that the Alberta Roadbuilders & Heavy Construction Association submitted a request for an industry-wide exemption called a minister's variance six months ago now as the last permit issued by the GOA is due to expire on October 31 and given that the association is required to get 51 per cent of the workers to approve, which is about 26,000 signatures to be collected and returned in just two days, how has your office been supporting these companies so that the work can be completed before winter?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As part of the changes to the labour laws we did include a need to make sure that there was employee perspective in all applications, making sure that there was worker support. In the case of the Roadbuilders we have been working with them and asking them for their suggestions on how best to demonstrate that worker support. We do work collaboratively with employers depending on their different situations, and I continue to work with the Roadbuilders and look forward to working with them in the future.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Minister, will you commit to work with and come to an agreement on an extension to alleviate some of the burden that these HR professionals are having to deal with at this point?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have been working with the Roadbuilders for these many months. We continue to work with them. I appreciate very much the member raising these questions here in the Chamber, and I'm happy to tell him that I have been working with the Roadbuilders and will continue to do so.

Thank you.

Health Care Wait Times

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, Alberta Health Services released their annual report that indicated disappointing results. Cataract surgeries, sir, have doubled in wait time from 14 weeks to 29 weeks. Hip replacements have gone up from 42 weeks to 49 weeks. That's almost a two-month increase. Knee replacements, that were 48 weeks, are now 55 weeks. That's almost 14 months now, over a year. These people are all becoming addicted to painkillers. You've been Health minister for three and a half years. What have you done about this? What are you doing about this? Why is the system deteriorating?

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

The Speaker: Point of order noted.
The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To any Albertan who is waiting for surgery, certainly any amount of wait is too long. While there is more to do, I am really proud of the fact that we have reduced wait times on hip fracture repair, radiation therapy. Our 17 stroke treatment centres are the best in Canada and the fastest in the world. There is absolutely more to be done on health care, and we're proud to do that. Instead, what the opposition is calling for is a \$700 million tax giveaway to the top 1 per cent. What would that mean? Well, the member from the opposition from Lac La Biche said that things would hurt under a UCP government, and absolutely that's the case for people who are waiting for surgeries and demanding health care services.

Mr. Yao: It's not just surgical wait times, Mr. Speaker; it's also emergency wait times. Patients at the Royal Alex hospital are waiting an average of three hours or more. The University of Alberta patients are waiting an average of two and a half plus hours. In Calgary the Foothills emergency room wait times run from an hour 45 to two hours this year. Recently overcapacity protocols in the Red Deer emergency department were utilized, another indicator that Alberta Health Services has not been able to address the issue of wait times. To the minister: three and a half years later why has there not been any improvement in these wait times?

3:00

Ms Hoffman: Well, Mr. Speaker, I certainly have to say for anyone who is waiting for care that we want to improve the health care system. That's why we're doing things like working with family physicians to reduce the wait-list for nonurgent GI treatment by 98 per cent, Mr. Speaker. That's why we have the lowest potentially inappropriate use of antipsychotics in long-term care and the lowest amount of time spent in the emergency department for patients who have been admitted. Absolutely, there is more to be done, but the solution is not to privatize health care. It's not to lay off front-line workers. It's not to cut 20 per cent. The member for Lac La Biche, that caucus member's own colleague, said that if the UCP were elected, things would hurt. On this side of the House . . .

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, the Health budget has increased during this government's three and a half years by approximately \$2 billion, and that doesn't even include your superlab building, which has doubled in cost from \$300 million to \$600 million. CIHI data shows that the cost in Alberta is \$8,100 versus the average stay in any other province, around \$6,000, and you've hired about 1,000 additional employees in AHS in your first full year while wait times continue to deteriorate. To the minister: where did you exactly open up positions? In our operating and surgery departments or emergency departments? Can you clarify? How many nurses and doctors did you allocate to these particular areas?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, we are absolutely investing in front-line services and front-line care, expanding long-term care, expanding emergency services, expanding EMS. What would happen if the Official Opposition was in government? Those people wouldn't be hired, and other people would be fired. On this side of the House we stand up for public health care; we invest in the things that matter to families. On that side of the House they fight for a massive \$700 million tax break to the richest 1 per cent. I think I know who's got the right priorities.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Grain Drying

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Farmers in my constituency and throughout Alberta have been working long hours over the last couple of weeks to try and complete the harvest of 2018. A lot of the grain in my constituency and throughout many parts of Alberta has been harvested in either a tough or damp condition. This excess moisture will cause the grain to rot quickly if not dealt with in a timely manner. Does the minister of agriculture know how much grain is in storage in a tough or damp condition, and do we have the capacity to dry this crop in a timely manner?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the very good question. You know, without a doubt, September was a very troubling, very frustrating month. You know, by many measures it was the coldest month on record. We've had snow right across the province. Troubling because it was basically three Septembers in a row that we've had very unusual weather. This October we've had a turnaround in much better weather. Mother Nature has shone on us, if you will, and has created the opportunity to get a lot of those crops dryer on the ground so there's less grain drying going on. As it progresses, we just know we're close to 80 per cent done in the province. It's varied all over across the province on what the grades are like, but, you know, time will tell. Hopefully, we're going to get even more into the bin.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, given that Alberta farmers produce food to help feed people all around the world and given that the weather conditions this fall have necessitated the use of grain dryers to prevent grain from rotting in the bins, has the minister developed any plans or programs to ensure that farmers will be able to dry this important food in a cost-effective and timely manner?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and a very, very good question, a very timely question. The Agriculture Financial Services Corporation will take into account any of the costs for drying grain, especially if there's grade downgrade, to ensure that the cost for the grain drying is taken into consideration for their calculation for their payment for their insurance. For sure there's assistance necessary for what looks like a year. In upcoming years there's been a program announced to the Canadian agriculture partnership for upgrading and retrofitting of existing grain drying as well.

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, given that these powerful grain dryers use natural gas or propane which are subject to a carbon tax at \$1.52 per gigajoule and 4.6 cents per litre respectively and given that I hear consistently from producers hurt by the carbon tax's impact not only on grain drying but also on livestock producers, when did the minister of agriculture last meet with farmers hurt by the carbon tax and why has he not been able to convince his government colleagues to exempt all food production from their carbon tax?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I meet very regularly. You know, a few days ago I met with Team Alberta, which represents grain – cereal crops and oilseed crops and pulses – across the province. I just talked to them. We talked about current harvesting conditions as well as the

somewhat tough conditions across the province for excess moisture. That work continues. Like I've said before, the agriculture community has embraced the opportunity to do their part to ensure that the overwhelming financial hardship they'll be in if climate change is allowed to continue – they realize the realities.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

Cardiac Care at Red Deer Regional Hospital

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Medical professionals and the central Alberta community have been pushing for stronger cardiac services for the Red Deer regional hospital. Our government reversed the previous government's planned cuts of over a billion dollars and listened to community concerns at the RDRH. AHS recently released the central zone health care plan and the interventional cardiac needs assessment and options analysis. Both made recommendations to enhance cardiac services in Red Deer, including cardiac catheterization. To the Minister of Health: can you inform the House what the process will be going forward?

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much for the important question. We've heard the call from the community that they've been pushing for nearly two decades to strengthen cardiac care services in Red Deer and area. That's why we've asked AHS to work with local physicians and their clinical teams in developing a cardiac care road map as well as an overall central zone health plan for the region, and we now have those, Mr. Speaker. The next steps include completing the needs assessment and a business case, which are necessary for the evidence-based capital planning process.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After decades of underfunding and cuts, Budget 2018 committed a million dollars for the Red Deer health capital planning to advance the business case for the redevelopment needs of RDRH. To the same minister: can you please update us on the status of the business case and if a timeline is now in place?

Ms Hoffman: I want to begin by thanking our two local Red Deer MLAs for their tremendous advocacy for their community and on this matter, Mr. Speaker. We are working to ensure that the exact needs of the community are itemized. The former Tory government used to make empty promises. Instead, we have no plan of doing that. We want to make sure that we want to move forward with a budget and understanding of what the future demands are, and we want to get this right for central Albertans. I understand that the needs assessment will be completed by the end of this year and that AHS is planning a business case as well.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Red Deer and its central Alberta catchment area continue to grow, and the RDRH is the only Alberta hospital that is the sole major referral centre for an entire zone. To the Minister of Health: what are we doing to ensure that the Red Deer regional hospital will be able to keep pace with future population growth in central Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Red Deer hospital continues to have challenges with overcapacity, which increases stress on our overall health professionals as well as on patients and

their families. This is exactly why the AHS team is working with physicians like Dr. Kym Jim as well as the local hospital foundation. I have to say that I think that we are making tremendous strides in moving forward in the three short years we've had. I wish that this project would have been taken care of 20 years ago by the former government. Instead, we're here today. We're moving forward with the community instead of proposing things like deep cuts that we know would cause pain. The UCP members admit themselves that things would hurt if there was a UCP government. We're working to build and support health care across Alberta.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Hon. members, we will begin Members' Statements in 30 seconds.

3:10

Members' Statements

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

Small Business Week

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Two weeks ago I had the privilege of attending the North Edmonton Business Association's fourth anniversary celebration. I had a lovely time talking with local entrepreneurs, small-business owners, and others to learn about the terrific work that they are doing in north Edmonton.

Coincidentally, two weeks ago was also Small Business Week. For years Small Business Week events have taken place during the third week of October with the goal of providing opportunities to network, share ideas and best practices, and, of course, celebrate achievements. This annual event was started by the Business Development Bank of Canada almost 40 years ago.

I don't need to tell you about any of the important roles small business plays in Alberta's economy. Almost 96 per cent of businesses in the province are small businesses. As of December 2017 small businesses employ more than 542,000 Albertans. Alberta small businesses have a bigger economic impact per capita than small businesses anywhere else in the country. In addition to providing jobs so hundreds of thousands of Albertans can earn a living for themselves and their families, they inject about \$100 billion into our hometowns and neighbourhoods.

Our government is making it easier for businesses to do business. Our government is making sure that small businesses have the supports they need to thrive. That's why we cut the small business tax by 33 per cent, saving business owners more than half a billion dollars over three years. We also listened to small-business owners and created new tax credits that other provinces have enjoyed for decades. There are also significant small-business supports in place to help homegrown businesses through difficult times. For example, more than 260 service providers are available to help Alberta businesses achieve their goals.

Our government will continue to invest in programs that support economic diversification and innovation. Working together, I know that Alberta will continue to be the right place to launch and grow a business long into the future. As we have celebrated Small Business Week, please take time to thank your local businesses for the incredible contributions that they make to Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin.

Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion Project

Ms Goodridge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour and a privilege to rise today on behalf of the constituents of Fort McMurray-Conklin. Like many Albertans across our great province, my constituents know the importance of our oil and gas sector.

That's why the unnecessary delay of the Trans Mountain project is so unacceptable. It's devastating to consider what this says about Canada and our country's ability to get much-needed job-creating projects completed.

Today our United Conservative caucus will be putting forward a motion for an emergency debate regarding the Trans Mountain expansion. While the federal government is complacent with no new end date on consultations for Trans Mountain, no new date for when the expansion project will actually be built, we here cannot be complacent. From an ever-growing differential in oil prices to job-creating investments that are fleeing our borders, the current situation requires action. Today's situation is partially the result of two other major coastal pipeline projects that were killed off by the federal government: Energy East and Northern Gateway.

In recent years Canada is developing a reputation of a country that can't get pipelines built. Over the last year my constituents, like so many other Albertans, were repeatedly told that the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion would be built. We were told that there would be shovels in the ground, but verbal assurances and promises alone do not provide dependable, mortgage-paying, family-supporting jobs.

I sincerely hope that all members and colleagues from all parties will support today's motion. It is important that Albertans know that steps are being taken to ensure that this much-needed project will actually be built.

Thank you.

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

New Democratic Party Convention

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, this past weekend I joined my colleagues and Albertans from across the province here in Edmonton for our New Democrat Party convention. The convention was overwhelmed and inspired with new members from all walks of life, who joined because they love Alberta.

We kicked off the weekend with Chief Laboucan and celebrated last week's historic agreement to ensure the Lubicon Lake band receives the lands and treaty benefits that they are entitled to under Treaty 8. We paid tribute to one of our Legislature's longest serving members, the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, who still insists that he's retiring and will not buy any of our attempts to change his mind.

We heard from delegates and speakers who let us know that our work fighting for families has made a real impact, delegates like Amanda Jensen, who was fired after she requested time off to care for her son with leukemia.

Now, Mr. Speaker, all weekend, delegates hashed out the finer points of policy, and we passed resolutions to protect and improve health care, education, create jobs, and strengthen the rights for all Albertans. We made commitments to things like increasing AISH and seniors' benefits to keep up with the cost of living and expanding the \$25-a-day child care program.

Mr. Speaker, the highlight of the convention for me was, hands down, when our Premier addressed the entire convention. Her fiery speech laid out a clear choice for Albertans between a government that helps families and working people and one that helps the wealthy and elite political insiders. There is a clear choice for how we build Alberta for the future and for whom that future is built. Is it built for everyday Albertans like workers and families, or is it built for those at the top like elite political insiders and the wealthiest 1 per cent? In Alberta that future is not found; that future is made. Albertans put their trust in us to govern, and we're proud

of the work that we've done, but we know that the work is not done. We will keep fighting for Albertans.

Thank you.

Rural Crime

Mr. W. Anderson: Mr. Speaker, there's an epidemic of rural crime. Last week I received a letter from one of my constituents who experienced first-hand the consequences of this problem. Two known criminals in a stolen truck and pursued crashed through a fence on her farm, tore across a hayfield, tossing out packets of drugs. They crashed through another gate before coming to rest against a tensile fence, all the while putting both the farm owner and her livestock at risk. This act cost thousands of dollars of damage, which was borne by the homeowner. But more significant is the emotional damage as a farm owner and a senior living alone now fears for her personal safety. No Albertan should have to fear living in their own home. The unfortunate thing is that the culprits were known offenders to the police. They got off with little more than insignificant punishment.

This constituent's story is one shared by many rural Albertans. I've heard similar stories from my constituents, and many of my colleagues in this House have heard similar stories. These Albertans are all calling on us to act as elected officials to do something to address this problem. The government needs to act. Stop the revolving door on our justice system. Create solutions to protect people and their property.

Last spring our United Conservative caucus released our recommendations to combat rural crime. The recommendations include increasing police response capacity, increasing and improving victims' services, addressing court delays, and educating the public on their rights and responsibilities in defending their own property. These recommendations came after broad consultation with Albertans, and implementation would go a long way to reducing rural crime, giving residents the peace of mind they deserve.

Unfortunately, this government has failed to take any concrete steps to reduce rural crime. Understandably, too many families do not feel safe in their own homes. Rural crime in some communities is up 250 per cent in the last number of years, including an increase in break-ins, vehicle thefts, and property crimes. One of the fundamental roles of a government is to enforce the rule of law and keep citizens safe. All Albertans deserve to feel safe in their own homes. The time to act is now. I call on this government to implement our recommendations and address the epidemic of rural crime.

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

Domestic Violence

Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Three years ago I rose in this House to introduce Bill 204, the Residential Tenancies (Safer Spaces for Victims of Domestic Violence) Amendment Act, 2015. Today I also rise and ask members of this House to join me in taking a stand against domestic violence.

Alberta has the third-highest rates of domestic violence in the country. In 2016 the Calgary Women's Emergency 24-hour family violence helpline fielded 12,000 calls and served over 15,000 clients. In Calgary alone charges were laid in 4,083 domestic-related assaults in 2017. Recent data from the Calgary Police Service shows that there's been a 13 per cent increase in domestic violence/conflict calls. A study conducted by the Canadian Women's Foundation reported that 74 per cent of Albertans know

of women who have experienced sexual or physical abuse. The Alberta Council of Women's Shelters found that one-third of all shelter admissions took place in Edmonton or Calgary, one-third in small cities, and one-third in rural communities. The report also found that the rates of indigenous women, immigrant women, refugees, and visible minorities using Alberta's shelters continue to rise.

The Calgary Domestic Violence Collective will host a launch for Family Violence Prevention Month at Mount Royal University on November 1. They have partnered with the Calgary Hitmen to hold a game in the name of family violence prevention on November 2. All levels of government, communities, and agencies need to work collectively to address the issue and support survivors and their families.

I ask everyone here to stand up and speak out, support survivors, listen, believe, validate, educate yourself on domestic violence, donate generously, and wear a pin or purple in November to show support for domestic violence prevention.

Thank you very much.

3:20

Trade with India

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, in diversifying and growing Alberta's economy over the last three and a half years, the Premier and her trade minister have ignored India, the largest democracy and the fastest growing economy. India has over 700 million people below age 35. That is purchasing power and a market that cannot be ignored. Last year the Alberta NDP angered the government of India when they committed a major diplomatic misstep. This was followed by Prime Minister Trudeau's disastrous tour, causing Canada-India relations to go downhill.

When the Leader of the Opposition and myself were invited by the diplomatic community to visit India, we did not hesitate to reinforce ties and improve relations with India. India currently uses 4.2 million barrels per day of oil and rising; 10 million barrels a day by 2040. Eighty per cent of it is imported. But it's not just about energy. India has a huge market for our pulse and legume crops. We addressed the tariffs imposed on Canadian pulse crops with four senior federal ministers, including the foreign minister and the chief minister of Punjab. We also talked about forestry, minerals, film production, higher and technical education, and telecommunications. Our delegation accomplished more in one week than this NDP government accomplished in three and a half years.

The UCP had a very successful trade mission, but instead of sending their officials to debrief us, the NDP filed a bogus complaint with the Ethics Commissioner, who rightfully saw through the electoral politics at play. Regardless of the NDP's politicking at home, we promoted Alberta and Canada abroad in a positive and constructive way.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the chair of the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future I'm pleased to table the committee's final report on Bill 201, Employment Standards (Firefighter Leave) Amendment Act, 2018, sponsored by the hon. Member for Highwood. This bill was referred to committee on March 19, 2018. We'd like to acknowledge the support provided by staff of the Legislative Assembly Office. Sincere appreciation is also extended to the organizations and individuals who contributed to the committee's review with written and oral submissions.

Mr. Speaker, the committee's final report recommends that Bill 201, Employment Standards (Firefighter Leave) Amendment Act, 2018, not proceed. The report also includes an additional recommendation. This report will be available on the committee's external website. I request concurrence of the Assembly in the final report of Bill 201, Employment Standards (Firefighter Leave) Amendment Act.

The Speaker: The Member for Highwood.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 18(1)(b) I wish to speak to the concurrence on the motion regarding Bill 201.

Speaker's Ruling Debate on Committee Reports

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member, for advising that you do intend to speak to the motion. On occasion when members wish to debate a motion to concur in a committee report, the motion has been called under Orders of the Day and is not debated during the daily Routine. In case of debate on a motion to concur in a committee report concerning a private member's bill, the most appropriate time to debate the motion is during the time allocated for private members' business. Therefore, consistent with what occurred in this Assembly on October 28, 2013, and indeed in this Assembly on October 30, 2017, this motion will be called as the first item under Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders. Hopefully, you will get a chance today.

Speaking times for members will be subject to the time limits for private members' business found in Standing Order 29(3), meaning that members other than the Premier and the Leader of the Official Opposition will each have 10 minutes to speak, with the mover having five minutes to close debate. If the Premier or the Leader of the Official Opposition speaks to the motion, they will each have 20 minutes' speaking time.

We now will continue with the daily Routine, and this matter will come back soon.

Are there any other reports from standing or special committees? The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

Ms Kazim: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a committee member and on behalf of the chair of the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing I'm pleased to inform the Assembly that the committee's report on Motion Other than Government Motion 501 was deposited interessionally on June 18, 2018, as Sessional Paper 244/2018. Motion 501 was referred to the committee by the Assembly on April 16, 2018, with a reporting deadline of June 19, 2018. The committee is not recommending any changes to the standing orders.

I would like to thank those who provided written submissions for the committee's consideration during this process. The committee's report is available on the Assembly website.

Thank you very much.

Notices of Motions

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

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to provide notice that at the appropriate time I will be moving the following motion:

Pursuant to Standing Order 30 be it resolved that the ordinary business of the Legislative Assembly be adjourned to discuss a

matter of urgent public importance; namely, to discuss what measures must be taken to ensure that construction of the job-creating Trans Mountain expansion project is completed given the recent Federal Court of Appeal ruling and diminished investor confidence in Alberta's energy industry.

Introduction of Bills

Bill 19

An Act to Improve the Affordability and Accessibility of Post-secondary Education

Mr. Schmidt: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce a bill being An Act to Improve the Affordability and Accessibility of Post-secondary Education.

[Motion carried; Bill 19 read a first time]

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

Bill 20

Securities Amendment Act, 2018

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 20, the Securities Amendment Act, 2018.

No doubt, members of the Alberta Securities Commission staff and board are very interested in this and watching it now. The securities regulatory landscape has become more complex, sophisticated, and international in scope and more driven by technology than ever before. The proposed amendments are intended to enhance the protection of Alberta investors and to promote the operation of a fair and effective Alberta capital market. Mr. Speaker, with these amendments we are ensuring that Alberta's securities regulatory system reflects the realities of today's markets and evolves with international standards and global regulatory reform initiatives. These amendments will update and further harmonize Alberta's securities laws with those in other jurisdictions across Canada.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 20 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm tabling five copies of the written responses to the outstanding questions raised in Alberta Transportation's Committee of Supply on April 11, 2018, which were previously submitted to the Clerk's office.

The Speaker: Do any other members have items for tabling? Calgary-Hays.

3:30

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three tablings today as I indicated during my question in question period. The first one is the first-quarter highlights from the Alberta government, where they brag about having a billion dollar reduced deficit.

The second one is the CBC reporting on August 31, 2018, where the minister brags about having a billion dollar reduced deficit.

In the third tabling are notes from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, notes to the consolidated financial statements from their annual report, which indicate that they shuffled \$800 million from one year to the next, which means that there was no billion-dollar reduction in the deficit as reported by the Minister of Finance.

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

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table a special submission to the *National Post* that ran on October 25, 2018, that's collectively signed by the presidents of Canadian Energy Pipeline Association, Canadian Gas Association, Independent Contractors and Businesses Association of B.C., Explorers and Producers Association of Canada, Chemical Industry Association of Canada, and finally, the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers. They talk very eloquently about the Bill C-69 and C-48 challenges.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks and climate change.

Ms Phillips: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of letters sent by Alberta business, industry, and indigenous communities with concerns around Bill C-69. I have five copies of a letter written on October 5 to the standing Senate committee from the Calgary Chamber of commerce. I have five copies of the October 12 correspondence sent to the Senate of Canada from the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, and the requisite number of copies from the Chiefs Council from the Eagle Spirit Energy corridor, also expressing concerns about Bill C-69. In all three cases the writers of those letters have asked for amendments to this piece of legislation.

The Speaker: Hon. members, are there any other tablings?

Hon. members, I have four tablings today. The first, I would like to table five copies of the amendment to the Members' Services consolidated orders passed June 21, 2018.

Second, I would like to table five copies of the Health Quality Council of Alberta's 2017-18 annual report, as per the Health Quality Council of Alberta Act.

Third, I would like to table Health Quality Council of Alberta's annual review which includes a summary of activities, accomplishments, and financials.

Fourth, I would rise to table five copies of the October 26, 2018, memo and attachments to the members: question period and Members' Statements rotations.

Hon. members, I believe we have two points of order. I'll call upon the Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Point of Order

Supplementary Questions

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to raise a point of order on the questions asked by the Member for Strathmore-Brooks. Independents get one question a week, and it looked like he was trying to knit together three completely unrelated topics into his one question.

Mrs. Pitt: Wonder where he got that from?

Mr. Clark: One of my hon. colleagues here is asking: where do you think he learned that from? Well, I will admit to perhaps trying that once in 2016, and to your great credit, Mr. Speaker, you caught me at the time.

If I could just start with a couple of very brief citations. *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, 2017, page 513, under supplementary questions it says: "By definition, a supplementary question is meant to arise from the information given to the House by a Minister or Parliamentary Secretary in his or her response to the initial question." *Beauchesne's*, sixth edition, page 122, section 414. "The extent to which supplementary questions may be asked is in the discretion of the Speaker," which establishes,

of course, Mr. Speaker, that you have the ability to decide whether or not we hon. members can in fact continue with our questions.

I'll reference you to a ruling you made just last spring, in which you had referenced Speaker Kowalski. Speaker Kowalski on May 12, 2004, page 1390, said that "there's also a tradition we follow here that if an hon. member is recognized, they raise first a question . . . they're allowed two supplementals." And the important part: "has always been understood that supplementals must have something to do with the first question."

The three questions that were asked went to three different ministers. One was about campaign finance reform and PACs, one was about the carbon tax to a different minister, and the third was about balancing the budget to yet a different minister. I would argue, Mr. Speaker, that it's important that we respect the integrity of the question process and that all questions and supplementals relate to the same topic.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I'll be brief. I agree with the arguments put forward by the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

The Speaker: Hon. members. To the Member for Calgary-Elbow, there's even more recent history. I think I dealt with this matter in April earlier this year. Since this is first day, one might have some leniency, but let me allow this as an opportunity to actually consider stepping in before the second question was asked. I give the benefit of doubt to the individual, and I want all members to be aware that I intend to address this matter if it should repeat itself again, but I'm sure that will not happen within this Assembly. So I believe there was a point of order.

Government House Leader, I think we have an additional point of order. Is that correct?

Point of Order

Addressing Questions through the Chair

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, during question period today the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo was asking a series of questions to the Minister of Health and during that group of questions, in a fairly aggressive way, pointing at the minister he referred to as "you." I want to just make a couple of points. In *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules & Forms*, sixth edition, on page 142, "It is the custom in the House that no Member should refer to another by name. Members should be referred to in the third person as 'the Honourable Member for'" or the "Minister is normally designated by the portfolio held." That is the hon. Minister of Health in this case.

Mr. Speaker, in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, 2017, on page 510 under the section dealing with principles and guidelines for oral questions it says very clearly, "Finally, all questions and answers must be directed through the Chair." So this is maybe just a good opportunity to remind all members of this, that when in debate or in question period in particular they should be going through the chair and not referring or going directly to another member.

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

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Government House Leader for pointing out what is, in fact, true in this Assembly. First of all, on behalf of the hon. Member for Fort

McMurray-Wood Buffalo I will withdraw the direct comment toward the minister, which I do not believe was his intent, which I think the Government House Leader has recognized in those comments, but the procedure is to speak through you, of course.

But I would also ask that while we are on this point of order, then, Mr. Speaker, that in the future the Government House Leader would go out of his way to make sure that his members would do the same. I could pull out reams of *Hansard* of their cabinet ministers across the way answering questions directly to us and making some pretty significant insults along the way. What's good for the goose is also good for gander.

The Speaker: I believe we had a notice.

Mr. Nixon: I've already withdrawn it.

The Speaker: Noted. Thank you for withdrawing. I would underline the point, again, about sensitivity to those kinds of comments by everyone in the House.

3:40

Emergency Debate

The Speaker: I think we're at the matter of an emergency debate question, and you would speak to that, Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion Project

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on my motion, which I've already provided notice of. I will not waste the House's time rereading it. I believe all members of the Assembly now have a copy of it that has been brought around by the pages.

The question, of course, that you need to answer at this point, Mr. Speaker, is the urgency of this situation. You know, I could spend my time here right now just talking about the fact that 441,000 person-years of work are tied up right now if Trans Mountain is approved, this in a province that has the largest unemployment outside of the Maritimes in this country.

But I will not spend too much time talking about that, Mr. Speaker, because you have already ruled last spring, while giving us an emergency debate on this exact same issue, that this is urgent. The issue that Albertans are facing, the consequences to Alberta are urgent. The government has agreed with that statement in the past and you have as well. I think that the question then becomes for the Chamber today and you: what has changed since the last time that you granted that emergency debate motion in this place?

What has changed, Mr. Speaker, is the following. When we had that debate, the government members, as they have in question period and throughout our time in the Assembly, got up and assured the people of Alberta, assured this side of the House, and sometimes even grandstanded and prematurely celebrated, but they made it very, very clear that Trans Mountain would be built, and that construction would have started by now. Now, since the last time that we have been in this place, you and I both know that that has changed, that the government was, in fact, wrong about that. They certainly celebrated it too early, and now we see from the Court of Appeal decision that there are not, as they like to say, two pipelines approved under this government. There is yet another pipeline that has been lost underneath this government. That has changed significantly.

Now, since then, we have not heard a clear plan from the government on where the Assembly of Alberta will be going under their leadership, what their plans will be to be able to make sure that this project is built. That has changed.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, I won't spend a lot of time quoting things for you, but I would like to bring to your attention one thing in *Beauchesne's*. I'm looking at the sixth edition on page 113, section 387. In the last sentence it says, "In making his ruling, the Speaker may, on occasion, take into account the general wish of the House to have a debate." The reality is that the urgency question, while I think it is relevant and clear, you can overlook even that if all sides of this Assembly want to have a debate on this important issue for Albertans.

I am certain – and I will be surprised if the Government House Leader rises momentarily to say that they do not find this urgent because it will be significantly different than their comments that are in the press. So I hope – I hope – that the government will stand and support this Assembly having a right to debate this important issue on behalf of Albertans.

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That, I suppose, tangentially touched on the urgency of the matter, a bit more like a preamble to the political debate.

But, you know, Mr. Speaker, I really hate to disappoint the Official Opposition House Leader. In fact, it could be quite unpleasant. So I want to indicate on behalf of the government that we agree. Under Standing Order 30(2): "The Member may briefly state the arguments in favour of the request . . . and the Speaker may allow such debate as he or she considers relevant [with respect to the] urgency of debate."

Now, Mr. Speaker, it is something that I think is very important to all Albertans. It's certainly something that's a very high priority for our government. I would dare say that it's the top priority at this time of the government of Alberta.

Having said that, I believe that it does meet the test laid out in *Beauchesne's* and in the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* to be considered a genuine matter of urgent public importance, and it is worth setting aside the regularly scheduled debate. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the government we will support the opposition's call for a debate on this matter and support the argument of urgency and suggest that the wishes of the House are to proceed with the debate.

The Speaker: Thank you. As was pointed out by the Opposition House Leader, there was a similar discussion on April 9, earlier this year, when this Assembly was adjourned to debate a Standing Order 30 matter, the subject of which was somewhat similar to the application that has been brought forward today by the Opposition House Leader. Standing Order 30 applications were put forward on May 30, 2018. I wish to note for the Assembly that while similar to the previous applications, the application made today constitutes a different question and therefore on that basis does not contravene Standing Order 30(7)(d).

On the question of whether the matter relates to a genuine emergency, as has been noted previously, it is without doubt that the Trans Mountain expansion project is of great economic importance to Alberta and indeed to all of Canada. The decision of the Federal Court of Appeal to overturn the National Energy Board approval of the project undoubtedly adds a different dynamic to the issue. In fact, this matter is of such importance that it would be difficult to conclude that the impact of the Federal Court of Appeal's decision does not constitute a genuine emergency.

In addition, I find that in light of the new circumstances relating to the Trans Mountain expansion project, the need for a debate has

taken on a renewed energy. Therefore, I find that the request for leave is in order.

I think we can proceed. The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for granting us the opportunity to spend some time this afternoon in this Assembly talking about what is arguably the most important issue facing our province, certainly one of the top two or three issues that are facing our province right now. We do know that the Federal Court of Appeal made a decision, a decision that I disagree with. It seems that the government has indicated that they disagree with that decision as well, a decision that has angered Albertans, frustrated Albertans, and put us in a situation for an indefinite period of time of not knowing what's going to go on with this product, which is then compounding the problem of being able to get our largest industry's product to tidewater, that continues to go on and on.

The reason, I think, that this is an emergency that should be discussed in this place today – and I'm glad that you, Mr. Speaker, gave us that opportunity – is because we have gone through a history during this process of this current government, the NDP government of Alberta, getting this wrong repeatedly. Now, sometimes, maybe to their credit, along the way they start to do some stuff right but often too late, usually after making fun of the opposition for suggesting it, attacking the opposition for suggesting it. They sometimes finally go and actually take the action that needs to be done, often the exact action that we already asked them to do in the past.

The problem, though, Mr. Speaker, is that it's always too late with this government and that we continue to end up in a situation where nothing is moving forward on this important situation. This government continues to sit on their hands most of the time, continues to stand with their close personal friend and ally Justin Trudeau in Ottawa and the federal Liberals against Alberta's interests, and to react too late. Then, as we go along the way, all of a sudden they'll stand up and say, "Oh, we're right; we're the big champion of this issue," and they'll try to do what we already suggested they do sometimes months and years before.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

We saw it with the B.C. part of this argument. Long before the appeal court made their decision, the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues on this side of the House were standing in this place making it clear that we needed to take drastic action against B.C. to enforce our constitutional rights with our resources, up to and including shutting off the taps. In fact, the Leader of the Opposition was raising that long before he was elected by his constituents to be in this place. Along the way the Premier and the cabinet ministers across from me made fun of him, compared him to Trump, said terrible things about him. It was shameful, Madam Speaker.

3:50

Then, as we already know, they come back to this place – poll numbers have changed; something must have been going on – and they change their mind and bring forward legislation that the Leader of the Opposition proposed. But do they act on it, Madam Speaker? No. They realized that the people of Alberta agreed with us, so they had to do something. So they passed a piece of legislation that, I would submit to you, they had no intention of ever using. In fact, they dragged out the process, filibustered their own bill in this place, as this side of the House repeatedly called for a vote on that issue to get it done to be able to give the Premier and her cabinet the ability to deal with that issue. They, shockingly, kept

filibustering that bill because they had no intention of taking any action on that issue.

We fast-forward now throughout the process and watch minister after minister – the environment minister, the Deputy Premier, the Premier, the Economic Development and Trade minister, the Government House Leader, the Energy minister – stand up and say: “We got two pipelines approved. We got this done. You can come to the party when it’s built.” The Energy minister guaranteed in this Assembly in question period that shovels would be in the ground by this time, in fact six months ago. We know that is not the fact.

Then the hon. Leader of the Opposition starts pointing out stuff like Bill C-69, which is basically going to stop any pipeline from ever being built if we don’t deal with that. He pointed out what would eventually just become S-245, which was Alberta Senator Doug Black’s bill that would designate Trans Mountain to be in the national interest. The Leader of the Official Opposition was pushing for that long before that was even in the Senate. In fact, he dispatched me as his House leader to have a meeting with the Government House Leader to try to negotiate wording around a motion that everybody in this Assembly could support, and they mocked us in that meeting. They said that this won’t work. They didn’t want to do it. They don’t want to stand up for it. They’d rather go out of their way to be able to continue to prop up Justin Trudeau despite the fact that he continues to hurt our province, to hurt people.

You know, I was in Rocky Mountain House on Saturday. Sixteen businesses in a community that really depends on the energy industry have been shut in the last year. I am tired and I know everybody in this House has to be tired of seeing people that have lost their jobs while this government continues to be too late to the party, too late to take action. Now we see the appeal court decision. What’s the government going to do? So far they’ve done nothing. I mean, they started to a little bit say that there are some problems with the way that Justin Trudeau has reacted to this, but most of the time they still go out of their way to protect their ally. As we know, in August of this year at a convention where Ontario and Saskatchewan refused to sign basically an agreement or memorandum because of Bill C-69, this government signed on to it anyway. They didn’t join Ontario and Saskatchewan in defending our province’s interests.

Why has this government not acted, and what are they going to do to get this project moving? When are they going to start to demand that Justin Trudeau and the federal Liberal Party make this project in the national interest? When are they going to take action? What I am scared about, Madam Speaker, is that what we are going to continue to see is the same pattern of behaviour that we’ve seen from this government since it started on this issue: standing up prematurely, spiking the football, and saying that this project is completed, trying to score political points while the people of Alberta suffer because it’s not completed.

I remember last session sitting in the Federal Building in the opposition offices listening to the cheers of this cabinet and these government caucus members outside, cheering that this project was built, but it’s not. It’s not done. What we need this government to do is to stop focusing on trying to take credit for something that hasn’t been done yet and start focusing on how we can get this thing done for the people of Alberta, because they’re depending on us to do that.

Their actions so far have been nothing short of shameful. To take credit and say that something is done when it’s not done is shameful. I can tell you that my constituents and, I know, your constituents as well, Madam Speaker, would agree. They don’t want to hear anymore this government saying over and over that they’ve got this project built when it’s not built. They want this government to come

forward with a clear plan on how they’re going to move this project forward. That’s what they want.

I’m not going to use all of my time today because I know that so many members in this Assembly want to speak to this important motion, but I call on this government to stop playing politics with this issue, to start working with all members of this Assembly, to start standing up to their close personal friend Justin Trudeau, and to work to get this pipeline built once and for all. The people of Alberta are depending on it. We need to get our oil to tidewater.

Madam Speaker, through you to them: please stop playing games.

The Deputy Speaker: Just before I recognize you, hon. minister, technically we have not concluded the Routine, and we haven’t completed Orders of the Day. However, it will be okay if anybody wants to have their coffee or tea in the House in the new cups. So go ahead.

The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I’m pleased today to rise and speak to this important debate. I’m always pleased to have the opportunity to comment on what’s been a key focus of our government and for the office in particular, the fight for adequate market access for Alberta’s energy resources. It goes without saying that, like most Albertans, I am deeply frustrated by the new obstacles that have arisen with the Trans Mountain pipeline since we last met. I’m also deeply concerned by the growth of the differential between the price of west Texas intermediate crude and western Canadian select in the recent weeks. The differential has huge consequences for the western Canadian energy sector and, more importantly, of course, for the men and women who work in that sector, their families, and our communities.

It’s even more frustrating, Madam Speaker, when you consider that in many respects things were starting to look up for our energy sector. They are looking up. Jobs are up; new oil sands projects are opening; the oil and gas sector is growing again. Our government is committed to ending the boom-and-bust cycle that we’ve seen in the past many years, and we are a government who is committed to building a recovery that’s built to last. That means getting the greatest possible value for our resources. That’s why we have placed huge emphasis on more diversification in our energy sector through programs such as PDP, the partial upgrading program, and the petroleum feedstock infrastructure program. The first round, as we all know, of the PDP is already creating new jobs in our province with the build of the new Inter Pipeline project. My department is busy evaluating the second round of the PDP and other programs as we speak. I might remind the people of Alberta that these are programs that our opposition opposed in the last session.

Make no mistake, Madam Speaker. Energy diversification is only one answer to getting our resources to market and value out of our resources. There’s no question that better market access for our resources, whether it’s raw or refined, is another big part of the answer. That’s why market access has become a key priority for our government since our government was first elected. Indeed, one of our Premier’s first out-of-province meetings after our government was elected was to eastern Canada to pitch the benefits of Energy East, and as members in this House know, our Premier has been a vocal champion for pipelines ever since that day. She has criss-crossed the country pitching the benefits of pipelines to anyone who will listen.

Through our Keep Canada Working campaign, we have invested significant resources in educating Canadians about the economic value of pipelines, and we have shown continental leadership through our climate leadership plan, tackling head-on the chief concerns of many Canadians from all walks of life about the

potential environmental impacts of pipelines. Madam Speaker, the results are speaking for themselves. Since our government undertook this work, support for the Trans Mountain pipeline has risen dramatically, to the point where now 7 out of 10 Canadians support the pipeline. This is a huge increase and a huge testament to the persuasiveness of our arguments.

On this side of the House, Madam Speaker, we've taken concrete steps to show our support for pipelines. Let's look at Keystone XL, for example. Our government has entered into an agreement with TransCanada to ship 50,000 barrels per day down the Keystone XL pipeline. The president of TransCanada thanked us for our commitment to the project, which he described – and I quote – as instrumental to achieving the commercial support needed for the project to proceed. Thanks in part to our support of Keystone XL, construction on the pipeline will begin next year. So that's one pipeline under way.

4:00

We've also supported Enbridge's line 3 project every step of the way. This project, once completed, will enable Enbridge to increase oil transport from 390,000 barrels per day to 760,000 barrels per day. Late last week this project cleared another major hurdle when the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission issued a written order for the Enbridge line 3 route permit. This built on an agreement in August between Enbridge and the Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa that the replacement line could cross the reservation on its route from Alberta to the Enbridge terminal in Superior. So, Madam Speaker, that's two pipelines.

Now we come to Trans Mountain, the pipeline project. Every step of the way we've stood up for Alberta jobs and fought to get this pipeline built, and we are not backing down now. This project means thousands of good jobs, a better price for our resources, and more revenue for services that we all rely on in our communities. With the U.S. as our only customer, money that should be going to Canadian schools and hospitals is instead going to American yachts and private jets.

Madam Speaker, I think it's important to provide some context for the debate here today. The Federal Court of Appeal ruling quashed the federal cabinet's approval for the Trans Mountain project, but it's important to note that there would have been no such approval without the leadership of this government and our Premier, because our government made Alberta a continental leader instead of a continental laggard on climate change, because our government placed a hard cap on greenhouse gas emissions from the oil sands, and because our government effectively delinked growth in emissions from approval for this pipeline.

This pipeline was approved, but we didn't stop once the pipeline was approved. We continued to speak up for the importance of this pipeline at every available opportunity. Our Premier explained to Canadians the importance of market access in terms of getting a better value for our resources. She made the case for the economic benefits that will flow to all parts of Canada from this pipeline, and instead of denying the reality of climate change, as the opposition would have us do, she addressed those concerns head-on. Not only did she speak about the work our government is doing to address climate change, but she made the case that we need better value for our resources to pay for the kinds of programs that are necessary if we want to make meaningful progress on the issue, and she demonstrated that there is, in fact, no meaningful progress in addressing climate change unless we get better value for our resources. It's not a question of either/or; it's not actually possible to have one without the other. The result, Madam Speaker, has been that massive increase in support that I already spoke of.

What else have we done? We participated in and won 17 separate court decisions in the process. When the government of B.C. threatened to put obstacles in our path, we implemented a temporary ban on wine imports and followed up with Bill 12 last spring. That legislation remains in our tool kit and is something we will use if needed. When Kinder Morgan indicated that they would be withdrawing from the project, we worked with the government of Canada to secure federal investment in the pipeline, and we showed our commitment to that project with a pledge to provide indemnity up to \$2 billion should the costs of the project rise to the point that such investment was needed. If it proves to be necessary, Albertans will receive shares in the pipeline commensurate with our investment.

We had hoped that we would be closer to the finish line than we are. Our previous 17 court victories gave us ample reason for optimism, but here we are. We've been clear that this ruling was bad for working families and bad for our economic security in Canada and in Alberta. Ottawa should have appealed the ruling to the Supreme Court, and we are very disappointed that they did not. Successive federal governments have created the mess we are in today. It's time for Ottawa to fix what's been broken.

We've made our view on this crystal clear by withdrawing from the national climate plan until we see action. Alberta, Madam Speaker, is a climate leader. We will continue to do our part to address climate change because, unlike members of the opposite side, we recognize that this is the right thing to do. But we have said all along that taking the next step and participating in the national climate plan can't happen until Trans Mountain is built.

We will continue to do our part in the coming months to maintain and increase public support for this pipeline. This government and our Premier will continue to seek opportunities to make our case directly to Canadians. We will work with the federal government to ensure that the new round of indigenous consultations takes place as quickly as appropriate.

We have also called on the federal government to amend legislation to make it clear that marine wildlife should not fall under the jurisdiction of the National Energy Board. We were very disappointed that they did not do this. They have instead chosen to consult on this matter as well. At least, they have set a clear timeline in this case. We have made it very clear that we are going to hold them to timelines and keep their feet to the fire.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: I'll recognize the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I thank the hon. the minister for her remarks. I'm pleased to rise on behalf of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition to debate this critical motion

to discuss a matter of urgent . . . importance; namely . . . measures [that] must be taken to ensure that construction of the job-creating Trans Mountain expansion project is completed given the recent Federal Court of Appeal ruling and diminished investor confidence in Alberta's energy industry.

Madam Speaker, as we know, getting a fair price for Canadian energy is existential to Alberta's economic future. Our failure to do so means that we are selling Alberta oil to the Americans, our only export market, for roughly \$20 a barrel while they actually sell American oil, heavy crude, to the rest of the world now as an exporter at \$70 a barrel, a \$50 price differential on some days in the last month.

If you include the price differential on natural gas and the \$11 billion of foreign oil that we import every year to this country because we are not energy independent, notwithstanding having the

third-largest oil reserves in the world, if you include those factors, the total estimated annual cost of this problem of bottlenecking of our resources amounts to some \$46 billion a year and an estimated \$14 billion in forgone government revenues, not to mention the thousands of jobs that would be created by the Trans Mountain pipeline directly and upstream jobs that would be created by it as well, \$46 billion of wealth that we are effectively giving to the United States and to some of the world's worst regimes: the Saudi dictatorship, the Iranians, the Venezuelans, and other OPEC dictatorships. Madam Speaker, this is intolerable, and it must end.

The problem is this. The reason we are talking about Trans Mountain in this place today is because all of the other efforts to get a coastal pipeline built have been killed by the current government's policies. Northern Gateway was a pipeline that would have gone, Madam Speaker, from Edmonton, from Sherwood Park in fact, to Kitimat, B.C. It was approved by the National Energy Board, with conditions, after three years of exhaustive reviews and hundreds, thousands in fact, of intervenor statements, all of this applied against the highest environmental and technical standards of any energy regulator on the planet, yet it was killed by a close friend and ally of this NDP government, Justin Trudeau. But what's worse is that our own Premier publicly campaigned against the Northern Gateway pipeline and did not raise a word of protest when it was vetoed by her close ally Justin Trudeau. In fact, she admitted to this Chamber under questioning last spring that her position was that we only needed one coastal pipeline. The problem is that by taking that position, informed by the NDP's historic antienergy ideology, we have ended up exposed to this campaign of obstruction on the last project that has any potential for completion.

4:10

Then the NDP's close friend and ally Justin Trudeau proceeded to kill the Energy East pipeline route that had been proposed by TCPL, a good Alberta company, after they spent nearly a billion dollars. They killed it, Madam Speaker, because, as they said in their statement of August 23, 2017, regulatory uncertainty created by the National Energy Board's decision to move into the regulation of up- and downstream emissions associated indirectly with the pipeline would become part of the responsibility of the project proponents. Trans Canada said that they had no idea what they meant. How could they possibly be accountable for upstream emissions for the production of oil that they don't produce or for downstream emissions for its consumption? So they cancelled that.

I note parenthetically, Madam Speaker, that the federal government forced the National Energy Board to change its regulatory parameters by including up- and downstream emissions, that led to the killing of Energy East. But isn't it curious that the Saudi and Venezuelan OPEC oil that is shipped into St. John or Montreal is not regulated by Canada based on either the up- or downstream emissions profile of that energy? This was a decision by this government's ally, Justin Trudeau, to penalize Canada, which has the highest environmental, human rights, and labour standards of any major oil and gas producer.

Of course, Madam Speaker, in late October 2015 then President Obama vetoed the Keystone XL pipeline, vetoed a second application by TCPL for a presidential permit for that project, and the NDP's close friend and ally Justin Trudeau surrendered: no diplomatic response to that devastating decision, which resulted in a further three years of delays on Keystone. Guess what, Madam Speaker? The NDP campaigned against Keystone from the very beginning. I will never forget seeing NDP Members of Parliament flying to Washington to lobby Congress to stop the Keystone XL pipeline. We had members of this cabinet standing on the front steps of the Legislature calling for the Keystone XL pipeline to be killed.

They got what they wanted. They got the veto on Keystone, they got the veto on Northern Gateway, and they got the carbon tax, that they and the Trudeau Liberals conspired on behind the backs of Alberta voters, and then they got, Madam Speaker, Bill C-69, the no-more-pipelines act, which this government would not oppose when it was introduced. They would not send ministers to Ottawa to oppose notwithstanding our suggestion that they do so.

And so now what have they done? They've ended up exposing us to one last prospective pipeline, Trans Mountain, and what happens? Their fellow partisans, the New Democratic Party in British Columbia, come to power and launch a campaign of obstruction. What does this government do about it? The square root of nothing. When last summer I suggested that we show there would be reprisals, that we indicate that we would be prepared to replicate Peter Lougheed's turn-off-the-taps strategy of 1981, the Premier mocked and ridiculed me. She said that I was acting like Donald Trump and that I wanted to build a wall around Alberta and that I was having a temper tantrum. It took her seven months, though, Madam Speaker, before finally realizing that we were right, when the government began to replicate our language.

Now we've had yet another setback. It seems like every few weeks throughout this year this government were doing their victory lap. They were spiking the football on the construction of Trans Mountain. In fact, they had a resolution at their convention this weekend: be it resolved that the Alberta NDP convention congratulate the Premier and the provincial government on their leadership in securing the expansion of the Trans Mountain pipeline, quote, unquote. [some applause] They're applauding the nonexistent expansion, Madam Speaker. They're living in cloud cuckoo land. All that's happened is that the proponent fled Canada. Kinder Morgan said: there is no investor certainty; we're out. Now we as taxpayers have ended up holding the bag, with a \$4 billion risk, and yet another block, yet another delay.

Madam Speaker, in response the government said that they were going to talk tough to their close friend and ally Justin Trudeau. The Premier said that she would hold her friend Justin Trudeau's feet to the fire and insist on an immediate appeal and timelines for restarting the process immediately. What did they get? No appeal, Madam Speaker.

The Prime Minister, after all the Premier and the NDP have done for him, after the carbon tax, after supporting him on vetoing Northern Gateway, after being mute on his cancellation of Energy East, after his northern B.C. tanker traffic ban Bill C-48, after the clean fuel standards, after all of this that has hammered the engine of our economy, wouldn't even give her an appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada. You've got to ask why. Does this Prime Minister actually want it built?

Madam Speaker, that is why it is time, I submit, that we had an Alberta government that will without apology go on the offence against the well-funded foreign interests that have led this campaign of defamation against Canadian energy, that, for example, funded the litigation that led to the Federal Court of Appeal decision. Yes, this should be appealed, but it is time that we demonstrated to our partners in the federation that if we cannot get a fair price for our resources, we are prepared to put on the table equalization and demand fairness . . .

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister of economic development.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise to speak to this very important topic. I want to clarify some of the, I think, misconceptions or mischaracterizations that the Leader of the Opposition has stated. First and foremost, you know, it needs to be clear that when the Northern Gateway project

and Energy East were both shot down, part of the reason why those decisions were made was because the previous Harper government failed to take adequate action to address the concerns in order to get the approvals for those two projects.

Now, I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that we were very disappointed to see the project of Energy East not move forward. We know that Alberta energy producers are the most responsible, have the highest environmental standards to adhere to, the highest safety standards, and we have an incredible human rights track record. What is incredibly frustrating for our government is the fact that Alberta energy producers have the capacity to produce energy for the rest of our country, and projects like Energy East have been stifled because of a few.

But I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that we will continue to advocate for pipelines in all directions. As my colleague the Minister of Energy pointed out, our Premier, our government committed 50,000 barrels per day for the Keystone XL project to move forward. We know that this is a step in the right direction. It will reduce the differential, which, as other folks have pointed out, is incredibly high at the moment and is having a significant impact on our energy sector.

Let me tell you and outline just briefly, Madam Speaker, some of the initiatives and actions our government has taken in order to support our energy sector. You know, when we first came into power, we announced a royalty review because a comprehensive review hadn't been done for quite some time. We talked to energy companies, the energy sector, and listened to their feedback. We struck a committee that engaged with leaders across the province and internationally to look at how Alberta's royalty regime can reward innovation, can reward efficiency, and can help encourage more investment at a time when it was most needed, which, of course, was when the global collapse of oil prices occurred back in 2015.

We came forward with a royalty regime that, quite frankly, Madam Speaker, I'm very proud of and that many companies have said: this is exactly the action that we've been asking government for. It took an NDP government to listen to the energy sector, to amend our royalty regime in order to incent investments. Let me tell you. Some companies were so excited about the new royalty regime that they applied for early access.

For instance, EnCana spent \$25 million to drill new wells in the Duvernay and Montney basin in northwest Alberta. They said that that spending would not have happened had we not made changes to the royalty system. I can quote Michael McAllister, who's the chief operating officer of EnCana, who said: it allows for investments in Alberta to compete with those in the U.S.

Those changes came into effect January 2017. By the middle of that month there were 247 active rigs in the province, more than 50 per cent more than that time the year before.

Now, that's not all, Madam Speaker. We also looked at new regulatory processes with the AER, which means that new projects can get up and running even faster, which we know will create jobs and improve our competitiveness. We know that we're saving industry hundreds of millions of dollars.

4:20

Now, Madam Speaker, I will say that positive steps have been made, but we acknowledge that there can be more, that we can do more, and we'll continue to work with our energy sector and with the AER to look at ways to expedite approvals so that we can get more men and women back to work in our energy sector.

Madam Speaker, I can tell you that there is not a more vocal champion of our energy sector than our Premier. She has been from day one the loudest and strongest advocate, from day one telling Albertans and Canadians that our government will do whatever it

takes to see Trans Mountain move forward. There are a number of steps that we did take, but I can tell you that we were quite frustrated with the federal government when it came down to a point where the federal government had to purchase the Trans Mountain pipeline because of not acting swiftly enough initially. But we did say that it was a step in the right direction. I can tell you that I speak with international investors on a weekly basis and that many of them, in fact most of them, have said: we applaud the fact that the government has taken over this pipeline; that provides certainty that we like to see and will help it move forward.

I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that our Premier has done more for the energy sector and to get pipelines built than previous Conservative governments, both provincially here and, quite frankly, federally. I mean, the Leader of the Official Opposition sat in Ottawa for 20 years. Twenty. For 10 of those years he was a senior cabinet minister. How many pipelines to tidewater were approved and constructed? None. I can tell you that more has been done.

Now, we are frustrated with the delay in this process. Absolutely. Shovels were to be in the ground. In fact, the energy sector did pick up their tools and begin to resume construction on Trans Mountain until the Federal Court of Appeal ruled. But I can tell you that we have been relentless when it comes to telling the federal government the importance of Alberta's energy sector, the importance of the Trans Mountain pipeline, the importance of reducing our differential, getting top dollar for our top resources.

There's a number of other actions that we've taken to help spur industry and investments. I mean, the petrochemical diversification program has a \$3.5 billion facility being built right now in Alberta's Industrial Heartland. In the coming weeks we're going to get a final investment decision on the second project, round 2 of this incredibly successful project. The window is closed for applications. What I can tell you is that there are more applicants in the second round than we had in the first round. Why, Madam Speaker? Because industry has said to us that Alberta is a better jurisdiction than the Gulf coast for value-added to our gas sector. What they said is: we need you, the government of Alberta, to help level the playing field because these companies are heavily subsidized in the U.S.

What I will say, Madam Speaker, is that clearly the Leader of the Official Opposition doesn't understand how competition and levelling a playing field works because if it was up to him, all he would do is go back to a flat tax and hope that industry just piles into Alberta. Well, let me tell you. Let's look at history. For decades Alberta had a flat tax. How many facilities upgraded propane to propylene? None. How many under our government? Two. And these are \$3.5 billion investments that would not have happened without our program, which is built on future royalty credits, adding a new link to the value chain and ensuring that Albertans are getting top dollar for their resources. But we also are keeping those high-paid, quality jobs here in Alberta, where they are deserved and where they belong.

I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that I'm very proud to be part of a government that's continuing to build on the legacy of former Premier Peter Lougheed, who saw an opportunity in the pet-chem space but recognized that there was a role for government. This is where the opposition is sadly mistaken. They don't understand global competitive forces and think that by sitting on our hands and doing nothing, the economy will diversify itself and investments will just flood back to Alberta. What we've done is ensure that we are competing internationally through a variety of programs to level the playing field.

Now, it must be noted as well that the Leader of the Official Opposition would cancel all of these programs, therefore laying off

thousands of workers and putting an immediate halt to a number of the investments that we see today because of the actions of our Premier and our government.

I will tell you, Madam Speaker, that the Minister of Energy, myself, Environment and Parks, and our Premier have been lobbying the federal government for over a year and a half on how flawed C-69 is and the impact it would have on our energy industry. Nobody knows this better than Alberta. And what's frustrating is that, again, you had Conservative governments around for many, many years that still haven't quite been able to talk to people in a productive way about the importance of our energy sector to the Canadian economy. I can tell you that there are tens of thousands of jobs created in other provinces because of Alberta's energy sector, but what we need is to ensure that there are future investments in our energy sector, and that's where, again, C-69 needs to be completely changed.

I'm proud to have a colleague, the Minister of Environment and Parks, who spoke to over 60 Senators last week in Ottawa, spoke to dozens of policy-makers and leaders to advocate on behalf of Alberta's energy sector because, Madam Speaker, Alberta is the economic engine of Canada.

The Deputy Speaker: I'll recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my honour to stand in this House and speak to the motion, the emergency debate on pipelines. We've heard quite a bit today from both sides, the Official Opposition and the government, about how amazing they are and what the other person did or didn't do. I know one thing for sure, that there's one way we can solve this right away. If we really believe that a pipeline is an emergency, we actually have a committee that deals with stuff like this on a regular basis, Resource Stewardship.

So if we are serious about wanting to come up with solutions that are going to help working-class families, the families that I represent in Calgary-South East that come into my office and want to know what's happening on the pipeline issue and what the government is doing, what the Official Opposition is doing – "Member for Calgary-South East, what are you doing on behalf of my family; I've been out of work for a number of years now, and I don't know what's going to happen next; I'm on my second mortgage" – if we really believe that those families are in crisis and emergency, we'll refer this to committee, and that committee will meet once a week every week until this issue is solved. In that committee, Madam Speaker, what we can do is that we can table those flights to Ottawa. We can table the notes and the minutes of what everybody has been saying and everybody has been doing, but we can also bring industry leaders to come help us solve this issue from an Alberta perspective.

Albertans for years and years have been mavericks in dealing with issues like this. So instead of calling an emergency debate – I think this is the second one in as many months, maybe five months since the last spring session – Madam Speaker, we can solve this. Let's put it into committee. Let's put the good minds of the opposition, the third party, the independents, and the government, let's put us around a table with the ministers and let's talk about what we have done and where we're going to go next. It really doesn't matter what happened 10 years ago. It really doesn't matter what happened a week ago. Albertans want to know what we're going to do today and tomorrow and for the next coming weeks until this issue is solved to put Albertans back to work.

An emergency debate gives us the next few hours to talk about this and blame one another and the other person that was in power,

the PCs for the last 44 years. But that really doesn't help the family tomorrow to get a job, to grow our economy.

Now, I've agreed with this government on many initiatives, the petrochemical diversification program. I asked a question today about the North West refinery and the opportunities that we have there. These are the very things that we can discuss in a committee. If we're serious about it, the Premier and the House leaders and the cabinet members right now can say: this committee is going to take this on as a serious challenge; we're going to meet once a week; we're going to bring industry leaders in; we're going to bring in mayors; we're going to bring in leaders from other provinces to talk about this issue. We can do that, Madam Speaker. This province has done it before.

In fact, we love to talk about the legacy of Mr. Lougheed, who was an amazing, incredible man. But let's take that vision, let's take that tenacity that he had for this province, and let's get to work and stop the blaming. Madam Speaker, that's what my constituents expect. That's what those small and mid-sized oil producers expect. People wanting to expand the oil sands, that's what they expect. They want to see results on a pipeline. Yes, we can blame the federal government, but how about let's not blame them anymore. Let's just take over the leadership, let's put it into a committee, and let's get the work done.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister of environment.

4:30

Ms Phillips: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I appreciate, actually, the opportunity to rise in this emergency debate. I want to thank the members of the opposition for providing the opportunity for the members of the House to consider this. Of course, the Trans Mountain pipeline and the resilience and growth of our energy sector are, in fact, a matter for the national interest, and it's of keen importance to all constituents from all of our ridings. The Member for Calgary-South East just talked about what he hears from the people he represents, and I know we all do.

It's important to talk a little bit about how we got here. We are now in the aftermath of a Federal Court of Appeal decision, and rather than blame judges and undermine the institutions of our parliamentary democracy, as I have heard some people do, what we need now is action from the federal government. Now, we wanted to see specific actions from the feds that we did not see, and we're deeply disappointed in that, Madam Speaker. But the 22-week timeline, should it be adhered to, is appropriate for rescoping in the marine safety elements. We would have preferred a legislative solution to this matter, but be that as it may, those 22 weeks would have likely been around the same clock spins as a legislative amendment. As long as those timelines are adhered to, Albertans will see a good result sometime early in 2019.

Now the piece around the indigenous consultation. There were two grounds for the striking down of the decision of the Trans Mountain approval, Madam Speaker, as we remember. I have seen members opposite criticize the lack of a timeline associated with indigenous consultation. That actually undermines the upholding of the honour of the Crown with respect to nation-to-nation consultation and the terms within the court decisions that that consultation be meaningful and iterative and two way. Unless the opposition is seriously suggesting that we cut corners on indigenous consultation, it has to be structured the way it is.

Now, the Northern Gateway decision was struck down, in fact, on the grounds that the Crown did not adequately discharge its duty around consultation with respect to Northern Gateway. In fact, the TMX decision, Madam Speaker, came about because of the

inappropriate scoping within the original review for Trans Mountain. Both of those decisions were made by the previous federal government, and the Leader of the Opposition was in that government. There is plenty of blame to go around with respect to the federal government's actions with respect to pipelines, but let's not forget that cutting corners on either environmental impact assessment or indigenous-Crown consultation is a road to nowhere. It will not get pipelines built. Neither, too, will ignoring the reality or, in fact, denying the reality of climate change, which the members opposite also propose that we do. That also won't help.

In this case, Madam Speaker, we have got to get it right, and we need to ensure that as we fix this system, this mess that we have been left with from the 2012 decisions around the CEAA, the National Energy Board, we ensure that we are not replacing a broken system with another broken system. That is why I went to Ottawa last week. It is the job of environment ministers to ensure that environmental rules are upheld and that processes are followed and that large projects, if they merit being built, must get built.

That is the job of the environment minister, Madam Speaker, and that's why I was so proud to bring in the climate leadership plan, which, in fact, led to the approval of those two pipelines. We must – we must – take our responsibilities to the environment seriously. We need to make sure that we do that within a regulatory regime that will hold up in court and will hold up in the courts of 2018, not in some bygone era, that the opposition wishes we were still in, where with indigenous consultation you could just cut corners, where climate change wasn't real, where we didn't care about our air, land, and water. Those days are over.

That is why we need to see changes to Bill C-69, and that is why we are advocating so vociferously, and we have from the very beginning, Madam Speaker. I have made several trips to Ottawa on this very matter.

Let me talk a little bit about exactly what we are looking for, because this is not just about making sure that Trans Mountain gets built. The federal government has a responsibility to act in response to the Federal Court of Appeal decision around the two matters, the indigenous consultation and the rescoping of the marine safety issue. But this is also about: what does the future of the energy industry look like, Madam Speaker? Well, in one sense, first of all, it looks like an energy industry that is resilient to the reality of climate change and, in fact, flourishes within the context of climate change being real. The time is over to ignore those matters within the regulatory process.

However, we need to make sure, as Bill C-69 contemplates a strategic assessment for large projects surrounding its climate change impacts, that Alberta's climate leadership plan stands in for that strategic assessment given that it is the most comprehensive response to climate change on this continent, Madam Speaker. So that is the first piece. We have made that positioning very clear to the federal government, and we expect to see clarity on it, not just in some bland assurances but in writing, in a draft regulation or in an amendment to the legislation, ideally, itself, and we have said that from the very beginning.

Furthermore, Madam Speaker, we need to know what's in and what's out. The project list is deeply important to industry, and the federal government needs to be very, very clear on what kinds of projects are in in the new impact assessment rules and which ones are out. We saw some of the problems associated with this, with the throwing out of the Trans Mountain project approval. The inappropriate scoping that was decided upon by the Harper government, in fact, led us to this day. So we need to make sure we have clarity on project lists. I expect the federal government to give us that clarity, and I will not stop asking them for that until we get it.

Furthermore, Madam Speaker, we need to make sure that for items within provincial jurisdiction we have appropriate environmental regulations, whether it's on the climate side or air, land, and water impacts, and that we ensure that those frameworks are in place on the provincial side. But we also need to make sure that there is no confusion about provincial jurisdiction over natural resources, that section 92A of the Constitution is upheld appropriately, and we want explicit mention of that within the legislation.

Furthermore, going back to the project list, Madam Speaker, we want to see an in situ exemption, and that links to this issue of jurisdiction. In situ production does not impinge upon, does not trigger federal environmental assessment. It does not trigger items over which the federal government has jurisdiction unless we are talking about greenhouse gas emissions, which are, in fact, an area of shared jurisdiction. Now, the fact of the matter is that in situ production in this province is governed by the oil sands emissions cap. Further, it is decarbonizing. We're taking the carbon out of the barrel through \$1.4 billion worth of clean-tech investments, a large amount of which is going into the oil sands industry. The provincial government already has taken up this jurisdiction, and a federal intrusion in this matter is neither welcome nor necessary. So we are looking for that explicit in situ exemption. We know that that will strengthen our energy industry going forward because the rules are clear in Alberta with respect to climate policy.

Finally, we are looking for changes around timelines, Madam Speaker. There are a number of new criteria, terms, and principles inserted in the act that remain too vague to properly assess their impact. We want to see either publication of draft regulations or an outright amendment to the bill, preferably the latter, because we want to make sure that the industry has the kinds of assurances that it needs to make those final investment decisions on those large projects going forward.

A final element and final point to make around the future of the energy industry and investor confidence in this province, and this one is really important: we need to fix this legislation. There are so many companies who do not want to see a return to the CEAA of 2012 because that system was broken in the first place. So if we want to listen to the chambers of commerce, if we want to listen to the industries that are going to be captured by this impact assessment, then we need to make sure that we fix C-69, and we want to see that clarity coming from the federal government, either going back to the House of Commons or within the Senate Chamber, as soon as is possible, Madam Speaker.

Thank you very much.

4:40

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to this emergency debate on what measures must be taken to ensure that the construction of the job-creating Trans Mountain expansion project is completed given the recent Federal Court of Appeal ruling.

In light of the Federal Court of Appeal decision on the Trans Mountain expansion the government of Canada saw fit to implement two more things to be in compliance with regulations. The first was to send the project back to the National Energy Board for a study on the impact of the two additional tankers a day in the Salish Sea versus the pod of orcas. Two tankers, Madam Speaker. As we speak, right now there are a hundred tankers – I just checked 10 minutes ago – in the port of Vancouver. Those two additional tankers will really make a difference, so we have to talk about that.

Then, Madam Speaker, can you imagine if the B.C. NDP's fast ferries were in service on those waters. Which one would have the greater environmental impact?

Now, Madam Speaker, to make sure I don't politically interfere in the NEB project approval process to assess these two extra tankers a day, I have not sought leave to appear as a witness. But guess what? That hasn't stopped the leader of the B.C. Green Party, Andrew Weaver. I guess he somehow has the money for lawyers and wants to take questions from high-priced lawyers, from all the witnesses before the National Energy Board.

The second thing the government of Canada has decided to do is to recommit to complete phase 3 of the indigenous consultation. Apparently, it's not good enough for the Crown to send a bunch of bureaucrats with no decision-making power to conduct consultations. I could have told you that, that it's a waste of time and money and resources. If the bureaucrats sent to consult are not empowered to make decisions and commitments, you're just wasting everyone's time and money.

But here is the kicker. The federal Liberal government failed to put a timeline on the new consultation process for TMX. To quote a Liberal minister, Amarjeet Sohi from Alberta, he said: we are not going to put a timeline on these consultations. He said that on October 3, 2018.

Madam Speaker, Canada consulted with indigenous people for over 40 years, including the creation of the Berger inquiry, with respect to the natural resource developments in Canada's Arctic and in the Mackenzie River valley. By the time First Nations were ready for development and the NEB had issued approvals to Imperial Oil to bring natural gas to the south, new technology came along, and the market price for gas collapsed, and Imperial's project did not move forward. All the benefits that the First Nations had negotiated and that would be able to improve their lives, things like roads, hospitals, and all: they all fell apart and never happened. Now here is this federal minister from Alberta refusing to put a timeline on consultation.

I am a firm believer in upholding the duty and the honour of the Crown, but at a certain point enough is enough. Madam Speaker, enough is enough. Consultations, to move forward, need to happen swiftly, and it is consultation, not negotiations. Let's be clear about it.

As for the federal minister, Sohi, he is a Liberal's liberal, a rabid partisan. He was known to show up here in this public gallery and cheer on the Member for Calgary-Mountain View and Laurie Blakeman and Kent Hehr while those Liberals set baited traps for all parties.

Minister Sohi did not like my editorial in the *Calgary Sun* over the weekend and responded today. Sadly, Minister Sohi continues with the bravado and false hope of getting the Trans Mountain pipeline built. Minister Sohi forgets about Justin Trudeau's pipeline whisperer, his principal secretary, Gerald Butts. Before he entered government, this former Canadian head of the World Wildlife Fund had been on the take from people who would scuttle Canada's oil and gas industry. I don't know of anyone who quits their job to go work for the Prime Minister's office and gets over \$300,000 in severance. Nice work if you can get it, Madam Speaker.

There is a video all over the web of Mr. Butts wanting to shut down the oil sands. There are videos about this government's members, members in this House, in the past, protesting against these pipelines. There are videos that you can look up. When Minister Sohi opens his mouth, it's quite rich and disingenuous as long as Gerald Butts is the Prime Minister's principal secretary, because he wants to leave it in the ground. He won't let any pipeline get built.

We urged the federal government to explore every avenue possible to get the Trans Mountain expansion back on track, including but not limited to an immediate appeal to the Supreme Court, re-engagement of the consultation process, and potential legislation.

But it's not just us, Madam Speaker. That great bastion of finance in Quebec, Desjardins Capital Markets, has this to say: we maintain our previous concern that the federal Liberal government will likely be highly reluctant to exercise force approaching the window of the next election cycle, expected next fall.

There is another gentleman, former CEO of TransCanada Hal Kvisle. He said:

I don't see how any private-sector pipeline company would be dumb enough to embark on a major pipeline project in Canada today . . .

The government would hope this shows Canadians that things can get done in this country, when it actually shows the private sector that even the bestlaid plans are going to end up in the ditch.

That was in the *Calgary Herald* on May 30, 2018, Madam Speaker.

Then CAPP's Tim McMillan said: investment was done under extraordinary circumstances, and we should work very hard to never find ourselves in this position again.

That's why, Madam Speaker – this government said that they have done so much for these pipelines and oil, but Albertans are not buying that. When I'm getting those in my riding, people are saying: if you fool me once, shame on me, but if you fool me twice, shame on you. This government: I mean, everyone knows what they did. They just cheered the failure of pipelines, but they were celebrating a victory lap, like the Leader of Opposition said, when nothing is getting built.

That's why we called specifically for these actions: invoke the declaratory authority under section 92(10)(c) of the Constitution, immediately passing Bill S-245; immediately bring forward the promised legislation to reinforce federal jurisdiction; suspend the transfer of \$4.1 billion in infrastructure funding and \$1.3 billion job-training funding to the B.C. New Democrats until they end their campaign of obstruction; pull bills C-69, which the energy industry says means that a future pipeline project is very unlikely, and the tanker ban, C-48, that impedes the ability to get resources to the market; and indicate to the B.C. NDP government that the \$182 million in funds earmarked for B.C. under the low carbon economy fund will be withheld pending construction of the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion to parallel the withholding of \$60 million from Saskatchewan for refusing to implement the carbon tax.

Madam Speaker, global oil demand is growing, and it's nearly 100 million barrels per day. By 2040 27 per cent of the global demand will be from oil, and 25 per cent will be from natural gas. That means that by 2040 half of the energy market will be oil and gas. That is from the IEA. Petrochemicals are also becoming the largest drivers of the global oil demand.

4:50

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow, followed by Calgary-Klein.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak on the emergency debate on the Trans Mountain pipeline. I'm glad that we're having the opportunity to speak about this. I've got to tell you that I hear about this issue more than any other from constituents in Calgary-Elbow and from Albertans that I talk with around the province. When I go door-knocking, there is frustration, there is concern, there is absolute anger that we find ourselves in a situation where Alberta has some of the most responsibly produced

oil in the entire world but we can't sell it. We can't get it out of the province. We can't ship it.

I've been talking with people who are part of the investment community in the energy sector, and they've said that, you know, things were really looking up. There was a belief that this pipeline was going to go ahead, that they could rely on the regulatory process, that they could rely on the federal and provincial governments to actually ensure that the process was followed, that we'd actually see a pipeline built. They were starting to see capital maybe start to move back into Alberta.

But this has frozen everything, not just investments related to oil and gas exploration and production but investments related to technology, investments that are totally unrelated to the oil and gas sector. Investors from around the world are looking at what's happening in Canada, and they're saying: "I'm not sure I can trust putting my money there. I feel like maybe there is more risk in Canada than I thought, so I'm going to pull back and wait and see if Canada can figure itself out." So what used to be a massive advantage for Canada, political stability, a predictable regulatory regime – in fact, we have or, I should say, we had such a great reputation around the world that our regulatory experts would help set up regulatory regimes in other parts of the world. Well, that's no longer true. We're now seen as a very risky place to do business.

That is really a tragedy. It costs Albertans jobs, it costs Albertan families, it costs tax dollars that could go into important programs in health and education and ensure our society is a fairer place. So it's not just a straight fiscal issue, whether or not we ensure that our product gets sold to the rest of the world.

When I look at the approach that the NDP has taken, they said: Albertans, if we have a carbon tax, we are going to get a pipeline. They just made a straight equivalence, carbon tax equals pipeline. Well, no pipeline: what does that mean for the carbon tax? Is it a straight equation now, or are we now going on some other plan?

Where we've ended up, though, is that instead of having a pipeline – and instead of quietly going about their work of ensuring that the regulatory process was followed, what the government has done is to govern to a headline. They've just said, "Carbon tax equals pipeline," and the moment that the federal government purchased the Kinder Morgan pipeline, what did they do? They took a victory lap. They may have well strung up a banner in front of the Legislative Assembly that said: mission accomplished. They trotted out all of their caucus, and the Premier did a big news conference, and a number of us on the opposition side, staff, and media were kind of standing around gobsmacked, watching this spectacle.

Now all of a sudden, well, the courts decide that the regulatory process was not followed, that, in fact, indigenous people were not appropriately consulted. Now, I've talked to some lawyers, and I think that there's some disagreement as to whether or not that is, in fact, a correct ruling and that perhaps the federal government should look at an appeal. Regardless, that is a responsibility of the federal government, to consult at phase 3 with indigenous people and do a consultation that is a proper two-way consultation. That is on the federal government.

But where I hold the provincial government accountable is that you can't tell me that within the Ministry of Energy or within the private sector in this province we don't have a few lawyers, regulatory experts who could perhaps look over the shoulder of the federal government and make sure that that process is followed. But that didn't happen. The province of Alberta was completely hands-off back in 2016 and just said: well, we'll just trust Ottawa. When has it ever worked in the province of Alberta where we sit back and say: well, we'll just trust Ottawa; things will be fine? Clearly not. So it is not just Ottawa's fault that this happened. It is absolutely on

the provincial government, who should have been looking over the shoulder, who should have bringing some of that regulatory expertise to bear in that process to make sure that the Trans Mountain pipeline went ahead.

The tragedy of this is compounded by the fact that not only is this an economic story, as I said before, but it's an environmental story, too. The research and innovation that are happening in this province – in fact, we had an opportunity with my Alberta Party caucus colleagues this morning to tour the University of Alberta. There's unbelievable work under way at the University of Alberta on carbon abatement, on reducing land use for resource development and development of all kinds, on reducing the use of fresh water and abating tailings ponds in oil sands. These are the problems that not just Alberta is grappling with, but the world is grappling with.

I have always maintained that Alberta's contribution to fighting climate change is, yes, reducing our emissions here at home, but the far greater contribution that we will make to fighting climate change is developing technologies in Alberta that will address carbon emissions that we can then sell to the rest of the world. That is our contribution, and that contribution is funded directly by ensuring that Alberta oil and gas gets to market. So when pipelines are delayed or deferred or perhaps even cancelled, it has a massive impact on the environmental side. It has a devastating and negative impact on carbon emissions globally. That is a case that I don't believe the NDP has made nearly strong enough to our friends in British Columbia nor to the rest of Canada. Building pipelines is a pro-environmental policy, not just having a carbon tax in Alberta. Building pipelines enables research and development that will reduce global carbon emissions. That's the goal. That case has not been made nearly strongly enough.

The other consequence is, of course, more oil on rail. That is, we know, statistically more risky. I don't want to suggest for a moment that it's unsafe, but it's not as safe in any way as shipping oil through pipelines. We know that. That costs more, which has an impact on the bottom line for energy companies, which means they hire fewer people, which means they generate fewer taxes, they pay lower royalties, and it has a substantial economic cost. It also presents barriers to other Alberta products, agricultural products in particular, finding their way to market. It enriches the train companies – I'm sure they're thrilled with it – but it's not anywhere near the best interests of Albertans.

Now, the minister of environment and others have talked about Bill C-69 and that that simply does not work for Alberta. I agree. There are substantial problems with Bill C-69.

I will say that the current rules, the CEAA, 2012, also don't work for Alberta. There are many examples of that in the energy industry. On another project that's currently under way, a project that's very close to my heart and the interests of the constituents of not just Calgary-Elbow but downtown Calgary, the Springbank off-stream reservoir, a very, very important project, the goalposts continually move. Every time there's a filing, a huge number of questions come back, and the timeline moves back, and the timeline moves back, and it just never seems to end.

That's a challenge that I can understand now, having intimately and closely watched this process. I can only imagine, for a project that's, frankly, relatively simple, like the SR1 project, compared to a massively complex project like a pipeline or a tailings pond or an oil sands development – I can't imagine how much effort and time and cost would go into that.

Madam Speaker, I stand here frustrated that we don't have a clear path forward on the pipeline, that it is not under construction, as this government said it would be. Of course, here in the Alberta Party caucus we are always cheering for pipelines. We will never cheer

against Alberta. We will never cheer for a project to fail. We want this project to succeed, and we want it to go ahead very, very quickly.

But Albertans are demanding a credible plan for energy, not just pipelines. They're demanding a credible plan for energy diversification, for petrochemicals, for upgrading, for expanding exploration and production, for opening up investment once again in Alberta and not seeing those dollars that are going to energy development in the United States – it's far easier to get projects approved in the U.S. than it is here. It doesn't mean that we need to abandon our responsibility. Environmental responsibility, social responsibility, safety: those are things that we do better in this province and in this country than anywhere in the world, and we ought to be proud of that. But companies, investors need some certainty that the money they put in is going to result in project approvals and reviews in a timely – way.

Since a credible plan isn't forthcoming from this government, I can promise you that the Alberta Party will present a credible plan, going into the next election, for how we get Alberta's energy sector back up and running, how we get Albertans back to work, and, most importantly, how we get pipelines built.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

5:00

The Deputy Speaker: Calgary-Klein, followed by Fort McMurray-Conklin.

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to speak to this emergency motion, a very important topic indeed. Now, I have stood up here in the past in this Assembly and expressed my frustration and this government's frustration at the fact that the Trans Mountain pipeline is not being built as we speak. It's frustrating because this government had this pipeline in its sights from day one. We knew very quickly, upon assuming government, that getting a pipeline to tidewater was going to be critical infrastructure to growing our energy industry and getting a fair price for our product, which makes you wonder why previous governments didn't see this.

As such, Madam Speaker, we did everything that was asked of us to get approval, including bringing in the most robust climate leadership plan in the country, and the federal government did approve the construction of the Trans Mountain pipeline. Unfortunately, the Federal Court of Appeal ruled against the Trans Mountain pipeline, quashing the decision of the previous approval. This ruling is bad for working families and the economy. The approval process is flawed, and that's clear.

One of the most unfortunate parts of this flawed process is the fact that the Leader of the Opposition had the opportunity to improve it during his tenure in Ottawa but chose not to, and he couldn't get a pipeline built to tidewater in this province during this period either. While the federal Conservative governments were failing at getting pipelines built and changing the process, the world changed around them, and it would appear that the Leader of the Opposition and his caucus were left behind and refused to catch up.

Let's dissect this motion for a moment if you'll indulge me:

To discuss what measures must be taken to ensure that construction of the job-creating Trans Mountain expansion project is completed given the recent Federal Court of Appeal ruling and diminished investor confidence in Alberta's energy industry.

Now, what measures must be taken to ensure that construction of the job-creating Trans Mountain expansion project is completed? Well, Madam Speaker, on this side of the House we will do whatever it takes to get the Trans Mountain pipeline built, but it

appears that the opposition won't. On this side of the House we understand that climate action was an integral part of getting federal approval, and it remains an integral part of getting this pipeline built. And you know what else? It's just the right thing to do.

You know who else thinks carbon pricing is good for the energy industry? The energy industry. Steve Williams, CEO of Suncor, said: "We think climate change is happening. We [think] a broad-based carbon price is the right answer." He also said that climate inaction threatens the future of the oil sands and that an earnest effort by government to decrease emissions, shared by consumers and industry, through a carbon tax and regulations could be the best possible outcome. So it's obvious, Madam Speaker, that this government and the energy industry have already adopted a measure to help ensure construction of the pipeline.

Now, let's compare this to what the opposition is doing to help ensure construction of the pipeline, which would be absolutely nothing. Instead of supporting a price on carbon that drives efficiency in the oil sands and is supported by energy leaders, the opposition riles the anger machine with its anti carbon tax stance.

The Leader of the Opposition's good friend and ally the Premier of Ontario, Doug Ford, got together to rally against the carbon tax recently. Let's call this rally what it really was, Madam Speaker, a rally against the energy industry. The opposition had even partnered with their other good friend and ally, Rebel media, to rally against the carbon tax and, in effect, again, rally against the energy industry.

The bottom line: the UCP leader will say anything to get elected. He's more interested in grandstanding than doing what's right for the energy industry. What's more, Madam Speaker, what makes the Leader of the Opposition think he knows more than energy executives? I'm not seeing it.

Also, part of this motion is to deal with diminished investor confidence. Well, Madam Speaker, investment is returning. The oil and gas sector has grown by 6.4 per cent in the past year, largely in Alberta's oil sands. CNRL announced that it will increase its capital spending by \$170 million this year to \$4.6 billion to advance engineering and purchase equipment for its Horizon expansion efforts. Athabasca Oil has boosted its capital budget by \$45 million to \$185 million.

We have also made it clear that we are not happy with the Federal Court of Appeal ruling, something else we're doing to make sure this gets built, Madam Speaker, and we've been clear that this ruling is bad for working families and bad for the economic security of Canada. Ottawa should have appealed the ruling to the Supreme Court, and we're very disappointed that they did not.

Successive federal governments have created the mess we're in today, and it's time for Ottawa to fix what they've broken. Three years ago we set out to break our land lock, and despite the setbacks we have made progress. Today Canadians in every part of the country support our efforts to build the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion, and we will continue to use every tool we have to reach out to Canadians and make the case for this project, from main street to Bay Street.

Also, Madam Speaker, I am extremely proud of our Environment and Parks minister, who has been doing a great job of letting Canadians know that Bill C-69 as it is drafted will have a serious impact on the Canadian economy and specifically on the economy of Alberta.

Madam Speaker, it's been a pleasure to speak to this emergency debate, and I thank you for bringing it forward. It is an important topic, and it's really provided me and others with the opportunity to illustrate the large dichotomy between this side of the House and the opposition when it comes to helping to get this pipeline built. We're listening to industry leaders and scientists. They listen to

Doug Ford and Rebel media. This is a big difference. We're leading on the issue of climate change. They continue to attract candidates that deny science. Our made-in-Alberta plan goes hand in hand with economic growth. They would rather make lawyers rich than come up with their own plan. Our plan is attracting green investment in Alberta. They want to cancel those investments and go back in time.

With all that said, Madam Speaker, thank you so much to the Leader of the Opposition for the opportunity to speak to this emergency motion and to allow me to show Albertans that this side of the House is fighting for pipelines and Albertans and that that side is fighting for themselves.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Fort McMurray-Conklin, followed by Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Ms Goodridge: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm honoured to rise today and speak in favour of this extremely important motion, a motion that is absolutely critical to the success of my riding, Fort McMurray-Conklin. I was born and raised in Fort McMurray, and I've lived there most of my life. My family, in fact, has worked in the oil sands for almost 50 years. My dad tells stories of days when Syncrude sweet light crude used to trade at a higher rate than WTI, and that was only a short 20 years ago.

Now we sell our product, our fantastic product, at a major loss, and this is due in full to the lack of access to markets. The increasing differential, which today is at almost \$50 a barrel, hurts Fort McMurray-Conklin. It hurts Fort McMurray, it hurts Alberta, and it hurts Canada. It hurts our oil and gas sector. Our oil and gas industry contributes billions of dollars into our economy. They employ tens of thousands of hard-working women and men throughout my riding and Alberta as a whole.

So many Albertans right now are out of work, so many people in my riding of Fort McMurray-Conklin are out of work, and so many companies are taking their investment dollars and capital elsewhere. We've seen so many companies pull out of the Fort McMurray oil sands and invest in different countries in the Middle East because they think it's a safer bet for investments right now. It's so important that we get these pipelines built in order to improve investor confidence and get northeastern Alberta back to work.

The unnecessary delay of the Trans Mountain pipeline project is devastating to the people in my riding. As I said earlier today, it's devastating to consider what these delays in getting shovels in the ground on this project say about Canada's ability to get much-needed, job-creating projects built.

5:10

Over the last six months I've had the opportunity to knock on tens of thousands of doors throughout my riding of Fort McMurray-Conklin, and what I heard was overwhelmingly clear, that we need to get pipelines to tidal waters built so that we can once again sell our valuable product at a fair market rate. The overwhelming message I heard at the doors of regular, ordinary Albertans was that we needed to get pipelines so that we could once again sell our product at a fair rate. This was the same message I heard at Tim Hortons, that I heard at Earl's or any other restaurant around town. People were hurting. Companies were hurting.

Having more pipeline access would not only put more money back into our economy, but it would bring tens of thousands of much-needed jobs to Alberta. To be specific, it would add 14,600 construction jobs, well-paying construction jobs, it would add 13,340 pipeline operation jobs, well-paying, skilled jobs, and it would add over 400,000 jobs related to additional investment in oil and gas development as a result as higher net-back producers.

One thing that I have learned growing up in Fort McMurray that is evidently clear is that when Fort McMurray is working, Alberta is working, that when Alberta is working, Canada is working. This isn't something we can take lightly. This is absolutely fundamental. Our economy is trying to recover from one of the largest recessions in Alberta's history. The people of Fort McMurray are trying to recover after one of the costliest natural disasters in Canada's history. This project would have brought hope back to the people in my riding. This project would have been the light at the end of the tunnel. The number of foreclosures in my riding is outstanding. We need to do something to get these people back to work, and this project is precisely what we could put forward.

What we have seen is social licence, that was supposedly going to get us this pipeline. We were told that if we had a carbon tax, we would get a pipeline. We were told that that would give us some social licence and that some social licence would all of a sudden buy us this goodwill to build a pipeline. Unfortunately, we see a carbon tax but no pipeline. What we do see is everyone against the oil sands.

I absolutely believe that we need to do more in this House. We need to do more to urge the federal government to get the Trans Mountain pipeline back on track, and we need to work together to push this forward and do everything within our power.

Thank you so much, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Vermilion-Lloydminster, followed by Sherwood Park.

Dr. Starke: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today and speak to this debate and to perhaps offer a little different perspective on things. I've been listening carefully to what's been said by members from the Official Opposition, from government members, from members from the third party, and I will say that I think I am joining an increasing cohort of Albertans who are growing weary. We are growing weary of politicians who attempt to take every statement, every news story, every new happening and try to torque it to their political advantage. Now, I know there's an election coming in six months. I'm fully aware of that. But, Madam Speaker, on an issue that is as critical as this one is to our overall existence, if you wish, as a nation – because, really, if we can't get major projects built, what does that say about Canada? I think that I'm joined by, like I say, a growing number of Albertans who are truly growing weary that everything that comes up then becomes an exercise in finger pointing and blame. That accomplishes nothing.

Now, I think I can say that like most Albertans or perhaps all Albertans, I was disappointed in the Federal Court of Appeal decision of August 30. I'd like to point out a couple of things about that decision, though. That decision was rendered on August 30, but the Federal Court of Appeal took 10 months to write that decision. They had heard and considered all the arguments, and they wrapped up in October of 2017. Some 10 months later the Federal Court of Appeal, three judges with a combined experience of over 44 years, rendered the decision, a unanimous decision, reversing the National Energy Board's decision.

Now, both the Official Opposition and the government have called on the federal government to appeal this to the Supreme Court of Canada. I'm not a lawyer, but personally I think that's a symbolic but hardly a substantive gesture. Appealing to the Supreme Court of Canada is only going to result in an even longer delay. If it took three judges 10 months to write a decision, the nine judges of the Supreme Court of Canada – well, I'm not convinced that they will arrive at a reversal of those three judges' decision any quicker. In fact, I think we have to ask ourselves the question: what is the expectation that a unanimous decision made by three judges

with a combined 44 years of experience on the bench would be reversed by the nine judges of the Supreme Court of Canada? The only thing that I could see as a positive to appealing is if the Supreme Court of Canada was prepared to pass an injunction that allowed construction to continue based on the NEB's approval.

But, you know, I think that, like most Canadians, what really frustrated me in the days after August 30 was the blaming that went on. We had the federal Liberals blaming the Harper government for an inadequate regulatory regime. We had our government in this province blaming members of the opposition and specifically the Leader of the Opposition for inaction while he was in government in Ottawa. All of this was designed to somehow get a political leg-up on the other guys, and in the meantime Albertans are sitting and watching this and they're saying: do you not realize that we have more at stake than simply who gains a political advantage out of all of this? I think that's the frustration I hear from Albertans when I talk to Albertans. It's: get your heads together, and get this done. Instead, what we hear – and we heard more of it this afternoon; we heard it from just about every speaker speaking – is the opportunity to blame the other side.

You know, I do want to make a few comments that arose from debate. It may come as a surprise to you, Madam Speaker, but when I'm in the Chamber here, I actually listen to the debate, and I like to hear what the members have to say. You know, it's interesting. The Minister of Economic Development and Trade – it's very interesting. Like a lot of the members of government have wanted to do, he has invoked once again the vision of Peter Lougheed. I have to confess that it makes me feel good every time I hear the folks opposite invoke Mr. Lougheed's name. It makes me feel good when I hear the UCP doing the same thing. I mean, I think that we could be pretty much guaranteed that regardless of who wins the next election, they'll be following in the footsteps of Peter Lougheed. What that says about Peter Lougheed is that Peter Lougheed was pragmatic and not dogmatic. Peter Lougheed was a leader that looked at the situation and applied things that weren't necessarily adherent to a specific ideology.

You know, the minister mentioned the petrochemical diversification program. Well, I can look back and look at some of the decisions that were made in the 1970s by Mr. Lougheed's government with regard to natural gas diversification at Joffre. I can look at what has happened in the oil sands development in Fort McMurray and say that if it wasn't for AOSTRA, the Alberta Oil Sands Technology and Research Authority, the oil sands might never have been developed in the way they have been and are now providing a major economic driver in our province.

5:20

So I smile when I hear people talking about Premier Lougheed, and then I have to also smile when I hear in one breath the government say how Peter Lougheed was, you know, such a great leader and had this great vision, and yet in the next breath they say how 44 years of government by the Progressive Conservatives was a disaster. You can't have it both ways, folks. If Peter Lougheed was such a disaster, he was in the chair for the first 15 years of that period of time.

You know, we hear also a lot about the failure of getting pipelines to tidewater, but nobody seems to ask the question: why? Nobody seems to ask the question: why were pipelines not built to tidewater? The answer to that question is actually really related quite simply to markets and to who owns and who controls oil and gas development in North America. In fact, for most of the years that often get talked about where no pipelines to tidewater were built, lots of pipelines were built. Pipeline capacity increased considerably, but those pipelines were being built to refineries

elsewhere in the United States because in those years that was the most profitable place to ship the oil. It was less profitable to ship overseas. It was less profitable to ship to the Pacific Rim. The most profitable place to ship Canadian oil was to U.S. refineries. Therefore, the pipelines were built to U.S. refineries and not to tidewater because those were less profitable investments.

What has changed, of course – and the world has shifted – is we have seen a shift because of the increase in U.S. production because of fracking, which the NDP candidate I ran against in Lloydminster in the last election said that there should be a moratorium on all hydraulic fracturing. Because of fracking, because of multistage drilling techniques and drilling plants, directional drilling, this has opened up an increased and enhanced oil production in the U.S. to a point where over a span of about eight years their domestic oil production doubled. The U.S. went from being a country that was not allowed to export oil because it was keeping it for its own uses to a country that exports a great deal of oil, including a great deal of oil into eastern Canada. The number one source of oil in eastern Canada is not the Saudis, is not Algeria, is not Nigeria, is not Venezuela. It's the United States of America. That's the shift that has occurred, and that has also been the shift that has resulted in the expansion of the differential to now close to \$50. Then, of course, we are recognizing the crisis that that results in.

You know, Madam Chair, I'm somewhat of a student of history, and I look at what happens when people make decisions that don't necessarily result in their own electoral success. I look at, for example, this government vehemently defending the Trans Mountain expansion and only the Trans Mountain expansion to the exclusion of other viable options because they have put so much emphasis on that.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Sherwood Park, followed by Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I always like to thank the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster for his always very interesting speech. I'm glad that he rose this afternoon.

Here we are. It's another Monday and another debate on the Trans Mountain pipeline. Sometimes I really just wish that the opposition was willing to believe facts and the evidence of what the Premier, cabinet, and public servants have been doing with their colleagues in the federal government and the oil and gas industry to make the Trans Mountain pipeline continue to be built. I tend to believe facts.

This pipeline is important not only to residents and businesses in the constituency of Sherwood Park. This pipeline starts about three kilometres from my own office and will be joining some of the other pipelines just a few feet from my office in one of the pipeline corridors. But this pipeline is important to all Albertans and to all Canadians.

I am daily reminded of the need for a new pipeline and the challenges of some of the alternatives currently being used to move the raw bitumen such as rail and trucks. I am also reminded how little was done by the federal Conservative government, in which the Leader of the Opposition was a member, and how little was done by the former provincial governments, of which many of the opposition MLAs were members of or involved with. For years former Alberta governments allowed raw bitumen to flow down to the U.S., and instead of job creations in Alberta, good refinery and upgrading jobs went south to Texas, Louisiana, and other States. This not only meant good, long-lasting jobs have gone south but also the differential in price between the raw and upgraded bitumen

has seen the U.S. oil and gas sector making money rather than us in Alberta.

The Premier was clear on her disappointment with the federal court ruling. I think we also have a picture of her with Prime Minister Trudeau, and I think even with the body language she was very clear how upset she was. The Premier believed that Ottawa should have appealed the ruling to the Supreme Court, and she was disappointed that the Prime Minister decided not to.

Now, the Trans Mountain pipeline is supported by Canadians from every part of the country. Like many MLAs, over the summer I had the opportunity of meeting MLAs at our professional development conferences and all Canadians on our summer holidays. We know that the need for a pipeline is well known and that the work that Trans Mountain and the Alberta government has done to safeguard the pipeline and to respond to environmental concerns is also well understood by Canadians in all the provinces.

Not everyone is as privileged as I am to meet with pipeline companies operating in the Industrial Heartland area and learn about their environment and safety standards, to see their control rooms, learn about the constant monitoring, shutdown procedures, backup systems, alternate electrical sources, and so on. So as an MLA I believe that we all have a role to play in sharing information about the reliability of pipelines and the work the energy industry is doing to make them safer.

I often wonder how the members of the Conservative government now represented in this Assembly were not able to get the approval for the pipeline. How do they think constantly demeaning the Prime Minister in memes, ads, and their remarks is going to encourage the federal government to work with them to meet the needs of Alberta? If they continue to deny the importance of reducing carbon emissions and belief in climate change, how can they convince Canadians that they have the best interests of Albertans and Canadians at heart?

Now, I know that there are a couple of new, younger MLAs in the opposition benches now. My hope is that they do understand the importance of climate change. Maybe if they went through our school system, they might have benefited from learning about it. It might be a surprise to the members opposite who struggled with accepting climate change that most Canadians do believe that climate change is real and that efforts by government to reduce carbon emissions and the efforts by the oil and gas sector to do the same is what Canadians want. On the government side we applaud the work done by pipeline companies to mitigate climate change by constantly innovating and working to find new ways to reduce their climate emissions.

Earlier the Minister of Energy, the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, and the Minister of Environment and Parks referred to the work that the government is doing on diversification. This approach in creating jobs in the Industrial Heartland currently but all throughout Alberta is important because it means that the export of the products through existing pipelines will lead to greater revenues for the companies and the government. There is not one simple solution to employment in the oil and gas sector or to the renewed fortunes of Fort McMurray or the area that I represent or increased revenues for the government. But the multidisciplinary approach that the government is using that includes increasing the capacity of pipelines through innovations that include a way to remove the need for diluent, the building of new pipeline, and investing in companies that are upgrading here in our province is the way that we will be able to return to greater employment in the oil and gas sector in Alberta.

5:30

Maybe it's time for the opposition to support this multipronged approach, rather than voting again and again against the efforts to

diversify our petrochemical industry and against investment in the climate change leadership plan.

Madam Speaker, I always appreciate the opportunity to reaffirm the commitment of the government to getting the most out of our natural resources to provide the services Albertans need. I also always appreciate the opportunity to support the constant work done by the Premier and the ministers, working with the federal government and other provinces.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Grande Prairie-Wapiti, followed by Calgary-Mountain View.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and speak to the emergency debate on the Trans Mountain expansion project. The UCP, of course, is not calling the Trans Mountain pipeline an emergency. We are trying to call the government's attention to the emergency that is upon us, since the pipeline project has stalled yet again and there's no movement in sight.

Madam Speaker, two months ago the Premier said: a reliable timeline to resume construction will be established in a few weeks. Her few weeks passed long ago, and even she does not have confidence in Ottawa's new time frame. In three and a half months she's gone from urging Albertans to pick up tools because there's a pipeline to build to admitting she's skeptical of the federal government's timeline. That hardly instills hope in Albertans or investors.

If any Albertans happened to tune in to the October 23 Resource Stewardship meeting, they might have lost all hope in this government's competence on this most important file, but they would be sure about one point. The lack of a pipeline to take our oil to tidewater has created a crisis for our province, and there is no solution on the horizon.

The UCP members of the Resource Stewardship Committee, after a year of trying to finally convince the NDP majority on the committee to tackle a resource issue, convinced them to invite Alberta Energy to the meeting. Actually, we wanted the Minister of Energy, but the NDP members voted that invitation down. Anyway, the Ministry of Energy was invited to attend the October 23 committee meeting to discuss the stalled TMX project, and we convinced them to invite proponents promoting other projects that would take our oil to tidewater, namely G7G's Alberta to Alaska railway and Eagle Spirit's pipeline.

We wanted these projects on the table because we had no confidence in the government of Alberta for a plan B should TMX remain stalled. We, like all Albertans, want this project to go ahead, but unlike the government, we believe it is incumbent upon us as legislators to look at other options. We need these options not just because the fate of TMX is in the air, but because even if it is built, Alberta will still need more capacity for moving its oil as our production increases in the coming years.

We had hoped we may be pleasantly surprised, when Alberta Energy appeared before the Resource Stewardship Committee, that it had plans beyond plan A; that is, the Trans Mountain pipeline. But there is no plan B or C or D for expanding market access. Sure, there is line 3 and Keystone, but where do they go? Down into the U.S., of course. And what is the problem with that? Well, on October 12 even Albertans who were too busy earning a living and raising their children learned an alarming fact, for that's the date that the price discount when we sell our oil to the U.S. hit a record high of \$52.

Let me go over the math, and then I'll wrap up by discussing the Premier's subsequent Hail Mary announcement about expanding rail capacity. First, the math. Alberta exports 3 billion barrels of

bitumen crude a day. Almost every drop goes to the U.S. via pipeline or rail. That means that, according to Alberta Energy itself, that price differential costs \$210 million in royalties for every dollar of the price differential. So if the discount hits \$50 and stays there, that would work out to \$10.5 billion of lost revenue for Alberta. Does that sound alarming? Of course, it does. Every Albertan may not understand the details that bring us to that figure, and neither should they. But when they sadly learn that the shortage of pipeline capacity can cost Alberta's treasury \$10 billion in one year, they want to know: what has brought us to this plight, and how are we going to get out of it? We in the UCP believe that they have a right to know what government policies over the three years have brought us to this point.

Even the Energy minister acknowledged this problem, and that was long before the discount hit \$50. Let me quote from *Hansard* on December 12, 2016, during the government's congratulatory period on Trans Mountain, which, by the way, has yet to materialize. The minister said:

Once it's completed, there'll be at least \$3 a barrel more to Albertans, and without this additional pipeline access, the companies would be losing between \$8 billion to \$13 billion annually in revenue by 2022. Without additional pipelines we would lose \$1 billion annually in revenue to the government.

As you can see, even the government itself has admitted that this latest escalation of differential poses a serious crisis.

You may hear that the differential will lessen when some refineries are finished with their annual shutdowns. True, but that's only by degree. We now have a structural differential of \$25 to \$30 due to the shortage of pipeline capacity. So that is a revenue shortfall of at least \$5 billion a year.

Now let me address the Premier's announcement about rail capacity. When the record differential was exposed, she announced that she was urging the federal government to purchase railcars and locomotives to move more of our oil. There are all kinds of problems with this announcement, from creating traffic jams on rail lines for our agricultural producers and other important sectors trying to move their products to international markets, to relying on the federal government to purchase needed rolling stock when it hasn't shown any interest in Alberta, to protesters in B.C. blocking our bitumen on our rails and, with it, other Alberta products as well. Still, it can sound good.

In committee I asked Alberta Energy what would happen to this oil when it hit the Vancouver area. Would it go to international markets so we could obtain a higher price on the world market? The answer was already obvious, of course, because larger tankers cannot travel to the Vancouver-Burnaby terminals. Alberta Energy confirmed that that was correct. This oil would be loaded on smaller ships that would head down the coast to U.S. ports. So this government's answer is to get the federal government to buy railcars to take our bitumen and crude to terminals in the Vancouver area and be shipped down to the U.S., where there is a record high price discount. Albertans have been led to believe that this is an answer to shipping our most valuable resource to foreign markets where we can get a much higher price for it. Clearly, there's a misunderstanding.

Let me point out at this point that all along the UCP has urged the government not to rely on one pipeline to tidewater to cure our pipeline capacity shortage. Yes, we need the Trans Mountain pipeline for sure, but even if it is built, we are still going to need more ways of getting the crude and bitumen we will produce in the near future to tidewater, where it can go to truly foreign markets, where it can obtain a higher price. If we simply ship more and more to the U.S., as will happen with Keystone and line 3 and rail, then we are no farther ahead. We should be looking into other options

like G7G or Eagle Spirit or even North West upgrader's phase 2 and 3, value-added like Nauticol. There are lots of options that the government should be pursuing to find different markets for our product rather than just relying on TMX, that we know is up in the air these days, Madam Speaker.

Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, followed by Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to speak to this very important debate, that is appropriately taking up most of our afternoon, that of the Trans Mountain pipeline. I entered politics in 2004 on the climate change issue and the lack of action by the Klein government to take seriously the growing evidence that climate was going to be a defining issue for this generation and future generations. It may seem incongruous, then, that I would be supporting the Trans Mountain pipeline along with my party, but we do.

5:40

It's indeed easy to take positions that oppose each other, and as the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster commented so eloquently, politicizing the issues around this pipeline has not served Albertans, it's not served Canadians, it's not going to serve our future generations, partly because – as I'm watching this develop over, well, the last year at least, it reminds me of the phrase that sunk Rome. Nero was fiddling while Rome burned, and that's what I see, unfortunately, especially as we approach the election in 2019.

Instead of focusing our energies on a bigger vision – and I have to give credit for this bigger vision to Dr. David Layzell at the University of Calgary. The Canadian energy systems research institute was working not only nationally but internationally on trying to broaden the debate beyond carbon and beyond climate to the systems that are changing around us, every one of them interacting with the other to either make it more or less likely that we will enter the 22nd century with life, with meaningful transportation, with stable education systems, with health, and with all of the benefits that we have so far taken somewhat for granted because we have such an overabundance of resources and investments in this province, to the credit of previous federal and provincial governments and the people of Canada who have supported those governments.

It may seem, then, incongruous, but we do need to think bigger. I would like to think that even as we head into an election time, we could see the kind of future that David Layzell is challenging us to think about in the face of disruptive technologies like autonomous vehicles, the growing energy focus around hydrogen and cleaner nuclear, renewable nuclear, and the new opportunities to grow food with non fossil fuel based fertilizers and chemicals, and think about what these messages should be giving us in taking leadership on some of these new technologies and not simply focus on who's right and who's wrong and who's working harder for the energy industry here and who's got the right approach to getting a pipeline built and who needs to be taking the blame for either not historically developing the technologies to move oil to tidewater or moving to new energy forms.

If we had had the vision 20 years ago that we have today around, for example, the new energies, clean, renewable, the extra jobs associated with a clean, renewable tech sector and had a more serious commitment across the globe in looking at the interface of health, education, energy, environment, and the technologies that are now upon us and leadership being taken by other jurisdictions on many of these issues, we would not be up against a wall which

is seriously going to threaten not only the stability of this country but the international community. We are going to see refugees like we have never seen to date if we continue thinking short term about who's right and who's wrong . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Pardon me, hon. member.

Hon. members, could you please take your seats while . . .

Mr. Nixon: We're waiting for your permission, Madam Speaker. We're between you and him.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Nixon: Don't start a new point of order.

Dr. Swann: You're forgiven.

Our current polarizing debate fundamentally fails to address the multitude of interdependent systems, and when we start to think about the broader systems, we take a bigger picture look and think about the longer term future than simply the next election or the next four years of an election cycle.

I would encourage people to look up the University of Calgary, Canadian energy systems research centre to see some of the tremendous and creative thinking and projects that they're involved with; for example, hydrogen freight transportation. They just received some funding to try that out and see what that's going to mean for jobs, new technology, the environment, health in the coming years.

Governments that fail to lead rather than follow and give due credit to the disruptive technologies that are coming upon us will surely fail not only our people but the planet. Who more than Alberta has the minds, the opportunities, the resources, the history to make innovative change better? That's why bitter partisan positions simply don't have a place today in Alberta. If we care about our children and our longer term future, we have to move beyond this and see the bigger picture that we have to be contributing to, that's currently being subverted by efforts to achieve political points.

I don't get a sense of the bigger leadership in the UCP. I don't hear their comments about what they would do differently. I don't see a vision for health, energy systems, new transportation, and new jobs. What I see is "no, no, no" about the current reality of climate, environment, and the new economy that's almost upon us.

An Hon. Member: What's wrong with used cars?

Dr. Swann: What's wrong with used cars? Well, that's what I would like the UCP to talk to us about. There are some alternatives, bigger transportation that carries more people and that uses some of the new options.

We must get to grips with a more thoughtful, multisystem, cross-party, national discussion that recognizes the new energy forms that are upon us, including robotics, AI, and autonomous vehicles, which should be anticipated by the kind of leadership that we could have in this province. We do need sustained fossil fuel production both for national and international well-being right now to help us make this transition. But where's the vision, and where's the willingness to look past partisan interests? We as citizens of this province, as parents, as grandparents, as people who are going to be judged in the next 10 to 20 years on what we did or failed to do in this session of our Legislature, in the coming session, have a profound responsibility to look at climate, environment, energy, jobs in a very fresh way. I've been totally inspired by what the University of Calgary and the CESAR centre, which they call it for short, is trying to push us legislators to think past.

There had been, as my colleague from Vermilion-Lloydminster has said, a government in the '50s who tried to push a trans-Canada pipeline and sacrificed their political future – they happened to be Liberal – because they were unelected even though they had a vision for a trans-Canada pipeline system that would have created a tremendous change in our whole last 70 years. Why was it sunk? It's a good question. It had to do with political debate, political points being scored, lack of public awareness. The media were not telling the story in as effective a way as they could have. There was a failure to think long term, there was a failure of vision, and there was a failure of the legislators at the time to make the case and to stand for something bigger than their own political interests.

I put that out because this is an opportunity for us to say what's really in our hearts and minds about this particular pipeline. We've said a lot of it before, so what I want to remind us of is that as politicians we're here to do two things, it seems to me. One is to ensure that we protect the public interest and that we look at the long term. I don't think we're doing that effectively, so I challenge all sides here to think bigger and think about the very destructive effects of failing to lead economically, socially, and environmentally in this next decade.

The Deputy Speaker: Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my privilege to stand and speak to the emergency motion, and I appreciate that the business of the House was suspended today to do that because this is so important. Unfortunately, we are missing out on some important business right now, talking about the sustainability of our regions and talking about firefighting, but those things need the support of our economy in order to really be able to do the business of Alberta.

5:50

It's also my privilege to stand as the representative for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville and for all the workers there. It's not a community that is made up of skyscrapers and the office buildings that house the leadership of our oil and gas companies. It's actually the home of the people that work in the plants themselves. It is people that build homes, start hockey teams. The companies also build a lot of things in our community as well, things like the Sherritt wing of the Fort Saskatchewan hospital. Those things are all built by the economy. I'm glad that everybody has come together to support those people today.

Every day we lose \$80 million because of the differential by shipping our resources to the United States. Having less money and having our arms tied behind our backs economically makes it very difficult to help those workers get better jobs, go back to work, and be able to build those things in Alberta that we've been working on for the last three and a half years: schools, highways, intersections, bridges. Those things not only build a province but also make it more safe. It's work that had been long overdue, and I'm glad that we've been able to put some people back to work doing that, but not everybody has been able to go back to work.

I know that probably, hopefully, all members of this Assembly don't support losing \$80 million of resource money from our province to the United States. I'm sure that the President there would like to make America great again, but I would like him to not do it with our money.

It's been a long journey for the last three and a half years. Unfortunately, we have seen a federal court ruling that hurts families and hurts Alberta's economy, but it's important to continue to build the things that we're able to do here. It's important to diversify the economy and industry, work that started with the

announcement of the petrochemical diversification program that saw the announcement of a \$3.2 billion polypropylene plant that will be built just outside of Edmonton here, near Fort Saskatchewan.

We're also going to see, hopefully very soon, the final investment decision on a project that Pembina has put forward to do polypropylene. Also, we're going to see the results of phase 2 of that program and see what other projects are being proposed by companies around the world. We know that there is so much possibility in that economy and we know that there are companies that want to do value-add to ethane. We know there are companies that want to build straddle plants, and we know that there are companies that want to do upgrading. In the absence of the leadership that should have been coming prior to our government, we have had to grab the bull by the horns and take on that work as the province with some incredible partners in oil and gas and energy.

When it went to the federal court with everything that had been done so far, why was it turned over to the government of Canada to fix? Why did it fail? We see that it wasn't just a bad process that was created by successive federal governments, but it was also just plain bad listening. You know, that work, to be adults coming to the table and looking at those issues with our indigenous partners across the land where this infrastructure will be built and to actually discuss with them as partners, as self-determining people what it is that will benefit their communities, what benefit it will be to their families, and to actually listen: we have some of that work that happens every day in our communities.

I know that I have met with families both in Strathcona county and Lamont county that are on the front lines of development of our natural resources, and we have processes in which we determine how their families are affected, how their business is affected if they're farming, how their health might be affected, how the value of their very homes can be affected because when these areas are redesignated to heavy industrial use, the actual value of their home disappears.

I find it very troubling when we understand from the federal court that we did not listen enough through those processes and that we did not come to the table as partners to actually talk with indigenous First Nations about what that development looks like and how those impacts occur. It's troubling that we would afford those rights and those privileges to families that are basically my neighbours but then somehow lay a different judgment, a different set of values against our indigenous partners and say that somehow the two are different. The two are not different, and they should be thoroughly brought to the table and listened to because that's the only path forward.

You know, I hope that we can, as Albertans and Canadians, clear that hurdle and move beyond that sort of hyperbolic, disparaging comments that sometimes we hear. So I'm glad that this project is now owned by Canada. It's a project that as a public piece of infrastructure for the time being should deliver a public benefit.

Working with people to make sure that there are local hiring opportunities and local economic development opportunities is incredibly important every inch of that line.

What do we do now? Well, we keep talking to Canadians and Albertans about what we're doing. There's a reason why 7 out of 10 Canadians now, as a result of the work of our Premier, are on side with this project. They understand the value that comes back to their communities and that that this sort of real change is possible. It's important for them to know what we've done in terms of environmental leadership with the climate plan, to know what we're doing when it comes to diversifying our economy, and how it is that we have their backs through this entire process and into the future.

I look forward to further work on this, and I'm glad that we will continue to see the benefits come to all of our constituents, including those in Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Just in the last minute or two that we have left, I just wanted to answer one of the questions that the Member for Calgary-Mountain View was talking about. He wanted to know what we would do differently. That would be promoting Canada. You want to change GHGs, you want to change output: you use the greenest, best things that you have in the world that come from our country. You become the cheerleader. You are the person.

The world needs more Canadian energy. It's as simple as that, and if we actually look at what we're capable of doing, what we have, then, what the industry has done in order to promote better types of energy – there are billions of dollars, \$1.4 billion, in fact, that COSIA has put into making sure that we are as environmentally positive as possible. The fact that there are people in our own country who do not know and understand and promote this throughout the rest of the world, that Canada should be the leader, the example, not the beating post of the world for energy is an absolute shame. We are the market. We are the ones that should be going overseas.

There are all sorts of things that are happening with carbon leakage from countries that have fewer human rights than our own country, yet we import that every day. The United States may be the larger importer, but we are still importing products from countries that do not uphold the rights and the conditions that we have in our own country. You want to make a change? You promote Canadian energy.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Pursuant to Standing Order 4(2) the House stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday morning, October 30, 2018

Day 42

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (UCP)
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (NDP),
Deputy Government Whip
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)

Party standings:

New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 26 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Freedom Conservative: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent: 1

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

10 a.m.

Tuesday, October 30, 2018

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Deputy Speaker: Morning.

Let us reflect. As members of the Alberta Legislature may our primary concern always be the welfare of all of our people, and may we fulfill our office with honesty, integrity, and mutual respect.

Please be seated.

Orders of the Day

Government Motions

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

Morning Sitting Adjournment

28. Ms Ganley moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:
Be it resolved that on Thursday, November 8, 2018, the morning sitting of the Assembly stand adjourned at 10:45 a.m.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

[Government Motion 28 carried]

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

Adjournment of Fall Session

31. Ms Ganley moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:
Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 3(9) the 29th Legislature, Fourth Session, 2018 fall sitting of the Assembly shall stand adjourned upon the Government House Leader advising the Assembly that the business for the sitting is concluded.

[Government Motion 31 carried]

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

Adjournment of Fall Session

32. Ms Ganley moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:
Be it resolved that pursuant to Standing Order 3(9) the 29th Legislature, Fourth Session, 2018 fall sitting of the Assembly be extended beyond the first Thursday in December until such time as or when the Government House Leader advises the Assembly that the business for the sitting is concluded, and at such time the Assembly stands adjourned.

[Government Motion 32 carried]

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

Bill 8

Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2018

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is an honour and a privilege to rise today and move second reading of Bill 8, Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2018.

In the past few years Alberta has seen an increasing number of catastrophic disasters and local emergencies. All members are well aware of the significant impacts to personal lives, property, and community that result from these events. We all saw how Albertans fled Fort McMurray in 2016, when the Beast tore through their community. We saw how Calgary and High River and Canmore and many other southern Alberta communities were inundated by water after unprecedented rain in 2013. And we all saw how Slave Lake was affected after wildfire swept into the town in 2011. While these events were the big ones, there have been many other disasters that have affected Alberta communities over the years as well, from north to south, from east to west. Each event required action from local responders and municipalities to get people out of harm's way and to protect property to the greatest extent possible.

When the fire is put out and the water recedes, we take the opportunity to learn from the incident: how the response was handled, what went well, what could have been done better. For the larger events we hire an independent third party to conduct a formal postincident assessment and make recommendations for improvement. Madam Speaker, many of the proposed amendments you see in Bill 8, the Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2018, would implement recommendations from these reviews.

Most of what the members will see in the bill are behind-the-scenes items, so to speak. The proposed changes to the act focus on technical aspects of how municipalities and first responders handle emergencies. One result will be safer conditions for first responders and Albertans under evacuation orders, another would clarify how dispute resolution is used when property is damaged during a response, and another would establish the authority to create a new regulation that further clarifies emergency management roles and responsibilities with local authorities. Bill 8 will also make several other clarifying and technical amendments. Ultimately, all these proposed amendments will lead to stronger, more efficient responses to future emergencies.

Members will recall that Bill 8, the Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2018, was introduced this past spring. We then hit the pause button to consult with our partners across this great province on the legislation and the new local authority emergency management regulation. Over the summer the Alberta Emergency Management Agency engaged municipalities, first responders, and other stakeholders. We held in-person sessions in 11 communities across the province, which were participated in by 174 stakeholders from 92 municipalities. We talked to them about the bill and also about considerations that will be laid out in further, future regulations. Specifically, we spoke with municipally elected officials, municipal and First Nations administrators, directors of emergency management, and law enforcement.

We focused our engagement on these stakeholders as the proposed changes deal with the way municipalities and first responders handle emergencies. The goal is to find out whether the updated emergency management framework would give them clear direction on what they need to do to prepare for an emergency and then to respond. Although events like this are becoming more common, dealing with large-scale emergencies is not something local authorities have to deal with on a regular basis, so it is important to know if we are hitting the mark on clear roles and responsibilities with stakeholders. The answer is yes. Most importantly, stakeholders agreed that these proposed changes will move the ball forward towards a stronger emergency management framework in our province.

Madam Speaker, we have seen an increasing number of disasters impacting Albertans, and we have a duty to protect residents of this province when disaster strikes. The best way to manage emergency response is to be prepared well before emergencies happen. I'm proud to say that Bill 8 will result in a safer, more prepared, and more resilient Alberta. I'm proud to move this.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Perfect. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to speak about the Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2018. Alberta is a very scenic and beautiful province, and it has been devastated by an increasingly frequent string of natural disasters. We've seen fires ravage the north, the west, and the south and floods overwhelm most of the towns in between. Alberta quite literally has seen hell and high water over the last 10-year period. Albertans have a beautiful capacity to care for one another, selflessly help those who may not be able to do so for themselves, and persevere through any and all trying times. Not all that long ago Calgarians were standing knee deep in floodwater, lending a hand to strangers whose homes were impacted.

As grateful as we are for our supportive communities, that rally in the face of adversity, the highest praise and gratitude goes to our emergency personnel, who work around the clock in these disasters to ensure the safety of the public and that no one gets left behind, including pets. This is why it is so crucial that these personnel are given the power and authority to carry out what they are mandated to do.

Not only must we ensure the safety of each individual who's impacted by a wildfire, flood, and any other circumstances that necessitate a mandatory evacuation order; we also have a duty to ensure that those risking their own lives for the sake of the community are not putting themselves in harm's way. When an individual has been told that he must evacuate and that danger is impending and the individual decides not to heed the orders, the emergency personnel would then have to return under much more dangerous circumstances to try to get everyone to safety, placing a higher risk on their own lives as well as the individual's. A firefighter, for example, when making his initial evacuation order rounds and a ravaging wildfire is incipient, should not risk the loss of his own life to return to a house that he has already visited which is now engulfed in flames, putting additional lives at risk due to another person's stubbornness.

Although it may still be the case that some may choose not to leave their homes when a mandatory evacuation order comes into effect, this bill clarifies the liability in that circumstance. This places more responsibility on Albertans to heed evacuation orders and take seriously all advised precautions as they are now liable when they choose to act recklessly. Furthermore, this bill allows municipalities to become more effective in their local emergency management through their emergency advisory committee and other local authorities.

10:10

However, not all municipalities will be benefited by the Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2018. This legislation can impose a burden on the smallest communities, who do not have the resources, both in terms of money and people, to apply the necessary regulations of this act. In fact, this legislation, together with the Municipal Government Act, may overwhelm certain small towns that cannot take on this additional imposed cost and perhaps

even make them consider dissolution. It can be unfeasible for certain towns to impose the necessary responsibilities described in this bill, and the additional cost can render the municipality to be in an unstable position.

However, municipalities are expected to be better prepared for disastrous situations, which will ultimately serve the community and ensure the safety of their residents. This amendment allows the minister to decide on a minimal level of training requirements and ensures that their elected officials and municipal staff have a basic level of understanding of emergency protocols. Additionally, it is not enough that officials and staff are knowledgeable about the procedures of an emergency situation; they must also be aware of their roles and responsibilities before and after an emergency. Having a standardized training requirement across municipalities will effectively end the existing patchwork of training across Alberta and will ensure that there are no gaps in knowledge or practice when faced with a relentless natural disaster.

Instead of the patchwork, it is beneficial to have a framework for what each municipality's emergency plan must include and that they continue to update those plans regularly. When the time comes to put into immediate action the emergency plan, that is not the time to be realizing a flaw that has been overlooked. There is no worse time to realize that your municipal staff is unprepared or underprepared than when a disaster strikes. That is why standardizing across the board not only the plan but also the mock disaster exercises and requirements and frequencies is vital to ensuring the preparedness of the individuals whose lives will depend upon it.

Although this will increase the effectiveness of the emergency preparedness plans across the majority of the province, there is still the challenge of the smallest municipalities implementing this. We have not heard these concerns addressed, and this has caused some uncertainty. The requirement for municipalities to conduct annual or biannual emergency management exercises, although it is an absolute necessity for big cities and towns, can prove ultimately quite difficult for small municipalities, which may struggle to put together the resources. It seems to me that the purpose of this bill has been to improve regional collaboration between towns and ensure that appropriate and adequate requirements are clearly communicated throughout the region, though that still leaves me with the question of how small municipalities will be able to comply with this bill.

Finally, I'm happy to hear that the dispute resolution mechanism will not be used to decide whether or not an individual is eligible for funding following a disaster but, rather, the amount. This will be when property is damaged by the municipality or province in their response to the disaster rather than the disaster itself.

To conclude, I'm still uncertain about how this bill will affect the smallest municipalities, especially in the northern and rural areas of the province, and whether this will lead some of them to consider dissolution. However, I am glad to see that the standardization of safety plans and requirements for preparedness will be ensured as well as regional collaboration and putting safety of firefighters as a priority. That is why I'll be supporting the Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2018, today.

Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'd like to rise today in support of Bill 8, the Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2018. Over the past few years, as has been discussed before, Alberta has seen an increasing number of

catastrophic disasters and local emergencies. I know that in the constituency of Banff-Cochrane this is something that's all too familiar to folks because we live in, you know, a large rural area that's surrounded by trees and rivers and we are at risk of lots of different kinds of natural disasters in terms of forest fires, flooding, drought, and that kind of thing. We have a lot of urban-wildlife interfaces where people come into conflict sometimes with natural disasters just based on the proximity of their communities to these wild spaces.

You know, over the last summer, in the Bow Valley and even in Calgary there was a lot of smoke from the wildfires in British Columbia. This was something that kept natural disasters at the front of mind for constituents, and I know that a lot of people reached out to my office to ask: "Are we prepared? If the smoke comes closer and the fire approaches our community, are we prepared to act and be ready if this disaster comes closer to us?" The answer is yes. We've got very dedicated first responders and emergency management professionals that were ready to act at a moment's notice. But we also know from some of the reviews that we've done, based on past disasters, that there are some improvements that we can make. We can always learn and do better, and this bill aims to do exactly that.

I'm sure that my fellow members are really well aware of the significant impact to personal lives, to property, businesses, and communities that can result from these events, and we also know the way that it can impact our constituents. I know that after the floods of 2013 it's very common for people, especially in the spring – any time it starts raining, people get nervous because they're not quite sure if we're going to see the same kind of conditions that we did during the 2013 floods. That uncertainty is what can lead to mental health conditions. You know, it can sometimes make people leave communities entirely because of how traumatic it has been to go through those. So we owe it to those people to make sure that we're doing everything we can to prepare for emergencies and respond appropriately when they do happen.

For example, you know, we saw how in Calgary, High River, Canmore, Bragg Creek, Redwood Meadows, and many other southern Alberta communities we were inundated by water after the rain in 2013, and quite honestly, Madam Speaker, that event is something that inspired me to put my name forward to run to represent the constituents of Banff-Cochrane. I was incredibly inspired by how constituents just rolled up their sleeves and helped complete strangers clean out their basement. It showed how resilient our communities are and how dedicated Albertans are to helping one another. Even in the most extreme circumstances, when a neighbour may have lost their home, they're willing to go and help their neighbour clean out their basement and help put their lives back together when they're going through extremely stressful times. That really inspired me to want to step up and help ensure that we have the resources that we need, that the government is there to support those communities when they're going through these difficult circumstances.

You know, we've seen that all across the province, in places like Slave Lake after the wildfire there in 2011 and the same with Fort McMurray just recently. These events are the big ones that attract national and world-wide attention, but there are many other disasters that have affected communities over the years all across and in all four corners of the province. Each of those events always requires actions from local responders and the municipalities that are involved to make sure people get out of harm's way and to protect property to the greatest extent possible.

When the fire is put out and the water recedes, we always take the opportunity to learn from that incident: how the response was handled, what worked well, and what we can improve on. For the

larger events the government always hires an independent third party to conduct a formal postincident assessment and make those recommendations for improvement. Madam Speaker, the proposed amendments that you see in Bill 8, the Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2018, would implement the recommendations from those reviews.

Most of what members will see in the bill are sort of – I suppose you could categorize them as behind-the-scenes items. Sometimes the really flashy things get put out in public. You know, we make sure we have fire trucks and boots on the ground, and those are absolutely important. But how we co-ordinate those things behind the scenes and the rules that pertain to emergency management response are also extremely important. The proposed changes to the act focus on these more technical aspects about how municipalities and first responders handle those emergencies.

That said, this bill would achieve many important updates. One result of the bill being passed would be safer conditions for first responders and Albertans under evacuation orders. I'd just like to speak a little bit about how relevant this is to my constituency. For example, places like Banff, Canmore, and Lake Louise are largely populated by tourists, and they see about 4 million tourists and visitors a year. When you're dealing with these kinds of volumes of people, when emergencies happen, it's critical to have a response plan, to be well co-ordinated. You know, tourists come from other jurisdictions, and they might not always know the best evacuation routes or how to get away from danger.

10:20

You know, one prime example is that in the summer season there are so many tourists that flock to places like Moraine Lake, for example. The parking lot is full by about 8 o'clock in the morning, and they constantly run buses from the overflow parking lot. You've got this wild area where you've got people scattered throughout a large geographic region, and you've also got a bit of a bottleneck. In terms of if people had to evacuate, you've got thousands of people who are trying to get through a single road. Making sure that our first responders have the tools that they need to undertake an evacuation under these challenging conditions is absolutely essential.

You know, when I think of this, I think of visiting the Lake Louise fire department just recently. This little fire department is really a scrappy fire department that punches way above their weight. It's primarily composed of volunteer members, and these members every Tuesday, I believe it is, go and train. They count inventory in the fire department to make sure that they know where all the equipment is and that they're prepared to respond to these emergencies. They do this out of a really small fire department, that's based in one of the Parks Canada buildings there, and despite not having the ideal circumstances, where they'd like to be situated, it's remarkable to see what this department has achieved and the dedication of their members.

These members – and not just these members, for instance; it's all volunteer firefighters, for that matter – spend their own money for increased training to make sure that they have the skills that they require to respond to these kinds of things. I know the members in the Lake Louise fire department contributed their own money to buy a Lifepak defibrillator machine, that can help save lives. It's been successful. To see these people spend their own time and their own money on these things – for us to be able to help them do their job by making sure that this kind of management co-ordination is taking place behind the scenes is extremely valuable.

Another part of the bill would help clarify how dispute resolution is being used if there's property damage that occurs during a response. One of the other aspects of the bill would establish the

authority to create a new regulation that further clarifies emergency management roles and responsibilities of local authorities. There are also some clarifying and technical amendments. Ultimately, all of these proposed amendments are going to lead to stronger and more efficient responses to future emergencies.

You know, we know that this bill was introduced by the Minister of Municipal Affairs back in the spring in first reading, and that allowed us to go out over the summer and speak to affected municipalities and stakeholders about the bill to make sure that the proposed changes have gone towards meeting the needs that they've expressed.

I just wanted to talk a little bit more about the kind of preparedness that does happen behind the scenes that I've been privileged to witness. Just a few weeks ago in Canmore I was invited to participate and watch a sprinkler training exercise. Earlier on I mentioned how a lot of communities in my constituency have a wildland-urban interface, so the forest is butting up right against residential neighbourhoods. In Canmore this is especially true in terms of – you know, you've got these beautiful neighbourhoods nestled amongst the trees. What makes it so beautiful also makes it a little bit risky and dangerous. What the Canmore fire department did in combination with the provincial government and emergency response planners was go out and set up sprinklers to kind of fend off fires from encroaching on that wildland-urban interface.

I was up in the Eagle Crescent area of Canmore. For those not familiar with Canmore, the terrain there is quite steep. I was watching these firefighters carry, you know, gigantic fire hoses, I think six at a time, up these steep slopes to set up sprinklers to test how well they would work and where they ought to be situated. I was blown away by the fitness and dedication of these members. Like, just walking up the hill myself, not carrying anything but my jacket, I was out of breath, and then I saw these firefighters basically running up the hill carrying all these hoses. For them to be able to spend that much time to be in shape to do things like that is pretty remarkable.

You know, the other thing that they wanted to test with the steep terrain around there is whether the fire hydrants and the pumps can push enough water uphill in order to get enough water to make the sprinklers work. I believe the sprinklers are about every 50 feet or 100 feet apart, and there's a gigantic line of sprinklers on the water supply. So to make sure that the water can pump uphill and have the pressure that's required was part of this exercise. They looked at solutions like putting in different types of valves so that once the line is primed and you've got the water up the hill, if you need to disconnect for some reason, you don't lose the pressure in the line. You can disconnect, do what you need to do, reconnect, and the hose is still primed. These are all the kinds of things that run through the minds of first responders.

I'm always so impressed by the dedication and professionalism of these heroes, who work all the time to keep our communities safe. I'm extremely proud that we're doing what we can to make sure that first responders and emergency professionals are well equipped, have the kind of equipment that they need in the first place but also the technical details in the background that make their job safer. When we can evacuate people and make sure that people aren't in harm's way, those first responders don't need to focus on evacuating people; they can focus on addressing the emergency situation as it requires.

This bill accomplishes those things. It is based on lessons that we've learned from other emergencies. I'm very proud to be supporting this bill and really thankful to the Minister of Municipal Affairs for the work he's done and his department has done on this. I'd encourage all members to support the bill.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to Bill 8, the Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2018. I think this is an important piece of legislation. Certainly, all legislation needs to be reviewed on a somewhat regular basis, so the fact that we're doing this, I think, is helpful. No one plans emergencies, but everyone should plan for a response to emergencies when they occur. This is an attempt to be working towards that to make sure both our plans and our regulations will be effective. All too often, like how great thunderclouds arise in clear, blue Alberta summer skies, sometimes emergencies just arise out of the blue, so to speak. We certainly need to be prepared, and we need to plan for them.

My own experience in emergency management includes about eight years of volunteering with B.C. Search and Rescue and also several years as the communications official for a municipal emergency management team here in Alberta. In B.C. under Search and Rescue I served in the northwest, one of the most active regions. We had many call-outs a year. I've had the opportunity to work not only in the control centre for training under RCMP authority but also to take CASARA, Civil Air Search and Rescue Association, training and spend many hours with SAR techs in a Buffalo searching for downed aircraft. I've done mountain rescue and cliff rescue training, helicopter hover and exit training, and diver support training. I've had a lot of opportunities to participate in this. Of course, in Alberta I had the opportunity to do the provincial training for communications for local emergency management and a number of tabletop exercises, leading and participating in those as well. I do think preparedness is extremely important. Preparedness is something that needs to be rehearsed on a regular basis.

I support this bill and its intent. Hopefully, it will help us in Alberta to respond in more effective and efficient ways when the unexpected disasters do come upon us. As has already been said by the speakers before me, Alberta has had an increasing number of large-scale natural disasters and emergencies that we do need to truly be prepared for. I'm not going to re-enumerate them, because they already have been, but just say that in each one of those cases, when things have happened, there's always been a follow-up report, and there have always been a large number of comments about how things could have been done better, how things should have been planned for or anticipated in a better way. It's my hope and my desire that some of those comments and some of those recommendations are what we are seeing come forward in this bill.

10:30

I think the government did the right thing in taking the summer to consult. Hopefully, we will hear the details of some of that consultation as we move through the stages of this bill because I think that many of the people that are directly involved on the ground do gain insights and experiences that should be extremely helpful to us. Hopefully, we will see some amendments and some feedback that will address some of those concerns that have been raised repeatedly. I do say "repeatedly" on purpose because sometimes the same recommendations have come up after various events, and we do need to enact some of those things.

Yes, the consultation period is good, and here we are, and I think we should proceed. Even though many of the municipalities and regions currently have some practices and policies that fall in line with some of these new requirements – and my credit goes to them for their work in that – the reality is that we need a consistent

approach across municipalities, and we need to make sure that everyone understands what their roles and purposes are and how they can attain the highest level of performance when it's most needed.

I think we're endeavouring to do the right thing here. I do have some concerns about how the smaller municipalities will be both considered and enabled because that is a challenge for some of them, to be able to have the resources, both in terms of human capital and also in terms of financial resources, to be able to actually respond to some of these things.

Let me speak to some of the details of the bill. Under the authority to establish the local authority emergency management regulation, there are some changes here, that I think will be helpful, to add some additional clarity, some guidance to municipalities as they're trying to figure out what they should and shouldn't be doing in terms of both their bylaws and their staff training and different things like that. Currently there are some high-level guidelines, some high-level requirements and responsibilities, but a little bit more detail there may be helpful as long as we understand that every community is different. Quite frankly, in my experience, every emergency is different.

While the intent to create uniform guidelines is helpful, we need to be careful that we don't go just a little bit too far and create a straitjacket that limits the ability for local responders to address the uniqueness and the complexity of whatever comes at them because there's no way we can ever anticipate everything that could arise in an emergency. But, hopefully, it will improve the authorities' response time, their ability to declare a local state of emergency, their ability to be prepared for emergency before these things start to play out. That's the goal.

Under evacuation orders – next I'd like to speak to that – currently the Emergency Management Act allows the minister or a local authority to order evacuations during a state of emergency or a state of local emergency. This will be amended somewhat to clarify that people are required to comply with an evacuation order when it is made and that it's illegal to fail to leave an area that is under an evacuation order. There are lots of reason, I suppose, why this needs enforcement although I'm not sure what the actual consequences might be there for people who do still choose to remain. There is a challenge sometimes with people who do remain, not in every case, but sometimes they put themselves or, more importantly, maybe even their families in grave danger. Sometimes they cause the diversion of scarce resources and attention away from the actual emergency response. So there is a danger for people sometimes staying.

On the other hand, I would warn that from the municipality, the local authority's point of view, I think there needs to be some clarification and guidance as to when and when not to create a state of emergency officially, because sometimes, quite frankly – I've been close enough to some of this to hear the conversations – the local authorities create it simply as a precautionary measure because they're afraid of a potential liability or they're concerned about potential public response – “Why didn't you call a state of emergency?” – when, in fact, maybe it was a bit premature. Sometimes to do it, I will say, as a precautionary measure or out of fear of liability is not maybe necessarily the right thing for the people of a region.

And then, of course, the issue that has been raised recently as well: if that's the case, what happens with the care of animals? People's pets, people's livestock: are they to be abandoned if we enforce this in strict ways? Are we then as a province taking on the responsibility of caring for those animals as well, which would add a great deal of responsibility to emergency responders, that currently I don't think has been thought through very carefully?

I think we need to be careful about when these things are put into place, and I think that municipal, local officials could use some help and some guidance about when and when not to actually create a state of emergency. Currently the evacuation orders can be declared and a resident who refuses to comply with the mandatory evacuation will not actually be forcibly removed from their property simply because a mandatory evacuation order is in effect. I think that's one of the things that might be worth a little bit of conversation during Committee of the Whole.

Under the dispute resolution piece, changes will clarify which types of dispute may be taken to arbitration. I think this is helpful. Disputes are always difficult, and clarifying that up front as much as possible is really helpful. Clarifying that it's really about the amount of compensation, not whether or not one is eligible for compensation, might help a lot of people understand what they can ask for and what they can't or whether they're even able to do that. It is about not so much the damage caused by the actual natural event but damage that may be caused or necessarily caused by responders trying to deal with the issue.

For instance, a specific detail in Fort McMurray. I know at one point the fire chief showed us that there were a couple of houses that were in a critical location in order for them to try and create a firebreak and prevent the spread of the fire to the rest of the city, and they actually just bulldozed those houses under the emergency management authority. They had full authority to do it. I'm not questioning that they should have done it. But then the question arises: who pays for that, and what is the amount that gets paid when somebody's house, under that act, gets bulldozed? These kinds of difficult situations definitely arise, and some clarity in compensation and these kinds of things certainly would be helpful.

Some other positive changes to the act regarding the emergency advisory committees: those changes, I think, will also provide more detail and direction and, as well, provide consistency across municipalities. I think this is important. Currently the Emergency Management Act requires a municipality to have an emergency advisory committee consisting of elected officials. The changes will be that the regulation may provide additional guidance around creating these advisory committees, specifically regarding roles and responsibilities of the committee. I believe this will help streamline the process and involve more collaboration on the part of all the communities. It will also increase consistency and effectiveness of local authority emergency advisory committees.

Other changes to the management agencies and regulations will help clarify the requirements for the agencies that will ensure that municipalities are able to lead in an emergency response and implement the direction of the emergency advisory committee. I think these things will be helpful.

Another change regarding regional collaboration will help ensure appropriate, adequate, and clearly understood mechanisms for regional collaboration. That is extremely important. I know that in my particular area the cities, the villages, the towns, the counties work very well together, and oftentimes a lot of that has to do with just personality and willingness to work together and a sharing attitude. But the truth is that we sometimes need some guidance for that, and outlining sort of where and when and how to do these things, I think, will do nothing but improve the ability of, particularly, smaller areas, who need assistance, who depend on partnership agreements for equipment and for staffing, in some cases for emergency responders. I think this will be extremely helpful for smaller communities, and it needs to happen.

10:40

The regional services commission will be part of that, a joint committee representing two or more local authorities. Summer

villages may delegate their coverage to local authorities. These kinds of agreements, I think, are important, especially when an emergency is about to unfold and people are looking across jurisdictions at each other and nobody is quite sure whether they want to or not. It's too late to figure out those kinds of commitments when fires are burning, when floods are happening, tornadoes are blowing. We need to be ready to go.

These new proposed regulations will allow municipalities to enter into their regional collaboration agreements and stipulate which particular emerging managing powers and duties are being delegated to who or being shared with who or being provided by who. I think the requirement to establish sort of these transborder agreements within the province will be very helpful.

I think it's good to see that also there will be additional training, mandatory training. I've done hours and hours and hours of various kinds of training for emergency management, and you can never train enough. Anybody who's in a fire hall trains constantly, so I think that at the municipal level as well, training is extremely important. Even just taking time to rehearse the potential emergencies we might face, what would be our potential response, doing tabletop exercises, doing larger exercises: these things are extremely important.

I just trust that the new act, the amended act, is not going to just place a burden upon municipalities of expectation but also help them to be resourced and able to do that. They need expertise, on the one hand; they need resources, on the other hand. These things need to be backed up with the required support to actually make them have a real life.

Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my great privilege to rise in the House this morning to speak in favour of Bill 8, the Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2018. I'd like just one moment to congratulate our Minister of Municipal Affairs for making sure that there was time in the legislative session to take care of this very important business. You know, it's great to be part of a government that is always responsive and is always taking its obligations to the people of Alberta seriously, and I think this is another instance of that.

I have to say that I'm personally grateful to see, you know, these types of improvements being contemplated. Like the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, I also represent northeastern Alberta, and it seems that we've had more than our fair share of disasters in the last several years. Personally, as an insurance agent I got a very close, ringside seat to the Slave Lake fire in 2011 and got to see some of the good things emergency responders of the province did in terms of disaster relief and recovery but then also some of the issues that arose as well.

My very first act as a sworn-in MLA actually was the June 2 – I think we got sworn in in 2015. There was a big fire up in the Wabasca area that very evening, and residents of the Big Stone area were evacuated to Calling Lake, which is in my riding, and then as well to Athabasca. It was definitely a quick education in, you know, what the roles of elected officials are in these types of situations. Then, of course, I live in Boyle, and Boyle is midpoint between Fort McMurray and Edmonton and was one of the major destinations during the Fort McMurray fire.

Wandering River is also in my riding. During that disaster, which, of course, in our neck of the woods and, I think, for the

whole province was unprecedented in its scope and the number of people impacted, I think people really went above and beyond. I mean, that was not only the emergency responders, of course, but also local residents and citizens. At the same time there were a lot of things that went really well.

You know, there were other things that maybe gave cause for concern. For example, in terms of the number of people who got stranded on highway 63, part of the issue was that there was no fuel replacement, so basically people were running out of gas along the way. In fact, in Boyle we had to wake up the bulk fuel drivers from the local co-op to get fuel shipped up there, and I know they did the same thing in Plamondon. A lot of that response went that way. I know the Wandering River fire department emptied out all of their deep freezes, and I think they gave out all the food and water. I don't think there was a scrap of anything left in Wandering River by the next morning. Now, this is all great, but these were ad hoc responses, but I think that's entirely understandable considering just the scope and breadth of what happened there.

I think we have to come to a realization that with the change in climate and with more energy being put into the climate system with, you know, springs coming earlier, hotter, and drier, we have to expect the unexpected now. We can't even really call it unexpected, whether it's more frequent and stronger floods, whether it's more frequent – and we'll expect the tornadoes that the member talked about, and especially in our neck of the woods forest fires that burn hotter and burn faster and go further than what we've seen before. We really need to pick up our game, and that's not because we haven't had an excellent program in place, but as the need and demand goes up, so needs our response.

I think this is the right path, and I know that this is something that, you know, I'd say that our predecessors were good about doing as well. I mean, for example, after the Slave Lake fire they had the Flat Top Complex regulations and consultation that went out, and that kind of assisted. I think if they hadn't gone through that process, Fort McMurray would have been even more of a challenge.

But we also have a lot to learn from recent experience. You know, how do you learn from experience? Well, you don't just learn – and this comes from my background as an adult educator. Nobody learns just from experience. You can do the same stupid thing over and over and over again if you don't stop to reflect on that experience, so you learn from reflection on experience. That's why these types of processes of taking stock and going over what went well, what didn't go well, how we can do things better are so important. It's also really important to broaden the scope of who you talk to because a problem that all of us as human beings face is that we don't know what we don't know. Unless we talk to enough people, we just simply won't know what we're missing, so broad-based consultation is always better than just sticking to just the narrow, top experts.

You know, I'm very glad to see that the process that this bill comes out of went through that and actually went through the iterative process fairly similar to the process we used when amending the Municipal Government Act. Once again, that's a complex, very important piece of legislation, a lot of players, a lot of different wisdoms and experiences to draw on, and Municipal Affairs did a great job in that, in making sure that people that had things to offer had that opportunity. I'm glad to see that the same thing happened here in Bill 8. Having it introduced into the spring session but then available for consultation over the summer, I think, was really helpful in making it more of a robust piece of legislation. I think that's it so far.

I just want to also reiterate some of the other comments. I don't think you can overstate just how important it is to be organized and clear, where people are specific about their roles and their

obligations and where the resources are for when disaster strikes because, like I said, having been ringside for that type of situation, if you don't know what you're doing, you know – it's why they talk about the fog of war. I think there's a sort of fog of disaster that might be quite similar. You don't know who's doing what, where they're doing it, where you can find what you need, and meanwhile you've got demands, and people are yelling for this and yelling for that.

10:50

What happens is you can have people working at crosspurposes. You can have unanticipated gaps in coverage and in services. And that doesn't reflect on how well meaning, how brave, how giving the individuals involved are; it's simply a factor of the situation that they find themselves in. You're never going to be able to eliminate all the unpredictabilities in a situation, but the more you can do on that score, the better. The more you can have clarity, the more you can avoid role conflict, the more you can avoid jurisdictional battles or jurisdictional sloughing off, the better you're going to be. I think that the parts I'd like to highlight for the emergency management regulation speak directly to that because, of course, in Alberta municipalities do have a lot of responsibilities in the event on an emergency under the present act. Setting out what the responsibilities are in regulation, I think, will really help clarify and provide greater direction for them on just what is required for them to plan for disasters and to properly and appropriately prepare for the response if a disaster strikes.

I think, like I said, talking about how we're going into this new world of bigger and more frequent disasters, it's not necessarily going to be the case that there's just going to be one disaster at a time. I think this is something that we came pretty close to experiencing ourselves in the summer of 2016, when the whole province was bone dry and we had almost all our resources focused up in Wood Buffalo. I think it was a matter of luck that we did not have other complications that could have taxed us beyond the point where you call for help in the centre and there are no resources available in the centre to send.

So having it where municipalities aren't just dependent on others, where, of course, you can send help – but then at least they do have some built-in resilience and some understanding of handling things themselves. I think that's important for those who don't have it. I mean, I'm not going to paint everybody with the brush. Some municipalities have excellent emergency management plans in place, other ones maybe could use a bit of updating, and other ones maybe could use a bit of prodding. So I think that's good.

Other parts that I think are important beyond making sure these plans are updated: ensuring that elected officials and municipal employees understand their emergency management roles and responsibilities and are indeed trained for these roles. I can see that as being a very insightful recommendation to make and for a host of reasons, but one in particular – and this comes from my own direct experience – is that you'll find your elected officials facing a lot of public pressure to do certain things. They might be asking you to open up another emergency relief centre. They might be asking you to facilitate sending supplies here. They might be telling you to second-guess the actions of your trained emergency first responders. There's all types of temptations, especially when you're under stress yourself and you're not quite sure of what your own role is, to potentially get in the way and act in ways that maybe you shouldn't. Totally understandable and totally from the best of intentions, but if you're not clear on what your roles and responsibilities are, it can be easy under stress to overstep those. So I think that's another thing I'd like to highlight for that bill, to make

all of our hard-working municipal officials' and elected officials' jobs a bit easier that way.

The Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills brought up concerns over the resources available to smaller municipalities in order to meet these new obligations, and I think that's a valid question to raise. I know that when you talk to them, any time there are big changes in government regulation, the first question that they ask is: how are we going to find the time and the money and the resources to implement this? Now, there are free resources that are already available for the small municipalities if they so choose to be able to access. I would encourage other members, if their municipalities have those concerns, to let them know about it. The Emergency Management Agency offers several free programs and tools to help these communities fulfill their responsibilities.

These include a field officer program, which supports municipal emergency management through field officer visits, feedback on emergency management materials upon request, and delivery of training – this is all free of charge, by the way – and a suite of free online and in-class emergency management training courses. They have a good place to start. They offer the community emergency management program, an online application that provides templates and guidance to develop emergency management plans and programs. Now, is there more that perhaps needs to be done? Well, I guess as this rolls out, you know, we'll be getting that feedback, but definitely there are substantial resources already in place, and that is a credit to the management agency that they're there.

I guess that's all I have to say about this bill at the present time. I look forward to further debate and Committee of the Whole.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, the hon. minister to close debate in second reading.

Mr. S. Anderson: I'm good.

[Motion carried; Bill 8 read a second time]

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair in the chair]

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

Bill 8 Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2018

The Chair: Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Stier: Good morning and thank you, Madam Chair. Good morning, everybody. As the critic for Municipal Affairs I've taken it upon myself to look into some of the information that we've received this morning. Conversations that have been held this morning included a brief conversation with the minister, which I appreciate very much. I don't have a lot to go into here this morning, but when we last visited this bill in the spring, there were a lot of different things that were basically unknown to us, and there were a lot of conversations that were held over the past several years during my time in the House where we had a lot of incidents in the province, whether it's been the Slave Lake fire, the incidents in Calgary and High River with flooding, the Fort McMurray fire, of course, as has been mentioned this morning, I imagine, and some other things.

There were concerns from the public and most recently, by the way, in my own area in Pincher Creek with the Kenow fire on how these responses were handled by both local EMS personnel, fire response people, et cetera, et cetera, and I would like to stop at that point and just say that I'm so happy to see some of the great, great efforts by all of these different services in every municipality and in every agency. They've just been phenomenal given the circumstances that they've had.

At the same time, though, having said that, within the different reports that have been produced since some of those events took place, a lot of situations were reported upon where improvement could have been sought. From my memory, because I haven't read them all over this morning in much detail, the Flat Top Complex report after Slave Lake and some others talked about Alberta Emergency Management and the agencies involved and how they worked together and how municipalities worked together and how the various fire response teams were able to, especially in one particular note, communicate effectively and have a good chain of command and have a good authority in terms of who was doing what where, et cetera, et cetera.

11:00

The government had originally set out in the annual report and the business plan in 2018 a number of objectives, and I believe that the response to these objectives was Bill 8. I would like to say that I'm glad to see a lot of the work that has been done, but because of the way we work in this government between opposition and the government, a lot of times we on the other side here are not informed of day-to-day events and/or consultations or meetings or what's been going on, especially throughout the summer here with the consultation that was done on Bill 8.

I just wanted to take a moment to quickly outline some of the strategies that were in the business plan and then move on to some questions if I could, Madam Chair. The first one was:

- 3.1 Strengthen the provincial emergency management system by modernizing the legislative framework.
- 3.2 Improve Alberta's emergency preparedness and response capability [and that involved also the] Provincial Operations Centre.
- 3.3 Improve community and individual resilience by promoting disaster preparedness . . .
- 3.4 Improve the province's capacity to assist communities' and Albertans' recovery from disasters . . .
- 3.5 Improve resilience within the Government of Alberta by strengthening the Government of Alberta's business continuity program.

And lastly,

- 3.6 Ensure provincial 911 and emergency public alerting programs are in place and are able to meet future technological challenges.

That was more or less what I assumed was something that initiated Bill 8 as well as the other events that have taken place. I'm happy to say that the government provided us with a little briefing document on the different things that they were going to endeavour to do, and I'm quite supportive of those as well.

However, since that time there was a lot of consultation over the summer, then, to summarize. We don't know what information was gleaned from that. We don't know what concerns, other than what we're hearing from municipal organizations, were raised. So I wonder if the minister could address that. I'll give him the opportunity to provide the House with information with regard to these consultations.

Secondly, were there changes from the initial thought processes that Bill 8 created to redirect some of those initial thoughts that were in Bill 8 to the current form that it is now? Lastly, the document

received during that briefing included a lot of talk about upcoming regulations. As always, we do not participate in regulations here in the House, so it would be nice if they would shed some light on the regulations that are anticipated as well in that regard.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Further questions, comments? The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Sure. Left it pretty open there, so I'll try to address some of the things that the hon. member was talking about. As he mentioned, we did do a lot of consultation from the spring through the summer up until now with particular municipal organizations, emergency management professionals, First Nations, first responders, and law enforcement in particular out there to understand what we learned from our postincident assessment reports. He is quite right that the postincident assessment reports, which we do from every disaster, informed us on what was going on here and what we needed to do as well as the consultation with these other agencies and organizations.

One of the things that we had talked about was, for example, the incident command system, so formalizing and codifying some of the information that we have out there, the jargon, the way that we speak to each other, our communications systems. With the fires down south at Kenow, what we saw, you know, was that the people on the ground worked really well together, again, with what they had and what they knew, but we knew that we needed to do better. You saw last year when there were fires down there that they worked fantastically together, and it had much to do with the firefighters down there, the first responders, the municipalities, our field officers. Everybody was on the same page. That's what a lot of Bill 8 is doing. It's trying to codify and formalize those communications and understand them.

The incident command system is one of those things where it's not technology or hardware; it's about, like I said, clear processes and reporting lines and the same type of common language and structure. One of the things, that my director of emergency management says, is the speed of trust so that you know that the person beside you has been trained and knows exactly what they need to do. So you have no worries, and you can do things faster and quicker and more efficiently because we're all there in emergency management to help people on the ground. So that's part of what's going on there.

We also have First Nations field officers out there that we've been working with as well to help when it crosses over into First Nations areas.

What else can I talk about? Regional collaboration. There was talk about some of the smaller municipalities' capacity. We went out over the last year to municipalities all across the province and said: "Okay. What is your capacity? Let us know what your issues are, your concerns, what your resources are." We put money into mitigation, prevention across the province to aid these places.

Now, when Bill 8 gets instituted, or if it does, if the House so chooses, what that will do is make sure that every municipality has an emergency plan in place. If it is a smaller municipality that doesn't have a huge capacity, Municipal Affairs and AEMA in particular have a lot of training courses, a lot of capability to help those municipalities. If there are two small municipalities, for example, that have volunteer firefighters, which is normally what they do, we encourage them to work together because we all know that disasters aren't going to look at the boundaries; they're just going to go right across. So we need them to work together, and we'll be there to help support them as well, like I say, with the capacity and the resources that we have.

What else? I'm trying to think of what you were asking there, Member.

Mr. Stier: Regulations.

Mr. S. Anderson: Regulations. They're in the bill already. Like, we've done all the work on the consultation on the regulations. That's why we took the time from the spring to now. If there's any regulation in particular that you want me to speak about, I'll get that for you. I'll get my staff to get me the information on it. We do have it laid out in the bill. Hopefully, you guys have that – that would be great – but if there's some particulars you need, I can get that for you. There's a lot to go through with that, so I don't want to just speak off the cuff about something that you guys need to know about.

Like I said, we were informed by a lot of consultation on this, so I'd be happy to try to answer whatever question you have, and if I can't, then I will most definitely get the information for you.

The Chair: Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Stier: Yes. Thank you. I'd like to respond to the minister's remarks. I appreciate the minister's honesty and openness today. As always, it's very helpful in these discussions. With respect to the minister's remarks just a moment ago with respect to regulations, as he knows and most people here know, we don't get into the meat of the matter in regulations. So I gather that you're not aware of or have not yet had any particular focus on – I see you're waving a paper. Maybe you do have something. You know, usually with any bill we never see the regulations. Then later on cabinet and ministries work on those, and suddenly, wham, we're getting contacts from constituents or municipalities on certain aspects of regulations that came as a surprise to us.

Nonetheless, I'd like to drill down a little bit on what you've said with regard to regional collaboration and the municipal capacities. All warranted ideas; great, great thoughts there. Getting down to the Kenow fire as one example, in the Pincher Creek area there was a considerable number of landowner concerns and organized landowners who, as a result of the lack of co-ordination down there between several entities, had a fairly difficult challenge when suddenly within just 30 minutes they had to evacuate whereas, as the minister may know, at the meeting before that, the night before – in other words, 13 hours before – everything was all good and fine.

So I just wondered if the minister would like to speak a little bit more. Parks Canada was there, the local municipality rural, local municipality urban, and there was also the RCMP – I'm just trying to think; I'm missing one, but I'll come to it in a moment – and, of course, the local fire services from the municipality. Other municipalities came in to assist, of course, and we were thankful so much for all of these other municipalities donating men and equipment on this horrible event.

Nonetheless, is the minister aware of significant improvements in terms of interagency co-operation and chain of command – that is the biggest, biggest concern that was raised – and also the changes in evacuation? I realize that there are things about rights and so on and so forth with people and how they might be compensated later if there are evacuation issues. Chain of command is important to us. What has been changing there? And what about these evacuations? Are there improvements in procedures there?

Thank you.

11:10

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Sure. Thank you to the member. Yeah. Like I just said a minute ago, when you look at Kenow the year before and then what happened last year, you can see the improvements, and part of that had to do with an assessment after, in reports that came out. We had field officers on the ground at the time, so we went down there to speak to the municipalities. That was a bit of a different situation with Kenow. It's interesting because you had municipalities, provincial parks, national parks, and then First Nations, so it was quite a complicated situation that we had to deal with.

When I was talking before about regional collaboration, one of the regulations talks about state and local authorities who have mutual aid agreements and who choose to enter into these regional collaboration agreements. They can stipulate which EMA, Emergency Management Act, powers and duties are delegated to those organizations. We're trying to leave a little bit of local autonomy in that sense because they are the people on the ground there that know it better than anybody else. Part of that will be informed by the joint emergency advisory committees that are being supported through the bylaws from the participating partners. That will be part of that part, where they can ascertain, in a sense, what works best for them on the ground down there.

We did learn from Kenow to last year about the procedures and about the incident command portion with communication. That was definitely a big deal. With every disaster communication is the number one thing that comes out of it that says: we need to do that better. The people on the ground did that last time. We're very happy about that.

The other part is where we're instituting the municipal elected official training requirement so that every municipal official, even if they're not directly involved as emergency management, as a director of emergency management, which in most small communities would be the CAO because they stay around a lot longer, for example, than elected officials or a fire chief, you know, that's a volunteer – there will be requirements for municipal officials to take an online course to understand their roles and responsibilities. Most of the time it's, you know, to try to make sure that they have the right answers for the citizens because they need to get out of there, too. They kind of all need to get out and let the emergency professionals do the job. That's another part. We're making sure that they have the communication for their members out there and across agencies.

Also, the director of emergency management, there's training required for them which is more extensive, obviously, than for the municipal officials. There will be provisions that will require identified training that they can do within an 18-month period. There will also be municipal employee training requirements. There are all these online courses that are available to them, too, outside of kind of what we're requiring of them.

That's a lot. I mean, with some of the stuff that we're doing there there's a lot involved, but we're there. We have the capacity at AEMA to help with that, so that's part of what we're doing there. I hope that helps a little bit for you.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. Stier: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a follow-up to that, and this is going to be my last series of clarification questions. Thank you, Minister.

Going back to regional collaboration, this seems to be where it frequently is occurring that we have these communication issues and so on and so forth. In the briefing document we received I noted under regional collaboration some of the regulations that were

possibly intended to come up. I'll read what I've got here. One of them was:

The regulation will allow municipalities who enter into a regional collaboration agreement to stipulate which emergency management agreement powers and duties are being delegated.

There may be a requirement that an establishment of a joint emergency advisory committee must be supported by bylaws.

In some of the types of things that we've seen in Municipal Affairs before where we've got regional collaboration in regard to, perhaps, planning and other things, we've said that they have to do ICFs, intermunicipal collaboration frameworks. They have to do MDPs. They have to do this, and there's a timeline. With regard to these regulations to allow municipalities to enter into regional collaboration agreements regarding emergency management, is the government, instead of allowing it, going to make it mandatory for them to do these regional frameworks for emergency management or not?

I think it may be something to consider. I'm wondering if that is part of your regulation conversations and part of your intention, to make it mandatory to do that because it seems that when life is in jeopardy, there may be something more important here in many respects as compared to intermunicipal collaboration frameworks and planning. This is an emergency situation. Why wouldn't you, if not, make it mandatory for these to be done?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you. Yeah, I think it's a good question, and I appreciate that. As it stands right now, it isn't mandatory, and that was informed from our postincident assessments but also from the municipalities themselves, speaking to RMA and AUMA and the two big cities about that. The bigger municipalities have the capacity to do a lot of these things. Some of these small ones might not, so we try to take that into consideration. Do we think they should do it? Yes. But we are trying to leave as much local autonomy in that respect as we can. That's why we will come in with our field officers to help in that respect.

So, yeah, it isn't mandatory right now. That is informed from municipalities, specifically, on that and directly relating to capacity, basically. But the residents that we're elected by, you know, expect us to do these things, so we will make sure that mandatory emergency plans and exercises and all those things are created, but some of these other things like that one you speak of aren't mandatory.

The Chair: Any other questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's really a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 8, the Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2018. It's important to review legislation on a regular basis to ensure there is alignment between legislation and changing situations. It's particularly important to review the Emergency Management Act regularly because of changes: changes like evolving technology to save lives, changes in how municipalities are managed, and changes like the increasing frequency of natural disasters due to anthropogenic climate change. All of these dynamic factors require the Emergency Management Act to be reviewed and refreshed regularly.

Before being elected to the Legislature, I worked as a business analyst, and one of the certifications I earned was business continuity consultant. As a business continuity consultant I worked with companies to help them understand how their businesses could withstand a disaster. I helped them understand what steps they needed to take to make sure their business could survive an outage

caused by circumstances beyond their control, and what I learned from this training is that it's imperative to have a plan. If you aren't prepared for unpredictable or unexpected circumstances, your likelihood to survive is low, and you can vastly improve your outcomes by being prepared, by putting plans, strategies, and training in place to keep your business going and reviewing these plans on a regular basis to ensure their usefulness.

The Emergency Management Act speaks to these same concepts. How do we ensure that our cities and our towns and our rural municipalities are able to withstand the devastating effects of a disaster, whether it's natural or man-made? By doing so, we take a closer look at the existing legislation, and we can ensure what's on the books meets the needs we have today.

From the fires in Slave Lake in 2011 to the Calgary floods of 2013 and the fires in Fort McMurray in 2016 our province and our emergency management personnel have acquired more and more information. While it's very unfortunate that our province has had so many disasters so close together and that we continue to be affected by disasters in the surrounding area like this past summer's fires in B.C., that obliterated the sun from view for weeks, and that so many people's lives have been turned upside down, the information gathered has been invaluable. We see those lessons incorporated into emergency management exercises that are held on a regular basis to ensure that first responders are prepared for the unexpected on a large scale.

By definition, disasters affect many people and have the potential for loss of life. I'd like to take an opportunity to thank all of the first responders who help us stay safe during a disaster and every day any of us find ourselves in unfortunate circumstances. Thank you to the police, the fire, and the EMS personnel that are there for us every day.

11:20

It's smart to have a plan and be prepared so that lives and property can hopefully be saved, and it's important to ensure that plans and processes make sense on a regular basis. For these reasons the Alberta Party caucus supports the passage of Bill 8.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Madam Chair. My background in my previous life was in this world, emergency services, and I just want to say to the minister that I commend him, with a caveat, of course. Don't get cocky. This seems to be a reasonable bill. It seems to be a bill that is about addressing issues within our emergency services. It is truly about reinforcing best practices, and I hope that.

That said, when I read the document, though, it does appear to be very, very high level. I hope as they craft the rest of it and get into the nuances of it, they provide more in the way of explanations as well as even scenarios to demonstrate so that the individual people in the municipalities across our province understand how these things evolved and why we do them. It is about leadership. It is about accountability. We have 87 fiefdoms here within this Legislature, and within each one of our constituencies it's divvied up even more so into different little regional communities and towns and whatnot, each one with their own little – I hate to use the word – empire, but certainly everyone is responsible for their own community.

We just want to make sure that there's a balance there, ensuring that they do have the supports and the education, as the minister has indicated. Some issues that have happened previously were where groups have come in and overtaken the local group. Without using that local expertise to identify some of the issues, there are balls that get dropped. Again, it is a balance. It is about making sure that there

are things like mutual aid agreements. It's good to see that that's being led from the top because, quite honestly, a lot of municipalities need to be guided towards that. Positions are replaced in these municipalities, and the new guy doesn't know what's going on. That's where I see this legislation really leading to, really enforcing a lot of these communities to participate in things like mutual aid, to be aware of all the hazards in their area as well as have the ability to access the resources to that.

It boils down to money. A lot of these issues that you see come out of these incidents is that sometimes it's as simple as someone being hesitant to call for something because it costs money, and they're hoping another agency will call for that. As an example, hazardous materials are very expensive for some of these big events. You know, I've been at events where it's costing \$30,000 a day for a group to come from Calgary and bring their equipment to address a spill or something like that. Those are literally the things that will impede a community from actually calling for that, because they don't have the money. I know that emergency management has a budget. I think those are also things they need to clarify and support those communities with, making sure that they have the financial supports to call for the resources they need, provided they also have the education and the understanding to know when to call for those things.

Certainly, I might be getting into the weeds a little bit. My coworkers here are keeping it at the high level. Again, that is what I would desire, making sure that even though you have this high-level document, you provide some more information and more clarity regarding some of the smaller issues that occur. I have no doubt that you can come up with a lot of examples that would definitely reinforce those decisions.

That said, here in Alberta, here in Canada we also should be proud of the fact that we do have safety ingrained into our society. As I might point out, just this summer in I think it was Portugal or Spain – Portugal had some fires. People died in those fires. We're talking western Europe here, where they're just as modern and advanced as we are, and they lost people.

In Fort McMurray we had, depending on what number you're looking at, about a hundred thousand people evacuating out of a lot of these camps and all that. We didn't lose one person. Albeit we did lose two kids in a semirelated motor vehicle accident farther down the road, but directly as a result of the evacuation we didn't lose anyone. That's really amazing because we had a lot of people. A lot of houses burned down. I'm surprised that not one person who had his ear plugs in and his light blinders on so that he could sleep and work his next shift died. We didn't lose one of those people, and there are a lot of those guys in that community.

Again, commendations to the minister. You will need to provide us with more clarity, especially for a lot of the municipalities so that they can be more supportive. But the intent seems to be very good, and I just wanted to be on the record with that.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Any other questions or comments? The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Sure. Yeah, I'll try to address it a little bit. You know, the hon. member, I appreciate his background as well and what he's done in the past. I have a lot of respect for all first responders. He mentioned western Europe. Actually, some of the folks over there phoned, got a hold of Alberta to see what we've done in the past because with what's unfortunately happened to us here, we are fortunately very good at what we do. We lead in Canada and, quite frankly, around the world. People look to us as leaders on this.

You know, when he talks about some of the things that we're doing out there, a lot of what he's talking about isn't in this bill. It's already in AEMA. It sets out, say, DRP, for example, after the fact who pays for what, and there's certain criteria. That's already stuff that we've got laid out. Bill 8 is more along the lines of formalizing, codifying some of the things we've already been doing and also putting into action the requirements or the things that have come out of our assessment reports afterward. So a lot of these things that he was talking about are already happening.

But, you know, some of the work we have done in respect to, say, big incidents or all hazards is we've got Canada Joint Task Force 2 down in Calgary that goes across the province. This isn't part of the bill, but it will speak to a bit of kind of if there is a massive disaster, we do have some money that we gave out to six communities. It's \$2.6 million in grants to co-ordinate regional all-hazards incident management teams to strengthen regional emergency response. That's part of Canada Joint Task Force 2: the town of High Level, the city of Cold Lake, the capital region, Red Deer, and the city of Medicine Hat. So that's spread out across the province to help when there are massive incidents that maybe the local volunteer people, in particular, might not be able to handle.

So we've already done some of that work in that respect – a lot of work, actually – but I understand where the member is coming from. We already have things in place to make clear who pays for what. A lot of this is clarifying, you know, our roles and responsibilities in particular, not those other things already set in place, but I appreciate what he's saying. It is something that through our consultation we heard and that we're all aware of.

Since I became minister, I think that one of the things that is really impressive about emergency management personnel is that, you know, you might go to some other conventions and things like that where businesses or whoever it is might hold cards close to their chest; emergency management professionals don't. They're very open about: if there's a mistake, then how do we get better? Every single person in there is trying to do the best for the people that we represent. It's saving lives and protecting property and livestock out there. It's quite an interesting world to be part of, and I'm quite proud of the people we have in AEMA and across this province that do such phenomenal work.

Again, thank you to the member for the work that he's done in the past and to everybody involved.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin.

Ms Goodridge: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's an honour to rise and speak today in favour of Bill 8. I really do appreciate the changes that were made in this bill. I believe that it will go a long way in making our communities safer and making Alberta substantially better.

As has been talked about many times in the House today, the community that I grew up in, Fort McMurray, sustained an absolutely devastating fire just over two years ago with over 2,500 homes burnt, and everyone in our region experienced challenge. Everyone was out for a month, except there were a few people that did choose to stay, so having that clarification on the evacuation is very important because it puts a lot more onus on the individual to maintain.

But one fact that I do want to put into everyone's mind right now as to part of why this is so important is that as of October 5, 2018, there are only 797 homeowners that have received their final building permit and are allowed to live in those homes. That's 30 per cent. Let that sink in for a moment. Only 30 per cent of the 2,500 homes that burnt down have been rebuilt and are being occupied. That's a staggering number.

11:30

So it's very important that we do what we can to make sure that this bill passes and that we take emergency management seriously because anyone's community is simply one fire or flood away from this. Thank you so much, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Further questions, comments, or amendments? Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah, I do have a couple of questions I'd like to just briefly raise. First of all, I'd like to ask the minister if he could just help me to understand and clarify. We've asked for intermunicipal agreements, and I totally support them. I'm wondering about the issue of interdepartmental or interagency agreements, particularly with regard to – maybe this is more relevant to smaller communities than really large situations – the issue of social services in the midst of an emergency disaster. I don't believe that there is a proper framework or a funding formula to engage social service agencies for emergency disasters.

Quite frankly, managing disasters is often about: how do we care for the people that are displaced? They get into emergency shelters, they have to have temporary housing, yet I don't believe – I say this because several years ago, when I was involved with some of the emergency management things, it's an issue that came up with some municipalities and a couple of field individuals as well. There's no mechanism by which local emergency management groups can call for social service assistance to care for these people. I'm just wondering if that's been addressed. If you could make a few comments on that one for me, please.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you. Thank you to the member. He's quite right. With a lot of volunteers and volunteer organizations – you know, social services are something the AEMA has already been working on and does continuously to adapt. Red Cross is the big one, but you've got food banks and other volunteers that are involved. That would be part of the local emergency operation centre. It does work through that. AEMA has done lots of work over the past couple of years, trying to work with local organizations as much as we can – you're right – so that we can have those services in place. It usually does come down to the community itself. But we definitely have done some work on that, and there's more to do. I was talking to food banks this morning about that. It's something that I think is important for us, all types of social services.

Good point. Thank you, member.

The Chair: Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Yes. Thank you and thank you for the answer. I just think that there might be some room also for some sort of formal process by which some of the government social services might be involved. I don't think that social services has an emergency management plan within their mandate and neither does emergency management to engage them, so some sort of possible engagement, although I truly give credit to the many, many volunteer organizations that in many cases do step up. I only raise it because a couple of municipalities have raised it with me. Anyway, I'll leave it at that.

Secondly, with regard to evacuation orders, could you clarify for me? In light of the new regulations I don't know what the consequences will be for individuals who adamantly refuse to leave. That's the first part of the question. The second part of the question is: if they are required to leave and their property becomes destroyed, they're forbidden the opportunity to try to stay and

protect their property – in some cases they are actually very successful at that – then does that automatically mean that they will be qualified for compensation if they lose property due to the natural disaster rather than just due to emergency management activities? Those two questions with regard to evacuation, please.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you. Yeah, I mean, it was in place already that the fine for contravention of the act could be, I believe, \$10,000. That was part of what this act was trying to address. The liability for the first responders is what we talked about earlier. We've had RMA, in particular, ask me about livestock. If somebody needs to stay for their animals, they need to let the local emergency operation centre know that that's happening. We do understand that this has happened in the past. I think that as long as this communication is open, that's what we need to do, because it isn't forbidden for them to stay.

Part of the act is to make sure that that clarity is there. They aren't forbidden, but the problem was the liability issues that were there before for first responders. Now we've said no, like, it's up to the individual, who's accountable for themselves. So if they're going to stay, then, you know, the first responder isn't liable for that. They have to do a job of saving other people as well, right? That was part of that. They aren't forbidden because we do know there are cases, in particular with livestock, where people want to stay and take care of them. So we tried to allow for those types of things in the act, to make sure, because we heard it loud and clear from people out there.

Mr. Orr: I will be very brief. Just to say thank you, that's a very good clarification, that's what I needed to hear, and I think you've got it right.

The Chair: Calgary-Bow.

Drever: Thank you, Madam Chair. I wanted to rise to support Bill 8, Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2018, and I would like to commend the Minister of Municipal Affairs for putting this bill forward. This bill certainly will have a huge impact in my constituency of Calgary-Bow.

When I go door-knocking, this is the number one thing I hear at the doors. People are still very much impacted by the 2013 floods; Bowness was quite devastated by that. You know, one of the things that I love about Bowness is that they're a tight-knit community, and they help their neighbours. Since the 2013 flood there really is a sense of solidarity in the community. I think it really has strengthened that community a lot. Actually, I was just at the Bowness Community Association AGM, and this was brought up. People are still talking about it. I know that this bill will actually improve the lives of Bownesians, as they like to call themselves, and the residents of Calgary-Bow.

I also wanted to commend the minister on his consultation that he did for this bill. Back in June, actually, I was asked to announce on behalf of the minister that our government will be providing the city of Calgary \$1 million for emergency preparedness. I went out to High River for that announcement, and I was welcomed by many different firefighters and emergency-preparedness associations, and they were talking about different ways that we can prevent flood or emergencies. The funding is going to be used for things like the flood dams, water tubes, portable dams. These are things that could really help communities when they're scrambling to find ways to help with the emergency.

You know, after I made that announcement, people were really excited about that because, like I said, the number one thing I hear is: "What are we going to do about emergency preparedness? What

if there's another flood?" People actually watch the levels of the river rise and fall. When it starts to rise, they do start to call my office and ask: "What are we doing on flood, emergency preparedness? I don't want to go through what I went through in 2013." Our city needs to be prepared. It's such a pleasure to say that this is a priority for our government and we're going to continue to make it a priority.

Thank you very much to the minister for putting this bill forward and making sure that this will be on the agenda for this session. It doesn't just impact my constituency; it also impacts everyone else across Alberta as we saw with Fort McMurray and the wildfires, the fires in Slave Lake. We have gone through a lot in this province, but Albertans are strong and resilient, and we're always going to be ready to take on whatever comes at us.

Thank you very much again, and I hope everyone supports this bill.

11:40

The Chair: Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. As I look at this bill, I think about how important an issue this is, of course, dealing with, you know, the emergency management of the province. I think often of the people that have lost homes in things like fires and floods and that sort of thing, and I can't imagine what that would be like, I really can't. I've never had that experience in my lifetime of losing a home, and I can't imagine what people go through when they have that happen, not to mention what happens when you lose a whole community. Situations like Fort Mac, where so many homes were burned and so many communities were lost right there in that one city. Obviously, it's a very important issue and it's something that needs to be done, and of course it needs to be done right because the results of getting it wrong are so devastating for the people that it affects.

I just had a couple of questions here and a few comments, too. I know after the Fort Mac fire and, actually, after each one of these disasters that we've had in Alberta recently, there have always been reviews, there have always been investigations and things like that. I just wanted to find out from the minister, in particular with the Fort Mac fire: are all the reviews, internal or otherwise, and all the investigations and all the different things that are being looked at as far as the cause of the fire, the reaction to the fire from government and from the different, you know, responders; I just want to know if those have all been finished. All those investigations, all the reviews, again, internal or otherwise: if they're all finished, and if the government has that information at this time.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you. Out of the Fort Mac one, the May 2016 Wood Buffalo Wildfire Post-incident Assessment Report in particular, I believe that it was 21 recommendations, I think, came out of that. They are either all implemented or in the final stages of implementation. I shouldn't say final, because the Provincial Operations Centre is a big one, and that's something that I'm in the plans for right now. But there were 21, and they are either implemented or in the stages of being implemented, for sure. Some of them are similar things that came out of other postincident reports, too; in particular communication, which is one that I always bring up.

But there are a couple of them I can actually bring up for you if you want. For example, one was a review of this emergency management framework, that obviously we've done. The other one, recommendation 9, was:

Develop a Provincial Emergency Evacuation Framework and . . . model to provide enhanced decision-making capabilities at the Provincial level.

10. Build depth and capacity within local authorities to enable communities to support [themselves] during emergencies, which is something we've been doing a lot of the last year.

Another one about mandating incident command adoption, so that's another one that we've been doing. Those are just some examples for you, but out of the 21, they are either done or in the process.

Thank you.

The Chair: Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Yeah. Thanks. I appreciate the minister's response there, of course, on the review and recommendations from that report. I just want to confirm with him that of all the reviews, internal or otherwise, being done in this regard: was it just the one that was done, that produced the 21 recommendations, or are there more that have been done or are in the process of being done?

Mr. S. Anderson: The KPMG report was the one that came to Municipal Affairs, and that report is done. And, like I said, implementation is ongoing on a few of those, but they are either done or in the process of being implemented. So that's where we're at there.

Mr. Loewen: Okay. Thank you very much, Minister. I guess as we look at this bill, I know we've expressed concerns with maybe smaller communities, smaller municipal governments and their capacity to deal with some of these new regulations and what's contained in this bill. You know, I trust the minister at his word, that he's willing to work together with these small communities and that the government will help where needed and maybe have some of these communities work together, and I appreciate that. I think it is definitely a concern of ours and a concern of Albertans that these smaller communities aren't stretched too thin as far as, you know, working on something as important as protecting their communities from emergencies and disasters and things like that.

Again, it's so important to get this right, and I guess I hope at this time, too, that the government is willing to kind of take advice as it comes up and as things progress. We always learn more as time goes on, and we always have better ideas, and other ideas will come forward as we progress. Hopefully, we can implement some of these other ideas that people may have on how to prevent these disasters in our communities.

Again, we understand that the government took the time this summer to do consultations on this, and I hope that that consultation, you know, that feedback that they got is well represented here. It'd be a shame to have taken that time to talk with the communities affected and not implement what they've been talking about or what their concerns are.

I think there are some great things in this bill. I think it's, again, a very important bill. It's good to have increased consistency and effectiveness in the local authorities emergency advisory committees. I think it's good that it raises the effectiveness of local authorities emergency management agencies. It's good to ensure that the municipal elected officials are trained and prepared and knowledgeable of their assigned roles in an emergency. There are lots of good things there that I think can only help our communities as disasters come or potentially come and how we react to them.

Just, I guess, a couple of thoughts here. Will this take care of the timely and relevant communication with those affected by emergencies and disasters? I think in some of these disasters, of

course, we've found that lack of proper communication and different groups being able to communicate properly with each other has created more problems and actually made things worse. I'm just curious. Minister, do you have the confidence that this bill will solve that problem of timely and relevant communication with those affected by the emergency or disaster?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Member. You're right. Communication is key out there. I have all the confidence in the world that this will help communicate to residents. I mean, this is just part of a bigger picture. We have a lot of things that we do already, whether it be the emergency management app that we have, which was a leader in the country, the field officers on the ground who are out there, the municipal officials, emergency management professionals that are out there, first responders. That's why we're trying to codify what we've been doing, the really good work that's out there right now, but also the incident command system to make sure that's smooth across borders so that, as I said before, we have that speed of trust to make sure that we're taking care of the residents and the people and the livestock and property as best we can and they're as prepared as best we can.

You know, for the future we will have to adapt, as technologies evolve, our different communications systems out there, for sure. It is part of a bigger picture that we do fairly well right now, but, you know, we just need to make sure that we listen and improve as we go. I'm proud and I'm confident that we can continue to get the job done and lead this country in emergency management.

The Chair: Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Yeah. I just wanted to clarify one thing. I'm not sure that this bill clarifies exactly who is ultimately in charge during an emergency response. I just wanted to see if you could kind of clarify that as far as, you know, where this bill covers that issue as far as who is ultimately in charge.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you. It depends on the capacity of the municipalities in that respect when they declare states of local emergency. The municipality declares those. In particular, when they don't have the capacity – Fort McMurray, I mean, is the massive example – when they call us in, we have field officers in place with the municipalities to understand the situation as a minute-by-minute, hour-by-hour kind of deal. As soon as we know that the capacity isn't there for those local municipalities, that's when AEMA takes over at the request of the local municipalities. We don't just come in and take over. It is always the local authorities that we're in communication with to make sure. There's some clarity in the bill; there's some clarity on those things. It's a local clarification in that respect.

11:50

Yeah, for sure, it's because we have people on the ground that need to make sure we listen to the municipalities. Yeah, I appreciate that. It is something that came up in a couple of different jurisdictions, and we've made sure to try to keep that as clear as possible. Kenow, you know, and what happened last year: the changes there, that's because of that kind of stuff.

The Chair: Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: One more question, if I could. Thanks for the answers. I appreciate it. I'm sure many municipalities already have current practices and policies that meet the new requirements. I'm just wondering how many municipalities have work to do yet on

getting their current practices and policies up to snuff as far as Bill 8 is concerned.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you. Well, I don't have that number, you know, in that respect, but that was part of the work that I referenced earlier in this last year, going out and ascertaining the capacity and the resources that the municipalities have and the Métis and talking to some of the First Nations with our Minister of Indigenous Relations as well, across ministry in that respect with Energy and some of these other ones, too, to understand what business has out there and industry. The capacity out there: a lot of them are pretty good. They know what they need. They're already ready to go. There were just some smaller ones maybe that didn't have quite the capacity, and that was part of what we tried to remedy over the spring and into the summer. Now we'll work with them on these to engage with them to see if they need help in training and with emergency management courses and those types of things. I don't have the number. We didn't look at that. We're there to help them, and we will continue to do so.

Thanks, Member.

The Chair: Any further questions, comments, or amendments?

Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to rise again to speak to this bill and thank the minister for his initiative in this. I also appreciate the comments of some of my esteemed colleagues in terms of those that are experts in emergency management. Some would call me disaster prone, having lived through a few things like sinking ships in tsunamis, so I understand the planning of emergency management. I like to think of myself as a reasonable emergency management expert, having survived a few of those things, but it's very gratifying to see that this bill actually addresses some of the key issues in terms of addressing the preparedness and ensuring that our communities not only are ready for possible disasters – of course, it's kind of like an insurance policy. You hope you never have to use the training, but, in fact, these are the insurance policies we make by ensuring that the province and cities and municipalities are ready in the event that something occurs. We don't have a lot of time. You don't have a lot of time to go backwards to do that training in a hurry. You have to be able to react and do much of that through having a plan and executing it.

I was in the airline business for about 20 years; gratefully, we had emergency and accident training and situational analysis and all sorts of preparedness for that. Gratefully, I never had to use that in 20 years, but we had it annually to ensure that we were ready in the event that there was a disaster, not just to be ready for a disaster but to also deal with the people and to ensure that the emotions and some of the challenges people face beyond the physical impact of that is also ready and there to be addressed.

My question to the minister. I've had some opportunity recently through the Economic Developers Association of Alberta to understand a lot of the work that they're doing in terms of resiliency training, which is really not just during the disasters and the emergencies but afterwards, to ensure that these municipalities and organizations, including the chambers of commerce and the municipal leaders and the political leaders of the area, are ready to move quickly after and to understand what needs to be done during an emergency to ensure that they're ready and that their capacity is not undermined.

I know that the Economic Developers Association of Alberta and their CEO, Leann Hackman-Carty, have been going around the province and have been supported in some respects by the

government to do some of this resiliency training, and I think that they're moving slowly but surely through many municipalities. They're struggling with funding, from what I understand, in terms of doing that resiliency training. So I guess my question to the minister is: in this bill we're talking about preparedness and how we act when an emergency comes, but are you working with your colleagues in terms of that resiliency training to ensure not only that we address the incidents but that we address the impact and are able to move forward quickly afterwards to ensure – we've heard from our esteemed Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin as well about the fact that there's only about 30 per cent of the households that have actually gotten through the process of some of the funding, the closure . . .

The Chair: I hesitate to interrupt, hon. member, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(2.1) the Committee of the Whole will now rise and report progress.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Mr. Hinkley: Yes. Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has under consideration certain bills. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 8.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the committee concur in the report? Say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Any opposed, say no. So ordered.
The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Seeing as we've made good progress this morning, I would move that we rise until 1:30 this afternoon.

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

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, October 30, 2018

Day 42

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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

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New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 26 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Freedom Conservative: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent: 1

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, October 30, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Please be seated.

Hon. members, if I could just speak to a couple of administrative manners first. As we continue the proceedings for today, I want to make a couple of reminders. First, I would ask that you please remember that you do not cross between a member who is speaking and the Speaker's chair. [A child vocalized] That's a wonderful sound to hear in here, believe me. They won't have to agree to the rule, but these guys do.

If the Speaker is standing and you are waiting to enter the Chamber, please wait until the Speaker is seated before you take your chair.

Thank you.

Introduction of Visitors

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the high commissioner of the United Kingdom to Canada, Her Excellency Susan le Jeune d'Allegershecque as well as Ms Caroline Saunders, the consul general for the United Kingdom in Calgary, and Ms Alyssa Perron from the British consulate. Alberta appreciates its historic connection with the United Kingdom and its people. Her Excellency's visit has presented the occasion to explore a number of opportunities. Earlier today we met and discussed opportunities for collaboration in the areas of energy, health, and artificial intelligence, to name a few. We look forward to working with Her Excellency and the consulate in Calgary on further developing and strengthening our relationship with the U.K. I would now like to ask the high commissioner and Consul General Saunders to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to the House, through you, Falun school. I believe these student are in the gallery today. They come from Falun school, which is a school in a little community in my constituency that many may not know about, but if you have been in my constituency, you do know about Falun school. Could these students please rise and receive the introduction of this House.

The Speaker: Hon. member, your class may not yet have arrived.

The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's really an honour to be able to introduce to you and through you to all the members of the Assembly, from the beautiful town of Bashaw, the Bashaw school. I would like to introduce to you the students, that are accompanied by their teachers, Mr. McIntosh and Ms Lischynski, along with their chaperones, Ms Miller, Mr. Chipley, and Ms Peterman. Would you please rise and accept the traditional warm welcome. Yeah, everybody please rise and accept the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Mr. Carson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you 56 amazing grade 5 and 6 students from Afton elementary school. The students are accompanied by their teachers, Mr. Baird, Mrs. Rizzato, and Ms Clulow Haennel, along with their chaperone, Mr. James Hornbeck. I had the opportunity to ask them, "If they could see one law introduced in the House, what would it be?" They said, "More ice cream for breakfast," so with unanimous consent – I would now ask them to please rise to receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other school groups here today?

Seeing and hearing none, the Minister of Health and Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have three introductions today. First, it's a privilege to rise and introduce the Parkhill and Gillies families, who are advocates for the Phelan-McDermid Syndrome Foundation. Phelan-McDermid is a complex syndrome associated with the deletion of chromosome 22. I was very proud to declare October 22 Phelan-McDermid day in Alberta to help increase awareness of this rare syndrome. I ask that Mike, Gail, Stan, Carol, and Marian please rise and receive the warm welcome of our Assembly. [A child vocalized] I can tell how excited she is for this.

My second is a group of health care aides, who are seated in the members' gallery. October 18 is Health Care Aide Day in Alberta. HCAs are the second-largest health care workforce in the province, and they are very valued members of the health care team. I am grateful for their tireless work to care for Albertans when and where it's needed so families are supported as their health care needs change and evolve. I'd ask that all of these guests and their allies please rise and receive the warm welcome of our Assembly.

Lastly, seated in the public gallery, I have some guests who are here to witness and support the introduction of Bill 21, An Act To Protect Patients. I ask that they rise as I introduce them. Debra Tomlinson is the CEO for the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services. MaryJane James is the executive director of the Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton. Katie Kitschke is the executive director of the Saffron Sexual Assault Centre in Sherwood Park. Dr. Cathy Carter-Snell – sorry about that, Cathy – is a sexual assault nurse, examiner, and professor at Mount Royal University. Dr. Karen Mazurek is the deputy registrar of the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta. They are also joined by Marian Stufco, the government relations adviser. Please join me in welcoming these women and showing our gratitude for their efforts.

The Speaker: Welcome to all of you.

The Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a privilege to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly representatives of the Canadian Union of Public Employees and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers local 424. I would ask that they please rise as I call their names. From CUPE we have John Vradenburgh, CUPE local 474 president and CUPE Alberta recording secretary; Barry Benoit, CUPE local 474 business agent; James Niven, CUPE local 784 president; Lee-Ann Kalen, CUPE local 1099 president; Alejandro Pachon, CUPE national researcher; and Dustin Abbott. From IBEW local 424 I'd like to welcome journeyman electricians Robert Gibbons, Sean McDonald, Ray Parker, Ashley Mycholuk, and Richard Nally. I would now ask all

members of the Assembly to please provide them with the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Service Alberta.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of this House Mike Bonner. Mike Bonner has been a long-time supporter of me through multiple elections and was there right when I started my political career. He's a fierce advocate for workers who've been injured and has been a long-time advocate for those who are working with or on occasion dealing with WCB. I'd like him to rise now and accept the traditional warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure and honour to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this House Alberta's first Advocate for Persons with Disabilities, Mr. Tony Flores. Mr. Flores is an accomplished parathlete and a leader who has devoted his life to disability issues. He believes strongly in self-advocacy, empowerment, and breaking down barriers. I'm excited to see Tony lead the disability advocate's office to make life better for Albertans with disabilities, and I encourage anyone with concerns to contact his office once it's open, this November. I ask Mr. Flores to please receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

1:40

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a few introductions today. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly various members of food banks from across our province. They're here today to talk to their local MLAs to discuss some of the issues that they're facing and some of the successes as well. As you know, the food banks of Alberta feed many hungry people in this province and have seen an increase in usage year over year. I will ask you to rise as I call your names: Suzan Krecsy, Alison Richards, George Thatcher, Kevin Leahy, Valerie Leahy, Gert Reynar, Cindy Carstairs, Tia Fox, Bruce Ironshirt, Leni Schielke, Mark Schielke, Doug Tweddle, and Executive Director Stephanie Walsh-Rigby. It's a personal honour of mine to introduce the chair of Food Banks Alberta and the executive director of the Airdrie food bank, Lori McRitchie. Please receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour and a pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a very good friend of mine, Lori Rehill. Lori, please stand. Lori is the former executive director of Airdrie victims' services. She is a volunteer of all wonderful things. She's also here with Food Banks Alberta as an adviser. She's my campaign manager, and we're very excited for the things that are to happen in Airdrie.

At this time I would also like to recognize the staff and students in Airdrie at C.W. Perry middle school that are watching at this moment.

Please, all, receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Members' Statements

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

Official Opposition and Government Policies

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to pay tribute to the working men and women of Alberta: firefighters, nurses, social workers, plumbers and pipefitters, teachers, road builders, and educational support staff. We are a province of working people who believe in Alberta, and we fight for Alberta every day.

I'm speaking about the many in Alberta that the Conservatives want to leave behind, the people the Conservatives want to hurt with their backroom promises to their friends and insiders.

I'm speaking about the men and women who want basic protections that will keep their families safe, the people who want workplace rules so they can be treated with basic dignity and respect.

I'm speaking about the men and women who deserve retirement security, not looming threats that their pensions will be gutted, the social workers who hold up their fellow Albertans in their darkest hours, the nurses who deliver direct care and emotional support for our families when they are sick and vulnerable.

I am speaking about the pipefitters who are fighting for the energy economy and for our strong future.

I'm speaking about the teacher who is putting in that extra care and attention to ensure that each of their students has the best chance at success.

I am speaking about workers. I am so very proud to do so, and to you working Albertans I say: we hear you, and we are working for you because we are a government of workers. We are teachers, nurses, tradespeople, public servants, and social workers. We are electricians, utility workers, policy analysts, and, yes, most shocking of all, we are the people who identify with the mice, not the cats, in Mouseland. We are workers, and we are Albertans. We are working for you, and we are fighting for you, and together we are going to keep this province moving forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Natural Resources

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The world needs more Canadian energy. Did you know what our energy sector does for Albertans and this great province and our amazing country of Canada? Do you know the impact that our energy sector has on bringing prosperity to Albertans? We have become such poor storytellers about our natural resources, the lifeblood of our province, the heartbeat. The technical language that surrounds the energy sector can make it challenging, but we can't get lost in acronyms and technical jargon and forget the heart of the issue. Our magnificent natural resources, our trees, our mountains: these things bring meaning to our lives and prosperity to our families and bring us together as a nation.

We need to work to speak authentically about our natural resources. We have nothing to be ashamed of. We need to continue to fight back against hyperbole. We need to stop letting Hollywood stars like Jane Fonda and Leonardo DiCaprio or activists like Tziporah Berman define the narrative around our resources. We need a government that is proud of the history of our energy sector and has a vision of where it needs to go and isn't afraid to speak out about those things and those attacks on our province, our country, and our prosperity.

We are not telling a story of how our resources represent freedom, social stability, compassion, authenticity, and how our resources have created the world we live in now. Why are we not telling the story, a national story of connection, of how resources have brought us together as a country and as a nation? Why are we not building up our nation and creating pipeline infrastructure, that means something, Mr. Speaker, that is so much bigger? You are building the morale of a country through claiming what is ours and being so proud that you are filled with joy to help seed growth, opportunity, and prosperity. We need to do better because Albertans are counting on us. As my friend Cody Battershill says: our natural resources are a great story, and all of us should be telling it.

Thank you.

Affordable Housing

Mr. Westhead: Affordable housing has been a long-standing concern in Banff-Cochrane. Everyone deserves a safe and secure place to call home regardless of their income. Access to a home is about fairness and is the foundation for a better life. This is at the heart of our government's \$1.2 billion provincial affordable housing strategy.

I'm proud to say that we've taken concrete steps to implement this strategy in Banff-Cochrane. Just a few weeks ago, in partnership with the town of Banff and Parks Canada I helped cut the ribbon on the Ti'nu housing complex. Ti'nu provides homes for 131 families and individuals in a town with a zero per cent vacancy rate. The week after we cut the ribbon on the Ti'nu project, I announced a \$2.6 million investment in the Banff YWCA's courtyard project on behalf of the Minister of Seniors and Housing. This project will provide 33 families and individuals with below-market housing. A more stable housing market is also good for employers, who often struggle to attract and retain workers due to the high costs and lack of housing options.

But affordability goes beyond just housing. Our government lowered school fees, ushered in \$25-a-day child care in Banff and Canmore, froze tuition, improved the child benefit, and, together with municipal partners and Parks Canada, created their own public transit system that now connects residents and tourists all the way from Canmore to Lake Louise.

Meanwhile the UCP proposes hare-brained affordable housing solutions like sacrificing wildlife corridors, a \$700 million tax giveaway to their wealthy friends and insiders, deep ideological budget cuts, rolling back protections for working people and consumers, and slashing wages for young people.

I know that our plan is getting results, but there's more work yet to do. I'll continue fighting for constituents to have a place that they can afford to call home and to build communities that include Albertans from all walks of life.

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

Seniors' Housing Placements

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to make a statement about a constituent of mine, an 87-year-old senior who was spoken about in this House earlier. Zoe Bleau is a resident of Bonnyville who needs placement in one of our local seniors' lodges. Her doctors have supported this placement and even wrote letters reinforcing the need for her to be allowed access to care in the Bonnylodge. However, due to a survivor's benefit that she has as a result of the passing of her husband many years ago, she was denied admission to this wonderful facility. Despite desperate pleas from her family and even myself, the government is unwilling to

accommodate Ms Bleau in her wonderful, wonderful state that she is in, which is stuck in limbo. The system that is more or less alienating people with pensions is shameful, and the ministry needs to see that seniors have more flexibility getting into our seniors' centres.

Every day outside of a lodge holds the risk of a fall for a senior. One fall, in many cases, is fatal for a senior. Unfortunately, Zoe was doing her household chores, and she had a fall. Her daughter describes this fall as what left her immobilized and, quote, crying and shivering in a pool of water. End quote. As a result of this fall Zoe suffered a fractured hip, that required her to be sent hundreds of kilometres away for surgery in Edmonton. Clearly, this is regrettable news, yet we all knew the possibility that this would eventually come to pass.

Mr. Speaker, what the family asks and what I hope for is flexibility in the system so that people like Zoe Bleau get the care they need. It is unbelievable that in this day and age our seniors have to beg the government for the ability to age in dignity in local facilities like the Bonnylodge. The family of Zoe Bleau is begging, and sadly this government is turning their back on her. This needs to stop.

The Speaker: Thank you.

1:50

Oral Question Period

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

Provincial Budget Revenue Forecasts

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This weekend at the NDP convention they considered a resolution congratulating the Premier and the government on, quote, securing the expansion of the Trans Mountain pipeline. That's curious. The government's entire budget was predicated on securing the expansion of the Trans Mountain pipeline. Does that continue to be the case? Do they continue to plan in their fiscal plan for the completion of the Trans Mountain expansion?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. If the member will recall, this matter was discussed when we introduced the budget last spring. In fact, the Trans Mountain pipeline is not factored into the assumptions that underline our budget. In fact, our path to balance is secure because it is based on very cautious and conservative and prudent assumptions. You know what else is the foundation of our path to balance? It does not include firing 4,000 nurses. It does not include having to fire 4,000 teachers. It does not include giving a \$700 million tax break to the top 1 per cent. It includes conservative assumptions . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the only person talking about firing is the Premier, whose government is planning on taking 2 billion extra dollars out of the pockets of ordinary Albertans through their 67 per cent increase in the carbon tax.

The Premier just contradicted her Finance minister, who, on the day he introduced the budget, admitted under questioning from media that it was predicated on additional revenues coming from a higher price for Alberta oil through the completion of the Trans Mountain pipeline. This is a very simple and objective fiscal question. Can the Premier tell us whether or not her budget and fiscal plan continue to be predicated on the completion of that pipeline?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, I've actually just answered that question in my previous answer. What I will say, though, when the member talks about the carbon levy: one thing that our government didn't get into office to do was to hurt Albertans, unlike the members opposite, whose Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills decided in a fit of transparency to say that the UCP plan will hurt Albertans. It's going to hurt. That's not what we're here to do. Our plan is not premised on that. Our plan includes cautious, prudent assumptions. We will get to balance, and we will support Albertans in the process.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, this government hurt Albertans when it decided to raise income taxes, the carbon tax, property taxes, to support the Trudeau payroll tax increase, to increase taxes on employers and job creators, all of which deepened and prolonged a recession from which 177,000 Albertans are still out of work. The question is: does the government's fiscal plan continue to be based on a 67 per cent increase in their job-killing carbon tax? That would be the same carbon tax that they didn't tell Albertans about in the last election.

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, I just really do need to correct the record because, in fact, what happened when our government got elected was that we got rid of a health care levy that this member's predecessor party brought in on all Albertans. What we did instead is that we also brought in a progressive tax regime. Now, I understand that the members opposite are very keen to eliminate that and to give a \$700 million tax break to the top 1 per cent and pay for it by firing nurses and firing teachers and making sure that it hurts Albertans. That is not our plan going forward. We're going to continue to have Albertans' backs.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.
Second main question.

Carbon Levy Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion Project

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, nearly half of Albertans don't pay income tax, but one hundred per cent of Albertans pay the NDP carbon tax. It is the most regressive tax in Alberta introduced by the NDP. It makes it more expensive for seniors to heat their homes, for single moms to fill up their gas tank to drive to work, and now the NDP's fiscal plan is to raise that tax by 67 per cent with no increase in the rebate, making it even more regressive. Why does the NDP continue to plan on that 67 per cent increase in their job-killing, regressive carbon tax?

Ms Notley: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, the member opposite is of course entitled to his own opinions, but he is not entitled to make facts up. We have been very clear, first of all, that the additional costs of the carbon levy and pricing pollution are not built in to our path to balance at this point because of the decision of the Federal Court of Appeal around Trans Mountain. In addition, the fact of the matter is that two-thirds of Albertans get a carbon rebate, so in fact the member opposite . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I'm simply referring to the government's own published policy, which in its budget confirms the 67 per cent increase in the carbon tax with zero increase in the rebate – zero increase in the rebate – making this a massively

regressive tax. The Premier knows full well, if she wants to be honest with Albertans, that carbon tax fans, like the NDP and their close friend and ally Justin Trudeau, really want the carbon tax to go to \$200 or \$300 a tonne. Under the NDP plan that means a massively regressive tax on the poor. Why is the Premier still planning on punishing poor Albertans with the increase in the carbon . . .

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

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, I don't know how many times I have to say this. The member opposite knows that he is quoting something that our government has since moved away from as a result of the Federal Court of Appeal decision. Yesterday I made it very clear to the member opposite that the financial implications of that are no longer considered in our path to balance and are not required for us to meet our path to balance, yet he continues to repeat things which are simply not true. The member opposite: if he ever wonders why it is that people don't have a lot of faith or trust in him, it's this kind of thing right now.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, in terms of faith we can see the results of recent by-elections, in one of which the NDP won 14 per cent of the vote and the United Conservatives won 83 per cent and then 69 per cent and 20 per cent. We'll trust Albertans to make a judgment on who's telling the truth about the carbon tax.

Now I have a very simple question for the Premier. Is she planning for the completion of the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion? Does she believe that will happen?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The fact of the matter is that we are absolutely committed to getting the Trans Mountain pipeline completed. We are working on it each and every day. We are standing up for Albertans in front of the National Energy Board as the matter goes forward. In about 20 minutes I'll be leaving here to fly to B.C. to continue to make the case in B.C. for why this project is so important, not just for Albertans but for British Columbians and all Canadians. We will not stop fighting until this pipeline is built.

The Speaker: Third main question.

Mr. Kenney: I take it, then, Mr. Speaker, that the government assumes that the Trans Mountain pipeline will be built, in which case they assume the carbon tax will be increased by 67 per cent. What am I missing here?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, what the member opposite is missing is that we are focused on getting the job done and standing up for Albertans and not cheering for the failure of Albertans or the failure for the jobs or the failure for the pipeline like the members opposite have been doing from day one. That's why, of course, we have a Leader of the Official Opposition who said in Ottawa that no pipeline is a national priority. You know what? We disagree. This is a national priority. That's why we're going to keep fighting for it, and that's why the pipeline will get built.

Mr. Kenney: That's a complete misrepresentation. I said that getting Canadian energy to global markets was a national priority. It's the Premier who said that she only wanted one pipeline, Mr. Speaker, and that's how we got into this situation.

Let me ask the question again since she didn't even try to answer it. Since the government's assumption is that the Trans Mountain

pipeline expansion will be completed, is it not also the government's assumption that it will raise the carbon tax by 67 per cent? You can't have one without the other under the NDP's policy.

2:00

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think I've answered that question enough times already. What I will say is that there is something missing in a budget that would be put forward by the members opposite if they ever, God forbid, got the opportunity, and that's the \$700 million a year tax cut that they want to give to their friends in the top 1 per cent. The members opposite say that they can balance the budget, that they can give massive tax cuts, that they can get rid of the carbon levy, but they never say how they're going to pay for it except when the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills speaks, and he says that it'll hurt.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

I think we're at the second supplemental.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, let's try this another way. Is the Premier ruling out under any circumstances the government's planned 67 per cent increase in its carbon tax? For clarity, I'll repeat it. Is the government ruling out the planned 67 per cent increase in the carbon tax under any circumstances?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite knows the plan that this government had in place with respect to the pricing of pollution in the province of Alberta. The member opposite also knows the position that I took as Premier of Alberta when the Federal Court of Appeal rendered its decision on Trans Mountain. This is all a matter of public record. I have since talked about what the implications of that are for our path to balance, which is that our path to balance is secure. We have this under control. The member opposite, however, needs to explain to Albertans what will happen if he cuts the levy altogether or he gives his \$700 million tax break to his friends.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

The Member for Calgary-South East.

Grande Prairie Regional Hospital Construction

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Grande Prairie hospital is still sitting incomplete, and with the construction manager having left the project back in September, it's unclear when exactly the people of Grande Prairie and region will be getting this much-needed hospital. The Minister of Infrastructure assured Albertans that a new manager would be hired by the end of October. Well, we're one day away from the end of October, and there's been no news from the minister or this government. To the Minister of Infrastructure: has a new construction manager been hired for the Grande Prairie hospital, and if not, can you please explain to this House why?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, as the member well knows, we both sat in government, the two of us together as colleagues, when this issue first came up. Certainly, we have decided not to make this a political issue. Now, I've had wonderful conversations with the member from Grande Prairie, and as we work through the process, I have kept him fully involved in what's going on. You and I both know that as we work towards a solution

for the people of Grande Prairie, politicizing it is the last thing we should be doing.

Mr. Fraser: I would agree, Mr. Speaker, but it's about transparency and honesty.

The original timeline for the Grande Prairie hospital has construction finishing by the end of 2019, with the doors opening to the public in 2020. The lack of progress over the last two months and the absence of an updated timeline from the minister points to those dates being pushed back. This is troubling news for the residents of Grande Prairie, who have been anxiously waiting for this important piece of infrastructure to be completed. Minister, the people of Grande Prairie deserve to know when they can reasonably expect this project to be completed. To the same minister: is your department able to issue an updated timeline on when we can expect the Grande Prairie hospital to be completed and open to the public?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are actively working to ensure that we have a new construction manager in place. It's a process that we consider extremely important for the people of Grande Prairie. I would ask this question of the member. My door is always open for a conversation. I have had many conversations with folks about the Grande Prairie hospital. I would question that if he is so concerned about it, why has he not approached me for a conversation, with my open-door policy?

Mr. Fraser: I appreciate the open door, but it's also open aisle, and this is question period.

The last construction manager left the project in part because of the large number of change orders and design clarifications, changes that the manager claimed weren't properly accounted for in the funding. This means that we're likely going to see the cost of this project moving higher, and a new construction manager will want to make sure the province actually commits the necessary funds. In addition, given that the previous manager was treated the way he was treated, the new manager will probably ask for a premium to offset the risk of a public fight with the minister. To the same minister: will you detail to this House the additional cost overruns, and will you admit that your treatment of the previous contractor will make completion of this project more difficult?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. minister.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, as we looked at this project – and the construction project contract was signed in 2016 – both sides agreed to both the scope of the project and the cost of the project. Both groups signed that contract and agreed that that was completely reasonable. We have a situation now where we want to move ahead and get this project done, so we have taken the actions that we've taken in order to make sure the people of Grande Prairie have a hospital as quickly and effectively as possible. We will shortly have a construction manager in place and move forward from there as quickly as possible, and we are pleased to be able to say that.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mountain Pine Beetle Control and Wildfire Prevention

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry. There has been a large influx of mountain pine beetle

into the Jasper area in recent years. Now we are seeing large areas around Hinton being impacted by the beetle. What is your department doing to fight this pest that threatens our pristine forests?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. The fact is that successive federal governments have not adequately addressed this issue in Jasper national park. Through my department we're active on a mountain pine beetle working group with stakeholders in the Hinton-Edson area and other orders of government to co-ordinate efforts to control the pest. The Member for West Yellowhead is in that group, as are local governments and forestry companies. To date the government has invested more than \$500 million to address this concern, and more recently we called on the federal government to help contribute to this fight, just as they do for pests that have affected forests in eastern Canada.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Minister. Given that thousands of Albertans rely on our forests for jobs and that more than 70 communities rely on the forest industry, how are you working with the industry to ensure that this pest doesn't impact the jobs and prosperity of our communities?

Mr. Carlier: Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to continuing aggressive survey and control activities to address the mountain pine beetle and to maintain a vibrant forest industry. Our 2017 budget maintained funding at about \$25 million for those activities, with about 70 per cent of those funds going to the Edson forest area, with the main goal of protecting provincial resources. We've also given a grant to FRI Research to study the mountain pine beetle so that our policies are informed by science and the best available data. As always, we co-ordinate our efforts with stakeholders in the forestry sector to ensure the most effective and co-ordinated use of provincial resources.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Minister. Given that the trees that are killed by these beetles increase the risk of wildfires and given that there are increasingly large sections of forest impacted by this beetle, what are you doing to ensure that the beetle-impacted communities are safe from wildfires?

Mr. Carlier: Mr. Speaker, community safety is always the top priority when it comes to forest and wildfire management. The best way to fight fires is to prevent them in the first place. I'm proud that this government more than tripled funding for FireSmart initiatives. The FireSmart program helps communities and residents reduce the threat of wildfire through things like vegetation and fuel management, public education, and emergency planning. Furthermore, we updated our laws to address things like the use of fireworks and exploding targets, which increase the risk of fires during dry conditions. We have extensive contracts with firefighters and heavy equipment operators should the need arise. We have agreements with other provinces, states, and countries.

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

Emergency Medical Worker Wait Times in Hospitals

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, 650,000 hours spent by two paramedics in Alberta emergency rooms in 2016 with their ambulance out of service waiting to transfer care to the emergency room staff, four times longer than the best standard; 135,000 hours of overtime of paramedics in 2016. This summer our

survey of paramedics got the response that there is increased frustration, that their patients' health and their own continues to be compromised, as is confidence in their leadership. To the minister: what has changed since 2016 in hallway waiting times?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. We are incredibly proud of the paramedics and all EMS professionals and the work that they do every day to ensure quality care for Albertans. Last year our dispatch system handled more than half a million requests for service. Certainly, demand is up, and despite the significant increase in calls, response times have remained steady. We know there's absolutely more work to do. That's why we increased the budget for EMS by \$23 million. That's why we're getting more boots on the ground. That's why we're expanding community paramedicine, and we won't let up.

Dr. Swann: That's all very interesting, but what has changed in hallway wait times?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

2:10

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Some of the work we've done to ensure EMS professionals are being used more effectively is reducing the use of ambulances doing interfacility transfers; building new long-term care beds to ensure that there are appropriate places for folks who are waiting in hospital for placement, to ensure that residents who need to access those beds in emergency rooms have a way to do so; encouraging crews to consolidate patients so that fewer crews are waiting in hospital. We know that there is more work to be done, but as we've seen under previous governments, firing nurses, closing hospitals won't do the job. It is something that you can close things quickly, but it takes time to build. There is more to do.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Dr. Swann: Again to the minister: has anyone in management been held accountable for this continued waste of resources and manpower?

Ms Hoffman: Thank you for the question. Certainly, there are a number of issues that we've been working diligently to address. Actually, indeed, I believe that all of the recommendations that the member opposite brought forward are initiatives that we are implementing, Mr. Speaker, and already had been prior to the release of his recommendations. More is absolutely to be done. One of the reasons why we're in this situation is because we lack acute-care hospital space where it's most needed. That's why we're building the Calgary cancer hospital. That's why we're building a new hospital in Edmonton on the south side. That's why we're building the Grande Prairie hospital. We need to invest. The Official Opposition wants to slash billions of dollars from the budget. That would only make things worse.

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

Provincial Budget Revenue Forecasts

(continued)

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On page 84 of the NDP budget this spring it says: "Beginning in 2021, additional revenue resulting from the federally-imposed carbon price tied to the construction of the Trans Mountain Pipeline will be used to support

vital public services.” Does that continue to be the case? Will the increase in the carbon tax to \$50 a tonne continue to be implemented in order to “support vital public services”?

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. Our budget is not tied to the federal increases in the carbon levy. Our Premier was very clear that until Trans Mountain pipeline construction is well under way, we have removed and pulled out of the federal climate leadership plan. Quite frankly, without Alberta there is no federal plan. I can tell you that our Premier and our government will continue fighting for Trans Mountain. We've been strong advocates. We've supported Keystone XL with 50,000 barrels per day because we need better prices for our top-notch resources.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the hon. the minister just said that a planned increase in the carbon tax is, quote, not part of the NDP's budget, end quote. Page 84 of that budget says that the government is banking on a 67 per cent increase in carbon tax revenues. Why did the minister just contradict the black-and-white words in the budget presented and voted on by his government?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me be clear. Our path to balance is intact, and the member opposite should look at our last budget. Now, our Finance minister will provide clear evidence at the appropriate time that it is intact. Let's be clear that we are fighting to get the Trans Mountain pipeline built and that it will get built. Team Failure across the aisle there wants to see this project fail, with 37,000 jobs lost and more than \$15 billion to the national economy. I wonder when the members opposite will stop cheering for this pipeline and our energy sector to fail.

Mr. Kenney: Albertans would be forgiven for not understanding the position of the government, Mr. Speaker. The government is claiming that it will ensure the construction of the Trans Mountain pipeline and that if it is constructed, there will be a 67 per cent increase in the carbon tax, but now it's telling us that there may not be a 67 per cent increase in the carbon tax. So which is it? Should we believe the budget or what the government is saying in the House today?

Mr. Bilous: Mr. Speaker, we're very proud of the fact that we have reduced the deficit by \$3 billion. We are on track to balance the budget by 2023. That will continue. In due time the Finance minister will make clear that our budget is intact. What is interesting is – let's look at the history of the Leader of the Opposition when he was in Ottawa: six straight deficit budgets, a \$56 billion deficit in just one year. He added \$145 billion to our national debt, and \$309 billion have gone on interest payments alone. Pretty rich taking advice from the opposition.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, a few minutes ago the Premier claimed that the construction of Trans Mountain was not factored into the government's budget projections, but a Global News headline the day the budget was presented says: Alberta factoring in Trans Mountain pipeline in budget forecasts. They reported that because the Finance minister said, quote: we've built the revenue associated with higher prices from Trans Mountain into the budget because that's what everybody believes will happen. Why did the Finance minister say that the budget was based on the completion of Trans

Mountain in the spring but the Premier claimed that that was not the case today? Why does the government not understand its own budget?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll say it again for the hon. member that our path to balance is intact, that we will have and we have a clear path to balance by 2023. The difference between this side of the House and that side of the House is that we are not going to fire 4,000 teachers and 4,000 nurses and give a \$700 million tax break to the richest 1 per cent of Albertans. We're fighting for Albertans, we're standing up for our energy sector, and we will continue to do that.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I feel for the hon. minister – I understand the bafflegab and the attacks and the distractions – because he's incapable of explaining this profound contradiction in the government's fiscal plan. According to the Finance minister – I just quoted him – his budget is based on higher royalties coming from the completion of Trans Mountain. Not my words, his. According to page 84 of the budget it's based on a 67 per cent increase in the carbon tax, a \$2 billion increase in revenues. Is the government now saying that all of that additional revenue has been . . .

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for asking the same question yet again. I'll give him the same answer, that we have cut our deficit by \$3 billion. We are demonstrating that we can invest in Albertans, that we can invest in front-line services like education and health care. Unlike the members opposite, who would fire 4,000 teachers and fire 4,000 nurses, we are showing a clear path to balance while supporting small businesses and the business community and our energy sector across this province. We have their backs. The opposition would let them fail.

The Speaker: I believe we are at the second supplemental.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the NDP's so-called path to balance takes us to a projected \$96 billion debt in 2023, but that's based on \$2 billion in additional carbon tax revenue and additional royalties from a higher price after the completion of Trans Mountain. Now the government is saying that neither of those things are in the budget or the fiscal plan. Fine. You know, events happen and governments change policy. That's okay, but can they tell us, then: how are they going to make up for the billions of additional revenue that they say they've now taken out of their fiscal plan?

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll thank the member. Again, as I've mentioned to the hon. member, our Finance minister will provide clear evidence at the appropriate time and demonstrate that our budget, our path to balance, remains intact. But what we do have in front of us are the numbers, the fact that our economy is growing. In fact, last year Alberta led the country in GDP growth of 4.9 per cent. Part of the reason is because we had a choice, and four years ago, when the price of oil collapsed, we chose to invest: invest in Albertans, invest in our economy, invest in health care. Members opposite would have fired teachers and nurses and hurt our . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, I'd like to stop the clock for a moment, please. I'll be back with you.

Could I have a table officer here.

I'm sorry, hon. member. Please proceed.

Provincial Revenue and Carbon Pricing

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, on April 10 of this year the hon. Finance minister said, quote: we built pipeline revenues into our path to balance projections; we're confident all the pipelines will be built, so we're just going to keep going down this road. Unquote. The government's fiscal plan: is it still based on an assumption that Trans Mountain will be completed, and is it not therefore evident that it's still based on a planned 67 per cent increase in the carbon tax?

2:20

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier has been clear as far as our position on the federal price on carbon and the fact that Alberta has withdrawn its support from that plan until the Trans Mountain pipeline construction is well under way. What I can tell you is that we know that Enbridge's line 3 is well under way, that the pipeline was approved, and that this is creating good jobs right now, today. We know that Keystone XL is proceeding next year. We've committed to supporting that project with 50,000 barrels per day because we know that this project alone will help reduce the differential and get Alberta producers a better price.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Kenney: Given that the minister just said that the budget was based on the federal climate plan and given that that plan is predicated on a \$20-a-tonne carbon tax this year, why are Albertans paying a \$30-a-tonne carbon tax? Why does the government think that that'll show Ottawa by imposing a higher tax on Albertans than the one that their close friend and ally Justin Trudeau is asking for?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll encourage the hon. member to get out from under the dome and talk to some companies like Exxon Mobil and other major energy industry leaders who have a fund to be advocating in favour of a price on carbon. You know why? Because these companies have invested hundreds of millions of dollars into energy efficiency, reducing their greenhouse gas emissions, increasing their efficiencies, decreasing their costs. They are world leaders, and they celebrate and agree with us on our price on carbon because it is getting us to where we want to go. They do not want to go back into the Dark Ages.

Mr. Kenney: Modern Alberta is the Dark Ages according to the NDP, a government that has members that praise the socialist dictatorship in Venezuela. You can't make this up.

Mr. Speaker, the government says that it's pulling out of the federal climate plan. Will it therefore join the governments of Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, and New Brunswick in challenging the constitutionality of the federal carbon tax plan, which this government claims it's pulling out of?

Mr. Bilous: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, Saskatchewan is the last province I'm going to take advice from. If we look at the tale of Saskatchewan and the choices they made four years ago, when they brought in an austerity budget, they cut services across the board, they fired thousands of teachers and nurses, and they increased taxes. What is the result of that? Last year Saskatchewan created 1,000 new jobs. In Alberta we created 90,000 new full-time jobs, most of those in the private sector. I can tell you that Alberta is leading when it comes to manufacturing, exports, and growth.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Refugee Claimant Driver's Licence Eligibility

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituency office works closely with refugee families that are moving to Alberta and are fleeing violence and persecution so that they can begin a new chapter in their life. To the Minister of Service Alberta: what is the province doing to remove those barriers that they may face when they're trying to settle?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for my first question in this House as a minister. I couldn't be prouder to answer a question about how newcomers are a valued part of Alberta in our province and deserve the same opportunities to succeed as every other Albertan. I've heard from many new Albertans who are unable to work or even to drive a pregnant partner to the hospital because they couldn't drive. That's not right, and that's why we took action. I'm so proud to say that since June of this year our government has allowed refugee claimants to get a driver's licence in Alberta, and I'm proud of the work that our government has done on that point.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the minister once again: please explain how this will benefit newcomer families in my constituency and across this entire province.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We have the right to live in a province that respects and celebrates diversity and where we can all belong. Refugee claimants endure a considerable amount of hardship and loss to get to Canada, and they shouldn't be forced to face unnecessary barriers for building a better life for their families once they get here to Canada. Many jobs require employees to have an Alberta driver's licence, so waiting unnecessarily to apply for a driver's licence can also mean waiting for work. That's not something I support. With this change Alberta joins the rest of the country in helping refugees get to work as soon as possible so that they can support themselves.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After a Syrian refugee brought this issue to my attention, I found out that Alberta made changes back in 2012, under the previous government, and that they no longer allowed refugee claimants to obtain a driver's licence. How did it occur that Alberta became such an outlier in this area?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Malkinson: Well, thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. As the member correctly stated, the changes made in 2012, under the previous Conservative government, made us an outlier in Canada. Those changes happened while at the same time the Leader of the Official Opposition was in Ottawa cutting health benefits to refugee claimants, and apparently his Conservative colleagues here in Alberta were following his example. At the same time, he was detaining refugees in jails, described as a former three-star hotel with a fence around it. He even went so far as to separate mothers and children in these facilities.

Instead of putting up barriers for newcomers, Mr. Speaker, we are removing them and helping them build a new life for themselves.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Dementia Care

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Now, I've been pushing this government to come up with a proper plan for dementia care for nearly two years, but Albertans continue to struggle. The dementia strategy put forward on the last business day before Christmas simply is not good enough. Albertans are right to question the NDP's commitment to dementia care when the word "dementia" is mentioned only a single time in the 165-page business plan for the government of Alberta and exactly zero times in the 172-page fiscal plan. To the Minister of Health: is your dementia strategy working, and how do we know?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our targeted and strategic approach will lead to quality care, timely diagnosis, better brain health, and stronger community supports for years to come. I want to commend everyone in the community who was involved in this. We had experts in public health, and we had people with lived experience. Albertan Roger Marple said: "As a person living with dementia, I have never felt more optimistic. I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the provincial government on the release of the dementia strategy." I really want to say that we're fighting for Roger, and we're happy to work with him to help address the needs that he has and that his family has.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Those are a lot of words, but I'll simply ask again: what specifically has changed in the time between December 22, when you released the dementia strategy, and today?

Ms Hoffman: I'll go back even a little bit before that, Mr. Speaker. I think it's important to note that since 2015 roughly almost \$7 million has been invested in measures specifically to give families tools to support their loved ones living in a home or in the community, including expanding the First Link program, almost \$2 million; mental health first aid for seniors, more than half a million dollars; and we specifically have dementia-trained nurses through Health Link. If anyone calls 811, they can get support from dementia nurses right over the phone. These are a number of important initiatives that were driven by the community to help support the community.

Mr. Clark: Mr. Speaker, again, with respect, those are not net new dollars, and it's not like we did nothing for people with dementia before this government came into power.

I'm going to ask about stigma as something the minister mentioned. Given that stigma continues to be a challenge both for people living with dementia and those who fear the stigma and therefore do not seek a diagnosis, again to the Minister of Health: I would like to know what specific, measurable efforts have been undertaken to reduce stigma in the 10 months since your strategy was released, and what are the results?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, we're proud to work with people with lived experience and with folks who are experts in public health around this important initiative, including the appropriate use of antipsychotics. We are working to reduce stigma, as the member mentioned, with partners like the Alzheimer Society. There is a significant effort under way, and we're proud to work with the community and support them. The Official Opposition wants to fire nurses and teachers, 4,000 teachers, and give a \$700 million tax break to the richest 1 per cent. We're proud to work with the community and to invest in the things that matter to them and to support Albertans living with dementia.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Government Spending

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I spent this summer connecting with my constituents, and I found time to consult with Albertans on the state of our province's finances. What I heard repeatedly was that they are very concerned with the government's wild spending ways. Since 2015 the NDP's unrestrained borrowing has ballooned Alberta's debt by 668 per cent to \$50 billion. That is a burden of \$50,000 per family of four. To the minister. Debt means more in interest costs, less in services. What is your government's plan to get Alberta's debt back under control?

2:30

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me be clear that we have a path to balance. Our path to balance is intact. We have that in addition to the fact that we've reduced our deficit by \$3 billion. I'm very proud of the work we're doing investing in critical infrastructure in this province, which is helping our small businesses as far as growth goes. I'm not going to take advice from the members opposite. We've heard that the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills had said that their plan is going to hurt, is going to hurt Albertans. Well, you know what? There's a different choice, one where we invest in Albertans, invest in infrastructure, and get . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Barnes: Given that many of the Albertans I spoke to noted that since the NDP raised personal and corporate taxes, they have actually brought in less revenue and given that stakeholders overwhelmingly favour the UCP's plan to conduct a thorough review of government regulations with an eye towards meaningful reductions of red tape and a focus on free enterprise, calling it thoughtful, reasonable, and justified, to the Finance minister: will you commit to a full review of provincial regulations and focus on free enterprise, or will Albertans have to wait for a change in government?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd love to know how many constituents of the member opposite like the fact that they're proposing a \$700 million tax cut to the richest 1 per cent of Albertans, which means that the majority of his constituents would see nothing.

Mr. Speaker, we've invested in this province, and we are seeing the benefits of our government's decisions through the 90,000 new full-time jobs that were created last year, most of those in the private sector. We've seen businesses expand in the province. Flair Air moved their headquarters out of British Columbia over to Alberta. We see Nexen. We see Amazon, Champion Petfoods . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, given that NDP unrestrained spending levels lead to massive borrowing, which leads to skyrocketing interest costs, and given that annual government interest costs already total \$2 billion, nearly \$2,000 a year per family of four, and given that \$2 billion is more than most departments spend each year, making the department of debt the fifth largest department in this government, to the minister: will you acknowledge that your undisciplined spending plan, six credit downgrades, and now rising interest rates are jeopardizing the futures of Albertan families?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll tell you what: Albertans pay \$11 billion less in taxes than the next lowest taxed jurisdiction in Canada. Eleven billion dollars: that's with the carbon levy.

But I'll tell you what else. Let's review here. If the member opposite dislikes deficits, let's talk about what his leader did when he was in Ottawa: six straight deficit budgets, a \$56 billion deficit in just one year. I'm surprised you're not applauding. This was your leader. Mr. Speaker, he added \$145 billion to our national debt and \$309 billion in interest payments. I think the member opposite . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

High-risk Offenders

Alberta Review Board Decision on Patient Transfer

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, on April 15 of 2014 Matthew De Grood murdered Kaitlin Perras, Jordan Segura, Lawrence Hong, Josh Hunter, and Zackariah Rathwell, five young people less than five years ago. Under the Not Criminally Responsible Reform Act it is the responsibility of the province to pursue a high-risk designation. To the Minister of Justice: does this government deem the worst mass murderer in Calgary's history to be high risk?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Of course, as I've said, the entire province was shocked by those tragic incidents. This province lost five young people, and I think it's of great concern to everyone throughout the province. As I've said before, those decisions are made by independent Crown prosecutors. They are based on the facts and the law. That law is governed at the federal level. The member opposite clearly has a concern about the way the law is written. I would suggest that she write to the federal government about that.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

First supplemental.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have written the federal minister. I'll table that letter later.

Given that the families of the victims have to live their lives with permanent scars of grief and loss and given that the province is responsible for the Not Criminally Responsible Reform Act and the Alberta Review Board – facts – and given that Albertans have been communicating their concerns about the very real chance that a violent murderer will be released from our justice system, Minister, what are you doing to ensure that this individual will not walk freely in Alberta's communities?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, I completely understand the concerns around this case. I don't think that there is any Albertan in the province who doesn't feel for the unimaginable loss that these families have suffered. The member opposite is incorrect. The province is required to set up a review board based on, again, the federal legislation. We are governed by that law, and we must abide by it. I do understand that the families have some concerns about the process, and I . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, I'll help her out. Section 672.72 of the Criminal Code states that within 15 days any party may appeal against a disposition or placement decision made by the review board. Given that the administration of justice is within the provincial jurisdiction and that this minister is totally wrong to claim yesterday and just now that this is a federal process, why has this minister refused to listen to the victims' families and do something about the review board's decision?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, the member opposite has just cited the Criminal Code, which, as all members in this House should know, is, in fact, federal legislation.

Mrs. Pitt: Provincial jurisdiction.

Ms Ganley: It's federal legislation, Mr. Speaker. She can yell and scream and heckle me all she wants, but this is a very serious case, and I think it should be taken seriously and nonpolitically. I am happy to work with the families on the things within provincial jurisdiction, but the Criminal Code is not one of those things.

Renewable Energy Environmental Concerns

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, it appears that once more the current NDP government is borrowing from the UCP playbook. This time they have decided that it would be a great idea if renewable projects were required to make the land whole again. Now, as of September 14 of this year, there will be reclamation directives that need to be followed. Minister, why is there still no equivalent of the oil and gas industry funded orphan well fund included in the directive despite landowners and the Property Rights Advocate repeatedly asking for one?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're very proud of the projects and legislation we have brought forward as part of our renewable plan to replace 30 per cent with renewable electricity by 2030, our 30 by 30 plan. When we brought forward that legislation, we also brought in tools for landowners to negotiate with the companies who wish to be proponents of the projects, and there are

a number of tools available to landowners. It is not subject to the Surface Rights Board, as is oil and gas, but there is a lot of help . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
First supplemental.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this government provided lucrative incentives for renewable companies to set up and operate in Alberta, Minister, why has it taken three years before you have finally acknowledged landowners' and the opposition's concerns, before you issued these new directives?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we do a lot with landowners, both in my ministry and in my colleague's Ministry of Environment and Parks. First and foremost, when we talk about oil and gas, we have a certain set of rules, and when we talk about Environment and Parks, there's another set of rules. A number of the rules are administered by the AER on both of our behalves, but there are other ones that fall outside of that. Again, there is assistance for landowners, should it be through the Farmers' Advocate or through the workbooks and tools that we have provided for renewable projects.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this government has continued to make things harder for Alberta's farmers and ranchers and given that I'm sure the minister of agriculture agrees with the seriousness of this issue, Minister, in this directive's best practices guideline why is it that the Alberta clubroot management plan is the guideline that only should be adhered to when the possibility exists that contamination could occur?

2:40

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, we've listened to a number of folks in all sectors, including the agriculture sector. When we did our climate leadership plan and the carbon levy, we excluded farm fuel, as an example of one of the things that helps. We've also provided regulation and legislation to help farms, for example, get solar panels, to work on irrigation and other energy efficient projects. We've invested \$225 million on innovation projects just in the ag sector alone to support research, commercialization, and investment. We continue to listen to our farmers, as we . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The Member for Calgary-Bow.

Provincial Fiscal Policies

Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Budgeting is about priorities. Given the collapse in the price of oil our government must find savings. To the Minister of Economic Development and Trade: can he give us examples of what savings he's found?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. It's true that when the price of oil collapsed, our government had some difficult decisions to make. Now, we could have followed the advice of the opposition and fired 4,000 teachers,

4,000 nurses, and recklessly cut services that Albertans rely on. These cuts, as the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills has said, are going to hurt. But instead we made a decision to carefully find savings and also to invest in much-needed schools and hospitals. We cut government waste created by the PCs like the sky palace and lavish golf memberships. Our plan is working. Our GDP is up. Our economy is recovering. Jobs are up. Manufacturing is up. Exports are up. I'm very proud of the work that our government is doing standing up and fighting for Albertans.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans were tired of the sense of entitlement by the previous Conservative government: private jets, the sky palace, runaway salaries for their insider friends, and through-the-roof hospitality charges. Can the minister tell us what he's done to correct these issues and how expenses compare to the previous Conservative government?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since we formed government we've been bringing salaries in line with other provinces. We've cut perks that certain executives have had like access to private health care. In fact, if you compare travel and hospitality expenses with the previous government, we've brought expenses down by a whopping 933 per cent. Now, while we work to eliminate the waste that the previous PC government exuded on a daily basis and get the budget priorities right, we know that Conservatives only care about a massive \$700 million tax cut for the richest 1 per cent of . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
Second supplemental.

Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand that beyond cutting Conservative government waste, our government has found additional savings, savings that were achieved without firing thousands of teachers and nurses. Can the minister tell us more about those details?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. We also extended the salary freeze for management and non-union employees. That saved us about \$29 million. We strengthened the hiring restraint. That has saved us over \$107 million. Now, all in all, we found about \$750 million in savings without firing 4,000 teachers, 4,000 nurses, which is what the Conservatives are looking to do. As a result, we've cut the deficit by \$3 billion, and we're going to continue to work hard to find those savings.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we will continue with Members' Statements in 30 seconds.

Members' Statements (continued)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

Day of Arbreen

Ms Kazim: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday marked the Day of Arbreen, which occurs 40 days after the Day of Ashura, when Husayn ibn Ali, the grandson of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, was martyred in the Battle of Karbala. Husayn ibn Ali

was a seventh century revolutionary leader who sacrificed his life for social justice. The Day of Arbaeen is the day on which Husayn's family returned to the land of Karbala to properly bid farewell and grieve their loved ones.

Today, 1,400 years later, the Day of Arbaeen is mourned by millions of people around the world. It is a day to pay tribute to the sacrifice of Husayn for social justice. Large marches are organized in cities across the world to symbolize the eternal nature of Husayn's revolution and to show that they stand for social justice, honour, and peace.

Yesterday the march of Arbaeen was also hosted in Calgary by the Hussaini Association of Calgary. To commemorate Arbaeen, people from all over the globe participate in the tradition of walking 80 kilometres from Najaf to Karbala every year. Volunteers distribute free food and drinks to those undertaking the pilgrimage and offer places to relax, wash, and sleep.

Arbaeen is the largest peaceful gathering in the world. The number of pilgrims has risen to 25 million despite the threat of terrorists who have vowed to attack this stand for peace and social justice.

As the Minister of Culture and Tourism said yesterday, "No one should have to worry about their safety when they . . . worship." I am proud to be part of a government that is committed to standing up against intolerance and ensuring that Alberta is a place for all people of all faiths.

Thank you.

International Trade

Mr. Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, over the summer I was honoured to be chosen by the Leader of the Official Opposition to be the trade critic, and with the inaction of this NDP government on numerous trade files, it's going to be a busy role. I've worked in a federal Conservative government that signed over 50 free trade deals, each one gaining more market access and economic opportunities for Canadian businesses and families. I've represented Canada on numerous trade missions, promoting free trade, open market access, and reduced trade barriers for Canada in Hong Kong, Beijing, Moscow, Istanbul, and the United States.

Mr. Speaker, over the last few years we've come to an unfavourable position in Canadian trade relations, stemming from the NDP-Trudeau alliance. CETA and the CPTPP were negotiated years ago by the former federal Conservative government, both yielding huge benefits to Canada's exporting industries and workers. However, it took over three years for Canada to sign off on one, the trans-Pacific partnership. Both these trade deals are important for Alberta, and to use a sports analogy, the walk-off home run for a Team Canada win happened years ago. The NDP government just needed to convince their ally Prime Minister Trudeau to sign the ball.

Regarding NAFTA, Mr. Speaker, this government did a disservice to Albertans. There were no economic gains, no demands by this government. No expectations were set for Canada going into this negotiation. The best this NDP government could do was to join the media commentators and decide that a do-no-harm outcome was the best outcome for Canada. That's not how you win at baseball, and that's not how you win in free trade negotiations.

Mr. Speaker, under this government we don't have new pipelines, our rail lines are clogged, we can't get our products to market, and when we do, there's a massive discount that we receive. The NDP has recently put on a show of caring about pipelines, but it doesn't . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Deputy Premier.

Bill 21

An Act to Protect Patients

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to rise and introduce Bill 21, An Act to Protect Patients.

Mr. Speaker, our government believes that women and all Albertans deserve to feel safe while accessing medical services. Albertans place their trust and even their lives with their health care providers. They must know that without a doubt they are in safe hands. This past spring I was made aware of a situation where a doctor was convicted of a sexual assault and got his licence back. When I dug into this situation, I was frustrated to learn that the tools available to the regulatory colleges here in Alberta were inadequate to protect patients.

Bill 21 will strengthen protection for patients from sexual abuse and sexual misconduct by regulated health professionals. I am so proud to be able to move on this with first reading for Bill 21, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 21 read a first time]

2:50

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to table some of the letters and technical submissions that my colleagues and I have written to the government of Canada with respect to Bill C-69 and Bill C-48. The first of these letters is dated as far back as April 12, 2017, the latest just a few weeks ago. While this doesn't record the numerous conversations and meetings that have been held with our federal colleagues, it does in fact establish a timeline of how long our government has been speaking up on behalf of Albertans on these important matters.

The Speaker: Any more reports? The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of an e-mail correspondence from the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada. I'd like to highlight the part in her letter in response to the Matthew de Grood case here in Alberta: "The Minister of Justice and Solicitor General of Alberta, who is the appropriate authority in this regard." I think the minister is wrong.

I would also like to make a second tabling, the requisite copies of a copy of the Criminal Code, that states under Grounds for Appeal in section 672.72(1): "Any party may appeal against a disposition made by a court or a Review Board, or a placement decision made by a Review Board, to the court of appeal of the province . . ."

The Speaker: Move along, hon. member. They can read it themselves.

Mrs. Pitt: Sorry. That's just an excerpt. That's all I have, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Are there any other members? Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a letter to table from Mrs. Zoe Bleau. An excerpt from the letter:

We are desperately pleading that [my] Mom be put into the lodge in the first available opening. She is in dire need! If Mom had been placed in the Bonnylodge sooner, she would not have been performing household chores that could put her at risk of a fall. Also, in the event of a fall, she would have been in a safe place where . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, the same issue. I'm sure they're going to read it.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, are there any other reports? The Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the appropriate number of copies of a newspaper article by Ms Corbella from the *Calgary Herald* discussing the neglect of this government when it comes to Bill C-69 and the hypocrisy that we've seen from them when it comes to Trans Mountain. I would encourage everybody to read it. It's a good article.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I believe there were no points of order today, so I believe we are at Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

The Acting Chair: I'd like to call the committee to order.

Bill 8

Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2018

The Acting Chair: Are there any speakers to the bill?

Seeing and hearing none, are we ready for the question on Bill 8, the Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2018?

[The clauses of Bill 8 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Acting Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

The Hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Chair. At this time I'd like to move that the committee rise and report Bill 8.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Mr. Hinkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 8.

The Acting Speaker: Having heard the report, are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker: Opposed? That's carried.

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

Bill 19

An Act to Improve the Affordability and Accessibility of Post-secondary Education

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to move second reading of Bill 19, An Act to Improve the Affordability and Accessibility of Post-secondary Education.

Our government is committed to fair legislation that improves the lives of all Albertans, including the many postsecondary students that study here in our province. This includes our proposed bill, that will update the Post-secondary Learning Act to ensure that Albertans have access to affordable, high-quality postsecondary education now and in the future.

Back in 2015 our government committed to stable and predictable funding for postsecondary institutions. We also began a tuition and fees freeze that has kept tuition at 2014-2015 levels. This freeze has since been extended through the current 2018-2019 academic year. Because we've frozen tuition at 2014-2015 levels, the average undergraduate degree program tuition in Alberta is now more affordable and is now among the lowest when you compare average tuition across the country.

This has had a substantial impact on the lives of learners and their families all across our province. During the four years that our tuition and fees freeze has been in place, we've worked diligently to consult with stakeholder groups, including students in postsecondary institutions, to develop a long-term strategy to protect and strengthen our postsecondary sector. This bill represents the culmination of years of work by our government and by the staff of Advanced Education.

Now, Madam Speaker, those keen observers of legislative history will recall that I was questioned on when we would release the results of our consultation on tuition. When asked, I said that we would deliver those results in the fullness of time. Now, at the time the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster heckled me and informed me that the fullness of time, as he understood it, meant never. In fact, I don't blame him for thinking that, because when he was a member of the government, they had a strong tradition, a proud tradition of making a bunch of promises that they never delivered on. So it's natural for him to think that when he heard the phrase "in the fullness of time," that was the old Tory way of telling people it was never going to happen.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

That has changed under this government, Madam Speaker. When we make a promise, we deliver it. We promised to review tuition and come forward with a framework, and in fact we have delivered it today.

Bill 19 proposes a number of updates to the Post-secondary Learning Act that will set our province's postsecondary learning system up for continued success. This bill will create the checks and balances needed to better control tuition and fees for domestic and for international students.

First, in order to ensure that tuition costs remain affordable and do not spike, we will be tying tuition increases for domestic students and apprentices to the consumer price index. This will mean that the average tuition costs at each institution cannot increase more than the consumer price index, with each program capped by a 10 per cent increase maximum per year. Secondly, we're updating the bill to give the Minister of Advanced Education the authority to

order future tuition and fees freezes so that the government can keep the cost of postsecondary education affordable in the face of an unexpected economic downturn.

3:00

Finally, this bill will also provide the regulatory authority needed to implement the new tuition framework that will deliver on our promise of affordable and predictable postsecondary costs for domestic and for international students.

Passage of this bill will give our government the authority to enact our proposed extension of the tuition and fees freeze for a fifth and final year through 2019-2020. This bill will also allow us to ensure that postsecondary costs don't spike once the freeze ends in 2020-2021, when we institute a new tuition framework for domestic and international students. This new tuition framework will formally remove market modifiers put in place by the previous government and will place unprecedented caps on the amount of tuition that can be raised through the regulation.

We're also capping mandatory noninstructional fees. These fees are often used for things like health services, athletic facilities, and the like and have been a point of contention that was mentioned repeatedly in our consultations. We heard the voices of students during our consultations through both formal and informal consultations, so to keep students, our largest stakeholders, a part of the conversation, institutions will not be able to create new mandatory noninstructional fees without student approval.

Our changes to the tuition framework will also impact apprentices, who will now be part of the PSLA for the first time. As we're doing with postsecondary tuition, we're capping apprenticeship tuition so that increases cannot exceed the consumer price index.

Madam Speaker, our government is also taking unprecedented action when it comes to international student tuition. For the thousands of international students who study and live in Alberta, our government is removing the fear of unknown changes in tuition and fees by creating a tuition guarantee. With this guarantee international students will be told the tuition cost for each year of study before they accept admission in a program. That way international students will have the peace of mind of knowing what their education will cost and will be able to study in Alberta without the fear of unpredictable tuition spikes.

In addition to the introduction of new protections which will keep tuition and fees affordable, we'll also be modernizing and reorganizing the postsecondary system to create increased access for students across Alberta. Since our government was elected in 2015, we have received requests from many institutions asking us to grant approvals that would allow the institutions to facilitate student success and ensure that students across our great province have access to high-quality education close to home. Therefore, we have allowed Red Deer College and Grande Prairie Regional College to pursue degree-granting status and have moved both institutions along the path to becoming universities. We also approved the Alberta College of Art and Design's request to change to university status to better reflect its programming and mandate. This legislation will formalize these changes and will ensure that the postsecondary system continues to adapt to best serve the needs of students, communities, and the province.

In addition to these changes at these institutions, this bill will also update the current six-sector model to better reflect the unique roles of each sector and to describe the sectors in terms that are relatable and easier to understand. All of the proposed updates to the roles and mandates outlined in the bill serve four purposes. First, they increase collaboration between sectors, creating new programming for students and increasing accessibility. Second, they clarify mandates, ensuring that a wide variety of programming from

foundational learning up to graduate degree programming is available in all regions. They ensure research across the province is co-ordinated and aligned with the Alberta Research and Innovation framework, and they increase degree access for Albertans, especially those in rural areas, because in certain circumstances comprehensive community colleges will now be able to offer degrees autonomously.

As you know, our government is taking steps to ensure that boards at all agencies, boards, and commissions are as diverse and as varied as our province. In fact, Madam Speaker, you'll remember that when we took office, the public members at our postsecondary institutions were comprised two-thirds of men. I'm happy to say that as of today the majority of public members appointed to the boards of governors at postsecondary institutions across the province are women, which is a better reflection of the student population that they serve, also a majority of women.

To ensure that boards of governors at PSIs follow this larger government trend to increase diversity and variance, we're making changes to update representation so that the unique voices of all of our stakeholder groups can be represented. We're proposing changes so that all publicly funded postsecondary institutions have two student representatives so that our largest stakeholder group, students, have an amplified voice on their campuses. This bill will also allow for an additional public member to be added to the board at all institutions so that diverse voices and underrepresented populations can be heard.

All of these changes are necessary to keep Alberta's postsecondary learning system affordable, accessible for all, and functioning at the highest level. This bill demonstrates our government's commitment to improve the lives of students in our province so that they can achieve their educational goals, get good jobs, and contribute to Alberta's diversifying economy. Albertans deserve a postsecondary system that provides high-quality education that's accessible and affordable for all, and this bill delivers on that promise.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Highwood.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise in the House today to speak on Bill 19, An Act to Improve the Affordability and Accessibility of Post-secondary Education. As the UCP caucus critic for Advanced Education I'm happy to kick off the debate. Bill 19 will legislate an inflation-based cap on increases to domestic student and apprenticeship tuition. Tuition increases will be tied to the consumer price index. This means that postsecondary institutions will not be able to raise the average tuition past Alberta's consumer price index. From my understanding, individual programs will be able to raise tuition up to 10 per cent as long as the average, across-the-board tuition does not exceed the consumer price index. Bill 19 also gives the minister power to regulate noninstructional fees such as fees for athletic facilities and bus passes. The minister will also have regulatory authority over international students' tuition. Further, students will have a greater representation on the institutions' boards of governors as all institutions will now have at least two student representatives.

Madam Speaker, much of the bill also looks at updating the six-sector model with new names for the different types of institutions. The new names of the institutions are the comprehensive academic and research universities, undergraduate universities, polytechnic institutions, and comprehensive community colleges. Specialized arts and culture institutions and independent academic institutions keep the same name. These sectors more or less carry over from what they were called before with a few minor changes. I see nothing wrong with updating the names.

Madam Speaker, as Advanced Education critic I've had the pleasure of speaking to many students all across this beautiful province. I know the struggles that university students face. Schooling isn't cheap, and many students have to work at least one, sometimes two jobs to cover their expenses. I have a great deal of respect for university students. I know the hard work they put in. Postsecondary students have been asking for predictable tuition increases since this tuition review started, and I commend the government for listening to the students and tying the tuition to the consumer price index.

The government also took action, good action, when they increased the representation of students on postsecondary institutions at the board of governors level. Previously some institutions such as Grant MacEwan in Edmonton and Mount Royal University in Calgary only had one student representative, which would have been quite a burden for one student to carry. All institutions will now have two student representatives and a third if the school has a graduate program. I'm also pleased that the government legislated this change and that they were able to listen to the student groups.

Madam Speaker, my greatest concern, though, with this bill lies with the power this will give the minister. If Bill 19 passes, the minister will be able to control almost all revenue-generating capacity of the institutions. I believe that our postsecondary institutions should be able to make decisions independently and in the best interests of their own institutions. I do not like having so much government control.

So much of the action that the government is taking on in this legislation is up to the discretion of the minister. The minister, for example, can dictate international student tuition. Same with the mandatory noninstructional fees. The minister says that he will increase transparency and predictability for both international student tuition and noninstructional fees. I fully support this move. However, how do we know that this is the case?

3:10

The minister is asking us to trust him with these regulations. Trust him. The problem is: how can we trust this government? I don't believe that Albertans trust this government. Why should they? The government has already broken trust with Albertans over the past three and a half years on a number of occasions. The Bill 6 fiasco in the first year of the NDP mandate caused more than just a little bit of anger from Albertans, especially in rural Alberta. The increased red tape for business has made Alberta a much less economically viable place. And most of the carbon tax, which has never been campaigned on and is imposed on Albertans, is affecting jobs, household income, and day-to-day expenses for all Albertans. This government has had so many missteps since they've been elected. Why should we further trust that they'll get it right with Bill 19?

Speaking of the carbon tax, Madam Speaker, universities are on the hook to pay for the government's ideological agenda through this tax. This can be a burden costing our institutions millions of dollars every year. I hope the government understands how many instructors or teacher assistants or student services this could fund. There is also no rebate option for postsecondary institutions, so universities are forced to bear the full cost of the carbon tax. This can really affect their budgeting. At the end of the day, taxpayers are supporting the universities, so taxpayers are getting less value for the money that they give to the institutions and the universities. If the government cares about helping students and cares about increasing the amount of money institutions can provide for students, maybe they should look at repealing their carbon tax.

Speaking of budgeting, the tuition freeze will be continued through the 2019-2020 school year. A decision to earmark money

to postsecondary institutions to make up for this freeze won't be made until budget time next March, which means that we don't know for sure whether money will be made available for postsecondary institutions. It's a guessing game. The government says that they will provide the money. However, once again they're asking us to trust them, and once again we have to ask: why should we trust them?

Madam Speaker, I support the Alberta students in the province, and I'm glad that they were able to advocate effectively to tie the tuition to the consumer price index and to put some form of regulations on other fees. However, I have many concerns with this bill, and I'm very concerned with the power that will be vested and given to the minister. Therefore, at this time I have to say that I will not be supporting this bill.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 19, An Act to Improve the Affordability and Accessibility of Postsecondary Education. As with so many government bills, the name of this one is ironic. Why? Well, because the NDP's homegrown carbon tax has already created operational issues for Alberta's stellar postsecondary institutions. Quite simply, it costs them millions of dollars more to operate under this government when the NDP surprised them and all of Alberta with a carbon tax. They continue to struggle with ways to cut back so that they can incorporate Alberta's carbon tax into their budgets, and they have to figure out ways of absorbing future increases that this government will continue to add on when it adds the Trudeau carbon tax on top of Alberta's existing tax. Now the government introduces an act to improve accessibility and affordability of postsecondary education without regard for the already struggling institutions' ability to lose even more revenues.

We're concerned that the financial model the NDP is imposing on postsecondary institutions is not sustainable. The bill, if passed in the House by the majority of the NDP, is another case of unintended consequences, a theme that has occurred over the past several years. The reality is that it will very likely erode the quality of postsecondary education in Alberta. Who suffers for that, Madam Speaker? Why would an NDP government create a fiscal model that would cause this to happen? Time and again they do not think their policies through to the obvious conclusions. Curiously, these conclusions are obvious to others, but we know that short-sighted policies are something of a bit of a hallmark with this particular government, like the carbon tax itself. Wasn't that going to bring us the social licence for the Trans Mountain pipeline? We certainly heard lots about it in the first two years of this government. Now they hardly mention it except in a defensive manner when Albertans point out that the carbon tax has failed to display any form of social licence.

In fact, my newest colleague on this side of the House, the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, was able to ask representatives of the Energy ministry in committee last week if they had quantified the carbon tax. The reps, to their credit, answered honestly: no, the department had not put a dollar value on social licence. Now you will hear differently from government members. They will tell you that it is invaluable, but Albertans and constituents in Calgary-West, however, know the truth. There is no value to those 13 letters.

So you can see why I am looking at Bill 19 with a bit of a critical eye. The NDP is setting up to add more fiscal constraints on postsecondary institutes, and they just don't see it. That's why we need to point this out, and we have precious little time to do that in this Assembly, Madam Speaker.

Let's look at the long-term consequences of further constricting the budgets of postsecondaries. If they have to cut back even further, first due to the carbon tax and now because of Bill 19, they will have less funding for research, which is so critical for them, and less funding for instructors. In fact, Madam Speaker, when I was part of the heritage trust fund committee meeting just only a few days ago, there was what I believed to be a doctor or professor, a researcher, that certainly had concerns about funding for some of his projects as well, and he and others may be facing even further constraints, which for sure is a concern. If they're not offering tenure, as an example, because they cannot afford it, they will not be able to attract the kind of quality instructors that they would like.

When students are investigating their options – and remember that they have options for higher education all over the world – they may well take a pass on Alberta even if it is their home province. That would be a loss to Alberta, and how unfortunate that would be. Madam Speaker, this is a competitive sector, one of the most competitive around the globe. Students are educated about their choices, and they're mobile, especially in this era.

Bill 19 is looking to cap much of the flexibility to fund their programs, their operations, and their personnel. Restricting funding sources on top of the carbon tax is not a positive move for a government that purports to focus on affordability. It is absolutely forgetting the affordability for institutions.

Let me quickly address another concerning aspect of Bill 19, as mentioned by my colleague, and that is the amount of authority it gives the Minister of Advanced Education to set noninstructional fees in international student tuition. Handing authority to ministers is another hallmark of the NDP legislation. If Bill 19 passes, a minister can choose not to consult with postsecondary boards. The minister can make snap decisions that once again result in unintended consequences.

As this bill moves through the House, we look forward to the minister addressing these concerns if he chooses to. I would request that he particularly address the issue of competitiveness within the broad sector. Alberta has world-class institutions and other institutions that are still fairly new to the university sector, but they all need a fiscal model that lets them focus on the areas that will provide them with the greatest ability to compete in their specific areas of expertise. Madam Speaker, if Bill 19 hampers them from doing so in any way, then the concerns we are voicing today must be taken into account as the bill moves through further readings of this Assembly.

I thank you for your time, Madam Speaker.

3:20

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker, and I want to thank the Member for Calgary-West for his comments and just take a few moments to address them if I could. First of all, one of the issues that he raises in debating this bill is his concern around financial constraints that we might be placing through this bill. Now, certainly, we are limiting the amount by which tuition can increase. That is, in fact, the goal of this legislation, to promote affordability for students. Students are the number one priority of the higher education system, and we're just reinforcing that by making sure that affordability for students is the number one principle when considering the institutional budgets.

But on the matter of fiscal constraints, you know, let's talk about their record of imposing fiscal constraints on universities and colleges. It was only six years ago that the then minister of

advanced education, who currently finds himself unemployed, imposed a 7 per cent cut on the budgets of advanced education institutions all across this country. Staff were fired. Students were crammed into classrooms. Faculty had to give up their telephones, Madam Speaker.

But not only that; they weren't happy enough to make those kinds of cuts back in 2012-2013, Madam Speaker. When those guys existed as the Progressive Conservative caucus, they brought forward a shadow budget that actually proposed a \$450 million cut to the higher education sector. In fact, the last PC Premier proposed a budget before the 2015 election that cut more than \$550 million from the budgets of advanced education systems. And, you know, if they ever have the opportunity to make a budget again, we can expect those kinds of cuts to come as they pursue tax cuts for millionaires and billionaires and throw students under the bus.

Now, Madam Speaker, the Member for Calgary-West also issued some concerns about the carbon tax, and I want to just make him aware of an article that ran on a news site that's dedicated to University of Calgary news, called UToday. This article is dated September 18, 2018, and it's entitled "Ahead of the Curve: UCalgary Reaches Canada's 2030 Target to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions More than a Decade Ahead of Schedule." I want to take this opportunity to commend the good work of the University of Calgary in reducing their greenhouse gas emissions by 30 per cent, ahead of schedule. They had committed to reducing their greenhouse gas emissions by 30 per cent by 2030. They are well ahead of schedule. Part of that is due to the action of our government. We loaned the money to invest in energy efficiency programs through the Alberta Capital Finance Authority, millions of dollars that we invested in the University of Calgary through that loan, that are yielding positive results in energy efficiency, renewable energy, and greenhouse gas emissions reductions here in this province.

I think that there is a lot of other exciting work going on at university and college campuses all across this province to tackle climate change because, unlike the members opposite, people at universities and colleges recognize that, one, climate change is real, it's human induced, and we have to do something about it to prevent it from having a negative impact on our world. They are actually taking action on that, and I commend them.

Now, the third issue that the Member for Calgary-West raised was this issue around quality. I want to direct the member to the section of the Post-secondary Learning Act where we talk about tuition and fees and, in fact, authorize tuition freezes through the tuition framework that we're proposing to create through regulation. In fact, that regulation will contain a system for exceptional tuition increases in cases where programs may be needing additional revenue to improve the quality of their instruction, Madam Speaker.

It will be incumbent upon the institutions to demonstrate how additional revenue for that program will improve the quality of the program that they deliver to students and get students' buy-in for those increases. Under the old system, that was, you know, created by those guys over there, students had no voice. University and college administration could jack up fees willy-nilly, and students were left to pay the bill. In this case, a university will have to be completely open and transparent about how they intend to spend the money and how that money will be used to directly improve the quality of education in their classrooms, and students will have the power to say yes or no, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

Ms Kazim: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm very proud to rise in the House today in support of the bill and one of the cosponsors of

Bill 19, An Act to Improve the Affordability and Accessibility of Post-secondary Education. This bill is very close to my heart because when I came to Canada with my family, when we immigrated to Canada, one of the biggest excitements for me was to pursue higher education, in particular postsecondary education.

I would like to quote something from an article that has been written by the president and CEO of Lumina Foundation. His name is Jamie Merisotis. Talking about how important postsecondary education is, he says that it

isn't just about jobs and economic success. When it comes to building a fulfilling life, good jobs and careers are certainly necessary; but they're not sufficient. Intangibles matter, too — things like personal growth and citizenship and the commitment to equity and social justice. And postsecondary education contributes significantly in all of these areas. In fact, statistics show that individuals who have earned postsecondary credentials are healthier, live longer and are more deeply engaged in civic and community life than those who lack credentials.

Talking about providing a platform to students and making sure that higher education is affordable to them and accessible to them is basically saying that we are making a big difference to make the lives of Albertans better. Our government always stands up for fairness. It stands up for every Albertan, and it stands up for the protection of every Albertan. With this bill, by discussing this bill and moving it forward, we are making sure that our objective of improving the affordability of adult learning is achieved, which is crucial for the progress of our society. We need to keep costs of higher education under control so that it gives more certainty and predictability when it comes to affording postsecondary education.

When it comes to universities and colleges, the engagement of students is very important. When there is no voice of the students at the table of discussion of what their overall experience is going to be like for the universities and colleges they are going to sign up for, then basically the institutions are missing a big piece of how they can make a difference in their lives.

When people are committing to pursue higher education, it is a long-term commitment. It could vary from taking a course for a few months to the point where the education would be for a number of years. It is a commitment that a student makes every time he or she applies or when they apply for a university and get admitted into it.

Education is something that is evolving with time and all the time. To keep up ourselves with education will be doing justice to the students by preparing them for how the future is unfolding and how they can have good control when it comes to navigating their own lives by choosing the program they're in and how they can prepare themselves financially to plan their education to ensure that they meet their objectives and they complete their degrees, diplomas, or certificates.

Therefore, this bill is very important and does have complexity because it does involve a lot of matters and a lot of issues that need to be addressed. They have been overdue when it comes to addressing those issues. That's why our government has been engaging massively with students from all over the province, with students from different walks of life, so that we can ensure that we are addressing the barriers that students are facing, so that we can allow them to have access to postsecondary education, making sure that we listen to their concerns and how we can improve our system, which is an ongoing process because our needs are changing on a daily basis.

3:30

To make sure that we are able to provide a high-quality education that is advanced and that is addressing the issues that are taking

place at a given time, we need to be providing them with a modernized system. That's why this bill is bringing that modernization to the system, to abide with the needs of our students in this time frame. That's why a lot of time was taken to be thorough and to do consultations with the stakeholders when it comes to compiling this bill together. This bill is basically a compilation of the discussions and feedback that has been received from the stakeholders by our government.

Our government heard clearly in our consultations that affordable adult learning needs to be carefully constructed and based on a solution-based approach. We came to a solution that will work now and in the future. To avoid uncertainty during the process, we extended the tuition freeze.

The administrative change is to streamline the process for initiating a freeze instead of having to amend the regulations. It means that the government can respond more quickly if economic circumstances change and a freeze is necessary. Considering the fact that changes happen very drastically, we want to make sure that every time a change happens, it's addressed in a timely fashion, that's when we're making sure that the needs of the students are met. Therefore, this streamlining through this bill is important and is a very efficient way to ensure that when it comes to our postsecondary education, there is no compromise.

In summary, it's an amazing bill because, first, the consumer price index cap is moved from the regulations into the act. This response is to student concerns around transparency. It ensures that Albertans, through their MLAs, will be part of any potential future debate on how tuition increases are regulated. There is a 10 per cent cap on tuition increases for individual programs. The CPI cap applies to institutions.

Tuition for individual programs may vary. We are putting necessary limits on how much they can vary. In at least one case a program saw a 50 per cent increase. New regulations around mandatory noninstructional fees ensure fairness and transparency. Such fees must reflect the actual cost to deliver services without any markups.

Student associations will have to approve any new mandatory noninstructional fees. The market modifier mechanism is replaced with a quality-focused process. This mechanism can be used for a program of study once every five years. Proposals will be joint submissions by student associations and institutions and must show how additional tuition revenue will improve program quality. Proposals must ultimately be approved by the minister in order to be implemented.

A new tuition guarantee will protect international students from unexpected tuition increases. Institutions must communicate to international students the exact amount of their tuition for each year of the program. These amounts will be guaranteed.

All in all, Madam Speaker, this bill is adding security when it comes to postsecondary education. We are making sure that our students feel safe and secure when they're signing up for higher education. We are making sure that we are providing our citizens with the right tools to have a better quality of life by making our postsecondary education more affordable and accessible.

Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour to rise today in the House to speak on Bill 19, An Act to Improve the Affordability and Accessibility of Post-secondary Education. Bill

19 focuses on placing an inflation-based cap on tuition fees for postsecondary institutions based on the annual changes in Alberta's consumer price index starting in 2021. This is being implemented after years of tuition freezes under this government.

Students in Alberta are already paying well below the average annual tuition rates for the country. In Alberta here we're paying approximately \$5,700 and change annually while the national average is a thousand dollars more at about \$6,800. While reducing fees for students is a great concept, unfortunately we just still have to go back to the fiscal responsibility and the longevity of being able to finance such programs.

Don't get me wrong; I think that in an ideal world we'd love to have our kids have free education. We want all our kids to have that postsecondary because it's brilliant, right? We want our society and our culture to excel. We want our kids to grow up with all the options in the world. I do know a country that does provide free education. Eastern Canada buys all of their oil from Saudi Arabia, and the Saudis actually provide their students with free education. I know because my neighbours are of Saudi Arabian descent, and they stayed despite all the things.

I asked them: "How do you guys get it paid? Like, how do you pay for this education?" You know what? They apply for the school themselves, they decide where they want to live, and then they go into an office. There's a lineup of students going in there, and they just tell them: "This is my school. This is where I'm going. This is where I want to go. I'm going to Canada." "Okay. How much do you need?" They have a chart, and it says exactly what the cost, expenses are, and they basically write them a cheque: "Here you go."

These kids, they live very, very comfortably and a free education. That said, you have to be from a certain lineage in Saudi Arabia to access these free funds. They are extensions of the royal family, but there are thousands of those kids. But I digress.

Here we're broke because we cannot get Canadians to buy our oil. This government has been running multibillion-dollar deficits every year since this government took office, and this bill will continue to suppress postsecondary institutions, preventing them from raising tuition beyond what the consumer price index is. Postsecondary institutions have restrictions on how they can raise money. They can't recuperate their revenue that's lost by the tuition freeze through other means due to these restrictions. Students have already seen the costs of other services skyrocket: student union fees, their parking that they have to pay for. I understand even some of the rents in some of the places, the student accommodations, have climbed a little bit.

Again, where does all this revenue come from ultimately? It does come from us. It comes from all of us. We're the taxpayers. We are all paying. Every Albertan is paying for this education, and Albertans are continuing to get taxed more and more. Now this government wants to add the burden of student tuition fees onto the taxpayer. At the University of Alberta our provincial government grants account for over half of the budget, 51 per cent. Only 17 per cent of the cost of the university is covered by tuition and fees.

Alberta's taxpayers can't keep picking up the tab from this government's meddling otherwise future generations will not be able to afford this education. That's the thing that we have to recognize, the future generations. It's great now while you're in government. You want to show some restraint on what these kids have to pay for their tuition fees, but you're forgetting about future generations, and that is a concern here. But, you know, you're trying to get elected next year. I get that.

With all these revenue restrictions on postsecondary institutions, we risk making our institutions uncompetitive. Postsecondary education should certainly be affordable but not at the expense of

the quality. Universities are running out of ways to raise money and pay for their day-to-day operations.

Let us recognize that we do value our postsecondary education. Higher education provides numerous benefits to our economy. It supports higher wages, which ultimately strengthens our economy. It reduces unemployment and increases the overall health of our province and its people. Albertans who choose to attend postsecondary education, who get a postsecondary education make nearly 40 per cent more in lifetime earnings than those with high school diplomas. That allows for more revenue to be collected by the government in order to fund essential services such as our health care system.

3:40

The return on investment for a university education is 16 per cent. Businesses would love to receive that kind of return on their investments. Education is the driving force behind our growing economy. Innovation from students in Alberta makes us a world leader in our oil and gas industries, our tech, our health care, and so many other fields. Our economy grows because Albertans know the value of education.

I asked this Health minister: have you looked outside these borders to see how other institutions raise money? I know that in the United States they changed the legislation around universities to allow them to profit from inventions that are made in their institutions. Stanford University in California, which is where Facebook and all those others in Silicon Valley – my cousin is a professor there. They get money from every invention that they come out with, every website that has been developed there where they were working with students. That school, Stanford, has benefited from a lot of those inventions and those initiatives. It's an entrepreneurial way. But it did allow the universities south of the border to have another stream of revenue, encouraging development and ingenuity and entrepreneurship.

In May of 2017 a study was done to calculate the impact of the seven postsecondary institutions, and the study concluded that the institutions added \$8.6 billion in additional income for the region in 2014-15. They also went on to say that over their lifetime the benefit to the region would be \$180 billion. The president of Calgary Economic Development stated that, quote, the impact of postsecondary institutions as economic engines in our city is extraordinary and is highly underappreciated, that higher education's benefit is that it inspires Calgarians to the innovative thinking that drives our progress as a great place to make a living and a life that is immeasurable. Unquote. Again, there's no doubt that everyone in this House respects education. We all do. We all do.

You know, there's a quote on Mount Royal students coming from Calgary, that more than 70,000 alumni remain in the city, as stated by the president of Mount Royal University. Given that, it's vital to demonstrate in real dollars how those postsecondaries like Mount Royal deliver value to our local economies like Calgary's.

These two influential individuals praise the effects of postsecondary institutions. They bring numerous benefits to our communities, and we must ensure that they do remain competitive and efficient at training Alberta students.

I personally take great pride in our institutions. I've gone to technical schools, more the community colleges. The rest of my family have gone to universities across this fine nation and around the world, but ultimately they come back home here. They choose the schools here, my family has, because we do provide a high level of education. It is very good quality. But, again, we have to ensure that we can maintain that. It does start with maintaining our education.

Those with postsecondary education benefit from employment stability and often pension plan coverage. This allows individuals to invest in houses and businesses and allows them to donate to the local charities. They continue to participate in our economy. Most new jobs require some sort of skill training with some type of education or training. We're watching our education systems evolve, and we're going to continue to evolve. Other nations have exceeded us in some ways.

As a paramedic I went to a technical school here in Alberta. That was more than two years. It was a 20-month program. Then I went to Australia for a year after. I thought I might be able to get a job there, just part-time or something like that. In Australia they demanded a four-year degree for their paramedics, so for obvious reasons I was not able to apply for a position in that. But it was a good learning experience for me. Our systems are always evolving, and all of our careers that we go into are continuing to evolve. You see the high pinnacle that some places place on some of these aspects, and we're going to continue to see other aspects of our workforce grow in their educational requirements. Again, postsecondary education is very, very good for us. It benefits us, and it helps us become better at what we do.

Obviously, another benefit of the postsecondary growth is the job creation that follows, the replacements needed for all the people that are currently around. It's a continuous evolution, and we're figuring that two-thirds of those people by 2024 are going to require some sort of college or postsecondary or vocational education. In Alberta we need to maintain that high quality of care in order to capitalize on that economic growth that comes from these educational institutions. But, again, it's about being fiscally responsible. It is about ensuring that there's balance in how you spend that money and invest that in our education. I know that Albertans know the value of their education, but, that said, they won't also stay in Alberta if they don't feel that they're getting their money's worth. If our education system degrades, if it slips and our reputations follow and it flounders, that affects all of us here in Alberta. We consider ourselves at the highest level, and we have to continue that.

Obviously, education is correlated with other things, including better health, which I am very passionate about, Madam Speaker. Studies have found that individuals with postsecondary education are less likely to smoke, have lower rates of obesity, and are more likely to lead healthier and longer lives. Parents with postsecondary education may pass on those positive behaviours to their children as well. So, again, we have to strive to maintain the highest standard for our institutions and make sure we are providing the appropriate resources to train our future leaders.

This cap on postsecondary tuition puts our institutions at risk. Unless this government has other ways of creating revenue or of finding some other efficiencies within those institutions – I'm sure we can propose some. I'm sure he's talked to all these postsecondary institutions. They have suggested things to me. They've talked about course development.

Connolly: I thought you didn't want to get bogged down.

Mr. Yao: Yeah.

This whole bill is ultimately just poor judgment. What's more worrisome is that they want to give this minister more power. The government says that we can trust them to make the right decisions, but can we really? No. If there's one thing this bill has right, it is that it is about fee transparency, and I commend the minister for that. He is trying to ensure that our children and these kids that are going to school have some predictability in their tuition fees, because, as we know, that is a large burden on our society. But, again, it's about practicality. Socialism is great, Madam Speaker,

until you run out of other people's money, to quote Margaret Thatcher.

The point is that we must have a long-term plan in place for our postsecondary institutions. We cannot maintain freezes year after year, and the Alberta taxpayer can't afford to be picking up the entire tab for postsecondary education. I mean, we have to consider that when most people in this House were kids, like, 20, 30 years ago, we were only paying about 30 per cent in taxes in total: provincial, federal, municipal, et cetera. I mean, in this day and age we're almost paying half of our salaries in taxes, and we're coming close to that half, and that's very concerning. But I digress.

Again, we must have a long-term plan in place for our postsecondary institutions. We all know the importance of postsecondary education, but we have to ensure that it is viable. I would certainly ask this minister to reconsider this or to at least provide us with a longer term plan. I'd like to understand what the discussions are with the universities because I'm sure they're under a lot of duress with the financial restrictions that they have.

Although I understand and appreciate the intent of this bill, I will have to vote against it, and I hope that all members have heard my arguments and will do the same. Thank you so much.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I'll recognize Edmonton-South West.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Now, I think this is a bill that is extremely important that we are debating today. It's a bill that I'm very proud to be able to stand up and speak for. Frankly, I probably remember what the effects are of having to pay tuition every single year or semester better than, well, frankly, most people in this House but certainly better than almost everybody in the opposition.

3:50

Madam Speaker, students having better access to affordable learning that's high quality is one of the most important things that we possibly can do in this Assembly. That's why I believe it is absolutely shameful that the opposition is speaking against this today. When we talk about things like cost for education, we're talking about what the cost of making sure we have a strong workforce is, the cost of making sure that future Albertans have the knowledge they need to excel in Alberta, have the knowledge they need to have good livelihoods, to have strong families. This is what we are talking about when we talk about making postsecondary accessible and affordable for Albertans.

Madam Speaker, I remember that when I first joined university, MNIFs, or mandatory noninstructional fees, were a huge issue. They were such a huge issue, in fact, that we really believed that the Conservative government, our opposition colleagues over there, were basically letting universities use them as methods to circumvent tuition caps. It was basically a method where the universities could hike at will, and it was something that students spoke out on en masse. Students were livid that institutions were allowed to do this under Conservative regimes. I'm glad that our government has listened, that our minister has decided this can no longer go on. We need to be fair to students. When there are fees, they need to be justifiable. They need to be something that we can look at and say: what is the value?

I remember that when I was in university, Madam Speaker, I paid a circulation fee, and the best that we could figure out on what that circulation fee was for was for using the hallways. There was an additional \$800 fee every year to use hallways. That's the type of thing that the opposition wants to let go on. That's the type of thing

the opposition wants to let rise at rates well above inflation. I think that's absurd. I think we should be fighting for accessible education for everybody. We should be saying that even the student that can't afford to pay \$800 to walk in a hallway should still be allowed to learn. I think that is one of the most important things that we can do here.

Madam Speaker, I think that we heard the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo speak about things like: we need to think about our future, and that's why we can't do things like lower tuition right now, why we can't cap tuition, because what's going to happen to future Albertans? That's a really interesting comment. What's going to happen to future Albertans is that they are going to get that opportunity to learn. They are going to get that opportunity to succeed. The opposition clearly does not understand the importance of our education system. They don't understand the importance of bringing in rules that allow students to have sustainable educations.

One of the things that I continue to hear today is concern around international students. International student tuitions are oftentimes quite a bit higher than for domestic students. Bringing in stability for these students – I had a number of colleagues and friends who were international students – along with our domestic students is important because it's what allows our institutions to attract high-quality students. It allows our institutions to bring in people from all over the world, whether that's researchers in Europe, in Asia, and in the United States, wherever they are. They want to come here because they know they can get a top-notch education while also being able to say: I won't have to worry about choosing between going to the food bank or paying for my tuition at the end of this month. That's what we're talking about. We're talking about taking away the uncertainty for those students that don't know whether next year their tuition is going to go up \$5,000 and that that means that they're not going to be able to afford rent or that they're not going to be able to afford lunch.

Madam Speaker, that's the type of decision we're making today. When the opposition speaks against that, I cannot honestly fathom why they would possibly believe that we should allow students to continue to have uncertainty, why we should allow students to have to go to food banks. That is the reality. How many campuses have food banks? I would say, actually, a number of campuses. I know the University of Alberta, the University of Calgary have campus food banks, and that's shameful. We shouldn't have to have those facilities. We should be able to tell students: this is exactly what you will need to succeed in university.

I think it's wonderful to see that our government is listening, and I think that Albertans that are watching right now – I know that I have a number of colleagues that are students or were students that are listening to this debate because they care about student issues. They care that we have strong educational institutions. I know that they can see really clearly right now that the opposition is coming up and saying: well, we need to let universities raise tuition at whatever rate they want, we need to let them raise fees at whatever rate they want, and we think students should just suck it up and pay for it. That's what the opposition is trying to say today. What our government is saying is that we listen to students. After years of consultation, we finally came back and said: "This is what you wanted, and we agree with you. We agree that students should be sustainable and have steady and reliable metrics to work with. We believe that making sure that your tuition isn't rising significantly above the cost of inflation is a fair thing to say. We agree with you."

Our government decided that we would side with the everyday Albertans who use postsecondary institutions, the ones who go out there and say: I want to make a better life for myself. We sided with

those Albertans. What the opposition did is that they decided that they wanted to side with the wealthy elite. They sided with the wealthy elite. They sided with the 1 per cent. They're going to give huge tax cuts, \$700 million in tax cuts, to the wealthiest Albertans and then decide: "Oh, but, students, you guys can pay a little bit more. That's okay. Let's let the students pay well above inflation, but let's make sure that our wealthy friends don't have to pay any more. They pay enough. We can't use that money to fund your education. Your education doesn't matter as much as them." That's what the opposition wants. Madam Speaker, it is something that I really don't understand some days, how they think that Albertans believe them when they say: we need to stand with the rich and let students fail. That's essentially what they're saying.

Madam Speaker, I am so proud to be able to speak in favour of this legislation. I am so proud to be able to say that everybody should be voting for this. It's something that students have asked for for years, and it's finally being granted them by a New Democratic government. I'm pleased to urge all my colleagues to vote in favour. But I'm afraid it sounds like our opposition friends really don't have students' backs.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. That was very passionate. I can say that as a past student myself I also went through the hardship of paying for my tuition. To say that I am out against students is a little harsh. To say that Conservatives want to see students fail is even more harsh. I think that we have a good record over the many years of supporting our students. I hear chuckles from the other side. But I will tell you that when it comes to caps, I do have some concerns. Now, what happens is that when we decide that we're going to place caps on it, I'm asking: did the NDP actually do some sort of study to show what the result of this is, an economic impact study, if you will?

Are we going to be making our institutions unviable, to the point where they're going to start shutting down and our students won't be able to go to school? That is a question that wasn't asked to the minister. This is a credible question. I'll tell you that as a past student myself – I went to the University of Lethbridge, and I'm very proud of my time at that university. You know what? Lethbridge will always be a city that I hold deep respect for. I also understood that as a student I needed to support the university both with money and with making sure that the bachelor of management department also had support from me as well as making sure that the government heard that being responsible with its money is important.

How can this, an argument on Bill 19 – it's named An Act to Improve the Affordability and Accessibility of Post-secondary Education – devolve down to: the Conservatives want to harm every student across Alberta? I think it's reckless to be going down that road. I think that by saying that, that also is very inappropriate, and I would ask that member to apologize for it.

The Deputy Speaker: Edmonton-South West.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Madam Speaker. What I won't apologize for is standing up for students. What I won't apologize for is saying that \$700 million in tax cuts to the wealthiest Albertans would be better spent if we invested that in things like tuition freezes. What I won't apologize for is that Conservatives think they can get away with taking the money that we want to spend for students and using that to line their friends' pockets.

4:00

When he talks about things like economic impact, I think the economic impact is that students won't have to go to the food bank anymore. Who can argue against that? I think that what is amazing here is that the opposition has decided that they can't support our students. They can't support our postsecondary students having accessible education. They've decided that this is the hill that they want to fight on, that this is something that they believe is going to allow them to fight against our students' rights to have education and to learn those things. He spoke passionately about how he went to the University of Lethbridge, Madam Speaker, and I believe that University of Lethbridge students would probably agree that they want to know what tuition is going to be next year and the year after that. If you're in a four-year program, well, maybe for all four years you'd like to know what that's going to cost you.

I think that those are the things that our government listened to. Those are the things that most students probably agree with, Madam Speaker. Students agree that knowing what your expenses are going to be is something that's a very fair ask for somebody who has to plan the next four years of their life. We know those next two, four years, depending on the program you're taking, those next years of your life are going to set you on the path for a career for the rest of your life. That's why we believe that investing in this small number of years for students is one of the best investments we can make. It's one of the best investments that we can make, and students deserve that much. They deserve to know for those two years, for those four years. Some students take six years. They deserve to know for the length of time that they're in university. They deserve to have stability.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there other speakers to the bill? I'll recognize Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise on Bill 19, An Act to Improve the Affordability and Accessibility of Post-secondary Education. I'll start by congratulating the government on listening to students and seriously consulting with them over the last two years. Of course, that's only part of who needs to be consulted with, but it's an important part of those who are going to be affected by tuition changes.

It's very clear. My consultations with students revealed much the same information. They don't believe that a freeze indefinitely is in their long-term best interests either. They want to see a gradual, predictable, stable increase that reflects a cost-of-living increase and inflation. I think the minister has clearly heard that. As indicated in the bill, it's going to make things more realistic in the real world.

If there's one little irritant, that would be that you're postponing it till after 2019 as opposed to bringing it in next year, which, to me, would smack a bit of political opportunism. But that's a minor issue in a bill that is really addressing some serious issues with both provincial and national students and also international students, both of those having been a big irritant and uncertainty in the past number of years.

The tuition cap, then, is scheduled to take effect in the fall of 2020, and it's not clear to me to what extent we'll see noninstructional fees increase. It's not clear to me from this bill yet the extent to which a cap might apply to noninstructional fees. I hope the minister can clarify some of that.

The cap certainly appears to apply to all postsecondary institutions and apprentice fees, and individual programs are permitted to increase by 10 per cent. I assume that by "program" we're referring to faculty, because if every program in a university or college increased by 10 per cent in a year, that would be a

substantial increase. It's not entirely clear to me what "program" means there, and I'd appreciate some clarity around that.

The tuition cap does not apply to international students, but postsecondary institutions will be required to give them a tuition guarantee at the time of admission. Doing so will certainly prevent international students' tuition from rising inordinately or unexpectedly, again assuming that noninstructional fees will not be allowed to make up the difference in a postsecondary budget.

In passing, I'll say how much I as the Member for Calgary-Mountain View appreciated the support from the ministry in moving the Alberta College of Art and Design to university status. It has been struggling for years with a less-than-equitable budget, a tremendous demand from our students to have a place at the College of Art and Design. This will not only provide much stronger opportunities for outside investments but also a credibility and status that will be more deserving of an organization that's really one of the premier in Canada, certainly western Canada, in the areas of art and design.

It also clearly provides and mandates, in fact, greater collaboration and innovation across our postsecondary systems. That can only improve efficiency and attractiveness and, I would say, excellence in our postsecondary institutions. So I'm pleased to see that as well.

The establishment of at least two student representatives on the boards of each postsecondary institution is, again, a positive statement that recognizes and empowers those who are in these institutions and who have to come to grips with more and more of the responsibility for not only their own well-being but the institution's well-being, finding that balance in terms of affordability and accessibility with the fiscal responsibility of the institution.

I think many of these are excellent decisions. Certainly, I support them, and I will be supporting this bill.

One other question came up. If the minister has the authority to regulate going forward, does that mean that each decision of each program needs to be passed through the ministry even if it's below the 10 per cent?

My information, for the record, is that our average university tuition in Alberta is \$5,700 per year. Nationally it's \$6,800 per year. So it's not nearly as dramatically different as what my colleague in the UCP mentioned.

Overall, I think this is much needed, overdue. I certainly support the direction that postsecondary education is going, which is our future in all dimensions. Whether it's academic or apprenticeship training, all those dimensions are the key to our economy, to innovation, to a future that is going to move us towards what I would call a more sustainable future, one in which we're seeing much more thoughtful approaches, much more critical voters, much more active citizens, that I would hope strengthen the leadership in government, strengthen the long-term well-being of this province and the prosperity of this province.

It is a critical investment. There is none more important than education, and postsecondary education is a big part of that final phase of formal education. I applaud the government for its efforts to address in a balanced way, I would say, both the fiscal realities and the need to make education a priority and to be seen to be a priority.

I have mentioned in the past that in medical school in the '70s I paid \$650 a term. That was under the Lougheed government, and it makes me realize just how much that government valued education and was willing to make it easily affordable. I could earn as much as I needed for the whole year by working for the four months in the summer on a farm.

4:10

To say that we have moved away from that level of support for postsecondary education is an understatement. I've long since felt

that we needed to encourage, in any ways possible, students to continue their education and find the success and contributions to our society, including taxation, that they will be contributing to everything that we value, as they could.

I'm sorry that I don't have more in the way of details about these noninstructional fees, but I assume that will come up in discussions.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I will recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Acadia.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Before I get started, I want to do a quick shout-out to my friend Tiffany, who is watching from home in B.C. We used to organize together. We worked together at the Simon Fraser Student Society back when I lived in Vancouver, and she and I used to talk a lot about how budgets are political documents.

Budgets speak to priorities, and I would like to just say that our government has made postsecondary learners and their families a priority by freezing tuition fees and with this bill, if it passes, by tying tuition fee increases to the consumer price index. This bill also guarantees a fifth year of a tuition fee freeze in Alberta. I'm going to say that again: a fifth year of a tuition fee freeze in Alberta. Our government has supported students and institutions by backfilling that freeze with \$129 million to date, with the amount for 2019-2020 being determined through the debating process of Budget 2019.

Now I want to speak a little bit to the B.C. experience and why that bit of increasing funding to institutions while freezing tuition fees is so critical. In the years before I moved to B.C., the previous government had frozen tuition fees, but they did not increase funding to institutions to keep pace with rising costs. When there was a change in government, the tuition freeze was ended, the cap on tuition fee increases was lifted, Madam Speaker, and in the time that I worked at the students' union, tuition fees increased 30 per cent per year. To put that into context, that means that from when a student started first-year university, all bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, looking towards building that future of theirs, to the time they reached their fourth year of study, their annual tuition fees had doubled.

Our government learned from that example, and that is why we funded that tuition freeze, because, you know, when fees increase rapidly, students are faced with really difficult choices. I knew many students who had to drop out because of the fee increase, a rapid fee increase, because they couldn't afford to keep going. Other students took a year or two off study to work full-time and save up some additional money to finish off that last year of their education. That was the year that we created the student food bank at Simon Fraser. That's not a proud moment, Madam Speaker. Those students shouldn't have needed to go to a food bank while they were pursuing their education and building their futures.

By tying tuition fees and mandatory noninstructional fees to the consumer price index, this bill will allow learners, their parents, their families, and our postsecondary institutions to plan for the future, to know what to expect, and to be able to budget accordingly.

Now, many in this House know that I am the mom to two young kids, and as a parent you get a lot of mail, particularly when you're expecting, from people who want to talk to you about saving for your kid's future. One of those companies estimates that in the year 2036, which would be the year when most babies who are born in 2018 will reach postsecondary education, the cost of the tuition alone for a four-year degree by then will be \$84,000. Madam Speaker, that's \$12,000 per year in tuition fees alone.

I just want to shout it from the rooftop. I'm so excited that if this bill passes, that means that Alberta families and Alberta parents can rest a little bit easier knowing that under this government their children's tuition fees, their tuition fees will be much lower and their futures that much brighter.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure as always to rise in the Assembly. It's interesting that we talk about postsecondary education today, also for you and me who both have had the privilege of being elected and serving on the same student association in our past. I don't know if you're aware of that. I believe that that is, in fact, true. Though we may be in different political parties in this place, in our previous lives we served in the same organization in student politics at different times, of course.

I am going to today, Madam Speaker, move an amendment. I have the appropriate number of copies for the pages. I will wait for your instructions. I almost didn't send the original, which would have been a problem. I'll wait for your permission to continue.

Okay to go, Madam Speaker? Sorry, I didn't see that. Thank you. I appreciate it.

The amendment I will move reads as follows, Madam Speaker. Mr. Nixon – again, I think we must not have been here for a while. I'm starting to say names inside the House. I see the Chair of Committees laughing at me and probably rightly so. Let me try that again.

I will move that the motion for second reading of Bill 19, An Act to Improve the Affordability and Accessibility of Post-secondary Education, be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 19, An Act to Improve the Affordability and Accessibility of Post-secondary Education, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

Madam Speaker, the reason that I move this amendment today – I was listening with interest trying to determine where I would be with this legislation as it progresses through the Assembly and having a look at what the answers of the government to some of the questions coming from the members on this side of the House would be. As you know, we see legislation for such short periods of time when we're in opposition because the government gives it and then calls it. Sometimes we're trying to understand if the government actually has it right, if they have taken the time, of course, to consult with universities. Have they consulted with student groups? What are the other aspects of the bill? As you know, sometimes there are other things that are planted within bills by the government.

Our role, of course, as the Official Opposition is to work with our staff to go and rout that out, to have a look and try to find those types of things, and that takes time. What I did notice was that there were not a lot of answers to some of the concerns that members were asking about today. I question at this point whether consultation has been done all right. I've been talking to some stakeholder groups who I know will be part of this process or will be impacted by the decision of this legislation, and they're indicating to me that they have not had an opportunity to be consulted on this process. I think that halting the process and making sure that consultation can happen is a good idea.

You know, we talk often when we move procedural amendments like this about the fact that the government seems to only want to actually go and consult or actually work through committee processes or those types of things when it's a piece of legislation that they recognize that they can't politically vote no to in this building with the cameras on and everybody watching. They recognize that they can't vote no to it, so they'll send those pieces of legislation to committee, but they won't send other pieces of legislation to committee.

You know, it's interesting. A great example – and we'll spend some time debating this next Monday in this place – is that the hon. Member for Highwood brought forward a private member's bill last session in the spring. We agreed and worked with the government, actually, to send that to committee because we recognized that there were some parts of that bill that probably still needed to have a discussion. That's how the system works. That's the process for making legislation. That's how we designed it. That's why we have standing committees and we have other groups where witnesses can be called, people can flesh out thoughts, talk to experts, talk to people that are involved to make sure that we've got that legislation correct.

4:20

In that case that bill went primarily because what was happening, Madam Speaker, was that the government was in a position where they could not vote against firefighters because that's what it would look like, but there were some issues with the bill. We agreed. We got the bill off to committee, had a look at it, and to the credit of the members on there, we recognized that that bill was just not going to work, that that legislation needed to be halted and looked at from a different angle, and the committee recommended that to this House. I don't want to presume where we'll be, particularly because it's private members' business, but I suspect that this House will agree with that as we make that decision in the following private members' days in this Assembly. That's a good way for this process to work.

We've seen it with other pieces of legislation that the NDP government in Alberta were scared to make a decision on inside this place, so they sent it to committee. The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler had a bill, pretty famously in the first year of the 29th Legislature, which was sent to committee because you could see the Government House Leader and everybody on the other side at that point go: oh, man, we can't vote against that. So they sent it to committee and then essentially killed that bill, didn't let it go back. We've seen many examples of that but not when it's a piece of government legislation.

The problem, Madam Speaker, is that the government, because they do that, continue to get it wrong. Interestingly enough, each time we've come to this place for a sitting, the government has had to bring forward another piece of legislation to fix their legislation from the time before. Every single time since this NDP government came into power, the following sitting they've had to bring bills forward to fix their legislation: elections financing, election rules, labour legislation, on and on and on. In fact – and I'm sure you won't be surprised – I anticipate that will happen again in the next few weeks. The government will have to bring forward legislation to fix it. The problem with that, then, is that in the meantime you have a law that has been put in place that's not working or something has been missed, which is why I would move that.

We see that consistently with this government. It concerns me because we see it consistently with this government on all sorts of issues, which is why we need to refer this. Bill C-69, something we've talked about a lot, is a House of Commons piece of legislation which, unfortunately, passed in the House of Commons.

Over and over and over in this House we were warning the Alberta government: you've got to deal with Bill C-69. Then across the way, as you know, Madam Speaker – we watched them do it – they would rise and mock the Leader of the Opposition. They would make fun of us. They would say that we were wrong and that we were spending our time focused on Ottawa. Of course, we were spending our time focused on Ottawa. Ottawa was attacking Alberta. It's our job to focus on Ottawa. Then fast-forward several months, what happens? That side of the House gets up and realizes: "Oops, we made a mistake. You guys were right. We were going too fast. We made a mistake."

Another great example: the shut-off-the-tap legislation. The Premier and the Deputy Premier and many other people across from me today made fun of the Leader of the Official Opposition even before he was a member of this place, said hateful and terrible things about him when it came to that legislation. They compared him to Donald Trump, said he wanted to build a wall, said all those types of things and really made fun of him on a regular basis. Then you fast-forward a few months, and they bring in the exact same piece of legislation that the Leader of the Official Opposition recommended to this place.

Now, funny enough, as I've already said in this place before, Madam Speaker, in this Chamber, they had no intention of ever using that piece of legislation, sadly, and we know that history will record that they never did. In fact, they filibustered their own piece of legislation to prevent it being used to protect Albertans because they would rather stand with their close personal friend and ally Justin Trudeau. But I digress for now. [interjection] The Deputy Premier is bragging about that right now. Through you, Madam Speaker, to her: she should be ashamed. She should be ashamed of her behaviour, that she would not stand up for Albertans and brought forward a piece of legislation that they never intended to use. It's disappointing. Albertans don't like that. They deserve better.

Connolly: What bill are we on?

Mr. Nixon: We're not on the bill right now. We are on an amendment to refer it to committee, and we're talking about why we need to refer this type of legislation to committee. The hon. Member for Calgary-Hawkwood may want to reread the amendment because that's what we're on right now. We are talking about why this government can't be trusted on legislation.

Again, here we are, the second day into this sitting, listening to the minister and to other members discuss this bill. No answers to any questions. Are they really ready? How do I know? This has always been the problem, Madam Speaker. How do you and I know that they've actually done it this time? The history, the track record when it comes to these types of things with this government is clear. This government has a history of repeatedly getting legislation wrong and either not acting and then watching Albertans face the consequences as a result of their inaction or having to come back to this place, to this Assembly, and fix the mistakes that they made in their last legislation, often mistakes that had been noted by this side of the House and, certainly, mistakes that would have been noted by experts or other people if they'd had a chance to participate in committee.

That is the question that is before the Assembly with my amendment, and the reason I bring that forward is simply this. I think, at first glance of this legislation, that there's some good stuff in it. I have some other questions, serious questions, though, about whether or not they got this right. I think that our universities and our colleges, our postsecondary institutions, are too important for this government to get this wrong.

The other thing that makes this more complicated at this moment, Madam Speaker, is that we know that if the Premier is to follow the law, the election law, which I expect that she would, she may be calling an election before our Assembly could be recalled in the spring. So you could be in a place where they got it wrong this time and there is an extended period of time until it can be fixed.

So we're kind of at a spot now where the NDP pattern of bringing forward legislation, messing it up, and then having to come back here and working to get it fixed ain't gonna work possibly this time. So then what happens to the people that are facing the consequences while that's happening? I want to make sure that we get it right. I think that by following this amendment, we have an opportunity to do that. We have an opportunity to be able to make sure that we get a good piece of legislation out of this that will deal with a very, very important issue.

As you know from your experience in postsecondary student politics – and I don't know, Madam Speaker, if you sat on your university's board in your position; I think you probably did. I know I did. It's complicated, running a university. There are complicated aspects to it, lots of different factors that result in the funding, and making sure you get this right is obviously important. Our institutions can't afford to wait six months for this place to come back to be able to fix the mistakes that, possibly, this government is getting ready to make again.

Now, they might not be, and that's why we should be having a conversation to make sure they get it right. As I go back to my constituency and talk to my constituents, I see the suffering that they've had to go through the last three and a half years as a result of either inaction from this government repeatedly, particularly on the energy file, or as a result of them getting legislation wrong. I don't want to see the same thing happen. I think it is our responsibility as members of the 29th Legislature to stand up and say: you have not shown us that you've not got this wrong. In fact, they're not even answering the questions that members have raised already this afternoon in this place. They just get up, stand up, and go into full on fear and smear attacks that a government that can't run on its own record often does, and that's fine. That's their tactics. Go for it. I get it. But don't get it mixed up with such an important piece of legislation that impacts a lot of people that aren't in the middle of that argument.

I get it. I understand, Madam Speaker. You have a government that is in chaos. It is running nervous. They're very, very worried. They recognize that they've made terrible mistakes and that very shortly they're going to have to go to the ballot box, and the boss is going to decide if the behaviour that has happened from this government in the last four years is right. I get that; I get why they would be nervous about it. But to accelerate a piece of legislation without getting it right, without taking the time to answer the questions and to respect the process that is here – this is not an election right now, and this bill has nothing to do with an election. This government has a responsibility to get it right. So let's send it to get reviewed to make sure we got it right. It could still be done before the next election if the government would co-operate with that process. Certainly – certainly – the government should take some time to actually answer the questions in this place.

4:30

I will close with this, Madam Speaker, as I know I'm running out of time. I would encourage all members to support my amendment to help us get this piece of legislation right and to help us help this government, who continues to make mistakes over and over when it comes to legislation. I don't care about this government's credibility – they've lost all credibility where I come from; they've lost all credibility with me – but what I do care about is that when

they make these mistakes, they hurt the people that I represent. I want them to stop doing that and to take the time to consult, and I hope they support my amendment to do so.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I have to say that when the hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre was speaking, when I did speak up, it was in agreement that when the member referred to the fact that he was digressing, he wasn't on topic. I do agree that he wasn't on topic.

There were a number of things that he raised that I do want to respond to. One is that he said that when things are referred to committee, it's because this side of the House doesn't want to debate them. Nothing could be further from the truth, Madam Speaker. We've debated many things in this House. Actually, members on this side of the House have voted on every single bill that has been brought forward in this House.

I wish I could say the same for the members opposite. The members opposite rose at every opportunity they had to speak on Bill 9 in the past session. They didn't even bring forward a motion to refer. If that's something that would be so helpful, why didn't they do that? The reason why they didn't do that is because they said that it didn't matter to the people of Alberta, that it wasn't an issue of importance. Well, I'll tell you that protecting women from harassment when they're accessing health care services is an issue of importance to many Albertans. I'll also tell you that protecting students from being gouged when it comes to postsecondary education is also a value that this side of the House and many Albertans think is of crucial importance.

I also want to appreciate that the member opposite talked about his time in student government. I also spent time in student government. I was very proud of that. I googled the member's time in student government, because when he referred to his time in student government, I had a recollection that there was something interesting about that time when he was president of his student association. I have to say that one of the things that popped up was how – there's a piece online about how he violated his own bylaws and how his association violated their own bylaws, without issuing notice of an AGM, while interfering with a student newspaper, pulling the student newspaper's website link down without the managing editor's consent. The assumption is that it was because a student newspaper wrote a piece noting that very quickly, without a lot of notice, the executive itself voted to make their then president and student executive the highest paid student executives in the province of Alberta, Madam Speaker.

I have to say that I will very happily work with student leaders across this province on issues of importance to all students. I find it pretty rich that somebody who, it appears – I think there was a motion to remove the hon. member. The motion was recommended for the member to be expelled from the organization, and that motion was passed. Anyway, it's interesting.

I, too, spent time on student government and am very proud of that. I know that many Albertans have served in a variety of ways. I have to say that the student leaders who spend their time advocating to make life more affordable for all students rather than to raise their own compensation are ones that I'm very proud to work with on things just like this legislation, that indeed does protect all students by bringing in safeguards and protections for students to ensure that they can plan ahead when they enrol in postsecondary. We know that many working-class families and lower income families are reluctant to take on debt, and one of the reasons is because they want to have certainty that they have a plan

to be able to repay that. Being able to give certainty to students about what their tuition will be in the future, being able to give them that predictability, I think is vitally important.

Again, students who have advocated for all students to have life made more affordable through having controls around the tuition rates, having five years of frozen tuition fees in this province: those are the voices I'm really proud to stand up for and defend.

That's why I was deeply troubled when I read that instead of doing things that focused on affordability for students, the member chose to increase his own compensation to make it the highest paid of student executives in the province, assuming that the story I've read is true. If it isn't, I'd be happy to be corrected. I guess my question would be: does the member have a different recollection of that story? That would be my question to the hon. member.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, on the amendment, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to have the opportunity to rise and speak to this amendment to Bill 19, my first opportunity to rise in this legislative session. I'd like to welcome everybody back. I'm glad we get to start with some good debate on what I think is an important piece of legislation.

Of course, as the representative for Edmonton-Centre I have three major postsecondary institutions here within my constituency, those being Grant MacEwan University, NorQuest College, and, of course, the University of Alberta at Enterprise Square. Should I have the honour in the election next year to continue to represent the residents of Edmonton-City Centre, that will also, then, include NAIT. So I have the opportunity to speak with many students, Madam Speaker, and indeed with faculty and indeed with the presidents of those institutions, and certainly this has been a topic of conversation over the last two years.

Now, the concern that's been brought forward, under which the member justified bringing forward this amendment, was around the question of consultation. He is concerned that not enough thought has been given to this bill, that therefore it is imperative that we sit down and study this further in committee to ensure that all voices are being heard and all possibilities are being considered.

Now, I find this a bit ironic or perhaps even approaching the hypocritical, Madam Speaker, given that recently the hon. leader of the loyal opposition stood in front of the Calgary Chamber of commerce and stated that should he have the privilege of becoming the Premier of Alberta and should they have the privilege of becoming the government of Alberta, their intent would be to eschew consultation. He said that he did not want to get bogged down in consultation. He wanted to move quickly so that nobody could get a word in edgewise, so that nobody could oppose, no opposition. He said that he would have the right and the mandate to do this because he has been going around the province of Alberta and speaking with all the people that he thinks are important to listen to in making these decisions.

And now, Madam Speaker, their House leader stands here today and tells us that we should slow down because we have not talked to enough people and we have not done enough consultation on making these kinds of changes, nowhere near the impact of the kinds of changes that the Leader of the Official Opposition has been talking about making.

Now let's talk for a moment, Madam Speaker, about the consultation that has gone into this bill. This has been in process since 2016. All Albertans have been well aware of this, and indeed members of the opposition have stood in this House and often asked

questions about how this process was going. How were those consultations moving along? Why was the minister not coming forward with a decision and a plan sooner? We took that time because we wanted to ensure the proper consultations were held.

There is not a single educational institution in this province that did not have the opportunity to provide their input on this bill. The Minister of Advanced Education spoke to the head of every single postsecondary educational institution in this province. He spoke to every single student group. He spoke with the faculty at these institutions. We consulted Albertans in general: an online survey, an online process, to which we received over 4,000 responses. He consulted also with the nonfaculty staff at postsecondary institutions. This was a process of speaking and hearing from everyone, Madam Speaker.

I dare say that the minister got pretty much every view on this issue that could be had, in a process that lasted two years, and what has come out of that is the bill that we have in front of us, a bill which, when it was announced yesterday, every single student leader that was there spoke out on and thanked the government for bringing it forward.

4:40

Frankly, Madam Speaker, I'm troubled by – I don't know any other word to use – the condescension towards students from the members opposite, that they don't know what's good for them, that they could not possibly understand what they're dealing with here. This is not the same world in which many of the members opposite had the opportunity to get their education. Their education was much more heavily subsidized than that of students today. The Member for Calgary-Mountain View noted that they were able to earn enough in four months to pay for an entire year, an absolute impossibility for the majority of students today. It is a different reality. But you say to those students: "You don't understand what you're dealing with. You need to build better character. You need to learn more about how to earn what you think you deserve. You need to work harder," with perhaps in parentheses, "like I did."

I cannot agree with this amendment. I know the consultation process. I have sat down every single year, at least twice a year, with the leaders of student organizations in the province and heard what they have been asking our government for, and, Madam Speaker, this bill is exactly that. I know that members opposite have sat down with those students, too, because they have happily retweeted the photos of those consultations. They've put them up on Facebook. They've spoken with pride of how they sat down to listen to student leaders.

But they will not stand here today and support what those student leaders have asked for, those student leaders, Madam Speaker, who are incredibly hard working, who understand the modern economic environment, who know that they are not going into the same sort of work situations that so many of the members opposite were able to enjoy during their careers. The ground has shifted. The students know that they are looking at a future often of increased contract work, less benefits, less guaranteed employment, having to shift careers multiple times.

On top of that, members opposite want to tell them that they should pay more. Frankly, Madam Speaker, maintaining affordable education is one of the least things we can do to help young people in the modern world be able to get off to a good start. I cannot think of a better investment that the government can make than to ensure that all students in our province can afford a postsecondary education, not only for the benefit and the improvement in quality of life that it will have for those students but for the economic benefits, therefore, that we receive as a province when people who

are better educated are able to go on to better careers, are able to fill the jobs we need, are, frankly, able to create the jobs we need.

I'm incredibly proud to have many organizations here within my constituency like Startup Edmonton, TEC Edmonton, others who are the future entrepreneurs of this province, the people who are building the new economy, frankly, that is going to help carry us into the future with the eventual waning of the energy industry. I wouldn't predict when that's going to happen, but we know it will. Frankly, these are the people that are building the new jobs, the new industries, the new companies that are going to carry us there and help us prosper as a province. Frankly, Madam Speaker, these are people who are students. They're going to school, they're working on their education, and at the same time they are working hard to build new ideas, to take research that they're doing, develop that into new products, techniques, services that are putting our city on the map. Our investment in their education is an investment in that economic benefit for our province.

So when those students come and they say to us, "This is the support we need from our government," Madam Speaker, I'm going to listen, just like we listened to all of the presidents of all of the educational institutions in the province and heard their thoughts and concerns, just like the minister went and listened to all of the staff, the faculty, everybody involved in the postsecondary education system.

This bill may not give everybody within that what they want, but I think all involved in this process would agree that this is a reasonable balance and compromise.

Postsecondary institutions are happy with the flexibility that they're being afforded within this bill. Again returning to the question of consultation, members have raised their concerns about maintaining the quality of education. Madam Speaker, as has been noted by the minister, if an institution feels that the quality of a course or a program is being compromised, they can sit down with the students. They can have that conversation. They can have consultation. I don't think that they'll take the view that such a process is being bogged down. They can sit down with the students. They can have that conversation. They can talk about the value that students would receive, and if they can make a good case for it and students are willing to support it, they can bring that to the minister and the minister can approve it. How much more democratic of a process could you ask for? Far more democratic than the proposal of the Leader of the Official Opposition, should he have the privilege of taking government next year.

Madam Speaker, I cannot support this amendment. The minister has consulted. He has spoken; we have heard. We have the example of other jurisdictions across Canada that have had tuition caps in place. Frankly, it is high time that we provide some certainty to students in this province, to educational institutions and move forward with a fair and balanced plan that is going to ensure that we have an educated generation to continue to move this province forward.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I stand to support the amendment that my colleague and friend the hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre made. It is a responsible amendment and done with good reason and in a spirit of making sure that the legislation that passes through this House is as good as it can be.

Now, we just heard a pretty fiery speech from our colleague from Edmonton-Centre a minute ago about how the consultation has been great and everybody has been consulted and nothing has been missed. You know what, Madam Speaker? If only we could trust that was true, we would probably say: "Okay. Good enough." But the problem is that that's not the history of this government. That's not the history of this cabinet. This government has a track record of coming in here and saying, "We've consulted with everybody," and then when the opposition pushes them and then other people come forward, very often they say, "No, they didn't talk to me," or "They did talk to me, and I didn't get anything I wanted."

A great example – there are so many great examples. Bill 6 is a great example, their farm legislation, but a more recent one, Madam Speaker, where they brought forward a bill – the Municipal Affairs minister brought forward a bill in the last session where we actually pointed out to him right here in the House direct discrepancies within the legislation, direct discrepancies between the legislation and what was currently on the ministry website. By direct I mean exact opposite discrepancies. The minister stood up and berated us and said that we don't care and that we don't listen and that everything was perfect and that if only we loved Alberta we would support this. The same minister the next day walked in with three pages of amendments to a four-page bill.

So you'll have to forgive me, Madam Speaker, if, while I was impressed by the previous fiery speech, I don't trust the content of it. This government has a long, established track record of insisting that they've consulted, and when the facts are checked, it turns out that those facts are not facts at all but rather what the government would have Albertans believe rather than what actually happened. It was an impressive speech. It's just that the government's track record leads me to not trust the impressive speech that we heard ever so recently in this House.

4:50

And you know what? It's only a matter of the Official Opposition trying to get it right. As I've often said in this House, very often the government would do well to remember that the best advice they often get in this House comes from the opposition. If they would follow it sooner, they would get in less trouble, they would probably be more popular with Albertans right now, and they would probably have gotten a lot of things right in the last three and a half years that they keep getting wrong. I think what we're offering here to the government is an opportunity to make sure they've got it right. We're not even saying that they got the bill wrong. You know what? That's not what my hon. colleague from Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre said. He said that we need to know that the consultation has been done before we make such an important decision.

Postsecondary education is one of the main underpinnings of the current, past, and future success of the province of Alberta. Why? Because while it's not exclusively for young people, young people are the future of our province, and – let's face it – they are the main consumers, main users, main beneficiaries of postsecondary education. They go out into the world and actually make us proud. They actually make Alberta the wonderful land of opportunity that it is for 4.3 million people, and we don't want that to stop. We do not want that to stop.

I also found it interesting in the remarks I heard earlier today that the hon. Member for Calgary-Acadia talked about how there's been five years of tuition freezes. Well, I guess I would remind that member and all members of the House that that means that the first two years of those five were under a Conservative government because the current gang has been here for three and a half years. The government of the day, today, actually saw fit to continue a

program that the previous Conservative government put in place. History may show that to be a great decision. It may show that to not be a great decision. I haven't researched the remarks that the Member for Calgary-Acadia gave, but if it turns out that they're true, and I have no reason to believe that they're not, it would indeed show that those tuition-freeze years started with the Conservative government.

This is important, Madam Speaker. This is a bill that talks about tuition freezes, limiting the tuition increases to the CPI, all things that, if we are able to send this to committee and check, may turn out to be the right answer. We just want to make sure it's the right answer. There's too much at stake to get it wrong.

When I talked to student groups – and the one thing I do agree on with the hon. member that spoke earlier and gave his impressive speech was that I have talked to these student members and have gotten my picture taken and was proud to put it on Facebook because I talked to those people, and those student representatives from the postsecondary institutions are bright people. They're serious people. They're serious about their future. They're serious about the future of Alberta. They're serious about wanting to make a good living and contribute to the world and be successful, and I'm so grateful for that.

When we have these discussions, they always turn to – you know what? If I was a student, I would want a lower tuition as well. Who wouldn't? If I paid \$2 for a loaf of bread, I'd rather pay \$1. Who wouldn't? This is much more important. I'm certainly not suggesting that a loaf of bread isn't important because it is, but this is a bigger purchase than a loaf of bread. I think we can agree on that.

Some of the discussion that I often have with those students when I'm together with them is: this is an important decision. This is an important decision, whether you perhaps have a higher tuition and pay for it for four years while you're in university or college – I realize some programs are two and some are eight, but four is a reasonably good average for discussion – whether you pay a higher tuition now with less support from the taxpayer or whether you pay a lower tuition now with more support from the taxpayer and then be that taxpayer and give higher support for the next 44 years.

You know what? I would say to you, Madam Speaker, that if the student says, "No; I want to pay a higher tuition now and lower taxes later," they're right. Here's the funny thing. I would also say that if they want to pay a lower tuition now and are willing to contribute to other people's tuition for the next 44 years, they're also right. It's really a matter of their personal preference. These students understand, because they're smart people, that there is no free lunch. There's no free education; somebody pays for it. They understand, actually. They actually understand the relationship, that there's a certain amount that students should reasonably pay and a certain amount that society should reasonably provide so that young Albertans and all Albertans who want to and can achieve the admission standards get a chance to be all they can be, to make themselves the very best contributor to society and the most successful human being that they can be for not just them but for everybody. They get that.

But what I haven't heard the government explain yet – and this is why it would be interesting to go to committee to talk about that balance of costs in a constructive way, not a partisan way because I don't see this as a partisan issue. Those kids in that university are Conservative, they're NDP, they're Liberal, they're Alberta Party, and politically unaffiliated, of course. This matters for all of our kids and grandkids and all of our future. This is not an NDP issue. It's not a Conservative issue. It's not a political issue in my view. It's an Alberta issue that needs to be managed and taken care of correctly.

Here's what I imagine, Madam Speaker, that we would talk about in committee. We would talk about: does this legislation have the balance right between what part of the costs are paid by students, what part is paid by the institutions themselves through the institutions being able to create revenue in other ways, and with the government itself putting money forward and saying: yes, this is how much we're going to support each of the institutions. It's a complex issue because, of course, what you have are thousands and thousands of students, each with a different financial ability to pay, and then we get into the supports for those students with less ability to pay, which matters because the ability for all Albertans is important.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

The discussion I have heard so far doesn't for me, anyways – I think we need to talk about that I'm not sure all the institutions are in a same place. The reason I don't think they're in a same place is because some have stronger balance sheets than other ones do, and we need to probably have that discussion. Will this legislation perhaps limit one institution financially while giving another institution a lot more than what they need? That would be a worthwhile discussion. It would be a worthwhile discussion to talk about the fact that the students are different, the institutions are different, and also it may come down to that different programs require different considerations. These are the things that we could hash out at committee and get it right.

Again, I think it's not the biggest bill we've had in here, but it's biggish. I'm looking here at, you know, 51 pages. We've had it for a couple of days, a day, I guess. This, actually, for the Official Opposition says: "No; you know what? Maybe we should have a better understanding of this before we go forward." I think that's a responsible position for us to take and one that I would hope the government, frankly, would embrace because those kids in school will be all of our kids, all of our grandkids, and all of their grandkids and kids. They're all going to win or lose together based on this thing, and I think taking some time to get it right is a responsible position to take. I would hope that the government sees their way clear to say: "Okay. Let's kick it around together. Let's talk about it. Let's make sure we got it right because there's too much at stake to get it wrong."

That, Madam Clerk – sorry, Madam Speaker. My apologies. You know, I need to get your title right. There's my debate, and with that, I will move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

5:00

Bill 20 Securities Amendment Act, 2018

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is a real thrill today to be able to rise on behalf of the Minister of Finance to move second reading of Bill 20, Securities Amendment Act, 2018.

The Alberta Securities Commission is mandated to protect investors and foster a fair and efficient Alberta capital market. This requires balancing investor protection and the integrity of the financial system while allowing innovation and ensuring a competitive investment climate. Achieving this balance is complicated given the increasing complexity, sophistication, international scope, and technological advances of the securities regulatory landscape.

The following amendments have been developed as part of Alberta's commitment to ongoing reform of the securities regulatory

system: implementing a capital market whistle-blower program for misconduct under the Securities Act; creating a regulatory regime for benchmarks and benchmark administrators that will be compatible with the benchmark regime being adopted by the European Union; broadening the scope of provisions for Alberta Securities Commission members, staff, and/or agents that protect them from being compelled to testify about information collected in the course of their duties in third-party proceedings; and implementing consequential and harmonization amendments. These amendments are intended to improve regulation of Alberta's capital market, enhance investor confidence and protection, and keep our securities laws harmonized with other jurisdictions.

I'll just quickly go into some of these that are coming. The first of the amendment proposals is to advance investor protection. An addition of a new part 2.1, whistle-blowing, would allow the Alberta Securities Commission to implement a whistle-blower program similar to those adopted in 2016 by Ontario and Quebec. These amendments would help protect Alberta investors and encourage investors and employees of publicly traded companies to report serious securities- or derivatives-related wrongdoings. Securities regulators such as the Alberta Securities Commission believe that a whistle-blower program will assist in preventing or limiting harm to investors.

The program would protect whistle-blowers who report misconduct in the Alberta capital market by prohibiting retaliation against them, providing them with limited immunity, and keeping their identities and the information that they share confidential. These amendments are consistent with the public sector whistle-blower policy introduced by our government earlier. However, in the proposed program protection would apply to individuals working in the private sector, employed by or otherwise connected to an entity where securities violations may be occurring. The whistle-blower program would also protect the integrity of Alberta's capital market by prohibiting false reports of wrongdoing, obstruction of whistle-blowing, and agreements aimed at restricting whistle-blowing.

The second of these amendment proposals would implement a regulatory system for benchmarks and benchmark administrators. For your information, benchmarks are indexes that include a group of securities, the intent being to represent the performance of a particular segment of the market. An example would be a benchmark that provides an indication of short-term interest rates that are used in setting the floating interest rate on some derivatives and loans. The provisions are designed to harmonize with similar systems for benchmarks now in place in the European Union and most recently put in place in Quebec and Ontario. The new benchmark system will require administrators of designated benchmarks to be registered and identified by the regulator as a designated benchmark administrator, clearly define a designated benchmark, and ensure that a designated benchmark administrator has to comply with the same requirements as an administrator under the EU regulations.

Another harmonizing initiative will further the protection of investor information by no longer requiring Alberta Securities Commission members, staff, and agents to testify in third-party hearings regarding information collected in the course of their duties. This ensures that investors' information, especially from those who come to the Alberta Securities Commission to report wrongdoings, is not provided to a third party who would not otherwise have access to that information. Further, this allows individuals entrusted to enforce Alberta's securities laws to carry out their duties without fear of civil liability. Ontario recently passed a similar amendment, and this change would result in this aspect of Alberta's securities laws being harmonized with Ontario's.

Around section 223: amendments to Lieutenant Governor in Council regulations would also permit the Alberta Securities Commission to make rules regarding the manner and form of material provided to the Alberta Securities Commission under other Alberta legislation such as the Business Corporations Act.

To quickly wrap this up, with these amendments we are ensuring Alberta's securities regulatory system reflects the realities of today's markets and evolves with international standards and global regulatory reform initiatives. I would certainly encourage all members in this House to support this bill, and I appreciate the chance to move second reading here.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thanks to my colleague from Edmonton-Decore for introducing for second reading Bill 20, Securities Amendment Act, 2018. I, too, rise to speak to Bill 20. This bill, of course, is bringing forth a number of amendments to the Securities Act. It has only been 24 hours since the bill was tabled, and we're still in the midst of doing a lot of outreach to securities dealers. But at this point, as the intention of second reading, I support the intention of Bill 20, Securities Amendment Act.

I'm slightly concerned about how broad and how important this act may be, Madam Speaker, so I'm hoping at Committee of the Whole to have an opportunity to seek some clarification and some answers, and I look forward to that.

To start, Madam Speaker, I make no secrets: I'm not a fan of additional regulation, more red tape, more paperwork, more work for public servants and regulators. On this side, while the UCP consistently calls for less regulation, less regulation does not mean no regulations. Securities are complex financial instruments, and when not regulated properly, events like the 2008 financial crisis and the great recession can happen.

To back up a bit, on a positive note, Bill 20 does take a giant leap in recognizing the work of Conservatives on the negotiated comprehensive economic and trade agreement, or CETA, with the European Union. We welcome European capital for investment, and our businesses, our families, and our employees look forward to this investment from Europe and investing in Europe. Madam Speaker, the free flow of capital is essential for the workings of Alberta and Canada's economy. Particularly now, with the layers of burden that this government has added in the last three and a half years, the free flow of capital is especially essential.

Canadian securities regulators have committed to implementing a regulatory regime for benchmarks equivalent to the European Union's regime to ensure that the European Union market participants may continue to use Canadian benchmarks. In other words, if Canadian Western Bank makes an overnight loan to Deutsche Bank, they may make it using the Canadian benchmark rate, or Barclays bank may use a Canadian benchmark rate to make a loan to Canadian Western Bank. Benchmarks are interest rates banks charge other banks for short-term loans. In Canada, I'm told, we have the two.

Madam Speaker, you may recall the most famous global benchmark is the LIBOR rate. That is the London interbank offered rate. The LIBOR is an average interest rate calculated through submissions of interest rates by major banks around the world. You may also recall that in 2008 a major scandal arose out of the fall of the world financial crisis when it was discovered that perhaps the banks were falsely inflating or deflating the rates so as to profit from trades or to give the impression that they were more creditworthy than they were.

5:10

Couple this with the fact that LIBOR underpins approximately \$350 trillion in derivatives. An attempt to manipulate an exchange rate could also be an attempt to manipulate derivatives in violation of law, and because mortgages, crucial things like student loans, family loans, financial derivatives, exchange rates, ETFs, and other financial products will rely on these, the manipulations of submissions used to calculate these rates can have significant negative effects on families, consumers, and Albertans.

Madam Speaker, I hope you're starting to see why it's so important, and I hope it's starting to become clear how important it is that we get this right, that the regulation of securities by the Alberta Securities Commission is right. I thank all the Alberta dealers that we've reached out to that have had the time to get back to us in just 24 hours, and I look forward to their consultation continuing, and I look forward to the process of Committee of the Whole.

This is also where whistle-blower protection comes in. Madam Speaker, it's essential – it's essential – for Alberta employees, Alberta communities, wealth creation, Alberta job creators that our stock exchanges and our security markets be as fair, as transparent, and as efficient as possible. Couple that with the impact that these exchange rates could have. At this point in time I absolutely support the enhancement of whistle-blower protection, whistle-blower involvement. Whistle-blowers need confidentiality. They also need to ensure that the information shared by the Alberta Securities Commission – they also need to ensure that the information they share remains confidential. Whistle-blowers can take a great risk to ensure that markets run fair and smooth so every Albertan has the opportunity to create wealth, create jobs in a free-enterprise Alberta. There needs to be a prohibition on retaliation against whistle-blowers as well.

There also needs to be a prohibition on agreements that purport to restrict whistle-blowing. This is like making sure there is nothing untoward in someone's employment contract. Again, we need to ensure that in a fair, legal way whistle-blowers have the maximum opportunity to come forward in the fairest possible sense. But, just like a whistle-blower, employers need to have a prohibition on false reports of wrongdoing. In other words, whistle-blowers need to be right and know what they are doing when they call for a halt to certain activities.

Madam Speaker, sometimes whistle-blowers are themselves caught up in the crime until they realize something is wrong. That is why there also needs to be limited immunity for whistle-blowers. Yes, the whistle-blower may have come forward when they realized something was wrong, but because they were involved in the crime, they have to be held responsible for that as well, and that has to be balanced with the need for them to come forward versus the need to protect an innocent investing and working public.

I've also just heard that Bill 20 will amend section 222 of the Securities Act such that Alberta Securities Commission members, staff, and agents will not have to testify in third-party proceedings unless it is directly related to something to do with the Securities Act. That seems very reasonable, very fair, and important for liability protection.

Section 223 will be amended so that the Alberta Securities Commission can also decide how securities and companies submit paperwork, whether hard copy or electronic. I believe that this could help modernize the information system and technology that will help track all these critical filings, save time, save money, and I hope not only for our good bureaucrats and front-line workers but also for our investors.

I'm also told that there are some smaller harmonization pieces to this legislation, and I think that's necessary and good, too, as it sounds like Ontario and Quebec have gone there before. I'm especially pleased that it protects Alberta's right to be the free-enterprise leader in Canada. It protects Alberta to have say and control over our own Alberta Securities Commission. For generations Albertans have been the leaders in taking risk, innovating, whether it's agriculture, oil and gas, or information technology. I'm so glad to see that that is continuing.

Madam Speaker, in summary, I support the intent of this bill. I will be voting in favour of it at this point, and I look forward to getting some more feedback from the investors we've reached out to and some more answers to questions during Committee of the Whole.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I too am very pleased to stand and contribute to the debate on second reading of Bill 20. At a previous iteration of this I stood up and I think I surprised at least the Minister of Finance by saying that I thought this was, at that time, some of the most exciting legislation. Usually securities legislation is seen as quite dry and arcane, even obtuse. I really want to congratulate the Minister of Finance for that previous legislation, which provided a lot of consumer protection and actually strengthened the Alberta Securities Commission in its work.

I really, actually, want to echo the comments of the previous speaker, in that a well-functioning Alberta Securities Commission is essential to the economy of this province. I'm proud to be part of a government that has continued the support of the Alberta Securities Commission and basically protected it from the predations of a national securities commission that would have robbed, in my opinion, the ability of Alberta companies, particularly in oil and gas, agriculture, forestry, mining, other areas that we have particular expertise in in this province and particular interest in terms of the economy.

If we're going to make this legislation work well for the economy of the province, we need to make sure that in particular the whistle-blower protection is solid, and that's one of the things that I'm really pleased with here. Investors, whether they're here in Alberta or elsewhere, need to know that the financial transactions that come out of this province are done above board, and they need to have faith in the Alberta Securities Commission, that it can do the job for which it is set up and for which, actually, our government and Albertans in general pay a large amount of money. The Alberta Securities Commission is a very expensive proposition, and it's a place where I'm pleased to see my taxpaying dollars go to.

When I hear the opposition complain about the inefficiencies of government spending and how they would cut a lot of this sort of stuff, I often wonder how that Alberta Securities Commission would actually be able to continue to function if it didn't have the taxpayers' support to do its job. That's something I'd like to hear more about perhaps in Committee of the Whole, how the opposition might, if they were to get into power – which I'm dreading – how that might actually work out. Anyways, I digress a little bit.

You know, the Alberta Securities Commission needs to be trusted, needs to be credible, needs to be transparent in its activities, and if it is, our economy is going to be much more successful. We are going to be able to tell constituents of mine, who have come to my office and complained about concerns that they've got about

some financial transactions that have gone on in the past, that we're actually seeing a way through to the future.

5:20

This program is going to protect whistle-blowers who report misconduct by prohibiting retaliation against them, by providing them with a form of limited immunity, and by keeping their identities and the information they share confidential. The previous speaker referred to section 222. Section 222 is being expanded to do just what I've talked about, making sure that a whistle-blower can make a report and institute some action without concerns about being harassed – I'm not sure whether that's the English or American pronunciation.

The whistle-blower program is important. The benchmarks are also important. This is one of the more arcane and obtuse aspects of securities regulation – and I'm not going to get into it, largely because I don't understand a lot of it – but if we're going to have a credible Securities Commission process, we need to have benchmarks. I think that's the simplest way to mention that. These benchmarks are indexes that include a group of securities, the intent being to represent the performance of a segment of the market.

Now, to come back to what I was talking about, how the market here in Alberta is predominantly mining, exploration, oil and gas, forestry, agriculture. Those would be the kinds of segments that we'd need benchmarks in. There are also benchmarks for things like the LIBOR, the floating interest rates. Probably what's most important about these benchmarks is that they're going to harmonize our system with the European Union and recent new legislation in Ontario.

These are just two different examples of why this legislation is very important. I'm very pleased to hear that the opposition is going to support this legislation.

Thank you for your attention.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

We are now on 29(2)(a). Are there any members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, I will ask the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore to close debate.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Madam Chair – Speaker. Sorry. My apologies. I keep getting the two confused.

Very excited to hear, as we're moving through second reading here of Bill 20, the Securities Amendment Act, 2018, that we're getting some support to move this conversation along into Committee of the Whole.

As I had mentioned earlier, the Alberta Securities Commission, again, is mandated to protect investors and foster a fair and efficient Alberta capital market – we've heard the previous speaker for Edmonton-Whitemud refer a little bit to that – of course, requiring a balance to investor protection and the integrity of the financial system. You know, I think as we're moving forward, we're seeing this system becoming more complicated with the complexity, sophistication, the international scope in there as well as all the

technological advances that are coming along, and we need to ensure that our securities regulatory landscape is as secure as possible.

As we had talked about earlier, implementing the whistle-blower program in there, benchmarks and benchmark administrators will be compatible with the European Union. We've seen that as we move forward, trying to harmonize all of these systems will allow the entire securities system to move more fluidly, broadening the scope of provisions for Alberta Securities Commission members, staff, and their agents, and protect them from being compelled to testify about information that's collected in the course of their duties in third-party proceedings. We've heard quite a bit around individuals that are getting pulled into litigations simply because they had access to information simply by doing their jobs. Thus, we're protecting information that would not have otherwise been available to these third parties and all of the harmonization that goes forward.

I'm glad to see, as we standardize things across Canada, that implementing similar changes that were already adopted in 2016 by Ontario and Quebec will allow our jurisdictions to interact a lot more clearly rather than simply duplicating processes over and over again throughout all of the jurisdictions, thus making things more efficient. As our friends across the way like to say, "We don't like red tape" so this will allow us to smooth that system out.

I will comment though that with whistle-blowers, prohibiting retaliation against them, there was some great work done not only in this House but also within committees around whistle-blower legislation here in Alberta when, of course, the biggest thing that we had heard was the fear of retaliation from people. By providing them with some limited immunity as well as keeping their identities and the information that they share confidential, it will strengthen that part of the legislation and allow us to provide a system where whistle-blowers will feel confident coming forward and bringing the information that could be of serious consequence, and thus protect them.

Benchmarks, you know, standardizing that system, benchmark administrators: again, just a simple matter of smoothing out the system and allowing jurisdictions to interact with each other in a much faster and more efficient manner.

With that, I'm happy to close debate on second reading.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore has moved second reading of Bill 20, Securities Amendment Act, 2018, on behalf of the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

[Motion carried; Bill 20 read a second time]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think that we have made great progress this afternoon, so I thank all the members for the fantastic debate. I would like to move that we adjourn until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:28 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday morning, October 31, 2018

Day 43

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Wednesday, October 31, 2018

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Prayers

The Acting Speaker: Good morning.

Let us pray. Give to each member of this Legislature a strong and abiding sense of the great responsibilities laid upon us. Give us deep and thorough understanding of the needs of the people we serve. Amen.

Please be seated.

Orders of the Day Government Motions

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Morning Sitting Cancellation

33. Ms Larivee moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:
Be it resolved that, notwithstanding Standing Order 3(1), the morning sitting of the Assembly on Thursday, November 22, 2018, be cancelled.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Speaker. For the benefit of the House I should indicate that this motion is being moved, as was a similar motion last year, in order to facilitate participation of members in the Rural Municipalities of Alberta fall convention and, in particular, in the ministerial forum which takes place that morning.

The Acting Speaker: Are there any members wishing to speak to the motion?

Seeing none, Deputy Government House Leader, do you want to close debate?

Ms Larivee: Sure. Consider it closed.

[Government Motion 33 carried]

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 21 An Act to Protect Patients

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's an absolute privilege to move second reading of Bill 21, An Act to Protect Patients.

As we've seen in recent years, sexual abuse has received a lot of media attention, and it's top of mind in our society. The Me Too movement and other actions are bringing these issues to the forefront of our consciousness while challenging us to do better here in government and in all parts of society. We all know, of course, that this has been an issue for much longer than it's been talked about and that it has taken far too long for our communities to address sexual violence and harassment. This is a very important issue because sexual abuse leaves untold trauma in its wake and damage that can last a lifetime.

This past spring, when I was made aware of a situation where a doctor was convicted of sexual assault and got his licence back, I

was shocked when I heard this news, and I was angry because I didn't feel that Alberta patients were being properly protected. The reality is that we hear too many of these stories, and indeed just one story would be too many. My office has heard from Albertans who have experienced sexual abuse or misconduct by regulated health professionals. These stories are gut wrenching, and often they're extremely difficult to hear. But I'd like to take a few moments to share a few today, with personal identifying information omitted, of course, just so you can get a sense of some of the themes that we're here to address today.

A father told me about how his son, living with autism in a mental health unit, was punished for making an assault complaint. We heard about an alleged molester taken to court multiple times, only with arbitration. We heard from a woman assaulted by a nurse who cried for help and no one ever came. We heard from a mother whose daughter told her over 10 years ago that a doctor touched her genitals. The mother never told anyone. She didn't know who to tell. She didn't know what to do.

Madam Speaker, these are the kinds of stories that inspired us to introduce this legislation, because when I dug into the situation, I was frustrated to learn that the tools available to the regulatory colleges in Alberta were inadequate to protect patients. I sat down with my team and I said: we must fix this. We began working with our partners at the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta as well as other regulatory colleges, who govern health care workers to develop the right tools to keep Albertans safe. I am proud to say that the colleges have been willing partners in this work, sharing our commitment to patient safety. Today I am proud to announce the result of that critical work, legislation that will help to protect patients and prevent sexual assault as well as provide greater transparency.

Madam Speaker, Albertans should always feel safe when accessing health care services. Those were the values behind the legislation we introduced in the spring to protect women's choice in accessing health care, and we continue to champion those values today. Albertans place their health and often their very lives with the health care providers. Ultimately, Albertans give their health care providers their trust, and with that trust must come responsibility and accountability. Albertans must know, without a doubt, that they are in safe hands. They must know that the gift of trust they give to their health care provider will be met with respect and honoured. Our government is taking actions through this bill to ensure Albertans feel safe while accessing their health care services. We have zero tolerance for sexual abuse or sexual misconduct towards patients, and it's a significant betrayal of the public trust.

Through the proposed amendments to the Health Professions Act in Bill 21 we are strengthening protection for patients from sexual abuse and sexual misconduct by regulated health professionals in Alberta. We are proposing a number of initiatives through this bill, including imposing mandatory disciplinary penalties for sexual abuse and sexual misconduct, enhancing public transparency by requiring that information about professionals' discipline histories for sexual abuse or sexual misconduct towards patients be published on the college websites indefinitely, and establishing patient relations programs that must include measures for preventing and addressing sexual abuse and sexual misconduct towards patients.

The patient relations program will also help Albertans better understand the complaints process and where they can go to for help. It will include training and an educational requirement for health providers as well as college staff.

The bill will also provide funding for treatment and counselling for patients who have alleged experience of sexual abuse or

misconduct by a regulated health professional, ensuring complainants have greater participation in the investigation and hearing process; conducting more stringent background checks for registering health professionals; implementing new reinstatement rules for regulated health professionals who've had their practice permits cancelled due to sexual abuse or misconduct; and mandating the creation of new standards of practice for sexual abuse and sexual misconduct that must be approved by the Minister of Health.

Madam Speaker, Alberta will be the second province in Canada, after only Ontario, to take this kind of targeted legislative action to protect patients from sexual abuse by regulated health professionals. I am so proud – and I think we all should be proud – that Alberta has an opportunity to be a leader on such a crucial issue. There is no circumstance where sexual abuse by a regulated health professional will be tolerated. That's why we are making it clear to perpetrators that the age of impunity is over. These crimes have been confined to the shadows for far too long, and it's time that we bring them into the light. This bill, An Act to Protect Patients, will help protect Albertans, and it will also ensure appropriate penalties are in place.

I want to thank my cosponsors for this bill and for their collaboration and for their leadership on this issue: the Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park, who, when this issue impacted families in the community she represents, wrote me immediately to find out what she could do to help these families and to prevent this from ever happening again; the Member for Calgary-Bow, who showed tremendous leadership when she introduced her own legislation enabling survivors to break residential leases without penalty when escaping domestic violence. I know how proud she was the day that legislation passed in this Assembly, and I remember how I felt, too, to work at a place that stood up for women and for survivors.

Our government will continue to stand up against sexual assault, harassment, and bullying, whether it's in the workplace, the home, the school, on your way into a doctor's office, or when you're in that doctor's office, because Albertans deserve to know that their government and indeed all of their representatives will fight abuse and harassment and stand with survivors at every opportunity.

I encourage all members of our Assembly to show support by voting yes on second reading for Bill 21, and I look forward to debating this bill with all of my colleagues. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is an absolute privilege to be here and to speak to this bill, the protecting patients from sexual assault by health providers act. You know, one of the most wonderful things about what we get to do is that we get to meet a ton of wonderful people – wonderful people – but we also hear some of the most horrible things as well. Thank goodness that when that happens, sometimes it leads to legislation that helps out the people that we represent. The fact that someone in a position of power can abuse at this level and could potentially just leave with a slap on the wrist is absolutely horrible. And the minister has outlined other situations, other than the one that I brought forward in the Legislature, and I am grateful for that. Thank you for sharing.

9:10

This is a piece of legislation that I feel very strongly about, and I'm absolutely thrilled that the government has brought this forward. All Albertans have the right to high-quality, timely, and safe health care. As patients we share our most private concerns and

are incredibly vulnerable with our health care workers, be that doctors, nurses, lab techs, and this is the way that the system needs to be. The public's trust in physicians is crucial, especially when we're ensuring that when an Albertan walks into a doctor's office, they feel safe and trusting and comfortable to share that intimate information which enables health professionals to diagnose, prescribe, and make informed choices about a patient's health.

Unfortunately, for thousands of dedicated and upstanding physicians, who dedicate their lives to their patients' wellness, there are a few individuals who have leveraged their position as physicians and broken the trust of patients and Albertans. It's unfortunate but true that just one horrible incident can spoil the whole bunch. The consequence for a few select individuals damaging the overall reputation of physicians as a whole has the ability to cause chaos in the health care system. Without public confidence and trust our entire health system can break down.

So, with this in mind, I'm pleased to see this legislation that will return public trust and accountability and openness as well as provide protection and legal recourse for victims of sexual assault and misconduct by health care providers.

The issue first came to my attention last spring, when I was absolutely horrified to read the story of Dr. Ismail Taher, who was found guilty in a court of sexually assaulting an 18-year-old woman during an August 2013 examination in Sherwood Park. The woman, who had concerns about nose piercing, testified that Taher had touched her buttocks and massaged her breast during the visit. About a year later he was found guilty twice of sexually assaulting a nurse in a north-side clinic in June 2018 by brushing her breasts and later grabbing her breasts and then pinching her backside. He was also exonerated of another charge of sexual assault on a clinic manager but found guilty of physically assaulting her.

After this proven track record of shockingly inappropriate behaviour and a record of repetition, Dr. Taher was then allowed to continue practising medicine following a hearing tribunal by the College of Physicians & Surgeons. According to an occupational assessment in the report completed in October 2017, the college found Dr. Taher fit to practise medicine and a low-risk offender.

For the life of me, when I read those words, I couldn't believe it. The college had determined that Dr. Taher could practise medicine as long as he had a chaperone when seeing female patients, participated in a monitoring program, and worked with other doctors who know his discipline history. In what world should a physician with a proven track record of sexual misconduct and assault of female patients be allowed to interact with patients ever again?

Being a doctor is a privilege and not a right. For those that have proven themselves repeatedly unworthy of that privilege, why have they been given such lenience and grace by the regulatory bodies that have overseen them in the past? The ruling from the college was incredibly disappointing. It was because of this shockingly inappropriate response that I asked the Health minister what her government would do to address this on three separate occasions during question period last spring.

While I wish that the government had been able to implement legislation sooner, I do understand what goes into this kind of legislation, and I understand how difficult it is to bring these forward. I'm extremely pleased to see that it is here now and that it will give Alberta patients the protections that they rightly deserve, and I would like to congratulate the minister on taking the time to learn from some of these growing pains that Ontario experienced when they implemented the same legislation. It's important that we get this bill right the first time and that we don't leave any room for these physicians to appeal convictions based on loopholes and technical definitions.

The disciplinary system of the past was one which Dr. Gail Robinson said was a system of protectionism of the professions as opposed to being more concerned about the welfare of patients. I am pleased to see that this legislation will change this to a system that prioritizes the needs of patients and public trust. There are so many important pieces of legislation that will provide much-needed accountability.

The fact that there will now be mandatory penalties for those found guilty of sexual misconduct and abuse is crucial. The current system gives a lot of discretion in sentencing to the college and hearing tribunals, which has led to what I believe to be lenient decisions and a loss in public confidence, and we just can't have that. We saw that in Dr. Taher's case.

I'm pleased to see that Bill 21 mandates educational training on sexual misconduct and abuse for physicians, tribunal members, and the colleges.

In a world, Madam Speaker, where we are still fighting the stigma of sexual assault, in the wake of the Me Too movement, as the minister had mentioned, where there are still many people not aware of the inherent biases in sexual assault cases, it's incredibly important that we are educating our professionals on this issue. Whether this is our judges, first responders, or physicians sitting on tribunals that are overseeing sexual misconduct cases, education is a key piece.

I also think that it's excellent that the victims will now be provided with counselling supports as well through the colleges. Despite amazing efforts of sexual violence counselling centres across this province to address this tidal wave of need, there are still enormous wait-lists in most cities, and the cost of private counselling for victims can be very prohibitive. The colleges are accountable for the actions of the members that they oversee, and they should be accountable for addressing the fallout from unethical behaviour that hurts patients and requires them to need counselling. This being said, these are excellent organizations that will be able to collaborate and cost share on both the counselling and educational components of this bill so that smaller colleges are not disproportionately impacted.

Another piece of this legislation that I think is critical and crucial is the fact that physicians who are convicted of sexual assault or misconduct will be named publicly and available online in perpetuity. While there may be instances in which physicians are rehabilitated, reapply for their licences following a suspension or cancellation, and are able to get back to treating their patients, Albertans must have the right to know if the doctor they're seeing has a history of misconduct. Albertans should not have to depend on ratemds.com to see if they should feel safe going alone in a room with their physician. In fact, this information was previously only available for five years, and that is unacceptable since I can guarantee that those who've been victimized by sexual misconduct by a physician will certainly be concerned and processing that incident, and for some people that takes more than five years.

As I've said, what it really boils down to is the right of an Albertan as a consumer to make an informed choice, which they can only make if they have all of the facts. I'm glad that Albertans will now have access to the full history of physicians with misconduct convictions with no time limits.

Another important aspect of this legislation is that it will end physician amnesty in Alberta. By this I mean that physicians who have been convicted of sexual misconduct or assault elsewhere will no longer be able to flee to Alberta and continue practising. I do have a couple of questions about this after, that I'll say at the end of this discussion. If a physician has been found guilty of misconduct, they should not be able to head to Alberta to continue to be a risk to patients simply because there's no legislation preventing this.

This piece of legislation will address a substantial gap in the current system and ensure that people coming from other provinces do not see Alberta as the land of opportunity in this manner. It is also important that physicians who would like to practise in Alberta are legally required to disclose any of their previous convictions.

In the interest of doing my due diligence, I would like to seek some clarity with regard to some specific questions that I have. This would be greatly appreciated – and feedback from the minister – so I'm just going to bring these up here.

The five-year licence revocation is a process for Health, so what is the threshold that would be used to determine if this professional should have the ability to practise again? Then requirement for health professionals to disclose unprofessional conduct in another jurisdiction: is Alberta requiring the regulatory bodies to check all the existing professionals or just the new ones coming in, or is the professional on an honour system? How can Alberta Health be sure that this is occurring? What if a health professional does not disclose? Is there a penalty for that?

9:20

Also, Madam Speaker, section 96.2(1), on page 9, indicates that their permit to practise will be cancelled if the misconduct was sexual abuse and suspended for a specific period of time if it involved sexual misconduct. My questions are: how long is the cancellation for sexual abuse? Who decides the specific period for sexual misconduct? And what is the process for reinstatement of their licence?

Obviously, we support ensuring that Albertans are not at risk from any doctor with a record of sexual abuse, but if doctors who are practising here must suddenly leave their practices because this record has been disclosed, does Alberta Health have a plan to help ensure that Albertans have access to another physician, especially in rural areas? If a doctor has been taken out of there, what's sort of the backup plan to replace doctors in those areas?

Public disclosure on the websites, Madam Speaker: how will Alberta Health monitor the websites to ensure that all colleges are providing the transparency that's required in the bill?

Finally, in section 135.5(1), minister's direction, I just have questions about if there's possible overreach here. I'm happy to hear whatever the minister, obviously, has to say about this, but the section allows the cabinet to change standards of practice for any of the 29 regulatory bodies covered by the Health Professions Act if the minister deems it in the public interest. As I recall, the minister had indicated, in Dr. Taher's case, that she did not have this authority. Is this section included to deal with that particular issue? I'm assuming so. If the minister wouldn't mind outlining the kind of consultation she had with those regulatory bodies regarding this.

In conclusion, I cannot imagine going to my doctor and being violated. I can't imagine how, after enduring something like that, I could ever go to another physician and feel safe again. So to the brave people, the brave women who have come forward against their perpetrators only to watch them get a slap on the wrist and continue to practise medicine: you are so brave and you deserve better. Thank you for your courage, your resilience, and for being the leaders in this issue. Without your bravery this issue may never have been addressed, and I am, for one, extremely grateful for those of you who stood up and said: "No. I will not accept this."

I know that it must have been terrifying to go to court and to discuss and rediscuss your trauma only to be disappointed as you watched those who wronged you continue to live comfortably and continue to work. I know it must have bothered you in the first place, but you must have wondered why the system was stacked against you. I hope that in reading about this legislation, you are able to find some peace, knowing that your outspoken courage

changed the system in our province for the better. I'm very grateful to the government for bringing forward this piece of legislation, but more than that I'm grateful to the survivors of sexual assaults and abuse at the hands of physicians and those people who led the charge. My colleagues in the UCP caucus and I are honoured to support this legislation on behalf of those powerful men and women.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Loyola: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's always a pleasure to get up in this House and speak. It's wonderful to be back here in session and see all the smiling faces on the other side of the room. It's always wonderful to see them.

I wish I was getting up to speak to something better though. I've got to be honest. You know, with every piece of legislation that comes forward in this House, we have to ask ourselves: well, what is the problem that we're trying to fix? Madam Speaker, this goes a lot further than just patient rights because of course we know for a fact that in our society we are plagued with this problem of abuse of power. That's what this is all about. At the root of what we're trying to fix here is the abuse of power, people who are in positions of authority using their power to sexually abuse, in this particular case patients, but of course this happens in all kinds of scenarios and, unfortunately, relationships. At the real root of this is patriarchy, something that, you know, not all of us in this House would really want to talk about.

This has to do with a culture, a culture where specifically the tendency is that men abuse their power over women. Now, if we ever want to change this culture, then particularly us men – and I know that a lot of the men in my caucus are open-minded. They want to be willing and able to listen to what women have to say and, more importantly, understand where these women are coming from and then learn how we can build a better society that is more just and fair, where everybody can treat each other with the respect and dignity that we all deserve.

I find it heartbreaking that women in this province when they're going to a doctor, a place where they're going to deal with their health issues, a place where they should feel safe, are not getting that experience because there are men who abuse their power.

You know, unfortunately, Madam Speaker, I've had in the last six months two cases – two cases – of young women who have come to my constituency office to talk about how men, in particular, have abused their power and actually sexually abused them; one in a place of work, and another when a nurse, in particular, was invited to a doctor's home where they were supposedly going to be working on some kind of nonprofit initiative. So it breaks my heart. It breaks my heart that this is the case because I know that we can do better.

Now, if we can put forward a piece of legislation that will help move this forward, that will help educate, that will help people learn, but more importantly, say that we will not accept that this will happen in this province, this is something that we are proud to put forward as the Alberta NDP. Here we are making an attempt to establish within legislation supporting a culture of just relations between women and men.

If passed, Bill 21 will strengthen protection for patients from sexual abuse and sexual misconduct by regulated health professionals here in the province of Alberta, and it's going to impose mandatory disciplinary penalties for sexual abuse and sexual misconduct. It will be ensuring that Albertans have a tool to find information about a professional's disciplinary history for

sexual abuse or sexual misconduct and establishing patient relations programs that help prevent and address sexual abuse and sexual misconduct toward patients. The patient relations program will help Albertans to better understand the complaints process and where to go for help if they experience something like this. It will also include training and educational requirements for health providers and college staff.

In addition, the bill would ensure that patients have access to treatment and counselling if they've experienced sexual abuse or misconduct when visiting a health professional, and it would also give complainants access to more participation in the investigation and hearing process. On this one I want to take a little bit of time.

You know, I say heartbreaking. I don't know if people actually are listening to what I have to say when I say how hard it is to sit across a desk from a young woman who has gone through an experience of sexual abuse and says: the system didn't help me. Until when? Until when are we going to stand around and just let these things happen, and then, worse, when it does happen, we do little or nothing to actually correct the situation?

9:30

This is why I firmly stand behind this piece of legislation. We are promising to do more, to be better. In the unfortunate circumstance where something like this actually happens to somebody, we are going to make sure that there's a full investigation and that there will be a hearing process where that person can then bear witness to what actually happened to them, and they will be listened to. You know what, Madam Speaker? In this Alberta NDP government when a woman comes forward with complaints of sexual abuse or sexual misconduct, we believe them. Our government believes strongly that every Albertan should be able to live free from sexual harassment and assault, and this legislation would make it clear to the perpetrators that the age of impunity is over. We need to do more. These crimes have been confined to the shadows for way too long.

Madam Speaker, I am proud to get up in this House today and speak to this particular piece of legislation. I know that everyone on this side is going to support this particular piece of legislation. I want to urge everyone in this House to do the same.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I will now recognize the hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to be able to speak on Bill 21, An Act to Protect Patients. This is an important issue that I think impacted so many of us when it came to light by my hon. colleague from Chestermere-Rocky View just this spring. I'd like to thank the Minister of Health for taking action on this, for doing so many things but, very importantly, sending a message to particularly women. I know that there will be situations of abuse towards men as well, and men and women in this province are being sent a message that we've got their back, that they don't need to be afraid to go to the doctor and have a checkup. My heart just aches for a situation, you know, where I might find myself in, being violated in such a manner by somebody that is in such a trusted position.

I would like to commend and I think that it's important to recognize that there are so many wonderful health care professionals in our province that do such a great job of taking care of us. Madam Speaker, I know that certainly in my community of Airdrie there's a wonderful slate of doctors and health care professionals that are top notch, and I'm so grateful that we have

such a wonderful team to rely on in our community. I'm grateful that the patients in our community can look back on this piece of legislation and know that if anything were to go wrong, an assault were to take place, the perpetrator would have some consequences. That's such a significant thing.

What shocks me the most about this whole case that came forward in the spring, Madam Speaker, was that this health care professional, this doctor, was accused and convicted of sexual assault but was still practising, and nobody knew. Nobody knew that this man – his patients didn't know; his future patients didn't know – had a history of assaulting his patients.

One of the things that I do believe is addressed in this bill is that convicted health care professionals will be on a website. There will be public disclosure that can be accessed by patients. Maybe I could be corrected if I'm wrong. Perhaps that doesn't go far enough. Some sort of notification to patients of the conviction would be a good idea. I know that I don't really think of going on a website to see if my doctor has been listed as an abuser, and I don't know if most people do. But I guess now we will. The conversation is happening. It's here, and that will be the case. So I think that's really good.

Madam Speaker, I'd like to applaud the women that did come forward and did use their voices and made a complaint. It's unfortunate that there weren't real consequences for Dr. Taher at the time. That's rather unfortunate, but here we are today.

I'm really pleased to see that a mandatory penalty on those that are found guilty of sexual misconduct or abuse is put forward. There's a suspension for sexual misconduct and a five-year licence cancellation for sexual abuse, and they must reapply after the licence cancellation. I think that's an important point to make in regard to this legislation. It's not an automatic back-to-work. There is a process and an interview at least that takes place before the doctor gets his licence back, Madam Speaker. I'm shocked that in 2018 there was no process – I think everybody in this Assembly was – for the college to take action.

It was great to see some of the college representatives here yesterday when this bill was introduced and see the collaboration that has happened in regard to this legislation with the college and, I would assume, doctors as well in this province. I will appreciate the opportunity to be able to speak with some of the physicians in my constituency. I hope that we're able to evaluate this process and continue communication as it rolls out, make sure that it works as effectively as it possibly can, and should it present any challenges as it rolls out, that we're able to act swiftly in terms of making some of those changes that would be effective for everybody involved.

It's good to see that this is in place. I would imagine that it would also include maybe an evaluation of that five-year licence suspension, if that's an appropriate amount of time for a professional to lose their licence. What about repeat offenders? What is the process for that? Is there an indefinite suspension built into this? What does that look like? I think that's a good question to ask. The legislation doesn't outline how long the suspension will be, just that they will be suspended for a "specified period of time." I think that would be something that needs to be addressed, Madam Speaker.

I don't have a lot of questions around this. I think that members in this House are very likely in agreement with what we're talking about here today. Hopefully, we're in agreement with, you know, being able to check back and ensure that this legislation is working for Albertans and for victims in this province, more specifically, because that's who we need to be thinking about, first and foremost, when we're making any type of legislation that affects victims. That's a significantly important factor in the decisions that myself and my colleagues make. Putting victims first is always top of mind,

Madam Speaker. It's great to see that there are measures in here for counselling for victims in these cases and that the college is picking up that cost. I really am grateful for that type of process being built into this legislation.

9:40

Madam Speaker, I would again thank the Minister of Health for bringing this forward. I again would like to thank my hon. colleague from Chestermere-Rocky View for bringing this up in the House and also the Leader of the Official Opposition for discussing this in the House as well just last spring. It's good to see that there's some action taking place, and it's good to see, you know, that an issue that the Official Opposition has been pushing forward sees results at the end of the day. We're pleased to see the minister act on this file and on this issue in particular.

I would encourage all members of this House to support this legislation as we go through and as we discuss. I look forward to the debate, more particularly in Committee of the Whole, where we could get some of these questions answered that my colleague raised as well as myself and just some clarity around that so that we all feel good. I look forward to further consultation with the physicians in my constituency, as I'm sure my colleagues do as well.

I, lastly, would like to thank the hard-working physicians in our province that do such a great job. It's unfortunate that not everyone is a good person, and that's why we need legislation like this.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to be able to speak on this piece of legislation. I look forward to hearing from more of my colleagues and continuing the debate. With that, I will take my seat.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any members wishing to speak? The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm so thankful to hear such strong support for this legislation around the House. You know, we all bring our own experience to the table, and for me as both a woman and as a nurse who worked in the health care field I feel really strongly about the importance of this legislation.

As a nurse, as a health care provider, not a physician but still in a position of trust, I know that when people came into my office, they had an expectation that I wanted the very best for them and that I would do everything I could to make their life better as a result of that interaction. I asked them tremendously personal questions, and they answered me. You know, I think I could have asked them to do a lot of things, and because of that position of respect they would do virtually whatever I asked. That bar of level of respect and understanding is even more so for physicians in this culture. I mean, we very much understand and respect the position of a physician to have a very high bar in terms of wanting to protect our well-being.

As a health care provider in that situation and knowing that level of trust that others have in me that's so extensive, you know, it truly makes me ill to my stomach that there are people who would take advantage of that level of trust in order to, well, take advantage of women typically. I think it's incredibly important that we make it clear to all of those who are in that position of trust that there are expectations, that there is accountability, and that they need to maintain that high bar, and if they don't, that we will hold them to account.

Not only that, I would feel tremendously terrible if it actually impacted the ability of those people going in to see health care providers, if they felt that they couldn't trust their health care

provider, if that would actually make it more difficult to provide high-quality care to them. In the interest of ensuring that all health care providers are understood to be in that position of trust, you know, and to continue to provide that care, I think it's so important that we help all Albertans understand that we will make sure they're protected, that we will hold them to a level of account on that.

You know, even more so from the position of a woman, flipping it onto the other side, women in our culture in many ways have been conditioned to be incredibly accommodating and responsive to individuals who are in a position of trust like a physician. Oftentimes we hear stories of abuse, and it's almost always where someone was in a position of power, and physicians do have that tremendous position of power. I think we're learning, and I think we're changing. I'm so thankful that women are starting to be less likely to just go along with whatever someone in a position of power says, but I think we have a long way to go on that. I think our culture has a long way to go for women to feel empowered and safe when it comes to challenging and pushing back against those in a position of power.

Given that there's so much more work to be done in that area, you know, I think it's incredibly important as a government that we take that responsibility on, to ensure that when they share their story, we listen. I'm incredibly proud to be part of a government who's made it tremendously clear that when individuals, particularly women but any individuals, disclose a history of sexual abuse, no matter who is being accused of that, we make it clear: we believe you; we want to hear your story; we will do whatever it is we can to help you to be safe.

As much as we've done great work in providing additional resources to support those who have experienced sexual abuse, the most important thing we can ever do is to invest in prevention. Certainly, a key and important way we can invest in prevention is to take these kinds of measures in which we ensure that physicians are held to account on this and that when we know that they're high risk, we can ensure that they don't have an opportunity to do the same thing to other women.

You know, some of the things we talk about in this House are a bit mundane. I don't think most of us in the House are quite as moved by maybe the securities legislation amendments that we'll be talking about later this afternoon, but there are things such as this on which every single person in this House knows we're being a part of something that is making life better for the people of this province. I'm tremendously proud to be a member of the government that's bringing this forward.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, I will call the question unless there's anybody that would like to close debate. No? Okay.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for second reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:49 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Fraser	Nielsen
Anderson, S.	Goehring	Payne
Babcock	Hinkley	Piquette

Bilous	Hoffman	Pitt
Carson	Horne	Renaud
Clark	Hunter	Rosendahl
Cooper	Jansen	Schmidt
Dach	Kazim	Schreiner
Dang	Larivee	Shepherd
Dreeshen	Littlewood	Smith
Drysdale	Loyola	Strankman
Eggen	Malkinson	Sucha
Feehan	Mason	Turner
Fitzpatrick	McKittrick	Westhead
Totals:	For – 42	Against – 0

[Motion carried unanimously; Bill 21 read a second time]

Bill 19

An Act to Improve the Affordability and Accessibility of Post-secondary Education

Mr. Nixon moved that the motion for second reading be amended by deleting all of the words after “that” and substituting the following:

Bill 19, An Act to Improve the Affordability and Accessibility of Post-secondary Education, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

[Adjourned debate on the amendment October 30: Mr. McIver]

The Acting Speaker: Are there any members wishing to speak to the referral amendment? The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I will briefly speak to the referral motion made by my hon. colleague yesterday. I'd just like to reiterate that the Official Opposition and opposition members in general in this Assembly have just recently received a copy of this piece of legislation, and there's a lot of information in there. There's consultation that needs to be done in order for members on this side of the Assembly to be able to make an informed decision about the legislation that's in front of us here today.

It's always a good idea to thoroughly consult, as we all know in this Assembly, Madam Speaker. We could do that in a committee and call in witnesses. We can hear from all universities and colleges, students' union groups, other stakeholders that would be interested. Consultation and due process is never a bad thing. We can move swiftly in that process in order to have this piece of legislation in place before the next election, which I'm sure is the goal of the government members.

With that, I urge all members of this Assembly to vote in favour of the amendment. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I appreciate you accommodating me to speak on the referral motion on Bill 19. I will rise to speak against the referral motion. I think that this is a bill that was a long time in the making. The minister likes to joke about the definition of fullness of time. It would have been nice, I think, to see, certainly, some of these changes come forward sooner. Based on conversations that I've had with key stakeholders in my constituency, students in postsecondaries in my constituency and

beyond, there does seem to be a lot positive in this bill and that does in fact move things forward, primarily for students, which I think is very important. When I talk with student representatives – and I have done so in my time here as an elected member – many of the things that students have been advocating for are reflected in the bill, which is good to see. I'm glad to see that happen.

I think you saw that the response from students who were in the gallery the other day, I believe Monday, when the bill was introduced, was broadly positive. There is still work to do on many aspects, including mental health and other areas, but embedding the tuition increases tied to CPI is very much a positive thing and something I know students have been advocating for for a long time. I won't enumerate all of them, but there are some governance changes on the university side that have a direct impact in my constituency and which I know are a positive thing and I'm pleased to see in the bill.

I will be voting against the referral motion because I think that this has actually gone through a thorough process, frankly, perhaps a process a little too long. But to say that we need to study it further in committee I think does a disservice to postsecondary institutions themselves, does a disservice to students, so I will be voting against the referral motion and in favour of Bill 19.

Thank you.

10:10

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any members wishing to speak to the referral? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Why, thank you, Madam Speaker, for recognizing me while I am on my feet. It's a pleasure. Happy Halloween, I suppose, is in order, and for the benefit of the House I decided that I would dress up like a politician today. Not only did I dress up like a politician today, but I switched ties with the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake so we could go as each other. It is a pleasure to be with you this morning.

I would just like to briefly comment on the amendment as I do have a couple of quick comments on that, and then I hope to rise a little bit later this morning, should we have the time, to speak in more depth to the bill. I think that at the end of the day it's important that while I disagree with some of the comments from the former independent Member for Calgary-Elbow and the former Alberta Party leader, I might add – I disagree that the consultation has been completed. Now, I do agree that there has been lots of great work done by student advocacy groups and others, and I, too, support much of the work that they have done. There are many positives in Bill 19, and I think that on balance it is quite likely that I will find it in my heart to support the legislation as I think that there is a lot of good work that's been done here, both for the minister's sake as well as for those students who have been quite involved.

Having said that, I did have the opportunity to reach out to some of my friends and colleagues in the postsecondary sector. I know that it might come as a surprise that I have those; friends, that is. But I might just add that the speed at which we are about to proceed or that I think we could expect to proceed on a piece of legislation like Bill 19 could use a pause on two accounts. One, I believe it was Monday – or perhaps it was only yesterday; I don't recall the date, either Monday or yesterday, certainly – that this significant piece of legislation was introduced, and I know that members of administration inside postsecondary are currently working through the bill and what all of the ramifications of the bill mean for them. That's not to say that we need to make all of the changes that they might be concerned with, but it would be very advantageous, I

think, to the House for us to be able to hear how the bill is going to impact other parts of the sector, not just students.

For postsecondary to work well, we need a good relationship between those who administer the system and those who are a part of the learning side of the system as well. It would be great, as an opposition member, if this particular piece of legislation was sent to committee so that we could have those folks at committee and be able to present some of their findings, their thoughts, their concerns about the piece of legislation or the successes, the way that the bill is going to have a positive impact on them. I believe that that could be done prior to the end of this sitting.

I'm not suggesting that the legislation needs to be endlessly delayed like we've seen the government do with certain pieces of private members' business, but the piece of legislation could be sent to committee swiftly and promptly and dealt with in a very quick and reasonable manner for the members of the Official Opposition and government members to be able to hear from experts as well as those in the postsecondary industry who would also like to provide feedback in a more on-the-record format than just giving my office a call and providing some of their thoughts, concerns, or successes.

I certainly will be supporting the amendment to send this bill to committee because I know I would like to hear from some of those folks at committee and have a much more full and robust understanding of exactly how Bill 19 is going to impact the system as a whole. We've seen the government make a lot of changes in the past. When they've turned one dial, it has had a negative impact on other dials inside the system. I particularly think about the negative work they've done around the capacity market and the electricity market and how that has had a negative impact. I just want to be clear and certain that the changes that they're proposing in Bill 19 won't actually have a net negative impact over a long period of time on our students having access to the important postsecondary institutions that they would like to.

As many folks in this House will know, the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills is home to one of those outstanding postsecondary institutions, so I feel that it is my duty to be able to represent that, both on the student side as well as on those administering it. I think we would be well served to send this bill to committee, and I would strongly recommend, notwithstanding the comments of the Member for Calgary-Elbow, that you support this amendment to send it to committee and that we deal with it in an expedient fashion so that we can get the bill back in the House before the end of the session and quite likely support that piece of legislation once we've had that feedback.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the referral?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[Motion on amendment REF1 lost]

The Acting Speaker: We are back now on the original bill. Are there any members wishing to speak to second reading? The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to say that it's nice to be back in the House and to have the capacity to speak to a bill, Bill 19, An Act to Improve the Affordability and Accessibility of Post-secondary Education.

I have to confess that today with this evening being Halloween and with this bill before us, it has brought back some old memories, memories of myself being in university and specifically of a program that used to be quite famous in the Edmonton area and

across North America. I think some of us that are old enough – and maybe that's not that many of us in here – may remember the TV program *SCTV*, and you may remember one of the very comical and lovable characters in *SCTV* that was characterized as Count Floyd. If you remember the sketch with Count Floyd, you would remember that he was supposed to take a movie that was being shown on the TV and build it up so that they would get viewers. It was supposed to be a scary movie, but often the only ones they could afford to get would be NFB trailers. You might see Bambi walking through the woods, and he would have to come on and say: scary stuff; very scary, scary stuff.

You know, Madam Speaker, I'm beginning to wonder if I haven't been time warped into some scary stuff today, when as a member of the Official Opposition I actually am going to support two government bills in a row. That is scary stuff.

10:20

One of the things that I realized when I started looking at this bill was just how important postsecondary education truly is to this province. You know, it made me reflect a little bit on my postsecondary experiences. I know that the minister – and I believe I'm correct in this, that he's an alumni of Concordia college. No? Okay. I thought you were, but I started off my university days at Concordia college, two years there, and learned a lot of really important things in my life. I learned that organic chemistry was not in my bailiwick and that basketball was far more important than organic chemistry, which explains probably why I didn't pass that course. I learned that a small school experience, having come from Jasper Place composite high school, a very large school at the time, and having gone to a smaller postsecondary institution, just how valuable that is to a lot of our students. It was there that I was able to interface my faith with an academic background, and that was really important for me.

Going on to the University of Alberta, I learned that I had a love for teaching and discovered my passion for education. I guess just before we focus in on the bill, I think that we can see that these institutions play a pivotal role not only in the lives of individual students and Albertans but in the creation of the kind of society that we want to have and the prosperity of our society in Alberta. It just plays a really crucial role.

You know, one of the things that I learned when I was in my university experience was the value of hard work not only within the institutions but outside. My family was very middle-class. We were well off, but it was still a situation where as a student I had to work my way through university, and I had to understand what it was like, Madam Speaker, to make sure that I took those four months, that I worked hard, that I saved my money, and that I had enough for the tuition and for all of the expenses that go along with university.

Bill 19, An Act to Improve the Affordability and Accessibility of Post-secondary Education is a very important bill and one that will have my support. Bill 19 will legislate an inflation-based cap on increases to domestic students and apprenticeship tuition based on an annual change in Alberta's consumer price index. I want to thank the minister for having that balance in there. The minister will have the power to set a tuition freeze with this legislation but will not be able to raise tuition higher than the CPI. Exceptional tuition increases on individual programs are capped at 10 per cent. I think he's pretty much hit the mark here on that.

Bill 19 also changes the student representation on the boards of governors by having student representatives at all of the institutions, three if the school has a graduate program. It allows colleges to transition to university status without legislative amendments. I think all of these things are positive moves forward.

Now, in 2015, Madam Speaker, we understand that the New Democrat government here instituted a domestic freeze at 2014 and 2015 levels. Then in 2016 you began a tuition review, and you consulted with students and with stakeholders. We've had conversation in this House already about the length of time and the thoroughness of that review, and we appreciate it. You had a 20-person advisory group that was formed to help the government find ways to create a more predictable system of fees and fee increases. The student groups had been asking for a cap on tuition since the review started, and I think everyone in this House has been the beneficiary of these student groups as they have come before us and as they have lobbied, I'm sure, the government and the Official Opposition, providing us with their valuable point of view on how to move forward on this issue.

Now, the minister's office has indicated that regulations will push noninstructional fees to have more transparency – and we would suggest that that is a good thing – and will force international student tuition to be more predictable, and I think, again, a positive move. Bill 19 will also allow for two student representatives at all institutions and at the degree-granting, three. Again, allowing for student input at the board of governors level is a good idea.

Over the past three years I know that I have met with many university and postsecondary students to discuss the concerns that they have with their postsecondary education, and through that process I have walked away very impressed with the calibre and the quality of the students that have come to help educate us. These students are bright, they're articulate individuals, and they've always impressed me with their insight into their educational experience and how we can move forward to ensure that that educational experience is affordable and that it is world-class. Now, I know it's been a few years since I was in university. While I remember clearly my time there and I value that time there, I don't ever remember being on the ball as much as these students that have come to visit us. I truly have appreciated being able to engage in conversation and to be able to have the results of that seen in a bill that we have before us. These students have been pushing for a tuition framework, and it's good to see that the government has listened to these Albertans on these issues that are important to them.

I know that we have seen at times and we have maybe been critical at times of this government for its lack of consultation, so it's good to be able to stand up and show by example to the province of Alberta that when good legislation is brought forward, this House does co-operate and this House does move together to better the province of Alberta. I can remember trying to explain to my kids over a 30-year teaching career in my social studies classes that the government is to be held to account by an opposition but that that opposition needs to ensure that when good legislation is brought forward, it will support it. So I'm glad to be able to stand up here today and say that there is much good in this bill.

I believe that this government has listened to the students and that in revising the tuition framework, this will give students predictability for what they will pay in tuition. That's always a good thing. These students are hard-working students. They need to have some predictability. They need to be able to know that they will have affordability as they move into and continue their university career.

You know, I'm probably not saying anything that most of us in this House haven't either experienced personally or know, but these students often have to have one or two jobs in order to be able to make it through university. I know that my own kids – and I have three of them – have all had to work their way through university, and some are still working their way through university. For instance, my son Joshua is presently taking a master of philosophy

at Concordia University in Montreal, and in order to work his way through, he actually has two jobs. I know how hard he's working, and I know how hard it is on him to try and balance his education with trying to be able to afford to have that education. So I believe that it's an important thing for us to have had this conversation and to have come to an agreement on how we're going to provide some predictability for our students as they are involved in their university education.

10:30

Now, you know, I suppose that we could go down a path – and I don't want to go down too far here because this is a very reasonable bill. But the NDP has created some issues, I would argue, with the wider economy and with our students having the capacity to find the jobs that they need to be able to work their way through university. I guess that's at least in part why I think that postsecondary students need certainty and funding.

Part of it is because it's to ensure that Alberta has the capacity and the workforce to be able to move forward into a knowledge-based economy. One of the realities that we have faced over the last three or four years in this province is the need for diversifying and the need for an economy that is going to be at least in part based on information and technology. It is our postsecondary institutions and our universities that prepare our students to be that workforce moving into the 21st century.

So I believe that legislating an inflationary based cap will definitely help postsecondary students. Capping tuition increases on individual programs at 10 per cent, I believe, makes sense. Tying increases to inflation based on the annual change in Alberta's consumer price index, I believe, leaves some capacity for universities to cover inflationary creep while providing some certainty for students moving forward into the future. These initiatives, I believe, when taken together, will provide more certainty for students and for the university's bottom line, and when they assess the financial viability of a postsecondary institution, it's important that we also place that into the equation.

Madam Speaker, I think that increased student representation on boards of governors is something that student groups – I know it's something that student groups have been asking for, and we're happy to see that the government has done this in Bill 19. Increased representation allows for increased dialogue, and it ensures that postsecondary institutions work for all, including students. I just believe that in a democratic society, where it should run in the interests of the citizens that it serves, even in our university institutions, having student representation is a very positive thing.

Now, myself and the opposition are pleased to see the regulations ...

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?
The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Why, thank you. It was a pleasure to hear the inspiring remarks of my hon. colleague from Drayton Valley-Devon. It sounded to me like he was just in the last one or two sentences there. I just wondered if he wouldn't mind sharing with me the last couple of moments of what was an awe-inspiring speech.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, are you wishing to respond? Please go ahead.

Mr. Smith: Well, Madam Speaker, as much as I appreciate the remarks of my colleague, I think that there are perhaps a few

students over the course of my 30 years that would beg to differ as to how awe-inspiring I really am.

Madam Speaker, I would like to make just a last couple of points. Number one is that we're pleased as an opposition to see that the regulations will now include noninstructional fees and not just the tuition fees. Student fees: obviously, tuition fees are an important part of the cost that students face, but they're not the only costs. So when we talk about the noninstructional fees, it's a significant thing for students, and I believe that having oversight over those is an important part of that overall picture of making sure that our postsecondary institutions are affordable and that our students have the capacity to move forward in their education to serve this province.

We're also pleased that the minister has said that the institutions will be required to tell international students what the tuition will cost for the entire length of their degree.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Madam Speaker, we have a new institution in Drayton Valley. We call it the Clean Energy Technology Centre, and as a part of that centre we have got a postsecondary institution, NorQuest College. In order to try and ensure the viability of that institution in a small town, we have, I believe, 27 international students from the nation of India that are taking a business administration degree. These students also need predictability. They're travelling from around the world – in this case, India – coming to a place that's very different, a long ways away from the supports that they have at home, and financial worry is not one of the things that they need to be going through. From my constituency I want to say that I believe that this is a positive thing.

You know, we need to monitor, and we need to make sure that we hold the minister and this government to account for what happens with those regulations and moving forward with this piece of legislation, but overall I believe that this is a positive piece of legislation, and it will have my support.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd be remiss not to speak in favour of this bill, and I would be remiss for a couple of reasons. The first is that it is the right thing to do. I've always felt that education is the foundation of our future. The availability of affordable quality learning opportunities, both now and in the future, is essential for the growth of our economy.

The second reason is the information I've received over and over again from students and student associations from both Lethbridge College and the University of Lethbridge, such as stable tuition costs now and not 20 or 30 years from now, when they'd be advocating for their children. They need it now.

Like the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View said yesterday, I believe, when I went to university a few years ago, the cost was pretty close to \$600 per year for tuition, and for my first two years that cost was covered by two grants for which I applied. They were covered by my agreeing to then finish my two years and teach for two years. My summer holiday and weekend holiday employment covered the cost of my textbooks, residence fees, or room and board. This would never have happened had I been required to work much longer periods of time to cover the costs of my education.

Now, I shared this because when I heard from students, I heard the feelings that they expressed. They want the full experience of postsecondary education. Having stable and affordable education will allow them to do just this. I believe that it's my duty as an MLA to support legislation which is supportive of my constituents and, in this case, supportive of our economy by setting our students and our economy up for success, both now and in the future.

When I was a student, I participated in sports. I participated in a number of athletic teams, and that ate up my out-of-class time. I also had a bit of a social life. I came from an all-girls Catholic school, so having a social life was actually part of my social growth when I was at university, and I was very pleased that I had that. Because I did those things, they helped me to learn to focus and to really utilize my time efficiently. Because I did this, I actually probably did better in my last few years at university, certainly, than I did in high school because I had to focus on what I was doing.

10:40

If I had to work as many hours as the kids at university and college have to do now, I could never have done that. The time that I spent in school would have been less productive for me as a student. I hear that from the students that come and talk to me. So I absolutely support this bill, and I ask everybody in this room to support it because it needs to happen and it needs to happen now.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Speaker. First of all, I just want to start off by saying how disappointed I am. Now, I'm not disappointed in this legislation; I'm just disappointed in my colleagues across the way. Halloween: this should have been their day to have the colour orange, the orange crush, wearing it loud and proud. There's only one colleague over there. She happens to be from southern Alberta, and I'm happy to see that she is wearing the colours loud and proud. Disappointed.

However, I want to start out by talking about the value of this bill. It's been a pleasure to be able to talk with student union groups. They've come to my office. They've come to our caucus. You know, these are people who are absolutely passionate. They are the future, they are the hope of Alberta, they're the hope of our world, and it is such a pleasure to be able to meet with them and to hear how they feel they can make it better. A lot of what I see in this bill – and I have to take my hat off to the minister for listening to these students and for trying to be able to get it right.

There are a couple of things in here that I wanted to talk about, but before I do that, I want to, first of all, say that the cost of education is becoming a barrier for students to be able to get in and get a good education. We know that the people who actually get out there, get better education: it's the best approach for them to be able to get out of bad circumstances they're in.

I came from a home that was, I guess, considered middle class, but I know that everything that I did, I had to earn myself. It was no different when I went to university. I started out at Mount Royal College – at the time it was Mount Royal College, so that dates me – then went to the University of Lethbridge, then down to the States to finish my university. Now, my first degree, a bachelor of science: I was able to basically work during the summertime and work part-time jobs during school to be able to pay for it. I didn't have to incur any student loans at the time. However, when I went back later in life to get my master's in business administration, the cost of that

master's was prohibitive. It was very, very difficult for me as a family man to be able to go in and say that this was going to be worth it and convince my family that this was all worth it. Very, very expensive to do, so I did have to incur student loans on that.

One thing that I've said to most of the student union representatives that have come into my office is that, you know, if you are so convinced that education is the right path and the best poverty reduction strategy out there, which I am a big believer in, then you need to be talking to the federal government because those student loan interest rates are way too high. They're actually making money on students on an antipoverty strategy, in my opinion one of the best antipoverty strategies out there. I really believe, Madam Speaker – and I don't speak for my party, and I don't speak for my colleagues – that if we believe in education as the pathway forward for helping anybody to be able to get out of this cycle of poverty, we need to make sure that we're not making money off them.

Now, I know that the provincial student loan interest rates are lower, and I don't really know whether or not we make any money off that. If we do, though, I think that we need to recheck that and question that. That's one of the problems that I still see. It hasn't been addressed. I hope that the minister and the NDP government are lobbying the federal government on behalf of our students to help them realize that, you know, we should not be making money off students. It shouldn't be a business, a money-making business, when this type of a strategy of getting more education is a great antipoverty strategy.

I've always hoped that I would be able to say this in the House, put this on the record that I'm a big believer in education. I know what it's done for my family. I've seen it work in many situations where people have been able to pull themselves up by their bootstraps. They've learned so much from it. I've got two kids right now that are in university. You know, I have to take my hat off to these kids. They work really hard during the summertime, save every penny, sacrifice going out and playing and doing the fun, frivolous things that young people can do. These guys sacrifice because they recognize the importance and value of being able to get a good education. They learn important things, Madam Speaker. They learn the value of work ethic, they learn the value of money sense, and they learn how to be able to plan.

One of the things that I like about this strategy that this bill, Bill 19, actually goes through is the concept of being able to create some kind of certainty. You know, businesses need certainty. I've said this many times, so it's no shock to my colleagues across the way. I don't believe that this government has provided that kind of certainty for businesses, but in this situation I believe that they're providing certainty for higher learning institutions and for students when they allow CPI to determine what the increases are going to be in tuition and costs. The value of that, in my opinion as a Conservative, for universities is that it helps them to be able to have the certainty of: "Okay. Well, we know that if CPI is 2 per cent or 1.6 per cent or whatever it is, we've got to be able to live within those means. We've got to be able to make sure our budget follows those constraints."

The other value in terms of certainty for students is that students now can say, "You know what? When I start out on this process of going for a four-year or an eight-year" or whatever it is that they're actually going to be doing, whether it's a master's or a PhD – they have the ability to say: "You know what? Unless we see something like in the '80s, where inflation was out of control, I think we can actually plan for what the cost is going to be for my education." That certainty is what I applaud and will be voting for in this bill.

However, I do want to say this. And I have to say that I apologize. You know, it is a 50-page bill, so I didn't get a chance to be able to

read the whole thing. So if I'm missing something here, I'm sure that 29(2)(a) coming from the opposite side will happen, and I look forward to that. From what I understand, the CPI is capped at 10 per cent, so you can't go any higher than 10 per cent increases. If that's the case, I guess the question that I have in that situation – if I'm wrong, I apologize. Yikes. If we're going to see a 10 per cent inflationary rate in Alberta, that's not a good situation.

To tell you the truth, some of the policies that this government might want to look at in order to make sure that we've got students that can afford education are those inflationary measures that we've seen in the past, Madam Speaker, inflationary measures such as the carbon tax, inflationary measures like a 50 per cent increase in minimum wages. All those costs are passed on to the consumer. All of the costs are passed on to the consumer, so that is naturally going to be an inflationary measure that the student, the universities, the businesses all have to be able to eat. They all have to pay for that.

10:50

Again, I've said this many times in this House. I am concerned about policies that the NDP government has brought forward that drive up inflation in our province once again because of policy. Now, inflation happens for many reasons, obviously. Sometimes, because we live in a global economy, those inflationary parts come from external areas, commodity prices and so forth. But if we are going to be serious about helping Alberta be a great place for our kids and for our grandkids, we have to start thinking about this issue of inflation, this issue of passing those inflationary increases on to our children and grandchildren. Now, that's not even bringing in the issue of having a \$96 billion deficit, which, obviously, isn't taken into consideration in inflation, but it is later on paid for. It's something that has to be paid for by our children and grandchildren.

It's the big picture that I'm talking about here, Madam Speaker. It's the big picture of being able to say: are we doing something that is going to be beneficial to our children and grandchildren? Is this something that we can be proud of and something that can provide them with a future, a bright future and a bright hope? They are our hope. They are our future. You know, this is a good piece of legislation, and I will be voting for it, but one thing that concerns me is that the other parts, the big picture, I don't think this NDP government has gotten right. The big picture being that – you know what? – when they actually do finish their degree, there is gainful employment for them, that there are opportunities for them to be able to start businesses if that's what they want to do.

Unfortunately, we've seen a decrease of \$36 billion, foreign investment leaving this economy, since this government took office. The problem is this: there are no measures to be able to measure what kind of internal investment has actually fled or has not been realized. I have the opportunity as an MLA to be able to talk to many people, many businesses, many people who would like to start businesses. And many, many times I have heard the argument that they are not willing – not willing – to risk their capital and start a business or to grow their business, whether it's adding another pub or adding another restaurant or adding another expansion to their business. They are not willing to do that because they do not believe there's certainty in what the NDP is going to do, because the NDP are willing to change the rules on a regular basis and create that message, send the message to our wealth creators and our job creators that there is no more certainty in this market.

At this juncture what happens is we now have a stagnated economy. Our economy is stagnated, and then we have people who come out of universities that are struggling to be able to find jobs. If that's the case, then I don't think that they're getting it right. I believe that the problem that they're facing is that they might feel like: you know, we want to be able to have voter-facing legislation

here, help the students think that we're actually doing them a favour. But in reality they're not finishing the equation. The equation needs to be finished by saying: "You know what? Go in there. Work hard. Get a good education, and at the end of the day, when you come out, there will be a robust economy, that you can be able to go in and get a great job or start a business if you'd like." That's finishing the equation, Madam Speaker. This is the sort of thing that governments are supposed to be doing, in my opinion, for our children and grandchildren.

I got into politics for that very reason. Alberta has been good to my family. We have done well here. This has been a great place for us to be able to raise our family, to be able to have opportunities for growth and development. I love Alberta. It's a great place to be.

I always find it sad when I hear from the members opposite how many things we got wrong, yet what's amazing to me is that they're here. Lots of them came here because they believed that there was something right about this place. Most of the time it was because there were opportunities here. There was work, so they came here from other provinces or other jurisdictions because we had done something right. Yet what I see and have seen for the last three and a half years, unfortunately, Madam Speaker, is a government that continues to say that we did so many things wrong, that we've had it wrong for 44 years, yet this is a government that, in my opinion, has chased away all of the opportunities that we've had here, those opportunities that we had for growth, those opportunities that we had for these kids to be able to come out of university and find that gainful employment that they desire.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the bill? I'll recognize the hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, one of the things I love about being an MLA is the amount of time we spend talking about education. In the last few years we've done so much, not only for the K to 12 system, but we've recognized the importance of postsecondary education for all Albertans. I think this is great because, as we all know, education is the cornerstone for a thriving economy and for success in all areas of our life and in Alberta.

So I am so glad that the Minister of Advanced Education has recognized the importance of education stability and has brought forward this bill, that is going to do what we've been talking a lot in the Legislative Assembly over the last couple of years, is really going to help provide education to the students who are going to power our companies, who are going to lead the innovation in the future, and that will continue to be the workers that our Alberta industries need.

As we all know – and I was just looking at some statistics this morning – a lot of our students are in debt. A lot of our students cannot afford university. I think especially of our students who come from outside Edmonton or Calgary, who have to factor into their education career not only the tuition fees and all of the fees to access postsecondary education, but they have to factor in travel to their homes, and sometimes it can be quite expensive. For example, if you attend the U of A and you live in Fort McMurray, you need to factor in a four and a half hours in a car or a plane ride and also living expenses, rent, and so on.

We all know that if students cannot afford university, they may choose not to avail themselves of opportunities for postsecondary education and be stuck in lower jobs and not contribute as much to the economy. We also know that when you're starting your education – and I have been privileged to actually attend three

different universities in my time and to have a son who went to university. I actually also worked for two postsecondary educations, so I understand that once a student starts a postsecondary education, it's really important that that student knows how much they're going to have to spend so they can plan their courses, they can plan when they can possibly work over the summer or do a co-op turn or an internship. They can also plan with their parents, if they have parents who can support them, how they're going to afford the tuition and the living expenses over the last four years.

What I really appreciate about this bill is that it's written – and I know that the Minister of Advanced Education doesn't have university students yet because his students are much lower and, I believe, still in elementary school. But I can really see that when this bill was written, it was really written from considering all of the things that a student needs to consider and his or her parents or guardians or so on in planning for a successful university education and making sure that the student has the time to concentrate on his studies and is not worried about finances all the time.

11:00

When I was working at the university of Victoria, I hired a lot of students. I had the kind of position where thanks to research grants I hired students and helped them to get access to employment that would lead to future employment in their area of work. I know, having talked with these students, that paying rent, affording food and even simple things like books – because if anyone in this House has recently looked at a bookstore, you'd realize that academic books can cost up to \$200 for one book given the nature of it. Students are forever wondering how they're going to be able to afford to live, pay tuition, the material that they need, and the supplies that they may need for some courses.

This bill is going to allow the students in our province, some of the young people that we know very well because they may be our children or our grandchildren, some certainty as they begin their education career, which will lead them to be involved in the economy of Alberta and to the success that we all see happening in Alberta in our industries.

One of the things that I also like about being an MLA, you know, is that I have the pleasure of meeting a lot of young people in terms of STEP students or co-op students, and I spent this summer, actually, meeting students who had been employed under the government STEP program in industries and nonprofit organizations. I met some really interesting students who had been hired by one of the energy companies in their control room. When I talked to the students, they all spoke about the need that they have around certainty of how they're going to afford to continue to be a student, and that stress, I know, really impacts their studies.

One of the other reasons that I like this bill – traditionally, Alberta students, after they finish grade 12, have had very low levels of attachment to the postsecondary sector. I don't have the statistics in front of me, but I know that Alberta is known as a province where our students, after leaving grade 12, do not have high rates of access to the postsecondary sector, be it university or institutions like NAIT or SAIT. This is something that I think this bill is going to help with. If students do not access postsecondary education shortly after their graduation from grade 12, it's really very hard for them to access postsecondary education in the future. I'm really hoping that this bill will encourage – I'm not only hoping; I know that it will – our grade 12 students to consider applying to postsecondary institutions and accessing postsecondary education.

When I was looking at the statistics around the grants, the provincial and federal grants for students, I also saw that it's not only 18-year-olds and 19-year-olds who are going to benefit from

this bill around affordability and accessibility to postsecondary education. There are a lot of people who did not go to postsecondary education after graduating from grade 12 who find themselves now in their 30s – they may be married; they may have children – who now realize that they should go to postsecondary education. This bill will also provide them with certainty and the ability to plan their access to postsecondary education with certainty. I think this is great.

Every time that I have the opportunity of making a speech at a university graduation, I always refer back to those Albertans who have chosen to go back to university to continue their career, to those Albertans who have seen how industry has changed and that they need now to get an advanced degree or they need to get their first degree. This bill is going to allow them to also plan for their postsecondary career.

One of the things that I always find interesting when you look at the students and you look at the diversity of students is that we have a lot of students who face special challenges in the postsecondary sector. We have students who have special needs. They may need a Braille reader, they may need access to deaf or hard of hearing interpreters, they may need access to a tutor or an assistant to be able to participate in postsecondary institutions, so these students face even more challenges than other Alberta students.

Again, by ensuring that our education system does not out of the blue ask students to pay more fees such as – I don't know; I've heard that it's not only access to recreation facilities but that there are all kinds of fees that students have to pay, and sometimes those fees are so out of proportion to what the tuition fees are. I'm thinking of those students who have special needs that already might be paying extra or have financial constraints in accessing postsecondary institutions due to their special needs. I'm thinking of how these students through this bill might gain access to postsecondary education and better jobs.

I think that we also have to be careful that we don't see postsecondary education only as a path to employment. One of the things that I've learned – and maybe it's because I'm from Europe or maybe because I've had the opportunity to study a number of different subjects – is that access to postsecondary education is really important just for our communities. When a student has the ability to study a subject of interest – and I note that one of the members opposite was referring to a philosophy degree. When we encourage students to pursue something they're interested in, something they're passionate about, it results in much better communities because it gives the young person or sometimes the not-so-young person the ability to reflect on how our communities thrive.

One of the things that I really appreciate about postsecondary education, and it's something that's increasingly happening in our K to 12 system, is the ability of postsecondary education students to learn to live with diversity, to learn within a diversity of opinion, a diversity of persons, a diversity of abilities, and to learn how to all work together and to really understand various world views and to not live in the little bubble that they lived in in the past.

I'm really encouraged that this bill will allow more Alberta students to access postsecondary education so that our percentage of students who access postsecondary education will increase. I'm really encouraged that those students will be less stressed, that they will have certainty around the amount of tuition and fees that they will be paying. I'm also encouraged that it might lead to more students with special needs, whatever the special needs might be, now finally having the financial ability to access postsecondary education.

As you can tell, Madam Speaker, I am so delighted with the work that our government has been doing to support students in Alberta. Thank you.

11:10

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I will recognize the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Mr. Dreeshen: Actually, could the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills go instead?

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. It's just that I had a speakers list and you were next on it, but if you prefer, I could recognize Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills first if you'd rather go later.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, and sorry for the confusion. It's his first day here. [interjections] Okay. It's his third day, and I admire him so much that I'm dressed like him today, as I mentioned earlier.

It is a pleasure to rise to speak to Bill 19, An Act to Improve the Affordability and Accessibility of Post-secondary Education. As we've heard this morning from a number of my colleagues, notwithstanding some of my concerns around the speed at which I anticipate this particular piece of legislation to be passed and the fact that a number of postsecondary stakeholders who've reached out to me have some reservations about understanding the full ramifications of what it's going to mean for their institutions and/or their faculty, I think that, on balance, we're moving in the right direction. I think that it would have been a good opportunity for us to consult with them and get some feedback, frankly, prior to even the passing of second reading. Since that's not going to happen, I hope that we'll be able to connect with some of those folks throughout the process and make sure that there's no significant need for major amendments or otherwise.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Broadly speaking, I think that Bill 19 has done a good job in representing a lot of the work that students have been doing on behalf of postsecondary students all across the province. Obviously, student groups are going to be happy with the cap on tuition and increased representation on the board of governors. You know, I think it's important, particularly from a governance perspective, that students, the primary stakeholders of the postsecondary sector, have a voice on the way the postsecondary that they are attending is governed. Students being the majority stakeholders, if you will, in the direction of the institution, I think it's important that they are asked for their opinion and that that is guaranteed on all boards at all institutions. I think that it is a step in the right direction to make sure that it's going to happen.

Coming into force on February 1, 2019, Bill 19 will legislate an inflation-based cap on increases to domestic student and apprenticeship tuition based on the annual change in Alberta's consumer price index, or CPI, starting in the 2020-21 academic year. Obviously, as we've heard from a number of members on this side of the House, this bill will provide the minister the power to regulate noninstitutional fees and international student tuition. The minister will have the power to dictate a tuition freeze within this legislation but will not be able to raise tuition higher than CPI.

Bill 19 also changes the student representation on the board of governors by having two student representatives at all institutions, and this, of course, is a positive step in the right direction.

Now, we've heard at some significant length from student groups that have been pushing for a tuition framework, and it's good to see that the government is finally working on that. I might add that I have also heard from a number of administrators and faculty members across the sector that they, too, are looking forward to what the tuition framework looks like. They may not entirely agree

with that framework, but they are certainly looking forward to having a sense of exactly what that's going to look like. The uncertainty of what the minister may or may not do was creating a lot of challenges for boards and administrations to prepare for what the future looks like.

As I've mentioned on a number of occasions this morning, some of those board members, faculty, and administration have reached out to me and have some reservations with the bill, but to have a sense of what the direction looks like will be useful for them and, in particular, as we've heard this morning, for student groups and for them to have a sense of what that tuition is going to look like. Revising the tuition framework will give students predictability for what they will pay in tuition. Madam Speaker, you'll know that predictability in your budget is important. At present you're not a full-time student, and significant surprises in your budget, quite likely, if your budget is anything like mine, don't create more fun but create less fun. I think that it's important that we extend as much predictability to students as possible.

You know, university and postsecondary: I think it's important that sometimes when we speak about postsecondary here inside the House, we tend to focus on the universities and larger postsecondary institutions. I don't think that it's a slight on any of the other institutions; it's just natural that we tend, when we think postsecondary, to think of the larger universities here in the province of Alberta. But I think it's important that we don't do a disservice to some of the smaller institutions or colleges or NAITs and SAITs of the world, that have such a critical role in the postsecondary framework. Now more than ever, the need for those institutions remains strong. I think it's so important that we support each and every one of those institutions and the students that attend there.

In a day and age where we see a significant push towards granting university status to more and more institutions, I get somewhat concerned about the push and what message that might send both to those institutions that would prefer to stay as they are and to the students that attend there, that if you attend Olds College or NAIT or SAIT or a diploma-granting postsecondary or an apprenticeship program, somehow those institutions or those students are less than those that attend university.

I think we need to do our part to ensure that that creep doesn't happen, that we're actually encouraging and supporting those institutions and those students and equally respecting students who attend trade schools or otherwise because in so many ways they are the builders of our province's future. They are the job creators who go on to own contracting firms and otherwise really make our economy churn in so many respects. Sometimes I think that gets lost while we're here discussing postsecondary more broadly. I think it's worth while to stop and just take a bit of a pause to make sure that we equally support all institutions and all students. I think that Bill 19 does do much of that with respect to treating all of those students equally, but I think that it's important that we do encourage those that choose smaller institutions to continue doing so.

11:20

While we're on the topic of smaller institutions and improving access and affordability to postsecondary institutions, you know, I think that there's so much that's good in terms of this legislation with respect to making tuition more accessible, creating the certainty and the framework that goes forward. But if the government was truly serious about doing all that it can to make postsecondary more accessible and affordable for all students, there are lots of other things that they could do.

One that comes to mind for me is the significant costs that students pay for the carbon tax and how that impacts postsecondary

institutions. I know that institutions like Olds College, who has a massive campus with many, many buildings, including farm buildings, barns – I know that the Member for Drumheller-Stettler will know that if you're having to heat a barn, it's significantly more costly than, say, heating a house or even a tower or a downtown building in any of the urban centres. I know that my colleague from Drumheller-Stettler will know, as you know, Madam Speaker, that the institution of Olds College is a working farm. This year, due to probably three, four weeks of winter right in the middle of harvest, the institution will have incurred some significant costs in the form of drying product and will wind up paying way more carbon tax than lots of the other institutions. In fact, Olds College pays hundreds and hundreds of thousands of dollars annually in carbon tax, and these costs need to be . . . [interjection] It totally is the fact, and they would be happy to confirm those facts. These costs are now absorbed into the institution.

This particular piece of legislation does speak about noninstructional fees, but when the government is legislating with the right hand but taking away with the left hand, it does create uncertainty for institutions and, as such, students. We've seen in a number of different areas that this is exactly what happens with the government. Listen, I'm going to support Bill 19. I think it's a step in the right direction. I think the fact that we're acknowledging that students need to have certainty and access to affordable tuition is an important step, but I also think that the government can do more when it comes to not punishing the postsecondary sector and the students that attend by doing small things like abolishing the carbon tax on postsecondaries. I think government members will remember that the Official Opposition took steps to try to ensure that that happened, yet the government knows better than everyone else, so we saw that they didn't listen.

You know, there's a lot more to say, but in the interests of time, perhaps I will wrap it up. The last thing I will say is that this bill does provide significant – significant – powers to the minister. I think that any time that we are strengthening the powers of the minister, it does expose some potential risk and lack of transparency in the process. I can assure you that the Official Opposition will continue to hold this minister to account.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Peace River.

Ms Jabbour: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I just wanted to speak briefly to Bill 19 because I think I bring a unique perspective that hasn't really been addressed so far in the debate. Like the Member for Edmonton-South West, I'm actually a fairly recent university graduate. I did not go to university till I was in my 40s, and when I finally was able to go, I had a family to support, I had expenses, I had a mortgage to pay. It was a real challenge. I was able to get some student loans and funding to get myself going, but it certainly wasn't enough to keep me able to go to school and really focus on my education.

In fact, I had a situation where, about halfway through my master's degree, I was actually earning more than the minimum, so when I applied for student loans, I was rejected. I was faced with not knowing how I was even going to be able to finish my education.

But, of course, student loans: I think that's another area that we definitely need to look at. It's not addressed by this legislation, but as my colleague from Cardston-Taber-Warner pointed out, it is an area that can be a barrier for students, so I'm hopeful that we're going to soon get to a comprehensive review of that area.

Just getting back to the bill, I know how important it is because when I was in university, I had the honour of being part of my student association. I was the president, and I also had the honour of being part of CAUS. With other student leaders at the time, we worked really hard to lobby the government, the Progressive Conservative government at the time. We would go and we would speak to them. Of course, they'd invite us into the office, and they'd smile, and they'd shake our hands and listen to us, and then they'd go away and do absolutely nothing. It really gave us the impression that the Conservative government didn't have a lot of interest in making postsecondary education more affordable and more accessible to us students. So it's really, really exciting to see this legislation because this is exactly what we were asking for. These are things that are going to go a long way towards making things a little bit better for all students.

I think, again, that it's important to remember that the face of what a student looks like is changing. It used to be that, yes, it was high school students – they were young; they were 18, 19 – but more and more we're seeing students like myself who, because of the economy, because of the high cost of education, have to go to work. They have to take a longer time to complete their studies because it's just not accessible anymore. We face other kinds of challenges, and we need a lot more support in different ways from postsecondary education and from legislation. I think this is an important step, and I'm hoping that we're going to continue to go in that direction to make postsecondary education accessible to everybody.

I also want to comment that I am the chair of the Northern Alberta Development Council. As part of NADC we have a very close relationship with the university and college presidents in the north. In the north in particular, it's incredibly important to have access to postsecondary education. It's really a key for us up there because that's how we can improve our ability to recruit and retain, because we're educating people who are already from the north and are more likely to stay there once they've completed their university and college studies. In my interactions with the college presidents they're all in favour of being creative and finding better solutions, how to make it possible. In particular, we're very proud of Northern Lakes College because they do all kinds of things to help make it easier for students to study, to balance those difficult choices between family, finances, and education that are so important.

That's really all I wanted to comment on, but I just want to say thank you very much to the minister for bringing this. As I say, I hope it's just a beginning of really good things for postsecondary education in this province.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Any comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I'll now recognize the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Mr. Dreshen: Thank you. I guess we were playing with fire a little bit with the outstanding Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, dressing up like each other. He was not in this Assembly when he was going to speak, so I stood up, so I guess there's a mishap on our part. I apologize for that, Madam Speaker.

I am proud today to rise in this House to speak on Bill 19, An Act to Improve the Affordability and Accessibility of Post-secondary Education. Bill 19 seeks to cap increases to domestic student tuition and apprenticeship tuition based on a rate of Alberta's consumer price index. Individual program tuition can be raised by as much as 10 per cent as long as the across-the-board average tuition hike is not greater than the CPI.

Previously the minister had the discretion to dictate how much tuition could go up. Since the NDP has taken office, there's always been a tuition freeze. In the few years prior to that, depending on the year, there was either a freeze on tuition or it did go up by the rate of inflation. So there is already a precedent for the minister to act through ministerial order in adjusting tuition rates. However, I suppose the minister wanted to put this into legislation.

11:30

This bill also gives the minister power to make regulations on other matters in postsecondary education, including noninstructional fees and international student tuition. Furthermore, this bill also seeks to increase the representation of students on boards of governors by having two representatives at all institutions plus a third if the school has a graduate program. Previously schools such as Grant MacEwan University here in Edmonton and Mount Royal University in Calgary only had one student representative on their board of governors.

Madam Speaker, I know the struggles that university students face. I'm a little less removed from my postsecondary studies than some members of this House but not all. I took economics and political science at the University of Alberta here in Edmonton. I did try out for their Golden Bears football team but was not good enough to actually make the team. But I do understand the realities of balancing work and life at university.

Albertan students are hard-working. There is no denying that. I know many people who are pursuing higher education who have to work sometimes two part-time jobs just to cover the bills. Many have had extra costs in moving from different parts of the province to their postsecondary school, and many of them are unable to do much else besides study and work. They have put other commitments on hold as they work to create a better future for themselves.

That's part of what being an Albertan is all about, working hard to create opportunities for yourself in the future. Growing up on a farm, I spent many weekends travelling back and forth between Edmonton and central Alberta during seeding and harvest. Again, it was finding that work-life balance that was a great teacher and something that was a great opportunity in university. That's what university teaches us, to make those short-term sacrifices for long-term gains.

Madam Speaker, I commend our university students for putting in the work to get a higher education, and I believe that Bill 19 should help in these efforts. Of course, we need to look at economic opportunities available in Alberta for our youth. University students can't put in all this work if there are no job opportunities that exist after they graduate because then, really: was it worth it?

The NDP's misguided and disastrous economic policies have destroyed many of the opportunities in this province. They've raised the minimum wage. Due to raising the minimum wage, I've heard of lots of friends that have lost their jobs or their hours have been cut back, and it's punishing to people. When you look at the increased red tape pushing investment dollars out of Alberta, it's pushing those dollars to actual common-sense jurisdictions that actually recognize the importance and the value of job creators and the dignity of actually having a job. All of this has made it much harder for postsecondary students here in Alberta to find jobs when they actually graduate. The students that Bill 19 is going to help need to have the opportunity to succeed in the future.

Speaking of economic opportunities, as I said earlier, current postsecondary students often need to work to be able to cover their bills when they are in university. The issue is that the NDP has made it much more difficult to find part-time jobs that supplement their income. [interjection]

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member.

Mr. Dreeshen: The minimum wage hike has caused employers to, again, reduce hours for employees. Increased red tape has made it more difficult for people to find jobs. And the carbon tax, as was mentioned earlier, has raised costs for businesses, making it more difficult to hire workers and more difficult to give significant hours to employees. The reality is that the jobs that are affected by the NDP's poor government decisions are often the ones that would have been held by university students, the same students that Bill 19 is meant to help.

Madam Speaker, going back to the bill at hand, Bill 19 will seek to cap domestic student tuition at the rate of inflation. Given the struggles that postsecondary students are going through because of this government, as I mentioned, it's a good step that they are taking by limiting the increases to tuition. No student wants to enrol in an institution paying one amount in one year only to have their tuition increase in the second. It would be pretty unreasonable for students to stand by and have so much uncertainty about how much they're going to pay for their own education. Bill 19 will give students that predictability with their finances so that they know for sure how much their tuition is going to go up each year. Predictability and certainty are important.

On the international tuition topic, Bill 19 will give the minister power to make regulations around international student tuition. The indication from the minister is that he wants to give international students the ability to know exactly what their tuition is going to cost throughout their degree. This might improve our ability to attract international students, as we can give those potential students the certainty that their tuition won't be increasing throughout their studies. One less uncertainty for students, Madam Speaker. It's a common-sense proposal and is something that I personally support.

Bill 19 also gives the minister authority to create regulations around noninstructional fees such as athletic facility fees and transit fees. The minister has said previously that the regulations would include provisions that would give more transparency to these fees. I believe that would be a winning issue for all students. Institutions would not be able to hide these fees that they are charging to their students. Rather, they will need to be out in the open so that they would actually be accountable to the students that they are going to be charging the fees to.

These last two points are simple regulations that the minister has said he would implement. We won't be able to see these regulations before this Assembly, so our hope is that the minister gets this right. However, the NDP has gotten so much wrong since they were elected three and a half years ago that it's hard to see how they could actually get this right. From the Bill 6 fiasco, Madam Speaker, to the carbon tax, there have been so many bad policies that this government has introduced that it's hard to trust anything that they say. Just yesterday the government wasn't even able to correct the contradiction in their own budget around increases to the carbon tax. The policies that are coming from the minister seem to be promising, and if the minister does what he says, then that could result in a positive change for postsecondary students.

Bill 19 will also give additional representation on some boards of governors by having two student representatives on every board, as I mentioned earlier. Of course, many institutions already have two representatives, but some schools such as Grant MacEwan and Mount Royal only have one. This change was pushed for by student groups who wanted increased representation of students on postsecondary boards. I don't see any problem giving students a greater voice on the operations of a postsecondary institution. These students are the ones that are going to be most affected by the decisions of these boards, so it is important that their voices are heard.

Madam Speaker, I do wish the NDP would have cared as much about hearing farmers' voices when it came to Bill 6. I do think that Bill 6 will go down in history as the worst lack of consultation that this NDP government has actually ever done. It was purely based on their socialist NDP dogma. Not actually listening to farmers was a great travesty.

Madam Speaker, I do think that it's interesting how when you actually take the time to listen to Albertans – you actually take the time to listen to Albertans – and consult with them and consult with stakeholders, good legislation might actually follow. This is mostly the case with Bill 19, but it has not been the case with previous decisions by this government.

When I speak to my constituents, Madam Speaker, I actually listen to them, and that informs me as a legislator. I can tell you that my constituents are not happy with this current government. Maybe the government should have actually consulted with Albertans prior to when they introduced their carbon tax, especially when they failed to actually mention it during the last campaign. The carbon tax was one of the NDP's worst hidden agenda items, which we now are all bearing the cost of today.

Speaking of a carbon tax, Madam Speaker, I'm not sure if the NDP realizes how much postsecondary institutions are actually paying in carbon taxes. I wonder if the minister has actually asked postsecondary education institutions in Alberta how much they actually are paying in carbon taxes. The carbon tax is a disadvantage for Alberta families driving to work and heating their homes, it's a disadvantage to Alberta businesses competing around the world, and the carbon tax is a disadvantage to our postsecondary schools and even our local school boards.

The outstanding Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills was mentioning how hundreds of thousands of dollars in carbon tax is being paid by local school boards around the province, and that's coming out of buses. That comes out of things that students actually need. What this government actually, really, needs to understand is that every dollar that an institution spends on the carbon tax is one less dollar that they can spend on important student services.

11:40

There's no rebate available for postsecondary schools. They have to actually get that money from somewhere else, which is either from students or taxpayers, and most of the time that's just a student paying it twice. I would think that any form of comprehensive postsecondary legislation would include something to address the amount of money that institutions are forced to pay on the carbon tax, but I guess not. The government expects that Alberta postsecondary institutions just have to bear that extra cost. Unfortunately, the carbon tax is a cost that is borne by our colleges and universities and not by schools in other parts of Canada and the U.S. This is another ideological move by this government that makes our schools more uncompetitive when compared with other schools in other jurisdictions.

Madam Speaker, Bill 19 does a number of things well, though, and I think students will benefit from its implementation. However, if the NDP government really wanted to help students, they would repeal their carbon tax and get the economy back on track. I know that students obviously care about the rate of tuition and the affordability of going to school. As mentioned earlier, I was proud to use programs that were available to students going through postsecondary schooling, and because it is an important investment to further one's education, it should be available for everyone in Alberta. I think that truly represents the equality of opportunity, and it is very important for students in Alberta.

However, students are concerned about whether there will be jobs when they graduate, whether their degree will actually be worth

while, and whether they will be able to build a career here in Alberta. I don't want to see all of our recent graduates leave this province because there are no jobs available here in Alberta. Alberta taxpayers pay a significant amount of money to ensure that our institutions are of good quality. Let's not make it more difficult for our students to stay here and work. Let's actually cut taxes, reduce red tape, and bring back the prosperity that Alberta once had. I want to see the Alberta advantage back in Alberta so that the students that Bill 19 is intended to help are actually able to succeed here in Alberta.

Madam Speaker, Bill 19 has many good aspects to it. Capping tuition to the CPI will have a positive effect on Alberta students and their bottom line. Some of the regulations that the Minister of Advanced Education has spoken about will be good for both Alberta students and international students. I also want to commend the government – yes, actually commend the government – for actually listening to stakeholders and introducing legislation that actually helps Albertans. I would strongly encourage members of the government to continue to do that for the next few months.

While I support Bill 19, much more needs to be done to have long-lasting improvements for university students, which include cutting the carbon tax, reducing red tape, and bringing back the Alberta advantage so that students can actually succeed here in Alberta.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Any comments or questions under 29(2)(a)? The Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and respond to some of the comments that were recently made by the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake. I listened with great interest, and it's quite clear that the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake has been wearing his Make America Great Again hat way too tight and it's impacting his ability to share anything remotely resembling a fact in this Assembly.

I want to address a couple of things that the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake brought forward, that claim that we're hurting students. First of all, one of the things that he said was apparently hurting students was the increase in the minimum wage. Now, I don't know – I'm not the son of a rich farmer, Madam Speaker – but I had to pay for my . . .

Mrs. Pitt: You know what? Point of order.

The Acting Speaker: On a point of order, the hon. Member for Airdrie.

Point of Order Insulting Language

Mrs. Pitt: Madam Speaker, the Minister of Advanced Education is personally insulting other members in this House, and I'd ask him to withdraw and apologize to the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake. Under 23(h), (i), and (j).

The Acting Speaker: The Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would suggest that there was a lot of inflammatory language in this House in the past little while. I do recognize that it's been taken personally in many ways on both sides of the House, and we should change the tone in this matter. You know, again, I would hope that you would encourage all of us to change the tone, that really has been, I think, rather equivalent within the House this morning.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, we were having a great morning. The tone was quite amicable, I believe. I will caution all members in this House that we refrain from engaging in what could be perceived as personal attacks. Recognizing there will be a dispute of the facts on both sides of this House about what is being said, let's keep the tone a little bit more respectful on both sides if we could, please.

Hon. minister, I would ask you to please withdraw the comment.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Of course, let me rephrase. My parents did not have the significant financial means that other people had to support their children while they were in university, so I was in the position of having to work minimum wage jobs, as many students are to be able to pay for their education. Of course, I would have loved to have had a minimum wage of \$15 an hour when I was going to school, a time, I would remind everyone in this House, when Alberta actually saw a doubling of tuition.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. minister, can you please withdraw your comment? Although I appreciate you've changed the tone, I'd still ask you to withdraw.

Mr. Schmidt: I've completed my statement, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Minister, I've requested that you withdraw the statement.

Mr. Schmidt: Madam Speaker, I've completed my statement.

The Acting Speaker: Member, I will ask you again to withdraw the statement, or else you can please leave the House.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Strankman: I withdraw, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak?

Mr. Cooper: Yeah. I'd like to rise on a point of order.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Point of Order

Explanation of Speaker's Ruling

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm rising on a point of order under Standing Order 13(1), "The Speaker shall preserve order and decorum and decide questions of order," and Standing Order 13(2), "The Speaker shall explain the reasons for any decision on the request of a Member."

My request to you, Madam Speaker, is to try to have an understanding as to why the options were given to the member to withdraw the statement or remove himself from the House. As you know and as other Speakers in this Assembly have ruled in this particular case, a member of the opposition was required to withdraw a statement, and when they failed to do so, they were in fact named by the Speaker, not just asked to remove themselves from the House.

I appreciate the position that you're in, Madam Speaker, as the Deputy Chair of Committees. You are rarely in the chair, and I don't want to put this on you in any way, shape, or form because the blame for the inaction of the minister lies solely with the minister.

My question to you is: why is it that a set of rules was applied to the opposition members when they refused to withdraw what were personal attacks and inappropriate statements, or perceived to be by the Speaker on that particular day, but today the member made clearly inappropriate statements, you asked him to withdraw them, yet – yet – he refused to do so and was allowed to remove himself from the House without apologizing to the member or without being named?

11:50

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, I've made my decision. The minister will have an opportunity to apologize when he returns to the House. If not, I will discuss this with the Speaker.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to second reading?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 19 read a second time]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Seeing as we have made great progress this morning, I would like to move that we adjourn until 1:30 this afternoon.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:51 a.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, October 31, 2018

Day 43

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Miranda, Hon. Ricardo, Calgary-Cross (NDP)
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)
Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (UCP),
Official Opposition House Leader
Notley, Hon. Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),
Premier
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (UCP)
Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (UCP)
Payne, Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (NDP)
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (NDP)
Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (NDP)
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (UCP),
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)
Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (NDP)
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP)
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)
Schneider, David A., Little Bow (UCP)
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (NDP)
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (NDP)
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (NDP)
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (UCP)
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (UCP)
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (NDP),
Deputy Government Whip
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)

Party standings:

New Democratic: 54 United Conservative: 26 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Freedom Conservative: 1 Progressive Conservative: 1 Independent: 1

Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly

Shannon Dean, Law Clerk and Executive
Director of House Services, and Acting
Clerk, Procedure
Stephanie LeBlanc, Senior Parliamentary
Counsel
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel

Philip Massolin, Manager of Research and
Committee Services
Nancy Robert, Research Officer
Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of
Alberta Hansard

Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms
Chris Caughell, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms
Tom Bell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

Executive Council

Rachel Notley	Premier, President of Executive Council
Sarah Hoffman	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health
Shaye Anderson	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Sandra Jansen	Minister of Infrastructure
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Children's Services and Status of Women
Brian Malkinson	Minister of Service Alberta
Brian Mason	Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Community and Social Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

Parliamentary Secretaries

Jessica Littlewood	Economic Development and Trade for Small Business
Annie McKittrick	Education

STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Mr. Coolahan
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	Luff
Dang	McPherson
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha
Deputy Chair: Mr. van Dijken

Carson	Littlewood
Connolly	McPherson
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schneider
Fitzpatrick	Starke
Gotfried	Taylor
Horne	

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Goehring
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Orr
Ellis	Renaud
Fraser	Shepherd
Hinkley	Swann
Luff	Woollard
McKitrick	Yao
Miller	

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Shepherd
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Aheer	McKitrick
Gill	Pitt
Horne	van Dijken
Kleinsteinuber	Woollard
Littlewood	

Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Wanner
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Babcock	Nixon
Cooper	Piquette
Dang	Pitt
Drever	Westhead
McIver	

Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms Kazim
Deputy Chair: Connolly

Anderson, W.	Orr
Babcock	Rosendahl
Drever	Stier
Drysdale	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kleinsteinuber	Taylor
McKitrick	

Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	Miller
Cooper	Nielsen
Goehring	Nixon
Gotfried	Pitt
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Cyr
Deputy Chair: Mr. Dach

Barnes	Malkinson
Carson	Miller
Clark	Nielsen
Gotfried	Panda
Hunter	Renaud
Littlewood	Turner
Luff	

Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola
Deputy Chair: Mr. Drysdale

Babcock	Loewen
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Fildebrandt	Panda
Hanson	Rosendahl
Kazim	Schreiner
Kleinsteinuber	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, October 31, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the House 32 members of the television and radio arts program from NAIT, here in the city of Edmonton. They're accompanied by their instructor, Lamya Asiff. I'm sure they're going to learn lots of hot tips on how to cover politicians here this afternoon. If they could all please rise. Join me in giving them a warm traditional welcome.

The Speaker: I'm not sure if that's good news or bad news.
The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek.

Ms Woollard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am delighted to introduce to you and through you the students from a school in my riding of Edmonton-Mill Creek, A. Blair McPherson school. The students are accompanied by their teachers, Ms Holly Paranich and Mr. Benjamin Maklowich. If the students and teachers would stand, please, I'd ask them to receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other school groups today?

Seeing and hearing none, the Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have several introductions today. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislature – please stand when I say your names – Kim Walker, who has worked in the oil and gas sector for 20 years and is a business marketing consultant. As an artist Kim was inspired to create the longest mural in Canada project to revitalize her community and start a new conversation on how public art can be designed. Laura Hack, a resident of Coventry Hills, studied education at the University of Alberta, then taught high school math, science in Regina, Edmonton, and Calgary, and now volunteers as a director with the NHCA and played an important role organizing this project. Lindsay Lantela, a born-and-raised Calgarian who is a homemaker and self-taught freelance artist in Coventry Hills, volunteers her time on the board of the NHCA and other nonprofit organizations in the Calgary area. Finally, Yana Soldatenko, a Kazakh citizen and recent graduate from the University of Calgary's urban studies program. Passionate about Calgary's communities and their development, she is currently working as a community engagement co-ordinator in the NHCA. All the guests were volunteers for the longest mural project in Canada and the subject of today's members' statements. I'd ask them all to rise now and please receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an absolute pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all the members of this

Assembly a constituent from Edmonton-Ellerslie, Misty Ring. Misty will graduate with distinction from the U of A's visual arts certificate program in 2019, where she earned three scholarships. Earlier this year she curated a show at the Art Gallery of Alberta for 13 emerging Edmonton and area artists. She also volunteered as a lead artist in the longest mural in Canada project, which, of course, my colleague from Calgary-Northern Hills will speak of more later today. I ask Misty to now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. A great pleasure to stand and introduce to you and through you to the House a long-standing member of the staff here in the Legislative Assembly Office and the library, Ms Ingrid Dandanell. No stranger to the building, not only did she work in the Legislature but 20 years as a librarian, serving the folks before my time. Retired in 2001, she has a keen interest in seniors' policy and is, I'm proud to say, a committed Liberal. She serves on the Senior Liberals' Commission in Alberta. Seated in the public gallery, I'll ask Ingrid to stand so we can give her the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a fantastic local artist, Mr. Mark Vazquez-Mackay. Mark received his BFA from the Alberta College of Art and Design and has been an instructor at ACAD since 2004. He is currently the artist in residence at Willow Park middle school. His work as a muralist, mentor, and volunteer has made him a great choice as the artist to design a mural in Northern Hills. His other works have been exhibited and collected across the continent. I'd like to invite Mark to now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Minister of Children's Services and Status of Women.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you guests from the Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society, joining us today to bear witness to legislation I plan on introducing later this afternoon. Patti Brady is deputy executive director. Senior managers Lloyd Yellowbird and Keleigh Larson, manager Candace Cleveland, Arlyse – and I've not had to pronounce the last name before, so sorry if this is bad – Wuttunee in communications, Lynda Gladue, Crystal Arcand, Christie Pace, and Megan Morin all support the work of connecting families to their culture and traditional teachings. It's my honour to introduce these guests and join you in offering the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Bent Arrow's front-line staff empower young people, including children receiving intervention services, with traditional teachings and cultural connections. Yesterday I joined them in a smudge and a song and listened to how connections to culture make a tangible difference. They truly help indigenous children walk in two worlds. I'm so thankful for the work they do, and I ask that these individuals receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Health and Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to do two introductions today. First is a group of members from CancerControl Alberta and Cancer Strategic Clinical Network here in Alberta. October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, as I imagine my colleagues are aware, and breast cancer is the most common female cancer in Alberta. More women are surviving cancer than ever before because of innovative treatment options, increased prevention, and, of course, treatment efforts as well as diagnostics. Thank you to these guests for their tireless work to help patients, support survivors, and find a cure. I ask that all of my guests please rise and receive the warm welcome of our Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ms Hoffman: And if I could, Mr. Speaker, I have a second. Thank you very much. It's my pleasure to introduce Rosella Mandau and her partner, Robin Allison, who are constituents from Edmonton-Glenora. I'm very proud of that. Rosella is a proud owner of one of my favourite shops along 124th Street, Studio Bloom. It's also added recently a café, Wildflower Cafe. I love their beautiful fresh flowers, their jewellery, their coffee, and their giftware. I ask that Rosella and Robin please rise and receive the warm welcome of our Assembly. To our MLAs who aren't from Edmonton, please feel free to stop by Studio Bloom and spend some money in Edmonton-Glenora.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ms McKittrick: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Ann Marie LePan, chief executive officer for the Robin Hood Association in my constituency of Sherwood Park and board member of ACDS. Mme LePan has worked tirelessly to ensure that Robin Hood is able to continue to provide excellent programs and services and tend to strong community relationships with private and public partners alike. Thank you, Ann Marie, for your creativity and compassion and for your commitment to working collaboratively to find solutions. Ann Marie, I ask you to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you two exceptional leaders from the disability service community, Ms Andrea Hesse, CEO of Alberta Council of Disability Services, and Dr. Nilima Sonpal-Valias, director of strategic initiatives and stakeholder engagement. The Alberta Council of Disability Services is a network of community disability sector organizations and a critical partner in our work to make life better for Albertans with disabilities. I also want to take this moment to congratulate them on their 45th anniversary, and I look forward to the continued partnership and advocacy. I ask both my guests to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

1:40

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Why, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today and introduce two constituents of the hon. Minister of Advanced Education. I understand he had a very eventful morning this morning. They are a couple of Conservatives who have done an incredible job right there in the constituency of Edmonton-Gold Bar. Chris Rooyakkers is a political science student and a volunteer.

Of course, seated with him is the former Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, a man of great esteem and respect and respect for the traditions of this House, an all-round great parliamentarian, Mr. David Dorward. I invite you to welcome them.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin.

Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Ms Goodridge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today marks the final day of Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Breast cancer continues to be the most commonly diagnosed cancer and the second-leading cause of cancer-related deaths amongst Canadian women.

I rise today to remember my mother, Janice Goodridge, who we lost to breast cancer over eight years ago, at age 49. I remember the day I found out my mom was diagnosed with cancer. I remember it like it was yesterday. My life completely changed that day. My mom was my hero, my confidante, a small-business owner, an active community member, a feisty fashionista, and, ultimately, a strong fighter. Unfortunately, my mother was diagnosed with HER2-positive breast cancer, which is one of the most aggressive forms of breast cancer.

Had we found her cancer earlier, she might very well be here today. Sadly, the screening that could have saved her life was not easily nor readily available to people in Alberta, including my mother. In fact, in order for her to get a mammogram nine years ago, she had to drive down highway 63 and come to Edmonton. It was too late for us to find a successful treatment plan although I'm very proud to say that she was part of a drug trial that is now the gold standard treatment for women with this form of breast cancer, and she continues to save the lives of Alberta women.

Please take action. Remind every woman you know to talk to their doctor and get themselves checked. Consider making a donation to help fund critical cancer research. But more than anything, I urge all Albertans to personally support their friends and family with cancer with their time and unconditional love. It goes a long way, and you don't know how long you're going to have them around.

Thank you. [Standing ovation]

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

United Conservative Party Membership

Connolly: Mr. Speaker, I'm rising on something that just a few years ago I never thought I'd have to do. I'm speaking to condemn the rise of racism, hatred, and actual Nazis in Alberta Conservative politics. Anti-Semitism and white supremacy have no place in this province, but disturbingly it seems the Leader of the Opposition ignores the extremists in his party.

It's come to light recently that the Leader of the Opposition hired a man to run his leadership campaign's phone bank, a man that has spewed racist, anti-Semitic views, a man whose social media history reveals that he uses anti-Semitic language and accused human rights commissions as, quote, antiwhite institutions. He wrote online: the leftists tend to be fat white women or degenerates, which I always find funny. After all that, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition gave this man a leadership role on his campaign, letting him manage 15 people for months. At the same time he also managed an online store that sells white supremacist paraphernalia, sickening materials, including T-shirts with slogans about shooting black people.

The UCP could have taken action before to stand up to extremism, but repeatedly we've seen the UCP allowing the rebirth of extremism in Alberta politics. The Leader of the Opposition has approved controversial candidates who've shared homophobic, Islamophobic, and racist views online. One compared Muslims to bank robbers. One tried to fund a Nazi meme scheme on Instagram. One shared a video calling homosexuality intrinsically disordered. One said that Islam should be banned, and a candidate in Edmonton posed and smiled for the camera with the hate group Soldiers of Odin.

I don't think that the Leader of the Opposition is racist, but his failure to act and his complacency are sending the message that these beliefs are welcome in his party. When someone shows you who they are, you should believe them, and the UCP continues to show that when it comes to extremists, they've got lots of room to spare in their party.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Peace Area Riding for the Disabled Society

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Peace Area Riding for the Disabled Society, otherwise known as PARDS, is a magical place in Grande Prairie. It is here that children and adults forge bonds with horses which can lead to amazing breakthroughs, and it's here where this magic comes in. These breakthroughs take place when the clients are simply enjoying themselves. Let me give you an example. Jennifer Douglas, executive director of PARDS, says that they have clients with autism who have never spoken, yet they've had a number of clients who start to vocalize at the centre. Their first word is usually "horse."

PARDS assists more than 600 clients a year through custom-tailored therapy programs that involve riding, grooming, and handling. Thankfully, this has strong community support because it doesn't fall under any category that allows them to obtain government funding. PARDS operates a \$4 million centre, and operations are covered by donations, fundraising, and revenues earned through public boarding and riding services.

As I've outlined, the human-horse connection is the heart of PARDS. Also, its staff are equally important. Let me give you one more example. A father was concerned about his little girl because her mother had left and his work in the oil field kept him away for stretches of time. He enrolled her in PARDS, and on the first day one of PARDS' miniature ponies adopted her. Soon they were bonded, and the little girl started telling the story of her pony. Her pony, she told staff, was unlovable, and his dad chose not to be with him. Staff immediately understood that this story was the little girl's. They shared the story with her father, and they had suggestions to help her further. Three years later this little girl is thriving. You can see now why PARDS has trotted into so many hearts in my community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Women's History in Alberta

Ms Fitzpatrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Make an impact. Emily Murphy, Nellie McClung, Irene Parlby, Louise McKinney, and Henrietta Muir Edwards won through their persistence a great victory for women. On October 18, 1929, women were finally declared persons under Canadian law. On that very day Violet Pauline King was born in Calgary. Called to the Alberta bar on June 2, 1954, Ms King became the first black female lawyer to practise in Canada. More recently there is Beverley McLachlin, the 17th

Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada, the first woman to hold that position and the longest serving Chief Justice in Canada. The late Hon. Senator Dr. Thelma J. Chalifoux was the first indigenous woman appointed to the Canadian Senate. A tireless social activist, she led the way for indigenous women in politics. This month two more fantastic Alberta women were sworn into the Canadian Senate, the Hon. Patti LaBoucane-Benson and the Hon. Paula Simons.

Many other women impacted the history of our province: union workers like my friend the late Judy Shannon; Jan Fox, the former district director of the Edmonton parole office; Jan Reimer, the first female mayor of Edmonton; Lieutenant Governors Helen Hunley, Lois Hole, and currently Lois Mitchell; the current Chief Justice of Alberta, Catherine Anne Fraser.

1:50

Today Alberta has a gender balanced cabinet, and we are led by our fearless female Premier, the second woman to achieve this pinnacle. We are enacting legislation which is always approached through a feminist, diverse lens. I am privileged to be the second woman to represent the constituents of Lethbridge-East. We must hear women's voices in this Legislature to have legislation . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Provincial Budget Revenue Forecasts

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In April 2018 the Finance minister said: we built pipeline revenues into our path to balance projections; we're confident all the pipelines will be built, so we're just going to keep going down this road. Now, fast forward to yesterday in question period. The Premier says that, in fact, pipelines are "not factored into the assumptions that underline our budget." Who is telling the truth: the Premier or the Finance minister?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me be clear. Our path to balance is intact. It does not rely solely on TMX. The Finance minister will make it clear that we're on track in the next quarterly update, and we've already reduced the deficit by \$3 billion. What is clear is that the member opposite has a plan, too, and it's to cut \$700 million in revenue by giving tax breaks to the super wealthy. That doesn't help Alberta reach its path to balance; standing up for ordinary folks does.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I see that the Deputy Premier continues to audition for opposition. I'm sure Albertans will give her her wish shortly, but here are the facts. In the budget that was presented to this House, it was clear that the Trans Mountain expansion, the budget numbers, had to be operational by 2021, so something has changed. Yesterday the Leader of the Opposition continued to ask – this government could not answer, so I will now ask again – how you are replacing the lost revenue from Trans Mountain not being built in your budget.

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, the Premier answered it yesterday, I answered it in my first answer, and I'll continue to answer it as we move forward. The path to balance doesn't solely rely on the completion of TMX. We have three pipelines. Two are already in

process, and the third is on track. Our Premier, in fact, is advocating today at this very time in British Columbia to make sure that we get this path to tidewater completed. It's not only good for Alberta, and it's not only good for B.C., but it's good for all Canadians. I am proud to have a Premier who's fighting for Alberta instead of spending all of his time thinking about what might happen in 2019.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I never said that the whole budget depends on Trans Mountain. I never said that at all. The Deputy Premier just acknowledged that their projections that they provided to this House when the budget was passed relied on Trans Mountain being done by 2021. What we have simply been asking, the Premier refused to answer. The question now is: what are they hiding? Why won't they answer it? What are you replacing those revenue projections with?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, nobody is hiding. We answered the question yesterday, we'll answer it today, and we'll probably be asked yet again tomorrow. Our path to balance is intact. The Finance minister will give that update to all Albertans with the next quarterly update. In fact, our deficit is \$3 billion reduced. That's good news. In terms of hiding, the Official Opposition is hiding the fact that their plan is for 4,000 teachers and 4,000 nurses to be cut. That would certainly move us backwards, not forward. I get why they're not being open and honest about that, but fortunately the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills was recently, when he said that if there's a UCP government, it's going to hurt.

The Speaker: Second main question.

Health Care Wait Times

Mr. Nixon: Well, let's try something else, Mr. Speaker, because the Deputy Premier continues to hide, obviously. In 2015 the NDP committed to implementing a wait time measurement and wait-list management policy to address long wait times in the health care system. We now know that underneath this minister's watch for almost four years wait times have increased underneath the NDP's watch. So maybe the minister could take some time today to explain her terrible performance on this file.

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, I have to say how refreshing it is to have a leader's question on health care. It's nice to know that they care about that for a change. All Albertans deserve timely access to high-quality public health care when they need it, and we're fighting to improve health care across this province. More than 280,000 surgeries were performed last year in Alberta across 55 surgical sites, and as our population continues to grow and age, so does the demand for these services. That's why we need to invest in the front lines instead of fighting for a \$700 million giveaway to the richest Albertans and making the front-line workers pay for it.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, let's be clear. Underneath this minister's watch open-heart surgery wait times have increased by nearly 50 per cent, cataract surgery wait times have increased by nearly 30 per cent, hip replacement wait times have increased by another nearly 30 per cent, and knee replacement surgeries have increased by 23 per cent. That is under this minister's watch. The minister wants to continue to audition to be the Leader of the Opposition. We would appreciate it if she would stand up and be the Minister of Health and explain her failure on this file.

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. We're continuing to increase capacity, and while anyone waiting for surgery doesn't want to wait – we don't want them to wait either

– cutting resources from front lines would only make it worse. Demand is up. Supply is up, but so, too, is demand. That's why this year in Budget 2018 – I wish the members opposite would have voted for it; fortunately, we're in government, and we were able to pass it – we invested an additional \$40 million in wait time reductions for things like surgery: cataract surgeries, cancer surgeries, hip and knee, and the list goes on, Mr. Speaker. We believe that it's important to invest in the people of Alberta, not privatize and outsource to the United States.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the question is about outcomes, not about spending. In fact, the NDP have increased spending by 14 per cent on health care since they came to office, and their wait times have gone up while spending more. That is a fact. Under this minister wait times have gone up. Albertans are waiting in pain longer on wait-lists while this minister continues to get up and just do partisan attacks. She needs to explain what has gone wrong with her ministry and why she has not come through with her commitment to address wait times. Why are you failing on this file?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, there are a number of wait times that have reduced. But for anyone who's waiting, we don't want to see them wait a day longer than necessary. That's why we're continuing to increase capacity. While members opposite call for deep cuts, we're increasing in a sustainable way. They used to have 6 per cent increases; we've gone to 3 per cent. But we've increased those resources on the front lines, expanding access because we know how important it is, improving access for mental health, improving access to EMS, and investing in things like home care, all things that the members opposite would cut. I care about front-line workers, and I care about everyday Albertans. I wish you spent more time focused on those than on the richest 1 per cent and giving them a \$700 million tax break.

The Speaker: Third main question.

Federal Bill C-69

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Premier wants to talk about everyday Albertans. Well, let's talk about everyday Albertans. They are being punished because of our energy industry not being able to get our product to tidewater. Justin Trudeau brought forward Bill C-69 in the House of Commons, which will essentially kill all the pipelines built. While this side of the House continued to raise it with that side of the House, they sat on their hands and did nothing for 229 days while that bill passed in the House. Why?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. I'm so proud to be part of a government that has made more progress on pipelines than for 20 years when we had the Official Opposition then in Ottawa and also Conservatives here in Alberta, and they failed to hit tidewater by any stretch of means. Our Premier won't back down. That's why she's in British Columbia fighting for this pipeline. That's why she spends time in Alberta and right across this country, fighting for this pipeline, because it's in the national interest. Instead of the members opposite continuing to cheer that the pipeline fail, I wish they'd get onside and work to make sure that it succeeds because it's a project in the national interest, and it's certainly good for all . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I'm cheering for Albertans and this pipeline getting built and for this government to stop taking credit for something that has not been done. February 8 this bill was tabled in the House of Commons. March 19 it passed second reading in the House. March 29 the Leader of the Official Opposition sent a letter to the Premier; no response from the Premier. March 22 the committee held 14 meetings in Ottawa; no response from this government. The list goes on and on. All the while our energy critic was talking to Ottawa, they sat on their hands for 229 days. The question is simple: why?

Ms Hoffman: Well, Mr. Speaker, we have been fighting for Alberta every step of the way. Alberta is, of course, the constitutional owner and regulator over the natural resource development in our province, and that's why we need meaningful opportunities to engage on regulation and policies that are still to be developed in C-69. The Minister of Environment and Parks led a group of key stakeholders to Ottawa last week that met with a number of Senators who will be debating C-69. Our message is clear. It's not appropriate in its current form. We will continue to fight for Alberta each and every day.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, that is the point. They sent ministers after the bill had already passed in the House of Commons. Too little, too late. In fact, this minister said on May 16, 2018, in this Assembly, "How is it standing up for Alberta to hop on an airplane and jaunt off to Ottawa every time you get a chance?" How does that stand up for Albertans, she said. So, in other words, she was willing to prop up her close ally, Justin Trudeau, sit on her hands until the bill passed, and then, once the bill passed, finally go down to Ottawa and say that you have a concern with it. It's too little, too late, which is the history of this government. Again, through you, Mr. Speaker, why did it take you 229 days?

Ms Hoffman: If you want to talk about friends with Justin Trudeau, there seem to be no closer allies than the members opposite. What we have an opportunity to do is to move forward on an Alberta plan and an appropriate price on carbon, Mr. Speaker, that ensures that Alberta's interests are taken. Instead, the Leader of the Official Opposition has said: "You know what? We'll challenge it. Yeah, we probably won't be successful. Yeah, it'll probably mean that the feds have to implement their plan." That's not the Alberta way. We're here to fight for one another and to make sure that we get the right plan for the people of Alberta. I'm so proud that our Premier is doing that today and each and every day, and I wish the members opposite would get onboard and start cheering for Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

2:00 Support for Postsecondary Students

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Parliamentary Budget Officer recently reported that the federal government provides \$12 billion of the over \$35 billion in total funding for postsecondary institutions across Canada. The PBO is concerned that "there is no process to track the CST once it enters provincial accounts." To the Minister of Advanced Ed: what exactly are you doing with the Canada social transfer funds to support postsecondary students?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. Certainly, we had an important announcement to help support advanced education here in the last 24 hours, which was to

freeze tuition rates and to have that indexed to inflation. I think that's a big step forward that's going to help Alberta students right across in each of our 26 postsecondary institutions.

In regard to working with the federal government, certainly, we work closely with them to ensure that we get the very top-quality education for our postsecondary students, and we'd be happy to pursue that now and in the future.

Ms McPherson: Thank you for the segue.

The PBO projected federal funding for student financing needs to increase by 31 per cent and funding for student employment needs to increase by 58 per cent if we hope to develop the talent that we need to grow our economy over the next five years. This government says that capping tuition at CPI is intended to cover wage increases; however, universities' other costs can increase by far more than local inflation. Again to the Minister of Advanced Ed: you've limited schools' self-generating funding options, so how exactly do you expect Albertans to pay for postsecondary education?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can say that our government will make no apologies for making postsecondary education more affordable for students. There's no better way to ensure that a student, regardless of their economic circumstance or where they live in this province, gets access if it is an affordable possibility. So many students choose not to go to postsecondary because they just simply don't have the money or their family doesn't have the money. We are opening the doors to make sure we have an equitable and just postsecondary education system in this province.

Ms McPherson: Reducing financial barriers to education is intended to increase the number of students attending, but those students need seats at schools. Full-time enrolment at the U of C increased by 3.2 per cent last year, double Alberta's population growth, and students in their 40s were the fastest growing group of students. How are you going to increase access to postsecondary education for under- and unemployed Albertans like the 8.2 per cent of Calgarians who are out of work right now?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, the best way to provide access for students regardless of their age is to make sure that it's an affordable proposition. I'm so proud of the progress that we've made in this regard. You know what? We have funded for education through this recession, during the economic downturn, for elementary students. They're going to move to junior high. They'll move to high school. We are making sure that we get that business done. You can't do that by making \$700 million cuts, cutting teachers, and otherwise compromising the quality of education that all Albertans deserve.

The Speaker: Hon. members, if I could just draw your attention and remind you yet again that we're now moving to question 5 on the list. Be conscious of the fact that this House appreciates members not using preambles in their supplementals and, secondly, ensure that the supplementals are related to the main question.

The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

2018 Harvest Support for Agriculture

Ms Babcock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've heard first-hand in my region that this has been an incredibly challenging year for our

producers. Dry conditions in the south, a wet fall in the central and northern regions, and smoke through some of the most important growing periods of the summer were just a few of the challenges faced by Alberta's farmers. To the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry: what were some of the challenges and the outcomes of this year's harvest so far?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. Many of my colleagues on both sides were at an important event last night with farmers. I talked to farmers directly. This year's harvest was indeed a challenge. We had some growing conditions, some hot conditions, dry conditions, and we had early snowfall. But with our farmers' hard work and perseverance I'm very happy to say that 95 per cent of the crops are now in the bin, and I want all of us to thank Alberta farmers for their hard work.

The Speaker: The first supplemental.

Ms Babcock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After years of drought and adverse growing conditions early snow the last few years has had a devastating effect on Alberta's crops, which has led to challenges with AFSC payments. To the same minister: how has your department and AFSC adjusted practices and procedures to deal with this issue going forward?

Mr. Carlier: Mr. Speaker, the staff and board of the Agriculture Financial Services Corporation have the same hard-working spirit as farmers and ranchers. In fact, many of the staff and board of AFSC are farmers and ranchers themselves, and they remember past difficult harvests. Last year I asked them to find a way to streamline inspections to help clear the backlog. This year after the September snow we had several good weeks of weather. We stood ready to streamline inspections once again, but because of the good weather, we didn't have to.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Babcock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The challenges faced by Alberta's producers will only become greater as the realities of climate change become clearer, a fact our friends across the aisle refuse to acknowledge. To the same minister: how does the government support producers when Mother Nature makes life more difficult for them?

Mr. Carlier: Climate change is a reality that our farmers and ranchers see first-hand as the years and generations pass, Mr. Speaker. First frost days are later. Last frost days are sooner. The province is wetter in some areas and drier in others. Along with this change we're seeing new pests and crop diseases on the landscape. We're helping farmers adapt. My department works on ways to guard against new pests and diseases through research at Alberta's postsecondary institutions and through our crop diversification centres. Unlike other governments, we're investing in agriculture through our climate leadership plan, which helps farmers and ranchers invest in energy efficiency. This helps cut emissions and save money.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Government Services Communication with MLA Offices

Dr. Starke: Mr. Speaker, one of the most important jobs of an MLA is to assist constituents with issues they are having accessing government services. A strong working relationship between MLA

offices and local government service providers is essential, and that's what we have enjoyed in Vermilion-Lloydminster for many years. So it's baffling that the staff at Alberta Works offices have recently been ordered to not communicate with staff at local MLA offices. To the minister of social services: why have you hampered our ability to serve Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. It's my understanding that Alberta Works offices are available to all Albertans by walking in, by calling, by way of the web. We also have an MLA contact in our offices who helps MLAs with their issues relating to their constituents.

Dr. Starke: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that many constituent concerns can be resolved quickly thanks to open lines of communication between our staff and local Alberta social services staff and given that the local workers for Alberta Seniors were similarly ordered to have no contact with staff in MLA offices and that all communications now have to flow through the minister's office and given that this edict requiring centralized command and control for all communications hampers services to Alberta seniors, to the minister of seniors: why have you ordered local Alberta Seniors officials to not have any contact with MLA offices?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, seniors built this province, and they deserve to retire in dignity, and we as a government absolutely want to liaise with constituency offices and make that process as accessible as possible. I'm happy to follow up with the member to find out the specifics of this concern. Certainly, our government wants to work to make sure that everybody is collaborating well.

Thank you so much.

Dr. Starke: Mr. Speaker, given that all MLAs and their constituency office staff work hard to give the best possible service in assisting Albertans and given that many issues can be resolved quickly and efficiently through good communication with local service providers who are familiar with the cases and the individuals involved and given that the recent change has resulted in a significant deterioration of service to Albertans, to either minister: will you reverse the directive preventing staff in regional offices from communicating with our constituency offices, and if not, why not?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Yeah. Mr. Speaker, I'd be really happy to follow up with the hon. member. I am not aware of any directive. In fact, we've tried to create even more opportunities for engagement. That's why each and every minister has created an MLA contact in their office, to try to help liaise in a more effective way for those who would like to work with our offices. It's not our intent to not have local experts work with local community members or the MLA offices, so we'd be happy to really follow up and clarify whatever miscommunication may have been provided on that because that's certainly not our intent. We're working to make life easier and more effective and more available for the folks who are reaching out for supports.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

2:10

Federal Carbon Pricing

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just have a simple question. Is it this government's position that the federal government has jurisdiction to force a carbon tax on the people of Alberta? Yes or no?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much. I'll take the first one, and then I'll be very happy to share with my colleague the Minister of Energy for supplementals.

Mr. Speaker, even the leader of the Official Opposition has admitted that that's the case. He said that if they go to court and they fail and they have to implement the Justin Trudeau carbon tax, he will certainly have to comply with that. I find it really interesting they're asking that question because their own leader has admitted that that is likely the very outcome, that the federal price on carbon will be implemented if Alberta doesn't act and do one on our own. We're being leaders, and we're moving forward in a responsible way.

Mrs. Aheer: That's interesting because given that last year the government's environment minister said, quote, our carbon price increases will track with the federal legislation that will be in place at that time; we've been clear about that from day one, end quote, and given that the NDP government now claims that this is no longer to be their position, why, then, won't they join with the other provinces in the court challenge that they are leading?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we've worked from day one through our climate leadership plan to develop a made-in-Alberta solution, one that was developed in collaboration with industry, with stakeholders, with Albertans, all people who are involved, and we stand with that climate leadership plan. We stand with the solutions we've come up with, and we will continue to work with our made-in-Alberta plan.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Albertans deserve a government that is going to fight for them. Given that the government has just said today that their path to balance is not solely based on TMX and given that this government's budget plan is based on further raises to the carbon tax, perhaps that is the reason that they will not join in the court challenge. Otherwise, how are they going to raise the funds?

Ms Hoffman: Sorry. I said that I would give her the rest, and then I changed my mind.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to clarify that we have a path to balance that has a lot of careful contingencies built in, and that's why we are more than \$3 billion ahead of where we thought we would be in terms of our path to balance. We are committed to moving forward on getting TMX, to making sure that we remove the price differential, and to making sure that all Canadians have the opportunity to prosper from this important plan. The members opposite are focused on firing 4,000 nurses, 4,000 teachers, and bringing in a \$700 million tax giveaway to the wealthiest Albertans. I think our priorities are aligned with the values of everyday Albertans.

The Speaker: Calgary-West.

Drug-impaired Driving

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government of Alberta has had years to prepare for the legalization of marijuana. One of its most important tasks was to ensure that police are trained and equipped to deal with the potential spike in drug-impaired drivers. The RCMP have indicated plans to purchase just four of the roadside saliva tests to cover the whole province, and Edmonton and Calgary police are considering – I repeat, only considering – using them. To the Justice minister: how many roadside saliva devices are in use in Alberta today now that marijuana is legal?

The Speaker: The Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Well, of course, it has always been the case that it was the plan to move forward with several different methods of testing for impairment, one of which the member should be familiar with, which is just to say roadside decision. That's police observing impaired behaviour and pulling the individuals over. In addition, we have increased training of drug recognition experts. One of the methods available to police, should they choose to use it, is a roadside saliva testing device. There are presently two more in testing, as I understand it, with the federal government right now, and police services will make those decisions based on their individual needs.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The first supplemental.

Mr. Ellis: Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta has long known that it would need many more police officers trained as drug recognition experts when marijuana became legal and given that RCMP are reporting that only 42 officers have this training, which means that only 37 per cent of Alberta's 113 RCMP detachments will have one of these experts, Minister, this is deeply concerning. Are you not worried that this lack of experts puts public safety at risk?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and again for the very important question. We all know that one of the main concerns that came from Albertans with respect to the legalization of cannabis, which, again, was a federal decision, is ultimately that there will be an increase in impaired drivers on the roads. We've been working very closely with the services to ensure that they're able to get access to those trainings and to be able to get funding for the access. In addition to the drug recognition experts, there is other training in terms of observations going forward for officers. But certainly we'll continue to work with those services to make sure that we're putting through as many drug recognition experts as possible.

Mr. Ellis: Mr. Speaker, what the minister is referring to is field sobriety tests, and that's not even close to what is needed right now.

Mr. Speaker, given that a critical component to ensuring that Alberta can prosecute drug-impaired drivers requires more capability to test blood than in the past and given that only specially trained technicians can perform this task, Minister, are all police detachments able to complete on-site blood tests, or are police forced to take their suspects to Alberta's overburdened hospitals and wait in the hallways along with the paramedics and their patients to collect crucial evidence for marijuana files?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, as I've indicated, we've worked very closely with police services to make sure that they have everything that they need. Certainly, legalization happened very recently. The province of Alberta, fortunately, was out in front relative to other provinces. In fact, other provinces were looking to us with the fantastic model that we had built. Certainly, as this moves forward, we will continue to work with those services to ensure that they have everything they need in every incident case.

Grain Drying and the Carbon Levy

Mr. Loewen: On Monday Alberta's Official Opposition asked multiple questions regarding the carbon tax and how it affects farmers drying their grain in an exceptionally wet fall. Grain drying is not optional and, in fact, is essential in order to not have grain literally rot in the bins. Unfortunately, the minister's answers were far from clear, choosing instead to talk about the weather and other things that were irrelevant to the questions. Can the minister today clearly explain to Alberta farmers how they will be reimbursed for the cost of the carbon tax on their grain drying?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're absolutely committed to supporting farmers in their quest to reduce emissions, reduce emissions but also reduce their overall energy costs, which will make them, of course, more efficient. Through the climate leadership plan we've devoted \$81 million over four years for farm efficiencies such as on-farm solar. We've also introduced a 50 per cent rebate on retrofitting and upgrading their grain dryers. That will go a long way in making sure that farmers are doing what they want to do best: grow their great products and reduce their own greenhouse gas emissions.

Mr. Loewen: Given that on Monday the minister attempted to claim that grain drying costs can be recovered through AFSC and given that AFSC compensation received for grain drying did not change with the introduction of the carbon tax and given that farmers that I talked to have told me that such provisions simply do not make up for the high cost of the carbon tax, will the minister admit that the carbon tax places an unacceptable burden on hard-working Alberta farmers?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. The member's own colleague last night was saying that if the price of natural gas were higher, then the carbon levy by a percentage wouldn't be as much. Yes, true. Natural gas is a really high cost right now. The carbon levy, you know, is part of our energy efficiency plans, part of our climate leadership plan, which the farmers are embracing. Farmers, when I talk to them, want to do their part. They ask me: what can we do to lower our greenhouse gas emissions, do our part, and as well find those efficiencies to make our operations more efficient?

Mr. Loewen: Given that the minister refuses to answer the question on how the carbon tax benefits farmers and given that farmers accept the fact that some years they have to dry their grain and given that the carbon tax adds huge additional costs to doing business that reduce their global competitiveness, when will this government remove the carbon tax so that the fine farmers of Alberta will not be burdened by these excessive and unnecessary expenses?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know what? I'll apologize to you if this sounds repetitive because it is. With the climate leadership plan we're devoting \$81 million over four years for farm efficiencies and on-farm solar. This is a program that has been well received by farmers for energy efficiencies in irrigation, in solar, in dairy barns, in chicken barns, et cetera. As well, a 50 per cent rebate on retrofitting, upgrading grain dryers is well received by the farmers. That's what they're looking for from this government, and they're getting that.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

2:20

Social Supports in Edmonton

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the last year the city of Edmonton initiative the recover project worked to explore how we can best balance urban renewal downtown with supporting individuals living with homelessness, personal trauma, substance use, and mental health challenges. The recommendations came out and were adopted by the city in August. They included prioritizing service delivery, which embraces harm reduction and increased collaboration amongst providers to improve outcomes for those they serve. To the Minister of Community and Social Services, will you take these factors into consideration when deciding future funding for service providers in Edmonton?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for your question and for your advocacy. All Albertans deserve a safe place to call home and receive the support they need to address the challenges they are facing. We recognize that issues facing Albertans are complex, and that's why our government has taken steps and invested in prevention efforts through our FCSS increase of \$25 million, our antipoverty work, and our work with respect to combatting homelessness, investing \$191 million. Our ongoing commitment to affordable housing is a key way that our government . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
First supplemental.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Edmonton city council has clearly stated that their priority in addressing chronic homelessness is to move past traditional models in favour of focused investment in supportive housing and given that the city is in fact currently looking to purchase four apartment buildings to convert to supportive units, to the same minister: what commitments have you made to help fund wraparound supports, and will you work with the city of Edmonton to expand these further?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. We have maintained stable and predictable funding for all partners, and also Budget 2018 continues the government of Alberta's historic \$1.2 billion commitment to maintain and improve safe, secure, and affordable housing. We are continuing to work with our municipal and community partners, including Edmonton, to find solutions facing Albertans in Edmonton, and we know that this means having their backs by investing in supports and services they rely on and not making reckless . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
Second supplemental.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that a report to Edmonton's council this year estimated an overall need for an additional 916 units of supportive housing and given that city staff are now working to identify sites across Edmonton where these units could be built, to the same minister: what steps have you taken to help provide access to the funding needed, and how will you support this construction going forward?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. All Albertans deserve a place to call home, and that is why we have invested \$7 million for over 60 affordable housing units in Edmonton alone, and we have invested in over 300 more supportive housing units in communities, including Edmonton. We know that providing access to additional health and treatment support helps end the cycle of chronic homelessness. That is why we have made strong and predictable investments instead of making cuts that we all know will hurt, as was described by the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Grain Marketing, Storage, and Handling

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past weekend the NDP and their supporters came together and passed some policy resolutions. One dealt with grain and the resolution to, and I quote: formally examine the impact to Canada's international reputation that has resulted from the changes to Canada's grain marketing, storage, and handling system. End quote. Minister, in all your travels I have never heard you publicly say that Canada's reputation and, by extension, Alberta's grain growers have somehow been diminished by any recent changes in that federal policy. Have you?

Mr. Mason: Point of order.

The Speaker: Point of order.

The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Over the years we've seen increased production from our hard-working Alberta farmers, which is fantastic, but which means more product on the rail lines. We're working with the federal government in their deliberations on changing the Canada Transportation Act, which helps a lot. We know from both CN and CP, the main characters, that they're increasing production. But that concern is still there, that we're able to have the capacity on our whole transportation system, making sure that we can get our products to market, and to continue working with the federal government and the railway systems to ensure that happens.

Mr. Strankman: Mr. Speaker, given that that resolution goes on to recommend, and I quote, "to put into place any additional government oversight needed to ensure that Canada's grain marketing, storage, and handling system works efficiently to the mutual benefit of all," Minister, to this third generation son of a rich farmer it sure sounds like your party is advocating that Alberta's farmers and our friends across Canada will once again be forced into a 1943-based monopoly, formerly called the Canadian Wheat Board. Is that your government's intention?

Mr. Carlier: Mr. Speaker, I'm somewhat confused by the question. I'm pretty sure the member wasn't at the convention. He might have been. You know, it was a very large convention, the largest

convention the NDP has ever seen in this province. Perhaps he was there. I didn't see him.

No, Mr. Speaker. You know, there are some challenges without a doubt in the transportation. We've seen some great success in both CN and CP ordering a thousand new hopper cars each, new double tracking, new terminals being built across the province. I think we're setting up to be in good shape for the future.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Second supplemental.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that several farmers, including myself, were thrown into jail for daring to take our own property, our commodity, wheat and barley grown by us, into the U.S.A. and giving it to a 4-H club, Minister, is this how your government would like to rebuild the tattered relationships with rural Alberta farmers and ranchers going forward into 2019?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud of this government's work on supporting our agriculture across the province. Last year we saw record export profits of \$11.2 billion. I think that speaks volumes. That's over 12 per cent more than the year before that. Agriculture year after year is breaking records. This government is very proud of our record with the agriculture community. I'm very proud of myself as I continue working with the agriculture producers, processors across this province. They continue the good work that they're doing growing and making and selling good products across the country and around the world.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Victims of Crime Fund

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Justice recently announced an "increase in available funding" and "new funding" for victims of crime. But it is not new. The surplus in the victims of crime fund has been growing for years. Victims of crime organizations have been prevented from accessing their own money. The money was mandated to benefit victims of crime funds all along. Why has this money been withheld all these years and why is it now announced as new money only months before an election?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the slightly misguided question. We have in fact made additional monies available to the victims of crime organizations. Several of those organizations were standing with me as we announced that. It is the case that over the course of more than a decade now there has been a surplus accumulating. Unfortunately, governments previous to ours had done no work around what the needs of victims were, how to meet those needs, how to measure whether we were meeting those needs, so the Auditor General asked us to do lots of that work before we were able to increase the funding to those organizations. We've now done that work, and we're happy to announce the increase.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Orr: Given that rural communities are in an epidemic of crime that has been escalating for years, rural victims deserve support, yet the access to victims' funds is for five urban municipalities only and no rural regions. This is patently inequitable and unjust. Further,

given that the Rural Municipalities resolution this spring called upon the government of Alberta to use the money from the victims of crime to adequately fund provincial victims' services units, why have rural regions been excluded?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There were multiple things that were announced in the announcement recently. Some of them were funding for the most strapped victims' services. We worked with the organization that represents all of the victims' services organizations, and they said where the greatest need was, and therefore we flowed additional funding to those particular instances. In addition to that, there was an increase in funding for certain victims of crime areas that deal with certain indigenous areas as well, so we've increased the supports to those units that are supporting those indigenous areas, which include rural units.

Mr. Orr: Mr. Speaker, given that the Auditor General, in fact, has called upon the government to "develop a plan that . . . identifies what the actual current needs of the victims of crime population are and . . . identifies gaps in service" and that much of that victim population is, in fact, rural and given that the crime-ridden rural regions have reduced access to victims' services and depend on heroic volunteers, who are now excluded from this plan, why does this government think it's acceptable to exclude the many repeatedly traumatized rural victims?

2:30

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There was a lot in there, but I'd like to just say that I'm incredibly proud of the work we've been doing with the victims of crime organizations. As the member has correctly identified, the Auditor General made recommendations arising from the fact that our predecessors had failed to do any of that work to identify the needs of victims. We have now identified that. In addition, I think it's important to note that we are extremely concerned about rural crime. That's why we're funding a plan that's already working. Meanwhile the opposition voted against that plan.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

Municipal Sustainability Initiative Funding

Mr. Stier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last month at the AUMA convention a very critical issue was raised once again that resulted in a resolution being passed regarding long-term, sustainable, and predictable funding through the municipal sustainability initiative, also known as MSI. To the minister. Your government has had three and a half years to follow through with the 2015 election promise to address this issue and now eight months to consult on and roll out this new program mentioned in the 2018 budget. Minister, given all that time why have you not yet provided clear details to municipalities on this funding?

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you to the member for the question. I think our budget was pretty clear, that we extended it to 2022, the MSI funding, and we funded through the downturn to our municipalities so they could build the infrastructure that they needed to support the people in our communities, which we knew was important. We had crumbling infrastructure left for way too long: schools, hospitals, bridges, roads. To help our farmers, help our oil and gas industries out there, we made sure the funding was

there. We are continuing to work with municipalities to make sure that they have a long-term, sustainable funding deal, and we'll make sure that that gets done.

Mr. Stier: Mr. Speaker, obviously, that wasn't good enough for the AUMA.

Given that with the passing of the former Bill 20, the Municipal Government Amendment Act, 2015, there are requirements for municipalities, as he's well aware, to do three-year and five-year financial plans and given that, once again, this continued delay in releasing details of this new program is unsatisfactory to the AUMA and municipalities, who are required to do their budget processes in the fall, to the minister: how can they even attempt to start these mandatory plans without being informed of this government's new, precise intentions for MSI funding before their fall deadlines are missed once again?

Mr. S. Anderson: Well, thank you to the member for the question. I don't know what \$700 million tax cuts to the rich would do for our municipalities. Nothing very good. But, as I've said, we've made sure the funding is there through to 2022. We've been working with the AUMA, the RMA, and the two big cities on city charters to come to long-term, sustainable deals. We will continue to do that. In fact, I have another meeting coming up with the RMA and the AUMA pretty quick here. It's something that we don't do on Twitter or on Facebook. We work face to face with these representatives from these associations. I've got great relationships with them, and it is a word that I call "consultation," Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Second supplemental.

Mr. Stier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, the precise details are hard to get today.

Given that after a very thorough consultation with their members the AUMA passed a special, extraordinary resolution at their convention regarding this annual funding infrastructure requirement and given that in my area the mayors and Reeves of southern Alberta have sent numerous letters to the minister in the past demanding that MSI funding intended for the next two years be fully disclosed, Minister, will you commit today in this House to respond to the AUMA's request and commit to communicating this vital, clear information immediately to the municipalities before once again it's too late for fall budgets?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for letting me clarify again that it is in our budget. They know exactly what they have until 2022. We have lots of time to work with them. I do want to get it sooner because I promised them that I would sit down with them, which I'm doing next week. I would like to know what saying the words "it'll hurt" will mean, like the member from Lac La Biche. Will that hurt our municipalities? Will that hurt our infrastructure in our municipalities? I think it probably would. But on this side we consult with the associations. They represent 342 municipalities and eight Métis settlements across this province. I have the best interests of Albertans all across this province.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Cannabis Legalization and Smaller Municipalities

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Communities in my constituency are concerned about the impact of drug-impaired driving and of other spillover effects from the legalization of cannabis. Municipal governments are already stretched in many of the small communities in my constituency, but for some reason they've been left out of this government's plans to deal with legal cannabis. To the minister: why did you consult with some communities but not others?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm actually proud to say that our cannabis consultation took in the most Albertans of any consultation ever performed by the government of Alberta. We had two waves of online consultation. We had multiple round-tables. We had consultation with various different groups. That allowed us to create an Alberta-specific plan. We didn't have the choice over whether or not to legalize cannabis, but we did have the choice to put forward a plan that reflected the views and values of Albertans, and that's exactly what we did.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that smaller communities in my constituency have indicated to me that they could struggle to deal with the new issues that legal cannabis will bring and given that they will need to add these new obligations to their existing responsibilities and given that they will too often be faced with the choice between allocating resources to cannabis issues and maintaining their current priorities, how are smaller communities supposed to address this reality?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First, I'll maybe touch on the big picture and go down to the smaller one. You know, we're providing \$11.2 million over two years for municipalities to help with the enforcement costs in those municipalities. That's similar to the levels that Ontario and Quebec are providing their municipalities. That means that 52 municipalities across the province will be eligible for this funding, and for those that are smaller than 5,000 people, the province of Alberta is paying for those policing costs.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that many of the problems identified could have been addressed with appropriate consultation between the government and the smaller municipalities, communities in my constituency have asked if the minister will rescind the program and invite the AUMA back to the table for meaningful consultation to discuss the distribution of excise funding to all municipalities. Is this something the government is willing to do?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much for the question, Mr. Speaker. The federal government and the provinces and territories in Canada have agreed to a two-year program of funding and the splitting of excise taxes. This province stood up for Alberta and all the rest of the provinces and said: the 50-50 share in excise tax was not enough; we need more to address the safety concerns, to address keeping it out of the hands of youth. We have a two-year program.

We're going to follow through with that two-year program, and the AUMA and other groups know that.

Advocate for Persons with Disabilities

Ms McKittrick: M. le Président, yesterday the Minister of Community and Social Services announced Alberta's first-ever Advocate for Persons with Disabilities. The advocate position was established through Bill 205, and the community is supportive of this new role. Tony Flores, a para-athlete and long-time advocate for persons with disabilities, has been appointed and starts immediately. To the minister: This important appointment requires further elaboration. What are the key responsibilities of the new advocate's office?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. Once again I want to congratulate Mr. Tony Flores on his appointment. We believe that as with all issues facing Albertans with disabilities, we've worked with them, and we consulted with them on this particular office. More than 1,300 Albertans weighed in on the role and responsibilities and priorities for the advocate. What we heard from the community is that the advocate should be listening to the community, providing individual navigation and issue resolution, and promoting inclusion of Albertans with disabilities.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms McKittrick: Merci, M. le Président. Self-advocacy efforts of groups like Disability Action Hall, Voice of Albertans with Disabilities, and Self-Advocacy Federation have been very important to my work. To the same minister: how will the advocate ensure self-advocacy efforts are supported and not diminished with this new role?

2:40

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. The advocate has said that he believes in Nothing about Us without Us, and we agree and believe self-advocacy should be supported, promoted, and not replaced. The advocate will work closely in partnership with Albertans with disabilities and advocacy groups to listen, build bridges, and strengthen self-advocacy across Alberta.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know Albertans are very keen to start connecting with the advocate's office. To the same minister: when will the advocate's office officially be opened, and how will Albertans be able to access the support?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. I'm pleased to share that the advocate's office will be open to the public this November, and any Albertan with a disability, a family member, or an advocate will be able to connect with this office. We are excited to get to work with the advocate to build on our government's work to make life better for Albertans with disabilities.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we'll continue with Members' Statements in 30 seconds.

Members' Statements (continued)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

Premier Peter Lougheed's Vision for Alberta

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, it bothers me that members of every party in this House feel free to praise Peter Lougheed as if he was one of their own. They act as if the Lougheed vision evolved from their political heritage. The NDP even had the gall to do this at their socialist convention on the weekend. I have taken the time to speak to key advisers of the Lougheed era as well as other people who were close to this great Albertan. What is very clear to me is that Premier Lougheed was never one to get caught up in a brand. In fact, you may be surprised that what he most valued was good governance, and performing good governance means listening to the people of Alberta.

Because of the general misunderstanding, I'm confident that the vision of this government and other opposition members is likely inaccurate. Peter Lougheed and Ralph Klein were two of the greatest Premiers our province has seen. They both insisted that members of their cabinet and caucus get out from under the dome and listen to the people that they represent and that we represent.

Furthermore, Premier Lougheed had a crystal-clear economic strategy. First, build an entrepreneurial and self-reliant culture which allows for small, smart, stable government and provide the lowest possible tax environment, which attracts massive foreign investment and stimulates greater entrepreneurial growth. We are not even close to that vision today in Alberta, Mr. Speaker, and that is why we are hurting so much. I believe Premier Lougheed would be disheartened, to say the least, if he knew the state of Alberta and Albertans today. Therefore, if other parties want to claim allegiance to him, they need to rejuvenate his vision for Alberta, not commandeer it in name only.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

Longest Mural in Canada

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last summer over the August long weekend the communities of Calgary-Northern Hills painted the longest mural in Canada. How did that happen? Calgary artist Kim Walker noticed that a fence line along a major roadway in Coventry Hills was deteriorating. Instead of a problem, she saw an opportunity. She envisioned bringing her community together to repair the fence while also creating an 850-metre-long mural that would be naturally lit up by the evening sunset.

Kim got to work. She designed a mural project capable of leaving a legacy and providing meaningful work to strengthen artists' professional portfolios, educational mentorships for aspiring young artists, and opportunities to build community spirit through neighbourhood beautification.

In addition, Kim wanted the mural project to contribute to Calgary's conversation about public art by showcasing the value of art created through community participation. Residents were invited to participate at every step of the process, from concept to creation. Mr. Speaker, amazingly, the fence was scraped, cleaned, repaired, primed, and painted in four weeks.

The mural is now a reality thanks to artist Mark Vazquez-Mackay's expertise and beautiful mural design of the history of Calgary that was guided by public consultation.

Lindsay Lantela, Makenna Millot, Misty Ring, and 23 other volunteers lent their artistic talents; Yana Soldatenko and Laura Hack of the NHCA helped organize the mural project; 35 community partners, who believed in the project's vision, donated resources; and, finally, more than 700 Calgarians came out to help.

Together as a community we achieved something incredible, the longest mural in Canada, that's approximately 6.5 football fields in length. Through this project we have created a proud legacy, and the mural is a focal point of the Calgary-Northern Hills communities, showing us what we are capable of when we work together.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Loyola: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to table five copies of the report of the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship, which provides a summary of the presentations received by the committee at its public meeting on September 25, 2018. Copies of the report will be provided to the Minister of Energy and the Minister of Environment and Parks. Additional copies of the report are available through the committee office and online.

Thank you very much.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the appropriate time I intend to move the following motion pursuant to Standing Order 42:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government of Canada to immediately move to withdraw the proposed Bill C-69, which is a threat to Alberta jobs and pipeline construction.

I have the appropriate number of copies.

Introduction of Bills

Bill 22 An Act for Strong Families Building Stronger Communities

Ms Larivee: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to request leave to introduce Bill 22, An Act for Strong Families Building Stronger Communities.

This bill will create a fairer, stronger, and more transparent child intervention system for the more than 10,000 children and youth who are in care across Alberta. It will increase fairness for indigenous peoples and improve supports for children in and out of care. Introducing this legislation is a key component of our public action plan, A Stronger, Safer Tomorrow, and a decisive step forward for our province. I look forward to discussion and deliberation with my colleagues on this very important legislation.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 22 read a first time]

Tablings to the Clerk

The Acting Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of

the hon. Ms Phillips, Minister of Environment and Parks and minister responsible for the climate change office, pursuant to the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act the environmental protection security fund annual report, April 1, 2017, to March 31, 2018.

2:50

The Speaker: Hon. members, I believe we are at points of order. To confirm, there were two points of order, both withdrawn, by the opposition. I believe there was a point of order raised by the Government House Leader.

Justice minister, yes.

Point of Order

Questions outside Ministerial Responsibility

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise with respect to rules surrounding question period. I'm citing here page 509 from *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*. It references specifically that questions should not "refer to public statements by Ministers" not directly related to their department or "address a Minister's former portfolio or . . . presumed functions, such as party or regional political responsibilities."

My suggestion, Mr. Speaker, is that questions with respect to matters having to do with the party are out of order with respect to the government responsibilities of the minister.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, it is extremely rich of the government to now suggest that they don't want to talk about party policy ever in the Assembly given that all this government can do is talk about the opposition's party policies. I could pull out reams of *Hansard* during question period of cabinet ministers referring to UCP policies. Further to that, even today we watched the Deputy Premier and other ministers over and over and over allege policies that, in fact, don't even exist. This is ridiculous.

Let's be very clear. The NDP had a resolution that has to do with bringing back the Wheat Board and causing significant problems for the farmers who have fought against that in our province for a long time. The member is the agriculture critic for the opposition. He's asking questions about government policy and whether or not the minister, who is the minister in charge of agriculture, would support something along those lines. He has every right to ask that and he should ask that, especially considering that today we watched another minister of the Crown get up and insult farmers and say about the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake that his father was just a rich farmer. I know his father well. He's a dear friend. He's not a rich farmer. He's a schoolteacher – this is important – who they insulted and still have not apologized for . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, we'll deal with that . . .

Mr. Nixon: . . . and now they want . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, I'm speaking.

Mr. Nixon: Sorry, Mr. Speaker. I didn't hear you.

The Speaker: That's because you were speaking. Try and stay away from the other issue and deal with this point right now.

Mr. Nixon: Well, the issue is that this is a ridiculous point of order designed by a government who can't run on their own record and is running scared and trying to stop this member from doing his job.

The Speaker: Government House Leader, you have additional contributions to make?

Mr. Mason: I do, Mr. Speaker. The point is that the rules are quite clear with respect to putting up oral questions in question period to ministers. They don't apply to debate in the House as a whole. It's quite permissible to talk about party politics and all kinds of politics in this House. That's part of what we do here. The rule is specifically to prevent people in question period from trying to get a minister to answer questions outside his or her responsibilities.

Mr. Strankman: Mr. Speaker, if you'd permit me to reread my question.

The Speaker: Yes. Go ahead.

Mr. Strankman: "Minister, in all your travels I have never heard you publicly say that Canada's reputation and, by extension, Alberta's grain growers have somehow been diminished by any recent changes in that federal policy." It was as simple as that. I was asking the minister if he felt that by change of a policy, Canada's grain reputation had been diminished. I think it's a fair question, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: What the member just read was what I have in the Blues. Let me just first of all ask a question to the Justice minister.

The Government House Leader just referred to a rule. Was he intending to speak to the standing orders of this Legislature? Or was it a reference to *Beauchesne* or the House?

Ms Ganley: It was a reference to the same section I was referring to in 509. I had apparently not made clear, according to the opposition's argument, that it was rules not around debate in the House in its entirety but specifically around what questions could be put to ministers and, that is to say, specifically questions within that minister's portfolio and not outside of it.

The Speaker: Well, what I have is actually on page 510, not 509. There are a number of issues related to questions in the House. The particular one that I think we are talking about is this reference: "Make a charge by way of a preamble to a question." That may be the other one. I think there's another one in here.

I haven't done this for a while. This one is a question that I'd like to make myself a little more familiar with. Let me defer the matter until I can check. I thought I had my source here, but I did not, so if the House would grant me that opportunity.

Motions under Standing Order 42

The Speaker: I believe we have a motion by the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Federal Bill C-69

Mr. Nixon:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government of Canada to immediately move to withdraw the proposed Bill C-69, which is a threat to Alberta jobs and pipeline construction.

Mr. Nixon: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My motion is very, very simple. It appears to me that everybody should agree that Bill C-69 is bad, an extreme danger to the province of Alberta. Despite the fact that it has taken the government 229 days to act, it does not mean that they should not take action now. This motion would send a clear message from this House to the House of Commons and to the Prime Minister of Canada and the federal Liberals that this is not acceptable and that we expect them to take action. I call on all members to join me in sending that clear message to Ottawa.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

[Unanimous consent denied]

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

The Chair: I'd like to call the Committee of the Whole to order.

Bill 20

Securities Amendment Act, 2018

The Chair: Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak to Bill 20, Securities Amendment Act, 2018. It seems we get a securities amendment act every year. While we may get lulled into complacency about such pieces of legislation, the Securities Act is fundamental for the good and orderly working of our capitalist system. Capitalism has done more to lift more people out of poverty than any other economic system, including communism. I should know, just looking at my home country. With record growth people escaped poverty.

3:00

Alberta's capital market makes up 25 per cent of Canada's capital market, not bad for only having 12.5 per cent of the country's population. The Securities Act governs the issue of investment vehicles like stocks, bonds, mutual funds, real estate income trusts. This is how regular people like you and me pool our capital resources, assess the risk, make investments, and earn a return on that capital. We need to be able to enfranchise the many in the economic life of Alberta. Share ownership in our businesses is the power of the people according to the late Margaret Thatcher. According to the BBC Four documentary *Tory! Tory! Tory!* when Margaret Thatcher came to power in 1979, 7 per cent of the people in the U.K. owned shares. By 1990 it went up to 25 per cent. I would like to know what the numbers are for share ownership in Alberta.

When more people own shares, more people understand capitalism. With the salaries we make as MLAs, I'm sure there are members of the NDP backbench who can afford to try share ownership. Once you get the taste of those first dividend cheques, you will drop your ideas about socialism or running to the Ethics Commissioner because I own shares in the companies that I used to work for.

It greatly troubled me to see the pictures of not just socialist materials on sale at the NDP convention but also Marxist and Communist materials. These ideologies have caused the deaths of tens of millions around the world, wherever they were tried or implemented. Later this month we will mark one of those ideologically imposed genocides, the Holodomor, the terror of famine in the Ukraine. The effects of that continue to resonate today with the war in the Donbass, where the ceasefire is broken every day.

If some of the NDP members particularly owned shares in Alberta businesses, maybe they would stop being NDP members and embrace the joys of capitalism. Once you know you need to create wealth to distribute it, that gets some fiscal discipline here, Madam Chair. The free flow of capital is essential for the workings of Alberta's and Canada's economies.

That's why I travelled to India and Hong Kong in September. I went looking for capital to come to Alberta and invest and went looking for places for Alberta businesses to invest their capital in India and Hong Kong. Conservatives went out and negotiated the comprehensive economic and trade agreement, CETA, with the European Union. Europe is a market of 550 million people. The harmonization needed for the benchmarks will allow European banks to access capital from Canadian banks, maybe even Alberta banks like Canadian Western Bank or ATB Financial. Maybe instead of criticizing our oil sands, BNP Paribas would actually show up and set up a branch in Calgary or Edmonton.

There was an argument some time ago about making Edmonton a financial services cluster because we have ATB Financial, Canadian Western Bank, Servus Credit Union, and AIMCo. Yet the Alberta Securities Commission and investment banks like OTT Financial reside in Calgary. Edmonton seems to be missing something.

I would expect that next year we will have another securities amendment act in order to enact provisions of the comprehensive and progressive trans-Pacific partnership, TPP, to allow harmonization with other benchmarks. Can the minister name the two Canadian benchmarks that are affected by Bill 20?

In the fight against acts of market manipulation, insider trading, or trading investors' money in a cavalier way, there are provisions in Bill 20 for whistle-blower protection. Acts of insider trading and market manipulation cause investors to lose faith in the markets. No one wants a rigged game, where the house always wins, Madam Chair. No one wants to invest in Ponzi schemes, either. Can you imagine what would have happened if a whistle-blower had come forward to the Securities and Exchange Commission in the U.S.A. and helped shut down Bernie Madoff's elaborate Ponzi scheme?

Or how about over in London? When it comes to whistle-blowing, I think about the London Whale. The London Whale was the nickname for a trader who lost at least \$6.2 billion belonging to JPMorgan Chase in 2012. The Whale earned his nickname for placing gigantic trades in small indexes, where the trades would stick out and everyone would notice. Facing criminal charges for security fraud, he was never formally charged, but his boss was. JPMorgan Chase admitted to violating securities laws, and they agreed to pay fines of more than \$1 billion. The bank's CEO, Jamie Dimon, took a pay cut despite the bank still making \$21.3 billion that year, Madam Chair, and it turns out that risk limits were breached more than 300 times before the bank switched risk evaluation formulas. A calculation error in the spreadsheet was the culprit.

I wonder if the minister is familiar with any whale-type situations happening in Alberta. Now with this legislation in Bill 20 maybe a whistle-blower will come forward with any whales out there. Legitimate whistle-blowers need to be protected from persecution by their employers. We know employers will try and go after whistle-blowers. At the same time, whistle-blowing should never be used to fight personal grudges or as payback against a broker for earnings below expectations.

Madam Chair, Bill 20 is a very fair and reasonable piece of legislation. I hope the minister was listening and is able to answer my questions on the benchmarks and may be able to provide any information on regulations that will flow from this legislation. I also hope the minister will be able to answer how many Albertans are shareholders.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Any other questions, comments, amendments? Edmonton-South West.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Madam Chair. There was a lot going on in that there, but I think I did catch a little bit of a question there around some of the benchmarks that are used. I think that in Canada there are certainly two important benchmarks: the Canadian overnight repo rate average, or CORRA, and the Canadian dollar offered rate, or CDOR. I think that when we look at all these things, we do need to look at a global perspective and understand that some of these changes are making sure that we're harmonized across the country as well as with some of the changes coming internationally.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other questions, comments, amendments? Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today to speak to Bill 20, the Securities Amendment Act, 2018. It's quite clear to all of us here that sound regulation is a necessary piece of the puzzle of regulation in the securities industry, particularly when it comes to building investor confidence in the province of Alberta, which is important to all members of the House. It's also very clear to me that we need to be working together with all of our provincial and international counterparts to ensure that compliance with regulations is both simple and straightforward and comprehensive.

Madam Chair, quite frankly, investor confidence needs all the help it can get in Alberta these days as it tries to recover from this government's job-killing carbon tax and its investment-repelling regulatory overreach in countless other sectors. These have been a major impediment to our ability to attract investors in this province, so a structural framework that ensures confidence and trust in our system may go some measure in helping us to achieve and maybe to return to that level of confidence.

3:10

The current government has undermined the economic fundamentals of this province as well, and that's created huge problems for investors considering the province, both domestic investors here in Alberta and across Canada but also international investors who have chosen not to continue to look at this as a place to invest. It's created a perceived imbalance of risks versus rewards in this province, Madam Chair, a balance which is all too important to all of us here in this province.

You know, when we look across the world at regulation and opportunities and stability and trust, we have much to learn from vibrant securities markets around the world. From New York to Hong Kong, from London to Tokyo, from Frankfurt to Shanghai we have and must be leaders in having a strong and trusted regulatory environment. In some measure I'm pleased to see that the act promises to protect whistle-blowers when they come forward but also removes incentives for false claims and that it protects Alberta Securities Commission employees from being dragged into third-party disputes. It does create an opportunity for the system to function better, for the trust and the regulatory environment to allow for clarity, and for that system to actually function in a better format in terms of our ability, again, to attract that much-needed investment.

I'm concerned, however, that it might not do enough to protect Alberta's jurisdiction over securities regulations, and I wonder whether we're harmonizing regulations with Ontario or simply accepting the province's regulatory decisions. I hope that we will maintain some independence on that side.

Madam Chair, the free flow of capital is essential for the workings of Alberta's and Canada's economies, whether that's, again, domestic investment, whether that's reinvestment within our province, or attraction of much-needed foreign capital.

I've spoken in this House and we speak across this province about the loss of at least now, to date, \$34.8 billion in foreign direct investment. That was actually in the spring of 2017, that number, and I know that we've lost some major investments since then, which concerns me. It concerns me that we are not in a position right now where we are attracting back that investment.

You know, in spite of the scholarly opinion of some of the closest economic allies of this government, I do not believe that the flight of foreign capital is ever good for Alberta or Canada. When we don't attract foreign investment, that very much becomes the canary in the coal mine for local investors. Do they keep their money here, or do they look elsewhere? In many cases we found not just foreign direct investment leaving this province, Madam Chair, but we've seen Alberta companies take their capital elsewhere, to projects outside of the jurisdiction of Alberta. We need to make certain that our regulatory system allows them the opportunity to do that here with certainty.

We've also seen significant divestiture by Canadian and international pension funds. These numbers are a little bit harder to track, Madam Chair, but I've heard anecdotally that this number could be in the hundreds of billions of dollars across the Canadian economy. Many of those impacted in the real estate and the energy sectors here are in Alberta. That also concerns me, that we are not in a position where we are attracting that investment by managing that balance between risk and reward.

My colleague from Calgary-Foothills mentioned that we welcome European capital investment and that our businesses are looking forward to investing in Europe, that exchange of trade and investment that is brought to us by Conservative initiatives – federal Conservative initiatives – to negotiate the comprehensive economic and trade agreement, or CETA, with the European Union. That is important to Canada and to Alberta. As we know, Europe is a market of 550 million people, well over 10 times the population of this country, and these are markets and access to capital which are vitally important to us.

But, Madam Chair, Asia is an even larger opportunity and in many cases represents our future. We can only hope for progress in the future on the TPP and the further facilitation of enhanced trade and investment opportunities with the growing Asian economies and the growing Asian markets for our products. Again, as importantly, the growth of the middle class in those countries which provide capital investment for us here in Alberta: we have the resources, we have the wealth here, the wealth in resources, to attract that in not just the oil and gas sector but in agriculture and forestry and tourism.

I hear that from my contacts in Asia all the time, that they are interested in investing here but they're uncertain about the investment environment here, Madam Chair, the investment environment that has been upset by this current government. So I am happy to see the regulatory environment improve, but I worry about the future and our ability to attract that investment here, where the regulatory environment will matter. You know what? It's good that we have more controls over acts of market manipulation, insider trading, or treating investors' money in a cavalier way, which may cause investors to lose faith in the market.

But, Madam Chair, let's go back to this bill and talk about some of the positive aspects of this, which, again, if we are able to attract back that investment, I think will be vitally important in ensuring investor confidence going forward. There's whistle-blower protection, which helps to restore faith and confidence that markets will function as they should and ensures that buyers and sellers are getting the right prices and the right protection. Legitimate whistle-blowers need to be protected from persecution by their employer, and that's embedded in this as well, and I'm happy to see that.

That's why we have a Public Interest Commissioner for public-sector workers, but workers for the Alberta Securities Commission also need that same protection when third-party cases outside the Securities Act emerge.

Madam Chair, every so often it is essential to update business practices, of course. As we know, new technologies emerge. We need to replace aging information systems that are no longer compatible with international standards, and I'm glad to see that that's being addressed as well.

We need to ensure that the regulatory processes facilitate, without undermining, the free flow of capital in a province known historically for its entrepreneurial spirit, that entrepreneurial spirit which has created opportunities, which has attracted investment, which has created an environment where risk does not outweigh rewards, that sadly we're seeing too much of in the province of Alberta. Risk is a perception, but risk is a reality which must be faced by investors across the world, who are not choosing Alberta now, and we need to make sure that that is an opportunity. Madam Chair, this act in some measure achieves some of the objectives we would like to see addressed to ensure that we are a world-class investment, regulatory, and securities environment, but we have a long way to go to not just improve the regulatory environment but bring a sense of opportunity and free enterprise and respect for investors back to this great province.

Attracting investors is not a perfect science. It's actually an emotional decision in many cases. It's a financial decision in many cases. It's a perception decision in many cases. Again, back to the risk versus rewards, that balance, Madam Chair, I believe, has been upset by many of the actions of this current government. As I often say, not one job gets created until somebody puts a dollar at risk. We need to respect that risk without coveting the rewards that the risk takers have reaped. When they make those rewards, let's make sure that those are shared appropriately with those investors who've taken the risk but also with Albertans.

That, Madam Chair, is how to build a strong, resilient, and robust economy, one that attracts investors, that protects them in a regulatory environment that I am happy to see we are moving forward with here, where we don't just try and tax our way back to prosperity, as is often the case when government policy is not driven by the attraction of investment and the creation of jobs but is driven by a certain world view, a myopic world view that is driven by partisanship and ideology.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any further questions, comments, or amendments?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

[The clauses of Bill 20 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: That's carried.

3:20

Bill 19

An Act to Improve the Affordability and Accessibility of Post-secondary Education

The Chair: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you. It's my pleasure to stand up and speak to Bill 19. It was great actually to read this legislation, and it was great to hear about the consultation that took place over a number of

years. Tying tuition to the consumer price index to ensure that tuition costs remain affordable and don't spike for domestic students and apprentices is welcome news. I know that myself along with most of my colleagues have probably had opportunities to meet with representatives from the various postsecondary institutions in Alberta. I think their messaging and their advocacy was clear and strong about what they wanted, and it was fantastic to see some of those changes reflected in the legislation.

I'm the mom of two adults that technically are both in university still. One has been in university probably for, like, 15 years now, which is, you know, a little stressful. [interjection] Yeah. I know. He's a fellow at the University of Alberta and technically still a student, I think, a postdoc student or maybe a post-postdoc student. I'm not entirely sure. No offence, honey. But he loves what he does, like many students. They do what they do and they work hard to get to where they want to be because they love what they do and they love what they study. My son studies really old dead stuff. He's a paleontologist, and he studies teeth, actually. But for him, it was a matter of going to school and spending the money and doing the work to be somebody and to be what he wanted to be and to wake up happy every day.

What I do know about students across the country, across Alberta is that most students don't have the ability to look to their family for support. At the time that my son was ready to go to university, I had certainly invested in a registered education savings plan since he was an infant. I saved and saved so that he could go, so he had that to use for his first degree. Little did I know that 15 years later he'd still be a student.

But I also know that he had to work. He had to work during the school year, and he had to work very hard during the summer to save up the money he needed to sustain himself through the year. For the most part he could live at home and commute to school, but there came a point where he had to move away, like most students. He had to go to Toronto to finish his PhD, and that was a struggle. As you can imagine, tuition is high, housing costs are high, everything is high in Toronto. So he needed to work, but he also needed to study. You can imagine that the work in his field is not lucrative work at the point where he's still a student, so he had to work very hard.

I think that if at the time when he was struggling and working, our minimum wage would have even come close to reflecting the need of these people working at those jobs – it would have been a game changer for him to have been able to earn \$15 an hour. He was one of those people that had a minimum wage job, but he was trying to educate himself and to better himself and to create a life for himself. So I think it's really important to remember this group of people when we talk about minimum wage and why it's essential to pay a fair wage.

You know, the other really great thing about universities and postsecondaries – not just universities; colleges, technical schools – is that they produce people that change our lives. They create thinkers that change our lives. They create technology and innovation that drive our province, our country, our world, essentially. They're the ones that create the foundation for our future. They're the ones that create Nobel prize winners. They're the ones that create the science that tells us what we need to do and the direction that we need to go. This is our future.

I'm incredibly thankful that this legislation is looking at what's important and is respecting those young people. In some cases they're older people that are going back to school, but we're respecting them enough to give them important roles on things like boards of governors, where they are making important decisions, they're looking at increased costs for some of the other things associated with education.

I was doing a quick little Google search just to get an idea if I could get some more recent information about what things are like for students now. I mean, it's a little different for my kids. Sadly, the youngest child of mine has decided she's going to take that meandering path through postsecondary life that her brother did, and I think she's in year 6. Hey, I'm really impressed with the tuition freeze. No. I'm actually very happy on many levels.

There's a national charitable organization called Meal Exchange, and what they did I think it was in 2016: they said that they surveyed about 4,500 students across five Canadian campuses for over 16 months. They issued a report called *Hungry for Knowledge*, and what that report said was that 39 per cent of students are going without nutritious food while they are postsecondary students. Now, I imagine it's a little different for students that are at home, but a lot of students are not. Add to that a family that is just unable to help, unable to send groceries, unable to send \$100 here and there to help out when things are tight, and you've got a really difficult situation. In many cases you've got young people, students making decisions between: do I take that extra shift so that I can eat, or do I study for my exam or finish this paper? You're pushing people into really stressful situations.

Added to the food insecurity are all of the other things that we associate with poverty. Maybe we don't think enough about our postsecondary students when we talk about poverty, but it is a reality. I think about the struggles around mental health. When we think about our postsecondary students and the real struggles around mental health – sadly, every once in a while we're given that wake-up call when we hear about another university or college student who has died by suicide. These are in many instances entirely preventable. We know that poverty impacts our health, our mental health, everything.

You know, I think about how happy and desk-thumpy we are when we talk about the value of school lunches in our elementary schools or junior highs, because we recognize the value of nutritious food and food security for students. They can't learn if they're hungry, and they can't learn if they're worried about where the next meal is going to come from. I think about postsecondary students. Add all of the other stresses that go along with being a postsecondary student, and you can understand why mental health is impacted.

I believe that any kind of legislation that we can introduce that really respects the fact that our postsecondary students are in positions that are really difficult and they are faced with really tough choices – so let's put them at those tables, at those decision-making tables. Let's put them in a place where they can listen to the arguments that are being made on both sides and add their voices and add their opinion, because they are essential. They're the ones that are impacted.

Again I wanted to thank the minister for his consultation. I was listening intently-ish this morning to the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. I think he was speaking to the motion, and he was talking about the speed of this legislation and why we need to stop, we need to slow down, and we need to send this to committee, because it's going too fast. Well, I think if you think about one postsecondary student that is struggling and if you think about those students in the future, this isn't too fast. This has been a long time coming, and I think the minister spent a very long time listening and talking to people and getting this information so that we get it right.

3:30

I'd also like to add that his leader seems to be pretty proud of the fact that if things change and he is the Premier of the province, which he appears to feel entitled to, he is going to go quickly. There is no need to consult because the election essentially is a

consultation, and he is going to speed it up and go through. So I find it a little bit strange that the member would stand up specifically on Bill 19 and say that it's gone too quickly.

I don't think it's gone too quickly at all. I think it's been a long time coming. The fact is that this minister has recognized the need to have student voices at decision-making tables, the need to have realistic caps, the need to look at other fees that are assigned to students, that are really tough burdens to bear sometimes.

So I appreciate the work. I'm happy to support it, and I look forward to hearing more of the debate.

The Chair: Any other questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek.

Ms Woollard: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm really pleased to have the opportunity to speak in support of Bill 19, *An Act to Improve the Affordability and Accessibility of Post-secondary Education*. Education is dear to my heart, and elementary, secondary, and postsecondary all rank right up there. I was thinking a lot about it in terms of affordability. As the member previous mentioned, that is really important. It's getting to the point where so many students are impacted by the cost that it is impeding their ability to get a postsecondary education.

I noticed when I was teaching junior high school a number of students who were very capable and quite talented and quite bright students, but they were daunted by the thought of the debt that they would have to incur. The families didn't have a lot of wealth, a lot of extra money, and the thought of having to live in Edmonton or Calgary and the expenses involved caused a number of them to just say, "Well, I'd better not," or "I'd better wait until I can save up the money." For some, that works. For some, they get out, get working, and they don't go back to a formal education, which I think is a loss for our society. We lose people who could really be contributing – I'm not saying that they weren't contributing – in a bigger way if it were more accessible. So, in addition to the affordability, I think accessibility is a major factor. Limiting tuition and the other costs will be a factor, will have an influence.

The other thing is that I was thinking about myself growing up in a pretty blue-collar community, where nobody had much extra money and postsecondary education was not the usual trend. But because postsecondary education back in my day was very affordable, people who were able, who had the marks and the inclination to go and the interest were able to access education, and the world really opened up. A lot of opportunities arose that would not have been possible if the costs were as high as they are now. It's hard to imagine in a world where the simple idea of getting a student loan was overwhelming. Every relative I had was practically apoplectic at the thought of it, but being able to go to university and not have to have the family mortgage whatever was really wonderful, and it really opened up.

I was thinking about the fact that it really added to our society. We talk about level playing fields. Well, this is a big factor in creating a society that has equal opportunity and ability for people to move into all sorts of professions without having to have a rich family or a very, you know, affluent family behind them. A person whose parent, whose primary breadwinner in the family works for a railroad can be right beside someone whose primary breadwinner in the family is, say, a city councillor, for instance, and do equally well and go on to the same academic achievements and accomplishments. A more equitable society, giving people more opportunity, just being able to tell someone who is in junior high or high school that it is manageable, they can do it, and what their dreams are can be achieved in many cases. I'm not going to tell everybody that they can do everything all the time because that's

not realistic, but people can accomplish what they want to with some help.

That's what I see in this. This is a help for our students. It's a help for our future. We all need supports. We want good roads and we want good doctors and we want all sorts of good service providers when we are unable to provide them for our own selves. We want people who are qualified and able and want to be doing it. I really like the idea of having city planners who are well-trained people, who have innovative ideas. That's the main thing I was thinking about as I was considering this bill.

The other one was the international students. I think I've mentioned before that I spoke with various international students and saw a documentary film that a group of them had made, which was really moving. It wasn't in English, but it didn't need to be. The students made it really for their own community in my riding, for people to understand what the challenges faced by international students were, with the primary concern being that the costs weren't predictable and they weren't stable. They would enrol in a program, and they would have the finances worked out, but the cost changed. They were left very powerless to deal with the instability and the unpredictability of that. So they would take part-time jobs. Sometimes that worked out. But they would have to be adapting and switching their goals as they went along.

A lot of times it made a difference, as we were talking about before, in how much food they were able to purchase, if they were able to keep themselves nourished. And with their jobs, if the job had to take up more of their time than they could actually afford, it could cut into their performance in their postsecondary institution. That sometimes would make it difficult for them to continue pursuing the program that they began in. So postsecondary students really need that predictability and stability in their funding.

Madam Chair, I just really support this bill very strongly and hope that we all do in this House. Thank you.

The Chair: Further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Dr. Starke: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to rise to speak to Bill 19. You know, I have a number of different thoughts, and I'll try as best I can to organize them. I will, I guess, start by saying that I'm in favour of the bill, that I will be voting to support it.

I do have some concerns, and in order to sort of get a better perspective on the bill, I sought some input from a number of different quarters. I spoke with representatives of Alberta students. A number of them I got to know quite well during the course of a recent political campaign I was involved in, and I was proud to have them as part of my campaign team. They certainly are enthusiastically in favour of Bill 19. They've indicated that many of the things in Bill 19 were things that they've been advocating for for some time, especially with regard to the certainties surrounding tuition fees and linking maximum tuition fee increases to the consumer price index. So that part is good.

I also spoke with officials at some of the universities that I know. Specifically, I spoke to people at Lakeland College, which is located, of course, in Vermilion-Lloydminster, with a campus in each of those two centres. There are also concerns expressed there, but the concerns, I would say, are sort of phrased in this way. The officials at those institutions, not just Lakeland College but others, are saying that they appreciate the need for some degree of certainty and stability in terms of costs for students and that Bill 19 provides this.

3:40

But concomitant with that is the requirement for the postsecondary institutions to have some degree of certainty with regard to their

funding, which clearly is not solely provided by tuition fees, only a percentage, and it's a varying percentage, depending on the institution and depending on the time frame we're looking at. But only a small percentage of the actual instructional costs of a university are covered by tuition fees. Because of that, there is a reliance on behalf of universities to find other sources of revenue. Certainly, the government grant each year is a significant source of that revenue, but there are other sources of revenue that universities have worked very hard to enhance.

I'll use the example of alumni support or extension. You know, one of the things that is a difference between what we have in our culture in Canada and the United States – while for the most part I would take Canadian culture over American culture any day of the week, if there's one area where I wish we could be more like the Americans, that is in alumni support of our postsecondary institutions. They do a much better job of this than we do. And it's hard to really explain. I've talked to extension officers at a number of different universities and colleges and asked: "You know, what is it that makes us different? Why is it that somebody who attends a postsecondary institution in the United States is almost branded and knows the fight song of their college alma mater until the day they die?"

I was attending a hockey game in Anaheim a number of years ago and got involved with a fight song singing contest between supporters of USC and UCLA in the duck pond in Anaheim, where they had to explain to people what icing and offside were. But when it came to the break between periods and the USC Trojan Marching Band came out and performed, the UCLA fans would start singing the UCLA fight song. Then the USC fans would go back and forth, this sort of antiphonal effect that went on within the arena. It was remarkable.

That is something that Canadian universities and colleges struggle with, although I would point out that in recent years we have seen significant, very generous gifts being given to institutions right across Canada. Certainly, right here in Alberta there have been some very significant gifts to fund specific programs, chairs in different fields of study, and I think that's positive.

But I do express a concern with regard to the overall quality and sustainability of our postsecondary institutions. Clearly, this piece of legislation is going to put I'll call it a harness or at least a brake on tuition fee increases. It's clearly going to be a lever that is not available to postsecondary institutions in terms of increasing the revenue, and because, of course, that money comes out of students' pockets, I can understand the need for that. But it is then, I think, more important that we put emphasis on the other sources of revenue and having some stability there, and that's challenging. If you're going to guarantee an international student, for example, the exact amount of their tuition for the next four years but the postsecondary institution does not know what it's going to receive as a government grant for even the following year, it creates some potential problems.

Now, I know there are going to be some in the room that are going to point out that I was part of a government that in the 2013 budget cut the Alberta Advanced Education budget by 7 per cent. I will tell you that that was a decision that, you know, at the time seemed to be appropriate. But in talking to various postsecondary institutions since that decision was made and seeing the difficulties that it created within Lakeland College, I know that that sort of cut – when they're anticipating a 2 per cent increase and, in fact, get a 7 per cent cut, that's like a 9 per cent chasm in their funding – is very, very difficult. That required some very, very difficult decisions to be made at Lakeland College with regard to cutting programs that were very good programs, were well subscribed but,

unfortunately, were also very costly to deliver, and there was no way to increase the tuition to try to do a cost recovery on those.

You know, stable funding is something that I think is important, but I wanted to broaden the conversation about postsecondary education a little bit because I think it is important that we put it in the context of what purpose it serves in Alberta society and what our needs are. Alberta has the youngest population in Canada. We've said that the average age of Albertans – I believe the number is 36. Alberta also has the lowest participation rate in postsecondary education in the country. That seems paradoxical, but that's, in fact, the statistic. Alberta has the lowest postsecondary education participation rate.

Now, some have suggested that that's because people can go straight out of high school or even not complete high school and go straight into working in the oil patch and earning very large salaries. While that is a factor, to be sure, it is not the sole reason. The impact of having a low postsecondary participation rate, though, is something that we have to take a look at. It means that in order for us to have the various highly educated tradespeople, highly educated university graduates to be our doctors, our nurses, our veterinarians, our pharmacists, our teachers, and a number of other fields, Alberta has to bring them in from other jurisdictions, from other provinces or from other countries.

Part of the challenge with doing that is that you have to attract them to come here. We know that the oil and gas sector at times, when things are going well, pays quite large salaries, and it inflates the salaries of everyone. Now, most of the time that's a good thing – I'm not saying that that's necessarily a bad thing – but it does require that we take a look at: what is our postsecondary education capacity? Is it sufficient, and what should we be looking at in the long term, in the eight- to 10-year time frame – and that's not really that long term – in terms of: do we need to increase capacity? My answer to that is that, yes, we do, and the number that has been arrived at by Alberta's 26 postsecondary institutions is approximately 90,000 additional spaces to what we have today.

Forty-seven thousand of those is roughly just to get Alberta to the Canadian average for a postsecondary participation rate. Just to get us to the average, not even to the highest. An additional 40,000 is roughly because we have a young and very rapidly growing population, and if we just keep up with population growth, we will need 40,000 additional spaces. If you add that up, it comes to just under 90,000 additional spaces. The planning for that has to go ahead.

The second question that needs to be asked is a broader discussion on affordability and accessibility and asking ourselves the question: what impact do affordability and tuition fees have on access to postsecondary education, and what can we do to lessen that impact? It even begs the question: should postsecondary education be free? I know that's been advocated by some student organizations, including the national union of students. They've suggested that it should be free, and in some countries it is indeed free. I do have some issues with that, and to make that change, especially if it was made abruptly, I think would create some significant issues.

But I will say that Canada, unfortunately, ranks 14th out of 16 OECD countries in providing scholarships to postsecondary students. Fourteenth out of 16. If we're talking about making postsecondary education more accessible and trying to get a higher participation rate, certainly something that we could do is at least look at what we're offering in terms of scholarships, awards, bursaries, grants, and loans. You know, as far as that goes, that's something where we have to look at ourselves: what could we do to improve that?

I'm actually pleased that I contribute annually to two different scholarships at institutions, mostly at Lakeland College, but we've also given to students attending other institutions, one named in memory of my former partner, Dr. Malcolm Gray, for students entering animal health science or veterinary medicine, and a second named in honour of my former classmate Dr. Kenneth Smith, who was an instructor for many years in the animal health technology program at Lakeland College. Kenny passed away a couple of years ago, and a bunch of us that are classmates of Kenny contribute to a scholarship that was established in his memory.

That's a good thing, and I think we should all look for opportunities for doing that and fund students in whatever field of endeavour is important to you. For me it's veterinary medicine. For someone else, it might be social work. It might be education. It might be a variety of different fields. But I think that that is something that we can do, and I think that that 14th out of 16 level is nothing that Canada should be proud of.

Finally, on the support of research and innovation, while Alberta has some of the greatest innovators and researchers anywhere in the world and we do incredible work like the development, for example, of the Edmonton protocol for islet cell transplants for type 1 diabetes patients, which is world leading, absolutely world leading, we unfortunately from the Conference Board of Canada last year got a D grade in their report on research and innovation in Canada. We need to do better. We need to find out what it is that we can do to better support our researchers.

3:50

Just last month I visited researchers at the University of Alberta who are working on providing a marker for prostate cancer. That means that for someone who has a high PSA antigen on the test, whose next diagnostic test was a highly invasive biopsy, which, if it didn't actually have the luck of hitting the tumour cells, would come up as a false negative, they're actually developing a test that would just involve a blood test that has a much higher sensitivity and a higher specificity rate for determining whether or not that patient has prostate cancer and whether they have to proceed with additional, more invasive forms of treatment.

That's happening at the University of Alberta. That's technology that is being developed here that isn't being worked on anywhere else in the world. Certainly, the initial findings are very promising. If it works, it is something that the university plans to make commercially available. The cost of doing that test is roughly one-quarter the cost of doing biopsies. You know, just think of the level of invasiveness. We're talking about a blood sample, a single venipuncture in your arm compared to the current means of taking biopsies on men with prostate cancer, which I won't go into the details of here.

Dr. Swann: Thank you.

Dr. Starke: You're welcome.

Madam Chair, I will tell you that I'm proud to be a former student of one of our postsecondary institutions. I attended the University of Alberta for two years in the faculty of agriculture and forestry. I was an aggie. I hated the engineers; they hated us. It was all good. After that, I completed my veterinary studies and went to the University of Saskatchewan. But I will tell you that I'm proud of the experience I had. I'm proud of what we have in our province in terms of postsecondary institutions, our 26 institutions, but I think it's something that we have to look at always trying to make better.

I support Bill 19 because I think Bill 19 does make things better, but I don't think we can stop with Bill 19. I think there are other issues we have to address. I think we have to continue to work with

the leadership of Campus Alberta, those 26 institutions across our province, and strive to make Alberta a world leader in postsecondary education, which is, I think, one of the key things in growing and developing and diversifying our economy.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Mrs. Schreiner: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 19, An Act to Improve the Affordability and Accessibility of Post-secondary Education. Fellow members, the future of our province is contingent on building our human capital to meet the competitive needs of our labour market. The ability to achieve this supports the changes that this bill is proposing.

Madam Chair, I reside in Alberta's third-largest city, and on March 1 I had the great pleasure of the announcement that our Red Deer College had been granted the opportunity to begin the journey to becoming a degree-granting institution. This announcement meant a number of wins for Red Deer as well as for all of Alberta. It was paramount to central Albertans as it kept family units together and reduced educational costs, but it also supports retaining our talent in our region as the catalyst to meeting our labour needs. Additionally, it draws students to the Red Deer area, and this migration promotes further chances to build upon our human capital. For this we are immensely grateful.

Education is an endeavour that promotes growth and prosperity within our communities and as a province as well as a nation. This government's foresight to recognize and answer this call serves a number of agendas that empower not only our future needs but, additionally, the current and future changing dynamics of our market.

Our ability to compete globally can be markedly harnessed by the educational opportunities we promote within our communities. My community of Red Deer has championed this 25-year ask, and we are thrilled to be part of the momentum this government is initiating. Fellow members, our province is unique in the opportunities that are offered. We are rich in resource, and if we continue to invest in our information, skills, and abilities, we can strengthen our stance by way of knowledge. Madam Chair, we know that knowledge is power.

Bill 19 supports the strongest Alberta we have ever had. It opens up opportunities with all of our communities. Gauging tuition increases to an Albertan consumer price index is sound fiduciary policy. It is directly correlated to what is affordable, and it aligns with Albertan families' desire to see themselves in a better economic position. Mandating students as voices on boards enables a unique perspective to the changes that meet their needs and rejuvenate the future of education. Governance speaks to accountability, and we are accountable to Alberta students and families, whose dreams fulfill the legacy of our great province.

Madam Chair, I am thrilled to speak to these changes and what they translate to my community of Red Deer as well as to the breadth of our province's future educational needs. We are clearly moving to a resolve that empowers present and future generations of educational mastery, and it is a pleasure to stand and rise to speak to Bill 19.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other questions, comments, amendments? Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I want to say that I guess I appreciate this bill, Bill 19, because our postsecondary education in Alberta is so important. Though I didn't take the opportunity myself to pursue a postsecondary education, I do

appreciate those that have, and I benefit from those that have every day. I think that as we go through our lives, we often rely on people that have taken that opportunity for a postsecondary education, and of course we all benefit from it. I know that my son in particular – he's a high school teacher in Valleyview – has benefited from his postsecondary education, and so do the students that he teaches. I think it's great that the government is concerned about these issues as far as making sure that postsecondary education is affordable and accessible for the people of Alberta.

There's some little discussion about the speed at which this bill came forward and everything. I think the concern I have is that it hasn't given me an opportunity to consult with students, with universities, colleges, and that sort of thing myself. I've reached out, but I haven't had a chance to have any kind of meetings or discussions with them on this. I do think it's only fair that we have an opportunity to hear what these organizations, these universities and colleges, have to say about this bill. You know, our thought on this is to have this bill pass as soon as possible, too, but taking just a little bit of time and having those discussions with the people that are most affected by this I think is reasonable to ask. Of course, we can do that and still have this bill pass this session.

When I look at the affordability and everything, I wonder about the added costs that this government has burdened postsecondary institutions with. One we look at is the carbon tax, of course, and what effect it's had on postsecondary education and these schools that provide that. So I just wondered if the minister could maybe answer a question as far as: what are the costs that have been incurred by, say, the University of Alberta, the University of Calgary, maybe Grande Prairie College because of the carbon tax?

4:00

The Chair: Any further questions, comments, or amendments?

Mr. Loewen: Okay. I guess no answer to that question.

You know, I think something that we need to keep in mind here is that this government has kind of gone ahead and they're talking about this Bill 19 to improve accessibility and affordability and trying to give certainty to these postsecondary institutions on their costs and their income and that sort of thing, but they did add a carbon tax, that did burden these schools with additional costs. Of course, by doing that, they also burdened students with the cost of the carbon tax.

When we look at the carbon tax and how it's affected students – now, of course, some of the people in my constituency, for instance, live close enough to school that they could just take public transportation or maybe even walk to Grande Prairie College, but many in my constituency would not have that opportunity. They would have to move to the area or drive great distances. Of course, when you're moving to an area to get your education, the cost of living is a huge expense for students. The cost of living has been increased by the carbon tax. The cost for students to travel to these postsecondary institutions has increased. Those are some concerns that we've had as this government has gone forward and passed some of their legislation.

Obviously, we have problems with employment. Youth employment is high right now. We understand how hard students work to get a postsecondary education, and they sometimes work one or two jobs in order to make ends meet. Of course, when the job situation is as poor as it is right now, this makes it harder on these students to procure the education that they desire. It makes it more difficult for these students to cover their tuition and to be able to finance themselves as they go to school.

I think another thing that we are concerned about, too, is that the government needs to ensure that they are creating jobs so that when

students get out of university or college, there's actually something for them to do. Of course, we have some serious issues with jobs in this province. Unemployment is high right now, so we need to make sure that these students have something to do when they graduate, because that's what they want to do. That's what they're here to do. They're there to gain an education so that they can make a living and provide for their families down the road.

They talk about sustainable postsecondary education as far as making sure that in the future these colleges and universities can continue to provide that quality of education. We need to make sure not just that we deal with the tuition and everything but that we deal with the expenses that these colleges and universities have.

Again, I appreciate the bill. I appreciate the idea behind the bill and why it's, you know, so important to make sure that these things are set, that tuition fees are something that students can expect and rely on, but we also have to make sure that the colleges and universities are provided with the opportunity and certainty going forward. Now, in my discussions in the past with Grande Prairie College I know that one of the biggest concerns they have, of course, is certainty, knowing how much money they're going to be getting and what they're going to be required to pay with that money.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

These organizations can deal a lot with the different things that government can throw at them, but they need to have certainty. This government, of course, brought in the carbon tax, and that added extra costs to the universities and colleges. Now they've come up with this cap and this tuition structure. These things have changed the certainty and have changed what these colleges were expecting. I appreciate that the minister suggested that there's been a lot of consultation with these organizations. I haven't had a chance to check that out myself because I haven't had a chance to have a meeting or discussion with, for instance, Grande Prairie College, which is in my constituency. They want to have certainty going forward, and of course as we keep changing things and changing things, then that certainty is gone, that kind of ability to plan in the future. Though I think something like this could help down the road, it obviously creates a little bit of a situation up front, when it first comes in.

Again, I think we're onto something good here as far as the government wanting to add some certainty for students. I think students deserve to have some certainty, too, as far as their costs and, going forward, what they can expect to pay. I guess I just wish the government hadn't done some of the other things that have increased costs for students and made things less affordable for students and, in fact, all Albertans.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Prior to continuing with the debate, I'd like to recognize the Minister of Advanced Education.

Withdrawal of Comments

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Madam Chair. It is, of course, Halloween, and while most kids are going to be eating a copious amount of candy this evening, it appears that my fortune is to eat a copious amount of crow.

I wanted to make some clarifications on some statements that I made earlier today in response to some remarks by the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake. Now, I understand that some members of this Assembly are interpreting my comments as an attack on farmers. Nothing could be further from the truth. I have nothing but

respect for farmers, be they rich or poor. My family, of course, farmed in Saskatchewan, were very bad at it, and ended up having to move off the farm because of that.

The point that I was trying to make was that our government is concerned about making sure that every Alberta student has the opportunity to achieve the postsecondary education of their dreams regardless of their financial circumstances. I was trying to underline the fact that I think it's incumbent upon all of us here in this House to recognize that some of us don't have as much privilege as others in this society and that some of us need more help than others to get into postsecondary education. In fact, I was trying to clarify that my own personal circumstances mean that policies like the minimum wage and those sorts of things are personally helpful to me and others like me in those financial situations.

I also wanted to clarify, Madam Chair, that I respect the ruling that you made. In fact, as a result, I withdraw my comments, as you've asked me to do.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Debate Continued

The Deputy Chair: We are now on the debate. Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Mrs. Littlewood: Good afternoon, Madam Chair. Thank you very much for recognizing me so that I can speak on behalf of the families, students, and new Canadians of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville. As part of my role as a rural MLA representing a number of municipalities, I have the opportunity to represent seven high school graduations every year, and with them go a slate of high school awards.

Unfortunately, on my way home from Tofield I actually had the unfortunate opportunity of colliding with a deer. While I hope that no one ever has to deal with that, that unfortunately is a reality of driving in rural Alberta. The best thing that happened was that I had a really nice, hard-working family pull over to the side of the road to see if I needed help. They live just a couple of miles over on their own farm. They had just seen me at the high school, where one of their children was accepting an award, and the father actually helped drag the deer off the road for me. That was incredibly kind and just an example of one of the many families that work very hard to be able to pay to put their kids through postsecondary.

4:10

On those nights where they are trying to achieve just small amounts of dollars from local businesses, municipalities, and legions, it all goes towards these young children being able to one day fulfill the dreams that they have. So that is who Bill 19 is for, you know, regular families that work so hard so that their kids can apply to and be successful in achieving postsecondary education.

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

I'm thankful for a lot of the work that the government has done, the Minister of Advanced Education, to ensure that there was stable funding, that there was frozen tuition since 2015, that there was mental health funding put into these postsecondary institutions. The dollars that were allocated specifically for the rurally located postsecondary institutions were dollars that were incredibly valuable and had been long advocated for by students. It took a long time, and it took this government to actually put the funding in.

When I think about the people that are in Fort Saskatchewan and surrounding communities – Vegreville, Mundare, Bruderheim – there are new Canadians that have come here to work as temporary

foreign workers, and one of those people is a friend of mine. Her name is Cheryl. She moved here under the temporary foreign worker program, and she worked at McDonald's for a number of years and met, actually, her partner in life, Anthony. They worked there, and they started to date. Actually, Anthony had to help create a false schedule with the manager so that it could look like Cheryl was off and Anthony was in fact working. Anthony was actually not working, and he surprised Cheryl at their church, Our Lady of the Angels, and proposed to her with the entire church, and it was on Skype. It was on Skype because they're from the Philippines, so they wanted to make sure that all of their families and friends were able to witness such a lovely and touching moment that they had. They worked together at McDonald's; they worked together at Tim Hortons. Cheryl and Anthony got married in that same church. Cheryl applied to go to postsecondary at NAIT. What I found out is that a person in her position as a permanent resident – oh, I missed a part.

They volunteer with a group called the Kabisig Society. This is a group that helps advocate for Philippine workers that are permanent residents or temporary foreign workers, and they help advocate on those issues. When we were at Turner park one day, she had some very, very incredible news to tell me over hot dogs. I thought that she was going to tell me that she was pregnant because she was so excited. As it turned out, she had gained her permanent residency status.

So she applied to NAIT, and she worked really hard. She worked minimum wage jobs, and Anthony did as well. She worked really hard. If you look over her Facebook feed, you see that they basically do everything. They post pictures of what they eat. They have matching shoes and matching Canadian shirts on Canada Day. When they go to *Avengers* movies, they always have matching superhero shirts. They're quite adorable. It was there that I found out that she had actually gotten pregnant. She graduated.

She and Anthony are just one example of new people that come to Alberta and want to help build our communities, build our economy, and build families. They come here to build families. For too long under previous governments they were treated like purses as opposed to people. So I'm really glad that we have a minister and a Premier that look at these people as contributors to society as opposed to just a lever. Yes, there are many levers of funding for education that need to be looked at, but to consider a person a lever for that funding is flawed. That's what can hurt the number of people that apply to postsecondary and can affect the amount of participation that we have.

It's expensive. Once upon a time it was \$800. Well, it's not \$800 anymore. It's quite a lot more expensive. It was out of my reach, you know, as the daughter of a single father, a painter of houses. To be able to put some measures to reel it in so that it's more accessible for the family in Tofield and more accessible for Cheryl and Anthony in Fort Saskatchewan is incredibly important.

I'm really happy that instead of thinking about tax cuts that would in fact gut that really incredible institution that continues to help us to look for those ways that we address the problems in society – Anthony and Cheryl are from the Philippines, a country that gets ravaged often by typhoons. We need to be looking at making sure that we have the brightest minds in our universities and our postsecondary colleges and our trades to actually build communities that can withstand the effects of climate change. These are all very important things that we need to pull together on as we move forward in Alberta and Canada and the world.

I'm very happy to see that an international student will at least know how much that year of tuition is going to be. They won't be surprised. It's still very expensive, but this is a great measure to move towards including people like Anthony and Cheryl in the

entire spectrum of society so that they are not only nannies, so that they're not only temporary foreign workers at Tim Hortons – who do incredible service, very honourable jobs – but they're also accountants and they're also lawyers and they're also child care workers. They are also people that just want a shot at doing something that they are passionate about.

So I'm really pleased that this is moving forward, and I look forward to seeing it pass through committee. Thank you.

The Chair: Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much. If you'd indulge me, Madam Chair, I've got a specific question regarding this, and then I'd like to carry on with a statement of mine. To the minister. On page 29 under Comprehensive Academic and Research Universities Sector it says under 102.3:

(2) An institution assigned to the Comprehensive Academic and Research Universities sector may . . .

(c) collaborate with . . . post-secondary institutions to support regional access to undergraduate degree programs.

Then the next clause says:

(3) Notwithstanding subsection (2)(c), Athabasca University shall collaborate with other post-secondary institutions to support regional access to undergraduate degree programs.

Is there something specific as to why Athabasca University was kind of singled out that they shall collaborate? Was there something that came up, that happened, that caused that?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills for the question. He's quite right. We do have a much stronger mandate in the bill for Athabasca University in particular to collaborate, particularly with the colleges in the region that he represents, the colleges in the region that you represent, Madam Chair. You know, when Athabasca University was initially founded, one of its purposes was to provide university education to rural and northern Albertans, who didn't really have easy access to university education at that time. I think it's fair to say that Athabasca University has drifted a little bit from that mandate. Our government has now reinforced that mandate, to provide access to university education in rural and northern regions in alignment with the original intent of that university, so the strength of that mandate, that requirement is reflected in the language that the member referred to in the bill.

4:20

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you, Minister, for that.

I'll carry on. Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to rise and speak on Bill 19, An Act to Improve the Affordability and Accessibility of Post-secondary Education. The only problem I really have with the bill is a little bit about the name of it, the accessibility part, because I don't see a lot of information in the bill that relates to accessibility per se. What I'm specifically referring to is, I guess, the number of seats, especially in the medical fields, that we have here in Alberta and the access.

I know personally of a couple of young men who couldn't get in in Edmonton and Calgary or anywhere else in Canada. So they were kind of forced to go overseas to take their training and then came back to find that there's no chance at all of getting a residency. We've tried to address this with the college as well. It's very, very difficult. We've got, you know, some good, well-trained doctors that are ready and willing to work out in rural Alberta that just can't

get a residency. So if we could work on the total accessibility and not just the financial, that would be awesome.

I've been a parent of two kids that have gone through post-secondary, one of them 10 years of university to get to the medical doctor stage, and watched the struggles that they had. It's quite expensive, especially being from rural Alberta, putting two kids through university here in Edmonton. We do see the struggle and the advantage that we would have if there was, you know, some control over tuitions as well. I do applaud that, having been through that and watched my kids work through it. But they were very fortunate that in the time when they were going to school, Alberta was in a boom phase, and there were lots of jobs. When you came out for your four months off in the summer, you could go and work. My son worked in the oil patch and did very, very well during the summer such that he didn't have to work through university and the eight months that he was in school. That really gave him a chance to focus on his studies, and I think that's what we're trying to address here.

You know, for a lot of the young people, when they come out of high school and get into university, it's a bit of a culture shock because they go away from the I don't want to say spoon-feeding that they get in high school, being helped along, but when you get into university it's: you sink or swim on your own. Having the ability to be able to afford to just go to school and concentrate on your studies and not have to work two or three part-time jobs just to pay your tuition and your rent and that I think would go a long way. Anything we can do to help students get to that point: I think it's incumbent on us as a government to do those things.

My worry right now with students and the young people that I do talk to is not so much that they're worried about the tuition – I don't think that's the top thing on their minds right now – but it's the fact that when they've finished their engineering degree, there are no jobs out there for them, especially down in Calgary. If you're in petrochemical or oil development, engineering, or geology, it's going to be very difficult to find a job. So, hopefully, we get some turnaround in the province here and get ourselves back to an advantage position, where we fill up those office spaces in Calgary and get people back to work.

As I said, we were very fortunate that our children went through. I had a good job in the oil field, so I could help them out a little bit. It's very expensive putting kids through school, especially from rural Alberta, in the cities.

I frequently hear about workshops and fairs that are put on for students to try to secure a job in a workforce that seems to not have enough jobs to go around, and students frequently are passed over. We want to ensure that we're doing what's best for the students. They need the peace of mind that comes with a capped tuition, and the relief of this worry will help them to focus on their education and on their future careers. As I said, you know, any time that you can put the students into a position where they're focusing on their studies instead of trying to make ends meet, it can be very helpful.

Students have been pushing for a tuition framework, so we were happy to see that the government is finally listening to them and implementing it into this legislation. In fact, reducing the unpredictability of tuition hikes would be the greatest help to students who struggle the most to make ends meet, perhaps working one, two, or even three part-time jobs while pursuing their education. It's good that the government has decided to actually listen to the students, as they have not done so with so many stakeholders in the past legislation that they've brought forward, which has ultimately ended up in making a mess of their respective files. So it is refreshing to see that there has been a lot of consultation with the students.

I'm also happy to see that students will be getting more representation on each institution's board of governors and that this will help all students have a greater say in the decisions that affect them.

Additionally, when it comes to the tuition of international students, there will be increased predictability as students will be able to know the cost of their entire degree. This could prevent unreasonable hikes that can throw a wrench into an international student's education. So many students must work to support themselves through their education, and not knowing what a student has in store for the next year can make it impossible to plan.

However, an exceptionally important way that students plan through their education is for how they will support themselves during as well as afterwards. The jobs available to students as of recently are flickering away due to the government's ideological agenda driving jobs out of the province. Like I said previously, we really need to get our focus back as a government, getting our economy on the upswing again.

As I said before, throughout my son's education he had the ability to support himself working in the oil and gas industry. Right now those jobs just aren't out there for students anymore. It was an opportunity that allowed him to be self-sufficient and debt free while providing him with a real quality-of-life experience to help him when facing future employers.

Unfortunately, what was once a means for so many is no longer a possibility for most students pursuing an education today. Those jobs are simply not there anymore, and for the ones that are, the pool of individuals applying for them tends to far outrank a postsecondary education.

I talked to one lady up in the Cold Lake area that previously used to hire 22 summer students. She used it as an opportunity to help out students and give them a bit of an education in the real world and how to work and build up the work ethic. But because of the increases in minimum wage, she now hires four students and then very quickly weeds it down to two because they've gone far more to mechanization, because they're in an industry where they could actually do that, use a lot of machinery rather than manual labour. They had to make that choice because of those increases.

It's a very prominent fear in the minds of students these days: what happens after graduation? Will I get a job? I addressed that previously with engineering students, especially in the petrochemical and oil industries. They're very, very concerned about going through a four-year program, all the expenses, coming out with a huge amount of personal student debt and no way to pay it off. I think that's going to cause some real concerns for young people in the future.

Although this legislation rightfully protects students during their education, we must give some forethought to the economic environment that they will be stepping into after their education and how to get Alberta's economy back on track. Postsecondary students need to feel secure in the availability of gainful employment as they enter the workforce, degree in hand. Again, you know, I mentioned the engineers. I worked with a lot of them, both young and old, in my experience in the oil field. It was always nice. They used to send out, especially over the summertime, students to work directly with us out in the field for their four months, so it gave them a real insight into what was actually going on in the construction industry that they could take back, then, into their fall studies.

Affordable tuition is at the forefront of a student's mind, but so is the career that they'll be stepping into for the rest of their lives. It's crucial to restore an economic environment with an abundance of available employment for a graduating student to feel secure in. Students must already sacrifice so much when getting a postsecondary education in order to pursue a career of their choice.

They often must put their lives on hold, give up an income, and spend their days, nights, and weekends studying, working to make ends meet, or attempting to live a balanced life.

The stress that a typical student life can bring on may be manageable for some but overwhelming for others. This is why it's so vital to support students in their education and ensure that any unnecessary worries are taken off their plate such as unpredictable tuition hikes. These hikes can mean that students are missing classes and studying time to work longer hours in a part-time job or a second job in order to make up the difference. Missed classes or being unprepared for an exam can have a dire consequence on the grand scheme of an education. That is why this tuition cap is important to students. This is why it's important to support students in their education and why I support this bill.

You know, we talk about the stresses of passing and being at the top of your class, at least in the top 50 per cent of your class, to ensure that you can get a job when you're finished. Anything that we can do, like I said, to ensure that students are spending their time studying rather than working two or three jobs to make ends meet – I think this bill goes a step in that right direction.

Thank you.

4:30

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to respond to a couple of the comments that the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills made in his speech. It was around the issue of accessibility. He suggested that he wasn't sure how the legislation promoted the accessibility of education. So I just wanted to talk a little bit about how what we're dealing with here promotes accessibility of higher education here in the province of Alberta. There are a couple of key things.

First of all, this bill puts Red Deer College and Grande Prairie Regional College on the path to becoming universities without requiring any future legislative changes to the Post-secondary Learning Act. We recognize that right now Red Deer College and Grande Prairie Regional College aren't ready to make that transition to university, but when they are, we won't have to come back to the legislation to do this. The mechanism is already in place to do that.

By allowing Red Deer College and Grande Prairie Regional College to make the transition to offering university degrees – and let me just be clear that they don't intend to sacrifice any of the other programs that they currently offer to the students that they serve; they intend to add on the possibility of pursuing university degrees at those locations – we will enhance the ability of Albertans in central Alberta and northwestern Alberta to get university degrees when otherwise they would have to go to Edmonton or Calgary, far away from home, to pursue university education. By putting Red Deer College and Grande Prairie Regional College – we are enhancing access for people in central Alberta and northwestern Alberta to university degrees that they otherwise would have to leave home and go quite far to get. That's one aspect of accessibility that we're enhancing through this legislation.

The second piece is related to that. It's these collaboration frameworks that the member had a question about earlier. We are requiring other colleges to collaborate with universities in the system to offer other kinds of degrees through the colleges that aren't on the path to becoming universities. Northern Lakes College, Portage College, Keyano College, Medicine Hat: those kinds of places will be able to work with existing universities in the province to come up with a way to deliver university degrees to the students that they serve and also allow students in the rest of the

province to have access to university education that they may or may not have access readily to right now. We're enhancing accessibility to university education in that way.

There's a final and not exactly straightforward point in the legislation. We heard quite clearly from students, faculty, and administration at MacEwan and Mount Royal University that their students were having problems going on to graduate studies with a MacEwan or a Mount Royal University degree in their hands because other universities who are assessing their qualifications weren't quite sure how to treat a degree from Mount Royal University or Grant MacEwan University. That's because the governance structures at those two institutions weren't exactly like the governance structures at the University of Alberta or the University of Calgary or other universities in other parts of the country.

We heard stories of students who had graduated from Mount Royal and MacEwan and had difficulty getting into graduate programs because the receiving institutions weren't sure how to assess their qualifications because they weren't quite sure what kind of institution they had graduated from. This bill addresses that issue as well, Madam Chair, by giving Mount Royal University and Grant MacEwan University a general faculties council, the ability of the board of governors to appoint chancellors, and the ability of the board of governors to grant honorary degrees. We are creating the powers and governance structures at Mount Royal University and MacEwan University that other universities have, so we hope that by doing so, we will enhance MacEwan and Mount Royal University graduates' access to graduate-level programming at other universities in Alberta as well as across the country.

So on those three points – enhancing access to university degrees by transitioning Red Deer College and Grande Prairie Regional College to universities, creating strong collaboration mandates between existing universities and the other colleges that aren't on the path to university, and changing the governance structure so that it's quite clear what kind of institutions Mount Royal and Grant MacEwan are – we're enhancing access for students all over Alberta to high-quality university education that will set them up for success regardless of where they go once they graduate. I'm quite proud of our government's movement on those three pieces of accessibility.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

Drever: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to support Bill 19, An Act to Improve the Affordability and Accessibility of Post-secondary Education, and I would like to thank the Minister of Advanced Education for putting this bill forward. I think it's an important one, and I want to talk about why.

I want to talk about back in 2013, when I was attending Mount Royal University. I remember that there was a big rally that happened when the Premier of the time, Premier Redford, made huge cuts to postsecondary, \$147 million worth of cuts, and that was one of the reasons why I actually decided to run for office. I was extremely disappointed in that government. I saw our tuition go up because of that. Our programs were cut. Our engineering program was cut. Our midwifery program was cut. Our jazz program was cut. Students didn't know what to do at the time, so they decided to do a rally, and conveniently Premier Redford's constituency office was right across the street from our university, so we decided to march to our constituency office and present to her a petition stating that we don't want these cuts.

I remember some of the chants that some students were saying: "No ifs, no buts, no education cuts" and "education, not edu-cuts." You know, I stand by those slogans. I stand by those words because

I feel that this current minister would never do something like that, so I'm proud to be part of that government that wouldn't hurt students.

You know, we've heard a lot of rhetoric from the opposition on how there will be a lot of pain if they become government, how they want to cut a lot of our budget, and I have no doubt that postsecondary would be on top of that list. So when they stood up just yesterday stating that they don't support this bill, it actually really personally affected me. It brought me back to how I felt in 2013. I don't think that students deserve that kind of treatment, and I'm just so happy that they have a government that is looking out for them and have their backs.

Thank you, Minister, for everything that you've done. Thank you for the consultation that you've done, speaking with student unions, speaking with different schools across this province. They spoke loud and proud that this is a bill that they wanted, and you definitely listened to them, so I just wanted to thank you for that.

On top of this bill, you know, our government has done a lot of extra things to help students in postsecondary, such as a tuition freeze for five years now, and that's something that I've heard a lot of positive feedback on from different students.

I still am technically a student at Mount Royal because I actually never got to finish my degree. I was a little busy campaigning, but you know what? Now I get to be the ambassador and talk about Mount Royal University and all the great work that they do, so there you go.

4:40

You know, I talk to a lot of students, and they say that they're very thankful for the tuition freeze because it gives them more predictability on their tuition and how much it's going to cost. I feel like no student should have to worry about that. Everyone should have the right to an education, and everyone should have the right to attend a postsecondary institution if they want to. I feel like tuition shouldn't be a barrier. Because of that I'm so proud that we did this tuition freeze.

I wanted to talk a little bit about the meat of the bill, and I wanted to talk a little bit about the framework. What it says is that it caps each institution's average tuition and apprenticeship fee increases to the consumer price index. It provides increased predictability for international students, allows the minister to regulate mandatory, noninstructional fees and international student tuition – that's actually something I've heard a lot from students of what they wanted, so I'm glad that this is in the bill – and empowers students to have more say over exceptional tuition and fee increases. Also, another thing that it does – and something that I know that the Member for Red Deer-North is really proud of – is that it's going to grant Red Deer College university status, so congratulations to you. It also will grant the Alberta College of Art and Design a transition to university status. That's in Calgary, ACAD. I remember when the minister made that announcement at that institution. They were very happy about that.

You know, this bill is actually going to be impacting a lot of people's lives in a positive way across the province, and I'm very happy to stand here and support it, and I hope everyone else does, too. Thank you.

The Chair: Any further questions, comments, or amendments? The Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to rise and speak to the bill. I do speak in support of it although I would like to make some comments, both supportive and, hopefully, constructive as well. Let me begin by saying that I'm really glad to see the

clarification, maybe even the enshrinement in legislation, of the diversity of college offerings or university or independent schools – all the different kinds of education that will be offered here. I really think that that also contributes to the accessibility. One size does not fit all, and different kinds of education are definitely valuable to different students in different sectors of our economy, different parts of our province, so I think that that's extremely important, that we have these kinds of things.

Yes. Red Deer College as a polytechnic university I think was a great step on the part of the government. I give you credit for that. The focus that they have on technical and industry-informed kinds of education, job-ready education, is extremely important in central Alberta and, I think, to certain segments of our economy as well. I think that kind of education and that kind of innovative approach, if I might even call it that, to education is helpful.

Also, with regard to that multisector approach to education I see the fact that there's a significant geographical distribution. That also, as has already been said, is a very key component of accessibility, the fact that students from every corner of this province can find an opportunity for some form of education almost at their doorstep, if I can say that. I think those are very valuable elements of this, and I'm very supportive to see the opportunity there for the diversity and the choice that that creates for students and for our province.

One of the main focuses, of course, of Bill 19 is to create stability, to create a clear sense of where both revenue and expenses are going. I think these things are important. So we have a cap on tuition.

In the past we've seen, actually, some whipsawing back and forth. We've gone from unpredictable hikes in tuition to implementing tuition freezes that would seek to provide stability for students but then, on the other hand, maybe are not sustainable long term for institutions. Now we have something that I think is a little bit more sustainable and predictable and a reliable pattern both for students and for the universities, and I think that there will be value in this. We don't have the tuition freezes or the wage freezes or the kinds of extreme statements or situations that create difficulties for either the students or the universities. When we look at legislation for this, we have to take both clearly into account. We have to remember both and make it a sustainable situation for both. I think this is important. Even addressing the issue of noninstructional fees, which can be a back door to tuition and a back door to revenue, is an important part of what happens here as well.

I do note, too, that the bill also gives the opportunity for exceptional program tuitions to actually be raised in some cases by up to 10 per cent, but those are exceptional situations, and I expect they will be dealt with that way.

Yeah. We've gone through a tuition freeze the last few years, which has been a great boon for students. The students have appreciated that.

The bill also creates some regulatory authority, as I said, to increase transparency and deal with the issue of noninstructional fees.

I'd also like to point out that, I guess, one of the concerns that I might suggest here is that there's a fair bit of authority or, I could say, discretion being offered to the minister directly. Holding the minister accountable for some of those decisions that may happen administratively later I think would be an important part of this. That's just a comment that I would like to make on it.

The fact that the bill increases student representation is important, and I don't think anybody would question that one. I think it's important that students have a voice and that they be heard at the universities.

Another aspect of the bill, though, that I might point some thoughts to is with regard to international students. I do think that it's important that international students also get some stability although it's a slightly different structure. At the same time, I think that one of the struggles we've had in Canada is to balance the issue between: is our education for our own students, or do we offer education for foreign students? Quite frankly, Canadian education has a very high international reputational value. I think we need to recognize that there are many international students who would like to get into university in Canada, and I think that if we were being very proactive on this, there is an opportunity here for us to build a revenue stream and even a business model for international students in a way that's appropriate without displacing Canadian students. I think we should be building capacity for both, quite frankly.

One of the added benefits of that is that then in many, many cases international students stay. They become part of our culture. They become part of our economy. Those university students are in many cases some of the brightest students from around the world, looking for a Canadian education. They become part of our culture, and they contribute to our culture. Some of the folks at Alberta Innovates are exactly in that line: have come from foreign countries, got educated here, and now contribute in very great ways to our economy. So I think there's a real value in actually cultivating international students in a way that's both a revenue benefit to the province but also not displacing or putting out of place some of our domestic students. Yeah. I think those are extremely important issues.

We provide students stability with this bill, which I think will be good both for domestic and international students. But, again, what are the opportunities after students graduate? They need to be able to find jobs, so we also have to couple this with a strong economy.

4:50

I actually have in my riding a past student who just graduated a few years ago and has a bachelor's degree. I think it's in either biology or environmental science. I'm not sure which. But he can't find a job, and he's actually working two jobs at two different fast-food restaurants because in his field he has not been able to find work. It is extremely important that we create an economic environment where students can actually have a hope of using their career choice, of stepping into a job where they can support their families, where they don't have to worry about what's going to happen after graduation, where they don't have to worry about how they are ever going to pay back the debt because there's no job waiting for them. What kind of an economy Alberta has matters immensely. We need to open doors for students so that they can go through their education with the excitement of actually being able to move into a career and have success in that as well. I think this is extremely important.

The challenge then, I think, for the universities is that we need to make sure that we continue to fund strong universities. This is always the balance between tuition for students and universities. Every year *Maclean's* magazine, I think it is, puts out the rating of all the universities. I know that all the students spend hours poring over it. It's one of their higher sold issues each year. Everybody is looking at the ratings of all the Canadian universities, and they're not just looking at how much the tuition is at each university; they're looking at what the university is good at. They're looking at what other students are saying about the quality of that education.

I actually know students who, when they were looking at university just coming out of high school, said to me very clearly: "If I'm going to go to university and spend the money on that, I'm going to the absolute best university I can go to anywhere. I don't care what it costs." I realize that's a challenge for many people, but what I'm trying to say is that the quality of the university is what

attracts many, many, many students. There are many students who look for the best university that they can go to because they believe that they will get the best education and because they believe that they will be connected then with the best opportunity for a great career following that.

We need to make sure that we create an environment that is sustainable for our universities, that our Alberta universities are actually the best in the country and have a reputation for being the best in the country, and one that students actually, truly want to attend and will come to from other places. I think that these are important balances that we should take into account: that universities are sustainable, that the quality of education is superior, and that students will choose the highest quality and the highest reputation possible as a place at which they would like to attend university. I just wanted to make some of those comments.

I think that the bill is definitely moving in the right direction. It creates stability for both students and universities. I applaud the government on the efforts that they've made on that. Of course, there's always room for us to continue to improve things.

With that, Madam Chair, I would like to adjourn debate on Bill 19 for the moment. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

Cortes-Vargas: Never mind.

The Chair: Any questions, comments, or amendments?
Seeing none . . .

Ms Ganley: I'm sorry. I believe the hon. member had moved to adjourn debate on this.

The Chair: Oh. I apologize. I had missed that.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 21 An Act to Protect Patients

The Chair: We'll move on to Bill 21. Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill-Mackay. Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Good enough.

Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to introduce an amendment to Bill 21, An Act to Protect Patients. It replaces the five-year ban from reinstatement upon finding of sexual assault by a professional with a lifetime ban. I'll wait for the amendment to circulate.

The Chair: This will be amendment A1.
Go ahead, hon. member.

Ms McPherson: I move that Bill 21, An Act to Protect Patients, be amended in section 7(b) in the proposed section 45 as follows: (a) in subsection 3 by striking out "until at least 5 years have elapsed from the date that the decision of unprofessional conduct was made by the hearing tribunal"; and (b) in subsection 4, one, by striking out "section 96.2(a)" and substituting "section 96.2(1)(a)" and, two, by striking out "until at least 5 years have elapsed from the date that the decision of unprofessional conduct was originally made by the governing body of a similar profession in that other jurisdiction"; and (c) by striking out subsection (5).

In short, this amendment modifies the proposed section 7. If passed, the amendment will eliminate the ability of a professional who has been found by their college to have sexually assaulted a patient to reapply to practice in Alberta.

I truly believe our job as elected representatives is to be the voice of people who might not be able to speak up, and survivors of sexual assault by medical professionals should be assured unequivocally that the person who offended against them will have no opportunity to assault someone else in those circumstances again. A health professional who abuses their position of trust to assault a patient has lost their privilege to practise. Being able to apply to return to practise after five years is not enough.

Sexual assault is always an act of exerting power over another person. It's an act of violence that uses sex as a weapon, and we should let survivors know in no uncertain terms that we stand with them. They should be confident in the knowledge that we will not allow anyone else to face the same awful circumstances they had to endure, that the perpetrator of the crime against them will not be empowered to offend in those circumstances again.

According to the Criminal Code of Canada voyeurism earns a five-year sentence. A person who violates their trust to commit a sex crime against a young person faces up to 14 years of prison time. A person who commits sexual assault can be sentenced up to 14 years.

Some might say that a lifetime ban on practising in Alberta is unreasonable for harming a patient for a lifetime. Now, the purpose of sanctions in the criminal justice system are punishment, deterrents, rehabilitation, protection, and denunciation. I've had some conversations with people who believe that because we value rehabilitation in our justice system, practitioners should be allowed to reapply for a licence after five years. I assert that anyone convicted of a sexual assault while holding a position of power over a patient is welcome to demonstrate their rehabilitation outside of the auspices of their prior profession. By all means, pursue a career in research, a position in a new career, and show that you are rehabilitated in other ways.

Earlier in October former Canadian Olympic sprinter Desai Williams received a lifetime ban by Athletics Canada for violating the organization's sexual harassment policy for his actions in 2010. Without trivializing the impacts of sexual harassment, the athlete received a lifetime ban for sexual harassment. The bill before us provides only a five-year ban for the far more severe action of sexual assault.

In 2014, when the Minister of Education revoked the licences of teachers who had sexual intercourse with a student or sexual conversations, the teachers' union accused the minister of playing political games because the ATA had only recommended the suspensions.

So we have a precedent for refusing those convicted of sexual assault from working in their previous field again, and we have the knowledge that – sorry. I find this difficult to talk about. We have the knowledge that survivors of sexual assault have already endured enough.

I really urge everyone to show our solidarity with survivors. Please support this compassionate amendment.

5:00

The Chair: Any members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Chair and to the member for the proposed amendment. I'm going to take this opportunity, because it directly relates, to speak in response to one of the questions raised by the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View, and that was: under what threshold would it be determined if a professional should have the ability to practise again once their practice permit has been cancelled? I think it does directly relate to this proposed amendment.

Under the current draft of the legislation if a practice permit has been cancelled, a health professional could not apply to the regulatory college for at least five years. It is in no way a guarantee that after five years a practice permit will be reinstated. I also want to clarify that if at the five-year mark they apply and are not granted reinstatement, there's a six-month period between applications to apply again for reinstatement. So if you apply at five years, you can apply at five and a half, and six, and so forth, but there, again, would be no guarantee. Even at five, that is the minimum standard that a permit would be removed for a sexual assault. I want to just reinforce that.

Regulatory colleges would be required to assess the application for reinstatement in accordance with the criteria set out in the Health Professions Act as well as in the professional regulations, and such criteria generally includes assessing evidence of good character, considering the record of the hearing at which the applicant's registration and practice permit were cancelled, whether the member is fit to practise, and whether the individual has met the conditions imposed on the individual before the registration and practice permit were cancelled.

I do just really want to reinforce that, like the member moving the amendment, we have no tolerance for inappropriate conduct, sexual abuse, or sexual misconduct, and regardless of the amendment in no way would we be consenting to that or endorsing that in any way.

I do want to say that we looked at other interjurisdictional comparisons, and as was stated in second reading, the only other jurisdiction to have a requirement is Ontario, and it is five years. So if we were to go to a permanent withdrawal, we would definitely be outliers. Even doing this, we're already being leaders in the country, by bringing in this clause and the mandatory minimum of five years, and I do want members to consider that.

I have to say that in the work that I've embarked on with the various colleges over the last six months, they have been very co-operative, and I'm glad. I think they, like all of us, know that any time that sacred trust in a health professional is breached, it is damaging to that individual long term and also to the profession and the trust that folks have in that profession. So I have to say that in working with the colleges and with working with other jurisdictions in doing the interjurisdictional comparison, I think we've landed on the right spot. And I do want to just reinforce that a mandatory minimum of five years in no way assures folks that if anyone is a risk to the public, that they would get their licence back after five years, that the mandatory minimum would be five. So I just really want to reinforce that.

With that being stated, I think I am inclined to vote against the amendment for that purpose. I think that the mandatory minimum is outlined in this legislation, not proposed that it be stricken permanently, forever. Again, there is the possibility that that could happen even by having a mandatory minimum of five based on the circumstances which are being considered.

For those reasons, I'll be voting against the proposed amendment. But I also wanted to take the opportunity to respond to at least one of the questions raised by the Official Opposition earlier. I'll respond to the rest at another opportunity in committee.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other speakers to the amendment? Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I'd like to thank the minister for her comments. I will just reiterate that it's important for us to stand unequivocally beside survivors of sexual assault. This is a very clear demonstration of our support, by saying to them:

"No. We won't stand for what happened to you, and the person that perpetrated will not have the opportunity to be able to offend in those same circumstances again. They won't be able to sexually assault someone that is coming to them for help." And we can do that by passing this amendment. We can do that by saying that across the board, across the province we will not allow a medical professional regardless of their college to reapply to be a part of that profession again. I think it's important that we do that.

I think we have waited so long to even acknowledge that survivors are there, and we have the opportunity to be really clear and to be outstanding leaders in this aspect. Society says that we don't tolerate sexual assault. Let's demonstrate that through the legislation.

The Chair: Any other members speaking to the amendment? I'll first recognize Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a very difficult topic, obviously. Having been a practitioner for 25 years, this is close to my heart. Important positions of trust, respect, training, ethical duty: this doesn't only apply to physicians, of course. There are some 40 different professionals, I think, involved in this. So it involves quite a large sector of the population.

I'm very sensitive to the issues that the member raises in terms of recognizing the tremendous suffering and impact on a victim of sexual harassment, assault, and various levels of misconduct. These are all degrees of injury, and where one draws the line and where one examines the circumstances around which that occurred and whether there were extenuating circumstances in that professional's life that may or may not identify different approaches to the penalties, the consequences for whatever acts were committed, is important.

But I also recognize that we are in a society that for good reason is equally focused on rehabilitating criminals, rehabilitating people who make mistakes, rehabilitating people who got into trouble for various reasons, some of them mental health related, some of them addictions related, some of them deliberate self-aggrandizement and selfish motives. There are all these ranges of motives for doing bad things to people and bad things to property. But we, I think rightfully, have moved to a point in our society where restoration and rehabilitation rather than punishment is also valued. When I think about the thousands of dental hygienists, occupational therapists, physios, forcing them out of their profession because of an egregious violation of a patient is a step too far for me.

I think we need to recognize victim rights and perhaps compensate, provide all the supports possible to the victim for whatever duration is necessary at the expense of that college that may or may not have been involved or at the expense of that individual who perpetrated the insult. But to ban them for life is not, to me, an appropriate recognition of the fact that we are humans, that we do bad things at times or make mistakes at times because of a variety of issues that are going on in life. I feel very strongly that punishment has been too big a part of our culture as opposed to rehabilitation of people who do make mistakes.

So I share with the minister concern that this is going a step too far. Other jurisdictions in Canada, I guess, have also sustained the fact that there is a minimum penalty required, and five years is a pretty significant impact on both your level of training and your loss of income. In a permanent disqualification you're removing somebody, in whom we've invested probably \$100,000 in education and training, from work that is needed in our society. And I think that if they demonstrate appropriate penance and do appropriate rehabilitation and are judged by their peers and perhaps others, maybe there should be an independent council that reviews those

individuals after a period of penalty and removal from their profession.

5:10

Certainly, there should be a very critical look at their appropriateness and then restrictions on their practice. Can they ever be practising alone without another person present? Can they ever deal with women of a certain age? Should they be restricted from dealing with children? Should they be restricted from dealing with particular medical problems like gynecological and those sorts of problems if there is reason to believe that they are not able to do those in good trust? I guess those are the kinds of judgments and I would call them appropriate limits based on evidence, based on what the individuals are demonstrating in terms of their remorse and their ability to change.

I can't support this amendment either, reluctantly, I think. I feel passionately for the victims of these offences as well, but I also believe very strongly in restorative justice, not in lifelong punitive actions of authorities.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a couple of more comments. I would disagree with the Member for Calgary-Mountain View. We should not be equally focused on the perpetrator and the victim of this kind of a crime. There are circumstances where we should just demonstrate complete rejection of somebody's behaviour, and this is one of those circumstances. Restoration: what about the victim in terms of restoration? Have we spoken to survivors of sexual assault to say: hey, are you okay with that doctor going and practising again and having the opportunity to offend against someone else even though he's been to prison and people say that, you know, he's rehabilitated, and he's awfully sorry for what he did to you?

I don't agree. I don't abide by that at all. I don't think it's fair to survivors of sexual assault to expect them to just swallow their pride and accept that the person that perpetrated against them is allowed to even apply for a licence to do the same sort of profession again. It's as though we're saying: "You know, we care what happened to you, but it isn't as important as what is happening to this person that perpetrated against you. So we're going to give them some more privileges, that we could take away, but we've decided that we're not going to take those away, that they've earned them somehow."

It just seems really backwards to me. When we have the opportunity to be able to say to victims very clearly, "We believe you, and we think what you have to say is important, and we're doing whatever we can to make sure that it doesn't happen to anyone else again," we have that responsibility.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Seeing none, are you ready for the vote?

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:14 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Clark	Gotfried	McPherson
Cyr	Hanson	Orr

Fraser	Hunter	Strankman
Goodridge	Loewen	

5:30

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Fitzpatrick	Mason
Babcock	Ganley	Miranda
Bilous	Goehring	Nielsen
Carlier	Gray	Piquette
Carson	Hoffman	Renaud
Ceci	Horne	Sabir
Connolly	Jansen	Schmidt
Coolahan	Kazim	Schreiner
Cortes-Vargas	Kleinstauber	Shepherd
Dach	Larivee	Sucha
Dang	Littlewood	Swann
Drever	Loyola	Woollard
Feehan	Malkinson	
Totals:	For – 11	Against – 38

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

The Chair: Back on the bill. Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm going to take this opportunity to respond to questions that were raised by the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View earlier in the day and, I think, reiterated by her colleague the MLA for Airdrie. I will try to do this as succinctly as possible.

I just want to clarify that upon royal assent, new registrants would be required to have much more stringent background checks, and this additional information would enhance the registrar's ability to assess applicants' character, reputation, and assist the registrar in determining whether it's appropriate to approve a registration or not.

There was a question around the disclosure of a health professional. If the regulatory college investigated that a member didn't properly disclose, penalties would be made at a hearing tribunal for that health professional under the Health Professions Act. That would be how that aligns.

In terms of the cancellation practice for sexual abuse, I just want to reiterate that the minimum penalty for abuse would be cancellation of the permit for at least five years. Again, that doesn't mean that there would be any kind of guarantee that a member who had their permit cancelled would ever get their permit back, but it does clarify that it's at least five years. Again, that aligns with Ontario, the only other jurisdiction to allow for the same type of mandatory minimum, where there aren't mandatory minimums in any other jurisdictions.

Then in terms of sexual misconduct the length of the suspension would be determined by a hearing tribunal, and again it could go as high as cancelling a permit if that was deemed to be the appropriate response in that specific circumstance.

I also want to reinforce that if a provider lost their licence under this legislation and wasn't able to practice – there was a question raised about what would that mean for the patients of that provider. Alberta Health would work with the health professional's office, with Alberta Health Services, and with the regulatory college to ensure that patient transfers to a new health professional are done seamlessly – this does happen today – or at least as seamlessly as possible. There are times when practice permits are revoked, and that is the practice that's undertaken in that circumstance.

Then there was another question around public disclosure on the websites. I want to reassure all Albertans and members of this House that Alberta Health will continually monitor the websites and work with the colleges to ensure that the requirements are met by at least this upcoming March 31 and that provisions within the legislation allow the minister to require that additional information be added to the website if it's deemed unacceptable.

In terms of questions regarding section 135.1(1) the Minister of Health will have to approve the standards of practice for the profession as we continue to move forward. Previously the Minister of Health could only review the standards of practice set out by the professional regulatory colleges, so this certainly does give more teeth around the standards of practice as we move forward. I want to reiterate that we didn't have that ability previously. We only had the ability in legislation to review them.

The last question that was asked was around the kind of consultation we had with the regulatory bodies. We definitely engaged with stakeholders, including the regulatory colleges, to help develop this legislation, and they are in support of it. Even yesterday we had the College of Physicians & Surgeons. We also had extensive consultation with sexual assault centres and other organizations, including folks with personal lived experience, and I want to say what a positive process it was and how I really feel it brought us to greater certainty around minimum increased transparency, minimum sanctions, and ensuring that the message is loud and clear to anyone who is a perpetrator in this way that the days of impunity are done and that, moving forward, the sanctions will be the strictest in Canada. We will ensure the greatest levels of transparency as well.

I do just want to take this opportunity to say how thrilled I am. I can't help but draw some parallels between the debate we had in the spring around Bill 9 and the debate we're having today. I think it's really important that all members of this House engage in issues that impact women's health and appreciate that while members weren't in a position where they chose to do so in the spring, they're doing so today. I think it's a really important issue, and I think all women's health issues are important and deserve the full and fair discussion by members of this Assembly. I appreciate that all parties have represented themselves through this process on this bill to date.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other questions, comments, amendments?

Ms Ganley: Sorry, Madam Chair. I would move now that we rise and report Bill 20 and that we rise and report progress on bills 19 and 21.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 20. The committee reports progress on the following bills: Bill 19 and Bill 21. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this day for the official records of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Having heard the report, does the Assembly agree?

Hon. Members: Agree.

The Deputy Speaker: Any opposed? So ordered.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Seeing the time and that it is Halloween this evening and we've made good

progress, I would move that the House adjourn and we reconvene tomorrow morning at 9.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:38 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday morning, November 1, 2018

Day 44

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Fitzpatrick	Starke
Gotfried	Taylor
Horne	

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Goehring
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Orr
Ellis	Renaud
Fraser	Shepherd
Hinkley	Swann
Luff	Woollard
McKitrick	Yao
Miller	

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Shepherd
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Aheer	McKitrick
Gill	Pitt
Horne	van Dijken
Kleinsteinuber	Woollard
Littlewood	

Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Wanner
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Babcock	Nixon
Cooper	Piquette
Dang	Pitt
Drever	Westhead
McIver	

Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms Kazim
Deputy Chair: Connolly

Anderson, W.	Orr
Babcock	Rosendahl
Drever	Stier
Drysdale	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kleinsteinuber	Taylor
McKitrick	

Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	Miller
Cooper	Nielsen
Goehring	Nixon
Gotfried	Pitt
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Cyr
Deputy Chair: Mr. Dach

Barnes	Malkinson
Carson	Miller
Clark	Nielsen
Gotfried	Panda
Hunter	Renaud
Littlewood	Turner
Luff	

Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola
Deputy Chair: Mr. Drysdale

Babcock	Loewen
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Fildebrandt	Panda
Hanson	Rosendahl
Kazim	Schreiner
Kleinsteinuber	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Thursday, November 1, 2018

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Prayers

The Acting Speaker: Good morning.

Let us reflect on the things which make us strong, that make us loving, and that give us strength to represent our constituents to the best of our abilities. Amen.

Please be seated.

Orders of the Day

Government Motions

Provincial Fiscal Policies

13. Mr. Ceci moved:

Be it resolved that the Assembly approve in general the business plans and fiscal policies of the government.

[Adjourned debate April 12: Mr. Fildebrandt]

The Acting Speaker: Any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin.

Ms Goodridge: Madam Speaker, it is truly an honour to rise today following a long-standing tradition of this Assembly to give my maiden speech. I would first and foremost like to thank my family, friends, and boyfriend. Your support, encouragement, and unconditional love have played such a key role in getting me here today.

Fort McMurray-Conklin is a stunningly beautiful place, containing many crystal clear rivers, peaceful boreal forests, and stunning northern lights. While indigenous people have called our region home for thousands of years, the development of northeastern Alberta was originally due to the fur trade.

Fort Chipewyan was founded in 1788, 230 years ago, as a trading post by Peter Pond for the North West Company. In 1790 Sir Alexander Mackenzie travelled the region and was the first person to document the description of the oil sands. By 1870 Hudson's Bay Company established a post in Fort McMurray. While the indigenous within the region were very familiar with the bitumen, often using it to waterproof and caulk their canoes, it wasn't until the turn of the last century that we saw any commercialization of the oil sands.

It was in 1925 that Dr. Carl A. Clark developed the hot water separation model, a process that's been refined but is still in use today. In 1967 Great Canadian Oil Sands, which is now Suncor, opened their doors, proving that the oil sands could be developed on a commercial scale. In 1978 Syncrude officially opened their doors, and many of others have joined the scene in the years that have followed.

As you can see, the region I am blessed to represent has a rich history that long predates that of this province.

While I was writing my first formal speech for this Legislature, I decided to read and consult the maiden speeches of the MLAs that have served before me. Not only did I learn some interesting facts about the riding but also of the MLAs. For example, members who have served before me have been asking for an all-weather road to Chipewyan since at least 1975, which was when *Hansard* was officially established in Alberta. Fun fact: there's still no all-weather access road to Fort Chipewyan.

In my research I found out that I am the 21st person to represent this riding, the sixth person to be elected in a by-election, the first person born in Fort McMurray to represent this riding, the youngest person, the first female, but I also have the distinct honour to be the last person to represent the riding of Fort McMurray-Conklin as the boundaries will once again change come the next election to Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche.

I am quite lucky to have had the privilege of being personally mentored by some of the MLAs that have previously served the riding, including Guy Boutilier, Don Scott, and Brian Jean.

Fifteen years ago I became involved in politics through volunteering on Brian Jean's first federal nomination. I've had the honour and pleasure of working alongside him on various campaigns and projects through this period of time. He has become a true friend and an outstanding mentor to me. I know for a fact that I would not be here today if not for his support. It will be tough to fill your shoes, Brian, but I promise to do my best to honour your outstanding legacy. Thank you for your service to Fort McMurray-Conklin, to Alberta, and to all of Canada.

Since 1905 the area that is now within Fort McMurray-Conklin has gone through many changes evolving from Athabasca to the current boundary of Fort McMurray-Conklin and soon to be the new boundaries of Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche.

I'd like to take a moment to recognize some of the notable and remarkable members that have previously served the area: Jean Côté, who went on to become a senator; Michael Maccagno, who was the former Liberal leader; Brian Jean, former Wildrose leader; Norman Weiss, the first but luckily not last Fort McMurrayite to serve our amazing region; Adam Germain, who currently serves as a justice of the Court of Queen's Bench; and Don Scott, who is the current mayor of the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo. And a sincere thank you to all of those who have served before me for helping pave the road, literally and figuratively. Thank you for your foresight to pave highway 881 and to twin most of 63. It sure makes the travel a lot easier and a lot safer.

To Leo Piquette, un fier franco-albertain, qui a battu pour le droit de s'adresser à la législature albertaine en français: je suis extrêmement fière d'être capable de vous adresser en français aujourd'hui. Je dois remercier mes parents, qui ont pris la décision très sage de m'enregistrer dans le programme d'immersion à partir de la maternelle. J'ai pu compléter mon secondaire en immersion, ce qui m'a donné l'occasion de m'inscrire au campus francophone de l'Université de l'Alberta, le campus Saint-Jean, ou la fac, comme c'est connu affectueusement. C'est ici où j'ai obtenu mon baccalauréat ès arts en sciences politiques.

Now for the rest of you in English. To Leo Piquette, a Franco-Albertan who fought for the right to address this Assembly in French: I'm extremely proud to be able to address you in French today. A big thanks to goes to my parents for their decision to enrol me in French immersion from kindergarten to grade 12, graduating from Father Mercredi high school with both an English and French diploma, giving me the opportunity to enrol in the University of Alberta's francophone campus St. Jean, or as it's affectionately known, The Fac, where I earned my bachelor of arts in political science.

After completing my degree, I returned to Fort McMurray to be with my family. Fort McMurray is and always has been my home. In fact, my family has called Fort McMurray home for almost 50 years. My dad, Gord, has worked in the oil sands for over 40 years now, and I was proudly at his side two weeks ago to see him recognized for four decades of service to Syncrude. His strong work ethic and determination have been guiding principles in my life.

My mom, Jan, owned and operated small businesses in town for almost 20 years before ending her career at Keyano College. My

mom was the quintessential definition of a social butterfly. She once told me that strangers were simply friends you hadn't met yet. For my mother almost any outing took at least twice as long as it normally should have taken. She always stopped to talk to people she knew and often even people she didn't know yet. In so many ways it was my mom that allowed me to pursue my passion for politics, and perhaps she's the reason why I'm so good at door-knocking now.

Like me, my siblings Sara, Scott, and Brent are all proud to call Fort McMurray their home. My sister and her husband, Cameron, have two beautiful children Ezekiel and Astrid, and I fully admit I'm a very proud auntie.

To my mother: words will never be able to express how much I miss you, but I am so grateful for the lessons you taught me, the unconditional love you showed me and everyone around you. I will always aim to make you proud.

To my dad: you are my biggest cheerleader, my most trusted confidant, and my best volunteer. Thank you for always fighting for me, believing in me, pushing me ahead, and making me be my very best self.

To my sister, brothers, brother-in-law, niece, and nephew: thank you for making sure that I was always fed and keeping me very grounded.

To my boyfriend, Niall: thank you for being so understanding and supportive.

To all my friends that have encouraged me and kept me positive: thank you for being so considerate and helpful.

To my campaign teams – yes, teams; three in the last six months, ever increasing in size, skill, and enthusiasm to see the NDP defeated in 2019 and restore the Alberta advantage – thank you for your dedicated work and constant optimism.

To the people of Fort McMurray-Conklin: I am honoured to represent you, and I sincerely thank you for trusting me with your vote.

Fort McMurray is a lot of different things to a lot of different people. To many Canadians Fort McMurray represented hope, opportunity, and a fresh start. To the world's leading oil producers we're a tough competitor who refuses to lie down. For far too many elected officials across Canada, we're simply a cash cow. To the fringe eco activists we're the enemy. In fact, Tzeporah Berman, an NDP-appointed member of the oil sands advisory group, refers to my region as Mordor. But to me Fort McMurray has and always will be home. I was born and raised here. I've lived and worked here. Conservatives of every stripe, federal and provincial, have always had our back. They understand that when Fort McMurray works, Alberta works. When Alberta works, Canada works.

I will never back down. Not from the Alberta NDP, not from the Trudeau Liberals, and most especially not from the fringe eco activists seeking to landlock our oil sands. I will continue to be a proud, unapologetic supporter and defender of our oil and gas sector and pipelines. You see, this is our home, and we are going to defend it.

Thank you.

9:10

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just want to thank the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin for her first big speech in this House, her maiden speech. It was an absolute pleasure to hear about all of the wonderful things that happen in the region that she represents, the economic driver of this province and this country,

and the stories of the people that live within that community. I'm just wondering if my hon. colleague could just give us a little bit more insight into the people of Fort McMurray and area and what that means to her and what that means to our province. I think that we would all benefit from that conversation.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin.

Ms Goodridge: Thank you for that question, Madam Speaker. Fort McMurray is a very diverse community, as many of you guys are aware. It's one of the most multicultural and also one of the youngest communities in Canada, which is quite fitting for me to be the youngest MLA and the first female. Fort McMurray has a very can-do attitude and a get 'er done spirit, not limiting people by their gender, their age, their education, or their race or religion, something that I'm very proud of and that I hope to continue pushing forward as the MLA for this region.

Thank you so much.

The Acting Speaker: Are there any other members under 29(2)(a)?

The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd, too, like to ask one of our newest members – as one of the elder members of the Chamber I'd like to have her explain her wonderful ability of bilingualism. I think that's astounding and shows a greater depth of experience that a lot of people may not understand. I'd like the member to give us some background to her bilingualism.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Goodridge: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I stated in my speech earlier, I had the opportunity of being enrolled in French immersion education in Fort McMurray from kindergarten all the way through to grade 12 and then went on to go to the francophone Campus Saint-Jean. It's something that I'm very proud of. In fact, in my most recent by-election I often would end up speaking with people at the doors in French as Fort McMurray has a very rich francophone population, and it was something that was quite an asset. As I've been travelling and have most recently won the nomination for the Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche riding, the francophone aspect has become even more valuable. I look forward to serving Albertans and using my skill to their benefit.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the motion? The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Mr. Dreshen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's truly an honour to stand here today and to give my maiden speech as the MLA for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, and as was mentioned yesterday, I have a proud pioneer history in this province, here in Alberta. My family settled and they built a new life in central Alberta, east of Red Deer, just east of the city, right in the middle of the constituency of Innisfail-Sylvan Lake. This was all before Alberta was even a province. It was just the Northwest Territories at that time, and it was even before this building was even built.

My great-grandfather was a surveyor for the railroad, and he set up a ranch in the area. My grandfather was a rancher. He also traded with pelts and skins, and he was a hunter, Madam Speaker. On the other side of my family they moved from the United States and

broke the land into a grain farm well over a hundred years ago. So I have deep connection to agriculture and to the area of the land in my riding, and I'll always be proud of that.

Representing the community that was built by so many pioneer families: it is truly an honour. At that time for those families there were very limited government services, and I can only imagine what they must have went through to carry just what they could — they came across on wagons or trains — and that was it. They had to build and create a world and a community that they wanted. I think that's a remarkable story and a remarkable history that we have here in Alberta. I don't think it gets celebrated enough, and I think it's something that we should really cherish here.

I know some hon. members like to talk about the incredible or outstanding people in their riding, but I truly have incredible people in the riding of Innisfail-Sylvan Lake. During the Pine Lake tornado in 2000 that killed 12 people and injured hundreds more, it was remarkable to see neighbours that stood shoulder to shoulder helping one another, doctoring the injured, cleaning up the shoreline, and comforting those that lost so much. People were just trying to help out others any way that they could.

Although it was 18 years ago, Madam Speaker, I can still remember a boat that nosedived about 20 yards away from where my family took shelter. As a child I was pulling walls and sinks and debris from trailers out of the water, and I can still remember my father swimming to the resort to help, which from the water looked like a complete war zone. Neighbours would make food, and they would bring it to the local community hall that was set up as a makeshift camp for people that were displaced. It's powerful moments like this that really put life and politics into perspective. I think it really helps us to recognize what truly is important in life.

I have other amazing, resilient communities in my riding, Madam Speaker. The city of Sylvan Lake is one of the fastest growing and has been one of the fastest growing communities in Alberta. It has a beautiful beach, and if members in this Assembly haven't actually been to Sylvan Lake, I would encourage that they go there in the summer. It's a lot of fun. It's a great place with a lot of young families, lots working in the oil and gas sector. Also, as a bedroom community for the city of Red Deer, lots of people will travel back and forth between Sylvan Lake and Red Deer. It's a great place for young families to raise their families.

Spruce View and Bowden are other great communities. They're great farming areas. Actually, the first grand opening I went to as an MLA was in Bowden for a new grain terminal, which was of special significance for me because I worked for the minister of agriculture who got rid of the Canadian Wheat Board monopoly. As a farm kid we actually took our grain to an elevator when the Canadian Wheat Board monopoly got removed, and we dubbed it our freedom wheat. It was in the outstanding Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills's riding, actually, in Trochu. But we delivered our wheat.

It was an amazing moment because so many people and people in this Chamber fought so hard for so many years to get rid of that Wheat Board monopoly and for farmers to be able to have the freedom to sell their property and to sell what they do. It was an amazing, amazing moment. I was even tasked, when I was working with the federal government, to work on legal pardons for peaceful civil disobedient farmers, one of which is just a couple yards away from me today, Madam Speaker.

There are other great farming communities in my constituency. Elnora and Delburne are on the eastern edge of my riding. I went to school at the Elnora elementary school and took shop classes in Delburne. I then went to Innisfail for high school and played hockey and started up their football program there. I think that's a great thing about being from Pine Lake, that you're in the middle of nowhere or

the centre of the universe, depending on how you want to look at it, because all these communities are equidistant from Pine Lake.

But these small towns and these public schools still provide great education today, and I think it's important that we can give these schools the resources and prioritize them because it is a great asset to have in a province like Alberta. One of my first roles as MLA was to attend the 100-year anniversary of the Elnora elementary school. More recently I attended the 125th anniversary of St Luke's Anglican church in Red Deer. Even though, yes, we are a young province, we still have amazing history in this province. Again, I believe it's very important that we take the time to celebrate it.

Now, not to dwell too much on politics, but I was humbled to be trusted and voted in during a recent by-election in July. I was given a mandate to serve the people of Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, and I take that very seriously and will every day that I am here. Having parents and a sister who are all teachers, Madam Speaker, they were the first to point out that I won the election with honours, receiving over 80 per cent of the vote.

9:20

Although it doesn't seem to be a popular opinion under this dome, people in my riding do not want a carbon tax that increases the cost of living in Alberta. People in my riding want a government that actually listens to Albertans, not to special-interest groups or special-interest labour groups that increase red tape and financial burdens on farmers. People in my riding want a government that stands up for our oil and gas sector, not that reinvents the record and pays lip service but actually takes steps to defend Alberta's interest.

Madam Speaker, people in my riding are proud to host the CFR. The Canadian Finals Rodeo is coming to Red Deer. Again, if people want to go down to Red Deer, it's an amazing place. Great agricultural and rodeo families come from my area. I know it's almost a political sin to actually name people, but Jack Daines is a legend from my area in the livestock and rodeo world. He's a great family friend, and I think what he's done for the rodeo industry is remarkable. On the topic of rodeo, even my grandfather in the '20s was actually a contestant and an outrider in the Calgary Stampede.

Madam Speaker, it's an honour to take my seat in this Legislature, which I believe is a safe place to debate ideas and to help find solutions that will make Alberta more competitive and successful. A couple of weeks ago I was honoured that at my swearing-in ceremony I could have so many family and friends and supporters and also the Lieutenant Governor, Lois Mitchell. Although as a lifelong Edmonton Eskimos fan I'd rather not talk football with her for the remainder of the season, I was truly humbled to actually be presented with the Grey Cup after my swearing-in ceremony.

I look forward to honouring the traditions of this place, fighting for the people of Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, and debating and bringing forth good policies for the betterment of Alberta. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for the time.

With that, I would like to adjourn debate. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 22 An Act for Strong Families Building Stronger Communities

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today on behalf of the minister to move second reading of Bill 22, An Act for Strong Families Building Stronger Communities.

The proposed changes in this legislation will increase fairness for indigenous families and improve support for children in and out of care. It will increase safety and accountability across the system. Most importantly, it will help improve the lives of more than 10,000 children and youth receiving services. Our government is committed to reconciliation and to making practical, common-sense improvements to Alberta's child intervention system. This legislation would address concerns that, as a social worker and a former member on the Ministerial Panel on Child Intervention, I have heard from children and families across Alberta. Bill 22 would make the intervention system fairer and more supportive for indigenous peoples.

Currently First Nations have no formal role in the court process involving member children. This means that First Nations are never aware that a child from their nation has been adopted by a nonindigenous family or is a subject of a guardianship order. They are given no opportunity to appear in court and to ask to have a say. Under Bill 22, First Nations would be automatically notified and could appear in court whenever someone applies for private guardianship of children of their band.

Currently there are two ways to apply for permanent guardianship of a child in care, through the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, which requires a mandatory home study and a cultural connection plan, and through the Family Law Act, which does not. Under this legislation every guardianship application for a child in care would follow the same process. This would ensure that every application meets a child in care's unique needs.

The proposed legislation would also strengthen how we support child safety and well-being throughout the system. Bill 22 would introduce new guiding principles that highlight child safety and make indigenous involvement a fundamental component of that system. These principles would provide a guiding vision of how the system should operate for courts, caseworkers, media, and others. Mandatory decision-making criteria would also require courts and caseworkers to consider every facet of a child's safety and well-being when deciding whether to remove a child from home, grant a guardianship order, and make other life-altering decisions.

Currently children also lose financial supports for permanency if their guardian dies, moves away, or otherwise changes. Under this legislation financial supports would stay with the child to help pay for counselling, respite care, transportation, and other important services.

Our government is committed to accountability and transparency. Bill 22 would create strict new public reporting requirements, including requiring Children's Services to report every death, injury, and serious incident within four days. These changes would ensure that Albertans are aware how government is providing services and know when something has gone wrong. They would make the system more open and accountable than ever before, helping us create the system that children and families deserve.

This legislation is the first in a three-phase review of the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act. It acts on recommendations from the Ministerial Panel on Child Intervention and is part of Alberta's public action plan to better protect children and support families. Bill 22 represents an important step towards a stronger, safer tomorrow, where children are kept safe, where family and cultural connections are better respected, and where children are kept safely with their families and their communities whenever possible. These changes would make the system fairer and more

supportive for indigenous people. They would help improve safety and long-term well-being of children across Alberta.

I would like to take this opportunity to encourage my colleagues to support this bill, and I look forward to hearing the debate. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak on Bill 22, which is entitled An Act for Strong Families Building Stronger Communities. It's been a long road to get here, as you know, Madam Speaker. We served together on the ministerial panel. I just want to take a couple of minutes to talk about this. This whole thing really grew out of the tragedy of young Serenity, who would be eight years old if she was still alive today. We had debates and questions in this House about Serenity, and we may have debates and questions about Serenity's case in the future.

But out of that, Madam Speaker, grew a demand from the opposition to have an all-party committee look into children in care, and I will say that we were, rightly so, I would say, pretty aggressive about wanting to have that committee because it was obvious that some positive changes to the way we treat children in care needed to take place. We pushed pretty hard for that all-party committee, and we didn't get it. But I will say in fairness that the Premier finally did grant us a ministerial panel and even gave this place a new minister to look after Children's Services. As best I can tell, that minister is working very hard to discharge her duties, and I thank her for that.

We got to the ministerial panel, and here's what I will say. I would thank all members from all parties that were on the ministerial panel. In my view, we worked in a very nonpartisan way for the betterment of children in care in Alberta, because it matters.

Now, historically, as I understand it, Madam Speaker, this isn't a new problem. This has been an issue that has been with us for a long time, through this government, through previous governments, including one that I was part of. I will say that I'm not sure that the bill today is going to solve everything, but that doesn't mean it's a bad bill. In fact, in fairness to everybody, as I understand it, there are improvements required in the way that we treat children in care. There are improvements required in all 10 provinces in Canada and, as I understand, in all 50 states in the United States and other places across the world. This is a complex issue that I'm not sure we're ever going to get to a hundred per cent, perfect place on, but it's our responsibility to move forward and to improve where we can and to do better where we can. This appears to be an effort by the government to do so, so I appreciate that.

9:30

Now, one of the first impressions of this that I had was from our former colleague Manmeet Bhullar, who I think started to try to address this issue during his brief time as minister. One of the things that he told me that made an impression was that you'd be surprised how much better kids do with their own parents even if their parents don't appear to be what you would call ideal parents. In fact, if they would appear to be poor parents, in most cases the kids actually will do better with them than without them. It seems to be a fact. When you look into it, it seems to hold true. However, there are cases where, when children are in danger, through their parents or for other reasons – perhaps they don't have parents anymore – they need to be put into the care of the government, and it's our duty on all sides of this House to do the best we can to look after those children that are in our care.

Another thing that really was at the core, in my view, of what we discovered and talked about and learned and dealt with on the ministerial panel was the fact that about 69 per cent of kids in care are indigenous, and indeed certainly 69 per cent of Albertans are not indigenous, which is to say that a severely high percentage of kids in care originate from Alberta's indigenous communities, far greater than the percentage that those communities are part of Alberta society. One has to really look seriously at that, and I would dare say that the ministerial panel really did make an effort at doing just that.

Now, one of the pages of the bill that most people don't bother reading – at least, it's my understanding that definitions were changed and words changed – is page 22 of the bill. It says:

33 The following sections are amended by striking out “aboriginal” wherever it occurs and substituting “Indigenous.”

And following that:

35 The following sections are amended by striking out “an Indian” wherever it occurs and substituting “a First Nation Individual.”

Again, as I said, with about 69 per cent of the kids in care being indigenous, using language that's more respectful to First Nations and indigenous people I believe is a very important element of this. I thank the government for making those changes in this bill. I think that's more important than we know today. It will probably prove to be more important than we think in the days and years to come in the future.

We sat on the committee. Here's another thing that I will say. Again, I'm not sure that the bill is perfect, but I will say this. One of the things that we learned and dealt with was that over the last decades in Alberta there were dozens, probably, of reports on children in care that came forward and were passed by this Assembly on which there was little or no action taken. So I will say this. Since the government is taking some action on this, that's a step forward, and they deserve credit for that. In fact, if the bill is not perfect – the fact is that it's one of three, as described by the government; in other words, there are two more to come – then perhaps it would be important to look at the outstanding recommendations from the committee and the deliberations of the committee.

I'd prefer it done in a nonpartisan, across-the-floor way, again, to make sure that when we get through what are purported to be or expected to be three bills to deal with the recommendations of the committee, we cover as much ground as we can and we cover it with a common understanding of what the committee learned and, hopefully, with a common goal, which I believe we all have in this House, of making life better for kids when they're in our care.

Again, I think the most important principle we need to remember as we go through this is that when a child is in care, surely the minister has primary responsibility, but I think all 87 of us in this House bear a responsibility. I think that we ought to share that responsibility and work together to make sure those kids who are our responsibility are looked after in the best way that they can be.

There are several sections here that, again, I'm sure I'll have more to say about as we get into Committee of the Whole and whatnot. I haven't had possession of the bill to look at it for very many hours. The fact that if a child is going to be put in someone's care and they're over 12, they actually have a say: now, it says in the next section after that that the court can overturn that child's decision, but just the fact that even before that happens, a child that's over 12, before they're put in the care of different adults, will actually have something to say about that I think is a positive thing.

Lots of people in this House are closer to the age of 12 than I am. A couple are further away. I would say that most people here are closer than me, but even I can remember that I had some of my own

opinions at the age of 12. Some of them were even correct. Many kids today and ones in care will have opinions about where they'd like to be cared for and who they'd like to be cared for by, and I would suggest to you that many of their opinions would also be correct. To have their voice heard is a positive step, in my opinion, a positive thing coming forward.

Now, an element that I think is important is that under this bill financial supports in the future, when the child's condition changes, as I understand it, will follow the child, not the guardian. You know, if you think about it, you think: why did this have to change? Well, it does. It does, and the fact that it is changing as a result of this bill I see as a positive thing and one more thing that I think is worth talking about. Clearly, funds to look after a child are meant for the child. In having the child move to a different home, a different guardian for whatever reason, there shouldn't be a delay with the funding following because, of course, there is no delay in the child's needs. The new guardian should have access to those resources for the benefit of the child right away without delay and without any gap in the care that the child gets.

Again, I touched on it a minute ago with the matters to be considered: recognize the child's opinion. If it's deemed that the child is capable of forming an opinion, it has to be taken into account in relation to decision-making about their interaction with the child welfare system. I just talked about kids that are 12, but kids that are two and three and four and five also know where they're comfortable and where they feel loved and where they want to be. I think that the requirement to listen to a child at any age who's in the care of the government about where and how their care changes, to hear that child's opinion, is no small matter and one that I am happy to see as we move forward.

The guiding principles that provide the context by which the act must be interpreted so that the safety and well-being of the children are paramount considerations should ensure that portions of the act cannot be taken out of context. The principles will be overarching goals of the act.

9:40

I like that, Madam Speaker, because I think that if there's one thing that we learned as we went through this, it's that every child is an individual, that every family is an individual, that every guardian is an individual. If you try to get too prescriptive with the rules about how that child is looked after, even with the best, best, best of intentions, it can turn out that what's specifically good for one child is not necessarily good for the next child, and if they're both stuck under the same specific rules with no flexibility in them, then one child gets good treatment and another child doesn't. So I think an important learning of the committee was that rather than severely prescriptive individual rules, overarching, guiding principles I think are what will lead us to looking after kids in care better.

Certainly, we have to put responsibility – and, listen, we put tremendous responsibility – on the people that look after children in the system, both their guardians and the bureaucrats, the public-sector workers that supervise and look after this. It's a weighty responsibility, but using guiding principles rather than severely prescriptive rules actually allows those professionals, in my view, more leeway to do the right thing rather than check the box: the child must be okay because I checked the box. I'd much rather have those professionals saying: in my professional judgment, using these guiding principles, we made a specific decision for the child because we think it's in the child's best interests. In my view, that ought to be much more effective than a prescriptive box that gets checked without due consideration over whether it actually improves the child's life or makes it worse.

Madam Speaker, we spent a lot of time on this. There are a lot of children in care that are depending upon us to do the right thing. There's a lot more to be said, and you can take this as a threat or a promise, whichever you prefer, and that threat or promise is that I'm likely to be saying more about it because this matters to me.

But at this point I will take my seat and hear debate from my colleagues. I'll just say that I think we need to get this right.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Mr. Rosendahl: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's always a pleasure to rise in this House and speak on such a very important matter. I'm very pleased with and I'm in strong support of Bill 22, An Act for Strong Families Building Stronger Communities. The proposed changes in this legislation will increase fairness for indigenous families and improve support for children in and out of care.

The previous government, in my opinion, failed the indigenous peoples in West Yellowhead. I'm not going to mention any of the case files that I worked on, but there were many. The indigenous peoples in West Yellowhead were told that there weren't any indigenous peoples in West Yellowhead because there were no reserves. You'd hear this from the people I talked to, and the files that we reviewed were many, like I said. They weren't respected, and how can you respect people when these comments are made to them?

Hinton, by the way, has a 25 per cent indigenous population. Then we talk about Grande Cache, with the co-ops and the enterprises. There are a number of indigenous peoples in Susa Creek, as an example.

There are also many indigenous peoples in Edson and Marlboro that were treated this way by the previous government, many case files, like you said. Once people found out that my office and my staff would listen to these people and listen to the concerns and some of the tragedies, I guess, about how these families were treated – and we know for a fact that for some of the children that were removed from these families, in some cases it's pretty clear it was for no apparent reason. I agree that they should be removed in the event of protecting a child from harm. I totally, totally get that and understand that, and even the indigenous peoples understood that as well.

But it's a sad state of affairs when these people would meet with us and you would hear of the stories time and time again, whether it was at the office in Hinton or when we had office hours in Edson. There were lineups in the hallway because they found out that we would listen to them and that we'd present their cases to the minister and say: look, we need to look at these things to try and move things forward.

That's why it's so important that this bill move forward. It will increase safety and accountability, which the system lacked and didn't have. It would improve the lives of many of the indigenous peoples in West Yellowhead. Our government is committed to reconciliation. The biggest problem to get by with this is the fact that a lot of people bring up the issue of residential schools and what happened, and of course you can't ignore the '60s scoop as part of it. Even today a lot of the people will not identify themselves as being indigenous for the fear that we could take their children away. Today it still exists because of what happened. Then when you look at the way these case files were handled, I can understand the fear that these people have. Yet by the same token we did not address these concerns in a real, fair, and proper manner.

When we look at their role in court, they're left by the wayside because they don't understand. It's a white man's system, they say. Because they don't understand, they don't know how to participate, so they're left behind. Like it says, the First Nations are not even aware that a child from their nation is even being adopted by a nonindigenous family or is the subject of a guardianship order until it's too late because they weren't involved in the process. They had no understanding. When they do intervene too late, usually there are unintended consequences where the child is removed from the community. I know a particular case in Grande Cache that was exactly – exactly – as they said. That's exactly what happened to the family. Even though there was somebody there willing to take the child in, because of a failure or for whatever reason, they weren't even given a chance.

9:50

Our government is fighting for what matters for everyday Albertans, and this includes our indigenous peoples. It's important that we support this bill. Under Bill 22, First Nations would be automatically notified so that they could be part of the whole process of what's going on with them through the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, which requires a mandatory home study and cultural connection plan, and that is important.

I'll bring up the issue of, say, Susa Creek school, for example. I was up there and visited with them. This is where the elders participate even in the school program and they teach the students about indigenous culture. They're right involved in that, so they're involved through the whole process of all these things to make sure that the young people understand about the culture and have participated up there. It was a fantastic opportunity that I had visiting with them at that school. It's just a small community school, but it's fantastic, the things that they do.

Under this legislation every guardianship application for a child would allow due process. This will ensure that every application meets a child in care's unique needs, which need to be respected. This proposed legislation would strengthen how we support child safety and well-being throughout the system, which was lacking for many years, as I said. The case files that we dealt with were something else.

Bill 22 will introduce new guiding principles that highlight child safety, make indigenous involvement a fundamental component of this system, which is very important to these people because a lot of them, like I said, Madam Speaker, just don't understand. White man's rules, they say. So it's important that when we do these things, we involve them.

Mandatory decision-making criteria would also require a course and caseworkers to consider every facet of a child's safety and well-being when deciding whether to remove a child from a home, grant a guardianship order, and make many other life-altering decisions. This is fundamental. It's fundamental to build reconciliation when we're dealing with these people, to understand, to help them so that they succeed.

Under this legislation financial supports would stay with the child to help pay for counselling, respite care, transportation, and other important services that were never there before.

Bill 22 would create strict new public reporting requirements, which is a good thing. These changes will ensure that Albertans are aware of how our government is providing services and know when something has gone wrong. It was ignored for so many years, and it was pretty evident, like I said, by all the case files that we were dealing with. It was so many that it would fill a six-inch binder. That's how bad it was.

This legislation is the first in a three-phase review of the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, which I pushed very hard with

the ministry because it was sadly lacking in the past. Past government, like I said, ignored some of these people for many years. It acts on recommendations from the Ministerial Panel on Child Intervention as part of Alberta's public action plan to better protect children and support families, which is really needed.

Bill 22 represents an important step towards a stronger and safer tomorrow where more children are kept safe – that is very important, very important to the indigenous peoples of West Yellowhead and, for that matter, to all indigenous peoples across the province – where family and cultural connections are better respected. We failed them because we didn't respect their culture and their way of life. They were left behind far too long. I applaud the minister for bringing this forward, and I applaud the minister for recognizing and doing the things with this panel that looked at this problem, that existed for many years.

I would like to encourage my other colleagues to support this bill for those reasons that I've mentioned. I look forward to hearing the rest of the debate on this very important bill.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

Mr. Ellis: Wonderful. Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It certainly is an honour to rise on Bill 22, An Act for Strong Families Building Stronger Communities. You know, I have a prepared speech here, but I also have, sadly, a lot of experience in dealing with vulnerable kids. Certainly, as the only law enforcement member who was ever on the Alberta Secretariat for Action on Homelessness, I can tell you that this was an issue that came up. I think that even a decade ago the disproportionate number of children surrounding the vulnerable population of homelessness that was part of the indigenous community was certainly very, very sad. I see Bill 22 certainly as a step in the right direction. As my colleague from Calgary-Hays indicated, I do believe that there is a lot – a lot – more work that needs to get done.

Madam Speaker, the road to get to this point, of course, has been long. It's certainly been a harrowing one. I feel confident in saying that every one of us in the Legislative Assembly has learned and, ultimately, changed as we've collectively walked through this path. You know, the driving force behind the legislation before us started today with three people: first, the Alberta Child and Youth Advocate, Mr. Del Graff, who issued an investigation review in October of 2016; my friend and colleague the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays, who was tenacious in pushing for this ministerial panel to investigate Mr. Graff's disturbing findings – I certainly commend him for everything that he has done – and of course, finally, not lastly, most importantly, little Serenity. It is that case which has stuck in the minds and hearts of every single member in this Chamber. Let me just take a few moments, Madam Speaker, to address Serenity, for she and her family have been a guiding passion for me.

10:00

You know, I wear this pin on my lapel that says Children First. A lot of people think it actually has to do with the minister who wore it before me, but it doesn't. When I was part of the Alberta Secretariat, Minister Hancock was the minister in charge at that particular time, and he issued us these pins. It was very much something that was kind of a nice keepsake to have, but it wasn't until the Serenity case that it really started to hit me and, I believe, every single person in this Chamber what that really, truly means.

Many of us here have children. Children need and ought to be first in any of the decision-making that occurs inside and outside this Chamber.

For me it means that when I'm thinking about my portfolio, when I think of my policing, I think about the children and the impact on the families. Certainly, that's something that has been very near and dear to me and my decision-making. You know, before Serenity became a household name in Alberta, many of us always talked about children first, but I think with that particular case people were really starting to realize that those were just words and that action needs to take place.

Again, I commend a bill that is a step towards a goal, a very challenging goal. I think to suggest that any government in Canada, and I would say any government in North America, has this right would be inaccurate. I think there has been a lot throughout time, the last several years – you know, people have made efforts, I think with good intentions, but sadly there have been failures. There have been good things, but it's certainly a system that will require a lot more time, effort, and certainly a bipartisan approach to putting children first.

Madam Speaker, you know, it really wasn't until Serenity reached out through the pages of Mr. Graff's report that we truly understood the importance of what had transpired. That is what we're doing here today as we speak in support of this legislation that we have before us. We're committing to keep Serenity's spirit in our hearts as we take care of some of Alberta's most vulnerable citizens.

I don't think I'm speaking out of turn by saying, Madam Speaker, that we failed Serenity. I think we as an Assembly, we as a society, all of us failed her, and we failed her family. I vowed personally to her mother, who came to this Chamber, and her close relatives that also attended here that I would not fail her moving forward.

This is one of the reasons why I'm very proud to stand up and speak to this bill and I'm very proud of, again, my friend from Calgary-Hays for everything that he has done for this very important issue as well. I'd like to give credit to everyone involved, starting of course with the ministerial panel, who spent countless hours travelling around Alberta, hearing directly from those directly involved with the affected child intervention system.

But, Madam Speaker, I would be remiss in not mentioning a component that I did not see in this bill as it relates to a proposal that I previously had before this House related to an amendment to the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, that would compel adults – compel all adults – who know that a child is being abused to contact either the police or the child welfare director in their region. I thought it was something that was important. I thought it was common sense. I said that if a child is being abused, if a child is being sexually abused, physically abused, adults need to know that you cannot turn a blind eye – you cannot turn a blind eye – to a child at risk.

Then we had Serenity's mother and family here, and the government, sadly, said no to something that I thought was common sense. Now, the minister had indicated to me that the police just weren't on board with that. Well, Madam Speaker, as a retired police officer I went to the source, and I asked the president of the Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police. I said, "Hey, do you have an issue with this bill as it pertains to possibly helping children and maybe something could possibly be added into Bill 22, as an example?" and he responded to me and said: "No. The bill that you showed me, that you've just presented to me, I don't have an issue with." I don't have an issue with. I said, "Well, what did you have an issue with that the minister seemed to indicate that the police would not be in favour of?" "Well, Member, I saw a first draft, and in that first draft we had some concerns but nothing that we could

not work through.” So it is completely inaccurate that the Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police would not be supportive of a change in the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act that would compel all adults who know that a child is being abused to contact the police or the child welfare director.

So when the Member for West Yellowhead talks about failures, there’s a failure right there. That’s a failure right there, right in front of your face, and you and your government own that. Now, I promise that minister, that government, the previous government had flaws. No doubt.

When I was a member of the Alberta Secretariat for Action on Homelessness and just a young constable, I provided recommendations. It was I who identified youth homelessness as an issue in this province, Madam Speaker. Did the government act on it? No, they did not, and that goes back to what I’m saying, the failures of the previous government. They put the committees together, they did not listen, and here we are today.

But Bill 22, ma’am, stands out. What stands out to me in this bill is an overarching principle. The act must be interpreted and administered so that the safety and well-being of children are the paramount considerations. Again, let’s point to the lapel pin. It’s simple. It’s important. Let’s drill down and look at the principles that flow from that particular statement, Madam Speaker. Protection from harm, a child’s best interests, safety and well-being being paramount: if only that had applied to Serenity. But if we adopt this principle, and we ensure that it happens, then these positive steps will help other children today.

10:10

Let’s pull out another principle that was critical in Serenity’s case, Madam Speaker. It’s the lasting relationships with family, friends, caregivers, and others whom they have formed connections with. Serenity and her siblings had been thriving when they were sent to a home, where she died and her siblings were traumatized. For that reason, I’m especially pleased that the principle is part of the principles in Bill 22. It’s important.

For the record, Madam Speaker, Serenity’s siblings – we’re in contact with the family – are thriving. They of course experienced enormous trauma in the situation that they were placed, but they’re surviving, and I’m very proud of the positive stories that we are hearing coming from that family.

Madam Speaker, I just want to move to another area under the proposed legislation that makes me very happy, ensuring that decisions regarding a child receiving intervention services consider a number of key matters. I’ll pick out the importance of ensuring that if the child is capable of forming an opinion, it should be taken into account. The Child and Youth Advocate has mentioned this in other reports he has issued as well, and that is a very good thing.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I’m pleased to rise to speak to Bill 22. I was going to say that it’s the culmination of a long process; it isn’t actually, I think, the end of this process. I sincerely hope it isn’t. Having talked with the minister and some of my colleagues in the House, I truly believe that it is not an end, although I think we have to acknowledge that it is a very important step forward and has come out of a lot of the very good work done by the all-party child intervention panel.

The process: I think it’s important to remember how it is that we got here, and this is not something that has just come up. This has

been an ongoing challenge for the government of Alberta – certainly, events prior to this government coming into power. I think it’s important to never forget the late and very much missed Manmeet Singh Bhullar and the work that he did on this file, and ministers before and since, every one of whom I think in their heart had children’s interests at the forefront.

But I think we also have to acknowledge that there have historically been some tremendous shortcomings in Alberta’s child intervention system, and nowhere is that more true than in indigenous children’s experience, indigenous families’ experience with the child intervention system, that has for many, many, many years been an extension of a colonial attitude, which is manifest in residential schools and is manifest historically in the ‘60s scoop. And in many ways – we heard this from many indigenous people through the process – it feels like the child intervention system is really no different than those things. It is about separating indigenous kids from their families, and that must end. I believe that Bill 22 is an important step in the right direction. It’s not an end in itself – I don’t think we’re there yet – but I think it is an important step in the right direction.

The process itself was a very, very good process, and I want to thank the minister and the government for agreeing to make this a truly open, all-party, nonpartisan process. It is an emotional issue. It will continue to be an emotional issue. I would hope in the debate on this bill that we continue to do a good job of not making it a hard partisan issue, that we really focus on outcomes for children, which is why I think all of us are here.

I want to take this time on the record and formally to not just thank the minister but to thank the members who were on the panel, Madam Speaker, yourself included, members here in the House today who were part of that process: members from the United Conservative opposition who provided a lot of thoughtful input; the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, the Liberal caucus; members on the government side who provided tremendous insight and lived experience working with child intervention. Also, the experts that we had on the panel: Bruce MacLaurin from the University of Calgary, Tyler White from Siksika Health Services, Dr. Peter Choate from Mount Royal University, and the newly made senator Dr. Patti LaBoucane-Benson. They’re very proud of her for ascending to the Red Chamber in Ottawa, and I know she will represent Alberta, Métis people, indigenous people, and Ukrainians very well in the Senate. I’m very proud of the opportunity to have gotten to know all those people.

Most important, though, are all of the people who participated in the process, who came out, shared their deeply personal stories, and the opportunity we had in the all-party panel to travel the province, to travel and meet on-reserve in treaties 6, 7, and 8, to hold open houses around the province, to hear from Métis people, to hear from now adult children who have lived experience in the child intervention system. It was not a fast process. In fact, it needed to be a methodical and thoughtful process, and it was. It was that, so I give the minister and the government a lot of credit going back almost two years now, when this panel was first struck. The first iteration of it, frankly, wasn’t good enough. I was joined by members of the opposition side to call for changes to the terms of reference, and to the government’s credit they heeded those calls.

That process has resulted in this bill. I believe that it has taken us forward and we are in a better place. I would hope that the government would learn from this process that perhaps there are opportunities in other areas where we could follow a similar process, which I think would actually result in a little less noise in the Chamber and a little more in the way of thoughtful governance for our province. I would hope that that’s something we’d see more in the future regardless of who the next government would be. I can

assure you that if we find ourselves in that position, that's something you could hold me to. But this process itself was a very good one, and again I want to make sure that everyone knows that I believe it was a very positive process.

The details of the bill and I think where things will be improved for the children who find themselves in contact with the child intervention system and for their families – probably the number one thing that I'm happy to see is an increased emphasis on safety. As the minister has said, the previous Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act focused on survival, just their survival. I think that none of us want to simply survive. I think we want to be safe. We want to thrive. We want opportunity. So changing from the word "safety" being in the old act I believe it was one time – having not had a chance to count every single word – to I think it's upwards of 15 to 20 times that this word "safety" now appears in the amended act, that's a vast improvement.

The Member for Calgary-Hays had talked about the principles that we're talking about here. When we're making laws, we certainly do need to have black letter law. You do need to say that the rules enable you to do this or prevent you from doing that, to say that you must do these things in this order. That's important. It's very important in child intervention. But one of the things that we heard from the front-line child workers – and let me just pause at that point to mention the people from within the system, both the people on the front lines of the child intervention system, the management, and people who are policy makers and who work in oversight, people who work in agencies, foster parents themselves. These are all people who had come and spoken with the panel as well.

10:20

What we heard from the front-line workers in particular is that there is a procedure manual that is upwards of a thousand pages, and when there's an unfortunate incident, the thousand-page procedure manual becomes an 1,100-page procedure manual and then 1,200 pages, and who knows where it ends. While it is important that we have actual procedures and that we can't simply have a free-for-all, I think what is more important is that we have a principle that drives the work that we do.

We heard some really compelling stories, where, in fact, a front-line child intervention worker was sitting before the panel, sitting next to his boss, and said, "Here's a situation where I went outside the rules because in the moment it was the right thing to do for that child," and we had a good outcome as a result. He turned to his boss and said: I hope I'm not in trouble. Technically he was outside that thousand-page binder, but what he was doing was the right thing for that child in the moment, and it was a good outcome for that child.

Those are the kinds of things that I hope the 13 new matters to be considered when supporting child safety and well-being that are embedded in the act – I hope that we can move to a place where the best interests of the child, given all of the complexities and all of the context of that particular child's situation, are weighed and considered.

The other thing that we heard time and again from the panel is the importance of cultural connection, so the mandatory home study and cultural plan that's embedded in this act is a welcome change. I had a nice opportunity to talk with Adam North Peigan of the '60s scoop survivors' society yesterday, and he's very encouraged by that particular aspect of the bill, as am I. I think it's very, very important that as this moves forward, the minister, the government, and all of us continue to engage in dialogue with indigenous communities to ensure that, in fact, what we are intending in this bill is actually helping and that walking together and cocreating that

future, which is some of the terminology that has surrounded and framed the work that we've done and the reports and the outcomes – these are very important things. They shouldn't just be words on a piece of paper. They must be thoughtful actions that are put into practice every single day. I'm hopeful that that will be the case.

That, then, ties to First Nations automatically being notified of every application for private guardianship. There were cases that we heard repeatedly where indigenous communities would not know, would not be notified when children who were part of their community were subject to a private guardianship or permanent guardianship order. That exacerbated or really, frankly, was an indication of the continued colonial mindset, where kids are taken away. So ensuring that indigenous communities continue or will be engaged in that process is very important.

Then also consolidating all of those private guardianship applications under the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act as opposed to splitting them between the Family Law Act and the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, I think, will also help. As the minister said the other day, the best court proceeding is no court proceeding at all. If we can avoid getting to court in the first place, that's always preferable. Sadly, sometimes the courts do need to be involved. But ensuring that notification is a very, very important part of that.

Focusing on the child: you know, one of the things that I've observed in not just the child intervention system but in this huge machine that is government is that when an individual goes within and between different departments or their status changes – you turn 18; you turn 65; you hit a certain income threshold – you fall off a cliff. All of a sudden your supports are gone, or you need to know to apply somewhere else. So the fact that financial supports for permanency will not end when a child's guardianship changes: that in the past was a challenge. Those supports and that funding following the child: frankly, it's amazing that that wasn't the case in the past. It's unfortunate, but this bill would change that. I think that's really, really important.

Also, moving from the 16 matters that should be considered in all decisions offered too much latitude and flexibility. I talked earlier about the importance of principle. Sometimes it is also important to have some black letter laws, so the 13 matters that are to be considered, must be considered, when supporting child safety and well-being are welcome. The fact that those are also updated from the previous 16 is very important.

One area that I noted when I first saw the 13 changes, which I thought was important, was the identification of indigenous identity as one of the matters that must be considered. As we know, 70 per cent of kids in care are indigenous. That is a vast overrepresentation relative to the population of our province. I believe that less than 5 per cent of kids across the province are indigenous, but 70 per cent of those kids in care are indigenous. That's very important. Equally, cultural connections are important to indigenous people, but they're also important in Alberta's multicultural society. We talked about that with the minister when we discussed this bill first: those multicultural connections regardless of what the culture is should also be considered. I'm pleased to see that that is embedded in the bill.

I'll conclude my remarks by saying that the bill is an important step forward, but we're not done. I'm glad to hear the minister acknowledge that there's a phase 2 to this, which would come forward in future legislation and would address the questions that we heard about. The band designate and that role: that work is ongoing in consulting with indigenous communities and band designates to make sure that that is properly resourced and properly considered. While I will certainly vote in favour of this bill – and I

am optimistic about the future, and I think this is a turning point – it's important that we keep going. Rest assured, the Alberta Party caucus will continue to be steadfast in our pursuit of making sure that the promise of this bill is realized, that the changes that have been committed to going forward are in fact made, that the principles that are enshrined in this bill are followed.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I will now recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my honour to rise and speak to Bill 22, An Act for Strong Families Building Stronger Communities. I really want to reflect on how we got here before I kind of go into the premise of the context of the bill it's under. It's important as we debate this to know and recognize where we've come from.

Through you, Madam Speaker, I want to acknowledge that there are a significant number of kids in the gallery here today, and through you I would like to say that they're very lucky to be here because we're on our best behaviour right now.

Nonetheless, it's remarkable because when I look at the kids up in the gallery, I am reminded of one thing, which is that when all of us, whether it's myself, the previous speaker, the gentleman in our House wearing the lapel pin – we were never taught about the residential schools. For most of us it was not until we were in university, for many of us it was finding out second-hand or of our own volition, but we were never taught about this.

It was pretty remarkable a year ago, when I took my son to an indigenous event, the launch of indigenous week in Calgary. I sat him down, and I wanted to talk about residential schools with him because I knew that it would come up. I knew it would be a topic that is important for him to understand. When I asked him about it, he had already learned about it. He had learned about it from a lot of the schools, from a lot of amazing teachers, who I see up there as well, who have taken it upon themselves to inform kids about our history, recognizing that there were some positives that came out of the history of Canada and the colonizations and that there were some negative things that we needed to learn from. Unfortunately, residential schools were one of those things. It's led us to a situation where we have a very troublesome child intervention system, where 69 per cent of kids in government care are indigenous children.

It's imperative for us as a House to make sure that we follow through on our commitments with the TRC and with UNDRIP to solve these problems. I know that for our Premier this has been something that has been very important to her since she was an opposition member, and I know that it's important for many members in this House.

10:30

So I want to open by thanking all members of the ministerial panel, including myself, including yourself, Madam Speaker, and the members of the House who spent a vast amount of time thoroughly reviewing the process to bring forward recommendations that we have here today.

The Member for Calgary-Hays alluded to it, that this is a long road. It will be a very long road. It took over 150 years for us to get here, and we're going to have to work collaboratively with communities, side by side, to find solutions because we will continue to find hurdles in this. I do want to recognize that many things said here today acknowledge that this is one step, one step of many steps that we need

to take to improve our child intervention system. This legislation does continue that path that the ministerial panel set towards ensuring that every child in Alberta has a safe home, that we follow through with our commitments to work with our indigenous communities to allow our children to carry their cultural heritage.

I would like to echo the thanks that we had from the Member for Calgary-Elbow acknowledging Tyler White, Dr. Peter Choate, Bruce MacLaurin, and now Senator Patti Benson, who put in a lot of thorough work. It was really neat because everyone brought a different background to the table. I think that even when you looked at the panel members, from people who have lived experience as social workers to individuals who might not have any social work background at all, like myself, we brought a different perspective to the table as we crafted this and really looked at different ways that we could ask critical questions.

One thing that this piece of legislation acknowledges – and this is something that we all carry, and many of us carry this because, as I alluded to, our education is different than the children in the galleries – is that we carry an innate bias because we didn't learn about the truth of what happened with our indigenous children when they were growing up. As we look towards ensuring that all of the child reviews go through the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, it ensures that as children in care are growing up, they're learning about their cultural background and that we are ensuring that that is taken into serious consideration.

That's also very important because – and it's something that's not brought up as often but has to be considered when we're talking about our indigenous communities in Alberta – half of our indigenous communities don't live on-reserve. Half of our indigenous Albertans are living in urban settings. The Member for West Yellowhead talked about the challenges that he faces in the fact that there were no land settlement claims in his area. We run into a risk where, when we talk about learning of one's cultural heritage and learning about where they've come from and their religious, spiritual beliefs, if we don't look at every perspective, they lose those beliefs.

It reminds me of a constituent I actually ran into when I was door-knocking a couple of summers ago. She was a victim of the '60s scoop. It wasn't until she became an adult that she actually started discovering and researching and trying to determine her identity. It's neat now because she's able to contribute to the community in a very positive way, but not everyone is given that opportunity. So it's imperative, as we place children in care, that we take that into consideration.

We also realistically are looking at ensuring that we're informing our First Nation stakeholders, the responsible bands, about when a child is going into care so that they can have a voice in the conversation, they can be part of the conversation, and then they can help lead us as a government and as a ministry to do what is best for that child in care. When we were in the ministerial panel and we talked with some of our First Nations stakeholders and leaders, it was neat to see this perspective. You know what? I hope I actually grow as a parent by hearing this perspective, where we talked about how the child is in the middle and that we have the community wrapped around the children. That is the approach that as a government we should take, that it's not just governments that have to decide these things – this is how we've gotten into these troubles before – but that we as a whole community wrap around that one child and ensure that that child has the best upbringing and the best living when they are growing up.

The other thing that was very important to take into consideration – and I do acknowledge the alarming rate, that 69 per cent of children in care are indigenous. But one of the things that was added to matters

of consideration, which I think really stands out, is that the child's race, spiritual beliefs, colour, gender, gender identity, gender expression, age, ancestry, place of origin, family status, sexual orientation, and any disabilities the child may have are put into consideration. That's important because it also needs to be recognized that there are children from many other cultural backgrounds that are put into the child intervention system.

This was something that we recognized and focused on. Whether this child is coming from a First Nations background or from a different ancestry, if their parents were refugees or permanent residents or immigrants: this gets put into consideration and we ensure that these children are given the resources to know about their heritage and know about their culture. That's, to be honest, what makes Canada so great, that we can all stand up here and celebrate what makes us unique and where we've come from. It's something that I think this legislation encompasses to make sure that we ensure that we do not give up as well.

The other thing that we've talked about, too, is that the director will make sure that we look at serious injuries. That's imperative, too, because in the past we have been very responsive only to deaths that generally occur. When a serious injury or serious incident occurs, it's an opportunity for us to look at the practice and learn from that practice and to grow from that. I remember in the ministerial panel that many members brought up some concerns that we don't necessarily look at the serious incidents and serious responses that happen.

Now, you know, I'd be remiss to not say that I wish we were never in a situation where we would have had to strike a ministerial panel, but the time that we were brought together was a very sort of pivotal time because it was a time in which we had started to move forward with our commitments to the TRC and UNDRIP. But it was also a time where we had learned so much from data analytics, which Bruce MacLaurin brought a lot of to the table, and also a lot of research that we have been able to take from areas of mental health and other academic and field research, that has allowed us to learn about things like the psychological trauma, even the psychological trauma that comes from a child being removed from their parents and from their guardians. What we learned and the emerging practices should always be what guide us when we are writing legislation and we are following through.

Ensuring that every five years an all-party committee is struck to review this legislation is very important to ensure that we carry on best practices in the field, that the field continues to evolve, and that we continue to get the proper feedback from our First Nations stakeholders and from all stakeholders on how to guide this practice, because many of them recognize that it's taken a long time for us to get here. We are starting to see some amazing practices coming out from other provinces that are charting the same path that we are, so it's imperative that we move forward from those.

With that being said, if we talk about the parameters for where we place children, that safety has become very imperative, that we ensure that safety is a key focus, and that we give a bit more discretion to that determination while recognizing innate biases that may exist, our having more explicit safety concerns and feedback is going to ensure that we have a proper system for all children there.

10:40

The other thing that we heard consistently in the ministerial panel was about supports to children and making sure that we provide the proper wraparound supports and that these things follow our kids who are in care. That's an important imperative because consistently we do hear about challenges between, across jurisdictions. Ultimately, as we talked about the focus on putting the child in the middle and that we ensure that the supports that our

government is providing follow that child as well, because realistically it's about working with that child – whether those supports are done through family guardianship or returned to the parent or if we're even looking at foster care, that will allow for the child to get the best supports needed.

It was also interesting because in our travels with the ministerial panel we spoke with a lot of foster parents. We spoke with a lot of people who had adopted indigenous children. Reflecting back to the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act setting up a path to ensure that the child has cultural connectivity, a lot of these parents – some who were nonindigenous had indigenous children – really appreciated having those supports and being able to work with communities and having a guided plan to ensure that their child had that cultural connectivity and that they were able to learn about their heritage and their background because they knew that at the end of the day it would help that child flourish and grow and it would help them as parents to be able to best support their children and, whether as foster parents or adoptive parents, do the best job that is possible for them.

With that being said, I look forward, as we move through the process of this bill, to hearing from all members, and I'm excited to support this as one of many steps that our government will be taking to ensure that we improve the lives of children in care.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I'll now recognize the hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise today and speak to Bill 22, An Act for Strong Families Building Stronger Communities. Where to start? There's a lot of stuff in this legislation, that was tabled just yesterday, and I will appreciate the opportunity to have a fulsome debate on this as the days come and be able to take this back to my constituents for some feedback.

I have a few things that I would like to say upon my initial reading of this piece of legislation. First, actually kind of buried near the end of this legislation, it says:

- (d) the response of the Minister's department to recommendations in a report made by the Child and Youth Advocate under section 15 of the Child and Youth Advocate Act, if the recommendations relate to this Act or the administration of it;
- (e) the response of the Minister's department to recommendations in a report made under section 53 of the Fatality Inquiries Act, if the recommendations relate to this Act or the administration of it.

Madam Speaker, I would be remiss to not point out that that is why we are here. When the report on Serenity was tabled in this House and opposition members asked what the minister was going to do in regard to recommendations of the report, the minister refused to give anything except that he has received the recommendations of this report, would refuse to act on any of the recommendations in this report. This Assembly lost it and rightfully so. The public was upset. The opposition was upset. Serenity, a little child who was so badly abused: no one cared. This government wasn't acting like they were caring.

Madam Speaker, I was pleased that after cries from the opposition, emergency debate, this panel was put together. I wish it was a legislative panel and done in a more transparent and open and public way, where all members could participate, if not at the table at least be able to listen, but that was not the case. I'm grateful for the work that the members on that panel did. There was a lot of travelling over the summer months. I do appreciate that.

I'll start at the back of this legislation for the start of my chat. Madam Speaker, I'm just going to point out some of the changes that I see in this legislation and make some highlights for the benefit of this Assembly. One of the changes here, under section 4, is in section 2.

- (d) the benefits to the child of lasting relationships with the people with whom the child is connected, including family, friends, caregivers and other significant individuals.

Madam Speaker, there was a policy that has appeared in a number of government documents that highlights unlimited reunification attempts with child and family, kinship caregiver providers. There is no mention in this piece of legislation in regard to safety in this particular area. During the visits of the child during a reunification attempt, what is the measure? What is the process? Who is checking these homes? Does that matter? I think it does. It most certainly does. At what point do we stop? At what point is it no longer in the best interests of the child to have such an unstable situation over and over and over again?

Madam Speaker, I have a very close personal friend who's been waiting five years to have some sort of stability in their home for an indigenous child that they have been taking care of since he was just a baby. They've gone through unlimited reunification attempts with the family – with the parents, with the grandparents – and the band, that's refused to accept this child although he should be theirs. He's been put in very unsafe situations. He's been put into a visit situation with his father where there have been four other criminals in that home, and no one checked it. This child comes back screaming. His emotional and mental health has absolutely deteriorated because of this situation that has continued to happen. Yet I don't see this addressed in this bill.

Emphasized in here is

- (g) the importance of stability, permanence and continuity of care and relationships to the child's long-term safety and well-being.

That's highlighted in here. That's not what's happening, Madam Speaker.

- (j) any decision concerning the placement of the child outside the child's family must include a plan to address the child's need for permanent, formalized ties to people who care about the child and must take into account . . .

Above all, that should be what's talked about.

It actually took until the government's third speaker to mention the safety of the children. Culture is extremely important, and there are lessons that we have learned more significantly over the past number of years. Culture is important, and I'm so happy to see that that is what's in here. Safety is important, too, Madam Speaker.

- (i) the benefits to the child of a placement within the child's extended family, or with persons who have a significant relationship with the child.

It needs to be clarified: not always blood. Not always blood. There are so many people in our society that have children whom they love and have created long relationships with. We all hear about these stories in our constituency offices, about these children in kinship care, in foster homes, where they have been with these families for 12 years and a long-lost relative is found, and now all of a sudden that relationship is not important. That's not okay. At what point do we ask ourselves and point out that it's detrimental to the child, who should be our priority here?

10:50

The part that was omitted from this legislation was in the previous section 2(d) and reads:

A child who is capable of forming an opinion is entitled to an opportunity to express that opinion on matters affecting the child,

and the child's opinion should be considered by those making decisions that affect the child.

I know that part was removed and that there's a different section that says that the opinion of a child over the age of 12 is to be considered in a matter of the court. It's good that that age is clarified, but a five-year-old has a very close connection with his mom even though she's not the tummy mommy, Madam Speaker, and his or her decision should be factored in as well.

Perhaps the government could clarify the rationale behind the age that appears later, in section 8.

A private guardianship order shall not be made without the consent in the prescribed form of

- (a) the guardian of the child, and
- (b) the child, if the child is 12 years of age or older.

I appreciate that the guardian of the child is considered to be a voice in this matter whereas the only change from the previous was that they removed:

(c) a director, if a director is not the guardian of the child. I would like some clarity around the age of 12 because I think children have a voice and have a say, and that should be absolutely considered in these situations, Madam Speaker.

Clause (m) in this same section, 4, reads:

There should be no unreasonable delay in making or implementing a decision respecting the child.

How do we provide accountability? I need some clarity on that, Madam Speaker. We know in many, many cases that this has been falling through the cracks and there's been no permanency, there's been no stability for many children who are in care in our province. That's not okay.

That's what's highlighted here, the biggest thing: the act must be interpreted and administered so that the safety and the well-being of children are of paramount consideration. Again, the act must be interpreted and administered so that the safety and well-being of children are of paramount consideration. We have to remember that in every single section of this.

I understand that this is part 1 of 3 in legislation to come in regard to the findings of the child panel. I hope to be able to offer some words of my constituents in regard to the making of that legislation, and I will be putting forward amendments to the legislation that we see before us here today, Madam Speaker.

In section 5, section 52 is amended. Just a question on this.

Notwithstanding any other enactment, a person may not apply to any court to be appointed as a guardian of a child who is [currently] in the custody of a director, or is the subject of a temporary guardianship . . . or a permanent guardianship . . . order.

"Not" is the word that's added. Before it was, "any adult may apply to the Court in the prescribed form for a private guardianship . . ." So why is it now "not"? A question around that. I would like some clarity. I know we can do that in Committee of the Whole. I just don't understand that part of this section.

I would like to highlight what I think is actually really great, the notice to the bands. If a First Nations member is to serve in court, they must be notified within 30 days. I think that's a good move towards stability and permanency in the system. And it's a way to engage family members in the beginning stages as opposed to, you know, five, six, seven, 10, 12 years down the road, when strong bonds are made. Then it gets a whole lot trickier, Madam Speaker.

In section 53.1(1), band participation in proceedings:

A band that is required to be served with notice of an application under section 53(1.1) may attend Court the first time the matter is heard in Court and may make submissions to the Court regarding the band's participation in the proceedings.

A lot of this actually, really, does seem common sense as long as proper notification has happened. If a band chooses not to have a

representative at the court during those proceedings, it probably would be unfair for them to attend at a later time, in the middle. However, I question that there may not be room for error, that, as we know, all humans are guilty of, Madam Speaker.

Sorry. I made a couple of notes all over this thing. I absolutely need more time to be able to do that. I will give notice now that I will be putting forward an amendment to section 105.71.

Mental health has not been considered actually anywhere in this legislation. Nothing. There's nothing in there. That's so significantly important. There's a significant amount of trauma, as was actually mentioned by another hon. colleague in this Assembly, that occurs when families are separated, when a child is removed from the home and sometimes put into a culture shock. Either way, it's a traumatizing situation for these children and for the family members in so many significant ways, close ones and distant relatives, Madam Speaker.

In subsection (d)

(i) "serious injury", in respect of a child is clarified in here. It means

(ii) a life-threatening injury to the child, or an injury that may cause significant impairment of the child's health.

"Or mental health" should be added. We have done great work around advancing and lessening the stigma of mental health in our province and in our country. We talk about PTSD. You know, we talk about childhood trauma. We know lots about early childhood education.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek.

Ms Woollard: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm really happy to be speaking in support of Bill 22, An Act for Strong Families Building Stronger Communities. Like many of the speakers before me, I come at this from a point of view of having spent a long time working in various parts of Alberta, a lot of time working in indigenous communities, First Nation communities. A couple of things really made an impression on me, and I was thinking about them as we spoke.

I spent one year working within a First Nations community, working with a member of the community for a full year, working in a portable, you know, where we had, like, 22, 23 children. You get to know people quite well when you're there so much. I grew to just value her understanding and knowledge of the community and her ability to work with children really highly and also came to appreciate so much the importance of listening and working to develop relationships. And I think a lot of what we're doing here is going to come down to that.

We have to have the trust of the people we work with, we have to listen to people and find out what their concerns are, and we have to develop the relationship enough so that we can find out what is important. In the past there have been far too many assumptions made as to how our procedures and laws needed to be enforced, and it just didn't work.

I wound up continuing to keep in touch with the woman I worked with, and she still does fantastic work in the school. She is so highly regarded by all the community. If I were to work up in that area of northern Alberta again, she's the first person I would be in contact with to find out what's going on and who to talk to.

11:00

But half of it – and I learned this in a lot of communities in northern Alberta – is listening to people. People aren't going to come straight out, necessarily, and say, "I need this or this or this,"

but they're going to tell you their stories, and they're going to help you understand where they're coming from and what they're hoping for, especially what they're hoping and what their goals are for their children. If you don't understand that and if you don't understand what they're bringing to the lives of themselves and their children, you're not going to be able to make much of a difference. To make changes we have to learn to listen and communicate, and I think this bill goes a way to supporting those actions.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

When I talk about communicating, I was reading through and I was thinking that it's lovely talking about how people are enabled to take part, to go to court, you know, be advised of measures involving children, but then we have to make sure that they understand where they will go if they want to speak on behalf of the child, and how will they get there. Transportation is an issue all over our rural areas, and if people don't have a way to get there and if a family is impoverished and needs help to get gas so they can make it to court, then that's important, and that's a part of the process we need to take to make sure that they will be involved.

We need to make sure we communicate in a way that's understandable to people. I know of many people, not necessarily indigenous, who are intimidated by our bureaucratic communication. They will get a letter from government and just put it to one side because it is gobbledegook to them, and it is really important to recognize when that is an issue. Not to be condescending, not to talk down but to make sure that the meaning is clear and also the forms of communication.

Talking to my former coworker from up north makes me realize, too, the importance of building relationships. When we have our caseworkers and our people that work with children, we need to really work on having consistency so people can develop a relationship with the workers so that they know who to talk to and they know how to go about securing help to find out what they need to know. A lot of the points people made earlier were on the same topic. A lot of it is getting down to human interconnection, interaction.

We have to be flexible, too. We have to have our actions be flexible enough so that if someone wants to come and speak about their concerns about a child or someone they know, their own child or someone else's, but they need somebody to come and be supportive for them, we can make that happen. We can allow that. We have to be really careful not to be overly rigid. So consistency of caregivers, flexibility, developing relationships, and building trust.

You know, it always amazed me and impressed me that all the families I would meet with in northern Alberta did trust the schools to take good care of their children. They would place them into their care for days and years at a time. We have to work to maintain that trust. As Children's Services we have to make sure that they do trust the system. To do that we have to show that we are trustworthy, and we have to make sure that we continue putting our words into practice.

I think this is a good bill. I think it's a really important one. It's really going to be important that people, everywhere they come into this – in Children's Services, if it's the children, the parents, the caregivers, anybody involved – are all part of the process and are all involved and respected.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to stand to talk about Bill 22 and the important principles that are part of this reading because this is about establishing core principles that will serve to guide not only these changes but two future phases of changes.

I was privileged to be part of the ministerial committee and want to join others who are celebrating the hard work of not only the committee itself but the tremendous sacrifices and efforts put forward by the staff of the child intervention system, including those on the reserve and those in the contracted agencies that provide many of these critical services, which, if we are true to the foundational principles of this Legislature, which have been reiterated over the time that I've been here, are to put children first. These are children and families that are critically challenged, and I was very pleased to be part of this important committee review, admittedly spurred by a very tragic incident, the Serenity case, and initiated around the whole death review process and how it still lacks transparency in some eyes.

On the other hand, there were real concerns in the indigenous community that in making names public, they weren't respecting some of the traditions and cultural practices and confidentiality of some of the community and the impacts that making a public statement or a public reference to a child who had either died or was seriously injured in care might have on their families, so wrestling with that in the first instance, with that whole balance between the right of the public to know and the right of families to have some privacy and confidentiality, and the timing that suited their family and their adjustments most appropriately.

This particular bill, Bill 22, focuses almost entirely, as it should, on the first priority of indigenous children because they are such a big part of the children-in-care experience, close to 70 per cent in this last year. It reflects the long history of trauma and cultural genocide that these folks have experienced.

To those in our western culture who still say to me, "They should get over it," I say, "You don't get over the profound loss of everything that makes you human, that makes you a culture, that makes you an identity." The loss of roots, values, communications is so profound that we can't even register a connection to these profound intergenerational losses that leave people rootless and confused and in many ways further traumatized in a series of systems that are so oriented to western white culture that it not only doesn't help in many of the systems that we've developed – education, health care, social services – but it actually further traumatizes in many cases the very people that they say they're there to help, not deliberately but because of the lack of understanding of the tremendous cultural damage that has been experienced by indigenous people.

I want to say a little bit about the foundational issues that I think are missing here. They are mentioned in our recommendations but, again, need to be raised every time we talk about culture and disadvantage and intergenerational trauma, and that is social determinants of health. These folks have not had the educational supports, the environmental supports, the social supports, the health supports, the income, the jobs, the prosperity in their culture that are absolutely foundational to being secure, to being well, to being able to cope with the stresses and strains that we all cope with every day: the losses, the injuries, the traumas that we may experience.

11:10

We have resilience because we have many of these social determinants that many of these folks, most of these folks, do not have and that are transmitted, then, to the children. We have this perpetual cycle of lack of supports, lack of security, and the need to intervene with respect to children's safety and health, but in so

doing, we run the risk of further traumatizing the family and further separating children from their roots and values.

This bill appropriately focuses on what we can do in the immediate, but it does not, to my mind, say enough about the social determinants of health, poverty, employment, and culturally sensitive education and health systems that would actually start to address in a preventative way the ongoing challenges that we're going to be facing with our fastest growing population, our indigenous population. We must get at the root issues here – not only psychological trauma but ongoing physical trauma, drug addiction, mental health issues in these communities – with wraparound supports and a serious commitment to getting at the root issues that create stability, create health, create the ability to respond to the traumas that are a part of everyone's lives but a significant part of our indigenous community.

The other thing I need to say in relation to the principles involved in this bill is that placing urgent health and safety issues can mean ignoring further long-term trauma from separation, loss of culture, family and kinship support, and fundamental security that contributes to the success over the next 20 or 30 years of this individual, their success in the workplace, their success in family life, their success in work life, and their very self-esteem.

The other issue that this bill does not address and that I want to highlight again because it must not be lost regardless of what happens in the next government is one of the very recurring themes that we heard around the table, and that was the importance of a band designate, a person in each indigenous band that has a responsibility to be a link between the western social support in child and family services and the band child and family support services.

But there's nobody there to make that link and make that communication and plan together about on- and off-reserve. Because many of these children are going on- and off-reserve with either care or counselling or various services that are needed, this band designate stood out as being not recognized, not supported, not consistently present, and frustrated in their ability to deliver on the very services that they were charged with by the chief and council – they're appointed by the chief and council – and frustrated with the families who want to see more co-ordination between on- and off-reserve services.

They are a critical piece of this, and I'm disappointed that the band designate issue could not have been dealt with now, before we get into another chaotic election season and the potential for tremendous changes in government. That was a prominent issue that they brought to us that was critical to making these changes effective and appropriate.

I'm also, I will say, pleased to see the reference to all cultural groups and their sensitivities, their importance in all child services interactions. It's a new, to me, although welcome recognition that culture and tradition and spiritual practices have a very foundational place in recovering a sense of identity, a sense of family and culture, stability. The growth and pride in this culture has to come based on so much of what we heard from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and, certainly, the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. Those are foundational to this, and I applaud the government for building on those in a very significant way in relation to indigenous people but also now in this bill recognizing all cultures as having legitimacy and importance in the child care and intervention system.

I myself have friends working in the various cultural communities and the education system in Calgary who tell me stories that would really shock many of us about the trauma and difficulties of many of the new Canadians and their cultures as well. So it was very important for me to see in this bill the recognition

that all cultures have an equal right to having qualified, experienced people in those cultures being a part of the transition planning and the ongoing counselling and service provision and service planning that goes on to reduce failure in the fostering and guardianship processes.

I'll loop back and just talk a bit about what the outcomes of this bill will be because I've simply talked about principles and applauded the government for taking the recommendations of this committee and moving on them in a very substantial way, if in a limited fashion and somewhat – well, almost entirely – focused on the indigenous community.

This bill will require that an indigenous child's First Nation must be formally notified of any application for private guardianship to allow them to make representation. It will require that all private guardianship applications must be made under a single statute, which the bill designates as the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act. Presently private guardianship applications can also be made under the Family Law Act. However, unlike the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, the Family Law Act does not require a mandatory home assessment. A shocking realization in my experience on the committee was that mandatory home assessments were not required. Any international adoption and fostering required that, but somehow it wasn't the case here.

This bill will require that anyone who wishes to become the permanent guardian of a child must first undergo a mandatory home assessment by government social workers and be approved. It requires a cultural connection plan to be written for every indigenous child subject to a private guardianship order. Again, I'd like to ensure that that extends itself to other cultural groups as well.

This bill requires funding to follow a child instead of being tied to the guardian so that financial support isn't lost or delayed if the guardian dies or is unable to continue in that role and responsibility for the child moves to another caregiver. It will require courts and caseworkers to consider 13 culturally themed criteria in making a decision involving a child's welfare, including whether to remove them from the home at all. Presently culture is listed as only one of 16 matters to be considered.

This bill will require the government to publicly report every death, injury, or serious incident involving a child within four business days. Again, I think that was a very contentious issue and needs to be revisited at some point to ensure that we're sensitive to each individual family's case and circumstances if we're really interested in protecting the family and those siblings that may be left in the home from unwanted traumatic experience relating to that public disclosure before they're ready, before they have prepared themselves to deal with the fallout.

The bill will require the Minister of Children's Services to post findings and recommendations made after government reviews of every death, injury, or serious incident involving a child within one year and publicly respond to any external recommendations. Much of this will now fall to the office of the Child and Youth Advocate as we have through this committee made recommendations that were quickly adopted and moved to the responsibility of the Child and Youth Advocate, who has a very important role and an independent role, I might add, that is critically important for this to be a credible role at all in analysis.

I would just point out parenthetically that we were hoping that we would see the disability child advocate be independent of government for the same reason, so that this could be a bona fide, independent, credible critic of services to children and youth with disabilities. Unfortunately, the government did not choose to do that, but we will continue to watch that development and do applaud the government for creating the position. Now, let's make it a credible position for the disabled or differently abled children and

youth, many of whom actually fall into this category because many of these children, 7,000 I understand in Alberta, cannot find adoptive homes, largely because of their disabilities.

11:20

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I had the honour of serving with the Member for Calgary-Mountain View on the panel, as I mentioned earlier in my comments. A lot of the things he's talking about, I think, are important. I would like to hear more of his thoughts, specifically on the need for the periodic review and what his thoughts are on what should be in scope for that review, timing and those sorts of things.

The Deputy Speaker: Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Well, thank you. I'm happy to rise and extend my thanks to my colleague from Calgary-Elbow, who was also a very active and vigorous participant in this committee, contributed a lot.

I was referring to the 7,000 children in Alberta who do not seem to be adopted and do not seem to come into care in a sustained way, in a permanent way, because in spite of many people looking to adopt children, these 7,000 kids with disabilities are not a priority for many families, so many of these will fall to guardianship experiences with the government and, unfortunately, go through many different care settings. There are some unique situations in the province that still need to be addressed in order to try and provide the best developmental opportunities, health and safety and development of these children.

I was also pleased to see in this bill a recognition that we need to review these services. Children must be first. In fact, I think every bill that we review in this House should go through a screening of: how is this going to impact our children, present and future? That should be a fundamental criteria of every policy we develop in this place. And to review this every five years, to me, is a very important and responsible thing to do because clearly this practice is a sensitive one that has many dimensions to it. It says that we've recognized that perhaps one of the most important roles that our government has is the care and management of our most vulnerable children. And that needs to be reviewed periodically.

I'm particularly concerned, though, that we get on to phase 2 and phase 3. Whatever government takes over in the new year or balance of people there are in the Legislature, I hope there will be a serious commitment to following through on phases 2 and 3 of the amendments and changes to the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act and the Family Law Act, which clearly have some, as the recommendations state, need for amendment.

Thanks, Madam Speaker. That's all I have to say. I welcome further discussion of the principles involved here and whether or not we've covered them and whether this bill covers them adequately.

The Deputy Speaker: Any further questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Just a question for the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View. I commented on the lack of any mention in this piece of legislation in regard to mental health, and I was wondering, because you were a member on the panel and attended many of those events and certainly have an expertise in that area: would you be able to maybe answer some questions or share some concerns in regard to the lack of mental health mentioned in this first piece of legislation?

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much. I think that's something close to my heart. Certainly, we did discuss it around the table repeatedly because much of the root of these children needing care had to do with mental health and addiction issues in this large indigenous cohort that we see every year requiring public care.

Mental health and addictions are a recurring theme, and they were discussed as being not appropriate in many cases for indigenous communities. They're western based. They're culturally blind. In many cases our mental health and addiction issues focus on pharmaceuticals. They are still struggling with racism, that many indigenous people communicated was entirely unhelpful when they reach out for help with either addiction or mental health issues. There is a real need for the same kind of cultural lens and cultural learning to happen within health, including mental health and addiction services. A real cultural shift has to happen in our own services to really make appropriate connections with indigenous populations.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other speakers to the bill? Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak to Bill 22, An Act for Strong Families Building Stronger Communities. Here we are, November 1. Welcome to November 1, 2018, everyone. We're in a digital age, yet I notice on our desks we have paper calendars that we still manually move out of our desk. So everybody can take their paper, throw it in the garbage, and now we're in November. It's November 1, 2018, and we're still learning. We're still needing to improve. We still have work to do, and I'm glad to be here to help and contribute to the work that's being done to improve our Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act.

The question is: how did we get here, and where are we going? You know, we take a look at how we got here. This update is as a result of the work that's been done by the Alberta all-party ministerial panel, the child intervention panel, formed after the death of Serenity, a four-year-old First Nations girl who was a ward of the state living in kinship care before she died in a tragic story, in a story that has gripped us all to the point of: we can do better, and we must do better. So where are we going?

I understand this is the first of three stages that the minister has identified for updates to the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act. The changes to Alberta's child welfare system under Bill 22, this first stage, will largely centre on First Nations needs. According to the *Edmonton Journal* this morning – I was reading the report from Emma Graney – of the 10,647 children currently receiving intervention services in Alberta, 6,547 are indigenous. That translates into 61 and a half per cent. You know, that number varies, I'm sure, up and down a little bit here and there, but we as a society can and must do better to help serve these children and their families.

One thing that strikes me with Bill 22 is that I believe the bill is around the safety of the children but also around the communications that we have within our society and how we can learn from each other. Even in 2018 we can continue to learn from each other and do better for these children. We all understand that life does have difficulties, and as a society we as communities and as families try and work through these difficulties as best we can. It is incumbent upon us to recognize each of our individual roles in helping to improve the situation. We have a job to do here with helping to improve legislation. There are people that are out on the front lines working day to day with individual cases that have a job to do.

It's very interesting that as an elected official we do have the opportunity, and not everybody in our society has the opportunity,

to do a ride-along. My son-in-law is an RCMP officer, and I got to do a ride-along with him this summer and see some of the work that he is also charged with doing within the community. Some of it is dealing with disadvantaged families and some of the struggles that they're going through, to help along with that.

So every member of society has a role. We have a role here today in this House to try bring forward legislation that will help, and I believe Bill 22 is a good start. It's a good step towards improving the recognition of culture in families, in how that dynamic plays out in the lives of children.

11:30

I was very fortunate as a young child. I grew up in the '60s and the '70s. My uncle and aunt adopted five children. They were of indigenous descent, and these five are the cousins that I grew up with, playing with day in and day out. You know, we look at that and we say that there was good to that, but there was also negative to the fact that they were removed from their culture. We try and improve and do better going forward. And these cousins – three are alive yet today. I hold them very near and dear to my heart because they were part of my childhood and my upbringing. It was never ever really recognized that they were any different, and they weren't. They were part of the family. So our experience – we can all bring something to the table to try and help to guide the way we move forward, and I value their input in this discussion because they have lived many decades of trying to understand it themselves.

As it stands right now, the First Nations leadership has no role to play in court processes involving band member children. That communication has to start. It needs to be there. Bill 22 will change that. First Nation leaders are also not being made aware that children are being adopted out and off-reserve, often into non First Nations households, or of children being the subject of a guardianship order. Bill 22 changes this with automatic notification to First Nations of court process, adoption, and guardianship of their children. Again, communication. We need to have that open communication and understanding. There is also need of protection of individual rights and individual identification, that type of thing, that we have to work through.

According to the minister at the press conference yesterday every child will be given a mandatory home study, a cultural connection plan, and ongoing supports that meet their needs. Every case is an individual case, and we have to recognize that and try to, as a society, in the best interests of the child and the safety of the child, work together with families and communities identifying what's in the best interest of that child.

In cases where the guardian dies, moves away, or changes, funding supports have not followed the child in the past, and I believe this is wrong. Funding for services such as counselling, respite care, transportation, and others will now follow the child, and that's an important step to move forward, to help recognize some of the pitfalls before.

The courts and caseworkers are mandated to look at every facet of a child's well-being before making decisions to remove them from a home, apply a guardianship order, or make other decisions. Under Bill 22 the Children's Services minister becomes responsible for key reports about children in care, and the department will have four days to post online all deaths, injuries, and serious incidents. So a very tight timeline there, and I believe that's also good.

We have all learned from Adam North Peigan, president of the Sixties Scoop Indigenous Society of Alberta, who was also in the article this morning in the *Edmonton Journal* on Bill 22.

If we look at the atrocities of the Sixties Scoop and what happened with children's services coming into our communities

and removing our kids, it really took the onus off the Indigenous people from any kind of decision-making whatsoever . . .

What this bill does is it allows Indigenous communities to have more input and more decision-making in what's in the best interests of our kids.

In order to properly serve these children as a society, we need to continue to learn from each other.

The updated act will be governed by a set of guiding principles. I believe that these principles are a good starting point to help us develop the system as we move forward. We are essentially, one, protecting children from harm, identifying, highlighting the safety of these children. Two, the importance of community and family in a child's life, recognizing that this is an important part of the identity of that child and trying to protect that. We can recognize that the children benefit from maintaining connections and relationships going forward and try to protect that and keep that as a high priority, a guiding principle. Indigenous peoples should be involved in the planning and decisions impacting their families and their children. These are all good principles to begin with. I suspect we may find that there are more principles that can be added that will help the act to become more fulsome and to continue to evolve over time.

Madam Speaker, this looks like common sense. It is a shame that such common sense became so uncommon in the child welfare system, but I do believe that we continue to learn, even in 2018. We're in 2018, and we're still learning. We're still trying to improve the systems that we have in place, and we will continue to improve and recognize where there can be improvement. I am pleased to recognize in Bill 22 also the review, every five years a review, meaning a wholesome review to make sure that we are not saying, "Okay, we're going to go through these three stages and we're done and we've perfected it," because I believe that we will again find some pitfalls that we can do better. It's important that we identify and learn from mistakes in the past. Under Bill 22 survival of the child is no longer good enough. Safety is paramount.

When we are done with Bill 22, we are not done here. As I mentioned, I am told that there are two more stages coming to update the act. But, more importantly, the debate does not stop. There will be a mandatory review of the act every five years, and that way we are able to assess and evaluate our performance and make the changes that are needed on a continual basis. We will never ever forget Serenity or the other children that have died in our child welfare system who shocked us into making these changes.

Throughout the all-party child intervention panel process stakeholders seemed nervous that we as legislators would not support kinship care. Kinship care is a positive thing. What happened in Serenity's case was criminal, and there were missteps along the way. I think we all recognize that now. It was not an issue with kinship care. It was in our delivery of the system that highlighted this difficulty.

Now, according to the minister's briefing on Bill 22, Bill 22 will now require that all private guardianship applications must be made under the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, which automatically triggers a comprehensive home study and cultural connection plan. Previously these private guardianship applications could also be made under the Family Law Act, which did not require the home study and cultural connection plan. The question did arise: does this now mean that all children in divorce proceedings and other proceedings such as that will now get a home visit or cultural plan study? I think we could get some clarification on that.

Madam Speaker, as I've said, I believe this is a good step forward. I encourage everyone to have a fulsome discussion. We also recognize that failures have been done in the past, failures are in the present, but we can't be sitting here in the blame game. We need to identify where failures are, own those, and move forward. The best way we can move forward is to work together towards solutions.

11:40

I look forward to hearing more debate and learning more about the bill in detail in the days ahead. With that, Madam Speaker, I would move to adjourn debate at this time.

[Motion to adjourn debate lost]

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Any other speakers to the bill?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

Hon. member, you moved it on behalf of the minister. Would you like to close debate on behalf of the minister?

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's been a wonderful morning listening to the discussion and the debate regarding this really important bill, and I look forward to hearing further discussion on it.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 22 read a second time]

Mr. Feehan: Madam Speaker, we've accomplished much this morning and noticing the time, I would like to recommend that we close for this morning and reopen at 1:30.

I'd also like to invite everyone in the House and everyone listening to join us for the Métis flag raising occurring at the Federal Building at 12:30 this afternoon. We'd love to see you all there.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:42 a.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, November 1, 2018

Day 44

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, November 1, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek.

Ms Woollard: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm so happy to be introducing to you and through you some of the students from a wonderful school in my constituency, A. Blair McPherson. The students are accompanied by two teachers, Mrs. Amber Kryslar and Miss Aya Furusawa, and a parent helper, Mr. Chris Johnson. If the students and the teachers and the parent could all stand up please, we'd be delighted to give you the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Mr. Carson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you 33 amazing students from the Centre for Learning@Home. The students are accompanied by their teachers Kelsey Beaudette, Sarah Joseph, Tammy Zimmer, and Judy Kramer along with their chaperones Dana Lickiss, Brian Lear, Laura Sorenson, Beverly Berg, Sigerido Pachelo-Vega, Belinda Brodziak, and Karen Bergstreiser. I would ask them to please rise to receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other school groups today? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions today. First, I rise to introduce to you and through you Mr. Mike Zuege and Ramona Vervoort. They are joining us on a special milestone. Twenty-five years ago they moved from Germany to Canada, specifically the fabulous constituency of Edmonton-Castle Downs. Mike volunteers for various nonprofit organizations and continues to assist many newcomers to Canada. I'd like to thank him for his work. Thank you both for sharing your milestone with us today. I'd ask that you please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ms Goehring: I'm also joined today by members of my wonderful team from the Edmonton-Castle Downs constituency office. I'd like to introduce to you and through you Elizabeth Nugent, social work practicum student from the University of Calgary, and Delia Pirie, retired warrant officer, social work practicum student from MacEwan University, and retired Canadian Armed Forces member who has served two tours overseas in Afghanistan. They are here to view our proceedings in the House, and I would like to thank them for taking the time to attend today. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ms McKittrick: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two constituents from my community of Sherwood Park, Evert

Poor and his wife, Gisele Poor. Evert Poor is the recent recipient of the 2018 sovereign's medal for volunteers. Evert Poor has spent 17 years educating Albertans on their shared heritage and facilitating greater civic engagement in local communities. He's a role model in his community thanks to his work with indigenous groups, helping to nurture entrepreneurship, civic engagement, and greater diversity throughout northern Alberta. Evert and Gisele, I ask you to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two good friends of mine from the great town of Rocky Mountain House, the crown jewel of the David Thompson trail for sure, my friend Robert Duiker and his wife, Fran Duiker. Robert, first of all, is the principal of the Christian school in Rocky Mountain House, but he also was the president of the Progressive Conservative constituency association for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. He played a very important role in uniting the Conservative movement in this province, which we're grateful to him for. He currently sits on the United Conservative board in the area and is a great help to us. I would ask that they both stand up and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly Jack Neustaeter and Daveed Haidner. Both are grade 9 students in the French immersion program at l'école secondaire Beaumont composite high school. They are at the Assembly today on their PD day. What a good way to spend their day. The proceedings are of special interest to them given the focus of their grade 9 social studies on government and economics and the roles and responsibilities of citizens in decision-making processes. Jack and Daveed are seated in the members' gallery, and I ask that they stand as you join me in giving them the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Feehan: Mr. Speaker, I think my guests are still arriving from the Federal Building, so if I could delay, please.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce some of Alberta's pharmacy technicians and members of the Pharmacy Technician Society of Alberta, who are seated in the members' gallery. Pharmacy technicians are leaders in providing Alberta families quality pharmacy services, assisting with safe and appropriate medication use. I ask that Teresa Hennessey, Laura Miskimins, Brianne Feduniw, and Lorén Voice please rise and receive our warm welcome and our appreciation.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, my second introduction is to recognize patient advocates and members of the Alberta Pituitary Patient Society. Today is Acromegaly Awareness Day, an opportunity for health care providers as well as the general public to become better informed about the signs and symptoms of this very rare disease. I'd like to thank the society for its dedication to making each day

the best day possible for people who are living with acromegaly. I invite Sonja Durinck, Laura Graham, James McKee, and Mark Terpstra to please rise and receive our warm welcome. Thank you for helping us to increase awareness.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other visitors to be acknowledged today?

The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all the members of the House the Métis Settlements General Council executive and the settlement chairs on proclamation day for the Métis settlements of Alberta.

On this day 28 years ago the Alberta government worked with the settlements to create a first in Canadian history, a recognized land base for the Métis to call home and the establishment of a law-making authority and system for self-governance. This was the vision of Métis leaders such as Gabriel Dumont and Louis Riel and of the 1975 Alberta federation of Métis leaders, Adrian Hope, Maurice L'Hirondelle, Lawrence Desjarlais, Sam Johnston, and Richard Poitras. It is still the vision of the Métis leaders of today. On November 1 we celebrate everyone in the past, and today we will continue to work toward a brighter future for all settlement members. It is with them that I stand here today to proudly acknowledge and honour proclamation day and the Métis settlements' importance to the past, present, and future of our great province.

Our partnership has led to great work together. Many settlements are taking leadership roles in responding to climate change and seizing opportunities to gain an ownership stake in diversifying Alberta's energy sector. Our indigenous climate leadership initiative programs are working with settlements to protect our shared environment, to create jobs, and to diversify our economy. We're also working together to renew Alberta's Métis settlement consultation policy, further strengthening our partnership and renewing our relationship.

I'd like to acknowledge the Métis settlement leadership here today. With us are Gerald Cunningham, the president of the MSGC, with whom I just had the pleasure to raise the Métis settlement flag at our Legislature Grounds. We also have members of the executive council here, Vice-president Darren Calliou and Treasurer Sherry Cunningham. On behalf of each settlement we have Stan Delorme, chair of Buffalo Lake; Harry Supernault, chair of East Prairie; Irene Zimmer, chair of Elizabeth; Herb Lehr, chair of Fishing Lake; Art Tomkins, chair of Gift Lake; Ken Noskey, chair of Peavine; Greg Calliou, chair of Paddle Prairie; and Dean Thompson, chair of Kikino. Please join me in a round of applause for our guests and for proclamation day for the Métis settlements, a living example of what we can do in partnership together. I'd ask my guests to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. minister, there might have been an extended preamble with that introduction.

The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my distinct privilege to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly three people from southern Alberta that are a part of my everyday life. They left home early this morning to get here for question period.

1:40

Mr. Cooper: Just for this.

Mr. Schneider: Just for this.

As I say your name, would you please stand. First, Sharon is my wife of 30 years, mother of our daughter, and my biggest supporter. I know that members may find this hard to believe, but Sharon actually watches QP on her computer every day. Folks, can you dig this? My daughter is Kristin Edmonds, and her newly minted husband as of July 28, Devery Edmonds. Now, Kristin works in HR at an accounting firm in Lethbridge, and Devery is a salesman at John Deere in Taber. Mr. Speaker, Devery and Kristin are in town today to go to the Oilers game tonight as they play the Chicago Blackhawks. It's a long drive from Lethbridge, as you know, and I hope the team can pull off a win while they're here. Anyway, please accept the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I do hope that you paid for the tickets for the new son-in-law yourself.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Acromegaly Awareness Day

Mr. Carson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today we recognize Acromegaly Awareness Day for the first time in Alberta's history. Acromegaly is a rare condition resulting from excessive amounts of growth hormone, most commonly caused by a benign tumour in the pituitary gland. The condition causes abnormal growth of bones in adults, characterized by the enlargement of an individual's hands, feet, and face and the alteration of the facial features.

Acromegaly is uncommon and can go undetected for many years. It is estimated that up to 16 per cent of Canadians may have a pituitary tumour and not know it. Early diagnosis and treatment can reduce the risk of complications and improve symptoms. Knowledge about the signs and symptoms are key to ensuring early diagnosis. The Alberta Pituitary Patient Society is dedicated to promoting awareness, education, and supporting patients and families.

In March 2017 I introduced my constituent and friend Sonja Durinck to my colleagues in the House. Sonja joins us here today. She is an active and dedicated member of her community and works tirelessly to help improve the lives of others. Sonja is adrenal insufficient and dependent on steroids to live. She has lived with two rare diseases for over 20 years. Sonja and members of the Alberta Pituitary Patient Society regularly visit patients in hospital to help build networks of support. As a founding member of the Canadian and Alberta pituitary patient societies Sonja has done remarkable work bringing awareness to the unique challenges faced by people with rare diseases.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the importance of Acromegaly Awareness Day, and I thank the representatives of the Alberta Pituitary Patient Society for their continued hard work and advocacy across the province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Family Violence Prevention Month

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to mark the beginning of Family Violence Prevention Month. Albertans spend November raising awareness for this very, very important issue. Alberta has one of the highest rates of family and intimate partner violence in the entire country, and despite the great work that's being done by both government and nonprofit agencies throughout our province, there is still so much work to be done.

Honestly, I think that one key to preventing the tragic and heartbreaking outcomes that family violence brings is to break our collective silence. It seems that no matter how much awareness is raised, individuals who know someone who's displaying the warning signs or have witnessed concerning behaviours are still hesitant to speak out. Perhaps they think it's not our business, not our place to let that friend know that she has options or resources that could help her out of a terrible situation, that it's not our responsibility to call the police when we hear something or see something going on at someone's house that tells us there is no doubt that someone is in need of help.

But, Mr. Speaker, it is our business. It is our place to speak out, and we do have a responsibility to act whenever we suspect family or intimate partner violence is occurring, and in doing so, we could possibly save someone's life. It's not enough to say to those who might be experiencing family violence: it's okay to reach out for help. We have to help them take that cycle-breaking first step. We have to speak up when we notice the warning signs, and we have to let them know that we know and we're here to help. We have to get them to a safe place where they can access the supports they need to break the cycle of abuse. We have to call the authorities when we know that someone is in immediate danger.

Mr. Speaker, family and intimate partner violence is no longer something we don't talk about. If we want to put an end to it, we must speak out about it.

Political Discourse

Mr. Fraser: Mr. Speaker, we've heard, over the last many months and especially over the last couple of weeks, political responses to hate crimes and where political parties are trying to stake their claim. I'm proud to serve as an elected member in a country and a province where people have the opportunity and the freedom to express their beliefs. I totally support the right of Albertans and Canadians to say exactly what they believe and express their passions. I believe in Albertans. This is their province and their future. If we give them the facts, they will chart the course that they want.

But we play an important role as leaders and as legislators. What we say matters. When we speak in our communities or in this Legislature, we can empower those that we lead to be better or we can embolden them to do what is wrong. I will always defend the right for us to disagree, to challenge the government of the day. I fully support that as an elected official I should be challenged. Leadership, regardless of political bent, is and should be about strengthening communities and not dividing them. My experience in this House in serving with a diverse group of individuals is that most of them are here for the right reasons.

That being said, I see people falling because they think that's what will get them elected again. As a father and as a husband and a lifelong Albertan my worry is this: how can we empower Albertans if we hate each other politically, if we see each other as enemies? How are we growing a diverse economy if we hate each other politically? What's the progress on the issues Albertans face if our motivation is just winning the next election? Mr. Speaker, I know we can do better.

Thank you.

Robert Sallows

Dr. Starke: Mr. Speaker, every man dies, but not every man truly lives. This is a quote attributed to Scottish patriot William Wallace, but it is a fitting description of the remarkable life of Robert Sallows. Born and raised in Calgary, Robbie was someone who

immediately made an impression, small in stature but large in impact. As an active member of the Progressive Conservative Youth of Alberta he was such a stickler for process that some joked that he wrote *Robert's Rules of Order*. He only wanted things done the right way, and he had the ability to engage in discussion and have both those who agreed and disagreed with him end up liking him, such was his personal magnetism.

Now, Robert's life had many twists and turns. At the age of 17 he required a double lung transplant. After receiving this life-saving gift, Robert became a tireless advocate for organ donation and served as national secretary for the Canadian Transplant Association. He was instrumental in supporting Len Webber's private member's bill that established Alberta's organ and tissue donation registry.

Last year Robert's health took another turn. He was diagnosed with cancer and underwent surgery and chemotherapy. His initial response was excellent, but this past June the cancer returned and this time would not be treatable. After informing his extensive social media network of this devastating news, he donned his trademark Tilley hat, headed to the Canadian Transplant Games, and proceeded to win the gold medal in doubles lawn bowling. Over the past few months he has inspired hope and courage with his open and honest account of his final, profound journey. Robert passed away October 20. While cancer made his other organs unsuitable for transplantation, he donated his eyes in a final act of generosity.

In memory of Robert I urge all Albertans to register with the provincial organ and tissue donation registry he helped create. Do it now, and tell your family. Do it in honour of Robert Sallows, a friend to many who, though he died, truly lived.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

Premier's and Official Opposition Leader's Allies

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last session I gave a member's statement comparing the Premier's close friends and allies with the close friends and allies of the UCP leader. I rise today to provide the Assembly with an update.

The Premier is always making new friends and allies, all of whom she's proud to acknowledge. Some came to say hello at last weekend's Alberta NDP policy convention, close friends and allies like the Alberta Fire Fighters Association, who took to the stage to thank the Premier for enhancing presumptive coverage for certain cancers. The head of the Fire Fighters Association said: Premier, you've had our backs for the last three and a half years, and now we have yours. Lubicon Lake band Chief Billy Joe Laboucan also attended and thanked the Premier for helping to shape their historic land agreement. The Premier also has friends at the United Steelworkers, who congratulated her for her leadership on the Trans Mountain pipeline.

1:50

But don't feel sorry for the UCP leader, Mr. Speaker. He, too, continues to make new friends, like close friend and ally Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario. They recently got together and tried to one-up each other on who cares less about both the environment and Alberta's energy industry at an anti carbon tax rally in Calgary. Another Toronto-based friend and ally is Faith Goldy, former Rebel media personality and alt-right Toronto mayoral candidate, whom the UCP leader said is always welcome in Alberta. The UCP leader also made several new friends who sell cars in Alberta, all for the low, low price of promising to remove consumer protection legislation. And who could forget the hate group Soldiers of Odin being photographed at a fundraiser for UCP nomination candidates in Edmonton?

Well, that's my update on close friends and allies, Mr. Speaker. Again, show me your friends, and I'll tell you who you are.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion Project Federal Bill C-69

Mr. Kenney: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday on live radio the Premier said, quote, of course, the first Canadian pipeline to tidewater in 70 years, Kinder Morgan, is closer now than it has ever been, unquote. First of all, it's no longer called Kinder Morgan. They left. Secondly, how are we closer now than we were prior to the decision of the Federal Court of Appeal, prior to the B.C. government's obstructionism? Why is it that the further we get away from completion, the closer we are, according to the Premier?

Ms Notley: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, I share what I think – actually, I'm going to give him the benefit of the doubt – is the member opposite's disappointment with the Federal Court of Appeal decision that has delayed the Trans Mountain pipeline. That being said, unlike the member opposite, I am not prepared to declare defeat and go home and then dine out on it politically. Rather, my plan is to continue to fight for this pipeline. The Federal Court of Appeal laid out a path forward. That is the path that is now being followed, and we will get a pipeline to Canadian tidewater for the first time in almost 70 years.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, the problem is the Premier and the NDP government's tendency to spike the football every time there is a setback and their refusal to actually fight back. I'll give you an example. The NDP's close ally Justin Trudeau has a bill before Parliament. It's the no more pipelines act, Bill C-69. Yesterday the Official Opposition proposed a motion calling on the government of Canada to immediately move to withdraw the proposed Bill C-69, which is a threat to Alberta jobs and pipeline construction. The NDP vetoed this motion. Why? Why did they veto the anti Bill C-69 motion?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, you know, the fact of the matter, as I think all members of this House agree, is that Bill C-69 in its current form is not acceptable, and I believe that all members of this House in different ways have made that point to the federal government. Certainly, our government has been doing that consistently, as the member opposite has heard from us. Our Minister of Energy began engaging on it back in June of 2017, and we have been doing it very vigorously ever since. There are a number of reasons why it will not support Alberta's energy industry. Therefore, we are fighting against it, and we will continue doing that until we get the changes we need.

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, was it an error that they vetoed the motion against Bill C-69 yesterday? If they're actually opposed to their friend Justin Trudeau's no-more-pipelines act, why don't they join other representatives of Albertans in this place? We could do this right after question period. Perhaps they just made a mistake. That happens. Could they correct the mistake by supporting later

today a motion calling on the Trudeau government to withdraw the no-more-pipelines law, Bill C-69?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What we're actually going to do is that given that it is a federal piece of legislation, we are going to advocate with respect to our federal lawmakers, both in the Senate as well as in the House of Commons, to have that bill amended so as to support the ability of our energy industry as well as those who are proponents of other major industrial projects to move forward because that's what we need to do to create jobs and to build economic activity. In the meantime we're also going to move forward on other important pieces of legislation for the people of Alberta in this Assembly while we are here.

The Speaker: Second main question.

Federal Bill C-69

Mr. Kenney: I'll take that as a no. The government purposely, then, vetoed a motion in this Chamber asking their ally Justin Trudeau to withdraw Bill C-69. That does not exactly suggest seriousness on the government's part. Now, Mr. Speaker, the Premier just said that they've been advocating against Bill C-69 with the Senate and the House of Commons. The truth is that the United Conservative caucus sent a submission to the House Natural Resources Committee against C-69 but the NDP government did not. Why did the NDP government not send a submission to the House of Commons against Bill C-69?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, our government, through our ministers, both the Minister of Energy and the minister of environment, has been advocating to the federal government about why Bill C-69 is not good for Alberta business, for Alberta's energy industry, and for moving forward. As you know, the minister of environment just came back from meeting with a range of folks in Ottawa. We are continuing to have actually ongoing conversations with the people who actually hold the pen, and we are confident that we are going to see significant improvements because we are about results, not grandstanding.

Mr. Kenney: Well, that's exactly what the government said when we proposed that they dispatch ministers last spring, after the bill was introduced, to make the case on behalf of Albertans against Justin Trudeau's no more pipelines law, but they said that to send a minister down there would be, quote, grandstanding. Now apparently they've accepted that idea. So, Mr. Speaker, why don't they just accept the idea that we could all, as one, put down the partisanship and speak with a united voice on behalf of Albertans and Alberta jobs with a motion calling upon the federal government to withdraw the no more pipelines act? This is a very simple, multipartisan initiative. Will the government accept it?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I've said before, I think that all members of the House have very clearly made the case to the federal government with respect to the position that we take on this, and we will continue to do this. We will continue to fight for Albertans. We will continue to fight for Alberta's energy industry. We will continue to point out to the federal government why Bill C-69 in its current form cannot be allowed to pass. That is exactly what we have been doing. That is what we will continue to do. In the meantime we will also do the other business of this House. I

think we can actually work on both projects, and I am very pleased to be able to do that for the people . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Kenney: Well, the Premier says that the NDP has been working on this since the summer of 2017. The bill wasn't actually introduced till March. Could she please underscore for us: what changes has the government secured in the bill, either before its introduction or since its introduction, as a result of their efforts? I think the answer is: no changes. Isn't that correct, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, the first discussion paper that came out on this matter was deeply troubling and deeply problematic. At some point in 2016 the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers and others, including us, expressed our misgivings about the initial sort of pass at this, far before the legislation was introduced. Since that time we've been engaging on this file at a bilateral level at every available opportunity. We've made sure that the final product that was introduced in the House was actually, if you can believe this . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. Thank you.
Third main question.

Crime Rates and Law Enforcement

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the Calgary Police Service has released new quarterly crime statistics that are deeply troubling, which indicate that there has been a 30 per cent increase in break and enters in Calgary this year over last, that there has been a 10 per cent increase in assaults, a nearly 20 per cent increase in sexual offences – in fact, 27 per cent over the last five years – and that there has been a 46 per cent increase in vehicle thefts over the past five years. Does the government share our concern about the growing wave of crime, and what is it planning to do to address this?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. I think all Albertans deserve to live in safe and resilient communities, and that's why we need to continue to work with our police partners to address these issues as they come forward. As our police partners have said so many times, a lot of these issues do relate to drugs in the province. We can't address that issue simply by policing our way out of it, so we have been working with the Calgary police and other services throughout the province on a lot of very exciting initiatives that will help to ensure that if the individuals who are perpetrating these crimes need to go to jail, that's the place they go, and if they need other assistance, that's the place they go.

2:00

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, to continue with these disturbing trends, the increase in break and enters in Calgary over the last five years is 47 per cent, and in assaults it's 33 per cent. The federal government has a bill before Parliament now that would actually reduce penal sentences for some of these very crimes. Will the hon. the Minister of Justice join with other provincial Attorneys General in asking the federal government to withdraw that bill and to ensure that there are meaningful penal consequences, serious time for serious crime?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Again, we have been working with our partners throughout the province within our jurisdiction because we think it's important for the people of this province to ensure that we're doing the things we can do rather than complaining about the things that other people can do. We've been working with those partners to ensure that we're able to get information flowing properly. Part of the problem with repeat offenders is that they move between jurisdictions. We've been working with our police partners to ensure that we're increasing communication between those police partners so that they can present all the relevant evidence to the decision-maker so that those who need to go to jail . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, last year the hon. the Attorney General issued a memorandum to the provincial prosecution service essentially instructing them to "triage" prosecutions, which meant essentially dropping many serious offences from prosecution. Does that continue to be the policy of this government, that certain cases do not merit being prosecuted by our Crown prosecutors?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Well, again, when the Jordan decision came down, it was a massive change in the law. As a result of backlogs that had been building up for decades, we needed to do something to make sure that the most serious and violent offences got prosecuted, and we took action immediately. It is the case that we also felt that it was necessary to inject resources into the system, and we did make that injection of resources, an injection, I might point out, that the hon. members opposite voted against. So if we're going to prosecute, we need the prosecutors, and if they're going to vote against that money . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Dementia Care and Long-term Care Standards

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this week I asked the Minister of Health for an update on Alberta's dementia strategy. Since that time I've done some homework, and I found that the NDP are falling way short on meeting standards for dementia care and long-term care. The continuing care service standards set the minimum requirements that facilities in the system must comply with. A recent audit of those facilities and standards found that less than half of the facilities in Alberta meet standard 9, which deals with training, and 40 per cent fail on standard 16, which addresses restraint management and secure spaces. To the Minister of Health: is that good enough?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm so proud to be part of a government that fought against significant budget cuts that would have had a significant impact on all folks in Alberta. The leader of that party now was formerly the Minister of Health at the time. Proposing a billion-dollar cut would have certainly hurt a lot of folks. We've protected and invested in public health care, and we've also expanded the number of long-term care and dementia care spaces throughout the province. There's more to be done, absolutely, but we're not going to do it by slashing billions of

dollars from the budget, and we're not going to do it by hurting ordinary folks. I'd be happy to follow up with the member more.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Clark: Mr. Speaker, I think Albertans deserve an answer to that question. This minister has been Minister of Health for nearly four years now and should take some responsibility.

Now I want to dig further into where the system is failing. Standard 11 deals with infection prevention and control. Standard 12 deals with medication management. The report shows that nearly 80 per cent of facilities fail on both measures. Eighty per cent: that is absolutely shocking, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Minister of Health. These facilities house some of Alberta's most vulnerable residents. What are you doing to ensure that long-term care facilities are preventing the spread of infection, managing medication, and meeting the needs of . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. Certainly, making sure that we have an adequate supply of long-term care and dementia care spaces throughout the province is a significant pillar in that. That's why we are on track to build 2,000 more spaces by the end of this term alone. We're also working to make sure that we increase staffing and oversight, because we know that there are a number of folks in this province who are in facilities that are long overdue for upgrades and for additional supports. That's why we continue to work with our front lines in AHS, and that's why we won't cut a billion dollars from the Health budget. We know that fundamental to this is quality front-line care that ensures that we care for all folks that . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Clark: If this government thinks that that is quality front-line care, Mr. Speaker, I'd hate to see what constitutes not quality front-line care.

The data that I've been able to find is only summarized in one high-level chart. Albertans living in long-term care, their families, and their caregivers want to know how the facility that they are living in stacks up against the rest, so what I'm going to ask the Health minister is: will you table an itemized, specific report of this audit that shows on a facility-by-facility basis which are meeting the standards and which are not?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Again, we do have audits of all facilities on a regular rotation, but we also have special audits if there's a specific concern that's being raised so that we can bring in additional supports for that. They are posted regularly on the AHS website as well as the HQCA website. I'd encourage anyone who has questions or concerns about their local facility to talk to the local management. As well, they can raise their concerns with AHS or with myself. We're very proud to be investing instead of proposing a billion-dollar cut to health care like that member's party or even more by the Official Opposition.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

Racism Prevention

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe we need to do everything in our power to stop racism in our province. I know there

are a number of not-for-profit organizations that are working hard every day to combat prejudice and bigotry, that risk destroying our great province at its core. To the Minister of Culture and Tourism: what is your ministry doing to help these organizations?

Miranda: Thank you for the question. Whether it's racist graffiti in Calgary, arson at the Edson mosque, or ultraright rhetoric drifting into mainstream politics in Alberta, racism and bigotry are still problems in our society and even in the opposing party. As part of our government's commitment to address racism, we announced a new antiracism community grant program because we believe on this side of the House that there is no place for racism in our communities, our province, and, especially, our leadership.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: how will this program help communities combat racial discrimination, foster acceptance, and promote diversity and inclusion?

Miranda: Thank you to the member for the question. Our government has committed a total of \$2 million to an antiracism community grant program. Eligible nonprofit organizations can apply for matching grants of up to \$25,000 in funding and \$5,000 in nonmatched funding. This money will fund training and education programs, the development of informational resources, various support services, and capacity building.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: when can groups apply for this grant?

Miranda: Thank you to the member for the question. The next deadline is November 19 for intake, and I would encourage all groups who take on this very important work to apply. On this side of the House we do not promote, endorse, or defend racism. It has no place in Alberta, so our government is committed to fighting it and fostering respect for diversity. The question is not: how much racism is okay? It's really that no amount of racism is ever okay.

Government Policies and Economic Indicators

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, another adverse impact of this government's managed decline of the economy is reflected by the increased cases of unpaid property taxes. The *Red Deer Advocate* states that Red Deer county is facing \$6.6 million in unpaid property taxes, a 20 per cent jump from just last year. This includes \$1.4 million from pipelines alone. When property taxes go unpaid, it gets downloaded onto the rest of the community, families, and the county. To the minister: do you have current information on how many Alberta families, businesses, and companies are unable to pay their current municipal taxes?

The Speaker: The hon. Finance minister.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much. I think I read the same media report that the member opposite read about the county. You know, we have been through a significant recession in this province, the worst in two generations. It has impacted not only municipal governments across this province, but it's impacted Albertans and companies. We know that there are some challenges on the corporate side in particular. We know also that on the personal side things are looking better because there was an underassessment back in 2016-17. I can follow up on those kinds of questions.

2:10

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, given that billions in capital flight has resulted in Calgary commercial vacancy rates of over 25 per cent, resulting in city investors losing value and tax assessment value, which, of course, costs all Calgarians their tax base and services, and given that the *Calgary Herald* reports that this has resulted in the largest hike in commercial tax rates among 11 major Canadian cities, a 9.5 per cent increase, again to the minister: do you not see how your managed decline of the economy, tax increases, and layers of regulation are making it tougher for all Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. Finance minister.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Actually, it's not that at all. What it is is the significant recession this province has been through. As I said, it's the worst in two generations. But, you know, things are looking up; I guess you were waiting for me to say that. We're seeing GDP growth up in this province, 4.9 per cent in 2017, and we're going to lead in 2018, '19, and '20 on GDP growth. Just on the business side business incorporations are up. Since the beginning of 2018 more than 26,000 businesses have been incorporated in Alberta. That's going to take up some of the slack that ...

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, given that the oil and gas industry saw foreign investment drop \$15 billion in 2017, due in large part to this government's anti-investment policies, and that, incredibly, the University of Calgary's School of Public Policy warns that a 30-year-old Albertan will pay an additional \$50,000 in personal provincial income taxes just to pay the interest on the NDP debt this Finance minister has accumulated, Minister, again, can you not see how your debt, interest expense, credit downgrades, and policies have burdened our municipalities, our cities, and now our youth?

Mr. Ceci: Actually, what I see is that the situation in this province, particularly for oil and gas companies and their lack of investment, is because of the drop in oil prices, Mr. Speaker. They haven't had the capital to invest. But, you know, they would be worse off under that side, that side of Conservatives. All Albertans would be worse off. All Albertans would suffer as a result of a \$700 million tax break to the richest 1 per cent that that side is only too happy to give to their friends and insiders. We won't do that. We're going to continue to stand up for Alberta.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Power Purchase Arrangements and the Balancing Pool

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a very simple question to the Deputy Premier. How much money did the borrowing pool – I meant the Balancing Pool – borrow from the government of Alberta to cover the losses on the PPAs, and how much will it increase by 2020, when the remaining PPAs will expire?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the member well knows, that matter was settled because of the position that this government took, that we were not going to privatize profits and socialize risk. So we settled those matters, and we now

have capped electricity rates, the fastest growing renewables market in the country, and are reducing our greenhouse gas emissions and our pollution.

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, given that termination notices for the PPAs were issued in the first quarter of 2016 and could have been terminated by the end of 2016 if not for the NDP government suing itself and given that the Balancing Pool's delays cost Albertans hundreds of millions of dollars that could have been used to pay for 4,000 teachers and 4,000 nurses, to the same minister: by interfering in the cancellation of the PPAs, did the NDP run the electricity market in a noncommercial manner?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We rely on independent agencies like the Balancing Pool and the MSA, the Market Surveillance Administrator, to effectively manage the electricity system within their mandates. Any suggestion of political interference is completely baseless. Decisions regarding the termination of PPAs has always solely been in the hands of the Balancing Pool and not the government.

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, given that the Market Surveillance Administrator, who also reports to the same Energy minister, found that the Balancing Pool broke the law in its handling of the PPAs and ran generating assets under its control in a noncommercial manner in a two-year period, did the Minister of Energy or any of her staff or employees of the department instruct the Balancing Pool to manipulate the electricity market? Was it in a voice mode?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our priority with respect to the electricity system is making sure power bills are affordable and predictable. We've been focused on fixing a broken system that Conservatives left us through a deregulation experiment that put consumers on a roller coaster. Since electricity was deregulated, Albertans were subjected to vast price hikes. We have capped electricity rates. We've opened up the largest renewables opportunities on the continent, with the lowest cost renewables in Canadian history now bidding into our system, and we're reducing pollution from coal and creating jobs in natural gas.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

Drug-impaired Driving

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A year ago I was urging this government to start preparations for keeping our roads safe once marijuana was legalized. Well, yesterday the minister could provide no assurances about the number of saliva roadside devices in Alberta or police access to blood testing or the number of drug recognition experts. Instead she offered this excuse: "Legalization [only] happened very recently." Minister, we've known this was coming for years, so why did you not ensure that all police in Alberta were prepared for this?

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think just to clarify a few things here, we have been preparing since we got the message from the federal government, and in fact, as I noted previously, Alberta was out in front significantly, and other provinces have been looking to us because we've done such a good

job with our model. That being said, it is a choice that is on police services to either buy those devices independently or to get them through the government, so we don't have immediate numbers in terms of the services that may have gone directly to the federal government to purchase those devices. Again, in terms of the training – I'll just stop.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
First supplemental.

Mr. Ellis: Mr. Speaker, thank you. Given that yesterday the minister confirmed that "there will be an increase in impaired drivers on the roads," Minister, let me specifically ask about blood testing again. Are police officers able to perform blood tests at their police stations or do they have to take suspected drug-impaired drivers to hospitals for this service?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I think, to be clear, that what I said was that we have been hearing concerns from Albertans about an increase in impaired drivers. I don't like to predict crime trends into the future. That being said, we have been working very hard with our police partners to ensure that we are ready to handle the legalization of cannabis. It certainly is the case that we have been training drug recognition experts. I do know that the RCMP has reported to us very recently that they are on track to meet their targets. With respect to the blood test, again, it depends on the services, as the member knows . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Ellis: Mr. Speaker, given that last May the Justice minister said, "One of our top three priorities is to ensure we are keeping our roads safe as this legalization process occurs" and given that your answers offered no confidence that Alberta has enough roadside saliva devices, blood-testing facilities, or drug recognition experts to keep our roads safe, Minister, the government appears to be grossly ill prepared. Why?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I'll point out that the Alberta government was the first to have two-phase consultation and to get a plan out there on the ground. Other jurisdictions have been looking to us. In addition, I will point out that we have worked very closely with our police partners. I think they have done an incredible job in demonstrating readiness. One of the things that we're certainly going to need to fight this type of crime or any type of crime is to ensure that more boots are on the ground. We are investing in those services as we are investing in other services. Meanwhile our opposition is voting against them.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Student Achievement in Mathematics

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year only 59.2 per cent of grade 9 students achieved an acceptable standard on the math PAT. Most Albertans believe that a passing grade is 50 per cent or better, but the *Calgary Herald* also revealed that the acceptable standard was only 42 per cent. To the Minister of Education: is it acceptable to you that over 40 per cent of Alberta's grade 9 students were unable to score 42 per cent on the PAT this past year?

2:20

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the question very much. We made several adjustments to the PAT exams here in the province of Alberta to make them stronger, to fit with basic skills and learning basic skills. The grade 9 part B, no-calculator portion: we knew fully well that the kids wouldn't do so well. Last year we did it with the grade 6s. And guess what? This year the grade 6s went up by 7.2 per cent. So people make adjustments, they learn along the way, and they learn because we're investing in education.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that one parent has said, quote, "Parents should be well informed about what constitutes an acceptable grade; cut scores should be well advertised and parents should be provided with the rationale behind choosing that particular cut score," end quote, and given that math cut scores have remained below 50 per cent for five years running and given that trust is earned and easy to lose, is the minister prepared to publicize the cut scores on future PATs and to explain why that cut score was chosen?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we are making great strides, progress in terms of our mathematic scores and diploma scores in general. They are on the rise in most subject areas, particularly in science and in math in grade 12. I'm superproud of what we have seen. And do you know how we've managed to do that? We did not cut the budget of Education during an economic downturn. We made sacrifices in other areas as opposed to the opposition here who would have 4,000 teachers less in our schools. That is a cut if I think so.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Smith: I guess parents will continue to be in the dark.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We would ask this: is the minister – after having refused to heed the opposition's warning for many years and yet given that the Alberta parents are saying, quote, "There is a crisis in math education in this province, and students do not have adequate mastery of basic mathematical concepts," end quote, how will this minister earn the trust of Albertans, address the problem of cut scores, and ensure that our students are truly prepared for 21st-century realities?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I certainly appreciate that question because, of course, what we are doing here and now is building new curriculum. You can see the new draft curriculum for kindergarten to grade 4 on the website right now. We have literally had tens of thousands of Albertans helping us to build that curriculum, focusing on basic skills. And you know how you do that? You make sure you do have those 4,000 teachers in the classroom; you do not make significant cuts. Seven hundred million in tax cuts: do you know how many schools that would pay for? More than 20 high schools. I would go with the high schools instead of the tax cuts, and I think most Albertans would, too.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

Postsecondary Tuition

Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Investment in education has been a key priority for this government. Students are concerned that the end of the freeze will bring a sharp spike in tuition costs. To the Minister of Advanced Education: what are you doing to protect students from the steep tuition hikes, and what has been happening with tuition once the freeze ends?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, our government has been proud of our record of fighting to make life affordable for Albertans, and that includes postsecondary students. As the member mentioned, we've frozen tuition for five years in a row, and thanks to this tuition freeze Alberta has gone from one of the most expensive jurisdictions for higher education to one of the most affordable, and I'm proud of that. Once the tuition freeze ends, of course, we're proposing that it be capped at the rate of inflation. As the member knows, under the previous Conservative government tuition and fees rapidly outpaced the cost of living, and we're proud to be able to take some steps to prevent that from happening.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
First supplemental.

Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Affordability is top of mind for students. With this additional year of the freeze announced before the new tuition framework takes effect, how much will the average student save over a four-year degree?

Mr. Schmidt: Well, Mr. Speaker, the average university student over a four-year program will save nearly \$2,000 thanks to our tuition freeze, and that amount reflects how much tuition would have increased under a different set of principles. I think it's important to contrast with the ideological friends of the UCP in Saskatchewan, who slashed and burned their way through a recession with very little positive results to show for it. They cut budgets to universities by 5 per cent, and tuition in that province has increased by over \$800. I'm proud of the approach that our government has taken to make life more affordable.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
Second supplemental.

Drever: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that most members of this House have been lobbied by the students' unions for the framework like this one, can you update the House on what the response has been from students on this action?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to say that students have received this announcement extremely positively. I would venture to say that I am probably more popular with students than I am with the members opposite. I know a member of the students' association who attended Mount Royal University prior to being elected, and I believe that she is pleased to hear about the package of reforms that we're bringing forward to Mount Royal University. That means that Mount Royal University will have a general faculties council, the ability to appoint a chancellor, and will have similar governance structures to give it the same kind of esteem and reputation that other universities across the province enjoy.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Oil and Gas Transportation

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pipelines are on the minds of many Albertans and with good reason. Our inability to get our energy products to market efficiently has resulted in a \$50 discount per barrel. That means less money for companies, employees, and government programs. The problem has become so bad that we're now seeing an increasing amount of oil ship not just by rail but also by truck. This shows just how desperate companies are to get their product moving. To the Deputy Premier: we're years away from adequate pipeline capacity, so what are you doing in the short term to get this product to more markets?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the Premier very recently was quite clear that we need some action from the federal government with respect to rail capacity, and we will certainly look at our options as well on the provincial side of the House. Another piece of this is, of course, that there is a knock-on effect for any time you have more demand for rail capacity. Then you have issues related to the transportation of agricultural products to market as well. That's also bad for Alberta. There's more to talk about in terms of getting better value for our resources, which I am sure I will be pleased to share with the House in supplementals.

Mr. Fraser: Given that shipping oil by pipeline is by far the safest method of transportation and given that depressed prices and bottlenecked transportation means more and more oil will be shipped by train and by truck and given that more oil being shipped by alternative methods carries additional risks to both the environment and public safety, to the same minister: what are you doing to ensure that increased use of nonpipeline transportation isn't posing additional risks to the environment and our public?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That's precisely why we need co-operation from the federal government on this matter of rail transportation. That is, in fact, a federally regulated matter. They, too, have a responsibility to ensure that Albertans get best price for our resources, that our resources can get to market because we are, in fact, a country, not a collection of villages or provinces. But rail capacity is fundamental to who we are as Canadians. Definitely the feds need to step up, but in the meantime there are a number of other things that we can do as a province, including getting better value for our resources here at home.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that many Albertans would be surprised to learn how much oil is moving by truck and given that the Alberta government and the people of Alberta would benefit from a better understanding of exactly where our oil is going and why and given that knowing which destination and methods of transportation deliver the most benefit to Albertans helps us plan for the future, to the same minister: will you provide this House with a detailed breakdown of where our oil is going currently and where we would like it to go?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I do believe that much of the information that the hon. member is seeking is available either through the Department of Energy or the Canadian

Association of Petroleum Producers' website. There are a number of different analyses out there. At the end of the day, the fact of the matter is that pipeline is the safest. Through our government's efforts we've gone from 4 in 10 Canadians appreciating this matter to 7 in 10 now. We've also secured the approval of two pipelines. Of course, Trans Mountain has been in the headlines a lot, but line 3 is moving along and has actually gotten some of its Minnesota-based regulatory approvals.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Unemployment and Job Creation

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government's latest annual report claims that more Albertans are working than ever before, but there are still over 177,000 Albertans out of work, 38,000 more than when the NDP took office. Meanwhile a recent Fraser Institute report indicates that over 46,000 jobs have disappeared from the private sector since 2014, accompanied by the flight of over tens of billions of dollars of investment capital. To the Minister of Labour: how do you explain this misguided, managed decline when speaking to the 177,000 unemployed and even more underemployed Albertans in virtually every corner of this province?

2:30

The Speaker: The Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, our government is putting jobs and diversification first. That's why we put so much time through our budget investments in those areas, and our plan is working. Though there are still people who are unemployed, the economy in Alberta is recovering, with 90,000 new full-time jobs last year. But we know, as I said, that there's much more work to do. We want to make sure that every Albertan at every kitchen table feels the recovery, and that's why we're standing up to Ottawa to build a pipeline in this province and across to tidewater, and we're making strategic investments.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Gotfried: A hundred and seventy-seven thousand is some?

Mr. Speaker, given that there are over 39,000 unemployed youth in Alberta, with youth unemployment at 11.5 per cent, the highest outside of Atlantic Canada, and given that it appears that young people have been left behind in your ever-so-fragile recovery, to the same minister: why are young Albertans experiencing such little success from your misguided, ideological, job-killing, investment-repelling NDP world view policies?

Mr. Ceci: You know what won't help the unemployed, Mr. Speaker? Even more people unemployed, because that side wants to kill more jobs, 4,000 teachers and 4,000 nurses. They want to give tax breaks to their friends and insiders. That's not going to get more people employed; that's just going to get the rich richer in this province. We're not going to do that. [interjections]

The Speaker: Calm it down.
Second supplemental.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A hundred and seventy-seven thousand would make it one of Alberta's biggest cities of unemployed people.

Given that the government continues to boast about its record of job creation and given that, at 7 per cent, Alberta has the highest unemployment rate in the country outside of Atlantic Canada, to the

same minister: if Alberta is recovering so nicely from the recession and the most robust job creation is fully funded by the NDP's red pen on the backs of future generations, what do you have to say to unemployed Albertans and their families struggling to make ends meet?

The Speaker: The Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. I know that not every person who lost their job or is working in a job that wasn't their original job now is happy, but things are looking up. We will not rest until every Albertan is satisfied and working to the full extent that they need to, they want to. On that side the opposition would fire more people. They would fire public servants. They would make it tougher because they'd privatize so many businesses that we are standing up for and won't let them do it.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mountain Pine Beetle Control and Wildfire Prevention

Mr. Schneider: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again it appears that we have been fortunate in this province that enough moisture fell this summer to lessen the threat of a major fire in Jasper national park. Now, that's small comfort to the population of Jasper townsites as they live in the shadow of an ever-expanding stand of dead and dying trees from the pine beetle epidemic. To the minister of ag: how many hectares of trees have been taken down either by some form of harvest or controlled burn around the town this year?

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you to the member for the question. You know, I come from B.C. originally, and I understand the devastation that the pine beetle can do and that it moved into Alberta in a big way. It's something that we've been working on in Alberta with the federal government, and we need to push the federal government to do more, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker. We know that the Member for West Yellowhead has pushed us very hard and advocated – and I know that our minister has spoken to the federal minister about this – and we have lots more to do on it, but we will continue to fight for the people of that area.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the serious nature of the threat to Jasper townsites and surrounding area and given that Jasper is a huge part of tourism in Alberta, as we all know, Minister, what is the ministry's and the federal government's plan to maintain the ecological integrity within the federal park while helping to thin out the infected areas, thus reducing the fire risk in that area?

The Speaker: The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you very much. You know, on behalf of myself as the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the minister of forestry we have been working hard on such programs as FireSmart, working with the town of Jasper, with the national parks, understanding, through the conservation officers there, what's been happening on the ground, working with the lumber industry, who has been affected quite hard on this, the softwood lumber in particular. We have task forces who are sharing information through us and the federal government and helping the municipalities. We will continue to work on this. The job isn't done. We know that, Mr. Speaker, and we'll continue to support Albertans.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the townsites of Jasper is fairly isolated out there in the mountains and given that funds through programs such as FireSmart are available and given that I understand the ministry of ag has increased funding, which I support, Minister, has your office and Municipal Affairs given any thought to changing the building codes within populated centres that may be vulnerable to wildfires in order to make them more fire smart, as many fire experts are now suggesting?

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you to the member for the question. That's a good question. As he correctly stated, we did – the operating budget for wildfire management is almost \$130 million, and that covers preparation work, training, air tanker bases, and seasonal employees. We have increased funding to FireSmart by \$11 million. Working through myself with Municipal Affairs and building codes and safety codes, we do monitor this, and we are adopting national standards. You know, I think we have to adapt as we go as climate change plays an ever bigger part in what we do in this world. We do monitor closely and adapt as we go, and we keep a good eye on it.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Surgery Wait Times

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta Health Services has 13 measures that help them evaluate their performance. Wait times, emergency or surgical, are, interestingly enough, not in any of those 13 measures. They don't use the deteriorating statistics for hip surgeries, where Albertans are now waiting 37 weeks on average versus 29 weeks from three years ago. Knee surgeries have slowed to 41 weeks on average from 33 weeks. Can this minister explain why things are getting worse under this government for Albertans? Can she explain why AHS doesn't use wait times as a performance measure, and is she looking elsewhere to see how they expedite surgeries?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for raising an important question. Certainly, any time anyone is waiting for surgery, we don't want them to wait a day longer than necessary. That's why we increased the budget to do more surgeries. At the same time we're doing more surgeries, more people are on the list asking for surgery, so we're actually providing more capacity. But I do know that some specific areas have seen longer wait times, and that's why it's important that we invest in public health care instead of cutting billions of dollars and laying off 4,000 nurses, as the Official Opposition is proposing. We want to take care of our community, and that requires investment.

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, the Workers' Compensation Board aims to have surgeries performed within a few weeks. Here's an agency that gets people into surgery in a fraction of the time of AHS. Patients don't become addicted to painkillers. They don't become complacent and demotivated. The patients quickly recover, and they continue to contribute to our society. Have you learned anything from WCB on how to deal with surgical wait times?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, I want to be very clear as well that anyone who requires urgent care, whether it's access to an emergency department, urgent surgery, or access to a specialist, will receive it. The UCP certainly don't have a plan to improve wait times. They

keep pushing for privatization and for big tax giveaways to the superrich, most high-income earners in Alberta, a \$700 million tax cut specifically to those folks. Why? They want them to take that money and go to other jurisdictions and pay privately. On this side of the House we invest in public health care because we want to improve access for every Albertan. Absolutely, there is more to be done.

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, WCB utilizes doctors and nurses that work in our AHS system, and they rent space from our smaller hospitals with underutilized operating rooms, like the Leduc hospital. Basically, hospitals run X number of surgeries, and if there's any extra space, WCB reserves that space. How is it that WCB is getting people access to surgeries substantially quicker than AHS while using the very same public health professionals and facilities to do this? How do they get someone into surgery in two to three weeks where it takes you 11 months?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to explain triage to the member opposite. It's actually AHS that's doing those surgeries in AHS facilities. It's 55 health care facilities that we do surgeries in across the province. The reason why we have some folks get in faster than others is because there's a triage system based on urgency, based on need. That's what happens in a public health care system that has an ability to make sure that everyone – it's not based on whether you have a fur coat or no coat at all that you get access to the front of line; it's based on your need and your urgency. I'm not going to apologize for public health care. There's more to do and more investment to be done, but laying off 4,000 nurses won't do the job, you guys. It's time to admit that.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

2:40

Educational Curriculum Review

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you know, our government has been dedicated to ensuring that students in Alberta are receiving high-quality education. That is one of the reasons our government decided to review the curriculum, as some of it was out of date, more than 30 years old, back when a few of us here were still learning on Commodore 64s in elementary school. Previous timeline targets expected that the new K to 4 curriculum would be written by December 2018. To the minister: can you please provide an update on the state of the curriculum review?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we've been working very hard since 2016 to build the curriculum. We have the K to 4 curriculum drafts up on our website now. We've had literally tens of thousands of Albertans helping us to build the curriculum every step of the way, focusing on basic skills like reading, mathematics, numeracy, critical thinking, and so forth. You know, I wonder why the UCP said that they would put the curriculum into the shredder. Now I know. It's because we're going to be teaching critical thinking skills, which go against the basic ideas that they try to push from the other side.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister. You spent much of the summer consulting with various groups to ensure that our curriculum rewrite is on track. Who did you meet, and what sort of feedback did you hear this summer?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to say that we had more than 100,000 interactions with Albertans contributing to building the curriculum we're at with K to 4 right now. We had round-tables with different industries, the energy industry, financial literacy. The Minister of Finance and I met with banks and credit unions. They put together a beautiful, wonderful way to teach financial literacy in K to 12. You know what? We're using it because we believe in interactions with Albertans for the betterment of our children.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Thank you. To the same minister. I received several inquiries from constituents last summer wondering how far along we were in this process and when we expect to see the new curriculum in classrooms. Could the minister please explain his timeline on that?

Mr. Eggen: Well, sure. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said, we have the K to 4 draft curriculum. We'll finish working on it and begin field testing here in the new year. It's a multiyear process, so it's very important to have continuity and a long-term commitment to education to allow this to happen. You will not see a new curriculum to benefit our kids if you make cuts in education, where you lose 4,000 teachers or you take \$700 million out of the system. These are not the ways you build good curriculum here in the province of Alberta.

The Speaker: We'll continue with Members' Statements in 30 seconds.

Members' Statements (continued)

Family Violence Prevention Month

Cortes-Vargas: Several years ago, before I was an MLA, late one night I got a phone call from an organization that I worked for. It supports people fleeing from family violence. I was told that I was needed as soon as possible to support a new mother with young children who spoke only Spanish. She just needed some support. I got there around midnight. I was there the entire weekend and long after that. I observed the complexities of the paperwork involved, her emotional strength, her resolve, and her dedication to her children. I also saw the deep sigh of relief when she realized that I spoke Spanish as well, that the person who was supporting her was someone that could communicate in her own language.

Mr. Speaker, November is Family Violence Prevention Month, and I am proud to wear a purple ribbon signifying my support for this important month and to bring attention to this issue. I am proud to be part of a government that sees family violence as a serious issue that needs to be addressed, a government that has made it possible for victims to end a lease without penalty and leave an unsafe home, a government that puts significant investment towards prevention of family violence and supports for people fleeing terrible situations, investments like \$33 million towards family and community safety programs and a \$25 million increase to support community-based prevention services across Alberta. Our government is committed to working with community organizations to support Albertans fleeing violence and looking for safety.

Two important organizations, Saffron and A Safe Place, are doing amazing work for the constituents of Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

Today, on the first day of Family Violence Prevention Month, I want to thank them and all of the organizations that support prevention and stand with survivors for the essential work that they do.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to tell you that at the appropriate time I intend to move the following motion pursuant to Standing Order 42:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government of Canada to immediately move to withdraw the proposed Bill C-69, which is a threat to Alberta jobs and pipeline construction.

I have the appropriate number of copies.

The Speaker: Minister of Transportation, do you have . . .

Mr. Mason: A notice of motion, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Mason: Why, yes, I do.

The Speaker: Great. Good.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(3) I'm rising to advise the House that on the next available Monday written questions 1, 2, and 3 will be accepted. Additionally, motions for returns 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 will also be accepted.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier and Minister of Health.

Bill 24

An Act to Recognize AMA Representation Rights

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to introduce Bill 24, An Act to Recognize AMA Representation Rights.

The legislation will provide the Alberta Medical Association with statutory representation for physicians in Alberta. The proposed legislation doesn't change existing processes between government and the AMA. It doesn't give the AMA new powers or abilities. The legislation was a commitment the government made as part of its recent agreement with doctors, and we have made good on that promise. I'm proud that our government has maintained a collaborative and constructive relationship with Alberta's physicians, enabling us to stabilize health spending while improving patient care. This legislation represents the next steps in this positive relationship. On behalf of my colleagues and all Albertans I want to thank the AMA and all Alberta physicians for working with us to meet Alberta's health care needs.

With that, I move first reading of Bill 24.

[Motion carried; Bill 24 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the requisite five copies of two documents: Alberta Health Continuing Care Health Service Standards, that I referenced in my

question earlier, updated and amended as of July 2018; and a presentation called The Care Planning Journey, including the chart I referenced earlier, which shows the poor performance on the standards in the continuing care health service standards guidelines. Thank you.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Acting Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the hon. Ms Ganley, Minister of Justice and Solicitor General, the Alberta Human Rights Commission annual report 2016-17; and pursuant to the Legal Profession Act, the Law Society of Alberta annual report 2017.

2:50

The Speaker: Hon. members, I believe we had a point of order, which was withdrawn by the opposition.

Point of Order

Questions outside Ministerial Responsibility

The Speaker: I am prepared to make a ruling on the point of order raised yesterday regarding the main question of the Member for Drumheller-Stettler during Oral Question Period. The question of the Member for Drumheller-Stettler, which you can find on page 1711 of *Hansard* for October 31, 2018, was as follows:

This past weekend the NDP and their supporters came together and passed some policy resolutions. One dealt with grain and the resolution to . . . formally examine the impact to Canada's international reputation that has resulted from the changes to Canada's grain marketing storage and handling system . . . Minister, in all your travels I have never heard you publicly say that Canada's . . . grain growers have somehow been diminished by any recent changes in that federal policy. Have you?

In her arguments the Deputy Government House Leader referred to page 509 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, which states that members should not ask questions during Oral Question Period that "refer to public statements by Ministers on matters not directly related to their departmental duties." In essence, a minister should not be asked questions that fall outside their ministerial responsibilities. The Official Opposition leader responded by arguing that provincial government policy connected to federal changes in the agriculture sector is an appropriate topic for questions to the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Members, I have carefully reread the question asked by the Member for Drumheller-Stettler yesterday, and I did have some difficulty determining what was being asked. The question could have been phrased so that it asked the minister directly about the impact of federal policy on Alberta grain growers rather than asking the minister whether he had made statements regarding those changes. My understanding of the intent of the question was that it was to assess the impact of the changes on Alberta's agricultural sector, which is undoubtedly related to the minister's departmental duties. Accordingly, I can find no point of order in this case.

Motions under Standing Order 42

The Speaker: Now I believe a member of the Official Opposition has a motion for the House. Please proceed.

Federal Bill C-69

Mr. Nixon:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government

of Canada to immediately move to withdraw the proposed Bill C-69, which is a threat to Alberta jobs and pipeline construction.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be brief. I have brought forward a motion under Standing Order 42 to do with Bill C-69. I will not spend any time talking about Bill C-69; it's been talked about much in this House, including today. Yet again during the exchange between the Premier and the Leader of the Official Opposition today the NDP, through their Premier, seemed to be indicating that they are committed to this House and this Assembly standing up to the House of Commons against Bill C-69, the bill to kill all future pipelines in this country that's been brought forward by their close personal friend and ally Justin Trudeau. It seemed to be that there may have been some indication from the Premier that her Government House Leader instructing her caucus to vote no on this motion yesterday was a mistake, so being the courteous guy I am on a Thursday, I would like to give them another opportunity.

I hope all members support us in defending Alberta and our energy industry.

The Speaker: As the House knows, there are no other speakers to the motion. We need to have unanimous consent.

[Unanimous consent denied]

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders

Third Reading

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Bill 8

Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2018

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour and a privilege to rise today and move third reading of Bill 8, Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2018.

This act contains many important updates. One result is safer conditions for first responders and Albertans under evacuation orders, another is clarity on how dispute resolution is used when property is damaged during a response, and another is establishment of the authority to create a new regulation that further clarifies emergency management roles and responsibilities with local authorities.

The local authority emergency management regulation will allow for additional direction to municipalities, including offering additional clarity to ensure that everyone understands what role they play in emergency management, providing direction on emergency management training for local emergency managers, and encouraging intermunicipal collaboration ahead of emergencies so that communities are prepared to work together. This regulation will ensure all municipalities across the province are better prepared to respond to disasters and keep Albertans safe.

We're here to help as the provincial government, through the fine folks at the Alberta Emergency Management Agency, to make sure that all communities get the support they need in preparing for and managing emergencies. Ultimately, all these proposed amendments will lead to stronger, more efficient responses to future emergencies.

Over the summer the Alberta Emergency Management Agency engaged municipalities, first responders, and other stakeholders. We held in-person sessions in 11 communities across the province, which were participated in by 174 stakeholders from 92 municipalities. More importantly, stakeholders agreed that these

changes will move us forward and help build a stronger emergency management framework in our province.

I'd like to say thank you to the staff and the leadership of the Alberta Emergency Management Agency, including Shane Schreiber, who is the managing director of the AEMA in our province, for all their work on this bill. I'd like to also thank all the elected leaders, the municipal administrators, first responders, and emergency managers across this province who helped us make these updates. I'd also like to thank all members of this House, on all sides, for their thoughtful debate and their questions on this act.

Madam Speaker, we have seen an increasing number of disasters impacting Albertans, and we all have a duty to protect residents of this province when disaster strikes. I'm proud to say that Bill 8 will result in a safer, more prepared, more resilient Alberta.

With that, I move that this bill be read a third and final time. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to third reading? The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Stier: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'll be brief today. I don't have a lot of prepared remarks for this, but I would like to offer my comments. In the past few years we've seen a lot of horrendous events in this province. I don't need to go through a lot of them, but certainly we can all recall the Slave Lake wildfire, the southern Alberta floods, the Wood Buffalo fires, in my own area the Kenow fires, and almost, again, more fire in that southern district of mine just across from the B.C. border.

I would like to actually offer my compliments to Municipal Affairs and the department for embarking on these changes. We did endure an awful lot in this past decade with a lot of these horrendous situations. I think they've gone ahead and looked through a lot of the things that were important between evacuation orders, dispute resolution, regional collaboration, training requirements for municipalities and first responders, emergency management plans, exercises, and all of these things that will contribute, hopefully, in the future to a much improved system.

With that, Madam Speaker, I close and wish everyone a good afternoon.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Mr. Rosendahl: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise in the House and talk about such a very important bill, Bill 8, the Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2018. We've all seen and heard several times about the big events – floods, fires, et cetera – across the Alberta land base. We're updating the Emergency Management Act so that we can be best prepared for disasters. This update will provide authority, create new regulation that will give clear direction on emergency management practices for municipalities, following consultation with stakeholders to make sure that we get this right.

I'm going to talk about the importance of the Hinton Training Centre, and the reason I'm going to say that is that the Hinton Training Centre is the most experienced centre in Canada for training forest fire fighters. We get forest fire fighters that we train that show up at the Hinton Training Centre from all across the world. The centre also trains water bomber pilots, small bird dog planes that assist with the dropping of water on fires, and it uses state-of-the-art flight simulators. I had a lot of fun in the simulator. Unfortunately, I ended up crashing both planes. Anyway, it was

fun. The instructor laughed while we were sitting there doing that. It's quite a program that they have for training.

3:00

The other thing that I want to mention is that I sit on the pine beetle committee, which was formed about two years ago with the local mayors, town and county of Jasper, the federal park, forestry companies, chamber of commerce, and of course the government of Alberta Agriculture and Forestry people. The biggest deal with this is supporting FireSmart programs, supporting the removal of pine beetle infested trees, which is very important when we're looking at management of fire issues going forward.

The reason I'm mentioning this committee is simple. We have to have an emergency plan in place. Once again, we all know that we choked in smoke this summer. It followed the highway 16 corridor, and of course when I looked out my office window, you couldn't even see the foothills that surround us. That's how bad the smoke in our area was. It was caused in part by the B.C. forest fires burning basically deadwood from pine beetles, to a major extent. Of course, it burns hotter and it spreads faster because of the deadwood.

West of Jasper park is now dead sticks. It's not red trees anymore. All the pine beetles have fallen off the trees, and all we've got is dead sticks there. Throughout Jasper park it's now nearly all red, as we can see when we travel through there. The eastern part is now turning red. Parts of the Hinton area can be seen like that as well.

Jasper national park has its own issues. It's controlled by the federal jurisdiction that looks after the federal parks, so it creates its own issues in the fact that they determine what they're going to do. We were fortunate to convince them to finally do FireSmart around the community of Jasper. It's the first time we've ever seen logging occurring in a national park, but it was important for the protection of the people in the town of Jasper. They're also logging now in other areas of the park. Whistlers campground will be shut down for a year. I had a long meeting with the manager of the park, and it'll remain shut down for a year. They're also going to do some upgrades, but during those upgrades they're going to remove all the deadwood from pine beetles because they know that it's a hazard and it has to be done.

The pine beetle committee recognizes the seriousness that this situation is creating. We realize that we'd better have a plan in place. The plan must address the limited scope of travel routes in West Yellowhead, including highway 16, highways 40 and 93, and of course the forestry roads. When we get a fire that could be in that magnitude, how do we address it, and where do we go? Evacuation plans have to be developed to cover the communities, random campers, and of course all the tourists that come into the park. We've been trying to work with the federal park to make sure that we address the concerns coming forward. That's why it's so important that we put this plan in place.

We need to ensure that we have plans to cover the winter conditions as well. We've had two bad forest fires in the Hinton area that were during the winter. A chinook comes through, and it wipes out all the snow, dries up everything, and all it takes is somebody being careless with cigarettes or whatever. We ended up with a big fire. Of course, the problem with that is: how do you fight them? Water bombers can't pick up water from a frozen lake, and neither can a helicopter. That's why it's so important that we look at these issues, and that's why I'm in full support that we look at this act and we ensure that we have a plan in place and working out in that situation that we have, that we're facing in West Yellowhead.

I really support this act, and I hope that it gets passed so that we can move forward and protect the communities and the people of West Yellowhead. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? Oh, 29(2)(a) first. Is there anybody else wishing to speak to the bill? Seeing none, would the minister like to close debate?

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just want to say thank you to everybody for the robust debate and the positive attitude on this bill because it's a really good thing that's going to help a lot of people. Thank you very much.

I close debate.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

[Motion carried; Bill 8 read a third time]

Bill 20 Securities Amendment Act, 2018

The Acting Speaker: The hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I rise today to move third reading of this bill before us, Bill 20, Securities Amendment Act, 2018.

The Alberta government is committed to ongoing reform of our securities regulatory system. This commitment to ongoing reform means Alberta has a modern, streamlined, and highly harmonized securities regulatory system. The Alberta Securities Commission, or ASC, is mandated to protect investors, to foster market efficiency, and to minimize systemic risks. This requires balancing investor protection and the integrity of the financial system while allowing innovation and ensuring a competitive investment climate.

These amendments were developed to support our commitment to ongoing reform by protecting investors and promoting a fair and effective Alberta capital market. To enhance investor protection, we will create a new regulatory regime for benchmarks and benchmark administrators substantially similar to the benchmark amendments recently adopted in both Ontario and Quebec. The European Union recently adopted a benchmark regulatory regime. To ensure that Canadian benchmarks may continue to be used by EU market participants, Canadian securities regulators have committed to implementing a regulatory regime respecting benchmarks equivalent to the EU's regime.

The amendments will also support the implementation of a whistle-blower program for the Alberta capital market and its participants similar to whistle-blower programs implemented, again, in Ontario and Quebec in 2016. Security regulators believe whistle-blower programs will encourage individuals to report information on serious securities- or derivatives-related misconduct to the securities regulator. Whistle-blower programs have also been implemented internationally, based on a belief that a whistle-blower program may assist in preventing or limiting harm to investors that may result from such misconduct. As whistle-blowing is an inherently risky activity with a myriad of personal and professional consequences, the ASC will create a whistle-blower program that mitigates as much as reasonably possible the risks and barriers that whistle-blowers may encounter.

The amendments will also provide ASC members and staff with protection from being compelled to provide evidence in civil proceedings relating to information obtained during the discharge of their duties at the ASC. That's substantially similar to the amendment adopted in Ontario in 2017.

Finally, amendments to Lieutenant Governor in Council regulations will permit the ASC to make rules respecting the manner and form of material provided to the ASC under other

statutes, for example the Business Corporations Act, in respect of relief from proxy solicitation requirements. This amendment will also facilitate the development and implementation of the new information technologies system, allowing a vast majority of material to be filed electronically.

3:10

These amendments were developed to improve the regulation of Alberta's capital market, increase investor confidence and protection, and keep our securities laws harmonized with other jurisdictions both in Canada and the EU. With these amendments we are ensuring that Alberta's securities regulatory system reflects the realities of today's markets and evolves in alignment with international standards and global regulatory reform initiatives. I'd ask all members of this House to support third reading of this bill.

Of course, I'd like to extend my appreciation to the board and staff of ASC as well as Treasury Board and Finance for making these changes to the regulations and the Securities Amendment Act, 2018, Bill 20, possible.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm going to try and keep it brief for everybody else in the House here today. I think that, certainly, the Securities Amendment Act has sometimes been lamented by opposition members as something we do very frequently or something that members may say is not the most interesting bill in the world, and we have to do it every year. You know, actually, I think that there are certain parts in here which are very important. It's something that my colleague from Edmonton-Whitemud has mentioned before. I think we do a lot of really good and important work in the Securities Amendment Act here.

Last year we brought in many protections for investors. This year one of the biggest things that I'm excited about is this whistle-blower protection program. We're not leading the way on this; it's being implemented across Canada. I believe the CSA has agreed to that. We've already seen it implemented in Ontario and Quebec. It's something that we know is going to help provide a robust securities regulatory regime. It's something that we know is important to have when we want to have a system that people can trust and depend on. As the minister said, whistle-blowing is inherently dangerous, which is why it's important to provide protection and confidentiality for whistle-blowers. I think that that's something that we can be really proud of, that we're supportive of an open and transparent system here.

I think it's also important to note that a lot of the changes going on are harmonizing us with the rest of the country and, indeed, other parts of the world as well. That's really important because it allows investors in Alberta to have confidence that we are working with our partners across the country, and it's important that we can minimize risks and uncertainty for investors. Really, all of these things together lead to a regulatory regime that says: Alberta is stable; Alberta is open for business.

We're also making some changes to protect investors' rights, things like privacy. We speak about Alberta Securities Commission members and their staff. They previously could have been called to reveal confidential third-party information through their job. We're protecting that information now. We're making sure that it can't leak through some sort of third-party discovery process. I think that all of these changes together, when we look at them – yes, sometimes it can seem like there are a lot of small things going on,

but when we put them together, it's very clear that this bill is there to ensure that we have a stable system that consumers and investors can both rely on.

I'm happy to support this bill, and I'm happy to encourage all members to vote in favour of it. That's all I have for today. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, would the hon. minister like to close debate?

Mr. Ceci: Close.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

[Motion carried; Bill 20 read a third time]

The Acting Speaker: Hon. Government House Leader, would you have a motion?

Mr. Mason: That we continue to meet until 9 o'clock tonight. No. No.

Madam Speaker, I am almost speechless but not quite about the rate of progress that we've made this afternoon and this week. I would like to thank all members of the House.

I move that we adjourn until 1:30 on Monday.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 3:16 p.m.]

Bill Status Report for the 29th Legislature - 4th Session (2018)

Activity to Thursday, November 1, 2018

The Bill sponsor's name is in brackets following the Bill title. If it is a money Bill, (\$) will appear between the title and the sponsor's name. Numbers following each Reading refer to Hansard pages where the text of debates is found; dates for each Reading are in brackets following the page numbers. Bills numbered 1 to 200 are Government Bills. Bills numbered 201 or higher are Private Members' Public Bills. Bills numbered with a "Pr" prefix are Private Bills.

* An asterisk beside a Bill number indicates an amendment was passed to that Bill; the Committee line shows the precise date of the amendment.

The date a Bill comes into force is indicated in square brackets after the date of Royal Assent. If a Bill comes into force "on proclamation," "with exceptions," or "on various dates," please contact Legislative Counsel, Alberta Justice, for details at 780.427.2217. The chapter number assigned to the Bill is entered immediately following the date the Bill comes into force. SA indicates Statutes of Alberta; this is followed by the year in which it is included in the statutes, and its chapter number. Please note, Private Bills are not assigned chapter number until the conclusion of the Fall Sittings.

Bill 1 — Energy Diversification Act (McCuaig-Boyd)

First Reading — 6 (*Mar. 8, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 50-51 (*Mar. 13, 2018 morn.*), 184-87 (*Mar. 15, 2018 aft.*), 233-43 (*Mar. 20, 2018 aft.*), 301-08 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft.*), 919-27 (*May 9, 2018 morn.*), 981-84 (*May 9, 2018 eve.*), 1054-59 (*May 14, 2018 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1286-87 (*May 29, 2018 aft.*), 1280-86 (*May 29, 2018 aft.*), 1299 (*May 29, 2018 eve.*), 1311-18 (*May 29, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1488-92 (*Jun. 5, 2018 morn.*), 1523-24 (*Jun. 5, 2018 aft.*), 1525-41 (*Jun. 6, 2018 morn., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 11, 2018; SA 2018 cE-9.6]

Bill 2 — Growth and Diversification Act (\$) (Bilous)

First Reading — 118 (*Mar. 14, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 243-46 (*Mar. 20, 2018 morn.*), 294-96 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft.*), 314-25 (*Mar. 22, 2018 morn.*), 411-12 (*Apr. 4, 2018 aft.*), 702-05 (*May 1, 2018 eve.*), 928-33 (*May 9, 2018 morn.*), 1061-68 (*May 15, 2018 morn.*), 1101-04 (*May 15, 2018 eve.*), 1163-67 (*May 16, 2018 eve.*), 1202-06 (*May 17, 2018 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1253-58 (*May 29, 2018 morn.*), 1288-97 (*May 29, 2018 aft.*), 1299 (*May 29, 2018 eve.*), 1379-82 (*May 30, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1492-94 (*Jun. 5, 2018 morn.*), 1510-23 (*Jun. 5, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation, with exceptions; SA 2018 c8]

Bill 3 — Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2018 (\$) (Ceci)

First Reading — 184 (*Mar. 15, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 221-26 (*Mar. 19, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 261-68 (*Mar. 20, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 296-98 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 28, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force Mar. 28, 2018; SA 2018 c1]

Bill 4 — Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2018 (\$) (Ceci)

First Reading — 165 (*Mar. 15, 2018 morn., passed*)

Second Reading — 226-32 (*Mar. 19, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 268-75 (*Mar. 20, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 298-301 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 28, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force Mar. 28, 2018; SA 2018 c2]

Bill 5 — An Act to Strengthen Financial Security for Persons with Disabilities (Sabir)

First Reading — 200-201 (*Mar. 19, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 360-62 (*Apr. 3, 2018 morn.*), 482-87 (*Apr. 10, 2018 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 847-54 (*May 7, 2018 eve.*), 1084-88 (*May 15, 2018 aft.*), 1361-64 (*May 30, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1418-21 (*May 31, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 11, 2018; SA 2018 c12]

Bill 6 — Gaming and Liquor Statutes Amendment Act, 2018 (Ganley)

First Reading — 448 (*Apr. 9, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 533-34 (*Apr. 12, 2018 aft.*), 669-79 (*May 1, 2018 aft.*), 1010-13 (*May 10, 2018 aft.*), 1101 (*May 15, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1158-63 (*May 16, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1360-61 (*May 30, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2018 c7]

Bill 7 — Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act (Carlier)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 491-97 (*Apr. 10, 2018 aft.*), 534-36 (*Apr. 12, 2018 aft.*), 679-83 (*May 1, 2018 aft.*), 908-09 (*May 8, 2018 eve.*), 913-14 (*May 8, 2018 eve.*), 1097-98 (*May 15, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1299-1311 (*May 29, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1365-74 (*May 30, 2018 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 11, 2018, for sections 1-6 and 20-21 and April 1, 2019, for sections 7-19; SA 2018 cS-23.3]

Bill 8 — Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2018 (S. Anderson)

First Reading — 374 (*Apr. 3, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1639-45 (*Oct. 30, 2018 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1645-53 (*Oct. 30, 2018 morn., adjourned*)

Third Reading — 1763-65 (*Nov. 1, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 9* — Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act (Hoffman)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 497-502 (*Apr. 10, 2018 aft.*), 785-93 (*May 3, 2018 morn.*), 775-76 (*May 3, 2018 morn.*), 807-08 (*May 3, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 909-13 (*May 8, 2018 eve.*), 957-61 (*May 9, 2018 aft.*), 992-94 (*May 10, 2018 morn.*), 1088-96 (*May 15, 2018 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1352-60 (*May 30, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 11, 2018; SA 2018 cP-26.83]

Bill 10* — An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements (S. Anderson)

First Reading — 528 (*Apr. 12, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 611-12 (*Apr. 19, 2018 aft.*), 643-50 (*May 1, 2018 morn.*), 761-72 (*May 2, 2018 eve.*), 973-81 (*May 9, 2018 eve.*), 1049-54 (*May 14, 2018 eve.*), 1180-87 (*May 17, 2018 morn.*), 1242-47 (*May 28, 2018 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1287-88 (*May 29, 2018 aft.*), 1299 (*May 29, 2018 eve.*), 1374-79 (*May 30, 2018 eve., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1555-71 (*Jun. 6, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2018 c6]

Bill 11 — Lobbyists Amendment Act, 2018 (Gray)

First Reading — 505 (*Apr. 11, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 612-13 (*Apr. 19, 2018 aft.*), 650-56 (*May 1, 2018 morn.*), 772-74 (*May 2, 2018 eve.*), 967-73 (*May 9, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1157 (*May 16, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1382-86 (*May 30, 2018 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 11, 2018, with exceptions; SA 2018 c9]

Bill 12* — Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act (McCuaig-Boyd)

First Reading — 547 (*Apr. 16, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 736-46 (*May 2, 2018 aft.*), 854-55 (*May 7, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 961-65 (*May 9, 2018 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 994-96 (*May 10, 2018 morn.*), 1135-54 (*May 16, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 18, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2018 c P-21.5]

Bill 13* — An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future (\$) (McCuaig-Boyd)

First Reading — 606 (*Apr. 19, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 746-53 (*May 2, 2018 aft.*), 808-16 (*May 3, 2018 aft.*), 855-64 (*May 7, 2018 eve.*), 947-57 (*May 9, 2018 aft.*), 1169-80 (*May 17, 2018 morn.*), 1247-50 (*May 28, 2018 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1322-34 (*May 30, 2018 morn.*), 1397-1404 (*May 31, 2018 morn.*), 1449-79 (*Jun. 4, 2018 eve., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1573-92 (*Jun. 7, 2018 morn., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation, with exceptions; SA 2018 c10]

Bill 14 — An Act to Empower Utility Consumers (McLean)

First Reading — 590 (*Apr. 18, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 718-24 (*May 2, 2018 morn.*), 915-19 (*May 9, 2018 morn.*), 1098-1101 (*May 15, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1319-22 (*May 30, 2018 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1421 (*May 31, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2018 c5]

Bill 15 — Appropriation Act, 2018 (\$) (Ceci)

First Reading — 610 (*Apr. 19, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Second Reading — 683-89 (*May 1, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 753-56 (*May 2, 2018 aft.*), 757-60 (*May 2, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 776-85 (*May 3, 2018 morn., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*May 14, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 14, 2018; SA 2018 c3]

Bill 16 — Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Statutes Amendment Act, 2018 (Gray)

First Reading — 879 (*May 8, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1010-13 (*May 10, 2018 aft.*), 1105-22 (*May 16, 2018 morn.*), 1155-57 (*May 16, 2018 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1258-64 (*May 29, 2018 morn.*), 1299 (*May 29, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1421-22 (*May 31, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 11, 2018, with exceptions; SA 2018 c4]

Bill 17 — Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2018 (Ceci)

First Reading — 806 (*May 3, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 864-65 (*May 7, 2018 eve.*), 1014-15 (*May 10, 2018 aft.*), 1058-59 (*May 14, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1157 (*May 16, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1364 (*May 30, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 11, 2018, with exceptions; SA 2018 c13]

Bill 18 — Statutes Amendment Act, 2018 (Mason)

First Reading — 1201 (*May 17, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1251-52 (*May 28, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1387-97 (*May 31, 2018 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1481-88 (*Jun. 5, 2018 morn.*), 1507-10 (*Jun. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 11, 2018; SA 2018 c11]

Bill 19 — An Act to Improve the Affordability and Accessibility of Post-secondary Education (Schmidt)

First Reading — 1621 (*Oct. 29, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1667-81 (*Oct. 30, 2018 aft.*), 1690-1701 (*Oct. 31, 2018 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1718-28 (*Oct. 31, 2018 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 20 — Securities Amendment Act, 2018 (Ceci)

First Reading — 1621 (*Oct. 29, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1681-84 (*Oct. 30, 2018 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1716-18 (*Oct. 31, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1765-66 (*Nov. 1, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 21 — An Act to Protect Patients (Hoffman)

First Reading — 1666 (*Oct. 30, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1685-90 (*Oct. 31, 2018 morn., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1729-32 (*Oct. 31, 2018 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 22 — An Act for Strong Families Building Stronger Communities (Larivee)

First Reading — 1714 (*Oct. 31, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1735-49 (*Nov. 1, 2018 morn., passed*)

Bill 24 — An Act to Recognize AMA Representation Rights (Hoffman)

First Reading — 1762-63 (*Nov. 1, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 201 — Employment Standards (Firefighter Leave) Amendment Act, 2018 (W. Anderson)

First Reading — 118 (*Mar. 14, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 201-14 (*Mar. 19, 2018 aft., referred to Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future*), 1620 (*Oct. 29, 2018 aft., motion to concur in report, adjourned*)

Bill 202 — Alberta Taxpayer Protection (Carbon Tax Referendum) Amendment Act, 2018 (Kenney)

First Reading — 179 (*Mar. 15, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 549-63 (*Apr. 16, 2018 aft., defeated on division*)

Bill 203 — Long Term Care Information Act (Schreiner)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 632-40 (*Apr. 30, 2018 aft.*), 829-33 (*May 7, 2018 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1221-30 (*May 28, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1434-41 (*Jun. 4, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 11, 2018; SA 2018 cL-22]

Bill 204 — Land Statutes (Abolition of Adverse Possession) Amendment Act, 2018 (Gotfried)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 833-41 (*May 7, 2018 aft., adjourned*), 1031-37 (*May 14, 2018 aft., reasoned amendment agreed to*)

Bill 205 — Supporting Accessible Mental Health Services Act (Jabbour)

First Reading — 1008 (*May 10, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1037 (*May 14, 2018 aft., deferred to Monday, October 29, 2018*)

Bill 206 — Societies (Preventing the Promotion of Hate) Amendment Act, 2018 (Coolahan)

First Reading — 1008-09 (*May 10, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1037 (*May 14, 2018 aft.*), 1441-47 (*Jun. 4, 2018 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 207 — Municipal Government (Legion Tax Exemption) Amendment Act, 2018 (Rosendahl)

First Reading — 1418 (*May 31, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 208 — Public Recreation Areas Consultation Act (Westhead)

First Reading — 1418 (*May 31, 2018 aft., passed*)

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, November 5, 2018

Day 45

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (NDP), Speaker
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Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, November 5, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let us reflect or pray, each in our own way. As today marks the beginning of Veterans' Week, may we take a moment to consider the remarkable service, women and men who so unselfishly protect our nation. Also, let us listen to the voices from the past about the pain of war, lest we forget.

Hon. members, ladies and gentlemen, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Mr. R.J. Chambers.

Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!
True patriot love in all of us command.
Car ton bras sait porter l'épée,
Il sait porter la croix!
Ton histoire est une épopée
Des plus brillants exploits.
God keep our land glorious and free!
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

The Speaker: Thank you. Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislature quite a number of the Alberta Education interchange teachers. This is a group of school administrators and teachers from across the province who are supporting Alberta Education to develop and implement curriculum. During their two-year interchange with the ministry they gain knowledge of new curriculum, where it will take us back, and then how we will implement it in the classrooms across the province. It's a very valuable program. It allows us to keep our rubber hitting the road and to make sure that we're building what's very best for our children in education. I'd like to ask them to stand now, please, and receive the warm welcome of the Legislature.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 34 students from Kim Hung school today. I was proud to have been there to open their school last year, when they had great dragon dances and line dances. That's how I know that they're in the greatest constituency in the entire province. The students today are accompanied by their teacher, Mr. Jeff Webster, along with their chaperones, Ryan Crackston and Kim Brix. If they'd please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Are there any other school groups, hon. members?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions today, the Loyal Edmonton Regiment and the Armistice 100

Committee. I'm honoured to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly distinguished guests from the Loyal Edmonton Regiment. When the First World War broke out, in August 1914, the 101st Regiment, Edmonton Fusiliers, was charged with recruiting and forming several battalions for the Canadian Expeditionary Force. The 49th Battalion, now known as the Loyal Edmonton Regiment, was the only battalion that was to remain a fighting unit. As we mark 100 years since the end of World War I, our thoughts go to remember 977 soldiers from all ranks and 2,282 soldiers wounded from the Loyal Edmonton Regiment. This afternoon it was my great honour to receive an honour roll from the Loyal Edmonton Regiment, presented to the Alberta Legislature. I would ask that our distinguished guests from the Loyal Edmonton Regiment stand as I call their names: Captain Rick Dumas, adjutant, Loyal Edmonton Regiment, 4 PPCLI, Jefferson Armoury; Honorary Colonel John Stanton, Loyal Edmonton Regiment; Chief Warrant Officer Jay Reinelt, regimental sergeant major; and Colonel, retired, Don Miller. I would now ask the Assembly to extend the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome, and thank you.

The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Oh, another introduction. I'm sorry.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For my second introduction I'm honoured to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a group dedicated to preserving and celebrating the memory of the 100th anniversary of the end of World War I, the Armistice 100 Committee. Please join me in thanking this committee for sharing their time and talent to mark this significant anniversary in such a meaningful way. Please stand as I say your name: Carolyn Patton, chair; Lieutenant-Colonel Mark Beare, chief of staff, 3rd Canadian Division Support Group; Captain Rick Dumas, adjutant, Loyal Edmonton Regiment, 4 PPCLI, Jefferson Armoury; Dave Ridley, executive director, Edmonton Heritage Council; Deborah Brandell, volunteer co-ordinator; Tanya Camp, technical support; Jill Wright, military liaison support; and last but certainly not least, our Sergeant-at-Arms, Lieutenant-Colonel, retired, Brian Hodgson. I would now ask that all members of the Assembly extend the traditional warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Now the Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you some very special guests who are seated in your gallery. It's my pleasure to introduce three St. Albert firefighters who are also trained as primary and advanced care paramedics. I would ask that they stand as I say their names: Jay Howells, Derek Ellicott, and Kyle Nobles. Please join me in extending these Albertans the traditional warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and through you a friend of mine and a constituent, Josephine Pon. Josephine was a banker for 25 years. Currently she's the vice-president for a chain of five restaurants in Alberta. She was a three-time board chair for Immigrant Services Calgary, a group that has helped over 200,000 new Canadians settle in Calgary. For 10 years she was the chair of the immigrants of distinction award. Josephine sought the UCP nomination in Calgary-Bedlington and lost by just nine votes. She handled this tough loss with much grace, and I feel so fortunate that she has volunteered to help me on my next campaign as she did on our leader's leadership campaign. I would ask all of

you to extend the warm traditional welcome of the Assembly to my friend Josephine.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions this afternoon. My first introduction is of two champions for central Alberta and Red Deer College in particular. Joel Ward is Red Deer College's president, and Brenda Munro is their dean of the school of continuing education. Our government was pleased to announce that Red Deer College is on the path toward university status, and I've been proud to celebrate with them as they begin to offer their own degrees. I want to thank Mr. Ward and Ms Munro for their tireless advocacy – I can personally attest to how tirelessly they have advocated for this; I'm glad they don't have my personal phone number – and I invite them both to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

1:40

The Speaker: Welcome.

Mr. Schmidt: For my second introduction, Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce Dr. Melanie Peacock. Dr. Peacock is the president of the Mount Royal Faculty Association, which represents approximately 800 faculty at that university. Dr. Peacock's work and academic background are in human resource management, and her fourth textbook regarding this subject matter is about to be published. Dr. Peacock's doctoral research focused on adult education and the importance of interpersonal relationship development in postsecondary settings. As well, Dr. Peacock is a sought-after media contributor at the municipal, provincial, and national levels. I ask that Dr. Peacock please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Nielsen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a real pleasure to be able to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a great friend of mine, Perri Garvin. Perri has been the co-ordinator of labour programs for the United Way of the Alberta Capital Region for the past 18 years. His role is unique in educating union members about community resources and how they can help their members access them. His involvement in domestic violence and mental health issues has contributed to a better understanding of unions working with their members. I must say that there is some truth to the allegations that Mr. Garvin 26 years ago might have had something to do with shaping my path and where I've ended up today. I'd ask now that Perri please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two dear friends of mine and of many people in this Chamber, from the great city of Lethbridge, Mr. and Mrs. Zielke, who are two of the most compassionate, nicest people that you could ever meet. Mrs. Zielke is the only . . .

Mr. Kenney: Dr. Zielke.

Mr. Nixon: Dr. Zielke, I should say. Thank you.

. . . cardiologist in the city of Lethbridge, fighting every day to save many Albertans' lives. Recently many of us got to visit them

in their home, and they introduced us to cardiologist-friendly pizza, Mr. Speaker. If you're curious as to the recipe, make sure to give me a call. I ask them both to stand up – they won't let us eat bacon, though; it's another issue – and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you members of my staff at Municipal Affairs. Specifically, these folks are responsible for much of the work done on An Act to Renew Local Democracy in Alberta, which I will introduce in a few minutes. I know this has been a tremendous effort by this very capable team, and I want to commend them for the work they have done. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I ask that they rise as I call their names: Cathy Maniego, LaRae Ellis, Angela Markel, Laura Klassen Bullock, Marie Overell, and Alexander Witt. I want us to please give them the warm welcome of the Chamber and thank them for all of their hard work.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other guests to introduce today? The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to the members of this House the community advocates project team. This is an incredible team of advocates who build awareness about family violence and effect positive change. I'm pleased to introduce Johanna Baynton Smith, Chris McCaw, Amanda Fletcher, and Mary Turner. With them are Heather Morrison and Michelle Holubisky from the city of Edmonton. I want to commend this group for the work they do, and I ask them to rise – they already have – and ask the House to give them a warm welcome.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

St. Albert Emergency Service Providers

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Jay Howells is a St. Albert firefighter and paramedic. People in St. Albert and across Alberta may know Jay as the firefighter who delivered two babies this past spring within a two-week period. Jay also assisted in the home birth of one of his three children. I had the opportunity to spend time with Jay Howells and the other firefighters during a ride-along this past summer. This was my second ride-along, and I was once again able to see the remarkable skill, professionalism, compassion, and camaraderie of the St. Albert firefighters, who are also trained as primary- and advanced-care paramedics. And, yes, the rumours are true; they are very skilled in the kitchen.

St. Albert residents also know Jay Howells as part of a team of four firefighters who took to the roof of station 2 fire hall last winter to raise funds for Muscular Dystrophy Canada. This small but mighty team pulled in approximately \$75,000 during last year's four-day and -night winter fundraising campaign. Muscular Dystrophy Canada is supported by 800 fire departments and associations across Canada. Their mission is to enhance the lives of those diagnosed with the neuromuscular disorder by providing

resources for mobility, seating and breathing aids, access to equipment, and vital research.

A few months ago MD Canada named Jay Howells as the 2018 provincial firefighter of the year. Naturally, Jay always says that he wishes all of his team's names were on the award, so I will share them with you in this Chamber: Derek Ellicott, Kyle Nobles, and Lee Monfette, who couldn't be here today because he and his wife just had a child this weekend.

I feel comfortable saying that all St. Albertans are grateful for our amazing firefighters and paramedics, who are always there when we need them the most. They are part of the fabric of our community, and we rely on them daily. Their jobs are incredibly demanding and require skills and courage I cannot even describe. So for all of this and more, I thank the St. Albert fire department and EMS for all that they do.

Thank you.

Anti-Semitism

Mr. Gottfried: Mr. Speaker, Richard Gottfried, my name almost to a T, was mentioned in this Assembly and at a synagogue vigil as a victim of the anti-Semitic attack in Pittsburgh. I would be lying if I said that this was anything but unnerving.

I was raised as a good Presbyterian, my Jewish heritage but half of my DNA. But in Hitler's Germany that would have destined me for work camps and ultimately the gas chamber. In the fall of 2016 I learned that the fate of over 68,000 Polish Jews from Lodz, the birthplace of my father, was eventual liquidation. Among those families were all of the relatives I will never know. Shockingly, perhaps miraculously, just 877 Jews survived in that city at liberation, with lives, bloodlines, stories, and history lost forever to anti-Semitism, racism, in one of its historically heinous extremes.

Mr. Speaker, can we live in a complacent world in today's society? Elie Wiesel once said, "The opposite of love is not hate, it's indifference." Can we afford to be indifferent in the face of discrimination and hatred? Last night I spoke at a screening of the documentary *Above the Drowning Sea* at the Beth Tzedec synagogue. Ho Feng-Shan, the Chinese consul general in Vienna at the time and known as the Chinese Schindler, single-handedly saved over 20,000 European Jews – this at a time when Canada said that none was too many – 20,000 lives saved, embraced by the Chinese people in what became the Shanghai ghetto, rescuing them from the plight of 6 million members of their faith. My personal bridge to China began when Shanghai became a safe haven for my father, a Polish Jew, over 100 years ago. That quite literally saved the only surviving bloodlines of my family.

We must all be vigilant, and we must be strong and principled and fiercely defend against any resurgence of anti-Semitism, racism, and hatred in all its forms across Alberta and around the world. We must all do our part, each and every day, in not being complacent or indifferent to words or acts of hatred in our midst. Mr. Speaker, let's ensure that "never again" is more than just a phrase of conscientious reflection.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

School Construction in South Calgary

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to update the House about the steps my constituents, myself, and our government are taking to make life better for students in south Calgary schools. Last year we opened Ron Southern elementary school and Holy Child school in Silverado to help service the growing southwest

communities. Both cases included the funding for two new playgrounds.

1:50

We followed through with two new high schools in south Calgary that opened in September. Because of these openings, we've seen a drop of 100 students at Centennial high school this year, and we see a forecast reduction of 200 students over the next couple of years, greatly reducing classroom pressures. The parent council there hosted a dialogue with the minister that brought parents from all over Calgary, who shared feedback about curriculum review and life in south Calgary. The opening of All Saints high school in Legacy means that Bishop O'Byrne is down to levels of students that the school was built for, reducing the count by over 200 students this year alone.

Two new playgrounds opened in my riding, including at Midnapore school, and with amazing work from the parent council at Samuel Shaw middle school this spring, we cut the ribbon for their new playground, both supported by government CFEP grants. Now we've set our sights on a new pilot project, with the leadership from the parent council at St. Teresa of Calcutta school, that hopefully will see a build of a new playground.

I will continue to seek further supports for expansion of schools in south Calgary. Currently there are no K to 9 schools in Legacy and Walden, and that needs to change. However, I'm concerned that with the UCP forecasting 20 per cent cuts for their budget, those cuts will come at the cost of students in south Calgary and those new schools.

I ran in the last election because of the lack of schools in Calgary, and I have worked hard with the minister to follow through on almost over a dozen builds in south Calgary, which has had a positive impact on all of the communities in that area. Now and in 2019 I will run to ensure and preserve and build on the great work that our Premier and our government have done for these students.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Unemployment

Mr. Kenney: Thank you very much. Last week new unemployment stats confirmed a six-month-long trend, six months of higher unemployment in Alberta, 2,700 more jobs lost last month. Mr. Speaker, 184,000 Albertans are looking for work. Is the NDP government proud of this record of growing unemployment, and what is its message to the 184,000 unemployed Albertans looking for work?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for that very important question. Of course, our government has been very, very focused on the need to create jobs in Alberta and to have the backs of Albertans as we come out of this most recent oil-price-induced recession. Now, the member knows that, yes, there were some jobs lost last month. We're aware of that, and we think about those people each and every day in the work that we do. He also knows, however, that in August there were 16,000 jobs created and that from month to month the numbers bounce around. Year over year we've created over 90,000 jobs and ...

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, in May of this year the unemployment rate was 6.2 per cent. Now it is 7.3 per cent. The NDP seems to think that that's going in the right direction. Most Albertans believe that more unemployment is going in the wrong direction. In fact, Professor Tombe at the University of Calgary says that if we had the same labour force participation rate that existed in Alberta before the NDP came to office, the current unemployment rate would actually be 8.1 per cent. Does the government actually think that its economic policy of higher taxes, job-killing regulations, and more debt is working for these unemployed Albertans?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Ms Notley: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, we know that there is more work to be done as we continue to focus on creating jobs. We also know that we actually have more Albertans employed in this province than we did before. The reason the unemployment rate is coming down is because more people are coming to Alberta looking for jobs, including people from Saskatchewan, who are not benefiting from the kinds of programs that the member opposite suggests that we adopt. What we decided to do was have Albertans' backs and to invest in growth. That's exactly what we're doing. What we won't do is cut 4,000 teachers or 4,000 nurses.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the Premier just said that the unemployment rate is going down. That is exactly the opposite of the truth. I won't use the unparliamentary language to describe that. I'll just refer to the StatsCan statistics. In May unemployment was 6.2 per cent. It's gone up every month for six months now to 7.3 per cent. In fact, there are 45,000 more jobless Albertans today than when the NDP took office in 2015. Is their recipe more of the same: more high taxes, more high debt, more job-killing red tape?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No, in fact, I did misspeak. What I meant to say was that the employment is up. More people are working than they were before, and the difference is that more people are coming in who are looking for work, people from places like Saskatchewan.

We know there's more work to do, Mr. Speaker. We know that as a result of the drop in oil prices in 2016, we hit bottom. It was hard, and it was hard for many, many Albertans. That's why we have invested in Alberta. We have had Albertans' backs. We are working on creating more jobs, 90,000 since last year. We know there's more to be done, but what won't help is cutting jobs for nurses and teachers and . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.
The hon. member.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the Premier corrected herself to say that unemployment isn't going down but that the employment rate is going up. On that, she's wrong again. In fact, the employment rate before the NDP came to office in April 2015 was 69.2 per cent, and last month it was 67 per cent. A smaller percentage of Albertans are actually employed. She clearly doesn't understand the statistics nor the lived reality of Albertans who are struggling to find work. The question is: does the government expect to deliver more of the same – higher taxes, higher debt, and more red tape – to address this jobless crisis?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. What I said, to be clear, was that employment is up. The number of jobs in Alberta is up. What we will not do is cut. We will not give a \$700 million tax break so that we can support the 1 per cent. We will not roll back spending to 2015 levels, throwing 4,000 teachers out of work, throwing 4,000 nurses out of work. We will not do what the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills wants us to do, which is: make it hurt. I didn't get into politics for that; nobody on this side of the House did either.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, Halloween was last week, so the fear campaign can end. None of that is the policy of the United Conservative Party, but let me talk about the record of the NDP. There are 42,000 young Albertans who are out of work, and this is shocking. The youth employment rate the month before the NDP took office was 62.3 per cent. It's now down to 55.7 per cent, still, three and a half years later, a dramatic decline in youth employment in Alberta. Is the NDP's response yet higher taxes?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, what we will not do is make it hurt for Albertans, which the member opposite's MLA for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills said in a moment of transparency. That is not our plan going forward. The member opposite is playing around with numbers. He knows full well that the price of oil dropped \$30, \$40 after we got elected. He knows full well that we were handed an economy that was not ready to deal with that. We have been working with Albertans, investing in Albertans ever since. The dial is moving. We know there's more work to do, and we will be standing there fighting for Albertans every step of the way.

Mr. Kenney: Well, it didn't take long for the Premier to blame oil prices. Isn't that curious, though, Mr. Speaker? In the U.S. states that see a dynamic, growing oil and gas sector, states like North Dakota and Colorado and Texas, the unemployment rate is 3 per cent on average versus over 7 per cent in Alberta, the highest unemployment outside of Atlantic Canada, Calgary with the highest unemployment of any major city in Canada. Does the Premier plan to make that bad situation even worse by continuing to raise taxes on Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, first of all, the member opposite knows that there is about an \$8 billion a year tax advantage for people in Alberta. We still have the lowest taxes in the country. Moreover, since the summer of 2017 our economy has created 90,000 jobs, so we are on the right track. The member opposite doesn't want to acknowledge those things. However, we're going to continue fighting for Albertans. We're going to continue investing in their schools, continue investing in their hospitals, having their backs so that everybody comes out of this recession together.

The Speaker: I think we're at the third main question.

Mr. Kenney: For the record the Premier is telling us that in the sixth straight month of growing unemployment, of more people on the jobless lines, this isn't going in the right direction. She told the *Edmonton Journal* recently that you can, in quotes, expect more of the same. That's what concerns Albertans. When she talks about employment growth, it's overwhelmingly, Mr. Speaker, being paid for by deficit financing: 55,000 jobs in the state sector but 29,000 fewer jobs in the private sector. Is the government's plan to create jobs in the private sector based on yet higher taxes and yet more red tape?

2:00

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, what is not our plan is to fire 4,000 teachers and fire 4,000 nurses so that we can give a \$700 million tax break to the richest 1 per cent of Albertans. I understand who the members opposite support, but we are on the side of all Albertans, and we are going to fight for all Albertans. We're going to make sure that they all enjoy the recovery, not just their friends and their donors in the top 1 per cent.

Mr. Kenney: What recovery? Mr. Speaker, 7.3 per cent unemployment, unemployment up for six months, 184,000 jobless Albertans? This is the problem. Those people are listening to their Premier say that happy times are here again, this great recovery where unemployment is going up. I've never seen a recovery like that before. What is the government's plan apart from more of the same, which from the NDP means higher taxes, more red tape, and more debt? What is their actual plan?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, what we're not going to do is what their friends over in Saskatchewan next door did, and because of that our province is leading the country in economic growth. We led last year. We're leading this year. We're leading next year. There are 2.3 million people working in this province, the highest number of people working in this province's history. Average weekly earnings are, again, higher than they were before the last election. That being said, I'll be the first to admit that we have more work to do to make sure that every Albertan feels this recovery, and that is what we are committed to making sure happens.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, one of the most tragic aspects of the NDP's economic disaster is the long-term unemployed. Alberta used to have the shortest average duration of unemployment. People might lose a job, but they'd quickly find a new one. Now for the last couple of years we've had the longest duration of unemployment, reaching as long as 23 weeks in this province. You know what that does to people's self-confidence? Their skills atrophy. Often it leads to mental health challenges. What is the Premier's message to those long-term unemployed who feel like they can no longer get a fair chance in NDP Alberta?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, our message is that we understand how challenging it is for them and their families, and that is why our government has made the choice to have their back from day one. We were not going to throw them out of work. We were not going to cut the services that they and their families rely on. We were not going to pull back on police services and municipal services and all those things that communities need. We were going to have their back, and we were going to invest in growth. As I said, we know that there's more work to do, but we are committed to doing it because we are committed to making sure that all Albertans ultimately feel the effects of the recovery.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Alberta Works

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Every constituent who's called my office about Alberta Works has mentioned ill treatment, disrespect, and bullying. Constituents have described how caseworkers make them feel like garbage, dirt, not even human, like it's all their fault. Three constituents recently said that they fear giving their names to anyone offering them support with this because they're afraid of investigation and retribution by Alberta Works. To the minister of human services: what policies prevent intimidation of vulnerable clients from bullying by Alberta Works?

The Speaker: The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. All Albertans, when they walk into an Alberta Works office, can expect that they will be treated with the utmost respect, and these allegations are very concerning. I would want the member to forward those details, and I commit to following up on these concerns. All allegations of such nature are looked into with due seriousness.

Ms McPherson: One constituent was left out of work because she faced multiple surgeries, and she can't pay her bills. She only receives \$700 a month to live on. Her phone is being cut off. She's had to go without heat, and it's wintertime. Alberta Works has demanded several audits of her personal bank account and told her to take budgeting classes at the Kerby Centre. Can the minister please share the budgeting tips that would make it easier for her to live on \$700 a month?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have heard from Albertans that these rates were kept low even when oil was trading at \$90. What we have done instead of making that situation worse is that we have maintained stable funding to that. I have heard from Albertans about these rates, and we are absolutely committed to making sure that we improve these programs so that Albertans can live with respect and dignity.

Ms McPherson: Another constituent was laid off from the oil industry recently. On Alberta Works' advice and request she provided details of employment retraining, an itemized list of training costs, and proof of an offer for work after she completes her training. Her caseworker denied funding without reason, refused to take her calls, and made a snide comment that truck drivers aren't needed. My constituent's additional requests for information went unanswered; they still are. How many complaints has the government heard from Albertans about Alberta Works' hostility and disrespect for those trying to get back on their feet?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said before, all such concerns are looked into seriously. I would ask the member to share those concerns with my MLA contact, and we will follow up on all these concerns to make sure that Albertans are getting services with respect and dignity.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Rural Crime Strategy

Mr. Rosendahl: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In March the Minister of Justice and the RCMP commissioner announced a \$10 million, seven-point rural crime reduction plan. Can the Minister of Justice give us an update on that plan and tell us if it is working?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the incredibly important question. Rural crime is an issue that's been on the minds of Albertans, and it's an issue that's been on the minds of our government as well. It was not quite a year ago that we announced our rural crime strategy, which included investing in front-line services and investing in Crown prosecutors. The RCMP

has now reported a decrease in property crime in rural Alberta by almost 11 per cent in the first half of the year. We know this hasn't extended to everyone yet, but we are starting to see the effects, and we're very proud of that.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Rosendahl: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: how does this plan keep police in the community instead of behind a desk?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Well, of course, we know that one of the concerns that rural Albertans have is that they like to see police officers out on the streets safeguarding the community rather than sitting behind a desk. That's why our rural crimes reduction plan includes funding for civilians who will input basic investigative things into computers, and that allows those officers to be back out on the street. Comparing July 2018 to 2017, there have been 366 fewer break and enters, 648 fewer vehicle thefts, and 2,358 fewer vehicle thefts across the province.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Rosendahl: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for the answer. Is the minister working with the new RCMP commissioner on continuing to implement the rural crime reduction plan?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll start by correcting my last answer. It was 2,358 fewer thefts, not vehicle thefts specifically.

Mr. Speaker, I've had a great relationship with our previous commissioner, and I thank him for all his work on this strategy. Our new RCMP deputy commissioner, Curtis Zablocki, comes to us from Saskatchewan, where he shared our focus on this sort of proactive policing. In fact, my early conversations with him indicate that he is very supportive of this strategy, and we will keep moving forward on this issue together. [interjection]

Government Caucus Voting Practices

Mr. Fildebrandt: Gesundheit, Mr. Speaker.

Today the hon. Member for Calgary-East showed incredible courage and conviction when she stated that under this Premier's leadership, quote: every power that MLAs are supposed to have to represent their constituents in the Legislature has been taken away and denied from the start; MLAs must vote the direction of the leader at all times. End quote. Madam Premier, is what your Member for Calgary-East has to say about your leadership and government true or not?

2:10

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I can say – and I know that the Premier believes this – that we are incredibly proud of our hard-working and very representative caucus. Very proud. Beyond that, the member knows that he can ask questions about ministerial responsibility, about government policy, but it is

not in order for him to be asking about party or caucus matters, and therefore I respectfully decline to answer that question.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Well, the minister respectfully declines to answer every question not written by themselves for their own backbenchers.

To enforce party discipline, the Member for Calgary-East goes on to say, quote: there is also a fear that they'll be isolated and that their political career will be finished and that their nomination papers will not be signed or opportunities given. End quote. I would say to both the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition together: sound familiar?

Mr. Mason: The Premier and I and all members of the government share a deep appreciation for our wonderful, hard-working caucus. The tremendous range of skills, backgrounds, and ideas that come from that caucus is an inspiration to this government every day, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Fildebrandt: When the Tory caucus was whipped into abstaining over a dozen times over the Bill 9 attack on free speech, the Premier rightfully condemned the Tory leadership for whipping their MLAs into silence. We now know beyond a shadow of a doubt that the Premier does the same to her own MLAs. Meet the new boss, same as the old boss. Will the Premier admit that when it comes to democracy and free votes in this House, her party is no better than the government that it replaced?

Mr. Mason: On the contrary, Mr. Speaker. This government is very much committed to the principles of democracy and openness. We have opened up services and policy-making to people that the previous government ignored for decades. We are bringing in people that were shut out of government, shut out of policy, and ignored by the previous government. That's one of the shining accomplishments of this government.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Victims of Crime Fund

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Back in February of 2016 the Auditor General identified concerns with the victims of crime fund, which had tens of millions of dollars in a surplus that was not making its way to victims. Since then multiple opposition members have asked multiple times about the money in this fund. For years we have been asking about it in this Assembly, in committee, and in the media. The minister kept telling us to wait. Minister, why did you wait so long to make a decision to use those available funds to assist victims of crime?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, as the member correctly points out, the Auditor General had some recommendations on those files. Those recommendations stem from the fact that those folks over there ignored this file for more than a decade. Our government stepped up and did the work necessary to put these funds in place, and we're very proud of that.

Mrs. Pitt: Three and a half years, Mr. Speaker. Given that it took so long for this government to act and that the fund's accumulated surplus has continued to grow upwards of \$70 million, given that the minister finally announced a plan for a mere \$4.5 million of that surplus, and given that this is not money in general revenue – it comes from fines and levies – and is earmarked for victims:

Minister, why is this government still withholding from victims 90 per cent of the surplus?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, as I said in response to the last question, part of the concern was that the previous government, the folks over there, left this file to languish for over a decade. As a result, no work had been done around what sort of money needed to be in reserve for the fund in case money stopped coming in, which is always a consideration. We have done that work now. We've worked with the associations that represent victims. As a result, we have a plan to put in place, and we're very proud of that.

Mrs. Pitt: Ten per cent of the fund over three years, Mr. Speaker.

Given that the government only announced funding for Calgary, Edmonton, Red Deer, Grande Prairie, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, and Wood Buffalo and given that there are invaluable victim support organizations all throughout Alberta – there are other places – including one in my constituency of Airdrie, and they're not included on that list and given that these guys are fundraising in the hopes of just keeping their doors open to support victims: Minister, why are you leaving out so many victim organizations across Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to say that in addition to the fairly lengthy list that the member listed, this also goes to support survivors of domestic violence on specific new problems, aiding victims in court when they're testifying, helping to make sure that indigenous communities have access to the same supports, and creating opportunities for restorative justice. That's just some of the work we've been doing on the victims of crime fund. I'm very proud that we were able to move forward on this file.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Provincial Debt

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. According to news reports Canada and Canadian households lead the world in debt, something that the Bank of Canada warned is a huge risk. Unfortunately, Albertans also lead the country in consumer debt. According to a poll conducted by MNP, 46 per cent of Albertans say that they are within just \$200 of not being able to pay their bills should they lose a paycheque. With layoffs continuing and Albertans receiving only \$20 a barrel for oil, why is your government focused on making it harder for Alberta workers and families with higher taxes, more bureaucracy, and more interest expense?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll thank the member for the question. I'd like to begin by pointing out the fact that Albertans pay the lowest taxes in the country. Albertans pay \$11 billion less in taxes than the second-lowest tax jurisdiction, which is Saskatchewan, and that's because we have no payroll tax, no PST, no health care premiums. What I can tell you is that in our province we are focused on diversifying the economy and supporting businesses, and we're starting to see the benefits of our government's policies: over 90,000 new jobs created, mostly in the private sector, last year. Let's look at Saskatchewan. They created . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, given that Ron Kneebone, economist at the University of Calgary, has said, I quote, a fiscal crisis doesn't happen overnight; you need to build a foundation to get there, and a foundation is based on accumulating debt, and given that the NDP has turned a \$12 billion debt into \$50 billion and that this minister is racing toward \$100 billion in debt and given that the department of debt servicing has become your fifth-largest department, putting all of our priorities at risk, why has your government failed to address increasing debt and skyrocketing interest?

Mr. Ceci: Mr. Speaker, as I said many times in this House, we have a path back to balance. That'll be in 2023. We'll do that without firing thousands of teachers and nurses. You know what? What I won't take advice around from that side is debt. For instance, the Leader of the Opposition's record while he was in Ottawa was six straight deficit budgets, \$56 billion in one year. He added \$145 billion to the national debt, and there were \$309 billion in interest payments when he was there. That made things far more difficult for all the people. He cut services, and other people suffered.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Barnes: Given that the NDP in their most recent budget claimed revenue from the Trans Mountain pipeline, that now sits unbuilt, and given that the pipeline won't be operational until well past 2020, if it becomes operational at all, and given that the Finance minister made no mention of the impact of the stalled pipeline on his growing mountain of debt for this and subsequent years in his recent quarter 1 update, Minister, will you commit to releasing the updated numbers reflecting our loss of revenue tied to this Trans Mountain pipeline and do so by Thursday?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we've cut the deficit by \$3 billion already. Our path to balance relies on 2 out of 3 of those pipelines, but we're going to see all three pipelines built. We will get TMX, we will get line 3, and we will get KXL. We will balance in 2023.

PDD Program Review

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, the government's persons with developmental disabilities review was announced last January, and I know that key stakeholders want to ensure that the voices of families are not just heard but actually have a seat at the table. Now, I'm not sure that's what the minister wants. The panel does include some great Albertans, all very accomplished in their own right, but virtually no representation from families around that table. To the minister: why have you limited the voice of families currently being affected by PDD services?

2:20

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. We are very proud of our government record for protecting and improving the services for persons with developmental disabilities, and we have put together a panel which represents families, service providers, and all those who have concerns, and nothing can be further from the truth that we have silenced families or advocates. There is representation. I can talk to the member afterwards about who is coming from where.

Mr. Cooper: Well, Mr. Speaker, if you look at the panel, you'll see that the vast majority of them represent service providers and not families.

Given that those receiving PDD services speak about Nothing about Us without Us and that the vast majority of those on the panel aren't actually families, to the minister: why haven't more family members or stakeholders dedicated to families been invited to provide feedback outside of the surveys on the PDD website?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. What we have done is a panel which represents the PDD sector, and it's different than what it used to be in the past. They're putting an accounting firm to do the PDD review. They are going across the province in all seven regions to reach out to the families, to reach out to Albertans and all of those who are receiving these services to make sure that we live with that Nothing about Us without Us, and we are absolutely committed to having those voices included in our review.

Mr. Cooper: Well, given, Mr. Speaker, that one thing is the same with this PDD review, and that is that families are being left out from being around the table, and while many of these families are grateful for the wonderful work that service providers have offered and provided, we consistently hear from them that they are concerned that they aren't being included with the Nothing about Us without Us when the panel is clearly proceeding without the key voices of families around the review table daily. What does the minister have to say to these families who are raising this concern?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. I was looking for a question. I'm glad you slipped it in right at the end.

Mr. Sabir: I think I will not agree with how the member has described it. The panel is going across this province. There is already a schedule out to consult with the families. When it comes to PDD, I will put my record against theirs any day. We have kicked off the PDD review, filled a vacant appointment for Premier's council, cancelled the support intensity scale brought forward by that side, repealed safety standards regulation, added \$150 million, and we don't think, as the Member for Calgary-Hays would describe it, that these supports are giveaways to disabled people.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The Member for Sherwood Park.

Sherwood Park Freeway Speed Limits

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's really a pleasure to ask a question that I wrote for myself on behalf of my constituents. Sherwood Park residents have asked me over the last few months the reason why the speed limits of the Sherwood Park Freeway have been changed. This road is a major connector to Edmonton. This topic is a hotly debated topic in letters to the editor, Facebook posts, Twitter, and calls to my office. To the Minister of Transportation: why were the speed limits changed?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I must compliment the hon. member on her question today. Speed limits on provincial roads, including the Sherwood Park Freeway, are based on national and provincial standards. These standards take into account, among other things, the design of the road, traffic volumes, and the spacing between interchanges. Changes to speed

limits occur frequently when additional lanes or interchanges or nearby roads are added to ensure safety. Speed limits are regularly reviewed by Alberta Transportation and will continue to be.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: my residents are also wondering why the speed limit was lowered near the Anthony Henday interchange.

Mr. Mason: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for that really solid follow-up. As the member is aware, a section of the Sherwood Park Freeway was expanded to include additional lanes as part of the northeast Anthony Henday Drive project and 17th Street on/off ramps and the Wye Road interchanges. As a result, a speed reduction to 70 kilometres an hour was required for safety reasons. [interjections]

Thank you.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm really sorry that everybody is laughing about this because this is a very important issue. It's a safety issue, and I think some of the members might be surprised as to who has brought this issue to the forefront in my office. But I understand that there's a review under way of the speed limits. I'm wondering: when will the results of the review be released, and how will constituents be informed of potential changes?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Well, based on ongoing feedback from Albertans we are conducting another review of the speed limits on both directions of the Sherwood Park Freeway. This review is expected to be completed early next year, at which point they will be shared with the public. When the review is complete, the ministry will have a better sense of what, if any, changes may be warranted. Safety is always our top priority. I want to thank the hon. member for her ongoing advocacy on behalf of her constituents.

Grain Drying and the Carbon Levy

Mr. Loewen: Mr. Speaker, last week I asked the Minister of Agriculture if the NDP had any plan at all to counteract the disastrous impact that their carbon tax has had on farmers working hard to dry their grain and save their crops this fall. First he said that it would be covered through AFSC, something farmers have told us offers no additional help to deal with this situation. Then the minister said that energy efficiency programs for farmers would be the magic solution. Could the minister please tell this House how farmers are expected to afford the massive capital costs of such upgrades while shouldering the immediate costs of drying their grain and carbon tax with the promise of slightly reducing costs for future years?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We had some good news recently. We had a very cold September with some snow, but we had some very warming temperatures in October. Mother Nature did her part in making sure that we get our crops in. Pleased to report that 95 per cent of those crops are in, so for all intents and purposes we are done harvest this year, which is good news. It is also true, though, that this is the third September in a row that we've had unusual, wet conditions, so from that we're looking at what efficiencies we could find for farmers in lowering their energy costs right across agriculture, wherever that may be.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Loewen: Given that farmers have to pay their gas bills that contain the carbon tax now because they can't risk gas being shut off and given that a lot of bills come due during this time of the year, like fuel and other expenses, and given that costs and booking purchases are already being expended for next spring, how can this government expect farmers to pay this carbon tax now when it hurts the most?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Depending a lot on the commodity and on conditions, many, many, many different factors were taken into consideration of what the actual cost might be. On average, you know, to dry a bushel of crop, oil seeds or grain or cereal, would be about two cents a bushel. Yeah, that is an expense, but we recognize that there's also efficiencies to be found as we have introduced through the climate leadership plan money devoted to agriculture specifically, \$81 million, that farmers are able to use to find those efficiencies, to lower their greenhouse gas emissions and actually become more profitable.

Mr. Loewen: Given that some farmers have told me that it costs 60 cents a bushel to dry their grain, I think the minister's numbers are way off, and given that the government lauds its energy upgrading and retrofit programs and given that these programs require farmers to come up with capital to initiate the programs and given that the financial impacts on farmers are occurring as we speak and given that even after upgrades farmers will still have to pay the carbon tax for the crime of drying their grain, why won't you just admit that the carbon tax on grain drying is an excessive burden and do something about the problem instead of talking around the issue and making excuses?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I for one would never call farmers criminals. I think that was a very poor choice from the member. I know that farmers do some really good work in this province. We're proud of them, proud of the work they do, proud of the backbone that agriculture is in this province, and we're looking for finding those efficiencies. When I talk to farmers and ranchers, they want to find those efficiencies as well. As we know, we've had opportunity to work through Canadian agricultural partnership to find retrofitting and new dryers, to find those efficiencies. We'll find those efficiencies, lower the greenhouse gas emissions, and at the same time save them money.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Rural Crime Prevention and Law Enforcement

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know that in recent years crime has become a growing problem across all of Alberta. In a recently released analysis from *MacLean's*, the city of Cold Lake in my constituency was ranked number 6 in Canada in terms of increasing crime over five years. Can the Minister of Justice tell the people of Cold Lake and the surrounding areas what the government is doing to rectify this unacceptable problem?

2:30

Ms Ganley: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much to the member for an incredibly important question. Absolutely those statistics are of incredible concern to us, and those statistics are from 2017. That's why, on seeing those statistics, our government

acted expeditiously to make sure we brought in a rural crime strategy. I wonder whether the members opposite, now seeing the statistics, regret voting against it.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This crime is a problem, and it's not just isolated to the city of Cold Lake. It is a fact that this is reflective of our entire province. Given that Alberta holds the top three spots for a five-year increase in crime, what further measures, in addition to those that have already taken place, does the minister plan to implement to effectively combat criminal activity in my constituency and the constituencies across Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, these statistics being from 2017, they absolutely were a concern and are a concern for the government. That's why we acted expeditiously to bring in a rural crime strategy, unlike the members opposite, who wanted four more months to study the issue before making very similar recommendations. In addition, this government has stepped forward not only to fund our rural crime strategy but to fund additional RCMP officers. In both instances the members opposite voted against it.

Mr. Cyr: Given, Mr. Speaker, that too often we see criminals enter the justice system, get convicted, walk out without serving a full or adequate sentence and given that punishment and deterrence must be an integral part of our justice system and given that instead of getting tough on criminals, we see the NDP's allies in Ottawa proposing to reduce sentences for serious crimes, can the minister tell us specifically what actions she has taken to keep dangerous criminals off our streets in Alberta and in prisons, where they belong?

Ms Ganley: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. Well, I think the most important thing, particularly in the post-Jordan era, is that we are working not only to find efficiencies in the criminal justice system in terms of getting police out from behind desks and ensuring that prosecutors are able to focus on the most serious and violent offences but we're also making sure that we fund that system not only in terms of police, that the members opposite voted against, but also in terms of prosecutors, in terms of judges, in terms of all of those things that make the system run better so that we can focus on protecting all Albertans.

Oil Production, Storage, and Transportation

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, to reduce the oil price differential there are several options, including devoting transportation by pipe, by rail, by road or putting the product in storage or restricting the production. The NDP government has failed Albertans on moving their oil to market. What other options is the Energy minister considering now and at what cost to the taxpayers?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, our government focuses every day on pipelines, on the jobs that energy brings, and on diversifying our economy. We've worked very hard on a number of fronts for that, and the differential absolutely has highlighted the need for access to market.

Mr. Panda: Given, Mr. Speaker, that last week some CEOs came out asking for oil production allocations and production cuts and

given that it is easier to adjust minable oil sands truck and shovel production than SAGD in situ production, was this the nature of the Premier's meeting two weeks ago with the CEOs? If so, what criteria will be used to allocate production quotas, and how many jobs will be lost?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we know that fighting for this sector matters. We're doing that every day with market access for not one but three pipelines. We are holding Ottawa's feet to the fire when we talk about getting the pipelines built. We're fighting Bill C-69 right now because as it is, it is not acceptable to Alberta and to our energy sector.

Mr. Panda: Given, Mr. Speaker, that last November the Minister of Energy was given the power under the Petroleum Marketing Act to commandeer tank farms and pipelines for the storage of bitumen, bitumen royalty in kind, BRIK barrels, and given my understanding that we are still receiving royalties in cash, not in kind, is the Minister of Energy considering displacing the oil storage of private companies to store the BRIK barrels due to the delays in completing the bitumen train at the Sturgeon refinery?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we've had a number of meetings with a number of different folks talking about the importance of energy, market access, and the differential. We've had the crude by rail group. We've had a group talking about natural gas and markets for that. We always engage our industry, as we did in this matter, and we will continue to do so because it matters on this side of the House that we stand up for Alberta workers and for our energy industry.

The Speaker: Lacombe-Ponoka.

Bighorn Area Land Use

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In January a copy of a government of Alberta e-mail about the North Saskatchewan regional plan provided a timeline with September as a date to – and I quote – establish the Bighorn wildland provincial park and final Bighorn park management plan. Is it the government's intention to proceed with turning the Bighorn into a park, and if so, when?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite is quoting from an internal options document. Clearly, September has passed, and that thing didn't happen, showing that it was an internal options document. In the spirit of Kananaskis Country we're looking at proposing a mix of land designations that will conserve and protect natural landscapes while accommodating a wide range of economic, recreation, and tourism opportunities in the Bighorn.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, the NDP resolution E5 from the recent convention called upon the government to create a Bighorn park, purportedly because it supplies water to Edmonton. Given that the North Saskatchewan water quality at Devon upstream of Edmonton is good and only deteriorates until downstream of Edmonton itself, is it the government's plan to create a park based on this misconstrued logic?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Leave it to the members opposite to not care about the drinking water quality for Alberta's capital city. That's actually shocking to hear, but maybe not given the random promises for deregulation and other activities coming from the other side. Listen, we're looking at a number of different land designations. Bighorn has a number of different options and opportunities associated with it for economic development, for tourism, for economic diversification, and there are a number of different ways that we can achieve those goals and protect the environment.

Mr. Orr: The city of Edmonton has great water, and in fact it's only the NDP fearmongering about bad water.

The quadding community was assured that quad trails in the new Castle park would stay open, but actually many have not. Many areas were closed. Given that the government promised stakeholder engagement but then proceeds with its predetermined plan, on what grounds should Albertans trust what you say now about the Bighorn?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the folks opposite undertook a lot of consultation on the North Saskatchewan regional plan. They held 21 town halls to come up with advice on regional planning, which included unanimous support for increasing protection for parts of the Bighorn backcountry. As for the OHV folks, we provided \$200,000 in grants to the Bighorn Heritage ATV Society for OHV trail development, promoting responsible recreation in the area.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Domestic and Gender-based Violence Prevention

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Family violence and domestic abuse continues to devastate communities across Alberta, which is why it is so important that during this month of November, that has been designated as Family Violence Prevention Month, we build awareness and demonstrate support for survivors and look to municipalities like Fort Saskatchewan who invest in a family violence prevention officer that helps to support families, including women fleeing domestic abuse. To the Minister of Community and Social Services: what is the province doing to actively address this issue?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. Family violence prevention is a key priority for our government, and we believe that no Albertan should live in fear for their safety. We stand with survivors, and have made improvements through our \$33 million investment in family and community safety programs and \$15 million investment in women's shelters. We know that there is more work to be done, and we are committed to taking action.

Mrs. Littlewood: Mr. Speaker, given key work that organizations like United Way undertake to partner with community-driven groups like the Jessica Martel Memorial Foundation and Families First in Fort Saskatchewan to bring awareness and knowledge around domestic abuse, including the Cut It Out initiative, Minister, what work are you doing to address gender-based violence and to support survivors?

2:40

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member. Our government stands with women who face violence and harassment. We have taken action to address gender-based violence and sexual violence. This includes removing the legal time limit for survivors to bring forward civil claims, making it easier for women to get out of a dangerous situation by allowing them to break their leases without penalty, and making an historic investment to combat sexual violence through sexual assault centres.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that rural and remote communities are often challenged with limited resources and isolation, that present unique challenges in providing family violence supports and service, what is your ministry doing, Minister, to support the critical work of these organizations in rural and urban Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. We know that rural communities have unique needs, and we are committed to working with them. Our \$25 million investment in the family and community support services program, FCSS, supports prevention efforts across this province, including rural communities. We have also invested, as I said, \$8.1 million in 12 sexual assault centres across this province, and with that money they will be able to extend their services to 15 new communities in rural Alberta as well. Besides that, we have also invested \$6 million in emergency supports.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The Member for Calgary-Hays.

Municipal Funding for Cannabis Legalization

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In an October 27 address to the AUMA the Premier said, and I quote: we are committed to putting the safety of people and families first in policing and public education and enforcement. She wanted to confirm that, quote, all these things affect you at the municipal level, and we heard your concerns loud and clear. To the Premier: if you heard the municipalities, why did you dash their hopes two days before marijuana became legal?

Mr. Ceci: Well, I think we're talking about the revenue that is coming in from cannabis. You know, our priority number one is to make sure with our partners, like municipalities, that it stays out of the hands of kids and we protect public health. We have provided \$11.2 million over two years to municipalities to help with the enforcement costs that they have, and for the ones that are under \$5,000, we're providing that enforcement cost, so the province of Alberta, of course, pays for those policing costs. Mr. Speaker, this is a two-year agreement, and we're going to be following . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. McIver: Well, Mr. Speaker, the AUMA said that 5 and a half million dollars a year is far below the municipalities' needs, especially considering that their local bylaw services will pick up a large burden of enforcement costs. Given that the Premier told municipalities: we will be working together as partners; we would

not have it any other way, unquote, to the Premier. Your government has put municipalities in a position of begging for funds. Is this truly how you define and how you would treat partners, by leaving them on the hook?

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you to the member for the question. We do treat them as partners, and we do a lot of consultation with them. We do know that cannabis has come in federally, and Alberta is way further along than any other province or territory. I'm glad to work with people like the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Treasury Board and Finance to help municipalities. We've said to them since day one that this isn't a cash cow, but we will look at the data coming in as it goes forward to make sure that we can adapt as it goes along. They know that. I think that when it got instituted, people were a little worried about things. We've seen that that hasn't come to fruition, but we will be there for our municipalities.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
Second supplemental.

Mr. McIver: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, given that the federal government provided tens of millions of dollars to provincial governments with the direction to share with the municipalities and given that the federal government is providing 75 per cent of the excise tax collected on cannabis, so it's shared with the municipalities, to the Minister of Finance: why are you letting the municipalities down? Why are you letting Ottawa down? It is because you are the only one that I know in the free world or any world that can actually lose money selling cannabis.

Mr. Ceci: You know, there has to be a program set up to sell that cannabis, Mr. Speaker. It wasn't here before. They didn't have that responsibility. We've set up warehouses, we've set up an online system, we've set up contact with retailers and contact with licensed producers. This is a two-year funding agreement with the provinces and territories and the federal government, and we will review after two years.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we will continue with Members' Statements in 30 seconds.

Members' Statements (continued)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Economic Recovery and Northeastern Alberta

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. When we proudly use the term "Canada's oil production," it's important that we acknowledge the players that make up that production and their contribution to our economy. I'd like to give an update on my region in northeastern Alberta.

The Cold Lake, Bonnyville, and Elk Point oil sands produce 730,000 barrels per day, making up 22 per cent of Canada's oil sands production. That is also approximately 15.5 per cent of Canada's total oil production. My area is a major player in oil and natural gas and deserves to be recognized for its ongoing contribution. I am proud that we are part of what has made Alberta so prosperous for so many years.

However, Mr. Speaker, the recovery that the NDP has been boasting has yet to be seen in northeastern Alberta. As I drove to Bonnyville to visit my granddaughter, I counted eight previously thriving businesses that have closed their doors and are sitting

empty, and that is just along the highway 28 corridor entering into Bonnyville. Each and every one of those business owners is wondering where the recovery is. Those workers who have managed to keep employment through this shutdown continue to see a 20 to 30 per cent drop in the value of the largest investment, their homes. They would also like to take a peek at this recovery that the Premier brags about.

Mr. Speaker, it's simply not enough to put the words on paper and accept them at face value. You have to leave the dome and get out and actually talk to the employers, the workers, the unemployed, and the failing businesses. From Fort McMurray to Lac La Biche to Bonnyville, Albertans from across the northeast part of our province are still waiting to get their piece of their recovery as businesses continue to close and job creators and investors flee to more inviting jurisdictions.

Mr. Speaker, how can the NDP possibly keep telling the 184,000 unemployed Albertans that we are in recovery?

Homelessness

Mr. Horne: Mr. Speaker, there is a challenge in our province that I feel doesn't get enough attention in this Assembly, and that is homelessness. Now, several of my colleagues have spoken about the homeless count in the big cities and about the various organizations that offer services in those urban areas, but we know that this is not the full story.

In 2015 the St. Albert food bank estimated that there were 98 known homeless people in the city, up from just 35 in 2011. These numbers are likely too low as most of the local homeless population are couch surfing or sleeping in cars. Many are young, and many more would not identify themselves as homeless; therefore, they don't reach out for help or access services.

Numbers don't yet exist for Spruce Grove, but a number of organizations throughout the region, including my office, have been working to come to an estimate based on who accesses the various services available. The hope is to then develop a more co-ordinated plan identifying gaps in services and advocacy priorities to all levels of government.

Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of reasons someone might end up homeless. For some it's addictions or mental health. For many young people it is a result of an unsafe home. Regardless of the reason, openness, honesty, and understanding are the best tools for getting people back on their feet and can often prevent homelessness before it even begins.

I am proud to be part of a government that is taking real action. We are investing \$191 million in the front-line services that vulnerable Albertans count on. We introduced the Alberta child benefit, which will provide \$175 million in benefits to families right across Alberta this year alone. Meanwhile, Mr. Speaker, a rural member of this House acknowledges that the opposition wants to make massive cuts, cuts that are going to hurt.

We will continue to take action to combat homelessness and poverty and to fight for Albertans. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

2:50

Heart and Mind of Alberta

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, on Saturday we said goodbye to Mary Elaine Vandavelde, my cousin's daughter. She died at the far too young age of 42. Mary was born with spina bifida. Mary didn't take her first step until five; however, once she did get going, with braces on her legs and arm crutches clasped in her hands, she achieved speeds that belied her condition. Mary had a smile that could brighten any room. She exuded a zest for life that was contagious

for all who were privileged to be in her presence. She will be missed.

But Mary's life sheds light on another success story, the story of Alberta's wraparound support services that helped Mary live a fulfilling life. Mary was able to receive some of the best health care around. She was able to receive some of the most compassionate care from support workers. This was what I call the heart of our society.

The heart of Alberta is made up of the dedicated teacher that stays up late into the night trying to figure out a way to reach a student whose grades are dropping for no apparent reason. The heart of Alberta is made up of firefighters who willingly run into burning buildings while others are running out. The heart of Alberta is made up of the tens of thousands of other support workers that work night and day to champion the compassionate side of our society. Mr. Speaker, that is the heart of our society.

But with any living organism, a mind is also needed. I see the mind as a strong, robust economy. Without that strong, robust economy our support workers would not have the funds needed to do this important work. Our province is a great province to live in when both the heart and the mind are working in tandem. We have seen in Ontario how when the economy is neglected, the heart is not able to do its all-important work.

Mr. Speaker, in the spring of 2019 Albertans will have the opportunity to choose between a plan that balances our society's heart and mind or a plan that continues to neglect and hinder our society's economy. I believe Albertans will make a healthy choice.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Bill 23

An Act to Renew Local Democracy in Alberta

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Merci, M. le Président. I'm honoured to rise and give first reading of Bill 23, An Act to Renew Local Democracy in Alberta.

The first bill that this government ever tendered was An Act to Renew Democracy in Alberta. Then in 2016 my colleague the hon. minister responsible for democratic renewal introduced the Fair Elections Financing Act. Both of these acts legislated getting big money out of elections and ensured that Albertans are the ones who decide who gets elected, not those with deep pockets.

Now it's time that we come full circle on election reform by bringing some of these changes to the municipal level. After consulting over the summer with Albertans, we have taken their feedback and are proposing these updates to get big money out of local elections, make it easier for Albertans to vote, and create a more transparent election process. If passed, this bill will ensure that all Albertans have a fair, democratic, and modern electoral system.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 23 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I had referenced an article in my question period questions today, Canada's Most Dangerous Places 2019. Alberta has made that list 7 of 10 times. Here at the front: Wetaskiwin, Red Deer, Lethbridge, Cold Lake, Whitecourt,

Spruce Grove, and Sylvan Lake. We monopolize the top of this list. It's shameful. I table this.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: The hon. Member For Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table two documents that I was remiss in tabling last Thursday. The first one is a CTV News Calgary article, Study Finds Alberta's Employment Growth Numbers Buoyed by Government Hirings.

Secondly, I rise to table five copies of a Fraser research bulletin from the Fraser Institute, The Illusion of Alberta's Jobs Recovery: Government vs. Private Sector Employment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, last week I referenced a researcher, engineer, environmental scientist in Calgary at the University of Calgary, Dr. David Layzell, who's proposed an innovative approach to the challenges of melding climate change, energy, and environment. He set up an institution there called the transition pathways research institute. He is suggesting that we broaden the discussion to include collaboration in understanding a range of systems that all have to change if we're going to meet the first requirements of a new and low-carbon future. I have five copies here of his proposal, and I hope people will take a chance to breeze through it. It's not a heavy document, but it really gives us a new perspective on how we might work together in moving towards a lower carbon future.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Acting Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the Hon. Minister Hoffman, Deputy Premier, Minister of Health, pursuant to the Health Professions Act Alberta College and Association of Opticians 2017 annual report, Alberta College of Combined Laboratory and X-Ray Technologists 2017 annual report, Alberta College of Occupational Therapists 2017-18 annual report, Alberta College of Optometrists 2017 annual report to government, Alberta College of Social Workers annual report 2017, College of Alberta Dental Assistants annual report 2017-18, College of Alberta Psychologists annual report 2017-18, College of Hearing Aid Practitioners of Alberta annual report 2017-18, College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta 2017 annual report, College of Registered Dental Hygienists of Alberta 2017 annual report, College of Registered Psychiatric Nurses of Alberta annual report 2018; pursuant to the Health Disciplines Act Health Disciplines Board 2017 annual report.

Orders of the Day

Written Questions

[The Acting Clerk read the following written questions, which had been accepted]

Coal Phase-out Costs

- Q1. Mr. Panda:
How much money has been spent by the government from April 1, 2015, to March 31, 2018, on the phase-out of coal-

generated electrical power in Alberta, and what costs are forecast for the next 10 years?

Electricity Capacity Market Costs

- Q2. Mr. Panda:
How much money has been spent by the government from May 1, 2015, to April 30, 2018, setting up the electricity capacity market, and what costs are forecast for the next 10 years?

Electricity Litigation Costs

- Q3. Mr. Panda:
How much money has been spent from May 1, 2015, to May 4, 2018, reaching settlements arising from the litigation concerning the power purchase agreements with the electricity generating companies and the Balancing Pool?

Motions for Returns

[The Acting Clerk read the following motions for returns, which had been accepted]

Rockefeller Brothers Fund Correspondence

- M1. Mr. Panda:
A return showing copies of all correspondence between the government and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund from May 1, 2015, to April 30, 2018.

Tides Canada Correspondence

- M2. Mr. Panda:
A return showing copies of all correspondence between the government and Tides Canada from May 1, 2015, to April 30, 2018.

Tides Foundation Correspondence

- M3. Mr. Panda:
A return showing copies of all correspondence between the government and the Tides Foundation, also known as Tides, from May 1, 2015, to April 30, 2018.

350 Correspondence

- M4. Mr. Panda:
A return showing copies of all correspondence between the government and the organization known as 350 or 350.org from May 1, 2015, to April 30, 2018.

CorpEthics Correspondence

- M5. Mr. Panda:
A return showing copies of all correspondence between the government and CorpEthics, originally known as Corporate Ethics International, from May 1, 2015, to April 30, 2018.

William and Flora Hewlett Foundation Correspondence

- M6. Mr. Panda:
A return showing copies of all correspondence between the government and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation,

also known as the Hewlett Foundation, from May 1, 2015, to April 30, 2018.

New Venture Fund Correspondence

- M7. Mr. Panda:
A return showing copies of all correspondence between the government and the New Venture Fund, also known as New Venture, from May 1, 2015, to April 30, 2018.

Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative Correspondence

- M8. Mr. Panda:
A return showing copies of all correspondence between the government and the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative, also known as Y2Y, from May 1, 2015, to April 30, 2018.

3:00 Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society Correspondence

- M9. Mr. Panda:
A return showing copies of all correspondence between the government and the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, also known as CPAWS, from May 1, 2015, to April 30, 2018.

Love Your Headwaters Correspondence

- M10. Mr. Panda:
A return showing copies of all correspondence between the government and the organization known as Love Your Headwaters from May 1, 2015, to April 30, 2018.

Edmonton Community Foundation Correspondence

- M11. Mr. Panda:
A return showing copies of all correspondence between the government and the Edmonton Community Foundation from May 1, 2015, to April 30, 2018.

Calgary Foundation Correspondence

- M12. Mr. Panda:
A return showing copies of all correspondence between the government and the Calgary Foundation from May 1, 2015, to April 30, 2018.

Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders

Motion to Concur in the Report from the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Bill 201

Employment Standards (Firefighter Leave) Amendment Act, 2018

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Highwood.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the House today to speak on Bill 201, the Employment Standards (Firefighter Leave) Amendment Act, 2018. Bill 201 is my private member's bill which I introduced last spring sitting. This bill would have amended the Employment Standards Code to protect part-time, casual, or volunteer firefighters from loss of employment because they are or have become a part-time firefighter.

Currently employers can and in some cases have terminated employment for missed time due to fulfilling duties as a part-time firefighter. The reasons for me introducing this bill are simple. As I've stated to this House before, I'd been an MLA for less than six months when I received a phone call from a young man from southern Alberta. He had been a volunteer firefighter for one of the municipal districts or counties. I say "had been" because his regular, full-time employer had recently given him an ultimatum. His ultimatum was: quit your job or quit firefighting, because as long as you work here, you aren't a firefighter.

At the time I wanted to rectify the situation and decided to introduce a private member's bill to try to prevent this from being allowed to happen again. I consulted with fire officials in my constituency, who are supportive of this bill, and I imagine fire chiefs across the province would also be supportive of the goals of this bill. Emergency services in Alberta are stretched pretty thin, especially in rural areas. Code reds are a common occurrence. Firefighters, especially firefighters in rural areas, do more than just respond to fires. They also respond to everything from medical emergencies to chemical spills and traffic collisions. Some municipalities in rural communities cannot afford to fill the firefighter hall roster with full-time employees. They rely on part-time and volunteer firefighters in their communities to meet these sometimes life-threatening situations.

Mr. Speaker, as legislators we need to respond to the issues that are affecting Albertans and create solutions that remedy or could potentially remedy the problem. I heard a concern from an Albertan, and I responded by introducing this private member's bill. That was the goal of Bill 201, to help volunteer firefighters have job security. It was also the intent that this bill would have helped rural detachments recruit and retain firefighters.

Bill 201 was referred to the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future, where members were able to study the bill in depth. This is a plan that all government legislation should follow instead of ramming legislation through, as this government has done previously. They need to take the proper time to study their legislation with all – all – stakeholders. Maybe then they would have been able to avoid some of the legislative mistakes they've made previously.

However, Bill 201 was sent to committee, and we were able to look at all of the impacts of this bill at length. Part of the committee's job was to consult with stakeholders and get input from those who would be most affected by this legislation, so input, consultation. Now, a few stakeholders came forward with concerns about some of the possible ramifications of this bill. That's great. That's consultation. That's what the committee's job was to do.

One major concern was that Bill 201 would handcuff businesses and would create an adversarial relationship between fire departments and local businesses. Rural fire chiefs and their departments have been working hard for a number of years to work with local businesses to improve recruiting. It's very beneficial to business if they have a fully functioning fire department. It makes sense. It makes sense that they would work together to solve community issues, issues in mostly rural Alberta. It's a valid concern, and I know that fire chiefs have the best interests of their departments and their staff and the community at heart and in mind.

Another consequence that was brought up was that businesses wouldn't hire firefighters if they felt they would be handcuffed by this legislation. This, of course, would be the opposite of the intent of this legislation. The opposite. It was never intended with Bill 201 to handcuff and make it difficult for volunteer firefighters from the business community to become volunteers. However, it's important that we understand all the consequences of this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding these concerns, I believe it is important to state that the work that firefighters do in protecting our communities, the hard work done, is unparalleled. These men and women put their lives on the line to ensure that their communities, their families, their neighbours are safe. Even more significant is the work of volunteer firefighters, who are hard-working, contributing members of their local community. Oftentimes they are small-business owners, tradespeople, farmers. And, more importantly, they're our neighbours. They have decided that they want to serve their community and have made many sacrifices to do so. I have a great deal of respect for these men and women, and we have a duty to represent their interests and find ways for governments to serve them better.

The Foothills county fire department, which is located in my constituency, represents the spirit of volunteer firefighting through their vision statement. It states: "Where there is no line between our firefighters, our community and our family." I will repeat: "Where there is no line between our firefighters, our community and our family." The reality is that, especially in rural areas, communities are tightly knit. You have your neighbour's back, and your neighbour has yours. That's part of what makes Alberta great. Those that are volunteering to be firefighters know the dangers that they could face, but they have the best interests of their communities in mind.

Mr. Speaker, when I think of the dedication of the firefighters in my riding, I can always think of the 2013 floods that hit High River. My good friend Fire Chief Len Zebedee was co-ordinating the response in High River. Chief Zebedee, who has since retired, and his team were working 24-hour shifts to protect the people and their property. Many of those firefighters had flooded homes of their own, but they still answered the call to serve their town.

A more recent example I can bring up happened in Okotoks. In my riding over the Thanksgiving long weekend a call was received by the fire department regarding a fire in a residential neighbourhood. By the time the firefighters arrived, the flames had engulfed the roof of the house. Crews worked quickly to ensure residents of the neighbourhood were safe and battled the blaze to protect the property. Luckily, nobody was at home at the time of the fire, and the Okotoks fire department was able to battle the blaze and keep the damage to only one home.

These are only a few of the countless examples of firefighters demonstrating bravery and putting their safety on the line for the service of others. Mr. Speaker, again, our job as legislators should be to support these first responders, listen to their concerns, and respond with legislation appropriately. I don't think anyone in this House doubts that we need support from those on the front lines, so we should continue to consult and listen to first responders and have their feedback help us determine the best course of action.

3:10

That is what we did with Bill 201. Stakeholders came forward with their concerns with this bill, and we were able to listen. That is why consultation is so important. I believe the government needs to continue this consultation and continue to listen to firefighters as there may be a legislative response that may be needed in the future. We'll see if that happens.

We've seen previously with this government that they've lacked proper consultation with stakeholders. We've seen that with them raising the minimum wage without listening to small-business owners; introducing Bill 6 without listening to farmers, my friends, my neighbours; and imposing a carbon tax on Albertans without campaigning on it. Hopefully, moving forward, the government will be able to commit to consulting with first responders, and as the Official Opposition we will continue to hold them to account.

Mr. Speaker, I believe Bill 201 had good intent as I was attempting to address an issue that I had heard from some of the volunteer firefighters.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gottfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak to Bill 201 and the motion. I would first like to thank the Member for Highwood for his passion, compassion, and diligence in doing what he felt was right for some of the rural communities across Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, volunteer firefighters are truly the first line of defence in many communities too small to have a fully paid fire department and thereby very, very important to not only the safety but the sanctity and the protection of not only lives but the property in our communities. These are enthusiastic, courageous men and women who can be called on virtually at any time, day or night, to respond to fires, medical emergencies, chemical spills, accidents, and more. We truly rely on them in this province because of the breadth of the lack of ability for many jurisdictions to be able to afford those full-time firefighters in the communities.

Naturally, it's difficult for many to be working regular jobs while being on call as a volunteer firefighter, and the terms of employment can become contentious. Obviously, the intent here was to take that barrier, to take the conflict of that out of this very, very vital and important role across Alberta. This bill was clearly intended to protect volunteer firefighters from reprisal or dismissal based on their volunteer duties.

Of course, we've had an opportunity – and I think that opportunity was a positive one – for us to go to committee and to consult with Albertans and stakeholders broadly to ensure that we had all of the information. I think it's been mentioned before here that the opportunity for us to consult is something that has not always been done well by this government. This bill, as a private member's bill, created that opportunity for us to engage stakeholders in a more robust manner. After consulting with stakeholders, we have come to realize that there are more implications and that more work is needed to be done to adequately both protect the volunteer firefighters without – and here's the balance, I think, that we should always take into account in all pieces of legislation – unduly burdening their employers and ensuring that there's fairness and a balance there.

It is important in all things learned – and it is, again, something that we've learned – that we need to move boldly forward sometimes, but we also need to be clearly aware of the unintended consequences of legislation, Mr. Speaker. We have seen that happen all too often in the last three and a half years, where the unintended consequences of legislation do come back sometimes weeks, months, or even years later, and we realize that there were some flaws to the approach in the first place or the execution of some of the best intentions in many cases.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Bill 201 proposes to amend the Employment Standards Code – that's a good thing – to protect the part-time, casual volunteer firefighters from loss of employment, quite frankly, for stepping forward within their communities to become a part-time firefighter, a volunteer firefighter. Currently employers can and in some cases have actually terminated employment for missed time due to fulfilling the duties of a part-time firefighter. Madam Speaker, again, balance between community protection and the best intentions of those individuals and the interests of local small businesses is something we always have to take into account, "balance" again being the key and operative word here.

The pros of this bill were very clear. We wanted to ensure that there was an opportunity for local communities to take care of themselves in a way that they could sustain. Again, we've heard that the financial burden on many of these communities would be overwhelming, to the point that they would not be able to meet those budgetary requirements to have paid firefighters do these duties. So what do they do? Do we let property be damaged? Do we take a risk with people's lives? No. We have to do what we have to do in those communities to make ends meet but also to balance those different interests.

It was there to close a bit of a loophole preventing volunteer or casual firefighters, part-time firefighters, who spend valuable time protecting their communities and responding to emergencies, from losing their jobs. This is a very, very difficult time. Madam Speaker, we hear many, many times and I hear daily from people that are very worried about their jobs. Because of that, they're working longer hours, they're putting in extra time, they're very much dedicated. Some of them are even worried about going on holidays because there might be a pink slip waiting for them on the Monday. So here we have a situation again where we have hard-working, dedicated, and very community-spirited Albertans concerned that through their volunteerism they may be putting their livelihoods in jeopardy.

We also have to make sure, as was mentioned by the hon. Member for Highwood, that they're not refused employment because of the duties that they may have from prior commitments to do those part-time and volunteer firefighter duties. If somebody is changing a job, is that an impediment to them being hired by a new employer or possibly taking a higher paying job opportunity or one with more responsibility? You know, it truly would take the worry out of losing employment because of trying to achieve this balance in considering when or when not to become a part-time firefighter, which, again, is very essential to the communities where they live and where they serve and where they are focused on not only being a part of the community but on protecting that community, Madam Speaker.

It would also help the fire departments fill their rosters by having a larger pool of people that they could draw from in terms of doing that, again, the focus being saving lives and protecting property. That's something that I think we have to thank all the volunteer firefighters across this province for doing.

Again, we have to think about the small businesses, struggling small businesses – they are going out of business every day – some of them small mom-and-pop shops, but they have a few employees; some of them more mid-sized employers who have to manage their workforce extremely cautiously and extremely carefully in a very, very difficult economy. Some of them are teetering on the edges of business failure, and sometimes those tipping points can be very fragile. It's within the economic climate that we're living here, which, sadly, has been the result of not only the economy but of some disastrous government policies, that we overlay this issue.

Some of the concerns around this issue are: how, in fact, do we create that balance to not overburden struggling employers, that are struggling to make ends meet, that are struggling to stay in business in many cases, struggling to pay the bills? In many cases what we hear from small business is: not even taking a salary themselves and working extra-long hours. Their employees become extremely important in that formula.

Madam Speaker, you know, I reflect on this. I ran into a former colleague this morning who is a military reservist. I guess one of the things we maybe can look at – and I see we've compared it to that in the past – is the whole issue of reservists and how they're treated in not only Canadian society but in many different countries around the world. I worked with many that were with the British

Armed Forces when I was with Cathay Pacific. It was considered not only an obligation for the company but an honour for these individuals to do the reserve services.

I see that the reservists' leave in Alberta is tied to specific duties. To be eligible for reservist leave, they must be employed for 26 consecutive weeks with the same employer as opposed to only the 90 days proposed in Bill 201. So there is some balance that maybe we need to have a look at there as we move forward.

The reservist can take the reserve service leave if they are deployed to a Canadian Forces operation outside of Canada – I think you could argue that the service of a volunteer firefighter is in service to the community in a way that's different but comparable to the type of service that we expect our military personnel to do – and inside Canada if assisting with an emergency or aftermath of an emergency, which, I think, is again key here. In many cases they are responding – they're not going because somebody's cat is up in a tree; they're going because there's an accident, there's a spill, there's a fire in a neighbour's home. There is something which demands immediate attention from that community, and that is done and fulfilled by those volunteers.

3:20

But they also have 28 days of annual training per year, which military reservists can do. They're allowed to train – and that's something we haven't talked that much about here – but the training requirements for that volunteer service as well, I'm sure, are in many cases done on their own time, which is again a personal commitment, a personal donation of their time and energy to the communities that they live in and that they serve.

So, Madam Speaker, there are many different implications here. We have to take a look at these balances. We have to achieve, I think, a reasonable balance based on the best information we can get. Of course, what we heard in committee was that there were other implications and there were some concerns, both from the volunteer firefighting departments, from the employers that were consulted as well.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to be able to speak to Bill 201, the Employment Standards (Firefighter Leave) Amendment Act, 2018. This bill has gone to the committee that I had the privilege of sitting on, and it's been a privilege to meet with members and chiefs and leadership that deal in this area of work in the province. I know that the intentions of the bill were definitely noble, but we learned from those that are right in the middle of it that it could lead to serious and negative consequences. It's important that we were able to do that consultation with fire chiefs and ask everyone that has an interest in the subject to share. But really what we heard was that there would be serious unintended consequences that the bill would cause.

I want to thank all of the members that sat on the all-party committee to discuss this and everybody that put forward submissions and that came to support, to give their expertise on this bill and talk about their recommendations. We were able to hear from individuals, including Peter Krich, president of the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association; Al Kemmere, president of Rural Municipalities of Alberta; Drayton Bussiere, chief, Lacombe county fire service; and Henry Thomson, deputy chief, training and operations, for the St. Paul fire department.

What we heard often was that the hope, through the bill, was that there would be gained employment flexibility and that it would

allow more members to respond, but what we really heard from these members that came and presented to the committee, some of whom actually have owned small businesses – that was one of the questions, whether any of them had any business experience, which they, in fact, did. There was concern that to have forced compliance would damage the relationship between volunteer firefighter recruitment and the businesses that they are of course relying on to provide the employees to give that service. The actual owners of these businesses are sometimes generous enough to give of their time to help communities respond to vehicle collisions and assist with structural fires.

We did hear that there were some ideas on having better approaches like having tax exemptions or credits or something like formal recognition. That might be a better approach, something that helps build the relationships together.

Of course, we did hear that this could have serious impacts on small business, especially on farms, where sometimes you have intense periods of activity like calving or harvest. So to force the farm owner to release all of their employees at the same time could have some serious and damaging effects on the farm.

Of course, it's important to establish these positive working relationships, and what we heard, again, from people like the deputy chief of the St. Paul fire department was that what we need is a collaborative approach between the fire service, the municipality, the employers, and the employees. Having things like employer recognition to thank the businesses that actually engage and volunteer their very scarce time to help with this important service would be something that they would support. But there were some issues. There were issues around the terminology, and there was concern that it might not change anything but would actually hurt the potential of having good response times because, of course, everything is built on relationships. That was one of the quotes that was given to us.

We heard from them that there is a program in place, something called Answer the Call, which now apparently enjoys national recognition. What it does is that it helps educate employees and employers and families on what the requirements are of someone that does this very selfless endeavour and sacrifices themselves and their time on behalf of all of our communities. It's that sort of collegial approach that is really necessary. We were provided with some of the material that is handed out to talk about it, and it's really about showing that a firefighter could look like you – you know, on one half of the person they're wearing their firefighter gear, and on the other half it's them just with their normal work attire – doing that sort of building and education that a person that actually goes and faces these dangers head-on can be someone that looks like any one of us.

We did hear that it would be burdensome on employers. The need for protections for workers, of course, is very important.

I just want to share some of the quotes that came from them during this process. Peter Krich, who is the president of the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association, said:

Your family, then your job, and then the fire service. That's how you build a fire service in your community . . . in order to build a fire service . . . you have to have good working relationships with people in your community, that being, number one, your employers.

He also said that employers in our community are the backbone of our fire service and that if we put legislation on employers, it will harm and damage the potential for recruiting and retaining those volunteers.

Mr. Bussiere was quoted as saying:

I don't believe that employers are not allowing their employees to leave for fire calls for any other reason than that it could be

detrimental to the operation of their business . . . at the end of the day the volunteer firefighters and their employers need to make money to support their families, and I don't think that we can ask them to put that at risk.

I just want to take a moment to thank all of the volunteer fire services across Alberta, across rural Alberta, that we rely on. They are called on not only for structural fires and grass fires, but they often are the ones that come first on to scene when there are vehicle collisions on the highway. So anything that we can do to help support them in that work and make sure that they're getting home safely to their families is incredibly important. I want to thank all of the families that are still at home and waiting for their loved ones to come home after those calls, because it is quite the sacrifice. These people are amazing, and they are embedded in every part of our communities. Anything that we can do to support them better, I think, we should absolutely make sure that we are endeavouring to do.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak with regard to the motion to concur with the final report on Bill 201, Employment Standards (Firefighter Leave) Amendment Act, 2018. I had the pleasure of participating in the work that the committee took over the last few months to get a better understanding of how the bill might impact our volunteer firefighting services and if it was going to help or hinder the ability of those operations to attract and retain their firefighters and to get a better understanding of how they perceived the consequences of the bill coming forward, if it would be good or otherwise.

3:30

It was a very good process that we went through, I believe, as a committee, the Economic Future Committee. I believe many of us at the beginning of the process believed that the bill came with very good intentions and that this was possibly a good thing moving forward, but as we collected written submissions, as we heard oral submissions, more questions started to arise within our deliberations. It became evident to the committee that the work was not quite finished, that we needed to continue to consult and to work with the firefighter service, the members there, that we can do better and can improve upon what is actually in place at this time.

Throughout the probably four- or five-month process – it was also good for myself – we were able to consult with local volunteer firefighters and the people in our communities that are on the front lines of the service to the community and to ask those questions. Some of the written submissions came forward from fire chiefs within my constituency and also family members within my constituency. It was good to touch base with them and get a better understanding of their perspective.

In our written submissions we received some general support for Bill 201, but then we also received some general opposition to Bill 201. I think the support was recognizing that the bill could provide firefighters employment flexibility and job security. Firefighters need to have the flexibility to answer calls at any time of the day or night, and this bill would ensure that employers would allow firefighters the time and flexibility to perform their firefighting tasks without fear of reprisal.

Another theme that came forward in the general support for Bill 201 in our submissions was that the bill would allow more firefighters to respond during the day, during typical working hours, and many volunteer firefighter submissions responded that they

were unable to respond to a fire during normal weekday business hours due to employment commitments.

Then also in the written submissions that the committee received, we saw a couple of themes in there that were in general opposition to Bill 201, that the bill had the potential to upset employers and create an adversarial working environment because the employers would feel forced to comply with imposed legislation. Another theme was that the bill may be detrimental to the recruitment of new volunteer firefighters. It had been suggested that employers would be hesitant to hire volunteer firefighters in fear of human resource issues. If employers are reluctant to hire, the recruitment of more firefighters would become more difficult. Therefore, that would be a negative consequence of Bill 201.

One thing that we did learn also and that I think really, really became evident to me during our oral submissions from members of the Fire Chiefs Association and the Rural Municipalities association – during those oral submissions we got a really good understanding of the work that the Fire Fighters Association does in their recruitment efforts and also in their communications to their community and families, the education efforts that they've done to try and help people within our communities to understand how to have a healthy firefighting organization. It's largely built around building relationships, building relationships with the employers in the communities and building relationships with families in the communities. Part of the training of the volunteer firefighters looked at recognizing that the volunteer firefighters' priority 1 had to be their family, and priority 2 then would be their job, their career. They are trained and educated to understand that their work as a volunteer firefighter must be priority 3. Their family and their jobs would come as priorities 1 and 2 and their volunteerism as priority 3.

What came out of the deliberations is evidenced in the recommendation. The committee decided, I believe unanimously, that Bill 201 not proceed at this time. Largely it was based on the concern that the firefighters felt that it could be detrimental to the relationships that had been built over the years with employers and employees and the good working relationships that are there currently and that they continue to work on going forward. The associations fully understand the challenges that our employers face when men and women need to leave their place of work in order to go on a call. There's always a good dialogue, a healthy dialogue, amongst those stakeholders to ensure that they can continue to be healthy organizations going forward.

We did as a committee also further recommend that the government of Alberta continue to consult with stakeholders to investigate the feasibility of developing comprehensive fire protection and prevention legislation in Alberta that is similar to other Canadian jurisdictions. We had discussions on whether or not that was within the scope of the mandate of the committee and whether or not this was part of what we would have in our final report, but the committee came to the agreement that it would be necessary to recommend that or that it would be good practice to recommend part of the findings that we heard from stakeholders. The Fire Chiefs Association spoke with regard to the fact that they really don't have a template legislation in this province to work from. They work with standards that are developed within the industry. They had asked for possibly more work to be done towards overarching legislation towards the firefighters. We recognize that the government of Alberta is working on this and continues to work on having those discussions with the firefighters.

We felt that it would be prudent to include the recommendation that the government of Alberta continue to consult with the stakeholders and continue to try and find a place where we can land that will be acceptable to all stakeholders within our communities

– the volunteer firefighters and the employers and the families – and come up with some legislation to help guide that going forward.

So with that, I am very much thankful for all the work that the committee did but also very much thankful for all the submissions that came forward, both written and oral, from people that decided to take the time to let us know their feelings.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to the motion to concur with Alberta's Economic Future Committee's recommendation that we not proceed with Bill 201, the firefighters amendment act. The work of firefighters, of course, is extremely important. We can never underestimate that. They play a valuable role in the protection of property, but far more than that, in the protection of life. As has been said, they are first responders to many kinds of situations in our communities around the province, so their work is extremely important. That's why I think it's essential that we get this legislation right, that we don't make mistakes, and that we take the time to really think this through clearly and get it right, as it should be.

3:40

Volunteers, of course, are the very backbone of Alberta's fire suppression. I did some checking. Just in one county, Lacombe county, for instance, there are six different fire departments and 160 volunteers. If you were to multiply that out over every county in the province, it's a lot of volunteers. Without volunteers we simply would not have functioning fire departments. We simply would not have the protections that they provide.

The Lacombe county fire chief, Chief Bussiere, is in this particular case, actually, a relevant person to reference. I'm very thankful that he had the opportunity to speak to the committee, address them. I think that one of the reasons that he was either called or appointed by the fire chiefs is because he holds a very unique role. He's not just the chief of the Lacombe fire department. He is also the Fire Chiefs Association chair of the recruitment and retention committee, so he has a very, very unique perspective on all of this. I've had the opportunity to speak with him numerous times, and I actually even called him this morning just to confirm that nothing had changed from his point of view, that his testimony to the committee was as he still sees it, and that is the case.

The concern, really, for the Alberta fire departments is over recruitment and retention. I think that's probably the biggest challenge that was brought to light by this bill. The issue of the recruitment and the retention of firefighters is a huge challenge for the fire chiefs; obviously, they have a committee dedicated specifically to that. I think that it's important to understand that the recruitment of firemen from the fire chiefs' point of view is really about encouraging an open conversation, as has been said here numerous times, to build relationships in the community with the municipality and the employers and the volunteer firefighters themselves. The recruitment and retention committee actually strongly encourages any new volunteer firefighters to first go and have a conversation with their employer to talk about it, what the implications for the employer and for their family might be.

There's a really important ongoing relationship-building piece that needs to happen here for the community to function well. You can't legislate a relationship very well; it has to be built through personal engagement. The concern was that this bill as it stood was probably too restrictive, probably even just too legalistic, too restrictive for the opportunity for relationships and co-operation, to have a conversation about creative solutions. When you add that

together with other labour code changes that have occurred in recent times that restrict the ability of employees to trade hours and time, it just becomes too restrictive.

It is a very real problem, particularly across the smaller communities of Alberta, and I'd like to just share an example from the Lacombe county fire department. The little village of Mirror needs a minimum of eight to nine members for their fire department to operate safely. They've had a fire department for many years, but unfortunately they've had a struggle maintaining the number of volunteers that they need. Without eight to nine members they're not able to cover absenteeism, they're not able to maintain equipment properly, and they're not able to back each other up safely on a call. It's mostly the safety issue that comes to the surface.

Over the last couple of years their volunteer force has declined to three and four individuals. As a result of that, they have recently been forced to actually disband that fire department. They can't maintain the equipment, as I've said, and they cannot operate safely to back each other up. So there now is no fire service in that community except for the county bringing in fire services from two other communities nearby if and when there is a call. The reality is that in that particular community, yes, lives may be at risk, property certainly is at risk, and insurance costs will escalate. Schools, the retail outlets, the library, the hall: all of these community infrastructure pieces are at risk because they have been unable to get the numbers of volunteers that they need to maintain a functioning fire department.

Fire volunteer recruitment and retention is an extremely difficult challenge across Alberta. We hear that from multiple fire departments, and when that doesn't happen, quite frankly, the community suffers. That's the challenge that we are facing. We need to make sure that we're actually able to support both the fire chiefs and the volunteers that work with them.

With regard to this bill while I think that the purpose and the intent of it was good – it intended to close a loophole with regard to protecting volunteers in terms of being able to have a job, being able to continue to work so that casual and part-time firefighters, who spend valuable time protecting their communities, would not be refused employment or be at risk of losing their job if they're called out too often, too many times – the reality was, though, from the point of view of the fire chiefs, that in fact the bill might make the situation worse rather than better, so it's important that we take into account their consideration.

The reality is that many fire halls across rural Alberta are finding it harder and harder to find people in their communities who are willing to sign up. Quite frankly, many of these communities cannot afford to hire full-time firefighters, and their inability to fill their rosters really is due to, in recent times particularly, our economic challenges and the difficulties that volunteers are having to find regular work, to maintain regular work. They're afraid to create any issues over this, and as a result they back off from volunteering.

There's an article in CBC, May '17, about the difficulty of recruiting and retaining fire volunteers during the recession, and the article reported, as I've kind of already hinted at, that 80 per cent, actually, is the number of Alberta's firefighters that are volunteers. Eighty per cent of our firefighters are volunteers. Without that 80 per cent we would not have fire departments across this province. It went on to explain how the economic downturn really has hit recruitment hard. Rocky View county, for instance, faced a 16 per cent reduction in their fire brigade each and every year. I mean, it's a massive attrition rate that voluntary firefighter organizations are facing. Their fire chief is quoted as saying, "We'll do our training and then we'll print out our roster sheet and we'll already start losing people." These communities just can't afford full-time

firefighters, and their inability to fill rosters in many cases makes it impossible for them to function, as I've already said about the village of Clive.

While many employers are often happy to accommodate volunteer and part-time firefighters, who often need to leave their primary employer when they get a call, many prospective volunteers themselves are actually concerned about causing disruptions. Ultimately, if the fire hall can't find the people they need, they can't fight the fires, they can't respond to the emergencies, and the result is longer and longer dangerous wait times for firefighter response times. That's part of the challenge, I think, that Chief Bussiere and others have pointed out.

The Deputy Speaker: Other members wishing to speak to the motion? Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

3:50

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's with privilege that I stand today and speak to the motion to concur for Bill 201, the Employment Standards (Firefighter Leave) Amendment Act, 2018.

I want to begin by sincerely thanking all the firefighters in this province, both volunteer and full-time, for all that they do in keeping this province safe. They risk their lives in their duties as first responders, being first on the scene in events of emergencies and in combating fires to keep our communities safe.

I'd like to talk a little bit about the changing roles especially in our small communities that happen to be along major highways and routes through our province. You know, specifically there have been issues over the years with the Wandering River volunteer fire department being in close proximity to highway 63 and some of the terrible accidents that they've had to deal with on that highway as well as up in my area, the highway 28 corridor, all the way from Smoky Lake through Vilna, Spedden, Ashmont, and the Bonnyville regional fire department that includes Bonnyville and Fort Kent. These folks, they do as much training as they possibly can, but on those major highways, when we do get a wreck, a lot of times there are fatalities. I just commend those folks for being able to go out there day after day, not knowing whether it's a friend or a relative that might be involved in a collision, not knowing until they get there what exactly they're up against.

I do reach out to all of them and thank them for their service. It really is awe inspiring to witness the firefighters putting down their own lives and putting their lives on the backburner and sacrificing so much for us and our families.

Just north of my constituency of Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills the fires have ravaged forests and towns, most memorably the Fort McMurray fire in 2016 and, of course, the Slave Lake fires. This terrible disaster decimated the community and burnt through many, many homes and businesses, but what we saw in those trying times was that Albertans banded together, neighbour helping neighbour, and our brave firefighters worked tirelessly and successfully to defeat the fire and avert any loss of life.

You know, from my own community of St. Paul and some of the volunteer firefighters in that area that went up there, they left their families and their homes for days and their jobs as well. A lot of these guys are also small-business owners or self-employed as well, but for those that are working for an employer, I can see where that would put an excessive stress on that employer.

One other thing, you know, when we talk about the Fort McMurray fire and these volunteer firefighters, is that we have no idea what the long-term effects of that exposure are, the multiple days of exposure. Those guys volunteered, ran up there. Like the saying goes, there are people running away from the fire, and

they're running toward it. We're going to have to be very cognizant about monitoring those volunteers that went up there and seeing to the long-term effects of that fire.

I'd like to thank the firefighters involved in battling that fire as well as every fire of all calibre that have threatened our beautiful province.

However, the last thing we want is to affect the lives of those volunteer firefighters by making them less employable or damaging their relationship with local businesses. Now, personally, in my involvement in the oil and gas industry up in the Bonnyville-Cold Lake area and St. Paul, we had many guys that worked with us that were members of the volunteer fire departments. Sometimes they would have to leave at the drop of a hat when their pager went off, and I don't recall any instances where anybody was reprimanded or chastised for their duties in that regard, so I would be curious for my own personal benefit to just see what the stats are on how many volunteer firefighters have actually faced reprimand in the performance of their duties.

We have listened to stakeholders express their concerns over how this piece of legislation has the potential to force employers into a corner with firefighter leave. We want to make sure that the businesses do not feel that their hands are tied when they hire a volunteer firefighter and, along the same lines, that volunteer firefighters are not painted as less employable due to the sacrifices they make in keeping our towns safe. It's very, very important. You know, as an employer, when that employee gets that call to go to a fire or to an accident on a highway, you don't know, especially in a small town, whether it could be your neighbour's place or a family member that's involved there.

The intent of this Bill 201 was to ensure the job security of volunteer firefighters when they leave their work and are called to an emergency situation. Oftentimes casual, part-time, and volunteer firefighters risk loss of employment when they must leave work. Again, I can't speak from personal experience because I have not heard that out of any of the volunteer firefighters that I've dealt with. Next time I stop into the fire halls – sometimes they have a social event – I will check with them and see if any of them have had any personal experience in that.

What we have heard from stakeholders, though, is that there is an existing relationship between fire departments and local businesses, and the very last thing that we want to do as legislators is undermine that relationship by handcuffing them with any sort of legislation. We're very happy that stakeholders have brought forth to us these concerns, and it is important for us to take this very seriously and act in accordance with them.

My understanding, not being involved in that committee, was that this bill did actually make it to the committee stage, which we've been trying to push over the last three and a half years on many very, very important pieces of legislation that we felt could have benefited from consultation with stakeholders and the people on the ground that are actually dealing with these situations on an everyday basis. Unfortunately, what we've met with most of the time is being voted down from getting this legislation put forward to committee. Unfortunately, as can be seen by this Bill 201, if it had been just simply passed through the House, the unforeseen consequences can be quite devastating, especially to small businesses and the relationship between the business and the firefighters.

As legislators it's our duty to behave in the best interests of Albertans and those who will be affected the most by the legislation, and therefore consultation is very important. In this case we have heard from those who will be affected that they feel this piece of legislation would not be beneficial to them. Therefore, as per their wishes, we support the motion to concur on this bill.

As I've said before, we've seen what happens time and time again when this NDP government acts without considering the implications for those that hold a stake in their legislation. They deny that their duty is to listen to Albertans, and then we end up with a fiasco like we had with Bill 6, where we had thousands of farm families coming to the steps of the Legislature, sitting up in the galleries, and so many of them watching at 1 o'clock in the morning that they crashed the Legislature live streaming site.

You know, when important pieces of legislation come through and you don't properly consult, you will face the consequences. Bill 6 was a prime example of the government's negligence to consult with those towards whom the bill is addressed, that even when Albertans tell the government exactly what they think of a bill, the NDP's top-down, paternalistic government tells them that they know best. Farmers of Alberta with relation to Bill 6 should have been listened to and should have had a say in a bill that ultimately caused a mess. Then again, we've seen many instances in which the NDP did not consult.

A quick glance at their carbon tax gives another example. It would not be possible to consult with Albertans on a tax that affects everyone but that they did not run on in their campaign. How could Albertans have given their thoughts and feedback if they were not consulted? Would Albertans have signed on to a tax that simply makes life more expensive and drives investment away into other jurisdictions? I doubt very much whether NDP door-knockers during the 2015 campaign had asked individuals at the door whether they would have seen fit to accept the carbon tax with no benefit and no reduction in GHGs, whether they would have actually accepted that and voted for it. I guess we'll see in 2019 what Albertans actually think of this government and the carbon tax. I do believe that the carbon tax will be a major issue in the coming election.

Farmers are saying that the carbon tax is driving agriculture out. We talk about . . .

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Strankman: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour to rise today and speak on Bill 201. I see by the notes that I have here that my aide wrote down the word "honour" using the old English verbiage with "u" in it. Madam Speaker, in this case, there's a lot of honour with "u" in it that these volunteers have in the jobs that they do. I commend the Member for Highwood on his presentation of this bill. It's certainly a valuable thing.

4:00

Madam Speaker, last spring, when the session broke, I had an opportunity to attend a place in the constituency where a 28-year volunteer was receiving his award. The little community is named Donalda. I can't remember the gentleman's last name, but I do remember standing there giving the award, and my phone was just vibrating excessively in my pocket. At the same time that I was honouring this long-term volunteer, volunteers right at our home, right at our farm, were saving our farm from a prairie fire that had initiated or would appear to have initiated off the local road allowance. My son and others kept us from actually losing our farm. I was able to make note of that to the volunteers, also in another little community, on Saturday night in a little place called Veteran. It's a pleasure.

It's certainly been an interesting process to get to this point, Madam Speaker. I'd be remiss not to thank those firefighters, particularly those volunteer firefighters, who keep us safe. They keep us safe throughout the year every year. These men and women, who make up some of the most selfless volunteers anywhere, risk

their lives, their health, both mental and physical, so that we – and I have personal experience of that – can be safe.

When I saw Bill 201 come to the floor for first reading, I thought: “Great. A bill that I would hope all of us, across the bow here, could support.” I read it over, and after first reading I didn’t think there was anything that could be contentious about the bill. There were no concerns or any that I’ve heard around my constituency. It’s been discussed with a variety of firefighters, and we heard their impressions of the bill. To the folks that I’ve talked to, there seems to be nothing contentious. However, the bill has been sent to committee, and discussions have continued.

Madam Speaker, as you well know and as I previously described, I come from an area of small and sometimes remote rural communities that rely on these volunteer organizations and these fire departments to keep our area safe. What I’ve seen is that it takes a lot of these good people willing to take and give of their time to provide protection. It takes a lot more than people; it also takes a great community to stand behind these people. These rural, sometimes remote towns throughout my riding are great communities and have thus far stood behind their firefighters.

Everyone knows that the radio calls can and do go off at any time, day or night. Whenever these volunteers can, they will go out to those calls. Most firefighters are on the road to the call and often in the hall before they even know what they are going to or what the incident is. Perhaps it’s an accident, a structural fire, a grass fire, a medical lift assist. Madam Speaker, the list goes on. You never know what is going to happen, yet these brave men and women go nonetheless. As the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner and the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills have also described, these people are unusual in that they run towards the fire; they don’t run away from it. In my personal life experiences on the prairies I, too, have run to assist to try and extinguish prairie fires.

What I hear around town is that during the day there are fewer firefighters that are able to answer the call because of employment commitments. Some, frankly, cannot make it to the call because they are out of town with their jobs. Some are teachers. In one case I heard of a fellow that taught shop who was limited in his ability to respond because he just could not go and leave the band saws and table saws with unsupervised students working while he went out. He had to make the hard decision to simply turn off that radio when that call came.

Others, Madam Speaker, work daily in the patch or on area farms, others in health care at the hospital, but whatever the case, many for whatever reason simply cannot make the call. Consequently, I understand that, especially in daytime working hours, some halls have issues getting out very many responders to go to a call but usually find enough for a small team. Often the same people are at the calls during daytime hours, and I’m sure that this is a strain on the employer-employee relationship.

Madam Speaker, some felt that this was an important bill because we need to ensure that there is protection for our communities, especially our more rural and, in many cases in our riding, remote rural areas. In our remote rural areas some people are aware of what’s known as the Suffield fire or the Hilda fire, which even your office or representatives from your office attended to visit with those people. Those areas cannot afford to hire a full-time staff or full-time positions other than the senior officers. The cost to hire and staff a full-time fire department is vastly different than that of a part-time or volunteer organization. There are many small communities that, frankly, cannot support this because of their size.

Madam Speaker, it’s believed that this bill has maintained a good balance. For example, the employee needs to have been employed by the same employer for at least 90 days, and that creates employer-employee stability. The bill would give part-time

firefighters employment flexibility to answer calls at any time of the day or night, and it would give part-time firefighters job security without fear of reprisal when they leave to answer those calls. Again, the bill would have potentially allowed more members to respond during the day, especially between the hours of 0800 and 1630. Many firefighters, according to our submissions on the bill, stated that they were unable to respond to an emergency during normal weekday business hours due to serious employment commitments. I would personally hate to think that members didn’t respond because they were afraid that they would lose their job, and I would hope that that would never come to pass.

Now, the upside of our continued discussions was that we have a great chance to sit down and talk to others about this issue and other aspects of this proposed bill and to consider other relevant points of view. This bill did not entitle the employee to have pay for the occasional unpaid leave when they need to assist in fire services. From my understanding, though, Madam Speaker, and from some I know, part-time or volunteer firefighters are paid to be out on calls. Hence, the employer didn’t need to pay while they were gone, but the employee was still able to make a meagre wage through that fire department, and it provides proper incentive to the employees to still have a wage and help have the community kept safe. In short, this bill would close a loophole that would prevent any volunteer, casual, or part-time firefighter who spends valuable time protecting their communities in emergencies from losing their job and, with that, job security.

Recruitment and retention are already a huge concern for some fire chiefs. This bill, in some people’s view, helps local fire chiefs with both of these issues, recruitment and retention. Some chiefs told our members that it takes resilient people to do the job – and I can certainly testify to that, Madam Speaker – and people have been able to come out. This bill, I believe, strikes that balance. This bill has looked at several things such as flexibility and job security in an attempt to allow more members . . . [Mr. Strankman’s speaking time expired]

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other speakers to the motion? The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin.

4:10

Ms Goodridge: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is an honour to rise in the House today to speak to Bill 201, Employment Standards (Firefighter Leave) Amendment Act, 2018. I would sincerely like to thank my colleague for Highwood for bringing up this important issue. The work of firefighters is truly outstanding, and that’s precisely why we need to make sure that we get this bill right.

Having grown up in Fort McMurray, forest fires and car accidents along highway 63 were almost a way of life, often having volunteer firefighters responding to those calls. This bill also hits really close to home for me for so many reasons. In 2016, when a fire ravaged Fort McMurray, destroying over 2,500 homes, countless firefighters put themselves in harm’s way to save our community. These courageous women and men fought day and night to save our community from one of the costliest disasters in Canada’s history. While Fort McMurray is served by a full-time fire department, the rural communities within the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo operate by volunteer departments. It was these volunteer departments that stepped in, stepped up, and helped save countless homes in the region.

For example, Ron Quintal, the deputy fire chief of Fort McKay, one of the many volunteer fire departments that responded to the fire, said that this was the first time in the 10 years that he’d served on the Fort McKay fire department that they’d been asked to make

a call in Fort McMurray. The brave men and women from the Fort McKay volunteer fire department drove south on highway 63, heading away from safety and towards the massive fire. Within minutes of Quintal and his team arriving in Fort McMurray, they were dispatched to a neighbourhood and worked for the next 36 hours straight. They saved much of that neighbourhood. Thank you.

There are countless stories of volunteer fire departments providing the much-needed manpower to help fight this massive beast of a fire. This includes many of our industry partners' volunteer firefighters and volunteer fire departments from across the province, including that of Lac La Biche, St. Paul, Westlock, and many, many others. We credit so much to the intensely hard work that was done by the firefighters, including our many volunteer firefighters. None of them quit. None of them backed down. No one fled the flames. They stayed, they fought, and they saved our community.

In total, there were 88,000 people that were evacuated from the area, and in total 1,100 firefighters came to help my community during the fire. The Canadian military was even deployed to help support our region's first responders. The blaze destroyed almost 600,000 hectares and almost 2,500 homes, causing nearly \$10 billion in direct and indirect damages, making it one of the most expensive disasters in Canada's history.

Madam Speaker, two weeks ago it was my honour to attend the grand opening of the new Anzac fire hall. The Anzac fire department is one of the many volunteer fire departments within my riding of Fort McMurray-Conklin. This volunteer fire department is also one of the busiest within the region, taking up to 300 calls a year, almost a call a day. The new fire hall offers significantly more space for training for these volunteer firefighters and much more space for their equipment, giving them the ability to better respond to their many calls. I am truly grateful that I am friends with many of the volunteer firefighters from the Anzac fire department. It was quite an honour to see them in action and see them have the new hall opened up. As has been stated, these volunteer firefighters protect many of our rural communities not just within my riding of Fort McMurray-Conklin but right across this province. Their service should be celebrated and recognized.

This legislation would have closed a loophole, preventing any volunteer, casual, or part-time firefighter who spends valuable time protecting their communities and responding to emergencies from losing their job. It also would have prevented part-time firefighters from being overlooked by employers because of their obligation to leave work and fulfill their volunteer duties. It also would have helped communities by increasing the number of firefighters available to respond to fires, which could also decrease response time.

While I truly appreciate the spirit of this bill, upon further consultation with various stakeholders we discovered that this bill would have also had some pretty negative, unintended consequences. Specifically, it could negatively affect rural businesses. We heard that it could create an adversarial relationship between businesses and volunteer fire departments, and in many of our rural communities we cannot afford to have a negative relationship developing between our neighbours. Fire departments have worked tirelessly to build these relationships with local businesses, and they felt like this bill would force the hand of many businesses. While the leave the firefighters would have taken would be unpaid, there would still be serious economic impacts to businesses due to an ever-increasing load of disastrous provincial government policies. We heard that the burden on many of these businesses would be far too high. We truly need to find a balance that reduces some of these unintended consequences.

We need to work on increasing collaboration to build relationships and improve the overall safety of our rural communities, and that's what it's truly about. It's about safety. There is so much value in consulting with subject matter experts when drafting bills and policies to avoid these unintended consequences. Unlike the current NDP government, on this side of the House we welcome and listen to stakeholders from across the province. This bill was not supported by the community and by the stakeholders, and we accepted that feedback.

Being a firefighter means so much more than just battling blazes. Firefighters save people. Firefighters walk into the fire when everyone else runs out, and we are so grateful for our firefighters, who work tirelessly to make a difference in our communities. I would truly like to thank my hon. colleague for bringing this bill forward, focused on making sure volunteer firefighters were treated with the respect and dignity they deserve.

Many stakeholders expressed concerns over aspects of the bill, and I will not be voting in favour of it. We cannot put forward legislation that will hinder our volunteer fire departments. Most of our everyday heroes are volunteer firefighters, and our rural and remote communities are truly indebted to these selfless volunteers who rush into fires while everyone else seems to run away.

Comprehensive firefighting legislation is something that we can look into studying in the future as we continue to consult with stakeholders on this important matter. We have received wonderful feedback from countless individuals across this province, and we will continue to build on these relationships in order to develop the best possible legislation for supporting everyday heroes.

As I grew up down the street from a fire hall, I'm quite familiar with firefighters and it's truly something that is a passion to me. It's very great to see that this bill had the wonderful spirit to protect our volunteer firefighters.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any others? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'd like to take this opportunity to speak to Bill 201 also. When you look at this bill, of course, at first it looks great. You know, we need to have volunteer firefighters. So many small communities in Alberta depend on a volunteer fire department, and I think it's something, obviously, that we need to protect. We need to have those people in place that are willing to do that. It's obviously not a job that's for everyone, but of course the people that are willing and able to do such an important job in our communities: we need to be able to take care of them. Of course, the importance of their job and their duty makes this bill so important to get right. By getting it wrong, I think we have a lot of risks to have the whole system fall apart that we depend on so much.

Now, this was sent to committee, and I think that was a great opportunity to have this reviewed and have it looked at and to listen to the different groups that came in and stakeholders that came in and talked to the committee so we could get a better understanding of the full impacts of a bill such as this. I think that by having those presentations, we all learned something and some things that we didn't know before as far as the implications of a bill like this.

Of course, the volunteer firefighters, I mean, volunteer to do a job, and it's such an important job in our communities. They volunteer. They take time out of their lives to do this great work.

4:20

Along with the firefighters we have the businesses that the volunteer firefighters work for. Those businesses, of course, give

up something, too, in order to support the local firefighters, by allowing their employees to go off and help the community when needed. So I think it's important to recognize the important part that the local community businesspeople play in the role of volunteer fire departments.

Now, my community where I live, the community around Valleyview, is served by a volunteer fire department, too. Of course, I know those volunteers. They are people in our community. They're hard working. They're good people. They're dedicated to the cause. I guess, being as I know most of them, I know how often they meet. They have regular meetings where they get together and they discuss the issues and how they can better support the community. They also train a lot, too. They go to different courses outside of town and travel, too, so that they can learn the techniques and the different things that they need to do to do their job properly.

Of course, that's all volunteer time. That's all time they take out of their lives, away from their families, away from their jobs, to serve the community. These people are actually – let's face it – local heroes. These are the people that instead of running from a fire, run to a fire, that go to horrible accidents on the highway, that a lot of times are the first people there because they're ready to go at any time. They drop everything and run as soon as the call comes. We often see our young children – I see my grandchildren sometimes, you know, and they want to wear the fire hat. They want to dress up like firemen for Halloween. That's what these people are. These people are dedicated. They're very giving of their time and their energy, of course, and they feel it's important, and it is important. I think we have to respect that.

I think it's also – again I want to mention the businesses that these people work for, the men and women that are firefighters. These businesses that they work for are willing to take that time when, let's say, they have a firefighter that works on the floor of a store or something like that. They know that when that fire call comes, they're going to lose one employee off the floor, you know, immediately, and they're willing to accept that. When we talk about volunteer firefighters, we have the firefighters that volunteer but we also have the businesses that volunteer, and I think it's important to have that idea that they volunteer that to the community, their employee, knowing that that employee may be lost for a few hours or the rest of the day.

Some of these jobs, of course, that these people have, I mean, are critical jobs. If they drop everything right then, that could cost the business thousands of dollars. You know, that all has to be taken into consideration, and I'm sure those people have to make those decisions each time that fire call comes: can I in good conscience take this call, or do I need to stay at work? But, of course, something like this bill would kind of take away from that opportunity for businesses to have that kind of involvement, to be able to volunteer the part of their business to help the community, too.

I know that our local fire department each year has a hockey tournament. I want to say that it's been 35 years in a row, I think, that they've been having a hockey tournament and raising money. They've raised tens of thousands of dollars to help the community and help the victims, people that have had house fires and that sort of thing. I think it's great that these fire departments are not just a group of people that show up when there's a fire or when there's an accident or anything, but they're actually active in the community and trying to do more than just that job of helping in the time of need.

I spent some time in Fairview with the volunteer fire department there. They had a function there and were fund raising and stuff like that for different things in the community. It was great to see that kind of activity and the community involvement there.

Of course, in Valleyview we have the same thing, and I know that, for instance, the DeBolt fire department is very active. DeBolt is a couple of small communities – we've got DeBolt, we've got Crooked Creek, Valley Ridge, and that area in there – and they have a very active volunteer fire department there, and I know they work hard and they show up when they're needed to. Highway 43 runs right through that area, and at times there are a lot of accidents in that area. The volunteer fire department is quite often the first one there because they are right there. The nearest hospitals are in Valleyview and Grande Prairie for ambulances to come from, but of course that volunteer fire department is right there. I think that it's just a huge blessing to have in our community there, to have those men and women willing to drop everything and be there for the community when something goes wrong.

I spent some time in Bezanson here this fall, too, talking to some of the volunteer firefighters there, and they've got a very active volunteer fire department there, too, and it's great to see that taking place. These small communities that do so much: you know, those are the communities that are in between the centres, where they fill a pretty big gap in services when it comes to emergency services.

Getting back to, you know, the committee's work on this, that allowed for more consultation. I think what came about is realizing that there were some unintended consequences that could happen because of a bill like this. I think it's important to have even more consultation and really get this right because it is something that is critically important for rural Alberta in particular. If we get it wrong, then I'm not sure what could happen. But we do want to make sure we get it right because we can't afford to get it wrong. I don't think these communities can afford to not have those volunteer firefighters, that are willing to come out and do that important work that they do.

Of course, at times I think it can be hard to recruit volunteer firefighters. By having difficulty to recruit – I mean, we don't want to do anything that'll make it harder to recruit. We want to make sure that the people that want to volunteer are there and ready and willing to do it. We also want to make sure that the businesses that these people work at are supportive, too. I think that's an important balance to have.

I think that during the consultation they found out that a number of stakeholders did not support the bill. They're worried that it would damage the relationship between employers and the volunteer fire service, making it adversarial. Of course, I think that's an important relationship that needs to be kept in balance. We need to have that balance both ways there. They also expressed concerns that maybe businesses wouldn't hire volunteer firefighters because they would be kind of handcuffed by this legislation. They wouldn't have that opportunity to say no sometimes if it's, you know, a critical thing at work.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak on the motion to concur on Bill 201, Employment Standards (Firefighter Leave) Amendment Act, 2018. I thank my hon. colleague the Member for Highwood for bringing this bill forward and raising this important issue in this House and in the committee. The work of the Member for Highwood will not go unnoticed, and we are saddened that he will not be returning to this House after the next election.

By bringing this bill forward and having the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future examine the legislation and call witnesses in to hear testimony, the Member for Highwood managed to spark a discussion among the firefighter community across

Alberta. We heard from the fire chiefs. They indicated that Bill 201 was not good enough. They wanted more. They want their own act, not to be part of several acts scattered all over the law books.

Bill 201 proposes to amend the Employment Standards Code to protect the part-time, casual, or volunteer firefighters from loss of employment because they are or have become part-time firefighters. That's a good thing, Madam Speaker. We already allow reservists in the Canadian Armed Forces military leave so they can attend annual training or be deployed on missions abroad. The Canadian Forces Liaison Council recognizes the best employers across Canada for their commitments to military leave. Why couldn't we do the same thing for firefighters?

4:30

I have heard that even in the Canadian Forces a firefighter is a trade where people can sign up, train, and be employed. When one is on an air force base, those firefighters need to respond to aircraft crashes on takeoff and landing. When on a ship at sea, everyone is responsible for fighting a fire on the boat or when a helicopter crashes on the deck or when munitions prematurely explode. Sadly, military leave might be two to four times a year whereas firefighter leave might be two to four times a week.

I was surprised and disappointed to hear volunteer firefighter can lose their jobs for leaving their jobs to respond to emergencies. Firefighters are essential to communities. How can we ever recruit additional firefighters for volunteer brigades all across rural Alberta if they are forever faced with this sword of Damocles over their head if they leave their job to go fight a fire? Volunteer firefighter rosters have been dwindling in rural communities due to the economic downturn. When people feel they are not protected through legislation, they choose work over their prospect of not being picked for a job due to their volunteerism.

Now, funnily enough, colleagues in Quebec have a law like this protecting first responders so that they can carry out their duties as a first responder and know their other job will still be there waiting for them. The NDP tried to bring in legislation like this at the federal level to amend the Canada Labour Code, but the bill died on the Order Paper in August 2015. Amending the Canada Labour Code would only protect 4,420 federally regulated firefighters among the 85,000 volunteers across the country.

We heard from the fire chiefs that came in that firefighting develops a brotherhood and that some volunteer firefighters would rather be down at the station training or waiting for a call than be at their own jobs. Firefighting is just one of those jobs where you can develop a passion for the work. Sadly, some municipalities cannot afford to indulge passions and have people sitting around all day.

Parkland county needs 40 volunteer firefighters to manage the new state-of-the-art fire hall in the Acheson industrial park. Otherwise, they have a \$6.5 million bill in order to have the firefighters on full-time. This is a large burden for the industries and residents to make up in property taxes.

Most stakeholders at the committee meeting expressed their strong support to have a single fire services act similar to the Police Act and would rather see one larger piece of legislation to encompass all the areas of fire services. You see, Madam Speaker, firefighters don't just fight fires. Firefighters respond to motor vehicle accidents. They use tools called the jaws of life to break open automobiles to rescue trapped accident victims. Many firefighters are trained as paramedics and can administer more than just advanced first aid while waiting for an ambulance to arrive. Firefighters are also the local hazardous materials team and respond to accidents involving dangerous goods that require respiratory equipment in order to handle the cleanup. Think of the material-handling training for all the types of things that our firefighters need

to take. Yes, you'll see firefighters out there in haz-mat suits responding to certain incidents.

But, Madam Speaker, because we took the bill to committee and because we got feedback from the firefighting leadership, that's why we will not proceed any further with this piece of legislation. I'll be voting to concur with my NDP colleagues that we can and will do better with the legislation.

Now, if only we could take so many other pieces of legislation to committee to consider and bring expert witnesses to testify and help us do our jobs better. Madam Speaker, I'm hoping that the Government House Leader will consider this suggestion, that we should do the same thing with many other contentious bills that come in front of us, that we take the opportunity to take them to committee and do thorough due diligence and get all the stakeholders to give their input and make those bills better.

With that, Madam Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to speak on this motion. I would also like to thank my colleague the Member for Highwood, who brought this bill forward. Unfortunately, as we all know, he won't return to this House after the next election. I happen to work with him. We both actually ran as Wildrose candidates in the 2012 election, so we've worked together since then. I'm so sad to see him not returning to this House. He served his constituency with so much commitment and dedication.

I actually look forward to the Minister of Municipal Affairs bringing a new bill as soon as possible to meet the needs of the stakeholders heard from in this committee.

I thank you, Madam Speaker, for granting me the opportunity again to address this piece of legislation. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the motion? The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to be able to stand in the House this afternoon and speak to the Employment Standards (Firefighter Leave) Amendment Act, 2018. Now, I know that I sit on Alberta's Economic Future Committee, and I know that we agreed to send over to the House an agreement as a vote by the committee that we would not at this time support Bill 201, and I agree. I was there to be part of that vote, and I stand beside what the committee decided.

I just wanted to talk about the bill for a few moments. Bill 201, of course, proposed to amend the Employment Standards Code. The intent was to protect part-time, casual, or volunteer firefighters from loss of employment because they are or they have become a part-time firefighter. Currently employers can and in some cases have terminated employment for missed time during fulfilling duties as a part-time firefighter.

Now, I spent a lot of my youth in a small town that at the time probably wasn't much more than a thousand people. I certainly knew all the firefighters and all of their families. I think probably the fire department was a lot smaller at the time because, certainly, the population of the town was a lot smaller. As the fire department grew, the county determined to add a Vulcan and district rural firefighting crew, so they would come in and train with the folks that were on the town of Vulcan fire department. They were two separate entities, but they ended up getting more members, more people to volunteer by doing it that way.

4:40

What this legislation proposed was to close a loophole, preventing any volunteer, casual firefighter from losing their job, as I said. It was also doing its best to protect part-time firefighters from being refused employment just because they must leave work from time to time to fulfill their duties. That's the part that I remember

about a small town fire department, that it was strictly volunteer firefighters. At that time, of course, many, many years ago, the employers and the employees all understood that firefighters were an important part of that fire department. The volunteers and the folks that were employing them, a lot of them understood that from time to time volunteer firefighters may actually have to leave. Those things I certainly remember. Like I said, I knew every one of them. The people that served plus their families all seemed to serve as time went on, so it was quite an affair.

The legislation also talked about taking the worry of losing employment out of the equation on considering becoming a part-time firefighter. These guys that volunteer to become firefighters don't expect much. They have a passion built right into them, something that is admirable for the rest of us to understand. They pretty much put themselves aside when an emergency comes along, and they become the heroes that we know each and every one of them are.

I think that previously the Member for Highwood did bring forward Bill 212, an Employment Standards Code amendment act, in 2016, which died on the Order Paper. Bill 201, of course, then became the resurrected and updated version, which was to define that a part-time firefighter was to include "a casual, volunteer or part-time member of a fire protection service of a municipality or Metis settlement." That was all done to broaden the scope of the bill.

Now, interestingly – and I think it's been said before – in October of '14 an article was written by someone from Parkland county. The question that he asked in that article was: who pays the cost of dwindling volunteer numbers? When you live in an area that strictly has volunteer firefighters, as maybe you do yourself, Madam Speaker, volunteering to be part of a volunteer fire department is very important, and we're lucky to have those folks.

Each year in Coaldale I'm invited to the Coaldale emergency services Christmas dinner and awards night along with the MP from the area. We do go, and we honour those volunteers that spend their time. We honour the time they spend. We honour the amount of time that they spend. We honour the families of those people that actually are just as much a part of that volunteering as the very person that is out there doing the job.

I was there in 2017, and we talked about the fact that the Coaldale fire department – I just speak of Coaldale because it's the biggest municipality in my riding, and I seem to end up doing a lot of things with the fire department. Anyway, they took their volunteers and went out to the Kenow fire that was at Waterton, and they were charged with protecting the Prince of Wales Hotel. When some of these folks got up to speak about that, tears came to their eyes. They knew what they were charged with. They knew that people were depending on them. They knew that they were doing this for people that they had never met and probably never would meet. But they were prepared to do their duty, and they understood what their duty was as a volunteer firefighter.

I looked on the website of the Coaldale & District Emergency Services fire department, and their credo is to Respect the Tradition, Embrace the Culture, Live the Life. They also talk about integrity being part of what they do at the Coaldale fire department.

Doing the right thing for the right reason, even when no one is watching.

Those are bold words.

Professionalism – In our training, service and how we present ourselves.

Respect – Treat others how you would want to be treated, with respect and dignity, on and off the job.

Compassion – Caring for the people you are serving and your co-workers through compassion and tolerance.

Teamwork – Working together with each other and outside organizations.

Pride – In our community, in our job and in our department.

So these guys have a bit of a code of honour that they determine to live by as they are volunteering for their local fire department.

The Coaldale awards night, that I end up going to every year: the sheer number of service bars and medals and documentations that are presented at that place – I had the opportunity to present a lot of those medals – indicate the steadfast professionalism and dedication that this team takes seriously in assisting others in their time of need. Whether full-time, part-time, or volunteer, their commitment, service, and sacrifice for their community are apparent.

Volunteer firefighters all across this province deserve to have our recognition at all times. They step up when – I think my colleague from Fort McMurray said that when people are running out of a burning building, they're running into it, and those are the kinds of people that I always respect.

I will be voting as the committee suggested. We certainly listened to stakeholders. I actually gave my seat to the Member for Highwood at one of the meetings because I felt it was important that he was able to be part of the conversation with the stakeholders. He did take that opportunity, and he got to ask questions of the folks that were there.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the motion? Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise to speak to Bill 201, the Employment Standards (Firefighter Leave) Amendment Act, 2018. Imagine this scenario. You drive into a town for a few groceries, and before you have a chance to park your vehicle, the fire hall is suddenly a bustle of activity. Vehicles are hurriedly arriving, men and women race inside the fire hall, and before long, fire trucks and rescue vehicles are racing out. You know some kind of emergency has occurred, a fire or a serious crash, and that your fellow citizens are jumping to duty. It happens quickly because it has to.

The arriving residents were volunteer and part-time firefighters. They are well known to their fellow citizens for they are the type of people who help out with so much else that goes on in their communities. This community service, though, is of a higher level because they are saving lives while also putting theirs in danger.

When the siren, or today their PDA, alerts them, volunteer firefighters leave their dinners, their farms, or their children's gymkhanas, and their workplaces to save a home, a life, a barn filled with animals. Minutes count, and they are trained to react. And thank goodness they do. Rural villages, towns, counties, and MDs cannot survive without volunteer and part-time firefighters. That's why I'm proud to speak today on Bill 201, introduced by my colleague the Member for Highwood.

This is one of those pieces of legislation that might simply be overlooked. And that is a key point about volunteer firefighters: we often do take them for granted. It's not that we do not appreciate them in this Legislative Assembly; of course we value them, and those of us who live in small communities know how critical they are. Let's face it. What would we do without these volunteers? If we didn't have highly trained first responders heading out on a moment's notice to emergencies, what would happen? Think about it for a moment: what really would happen? It is truly impossible to imagine.

4:50

This bill proposed to close a loophole in the Employment Standards Code to prevent any volunteer, casual, or part-time firefighter from losing their job when they are doing this important

work on behalf of their community. Clearly, the intentions of this bill were superb. When it was being debated in the House, some valid concerns were raised, and for that reason it was sent to the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future for review, once again a good course because the committee can perform far more thorough reviews of legislation than we can do in the short time that bills are before us.

The committee did a great job reaching out to stakeholders, a number of whom raised red flags. The two main red flags noted concern about affecting the relationship of volunteer firefighters and their employers, usually small businesses. The second, of course, was concern that enacting this change might affect the prospects of employment for the volunteer firefighters themselves. We don't want to cause any of these problems when the purpose of the bill was to make everything better. The committee, in its collective wisdom, chose to recommend that the Assembly abandon this well-meaning piece of legislation.

I thank my colleague the Member for Highwood for bringing it forward and raising these issues. By introducing this private member's bill, he has sparked an important conversation in communities about the great value of volunteer firefighters.

Employers may well adopt the proposed change on their own. They could make it company policy, or they could simply welcome a volunteer firefighter to their team and acknowledge their pride in the tremendous service they provide to their community. Let's face it: that's mostly what occurs now. In the communities that rely on volunteer and part-time firefighters, it is stores, lumberyards, hotels, and many other businesses that fall prey to the flames, so most business owners greatly value any employee who performs this important service.

I believe the positive debate we have had in the House, followed by the committee discussions, especially with stakeholders, has served a great purpose. Another positive move that has come from Bill 201's journey is that members of this House have now heard loud and clear the need for Alberta to create a single fire service act. It is important now that we do not lose this recommendation. We must continue consulting about a fire service act, what that might look like, and how it might serve firefighters, municipalities, and citizens.

For Bill 201, though, the focus was on Alberta's volunteer firefighters, and I would like to end on that note. So let me say to any current or former firefighter, and there may even be some here today who could become firefighters in the future: thank you for your service to Alberta and to your community; you jeopardize your time, your health, and even your life to serve us; we do appreciate it.

Now, Madam Speaker, on a more personal note, I'm not sure if there are any other volunteer firefighters in this House. Perhaps there are, but just so you know, I was a volunteer firefighter for many years in my little town of Grovedale. My son also became a volunteer firefighter, my daughter became a volunteer firefighter, and her new son-in-law became a volunteer firefighter. My brother ended up being the chief of our small fire service. Once I became elected as municipal councillor, they deemed it a conflict of interest, so I had to step down from the volunteer position, and my brother became the chief. So I understand, you know, very well the value in being a volunteer fireman. My brother and my son were also first responders. It takes a lot of time and training to become a first responder. I don't think people realize how much training it is. It's kind of like an EMT or a nurse but not quite. Some of them with lots of experience are just as qualified.

From the employer side, one story I can remember. I was already on council when we were harvesting and combining, and some of my colleagues would understand that. I had the job of driving the

truck, and I took a load in, dumped it, came back to the field to get another load, and here's my combine sitting there running, the threshing equipment going, the door wide open. I'm thinking: oh, man, somebody is hurt, or somebody is gone. I couldn't find anybody around. So eventually I jumped in the combine and started combining and filling the truck on my own. I was surprised later when my brother came back. He had gotten a fire call. He was driving the combine. He had jumped out of the combine at the end of the field and left the door open. I said: well, at least next time maybe shut the thresher off so it's not sitting there running. I was a little surprised by it, but I understood his dedication and what it meant. He went to a neighbour's place, where a trailer had caught on fire. There were no lives at risk, but they helped to save a lot of valuables for the neighbour. After that, I kind of got used to it. He had kicked out the thresher when he left, but when I came to the field, the combine was running. No big deal; you jump in it and go. So I know what it's like kind of on the employer side or trying to run a business and somebody has to leave, but it was pretty understandable.

I know also that my wife one Christmas morning was a little upset because our son wasn't home. He quite often stayed out late, but this was the next morning and he wasn't home yet. He finally came home at about 9 o'clock in the morning, and she wasn't very happy. But soon he told her that he was on his way home at a reasonable hour and that, of course, on his way home he got a fire call. It was a first responder, and he was in the truck. It was about 30 below on Christmas morning and snowing and very cold. He happened to be the first one on the scene. Somebody had reported lights in the bush, so he went down the bank and found a young man that was impaled.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the motion? Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a privilege to rise and speak to Bill 201, the Employment Standards (Firefighter Leave) Amendment Act, 2018, presented by my hon. colleague from Highwood. First of all, I just want to say that earlier today I had the opportunity in my member's statement of talking about the heart of our society. One of the things that I had mentioned – and I'm sure you'll remember this – is that the heart of Albertans is made up of the firefighters who willingly run into burning buildings while others are running out.

You know, having the opportunity of being able to speak to volunteer firefighters in my riding of Cardston-Taber-Warner, when you start talking to them, you start to realize and recognize the kind of people they are: committed, compassionate, caring people that have the best interests of the community at heart. When I first heard about this bill coming forward by my colleague, at first blush I thought: absolutely. For everybody that I can think of, all the businesses, this would be a no-brainer. This is something that they would be wanting to have as legislation. We seem to develop legislation based upon the worst-case scenario. I imagine that a large majority of employers would be good employers and would be able to provide that kind of flexibility for volunteer firefighters. But there are situations sometimes where you'll get a bad egg in the crowd, and then we have to take a look at this possible legislation.

One thing, though, Madam Speaker, that I believe in is the goodness of Albertans and the ability for us to be able to work together collaboratively to come up with a common-sense solution. The nice thing that we've seen . . .

5:00

The Deputy Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt, hon. member, but the time allotted for that portion of business has now elapsed.

Motions Other than Government Motions

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Mountain Pine Beetle

506. Ms Sweet moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to work with municipal and federal government counterparts to address the impact of the mountain pine beetle on our national parks and tourism and forestry industries.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to rise today and speak to Motion 506. As you know, life in many parts of our beautiful province revolves around forests. Many industries depend on our forests, from tourism and recreation to the forest product industries. Mountain pine beetle is a serious threat to our forests, affecting a quarter of Alberta's pine forest, with the most severe concentration being in the west-central pine belt. The mountain pine beetle is threatening our economy and our environment. If left unmanaged, mountain pine beetle populations could kill large amounts of Alberta's pine resources, up to 6 million hectares of pine valued at more than \$8 billion. This would have a large impact on the forestry industry. Of 25 major forestry companies operating in Alberta, 14 rely on pine to continue operations. Infestation also threatens watershed health, fish and wildlife habitats.

Since 2006 the province has controlled the mountain pine beetle spread by cutting down and burning more than 1.5 million infested trees. Mountain pine beetle infestation is also controlled through a number of best practices such as timber harvesting and prescribed fire. We know that without aggressive control, an estimated additional 564 million trees would be infested and killed.

Our government is committed to minimizing the spread of the beetle north and south and preventing them from spreading further east. Removing infested trees is the most important tool to control the spread. Another strategy is to have the forest industry harvest susceptible pine stands in order to decrease the spread in the long term. Our government is taking this fight seriously. Last year alone the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry allocated more than \$25 million to manage the infestation and impact of the beetle.

A main area of concern is the Hinton and Edson area, where mountain pine beetles from Jasper national park are moving to Alberta's forests in great numbers. Of the approximate 95,000 infested trees being controlled this past winter, more than half are in the Hinton area. The Jasper park area has also created increased safety concerns not only for the residents of Jasper but also for those who visit the park. Due to the damage caused by the mountain pine beetle, many of the trees in the national park have died and are now standing matchsticks. We have seen over the past few years the devastation and safety risks that are associated with forest fires, and Jasper national park is the epicentre of the most potential wildfires.

Due to this, our government has provided significant funding for the mountain pine beetle related to research and to impacting municipalities. We provided \$500,000 for mountain pine beetle related research in 2017-2018, and in April our government announced it would be investing \$600,000 to communities across the eastern slopes to combat mountain pine beetle. Our government also has an agreement in place with Saskatchewan to help prevent the spread to other parts of Canada. Alberta is the main front in preventing the spread eastward.

The huge problem of the mountain pine beetle can only be combated by working together and working co-operatively hand in hand. I've heard from groups like the Alberta Forest Products Association and the mountain pine beetle advisory group in Hinton and the municipalities, and they are saying that more work is needed

to contain the spread in our national parks. We need to know more about how the spread can be slowed down. We need a thorough assessment as to how much damage has already been done.

The federal government must look closely at their management of the mountain pine beetle, especially in our provincial national parks, not only to ensure the park can continue to be accessed for generations to come but to also address the safety concerns of the residents that live and visit these areas. I know that Alberta mayors from the affected areas and provincial ministers have sent letters to the federal government in support of our government's ask for this assistance. I know that the Hinton chamber of commerce developed a new policy resolution on the mountain pine beetle that has since been adopted by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce.

One of the key pieces of this policy is a request that the federal government reinstate the federal mountain pine beetle program with funds equivalent to the scale of \$200 million. Funds for such a program would support provinces like Alberta that are already infested with the mountain pine beetle and provide resources for communities and economic diversification and resiliency to communities that are affected by the mountain pine beetle. The policy highlights that federal involvement is needed to support national mitigation plans, community safety initiatives due to the higher risk of wildfires, and of course research and education initiatives.

Simply put, Alberta needs assistance from the federal government to support the good work we are already doing on this front. Since 2004 Alberta has invested nearly a half a billion dollars in order to control this pest, and I know, for example, that the town of Hinton has dedicated efforts to this fight as well. I also know that the Member for West Yellowhead has been a great advocate for this issue and his constituents' needs in this respect. He has been working with municipalities and industry on this issue for a long time.

Earlier this year the province provided Yellowhead county and Hinton with funding to control, suppress, and eradicate the mountain pine beetle on municipal and private lands. The funds are part of the mountain pine beetle municipal grant funding program, which helps Alberta communities minimize the spread of the mountain pine beetle infestation in their areas. Clearly, Alberta has done its part for quite some time. We now need collaboration from our federal counterparts to effectively combat the spread of the mountain pine beetle and the devastation it's caused. Co-operation is essential if we're going to create an effective strategy regarding the mountain pine beetle. Together is the only way we'll win this battle.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Mr. Rosendahl: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to be able to stand up and support this motion. As you know, life in many parts of the province revolves around forestry, and the industries depend on our forests for tourism opportunities and, of course, recreation opportunities and the forest product industries. We talk about the industries, for example, in West Yellowhead. Edson has three forest companies operating. Hinton has one, one pulp mill as well. Grande Cache: one forestry company. We also have a forest contractor working in Jasper national park working on the removal of pine trees and stuff, plus the park has said that they were going to be dealing with Whistlers campground, as I spoke of before under Bill 8.

The thing is that a strong, sustainable forestry sector is very important to our provincial economy, and it's important that we continue to work and deal with this issue with the mountain pine

beetle. When we look at the issue we see that was coming to us from B.C., it followed the highway 16 corridor, and it started west of Jasper national park. It gradually worked its way into the park, and now it's beyond. We saw how it was affecting the area, so a whole bunch of us decided that we needed to have a better say and input, so that's why we ended up putting together the pine beetle committee. It's made up by local mayors, towns and county, Jasper federal park, forestry workers, forestry companies, the Chamber of Commerce, firefighters, governments, Agriculture and Forestry, plus the federal member of Parliament was involved. Of course, my office was involved along with FRI Research, which is operated out of the Hinton Training Centre.

It's very important that we support the operation of this committee because they were dealing with the fact that we'd know that this could affect us going forward. The thing is, too, that what we need to realize is that it's not only the forestry sector that could be affected by this; I had mentioned earlier the issue of tourism. We look at the federal park: of course, the tourism that goes to that park every year is huge.

We were fortunate of the fact – not that it's a good thing, but when I talked to the chamber of commerce, they said: well, the smoke that we're getting this summer is actually hiding the view, but it's also hiding the red trees. He said: well, it might be a good thing, but what are we going to do going forward with that? It certainly is an issue that is a problem.

5:10

When we look at the whole issue of the committee mandate, when we got going with the committee, the mandate was pretty clear: we're continuing to ensure a thoughtful and sustainable approach to forest management that balances the economic, social, and environmental needs of Albertans and our communities. This, in fact, was a large part of why we put the committee together, that we needed to deal with that in that context.

The other part of it was that we needed to develop emergency procedures. We all knew full well what had happened in other areas in B.C. and of course, like I'd mentioned under Bill 8, the smoke and everything that we're dealing with in our communities. We were looking at those issues. We needed to make sure that we have an emergency plan in place in the event that that should happen.

We tried to urge the federal government to help us throughout this whole process and, of course, it was an issue that they really didn't step up to the plate. They still haven't. We've got to continue to put pressure on them to fully understand the scope of the problem that we have, what is happening in West Yellowhead in particular and the devastation that we're looking at. A lot of people would be shocked about what's going on there. When we look at some of the destruction, the area affected is, say, an 11,000-square kilometre park and is approximately doubling each year. That's how badly it's spread.

The resource conservation manager with Jasper national park, Dave Argument, said in an interview: sections of the forest have turned red as larvae feed on the phloem in the tree trunks and kill them. About 93,000 hectares of the park, 200,000 hectares of pine forest, were affected in the federal agency's most recent survey. Well, I'll bet you the survey this year is going to be even more devastating. And where has the federal government been all this time? Nowhere. They haven't been there. They haven't done anything, really, to really account for and try to prevent the beetles' spread from the park, leaving the park and coming into our area in Edson, Hinton.

In 2017 the beetles that came out of the park literally rained in our community. That's how bad it was. Disgusting. The fact is that the federal park didn't do anything, failed to recognize that it was a

problem, didn't put in any ask for federal money to help deal with it there, which they could have, but they didn't. Now, you look at the mess that we've got in the Edson, Hinton area. It is huge. I don't know what the survey this year has produced, but early indications are that it's not good.

An epidemic of pine beetles moved in from British Columbia. Like I said, their survival in higher elevations: they never thought that they would survive up near the treeline. They figured that, no, it would stay in the lower valleys. Well, no, they were mistaken because it's red as high up to the treeline as you can find. The survival rate in the higher elevations around Jasper is enabled by warmer winters resulting from climate change. Climate change is real. The pine beetle is a result of climate change, whether you choose to ignore it or not. That's why we haven't got cold enough winters to keep them in check.

The past practice of extinguishing wildfires in the park has allowed the forest to become denser and older, accelerating the beetle's spread. Of course, that's pretty evident. Researchers now believe that forest fires should be allowed to burn except where lives or property are threatened.

The pine beetle infestation has moved beyond the national park's eastern borders into forest near Hinton, Edson, northern Alberta, and the Lac La Biche area. The beetle had never been seen in these areas before 2006. Caroline Whitehouse, the health specialist with Alberta Agricultural and Forestry, said that the spread could affect 14 logging companies that harvest pine in Alberta. That's huge. It's going to be a huge impact on our economy, on those communities and workers.

The elevated fire risk. I already talked about that, like I said, when I discussed the issue about Bill 8 and the impending issue that can happen. I was driving in from Hinton last night and people were flicking cigarettes . . .

The Deputy Speaker: I'll recognize the hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak in favour of the motion and wish to echo the remarks of my colleagues, the members for Edmonton-Manning and West Yellowhead. The mountain pine beetle remains a serious threat to Alberta's forests, and the province takes the threat seriously. To date Alberta has devoted more than \$500 million to the pine beetle fight, but populations continue to spread across the province. Many Albertans depend on our forests for their livelihoods but also for recreational opportunities. Forestry supports thousands of jobs in scores of communities, and our forests are home to a diverse flora and fauna, which are tremendously important in their own right.

The uncontrolled outbreak occurring in Jasper national park is significantly affecting Alberta's pine forests. Early indications are that this year a broader dispersal of the pests occurred into the Rocky Mountain House and Brazeau regions as well. More information is being gathered to determine the extent and the severity of the dispersal. We're continuing our aggressive survey and control activities. We'll be analyzing the findings and directing our resources this winter to areas where we can have the greatest effect in terms of limiting further spread and mitigating impacts to Alberta's forest resource and the values it provides.

Surveys show that the pine beetle pest levels have increased in the Hinton-Edson area. For this area our tactic is to divide the forest into two zones, the leading-edge zone and the inactive holding zone. The leading-edge zone is the priority. Infestations within this zone are generally widely scattered and small. Due to the potential for further spread, control of beetle-infested trees in this zone is critical to slow or stop the spread along the eastern slopes and eastward

throughout the boreal forest. Our goal in the leading-edge zone is to treat 80 per cent or more of the sites that pose a risk of spread. This year, Madam Speaker, we've devoted about \$25 million to pine beetle management, which has helped control about 103,000 trees this year. This is similar to last year. About 70 per cent of the survey and control work will be located within the Edson forest area. As we develop our survey and control plans, we will continue to co-ordinate with forest industry plans to achieve the greatest impact possible with our control program.

As government we make decisions on how best to protect our forests. Forest management is complex and dynamic. We seek to find balance amidst the diverse economic, ecological, and social values Albertans place on the forests. For example, pine beetles tend to propagate in mature pine stands, Madam Speaker, the same pine stands that are favoured by caribou, one of the many iconic species at home in the boreal forest. Under the federal Species at Risk Act we're obligated to show how forest management can continue to self-sustain caribou populations. The motion calls on the government, with municipal and federal government counterparts, to address impact of the mountain pine beetle. We have a close working relationship with municipal governments in the affected areas. We're actively involved with the mountain pine beetle working group with municipal and federal representatives. The Member for West Yellowhead is on that working group.

5:20

My department staff is in close contact with municipal governments to address community safety through our FireSmart program, which offers an array of tools to help communities manage the forest and how it interacts with the community. For example, the program helps reduce the amount of fuel that occurs when trees are killed by the pest. In Jasper the program is being used to remove dead and dying trees in the Whistlers campground and on Pyramid Bench. This is being co-ordinated by the federal government through Parks Canada.

As part of our overall strategy we have made a formal request to the government of Canada for \$20 million per year over the next five years to enable an expansion of control activities and undertake important research. I have made this request directly to my federal counterpart. I know that many of our forestry and community stakeholders have reinforced the importance of this request as part of the province's overall strategy.

I would be remiss if I didn't thank the people and government of Saskatchewan for agreeing that there's an urgent need to suppress these infestations in order to prevent or minimize further loss and degradation of forests in both provinces. Both provinces recognize the threat of the beetle on our forests and have agreed to work together to minimize it. Since 2011 Saskatchewan has contributed more than 5 and a half million dollars to help reduce the threat.

In closing, I'd like to thank the Member for Edmonton-Manning for introducing this motion. Healthy forests require co-operation between orders of government, which this motion recognizes. I'd also like to thank the Member for West Yellowhead for his continued advocacy for his constituents and all those living and working in forestry towns and to the members who have participated in today's important debate.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise to speak to Motion 506, introduced by the Member for Edmonton-Manning. I know this member has always supported the forest industry. She always comes to the AFPA, or

the Alberta Forest Products Association, in Jasper. Interestingly, it's in Jasper, so we can see every year the advancement of the pine beetle over there.

Madam Speaker, I'm a bit alarmed that this motion is before us today. This is not to suggest anything against the member who has brought it forward. She is doing due diligence. The mountain pine beetle is a devastating pest that has been attacking Alberta's forests at a distressing rate for a decade. What is alarming is that a member of a government needs to push her own government to take action on this growing crisis. This motion asks the Legislative Assembly to "urge the government to work with municipal and federal government counterparts to address the impact of the mountain pine beetle on our national parks and tourism and forestry industries."

Madam Speaker, the mountain pine beetle has been a terrible threat to Alberta and all of Canada's pine forests since it began turning the mountains of British Columbia red in the late 1990s. The thinking at the time was that the Rocky Mountains were an insurmountable barrier for the beetles. But 12 years ago they started flying into northern Alberta, and they've continued trying to entrench their populations here ever since.

Up in my area of Grande Prairie-Wapiti our forestry companies have been proactive. They monitored for the beetle, removed hot spots of infested stands, and they've managed to contain it.

The government of the day developed a strong and effective mountain pine beetle action plan to provide a co-ordinated regional approach to controlling the infestation. This important work was being performed on behalf of Alberta's forests but also Canada's because if the infestation destroys the pine in northern Alberta, they would go looking for more trees, and that would take them into the boreal forest that arches across our province and right across Canada. Because these beetles threaten our nation's forestry sector as a whole, the provincial government of the day lobbied the federal government to assist with funding for the fight and placed particular emphasis on controlling any infestation in its national parks located in Alberta.

It should not have surprised either level of government when Jasper's trees started turning the telltale reddish orange colour a few years ago, but our provincial government is acting surprised, which, I suppose, is the reason for this motion. Our provincial NDP government and the federal Liberal government should have been working hard all along to be proactive about the beetles' inevitable march east. Because their lack of action is such a large oversight on the part of our provincial government, I thank the member for bringing this motion forward. I'm sorry, not for myself but for the communities and the industries being devastated by this ferocious beetle, that it has taken this government three and a half years to figure out that the insect is a terrible threat.

Everyone along the foothills from Pincher Creek north to Hinton and Hythe and Rainbow Lake have known it for over a decade. Yet what did our provincial government do? Last year it actually cut the budget for the mountain pine beetle control program. You don't have to believe me. Let me quote from the mountain pine beetle action plan for the central and Foothills mountain pine beetle planning regions. "In 2017-18, the GoA allocated \$25 million to MPB control programs across the province, down from \$35 million" the year before.

You get the picture. In the midst of a continuing crisis, one that the former government and industry have been proactive on for years, our current government cut funding. This is at a time when the beetles had moved into Jasper national park and were showing up in the foothills outside the park, namely the Hinton area. When the beetles arrived in the national park, it was critical that the province turn its attention there and be proactive. Let up our guard for one moment or three and a half years, and all could be lost. I

feel terrible for the people of Hinton and Edson that this tide of beetles is coming down upon them. But I've seen the effectiveness of the proactive measures in the Grande Prairie area. I know they can be effective. You cannot just sit back, however, and jump in and save the day once they have a hold on the forest. That's why Jasper is in such dire shape now. The federal government announced funding to cut thousands of trees around the Jasper townsites just a short time ago. Until then it ignored the problem, and now it's not if there's a fire in Jasper; it's when.

Of everything I've seen over the past three and a half years with this current government and its mixed-up priorities, this one perhaps baffles me the most. All it had to do was continue the good work that was started by the previous government in concert with the forest industry. Instead they almost abandoned it, and now even its own members have to provide it with direction through the Legislative Assembly to do the right thing. For that reason, I will support this motion, which shouldn't have been necessary. Let's hope it hasn't come too late.

In my area years ago I flew with the government of Alberta. They had forestry people and the industry in the area, and they would spot pine beetles in the helicopter. You could see little infestations. They would go in as a company and remove them and control them. I remember flying. There's nothing worse than flying in a helicopter with a bunch of foresters and one says, "Look down here," and the other one says, "There," and the helicopter pilot is flopping from one side to the other. I told him that he'd better fly straight or he'd have a mess to clean up.

I know they've been working hard at it over the years. I know it's not the provincial government; it's the federal government that needs to do something, and I know the province has to keep pushing them. Jasper is a gem in our province for tourism, but if we burn the thing black, it's not going to be that much of a gem, I have to say. Last year we saw what happened in B.C. after all the pine beetle trees get so old and so dry. It's just like Mother Nature's kindling waiting for a spark, and once it starts, you can't stop it. I'm really worried about the Hinton and Edson forest and their forest companies.

Once again, I'd like to thank the Member for Edmonton-Manning for bringing it forward. I'll be supporting this motion, and I encourage everyone in the House to do so as well. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

5:30

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thanks very much, Madam Speaker. I, too, am pleased to hear about this motion on the devastation, that needs to be addressed in a more active fashion. Again, I am a bit surprised that it has to come from a member when this is the job of government. But that having been said, anything we can do to increase the public support, the government support, the pressure on the federal government is a recognition that this is a very sophisticated attack that has resisted all efforts across the country, across the continent at control. It's part of, you know, the ongoing challenge that we have with organisms, whether it's in the health care system or it's in the natural environment. It's going to require some real vision and leadership.

I'm familiar, in the southern part of the province and the eastern slopes, with the spruce budworm infestation and how much damage that has brought to the eastern foothills in the spruce population. It's devastated a lot of the southern eastern slopes all the way, in fact, to Saskatchewan, across the prairies, and we haven't managed to make much of a dent there either.

I guess I have a question for the minister on the extent to which our planning includes a replanting, a reforestation with resistant populations. To what extent are we simply trying to control a pest which appears not to be controllable given the climatic changes and the lack of armaments that we have to destroy the beetle in its various stages? I would hope that there's an active replanting process going on to develop the undergrowth and to maintain the living systems that will resist not only that particular pest but also, as I mentioned, the spruce budworm, which is out of control in the southwest of this province.

What is being done to ensure that we have resistant plants, trees, other species going in there that will take over for what is seriously going to affect not only the eastern slopes and the parks but also our water supply and, as the member has mentioned, the fire risk? It's going to affect our tourism. It's going to affect, certainly, the recreation opportunities for our population. It has pretty widespread impacts. Focusing on the beetle is one thing, but focusing on the next generation of plants and regeneration that has to happen and whether it's well planned and well implemented: that is the question. Reacting to this devastating thing has shown itself to be relatively simply slowing its spread. It's a relatively ineffective approach to actually stopping and containing it. We need to have a plan B to regenerate and restore new forests and new opportunities both for the industry and for water protection on our eastern slopes and for fire protection.

I don't know if the minister is able to speak to that, but I'd be very interested to know if that's happening as well.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the motion? The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's always a privilege to stand in this House and speak, and today is, of course, no exception as we speak to the private member's motion by Edmonton-Manning. It reads:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to work with municipal and federal government counterparts to address the impact of the mountain pine beetle on our national parks and tourism and forestry industries.

Now, as my colleague said, I'm not sure where this comes from, but as an opposition member and the shadow minister of forestry I'm happy to stand and support this motion. I will have no problem whatsoever supporting this private member's motion. What we have seen in Alberta in recent years is a prolific influx of the mountain pine beetle. In 2006 and 2009 significant in-flights of mountain pine beetles in Alberta occurred. These particular influxes of this nasty pest resulted in mountain pine beetle infestations getting into parts of northern Alberta that had never seen this insect before. I think that we all remember that in the years prior to 2006 we were told by I guess they would be called experts at the time that the spreading of the mountain pine beetle from British Columbia to Alberta over our famous Rocky Mountains would never occur. Those same experts also believed that Alberta's colder climate, certainly northern Alberta's colder climate, would not be suitable for habitation by the mountain pine beetle. Clearly, the experts of the day were absolutely and, unfortunately, misinformed or incorrect.

But it's always prudent, I think, to consider facts when we talk about these kinds of topics, so here's a fact. The mountain pine beetle has destroyed essentially 40 per cent of the British Columbia forests. It's dead and it's dying wood. The forests destroyed in British Columbia by this pest are at the root of the creation of wildfire threats in that province. British Columbia's mixed forests are made up of approximately 40 per cent pine. The rest is about 50

per cent spruce and 10 per cent fir. This is all just pretty close, nothing too terribly nailed down here, but I would expect that there's probably some balsam thrown in there somewhere as well. But the point is that 70 per cent of B.C.'s pine, which, remember, makes up 40 per cent of their entire forest, has been destroyed by this beetle. This is a problem of monstrous proportions for British Columbia and, in my humble opinion, has not been handled appropriately in order to keep this pest in check.

Now it's moved into Alberta, and we're seeing a whole lot of our own grief being created by this mountain pine beetle. Now, this small, little creature remains a very serious threat to the health of Alberta's forests. As we have seen in B.C., infestations threaten social, economic, and environmental values. Infestations cause older wood to dry up. At that point the canopy closes, and the trees lose the lower branches that aren't getting sunlight anymore, which, in turn, creates an excellent propellant for potential fires. Let us not forget that dying or dead trees no longer absorb carbon; they actually emit carbon. Their usefulness in the big picture of a forest is nonexistent. Elimination of trees that are of this calibre and trees that are affected by the mountain pine beetle in conjunction with replanting at an unprecedented effort is about the only way to make a forest healthier, to make mountain parks' forests healthier.

If we look in our own backyard, one of the reasons for the Fort McMurray fire was that we had all this old and dying wood. Now, forests naturally want to try and regenerate themselves, but in the instance of the Fort McMurray fire the wood was, once again, old. The canopy above was all green while trying to regenerate, but the wood below it was dried out, once again creating lots of fuel for a fire to get out of control.

In B.C. the pine beetle problem started in overprotected forests, where the trees were allowed to become, once again, old and weak. It's become clear that in order to protect forests and protect communities within forests and protect human life, it's very important that forests are not allowed to get quite to that stage. It's been suggested by some experts in the field that Alberta should take control of its forests and set aside areas that have older wood that is nonproductive, of little ecological value, and starting to absorb less carbon. The idea would be to harvest those areas, then use seasonal workers such as students, for instance, to increase the amount of timber areas through planting seedlings. A sustainable forest actually needs to have more trees that are being grown than are being cut down.

It is imperative that the province of Alberta continue to develop a coherent and cohesive strategy to combat the spread of mountain pine beetle, including co-operative efforts with other levels of government. Now, this intergovernmental co-operation must be a critical part of any strategy of Alberta's, particularly when it comes to the federal government and Jasper national park. Now, we know that Alberta has had an action plan to fight the oncoming effect of the mountain beetle since 2010, but clearly a plan such as this does not appear to be able to exist on a basis that is independent of efforts that need to be taken with national parks.

5:40

I hope we all know that mountain pine beetles have not yet and never will be constrained by boundaries between federal and provincial jurisdictions. Pine beetles care little about those borders. A question I would have of most people in this building is: when was the last time they drove through Jasper national park? The majestic pine trees, that make up a huge portion of that area, have been affected and infected by the mountain pine beetle by a percentage of about 50. The fact is that the area affected by the beetle is nearly doubling each year according to resource conservationists, and if you have driven through the park recently,

you cannot help but notice the affected areas, that have turned an unnatural bright red. As the members have spoken about here this afternoon, that has spread now into the Edson area.

Practices in the past with this national park have been to extinguish fires, which, as I mentioned earlier, have allowed the forests to become more dense, become older, become weaker, which has allowed the quicker spread of the pine beetle. Before humans of any consequence were here, lightning strikes would start wildfires in forests, and they would just burn up that old wood. Like it or not, it was nature's way of invigorating and rejuvenating its forests.

Just as a quick aside here, current forestry management practices do their best to mimic what forest fires used to do. What these current harvesting methods result in is a forestry area that more closely resembles what a landscape would look like after a fire. A common misconception is that the current practices remove all of the trees when, in fact, many retention areas are left. This also allows for better regrowth of the forest.

It needs to be noted that it is the law in Alberta that harvesting be done in a sustainable manner. Forest companies collect comprehensive data on how trees grow and inventory plant and animal life within that forest. All this data is used to determine how much can be harvested sustainably. Now, I recognize that sustainable harvesting can mean different things to different people, but to a forest company it means ensuring that more trees are being grown than are being cut down. It also means maintaining harvest levels in order to create jobs and sustain forest communities. Sustainable harvesting also takes into account maintaining wildlife habitat, air quality, and soil quality.

As we speak here, infestations of mountain pine beetle in Alberta exist within the central and foothills planning regions. However, without improved efforts for containment, other regions throughout our province could be at risk in the near future. More and more it appears that we simply cannot treat this issue as a provincial problem. Because of improper actions in British Columbia and in our national parks with regard to control practices of this mountain pine beetle, Alberta is now experiencing the pine beetle issue, that clearly transcends borders.

This issue is a national problem, and it needs a national strategy, and the need is now. If the pine beetle issue continues unabated and reaches into Saskatchewan, it could be one of the more devastating natural disasters that we have known. This is a good reason why Saskatchewan actually has chosen to contribute money to Alberta to fight the good fight for this problem.

As I wrap up this speech, I encourage all members of the Legislature to consider seriously the effects of the mountain pine beetle on Alberta's forests. I also encourage all members of this House to support this motion wholeheartedly. Our forests are in trouble, and this is a start to a very large task ahead of us. If this motion is passed, then it is critical that this government make this motion of this Legislature to be more than symbolic.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the motion? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I just wanted to take a few minutes to speak on this motion. Right at the start I guess I find it a little odd that we're here to do what it says here, which is to "urge the government to work with municipal and federal government counterparts to address the impact of . . . pine beetle on our national parks and tourism and forestry industries."

I guess I'm curious. We know that the government has been spending anywhere from \$25 million to \$35 million the last couple of years working on this issue. I'm a little curious as to why, with

that much money being spent on it, the government isn't already working with municipal and federal governments. It doesn't appear, based on the motion, that there are any problems with the federal and municipal governments because otherwise we'd be urging them to deal with the provincial government. Obviously, I would think that the provincial government should be working with their counterparts already on this issue.

It does seem to be a bit of a strange thing that we're here talking about this today, but obviously it's good. The pine beetles, of course, don't know the boundaries of national parks or federal boundaries, municipal boundaries, anything like that. They go where they want to go, and this needs to be taken care of in a bigger scheme of things than just the province working on it alone. Like I say, I find it odd that the province would be working on this alone, but if that's the case, then I guess that would make this motion very, very important to deal with at this time.

You know, there are different things, I guess, with the national parks. Of course, they've been suppressing fires for years, and they obviously don't have clear-cutting there. Obviously, that's a prime area for the pine beetle to be working on, and we see the devastating effects in the national parks. Obviously, those are an important part of Alberta, the national parks, as far as tourism and that sort of thing. It's a beautiful part of Alberta, and to see the pine beetle devastating the forest there is not good, for sure.

You know, I'll be voting in favour of this motion. Hopefully, that gets the government working on what it should have been working on for years, which is working with the municipal and federal governments to address the impacts of the pine beetle.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the motion?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning to close debate.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you to all members of the House for your comments in regard to this motion. I just wanted to clarify a few things. I have been working closely with the Alberta forestry producers associations, and one of the things that they have been saying whenever they see me is, of course: what is a city dweller so worried about trees for? So I just wanted to give a little bit of history about my background.

I actually grew up in a forestry community. The community that I grew up in was either forestry or fishing, so I spent a lot of time either on the water or in, you know, the forest, camping and doing different things like that. Because of that I recognize the contributions that our different forestry companies contribute to their communities. Without the forestry company that supported the community that I came from, we wouldn't have had fundraisers for our high school graduations because they always donated cords of wood so that we could sell the cords for people's fireplaces. They developed ecological systems that we could use to go camping or to go hiking or to do different things like that. So forestry has always been something that I've had a strong passion about.

Because of that, even though I live in Edmonton, I'm in Jasper in the winter a couple of times, and then in the summer my husband and I are out camping and hiking and doing different things as often as I possibly can within this position, to the point where every time we drive to Jasper, my husband says, "Yes, Heather, I know; there are pine beetles," because I'm always commenting on how green it was the last time we were here versus how red it is now. So this is a passion of mine.

I think part of the importance for me to have this motion brought forward is not only the fact that there's obviously a disconnect between what is happening in the national park and what is moving into the provincial area but that I really wanted to support the government and the minister and the party that I belong to, the government side, to really put some pressure on the federal government. I recognize that we've been doing the work that we need to do within the provincial context. We've been working with municipalities. The hon. colleague from West Yellowhead has been doing great work around that.

But the reality of it is that the federal government needs to step up and they need to come up with a plan. There are areas – Jasper we've specifically focused on, but, I mean, it's moving down into the corridor or into Banff. It's around Rocky Mountain House, down the David Thompson highway. There are lots of different areas within the province that are being impacted that, without the support of the federal government, will continue to spread. We have seen them provide money for other worms and bugs in the east specific to preventing the spread to some of the trees that are impacted in Ontario, so now it's time for them to do the same work here in Alberta.

5:50

I appreciate what the minister has done in his advocacy and his work, but I do recognize that there are groups within this province that have written letters to the federal government asking them to step up and put money towards this issue. For me this was my way of supporting the minister to do the work that he needs to do but also supporting our constituents in Alberta around something that I think is extremely important to many Albertans.

So I would encourage all of our colleagues in the House to please support the motion. Thank you very much.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 506 carried]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I won't say that it's been an afternoon spent particularly productively, but it has been an afternoon spent. In particular, you know, I'd like to congratulate the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning for her motion, which I think was very useful.

With that, I move that we call it 6 o'clock and adjourn until 10 o'clock tomorrow morning.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:51 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday morning, November 6, 2018

Day 46

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

10 a.m.

Tuesday, November 6, 2018

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Deputy Speaker: Good morning.

Let us reflect. Hon. members, this is Veterans' Week, a time to remember the ultimate sacrifice paid by so many to give us the freedom to enjoy and exert our democratic rights, and as our neighbours south of the border head to the polls today, let's take a moment to reflect on the democratic system that brings us here to this Chamber and allows us to represent our constituents from all parts of Alberta.

Please be seated.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 24

An Act to Recognize AMA Representation Rights

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to move on behalf of the Minister of Health second reading of Bill 24, An Act to Recognize AMA Representation Rights.

Madam Speaker, physicians are a critical part of Alberta's health care system. They provide high-quality patient care, are committed to improving the health and well-being of all Albertans, and are leaders in keeping the health system sustainable in the long term. The proposed legislation recognizes the Alberta Medical Association as the representative for physicians who are authorized to practise in Alberta and provide publicly funded physician services. Proposed amendments would formalize the government's long-standing practice of working directly with the AMA on matters of physician compensation and physician programs. The amendments would also give physicians and the Alberta Medical Association clarity about their working relationship with government and Alberta Health Services.

We are proposing amendments to two pieces of legislation in the bill before us today, the Alberta Health Care Insurance Act and the Regional Health Authorities Act. Amendments to the Alberta Health Care Insurance Act would mean that when government consults on the rates of compensation for Alberta's physicians, the AMA will be the exclusive representative of physicians. Proposed amendments will also make the AMA the nonexclusive representative for physicians on other health-related matters that touch and concern physicians such as team-based care or how best to use information technology within the health care system. Making the AMA a nonexclusive representative for physicians means that government may speak to other stakeholders besides the AMA about these matters.

Through amendments to the Regional Health Authorities Act Alberta Health Services will recognize the AMA as the exclusive representative for negotiating certain service agreements with groups of physicians. The proposed legislation doesn't change existing processes between government and the AMA and doesn't give the AMA new powers or abilities. General representation rights have largely been within the current AMA agreement since at least 2003 but will now be enshrined in legislation. Alberta

Health Services has recognized the Alberta Medical Association's representation rights under contract since 2016, but now through amendments in Bill 24 they will be enshrined in legislation, and the scope will be expanded.

Madam Speaker, we are very fortunate to have some of the most talented doctors in North America here in Alberta, and I have had the pleasure of working with many of them, people like Dr. Garnette Sutherland, a neurosurgeon who was awarded the Order of Canada for his outstanding contribution to neurosurgery and was inducted into the Space Technology Hall of Fame for his role in developing an image-guided neurosurgical robot called neuroArm. Dr. Sutherland and I used to try to one-up each other on who had the best evidence on surgical site preparation in order to avoid postoperative wound infection, and it was truly an honour to work with such a brilliant yet humble doctor.

I'd like to use a bit of an analogy on why I'm supporting Bill 24 and why I sought to be a cosponsor of this legislation. By way of explanation, one of the roles for nurses in the operating room, where I used to work, is to be a scrub nurse. The scrub nurse sets up the sterile instruments and hands them back and forth to the sterile field. Scrub nurses sometimes set up two gigantic tables' worth of instruments, very complicated instruments that can be stacked on top of one another. The scrub nurse has to know each and every instrument and how they're used. Since the scrub nurse knows these procedures so well, they'll often be ready to hand the next instrument before the surgeon even asks for it because the scrub nurse is observant, knows what's going on, and can anticipate the next move.

But from time to time a surgeon will sometimes accidentally ask for a different instrument than what the nurse is about to hand them. In reality, the nurse is actually handing them the correct instrument, but they've asked for something different. So sometimes there are these moments of levity, where the surgeon will make a bit of a quip. They'll say: give me what I want, not what I ask for. It's kind of a funny situation in surgery if you can imagine such a thing. But in the case of Bill 24, Madam Speaker, our government is giving doctors what they want and what they ask for. So here we're satisfying the physicians in terms of the things that they've been asking for and the things that they want.

I've been proud to work alongside doctors for much of my clinical career, and I'd like to thank the Alberta Medical Association and all the physicians for working collaboratively with the government to meet Albertans' health care needs and for helping to create a health care system that is the best it can be. This legislation was a commitment the government made as part of the recent agreement with doctors, and now we're fulfilling that commitment.

I'd like to encourage all Members of the Legislative Assembly to support second reading of Bill 24, and I look forward to debating this bill with my hon. colleagues in the days to come. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is an honour to rise today to speak to Bill 24, An Act to Recognize AMA Representation Rights. The bill looks relatively harmless at a glance, but we need to be reading in between the lines. I believe that we should be referring this bill to committee for further study so that we have time for consultation with more stakeholders. Certainly, I don't have the benefit that you guys do of knowing about these bills ahead of time. I'm still trying to reach out to the AMA, to the college, to all the other affected parties just to get their feedback on these things, so certainly more time would be appreciated.

Now, Madam Speaker, 89 per cent of voting members ratified the agreement that led to the creation of this bill, and those numbers are great. But what they forgot to mention is that only 30 per cent of all AMA members actually voted. Now, you might think that that was an election in Fort McMurray, but it was not. That's within the college. But those numbers aren't great. The legislation is entrenching the Alberta Medical Association as the exclusive representative for physicians in all compensation or benefit matters, and I feel that more than 30 per cent of members should be weighing in on this very impactful agreement. All doctors will have to settle with the agreement that is negotiated by the government and the AMA. Therefore, anyone who has not had a chance to voice his or her opinion, whether in favour of the agreement or against: they need to be heard.

That brings me to my next issue, Madam Speaker. Why do physicians have the right to opt out of the AMA, but they have to accept the terms agreed upon regarding salary? What is the point of allowing physicians to opt out? Why are physicians unable to choose who they want to represent them or to simply represent themselves? As we know, this government does not allow any form of free speech amongst its ranks, but that does not mean that they must enforce that on our health care providers.

Now, do not get me wrong, Madam Speaker. I believe the AMA does great work representing physicians. They make sure that physicians are advocated for and ensure that the highest standard of care is being administered across the province. But they should not be the exclusive bargaining power. We live in a western democracy, and we deserve freedom of association.

While I was grateful to see that existing contracts would be respected, I'm still troubled by the exclusive rights this bill is giving the AMA. This bill essentially creates a superunion for physicians. It's creating a large negotiating power that will be putting pressure on the government. While it will not be recognized as a union, it will be able to use some of the same tactics. As we know, unions are excellent at bargaining for higher wages for their members. At a time of attempted fiscal restraint in health care we have to be cautious of the powers that we're bestowing on others.

Madam Speaker, \$5.3 billion: that was the number that was allocated for physicians in the latest fiscal budget. Five point three billion dollars. Our physicians already make some of the highest wages in the country. We can't afford a spike in physician compensation, which this bill could lead to.

That said, though, there is one area where I can agree with this government's bill, and that is the fee freeze until 2021. The government has pegged \$98 million in savings in health care costs because of this bill. Great. You do know a little bit of something about fiscal responsibility. Very little, but good on you.

10:10

But what about the long-term costs? How will this bill affect the ability to negotiate in the future? How will this affect our future generations? You guys haven't put that factor into any of your calculations when running up our debt and deficits.

In addition to the AMA pact, recent deals with the United Nurses of Alberta and the Health Sciences Association of Alberta have included two years of pay freezes while a new framework for dentists and pharmacists featured fee decreases. I hope the physicians are looking very closely at what happened to the pharmacists, Madam Speaker. For the pharmacists, with their issues over the last year, when they went to negotiations with the government, they only allowed two of the representatives into the meeting. They had to sign nondisclosure agreements, so they couldn't even share the information about what they signed with their own members. Transparency, accountability: things that this

government lacks. Now the AMA is just going right down that alley, so good luck to them if this is something that they helped create. They should recognize what a nondisclosure agreement is. They should recognize the bargaining tactics of this government and recognize what could happen to them. So they have been warned.

Does this minister plan to take the same steps for all medical practices in Alberta? That's the question. Will all medical professions soon be forced into a negotiation body that they may or may not want to join? What regulations are being hidden that will actually make negotiation with the AMA more expensive down the road? This bill has a lot of unknowns, and we do need some answers, so we're certainly looking to this government, who is trying to demonstrate that they're transparent and accountable, to share information with us so that we can make an educated choice on this bill.

This government continually passes legislation without doing their due diligence, and we will not let that happen again. Consultation: we've been trying to teach it to you for the last three and a half years. You kind of got it in bits and pieces. It depends on what the subject matter is. It depends on what you like and what you don't like.

I'm curious: what stakeholders did this government reach out to? I'd be interested in knowing what the college of physicians, what the nurses, what the other health professions think of this legislation, how it will impact all of them. We need more time to go through this bill, Madam Speaker. As I said, I don't believe the government has done its due diligence in studying the implications of this bill.

That said, I do have questions for the government side. You have teams of staff behind the scenes that can probably come up with a lot of these answers. I guess I would like to know more about the compensation that our physicians receive. I honestly thought that it was because we had one health organization, Alberta Health Services, physicians would more or less get paid consistent fees for all of the services that they provide, much in the way that dentists have their fee schedule and that sort of thing. I would like clarification on how different physicians in what places get paid differently and for what reasons.

I can understand, maybe, physicians in our far northern communities receiving some sort of financial benefit for working in a northern community, but I'd certainly like to know how much. Up in, say, Fort McMurray for many years the common number that was being thrown out by companies, by the municipality, by small businesses as a living allowance for their people was about a thousand dollars, but it did not matter what profession you were in. If you worked for these companies in general, you were getting that, including the hospital and all that.

Again, I'm curious as to: what is the financial disparity between the fees that are charged through our physicians? If there's anyone there – I'm looking at the good doctor. Maybe Edmonton-Whitemud could provide me with some explanations. I'd certainly like to understand that. It would be disappointing to know that a physician was able to negotiate a higher wage or fee for himself at one point. I might give him credit for that, but I'd also wonder about the balance and the fairness if they're all working under the same mandate.

I don't know if you guys remember when I was bringing up some questions about the WCB. You know, I don't know how much you guys are aware of how they use our own physicians. They contract them out, and it's for, like, 800 bucks more for an operation. The doctor I'm speaking with says that, yeah, he goes in there. He hires his team around him. The next time he's working in the OR, he's like: "Hey, guys, I've got a gig this Sunday. It's at Leduc hospital.

It's a minor hip. He's just got some spurs in there that we've got to take out. Any of you guys available?" He talks to his anesthesiologist. The anesthesiologist says, "Yeah, I can do that." A couple of the nurses: "Yeah, sure, we can do that." That's his team, and on Sunday at whatever, 10 o'clock they go in there, an Alberta Health facility, and do a private surgery. It does not compute, does it? I get a lot of blank stares from across the way. It's disappointing. Again, if you guys could provide some clarity on a lot of this, that would be wonderful so that we can see what the different physicians are getting.

An article from the *Edmonton Journal* stated that part of the agreement was to also end the retention program. Previously the program paid physicians between \$5,000 and \$12,000 as an incentive for each year they stayed in the province, and this is where a majority of the savings will be found. It will not be found from the freeze in fee increases but from the cancellation of this program that incentivizes physicians to stay in Alberta. While I'm all about cleaning up our health system, certainly I'm in agreement that a fund like this is unnecessary in this day and age. We can't afford to give extra. These physicians are working in a province and a nation that are beneficial to them and their families. They do not have to worry about certain extraneous things.

For example, my good friend who works for Shell just got transferred to Iraq. He had a choice of Texas or Iraq because Shell, as you guys know – you chased them away – is fleeing Canada. They've got their refinery here, but he had a choice. He got moved from Fort McMurray to Fort St. John, up in B.C., and now they're moving him out of the country. Texas or Iraq, they said. And he figures he had an equal chance of getting shot in either place, but Iraq pays more money, so that's where he's going.

My point is that we aren't under threat here and that any physician that chooses to make Alberta their home will have good schools and good postsecondary institutions. We have a good life. Unfortunately, crime is up, but that's also related to our depressed economy, that you guys put us in. Again, it's an incentive that I don't think we need, so I'm glad to hear that they cut out that incentive. But I am curious if that affects some of our physicians in some of our more rural areas and northern areas – I don't know if those are the ones that are getting a little bit extra – in which case that might be an aspect to consider because we do have to continue to promote good health professionals in our areas where we have more difficulty accessing those health professionals.

I'm pleased to hear that the AMA advocated for rural Alberta, from my understanding. The government often forgets everything outside of Edmonton and Calgary unless it's election time, so it's good to see. Included in the agreement was a rural northern program that provides up to \$60,000 a year to doctors who serve in the small communities as well as a business cost initiative that provides a maximum of \$146 per day to community physicians to help with overhead. Oh, goodness, I answered my own question here. So there is a little bit of an incentive for our rural people. Part of this agreement is great, and I'm glad the AMA did fight for the rural areas. However, I digress.

This bill ultimately creates a large negotiating body under which all other physician unions must negotiate. The minister recognizes the AMA as the exclusive representative regarding physicians' compensation matters, which will include rates of benefit payable for the provision of insured services by a physician and any funding for physician assistants programs. The act does say that Alberta Health Services is not required to recognize the AMA as the exclusive representative of these groups: managerial services, services provided by resident physicians or fellows when acting in that capacity, and any other services or classes of services prescribed by the regulations.

Again, with all the regulations, Madam Speaker, this government has a hidden agenda with this bill. Everything we need to know is in the regulations. Why is the government refusing to share all the information with us? Again I plead with you guys to provide us with some information. If you want us to support this bill, we need more data, more information, more statistics. I'd like to be in on those conversations you have with the physicians to understand all the nuances of it, certainly, but it is completely unacceptable that this government thinks we will let a bill pass without having all the information. We represent all Albertans here. We need to do our due diligence. If we don't support something, it's not because we necessarily disagree with the underlying issue that you wish to address, but we need to make sure that all facets of that bill are figured out so that we can support Albertans in every way. Otherwise, you risk people falling through the cracks one way or another. Some people might benefit; other people might have a detrimental result from it.

10:20

The government also says that this bill will give the AMA new powers. However, this legislation makes the AMA the exclusive representative when governments consult physicians and other health professional unions on compensation and benefits. If they are not given any new powers, why do we need this bill?

There are numerous unknowns in this bill, Madam Speaker, and I do find that troubling. Again, it's about the details. I hope that this government will listen to our concerns and will do the appropriate consultations and research in order to truly understand the possible implications of this bill. While there may be short-term savings from the original agreement struck with the AMA, how does this affect our future negotiations? Could this result in soaring health care costs? We all can agree that we need to rein in and get control of our health care costs. Alberta pays some of the highest rates per capita in the country. Again, our health care rates are substantially more than everywhere else. We're paying approximately 20 per cent more per capita than British Columbia. That does not mean that we're going to cut 20 per cent, let us be clear, but we need to rein some things in. We mustn't be complacent. We must do our due diligence and ensure that Albertans are getting the best possible deal.

My biggest worry: in some other jurisdictions physicians, believe it or not, have actually done strikes. That's the part that greatly concerns me about this empowerment of physicians under the AMA. I'm kind of curious. Heaven forbid a physician strikes. I would call him out on his licence. I seriously would. When we have people that are suffering and in pain and are dealing with debilitating diseases and physical processes, we need our physicians. We rely on them. That is why they get compensated so well, quite honestly. So heaven forbid they take typical Dipper action like a strike. Heaven forbid.

We mustn't be complacent on these things. We need to do our due diligence. We need to ensure that Albertans are getting the best possible deal. We can't afford to make the wrong decision on this bill as the quality of our health care and the health of Albertans are at risk. As I've previously stated, Madam Speaker, we need more time to work through this bill and assess its short-term and long-term implications. There are too many unanswered questions that need to be clarified through consultation and research.

With that, I would ask: certainly, if this government doesn't want to share any of the information that they have – and I look to the nurse across the way; perhaps she can provide me with some insight – ultimately I have to do my own consultations on this. Our team has to do our own consultations, and we're trying to get those consultations done, but it's very hard when you guys don't give us

much time. You don't give us much of a heads-up on what these bills actually are, and that's disappointing. Transparency, accountability: those are the things that you are trying to pride yourselves on, but I recognize that you don't have a big vocabulary and that those aren't in there.

Unfortunately, we can't leave it up to this government. You're going to need our help, so give us some time to do this and, again, provide us with some information. Maybe we can ensure that you have a well-balanced bill that ensures the intent that you guys are trying to get across. Certainly, I'd love to hear from the health professionals across the way, now bureaucrats.

Madam Speaker, I want to thank you so much for this opportunity to speak. It's always a pleasure. I look forward to the debate that we'll have today on this particular bill. I look forward to hearing what the opinions are. If you guys can provide me with any of that information, I'd love to hear it, but I'm guessing not. We shall see.

Thank you so much.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to rise to speak in support of this bill. I have a tremendous respect for our physicians, who work so hard for all of us right across Alberta and provide such an important and integral part of our health care system. You know, as a nurse for many years I worked with them and certainly can speak to working with physicians in rural Alberta. In rural Alberta it's a huge challenge for them. They're there for the entire community. They are on call on a regular basis. It's a small team that works together to ensure coverage of a community, and they have to be everything to their community. There are no specialists in a small town. They can refer out, but they have a tremendously important role to the people within small northern communities in particular and, of course, obviously, throughout every size of program across the province.

You know, I'm really thankful for the conversations we've been able to have with the AMA regarding how we can continue to move forward with a sustainable health care system in the long term for Albertans, and I'm thankful to them for being a valuable partner. Part of that is addressing the fact that, going back to rural Alberta, we have a tremendous shortfall of physicians in northern Alberta and, in fact, in all rural Alberta. All of my colleagues from rural Alberta can definitely speak to that. That shortage is something that we need to work together to address. Certainly, as government we need to do that, but we also need the AMA to be a partner with us in making that happen, in the kind of collaborative conversations that we need to have to come up with the solutions that we need long term to ensure that rural communities have access to the kind of medical care that they need for the health and well-being of their families.

Madam Speaker, you would know that it's a huge issue for the sustainability of our rural communities when we have challenges around physician recruitment. You know, when people can't count on knowing that when they need access to medical care, it will be there, that makes them consider exactly where they want to live. It's an important part of the sustainability of rural Alberta. The kind of collaborative relationship we've been able to develop with the AMA allows us to have the conversations about dealing with this very important issue, so I'm so thankful for the fact that we've been able to get to a position with the AMA to have these conversations and to develop the kind of working relationship we've got.

What we're talking about here, ensuring that the AMA is the representative for physicians, is not a change, Madam Speaker. You know, sometimes legislation gets behind the times, and it's time for

us to update it and reflect what the practice actually is. The practice has been, since at least 2003, that this is the case, that when it comes to talking about physician pay, the AMA is the representative for physicians. It's not a change; it's just putting practice into legislation, which is something that makes sense. It's ensuring that the law reflects what's actually happening and is current and up to date.

Most importantly, it acknowledges and validates that relationship that we have with the AMA and our partnership and our respect for physicians. They truly are a critical part of Alberta's health care system. They provide incredibly high-quality care. They work in partnership with other health care providers to provide that care right across this province, and I'm proud to have worked with a number of incredible physicians over my time while I was a nurse. You know, I'm proud to support them in the House to continue to be able to do that great work, and I certainly will continue to support a collaborative relationship with the AMA, which is going to mean that ongoing we have a sustainable presence of physicians in our communities across rural Alberta so that communities such as Slave Lake and High Prairie and Wabasca and Peerless Lake and Trout Lake and all of the communities that I represent in northern Alberta continue to have access to the high-quality medical services that they need now and into the foreseeable future.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I will recognize the hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

10:30

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 24, An Act to Recognize AMA Representation Rights. Bill 24 is a big deal. This bill matters greatly even though it is a very short bill, only about 12 pages long. Bill 24 establishes the Alberta Medical Association as a negotiating body, similar to a union, under which all other professional health unions must negotiate. Bill 24 makes the AMA the exclusive representative of physicians on any compensation matters but also gives the AMA the power to represent any group under regional health authorities if the majority of that group formally expresses that wish. That means that lab technicians, nurses, ambulance drivers, and paramedics could one day be represented by the AMA. Alberta Health Services is not required to recognize the AMA as the exclusive representative of these groups: managerial services, services provided by residents or fellows when acting in that capacity, and other services or classes of services prescribed by the regulations.

There is that magical word again, Madam Speaker, "regulations." Just what does the minister have drafted for regulations flowing out of Bill 24 that we are not allowed to see before Bill 24 passes? Regulations are how cabinet gets around bringing changes in law to the Legislature to be voted on. They just do it at the cabinet table. I hope the NDP knows what they are doing here so that they are not infringing on the inherent freedom of association.

Of the 30 per cent of AMA members who voted on this bill, only 26.7 per cent of members overall ratified it, 89 per cent of voting members. Only 30 per cent of AMA members voted on this bill. That is a concern. That is horrible voter turnout. That should bring concern to all of us, that we need to possibly reach out to those that were not participating in this vote to understand their position on this also. I am concerned that we have underrepresentation in this vote and that there could be another opinion out there that would not be in agreement with the direction that the AMA members that voted on this directed their association to go forward on.

But the beauty of Bill 24 is that it standardizes funding for physicians across the province – gone will be the days of two doctors doing the same job and making vastly different salaries in the same province – working towards equal pay for equal work. All of the current compensation contracts will be respected, but once they are over, all doctors fall under the AMA umbrella.

The NDP believes that this bill is going to help save the health care system \$98 million and that there will be no fee increases between 2019 and 2021. I would like to see the math on the \$98 million in savings. I've seen other estimates by this government on savings that could possibly come to our health care system, yet we see that we continually are increasing the cost of health care, with a continual decrease in the level of service from our health care system. Although the NDP might believe that we will be saving \$98 million, I'm not convinced. I am not convinced. That is certainly good news, if we can save \$98 million, for those of us who are trying to stabilize health care spending in this province and trying to find ways to do it more efficiently and more effectively.

Any doctor who chooses to opt out of the AMA cannot be represented by another body or themselves, so there goes that freedom of association again. Now the neurosurgeons can't be going out on their own and getting a different agreement than the cardiologists, who would want a different one than general practitioners in family medicine. I hope that all members of the AMA are fully aware of the implications of falling under one association that's doing their negotiating for them. If a doctor can choose to opt out of representation by the AMA but they are still bound by the collective negotiated agreement, wouldn't that mean that there is no reason to opt out if they are still tied by the agreement?

Bill 24 also entrenches the agreement framework between the AMA and the Ministry of Health in legislation. The government's hands will be tied in future negotiations as they must follow the framework laid unless they change those conditions through legislation again. That means changes to physician compensation won't come easy. It will require an act of the Legislature if those changes lie outside of the framework. That could seriously mess up health care reform if an enterprising government chose to undertake such a massive task.

Madam Speaker, I also understand that Bill 24 legislates the sharing of information between the AMA and AHS, Alberta Health Services.

Part of the agreement the NDP government struck with the AMA that resulted in this bill here today was to end the physician retention program. Previously the program paid physicians between \$5,000 and \$12,000 as an incentive for each year they stayed in the province of Alberta. I wonder what effect this cancellation could possibly have on rural Alberta. Could there be some unintended consequences buried in Bill 24 and the agreement with the AMA? You know, I reflect on the health care delivery in my constituency through the towns of Barrhead, Westlock, Morinville and on some of the difficulties that they've encountered trying to attract physicians into the rural area. We wouldn't want to see unintended consequences buried in Bill 24 that would inhibit the ability for physicians, doctors, to be attracted to those areas.

The questions around Bill 24 are many, and I'm afraid the time that we have here in this Legislature just won't be sufficient to answer all of them. I'm not sure that we have the ability in this process to actually get all the answers that we need, to hear from all the people that will be affected by Bill 24. Therefore, I'm thinking that Bill 24 may need to be sent to a committee for a short study. The Minister of Health could come in with her deputy minister and the president of Alberta Health Services and answer all of our questions. Also, the president of the AMA could come in and take

questions. We could also possibly get input from the United Nurses to give their opinion on this going forward, some of the pitfalls or the benefits that they might be able to identify that are within Bill 24.

Madam Speaker, the first glance here seems okay, but the devil is in the details, and I'm not certain that we are getting all of the details here. I know we are, as an Official Opposition caucus, reaching out to stakeholders to try and get some feedback from them. The people in the front lines and on the ground always are able to identify more easily the benefits and the pitfalls with any legislation that comes forward, so it's important to get that input from them. Has this government fully consulted with all stakeholders, or is their consultation just done with the negotiations with the AMA as an entity? It would concern me if that was the limitation that they had or if that's the limit of their engagement with the profession, with the association. Did they get all of the information necessary to make good decisions here, or are they relying on one association's opinion at this point in time?

While my colleagues and I are reaching out and consulting here, Bill 24 is riddled with unknowns. I think we need to make sure that each and every member here understands the ramifications and to not just blindly vote the way your whip tells you to but that we all make a concerted effort to take a look at the bill and to reach out to stakeholders within our constituencies, stakeholders that will be affected by this legislation, to get their understanding or to get their perspectives with regard to Bill 24.

With that, Madam Speaker, I thank you for indulging my thoughts on Bill 24, An Act to Recognize AMA Representation Rights. Thank you.

10:40

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Acadia.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak in favour of this bill. I think that it's really important, when government has a long-standing practice that seems to serve both parties involved, that there is a bit of a formalization of that relationship, and in many ways that is what An Act to Recognize AMA Representation Rights does.

As another hon. member noted, our government and previous governments have been negotiating exclusively with the Alberta Medical Association with respect to physician compensation for a great many years, going on 15 years, and I think that, you know, having systems like that codified so that both sides can have an understanding of what to expect is really important. It's a long-standing practice that government has had, and it doesn't change any of the existing processes between government and the AMA. It doesn't create new powers or abilities; it simply formalizes the existing practice.

I might also note that this is something that has come to during the course of the last round of negotiations with the Alberta Medical Association. It maintains the current scope of representation rights that the Alberta Medical Association has. It also kind of codifies what government will talk to about what. So when it comes to issues around physician compensation and benefits and things like that, then that conversation happens exclusively between government and the Alberta Medical Association. For other issues that impact physician working conditions, maybe interactions between doctors and other medical professionals, that is something that can be consulted on more broadly, and our government's policy has been to make sure that we're interacting with those other organizations as well.

I also want to comment on how I think this legislation will benefit individual physicians as well, because without an understanding of who it is that is representing them at the table with government when discussing important issues around salary and compensation – it's important for doctors to know who to turn to, and by formalizing this relationship, that really does provide that opportunity for individual physicians to reach out to their local AMA members, to maybe get a little more active in the association and be more involved members in their ongoing discussions both with the AMA and then, through the AMA, with government.

The two pieces of legislation being amended, of course: the Health Care Insurance Act and the Regional Health Authorities Act. It just basically sets out some of the existing relationships through those.

I do want to also take a moment to touch on the issue of the nonexclusive representation on other health matters. That refers to issues around team-based care, how to best use information technology in the health care system. What that means, then, is that government can work with the AMA on that as well as with the other stakeholders, whether that's the nurses' association or occupational therapists, nurse practitioners. It really allows for that well-rounded and interdisciplinary approach to these issues.

I would also note, though, that members opposite had some concerns with respect to rural physical recruitment, and I think that that's a really important issue. It's one that I know the Minister of Health takes very seriously. I can see why they would be concerned when in the past, with, you know, maybe contracts being imposed or cuts to health care budgets that didn't take into account impacts on smaller and rural communities, we did really see a number of physicians making decisions about where they wanted to live and where they wanted to practise. I think that making sure that we continue to have a respectful relationship with physicians and one where we recognize that we're all working together for the benefit of Albertans regardless of where they live and the benefits of working to ensure that Albertans have access to the health care that they need when they need it as close to home as possible is really critical.

I think the issues of rural recruitment, Madam Speaker, are really outside the scope of this bill, so I hope you'll indulge me for a moment to comment a little bit further on that. You know, the Ministry of Health is working very closely with both the AMA as well as RPAP, which in recent years has changed its name from rural physician action plan to be a more broad and more encompassing entity that also looks at the recruitment of nurse practitioners and other medical professionals that can meet the health needs of rural Albertans. Really, that's about bringing physicians and other health care practitioners to those rural areas but also supporting them when they're there. Through consultations with physicians and physician groups one of the messages is that it goes so much more beyond the dollars earned. It's also about the sense of community and that integration in community and feeling like you really belong. Anyone who's lived in a smaller community knows how that's just such an important part of the fabric of that community. Continuing to do that work through those two bodies and through different means is, I think, really critical and something that I know that the Minister of Health is deeply committed to.

I also wanted to take a moment to comment on why this legislation is necessary if it doesn't really change much. I mean, this is codifying the existing practice. Ultimately I think the reason that it is so important is that it really provides that clarity. It spells out for the AMA and for the physicians that it represents the working relationship between government via Alberta Health and through Alberta Health Services, the operator of the health care system. You know, those are two very distinct entities – I know there's some

confusion sometimes around that – and ultimately making sure that it's clear who to talk to and when is a really important part of a labour relationship.

I think it's naive to pretend that the relationship between government and physicians is anything other than a labour relationship, ultimately. Through Alberta Health or Alberta Health Services, wherever that physician happens to be employed, sometimes a combination of both, the government is the employer of that physician or is paying for this through the schedule of medical benefits. They do often operate kind of in an independent contractor arrangement. Having that codification and understanding of where to go when one has particular questions is, I think, critically important and also, you know, as I said, formalizing that longstanding practice and letting people know that. I would add that it was an important piece for the Alberta Medical Association to be recognized in this way and to be representative for physicians who are authorized to practice in Alberta and those who receive publicly funded physician services.

As I wrap up, I also wanted to comment on another question that was hinted at or perhaps asked by the members opposite with respect to doctors. Of course, different physicians have different specialties, and within that there can be a range of annual compensation that a physician earns depending on what they're doing. All of that is set out through the schedule of medical benefits, which is, again, completely outside the scope of this current legislation and this bill that we're bringing forward. Ultimately that is something that's negotiated between the physicians through the AMA and with government. I think that by setting that out and making it clear that that's where those negotiations happen, it helps physicians to, again, know who to talk to, know where to express their concerns, but also to make sure that we're reflecting, you know, some of those differences in costs for specialties.

The cost of equipment for one type of specialty or the cost of training is different than in another, and I think that the work being done between the Ministry of Health and Alberta Health and the work between the Alberta Medical Association really does help to address that. In fact, that was where a great number of the savings with respect to physician compensation has come, through that negotiation around the rates of the schedule of medical benefits. Contrary to what was alleged by one of the previous members, we've actually seen a reduction in a number of billing codes as well as some changes to acknowledge the costs to the doctors as well as demands on particular specialties.

10:50

Ultimately our government really does enjoy a positive working relationship with the Alberta Medical Association and with doctors. I think that that's because we have entered that conversation respectfully, approached negotiations in a spirit of negotiation and a spirit of bargaining in good faith, which has not always been the case in Alberta and certainly wasn't the case in other jurisdictions, where doctors and government have failed to come to an agreement. I think that the Minister of Health is to be commended for the work that she's done on that.

With that, I will close my remarks and again just reiterate that I think this is a really great bill. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak to Bill 24, An Act to Recognize AMA Representation Rights. As you

know, this bill has just recently been tabled and suggests some pretty massive changes in the way that the AMA and the government will continue to have a relationship. You know, there are some good things and there are some bad things in any change of relationship with any organization and government. This bill seeks to do a number of good things, bad and good, or just maybe good and some concerns, I think, would be a better way to put that.

Madam Speaker, we know that this motion was passed by the Alberta Medical Association at 89 per cent approval of the members that voted, but we know that only 30 per cent of the members actually voted and participated. So I would say that that would suggest most certainly that that's not thorough consultation and perhaps maybe more needs to be done.

Madam Speaker, there are many things that I've learned over the last couple of years being a member of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, and one of those things I've learned is that government doesn't always get it right, quite often, I would say, not. I think that certainly reflects in the polling numbers that we're seeing nowadays. Polls are just polls, a snapshot of the day and time. You know, they'll change, I'm sure. I certainly think that members of the government are crossing their fingers in the hopes that they do. However, I've also learned that this government tends to have a difficult time consulting, so forgive me if I'm a little bit weary in taking the government's word for fact in this Legislature and not offering and bringing forward some concerns that I might have with this legislation.

I would say that from my first read-through of this bill, without having to actually do some consultant work myself, which I assure you I will endeavour to do, Madam Speaker, as I do with all legislation that comes forward to this House despite the time frame that we have and the lack, I would say, of fulsome debate in most cases – Certainly, there's an opportunity in committee where we could further investigate this bill, bring forward witnesses, and really feel confident in the process and in the potential passing of legislation that is the right thing, not the right thing for the government and its members and its election chances but the right thing for Albertans. Always, always, always we must remember that we need to do the right thing for Albertans, all Albertans, not just some of them.

This bill would suggest that members of the Alberta Medical Association would essentially be one bargaining unit with the government and that, most certainly, specialists, in particular, are not having a unique conversation with the government or those that are in charge. I would maybe like to understand a little bit more about that process and how some of those needs coming forward can be addressed, Madam Speaker, just specific cases, more certainly, knee surgeon specialists.

We have an increased wait time. Under the last few years of this government the wait time has increased despite their spending increases. You know, perhaps there should be, most certainly, a conversation with knee surgeons and hip specialists and the government about how to address these wait times and how to bring them down. I don't know if this bill allows for that provision to take place any longer. So that's maybe a concern, Madam Speaker, that I do have with this piece of legislation.

I think it's great that the government says that this agreement will save \$98 million. That's excellent. I didn't know that the government believed that they could save money in the health care system without firing nurses and doctors, but they said that it's possible. The opposition has been saying that for a long time. It's good to see that the government may be taking talking points from the opposition yet again, ideas – that's great – and we've got lots more, and we'd be happy to share them with members of this Assembly, Madam Speaker.

I'm happy to see that this could potentially save some health care costs. There's nothing that has been addressed in terms of quality of health care and ensuring that that's maintained through this process, Madam Speaker, and I think Albertans are mostly concerned about the quality of our health care system. You know, Albertans pay a lot in taxes. Alberta spends a lot of money on health care, and we don't have great outcomes. I'm sure you can agree that quality of health care is absolutely a concern.

Madam Speaker, there are a lot of questions around this legislation that I'm hoping will be fleshed out through the course of this debate. I haven't really heard a lot of answers to some of the questions that my colleagues have been raising thus far, and in saying that, I'd like to move an amendment. I'll wait until you tell me to proceed.

The Deputy Speaker: Go ahead, hon. member.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I move that the motion for second reading on Bill 24, An Act to Recognize AMA Representation Rights, be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 24, An Act to Recognize AMA Representations Rights, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Families and Communities in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

Madam Speaker, I have addressed some of the concerns that I have with this legislation that was just recently tabled and the time or lack thereof that the opposition has to thoroughly consult through this process. We always do our best, but I think the most appropriate place to delve into the facts and the relationships that are changing under this piece of legislation is in the Standing Committee on Families and Communities. I've been a member of that committee. I no longer am, but I was. And I was fortunate to be able to participate in a number of processes that brought in experts to our committee to testify, and it was amazing, the information that these people brought forward and the work that the committee did in creating a stakeholders' consultation list and that process.

11:00

With only 30 per cent of the AMA members actually voting on this motion, that did pass at 89 per cent, Madam Speaker, maybe the other 70 per cent of the AMA members were not aware or were not notified in time of what was taking place. If that's the biggest talking point for the government in terms of bringing this legislation forward, I think it's worth taking the time to delve into why that is what that is and perhaps open this up. I know that during the committee process we take out a number of ads to drum up interest – in the newspaper, on the radio, social media ads – to get that kind of feedback in there as well.

I will be participating in the college of physicians dine-and-dash event tomorrow, I believe, so I will certainly take that opportunity to ask the members at that event particularly about this piece of legislation. And if they have any concerns coming out of that, I will certainly be bringing that forward to this Assembly. So perhaps there'll be an amendment that I would see fit or the people of Airdrie.

Madam Speaker, I would certainly like to consult with the physicians in Airdrie and area. We have a great team. I've talked about the Airdrie doctors before, and they're doing fantastic things in our community, really genuine human beings that care, as I know most doctors do. But I would certainly invite them to participate in the committee process in terms of this legislation because they're the ones that are impacted.

But it's more than just physicians that are impacted by this legislation, like I alluded to earlier. It's the quality of health care,

which is something that everybody in Alberta cares about. There are maybe, potentially, unintended consequences from this legislation, and that's something that could be fleshed out during the committee process, Madam Speaker. That's a good thing, right? Taking the time to get these things right is important for Albertans. I know that my children and the children in the community of Airdrie, more specifically, are the ones that give me the drive to ensure that our health care system is getting better for them.

There are a number of seniors in my community as well that rely on a good-quality health care system for their quality of life, not just in emergency situations, Madam Speaker, but the quality of life, right? Waiting 18 months for a hip replacement is 18 months of pain. Once you've gotten to that point, and then we say: wait 18 months, that's not good health care; that's sad. Our seniors don't deserve that. People in Alberta do not deserve to have a very poor quality of life because our government can't figure out how to get it right.

I appreciate, with this piece of legislation, Madam Speaker, that this would be an effort from the government to try and make it better. We see the cost savings that the government claims in their talking points, and that's a good thing, but we need to ensure that there isn't something we're not really thinking of – right? – when debate on legislation in this Assembly only consists of maybe two, three days, you know. Maybe next week, hopefully. There's the weekend to try and reach out and get some feedback.

Madam Speaker, there's danger of passing bad legislation. Nobody wants to pass bad legislation. I know the government doesn't want to pass bad legislation. We could figure that out in committee, for sure, absolutely. Put together a list of stakeholders recommended by all party members represented in the committee, agreed upon. It would have an array of information brought forward. I particularly think that all legislation should go through a committee process to just flush out the bad stuff.

Madam Speaker, could you imagine if Bill 6 went to committee, the farm legislation bill, back in the beginning? First of all, we were all new then. That would have been a fantastic learning process and exercise in democracy. There wouldn't have been thousands of people freezing outside as they were protesting the government legislation that did not include consultation. That would have been, I think, just great for all of us as legislators and most certainly for the people of this province.

So I think it's imperative that when we pass legislation to change the relationship between government and our physicians in this province, we take the time to get it right, we take the time to get all of the facts.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any speakers to the referral amendment? The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's always a pleasure to rise in this House to speak to legislation that is important to Albertans. Of course, today is no exception as we speak to Bill 24, An Act to Recognize AMA Representation Rights. Now, I wholeheartedly concur with my colleague from the fine constituency – is that what we're calling Airdrie now?

Mrs. Pitt: Most fabulous.

Mr. Schneider: Oh, the fabulous constituency of Airdrie.

I completely agree that this bill needs to be sent to committee for some fulsome and deliberate research.

Now, I have sat on the Alberta's Economic Future Committee since I got here in 2015. We certainly had a bill recently, Bill 201, a private member's bill that was sent to committee for research and to hear from stakeholders. Certainly, the members from this side of the House, certainly from our caucus, that were going to that committee to meet with stakeholders were very interested in hearing what the stakeholders may have had to say and whether they would be completely supportive or not. We were supportive when we got to that committee stage, but as we progressed and we had stakeholders come in and be very passionate about what their concerns were, we began to see that potentially there could be some more work done to Bill 201 that would be advantageous to all firefighters throughout the province.

That's a perfect example of why we need to send a bill to committee, and like my colleague from Airdrie said, not just this bill but certainly more than the bills that we do see get referred to committee. As she said – and she's right – things do get fleshed out that potentially were not put down on paper, that everyone could get a grasp on. So I'm all for sending this particular bill to committee as well.

Now, you might be wondering why we believe that it should be sent to committee. After all, from what we hear from the government, almost 90 per cent of the Alberta Medical Association's members have asked for this legislation. In fact, according to the president of the Alberta Medical Association's last missive there was a quote that said, "... a commitment to entrench physician recognition and representation rights within legislation." To me, and I think to the people in our caucus, it certainly sounds like they got what they wanted, which is interesting because I have no way of knowing that for sure as the president's message failed to say what kind of support the bill had among members.

11:10

Now, I certainly don't want to imply that I can't take this government at its word on this issue, but I just want to be a little bit realistic here. There are government members that spent the better part of their careers on this side of the House – they sat in opposition – and when bills came to the House that they were concerned about, they stood in some of these very same seats and made the same kind of request, that we need to get this bill to committee so we can further understand what it's all about. This is, I think, a four-page bill. When you sort through the meat and the chaff and the wheat and the straw, the pages that actually have some meaning on them add up to about four.

So if the roles were reversed, I wonder what the government members if they were sitting in opposition would be asking. Would they take the government at their word without saying a word? As the great conservative President Ronald Reagan once remarked, "Trust, but verify." It's a good piece of advice still today.

Now, to my understanding Bill 24 was brought forward as part of an agreement between the AMA and the government, a sort of negotiated gentlemen's agreement, it almost appears like, that in part was in return for bringing this legislation forward: the Alberta Medical Association agreed that doctors would receive no fee increases until 2021. This is where we see in our tech briefing notes that this looks like it leaves the government with a way for them to claim savings of \$98 million in health costs.

What we also know is from an article in the *Edmonton Journal* from May 30 of this year entitled Alberta Doctors Agree to Fee Freezes in Two-year Deal with Province. Now, that particular article talks about the part of the agreement that was also to end the retention program. Previously that particular program paid physicians between \$5,000 and \$12,000 as an incentive for each year they stayed in the province. Hey, whatever works.

I've been involved in physician recruitment and retention committees for most of my municipal career, and I understand that sometimes you've gotta do whatever you've gotta do to get a doctor to come and, certainly, to get a doctor to stay. I wonder what physicians new to this province feel about that particular quid pro quo that they had to relinquish. Perhaps they don't have an issue with it. Then again, perhaps they do. That's kind of exactly what referring this piece of legislation to a committee could flesh out and give us a chance to find out, Madam Speaker.

I mean, it's not like this question is the only one that bothers – it's not bothering me but bringing me to some of these questions, and I know that my colleagues have got the same.

Here's another one. While that number of 89 per cent of Alberta Medical Association members is a significant number – 90 per cent is a huge number in any kind of discussion when we're talking about percentages – just how significant is that, I wonder, to interpretation? After all, 89 per cent of Alberta Medical Association members that voted supported the agreement that led to this bill; however, only 30 per cent of the Alberta Medical Association's total members voted. I would say that it's hardly a ringing endorsement, unless it was such a foregone conclusion that members didn't bother to vote, which is possible. But it sure would be nice to hear that for myself. I'm sure everyone that's got anything to do with this bill would love to hear that part from those that couldn't be bothered to show up. If they felt this was a foregone conclusion, they didn't feel that they had to vote. It would be nice to hear it from the horse's mouth, I guess, so to speak, Madam Speaker.

You know, we were handed this bill yesterday afternoon. We saw a very brief technical brief late last week, and here we are trying to speak to it today. This bill is a lot bigger than the four pages that actually have details of the bill written on them. My colleague from Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock said it was 12 pages, I think. I think there are 12 pages within there, but five of them have nothing on them, and one or two have page numbers on them. So I think I'm closer when I say it's closer to four.

To me, Madam Speaker, the bill seems like, as my colleague from Calgary-Hays referred to it as we were speaking about this bill this morning, a Trojan Horse. When you look at this bill, all four pages of it – now, don't give me that eye – it doesn't seem offensive. From what I can garner from what I actually read, what's happening is that the Alberta government is actually setting up the Alberta Medical Association as some kind of a superunion, certainly maybe not a full-fledged union, as the word states, but they would have the ability to bargain and bargain on more than behalf of themselves. Forgive me, but the words within the legislation are a little bit vague in nature, and I'm not sure what else to think about what's going on here.

I will quote from the bill.

(2) The Minister recognizes the Alberta Medical Association as the exclusive representative of physicians on compensation matters.

(3) The Minister recognizes the Alberta Medical Association as a representative of physicians on health matters that touch and concern physicians.

Nothing vague there at all.

(4) The Minister shall engage the Alberta Medical Association in good faith and consider the Association's representations on matters for which the Association represents physicians.

Now, does that sound like a lot of power being given to one group, Madam Speaker? It sure does to me: a superunion, as we've determined to call this, under which all other professional health unions must negotiate. It not only formalizes the relationship between the government and the Alberta Medical Association; it

establishes the AMA as a negotiating body, a negotiating body for all other professional health unions. Wow. Now, to me, that seems like a lot of power for one authority to be handed.

For that reason and that reason alone, I have to suggest that the place for this bill to spend the next little while is in a committee, where committee members can sit down and talk with stakeholders to determine how good of a deal this is for Albertans or, more truthfully, Madam Speaker, whether this bill is a good deal for Albertans.

Now, the Member for Calgary-Acadia, when she gave her speech – and I appreciated it because she certainly has a lot more to do with health care than I do – commented that this was basically a formalization of a long-standing pact with the Alberta Medical Association, but nothing inside of this bill says anything like that whatsoever. So we are to believe that that is just what this bill is. I don't see it written anywhere.

But what she did talk about was funding for the rural physician action plan. I don't think that probably a lot of the government members have ever had to be involved, basically, in sitting on a committee in a 1,500-population town, that actually serves about 6,000 people, to try to figure out how to recruit physicians and have them stay. I as a municipal councillor spent, well, most of the years that I was there sitting on one committee or another, either a retrenchment or a recruitment committee for physicians, to try to get them there. I've got to say that the RPAP gal from Claresholm, I think, that we talked to online at night did a lot of background work for us as well so that we could try and do the good work that people were expecting us to do as we sat on that committee.

Now, what else do doctors give up? Well, from my read-through, of note, a couple of items pop out from that above quote. Doctors must settle with the compensation and benefits in the Alberta Medical Association agreement struck with the government, and physicians lose the ability to negotiate independently or in groups.

11:20

I'll just deal with the last first: doctors give up the ability to negotiate independently or in groups. In essence, they've signed up for collective bargaining, which is fine. Lots of people in our province, lots of organizations in the province run under that framework. As long as we can be sure that the majority are fine under the auspices of this sort of new superunion, then everything is well and good.

As I stated a moment ago, this agreement not only formalizes the relationship between the government and the AMA, but it establishes the AMA as a negotiating body under which all other professional health unions must negotiate. What it does, Madam Speaker – and I need to make this point again – is that I guess it makes the AMA the only representative of physicians on any compensation matters, and if I understand, it also gives the Alberta Medical Association the power to represent any group under the regional health authorities but only if the majority of that group formally expresses that wish.

Now, the caveat here is that Alberta Health Services is not required to recognize the Alberta Medical Association as exclusive representation in all situations, which is, at the very least, interesting. Would that very statement not be another good reason to see this bill go to committee and flesh out that very statement right there?

This bill also entrenches the agreement framework between the Alberta Medical Association and the Ministry of Health. The government's hands will now be tied in any future negotiations because now they are forced to follow the framework laid. Is that the intent of what this bill is? Is the intent of this bill to get all that lined up within this piece of legislation so that any future

government now has nowhere to go other than the framework that was laid out in 2018 by this government? Now, I don't have any intention, once again . . . [Mr. Schneider's speaking time expired]

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to take this opportunity to talk about Bill 24. It is An Act to Recognize AMA Representation Rights. Now, whenever we have a major realignment within Alberta of any group of individuals, we need to make sure that we adequately address this fact: have all the stakeholders that are involved in this been notified, and have they been consulted?

Now, it appears that the government has done an admirable job of reaching out to the AMA. We have a press release that shows that the AMA is very supportive, and I would like to just read some of the comments that the president of the AMA has made as well as our Minister of Health, because I believe this is important. To quote Dr. Alison Clarke, president of the Alberta Medical Association – I apologize. This is from the press release by the Alberta government on November 1, 2018, Alberta Formalizes Relationship with Physicians.

Going back to the quote here:

Agreements with Alberta's physicians have led the way to improved quality and access to care for patients. They have included advancement of electronic medical records, the introduction and evolution of Primary Care Networks, development of a provincial physician resource plan and programs to promote the most appropriate care. Ensuring clarity and formalizing the roles of the AMA and physicians in this regard is important to Albertans.

Wow. That's a lot, a lot that this four-page document is doing. I have to say that it seems to be a little ambitious to be able to lay all of that on a four-page bill. But you know what? I'd like to just move on, and we'll see what the Minister of Health has to say.

The Minister of Health says:

I'm proud that our government has maintained a collaborative and constructive relationship with Alberta's physicians, enabling us to stabilize health spending while improving patient care. This legislation was a commitment the government made as part of the recent agreement with doctors, and we've made good on that promise. I thank the AMA and all physicians for working with our government to meet Albertans' health-care needs.

So hers isn't as rosy. Summarizing that, what it does say – and I think this is more of an accurate description of what this does – is that it gives the ability to the government to be able to work hand in hand with the AMA.

One of the questions that I have for this government – and I would appreciate it if they would answer this – is that right now I see that there are approximately 10,000 physicians within Alberta. My question here is: how many physicians are registered members of the AMA? Right now we're showing – and this could be a little misleading – that 89 per cent of AMA members supported this deal. Now, if we've got, out of those 10,000 doctors, 9,000 doctors that are AMA members, then this was getting out a very strong consultation, other than the fact that we only had 30 per cent vote in this important vote. What I will say is that if this ends up being 1,000 doctors within this, I am worried that we may not have gotten this message out to the nonmembers of the Alberta government doctors.

We have two pools of individuals that independently contract to Alberta. We have your non-AMA members and your AMA members. Now, if we haven't done the appropriate consultation – and this is what we're trying to do. We're trying to say: let's refer this to committee; let's start looking at getting some of these answers. It appears that the AMA is almost one hundred per cent behind this when it comes to their leadership, and when it comes to the members, there wasn't engagement. With only 30 per cent of the members voting on this, we may not have had the engagement we need, and you would think that with something this important, we would have seen an engagement level of higher than 30 per cent. This would have been closer to 75 or 80 per cent engagement by the members of the AMA that are doctors.

I looked at the website of the AMA, and it shows that they have 14,000 members. Now, what's important to recognize is that this number includes other health practitioners. We don't actually have the breakdown, that I'm aware of, and if that does exist out there, I'd encourage the government to bring that information forward.

Now, when we're talking about referrals, about going to a committee, we've got to make sure we get this right, because if we get it wrong, are we going to end up with doctors across Alberta striking? That clearly isn't in the best interests of the patients, and it's not in the best interests of all of Alberta. So when we decide to move down this road, more or less moving towards – it's not really unionized, but it's an organization that represents independent contractors. This is very unusual, that we would have this kind of restriction or power that is placed over an independent group of contractors.

Usually what happens is that we have a union head on top of union employees, employees of the government or the specific company or private entity that they're trying to contract to. In this case what we've got are doctors, 10,000 doctors across this province who are individually or in a partnership or a joint venture working together to negotiate individual contracts with the government of Alberta.

11:30

Now what we're seeing here is that the AMA is suddenly going to inject themselves in between the doctor and the government. This will inevitably add a level of red tape that I think we can all say may prevent our independent doctors from actually being able to do their jobs. Suddenly, instead of focusing on the front lines, they're working to renegotiate some deal. I would say that maybe that is not the best use of their time.

In the end, I myself have an incredible respect for our physicians. I know that for myself and my family every time that I've been to see a physician, they have done an incredible job. I have, again, nothing but respect. I've had my father actually go through a heart attack. I will tell you that if it was not for the EMS and the physicians, my father wouldn't be here today. It is a clear indicator that there are things within Alberta that are just working. There are other things, like wait times, that we can work on, and we've heard from the government that this is an area that does need to be addressed.

Working on a press release from the AMA, AMA Legislation Tabled Today – this, again, is a discussion from the president of the AMA. It starts with:

Dear Members:

You may recall that one of the important provisions of the 2018-20 AMA agreement with [the] government was a commitment to entrench physician recognition and representation rights within legislation. I am pleased to let you know that this legislation was tabled today. It is called Bill 24, An Act to Recognize AMA Representation Rights.

And then they've got a little place you can click where you can actually see the news release from the Alberta government.

Now, what it is is that this was something that – it appears that the government, in order to get the reduction that they were looking for in spending, negotiated with the AMA to be able to more or less get the body to represent all of the doctors. I wonder how many doctors actually understand what this means and what the possible implications of this are. One of my concerns – and I would hope that the government of Alberta can answer this – is: will there be an impact to the funding for rural doctors?

It is almost impossible now, as you've heard from the government members themselves, to find physicians to go out to rural communities. So if we start to reduce the fees that these rural doctors are getting, that have been independently negotiated, to some base rate that the AMA has come up with, will we see a flight or a bunch of doctors from rural Alberta moving back to the major centres, the urban centres? I am very concerned with the fact that we have a lack of representation now. We will end up with no representation going forward. This is a reasonable question because, in the end, it is important that we recognize what the impacts are when it comes to rural Alberta and our physicians.

I do see that the government has had some discussions with AMA. What exactly has come up on this? Is there going to be one, I guess, standard for all general practitioners? And if that is the case, how are they going to deal with the unique complexities that come with the medical profession? Will we see reduced doctors? That is a question.

Now, I recognize that we are looking at some savings that the government is bringing forward here. They're saying that there's going to be \$98 million in savings. My next question is: is that \$98 million from rural Alberta? Where are the savings coming from? Is this an area that is more or less meaning that we're going to see cuts, massive cuts, in rural Alberta? Again, this is why it is so important that we refer this to committee because we can ask these questions. It is important.

Let's say that we have specialists in Edmonton here. It was Edmonton that saved my father's life. I will admit that. It was an incredible cardiologist that went through this. If we go to a standard for all cardiologists for their rate of pay, does that mean we will start seeing cardiologists going to other jurisdictions? That is important because I believe that we do have some of the best care when it comes to a lot of parts of our medical system. Obviously, we can always do better. But I will tell you, when it comes to a case-by-case basis, what I've heard, that in the end we need to continue making sure that we have some of the best even though we may not have all of the best results across Alberta.

Now, I would like to say that these are legitimate questions. It is important that you guys across the aisle recognize that there are more questions than answers, and this is exactly why we need to go to the stakeholders.

Now I would like to move on to adjourning debate. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 23

An Act to Renew Local Democracy in Alberta

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour to rise today and move second reading of Bill 23, An Act to Renew Local Democracy in Alberta.

The first bill this government introduced in June 2015 was An Act to Renew Democracy in Alberta. It banned corporations, unions, and employee organizations from making political contributions associated with provincial elections. In the fall of 2016 the Fair Elections Financing Act was passed. It ensured that Albertans have a fair, democratic, and modern electoral system by limiting the influence of big money on election outcomes and lowering the cap on political donations.

In the summer of 2018 the government of Alberta held online consultation with Albertans about similar reforms for municipal elections. More than 1,500 Albertans participated in the consultation. We also met with municipal associations, school boards, Métis settlements, Alberta's Election Commissioner, and municipalities. We consulted with Albertans on putting a ban on corporate and union donations, and 90 per cent of responses said that it was time to take big money out of local elections. Eighty-five per cent of Albertans we talked to also agreed that the contribution limit should be lowered to \$4,000 to match the provincial limit.

We're also proposing to take steps to even the playing field by reducing the campaign period from four years to one year for local elections, much like what is done in B.C. and Ontario. This is because elected officials should be focused on delivering results for the community, not on building a war chest for an election years away. This proposed reform will ensure that politicians are working for Albertans, not campaign donations. Albertans expect nothing less.

This act will also ensure that Albertans have a fair, democratic, and modern electoral system. For instance, all Albertans should be able to exercise their right to vote, so we're breaking down barriers to voting so everyone has a chance to participate. Making it easier to vote by introducing mandatory advance votes is one of the reforms Albertans asked for, and we're delivering. Mandatory advance votes in communities over 5,000 is a reform that 95 per cent of Albertans we talked to support. Municipal stakeholders like the AUMA and RMA also support this reform.

We also heard from Albertans that they want to see local elections that are more fair and transparent, and that's exactly what these proposed updates will do. Albertans have the right to know who is trying to influence their elections, which is why rules around third-party advertising are vital. Ninety-four per cent of Albertans agreed during consultation that it's time to make third-party advertisers transparent, and we're delivering on what they've asked for.

We're also closing the fundraising function loophole that allows candidates to raise tens of thousands of dollars through fundraiser events without disclosing who donated. These reforms are necessary to ensure our local elections are fair and transparent.

11:40

Albertans and stakeholders also told us that we need to strengthen enforcement provisions in local elections to make sure that rule breakers are held accountable. Laws must be enforceable to be effective, and these updates would give new powers to the provincial Election Commissioner to investigate offences and make sure the rules are being followed. Again, Albertans expect nothing less.

Madam Speaker, it's time to update our laws to get big money out of local elections, make it easier for Albertans to vote, and create a more transparent election process. Albertans asked for these reforms, Albertans support these reforms, and we are delivering. Our government made it clear when we updated provincial election laws that we want to take big money out of provincial politics, and now we're doing the same on the municipal level. We consulted with Albertans, and we know that they want to

see local elections that are fair and transparent. That's exactly what these updates will do because elections should be decided by big ideas, not by big money. People should be running for election on their ideas, not on how much money is in their bank account.

These rules will create a more level playing field for everyone who wants to run, and these laws must be enforceable and effective. The reforms before us today will do this by giving new powers to the provincial Election Commissioner to enforce local election laws to make sure that offences are investigated and prosecuted.

I can't think of a better time to pass this type of legislation. Municipal and school board elections are set for 2021. Passing this legislation now would give our local authorities time to learn about, train on, and enact these changes so the next set of elections run as smoothly as possible.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is really an honour to rise to speak today to Bill 23, An Act to Renew Local Democracy in Alberta. I really am thrilled to be discussing this, and I want to thank the minister for bringing this forward. Thank you. All of us in the Legislature here should be very proud to be supporting Bill 23.

You know, Madam Speaker, we pass a lot of important bills in here, but acting on something that stands up for democracy holds a particular resonance for me and, I think, for many others as well. As you know, Bill 1 of this government was An Act to Renew Democracy in Alberta, which stood up for democracy at a provincial level and strengthened election financing rules, eliminating corporate and union donations and putting a cap on individual donations, among other strengthening legislation. During the 2017 Calgary municipal election I heard from many Calgarians and many candidates that we needed to do the same for municipal elections, and I'm sure we all agree that it is the right thing to do. Albertans should be assured that candidates are being elected on ideas and not on how deep their pockets are.

There really are four pillars to this bill, Bill 23, Madam Speaker, which are campaign financing and disclosure, voter accessibility, accountability and transparency, and enforcement. Levelling the playing field in elections through financial reform is key to levelling the playing field in elections. I had a look back at the spending of the candidates in the Calgary municipal election, and it seemed that in every instance except the run for mayor, actually, the candidate who earned and spent the most money was victorious. One successful candidate spent nearly \$350,000. That's a hefty sum. That's a hefty sum for a single political candidate. To put that into perspective, that is much more than the Alberta Party could hope to get in a quarter, so that's a lot of money.

Campaign financing and disclosure. What that will do is ban corporate and union donations. Contribution limits will be lowered to \$4,000 province-wide for municipal elections as well as \$4,000 for school board elections. Candidates' spending limits will be set via regulation after consulting with stakeholders. Limits will be based partially on the size of the municipality and school board. Campaign periods will be reduced to one year, and fundraising contributions will be limited to only that period.

Now, voter accessibility is also an important part of standing up for democracy, Madam Speaker, because it helps to ensure that there are fewer barriers to voting and that everyone has a chance to participate. Eligible new Albertans will not have to live in the province for six consecutive months anymore before they can vote, which mirrors the changes that we made in the provincial rules. Wider use of vouching will be permitted, which means a voter with

identification can confirm the identity of a person without identification.

Communities of more than 5,000 will be required to hold advance votes to provide more opportunities for residents to cast ballots, and institutional voting will be allowed in more locations, for example in hospices, for people who can't get to traditional polling places.

Accountability and transparency. Madam Speaker, we've heard from Albertans that they want to see local elections that are more fair and transparent, and that's exactly what these updates do. Government will now require transparency from third parties that receive contributions and advertise to promote or oppose a candidate. Third parties will be required to register with each local jurisdiction they intend to advertise in, and campaign disclosure statements would be required from all candidates, including self-funded candidates. Candidates would be required to disclose names and addresses of those who contribute more than \$50, which is down from \$100 in the current legislation. The definition of what qualifies as an expense under disclosure rules has also been clarified to match the provincial rules. The fundraising function loophole that allows candidates to raise funds without disclosing their donors would also be closed, and campaign activities at voting stations would be restricted.

Enforcement. Madam Speaker, laws must be enforceable to be effective, and stakeholders and Albertans agreed that the enforcement provisions in the Local Authorities Election Act needed to be strengthened. To this end, Bill 23 would empower the provincial Election Commissioner to investigate, prosecute, and enforce rules related to campaign financing and third-party advertising. General administration of local elections would remain the responsibility of each local jurisdiction.

Now, Madam Speaker, consultation is very important in helping to get legislation correct. Unfortunately, unlike the opposition, whose leader has stated his disdain for consultation, this government did a fantastic job consulting on Bill 23 here. It actually goes back to 2016, when Municipal Affairs conducted a limited-scope review of the Local Authorities Election Act that included focused engagement with identified stakeholders. This consultation was completed, and recommendations were drafted for cabinet consideration. However, due to the proximity of the October 2017 municipal and school board general elections these proposed amendments did not proceed.

A further review in the summer of 2018 included broad public consultation through the use of an online public survey and stakeholder discussion guide. There were over 1,500 responses that were received through the survey and discussion guide. Two meetings occurred with representatives from the AUMA, the RMA, the city of Edmonton, the city of Calgary, the Local Government Administration Association, the Alberta Rural Municipal Administrators Association, and many more, actually. Additional meetings were also held with the AUMA, the RMA, and the cities of Edmonton and Calgary to specifically discuss potential solutions and formulas relating to campaign financing and identification of potential concerns regarding third-party advertising. Stakeholders agreed that amendments to the LAEA are necessary to promote fair and transparent local elections. The large majority of respondents to the survey were supportive of these proposed amendments.

The review also identified policy items to enhance the transparency and accountability of local authority elections. The updates encourage alignment with the Election Act and the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act to provide consistency where applicable, of course, in both provincial and municipal elections. It also addressed matters of improved citizen engagement and access to candidacy. The amendments to the act will improve voter accessibility and encourage greater participation through

increased opportunity while addressing concerns raised by municipal stakeholders along with Albertans. The passing of the amended act will ensure that policy amendments occur ahead of municipal, school board, and Métis settlement planning for the October 2021 municipal general elections.

With that said, Madam Speaker, I want to thank the minister again for bringing this forward and for the opportunity to speak on this bill and for the opportunity to make municipal elections more fair and transparent. I encourage everyone to vote in favour of this bill.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

11:50

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Stier: Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker, and good morning, everyone. I have some remarks regarding this bill this morning. I see what time it is, so I'll hopefully be able to fit most of it in.

It's a great pleasure to be here this morning to speak to this bill. It proposes a wide variety of amendments to the Local Authorities Election Act, as has already been mentioned by previous speakers. However, unfortunately, we have been given only a limited amount of time to look this one over. It just came out yesterday. We didn't have the privilege to consult with a lot of people in such a short window of time, but I certainly look forward to debating it more as time goes on. Nonetheless, with the little bit of time we have, I haven't formed a solid opinion, nor has our caucus, on just whether we are going to commit our vote in favour or against at this precise moment.

There are a number of questions and concerns that we've identified, and I'd like to spend a little bit of time on some of those this morning. How they're funded is an interesting topic, as was stated just this morning. The rules are fairly relaxed. I can recall that when I was first elected many years ago – it's almost 14, 15 years ago now – we went through some of this. There were a lot of loosey-goosey rules, if I could use that term politely, so it is probably appropriate to be reviewing this now. I agree with that.

Let's start out with some of the things that we're seeing. It appears that currently we have individuals, corporations, or trade unions that have been able to donate up to \$5,000 per year per candidate, but under the new rules, apparently, corporate and union donations will be prohibited, and the amount of money an individual can donate would be lowered to \$4,000 in total.

The campaign period will also be shrunk from the current four years down to a single year. If you're a candidate running for re-election, therefore, or simply a candidate who's looking to start on a campaign early, you won't be totally prohibited, however. During the first three years the rules will let you spend \$2,000 in total on things like door-knocking materials and various promotions. That seems a little tight from our standpoint. If you're a self-funded candidate, your eligible contribution has been lowered from \$10,000 to \$4,000 as well, matching the new donation limits. Albertans would be able to donate an additional \$4,000 as well to a candidate for school board or trustee according to the new proposals.

Another change that is of concern, actually, is: who's going to be enforcing these new rules? The newly appointed Election Commissioner apparently is that person, and he will see his office's authority increase as his office becomes investigator, prosecutor, and enforcer related to campaign financing and third-party advertising. That's fairly interesting. It might be quite a workload, I might suggest. Anyway, if there is wrongdoing found by the commissioner, he can levy up to \$10,000 in fines. That's a new change.

Another change around donations that raised my interest a little bit requires that all candidates be nominated before they accept any donations or incur expenses, and they must open a bank account once contributions to their campaign hit \$4,000.

On another thought, nomination day, currently set at four weeks prior to election day, is now being extended to run from January 1 until six weeks before election day. This probably should help as nomination day can become a very busy day for municipal staff because every candidate is trying to submit paperwork to become a candidate at that time. So I can understand that.

Other concerns. While this bill does not directly address the issue of spending limits, it includes provisions delegating that to regulations, which the minister insists will be released prior to the 2021 municipal election. While the minister promises that any spending limit will be nuanced and will respect the differences between rural and urban and large and small municipalities, I'm disappointed to see that the government is sending something as important as spending limits behind closed doors to the regulations. There's a lot of this kind of thing, I think, that we need to go over a little bit and see just what is going to happen there. Regulations, as you know, give us a lot of trouble because we don't debate those in the House.

Unfortunately, though, one of the other concerns we've heard from stakeholders and constituents regarding the elections appears to have been not finalized yet as well, which is the proposed amendments in Bill 23 for a candidate to issue tax receipts for municipal school board donations, but officials have said that the issue hasn't been taken off the table completely. We look forward to debating that aspect as well because whether or not municipal candidates or school board trustees can issue receipts has always been a concern of most of the municipalities and the associations. I hope, therefore, because it hasn't been taken off the table, according to their briefing, that that could be further discussed.

I'd like to also point out that Bill 23 apparently seems to have a retroactive clause built in at the back, so if the bill does pass, then a lot of these changes will be effective as of first reading, which actually occurred yesterday. While I understand that timeline before the election and the three-year period and so on and so forth, it is something that I'd like to draw to the attention of all people that may be viewing this debate today and as the bill becomes debated further.

The bill does also propose interesting amendments around increasing voter participation that I think I can support. For instance, any municipality with over 5,000 will now be required to have at least one advance poll ahead of the regular voting day. That has been something, as may have been said earlier today already, that I think is making some sense. There will be some extra costs to municipalities, perhaps, in some respects, but I think this is ultimately about improving turnout and making voting more accessible for the public.

Additionally, along with donation and spending limits is the requirement to disclose who donated and what the money was spent on. Moving forward, candidates will need to file detailed disclosures, apparently, outlining where the money was spent, broken down by category. I'm not sure how those categories will work, but this seems like a lot of extra work for municipal candidates. However, I'm still waiting to hear back from groups like the AUMA and the RMA, and I'm sure that they will have more to say about this in the coming days, as will we.

Something that appears positive, too, is that the bill clarifies that there will be no campaigning allowed on the properties where the voting stations will be located. Whereas before you might have had candidates standing outside in school parking areas and/or right at the doorways handing out literature, as we've seen in some other types of elections, they would now have to move completely off the

property. That does seem to make sense, and we certainly wouldn't be against that kind of change.

On another issue, I'm not sure how some people may feel about removing the six-month Alberta residency requirement. I'm concerned that this may be a loophole. I don't know for sure because we've just gotten into the debate on this bill. There have been accusations in the past; as we all know, elections are controversial. There may be a loophole there by those seeking to undermine elections in some regard. I understand this may be impossible to determine in some respects at some points, but it will be worth while to hear what others have to say about that aspect because it is something that raises the ire of a lot of folks.

Another change is the ability for a voter to vouch or confirm that another elector meets all the requirements to vote with that change of removing the six-month residency requirement. In the opposition technical briefing yesterday morning we were verbally told that a person could only vouch for one person total per election. However, after reviewing the legislation, we may have misunderstood what was being presented because it doesn't appear to be the case in the documents. It appears that a person can vouch for any number of people, from what we can tell at first pass. I look forward to having

the minister perhaps clear up any confusion there may be on that topic as well.

Madam Speaker, to close my comments today, I will say that, you know, the fact that we've got a hundred-page document and that then we're expected to debate it in full, full detail the very next day: it is very hard and difficult for us to respond in clear detail with a lot of clarity and good debate with such a short window. With the complexity of this bill and the importance of these changes to all the municipalities, candidates, and Albertans, we hope that we can have a more thorough debate during Committee of the Whole and that we can have sufficient time to review that. I'm not sure exactly when that's coming forward, but I look forward to bringing a lot of amendments that we've identified that may have to become debate items at that time.

Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Pursuant to Standing Order 4(2.1) the Assembly stands adjourned until 1:30 this afternoon.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, November 6, 2018

Day 46

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m. Tuesday, November 6, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

Cortes-Vargas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly an incredible school that I had the pleasure of being at during the grand opening, Ardrossan elementary school, and their chaperones, accompanied by Karson Campbell, Cyrille Wandji – sorry if I’ve mispronounced your name – Brant Halbert, Sydney Munsterman, and numerous parents that are with them here today. It was a pleasure to visit them when we opened their school, but it is a pleasure to have them here at the Legislature. I would ask them to stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Are there any other school groups, hon. members?

The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Legislature members of the Insurance Brokers Association of Alberta: Mr. Paul VanderHooft, president of the Insurance Brokers Association of Alberta; Jonathan Brown, president of the Professional Young Insurance Brokers; and George Hodgson, CEO of the Insurance Brokers Association of Alberta. Along with a contingent of brokers from across this province, they are a dedicated group who work to preserve and strengthen the insurance broker industry throughout the province, and they will have a reception later on tonight. I ask my guests to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions today, distinguished guests from the Royal Canadian Navy and from the Royal Canadian Air Force. I’m honoured to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly distinguished guests from the Royal Canadian Navy. Commodore Angus Topshee is a naval warrant officer in the Royal Canadian Navy. His diverse academic background includes military and civilian institutions on three continents. While deploying on ships around the world, he has accumulated sea stories involving pirates, sharks, terrorists, volcanoes, whales, fires, and all manner of things that keep life at sea interesting. In July 2018 he assumed command of the Canadian Fleet Pacific, based out of Esquimalt, B.C. Joining Commodore Topshee are Lieutenant Noelani Shore and Chief Petty Officer First Class Sylvain Jaquemot. Please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome, and thank you for your service. We don’t get many sailors in this particular province.

The hon. Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It’s a pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly 39 friends from the Building Trades of Alberta. They’re in the

Legislature today to advocate for the workers of our province. The organization’s history dates back to 1906, when they represented local lathers, plumbers, typographers, bricklayers, painters, and carpenters. Today Building Trades represents the interests of 16 Alberta trade unions and 75,000 hard-working Albertans in residential, commercial, and industrial construction, maintenance, and fabrication industries. I’d like to thank them for taking the time to come out and to speak to us about several important issues that affect our trades and our workers. I will not name all 39, but I would like them to all stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs, I believe you had some other introductions.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m honoured to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly distinguished veterans from the Royal Canadian Air Force. Beyond their distinguished service in the air force these are members of the Griesbach RCAF Commemorative Society, that has helped to raise \$258,000 to have the *Ad Astra* sculpture and storyboards installed in the beautiful village of Griesbach. The storyboards and the RCAF history are currently on display in the pedway connecting the Legislature to the Federal Building. These distinguished guests truly exemplify the RCAF motto, to the stars. Please stand as I introduce you: Brigadier General Bill Buckham, retired, and Ms Keatha Buckham; Honorary Colonel Bart West and Ms Carole West – on a side note, Carol and Bart’s granddaughter Claire is a page here with us at the Legislature – Lieutenant-Colonel Dave Ives, retired, and Ms Maureen Ives; Captain Ed Lindberg, retired, and Ms Marilyn Lindberg; Lieutenant-Colonel Jim Gillespie, retired, and Ms Molly Gillespie; Major Ken Usher, retired; Mr. Marvin Neumann, director of Canada Lands; Mr. Joe Linzen, CEO of Stainless Dreams Ltd.; and Ms Sue Castall, Griesbach RCAF Commemorative Society. I would ask all my guests to remain standing as they receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome, and thank you.

To the grandparents of the page, I understand the special opportunity you have to see your granddaughter here at work.

The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions today. The first is to recognize members of the Lung Association of Alberta & NWT, who are seated in the members’ gallery. Today is lung health day, and I hope my colleagues were able to stop by the display downstairs to assess how their lungs are working. I encourage Albertans to join me in recognizing lung health month this November and to offer their support to people in our province living with respiratory illness. I ask that Leigh Allard, president and CEO, as well as Deb Anderson, who did my test, rise and receive the warm welcome of our Assembly.

I also rise to recognize some of Alberta’s medical radiation technologists, who are also seated in the members’ gallery. I’m honoured to have these health professionals from across the Alberta Health Services, Edmonton zone, join us during MRT Week to celebrate the outstanding contributions of MRTs to the well-being of Albertans. These technologists use their specialized knowledge of image and radiation therapy equipment to support the diagnosis and treatment of Albertans. Certainly, I know that many people who live with cancer spend more time with their MRT than they do any other health professional during that journey. I’d ask that those who

are here, including Kim, Darren, Steve, Cuong, Kristy, Runell, Heather, Patricia, Megan, Adwait, Nancy, Fern, Rebecca, Alicia, Deena, Chris, and Tyson, please rise and receive our warm welcome and our appreciation.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Nielsen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a real honour to be able to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a group of very hard-working individuals from On Site Placement. Today with us we have Patricia Pasemko, executive director; Jeff Howlett, business development manager; program managers Katherine Macdonald and Marian Sanderson; and Tracy Smith, temp agency co-ordinator. Since 1981 On Site Placement has been operating as a nonprofit, with a vision of creating employment placement opportunities by matching the skills and abilities of individuals to contribute in a meaningful way to the success of their business community partners. I would like to thank OSP for their contributions to our community and for attending my A Taste of Decore event for the last two years. I would ask my guests to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

1:40

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to all members of the Legislature I'd like to introduce Mr. Slavo Cech. Slavo is up behind me. Slavo Cech from Metal Urges in Edmonton has been creating hand-forged artwork for homes, commercial spaces, and public venues such as the Royal Alberta Museum and the Legislature for over 20 years. I'll be presenting a members' statement on the Royal Alberta Museum later today. I'd ask Slavo to stand and receive the usual warm reception of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to make two introductions today. First of all, I rise to introduce representatives from the Council of Alberta University Students. They're here at the Legislature this week to meet with me and many of my colleagues in this House about issues that matter to Alberta students. Our government is listening to students, which is why last week we were proud to introduce Bill 19. Our bill builds on five years of frozen tuition by capping future tuition increases to inflation. This is exactly what the students of CAUS have been advocating for, and we're proud to be a government that listens to students. I ask that the following please rise as I say your names: Andrew Bieman, Amanda LeBlanc, Parvin Sedighi, Andrew Nguyen, Victoria Schindler, Reed Larsen, Adam Brown, Sagar Grewal, Anayat Sidhu, and Shifrah Gadamsetti. Please accept the warm traditional greeting of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Mr. Schmidt: For my second introduction, Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to introduce an outstanding member of Alberta's apprenticeship family and some folks important to his support system. Arden Callsen received a top apprentice award from my ministry's apprenticeship branch. He is a registered journeyperson, red seal ironworker, and now teaches in the Trade Winds program. He's joined by some important people in his life: his brother Lars, and she is not his younger sister but, in fact, his mother, Mary-Jane. With him is also Gary Savard of the Ironworkers local 720. I ask

that my guests please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly two of our city's bravest, who are seated in your gallery. It cannot be understated, the duty of first responders, who Albertans count on to perform dangerous tasks on a daily basis at a moment's notice. While firefighters face personal scares in battling fires, they are also subject to unseen harms by way of exposure to great scenes of tragedy, that can cause the deepest of scars to one's psyche. So I share great pleasure with you in this Assembly in introducing two of Medicine Hat's finest firefighters, who also find the time to advocate on behalf of their colleagues and Alberta rules. I would like to ask two of Medicine Hat's finest department firefighters, Gerald Bodnaruk and Patrick Jerome, to rise and accept the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome. It's an important honour and privilege to have you here with us, and I'm glad my peer talked about Medicine Hat.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a tremendous privilege to rise and introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Mr. Doug Van Helden. Mr. Van Helden is a constituent, a neighbour, and he is my insurance broker. It was wonderful to run into Doug earlier today, and I ask him to now please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you Mr. Dean Murray, who is a business agent with local 720 of the Ironworkers. He resides in Fort Saskatchewan with his lovely family, who own and operate the Daisy-A-Day floral shop. I will recommend it to all of my colleagues. It not only will help you out in a jam with a loved one, but it also makes some very beautiful arrangements when we've needed them in times of sympathy for our neighbours. If he could stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Royal Alberta Museum

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is blessed with 21 provincial historic sites and museums, which can be found in every corner of Alberta. They are a tremendous resource to Albertans by making our fascinating history accessible to Albertans of all ages and to a burgeoning number of tourists eager to experience our paleontological, geological, indigenous, industrial, and multicultural heritage.

On October 3 the new Royal Alberta Museum was opened. What a tremendous facility. The architecture is stunning, and I was so pleased to see the preservation of the large exterior murals that had adorned the post office building replaced by RAM. On opening day I spent several hours touring the galleries, including the high-profile

Natural History room, with its dinosaurs, mastodons, and dioramas, and the Bug Room as well as the extensive indigenous culture exhibits, which integrate indigenous belief systems into the museum. I was particularly touched by the power of the Manitou Stone.

During my visit to the Human History Hall I came across two exhibits which had particular resonance with me. One of them was an iron lung from the Aberhart hospital. It looks like the boiler chamber from an old-fashioned farm tractor, but it was a life-saving contraption for Albertans like Gary McPherson in the '50s and '60s, who had polio. Gary survived because of the machine and the care of doctors such as Dr. Brian Sproule and nurses such as Val Kamitomo, who became Gary's wife. I think of Gary's heroism a lot, particularly when vaccination campaigns are questioned.

The other evocative exhibit is right next to the iron lung. It's an important relic of west Edmonton's cultural history. The original thunderbird totem pole from the CFRN station on Stony Plain Road has been salvaged and rehabilitated by CFRN employees and the grandson of the original carver, who has ensured that it is a respectful recognition of indigenous culture.

The new Royal Alberta Museum is a world-class facility, and I encourage all Albertans to come and enjoy it.

Diwali

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Official Opposition I'm pleased to rise to wish all Albertans celebrating a happy Diwali and a happy Bandi Chhor Divas. Alberta is blessed to be the home of tens of thousands of new Canadians and their descendants of Indian origin, so many of whom are part of the ancient Hindu tradition and faith.

I recently had an opportunity, on my fifth visit to India with two of my colleagues, to reacquaint myself with that magnificent tradition, visiting the second-largest mandir in the world at Akshardham, near New Delhi, and also celebrating the Ganesh Chaturthi in a large mandir in Mumbai.

But this week, of course, Hindus around the world will be celebrating Diwali as the festival of lights, a tradition that goes back thousands of years and represents the victory of light over darkness, of good over evil, and of knowledge over ignorance. I believe that on behalf of all members I'd like to wish members of Alberta's vibrant and successful Hindu community a happy Diwali and to members of our Sikh community as well a happy celebration of Bandi Chhor Divas. [Remarks in Punjabi]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Mark Sandilands

Ms Fitzpatrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I say goodbye to my friend Mark Sandilands. This evening my spirit will be with Leona and all of those whose lives have been touched by Mark. They may be students, skiers, skaters, windsurfers, dragon boat racers, swimmers, those who competed against him and those he coached, political junkies or social activists, who looked forward to his impassioned contributions to the *Lethbridge Herald* to set the record straight.

Mark was engaged in our community. A professor at U of L for over 32 years Mark served on the University of Lethbridge Faculty Association in many roles. He was a learned man and utilized his knowledge in life through his interaction with many community organizations such as Lethbridge Family Services; the Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect; Alberta mental health, victims, and families subcommittee; Alberta community corrections

as a cofacilitator of educational groups for abusive men; the city of Lethbridge's Domestic Violence Action Team.

I met Mark in 2012, just before Christmas, when he engaged me to get involved at the executive level. I am where I am today in part because he asked me and supported me to run. Despite my sadness at the loss of my friend, I know I have been so fortunate to have known Mark. He gave me his friendship and his sage advice through thoughtful discussion. I felt valued and empowered, as I do today.

He ran twice provincially and twice federally, improving his numbers every time, and was a staunch NDP supporter because he believed, as we do, that governments can work and fight for the people. Thank you.

1:50

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Investment in Alberta and Job Creation

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I asked the Premier about what plan the government has to address the growing jobs crisis in Alberta with 184,000 unemployed Albertans and six months of growing unemployment. We didn't get an answer, and it sounds like it just means more taxes, regulation, and debt. But that's being reflected – one of the reasons for the unemployment is a crisis of investor confidence. Imperial Oil finally got approval after five years on a \$3 billion investment, but they're not sure that they will proceed. What does the Premier plan to do to restore investor confidence in Alberta?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, thank you to the member for the question. What we're going to do is continue to do what we have been doing. Let me just, you know, set the context. Cast your mind back to 2015. The folks over there were in power, oil prices had collapsed, and tens of thousands of jobs had already been lost. What did they propose? A new health care levy on all Albertans, and 12,000 students going to school without a new teacher. Fast-forward three years: 90,000 new jobs created, fastest growing economy in the country. Do we have more work to do? Yes, we do, but we're not going to stop fighting for Alberta.

Mr. Kenney: You heard it right there from the Premier, Mr. Speaker. More of the same is their message to 180,000 unemployed Albertans and tens of thousands of others who have given up looking for work. In fact, there are 42,000 more unemployed Albertans today than when the NDP came to office.

Now, EnCana, one of our major companies, has just moved nearly \$8 billion of Alberta capital to the United States. Now most of their operations are in the U.S. That is capital that could be creating jobs here in the province. How is the Premier going to bring investment like that back to Alberta with . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Madam Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. What we're going to continue to do is fight for market access for Alberta's oil and gas industry. That is a fundamentally important piece to growing our important oil and gas economy in this province. As the member opposite knows after 10, 20 years in Ottawa, they were unable to get a new pipeline to tidewater. We're going to keep pushing for it. We know that's a fundamental problem with the issues that he identifies, and we're going to keep fighting for our oil and gas industry and for the workers that they employ across this province.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the Premier just repeating ad nauseam falsehoods doesn't make them any more true. The Harper government got four pipelines built, that increased shipments of oil by 1.72 million barrels per day, while this Premier, of course, endorsed Justin Trudeau's veto of Northern Gateway, said nothing about his killing Energy East, and has allowed her New Democrat friends in British Columbia to run roughshod over Trans Mountain. It's not just EnCana that shifted job-creating capital out of Alberta. We've lost a hundred billion dollars of investment. What does the Premier plan to do apart from raising taxes and more red tape?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Ms Notley: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite talks about taxes, and I appreciate that his primary goal is to give a \$700 million tax break to the top 1 per cent. He never talks about how he's going to pay for it.

But what I know is that what we've been doing is we have worked. We have created 90,000 jobs in the last year. Retail sales are up. Manufacturing is up. We're leading the country in economic growth. What we didn't do was throw teachers and nurses out of work to give the top 1 per cent a bigger tax break. I know that's the member opposite's plan. It is not ours.

The Speaker: Second main question.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, our primary goal is to reignite Alberta's economy to get these people back to work, the 184,000 Albertans who are looking for work today. Now, yesterday the Alberta Chambers of Commerce said that the foundations of our prosperity are being eroded. The cost of doing business in Alberta is high relative to other jurisdictions due in part to the carbon levy, onerous labour law reforms, and a burdensome regulatory environment. Why is the NDP, according to the Chambers of Commerce, making a bad situation worse for Alberta job creators?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that the member opposite and many people in his caucus do not support the kinds of things we brought forward, for instance the minimum wage. But, you know, I think it really says a lot about a leader of a party when what he wants to do is give a \$700 million tax break to the richest 1 per cent of Albertans and at the same time gets up in this House and complains about things like a living wage for single moms, single parents, trying to make ends meet across this province. Three hundred thousand people are now helped by that minimum wage, and we are proud of that.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I'll remind the Premier that since she raised taxes on Albertans, they're generating less, not more, revenue from both personal and corporate income taxes. The Alberta chamber, whose opinion, apparently, she doesn't have any concern for, also said yesterday that

corporate tax increases along with the provincial carbon [tax] and costlier environmental regulations have resulted in weak job growth, layoffs, and the highest unemployment rate outside of Atlantic Canada.

Is the Premier saying that this organization that represents job creators is wrong?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, we have been very happy to work with a number of key job creators across this province. We've introduced the capital investment tax credit and the investor tax credit. We've actually cut the small-business tax by a third. So, in fact, we have worked very collaboratively with the business

community. At the same time we are also doing things like ensuring that there is a minimum wage in this province that allows people to put food on the table and keep a roof over their heads without stopping at the food bank on the way home, and I would suggest that the member opposite ought to start thinking about those folks as well because – you know what? – they vote, too.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, under the NDP's failed economic plan of higher taxes, higher debt, and more red tape, there are more Albertans, not fewer – more Albertans – using food banks. There are more Albertans who are unemployed than before. There's a hundred billion dollars of capital that has fled these policies, leading to this jobs crisis, and her only answer is to raise the carbon tax by 67 per cent and drive our debt to nearly a hundred billion dollars. When will the Premier and the NDP start listening to the people who actually create jobs in our economy and reduce the cost of doing business and creating jobs?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Ms Notley: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, I find it very ironic that the member opposite on one hand is talking about debt and deficit, yet all he wants to actually do is cut taxes for the top 1 per cent of the province. It doesn't add up. You know what? The member opposite should not be focusing so much on unicorn-type ideas. He needs to start being more practical. The reality is that we are working with businesses. We've had Flair Air move their headquarters from Kelowna, B.C., to Edmonton; CN Rail investing \$320 million in Alberta for new upgrades; and Nexen investing \$400 million to expand their Long Lake oil sands. The list goes on. We will continue to work to create jobs . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Third main question.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, what doesn't add up is raising taxes on job creators and generating less revenue. We're now three and a half years into the NDP's failed economic experiment: higher tax rates, lower revenues, less for public services. We are spending more. I'll grant the NDP that. We're spending billions more on interest payments to bankers and bondholders instead of on schools and hospitals. Why won't the government listen to Alberta's job creators and stop layering more and more costs and red tape on those . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The fact of the matter is that in Alberta Albertans enjoy an over \$11 billion tax advantage over the next lowest taxed province in the country. So we are maintaining that competitive advantage. You know, the member opposite sometimes likes to picture himself as a master of logic, but it's a little bit disingenuous to fail to talk about the historic drop in oil prices as being a factor in what this government is managing. The previous government left this province unprepared to deal with that drop in oil prices, and we are . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Kenney: There we go again, blaming oil prices, Mr. Speaker. I'll remind the Premier that in U.S. states that are similarly dependent on oil and gas, like North Dakota, Colorado, and Texas, the unemployment rate is at 3 per cent or less. In Alberta it's 7.2 per

cent and climbing. The NDP can't blame the bogeyman of oil prices anymore. The Alberta Chambers of Commerce, the Edmonton and Calgary chambers of commerce, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the job creators are all saying the same thing: the carbon tax, higher taxes, and more red tape are killing jobs. When will the NDP listen?

2:00

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What we will continue to do is to invest in Albertans and invest in Alberta and continue the path where, notwithstanding the most significant recession in this province's history in the last couple of generations, we continue creating jobs, as we've said, over 90,000 in the last year and a half. Definitely – definitely – more work to do. But the path to better outcomes is not laying off 4,000 teachers, it is not laying off 4,000 nurses, and it is not getting rid of the kinds of things that protect Alberta's most vulnerable workers. All Albertans need to benefit as we come through this, not just their friends and insiders.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the most vulnerable Albertans, every one of them, have to pay the NDP's carbon tax, that they plan to raise by 67 per cent without any increase in the rebate, becoming a massively regressive tax on the poor. So much for the most vulnerable. I'm concerned about these 184,000 vulnerable unemployed Albertans, 42,000 more than were in the jobless queue when the NDP came to office. Is it really the case that the NDP's promise to those people is higher taxes, more red tape, more debt, and less hope?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. No. Our promise to these folks is 240 new schools. Our promise to these folks is class sizes in which their kids can learn now and in the future. Our promise to these folks is affordable tuition so that their kids can go to university in the future and create jobs throughout this economy. Our promise to these folks is a health care system that will be there for them when they need it and when their loved ones need it. Our promise to these folks is to make sure that this economic recovery is shared by all Albertans, not just the top 1 per cent.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Public Service Workplace Bullying and Harassment Policies

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A question for the Premier: if a member of Alberta's public service wanted to raise a question about a culture of fear and intimidation in the workplace, how would they go about it?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the member opposite knows, our government did bring in legislation to improve our whistle-blower process. That is indeed in place, and of course I believe it has been working appropriately since it's been put in place.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Premier: does Executive Council or the government of Alberta have policies in place to ensure a harassment-free workplace for all public servants, and do those protections extend to Members of the Legislative Assembly?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. It's a fundamental belief of our government that everyone deserves to go to work free of harassment, intimidation, bullying, or assault. That, of course, includes all members of the public service, elected officials, and all Albertans. We have no tolerance for bullying or harassment of any kind.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect, we've now had two members of this Assembly raise very serious allegations, including the alleged cover-up of inappropriate behaviour on the part of members on both sides of the House.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I hope the focus is on government policy. I hope that's where this is going.

Mr. Clark: Again to the Premier: how can Albertans or those who work in the public service have faith in the antibullying policies that are in place when your own government doesn't seem to play by the same rules?

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, let me just say that I'm obviously very disappointed with the decision that was taken by the Member for Calgary-East. But let me also say how proud I am of the team that sits with me here on this side of the House. As Premier I could not be more fortunate. They are doing extraordinary jobs, they act with integrity, and they know that the hard work of change sometimes comes with good days and bad days and hard days and easy days. But they never take their eye off the ball, and together our caucus is fighting for a better Alberta. [some applause]

The Speaker: Order, please. Order.

Promotion of Alberta's Technology Sector

Mr. Nielsen: Mr. Speaker, the tech sector is a burgeoning industry in Alberta. It will help diversify our economy and create good-paying jobs. Can the Minister of Economic Development and Trade tell the House how the interactive digital media tax credit is supporting this very rapidly growing industry in Alberta?

The Speaker: The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll thank the member for the important question. Frankly, for far too long previous governments neglected our tech sector. They didn't listen to businesses who were asking for a level playing field. I'm very proud of the fact that we have introduced the interactive digital media tax credit, which is levelling the playing field between Alberta, Quebec, and B.C., that have enjoyed tax credits for many, many years and, because of it, have a burgeoning tech sector. I'm very proud of the fact that our plan is already working. A company called Improbable, a billion-dollar U.K. tech company, is relocating here to Edmonton because of the ...

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Nielsen: Mr. Speaker, Silicon Valley is known world-wide as the tech hub. However, given labour costs many leading organizations are looking at moving operations to places with significant talent. Alberta has that significant talent. What are we doing to make sure that Alberta is on the radar of these organizations?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Not only does Alberta have incredible talent; we have no sales tax, no health care premiums, and no payroll tax in addition to the best talent in the world. I'm very proud to work with the Minister of Advanced Education to increase the number of student graduates in the tech space. We also have a new direct flight from Edmonton to Silicon Valley, and recently we hired a company called Connection Silicon Valley to help build those relationships between Alberta businesses and the valley and to attract investment from Silicon Valley back here to Alberta. I'm very proud of that. We are working with companies that are looking at setting up shop here in Alberta.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
Second supplemental.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that women, indigenous peoples, and people living with disabilities have historically been underrepresented in the tech sector, what is the government doing to ensure that as our tech sector grows, historically underrepresented groups are being represented?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know what? I'm very proud of the fact that our interactive digital media tax credit comes with an additional refund for payroll costs for underrepresented workers, the first of its kind in Canada. This way, we are incentivizing businesses to hire qualified, diverse staff. You know what else? Companies that have a diversity of workers and board members do better, they are more successful companies, and they have higher and better balance sheets. I can tell you that we're very proud of this. I'm curious to know why the Leader of the Opposition wants to kill this tax credit and others that are supporting the very job creators in Alberta.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Liability for Energy Industry Environmental Damage

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The current oil well programs – the licensee liability rating program, the Orphan Well Association, and the mine financial security program – are premised on a robust oil and gas industry, that allows companies to effectively defer abandonment and reclamation indefinitely. We know that there are fiscal and environmental liabilities now approaching \$260 billion, according to the most recent Energy Regulator estimates, that will otherwise default to present and future generations. To the minister: can you tell the House, after three and a half years, what has changed since your government committed to address these . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we know that Albertans are concerned about aging oil and gas infrastructure and about tailings ponds and that kind of thing, and we absolutely are, too. When we first formed government, we began looking at

the whole liability situation and fixing it, and we got a full picture. To be clear, we take it very seriously. For too long in the previous government, as was mentioned, there was no attention to that, and I can assure Albertans that we are paying attention.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Dr. Swann: I'll take that to mean that nothing has changed, Mr. Speaker.

Given that the licensee liability rating system is clearly failing to address growing numbers of orphan wells and cleanup costs and that the mine financial security program has on deposit a small fraction of what is needed to cover the costs, why in 2018 has there been no change to honestly and responsibly address these massive looming public liabilities?

2:10

The Speaker: The hon. minister

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, there has been quite a bit of change since we took government. Under our climate leadership plan we have provided incentives for companies to do clean technologies such as CNRL's new technology for dry tailings. Shell and Suncor are collaborating on a new process that dewater mature tailings, meaning faster reclamation, slower growth. And we have revamped the tailings management framework and strengthened reclamation standards to ensure that fluid tailings are trending to long-term reclamation outcomes.

Dr. Swann: With all due respect to the minister, she's ignoring the elephant in the room.

The Speaker: No preamble, hon. member. Keep going.

Dr. Swann: The new Energy Regulator report suggests \$260 billion of liability potentially falling to the public after a government's estimate, over many years, of \$56 billion. We're talking about a fivefold increased risk, yet the vice-president of the Alberta Energy Regulator said that it's likely to grow as more data becomes available, not cut back. Should Albertans believe . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The numbers that the member is referencing represent a snapshot in time, and the number is closer to \$50 billion. The fact of the matter is that regardless of what it is, we have taken four actions: we've provided that loan to the Orphan Well Association, cleaning up wells faster, employing 1,600 people; we've tightened up the rules and the loopholes the previous government left in place; we've made a number of clean tech investments; and four, we are seeking long-term solutions to a long-term problem, calling on the federal government to amend the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act in response to the Redwater decision.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, for the record, this question was not given to me from a minister.

Calgary's 2026 Winter Olympics Bid

Mr. Barnes: In one week from today, though, Calgarians will be voting on whether or not Calgary should proceed with their 2026 Winter Olympics bid. To make an informed decision, Calgarians need transparency and full understanding of costs and potential

implications for taxpayers. A 2012 Oxford University study found that, on average, cost overruns for Winter Olympic Games between 1960 and 2012 were 135 per cent – 135 per cent – Mr. Speaker. To the minister: who will be responsible for cost overruns should they occur?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much. With regard to Olympic financing, Mr. Speaker, we have been very clear. From the government of Alberta \$700 million is all we can do towards the Olympic financing. That has been clear. We've shared that with our partners. We've shared that with Calgarians because we came out with that information 30 days before the plebiscite of November 13. So it's well understood that \$700 million is it from the government of Alberta.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the federal government has said that they are not responsible for cost overruns as part of their hosting policy and given that they also made clear this week that this precludes any security cost overruns and given that the recent Vancouver Winter Olympics planned \$175 million for security but spent nearly five times that, \$900 million, to the minister: has the province made any contingency plans should a cost overrun occur, or do they expect cost overruns to be shifted to the Alberta taxpayer?

Mr. Ceci: Mr. Speaker, I've been clear about how much money is coming from the government of Alberta in my last answer. What I can tell you is that contingencies are built into all of the parts of the budget and the budget lines. You know, the BidCo people are the ones who have put that together. We've had people sitting on that as well. We've been clear up front: \$700 million is it. You'd need to speak to the other two orders of government with regard to your questions.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, given that the city of Calgary is already facing challenges, including the country's second-highest unemployment rate, struggling to collect property taxes given the depressed downtown property values and given that the \$390 million municipal portion has been estimated to result in a 1.3 per cent increase in Calgarians' property taxes and that cost overruns could make that amount even higher, again to the minister: can you tell Albertans if your officials have done any analysis on the economic impact of raised property taxes on the Calgary economy, and would you commit to releasing that to the House, please?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you. What I can tell Calgarians is that they'll have an opportunity to vote on whether they want to see the Olympics in their city. Advance polls start today and go tomorrow, and on November 13 there are polls across the city as well. Calgarians have the information from the government of Alberta – \$700 million is assured from this order of government – and they have the opportunity to put an X where they want to with the plebiscite.

United States Tariff on Steel

Mr. Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, this NDP government did a disservice to Albertans and workers during the NAFTA renegotiations. Their do-no-harm trade negotiation tactic obviously didn't work. Alberta

steel producers are left with a carbon tax and a 25 per cent tariff. A local steel producer here in Edmonton estimates that 60,000 tonnes of steel exported to the United States are now subject to this tariff. Given that the NDP's good friend and ally Justin Trudeau today just admitted that the 25 per cent tariff will remain even if the USMCA is ratified, why has the NDP trade minister not made this tariff reduction a priority?

The Speaker: The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to share with the new member of the House that I've been in constant communication with the federal government talking about the implications of the steel tariffs that the U.S. imposed on Canada, also ensuring that Ottawa is well aware of the implications of Canada's countertariffs and how that's going to impact Alberta, not just our steel producers but also our consumers. That's where and who is being hit very, very hard. I can tell you that the USMCA is a trade agreement that is critical to the future of Alberta and of Canada, and we ensured that we were standing up for Alberta interests and communicating that to the federal government.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, quite simply, will the Minister of Economic Development and Trade commit that he will lobby his Trudeau Liberal allies to not sign the new USMCA trade deal until an agreement is in place to remove this tariff?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure if I'm going to agree to that because the USMCA has significant repercussions on a number of different industries. I'd love for the hon. member to go consult with the forestry sector, the agriculture sector, our energy sector, who actually is quite satisfied with the USMCA and the fact that energy is not being either penalized or hurt through this deal. They understood because we worked very closely with them on the potential repercussions of a trade deal. Now, what I can tell the member is that I've written a number of letters to the federal government and will continue to stand up for our steel producers and for our consumers but not at the expense of other industries.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, given that Alberta steel producers export around half a billion dollars' worth of steel to the United States, why is the minister playing politics with the livelihoods of so many working Albertans? Why won't they champion Alberta's interests and stand up against their Trudeau Liberal allies in Ottawa?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the Conservatives are saying that we shouldn't sign this deal at any cost, not realizing the billions of dollars that it would cost Albertans, Alberta companies, and Alberta workers and communities. They have no plan to diversify the economy. Our government has been working very, very diligently at diversifying the economy, working with our job creators. We will continue to work with the steel sector as well as every other sector to ensure that Alberta continues to remain competitive, and we will lobby Ottawa on their behalf, but I'm not about to take advice from that side of the House.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Opioid-related Deaths

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over 8,000 Canadians have died from opioid overdoses since 2016. Alberta has been hit hard by this crisis. We have the second-highest death rate nationally. In 2016 545 Albertans died from overdoses. So far this year, with two months to go, we already have 609 Albertans that have died from overdoses, and it doesn't end there. This summer the Calgary fire department reported a sixfold increase in their opioid responses from last year. These stats are completely unacceptable. What is this government doing to stop this growing crisis, and more importantly will they finally declare this a crisis?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. Certainly, our hearts go out to every family, every community member, every friend who's been impacted by these deaths. These were people that were loved by somebody and who have now died. We certainly want everyone who is struggling with opioids to know that they're not alone, that the crisis continues to have devastating effects on families across the province and the country. That's why we're expanding treatment options throughout our province. That's why today we're opening more supervised opioid consumption services, because we want people to have the opportunity to live another day, and we will continue to fight for them every day in this House and outside.

2:20

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, if this government considered this a crisis, they would have officials from Health and Justice and human services all working together along with their partners at the municipal, provincial, and federal levels. You're simply a facilitator. Why exactly did this government choose not to work with our confederation to study this issue? Why did you opt out of a national study on this opioid crisis? Why could you not work concurrently with this federal study while you worked on your provincial review? Is multitasking difficult?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are certainly working every day to save lives, and we won't back down from that cause. We have 4,000 more treatment spaces available in Alberta today because this government is fighting every day for the front lines, fighting for folks who are dying, and fighting to make sure that we have more opportunities for them to live another day. We've distributed over 80,000 life-saving naloxone kits, and more than 4,500 overdose reversals have been reported back to us. It's probably even more than that. Supervised consumption services continue to save lives. We're going to keep moving on all of those fronts. We'll continue to work with our partners in the federal government, but Alberta and B.C. are leading on this file, and we will continue to do so.

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, this minister claims that she's getting results, that she's addressing the crisis at hand, yet two Albertans every day are dying from this opioid crisis. The government's role model in combatting this opioid crisis, B.C., has seen its life expectancy drop by six months. Tens of thousands of Narcan kits have been distributed, yet we see still an upward trend in overdoses and drug abuse. This government is increasing dependency with these extended...

Speaker's Ruling Preambles

The Speaker: Hon. member, I want to just caution you, again, about the preambles. You're an experienced member of this House and would know that. I'd appreciate it if you'd address a specific question. The last two times you've given quite an exaggerated preamble without the question coming. I would ask that you focus at this point. What's your question? One sentence or less.

Opioid-related Deaths (continued)

Mr. Yao: The problem is obviously getting worse, not better. This government has demonstrated it doesn't want to work with our confederation to study the issue. When will the provincial...

The Speaker: Hon. member. [interjection] Hon. member.

Could I have the Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Carbon Levy and Agricultural Costs

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta farmers are part of the climate change solution through the amount of carbon they sequester by using new technology. Alberta farmers practise no till and minimum till, helping to retain carbon in the soil. They practise nutrient stewardship, applying the right fertilizer at the right rate, at the right time, and in the right place. Canadian canola growers have used biotechnology to reduce emissions by 1 billion kilograms, the equivalent of taking 500,000 cars off the road. Yet this NDP government penalizes the agricultural industry with ever-increasing carbon taxation. Why?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, the hon. member is quite right that there were a number of examples of climate leadership even before our government put in place our policies. Under the Conservative carbon tax there were a number of offset protocol opportunities for farmers that they took advantage of and that they continue to take advantage of. That's one way that the agricultural sector is certainly doing its part. Another way is through the \$80 million worth of reinvestments that we have made of carbon levy funds into agricultural sector efficiency. All of those investments would be cancelled if we do as they ask and...

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, given that carbon taxation adds costs to farm inputs and transportation, making it more expensive to produce food in Alberta, and given that our key competitors around the world are not exposed to carbon taxation, why does this NDP government continue to punish our agricultural industry, a trade-exposed industry, with carbon taxation?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, of course, we have a marked fuel exemption. We have the \$80 million worth of investments in efficiency that I talked about. All of those investments would be cancelled if we allowed Justin Trudeau to impose his plan on Alberta, as is the preferred strategy by the folks opposite. But, also, we have brought in output-based allocations, in particular for our oilseeds producers. What we're looking for is for that system to prevail and take some national

leadership so that we have a level playing field for everyone, because our system was developed in consultation with those industries.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, given that carbon policy needs to recognize both emissions and sequestration and given that farmers sequester more carbon in farm crops and grasses than they emit and given that I am now hearing that the NDP is devaluing the carbon emission offset credits available for investment under the CCIR, is what I'm hearing true? If so, why is the government increasing taxation on farmers while at the same time lowering the value of carbon credits in this province?

Ms Phillips: Well, the fact of the matter is that our carbon offsets have increased in value, Mr. Speaker, so that's the first place where the hon. member's facts are incorrect. But here's the thing. The entire system will be repealed and a system imposed on us by Ottawa. All of the system that we have carefully crafted in consultation with our fertilizer producers, with our canola crushers, with our farmers: all of that disappears if these folks have their way and they roll out the red carpet for Justin Trudeau to do whatever he wants, because that's apparently the preferred Conservative strategy.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Municipal Election Financing

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When the government introduced their first bill to regulate campaign financing, they claimed that they were taking big money out of politics. During the debate on the bill many members of this House pointed out that their bill was actually more likely to just drive that big money into less transparent and accountable areas. Intended or not, your government encouraged the growth of third-party advertisers and political action committees. Big money hasn't left politics; it's just found a new home. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: does your plan to regulate municipal campaign finances address the issue of PACs, or do you want to keep this glaring loophole intact?

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you for the question. We've listened hard to people all across this province who want big money out of municipal elections, local elections, and that includes municipalities, Métis settlements, school boards, and irrigation districts. Our focus is on making sure that it's about big ideas and not about big pockets, Mr. Speaker. We've heard it, and we are making sure that we get that done.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that incumbents in elections already have a number of advantages over challengers and given that one of these advantages is the ability to fund raise in a greater capacity and given that municipal donations do not qualify for a tax receipt, making fundraising even more difficult, and given that all of these concerns mean that challengers from minority and underrepresented groups are going to face even more barriers to running, to the same minister. Your proposed changes to municipal campaign finances are going to stack the deck in favour of the incumbent. What are you doing to offset those barriers?

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you to the member for the question, Mr. Speaker. This is on the Order Paper right now. The name of it is an Act to Renew Local Democracy in Alberta. We are going to debate that, all of the facts. I will have all that information for him during

the debate in the House, and I will gladly make sure that I answer those questions in the fulsome way that I can during that debate, in particular in Committee of the Whole.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that fundraising as an individual is going to get harder and given that third-party advertisers and political action committees have access to more resources than any individual candidate and given that this will provide an incentive for individual candidates to align themselves with PACs and third-party advertisers to gain support and resources, leading to municipal politics being dominated by ideological slates, to the same minister: what, if anything, are you doing to ensure that municipal elections remain free from outside influence by dark money groups?

Mr. S. Anderson: Again, it's on the Order Paper, and we'll be able to debate it in fulsome way during Committee of the Whole. But I don't understand if the member doesn't get what freedom of speech is and how PACs work. It's unconstitutional to ban those types of things. Would he like to put more, you know. . .

An Hon. Member: Parameters.

Mr. S. Anderson: . . . parameters around it? I guess that is probably the word I'll use. Yeah, a hundred per cent we will, and if he'd read the bill, he would know that.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

Crime Rates

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week the Leader of the Official Opposition noted Calgary's spiking crime statistics, and the Minister of Justice shrugged him off. So allow me to provide some other crime-related stats which may surprise Albertans and perhaps even the minister herself. I'll start with Alberta's crime severity index. In 2014 it was at 87, and since then it has spiked to 110. Minister, why did the NDP government burden police with carbon tax when they need that money to fight the increase in crime?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, one of the things that our government noticed last year before we introduced our plan to combat rural crime – I understand that crime goes throughout the province, but certainly that's the portion that's within our jurisdiction. We hope that cities will step up and do the same. One of the reasons we did that was because we saw that uptrend in crime statistics and we felt that we needed to take immediate action to help Albertans, as opposed to the opposition, who voted against that money.

2:30

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Ellis: Mr. Speaker, thank you. Now, given that last year Edmonton posted the second-highest crime severity index among Canada's 25 largest cities and given that according to the EPS website this index is continuing its climb in 2018, Minister, if, as you claim, this government is addressing Alberta's crime wave, then why is the crime severity index still increasing?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We certainly do know that there have been challenges with crimes, and we know that that rate is coming down. We have good numbers from the RCMP with respect to that, but we know that that is not felt equally throughout the province. That's why we're continuing to work with our law enforcement to make sure that we are investing in front-line services as opposed to the opposition, who voted against 59 additional RCMP officers, against 20 additional Crown prosecutors, against 40 new RCMP civilian personnel, and the list goes on.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that Albertans were the victims of 30,000 break and enters just last year and that that's a 35 per cent increase in the number of B and Es since 2014 and given that when the Member for Calgary-Lougheed confronted the minister just last week with stats outlining Alberta's crime wave she could only say, "We need to continue working with our police partners to address these issues" – Minister, working with police partners is and should be a given, so what are you actually doing to address this issue?

Ms Ganley: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think one of the most important things we're doing is that we're continuing to support our municipal partners with more than half a billion dollars in police funding. Interestingly, half a billion dollars is slightly lower than the \$700 million tax giveaway that the opposition would like to give to the richest 1 per cent, that would wipe out the entire police budget. So what we're going to continue to do is invest in services, invest in front-line police officers. I wonder whether the opposition regrets voting against those things.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Provincial Achievement Tests

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I regret to inform you that the Minister of Education has not achieved an acceptable result in his responses to the questions about why a passing score for the math PATs was set at 42 per cent, also known as a cut score. The minister knows that this is not a problem that will be solved solely by a new curriculum because the PATs are tailored to the curriculum. To the Minister of Education, a multiple-choice question: is the cut-score problem caused by (a) bad resources, (b) bad assessments, (c) bad teaching methodology, or (d) all of the above?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, the hon. member has an amusing perspective on what is a very serious issue, and that is around ensuring that we have basic skills for kids in mathematics and in language arts in the province of Alberta. We are doing that. We are building new curriculum. More importantly, we are making the investment in education to make sure that kids have teachers in front of them. You don't improve the situation by taking 4,000 teachers out of the system, which they are planning to do.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta parents have been asking that the cut scores be released and explained and given that this is a reasonable expectation on the part of parents and given that parents are becoming frustrated by the secrecy and evasiveness of the minister, to the same minister. True or false: the Minister of Education will publish and explain cut scores for future PATs?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I must say that we are very proud of our provincial achievement exam results here in this last year. We saw marked improvements in mathematics in Grade 12 and in Grade 6 and part of Grade 9 as well. We weren't afraid to ask the hard question of kids writing in Grade 9 and now in Grade 6 having a no-calculator section. That's what parents were looking for. That's what basic skills are all about, and you don't achieve those basic skills by making a \$700 million cut to the budget to give it to their rich friends when we could actually use that money in schools.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I guess the answer was: false.

Given that the cut score for question period today has been set at 66 per cent and given that the minister's nonanswers to my previous questions mean that he has once again failed to achieve an acceptable result and given that assessments are tailored to the curriculum that is taught, which means that even a perfect curriculum could not magically solve this problem, to the same minister: a homework assignment. What are you going to do to address the problem of cut scores?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I must say that when we introduced the grade 6 no-calculator portion two years ago, the kids struggled. This year they ended up with a 7.2 per cent increase in that one part of the exam. I'm not going to apologize for teaching basic skills and having that expectation in our classrooms. If people want to evade that or misconstrue it as anything but an improvement, then that's just not good mathematics, and that's just bad education. You know, I think we are doing an excellent job.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Federal Bill C-69

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's energy competitiveness is impacted by the cumulative cost of poor government policy such as not standing up with this side of the House against Bill C-69. Does the government not understand that we will continue to lose over \$75 million a week and thousands of good-paying jobs? How is this standing up for Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. With respect to Bill C-69 the province has taken Alberta's concerns straight to Ottawa's doorstep. We are fighting for Alberta. We are engaging at every level, and in fact the Deputy Minister of Environment and Parks is in Ottawa today meeting with senior officials in multiple departments to follow up on the meetings that I had in Ottawa. We're meeting with Senators and anyone who will listen to ensure Alberta's constitutional authority as the owner and regulator of natural resource development is respected.

Mrs. Aheer: Mr. Speaker, to be clear, the government voted twice against standing in unity with us against Bill C-69.

Given that as big energy projects wrap up, capital spending and resource development is falling because the big projects are not being replaced because we are uncompetitive and given that there are bottlenecks to getting our product to market and now we're more reliant on trucks and trains for transport, why will the

government not stand up with us in unity to oppose Bill C-69 and get our products to market?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know what? I'm very proud of the work that the Minister of Energy and the Minister of Environment and Parks and our Premier have done talking, engaging with Ottawa for the past year and a half, outlining our concerns with C-69. I'll tell you what we have done. Our Minister of Energy has modernized our royalty review to ensure that drilling is even more competitive and to incentivize companies to get going right away. We've also worked with the AER to make it easier to navigate through regulations. We know that we have incredible companies doing incredible work. I can tell you that there's a lot of work that has been done and is ongoing on this side of the House despite the fact that the members opposite . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
Second supplemental.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you. Well, Mr. Speaker, Bill C-69 needs to go away right away. Given that capital is fleeing Alberta, jobs are fleeing Alberta, business is fleeing Alberta, and we are not competing on the global scale because of actions like Bill C-69, why is this government helping to handcuff our people, our resources, and our prosperity?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we're working very hard every day for what matters to Alberta families, and that's getting pipelines, that's diversifying our economy, and that's creating the good jobs that the energy sector brings. We've worked very hard on our diversification plans. Inter Pipeline is currently building in Alberta, and they're going to bring value add, more value staying in Alberta for Albertans. We have one more project about to do an FID. This year we introduced Bill 1, which is going to provide a lot more incentives for people to bring diversification here to Alberta.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The hon. Member for Calgary-Acadia.

Climate Leadership Plan

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In October the UN panel on climate change report had dire warnings for the future if we aren't able to slow the pace of climate change. I'm hearing from Calgarians who are concerned about the impact on future generations and want to see action. Meanwhile crickets from the opposition. I'd like the minister responsible for the climate change office to outline how our government is working to support Albertans to reduce their carbon footprint.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, our preliminary data is showing that Alberta was reducing its greenhouse gas emissions last year and even this year largely out of the electricity sector. There are a number of different ways that Alberta is seeing results from the climate leadership plan. For example, with Energy Efficiency Alberta Albertans are saving \$10 for every \$1 they invest in residential energy efficiency. It's created 3,000 private-sector jobs and added half a billion dollars to the GDP through Energy Efficiency's one year of operation alone. Albertans

have saved \$400 million in energy costs. That is a massive savings for all Albertans.

2:40

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While the changes that individual Albertans are making have an impact on our carbon footprint and on individual pocketbooks, industrial carbon use is also a critically important part of the picture. How has government worked with the industry to address this, and what are some industrial leaders saying?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I can only quote from people like Brian Ferguson, who was the president of Cenovus, who said:

We fully support Alberta taking a leadership role in addressing climate change and we believe that one of the best ways to do that is through an economy-wide carbon levy as well as by supporting the development of carbon-reducing technologies.

I'll tell you how we've done that in the oil and gas industry, Mr. Speaker. It's through our methane reduction. We're already seeing companies grow by 1 to 300 per cent, the methane industry alliance advises us, based on the kinds of investments that we've made and the kinds of policies we've put in place.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that members opposite have made it clear that they don't believe in climate change or in the commonly accepted methods of addressing it such as carbon pricing, to the same minister: what are the consequences of rolling back these efforts, as the Official Opposition has pledged to do . . .

Mr. Nixon: Point of order.

The Speaker: Point of order noted.

Ms Payne: . . . and what is the consequence of literally doing nothing in the face of one of the greatest issues of our time?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There is no question that a plan imposed on us by Ottawa, as the Conservatives opposite would prefer to have done, would be very negative for Alberta. Investments in the green line and the Edmonton LRT: cancelled. Small business tax cut: cancelled. Policies that increase demand for natural gas in our electricity sector: cancelled. Biggest renewable opportunities in Canada: cancelled. Policies that help oil and gas invest in clean tech investments: cancelled. Policies for Alberta's farmers, our indigenous climate leadership programs – I know that the members opposite don't care – also cancelled.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we will continue with Members' Statements in 30 seconds. [interjections] Hon. members.

Members' Statements (continued)

Official Opposition and Government Policies

Mr. Loewen: For those Albertans who watch question period, it can be frustrating. Questions are asked, and the responses rarely have answers and usually contain a tirade of partisan attacks where

the truth is misrepresented and Albertans are misled. Here's a myth. They like to fearmonger about us only giving a tax break to the rich. The truth: UCP will give a \$3 billion tax break to all Albertans by just cancelling the carbon tax, unlike the NDP that massively raised taxes on all Albertans along with giving \$2 billion plus a year in interest to bankers and foreign investors.

Another fallacy. They say a change in government will mean thousands of nurses and teachers losing their jobs. The truth: these accusations are baseless and completely untrue, and they know it. The UCP will protect front-line workers like teachers and nurses. They always said that the opposition couldn't reduce the deficit without firing thousands, and now they claim to have done it. Obviously, it can be done.

Here is another tale. They claim that Conservative governments could not get a pipeline built. The truth: four major pipelines were built, and every major pipeline proposal was approved. You can't build pipelines that haven't been proposed. On the other hand, two major pipelines have been cancelled under this NDP government and their ally Trudeau, and other pipelines are in limbo. The NDP have watched private pipeline investment flee and can't even get one built when it is backed by billions of taxpayer dollars.

The NDP even have the gall to say that Conservatives are cheering for pipeline failures. The fact is that we've been ahead of the government at every step when it comes to supporting pipelines. In fact, just about every strategy the government has to get pipelines built was taken from the UCP playbook. The problem is that they were months or years too late.

This government even attacks our friends and neighbours in Saskatchewan. Perhaps their NDP friends there forgot to tell them that after decades of fiscal mismanagement and struggling public services, it was Brad Wall who got the books in order, spurred investment, and hired teachers, doctors, and nurses.

The NDP government has said that their policies are making life better for Albertans. If they think that massive tax increases, high unemployment, driving out billions of dollars in investment, attacking rural Alberta, increasing surgery wait times, and failing on getting pipelines built is making life better, then I'd hate to see what making life worse is.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Member's Tribute to His Father

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to pay tribute to my father, Junior Rulon Ruthven Shepherd, born in Marabella, Trinidad, on February 14, 1945, the fourth of 10 children. He loved electronics and working with his hands, which led him to vocational school and at 16 an apprenticeship with Texaco for 33 cents an hour. Two of his co-workers invited Dad to their church, where he adopted the faith that would define and shape the rest of his life. He spent six and a half years at Texaco. He taught himself to play guitar and harmonica, which he played at church, sometimes leading singing. You see, Dad had a beautiful baritone. I have many fond memories of sitting in the living room while he led family singalongs.

In 1966 Dad heard about jobs in Canada, and he leapt at the chance for a fresh start, touching down in August 1967 in the city where he'd spend the rest of his life, Edmonton. He quickly found work and became a journeyman electrician. He attended Sharon gospel chapel, where he met my mother, Annette. They started dating in 1969 and married the next year. By 1979 he had three daughters and one son. He worked incredibly hard to support us, including weeks as far away as Yellowknife when work here grew scarce. At 42 Dad enrolled at NAIT to pursue his original dream of

studying instrumentation, and that led to work repairing equipment at the Royal Alex hospital, where he worked until he retired. Dad remained devoted to his Christian faith, leading Bible studies, serving as a deacon and elder, tirelessly helping others, and welcoming newcomers.

In '99 Dad was diagnosed with prostate cancer but after treatment enjoyed good health in remission for many years. He was a devoted grandfather, helping raise four grandchildren and ensuring the other nine never ran short of teasing and dad jokes. In early 2016 we learned that Dad's cancer was back. He kept working in his church for as long as he could, and we had many more good days before he passed on June 14 of this year.

Dad and I held very different beliefs, but he taught me a lot. He gave me my first taste of music, my love of the mountains, and a strong work ethic. His memory will always be with me and now will also live in the record of this House.

Thanks, Dad. Rest in peace.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Freedom

Mr. Melver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Friday morning I was honoured to attend the flag raising at the field of crosses memorial project in Calgary on Memorial Drive. A ceremony happens daily at sunrise, and there is a ceremony at sunset, where the flags are lowered each day. If you go there, you will see 3,400 white crosses, each carrying the name, rank, regiment, date of death, and age at death of a Canadian from southern Alberta who has given their life in the military protecting our freedoms and quality of life.

It is a powerful image, showing in stark terms that our freedom is not free and never has been. On November 11 I expect that all members of this Legislature will find a place to go out in public and honour our women and men who serve in the military while remembering those who have served in the past, creating and protecting our freedoms. Mr. Speaker, we need to hold our freedoms closely every day and not take them for granted during the rest of the year.

Here are some freedoms that are under attack currently. The freedom for a person who tucks a child into bed at night to choose where and how that child is educated. There is a movement currently in Alberta to take away parents' choice in how they educate their children. We must resist this with all of our strength.

The freedom to practise the faith of our choice or indeed to practise no faith at all, if that is preferred, is under attack. Mr. Speaker, we recently saw the aftermath of active hate in Pittsburgh, where a person opened fire at a synagogue where people were peacefully praying. In recent memory innocent people at a mosque in Quebec were murdered out of hate while practising their faith. Many other faith communities around the world suffer unprovoked attacks fueled by hate.

Every time one of these events takes place, all of our freedoms are under attack. In many countries basic freedoms that we take for granted here are not respected. Women, people of a particular sexual orientation, and minority groups are routinely treated brutally in these countries.

Mr. Speaker, my desire is to have all of us think about our freedoms and thank those soldiers, sailors, and aircrew that have provided them, and my wish is that we remember every day and not just on November 11.

2:50

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have submitted to Parliamentary Counsel a request for an emergency debate, SO 30, today on the \$260 billion in unfunded oil patch liabilities.

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, do you have some reports as well?

Dr. Swann: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In relation to the SO 30 today are the appropriate number of copies of a PowerPoint presentation by the vice-president of liability, Mr. Robert Wadsworth, of the Alberta Energy Regulator. This has been circulated to members of the Legislature in preparation for this debate. It also highlights the inadequate representation of risk that has gone on for decades in this province, and it would give some very practical and concrete numbers for the members.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I believe we had one point of order. The Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Point of Order

Questions outside Ministerial Responsibility

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be brief. I rise on a point of order. I will refer you to *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition. I am looking at the section on principles and guidelines for oral questions, specifically page 509, the second bullet point, which I will quote to you: “ask a question that is within the administrative responsibility of the government or of the individual Minister addressed.”

What I have noticed today, Mr. Speaker – and I could have called a point of order several other times throughout the day, but I decided to let it go; on that question it just got so far that I think it’s become a bit ridiculous – is that the government has started each of their questions now spending time talking about what is hypothetically, maybe or maybe not, an opposition policy and then started to ask questions of the minister like: if that opposition policy was a policy, what does the minister think of it? Clearly, the process in question period is to ask a minister about the minister’s responsibilities, not hypothetical situations associated with the opposition, that, by the way, are not true. But that’s irrelevant to this point.

I think the government should, same as us, same as any backbencher or private member inside this Assembly, take the time and ask the minister about situations that have to do with their ministry, as per the process in this House. I recognize that the government doesn’t want to run on their record; however, in this Assembly they should at least participate in the process appropriately.

The Speaker: The Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to respond to this point of order. We do concede that the point of order reflects a concern that a question should be directed toward government policy. It would seem that it is fair that government policy can be questions as to not only what has been instituted but what policies may be instituted or what alternatives are being pursued, as is often a question from the other side of the House in terms of the nature of choices that are made. We recognize that sometimes, in seeking to pursue some of those choices and the decisions that are made subsequent to those choices, our members

may slip up and word a question in such a way that it implies asking about policies by others than the members in government.

Knowing that we are on occasion apt to slip up in our words, on this side of the House we will endeavour to ensure that we are a bit more careful when we ask questions about alternative policy possibilities that government are considering. We would acknowledge that in this particular case we need to be a bit more precise in our language, and we will endeavour to do so in the future.

The Speaker: Just for clarity, are you agreeing that you will withdraw the comment?

Mr. Feehan: Mr. Speaker, we will ask the member to withdraw the last part of her question for the record at this time.

The Speaker: Hon. member.

Ms Payne: Yeah. I withdraw that portion of the question. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

I think we are now proceeding to the Standing Order 30.

Request for Emergency Debate

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Liability for Energy Industry Environmental Damage

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 30 I’m calling the attention of the Legislative Assembly to discuss a matter of urgent public importance; namely, the protection of Alberta taxpayers from skyrocketing cleanup and reclamation liabilities for the oil and gas industry given that cost estimates could be as high as \$260 billion, raising questions about the adequacy of the orphan well program and the mine financial security program and considering that the Alberta Energy Regulator and the Alberta government have provided conflicting estimates that differ by more than \$200 billion.

Let me begin by expressing my profound gratitude to Mr. Robert Wadsworth, vice-president of closure and liability at the Alberta Energy Regulator, a true public servant who, at risk to his job, is addressing a private audience in the oil and gas industry and other stakeholders and identified our collective liability of \$260 billion. He asserted that this number is most likely going to grow, and it is five times higher than that reported by the Energy department in the past. This is a matter of urgent public importance and, Mr. Speaker, public trust. Albertans are demanding clear, transparent, valid estimates of our liabilities to present and future generations. Coincidentally, the day after this report was made public, Jim Ellis, the CEO of the Alberta Energy Regulator, resigned.

Let’s remember, Mr. Speaker, that the Auditor General in 2015 investigated and raised concerns about the serious inadequacy of reporting by Alberta Energy on liabilities, which potentially in relation to cleanup and reclamation could leave taxpayers on the hook. The minister of environment agreed at the time that the program needed to be reviewed, but nothing seems to have changed since then except the shocking revelation that we have been grossly underestimating these liabilities.

Why is it urgent, even critical that we debate this and put aside House business? Fundamentally, because the magnitude and seriousness of our collective liability in relation to the oil and gas industry in the past hundred years is, I believe, being made clear, albeit in a confidential way where it was presented but has now

become public and certainly in the public interest. It contradicts the unverified reports that consistently come out of the minister's office. This represents a potential fiscal, economic, and environmental crisis if it is not addressed appropriately. It begs, Mr. Speaker – not blames, but it begs – solutions, solutions that start with our collective awareness of the true liabilities that present to our economy, to our investors in the oil industry, to the public, and to the environment.

It's now clear that our Energy Regulator has in the past (a) not accurately reflected the public liability for cleanup of oil and gas facilities and (b) has for whatever reasons kept the reality of this liability from the public.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I want to urge you to get to the question of urgency. I hope that's where you're heading.

Dr. Swann: I hope that I'm making that case, Mr. Speaker.

This is a question not only of financial and environmental liability; it is a question of public trust in our Energy Regulator and in this department, in this government. The licensee liability rating for oil wells and the Orphan Well Association were designed to protect the public from liability, and it is based on a system that is easily gamed by overstating the assets and understating the liabilities. That's been clear as we see an orphan well fund that is nowhere near what is needed to clean up orphan wells in this province, let alone large facilities and SAGD oil sands, mines, and tailings ponds.

3:00

In truth, Mr. Speaker, assets are declining in value as liabilities continue to increase in this province. The longer we wait, the higher the price. More companies go away. More good people in Alberta, including your and my families, will pay toward a staggering estimate, currently \$260 billion.

Another revelation, Mr. Speaker: remediation costs – that is, the cost of cleaning contaminated soils – are not generally included in these costs under the LLR program. There are a number of these unmeasured costs that will add further to this very high estimate of liabilities. If not now, when will we, in these august chambers, address this silent financial tsunami? It includes not only contaminated lands, surface water, and groundwater – I'm just about finished.

The Speaker: Please focus on the urgency matter. If it's agreed in the House, you will get the opportunity to . . .

Dr. Swann: I am feeling a great urgency about this, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I can sense that.

Dr. Swann: I hope you're getting it.

This financial tsunami includes not only contaminated land, surface water, groundwater; it also includes unfathomable fiscal liability for us and our future generations.

It's also a profound financial risk for our banking institutions, including our own ATB, which has been operating on the basis of faulty information and investments. We now must recognize that they have been receiving discredited calculations and annual liability reporting on financial accounts in the oil and gas industry that have not reflected the true risk. The urgency . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member.

Dr. Swann: . . . and the scope of this long-ignored issue speaks for itself, Mr. Speaker. The time for denial and inaction is over.

The Speaker: With the greatest respect, hon. member, we need to address the urgency . . .

Dr. Swann: Have I convinced you yet, sir?

The Speaker: My eyes are blind to the issue.

Are there any other members who wish to speak to the order by Calgary-Mountain View? I have to acknowledge you. The Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to respond on behalf of the government to the request made by the Member for Calgary-Mountain View for emergency debate under Standing Order 30 this afternoon. I think that this Chamber can all agree that developing Alberta's energy resources is a privilege and not a right. And I think it's also quite evident that this is a long-standing problem for many years. There's no question that the previous government allowed this matter to fester for far too long. They stood back and admired the problem from afar. But, unlike previous governments, this government is seized by the importance of the issue.

Mr. Nixon: Point of order.

Point of Order Urgency

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the issue is urgency, as you've already pointed out to the Member for Calgary-Mountain View. The government is now trying to make a statement which may be relevant if you had granted a debate. The problem with that is that if this is allowed to continue, if you don't grant a debate, then other members are not allowed to respond in the same way as the government. The government should be responding to the urgency issue.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I noted that and will continue to focus on that, but the information decision rests with me, and I was gracious before.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Debate Continued

The Speaker: I would urge that the hon. minister address the point that the . . .

Mr. Feehan: My comments do speak to the point at hand, and I will speak to the relevant pieces of *Beauchesne's* that address this. But I need to point out that this government began a review of the liability management system, a review that included meetings with stakeholders from industry, environment, NGOs, landowners, municipalities, and indigenous communities.

The Speaker: Urgency.

Mr. Feehan: Well, it speaks to the fact that there are two sets of rules with regard to what makes something urgent. I'm just speaking to the fact that this government has in fact addressed it, which means that it's not an urgency. The *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* states very clearly that "matters of chronic or continuing concern, such as economic conditions, unemployment rates and constitutional matters, have tended to be set aside," meaning that they tended to not merit consideration as emergency debates.

Mr. Speaker, the issue of orphan well cleanup is indeed a significant one. It is an issue that has been years in the making, did not pop up overnight, and it is in my view a chronic concern rather than an acute one. The broad review that I believe the member wants, one that will determine long-term, made-in-Alberta solutions, is already under way.

My point, why I was making it, with regard to the statement in *Beauchesne's* – *Beauchesne's* further states that one Speaker ruled that the emergency debate provisions cannot be used to debate items which, in a regular legislative program with the House of Commons and regular legislative consideration, can come before the House by way of amendments to existing statutes, which, I have been explaining to you, we have done, or in any case will come before it in other ways.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that there are other avenues open to the hon. member that he could raise this issue. For example, today in question period the member had a question that was raised on this and had an opportunity to debate it with the minister; ergo, he has had the opportunity. He's also had opportunities for Members' Statements. He's also had an opportunity to debate a current bill that this government has put into place, Bill 14, An Act to Support Orphan Well Rehabilitation, which was an important bill that was debated in this House.

Again . . .

The Speaker: Hon. minister.

Mr. Feehan: . . . *Beauchesne's* says that if there are other opportunities, which I am detailing to you now, he should take the opportunity to avail himself of them. He either has or has not but does not need an emergency debate to do that.

In conclusion, I think that this is an . . .

The Speaker: Hon. minister.

Mr. Feehan: . . . important matter but does not rise to the level of urgency, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker's Ruling Brevity

The Speaker: Hon. minister and Member for Calgary-Mountain View and others in the House, I would draw to your attention: you both referenced Standing Order 30, which does, I believe, make reference to brief comments so that the Speaker might make a decision. Brevity was not in the minister's particular case today, nor yourself, hon. minister.

But we may have a question from the – are there other members who wish to speak to this? The Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Debate Continued

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do agree with you that comments are to be brief, so I will attempt to be brief. I do not think that the Member for Calgary-Mountain View has met the test. That, of course, will be up to you to determine. That does not take away from the importance of this issue and, certainly, the need for the government to address it, but I did not hear anything in the Member for Calgary-Mountain View's remarks that would indicate the urgency that is required.

Dr. Swann: Public trust, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: With respect, hon. member, if I gave yourself another point to speak to SO 30, I fear that it might creep into the debate actually taking place in this House rather than the urgent matter itself.

Dr. Swann: One sentence, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: Not even one sentence. I think this is a matter, if you – I think *Hansard* will adequately address the many legitimate points that you made, and I trust that all of the members will look at that again.

I am prepared to rule on the matter. The Member for Calgary-Mountain View has met the requirement, first of all, of providing at least two hours' notice to the Speaker's office by providing required notice at 2:46 p.m. yesterday.

The proposed motion submitted to my office reads as follows. I believe you have a copy of that.

Pursuant to Standing Order 30 be it resolved that the ordinary business of the Legislative Assembly be adjourned to discuss a matter of urgent public importance; namely, the protection of Alberta taxpayers from skyrocketing cleanup and reclamation liabilities for the oil and gas industry given that cost estimates could be as high as \$260 billion, raising questions about the adequacy of the orphan well program and the mine financial security program, and considering that the Alberta Energy Regulator has provided conflicting estimates that differ by more than \$200 billion.

3:10

As stated earlier in my comments, my job here at this point is to determine whether or not the request for leave to move to adjourn the ordinary business of the Assembly under Standing Order 30(2) is in order.

The number of orphan wells in the province and the related environmental impacts raise questions and serious concerns for many Albertans. As you have said – the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View identifies in his request for an emergency debate that there is also a large financial cost associated with the reclamation of these wells. It was reported recently that estimates relating to total liabilities for oil and gas in the province may be much too low. I do not doubt that the quoted figure was concerning to those who read those reports. Because a matter is serious, however, does not mean that debate on the matter is urgent, as was argued by the Deputy Government House Leader and the House leader of the Official Opposition. Because a matter is serious, however, does not mean that debate on the matter is urgent.

As noted in the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, pages 695 to 696, "matters of chronic or continuing concern . . . have tended to be set aside, whereas topics deemed to require urgent consideration have included work stoppages and strikes, natural disasters, and international crises and events." Furthermore, I must consider whether there are other avenues for debate in the Assembly on this subject matter, as the Deputy Government House Leader outlined. I note that there is a motion for a return presently on the Order Paper, Motion for a Return 18, requesting correspondence pertaining to the criteria for awarding contracts to reclaim orphan wells. The subject matter raised by the Member for Calgary-Mountain View might similarly be an appropriate topic for a written question or a motion for a return, particularly if the member's concerns relate to the value assigned to reclamation costs. A member might also garner this information during question period.

Accordingly, I do not find the request for leave to be in order, and the question will not be put.

Orders of the Day
Government Bills and Orders
Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

The Chair: Hon. members, I'd like to call the Committee of the Whole to order.

Bill 19
An Act to Improve the Affordability and
Accessibility of Post-secondary Education

The Chair: Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. It is with a great sense of relief that we reach Orders of the Day. There was a point there not too many moments ago where I thought that maybe we wouldn't make it this far before 6 o'clock, but I'm pleased to be here.

Madam Chair, I rise today to table an amendment to this bill, and I have the appropriate number of copies, that I'd like to submit to you.

The Chair: This will be amendment A1.
Please go ahead.

Mr. Schmidt: Okay. Thank you, Madam Chair. Since its tabling Bill 19 has received tremendous support on all sides of the Assembly. I'm proud that we're taking such strides towards giving the students of this province more affordable and accessible postsecondary education. Based on the debate to date and further consideration around mandatory noninstructional fees, I am proposing an amendment that further increases the transparency and predictability for students as it relates to these fees and to strengthen students' ability to have a strong voice in the cost of their education.

The amendment that I'm proposing, Madam Chair, reads as follows. Section 32 is amended in the proposed section 61 by adding the following after subsection (4):

- (5) If the board of a public post-secondary institution other than Banff Centre sets a mandatory non-instructional fee, the board shall set an amount for the fee that is less than or equal to the cost incurred by the public post-secondary institution to provide the goods or to deliver the services for which the fee is set.
- (6) The board of a public post-secondary institution other than Banff Centre shall not introduce a new mandatory non-instructional fee unless the board has obtained written approval from each of the public post-secondary institution's students' councils.

Madam Chair, this amendment is brought forward to address some of the concerns that we heard, of course, during the debate at second reading around this bill. The Member for Highwood, I believe, raised some concerns around a lack of transparency when we were putting the processes for the approval of these mandatory noninstructional fees in regulation. So we're moving those into the legislation to enhance the transparency that the Member for Highwood and others on that side raised during the debate on this bill at second reading.

But, more importantly, this amendment reflects further consultations that we had with students since this bill was tabled. Certainly, students expressed some concerns that the regulation didn't offer sufficient protection against actions of future cabinets to change the way that institutions can charge mandatory noninstructional fees. They wanted greater protections in terms of how much mandatory noninstructional fees could reflect the cost of the services that are provided. As well, they wanted to enshrine the

students' voice in saying yes or no to those mandatory noninstructional fees in the legislation.

I'm very pleased, Madam Chair, that our government is proposing this amendment to take those concerns into consideration and to address them directly.

With that, I look forward to listening to the debate on this proposed amendment.

The Chair: Any members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Highwood.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure, and I'm pleased to speak to the government's amendment on Bill 19. The amendment looks to be broken into two parts. The first part – and I'm paraphrasing – looks to cap mandatory noninstructional fees at the cost to provide the service which the fee is for. At first glance I don't have any issue with this, no issue with this section of the amendment. Rather, I think it makes sense to keep fees in line with the cost of providing a certain service. This does stop institutions from charging a much higher price for the service than it actually costs and keeping the difference for general revenue.

Now, I don't know how much this is the case with noninstructional fees as it currently is. Perhaps there is some discrepancy between the fee and the cost of the service. However, at this time I'm not aware of any examples. Notwithstanding this, I don't think this part of the amendment should create any problems as it'll keep institutions accountable with the noninstructional fees they charge.

3:20

However, even though at face value this looks like a fine part of the amendment, I believe we're doing a disservice to Albertans if we do not give due consideration to all stakeholders that this amendment will affect, and I mean all stakeholders. Before I can support any amendment, I need to hear from all the parties that should be affected by this amendment. I mean, we had all summer to work on this bill.

Madam Chair, I also have some concerns with the second part of the amendment. This part, if I understand correctly, would require the consent of student union groups if a university wants to create a new mandatory noninstructional fee. Postsecondary institutions should consult with their students. I say: should consult with their students. Lord knows, I was a student council president at my alma mater many, many years ago. I sat on that committee, and I sat on the board of regents at my institutions, so I remember. They should consult with all students when they're implementing new noninstructional fees. I would hope that universities would take those consultations seriously. These fees are going to be a burden for students, so it's important that students are given their input.

However, I'm concerned this amendment will affect the operations of the postsecondary institutions. My question to the government: have they consulted with the institutions to determine whether this is an amendment they can support? I think the government needs to give due time for us to seek input from all stakeholders involved in this matter. I can't say what institutions think of this as our caucus hasn't had time to consult with them.

Now, Madam Chair, the government has been consulting with postsecondary students for two years now, and I'm sure they received much feedback. Why is it that this government needs to introduce this amendment at this time? Why couldn't they get the bill right the first time? I'm sure they received plenty of feedback from stakeholders on these postsecondary matters over the last two years. What changed in the last two weeks which has caused them to abruptly amend their own legislation?

Madam Chair, unfortunately, I just cannot support this amendment at this time for the simple reason that we do not have

time to properly consult with all stakeholders that this change should be made. Perhaps this amendment will be supported by all sides, and I hope it is, but until I have time to listen to all stakeholders, I believe it would be irresponsible for us to vote and pass this.

Again, I'm not discounting the importance of student unions and the input that students need to have the opportunity to give. Student voices need to be heard by the institutions, and their input needs to be taken seriously. However, due to the short notice and the lack of time given to consult with stakeholders, I'm sorry, but I cannot support this amendment.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think it's important for all members to understand that this amendment is a technical amendment in that we're moving some of the policy decisions that our government made in response to the extensive stakeholder consultation that we've been undertaking for the past two years. We're moving some of those policy decisions from the regulation to the legislation. This amendment that's before us today doesn't reflect any change in the policy intent of our government with respect to mandatory noninstructional fees, how they're charged, and students' roles in approving those mandatory noninstructional fees. All of the stakeholders that the Member for Highwood mentioned have been consulted on this policy matter. Everybody understands that this is coming. The only thing that's changing is that what was in the regulation is now being proposed to be in the legislation.

The Member for Highwood says: what's changed in the past two weeks? Let me be quite clear that our policy intent has not changed in the past two weeks. However, it was only last Monday that the bill itself was tabled in the Legislature, and that was the first time that any of our stakeholders had the opportunity to see the bill as it was written, as it was proposed to the members of this Legislature, and to propose any changes.

With that, of course, we received some feedback from students. They wanted to see some of the policy that was intended for regulation moved into the legislation so that the accountability of the minister around how mandatory noninstructional fees were charged is open to the entire Legislative Assembly and not subject to the decisions that a cabinet would make. We agreed with students that that was the proper place to put this policy decision. You know, it's a testament to the way that this Legislature functions that we had draft legislation tabled, that our stakeholders indicated some ways that it could be improved, and that the government responded to those and brought forward those improvements, Madam Chair.

I'm pleased to support it. I encourage all members of this Assembly to support this amendment, knowing full well that all of our stakeholders have been adequately consulted on all of the policy decisions that we've made that are reflected in the legislation and the regulations and that this simply moves the responsibility for mandatory noninstructional fees and how they are governed to the Legislative Assembly and out of cabinet.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak to the amendment put forward here to Bill 19. As has already been brought forward in the Chamber today, it appears that this is broken down into two parts. If I understand it correctly, the first part says that

the board shall set an amount for the fee that is less than or equal to the cost incurred by the... post-secondary institution to

provide the goods or to deliver the services for which the fee is set.

It sets a mandatory noninstructional fee, and the board shall set an amount for that fee that is less than or equal to the cost incurred.

Madam Chair, I guess that in some ways that makes sense to me. I can understand and I actually can like the idea of taking something from regulation and putting it into legislation. But I guess I do come back to the question: who has actually been consulted when it comes to this amendment to this piece of legislation? We can see that it does keep an institution accountable, and that's a part of that equation. That's a fair thing to do, but I think it's also a fair question to ask: who has the minister consulted specifically? What institutions has he consulted, and what institutions have actually indicated their agreement to this amendment to the bill?

The second piece of this amendment speaks to the fact that they shall not introduce a new mandatory non-instructional fee unless the board has obtained written approval from each of the public post-secondary institution's students' councils.

Now, I can completely agree with the statements that have come before me here in this House, that student councils need the capacity to be involved in these processes, but that also means that in this particular case they're asking to be able to be allowed to approve. It's not just consultation; it's approval. I would be interested in hearing from the minister just who he has talked to as far as the major institutions, and have those institutions in this province actually agreed to the idea that students would actually have approval over the setting of these noninstructional fees? I would look forward to hearing the minister's response.

The Chair: Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you to the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon for his comments. I do hope the minister takes a moment shortly to answer some of those questions. My immediate concern, though, with this amendment is – I have a question to the minister with my concern. He's brought a piece of legislation to this Assembly. This House has not been sitting for several months. I assume the minister knew that this was a bill that he wanted to bring to this House to pass during the fall sitting of the Legislature, a bill that, by the looks of it, is going to have broad support, so that's good. But he now has to amend his own bill. That's great if he's caught something. As I've pointed out before, often this government gets it wrong and has to wait six, seven months and come back again and fix it. So maybe, to their credit, they're actually catching something in advance.

3:30

I guess my question through you to the minister is: what happened? Why do you have to amend your own bill? Did this get missed? What was the thought process? Similar to the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon's questions, have you consulted with student associations on this change adequately, to the same level as you did with the bill with the universities, et cetera? Maybe the minister will take some time to answer that as he asks for support for his amendment to his own bill.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I want to address, first of all, some of the questions from the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon. I'm disappointed that he made it an open-ended question, not a multiple-choice question, as he asked the Minister of Education earlier today, because usually the right answer for those kinds of things is (c). This way I have to show my work, and that makes it harder to get a good mark.

In his question, of course, he asked which universities we consulted on this policy matter that we're bringing forward. I just want to remind all members of this Assembly that this amendment doesn't reflect any change to the policy decisions that our government has made around how mandatory noninstructional fees are charged and the student association's role in granting approval to those mandatory noninstructional fees being imposed upon them. In conducting consultations with all of the universities and colleges across the province, they were fully aware that it was our intent to do this with mandatory noninstructional fees, and they understood that that was our intent, to allow student associations to have final say over whether or not those new mandatory noninstructional fees would be imposed.

To the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon: I can't tell you which ones agreed to this or not. Certainly, it's not the job of a government to receive unanimous consent from all of its stakeholders on any of the policy decisions that we make. However, I can tell the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon that we received broad support from all of the stakeholders in the postsecondary world for the policy decisions that we're making here with the legislation and the associated regulations.

Now with respect to the question brought forward by the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, why we are changing the bill now, Madam Chair, certainly, you know, I am nothing if not a humble and deeply reflective person, dedicated to continual improvement, and that is certainly the case with the legislation that I propose on behalf of the government with respect to this matter that we're discussing today. We certainly heard concerns from the member's own caucus around the processes around mandatory noninstructional fees and concerns that things would be hidden in the regulation that wouldn't be subject to the purview of the Legislative Assembly. I heard those concerns, and I took them into consideration. I actually acted on the wishes of that member's own caucus.

You know, I would hope that rather than gloating that the government has gotten it wrong again and here they go, they would just admit that our government listens when we bring forward legislation to this House. We take all ideas for improvement into consideration, and we act on the ones that actually improve the quality of the legislation, and that's what's reflected in the amendment today. I'm very pleased, as the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre should be, that because of the work of all of the members of this Legislative Assembly, this bill will be improved, and it will better serve Albertans, particularly those in the postsecondary world.

I hope that the members opposite will, you know, understand that their good work has not gone unnoticed by this government and that certainly we are very pleased to work together as a Legislative Assembly to present the best legislation possible for all Albertans and vote in favour of these amendments that we are proposing this afternoon.

The Chair: Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, and thank you for that answer, Minister. I just have a quick question regarding this amendment. Are we going to start seeing schools shifting – and I apologize – the mandatory noninstructional fees into mandatory instructional fees inappropriately because of this amendment, sir?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd ask the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake to restate his question. I'm not quite sure what he's asking.

Mr. Cyr: I apologize. I understood that my question was a little unclear. Right now I understand that noninstructional fees are going to need to be, more or less – if there are new ones added, the student body needs to accept those new fees. Is there anything in the legislation that prevents the school from deeming those mandatory instructional fees when they're actually noninstructional fees? What if they misclassify, sir? That is what I'm asking. Is there something there that prevents them from doing that? I don't know how else to put that delicately.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake for the question. Certainly, tuition is defined as the instructional fees that students are charged. Tuition increases, of course, are subject to the cap on the increase that's proposed in the legislation. Mandatory noninstructional fees are related to goods or services that are provided to students on campus that aren't related directly to the cost of instruction at a university or college.

The Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake certainly raises a concern that we heard from student groups all across the province. What's to prevent a university or college from calling something a mandatory noninstructional fee that is actually being used to support instruction in the classroom or some other unknown project or initiative undertaken by the university or college? Certainly, we have cases across the province where it's not clear where the money collected through a mandatory noninstructional fee is being spent.

That's what's required by this legislation. The university or college has to be completely open and transparent about the good or the service that will be provided by the fee that is charged and be accountable to students as well as the government as to where that money is being spent. We will all hold them accountable to make sure that those fees that are collected are spent on what they were intended for.

I hope that answers the member's question. I'm happy to take any further questions if he has any need for follow-up or clarification.

The Chair: Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate that. I was hoping that I could inspire the minister to get on his feet one more time. I've just got a couple of questions if the minister doesn't mind.

I'm looking at section (5). It seems to me to be clear that that just means you can't charge a fee higher than what you actually need to pay for what's going on. That actually makes sense to me.

Section (6). The word is not in there, but it occurs to me that this is giving a veto on noninstructional fees to student councils. I want to know whether the minister agrees with that. Without regard for what his answer is on that, about the veto, is there anything to stop the postsecondary institutions, once the students have a veto on the noninstructional fees, from creating a university renewal fee or just putting other words on a new fee?

Those are my questions, and if the minister would be so kind as to try and answer that, I'd be grateful.

3:40

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Member for Calgary-Hays can rest assured that he will always inspire me to get to my feet. I'm happy to answer these questions in particular.

The first question that the Member for Calgary-Hays asked was related to the veto that students would have. Certainly, that has always been our policy intent, to give student councils a veto on the fees that they are charged. That hasn't been the case in the past. This is a significant entrenchment of student power on campus, and certainly students will now have a significant voice in determining what the cost of their education is.

The other question, though, that he asked is: is there a loophole that a university or a college can use to circumvent the student veto process? It's our understanding that, no, there is not. A university can charge students either a tuition or a mandatory noninstructional fee. There is no other fee that we are entertaining here that can be charged to students, so we don't anticipate any loopholes that would circumvent a student's ability to say yes or no to the new mandatory noninstructional fees.

The Chair: Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you. If the government of Alberta or a minister makes a request or a demand of a university to create a mandatory noninstructional fee, is there a way for that university to be able to implement that through this current policy or through this new amendment?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Madam Chair. We don't as the Ministry of Advanced Education have the power to demand that a university or college implement a new fee. It's entirely up to the board of governors of each institution to decide what their tuition and fees are. Certainly, it's not within the ministry's power to request or impose a new fee or tuition charge on students. In fact, that's not our intent. Our intent is to make sure that students have a full and complete understanding of the fees that they're being charged and a yes or no say as to whether or not that's fair and should be part of the fees that they're charged.

The Chair: Any other speakers to the amendment? Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess the question that I would have for the minister, with his indulgence. These mandatory noninstructional fees have in the past been set by boards. It looks like now they will be set by student associations. Does this mean that now student councils and student associations would be able to roll back fees that have already been set?

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Madam Chair. No. Students won't be able to retroactively roll back fees. However, it is our intent to work with institutions to provide more clarity around the mandatory noninstructional fees that universities or colleges charge to student associations. It's certainly our intent, once the Alberta tuition and fees framework is released, to work with the institutions to make sure that they communicate clearly to students what the fees are being charged for.

Certainly, the Member for Edmonton-South West raised the issue of a hallway fee that is charged to University of Alberta students. Our intent is to make sure that University of Alberta students, as with all students, have a clear understanding of where their fees are being spent so that they're better able to hold their institutions accountable for the fees that they pay.

The Chair: Any other speakers to the amendment?
Are you ready for the question?

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

The Chair: We're back on the main bill. Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Mr. Dreesen: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise in my very first Committee of the Whole and speak on Bill 19, An Act to

Improve the Affordability and Accessibility of Post-secondary Education. I would like to take a moment to acknowledge the work that this government has done with this legislation. The tuition review started back in 2016, and the government took time to consult with stakeholders and listened to those that would be affected most by postsecondary legislation. During this consultation I am sure that they had heard from many different groups that offered their feedback on postsecondary matters. As a result, student groups are supportive of this legislation, and I am happy that the government was able to listen to their concerns and introduce Bill 19.

The main piece of Bill 19 that student groups are happy about is the cap on tuition. If the legislation passes, tuition will be capped at the rate of Alberta's consumer price index, meaning that one-year tuition hikes couldn't go higher than the rate of inflation. This is good news for Alberta's postsecondary students, and I think most members of this Assembly can be supportive of it. No student wants to be facing a massive increase to the cost of their education partway through their studies. Students need to plan accordingly and plan their finances according to their tuition. This is nearly impossible for students to do if they don't know what they're going to be paying in tuition fees. We have to understand that oftentimes tuition is going to be the biggest expense for students who are attending postsecondary studies. These same students are often working two or three jobs just to cover the cost of tuition. We have to respond accordingly, and I think Bill 19 does a good job capping tuition at inflation.

I'm also pleased that Bill 19 includes increased representation for students on boards of governors. Student groups have been asking for this, and it is great to see that the government listened to student groups in Alberta and implemented this change. Of course, some institutions already have two student representatives; however, this standardizes it across all postsecondary institutions. This gives students more access to board decisions and the governance of institutions. The board of governors of a postsecondary institution can control things such as noninstructional fees, international student tuition, and domestic student tuition. Giving students additional representation allows for students to have greater input into these matters of the institution. Oftentimes they are the ones that are going to be affected most by a board decision, so it is vital that students have sufficient input into these matters. I believe that Bill 19 achieves that.

Madam Chair, I do have some minor concerns with the legislation that I would like to discuss. First, as my colleague from Highwood mentioned, there are some parts of the legislation that deal with collaboration between different institutions. The way that I read the legislation is that polytechnic institutions and undergraduate universities must collaborate to provide regional access to programs. Now, this is a good initiative. However, my concern is with our comprehensive academic and research institutions and that there isn't the requirement in the legislation that they must collaborate to provide regional access to their programs. I'm sure the legislation was written like that for a purpose, but I am not sure if it is better if all postsecondary institutions are just treated the same way in the same regard. All publicly funded postsecondary institutions receive government funds, so shouldn't they all be treated the same?

Another concern I have is that this legislation gives the minister the authority to have comprehensive community colleges become either polytechnic institutions or undergraduate universities. This concern was also brought up by the Member for Highwood. I'm wondering why the legislation doesn't create a mechanism to transition all institutions to different sectors of universities. What if an undergraduate university wanted to become a comprehensive

academic and research institution? Is there a way that this can be done? With this mechanism in place will there be significant increases to the number of polytechnic institutions and undergraduate universities, and if so, what does this mean for the government funding these institutions? Of course, in this legislation the minister has the authority to initiate this, but can we trust the minister to get it right?

I also wish to push the Minister of Advanced Education – push in a metaphorical sense – to make sure that he makes public the results of their consultations with stakeholders over the last few years. The reality is that this government has given us lots of reasons not to trust them. From Bill 6 to the increase in red tape to the carbon tax to the minimum wage changes that have cut meaningful hours at work, this government has done much that has not benefited Albertans. As the Official Opposition we have to hold the government to account and ensure that this legislation is in the best interests of Albertans. Stakeholders have reacted positively to this bill publicly; however, we can be certain that this is the case by having the minister release the results of the consultations so that we all know what the stakeholders contributed. Why else would the government try to hide by not releasing this consultation? To use another schooling analogy, I think all we're asking is to prove their proof.

3:50

Madam Chair, another point I can raise with this bill is the amount of power that the minister and cabinet have over postsecondary learning in Alberta. The reality is that the minister could handicap postsecondary institutions and make it really difficult to raise money. Postsecondary institutions are in competition with institutions across Canada to attract students, recruit the best instructors, and acquire research dollars. If postsecondary institutions are not able to raise money, the services they can provide for students go down, which means that fewer students are willing to attend. Furthermore, the quality of education goes down when institutions cannot raise money. As said, institutions need to provide the best education possible for students, and they cannot do that when they have no money to spend.

Of course, this is all hypothetical as the regulations that would govern noninstructional fees and international student tuition have yet to be brought forward, and they won't be brought forward until this bill actually gets passed.

Regarding the regulations, I believe that some of the regulations the minister has talked about publicly could see positive results for Alberta students. As an Alberta MLA I would want to ensure that Alberta has the best postsecondary institutions possible. Alberta has always been a place of opportunity and prosperity, and our institutions should reflect that. Our colleges and universities should be the envy of Canada and attract people from around the world. The regulations need to reflect this and give both institutions and students the opportunity to succeed.

Now, Madam Chair, although there are some concerns with Bill 19, I think overall we are looking at a good piece of legislation. Student groups are pleased with the legislation, and I'm happy that this government worked with them to achieve this. If only they could listen to stakeholders this well on other pieces of legislation that they have brought forward. I call on this government to continue to listen to stakeholders for the next few months in all of the legislation that they do bring forward, that they may actually be able to avoid some previous missteps of the past.

Now, on the regulations I believe that the minister is on the right track with what he said publicly, for the most part. The minister has said that he wants to give international students predictability in their tuition by giving them the entire cost of their degree up front.

This would allow international students to plan better financially as they will have all the information that they require. This may have an added benefit of increasing the number of international students our postsecondary institutions may actually be able to attract, as it will show that we are supportive of international students.

Another regulation the minister has spoken of is to give transparency to noninstructional fees. This means that any fee that a student is having to pay on top of their tuition will include a breakdown and justification for that fee. No student likes paying additional money towards mandatory fees, and if the minister is able to create regulations that give students transparency regarding the fees that they're paying, that would be very beneficial, and I would be highly supportive of it.

Again, it is important that we hold the minister to account so that these good regulations become a reality. However, as I have said before, the most important thing that we can do for postsecondary students is have economic opportunities here for them. We need to get Alberta working again, and students have to have the confidence that there will be jobs for them when they graduate. Unfortunately, too many decisions by this current government have eroded opportunities in Alberta. I'm concerned that too many Albertans are having to leave our great province because they are unable to find jobs.

We need to get good value for our money and ensure that students that we are supporting through universities have the opportunities needed to succeed here in Alberta. So let's bring back the Alberta advantage and bring back the prosperity that we once had in this province. We can do this by cutting taxes, reducing red tape, and bringing back investor confidence to Alberta. If we are able to create this once again in Alberta, jobs will be there for our university students when they graduate. I believe that this is the most important thing that we can do as legislators, to bring jobs back to Alberta.

Madam Chair, in closing, with the exception of a few specifics in the legislation, which I questioned earlier, I believe that Bill 19 will have a positive impact on university students and will be beneficial to Albertans. I look forward to holding the Minister of Advanced Education to account during this privileged time in this Assembly and with the implementation of regulations, to ensure that they respect both the needs of students and the postsecondary institutions. I also commend the government for actually listening to stakeholders this time and producing legislation that is good for Alberta students and good for Alberta.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Any other speakers to the bill? Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I just wanted to ask a few questions, if I could, of the minister quickly here. I just wanted to see if he could explain kind of what this bill does as far as the power of students to set administrative fees.

Mr. Schmidt: I just want to respond to the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky by asking a question of clarification. When he's referring to administrative fees, is he referring to mandatory noninstructional fees or which? Can you clarify what you mean by administrative fees, please?

Mr. Loewen: I guess the fees that would normally have been set by the colleges and stuff like that, but noninstructional fees in particular. Yeah.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you. Madam Chair, with respect to mandatory noninstructional fees, any new fees that a university or college is considering have to be submitted for the approval of the students'

council at that institution and, of course, cannot be approved unless the students' council has said that it grants approval to that mandatory noninstructional fee, a significant increase in the power of student councils over the cost of students' education.

Mr. Loewen: I just want some clarification on that. You said new fees. Does that include an increase of existing fees, too, or just new fees?

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Madam Chair. The member raises an important question. Certainly, if the cost of providing that good or service increases over time, which most goods and services do, the institution doesn't have to go back to the students every year to ask for an increase in the fee. However, if the university or college wants to change the definition, change the basket of goods or services that are being paid for by the fee, then they need to go back to the students, explain what additional goods or services they want paid for and what the fee will be, and request students' approval for the additional good or service that would be covered under that fee.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Minister. That clarifies that.

Of course, the bill is one thing, but regulations and guidelines are an important part of something like this. When will the regulations and guidelines be finished for this bill?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. Of course, our intent is to introduce the regulations associated with this legislation once the bill has received royal assent.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Minister.

For the process of consulting I just want to know the balance of the consulting as far as how much was with students and how much was with the colleges and universities themselves.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. Of course, we've had formal consultations and informal meetings with every student association in the province, every university and college in the province. We've had members of faculty associations and nonacademic staff associations as well give us their input on the bill that's being considered here today. Our consultation with stakeholders has been extensive, and I'm satisfied that everyone has had their chance to give us their input on the tuition and fees framework that we're considering under this legislation.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Minister.

I think one thing that concerns a lot of colleges and universities is autonomy, being able to make their own decisions. Is there anything in this bill – or what in this bill takes away the decision-making process or opportunity for colleges and universities and brings it to government rather than within the college or university?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

4:00

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. The member highlights an important policy decision that was made by the previous Conservative government to entirely remove from the legislation the formula for charging tuition and to turn over the charging of tuition and fees entirely to the universities and colleges, and that put us in the awkward position of having some of the highest tuition and fees charged to students in the entire country. So I will freely admit that we are taking away some of the universities'

and colleges' autonomy, but we are strengthening the power of students on campus to have a say in the cost of their education, and we are making sure that the public is satisfied that every student in this province will be able to afford to go to university or college regardless of the size of their pocketbook or their financial circumstances.

This is being done in the interest of promoting affordability of postsecondary education, an issue that the previous Conservative government didn't address. They certainly let tuition, like I said, skyrocket to be the highest in the country. Our government, of course, is concerned about affordability, especially affordability of higher education, and that's why we are taking this step to cap tuition increases and put tight controls around the introduction of new mandatory noninstructional fees, to give students more power over the cost of their education and to ensure that Albertans in every financial circumstance can afford to go to university or college.

The Chair: Any other speakers to the bill? Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today to deal with Bill 19. I think that our students in the province of Alberta have paid an annual tuition fee of somewhere around \$5,744. It's about a thousand dollars less than the national average for tuition, and we know that the government in 2015 put a tuition freeze at the 2014-2015 levels. They did a review in 2016. They appointed a panel, an advisory group of 20 people, to look into producing a more predictable system for fees and services and tuition fees, and this bill is the result of that consultation.

We've stated before, Madam Chair, that we thought we would support the government in the consultation that they've done on this. They've brought student groups to the table, and they've talked with major stakeholders, and we would suggest that much of this bill we can probably support.

Bill 19 will legislate an inflation-based cap on the increases to domestic student and apprenticeship tuition based on the annual change in Alberta's consumer price index, starting at around 2020-2021.

Now, I guess one of the concerns – and it's not really so much a concern – is a concern that I would apply to every bill that comes before this House. You know, as in most bills this bill tends to give the minister the power to regulate noninstructional fees, international student tuition, and the use of regulatory powers. The minister's office has indicated that the regulations will push noninstructional fees to have more transparency – I think we've had some discussion about that today – and that it will have international student tuition far more predictable, which is a good thing for those people that are coming into our education system from outside the country.

Madam Chair, at the end of the day, because we pass legislation first and then we go to regulations, I would just caution the minister to use his judgment wisely when producing those regulations to ensure that he lives up to the standard of Albertans as they trust the judgment of the minister in making those regulations and that he applies prudence and wisdom in bringing those forward.

Bill 19 also changes the student representation on the board of governors, having two student representatives at all institutions and three if the school has a graduate program, again providing students with more input into their education and into the decisions that are being made surrounding that, and we can support that change.

Madam Chair, as for the inflation-capped tuition, it will provide more certainty for students. I think that over the past three years as I've met with some of the student groups that have come through and lobbied our party and the various parties in this Legislature – you know, they're bright, they're articulate, they've made solid

points to all of us. I think that we see some of those points reflected in this piece of legislation, so it's good to see the government finally listening to Albertans on issues that are obviously important to them.

Revising the tuition framework I believe will give students some of that predictability on what they will be paying in tuition. Having gone through that stage of life and having seen my kids, for the most part, almost get through that stage of life except for perhaps some of the bills that dad will be picking up, you know, we can see that many of our students entering these institutions often have very limited incomes, and they have little room for surprises and extra expenses that show up in their lives. So predictability is a very important thing. Many of them are living close to the edge as far as their finances are concerned, so anything we can do to provide certainty for our students is a good thing. I understand the need for a tuition framework and for predictability for students in our postsecondary institutions.

I believe our students work hard to try and work their way through university and postsecondary education. I happened to be eating at a local institution here last night and was served by a young lady that's in her fifth year of university. You know, it just served as a reminder to me of how many hours these students can put in after their education during the day and often will have to go back and open the books after they've put in a four- or five- or six-hour shift in the evening. So bringing predictability to that kind of a situation is good.

Now, I understand that the NDP government has had a continuous freeze on tuition since 2015 and that this new tuition framework will cap tuition increases to the CPI, but that's not going to start until the 2020-2021 school year. The minister has indicated that the tuition freeze will be extended to 2019-2020. So, I guess, just a real quick question arises for me. Knowing that the new framework for tuition will be passed as it stands in Bill 19, is the minister prepared to fund the rate of inflation for the 2019-2020 year? How are you going to deal with that capped year that's in there?

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you to the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon for his question. Yes, we do intend to provide funding for universities and colleges while the tuition freeze remains in place. More details about that will be brought forward when we present our budget in the spring.

The Chair: Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and thank you for the opportunity to speak on this bill. It's interesting reading about all of this. Just to give you some background, when I was in university in 1989, it was \$500 a semester. It went up to \$750 a semester while I was in school, and that was a huge increase at that time. I remember how much my meal plan was and all that. I was actually at that time working four jobs, and I didn't end up finishing that particular degree and ended up going into a music degree.

A music degree is one of those degrees in the arts that holds a lot of extra pieces that come along with it. If you're learning orchestra, you have to pay for an instrument, you have to pay for music, you have to pay for a music stand. You have to pay for a lot of different things, whether that's access to music rooms. If we were doing any sorts of larger pieces like oratorio, if you were in an opera background, as I was, you had to pay for all your musicians to come in and play for you for your recitals. It was actually a requirement of making sure that you were able to work with that level of group of people at that level of performance. I ended up actually going to Winnipeg to finish my music degree because I followed an amazing voice teacher that went out that way.

4:10

It was a long time ago, but it wasn't that long ago. I remember what it was like and the struggles that were there, being a young person, working all the time. Plus, again, in my music degree you're usually in around nine courses at any given time, which includes performances as well as master classes and other classes that are theory and whatnot. It's a big degree. My point is that what I learned and the resilience that I built at that time in my life, going to school at that time, are lessons that I think to this day have created an ability to work hard. I think that's what so many of us gain in university, that ability for that resilience, that immense strength that you garner when you're doing so many things at once and you know you can if you're encouraged to do so. These are amazing, amazing strengths that come out of a time that also produces a great amount of stress and for some of us a lot of debt that we take on as a result of going to school.

Also, you gain some of the best relationships and things in your life that actually push you forward in your life. For me I met my husband in university when I was 19, and when I was in Winnipeg, had a baby while I was in school. My little boy, when he was born in Winnipeg, was at 40 concerts before he was four months old. I'm sure that's why he is the amazing tenor that he is now. I have to say, having raised him in that area, as hard as it was – and I have interesting stories of leaving him in a viola case with my girlfriend while she played for him when I went up to my lessons. I'm sure she very much appreciated the baby puke that ended up in that viola case while I was away at my lesson. However, wonderful, wonderful pieces of my own personal history and my education. I'm sure none of us forgets too quickly the ramen noodles and macaroni and the incredible things that you're able to do with macaroni when you're on a very, very tight budget. I will never forget that.

Along with all of that, you know, the tuition piece is such a huge struggle for so many students, and I know that some of the youth in my constituency have felt the pinch waiting for their student loans. You know, they're trying to wait for a stretch of summer to be able to work as hard as they can and try and pay down some of their loans. A lot of these young kids are working just as hard. They're out there. They're putting themselves out there into jobs. A lot of them are involved in politics and door-knocking. I mean, for all of us who are here, we know how much youth are involved in the things that we're also doing at a political level, plus they're going to school, plus they're paying for their tuition. They're an incredible group of people, and I think we need to recognize how resilient and how amazing this group of people are.

I completely empathize with the students at the U of A who protested. Watching that whole thing happen, I would like to add my voice to the students of the U of A. I'm very proud that they stood up for themselves. It's especially not easy being the focus and at the centre of all of that. There are a lot of complications that go along with funding schools and funding universities and all of that. However, I'm very, very happy that they felt strong enough to stand up. We are always saying in this House that Albertans have a strong voice and that it matters to us and that we listen. I'm glad that they did that. I'm very grateful that the government listened to these students and that we're at this point here where we're able to debate a piece of legislation. I think the credit goes to the students and their strength and their ability to come forward and stand up on their own behalf.

An extra couple of hundred dollars a year, Madam Chair, makes a humongous difference in the life of a student. You know, this could mean the difference between staying in school and actually dropping out. We know that that money has to come from

somewhere, and the government does not subsidize international fees or residence fees. Students understand this. I think that part of the problem is always going to be that when situations come, when tuitions need to rise, quite often this has been dumped on students overnight. There's been absolutely no time to plan for that, right? I think that under normal circumstances there are some students and some people who understand that those fees are going to rise. You know, it happens, but what ends up ultimately happening every time is that the students are not made aware of these changes in tuition, and they are just left stranded, trying to figure out how they're going to make that happen. This is a big concern, and that cap on tuition is going to be a huge game changer in terms of stability as to how much a student is going to pay. The adjustment, you know, protects the bottom line of the business of university as well.

Part of the issue that we've seen on the campuses, like at the U of A, in terms of conflict between students and the board of governance comes from a lack of understanding, too, in that conversation. That conversation was very, very difficult for them to have because the communication lines were not open. There was an inherent power dynamic. That is concerning things where the interactions of the students are not being held up by the board of directors. If that voice at the table is not being heard, then it's going to lead to protests and causes, which ends up with these sorts of issues where students feel that they're not being listened to and that their inherent ability to be able to go to school is being attacked.

I also appreciate in this legislation that it increases the student representation on the board of governors at the institutions from two to three of the school's graduate program. That's actually a really crucial first step in empowering a student to have their voice heard. So thank you for doing that and for mending some of the fences between institutions where this has been an issue in the past.

This bill also provides some much-needed predictability for students financially, as I had mentioned, because you've legislated the inflation-based cap.

I also wanted to mention that there are many international students. So many of them have been sent overseas to this beautiful province of ours and to this beautiful country of ours to receive this incredible education and, especially, to participate in Canada, in Alberta and what we offer here as a country and as a province. While many of them are able to pay for school, there are equal numbers of international students that really struggle – they really do – even just to get by in their own domestic colleges, let alone with the privilege of being able to come to such a wonderful place like Alberta.

The students are facing additional barriers, and on top of that, they're away from their support systems. They may not speak our language well, you know, at least to a level that makes them comfortable to be able to go out and participate in life, which, of course, creates isolation, too, and depression and other things. We're noticing large, large increases in anxiety and depression amongst our university students as well, and isolation is a large part of that. Students are valued members in our society, and they enrich our country so much, too.

My point is that these are not people who should have their tuition just unceremoniously hiked. Like, let's give them at least the opportunity to know what that's going to look like and to have an overall picture of exactly what it is that they're going to pay. We have families that are overseas that are saving up for a lifetime to have their children leave their countries to be able to come to other countries and have their education here. I think it's absolutely imperative that those international students know exactly what they're getting into, exactly what they're paying for so that at the very, very least we're giving them all the tools to be as successful

as possible when their families have worked as hard as they have to bring them to this country.

I just wanted to say again: thank you to the government for listening to students. I know the students had to fight really hard to get to this point, and I'm very grateful that they did do that.

Thank you again so much for the opportunity to speak about this.

The Chair: Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to rise on the record really briefly. The minister in his comments seemed to indicate that Alberta has the highest tuition fees in the country. You know, some of our members have already talked about tuition being a tough thing to do. We want to make sure that students going into postsecondary are able to afford it. I just think, for the record, that it's important to point out that Alberta students already pay below the national average for tuition, with the average Alberta student paying \$5,744 annually compared to \$6,838 nationally, which is a little different than what the minister indicated.

With that said, I suspect my colleagues on this side of the House are prepared to vote this out of committee.

4:20

The Chair: Any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

[The remaining clauses of Bill 19 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

Bill 21

An Act to Protect Patients

The Chair: Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Yao: Thank you so much, Madam Chair. It's an honour and a privilege to be here. Regarding Bill 21, I'd like to start things off by moving an amendment, and I have the requisite number of copies here. Would you like me to wait for you to receive the amendment?

Madam Chair, Alberta's United Conservatives supported last week's motion for a lifetime ban if a health professional's licence was cancelled due to sexual abuse or misconduct involving a patient. We were surprised that this NDP government rejected that based solely on the fact that it mirrors Ontario's legislation. That is why, even though we would prefer a lifetime ban, we're bringing forward this amendment to extend the ban on reinstatement to 40 years.

Madam Chair, patients put great trust in health professionals. They depend on them for expertise in dealing with critical personal issues, and for that reason patients are in a very vulnerable position when they seek treatment for their physical and mental health. If in the course of treatment a health professional takes advantage of their position of trust to sexually abuse their patient, they are committing an unconscionable breach of trust.

The United Conservative Party strongly believes as legislators in ensuring that health practitioners who have had their licences cancelled because they preyed on patients face sanctions reflective of Albertans' expectations. How can we tell Albertans that we are

protecting them from predatory practitioners, who have been sanctioned by having their licences pulled, when just after five years they can walk back into the college with their application to practise again? That is why I, as the United Conservative Party's Health critic, am introducing this amendment. If approved, this amendment will prohibit a health professional who has had their licence and registration cancelled due to sexual abuse and misconduct from applying for reinstatement for 40 years.

Bill 21 is called An Act to Protect Patients. Let us provide, here in this Legislature, patients with a strong tool that we have available to us, and that's our ability to craft common-sense, responsible laws. Albertans expect nothing less, nor should they.

With this amendment I am moving that Bill 21, An Act to Protect Patients, be amended in section 7(b) in the proposed section 45 as follows: in subsection (3) by striking out "until at least 5 years" and substituting "until at least 40 years" and in subsection (4) by striking out "until at least 5 years" and substituting "until at least 40 years."

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Speakers to the amendment? The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Chair and to the member for engaging in this important debate with regard to all Albertans accessing health care free of intimidation, harassment, or assault. I appreciate that upon this occasion he and his colleagues in his caucus appear to be participating in this important legislation around protecting and supporting individuals as well as all Albertans who are accessing this service.

I have to say that I appreciate that I believe the intent is around ensuring that Albertans are protected, and certainly I believe that the legislation that we brought forward is incredibly – I believe that it's strict and that it's fair.

I just want to clarify one of the points that was raised by the member opposite. An individual who has had their licence taken away in no way has the ability to walk back in after five years and demand to practise. They have the ability, once their licence has been revoked for that period, to apply for consideration, and that is in no way a guarantee that they will get their licence back after five years. If there are concerns, certainly the tribunal will take that into consideration. Should the tribunal determine, when an individual has applied, whether it's at the five-year mark or any point thereafter, that the individual has not presented a case that gives them the confidence that they should reinstate their licence, they won't be able to apply again for at least six months, and the pattern therefore continues after that.

I just want to clarify that the minimum is five years that we've written into here, not a guarantee that at five years anyone would get their licence back. There still would be the full tribunal process and application process, Madam Chair.

But it is very important to our entire caucus that Albertans have the confidence that their health professional is there to serve them and to do so in a safe, transparent, and ethical way.

I just, lastly, want to reiterate that our legislation has the strictest sanctions in Canada. It parallels what Ontario has. To clarify, no other jurisdiction has gone this far yet. I imagine that many probably will. I hope that they certainly do. I believe that the five-year minimum is strict and fair, Madam Chair.

That being said, again, I just want to recommit that we did consult with survivor organizations, including the Alberta sexual assault centres, and they were supportive of the legislation that we proposed. We're really glad to be standing with them and with

survivors to ensure that everyone can have the confidence that health practitioners are being dealt with in a strict and fair way.

That being said, that's why I will be opposing the amendment as presented by the hon. member. Thank you.

The Chair: Any other speakers to the amendment?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A2 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:27 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hunter	Schneider
Barnes	Loewen	Smith
Cyr	McIver	Stier
Drysdale	McPherson	Strankman
Ellis	Nixon	van Dijken
Fildebrandt	Orr	Yao
Goodridge	Pitt	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Gray	Payne
Babcock	Hinkley	Phillips
Bilous	Hoffman	Piquette
Carlier	Horne	Renaud
Carson	Jansen	Rosendahl
Ceci	Kazim	Sabir
Coolahan	Kleinstauber	Schmidt
Cortes-Vargas	Littlewood	Sucha
Drever	Loyola	Swann
Eggen	McCuaig-Boyd	Sweet
Feehan	McKittrick	Turner
Fitzpatrick	Miller	Westhead
Ganley	Nielsen	Woollard
Goehring		

Totals:	For – 20	Against – 40
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[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

The Chair: Back on the main bill, are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. To begin, I want to thank the Minister of Health, the Deputy Premier, for bringing forward Bill 21, An Act to Protect Patients. I think that overall it is a sorely needed bill, a long time coming, and very clearly has all-party support.

I'm disappointed about the last vote. I think that it was a common-sense amendment from the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo to improve upon the bill, so I was disappointed that the government decided not to accept the amendment. Overall, it is still a strong bill that is very badly needed, and the government should be commended for it.

But even good legislation can be improved upon, which is why I'm going to be putting forward an amendment in a moment here. Actually, I'll just distribute it before I talk so people can follow along on their TV screens.

The Chair: This is amendment A3.

Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. The amendment I've put forward here amends the bill (a) by striking out subsection (1.1) and substituting the following:

(1.1) When establishing a hearing tribunal where the subject-matter of a hearing relates to a complaint alleging sexual abuse or sexual misconduct towards a patient by a regulated member, the hearings director must make every reasonable effort to ensure that

- (a) if the patient identifies as male, at least one member of the hearing tribunal also identifies as male, and
- (b) if the patient identifies as female, at least one member of the hearing tribunal also identifies as female.

And (b) in subsection (1.2) by striking out "has the same gender identity as the patient under subsection (1.1)" and substituting "identifies as either male or female if necessary to fulfill the requirements of subsection (1.1)".

That is a long way of saying that we just want to clarify, if it's straightforward, that if there is a male who has been alleged to have had abuse or the complainant alleging abuse or misconduct or the doctor, if they are a biological male or a biological female, there will be a biological male or biological female on the tribunal. Also, if they identify as a different sex, if it's a biological male identifying as a female, then there will be a female, the gender they identify with, on the tribunal.

Now, this is something that needs to be clarified. I don't think it would have massive applicability in the vast majority of cases, but it needs to be clarified. New York City, for instance, if I'm not mistaken, recognizes up to 31 different gender identities and expressions, et cetera. Those of you who know me well enough: people can live their lives however they want. It should be none of the government's business how people live their lives, whom they love, or how they identify, but as it involves serious government decision-making and a tribunal of this nature dealing with serious sexual allegations, this is serious business of government, and we are forced to grapple with these issues in that case.

We should be as accommodating as possible so that if someone identifies as a man, we will have someone on the panel who identifies as a man, biologically or not. If someone identifies as a woman, we'll have a woman on the panel, biologically or not, however they identify. What I do want to do is ensure that we're not opening the Pandora's box, that if someone involved here happens to be one of the very, very many on the fluid list of the number of identities – 31 according to New York City; it may have grown – it would be quite unreasonable to expect the authorities responsible to go out and find someone that particularly specific and targeted. Maybe they can find someone, but then you would have that one person who is always on that panel because it might be so incredibly rare.

4:50

My worry is that with the current language of the legislation it is a Pandora's box, opening up the door for having to find a representative on the panel of one of 31 gender expressions or identities, et cetera, et cetera. This still allows for making sure that we have someone on the panel who is there who identifies with the same sex as the person in question. It's just to clarify. It's to make sense of this so that we are not going to be potentially wasting the time of public officials in finding this.

Now, I will note that the current language of the legislation says: "every reasonable effort." It is not requiring the government to find someone of a potentially extraordinarily small number to fit on the panel. It's not a requirement. That should be clarified. I'm sure that the Minister of Health will clarify it in a moment if I didn't. It says: "every reasonable effort." In legislation "every reasonable effort"

means it quite literally. It means they will go to quite extraordinary lengths to find someone.

Where is the boundary of "every reasonable effort"? Does it mean we're going to fly someone in from other provinces or even other countries? Perhaps the minister can clarify if that is the case. "Every reasonable effort": that is a very broad definition. When it's in legislation, public officials are well advised to follow it to the letter of the law so that they are not breaking the law, that they're not going to be held accountable for not living up to it. It would seem to me that unless there are very clear boundaries around what "every reasonable effort" means, we're potentially going to have to bring people in from other jurisdictions just to meet a quota on a panel. I would like that clarified, and I think that this amendment makes sure that we're clear about what we mean.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, and thank you to the member for the question. While we don't always agree on outcome, I think we do agree on process, that members deserve to and should engage in the process of trying to improve legislation wherever possible. I am happy to provide that clarity. It's actually in the next section of the bill, which is section 4(1.2).

For the purposes of ensuring that at least one member of the hearing tribunal has the same gender identity as the patient under subsection (1.1), the hearings director may select one member from the membership list established by another council under section 15 to be appointed as [an] additional public member.

For example, if we're talking about the College of Physicians & Surgeons, they first would go to their public members to see if somebody had the same gender identity as the person who had launched the complaint. If they didn't, they could go to any one of the other 26 health colleges that we have in Alberta, and they all have public members. I believe the colleges have approximately three or even more than three public members on each of those colleges, so there are approximately a hundred public members. I'm extrapolating my math a little, but I think there are at least three public members on each of those colleges. Within Alberta it's people who've already been appointed as public members on other health colleges, so that's how we tried to make sure that we had reasonable parameters around this to define reasonable effort.

I understand what the member is saying, wanting to ensure that we not slow due process. That's why we did put that parameter in, ensuring reasonable efforts, and then we go on to define that it's within the public members of other health colleges. That being said, I think that we've already taken the point that the member raises about timely response and fair process into consideration. Therefore, I wouldn't be supporting reverting to a binary on gender because I think that we have done a reasonable job of making sure that we defined reasonable efforts but also honouring that not everyone fits into a binary.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Mr. Fildebrandt: A very quick clarification question I'd like from the minister following on a question I had. Would "every reasonable effort" include bringing in potential tribunal or panel members from outside of Alberta to meet that?

Ms Hoffman: No, because, again, 4(1.2) says:

For the purposes of ensuring that at least one member of the hearing tribunal has the same gender identity as the patient . . . membership list established by another council under section 15.

Section 15 is only Alberta health colleges, so it would have to be a public member who is already part of an Alberta health college within Alberta, and they would have to be appointed already as a public member.

The other reason why we did that is so that they have the training on how to conduct themselves at one of these tribunals. It wouldn't be weeks or even months of training because they're already working as public members on other colleges. Some colleges might have more gender diversity than others on their public appointees, so we wanted to enable the ability to have those public members from those other health colleges serve in this way. They would be within Alberta. They'd already be appointed to health colleges. The college of paramedics, for example, might have somebody that matches their gender identity, so it would be within that reasonable pool, and that's how we defined it. It's on page 3 of the bill as we proposed.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Any other speakers to the amendment?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[Motion on amendment A3 lost]

The Chair: Any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to Bill 21? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thanks very much, Madam Chair. I have an amendment to put forward, and I'll circulate it before talking about it.

The Chair: Amendment A4.

Go ahead, hon. member.

Dr. Swann: Thanks very much, Madam Chair. This is an important bill, and I think it's challenging to get all the details on such a sensitive issue exactly the way we want them. I think that one of the issues that's been flagged by some of my medical colleagues and by others is the element in Bill 21, An Act to Protect Patients: section 2(b) is amended in the proposed section 1(1)(nn.1) by striking out "and that has caused or is likely to cause physical or psychological injury or harm to the patient". The reason for this is that for any unwanted sexual content or sexual misconduct, it should not be necessary to prove physical or psychological harm. Any such contact would cause physical or psychological harm. The lawyers tell me that the need to prove physical or psychological harm is a barrier to getting convictions and to getting accountability for those who would perpetrate sexual misconduct and sexual abuse.

This phrase, "that has caused or is likely to cause physical or psychological injury or harm to the patient," is problematic in the sense that it is sometimes difficult to prove even though there has clearly been psychological harm, even though there has in many cases been physical harm that may or may not be visible. I think this is a friendly amendment. I hope the government will take it.

In the other two sections there are simply changes to accommodate the striking out of this particular section, Madam Chair. I'm happy to hear further discussion from all sides on whether this is progress and helpful to the appropriate conviction of anyone who is perpetrating abuse or violence against a patient.

Thank you.

5:00

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Yeah. Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and thank you to the member for catching amendments B and C as well as for highlighting this proposed amendment to section 2(b). I have to say that I researched where we pulled this definition from. It was

from our OH and S legislation. Of course, when you're talking about a patient-health care provider relationship, it doesn't make sense to have that kind of requirement in this legislation. That being said, I think this amendment would strengthen the legislation and correct the numbering challenges given this amendment. I will be supporting this and encourage my colleagues to consider doing the same.

Thank you.

An Hon. Member: All three sections?

Ms Hoffman: Yep. Supporting the amendment as proposed. Thank you.

The Chair: Any other speakers to the amendment?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[Motion on amendment A4 carried]

The Chair: Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to the bill? The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin.

Ms Goodridge: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to move an amendment, and I have the requisite number of copies here.

The Chair: This will be known as amendment A5.

Go ahead, hon. member.

Ms Goodridge: Thank you. I propose the amendment: in clause (a) striking out "Subject to subsection (3), a person" and substituting "Subject to subsections (3) and (4.1), a person"; in clause (b), in the proposed section 45, adding after subsection (4):

(4.1) In addition to the limitations established under subsections (3) and (4), a person whose practice permit and registration are cancelled as a result of a decision under sections 82(1.1) or 96.2, based in whole or in part on a conviction of an offence under the Criminal Code (Canada), may not apply for the practice permit to be reissued and the registration to be reinstated until at least 5 years have elapsed from the date of the completion of the sentence imposed for that offence.

And then in subsection (5) striking out "subsection (3) or (4)" and substituting "subsections (3), (4) or (4.1)."

Madam Chair, as you've already heard this afternoon, the United Conservative Party does not believe that a ban of five years is long enough for serious sexual offenders, but the government has failed to act on our suggestions for improving this bill. I believe that this government, at the very least, will guarantee that the professionals cannot seek to return to their practices while they are still serving a criminal sentence for the very offences that caused them to lose their licence. Amazingly, this bill allows that. This amendment would prohibit them from applying for reinstatement if they are still on probation, parole, or any other court-ordered restriction. It will guarantee a longer ban for the most egregious of offenders.

I want to outline why I believe this is such an important fix. A health professional who commits a sexual crime against a young patient or a major sexual assault on an adult patient could be jailed for 14 years under the Criminal Code, but they could also be out on parole in five years. As this bill is written, as soon as they are released from jail, they could reapply for reinstatement of their licence. Clearly, that makes no sense. It should not even be contemplated. I believe that if Albertans knew this, they would be alarmed. Since the NDP has refused to agree to insert other robust protections into Bill 21, let's at very least fix this oversight. Since we as legislators can do it, why would we not do it?

Thank you so much, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Yeah. Thank you very much, Madam Chair and to the member for the proposed amendment and for the consideration that, I understand from her remarks, she must have taken in drafting this. I just want to add one other thing around the five-year component, and that's that it's important to me that the legislation we bring forward obviously protects patients and ensures that we limit any risk that harm could be done to any future patient, but I also want to ensure that the legislation will withstand legal and constitutional challenges. I am trying to reflect, having just received this amendment, on what some of the concerns might be. I haven't had an opportunity, of course, to address this with legal counsel, so I'm not in a position to be able to say that I believe that this would withstand a constitutional or a legal challenge. That's point one.

Point two is that this certainly, if somebody was still on probation or if somebody was still incarcerated or serving some other kind of sentence, would be part of the consideration that the tribunal committee would take into consideration. I think it would be highly unlikely that if somebody was still serving a sentence, they would be deemed to have met the other criteria by which a health professional receives their practice permit. I would certainly welcome some of my colleagues who have practice permits as registered health professionals to extrapolate on that process if they so choose.

Without having an opportunity to question whether or not the legal and constitutional challenges would be met with this new amendment and knowing that that part of the tribunal process, when you apply to have it reinstated, includes having a criminal record check, I find it likely that it would probably, well, definitely have to surface during that criminal record check process. Therefore, the tribunal, I believe, would probably weigh on the side of not granting the reinstatement.

Again, not having had an opportunity to review this prior to seeing it just at this moment and not having an opportunity to discuss with legal counsel the implications of a legislative or a constitutional challenge, I have concerns that if we were to approve this, it would put us in a weaker position to protect patients. For that reason, at this point I am reluctantly voting against this proposed amendment. I really do want to ensure that we have strict and fair legislation and that we have protection for patients, and I would not want to see that stymied by constitutional challenges. So I think it's important that we reflect upon the intention of the amendment but respectfully vote it down at this point.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Any other speakers to the amendment? Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to the amendment moved by my colleague. I just want to thank her for her work on this particular issue.

I know that a number of folks in our caucus have been diligent in trying to ensure that the victims are respected in this process. While I can appreciate the minister's comments about the need for more information, frankly I think it's worth having a constitutional challenge take place on an important issue like this with respect to making sure that the safety of patients is put first and all of the other very important issues that have been discussed here this evening.

But the other key point that the minister made was that at this time she recommended voting against such an important amendment, that would require the time served plus five more

years, as mentioned by my colleague. I just think that now would be a great time to take a pause on this particular piece of legislation and allow the minister to get that important legal information that she says that she would like to have so that she can support or not support an amendment like this, so at this time I would like to recommend that we move a motion to rise and report progress.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion that the committee rise and report progress lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:09 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Goodridge	Smith
Cooper	McIver	Stier
Cyr	McPherson	van Dijken
Drysdale	Nixon	Yao
Ellis		

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Goehring	Payne
Babcock	Gray	Phillips
Bilous	Hinkley	Piquette
Carlier	Hoffman	Renaud
Carson	Horne	Rosendahl
Ceci	Jansen	Sabir
Coolahan	Kazim	Schmidt
Dang	Kleinstauber	Sucha
Drever	Littlewood	Swann
Eggen	McCuaig-Boyd	Turner
Feehan	McKitrick	Westhead
Fitzpatrick	Miller	Woollard
Ganley	Nielsen	

Totals:	For – 13	Against – 38
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[Motion that the committee rise and report progress lost]

The Chair: Are there any further members wishing to speak to amendment A5? Calgary-Mountain View on the amendment.

Dr. Swann: Thanks, Madam Chair. I'd like to just address some fundamentals here in these ongoing suggestions. Three basic questions are being asked about health workers, in particular, and sexual abuse. The first question that's being asked is: what is appropriate punishment for somebody who assaults a patient, and who should decide what that punishment is?

The second question is: should there be a loss of professional status, professional position, as a result of a sexual offence? I guess the third question that's being asked here is: to what extent should legislation prescribe the consequences as opposed to the professions who have been charged with, appropriately, I think, making decisions around practice and licensure and conduct? We have delegated these responsibilities to the professions. I guess we're saying also that we have a teaching profession, where we have people who are in positions of trust, and if we're going to single out a particular profession, how far does this go?

But in the first instance, I don't believe that legislation should be prescribing specific punishments. That's for either a court of law or a college. Secondly, to go to the next step and rescind someone's licence to practise, again, we have already delegated to professional bodies. If we're going to take that away, what are we saying about

the roles of these professional colleges, and how are we empowering or disempowering them from doing their job, which is to assess the degree of egregiousness of a particular act that someone has done?

I think that's enough said. Those three basic questions are at the heart of what these debates are about. I don't mind debating these issues because they are very serious, but I think we have to take a step back and say: what are we changing when we start legislating at this level what the punishment is going to be, including how long they have to stay out of their profession? We're undermining the role of the professional bodies if we do so, and if we're going to do that, we need to revamp the whole college process.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll just take a moment. I'd like to address the comments just made by my colleague from Calgary-Mountain View. I like that he laid everything out in a list. That's helpful to put your thoughts out that way.

In terms of punishment he asked: how do we prescribe a specific punishment? Should we be doing that here? To rebut that, I would like to ask: how do we prescribe specific remedies that are sufficient to show survivors of sexual assault in these circumstances that what happened to them has our attention, has gravity, and is being taken seriously? The reason that we're seeing these amendments is because the way the legislation stands right now, many of us and many people I've spoken to do not believe that five years is a sufficient amount of time even if that's the minimum, even if that's not what happens ever. It isn't sufficient to demonstrate to survivors of sexual assault by health professionals that what occurred to them is unacceptable.

Next was the loss of professional status and what the position or the role of the professional college should be. I don't think that anyone here has suggested or recommended that we take away any other authorities from these professional colleges. We're simply asking that the legislation reflect the gravity of this particular kind of offence, whether they are charged criminally or not or if they are found to be responsible by the college, which would include their peers and other people. It's not a matter of trying to take away anything from the professional colleges. It's trying to create a standard that can be followed for any professional college, whether it's for health or law or whatever it is, that sexual assault is unacceptable in our society and that we will create the framework of legislation to reflect that appropriately.

5:20

Finally, the last question: to what extent should this be legislated? Well, to what extent do we support survivors in their recovery from the trauma that is sexual assault? The member had previously moved a really good amendment saying that, you know, it's a foregone conclusion that sexual assault does cause a great deal of physical, emotional, mental harm to the person who is assaulted, and I think that ties into his question. I think it answers his question. To what extent should this be legislated? It should be legislated to the extent that sexual assault survivors in these circumstances know unequivocally that legislators stand with them and that they reject the possibility of sexual assault happening in those circumstances again.

For those reasons, I'm happy to support this amendment, and I commend the member for moving it.

The Chair: Any other speakers to the amendment?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A5 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:21 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Goodridge	Smith
Cooper	Kenney	Stier
Cyr	McIver	van Dijken
Drysdale	McPherson	Yao
Ellis	Nixon	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Goehring	Nielsen
Babcock	Gray	Payne
Bilous	Hinkley	Phillips
Carlier	Hoffman	Piquette
Carson	Horne	Renaud
Ceci	Jansen	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Kazim	Sabir
Cortes-Vargas	Kleinstauber	Schmidt
Dang	Littlewood	Sucha
Drever	Loyola	Swann
Eggen	McCuaig-Boyd	Turner
Feehan	McKittrick	Westhead
Fitzpatrick	Miller	Woollard
Ganley		

Totals:	For – 14	Against – 40
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[Motion on amendment A5 lost]

The Chair: Any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for the opportunity to speak about this. I would like to present an amendment, please.

The Chair: This is amendment A6. Go ahead, hon. member.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to move that Bill 21, An Act to Protect Patients, be amended in section 7 as follows: (a), in clause (a) by striking out "Subject to subsection (3), a person" and substituting "Subject to subsections (3) and (4.1) a person"; (b), in clause (b) in the proposed section 45 by adding the following after subsection (4):

(4.1) Notwithstanding subsections (3) and (4), a person whose practice permit and registration are cancelled as a result of a decision under sections 82(1.1) or 96.2, based in whole or in part on a conviction of an offence under the Criminal Code (Canada), may not apply for the practice permit to be reissued and the registration to be reinstated.

Madam Chair, I think back about how this came to be and the questions that we asked on Dr. Taher and a pattern of behaviour and what had happened to these women in this particular situation that not only were victimized and then survivors and then had the courage to come forward. To think that in the legislation there is nothing to make sure that somebody who has breached that level of trust doesn't have the opportunity to be able to reapply and be reinstated for their job. This is about trust, completely.

The Alberta United Conservatives supported last week's motion of a lifetime ban of a health professional's licence if it was cancelled due to sexual abuse or misconduct involving a patient. Let's talk

about this for a minute. We did that because we believe that this is an unconscionable breach of trust. Patients display an incredible amount of trust in health professionals. You're extremely vulnerable when you're in these situations, extremely willing to give over information that is particularly intimate about your situation, about what's going on. There are so many aspects to that. That breach of trust, when it happens, is absolutely devastating to the person who has been impacted by that. If they, in turn, are sexually abused by that health professional, it is absolutely imperative for those of us who have the privilege to legislate to ensure that these health practitioners are never ever again offered the opportunity to practise.

This is why the UCP is introducing this amendment. It provides a lifetime ban on health professionals who have been convicted of a Criminal Code offence, and that actually aligns with Bill 21's definition of sexual abuse. It includes the Criminal Code offences that align with misconduct as well if the practitioner's licence has been cancelled for those reasons. Why do we think that this is important? Well, the bar for a criminal conviction is high, and Albertans would be shocked to learn that Bill 21 actually leaves the door open for someone who's been convicted of a serious sexual offence to actually reapply to practise. Think about that for a minute. We're actually leaving that door open for that possibility in the health professional field.

Health is about trust, a hundred per cent about trust. The government is trying to build trust. We're trying to build trust. We're trying to make sure that within our health system, at the very, very topmost piece of that, that trust piece is there. It's absolutely imperative. For the sake of that public trust we must slam the door shut, and this amendment will actually accomplish that.

Thank you.

5:30

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Again, I just want to reiterate that I think the intent of the amendment aligns with the intent of the bill. I think that the purpose of this legislation, as was stated by the member and, I think, by the Alberta sexual assault centre folks who were at the press conference when we released this bill, says that, of course, we need to be strict and we need to be fair.

I just want to reiterate that we want to ensure that in our legislation – our legislation will be the strictest in Canada – there is a minimum sanction, being a minimum of five years, and that in no way does somebody applying lead to the outcome that they will be awarded their licence back because they've applied for it. I want to remind all folks about that and just reiterate that, through legal advice that we have sought, we want to ensure that this withstands legal and constitutional challenges. Our advice has been that if we went further than five years, that that would be less likely.

Again, I want to reiterate that this is removal of a licence for a minimum of five years, that at the point of five years someone may apply, but in no way does it lead to the likely outcome that they would receive their licence. It's important to us that we have a fair and strict process that aligns with the values that we've outlined through this bill and through speaking and fighting for Albertans who clearly deserve to have a government that's on their side, and that's definitely what we have worked to achieve through our collaboration with sexual assault centres, with survivors, with the colleges. Our government is clear that we want to stand up for women and survivors of sexual assault every day. That's why we've brought forward this bill and other bills earlier in this session, even in the spring session. I think that our record on this matter is clear.

I appreciate the passion with which the member of the Official Opposition speaks to this item and look forward to hearing her voice on all future items, hopefully with the same level of passion that she's been able to bring to this. Again, I want to honour the intent of the amendment. I think it's a good intent. I again, though, want to ensure that our survivors, that people who are in Alberta have the ability to have a bill that will have teeth and that will withstand constitutional challenges. That's why we're proposing a minimum period of five years, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Any other speakers to the amendment?

Dr. Swann: I'll maybe add another comment as well that I haven't actually expressed so far. I appreciate very much the sensitivity around this issue as well. Medical professions, all 18 or 20 or 25 of them, have a special duty of trust and privilege in our professions. I want to remind the member that colleges have the authority to restrict practices to certain types of medical or health care practices. They can limit the scope of the practice of that person if they see a reason to do so, they can use judgment and assess the nature of the harm that individual did and the subjects that that person may be particularly attracted to or damaging to, and they can ensure, for example, that an individual never practises without someone else present. There are a range of options for the colleges to address that don't have the impact of a one-size-fits-all, that we seem to be trying to find here.

I think in all professions there are these risks of people in authority and power positions abusing their power and authority on others, and for us in this Legislature to presume that we can assess each case in its uniqueness and address a common punishment for these folks I think is out of the scope of the Legislature, let me say. That is why we have professional bodies that are supposed to be self-policing, and if they're not self-policing, if they're not doing a good job, they need to be called on that.

In the first instance, the members here who are saying that we need to be more supportive of victims and victims supports and victims services, by all means, we need to do that. But we need to leave to the courts their role, we need to leave to the colleges their role, and we need to leave to the Legislature our role, which is to provide overarching legislation that makes sure that we take this very, very seriously. And I think this bill does take it very, very seriously.

The Chair: Any other speakers to the amendment? The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to thank my hon. colleague from Chestermere-Rocky View for this thoughtful amendment and indeed the Minister of Health for having brought forward the bill. I discussed this with her in question period last spring and indicated that the Official Opposition would be eager to work constructively with the government to bring forward legislation to address the outrageous circumstances of licences being granted to convicted sexual offenders practising medicine.

I would just briefly like to respond in support of this amendment to the remarks of the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, who essentially said that this matter is better left in the purview of the professional licensing body designated by the Legislature, namely the College of Physicians & Surgeons. Madam Chair, the problem is that the college failed in its duty to protect women. It failed to responsibly exercise the authorities granted to it by this Legislature. The college and other professional licensing bodies are granted the privilege to regulate their respective professions in the public interest for the common good, not to be given carte blanche to essentially look the other way when members of their professions

engage in crimes and are found by our fair legal system, are convicted by that system, of having engaged in such an odious crime as sexual assault.

I would submit to the hon. member that he is mistaken in placing such confidence in a college which failed to protect women in this instance. We as legislators cannot allow that mistake to be repeated. He talked about punishment. Well, darn right, Madam Chair. Physicians and other professionals who abuse their professional relationships with patients or clients for sexual gratification darn well should be punished. They should be punished, of course, under the criminal sanctions of the federal Parliament, but they should also face serious and, in our view, permanent repercussions in terms of their ability to practise their profession.

Finally, Madam Chair, I believe that the measures proposed by the amendment before us and a permanent ban on the ability of convicted rapists and sexual offenders to practise medicine would have a very serious deterrent effect, that before they take the step to violate the sexual integrity of one of their patients, they will realize that their entire career is on the line.

That is why I think most Albertans expect us to support this amendment.

The Chair: Any other speakers to the amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to get up and give a few more remarks. First of all, thank you to the member for moving the amendment. I think it's a good amendment. I think it's an important one.

One of my concerns in this debate today is that we're really focusing on the professionals, and we're not focusing on the survivors. I think that's where our attention needs to lie, with the survivors. I just want to go through a few reminders, put some context around where we are today.

The Me Too movement isn't a movement to try and trap anybody. It isn't about making sure that someone is punished. The Me Too movement is to let survivors of sexual assault know that they're not alone and that what they've experienced has been experienced by other people. The thing that keeps survivors quiet is shame, shame and guilt and a sense of responsibility for the act that has occurred to them.

Another point that I want to make is that sexual assault is not about sexual gratification. It is always about power. It's using sex as a tool to control someone else. When we think about what prevents people who survived sexual assault from reporting sexual assault, some of the obstacles are a fear of not being believed. To disclose something that feels so shameful publicly or to another person is a terrifying thing to do.

5:40

I know. I've reported being sexually assaulted to the police. I've stood in this House and I've spoken about years of abuse. It was one of the scariest things that I've ever had to do in my life: what if people don't believe me? What if what happened to me doesn't mean anything, it doesn't make any difference? Some of the other concerns are marginalization. I remember that when I did report to the police, I was told by an RCMP officer that they really had a lot of other important things to take a look at and my case wasn't that important. For any survivor, you know, it's a risk to come forward and to disclose what happened. It's a bigger risk to disclose to police, to law enforcement, because that has a lot of gravity to it.

It's taken so much for a survivor to come forward to a college, if they can even figure out that that's an option for them, and disclose what happened to them and to create circumstances where they're

okay sharing their story. It's pretty monumental that they've been able to make it that far. Their credibility is always in doubt. We have a history as a society of laying a lot of blame on survivors and telling them, you know, that they shouldn't have been wearing what they were wearing or they shouldn't have drunk what they drank or shouldn't have been where it was possible for them to be sexually assaulted.

If you think of the circumstances of going to see a health professional and being sexually assaulted, you have that trust, you think that you've already created the circumstances where you won't be sexually assaulted. One in four women will be sexually assaulted throughout their lifetime. All women keep in the back of their head: how can I be safe? We're not able to walk and go about our business in the same way that men are. We always are concerned about our safety. So when you are somebody's patient and you're sexually assaulted, it makes the crime even more egregious. It's already awful, and to contravene, to compromise that level of trust is unspeakable. There should be strict and very severe consequences for behaving that way.

I heard what the minister said about the legislation being the strictest in the country to be introduced, and I appreciate that. I really do. I would say that I'd love to see it be even stricter. I'd love us to be a beacon throughout North America, throughout the world as to how to handle sexual assault in cases of professional misconduct. I think one of the things that I'm hearing in the debate today, especially the hesitancy concerns about the constitutionality of the law, is an undercurrent of fear or concern that we could go that far and there could be a challenge.

I get it, and I'd really like to encourage all of us to act in a different way in spite of that fear, acknowledge that it's there because that's what courage is. If you think about the Kavanaugh hearings and Dr. Blasey testifying, she was petrified. She had to drink her glass of water with both hands. Like, she was scared. That is a really scary circumstance to be in, and she did it anyway. That's courage.

If we have fears about the constitutionality – and we're smart people in this room. There's nothing blatant about the constitutionality that says: oh, please, don't do this right now. I would really encourage us to be courageous and to go ahead and pass this amendment. Right now we have a chance to provoke societal change in attitude about how we address sexual assault, and we need to take it.

For these reasons, I am supporting this amendment.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Seeing none I'll call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A6 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:45 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Goodridge	Smith
Cooper	Kenney	Stier
Cyr	McIver	van Dijken
Drysdale	McPherson	Yao
Ellis	Nixon	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Goehring	Payne
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Babcock	Hinkley	Phillips
Bilous	Hoffman	Piquette
Carlier	Horne	Renaud
Carson	Kazim	Rosendahl
Ceci	Kleinstauber	Sabir
Coolahan	Littlewood	Schmidt
Drever	Loyola	Sucha
Eggen	McCuaig-Boyd	Swann
Feehan	McKitrick	Turner
Fitzpatrick	Miller	Westhead
Ganley	Nielsen	Woollard
Totals:	For – 14	Against – 36

[Motion on amendment A6 lost]

The Chair: Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with regard to Bill 21?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 21 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

5:50

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would move that the committee rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

Drever: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bills with some amendments: Bill 19 and Bill 21. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Any opposed? So ordered.

The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Westhead: Yes. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Seeing the time and the progress that we've made this afternoon, I would move that we adjourn the House and call it 6 o'clock and reconvene tomorrow morning at 9.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:51 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday morning, November 7, 2018

Day 47

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (NDP), Speaker
Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (NDP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)

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New Democratic: 53 United Conservative: 26 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Freedom Conservative: 1 Independent: 2 Progressive Conservative: 1

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Dang	McPherson
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Drever	Stier
Drysdale	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kleinsteinuber	Taylor
McKitrick	

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Coolahan	Miller
Cooper	Nielsen
Goehring	Nixon
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Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

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Barnes	Malkinson
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Gotfried	Panda
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Luff	

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Clark	Malkinson
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Kazim	Schreiner
Kleinsteinuber	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Wednesday, November 7, 2018

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Deputy Speaker: Good morning.

Hon. members, as we continue Veterans' Week, let us reflect on the military, police, firefighters, and paramedics who keep our Armed Forces safe both home and abroad, and let us also keep in mind the first responders in Sherwood Park, who have been working diligently to keep their community safe.

Please be seated.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders

Third Reading

Bill 19

An Act to Improve the Affordability and Accessibility of Post-secondary Education

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It is a pleasure to rise and move Bill 19 for third reading.

This bill represents a significant advance in protecting affordability for students as far as the cost of higher education goes and is also a significant advance in making sure that more Albertans get the opportunity to pursue the postsecondary education of their dreams.

You know, Madam Speaker, when our government was elected, we inherited an oil price in free fall, an economy that was going into one of the worst recessions in a couple of generations. Our government chose not to turn our backs on the people of Alberta and instead invest in the people of Alberta to make sure that they had the opportunities that they needed to continue to be successful and make their lives better, and that included the students of our province. So we continued to invest in every university and college by providing predictable and stable funding, and we continued to guarantee affordability for higher education by freezing tuition and fees at every university and college in the province so that every Alberta student had the opportunity to pursue an affordable higher education.

Madam Speaker, it's also important to know that the tuition freeze couldn't last, that we had to recognize that we needed a long-term plan for the sustainability of the cost of education for our students, and that's what's reflected in the bill that we are presenting for third reading this morning.

Madam Speaker, our government listens to Albertans. This bill is the result of extensive consultations with our stakeholder groups. We know how important this legislation is, so we ensured that the voices of our stakeholders were heard and respected. We consulted with postsecondary institutions, with student advocacy groups, and, most importantly, with the students themselves to ensure that their needs were met. I'm happy to report that the feedback from our stakeholders has been extremely positive, and they know that we're making improvements that will make postsecondary education more attainable for learners without sacrificing the high-quality education that Albertans expect from their universities and colleges.

This bill introduces important changes to keep postsecondary education affordable by creating checks and balances needed to

better control tuition and fees for domestic and for international students. While this bill does give the minister authority to set fees for apprentices, the institutions will continue to set fees for all other students, allowing them the flexibility and the ability to continue to provide high-quality programs for students. I want to repeat that there will remain a difference in treatment between tuition fees for apprentices and other postsecondary students. Apprenticeship fees are the same at every institution and are set by the minister. Bill 19 doesn't change that. However, this will place some restrictions on the minister's authority by requiring apprenticeship fees to align with other student tuition increases, namely through the consumer price index.

This bill also includes explicit parameters for mandatory noninstructional fees, which are fees that students pay in addition to their tuition. This bill ensures that public institutions must keep mandatory noninstructional fees at or below the cost to provide the goods or services for which the fee is set. These fees cannot be used as revenue generators for institutions. This bill also ensures that institutions must have written approval from student councils before they introduce a new mandatory noninstructional fee. This ensures that all students across our great province continue to have access to high-quality and affordable educational opportunities.

We're creating a system that is accountable and transparent not only for the students but for all Albertans. We've listened to our postsecondary partners. We're continuing to ensure that the needs of our postsecondary partners are heard and respected. That's why this bill strengthens the collaboration between sectors and ensures that research across the province is co-ordinated and aligned with the Alberta research and innovation framework.

We've also told our postsecondary partners that our intention is to provide them with backfill funding while we continue our tuition freeze for a fifth year. This will offset the cost of the tuition freeze for those institutions. We know how important stable and predictable funding is. Our government, as I mentioned at the beginning of my remarks, restored funding to institutions, and we've provided 2 per cent operating grant increases every year since 2015.

Our postsecondary institutions are highly regarded and respected across the country. The many changes in Bill 19 will ensure that the quality of postsecondary education in Alberta remains extremely high.

I'm proud of this bill and what it represents to all of our stakeholders. I know that it will serve our stakeholders and our province well. This proposed bill continues our government's commitment to the students of our province, a commitment that we've upheld during our government's mandate. Bill 19 will ensure that affordable postsecondary education is accessible for every Albertan. The initiatives in this bill will create a postsecondary system that continues to provide learners with the skills that they need to succeed in Alberta's diversifying economy.

I look forward to the rest of the debate at third reading of this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the bill, Bill 19, An Act to Improve the Affordability and Accessibility of Post-secondary Education. I will say that I am in support of the bill. I think it's an important bill, one that needed to happen although there are some challenges.

I think there are a few things that, just for the sake of government and for the sake of Alberta, we should address a little bit in this conversation although I am sure that students are happy with the bill. I know that some of them have been consulted, and I think the stability that it will create for students is definitely going to be a

valuable thing, and it allows them to plan. It allows them to figure out how they're going to get their finances in order. I think it will be helpful to them in that regard.

I do think the tuition freeze of 2015 was a concern. Any time you have a radical departure from policy in government, it creates challenges for one group or another, so I think resolving that and figuring out a reasonable rate of return for the colleges and costs for the students is something that's important.

I understand that student bodies were pushing for a cap that was tied to the consumer price index, so I think that they should be happy and satisfied with that. I do have some concerns about the consumer price index, though, and how it might impact Alberta. It hasn't always been stable and low as it's been the last few years. There have been times where it's been very challenging.

There are also economists who question the validity of the CPI, the way it's calculated. The way it's calculated has changed over the years. My concern also with that is partly that the reality is that we're tying our Alberta tuition and university funding to a figure that is set federally. Quite clearly, it's set for federal policy benefit, not necessarily Alberta policy benefit. The way it gets calculated gets tweaked at different times throughout its history. There are some who claim that the federal government deliberately keeps it a little bit low because that suits their own personal position. I'm not sure that it's a perfect measure, but it's something we'll have to watch, something that we'll have to continue to monitor as we move forward in Alberta here because, quite frankly, I think we need to make our own decisions and not be tied in everything to the federal government.

But I think it will, as I said, provide predictability, and it does provide at least a framework that the institutions can work with, a framework that gives them important predictability. As in every business – and universities are also a business besides an educational institution – the costs are sometimes not nearly as significant as the reliability or the predictability of them and the policy framework in which they exist. So this is good.

9:10

The reality is that many students have to pay for their own education. They have to work very hard to get a postsecondary education, sometimes two jobs. We often hear that. People who have succeeded and who give inspirational challenges often tell their stories about how hard they had to work. It's no different here in Alberta. To get a postsecondary education, for the majority of people, is a huge challenge. I know it was for me. I had to earn every cent of it, and many, many students are in the same situation. The thing that scares me a little bit, though, is the escalating cost of that tuition, that has to be earned. I've always sort of thought that way back in the late '70s, when I started my education, it somehow seemed easier than it appears to be today.

I tried to do a little bit of research on that, and I think there are some extremely interesting numbers that arise. Unfortunately, I don't have detailed numbers for Canada. I do have some American numbers, and I think the entire western world is facing this escalating challenge. For instance, in 1971 the cost of a public college education in the U.S. was \$8,700. In 2016 it was almost \$21,000. Now, here's the important part. If you compare that to median income and put it into a ratio, it's almost scary. I have it here for both women and for men, and it's different but in different ways. In 1971 the average cost of a college education was 58 per cent of the annual median income; 58 per cent in '71. By 2016 that same ratio had jumped to 80 per cent. So we have an over 20 per cent ratio increase for women. This is a huge increase for them. For men, as I said, the numbers are slightly different. In 1971 the average college cost divided by the median income was only 20 per

cent. By 2016 that 20 per cent had jumped to 51 per cent; over a 31 per cent increase in costs.

When I went to college, you could go to work in the summertime. You could get a job. For me it was either construction or tree planting, actually. Did that for a summer, fighting mosquitoes and mud. You could go to work for the summer, and you could come out at the end of summer. There were jobs available, and you would have enough money for the next year to get through school. Now that is almost impossible.

I think this is a trend across the western world. When you have these kinds of escalating increases – 80 per cent of average income for women, 51 per cent for men, with a 20 per cent increase and a 30 per cent plus increase – these are challenging numbers for our educational realities. We need to take into account the economics of this for students. Students really do need the opportunity to earn the money that it will take to pay for their education.

I do have some numbers for Canada in terms of debt financing, and it tells much the same story. Student loans for Canada in the various ratios, by the time you're done, whether it's \$5,000 or \$5,000 to \$10,000 or \$10,000 to \$15,000 or over \$15,000, have increased. For those who have over \$15,000 in student loans, just from '91 to more recently – I don't even have the number here, but it's more than tripled. The size of student loans is increasing dramatically. We have a real problem here where both the tuition-to-income ratio and the size of student loans are increasing at a rapid pace. It is important that these kinds of issues are addressed and fixed and somehow looked at by government.

Capping tuition rates for students I think is one potential solution, one step, but there's a much bigger puzzle than that, a much bigger challenge for us. It has to do with the fact that students need jobs, and we need good-paying jobs. We need the kinds of jobs that make it possible for a student to earn enough to actually pay their way through education and not come out with massive, multiple years' worth of debt to have to try and address. To me, that would be extremely depressing. I don't believe in personal debt. I don't believe in government debt except in rare situations. I just think it's a huge risk for us to cause the young people of our day to start out their life with a net debt situation in terms of their own personal finances, their family, their ability to provide for children, to buy a house, to even have a car to go to work. I think that these are challenging issues that government needs to address.

As I said, years ago you could get a job in the summertime, and you could earn enough to pay your way. Now you may not even get a job in Alberta in the last few years. Some of this, quite frankly, is the cause of macro government policy. It's not just the price of oil. I mean, you look at other jurisdictions, and they're booming. I just noticed yesterday that in the U.S. the leading market index is actually oil and gas extraction. Their economy is booming. Young people are getting jobs in those industries. They can't even hire enough people. Here we don't have any jobs to offer them. So macro government policy in terms of the economy actually has a huge impact on the accessibility and affordability of education, which is what this bill is about.

I note that if you take a look back through history, the glorious times of education in any society in history are those times where they were economically prosperous. One of the benefits of economic prosperity is the need to not have to work so much of your life, which grants you the freedom to engage in not just education but also the arts and culture. When economies are struggling and poor, people don't have those luxuries of both education and the arts and culture and all of those things. So I think it's extremely important that we do maintain in Alberta a vibrant economy, a growing opportunity for employment, and not just the kinds of jobs that cause students to struggle through but, hopefully,

the kinds of jobs where over four months of the summer they could actually earn enough to pay for the next year's education. Unfortunately, in Alberta in recent decades the only place where you could really do that, for the most part, was in the oil and gas industry, earn that kind of money.

Now we have a government that's put a cap on much of our oil industry. We have a government that too often has tried to shame our oil industry, drive it out of our province, drive it into the U.S. We've seen a number of companies leave just recently, this week, take all of their investments and move them into the U.S. We are building the education of U.S. students and leaving our own students strapped for income and the opportunity to succeed and to get ahead. I think this is a part of the big picture that is a huge challenge for us. It's a problem.

I'm pleased in one regard, that there's some stability and that there will be some ongoing framework there for both students and the universities. I think that while the cap for international students is good for international students, we need to make sure that it's presented in a way that actually invites international students in because they do a lot to fund our educational institutions. We don't want to create a situation in Alberta where we lose the economic benefits of international students. They bring a great benefit to our province. As I said before, many of them stay and become great contributors to our culture, to our economy, to our industry, and to innovation. They bring fresh ideas, and that mix of international ideas being brought to us is part of what we need in Alberta to make us prosperous and to make us successful.

I am a little disheartened that it took three and a half years to get this tuition review done. I think it was an important, urgent issue that probably should have been done earlier than that.

I think we also need to take a much broader look at the other policies that affect the whole picture of the massive rising increase of university education and the decline of our economic strength, of our economic vitality, because these policies can affect the whole province and, in the end, affect how we go about creating a context where a university education is entirely possible for students.

9:20

When we cripple our economy, university education as well as students suffer. There are now 184,000 unemployed Albertans, 40,000 more than before this government took office, in 2015. We need to make sure we get people back to work, not just in low-paying jobs but good-paying jobs, the kinds of jobs that can pay for a university education. That's what students are dealing with. Those are the things that we really need to be thinking about and the things that we need to continue to address on sort of a macro level.

I'd also like to say on sort of the broad picture of things that I think we need to encourage our universities, which are educational institutions but are also businesses, to really focus on the business side of their model. We have universities that teach business education. We have some of the brightest business minds in our universities. So I think we need to encourage the universities as well to also look at ways that they can adopt lean business models. Every other business in the province has had to do that.

I would encourage them to wrestle a little bit more with how they build endowments. I know all the big universities in the U.S. have massive endowments. In many cases they're able to fund tuition. Stanford University, I think, has gone away from tuition altogether because they have the endowments, so they just endow every student. For them, it's about grades. If you have the grades, you make it into the university. We need to encourage them to build those endowments, and I know that's been a challenge in Canada. Canadians need to be more generous, I think. We should endow our

universities so that they're not struggling and hampered so that they can be world class.

I'd also encourage that government should try and find ways to incent universities to be innovative and business class, basically, to be innovative in terms of revenue and find value-added means. Businesses have to do this all the time. There are some ways I think they could build additional revenue through the sale of product, leasing of physical assets – I mean, they hold immense assets in many cases – consulting, and speaking. I'm just saying that we need to encourage them to model best business practices in every way possible so that they can offer their students an absolute premium university. Quite frankly, students looking for a university are sort of like shopping for a car. Everybody wants the Lamborghini but can probably afford the Volkswagen. It's a challenge to try and find a price point that provides us with what we need.

These are some of the broader challenges, I think, facing universities. I also question a little bit – and this isn't my idea; I read quite a bit in different areas – the trend of universal four-year degrees. It used to be three. In Britain it still mostly is three unless you do an honours four-year extra program. You know, you could cut student tuition by 25 per cent immediately if we would grant a three-year degree instead of a four. My point with that is that I don't think every student necessarily should take a university degree and especially not a four-year degree. I think that a more basic education – I think it's what they call a basic degree in Britain – for many students will serve well. It will help keep them out of debt, and it's an immediate 25 per cent cost to the tuition of a bachelor's degree.

The push for a four-year degree in some respects is driven by a revenue drive by universities wanting more money out of students, and I think it's something that needs to be challenged and questioned because not everybody actually benefits from a university degree. It's not a guarantee of a job, and when we sell it for that, in some ways we're deceiving students who go into debt to get a degree that then does not serve them well.

I guess my point is that we need to be a little bit more careful about the appropriateness of education for each student and where the best value is. I understand that university degrees generally make more income and that there's a whole scale of that. All of that I totally understand and agree with, but it's not the right choice for every student.

I was just reading here yesterday, in fact, an Edmonton Food Bank report, 2018 Beyond Food: Revisited. I was shocked to read that actually 48 per cent, almost half, of food bank recipients in Edmonton, have a postsecondary education of some kind or other. There's only one of two things going wrong here when half of our food bank recipients have a postsecondary education of some level. Either the economy needs to be improved, or the education isn't focused in a way that provides them the opportunity to get what they need in order to hold a job, in order to advance their own personal lives and careers, in order for them to provide for their families. There is a need, I think, to refocus some of our university training.

Now, I totally, totally agree that esoteric academics does have its place. We do need very, very technical and scientific and focused people in our society for sure, but it's not beneficial for everyone. I think working more toward helping students find the right education for them, that will truly serve them well, so that we don't have all these postsecondary graduates who cannot get a job, having to go to food banks – that's a tragedy when they're carrying debt for education already. I think we need to focus as well on the suitability of the education that we're offering to students.

Those are just a couple of insights and a couple of remarks that I would like to make. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hawkwood.

Connolly: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 19, An Act to Improve the Affordability and Accessibility of Post-secondary Education. Now, I listened very closely to the comments from the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka, and quite frankly I find it astounding that his main idea for lowering tuition fees and to keep students out of debt is to have students stop going to university altogether. Usually when I meet with students, I tell them how important it is to get an education. But, you know, I guess that's just the difference between the NDP and the UCP.

Frankly, bills like this are why I entered politics and put my name forward in 2015. Before I was elected, I was a student, and I'm really proud of that. Governments need to have a diversity of views. Making sure that students' voices are heard in this Legislature is incredibly important because it brings about decisions and bills like this.

Before I was elected, I was working minimum wage jobs, full-time in the summer, part-time during school. On top of volunteering, on top of my studies, and on top of extracurriculars, I needed a part-time job so that I could afford to study. On top of that, I had to take out loans because even then it didn't cover my expenses. Now, my parents aren't rich – in fact, I'm making more in this job now than anyone in my family has ever made – so it wasn't always easy. The vast majority of students I studied with and who are studying now in Alberta cannot afford to get a degree without taking out massive loans.

I'm incredibly disappointed that the opposition will not be supporting this bill. However, I'm not surprised.

Mr. Orr: We are supporting this bill.

Connolly: Oh. They're finally supporting the bill. That's good to hear. The last I heard, the large majority weren't supporting.

But I'm surprised because any time we put forward legislation that sets out to help students, to help LGBTQ youth, to help women, the opposition seems to sit on their hands or to leave the room entirely. So I'm very glad to see that you're all here and debating today. But if the opposition really wanted to help students, they would have talked to them to begin with and put forward this bill when they had the chance, when they were in government.

Now, the UCP has really shown who they are, and it's time for Albertans to see them. The Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills said that if they get into government, quote, it's going to hurt. It's obvious to me that some members of this Assembly ran to help Albertans and others ran to hurt them. Voting for this bill will help Albertans, and that's why I'm supporting it. Students deserve affordable high-quality learning opportunities.

For decades whenever there was a drop in oil, Conservatives used students and postsecondary institutions as scapegoats, cutting their programs at every chance they got. My friends were attending Mount Royal when the previous government cut the programs they were in. They didn't even know if they were going to be able to finish their degrees because the former government had absolutely no plan whatsoever to help those students.

I'm sick and tired of Conservatives saying that they care about students because their record shows the exact opposite. They have absolutely no plan to help students. If they were in government today, they would have cut advanced education like they always have. If they were in government, our tuition fees would be sky-high, with multiple market modifiers and no plan to fix the problems that this bill finally fixes.

9:30

If the members opposite finally got off their seats and talked to students, they would know why this bill is important. They would know why this bill has been needed for decades. But the Leader of the Opposition stated that he has no intention to consult with anyone if, God forbid, he's elected Premier, because he doesn't want to get bogged down.

If they had spoken to students, they would have heard from people like Andrew Bieman, chair of the Council of Alberta University Students, who said:

We have been asking for these changes for a long time, and we're happy to see the government addressing students' concerns regarding the costs of tuition. We're looking forward to legislative changes that help support students in the long run, as students are the largest stakeholders in the post-secondary system, and it's encouraging to know that our voices matter.

Basically, Madam Speaker, the UCP have been showing, time and time again, their true colours. They're not in this Chamber to help students. They're not here to help anyone that may be struggling. They're here to help their rich friends in the top 1 per cent. They're here to give tax breaks to the rich and hurt everyday Albertans.

Our government will continue to work to improve the lives of every Albertan. We will make sure that students have access to mental health supports. We will make sure that Alberta's students can afford to go to school. We will make sure that Alberta students have what they need to succeed in Alberta, because without an educated workforce, our province is doomed to fail. But it seems that our province's failure is exactly what the UCP has been cheering for.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It was interesting listening to the Member for Calgary-Hawkwood talk and go on his rant, I guess, on the UCP. Now, he suggested that the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka was discouraging people from going into postsecondary education. Maybe he should have been listening more carefully, because that definitely was not the case. He also suggested that we weren't supporting the bill. Of course, maybe he needs to attend the House a little more and pay attention to what's going on here, because I don't remember the members saying anything of the sort. He also said that this bill should have been done a long time ago. We even heard the minister speak here just yesterday, talking about how we had the highest tuition in Canada. Of course, that's not true either. We had some of the lowest tuition in Canada, way below the national average.

One thing I think the government fails to realize and that the Member for Calgary-Hawkwood maybe needs to realize is that this government has raised costs to universities. They brought in a carbon tax, that has cost universities and colleges millions of dollars. This carbon tax has cost students money, too. It's cost them money to travel. It's cost them money for heating the places that they live. All these costs have been increased due to this government here.

We have the highest unemployment and the highest youth unemployment. How are students going to support themselves in college and university when this government has done nothing to support them getting jobs? Madam Speaker, I think it's pretty rich for the Member for Calgary-Hawkwood to get up and go on this rant on the opposition here when they have done nothing to help the students in Alberta.

There are lots of different things that this government has done that are not very helpful at all to students. In fact, I actually had a member's statement yesterday, where I talked about all the different things this government is saying that are just not true. Then the Member for Calgary-Hawkwood gets up and reiterates the same things. Now, I wish that the member opposite would take a little more time and maybe think of what their government's actions have done and what their inaction has done, too, to unemployment, to the cost of living for everyday Albertans. They talk about the tax breaks. Madam Speaker, they've raised taxes on every single Albertan, from the top income to the bottom income.

I think it's pretty rich to have the Member for Calgary-Hawkwood get up and speak like he just has, railing on the opposition, when we've been supporting Albertans every step of the way. We've been fighting with this government as far as the damage that they've been doing, and we will continue to fight this government on the damage that they're doing. When they come up with something good, we'll support it. We will. We'll try to make it better.

I think there are a lot of things that could have been done with this bill as far as some more consultation. They say that they've done all this consultation, but they don't have the regulations in place yet. They don't have the guidelines in place yet. I think colleges and universities in Alberta are worried about that. I think they're worried about what the government is going to come up with as guidelines and regulations for this bill.

Obviously, some more time could have been taken as far as having the opportunity for these colleges and universities to look at what the guidelines and regulations are going to be so they know how it'll affect them. There's lots of opportunity for that. We could have sent this to committee and had a little bit more time for input. It still could have been passed in this legislative session, but we could have had just that little bit more information that the colleges and universities could have used so that they could make a decision on whether they would like to support this or not. Obviously, without all that information, how are they going to know what they're getting with this bill?

I think there are a lot of different things here, Madam Speaker, that this government could do. Again, if we'd had this input from these people – we could have had students come in and talk about this. We could have had the colleges and universities come in and talk about this, and had they known what the regulations and guidelines would be, they would have had that opportunity to have that input, and we would have been able to have that input, too, so that they would know what they're doing and what's going to happen with this bill and how it's going to affect them.

I'll leave it at that. I appreciate the time.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is an honour to rise today to speak to Bill 19, An Act to Improve the Affordability and Accessibility of Post-secondary Education. Education is one of the pillars of our society, and it's through education that we make our province competitive with other jurisdictions, we create a more active community in regard to actions like voting and donating, and we innovate and stimulate the economy.

Everyone here values education, and it's disappointing when you hear members from the government side being so arrogant as to assume that they are the only defenders of education, that they're the only ones that believe in postsecondary education. I guarantee that everyone in this room believes in education, especially on this side of the House.

Let's move on with this. You know what? Education is not just about what you learn from your professors or read from your textbooks. Postsecondary education helps us to develop essential skills such as time management, interpersonal skills, critical thinking, unless you're enrolled at Wilfrid Laurier. But other than that, most schools do try to teach some critical thinking. These skills are absolutely critical if we are to remain competitive and grow as a society. Certainly, there are lots of studies that talk about the benefits of postsecondary education in regard to job prospects. Those with postsecondary education have a higher employment rate, they make more money, and they enjoy longer term careers.

Postsecondary education has benefited me greatly, Madam Speaker. I might not have a university degree like some of the folks in this room, but I went to technical school. I went to NAIT and also AVC, Alberta Vocational College, in Lac La Biche to get my EMT and then my paramedic at NAIT. When I got on with the fire department in Fort McMurray, I got the pleasure of going into a more technical program, the firefighting program at Vermilion college, and that was a good experience. So I had a very interestingly diverse education that was more on the technical side.

But in order for me to proceed in my career, to grow as a firefighter paramedic, Madam Speaker, I started taking courses at our local community college, Keyano College, up in Fort McMurray. I took a class a semester, working my way towards my business admin certificate. My hope was to get, like, a diploma or a degree in it. I tell you what. That program alone put me ahead of all my co-workers, so when there was a position available in the management ranks, I was able to procure that job by applying. Definitely, my abilities on the floor really helped. I went into administration, and it was thanks to that business administration certificate. I believe that really helped me stand apart.

9:40

But the flip side to that, Madam Speaker – well, let me first talk about that. Going into the management side was great, administration. I was running EMS for an entire region. It was a time when I was developing a lot of the stuff for our own protocols and that. It was a time when Alberta Health Services came and took over everything. It was a time of great grief because even my boss, my fire chief, came up to me and said: how do you like answering to two masters? I had Alberta Health Services on one side and the mayor and council on the other, that I had to address, and it was very difficult because sometimes there were conflicting issues in there. It was a pain in the butt, quite honestly. But I digress.

I enjoyed the job in the administration, and then education helped me get to that side, but my lack of education also created that glass ceiling, and I couldn't climb any higher. Even though I had the smarts and I had the work ethic and I knew our industry, any applications I had to a more senior position weren't being considered.

I remember going in to ask my chief: "You know, what do I have to do? Where am I at here? Like, I'm stuck in this position. I'm not enjoying it. I have to deal with Alberta Health Services. Like, I want to get into a higher position." He said, "Come into my office." The chief walks me into his office. On his desk I remember there was a stack of papers, and he takes a handful of them and throws them on the table in his office there. "Tany, take a look at those." You know how the pile hits that table and just slides right across, right? I just start randomly picking them. They were all resumés for the positions that I was applying for. He said, "Look; keep looking." I started looking at all these resumés. Every one of them had a degree or a master's degree, a higher level of education than I had.

Even though I had things like project management, which was another separate course, and the business admin and a couple of

other things, classes and officer courses, it still wasn't enough, so I was restrained by the amount of education that I had. It was shortly thereafter that I realized that I needed to reconsider where I was at and consider getting that postsecondary education.

I guarantee, people across the way, that there are people over here that understand the real repercussions of not having an education and having an education. The arrogance that I see that comes from across the way is just really ridiculous and rhetorical. I know you're playing the politics game, but, you know, it is arrogant, and it is sad. Let's be clear. [interjections] Sorry. What was that?

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member.

Mr. Yao: Sorry. One of your folks from the government side was beaking off there. I was curious as to what he was saying.

The Deputy Speaker: Please continue.

Mr. Yao: Anyways . . . [interjections] Say again?

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members.

Please continue, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Yao: Sorry. They're just heckling over there.

Anyways, we do understand the need to ensure that education is sustainable. That's the issue, that all of our expenses are increasing. The expenses on the schools are increasing. You threw a carbon tax on them, that they have to absorb, and they need an ability to pay for all these things. Again, we would love to have a school system that definitely didn't have financial barriers, but unfortunately that is a fact of life here because we need to pay those professors, we need to pay for those heating bills in those schools, and we need to build that infrastructure. There's only so much that you can take from Albertans, who are paying so much in taxes. So recognize that we do understand this.

You know, I was fortunate enough to talk to a student in my constituency about their experience with postsecondary institutions. The student was disappointed with the freezes because his experience was that when fees were frozen previously, he got hit with his parking and his other annual fees. Book prices went up, textbooks. They were things that they were having problems navigating, okay? He wasn't a rich guy. He had to work full-time while he attended university as, again, he wasn't wealthy. He didn't have parents that could sponsor him for his tuition. So he only took about five to six classes a semester as well as working 35 hours a week just to stay afloat. We certainly recognize where individuals like this need predictability and stability in order to budget. Living paycheque to paycheque isn't a great way to live.

Now, I'm not saying that all students have to work while they're in school, but it's sometimes a necessity. That said, they do gain valuable skills albeit they're not partying all the time. They have to work and sleep and eat and study. Those are the ones that learn the true value of their education and a dollar spent, unlike some others who get everything on a platter, I suppose. We understand that student groups have been pushing for stability in education. They simply just want to know what they're going to be paying for tuition year after year, and we certainly understand their concerns around that.

Yes, you know, one of the things that certainly impair a lot of these guys is the taxation. Even the carbon tax makes everything more expensive. Again, the institutions are saying that the prices rise on everything, whether it's their energy bills, their construction bills to build a new annex. It just goes on and on. I'm just curious as to why this government hasn't exempted postsecondary institutions and even our health institutions, I might add, from the

carbon tax. Better yet, you should just remove it entirely because, in the end, it's just a tax, isn't it?

One point I'm pleased about with this bill is that I'm glad to see that the regulations do try to include noninstructional fees so that some of these things that students have faced previously won't hurt them as much, like increases to parking and whatnot. My constituent had mentioned to me that the institution he was attending did try to pick up costs by raising all those nontuition fees. He told me that parking costs doubled, some of his book fees increased, and it was very tough.

Madam Speaker, there is another concern about this bill, and it is the regulatory authority over noninstructional fees and other things. It seems this minister might be trying to take control of a lot of the process. We do have to recognize that a lot of these agencies need to follow some sort of due process, but part of the due process is also making sure that they're financially viable, and by putting restrictions on a lot of the things that these universities can do, it could impair them. We can only hope that the good minister has the decency to try consulting with them when he's making a lot of his decisions. They certainly haven't demonstrated a lot of consultation on other bills.

9:50

That said, Madam Speaker, I do stand here today in favour of Bill 19, An Act to Improve the Affordability and Accessibility of Postsecondary Education. At the heart of this bill I believe his intent is good, and we understand that. The benefit, again, of more predictable financing for students' tuition fees is greatly desired, but again we have to balance that with making sure that universities have the ability to be fiscally responsible and to spend within their means. To that effect, I would ask the minister: what are his conversations with these schools? Do they have ways of reducing some of their costs? I wonder if these professors are all collectively willing to take a bit of a drop. I have students that complain about their professors that work a day a year. I don't know if that's an exaggeration or not, but they don't see them around. It makes me wonder if they'd be willing to pitch in for the collective good. Who can say for certain?

To this bill, Madam Speaker, I do understand the intent, and I recognize that they want to try to get some stability there. I certainly recognize that. Let's see where we go from here.

Thank you so much for the opportunity to speak on this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I want to thank the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo for taking some time and commenting on this bill. I thought it was interesting, his talking about his real-life experience with the education that he had and how he chose to extend it and go back to a postsecondary institution to expand his education. I think it's good to have those real-life experience stories, you know, to encourage the youth in Alberta today to look at other options as far as education and what they can be doing.

I also want to thank the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo for his service as a first responder, which, of course, is what he went back to school for, to improve his education. I think that's definitely something that can be lauded and respected. Of course, we rely so much on our first responders all across Alberta. We've been talking about first responders in some of the bills that we've been discussing in the Legislature already and the importance of having our first responders, our volunteer firefighters, and things like that, especially in the small communities in Alberta.

I thought it was interesting, too, his comments on the carbon tax, how it affects the costs of universities and colleges and how that money could be so much better spent on the actual education rather than on a tax, and also on the cost of that carbon tax on students and how it affects them and their living expenses, in particular students that travel from outside the centres to the colleges and universities, students from rural Alberta. Some of the biggest costs of an education are those living expenses and travel expenses. Of course, those living expenses and travel expenses are all affected heavily by the carbon tax.

He also talked about the importance of universities, you know, being sustainable, being able to have the income and the expenses balanced so that they can actually provide the proper education for students, which they need to do, which is their job to do. Universities and colleges: I think one of the things that they're always after is predictability in their funding and their income and expenses so that they can make decisions on where they spend that money and how they serve the students. I think that one of the most important things that we can do for colleges and universities is to come up with something that's predictable both on the income and on the expenses side so that they know how much money they have and what they can spend it on.

Like I said, I enjoyed listening to the member's speech. By giving that real-life experience, I think that was a good opportunity for people to listen and to understand the importance of postsecondary education.

I did want to go back to the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka and some of his comments. Of course, we didn't have the opportunity to ask him questions on what he said, but I thought it was interesting how he talked about the consumer price index. It seems simple to just add in . . .

Mr. Westhead: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: We have a point of order, hon. member.

Point of Order Relevance

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I believe that under Standing Order 29(2)(a) the intent is to comment on the comments of the speaker, not someone who has spoken in the past. I would just like to ask the member to focus his comments on the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

The Deputy Speaker: Does anyone wish to respond to the point of order?

Mrs. Pitt: Yes, Madam Speaker. The Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky was simply stating that some of the comments from the previous speaker and then the speaker he was referring to are relative to this conversation and some of the comments from the original speaker, from Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo. I can assure you that if you allow the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky just a little bit more time, you'll see that this will make its way around to a fulsome conversation that will be understood by all members.

The Deputy Speaker: I will agree. I was actually giving you a little time to see where you were going with that, but I was at the point of cautioning you, Member, that you were drifting into an area that wasn't going to be appropriate for the intent of Standing Order 29(2)(a). Again, please confine your remarks to the previous speaker, as is intended by this particular provision of the standing orders.

Go ahead.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I appreciate that leeway there.

Debate Continued

Mr. Loewen: I was talking about the consumer price index and, of course, how it's calculated and how it could be politically manipulated or adjusted for political reasons. What that does and how that leads back to what we're talking about is that the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo talked about the importance of universities being sustainable and being able to know what their costs are and what their income is and being able to make sure that they had a balance so that they could continue providing the education that they should. This idea of the adjustment of the consumer price index: the idea of having it tied to that is maybe a good idea. Maybe it's the best idea. I don't know. What it does do is allow for a little bit of adjustment there, and maybe the colleges and universities may not know from one year to the next what's happening as far as that's concerned. I think that's the segue that I was using to bring that back into this discussion.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

Ms Miller: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today to speak in support of Bill 19, An Act to Improve the Affordability and Accessibility of Post-secondary Education. Our government is dedicated to fair legislation that improves the lives of every Albertan, including the many postsecondary students in Alberta.

In 2015 our government, which I'm very proud to be a part of, committed to stable and predictable funding for postsecondary institutions. Madam Speaker, because this government has frozen tuition at 2014-2015 levels, the average undergraduate degree program tuition in Alberta is more affordable, something I hear every time I walk through the halls of Red Deer College. Because of our government's foresight and actions, tuition in Alberta is now the fourth-lowest average tuition in the country, something I'm very proud of.

Bill 19 proposes a number of updates to the Post-secondary Learning Act that will set our province's postsecondary learning system up for continued success. This bill creates the checks and balances needed to better control tuition and fees for domestic and international students. By tying tuition to the consumer price index, it ensures that tuition costs remain affordable and do not spike for domestic students and apprentices. That means that here in Alberta the average tuition costs at each institution cannot increase more than the consumer price index and that each program is capped by a 10 per cent increase per year.

10:00

This government is also updating the act to give the Minister of Advanced Education the authority to order future tuition and fee freezes so that the government can keep the costs of postsecondary education affordable in the face of an unexpected economic downturn.

Furthermore, Bill 19 will provide the regulatory authority needed to implement the new tuition framework. It will deliver on our promise of affordable and predictable postsecondary costs for domestic and international students. Bill 19 is also capping mandatory noninstructional fees, or MNIFs. These fees are often used for things like health services, athletics, sexual assault centres, et cetera, and have been a point of contention that was mentioned repeatedly in the consultations carried out by this government. Bill 19 is also capping the apprenticeship tuition, the same as the

capping of postsecondary tuition, so the increase cannot exceed the CPI.

Madam Speaker, unprecedented action is being taken here by this government when it comes to international tuition for the thousands of international students who study and live in Alberta. This government is in fact removing the fear of unknown changes in tuition and fees by creating a tuition guarantee. With this guarantee international students will be told the tuition cost for each year of their program before they accept admission to their institution. That way international students will have peace of mind knowing what their education will cost and will be able to study in Alberta without the fear of tuition hikes.

Madam Speaker, this bill will also be modernizing and reorganizing the postsecondary system to create increased access for learners across Alberta. Since this government was elected in 2015, requests by many institutions asking for the government to grant approvals that would allow institutions to facilitate student success poured in. To ensure that students across our great province have access to high-quality educational opportunities, Red Deer College and Grande Prairie Regional College can pursue degree granting, and both institutes are on the path to university status, something that the people of central Alberta and the Grand Prairie region have been asking for for years. I hear about degree-granting status at RDC on almost a daily basis, and people of central Alberta are absolutely thrilled that their kids won't have to leave home to get their degree. This legislation will formalize this change and will ensure that the postsecondary system continues to adapt to serve the needs of students and communities in the province.

Madam Speaker, Bill 19 demonstrates this government's commitment to improving the lives of learners in our province so that they can achieve their educational goals, get good jobs, and contribute towards our province's diversifying economy. Albertans deserve a postsecondary system that provides high-quality education that is affordable and accessible, and this bill delivers on that promise. I encourage everyone in the House to vote in favour of this bill.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Absolutely. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I really appreciated hearing the comments of my colleague from Red Deer. I understand that this bill is indeed a very important step forward for the work that's being done through Red Deer College and now its opportunity to work towards becoming a university. I know I've had the chance to speak to students who've been part of the programs there. They have had some challenges at Red Deer College. I know that, unfortunately, they had to let go of their well-respected music program. I remember speaking with a number of students and indeed some of the faculty that were involved in the program at that time about the challenges they were facing there.

It's fantastic to see that now they have this opportunity to transition and that the city of Red Deer, as it continues to grow, is now, through this bill, going to be able to have a full degree-granting university over time, that we're going to be able to work towards that. I appreciated the comments that the member made there, and I was thinking that perhaps she would have a bit more to share on that.

As well, I thought the member might also have some good perspective here in that, you know, she has long been an Albertan. I believe you've raised children here in the province, and indeed I imagine you have grandchildren here in the province. Of course, they've taken advantage of the postsecondary system. I imagine the member might have some good reflection on her own experiences

coming through a postsecondary education institution, the experiences of her children, and the type of future that this bill is going to provide then for some of her grandchildren as they go through that same system. Perhaps the member would have some thoughts on that.

The Deputy Speaker: Red Deer-South.

Ms Miller: Thank you very much. I myself attended the U of A, Grant MacEwan, and I also did distance learning. The reason I ended up with my education going to Grant MacEwan college rather than continuing at the university was the costs. I've talked to many students at RDC that had moved or were planning to move from the U of A or the U of C to get their studies at RDC and places like Grant MacEwan because the tuition costs were so much lower.

I've got a granddaughter who wants to be a teacher, and I know that the cost of tuition will be a concern for her mother. Anything we can do to keep it more affordable and keep our kids closer to home so they don't have to have the extra expenses of dorm fees and meal plans and travel, the better. I am so proud of this bill, and I am so proud of the work that our minister has done on this.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gottfried: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to rise to speak to Bill 19. It's clear, and it may be contrary to the comments from the Member for Calgary-Hawkwood, whose speech writer was both out of tune and out of date on some of the sentiments on this side of the House. I rise to speak in support of Bill 19, An Act to Improve the Affordability and Accessibility of Post-secondary Education, in Alberta.

Madam Speaker, I have three children, and many of our members on this side have children and grandchildren in the postsecondary system now, and if not, they're anticipating their moves to seek postsecondary education of one sort or another. So I'm in the middle of it. I have children that are well along in their postsecondary education, some that are pondering it, and I'm fully aware of the costs of education and some of the concerns that we all as Albertans, I think, have about the affordability of postsecondary education for our children, for the next generation, for the students of today and the leaders of tomorrow.

Madam Speaker, I hear about it from within my household; I hear about it on my board. I have five members of my board between the ages of 18 and 22. I have a further five or six members of my board between the ages of 22 and 28. Some of them probably are still paying off student loans and moving forward in their careers. I hear it from them, and I hear it from my constituents all the time, the concerns, not just the concerns but the hopes and dreams they have to pursue an education in one field or another so that they can have a future, a bright future, and have those opportunities which we've heard about from the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo, where he faced barriers because of educational disadvantages versus other candidates and jobs that he was looking at.

Madam Speaker, I'm quite happy today as well that I'll be speaking to some representatives from CAUS to hear their concerns and their input on some of these issues about affordability and tuition and some of the other items and issues that are addressed by this bill, I think many in a positive manner. But I think they only go part of the way in dealing with this. We're now freezing tuitions and controlling the increase in tuitions with the consumer price

index, which I think is a good thing, but we are still in a situation where the affordability of postsecondary education is a challenge.

I remember that when I was going to university, I could work, as was mentioned, I think, by the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka. You could work hard all summer and work those 8-, 10-, 12-, 16-hour days and save up your money and have enough to pay your tuition and pay for your books and pay for most of your living expenses throughout the year, sometimes leaning on your parents a little bit when those funds ran out, sometimes taking a part-time job to supplement that income so that you could do more than just go to school. You could actually enjoy that postsecondary experience and have some spending money on the side, important to pay for gas, pay for insurance, and those sorts of things, which are just a part of life.

10:10

Many of our students are not in the position where those are paid for them. They have to earn and pay for those themselves, for the privilege of being able to have those opportunities and that flexibility. Madam Speaker, it's a concern for me. In today's world I know that my kids work hard all summer long, and there's no way that they can save, even if they've got a good job, to pay those same costs that I could afford when I was a student back in the late '70s and early '80s, so that concerns me.

I also was just looking back at some of the current situation with respect to student loans. Madam Speaker, Canada student loans has \$19 billion in outstanding loans right now. Now, I know that number might seem like a small amount for the members on the other side here compared with approaching a hundred billion dollars' worth of debt, but \$19 billion across this country in student loan debt. That's \$19 billion of debt. But in doing a little bit of research, since 2010, rough calculations, we've actually had to write off, the Canadian government, over \$1.8 billion worth of student loan debt that was either uncollectible or people had declared bankruptcy and for various reasons. That was between 2010 and 2013 that it was \$541 million; in 2013, \$175 million; 2014, \$231 million; 2015, \$295 million; 2017, \$178 million, and in 2018 it was \$203 million. These are the student loan amounts that are being written off because students not only can't afford — so they're borrowing money to go to school, but now we're getting into the situation where they're not able to pay back that money.

That's one of the things that concerns me, not so much about this bill but just about the situation that our students are in in this province and in this country in terms of being able to afford this, not only to be able to afford it, but they think they can afford it, and then it ends up that they can't repay the money that they borrowed to do that. A lot of that, Madam Speaker, is because they can't find jobs.

I spoke in the House the other day, and if I recall correctly, youth unemployment in Alberta is at about 11.7 per cent, which is a huge number and one of the highest amongst demographic groups not only in the country but in the province, certainly, as well. If I recall correctly, I think the unemployment amongst students is around 44,000. I think it was 37,000, but it's bumped up to about 44,000 individuals. Well, those are the same students. These are the youth. This is the unemployment rate, and those students when they are seeking positions in the summertime to work, that high unemployment rate is something which affects them year in and year out, whether they're trying to get a part-time job, whether they're trying to get a full-time job to pay for their postsecondary education.

That is a huge problem for us here and then even more so when they graduate. What I hear more from students today who absolutely want the tuitions controlled and whatnot: more

importantly, they're concerned about getting a job when they graduate, Madam Speaker, about getting a good-paying job, that they've now invested anywhere from a couple to four years of their lives or even more if they're into graduate programs so that they can have higher earning potential. What we're seeing are students graduating with bachelor's degrees and choosing to go back to take a graduate degree because they can't find employment. But what happens then?

You know what I'm hearing from them? A good friend of one of my sons has a bachelor's degree in geology. She goes back and takes a master's degree in geology. Do you know why she's doing that? She can get a job internationally with a master's degree. The minimum requirement to be hired and employed internationally as a geologist is a master's degree, and that's why she's pursuing that. Here in Alberta she'll have six years of education under her belt, seeking jobs here in this province to try and pay back her student loans but also to fulfill her dream and her vision of becoming a geologist, and we're going to lose that talent overseas after six years of education in this province. That's a problem, Madam Speaker, those people who are seeking employment.

I hear it now from people in their first year and second year and third year or approaching graduation from their postsecondary education. They're worried about a job, worried about a job in their field preferably but just worried about a job. That's why we see so many students that are doing jobs that are not in the fields of education that they've been in, Madam Speaker, and not able to earn enough money to pay back those student loans, to the point where we've got \$19 billion in student debt in this country. That's just the federal debt. I'm not sure what the amounts are here. I'll be doing some more research on that to see what it is on the provincial debt side as well. But 1.8-plus billion dollars' worth of written off debt because people can't pay for that because of bankruptcies, because of lack of collectability on those debts: that frightens me. That's a large number, and I think if we divided that over the number of graduates per year in this province, we'd see that it's a huge problem for us.

Moving on, again, as I said, I will be supporting this bill because I think that the intent is a positive one to try and control the costs of postsecondary education. I believe we need to work with postsecondary institutions to ensure that they are doing what they can, the best they can to control costs. Maybe it's not just the rate of inflation, but maybe over time we can increase productivity and we can increase efficiency and delivery of the education while not undermining the quality of that education.

Some of the previous speakers, Madam Speaker, have talked about some of the other impacts that we need to consider. The carbon tax: I am sure that the impact of the carbon tax across this province with postsecondary institutions is in the millions of dollars. And it's not just postsecondary education; I hear it from all fronts. I hear it from nonprofits, I hear it from recreational facilities, I hear it from the faith sector, who are trying to deliver services. And here again we run into this same situation with the postsecondary institutions with respect to carbon tax. It's a burden on our students. It's a burden on our faith-based institutions. It's a burden on our nonprofit sector. It's a burden on the recreational facilities that all Albertans use as well. As was mentioned, you know, maybe we should be exempting those.

I happen to agree that we should scrap that tax entirely, but that's another issue altogether. It is impacting the affordability of education today in this province and is a burden and is a problem, and it's going up 67 per cent, Madam Speaker; 67 per cent, that carbon tax is going up. Let's take that number today and increase that burden on the postsecondary budgets by 67 per cent and see how that impacts the affordability of education in this province.

That concerns me. Here we have a good initiative to control costs, but actually we're layering costs back on those same institutions at the very same time out of the two different sides of that same mouth.

Now, I believe the students will be here. I'll talk to the members from CAUS this afternoon. We'll be happy with the cap on tuition, and I think that that's a good initiative. I think that the increased representation that they'll have within their own institutions on the boards of governors is a positive step as well. Students' voices deserve to be heard.

Members on this side, we're listening to those students. They are our children. They are friends of our children. They are members of our boards. They are members of our community, and we listen to them when we're knocking on doors. We hear that at the doors. Very often, you know, knocking on doors, it is a student or young person who's coming to the door. What a great opportunity to hear from them, to hear what their hopes and dreams and visions and concerns are and how they view things, how they perceive things, because it's different. We need to ensure that we embrace that in a positive way and that we do something about it, not just listen, not just hear, but that we do something about it.

We've heard about the international students' situation. I think international students enrich the postsecondary experience in this province. Yes, I know there are concerns with the costs and how we should allocate those costs to international students. But there's no question in my mind that having international students, having the diversity of the student population in our country, in our province is a positive thing, and the bridges that we can build through those relationships are incredible. Many of those students choose to stay here in Canada and in Alberta, and that enriches our society as well. Those that go back are bridges for our students, who in many cases spent those four years together, shoulder to shoulder as fellow students, maybe into the graduate programs as well.

Those are bridges to countries around the world for us, Madam Speaker, which I think are vitally important to the future of this province. The bridges we build today as youth and as students are the bridges of commerce and the bridges of friendship and the bridges of culture in the future because one day those students will go back and they will be leaders in their communities. We've all experienced that, I think, as we talk even to some of the immigrants here in Canada. I talk to some of my dear friends who have been in Canada for 30 and 40 years, who left places like Hong Kong as young students and came to Canada and have done well and have prospered in this province and in this society here. But guess what? Their former fellow students back in Hong Kong are now leaders of industry, and those are bridges that we can build. I do believe that the protection of that for international students is a positive, positive step and a positive thing, and I do support that and thank the minister for that initiative.

10:20

The tuition framework, I think, is a positive thing to ensure that we have a positive framework. Predictability is a positive thing, giving students predictability at all levels, whether it is, again, international students or whether it's our own local students, in terms of understanding, even if the budgets are too high – I believe they're too high and the costs are too high – the opportunity, again, for some predictability so that they can plan ahead, so that their parents who have RESPs can say: "Here's how much we've got in our RESP. We can allocate that."

I know that, for me, my wife and I have saved as diligently as we can and put money into RESPs because we have three children. We kind of have to allocate it accordingly, not necessarily equally but subject to the costs that they're facing in the various postsecondary paths that they choose. That's important to us, that they can work

and contribute to their own education, that we can contribute some savings to them, and that they in some cases may take on a small amount of student debt as well.

I want them to be able to find the good jobs when they graduate to be able to pay that off, to not be one of those defaulting debtors, 1.8 billion plus dollars of defaulting debtors in this province. Do you think that that feels good for our students, Madam Speaker, when they default on that or have to declare bankruptcy? I don't think so. That's because they can't find the type of opportunities when they graduate.

Sadly, we see so many graduates, talented, talented young people, working in jobs that are not commensurate with the type of education they have. They're driving a taxi, they're working in the hospitality industry, they're doing so many different things. I mean, talk to somebody in a hospitality sector that you go to, a service industry you go to, and ask them. I challenge all of us to ask the people – the baristas and the taxi drivers and the service staff in the restaurants and the hotels that we go to – what their background is.

Madam Speaker, I'm very honoured to be able to speak . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just want to take a few moments to address some of the comments that the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek made in his speech, particularly around student loans. I don't have any issue with the data that he used. I'm relieved that he used a credible source, which is not always the case with the members opposite. I just wanted to enlighten the member and any others listening to his speech about some of the facts for Alberta student loans. I don't have the numbers – I don't know the numbers off the top of my head – but I have rough approximations. Right now we have slightly less than \$700 million in student loans outstanding to students here in Alberta. That's made available to about 90,000 students. Ninety thousand students across Alberta have taken out student loans, which is approximately a third of the total number of students who are in the system. So a third of Alberta students right now currently hold student loans, and that total is slightly less than \$700 million.

Every year we write off about \$60 million in student loans. It's single-digit percentages, Madam Speaker. It's a significant cost; \$60 million, of course, could pay for the tuition freeze four times over. It could certainly be used to enhance the student experience in a myriad of other ways. However, that is one of the risks that we're willing to assume as a government, of course, when we provide a loan program like that. Some of these loans are going to be written off.

The member opposite seems to think that there is this vast group of unemployed students – you know, they're working hard, or they're trying to find a job, and they just can't find one – and they've got their degrees in hand, and because of his imagined state of the economy here in Alberta, our students can't find work. That's where he is completely wrong, Madam Speaker.

The vast majority of the student loans that we write off as a provincial government are for students who have attended private colleges. They're not students who go to the University of Alberta. They're not students who go to the University of Calgary. They're not students who go to Red Deer College or NorQuest College. They're students who go to CDI or Reeves College. They are victims of unsavoury private education practices. They're sold a bill of goods. They're told that they're going to enrol in a program that will get them a job that pays them enough money to pay back the extremely high student loans that they have to take in order to pay

for these programs, and that turns out not to be true, Madam Speaker.

We get complaints to our office every single day from people who are taken advantage of, who signed up for student loans, in many cases unbeknownst to them, student loans that they cannot pay back because of the questionable practices of a lot of these private career colleges, Madam Speaker. So I share the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek's concern. The Member for Airdrie is laughing. I challenge her to prove me wrong. I have the data. My staff tell me about this all the time.

Private career colleges are the vast majority of the student loans that we write off, so our government is taking action to make sure that we are addressing some of the problematic practices that we find in private career colleges. We're tightening up their ability to – we monitor them very closely, making sure that they behave properly according to the regulations that we have in place. And we're taking additional steps to make sure that they don't rope in students to student loans that they're unaware they're actually signing up for and they have no hopes of paying back.

All that to say, Madam Speaker, that we share the member opposite's concern for the number of student loans that we're writing off. I'm pleased that I have had the opportunity to make everyone aware that the vast majority of those student loans that are being written off are for students who have received programs from private career colleges that were told that they would get high-paying jobs and ended up not being able to and were sold a bill of goods that turned out not to be true. Our government is taking action to protect those students.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other speakers to the bill? Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to this bill on the main bill. I did have the opportunity to speak to the amendment, fairly early on, that was brought by members of the opposition and speak to some of the elements there, some concerns they'd raised around consultation and some other pieces here.

I'm very pleased to see that in the time since, though I haven't been able to be here for some of the other debate, they've shifted their position and they have come around to supporting this bill. It's fantastic to see. I'm glad to hear that they are echoing in this House the concerns of students, recognizing the challenges that they face both in the job market and in terms of affordability. I think it's fantastic that we should see a unanimous vote in this House to support this legislation so that we can support students in our province.

I'd like to begin by noting a quote from the president of one of the universities here in my constituency, Deborah Saucier, the president of MacEwan University, someone I've had the chance to start to get to know. I've really appreciated the progressive vision she's brought to MacEwan University, both in terms of outreach to the community and highly valuing the voice of students. She says:

The transformative experiences students take away from Alberta's post-secondary institutions fundamentally change them in ways that benefit not only those students, but also shape our province's social and economic future. It's why we support the government's commitment to making it possible for more Albertans to access – and be able to afford – a quality education.

That is the core of why we have this legislation here today, Madam Speaker. We are here to ensure that more Albertans can access and be able to afford a quality education. I'm incredibly happy that one of the presidents of one of the universities in my constituency

agrees with that and supports this legislation as a step in that direction.

As I noted in my previous remarks, Madam Speaker, there has been robust consultation that went into this bill with the presidents of universities, with boards of governors, with the staff, with students. And, indeed, members across the aisle have acknowledged, now that they've had their meetings with students, they've spoken with them, that they have heard that this indeed is what students are asking for.

I'm very pleased to see a number of things within this legislation. Certainly, we've had quite a bit of discussion so far about the tuition cap, and that has been a very important piece of what students have been asking for. So I'm very pleased to see that piece here.

10:30

I'm also very happy to see the changes in governance, which some other members have addressed, now allowing there to be two student representatives on all boards of governors within the province. Madam Speaker, I can tell you that for MacEwan University, for NorQuest College, and for other, smaller institutions that I have the pleasure of representing, the honour of representing, this has been a real concern for students. It's a lot of work for a single student on a board of governors to represent all of the concerns of their entire student body. It can be a real challenge for them sometimes at those meetings, then, to have the sole responsibility of making those voices heard. Now having that opportunity for there to be two students at that table to raise those voices, to provide each other with support, and to provide that additional voice at the table, I think that's a very important step, and I deeply appreciate that the minister has taken action on that.

Indeed, Madam Speaker, these are things I heard from these student representatives within my first six months in office. I think it was in the summer of 2015 that I first met with representatives of the students' association at Grant MacEwan – or at MacEwan University. Pardon me; I sometimes revert to the old name. They raised that particular concern around governance, they raised the concern around tuition, and they raised the concern around wanting MacEwan University to have the opportunity to be classified in a different place within the sector model in the province. Those were some of the initial asks, and here we are three and a half years later. We finally have the opportunity to bring this forward.

Now, some members have said that it's taken too long for this bill to come forward. At the same time, members have said that there hasn't been enough consultation. I'm not quite sure how they square that circle, Madam Speaker. But what I would say is that I think it was important that the minister took the time he took to sit down and have these discussions with students. This is one of the things our government does. We plan for the long term. We give careful thought to how we're going to move forward in terms of these complex situations. [interjection] The Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo seems to find this amusing. I'll tell you that I didn't find his comments terribly amusing earlier, but I'll attempt to refrain from the kind of condescension I often hear from that member.

The reality is, Madam Speaker, that the members opposite have talked about their concerns around certainty, how postsecondary institutions are going to be able to move forward, but in the history of Conservative governments in this province with postsecondary institutions, stability and certainty have been the farthest things from that relationship. Every time the price of oil would drop, Conservative governments would make cuts. Institutions wouldn't know by how much. They didn't know what their budget was going to be from one year to the next. Conservative governments would go on spending sprees when the price of oil was high, and then they

would make cuts, never predictable from one year to the next. What could postsecondary institutions do but double down on the tools that they had at their disposal that they could trust: tuition, noninstructional fees, other things that went directly on the backs of students. For years Conservative governments abdicated their responsibility to provide stability to the postsecondary education system and left that on the backs of Alberta students.

By contrast, Madam Speaker, over the last three and a half years we have provided 2 per cent increases year over year; stable, predictable funding that allowed our institutions to plan, that allowed them to move forward, that allowed them to adapt to increasing costs. We recognize those exist as student numbers increase, as other pressures increase. That is the first time in many, many years that they have had that kind of stability and certainty.

They speak about capital costs, Madam Speaker, and speak about the concerns they have over the additional pressures that universities and institutions face as they continue to have to deal with maintenance, as they continue to look at issues around building and how they move forward. Well, our government has made heavy investment into the maintenance renewal fund for postsecondary institutions. In fact, we have drastically increased funding to address the massive infrastructure deficit that was left behind by previous Conservative governments, because, again, the tradition in this province was to tie all of our public services to the price of oil. There was no long-term plan. There was no further thought given than to the next election.

Our postsecondary institutions, and therefore what was downloaded to students from there, were left to deal with the aftermath. Conservative governments, in order to try to maintain a sense of prudence but, again, not thinking in the long term, skimmed on infrastructure and providing universities, colleges, our postsecondary institutions with the dollars they needed to be able to keep up the infrastructure they had, let alone go on to build.

Indeed, shortly after I was elected, again, one of the first conversations I had with the board of governors and the president of NorQuest College was around concerns over a cut that had been made by the previous Conservative government for the Singhmar Centre for Learning. They were short millions of dollars that had been promised to them and that the Conservative government had suddenly decided they were not going to bring forward. I had conversations with our Minister of Advanced Education, with our Minister of Infrastructure, and I'm pleased to say, Madam Speaker, that our government stepped forward and we turned that around. We provided them with that additional funding so that they could complete that centre, open it, and now have it there serving students in my constituency.

This is the record up until now. When members opposite criticize our government and this piece of legislation around their concerns about predictability and stability, I can't say that I can take that very seriously. Now, the fact, Madam Speaker, again, is that we recognize the complexity of the system we are dealing with in the province of Alberta. We recognize that there are many pressures on students. Members opposite have spoken about the carbon tax and the pressure on postsecondary institutions. Again, we have worked with these institutions. We have provided them with support so that they can move forward and develop more energy efficient infrastructure. Indeed, again, by actually addressing the maintenance deferral, we're helping them do precisely that. As you upgrade older buildings, they become more energy efficient, therefore reducing the actual energy costs.

Our government retains the ability to walk and chew gum at the same time. We can move forward on addressing the larger issue of climate change in partnership with our postsecondary institutions, in partnership with business, nonprofits, all Albertans, frankly,

while still also addressing other issues that are on the table here. As I have made clear, Madam Speaker, our government has not simply left postsecondary institutions hanging. We have worked with them on a number of fronts to help address their costs, their cost pressures so that ultimately we can help them help students, which all members in this House have so far said that they absolutely agree with. That's why I'm pleased to stand and support this legislation, which I truly believe is going to make life better for students and, as a result, for all Albertans, because as Ms Saucier, the president of MacEwan University, noted: doing this for students, providing them with this opportunity, provides a net benefit to our province as a whole. Again, that is about investment and long-term planning.

Now, I recognize that members opposite may not agree with all the directions we choose to take in how we plan for the long term, and I recognize that members across the way have raised, you know, some other concerns that we also certainly agree on. The Member for Lacombe-Ponoka spoke about the concerns that he had around tuition getting more expensive, and certainly all members have agreed with that here, that jobs don't pay enough for students to be able to earn enough over the summer to be able to pay for the full school year. Indeed. That was one of the first things I noted when I had my first opportunity to rise and speak to this bill.

There have been comments and discussion around the size and number of student loans as they're ballooning, yet, Madam Speaker, I have not heard the members opposite offer any solution on this. They have said that they agree with capping tuition. That's a good step. That's a good first step. That addresses one piece here. But I have yet to hear them offer any solution to any of the other challenges that our students are facing here. Wanting to take the minimum wage and roll that back now for youth: that's not going to help them be able to earn more in a summer to be able to afford postsecondary tuition.

10:40

I am proud to say – and indeed I spoke with representatives from CAUS yesterday – that our government brought back the STEP program to keep students employed in this province and help them not only be able to earn a better wage in the summer but also to be able to work in degree-relevant fields, and indeed that's what the students from CAUS were talking to me about.

They are incredibly thankful that our government brought that program back, but what they would like to see now is that program targeted in a way that it helps provide students with degree-relevant experience. They appreciate the fact that they can get a job with a landscaper or with another business who applies to the STEP program, but they would love to see far more accounting firms or, say, organizations or nonprofits that are offering opportunities to get experience in social work or engineering firms or others stepping up to take advantage of that to provide students with the opportunity to get that kind of employment.

Frankly, Madam Speaker, the only kinds of solutions I've heard from the members opposite always involve just simply cutting taxes. They believe that if we simply cut more taxes and leave more money with top earners in the province, that will magically somehow trickle down. That hasn't been the case. There is no jurisdiction that I've seen where they have made those kinds of tax cuts and it has benefited their postsecondary institutions. We've seen skyrocketing tuition across many parts of the United States and in many other places. The fact is that this is a public good. This is a public value. It requires a public investment.

There's work that we're going to need to do in a lot of other fields, absolutely. We have more work to do to continue to build Alberta's economy back up. It's come a long way since 2015, and indeed we are continuing to lead in Canada, but there are still many,

many people that we need to work to support, and I recognize that students and youth remain among them. But there are better ways we can do that than simply cutting taxes for the top 1 per cent in the province, giving that \$700 million tax break.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Dach: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's always a pleasure listening to the Member for Edmonton-Centre talking on any topic, especially one that's close to his heart in the middle of his constituency, where so many educational institutions reside.

It struck me while listening to the Member for Edmonton-Centre that the debates we often have in this House are not necessarily debates couched in terms of right or left on the political spectrum, but they are, really, debates about living in the past or embracing the future: the future of high-tech jobs, for example, that are going to be needed in this province to allow the economy to move forward in our energy and agricultural sectors, the future of our innovation economy, that's going to be necessary in order for our students who are now graduating to be employed.

I'd like the member to maybe wax a little bit more on this theme about living in the past versus embracing the future by talking about how granting accessibility and affordability to quality education continues our pattern here in Alberta of fighting to support Alberta families and, really, with concrete measures, putting money in their pockets, serious money in their pockets, serious savings that they can use to invest in their family or in other ways that they so choose and how the value of a postsecondary education not only helps those individual families but also moves ourselves forward as we look towards a new, technologically advanced economy that is going to be requiring a much higher level of expertise from our students and that we need to make sure we embrace the future in getting those students prepared for the new economy that's emerging and that we take advantage of all the opportunities that we as a government can do to make sure that the workforce, the brainpower of this province is employed to best advantage, to take every opportunity that we can to grow our export markets and technological capacities so that we look forward towards the future with great excitement and know that there's no market in the world that we can't touch and that there's no technology that we can't be a leader in in this province. I'd like to hear a little bit more from the member about those topics.

The Deputy Speaker: Go ahead, Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the comments from my colleague from Edmonton-McClung. Yeah, I would love to touch on that a bit. You know, one of the big things over this last year that's really been of value to me, again, another great decision, I think, involving the Minister of Advanced Education, the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, and some others, has been our government's decision to create new postsecondary spaces in the province for people in technological fields. Now, members opposite have spoken about the need to help ensure that students are getting education in fields that are going to help them find work. Indeed, I talked to start-up companies here in my constituency that have come up through Startup Edmonton, TEC Edmonton, that are working in the many co-working spaces we have here who are part of that new economy, and they tell me that they are having a challenge finding people with the skill set and the knowledge that they need in digital technology and computer coding and some of these other fields.

These are big opportunities that our government has invested in through the Alberta investor tax credit, through the new screen-

based industries tax credit. These are things that are going to grow and move our economy forward. Indeed, keeping that postsecondary education affordable and accessible is incredibly important. I'm very pleased that our government is making that investment to work, again in partnership and collaboration with our postsecondary institutions, who are themselves happy to open this up, to provide that opportunity.

I would also note that in this legislation we are limiting fees and helping to control costs for apprenticeships. We have talked in this House – indeed, the leader of the loyal opposition has expressed it himself in a few different venues – about the importance of giving more high school students opportunities to access vocational trades. I'm very happy to have programs at St. Joseph Catholic high school here, at Centre High here in my constituency, where they do exactly that. Those students get the opportunity to begin to work towards getting certification in the trade, begin to work towards getting their apprenticeship while they are still in high school. By keeping tuition and these costs lower and more affordable, we make it easier for those students to be able to move into that postsecondary realm, complete that work, and get to work sooner. Not only that, Madam Speaker; they have experience, which then also opens up the opportunities for them to gain employment more quickly.

I'm proud of the work that our government has done on this and many issues. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and Happy Diwali. Actually, today is the Deepavali. The Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie was reminding me this morning to greet Diwali to everyone. Last night he himself, the members for Grande Prairie-Smoky, Chestermere-Rocky View, Calgary-Lougheed, and Edmonton-Mill Woods were all there celebrating with a few thousand Hindus and Sikhs from Edmonton at a temple. Diwali is all about, you know, light triumphing over darkness and good triumphing over evil, but also that light signifies the purity and the power. That's why on this occasion I would wish everyone Happy Diwali and that the light in each of our souls shines and brightens others' lives.

This bill that we're talking about today, Madam Speaker: in the spirit of Diwali, I'm going to personalize and customize. I'm very moved hearing the debates on both sides of the aisle here, particularly from the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo. He said that he had all the qualifications, smarts, but because he didn't have the degree, that would have taken him to the next levels of employment, he was disappointed. We don't want other kids in this province to lose the opportunities due to lack of education. That's why our caucus is very happy to support this bill. Although my neighbour and good friend from Calgary-Hawkwood thought that we were not supporting it, actually we are supporting it. If there is any good legislation brought forward by the government, we are always there to support it. But, at the same time, as the Official Opposition it's our job to talk about how we can make it better. There is always hope for improvement.

10:50

In this bill we talk about making tuition affordable, which is a great thing. We also talk about: when the students take student loans, how do they pay it back? Right? If the province is waiving loans, are we able to afford it? In most of the cases in the cultural communities – I mentioned quite clearly South Asian nations – the parents pay for kids' tuition fees. As a cultural practice they don't like their kids to borrow money and take student loans. They don't want them to be indebted. They don't want to put them in debt. So

are the parents able to pay back for their kids' education? That's the thing. So we have to look at the big picture.

I know that the Member for Edmonton-Centre talked very passionately about the tax cuts, but he's only talking selectively about \$700 million given to the rich people, which is not true, because by cutting taxes, actually you are attracting more investment. That will provide opportunity for the students to get jobs. The Minister of Advanced Education said that it's not true that students who graduated from postsecondary are not finding jobs. It is true; they are not finding jobs. I can tell you from my own experience. My son's classmates, after they graduated, were not able to find employment, so they're actually trying to apply for a master's, thinking that in the future, after they finish their master's degree in two years, the market might improve and give them opportunities. I heard from many people in Calgary-Foothills coming to my office telling me that their kids are not able to find economic opportunities here, that that's why they had to extend their education. That is true. Whether you agree with it or not, it is a fact.

Madam Speaker, my colleague from Calgary-Hawkwood also said that members on this side of the aisle are out of touch, that they don't have the same issues that regular Albertans face or something like that. It's not true. I'm a parent. I'm an engineer, and my wife is an architect, so as parents we wanted our kid to have a better economic opportunity. That's why we came here. He actually went to U of C. My son got his first degree in the biomedical sciences honours program. He applied to med school in Calgary. He was interviewed twice, but they didn't offer him the seat. At that time I was quite busy fighting for my Calgary-Foothills nomination in the by-election. I didn't pay much attention to what was going on. After his second interview with the Calgary med school, the second time they didn't offer him the seat, he chose to apply to overseas schools. The fee there is ridiculously high for foreign students. He is paying, just in tuition fees alone, \$80,000 and, on top of it, living expenses like boarding and travelling and all. Each year he is spending more than \$110,000.

That was the time when I took the pay cut. When I got elected to this position, I had to take a huge pay cut. But because of the cultural practice I mentioned to you – I was busy, and he was discussing it with his mother. His mother promised him: "Don't worry about it. Go ahead. We'll pay for it." Right? So we said that we'll pay for it, but I don't want him to take it easy. He should have some responsibility, and he should go and get some loans. He applied for a loan. Apparently, he got some federal loan, some provincial loan. He will get about \$150,000 out of that half a million he's going to spend on his four years of med school.

So why I'm saying that is: we know the issues. As a parent I know. I'm paying. I'm paying for it. Don't assume, like, that your opponents are heartless or that they're not regular Albertans. We are regular Albertans. It's our job to debate with you and improve your bills. And the same thing: if we get the honour to be in government next year and some of you are on the opposition benches, you'll do the same thing because that's what you'll be elected to do.

Anyway, coming back to this bill, Madam Speaker, having the tuition guarantee, particularly for foreign students, is a great thing. Like my colleague from Calgary-Fish Creek said, all those foreign students, when they come here, get better education, and then they become good ambassadors, and if they choose to stay back here and become citizens of Canada, they will add to the skilled workforce. That's why recently, when I and the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake accompanied our leader on the trip to India, we met with many stakeholders overseas, including some of the people involved in postsecondary education. What they're looking for is predictability,

particularly with the situation with the visas in the United States. President Trump has tightened H-1Bs and student visas and all.

Most of the students from South Asia used to go to the U.S. as students. Once they got their MSc and other masters' degrees, then they went to Silicon Valley, and then they did a start-up. Many of them became entrepreneurs, and that's how they contributed to the booming U.S. economy. If we could bring some of them here and retain them here, they'll be good contributors to our economic growth here. That's why I like that aspect of this bill, giving some predictability and guarantee for foreign students and also for our local students.

Also, I have an issue with the Minister of Advanced Education when he was slamming private schools. All of them are not that bad for the reasons I mentioned to you, like my own kid and even myself, actually. Although I was in the public system till grade 12, the engineering school I went to was privately managed by a trust, and they had a world-class institute. I got the benefit of studying in that school. I mean, their motto was to educate students and help them. All the private schools probably did. Maybe some – I mean, there are always some issues with educational institutes, but all private schools are not bad. If that is your opinion, I would want you to reconsider what you said.

Then coming back to what the Member for Edmonton-Centre said about the overall economy, it's two ideas here. In your case you're saying: "Okay. We won't reduce the taxes, but we keep on adding layers of regulatory burden. We'll bring in bills like the carbon tax or a cap on emissions" and all that. Those policies are making the bad situation worse. We don't blame you for the world oil price, but then your government, the NDP government, made the bad situation worse. That's why the companies and the jobs are fleeing. The investments are fleeing Alberta. That, I think, you have to acknowledge at some point rather than saying that we don't have any ideas, that we are not offering solutions.

We are offering solutions. We are opposing the carbon tax. We said that we'll repeal it, and we gave you the reasons. We said that why we want to reduce taxes is because you increased taxes, but your revenue has gone down. Those numbers are there for you to look at. Your government revenue has gone down even though you increased taxes.

11:00

When we reduce the taxes, we believe all those investments will come back. That will create jobs for these postsecondary graduates. That's our idea. That's what we're going to campaign on in the next election and let the people decide. They'll have options to choose between the NDP platform and the UCP platform. Also, this week, during the QP when the Leader of the Opposition asked about those economic issues, the Premier threatened: oh, those youth will vote. Remember that? Now I'm saying that all those youth, when they graduate, don't have economic opportunities, employment opportunities, and if their parents are at home not working, they will remember that, too. The Premier also should realize that all those unemployed 150,000 or 180,000 Albertans: they too vote. They'll remember that. They'll look at both platforms, and they'll choose which platform fits better for their economic prosperity.

For us, we had to create wealth first to be able to pay back our way with the student loans. First, we had to create the wealth. That's the difference in the ideas between the NDP and UCP. Our thought process is: we had to first create the wealth so we can distribute it. In your case, you're taking on debt. A \$96 billion debt: that's what your budget said. If you get the opportunity to be in government for a second term, in 2022 you'll balance the budget, but till then you said that you'll have a \$96 billion debt. Somebody has to pay it back. Who will pay it back? If people are not working, if they're

not paying taxes, how will we pay back that debt? That's something we have to think about, Madam Speaker.

Also, when some of our members said that we won't trust the government about consultations, there is a reason, like, previous bills like Bill 6. Although I'm from Calgary, Madam Speaker, I travel all across Alberta . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's been enjoyable to listen to my hon. colleague here. I wanted to say that a while back I had read an article about a one-cylinder engine. It could go two speeds, zero or a hundred. It was phenomenal, but it could only do two things, you know, zero or a hundred. Unfortunately, what I've heard here today, especially from Calgary-Hawwood, is absolute vitriol, overheated rhetoric about this issue when in reality we have said – right from the beginning we've talked very positive. We've talked about some of the negative things about this bill, but we talked very positively about the bill. For him to be able to get it so wrong, that we were not in favour of this bill, just goes to show that he needs to think about maybe some kind of a middle, that the people on this side are actually in favour of some of the good policies that are being brought forward on the other side.

What I liked about my hon. colleague is that he got up, he spoke about some of his concerns, he did it in a measured response that I felt was respect, showed respect for this House and respect for his colleagues even in speaking about the Member for Calgary-Hawwood. Just the way that he spoke about this was – you know, he said: my friend from Calgary-Hawwood. This is the kind of respect and this is the kind of dialogue that we should be having in this House, Madam Speaker, and one that I actually really respect.

Now, the member that just spoke has a lot of experience. He has a lot of education. He has seen the benefits of an advanced education. He has seen the benefits of being able to help his children get advanced education. He's speaking from an experienced position.

I have two children right now that are in school, that are going to university, and I know how hard they work, Madam Speaker, to be able to have ownership of this experience. Now, yes, their mom and dad can help them. But they choose, they want to have ownership. They want to be able to say: "You know what? I earned it myself. I'm the one who actually got out there, and I worked hard during the summertime. I made some sacrifices. I learned some money management. I did the things that actually made me be successful." They have ownership of it. You know, you have to take your hat off to these people, to these kids, to these young Albertans that are really working hard.

Now, that's why you've seen from this side of the House a lot of support for this bill. We've tried to show a balance. We've tried to show that there is a balance between what is happening with the costs of universities – when you cap the tuition rates in perpetuity, it's not a sustainable model, Madam Speaker. So I applaud the government for addressing that issue. I applaud them for recognizing that it is not sustainable. I've heard members from the opposite side say that it's not a sustainable model, and I applaud them for doing that.

However, the overheated rhetoric that we heard, that the Conservative governments in the past have only raised rates and they've only caused problems for the universities, only caused problems – in fact, I think it was his "always." The Member for Edmonton-Centre said: always. I just thought: okay; well, show us the evidence that shows that the Conservatives and the past governments have always caused problems for the universities.

Again, it's this overheated rhetoric, Madam Speaker, that, in my opinion, is not helpful to the debate.

The debate we're trying to have is: is this a good piece of legislation? Is it something that's actually going to be good for students and for universities so that it's sustainable? If there can be some better things added to it, then that's our responsibility. It's not only our responsibility but backbenchers on the government side's responsibility to try to make it better. This is what we're trying to do, yet unfortunately what a lot of the discussion that we've seen here, Madam Speaker, from members opposite is – and again I go back to Calgary-Hawwood – is just absolute, over-the-top rhetoric and a fight against the approach . . .

Mr. Feehan: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, we have a point of order.

Point of Order Relevance

Mr. Feehan: Madam Speaker, we've had this addressed already in this House today, that the point of 29(2)(a) is to address the previous speaker and not to reiterate everything that has been happening in the House for the morning. I'd like to see the speaker focus on the previous speaker, to which he is supposed to be addressing his comments, and not use it as an opportunity to review.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Madam Speaker and to the hon. minister for those comments. I can assure you that my hon. colleague from Cardston-Taber-Warner was about to get to the point.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, this is already the second time this morning that this has come up, so I would just really caution you. The intent of 29(2)(a) is to question the previous speaker, make comments on it, but it's also the intent to have a bit of a dialogue. I think we're tending to lose sight of that. I do give a lot of leeway on this, but I think it would be a far more productive conversation if we tried to encourage more back-and-forth dialogue with it and used it as it's intended, you know, referring to the previous speaker.

Debate Continued

The Deputy Speaker: I will allow you to continue. You've only got five seconds left, but try to stay focused.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm answering his 29(2)(a).

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Go ahead.

Mr. Panda: So . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Five seconds goes very quickly.

The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Dr. Starke: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to speak to third reading on Bill 19. I will say from the outset that I will support this bill in third reading, but I would like to expand a little upon some of the comments that I made during committee debate on this.

They have to do with, actually, a word that was just spoken here in the House, and it's a word that I believe in very strongly. The

word is “balance.” I think that my belief in balance comes partly from my veterinary background. As veterinarians, as human physicians, for that matter, as biologists we learn that systems, animal and human systems, act in balance and that there are a number of different things within those systems that provide checks and balances to make sure that things don’t go out of whack.

11:10

I’ll give you an example. Blood sugar is governed largely by two hormones, insulin and glucagon. Thanks to the interplay of those two hormones, which is truly an amazing thing, blood sugar is maintained within a relatively normal range in the vast majority of healthy people and healthy animals. It’s when one of those hormones goes out of balance that we see disease issues. As we know, insulin, which was discovered some 97 years ago thanks to the work of Dr. Frederick Banting, is the hormone that’s missing from that balance.

But balance is not easy, and balance, for example, when we are doing government policy is not easy. Right now there is a debate – and it’s a difficult debate – between the rights of persons wishing to express their religious beliefs and the rights of patients who wish to access specific health services that have been deemed to be necessary and legal. There’s a balance there, and it’s a difficult one to balance off, but finding that balance is truly critical.

You know, even just this week we learned, for those of us who didn’t already know, that there is a balance between the autonomy and independence of MLAs and iron-fisted caucus discipline. There’s a balance, and striking that correct balance can be difficult.

Well, in the postsecondary sector, from my discussions with both leaders in the postsecondary sector and students – clearly, this bill addresses one side of the lever, and it’s the side of the lever of accessibility and affordability. We know that that is something that is vitally important to this minister and this government and, for that matter, all members of this Legislature. Many, many of us have had personal experience attending university, have had children or other relatives attend university, and affordability and accessibility are very important. We do not want to ever have a situation where capable Albertans who wish to attend a postsecondary institution are unable to because it is not affordable or accessible. To address that side of the equation is a good thing, and Bill 19 does.

The concern that I have – and I raised this in debate in committee – is that the other side is the sustainability and the quality of postsecondary education. That is something that is held within the purview of the leaders of the postsecondary sector. Many of them have told me that they have grave concerns about how this might impact that balance. Indeed, if the quality of postsecondary education that is offered at our institutions in Alberta declines because those institutions cannot provide the same quality of programs, well, Madam Speaker, that’s a concern. Then it won’t matter that the education is accessible and affordable. You could make it as cheap as you like. You could make that price zero, but if the quality of the education has suffered, then we’ve accomplished nothing. In fact, the lever or the teeter-totter, whatever you want to call it, has broken on the fulcrum, and both sides are now sitting at rock bottom.

So I think it’s vitally important that now that affordability and accessibility have been addressed – and in my conversations with some of the student leadership I said: “I think, you know, you can spend some time celebrating this victory that you’ve won, but your work is not over. Now you need to address working alongside the leadership in the universities. You need to work alongside them to ensure the sustainability and the quality of that education that is now, hopefully, more affordable and accessible.” That’s the first thing that I wanted to talk about in my address on third reading.

The second area that I wanted to talk about is to offer my colleague the hon. Minister of Advanced Education some advice. We learned yesterday that, in his own words, he is “a humble and deeply reflective person, dedicated to continual improvement.” I’m quoting his words here. As we should all be dedicated to continual improvement, then as someone who has had the experience of sitting in cabinet and being in government and making some of those difficult decisions that required balance, and even more so, Madam Speaker, because both the minister and I belong to that small group of people – yes, we are accordionists. The accordion: an instrument that is despised and rejected perhaps only more by the bagpipes. We both play the accordion, so we are both men of sorrows and acquainted with grief, to paraphrase from the prophet Isaiah.

Madam Speaker, when the minister took his oath of office – and I took the same oath some years ago – there is a one-page oath for the ministry that you are moving into, and there is a four-page oath that you take when you become a member of Executive Council. That’s a big responsibility, and if you read through the words of the oath of Executive Council, you will find an indication of expected behaviours, expected deportment, expected now that you are a cabinet minister, now that you are a member of Executive Council, expectations that you have.

I must say that with this minister – and I’m not alone in this. Certainly, I have, you know, many people in the postsecondary sector who feel the same way, but goodness knows they don’t want to be attributed. I’ve talked to many people who are disappointed in the deportment of this minister, this minister who just a few months ago accused one of the most respected university leaders not just in the province but in Canada of lining his pockets, a shocking and completely uncalled-for attack upon someone whose reputation, I can assure you, is much longer and much stronger than the current minister’s. We saw it earlier in debate on this bill, when the minister made a comment about “the son of a rich farmer” in attempting to make his point. Well, Madam Speaker, that’s not what people expect of cabinet ministers.

So if the minister is indeed a humble person, dedicated to continual improvement and deeply reflective, I’m going to suggest that he reflect on this. Albertans, especially those with involvement in the postsecondary sector, including the students that he was so happy to be photographed with and, you know, enjoying himself with during the course of the announcement on this bill, expect their cabinet minister to behave like a cabinet minister and not a frat boy at a kegger.

Madam Speaker, that is my word of advice to this minister.

Mr. Feehan: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Go ahead, hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Point of Order
Relevance
Insulting Language**

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise on a point of order under Standing Order 23(b) as well as under 23(h), (i), and (j). The first point of order, under 23(b), is that a member speaking in the House needs to speak to matters that are relevant to the question at hand, and that is the bill. This speaker is clearly not speaking to the matters at hand or the question under discussion. I would like to see him discontinue his present course of comment and move back to the bill.

Secondly, the comments being made are clearly intended to impute motives to a member in the House and are essentially

insulting language at this point to the member of whom he's speaking and are not relevant to the concerns that we are talking about this morning. Using this as an opportunity merely to take a slam at another member seems to be a violation of at least two sections of Standing Order 23.

Thank you.

11:20

The Deputy Speaker: Do you wish to respond to the point of order, hon. member?

Dr. Starke: Madam Speaker, I would like to respond. First, to the first point on 23(b), I can assure the hon. Deputy Government House Leader that commentary with regard to the department of the minister specifically during the introduction of this bill is entirely relevant to the bill. We've had lots of discussion in this House. We've had discussion about the carbon tax, and we've had discussion about a wide variety of other things from members on both sides of the House that had, at best, a tangential relationship with the bill at hand. I was talking specifically to the bill at hand. Now, if you wanted to point of order me when I was talking about insulin and glucagon, okay. Fine. But a point of order here? This is not a point of order under 23(b).

As for 23(h), (i), and (j), Madam Speaker, I chose those words carefully. I said: behaving like a frat boy at a kegger. I didn't suggest that that was what the member was doing. I was saying that the preference of people was that their ministers behave like cabinet ministers. As far as that goes, I was not imputing motives. I was not intending to attack the character of this minister. I was simply offering this minister some advice.

The Deputy Speaker: Any others wishing to comment on the point of order? Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to speak to the point of order, in particular 23(h), (i), and (j). I read: "imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member." The Minister of Advanced Education over the course of this entire sitting has continually displayed behaviour that is unbecoming of a minister of the Crown. That is not imputing false or unavowed motives in any way, shape, or form but, in fact, in a roundabout way generally explains the behaviour that continuously comes from this minister in this House.

In regard to 23(b), I would speak to that matter as well. The way in which the minister has spoken to other members in this House during the course of this debate, being the minister and the mover of this bill – absolutely, one has to do with the other, Madam Speaker. Perhaps if the minister or the government is offended by the way in which the minister does offend members of this House, the government members would encourage their minister to improve his attitude towards opposition members in this House.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, I have to say that I was a little concerned myself with the use of that language under "uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder," because it certainly does have that effect when we use those types of words. I will remind the House that the minister did withdraw and apologize for the statements that he made previously on this.

Usually we move on. We're here to debate the bill; we're not here to debate individuals' behaviour or conduct. I would caution the member. Certainly, you have the experience in this House to know what is and is not appropriate. I would encourage you to use language that is not going to create disorder and to confine your remarks to the bill.

Thank you.

Dr. Starke: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I do appreciate that, and in order to achieve what you're asking us to do, I will withdraw that comment, and I will sincerely apologize to the minister and to the House for having used that if that is your ruling. That is just fine.

Debate Continued

Dr. Starke: What I will say, Madam Speaker, then, by way of concluding my remarks: I have concerns about this bill though I will support it. I have concerns about our postsecondary sector. I mentioned during committee debate that Alberta has the lowest level of postsecondary participation anywhere in Canada. The lowest level. In order to just get to a point where we're at the Canadian average and to allow for population growth, which in Alberta has always been robust, we need 90,000 additional spaces in the postsecondary sector. That's going to cost some money.

My own opinion is that money spent on education and advanced education is money well spent. I will point out to the House – and most people probably don't remember this – that one of Peter Lougheed's base tenets was that even in difficult times, if you have to cut everything else, preserve education. That was Peter Lougheed that said that.

As a Progressive Conservative I note that I have been moved progressively to the right, which, I can assure you, many people have tried with all the tenacity of a border collie trying to herd that last lost sheep into the sheepfold. Madam Speaker, I can assure you that as a Progressive Conservative, the assurance that education be accessible, that it be affordable, that it be sustainable, and that our postsecondary institutions can always provide a high quality is something that I think is in all Albertans' interest. This is a nonpartisan issue.

As I said, I'm in support of Bill 19. I would like to thank the minister and his staff for having done the work on this. I, frankly, disagreed with the notion that there wasn't enough consultation and that we needed to send it to committee. I felt that the consultation on this was long standing. He commented to me when I mentioned about the fullness of time – Minister, you made a crack during your opening remarks on second reading. You know what? That's fine; I'm okay with that. I'm in the House and can quite easily absorb those things. I've had worse, let me tell you.

Madam Speaker, I am in favour of Bill 19. I hope that all members vote in favour of it, but I also hope that not just the minister but subsequent ministers and subsequent governments act to guard that balance, that balance between affordability and accessibility, and sustainability and quality, and not only do that but make the lever, make the teeter-totter even bigger so that we can accommodate more students so that more Albertans can get a higher education, because I think that is good for our economy and it's good for our society.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Under 29(2)(a), the hon. minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Perhaps I'm rising to take the bait. I'm not sure. I'm pleased to offer a few comments to some of the comments made by the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster. For the member's knowledge, my mother is a keen observer of the proceedings here at the Legislature. I would have to say that, after me, her favourite speaker in the House is the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster. I just say that he has created probably some significant emotional pain and cognitive dissonance for my mother because now she's pitted between her two favourite

speakers here as to whom to believe. I am not entirely sure that my mother will take my side in this matter. The Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster has put me in the uncomfortable position of having to explain to my mother why her second-favourite speaker has said what he did.

In the spirit of accordion player solidarity, I will kindly take the advice of the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster as to deportment. Certainly, we're all guilty of letting our emotions get the best of us in this House. I meant what I said when I said that I am a deeply reflective and humble person, dedicated to continual improvement, and I will take the member's advice.

I did want to take issue, though, with one of the comments that he did say. He said that he adopted Peter Lougheed's vision of funding education above all else, which is interesting, Madam Speaker. Forgive me; I don't recall if the member was in cabinet at the time. Certainly, he was a member of the House and the government caucus at the time that the government of the day cut funding for advanced education by 7 per cent.

11:30

Certainly, I appreciate the advice that the former minister, the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster, has given. It's unfortunate that his government didn't live by that creed that Peter Lougheed set out when given the opportunity to. Those 7 per cent cuts in budgets had a significant effect on the quality of education and the affordability and accessibility of education in the province of Alberta, and that certainly contributed to the downfall of the government of the time. They didn't support services.

The interesting thing, though, Madam Speaker, is that when his caucus, the PC caucus, existed as more than one member, they did release a shadow budget. He signed off on it. They proposed a cut of an additional \$400 million, give or take, to the Advanced Education budget of the day, which represents about 20 per cent of the operating grants that we give to universities and colleges across the province. So it is very interesting to me that the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster seems to be a follower of Peter Lougheed's valuation of education, yet when given the chance to bring a budget, he voted for a budget that cut Advanced Education by 7 per cent. And he didn't learn from that lesson. His caucus presented a shadow budget that proposed an even bigger cut to Advanced Education, possibly because he felt that maybe the 7 per cent cut in 2013 wasn't big enough, didn't go far enough.

You know, I appreciate the member's comments on my deportment. I would just ask that the member do me the return favour of actually acting out what he says he believes in. If he believes in the value of education, then he should have voted to support it through the budget. He should have voted for our budget, which supported education. He shouldn't have been a member of a caucus that prepared a shadow budget that proposed a 20 per cent cut in the operating grants of universities and colleges.

With that, Madam Speaker, with that helpful bit of advice to the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster, I will take my seat.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Mr. Carson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today in support of Bill 19, An Act to Improve the Affordability and Accessibility of Post-secondary Education. First off, I would like to thank the Minister of Advanced Education for bringing this forward. Over the last three and a half years I've had the opportunity to speak to many of the student groups who have advocated for the very things that are within this bill, and I think it's important to finally see this moving forward.

Of course, in the 2015 election there was an opportunity for our party, the NDP, to put forward a platform which, I believe, included tuition freezes if I'm correct and for the governing party at that time, the Progressive Conservatives, to put forward a budget that included market modifiers or the continuation of those. I think that was one of the reasons why we are here today on this side of the House and the other party, while essentially dissolved as the Conservatives, are on that side of the House.

I will just start off by saying that, of course, in 2015 our government committed to stable and predictable funding along with the tuition freeze in our platform. As we are all aware, this freeze has been put in place from the 2014-2015 year, extended into the 2018-2019 academic year.

This bill represents the conclusion of years of hard work by this minister and this government, meeting both with the student associations and students that are outside of those associations as well as the administration of these institutions. Of course, Bill 19 proposes a number of updates to the Post-secondary Learning Act that will set our province's postsecondary learning system up for continued success; first of all, tying tuition to the CPI, which was one of the main issues that the student associations brought forward to us, starting in 2015. I'm very proud to see that moving forward. We're also updating the act to give the Minister of Advanced Education the authority to order future tuition freezes, which is very important as well.

I think it's very important that we continue to see the cost of postsecondary education as affordable. I think back to my own life. While I didn't go to university, I first attended NAIT for radio/television broadcasting. Following that, I went back to work towards my journeyman ticket, which I didn't get before becoming elected, but I did some apprenticeship training there as an electrician. While I was able to afford both of those programs, in the instance of the apprenticeship training I was actually able to be reimbursed by AIT, I believe it was, which was wonderful. But I am happy to see that we're moving forward with moves to make that more affordable or capping the tuition as well.

When I think back to my own life, I think I've mentioned once in the House before that my mother, the most inspirational woman in my life, was 14 years old when she had me. I mean, there's a lot that comes with having a child that young. I can't imagine even having a child at my age, 26 now. She went on to university. She didn't miss any school. She said: you know, I want to make sure that he has the best life that he can have. So she went on, finished – well, it was in Saskatchewan, so they don't have junior high – elementary school, went on to high school, and then went to the U of S to gain a sociology degree.

Now, she is very happy that she was able to do that, but she still lives with the ramifications of having to take on a student loan. I mean, not only was she having to pay her own way through school; she was a single mother. She didn't have any support, or very little, from other family members. Honestly, if anything, she was supporting other family members other than myself. So she took on a student loan, not only having to pay for school but having to support a child, and, as I said, still lives with the ramifications of that today. I mean, this is not something – you know, not everyone goes to school and is able to find employment in the industry that they are working towards.

With that being said, I mean, we hear a discussion a lot about whether arts degrees are worth it, you know. She went and took sociology, which is a bachelor of arts program. I would never discourage anyone from doing that because no matter what you're going to postsecondary institutions for, I think you're learning something and you're becoming a better person. I would just start by saying that I do have concern with the Member for Lacombe-

Ponoka saying: well, maybe you shouldn't go to postsecondary education. Somebody else said that that's not what he meant. But I have concerns with that.

As I mentioned, you know, having a mother that young and her living with these costs still to this day, I think it's very important that we're moving forward to put a cap on tuition. I just want to say that there were other comments made by Lacombe-Ponoka – well, there were many that I have concern with, one of them being that universities should be more lean. I have great concern with that. I mean, over the last several decades, being under a Progressive Conservative government, they've had to find ways to become lean.

When I think back to my education at NAIT even, in the radio/television broadcasting program, they've had to make a lot of adjustments with such a small amount of funding. You go there and you see. I was just there last week, actually, and the instructors are putting together sound panels at home, essentially, because there's not necessarily the funding there. But they don't complain. They do with the funding what they can.

I also have other concerns with what was said. I mean, the carbon levy piece continues to come up. I will just remind the members on all sides of this House that Advanced Education has invested \$929.8 million in capital projects since April 2015. We have doubled the budget for maintenance and renewal since 2015. That's \$60 million in 2014-15, which we increased to \$118 million now. To say that the carbon levy is killing these institutions is completely ridiculous. We've seen increases to these funds, which are very important. I think that it's important to recognize that students want to see these renewable projects and green energy projects moving forward.

The person who created carbon pricing is a Nobel prize winner. When we have 97 per cent of scientists agreeing that climate change is real and that we need to do something about it, when the author of carbon pricing is winning Nobel prizes, at what point do you start to agree with this? I mean, we have prominent Conservative leaders that are agreeing with this. I don't understand. But I digress. That is not what this bill is about.

Once again, the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka said: "What have you done for students' education? Costs are increasing." Well, the tuition freeze was the first thing. He said that we're not moving fast enough. Well, you did not agree with the tuition freeze when we implemented it, but now you're here saying: oh, we agreed with everything all along. It's very silly.

11:40

Meanwhile you're saying that we haven't done anything for students. We increased the minimum wage, and this goes back to the story of my mother. She worked entirely through high school, probably through elementary, and, of course, through university. She was working at a bank as a front teller. She was making the minimum wage. To say that the minimum wage does not help these students: it's not true at all.

Let's see here. There was also mention that there should be accelerated programs, which I don't understand. We do have accelerated programs. You know, there are four-year programs. There are accelerated one- or two-year programs from a variety of institutions. This kind of reminds me of the Leader of the Official Opposition saying: you know, RAP programs are a great idea. He said that a couple of weeks ago. Well, we already have those. Those are things. It's not something he can bring in.

I guess my final piece would just be that if you are in support of this legislation so much, which you say you are – I don't necessarily believe you from the comments that you've made previously through the last three years. When the students meet with you over the next week and over the next six months, I hope that they will question your intentions. You know, if you were to become the

government of the day next year, then these students should understand and make sure that they get a promise from you, because if that were to happen, I think you'll go back on it, and I hope that they hold you to account.

Once again, thank you to the Minister of Advanced Education for bringing forward Bill 19. I'm very happy to see it move forward. It was one of the main reasons that I got involved with politics, to see more opportunities for students to succeed. I hope everyone supports it.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The hon. member from the government side had mentioned the carbon tax, and I'm wondering if the member opposite could explain to me how exactly the carbon tax benefits students, particularly around the issue of increased costs to students. The carbon tax literally increases the cost of absolutely everything. Students are not immune, and we know that, despite the rhetoric from the government in regard to the carbon rebate cheques, that that absolutely does not cover the output costs of everyday needs and expenditures in a student's life.

I would be particularly interested to know what the member thinks a carbon tax is doing to help benefit students and help them to have a more affordable life not only now, in the course of their university or college education, but how exactly, moving forward, that is going to benefit students and their families.

Ms Jansen: The green line.

Mrs. Pitt: Madam Speaker, the minister opposite yelled "green line." You know what's a fun fact? The green line was actually approved prior to this government and was not tied to any of the carbon tax funds that the government is currently putting into general revenue. They're absolutely misleading the public in these types of conversations. Everybody knows that the carbon tax money collected by this government goes into their general revenue funds and that they dole it out as need be. Particularly, the Calgary green line project was approved, actually, while the Leader of the Official Opposition, the Member for Calgary-Lougheed, was a minister with the federal government.

Again, it's one of those situations where, you know, we say or do something on the Conservative side, and the government members freak out, saying: it's the world's worst thing. Then they realize: actually, it's a good idea. Then they take our talking points and use them moving forward.

Mr. Feehan: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: We have a point of order. The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Point of Order Relevance

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. For the third time this morning we rise and speak to the fact that 29(2)(a) is supposed to be about the previous speaker and the comments they made. Clearly, we have drifted off into a speech and lecture with facts derived from the ether, not related to anything happening here on Earth. I really think that we need to admonish the opposition yet a third time for wasting the time of this House to use it as an opportunity to lecture and berate, completely inappropriately and without value, when we actually should be speaking to the bill at

hand. I'd really like to see them try to focus on that at least for one morning. I know it's hard. It's been a whole two hours and 45 minutes, and some attention spans really are unable to get through a whole morning.

Mrs. Pitt: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Before I address the second point of order, would you like to speak to the first point of order?

Mrs. Pitt: I would like to speak to the first point of order, Madam Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to do so.

When I was asking questions around the carbon tax and the impact that it's having on students, making their lives less affordable, the Minister of Infrastructure had yelled across to me: the green line project. I was simply explaining the facts around the green line project and where the funding was actually coming from, Madam Speaker, completely relevant to the conversation. Perhaps if the government members want to participate in the debate, they would stand up and do so. But when I was speaking on 29(2)(a) in regard to another member's comments and concerns in this House, I was completely on topic and particularly answering some of the heckling that's coming from the government ministers.

So this is not a point of order, Madam Speaker. In fact, I don't recall that the minister actually made a citation either in regard to his point of order, but this is absolutely relevant to the conversation and it's a matter of debate.

The Deputy Speaker: All right. We have discussed this issue several times already this morning, and perhaps we need to have a broader dialogue again about the use of 29(2)(a). I will say that I think that everybody has been very congenial in this House this morning for the most part, which is nice to see. That said, yes, there was some heckling occurring while you were speaking. That doesn't mean that you necessarily respond to it and get distracted by that heckling. I think that there is an onus on all of us to strive to a higher level of debate in this House. Again, I have been giving a great deal of leeway with 29(2)(a), but I encourage members to really try to stick to the intent of that standing order.

If you would like to continue your remarks on 29(2)(a), please, hon. member. Just a clarification: you cannot call a point of order on a point of order. Go ahead.

Debate Continued

Mrs. Pitt: I thought I'd try.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I was talking about earlier, the affordability for students. The government is expressing concerns that it's very expensive for students for life, particularly in regard to postsecondary education, and I would absolutely agree. I would question why the government is making it even more expensive for students with their carbon tax. Students understand that, and their parents understand that. Albertans understand that the carbon tax is making life more expensive, and I don't understand why this government doesn't get it, particularly one of the younger members in the government caucus who is very likely making a significantly higher wage than most of his peers. So maybe because he doesn't understand the impacts of the carbon tax, he doesn't understand that students absolutely feel those effects. If he could explain to me why or how this carbon tax makes sense, I would be grateful and make an effort to understand where he is coming from on behalf of his constituents, not just personally for himself.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, you have a few seconds to respond.

Mr. Carson: Well, I just said that I was raised by a 14-year-old mother, so for you to say that I don't know what living in poverty is like is completely ridiculous.

11:50

I'll say that the valley line LRT, completely funded by carbon levy funds, is a massive investment for my community. People understand that that investment is going to change the way people move through the city, and that is going to positively impact students across the city. It's an incredible investment in my community.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: I thought that that would be the constituency on everybody's lips, so it would be easy to remember.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to Bill 19 on third reading. Before I begin, I'd just like to make a comment, with all due respect to your position, on your response to the first point of order, where you acknowledged that the minister had withdrawn his comments and apologized. I'd just like to correct you. He has never apologized for his statement. He withdrew the comments. He has never apologized to the member, and he has never apologized to the farmers of Alberta, who he slighted in his comments.

That being said, getting back to this bill. It will put in place a cap on tuition in postsecondary institutions in Alberta, indexing them to the CPI, which will make the rate by which the tuition rises every year more predictable and controlled, and that is a good thing. I see the necessity for students as they have dealt with massive and volatile tuition hikes in the past.

But I'd also like to mention that just today in the *Edmonton Journal*, I believe, the president of Grant MacEwan University made some comments. Grant MacEwan University is a great institution that's accessible right downtown. We have a lot of people that otherwise would not be able to afford to go to an institution, but we have some that are in the inner city, and it's accessible to people that live downtown. It's a great advantage to the downtown community, much like Portage College is out in St. Paul and Lac La Biche and Cold Lake, where people can go to school right in their own community, so it does give that advantage.

Now, her concern is the unforeseen consequences of this cap. She talks about the reduction in the ability to provide competitive wages to their instructional staff, resulting in what they call cherry-picking by other institutions. Now, we've already seen this with the cap on our Crown prosecutors, Madam Speaker, where Alberta put a cap on wages, especially for people just coming out of university, and a lot of those good Crown prosecutors have left our province to go to B.C., where they can make 20 to 25 per cent more. It puts an extra burden on our legal system, especially out in rural Alberta where we have Crown prosecutors with an average caseload of upwards of 2,000 cases.

You know, I've had meetings with the chief Crown prosecutor, where he's admitted in public that they've taken 200 of their cases and just said: "You know what? These are cases that didn't involve violent crime or are mostly just petty theft, which, if it happens to be your quad or your truck that was stolen, I mean, it means a lot to you, but in the grand scheme of things in the prosecution office it didn't." They would want to stick to the violent crimes and domestic violence and that, so a lot of those cases were just thrown into the garbage and

will never see the light of day. So this is one of those unforeseen or unexpected consequences of an action of the government.

Now, you know, when they put that cap on the Crown prosecutors, they possibly didn't think about how it was going to affect especially rural Alberta and the stresses that we already have and the rural crime. People are getting the idea that they can break into houses and steal vehicles and steal RVs and all these things or just tools out of somebody's shop, and they know that even if they get caught and arrested, they're never going to be prosecuted for it. These are what we call the unforeseen consequences.

Now, while it is a huge benefit for students, especially those of low income, and for accessibility to universities and colleges, the concern from the president of Grant MacEwan University is the ability of the universities and colleges to maintain the level of education that we're accustomed to here in Alberta, and it is a great education. Two of my children have gone through, one through Grant MacEwan University and one through the University of Alberta for a lot of years. A medical degree takes a long time. A nursing degree is a four-year program.

I know that not only the tuitions but as rural students living in Edmonton it's the extra costs of accommodations and just living your life and having enough money to buy your lunches and not have to work extra jobs just to make ends meet so that you can concentrate on your studies.

My only concern with the cap on tuition is, you know, listening to the president of Grant MacEwan and her concerns about how it may affect the quality, the number of courses that are available, and also that they may have to cap the salaries of some of their high-end instructors and some of the best instructors. These people have a limited career just like everybody else. Not saying that they're totally focused on money, but a lot of times it is a really big thing, where if you have a choice to work in Edmonton for \$100,000 a year or in Victoria for \$150,000, a lot of times you may choose to go to another institution. That being said, I guess that is my only concern with the bill.

We are supporting. We do understand how it affects students. In an attempt to continue increasing revenue, postsecondary institutions continued increasing their prices in the form of noninstructional fees when tuition was frozen. My understanding is that this bill also gives the minister the ability to cap those expenses as well. From my understanding, reading what the president of Grant MacEwan University said today, a lot of times the gym fees and access to exercise facilities and even some of the food is subsidized, and a lot of times they're already covering a lot of those costs, so putting a cap on those is going to make it even harder for universities to operate in that way.

Again, I just hope that we don't end up in a situation where we look back at this cap on tuition three years down the road and say:

"You know what? It was a very well-intended bill, but here are the consequences that we've seen. We've had a reduction in courses at Grant MacEwan or the University of Alberta or the University of Calgary, and we've lost some really good instructors from these programs, and we very, very likely will never get those folks back or increase that level of study." With this legislative step to increase the transparency of noninstructional fees, it's my hope that students will no longer face vague and undefined fees during their education.

Further to this, the bill enacts a limit to the increase in tuition, stating that program tuition can be raised by a maximum 10 per cent as long as the average across the board is not greater than the CPI. We can recall a few years prior to the tuition freeze, since this government took over, that tuition went up by the rate of inflation already. This set a precedent for what Bill 19 aims to accomplish, and also means that the same can be achieved through ministerial orders rather than new legislation altogether.

Again, just before I run out of time here, Madam Speaker, I'd just like to reflect, and hopefully the minister will consult with the president of Grant MacEwan. I know that I've met with her. She's a very, very intelligent lady and has the best intentions for her students and her faculty in mind when she's making her decisions. I don't think she would come out and just make reckless statements in regard to Bill 19. That being said, this bill protects students from postsecondary institutions hiking such fees as a roundabout way of increasing revenue. We do see that. The measure affords more security and confidence for students, commendable in all ways. I know that it was an issue when my son was going to school and when my daughter was going to school, the tuitions were a big part of it.

Like I said, as far as from a rural student standpoint, far more than that is the cost of rent. If you're trying to live in downtown Edmonton so that you're close to Grant MacEwan University, it is very, very expensive to live down here, and food costs, transportation costs as well. There's more to the whole issue than just the tuition when it comes to student's accessibility, especially coming from a rural setting. I know that it does hold back a lot of rural students from making those choices of furthering their education because they don't have the same access that a student born and raised and living in Edmonton and Calgary would have, being able to live at home while they go to university. It can be quite costly for rural students to come into Edmonton and Calgary. If there's something we can do to help subsidize the . . .

The Deputy Speaker: I'm hesitant to interrupt, hon. member, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(2.1) the House stands adjourned until 1:30 this afternoon.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, November 7, 2018

Day 47

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, November 7, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's really my pleasure today to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly students from one of the greatest constituencies in the entire province. It was great to go to their school and help open it not that long ago. The students I've met many times over the last few years. From Roberta MacAdams school today we have Mr. Ash Robinson, Mrs. Amber Smith, Ms Katrina Pickett, and Ms Cherilyn Maluga. If you'd all rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my great pleasure, on behalf of the Minister of Transportation, to introduce to you and to all members of this Assembly 26 brilliant students from Norwood elementary school in the constituency of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. These students have been busy here today and have visited the Borealis Gallery, the Pehonan Theatre, and the Agora Interpretive Centre in the Federal Building, as well as the Legislature Building. They are accompanied today by their teachers, Susan Strebchuck and Danielle Duncan, and their student teacher, Miss Woodman. I would ask them to please rise now and accept the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Mr. Carlier: Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and through you, sitting in the public gallery, students from Niton Central school, accompanied by their teacher, Mrs. Maskell, and parent helper Mrs. DeLeeuw. I'm fortunate to be the MLA to several small, deeply rooted, historical towns, Niton Junction being one among them. Niton has been a landmark on the trail to Jasper for nearly 100 years, once acting as a major agricultural trading station on the railway. I ask that you and all members of the House join me in a warm welcome for this group, that's come a long way to visit us.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ms Goehring: Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly distinguished visitors from the veterans' working committee. During Veterans' Week we honour veterans who have given their lives for our country and all those who have served. Today we also honour those who serve veterans. A year ago Mr. Doug Styles, himself a veteran, contacted the Minister of Seniors and Housing about homeless veterans in Alberta. Sadly, despite their service, the last homeless count showed 174 veterans without a home. We know there are many more without a permanent address. In response we formed a veterans' working committee. Now, less than a year later, we will be announcing an exciting pilot project to improve life for veterans and homeless veterans in Alberta. That announcement will take place on Friday.

I would ask the members of the veterans' working committee to please rise as I introduce you: Captain Doug Styles, veterans' advocate; Master Warrant Officer Michael Hogan, Department of National Defence and Canadian Armed Forces; Corporal Wallace Bona, royal Canadian electrical engineers, president of the Aboriginal Veterans Society of Alberta; Major, retired, David Blackburn, Forces@Work; Matt Barker, veteran of the RCMP; Warrant Officer Gerry Finlay, Royal Canadian Legion, command service officer, Alberta-Northwest Territories Command; Lieutenant-Colonel Chad Rizzato, Canadian Armed Forces, project manager, veterans' service centre and housing; Major Chris Duncan, director of operations in the Canadian Corps of Commissionaires; Lynda Cuppens, co-chair of the veterans' working group for the government of Alberta and a military spouse; Sharon Blackwell, co-chair of the veterans' working group; Kevin McNichol, CEO, Forces@Work; Shawna Laychuk, Veterans Affairs Canada; Andrea Fuller-Chalifoux, Veterans Affairs Canada; Ragaad Jurf, Alberta Community and Social Services; Jill Wright, military liaison support. Please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Thank you for your service to our country, and thank you for your continued service to our country.

The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Mrs. Schreiner: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise and introduce my guests in the House today. From the Central Alberta Sexual Assault Support Centre we have Sarah Maetche, administrative assistant and community journalist. Suzanne Zukiwsky, board chairperson, has been on the board for seven years. She is a Red Deer College psychology student and a Red Deer public schools educational assistant. Kellie Cummings, board vice-chair, has been working with the vulnerable sector for 18 years. The last 11 years she has dedicated herself to those fleeing family violence and sexual trauma. We have Dyson Zukiwsky, event volunteer and supporter; Spencer Zukiwsky, event volunteer and supporter; as well as Patricia Arango, executive director since 2014. Patricia is the former ED at Chatham Kent Women's Centre, Ontario, where she worked for more than 15 years. She is an active volunteer, Rotarian, and member of various boards and chairs. Over the last four years under her leadership Central Alberta Sexual Assault Support Centre has created the iRespect campaign and the first provincial text and web chat crisis line service. I am so very proud of my guests today, and I ask that they receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A great pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to the House two members in the Assembly who are involved with mental health, particularly mental health youth services, Mr. Mark Korthuis and Dr. Adam Abba-Aji. Mark is the CEO of the Mental Health Foundation, an organization dedicated to building better mental health care for people in Alberta. Dr. Abba-Aji is the lead psychiatrist with Access Open Minds, a program working to change the way we deliver mental health service in Alberta. They've both been invaluable contributors to the movement to better integrate mental health and social services in Alberta. I'll ask them to stand. Give them the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions today. First of all, it's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly members of the Community Drug Strategy Committee for Strathcona county. This group has been working collaboratively since 2017 to address the opioid crisis in our community and to develop a drug strategy for Strathcona county, including the exhibit *Opioids Don't Discriminate*, an interactive experience. Last night the workplace of some of my guests was damaged. Thank you to firefighters, RCMP, and EMS for their prompt response. I acknowledge that this situation is upsetting for staff and residents alike, and I really thank my guests for coming today. I will ask my guests to please rise as I call their names: Lerena Greig, Susan Robblee, Darlene Spelten, Jean Bell, Stephen Neuman, and Sam Singh. If I've forgotten anybody, please rise. I'd now like to ask that you receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ms McKittrick: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the constituency manager for my office in Sherwood Park, Trish Agrell-Smith. I first met Trish when she was working at Baseline Wine & Spirits in Sherwood Park, and I soon realized that outside of her obvious knowledge of wine she had a lot to offer and that she was the person I wanted as part of my team. She started working in my office part-time and has been my constituency full-time manager since last November. She helps me keep organized, is kind and patient when helping constituents, and is a great graphic designer and writer. Thank you, Trish, for your fantastic work. Trish, I would now ask you to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Mr. Rosendahl: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two guests who are here today to observe the introduction of Bill 25, the Canyon Creek Hydro Development Act. Mr. Jeff Wearmouth is the cofounder and current director of Turning Point Generation. Jeff is a professional engineer born and raised in Alberta. He has worked in renewables and the energy sector for over 25 years. Mr. Rob Mackin, former mayor of the town of Hinton, has worked with Turning Point to introduce them to the community and key stakeholders in the region. In 2017 he helped spearhead the Hinton Energy Alternatives Team, which is made up of leaders in the community, to support and attract exciting development such as the Canyon Creek project. I ask Rob and Jeff to both stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

1:40

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions. The first is some students who are here with their instructor and staff from Global Tesol College campus within my riding. My guests are visiting from Libya and work in finance, and this is their first visit to Canada, to be immersed in our culture and our language. I want to welcome them to Alberta and, specifically, to our capital and our Chamber here. I invite them to rise and receive the warm welcome of our Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ms Hoffman: Secondly, I rise today to recognize members of the Medical Assistance in Dying Review Committee who are seated in the members' gallery. I want to recognize their dedication and their compassion and the work that this committee has done to ensure that Albertans have the care and support that they need should they choose to access medical assistance in dying and to ensure that the wishes are met with dignity and with respect. I'd also like to acknowledge one of the members, who wasn't able to be here today, Troy Stooke, who has joined the committee as a public member to share her experience as a family member and an advocate. The members who are present today, please rise. Those are Dr. Jim Silvius, Dr. Elizabeth Brooks-Lim, and Debra Allen. Please receive our warm welcome and our gratitude.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to introduce to you and through you my good friend Jesse Cesar. He's a member of the Filipino community. He's lived in Alberta for eight years. He's part of Yorkton Group International and works as a client relations specialist. He's also a member of St. Theresa parish and a member of the Knights of Columbus. He's an active member of my volunteer team who lives in Edmonton-Ellerslie. I'm so proud to call him my friend. Jesse, please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a very good friend, a strong female leader, a former colleague. MLA Jacquie Fenske, former mayor, by far makes some of the best pies in Alberta. I'd like to also introduce Marvin Olsen, the Alberta Party candidate for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, and his beautiful wife, Shannon Olsen. Will all members please welcome them to this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through to all members of the House members of the group Advocis, the Financial Advisors Association of Canada. If they could stand as I read their names: Rob McCullagh, Kelly Smith, Wade Baldwin, Lorne Zalasky, Lori Power, Julie Martini, Nick Colosimo, Greg Pollock, Kris Birchard, and Chris Fox. Of course, one of my favourites is Dan Boorse from Grande Prairie. Dan is a member of Rotary and volunteers with lots of organizations within Grande Prairie. If we could give them the warm welcome of the Assembly, that'd be great.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Are there any other introductions, hon. members? The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of this House Minu Bhatia. As some of you may know, Minu is the creator of the giant crocheted Canadian flag. It's 40 feet by 20 feet and weighs around 132 pounds. It took Minu over three years to complete this amazing project. Minu wanted to pay tribute to the country where diverse groups of people can enrich their lives and those around them. This project is dedicated to a nation where we can all expand our

horizons, build a better future, and realize our dreams. Our government is currently in the process of finding this wonderful piece of art a permanent home. I would like to ask Minu, who is joined by her family and children, to receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Members' Statements

World War I Armistice Centenary

Mr. Schneider: Mr. Speaker, in honour of the 100th anniversary of the armistice of World War I, I rise to pay my respects and honour the service and commitment of military members and their families from Alberta who fought for our freedom. The Vimy Ridge Armoury, today located in my riding of Little Bow, is home to the 20th Independent Field Battery, the Royal Canadian Artillery, and Troop 3 from the Medicine Hat-based A Squadron of the South Alberta Light Horse. The 20th Battery can trace its roots as being the truly Alberta battery raised by Major John Smith Stewart, the father of artillery in Alberta. He raised this unit from Lethbridge but recruited the gunners from Edmonton and Calgary as well to form the 20th Battery, which still operates. This year, to mark the 100th armistice of World War I, the 20th Independent Field Battery will conduct a 100-gun salute on Remembrance Day in Calgary.

At this time I also want to share with you a few southern Alberta connections leading up to the last few days of World War I. The second of four artillery batteries raised from Lethbridge, the 39th had the distinction of being the first Canadian artillery battery to enter Mons and can claim to have had one of its 18-pounder field guns fire the last round in World War I. Brigadier-General Stewart, who commanded the artillery units of the 3rd Canadian Division at the end of World War I, was also one of many serving MLAs during the Great War for civilization. He had the great honour to command the parade in the Grand-Place in Mons for General Currie on November 11, 1918. He also returned for the 50th anniversary in Mons, where he was made an honorary citizen. As we commemorate the armistice and continue to recognize the military contribution to Canada, it's also about connecting our members of the Legislature to the military and to their fellow citizens, thus enabling an understanding of how they have contributed and continue to contribute to the fabric of this great province and great nation.

Lest we forget.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Community Drug Strategy for Strathcona County

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to highlight the work of the Community Drug Strategy Committee for Strathcona county. I am so proud of how my community has moved forward in addressing this issue. Strathcona county, like many communities across the province, has been impacted by the opioid crisis. In 2017 community partners, including the following, came together to develop this strategy: various Alberta services departments, Chimo Youth Retreat Centre, Children's Services, Elk Island public and Catholic school divisions, Hope in Strathcona, Moms Stop the Harm, parents empowering parents, Sherwood Park primary care network, the RCMP and its victims' services, Saffron Sexual Assault Centre, the Salvation Army, various Strathcona county departments including family and community services, and the Strathcona county public library. Using a new mental health model based on the premises of collective ownership and empathy, best practices, brain science research, and community engagement,

the committee has developed a community drug strategy for Strathcona county, from addiction to connection.

With funding from an AHS opioid public awareness grant the committee developed a public information engagement campaign, Just a Little to Lose a Lot, and have created *Opioids Don't Discriminate*, an interactive experience. Originally scheduled to run this week at the community centre in Sherwood Park, this exhibit is a unique interactive exhibit allowing participants to follow the journey of three fictional community members who find themselves affected by opioid use. Based on real-life experiences and local statistics, this exhibit is a one-of-a-kind opportunity to explore the impact of opioid use in our community. With the uncertainty surrounding the unfolding incident at the community centre, I hope that this amazing exhibit will have the opportunity to continue and to travel across the province.

As the MLA for Sherwood Park I am so thankful and appreciative of the collaborative work that this diverse group of community partners has accomplished.

Congratulations.

The Speaker: Thank you.

1:50

Myron Thompson

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to salute an Alberta original, my friend Myron Thompson. I have been blessed to call Myron, one of the most successful and best-known politicians of his era, a friend and a mentor. Over Myron's long and successful life he has accomplished much, starting out with an incredible baseball career. In fact, he made it into the New York Yankees' baseball program as a catcher, competing with a guy by the name of Yogi Berra for a spot in the big club.

After baseball Myron and his amazing wife, Dot, would settle in the community of Sundre, where Myron would serve as a school principal for 23 years. Myron served faithfully several generations of Sundre students. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I would guess that well over half of the town population went to school with Myron as their principal. He entered municipal politics in 1974, becoming the mayor of his beloved Sundre. In 1992 he was elected to the House of Commons, where he served faithfully as our man in Ottawa until 2008. He became known in Ottawa for wearing his cowboy hat and was never hesitant to proudly display our western heritage. After he retired from Parliament, he stayed in Sundre, where he served on town council for several more years. He finally hung up his spurs last year after an incredible 50 years of public service to our community.

No one could raise holy heck like Myron or fix a stern glare better, and there's no question that Myron always calls it as he sees it. But if you miss the twinkle in his eye or the playful grin, you don't really know Myron. Myron never leaves you with any doubt about his deep faith in God or how much he truly loves his family, his students, his constituents, his town, his province, and his country, and he never shies away from fighting for them.

Myron announced just a few weeks ago that he is facing what he describes as his last great battle, a fight with cancer. He is facing this fight with the same class, dignity, and grit that he faced every challenge in his life with. There will never be another Myron Thompson. He truly is one of a kind, Mr. Speaker.

God bless you, Myron. You know that my entire community stands with you and Dot as you have stood with us for so many years.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Suspension of Physicians' Licences to Practise

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this year it came to light that a physician practising near Edmonton had been convicted of sexual assault against patients and nurses with whom he worked. It was shocking to learn that this physician had been allowed to continue to practise with a licence from the college of physicians, so the opposition at the time asked the government to consider bringing forward legislation to ban licences from physicians convicted of assault. We're glad that's happened, but the government will only allow that to apply for five years. Why not ban doctors permanently from practising if they've been convicted of assault?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Like the member opposite, our government and in particular our Minister of Health were very disturbed by the situation that the member opposite describes. That's why the minister has brought in legislation to this House, only the second province in the country to bring in this kind of legislation, to protect vulnerable patients and particularly to protect women in these vulnerable situations from predatory professionals. That's why we are moving forward with this legislation. We are still having good conversations about it, but we're happy to be able to bring it in.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Kenney: I thank the hon. the Premier for her response.

Mr. Speaker, as I said to the government in March, the Official Opposition would be happy to co-operate with the government in the adoption of such legislation. We seek to do so constructively; however, there have been multiple opposition amendments proposing, effectively, a permanent ban on the ability of abusive physicians to practice, given the risk that they will revictimize in the future and also to send a clear message of deterrence to abusive physicians. The government voted down those amendments. Why? Why don't they support a lifetime ban?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the very important question. It is our fundamental belief that women and all Albertans accessing health care services should do so without fear of harassment, intimidation, or assault, of course. We're happy to work with all members of this Legislature when considering how best to do that, and we certainly welcome the critic of the opposition caucus. I have reached out for meetings, and we continue to work collaboratively. We also work with front-line providers who provide support to survivors. We've increased their funding, and I'm very proud of that.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, again, the government now on three occasions has voted against amendments that would effectively impose a lifetime ban on doctors convicted of sexual assault. This is a terrible violation of the doctor-patient relationship, and I cannot understand why there would be any consideration of granting a licence to practise to a doctor found guilty of sexual assault. So will the government join with us in listening to vulnerable Alberta women who have been victimized in this way by agreeing to a lifetime ban on the ability of such doctors to practise?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and again to the member for the important recommendation. Again, we are only the second jurisdiction in Canada to embark upon this kind of protection in bringing in a mandatory minimum requirement of a five-year suspension. I appreciate that the amendments came forward recently and certainly welcome anyone to bring forward recommendations at any time to help strengthen our legislation. We continue to work with the organizations that represent survivors to make sure that we have the strictest and fairest consequences in place so we can withstand appropriate constitutional or legislative challenges. We want to ensure that these consequences stick and that we protect all patients.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
Second main question.

Student Achievement in Mathematics

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, in recent years there has been a disturbing decline in math ability amongst Alberta students through multiple different standardized tests. Most recently the provincial achievement test shows that math proficiency amongst grade 9 students has declined from 67 per cent in 2014 to 59 per cent last year. Does the government share our concern about this data, which shows declining math proficiency amongst Alberta students, and what does it plan to do about it?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This is a very important question. That is why the Minister of Education took action almost as soon as we got elected to bring together a group of experts in math to develop some significant changes to our math curriculum, which were announced last year. The results that we're seeing now demonstrate the fact that it was necessary to do. We're very pleased that we've been able to bring in some very significant changes that will in fact improve math ability amongst our students.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Kenney: I thank the Premier for that answer, Mr. Speaker. However, the actions taken by the government do not address a fundamental problem, which is that since the introduction of discovery or inquiry learning as a common method of mathematics instruction we've seen a steady 15-year decline. It clearly started before the NDP was in office. Regardless of party, we all need to work together to turn the situation around. Does the Premier share my concern with the fact that the cut-off score for math proficiency is only 42 per cent for grade 9 students?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do at least appreciate the member opposite acknowledging that it was, actually, the previous government that put this system in place.

As the member has identified, we have just in the last year implemented the plan that has been developed by the Ministry of Education. We're supporting math teachers, funding their ability to increase their skills; we are modernizing the curriculum and asking for a renewed focus on the basics, including memorization of multiplication tables and fractions; and we are improving testing. Part of the thing that happens is that as you do that, you see that, oh, the tests are not good. That's why we're working . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Kenney: I do appreciate that answer, Mr. Speaker. I think the minister has taken some positive steps forward.

The decline has been so rapid that tens of thousands of Alberta families, many of them new Canadians, are now forced to pay out of pocket after-tax dollars for math tutors to backfill for what children are not learning at school. Will the government make it very clear that the expectation is for our schools to equip young people with the basic math skills that they need to succeed in the future regardless of pedagogical fads like discovery learning?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, that's exactly, as I've said now twice before, what our government is doing. We are working very hard to improve the math curriculum and to improve the outcomes that we are now testing for as well because we think that this is fundamentally important to the educational future of all Alberta kids.

But what I will say, Mr. Speaker, is that one of the other ways that we make sure that our kids get a good education is to make sure that there are enough schoolteachers in the schools that they are learning in. If we were to, for instance, have frozen funding in 2015, we would not see the kind of progress that we are now able to deliver.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Third main question.

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, on that point, the government has been in office for three and a half years, and the math scores continue to come down.

2:00 Carbon Levy and Federal Carbon Pricing

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the voters of Washington state for the second time in a year rejected a proposed carbon tax in a referendum. This is the greenest state in the United States. Unfortunately, Albertans haven't had a chance to hold a referendum on the NDP's carbon tax. The Premier has said that she does not intend to proceed with her planned 67 per cent increase in that tax unless there is construction of Trans Mountain. Will she agree to require that a referendum be held before there are any future increases in the carbon tax?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, the member opposite is fully aware of what our government's position is with respect to the climate leadership plan and the matter of pricing carbon as a tool to fight climate change, something that is fundamentally important. I appreciate that the member is often inspired by what goes on south of the border; however, that's not how we take our direction. You know, in Washington, for instance, almost half a million people don't have access to health care, and that's also not a model that we're going to follow. What we are going to do is make progress on combatting climate change, innovation, investment in renewable energy, transit . . .

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Kenney: Well, democracy is not an idea that belongs to the Americans, Mr. Speaker. Albertans want democracy. They want to have a say – they will in the next election, in any event – on the carbon tax.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal scheduled the date for the hearing on that government's constitutional reference on the threatened Trudeau carbon tax. It is going to be

supported by the governments of Ontario, Manitoba, and the incoming government of New Brunswick. Will the government of Alberta seek intervenor status to help defend provincial jurisdiction against the threatened federal carbon tax?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the member opposite knows, we have adopted our own climate leadership plan. As a result, the actions of the federal government are not relevant to Alberta at this time. What I will say, however, is that the member's new-found affection for the Prime Minister and his desire to replace a made-in-Alberta plan, made in consultation with our industry, with a made-in-Ottawa plan that was not made in consultation with our industry is, well, perplexing. However, we will continue to work for Albertans, with Albertans on behalf of our collective environmental interests.

Mr. Kenney: Well, that's exactly the opposite of our position, which is to challenge the constitutionality of a federal carbon tax.

Mr. Speaker, why is it that the governments of New Brunswick, Ontario, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan are doing more to defend the constitutional authority of the government and Legislature of Alberta than the NDP government is?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, what our government is doing is leading the country in terms of taking action combatting climate change. Sometimes, you know, making decisions that are for the good of future generations requires strength and resolve in advance, and that is what we are doing. Because of that we're able to invest in the LRT, in the green line. We're able to finally move Alberta to a place where we can incent renewable energy, something that should have happened decades ago, and we are doing this on behalf of future generations of Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Mental Health Services

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When a young person is dealing with a mental illness, family can be one of the most important lifelines. However, families aren't always equipped to deal with the additional strain of caring for someone with a mental illness. In order for them to be effective and to support their loved ones, families need our support. They need to know what their resources are, where they're available, and how to access those resources. To the Minister of Health. Minister, I've heard from constituents that are caring for a child with mental illness, and they don't know where to turn. What is your government doing to connect families with the help that they need?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. I want to assure all Albertans that if you're ever at a time of crisis, if it's an emergency, please call 911. If it's something that you have a little more time to process and you want some advice on, you can always call 811 and speak to a licensed registered nurse here in the province of Alberta, and they will help you navigate through some of the options that are available.

In terms of system investments, we've increased our capacity for children and families by building the Rutherford mental health clinic here in Edmonton. We've also funded new counselling supports for survivors of sexual and physical assault through the

Zebra Child Protection Centre, and they supported over 1,600 children and youth last year.

Mr. Fraser: While we all hope that someone dealing with a mental illness can rely on the support of friends and family, that simply isn't always the case. Whether it's because they have no one to turn to or because the people in their life aren't equipped to help them, many people suffering from mental illness are at risk of isolation, homelessness, and much more. This is especially a concern for someone who is being discharged from a facility as that transition often results in falling through the cracks for these patients. To the same minister: what specifically is your government doing to ensure support for those suffering from mental illness after they've been discharged from a facility?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and again for the question. Currently we are in the process of monitoring over 150 initiatives that our government has led and been involved with because of the valuing mental health work that we did when we were first elected. I want to thank the former Associate Minister of Health for her work on that important file as well. There are 18 actions specifically related to Valuing Mental Health: Next Steps, including the building of an eight-bed youth facility in Red Deer, increasing psychiatric emergency service outreach at the Alberta Children's hospital, and the list goes on. We need to continue doing more, but much has been done.

Mr. Fraser: The issues that I've talked about today are symptoms of a much larger mental health crisis in our province. While spending has gone up, we're still struggling to improve outcomes. What we need is a province-wide vision for how we approach mental illness and to help those who are suffering. The Valuing Mental Health report is a good first step, but we need to make sure that the recommendations are being adapted into a holistic approach to mental illness, not simply being applied in a piecemeal fashion. To the same minister: how close are we to full implementation of that report, and is your ministry pushing for a more holistic mental health strategy for all of Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's exactly what we're doing. That's why we didn't stop when we wrote a report. Many people said to us when we embarked on this process: we've written reports before, and they sat on a shelf. It was really important to them that this new government, our NDP government under the leadership of our Premier, develop next steps. That's why we have the 18 steps identified under the Valuing Mental Health: Next Steps report.

We've also increased investment through the mental health capacity building in schools. Now over 65,000 students in 182 schools in 85 communities have additional supports because this side of the House voted to increase the budget and give those supports to families while members on that side of the House voted to slash them and lay off front-line workers, Mr. Speaker. I think we know who's got the backs . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Health Care Accessibility

Ms Fitzpatrick: Mr. Speaker, a constituent of mine in Lethbridge requires joint-replacement surgery. This constituent is a senior, as

is their spouse. The preference would be to have their surgery performed in Calgary, where their family lives and can provide social supports before and after the surgery. To the Minister of Health: is this an option available in Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for this important question. The short answer is yes. A patient can request to have their surgery in a different community than the one that they live in. For example, a Lethbridge physician can e-refer directly to a Calgary surgeon or vice versa. Obviously, our goal is to get patients surgery as quickly as possible based on their needs, but we also know that we need to act with patients' wishes as a guide in this, and I want to applaud the member for her advocacy on behalf of her community.

Ms Fitzpatrick: To the same minister: how many joint replacement surgeries have been performed in Lethbridge over the past year, and what is the ministry's plan to protect that surgical capacity for my constituents?

Ms Hoffman: Specifically in Lethbridge, 233 were performed last year, and AHS performed 569 hip replacements in the south zone in 2017-18, also 778 knee replacements, almost 3,000 cataract surgeries. We protect our surgical capacity by investing in strong public health care, Mr. Speaker, unlike the members opposite, who want to fire 4,000 front-line workers, nurses. We've got the backs of ordinary families.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Recruiting surgeons and other health care professionals to our smaller cities and rural areas is a challenge. Some communities attempt to mount their own version of *La grande séduction* or the Newfie version: hey, boys; a soiree to meet the boys, and then they'll stay. What is the government's plan to ensure that we have the professionals we need in Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have a friend who works as a surgeon here in Edmonton, but when she was on a stint in northern Quebec, she certainly met every eligible bachelor in town, and I understand why communities want to make that the case. We need something more robust than that, though. I'm proud to work with the AMA and with our medical schools and with RPAP to ensure that we have recruitment aligned with the needs of Albertans. This is a long-term effort, and this is something that Conservative governments failed at and that we have taken up.

Government Services Communication with MLA Offices

Dr. Starke: Mr. Speaker, last week I asked three different cabinet ministers why public servants working in Alberta Works and Alberta seniors offices have been ordered not to talk to staff in MLA constituency offices. Now, the minister said that they knew nothing about this and said that they would follow up with me to resolve the issue. Well, I thought: great. Since then, crickets. My office staff and I have not heard a word from any of the ministers or any of their staff or the much-vaunted MLA contact person. To the Deputy Premier: is this your idea of following up?

2:10

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While I don't have the Blues in front of me, I think what I did say or what I intended to say

is: please, give my office a call. We are happy to work with you on this matter. Every minister has an identified MLA contact to ease that flow of information. Mine is Courtney. She's a lovely human. She's on the fourth floor. Please, if you want to reach out to her or to me personally, I know the hon. member has my contact information. I've been able to solve a number of issues with him directly. My staff are working on a number of files. Of course, we take your concerns very seriously and would be happy to work with you. Give me a call or send me an e-mail, please.

Dr. Starke: Well, Mr. Speaker, my office has been trying to get a meeting with this minister and have several issues resolved since August, and so far we've heard crickets. We've heard nothing from the other ministers either, but we did get some response. We got response from staff in constituency offices from all across the province, all saying the same thing, that they've heard the same directive. But, you know, funny thing: all of those offices were for opposition members of the Legislature, not a single response like that from government members. To the Deputy Premier: why the double standard? Why is your government punishing Albertans who had the temerity to elect non NDP MLAs?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again I welcome the member to reach out to me personally.

I want to give an example of another member on the opposition who did reach out to me. It's the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, who reached out to me and said how important it was that people who were getting inadequate service for dialysis on a bus parked in front of the hospital get quality care. You know what? We addressed that, this side of the House. Forty-four years with a Conservative government, and it was this side of the House in an opposition riding that rose to the challenge, fixed that solution. You know what, Members? The Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills now says that if a UCP government was elected, it would hurt. You know what? He's right.

Dr. Starke: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll come back to the topic at hand. Given that the constituency offices are supposed to be nonpartisan and given that we have received several reports that Alberta Works and Alberta seniors have been ordered not to speak to constituency office staff but only in opposition-held ridings, to the Deputy Premier. You know, five years ago this kind of behaviour would have had the Premier lighting the Minister of Transportation's hair on fire. What are you going to do to end this double standard?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is available to help Albertans who need assistance. We are hearing from the front-line staff that MLAs were contacting them directly and that that made them uncomfortable. I will also say that nothing has changed that was in place before us. It's the same process. When you reach out to a minister's office, we are here to help, and if there are any specifics, please reach out to any of our offices.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Unemployment Provincial Budget Revenue Forecasts

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Corporate tax increases, provincial carbon tax, and costlier environmental regulations have

resulted in weak job growth, layoffs, and the highest unemployment rate outside of Atlantic Canada. What does this government say to Albertans who are out of work and unable to take care of their families because of NDP policies?

Mr. Ceci: Well, Mr. Speaker, what we have said all along is that Alberta is the lowest taxed jurisdiction in the entire country at \$11.2 billion less than the next province. We have said to Albertans that we are there to support you through this downturn, and we have done that with our employment support programs, with our income support programs. We addressed those. We did not leave them languishing and let people line up and not provide services. We have also provided support for job training, apprentices, and other things to get people back to the workplace as soon as possible.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, the government's own budget says: "Beginning in 2021, additional revenue resulting from the federally-imposed carbon price tied to the construction of the Trans Mountain Pipeline will be used to support vital public services as the province stays on track to balance the budget by 2023-24." To the Premier: how does your government plan to provide vital public services to Albertans without a pipeline that you're not willing to fight for?

Mr. Ceci: Mr. Speaker, this side has fought for the pipeline. We'll continue to do that with Ottawa, to stand up to Ottawa and say: look, this needs to happen as quickly as possible. The Premier has been across the country talking to all sorts of audiences, and some of them weren't very friendly, but she stood up for Alberta and will continue to do that. You know, we have a strong path to balance, and it's based on three principles: a strong and diversified economy, stable spending and cost containment, and reducing Alberta's reliance on resource revenues. We're doing all those things at the same time.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is the government, then, saying that their budget is tied to the Trans Mountain pipeline and the ability to get the pipeline built?

Mr. Ceci: Mr. Speaker, I think I've addressed this question several times. Our path to balance relies on two out of three pipelines, but we're going to keep fighting for all three of those pipelines. We will get TMX, we will get line 3, KXL will happen, and we will balance by 2023. On that side they want to cut \$700 million for the richest 1 per cent and leave the rest of us to suffer. That's no plan. Our plan is going to work.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Oil Sands Advisory Group Former Co-chair

Mr. McIver: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, on October 13 the Premier and Tzeporah Berman each addressed the Alberta Teachers' Association. During her speech the Premier said, quote: soon after I was elected Premier, she – meaning Ms Berman – worked with leaders in the energy industry to help fashion Alberta's response to climate change. Listening to that comment, one might think Ms Berman was hired by the energy industry. Premier, Ms Berman was not hired by the energy industry; she was hired by you. Yes or no?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the development of the climate leadership plan soon after we were elected, we discovered that oil companies had in fact been in conversation with environmental groups for some time on the topic of trying to break the land lock and having a more fact-based conversation around Alberta's resources and getting those resources to market. It was a surprise, actually, to me – and it was a surprise to many of us – that that degree of consensus actually existed. It had been led by many of Canada's largest oil companies. That was the consensus that was there, and then there were a couple of pieces of work in terms of implementing . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. McIver: No answer, Mr. Speaker.

Given that last spring in this House the hon. environment minister and the hon. jobs minister described Tzeporah's views as wrong and irrelevant and given that even before this government appointed her as co-chair of the oil sands advisory group, she was voicing extreme views about Alberta's energy resources and given that her opposition has escalated to the point that the Premier now feels the need to follow her around after every speech, Premier, what was your strategy when you hired Ms Berman, and how is that working out for Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will rise in this House and deliver an answer that I delivered many times to the same question over and over again, which is that there were three co-chairs for the oil sands advisory group in developing recommendations around implementing the 100-megatonne limit on emissions and a couple of other pieces, including clean tech reinvestments and land-based concerns with respect to oil sands development. That work was concluded some time ago, and therefore there is no need for the oil sands advisory group any longer.

Mr. McIver: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that the Premier did hire Ms Berman and now has created a public spectacle by following her pipeline opponent on her speaking schedule and given that the Premier distances herself from Ms Berman now but that even she must recognize that she's responsible for handing Ms Berman a platform for her extreme anti-Alberta views in the first place, Premier, are you finally ready to admit today that your government made a mistake when you hired Ms Berman as a policy adviser for our most valuable resource?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the individual in question shared the co-chair duties with Dave Collyer and with Melody Lepine from the Mikisew Cree, but the members opposite don't seem much interested in talking about the indigenous involvement on that group. Neither are they interested in talking about the industry involvement, which came from a number of companies, including Imperial Oil, who just today announced a final investment decision on the Aspen project within the context of the oil sands emissions limit. Clearly, the climate leadership plan is working to spur investment, to reinvest in clean technology, and to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Education for Students with Special Needs

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many students with special needs are eligible to receive full instructional funding if they attend

a designated special education private school. The funding manual requires that parents consult with their resident school board so that, quote, parents are making an informed decision, end quote, and an official from the resident board must sign off on the consultation. To the Minister of Education: why do parents need permission in the first place? Does the minister not trust Alberta parents to make the best choices for their child's education?

2:20

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, it's very important that we have a firm line of communication, in partnership with parents and teachers and the school, every step of the way. When we're working with students that require special needs, it's doubly important to have that communication and that conversation every step of the way. Our government has been working hard to ensure that we have inclusive education with supports, and those supports include incorporating and helping to work with the families every step of the way.

Thank you.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the United Conservative Party trusts parents to make good educational choices for their children and given that just last year the minister himself affirmed the government's support for funding of private schools in a letter sent to the ATA and given that he agreed in the letter that special-education schools in particular, quote, should continue to receive government support, to the same minister: if you're so supportive of these schools, why are you bent on making it more difficult for students to access them?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for bringing up the specific information. I would be glad to discuss this particular issue with him to ensure that we do have clean lines of communication. He's a hundred per cent correct. We have worked hard to make sure that we have funded all forms of choice in education here in the province of Alberta, and we're very proud of that. Through that choice, we have created a very strong school system, we have excellent results in the provincial achievement exams to reflect that, and I'm proud to every step of the way work with families to make a better education system.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that these families already face significant hurdles when it comes to securing a good education for their children and given that until this year parents were trusted to simply declare that they had consulted with the resident boards and given that no one was informed that a school board's official signature is now required until one week before school started, to the same minister: are you deliberately placing another hurdle in the way of educational choice for these families?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, that would never be the intention. We've always been trying to ensure that, by fully funding enrolment growth and looking for ways by which we can refine special-needs supports for families. I think that we've done a good job. This helps along the way. I can certainly use this information to get back to see exactly what the potential challenge

is, but I know that on a universal basis, by funding public education and putting that investment in, which this government has done for four years now, we have built a better system, and we're proud of the results.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

Racism and Hate Crime Prevention

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week I was proud to host an antiracism consultation event in my constituency. A few individuals associated with the white nationalist movement and with a history of posting misogynistic and racist material online decided that this was an open invitation to drop by. Luckily, the incident was resolved without issue, but I fear that this will discourage members of the public from attending these events and participating. To the Minister of Education: what have you done to combat racism in Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to take a moment to commend the member for making it clear that racist and misogynistic views have no place in this province. The presence of these people promoting white nationalism at public events is a frightening trend. It seems to be emboldening. Somehow they are emboldened to do more of this, and I find that reprehensible. That's why we have released our Taking Action Against Racism report and continue to fight against racism and to educate people about this. We have taken many practical steps, and we certainly encourage the public to help us in this fight.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I heard loud and clear from my work that taking allegations of racism seriously in the school system is a major issue. To the same minister: what is being done to make sure that all students feel safe to speak out against hatred and racism?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, racism and hatred, I believe, are a product of ignorance, and you fight ignorance with education. When students have a solid education foundation in critical thinking, history, civic responsibility, and community, they will understand that hatred and racism are fundamentally wrong. When students see themselves reflected as well in what they learn, when they see themselves reflected in the curriculum, their confidence grows, and they feel empowered to speak out against hatred.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As part of the antiracism announcement from the Minister of Education, our government also announced funding for hate crime units. Can the minister provide the House with an update on those units?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, in co-ordinating our intelligence efforts towards groups that are more systematically promoting hate for political purposes or what have you, it's important that we gather that information together. We have a Hate Crimes Committee, but we want to bring that together

with the police and the RCMP, that do gather that information as well, so that we can tighten the noose on these people who use hatred and racism for political purposes.*

Energy Policies

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, when the Energy department appeared before the Resource Stewardship Committee, the deputy minister could not assess a dollar value for the NDP's social licence. Given that the social licence was deemed meaningless by the deputy minister, to the Minister of Energy: when will the social licence be issued, who is supposed to issue it, at what price, and how long is it valid for in spite of the carbon tax?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Let's talk about what's real, which is the climate leadership plan, the fact that we have already reduced greenhouse gas emissions through our climate leadership plan; that we are seeing \$1.4 billion worth of investment in clean tech to help oil sands innovation, for innovation projects to support research, commercialization, industrial energy efficiency, and grants for bioenergy projects that help the agriculture and forestry sectors; \$400 million in loan guarantees to support investment in efficiency and renewable energy. We've cut small-businesses taxes by a third . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, given that the Premier's friends and allies and the NDP's fellow world travellers refuse to issue a social licence for pipelines and given that her Trudeau allies have held up construction of three pipelines but chose to impose the painful carbon tax, to the Minister of Energy: who are we supposed to get the social licence from to build the new pipelines? Is it from John Horgan or Jagmeet Singh or Gerald Butts?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I noted with interest last week the member's comments on C-69, when he was talking about Trans Mountain, and he was talking about a number of other things. He said about indigenous consultation, "Enough is enough." Now, that is exactly the kind of attitude that doesn't get pipelines built. That is exactly the kind of attitude that drove us into a one-product, one-market, at-one-price situation, which led to a dramatic loss in jobs. Their way forward is no way forward for the province of Alberta.

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, given that I attended Diwali celebrations last night here in Edmonton and given that all those unemployed engineers who were introduced in this House 18 months ago now cannot afford to celebrate Diwali because they continue to be unemployed, Minister, how do we measure and quantify the worthless and nonexistent social licence for the new projects, and how do we get those highly skilled professionals back to work?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. One of the ways we do that is by investing in diversification to make sure that we are broadening the energy economy, adding value to our resources, something that the members opposite have opposed. One of the ways we do that is by investing in efficiency, in renewables, in clean tech, again broadening our energy sector so that Alberta can be an energy economy in every sense of that word, something

*See page 1878, left column, paragraph 7

that the folks opposite oppose. One of the ways we do that is by making sure that good projects go forward like the Imperial Aspen project, which got its final investment decision today, again making sure that we're broadening our energy sector, that we are making sure that good projects go forward. There are a number of different examples.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Economic Development

Mr. Gottfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. From September and October the private sector shed another 10,000 jobs while the public sector added 7,000. The UCP recognizes and values the contribution of Alberta's public servants, but supporting them without cheques written in red ink requires a thriving private sector. This government's debt-ridden recovery has put our public servants and public services at the mercy of creditors and ratings agencies. To the Minister of Labour: what specifically are you doing to improve economic fundamentals in this province in order to drive real recovery in the private sector?

2:30

Mr. Ceci: I think I'll address the credit rating discussion that was part of that whole mix. You know, our province and our government were dealt a really tough hand with the collapse of oil prices, but instead of deep cuts across government and privatization, which would be a problem also for people working, we put jobs and diversification first. Our plan is working. We're seeing the deficit drop \$3 billion, Mr. Speaker. We have the strongest balance sheet of any province. I think TD Bank said that our balance sheet is the envy of the country. We're going to keep moving forward with the plan we have for economic diversification.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Gottfried: The credit rating is under your watch, Minister.

Mr. Speaker, given that the NDP is undermining Alberta's entrepreneurs and businesses with burdensome regulations while the job-killing carbon tax has only made the situation worse and given that the NDP's red ink recovery has damaged our economic fundamentals so severely that boutique tax credits are akin to putting a Band-Aid on a critical wound, to the same minister: when will this government get out of the way of Alberta's renowned private sector and let them build their businesses, create jobs, and generate much-needed societal wealth?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, a significant part of entrepreneurs out there have small businesses. That's the backbone of any economy, and Alberta is no different. That's why we're putting jobs and diversification and supporting small businesses first. My colleague down there talked about the small-business tax cut, from 3 per cent to 2 per cent, that's funded by the climate leadership plan. Our plan is working: 90,000 full-time jobs last year alone, in 2017. We are going to continue to lead the nation. We're amongst the leaders in the nation again this year. That's going to help businesses.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Gottfried: Mr. Speaker, given that both unemployment and the unemployed grow in this province, a robust public sector is only possible if we grow the economic pie, and given that the NDP has

chosen to both shrink that pie while coveting a bigger slice for their own coffers and given that something – or should I say someone? – has to give, to the same minister: which taxes will your government be hiking to pay for your red ink recovery? The carbon tax, income tax, some other magical debt-slaying world view tax, or is it all of the above?

Mr. Ceci: You know, the tax advantages of this province over every other province are \$11.2 billion, with no sales tax, no health care premiums. There's one more that I've forgotten off the top of my head, Mr. Speaker. Anyway, there will be no areas like that, PST and other kinds of things, that we will bring in. He wants to tax Albertans; we won't do it.

Energy Policies (continued)

Mr. Loewen: Mr. Speaker, the government claims to support Alberta's energy industry, but their actions don't always match their words. In fact, their words don't always match the words from just a few months earlier. To the Energy minister: if you support Alberta's energy sector, why have you placed limits on our economic progress with the NDP oil sands emissions cap?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The oil sands emissions limit is in place and has been for a couple of years now, yet we have seen new investments, like the Nexen \$400 million expansion at Long Lake, for example. We've seen JACOS make a big announcement as well, and just today we have the final investment decision coming from Imperial Oil on the Aspen project. I mean, just yesterday the UCP leader was cheering for the Aspen project to fail for his own political gain, but today is a different day.

Mr. Loewen: Given that it seems like the Environment minister has the Energy minister's tongue and given that with these projects that are started now, there's been a lot of other investment driven away at the same time, billions and tens of billions of dollars, and given that members of the NDP caucus have protested ethical and responsible energy industry in the past, including the Education minister, who chanted "no more approvals" and has since shown no regret, and given that the NDP has empowered other unapologetic anti-oil activists, will the Energy minister actually support the people in the energy industry by repealing the emissions cap and the job-killing NDP carbon tax?

The Speaker: The Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we're fighting every day for what matters to Albertans, and that's market access by getting pipelines, it's diversification, and it's creating those jobs that Albertans want, especially in the energy industry. We're not going back to the boom-and-bust days. That's why we're working on a recovery that's built to last. Jobs are returning, new oil sands projects such as the Aspen project, that's going to be a \$2.6 billion investment, hundreds of jobs. It'll be in commission in 2022, and that's all operating under the oil sands cap of 100 megatonnes.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Loewen: Given that the oil field workers in northern Alberta are overwhelmingly opposed to the carbon tax and emissions caps, so maybe the minister should be talking to them, and given, Mr.

Speaker, that in order to revitalize our energy sector, we need to get better value for our resources, and given that to do this we need to get pipelines built and given that there was no support from this government when Keystone was vetoed and given that the Premier backed Trudeau's cancellation of Northern Gateway, will the Energy minister finally support our energy industry by forcefully and specifically demanding that Trudeau kill his no-more-pipelines act, Bill C-69, and the tanker ban, Bill C-48?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we're fighting every day for what matters to Albertans, and that's market access with pipelines, that's diversification, and that's the good jobs that the energy industry brings. Just this morning I was addressing the chemistry industry, talking about Bill 1 that we had last year, that's bringing billions of dollars of investment to Alberta as we speak, and there's more to come. They're keen to invest in Alberta, and that's because we have a forward-looking plan that takes into account doing what's right for the environment as well as bringing investment.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Electric Power Prices

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, as you know, the government capped the electricity rate that consumers pay at 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour, which sounds great if you didn't know that the average price that we paid used to be half that amount before the NDP started meddling with the electricity market. To the Minister of Energy: how does she answer seniors on a fixed income when they complain about skyrocketing electricity prices?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, we're fighting for what matters for Albertans, and that's also a stable electricity system, stable prices. We're fixing a system that was, quite frankly, very broken. We're capping energy bills. We're bringing in common-sense reforms to make bills more affordable and predictable. When we talk about the carbon levy, we have rebates for seniors that help pay for those bills.

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, given that in Public Accounts Committee yesterday we were presented the actual costs of electricity being charged to Albertans either through rate charges or taxes and given that those prices reached as high as 9.4 cents per kilowatt hour in August this year, can the minister tell us how high she sees these electricity prices going and whether she could table studies showing future increases?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's interesting that the Conservative members across the way want to defend the price spike system and the backroom deals that were part of the broken system that we inherited. They continue to do that, but, you know, on this side of the House we're on the side of protecting Albertans. We have their backs, and we're going to continue to do so when we're fixing a system that's broken by common-sense reforms and capping electricity prices.

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, it is said that hindsight is 20/20 vision, and given that the minister has now seen how high electricity prices

have gone, does she still think that this government is making life better for Albertans and especially for those people on fixed incomes?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we are protecting Albertans from those wild price swings that were caused by the system that was broken by the previous Conservative government. In capping bills, we are bringing more stability to families. We're bringing in common-sense reforms, a capacity market because on this side of the House we are on the side of Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

Educational Curriculum Redesign

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, to the Minister of Education. Junior high school can be a challenging time for students as they prepare for the transition to high school and many begin thinking seriously about their future careers. I know this government is working on modernizing our curriculum, but with government focused on updating what students will learn in early elementary school, significant changes to junior high are years away. What steps is the government taking now to ensure students are supported as they prepare for high school.

2:40

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a very good question because, of course, as we build through the curriculum, we're certainly going to make sure we use good ideas that we get along the way straight away in our classrooms, to make sure we improve life for junior high and high school students every step of the way. For example, we've been increasing the dual credit program here in the province in regard to agribusiness and health care and in the trades as well. We're making adjustments to exams to make sure — you know, they have the no-calculator portion in the grade 6 and grade 9 exams so that kids are learning to do math on paper or in their heads. Every step . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
First supplemental.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister. Given the recent decline in math scores in grade 9 PATs and given that the transition to high school can be a difficult adjustment for some students, it seems like action on the new curriculum for grade 9 is urgent. Will the minister consider changing the curriculum development process to tackle improved supports for grade 9 students sooner rather than later?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you. I must say, Mr. Speaker, that we were anticipating that the grade 9 no-calculator portion was going to be problematic because it was the first time they were going to do it. We did it last year with the grade 6s, and lo and behold the grade 6s came through with flying colours this year. I would expect the same for the grade 9s next year. However, we want to make sure we're making these changes straight away. It's important to support grade 9 students, so I have directed my department to move the grade 9 curriculum development forward, so the writing will begin for the grades 5 to 9 curriculum this month.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister. I want children to get the kind of education that will prepare them to lead our province for a brighter future. I've heard from my constituents that education is a critical priority for them. How is this government supporting the implementation of future curriculums to ensure that there will never again be students learning from a curriculum that's over 30 years old?

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This modernization of the curriculum is historic. We're on to all subject areas and all grade levels, and it's a continuous process so that we're always working to move forward on the curriculum so that things don't get stale along the way. I must say – I've said it before; I'll say it again – that what you do not do to forward education is that you do not fire teachers, 4,000 teachers that you would lose taking \$700 million out of the budget that potentially could be used for education. That is the wrong way to go.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I've been advised that the Minister of Education would like to clarify an answer on question 10.

Racism and Hate Crime Prevention (continued)

Mr. Eggen: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On question 10, when we were talking about antiracism initiatives, I would like to withdraw my comment that talked about tightening the noose.* My intention was to talk about tightening the net so that we use hate crimes intelligence from all police forces so that we are making categorical changes to ensure the safety of Albertans.

The Speaker: I'm advised that the practice of the House has been that the member who directed the first question would get an additional supplemental. Do you have an additional supplemental question?

Members' Statements (continued)

The Speaker: Thirty seconds, hon. members.
The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Central Alberta Sexual Assault Support Centre

Mrs. Schreiner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Fellow members, I would be remiss if I did not embrace yet another opportunity to convey attention to the outstanding organizations that my constituency as well as those encompassing central Alberta draw support from. Friends, it is my pleasure to introduce our Central Alberta Sexual Assault Support Centre. With over 30 years of compassion and caring this organization serves the needs of our Albertans when the unthinkable occurs. They continue their mandate to work collaboratively with community partners to provide a safe haven to those who have experienced sexual abuse or sexual assault, whether the incident occurred recently or decades ago.

Recently, this organization introduced a 24-hour sexual assault text and web chat crisis line to further support those who are victims of sexual crimes. This anonymous, user-friendly method creates an instant resource to assist those who feel that there is nowhere to turn at 3 a.m. or that isolated locations render them powerless. As a result, no one needs to feel that they are alone. With a front line of

volunteers, this cost-efficient method provides instant communication and words of encouragement at a time when personal meaning may be challenged or hindered by sexual assault or abuse.

I am proud to share that this year the centre was recognized by our Red Deer chamber of commerce at their business of the year awards. Friends, this was the first year that a not-for-profit category was incorporated, and I commend the innovation, foresight, and immense commitment that the Central Alberta Sexual Assault Support Centre provides to our citizens. They have answered the call to support Albertans by listening and fashioning resources to combat feelings of no self-worth as a result of sexual abuse or assault.

It is my honour to speak to the work of this great organization in the House and to thank them personally for their pledge in supporting victims of sexual abuse and assault.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Métis Week and Louis Riel Day

Mr. Hinkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we will be away on Friday, November 16, I rise to remind everyone of Métis Week and the Louis Riel commemorative day. The Métis, hidden but in plain sight, are in our military, in our Legislature, and show leadership in many communities. There are eight Métis settlements in Alberta, with over 114,000 people. Métis Week marks the annual celebration of Métis people, their culture and contributions, including special events honouring the anniversary of Louis Riel's death.

Let's step back in history to 1932, when the Métis Association of Alberta lobbied for improved social and economic conditions and a land base for their people. Not until 1985 did Alberta commit to pursue constitutional protection of Métis land in the federal Alberta Act and the passage of the Metis Settlements Act to provide a framework for local self-government on the settlements. In 1990 land was transferred to Métis settlements, resulting in the only recognized Métis land base in Canada protected by legislation.

Last week we raised the Métis flag here at the Legislature to reaffirm our commitment to Métis rights in Alberta. Louis Riel was a champion of French language rights, the founder of Manitoba, a visionary for Métis self-determination, and exemplary of the new Canada.

This week we also celebrate Remembrance Day. Let me remind you of the 20,000 Métis and indigenous men and women who have served Canada by sharing a poem called a Prayer for Métis Veterans.

As Métis we are standing
We'll bow our heads in prayer
God bless those Métis veterans who
Saw war and who fought over there.

There are many of them buried
In far-off foreign lands
So proud to serve, because of them
Now Canada's freedom stands.

In prayers we will remember
The awful price they'd pay
They gave up their tomorrows
For us to live today.

Lest we forget, we remember November 11 and 16. Canada's strength is in her people. Among them are our resilient Métis.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

*See page 1875, right column, paragraph 1

Diwali

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Diwali, also known as the festival of lights, commemorates the triumph of good over evil. Diwali is celebrated by the Hindu, Sikh, and Jain communities. Many people in Alberta and around the world celebrate this time with candle lighting, family gatherings, reciting prayers, and gift sharing. It is truly a joyous time of year. The Sikh community recognizes this celebration as Bandi Chhor Divas, as on this date 52 political prisoners were released back to the community.

I'd like to personally thank all those celebrating this colourful celebration for their contributions to our province. As we all know, different perspectives enrich our understanding, which is one of the points of this wonderful celebration. Not only is it the celebration of light over darkness but of knowledge and understanding over ignorance.

As we continue to work together to build a better Alberta for all who call it home, it is especially important to me to thank the community for their many social, economic, and political contributions to our province. Each and every community and ethnicity in Alberta strengthens our social and cultural fabric and adds vibrancy to our communities. It is this diversity that helps to make our province such a great place to live, work, and raise a family.

My caucus colleagues and I wish all families in the province a very happy Diwali and Bandi Chhor Divas, and I hope this new year brings joy and success to all Albertans and is filled with good health and prosperity. May the lamps of hope and joy illuminate our lives and fill our days with peace, happiness, and goodwill and may the festival season illuminate our homes and may the light empower us all to continue showing compassion and understanding towards one another.

Happy Diwali.

2:50 Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices I am pleased to table five copies of the committee's report recommending the reappointment of the hon. Marguerite Trussler as Ethics Commissioner for a five-year term. Copies of this report are available online or through the committees branch.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to provide notice that at the appropriate time I will move the following motion pursuant to Standing Order 42.

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government of Canada to immediately prevent Statistics Canada from demanding that banks turn over the personal financial data of their customers, and be it further resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to ensure that ATB Financial as well as credit unions in Alberta protect the personal financial data of their customers from being shared with third parties without their consent.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Bill 25

Canyon Creek Hydro Development Act

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to request leave to introduce Bill 25, the Canyon Creek Hydro Development Act.

Mr. Speaker, on August 2, 2018, the Alberta Utilities Commission approved Turning Point Generation's Canyon Creek application for a 75-megawatt, closed-loop, pumped hydro energy storage project. The AUC determined that the project is in the public interest. The Hydro and Electric Energy Act requires that a bill be prepared in order to authorize a construction order and an order in council to authorize an operation order for the hydro development. The AUC has indicated that their review of the Canyon Creek application considered both the construction and operation of the project.

Passage of Bill 25 would authorize the AUC to make an order for the construction and operation of the Canyon Creek pumped hydro energy storage project. While this act meets our legislative requirements to grant the appropriate authority to the AUC, it does not remove any of the regulatory duties of that body or the Alberta Environment and Parks approval requirements.

Mr. Speaker, this project shows that companies are eager to invest in renewable and alternative sources of energy in Alberta. Privately funded projects like this one will help us transition to a low-carbon electricity system and enhance Alberta's position as a responsible energy producer.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 25 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In accordance with section 19(5) of the Auditor General Act as chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices I am pleased to table the report of the Auditor General of Alberta, November 2018. Copies of this report have been provided to all members.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table today the requisite number of copies of a news report that I talked about in my questions.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of an Alberta labour force statistics report referenced in my questions today.

Thank you.

Motions under Standing Order 42

The Speaker: Hon. members, I believe we are now dealing with the motion under Standing Order 42 which was introduced by the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, which I think was delivered to everyone. I would allow the opportunity to the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat to speak to the motion.

Statistics Canada Request for Personal Banking Data

Mr. Barnes:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government of Canada to immediately prevent Statistics Canada from demanding that banks turn over the personal financial data of their customers, and be it further resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to ensure that ATB Financial as well as credit unions in Alberta protect the personal financial data of their customers from being shared with third parties without their consent.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a very important and urgent priority right now because Statistics Canada is asking banks across the country for financial transaction data and personal information of half a million, 500,000, Canadians without their knowledge to develop a new institutional personal information bank. Unfortunately, this includes personal banking and financial transactions, including bill payments, cash withdrawals from ATMs, credit card payments, electronic money transfers, and even account balances of Canadians.

Mr. Speaker, this has created urgency everywhere in Alberta that I've been, but it's also created urgency and concern amongst some qualified Canadians in this business. Statistics Canada has triggered a formal investigation by the Privacy Commissioner, Daniel Therrien, because of their request for personal banking information. Scott Smith, a privacy expert with the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, has warned that businesses are concerned with the requirement to hand over consumer data to the federal statistics agency. He's very concerned that it will highlight the differences between Canadian privacy laws and a tough new law in Europe, and he believes this could even put trade at risk. Of course, we've seen what trade disruption with our NAFTA agreement with America has done for hardship for Alberta commodities, for Alberta families.

Mr. Speaker, it's especially urgent because Albertans are very, very concerned about this. Everywhere I went when we were home last weekend, whether it was a Tim Hortons, a roastery coffee shop, or an event, Albertans were coming up to me, Cypress-Medicine Hatters were coming up to me and saying: "Can we not do something about this? I do not want my personal information to be accidentally leaked. This is my information. This is my information, my information that I have garnered and protected my family with, with my bank." And now we have the Trudeau government once again stepping into Alberta families and lives demanding that banks and credit card companies hand over Alberta's detailed personal financial information – and this needs to be said again – without their consent, without Alberta families and Albertans consenting to this information being distributed.

We hear it every day in here. I heard it two or three times in the government's answers to our questions in question period. The government answers: we are fighting every day for what matters to Albertans; we are fighting for what matters to Albertans. Mr. Speaker, through you to the government: this matters to Albertans. Everywhere I went this weekend, Albertans would talk about the concerns they had with Alberta's economy, with other things going on around Alberta, but it was always mentioned at the same time that they're concerned about what the federal government is doing reaching into their personal information, their personal information that they've developed with a bank or they've developed with an institution, and they feel strongly that it's a massive overreach by Justin Trudeau. Again, this is this NDP government's chance to

show that they stand up for Albertans and not with their ally Justin Trudeau.

Mr. Speaker, these concerns of Albertans are not only about government overreach, but there's good cause for concern if this information accidentally gets out in the public, accidentally gets leaked, for the financial hardship that Alberta and Canadian families could suffer, just having to go around and cancel your cards, change your information, protect your family's fiscal future.

3:00

Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you what Ann Cavoukian, a former Ontario Privacy Commissioner, said about this. She said: "It just leaves a bad taste in your mouth, unfortunately, because it seems as if Stats Canada isn't being transparent. When you find out after the fact, it just leaves many questions unanswered, and I think that's the reaction you're seeing now. People are dumbfounded by this. I know it sounds extreme, but you can't rule out what can happen to personally identifiable data, which is very sensitive, that's collected for one purpose and ends up being misused for other purposes." Again, that was Ann Cavoukian, former Ontario Privacy Commissioner.

The Canadian Bankers Association said that they weren't even aware that Statistics Canada was moving to compel disclosure of this information. Think of the cost that'll be pushed back on Canadians, Albertans. Think of the accidents that could happen as this information comes out.

Mr. Speaker, a quick check of security breaches shows how easily this can happen in financial and personal-time hardship to Albertans and all Canadians. The Canadian government's record of privacy breaches just between April 1, 2015, and March 31, 2016, include – and these are only the worst ones – 84 breaches in Veterans Affairs, 50 breaches of privacy in corrections Canada, 47 in immigration, 21 in Canada Revenue Agency, and 17 breaches, not all of them serious breaches, in employment and social development.

Mr. Speaker, I'll just give you a couple of the ones that are amazingly hard to imagine. In 2018 the personal information of 2,027 Canadian federal government employees was lost after a device was stolen from public services at Procurement Canada. The employees weren't notified until more than two weeks after the breach. Can you imagine the financial information that could have been lost, the hardship that some Alberta or Canadian families may be facing now?

Mr. Speaker, in 2016 Statistics Canada lost nearly 600 sensitive files during a census process after confidential documents – confidential documents – were left on a subway, and hundreds were lost after an employee's car was stolen.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I believe that the data that you're sharing may well be important, but the principle – again, the same as yesterday: you've got to get to the point. What makes it urgent? That's what needs to be decided.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What makes it urgent is that the federal government, this government's good ally Justin Trudeau, is forcing this on over 500,000 Canadians right now, including many Albertans. Albertans are terrified of their information being leaked, and this is this government's opportunity to show that they really are here fighting every day for Albertans.

I ask all my colleagues in this House to support this motion. Thank you, sir.

[Unanimous consent denied]

Orders of the Day
Government Bills and Orders
Second Reading

Bill 24
An Act to Recognize AMA Representation Rights

Mrs. Pitt moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 24, An Act to Recognize AMA Representation Rights, be amended by deleting all words after “that” and substituting the following:

Bill 24, An Act to Recognize AMA Representation Rights, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Families and Communities in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

[Adjourned debate November 6: Mr. Cyr]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: Any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak to Bill 24, An Act to Recognize AMA Representation Rights. Imagine that. Just after my comments in second reading, we get before us a referral amendment. I was talking about how we need to refer Bill 24 to committee for study, and here we are now discussing just that. I believe that this referral amendment is in good order and would be the prudent thing to do in order for all of the unintended consequences that could be present with regard to the AMA representation rights in that we would be able to, through committee, understand more thoroughly what is going to transpire and possibly some of the pitfalls with regard to Bill 24 and improve it through the process of committee, make it better, and serve Albertans in a more wholesome way.

Our people, our researchers, have started checking around with doctors. My colleagues have also been talking to doctors. The doctors we've talked to so far didn't even know that Bill 24 was in the works until it was mentioned in last week's AMA newsletter. I'm sure every member here also gets that newsletter, and I will attest that it was in the newsletter, but apparently Bill 24 has been in the works for some time.

The doctors we were able to talk to or who got back to us in the short amount of time that we've had the ability to speak with them speculated about the different groups that the AMA may be interested in going after for representation. What we see in Alberta right now is that the AMA does not necessarily represent all doctors in the province, and as we move forward, the legislation will encompass all doctors, whether they're members of the AMA or not.

First, we have to understand that a medical doctor is not a doctor until they are told they are a doctor. There are lots of categories of doctors also: in training or doctors that are not quite doctors but are more than nurses. So let's review some as potential new AMA members. Of course, the AMA would like to continue to grow their membership ranks, and we see that there are a lot of potential new AMA members that would possibly be under this legislation.

The AMA may be going after resident physicians, the doctors in training, as a group to be represented even though the resident physicians are currently represented by a group called PARA, the Professional Association of Resident Physicians of Alberta.

Then there are the physician assistants. These people are academically prepared and highly skilled health care professionals who provide a broad range of medical services. Physician assistants act as health care extenders, working under the supervision of a

physician to complement existing services and aid in improving patient access to health care. Is the AMA looking to target them also?

We also have the clinical associates. They assess patients, make diagnoses, prescribe treatment, and perform minor surgery under the supervision of a physician. Often these people have been trained as doctors in other countries and are having their skills assessed and upgraded to meet Canadian standards. By definition, these people sure look like candidates also to join the AMA.

Finally, there are the nurse practitioners, registered nurses, RNs, with graduate degrees and advanced knowledge and skills. They are trained to assess, diagnose, treat, order diagnostic tests, prescribe medication, make referrals to specialists, and manage overall care.

Now, the doctors we talked to also expressed puzzlement and wondered why a doctor would never want to be part of the AMA. All of the doctors we talked to were members of the AMA. Membership in the AMA comes with benefits, so all the doctors we talked to felt that all doctors would benefit greatly from being members of the AMA. They have benefits such as a fairly large payout for maternity leave per child, the reimbursement of malpractice insurance, on-call stipends, a flat-fee payment to physicians who practise and also reside in rural, remote, northern program communities, continuing education program, and so on and so on, the benefits of being a member of the AMA. Most doctors would be wanting to become members to participate in those benefits. Of course, we the taxpayers pay for all that.

3:10

We have questions about the groups of medical employees the AMA wants to target to recruit to their ranks. We have questions about the benefits the AMA membership gets. So you see why we might want to send Bill 24 to committee. There are always more questions that need answering. We're not sure that all those questions have already been asked. Therefore, there could be some unintended financial consequences here to Bill 24.

Bill 24 was brought forward as part of an agreement between the AMA and the government. In return for bringing this legislation forward, the AMA agreed that doctors would receive no fee increases until 2021. The government has seen this as a way to save \$98 million in health costs. They've calculated that they believe there will be \$98 million saved over the next three years. The minister talked about saving \$98 million in health costs. That is \$98 million on a Health budget with an operating expense of just under \$21 billion. Therefore, the Health minister is talking about saving less than half a per cent of the Health budget. Actually, if you calculate it out over the three-year period, it's much smaller than that, so relatively small savings but savings nonetheless. The \$98 million is slightly more than the entire budget for addictions and mental health, which stands at \$86 million, and that number can be found in the Health estimates on page 157.

Do you know what the largest line item is in the Health budget, Madam Speaker? It's physician compensation and development. Physician compensation and development comes in just shy of \$5 billion: \$4,919,999,000. Just \$80 million for mental health and just short of \$5 billion for physician compensation, the largest item in the Health estimates. So the Minister of Health is going to save 1.8 per cent on physician compensation with this deal to save \$98 million.

That sounds a bit better, but we are going to have to do a lot better to save money in health care overall. It is a start but a slow start. All one has to do is take a look at the age pyramid of the province to see those baby boomers, just like me, marching towards retirement and the ever-increasing needs the baby boomers will face. The front-line workers know where those savings can be found.

Now, the government will crow about 89 per cent of AMA members approving the agreement, but voter turnout was only 30 per cent. Really, only 26 per cent of the current membership approved this plan, so only 26 per cent of the people who receive just shy of \$5 billion annually even cared to vote.

Madam Speaker, do you see why we might want to take this bill before committee? These dollar figures are astronomical. We have a Health budget that spends almost \$21 billion annually while our tax revenues from all forms of taxation, whether that be personal, corporate, education property tax, carbon tax, and others come to just shy of \$23 billion. If not for the natural resource royalties of \$3.8 billion, transfers from Ottawa of \$8.2 billion, investment income of \$2.8 billion, and revenue from other sources of \$10 billion plus all the borrowing – we cannot forget about all the borrowing that is currently taking place. How else would the province operate? Health alone gobbles up almost all of our tax revenues.

Madam Speaker, I think I've made my case here as to why we need to send Bill 24 to committee. With a budget as large as Health's and with a spend on doctors as large as there is, just shy of \$5 billion, and when the best the Health minister can find is 1.8 per cent of the annual doctors' salary, which is actually spread over three years, and less than half a per cent a year on the total Health budget, we need to have a conversation with the doctors and other stakeholders within the industry.

I would encourage all members to support the amendment to refer this bill to committee. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock's comments today, very thoughtful, on a very important piece of legislation, with lots of questions that need to be answered yet, which I think was the core point of his speech this afternoon. If he would take a brief moment just to expand a little bit on a couple of the things that he raised during his speech that I would be interested in.

He talked in great detail about the question of: what else would be prescribed in regulations if this legislation was passed in the way that it was presented? I'd like it if he would expand a little bit on his concerns on that, maybe even elaborate a little bit on historically what has happened on some of the legislation he's been asked to vote on by this government in his time as a member and then on what he's seen happen or not happen with the regulations side afterwards. Maybe he'll expand a little bit for this Chamber on why that's an important question for the opposition.

Also, you know, the question that he raised about how this could possibly give the minister more power through regulations than we know: I think that's a fair question to make sure that we understand.

Then, lastly, he raised during his comments concerns around consultation. I know you probably get bored, Madam Speaker, when you're in the chair and hearing us talk about that, but in reality we have seen, as you know, this government consistently having to come back in sessions afterwards to fix legislation they brought to the Chamber. Just the other day, on another bill, they managed to catch it in time this time, which was helpful, and they had to change a bill that they had just brought to the House days before.

Maybe the hon. member could expand on those three points a little bit, as he did in his speech. That would be helpful for me.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to my colleague for the questions. Of course, we need to take a look at all

of these aspects as the Official Opposition. The government, to a large degree, is asking us to just trust them. We receive these bills, and in a very short period of time, most times the next day, we're discussing bills that are fairly in-depth, that have huge consequences for the people of Alberta. Many times we have the pitfall of legislation that will be enacted that gives the Executive Council significant powers to put forward regulations as they see fit, and this Legislature, the members here, really have no influence on how that is going forward. As Official Opposition members we continue to encourage the government to bring forward these bills in a way that we're able to digest more of it in a timely manner, to have more time to consult with stakeholders, and to receive more information back on how Albertans are viewing these.

We definitely have to be careful, in my opinion, with the powers that we give the minister of any department, a single person, giving them powers to enact these regulations and make decisions on behalf of all Albertans. We need to be very careful that we do not get into a situation where the minister has powers that would not be healthy for our society.

3:20

The third thing. With regard to consultations, we have seen time and time again over the last three and a half years legislation being brought forward and that stakeholders within the industry or the profession or the group that's being largely affected by the legislation being brought forward have significant concerns with what is being proposed. Time and time again we as the Official Opposition have asked this government to please put in place the proper consultation so that all Albertans, in a very transparent manner, are able to see that this is good for Albertans going forward. What I'd like to see is the opportunity for Bill 24 to ...

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to speak to the referral amendment this afternoon for Bill 24. I just want to reiterate that this bill and the proposed amendments in the bill really just formalize the government's long-standing practice of working directly with the AMA on matters of physician compensation and physician programs. I just want to remind members that it doesn't really change the existing processes that have currently been in place between the government and the AMA. It doesn't give the AMA any new powers or abilities. Really, it just sort of formalizes a long-standing informal process. This is something the AMA has been asking us for, and, you know, we're here to deliver on that commitment. For that reason, I would encourage members to vote against the referral amendment.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Mr. Nixon: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the hon. deputy government whip's comments. I want to reiterate for the Chamber – this is under 29(2)(a), and then I have a question – that this side of the House at first glance actually probably supports this legislation. It was just brought forward by the government. We're obviously doing our due diligence as opposition and talking to some constituents and people that will be impacted, just trying to make sure of that, which is our role.

I'd like the hon. member, though, to maybe expand under 29(2)(a) – or if the minister who has brought forward the bill wants to as well, that would be helpful – on some of the consultation that was done to provide assurances to this House that this should not go to committee. We are speaking about the amendment. It seems to me that you're indicating this does not need to go to committee.

Maybe you could expand on what the government has accomplished or done that would make this side of the House comfortable that our doctors and our constituents have been properly consulted on this piece of legislation.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other questions, comments under (29)(2)(a)? Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I do have a question for the hon. deputy House whip. One thing he said there is that this is actually just formalizing already standing practices. I am the Labour critic, not the Health critic, and I know that this is a Health bill, but the question that I have is that from what I read, rather than saying that it formalizes, it actually gives the AMA exclusive – exclusive – rights to represent the physicians of Alberta.

Now the question I have for the hon. member. If, from my understanding, 80 per cent of physicians are members of the AMA, the other 20 per cent, that have elected not to be, are going to be affected by this legislation now. How can he say that there are no changes to the current practices? I know it's only a six-page bill, but in that bill it says specifically that they have exclusive rights to represent physicians. If you could comment and help us understand this, it would do us a lot of good on this side of the House.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm happy to respond. You know, I just think it's important to remember a few things that definitely won't help the medical system here in the province: a promise that the legacy party of the members opposite, the Wildrose, had actually planned to send patients to the United States if they weren't able to access health care here in Alberta.

When we're faced with a party on the opposite side who is proposing experiments in privatization with our health care system, that would only put patients at risk. It would allow their wealthy friends and donors to jump the queue and access health care services before everyone else. In Canada health care access is based on your need to access health care and shouldn't be based on your ability to pay. We've got to be really wary about what the Wildrose legacy party and now the UCP has been proposing in terms of the way that they'd like to manipulate the health care system. Sending people to the U.S.: it really just shifts those jobs outside of Alberta. What I would rather see, instead of taking patients away and sending them elsewhere, is to make sure that we have a health care system here in Alberta that works for everybody, that it doesn't matter how much money you have, you are able to access the system just the same as everybody else.

I can tell you that another thing that's not going to help the health care system here in Alberta is the \$700 million tax cut for the wealthiest 1 per cent among us. What the members opposite are proposing, in terms of giving tax breaks to their wealthy friends and insiders, is not what our health care system needs. We need to make sure that we're investing properly in our health care system. One of the first actions of our government was to reverse a \$1 billion planned cut that the legacy party of the UCP was proposing. We also reversed the idea of having a health care premium, Madam Speaker. Who knows? That may be what they're going to be proposing in the next election. They really haven't made their intentions clear to Albertans.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? Fort McMurray-Conklin.

Ms Goodridge: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour to rise today to speak to the referral motion on Bill 24, An Act to Recognize AMA Representation Rights. Our role as legislators and as Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta is to ensure that we're doing everything reasonably practicable to make sure that we are making life better for Albertans. It is important that we have time to consult with stakeholders and Albertans to ensure that their voices are heard and that we have evaluated all potential consequences, both positive and negative, of all pieces of legislation before we vote on them.

This bill is no exception. In my previous time I served in Ottawa for the minister of the environment there. In Ottawa it's a long-standing practice that every single piece of legislation automatically goes to committee for consideration before the third reading. As such, stakeholders are able to come and talk directly on the bill and make sure that most of these unintended consequences are dealt with before the bill gets enacted. I truly believe that that's something that could be very useful for this particular bill, because while on the surface it looks quite benign, we don't know what the unintended consequences are.

Being from Fort McMurray, I've seen first-hand the struggle that rural communities have and face in receiving adequate health care. We far too often face challenges in attracting and retaining doctors and other health care professionals within our region. Often physicians prefer to stay in larger centres for a variety of reasons. This is why I feel that this bill might disproportionately and negatively affect our rural communities. In fact, there are doctors that work within the emergency department of the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo's hospital, the Northern Lights regional health centre, that actually fly in and fly out of our community. They live in Toronto, in Calgary. They serve our emergency department, which is wonderful, but this creates some challenges, and it's not an ideal solution.

For example, when I was in grade 3, our family doctor left. This created some struggle, and it took us nearly five years, having a different family doctor almost every single year over those five years, before we could find another family doctor. We celebrated when we got that new family doctor. They left two years later. By the time I was in about grade 9, I gave up on the idea of having a family doctor. I typically just go to walk-in clinics. That's partially due to the struggle we have in recruiting and retaining doctors in many of our rural and northern communities. While this is just my experience, rural Alberta faces a complex range of issues in regard to physician access.

3:30

According to Alberta Health data the number of physicians has dramatically outpaced the province's population growth in recent years. At the same time, the number of doctors practising outside of cities has decreased. There are many challenges in recruiting and retaining doctors in many of our northern and rural communities. This is not just the case in Alberta, but this is a nation-wide problem. There's both a shortage and a maldistribution of the physician supply, with many rural Canadians being disproportionately affected. Forward-thinking strategies, including rural exposure for training and training local students, help to improve this, but we're not quite there yet.

Rural Canadians already experience lower life expectancy, higher infant mortality, higher cancer mortality, higher cardiovascular disease mortality, and higher accident rates. According to a 2017 Canadian Institute for Health Information report, of the 84,000 physicians that are in Canada, 92 per cent of them practise in an urban setting. That's a staggeringly high percentage of our doctors across Canada that practise in urban

settings. It's worth noting that while 6 million Canadians live in rural Canada, which represents about 18 per cent, only 8 per cent of our physicians are in rural Canada. That's a 10 per cent differential. Furthermore, when you do a study into how many specialists in Canada practise in rural settings, that drops even more, down to 3.1 per cent. These two facts mean that many rural Canadians must travel to receive the health care they need because so many simple services aren't available. Yet, at the same time, the percentage of doctors has decreased.

In 2012 8 per cent of physicians practised in rural areas. In 2016 this percentage declined in Alberta to only 7.3 per cent. Of the 994 new doctors practising family medicine in Alberta between 2012 and 2016, only 60, or 6 per cent, chose to practise in rural areas. This is really alarming, that many of our new doctors are choosing not to practise in rural areas and are instead choosing to practise in urban areas. This is for a variety of reasons. Many doctors end up staying where they studied because they've started their families, they have their network of friends, and they're used to that lifestyle, having spent many years studying medicine in urban settings.

We've all heard stories in small communities of doctors that have to be on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week without any backups. This is just one of the many reasons that many young physicians are choosing not to take positions in rural communities. They feel that the family balance is not as easily attainable. Furthermore, we've heard that it can be difficult for a surgeon's spouse to find employment within the field of study of their choice within smaller communities. There are a variety of reasons why doctors are not choosing to go to these rural communities.

The College of Family Physicians of Canada in 2016 in collaboration with the Society of Rural Physicians of Canada released a background paper on the challenges for medicine in rural communities. It stated that "Canadians who live in rural communities tend to [have] poorer health than that of their urban counterparts," a disparity that's "directly related to their distance from urban centres." This trend, they found, is particularly severe amongst indigenous populations, which often live in rural and remote communities.

There are just over 10,000 physicians that work in Alberta as of September 2018, and there's only about 7.3 per cent of those doctors that practise in rural communities. Why do this government and the AMA feel that the AMA's role in the negotiating process should be entrenched in legislation? What other negotiating body is threatening the AMA? Why does the AMA need to have exclusive representation when approximately 80 per cent of the doctors already belong to the AMA? Were the 20 per cent that don't currently belong to the AMA consulted on this legislation? Ultimately, if this agreement has been working for the last 15 years, why is it all of a sudden so important to enshrine in legislation? I'm not saying that it's not, but I'm curious as to: why now?

I'm grateful that this bill has found potentially some savings. The government maintains that this agreement leading up to the creation of this bill would result in about \$95 million in health care savings. That's outstanding. But is this long-term savings, or is this something that could potentially end up costing taxpayers more when it comes to negotiating future agreements, mitigating any short-term savings?

This bill had five months of negotiation, and the use of facilitators was required to reach the agreement. Five months of negotiation, but only 30 per cent of the doctors voted. To me, that's not good enough. It received 89 per cent support, but that's still 1 in 10 doctors that belong to the AMA that did not support this, as I've previously brought up. Eighty per cent of the doctors do belong to the AMA, but there are 20 per cent that don't. Were these doctors consulted?

The bill ends the retention program that paid doctors about \$5,000 to \$12,000 a year for each year that they stay in Alberta. Are there risks that this could negatively affect our ability to recruit and retain doctors in our rural and northern communities? To me, there are so many unknowns within this bill. What else is going to be prescribed in regulations? How many doctors were consulted? Were rural doctors consulted? Were rural hospitals consulted? Were rural health providers consulted? What consultations actually went into this bill? What questions were asked during these consultations?

This bill seems to give the minister more power over regulations, and I'm curious if this is actually true. What could all of the unintended financial consequences be? We see short-term savings, but is this actually going to be something that can be maintained? Will this actually save Alberta taxpayers, or will this end up costing us more money when it comes to renegotiation down the line? How will this affect negotiations, going forward, in regard to physician benefits and compensation? What does it do to the 20 per cent of the doctors that don't currently belong to the AMA? Does it make many of them perhaps choose to leave Alberta and go and practise elsewhere? Perhaps they have reasons as to why they didn't want to be part of the AMA. All of these are questions that we really need to be asking ourselves.

It is so important that we take these questions seriously, because our health is something that we can't afford to get wrong. We really can't afford to not have doctors. So many of us in this Legislature represent communities that have countless health care horror stories due to the difficulty in attracting doctors to our communities. Before we can choose whether this is something we can support or oppose, I truly believe that we need a lot more information, and we need the opportunity to consult with stakeholders and the time to do the possible research.

I've personally reached out to a few doctors that I know as well as some lawyers and asked them questions to see what their opinions are of this. But we haven't had enough time to fully consult with enough health care providers, the hospitals and make sure that this bill doesn't have these negative, unintended consequences for our rural communities. It's something that we really need to take seriously. Health care decisions are way too important to get wrong.

While I really do thank the government for their commitment to medical professionals, we can't move forward without some further study or at least some answers to these questions that we've been raising to ensure that this bill is actually positive for Albertans. It's something that's really, really important, and we can't afford to get this wrong.

The current legislation to make the AMA the exclusive representative when governments consult physicians on compensation and benefits: this exists and has been existing for the last 15 years, this relationship. The reason as to why we're doing this now is something that I'm just curious about.

3:40

As I stated previously, when I was in Ottawa, it was very common for pieces of legislation – in fact, it was required that all pieces of legislation go to committee and were studied by a multiparty system, where you could bring in stakeholders and ask questions of these stakeholders to examine the legislation. Oftentimes bills changed substantially while they were in committee, and the opposition members or government members would bring forward stakeholders that brought up some very valid points and often made changes that were critically important to preventing the negative consequences that no one had anticipated. That's why I believe that sending this bill to committee to allow us to have a little

bit more in-depth consultation would be great. I would be really curious and interested to hear what kinds of consultations went into this bill and how many doctors, how many different health care professionals were actually consulted on this bill prior to it hitting our tables there this week. It's something that I think all of us, on at least this side of the House, are really curious to hear, and I'd really appreciate having some of these answers.

I believe that committee is the best possible place to have this. I'm not saying that this is a bad bill. I don't know. I really want to have some of these questions answered before I make a decision, because I truly believe that it's important to make informed decisions before voting on any piece of legislation.

I would truly, truly appreciate it if all members of this Assembly consider this amendment and refer this piece of legislation to committee. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), the Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Yeah. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to be able to respond to some of the questions raised by the hon. member and to give the answers to the questions, fair questions, that she's asked during this stage of debate in consideration of the amendment.

I want to begin just by clarifying and reminding everyone that the reason why we're doing this motion is because we entered into a fair and open and good-faith negotiation with the AMA about the state of health care and their contract here and their rates of compensation in Alberta. This relationship has been in place for many, many years, at least three rounds of negotiations that I've been well versed in, Madam Speaker.

When we were in obviously challenging fiscal times, we went to our labour partners and we said: "We need you to take zeros. Albertans are not in the best state economically right now, and we don't want to enter into more borrowing than necessary. We want to ensure that we continue to improve and protect the services that Albertans rely on. We're not talking about deep cuts that would hurt the front lines, but we do want you to take zeros. We think that that's fair and reasonable."

In consideration of that – actually, in the amending agreement we got rollbacks, which definitely helped us on our path to balance and helped us achieve these \$3 billion ahead of projections that we're at today, but also they said: "Okay. Fair enough. We understand that there's a need for zeros." They didn't exactly say it that quickly, but they said: "We want to ensure that we enshrine this relationship, that moving forward the government of Alberta always treats the AMA as a partner at the table and that it's a respectful relationship and it's enshrining the existing relationship that's been in practice in this province for many, many years." Madam Speaker, I think that's a fair price to say: "We're going to continue to have a reasonable relationship with you and a respectful relationship with you, and we're going to honour the role that you have embarked on."

I also want to clarify. One of the questions asked was around the number of physicians. Ninety-six per cent of Alberta physicians are members of the AMA, and those 96 per cent get regular updates through president's correspondence – I think many MLAs get the president's letters as well – and through, obviously, their rep for them and their organizational structure that they have in place. Ninety-six per cent of physicians in Alberta had an opportunity to vote on this. Many did. I understand that it wasn't full participation. But I don't think any of us were elected by 100 per cent of our electorate coming out to elect us, and we still represent those democratic processes that are in place. It did have a very strong vote

of confidence from the members of the AMA that chose to vote on it, and I respect their right to ask for this.

This was done many, many months ago. They had lead-up to their vote, then obviously we ratified the agreement, and then there have been many, many months since then, and we certainly have welcomed feedback from anyone who had considerations about it during that period of time. But this was done in an incredibly transparent way through public disclosure, Madam Speaker.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other speakers to the amendment? Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Yeah. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate you recognizing me, and I appreciate the chance to rise and speak to the amendment. You know, it's been interesting sitting in here and listening to the debate and the opposition side of the floor coming out with so many reasons as to why this needs to go to committee, as to why this needs to be further discussed, and absolutely clear is our support for our doctors and how good they are, the best in the world, support for our health system, how good it is, support for all our front-line workers but wanting to make sure that we have the opportunity, because we certainly have the time, to get this right. So why not send it to committee? Why not take the opportunity to put this in front of MLAs from both sides, from the parties not in government and have a chance to discuss this with many professionals, with many Albertans, and many other related allied professionals that it could affect?

There are many things that I want to go over, but as my colleague from Fort McMurray mentioned about more of a standard process in the federal government and how it's habit to refer many, many laws, many, many bills to committee, to the opportunity where, in our case, Albertans would have the chance to come in and be fully involved in their province. We as more generalists could hear from experts, could hear from Albertans who know their industry, whose future depends on it, quite frankly, and Alberta's future depends on us getting this right. You know, why not do that at a table where there's time to call in the right witnesses, where witnesses can hear what's going on and come forward, where they can offer all kinds of expert knowledge?

You know, when I was first elected in 2012 – and I always want to say how grateful I am to the people of Cypress-Medicine Hat for this opportunity – one of the first committees I was on was Resource Stewardship, and the committee was very active. It was active equally from the government people and the opposition members. Madam Speaker, I remember us looking at three or four different hydro projects for northern Alberta, for the Calgary area. We even talked about some in other areas like the eastern part of Alberta, and we had experts come in. We had Albertans that knew the impacts, knew the costs, knew the potential come in and tell us about it. We had many First Nations people come in and express their ideas and their opportunities and concerns. It was just a great chance for me, especially being a brand new MLA, and even today, to really listen to those that it would affect the most, to those that it would help the most, and those to make sure that we get it right.

I'm sitting here wondering why this government is not willing to give us the chance to minimize unintended consequences, to get it right. You know, I think I heard that this formalizes a long-time agreement that the government has anyway. Well, if it's a long-time agreement or a long-time relationship or a verbal agreement, what's another couple of months going to take? What's another couple of months going to take when we're here anyway? I see that we don't

have night sittings this fall. It's something we could certainly do at night. Certainly, we're here. We're willing. We want to do the very best we can for Alberta. Why not let us?

3:50

Let's talk about all our great doctors and all the specialties that are in that incredible profession and all the expert, expert knowledge and all the specialized knowledge. I just can't imagine how a little, six-page bill could possibly encompass everything that's important to our important public servants, essentially, so let's take the time to get that right.

I want to talk for a second, too, about what it says here about the relationship between the AMA and Alberta Health when it does become formalized in this bill. Because we don't have a lot of clarity in the short six pages and we're under the belief that many of the details will be just in regulation, controlled by the minister, controlled by the bureaucracy, controlled by the government, we also think at this point that it means that any independent professional associations, and, our people believe, including the Alberta dental association, can no longer negotiate individually with the government and must go through the AMA. I mean, that's just one of many other good associations and other good professionals that take financial risk, dedicate large parts of their life to very, very aptly and very, very capably serving Albertans.

Madam Speaker, I think back to the last time that this minister and this government looked at changing things with the dentists. I don't know if she's heard as much negativity from the profession as I have about her changes, but my goodness she's not only opening the door for this to happen again; she's doing it without the opportunity of many, many of this great profession to come forward and tell us that they're in agreement or tell us how we can make it better. I see that as such a missed opportunity. I wonder why the government would take that risk. I wonder why the government doesn't want to get this as good as possible.

I feel the need to tell a few horror stories, and I think back to health care. I don't know what all the motivation was when the regions were basically eliminated and AHS, Alberta Health Services, was set up, and the unintended consequences – my colleagues use those words lots; I want to use those words lots – that it caused. You know, I've said it in the House before, Madam Speaker, that when I talk to AHS employees in Cypress-Medicine Hat, tremendously hard-working, you know, wanting to give Albertans the best service they can, they talk about the stories about how procurement is so offside, how when they need a little bit of glue, they have to wait two weeks before a big case finally arrives. They end up opening one of the big cans and basically shelving the rest or putting it somewhere where it won't do anybody any good. Can you imagine this kind of thing happening with expensive medical supplies?

My favourite is the one in the Medicine Hat hospital. I haven't heard this one for a while, so hopefully AHS fixed it, but it used to be that when the parking arm broke and you couldn't get out of the parking lot, you'd push the button, and a person would come on and say: "Oh, I'll come right down, and I'll fix that for you. By the way, I'm in Red Deer. I'll be there in five hours." These are the kinds of things that happen when you don't do things right, and as people on both sides of the floor have said, our health service, the physical and mental and health of Albertans, especially our seniors that built this province and our youth, is too important not to get this right.

I'm really, really glad that so many of my colleagues talked about the risk with rural communities and how this may disproportionately affect service to rural Albertans through doctors' services.

The Bow Island hospital – and there are so many good things to say about those people; they're so independent, they're so hard-working, they expect so little – is just going through a process

where they started to lock the emergency door at 5 o'clock. Can you imagine – can you imagine – a real emergency and you can't get your loved one or yourself in the door? I will give our Alberta Health Services people down south tons of credit. They've been made aware of this problem. We've discussed it with them. They're working on a solution. They have a solution. But this, Madam Speaker, is exactly what me and my colleagues are talking about. This was done without realizing the huge impacts it could have on an Albertan, an Albertan family, somebody in crisis, somebody at the worst time for them, unfortunately. Yeah, we'll correct the problem after, and I believe Alberta Health Services will get there, but we don't need to do it after.

It's like this bill. We don't need to do it after. We can send this to committee, we can bring in the experts, we can bring in the dentists, we can bring in professionals and allied professionals from all other representative groups that the AMA is purporting to represent, and we can hear what's important. We can get this right. Madam Speaker, why would we not put in that month or two when we're here anyway, when the government doesn't have us sitting at nights, when we all want to do the best we can for Albertans? That makes zero sense.

We've talked about how rural Albertans, again, you know, don't have access to as many doctors. This agreement talks about some uniformity, some maybe consistency, but that may have a negative impact on a rural doctor, who out of necessity may need to be on call a lot more, who out of necessity may need to see a lot more patients, who out of necessity may have to look for a locum and pay more out of his or her pocket to make that happen. Madam Speaker, I don't know. I don't think the government knows. Let's send this to committee, and let's find out. Let's spend the time to do that right.

While we're here, maybe this bill can encompass – I mean, I understand that universities are more directly responsible for who gets into medical school and who doesn't. But one of the things that surprises me the most, and maybe this bill could improve it, especially for rural Albertans and rural Alberta, Madam Speaker, is the number of young people from Medicine Hat – and I'm talking 10, 20, 30 of these young people that I've met over the last six years – that have, like, 4.0 grade averages, 3.9, are the smartest young people anywhere in Alberta, Canada, in the world, that want to get into medical school and can't.

Dr. Swann: They've got to have more than marks.

Mr. Barnes: Well, I'm hearing there has to be more than marks. Of course there does, but we also know that parts of rural Alberta are short of doctors, whether it's because of rationing or limitations the government has had to put on to control spending.

The fact remains – the fact remains – that we need a more transparent system there, and we need more opportunity, Madam Speaker. We need more opportunity for young Albertans that just want to give back to other Albertans in Alberta. We need more opportunity for them to do that, for them to reach their pinnacle, for them to service Albertans. I don't see that anywhere in this bill. Maybe the AMA wants the same. Maybe the AMA can help us. Surely that's a question that somebody can ask at committee. Somebody can answer it. We can make this better, better for Albertans.

I also, you know, have some concerns about choice for Alberta doctors.

4:00

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have to say that I was very enlightened by what my colleague had to say. He had some good points. I think that we all can agree that utilizing our committees as they were intended, which is to discuss legislation within this Legislature, is important. Something that is as important as moving our doctors into a potentially unionized environment is a concern, I think, that all Albertans have if it's not done correctly. That is where a committee would be an excellent route to go. I have to say that whenever we've got a bill that seems to come before this House, the government seems to have trouble doing the appropriate consultation it needs in order to be able to get the bill right the first time. [interjections]

Mr. Hunter: That's funny. Sadly, they think that's funny.

Mr. Cyr: Well, yeah. Unfortunately, it does seem like this is a bit of a joke for the government right now.

I will tell you that what isn't funny is that this could actually impact our health care system if we get this wrong. We will end up with, potentially, doctors that are unhappy.

I asked specific questions on the referral last time. I'd asked for the government to come back with answers. There's almost going to be \$100 million worth of savings. I have to admit that when it comes to this government, it seems like the only thing they can do is spend, but in this case they're actually looking for efficiencies within the system, and I commend them on that. The problem is if that \$100 million comes out of rural Alberta. That was my question before: if we're going to be finding \$98 million in savings, where is that money coming from? Will we end up putting rural Albertans at risk because we can't find doctors?

I have to say that it's disappointing whenever we've got something as important as doctors coming before the House. This is a good thing that would be discussed thoroughly through a committee setting.

I have to say that whenever I discuss doctors in my constituency, one of the things that continues to come up is that the city of Cold Lake has a lack of doctors. It has had a long-term lack. It has been a long-standing problem within the constituency. I heard from the member before when she was talking about being unable to find doctors in her constituency. In mine, the only way that we were able to get a family doctor is that we were blessed with my wife getting pregnant. Apparently, if your wife is pregnant, a doctor has to be made available. That was the only way that my family was able to get access to a physician.

This is a problem that already exists. My concern here is that if we move this forward and we go to a standardized, set pay scale for the doctors in rural Alberta, are we going to be ensuring that these doctors move to somewhere that is – I guess we've heard over and over again – more urban? We already heard that the majority of doctors favour our urban settings, which is fine. I understand wanting to live in Edmonton or Calgary or Lethbridge or Grande Prairie. The thing is that they're wonderful cities, and I can see why physicians would want to live in them, but we do need health care outside of those major centres. If we get this wrong, that means we're going to see a migration – it may not be today, it may not be tomorrow, but it's going to slowly happen – and then through attrition we're going to see less and less doctors available, and that is unfortunate.

The question I have for my colleague is: do you see attrition happening within Alberta if we get this wrong?

Mr. Barnes: Thanks to my colleague for the question. I appreciate it. Well said. A couple of things that were cut off when the bell went . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Dr. Swann: Well, Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to speak not only to the amendment but to the bill itself. I've never been a member of the AMA – I chose to be independent – but I know that the AMA has played a critical role in terms of negotiating with the government of Alberta over the years in establishing a fee schedule that they can live with and also in establishing some variance on that fee schedule and is involved in the capitation system, where, on a particular roster of patients, a physician would get a certain amount of money and therefore is more free to provide a range of services rather than just one-off services driven by volume, where his income is driven by volume.

I'm also aware that over the years there have been some disparities develop in the Alberta Medical Association. Certainly, some specialties are, I would say, inordinately valued, and their billings are significantly higher than in other areas of medicine. Historically, too, some specialties have gone directly to the ministry to negotiate their fees separately from family physicians, for example, who are part of the AMA. Their fees are negotiated as with most of the various professions within the medical profession, are covered by the AMA.

So what's developed is a sense of inequity and favoured access for some specialties over others, and that's part of a problem that's divided the profession and pitted one group against another. That has not been helpful not only to the building of a stronger sense of mutual support and fairness within the association, but also it has meant that when medical students look at the levels of income – and they're obviously faced with student debt, a new practice, perhaps buying a house, starting a family – one of the first things they might have to look at is what kind of income they're going to receive. The disparity is growing as a result of having several negotiating groups acting independently in the medical association.

This will bring that all into line. This will provide for a single negotiating team from the Alberta Medical Association. It will, I think, help to bring a little more fairness, I hope, a little more consistency in how we are dealing with each individual branch of the medical professions, and I think it will reduce some of the conflict and rivalry that goes on in any profession where some are more equal than others. It's long overdue. It's something that the AMA has agreed to and the majority of the physicians, I gather, have also agreed to.

I don't see a downside and I see only a positive to this myself. I think we will be better served by a unitary negotiating body. It's been acting in that way as well as it can, but there have been factions within the Medical Association that are in some ways going around the AMA and therefore creating some inconsistencies, some perceptions of inequities, some rivalries, and that has to stop.

In my view, this is important legislation not only for patients but to help physicians start to move towards what are considered more equitable deals in terms of their salaries and incomes and what is a more open and transparent process rather than what often may happen, which is deals being made in more private negotiations with certain specialties. So this is progress. I've watched this evolve over 25 years, and it's not getting better. I'm happy to see that the minister has done her due diligence here and consulted with the profession. From my point of view, the sooner we do this, the better

4:10

The Deputy Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a)? Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, I really appreciate the hon. member being a doctor, being able to stand up and give us some clarity on this. I know that having someone who's been in the industry as long as he has, having the experience he has: he knows the inner workings. We've often said on this side of the House that the people who are the closest and fighting the fights in the trenches will know best how to be able to move forward.

Some of the things that, I guess, are questions that I do have, Madam Speaker, for the hon. member. He said that we're moving in the right direction, it's been 25 years in the making. I guess the question that I have is: if 98 per cent of the doctors and physicians are part of the AMA, why hasn't this happened until now? I mean, we're three and a half years into the NDP's mandate, so this is something that probably would have been, in my opinion, brought forward right at the beginning if this is, again, 25 years in the making.

As much as I respect the position that this is the right direction – once again, I think we've heard from most of the colleagues here that have spoken, on this side of the House at least, that we haven't made a decision on whether we'll be supporting this bill or not – one of the problems that we face, Madam Speaker, is that when we do ask questions, the Member for Banff-Cochrane, I believe, would stand up, and rather than answering the question, we get again these hyperpartisan responses. You know, again, these are benign questions. They're not intended to cause concern for the members in the government side. These are just asking for clarity.

One of the problems and the reasons why we've said, "Let's refer this to the committee" is because we are trying to get information so that we can do our jobs as MLAs and representatives of the people of our ridings. I think that probably the best presentation that we've seen here today is by the hon. member from the Liberal Party, being a doctor, getting up and saying that this is something that he thinks is good for the health care profession and good for physicians and for Albertans and the reasons why he believes that.

It would have been nice if, when we asked our questions under 29(2)(a), we had received some answers from the members opposite. Actually, I do believe that the Health minister did get up and did answer one of the questions. But, again, the question that I still haven't been able to receive an answer to and would love to receive an answer to from the people who have crafted this bill is: if the Health minister said that the formalization was a concession for zeros by the physicians, how is formalizing this a concession? What is it about the formalization of this that actually is a concession to the physicians? Is it that it hasn't been working, that the negotiations haven't been working, so formalizing this ties the hands of the government more so that it's in the benefit of the AMA or the physicians in negotiations? Again, all that information, Madam Speaker, has not been provided to this House and to the members of this House.

If the member is willing, I would love to hear his position on some of these questions that I have.

The Deputy Speaker: Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thanks very much, Madam Speaker. These are legitimate questions. The other question I have and that isn't clear to me is just how much this might influence the self-regulatory control of the profession. How much might this provide access to information and powers to the government that might be seen to be a threat to the profession? I haven't heard back yet from the AMA. They're responding to some of my questions about their comfort or not with this bill. I believe that in the main they are comfortable with the bill. It isn't yet clear in my mind to what extent they may

be surrendering some self-regulation, some self-governance, but I don't see it in this current draft. I don't see any threat to self-governance and self-regulation in this. I see it as a result of good-faith negotiations on both sides.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Highwood.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm happy to rise in the House this afternoon to speak to the referral amendment on Bill 24. Bill 24, if passed, will amend the Alberta Health Care Insurance Act as well as the Regional Health Authorities Act. It will formalize relations between the government and the Alberta Medical Association, or AMA. Bill 24 will also legislate the AMA as the negotiating body under which all health professional unions must negotiate. If I understand it correctly, the other unions will fall underneath the AMA, and this gives the AMA the power to negotiate on behalf of any group that falls under its authority as long as the majority of its members approve.

As I studied Bill 24, one positive I can pull out is that there will be no fee increases until 2021. I believe this was part of the agreement that the government was able to strike with the AMA.

Now, the government estimates that it will save \$98 million in health care costs. I believe that we have to be fiscally responsible, and any measure that can save the taxpayers money, I think, is a good thing. At the rate that the NDP government is spending, though, we'll be racking up \$96 billion worth of debt in our near future. Of course, the savings that this agreement will create is just a drop in the bucket relative to the financial mess this government has brought into this province. However, it's always small steps and small savings that we need to do, and if we achieve enough of these, we'll be able to slowly tackle the debt the province has given us. If only the government could be fiscally prudent with all of the decisions they make and all of the legislation that they've introduced in this House, perhaps we wouldn't be in the mess we are in right now.

Of course, we don't know the full financial implications of this bill. Send it to committee. The government says that they are short-term savings, but will there also be savings in the long term? We don't understand that yet; another reason why my colleagues have suggested: send this bill back to committee. Let's understand the full process. Are there long-term savings? We don't know.

Madam Speaker, we know that 30 per cent of AMA members voted; 89 per cent approved the agreement that led to this Bill 24. That is very strong support. However, it can be a little concerning that only 30 per cent of the members voted. Thirty per cent. That means that 70 per cent didn't vote. In an ideal world we would be able to get feedback from all doctors and professionals involved. However, I understand that isn't always possible, and the physicians that gave feedback did vote in favour of this agreement.

Madam Speaker, this is one of the reasons why I'm supporting this referral amendment. We need to hear from all stakeholders involved in all decisions of this bill. Thirty per cent is all who participated, which could give us a good representation of all of the professionals, but it may not. We need to ensure that a good sample is conducted and that a majority of the doctors are in full support of this bill. For example, one question we could ask is: did the government and the Alberta Medical Association hear from rural physicians? I believe that it is important as legislators that we hear feedback from stakeholders publicly. Send it back to committee. That is why I believe it's important to refer this to committee. Bill 24 makes some very consequential changes, and I believe as legislators we need to give it due process.

4:20

We should be doing this with all legislation that comes through this House. We know that the government has done a poor job in the past of consulting with stakeholders and ramming through their agenda, but we are here to represent Albertans' best interests, and that's all Albertans, not just special-interest groups or those who have an in with the government. Rather, we need to take proper time to talk to our constituents, consult with them, and hear from stakeholder groups in the matters that we are debating in this House.

When a bill is introduced in this House, as legislators we need to be able to hear feedback from all Albertans. Bill 24 was just introduced last week. This gave us just a little bit of time to review the legislation and talk to our constituents. It's only been a week. However, with a consequential bill such as this we need more time to get it right, and, really, one week just isn't enough time to fully consult with all stakeholders and the constituents that will be affected. I think it's prudent that we consider sending this bill back to committee for that reason alone. One week is just not a significant amount of time, enough time for us to gather the information that we need to provide feedback to our constituents.

Madam Speaker, that's what committees are for, to hear from stakeholders and those closest to the decisions that are being made. It's all done in a public forum so that Albertans can hold us accountable for the decisions that we make and the results of the committee study. Accountability. Transparency. Hmm. I believe that we need to use committees more in this legislative process. The government has seldom used committees when pushing through their legislative agenda.

I've experienced this with my private member's bill, Bill 201. It got dragged through committee. Hey, I think the committee did excellent work, and I agreed with their outcome on that. That's what committees are for. But this government doesn't want to use the committees on their side, just on our side for some reason. We've seen many times where the government has introduced a bill, passed it in this Legislature – and it has come into effect – only to realize later that perhaps they got a few things wrong.

We can't afford that. This is too, too important a bill. Our constituents expect better of us. A really good way to avoid doing that in the future is to actually use the committees that are set up so that the government can get legislation right the first time. Let's take some time, and let's do this right. I think it's extremely important that we hear back from stakeholders, and that's what committees are for. As MLAs we've got a job to do, and we in the opposition are happy to spend time discussing legislation in committee to ensure that we get it right, get it right the first time.

Madam Speaker, there are many instances from this government where they did not consult properly with stakeholders. Let's look at the carbon tax. It got pushed through, and if they had listened to Albertans and given due process, maybe we could have reconsidered introducing the carbon tax. But we all know that did not happen. The reality is that the carbon tax has cost Alberta families a lot more than they anticipated. It's hurt families. It's hurt investment coming into Alberta. Billions of dollars of investment capital has moved out of the energy sector and moved into the U.S. market as a direct result of the carbon tax. Members in opposition here are representing our constituencies. We voiced opposition to the carbon tax; however, government members supported the bill, and the carbon tax got pushed through.

Another example we can bring up about the government's lack of consultation is regarding the increase in minimum wage. I've heard from dozens of small-business owners in my constituency that the increase in minimum wage, the recent increase in minimum wage, has impacted their bottom line substantially and cut back now

on the level of service they're providing their customers and their profit. This is a double whammy: a carbon tax, increase in minimum wage. Consult with people first. Another example. You know, if the government had brought the decision before a legislative committee, they would have heard the concerns from small businesses and how it would have affected them. But they didn't. They just brought it in ideologically, forced it through the House, and now businesses are suffering. But as it turns out – again, no agenda, no regard for the people that are being affected.

Now, Madam Speaker, this is not to say that this is the case for Bill 24. It could be very well the case that the government consulted fully with stakeholders and took their feedback seriously. However, I believe it would be more prudent to refer this to committee and allow us all to fully understand the true impact of Bill 24 on all constituents, not just the doctors but all the people affected by it.

I'm sure the government has done plenty of consultation with physicians and other health professionals regarding this bill, with 89 per cent of the doctors voting in favour of this agreement. I'm sure that there were plenty of stakeholders that would be pleased with this legislation. However, we may never hear all of the feedback that the government has received from the stakeholders. Why not? That is what we need to hear. We need to hear feedback from the stakeholders and the public. Have a public forum so that all Albertans can have confidence that as legislators we're taking the right steps with this legislation.

Madam Speaker, Bill 24 looks to have some positive elements to it. The health care cost savings are something that I think all members of the House would agree on. However, I still have many questions regarding this bill that I think need to be heard and need to be addressed before we can proceed. For example, have we heard from physicians in all areas of the province? I mentioned rural physicians. I don't know of any rural physicians in my constituency that were consulted. Anybody else? No. Why does the consultation agreement between the government and the AMA need to be formalized at all? Under the opt-out provision, why would any physician want to opt out if they're still bound to the agreement? Even though you don't belong to the union, you've still got to pay union dues. That is why I will be supporting the referral amendment, so that we can get proper consultation with all stakeholder groups.

Madam Speaker, in closing, we still have many questions regarding this bill, and I don't feel comfortable carrying on without proper study. I hope that the government will consider a referral motion, giving us time to take in the feedback from all stakeholder groups. Let's send this back to committee.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Under Standing Order 29(2)(a) the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate being able to hear from my hon. colleague from Highwood. One thing that I heard him say was that 89 per cent of the AMA members voted, but from what I understand, I'm not sure whether or not that's what we've heard. What we've heard is that actually 30 per cent of its members took part in that vote, which, in my opinion, is more evidence and reason why we need to send this to committee, because if only 30 per cent of its members actually took part in the vote and 89 per cent of those voted in favour of it, it is, from what I understand – 30 per cent as a sample group is not bad. But once again, being able to know for sure that this is what physicians want and want to move forward on and that the questions and concerns specifically, I think, in regard to rural physicians have been met: this is something that I think going to committee would provide.

I would like to ask the hon. Member for Highwood his thoughts on whether or not he felt that that sample size is adequate to be able to truly say that this is what AMA members are looking for.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. W. Anderson: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. The concern we have is that I don't think 30 per cent is the right number. It means 70 per cent did not participate. That being said, I'd like to see some of the information from some of the stakeholder groups that they had solicited, if they did, specifically in the rural sectors because in the rural constituencies a lot of doctors are working long hours, hard hours, and they're being affected by this, but maybe they did not have the opportunity, probably didn't have the opportunity to provide some feedback to this government. Now, show us the documentation. Show us the results. Give us the data. Take this to committee and show it to all legislators and all members of the public that will be affected by this.

This is serious legislation. One week is not a significant amount of time for us to even consider what the end result will be. Play the movie out. What does it look like? What does success look like? What we've seen up till now with this government: by ramming legislation through and not taking it to committee, there have been repercussions, serious repercussions. Madam Speaker, I don't think Albertans deserve that. I think they deserve better, and my concern is that if we continue in this direction without proper consultation, without proper feedback, that long-term effect is going to be extremely negative to a lot of people, not just physicians but, obviously, the stakeholders and constituents. I mean, they talk about going to the United States for medical treatment.

4:30

Well, I had the privilege of going through the health care system about a year and a half ago, where I'd be waiting six months just to see a specialist just to have an interview, another year before my spinal surgery would be able to take place. When I called down to the clinic in Arizona, they could do that in 24 hours. Why? Like, this is what boggles my mind. Instead, what they want to do is that they want to fill the old guy with painkilling drugs long enough so maybe he'll just shut up and put up with the system. But waiting a year, three, four, six months just to see a doctor or a specialist and then waiting another three months for his results and then another year later for surgery: this isn't a health care system that works effectively. It's broken. We need to get down to the details. This is a serious business, and I've experienced it personally. Believe me, Madam Speaker, it's not something I would wish on anybody. I managed to get through the other side. It did work in the end. But, wow, the treatment during the process was horrific, and I don't wish that on anybody.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? Calgary-West.

Mr. Ellis: Madam Speaker, thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to speak. Certainly, I rise to speak to the referral motion for Bill 24, An Act to Recognize AMA Representation Rights. My staff has certainly gone to great lengths to put together notes for me, which I'm sure I am going to get to.

I'm going to support this motion. I think it's important regarding consultation. I want to address a couple of the, I guess, comments that I've heard in this Chamber over the last short bit of time. As my friend from Cardston-Taber-Warner indicated in regard to the

Member for Banff-Cochrane and the hyperpartisan remarks, we're really just asking simple questions, especially when we're just talking right now about consultation.

You know, Madam Speaker, I am just a simple police officer. I was a security guard. I did shift work for, like, nearly 20 years. My father was in the military and police, grandfather was in the military. I come from a working-class family, so I'm a little, quite frankly, tired of hearing about all these alleged rich friends that I have when most people that I know are teachers, are nurses, some doctors, certainly people that are neighbours and friends and from the community. So I hope that we can really just truly get to the issue at hand, especially when we're talking about Bill 24. Again, I think this is a very important referral.

Now, the minister also had mentioned consultation. You know, I think I've said in this Chamber before, Madam Speaker, talked about the importance of consultation and kind of the unintended consequences of lack of consultation. I think I've also spoken in regard to the committees and how successful they can be, ensuring that all sides are heard on a particular subject, especially one as important as health care.

Now, my friend from Highwood, the Member for Highwood: I thought it was very fascinating that he had indicated – and if I am wrong on these numbers, I certainly would appreciate the government correcting the record. When I hear numbers like only 30 per cent of the total number of physicians voted and that, you know, 89 per cent of the 30 per cent voted yes, which – again, no math major, Madam Speaker. From my perspective it appears to be a low number of physicians that actually participated in this vote and this consultation. I certainly would like to know if all doctors – and I think this is important, especially because it affects all doctors – were consulted and were at least made aware of an important bill such as this.

Now, if I was to listen, as I did, to what the minister indicated to me, it was a very exhaustive consultation. It sounded to me like there was a lot of back and forth and that there were certainly a lot of folks that were involved in this. One can only be led to believe that the people that the minister was negotiating or talking with were representatives of the – again, please correct numbers – my understanding is over 14,000 physicians that currently practise in this province, which is certainly an outstanding number.

I guess what I do have a concern with is that, you know, when we get this bill presented in the Legislature and my staff and all my colleagues' staff attempt to contact stakeholders in the community on short notice in the evenings, in the mornings, everyone who should be consulted was consulted. I have had some feedback. I do have at least a couple of physicians that I was able to get hold of. One was able to respond back to me. I think where I have a concern, Madam Speaker, is that when somebody who is a family physician, president of the Canadian Society of Hospital Medicine, indicates to me that he's not currently involved in the negotiations – he read both the act and the Alberta government media release only after I let him know that it had come out. He was not aware of this change and certainly – maybe I won't go into it at the moment – expressed concerns.

Is that consultation, Madam Speaker? When somebody who, let's see, has a bachelor of science, master of science, an MD, CCFP, FCFP, SFHM; staff physician, Beaumont medical clinic, Foothills medical centre; clinical associate professor, University of Calgary; and president of the Canadian Society of Hospital Medicine, when somebody like that says, "I wasn't aware of this," that should give everyone in here pause, everyone, including the folks on the government side, to say: "Hey, wait a second. Maybe not everybody was consulted on this." It's important that people like this – this gentleman here has more credentials and letters after his name than

I have in my entire name. Yeah. This is somebody that is highly respected in this province and certainly in the medical profession itself, and he was not aware of what was going on here.

4:40

So I see no issue with anyone in this Chamber to pause this – we are going on a constituency break – to sit there and say: “Hey, wait a second. Let’s just make sure that all physicians, especially one that represents other physicians, are fully aware of what this bill is, what possible changes are indicated in this bill, and that the government gets buy-in.” I don’t think anybody in this Chamber, I don’t think anybody in whatever profession that they belong to wants something that is even perceived to be forced upon them, let alone be blindsided. My take on this e-mail and certainly comments that have been made to me is that certain folks within the medical community are blindsided on this. Although I can appreciate that a select group of people were contacted – and, again, the perception is that a select group of people appear to have voted on this – based upon the information that I have, I would argue that medical professionals, physicians were not just not consulted but were not even made aware of this bill and what the contents of this bill are.

Again, Madam Speaker, this is one of those things that gives me great pause. I think that doing due diligence, ensuring that the government and those involved get the appropriate buy-in – because I think it’s important that if you’re going to have any form of success, you achieve buy-in with the stakeholders for which you are representing.

Now, Madam Speaker, one of the other things that gives me a little bit of pause here is that, you know – and, again, numbers can always be slightly different, but my understanding is that the AMA represents about 14,000 doctors. Even if we say that 14,000 participated in this – but based on the information I have, I find that that may not indeed be the case. But if we assume that they were, then I see numbers such as 12,460, which would be 89 per cent of the 14,000. That still leaves me pause that you’re still looking at numbers like more than 1,500 would not be supportive of this. We’re not talking about small numbers. And I get it. What the minister said is correct, to suggest that not every single person in a constituency voted during the election. I get it, right? But, again, it goes back to what I was trying to say, which talks about people that you would believe should know what was going on with a bill of this sort of magnitude were completely unaware of what had transpired and what was really dropped upon Alberta over the last, short few days.

Madam Speaker, again I would encourage everyone in this Chamber to give pause. As my friend from Cardston-Taber-Warner indicated, this is something that does not require urgency. It is something that, as was indicated, is a long-standing practice – that’s what I think somebody had mentioned on the government side – that they’re enshrining. Okay. Well, if that is the case, then there is no rush. There is no rush to, you know, put this through the House, to vote on it today, tomorrow. I mean, again, ensuring that we have the necessary consultation, ensuring that all of the stakeholders, all of the medical professions or certainly people that are involved in the medical profession are consulted on this, have their input – you know what? If the government talks to these individuals such as the person that I mentioned, maybe they do achieve the buy-in. That’s fine. If this is a practice that’s been long-standing, again that’s all fine. You know, nobody has indicated that they’re against doing something that is good for the medical profession.

The Deputy Speaker: Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), the hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I just want to begin by clarifying and reminding folks that joining the AMA is a personal choice for each physician, but currently 96 per cent of the physicians in Alberta do belong to the AMA. Today if a physician chooses not to belong to the AMA, they still work under the terms and conditions reached within the AMA agreement. We are proposing that this legislation will formalize this practice as it’s our belief that negotiating with a single entity ensures fairness, consistency for physicians. That will continue to be the case. This isn’t changing practice.

I also want to remind or maybe clarify for folks who don’t know that the AMA communicates with its members. The AMA has president’s letters that go out monthly, that talk about things like the negotiation process and what the terms are within the new agreements that people have the opportunity to vote on. This was voted on back in the spring, Madam Speaker, so this is something that members had the opportunity to engage on at that point and certainly at any point before or after that as well through their professional association, that being the AMA.

I just want to give an example. I know that the Member for Calgary-West was elected in 2014. I looked up the by-election results. There was a 35.7 per cent voter turnout, and that member got 44 per cent of the vote for those who turned out. And he rightfully was the person to receive the most votes. Even though only 35.7 per cent of voters turned out, he certainly earned his seat in this Chamber. I don’t think anyone would say that he should go to committee and consult with people from his constituency before he can have the opportunity to represent folks. He was elected through a democratic process.

There was a democratic process that ensued as a result of a fair and reasonable negotiation that resulted in efficiencies, zeroes, and formalizing the current relationship. I just want to reiterate that this isn’t about giving new powers or new processes. This is about formalizing what, I think, were a very respectful two rounds of negotiations in the term of this government that resulted in savings for Albertans, that resulted in no reduction to services but, in fact, in many areas increased services throughout the province. All that the physicians are asking for in return through this bill is to respect that we will have fair and reasonable negotiations. I think that that’s something reasonable for us to continue to have as we move forward.

Negotiation was perhaps an overstep. Consultation, Madam Speaker, because, again, just to reiterate, this isn’t actually a union. This is a professional association that we engage with in a very professional and respectful way. I’m really pleased that the consultation has in many ways over the last two years resulted in what felt like a good-faith negotiation, to be frank, even though it was not indeed a negotiation. It was an engagement. That’s what this bill outlines.

Again, physicians are members of the AMA. They were contacted by the AMA about this whole process. It was definitely something that was discussed a lot in the lead-up to the recommendation to ratify the agreement that they reached. It was through their communications with their president, and members certainly have an opportunity to do so. Any physician in Alberta who wants to engage with their association has the opportunity. Not everyone chooses to take that opportunity, and that’s their own choice.

I respect the 35.7 per cent of voters who came out and voted in the Calgary-West by-election, and I respect the physicians who chose to vote for the ratification of the AMA agreement. Part of the terms of that agreement were that we would bring forward legislation this term, and I am honouring that negotiation, Madam Speaker.

Thank you.

4:50

The Deputy Speaker: Calgary-West.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I certainly do not want, and I hope I did not hear this correctly, that the minister was in any way insinuating that this person who I reached out to did not receive an e-mail, may have ignored the e-mail or, in any way, was not properly notified. This is a very qualified individual who was not made aware of this bill. He clearly represents other physicians; president of the Canadian Society of Hospital Medicine. So if he is not aware of this, then it's only reasonable to assume that other physicians are not aware of this bill. It would only make sense that we would consult and make sure that this is sent to a committee so that we can get the proper consultation on this particular bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Any further questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: It was absolutely not my intent to say that that member wasn't notified . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is a pleasure to stand and speak in favour of this referral motion to Bill 24. When we first came into the House to discuss and to debate this bill, we had, obviously, questions that we wanted to go through with our staff, with other colleagues. We sat around the table, we talked about what we see this bill doing and not doing, we talked about the pros and the cons, and truthfully, we had not been able to figure out whether or not this is something that was going to be good or bad because there were just so many questions that we had. The value, in my opinion – and I talked about this earlier this morning – to what we're doing here is the opportunity to be able to stand up, to have debates back and forth. The full Westminster parliamentary system that we have is designed to help us to debate these things so that we can come up with the best practices.

We've gone back and forth. We've had the opportunity to hear from the hon. minister, the Health minister, which I appreciate and I know that the colleagues on this side appreciate. We've had the opportunity of hearing from the Member for Calgary-Mountain View, another physician in the House. I know that there is another physician in the House as well. I'd be very interested in hearing from him to know his position on this and what he sees as the positives and the negatives to this. Again, I think it's important, Madam Speaker, that we hear from the people who are in the trenches, the physicians that are living this day in and day out because I think that they have the ability to get these things right better than some bureaucrat or someone so far removed from those trenches.

When we come into this House and we talk about the need for being able to refer this to committee, it is a genuine desire for us to be able to see good legislation coming forward. I don't believe anybody in the House has any intention of bringing forward bad legislation for Albertans. I know that sometimes in this House things can get heated, but I would say that if someone was willing to put their name forward to actually stand up and try to be an MLA, a representative of the people in their riding, they have the best intentions for those people in their riding. Forgive me for being cynical, but we've seen so many times where the government has said that they've consulted. Then we try to slow it down so that we can have an opportunity to be able to reach out.

Then what we hear from our members in our constituencies and other parts of the province is that they hadn't been consulted, that they had not actually had the opportunity to bring forward reasonable ideas about how the legislation should proceed.

Now, I think that the Member for Calgary-West has provided us with a very reasonable answer to these queries, and that answer comes in the form of an e-mail that he was sent. When we first received this legislation, obviously, being the Labour critic – and I know this is the Health minister's bill, but there is a labour component to this – immediately we sat down, and we said: let's send out an e-mail to physicians that we know in our riding, and let's find out from them what they think of this bill. That happened yesterday, Madam Speaker.

We're starting to receive some of the information back. We're starting to receive some e-mails back and some correspondence, but the concern is that with the speed that this government is wanting to move this bill through the House, it's not going to give us an opportunity to be able to do what we're supposed to be doing, which is consulting with those people who are going to be affected by the bill.

It's only incumbent upon us, Madam Speaker, to present to this House a referral motion that allows us the time necessary. I don't believe that we're asking for months on end. We just need to make sure that we are going to get it right, that the premise of the bill is what it says, that it will be just formalizing already a good practice that has been happening for years, decades in the province. I don't think it's unreasonable to ask.

Now, through the course of today, we've had the opportunity of hearing from the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, and I respect him. I respect his opinion because, again, he is a doctor. He is a physician that has practised, and his recommendation was that this was 25 years in the making. However, there was still a caveat that he presented that I don't think we've heard an answer on yet from the Minister of Health, and that caveat was: how does it affect the autonomy of the AMA in terms of self-regulating?

Now, that is a question that we had not even thought about. That's something that we on this side in our conversations hadn't discussed. We didn't see it. Here's the reason why. I'm not a doctor. The people who were sitting around the table weren't doctors, so we wouldn't know that. We wouldn't see it. However, the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View is a doctor. He probably took a look at this thing, made a phone call to people he probably knows in the AMA, and said, "What do you think?" and pretty quickly he was able to get that little bit of information where they're a little concerned. I don't see any reason why we couldn't slow the process down a bit so that we have the opportunity to hear from other physicians who are in the trenches that would be concerned.

We've already identified a few of these concerns here, Madam Speaker, today. One of the concerns that we have – and many of us on this side of the House are from rural ridings – is how it is going to affect members in our rural ridings.

One of the questions that I had has to do with my line of work before. Before I was an MLA, I was in commercial construction, so I had the opportunity of doing some work up in Fort McMurray. Well, while we were doing the work up in Fort McMurray – we were building an airport hangar up there – we didn't have any accidents, but we started to get to know some people up there. I had an opportunity to be able to meet a doctor there, and that doctor told me a lot of information about how his role up in Fort McMurray as a doctor was very difficult. Being so far removed from larger centres like Edmonton and Calgary, it was difficult for his family. I mean, he enjoyed his work. He was very engaged. But it was a difficult thing for his family, being so isolated.

5:00

One of the first things that I thought when I saw this bill was: how is this going to affect these remote areas or rural areas in terms of them being able to retain family doctors? Now, in my riding, Madam Speaker, in Milk River, through the RPAP program we had the opportunity to bring in a couple of doctors. Only one of those doctors has stayed now. They both actually came in from South Africa. We couldn't fill the need for those doctors there locally. We had to bring them in from South Africa. So already we're seeing that it's difficult for us to be able to find doctors that are willing to go into rural Alberta.

But let me go back to this Fort McMurray model, and this is one of the questions I was thinking about today. As anybody who has been to Fort McMurray knows, the cost of living there is very expensive, very high. It's a long way up there, five hours from here. So if the negotiated model in terms of fee structure is centralized and it's unified, as the doctor from Calgary-Mountain View said, how does it work in terms of being able to get the doctors up in Fort McMurray to be able to say, you know, that even though the cost of living up there is three or four times the cost of living in, say, Lethbridge, they have an incentive to stay or an incentive to be there? The good doctor, again, talked about the disparity between those fee structures being brought into line.

I guess my question is – and I don't know. I think that maybe it would come through regulations. I'm not sure. But if you have that uniformity of the fee structure, once again, I would imagine people would want to be in a place like, say, Lethbridge, where the cost of living is so much cheaper. The cost of a home is, you know, a third of what the cost of a home up in Fort McMurray would be. Property taxes are cheaper there. All of the input costs and the costs to physicians are so much higher up in Fort McMurray. So if you are going to make that fee structure uniform across the province and there's no variance, I don't know how that's going to work.

Now, again, I don't believe that this bill actually goes into the details of that. I'm not a doctor, but it just goes to show that we have to start looking at some of these things. We have to start looking at some of the concerns that some of the physicians might be bringing forward. The fact that my hon. colleague from Calgary-West started to receive some feedback and that a fairly prominent physician in Calgary was willing to get back to him and say, "I haven't heard anything about this," in my opinion is all the evidence we need to slow this down so that we make sure that we have a good direction and directive from physicians.

Now I want to go to one of the things that, through the debate back and forth, Madam Speaker, I heard from the minister. The minister made an argument that, you know, 37 per cent is not bad. When you're electing people, that's not a bad thing. I mean, people in this House got elected on I think she said 37 or 39 per cent. Well, here's the problem with that argument. I appreciate her making the argument, but the problem is that we don't actually have to do that.

How many physicians – 10,000, 11,000 – do we have in Alberta? Well, I don't think that it would be very difficult to slow this down and to actually have a fulsome direction from all of the members. If all of the members, 80 per cent of them, decide to vote, I think that we would be able to say: "You know what? It's not 30 per cent. It's 80 per cent that have voted. We have our marching orders. We know what we want to do, what we should do."

But we don't have that sample size. We only have 30 per cent. Thirty per cent of those physicians have voted so far. [interjection] I'm not sure exactly what the member opposite is heckling about. I can't hear him. My hearing is not so good. But I will carry on with what I'm saying. If he's asking questions, I would invite him to

please stand up and make sure that he asks the question so that we can get that in *Hansard* and, again, have a fulsome debate here.

Back to my point, if there's no pressing need, if there's no health emergency, environmental catastrophe, whatever it is, Madam Speaker, if we don't have that impetus, that need to push this forward, why are we? Why does this government feel such a burning need to push this forward?

Bill 6 is a classic example of the unintended consequences when you get it wrong, a classic example, Madam Speaker, of when you say, "Hey, we've got lots of consultation," and then all of a sudden all over the province they have combines lining up for miles and miles on end and some of the largest groups of farmers showing up and protesting on the Legislature steps. I would think that after having that happen, the NDP government, the government of the day, would say: "You know what? We need to do a little better at this, prudently."

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would say that this was very interesting, and there were a lot of questions that the member, my good friend, brought forward. Again, the United Conservative Party is always looking to collaborate with the government on good bills, bills that they are bringing forward in good faith, that show that they're trying to improve Alberta and the direction Alberta is going in. I see that the member, my good friend, has also got some questions about this. And while there are some benefits that we're hearing from the government, we're also needing to make sure that this is done right. So I would like to hear if he's got any more concerns. So far I can say that some of them haven't been addressed yet.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I would like to thank the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake, a good friend of mine, for asking me this question. Look, again, having the opportunity of being able to get it right is our responsibility. It's our right. If it can't happen here, if we can't have the opportunity to be able to debate it and then take it to committee so that they can bring forward representation from the AMA, from its members, hearing both the pros and cons, then how can we in good conscience say that we got it right? How could we in good conscience say that we've done the job that Albertans have sent us here for, that what we've done here now is enough, that we've had a fulsome approach to this discussion of this bill, and that in good conscience we can bring it forward and have it receive royal assent?

Within a very short period of time, as you know, Madam Speaker, we've already come up with many good questions. Many good questions. I think that a few times the hon. Minister of Health has stood up and answered a few of them. She keeps going back to clarify that there's 96 per cent of physicians who are part of the AMA. Thank you so much. I didn't know that. I thought it was 80 per cent. I appreciate you getting me that information.

You know, it goes back to this concept, Madam Speaker, of our desire to be able to reach out to the AMA and to its members. Give us the chance. Give us the opportunity to be able to do our jobs. I'm sure that the members opposite, especially the backbenchers, would love to be able to have that opportunity as well.

5:10

We've heard from a past member of that caucus that she didn't feel that they had the opportunity to do that. This isn't just coming from this side of the House, Madam Speaker. This is actually

coming from past members of the government side that are saying: "You know what? We have the opportunity, we have the privilege, and we have the responsibility to make sure that we get these things right." We shouldn't just say that we're going to rubber-stamp something. That's not our responsibility. That's not, in my opinion, a healthy way of being able to do what we've been asked to do here.

I am very much in favour of sending this to committee, of having the opportunity of being able to discuss it fully and being able to have those people who are deep in the trenches, those physicians that actually live, breathe, and have this as something that they have to be concerned about on a regular basis, give us that expert witness and testimony rather than just taking the advice or scout's honour or, as I sometimes have heard the Government House Leader say, you know: trust us. Well, I'm sorry, but the past record hasn't been very good.

Mr. Nixon: Trust but verify.

Mr. Hunter: There you go. Trust but verify is exactly what one of the greatest legislators said. I think we need to make sure that we do that, trust but verify.

That's what we're doing as the opposition, making sure that we're trusting and verifying by sending this thing to committee. I would hope that all members of this House would take a serious look at this as an important amendment to this bill.

Thank you so much, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any further comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: On the amendment, not under 29(2)(a), Madam Speaker?

The Deputy Speaker: On the amendment.

Mr. Nixon: Okay. Just making sure.

Thank you very much. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the amendment today. I would like to start off by actually, through you, Madam Speaker, to the hon. Minister of Health and hon. Deputy Premier, thanking her for taking the time today to answer lots of the questions of the members of the opposition on this legislation. It's noted and certainly, through you to her, Madam Speaker, appreciated.

I think I'd like to start off by pointing out, similar to what many of my colleagues have spoken about already this afternoon, and making very clear before the House today that we're speaking at this moment about a referral amendment to send this piece of legislation to a committee to be reviewed. That is not taking a position on this side of the Chamber that we are against this legislation. I actually suspect, Madam Speaker, as I've listened to the debate today, that I will likely be leaning towards supporting this bill that the Health minister has brought forward before this Chamber this afternoon.

I still think that this amendment brought forward by the hon. Member for Airdrie is appropriate. It makes sense to send this to committee to make sure that we've properly consulted on the process. Lots of the great questions that I've heard this afternoon – and some of them I never thought about until I heard them – I think are very interesting, and the great feedback that the minister has provided to those questions is valuable. One of the tough parts, though, Madam Speaker, as you know, is that in this Chamber it's often hard to have the type of dialogue to be able to get a piece of legislation correct whereas when we're in a standing committee

environment, it's easier to have that back and forth, to be able to interact and make sure we get the legislation right.

The other reason why I think that's important is that it's also an opportunity where more of the private members in the government caucus get to participate. In my experience over the last three and a half years, they get to participate a little bit more in the committee. Just because of the nature of how the Legislature works, the opposition spends more time debating in the Legislature. That's how our process works. Certainly, the history within this Chamber is that private members have significantly more opportunity to be able to participate.

As mentioned by a couple of the hon. members, we do know that we have some doctor colleagues, physicians, that are in the government caucus. I would be interested in their advice, their thoughts on this piece of legislation, as certainly they're the members in the Chamber that probably have the most experience with it. I know that if we were debating a piece of legislation that had to do with law enforcement, I would strongly encourage, as the House leader of the opposition, that the hon. Member for Calgary-West be able to participate in the process because of his lengthy career in law enforcement. I think he adds significant value to a debate of that nature, just like I do the medical professionals inside this Chamber. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, for example, who I have spoken about positively in this Chamber before, has been a physician for friends of mine in his unique capacity working with people with cancer, so I think his input on this would be something that I would value. In committee, in my experience, Madam Speaker, you have a bigger opportunity to do that.

Now, it was interesting to me to hear the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin speaking in the Chamber today, who comes from Ottawa, not as a Member of Parliament but as a staffer for other Members of Parliament in her time there. She echoed her shock as a new member in this Chamber realizing how our legislative process works here compared to a place like Ottawa. Madam Speaker, it's interesting to me that every time a staff member comes from Ottawa and ends up working at the Alberta Legislature or a former staff member from the federal Parliament becomes a member of the Legislature, which I think is pretty cool, they all say the same thing. In fact, actually, the Leader of the Official Opposition, who has considerable experience in Parliament over two decades: as his House leader I often have to explain to him why things are so significantly different on the committee side, because they just don't understand it, because this would not happen in Ottawa.

We would not be in a situation where the government brings forward a piece of legislation that has significant impacts on a lot of people, a complicated piece of legislation, that was basically read in the House and only a few short days later was in a position where it could pass in this Chamber before members of the Legislature, particularly on the opposition side, who have not seen the bill because the government has had this bill – it's just the first we've seen it – are able to consult with the constituents they represent. I represent a lot of doctors, as do members on this side of the Chamber, as do members on that side of the Chamber. But the fact that here in the Legislative Assembly of Alberta we're in a spot where you could actually pass a bill, all three stages, in one day – that would be rare – or certainly before members of this House have an opportunity to return to their constituency to go and talk to the people that they represent is a unique thing to this Chamber and this House that we operate in.

You would not see that in Ottawa. A bill going to committee is standard procedure in the House of Commons. Being able to call witnesses to make sure that you get legislation right, to be able to

ask questions is a common procedure in Ottawa. I would argue that it's something that I actually think we should do more often inside this Chamber.

You know, the hon. Member for Calgary-West in his comments was speaking about how he's already heard from a constituent or at least somebody from Calgary, I believe, the city that he represents in this Chamber, who has got considerable expertise on this issue, saying: well, I've got some questions. I think that's pretty reasonable. Going to committee allows that to happen. A person could come forward, they could testify, provide information for the hon. members of the 29th Legislature to be able to make an educated decision on how they cast their vote for their constituents.

This becomes important because we have seen examples of mistakes that have been made by this government and, I'm sure, previous governments, quite frankly, by going through a process in the Assembly where they do not use the committee process to make sure that they get it right, to make sure that the people that will be impacted by that legislation have had an opportunity to contribute. In this Chamber we don't often hear from the ministers on that type of legislation. Again, I want to reiterate, as I did in the beginning, that I think it's great that we have heard from the Health minister, to her credit, during this. In fact, I think that makes me more comfortable with this piece of legislation because you can start to get the answers. Pretty rare that we see that, but I digress on that.

Making sure that we get legislation right is an important responsibility of this side of the House. It's an important responsibility of the private members on that side of the House as well. Their job, Madam Speaker, as you know, is to hold the government to account, no different than, actually, the opposition, particularly when it comes to legislation like this, that has really not many partisan implications that I can see. This is a technical issue that we have to make sure that we get right. That's the hon. members' responsibility, just as it is our responsibility.

5:20

I'm sure that they would appreciate an opportunity to be able to talk to some of the physicians that they represent to make sure that this legislation is right. They would appreciate an opportunity to ask questions not only of the minister but of bureaucrats that are involved in the Health department, that may be able to provide some technical advice to the members of the Assembly on this before they cast a vote, but also to be able to talk to outside groups, that are outside of this bubble that we live in, not only in this Chamber but in this whole precinct and in our world in Edmonton. It's often great to see it.

You know, we saw one of the most famous examples, of course, Bill 6, the agriculture safety bill. An amendment like this was moved on that piece of legislation, to move that to a committee to be able to make sure that people, stakeholder groups could come forward. We know that the history of that now is that, in the end, because the opposition spent time asking questions and going through a process like this, Albertans, farmers and ranchers in that case, were able to come to the Legislature to protest – I would argue that it would have been easier through committee – to be able to say: hey, there are some mistakes in this bill. In the end, the government brought forward an amendment to address some of those mistakes. There are still some other issues, I would say, with Bill 6 – we'll address that if we're fortunate enough to form a government in the next few months – but they did make adjustments based on that feedback.

I think that it would have been more efficient in that case to have had that feedback in a committee in a positive way, with farm and ranch communities and farm and ranch families rather than a thousand or more of them on a regular basis having to stand on the

stairs of the Legislature chanting: kill Bill 6; you're getting this wrong. It's a great example of how that would have gone better.

There are many, many more inside the history of the 29th Legislature and, again, Madam Speaker, I suspect, probably through previous governments before the NDP government because the system does not work the same way as the House of Commons. I think it lends itself for the opportunity for these type of mistakes to be made when you're not using the committee process that is common within the Westminster parliamentary system. Instead, you're seeing this type of legislation rammed through often in 24, 48, 72 hours. You've got MLAs literally going out to the cloakroom using their cellphones – I don't know how they did it before cellphones, quite frankly – trying to get a hold of relevant constituents, relevant stakeholders to say: "Where should I be on this? Is this right? Is this going to impact the community that I represent?" It's a flaw of the system.

Luckily, we do have something within our system that can address that. I think the House of Commons' system is more appropriate. I think it's a better form of democracy. When you use the committee system, it allows people to be able to participate from all different angles.

But we at least have an opportunity, as the hon. member for Calgary – not Calgary but Airdrie; she would be really upset if I called Airdrie Calgary – has done, to move a referral and move it then to committee so we can move it out of this Chamber to committee, go through that great process. It doesn't have to be long. It could literally be a couple of days. Bring the right people in and have that opportunity. Unfortunately, it appears, from what I've seen indicated to me – I don't want to predetermine how, of course, the government is going to vote – that there's no interest yet again in sending an important bill like this to committee.

What frustrates me more about that – and I think hon. members across the way should think about this before they cast their vote. The only time in the 29th Legislature that the current NDP government and their backbenchers, their private members, have taken the opportunity to actually vote with the opposition to send something to committee or done so themselves – I'm actually not sure if they sent anything to the committee themselves or if it's always been on one of our motions. I could be corrected on that.

But the only time that they've taken the opportunity to do that is on a bill that has become, politically, a hot potato for them. So you're in the legislature, like: "Ooh, that's a problem. The opposition is getting media on it or whatever is going on, and we want to vote against it. We don't like what the opposition has done." It's usually one of our bills, in my experience, Madam Speaker, most of the time. "But we can't vote against it. We can't be called on the record to stand up and vote, so we're going to send it off to committee for it to either die in the committee process and never come back to the Chamber or to buy some time to be able to figure it out." I think that's disappointing, that that's the only time that we're actually using the committee process to get good legislation, primarily as a government tool to kill private members' bills in the Chamber.

When you have a great example like this, what is probably at its core a pretty good piece of legislation but may just need some minor tweaks – I don't know – there may be some stuff that comes forward in the committee process that the government never thought of. We saw this week the postsecondary minister amend his own bill that he brought to this Chamber. He brought forward an amendment that, I believe, actually passed with the support of the House. I could be mistaken on that as well. A great example. What if he had not caught that?

The government wants to say: "We got it all. We caught it all. It's okay, hon. member. You can trust us." But then we see this

track record over and over of a piece of legislation making it through the House, forced through by the majority, and then the government has to come back the following sitting and try to fix it yet again, sometimes, in the case of some of the democratic renewal bills that we saw in this Chamber, multiple times, I think, something like three or four consecutive sittings trying to fix mistakes that the government put inside their legislation. If you went to committee, it all would have been done right the first time.

Now, sometimes, though, what's really problematic about it, Madam Speaker – and I'm sure it concerns you as much as it concerns me – is that Albertans get impacted by that. How problematic, I guess, really is it that we have to spend an extra couple of days in another city, six months later, debating a piece of legislation the government got wrong? I mean, it slows down other important government business or legislation, but it's really not, I guess, the end of the world that we have to stay here and debate that. I don't have a problem with that. But when there are consequences to the people that we represent that they have to put up with for six, seven months, a year or longer as a result of that mistake that has been made by the government because something got missed – I mean, mistakes happen. My wife informs me that I make plenty. But that does not mean that we shouldn't learn from the experiences that we've had in the past in this Chamber and take time to do it.

This amendment does that. This amendment gives the government an opportunity to be able to send this to make sure we got it right so that they don't have to come and bring an amendment to fix their own bill or bring another bill next sitting to fix the bill that they messed up the previous sitting. It also gives . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have to say that it's very interesting to see the passion that my House leader has when it comes to ensuring that bills get referred to committee. As a man that has sat on many committees, I have to say that . . .

Mr. Ellis: And chaired, too.

Mr. Cyr: Actually, a good point from Calgary-West here. I chair a committee.

When committees are used correctly, we can see actual benefit happening for Alberta. A lot of times what happens – and we've heard this repeatedly – is that the government seems to prioritize opposition bills for committee that they feel are difficult for them, but when it comes to bills that have been identified by the opposition saying that this could be problematic if it's not done correctly, we end up seeing silence on the government side. Then it's accusations and pointing to us that we're trying to slow the process down. Let's be clear. Our job as opposition is to ensure that we strengthen legislation.

While this bill here is not as meaty as some of the other bills – the Municipal Affairs one that just came through: that one there is a rather large one – a lot of times what happens is that a single phrase in a bill can actually mean a great difference in how it actually is interpreted. If I remember correctly, there was a dispute on one of the bills that had gone through the House in an eastern province, and a simple comma actually changed the entire meaning of a paragraph. That's why making sure we get this right is something that, I think, we all are hoping for.

It is good to hear that one of the questions that I'd asked before was: how many of the physicians are in the AMA? I'm very thankful the Minister of Health answered that: 96 per cent of just over 10,000, I believe, so 9,600 members, somewhere in there,

9,700 members, give or take a few, I'm sure. We're looking at a large body of physicians.

5:30

It's amazing how much engagement you can get from a group when you start talking money. That is the whole thing. I understand that the argument could be made that you say that an elected official may only see anywhere from 40 to 60 per cent engagement from the constituents, but I will tell you that if there was a dollar attached to that vote, that engagement probably would be a lot higher.

So to see that we're at a 30 per cent engagement when this is potentially going to have a very large impact to these doctors tells me that potentially the AMA may not have gotten that message out well enough to its members when it was actually going out for consultation on whether or not they should go down this road. Again, I understand that doctors are busy. You know, the one thing that I did struggle with in my career as an accountant was getting a doctor to actually fill a form out. That seems to be one of those struggles. When you have a doctor that has literally no time to fill forms out, you see that they may not have the appropriate time to be able to maybe read every single AMA e-mail.

That is why I'm saying: was that consultation done in an appropriate fashion? I think that having the AMA president before us is a good indicator to the committee, being referred again to the committee, that she would be able to answer these questions, because until we can actually get to the meat of this, it is going to be hard to know. I'm not putting down the AMA, because it's a great organization, and I do believe they're doing a great job representing doctors.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment REF1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:33 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Barnes	Goodridge	Schneider
Cyr	Hunter	van Dijken
Ellis	Nixon	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Goehring	Miller
Babcock	Gray	Miranda
Carson	Hinkley	Nielsen
Ceci	Hoffman	Payne
Connolly	Horne	Renaud
Coolahan	Kazim	Rosendahl
Dach	Kleinstaub	Sabir
Dang	Littlewood	Schmidt
Drever	Loyola	Schreiner
Feehan	Malkinson	Sucha
Fitzpatrick	McCuaig-Boyd	Westhead
Ganley	McKittrick	Woollard

Totals:	For – 8	Against – 36
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[Motion on amendment REF1 lost]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I would move that we adjourn debate on this matter.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Ms Ganley: Seeing the vigorous debate we've had and the hour, I would move that we call it 6 o'clock and resume tomorrow morning at 9.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:50 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday morning, November 8, 2018

Day 48

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (NDP), Speaker
Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (NDP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (UCP),
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Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (UCP)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (NDP)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (NDP)
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Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (AP)
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Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)
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Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (NDP),
Deputy Government Whip
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)

Party standings:

New Democratic: 53 United Conservative: 26 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Freedom Conservative: 1 Independent: 2 Progressive Conservative: 1

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Fildebrandt	Panda
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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Thursday, November 8, 2018

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Prayers

The Acting Speaker: Good morning.

Let us reflect, each in our own way. As we continue Veterans' Week today, let us reflect on how fortunate we are to gather in this Chamber today for our final day of debate this week. As we all return to our constituencies for the day of remembrance, may we travel safely. Amen.

Please be seated.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders

Third Reading

Bill 21

An Act to Protect Patients

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier and Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my honour and privilege to move third reading of Bill 21, An Act to Protect Patients.

I want to thank members of this Assembly for their thoughtful observations and constructive suggestions during second reading as well as Committee of the Whole. I truly appreciate that all parties have represented themselves through this process.

Earlier in this debate I shared with the Assembly my shock and anger this spring when I became aware of a situation where a doctor was convicted of sexual assault and got his licence back. Albertans weren't being properly protected, and we needed to fix this. Since then we have heard many stories from Albertans that are simply gut-wrenching and often extremely difficult to hear. We began working with our patients and the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta as well as the other regulatory colleges who govern health care workers to develop the right tools to keep Alberta patients safe. I'm proud that my colleagues shared our commitment to patient safety and partnered with us on this work.

Madam Speaker, the proposed amendments would protect Albertans from sexual assault and sexual misconduct by regulated health professionals. If passed, it will establish mandatory penalties for sexual abuse and sexual misconduct by regulated health professionals. It will require more transparency for regulatory colleges.

Pardon me?

The Acting Speaker: There is no amendment on the floor.

Ms Hoffman: I'm not speaking to an amendment. I'm moving third reading.

The Acting Speaker: Okay.

Ms Hoffman: I'm moving third reading, and then I understand there will be a motion.

Oh. It does say amendment in this sentence. I understand why you'd say that. Sorry. It's been a busy 24 hours. There was the word "amendment" in here, and I'm sorry for that. Oh, you know why? The word "amendment" is in here because it's amendments to

current legislation that governs the Health Professions Act. So the bill in itself is an amendment.

Don't worry, Aaron, the wording was correct. Yeah. I'm sure his heart just stopped.

Given that this bill is in itself an amendment to the Health Professions Act, the proposed amendments would protect Albertans from sexual abuse and sexual misconduct by regulated health professionals. If passed, it will establish mandatory penalties for sexual abuse and sexual misconduct by regulated health professionals. It will require more transparency for regulatory colleges by having disciplinary actions related to sexual abuse and sexual misconduct clearly and consistently posted online. It will increase survivor supports by providing them with access to treatment and counselling. Those are all of the amendments the bill proposes currently.

Women and all Albertans deserve to feel safe while accessing health care services, and this bill will do just that. If passed, it will make Alberta a national leader in protecting patients from sexual abuse and misconduct. Madam Speaker, Bill 21 will help protect Albertans and ensure that appropriate penalties are in place. We have had some very productive conversations with the opposition, and I expect that the hon. Opposition House Leader will rise in a moment.

With that in mind, I move third reading.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to rise today, and thank you to the Deputy Premier for her comments. I have to start off today by pointing out the extraordinarily different tone that is coming from the Deputy Premier and the government side of the House when it comes to this legislation. I'm happy to see the different tone because I think it will be good for Albertans in the long run, but I am a little shocked to see it. I'm not sure what has happened in the last 24 hours, but it appears that the government is indicating that they would like to change their mind on some of the decisions that they made in the Chamber over the last several days. As such, because I am such a nice Opposition House Leader, I have decided to move the following motion.

Madam Speaker, would you like me to give you the copies first, or do you want me to move now?

The Acting Speaker: If you could, just to make sure it's in order first, bring a copy to the table, please.

Mr. Nixon: I will await your instructions.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, please go ahead.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I move that the motion for third reading of Bill 21, An Act to Protect Patients, be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 21, An Act to Protect Patients, be not now read a third time but that it be recommitted to Committee of the Whole for the purpose of reconsidering sections 7 and 26.

Madam Speaker, it is not the first time, as you know, that I have moved a procedural amendment in this Assembly in an attempt to get the government to either reconsider their legislation or to send it to committee to make sure that they got it right. But by the indication from the Deputy Premier this morning it appears that it will be the first time that the government accepts that recommendation, which is interesting in and of itself.

The move from third reading back to Committee of the Whole is highly unusual, in my point, Madam Speaker. It tells me that the

government has changed its mind and its heart when it comes to allowing predatory doctors to reapply for reinstatement after just five years. If the government had just listened to members from this side of the House when they had a chance, we would not be in this unprecedented situation. The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills rose during the amendment debate and gave the minister an opportunity at that point to be able to adjourn the debate and reconsider the direction that the government seemed to be going on this legislation.

At the time then the minister rose and said that not only did the opposition have it wrong about the five years but that she had consulted with sexual assault groups, that this is the direction that they wanted to go. After that debate in the House the opposition started to get called by those types of groups saying that consultation did not happen. The reality is that what we saw take place is the government yet again, out of its partisan bent, its inability to be able to work across party lines on important issues like this that should not have been a partisan issue, to be able to cross and work with us to be able to get this done right, instead just blindly, automatically voted against what the opposition brought forward. Then they find themselves in a spot like this.

It's alarming to me because this is how it took so long to even get this bill to the floor in the first place. The Leader of the Opposition and the hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View were bringing this forward in the last sitting of the House. No mention of that, Madam Speaker, when it was finally brought, this legislation, to this Assembly. No mention or a thank you at that time for the work they did, though they weren't doing it for a thank you. But the reality is that the government went and waited over an entire spring and an entire summer to even bring this legislation to this floor because they didn't want the hon. members to be able to have credit for the process.

So now we've already had to wait six or nine months, when predatory people in the medical community could be in a position of power still over their patients, because this government, rather than work with the opposition on something – again, I could think of no other better example of a nonpartisan issue, but they still went out of their way to prolong this for Albertans.

Then they bring the legislation to the House, and they get it wrong. They stand up for the idea that somebody who did something so terrible to a patient and a person that they had power over could then have their licence back in five years. I haven't talked to one constituent, anybody on this issue who thought that was a reasonable position of the government.

The opposition comes forward with reasonable amendments and automatically, Madam Speaker, the Deputy Premier and the rest of the NDP caucus rise and defend an undefendable position because of their blind hatred for the opposition. That's what it feels like. This can't continue to happen because this is what happens. I've talked about this so much. This government brings forth legislation and has to either amend it days after they've brought it forward because they realized that they've made a mistake, or, more often than not, they have to come back six or seven months later and amend their position.

9:10

I also think that it's important that at some point today the government explain what has changed because they've put a tremendous amount on the record, a tremendous amount of content on the record in *Hansard*, defending the position of five years. Yesterday the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition asked why the government had a five-year ban instead of a lifetime ban, and both the Premier and the minister defended their position. That's less than 24 hours later. The concern then has to become,

because of the history of this bill: how do we now know that this amendment actually has fixed everything? I think, Madam Speaker, there are a lot of people who are going to want to speak about this, but it's important that we were clear on how we ended up here.

With that said, though, I move this amendment because I believe that this is such an important issue, and I hope that the government will finally reconsider it and look at the reasonable amendments that have been brought forward by the opposition and get this right for Alberta.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Sorry to be hesitant to stand up. This is a little bit unexpected, the way that things have played out. [interjection] Apparently one of the members across the way finds something funny about this subject. I don't think anything is funny at all. I think it's really unfortunate that we're in this position today. I did move an amendment last week asking for a lifetime ban, and I'm looking forward to seeing what's in this recommittal. As late as Tuesday I asked the acting House leader if we could extend Committee of the Whole so I could bring forward another amendment after speaking to the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services. I know that they met this week, and I suspect that some of this has to do with a letter that they forwarded, that I'll happily read into the record later.

I'm of mixed feelings. I'm grateful that we are taking another look at this, and I'm really disappointed that it had to be such a struggle to get to this point, to be able to do something that was patently right. It was the right thing to do from the beginning. There was a lot of wasted energy, and I'm super disappointed that we had to work so hard to get this to happen. I'm looking forward to hearing what the amendments are.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the recommittal amendment? Oh, yeah; 29(2)(a). My apologies.

Ms Hoffman: Sorry. Not 29(2)(a), no.

The Acting Speaker: Sorry. Are there any other members wishing to now speak to the recommittal?

Ms Hoffman: I would just encourage my colleagues to support the motion.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Any other members, 29(2)(a), wishing to the speak to the referral? Seeing none.

[Motion on amendment REC1 carried]

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: I would like to call the committee to order.

Bill 21 An Act to Protect Patients

The Deputy Chair: The Committee of the Whole has under consideration sections 7 and 26 of Bill 21, An Act to Protect Patients. Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be

offered in respect to these sections of the bill? The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. It's always fun making that switch from Speaker to chair and soon back to Speaker, I imagine.

With me I have a copy of an amendment that I'd like to propose.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Deputy Premier. If you could just wait until we have a copy at the table.

Please go ahead. This is amendment A7.

Ms Hoffman: Yeah. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I want to be very clear that our government has always and continues to believe that sexual assault is a heinous crime and that it will not be tolerated. That's why we introduced legislation to protect patients from sexual abuse, sexual misconduct, sexual assault, making Alberta only the second province to do so so clearly. We've listened to survivors and listened closely to the organizations who support them as we drafted the legislation. We did indeed work with sexual assault centres, and we continued to work with them during this debate. I was very proud to stand with them in support of this legislation when we introduced it.

While the penalties in this legislation were modelled after Ontario's, we agree with survivors that we can and should go further than Ontario did to protect patients in Alberta. That's why we listened to survivors and consulted our legal counsel yet again, and we are amending the legislation to ensure that those medical professionals who have committed sexual assault can never apply for reinstatement here in Alberta, those who have committed it and went through an original hearing tribunal and were found guilty of that through the tribunal process.

We want to ensure that this legislation is as strong as possible while still empowering survivors to come forward and enabling colleges to protect their patients, and these amendments will do just that. I'm happy to hear further comments from my colleagues and to respond to those as well.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment on sections 7 and 26? The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I am pleased to rise in support of this amendment; however, I will enumerate reasons for which I believe it is inadequate. Therefore, it is my intention to propose a subamendment should this one be adopted by the committee.

Madam Chair, first I'd like to review how we got here. Last April my colleague the deputy Leader of the United Conservative Party and Member of the Legislative Assembly for Chestermere-Rocky View was the first member to raise in this place the concern about physicians who have been found culpable of various forms of sexual assault against patients or indeed colleagues. In fact, my colleague raised this on April 19 of this year, and shortly thereafter I raised a question in this Chamber about the practice of the college of physicians allowing a licence to practise to member physicians who had been found guilty of sexual assault. We all know the particular case which led to this, which seemed to us a *prima facie* abuse of the regulatory authority of the College of Physicians & Surgeons, an authority granted to it by this Assembly on behalf of Albertans.

How much time do I have?

The Deputy Chair: Eighteen minutes.

Mr. Kenney: Sorry. I'm still learning the rules around here, Madam Chair. Thank you for your patience.

Madam Chair, I think it's very important for us to underscore that regulatory bodies, professional licensing agencies designated by the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, while they are self-governing agencies, are accountable to and ultimately derive their authority from this place, acting on behalf of Albertans, and they, therefore, do not have *carte blanche* to abuse their regulatory authority in such a flagrant way as to grant a licence to practise medicine to predator doctors. This I think is a matter, quite frankly, of common sense. I think this is a question that transcends partisan or ideological views.

This is in part about the sanctity of the doctor-patient relationship. It is about the vulnerability of patients who enter into that relationship, trusting implicitly that the physicians treating them will act as conscientious professionals, respecting their personal, physical, and sexual integrity. So when a physician violates that trust in such a flagrant way as to sexually assault or abuse a patient, it is, I believe, essentially an unforgivable crime in terms of their professional credentials. Of course, Madam Chair, such instances may also be subject to criminal sanction under the Criminal Code of Canada, and they may also be subject to professional censure.

9:20

But the question before us now, a question that the Official Opposition raised in this place six months ago, is whether a slap on the wrist is adequate as a sanction by the licensing body to discipline a member who has sexually abused a patient. That is why last spring, Madam Chair, I called on the government to bring forward legislation to deal with this. Now, when I first did so, the hon. the Minister of Health said, essentially, that the college didn't have the power to withhold licences. So I said, right on the spot: well, then why don't we amend the relevant legislation to grant the college the power to withhold permanently the right to practise from predator doctors? And I indicated to the hon. the minister and the government that we in the opposition would be keen to co-operate in any way with the government in the development or passage of such legislation swiftly, and we were quite frankly prepared to do that last spring, to fast-track legislation of that nature.

Well, it's unfortunate that it took the government so long to act, but finally they came forward with legislation now. It clearly wasn't a priority in the spring. So they finally came forward with legislation. But even though this matter had initially been raised by the opposition in a completely constructive and nonpartisan fashion with a polite offer of co-operation, the government did not consult with the opposition prior to the introduction of the bill. When concerns were then raised by the opposition about the legislation, about it allowing for predator doctors to have their licences renewed, Madam Chair, the government dismissed these concerns out of hand and voted against three opposition amendments to allow for a long-term or effectively a lifetime ban on predator doctors from practising medicine.

Madam Chair, I want to dial back, though. What I found really problematic – I'll get back to the substance of the issue in a second, but I want to talk about the process that led us to this peculiar moment this morning of the government furiously backpedalling in embarrassment over its mishandling of this important issue. When I rose in the spring to ask the minister about this issue, I did so in the most polite, respectful way possible, and the hon. minister responded with a partisan and personal attack – a partisan and personal attack – as the *Hansard* transcript will confirm. I think that's exactly the problem that led us to this place, a spirit of

hyperpartisanship that we see from this government in general and, quite frankly, from this minister in particular.

Let me share with you the exchange that we had, Madam Chair. Here you have a serious issue affecting vulnerable women in particular, a good faith effort on the part of the opposition to reach across the aisle to the government. I thanked the minister in advance for any co-operation we could have on this issue. I offered in a nonpartisan way to co-operate, and her response was a partisan and personal attack. The refusal to even contemplate operating in good faith with the opposition is what led us to this embarrassing moment today.

I would like to propose to the government that it consider this a learning moment. That perhaps, Madam Chair, there's not a Manichaean kind of duality here, where the government is all good and the opposition is all bad. Perhaps the government could admit, in the wake of this legislative fiasco, that elected members of the opposition, at least on occasion, are acting in good faith and can be constructive legislative partners in finding solutions for Albertans.

Madam Chair, this points to a larger issue. When I had the honour of becoming Leader of the Opposition, I met with my colleagues in this caucus and said that I think Albertans expect us to raise the bar of decorum and civility in this place. When I first visited the Assembly, shortly after being elected leader but before being elected a member of this place, I couldn't believe the disrespectful noise back and forth, the desk thumping, the heckling, the unnecessary insults from, quite frankly, both sides.

And I understand what happens. You know, I've got a little bit of parliamentary experience. In my 19 years in the federal Parliament I would see when hyperpartisanship would take over and, mea maxima culpa, Madam Chair, undoubtedly many times in those 19 years I was responsible for it. It didn't make me proud. In fact, perhaps as I matured, it made me learn that politics, at least in a deliberative Chamber such as this, could be done differently.

It is important that this is a place for the clash of ideas. It is inevitable and desirable that we should have vigorous debates, disagreeing vigorously on policy issues – that's how this great Westminster parliamentary democratic system ought to be – but surely undergirding that should be a basic respect for one another that I think has been, frankly, devoid in this Chamber. When I hear the kinds of insults, I mean – I'm sorry to raise this, but I'm going to, Madam Chair – I don't think it's a coincidence that the minister who walked herself into this problem in part by her refusal to even sit down and talk to the opposition or seriously to consider opposition amendments is the minister who stood up in this place and said that members of my party, quotes, hang out with sewer rats.

And I appreciate that the member apologized for that, Madam Chair, but I raise this for a point. The tendency to go to that kind of rhetorical extreme in demonizing your opposition is what leads to a failure to co-operate in a spirit of civility and nonpartisanship on certain issues like this, issues that ought to transcend partisanship. Now, I am a partisan. I hope that my party wins the confidence of Albertans next year. We're going to have a strong debate in the election and the time leading up to it, but surely there are moments when we can park the partisanship.

I raise this because I really do hope this will be a learning moment about the importance of co-operation when it is possible. I think that's all Albertans expect of us. They don't want this Chamber to be an echo chamber. They don't expect us all to be of like mind on everything all of the time. They understand that spirits will get high occasionally. I get that. None of us are angels, Madam Chair. But when there is an honest, good-faith effort to reach out, perhaps we could accept that.

Let me share this with you in the context of my own parliamentary experience. When I had the honour of serving as a minister of the federal Crown, I made it a point to reach out to my opposition shadow ministers or critics to consult with them on legislation before it was drafted and after it was introduced. In fact, Madam Chair, I believe if you check with my former opposition shadow ministers, they will confirm this, including the Rt. Hon. the Prime Minister, who was my critic for three years, and including somebody I consider a dear friend, a New Democrat, Olivia Chow. She was my critic for three years, and she will confirm, if asked, that I in multiple cases accepted a number of NDP amendments to Conservative government bills that I introduced.

9:30

I'll go a step further, Madam Chair, and I will reveal that my boss, the Prime Minister, didn't like me coming back to cabinet to seek approval to amend government legislation to accept opposition amendments. He wasn't really big on that idea. But I thought it was critically important that to the greatest extent possible we try to find common ground, that if we couldn't find complete consensus, we at least listen to one another. I spent dozens of hours as a federal minister sitting down with my counterparts in the opposition parties, including the NDP, to try to find common ground. Now, I'm sure those opposition critics will say that I didn't do it enough because I didn't accept all the opposition amendments – I didn't agree with them all of the time – but they will absolutely confirm that I tried to reach out and often did accept their amendments in good faith.

So if I could do that with the NDP in opposition in the House of Commons, why can't this NDP government do it with the Conservative opposition in this Legislature, Madam Chair? Is that an unreasonable thing to suggest?

Now, I have this from May 2, 2018, in *Hansard*, and I'm going to quote this into the record. I asked the hon. the Minister of Health:

Can the minister clarify, please, whether or not the College of Physicians ... has agreed that they will withdraw licences to practise from physicians who are charged with sexual assault or are under investigation for that kind of terrible crime?

The minister said:

Thank you ... Mr. Speaker. Some governments are further ahead of us in their work in this regard ... We're definitely working in close partnership to make sure that all Alberta women can feel safe when they're going to the doctor.

I replied:

I thank the hon. minister for the substantive answer, Mr. Speaker. I think the minister is telling us that the college will not do this unilaterally but requires legislation. Why could the college not take its own disciplinary action to withhold licences from physicians accused of sexual assault? Secondly, I can assure the minister that we would co-operate with the expeditious passage of any legislation granting the college that power.

The minister replied, saying:

I'm excited to hear that the member is willing to show up and vote on a bill that is certainly important to women accessing health care services ...

It's good to hear that the member of the Official Opposition plans on showing up in this regard ... I've heard the quote that 90 per cent of success is about showing up. As an Alberta woman I'm concerned about what the track record of that member has been, but I'm glad he plans on showing up for this vote.

There's only one way I could characterize that response, which is snark, Madam Chair, a snarky, partisan response in an answer from the Deputy Premier of Alberta in response to a completely nonpartisan expression of gratitude and offer of co-operation. That's the attitude which caused the minister not to sit down with my colleague or other opposition members to discuss the statutory

solution to the loophole allowing predator doctors to get their licences to practise. That's the attitude, the hyperpartisan effort to demonize other members of this place, which caused the government and the minister to dismiss out of hand three thoughtful and constructive amendments brought forward by opposition members.

Again, there's not a lot of time left in this Legislature, a few more months, but hopefully in those few months, as partisan tempers rise inevitably as we get closer to an election, how about in this place we make a conscientious effort to find common ground?

In that spirit, Madam Chair, I thank the government, I thank the hon. the Minister of Health for having reconsidered this issue. I thank the government and the minister for having reconsidered this matter. I thank them for the motion that they have brought forward. I'm glad that they now have had a change of mind and agree with us in principle that the consequence of the abuse of practice by predator doctors should be potentially a permanent ban on their ability to potentially victimize other patients, and I look forward to speaking a little bit more on the substance of this amendment later in the debate.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

I'll now recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Chair. To preface my remarks, I want to apologize to the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark. I assumed that he was laughing while I was speaking, and he was not, so I want to offer my apology.

I'll also preface my remarks with: I find this difficult to talk about, and the more we talk about it, the harder it is. I have PTSD because of sexual assault, so every time we talk, it's like ripping a Band-Aid off, but I think it's important, so I hope you'll bear with me. These are just tears, it's just water, and I'm just a human being.

I'm very grateful for this amendment. I'm grateful that this is a lifetime ban, and I'd like to hope that my remarks earlier this week about the courage of survivors coming forward had some influence over the decision to bring this amendment forward today. Last week, after I moved my amendment for a lifetime ban and it was voted down, I reached out to the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services, and I had a conversation with them because I wanted to make sure that I wasn't off the mark, that the lifetime ban that I had proposed wasn't unreasonable. Through that conversation the request was made to wait a few days because the association was meeting yesterday, and they had a very thoughtful, difficult conversation about what's appropriate in these circumstances.

I'd like to read part of that letter into the record because I think it's really important. Now, these are people that provide services to sexual assault survivors every day. This is what they do every day. I think they're amazing. I think that what they do is invaluable, and I don't think we could ever pay them enough money for the healing that they provide.

The Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services applauds Alberta for being the second province in Canada to adopt a policy that protects patients from sexual violence. The issue of sexual violence has been surrounded in silence, secrecy and shame, and after 25 years of advocating on behalf of survivors in this province, we are appreciative of such passionate discussion amongst our political leaders.

Health professionals occupy a unique position of power and control over their patients, and the abuse of this power and the betrayal of that trust can have devastating lifetime effects.

As survivor advocates, we are in full support of a lifetime ban. We have no doubt that the after effects of this type of sexual victimization impact survivors throughout their entire life.

To ensure the tribunals at regulatory bodies employ the most consistent and effective response, AASAS strongly recommends:

- Training for all tribunal members on the myths and stereotypes that surround the crime of sexual violence
- Inclusion of at least two sexual violence experts/advocates as tribunal members.

I hope we see some flavour of these recommendations developed in regulation. I think it would be a great benefit to any tribunal that's hearing a case such as this, so I'm really hopeful that that's what we'll see. I just want to say that with everybody here today voting in favour of this amendment, we're helping survivors heal. We're showing them really clearly that we do believe them and that what they have to say is very important, and for those reasons I encourage everyone to support this amendment.

9:40

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

I'll now recognize the hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park, followed by the hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Cortes-Vargas: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's an honour to rise to speak today, one, to speak to Bill 21 but also to the amendment that we're discussing on the floor today and to thank the hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill for her work on this. I deeply appreciate how emotional this is. I, too, am a survivor of sexual abuse. I, too, am also a survivor that has never had the opportunity to take and bring this kind of issue to a court, nor will I probably ever be.

Madam Chair, when I hear the Leader of the Opposition stand up on a bill about protecting patients and take the 10 minutes to discuss how this was unfair to him, I feel like that is the ultimate demonstration of privilege if I've ever seen it. I mean, I think that the work on this has happened on so many fields. I know that the member opposite that they were talking about has brought these questions up in question period.

I know that some of these incidents started in Sherwood Park, so I started working with the minister seven months ago. I didn't say, you know: why didn't they do it? I looked into why they couldn't do it, and I saw that they didn't have the teeth in their legislation to do this. I saw and I met with the Alberta Medical Association, and they wanted the college of physicians – sorry; I'm talking about a different regulatory body. They wanted to be able to address this properly because overall their goal is to maintain the safety of patients, and they are deeply committed to that cause.

I think that when we make this about one individual – frankly, this isn't about him. This is about survivors, this is about patients, and this is about access to health care without fear that you're going to experience some form of sexual abuse, some impropriety. You shouldn't have to feel that. I think of the patient that went through that and how difficult it would be to cross that barrier, to go into an office, and to think about what kind of protections they can put in place to make sure it doesn't happen again. That would be exponentially difficult, Madam Chair.

That is the kind of thing that motivated me to work with the ministry, to look at which province was the only one that had legislation on this front, and it was Ontario. I spent hours upon hours reading the current tribunal processes, the issues that brought it forward in Ontario then. The fact is that the College of Physicians and Surgeons there conducted their own investigations as to what powers they could grant the tribunal there in order to support this.

This process has been different in Alberta. The process was brought forward by the legislative body, by us, and we looked at consultation with them. It was the opposite in Ontario, and I think that allowed for a capacity to have investigative reports, and they go into great depth. In fact, before the legislation was passed there, the College of Physicians and Surgeons brought forward a letter that goes through each problem that they see in the current way it sits. Frankly, how our legislation stood before this kind of read the same, so you'd go through the same problem. What happens if we bring forward a complaint? What can the tribunal look at? What do we do for transparency? All of these things had similarities in scope because for a long time we hadn't looked at how to modernize the rules and the powers given to them.

I thank, first of all, the minister for being able to have collaborative conversations about this, for reaching out to AASAS. I think that if you want to make this about not being able to consult and then at the same time seeing that we're right here, that we're having this conversation – we're not afraid to say that we're willing to solve a problem and that we're willing to stand up for the questions on the complexities of a bill like this.

We're not just talking about a slap on the wrist, as it was mentioned by the member opposite, for a misconduct. Five years out of the profession: in the medical association any doctor will tell you that that's almost equivalent to never being able to practise again. I talked to nurses: the same thing for them. That is not a slap on the wrist.

At the same time, like, the characterization of that ultimately damages the public perception of their protection in this. Ultimately, I think that when we talk about survivors and how they bring forward questions and concerns, sometimes it's, "I don't think they meant to say this, but this is how they made me feel." If we don't have a way to address that – sometimes you just want to be able to say: "Can we resolve this and not go through a terrible tribunal process where I'll have to, you know, provide testimony? That creates stress in my life. Can we find a way to address this?" If we make it so, so difficult, then I can see that as a barrier for people to come forward. Do we want to do that? Do we want to evaluate the consequences of what we do?

I absolutely agree that if someone takes their power and their position as a doctor, as a nurse – and we're talking about almost 40 different colleges in this situation. If someone abuses their power, we absolutely need to make sure that there are consequences. We absolutely need to make sure that patients have the ability to understand that background, what their rights are. That's going to be hard enough, Madam Chair, because understanding regulatory bodies isn't something that people inherently think about. If I think that something happened to me with a doctor that I wasn't particularly happy about, before I came to this Legislature, I wouldn't be, like: "Oh, right. I have to call the College of Physicians & Surgeons." No one thinks about that. We still have to make sure that those bodies that are put in place have the ability to protect them, and I think that's where I applaud the members opposite for standing up to this.

But I also recognize that the conversation has to be based on appropriate levels of justice as well. We are talking about a tribunal that would then allow – and one of the other things I'm proud of here is that we looked at the tribunal and we said: in this instance, if a case was to be brought forward, it would be the balance of probabilities that would cause them to be able to rule whether they were able to make the verdict. I think that that's crucially important in something like this. We talk about the number of people that do come forward and their success rates.

When we put something like this in place, it's because we've been meticulous in thinking of every single step because it's

important to make sure that the people that are members of these spaces also feel like they have the ability, if they did something that was inappropriate, to also rectify it in certain situations. It can be for smaller ones that would also fall under misconduct. I think that those things happen within society, and I think the Me Too movement has told us about the kinds of things that happen on a daily basis. I think that we need to find a way to address these things because we can't, frankly, just say that everyone is wrong. We need to find a way to have some form of restorative portion to what we're doing, because, at the end of the day, what we're working on is to create a culture that says: "Listen, this isn't okay. This can't continue to be in." I don't care if it was the culture of the past. I don't care if it was okay then. It's not okay because any form of sexual assault or sexual misconduct has a deep impact on anyone who has experienced it, an impact that you can't ever shake.

Madam Chair, at the end of the day, this amendment demonstrates the government's and the minister's ability to listen and the commitment to being able to get something right for a patient. I think that's how this should be characterized. Shame on the members opposite for saying that we aren't willing to work with them because this is exactly that demonstration. When you make a case for 10 minutes that all of this is terrible because we did it, because someone once mentioned your record – it's your record. If you don't like defending it, change it. That's not on us.

I think, Madam Chair, at the end of the day, we need to keep having these conversations. We need to ensure that not just in health care spaces are we supporting survivors but all across the board. I think that's where it is hard to have those conversations because it feels like we are at some point blaming someone for something that they've done. I think that when these conversations happen on a routine basis, that's why people get defensive, because they at some point may have said something that they don't know how to rectify now.

9:50

We have to give that space for people to grow, because if we can't grow within society, what are we giving people the opportunity to do? I'm not at all excusing anyone that ever thinks it is okay to implement their power and to abuse that power. Frankly, when you read the story that happened in Ontario, that actually brought this legislation to Ontario, it's actually appalling as to how something like that would happen in a doctor's room.

I think that it is absolutely imperative that we put this legislation forward, that we make sure that in the instance that we are moving forward with a tribunal verdict that says that they are guilty of a sexual abuse, they will not be able to practise again. I think we have to let the tribunal also do its work. Otherwise, why do we have it? Otherwise, we have to question why we are putting these things in place.

Madam Chair, this is so important for the work that we need to continue doing. I know that the members opposite know that. We've worked with them on different issues. This government actually does have a record of having supported amendments from the opposition in a way that is actually quite different than the former government. I mean, I will remind the members that I used to work for the Premier beforehand, and in her time in office before being Premier, she had one amendment that the previous government moved and approved, one amendment in a career of years.

I think that we have demonstrated session after session that we are willing to look at it. We don't have to agree on everything, but we are willing to look at these things. I mean, a lot of their amendments look very similar time after time because it's the procedure of how they're doing these things, but I think it's unfair

to characterize this bill – to put those things into perspective right now, I frankly feel that only someone that hasn't felt the pain of sexual assault in their life would make this about something, anything, other than that. I deeply feel that. When those kinds of comments are made, I get it. I get that everyone in this Legislature works hard and that, frankly, it is a job where you don't get much recognition when you do something right. I don't think that many members know that I started working on these things seven months ago and that I started bringing things forward to the minister's office and that she was getting annoyed with me for the number of things that I asked her to look at.

I think it's important that we keep debating this amendment and that we look at the importance of an amendment like this, Madam Chair. I really hope that the conversation can be about patients, about what we're looking at. Frankly, even our position before this was from consultations that we've had, from the worry about, as it was stated multiple times: what happens to the constitutionality? Will they be able to challenge it? I think it's a fair question to have when we're talking about a justice system. I think that resulted from the consultation. You can disagree on whether that is or not, but that's why we're here. We want to be sure that something that we're putting into legislation would be the best for the patients and to make sure that we are providing appropriate health care.

Madam Chair, thank you very much for allowing me to make comments to Bill 21 and to the amendment today. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky ... No. That's not right. Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: I get confused with him all the time.

Thank you so much for the opportunity. I actually, really, don't know where to start other than that I think we need to bring this back to why we're here in the first place. One of the things I'd like to mention is that the hon. Leader of the Opposition has been an absolutely incredible advocate by the side of all of us on this side trying to bring this legislation forward. I couldn't have more gratitude for a person who has worked so hard alongside us to bring this legislation forward. Then for him to be attacked personally in this Legislature for bringing forward questions that have ultimately led to this legislation and then to have the government attack him for his good work in here, working with us and offering to work with the government, I think that shame needs to be turned back around onto the government. You need to consider why we're here in the first place.

One other thing that I'd like to address before I go fully into this amendment is that the member who just spoke was talking about the reality of the people who commit these crimes and about their rights to be able to have a tribunal and all these kinds of things. Okay. But I'm going to tell you something, Madam Chair. My body, the bodies of anybody in this room, my children, my parents, anybody that I love: if a doctor ever – ever – hurt or molested or touched anybody that I know and that person was not held accountable and the government does not have the guts to stand up and say that that's not appropriate, then shame on them.

On top of that, when we brought legislation forward to extend the ban in legislation, that we're grateful for – I think all of us have said this here at least once, that we are grateful for this legislation, no doubt, whoever brought it forward. Let me also say that the college of physicians and doctors, if you have consulted with them, would be grateful for the ability to do their jobs properly. That would have to be mandated by this government, and this strengthening that we brought forward would give them all of the tools that they need to hold accountable these people who decide that in vulnerable

situations they're allowed to massage breasts and pinch buttocks and actually, in Ontario, molest 21 people that were sedated. Twenty-one before it actually came forward, and he was banned for 10 years and was allowed to reapply, as far as I understand.

Let's be clear about why we're here in the first place. This is a nonpartisan issue. This is something that we brought up with the very good intention of helping to change the legislation. This amendment is strong. It could be stronger. We have an absolute responsibility. Let me just quote. Like I said, I don't even know where to start. Let me quote here from the hearing tribunal.

Dr. Taher did not suggest he had any medical basis to touch the patient's buttock or breasts.

He admitted that. I don't know; maybe he deserves more of a tribunal. We'll let the government decide that.

Then it goes on to say that he had reported that

at the time he had believed the patient's attire and behavior had been an indication that she had been giving him "an invitation."

Really? And the government wants to stop our ban on somebody like this from being able to reapply after five years because, technically, after five years they're not competent anymore, they have to reapply, and it would be difficult for them. I'm sorry. I'm not going to weep over that. I'm weeping over the person that went there, trusted a doctor, and was manipulated by that doctor. Let's be clear about why we're here. The public confides in their physicians.

The member had also said that the physicians are the ones that bear the burden of this, and they do. You don't think for one moment that physicians want to make sure that legislation is strong enough so that any young person that's coming into this very, very noble profession understands, right from the get-go, that do no harm means that: do no harm? But if we want to get into the weeds of what that means or that particular situation and make exceptions to the rule before we even get started, my goodness, are we not going 10 steps backwards?

10:00

What is the purpose of this legislation? The purpose is to lay down a foundation to make sure that anyone that comes into this noble profession – and as it was pointed out to me, in education if a teacher is fired for these particular reasons, they can't come back to school. Would you like to know that the teacher that's teaching your child, grandchild, cousin, friends, neighbour's child had after five years reapplied and then was allowed to teach young children again after having molested a child? We're talking about this legislation as it pertains to women, but what about children? What about vulnerable people, anybody in a situation like that?

Do any of you in this House want to stand in that doctor's office that has molested or behaved in any inappropriate manner – you tell me right now – who has proceeded with that, completely vulnerable in whatever situation you're in there for, and be okay because after five years they were allowed to apply or they happen to have a mentor with them who watches over them while you are shirt off, pants down, vulnerable?

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, I know that this is an important subject for everybody in the House. Just a reminder, if you could do it through the Chair, please, instead of speaking to each other. Thank you.

Mrs. Aheer: Sorry, Chair. I appreciate that. Thank you so much. Through you.

I would like to know who in here would like to be in that doctor's office and is okay with that. Any of you? Sorry, Chair.

I would like to know, Madam Chair, if anybody in this House is okay with that. And if you are, stand up now and say that that's

okay and that you're okay with five years and that that's enough, that after that time, that person has learned their lesson and they're not going to manipulate a vulnerable person while in their care because they didn't know what they were doing the first time around.

It is an absolute honour to be here, absolutely beyond my wildest dreams and expectations to be able to stand in this House with people who care about Alberta. Protecting patients from sexual assault: actually, this bill should be renamed An Act against Predatory Doctors. This act is so important in promoting health. We talk about women's health, but this is all people. All of us are vulnerable when we're in front of a doctor. All of us. We tell them stories about absolutely everything that is going on in our lives – absolutely everything – things, Madam Chair, that you would not normally tell to even somebody you know that well because it's so personal. You're going to that person with this information in your hand, going: please help me and my situation. The mistake that the government made in not accepting the legislation that we brought forward hopefully will be fixed in this amendment. I'm grateful that they've taken actions to improve this important piece of legislation.

The fear of sexual assault by a health care provider should never be a barrier. For anybody who has ever been at the hands of a predator or sexual assault, the thought of going in, Madam Chair, to a doctor and being that vulnerable is already an issue. The experience of the Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin: she talks about a gynecologist there in Fort McMurray that was charged with assaulting six female patients between 2003 and 2005. Am I correct? Yeah.

It's very, very overwhelming, actually, to hear about, especially if you consider rural areas. You know, we're considering people who – a lot of these doctors who live in rural areas know their patients, they know the families, they have dinners together. I'm very good friends with my doctor. So that trust is even beyond just the doctor-patient relationship.

All of us were horrified to learn about the disturbing report on Dr. Taher that was about the sexual assault and about the patients that were twice assaulted and the nurse that had been allowed to return to work even though the doctor, Dr. Taher, who was working there had shown this pattern of behaviour. She had to go back and work with this guy.

So you can imagine, after fighting so hard to get this information across, that we were very happy to see this legislation come forward, but I think what we need to consider altogether here, Madam Chair, are the loopholes that are still there. Beyond the emotions that I personally have and have shown and beyond the partisanship that has happened with the bill, you know, with respect to speaking about this and beyond where credit goes or doesn't go, it's about: we have to go to bat for the Albertans who put forward multiple – and those amendments that we created on this side: this was because Albertans, their voices were in our ears through those amendments.

The amendments aren't for the people in this House. The amendments are for my neighbour next door that doesn't speak English very well. She's an amazing woman. They have four children. One of them has special needs, and she has to be able to go to her doctor, that she may not completely understand due to her limited English. She comes from a country where things might not have been as wonderful as Canada is, and everybody is telling her: you know, we are this amazing country, these beautiful people. We are. So she already goes into that relationship with that doctor, Madam Chair, with the desire for trust.

If we in this House can't uplift that public trust, we've lost already. This kind of legislation is there to actually invest in public trust, to invest in health care, to invest in what our expectations are.

All of us who are in here, Madam Chair, as politicians are held to a higher standard. Why is that? That's a good thing. The expectation of our doctors should be no less than that. We rise to the occasion. We work harder. We learn from our mistakes. If the actions of the government are only going to be totted up to partisanship and not working together on this, I feel very, very sorry and incredibly disappointed, and I'm sure Albertans are as well.

It's such a privilege to stand up in here for something that I'm so grateful for every day, and that's safety. I want to thank the Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill as well because as a survivor this is very, very difficult for her, too, and she's shown such grace and strength bringing forward legislation.

I wish that this had happened earlier this week when the bill was originally in third reading. Late is better than never. I want to thank the minister for being willing to take a step back and take a look at this legislation. No one is perfect, as the Leader of the Opposition had said earlier, and we're not expected to be, but this is a very, very important step forward. Five years after assaulting a patient is just not enough time. I cannot imagine a single Albertan, as you can tell by my speech this morning, who would be comfortable being alone with a physician who'd had the ability to reapply for their licence after a five-year ban for being sexually inappropriate or aggressive with a patient.

Consider, too, that sexual assault, sexual inappropriateness, and all of these things are very, very broad spectrum definitions, Madam Chair. Broad spectrum definitions. What we have to remember is that a doctor is a position of authority. No matter how you look at that, this is the person that has the information that is able to hopefully lead us.

What we're talking about here with this bill is actually prevention. It's based on a very, very sad situation and the absolutely horrific treatment of people who went for care, but actually the legislation is about prevention. The legislation is about setting up the right language, the right tone, and the right laws to be in place to make sure that the folks that are in this power position understand that privilege and understand the trust that is being given to them and that they enter into that wholeheartedly, understanding their responsibilities and that that is not something that any of us are willing to negotiate.

10:10

Physicians who are convicted by a tribunal of their peers should never ever be allowed to practise again. The credibility of our health system and the trust and safety of patients depend on this important change, that actually we advocated for very hard on this side, Madam Chair. I am honoured that I had the opportunity.

I would also like to thank my incredible, incredible staff, that have worked so hard with myself and the Leader of the Opposition, bringing this information forward. It's been very, very emotional and very hard on everybody, and I'm very proud of the people that I work with. I'm very pleased to have been able to bring this forward in the House and to see some resolution. I'm so proud of my colleagues. I'm so proud of my colleagues on this side of this House who fought so furiously to get this legislation to this point.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to begin by thanking my hon. colleague from Chestermere-Rocky View for her passionate remarks and deep conviction on this issue. I would also like to thank the hon. members for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill and

Strathcona-Sherwood Park for their sincere, powerful, and heartfelt words and for sharing their painful personal experiences with the House and with Albertans. That underscores the great seriousness of the issue with which we are seized. I'd like to also thank the Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill for having brought forward one of the thoughtful amendments on Bill 21 to eliminate the five-year window proposed in the original legislation.

I would also like, Madam Chair, just briefly to respond to some of the comments made by the Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park about myself. I regret if I said anything in my initial remarks to suggest that I would think this bill is about me. To the contrary, what I tried to convey was my disappointment, when I first raised this matter in a completely nonpartisan fashion and offered to co-operate with the government on behalf of the opposition, that the hon. the Minister of Health turned that into a personal attack. My point was simply that I hope we can all use this very peculiar volte-face on the part of the government, moving this from third reading back into Committee of the Whole, doing a complete policy reversal – I would hope that we could learn from this and learn that perhaps working more collaboratively and finding common ground across party lines is the best way to serve Albertans when and where it makes sense.

Now, having said that, Madam Chair, I would like to speak a little bit more about the substance of the amendment. To try to put this in layman's terms, section A(a)(3) of the amendment before the House proposes two substantive sections. One is subsection (3), which essentially says that if a physician has had their permit to practise medicine cancelled as a result of a decision of unprofessional conduct based in whole or in part on sexual abuse, they may not reapply for registration. They may not apply for reinstatement of their medical licence.

We wholeheartedly agree with this amendment, Madam Chair. It gives effect to the amendments proposed earlier this week by the Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill and the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View and the Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin. So we thank the government for having listened and addressed this because this is dealing now with predator doctors who've been found guilty of sexual abuse, which has a particular meaning, Madam Chair, in the Criminal Code of Canada and obviously deals with much more serious kinds of abuse.

We all recognize that there are different forms of sexual offences, and that is why the government amendment goes on in subsection (3.1) to say:

A person whose practice permit and registration are cancelled as a result of a decision of unprofessional conduct based in whole or in part on sexual misconduct may not apply for the practice permit to be reissued . . . [for] at least 5 years.

In layman's terms, what the government amendment, I think, understandably seeks to do is to make a distinction, to bifurcate the consequences between sexual abuse and sexual misconduct. It essentially says: a lifetime ban if a predator doctor has been found responsible for sexual abuse but the possibility of reapplying if the doctor is found guilty of sexual misconduct, which under the Criminal Code of Canada and the common law is a lower standard of offence.

One of the concerns we have, Madam Chair: while we wholeheartedly agree with the first part of this, the lifetime ban for abuse, we are concerned that there may be some kinds of misconduct characterized as sexual misconduct or unprofessional conduct which should merit the lifetime ban as opposed to the five-year ban proposed. For example, we understand that one of the most frequent forms of sexual or unprofessional misconduct on the part of a physician involves what is known as voyeurism, like videotaping or surreptitiously photographing patients in a

vulnerable situation. My understanding – and perhaps the Minister of Health could confirm this – is that the majority of complaints brought against physicians for offences of this nature deal with voyeurism, which is a grave invasion of the privacy and security of a patient.

With that in mind, I just wanted to give notice that we intend to bring forward a subamendment, which is being shared with the government. This is not a formal motion. I'm just giving the committee an informal heads-up to expect a subamendment from the opposition which would say that, notwithstanding anything to the contrary, a person whose practice permit and registration are cancelled as a result of a decision of unprofessional conduct under sections 82(1.1)(b) or 96.2(1)(b), based in whole or in part on a conviction of an offence under the Criminal Code, may not apply for the practice permit to be reissued and the registration to be reinstated.

Essentially, what we will be proposing, in a completely constructive spirit, Madam Chair, is an amendment to use the threshold established in the Criminal Code of Canada for triggering the lifetime ban on predator doctors. If, for example, a doctor is found culpable of having engaged in voyeurism that would meet the Criminal Code threshold of an offence – that is to say, that could carry a significant penal sanction – then we believe that should carry with it the lifetime ban proposed by the government under part A, subsection (3), of the government amendment.

10:20

We'll have a chance to clarify this when we share the proposed subamendment with members, but I just simply wanted to give our constructive input on this at this point, which is to say that while we do appreciate the government's willingness to reconsider the bill, to support bringing this back to committee, and while we do appreciate the effort to amend Bill 21 to ensure a lifetime ban for doctors who are responsible for sexual abuse, we do think that the next section may create loopholes that allow for the reinstatement of the licence for doctors who've been found guilty of a criminal offence that does not constitute sexual abuse but which is made up of other forms of abuse such as an invasion of privacy through voyeurism.

We'll offer that in due course this morning, Madam Chair. One of the reasons that we're speaking to this is because we've been trying – you know, all of this is happening at lightning speed by legislative standards, and we are working with Legislative Counsel and our research staff to frame this and potentially other amendments in the technically correct fashion. I just offer that as constructive input into this important debate.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

I'll now recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow, followed by the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin.

Drever: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for the opportunity to rise to speak to this amendment to Bill 21, An Act to Protect Patients. I think that it's been quite an interesting debate in this House, and I would really first, before I start, commend the Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill and the Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park on their courage to speak about their experience. In this Legislature I know that it's really hard to talk about those kinds of things as sexual assault does leave a scar, a scar that will never go away, so bringing it up is hard to talk about. I want to just say thank you for coming forward, because you're not just talking about yourself. You're also speaking about women across this province who don't have a voice, and you're standing up for their rights. I just want to personally say thank you for that.

You know, members on this side of the House, this bill and this amendment proceed naturally from our values. I know that the Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park just talked about how she's been in consultation with the Minister of Health for about seven months now. I know that with her background as a social worker, she has dealt with many cases like this and has consulted with many different organizations across Alberta and has a really good understanding around how to deal with this kind of thing. It's only natural that she would be a cosponsor of this bill. I'm proud to be a cosponsor of this bill as well. I've spent the majority of my years as a women's rights activist, and I think that's proven through my legislation helping women fleeing domestic violence situations by them not paying a fee. Since that, over 500 women have used that, and I think that it's needed. I'm just proud of our government's work in helping women.

It's something, actually, that has been ignored for quite a long time, for 44 years. This is why Albertans back in 2015 decided that they wanted a change. They were tired of not being heard, and it's refreshing that they have a government that's actually listening to the people. I'm just so proud to stand here and have the privilege to even talk about a bill that's really going to be helping hundreds of people's lives.

You know, I just find it really interesting that the Leader of the Official Opposition was just a few minutes ago talking about himself – instead, I feel like this bill is about survivors of sexual assault and sexual misconduct – and I find it insulting to women. I remember him putting forward a video after Bill 9 saying that he knows what's good for women in this province, and I would have to disagree with that wholeheartedly. I think his voting record as a Member of Parliament really speaks to that. His actions speak louder than his words, Madam Chair. Either way, it's good to know that at least they are listening to our government and agreeing with this amendment today.

Mr. Nixon: Point of order, Madam Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Point of order. Please go ahead.

Point of Order Relevance

Mr. Nixon: Madam Chair, I rise on relevance. We're talking about an amendment that has been brought forward by this government in an unprecedented way to correct a mistake. The member who is speaking right now is speaking about anything but the amendment. Quite frankly, I think it is quite ironic that she would spend her time attacking members on this side of the House when it's already been pointed out that that's the problem that got them to the same place. In addition to that, that member, just less than 48 hours ago, stood in this House three times and voted against women. That's her record in this Chamber, not the hon. members . . .

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, thank you.
The Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Madam Chair. I understand that the debate has gotten rather heated in this place today. I think that, based on the experiences of members in this Chamber, there has been a certain amount of latitude allowed today. I appreciate that the Opposition House Leader feels the need to amp this up, but I think the member is more than willing to carry on and get to the point. I'm seeing nodding, so I think that in that case we can carry on, and I'm sure she will speak on point.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. members. For all members of the House, if you could reference *Beauchesne's* 459, relevance of the debate. I try to allow as much leniency on both sides when we're in Committee of the Whole. I believe I've done that for the opposition side as well as the government side. If I could just ask that we on both sides refocus on the relevance of the sections. At this point there is no point of order.

Please go ahead, hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

Debate Continued

Drever: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, you know, the whole thing that I was trying to say was that this amendment is very important for women's lives. It will provide serious consequences to health care providers who think that they can get away with sexual misconduct or assault, and I'm just so proud to support it.

I've listened with great interest to members on all sides, in particular to the other side, the United Conservative Party. They've spoken very passionately about wanting to send a message to women in Alberta, as I mentioned before, but I can't help but think that they've already sent a very powerful message. Back in May of this year, when the House was debating Bill 9, Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act, I didn't hear a word, actually, from the members of the United Conservative Party. In fact, they left this House every time we voted on that bill, 14 times.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, if you could please focus on section 7 of the amendment.

Drever: No problem. You know, I'm just pleased that today they decided to join us in condemning violence and harassment inside a doctor's office.

I am very happy that our government has done a lot of work for survivors of sexual assault in this House. We've done a lot of work by increasing funding for women's shelters by \$15 million. That has helped more than 17,000 women and 14,000 children in Alberta. We have provided \$6 million in emergency financial supports to 5,489 Albertans fleeing abuse. This government has provided \$25 million in new funding for FCSS to address sexual violence and to promote healthy relationships.

This government has also provided \$33 million to 121 community projects that support survivors and to help end family violence and sexual violence. This government helped the North Rocky View Community Links family violence services project and Sagesse, a peer support service in Calgary and Airdrie, providing more than 1,500 counselling hours. I'm very proud of that. I know that I've personally been to many of these organizations myself, and they're very thankful for our government's work because now they can properly help their clients in addressing family violence and sexual assault.

10:30

You know, I just wanted to stand to say that I support this amendment, and I encourage everyone in this House to do the same. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

I will now recognize the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin.

Ms Goodridge: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to move an amendment, and I have the requisite number of copies here. Would you like me to wait until you receive the amendment?

The Deputy Chair: Just to clarify, hon. member, it's a subamendment?

Ms Goodridge: It's a subamendment, yes. Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Deputy Chair: You can just wait until I have a copy at the table.

Please go ahead, hon. member. Your amendment will be referred to as SA1.

Ms Goodridge: Wonderful. Thank you, Madam Chair. Alberta's United Conservatives are proud to have shown our effectiveness by pushing the NDP government to ensure any health care professional who sexually abuses a patient never practises again, but we can still do better.

Allow me to read this common-sense subamendment to the government's amendment to ensure that we cover all criminal convictions involving a doctor and a patient: (a) part A is amended (i) by renumbering it as part A.1 and by adding the following before part A.1: A. section 7(a) is amended by striking out "Subject to subsection (3), a person" and substituting "Subject to subsections (3.1) and (4.1), a person"; and (ii) by adding the following after clause (b): (b.1) by adding the following after the proposed section 45(4):

(4.1) Notwithstanding anything to the contrary, a person whose practice permit and registration are cancelled as a result of a decision of unprofessional conduct under sections 82(1.1)(b) or 96.2(1)(b), based in whole or in part on a conviction of an offence under the Criminal Code (Canada), may not apply for the practice permit to be reissued and the registration to be reinstated.

Madam Chair, as you've already heard many times over the past few days, the United Conservative Party does not believe a ban of five years is long enough for health professionals who commit serious sexual offences. The government's amendment today performs that service on behalf of patients if they have been sexually abused by a health professional. This will include all convictions under the Criminal Code that align with sexual abuse and all findings by a tribunal for guilt of sexual abuse.

What this amendment does not ensure is that health professionals whose licences have been pulled due to a Criminal Code conviction that aligns with sexual misconduct also face a lifetime ban. Our United Conservative caucus has been trying through every legislative means possible to us as members of the opposition to impose a lifetime ban on any health professional who has been found guilty of sexually abusing a patient and who has had their licence pulled for sexual misconduct. We are pleased the government's amendment shuts the door on convicted sexual abusers, but we also on this side of the House want to see the door closed for criminal convictions aligning with sexual misconduct.

The bar for a criminal conviction is high, and Albertans would be shocked to learn that Bill 21 leaves the door open for someone who has had any conviction for sexual offence involving a patient, including potentially harassment and voyeurism, to apply for their licence. We are hopeful that this government will understand the importance of dealing with all sexual offences with the same firm measure.

Let's fix this bill now to offer Alberta women and patients the utmost protection now and provide all Albertans with the faith that their legislators are crafting laws that deal firmly with all criminal convictions.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Deputy Premier and Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Yeah. Sorry. Is this 29(2)(a)?

The Deputy Chair: No. We're in Committee of the Whole.

Ms Hoffman: It's not. Okay. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I just want to say that I think the intent of the mover aligns with the intent that we share in government. I just have questions. The reference in the actual subamendment refers only to the Criminal Code. It doesn't say: of a sexual nature. As I understand it, we will soon be at a point where we rise. I think what the mover said in her remarks was: Criminal Code of a sexual nature. I think we might have to work collaboratively. Again, if there's an opportunity, when there is a desire to work on amendments – certainly, if we would have had this ahead of time, we could have worked on that language and would be happy to do so with our staff while we, of course, honour our veterans.

I have to say that I want to thank again all of the colleagues who have been involved in this process for many, many months. I believe it was in April when we first started speaking publicly about this. I know how heart-wrenching and emotional and challenging this has been for probably everyone but explicitly for the survivors who've approached me. I know how committed they are to making sure that this never happens again and that we ensure that every person who has survived has confidence that their abuser is being held accountable and won't have an opportunity to reoffend.

Again, I want to say to both of my cosponsors how honoured I am to have worked with them through this process to make sure that we not only send a very clear message – obviously, that is a big part of this – but that we also have by far the strictest legislation to ensure that there is no room. As I had mentioned in the introduction of this bill, the days of impunity are over, and we are bringing folks out of the darkness into the light so that folks have an opportunity through this legislation and through the work that we've done to align in supporting survivors.

A few ways that we've done that before today include, of course, the increased investments to the sexual assault centres as well as bringing forward protections for folks accessing . . .

Mr. Nixon: Point of order.

The Deputy Chair: A point of order called.

Point of Order Relevance

Mr. Nixon: Madam Chair, again, I'm very interested in hearing what the minister has to say about it. I think it's important to this piece of legislation, but we are literally on a subamendment. The relevance of this for the debate portion of this subamendment that is before the floor is confusing the process. I actually don't think that's the Deputy Premier's intention. I want to hear more about what the Deputy Premier has to say on this important issue. That's what Committee of the Whole is for, but we're specifically on this subamendment at this moment.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: As I was saying, I believe that this subamendment, with the intent that was referred to by . . .

The Deputy Chair: No. We're still on the point of order. Does the Deputy Government House Leader have a comment?

Ms Hoffman: Oh, I'll let my House leader defend my honour.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I do believe that the Deputy Premier is willing to refocus her comments with respect to the subamendment specifically, so I'm happy to let her continue.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. Deputy Government House Leader. Again, because we're in Committee of the Whole, I do try to allow some latitude. I know that there were some specific questions, so if the minister could maybe focus specifically on the new subamendment, that would be appreciated.

Debate Continued

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. The subamendment speaks to and the mover of the subamendment spoke to the importance of being very clear around the Criminal Code components, building on that, of course, and respecting the fact that it is survivors who we are motivated to ensure are protected and have the ability to have full confidence as well as anyone – any woman, any Albertan – entering the health care system. That's one of the reasons why through the legislation we've added the components around transparency and posting. I certainly appreciate the intent of the hon. member. I think we had a very good conversation with the opposition Health critic to explain why we were bringing forward our amendment this morning and last night, and I certainly welcome opposition members who have amendments and want to ensure that we're aligned and have good understanding to do the same moving forward.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. Deputy Premier, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(3) and Government Motion 28 I shall now interrupt the proceedings and call the committee to rise and report progress.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

10:40

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Committee of the Whole has under consideration certain sections of Bill 21. The committee reports progress on the following: section 7 and section 26 of Bill 21. I wish to table all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official record of the Assembly.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Does the Assembly concur in the report? All in favour, please say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Acting Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

The Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. As we were slated to adjourn at 10:45 in any event and seeing as everyone has a Remembrance Day ceremony to get to, I would propose that we call it 10:45 and adjourn until this afternoon.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 10:42 a.m. pursuant to Government Motion 28]

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The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, November 8, 2018

Day 48

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)
Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Conklin (UCP)
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (UCP)
Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (NDP)
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)
Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (NDP)
Hunter, Grant R., Cardston-Taber-Warner (UCP),
Official Opposition Deputy Whip
Jansen, Hon. Sandra, Calgary-North West (NDP)
Kazim, Anam, Calgary-Glenmore (NDP)
Kenney, Hon. Jason, PC, Calgary-Lougheed (UCP),
Leader of the Official Opposition
Kleinstauber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (NDP)
Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (NDP),
Deputy Government House Leader

Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (NDP)
Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (UCP)
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)
Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (Ind)
Malkinson, Hon. Brian, Calgary-Currie (NDP)
Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),
Government House Leader
McCuaig-Boyd, Hon. Margaret,
Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (NDP)
McIver, Ric, Calgary-Hays (UCP),
Official Opposition Whip
McKittrick, Annie, Sherwood Park (NDP)
McLean, Stephanie V., Calgary-Varsity (NDP)
McPherson, Karen M., Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill (AP)
Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (NDP)
Miranda, Hon. Ricardo, Calgary-Cross (NDP)
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)
Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (UCP),
Official Opposition House Leader
Notley, Hon. Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),
Premier
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (UCP)
Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (UCP)
Payne, Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (NDP)
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (NDP)
Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (NDP)
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (UCP),
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)
Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (NDP)
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP)
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)
Schneider, David A., Little Bow (UCP)
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (NDP)
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (NDP)
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (NDP)
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (UCP)
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (UCP)
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (NDP),
Deputy Government Whip
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)

Party standings:

New Democratic: 53 United Conservative: 26 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Freedom Conservative: 1 Independent: 2 Progressive Conservative: 1

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Director of House Services, and Acting
Clerk, Procedure
Stephanie LeBlanc, Senior Parliamentary
Counsel
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel

Philip Massolin, Manager of Research and
Committee Services
Nancy Robert, Research Officer
Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of
Alberta Hansard

Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms
Chris Caughell, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms
Tom Bell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

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Rachel Notley	Premier, President of Executive Council
Sarah Hoffman	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health
Shaye Anderson	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Sandra Jansen	Minister of Infrastructure
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Children's Services and Status of Women
Brian Malkinson	Minister of Service Alberta
Brian Mason	Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Community and Social Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

Parliamentary Secretaries

Jessica Littlewood	Economic Development and Trade for Small Business
Annie McKittrick	Education

STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

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Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	Luff
Dang	McPherson
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha
Deputy Chair: Mr. van Dijken

Carson	Littlewood
Connolly	McPherson
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schneider
Fitzpatrick	Starke
Gotfried	Taylor
Horne	

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Orr
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Fraser	Shepherd
Hinkley	Swann
Luff	Woollard
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Miller	

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Kleinsteinuber	Woollard
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Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Wanner
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Babcock	Nixon
Cooper	Piquette
Dang	Pitt
Drever	Westhead
McIver	

Standing Committee on Private Bills

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Anderson, W.	Orr
Babcock	Rosendahl
Drever	Stier
Drysdale	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kleinsteinuber	Taylor
McKitrick	

Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

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Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	Miller
Cooper	Nielsen
Goehring	Nixon
Gotfried	Pitt
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Carson	Miller
Clark	Nielsen
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Luff	

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Clark	Malkinson
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Fildebrandt	Panda
Hanson	Rosendahl
Kazim	Schreiner
Kleinsteinuber	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, November 8, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the high commissioner for New Zealand to Canada, His Excellency Daniel Mellsop, as well as Mr. Nick Fleming, trade commissioner and Consul General of New Zealand in Vancouver.

Mr. Speaker, there are many similarities between our two jurisdictions that allow for natural partnerships across a number of areas. I had the opportunity to sit down with His Excellency this morning to discuss some of those areas, including agriculture innovation. What's fascinating is that 80 per cent of New Zealand's electricity is generated by renewables, so there's lots in common between Alberta and New Zealand. We enjoy a warm relationship, and we look forward to working with the high commissioner to further our relations in trade and in areas like agriculture and to collaborate on matters of interest, especially to indigenous peoples. I'd now like to ask the high commissioner and Mr. Fleming to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you a group of seniors that have travelled to the Legislature today from the Heritage Place Lodge in Morinville: Simonne Deblois, Glen Gabby, Dell Risser, Marie-Thérèse Cyr, Dorothy DeChamplain, Jean, Liette Beaulieu, and Monica Warrener. They are here today to learn more about the happenings in the Alberta Legislature, and I welcome them here. I'd ask that they please rise to receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Mr. Piquette: M. le Président, c'est avec fierté que je me lève à la Chambre aujourd'hui pour introduire members of CFB Edmonton 1 Service Battalion, who are students in the official languages program. We have here Master Corporal Johnathan Cognac, Corporal David Houde, Leading Seaman Becada, Private Fortier, Aviator Monette, Corporal Migneault, and they are accompanied by their instructor, Deborah Stasiuk. I had the opportunity to chat with them at lunch, and I have to say that they are wonderful students, so obviously they must have a great teacher. A warm welcome to Alberta, and I hope that you really enjoy being here. I see that they've already risen, so I would like to have the members extend to them the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

Cortes-Vargas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly the very first class of the brand new school of Davidson Creek, and I hope that they'll stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly. It was my pleasure to be there as we were opening this school with an incredible amount of windows. I think that they're pretty excited to be here, so give them a warm welcome.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of my good friend from Battle River-Wainwright it is indeed my privilege to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a remarkable group of students from the Bashaw school. They are obviously here today to take a tour of the Legislature and learn a little more about how the Legislature works. I see just about everybody has risen there. If everybody is there, I'll say your name. The teachers are Rebecca Coates, Gerald Brouwer, and Lezley Lischynski. Hopefully, I got everything right there. Chaperones are Sara Jo Errity, Lori Miller, Maypu and Mark Mann, Sheena Singleton, Chad Singleton, Bobbi Wright, Jeff Bailey, Matt Greanya, Natasha Lawrence, Marie Leier, and Renée Groux. Please accept the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

Ms Babcock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of our Assembly SML Christian Academy. There are 17 students today here in the public gallery. They're accompanied by their teacher, Mrs. Vanessa Hamilton, and their chaperone, Mrs. Aimee Williams. If they could all stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of our Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ms Goehring: Mr. Speaker, today is Aboriginal Veterans Day. I'm honoured to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly distinguished visitors from the Aboriginal Veterans Society of Alberta. The society's mandate is to organize and unite all aboriginal veterans for advocacy and support of each other. Today we honour First Nation, Inuit, and Métis veterans for their dedication and sacrifice. Indigenous veterans bravely served in World War I and every world conflict since. We thank you for your sacrifices, for your service with the Canadian Armed Forces, and for your continued contribution to our society. Hay-hay.

I would ask our honoured guests to stand as I read your name: Corporal Wallace Bona, retired, royal Canadian electrical engineers and president of the Aboriginal Veterans Society of Alberta; Corporal Shawn Donovan, retired, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry; Corporal Clint Eastman, retired, intelligence branch for five years and 22 years with armoured, and his wife, Corporal Jocelyn Eastman, retired, served 16 years between the RCAF and the Royal Canadian Navy; Corporal Chuck Stevenson, retired, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, and his wife, Bridget Stevenson, who will be celebrating 52 years of marriage on November 21. I would ask that all my guests remain standing and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome. Thank you for your service.

Mr. Horne: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the winner of the

Royal Canadian Legion's Dominion essay contest, Sadie Vogel. Her father, Mr. Paul Vogel; her mother, Mrs. Penny Vogel; and her sisters Miss Ellie and Holly Vogel join Sadie in the Speaker's gallery. The Vogels are from St. Albert, where Sadie currently attends St. Albert Catholic high school. I am sure that many members will recognize Sadie, who read out part of her essay Remembering the Past and Reflecting on the Present at the Remembrance Day ceremony earlier today. On November 11 Sadie will be part of the ceremonies in Ottawa, where she will meet the Governor General and help lay a wreath at the National War Memorial. I would ask that Sadie and her family all rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome, and thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Isaac and Colleen Stepney. Isaac is in grade 6 at St. Pius X elementary school. He's excited to learn about the provincial government with his class this year. He enjoys playing ball hockey, reading, playing board games, and spending time with his family. Colleen is a retired Edmonton Catholic school social studies teacher who has brought many students to visit the Legislature. She is delighted to introduce her grandchildren to the history and traditions of the Legislature in hopes that it will inspire a lifelong interest in politics and the democratic process. I'd ask Isaac and Colleen to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

1:40

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise and introduce to you and through you Mark Taylor and his son Markus. Mark is the dedicated executive director of the Alberta Party and is raising a fine young man. It's a pleasure to have them as friends and in this House today. If the members would give them the warm welcome, I'd appreciate it.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a special group of individuals who promote diversity, inclusion, equality, and human rights. Joining us here today are human rights advocate and Hate to Hope founder, Chevi Rabbit; representatives from the 13th annual sisters in spirit vigils, April Eve and Freda Ballantyne; as well as newly elected councilwoman Katherine Swampy, who was an integral part in creating Canada's first rainbow crosswalks on a reserve. We also have Hate to Hope guest speaker, Dan Johnstone, and Rob Schwabenbauer and his team from the Mental Rescue Society. I'd like to thank my guests for all the important work that they do to make life better for all Albertans, and I would ask that they now please rise to receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Health and Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first introduction today is to recognize two remarkable Albertans who exemplify the values of learning, teaching, and service. Dr. Austin Mardon is a geographer, writer, parent, and person living with schizophrenia. His wife, Catherine Mardon, is a lawyer, pastor, author, and parent. Together

they are frequent writers, speakers, and advocates for mental health, social justice, and people with disabilities. They have received countless honours in recognition of their work, including the Order of Canada for Austin and papal knighthood for both Catherine and Austin. Please join me, colleagues – and Catherine and Austin please identify yourselves in the members' gallery – in honouring these two folks.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ms Hoffman: I'd also like to rise today in recognition of our province's allied health professionals and their valuable contributions to health care teams across our province. This week is dedicated to allied health professionals as they dedicate their careers to the well-being of others. The allied health teams in our province include many disciplines such as audiology, psychology, occupational therapy, physical therapy, recreation therapy, respiratory therapy, speech-language pathology, social work, and spiritual care. Representing some of these folks today, I'd ask that Carol Robertsen, Eileen Keogh, Lana Hawkins, and Liz Webster please rise and receive our warm welcome and the appreciation of our Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three sets of introductions, and I will be brief. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you some very important advocates who have called for increased AISH and financial assistance rates: Ian Young, Larry Marcotte, Don Slater. They're joined by Kelly Dowdell from Momentum; Rob Yager, president and CEO of United Way; Allan Undheim, vice-president of community building and investment for United Way; Jody-Lee Farrah, Andre Tinio, Elie Haddad, and Kayla Das from the Alberta College of Social Workers. I want to thank all of you for your dedication to fighting poverty and ensuring that all Albertans can live in dignity and provide for their families. Our government shares your commitment and looks forward to continuing to take action to make life better for Albertans. I ask my guests to rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you three guests all the way from Calgary: Sana Jahangir, a real estate associate, a successful businessperson; Gul Wisha, resident and property manager with VIP company, who is accompanied by her daughter; and Humaira Falak, program co-ordinator with the Calgary Senior's Resource Society. These women are strong and successful advocates and active members of their communities who make life better for newcomer and immigrant communities. I ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you. It's my last introduction, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to all members of this Assembly I want to introduce Red FM reporter Ramanjit Sidhu and Arshad Chaudhry, who is the Red FM photographer and one of the gallery's best photographers, and Kayla Van Den Bussche, Arshad's assistant photographer. These folks came up from Calgary to cover the event that will change the lives of many Albertans. I thank them for their dedication and for bringing culturally relevant news to the great people of Calgary in a language they understand. Red FM has done

some great work with raising funds for the Peter Lougheed Centre's maternity triage area and neonatal intensive care unit care rooms, and now they will be having a radiothon for the Peter Lougheed Centre hemodialysis unit on the 23rd of November. I ask my guests to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly Mr. Andrew Boitchenko. Andrew is a constituent of mine and a proud Conservative and a volunteer with the United Conservative Party constituency association in Drayton Valley-Devon and a friend. Andrew was born in Odessa, Ukraine, and he is an active member of the Ukrainian community in Alberta and sits on the council of Canada-Ukraine Chamber of Commerce. Would Andrew please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks and climate change.

Ms Phillips: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you two women visiting us from Japan. They're here on behalf of the government of Japan's Ministry of Environment. Their names I'll say in the Japanese way. Aya Naito and Maho Takimi are here to focus on carbon pricing and emissions trading systems in Japan and around the world and to learn more about how it works in B.C. and Alberta. I would like them to rise [Remarks in Japanese] and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other introductions? Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege today to introduce to you and through you representatives of Lacombe composite high school, one of two schools in Canada to share this year the award for the greenest school in Canada. The students and their teacher, Mr. Schultz, are here in Edmonton today participating in the ag hero symposium, meeting with members of the Commonwealth ag society, presenting some of their projects, and planning for others. I'll mention them a little bit more in my member's statement. I ask that they please stand as I call out their names: Mr. Schultz, teacher; and then students Jade Benoit, Darcy Cunningham, Alexis Hutson, Holden Fafard, Brianna Campbell, and Cody Schonewille. Please extend to them the traditional warm welcome of the House.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Members' Statements

World War I Armistice Centenary Aboriginal Veterans Day

Ms Goehring: Mr. Speaker, this Remembrance Day marks the 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War, when an armistice was signed at 11 a.m. on November 11, 1918, which ended the hostilities of the First World War. Here in Canada our nation's contributions still evoke pride while families still feel the impact of loved ones lost. Leading up to the signing of the armistice is a period of time referred to as Canada's Hundred Days, a three-

month stretch of Canadian victories that saw more than 100,000 Canadians advance 130 kilometres. Such triumphs came at a high price: 68,000 Canadians lost their lives in World War I, and more than 172,000 Canadians were injured.

Mr. Speaker, today is national Aboriginal Veterans Day, and it is my honour to recognize the contribution of indigenous Canadians from the First World War. An estimated 4,000 indigenous people, 400 in western Canada, voluntarily enlisted in the Canadian military in the First World War. They did so out of a proud warrior tradition, from a sense of adventure, and from patriotic sentiment. They served in every major battle Canada fought, and they served well. Over 50 were awarded medals for bravery, and hundreds died or were wounded, yet when the war was over, indigenous veterans did not receive the same services as others or the recognition that they deserved.

1:50

Mr. Speaker, I can only touch on this important story today, but with the 100th anniversary of armistice on our minds, I invite Albertans to explore this and other stories of the First World War for themselves. In the course of history a century is only the blink of an eye. The First World War still offers us many important lessons today of bravery and perseverance and ideals that led many to make the ultimate sacrifice. Let us learn these lessons and never forget those who lived them a century ago.

Lest we forget.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Unemployment

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Friday's job numbers show that unemployment is up 32 per cent under the NDP government's watch. Literally hundreds of thousands of Albertans in this province are out of work, and we have the highest unemployment outside of Atlantic Canada in our country. These are real people suffering real consequences as a result of that unemployment, and all this government can do is say that everything is rosy. It's not. My question is this. How does the government explain the decline in private-sector employment?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, it's interesting. I think it was on Monday or Tuesday that the Leader of the Official Opposition was declaring defeat and talking about how nobody was ever going to invest in Alberta again. About an hour after those sets of questions, I believe that Imperial Oil announced a \$2.6 billion investment in Alberta's oil sands. So let me just say that work still needs to be done, Albertans still need more jobs, but we are on the right track.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, of course, that's very good news, but that still doesn't replace the \$100 billion that left under this Premier's watch.

Standing up and saying that everything is okay totally disregards what these families are going through. A young man by the name of Ryan visited with me in Rocky Mountain House when I was home on Friday, a father of three who's been unemployed for two and a half years, struggling to keep his family fed, who's lost hope.

His biggest frustration is that this Premier and this government continue to act like that does not matter. Again through you, Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: why does this government insist on telling Albertans how good things are, how good they have it when we know without a doubt that we still have the largest unemployment in the country?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact, what we say all the time is that we know there is more work to do and that we continue to be focused on having Albertans' backs and doing whatever we can to promote job creation and that we know that it is not success until every family feels that recovery. We actually say that all the time. That being said, the members opposite want to paint a picture that is not true. Just yesterday StatsCan came out and showed that last year Alberta led the country in economic growth by a long ways, doubling Saskatchewan next door, that followed . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, let's talk about actually what this Premier and her government say to Albertans. She told them to take the bus. She told the people that were concerned about the carbon tax that they were Chicken Little. She told seniors in my community to fund raise to pay for her carbon tax. And she continues to stand up here and just try to indicate that because we have some investment coming back, everything is going to be A-okay. The reality is that while that is good news, unemployment has still been increasing since May under this Premier. Investment is still fleeing. Trans Mountain, which she promised the House would be built, is not being built. People are out of work, and they are hurting. Again, how does this Premier expect Albertans to believe that things are looking up when their . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Another thing that is in fact happening is that the employment rate in Alberta is the highest in the country. The number of people working in Alberta is higher than it has ever been. The average weekly wages are higher than they have ever been. Is every family feeling that yet? No. That's why we're going to continue to focus on supporting our communities. But what we do know is that the families that the member opposite talks about will not be helped by blowing a \$700 million hole in the budget to give money to the richest 1 per cent of Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Provincial Achievement Tests

Mr. Smith: Thank you. Yesterday the Minister of Education boasted of "excellent results" in the provincial exams. A 42 per cent passing grade, or cut score, is not an Albertan standard of excellence, and the Premier herself remarked yesterday that "the tests are not good." Now, I was a social studies teacher, and I never learned how bad tests could produce excellent results. Perhaps you need discovery math for that one. Mr. Speaker, through you to the Premier: how is it that bad tests are getting excellent results?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we see excellent results in so many areas, in science and grade 12 math and

grade 6 math. Grade 9 math: room for improvement, for sure. But you know what? We're not afraid to have no-calculator portions on the tests to make sure that kids can do math in their heads. That's a decision that we made to make sure that we're investing in education, to make sure our kids get the very best education now and into the future.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know that the PATs are extensively field tested and that the assessment branch has historically produced excellent assessment tools, which indicates to me that there is some kind of disconnect between teaching methodology, teaching resources, curriculum, and assessment. Parents deserve to know which pieces of the puzzle are missing. Why won't the Premier direct her minister to publish the cut scores and explain the rationale behind them so parents can better understand where the problems lie?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we know that the root of the problem is that we need to develop new curriculum, which we are doing here in the province of Alberta, the biggest curriculum rebuild in the history of the province. The previous government failed to build curriculum in a modern way, and we are doing so. We're proud of the results that we're getting. Certainly, we have transparency every step of the way to make sure parents, teachers, and students know what is expected of them, and we should expect nothing less.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In a recent CBC article one Alberta parent has described her daughter's experience with the PATs this way. "We really didn't have any indications from her report cards that she was going to be flunking the exam." This disconnect between expectations and results strikes me as mounting evidence of a major problem with math instruction in Alberta, and curriculum is only one piece of the puzzle. When is the Premier going to direct the Minister of Education to make a comprehensive inquiry into the problem of cut scores?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said before, our PAT exam scores are excellent. We see some room for improvement on one part of one exam in one grade. You know, I used to teach a bit of science. It's called action-reaction. Action: you take \$700 million out of the public purse to give to your friends. Reaction: kids in schools will suffer; kids in classrooms will suffer. You take 4,000 teachers out of the classroom: action-reaction, same result. We're here for kids. We're proud of that.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Suspension of Physicians' Licences to Practise

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Six months ago we raised the case of an Edmonton area doctor who was convicted of sexually assaulting a patient at a Sherwood Park clinic in June 2013. He also assaulted a nurse at a north side Edmonton clinic. He also assaulted a clinic manager. The tribunal report said that "proven conduct was . . . serious and repugnant for a member of the medical

profession.” Until this morning this government thought that a mere five-year suspension would be good enough. To the Premier: why?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health and Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Women and all Albertans should feel safe when receiving medical care. We’ve been clear about that for a number of months, and I want to thank the Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park for her advocacy on this particular issue. That’s why our government introduced legislation to ensure better protections for patients from sexual abuse and sexual misconduct, more transparency on the disciplinary histories and criminal convictions of health providers, and why we were matched, until this morning, for the strictest in Canada. But we’re thinking that it’s time to take that even further. We’ve worked with survivors and the agencies that support them, and they’ve asked us to do that, and we’re proud to do so.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you to the minister for listening to the opposition.

Five years is not a long time. Dr. Ismail Taher sexually assaulted an 18-year-old female patient in a Sherwood Park clinic in 2013, violating the sacred doctor-patient trust. If he had received a five-year restriction on practising back in 2013, he’d actually already be practising right now, today, in 2018. Again to the Premier: why did your government this week repeatedly stand against making a lifetime ban from practising for doctors and is now only starting to backpedal?

2:00

Ms Hoffman: I want to thank members from both sides of this Chamber for their passion in this debate on this important topic. Let me make it clear. My intention is to proceed with preventing any physician found guilty of a sexual offence as defined under the Criminal Code of Canada from being reinstated, to prevent that from happening, to prevent anyone who has conducted sexual assault from being able to practise again in this province, and to give the colleges the strictest legislation of any jurisdiction across Canada to ensure safety for patients and all Albertans, Mr. Speaker. I’m proud of our record.

Mrs. Aheer: Mr. Speaker, the minister’s record is voting three times against extending the ban on predatory doctors.

We welcome that the government has finally come around to doing the right thing, but just the other day the Minister of Health said that she wanted to

ensure that everyone can have the confidence that health practitioners are being dealt with in a strict and fair way.

That being said, that’s why I will be opposing the amendment.

To the Premier: why did the government spend days arguing that five years is a good enough ban for doctors who sexually assault patients?

Ms Hoffman: Again, I want to say that Alberta’s vision for this law is the strictest in the country, and we will show just how serious our government stands in support of women’s rights and the rights of survivors when they’ve been assaulted, Mr. Speaker. It’s important to us that we continue to show just how we stand with survivors. That’s why we’ve increased funding for women’s shelters by \$50 million to help more than 17,000 women and 14,000 children flee violence, that’s why we passed legislation so that survivors of domestic violence can break a lease without financial penalty, and that’s why we will improve access to the legal system for survivors of domestic violence by removing the two-year time limit for

bringing forward civil claims. Our record is clear, and I’m proud of it.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Dr. Turner: Mr. Speaker, consumer protection is a major responsibility of governments of all types.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I was thinking about next week, when we won’t be here. My apologies.

The Member for Calgary-South East.

Mr. Fraser: No problem at all, Mr. Speaker.

Mental Health Services

Mr. Fraser: Mr. Speaker, to the Deputy Premier: when we speak in this House, who are we speaking for? Are we speaking for our constituents, or are we speaking for political parties? As representatives for Albertans do you believe that honest questions asked in this House deserve straight answers?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I have the absolute honour and privilege to be in this House every day fighting for all Albertans. On this side of the House we’ve done that by stopping a billion-dollar cut to health care, by making sure that we invested in children when former governments wanted to push for deep cuts, and we will continue to do that. And, yes, I will happily answer reasonable questions with reasonable answers, and I will not back down from my responsibilities to fight for ordinary families.

Mr. Fraser: I asked yesterday how close we were to full implementation of the Valuing Mental Health recommendations. I asked that question because people in Alberta are suffering. Whoever is responsible, it’s clear that we don’t have the necessary supports for people suffering from mental health. To the same minister: how many of the recommendations have been implemented, and what still needs to be done?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Currently we’re monitoring over 150 initiatives led by the government, Alberta Health Services, and community organizations to move forward with the 18 actions that were identified in Valuing Mental Health: Next Steps. I’m very proud of the fact that we not only did a review but that we developed an action plan, something that many members in the community said hadn’t happened before. They were a little bit nervous that they might be part of a report that would sit on a shelf, but this side of the House has put our money where our mouth is. We’ve moved forward on action plans, and we’re funding it while members of the opposition continue to vote in opposition to those.

Mr. Fraser: Minister, we know that there are thousands of Albertans dealing with mental health issues. Their voices count, and they should be our top priority. To the same minister: can you articulate a vision to give Alberta families hope that mental health will be top of mind and a nonpartisan priority?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, as was evident from one of the Premier’s first two or three news conferences, we absolutely wanted to reach across the aisle and work with members of multiple parties to

address this significant area of need. That's why we invited the Member for Calgary-Mountain View along with the now Minister of Children's Services to lead a review on mental health. Then when we added the associate minister, she helped lead the initiatives around implementation. We welcome all members of the House to bring forward ideas and recommendations because we are certainly focused on making sure that we invest in supporting and promoting and protecting the health of all Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Consumer Protection for Motor Vehicle Owners

Dr. Turner: Thanks again, Mr. Speaker. Consumer protection is a major responsibility of governments of all types. Our provincial government has made it a priority. My constituents, particularly seniors, are really appreciative. They want to hear more about these efforts. To maintain mobility, these seniors may need to buy a car sometime. To the Minister of Service Alberta: please outline the initiatives taken to protect all Albertans who are purchasing or leasing a motor vehicle.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Service Alberta.

Mr. Malkinson: Why, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Our government believes Albertans should be protected when making purchases, whether big or small. That is why we recently announced new protections for consumers when buying or repairing a car, protections such as informing buyers of the history and condition of a vehicle so they know as much as the dealership, giving a written estimate upon request for repair, providing a comprehensive bill of sale, itemizing things such as, you know, paint protection and others that the consumer might want, and transitioning the AMVIC board into a public agency as the automotive agency regulator.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Dr. Turner: Thank you. To the same minister: do you have any concerns that the playing field needs to be relevelled after these important changes?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Malkinson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member again for the question. These protections will increase transparency in the industry and help Albertans make well-informed decisions when buying or fixing a vehicle. This levels the playing field for consumers and prevents businesses from having to compete with bad actors in the industry. We did this by consulting with Albertans, with industry, which is something this side of the House believes in – and I know others do not in this House – and by not making backroom deals and selling our platform to the highest bidder in exchange for \$700 million tax breaks for the wealthy.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Dr. Turner: Thanks again. How is the ministry protecting car dealership customers from usurious car loan rates?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Albertans deserve a safe borrowing environment. That's why we're bringing in new rules that level the playing field for lenders and protect

borrowers of high-cost products such as instalment loans, rent-to-own contracts, or vehicle loans. These changes include establishing disclosure and advertising requirements and establishing licence requirements for high-interest lenders. These protections will help borrowers make informed decisions and minimize the risk of being trapped in a vicious cycle of debt. That's good for all Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

Government Caucus

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are elected as MLAs to represent people to the government and not the government to the people. The establishment parties and the career politicians have learned nothing from the last election. The establishment parties act like they're entitled to the votes of the people and entitled to the obedience of the MLAs. Premier, is it the government's policy to control, silence, and whip your MLAs?

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, this government is here for all Albertans. It's important that all voices are heard, and we make sure that that happens. You know, I see the hon. member is in the far corner, no longer with his caucus, and I'm sorry. We do have also a matter of working together as a team, and that's important in politics, too.

Mr. Nixon: Point of order.

The Speaker: Point of order noted.
First supplemental.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that it's hard to believe when the Member for Calgary-East called out her own government for excessive control over its MLAs and given that this rot is firmly entrenched in both establishment parties and given that when I was in the Tory caucus, I too was silenced and whipped, again, is it the government's policy to silence and whip your MLAs? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order, folks.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, we have, in my opinion, the best caucus that I've ever seen in this Legislature. I've been here longer than any other member, so I've seen a lot of government caucuses come and go, and this is absolutely the finest one. We have such wonderful input from our very diverse group of MLAs. We represent people in this province that never had a voice before, and that's something I'm very proud of.

2:10

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's hard to believe.

Every MLA votes the same as their leader does in every caucus and every time. When the NDP brought forward their Bill 9 attack on free speech, I was not free to speak out about it or even vote to represent my constituents on the bill. Independent thought was not welcome. Is it the government's policy to control independent thought, just as the Tories do? [interjections]

The Speaker: Calm down, folks. Stay calm.
The Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I'm very shocked to hear that, quite frankly. It confirms what I believed about our friends in the Official Opposition. I want to assure you

and all members that we have one of the best caucuses in this Legislature's history, and they provide a wonderfully diverse input to the government. We value them, and we value their opinions.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

Bail for Persons Charged with Violent Offences

Mr. Ellis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. A man accused of attacking and terrorizing his girlfriend this fall was released on bail not just once but twice. The first incident was a particularly vicious attack. A little more than a month later he was arrested again after he was accused of pulling up beside her in a vehicle and firing a gun. Incredibly, he was released a second time, and the woman felt so unsafe that she has now fled the community. Minister, why did the bail system fail this young woman so badly?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the very important question. I think this case is extremely concerning to our government. I think it's extremely concerning, obviously, to the opposition and to all Albertans. Preventing and addressing domestic violence has been one of our government's top priorities. As members of this House will know, unfortunately bail decisions are ultimately determined by independent justices of the peace. In this case the prosecutor did oppose bail and was not successful.

Mr. Ellis: Mr. Speaker, given that in the first incident the woman accused her ex-boyfriend of biting her face, choking her, banging her head against the floor – and the disturbing pictures show her battered, swollen, and scarred – and given that even though her ex-boyfriend was charged with three counts of assault and one count of unlawful confinement, he was released and continued to terrorize her, Minister, why does it appear that Alberta's bail system favours a person with violent tendencies rather than a victim of domestic abuse?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Again, this is an incredibly troubling case. My office has reached out and spoken with the families to ensure that they are receiving the necessary supports through victims' services in this case. It certainly is a troubling case. As I've indicated in my previous answer, these are decisions that are made independently of government. The Crown did attempt to oppose bail in this case.

Mr. Ellis: Mr. Speaker, given that in the second incident the man is accused of shooting a gun near the victim and it resulted in very serious charges against this alleged accused and given that despite these alleged hostile acts committed by a man already on bail for a vicious attack against the same victim, he was let out on the streets again, Minister, how can we claim that protecting victims is a paramount goal of our system in the face of such a colossal failure?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Again, it is certainly a goal of our government to ensure that we are doing everything we can to prevent and address domestic violence. That's why we've increased funding for domestic violence shelters. That's why we've taken a number of steps around these sorts of issues. This case is, as I have noted, very disturbing. My office has been in touch with the family to ensure that they have the necessary supports.

Thank you.

Caribou Range Plans

Mr. Loewen: Mr. Speaker, last spring the government tabled a letter to the federal government regarding the development of caribou range plans indicating that the province needed more time to conduct a socioeconomic impact assessment and that federal funds would be required to implement effective caribou management. Could the minister tell the House what the response from Ottawa was, what discussions have taken place on the issue since, and what the present plans and timelines are?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks and climate change.

Ms Phillips: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we are fully committed to recovering caribou populations, as we are legally required to do under the Species at Risk Act, which is a federal piece of legislation. Earlier this spring we led a delegation to Ottawa where we requested support from the federal government, as the hon. member points out. We did get a commitment from them of something in the neighbourhood of \$30 million to assist us with caribou range planning and some of the near-term recovery efforts that we can undertake.

Mr. Loewen: Given that the NDP has been through multiple versions of the caribou plan and given that they have had to backtrack on their own words after realizing oversights and mistakes and given that until those on this side of the House and the communities affected applied pressure on the issue the government wasn't even considering an economic impact assessment, can the minister confirm to us that the results of the assessment as well as those from consultations with industry, stakeholders, and the communities affected will drive the next steps of this process?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There are a number of incorrect statements within that lengthy preamble of a question, but let me just correct one. A socioeconomic assessment is, in fact, part of range planning and is being undertaken in the various ranges. There are, I believe, 17 ranges that we have to plan for. They're all in various stages of development. There's a tremendous amount of technical and scientific work – science – that has to go into this, and I'll be pleased to provide more detail in the supplemental if I ever get the chance.

Mr. Loewen: Given the NDP's atrocious record on this file and on wildlife management more broadly and given the NDP's tendency to develop management plans in silos, disregarding the interactive nature of Alberta's complex ecosystem of wildlife, forests, and waterways, and given, for example, that pine beetles, which threaten Alberta, and caribou, which are threatened in Alberta, are said to require similar old-growth forests, what has the minister done in dealing with these two conflicting management issues?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, Alberta is redoubling its efforts to work with industry to develop solutions that avoid the imposition of an environmental protection order, which is something that would happen if these folks had their way because they would do nothing. Certainly, my deputy minister was meeting with federal counterparts today on the issue of C-69, but I know that she is also engaging the federal government on our recovery efforts with respect to caribou populations as well and on their investment and their responsibility to help us on this file.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

SuperNet Contract Management

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday Alberta's Auditor General released his fall report identifying the new and follow-up audits recently conducted by his office. Among those audits the Auditor General addressed the NDP's mismanagement of the SuperNet, Alberta's most critical Internet infrastructure. More broadly, the audit was critical of the existing contract management processes of Service Alberta, indicating that improvements must be made. To the minister: do you agree with the Auditor General that the status quo for Service Alberta contract management is unacceptable?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Service Alberta.

Mr. Malkinson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Auditor General was indeed correct that there were many problems with the previous contract. He described it as: poorly constructed and largely mismanaged. I'd point out that the Auditor General was looking at the previous SuperNet contract. That was the contract that was put in by the previous PC government. The Minister of Service Alberta, this government came forward with changes to replace that contract and, in fact, implemented all of the Auditor General's recommendations.

Thank you.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

2:20

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this current government has had three years to deal with that and given that the Auditor General issued three new recommendations in his audit and given that these recommendations highlight key failings of the performance measurement and the compliance processes and given that these failings have negative impacts on hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of important government contracts like SuperNet, can the minister tell us if he has immediately directed his department to implement these recommendations and what steps he plans on taking to prevent future processes that fail just like this one?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Malkinson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact, our government took immediate steps to address those issues three years ago. That is why we have a new contract for SuperNet that I'm so proud about, that we're going to be posting that online shortly, as soon as the assets transfer over to Bell with the new contract. You know, that contract was done by the previous Conservatives, and it left us with a contract that did not function properly and did not properly serve rural Albertans. Thank goodness that Albertans elected a government that was able to fix it properly.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we have repeatedly asked this government over the last three sets of estimates to correct this or give us an update and they've told us each and every time that they had it under control – clearly, this is not the case; we're putting at risk over 400 Alberta communities, including schools and hospitals – and given that the NDP had three entire years to get this new contract in order, will the minister admit that the process that led to this new SuperNet contract failed to meet the standards that

Albertans expect from their government and take steps to ensure that these contracts ...

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. Thank you.
The hon. minister.

Mr. Malkinson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact, we did take steps to protect Albertans, and Albertans did that by electing an NDP government, which took steps to clean up the PC mismanagement, and this contract was just another example of that. I suggest that the hon. member look to his colleagues who were part of the government at the time. We took the time to go forward with a new contract that will serve Albertans well, and thank goodness we were there to do that.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Military Content in Educational Curricula

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the government of Alberta's liaison to the Canadian Armed Forces I've had the tremendous honour and responsibility of advocating for the Alberta men and women who serve us bravely every day. I've heard from members of the Armed Forces across the province on the importance of ensuring that our history is not forgotten. This is especially significant as it is currently Veterans' Week and we are commemorating the 100th year of the armistice this Remembrance Day. To the Minister of Education: how is military contribution and history present in the new curriculum?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you for the question, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud to say that our military history and service will be very well represented in the new curriculum. We're working on the grades 5 to 9 curriculum right now. We want to make sure that kids have a very clear idea about the history that we share, the things that we should be proud of, and to make sure that we don't see atrocities like we saw with World War I, and so that kids can learn: never again.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As there is a very strong military presence in my constituency of Edmonton-Castle Downs, I have the opportunity to speak with veterans and active military members, their families regularly. To the same minister: how is the government incorporating the lived experience of Alberta veterans and current CAF members in the new curriculum?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we've worked with military history – we had a military history round-table – and we've been speaking with Canadian Forces, both veterans and current members, to make sure we're building a strong curriculum. I hear it time and time again from service personnel that they like to get stationed in Alberta because – you know what? – they think that the education system is the best in Canada.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know that the involvement of the Canadian Armed Forces affords many unique opportunities to the young people of our province to chart a positive course for their lives, test their abilities, and learn valuable life

skills. To the Minister of Education: how is the government supporting opportunities for students and Alberta youth to engage with the Canadian Armed Forces?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we're working very closely with the Canadian Armed Forces. We're working with advocacy groups. I'm very proud of an announcement that we'll make around No Stone Left Alone tomorrow, together with the member, to make sure that we have a strong school system there for Canadian Forces kids but all students as well. You know, this whole notion that you would make cuts and that it's going to hurt, I mean, that would hurt Canadian Forces personnel, which I think is not conscionable, and we don't want to be hurting our kids as well because we're here to help and to create something that we can be proud of.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Service Alberta Contract Management

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday's Auditor General's report examined procurement in Service Alberta, highlighting SuperNet as an example. Through examining this contract, the AG found that the department lacked an effective contract management system, and Service Alberta confirmed that it applies the same process to manage all of its large and complex contracts. Now, this contract was so late that subscribers and ISPs were scared about service continuity. To the Minister of Service Alberta: how many other large and complex contracts does Service Alberta manage with this flawed process?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Service Alberta.

Mr. Malkinson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. As the Auditor General's report pointed out, it was a backward-looking report specifically on the original SuperNet contract, so that was the one that was put in place by the PCs. We took the lessons learned from the previous one and actually implemented the recommendations that the Auditor General put forward in his report when we came forward with the new SuperNet 2.0 contract.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That actually wasn't an answer.

Given that the Auditor General found in 2018 that parties to contracts are not interpreting terms and conditions consistently and given that this exposes the government to unnecessary risk, what specific measures has this minister taken to improve Service Alberta's capacity to learn and ensure that flawed processes and unaccountable outcomes don't occur in the future?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Malkinson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned before, the Auditor General's report was backward looking. You know, that contract was put in place by the former PC government. As we go through Service Alberta, we have taken steps to fix the PC waste and bad mismanagement that was in there before. Thank goodness that Albertans rejected the poorly constructed and largely mismanaged contracts that the previous

government was known for by electing an NDP government, and hopefully they'll do it again in the upcoming election.

Ms McPherson: Given that the Auditor General found deficiencies in 2018, this year, in how Service Alberta defines performance measures and targets in its contracts that prevent the department from understanding or reporting on whether contracts deliver on desired outcomes and given that the minister said yesterday that the SuperNet contract was an excellent example of something that our government had to come through and fix, when will Service Alberta publish performance measures about its procurement practices?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Malkinson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the member pointed out, I am going to be making public the new SuperNet contract as soon as the deal is finalized and the assets are transferred over to Bell. Because we are proud of the work that we've done on that contract, we are going to have that contract be public so that Albertans can see for themselves the good work that Service Alberta and our government have done on that contract to serve rural Albertans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The Member for Calgary-Hays.

Highway 1 Snowstorm Response

Mr. McIver: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, thousands of motorists were stranded on highway 1 between Calgary and Canmore for more than 10 hours during the October 2 snowstorm. When they ran out of gas, food, and water, they turned to each other to survive the ordeal because neither the plows nor the police showed up. Their desperate calls to 911 got them a shrug. To the Minister of Transportation: why did the government abandon these motorists when they needed your help?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Nothing could be further from the truth. Great efforts were made by our contractors. We had difficulty throughout the evening in getting the appropriate communications about what was going on from our partners in the RCMP, but our contractors were working diligently on the job.* In the end, I'm very grateful to say that everyone was fine and able to return home to their families.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. McIver: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, given that this provincial government relinquished its responsibility to help desperate citizens – and they can blame the RCMP's communication all they want – and that the lapse could have ended in tragedy if temperatures had fallen to dangerous levels that night and given that there are emergency mechanisms the government can activate to deal with perilous circumstances like this snowstorm, again to the minister: what happened on October 2 that caused your government system's response to fail so badly?

Mr. Mason: Well, Mr. Speaker, I reject that characterization. Our staff worked diligently. I worked that evening with our staff who were present in the emergency area that were supervising our efforts. We worked very hard, including myself taking to social media, not my favourite place to be, to try and make sure that people were well informed about what was happening. In the end, the

*See page 1921, right column, paragraph 12

RCMP successfully extracted everyone. I want to thank, particularly, the town of Canmore for their work.

2:30

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. McIver: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that all these stranded motorists would like to thank the minister for tweeting gasoline and tweeting a blanket and tweeting water, it didn't actually get there by tweet. A full month has gone by. The minister and the government obviously failed. What have they learned, and what are they doing to make sure they don't fail Albertans again the next time it snows?

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, I wanted to finish my thanks to the town of Canmore for the respite centre that they set up. They helped hundreds of people with food and warmth. People were, I think, very grateful for that. We certainly were. We're endeavouring to make sure that our communications are as good as they can be with our partners in the RCMP, with other organizations, and with municipalities. We want to make sure that this kind of thing doesn't happen again. It was very unfortunate. But the member's characterization of it is incorrect.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

East Central Francophone School Principal and Superintendent

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, it's now been 250 days that the principal of École du Sommet has been absent although he is still listed as the principal on the website. To this day parents have not been given any information from the ministry regarding their principal. To the Minister of Education. This is a small, community-oriented school where parents and teachers are close friends. Why have you refused to respond to the parents' request for information to clear up this issue?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much to the member for the question. Certainly, the school board in St. Paul produces a very excellent education, as does the school. I am aware of the very difficult situation that has happened as a result of a human resource circumstance. It's also incumbent and important for me to abide by the rules around human resource issues. There is an investigation taking place now and . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Hanson: A human resource issue.

Given that on October 30 parents received an e-mail announcing the name of the acting superintendent, it now appears the francophone board superintendent is also absent. Minister, what is going on here? Why do you ignore the parents' right to know what is happening in their school?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much for the question. Again, it's a very excellent school system and school. People are working hard to make sure that there's an excellent level of education. But, again, as it happens, the superintendent is under investigation, as well, at this moment, so it's incumbent upon me to not comment on this investigation here in the House.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that out of frustration parents have removed over 35 of their children from École du Sommet, which is effectively removing their constitutional right to a francophone education, and given that parents requesting information have been ignored by your office and given that the public school board doors are locked to the public – Minister, these parents and these students deserve answers – how long are you going to allow this situation to deteriorate?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, it's important to understand what the rules and protocols are around investigations and how that must unfold legally, quite frankly. I certainly think that the results that we just saw from this particular francophone school board were excellent. They produce excellent education for students and a safe and caring place for them to be educated in. But making comments around investigations is not something we do here in the House.

Time-share Lease Consumer Protection

Mr. Gotfried: Mr. Speaker, while I appreciate the Minister of Service Alberta making time to meet on an important issue for many of my constituents and people across Alberta, since that meeting I have received a mountain of correspondence referencing what appear to be serious breaches of consumer protection legislation, supposedly being ruled outside of the mandate and jurisdiction of the legislation and this government. To the minister: can you confirm that the sale of time-share properties in Alberta is regulated by current and past legislation and your commitment to ensuring all Albertans are protected under law?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Malkinson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm, of course, disheartened to hear about the financial burden and hardships that Albertans have faced with these particular time-shares. You know, for too long Alberta's consumer protection laws definitely lagged behind, and that was something that we fixed. That's why we have taken action and strengthened our consumer protection laws so that hard-working Albertans are protected whether they are buying a new home or condo or whether they're going to their favourite concert or getting work done on the family car.

Mr. Gotfried: Mr. Speaker, given that I've received constituent correspondence dating back to March of this year from Alberta Justice stating, "The sale of timeshare properties in Alberta is regulated under the Consumer Protection Act, (formerly the Fair Trading Act)" and given that I'm convinced the minister wishes to do the right thing to protect Alberta consumers, Minister, can you explain to Albertans why this government has failed to enforce clear and, to me, unequivocal protections within both the Consumer Protection Act and its predecessor, the Fair Trading Act?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Malkinson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the RCMP have actually investigated this matter, and I, of course, encourage Albertans to follow up with them. There are some crossjurisdictional things happening with this since the time-shares were indeed in B.C. but sold in Alberta. We're of course continuing to listen to Albertans who are impacted by this, and, you

know, we definitely encourage Albertans to follow up with Service Alberta's consumer protection unit. If there's any new information that may become available, it is something we want to hear here in Service Alberta.

Mr. Gottfried: Mr. Speaker, I believe this minister has some responsibility.

Given that consumer protection is important to all members of this Assembly and rightly has been a theme of this current government and its members and given that my constituents feel that recourse to the courts would not have been necessary if this government had done its job in the first place by protecting consumers, again to the minister: if the legislation has been breached, will you commit to full disclosure on the issues of mandate and jurisdiction and to a full and perhaps independent investigation into those alleged breaches?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Malkinson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Just recently this particular matter, again, went back before the courts, so in the case of an independent investigation, you know, the precedent set by the court I think would end up settling that matter. However, in Service Alberta we, of course, are monitoring the situation, and we are happily taking feedback from Albertans. If there do need to be changes above and beyond what we've already done, this government and this minister would be happy to look at them.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Edmonton-McClung.

Racism Prevention

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On October 27 we saw yet another act of deadly violence against a racial minority in North America. The recent mass shooting at a Pittsburgh synagogue was a stark reminder that racism and hatred exist and can have lethal consequences. My riding of Edmonton-McClung has the Beth Israel synagogue, the Rahma mosque, and a large newcomer population. Alberta's diversity is its strength. I am proud that my constituency reflects that strength. To the Minister of Education: what is the government doing to ensure that these residents of Alberta have a voice in addressing racism and ignorance in our province?

Mr. Eggen: Thank you for that question. Mr. Speaker, the atrocity that the member describes and others like it are very saddening, and my heart goes out to the Jewish community and racialized communities across the world. Our government is working with communities to combat racism and hatred and to promote inclusivity and acceptance here in our province. The Alberta Anti-Racism Advisory Council will provide government with valuable insight and advice on how to support those efforts. We have more than 300 applicants to the council, and we are committed to ensuring a diverse membership that accurately reflects Alberta's population.

The Speaker: Thank you.
First supplemental.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are fantastic organizations across the province that work diligently to address the needs of these racialized communities. I've heard again and again

that these organizations provide valuable support to reduce feelings of vulnerability and fear. To the Minister of Education once again: what is the government doing to ensure these groups are supported in their work to combat racism in Alberta?

Mr. Eggen: Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, we know that we can build from the strength we have in local communities and local community groups to help to combat racism and to provide that education that fights ignorance, as I said before. We have a grant structure available for groups to apply for antiracism initiatives. We have very, very good pickup for these grants, but we're also making and designing them so that they are quite modest and so that many people can participate and help to build a stronger, safer community for everybody in the province.

2:40

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Dach: Thank you once again, Mr. Speaker. Newcomers to Alberta come from a wide variety of backgrounds and must quickly adjust to life in a new home. Given that this can mean learning a new language, new skills, and new social norms, children come to Alberta and begin learning in an environment that can be very different from what they are accustomed to. To the Minister of Education: what is the government doing to ensure these students feel welcome and safe in their schools?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's a great question. You know, we see encouraging signs. People are moving to Alberta from all parts of Canada and around the world, in part because they know that there is a more safe and caring environment being fostered in our schools, where kids can have that diversity. We need to make sure that diversity is reflected in the curriculum that we are building here now so that kids can look to the curriculum, see themselves, see their shared history in that curriculum. That builds confidence, and from confidence you have a platform for learning.

Thank you. [interjections]

The Speaker: Some order, please. [interjections] Order, please.

I understand that the Minister of Transportation has a supplemental piece of information with respect to the question from Calgary-Hays.

Highway 1 Snowstorm Response (continued)

Mr. Mason: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to supplement my answer to the hon. member. I want to just let him know that we were aware of a very severe storm coming and that all maintenance equipment was mobilized and was available. Unfortunately, the severe winter conditions resulted in the roads being blocked, including semi-trailers in some cases jack-knifed or off the road, blocking access to emergency vehicles and to maintenance equipment. We are in fact conducting a routine examination of this. It's done every time there's an instance, and that review should be completed fairly soon.*

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Member for Calgary-Hays, a supplemental.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that I'm grateful that the minister has approved that gasoline, blankets, and water don't arrive by tweet and has admitted that there was a problem, I would hope that at some time in the future he might be able to report

*See page 1919, right column, paragraph 11

to this House any learnings and improvements that Albertans can look for in the future. If he would enlighten us on that, I would be grateful.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would be pleased to do that. And I do want to say that the first responders, including the RCMP, as well as our maintenance people as well as municipal resources need to be commended for their very diligent, hard work late into the night. I would also like to acknowledge the fact that it was probably a very frightening time for many people who were stranded on the road, but I'm convinced that this review will show us how to prevent any such further recurrence. Sometimes the weather is just overwhelming.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

We'll continue in 30 seconds, hon. members.

Members' Statements

(continued)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Lacombe Composite High School Environmental Award

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I celebrate Canada Green Building Council's greenest school in Canada 2018 winner, Lacombe composite high school. I congratulate Wolf Creek public schools and the business sponsors and the volunteers for their support. I congratulate my friend and teacher Mr. Steve Schultz, who with vision and dedication leads the students, and I congratulate the students, who for the past 15 years have participated in the program, some of whom are here today.

Here is what Lacombe students have done for sustainability and a greener community. Through the EcoVision enviroclub they've installed 32 solar arrays on the school, producing six kilowatts, along with a portable solar array and solar classroom cars. They built and use a 42-foot diameter, energy-efficient geodesic tropical greenhouse with geothermal heat storage and commercial aquaponics system. They have two acres of outdoor gardens with 40 raised beds, a 125-fruit-tree forest, picnic tables, and bird, bat, and wild bee houses. They have an urban beekeeping program with eight hives. Lacombe is the first school in Canada to run a beekeeping course for 20-plus credits. They also do farm market sales and a microbusiness program selling garden and apiary produce. They completely compost the 25 kilograms of school kitchen waste. They are now researching and fundraising for an outdoor gazebo classroom with a living roof, and they also have an active robotics program.

Wow. Lacombe high school, way to go. You truly are one of the two greenest schools in Canada, and the thousand-dollar prize will be put to good use. Lacombe is the perfect place for these endeavours. Lacombe is all about agriculture. We have both federal and provincial ag research stations. The soil is great. The weather is near perfect, and there are knowledgeable people who help guide student learning. Way to go, Lacombe students, and thank you to Mr. Schultz, Lacombe citizen of the year and teacher extraordinaire.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Calgary's 2026 Winter Olympics Bid

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Tuesday Calgarians will have their say. They will vote on whether to bid for the 2026 Olympic Winter Games. Now, there's been a lot of heated debate. Like my neighbours, I've been paying attention to both the process

and the details of the deal. I wish the process was stronger. I wish we had a funding commitment from the federal government sooner than we did, and I wish we had longer to weigh our options. But now that the numbers are in, I think this is a good deal. On Tuesday I will be voting yes. I've always believed we won't move forward if we stand still. An Olympic bid is an opportunity to build on the legacy of one of the best Games ever held, the Games that were run at a profit. The 1988 Olympics left a remarkable legacy over the past 30 years for our city and our country. There's no reason to believe that hosting in 2026 wouldn't leave the same or a better legacy for the next 30 years.

I think we get a good financial deal. We get nearly 1 and a half billion dollars from the federal government for infrastructure that is badly need. Make no mistake: this is money that Alberta would not see otherwise. The IOC has stepped up. The provincial government has provided a responsible contribution, and the amount committed by the city of Calgary is almost entirely made up of what the city would spend anyway on badly needed infrastructure like a field house, facility upgrades, and affordable housing.

What about the risks of cost overruns? I have total confidence in the organizing committee to stay within budget. We've proven time and again that we can build major projects in Calgary just like the brand new Central library, which came in on time and under budget, and let's not forget that the proposed plan includes a billion-dollar contingency. That is nearly 1 dollar in 5 of the entire bid.

Calgarians have different opinions on this, and everyone's opinion matters. I've looked at the numbers, and I think Calgary 2026 is a good deal for our city, our province, and our country. It will create jobs, build on our legacy, and once again showcase Calgary to the world. This Calgarian is voting yes, and I encourage all my neighbours to do your homework and make up your own mind. Yes or no, get out and vote on Tuesday.

Federal-provincial Relations

Mr. Fildebrandt: "The west wants in." Preston Manning and Stephen Harper spoke those words in 1987, when they launched the Reform Party in revolt against the Liberal, Tory, and NDP establishment parties dominated by antiwestern interests. As the western alienation was transforming into western separatism, they sought to channel that anger into something more positive. As many Albertans looked to take the west out, they sought to take the west in, but after decades of struggle the west has never succeeded in getting more than just a foot in the door. The fact is that when the Liberals are in power, Ottawa will work against us. When the Tories are in power in Ottawa, they will too often take us for granted.

The only answer is for Alberta to take back its destiny into its own hands. Alberta must follow the example of Quebec here and take back all powers under the Constitution that the provinces have but do not exercise. Alberta must take direct control over our own pension plan. Alberta must collect our own taxes. Alberta must take direct control of the administration of the Firearms Act. Alberta must take back direct control over our own immigration and refugee system. We must build a new Alberta government that will fight the Trudeau carbon tax without end. We must build a new Alberta government that will not just complain about equalization but be prepared to use every tool at our disposal to force Ottawa to the table. We must build a new Alberta government that does not accept our extreme under- and misrepresentation in the Senate.

2:50

Albertans are proud Canadians and we want nothing more than to be treated equally and fairly with the rest of this country. That is not going to happen under the status quo. The Freedom Conservative

Party is dedicated to bringing decision-making back home, building a firewall around our provincial wealth, and holding a referendum to renegotiate our constitutional relationship with Ottawa. We must come together to build an Alberta and a Canada that is strong and free.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Suspension of Physicians' Licences to Practise

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last April my colleague the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View raised a disturbing incident. A doctor here in Edmonton was continuing to practise, to see patients despite having been convicted of sexually assaulting a patient. This individual was convicted of sexually assaulting a patient at a Sherwood Park clinic in June of 2013. He also assaulted a nurse at a north-side Edmonton clinic a year later. He was also charged with assaulting a clinical manager. The tribunal report over his conduct said that "proven conduct was very serious and repugnant for a member of the medical profession." Serious and repugnant, yet he was allowed to return to seeing patients, patients who had no idea about this doctor's behaviour. This was a demonstration of the failure of one of our professional colleges.

The Leader of the Official Opposition raised this in question period as well. As he committed at the time, our United Conservative opposition are ready to work with the government to ensure that this needed legislation passes quickly if introduced. We welcome the government putting forward legislation months later, but the legislation as proposed didn't go far enough. A five-year suspension for those grotesque crimes is simply not enough. We raised these concerns and proposed amendments. It was disappointing to see the government defeat these amendments. It was disappointing to see the government defend the idea that being unable to practise for five years was good enough. It was disappointing to see the NDP members on the government benches stand and repeatedly vote against amendments to move this towards a lifetime ban.

Today it appears that the government finally recognized this obvious problem in their legislation. Mr. Speaker, we're relieved that the government has finally changed its mind and finally supports a lifetime ban for doctors who commit sexual assault. The doctor-patient relationship is a sacred trust.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Remembrance Day

Mr. Rosendahl: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Every year in the weeks leading up to November 11, people from across the province, across our nation come together to pay tribute to men and women in uniform. Many of us proudly wear poppies as a symbol of remembrance and respect towards those who have fallen in the defence of our freedom. Some attend Remembrance Day events and reflect on the past and present sacrifices made by Canadian service people. It is easy to forget that there are dedicated individuals who commit themselves to honouring our veterans year-round such as the members of the Royal Canadian Legion.

Legionnaires are the ones who provide our poppies and organize our Remembrance Day services. They raise money to provide essential support to veterans, their families, and other community organizations. They educate and provide mentorship to our young people through cadet programs. Legions also provide venues for socializing, local events, and volunteer recruitment. Legion halls

are a foundational part of communities across Alberta. As a Legion member myself I have always recognized the incredible service that Legions provide to veterans and communities.

Recently with the consultation of my bill, Bill 207, the Municipal Government (Legion Tax Exemption) Amendment Act, 2018, I have had the privilege to consult Legions all across the province, deepening my appreciation for Legions. I am proud to have five Legions in my constituency – Hinton, Jasper, Edson, Cadomin, and Grande Cache – where I have spent a great amount of time with veterans. I am proud to be in a province where there are over 120 Legions. I am proud to rise today and give my thanks and support to our troops, our veterans, and our Legions.

Lest we forget.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: If I may, before we move on, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to provide notice pursuant to Standing Order 7(8) that the daily Routine will continue past 3 p.m.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation. You have a notice of motion?

Mr. Mason: I do, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of my colleague the hon. Minister of Justice I would like to give oral notice of a bill for the Order Paper, that bill being Bill 28, the Family Statutes Amendment Act, 2018.

Thank you.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Bill 26

An Act to Combat Poverty and Fight for Albertans with Disabilities

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour and privilege to rise today and request leave to introduce Bill 26, An Act to Combat Poverty and Fight for Albertans with Disabilities.

This legislation, if passed, will make historic changes to the AISH income support and Alberta seniors' benefits programs by indexing these programs to cost-of-living increases. Mr. Speaker, this legislation is a response to the concerns and feedback that we have heard from many Albertans, their families, and advocates, who count on AISH, low-income, and seniors' programs. If passed, this legislation will make a positive difference in the lives of thousands of Albertans. I look forward to the discussion in the House on this bill.

With that, I move first reading of the bill.

[Motion carried; Bill 26 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of correspondence, referenced in my question today, from Alberta Justice and Solicitor General, dated March 2018, referencing that "the sale of timeshare properties in Alberta is regulated under the Consumer Protection Act." Further, it says,

"I sympathize with you and the many other individuals impacted . . . however, there is nothing further I or this ministry can do to assist you directly."

The Speaker: Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To supplement my member's statement on Monday, I am tabling the requisite five copies of a document provided to me by the St. Teresa of Calcutta School Playground Foundation, which I provided to the Minister of Education earlier today.

The Speaker: Any other tablings, hon. members?

I advise the House that I believe that the point of order from the Opposition House Leader has been withdrawn. I think there was one point of order. Is that correct?

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, the hon. Opposition House Leader has chosen to withdraw that point of order.

The Speaker: Thank you.

3:00

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: I would like to call the committee to order.

Bill 21 An Act to Protect Patients

The Deputy Chair: The Committee of the Whole has under consideration sections 7 and 26 of Bill 21, An Act to Protect Patients. We are currently on subamendment SA1. Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered in respect to this section of the bill?

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to rise on the subamendment which is before us right now. This has been a long and winding road to get to where we are. Certainly, starting back in the spring, the Leader of the Official Opposition and the deputy Leader of the Official Opposition raised this important issue. I think it's an issue that matters to all Albertans. Surely, when any Albertan goes to see a doctor, I know that they have every right to expect professional behaviour, and to be clear, that's almost always what Albertans get. However, in any line of endeavour you do end up with certain individuals who are either poor at their job, show terrible judgment, or actually do things that are completely unacceptable and offensive.

When it comes to those cases where that small minority of doctors are predatory and commit sexual advances towards their patients, then surely that needs to be dealt with in a firm, harsh, and definite way. Certainly, from the input that I've heard into my office and talking to people that I know, I think Albertans' opinion is that doctors convicted of sexual misbehaviour towards their patients, particularly female patients, obviously, but any patient, should lose their licence not for five years but forever. Despite the fact that this issue came about in the spring, Bill 21 didn't arrive from the government until this week, and of course it arrived with a recommendation to only suspend the doctor's licence for five years before the doctor could reapply.

Now, certainly, we the Official Opposition and other opposition parties took the position very much right from the start that that was

not an adequate reaction to the heinous behaviour that we are talking about and, surely, in the example of Dr. Taher, which, I suppose, has become the best illustration of this very, very serious and completely unacceptable and offensive behaviour that can sometimes occur. Albertans really have come to the conclusion that a stronger, longer withdrawal of the doctor's ability to practise medicine is what's appropriate. Indeed I believe that what Albertans want this House to do is to say that that doctor can't practise medicine anymore in Alberta.

The entire House, in my understanding, is actually coming around, I believe, to the same conclusion despite the fact that the government side took a much different position at the beginning of this debate on Bill 21. I'm presuming they received some of the feedback from Albertans that the Official Opposition has received and, I understand, some of the other opposition parties have received, which is a very strong message saying never, that when a doctor is convicted of sexual misconduct against a patient in that sacred trust relationship in Alberta, that doctor should never be able to practise in Alberta again.

Here's the problem. The problem is that in this very illustrative case with Dr. Taher, that is not what occurred. That sanction is not the sanction that that doctor received. Frankly, I think many Albertans are angry about that.

Now, the government rejected the opposition parties' amendments to strengthen that. They strengthened one amendment to stretch the time period out to never and then another one as an alternative, I think, because the member of the House thought that the closest to never was 40 years, probably reasonably based on the fact that by the time somebody gets a medical degree, they're probably, in many cases, 25 or 30 years old. If you add 40 years onto that, they're pretty much at the end of their effective time of practising medicine. So, really, both amendments amount to the doctor never getting his licence back. Despite the fact that they weren't worded identically, I believe the net effect in protecting Albertans was the same strong net effect, which is why the Official Opposition and indeed another opposition party took that position.

Of course, we're at this awkward place because, apparently, until they got a stronger message, the Health minister, the hon. Deputy Premier, took a completely different stand and insisted that the five years was enough and indeed let this piece of legislation go on to third reading without any of those important amendments being made.

Today we saw what brings us here to this subamendment, this amendment and the subamendment that we're talking about right now. A most extraordinary thing happened. The government did a complete 180, taking a mulligan, if you will, backtracking, admitting failure, admitting a mistake, something that this government has been severely reticent to do despite the fact that they've had many, many pieces of legislation that they've had to drag back to this House for sometimes one, two, three, and four changes before they got different pieces of legislation to the place where they wanted them to be. They've actually gone further than third reading; they've gone past third reading and then had to bring another piece of legislation back. But this is the deepest they've gone into a piece of legislation before retreating, going into full retreat, admitting failure, admitting to be completely wrong, admitting the opposition was right and they were wrong. I'm sure that was a little painful for them to do. Nonetheless, I thank them for doing that because this issue is important to all Albertans.

Despite the fact that I'm sure it was painful and humiliating for the government to do it, I give them credit for doing it. I think they have come to the belief and the agreement, where the opposition has always been, that five years is not an appropriate penalty for that abuse of the doctor-patient relationship trust, not an appropriate

penalty for sexual misconduct towards a patient who's depending on that doctor for care, for compassion, and for a chance at a healthy life under the doctor's care moving forward.

Madam Speaker, the government, to their credit, has agreed to recommit Bill 21 to Committee of the Whole. The opposition has accommodated the government's desire to do so, and an amendment was made. Of course, the subamendment, it is determined, will improve the amendment that was put forward.

What's happening right now other than me being on my feet talking about this is that there's been some consideration that there is an additional improvement to that subamendment that I think that the government and the Official Opposition can agree upon. While I'm here debating the subamendment on this very important bill to protect Albertans, it's my belief that there are members from both sides working feverishly in the backroom, looking to refine the subamendment, to improve it, and to come up with something that is a little more fulsome, a little more effective, which we believe will more fully meet the desires of Albertans for that protection, which they deserve, they need, and they surely want.

3:10

Madam Chair, again, as I said when I started out, it's been a long and winding trail to get to this point, and it's certainly my desire and the desire of the Official Opposition that before this day ends – and as we all know, this day ends at 4:30 on Thursdays – we can come to that common understanding of where we need to be with this legislation, that we can think of Albertans, that we can put our political differences aside on this issue, which I believe and I think all members of the House believe ought to be a nonpartisan issue. Having women and indeed all Albertans safe when they go to the doctor should be everyone's position. It should be an NDP position and a Conservative position and every other party's position. It's an Albertan position. It's a human position. It's a position that we all need to have and we all need to get to. So by the end of this day that's my hope.

Really, today the opposition showed what due diligence and perseverance is. To get here, we held the government accountable. We stuck to our guns, but we also agreed to work with the government and to look for what I would call that hallowed middle ground, where all sides in this House can do something that upon proper reflection, not only with each other but proper reflection and communication with bodies like the College of Physicians & Surgeons and the AMA and doctors' groups and individual doctors and indeed patients – let's not forget about the patients, the Albertans who are patients. These are the people, particularly women, that need to be protected. If we do our jobs well today, we will have moved forward in protecting those Alberta women today.

You know what? No one wins if we don't get this right. No one wins. Without regard to whatever political party they support, whatever part of Alberta they live in, whatever their quality of life is in other ways, it serves no one if a woman goes to a doctor and that woman is not safe. That will never be a standard that should be tolerated. It should never be a standard that is accepted.

I am genuinely and sincerely of the opinion that by the time this day ends, I hope that we can all look across the aisle at each other and say, "Well, there are a lot of things we don't agree on, but we agree on this," which is why it's important that we take this time. There was a point, I believe, when the House was considering talking about other pieces of legislation today, and at this point, again, it's been agreed that the most important thing that we can do on this day is to get this important issue right, an issue that we struggled to get to this place where we think we can all agree and get it right and one that matters. I'd like to think that everything that we do in this House matters, but I think most Albertans would agree

that some things matter more than others. The sanctity of the doctor-patient relationship, the security of that relationship, is of the highest importance.

Madam Chair, there has been a lot of talk about how we properly look after survivors of this heinous act when it happens, and that's important, but the place that I'd like to get us to is a place where we have fewer survivors because we have fewer offences made. While you can never one hundred per cent stop bad human behaviour, one of the mechanisms that we as legislators can use to prevent bad human behaviour is to put in place sanctions, penalties, things that those that would behave badly would not look forward to, would be afraid of, be unwilling to tolerate, and that, we would hope, will inspire them to forgo any bad behaviour that they may be considering. What's better than looking after a victim of sexual violence in a doctor's office is to have no victim at all. What's better than having a survivor is to not have anything to survive. What's better is to have a trusting relationship that is honoured one hundred per cent of the time. While we may not be able to guarantee in this Legislature that we can do that one hundred per cent of the time, by gosh, I think we need to try to get as close to that one hundred per cent number as we can, and by so doing, I believe we will be truly serving not only Alberta women but, really, all Albertans.

There are other things to do. The College of Physicians & Surgeons: my understanding is that they are actually looking forward to this legislative guidance. They're actually looking forward to the legislation putting them in a position where they can apply meaningful sanctions in a timely way and feel fully able to do that without having those sanctions overturned and without having their own tribunals feel reticent to put in place the proper sanctions. That's my understanding. If we can actually do that for them, if we actually could put them in a better position to serve all Albertans, that function of this Legislature would be one, indeed, that we could all be proud of if we can get to that important point.

Madam Speaker – Madam Chair. Pardon me. I'm trying to elevate your position here. You might be Madam Speaker in a few minutes, when we move out of Committee of the Whole. I mean nothing but respect. I want to thank you for this opportunity to rise and speak on this bill. I know that there are people in the background working feverishly to agree on words that will get us to the place where we want to be. I'm grateful for this opportunity to talk about a matter that truly is of importance to all Albertans.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the subamendment? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the Member for Calgary-Hays, who has been discussing this important subamendment for the last . . .

Mr. McIver: Nineteen minutes.

3:20

Mr. Nixon: . . . 19 minutes. As he says, there have been some conversations taking place, of course, behind the scenes between the government and the opposition, conversations that I believe are going to bear fruit shortly, Madam Chair. I'm sure you are excited about that.

The Leader of the Opposition spoke about his desire to be able to try to come to a good compromise – actually, I think that "compromise" is the wrong word in this case – a good agreement that will make the strongest piece of legislation on this issue for Albertans. He did indicate, Madam Chair – I don't know if you

caught that part of his speech this morning, where he discussed the kind of timeline that got us to the place that we're at today, kind of an unprecedented day. I know that in your time in the Assembly you have not seen a process quite like this in the Legislative Assembly. In fact, it had gotten complicated enough that we had to bring in, between us and the government, some extra procedural help to try to figure out how to do this appropriately.

He talked about how, you know, this was brought forward last spring. The hon. Leader of the Opposition and the hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View – not Rocky Mountain House-Chestermere, as sometimes those of you who sit in the chair like to say because they sound similar. In fact, Madam Chair, I don't know if quite often people hear that I'm from Rocky Mountain House and think it's Rocky View county. I don't know if you've ever been to Rocky Mountain House and Rocky View county. They're very different places, about as different as myself and the hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

He talked about how they brought this important issue, that they identified it last sitting. The Deputy Premier at that time did not move forward with legislation, but we are thankful that sometime, at least, over the summer she recognized this as a serious issue and brought forward a piece of legislation to the Assembly. You know, the Leader of the Opposition pointed out some of the antics that we thought were unfortunate on this issue, but the reality is that the bill did get here.

But then, when the bill got here, there was a discussion primarily around five years versus lifetime bans in certain situations, and there was certainly significant disagreement between the government members of the House and the opposition on those issues. The Alberta Party and the Official Opposition, the United Conservative Party, were united on that issue, and in this case the NDP government were not on the same page. In fact, the members across the way from me stood up four times in a row in this House, had their names called for their constituencies, and voted against, you know, making sure predatory doctors and those types of things would be unable to practise medicine if they were convicted of crimes and had done things of a significant sexual nature to hurt their patients or people that they were charged with caring for. The government made that decision.

At that time the Deputy Premier indicated that she felt she didn't have enough time to look at the amendments that were being brought forward by the opposition. I found that a little bit alarming, the fact that that is what her and her party call on the opposition to do constantly, on a regular basis, with more than just amendments. They ask us to do that with large pieces of legislation. It's an interesting process for us, where we have to often be able to try to determine what to do with a piece of legislation. It's hard.

Now, the reason I bring it up is just to point out that the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills gave the minister an opportunity to be able to adjourn debate briefly for a day or so to be able to get this right, to have time to review it. Instead, the government chose to stand up three or, actually, four times and vote against what, clearly, the majority of Albertans wanted and then sometime between then and there decided, I think because of political pressure, to change their mind and reach out to us and ask us to take their bill back out of third reading, back into Committee of the Whole, do what's called a recommittal motion, and then try to have an opportunity to have a do over. I'm glad they did because I think it would have been unfortunate if this bill had passed the way that it was in third reading and if this got missed when they go forward. I think that, to their credit, they recognized that. They came to this Chamber and had an opportunity to change it.

We looked at the amendment that was brought forward by the government, and in general – actually, not in general. We agree with

all the content of the amendment, but we feel there was one section that was missed, which is why the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin brought in a subamendment, which we're talking about today, to be able to amend those areas that we think have been missed. Now, my understanding, Madam Chair, is that the government has indicated to us that they're in agreement in general with our intention with the subamendment. We have been in discussions, since we rose this morning for the Remembrance Day ceremonies, attempting to get that amendment to a place where both the government and their lawyers and the opposition are comfortable being able to pass it.

I do expect that that amendment will briefly be coming to this Chamber. As such, then I will shortly, actually, consider probably withdrawing the current subamendment that is on the floor. I'm explaining that now so that I don't have to explain it when it happens, Madam Chair, to try to make it as efficient as possible once that new subamendment arrives. Then you will probably see the Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin shortly thereafter rise to move a new subamendment.

Now, I actually think, Madam Chair, there's a very good chance that you will probably know how close we are to that before I do, but we will find out. Maybe not. Maybe it'll be a surprise. We will see where we're at. But that's what we are going through today. I think what's important about that is that it shows how we should have handled that as a Chamber in the very first place. If the minister felt that she did not have enough time to review the amendment – and I suspect that what her argument will be is that, well, we send you briefs . . .

Ms Hoffman: A sit-down briefing.

Mr. Nixon: A sit-down briefing, usually the day before a bill is voted on.

Now, I've been in those sit-down briefings, and while I do appreciate that they give them, they are nowhere near adequate enough for us to be able to determine our position on a bill. That takes time. The hon. Deputy Premier spent some time as a staffer with the NDP when they were in opposition. She knows that you don't just go to a government briefing and take the government's word for it. That is not the reality of the political process.

Madam Chair, I know, without a doubt, that in the last NDP caucus, when they were in opposition, the hon. Government House Leader, who spent a considerable amount of time in this Chamber in opposition – and I always enjoyed watching him in question period – did not go to Progressive Conservative briefings on a bill and just automatically assume that they were completely comfortable with it and then come into the Assembly and make his position for his constituents based on what the Progressive Conservatives told him in that briefing. That is not a reality of how the NDP operated in opposition. It's not a reality of how any opposition party should operate.

You take that briefing. You take the bill. You work with your researchers and your staff to try to understand it. Most importantly, you reach out to constituents, you reach out to stakeholders that will be involved. I know that the NDP did that when they were in opposition as well. That is the process for the opposition when they're in there.

Now, an amendment. I have been in this Chamber many times, firstly as the chief opposition whip and then later as the Opposition House Leader, when the government has brought in amendments that I only saw minutes before, where I was literally, Madam Chair, taking pictures of the amendment and sending them to staff that are elsewhere, trying to find out where the amendment is at. It is not that uncommon for an amendment to come to this place with very

little notice because of the speed of how we move through this legislation. The reality is that that is our process here in Alberta, which is why I always talk about the House of Commons. It has a different committee process, that I think probably would avoid such things as this.

What I think is important about this is that, at the end of the day, the government has indicated that, I think it would be fair to say, they regret voting against those amendments so hastily or moving this to third reading without a further discussion on this important issue. As such, we found ourselves there, and I think there's been some good bipartisan co-operation on an important issue today.

As such, Madam Chair, I'd like to ask for unanimous consent to withdraw the current subamendment that is on the floor.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

There has been a motion to withdraw subamendment SA1, requiring unanimous consent.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Deputy Chair: The subamendment will now be withdrawn.

The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin.

Ms Goodridge: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to move a subamendment, and I have the requisite number of copies here. Would you like me to wait till you receive the subamendment copies?

The Deputy Chair: If you could please just wait until I have a copy at the table.

Go ahead, Member.

Ms Goodridge: All right. Thank you, Madam Chair. Part of why I've been pushing so hard to ensure that any health professional who sexually abuses a patient never is able to practise again is due to some of my personal experience. Dr. Carl Nqumayo, an ob-gyn in Fort McMurray, was charged with assaulting six female patients between 2003 and '05. He was supposed to be performing internal examinations on the women when the offences were committed.

I was 18 at the time that Dr. Nqumayo was charged, and it was all over our local media. It affected me and many young women within my community who were supposed to be getting these important tests completed for the very first time. It made a generation of young women in Fort McMurray reluctant to take their health seriously.

3:30

Today I would like to move my subamendment to ensure that health professionals that abuse a patient never practise again. I would urge all members to support this important change. I move the motion as follows:

(a) by renumbering it as part A.1 and by adding the following before part A.1:

A Section 7(a) is amended by adding "or (3.1)" after "subsection (3)".

(b) in clause (a) in the proposed section 45

(i) by striking out subsection (3) and substituting the following:

(3) A person whose practice permit and registration are cancelled as a result of a decision of unprofessional conduct based in whole or in part

(a) on sexual abuse, or

(b) on a conviction of the person under section 151, 152, 153, 153.1, 155, 162, 162.1, 163.1, 171.1, 172.1, 172.2, 173, 271, 272, 273, 286.1, 286.2 or 286.3 of the *Criminal Code* (Canada)

may not apply for the practice permit to be reissued and the registration reinstated.

(ii) in the proposed subsection (3.1) by striking out "A person" and substituting "Subject to subsection (3), a person".

Thank you, Madam Chair, and I would please urge all members of this Assembly to consider accepting this amendment.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member. First off, the amendment will now be referred to as subamendment SA2.

Are there any members wishing to speak to subamendment SA2? The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Chair and to the member for the amendment. I think this goes to speak to how complicated some of this language can be around drafting and how important it is to make sure that we work in a way that's collaborative. I really do want to recognize that the members opposite and staff sat down with our Health staff and with staff from my office to make sure that the intent, which we both agree upon, is indeed the language that will ensure the safety for any individual who is part of such a severe act.

I have to say that I think it's really important that we continue to say to anyone who's been assaulted, to all health professionals, and to all Albertans that they are going to be protected, that we are going to ensure that they have the supports that they need, and that if there are any concerns, they are addressed.

I have just gotten confirmation that this indeed is the language that we agreed upon. Therefore, I want to encourage all my colleagues to vote in support.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to subamendment SA2?

Seeing none, I will call the question on the subamendment.

[Motion on subamendment SA2 carried]

The Deputy Chair: We are now back on the amendment. Are there any members wishing to speak to the amendment as amended?

Seeing none, I will call the question on amendment A7.

[Motion on amendment A7 as amended carried]

The Deputy Chair: Are there any other members wishing to speak to sections 7 and 26?

Seeing none, I'll call the question on section 7 and section 26 of Bill 21, An Act to Protect Patients, as amended.

[Motion carried]

The Deputy Chair: Shall the bill be reported with amendments? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Mr. Mason: I move, Madam Chair, that the committee rise and report Bill 21 as amended.

[Motion carried]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Ms Jabbour: Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain sections of Bill 21. The committee reports the following: sections 7 and 26 of Bill 21 with amendments.

I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Acting Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

Bill 21 An Act to Protect Patients

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier and Minister of Health to move third reading.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and thank you very much to our colleagues for the progress we continued to make this afternoon.

It's my honour to introduce again third reading of Bill 21, An Act to Protect Patients.

Thank you very much to members of the other parties for the important amendments and contributions to ensure that this bill is even stronger than what was introduced, and thank you to all members for working together to ensure that we have the strongest possible penalties in place for regulated health professionals who do commit sexual assault. Our government has zero tolerance for sexual abuse or misconduct towards patients, and it's a significant betrayal of the public trust, as many of us have mentioned. There is no circumstance where sexual abuse by a regulated health professional will be tolerated. The age of impunity, once again, is over, and it's time to take these crimes into the light.

Again, I want to thank the regulated health authority colleges for their support on this bill and all of the brave and strong Albertans who have shared their stories to ensure that this never happens again. I'm very proud that our government is taking action to increase transparency.

With that, I move third reading of Bill 21.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? I'd like to recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to actually move a recommittal back to Committee of the Whole. I'll give the necessary copies. Let me know when you receive it.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, if you could just wait until I have the amendment at the table, and then you can go ahead.

Thank you, hon. member. Your amendment will be referred to as REC2.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to move that the motion for third reading of Bill 21, An Act to Protect Patients, be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 21, An Act to Protect Patients, be not now read a third time but that it be recommitted to the Committee of the Whole for the purpose of reconsidering section 4.

The reason that I am moving this is that I do have an amendment to move this afternoon to address some of the concerns put forward by stakeholders.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? Seeing none, I will call the question on amendment REC2.

[Motion on amendment REC2 carried]

3:40 Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole (continued)

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: I would now like to call the committee to order.

Bill 21 An Act to Protect Patients (continued)

The Deputy Chair: The committee has under consideration section 4 of Bill 21, An Act to Protect Patients. Are there any comments, questions, or amendments? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's certainly been a lesson in procedure today, how things work – it's been interesting to watch that part – and I think really heartening and gratifying to see all of us working together to strengthen this legislation. I'm really grateful for the opportunity to move this amendment. I'd like to move that Bill 21, An Act to Protect Patients, be amended by striking out section 4 and substituting the following:

4 Section 16 is amended by adding the following after subsection (1):

(1.1) When establishing a hearing tribunal where the subject-matter of a hearing relates to a complaint alleging sexual abuse of or sexual misconduct towards a patient by a regulated member, the hearings director must make every reasonable effort to ensure that

- (a) at least one member of the hearing tribunal has the same gender identity as the patient,
- (b) all members of the hearing tribunal have received training on trauma informed practice and sexual violence, and any other training specified by the Minister, and
- (c) all members of the hearing tribunal have completed the training referred to in clause (b) prior to serving on a hearing tribunal.

(1.2) For the purposes of ensuring that at least one member of the hearing tribunal has the same gender identity as the patient under subsection (1.1), the hearings director may select one member from the membership list established by another council under section 15 to be appointed as one additional public member.

The rationale behind this is to ensure better decision-making by tribunals when they're hearing cases of sexual abuse or sexual misconduct.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.
Are there any members wishing to speak?

Ms Hoffman: What a nice example, I think, this is of how we can achieve good outcomes when we continue to work collaboratively.

That being said, I have reviewed the language. It reflects the understanding of the conversations the hon. member and I and many members of my caucus have had. Therefore, I encourage all colleagues to vote in support.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A8?
Seeing none, I will call the question.

[Motion on amendment A8 carried]

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Well, it is with an incredible sense of déjà vu, Madam Chair, that I stand to move that we rise and report Bill 21 as amended.

[Motion carried]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Ms Jabbour: Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain sections of Bill 21. The committee reports the following: section 4 of Bill 21 with amendments. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Acting Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

Government Bills and Orders

Third Reading

(continued)

Bill 21

An Act to Protect Patients

(continued)

The Acting Speaker: The Deputy Premier and Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. My grandmother said good things happen in threes. It's my pleasure, for the third time, to introduce third reading of Bill 21, an act that I think we're all really excited to see move forward and be passed and enacted to ensure that patients and all those who visit health care offices have the confidence and full assurance that they are doing so without seeing somebody who may have been found guilty of sexual assault.

With that, I am very proud to move third reading and look forward to this continuing to move through at this new pace that we've set this afternoon. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to third reading of Bill 21? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak on Bill 21, An Act to Protect Patients. This bill is an incredibly important step forward for our province to protect patients and ensure trust in our health care system. I want to first thank my colleague from Chestermere-Rocky View for raising this important issue this past spring and for being unrelenting in her advocacy for victims all across Alberta.

Trust in our health care professionals is an absolute necessity for our health care system. It is critical that we deal with those few who abuse this trust and, in doing so, not only support victims but also the vast majority of health care professionals who uphold the high standard of ethics expected in their vocation.

I also want to take the opportunity to thank the government for coming forward with this bill and for belatedly making this decision to engage with the opposition to make it better. My colleague's amendment to change the length of the ban from five years to a lifetime, in my view, is an important change to let victims know that they have our support, that they have the understanding that their safety is our utmost intent in this legislation.

Madam Speaker, I am a husband and a father, and the safety of my family, particularly in potentially vulnerable circumstances, is my utmost concern. I am also confident that this issue is of the utmost concern for every member of the House.

I want to thank everyone who knows how important this is and is working to deliver this legislation for Albertans. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to start by first of all saying to the Member for Calgary-MacKay-Nose Hill and the Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park that I am always humbled by the willingness of members of this House to be open and to talk about their personal experience. I think this is why I really appreciate being part of the Assembly at the moment where we're really willing to tackle some very tough issues that are not only very personal but affect people for a lifetime.

The other thing that I think is important to say is that whatever bill we pass and so on, the important thing is that, first of all, we believe people who report sexual abuse or sexual misconduct. That's one thing that I've appreciated, the ability that we can put forward bills and programs and so on so that when somebody stands up and speaks, we believe them and we take action. I think this is really important in what we do in the Assembly. I'm also very aware that this bill is not the only thing that the government has done to protect victims of sexual abuse or to listen to them and to put programs in place. I appreciate the extra funding that has gone to programs for safe homes or for counselling programs.

3:50

I'm really pleased to stand up and speak on behalf of this bill because, as we all know, there was an incident in Sherwood Park, my constituency, that led to concern arising out of the way that the doctor was able to practise. I also want to thank the constituents, the people who have spoken about it and have interacted with government and opposition members to make sure that we dealt with this bill. We may be voting for this bill in the House, but I think this bill indicates the fact that the voice of those who are survivors, who have been victimized is really important in how we make decisions.

Thank you to the Deputy Premier and Minister of Health for working with every member of the House to make this a very strong bill, and I especially appreciate the willingness of the opposition to work with us and to be reminded all the time that we have to listen to the voice of those people who say they've been abused.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is an honour to rise today in the House to support Bill 21, the protecting patients from sexual assault by health providers act. This minister might not be able to address emergency wait times, which continue to worsen, and our

ambulances that continue to line up. This minister might not be able to improve surgical wait times as they deteriorate, surgeries at 46 weeks now. This minister might not be able to do one iota of streamlining in administration in order to enable front-line services to see their patients more effectively. But this minister was good enough to listen to the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View on her question this last spring, and she is addressing a very serious issue, and for that I commend her. This is a good bill. This bill is a crucial piece of legislation, and I'm very grateful for the opportunity to stand up and talk on it today as the Health critic for the United Conservative Party.

I understand the code of conduct that is expected of those in the medical profession. We must treat all patients with respect and dignity. We must do our very best to make sure patients know that they are safe and that they can trust us to help them. It's absolutely horrific that some medical professionals take it upon themselves to misuse their power and sexually abuse their patients. Madam Speaker, when we were discussing this bill and I was discussing this bill with two friends, those two friends told me about their negative experiences. It was appalling. My one friend, when she was a child in Ontario, a teenager, a lifeguard, sprained her ankle. The paramedics proceeded to cut off all of her clothes, and to this day, 20 years later, she's still disgusted by it. She was good enough to share that experience with me. As a former paramedic I can tell you that if you have a sprained ankle, there is no need to cut off all of your clothes. That much I guarantee. It's disgusting. Why would a 17-year-old kid have to go through that kind of traumatizing experience? She had the trust of a medical professional who was working on her, and it's absolutely disgusting that someone would take advantage of that.

Another story from another friend here in town. She shared with me a story that involves her teenage daughter here in this city. She was having chest pains. By any measure, I know what to do with chest pains. You're assessing something in the chest. You're assuming it's a cardiac issue or maybe a musculoskeletal issue. Ultimately, Madam Speaker, the doctor wanted to do an internal exam on her – just to be clear, when I'm talking about an internal exam, I'm talking about a vaginal exam – for chest pain. When her daughter was startled by this and very unsure whether to say yes – and thank God she was discouraged from agreeing with this treatment – the doctor shamed her and said: you're refusing a medical treatment? This poor kid didn't know what to do. Ultimately, they left the hospital, and she was able to see a physician a little bit later and get a proper diagnosis.

I tell you what. It's things like that, and this abuse of medical professionals is truly detrimental to our society. It's unfortunate that our college failed us in this regard, and we can only hope that this legislation will ensure that these things never happen again. This bill ensures that patients will feel safe, that they can continue to have faith in their doctors and in the system. They can be reassured that medical professionals will not abuse their power and, if they do, that they will be held accountable. The safety of Albertans should always be our number one priority, and this bill certainly does that.

People need to be held accountable for their actions, and that includes the organizations that they're responsible to. We have to have faith and trust in these colleges that we have empowered to manage professionals. The epitome of professionals is the fact that they are self-managed. The fact that this one particular college failed our society in allowing one physician to treat people was disappointing, and we can only hope that they and every other college learn that they are accountable, that they're responsible for their actions, and that our society is very aware in this day and age. We can only hope that these things never happen again.

With that, Madam Speaker, I just simply want to say that I'm proud to stand today with this Legislature in favour of Bill 21. This bill, I hope and we all hope, will bring back to Albertans trust and faith in our system, trust and faith from people that have been mistreated by the system. We can only hope that they continue on in our society, hope that this will hold all medical professionals accountable for violating their sacred oaths and will ensure that a high standard for our medical professionals will be upheld.

I do hope that all members will vote in favour of Bill 21. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. member under 29(2)(a)?

Ms McPherson: Just a comment, not a question. I think it's really incumbent on all of the members of the Legislature to avail themselves of information about trauma and how their language can be extremely retraumatizing for people who've experienced sexual assault. With some of the language that I just heard, I had to plug my ears so that I didn't have to listen to it. It was very upsetting. It was unnecessary. It didn't add anything to the debate, and I'm very disappointed to have heard it in this Chamber in that context. Once again, you know, there are many programs available where you can learn about trauma and about the effect of your words on other people.

The Acting Speaker: Any other comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, hon. member, would you like to speak to third reading?

Ms McPherson: Just very briefly.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I want to reiterate my extreme gratitude for where we've gotten to, acknowledge the Minister of Health, the government caucus, the Official Opposition. I want to thank especially my own caucus members for standing with me and in solidarity for women. It's not just women; it's all patients. We've all done a remarkable job of sending a really clear message to people who have experienced sexual assault that we believe them and that we take it seriously and that their words matter, their experience matters.

So I'm really happy to be able to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I'll now recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

Drever: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'll be brief in my comments. I just want to thank the Minister of Health for putting forward this bill. This is such an important bill to so many women here in this province. I know that she worked very hard on it, and I just wanted to say thank you for that.

Our government has always been clear that sexual assault is a heinous crime and it will not be tolerated. I'm just so pleased that we're so close to passing this important piece of legislation to protect patients from sexual abuse and sexual misconduct, making Alberta the second province to do so. I'm proud that Alberta is a leader in Canada in preventing assault and supporting survivors, and I want to thank the members from all parties in this Assembly for their thoughtful debate and constructive conversation around this legislation. We've listened to survivors and listened closely to

the organizations who support them as we drafted this legislation and as we continued to work with them during this debate.

4:00

I'm very thankful for all the amendments that came forward. I think that they really strengthen the current piece of legislation. I also wanted to thank the Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park for all her words today in the House. I think that she spoke on behalf of a lot of women who've been in that situation. I think that's a pretty strong message. As legislators this is our role, to represent our constituents, and I think that everyone here has done a really good job here today.

Thank you. That's all I have to say.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Any members under 29(2)(a)?

Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I will speak briefly to take this opportunity to rise and speak in favour of Bill 21, which I think is, without question, a tremendously important piece of legislation, that I would hope has a very strong and positive impact on the lives of Albertans who may be victimized by medical practitioners, be they doctors or members of the other nearly 40 colleges, I think, that it will be applied to in this case.

I also want to make sure that I thank the Minister of Health and the Government House Leader on the government side for working very collaboratively with the opposition. We had a lot of back and forth to get this bill where it needed to be, and government and opposition and all members should be proud of the work that we've done here today. I want to make sure that my gratitude is on the record and stated.

I want to thank my colleague the Alberta Party caucus Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill for being the first here to push for a lifetime ban. Ultimately, after some back and forth, we got to where we needed to be. Most importantly, though, I want to thank her for her tremendous bravery in sharing her personal story. Thank you.

To the Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park as well for her powerful words earlier today and to others in the Chamber who may have had similar experiences but not having had the desire to share that, which is absolutely your right: know that I believe you and that that is something that we, and I personally, acknowledge is tremendously impactful on your life. I know that others in this House have shared their stories, and it is really humbling and sobering to hear those stories. With some of the other stories that we've heard and personal experiences, what I'm struck by is just how devastatingly widespread sexual assault, sexual harassment is in our society. We're starting to finally shine a light on that problem. I think legislation like this, bills like this, help ensure that that cycle stops, but I think we need to be cognizant of the fact that we're a very long way from solving this problem in society, and there's much work that remains to be done. I really do want to thank those who have had the bravery to share their stories, and I will, with my Alberta Party colleagues, support Bill 21 at third reading.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Peace River.

Ms Jabbour: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I did want to just take a brief opportunity to speak to Bill 21 and, I think, just really reinforce how incredibly important this legislation is. I'd like to

remind the House that we've talked a lot about the impacts of a doctor-patient kind of a situation. But this bill, in fact, regulates a whole number, a whole range of health professionals, including my own profession. As a provisional psychologist, my profession falls under the agency of this bill as well. If you think about a relationship between a psychologist and a patient, the potential for damage could be pretty severe just due to the nature of the personal revelations, the kinds of conversations that go on; you could be potentially creating a lot of damage should you engage in an inappropriate sexual relationship with a patient. Now, as psychologists we have a very, very strong code of ethics. We are expected to adhere to this, and in fact it's an excellent code of ethics. You benefit from it every day because it really gave me some good guidance in a whole multitude of situations.

I think it's important that the college, while they would hold their members to account, also needs to have the backing of some legislation to support them in that. This is what I heard the other evening when I had the opportunity to speak with members of the college of physicians. They said how much they appreciated this legislation because it will actually give them the legal piece that they need when they want to withhold ever giving back a licence to someone who's found guilty of an offence. This is really far-reaching legislation. It's not just doctors; it's impacting a whole range of health professions. It's wonderful. I'm really glad that the government has brought this forward.

I just wanted to comment a little bit on the process. It's been really interesting, I think, partly because I guess I'm a bit of a legislative geek, and I find it really interesting that we've had to follow all of these rules back and forth to get these things fixed. It also brought home to me the importance that we pass legislation that will withstand a constitutional challenge. We would never want to pass really good legislation like this and then have it struck down, because this is legislation that we need in this province, so I think it was really important that there was some due diligence done around that. While maybe initially, you know, we thought that we had found that balance, the minister went back, checked with the legal counsel, and came back with another possibility. You know, I think we've arrived at a really good solution together.

I just wanted to comment, thirdly, about the collaborative process. One of the things when I was working in *Hansard* and I used to watch the process back and forth during the years when the former PCs were in power: it would frustrate me because the opposition would bring forward excellent amendments, great suggestions, and the government just ignored them. They had no interest whatsoever in listening to anything the opposition had to say. So I'm so pleased that our government is doing this differently and that you're willing to listen, that the Health minister and the opposition parties worked together to make this bill as strong as could possibly be. Thank you so much for engaging in all of that. I'm really, really proud that as a province we're taking the lead on this.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Are there any more speakers, just to clarify?

Seeing none, I'll now call on the Deputy Premier to close.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you so much, Madam Speaker, and thank you to all of my colleagues. I know that this has been a very important bill for, I imagine, all of us. I look forward to us being able to spend time in our constituencies this next week telling our constituents about the important work of this House.

While I think we've done a great job talking about what everyone on the floor of this Chamber who's elected has done to bring us to

this point, I want to also recognize all of the staff who were part of the work in drafting the original bill, making sure that we worked on amendments, and making sure that we brought it to this conclusion today of third reading. Lastly, I want to recognize the table officers and the Chair/Speaker/Chair/Speaker for her amazing ability to adapt today and help navigate this process. I imagine this is something that she probably wanted to speak to as well, so I look forward to hearing what she tells her constituents about this important legislation once we rise today.

Thank you very much to all members.

With that, I close debate at third reading of Bill 21.

[Motion carried; Bill 21 read a third time]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I would like to thank all members. This is as close as legislating comes to clockwork precision. Here we are with 20 minutes left on the clock, but I will move that we call it 4:30 and that the House adjourn until 1:30 on November 19.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 4:10 p.m. to Monday, November 19, at 1:30 p.m.]

Bill Status Report for the 29th Legislature - 4th Session (2018)

Activity to Thursday, November 8, 2018

The Bill sponsor's name is in brackets following the Bill title. If it is a money Bill, (\$) will appear between the title and the sponsor's name. Numbers following each Reading refer to Hansard pages where the text of debates is found; dates for each Reading are in brackets following the page numbers. Bills numbered 1 to 200 are Government Bills. Bills numbered 201 or higher are Private Members' Public Bills. Bills numbered with a "Pr" prefix are Private Bills.

* An asterisk beside a Bill number indicates an amendment was passed to that Bill; the Committee line shows the precise date of the amendment.

The date a Bill comes into force is indicated in square brackets after the date of Royal Assent. If a Bill comes into force "on proclamation," "with exceptions," or "on various dates," please contact Legislative Counsel, Alberta Justice, for details at 780.427.2217. The chapter number assigned to the Bill is entered immediately following the date the Bill comes into force. SA indicates Statutes of Alberta; this is followed by the year in which it is included in the statutes, and its chapter number. Please note, Private Bills are not assigned chapter number until the conclusion of the Fall Sitzings.

Bill 1 — Energy Diversification Act (McCuaig-Boyd)

First Reading — 6 (*Mar. 8, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 50-51 (*Mar. 13, 2018 morn.*), 184-87 (*Mar. 15, 2018 aft.*), 233-43 (*Mar. 20, 2018 aft.*), 301-08 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft.*), 919-27 (*May 9, 2018 morn.*), 981-84 (*May 9, 2018 eve.*), 1054-59 (*May 14, 2018 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1286-87 (*May 29, 2018 aft.*), 1280-86 (*May 29, 2018 aft.*), 1299 (*May 29, 2018 eve.*), 1311-18 (*May 29, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1488-92 (*Jun. 5, 2018 morn.*), 1523-24 (*Jun. 5, 2018 aft.*), 1525-41 (*Jun. 6, 2018 morn., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 11, 2018; SA 2018 cE-9.6]

Bill 2 — Growth and Diversification Act (\$) (Bilous)

First Reading — 118 (*Mar. 14, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 243-46 (*Mar. 20, 2018 morn.*), 294-96 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft.*), 314-25 (*Mar. 22, 2018 morn.*), 411-12 (*Apr. 4, 2018 aft.*), 702-05 (*May 1, 2018 eve.*), 928-33 (*May 9, 2018 morn.*), 1061-68 (*May 15, 2018 morn.*), 1101-04 (*May 15, 2018 eve.*), 1163-67 (*May 16, 2018 eve.*), 1202-06 (*May 17, 2018 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1253-58 (*May 29, 2018 morn.*), 1288-97 (*May 29, 2018 aft.*), 1299 (*May 29, 2018 eve.*), 1379-82 (*May 30, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1492-94 (*Jun. 5, 2018 morn.*), 1510-23 (*Jun. 5, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation, with exceptions; SA 2018 c8]

Bill 3 — Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2018 (\$) (Ceci)

First Reading — 184 (*Mar. 15, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 221-26 (*Mar. 19, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 261-68 (*Mar. 20, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 296-98 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 28, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force Mar. 28, 2018; SA 2018 c1]

Bill 4 — Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2018 (\$) (Ceci)

First Reading — 165 (*Mar. 15, 2018 morn., passed*)

Second Reading — 226-32 (*Mar. 19, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 268-75 (*Mar. 20, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 298-301 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 28, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force Mar. 28, 2018; SA 2018 c2]

Bill 5 — An Act to Strengthen Financial Security for Persons with Disabilities (Sabir)

First Reading — 200-201 (*Mar. 19, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 360-62 (*Apr. 3, 2018 morn.*), 482-87 (*Apr. 10, 2018 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 847-54 (*May 7, 2018 eve.*), 1084-88 (*May 15, 2018 aft.*), 1361-64 (*May 30, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1418-21 (*May 31, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 11, 2018; SA 2018 c12]

Bill 6 — Gaming and Liquor Statutes Amendment Act, 2018 (Ganley)

First Reading — 448 (*Apr. 9, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 533-34 (*Apr. 12, 2018 aft.*), 669-79 (*May 1, 2018 aft.*), 1010-13 (*May 10, 2018 aft.*), 1101 (*May 15, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1158-63 (*May 16, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1360-61 (*May 30, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2018 c7]

Bill 7 — Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act (Carlier)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 491-97 (*Apr. 10, 2018 aft.*), 534-36 (*Apr. 12, 2018 aft.*), 679-83 (*May 1, 2018 aft.*), 908-09 (*May 8, 2018 eve.*), 913-14 (*May 8, 2018 eve.*), 1097-98 (*May 15, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1299-1311 (*May 29, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1365-74 (*May 30, 2018 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 11, 2018, for sections 1-6 and 20-21 and April 1, 2019, for sections 7-19; SA 2018 cS-23.3]

Bill 8 — Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2018 (S. Anderson)

First Reading — 374 (*Apr. 3, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1639-45 (*Oct. 30, 2018 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1645-53 (*Oct. 30, 2018 morn.*), (*Oct. 30, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1763-65 (*Nov. 1, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 9* — Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act (Hoffman)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 497-502 (*Apr. 10, 2018 aft.*), 785-93 (*May 3, 2018 morn.*), 775-76 (*May 3, 2018 morn.*), 807-08 (*May 3, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 909-13 (*May 8, 2018 eve.*), 957-61 (*May 9, 2018 aft.*), 992-94 (*May 10, 2018 morn.*), 1088-96 (*May 15, 2018 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1352-60 (*May 30, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 11, 2018; SA 2018 cP-26.83]

Bill 10* — An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements (S. Anderson)

First Reading — 528 (*Apr. 12, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 611-12 (*Apr. 19, 2018 aft.*), 643-50 (*May 1, 2018 morn.*), 761-72 (*May 2, 2018 eve.*), 973-81 (*May 9, 2018 eve.*), 1049-54 (*May 14, 2018 eve.*), 1180-87 (*May 17, 2018 morn.*), 1242-47 (*May 28, 2018 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1287-88 (*May 29, 2018 aft.*), 1299 (*May 29, 2018 eve.*), 1374-79 (*May 30, 2018 eve., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1555-71 (*Jun. 6, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2018 c6]

Bill 11 — Lobbyists Amendment Act, 2018 (Gray)

First Reading — 505 (*Apr. 11, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 612-13 (*Apr. 19, 2018 aft.*), 650-56 (*May 1, 2018 morn.*), 772-74 (*May 2, 2018 eve.*), 967-73 (*May 9, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1157 (*May 16, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1382-86 (*May 30, 2018 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 11, 2018, with exceptions; SA 2018 c9]

Bill 12* — Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act (McCuaig-Boyd)

First Reading — 547 (*Apr. 16, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 736-46 (*May 2, 2018 aft.*), 854-55 (*May 7, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 961-65 (*May 9, 2018 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 994-96 (*May 10, 2018 morn.*), 1135-54 (*May 16, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 18, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2018 c P-21.5]

Bill 13* — An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future (\$) (McCuaig-Boyd)

First Reading — 606 (*Apr. 19, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 746-53 (*May 2, 2018 aft.*), 808-16 (*May 3, 2018 aft.*), 855-64 (*May 7, 2018 eve.*), 947-57 (*May 9, 2018 aft.*), 1169-80 (*May 17, 2018 morn.*), 1247-50 (*May 28, 2018 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1322-34 (*May 30, 2018 morn.*), 1397-1404 (*May 31, 2018 morn.*), 1449-79 (*Jun. 4, 2018 eve., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1573-92 (*Jun. 7, 2018 morn., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation, with exceptions; SA 2018 c10]

Bill 14 — An Act to Empower Utility Consumers (McLean)

First Reading — 590 (*Apr. 18, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 718-24 (*May 2, 2018 morn.*), 915-19 (*May 9, 2018 morn.*), 1098-1101 (*May 15, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1319-22 (*May 30, 2018 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1421 (*May 31, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2018 c5]

Bill 15 — Appropriation Act, 2018 (\$) (Ceci)

First Reading — 610 (*Apr. 19, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Second Reading — 683-89 (*May 1, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 753-56 (*May 2, 2018 aft.*), 757-60 (*May 2, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 776-85 (*May 3, 2018 morn., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*May 14, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 14, 2018; SA 2018 c3]

Bill 16 — Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Statutes Amendment Act, 2018 (Gray)

First Reading — 879 (*May 8, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1010-13 (*May 10, 2018 aft.*), 1105-22 (*May 16, 2018 morn.*), 1155-57 (*May 16, 2018 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1258-64 (*May 29, 2018 morn.*), 1299 (*May 29, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1421-22 (*May 31, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 11, 2018, with exceptions; SA 2018 c4]

Bill 17 — Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2018 (Ceci)

First Reading — 806 (*May 3, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 864-65 (*May 7, 2018 eve.*), 1014-15 (*May 10, 2018 aft.*), 1058-59 (*May 14, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1157 (*May 16, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1364 (*May 30, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 11, 2018, with exceptions; SA 2018 c13]

Bill 18 — Statutes Amendment Act, 2018 (Mason)

First Reading — 1201 (*May 17, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1251-52 (*May 28, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1387-97 (*May 31, 2018 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1481-88 (*Jun. 5, 2018 morn.*), 1507-10 (*Jun. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 11, 2018; SA 2018 c11]

Bill 19* — An Act to Improve the Affordability and Accessibility of Post-secondary Education (Schmidt)

First Reading — 1621 (*Oct. 29, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1667-81 (*Oct. 30, 2018 aft.*), 1690-1701 (*Oct. 31, 2018 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1718-28 (*Oct. 31, 2018 aft.*), 1828-35 (*Nov. 6, 2018 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1845-65 (*Nov. 7, 2018 morn., adjourned*)

Bill 20 — Securities Amendment Act, 2018 (Ceci)

First Reading — 1621 (*Oct. 29, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1681-84 (*Oct. 30, 2018 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1716-18 (*Oct. 31, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1765-66 (*Nov. 1, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 21* — An Act to Protect Patients (Hoffman)

First Reading — 1666 (*Oct. 30, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1685-90 (*Oct. 31, 2018 morn., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1729-32 (*Oct. 31, 2018 aft.*), 1835-43 (*Nov. 6, 2018 aft., passed with amendments*), 1900-10 (*Nov. 8, 2018 morn., recommitted, adjourned*), 1924-28 (*Nov. 8, 2018 aft., passed with amendments*), 1928-29 (*Nov. 8, 2018 aft., recommitted, passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1899-1900 (*Nov. 8, 2018 morn., recommitted to Committee*), 1928 (*Nov. 8, 2018 aft., recommitted to Committee*), 1929-32 (*Nov. 8, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 22 — An Act for Strong Families Building Stronger Communities (Larivee)

First Reading — 1714 (*Oct. 31, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1735-49 (*Nov. 1, 2018 morn., passed*)

Bill 23 — An Act to Renew Local Democracy in Alberta (S. Anderson)

First Reading — 1778 (*Nov. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1809-12 (*Nov. 6, 2018 morn., adjourned*)

Bill 24 — An Act to Recognize AMA Representation Rights (Hoffman)

First Reading — 1762-63 (*Nov. 1, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1799-1809 (*Nov. 6, 2018 morn.*), 1881-97 (*Nov. 7, 2018 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 25 — Canyon Creek Hydro Development Act (McCuaig-Boyd)

First Reading — 1879 (*Nov. 7, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 26 — An Act to Combat Poverty and Fight for Albertans with Disabilities (Sabir)

First Reading — 1923 (*Nov. 8, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 201 — Employment Standards (Firefighter Leave) Amendment Act, 2018 (W. Anderson)

First Reading — 118 (*Mar. 14, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 201-14 (*Mar. 19, 2018 aft., referred to Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future*), 1620 (*Oct. 29, 2018 aft.*), 1780-92 (*Nov. 5, 2018 aft., motion to concur in report, adjourned*)

Bill 202 — Alberta Taxpayer Protection (Carbon Tax Referendum) Amendment Act, 2018 (Kenney)

First Reading — 179 (*Mar. 15, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 549-63 (*Apr. 16, 2018 aft., defeated on division*)

Bill 203 — Long Term Care Information Act (Schreiner)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 632-40 (*Apr. 30, 2018 aft.*), 829-33 (*May 7, 2018 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1221-30 (*May 28, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1434-41 (*Jun. 4, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 11, 2018; SA 2018 cL-22]

Bill 204 — Land Statutes (Abolition of Adverse Possession) Amendment Act, 2018 (Gotfried)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 833-41 (*May 7, 2018 aft., adjourned*), 1031-37 (*May 14, 2018 aft., reasoned amendment agreed to*)

Bill 205 — Supporting Accessible Mental Health Services Act (Jabbour)

First Reading — 1008 (*May 10, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1037 (*May 14, 2018 aft., deferred to Monday, October 29, 2018*)

Bill 206 — Societies (Preventing the Promotion of Hate) Amendment Act, 2018 (Coolahan)

First Reading — 1008-09 (*May 10, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1037 (*May 14, 2018 aft.*), 1441-47 (*Jun. 4, 2018 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 207 — Municipal Government (Legion Tax Exemption) Amendment Act, 2018 (Rosendahl)

First Reading — 1418 (*May 31, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 208 — Public Recreation Areas Consultation Act (Westhead)

First Reading — 1418 (*May 31, 2018 aft., passed*)

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, November 19, 2018

Day 49

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (NDP)
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Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Sandra Jansen	Minister of Infrastructure
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Children's Services and Status of Women
Brian Malkinson	Minister of Service Alberta
Brian Mason	Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Community and Social Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

Parliamentary Secretaries

Jessica Littlewood	Economic Development and Trade for Small Business
Annie McKittrick	Education

STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Mr. Coolahan
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	Luff
Dang	McPherson
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha
Deputy Chair: Mr. van Dijken

Carson	Littlewood
Connolly	McPherson
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schneider
Fitzpatrick	Starke
Gotfried	Taylor
Horne	

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Goehring
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Orr
Ellis	Renaud
Fraser	Shepherd
Hinkley	Swann
Luff	Woollard
McKitrick	Yao
Miller	

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Shepherd
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Aheer	McKitrick
Gill	Pitt
Horne	van Dijken
Kleinsteinuber	Woollard
Littlewood	

Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Wanner
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Babcock	Nixon
Cooper	Piquette
Dang	Pitt
Drever	Westhead
McIver	

Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms Kazim
Deputy Chair: Connolly

Anderson, W.	Orr
Babcock	Rosendahl
Drever	Stier
Drysdale	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kleinsteinuber	Taylor
McKitrick	

Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	Miller
Cooper	Nielsen
Goehring	Nixon
Gotfried	Pitt
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Cyr
Deputy Chair: Mr. Dach

Barnes	Malkinson
Carson	Miller
Clark	Nielsen
Gotfried	Panda
Hunter	Renaud
Littlewood	Turner
Luff	

Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola
Deputy Chair: Mr. Drysdale

Babcock	Loewen
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Fildebrandt	Panda
Hanson	Rosendahl
Kazim	Schreiner
Kleinsteinuber	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, November 19, 2018

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Deputy Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let us reflect. Today the Assembly hosted a ceremony to commemorate Holodomor, the famine and genocide imposed by Soviet authorities in Ukraine. Let us take a moment to honour and remember all those who have lost their lives during this horrific event.

Hon. members, ladies and gentlemen, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Mr. R.J. Chambers. I would invite all of you to participate in the language of your choice.

Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!
True patriot love in all of us command.
Car ton bras sait porter l'épée,
Il sait porter la croix!
Ton histoire est une épopée
Des plus brillants exploits.
God keep our land glorious and free!
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

The Deputy Speaker: Please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm honoured to rise today and make two introductions to you. First of all, I'm honoured to introduce through you to all members of the Assembly Mr. Derek Fox. Derek was elected to the Legislative Assembly of Alberta in 1986 to represent the good people of Vegreville for seven years. Like our current members, he shared the understanding of the importance that our rural communities, farming, and agriculture have in our province. During his time in office he fought for hard-working people in rural Alberta as the Official Opposition critic for agriculture and rural development. Today he carries on the entrepreneurial spirit of Alberta as a business owner in Vegreville, and he plays an active role in his community as secretary treasurer of Warwick Hall and is a sponsor of the Vegreville Agricultural Society. I would ask that Mr. Fox please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

Madam Speaker, I'm also honoured to present to you and through you to all Members of the Legislative Assembly Mr. Tom Sigurdson. Tom has been described as tireless and formidable in his long career advocating for immigrants, impoverished and, of course, working people throughout Canada and Alberta. He was elected to the Legislative Assembly of Alberta in 1986 to represent the good people of Edmonton-Belmont. Serving until 1993, he fought for hard-working Albertans as the Official Opposition critic for manpower, tourism, Education, and Labour. He also had the good fortune to have one of the bossiest summer students ever, subsequently becoming the Premier of the province. All I can say is that if you thought I was bossy then, you should try working with me now. Currently the executive director of the B.C. building trades council he tirelessly fights for 35,000 highly skilled trades workers

from 17 different unions making up the council. I ask that you please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

Cortes-Vargas: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a privilege to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly enthusiastic members of the Strathcona County Pickleball Association. Later today I'll be speaking a little bit more about the growing sport. Here today are Rita Fournier, Loui Fournier, Zane Nykiforuk, Roger Kemp, Jamilah Mumo, Sharon Loughheed, and Rob Loughheed. As you know, Rob Loughheed served as a member of this Legislature for three terms, representing the constituencies of Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan and Strathcona. I ask my guests to rise and to receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Introduction of Guests

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. With your indulgence I have two introductions. First of all, I'd like to introduce 37 members of the grade 6 class of Waverley school, who are here for a week at the Legislature. I see them eagerly waving at me. They're accompanied by their teachers, Mr. Douglas and Ms Walls, and their chaperone, Ms McLennan. I had the pleasure of visiting Waverley school at the end of October, where we debated and eventually decided to extend voting rights to 11-year-olds here in the province of Alberta. I'd ask that they please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

For my second set of introductions, Madam Speaker, I rise today to introduce a group of student leaders in our postsecondary system. The Alberta Students' Executive Council represents students in every corner of our province and are here at the Legislature for their inaugural Fall Advocacy Week. I've been proud to work with them as we crafted Bill 19, and I'm happy to have them in the building as debate continues. With us today – and I ask that they rise as I say their names – are Garrett Koehler, Nicholas Newnes, Ramon Ramirez III, Karen Velasco, Dacil Aguilar, Chaise Combs, Lindsey Comeau, and Alex Bedard. Forgive me if I've missed anybody. I'd ask that they all please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's indeed my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly 18 staff from the Ministry of Energy. The staff here today are from all parts of departments and provide invaluable support in our province's largest industry. Some are involved with mapping oil and gas resources, others help develop policy, and yet others help to ensure collection of Alberta's royalties. Not all the staff are new to the ministry, but for the most part this is their first time in this Legislature. I want to thank each and every one of them for the important work they do every day on behalf of Albertans. I'd ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is really my pleasure today to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members

of the Assembly some of the greatest students in the entire province because they come from the greatest constituency. There are 25 in the public gallery today from George P. Nicholson school. They're accompanied today by their teacher, Jamie Wilson. I'd ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other school groups?

The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Last month eight exceptional Albertans received the highest honour our province can bestow, the Alberta Order of Excellence: Wayne Chiu, k.d. lang, David Manz, Solomon Rolinger, Allan Wachowich, Ralph Young, Rosella Bjornson from Strathcona-Sherwood Park, and Sherwood Park's very own Reg Basken.

Today I introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Mr. Reg Basken. Reg has dedicated his life to taking care of people and communities. Through his work with the precursors to Unifor, the Alberta Labour Relations Board, and the International Chemical Energy Federation, he has worked towards workplace safety, environmental sustainability, and ensuring that workers have a voice in the collective bargaining process. He has been actively involved in the United Way. He received the Queen Elizabeth II silver, golden, and diamond jubilee medals and was very instrumental in establishing medicare. Reg is here with his sister and brother-in-law, Dorothy and Bob McRae, that I'm happy live in my riding; his niece Carene Schroeder; and grandnieces Eden and Jorden. I'd like to ask Reg and his family to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

1:40

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. A real honour for me today to stand and introduce to you and through you to the House six very dedicated citizens representing a number of different organizations in the province calling on the government to commit to the safer use of chemical pesticides, especially in urban areas. I'll ask them to stand as I mention their names: Dr. Elisabeth Beaubien, a plant ecologist at the University of Alberta; Dr. Raquel Feroe, member of the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment; Rod Olstad, member of the Edmonton chapter, Council of Canadians; Hayley De Rose, practical nurse and mother; Robin McLeod, project co-ordinator with Alberta Low Impact Development Partnership and Healthy Calgary; and Sheryl McCumsey, co-ordinator for pesticide-free Calgary. Let's give them the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a wonderful group of constituents who have taken the time to share their stories with me and advocate for changes that take care of the most vulnerable Albertans: Francine Bérubé, a member of my staff, who I'm so lucky to have working in my constituency office; her sister, Evelyn Bérubé; Wendy McDonald from Inclusion Alberta – she has spoken with me numerous times regarding AISH and PDD benefits and making sure Alberta is more inclusive – and Angela Rouel, a constituent who is an outspoken advocate for an increase to AISH, who has shared her concerns with not just me but Premier Notley as well. I'll be speaking more about AISH and Bill

26 later today. Now I ask my guests to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Culture and Tourism.

Miranda: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a privilege to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Justin Zalewski, Jordan Conway, and Jonathan Berube from the Alberta LGBTQ chamber of commerce. Since its inception in October 2017 the chamber has been tirelessly working to advocate for and support the LGBTQ businesses in Alberta. I would like them to now please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you a friend of mine, a lady that I share quite a bit in common with. We're both from a small-business background, we both believe in strong Alberta families, we both like knocking on doors to hear what's important to Albertans, and we both received our nomination about the same time this year, she for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville and me for Cypress-Medicine Hat. Could I please ask Jackie Armstrong Homeniuk to rise and accept the traditional warm welcome of the House.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly four individuals that came to my office and had a great chat this afternoon. I'd like them to stand as I call their names and recognize them: Ramiro Mora, CWell Consulting; James Allen, director of government affairs for Savers Value Village; Jeff Smail, VP Canadian operations; and Khazeena Ashroff, recycling sales manager. These individuals work with Value Village, which my wife appreciates greatly. Please rise. Give them the traditional warm welcome.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Why, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure today to rise in the Assembly to introduce one of the most important people in my life. This particular individual had the unfortunate pleasure of carrying me for an extended period of time. She, along with my dad, has invested literally hundreds and hundreds of thousands of hours into their five children. Of course, I'm her favourite, fourth-born, that is, as she would say. We all know that we can't do this job without those who support us, and certainly my parents have been that for me for so long, always encouraging me to strive to be my best, to help others, and I've been pleased to follow their example of serving the community, which they have done for all of the years of their lives.

She may not be a giant in stature, but she's certainly a giant in my life. She once in a while reminds me that she may be little but she could still whup me, and nothing could be further from the truth. It's my pleasure to introduce to you my mom, Mary Cooper.

Members' Statements

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Bill 26 and AISH Client Benefits

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Conservative opposition members often accuse the NDP of building government policy on a framework of New Democratic Party ideology. To this I proudly say: guilty as charged. There is perhaps no better example of this shameless adherence to our party's core values than Bill 26, now before the House. I've heard from constituents on AISH about their struggles to pay the rent, to put food on the table. I've heard worries from vulnerable members of my constituency that benefits were not enough to cover the rising cost of living. I want to thank those who took the time to bring forward their concerns to me and MLAs across the province. Your concerns have been heard.

If passed, An Act to Combat Poverty and Fight for Albertans with Disabilities will index social benefits to inflation and recognize the higher cost of living by providing an immediate increase to AISH and income supports. These changes treat recipients with greater dignity and respect. An MLA's predominant role, Madam Speaker, is to fight for people who need help the most. Albertans shouldn't have to choose between putting food on the table or paying the rent.

For me, the last three years have been about fighting for what matters to regular people, fighting to make sure our economic recovery reaches everyone, especially the most vulnerable Albertans. If Bill 26 is passed, Madam Speaker, 250,000 Albertans – 250,000 – including people with disabilities, low-income families, and seniors, would see increased financial supports. We've heard the concerns of people on benefits, and our NDP caucus will never stop fighting to ensure that everyone can succeed and live with dignity. This fight requires some framework, some policy, and, yes, some ideology, an ideology that is concerned about everyday Albertans. Let the opposition tell the 250,000 people benefiting from Bill 26 that we are wrong. Albertans know who really has their backs.

Unemployment and Government Fiscal Policies

Mr. Barnes: Ignore it, and it will go away: that seems to be the strategy employed by Alberta's Finance minister. There are plenty of warning signs that the NDP's managed decline of Alberta's economy and layers and layers of burden are causing considerable hardship, and it is Alberta families that suffer the consequences. More than 180,000 Albertans are unemployed. That's 7.3 per cent, the highest unemployment rate outside of Atlantic Canada. In Calgary the story is even worse. Unemployment in the Stampede city is 8.2 per cent. Only St. John's is higher. To make matters worse for Alberta families, more than half of jobless Albertans are no longer eligible for employment insurance.

Clearly, something isn't working. And it's not going away; it's getting worse. Too bad the Finance minister is so focused on NDP ideology. Under this Finance minister Alberta is on track to amass nearly a hundred billion in debt. The cost to service that debt: \$4 billion every single year. Four billion dollars: that makes the ministry of debt the fourth largest in government.

1:50

But according to the Finance minister this is normal. According to the Finance minister the deficit will sort itself out in a few years once we start receiving revenues from the Trans Mountain and the Keystone XL pipelines. However, the Finance minister doesn't mention that Trans Mountain is hopelessly bogged down in red tape, and their initial position against Keystone resulted in yet another halt. The government's failure to build pipelines to tidewater has driven the differential price to \$54. According to the

Alberta government's own estimates we're on track to lose \$4 billion this year due to that differential price.

So where does that leave Alberta families? Out in the cold. This government's carbon tax has also made it more expensive for Alberta families to heat our homes, keep our lights on, feed and clothe our kids. Madam Speaker, 180,000 families have at least one wage earner without a job and more than half without employment insurance. But, hey, the Finance minister says that we worry too much.

Statement by the Speaker

Use of Electronic Devices in the Chamber

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, before we commence our afternoon's business, it has come to my attention that there may be a need to remind all members that the use of any recording device or camera, either as a stand-alone device or active on a member's phone, tablet, or computer, is not permitted in the Chamber at any time. I would ask all members to observe this rule out of respect for their colleagues and the institution as a whole.

Oral Question Period

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Provincial Budget Revenue Forecasts

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. On April 10, 2018, the Finance minister said: we built pipeline revenues into our path to balance projections; we're confident all the pipelines will be built, so we're just going to keep going down this road. Let me be clear: the projections included TMX and Keystone XL being built. We now know that these projects, at best, are going to be delayed. How does this impact the debt that Albertans are now facing, Madam Premier?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. There is no question that, as we have clarified a number of times, our path to balance incorporates the successful completion of 2 of 3 pipelines or one if it's Keystone, and of course we know that both TMX and Keystone are delayed. Nonetheless, we feel relatively confident that as we move closer to our path to balance, we will be able to meet the targets that we have set and at the same time support those important services and economic growth that are so important to Albertans.

Mr. Nixon: Madam Speaker, analysts say that the decision on Keystone could be delayed for upwards of a year, and we now know that the federal Natural Resources minister says: we will not put a stop clock on consultation for Trans Mountain. This can go on a very long time; it's a reality. I know the Premier has promised Albertans that these pipelines will be built within the timeline of her budget, but the fact is that that's not going to happen. She has failed on that issue. Again, will she table a fiscal update to show how these changes will change her budget?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. In fact, the Finance minister will be tabling a quarterly update soon, and we know that we are on track to meet all of our targets this year. Then we will take a look at where we're going going forward. But what

we do know is that as we deal with these struggles, the answer is not to cut taxes by \$700 million or a billion or whatever more for the top 1 per cent of the population or to make Albertans pay for the difficulties that we are facing after successive federal governments' inability to get a pipeline built.

Mr. Nixon: Madam Speaker, the Premier continues to audition to be the Leader of the Opposition. Let me be clear: the UCP has been clear that they will not be doing those cuts the Premier continues to just make up in imaginary land. But again, this question is important. This Premier promised this province that these two pipelines would be built, she used them as her projections in her budget, and she continues to delay in this House giving answers to the members of this House. Again, how will this impact your budget, the fact that you've now lost two pipelines that you promised Albertans would be built?

Ms Notley: Well, Madam Speaker, I'm not in the business of cheering for failure. I know that the members opposite think that that is their path to some form of electoral success, but that is not the way that we are going to go. We are going to keep fighting for TMX, we are going to support TCPL with respect to the Keystone project, and we're going to do everything that we can to stand up for Albertans. We are not going to cheer for their failure. We are not going to plan massive tax cuts, and to be clear, they have not clarified that they are not going to move forward with that. Moreover, we are going to support Albertans in their schools, in their hospitals, and where they need strong public supports.

The Deputy Speaker: Second opposition main question. Chestermere-Rocky View.

Services for Persons with Disabilities

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you. Albertans who are challenged with cognitive and physical disabilities have so much to give to our province. This is something that has been recognized by the private sector, many MLAs, the Alberta Legislature, and the cities of Edmonton, Lloydminster, and Grande Prairie, who have led in employing people with disabilities. To the minister: why does the government of Alberta fail to follow, let alone lead, in employing these amazing, able Albertans? And, no, an internship program that offers temporary employment at best does not count.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. What we have done is that we have increased supports for persons with disabilities by \$150 million. Those supports also include employment supports. In fact, we have created an internship program within our ministry as well, so we are taking all steps that help them live in dignity. We are providing them with the resources they need to live.

The Deputy Speaker: First supplemental.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you. As I said, Madam Speaker, that internship program does not count.

Madam Speaker, employment opportunities for disabled Albertans are crucially important. There are still a great deal of questions from stakeholders and Alberta families about the roles and responsibilities for the Advocate for Persons with Disabilities, which was finally announced after almost a year of waiting. To the minister: can you clarify the role of the advocate, if employment

opportunities for our disabled population will fall under this new office, and if not, why not?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Let me tell you, Member, that for those who are in those positions, you can ask them. For them, that internship does count.

The role of the advocate was very clear in the legislation, that he will advocate on behalf of Albertans with disabilities, bring forward their interests and their voices to the table, and also help them navigate the supports that exist. Employment support exists under PDD, and that will remain the same.

The Deputy Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Maybe the minister has forgotten, but the advocate actually falls under his ministry, so I'm actually asking him that question.

The government has regularly proven themselves to be unreliable when it comes to consulting with Albertans on the importance of persons with developmental disabilities. The provincial advisory committee that was created to bring ongoing advisory capacity has been disbanded. The minister providing input on the PDD issues: this committee was disbanded by the government with no warning to the stakeholders receiving PDD supports. Now their families, service providers no longer have a seat at the table. To the minister: will you commit to reinstating this council?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would say that I will put our record, my record on this file against theirs any day. They are the ones who were imposing decisions on PDD. We worked with them, and we repealed the safety standard that they imposed on PDD. They imposed a supports intensity scale on PDD; we repealed it. We are currently working with them on all issues that matter to them. I would urge and encourage you to be part of that and to attend any one session to see what they have to say.

The Deputy Speaker: Second Official Opposition main question. Calgary-Foothills.

Provincial Special Envoys to the Energy Industry

Mr. Panda: Madam Speaker, after taking victory laps, the Premier appointed another task force today, which includes her former chief of staff, the antipipeline Brian Topp, to go around and talk to energy companies about solutions to the oil price differential. Due to the actions and inactions of this NDP government and their Trudeau Liberal allies, western Canadian select was selling at \$14.68 per barrel this morning. This is just over 9 cents per litre. A can of Coca-Cola costs more than that. What does the Premier expect to accomplish by having more appointees and having more talks?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Certainly, we were happy to announce that panel this morning. They bring a lot of expertise in a number of areas. This is a serious matter. The differential is absurd, and we have to do something about it. We have an opposition, however, whose leader was in Ottawa for 20 years, 10 in cabinet, and did not build one single pipeline to tidewater. We know that market access is important, and that's what

Albertans want to do: they want to see action to get that pipeline built.

2:00

Mr. Panda: Madam Speaker, with respect to the price differential between WTI and WCS the Premier was quoted in the *Calgary Herald* saying, “we can’t have it racing out of the ground at \$10 a barrel for a really long period of time.” To the Premier: Brian Topp compared Alberta’s energy industry to selling land mines. Isn’t this appointment just like bringing back Tzaporah Berman again?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, Mr. Topp, for example, he’s one of three in the group, and he has a long history of negotiations and is respected from all sides of the political spectrum. We also have two other members who bring a wealth of experience, because we know that we can’t sit and wait as has been done in the past. We know we can’t sit there and yell at people and expect action to come because we know that doesn’t work either. We’ve seen that for 20 years. We are on the side of Albertans. We know that market access matters to Albertans and it matters to our industry, and that’s what we’re doing.

Mr. Panda: Madam Speaker, Brian Topp opposed the Keystone XL pipeline, and he’s the architect of the carbon tax for pipeline strategy and wants to ban cars from the cities of Edmonton and Calgary. Is this really the best person Alberta could find to act as a special envoy for all our energy workers? They don’t have any confidence in this gentleman and in this government. Because of their actions thousands of Albertans are out of work. Why did they choose him, same as Tzaporah Berman?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Our government from day one has fought for what matters to Albertans, and that’s jobs in energy, that’s market access, and that’s prosperity to Alberta, and we’re doing that. We’ve been fighting for long overdue access, which was not fought for by the Leader of the Opposition when he had a chance to stand up for Alberta; 10 years in cabinet, 20 years in Ottawa, he did nothing. There were no pipelines built to tidewater, and that’s why we’re in the situation we are today. We are fighting very hard, something they have not done, and they continue to have no plan, just to criticize.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Oil Price Differentials

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The massive price discount on Alberta’s oil is costing our province and our country billions of dollars. It is without doubt a national crisis, but instead of decisive action, the NDP have decided to strike yet another committee. Now, industry has been clear. Until pipelines are finally built, we need to temporarily curtail oil production to increase prices, keep producers viable, and, most importantly, keep Albertans working. To the Premier: why have you kicked the can down the road when it is clear that urgent action is required right now?

The Deputy Speaker: The Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think the Premier made it fairly clear this morning that this is a team that will start right away, that will be reporting very soon because we know

that action matters, because we know market access matters. We know that jobs in our energy sector matter. That’s what matters to Albertans, and that’s what we’re doing. We’re taking action to provide those jobs and provide a path to get those pipelines built because we know that market access matters, as does our whole energy industry.

The Deputy Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Clark: Madam Speaker, thank you, but let’s be absolutely clear. What the minister is actually saying is that she really doesn’t have faith in the officials in her own ministry to quickly do that work. That means that either the minister is happy with the status quo or, in this case, making no decision is itself a decision. Again to the Premier: I understand why you’ve asked the Deputy Minister of Energy to be part of the panel, but beyond his credentials as a good New Democrat, what message does it send to industry to have Brian Topp part of this panel?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. We’re very proud of the panel that’s been created. As with all good teams, it’s a team that brings a variety of skills. We expect that action will happen because of that. As the hon. member and anyone who lives in this province knows, there’s a disparity of agreement as to what next action should be, so that’s what this committee is going to look at. We’ve been working with industry constantly, looking at all options. No doors have been closed, and we’re going to continue to engage with industry.

The Deputy Speaker: Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Madam Speaker. What I can tell you is that Alberta energy producers and Albertans don’t like Ontario New Democrats coming and telling them their business. Albertans want to be involved in those answers. But I will say that the challenge facing our province is absolutely extraordinary. But desperate times call for desperate measures. In the short term curtailing oil production would be a dramatic step, but having personally talked with many industry experts over the last week, I believe it’s the right thing to do to maximize the value of the resource that all Albertans own. Again to the minister: will you agree to temporarily curtail production to increase the take for Alberta’s key producers?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to remind my colleagues here that this isn’t just an Alberta issue. This is a Canadian issue, and it matters not where people come from to address this issue. It is about Canada as well as Alberta. We’re losing over \$80 million a day because of this differential, and we need action; we need it quickly. As my hon. colleague knows, there’s a variety of opinions on this. That’s why we’ve engaged some experts to come and work with industry to get those opinions and look at all options. As I said, no doors are closed at this time.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek.

Mental Health Services in Edmonton

Ms Woollard: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Valuing Mental Health report highlighted that our mental health system is complex and hard to navigate. With multiple access points into community-based addiction and mental health services in Edmonton and

without 24/7 support other than crisis teams or the ER, families are left without the care they need. To the Minister of Health: what is being done to fix this and follow through with the recommendations out of the Valuing Mental Health report?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker and to the member for the important question. It's incredibly important to know that our government is committed to removing barriers that Albertans face when they're accessing mental health services, including difficulties navigating the system, and that's why we created the Valuing Mental Health: Next Steps, which has over 150 initiatives that are currently under way to improve and expand co-ordination of mental health services. One specific one the member mentioned, 24/7 access: we announced recently a 24/7 mental health clinic at the Royal Alexandra hospital here in Edmonton, and we're very excited for it to open its doors.

The Deputy Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Woollard: Thank you again, Madam Speaker. How will this initiative provide better care for patients, please?

Ms Hoffman: The 24-hour clinic at the Royal Alex will expand counselling, treatment, and crisis support, ensuring that it's there even evenings and weekends, when people often feel the most isolated. It will be staffed by more than 100 additional mental health employees, including mental health therapists, nurses, social workers, and addictions counsellors, all important investments in health care, Madam Speaker. Instead of talking about pulling thousands of dollars, millions of dollars, billions of dollars, out of front-line services, this government is investing in the services that matter to Albertans and increasing access through things like the 24/7 clinic at the Royal Alex.

The Deputy Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Woollard: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you for the response there. Who was involved in the creation of this program, and when will families be able to use this new program, please?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. AHS consulted with over 400 individuals from a range of organizations as well as patients and family members who have lived experience on how best to improve access to substance use and mental health services, specifically in the Edmonton area, and our government is providing a million dollars to renovate the space. The Royal Alexandra Hospitals Foundation and the Mental Health Foundation are raising an additional \$350,000 towards that new clinic. Construction is already under way, and we expect it to open later this winter. It can't come a day too soon; that's for sure. We're really excited for this project.

Rural Crime Strategy

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Dr. Starke: Well thank you, Madam Speaker. I continue to receive many calls from rural constituents who have been victims of criminal activity. Now, there has been a small drop in crime statistics, and that's prompted the Justice minister to loudly proclaim that the government's rural crime initiative is working. But those statistics are small comfort for people who continue to be

victimized, for some for the fifth or sixth or seventh time. To the Justice minister. Frustration continues to grow for these rural residents. What do you have to say to them?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker and to the member for the important question. Well, as the member has correctly pointed out, we have seen an 11 per cent drop in property crime across rural areas in the province. I've been clear in every instance in which I have spoken about this, that that has not extended to every area in the province. That's one of the reasons why our crime reduction units are so important. They can follow where the crime goes to make sure that they are proactively targeting those individuals who are doing a disproportionate amount of damage to our communities.

2:10

Dr. Starke: Well, Madam Speaker, given that the RCMP has started telling my constituents that when it comes to stolen property, they don't have the time to spare nor the manpower to recover it and the RCMP are now telling people to simply file an insurance claim for stolen property and that some of our residents are finding it very hard to either obtain insurance or that the prices have skyrocketed, to the minister: what concrete actions are you taking to ensure that rural residents continue to be able to access property insurance at a reasonable cost?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker and to the member for the question. Again, as we're moving forward, we're making sure that all Albertans across the province feel the impacts of our rural crime strategy in decreasing our property crime. I cannot be clear enough about this. The RCMP have been clear about this as well. It is important that all people across Alberta report crime where it's occurring. That goes into our intelligence databases, and it allows us to target the crime more effectively. We've had a fantastic relationship with Rural Crime Watch and Citizens on Patrol, and they are helping us to move forward.

Dr. Starke: Madam Speaker, given that our local RCMP are so overwhelmed by cases that they can't respond to or investigate crimes that have occurred and that when the much-vaunted rural crime reduction unit visited my constituency, the Vermilion River county councillors were told that our county is simply too big to provide adequate police protection, to the Justice minister. Your government is finally admitting that your economic recovery isn't reaching all Albertans. When will you also admit that your crime reduction initiative is failing to serve and protect all rural Albertans?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. As I've indicated previously, the strategy is working. It's having an impact in terms of decreasing crime in many areas of the province. It is clear that it hasn't rolled out equally to all areas of the province, as is normally the case. We are working with those areas to make sure that we're moving forward on that. The answer here is more investment in police, not less. That's why our rural crime strategy is taking the steps to invest in police, invest in prosecutors, and I would wonder why the member opposite voted against it.

Dr. Starke: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Point of order noted.

Provincial Budget Revenue Forecasts
(continued)

Mr. Barnes: Madam Speaker, a year ago the differential, the difference in price between west Texas intermediate and western Canadian select that Alberta produces, was just \$18. Last week the differential hit a punishing \$54, a 200 per cent increase. To the Finance minister: what impact does a \$54 differential have on your government's debt, revenues, spending, and interest expense?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, first, let me address the debt-servicing cost question that was brought up in the member's statement. I just looked at Budget '18, and it's half of what he has said is the debt-servicing cost, so I'm not sure where he got his numbers. But I do want to say that our path to balance is intact. The opposition, we know, has no plan to balance. They have no plan for anything other than giving the super wealthy a \$700 million tax cut, and we will have hard-working Albertans pay for that tax cut. I don't think that they're on the side of Albertans. They're on the side of their superwealthy friends.

Mr. Barnes: Madam Speaker, my member's statement was about the \$4 billion he wants to put us under interest expense not the \$2 billion we're currently under. But again to the minister: is the government concerned that this substantial loss of royalty revenue as a result of the differential will result in your seventh credit downgrade as it becomes obvious that this government's path to balance is nothing more than a path to debt, interest, and hardship for Alberta families?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Thanks again, Madam Speaker. You know, we're not going to take advice from that side of the House. For instance, the opposition leader, when he was in Ottawa – and we heard it from our Minister of Energy earlier – had six straight deficits in the governments he was in, a \$56 billion deficit in just one year alone, and he added \$145 billion to the national debt and racked up over \$309 billion in interest payments. On this side of the House we cut the deficit by \$3 billion already without firing 4,000 nurses and 4,000 teachers, which they would do.

Mr. Barnes: Madam Speaker, \$50 billion in debt in just three years.

Given that this government's 2018-19 budget pegged the cost of the differential at \$28 and was counting on it to actually decrease next year, not the north of \$50 that it currently is, and given that this government already prematurely calculated the revenue from a pipeline that isn't even built or started and was planning to increase the carbon tax on Alberta families, to the minister: when will you and your government get realistic about the cost of interest that reduces all of our priorities?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'll just talk about the principles that Budget 2018 was built on. A strong and diversified economy: we see that across our economy. There are challenges, but we're addressing those. Stable spending and cost containment: something that side could never do. Reducing our reliance on resource revenues: that is taking place through PDP 1 and other things. We laid out a plan that would not bring in the reckless cuts

that that side is calling for, cuts that the member from Lac La Biche has said would hurt Albertans. Well, that's right. It will hurt Albertans.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Finance minister sees things that don't exist.

When Alberta's NDP government released its so-called path to balance, it banked on higher resource revenues from the Trans Mountain pipeline. At the time the Dominion Bond Rating Service called the NDP's revenue forecast, quote, highly uncertain. Now, with the pipeline delayed indefinitely, we know that that revenue forecast is highly impossible. To the Minister of Finance: since Alberta has seen six credit downgrades since your government took over the books and you have not learned a thing, how will you explain the next one, and what are you doing to avoid credit downgrade number 7 on your watch?

Mr. Ceci: It's like a bad movie over there, Madam Speaker.

You know, we're putting jobs and economic diversification first in this province, and our plan is working. I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that businesses are coming to Alberta. Flair Air moved their headquarters from Kelowna to Edmonton. CN Rail is investing another \$320 million in Alberta for upgrades. Nexen is investing \$400 million to expand their Long Lake oil sands. On and on and on. It's not as dire as that person says.

Mr. McIver: Madam Speaker, given that Albertans consider this minister's policies to be a horror movie, given that the minister's response is not surprising because he tends to remain in denial right up until our credit rating falls again and then he simply shrugs his shoulders, and given that our lack of pipeline capacity has created an alarmingly high discount on every drop of oil we sell, resulting in a very low price, to the minister: have you had any discussions with DBRS, Moody's, or Standard & Poor's about Alberta's escalating revenue crisis and the potential on the credit rating that you are responsible for?

An Hon. Member: Hopefully not.

Mr. Nixon: Point of order.

Mr. Ceci: Madam Speaker, you know, Q2 is coming at the end of this month. We'll have an opportunity to update all Albertans with regard to the fiscal situation of our budget, and I can tell you that there's going to be some good news in that Q2 update. As a result of our work, we have cut the deficit already, \$3 billion, something that side refuses to recognize and understand. When they were in government, the operating expense of their government went sky high. They spent like drunken sailors. We're restrained on this side.

The Deputy Speaker: Point of order noted.

Second supplemental.

Mr. McIver: Thank you. Given that the minister is restrained by the truth because he won't tell it as often as he should and given that in a continuing effort to deflect attention from his government's mishandling of the growing crisis, the minister for economic development unveiled a real-time lost revenue counter and given that the counter highlights national revenues of \$84 million a day – it's good to highlight that – but fails to tell Albertans how much they are losing per day, to the Finance minister: do you even know the daily amount of Alberta's real-time revenue counter, and what are you actually doing to make it better other than spending more

money than you're bringing in and building up a bigger pile of debt and deficit for them to deal with later?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister of economic development.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Nixon: Point of order.

Mr. Bilous: What we do know is that no one has been a stronger advocate for market access than our Premier, unlike the opposition over there, whose leader spent 20 years in Ottawa, 10 years in cabinet, and failed to get any pipelines to tidewater, Madam Speaker.

It's a little rich for us to be taking advice from these folks. It's also ironic that when they talk about debt and deficit, they look at the leader and how much he racked up: six straight deficit budgets – do you discuss that at your caucus meetings? – \$56 billion in one year alone. We are moving forward. We've rolled out a strategy to ensure that these pipelines move forward.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

2:20 Educational Curriculum Redesign

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Minister of Education's new curriculum appears to be taking a one-size-fits-all approach, applying the same template to every educational discipline. As a former social studies teacher I can assure you that forcing math into a social studies template will not result in good math instruction. Each discipline requires its own appropriate approach. To the Minister of Education: why are you trying to stretch or chop every subject to fit the same narrow template?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Certainly, I'm very proud of the curriculum work that we're doing here in the province of Alberta in all subject areas at all grade levels. This is a way by which we can track and make sure that we quantify skills as they move from grade to grade and make sure that we do have those interactions between subject areas. For example, financial literacy exists and will live in mathematics, but it will also live in social studies, and it will also live in health and so forth. This is a way by which kids can internalize and learn these lessons and carry them with them for the rest of their lives.

The Deputy Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Given that many cognitive theorists maintain that children do not develop critical thinking skills until around the age of 12 and given that the new curriculum asks even the youngest students to think critically and given concerns that the curriculum does not teach the basic knowledge they'll need to think critically when they're ready, how will the minister address concerns that this inattention to basic knowledge will leave students unprepared to think critically?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, I find it a bit curious that we would be debating something around basic skills. We are building basic skills into the curriculum. The draft curriculum for K to 4 is up on the website now for people to look at, and we'll start field testing in the new year. Certainly, it's

important to match basic skills with more advanced cognition in later grades, so we're working on grades 5 to 9 right now. Critical thinking is a very important part of being a member of a modern society. I know that the members opposite don't like critical thinking because once people learn it, then they will be less likely to vote for the UCP.

The Deputy Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think somebody had better work on their critical thinking skills.

Given that Alberta's diverse communities have varying educational needs and given that, for example, farm safety education is vital in a rural setting but may not be needed by urban students and given that the new curriculum appears to treat every student and every discipline according to the same template, when will the minister release the instructional resources so that Albertans can be confident that the curriculum can be tailored to meet local needs?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Actually, that's a very good question. What we're doing is that we are doubling down on the professionalism of teachers and of local boards and so forth to build content that does work in their own particular local areas. I will make no excuses about urban students learning about agriculture, for example, because it's our second-biggest industry and it's a very important part of the structure of who we are as Albertans. You know, what you don't do, though, is take 4,000 teachers out of the system, make major cuts . . .

Mr. Nixon: Point of order.

Mr. Eggen: . . . from the budget for the sake of simply trying to make ideological choices, which is what the members opposite are doing.

Energy Industry Diversification Programs

Cortes-Vargas: Madam Speaker, the construction of the Inter Pipeline facility has done a lot to stimulate the economy in the Industrial Heartland. This investment would not have been possible without the first round of the government's petrochemical diversification program, and understandably a lot of my constituents have been asking me how we can keep this momentum going. Last spring we passed legislation to enable the second round of PDP as well as programs for partial upgrading and petrochemical feedstock infrastructure. To the Minister of Energy: what is the status of these programs, and when can we expect announcements of the next steps?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you for the question. I'm very proud about the work our government has done on diversification. You know, I'm old enough to remember when Peter Lougheed started that work, and then for whatever reason it was dropped until our government. We know, as I've said many times in this House, that the first round was very well subscribed, and we're very proud of the results. The second had just as much interest. Right now they are being evaluated at arm's length from our minister's office and by an independent fairness monitor, and we're going to have more to say early in the new year.

Cortes-Vargas: Given that workers, industries, and municipalities all submitted feedback about PDP and other programs in the economic diversification panel, how is the minister ensuring she is addressing their feedback as we move to the next round of applicants?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I said, I'm very proud of what we've done so far. The benefits of the Inter Pipeline investment have been well beyond the heartland itself. I've had the pleasure of touring a factory in Grande Prairie where they're providing vessels to the project. There are companies in Balzac and Red Deer that are also enjoying the benefits. In the new one we've placed some additional weight on jobs provided, apprenticeship opportunities, and benefit to indigenous groups.

Cortes-Vargas: Given that workers in the building trades are anxiously awaiting more projects and given that the Industrial Heartland plays a critical role in Alberta's GDP, to the minister: are there criteria to ensure that there are viable projects that are ready to move ahead if there are successful applicants?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The simple answer is yes. We have two sets of criteria for evaluating the projects. One, as was mentioned, was benefit to Albertans. The other criteria speak to the economic viability of the programs, including having a solid business plan, evaluating the technology used, the company's environmental performance, which speaks to the overall capabilities, and the timing of the project completion. I'm excited about the opportunities that are before us and excited for the next steps to come.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Tow Truck Driver Safety

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Last fall a private member's bill would have allowed tow trucks to use blue and white warning lights along with the currently permitted amber. The industry asked for this change because their work on Alberta's roadsides creates hazards for tow truck operators as well as members of the motoring public. Although this bill died on the Order Paper, the minister had indicated interest in it. To the Transportation minister: does the minister have any plans to implement this bill's proposal?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much for that very good question, Madam Speaker, from the hon. member. I just want to start out by reminding people that the law requires them to slow down when they pass a tow truck with flashing lights to a minimum of 60 kilometres an hour, and we urge drivers to be cautious at all times. With respect to the question about the lights, that's something that is under consideration. I'm happy to give more information in subsequent answers.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Given that tow truck operators are asking if there's anything they can do to help advance the proposals in the bill and given that I'm also receiving interest

from industry representatives from other provinces but I'm not sure how to respond to them, to the same minister: what actions would you recommend tow truck operators take to obtain this extra level of safety for all Albertans?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I wish to correct a previous answer. You must slow down at least to 60. That's not a minimum; that's a maximum. I just wanted to clarify that for everyone.

We know that Saskatchewan has implemented a system of two-colour lights for tow trucks, including blue and, I believe, amber. We're in touch with Saskatchewan. We're looking at their experience. We want to deal with that. In the meantime I urge all drivers to respect the fact that tow truck operators are out there, that they're exposed, and we need to be careful.

The Deputy Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Given that allowing tow trucks to use more visible blue and white warning lights enhances safety for all motorists and given that Saskatchewan and four other provinces have successfully made this change and that the minister can easily make the required changes to the highway traffic act simply through regulation, to the minister: will the minister work with all parties to implement this common-sense proposal as soon as possible?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker and to the hon. member for the question. Well, as I indicated, we're looking at the experience of Saskatchewan and other provinces with respect to this. When we've analyzed it and are convinced that it's actually going to make a difference to improve safety, we're seriously prepared to take a look at what changes we can make to make sure that tow truck drivers, like everyone on our highways, are safe.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

2:30

Business Regulations

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Speaker. This past week our neighbouring province to the west hosted the B.C. Business Summit 2018. One of the slide decks showed that Canada ranked 34th of 35 Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development countries when it comes to time to obtain a permit for a new general construction project. This was just one slide in many that showed how poorly Canada is doing on red tape. To the government: how is Alberta doing on red tape reduction?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I think we're doing quite well, actually. Thank you for the question. There are a number of things that our government has undertaken, including that every time that we are reviewing a regulation that comes back up – many, many government regulations are on a five-year timer – we look at the regulation to ensure that it's still serving its purpose. If it's a safety issue, if it's an environmental issue, or if the regulation is stale-dated and needs to be either amended or discarded, this is an ongoing process. We don't need a campaign in

order to have a focus on regulations. We are constantly looking at how we can make it easier to do business in the province of Alberta.

Mr. Hunter: Madam Speaker, given that Amber Ruddy, the director of CFIB, said, "Alberta is the only provincial government in Canada that refuses to be publicly accountable for the regulatory burden," would the NDP say that they are bringing down Canada's grade amongst OECD countries or raising it?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Madam Speaker. What I'll point out to the member if they want to count regulations simply or only: look to the province of British Columbia, where up until recently there were regulations for bar and restaurant owners as far as the height they could have televisions inside their restaurant or bar. That seems absurd to me. Alberta doesn't have those types of regulations. Starting off with a certain number, other provinces have an abundance of regulations. What I will say and what we've introduced not long ago is that Alberta is moving forward on a common business number because we want to make it easier for businesses to do business in Canada and work with the federal government, and we are waiting on them.

Mr. Hunter: Madam Speaker, given that this government has received an F from CFIB every year and given that they have added over 100 pages of legislation to just the OH and S act alone, how can they stand in this House and defend their record on red tape reduction? Struggling Albertans deserve an answer.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know what? I was very proud to be Alberta's trade minister and to partake in the negotiation of the Canadian free trade agreement or the renewed AIT, where actually the national Canadian Federation of Independent Business awarded all trade ministers the golden scissors because we are moving forward with trying to make it easier to do business across the country. Now, I recognize there are a number of other initiatives that we are working on with other provinces, trying to make it easier to do business in all jurisdictions. We recognize this, and we will continue to work toward making it easier . . .

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin.

Hillview Park Condominiums in Fort McMurray Condominium Regulations

Ms Goodridge: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Over 2,500 homes were destroyed almost two and a half years ago in the Fort McMurray fire. Only 30 per cent, 823, have been fully rebuilt, leaving 70 per cent still not home. One of the many horror stories comes from the Hillview condo complex, which has 214 separate units and has faced a series of serious challenges, and they're still a long way from being home. The government has recently committed \$2 million to help these individuals. Could the minister please tell the House what the conditions are for the money?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Service Alberta.

Mr. Malkinson: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to report that in partnership with the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo and the Red Cross there's an additional \$6 million being made available to support those who were affected from the

Hillview condos. The Red Cross, of course, has an office set up in Fort McMurray and has already provided individual assistance to upwards of half the Hillview owners. I'd of course want to point out to any Hillview condo owner to definitely contact the Red Cross to see the help that is available to them.

The Deputy Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Goodridge: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Given that this NDP government created a licensing system for builders to be able to build post fire in Fort McMurray to prevent the very failures that we are seeing today in the Hillview complex, will the government admit that there was a failure in the licensing process, and as a result, are you looking to review this very flawed framework?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Sorry. I'm a little slow, Madam Speaker. Hurt my back. Actually, the member is incorrect. The builder licensing legislation came in after the fire in Fort Mac. What was in place in Fort Mac was kind of a precursor, a pilot, to put some things in place to try to help where we could. The legislation, in fact, that is in place, that Municipal Affairs put in, that I'm quite proud of, that we did great consultation on, and that builders and developers alike were happy with, has proven to work quite well since then because it's doing the job that we want it to do.

The Deputy Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Goodridge: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Given that many of the 70 per cent that aren't currently home are in multifamily dwellings, specifically condominiums, and given that any community in Alberta is simply a flood or a fire away from a similar fate and given that the people in Fort McMurray have already gone through enough, when will you finally release the condo regulations that you've been working on for the last three and a half years, and will these regulations actually protect against another Hillview tragedy?

The Deputy Speaker: The Minister of Service Alberta.

Mr. Malkinson: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Of course, you know, condo owners throughout the province deserve to have a condo board that functions appropriately. That is why we went out and consulted with Albertans. We did two rounds of consultation, working with many different industry groups. And the condo regulations that came out of that consultation: I think the hon. member can expect to see those shortly.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

Lethbridge Drug Use and Crime Rates

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Of nine Alberta communities on *Maclean's* magazine's list of the top 20 most dangerous places in Canada Lethbridge sits in third place due to a spike in illicit drugs and associated addictions problems. In a recent *Lethbridge Herald* article police confirmed that addicts are fuelling their drug habits by committing break-ins and other property-related crimes, and the UCP is hearing from citizens concerned for the safety of their families. To the Justice minister: do you concur with the police that drugs have prompted this sharp increase in crime in Lethbridge?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker and to the member for the important question. Certainly, we have been having conversations with our police partners around substance abuse issues throughout the province. It's certainly one of the things that is seen as a driver of crime. That's why we think it's important to address crime from a multifaceted perspective, ensuring that we're addressing not only the criminal end point but the upstream things like addictions and mental health. I'm sure we'll have more to say about that in subsequent questions.

The Deputy Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Given that residents are saying that a drug consumption site is attracting an influx of addicts to their neighbourhood and given that schools, parks, residences, and businesses are all located within walking distance of this site and given that I understand that the purpose of this consumption site is to save lives and reduce harm but that that does not mean the government should dismiss residents' valid concerns about harm to their neighbourhood, to the Justice minister: will you order an immediate review of the crime rates in this particular neighbourhood?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much. Since this is certainly a public health situation, I'm going to take the lead on this, but rest assured that I work regularly with the Justice minister as well as both local MLAs from Lethbridge. They've done an excellent job of raising the concerns and helping us make sure that folks who live in Lethbridge get the supports and services they need. That's why we've invested an additional \$80,000 for needle collection, that we've doubled now to \$160,000. These funds are supporting additional cleanup. We're also making sure that we are working with service providers. The fact is that substance use in Lethbridge is at a significant rate, and we can't turn our back on the people who are dying in the community, unlike the Leader of the Official Opposition recommended when . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Ellis: Thanks, Madam Speaker. Given that the location of this consumption site is posing hazards to residents, with many people especially concerned about children, and given that no one is asking this government to ignore people in the throes of addiction but that at the same time it must not ignore residents and businesses experiencing negative effects from the unintended consequences of this initiative, Minister, will you commit today to deal with this situation for the health and welfare of the entire community?

2:40

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. That's exactly what we're doing, and that's exactly why we've worked with the local MLAs to increase supports for community initiatives around the community. The truth is that the supervised consumption site in Lethbridge has the highest rate of use anywhere in our province's supervised consumption sites. It's saving lives every day. ARCHES responded to over 800 emergencies since opening in February, so this is certainly a state of emergency. The members opposite encouraged us to address it as an emergency. We're doing so. We're also working with local businesses, local law enforcement, the police, the mayor, and the local MLAs because this isn't something that we can police our way out of.

Mr. Sucha: Well, Madam Speaker, I'd like to open by congratulating the Calgary Stampeders on their win last night.

Urban Wildlife Management

Mr. Sucha: With the growth of the city of Calgary, interaction between wildlife and residents becomes a way of life. My riding's proximity is very close to Fish Creek park, so we see wildlife like deer, coyotes, bobcats, and on the rare occasion even moose and bears enter my community. To the Minister of Environment and Parks: what is your ministry doing to track wildlife in these areas?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister of environment.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Alberta towns and cities have developed rapidly in urban areas. Certainly, we have an urban park in Fish Creek, and we often hear about wildlife-human interactions. That's one of the reasons why we have struck a committee to manage it, being chaired by the hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane, who's doing excellent work around human-wildlife interactions. We also have a number of other initiatives. We've invested in parks infrastructure, we've invested in wildlife corridors and underpass infrastructure, we've invested in parks staff and enforcement officers: all things that would not have happened had the folks across the way had their way.

The Deputy Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Sucha: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Given that I have heard significant concerns with interactions between bobcats and residents in my area, what is the government's policy to remove wildlife that may be dangerous to encounter for residents?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Madam Speaker. If a wild animal is posing a danger to Albertans, there are a number of different things that they can do, but if they're in one of our parks or on public land, they should call their local fish and wildlife management office. Depending on the species of animal, what the behaviour is, where the encounter occurred, fish and wildlife officers may take one of several actions, including relocation, medical care, or euthanization.

The Deputy Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Given that we have heard some concerns that the work on the southwest ring road and the growth of south Calgary are disrupting migratory patterns of wildlife, causing them to enter areas that they haven't entered before, what is the ministry doing to prevent these negative impacts on wildlife during these projects?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. In the case of the ring road what we try to do is mitigate the impact on wildlife, including clearing vegetation outside the breeding-bird window, identifying locations to improve wildlife passage through clear-span bridges, building fences at specific locations. We also made sure that the 2013 wetland policy applies to that project. We've therefore been able to avoid some wetland loss at Weaselhead that would have otherwise happened. We're trying to make sure that we carefully balance the environment and the economy. With the ring road and with the coming green line, people need to get to where they're going, whether it's work or school, and we are committed as a government to making sure that happens.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, the Minister of Justice has asked to be able to supplement a response given during an earlier question.

The hon. Minister of Justice.

Rural Crime Strategy

(continued)

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. In response to the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster I had indicated that he had voted against the rural crime strategy. That was incorrect. It was our colleagues from the UCP who voted against it, but the MLA for Vermilion-Lloydminster had in fact voted in favour.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster, did you wish to respond?

Dr. Starke: That covers it very well, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Just before we continue on, I've had a request to revert to introduction of guests briefly.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests

(continued)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Mrs. Schreiner: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to introduce to you and through you guests from the Alberta Federation of Rural Electrification Associations who are here today in support of my motion to promote long-term viability and sustainability of REAs and other co-operatively organized utility associations. The AFREA represents member-owned co-operatives that distribute electricity throughout rural Alberta. These co-ops have distributed electricity for over 75 years. Here today are President Dan Astner, Vice-president Charles Newell, and Vice-president Robert Peyton. The board has been instrumental in bringing the important topic of REA sustainability to my attention. Also joining us today is CEO Al Nagel, who has worked in the electricity industry for over 50 years. I'd ask all of my guests from the AFREA to now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Members' Statements

(continued)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Holodomor Memorial Day

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Today we mark 85 years since the Ukrainian genocide known as Holodomor, a word made up of two brutal realities: "holod," meaning hunger, and "moryty," meaning a slow, cruel death. In just two years millions of Ukrainians died of starvation.

Last year I travelled with the MLA for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview to Kiev to pay my respects at the Holodomor memorial in the country of our ancestors. We carried a bowl of wheat as we walked by the Angels of Sorrow, statues that guard the souls of the starved. We passed 24 millstones that remind us of the 24,000 human lives ground to death every day during the famine. We laid our eyes on a statue of a girl, with tears on her face, captured in time along with her frail frame.

Stalin's plan was deliberate, and beginning in 1932, brigades of men came to steal any and all food. Many came specially equipped with long metal rods topped by hooks, used to prod any surface in search of grain to feed Stalin's armies. Natalia Talanchuk remembers her mother forbidding her to look outside the windows in the mornings because out in the streets were bodies of the people who had died of starvation overnight. Outside of Ukraine little was known, and inside to even speak of this event was a crime subject to imprisonment, exile, or execution.

Remembering the Holodomor isn't just for those of us with Ukrainian blood; it is for all of us. As Albertans we do more than remember. We act to ensure that their tragedy is never repeated. In the memorial book there I left a note: "We are each born with rights to live as who we are, no matter race, religion, age, gender, gender expression, or social economic situation, without fear. I commit to working to protect these rights, every moment, every day."

Madam Speaker, today I recommit myself to these things. May the memory of those who died live forever. [Remarks in Ukrainian] Memory eternal.

Hunting Season

Mrs. Pitt: Madam Speaker, the leaves have changed colour, and the weather has cooled down. For many Albertans their thoughts have turned to red flannel and blaze orange toques. Hunting season is here. Hundreds of thousands of people take part in this time-honoured tradition. Whether a rifle or bow hunter, we are extremely fortunate here in Alberta to have about 5 million acres of public land under agricultural lease that hunters may access.

Regardless of whether you want to hunt on public or private land, there are rules that need to be followed before you enter the property. If you wish to access public land such as grazing leases, you must contact the leaseholder and provide information about your visit. Although leaseholders must allow reasonable access to the land for recreation, there are some circumstances where the leaseholder may deny or apply conditions. Similarly, if you want to hunt on private land, you must first contact the landowner or the landowner's designate for permission. They can allow you to hunt or not – it's entirely up to them – and you must respect their discretion or face the consequences.

Last year investigations were conducted by fish and wildlife, resulting in charges or warnings being laid. This is unacceptable given technology today – the use of GPS devices, hunting apps – and even the good old-fashioned county maps with ownership and quarter sections clearly marked. There really isn't much reason for not abiding by the rules.

Madam Speaker, there are youth programs, seniors' programs, and programs to help those with disabilities enjoy this outdoor pursuit. There are even programs that allow for the donation of your harvest to the less fortunate. We should be proud that our hunting community plays such a vital role in wildlife management in this province. The money spent on licences and tags helps to keep these programs viable. Please join me in wishing everyone a safe, successful, and law-abiding hunting season.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

2:50 Strathcona County Pickleball Association

Cortes-Vargas: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my honour to stand today and recognize the active volunteers in an association that has been thriving in Strathcona county, and we all share the

goal of ensuring our community has the spaces they need to meet their fitness goals.

Pickleball is one of the fastest growing sports in Canada, and it encourages players from the ages of seven to 70. Pickleball is alive and well in Strathcona-Sherwood Park, and rarely is there ever an event or meeting I can get through without someone bringing up the subject of pickleball. I enjoyed my brief experience with the pickleball association when I had the pleasure of opening one of the new Strathcona county courts last year. The newest location is in my constituency, and it includes three outdoor courts at the Ardrossan junior and senior high school. There are now nine Strathcona county venues where residents can come together to play.

Pickleball is not simply dropping a ball into an old pickle jar, as it's been explained to me in jest. It's a combination of ping-pong, tennis, and badminton. Using paddles, players take turns to volley the ball across the net. It's an inclusive sport, and the rules have been adapted so pickleball is accessible to those in wheelchairs.

In July the Strathcona County Pickleball Association, with the help of 100 volunteers, held the first-ever Sherwood Park Open, which brought together 200 players. The Strathcona County Pickleball Association is a warm and friendly group, and, boy, are they active. People can drop in almost at any time and be welcomed by seasoned players who will explain the rules and get you started.

Madam Speaker, it has been a difficult two weeks for Strathcona county, but Strathcona county is resilient and has an amazing community spirit and co-operation that, to me, is exemplified by our many hard-working community groups. It is exactly this spirit of kindness and inclusion that keeps our community strong and a great place to call home.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Bighorn Area Land Use

Mr. Schneider: It is with interest that over the last little while on this side of the House we have had numerous stakeholders come to us expressing concerns with the NDP plans for the Bighorn area. We have seen the internal e-mail talking about turning the Bighorn into a wildland area, and we have also seen and heard about the resolution/proposal at the Alberta NDP's most recent AGM proposing the same. Contrast this to last week's statement by the minister that, quote: we're looking at proposing a mix of land designations that will conserve and protect natural landscapes while accommodating a wide range of economic, recreation, and tourism opportunities in the Bighorn. Unquote. Contrasting statements, it seems.

Now, the minister's own website states, "Wildland provincial parks are large, undeveloped natural landscapes that retain their primeval character." So this begs the question: how does that align with what the minister stated? Do we go with the policy e-mail, the minister's statement, or the party resolution? Remember that the minister had previously stated that the government wanted more Alberta parks. So what's the direction here? If the minister says that they are planning a park in the Bighorn, can the government ensure that no forestry sector jobs will be lost? Will existing forestry leases be respected? If the Bighorn is designated as a wildland park, can it be done in such a way that no jobs are at risk? So many questions and so many conflicting statements.

What will the government do if a pine beetle outbreak occurs in a newly designated Bighorn provincial wildland park? Will they act too late, similar to what happened in Jasper? What would a new designation in the Bighorn mean for the area's communities? Would they be consulted before any new park is designated,

knowing that the loss of energy, forestry, and tourism dollars could be a reality? Will we have more communities face economic oblivion, similar to what this government has done to our coal communities? I, for one, hope not, but past actions by this government make me and stakeholders very skeptical.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Notices of Motions

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 42 at the appropriate time I will rise on a motion later today. The motion I will be putting forward states:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to reject co-operation with the federal government in the imposition of the Paris agreement on climate change.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Madam Speaker. At the appropriate time I intend to move the following motion pursuant to Standing Order 42:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to immediately release an updated fiscal projection given that Budget 2018 did not account for the delay in the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion and the Keystone XL pipeline or the significant differential in oil prices that is impacting Alberta jobs and the economy.

Thank you.

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices and in accordance with section 4(7) of the Election Act and section 4(2) of the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act I would like to table five copies of the 2017-18 annual report of the Chief Electoral Officer. A copy of this report will be provided to all members.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, I have two tablings today. First, I would like to table five copies of the fifth annual report of the Alberta Public Interest Commissioner.

Second, I'd like to table five copies of the 51st annual report of the Alberta Ombudsman.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Acting Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Mr. Schmidt, Minister of Advanced Education, pursuant to the Apprenticeship and Industry Training Act the Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board 2017-2018 annual report.

On behalf of the hon. Ms Gray, Minister of Labour, pursuant to the Government Organization Act annual reports for the following authorized radiation health administrative organizations: the Alberta Association for Safety Partnerships, January 1, 2017, to December 31, 2017, with attached financial statements; the Alberta College and Association of Chiropractors, July 1, 2017, to June 30, 2018, with attached financial statements; the Alberta Dental Association and College, January 1, 2017, to December 31, 2017, with attached financial statements; the Alberta Veterinary Medical

Association, November 1, 2016, to October 31, 2017; the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta, January 1, 2017, to December 31, 2017; the University of Alberta, April 1, 2017, to March 31, 2018; the University of Calgary, April 1, 2017, to March 31, 2018; and pursuant to the Chartered Professional Accountants Act the Chartered Professional Accountants of Alberta annual report 2017-2018.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, we have some points of order that were raised. The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Point of Order

Addressing Questions through the Chair

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise on my first point of order. I will actually quote my friend the hon. Government House Leader because when he raised the exact same point of order last time that we were here, he did a very good job of it. I agreed with him at the time, so I think that that will speed things up. He said on October 29, 2018:

Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker was in the chair at the time.

Well, during question period today the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo was asking a series of questions to the Minister of Health and during that group of questions, in a fairly aggressive way, pointing at the minister he referred to [her] as “you.” I want to just make a couple of points. In *Beauchesne’s Parliamentary Rules & Forms*, sixth edition, on page 142, “It is the custom in the House that no Member should refer to another by name. Members should be referred to in the third person as ‘the Honourable Member for’” or the “Minister is normally designated by the portfolio held.” That is the hon. Minister of Health in this case.

Mr. Speaker, in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, 2017, on page 510 under the section dealing with principles and guidelines for oral questions it also says very clearly, “Finally, all questions and answers must be directed through the Chair.”

Today, in response to a question, the Finance minister leaned over to the Member for Calgary-Hays, pointed his finger directly at the member, and aggressively started saying “you,” not speaking through the chair.

I agree with the Government House Leader, as I did then. That’s the process for our House, and I would ask either that he withdraw and apologize on behalf of this member or that you rule accordingly.

Thanks, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The Government House Leader.

3:00

Mr. Mason: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Interestingly, I also agree with the Government House Leader on this matter. I did not observe the occasion, but I did observe during question period today, as on most days, that there were occasional lapses on both sides where people referred to the person they’re asking or answering as “you.” It’s a good reminder that all members should remember to go through the chair on these matters. If this is as the Official Opposition House Leader says it is, then he’s quite right, and I will ask our members and members of our government to try and keep this in mind.

The Deputy Speaker: Moving on to the next point of order, the hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Point of Order

Reflections on Nonmembers

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise on 23(h), (i), and (j) in regard to some comments made by the Minister of Education in a response to a question by the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon. During the minister’s response to the question – I was quite shocked to watch him do it – he indicated that he was making drastic changes to the education system in order to be able to deal with, essentially, conservative voters, who he said were not capable of critically thinking. Then that way, in the future they would not vote for Conservative parties and would vote for the NDP.

Now, there were 772,000 Albertans who voted for the Conservative side of the question in the last election. There are hundreds of thousands of Albertans who identify as conservatives, and I can tell you that they would be greatly insulted to be informed by the Education minister that they cannot critically think. Let’s be clear. This is a government who continually calls Albertans names, a Premier who referred to some Albertans as Chicken Little because of their concerns with the carbon tax, and, most famously, a Deputy Premier who called Albertans sewer rats. In this case, again to say that they are not capable of critically thinking is appalling, and that minister should stand up and apologize and withdraw his ridiculous remarks about the people of Alberta.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. You know, some people in the House seem to be able to twist the truth like a pretzel, and this is a perfect example. For example, if you take what the Minister of Education said – and I thought it was a fairly lighthearted political jibe across the aisle – it was not that people who voted Conservative were incapable of critical thought but that, in his opinion, the more people were able to reason critically, the less likely they were to vote for the UCP. I don’t disagree with that point of view, but we respect and the Minister of Education certainly respects the right of every Albertan to make up their own mind with respect to how they vote and what their political leanings are. There are very many intelligent people on both sides or on all sides of the political system. It’s important that we encourage critical thought as a whole, not with a political objective in mind but just to help everyone make informed decisions about things that affect their everyday lives. That doesn’t mean they’re going to arrive at the same conclusion, and I don’t think the Minister of Education meant that.

Another example of how the hon. member is twisting words here was his reference to the Health minister’s talk about sewer rats, which was not directed to all Albertans by any means, not by a large degree.

An Hon. Member: Then why did she apologize?

Mr. Mason: She did apologize for that, but it was very focused, I think, on Rebel Media, which is, of course, very supportive of the UCP. The UCP leadership and members of their caucus have been repeatedly interviewed by Rebel Media notwithstanding the fact that it provided live coverage of the Nazi rally in Charlottesville and had adopted a very openly racist point of view and tone in its coverage, Madam Speaker. For the Official Opposition House Leader to then point the finger at the Minister of Health for being critical in a sharp way, admittedly, of that so-called media outlet is a bit rich because I think, quite frankly, that the UCP has a lot to answer for with respect to their associations with extremist groups, including Rebel Media. So I don’t think any apology is warranted

in this case. It's part of the normal debate in this place, and I think that the opposition doth protest too much.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, with regard to this point of order I don't have the benefit of the Blues. I did hear the comment, but in my viewpoint it was again part of that lighthearted banter back and forth. It's something, arguably, it perhaps would be nice to have a little more of in this Assembly and in this Chamber. That said, it's nice to have a reminder that we do need to always be conscious of our words and our decorum and the statements that we're taking in, how people are understanding these.

Was there another point of order? You've withdrawn one?

Did you still have another point of order, hon. member?

Mr. Nixon: I'm just checking.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster has withdrawn his point of order.

Point of Clarification

Mr. Nixon: I rise, Madam Speaker, on 13(2) and ask you to explain your ruling and, in particular, why you think that insulting almost a million Albertans is light banter.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, I've made my ruling, and I don't think any explanation of that is necessary.

Motions under Standing Order 42

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks on Standing Order 42.

Paris Agreement on Climate Change

Mr. Fildebrandt:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to reject co-operation with the federal government in the imposition of the Paris agreement on climate change.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity. Now, I think this is a matter of relative urgency for this House to debate. The federal government and many provincial Legislatures across the country have had the opportunity to debate and discuss the Paris climate accord. This Legislature has not. The Paris climate accord, while those agreements are international, has massive direct effects on Alberta, its finances, and our economy. Just as this House has in times gone by debated other accords like Kyoto and Copenhagen, the Paris climate accord is of direct consequence to Alberta, and this House has not had the opportunity to debate it yet. So I would request that the Legislature of Alberta be afforded the opportunity to debate this important and imposing federal policy, and I ask all members of the House to agree to allow this debate.

The Deputy Speaker: Unanimous consent is required to proceed with debate.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Deputy Speaker: You can begin debate on your motion, hon. member.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Well, I want to thank members for agreeing to allowing this debate to move forward. The Paris agreement on climate change is of critical importance to all of Canada and to Alberta in particular. The agreement, signed by Prime Minister Trudeau along with support

from the federal Green and ND parties, commits Canada to meeting climate change and emission objectives that are outrageously unrealistic. They are objectives that no country on the planet is currently headed towards actually meeting.

3:10

The Paris agreement on climate change follows in the footsteps of the Kyoto accord and the Copenhagen agreement. It follows in a long story of these international accords where politicians, big business, and other international interest groups come together, have a bunch of photo ops, and agree to save the world on a piece of paper. Unsurprisingly, these agreements always require that advanced industrialized economies like Canada do far more than our share. Now, the only good thing about these agreements is that our governments have consistently never met the objectives because meeting those objectives would strangle our economy.

You can still see some old, worn-out bumper stickers. I remember seeing bumper stickers on trucks around rural Alberta that said: no gun registry, no Kyoto accord, and no liberals. You can still see some of these because the Kyoto accord is – I'm sure the Member for Calgary-Mountain View doesn't like part of the bumper sticker. He probably doesn't like any of the bumper sticker, I would imagine. I'm sure they weren't referring to him.

Now, any government that realistically attempted to meet the objectives of Kyoto or Copenhagen or Paris is – no government has attempted to actually meet those objectives. They are merely aspirational. Any attempt to impose them in full would be debilitating to our economy. Of course, we need to do work to ensure that our industries are operating safely and cleanly, that we have an emphasis on environmental policy, on clean air, water, and land.

But I'm going to say something that shouldn't be news to this House. Carbon dioxide is not pollution. It is a naturally occurring phenomenon. Too much of it can be damaging, but it is not pollution. It is not a tax on pollution because carbon dioxide is not pollution. It's what plants breathe. So we need to be careful in the language we're using here when the government talks about taxes on pollution.

The Paris climate accord was signed by the Trudeau government with the support of the Green Party, the NDP, and the federal Tories. The very first act of federal Conservative Party leader Andrew Scheer after becoming leader was to whip his caucus into voting to support the Paris climate accord, and that was a early warning sign for me that perhaps that would not be a party that I could necessarily trust anymore. The Paris climate accord is supported by every single establishment federal political party. I would assume it's supported by our government, but I'll let them speak for themselves.

This is an agreement that our federal government has signed that they are now imposing or attempting to impose in legislation on provinces that do not comply. Ontario has recently liberated itself from the Kathleen Wynne Liberals, and they have pulled out of the backdoor carbon tax of that government, a cap and trade plan. They have pulled out, and now the federal government intends to impose a direct carbon tax on its own. Now, this case is going before the Supreme Court. It is to be determined yet if the federal government has the constitutional authority to impose a tax on one province and not another. To date that has generally not been the case. The federal government does not have that authority, but they believe they have it, and I suppose the courts will make that determination. The federal government is at this time imposing a carbon tax on provinces that do not comply.

Now, I might not agree with everyone on this side of the House, but I have a pretty strong feeling that a year from today there will

not be a carbon tax in Alberta. It will be gone, one way or another. It is important for us to take a stand against any attempts by the federal government to impose policies that it has signed off on without provincial consultation or, in fact, without consultation with Canadians. In the last federal election, except for the people who voted Green, no Canadian voted for a carbon tax. Only about 5 per cent of Canadians voted for a federal carbon tax, yet it's being imposed at a national level.

So what is behind it? The Paris climate accord is an agreement between wealthy and connected elites and governments and big business for wealth redistribution. It is a plan that does not have the best interests of economic growth at heart, and it doesn't have the best interests of Canada and especially Alberta at heart. We should take a stand in this House and vote very clearly to reject the Paris climate accord in its entirety. We should send a message to the federal government that we will not be a part of their plan to impose the Paris climate accord here in any part whatsoever. We have an opportunity to speak loudly and with a unified voice as Albertans in this Legislature to send a message to the federal government that they can keep their carbon tax and they can keep their accord. We want nothing to do with it.

Albertans were not consulted on a carbon tax. Albertans were not consulted on the Paris climate accord. The Paris climate accord is one of these kinds of international agreements that violates our sovereignty as a country. It puts the UN above Canada. It puts the UN above Alberta. It puts international bureaucrats and international celebrities above the interests of real, everyday working people. This is an opportunity for this House to send a message loud and clear to Ottawa, to Prime Minister Trudeau, and to the international community that are behind the Paris climate accord that we want none of it. They can keep their carbon tax, and they can keep their climate accord. Alberta is going to stand on its own, strong and free.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Before I recognize the next speaker, I just want to verify that although we haven't hit Orders of the Day, as per our previous precedent you will be allowed to bring your drinks into the Chamber.

I'll recognize the hon. minister of environment.

Ms Phillips: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise on this matter of the pressing issue of climate change. Of course, it is probably the most important and pressing issue of our time. Certainly, humanity has never seen a challenge such as climate change before. That is why, for example, the international panel on climate change released its first post-Paris scientific assessment very recently, showing that higher global warming temperatures will affect Canada's biodiversity in a number of ways. Impacts associated with risks such as forest fires, the spread of invasive species are lower at 1.5 degrees than they are at two degrees of warming. Climate change will intensify the risk of forest fires. The spread of invasive species will over time change the complexion of our forests. It also makes extreme weather events such as floods much more likely and much more severe. "Severe weather due to climate change is already costing Canadians billions of dollars annually." That is not from an environmental organization; that's from Don Forgeron, who's the president and CEO of Insurance Bureau of Canada.

Around the world the cost of disasters has increased fivefold. In Canada federal disaster relief spending rose from an average of \$40 million a year to an average of \$100 million now. Then in 2013 spending hit a record \$1.4 billion, largely due to flooding disasters in Ontario and in Alberta. This is why, Madam Speaker, Canada's

property insurance industry is calling on governments across the country to come together and implement expansive climate policies that will better prepare Canadians and their communities for when disasters strike.

Similarly, Lloyd's of London has indicated that the frequency and cost of natural disasters continues to rise, with their CEO noting that direct losses over the past decade estimated at \$1.4 trillion annually. The Prairie Climate Centre, closer to home, for example, their models have shown that 2018's record-breaking summer heat will become the new normal by 2050. At the same time the prairies, from Manitoba to Alberta, are likely to be drying out. Co-director Dr. Danny Blair had no hesitation recently in linking the larger, hotter forest fires of the last few summers at least in part to climate change.

In the south drought stress is making it tough on boreal staples such as aspen trees. In an article in March of this year Dave Gambrill from *Canadian Underwriter* magazine wrote Alberta: Canada's Poster Child for Climate Risk, showing that 8 out of 11, the most expensive natural catastrophes to hit Canada since 1983, swept through some portion of Alberta. Those eight catastrophes accounted for \$9 billion in damage claims.

3:20

Sean Russell, managing director of a reinsurance broker, told a panel discussion that "of the approximately \$9 billion that the property and casualty insurance industry paid out . . . 63% of those losses have happened in Alberta," prompting questions as to whether Alberta is rapidly becoming uninsurable, Madam Speaker.

Another source of rising costs from climate change is public infrastructure and whether our bridges, our roads, our dams, our levees, our sewers, our drainage systems are ready for these kinds of frequent and severe weather events. The overwhelming consensus is no; we are not ready. The Conference Board of Canada showed the replacement value for existing assets deemed to be in poor or very poor condition at \$141 billion. There are costs, Madam Speaker, because climate change is real.

This is despite the fact that we have members both of this House and of the party opposite who have said that climate change is a hoax. The candidate for Calgary-Beddington, for example, said that, and he still won the nomination. He was allowed to run. We have an MLA for Calgary-Foothills here who claims that "we need some carbon dioxide here to grow the trees and plants and forests and whatnot," Madam Speaker. The MLA for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo said: I'm pretty much in the middle of the road on this, whether climate change is a hoax. The MLA for Cypress-Medicine Hat has on numerous occasions aligned himself with this hoax conversation, which, of course, we see coming from President Trump stating global warming is a complete hoax in reaction to a tweet by NASA, because apparently the MLA for Cypress-Medicine Hat knows better than NASA. Even the Leader of the Official Opposition has asserted that there's, quote, a legitimate range of perspectives about exactly to what degree humans are responsible for climate change.

Now, in that I could take a scientific rebuttal to that, Madam Speaker. I could just lean on John Oliver, the comedian, who said that we don't need a politician's opinion on a fact. As John Oliver said, you might as well have a poll asking: "Which number is bigger, five or 15?" or "Do owls exist?" or "Are there hats?" You don't need an opinion from a politician who has spent his life denying the science of climate change on whether climate change is real. There is unanimity that climate change is real and it poses significant risk now and into the future. I know that for my little boys, when I have to look them in the eye at the end of the day,

seven and nine years old, as they become adults they're going to ask me: why didn't you do more? I know they will.

Now, as Dr. Katharine Hayhoe, an acclaimed Canadian atmospheric physicist said: "The climate does not care about ideology. Instead, the true threat is the delusion that our opinion of science somehow alters its reality. This is deluded thinking." Steve Williams, CEO of Suncor, one of Canada's largest oil producers, says this: climate change is happening; we think a broad-based carbon price is the answer. The World Bank Carbon Pricing Leadership Coalition, a voluntary partnership of 160 businesses, says: "Climate change is one of the greatest global challenges of our time. It threatens to roll back decades of development progress and puts lives, livelihoods, and economic growth at risk." That is why, Madam Speaker, recent Nobel prize winning economists William Nordhaus and Paul Romer have said that carbon taxes are the solution to climate change.

We know we are moving into a carbon-constrained world. Nobody cares about random UC opinions. The climate doesn't care. We are moving into a carbon-constrained world. We are moving into a world where the voluntary targets laid out in the Paris agreement – the world is looking for the opportunities in meeting those targets. Within it there are a number of market-based mechanisms that are pointed to within the Paris agreement, including article 6, which a number of folks in our business community here in Alberta and in Canada are watching very closely because there's a tremendous amount of opportunity here.

Now, what do Nobel prize winning economists have to say about pricing carbon? Here's a quote:

The policy is very simple. If you just commit to a tax on the usage of fuels that directly or indirectly release greenhouse gases, and then you make that tax increase steadily . . . people will see that there's a big profit to be made from figuring out ways to supply energy where they can do it without incurring the tax.

These are market-based, free-market economists, Madam Speaker. They say that this crisis can easily be averted through economic policy. The way to do that is to ensure that we price carbon pollution, helping Canadian companies create jobs and compete successfully in the global shift. Now, the opportunity in competing in that global shift is estimated to be worth \$23 trillion globally between now and 2030.

Madam Speaker, there are a number of conservatives who believe in climate change or they understand the science of climate change. They believe that we actually must take action. There's a difference there. Over here we have a misunderstanding of the science, but we also have a fundamental belief that we ought to do nothing. Here are some Conservatives who believe that we ought to do something. Here's one: Stephen Harper. In an interview with CBC in 2014 he told Peter Mansbridge that climate change remains "a significant threat" to humanity, up there with economic challenges. He said that Canada was phasing out the use of coal-fired electricity, which he described as the single biggest source of greenhouse gas emissions in the world, and also said, "If others would just follow our lead, we'd have this problem solved." He also made a speech in Berlin around that time, where he endorsed carbon pricing as well.

Here's another granddaddy of the Conservative movement in this province and in this country, Madam Speaker, Preston Manning:

For any economic activity, especially the production of energy, we should identify its negative environmental impacts, devise measures to avoid, mitigate or adapt to those impacts,

which we are also doing through our climate leadership plan, as an aside,

and include the costs of those measures in the price of the product.

Going back to Mr. Manning:

It's the idea behind using carbon pricing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Now, Madam Speaker, that is why we worked with our oil and gas producers, worked with clean tech companies, worked with renewables companies, worked with energy efficiency companies, worked with the forestry sector, with the fertilizer sector, with the agricultural sectors, with refining and upgrading sectors all across this province to design our approach to climate change, because all of those folks, who employ Albertans, want to see their business model resilient to a carbon-constrained future. They actually think ahead. They also listen to scientists, and they know that climate change poses a significant risk if we do nothing.

That's why we put in place the policies that we did, Madam Speaker. They are market-friendly policies. They are policies that ensure that we remain competitive. They are policies that have a number of trigger points where we can review them over time to ensure that they are working for our economy. That is why the same year that we brought in carbon pricing, we led the country in economic growth, and then the next year that we had carbon pricing in place on an economy-wide scale, we also led the country in economic growth. Next year we'll have carbon pricing in place, and we're projected also to lead the country in economic growth.

Last year alone we saw the reduction of 11 megatonnes of greenhouse gas emissions, which is roughly the annual emissions of Newfoundland, Madam Speaker. So when the opposition claims falsely that carbon pricing does not reduce greenhouse gas emissions, again, that is wrong. That is wrong. Taken together, our climate leadership plan is paving the way for emissions reductions of 43 megatonnes by 2020. That's double the annual emissions amount of the entire province of Manitoba.

Alberta's energy producers are strong partners in these efforts, benefiting from \$1.4 billion worth of investments and innovation, which is seeing some huge payoffs in our energy sector. This year Emissions Reduction Alberta celebrated nine successful oil sands innovation challenge projects. Those include partial upgrading technology, water treatment processes and materials, and enhanced bitumen recovering technology. Those projects will reduce about 4 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions and create more than 250 well-paying jobs, Madam Speaker. There are so many success stories with respect to our reinvestment of the price on carbon into what industry asked us for, which is clean tech, which is innovation, which is phasing out coal, which is our lowest cost emissions reduction, Madam Speaker, and ensuring that we have a good market for our cheap and plentiful natural gas in this province as well as our amazing renewables opportunities.

We have some of the best renewables opportunities on the continent. The solar resource in Calgary is roughly the same as the solar resource in Rio de Janeiro. It is not true that we don't have relative advantage when it comes to solar and wind but also natural gas. That's kind of why we've seen such a growth in solar industries. We've seen a 500 per cent growth in our solar installations since 2015, Madam Speaker. We have seen so many companies grow as a result of our investments.

3:30

But let's talk a little bit back to oil and gas. At CNRL's Horizon mine, north of Fort McMurray, they built a multilevel mobile platform that separates bitumen from sand, leaving behind dry tailings. This technology also shaved \$2 off the cost to produce a barrel of oil, Madam Speaker, and that's because carbon is also an input cost. We're seeing this across the oil and gas sector, that as we reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, we're also reducing our

water use, our steam-to-oil ratio, and a whole bunch of other inputs, which reduces costs.

Similarly, the Aspen project by Imperial Oil just got final investment decision approval the week before last, again a solvent-assisted technology that reduces their costs as well as reduces their greenhouse gas emissions. Suncor just opened up Fort Hills. The Fort Hills mine will produce a barrel of oil at the North American average, Madam Speaker. So it is not true that we cannot compete in a carbon-constrained world because we are doing it now. It is not a theoretical future. It is the present that Alberta is living in now.

But there are also other forces at work. It's not just a national carbon pricing framework and our government's desire to keep the federal government out of our jurisdictional space, where they don't belong. There are also other changes afoot globally. For example, there are new marine fuel standards with respect to sulphur content in marine fuel coming in. But in Fort Saskatchewan Enlighten Innovations is pioneering their CleanSeas project, which uses new technology to remove the sulphur from feedstock and produce that cleaner fuel that the world is looking for. I had the opportunity to tour it with the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, Madam Speaker, and those investments were funded through our price on carbon. They're putting people to work east of Edmonton here to solve a global problem.

We are an energy province, and it has baffled me my entire adult life, before I sat on this side of the House, why Alberta couldn't be that source of export of clean tech technology, why we couldn't be the ones putting people to work solving the world's problems with respect to what we know is coming, which is a carbon-constrained future.

Those are the kinds of things happening right now here in Alberta. That's to say nothing, Madam Speaker, of converting biomass into electricity. We're doing it . . . [interjection]

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, please take your seat.

Go ahead.

Ms Phillips: Oh. Thank you.

. . . where we're converting biomass into electricity. Dapp Power in Westlock is accomplishing this. Lethbridge Biogas in southern Alberta is accomplishing this. Those investments are also funded by our price on carbon.

Madam Speaker, closer to home, too, our cities, our towns are being assisted with making those changes to make them resilient to commodity prices in the future. If there's one thing we know, it's that we cannot control the price of commodities. We certainly know that very, very well on this side of the House. So ensuring that our communities have as much resilience as they can to grow and to invest in services for kids, for seniors, for families by displacing some of their electricity and natural gas costs is exactly what we're focusing on.

For example, we have lowered our utility costs in places like an aquatic centre in Barrhead, a fire hall in Northern Sunrise county, an affordable housing complex in Valleyview. Ty Assaf, a councillor for the town of Barrhead, said: "Investing in renewable energy diversifies our local economy and improves our community. Barrhead's 149-kilowatt system on the Aquatics Centre will save about \$17,000 on electricity bills each year." Madam Speaker, that's a lot of money for a small town's recreation centre. That is a lot of money that can go towards low-income seniors' programs or low-income children's programs.

We're also making sure that we're involving indigenous communities in these developments as well, Madam Speaker. Germaine Anderson, who's the chief of the Beaver Lake Cree Nation, says: "We recognize the importance of becoming energy-

efficient and how moving to the green economy will . . . position us economically down the road." That is why we have done things like invest in training, in business development, in energy plans as well as energy retrofits for both band infrastructure and for people's homes and renewables. We'll have more to say later on this week about that as well.

But the fact of the matter is that indigenous communities are often the most at risk in terms of the fact that they don't have the infrastructure to deal with more frequent and severe weather events. They are looking for diversification opportunities so that the new economy, which we know is happening out there with new clean tech and new opportunities, doesn't bypass them as for so long economic opportunities have bypassed them. We need to make sure that we continue those investments, Madam Speaker, and be open to all of those new opportunities, again, because we're an energy province.

We have a number of other opportunities that are happening here in Alberta. We have industrial energy efficiency, long ignored by the previous government, for near-term, low-cost energy solutions that also save companies money. We have commercial energy efficiency, deeper retrofits, those kinds of initiatives, being funded by the Energy Efficiency Alberta agency.

And, like I said, we have a number of new renewables investments, Madam Speaker. About 7,000 jobs will be created by our renewable energy program as we go through our phasing out of coal. To be clear, 12 of those 18 plants were slated for phase-out. As we know, Stephen Harper actually felt quite strongly about that under the Leader of the Official Opposition's watch, but what they didn't have was a plan to transition those communities, and that's also what we are investing carbon levy funds in, in addition to things like transit.

That's where I want to finish off here, around transit and around infrastructure. The green line in Calgary and the valley line LRT and the expansions in Edmonton will get people going quicker to their jobs, to their homes, to their schools, Madam Speaker, in a way that is more sustainable.

Similarly, too, we will protect Calgary through climate adaptation investments with investments in the Springbank dry dam facility, to which we are deeply committed. There seems to be a little bit of confusion on the other side on this matter.

Madam Speaker, there is more to be done. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Well, I must say that it's an interesting time in the Legislature when we are still debating climate change and the reality of climate change. I think we have had 20 years of debating and denying and deferring and committing and not fulfilling commitments to reducing our carbon footprint on the planet. For some in Alberta it's a surprise to know that we are among the highest per capita emitters of carbon emissions on the planet. We're a small population, but we have a tremendous carbon footprint as a result of our cold temperatures, our significant transportation challenges, and our heavy oil industry, among other industries that emit carbon, obviously.

I think it's important to reinforce the fact that this is the closest thing to an emergency that we as legislators face. If we care about the future, if we care about the evidence that's mounting on almost a monthly basis, the efforts to try to reduce our collective impact, industrial impact, our domestic impact, our transportation impact, our heating impacts, all of these combined, are critical. I would call it an emergency. Clearly, the clock is ticking. The damage is already being done.

The minister has already spoken about the unprecedented insurance claims that have resulted from extreme weather events. We know about new infectious diseases like the West Nile virus that have moved north as a result of the temperature changes. We know that food production is going to change. Obviously, it might improve in some parts of Alberta, and that's part of the dilemma Alberta faces. There could be some very significant benefits to warming in Alberta, so we drag our feet in Alberta because, of course, we have these financial interests in the oil industry and we don't mind warming in a climate that's often very cold. Of course, if we can improve productivity in some of the constituencies in northern Alberta – what surprises me is that this member comes from the Palliser Triangle in which there is a significant threat of drought, significant threat of loss of food production, and water shortages.

3:40

Whether the Paris accord is the ideal approach to this, it's clear that nothing else has emerged. We have basically four choices for reducing greenhouse gases. We can legislate by targets, force a province to meet a certain limit on their emissions and pay fines if they don't. We can legislate by taxes to incent the behaviour change in citizens, in consumers, and in producers of greenhouse gases. We can go, as Mr. Harper tried to do, sector by sector, calling for efficiency standards in certain industries: the transportation industry, the heating industry, the oil and gas industry, the manufacturing industry. We can set some sector-by-sector targets. We can do a cap and trade where one jurisdiction has a cap on the amount of the total emissions that they can produce. If they exceed that, they pay a fine or, I guess, a trade into the pot that goes to those who are actually reducing the carbon in that particular jurisdiction. At some point that is supposed to balance out and actually move us to lower emissions.

What I can say is that this is now at the eleventh hour in this challenge. Anybody who is thinking seriously about future generations and about the impacts this is having, especially in the poorer and lesser developed countries, the flooding that is already occurring in some of the South Asian countries and some of the island states that have in fact been relocated as a result of climate change impacts, has to recognize that we are beyond the point of debating climate change.

We should be beyond the point of debating what 196 countries two years ago decided was a very good step. Not the be-all and end-all, and scientists across the world have said that that will not get us where we really need to go, but it's a start. It's at least something that we can agree on voluntarily to try to achieve, to minimize the increased temperature below two degrees Celsius, which is considered to be a very critical level at which there will be significantly more damage to people, to property, to our planet, and to our ability to grow food, which is the most fundamental issue that many countries are already facing and are now fighting over.

As indicated, it's not a treaty; it's a voluntary agreement. Some of the criticism around this has been that it's a voluntary agreement, and Mr. Trump has said that he's pulling out. Within 12 months he will be pulling out of this agreement. That's 1 out of 196 countries that says that they want to pull out of this. This is absurd, and it's so harmful to think about the possibility that we once again start to undermine an international agreement that has made such efforts to try to pull us around the same table and reach some at least minimal targets as countries and the commitments around the world.

Yes, we can't legally bind countries to these targets, but in good faith these countries have recognized that they owe it to their children, they owe it to their future, and they owe it to their country to make every possible effort to, number one, reduce the emissions;

number two, start adapting already to some of the fierce changes that are going on in their country; and number three, to think about what strategies can best begin to make these important changes.

While I welcome the chance to talk about climate change and reinforce the urgency that this Legislature come to grips with this and embrace the tremendous urgency around action and commitment and collective putting aside of ideology to honour the science, to honour the long-term commitment that we should have to this planet and to our children and grandchildren, I am somewhat disappointed that we are still wrestling with even these very most basic targets and discussions when, as I say, over 85 per cent of the world has said: "We recognize the problem. We want to work together. We know this is not perfect, but we are going to do everything possible to mitigate carbon, to adapt to it, and to put in place some kind of a carbon market that will help us send the right message to people and businesses to do the right thing."

There are other elements to this that include supports for the least developed countries, including financing and technological support. Clearly, if we in this part of the world can't share some of our technology and resources with the least developed countries, we can't expect them to take the kind of leadership that we must take.

To honour the current commitments of this provincial government around moving to clean, renewable energy, efforts at conservation in homes and businesses and transportation, I applaud what the government has done so far against some pretty significant challenges. I think we are making progress. It is obviously not enough but huge, huge initiatives, compared to the previous government on this whole file, that are welcomed by those in Alberta that really pay attention and care about the long-term well-being of this province, both economically and environmentally and socially, because as in every other country, when resources and fighting over resources and shortages of resources, including food and clean water and clean air – when those become an issue, you have social disruption. You have all kinds of I would call it violence. I don't think it's too extreme to say that we are going to see many more refugees coming to our gates as a result of climate change and the conflict that results from shortages and inadequate resources.

So let us be clear. This is not a perfect agreement, but it is the one we have. It is the one we're moving towards. Inadequate as it is, according to the scientists, it is progress. What I would like to see is a debate on how we can redouble our efforts around carbon reduction in this province, around transportation such as the new project out of the University of Calgary, where something like eight or 10 transport trucks are going to be moving to hydrogen fuel for the next two years and the measurement of how efficiently we're managing that. In this fossil fuel province we maybe can't compete with the electricity generation that, say, Quebec or B.C. can use out of clean water energy, hydro energy. However, using hydrogen and our fossil fuel industry, we can move towards a hydrogen economy that would both use our skills and technology in hydrocarbon development and provide clean energy through the hydrogen fuel cell, which produces only water and oxygen. So a tremendous opportunity to show more leadership than we have in the past.

There's no question in my mind that the Paris accord stands. We have to stand firm despite the U.S.'s, or one man's, decision to pull out. Who knows how long he's going to be in place, anyway? I expect and I hope that he won't be in power too much longer and that we will actually have a responsible and competent and informed President there who will bring the U.S. back to its senses around climate change and the leadership that's needed there.

Again, the U.S. is a big emitter. Along with China they're the biggest emitters totally, but, you know, Canada on a per capita basis

is a huge emitter. We have a responsibility as individual citizens and as responsible legislators to see our key responsibility as educated, resourced, technologically savvy, recognizing the long-term well-being of this place and the planet, to listen to the United Nations, the climate convention, listen to the scientists, and look at our own backyard and see what the impacts of floods and fires have been here along with new infectious diseases.

There's no question in my mind that this is one of if not the most important issues that we deal with and that we set aside the politics of this and look at what's the best alternative given what we have in terms of the global agreement and move forward with it, exceed it. Let's exceed the targets that Paris has established with Canada, and let's pull together with other provinces and the federal government and make sure that we leave a legacy for our children that says: we took this seriously; we came to understand the science, and we're doing everything possible as legislators to create policies that provide the right incentives to conserve, to develop new technologies and clean energy, and to mitigate the worst impacts expected from this climate chaos, which is more what it should be called, rather than climate warming. It's climate chaos.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Before I recognize the next speaker, we've had a request to revert to Introduction of Guests. Is anyone opposed to the request?

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

3:50

Introduction of Guests

(continued)

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Just following on the comments from the Liberal member on his plan to make Alberta great again, I wanted to take this opportunity to introduce to the House Valerie Keefe. She is here to meet with me today, but much to my surprise I actually got a motion passed to do something in here, which is rather rare for an opposition member, so we're debating this. Valerie is an advocate for trans people. She is a former member of the NDP but has seen the light of conservatism and libertarianism and is here to discuss potentially getting involved with the Freedom Conservative Party of Alberta. She isn't moving from one side of the spectrum slowly along it. She just jumps the whole way along, apparently. I wanted to take this opportunity to introduce a former member of the NDP, as I understand it, who, I guess, has been surprised to be able to indulge in today's debate. I'd ask all members to give her the traditional warm welcome of the House.

Motions under Standing Order 42

Paris Agreement on Climate Change

(continued)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to see you today in the chair and to be able to rise to speak to this motion. I'd like to start off just briefly quoting the hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition on June 11 of this year. In a scrum he said in regard to this issue that "the preponderance of carbon tax for them to come close to achieving the Paris climate GHG emission targets would require a price in the range of \$300 a tonne, not the current \$30 a tonne. This is not environmental policy. It's political

theatre. It's the NDP government addicted to the idea of expanding its control over people's lives and bringing in more tax revenue. As Doug Ford said, it's just another tax. It's not about environmental policy. We, the UCP, in our platform will present a comprehensive plan that will include concrete measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions."

Madam Speaker, that's important for a couple of reasons. The first is at the end of that statement where it makes clear that greenhouse gas emissions is something that needs to be addressed and that a future United Conservative government will address it. We'll bring forward ideas in the next election as is our responsibility when we're in an election.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

The second part of that that's important is the staggering number that it would take, the staggering amount of carbon tax that would need to be charged to be able to meet the agreement of the Paris accord. The reality is that it's significantly more than is already being charged to Albertans right now by this NDP government and their close, personal friend Justin Trudeau, the Prime Minister of this country. Significantly more. To use a carbon tax to be able to meet those emissions would require us to go even further than this government already has, to go further with the consequences to the people of Alberta and to our country as a result of that decision.

The reality is two things here, Madam Speaker. One is that at the amount that the NDP government has brought forward, they cannot meet the targets, and they will not have a significant impact on the environment. Their own numbers say that. So they've brought forward a tax, a punishing tax for many Albertans, in order to, they say, try to meet targets, but the reality is that they know and their own documents have shown that in order for them to meet those targets, they would have to go significantly further. At the time of that quote, it was \$30. I believe it's \$50 right now. They would have to go to about \$300 or more.

The problem with that is that in exchange for what the NDP said would be social licence, which we'll talk about briefly in a minute, the government has chosen to put a punishing tax that they did not campaign on, that they hid from Albertans and then brought forward when they received a mandate to govern in Alberta. They put that tax on, knowing that they could not meet emissions targets. They know that. Either they intend to raise it at some point to be able to meet those targets or it really had nothing to do with the accord and was just a tax, as the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed said in his comment, a tax on Albertans, a money grab by this NDP government. It has to be one or the other.

The problem is that people continue to hurt because of the decision of this government to bring forward this carbon tax. They made the decision. They said that they would get social licence, that they would be able to get the pipelines built to be able to tackle some of the most serious issues facing our energy industry if we as a province accepted this carbon tax, which the province never did. We took the pain that is associated with that.

Now, we know that they didn't get that social licence. In fact, social licence at this point, I think this House has to declare, is a failure. This government has stood in this Chamber repeatedly and put up their hands and said: two pipelines; we got two pipelines approved. They had celebrations and told Albertans it was a done deal.

Mr. Cooper: Mission accomplished.

Mr. Nixon: Mission accomplished. It turns out that it was not. We now know that. Social licence did not work for that.

Now, what happened to the people of Alberta during that time? We've seen widows losing their carbon tax rebates when their

spouses passed away. I sat with school boards who are struggling now with the increased costs of transportation to get our children to school and the increased costs of operating their facilities.

A seniors' centre in my constituency is a great example, the West Country seniors' centre. We've talked about it in this Chamber many times. It is one of the most appalling things that I've ever seen this government do. You know what they did, Madam Speaker? When that was brought to their attention and there was a lot of political pressure associated with that issue, they told everybody: hey, we'll work with that seniors' centre, and we'll get it fixed. Now, do you know what working with that seniors' centre was? The Premier's office called those seniors' centre officials and said: have a fundraiser to pay for the carbon tax or raise the rates on your fixed-income seniors, the fixed-income seniors to whom this government continues to charge a tax that we now know can't even come close to meeting their objectives and has not given us the pipelines.

Now, we brought that up, and there was more political pressure. So the government then called up and said: "Sorry. We went too far. We'll work with you. We want to do an assessment of your building." They, the government, spent thousands of taxpayer dollars – I don't remember the exact amount; I believe it was north of \$10,000 – doing an assessment on this facility, enough to pay, from what I recall, close to a decade of the facility's carbon tax. That was their assessment. How about they just give them their money and stop taking it? But they did that.

Now, you know what the report said? I have the report. It's bizarre. It comes back with only one real suggestion. Madam Speaker, get this. It suggests that they unplug their coffee makers when they're not having coffee to lower emissions.

I talked, of course, to the president of that centre, a long-time friend of mine, Mr. Ed Wicks, a great guy from the great town of Sundre, who's been advocating for seniors in that community for a long time. He said, "The problem, Jason, is that we've got our coffee makers on timers. We don't need to unplug them."

Mr. Fildebrandt: Names are not allowed.

Mr. Nixon: The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks points out that I used my own name, and I do apologize for that. He is correct. Ed Wicks said to the hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre: the problem is, Jason, we use timers. Oops, I did it again. That's twice in a row, Madam Speaker.

The point is this. This government continues to punish the people of Alberta with a carbon tax that can't even meet their own goals. [interjections] They laugh right now. They laugh about those fixed-income seniors. They laugh about our education system that is struggling because of the carbon tax. They laugh about our municipalities. They laugh about that. They laugh about our nonprofits, who are struggling to be able to pay the bills. They laugh. It's not funny, Madam Speaker. This is not a funny thing. It is not funny. What is happening to the people of this province because of your decisions is not funny, so you should not laugh at it. They've had to pay significant consequences as a result of that decision.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Now, I think that there was no way that we should have gone the carbon tax route. That's no secret. We spoke about it in this Chamber, the members on this side of the House, but the reality is also this. This government chose to go the carbon tax way even though they knew that they could not meet the emissions targets at the price that they brought forward. Clearly, it was not about emissions; it was about a tax grab. But then they said: don't worry; we'll get social licence, and we'll get pipelines built. That's what

they said. So at the very least, if they forced that tax upon the people of Alberta, they should have come through on their ability to get those pipelines built.

4:00

We now know they did not. They did not come through. One of the biggest crises that this province has ever faced is happening right now despite the fact that many people have warned this government about this for years. They continue to prematurely celebrate getting pipelines built. So social licence didn't work.

What did they do, though, when it came to standing up to the federal government? In fact, often we hear members of the NDP say: "This is not our fault. I'm sorry we said that it was built. I guess we shouldn't have said that. But don't worry; we're working with Justin Trudeau. It's going to be okay." Working with Justin Trudeau? What has Justin Trudeau done on this issue? I've told members across the way from me over and over that paper approval from Justin Trudeau is worth nothing, and that has been proven.

This government stood in this House and supported repeatedly Justin Trudeau on so many issues with our energy industry, waited 229 days to even speak up against Bill C-69, the no-more-pipelines bill brought forward by Justin Trudeau, stood on their hands and, in fact, supported Justin Trudeau on his decision to cancel and block the Northern Gateway pipeline. It would sure be nice if that was on its way, a pipeline that got done by Stephen Harper, by the way.

They stood on their hands while Energy East was cancelled, said nothing, took no action against the Prime Minister and the federal government, did not stand up for Alberta and, instead, sided again and again and again with their ally in Ottawa. That's what they do over and over.

On Trans Mountain we could not even get this government to take a serious stand against B.C. or the feds for months, over a year, maybe longer, and then all of a sudden, once the political pressure finally ramped up, they said: okay; hon. Leader of the Opposition, we'll try this shutting-off-the-tap legislation. But, Madam Speaker, you and I both know they never intended to do it. They never intended to take action. Yet again they sat on their hands and did what Justin Trudeau did. They filibustered their own bill inside this Legislature, had the nerve to go back and tell Albertans: "Don't worry; we're going to do this. We're going to defend you. We're going to defend you. We are going to pass this legislation. We're going to shut off the taps." Then they sat in this House and filibustered the bill so they would not have to do that. It was shameful. Over and over this government chooses to side with Justin Trudeau, even now.

Actually, one other example. The Leader of the Opposition, long before it was talked about in the Senate – and when it was talked about in the Senate, it was important – said that we should be using the Constitution to declare this in the national interest. He brought forward motions in this Assembly which he tried to negotiate with the other side in good faith, but they were too worried about protecting Justin Trudeau to even talk to him, and they voted against calling on the House of Commons and the Prime Minister to make Trans Mountain in the national interest. They voted against it, voted with the Prime Minister again, over and over. The actions, or the lack of action, are very, very clear.

Now, Trans Mountain gets stopped yet again. They've not been able to force the Prime Minister to enforce the rule of law. Now they're in a situation in court where they can't get the Prime Minister to get this in the national interest. He won't move. There's a bill inside the Senate. They haven't spoken in favour of that at all. They didn't get their ministers down to Ottawa to say: this has to be passed; this project is in the national interest. Instead, they sat on

their hands again and kept coming back to this place and telling Albertans that they were going to get this pipeline built.

I think it's fair for Albertans to start to ask: what the heck is our government doing? Our government continues to punish people, Albertans, that they are elected to protect, the most vulnerable, people on fixed incomes. The carbon tax, Madam Speaker, is a regressive tax, particularly now that they've pulled back all the rebates. It's a regressive tax. It hurts the poor more than the rich. That's what the carbon tax does. [interjections] I know it makes them mad, but that's what they did. They brought forward a carbon tax that hurts the most vulnerable people in our communities. The rebates have been clawed back. [interjections] The members are heckling away.

I'll give you another example.

An Hon. Member: The rebates are still there.

Mr. Nixon: But not for the increase to the carbon tax. That's not true, hon. member. You should maybe talk to your minister if you're concerned about that. But that's not true.

In fact, here's one other one, fixed-income seniors, who are disproportionately impacted by this, without a doubt, because they're on fixed incomes, somewhere we're all going to be one day. This government allowed their carbon tax rebates to be clawed back by 30 per cent without even a word from the minister, without even a word to defend the very people this government claims to help. Hockey moms and hockey dads at the pumps are not going to be how we fix this problem. We've been telling the government that for a very, very long time.

You know, sometimes you've just got to accept that you were wrong. You should just accept that you're wrong, because people are being hurt by it. This is not a game, that we get to come here and play and wear our fancy clothes and stand inside this Chamber and give speeches all day. This has real-world consequences. Decisions that are made in this place have real-world consequences. The government policy has been a failure, in particular in their inability to take action against the federal government and, before that, B.C. Their unwillingness to take action, not even having the ability to call on the Prime Minister to appeal the decision on Trans Mountain – they couldn't even be bothered to do that.

They should be hanging their heads in shame on this. They've stood in this Chamber, Madam Speaker – you saw them do it – and said: "We got two pipelines built. It's done." They stood outside the Legislature in the summer and had a big party, screaming and hollering about how great this moment was. I wish it was true. It's not true. It's not true. But instead of coming back to this place and saying, "Okay; you know what; we got it wrong," which is the stage that they should be at – we clearly can't buy social licence by punishing the people of Alberta; that has not worked. – we should pull back the carbon tax, something that this side of the House has moved many motions on to ask this place to do that have always been voted against by the NDP.

At the same time, all across this country in jurisdictions – you know, Ontario had a big election. There goes the carbon tax. In Manitoba, I believe, in New Brunswick – the state of Washington, the most green state of all the states, could not even get a referendum passed on the carbon tax in the state of Washington in the last midterm election.

An Hon. Member: What about California?

Mr. Nixon: They want to use California. I'm not even going there today.

They want to continue to hang onto this idea, and it's okay. If it was just them who were going to pay the consequences for it, in the

polls or wherever Albertans choose to give them those consequences, that would be one thing, but as they make those decisions, they are continuing to hurt people. Now we don't have the pipelines that we need, and it's going to have consequences for many years to come.

Drever: Well, there was a climate change denier.

Mr. Nixon: The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow just heckled at me that I'm a climate change denier. I am not a climate change denier. She should not heckle that at me. In fact, I opened this speech with a comment about how emissions are an issue that need to be dealt with and that we will bring forward policies to do that.

What I reject, Madam Speaker, is that the Member for Calgary-Bow believes that she can solve that problem on the backs of Albertans that are just trying to make a living, that she can solve those problems on the backs of fixed-income seniors, that I represent inside this place with pleasure. She thinks that she can solve this problem by making it harder for schools to transport kids to school. That is shameful. That's where we are at. It's more shameful, as I said at the beginning of this speech, because they knew the entire time that they could not meet the goals. Either they meant that they're going to increase it on the people of Alberta at some point to be able to meet the goal, or they never had the intention of ever meeting the goal and just wanted to bring in a tax.

I will close with this. We are in a situation as a province – we are actually past that situation as a province – where we need to take action, concrete, strong action to defend our constitutional rights for our resources, to be able to get our resources to tidewater, and to stand up for Alberta. It has been three and a half years or longer of an NDP government sitting on their hands, voting over and over with their close ally Justin Trudeau against the people of Alberta, against the people that they represent. Over and over they voted with Justin Trudeau, and then we didn't get pipelines. They didn't succeed in it.

4:10

We brought forward significant ways that we could do that: shutting off the taps for B.C., a referendum on equalization, making the project in the national interest. Do something, but stop punishing the people of Alberta. Stop punishing the people of Alberta. It is time to start saying to Ottawa that there will be consequences if you will not work with our province on this issue. There will be consequences. It is time to say to the other provinces that we want fairness. It is not wrong to want fairness.

With this, I will close for real. To the NDP across from me: stop punishing the people of Alberta with your ideological agenda. Madam Speaker, through you to them, stop punishing the people of Alberta, start standing up for the people that you represent, stop this ridiculous path, and let's get to work on how we can get our product to tidewater.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Let me think about it: should we go with comments the Official Opposition leader made in a scrum about a nonexistent platform or with a Nobel prize winner who, after decades of studying solutions to address climate change, came up with something that won a Nobel prize? An economist dealing with science, dealing with fact: imagine that.

It was actually only a few weeks ago that the United Nations released a really unique report, and it's not something that you hear about very often. Ninety-one of the best minds from 40 countries have concluded that the world is on a fast track to irreversible damage. But the opposition wants us to stop. They'd like to play

games and put bumper stickers on their trucks that say, “Axe the Tax” instead of stopping and dealing with the most progressive idea, that won a Nobel prize, by the way, a free-market idea that deals with reducing emissions. A child born today will suffer the effects, the impacts of climate change when she turns 23. This is our future.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, that issued this report, told us again and again and again – and we’ve been warned by scientists – that the seas will rise faster, that droughts will last longer, that extreme weather changes will be our reality. Diminishing Arctic ice: I think we’re already seeing that. The impact on humans and species and plant life will be incredible, yet you have the opposition that is taking a position only to play political games like to slap on a little bumper sticker that says, “Axe the Tax.” You don’t have the political courage to stand up and do something extraordinary, to start bending this curve. We don’t have a lot of time left. The risks of ignoring climate change are very, very real.

I want to go back to the Nobel prize winner, Yale professor William Nordhaus. For this path-breaking idea, putting a price on carbon, he won this award after four decades of research. His research shows that raising prices through a carbon tax is a far more effective and efficient way to lower carbon emissions than direct government controls on the quantity of emissions through regulations on cars, power plants, et cetera. He won a Nobel prize. I haven’t heard that coming from over there. I haven’t heard that at all.

You know, I was talking with my son yesterday. My son is a scientist, and actually his girlfriend teaches introductory climate change at the University of Alberta. It’s too bad they don’t open it up for auditing so that some members can sit in on her class. One of the things they said to me, you know, is that it’s a little baffling that there’s so much opposition to addressing climate change. People certainly had a fit when things around recycling were introduced like deposits on bottles, an extra cost for dealing with your trash or your compostables, things like that. But people got over it, and people saw the value.

The opposition is stuck on hanging their hats on getting rid of something that is working. Fact: it’s working. It can work; it will work. If we do nothing, the reality is that for us and our families, for our children and their children, the price they will pay is unbelievable. Then you’ll hear them talk about: well, you know, Canada is not the biggest problem. We might not be the biggest problem, but as the hon. member said, per capita we’re a huge problem. We need to step up. We need to do something about this.

Think about the alarms that were raised around ozone depletion and the use of CFCs. Eighty-five per cent of ozone depletion was man-made. The rest occurred naturally. As you know, this layer protects life on Earth from the sun’s damaging UV rays. We were warned by scientists, and we listened, and we took some bold steps. Many countries agreed to reduce or prohibit the production of materials made of or by the use of CFCs. We raised awareness, and we took steps. We’re seeing the benefit, and we will see the benefit going forward. At a certain point it would have been too late, but we listened to the scientists, we looked at the science, and we took steps. We took bold steps to reverse this trend.

You know, it’s interesting. I thank the member for allowing us this opportunity to debate this emergency motion about the Paris accord, but it’s sort of interesting to hear members opposite talk about the need for Canada to withdraw. I don’t know if you know this, but Syria has actually become a signatory on the Paris climate agreement, leaving the U.S. as the only country in the world not to support the framework deal to combat greenhouse gas emissions. Now, I think back to some of the news coverage over the weekend,

where you had the President of the United States standing in California, where a fire has wiped out an entire city – Paradise, not Pleasure – and people are missing. Hundreds of people are missing. They’re finding the remains of residents every single day. I’m not saying that climate change started that fire, but we know that the results were far worse because of the implications of climate change, man-made climate change speeding up the effects of climate change.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

There is a huge difference. Some of the really interesting arguments that I hear from opposition members and some of their supporters, you know, that climate change is a hoax: look at the temperature; it’s gotten so much colder here. Well, again, I just want to remind people that there’s a huge difference between climate and weather. You know, I think it’s really important to look – I’m talking about some global issues, but if you look at Alberta in the last few years, if you think about some of the horrible natural disasters that we’ve lived through, some of them were events that are said to occur approximately on average every hundred years, and they just keep coming. We just keep having these floods that are devastating, that wipe out communities and families and businesses. We have fires. We’ve always had fires, but certainly they’re worse. All of these events continue to happen, so implementing a tax on pollution – and that’s what it is – is a strategy to start to move us in another direction.

When I think about the future, I’m always hopeful when I look at the young people in my family, within my circles of friends, and in my community. I’m always extremely hopeful because it’s a generation of people that are really well informed, and our children are well informed. They understand that the effects of climate change are the biggest – the biggest – problems that are in front of us. They will impact every facet of our lives from mass migration to negative impacts on our ability to produce food, water, so many things. They know that we need to do something, and I believe they see that this government, after a very long time of ignoring hard science, has the political courage to stand up and do something.

The opposition likes to play their games and – I don’t know – talk about the Prime Minister. Whatever. What we’ve done is focus on Alberta and focus on an Alberta-made solution that will focus on what’s happening right here. We need to do our part. We absolutely need to do our part, and I don’t think any of the opposition members get a free pass on this. You don’t get to stand up and walk out of this Chamber, like you’ve done when we asked you to protect women. You have to address this. This is a reality for every single one of us. You need to have the courage to, say, maybe disagree with your leader. Maybe your dear leader is wrong. Maybe he’s wrong. This is a bold step forward in addressing a problem that is huge, that scientists agree – and let me tell you that scientists don’t often agree – that this is real. They’ve been telling us this for decades, and we’ve been ignoring them. It’s time to wake up.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

4:20

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just wanted to take a couple of minutes to speak to this motion urging “the government to reject co-operation with the federal government in the imposition of the Paris agreement on climate change.” I find the wording very interesting. I don’t think that this is a situation of imposition so much as an agreement. The Paris accord was actually ratified by

Canada on October 5, 2016, so I'm a little confused as to why this would be an emergency right now. We've had a couple of years to talk about it.

But in doing some research on this this afternoon, trying to understand more about the Paris accord so I could speak rather cogently this afternoon, when you take a look at the canada.ca website, there's actually really great information. They talk about long-term goals and what we need to do to mitigate climate change. It is a foregone conclusion that we are seeing the effects of climate change and they will continue to accelerate.

Long-term goals, including adaptation: what can we do to adapt to our changing climate and the weather that it produces? We've seen the forest fires in California, and I'm sure that was really reminiscent of what we experienced in Fort McMurray here in Alberta. I'm sure that it was really difficult for a lot of people to see that. If we can do anything to prevent that from happening somewhere else, that doesn't include rakes or vacuum cleaners in the forests, I think that it's incumbent upon us to do that.

Some of the other things that are highlighted on the website are a co-operative approach, and I think collaboration and integrated approaches to problem solving are always the most effective way to address an issue. If we try and solve something in a silo on our own or by denying that it exists, we're not going to solve any problems. We're just going to kick the can down the road for somebody else to deal with, and that'll be our kids, and I don't think that that's a very fair burden to put on them.

Some other highlights from the website talk about the finances. It costs money to address this problem. The model that we have right now is certainly good at generating wealth in many areas, but we need to change that so that the way we run our economy allows people to build wealth but also mitigates the effects of climate change. That's incredibly important.

Transparency and stock-taking. We can't solve a problem if we're not really clear and honest about where we are now and where we want to be in the future. None of those things happen if we don't have good communication, if we don't have good relationships between different levels of government and between governments across the world.

So for all of these reasons and the fact that this isn't really an emergency for us to debate right now, I will not support this motion.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to rise and speak to the emergency motion that has been brought forward toward the House this afternoon. I won't take a whole lot of time, but I will advise the House that I really believe that the Official Opposition's position with respect to this motion and climate change in general really is an abdication of responsibility. We in this House as elected politicians, as government and as opposition, need to recognize our primary responsibility to lead, and by that I mean leading in terms of recognizing threats and planning a strategy to protect Albertans from those risks that we might identify.

This abdication is one that I think is fundamental to the strategy of the Official Opposition, to hide behind what they try to tell us is not happening, and that is their view, that climate change is not real. The economic geniuses on the other side of the House will lose out on all the potential opportunity that actually tackling climate change and recognizing the threats that we face as a result of it and ensuring that we make the right investments on behalf of Albertans to transition to a low-carbon economy and financing that transition with strategic investments into green energy development and

energy efficiency using the very same energy levy, climate change levy, that they deride all the time. I really can't fathom why they think that Albertans will believe that their way is the way to go, because Albertans are clear thinkers. They do recognize what's going on around the world.

We see our northern ocean, our Arctic Ocean, no longer freezing over. We have had drastic fires and weather situations. The bottom line is that the global mean average temperature is rising, and we have enough scientific evidence that is so clearly telling us that we have a problem. It's a man-made problem caused by man-made addition of carbon into the atmosphere, whether you like to call it pollution or not. I would invite the hon. members who claim that CO₂ is not pollution to try switching CO₂ for oxygen and seeing which one is easier to breathe. CO₂ is definitely pollution. It's causing our climate change to accelerate and the global mean average temperature to accelerate to a point where it's causing devastating effects on our planetary ocean levels as well as our weather.

That responsibility to mitigate those risks lies with us as legislators who are bound to recognize and take action against those risks to protect our Albertan citizens that we represent and to also, really, take advantage of the opportunity. This new low-carbon economy that we are entering into, to lose the opportunity to transfer those dollars that we can obtain while there still is a demand for our responsibly produced energy products, not to take advantage of those dollars and invest them into a new transitioning low-carbon economy is a foolhardy, missed opportunity.

I really think that Albertans are very knowledgeable and will definitely vote with their minds and with their wallets when it comes to determining who should lead Alberta into this new energy economy, a government led by individuals who see and respect the science that is before us and who also take advantage of the opportunities that mitigating those risks present to us and our economy while a short window of us being able to sell our responsibly produced energy into global markets exists and allows us to use that economic rent to finance this transition into the low-carbon economy which is upon us. Those who deny climate change will, I think, be fundamentally left behind to wonder why they ever denied it in the first place.

I won't go further. I'm really very passionate about this. I think we have nothing but bright blue skies ahead of us as an Alberta economy. We do have some hurdles to get over, but the long-term situation where we have a very large supply of fossil fuel which will be fed into a global demand that is still quite vibrant for the next two to three decades at the very least is something we should use as an economic advantage and a lever to finance the transition into a low-carbon economy and take advantage of the artificial intelligence operations that are starting to come into our oil patch. We're looking at automated vehicles. We're looking at all kinds of technological advances that we can use to advance the transition to a lower carbon economy and make our workforce more amenable to the economics of the future.

If indeed we don't take advantage of the opportunities as the opposition would have us do, we would deserve to lose the election, but I don't think we will because I think Albertans are listening to what's happening around the world and realize that we're taking steps to protect them against the risks of climate change that's real, and we'll be recognized for that.

Thank you.

4:30

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise today and take part in this debate. As the Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill noted, perhaps it's not an emergency in the sense that's often considered in this House, but we've taken the opportunity for this debate, so I appreciate the opportunity to participate in it.

I'd like to begin by addressing some of the initial comments from the Member for Strathmore-Brooks in regard to how we should be describing CO₂ emissions. Certainly, this is a point of some pedantry amongst many on the conservative right in talking about the issue of climate change and choosing to nitpick on particular words or definitions as opposed to actually addressing the real issue at hand, but, fair enough, we'll address that.

If one looks at the definition of pollution in the Oxford dictionary: "The presence in or introduction into the environment of a substance which has harmful or poisonous effects." Certainly, Madam Speaker, an excess of CO₂ qualifies as something that, when introduced into the environment, indeed has harmful or poisonous effects.

Encyclopedia Britannica:

Pollution, also called environmental pollution, the addition of any substance (solid, liquid, or gas) or any form of energy (such as heat, sound, or radioactivity) to the environment at a rate faster than it can be dispersed, diluted, decomposed, recycled, or stored in some harmless form.

That being the case, I think we can set aside minor quibbling about definitions and recognize that what we are talking about today is in fact a very real and genuine problem.

When we have an excess of CO₂ emissions – and to be clear, Madam Speaker, when we speak about climate change and we talk about emissions and we talk about pollution, we are not talking solely about CO₂. CO₂ is the predominant greenhouse gas, but we're also talking about methane, sulphur dioxide, other gases which are also released and which also contribute to the issue. CO₂, of course, is the primary pollutant in excess which is causing the issue due to man-made choices, man-made decisions, our approach to industry, the actions and choices that we each individually and on an industrial level make every day which are contributing to the very real issue of climate change.

As others have addressed today, we're seeing the impacts of that in the world today. Just a few weeks ago I had the opportunity to join the community from St. Vincent and the Grenadines here for their cultural celebration and their independence day celebration, and I talked with them about the very real experience of some of their country's brethren and sisters who have endured the effects of some severe hurricanes. Indeed, officials in that country noted that that was directly related to issues that are spinning off from the ongoing issue of climate change.

We recognize that this is a real and genuine issue that impacts people around the world and, indeed, Madam Speaker, that the decisions that we make and have made, that have contributed to our prosperity and have placed us in an incredibly advantageous position with an impressive quality of life that is the envy of many around the world, are predicated and built upon the fact that we have been contributing to this issue over the years, significantly. We set a standard that other countries wanted to adopt, and they have therefore increased their impact. So we can try to dismiss the fact and say that we don't produce as much as China or India or some of these other countries, but the fact is that those countries are following our example.

We have set that standard, and it's time for us to set another standard, too. Madam Speaker, dealing with climate change is something called a collective action problem. Now, a collective action problem is defined as a situation in which all individuals will

be better off co-operating but fail to do so because of conflicting interests between individuals that discourage joint action. This is a very real problem that we face because the reality is that we are not going to deal with this situation in any way unless we find a way to enact some collective action.

As has been often observed by members opposite and indeed others on the conservative right – you know what? – no one jurisdiction can do this alone. I agree with them there, Madam Speaker, but where I begin to disagree is when they say: therefore, there is no need to take action, or therefore we cannot take any action until somebody else goes first, or we can only go as far as someone else is willing to go. That is not leadership. That is not what Canada is known for, that is not what Alberta is known for, and that is not going to move us forward in addressing a very real problem.

Now, as I said, Madam Speaker, part of the issue here is that some on this issue are choosing to get caught up in pedantry, are choosing to get caught up in small politicking, very short-term thinking, because they believe that's going to be to their own political gain. We see that south of the border. We see that amongst our own opposition here in Alberta. We see that amongst Conservative opposition in Canada.

Now, I appreciate that members opposite have come around to agreeing that this is a problem. That's a good step forward. Indeed, recently data was released that shows that the majority of Canadians – and that includes a majority of Conservative voters – recognize that this is a real and genuine problem. So when we come back around to the question of this debate, as put forward by the Member for Strathmore-Brooks, that we as Alberta should step back and say, "We will not support the federal government in their decision, having signed on to the Paris accord," that being the global agreement to set those targets, I cannot agree with that motion.

Now, let's be clear, Madam Speaker. Members opposite have talked about, you know, the astronomical figures that would be required to address this issue. To be clear, there is no addressing this issue without cost. That is simply an impossibility. So what our discussion comes down to, then, is: how are those costs to be best addressed? How do we implement them into our system?

They have to be implemented somewhere, whether that's going to be through regulation, which seemed to have been the favourite option of our former Prime Minister, Mr. Harper, and his Conservative government at the time, who said many great things about all the steps they were going to take and how they were going to rein in industry and how they were going to bring in regulation and all the steps they were going to take to begin to achieve Canada's carbon emission reduction goals but ultimately did nothing, ultimately did very little, again, because of that lack of political will, that unwillingness to be leaders on this issue, the unwillingness to address the fact that this is a challenge that we're going to have to face and there will be costs involved.

Now, members opposite have chosen so far not to put forward any actual policy on this issue or any indication of how they would actually choose to address it, again choosing to play that short-term political game. Frankly, Madam Speaker, I'm proud to stand with a government that is taking real action on this issue.

What we are seeing around the world, Madam Speaker, that I think is relevant to this conversation and particularly in the way the question has been framed by the Member for Strathmore-Brooks, is also concerns with the rise of nationalism, that being a very clear degradation of the principles of co-operation and collaboration on the global scale. Now, again, this is a word on which we often see folks on the right exercising some pedantry and trying to parse it in different ways to say things that it doesn't actually say, so I will be clear in my definition. When I talk about nationalism, I'm talking

about, as the Oxford dictionary says, “Identification with one’s own nation and support for its interests, especially to the exclusion or detriment of the interests of other nations,” or another definition, “Loyalty and devotion to a nation especially: a sense of national consciousness exalting one nation above all others and placing primary emphasis on promotion of its culture and interests as opposed to those of other nations.”

Now, I recognize that the Member for Strathmore-Brooks leans a little bit in this direction. I mean that in terms of favouring a much higher, I guess, elevation of Alberta values, Alberta culture, Alberta’s interests over its place currently in the national scene. I’m not quite sure that you could call that provincialism. That would perhaps be a misunderstanding and a misrepresentation. But I recognize that, and I appreciate that the member stands by those values. Personally, I’m concerned by the growth of this sort of point of view and this sort of populism around the world.

4:40

There is indeed, Madam Speaker, a time to be patriotic, and indeed I consider myself a patriot. I am proud of my country. I am proud of my province. I am proud of my city. I don’t consider any of those necessarily to be superior to other parts of the world. There are many things to admire in many nations and many places, but that’s to one side of the point.

Ultimately what it comes down to, Madam Speaker, is that I find it very problematic that we are moving to a world where, increasingly, people are choosing to elect governments in nations that say me first, everyone else after. There are times to stand up for our national interests: indeed, when we are negotiating a free trade agreement; indeed, when we are working to negotiate pipelines for Alberta; indeed, when the city of Edmonton is advocating for its fair share of the resources that come from the province for its municipal infrastructure. Indeed, those are appropriate things to do.

But there are times and there are things where we need to come together to address action. This increasing move towards nationalistic approaches, policies, this increasing move towards populist thinking, as being demonstrated right now in the United Kingdom with the Brexit issue, is ultimately destructive. It ultimately harms those whom it tries to draw in. The people that they bring in under a populist philosophy and tell that it’s going to benefit them are ultimately harmed, because we do more and are able to accomplish more when we work together than when we choose to be entirely selfish in our interests.

So to bring this around, obviously I cannot support this motion from the member. I believe that these goals that have been set in the Paris accord: indeed, they are lofty. Indeed, they are challenging to meet, but they are also in one sense, Madam Speaker, I think, aspirational. We recognize, of course, that these are the realities of what we have to do if we want to truly circumvent the catastrophic effects of long-term climate change. But that does not mean that anybody is suggesting that these will be accomplished overnight or in the next year. We need to take these initial first steps. We need to begin that journey. If we just simply sit back and say, “This is too big an issue to possibly handle,” then we will never make any progress. Indeed, when we talk about the legacies that we are going to leave to our children and grandchildren, this is far, far worse than any of the doom-and-gloom scenarios that members opposite like to sometimes put forward in regard to the economy.

Now, the reality is, Madam Speaker, that we have taken real action as a province to begin to address this issue. Indeed, the introduction of a price on carbon is the first step, and it is one of many steps. Now, when members opposite choose to speak about the \$300 price on carbon being what has to be in place to achieve the Paris climate goals, indeed that is if that is the only step that is

put in place. Nobody has suggested that that is the only tool in the tool box, and certainly it is not the only tool in the climate leadership plan that our government brought forward. There is the ending of coal-fired electricity by 2030. There are steps to create technological innovation, which is reducing emissions in the barrel. Increasing renewable energy and the use of renewable energy, providing supports to people to help them reduce their energy usage, moving up energy efficiency in the province of Alberta: all of these things cumulatively begin to move us towards that goal.

So we can choose, Madam Speaker, again, to fearmonger, like members opposite like to do, misrepresenting particular parts of the climate leadership plan while offering no solutions in return. Indeed, if we are not going to put a price on carbon which applies to all sectors of the economy, then that means that burden will be left solely to industry. I would love to hear from members opposite what the burden would be on industry to meet the Paris accord goals if it’s left to them alone and no other steps are taken.

We are, of course, working with industry, Madam Speaker. We’re helping them, and all the funds that come in from the price on carbon go right back into other things to help reduce that. There are the rebates that go to individuals to help them offset the cost to them personally. Then there are the amounts that go into renewable energy, the amounts that are going into helping communities that have been dependent on the coal power industry to transition, amounts that are going into developing better technology, amounts that are going into energy efficiency, amounts that are going into green transportation and sustainable transportation across the province.

All of these things together, Madam Speaker, are us showing initiative, showing leadership because Alberta took these steps first. We didn’t follow Ottawa on this one; we led. Frankly, I’m happy to see that Ottawa has come along behind us and that they’re working to make sure that these types of positive steps are being brought forward across Canada with the national price on carbon, which then allows the choice for each individual jurisdiction to determine how they will reinvest that income, allows each individual the choice to determine how they can best address their own carbon usage, allows industry the choice to determine which technologies, which approaches they would prefer to implement, as opposed to the only other option that’s left to members opposite: imposing some form of regulation on industry telling them what they have to do.

I’m proud of the work of our government. I will proudly stand behind it. I will proudly campaign on it, as I do every week when I go out and I talk to my constituents at the doors. This is policy we can be proud of and that has put Alberta on the map internationally as a responsible energy-producing jurisdiction.

For all those reasons, Madam Speaker, I’ll be voting against this motion. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

I’ll now recognize the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Speaker. First of all, I just wanted to say that there were a couple of comments that were made by some members from the opposite side there, St. Albert and Edmonton-McClung specifically. I don’t have the Blues in front of me, so I can’t quote them specifically, but the comments that were made identified us on this side of the House as being the problem with their carbon tax and that we are continually going against their carbon tax. But let me be absolutely clear. The reality is that two-thirds in almost every poll that we have seen of Albertans say that they are against carbon tax, so when they get up in this House and

they start pontificating and waxing poetic about how right they are, the reality is that Albertans are not buying it.

In fact, Albertans are saying: "We are going to reject this. Give us an opportunity in an election, and we will show you how upset we are about the fact that you have crammed this carbon tax down our throats." This is the sort of thing that in this House they can stand up and sound fantastic, that they're so high and mighty and that they're so right, but the truth is that every election Albertans get the choice, and they get to choose who is right.

I'm not exactly sure why the members opposite are not actually taking a look at the polls and actually saying: "You know what? Albertans aren't buying it. We need to be able to maybe back off from this thing." But they aren't looking at it. They aren't actually addressing Albertans' concerns. I thought that we were a House that represents Albertans here, but in reality what they're talking about is a party that represents a small minority in Alberta. The truth is that the large majority of Albertans are saying: we reject this premise that the carbon tax is the way to go, that it can build us pipelines, that it can actually build us social licence. Because of that, on this side of the House we have maintained over and over again that the carbon tax is not the right approach to being able to address this issue.

4:50

Now, I think that it's important to let people know about a situation down in my riding. We have a lot of heat units down there. We grow lots of stuff down there. In the Taber area we have Rogers Sugar, or Lantic Sugar as it's called, that is a fantastic employer in my riding, and the cost of the carbon tax – because sugar, the sugar beets that they grow down there, is an international market, the sugar producers are price takers. They're not price makers. They have to sell this sugar into the market. The problem is that they have this carbon tax that the people right across the border in the States do not have to pay. This huge employer in my riding is in this situation where they are just hoping that the NDP don't get in a second term, Madam Speaker, because if they do, they might just leave. If they were to leave, the number of jobs that my riding in the Taber area would lose would be devastating to that community.

This is the sort of thing, Madam Speaker, that I think that this NDP government, which has been coined the government of unintended consequences, needs to really start thinking about. They ideologically push forward with their agenda, and in reality, rather than actually taking a look and saying, "Well, what is the economic impact? What are the consequences of what we're doing?", rather than doing that, they ideologically move forward in and push their agenda down Albertans' throats. As poll after poll shows, Albertans are not buying it. They're not excited about it. In fact, they're going to show them how unexcited they are in the next election.

Madam Speaker, this concept, the concept of carbon tax being this silver bullet that is going to buy this social licence, that is going to provide all of these jobs because we're going to build pipelines to the coast: we've not been able to see any fruition of that. We haven't been able to see any kind of growth in that. Now, they spike the ball on a regular basis saying: "You know what? See, we did it." In reality it's always premature because then something else happens. The court says: "No. You didn't have proper duty to consult, so you can't move forward."

The problem is that rather than actually stepping back and saying, "Until we actually get this social licence, we're going to get rid of this carbon tax we have. We're going to give Albertans the opportunity to be able to vote on this in the next election" – if Albertans say in the next election, "You know what? You've now been honest with us and you've told us that we're going to have a carbon tax and this is the cost of that carbon tax. Yes, we accept it.

We're going to vote you in," then that's democracy, Madam Speaker. That's the system we live in of democracy. If that was the case, then we have to accept it. But the truth of the matter is that rather than actually saying that they are willing to let the voters decide, let the Albertans, the people who struggle with this, the people who struggle . . .

The Acting Speaker: Sorry. I hesitate to interrupt, Member.

Members, can we all please sit down in our seats. We're not in Committee of the Whole. Thank you.

Please go ahead.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Speaker. If they had the ability to take a look at what Albertans want and give them that opportunity, I'm sure – not just sure; poll after poll indicates that Albertans would reject this agenda of the Alberta NDP. Yet we have heard time and again – again I go back to what the members for St. Albert and Edmonton-McClung said, that it's us that are causing the problems, that we're the ones who are against the carbon tax. Albertans are against the carbon tax. They're the ones who are giving us the clear indication that, no, that is not the correct approach, this is punitive, and there's no benefit to it.

If the benefit was that we were going to get a pipeline to tidewater, maybe the polls would change. I don't know. But I can tell you right now that the single mom with three young children, the person who's struggling, the fixed-income homeowner or the fixed-income person that's just trying to be able to make a go, they are not happy about this. I hear from them on a regular basis. These are the people who say they need a cease and desist. They need a stop with this destruction of the Alberta economy. Stop with destroying individuals' lives with this carbon tax that is punitive in nature.

Now, there was another comment that was made by the Member for Edmonton-Centre, and one of the things that he said in there – the argument is constant from the opposite side – is that if Albertans want to have a good environment, they'll want to have the carbon tax and that they want to be able to do their part. Well, you know what? If they were so sure of that, they could do a plebiscite or they could do an election. They could call an early election. You know what? I think Albertans would be very happy to have an early election. They would love to be able to have an opportunity to be able to make this the ballot decision. I can tell you that if they go to the ballots with this decision, if this is the ballot decision, I can tell you what Albertans are going to say. I talk to Albertans all the time. Albertans are not happy with this. This is not going to be able to provide that silver bullet that they seem to think that it is.

So, Madam Speaker, the issue at hand here is this government's complete lack of listening to Albertans, complete lack of this government's desire to know what Albertans want and then moving forward with something that's going to help Albertans. This is the reason why they're sitting so low in the polls. This is the reason why Albertans are rejecting their message and what they're doing.

Madam Speaker, I hope that all members of this House think about the consequences of the work that they're doing here, that this is not a laughing matter, as we've seen when my colleague was speaking earlier about how members of the opposite side were laughing as he was talking about senior citizens and fixed-income earners. For them to laugh at the plight of Albertans is deplorable, something that is not acceptable, is definitely not parliamentary.

Madam Speaker, I hope that the government will rethink this approach that they've had to the carbon tax, to how it's punitive in nature, that they would recognize that this is not helping Albertans – it's just punishing them – and that the members opposite who say that it's us that are causing the problems would take a look at this

and realize that it's not just us. This is the majority of Albertans that are saying: no; we never voted you in for this, and we're not going to accept it.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the motion? The hon. Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Thanks, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise this afternoon to speak to Standing Order 42. I'm in agreement with the environment minister as well as the Member for Calgary-Mountain View and many of our colleagues here that climate change is real and that these might be the most substantial debates of a generation and perhaps for the future of humanity. The opposition has proven time and time again that they refuse to accept the science of climate change, and again we're hearing that here in this House today. The Conservatives plan to go backwards on climate change, which would remove billions of dollars of investment in renewables, eliminate energy efficiency programs that save money for families, businesses, and industry.

You know, Madam Speaker, each year April 22 is Earth Day. This is now a global event each year, and there are an estimated more than 1 billion people in 192 countries that now take part in the largest civic-focused day of action in the world. In this place, this Legislature, we hear day after day questions coming from the United Conservative Party opposition, questioning the value of Alberta's climate leadership plan, raising doubts that the value of the carbon levy and whether or not one province could have any effect on the overall global emissions at all.

You know, we've heard here today some quotes from former Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Preston Manning, but it reminds me of another notable Conservative politician that received some credit years ago. It was at an Earth Week gala dinner that was held back on April 18, 2006, and it was at this gala dinner where former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney was the distinguished greenest Prime Minister in Canadian history. It all happened at the Château Laurier in Ottawa before a sold-out crowd of environmentalists and corporate leaders.

5:00

Let's reflect for a moment on the significant accomplishments that would have led to this distinguished award. Myself, along with many others in this Chamber, was born and raised in Ontario, and many of us have memories of the acid rain debates and were aware of the damage that concentrations of sulphur dioxide emissions did to our natural ecosystems such as lakes and rivers, much of which was caused by coal-fired plants in the American Midwest and nickel smelting in Sudbury. I think the member moving this motion might recall some of those debates, too. Recognizing that something needed to be done about this environmental issue, government took action, and in 1991 Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and American President George Bush signed the acid rain accord. This would lead to a cut of more than 50 per cent in sulphur dioxide emissions in eastern Canada. During that time there were also significant measures introduced that reduced ozone depletion and helped clean up the St. Lawrence Seaway.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

I'd like to offer that these changes have paid massive returns decades later. It shows that government programs and initiatives can have a positive effect on the environment. I wonder, Madam Speaker: what happened to those Progressive Conservatives that

used to look decades ahead, attend climate change conferences, and represent Canada proudly? Every once in a while you hear an anxious point of order from the UCP, trying to perhaps distance themselves from their climate change doubting colleagues, but that gives us hope that a few of them might actually believe that human activities might have an impact on a changing global climate. I hope that all my Legislature colleagues on the other side of the House can learn the historical lessons from the former federal PC governments and understand that we actually do have an impact on our environment and that our government policy can have an impact on emissions and reduce the effects of climate change.

In the words of Brian Mulroney: climate change is the most serious environmental challenge, and time is running out; let's acknowledge the urgency of global warming. Then let's work together, bringing the world to a consensus on this topic. Madam Speaker, this is not the time to pull out of the Paris agreement on climate change.

We know that it's possible to take leading action on climate change and grow the economy at the same time because we've done it year over year. Alberta stands at a crossroads. We can ignore the signs of climate change and be dragged along, or we can take and make our own choices.

For those of us that lived in Calgary last summer, we know the air quality was poor due to forest fires elsewhere in B.C. The poor air quality lasted weeks and weeks on end, at least six weeks as I recall, and it was the same story the summer before. This year was different, though. I noticed that events were being cancelled, outdoor community recreation events specifically. It had a clear effect on people's lives.

Madam Speaker, our government has a solution. It's about investing in Calgary's green line LRT, that will create more than 12,000 jobs. Our energy efficiency programs mean that Albertans are saving \$70 for every tonne of carbon emissions reduced, Albertans are saving \$10 for every \$1 they invest in the residential energy-efficiency products, and our energy efficiency programs have saved \$414 million in energy costs. That's enough energy for 850,000 homes for one year. Businesses in Alberta have saved \$36 million in energy costs, and that's the same as taking 78,000 cars off the road. We're helping lower and middle-income families offset their costs through carbon levy rebates, with approximately two-thirds of households receiving a full rebate.

Madam Speaker, these are real solutions designed to tackle climate change. We can make a difference, we need to start now, and this is why I cannot support this motion.

Thank you.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Mine is really quick. I just have, actually, a question for the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner. He had indicated that the Lantic Sugar factory was in his riding and that they were very worried. Now, I wonder how worried they are when they've put in \$20 million worth of renovations to continue with the business after we provided some support.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members to speak to the motion? Calgary-West.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you. I want to thank everyone for their discussion on this certainly important topic. I'd also like to thank the Member for Calgary-Northern Hills for speaking. Certainly, he's been very passionate about this. I certainly believe that with his passion he might even reconsider running again in 2019. I certainly would encourage that, to run in Calgary supporting, you know, the carbon tax in that particular riding that he represents.

Now, I have to talk about a couple of things that I think are important, Madam Speaker. I know it's been said here before that two-thirds of Albertans consistently support getting rid of the carbon tax, but you have to recognize, whether you like it or not, that there is what is called a pattern. It doesn't matter if it's a biased poll. It doesn't matter if it's an independent poll. It doesn't matter if it's one that's commissioned by whomever. There is one constant theme, and that theme is that two-thirds of Albertans do not want this regressive carbon tax. That has been very, very clear, and that's been made very clear to me in Calgary-West.

I think it's important that we talk about listening, listening to our constituents, listening to the people of Alberta. You know, I sat in this Chamber – I was kind of thinking about this the other day – with some folks that may be perceived to be arrogant. We sat in a caucus of 76 people, Madam Speaker. I thought: my goodness, if 2019 comes around and I am so fortunate to be humbled by the people of Calgary-West, to be re-elected. I look at all the people that are running for the United Conservative Party and, of course, my friend here from Calgary-Hays – as I look at the picture of the Chamber from the previous Legislature, in the end it is just the Member for Calgary-Hays and myself who are the only two left standing from a previous government. My point is that you need to listen to the people you represent.

Now, I know that it's been said that, you know, we have other caucus members who were part of the previous PC Party, but they're not running again. The only two people that are running that are part of the Conservative caucus are the Member for Calgary-Hays and myself, so fair warning. When you don't listen to the people of Alberta – you can take away their jobs. You can take away their homes, but – I'll tell you what – you're never going to take away their right to vote, and they will send a clear message to the people in this Chamber in 2019.

Madam Speaker, I need to talk to you a little bit as well regarding what has been brought forward in the House in regard to people on fixed incomes. You know, I know that it's been said here that somehow all my friends are wealthy, but let me tell you something. I'm a simple, simple man. I came from a very simple home. My mother and my grandmother both currently live on fixed incomes, and they struggle. They struggle because of a carbon tax. You don't realize what sort of effect you are having on the daily lives of these people. They need to make choices on whether they can have bread or milk or heat their homes. Every time I go to Safeway – every time my grandmother goes to Safeway, less and less groceries can she afford. You guys can deny it all you want, but you are having a negative impact on people on fixed incomes. That will stop, and it's going to stop in 2019.

5:10

One of the members brought up Brian Mulroney. I was pretty young back then, but I'll tell you my recollection of Brian Mulroney. He led his party to one of the worst defeats in Canadian history, so I certainly wouldn't be taking any advice from him. Now, you can try and link him to the Conservatives all you want, but he's not a party that I ever belonged to.

Madam Speaker, there are people in this province who are hurting. You know, I spent the weekend as a hockey dad, getting up at 6 o'clock in the morning, taking my son to the rink, and listening to the people at that rink talk to me about how they don't want a carbon tax, talk to me about how the policies from this government are hurting them. This is not about Suncor. This is not about any major, large corporation. Quite frankly, I don't care about them. But I care about my family, I care about my friends, I care about my neighbours, and those people are hurting right now. There are

people that are hanging on by a thread with their jobs, making mortgage payments, all because of this regressive carbon tax.

So I am proud to stand here and say: I do not support a carbon tax, and I do not support what this government is doing when it comes to the energy industry right now.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Other members wishing to speak to the motion? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak on this motion that's before us. You know what? I've been listening to the debate, and there are a few things that have caught my attention. I heard, for example, the members from the government side talking about: let's do this together. All right. That sounds nice. Let me say this: I agree with that.

But the point, Madam Speaker, is that the government is not doing it together. If they were doing it together and they were grouping themselves together with larger, world-wide economies that could actually make a significant difference to the environment, then of course that might make a difference. If they were doing it together and they were doing it with larger numbers of people that could make a difference to the environment, then they might have something. The problem is that if you shut down completely Canada's economy, you would lower the world emissions by, from what I understand, about 1.6 per cent according to the scientists that the folks on the other side are fond of quoting. Nothing wrong with quoting scientists; we depend on them for a lot of our knowledge about the world.

But the fact is that sacrificing yourself to not help the environment doesn't make sense. The fact is that if we could actually work together with the rest of our country and bring along large economies like the United States, like India, like China in meaningful changes together, then we could actually make a difference on the emissions that go out into the world whereas doing this without them is self-sacrifice without actually doing anything for the environment, and that is actually silly. That is actually silly.

Here's the other thing. Because of that, the problem, without bringing together a large enough block of the world when you're making changes like this, is the fact that this particular carbon tax of this particular government is actually having a net negative effect on the environment. The carbon tax is actually not only not doing good for the environment; it's negative.

Again, someone that people on both sides of this House often quote is Andrew Leach. The government is aware of this: he's talked about carbon leakage. The fact is that every time you make our Canadian industry less competitive so that somebody buys a barrel of oil from Venezuela, from Saudi Arabia, from Russia instead of from Canada and, more specifically, Alberta, that barrel of oil is arriving at a higher burden on the environment, with higher emissions, lower human rights standards. That's what this government has wrought. That's what they're bringing forward. They're bragging about that. The fact is that I know they intend to do the right thing, but the evidence doesn't indicate that they are successful. In fact, the evidence indicates that what they're doing now has a net negative effect because they are not bringing along the larger economies with them while they do this.

All Albertans and, I believe, all Albertans in this Legislature want to ensure that we protect the environment. I think that's a core value. I don't think that that really has a political bent to it. I think everybody wants the world to be a clean and healthy place, not only for ourselves but for those we love, for our children, for our grandchildren, and for future generations. That's not a Conservative

value. It's not an NDP value. It's a human value. That's not a party value. I would not accuse members of this House of wanting to leave the planet a mess. That's not what anybody intends here.

The question is about how to do it in a way that makes sense. If we could convince, again, our neighbours in the United States, China, and India to come together and make – I don't know – a different half of what this government thinks they're making but have everybody else doing it at the same time we did, it would be a way bigger positive effect than what's even being contemplated here, a way bigger positive effect than if we shut everything in Canada down, if we had countries like China, India, the United States making a smaller contribution to the environment.

Madam Speaker, the fact is that doing it by ourselves is much, much less effective, and when we provide prohibitive costs to our industry, to our people, we take away jobs, hurt the lowest income people, the most vulnerable people in Alberta. So for bragging rights? If you're actually not making the environment better, all you're getting is bragging rights. Why don't we actually think about doing it and bringing other people along so we can actually make a positive difference to the environment instead of just for the bragging rights? It doesn't make sense without bringing the rest of the world along.

So, in that spirit, I have an amendment to move, Madam Speaker, and I would like to move it if that's okay with you. I could keep speaking, but my guess is that you're going to want me to wait until you've seen it before I continue. Yes? I will wait for your signal.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member for Calgary-Hays, go ahead.

5:20

Mr. McIver: Thank you. For those watching at home, I move that the motion brought forward by the Member for Strathmore-Brooks be amended by adding the following after "climate change":

"; but recognize the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions without imposing disproportionate costs on the Alberta economy not being imposed by our economic competitors."

This, Madam Speaker, is what I have been talking about. I believe everybody in this Legislature wants to make the environment better. I would hate to think anybody in this Legislature wants to virtue signal or create the illusion of making the environment better while not actually making it better and, in so doing, take away the jobs of tens of thousands of Albertans or hundreds of thousands of Albertans, making life more expensive and less enjoyable for the most vulnerable and the lowest income Albertans and the people that need the support of this government and this Legislature the most. I would hope that members of this House want to improve the environment without disproportionately damaging Alberta's economy, without disproportionately damaging those people in Alberta that are the weakest amongst us, those that most need our support, those that might have the lowest income, those that actually are the ones that we most need to protect.

We have a responsibility to all Albertans, of course, but we have, I believe, a greater responsibility to those that need us the most. That's what this says. Why would we disproportionately hurt the Alberta economy, taking away jobs, opportunity, making consumer goods more expensive, making housing more expensive, making food more expensive? When we do that, we actually hurt the people that are of the lowest income, the poorest Albertans, the most. Those are the people that we all should be thinking about. Those are the people that, I would say, around here we all claim to say that we're thinking about. These are the people that we all ought to be thinking about every single day that we're in here, every time we stand up to speak, every time we vote, every time we act on behalf of our constituents. We ought to be making sure that we do not hurt

them disproportionately or hurt Alberta disproportionately. It only makes sense.

Now, we've already seen the evidence of not doing that. This carbon tax has disproportionately hurt Alberta while actually probably doing net damage to the environment. What have we seen as a result? Economic activities have been leaving Alberta in droves, well over \$40 billion in investment gone along with the jobs, the opportunity, the future opportunities for our children and grandchildren, chased out of Alberta by, amongst other ways, the carbon tax introduced by this government.

Mr. Piquette: Not at all. You know that.

Mr. McIver: Yes, I know you did better than the carbon tax. I see the member from Athabasca there arguing. I'll give him credit. He also chased out the investment with the corporate taxes, with the personal taxes, with the excess regulations, but the carbon tax was part of it. You're right. I should have given you credit for all the other bad policies, but we are talking about this one right now.

The fact is that this is what happens when you have bad policies. You chase out jobs, opportunity, things that can make life better for Albertans. Again, Professor Andrew Leach calls it carbon leakage, and he's right. Every time a barrel of oil comes from somewhere else, we've actually supported a country with lower human rights standards than Canada, lower environmental standards than Canada. If you're actually giving the business to somebody with lower environmental standards, you're actually not doing anything for the environment, and it's probably a net negative out of the carbon tax in its current form. Again, if we could come together along the way with the United States, with China, with India and say, "Together let's reduce the world's emissions," we could actually make a dent. Someone might actually notice. For those that, you know, claim they care about the environment, then that is the way, I believe, we all ought to be looking at it.

In fact, there's lots of other evidence. I mean, you look and see oil and gas booming in places like Texas and North Dakota but slumping in Alberta. They don't have the NDP policies tripping them up, making their product more expensive, causing everything for their citizens, whether they're in the industry or not, to be more expensive than it needs to be, including basics like food, basics like heat for people that – frankly, again, it's not wealthy people who have to choose between groceries and heat. It's poor people. It's people of low income. Those are the ones that we need to actually be turning our thoughts and our minds to, not thinking about our fancy friends from France and how happy they're going to be with us.

I know that we sent the minister over there to meet up with her fancy friends, and what we have is a carbon tax as a result. What we have is damaging Alberta's economy. What we have is hurting the people that we're supposed to help. Yes, we should work to lower our emissions, primarily with technology, and we should not impose the costs upon ourselves that our closest competitors are not paying.

You know what? The fact is that people didn't really switch from horses to cars because they ran out of horses. They switched from horses to cars because they went faster, eventually, not right away. Eventually, they were more reliable, could go farther without stopping. It's certainly more comfortable in the winter when you're heated when you're driving. The technology evolved to have people naturally shift, which is the attitude that we should have here.

If we want to lower emissions, we need to work together with other countries, have technology where we can heat our homes more efficiently, technology where we can move goods and services around more efficiently, technology where we can do

everything that we do with energy: cool things, heat things, make sure that the refrigeration in the grocery store is more efficient through better technology. These are the ways in which we can actually make a difference to the environment without hurting our citizens, in particular without hurting our citizens with the lowest income, the most vulnerable of our citizens, the ones that we should care the very most about.

Madam Speaker, I hope that members of the House will support this amendment. Economic activity and jobs are at stake. Yes, the environment will be affected. I think that we need to do both of those things. I think we need to have a positive effect on the environment and the economy and not choose one or the other.

Mr. Coolahan: Well, what's your plan?

Mr. McIver: I just heard chirping from the other side. Well, I'll tell you what. We will have a plan, as our House leader has said, before the next election comes, but I'll tell you that what makes the environment better is killing the carbon tax. The government's carbon tax is bad for the environment because it's driving out oil and gas production into countries with lower environmental standards than Canada's. Sorry, but the government's policy is making it worse.

To talk about what the plan is, our plan is, first, to stop the damage that's being done by the government's current policy – and there is damage being done – and, secondly, to put a common-sense solution in place that protects both the environment and the economy. The government's current plan does neither.

On that, I will stop speaking. I hope that members of the House can see their way clear to supporting what I believe is an important amendment, and I will listen to the debate.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: On the amendment, Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm sorry to preempt the Government House Leader, who seems very eager to join in this evening's festivities. I want to thank the Member for Calgary-Hays for his participation in this debate, putting forward the amendment to the motion before us now, essentially adding I think we'll call it a disclaimer clause, adding that we're against Paris but not too against Paris.

I think it is a reasonable amendment. No one on this side, that I'm aware of at least, is arguing that we shouldn't do anything about greenhouse gas emissions, that there should be nothing whatsoever. Now, what it is that we're going to do in the place of a carbon tax or in the place of complying with the Paris accord: that's to be seen. I mean, cap and trade is simply a backdoor carbon tax that is perhaps even more harmful to the economy than a direct carbon tax. And then the traditional command and control regulatory approach is also highly disruptive to the economy, picking winners and losers, and has a lot of costs, but people don't see these costs.

5:30

I'm going to have to give a rare bit of perhaps backhanded praise to the NDP here. A carbon tax is braver than the other forms of backdoor carbon taxes: command and control regulation or cap and trade. It's braver in the sense that people can see it. You can actually see it. That tends to make it less politically popular. And we have to know that we shouldn't only do what is popular; we have to do what is right. In this case I think the NDP are not doing both what's right or popular. But in their own minds they think this is the right thing to do, and they're entitled to think that until they no longer have the ability to pass that legislation.

The amendment put forward by the Member for Calgary-Hays here is perhaps making the motion now rather wordy in its completeness, but I find it to be reasonable. You know, far be it from me – the Siberian corner here now is more the gulag archipelago; it's getting so busy over here. But in this corner of the Legislature we learn some lessons on co-operation and working across party lines and the ability to get things done. If someone else, regardless of party, brings forward an amendment to anything I'm putting forward, if I think it's reasonable – and I don't necessarily think it improves it, but I think it's reasonable – and if that helps members to feel more comfortable in supporting a motion from this Legislature to reject the Paris climate accord, then I think it's well worth including.

I would encourage members to accept the amendment and from there move forward to the final vote in this House rejecting all co-operation with the federal government in its attempts to impose the objectives of the Paris climate accord.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to speak to the amendment to the motion put forward by the hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks. It's an interesting amendment.

The original motion made by Strathmore-Brooks asks that we "urge the government to reject co-operation with the federal government in the imposition of the Paris agreement on climate change." That at least, Madam Speaker, is clear. The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks doesn't support the international agreement that was arrived at in Paris, and he doesn't like the consequences of that because he's also very much opposed to the climate leadership plan that this government has brought forward. That is at least clear. We do not agree with that approach. Nevertheless, we thought it was very much worthy of debate this afternoon because I think it's really important that we clear the air with respect to the policies of not only our government and our party but of the other parties as well.

The problem comes now with the amendment that's been put forward by the UCP. I have to admit to a certain curiosity as to how they were going to respond to the motion from Strathmore-Brooks, and now we can see what the manoeuvre actually is, Madam Speaker. The manoeuvre is to say: well, what would it mean if it was adopted? They're amending the motion. They're not changing what's in the motion. The motion asks that we "reject co-operation with the federal government in the imposition of the Paris agreement on climate change." They're not changing that in their amendment. They're clearly still prepared to support that position, but they want to hedge their bets. I'm a little disappointed that Strathmore-Brooks didn't see through their strategy here.

They want to recognize the need to reduce greenhouse gases, so they want to be able to tell Albertans that they actually agree with reducing greenhouse gas emissions. They want to tell Albertans that. But it can't impose "disproportionate costs on the Alberta economy not being imposed by our economic competitors." That sounds reasonable in a way. But there are all kinds of other buts, Madam Speaker. You know, they don't want any kind of price on carbon notwithstanding the fact that that is the most market-friendly approach to dealing with reducing greenhouse gases. They don't want a cap and trade. They don't want really anything that would actually do something. This is the problem with their position.

Some of them claim to believe in human-caused climate change. You know, I think that there are a couple of them that actually think that. But we also know – and we heard this in the speech from the

Minister of Environment and Parks today – the list of statements from members opposite that oppose the idea, in one degree or another, that climate change is actually caused by human activity. Sunspots or – I don't know what else – some cosmic kind of activity are what they tend to credit for that.

The fact of the matter is that there is a clear consensus among scientists and world leaders, with the exception of one just to the south of us now, who believe that climate change is an urgent priority, that it is already well advanced. Indeed, Madam Speaker, we can see the impacts of climate change around us. I'm old enough. I'm older than probably most of the members over there, not all. There are a couple of seniors in their back row, shaking their fingers at me, you know, waving their canes in the air, that remember what winters used to be like in this province. You normally wouldn't be able to walk outside with just a light jacket in November in the province of Alberta. It was cold, and it was cold right across the prairies. It was cold right across most of Canada with the exception of the little area along our west coast. The winters were long, and they were hard, and Canadians took some considerable pride in being able to live through the kind of winters that we had. That's not the case anymore.

You know, Madam Speaker, when I was a kid – I was probably eight or nine – our family drove up the Icefields Parkway between Lake Louise and Jasper. We stopped at the Columbia Glacier, about halfway up the road, and there was a huge glacier there that came right down almost to the road. There was a little bit of a lake there, and it was very, very impressive.

Well, we went back, you know, a few years ago, and they had developed markers from where that glacier had been at certain years. Back at the end of the 19th century the glacier had actually been on the other side of the highway. I saw where it was when I went and saw it – that would have been in the mid-60s, I guess – and then I looked to where the glacier was now. This is just within my lifespan. There was a huge, huge distance – I would say the better part of a kilometre – that that glacier had retreated since I was a boy. Members opposite wonder about climate change, whether or not it's real or whether it's really a problem, and I think that there's a clear measurement right here in Alberta, that anyone can go and see, for what has actually changed.

5:40

But what else has changed? Well, the Minister of Environment and Parks talked about it earlier in her speech. What about the forest fires that we've had to deal with in this province? They are extraordinary events. What's happening today in California is not the normal cycle of fires. You know, fires occur everywhere. Forest fires are a natural thing. And, yes, they have been made worse because of poor long-term forest management practices around the world. But they are occurring more severely: much larger events, more damage. Whole cities are burning. We saw Paradise. Well, it's not a city but a town. There are over 1,000 people missing right now just in California. A couple of years ago in Australia: the same sort of situation. We had, of course, our huge fire, a couple of them, one at Slave Lake and then, again, in 2015 the devastating Fort McMurray fire. So that's one thing.

Then flooding is the other consequence. We've seen an increase in disastrous flooding. Again, flooding is a natural event. You can't just sort of say that there were no floods before climate change, but you can say that floods are more serious, more severe, and may happen more frequently.

That's why the insurance industry in this country and around the world is strongly supportive of action to fight climate change, to mitigate it, to reduce it, to slow it down, eventually to reverse it, because it's very bad for their business. They are paying out billions

of dollars in claims that they didn't have to pay before. It changes everything in terms of how they calculate their actuarial tables and the rates that they're going to have to charge to pay for all of this. We're all going to pay for it, billions of dollars of costs, even right here in Alberta, and that's borne by everyone in this province.

To say that climate change isn't an urgent and serious problem that requires a response is irresponsible. But you can't have it both ways like the UCP wants. They want to say: "Oh, yes. Climate change could be human caused or partly human caused. Yes, it's a problem, but let's not do anything." That's their position, essentially: let's not do anything. Every time you put forward an idea to deal with it, of course, it's not free, and they're not willing to pay any price, that I can see, to deal with this problem. But Albertans are paying a price. They're paying higher insurance premiums. They're having to deal with all kinds of things. Taxes are affected by the need to deal with climate change and to protect our cities and our farms from the ravages of ongoing climate change.

The opposition, the UCP opposition in particular, I think, is extremely irresponsible in their approach. They think that they can get away with it: "Yes, we don't like climate change. But, no, we don't want to do anything about it." It's high time that the leader of the UCP stood up here or some other place in front of Albertans and said exactly what the UCP is prepared to do about climate change because he has not done that. He's really hoping to finesse his way into power in the next election by talking about all the problems and offering no solutions. Well, I don't think it's going to work, Madam Speaker. I don't think it's going to work at all.

The Member for Calgary-Hays stood up, and he said that other countries aren't doing anything. Well, you know, I have to remind the hon. member that almost every country in the world originally signed on to the Paris accord. Yes, some countries are treated somewhat differently than others because they have economies that are developing at different stages than the rest of the world or than other countries. So, yes, there are some differences in the approach to the solutions. But everybody signed on.

We have one problem, which is giving them hope, I suggest, and that is that the United States has elected a President who's decided to pull out of the Paris accord. I really hope, Madam Speaker, for our sake, the sake of the world, that that is a temporary situation and that it will be resolved in a couple of years. I very much hope that that is the case because the United States has become an outlier in terms of the international consensus. It's unfortunate to see our friends in the UCP falling into the same trap. They want us to be an outlier, too. I think that that's something that I don't think will sit very well with people.

Now, the hon. Member for Calgary-West gave a very angry speech about all of the terrible economic hardship that this government is inflicting on poor and elderly Albertans, and I just want to deal with that because those people, first of all, have a struggle far beyond the climate leadership plan and the carbon levy that is part of that. They have a struggle dealing with taxes. They have a struggle dealing with the cost of living, in some cases rent, food, all of those things. I just want to remind the hon. member that the difficult financial situation that we find ourselves in now and the rough patch in the economy, the downturn in the economy that we have seen as a result of dramatically falling oil prices is really what has hurt people more than anything else.

Why are we in that position? Well, quite frankly, we're in that position because the previous Conservative government, of which he was a member, failed to diversify our economy and failed to diversify the sources of revenue that this government depends on. When we took office – and this was not new – 30 per cent roughly of program expenditures were paid for by volatile nonrenewable

royalty revenue, and that is a situation that they had years, nay, decades, to fix and did not fix. They handed that to the new government. That was something we inherited at a time of plunging oil prices and depressed natural gas prices.

So what do you do? Well, you know, there are lots of things you can do. One thing that we don't do – I can tell you that this government doesn't – is cut services to those same people, and that's what this opposition would have us do. Again, they don't want to connect the consequences of their actions. "We're going to reduce spending by 20 per cent," says their leader, "but there won't be any consequences to the people of Alberta; we have severely depressed royalty revenues coming in; we're going to cut the expenditures of the government by 20 per cent with no negative consequences for the people of Alberta," instead of saying, "Well, here's what we're going to do." I can respect a position that says that we have to reduce our expenditures by that much. You know, that's not a position I agree with, but it's at least a legitimate conservative position to take. But the question is: what do you do to get there, and who pays and who benefits? Questions they refuse to answer.

5:50

Now, it seems to me that if you want to reduce spending by that amount, you have an obligation to tell people how you're going to do it. Again, it's the same strategy that's being followed. They're going to try and finesse their way through the election by promising to make reductions and pretending that there are no consequences and offering no clues as to how they're actually going to do what they want to do. It's an intellectually dishonest approach, and I sincerely hope the people of Alberta are going to recognize it.

It's clear – just to get back to this point because I don't want to let Calgary-West off the hook just yet. In his anger about the impact of the carbon tax, is he also angry at a government that failed to diversify the economy that left the people of Alberta once again to face dramatic cuts to government programs and other expenditures when the price of oil goes down? When we were in opposition back in the day when I was leading our caucus, we said over and over again that we should not be laying off teachers and nurses just because the price of oil goes down, and we have to find a way to not do that. We know – and everyone in Alberta knows – that the price of oil, the price of natural gas goes up and it comes down all the time. That is a regular thing. You can count on it.

Why would we have a budgeting system that makes investments and funds new programs when the price of oil is high, only to turn around and cut them when the price of oil goes down? That makes no sense, but that is the past to which they want to return. I have to say that we need to do everything possible to stop them from doing that because that is the past that has hurt Albertans over and over again, and it's time we learned the lesson.

You know, Isaac Newton – no. He was replaced by Einstein. It was Einstein that said that the definition of madness is to continue to repeat the same actions and expecting a different result. That, I'm afraid, defines the operating philosophy of that government.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Well, Madam Speaker, there's limited time obviously before the supper break, but it's interesting. I think actually I'll pick up right where the Government House Leader left off, and that is that the definition of madness is to continue to do something over and over even though it's not working, which is exactly what this government has done during their entire time in this mandate.

They brought forward a carbon tax, punished the people of Alberta, said that they would have social licence, caused significant social damage across this province. It hurt people, something that they want to forget that they did, but Alberta hasn't forgotten, and then they continue to do it because – well, first of all, they said that it was because they would get social licence to build pipelines, but even though we know that's now not true, they continue to do it over and over and over, punishing the people of Alberta.

You know, the Government House Leader brought up a lot of interesting points. Time is short. I want to focus on one particular area. He attacked or called out, I guess, the Member for Calgary-West for speaking passionately defending fixed-income seniors and showing his frustration with what this government has done to his constituents. I am just as frustrated, and so are those fixed-income seniors across the province. This Government House Leader and his caucus, his fellow caucus mates, his Premier, the cabinet that he belongs to have gone out of their way to punish the people of Alberta. They have hurt the people of Alberta.

Mr. Mason: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader on a point of order.

Point of Order Imputing Motives

Mr. Mason: Standing Order 23(h), (i), and (j), including imputing motives. The hon. member, the House leader for the UCP has just stood here and suggested that we've gone out of our way to hurt people. Now, that may be his opinion, but that is unacceptable in this House, and I believe that it violates the standing orders.

It's one thing to say that what you have done may have hurt people. I don't believe that's true, not at all. I can see that it could be a legitimate and parliamentary argument that could be made, but to suggest that I, personally, as a member of this House and other members of this House, have gone out of their way to deliberately hurt people is completely unacceptable, Madam Speaker, and we shouldn't be having that kind of tone in the debate here. Talk about policies. Say that the policies are good. Say that the policies are bad. Say that the policies help people. Say that the policies hurt people, but quite frankly to say that you've deliberately set out to hurt people is in fact, in my opinion, unparliamentary, and it's in violation of those standing orders.

I would ask that the hon. member withdraw that remark and apologize to me and other members of this House.

Mr. Nixon: Madam Speaker, in your words earlier today, it sounds like lighthearted banter maybe, but what I will say is this: I never said him specifically. I spoke about the policy of the government that he belongs to. Now, he might be ashamed of what his government has done. He, quite frankly, should be, but I will not apologize for standing up and defending fixed-income seniors from this government's behaviour. This government's policy has been devastating and has hurt people, and this member should stand up and apologize to Albertans. It's a matter of debate.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, it's getting late in the day, and I have to say that I don't think there is a point of order on this, but again it's a good reminder for all of us to really be careful that we are not making personal implications with our remarks against another member or group of members.

Please continue, hon. member.

Debate Continued

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I do know that the Government House Leader appears to not want to hear what I have to say today. I wouldn't want to hear it either if I was him based on his government's policy and actions and the significant impact that they have had on the people of Alberta. I would be ashamed of that, too.

But here is the point. The Government House Leader in his tirade that he just gave to this House did not answer any of the important questions, and the most important question is this. The government's own reports show that for them to meet the Paris accord with the carbon tax, they would have to charge \$300 a tonne instead of the \$50 or so that they're charging at this moment. That means one of two things. Either this government knowingly is bringing forward a tax to hurt people in this province, that hurts people in this province, or they intend to raise it. It's one or the other. They don't answer that question. That's part of their secret agenda, I guess, Madam Speaker. I know that the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs, the hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont, is laughing about that, but the people in his constituency are not laughing about it.

That's what's important about this. The decisions by this government have real consequences, and the Government House Leader standing up here and calling out the Member for Calgary-West for defending seniors is totally inappropriate, and he should actually, I think, be ashamed of that. A member of his standing who's been in this Chamber for so long should stand up in this Chamber and fight for the seniors in his constituency. It's disappointing to see him and all of his fellow colleagues continue to stand by idly as their constituents have to go through the pain that comes with their bad policies. Very disappointing. It is extremely disappointing to see what has taken place.

Now, why won't the government stand up and answer that? Instead they want to attack the opposition who brings forward a pretty reasonable amendment saying that we need to tackle greenhouse emissions without making Albertans pay undue consequences for it. They don't believe that. That's the difference between these two parties. They think that their ideological agenda can be dealt with on the backs of everyday Albertans. We think not. We will stand in this House and defend fixed-income seniors. We will defend the most vulnerable. We will defend our municipalities. We will defend our hospitals. We will defend our families over and over and over, and if this government wants to continue to stand up and defend their actions against the people of Alberta, their actions that have cost them significant amounts of money all the while without getting pipelines built, I know that they're disappointed.

They get upset when we point it out because I know without a doubt that when they go home to their constituencies, they're getting flack for it, and they should get flack for it. They should get flack for the way that they've treated Albertans. They should get flack for it. They should stand up and they should answer the question: do they intend to bring it to \$300? Is that their plan? Or did they just realize – the Government House Leader is shaking his head no. Their own documents show they can't meet their emission targets. They just agreed that this is just a tax on the people of Alberta, and it has nothing to do with the environment. The Government House Leader just admitted that, nodding his head, saying: we don't intend to do it.

Mr. Mason: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Point of Order Imputing Motives

Mr. Mason: Again, 23(h), (i), and (j). He's imputing motives again. I never admitted any such thing, and I really do wish the opposition – because this is a general problem. Specifically this House leader, who's just done it again, is standing up and attempting to suggest that I or others in this House have said things that we simply did not. I think we should be very careful in this House, quite frankly, to prevent that sort of debate because it's really important that we get our ideas out and talk about what we're going to do about the problems and how we see those problems. I think those are really valuable things to be talking about. It's unfortunate that the Opposition House Leader just wants to twist people's words to suit his own political purposes, Madam Speaker.

6:00

Mr. Nixon: Madam Speaker, if I misrecognized the hon. member's head nod or head shake to not bring it to \$300, I apologize. I guess that means he intends to bring it to \$300. I'm confused which one he was trying to contribute.

Mr. Mason: Same thing again, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: You can't call a point of order on a point of order.

Mr. Nixon: With that said, I'd be happy to withdraw pointing out the member shaking his head.

Debate Continued

The Deputy Speaker: The time allotted for that order of business has now elapsed.

I need to call the vote on the amendment brought forward by the Member for Calgary-Hays.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on the amendment lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 6:01 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Ellis	McIver	van Dijken
Fildebrandt	Nixon	Yao
Hunter		

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Gray	Nielsen
Babcock	Hinkley	Payne
Carlier	Horne	Phillips
Ceci	Kazim	Piquette
Connolly	Kleinstauber	Renaud
Coolahan	Larivee	Rosendahl
Cortes-Vargas	Littlewood	Schmidt
Dach	Loyola	Schreiner
Dang	Malkinson	Shepherd
Drever	Mason	Sucha
Eggen	McCuaig-Boyd	Turner
Feehan	McKitrick	Westhead
Fitzpatrick	Miranda	

Totals:	For – 7	Against – 38
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[Motion on amendment lost]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. In light of the fact that the RMA is holding a number of events and social activities this afternoon and that members, at least on this side, would like to be there to interact with the municipal councillors from rural Alberta, I would request unanimous consent of the House to shorten the bells to one minute.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Deputy Speaker: On the motion itself by the hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 6:19 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Cyr	Hunter	Schneider
Ellis	McIver	van Dijken
Fildebrandt	Nixon	Yao

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Gray	Nielsen
Babcock	Hinkley	Payne
Carlier	Horne	Phillips
Ceci	Kazim	Piquette
Connolly	Kleinsteuber	Renaud
Coolahan	Larivee	Rosendahl
Cortes-Vargas	Littlewood	Schmidt
Dach	Loyola	Schreiner
Dang	Malkinson	Shepherd
Drever	Mason	Sucha
Eggen	McCuaig-Boyd	Turner
Feehan	McKitrick	Westhead
Fitzpatrick	Miranda	

Totals:	For – 9	Against – 38
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[Motion lost]

The Deputy Speaker: The House stands adjourned until 10 tomorrow morning.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6:23 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday morning, November 20, 2018

Day 50

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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New Democratic: 53 United Conservative: 26 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Freedom Conservative: 1 Independent: 2 Progressive Conservative: 1

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Carson	Littlewood
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Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schneider
Fitzpatrick	Starke
Gotfried	Taylor
Horne	

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Goehring
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Orr
Ellis	Renaud
Fraser	Shepherd
Hinkley	Swann
Luff	Woollard
McKitrick	Yao
Miller	

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Shepherd
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Aheer	McKitrick
Gill	Pitt
Horne	van Dijken
Kleinsteinuber	Woollard
Littlewood	

Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Wanner
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Babcock	Nixon
Cooper	Piquette
Dang	Pitt
Drever	Westhead
McIver	

Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms Kazim
Deputy Chair: Connolly

Anderson, W.	Orr
Babcock	Rosendahl
Drever	Stier
Drysdale	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kleinsteinuber	Taylor
McKitrick	

Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	Miller
Cooper	Nielsen
Goehring	Nixon
Gotfried	Pitt
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Cyr
Deputy Chair: Mr. Dach

Barnes	Malkinson
Carson	Miller
Clark	Nielsen
Gotfried	Panda
Hunter	Renaud
Littlewood	Turner
Luff	

Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola
Deputy Chair: Mr. Drysdale

Babcock	Loewen
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Fildebrandt	Panda
Hanson	Rosendahl
Kazim	Schreiner
Kleinsteinuber	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

10 a.m.

Tuesday, November 20, 2018

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Deputy Speaker: Good morning.

Let us reflect. Today is the Transgender Day of Remembrance. Let's take a moment to reflect and remember all of those who have fought and continue to fight for equality and justice.

Please be seated.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 24

An Act to Recognize AMA Representation Rights

[Adjourned debate November 7: Ms Ganley]

The Deputy Speaker: Any member wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak to Bill 24, An Act to Recognize AMA Representation Rights. Bill 24 amends both the Alberta Health Care Insurance Act and the Regional Health Authorities Act. The main purpose of this bill is to formalize the relationship between the government and the AMA. This bill ultimately creates a large negotiating body to oversee negotiations between Alberta's doctors and the government of Alberta.

Now, the government and the Alberta Medical Association have had a long relationship together. As a matter of fact, I believe it was 1906 when it was created in its first incarnation, and for over 100 years the Alberta Medical Association has represented and advocated for Alberta's physicians and for their patients. The AMA offers resident physicians and medical students a wide variety of services and benefits and help with both personal and professional financial needs. It's a very important and a good organization for both patients and for doctors.

Based on the comments of the physicians that I talked to in my constituency, two things were stressed in my conversations with them. The first was that doctors were for the most part happy with their relationship with the Alberta Medical Association. Secondly, they believed that the relationship that the AMA has had with the government both historically and presently has been a very positive one, and it would be my hope that we would be able to keep that a positive relationship moving into the future.

Now, Madam Speaker, Alberta physicians have been principally paid through a fee-for-service model in which doctors bill the government a predetermined fee for each service that they perform for patients. The Alberta Medical Association has been the organization that has represented most but not all doctors in Alberta when negotiating the fee-for-service model. Just this past spring a new, two-year funding agreement was signed between the AMA and the government, and the AMA agreed that the doctors would receive no fee increases until 2021. This is estimated to save the government somewhere around \$98 million in health care costs. Part of the deal was an agreement, was a commitment made to introduce legislation that would recognize the AMA as the sole representative of the physicians when negotiating compensation.

Hence, today we find ourselves talking about Bill 24, the bill that is before us today.

Bill 24 is going to change to some degree the relationships that doctors have with the AMA and that the AMA has with the government. Now, prior to Bill 24 the AMA signed agreements with the government and had a significant role in managing the flow of funds to physicians from the physicians' services budget. Under Bill 24 the minister will recognize the AMA as the exclusive representative regarding physicians' compensation matters. It not only formalizes the relationship between the government and the AMA, it establishes the AMA as a negotiating body under which all other professional health organizations must negotiate.

Bill 24 amends current legislation to make the AMA the exclusive representative of physicians on any compensation matter and on any benefit. This will include rates of benefits payable for the provision of insured services by a physician and any funding for physician assistance programs. This legislation will cover both doctors who are employees of Alberta Health Services and physicians who are regulated members of the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta under the Health Professions Act.

Madam Speaker, changes under the Regional Health Authorities Act will include that if a majority of a group expresses to the AMA a wish to be represented by the AMA in the negotiation, renewal, or extension of a particular contract governing the group's service with AHS and both AHS and the AMA agree that they are suitable, it will be recognized that the AMA will be their exclusive representative in all negotiations, renewals, and extensions of that contract. In essence, physicians will lose the ability to negotiate independently or in groups.

Alberta physicians supported the new, two-year agreement this past spring with a vote of 89 per cent. But, Madam Speaker, it's important to note that only 30 per cent of Alberta's member physicians actually voted on this new agreement. Now, I'm not suggesting that the new, two-year agreement that was ratified by this vote is not valid. I am stating a simple fact, that the majority of physicians in Alberta did not participate in the vote to ratify the new agreement, yet Bill 24, a piece of legislation that is the result of that ratified agreement, is going to affect one hundred per cent of the physicians in Alberta. This is a concern.

As a conservative I've always believed that every individual has a right to their own labour. As part of that right to their own labour, they should have the capacity to decide if they want their interests represented by themselves or the collective bargaining unit of their choice. There are some physicians that do not want the AMA to represent them and would like to negotiate on their own.

Today with Bill 24 we find ourselves in the situation that while the AMA has historically represented a large majority of physicians in Alberta, it has not represented every physician, yet because of Bill 24 those few that have not been represented by the AMA will eventually have no choice. In the past physicians not covered by previous AMA agreements could negotiate their own agreements. Now as these agreements end, the physicians cannot be represented by another body or by themselves. Under Bill 24 physicians that had opted out of the AMA will now be compensated based on the agreement between the AMA and the government at the expiry of their previous contract. Physicians will lose, therefore, the ability to negotiate independently or in groups outside of the AMA, and that denies those few physicians the right to control their own labour.

To this point in Alberta history membership in the AMA has always been voluntary. Bill 24 now makes it so that physicians will be represented by them regardless of whether they are a member or not. If a doctor can choose to opt out of representation by the AMA but they are still bound by the collective negotiated agreement,

wouldn't that mean there is no reason to opt out if you're still tied to the agreement?

Historically physicians have had a more flexible model that recognized the interests of a small but nonetheless important group of physicians who wished for something other than a top-down model where it seems to be one size fits all. The UCP would like to offer physicians more, not less, flexibility. It's important that a strong working relationship is established between the AMA, the physicians, and the government.

10:10

The government needs to have a flexible relationship in order to ensure that this bill and future agreements with the AMA work for all Albertans, and their primary focus should be on improving patient care and outcomes. Unfortunately, the government has jeopardized that flexibility by using Bill 24 to limit the bargaining power of the government when negotiating future agreements with the AMA. Bill 24 potentially moves everything from policy into legislation and in the process makes agreement and policy impossible to renegotiate without amending legislation.

Does the government plan on compensating physicians for everything, including vacation, maternity leave, sick leave, et cetera? This would become very expensive for the province and the taxpayer. Bill 24 may even negatively affect doctors' compensation and benefits. If the AMA is the exclusive representative on compensation and benefits, do the physicians lose their ability to act as independent contractors? There are many physicians who operate as contractors to AHS and are small businesses, usually created as professional corporations. Would they lose the tax advantage that these provide? Will physicians be considered an essential service? Bill 24 could prove to be a costly agreement in the future, mitigating any of the temporary savings that have been placed before us today.

It's for these reasons that I will not be supporting Bill 24, not because I do not want to see well-compensated physicians but because I want physicians to have the flexibility to represent themselves if they desire to. I want to see a positive, flexible relationship between the government and the AMA and physicians. This is what we have traditionally had, and I can see where Bill 24 could threaten that relationship.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise on Bill 24. Now, Bill 24, of course, deals with the relationship between the government of Alberta and the Alberta Medical Association and their representation rights. I think it's not too hard to acknowledge that this is a long-standing relationship and an important one. Certainly, the relationship between the government and doctors and people in the medical profession is an important relationship that's been in place for many years with this government and with previous governments and one that I believe is for the most part a positive one and one that I would like to see maintained in a positive and long-standing relationship as we go forward.

The current legislation in front of us – we'll talk more about that when we get into Committee of the Whole – leaves a few questions that I think need to be answered. Madam Speaker, I'll try to address some of these questions as I make my remarks in the next few minutes here.

We are concerned at the UCP. We need to make sure that physicians have flexibility, and we need to know that the current

legislation will not limit the flexibility that physicians have. I appreciate that we've heard that there was an 89 per cent vote. But, also, I would be interested in clarification from somebody on the government side because what we think we understand at this point – and I'm happy to be corrected – is that the vote was on a different issue and only 30 per cent of the AMA members voted. If we round 89 per cent up to 90 to be generous to the government, even if you do that, 90 per cent of 30 per cent is still only 27 per cent, not the overwhelming majority that the government has represented to us. So we'll look for clarification on that if the government chooses to offer it along the way.

Certainly, we've heard from some physicians that don't agree with the position that the government is taking with this bill, so I think it's important that we get it right. It's important because the relationship, of course, between the government, physicians, and medical professionals is important. But more than that, Madam Speaker, the relationship between Albertans and their doctors is important. When you have an overarching change in the bargaining relationship, well, to be clear, that could lead to a better or a worse relationship. That's why it's worth talking about, and that's why it's worth asking questions about it here this morning.

Madam Speaker, some questions occur to me. The AMA is the exclusive representative on compensation benefits. Do those physicians that currently, now, act as independent contractors lose their ability to do so? I know it sounds like a detail, but it's probably not a detail to those doctors that are in that position right now. It makes me wonder how professional corporations would fit in. Would doctors lose the tax advantage that a professional corporation provides? I would hope not, but it would be nice to hear a little more detail from the government on that. On compensation for things like vacation, maternity leave, sick leave, you know, it would be interesting to hear from the government if there are any changes, additions, subtractions to those pieces of the relationship. These things would be important to know.

If a doctor chose, for example, to opt out of representation, would they still be bound by the collective negotiated agreement? I guess one could ask the question: why opt out if they're still tied to the agreement? Nonetheless, the starting place is actually knowing how that detail would affect the doctors on the ground in their everyday lives, and then, I suppose, the doctors could make an informed decision themselves as they consider their relationship with the government should this piece of legislation pass.

One has to wonder what the motivation for the government was, whether it was to get a better deal for the taxpayers, whether it was a deal, hopefully, intended to get better patient care outcomes, or whether there was some other motivation behind this. Essentially, doctors have been negotiating successfully for a long time with this government and with previous governments, I think it could be said. Of course, in any negotiation I'm sure there's never a hundred per cent agreement, but the negotiations over time have been successful. So one needs to wonder what the government hopes will be better after this relationship happens when the relationships and the negotiations have been successfully carried out up till now.

It would be nice to have clarification from the government, for example, on how this change would affect rural municipalities and what other unexpected consequences might come up.

Having had a chance to look at the legislation, at this point I have more questions than answers. In that spirit, I think I will sit and listen, and maybe I will get some of the answers to the questions I've posed and some of the other things that have not been made clear yet through the draft of the legislation.

Madam Speaker, I appreciate this opportunity to share some of my thoughts on Bill 24. I think there's a reasonably good chance I'll be on my feet again before this is over, but hopefully we'll have

heard a few answers to some questions from the government between now and then. For me, at least, that will help me to make a decision on whether this is a good bill or not and which way we should go on this. So I appreciate this opportunity.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

10:20

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the bill? *Chestermere-Rocky View.*

Mrs. Aheer: Well, good morning, and thank you for the opportunity to speak to this bill. I wanted to start off with one of the things that is most concerning. The AMA has always been voluntary. It's always been a voluntary situation, and this happens with pharmacists as well. There is an association that you join in order to be able to have people be able to represent you, and it is a voluntary situation. When you create an association that no longer makes it voluntary, it's sending a signal to industry that their voices no longer matter. The question – and this was brought up by the Member for Calgary-Hays, too – is that the government is saying, if I have this correct, that 89 per cent of the members mentioned approval of the current AMA-government agreement, which was not mentioned in the proposed law.

The reality is, to repeat, that only 30 per cent of the AMA members voted. How is it that, with a 30 per cent vote, suddenly the government feels that that is enough of a percentage across a group of doctors? As we all know, doctors run their businesses like corporations. They're responsible for their rent. They're responsible for their equipment. They're responsible for running their offices, the staff they hire. They are little businesses. So how is it that that 30 per cent number in any way is representative of the number of doctors that we have in our province, to be able to say that under that auspices suddenly it's okay, that we have an association that is stating that they represent all doctors when actually the opposite is true, that it doesn't represent all the doctors? How does that work?

The thing is that, especially anybody who knows doctors and offices and all that – they require flexibility to be able to run their businesses. They require flexibility into the future so that they understand how it is that they can run their businesses. And if they're under the auspices of one group that is dictating to them the way that they should run their business, I just can't imagine that doctors, given the opportunity to understand what was going on, would agree to have the AMA being the only thing that makes those decisions for them, especially with only 30 per cent buy-in at this point in time.

When you look at a doctor as an independent contractor, we're looking at very complex situations within each of those. Those offices are all thumbprints. They're unique. Those doctors know their patients. They know what's going on in their lives. These are very, very important relationships between the doctors and their patients. And for an association to come in and be able to dictate to them how they should be running their business, I think we have to consider what that would look like and what that would mean for the doctors.

So when you talk about a piece of legislation formalizing a relationship between the government and the Alberta Medical Association that establishes the AMA as the exclusive negotiating body for professional health unions, what does that mean exactly, and how did you get the permission to do that? Madam Speaker, the question that the government needs to answer to the doctors and physicians in this province is: how did they come to the conclusion

that this was the right decision, to basically formalize that relationship?

Madam Speaker, we've had many, many issues with consultation over the last few years that we've had the privilege of being here. We can talk about Bill 6. We can talk about a lot of the energy bills that we've talked about a lot in this House. But we're talking about a group of people here in Alberta that are health providers, sometimes the very, very first step that people have to their health care. And then all of a sudden they're being thrown into an association that only 30 per cent of them agreed to.

I don't understand how this government is turning the numbers around to say 89 per cent, that they heard that 89 per cent mentioned approval of the current AMA-government agreement, which did not mention the new proposed law. So if only 30 per cent actually understand what's going on, how is it that we justify a change of this magnitude? Has the government actually consulted, Madam Speaker, enough with the doctors to find out whether or not they want this relationship?

Truth be told, when we were given this legislation and then we reached out to our constituents and our doctors, quite frankly, many of the doctors were looking at this legislation and they didn't know that some of these changes were coming down. How is that possible? In *Chestermere-Rocky View* I sent out the legislation to all of the doctors in our area, and I have yet to receive back a document from any of our doctors saying that they were consulted on this. Not one. I mean, maybe *Chestermere-Rocky View* is not important right now to the government, what's going on with that area, but our doctors sure were not consulted on this piece of legislation.

When we talk about rural doctors, this is even a bigger issue, about making sure that we are pulling doctors into rural areas, how important that is and how important that relationship is. There is a huge amount of risk for a doctor coming into a rural area and setting up an office. A huge amount of risk.

So when you put a relationship like this between the government of Alberta, the Alberta Medical Association, and the doctors as a negotiating body without having full buy-in from the very people that you've created this association for, this relationship for – and let's be clear. The government is creating this relationship. This isn't a relationship that was brought forward by the doctors. How is it that you justify creating that relationship when you don't have buy-in from the doctors? Again, I'm looking forward to hearing from my constituents and I'm looking forward to hearing from our doctors to find out how this legislation impacts them. The ones that we have heard from, Madam Speaker, weren't consulted.

Chestermere-Rocky View is an interesting place because the riding hugs the entire outside of Calgary, so a lot of people go to Calgary for services. We do have quite a few medical clinics in *Chestermere* and wellness centres in *Langdon* as well. These are really, really, super dedicated people, Madam Speaker, very, very dedicated to their community. As I've mentioned in this House before, my doctor is a personal friend after many, many years of going to him. I'm quite certain that when I have these discussions with him, he will not have been consulted on this. So what does the government say to that, when they claim consultation, when they claim that discussions have happened, yet in their own numbers only 30 per cent of the people that understood this legislation responded.

With the current state of our province it is, of course, important to find cost savings given that with the NDP government we've seen our debt grow like never before. The government keeps talking about cost savings. Is this a centralization? Is this what we're talking about for cost savings? I would actually like to have that

answered by the government. What exactly is it that they're trying to accomplish here?

The government is claiming that the legislation will save \$98 million in health care costs since the AMA has agreed. What exactly does that mean, Madam Speaker, \$98 million? Where and how? Is that impacting our doctors? You're talking about cost savings. I would like some clarification on exactly how that's working when an entire new body is being set up, an entire chunk of bureaucracy is being set up to create a relationship between a group of people that are individual little corporations that take all of the risk on. The government is saying that they've bought into this, yet the numbers don't say that. So \$98 million in savings. Okay. Where? How does that work exactly?

10:30

Then the other question is: when doctors are compensated, how is that impacting their compensation? We understand that that compensation needs to happen. In a doctor's office, Madam Speaker, like I was saying before, doctors pay for their equipment, they pay for their staff, and they pay for their overhead. I mean, they are running an actual business there and, on top of that, all of the patients that they have coming in, the paperwork, everything that needs to be dealt with. How is this going to impact that compensation to the doctors?

I'm curious, actually, about: if there are concerns, how will they now be negotiating? The government is saying that they're going to be negotiating through the AMA, but if they haven't actually agreed to be part of the AMA, then how do they negotiate? They're being forced to be part of the AMA. Is that correct? They're being forced into this relationship to force negotiation. Am I understanding that correctly? Because if that's the case, I can pretty much guarantee you that most of the doctors will not agree to this. I'd like some clarification on that as well.

Interestingly, the bill entrenches the agreement framework between the AMA and the Ministry of Health. So the government's hands will be tied in future negotiations, and they must follow the framework laid out unless they change those conditions through legislative changes. Am I to understand, Madam Speaker, that those changes can be made in regulation, and if those are changed in regulation, does that mean that the doctors then are able to help with that negotiation? If the government's hands are tied and it's done just through the AMA, then if a negotiation is done, how does the government change the regulations? Do they just change that in the regulations, or do they change that in a legislative space like this where it can be debated on behalf of the doctors of Alberta?

I actually believe that the way that this is set up, if that body is the only negotiating body and the doctors don't have the ability to have a discussion outside of an association and a relationship that's being forced upon them, then this could be very, very difficult for them to negotiate their needs. Already it sounds to me like the government doesn't quite understand the needs of the doctors. How is it that we make sure that that relationship is actually negotiating on behalf of the doctors in a way that's conducive to how they run their businesses, especially if they're running them like corporations? It seems counterintuitive to their ability to be flexible within their jobs and what it is that they're doing.

I would highly recommend that more consultation be done on this. I really, really think that a decision of this magnitude – when you're creating an overarching body that is going to be responsible for a group of people that take care of our health in this province, you're going to want as much buy-in as possible. Otherwise 30 per cent of the people are making the decisions for the rest of that population.

The legislation makes the AMA the exclusive representative of physicians on any compensation matters – any compensation matters – but also gives the AMA the power to represent any group under the regional health authorities if the majority of that group formally expresses that wish. Now I guess the question needs to be: what does a majority mean? How does the government create a situation where the AMA has to find that majority if at this point in time in the legislation they're not willing to make sure that they've consulted enough to have a majority to buy into the legislation in the first place? How does that happen? How is a majority created? How do they make sure that that majority is there to make sure that they're representing the doctors that they're supposed to?

It says here, and I don't know how you clarify: if the majority of that group formally expresses that wish. How is that negotiated? How do you figure that out? What is that process, Madam Speaker? I think we need some clarification on that as well. What are the doctors saying about that? If you're consulting with people, if anybody on the government side has spoken to any of their doctors, I'd sure like their anecdotal information of what their doctors said about that. How is that majority expressed, and how are they going about doing that if the AMA has the power to represent any group? Then are we pitting groups against each other in terms of negotiations through an association and a relationship that's being forced on them by the government?

Physicians with a pre-existing individual contract may opt out of the AMA. However, they cannot be represented by another body or themselves. Once their contract expires, they must accept the agreement negotiated by the AMA. Madam Speaker, that is the most telling piece of this legislation. Let me read that again. Physicians with a pre-existing individual contract may opt out of the AMA.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to thank the member for her comments on this piece of legislation. When she was speaking she was talking about a lack of consultation that seems to have occurred with this bill. As we know, the physicians that were members of the AMA did indeed have a vote, an 89 per cent vote, almost 90 per cent, but of that only about 30 per cent of the physicians in the province that are part of the AMA actually took part in that vote.

It was a little bit surprising to me that when I did consult with some of the physicians in my constituency, they had to think about what we were talking about when I brought up Bill 24. It was not something that came readily to their mind. In fact, in one case one of the physicians actually had to go and look it up and read through it and try to figure out what the bill was all about. It wasn't top of mind. I guess that does bring the question: why didn't the government consult with physicians? While there are several things I'd maybe like to ask the hon. member to talk a little bit about, one of them is going to be this whole issue of consultation, if she could expand on that from her constituency's point of view.

Secondly, the cost savings. You brought up the cost savings of \$98 million, supposedly, yet when you're changing a relationship, one that has worked historically very well in the province, the question I've got is: what are going to be some of the circumstances that change, and what does that mean for the long term when it comes to negotiating? I'd love to hear a little more about what she has heard from her constituents and from her physicians about some of the ramifications for whether this is actually going to place the government in a tighter position and at a time when we know we're going to be having and have had large deficits, have created a large

debt, and where governments are going to have to be very, very careful with how they spend their money in the future.

Thirdly, both the hon. member and myself come from rural constituencies, and I'm wondering if she's heard anything from her physicians about whether this bill will disproportionately affect rural communities. We know that all doctors will now fall under this new negotiating model, with the AMA being the sole representative of physicians, so I'm wondering if the hon. member has any capacity to shed some light on whether this will negatively impact the capacity for rural physicians to be attracted to rural areas or for us to be able to attract physicians to rural areas. I'm not sure that there isn't a single rural area in this province that doesn't have problems finding physicians. We've got some amazing doctors in our rural areas, and we've got some amazing groups of citizens that work hard to try to attract doctors to a rural setting. I would definitely be interested in hearing if there are any issues in her constituency that are related to whether they think this will be an issue to attract. It's already a difficult situation, and we don't need to make and have any unintended consequences.

Lastly, you know, there's a series of questions that have gone through my mind, and I'm wondering if they've gone through the hon. member's mind, as to whether or not the government plans on compensating physicians for everything, including vacations, the whole package.

These are some of the things. You know, as we're debating in the House, as we're talking through this bill, we need to be listening to what each side of the House is saying and what our constituents are saying at a local level. That brings to everyone, to all 87 of us, that capacity to be able to listen and to consider and to really make sure that this law that we're going to be passing actually is beneficial to the citizens of this province. You know, we're talking about health care here.

I would be interested if the hon. member – I'll try to leave her at least a couple of minutes here – could speak to one of those issues. Thank you.

10:40

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, you have five seconds if you wish to respond.

Mrs. Aheer: Five seconds? I'll say hi. Good morning.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Mr. Dreeshen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak on Bill 24, An Act to Recognize AMA Representation Rights. Bill 24 amends the Alberta Health Care Insurance Act as well as the Regional Health Authorities Act. The Alberta Medical Association, or AMA, will be established as a negotiating body not only for physicians but for all professional health occupations. The AMA will be the only representative on compensation matter for physicians, as was mentioned earlier. Bill 24 will also give authority to the AMA to negotiate on behalf of any group under the Regional Health Authorities as long as the majority of the members of the group wish to be represented.

Madam Speaker, Bill 24 is a significant piece of legislation. If this bill passes, all health professional unions could potentially be represented by the AMA. This will create an overarching union that will leverage all unions representing smaller professionals that will have to work under the AMA and will be bound by the AMA's agreements. Individual professional medical associations can of course opt out of being represented by the AMA; however, they are still bound by the decisions of the AMA. This appears to be because the government will only negotiate with the AMA in collective

bargaining. This is a problem because one union may not be able to work for the benefit of all professionals under its jurisdiction.

I have concerns that agreements could end up affecting certain medical professions negatively and that these professionals are then stuck with an agreement negotiated by the AMA. An example, Madam Speaker. Jerry Dias, the president of Unifor, who represents 13,000 media employees, last week declared: we will stop Conservatives in the next election. That's just a great example of union abuse. Here you have a large union going into partisan attacks rather than representing their membership, which is what a union is supposed to actually do.

Madam Speaker, another point I can bring up regarding this legislation is that Alberta Health Services is not required to recognize the AMA as the exclusive representative for certain groups. These groups include managerial services, services provided by resident or fellows acting in that capacity, and other services or classes of services prescribed by the regulations. The question arises: did the government properly consult with these stakeholders? Speaking of stakeholders, how do we know that this government went through the proper consultations with stakeholders? We can see and it was discussed here earlier today that 89 per cent of doctors that voted did favour this agreement that ultimately led to this legislation. However, only 30 per cent of physicians actually voted. What happened to the other 70 per cent, the majority of doctors?

I understand that some may not have been interested in voting. Since all of us in this House are here because of elections, we understand that it is difficult to get a large voter turnout. However, when only 30 per cent of those eligible to vote actually cast their ballot, we have to ask the question of whether proper consultation actually occurred for this legislation. Again, Madam Speaker, as was mentioned earlier, this is the same government that created Bill 6, which will, I think, go down in history as this horrible legislation that happened in the last three and a half years from this government not actually consulting with farmers and farm groups.

On the same note, Madam Speaker, some of my colleagues here on the opposition side of this Assembly did reach out to many physicians in this province. Some of these physicians were part of that 30 per cent who did actually vote. However, some of the 30 per cent that actually voted were AMA members and have said that they only voted on an amended agreement and were not actually aware that this bill was even coming. I believe that this fact is cause for concern, and members of this Assembly should be seeking further clarity around this issue.

Other physicians have told us that they don't want to be represented by the Alberta Medical Association. This may be a minority of doctors, but it is still important to take into account their views. These physicians would rather negotiate with AMA or on their own. Bill 24, however, does not give them the freedom to do so anymore.

Madam Speaker, let me raise an additional issue with Bill 24. In other pieces of legislation governing health care such as the medicare act or the Canada Health Act, physicians have been seen as independent contractors. This does not appear to be the case for Bill 24. Previously membership in the AMA has always been voluntary. Doctors could choose whether or not they wanted to be represented by AMA. If this bill passes, physicians who may not be members would be represented in negotiations by AMA regardless. Bill 24, again, through the NDP's socialist dogma, believes that doctors should not have the freedom to choose the representation of their choice, that they're actually forced by a government, against their will, to choose AMA.

Now, Madam Speaker, another question is: does Bill 24 offer enough flexibility for doctors and other health professionals? The

bill as currently written seems to offer more of a top-down approach to union negotiations. Does having a top-down model like this serve the best interests of Alberta doctors? Some physicians may prefer a bottom-up approach or a grassroots membership approach versus top-down union bosses, and I have concern that this bill does not allow for this. Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, Bill 24 creates, in essence, a one-size-fits-all union. Other health professionals outside of physicians may have more difficulty negotiating for issues that are important to their members if they are represented by the AMA. Furthermore, as I previously mentioned, Bill 24 seems to give less power to doctors that don't want to be represented by AMA.

Madam Speaker, something else I would like to bring up is that Bill 24 seems to have little to nothing about patient care. I'm concerned that this legislation will tie the hands of government on how health care money is spent. We need as much money as possible going forward towards front-line services.

This government, since being elected three and a half years ago, has shown again and again that they are terrible managers of the hard-earned tax dollars of taxpayers here in Alberta. We can see that this government will have an estimated deficit of over \$9 billion this year. If this trend continues, our debt will balloon to \$96 billion by 2024. We can also add to this fact that the government is depending on pipelines to balance its budget, pipelines that for years they were actually protesting. However, the government has failed to get Albertans here any critical energy infrastructure projects built, and unfortunately this means that any form of balancing the budget by the NDP just remains a fantasy.

Madam Speaker, I am concerned that Bill 24 also allows for too much money to be tied up, which will affect patient care. In a perfect world the government would be able to allocate money directly to ensure that patient care is at the forefront of how our tax dollars actually are spent. The reality is that most Albertans want to see the money they spend on our health care system directed to the front lines. They want to see their doctors allocated efficiently to allow limited waste in our health care system, because the unfortunate reality is that we have plenty of bureaucratic waste in Alberta's health care system. Does Bill 24 do anything to address that major issue, major budget issue, here in Alberta? I don't believe it does. It may be beyond the scope of this particular bill, however, but it is something that this government should address. On Bill 24, however, I do have a concern with how this ties the hands of government and potential future governments.

Now, the focus of this government should be on patient care and ensuring that Albertans have a health care system that is accessible and available to them. This is a time when wait times for knee, hip, and cataract surgeries are at an all-time high. This should be the focus of this government. When I talk to my constituents – and I'm sure most other members in this Assembly would agree with this – one of the most frequent topics raised in our constituency offices is health care. This can range from access to a family doctor to wait times for major surgeries to seniors' care. The reality is, though, that not many Albertans, when asked about their concerns around the health care system in Alberta, mention the AMA negotiations. Don't get me wrong, Madam Speaker. This issue that Bill 24 seeks to address is very important – these issues are very important – but we need to take the time to give it the proper consideration and acknowledgement. The fact is that doctors are a very important part of the health care system, and their concerns need to actually be taken into account.

10:50

However, there are many big issues in the health care system that Albertans are looking for us as legislators to address. For example, Madam Speaker, I look at the emergency wait times on the Alberta

Health Services website. I looked at it last night. At the Red Deer regional hospital, my regional hospital in central Alberta, which is used by many of my constituents in Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, the wait time for the emergency department was over three hours. Again, the Red Deer regional hospital has a terrible track record that's been ignored by this Minister of Health and this NDP government. The problem of wait times gets even worse when you go to Edmonton. The wait time at the University of Alberta emergency department was shy of just six hours here in the capital. [interjection] Now, Madam Speaker, Albertans find this unacceptable, as does the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, but as the MLA representing my constituents, I find this also unacceptable. Does this government see this as unacceptable service to Albertans? This is where the priority should be for government, finding ways to serve Albertans better in the health care system.

Now, regarding the bill before this Assembly, Bill 24, I believe that there are too many questions left unanswered, questions such as: was proper consultation done with the doctors? Does Bill 24 allow for enough flexibility for all health professionals? What are the budgetary implications of passing this bill down the road?

Madam Speaker, a referral amendment was introduced by my colleague from Airdrie where we could look at this bill in depth in the Standing Committee on Families and Communities. Here we could have ensured that proper consultation was conducted, and we would have had the opportunity to hear directly from those affected by this legislation. Albertans would have then also had the opportunity to see publicly the information used to develop this legislation. Unfortunately, the NDP government voted against this amendment, and we are forced to again just trust them, that they got this right. Well, unfortunately, we have not previously seen that we can trust this government to actually get legislation done right. They have lost their trust with Albertans after the Bill 6 fiasco, increasing red tape, and bringing the job-killing carbon tax, that they didn't even campaign on. Why should Albertans trust this government with this piece of legislation when we have seen how badly it has turned out for them in the past?

Now, Madam Speaker, there are too many questions in this legislation for me to support this bill at this time. Maybe if we had the opportunity to study this bill at committee, it would have made me less adversarial to it. Maybe if I could see the consultation that this government actually did, I would think better of this bill. Maybe if I could see all the implications of this bill, I would be more in favour, but at this time I cannot support this bill. My colleagues on this side of the House may decide to propose some amendments to this bill, and I hope that this government does take those improvements into account, as they did in the second week that we came back to this House, when they actually accepted an opposition amendment. However, as this bill is currently written, I will be joining my colleagues in opposition to this bill.

Thank you again, Madam Speaker. With that, I would like to adjourn debate. Thank you.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 23

An Act to Renew Local Democracy in Alberta

[Debate adjourned November 6]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Livingstone-MacLeod.

Mr. Stier: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and good morning, everyone. It is my understanding that I still have approximately seven minutes left in this portion. I would like to start with what I concluded with last week. Basically, I said that with the complexity

of this bill and the importance of the changes to all municipalities, candidates, and Albertans, we expect to deal with this bill very thoroughly as we proceed through the process and especially in Committee of the Whole. We have got a fair number of concerns with this bill.

You know, it's interesting that it appears to us from what we read here and what we've heard that they seem to be limiting the amount an individual can use to campaign with. As we know, municipal elections are nonpartisan, and often the candidate's name recognition is the only key to their success. Nonincumbents often start campaigning well before an election date, sometimes years in advance. By hindering how much an individual can campaign, these changes are likely, in my belief, to further entrench incumbents, who are already having a significant advantage in any election. Further, a spending limit of \$2,000 outside of a campaign period might be possible in small municipalities, but in mid-sized and large municipalities \$2,000 does not go very far.

All of the additional disclosure requirements being placed on candidates as well could either dissuade people from participating in the democratic process or result in accidental violations, we feel. Many municipal candidates are doing everything by themselves. Do we really want to discourage rookies from running for office, Madam Speaker? Why does the government insist in this bill on requiring expense reporting by category? I'm concerned that this is needlessly burdensome. As we all know, municipal politics is often where people first get involved because of the nonpartisan nature. I'm concerned that these changes are onerous and will intimidate potential candidates. This seems like the reverse of where we need to go. This is not the direction that we anticipated to see in this bill. It seems to assume that one size fits all when maybe different rules should be applied to various sizes or categories that better reflect the nature of the municipal campaigns in different size municipalities.

We do support banning union and corporate donations, as we said earlier. Getting big money out of all levels of politics, we feel, is probably a good thing. Under the old rules, unions and corporations had the same donation limits – and this was fair – but we're very concerned that this bill removes donation limits and pushes it over to PACs. We're worried about the amount of influence that may go from the local municipal elections into PACS and therefore become somewhat uncontrollable.

The bill requires also that candidates disclose the names and addresses of everyone who donates more than \$50. We wonder: why the difference between that and the provincial election rules, which set a limit of \$250? We already use that in our provincial schemes. Everybody is used to that. Why set up another confusing rule that doesn't make sense?

Many details, of course, once again are being left to regulation, and none of that is ever debated in this Chamber. The minister again, with that, without having it in this bill, seems to want us to trust him. How can he expect that when the things he said on this bill are not actually in it? In this case I'm referring to the vouching of voters. It does say in there that a person can vouch for someone, but it doesn't seem to say anything about limiting that. We don't understand why that would be missing and why that would be left to regulation. Why not just put it in the bill?

I'm not sure of my time left, Madam Speaker, but at this time, if I could, I would just like to conclude that, again as I said earlier, this is a complex bill. It has a lot of important new rules, donation limits, all kinds of different things that are new for municipalities. In the old days I know that, as a guy in a small municipal world, there weren't a lot of rules, and certainly perhaps something needed to be done there. On the other hand, it seems to us that for some of the small municipalities, having to do as much paperwork on this,

having limits throughout their campaign period that they never had before in accepting donations, and being limited in how long they can campaign seem to be quite a stretch for the ordinary municipal world.

With that, I would like to conclude that we look forward to Committee of the Whole, where we'll be bringing forward several amounts of amendments and trying to make this bill the right thing for Alberta. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's actually great to hear from my hon. colleague from Livingstone-Macleod, particularly on this issue, given that he has extensive experience with municipal elections in his area. I know that, you know, my colleagues and myself certainly look up to him and the experience that he brings to the table. My hon. colleague from Calgary-Hays also has extensive experience in the municipal realm.

11:00

I was wondering if my colleague from Livingstone-Macleod might be able to describe to us in this Assembly what particularly the retroactive piece of this legislation might mean to candidates that are currently fundraising for their 2021 campaigns. We know that, particularly in the big cities, let's say Calgary and Edmonton, you know, these aren't campaigns that come out of the blue and out of nowhere and can't just happen on fundraising activities that start to happen just the year of the election. Madam Speaker, we know that these are probably activities that are happening now. Given the experience of my colleague in municipal elections and that retroactive piece of legislation, for those that might already be fundraising for their 2021 campaigns, perhaps he could explain to me some of the challenges, particularly around that clause in this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Stier: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker, and thanks for raising that question, hon. Member for Airdrie. You know, it's interesting. At the conclusion of a lot of these bills, they bring in when the bill will be coming into effect, and in that regard I can read to you in some detail here. Where we're talking about these contribution limits and these new contribution rules, donations, et cetera, et cetera, they actually come into force at the first reading of this bill if this bill passes. We've already had first reading several weeks ago. Many of these municipalities and these councillors that may be considering to run or are running already have already incurred some costs. They've been working on a four-year campaign period. That started the day after they were elected a year and a half ago. In any regard this bill is going to have some dramatic impact on some of those people. Suddenly this will change their situations drastically, and they'll have to make some adjustments to their legal work and all of their registration work, et cetera, et cetera, and the reporting is going to be an interesting requirement with that kind of a change.

Thanks for the question. I hope that answer kind of addressed it somewhat, but it is a very complex situation. It's hard to go about that in the next few minutes here without changing and looking at the bill in a little more detail.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm really grateful for the previous opportunity to ask my colleague about that particular retroactivity clause in this Bill 23. Actually, I think there's a case to be made that that sparked maybe a few more questions. Are there penalties, in particular, to a candidate that's already started fundraising? Does he or she just simply give that money back? That's actually a big piece, and I know that many hopeful candidates out there would certainly appreciate the answer to that as these candidates and their campaigns don't want to be incurring fines.

You know, we also know that under this legislation the Election Commissioner has the authority to conduct investigations, Madam Speaker. My understanding is that currently the Election Commissioner office operates under a complaints-based process, and he's currently got a number of complaints under investigation in his office right now. I look forward, actually, to the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices, where we're able to get a better picture of the workload that's happening in that office right now. I mean, I still firmly believe it's a duplication of services from the chief electoral office to the Election Commissioner office, so he's maybe got lots of time. Who knows? But there are lots of questions that need to be answered around that particular piece.

As you know, Bill 23 – I have it right here – is probably the largest piece of legislation in this particular fall sitting. It encompasses so many things. There are sweeping changes here. I find it interesting, Madam Speaker, that the NDP are generally so concerned about dark money that's floating around here when, in fact, because of their legislation, we are in a situation where there is lots of dark money floating around, and they continually put forward pieces of legislation that create more dark spaces, which is exactly what is happening here. This will create and involve PACs, political action committees, in the municipal realm, which is interesting, and unions as well although I don't think that they were ever not involved in municipal elections. It's interesting – and I think it should be particularly pointed out – that the NDP are continually creating spaces where dark money exists. So I would ask the question: who is actually concerned about election financing and transparency? The record shows that that's not the case with this NDP government.

There are a lot of questions that I have around this bill, Madam Speaker. There are some transparency pieces in here. Corporate and union donations, of course, are taken out of direct contributions to a candidate, and there are similar rules to the provincial side, which we've been operating under for the last number of years, in terms of personal donations up to \$4,000. I think it's going to be challenging for some candidates, but I think it's good. I think that that change is a good move.

Madam Speaker, there is nothing that I can see – and, of course, I'm okay to be proven wrong in this. In particular, women and minorities, we know, are underrepresented in municipal politics, and this would have been a great opportunity to maybe address some of those issues and create opportunities, even a conversation around this. I don't think I've heard anybody actually talk about that. We have a number of groups out there: Equal Voice, those types of groups. Of course, the United Conservative Party is very excited to have Rona Ambrose, the former interim leader of the Conservative Party of Canada, and Laureen Harper, our former Prime Minister's wife, leading the She Leads campaign, which is assisting and promoting and championing women in leadership roles in politics in particular. We're real excited to see that. But it would have been interesting, in An Act to Renew Local Democracy in Alberta, to have a piece of that represented in this bill, particularly because this government did create a ministry for the

status of women, and we haven't heard anything in particular on that. I'm sure that's coming in this debate.

As you can see, I just have a number of, you know, sort of top-level questions right now and really need to delve into this piece of legislation.

With that, I would like to move an amendment. I will wait, Madam Speaker, until you give me the go-ahead.

The Deputy Speaker: Go ahead, hon. member.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I move that the motion for second reading of Bill 23, An Act to Renew Local Democracy in Alberta, be amended by deleting all of the words after “that” and substituting the following:

Bill 23, An Act to Renew Local Democracy in Alberta, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

Madam Speaker, for some of the reasons that I've already highlighted prior to moving this amendment, I think that it's imperative that this be a piece of legislation that we get right, that we get right for our democratic institutions at the municipal level. There are a number of challenges with the provincial elections financing act, of course, with the unintended consequences of creating PACs in this province, and we know now, because of that, that that is what is going to happen in our municipal realms as well. That would be something that we should discuss, and maybe there are some loopholes that could be closed up or maybe a different way to do this right.

11:10

Bring in some experts. You know, I'm very fortunate to have two colleagues on my team with extensive municipal political backgrounds. Sorry; three. My colleague from Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills was also an elected . . . [interjections] There are more than three. Sorry. I shouldn't give a definitive number. There's a ton of expertise in my own caucus and – you know what? – in my own community, Madam Speaker.

There are two levels of municipal government in the constituency of Airdrie. The city of Airdrie has a mayor and six councillors. The county of Rocky View works in a different way, of course, but will be subject to these election financing rules. Anyway, a current elections expert who just recently went through an election campaign and probably has some money left over from that realm would be very curious as to what we're going to be doing with this particular piece of legislation. Really, more so, I know they're all going to follow the rules, but they need to know what those rules are. I think that they would appreciate the opportunity to give feedback. There are a number of bank accounts out there with money in them, and I know these guys and gals don't want to be incurring any fines or have an unnecessary headline in a negative way in any way, shape, or form. They're doing important work in our counties and municipalities, and we need to ensure that we're doing what we can to support them. This needs to be a collaborative effort of consultation.

I do know that the city of Airdrie, which I represent at the provincial level, hasn't been asked about this piece of legislation by this government, so that right there tells me why it's so important for this to be discussed in the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship, Madam Speaker, which is the appropriate committee to have these conversations.

I think it's important that Albertans have a say in this legislation because it's not just the elected officials; it's Albertans, right? The legislation which we pass in this House is for Albertans. We always need to remember that. A committee process is an important piece,

and this will show the public just how transparent and open and accountable this government is. Certainly, the Official Opposition will play a part, as will other members of this Assembly, and we appreciate the opportunity because as legislators that's what we're here to do, to make sure that we are approving and putting forward important legislation in the Alberta Assembly.

Madam Speaker, with that, I urge all members of this Assembly to vote yes on my amendment. I look forward to the fulsome debate and, hopefully, exploration in the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Talking about democracy in elections is very, very serious. It is probably one of the most important things that we can debate in this Legislative Assembly. We're all here because we really believe in elections. We believe in the right of people to have a fair way of exercising their vote and their interest.

Madam Speaker, Albertans have been very clear that they want to get money out of local elections. This was a consultation that happened over the last couple of years. As we all know, the Assembly passed a law around the provincial election, and the minister made it clear that we were also looking at changing the laws for municipal and school board elections. We want to make sure on this side of the House that Albertans have a fairer and more transparent election process.

Last month we all watched the U.S. election and its result. We listened to media reports of how challenging it was for some prospective voters to be registered and the amount of alleged voter suppression that happens and how corporations influence the elections in the U.S. and the way that elected officials have the power to gerrymander polling stations and so on. As someone who's been an international election observer and worked in other countries on the democratic governance – actually, I just came back from Haiti, where I spent a week looking at their democratic processes or the lack of it. I worked for elections at all three levels of government, and I ran for municipal, school board, and of course as an MLA.

I have been appalled at what I've seen of the U.S.-style election. It actually really pains me to think of anyone in Alberta not seeing how U.S. elections are not a good example for the rest of the world. It pains me to see how challenging it is for elected officials and how hard it is in the U.S. to reform the election system. It also pains me to think that Albertans have gone over to the U.S. and supported the election process of the current President.

Anyway, for example, it appears to me that in the U.S. campaign signs are allowed near polling stations. The best thing that I found about the night of the U.S. election was to find out that in the U.S. people started to understand the importance of voting and to have fair and transparent processes, so I'm really hoping that the new elected representatives, governors, and Senators have the guts to reform the system and implement the kinds of changes our government has made. The reason I wanted to talk about the U.S. election is because, fortunately, here in Canada our election systems have been a lot more transparent than there, but also it's because we the people have had the ability to change our systems.

This is why with this bill, An Act to Renew Local Democracy in Alberta, the government is taking important steps to ensure that municipal elections for councillors and school trustees as well as

irrigation districts and Métis settlements are seen as important, fair, and transparent elections the same way that we have made the changes at the provincial level. I'm actually quite proud of how proactive the government has been in changing provincial election laws and now how we are looking at making municipal elections as transparent and to take the influence of corporations and unions out of the elections. I mean, I'm appalled every day when I hear of the influence of the NRA in the U.S. elections.

When I was professionally active in public policy at the municipal level, I used to do this after every election. I used to print out – and it was available on all the municipal sites – the financial declaration of each elected municipal councillor and school trustee. In the jurisdiction that I was a school trustee, like councillors, I was obliged to file a return. These filed financial returns are a really good indication of who hoped to influence or who supported prospective candidates.

An example from the municipality that I'm currently an MLA for might really, I think, bring the issue of why it's important not to have corporation and union donations to municipal and school trustees. An example from the last election: one of the candidates for mayor collected \$88,000, mostly from real estate corporations and individuals affiliated with these real estate corporations. When I calculated it, it was more than \$1 per eligible voter in the municipality. Another candidate for mayor got \$65,000 from similar sources. The actual winner of the election spent \$33,000.

11:20

The Minister of Municipal Affairs moved towards introducing this bill after lengthy consultations with municipalities and school boards. I want to emphasize that because it seems to be something which the members of the opposition have not noticed. If you'll remember, after the provincial bill was introduced, there were a lot of discussions on the need to have a similar bill for municipalities. At that time it was so close to the municipal election that it was decided to continue consulting with municipalities and school boards and then to introduce the bill after the election. I would add at this point that it's very different from their best friend, Doug Ford in Ontario, who did not consult with municipalities and introduced a bill without consultation that definitely changed things in Toronto and not very nicely either.

We chose to really consult with municipalities and school boards, and we also chose to consult with individuals. If you had bothered to look at the numbers in surveys or if you had bothered to find out the feedback that individual Albertans gave to the minister, you would know that there was a lot of interest in seeing this bill brought forward. What is really heartening to me is that Albertans really did care that we needed to change the system for municipal and school board elections to make them fairer, more transparent, and to ensure that big money such as real estate corporations did not influence elections.

There's about 340 municipalities and more than 60 school authorities in Alberta. I could not find a participation rate for the last municipal election, so as an example I'm going to give you the one for Strathcona county. In the last election, in 2017, in Strathcona county only 39.10 per cent of the voters bothered to turn out for the municipal election. In 2013 it was 37.3, in 2010 it was 36.6, in 2007 it was 33.3, in 2004 it was 34 per cent, and in 2001 it was 39 per cent. In 1998 the only time that 50 per cent of the eligible voters in my community bothered to vote was because there was a referendum for a new recreation centre, and it was about the VLTs. Unfortunately, it's impossible to find out what is the percentage of voters who bothered or who elected their democratic right to vote in school board elections because of the way that we really hold

separate elections for Catholic, public, and francophone school boards.

As an MLA and as an Albertan I'm very concerned about the lack of voter involvement in municipal and school board elections. As a former school trustee I think that this is one of the most important things that we should be doing as Albertans, to support our school boards and to vote for great education systems at the local level. Our school trustees are really important, and we should be voting for school trustees. When I realize that only 40 per cent of the constituents in my constituency really understood the importance of voting for the municipal councillors and the mayor, I really think that as a province we really need to do something to make sure that there is a greater involvement of residents in municipal elections.

So how does this bill really help with voting accessibility, accountability, and transparency? I want to reinforce it for the opposition, who may not really have read what this bill does. First of all, we've talked a lot about campaign finance contribution and disclosure. This bill would strengthen the rules around donations. It would ban corporation and union donations. It would limit contributions to \$1,000, which is the same as in the provincial election. It would give regulations around setting campaign spending limits. It would also make sure that fundraising events are subject to contribution limits and disclosure requirements. It would make sure that candidates are nominated before incurring campaign expenses or accepting contributions. And then especially – I think it's really important – it would make sure that campaign finance and contribution disclosure requirements also apply to school board elections. It would also reduce the campaign period from four years to one year, which I think is a really good way of making sure there's a playing field for every single person who seeks to become a municipal councillor, mayor, or school trustee.

It also would really – and I think this is really an important thing that maybe the opposition may not have paid attention to. It would really increase voter accessibility. I just pointed out the fact that in most municipalities less than 50 per cent of voters bothered to turn out for the election. This bill would make sure that there would be mandatory advance votes for municipalities and school divisions with greater than 5,000 population, so if you can't vote on election day, then there are going to be alternate ways for you to vote. It would also, like we did with provincial, remove the six months' Alberta resident requirement, and it would extend vouching provisions.

The Member for Airdrie talked about access for women and minorities. You see, I'm really concerned about these issues of accessibility and ability of voters to exercise their democratic right, so I think this bill is going to encourage and remove barriers for people who may be living in poverty, who may not have access to transportation on election day, because they can do advance polling. It's going to encourage municipalities to have more mobile polls. So maybe not only will we see a greater percentage of Albertans exercise their voting right, but we might see more people who have disabilities, who live in poverty, who come from minority groups have the ability to exercise their vote.

The part that I think is really important – that's why I started this speech with a discussion of what happens in the U.S. This bill is going to create greater accountability and transparency by aligning and restricting third-party advertisers and restricting campaign activities at polling stations to unduly influence voters. I want to talk about that, because as the municipal clerk in one election here I have seen, with the lack of clear guidelines, scrutineers for a particular mayoral candidate influence voters at the polling station. When I reported that to the clerk in charge at the polling station, she said: well, there's no mechanism to deal with this issue. I'm really glad that this act will empower the Alberta Election Commissioner

to enforce rules, and this will ensure that violations in municipal elections are properly investigated.

If there's one thing that this act does that is going to really make a difference around the ability of voters to know that their vote counts and is democratic and properly transparent, it's the fact that they know that if there is an infraction in the rules, if there are campaign signs near the polling station, if people talk to voters that shouldn't be talking to voters in the polling station, there's going to be a way for those issues to be investigated and dealt with.

I want to reassure the member of the opposition that if he read the bill correctly, he would find out that the minister very much understands that you have big municipalities like Edmonton and you have small municipalities like Tilley, which may have 300 people, so he's already building within the bill some discussion of municipal size.

I also want to . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Westhead: Yeah. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. The member has a really strong background in this field, and it sounds like she has a little bit more to share with us, so I just wondered if she might like to elaborate on some of the things that she was speaking about in her speech there.

11:30

Ms McKittrick: Thank you. Yes, I really do. I've talked about enforcement. What I wanted to make a comment about is the Member for Airdrie, who felt that the bill should do something about the number of women involved in municipal elections. Now, we all share a concern around the lack of women, and actually I share a concern over the lack of women in the opposition ranks. But – you know what? – the best thing we can do about engaging people in municipal elections is to make sure we have a fair and transparent system and that we limit corporate donations because that is what's going to make women participate in the system.

I wanted to talk a little bit about, really, the importance of voting for school trustee. I want to do that not only because I'm the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Education, but I want to really think of why it's important that we engage in the democratic governance in school trustees. It is not just because if you have children in the school system, you should be involved. It's because what happens at the schools, at the school board is important for all Albertans. It is important that we support what our children learn. It's really important that we understand that the education system is one of the tools that we use around economic wealth and economic outcomes of our province. So I would like to take this moment by encouraging everyone to always vote for their school trustee.

I want to address the issue, Madam Speaker, of the referral. I'm really sorry, members of the opposition, but I think you need to realize that this bill has been actively consulted with school boards, with municipalities, with Albertans, that it comes out of a deep desire of Albertans to take corporation money out of the school system, and that the bill is the result of careful consideration of everything, that the government has been listening to Albertans. So I'm really sorry, Member for Airdrie, but there is no way that I could vote for an amendment to refer this bill.

I think it's important that we pass this bill in a timely manner to prepare everyone for holding the elections in three years. I really appreciated how the Minister of Municipal Affairs did not present this bill last year because we were in a municipal election, unlike the friend of the opposition Mr. Doug Ford. So I think the

consultation has happened. Everybody wants to see this bill passed. Candidates want to know how to prepare for the next election, and this bill is going to allow municipal elections, school trustee elections, Métis settlement and irrigation elections to be done in the most open, transparent way that we have ever seen in this province.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any further questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Excellent comments from the member. If you're concerned about corporate and other major donations, why does this bill not exclude corporate and union donations to the PACs, from even out of the province? I mean, people from around the world could be contributing to these PACs.

The Deputy Speaker: Sherwood Park, do you wish to respond?

Under 29(2)(a) any further questions or comments? Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Mr. Dreesen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The member opposite mentioned my international election experience. I believe it was a reference towards me. Actually, I'm very proud of my two international election observer missions that I did in Ukraine, with the presidential election that eventually saw President Poroshenko get elected and the parliamentary election. There were two different years I went over to Ukraine, into central and eastern Ukraine, and the member talked about her experience in Haiti. I was just wondering what influences from her experience in Haiti are actually found in Bill 23.

The Deputy Speaker: On the amendment, the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Madam Speaker. One of the nice things about being in the front row is that it's a little easier to catch your eye. This is ideal. You could continue to move along the front row and perhaps over to the other side.

I will talk about this bill and the proposed amendment. I have some sympathy for where the Member for Airdrie is coming from in proposing this amendment because I'm left with a lot of questions about Bill 23. I will acknowledge that the government certainly has done some extensive consultation. I've talked with a number of municipal councillors from Calgary but also from smaller communities, and I don't want to suggest that there's any sort of consensus either in opposition to the bill or, frankly, in support of the bill. There are a lot of questions that I think could benefit from a review by the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship, as the member has proposed.

You know, I have to say that the question of electoral finance reform and elections generally is the second-most commonly legislated topic by this government since they came into power three and a half years ago. This is the seventh bill that they have presented before this House that has to do with elections or election financing. Just the sheer volume of changes that they have brought forward, I think, gives us pause and questions as to why that is and what exactly they are trying to achieve through these changes. I've got to say that it seems that every time that one of these election finance bills comes up, there are unintended consequences.

The Member for Calgary-Mountain View raised the question of PACs. One of the challenges in regulating PACs, if I can be so bold as to try to answer your question, Member – it's not a challenge. It's a tremendous benefit of the society in which we live. It is a free and democratic society. We have freedom of association. We have freedom of speech. Given that, it's very, very difficult and, frankly,

dangerous for government to constrain that ability for any individual or group of people or corporation from participating in the democratic process, from putting together a group of people who share a certain view and want to propose a certain opinion. The courts have been very clear and very narrowly interpreted what governments are able to do in restricting the ability of individuals, of corporations, of unions from getting together, putting together an organization, and speaking publicly about whatever that organization's views are. I think we have to be very careful if we want to go down a path of restricting freedom of speech.

How then do we ensure that there is not undue influence on the political process, on the municipal election process and the provincial process, from these organizations? I think the answer is to make sure that we don't accidentally, if I'm being generous, or perhaps deliberately stack the deck in favour of a certain way of operating that might benefit a certain viewpoint or might benefit a certain government provincially. I think that's what the NDP was trying to do when they originally eliminated corporate and union donations and dramatically reduced the individual contribution levels and also put all sorts of constraints on the provincial political process, and these constraints, which look like they're now under Bill 23, are going to be applied to municipal campaign processes.

All of this is creating the shadow organizations, because people will always have an opinion. They will always have a view and want to express that opinion. They can either do it through an open process, through the democratic electoral process, through, in the provincial case, political parties or through, in the municipal case, individual candidates that represent those views, and do so transparently so we know where it's coming from, or they're going to create shadow organizations because they have been forbidden from participating in the open process. That's why we see the rise of PACs.

Now I think we need, clearly, some controls and some constraints. I think that as time moves on, it's going to be increasingly difficult actually even to implement the constraints that exist now. I think that, based on my reading of some of the court rulings, it's very difficult to actually hold these organizations from spending whatever they want, even right up to election day. That's a problem. When you're constraining it too much, you create these shadow organizations. That's certainly one big, big, big concern that I have with the particular changes that we see in Bill 23.

11:40

Some of the other concerns that have been mentioned, which I share, are that the changes that have been made to municipal campaign processes create barriers for nonincumbent people to try to challenge a sitting councillor or trustee. I actually struggle with this one, again a reason why I think that perhaps we should send this to committee so we can actually do some deeper analysis on how this will play out in real life.

On one hand, you would think, you know, that if no one can raise money until January 1 before an election, that's an advantage to those who are incumbents because if you're an incumbent, from the day after the election for the next four years, if you're fund raising every month, every day, then very likely you're going to generate a big war chest, and it's going to be very difficult for anyone who's not the incumbent to overcome that. The flip side is: what are the chances on January 1 of election year, based on all the groundwork that's been laid by that incumbent, that an avalanche of money comes in in the first 10 days of January in support of the re-election of that particular councillor or trustee? Now, these are issues that are probably more acute in the large urban areas, probably not entirely an issue outside. Probably this is an issue of a little more acuity in the big cities, but I think it applies broadly.

Again, another question that I haven't had an adequate answer to from the government side is: how does that break down between smaller rural centres, between counties, and between the large municipalities? I haven't seen that. Again, another reason, I think, for us to have this run through a committee. How do municipalities monitor who has donated and to whom and when? I understand that there is some kind of provincial system.

But when talking about barriers, in addition to just the simple fundraising barrier, one of the things I found most offensive, frankly, in the changes that were made on the provincial front was that when any Albertan simply utters the words, "I think I'd like to seek a nomination; I think I'd like to participate in democracy," you have to put your name on a government list. The government needs to make sure that you've identified yourself as someone who dare take advantage or action, who dare participate in democracy. That in itself I have real trouble with.

It also creates barriers for people who may not know the complexities of Elections Alberta rules, the complexities of whatever process will be put in place on the municipal side. While on the provincial side we have political parties that have some weight and some administrative ability to help nomination candidates and to help nominated candidates ensure that they're complying with the rules, very often, in fact, in the vast majority of cases that doesn't exist on the municipal side. So now we're creating these barriers for people who I think would want to participate in democracy but may not have the sophistication. The very people, I think, that I would suspect the NDP would like to see more actively participating in democracy are now less likely to because there are additional administrative barriers being put in their way, and if they fail to meet those administrative burdens, now they're subject to personal fines, which we didn't have before. I think we should be making it easier for Albertans to participate in democracy, not more difficult.

I've yet to hear an explanation from this government about what problem exactly it is that we are trying to solve. Can you quantify the problem? Can you tell us? In all of the rural districts and counties, how often this is a problem? Is this a problem only in Edmonton and Calgary? Is this a problem in mid-sized cities? If it is, I'd like to know how you quantify what that problem is. Again, I think that's a good reason for us to be sending this off to committees.

The other piece of concern that I have is just the overall administrative burden on municipalities themselves, the opportunity or risk, then, that we're going to have a variety of interpretations, different municipalities interpreting the same set of rules slightly differently, where you cross a county boundary and all of a sudden there's a slightly different interpretation of these rules. It's a large, multipage – I don't even know how many pages this bill is; 89 pages – nearly 100-page bill that creates an opportunity or risk that interpretations will be different across different municipalities.

The other strong recommendation that I've heard coming from municipal councillors that I've talked with: why is it that municipal campaign donations – if we're going to take corporate and union money out, will we still need to run campaigns? Why is it that municipal campaigns are not eligible for tax receipts? Why is it that we in the provincial sphere get to take advantage of a very, very generous – very, very, very generous – tax deduction for any donation that comes to a registered political party but municipal councillors cannot? We're constraining their ability perhaps too much to raise money that they need to run campaigns. So, again, I would like to see an analysis of what the impact of that may be.

With that, I would really encourage all members to vote in favour of this amendment. I think it's a reasonable one that we see this bill reviewed at committee.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thanks very much, Madam Speaker. Well, I'd like to hear more from the member about what he considers to be the barriers to local participation as a result of registering as a candidate.

Mr. Clark: Well, thank you, Member, for that question. You know, one thing I've observed as we go through the process of nominating candidates here for the upcoming spring election – I believe we're going to have an election in the spring. I'd love to hear the government get on the record and actually confirm that we're going to stick to the fixed election date. The Elections Alberta forms themselves are not overwhelmingly complex, but the consequences of getting it wrong, especially with the new Election Commissioner, are actually fairly dramatic. If all of a sudden you have not created a bank account properly or you haven't filed on time, then there is some risk of personal fines, especially when we're talking about simply being part of the process from a candidate nomination perspective.

I've seen candidates that I would want to participate in the process reconsider their participation in democracy because the administrative burden is too high. They're confused by the forms they have to fill in, and that's especially true of indigenous people, of people who perhaps live in poverty, and these are voices that I think we don't hear nearly enough in the democratic process, certainly at the provincial level. This is where we as provincial parties have some ability to help these candidates bridge that gap and fill in the forms, but on a municipal basis, if you're someone living in poverty, then your ability to manage the paperwork that's almost certain to be generated by this process I think creates a pretty significant barrier to participating in democracy, which I would think would run counter to what this government in particular would want and certainly what I would like to see. I think it should be made easier to run, not more complicated.

The Deputy Speaker: Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'll speak to the amendment.

The Deputy Speaker: You didn't want another question under 29(2)(a)?

Any further questions under 29(2)(a)?

On the amendment, yes, I have to say that this member was first in my memory of the speaking list. Go ahead, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Why, thank you, Madam Speaker, and with apologies to one of the greats, I might add, around here.

Dr. Swann: Obviously not a threat anymore.

Mr. Cooper: Yes. That's exactly right.

It's a pleasure, I suppose, to rise and speak to Bill 23, An Act to Renew Local Democracy in Alberta. What a noble name it is, a noble name in a title: An Act to Renew Local Democracy in Alberta. Perhaps the bill should more appropriately be named the Local Authorities Election Amendment Act, 2018, but since this government is in a very unique path and track record of renaming

pieces of legislation to fit their political agenda, we see that again here in Bill 23.

Now, I might just add, Madam Speaker, that there are significant portions of this legislation that I think are well intentioned, but like so many things that this government has done since the last election, they have been meaning well, but the results of what they delivered have been anything but what their intention was. I think that is why we've seen similar pieces of legislation come before the Assembly not one, not two, not three, not four, not five, not six but now the seventh time in just a couple of years. In fact, I think you'll recall . . .

11:50

Mr. McIver: It's a charm.

Mr. Cooper: Seven times. That's exactly right. Seven times are a charm. Yeah. I think it's actually three times is a charm, but in this case it takes the government twice plus one extra to actually get to where they're headed.

The very sad thing, Madam Speaker, and the exact reason why we should be referring this to committee – my hon. colleague from Airdrie and soon to be Airdrie-East recommended that we send this to committee – is that we are actually here to help and prevent us from having to come back an eighth time to correct all of the challenges that are going to be in place because of Bill 23.

Now, we've heard from the hon. Member for Sherwood Park, talking about the extensive amounts of consultation that have taken place on this particular piece of legislation. Well, Madam Speaker, what the truth is is that the minister and others have talked to a lot of municipal politicians and perhaps even Albertans about some of what their ideas might be that they might like to see in a piece of legislation. Now what we need to do is make sure that the government got it right. I can tell you that they haven't, and that's because I've heard from a lot of folks, from all across the province, actually, who have brought a number of concerns to my attention.

A lot of those things surround the fact that the intention of the legislation, which is to get corporate and union donations out of the process, is a good one, one that we've supported, one that we campaigned on, one that we have always voted in favour of, but the net result of what they're doing is that, yes, it will get corporate and union money out of municipal politics in the form that they can donate directly to the candidates, but it is going to create a whole other series of problems as a result of the way that they have legislated in Bill 23.

One of the things that's particularly interesting to me and another reason why I think we should send it to committee is the fact that not only have they said that there's going to be a donation limit to municipal politicians – and they have set that the same as at the provincial level – but they've said that municipal politicians are slightly less important than provincial politicians. They're only allowed to do that one time in a four-year election process whereas provincial politicians, slightly bigger fish, if you will – and maybe I'm paraphrasing – can fund raise year over year over year during the election process.

The government says that they're trying to make the rules the same provincially as they are municipally, yet we see in a number of cases in Bill 23 that they're actually creating two sets of similar rules that are, in fact, different. When you limit municipal politicians from being able to fund raise year over year over year, not only are you giving the incumbent a significant advantage, which is, again, the opposite of what they say will happen, but in fact you will be giving the incumbent an advantage. You also limit free speech of candidates outside of that four-year period.

One of two things is going to happen. We're going to create PACs at the municipal level or provincial politics are going to creep

more and more into the municipal level, and if you ask me, Madam Speaker, I believe that that's one of the intentions of the NDP in this legislation, to get more municipal politicians actively campaigning alongside the NDP government. There are going to be unintended consequences from this piece of legislation, and preventing people's right to free speech and their ability to spend money to promote their ideas outside of that period of time I actually believe will be found to be unconstitutional. But if the goal is to create the same set of rules, they're not even doing that.

So I would guess that we should talk about this at committee, and when the government chooses not to do that, I would suggest – my intention in this is actually to make sure that we have a good piece of legislation that doesn't end up being worse off for Albertans than better for Albertans. I intend to send the Minister of Municipal Affairs a couple of amendments so that he has plenty of time to think about why he's not going to support them, but the goal is to create a better piece of legislation.

Another perfect example. My hon. colleague from Livingstone-Macleod said that for municipal politicians the cap after which a donation needs to be declared is \$50. For PACs, it's \$250; for provincial politicians, it's \$250. Is it that this government doesn't trust municipal politicians like they trust themselves, or is it just an oversight? I don't know, but it's a continued example of the government saying one thing and doing another. We've seen it time and time and time again.

Another perfect reason to send this bill to committee – and I look forward to debating this bill at some length over the next number of days – is that now we're going to require additional paperwork and recording of finances, which I don't have a problem with. But what I'd like to know is what the costs associated with that are. There are quite likely going to be over 5,000 people across the province that run in the next municipal election. This government just hired an Election Commissioner and now have piled on a significant piece of work to that role.

I'd like to know this from the minister. My guess is – if we've seen this once, we've seen it a thousand times – that they're going to be coming back to the House to ask for more money for this. This government legislates first and then figures out the consequences after. It is a classic example of them saying one thing and doing another.

Mr. McIver: No.

Mr. Cooper: I know. It's hard to believe. I think that this couldn't have been more clear.

Another reason why we need to send this to committee is that last week the Minister of Municipal Affairs was on a radio program in the city of Calgary talking about how he was going to save democracy in Alberta with this piece of legislation, and he also made some statements that were devoid of facts. One was around this issue of vouching for people that don't have ID on the list. This particular government wants to open it wide so that one person can vouch for many people many times in any polling location. Let me be clear. The vast majority of people want to do the right thing when it comes to elections, but not every person wants to do the right thing when it comes to elections. That's exactly why we need to put some reasonable frameworks around what that looks like. Perhaps you can vouch for four or five or six people, but an unlimited number doesn't seem reasonable. It's exactly why we should be talking about this at committee.

Now, I know the government says that they've consulted, but the other question that I have is: have they consulted with politicians who have lost? This particular piece of legislation is going to

empower incumbents to an even greater extent, which is outrageous, Madam Speaker.

The other thing in this particular piece of legislation that we should be sending to committee so that we can talk about it is around some of the issues of transparency. The minister just the other day on the radio said that every municipality will have a voters list at the polling stations for people to be held accountable, but there's nowhere – there's nowhere – in Bill 23 that gives any

indication that it is his intention that a voters list is required at all municipal elections. It may be that he doesn't want that.

The Deputy Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt, hon. member, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(2.1) the House stands adjourned until 1:30 this afternoon.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, November 20, 2018

Day 50

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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McKitrick	

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Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	Miller
Cooper	Nielsen
Goehring	Nixon
Gotfried	Pitt
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Cyr
Deputy Chair: Mr. Dach

Barnes	Malkinson
Carson	Miller
Clark	Nielsen
Gotfried	Panda
Hunter	Renaud
Littlewood	Turner
Luff	

Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola
Deputy Chair: Mr. Drysdale

Babcock	Loewen
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Fildebrandt	Panda
Hanson	Rosendahl
Kazim	Schreiner
Kleinsteinuber	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, November 20, 2018

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: Good afternoon. Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you a group of home-schoolers from in and around the Fort Saskatchewan area. We have students accompanied by their parents and teachers, including Mrs. Venessa Kalist, Mrs. Tammy Burgardt, Mrs. Caryn Troost, Mrs. Tonya Collins, Mrs. Karen Hipson, and Mr. Vern Cripps along with a couple more, Mrs. Tammy Froese and Mrs. Shelley Brewer. If they could all stand with their lovely young guests and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you 66 students from the Edmonton Christian northeast school. The students are accompanied by their teachers, Elaine Junk and Greg Gurnett, along with their chaperones: Susana Maki, Jexy David, Julia Adams, Chan Lu, Sindy Weber, and Chris Maluta. I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other school groups? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to introduce on your behalf Margaret Carroll from the town of High Level in your constituency of Peace River. Margaret is an owner of M&M Real Estate in High Level and is a strong business leader and community advocate. She is the director of the Grande Prairie real estate board, a past copresident of the High Level chamber of commerce, and was recently nominated for the Alberta women entrepreneurs award. Margaret is seated in the Speaker's gallery, and I'd ask her to please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today and introduce four absolutely outstanding Albertans all in their own right. They are all school board trustees. There is literally no one in our province more undervalued than school board trustees, and I know that from the bottom of my heart they all deserve even more praise and support from all of us and all Albertans because what they do is the truest form of public service. So it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you Holly Bilton, the chair of the rural caucus of ASBA; Colleen Butler, the chair of Chinook's Edge school division; Sherry Cooper, a trustee from Chinook's Edge school division – no relation; I say that for her benefit, not mine, because I could be so honoured to be related to her – and Melissa Copley, a school board trustee for Chinook's Edge school division, also my long-suffering, immediate next-door

neighbour. If you'd please welcome them in the traditional fashion to the Assembly, I know that they and I would greatly appreciate it.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure today to rise and introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly my legislative co-ordinator and his family. Now, my legislative co-ordinator, Mr. Jesse Robertson, has only been with me for a short time, but in that time he has shown that he is not only a true conservative but somebody that can actually ride herd over me and make sure that I'm where I'm supposed to be and know what I'll need to be saying.

Mr. Cooper: Now that's a special skill.

Mr. Smith: Yes, it is.

With him is his wife, Colleen Robertson. She's a hard-working, home-schooling mom, a former registered nurse. She volunteers with youth, loves to mentor young people, and does so when they're at a very formative time in their lives. With him is Madison Robertson, age seven, who is in grade 2 and loves to read, loves creating art, and her favourite colour is gold. Now, Malcolm Robertson is age six, in grade 1, and he loves to wrestle and he loves to ride his bike and he loves to build Lego, so at some point in time we're going to have to get together and have some fun. Lastly, Isobel Robertson, age five. She's in kindergarten, and she loves music, she loves to dance, which I do very poorly, and she is very kind and considerate. If I could have the Robertson family stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Culture and Tourism.

Miranda: Thank you, Speaker. It's my privilege to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Reeve Leanne Beaupre, Harold Bulford, Daryl Beeston, Ross Sutherland, Bob Marshall, Peter Harris, Linda Waddy, Karen Rosvold, Lesley Nielsen-Bjerke, and Corey Beck from the county of Grande Prairie. They are joining us here in Edmonton for the Rural Municipalities of Alberta conference. I had the pleasure of meeting with them earlier today, and I now ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise to introduce to you and through you my friend Michelle Eldjarnson. She may not quite have arrived yet. They're en route here. She works tirelessly to support our community and surrounding area. Her concentration is in the chamber membership and supporting those members. She's been instrumental in getting the Chestermere, Langdon, and Strathmore chambers to collaborate on events, and on top of that, she is a full-time realtor. Her focus has also been involved in the business series in Chestermere and Langdon and Strathmore, so this is a person who really, really works hard to bring her community together. She's also a director on the political action standing committee with the Calgary east real estate board and recently travelled to Ottawa to present on behalf of the Bow River district, which includes Chestermere, and lobby on behalf of homeowners. It's such a privilege to speak about her. If you're here, Michelle, if you could rise, and if we could please give her the traditional warm welcome of the House.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Today is national child day, so I rise to introduce to you and through you some very special guests. They are winners of Alberta's Great Kids awards here with their families, and they joined me in the cabinet room earlier, where we held our very own cabinet meeting together and discussed some of the issues that mattered to them. If they could please stand as I call their names. Quinlan Grandbois is here with his family: Corine, Oree, and Shirley; Marigold Mioc is here with her mom, Lily, and with Moses; Maddie Bosgra is here with her mom, Leah; Izabelle Gaskarth is here with her dad, Dean, and Liam; Jadah Sparklingeyes and her family: Chantel, Pierre, Jenay, and Jory; and Brady Mishio and his dad, Terry. Hi, guys. These great kids are already leaders in their parts of Alberta. They've overcome great challenges early in their lives, and they've inspired and helped many others around them and demonstrated to me once again today just how bright the future of our province is. I want to thank them for coming from all over Alberta to be here today for our cabinet meeting, and I want to invite them and their families to please receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is indeed my honour today to be able to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House some very special guests of mine in the House. First of all, my daughter, Jodie Johnson. Without her, I probably wouldn't have been elected three times to this House. She helped me very much through all my campaigns and took time off work to work in my campaign office even. If she could stand. Also my son-in-law, Don Johnson. He's been there all along and helping, too, but the best thing those two have done for me has been giving me my two precious things in life, my granddaughters, Tory and Sydney Johnson. I'm really glad to have them in the House today. Most special is my wife, Sherry. As of today it's been 42 years we've been married. It's our anniversary. Thank you. She's been through a lot with me over 42 years and is still here. Please give them the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

1:40

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce a group of advocates with Diabetes Canada. As my colleagues are probably well aware, November is Diabetes Awareness Month, which is a time to focus attention on advocacy for people living with diabetes, of course, prevention, research, and a cure. The support of dedicated volunteers like the guests who are in our gallery today help make life better for people who are living with diabetes. I ask that as I say their names, they rise. They are Kate, Bridget, Murray, Melanie, Doug, Deanna, Christine, Randeep, Maureen, Cali, Dawn, Cory, Nicole, and Louise. Colleagues, please join me in extending the warm welcome to these guests.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

Cortes-Vargas: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly members of the Strathcona County Fire Fighters Union. It is especially an honour today after knowing that Strathcona county has been dealing with the aftereffects of the explosion. There is no one, I believe, that could protect our community better than the folks up there. I don't think I see all of them, but I'll introduce the ones here because I consider them friends and I

consider them folks that have worked with us on things that are important to them. It's a pleasure to introduce President Andrew Spence and Brian Sturm. Those are the well-dressed gentlemen up there that protect the great community of Strathcona county. I just want them to get the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

Ms Miller: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two guests from Westerner Park in Red Deer. Bradley Williams has served on the board at Westerner Park for the past seven years and was most recently board vice-chair. In September he was asked to step in as CEO until a permanent replacement is found. Kim Mechefske has worked at Westerner Park since 1996, and she is the current concessions and beverage and suite operations manager, a position she's held for the past 10 years. I ask Bradley and Kim to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you three Medicine Hatters. Now, these three people are incredible problem solvers, very hard workers, and great customer service people, and I know this because they were friends and colleagues of mine during my real estate career. When I call their names, if I could ask them to stand. I would first like to introduce the Medicine Hat Real Estate Board president, Tim Seitz. Secondly, I'd like to introduce a past president and our current PAC representative, Jeff Lanigan, and thirdly, another past president and our current Alberta Real Estate director, Devon Felesky. Of course, these three are here to talk to government and talk to opposition about pressing issues in the real estate industry. I ask the three to rise and accept the traditional warm welcome of the House.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce Valerie Keefe. Some of you who were here yesterday afternoon recall that I introduced her then, but I want her to be introduced to the entire House. If she would stand. Valerie is an active advocate for trans people in Alberta. She's here today as part of the day of remembrance for trans people. I would like to point out that she was the president of the NDP at Grant MacEwan University and is no longer with the NDP and is working with the Freedom Conservative Party, advocating libertarian principles in support of all people and trans people. I ask that the members give Valerie the traditional warm welcome of the House.

Mr. Drysdale: Madam Speaker, I'd just recognize two more special guests in the gallery from the city of Grande Prairie, councillor Jackie Clayton and councillor Wade Pilat. I assume that they're here to take in the RMA convention. I see them sitting there. I just wish that you'd give them the warm welcome of this Assembly.

Statement by the Speaker

Rotation of Questions and Members' Statements

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, prior to the start of Members' Statements I would like to inform hon. members about further revisions to both the Oral Question Period and Members'

Statements rotations. Yesterday, November 19, the Speaker's office received a signed House leaders' agreement. The agreement has been reviewed, and it raises no concerns.

The changes to the Oral Question Period rotation indicated in the agreement are as follows. The Member for Calgary-East may ask question 7 on days 3 and 7 of the eight-day rotation. These questions were previously allotted to the Official Opposition. The Official Opposition now receives question 10 on days 3 and 7. These questions were previously allotted to private members from the government caucus.

Concerning the Members' Statements rotation, the House leaders' agreement provides that the Member for Calgary-East receives one member's statement every three weeks on a Thursday, starting on November 29, 2018.

The Speaker's office sent out a memorandum concerning the changes to both rotations earlier today. Members can find on their desks copies of the Oral Question Period rotation and the projected sitting days calendar, which contains the Members' Statements rotation, among other things. These new rotations will take effect today. I will table the House leaders' agreement under the appropriate item of business later in the Routine. I would also note that the Assembly is on day 1 of the Oral Question Period rotation and week 1 of the Members' Statements rotation.

Members' Statements

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

Canadian Finals Rodeo

Ms Miller: Thank you, Madam Speaker. On January 16 of this year it was announced that for the first time in its 44-year history the Canadian Finals Rodeo would no longer be held in Edmonton. It was travelling to a new city and venue. It would be calling Westerner Park in Red Deer its new home.

It was an exciting announcement for our city, but there was little time to celebrate. There were just nine short months to plan and prepare for the 45th year of the CFR. In nine months what our city accomplished is nothing short of incredible. Our community pulled together: 247 volunteers donated over 3,000 hours of their time and their blood, sweat, and tears and showed the entire country what makes Red Deer such an amazing city.

Over 43,000 people attended CFR 45 during its six-day run. It is estimated that over \$20 million was injected into our economy. Over \$45,000 was raised for local charities. The first-ever junior finals rodeo Rising Stars event awarded \$24,000 in scholarships to our up-and-coming young athletes. The achievement of CFR 45 is just confirmation of the incredible spirit of our community.

I would like to thank Westerner Park and all of their staff and volunteers, whose passion and planning brought the CFR to Red Deer and whose dedication and hard work has made CFR 45 such a huge success. I would like to thank our government, especially Culture and Tourism, for their \$250,000 grant, that we invested into the CFR through the major fairs program. I would also to thank all of the businesses and organizations that stepped up and sponsored CFR 45 and its events.

It is a testament to our community that CFR 45 was such a huge success. I'm looking forward to CFR 46. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Humans Helping Humans Foundation in Drayton Valley

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. One of the joys of living in Alberta is realizing that as a result of its pioneer history and its entrepreneurial spirit we are province of can-do people. A perfect example of this is the work of Humans Helping Humans in Drayton Valley. Local businessman Hack Hamdon believed that there was a need for affordable housing in Drayton Valley. Too many low- and middle-income families struggled to find appropriate and affordable housing within the community, so Hack and other residents started up Humans Helping Humans.

In 2008, after much planning, fundraising, and organizing, Humans Helping Humans had raised more than \$215,000 and saw their first duplex project go to two deserving families. Since then, projects have been completed in 2010, 2012, and 2015, and on October 4, 2018, I had the privilege of watching two more families take ownership of the latest two housing units. Amidst the joy of seeing two families receive a hand up was the satisfaction of knowing that the funding and building of every one of these houses of hope was done through the generosity and hard work of the local community.

1:50

A portion of the funds to build these houses of hope has come through the fundraising efforts of local celebrities, who practise for many months to compete in a dance competition called Shakin' n Drayton. Now, on November 24 the community of Drayton Valley will once again gather to watch some amazing dancing that is in reality an exercise of community love and generosity. This year the tickets to this event sold out in less than 38 hours. Now, if you missed out on tickets but still want to help this worthy cause, I would encourage you all to go visit Hack Hamdon and the other board members, and I am sure they would willingly accept any and all donations.

Oral Question Period

The Deputy Speaker: First main question. The hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

Oil Price Differentials

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Albertans understand that our province is being devastated by a massive underselling of our greatest asset, our oil, at a \$45-a-barrel discount. Yesterday I called on Alberta's oil producers to step up to the plate voluntarily to reduce the inventories and reduce the price differential by cutting production of Alberta oil by some 250,000 barrels per day. Will the Premier join with me in calling on those companies to lead voluntarily with action?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. In fact, it turns out we've already been on this issue. As I believe the member opposite is aware, we have appointed envoys to go and meet with leaders in our energy industry to address this issue because we understand it's fundamentally important. The idea of bringing them into a room and then having them agree to voluntarily do it: well, that's illegal. That's collusion. One of the things that's really important for us to do, therefore, is to work with them in the way that our government is, and we are hopeful that we will find a solution on behalf of all Albertans.

Mr. Kenney: Well, Madam Speaker, when I asked that very serious question, the Premier snickered. She laughed. I don't understand why this is a laughing matter, that our economy is losing tens of billions of dollars of value a year, the Alberta treasury \$5 billion a year. The question was a very straightforward one that was put to me by a number of leaders in the energy sector over the past few days. Why won't the government call on companies voluntarily, without collusion, to reduce production by just about 5 per cent, that would help to reduce the price differential massively, by about 50 per cent?

Mr. Fildebrandt: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Point of order noted.
The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I think the member opposite should be reminded that, in fact, our government takes this matter very, very seriously, and I can't accept his characterization that somehow we are not. In fact, we have been focused on very little but this issue. I have met with energy industry leaders myself, and I have been gathering advice from all quarters. We are working on this front both in terms of the short term, the medium term, and the long term to increase takeaway capacity and also to address matters in a very urgent basis, and we will continue that work.

The Deputy Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Madam Speaker. One of the envoys appointed by the Premier yesterday, her former chief of staff Mr. Topp, has compared Alberta oil to, quote, ethical land mines. He's called for us to produce a great deal less hydrocarbon energy, pledged to get fossil fuel cars out of Canada's cities, and has a long track record of attacking Alberta's oil industry. Doesn't this ring like the appointment of Tzaporah Berman to co-chair the NDP's advisory group on the oil sands? Why should we be taking advice from somebody who wants to damage the industry?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Let me begin by saying that what I won't do is take advice from someone who spent 10 years in Ottawa and actually managed to make the problem worse and, certainly, to not fix the problem. What I will say is that Mr. Topp worked closely with energy leaders to put together the climate leadership plan and to put together the consensus from energy leaders with respect to that plan. He also worked closely with them with respect to our royalty review, a review that produced a system that the energy leaders across the sector were in favour of. So I think he has a very good record.

The Deputy Speaker: Second main question. The hon. leader.

Mr. Kenney: Madam Speaker, the NDP is repeating the same mistake they did in the appointment of Tzaporah Berman.

Pipeline Development

Mr. Kenney: Madam Speaker, we would not be in this situation if the federal government had not vetoed the construction of the Northern Gateway pipeline, that had been approved by the last government. Yesterday former Liberal MP Martha Hall Findlay, now an Albertan, said: I think one of the biggest mistakes the federal government has made in Canadian history was to say no to Northern Gateway; that will prove to have been disastrous. Does

the Premier agree that the decision to veto Northern Gateway was a disastrous mistake?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. What I know as the Premier of this province is that successive federal governments in Ottawa, a federal government of which the member opposite was a part and the current federal government, have failed to get this right and have failed to get a pipeline built to tidewater in almost 70 years. It is shocking. As Albertans we are all frustrated, and we need to move forward. We need to get progress. We need to get a pipeline to tidewater. We are working on all fronts. With respect to the differential we are working with respect to medium-term takeaway capacity. We are working for the long-term solutions, getting a pipeline, and upgrading our . . .

Mr. Kenney: Well, Madam Speaker, that takes a lot of chutzpah, for this Premier to criticize her close friend and ally Justin Trudeau for vetoing Northern Gateway at her request. In April of 2015 the Premier said, quote, Northern Gateway is not the right decision. She admitted in this place last May that she asked the federal government for only one pipeline to the west coast. Why did the Premier make this historic and disastrous mistake of advising the federal government to cancel the approved Northern Gateway pipeline?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you again, Madam Speaker. First of all, the historic and disastrous mistake was the way Northern Gateway was managed by the former Conservative government, of which the member opposite was a part. Take some responsibility. Also, he should stop making things up because I certainly did not ever make any such request to the Prime Minister, and the member opposite needs to stop saying things that are not true.

Mr. Nixon: Point of order.

Mr. Kenney: Madam Speaker, it's not just a quote attributed by the *Calgary Herald*; it's on video, where the Premier said, at an editorial board meeting of the *Calgary Herald* in front of a dozen journalists and a live video camera, that Gateway is "not the right decision." It was in this Chamber on May 1 that she said: what we did was talk to the federal government about getting a pipeline to tidewater; we said that we needed one of those pipelines to go west. This Premier, that party opposed Northern Gateway. Why don't they stand up and take responsibility for that historic error?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. At no time did this Premier or anybody in this government ask the federal government to cancel Northern Gateway. Let me be absolutely clear with respect to that issue. Moreover, we have done nothing but fight to get Trans Mountain built from the very beginning up till now, and until it is actually built, unlike the members opposite, who want to dine out on cheering for failure, we are focused on building support from coast to coast to coast. For the Trans Mountain pipeline we've gone from 4 in 10 to 7 in 10 Canadians supporting it, and we will get it done.

The Deputy Speaker: Third main question, hon. leader.

Mr. Kenney: Madam Speaker, not only did this government cheer for the failure of Northern Gateway, not only did they not raise a

peep of protest following its cancellation by their ally Justin Trudeau, but they were actively opposed to the construction of the Keystone XL pipeline. When asked on live radio if the Premier supported the construction of Keystone, she said no. Will the Premier admit that it was a terrible mistake for her and her party to oppose the Keystone XL pipeline?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Premier.

2:00

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. In fact, I and my party and our Minister of Energy committed 50,000 barrels to the Keystone pipeline to get it over the finish line. We have in fact worked very closely with the proponents of the Keystone pipeline to get that pipeline built. We have also supported line 3. Just yesterday we heard that line 3 has passed significant bureaucratic hurdles in the U.S., in part because of the incredible representations made by our minister of environment to those decision-makers on behalf of line 3. We are fighting for pipelines each and every day, unlike the members opposite.

Mr. Kenney: Madam Speaker, the government's budget was predicated on the construction of at least two pipelines. We've now had the suspension of Trans Mountain after multiple victory laps by the NDP government. We've had the suspension of Keystone XL, the killing of Energy East, the vetoing of Northern Gateway. What are the consequences of these decisions on the fiscal plan of the government?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. We know that in the short term the delays of these two pipelines, TMX and Keystone, will have consequences. So far we are on track with respect to our current budget projections, and we will provide more information as we receive it. But here's the thing: what we do know is that we will not give a \$700 million tax cut to the top 1 per cent. We will not lay off 4,000 teachers. We will not lay off 4,000 nurses. We will not, quote, make it hurt, end quote, for Albertans.

Mr. Kenney: Madam Speaker, the NDP . . .

Mr. Hanson: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Point of order noted.
Go ahead, hon. leader.

Mr. Kenney: Madam Speaker, the NDP is making it hurt for Albertans. [interjections] They're laughing about 148,000 unemployed Albertans, about six straight months of higher unemployment, about the highest unemployment in Canada outside of Atlantic Canada. Now they're planning for a 67 per cent increase in the carbon tax to make it even worse. How do they propose to balance the budget five years from now without the 67 per cent increase in the carbon tax that they banked on?

Ms Notley: Again, Madam Speaker, I've answered that question a number of times. We have indicated that our path to balance does not currently require or depend upon an increase in carbon pricing as per the federal plan because we are waiting for the Trans Mountain pipeline to get shovels in the ground. But let me be very clear. The member opposite and one of his MLAs said: it's going to hurt. That is their plan. Rather than taking shots over here at difficult situations that we're all trying to manage, why won't they come clean with what their plan is?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Assisted Dying

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Medical assistance in dying is a serious issue and unimaginably stressful for patients and their families. The issue, albeit new and evolving in Alberta, should have garnered the utmost attention of the minister to make sure that patients and Albertans were not falling through the cracks. To the Minister of Health: what steps did you take during the implementation of medical assistance in dying to ensure timely access to services?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and certainly thank you to the member for the question. This is an incredibly important and personal topic for, arguably, every Albertan in some way. We have been following the federal legislation and making sure that we roll out the right to choose medical assistance in death throughout our province. I'm proud of the kinds of national recognition we've received, but certainly there is more work to be done because we know that there are some people who have found it difficult to access that choice, and that is certainly not acceptable.

The Deputy Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Minister, you are aware that at least two Albertans over two years ago were faced with difficulties in accessing medical assistance in dying. To the same minister: why didn't you act when you were first made aware of the problem, and why didn't you address these issues until they became public?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Again, the federal legislation just came into effect slightly over two years ago, and in the months following that, there certainly were some situations that were very difficult for families. I want to thank Doreen Nowicki's family for sitting down and meeting with me to discuss what they experienced, particularly the assessment that happened outside of hospital and how difficult that was for them. I can imagine that any other family could imagine how difficult that would be for their loved ones. What we have done is that we've addressed those concerns, and we've made sure that the new model continues to work in a way that honours and respects patients and their choices.

The Deputy Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Medical assistance in dying presents an ethical dilemma for some health service providers, and we should respect and accommodate those beliefs. However, the first concern must always be for the wishes and well-being of the patient. Respectfully, Minister, your actions have demonstrated that in these particular cases patients, Albertans, seem to be an afterthought. To the same minister: what is your plan, going forward, to ensure that Albertans aren't forced onto the street to access a legal medical service, and can you ensure that your ministry is patient focused and not politically focused?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Again, I want to say that the way that Mrs. Nowicki was treated, in my

opinion and I think in the opinion of all, is unacceptable. That is not something that we would want for anyone that we love or for ourselves. Every patient in Alberta deserves to access a high level of dignified, compassionate care no matter where they are and what health facility they might be in.

I've asked Covenant Health to update their policies to reflect the amended practice. Certainly, this fiscal year nobody has had to be removed for an assessment to be done. I've asked them to make sure that they update their policy to reflect that that will be the expectation moving forward. If it doesn't do so, I will act myself, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, just a reminder that there will be no preambles on supplementaries.

The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Grande Prairie Regional Hospital Construction

Mr. Rosendahl: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Like many Albertans, the people of Grande Prairie have been working hard, raising families, and paying their fair share of taxes. I was pleased to hear that recently a new construction manager was selected for the Grande Prairie regional hospital. Can the minister update us on when the work will resume on-site and provide us with a revised completion date?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. We do now have a construction manager. We are pleased to announce that Clark Builders is taking over construction management on the Grande Prairie hospital. Very happy to see that. They're going to begin mobilizing the site right away. Full construction activity is going to ramp up in the new year. Clark's first order of business is to put a construction schedule together, and once that is in place, they will begin looking at the subcontractors that they will take to the site.

The Deputy Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Rosendahl: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Hard-working men and women are the backbone of our economy. How are we ensuring that the subtrades who are working on the site have an opportunity to continue working on this project?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Well, as I said before, construction activity is going to ramp up in the new year, and we hope to have nearly 400 construction workers on the site. I had a chance to touch base with the president of Clark Builders. They have just a terrific reputation. We had a conversation about making sure that we stayed in the loop as per what was happening down at the site. Our intention is to work closely with Clark Builders to make sure that there are lots of opportunities for the existing trades to determine if they would like to bid on a new contract on this project, and we welcome the local subcontractors in that effort.

The Deputy Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Rosendahl: Thank you, Madam Speaker. This project has been plagued with issues in the past. Can the minister tell us what the budget is for the project and what she is doing to ensure that there is cost certainty on this project?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The existing capital plan for this hospital has a budget of \$763 million. The project scope was previously fixed in December 2016. So \$763 million: it's going to remain at that number. The new construction management fee falls well within that budget amount. We are very confident in our construction manager and in our ability to get this hospital done for the good people of Grande Prairie, some of whom I see up in the gallery. I had the pleasure of chatting with them today about it.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Health Care Budget

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. The Canadian Institute for Health Information today released a report stating that Alberta is the highest spending jurisdiction per capita on health care in Canada. In fact, if we were to spend just the Canadian average on health care, we would save over \$3 billion annually. That totals nearly half of the government's deficit. To the Minister of Health: why does Alberta have the most expensive health care system in Canada?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

2:10

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker and to the member for the thoughtful and important question. Certainly, this is a complex matter and one that can't be addressed overnight. There were many years where the now Official Opposition had budget increases in excess of 6 per cent, and then in later years they'd fire a bunch of staff, and then they'd do another 6 per cent increase the year after that. Instead, what we've done on this side of the House is that we've worked to provide stability and reasonable growth. The same report talked about Alberta's increase being only 2.2 per cent this last year. We're getting to a rate of growth that's far more sustainable than we saw under the former government, and we're focused on the front lines and making sure patient care is the driver.

Dr. Swann: Madam Speaker, again to the minister: what areas of efficiency does she see in reducing this, I would say, unprecedented budget, which continues to be over?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. There are three areas in the budget where we see that the pie charts under former governments grew dramatically, and we tried to make sure we addressed that and had more stable growth. Those were physician compensation, pharmaceutical costs, and acute-care operations. We've done a lot of work to make sure that we focus our acute care around patients instead of blowing up hospitals, like we saw under the Official Opposition when they were in government in the '90s. We've made sure that we're bulk buying and using the lowest cost but highest efficacy of pharmaceuticals, and we sat down with physicians and renegotiated their compensation.

Dr. Swann: Will the minister commit to an audit of the Alberta health system and look for other areas of efficiency? Yes or no?

Ms Hoffman: Madam Speaker, I'm very proud of the fact that we have an extensive audit team within the GOA as well as with the Auditor General. We do regular system audits in specific areas within the system. I believe that the Auditor General and Public Accounts met just this morning to discuss Health. I think that that

is one of the ways that we have really good opportunities to focus on policy outcomes and costs.

One of the other areas where we spend more than in neighbouring provinces is on seniors' drug coverage. The Official Opposition talks about: well, we could spend the same as B.C. and get better outcomes. Well, B.C. seniors pay far more for their drugs, Madam Speaker. I don't want that to be the outcome for Albertans, to raise their drug costs.

Energy Policies and Social Licence

Mr. Dreeshen: Madam Speaker, during question period on November 7, in response to my good friend from Calgary-Foothills' question on the NDP's social licence, the environment minister's response was: let's talk about something real. She continued this government's position that increasing taxes and regulatory burden will somehow get pipelines built. Was the minister of environment, from her time as a Greenpeace activist, fully aware of this fictitious social licence value that the NDP has been peddling to Albertans for the last three and a half years?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Well, I'm not sure that I'm going to take direction from someone who spent 10 months of his life campaigning for a guy who thinks that climate change is a hoax perpetrated by the Chinese, in terms of direction on how to make climate policy. What we have done is that we're reducing greenhouse gas emissions. We have done so by 11 megatonnes. Already we have reinvested \$1.4 billion in innovation projects. There's much more to talk about as we've also made sure that we have the fastest growing economy in Canada.

Mr. Dreeshen: Madam Speaker, let's bring this a little bit closer to home. Given that the Premier and the minister of environment have stood outside this very building protesting pipelines and now given that the Premier appoints Brian Topp, a failed federal NDP leadership candidate who also campaigned against pipelines, to be the NDP's relief pitcher on the oil price differential crisis caused by their desire for a pipeline shortage, why is the NDP trying to redefine their record as proponents of pipelines when for so long they were protesters of pipelines?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister of environment.

Ms Phillips: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. That statement is false. It is directly false.

Mr. Nixon: Point of order.

Ms Phillips: I would appreciate it if the member would cease in misleading the House on anything that I have or have not done, Madam Speaker. It is false. That's the first thing.

The second thing here, Madam Speaker, is that we have brought in a climate leadership plan, yes. We have done so at the same time as the economy has grown the fastest in Canada. We have done so in a way that makes sure that a climate plan is not imposed on us by Ottawa. If we want to talk about private citizens, I have two words: John Carpay. Is that guy still on your team?

Mr. Dreeshen: Madam Speaker, the Premier, the minister of the environment, and Brian Topp have all opposed Alberta oil. Given that the NDP's social licence has done nothing to get pipelines built, given that the Deputy Minister of Energy at the Resource Stewardship Committee said that the social licence has no value, and given that pipeline protestors other than those sitting in this

Assembly continue to oppose pipelines, can the government explain why they continue to push their failed social licence ideas on Albertans rather than admitting it hasn't worked in getting pipelines built?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. If we want to take a trip down memory lane, perhaps 10 months of this member's life spent campaigning to grab us all by the steel tariff could be something that we talk about. But you know what? We've cut small business taxes by a third; we have exempted small and medium-sized oil and gas companies until 2023, something that Justin Trudeau has not committed to doing; and we've provided \$2 billion in carbon offsets to companies investing in methane. All of those investments would be cancelled if the folks across the way had their way.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin.

Energy Advisory Group Appointments

Ms Goodridge: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The price differential for Alberta oil has now reached crisis proportions. We're losing almost \$100 million a day because we're forced to sell at such a high discount. That's almost \$25 per Albertan per day. This is a result of failed NDP policy. This isn't just a Fort McMurray problem or an Alberta problem; it's a Canadian crisis. I truly question why there are no industry representatives on this advisory panel. At this critical time why did the Premier appoint Brian Topp, someone who spent years fighting against Alberta oil and gas jobs, to this important panel?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister of economic development.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'd be happy to talk about the fact that our Premier and our government have done more to secure market access and a pipeline to tidewater than the previous federal Conservative government and the previous PC governments in the last 20 years. In fact, the Leader of the Official Opposition was a cabinet minister for Canada and failed to get a pipeline to tidewater. Our government has done more advocating on behalf of our energy sector, and we are closer and closer to getting that pipeline built. We will not quit until it's built.

The Deputy Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Goodridge: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Given that Tzeporah Berman previously advocated for shutting down the oil sands and given that she referred to my home as Mordor and given that she pocketed tens of thousands of our tax dollars advising the NDP government on oil sands and given that directly after ending this gig she went on to fight against the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion project and given that it's the lack of pipelines to tidewater that's the major cause of the extreme price differential, to the Premier: will you admit that her appointment was wrong?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd love to ask the hon. member if she'd admit that her leader failed to get any pipeline to tidewater when he spent 10 years in Ottawa. Our government will continue to work toward market access, pipelines, quite frankly, in all directions. We committed 50,000 barrels per day for the Keystone XL pipeline. We were very disappointed to hear that that has been delayed, but we will continue to advocate for market

access. Our Premier has taken concrete steps to address the immediate differential crisis but also the medium term and the long term. We will see it built.

The Deputy Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Goodridge: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Given that Brian Topp compared Canadian ethical oil to land mines and given that he called to ban fossil-fuelled cars in cities and given that he said that Canada should, and I quote, produce a great deal less hydrocarbon energy and given that he was the one that developed the failed carbon tax as social licence to get . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Do you have a question, hon. member?

Ms Goodridge: . . . pipelines built, does the NDP government honestly believe that Topp will be any different than Berman?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Again, you know, I'll talk a little bit about the work that our Premier and our government has done not only on the Trans Mountain pipeline but also working with the energy sector to diversify within our industry. In fact, earlier today the Premier talked about how we are going to be upgrading more of our petrochemicals here in Alberta. We're following on the legacy of Peter Lougheed and showing true leadership on this file as opposed to the Official Opposition that doesn't believe in diversifying our economy nor supporting the very energy leaders that are the backbone of this country.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

2:20

Provincial Fiscal Policies

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Earlier today the University of Calgary released a research paper that found the NDP's current fiscal path forward is unsustainable. The Finance minister's talk of balancing his budget is just inaccurate. Compounding Alberta's fiscal crisis are the worst oil prices for Alberta's oil, Canada's highest per capita health care costs for 2018, and his ever-skyrocketing debt costs. To the Finance minister: what is your government doing to avert this current fiscal crisis?

Mr. Ceci: Madam Speaker, of course, we appreciate the work of Professor Tombe. These projections, though, do not take into account the fact that we have found savings and will continue to find savings that clean up government, that we have economic indicators that are changing over time like the GDP, oil prices, and manufacturing levels, and the fact that we have cut the deficit already by \$3 billion. Those things also have to go into projections. We're on to balance the budget by 2023.

Mr. Barnes: Madam Speaker, given that if this government stays the course, Alberta's debt will reach 50 per cent of GDP, higher than any time in our history, higher still than in the 1930s, when the province partially defaulted on its debt obligations, again to the Finance minister: will you commit to helping Alberta families and commit to practical solutions like cutting red tape, supporting free enterprise, and supporting Alberta communities?

Mr. Ceci: You know, Madam Speaker, we have already done all sorts of things. We have cancelled golf club memberships that the previous government left in place for agencies, boards, and commissions. We got rid of the private jet that they used to go

around the province in. In fact, Professor Tombe himself admits that this report is projections. They're not predictions. They're not definitive predictions of where we will go. We will balance by 2023.

Mr. Barnes: Madam Speaker, given that according to economists at the University of Calgary this government's fiscal plan will result in debt service costs of \$22 billion a year by 2040, making this government's department of debt interest the second-largest department by spending, is the Finance minister aware that this is simply unsustainable and will jeopardize every single important priority of Alberta families, even education and health care?

Mr. Ceci: Madam Speaker, I stand corrected. It wasn't a jet; it was an air force they had.

Professor Tombe also acknowledges, and that side doesn't, that we have the best balance sheet of any province, Madam Speaker. In fact, when we balance in 2023, we will still have the lowest net debt to GDP in the country. Professor Tombe acknowledges that. Why can't they?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Labour Legislation

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Before I was elected, I was very active in the fight for workers' rights here in Alberta. I've stood shoulder to shoulder with my sisters and brothers in the labour movement, who for years asked for improvements to our province's labour laws only to be met with silence from the former Conservative governments. To the Minister of Labour: what are you doing to ensure that workers' voices are heard and respected?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Labour.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Our government has the backs of workers, and we are fighting for the things that matter to them. When we came into office, we inherited labour laws that were decades out of date. Workers in Alberta were denied the same rights and protections that workers across Canada were benefiting from, and it wasn't right. That's why we took action. Our changes now mean safer jobs. They mean a WCB system that will be easier to navigate and a labour relations system that works for everyone. Most importantly, it means increased rights for all working people, not just benefits for those at the top.

The Deputy Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Given that before the changes to Alberta's out-of-date labour laws it often meant that workers fell further and further behind while those at the top in Alberta got further and further ahead, again to the Labour minister: what are you doing to ensure that workers have labour laws that work for them, not against them?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm very proud of the work that we've done to ensure that working people in our province finally have a voice at the table. I'd like to thank the member asking the question for the work he has done to advocate for workers' rights.

We know the Conservative plan for workers, Madam Speaker. We've seen it in action for decades. Working folks saw their contracts ripped up, their pensions attacked, their rights trampled so that someone could take a better vacation or buy a second home.

Now the Conservatives are planning to double down on these failed policies and make things even harder and hurt families. I will not allow that to happen, and I also think we should be reviewing laws earlier than every 40 years.

The Deputy Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Given that the past Conservative governments have tried to strip workers of their rights, again to the same minister: what are you doing to ensure workers' rights are not only respected but strengthened?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Unlike the Conservatives, on this side of the House we do not think that workers, collective bargaining, and unions are bad words or words that need to be whispered in the tone of Voldemort. No. On this side of the House we're on the side of everyday working people. I'm going to keep fighting for the things that matter to them. The Conservatives have been very clear. They want to roll back workers' rights, they want to leave families in the lurch, and they want to fire 4,000 teachers and nurses just so they can give the top 1 per cent a \$700 million tax giveaway. Albertans have already seen that movie, and it's not pretty.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Postsecondary Sexual Abuse and Assault Policies

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Alberta Party caucus believes in school of choice and reasonable accommodations for the individual beliefs of teachers and students. However, we also see the need for standards that ensure that all students have the access and the support they need such as this government's approach to GSAs. The Minister of Education may want to share that approach with the Minister of Advanced Education, however, because postsecondary students are asking for something similar. To the Minister of Advanced Education. Students have been asking that postsecondary institutions be required to have a stand-alone sexual assault policy. Why haven't you made this change?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Of course, we've been working with our institutions to make sure that every institution has a sexual harassment and sexual violence policy in place. I'm pleased to report that most of them do. We still have two policies outstanding, and we are working with those institutions to make sure that they get those done as quickly as possible. It was my pleasure to meet with the students of ASEC earlier this week to discuss their concerns around sexual violence prevention policies on campus. I assured them that I'm working with our partners in the postsecondary institutions to make sure that their policies meet best practices.

The Deputy Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Given that sexual assault and sexual misconduct can completely derail the opportunity for a survivor to get an education and given that recovering from the trauma of sexual abuse or sexual assault is a lifelong process, to the same minister: what protections and supports are in place across all postsecondary institutions to ensure that survivors of sexual assault or abuse have the support and flexibility to complete their programs?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Of course, our government has committed a significant number of dollars to mental health supports. In discussions with a number of the institutions some of those institutions have used those mental health support dollars to support sexual violence survivors in dealing with the issues that have been created by their experiences. Of course, we've continued to encourage all universities and colleges to have the resources available to their students to deal with these issues when they arise. What won't help is millions of . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Mental health issues arising from an assault can be quite isolating, and given that a student's peers may be able to help in a way others can't and given that we should be supporting student-led mental health initiatives, to the same minister: will you require that Alberta postsecondary institutions provide a portion of their mental health funding for programs that are designed and supported in partnership with students' associations?

Mr. Schmidt: Madam Speaker, I had the chance to meet with the student representatives of ASEC earlier this week to discuss that exact matter, and what I assured them is that as we review the mental health programs that have been instituted with the money that we provided in our budget a couple of years ago, we would ensure that the students' voices are heard in the development and implementation of those programs. That work is ongoing with our universities and colleges all across the province. It's important to know that our government has students' backs in this matter. We want their voices to be heard, and we want the mental health supports to meet the needs of students. We're working very hard to make sure that . . .

School Bus Driver Training

Mr. Cooper: Alberta school bus drivers transport our most precious resource. School boards are currently required to provide extensive driver training, and as a result there are very few traffic incidents caused by school buses. Despite this strong safety record the Transportation minister has ruled that school boards may no longer be able to provide such training and that this training must be provided by a third party at the cost of over \$1,500. Why are school boards being subject to this massive change that will not make school buses, their drivers, and, more importantly, our children any safer?

2:30

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Well, our government has introduced a number of measures to improve safety on our highways, including mandatory entry-level training for people who seek a class 1 or class 2 driver's licence, and we worked closely with stakeholders, including school boards. More recently they've raised some concerns with respect to that, and we're in discussions with the school boards. I'm hopeful that we can get a resolution satisfactory to them. But the important thing that I want to emphasize is that our government has taken very clear and positive steps to improve the safety of everyone travelling on our highways, including school children.

Mr. Cooper: Madam Speaker, given that our children's safety is paramount yet the province of Ontario currently exempts school bus

drivers from its mandatory entry-level training requirements for commercial drivers and given that the Alberta School Boards Association is seeking a similar exemption, will the minister commit to hearing out our school transportation professionals before imposing this untested and expensive training program on our schools that, in fact, is highly unlikely to actually increase safety?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Of course, we're willing to talk to our partners, to school districts, and to other stakeholders as well. But I hardly understand how exempting school boards from the new, more rigorous standards for training actually improves safety for children. Perhaps the member could enlighten us.

Mr. Cooper: Well, Madam Speaker, there are plenty of ways to improve safety for our children and given that when riding the school bus the most dangerous occurrence for students is when impatient drivers choose to ignore flashing lights or stop arms and impatient drivers pass buses illegally – this happens so commonly that bus drivers call it a flyby . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, do you have a question?

Mr. Cooper: . . . and given that in one jurisdiction in northern Alberta they recorded a hundred incidents of flybys, to the Minister of Transportation: will you consider increasing . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, you're out of time.
The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much. I think I got the gist of it here, Madam Speaker. The hon. member uses a lot of statistics and examples from Ontario. But I can tell him that we thoroughly agree with him, as do school jurisdictions and all safety organizations, that these flybys, as he calls them, are a very, very serious problem, and we enforce that most rigorously. I can tell him that that's something that we're going to continue to make sure that we monitor to make sure that our children are as safe as possible.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Grande Prairie Regional Hospital Construction (continued)

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Unfortunately, the Member for West Yellowhead stole my question about the Grande Prairie hospital, but I thank the minister for the information anyway. I will be able to share that with my residents. But I didn't hear the minister say exactly a time frame of when the new hospital will be complete. Could she actually give us that time frame?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms. Jansen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to thank the member across the aisle for his advocacy on this. One of the great things about having him as a former colleague and a friend is that we can consider this issue postpartisan and work together to make sure we get that Grande Prairie hospital built, so I thank him for his efforts on this.

Clark Builders is going to have a construction schedule in place, as I said. They hope to begin getting those subs and the sub subs after Christmas, Madam Speaker, and then move ahead as quickly

as possible. So we're pretty excited that we're going to get this project done on time and on budget.

The Deputy Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Madam Speaker. On time and on budget sounds good, but I still don't know the time.

Madam Speaker, given that local contractors are out millions of dollars, you know, after the last general contractor was relieved from the project and that there's no assurance that they will get to go back to work and that the answer given to them was, "We've paid Graham all the money; take Graham to court in order to get your money," well, these small local contractors are on the verge of going under, and I just hope the minister can . . .

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms. Jansen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. That is absolutely a concern to all of us. I know that the member and I have had this conversation. I had this conversation with the president of Clark Builders and told them about my concerns. We had the conversation with the folks from Grande Prairie council, of course, who are up in the gallery. These are critical issues that we consider very important. We want to make sure that going forward everybody understands. We've got a lot of folks who have worked on this project in Grande Prairie. We want to make sure that their concerns are addressed.

And I just want to say again that in a fine example of postpartisanship, our ability to work together as a group to make sure that this gets done . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, second supplemental.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you again, Madam Speaker. The minister quoted a number, and I was a little bit annoyed because I didn't hear it. I thought I heard \$765 million. That's good, but the question is: does that money just include the construction, or does that include all the money to equip the new hospital once the construction is finished?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms. Jansen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. So \$763 million is the complete budget for the project. If there are any other concerns that Clark has, of course, we will address them as we go through, but we agreed to this budget in 2016 as the budget for the project. Clark has agreed that that is the budget going forward, so we are confident with someone with Clark's reputation. We know that they have an excellent track record of completing complex health care facilities and completing them on time. Of course, the Stanton Territorial hospital renewal project in Yellowknife is a prime example of that, so we're confident that . . .

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Adoption Regulations

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Last year this House voted unanimously in support of my private member's Bill 206, the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Adoption Advertising) Amendment Act, 2017. This bill would allow prospective parents to be able to post profiles online and help them with the enormous backlog of families looking to complete their loving family. The bill has still not been proclaimed. To the minister. I asked you for

an update on these issues on April 10. Have you finished drafting regulations, and if not, why not?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Speaker. All children deserve a safe, welcoming, and loving home, and adoptive families play a very critical role in helping to ensure that children in our province get exactly that. We share the member's commitment to ensuring that the adoption process gives both children and parents the best possible outcomes. We're currently consulting with Albertans on next steps, but we need to take the time to get this right.

The Deputy Speaker: First supplemental.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Well, I recently received a message from a constituent, and the quote is:

I am wondering when the regulations [for adoption law] will take place as we are quite hopeful that this may give us a chance to finally find a way to adopt a child. [We've] been waiting for over 4 years to be matched.

Four years. To the minister: what do you have to say to these adoptive parents across Alberta who are desperately waiting for the proclamation of this legislation to help them finally complete their families?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Like I said, we want to take the time that we need in order to get these changes right. In order to do that, we're talking to young people, to families, to parents, to organizations and working together to look for improvements. I know the Conservatives have no problems rushing through changes to make life harder for families, but we are not planning to do that.

Mrs. Aheer: Madam Speaker, it's too bad that a partisan attack has to come on a piece of legislation that was actually, you know, passed unanimously in this House. I do believe that the questions that I'm asking are relevant to the fact that this minister has not reported back to me since April of last year when I asked what is happening with the regulations on this legislation so that families can actually go out and adopt and to increase the process to get rid of the backlog. My question is: can the minister please provide the House, then, with the date that you have instructed your department to have . . .

2:40

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I've been talking very closely also to potential adoptive families about it. These are very complex issues, and it's incredibly important for both the children and for those families that we get it right. I know it's strange to hear we're actually taking the time to consult with Albertans rather than just talking to used car salesmen. But, you know, on this side of the House we're really committed to having the backs of those Albertans and fighting for those families and fighting for those children and taking the time to ensure that we invest best in the future for those children.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Acadia.

Educational Curriculum Redesign

Ms Payne: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Our world has changed since many parts of the current K to 12 curricula were written, with the widespread use of the Internet and smart phones as just one example. We all want our children to succeed both in school and in the modern world. How will the curriculum review ensure that Alberta children graduate with a world-class education and the ability to lead our province and economy into the future?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Certainly, we are very proud of the work that we are doing to modernize our curriculum here in the province of Alberta. Some of the subject areas were more than 30 years old, and certainly we wanted to integrate those curricula for different subjects together as well. We've had industry leaders. We've had banks. We've had energy. We've had universities, computer programmers, and the list goes on. Literally, thousands of Albertans have helped to build the curriculum to where it is today.

Ms Payne: Madam Speaker, today's students face an increasingly complex world. In my constituency I regularly hear calls for increased financial literacy, greater understanding of indigenous peoples, and a stronger health component, particularly for physical and mental well-being. How has the curriculum review addressed these critical issues?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Certainly, our curriculum for K to 4 right now, which you can see online at Alberta Education, is focusing on basic skills, those foundational skills where kids can be feeling confident about their basic mathematic skills, learning how to read, learning how to do computational thinking as a precursor to coding, all of these things working together based on a platform, a foundation, of confidence. I know as a teacher myself that when a student is confident and they're loved and they have the security from the school, that is a precondition to being successful in school.

The Deputy Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Some have been critical of the curriculum review, including saying that they would throw out all of this work. What does the minister say to that?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Certainly, we have now had consultation and interaction with more than a hundred thousand Albertans, and the conversation that we're having around curriculum is helping to strengthen, quite frankly, our entire school system. Any suggestion that the opposition would take this curriculum and all of this work and put it through the shredder I think is an indication of a basic lack of understanding of all of the work that has gone on and a basic lack of understanding of what Albertans want for a 21st-century education in this province.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, before we continue with Members' Statements, I've had a request to briefly return to Introduction of Guests.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Deputy Speaker: Go ahead, hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Introduction of Guests

(continued)

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the House for allowing me to rise to introduce my guests. It is my personal pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly an outstanding group of small-business people from an industry association I belonged to for 30 years who are dedicated to maintaining high professional standards and providing valuable diligent service to their clients. Here today are constituents of the MLA for Calgary-Bow, Brad Mitchell, the CEO of AREA, and Matthew McMillan, their advocacy adviser, as well as 30 members of the Alberta Real Estate Association. AREA represents over 10,500 realtors from across this province. They're meeting in Edmonton this week for their annual Government Liaison Days conference. AREA is a vital part of Alberta's real estate sector and an advocate for a healthy, transparently regulated market for buyers, sellers, industry members, and all Albertans as well. I'd ask my guests to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce a number of guests who are here for the tabling of Bill 27, the Joint Governance of Public Sector Pension Plans Act, which I'll do shortly. They are the United Nurses association's president, Heather Smith; the Alberta Federation of Labour's president, Gil McGowan, and secretary-treasurer, Siobhan Vipond; and the Alberta Fire Fighters Association's president, Craig Macdonald. If they can all stand up.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I just would like to recognize a number of other people that have worked very hard towards joint governance on pensions for a long time on behalf of their membership. In the interest of time I'll just say their names. If they could rise as I speak their names, please. To cover off the ends here, we have Nancy Furlong, James Niven,* Karen Kuprys, Dave Climenhaga, Dave Cournoyer, Richard West, Elisabeth Ballermann, Janice Kube, Donna Price, Lola Barrett, Mike Parker, Trudy Thompson, Jerry Toews, Donna Farquharson, Chris Gallaway, Elizabeth Johansson, Marle Roberts, Doug Short, D'Arcy Lanovaz, Elliott Davis, and Tom Fuller. Thank you for your work. Please extend the traditional warm welcome.

Members' Statements

(continued)

Transgender Day of Remembrance

Connolly: Madam Speaker, today is the international Transgender Day of Remembrance, a day to honour and remember those who have lost their lives to hatred and transphobia and have been victims of violence, abuse, and discrimination because of their gender identity and expression. As allies we will not waiver in our commitment to support safe and inclusive spaces. My heart goes out to every individual who has to hide who they are for fear of discrimination. To the LGBTQ2S-plus community here in Alberta: we will always be here for you, and we will always support you. No

one should live in fear of violence or harassment. No one should be discriminated against, denied basic services, or lose their life because of who they are.

Being an ally takes more than empty platitudes. An ally calls out friends when they spread hatred and fear. Last week John Carpay, a man the Conservative leader compared to Rosa Parks, stood on stage at the Rebel media conference and told the crowd that the pride flag is the exact same as the Nazi flag. When asked to denounce the hate-filled comments of yet another UCP insider, the Leader of the Opposition couldn't seem to run away from his responsibility fast enough. Madam Speaker, the Conservative leader says that he's an ally, but actions speak louder than words.

Today, on Transgender Day of Remembrance, I really hope the Conservative leader takes a moment to reflect on the impact his actions are having and the damage this rhetoric is causing. We will continue to fight for LGBTQ2S-plus rights in our province, our country, and around the world. I'm so proud to be part of a government that has taken historic steps to create a more inclusive and welcoming province, including adding gender identity and gender expression to the Alberta Human Rights Act. We can honour the over 369 lives lost to transphobia this year by taking a stand against violence, harassment, and bullying and keep working towards a safe, inclusive, and welcoming place for all Albertans.

The facts are clear, Madam Speaker. GSAs save lives, LGBTQ rights are human rights, and it's time that the Conservatives got on board.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

Humility in Politics

Mr. Stier: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As many of my fellow members know, after representing the good people of Livingstone-Macleod for two terms, I've chosen not to seek re-election. I want all of my constituents to know that it has been the honour of my lifetime to serve as an MLA. I worked hard to advance the cause of efficient and responsible government.

If my time here has taught me one thing, it's that this institution works best when those entrusted with the awesome responsibility of governing actively seek to remain humble. Humility in government means respecting the voters' wishes and putting the public good ahead of ideological dispositions. A humble government, for example, would not institute the largest tax increase in our province's history without an electoral mandate, without meaningful consultation, and against the wishes of the majority of Albertans. When governments fail to remain humble, they fall, to be replaced by leaders who are willing to listen.

In this regard I'm heartened by the rebirth and rise of the United Conservative movement within our United Conservative Party. Throughout the unity process there were many doubters among the chattering classes, who told us that there were too many hurdles to overcome, yet our movement was able to overcome every challenge for one simple reason: humility. This, more than any other quality, is what has been missing from Alberta politics. With his commitment to servant leadership our leader has demonstrated a deeper understanding of what is necessary to rebuild our province as a beacon of hope and opportunity. He will serve Albertans well.

Next spring I will leave this place as an MLA for the last time. Thanks to the restoration of honest humility and conservative statesmanship within the Conservative movement I will be able to do so with my head held high. I've never been so confident that Alberta's best days are yet to come.

Thank you.

*This spelling could not be verified at the time of publication.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

2:50

Rural Crime Strategy

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Last spring I rose in this House to speak on Alberta's rural crime reduction plan. Rural property crime was spiking, and action needed to be taken, so our government listened to the needs of Albertans and in concert with the RCMP came up with a plan. That plan has already reduced rural property crime by 11 per cent. By expanding rural crime reduction units across Alberta, adding Crown prosecutors, adding crime-mapping experts, and providing more civilian support, the new tactics are already starting to make a difference. Our investments are working.

I have seen this first-hand in my own constituency of Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater. For example, not long ago break-ins were spiralling out of control in Calling Lake. Residents told me heartbreaking stories of having possessions stolen and having their privacy violated. However, a crime reduction unit was able to come to Calling Lake, and in close co-operation with Athabasca RCMP and the local community break-ins have been dramatically reduced.

It's not just my constituency where the strategy is working. The RCMP has attributed the reduction of crime across the province to the strategy. But we know that not every community has seen these reductions yet, and that's why we will keep fighting to make sure that they do.

When the Alberta crime reduction plan was voted on in the spring, I was amazed to see the UCP oppose it. This issue was more important than what side of the House we sit on. It is about making life safer for Albertans. I am grateful for the Minister of Justice's work and to be part of a government committed to reducing rural crime. But there is still much work that needs to be done. We will continue to listen to Albertans, work with law enforcement and with our local community partners, and continue with the strategy that has been proven to work to ensure that Albertans are safer.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Energy Policies

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Recently Alberta's Premier has asked the federal government to buy more railcars to ship oil to market. After years of participating in activities that hindered this very thing, it's odd that only now this government understands how important our energy industry is to this province's financial well-being. For years private energy companies have been attempting to build pipelines but have been prevented by a narrow, ideological mentality that now sees Alberta's oil sands stranded and completely land locked. Now we are in a situation where railcars are the only short-term solution to accomplish what private industry has been trying to do for years to get their product to market.

In recent years we have seen the result of displacing products that cannot be moved by pipeline in favour of petroleum products that can. When you realize that private industry was fully prepared to invest in and build the Trans Mountain pipeline, it becomes crystal clear that the need for government intervention was unnecessary had they simply gotten out of the way of private enterprise.

Another important example of this is the approach being taken with Alberta's coal plants. The early decommissioning of coal plants will cost Albertans billions of dollars and only contribute to an already out-of-control provincial debt, billions that we can only ill afford.

As a Conservative I believe strongly in smaller government, which also includes less government involvement in private industry. As a rule if something is financially viable and worth while, private investors will usually make it happen on their own.

We are now experiencing a situation that this government's ideological beliefs helped create. Well, Madam Speaker, it's only money, taxpayers' money, Albertans' money.

Notices of Motions

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'll try again. I would like to at the appropriate time move the following motion pursuant to Standing Order 42.

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to immediately release an updated fiscal projection given that Budget 2018 did not account for the delay in the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion and the Keystone XL pipeline or the significant differential in oil prices that is impacting Alberta jobs and the economy.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Introduction of Bills

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

Bill 27

Joint Governance of Public Sector Pension Plans Act

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 27, Joint Governance of Public Sector Pension Plans Act.

Today, Madam Speaker, we are joined by a number of labour leaders who have been pushing for this change for decades. For almost 30 years these practical changes have been promised by a series of Tory Finance ministers, never to move forward. I'm proud that we are finally introducing these changes. The proposed legislation would transition the local authorities pension plan, the public services pension plan, and the special forces pension plan to a joint governance structure. This structure will give employees and employers an equal say in how their pension plans are managed. By giving equal voice to employees and employers, pension decisions will no longer happen to the owners of the plan; they will be made by the owners of the plan.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 27 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Madam Speaker, I rise to table five copies of a report prepared by Alex Markowski, energy market analyst, EDC Associates Ltd., at the request of the Independent Power Producers Society of Alberta, that demonstrates that the Balancing Pool was not consistent with the managing of terminating the PPAs in a commercial manner, thus resulting in the loss of almost \$750 million to the Balancing Pool and approximately \$2.9 billion to the electricity generators of this province, further confirming that the NDP government has been manipulating electricity prices.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other tablings?

Hon. members, I have a tabling, five copies of the November 19, 2018, House leaders agreement on Oral Question Period and members' statement rotations.

Point of Order

Offending the Practices of the Assembly

Questions outside Government Responsibility

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, we have a number of points of order. I believe the first one is for the hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have got a matter of two points of order today relating to the same incident but relating under the same section, referring to the Standing Orders of the Alberta Legislative Assembly, section 23(1), that "A member will be called to order by the Speaker if, in the Speaker's opinion, that Member . . . introduces any matter in debate that offends the practices and precedents of the Assembly."

Now, there are two flowing from this, one of which I have the benefit of very clear precedent from *Erskine May Parliamentary Practice*, 24th edition. The other I would request that your office investigate. I have not had the benefit of finding the specific section that would be considered in violation of "any matter in debate that offends the practices and precedents of the Assembly."

During the first set of questions the Leader of the Official Opposition asked the Premier – I do not have the benefit of the Blues, if you'll forgive me – to get oil producers in Alberta to come together to cut production. In my first section of this I do believe that there are established precedents that it is out of order or, in the words of our standing orders, "introduces any matter in debate that offends the practices and precedents of the Assembly," that it is, in fact, a violation of the precedents and practices of this Assembly to call for breaking the law.

3:00

Now, the law I refer to is the Competition Act of Canada, sections 45, 46, and 48. I will just briefly read these sections into the record.

45(1) Every person commits an offence who, with a competitor of that person with respect to a product, conspires, agrees or arranges

- (a) to fix, maintain, increase or control the price for the supply of the product;
- (b) to allocate sales, territories, customers or markets for the production or supply of the product; or
- (c) to fix, maintain, control, prevent, lessen or eliminate the production or supply of the product . . .

46(1) Any corporation, wherever incorporated, that carries on business in Canada and that implements, in whole or in part in Canada, a directive, instruction, intimation of policy or other communication to the corporation or any person from a person in a country other than Canada who is in a position to direct or influence the policies of the corporation, which communication is for the purpose of giving effect to a conspiracy, combination, agreement or arrangement entered into outside Canada that, if entered into in Canada, would have been in contravention of section 45.

Then section 48 elaborates on this.

In short, sections 45, 46, and 48 of the Competition Act are quite clear that other than under supply management organized industries it is illegal for any business in Canada to actively collude on price-fixing and production-fixing. It is illegal. I would seek your wisdom, Madam Speaker, in determining if it is in violation of the practices and precedents of this Assembly for a member to actively advocate breaking a major federal statute.

The second part of what I'm referencing here is also under section 23(1) of the standing orders of this Assembly: "introduces any matter in debate that offends the practices and precedents of the Assembly." For this I will turn to – forgive my pronunciation.

Mr. Mason: *Erskine May*.

Mr. Fildebrandt: *Erskine May*. I'll have to take it from Obi-Wan here.

Chapter 20(3) under Outline of the Business of the House of Commons, Order of Business:

It is not in order in a question to ask for action to deal with matters under the control of local or other statutory authorities, or of bodies or persons not responsible to the Government such as banks or companies (except where there is a government shareholding), the Stock Exchange, employers' organizations and trades unions; or to ask for action regarding or information about the activities of such persons or bodies which Ministers have no power to perform or obtain. Questions, however, have been asked about information which the Government collects on such bodies.

Now, our government may own a pipeline, but that is federal. Our government does not own these oil companies. Therefore, it is out of order and against the practices and precedents of this House to be asking the government to intervene in private businesses or to be asking questions about interference in such businesses, as outlined in chapter 20(3) of *Erskine May*.

There are very good reasons for these precedents and rulings here. Competition is fundamental to the functioning of any free-enterprise economy. In the absence of socialism or free enterprise we get crony capitalism. Crony capitalism arises when we have private interest at public expense. To have the government actively engaging in price-fixing, which we already see in supply management areas, to see the government actually engage in limiting competition among businesses in Canada is beyond my understanding of how it could be in any alignment with free-enterprise principles.

These are important laws that we have in the Competition Act to prevent exactly this kind of crony capitalism that emerged in the early 20th century. I would ask . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, I think you've explained your point of order. We're starting to move into a debate, and that's not the point of a point of order.

Mr. Fildebrandt: These are important laws. I would seek your advisement if it is in contravention of the practices and precedents of this Assembly to advocate breaking the law and, further, to deem if the questions are in order, period, from chapter 20(3) of *Erskine May* relating to questions beyond the scope of the government.

The Deputy Speaker: The Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Madam Speaker. There's a lot to possibly be said for that rant, but I don't really know if it's worth this House's time, quite frankly. It's the first time I've ever seen, though, a member rise in this House on a point of order and then outright admit that they can't find anything inside any standing orders along the way that show that they have a point of order and then ask the Speaker to conduct – at one point there it sounded like he wanted you to conduct a criminal investigation, civil investigation; I don't know – some sort of investigation, which, of course, is not your role, which I'm certain you will explain shortly to the member.

With that said, let's be very clear. The Leader of the Opposition did not call for anything illegal in his question. He was very clear

that any sort of voluntary things that are undertaken by corporations in this province to deal with the crisis that we now face would have to be within the laws of the land. He was clear inside the Chamber and outside the Chamber on that fact. I think it's really ridiculous and unbecoming of the member to accuse – I would point of order this, but of course I can't point of order in a point of order, Madam Speaker – a member of this House, the Leader of the Official Opposition, of attempting to do something illegal or criminal. It's extremely rich, I would say, coming from that member in particular.

I will close with this. It is a matter of debate, clearly, and this member should stop wasting this Assembly's time.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Madam Speaker. I have sort of a mixed view on this point of order. I'd like to start by responding to the Official Opposition House Leader's critique of the hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks' point, that he didn't have any legitimate citations. I don't think that's true. He argued that under Standing Order 23(l) a member may not introduce "any matter in debate that offends the practices and precedents of the Assembly."

Then he went on to allege that the questions violated certain sections of the Competition Act. Now, that's a worthwhile point of discussion, but I'm not a lawyer, and I'm not versed in competition law. I don't know if the hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks is, but I think it would be very hard for anyone, including yourself in the chair, Madam Speaker, to make a ruling with respect to the legality or illegality of any statement that the Leader of the Official Opposition may have made. In that sense, I'm not confident that we can dispose of this matter through a point of order here in the House. I do think it's an interesting point. I think, quite frankly, that the Leader of the Opposition is guilty of a number of transgressions. Whether or not he has violated the Competition Act is something I will leave for others to decide.

With respect to that matter, I don't believe that this is actually a point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the point of order?

Mr. Fildebrandt: Can I just add something?

3:10

The Deputy Speaker: No. You have already spoken, hon. member.

I will rule that this is not a point of order and just make the comment that simply because a member in the House states that something is illegal does not necessarily make it so, and it is not the role of this Assembly to determine how the law should be applied. Notwithstanding, it was an interesting argument. I appreciate the time and effort you put into it, but it is not a point of order.

Moving on to the next, the hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Point of Order

Allegations against a Member

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise under Standing Order 23(h), (i), and (j) in regard to a response from the Premier to the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition today in question period. There was an exchange taking place in regard to pipelines and the history of pipelines in this province. The Premier got quite upset with the Leader of the Opposition and then implied that he was not telling the truth and was essentially lying to the Chamber, which I think is disappointing. I think it's further even more disappointing when, in fact, the Leader of the Opposition gave

direct quotes that make it very, very clear that the Premier did speak against Northern Gateway, did speak against Keystone and at no time supported it, which, quite frankly, is shameful. I understand why she would be ashamed of that now, but her telling the Leader of the Opposition that he was lying or not telling the truth is extraordinarily disappointing, particularly given that all of her comments are on tape.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. In respect of this matter, this gets to the approach that's been adopted by some members opposite, including the House leader and the leader, of twisting statements that have been made by people in the past or in the House in the present tense. The allegation that the Leader of the Official Opposition made was something to the effect that the Premier had urged – and I don't have the Blues – had communicated on behalf of the province of Alberta to the federal government with respect to the disposition of matters relating to the Northern Gateway pipeline, and that is absolutely untrue and is not proven by any of the suggestions and quotes that the opposition has made.

This is a question, I think, that we need to be a little bit careful about. It's a fine point to provide some quotes. All of us in this place have evolved in our views, and I want to say that this government has done nothing but act responsibly with respect to the question of pipelines. And to take statements from the past and twist them into something that they are not is, in fact, something that is at variance with the truth. If you twist something enough, it becomes an untruth, and I think that the Premier was making that point. I believe that the Leader of the Official Opposition does say many untrue things in this House, and I think the record can show that.

It's up to you, Madam Speaker, to decide whether or not the form that she used to communicate that concept, that view, was parliamentary or not. I believe that it was entirely parliamentary. She did not suggest that the Leader of the Official Opposition was lying.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the point of order?

Hon. members, I have reviewed the Blues. The hon. Premier did not accuse the Leader of the Official Opposition of intentional falsehood or lying. As noted in *Beauchesne's* paragraph 494, "it is not unparliamentary . . . to criticize statements made by Members as being contrary to the facts." Again, this is a difference in how things are interpreted and not a point of order.

I'll just mention that the third point of order was withdrawn.

Do you have another point of order, hon. member?

Mr. Nixon: We're on mine, then? I'm just making sure that we're on the same page.

The Deputy Speaker: It's yours, yes.

Point of Order

Addressing Questions through the Chair

Mr. Nixon: I will give you some reference points. *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules & Forms*, sixth edition, page 142:

It is the custom in the House that no Member should refer to another by name. Members should be referred to in the third person as "the Honourable Member for" A Minister is normally designated by the portfolio held: "The Honourable Minister of"

So Health or something along those lines.

Also, Madam Speaker, in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, third edition, 2017, on page 510, under the section dealing with Principles and Guidelines for Oral Questions, it also says very clearly: “Finally, all questions and answers must be directed through the Chair.”

I rise on a point of order in regard to a response by the hon. minister of the environment to the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake. The hon. minister of the environment was frustrated, as emotions sometimes get high in this place, which is fair, but certainly was not speaking through you and, in fact, was hanging over her desk pointing at the hon. member extremely aggressively. You’ll see from the Blues that, again, Madam Speaker, this is what this government does.

Ms Phillips: That’s not true.

Mr. Nixon: It’s very true, and the tape will show that. In addition to that, she was definitely, the Blues will show, talking directly to the member and then, later on in the answer to the question, turned and started to speak directly to the Leader of the Opposition, who was not even in the exchange of the question. It’s not within the practice of this House. This has come up several times. The right thing to do is to apologize and withdraw – again, emotions get high – and move on.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I would suggest that – and I don’t have the Blues, but it wouldn’t surprise me in any question or answer in this place that some members occasionally lapse into referring directly to the person they’re engaged with. That happens on both sides. I don’t know if that happened in this case. But in terms of the minister of the environment looming over members way over on the other side, there are not very many people that she actually looms over, if I may say, certainly not the Opposition House Leader, so I reject that characterization. Obviously, emotions were running high, but to suggest that there was some threatening or intimidating body language: I was watching the minister when she made her answer, and I reject that characterization completely.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the point of order? The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to add my two cents to this conversation, for whatever it’s worth. In fact, conversations were a little bit heated earlier today in question period in the exchange between the minister of the environment and my hon. colleague from Innisfail-Sylvan Lake. She did lean, not loom, over her desk in a very aggressive manner, not speaking through the chair in any way, shape, or form. We’ve had this discussion yesterday and previous days during this session already, and the government continues to refuse to speak to and through the chair instead of directly and aggressively towards members opposite in this Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, I have the benefit of the Blues, so I do know what was said. As to any kind of motions or allegations I will have to say that the hon. minister of environment is one individual who in particular engages very, very much through the Speaker at all times, so I don’t believe that there would have been any kind of threatening or any direction against another member in this House. It’s again a good reminder that we don’t do that, but there’s no point of order.

On the last point of order?

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you . . .

Mr. Mason: Point of order, Madam Speaker.

Point of Order Exhibits

Mr. Mason: The hon. member opposite just showed his phone with a picture that he claimed showed the minister of the environment in the incident we’re talking about. If that member is taking photographs of other members in the House, it’s a gross violation of the rules.

Mr. Nixon: Madam Speaker, the hon. member – I just checked with his phone – is not taking photographs. Again, talk about accusing members of something they didn’t do. The member was pointing and showing his colleagues pictures of the environment minister at a protest. That’s what he was referring to his colleagues.

Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, I will also remind you that it isn’t appropriate to be waving around props, whether it’s your phone or whatever it might be. It simply incites disorder. Again, that’s not a point of order.

Can we get to the final point of order? The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Point of Order Preambles to Supplementary Questions

Mrs. Pitt: Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to make a point of some of the actions on behalf of yourself that happened during today’s question period. There was not one, not two, but three speakers of the Official Opposition that were interrupted by yourself during their questions when there were very, very clearly appropriate connector words in all of these sentences. Furthermore, when members of the government, not one, not two, but three, did extremely similar questions, although not really hard-hitting like the Official Opposition’s, you didn’t interrupt one single member. In fact, you did give a warning – I’ll give you that – but it was at the end of the question, whereas when it was members of the Official Opposition, you cut them off and in some cases didn’t let them actually resume the question. I would just ask that you call it fair and square for all members of this House. I think that speaks to the order that this Assembly should have, and I think that is something that Albertans expect to be happening in this Assembly. I ask that you call it fair and square from now on.

3:20

Mr. Mason: Well, Madam Speaker, that would normally be considered completely unacceptable by the Speaker. In this place you can do one of two things if you’re not happy with the Speaker’s ruling. One, you can rise under the standing orders and ask the Speaker to explain the reasons for a ruling. Otherwise, you can make a motion of nonconfidence, which then immediately triggers a vote, and if the vote carries, the Speaker is removed from their position. I think what we just heard from the deputy whip in the opposition was completely contrary to the rules and practices of this House and a real cheap shot, quite frankly. I’m surprised that it’s allowed.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I know that the hon. Government House Leader is trying to characterize this as something else, but my understanding is that the hon. deputy

opposition House leader rose under 13(2), which allows us to ask the Speaker to explain a decision that the Speaker made. That was the context in which I heard the question, and I think that since it's within our standing orders, it's not nearly as offensive as what the Government House Leader would try to paint.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members – and I do appreciate Calgary-Hays for that clarification – I did indeed take the comment under that. That was my perspective, that it was questioning my ruling. However, the member is just cautioned for another time to make sure that you do clarify that and quote your source, that that's what you are trying to do because it's far too easy to come across as something that you just don't do in this Assembly, questioning the Speaker's ruling.

I will just say that I reminded everyone at the beginning of question period, at the beginning of question 4 that there were to be no preambles on supplementaries. You're all aware of the time limits, and that's the way it is. How you want to interpret that, what the content of that question is is a different matter, but we have time limits, and we have rules, and the rules say: no preambles on supplementaries. That's the end of that matter.

Motions under Standing Order 42

The Deputy Speaker: Moving on, I believe we're at Standing Order 42. Yes. Go ahead, hon. member.

Budget 2018 Update

Mr. Ellis:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to immediately release an updated fiscal projection given that Budget 2018 did not account for the delay in the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion and the Keystone XL pipeline or the significant differential in oil prices that is impacting Alberta jobs and the economy.

Mr. Ellis: Wonderful. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It certainly is with great urgency that I'd like to propose the motion. I'd like to certainly explain my reasons for this urgency; I may call it a crisis. You know, MLAs are being asked to vote for programs and make fiscal decisions without a clear understanding of the province's finances. Budget 2018 did not account for the current oil price differential. The government repeatedly insisted that their budget is based on two out of the three pipelines being built. In fact, I'd like to note *Hansard*, Energy's estimates on April 9, 2018, where the Energy minister said: "We need, as I mentioned earlier, two out of the three pipelines. If Kinder doesn't go, we still have [Keystone] XL and line 3. Like, we need two of the three."

I'd also like to mention the Q1 update, August 31, 2018, by the Finance minister, who said, quote: two out of the three of them are necessary to happen; Keystone XL – I think if you look at the budget book, page 104, it shows that it can take a lot of capacity far into the future, so it's an important pipeline for sure. Unquote.

The Finance minister also indicated, in a media availability on April 10, 2018, quote: we built pipeline revenues into our path to balance projections; we're confident all the pipelines will be built, so we're just going to keep going down this road. Unquote.

I'd also like to mention that this expectation was built into the budget for this government. The fiscal plan, page 48, says, "The Enbridge Line 3 replacement pipeline is anticipated to start operations by 2019, while the TransCanada Keystone XL and Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain Expansion pipelines are expected by 2021."

Also, Madam Speaker, fiscal plan, page 84:

Beginning in 2021, additional revenue resulting from the federally-imposed carbon price tied to the construction of the Trans Mountain Pipeline will be used to support vital public services as the province stays on track to balance the budget by 2023-24.

Now, this month's court ruling, Madam Speaker, delaying Keystone XL and the ongoing delay of the Trans Mountain expansion put this budget expectation into serious doubt. The fiscal plan assumed that these pipelines would be built and still put the province on track for \$100 billion of debt.

Debt under the PCs that I was a part of during that last six months of their 44-year reign: the 2014-2015 actual was, I believe, \$12.865 billion. I certainly will note that there was no borrowing for operations in that particular plan, and it certainly was the start of the oil crisis that we have currently been facing over the last number of years.

Now, the 2018-2019 budget estimate is looking at \$54.220 billion in debt, and that's a 321 per cent increase. The 2021 budget target of . . .

Mr. Mason: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, we have a point of order.

Point of Order Speaking to Urgency

Mr. Mason: Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. Well, section 42 of the Standing Orders specifically says that the member who's introducing such a motion can explain the urgency of it, but the hon. member is not doing that. He's giving a recitation of various financial documents that the government has tabled, but I don't see or hear an argument for urgency. He's essentially arguing his case, which should only happen after unanimous consent is given.

Mr. Nixon: Madam Speaker, the Government House Leader may not have noticed, but the Speaker last time, in a discussion about a similar type of motion, allowed a government member close to 18 minutes or so, roughly, if you check *Hansard*, and our member at the same time about 14 minutes. I do think that it is fair that the member should shortly get to the point of urgency on that, but I think the Government House Leader should just let him finish saying what he has to say, please.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, it's not just strictly the amount of time that's taken; it's the content and the direction that it's going. I'd encourage you to get to the point and explain the urgency of the debate, please.

Mr. Ellis: Yeah. You know, Madam Speaker, I certainly mentioned in the first part of my submission the urgency of the debate.

Debate Continued

Mr. Ellis: I will conclude by saying this. The people of Alberta, I believe, have a right to know, and the differential in the oil prices is at a national crisis level, affecting and impacting people, not just businesses but real people throughout this province. I think that it's important that we urge the government in a nonpartisan factor so that they can explain to the people of Alberta what this differential in oil price is having on the impact of the budget of this particular government, including, of course, the delays in the Keystone XL pipeline as well as the delays in the Trans Mountain pipeline, where we are not seeing a single inch of that pipeline being built. It is at a crisis level that we are asking and urging the government in a

nonpartisan factor to ensure that we as the people of Alberta know what is going on in regard to this financial crisis.

Thank you.

3:30

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, there's been a request for unanimous consent under Standing Order 42.

[Unanimous consent denied]

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders

Third Reading

Bill 19

An Act to Improve the Affordability and Accessibility of Post-secondary Education

[Debate adjourned November 7: Mr. Hanson speaking]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's always a pleasure to rise in the House and speak to legislation. Today is no exception as we go forward speaking about Bill 19, An Act to Improve the Affordability and Accessibility of Post-secondary Education. Earlier this session the Minister of Advanced Education tabled Bill 19 in the Legislature. Among other things, starting in the 2020-21 academic year, this bill proposes to legislate an inflation-based cap on increases to domestic student and apprenticeship tuitions. The bill proposes that the cap be based on the annual change in Alberta's consumer price index. If passed, the act would amend the Post-secondary Learning Act to implement the province's revised tuition framework.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Also of note, Bill 19 originally gave the minister power to regulate noninstructional fees and international student tuitions. The Advanced Education minister, through this bill, would also have the power to dictate a tuition freeze but in the event of a required increase in tuition, as said a minute ago, would be unable to raise said tuition higher than Alberta's consumer price index. Also, exceptional tuition increases on individual programs will be determined by regulations set by the minister.

Another alteration that the legislation proposes: changes in student representation on boards of governors, by having two student representatives at all institutions. If the school in question has a graduate program, the number of student representatives on a board of governors would be three.

It is clear that the students' groups will likely be quite taken with the fact that tuition fees would have a cap on them. This is something that advanced education students in Alberta have been asking for for quite a while. I'm sure that the students' groups would also be onside with the increase in the representation on the board of governors. Madam Speaker, this is great. Students need a voice, and they're receiving a little more of that voice in this bill. I guess it could really be stated that the major stakeholder of postsecondary institutions is the students that use those facilities, so when we talk about governance of those that actually are attending the college or university, being more fairly represented at the table where decisions that may actually affect them are made, I think, should be well received by the students.

Bill 19 also allows colleges to transition to university status without legislative amendments, which of course will streamline the process should this action be required. Madam Speaker, in my

elected cycle I've had situations similar to this being brought forward by folks from the town of Drumheller who wanted to be involved with Red Deer College.

The bill also makes a few changes to the names of the different types of postsecondary institutions. Also, there will be some level of predictability to institutions if Bill 19 receives royal assent. All in all, the legislation does indeed constitute a lot of changes, but I think that for the most part the changes follow what students and the institutions have been seeking for some time.

Now, I guess one of the perhaps negative parts of the bill is that the Minister of Advanced Education, upon passing of this bill, originally would have too much discretion over noninstructional fees and international student tuitions. But with the amendment that was passed in the Committee of the Whole, I'm glad to see that student councils will have to sign off on this now and that if a board chooses to raise it, it will be to just cover the costs. It won't be profit driven. We will have to watch to see what the final result actually ends up looking like with regard to international students.

I myself did not seek a university education, Madam Speaker, although I did attend Red Deer College for one year. There were some courses there – I think in slang we called it beer drinking 101. I lined up my life's work after that entirely on my decision, on my own direction. But my son went to college, went to NAIT, and has worked diligently on his oil field instrumentation certificate although with the downturn in the oil patch, he's come back to our family farm and now manages that. He manages that to a great degree, and I'm very proud of his leadership in that position.

Madam Speaker, as parents we certainly weren't rich parents, far from it. What we had we earned by hard work and saving and appreciated the opportunity that the government of the day allowed us. I'm sorry I digress in that regard, but I can say that my wife and I worked very hard and did without in many cases – I think my wife would probably attribute that in greater volume than I do – so that our son could have the ability to explore another career if he so desired. My family is extremely proud of that option that our son has. That is always a good start for a child, and I think most would agree. We also did the similar situation with our daughter who now works in the city here for Enbridge and has escaped many of the corporate layoffs to date.

As much as I had paid for our children's education and had a child or children enter the postsecondary system, I guess I did not realize what instructional fees, at the time, actually were. I had a brief interlude of that myself, but I did not know what they now cost. My wife or I just wrote the cheque.

As a result of that, I looked up what noninstructional fees were at the University of Alberta. This is what I discovered. Those fees at that institution include student health and wellness fees, a student academic support fee, students' union membership, students' union dedicated fees, student union health plan, student union dental plan, a physical activity and wellness centre fee, and a U-Pass fee, which provides eligible students unlimited access to regular Edmonton, St. Albert, and Strathcona county transit fees for fall, winter, spring, and summer academic terms. This fee is assessed to all students registered in on-campus courses in the fall and winter terms. There is also an athletic centre recreation fee. The list is quite onerous. For an on-campus, full-time student those fees add up to just under \$1,000. That alone is a substantial fee, especially for a student.

I understand that with the passing of Bill 19, should there come a time when a new fee in this area is proposed, students will have the opportunity to approve those fees, and if approved, they won't be costed for profit. As an aside, I don't necessarily blame the institution that levied those fees. They have to recover their costs. At the time they were finding that their streams of revenue were sort of drying up, so any way to recoup those expenses, in my

opinion, was a requirement, some might say a form of a business requirement, in order to keep their heads above the financial water. I think you'll find out that students should be pleased to see that the regulations will now include certain caveats to those noninstructional fees, because, Madam Speaker, student fees, as I just pointed out, can certainly be a significant cost to students.

3:40

Something else that is good to see is the fact that the minister has said that the Alberta institutions will be required to tell international students exactly what those tuitions may be or would cost for the entire length of their degree-earning process. Those numbers have been kind of up in the air in the past for both the institution and the student.

A provincial tuition freeze has been on for some time in Alberta, and the institutions were not able to increase general tuition, which would of course have increased the costs to international students. It was kind of a tight spot for an institution to be in, once again because sources of revenue for institutions were getting to be a smaller list. Without getting into the politics of the institution, as a person looking at this with no skin in the game, how else would the university proceed? The university was not able to use either domestic tuition or the government grant to subsidize international tuition fees, so the international students were somewhat being used as a revenue source themselves. I'm not saying that was good or bad; I'm only hoping to infer reality, merely a business decision again to stay above the waterline.

Once again, the minister has made it clear that international students will now know exactly what their education will cost them. It stops tuition for those international students from rising unexpectedly during their educational programs, which makes a lot of sense, very frankly. I believe that that will also be a part of regulations, so we will of course be watching to see what those regulations actually look like when the time comes.

Now, Madam Speaker, here we are in the fall session of the Fourth Session of the 29th Legislature, six to eight months out from a provincial election, and we still have one issue, one that constituents bring up on a regular basis to me and my caucus members. That issue is the carbon tax, and the carbon tax, as far as further learning institutions in Alberta are concerned, is becoming a large financial issue. It appears that it may become an even larger issue if and when the carbon tax increases. You talk about revenue streams drying up and institutions needing to cut some of their expenses in order to keep their tuitions in line. This falls into that discussion. Sixty-six per cent of Albertans have a terrible taste in their mouth because of that tax. They feel betrayed because the government forgot to mention the fact that if they were elected, they would submit Albertans to a tax which would change their way of life in a negative way in this province.

I know, Madam Speaker, that we're talking about Bill 19, and to stay on that track, trying to address affordability without postsecondary education – but I wonder if the minister has considered just how much the carbon tax costs these postsecondary institutions. I've heard some pretty large numbers bandied about. For one of the larger institutions in Alberta, in fact, it was well into the seven-digit numbers. Just like a farmer or a small-business man in Alberta or the average homeowner that has been forced to pay this tax, that was not part of the government's campaign, institutions were levied a carbon tax as well, I'm sure, in some cases severely injuring their cost-profit line. If the institution in question did not have that seven-digit carbon tax to pay annually, would the bottom line of that institution or of every institution that is forced to pay the carbon tax, for that matter, not be in a better position than they find themselves in now? It would of course be better for the

students than those facilities, better for the students' bottom line as well.

Universities and colleges don't heat themselves in the winter or cool themselves in the summer without the added expense of the carbon tax. Bus passes for students to get to or from their chosen institution of learning don't continue to go up for no reason at all. The city is forced to increase fees like that because it costs more for the city to run those buses as a result of this unadvertised tax. While finding legislative ideas that make education more accessible and affordable for our students is a gallant effort, let's not forget that one tax that really does weigh on the bottom line of our educational institutions.

In rural areas it also weighs on our school divisions, especially in the rural areas that have long distances to transport their children to education. Let's not forget who actually gets to pay that tax that makes life more difficult: the Alberta taxpayer, Madam Speaker. There's only one taxpayer in Alberta, the guy or gal that is always in the sights of the government finance guru that is always looking for more money. You can only go to the well so often. Perhaps government, considering that these publicly funded institutions in Alberta should get a break from that money-grabbing tax, could ease a lot of financial problems for those places that we send our children to for their further education.

Let's also not forget that when the carbon tax bill was before the House a couple of years ago, the Official Opposition stood in this Legislature and made that very recommendation to the government, that recommendation being that the government should not be adding cost to a student's further education by levelling the carbon tax on our postsecondary institutions. We pressed amendments to that bill. We talked about it in just about all of our speeches, and I think everyone in this House and all Albertans remember that this government went ahead, levied that tax, which has been making life more difficult rather than necessarily better for those that choose, in this case, Madam Speaker, further education.

And look, we in the Official Opposition certainly understand how hard students work to get a postsecondary education. It takes a lot to get a student through to graduation. Madam Speaker, I know that times two.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin.

Ms Goodridge: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour to rise today and speak to Bill 19, An Act to Improve Affordability and Accessibility of Post-secondary Education. Being a very proud graduate from the Campus Saint-Jean at the University of Alberta, I truly understand the importance of an excellent postsecondary education. I truly believe that I received the best education, and I know that I would not be here today without the lessons that I learned during my time at the Campus Saint-Jean. I had the opportunity to study political science, which helped to prepare me for my current position. The education I received shaped my future.

The Campus Saint-Jean is a very unique campus at the University of Alberta, that offers courses taught in French and offers a francophone learning environment. It is within Edmonton's francophone quarter. If any of you guys in the House haven't taken an opportunity to go and see the University of Alberta's Campus Saint-Jean, I would really welcome that you go and take a tour. I consider the Campus Saint-Jean as the crown jewel of the University of Alberta's crown, offering a fantastic opportunity for all those that study there and live nearby.

Part of the reason that I chose to study at the Campus Saint-Jean was an affordability factor. It was partially due to the fact that I was able to qualify for a substantially larger number of scholarships and complete my bachelor's degree without any debt. Being from Fort McMurray, I didn't qualify for student loans, and this was my opportunity to be able to complete an education. I was able to graduate without any debt, also due to the fact that I was able to get a very well-paid summer job through my time in university working at oil sands operations, which gave me both real-life job skills and much-needed funds to help pay for my high-quality education in French here in Alberta.

Now, there are many benefits of postsecondary education, and there are many postsecondary education institutions throughout Alberta, including seven in Calgary. In total those schools have about 88,000 students and more than 10,000 full-time employees. There are some major economic benefits for the Calgary region. Calgary Economic Development puts a dollar figure on the economic impact of Calgary's seven postsecondary institutions at about \$8.6 billion in additional income for the region in 2014-2015. That is a substantial amount of additional income. Over a lifetime the economic impact of higher education for the students, the taxpayer, and society in Alberta is in excess of \$180 billion. The study concluded that taxpayers benefit from a 17.6 per cent rate of return on investments in Calgary postsecondary institutions. It also determined that for every dollar invested, \$3.50 was generated in economic benefits. That's a pretty good return on investment. The total impact of research activities at the seven institutions in Calgary totalled \$663.3 million, including \$278.6 million in productivity gains.

3:50

Postsecondary education also provides a lot of societal gains; it's not just about economic impact. There's ample research that suggests that individuals that have been to a college, a university, or a postsecondary institution are more likely to engage in many civic activities, including volunteering at a higher rate, higher levels of donations, voting at a higher rate. They generally have a lower unemployment rate and are less likely to require social assistance in general. Furthermore, university graduates tend to rate their physical and mental health higher than those with fewer years of postsecondary education and are actually less likely to smoke. Happiness and life satisfaction also tend to increase with the number of years of education.

We are very fortunate in Alberta to have many postsecondary institutions throughout this great province offering a variety of programs and areas of study. For example, in Fort McMurray we have Keyano College. It was opened in 1965 as the Alberta Vocational Centre and reopened in 1975 as Keyano, which is a Cree word that roughly means sharing. Keyano has grown significantly over the years and has a series of campuses throughout the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo, with their principal site at the Clearwater campus in downtown Fort McMurray and regional campuses in Fort MacKay, Conklin, Janvier, and Fort Chipewyan. They offer specialized courses and training to more than 2,800 full-time students and over 13,000 part-time students in a variety of learning opportunity methods, including classroom, online, and blended delivery models.

Back to the bill. One of the positive aspects that this bill includes is increased student representation on the board of governors. This has been something that I've been hearing about since I was a university student, and I'm happy to see that the government included this within Bill 19. I know that this was one of the number one asks at the U of A Students' Union back then, and I don't think that's changed.

Furthermore, the revised tuition framework truly increases stability and predictability when it comes to how much students will pay for university. This is something student groups have been pushing for for many, many years. It really helps with planning year over year, and I hope it will help to increase the number of students who are able to complete their education. I had a few friends that had to delay their plans for university due to the fact that tuition had increased substantially. I know first-hand just how hard students work in order to obtain their education, many working one, two, or three part-time jobs just in order to make ends meet. In fact, I've got friends that worked full-time jobs just to be able to make ends meet. I can't imagine how difficult it was for them. I was very grateful to only have to work one part-time job through university.

I'm very pleased to see that the minister has said that postsecondary institutions will be required to advise international students what their tuition costs will be for the length of their programs. This stability will help to attract international students, who add so much to our learning environment. Campus Saint-Jean has a vibrant international community, with many students originating from a variety of countries such as Morocco, Lebanon, Côte-d'Ivoire. Their experiences and traditions truly added to my overall education that I received at Campus Saint-Jean.

Furthermore, I'm happy to see that the regulations will now include the noninstructional fees and not just tuition fees. The fees can be ever-increasing, and sometimes it's just a few dollars that make a big difference.

Our priority in government overall should be to ensure that our postsecondary education system has longevity. We need to ensure that students can continue to advance their education and contribute to our society. However, this government has been bombarding students with policies that make it more difficult to go to school.

Let's look at some of the struggles added on to students through the carbon tax. The cost in a typical Alberta household of a \$30 a tonne carbon tax is about \$667 a year. That's more than the cost of a single standard course at a postsecondary institution in Alberta. One course. That's the carbon tax price. At \$50 a tonne it's about \$1,100. That's almost two standard courses at a postsecondary institution here in Alberta. There's also the increased cost of utility payments, fuel prices. It truly raises the cost of everything. Furthermore, it takes millions of dollars out of the pockets of our schools and postsecondary institutions, making postsecondary institutions look for other ways to be able to raise funds. The cost of the carbon tax to postsecondary institutions is quite large. This government still needs to address just how it plans to help postsecondary institutions pay for these large, increased costs.

Then, Madam Speaker, there's also the issue of a \$15 minimum wage, which negatively affects many students. Minimum wage hikes negatively affect employment amongst low-skilled and young workers at a much higher rate. Furthermore, evidence has shown that on average a 10 per cent increase in the minimum wage decreases youth employment by between 3 and 6 per cent. That's truly a lot of students. Furthermore, one academic study, for instance, found that minimum wage hikes actually increase the share of families that fall below the relative poverty line, which suggests that low-income families are hurt even more by the reduced employment opportunities emanating from minimum wage hikes. Most students need to find jobs to work at when they're in school, and many students that I have spoken to work, like I said, full-time hours just to support themselves. The reduced economic opportunities for our youth are creating large barriers for those trying to receive an education.

These two concerns also affect the potential for new graduates to find work here in Alberta. Alberta's unemployment rate is at 7.3 per cent, the highest of all provinces outside of Atlantic Canada.

Furthermore, Calgary has an outstandingly scary unemployment rate of 8.2 per cent, making it the second highest in the country.

The increased costs on our job creators limit the number of growth positions. We've heard many cases of small, medium, and large employers that have slowed their growth and aren't hiring as many employees due to the increased cost to their operation. Employers are more likely to cut hours and freeze hiring if their costs are continually rising.

Furthermore, with the seven credit downgrades since this government took office three and a half years ago, it means that we are paying more for interest and we're paying more to service our debt at an ever-increasing rate. Truly, the list goes on.

Under the NDP's current plan debt will climb to nearly \$71 billion by 2021, and someone's going to need to pay that back. If we want our future generations to succeed, we can't keep passing our mismanagement on to future generations. If we want our postsecondary institutions to remain viable, we must rein in our spending so that we can continue to support a good, high-quality education here for all Albertans. The government needs to make sure that they're creating an environment so that current postsecondary students have meaningful employment upon their graduation.

Now, amongst all of these poor decisions made by this government over the last three and a half years, I'm grateful that this government has brought forward this piece of legislation. It's a step in the right direction when it comes to ensuring the longevity of postsecondary institutions. It also ensures that we continue to have world-class postsecondary education offered right here in Alberta. Education has numerous benefits for our economy, for our society, our communities, and it is one of the reasons that our province is the best place in the world to live.

I would like to thank all of the students that have contributed to this very important bill. We will continue to consult with you in order to create the most efficient and highest quality education possible.

I hope all members have heard my arguments, and I look forward to rising in the House in support of this bill.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour and a privilege to rise today and speak to this bill. You know, this bill was one of the primary reasons why I got into politics in the first place. Actually, the hon. minister was one of the first – well, at that point he was still a candidate – people that I met who was invested in politics as well.

Now, we all know that postsecondary education is so vitally important to the health of our communities. Indeed, it's often associated with seeking better income for you later in life. It's also associated with strengthening our citizenship here in our community. So I am so happy to see that this bill finally comes forward.

4:00

One of the reasons why I am so happy to see this come forward is that prior to running as a candidate myself, I was involved with the MacEwan NDP at a time when the then government, now the opposition, was cutting the funding to postsecondary education. And, worse, they were cutting funding to education immediately after they told postsecondary education that they were in fact going

to raise funding by 2 per cent. This put everybody in a very nervous position because nobody knew what was going to happen.

I knew so many students who had already had their programs phased out halfway through a degree. One of them started studying Middle East and African studies. He was barely able to find the credits through the rest of the institution to pass with that degree. This was at a time and we still are in a time where studying the Middle East is so vitally important to our foreign policy and to our trade around the world. You know, it seems every time I check a newspaper or watch the 6 o'clock news you hear something about Saudi Arabia or Turkey or Syria, and this is so important for us as a community to understand.

I'm very proud to serve with a government that is not just protecting and investing in postsecondary but is indeed ensuring that more and more people have access to affordable postsecondary education. You know, I myself, right out of high school, first went to NAIT for graphic communications, and I finished that course. I actually recently ran into one of my former instructors, and she was very happy, although a little bit confused about how I ended up as a politician, to hear how one of her students was progressing in their career.

But many of my classmates could barely afford to attend class. You know, I was very fortunate. My family lived in the area, so I had the opportunity to stay at home while I was in school, and that meant that I didn't have all of the expenses of rent. My parents always made the agreement that as long as I was in school, I wouldn't have to pay rent. I was responsible for my own books and such, of course, but I wouldn't have to worry about rent. But many of my classmates were living three or four people in a two-bedroom suite, in a basement suite in fact, just so that they were able to afford to get an education. When I was at NAIT – this was a one-year course – I was always amazed at the dedication to pursuing education that a lot of my classmates had.

Later on, of course, I went to MacEwan and studied political science, and while some people will claim that I dropped out, I didn't drop out. I am currently in a class about leadership and governance, you know, deep into the research on that paper, which has been fascinating.

It's so important for the province to ensure that we have accessible postsecondary education and that we have predictable postsecondary education because the more people that are able to pursue a postsecondary education, the stronger our economy is, indeed the stronger our democracy is. I am so proud to finally see that we will have predictable tuition rates in this province. This is something that is long overdue.

You know, so many of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle have talked about the advocacy of CAUS and all of the other student organizations, but this is something that we were calling for long before that. Predictable education was something that we were talking about when we were on the steps of the Legislature protesting an, effective, 9 per cent cut to the budget of our institutions.

An Hon. Member: It's going to hurt.

Mr. Horne: And then we have members opposite talking about how their proposed cuts are going to hurt. We'll see how that ends up if they ever form government again.

I am very happy to support this, and I hope all of my members do as well. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, the hon. Minister of Advanced Education to close debate.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour to rise and close debate on Bill 19, An Act to Improve the Affordability and Accessibility of Post-secondary Education. I want to thank all of my colleagues for their interventions in the debate on this matter. I think there have been a number of issues around the affordability piece that have been well canvassed, that I won't repeat.

There are some things about the bill, though, that I do want to highlight that haven't been mentioned so much; namely, around enhancing the accessibility of education, particularly around creating a pathway to university status for Red Deer College and Grande Prairie Regional College. Those were requests that were made by those institutions to this government as well as previous governments for years, and I'm glad that our government has taken upon itself to finally grant that request. That will go a long way to providing educational opportunities, university degrees to the students in northwestern Alberta and in central Alberta who for whatever reason cannot make the trip to Edmonton or Calgary to pursue a university degree there. I'm quite proud that our government has finally taken action to allow Red Deer College and Grande Prairie Regional College to grant their own university degrees.

In addition to that, Madam Speaker, this bill recognizes the university status of the Alberta College of Art and Design. It only makes sense that an institution that grants university degrees be called a university by name, and this legislation, of course, grants that title to that institution. I think the students of that institution will be better off having graduated from a university than from an institution that was formerly known as a college. It creates less confusion. Getting a university degree from a university causes far fewer questions than getting a university degree from a college, and I'm quite pleased that we've been able to rectify that situation.

In addition, we are changing the governance structures significantly of MacEwan University and Mount Royal University. This was work left undone by the previous Conservative government. In order to be recognized among their peers as universities, universities need to have governance structures that their peers recognize. This bill changes the governance structures of MacEwan University and Mount Royal University. It allows them to create for the first time general faculties councils, which are the standard way of governing academic affairs at universities all across this country. It will also grant MacEwan University and Mount Royal University the ability to appoint chancellors and grant honorary degrees, which are the most prestigious awards that universities can confer on somebody, Madam Speaker.

This will enhance the reputation of those institutions in the eyes of their peers across the country. We hope that by doing that, we will allow graduates of MacEwan University and Mount Royal University to pursue graduate opportunities at universities across the country that weren't quite sure what to make of MacEwan University and Mount Royal University with the structures that were in place before this legislation was brought forward to this House.

In addition, of course, we are increasing the student representation on the boards of governors of colleges and technical institutes across the province. It's the case that universities have two undergraduate representatives on their boards of governors, so in our minds it's only fair that technical institutes like NAIT and SAIT and community colleges like Medicine Hat College, Keyano College, Olds College, Lakeland College, among others, have two representatives on their boards of governors. Madam Speaker, this

government has the backs of students. We believe that students are the most important stakeholder in the postsecondary world. By enhancing their voice in the governance structures of their institutions, we give them a lot more say and power over their education, and we think that that is going to be a benefit to the students.

4:10

You know, with respect to strengthening student voice, of course, we have done a lot to enhance students' control over the cost of their education. Not only are we providing them with a guarantee that the cost of their tuition won't increase more than the consumer price index here in Alberta, we are also giving them a say over whether or not they are charged new mandatory noninstructional fees, Madam Speaker. The past practice of university administrations springing mandatory noninstructional fees upon students by surprise has come to an end, and we are pleased that we are finally giving students the power to say yes or no to those fees.

We believe that students won't be unreasonable in rejecting these fees. Students accept that a university or college education has a cost attached to it and that the cost should be shared between the taxpayers of Alberta and the students themselves. They just want those fees to be fair and reasonable, and they want to know what the money is being used for, Madam Speaker. That's why this legislation will bring in unprecedented transparency around the use of mandatory noninstructional fees and give students the power to say yes or no. If those mandatory noninstructional fees, of course, pass the reasonability test that I think students will impose upon them, I am sure that students will be happy to accept those and reasonably have a significant amount of control over the cost of their education.

In the remaining time, though, I want to address a larger issue that I think was highlighted in this debate. Even though both sides of this House are voting in favour of this legislation, Madam Speaker, it's not true to say that we both share the same vision for postsecondary education in this province. On our side of the House ever since we were elected in 2015, this government has provided significant financial support to universities both in increases in operating grants as well as increases in capital grants. When we took office, the former Prentice government, of course, was set to make significant cuts to higher education institutions. We reversed those cuts. In addition, we provided them with a 2 per cent increase in their operating grant that year, and we've provided them with 2 per cent increases in their operating grants every year since.

One of the issues, of course, that has been raised by some of the stakeholders when we've consulted with them about this legislation is their concern over constriction of revenues. In fact, some of the members opposite have raised that concern. It's true, Madam Speaker, that this legislation will constrain the revenues of institutions. In order for us to have a strong public higher education system in this province that remains affordable for the students of this province, it means that the government has to commit the additional revenues on the operating side of the balance sheet that are constrained on the tuition side.

Certainly, it's our belief that the taxpayers have a significant responsibility to provide high-quality higher education opportunities to every Albertan regardless of their financial or geographic circumstances. That's, in fact, the bargain that we're making in constraining institutional revenues in the way that we have and guaranteeing affordability for students in the way that we have. In order for us to continue to have a high-quality higher education system in this province that meets the needs of all Alberta students, it's now incumbent upon the government to make up the difference in operating revenues. We've done that in the past, and you can rest

assured, Madam Speaker, that under this government in the future we will continue to meet our commitments to providing high-quality higher education by ensuring that every university and college has the operational revenues that they need to provide that education.

In fact, Madam Speaker, if we were to implement the policy suggestions that we've received from our colleagues across the floor, we would limit the quality of higher education in this province. Some of the members opposite, of course, when they were in the former PC caucus, presented a shadow budget that presented a \$400 million cut to the higher education budget of the government of Alberta. Of course, now they're voting in favour of constraining the tuition revenue that would be available to the institutions through the tuition side of the balance sheet, which means that that will reduce the number of opportunities for Alberta students to get a high-quality education. That means fewer classroom spaces for university and college students. That will mean fewer programs. That will mean reduced opportunities, like I said, for Alberta students.

In fact, Madam Speaker, we believe that that's the wrong way to take the province. We've got one of the youngest and fastest growing populations of any province in the entire country, and we need to invest more dollars in our higher education system, not make \$400 million cuts to the budget of the higher education portfolio, in order to have a well-educated population that is competitive in the global marketplace but also has citizens who are well prepared to engage in the public life of our province.

I don't want anybody out there who's just casually observing this debate to think that because both sides have voted in favour of this legislation, we have similar views on how to enhance higher education in this province, because nothing could be further from the truth, Madam Speaker. We have very different views on how higher education should be operated in this province. Our government, through our past actions and through this legislation, is committed to continuing to provide opportunities for every single Albertan, regardless of their financial or geographic circumstances, through increasing the operating grants of each university and college and guaranteeing the affordability by preventing significant tuition hikes.

In addition to that, Madam Speaker, a tangential theme that's arisen over the course of the debate is on how best to support students outside of the framework of the higher education budget and tuition legislation. Certainly, we've heard a number of concerns around youth unemployment, and we believe that youth unemployment is a significant problem. We certainly recognize, like many have, that students have to work hard to pay for their education. That's indeed true. In fact, our government has made significant progress in providing increased opportunities for students to pay their bills while they're going to school.

We reinstituted the STEP program, that was cut by the previous Conservative government, that gave thousands of students summer jobs at decent wages that would allow them to pay their tuition, Madam Speaker. I was a beneficiary of STEP student programs while I was in university. I certainly wouldn't have been able to afford the tuition had I not been privy to those opportunities, and many students in Alberta would also be in the same boat if we had continued on with the decision of the previous Prentice government to cut that program.

In addition, it's remarkable to me to hear members of the Official Opposition wonder in amazement at how hard students have to work, that they have to work two or three or four part-time jobs to make ends meet, and then in the same breath say that we need to cut the minimum wage. Madam Speaker, the only thing that that would result in is the need for a student to go out and find a fifth or

sixth or seventh part-time job to make ends meet. It's our government's belief that we're supporting students by giving them a decent minimum wage that provides them the ability to pay their bills and make their way through school. It's astounding to me that in one breath we have members opposite marvelling at how hard they have to work and then in the next breath saying: "You know what? We think you should have to work a lot harder to be able to pay for school." That's not acceptable, and that's why our government will continue to make sure that we have a decent minimum wage to support students so that they can make ends meet and pay their way through school.

The other thing that they've brought up to support students is a reduction of the carbon tax. Madam Speaker, of course, eliminating the carbon tax is a magic bullet that the UCP offers for every problem. I don't know. If we've got wildfires, reducing the carbon tax would somehow help with that, or if the sun is shining too brightly, maybe reducing the carbon tax would help with that as well. But it's ludicrous for them to insist that by cutting the carbon tax, we're going to make . . .

4:20

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

[Motion carried; Bill 19 read a third time]

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: I would like to call the committee to order.

Bill 22 An Act for Strong Families Building Stronger Communities

The Deputy Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered in regard to this bill? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 22, An Act for Strong Families Building Stronger Communities. I'm extremely honoured to stand here as the United Conservative Children's Services critic and to participate in this important event.

Madam Chair, I honestly don't think that there is a single person that I've talked to in my role, in my privilege that I have as an MLA, who hasn't been deeply, deeply affected by what happened to Serenity. It's such a tragic story, and it broke the hearts of so many Albertans. It was a clarion call to action for all of us here in this Assembly to fix this extremely broken system that failed this little girl. So many of us here are parents, and while you don't need to be a parent to be heartbroken and angry about Serenity's death, I know that the parents in this room have put themselves in her mother's shoes many, many times. I know that I have. I can't even begin to tell you how that makes me feel. I think I can say on behalf of many people that heartbroken and angry doesn't even come close to describing how we feel.

There was a great deal of advocacy from this side that pushed towards striking the child intervention panel. When the panel was struck, I think all of us were hopeful that things would happen that would help to make sure that this would never happen again. I was so deeply honoured to have been asked to serve as our caucus's critic for Children's Services, especially coming on late to the panel, and being able to participate for even a short while was a

tremendous privilege. I would deeply, deeply, from the bottom of my heart like to thank the hon. members for Calgary-Hays, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, and Airdrie for the incredible work they did preceding my ability to be able to join that panel. I'm forever grateful for the time and energy and advocacy that came from them on this panel.

Coming in at that point in time, it was so disappointing to find out that during the panel discussions the panel wasn't permitted to investigate the circumstances around Serenity's death, which, in my understanding, was why we were there in the first place. It was the whole reason there was a new ministry created. The panel members were barely even allowed to speak her name, Madam Chair.

Then the question is: how are you supposed to figure out how a system has failed Serenity – or anybody else, for that matter – and her siblings, I might add? How were we supposed to see where and how she fell through the cracks if we weren't actually able to ask the questions? How, then, are you supposed to make changes in legislation to ensure that this incredible tragedy doesn't happen again?

Like I said, I came into the panel quite late in the game, and the assumption when I went into the panel was that these discussions would be very, very intense and deep and strong and digging into the weeds as to what had happened here. But that's not what happened. I think the concern is that I certainly don't have answers to those questions. The panel doesn't know the answers to those questions because we were not allowed, Madam Chair, to ask those questions.

I have to say that, based on the legislation that we have here before us, I don't think the NDP has the answers to those questions either. There is nothing in this legislation that would prevent a similar tragedy from befalling another child in care. That's a tragedy. It's concerning because in the legislation there's no reassurance to Albertans that the government has identified – and this is the bigger issue here, Madam Chair. How do we identify how this happened so that we're actually taking steps to prevent that from happening again to somebody else's daughter, somebody else's baby?

There is nothing here in this legislation that truly gives me faith that the NDP was ever serious about fixing this broken system for good. Serenity was subjected to sexual abuse, starvation. She was hypothermic. She had a fractured skull. Her caregiver said that she had fallen from a swing. Now, the heartbreaking information that came from this, I think, changed everybody in this House. It's disappointing that we are not able to figure out a way to make sure that this doesn't happen.

However, I would like to outline what I also believe are positive changes in this legislation. One of them is that there has been a loophole that has been closed that previously permitted private guardianship applications to be considered without a home assessment completed by a qualified social worker. That is a very good step in the right direction.

I'm also pleased to see the bill replace the word "survival" with the word "safety" throughout the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act. At the end of the day, Madam Chair, don't we want to do so much more for these children than merely ensuring their survival? I would hope so. Albertans and families are looking to us to not only put a roof over their heads but to protect them from harm and to also nurture them, to help them to grow and lead happy and productive lives. These are very complex situations. There's nothing simple about this legislation. There's still so much to be done on that front, but at least a change in the language that clearly communicates that goal is a step in the right direction.

Another positive change that Bill 22 proposes is to implement the child intervention panel's recommendations that the legislation

governing the child welfare system be more culturally sensitive when dealing with indigenous families and children and the communities.

The bill is not without its merits, Madam Chair, far from it, but the problem is that we have the bad far outweighing the good. The call to action that was brought forward by the opposition: the action is not there.

4:30

One of the more important things that we need to bring up – and the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre brought this up on several occasions – was with respect to the publication ban. Why is it that this legislation does nothing to address the publication ban that is currently in place when a child dies in government care? This was brought up over and over and over again on this side of the House. In fact, the publication ban was another thing that the panel wasn't even allowed to consider. We weren't even allowed to ask questions about that. Why?

The ban shrouds the entire system, Madam Chair, in secrecy, and it just absolutely takes away from any ability to have public accountability. Isn't that why we were here in the first place? It's why we were here in the first place: public accountability, making sure these tragedies never happen again, making sure that the government was accountable not only to the people but to the children that they have in their care. Yet we're not even allowed to ask questions about that. Isn't the lack of transparency with respect to system failures the whole reason why we're here debating this legislation? The implementation of the legislation has to be strong, and it has to have calls to action. So something has to be done to ensure that any publication ban prescribed by the legislation serves in the best interests of the child and not in the best interests of the department. The child, not the department.

There are a number of other recommendations coming out of the panel's work that don't feature at all in the legislation, which leaves me with one glaring question: why? Why isn't the government falling all over itself, Madam Chair, to implement these recommendations in an effort to provide the very best child intervention system that it possibly can? That's what we're talking about. Instead, we get a few improvements, but largely we are left with the same broken system that failed Serenity. The answer that we're getting from the government is that this is just phase 1 of three, but if there are not strong pieces in this legislation that show us that we're heading in a direction that will actually protect a child, then why are we here?

This is unacceptable to me. Quite often in this situation all you can do is imagine what that little girl went through, a little girl padding across a trailer in the middle of the night in her bare feet, trying to find food to eat and was not able to get food to eat and then was beaten for taking food and was sexually assaulted and weighed the size of a very small baby by the time she was taken into care. That's the picture that needs to remain with all of us when we're actually carving out this kind of legislation.

Despite a few improvements, it's very difficult to support this legislation.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, I hesitate to interrupt. I just want to remind all the members in the House of section 23(g) of the standing orders of sub judice. This matter is currently before the courts. If we could just refrain from getting into any detail specifics that may create issues.

Mrs. Aheer: Absolutely, Madam Chair. I don't think I'm really aware of any other details other than the ones that have been released, but thank you for the reminder. I appreciate it.

I need to mention, though, while we're talking about this, that the assumption is that after Serenity passed away, you move on to doing a panel discussion. Yet we have more children in care.

I'd like to describe a particular case. All of us received this from the office of the Child and Youth Advocate, Madam Chair. This is a young adult, actually, now. His name was Dakota. It's happening right now. So Dakota at the age of three was found with cigarette burns on his body. Cigarette burns. Then he was placed four more times before his fifth birthday. Then from five to seven years he was moved three more times, multiple times. Then after that he was returned to his parents, who were unable to take care of him, and then taken back from his parents and put into foster care. At that time he was assaulted by an older peer, sexually assaulted, and that was one of several times that he was sexually assaulted. This is in 2018. By the time he was 14 he had moved 14 times.

This is happening now, after a year and a half of a panel discussion that has happened and no implementation of legislation that is helping out Dakota. This has happened. This boy has died.

We're talking about complex needs with all of these children, too. They're coming from extreme trauma, Madam Chair, and they need access to experts. So many people even have a difficult time in knowing how to deal with these children and the trauma that they have faced.

This legislation does not honour Serenity, and it does not honour Dakota and all of the other children that are listed in the office of the Child and Youth Advocate, so I would urge my honourable colleagues on the government benches to go back to the drawing board and come back with comprehensive legislation that will work to keep kids safe and reassure Albertans that what happened to Serenity and Dakota and all of the others – I could list all of the names for you – doesn't happen again. What we have to do before us today is simply make sure that we do that.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I would like to move an amendment. I have the requisite number of copies here with the original, of course. I shall wait for you to receive them.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, please go ahead. Your amendment will be referred to as amendment A1.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, ma'am. I would like to move that Bill 22, An Act for Strong Families Building Stronger Communities, be amended in section 4 by renumbering the proposed section 2 as section 2(1) and by adding the following after section 2(1):

(2) Nothing in subsection (1) shall be interpreted as derogating from the obligation to report a child in need under section 4.

Madam Chair, the amendment before you addresses one of the aspects of Bill 22 that concerns many of us in our UCP caucus and, may I say, almost everyone in this Chamber, and that is the lack of accountability in this act for adults involved with children in need of intervention. The wording of this motion may look somewhat familiar to some members of this Assembly. If so, it's because you have seen the concept before in a private member's bill that I have brought forward at least two times now. While its official name last time it appeared on the Order Paper was Bill 216, I've always referred to it and many have referred to it as Serenity's law. I'm hoping that the members here today will take a new look at the changes proposed under Serenity's law and agree with me that this should become part of Bill 22 here today.

Madam Chair, if I could explain as to why. This bill has been called An Act for Strong Families Building Stronger Communities, and this amendment will, in my opinion, do that. It does so in a clear and a very simple way. This amendment would at least attempt to make all adults responsible to contact authorities if they know a child is in need of intervention. It seems so simple. In the spring of 2017 I promised a young lady who was Serenity's mother that I would do my best as a legislator, as an Albertan, to convince my colleagues in the Legislative Assembly to implement this simple change that would save the lives of children here in Alberta. We know it's too late for this little girl, Serenity, but we all know that she's here with us today in spirit.

4:40

Her mother, who we have remained in contact with, you know, told us only a few weeks ago that when this bill was introduced and she actually read this bill, it's reinforcing many of the things that are already in place, but it's really the component of my previous bill, which was Serenity's law, that would actually make a difference in the intervention of saving children right here and right now and something that we all can do today and certainly be proud of when we go home later on this week. That's why I've drafted this amendment, you know, given the parameters and restrictions that I had to deal with.

Madam Chair, let me just say that the intention of Serenity's law was to offer an avenue to call the police. Everyone knows how to contact an officer if they certainly believe that they may be or somebody may be in danger. But we cannot do that in Bill 22. Instead, I'm bringing forward this amendment to underline the responsibility of adults to contact the authorities. I want all of us here today to take pride in actually doing something, what I believe would be of really, truly concrete value, that will save the lives of children, again, here today and right now.

On December 12, 2016, when I first proposed this concept to the Premier, the Premier of this government told me that Serenity's law in the Chamber here is exactly the kind of practical idea her government was looking for to improve the child intervention system. I took that as a sign of good faith, that in a nonpartisan fashion we would do something in the common interest that would benefit the children of Alberta, which, I would say, everyone here wants to do. Bill 22 was supposed to make improvements, but in my humble opinion this falls a little bit short.

If you won't listen to me, I hope you're able to listen to the mother of this little girl, who, as my colleague has just previously pointed out, was horribly abused in the system. You know, she knows this amendment is being presented. We've contacted her. Just a short time ago she sent an e-mail saying that this would have saved her daughter. This is the type of amendment that if an adult, everyone in Alberta, was aware of the responsibility to make sure that the authorities are notified, that they cannot turn a blind eye – they cannot turn a blind eye – when a child is at risk and they know that they have to contact the authorities, there would be consequences. There would be a responsibility. She said that this would have saved her daughter. This is the type of legislation that would have saved this little girl. We know, as my colleague just pointed out, that there are so many other children in the system that are vulnerable and currently at risk. We can make it better, Madam Chair, and not just for Serenity but for others.

You know, this amendment will help children who perhaps should've been in the system but never got there because adults knew these children's lives were in danger and never notified anyone of authority. Examples that we've used in the past in this Chamber – little Alex, little Ryan, little Ezekiel – all died tragically in their homes. There are many other children out there at risk right

now who can be saved by adults today. In all those cases there were other adults who were aware that these children required immediate intervention, yet a blind eye was turned. Those adults were never ever held responsible. I don't think there's anyone here that would not—I certainly challenge anyone to stand up and say: no, adults do not need to be held responsible when a child is at risk. I believe that an adult has to be held responsible. These are little children that we're talking about here.

If I could just take a moment here and explain what this amendment, at least we hope, will accomplish. At this time there's a section in the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act that requires adults to contact a director of child intervention if they know of a child being at risk. But as we've demonstrated in this House in previous questions in question period, it's not that easy to know how to even contact a director when a child is at risk; hence the importance of this amendment that we're trying to put forward here. In the case of Serenity and Alex and Ezekiel and Ryan other adults were aware of the dangerous plights that they were facing and should have been held legally responsible for not contacting the authorities. Far too many times in Alberta children have died in horrible circumstances that could have been prevented if an adult had only spoken up.

Madam Chair, I know there was a concern during the previous bill in regard to the Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police. I had spoken to the Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police. What they had had, if that makes any sense, was an old bill, an original draft, and the bill that I had presented was something that they were supportive of. It talks about a "person who has reasonable and probable grounds to believe that a child is in need of intervention shall forthwith report the matter to a director" or in this case a police officer. Although this is not exactly the same, it certainly is a variation that we can present that will still resemble what we are trying to achieve, which is to let Albertans know and adults know that it is not acceptable to turn a blind eye to a child who is at risk. It is not acceptable when a child is in need of intervention to look the other way.

Now, I promised Serenity's mother that I would never give up on seeking justice and protection for children. For the sake of this little girl, who would have been around eight years old if she had not been killed, for the sake of her surviving two children, who suffered similar horrors and are now, you know, certainly, still facing the trauma having to live through what they had gone through, and for all children, Madam Chair, who are at risk today, I and my colleagues here would like to say again that we wish that everyone in this Assembly would pass this amendment that would help children today, something that we can actually do today to ensure that adults in Alberta are made aware that they are going to be held responsible, that they cannot turn a blind eye to a child who is at risk, a child who requires intervention. It is not acceptable anywhere, and it is certainly not acceptable in the province of Alberta.

I hope we can work in a nonpartisan fashion, and I certainly encourage all members of this House to pass this amendment. Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? I will see the government side and then follow with the opposition side. The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Madam Chair. Having just gotten this amendment, I am right now digesting it and looking into it further and really reading into it. But I want to reference and look at some of the comments that were made by the mover of the amendment

when he talked about comments that came from the Premier in relation to practical ideas. I think that that's sort of the journey that we charted for a long time.

4:50

I want to address something, Madam Chair. This was not a New Democrat issue. It was not a PC issue. This wasn't a Social Credit or United Farmers issue. This wasn't a Liberal Party issue. This has all been created over time by successive governments in the entire history of our province, even to the day when this province was part of the Northwest Territories. The situation that we found ourselves in is as old as Confederation in some respects. This journey became something that took a very long time for us to digest, and it was really around the moment of us trying to find those practical ideas.

I want to reflect, as I look at this amendment and many of the items that have come forth to us, about the journey that we've gone on and how we've gotten here and how we've gotten to this bill and how we've talked about the context of it as well as the context of amendments that we are moving forward here, including the Member for Calgary-West's.

We all remember the day when we were talking about this in the House. We all remember the day when we struck this panel. The journey that this was was something that I couldn't fathom in 2015 when I entered politics that I would be going down. It was something that I could not fathom that I would be going down when I was announced as one of the five members of the ND caucus to serve on the panel. To try to avoid some ways to personify this, it's something that grew legs, and that was something in a very important fashion. There's something very complex, as we've talked about, in the different phases in which the recommendations of the panel has brought forth. We know that this is something that's going to take time, that we are charting courses for, that we are charting timelines in regard to it.

When it was struck, it was unique in that we had a lot of experts that were coming onto it. We did everything that we could to make sure that the elected officials could do their job to represent constituents but that we ensured that we were consulted with the expertise we needed at the table, so I want to thank Senator Laboucane-Benson, Dr. Choate, Mr. MacLaurin, and Tyler White, who joined us during this process.

First we looked at the complex needs of the reporting of the child deaths and how we reviewed them and the review process, and then as we started, we went into this process that we thought was going to be a six-month process. We had timelines approached, and at first all parties kind of went together. We looked at it, and many of us thought that it was going to be what it was going to take. But as we started to pull back the layers, we started to look at what legislation was going to be needed and what we were going to have to bring forward and whether the member's amendment was going to be needed for this.

We started to hear more and more stories. We started to hear about the complexity of what this was. We started to learn that this whole thing delved deep into reconciliation. We all talked about the number, but it was something that really hit us to heart when we first went into consultation with some of the technical briefings, when we were hearing that over 66 per cent of children who were in government care were indigenous children.

So while we wanted to make sure that we served all children of all backgrounds, we recognized that there was a disproportionate number of kids that were in government care. From there we had to look at how we addressed this. Going into the spring and into the summer, we started meeting locally with some urban indigenous groups who were doing a tremendous amount of work, who were seeing tremendous amounts of success, some with government

support, some despite government support. They were having successes, and they were having amazing stories. We were hearing first-hand from families. We were hearing first-hand from kids who were in care.

It was also a journey for us to learn, and, to be frank, I don't think we will truly completely know. We'll always be learning. This is a process that has gotten us here over the last 150 years. We started to learn about reconciliation, what that meant to our child intervention system and how initial government intervention with children through residential schools and through things like the '60s scoop got us to generational trauma and how kids who were in government care were children of other kids that were in government care and that this was a systemic problem that went generations after generations.

In that process I remember one of the most moving things that I did was when we did the blanket exercise as a panel, and I want to thank the members from the Alberta Party and the Alberta Liberal Party who did this journey with me. It was one of the most moving things I have ever done. I broke down in tears when it was over because I could not stop thinking about my own kids during this whole experience. I remember the elder came up to me and he gave me a hug and he said: we're all healing. That was very moving because I think sometimes the advice is that in our own lives and our own experiences we're always going down a journey where we're healing, whether it's trauma that we've experienced as children, stresses in our jobs, in our lives, stresses of being parents or breakdowns in certain families. Many of us go down a position in which we're healing. To be frank, as we sit here on the government bench and as members sit on the opposition bench, we all sit collectively in this Legislative Assembly. We are healing. We're healing from a problem that we have caused over time as a collective province that we need to work together as a collective province to solve.

It was very informing to go through this, and even though it was something that carried on for over a year, which was something unprecedented that we didn't expect, it was deserving for it to do so. It was something that we needed to take into serious consideration and to move forward on, and it was something that we needed to do to make sure that we addressed the systemic challenges that we saw for all kids. We had many focuses in mind, but at the end of the day the focus was about protecting the children, about protecting individual children.

One of the things that I think is addressed through some of the concerns I heard from the previous speaker is the fact that we've enhanced safety in the wording of the legislation. We made sure that we're moving some of the interpretation to make sure that the safety of the kids is paramount in the practices that our child intervention system and our workers within the system do and that as the children move through the process, they're put in the centre.

I remember when we were talking about traditional indigenous teachings, about what many different nations believed, whether some were Dene Tha' or Cree or Blackfoot, which are traditional to the province of Alberta, but many other nations that come from other areas, the Métis community as well, but also a lot of our indigenous communities that come from abroad who have chosen to settle and to live in . . .

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member.

Mr. Sucha: . . . Calgary, whether it's in our urban settings or our rural settings.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt you, but could you – I think maybe we could speak to the amendment.

Mr. Sucha: Yeah. Absolutely.

The Deputy Chair: Okay.

Mr. Sucha: Going into it, we've talked about, within the amendment, looking at obligations in relation to reporting. Within the reporting, as I was tying into this, we talk about the children being in the centre. It's the community as a whole that needs to discuss and communicate with each other the safety of those children, and we need to provide the resources and supports to make sure, as we're noticing challenges that exist within a community, that the community is empowered to have those processes to communicate with families and with parents, to be able to have the resources and services that they provide.

When I look into this, I'm questioning whether the reporting situations are addressed within some of the things that we've heard from the previous panel because some of the things that we heard in relation to the children being in the circle and having a child in the circle is that the community is able to collectively take care of a child. When you allow and you address cultural sensitivities and you make sure that we recognize these things that are important, does reporting become necessary when we provide the resources to put that child in the centre?

5:00

Now, I'm still digesting a lot of what we've been hearing over time. I'm always open to any conversations in relation to this.

It's also empowering. Are we addressing this within some of the extra steps that we've taken within the social work? Are we addressing this amendment and the concerns around obligations of reporting by ensuring that the social workers are properly resourced? Those are some of the things that we've heard and some of the things that we've looked into.

I know I've gone really kind of deep into the nuts and bolts of this process. I think it's something that, for every amendment that goes through this House, including the hon. Member for Calgary-West's, we have to look at and we have to give some serious consideration to, as was discussed. I look forward to hearing some more of the debate.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment A1? The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to thank the member for bringing this amendment forward and your colleagues for participating on the panel. Certainly, you know, there were some very strong recommendations that came out of that panel that, after many recommendations having sat unfulfilled on a shelf for decades, we were able to turn into an action plan, an action plan that we know is going to make a real difference for families and for children.

Certainly, in terms of the legislation and the action plan, you know, we have been able to work, thankfully, with our Child and Youth Advocate, who is a strong voice on behalf of Alberta's children, as well as Dr. Cindy Blackstock, who is clearly very well known as a strong advocate for children. Both said that they were quite impressed with the work that we're doing.

Having said that, safety is incredibly, incredibly important. Certainly, within the act we've stressed safety quite strongly. Making sure that all relevant authorities are notified is definitely something that I continue to stand behind. The act currently allows for that to happen, but, you know, again, safety for children is so important that any additional clarifying language would not be out

of order. I'm happy to support the amendment that reinforces the work that's already happening on the ground.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I rise on the amendment put forward by my colleague from Calgary-West. Let me say that it sounds like the government may support this, and I appreciate that. I don't mean to sound ungrateful, because it's a good thing that they're doing that, but we need to remember that this is short of what is Serenity's law, but it's what we thought we could fit into the legislation as it's written today.

Anything positive that will have a chance to make children more safe is a good thing. Certainly, in the committee that came to these recommendations for the legislation today, it was a battle to get there. But we did get to a place where there was a ministerial panel that we were on, and it was an all-party one, and I'm grateful for members of all sides of the House for the time that we spent together. I would agree with some of the previous speakers that the panel, in my view, operated in a nonpartisan way and worked together for the benefit of children.

I would also say that one of the biggest disappointments for me then and still today is that while there are many children in Alberta that need to be protected and looked after in the system – and the reason that we need to look at the legislation is to make sure those children can be looked after in the system, but the inspiration for the change really was Serenity's situation.

Madam Chair, I know we were asked to be careful what we say because it's before the courts, but I can assure you that I don't know anything that hasn't been in the newspaper yet. There's nothing I can talk about that hasn't been in the newspaper yet because I don't know anything that hasn't been in the newspaper yet. There is the problem: we weren't able to talk in the committee. In the committee we actually weren't even able to talk about what was in the newspaper, let alone what wasn't in the newspaper. Consequently, we haven't gotten to the place where we can say that no child will ever suffer the fate that Serenity did again.

Speaking of the media, let me just say that I've got to just take a minute here to thank now Senator Paula Simons, that actually, really did very good work to bring Serenity's case to the consciousness of Albertans, and I'm not sure how – I'm just going to give credit where it's due. Now Senator Paula Simons, then journalist Paula Simons, really deserves a lot of credit for bringing this to our attention, and it was a long journey getting to even talking about this.

I'm certainly going to support this amendment, but the fact is that no one watching or hearing this should think that this deals with everything that was material to Serenity's situation, because it does not. The ministerial panel wasn't allowed to discuss this stuff. Every time that anybody tried to raise it, it was called out of order, and we had to stop talking about it, which was a constant frustration for me and still is a frustration now and will be until whatever point in time we can actually talk about what happened there and talk about what we need to change to make sure it doesn't happen again.

The little bit I think I know from the good work of, again, primarily Senator Simons now is that Serenity was in danger, people knew about it, and no one phoned the police. So at some point I would like to get to the point even past this. Where my colleague from Calgary-West wants us to go is to get to the point where we would have in place what he calls Serenity's law, and this isn't it. It's a partial step towards it, and I thank my colleague from Calgary-West for that because I know it is the best that he could do

within the framework of the legislation that the government has presented. But I will be happier when we can come back to this place either now or under a new government or even at some point in the future and pass Serenity's law because I think we actually need to get there, where it's not just an encouragement to phone the police when a child is in danger but it's actually a requirement.

Here's the problem: when somebody gets referred to the director or the minister – and certainly I believe that the minister's intentions are good. I believe that a director's intentions are good. But the fact is, Madam Chair, that in the real world when something goes wrong to the point where a child is in danger, a child has died, a child is injured, it's human nature for people to think: wow, am I going to be in trouble? Then, of course, the human mind naturally goes to: "Well, what if nobody knew? Then maybe I won't be in trouble." While we'd hope that that will never happen, it would appear that in Serenity's case that did happen. Somebody – I don't know who or how many – knew something and didn't go to the police. Consequently, the tragic abuse that this little girl suffered continued until she was no longer alive.

5:10

I'm with my colleague from Calgary-West that I will be more satisfied when we get to the place where it's not a choice to call the police but it's an obligation. Again, while this is a positive step towards that, this doesn't get us there. This doesn't get us there.

Madam Chair, there's a lot more to talk about in this bill, and I intend to have more to say. In fact, I've got quite a bit more to say about this. But because I'm enthusiastic about this issue, I'm doing my best to restrict my remarks to the amendment, which is why I will finish speaking now and then why I will feel it necessary to get on my feet again on the main motion, because this is way too important to not talk more about. Well, I'll just say that the amendment is good, I'm going to support it, and I'll say the much more that I have to say thereafter.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1?

Seeing none, I will call the question on the amendment.

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

The Deputy Chair: We are now back on the original bill. Are there any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today to introduce an amendment on behalf of my hon. colleague the Member for Calgary-Elbow to Bill 22, An Act for Strong Families Building Stronger Communities. This amendment strengthens and reviews the provisions of this bill in section 30 by tasking a committee of stakeholders, MLAs, and all parties with the review instead of only an unspecified list of MLAs. It has been shared and revised with the minister's office.

While this amendment circulates and for the benefit of the viewers at home, I'll read the section of the bill this amendment seeks to replace.

Review

131.2(1) A special committee of the Legislative Assembly shall periodically conduct a comprehensive review of this Act.

(2) The special committee shall submit to the Legislative Assembly a report that includes any amendments recommended by the special committee within one year after the special committee starts its review.

(3) The first review must be started within 5 years after the day this section comes into force.

(4) Each subsequent review must be started within 5 years after the day the report on the previous review was required to be submitted.

Would you like me to continue as the amendment is being circulated, Madam Chair?

The Deputy Chair: Yeah. Please go ahead, hon. member. One point of clarity, sorry. You're moving it on behalf of the Member for Calgary-Elbow?

Mr. Fraser: Yes.

The Deputy Chair: Okay. Your amendment is referred to as A2. Please go ahead.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you. The Member for Calgary-Elbow to move that Bill 22, An Act for Strong Families Building Stronger Communities, be amended in section 30 by striking out the proposed section 131.2 and substituting the following:

Review

131.2(1): In this section, "review committee" means the committee appointed under subsection (2).

(2): At least once every 5 years, a comprehensive review must be undertaken of this Act by a committee appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

(3) The review committee must be composed of

- (a) one or more persons representative of
 - (i) Indigenous communities,
 - (ii) guardians and caregivers of children, and
 - (iii) providers of services to children and families, and

- (b) one or more members of each caucus represented in the Legislative Assembly.

(4) The review committee must submit to the Minister a report that includes any amendments recommended by the committee within one year after commencing its review.

(5) On receiving a report under subsection (4), the Minister shall lay the report before the Legislative Assembly if it is then sitting or, if it is not then sitting, within 15 days after the commencement of the next sitting of the Legislative Assembly.

(6) The first review must commence within 5 years after the day this section comes into force.

(7) Each subsequent review must commence within 5 years after the day the report on the previous review was required to be submitted.

As you can see, the amendment keeps the five-year period and adds indigenous communities, guardians and caregivers, service providers, and a member of each caucus to the review committee. The amendment also requires the review to be made public. The proposed structure of the review committee itself echoes the structure of the Ministerial Panel on Child Intervention and will hopefully be informed by the panel's learnings.

I've heard from my colleagues in all caucuses about the impact that the panel has on their way of thinking and how we protect children in Alberta and how we work together in this House. In my own work as a paramedic in rural Alberta I've seen the devastating impact that our previous colonial practices have had on indigenous communities and families through continuing intergenerational trauma and violence. We have a responsibility to address those and many other challenges as a part of the truth and reconciliation journey. I hope this amendment can contribute to that in a sustainable way.

My colleague from Calgary-Elbow has made it clear that this province's further work to protect vulnerable children must be done in a nonpartisan way, that we cannot exploit children for political

gain. He also made it clear that the work of future Legislatures on this topic must include more representative stakeholders at the table. That's why it's important that we ensure future work to protect children proceeds in an inclusive and nonpartisan way. This amendment moves us towards that goal, and I hope all members of this House support it.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment A2? The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to, you know, rise in support of this amendment and say thank you to the Member for Calgary-Elbow for his dedication to his work on the panel and his strong commitment to putting politics aside on behalf of the children of this province who are a part of the child intervention system and of all of their families. This amendment is certainly a reflection of the work that he did and his commitment in that way.

As we saw through the work in the panel, the contributions of those who came as experts to the panel – those with lived experiences, those from our indigenous communities, those of the providers – proved to be truly invaluable in addressing systemic changes. Every single one of the advocates did bring to the table their own distinct voice and expertise, and they were absolutely integral in shaping our recommendations to be as positive as they were and to, in turn, turn that into an action plan that is going to make an incredible difference in the lives of children and families within this province.

I am very supportive of ensuring that these voices are heard in future reviews. I am supporting it and once again thank the member for his contribution.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow and on his behalf the hon. Member for Calgary-South East on moving this amendment. I do have a question on it. In general I think this amendment is going in the right direction and likely something that we're going to be able to support.

I don't know if the hon. Member for Calgary-South East will be able to answer this question. One of the things that the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow and other members that were on the committee, including yourself, Madam Chair, will know is that – I'm sorry; not the committee but the minister's panel on this issue – there was lots of discussion about the need for an ability to hold people accountable, to hold the system accountable, to be able to measure where we were at with things. I think that's the intent of this amendment and that many parts of it will be able to help with that. My concern, though, is that the committee that is being proposed I think would be better if it had representatives from all parties in the Assembly and it would be a bipartisan process. I just wonder if the Member for Calgary-South East agrees with that.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

5:20

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Madam Chair. I absolutely do agree with that. I think that in my experience in almost close to seven years in this House, we've seen it in particular instances. Unfortunately, it all too often happens around tragedy when members of this House collaborate in earnest and do put aside the politics. I think that it is

important, not just when it's around tragedy, whether it's the wildfires or whether it's the 2013 floods or the issues that we've seen with children in care and in other important matters. I do believe that as MLAs, as private members of this House, I just honestly believe that our best work happens when we collaborate, when we get down to work and listen to one another and really try to put Albertans first instead of our own political ambitions. So, yeah, I do agree.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate that honest assessment from the Member for Calgary-South East. I certainly think so as well.

One of the things that I've learned from this experience is that it's important to have that bipartisan support and bipartisan eyes on a situation of this magnitude. I think several members have spent a lot of time talking about trying to remember the path that took us to this place that we're at today, that in fact something very, very tragic happened. I think we all agree on that. I don't think that any member of this Assembly would deny the extraordinary tragedy that took place in regard to the Serenity story, which has been talked about in this Chamber many times. But there are many, many other similar stories, unfortunately, within our system that cause us to have to, you know, end up in these positions.

What I found when we went through that was that the government, while they certainly agreed that there was a tragic situation, a situation that they certainly were not responsible for – I think it's always important that as we disagree on how to handle this very tough issue, we make it clear that no member of this Assembly is responsible for what happened to Serenity. The people that did that to her are the ones that are ultimately responsible. But there is a constructive effort to block transparency on what happens with that issue. That's the experience that I had. I don't know if that was the experience that you had, Madam Chair, when you were on the minister's panel. But there was, in my mind, a blatant, constructive effort to make sure that the facts of the situation that brought us to this situation were blocked from all parties being able to see them, from everybody that was involved being able to actually have a look at the facts to be able to make determinations about what to do.

When we first started the Ministerial Panel on Child Intervention, we went to Government House. There was a lot of media involved at the time because of the articles from Paula Simons and Emma Graney. There was a lot of friction between the media and the ministry, which ultimately was of course split into two as a result of that. So there was a lot of media there. We had our first meeting and set our goals, set some of the parameters on how we would work through the process. We then got bogged down in days of argument with the minister – I don't think it's actually fair to say the minister because she was not there at the time – the government members of that committee actively working to make sure that the meeting could not be recorded, that there would be no records of the meeting. That went on for a very, very long time. It actually, Madam Chair, got fairly heated between the government side of the committee and the opposition side of the committee.

Now, what was interesting is that some of the external experts we had participating in that process with us ultimately helped try to bridge that gap, and we were able to finally get the meetings recorded so that people would be able to hear what was spoken about. They also could hear what we were going through, but also there would be some sort of record of the proceedings. We could

not get a *Hansard* type of thing happening no matter how much we tried. I continue to be disappointed that that happened.

Then we moved over to the Federal Building and had what would be similar to our standing committee meetings, similar to a process where we could sit and we could talk although it wouldn't have been on the record, and the people who were experts and content experts and who knew things about the situation that we were trying to address could come and sit and answer the questions. And it would be very similar, Madam Chair, to our experience, for members of the House that were not part of the ministerial panel, when you're in a standing committee of the Legislature.

Opposition members who made up that panel from the Alberta Party, the Liberal Party, at the time the PC Party, and the Wildrose Party started to ask similar questions that you would see. You would take a turn. You had a few minutes. You would ask a question of some of the experts about what was going on. I think, certainly, for us on the panel we felt that we were sent there to find out what happened to Serenity, which was a serious issue that was happening here politically. We asked the government to have an all-party panel or committee look at that situation so we'd be able to come back with solid recommendations so that what happened to Serenity could not happen to another little girl or little boy that is in our care.

So when we went there, we started to ask questions about that case. I remember – maybe the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays will recall – that we had some representatives from K Division and the Edmonton police that were there talking one day in the same room as the standing committee, and we began to ask some questions about how files were transferred. You may recall, Madam Chair, that at the time there was quite a controversy about the ministry not getting information to the proper authorities. In fact, the police at the time, according to, I believe, Paula Simons' reporting – it was possible it was Emma Graney's – were not able to get that file of information. They didn't have it. They didn't even know it was going on. In fact, they found out about the Serenity case from the news.

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

When I started to ask them questions about how that worked – and actually fairly technical, not very partisan questions because I think this issue is not partisan. There were a lot of moms and dads in this room. There were a lot of aunts and uncles and grandparents and people that just want to make sure that kids are safe. I don't think that wanting to make sure that this doesn't happen to another child is a partisan issue. And so we asked them questions about how it works, how the police departments interact with the government, how a file like that could not get there, how it could be that the police didn't know about these type of documents until they read it in the newspaper, which I think was shocking to everybody, including the government members on the panel. I would imagine that they were quite taken aback by that.

What happened was immediately the chair, who, of course, belonged to the government caucus, with the support of the majority, which, of course, was the government on the committee, shut that down, and said that we could not speak about that issue and we could not ask questions about that issue. And that became a pattern of what happened during the entire panel process. The majority blocked the other parties that were trying to participate in the process from being able to get information about the very case that sent us to that place that we had committed as a group in this place to be able to try to look at to try to come up with recommendations to make sure it did not happen again.

In fact, the opposition at the time – the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays, I believe, was the leader of the third party at the time. I was

happy that we got to merge and are all one party now, but he was leader of the third party at the time. I was dispatched to be the negotiator for the Wildrose Party with the government. He was negotiating on behalf of the PC Party, and we had our friend, the leader at the time, the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow, of the Alberta Party. I think he was not the leader anymore, the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, but he was definitely the only elected member for the Liberal Party that was in the Chamber. We all got together, and that's a wide spectrum of political thought.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

I mean, that is the extreme – I don't want to say extreme, but that's the left side of the spectrum, not quite as left as the current government of the day possibly, but that's the left side of the spectrum with the Alberta Party and the Liberal Party. Then, you know, you have the conservative side of the spectrum. We all went in there and said: "Okay. How can we make this work? This is a serious issue."

At first the government continued to reject a bipartisan process to address this issue. That went on for a long time, but we finally were able to compromise and say that instead of an actual committee of the Legislature that would be on *Hansard* and would require votes on the record and would require, in our view, accountability, we were willing to compromise because of the significance of this issue, and we were going to agree to a ministerial panel as long as the opposition got to participate. And that's where we ended up. We got sent to go take on that task, and we're there. We agree to it. We're told that we'll be able to address this issue that, certainly, Madam Chair, the province of Alberta was very upset about. They're still upset about it now, but as things go on, you know, news cycles change, and that's the reality of life. Life goes on. But at the time they were very, very upset about it.

5:30

We were willing to take it out of this place into a bipartisan process, compromise, and go with the ministerial panel instead of a standing committee because we still wanted to be able to do something, but then it was repeatedly blocked. What was staggering to me, Madam Chair – and I know you'll recall this as well – is that when we had this first meeting, there was some discussion about a new process, something that I had not experienced. I don't know if the Member for Calgary-Hays had ever experienced it before. We were presented with something called a consent agenda. No, not a consent agenda. Everybody would have to consent. There would not be votes. There would not be votes where we would vote to decide if we would move something. It would be that we were going to attempt to get everybody to consent.

Mr. McIver: A consensus agenda.

Mr. Nixon: A consensus agenda. Thank you. That's the right word.

It was a consensus process. That was something new certainly for a bunch of partisan politicians on all sides to have to figure out how to navigate. We had lots of talk about how that would work and what that would look like. Some of us had some concerns that it would then bog down the process. Eventually some decisions had to be made. Some of us also had some concerns that that really just meant that, you know, certain people were not going to want to be on the record to make some of those tough decisions. Let me just stress this, Madam Chair. That was actually not part of the negotiations. That happened after we were at our first meeting, and the opposition had to agree to that. But we still wanted to move forward on an important issue, so we said that we would try to work within that process.

Then when some of the examples that I already talked about came up and we'd start to ask questions and tried to get there and we said, "Whoa. Whoa. Whoa. That's not consensus. We want to talk about this issue. We've been sent to talk about this issue," all of a sudden for those issues and those issues only there was a vote, and of course we were outvoted because we are the opposition. That's something we're used to. That's part of being the opposition. You go to a standing committee. I know you haven't been in opposition before, Madam Chair, but you will find that you get pretty used to losing votes in the opposition. You know, it doesn't make you that frustrated. It's kind of the process. The government has the majority.

It was interesting because then it was only when we tried to deal with the actual situation that brought us there that we all of a sudden went back to the process that was not the consensus agenda. It was the majority agenda. This went on to lots of conflict in the discussion, particularly actually as we got to a conversation around the publication ban. The opposition and the media that had been pushing this issue and doing a lot of good investigative work, quite frankly, on this important issue, had continued to bring up the publication ban. It's complicated. There are a lot of legal aspects to the publication ban. You're trying to balance issues of the public's right to know, the government's right to know to be able to make changes as a result of the situation, the media's right to be able to present something that often could put a face on a tragedy and actually make change but at the same time try to balance families' rights to privacy, individuals' rights to privacy in what is often the most tragic day of their lives.

I struggled a lot with that issue. At first I believed that transparency is probably the best way to go. I still believe that, but then when we sat and we listened to some of the families who had experienced that with their kids who had been lost and having to make a determination of whether their child's name would be public and would be part of the news process, for me, Madam Chair – I don't know about you – that was one of the most emotional things to watch, when parents or the people from those families came and talked about that. I mean, it became an extremely complicated thing. You recognized that it wasn't as simple as it looked just reading it in the newspaper. So we said: "Hey, we want to explore this. We feel that it's part of our mandate, and we want to go through it."

I don't know who instructed the government members on that. I don't want to say that it came from the minister's office. I can only say what the government members did on that. They again started to try to block us from being able to talk about that issue. Essentially the ministry, the very ministry that had made some mistakes along the way and that we were trying to make sure that we could give them the tools or the resources or the policy so that they would not make those mistakes again, said that that ministry would deal with it and essentially it was too complicated for us. We disagreed, and we fought back.

There was a panel meeting on the top floor of the Federal Building, another one of those nonconsensus meetings, all of a sudden. It got a little bit confusing for us, Madam Chair, because one moment it was consensus; the next thing you know it was votes. The panel, under the instruction of the chair, voted to say that we couldn't do that.

The opposition then started to raise several concerns about that. I think the media of the day was sympathetic to us on that because they had been raising it, so there were some sympathetic articles, columns on the idea that that had to be looked at. The outside experts that had participated with the partisan politicians that were part of the process ended up siding with us, and we were able to

actually outvote the government majority on the panel and able to then bring that forward, but it had to go through a lot of steps.

My point with all of this, Madam Chair, is that the government, particularly this government – it's the only government I had experience with on a panel of this nature – spent most of their time truly blocking the members who got sent there to, you know, invest time in trying to solve this. Maybe there's a reason for this that we don't understand. They spent most of their time blocking them from even being able to ask a simple question about the very little girl that caused us to have that panel. Instead they wanted us to trust the department and to trust the ministry on their own to get this right.

I think that we would have been in a much better spot right now if that had not been how the NDP chose to strong-arm that process. I think that if they had truly taken the opposition up on an open, fair conversation, publicly minuted or put into *Hansard*, allowed it to be broadcast without any argument and allowed members to ask questions about certain situations, particularly the ones that they were sent there for, we would have ended up with a lot more information. Then we actually could have come as a united group in the 29th Legislature, as a united group of MLAs and human beings from the province of Alberta that truly do not want to see something like this happen again, come forward with a clear list of recommendations. Then we could actually go back and look at the people of Alberta and say: that was a horrible situation that happened to Serenity, but here is what we learned as a result of that, and here are the things that we are going to recommend back to our colleagues inside the broader Chamber of the Legislature, and here is what we're going to pass to be able to do that.

Instead, that didn't happen. We had to come back to this Chamber and then start to ask questions about the very issue that we had been dispatched to work on as a group. It was confusing for people that were outside of the group. I remember talking to some of my colleagues, who said: "They're not telling you about this? Didn't we agree to make this panel so you could have a conversation?" In my mind what was most frustrating about that is that the minister and the Premier and the Deputy Premier would get up and answer those questions and then act as if they were telling us that information, act as if they were not blocking us from getting that information. Some of the *Hansard*, if you look back at it at that time, I found shocking.

And then you would leave after question period, and you would go back to the next panel meeting. The panel met a lot. It did lots of good work and heard from lots of people. You would go back to the panel meeting and then try to get the panel back onto the conversation and the topic that we were dispatched to deal with, and even after standing up in question period and saying, "Yeah, we're giving them all that information," basically they would leave here and not give us any of that information.

5:40

Now, I recognize that there would have been some information that was associated with the Serenity case that the minister, quite frankly, could not have talked about in a public manner. There were other mechanisms to communicate with the panel about those types of privacy issues. That could have been something that could have been negotiated between all the parties that were involved. There could have been a confidential briefing. There could have been an agreement that there were certain things that can't come out because there's some confidentiality issues with it but that here are the areas that don't have that, that you could ask questions about. Instead it was just a complete blanket of not allowed to talk about it. I don't think that most people who watched us inside this Assembly a couple of years ago, when this story first started to break, thought that when we announced that ministerial panel, an all-party

agreement to that panel, we were all going to go into a room and not even talk about the case that sent us there. I don't think most people thought that. Now you would think that we would be allowed to talk about other cases, other issues, other examples of problems in the system.

Now, remember, Madam Chair, we were sent there to try to come up with solid recommendations to make sure that in the future kids that are in the care of our government or that have an interaction with child intervention are not killed. That is what we were sent there to figure out. We were sent there to figure out how some of these terrible tragedies happened.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I was listening, of course intently, to the comments of the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. I think it was very important to have somebody that had the experience of being on that panel right from the start. It was interesting hearing what he said on how things were working there. I did enjoy, of course, listening to the Member for Calgary-Hays also talk about the panel and how things went there.

I guess I find it amazing that the panel basically was set up to deal with the case of Serenity but that through the whole process they couldn't talk about Serenity. They couldn't actually talk about the case that brought about the panel's purpose. It's been said multiple times here from both sides of the House that this is a nonpartisan issue, and I agree. It's definitely nonpartisan. It's about children. It's about safety. It's about taking care of the vulnerable in our society. That's got to be our number one purpose in this. As I look at this bill and I see that it's the first of maybe multiple pieces of legislation that the government wants to bring forward, I would just hope that the first piece would be the most important piece, the one that would actually make a difference and would have made a difference for this child who is the reason that it was brought forward.

I guess I'll maybe just leave it at that for now. I do have more things to say on this issue, but I'll leave it for now and maybe ask the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre to expand a little bit more.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Any other members wishing to speak on amendment A2? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's great to be back so quickly. As I was saying when I closed off, beyond just the Serenity case that we had been sent there to deal with, we were blocked from asking about any specific details about processes that could happen within the government about specific cases. The problem with that is: how do you identify the problems and then identify the situations that are creating those problems within the system that are ultimately causing these tragedies if you're not allowed to ask questions about how it happened?

One of the things that Paula Simons reported was that the RCMP said they needed [Serenity's mother] to sign a release to allow Alberta Health Services to release Serenity's full file. Eager to co-operate, she signed the necessary papers. Then RCMP called her with what she calls "terrible news."

Alberta Health Services said they couldn't release the records.

"They wouldn't turn it over, not even with my signature" . . .

The province and the child welfare agency responsible for Serenity's case failed to turn over . . .

Actually, I want to back up. I want to go to that part of the sentence. That is a great question. For that family it would've been a simple question: what is the reason for that? A very simple thing. We could've looked at: was that reasonable, or is that something that we'd be able to fix for a mother whose child was killed in our care?

The province and the child welfare agency responsible for Serenity's case failed to turn over a key internal review of Serenity's care to the RCMP. The Mounties only got those essential records after a public report from the child and youth advocate and a subsequent investigation by the Edmonton Journal put Serenity's case in the public eye.

That's actually the thing that lit the fuse to make this issue blow up into a massive political issue, and rightly so, across this province. It's the thing that put the minister at the time under significant media pressure, and ultimately the Premier had to split his ministry into two. There are a lot of other facts that are appalling there, but that key fact is actually what started the ball rolling.

Think about that, Madam Chair.

The province and the child welfare agency responsible for Serenity's case failed to turn over a key internal review of Serenity's care to the RCMP.

They failed to do it. Now, why? I actually tried to ask questions about this of both the Edmonton police and the RCMP. The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays, I suspect, actually asked some as well. I don't recall his offhand, but I do recall mine. I got a couple of answers about how the computer system was working. We're starting to explore that. I would be interested to know if part of it was an IT problem. I mean, that would be a reasonable thing to be able to determine. Immediately I was shut down by the NDP chair and not allowed to ask another question about that very simple fact.

Normally, the RCMP would turn a homicide investigation . . .

These are Paula Simons' words.

. . . over to its senior and expert major crimes unit. Instead, they kept the investigation with the local detachment. And there it remains.

Turns out, the RCMP did have many of Serenity's medical records. But in some cases, they got photocopies of those documents from Serenity's mom, and not from [Alberta Health Services].

A little girl was beaten, sexually abused, and starved to death. Her mother had to get some documents. She couldn't even get them all. Alberta Health Services could not get them there. It hindered the investigation. They didn't even know what was going on. That's a reasonable question for that panel, that we sent to review this, to be able to ask. I still, to this day, don't understand why we weren't allowed to.

Paula Simons again:

More than two years later, Alberta's medical examiner has not released Serenity's cause of death. The Child and Youth Advocate, an independent officer of the legislature,

whom we all know,

was denied a copy of an autopsy report. The case has never been ruled a homicide. Cpl. Laurel Scott . . .

I hope I got the name right.

. . . who speaks for the RCMP in central Alberta, says an investigation is still open. Because of that, she offered no further comment.

Why did the child advocate's report omit any reference to the genital and anal bruising, and the absent hymen, which might suggest sexual assault? Or to the hypothermia?

It's not a fun thing to talk about, but it is a legitimate question.

We fought, and we managed to get the medical examiner to come and talk to the panel, and we started to ask some questions. What happened, Madam Chair? The NDP blocked the other political parties that were a part of the process from being able to ask the questions or at least receive the answers. I ask my colleagues that are with me in the House today: do you think that you sent us to participate in this all-party panel on behalf of Serenity's case to not be able to ask those questions?

Again Paula Simons:

A year before her death, Serenity was at the 50th percentile for size – absolutely average. Twelve months later, her weight was so low, it's simply not on the chart for a four-year-old girl.

How was this allowed to happen? How was it that children's services simply gave guardianship of three children to this couple despite the allegations of abuse, then never checked up on them? How did a child starve in a province of plenty? Why, despite the horrifying medical evidence, has no one been charged with anything?

Why?

That's what we got sent to ask. That's what we got sent to try to find an answer to, to be able to come back here and come up with some decent recommendations to be able to change that. Not one of us in this Chamber, Madam Chair, can look each other in the eye and say that that panel accomplished that. None of us can say that that panel accomplished that. I challenge anybody in this Chamber to be able to say that they could go back to their constituents and say that we were able to solve this horrible case, this horrible situation that happened to this little girl, that this panel that we came up with solved it when you hear that we weren't even allowed to ask questions about that.

5:50

Now, maybe it has been solved. Maybe the NDP did it behind closed doors and didn't share it with anybody else. But that's my point on this amendment. That's why all parties should have an opportunity to be able to participate. I think it makes it more transparent. I don't think that most of Alberta would know that that is what was happening behind the closed doors of the ministerial panel if it wasn't for the fact that opposition members were there and able to come back out and say: this is what's happening, and it's wrong.

Paula Simons writes:

She didn't die on [the Premier's] watch.

I agree.

But the NDP government has done nothing to lift the secrecy that surrounds the death of children in care.

That's the point. The panel was not allowed to talk about what went wrong with this case. But it is also about the culture of secrecy around it, about who is accountable. It was not allowed to put in mechanisms to make people accountable. It was just not allowed to do it.

Again Paula Simons:

But we're talking about a four-year-old girl, who'd been an active toddler who loved to climb and play, a child without any documented health problems to explain why her weight had plummeted to that of a famine victim.

Why did no one notice that a child that was in our care, who had interacted with our system, went from a normal little girl, from all reports a healthy little girl with an adequate weight, all the way to a famine victim? We should be allowed to ask that question. Albertans want to know that answer. They want to know what happened. They want us to be able to come back and say: yes, this will be found out. The criminal justice system can hold people responsible from the criminal side – that's not our responsibility – but this is what happened within our system, this is where we failed

in our system, and this is how we can make sure it never happens again.

I don't know about the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays, but that's what I thought we got sent there to do. I continue to feel terrible that our panel was not allowed to be able to do that. Every time that we talk to Serenity's family, it feels terrible that we were not able to do that. I remember at the time talking to family members of Serenity and how excited they were that we were going to undertake this in a bipartisan way. And then to have to watch them watch this just turn into the story of their family member, somebody they care about, just being constantly blocked from being able to see the light of day.

Again Paula Simons:

Two years after [Serenity] was taken to hospital with a traumatic brain injury, her emaciated body covered in bruises, old and new, the Office of the Medical Examiner has yet to release an official cause of death.

Two years. Two years went by after a little girl, who our government shared some responsibility for, had such horrible things go wrong. Two years went by, and nobody still even knew the cause of death, certainly not the RCMP, we now know. Two years.

Within two months of Serenity being sent to her new home – this is again Paula Simons – child intervention services

received reports the children were bruised, scratched and malnourished. A doctor found the youngest had lost three pounds. The children's birth mother claimed the children were being denied food and were physically abused.

She asked that they be removed from the care of her family members and returned to foster care. Her request was denied.

Her request was denied even with reports, medical reports, of things that were happening to Serenity and her siblings. Her mother was saying: something is happening to my kids. Her request was denied. The next you hear, she's no longer here. She's died. She's been killed. And we're not allowed to ask how that happened.

What happened when that was reported to the doctor? Who did her mother report that to? Why did nobody act on that?

Look, I'm a simple country guy from Sundre, and that's fine, Madam Chair, but I can tell you that I can walk anywhere on main street down in Sundre right now, a great town, my hometown – I

love it – and if I tell this story to anybody else, they would say: "Why didn't somebody get in a truck after receiving that report and drive down there and find out what was happening to that little girl? Why? Why did nobody do that?" That is a fair question to have asked, again, blocked by the NDP on this committee.

Paula Simons again:

The investigation into the allegations of abuse was closed. Shortly after that – just five months after they were placed in the home – the kinship care providers were granted full guardianship of the children, and . . .

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(3) we shall now rise and report progress.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Mr. Hinkley: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 22. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour, please say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Acting Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Just seeing the time and the progress that we've made this afternoon, I would move that we call it 6 o'clock and adjourn until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:56 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday morning, November 21, 2018

Day 51

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Wednesday, November 21, 2018

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Prayers

The Acting Speaker: Good morning.

Let us reflect or pray each in our own way. Today marks the 86th anniversary of the creation of Alberta's first provincial parks, which have preserved some of the natural beauty of Alberta for us and our children and will continue to do so for future generations of Albertans. During our deliberations today let us keep in mind that the work that we do today should be forward looking. We should strive to make the lives of Albertans better and easier and to preserve this province for generations to come.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

Bill 25

Canyon Creek Hydro Development Act

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Mr. Rosendahl: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's always a pleasure to rise in the House. I rise today on behalf of the Minister of Energy to move second reading of Bill 25, the Canyon Creek Hydro Development Act.

On August 2, 2018, the Alberta Utilities Commission approved Turning Point Generation's Canyon Creek application, and that application is for a 75-megawatt, closed-loop, pumped hydro energy storage project. The AUC determined that the project is in the public interest and should proceed. This triggers a legislative requirement on our part under the Hydro and Electric Energy Act. Once a report like this one from the AUC is submitted to the Lieutenant Governor in Council, section 9 of the act requires that Executive Council direct a bill to be prepared. This allows the AUC to authorize construction of this project. Section 10 requires an order in council to authorize operation of the hydro project.

In its review and approval the AUC considered both the construction and operation of the project. This enables the passage of this bill to authorize the AUC to make an order for both the construction and operation of the Canyon Creek project. This bill is one step in the project approval process. The company has expressed strong interest in advancing this project but can only do so after receiving authority to proceed from the Alberta Utilities Commission. The AUC can only approve construction and subsequent operations of the project upon royal assent of the bill. With this bill, if passed, the Canyon Creek project still will be subject to further approvals from the Alberta Utilities Commission and Alberta Environment and Parks.

Madam Speaker, I'd like to share a few details about the proposed Canyon Creek project. The proposed Canyon Creek project is located about 13 kilometres northeast of Hinton. It is not a large-scale hydroelectric dam. Rather, it's a small, 75-megawatt, closed-loop, pumped hydro energy storage project. A closed-loop project like this one isn't connected to naturally flowing sources of water. The location is easily accessible to existing infrastructure while isolated enough on Crown land for minimal disruption to neighbouring communities and landowners.

The project has received letters of support from local communities and officials and will bring long-term economic benefits. As the project is adjacent to a previously disturbed area, the old Obed coal mine, and is not connected to existing natural water bodies, we expect environmental impacts to be reduced. That said, the company will be required to adhere to and meet all of the province's strong environmental standards. The company has consulted with stakeholders to discuss any concerns.

At this point I think it's important to note that the bill would not remove any of the regulatory authority of the Alberta Utilities Commission or Alberta Environment and Parks. Through this proposed legislation we would be granting the Alberta Utilities Commission the authority to approve the construction and operation of the Canyon Creek project, and Alberta Environment and Parks would still be required to issue the approvals.

It's also important to note that this bill would only apply to this one project. A similar bill, the Dunvegan Hydro Development Act, was passed in 2009 under the same process. Any future hydroelectric project would require a separate bill and go through the same approval process.

Madam Speaker, this is a good-news story for Alberta, showing that companies are confident to invest in our province. Projects like this show a long-term vision and demonstrate a long-term commitment to investment in Alberta. Alberta has always been a leader in oil and gas, and increasing the production of greener electricity will further enhance our leadership position as a responsible energy producer.

I hope that all members support me in moving forward with Bill 25. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Good morning. I rise to speak to Bill 25, the Canyon Creek Hydro Development Act. Normally when a project requires the approval of cabinet to proceed, it simply receives it. In this case, however, the law is different, as I understand. The Alberta Utilities Commission approved Turning Point Generation's Canyon Creek pumped hydroelectricity storage project on a portion of the site of the former Obed coal mine near Hinton. The Hydro and Electric Energy Act is written in such a way that hydro projects have to be brought before the Legislative Assembly to receive approval.

Now, I'm sure there is an explanation for this requirement to bring hydro projects to the Legislature for approval. But in this case the requirement to bring this project to the Legislative Assembly looks a lot like a piece of red tape for project approval. The UCP is committed to eliminating red tape. Madam Speaker, my colleague from Cardston-Taber-Warner is assigned by our caucus to consult multiple stakeholders on how we reduce red tape and speed track projects like this.

The Canyon Creek project is designed by incorporating two small off-stream water reservoirs. One is up the hill by the Obed mine, and the other one is at the bottom, not far from the Athabasca River. These two man-made lakes will be connected by the pipeline with pumps, turbines, and generating equipment near the bottom reservoir and powerhouse. The design utilizes a closed-loop system, the first of its kind in Alberta, and it will use the same water repeatedly for pumping and generating. There are other companies interested in similar projects, Madam Speaker, and since there are going to be more renewable energy projects in the province, we're going to need more projects like the Canyon Creek hydro development to act as storage for electricity.

This project acts like a battery or a green peaker plant. When electricity prices are high, the water falls from a high pond over the generators to a low pond, producing 75 megawatts over 37 hours. When electricity prices are low, the water is pumped up the hill for storage. Now, for the physics people out there, I know there is a concern about the energy equation around the conservation of energy with this project. But, as you know, Madam Speaker, one theory in physics is that energy cannot be created or destroyed, only changed in form. I'm assured this project is more about conserving low-price electricity for use at high prices with 80 per cent efficiency.

9:10

We need new generating plants to replace the coal-fired plants that are retiring, are forced by the NDP government just to meet their ideological policy goals. They have accelerated the phase-out of coal mines more than the prescribed federal requirement. With that, you know, Madam Speaker, Alberta taxpayers are on the hook to compensate generating companies and the coal mines. That's a different story for a different day. But we need new generating plants to replace those coal-fired plants, and this project is a good opportunity to create that required generation. We also need the generating peaker plants to backstop wind and solar projects.

The Canyon Creek hydro development is estimated at \$200 million in private investment and 300 construction jobs near Hinton. Once the Legislature approves this project, that is not the end of the approvals, Madam Speaker. Alberta Environment and Parks is going to need to issue some permits. One of those permits will be a Water Act permit to withdraw water from the Athabasca one time to fill the ponds, and water will also be needed every so often to compensate for evaporation. So although they are going to recycle the same water, they have to top up to compensate their operation.

But it is those water permits that are of greatest concern. This project was approved by the AUC on August 2, 2018. It took 14 weeks to get the bill before the Legislature. That is three months, one-quarter of a year. Bill 25 will likely have Legislature approval this week. Then the Lieutenant Governor has to give royal assent. But it is the licences from Alberta Environment and Parks that will be the holdup.

We know from experience, talking to municipalities at the Rural Municipalities of Alberta this week, that people are waiting years for permits out of Alberta Environment and Parks. Simple things like gravel extraction are tied up, and construction projects for public projects like roads, including provincial highways, are stopping because of Alberta Environment and Parks. They need to look for critters in the ditches or travelling through the culvert that is about to be replaced. These studies can only be done between the months of May and October because – well, who wants to be out in the snow and cold, Madam Speaker? – the studies apparently need to see free-flowing water.

Alberta Environment and Parks is known to have held up permits for changing the fuel used by the cement plants in the order of two to three years. On a simple fuel change, Madam Speaker. Yesterday I was talking to the Cement Association, and that's what they told me. It took two to three years to get a yes or no to stop burning coal and switch to garbage instead. Two years. They're trying to replace coal because they burn coal to create heat in their clinker and cement plant. They're trying to be innovative. They want to use commercial and industrial garbage instead to generate that heat, but Alberta Environment and Parks took two to three years to give those simple permits.

Meanwhile the same cement producers in, of all places, British Columbia get those permits in 21 days. If anyone on the other side,

on the government benches, can take note of this and can do something about this, that would be great. Madam Speaker, it's unacceptable. If other provinces are taking 21 days and we are taking two to three years, we are sending the wrong message to investors. It doesn't take two to three years to check the science and to do a risk assessment. Use some common sense and take a customer service approach to government before issuing permits.

With that, Madam Speaker, I believe this is a good project for the Hinton area and for Alberta, and I believe enough time has been wasted on the approval process and debate and that we should get on with this pump hydro project. This is a green project that is needed with the level of renewables being introduced to the Alberta electricity market.

I urge all my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support this bill. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 25?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for West Yellowhead to close debate.

Mr. Rosendahl: Madam Speaker, yes, I close debate on this. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

[Motion carried; Bill 25 read a second time]

Bill 23

An Act to Renew Local Democracy in Alberta

Mrs. Pitt moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 23, An Act to Renew Local Democracy in Alberta, be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 23, An Act to Renew Local Democracy in Alberta, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

[Debate adjourned on the amendment November 20: Mr. Cooper speaking]

The Acting Speaker: Are there any members wishing to speak to Bill 23? The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's always a pleasure to rise in this room to speak to legislation that affects all Albertans. Today we speak to Bill 23, An Act to Renew Local Democracy in Alberta. Now, this bill proposes a variety of amendments and changes to the Local Authorities Election Act. As many others have mentioned . . .

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, sorry to interrupt. My mistake. We're still on the referral, so I just wanted to clarify for the House that we're speaking to the amendment still.

Mr. Schneider: I'm speaking to the referral, Madam Speaker. Thank you.

As many others have mentioned in this room, this is a complex piece of legislation that needs time to be gone through with a fine-tooth comb, so to speak. It is a bill that, quite frankly, needs to have some consultation done, I believe. You know, we on this side certainly need to have enough time to consult with the towns in rural Alberta, the villages, rural municipalities, Métis settlements, and any other entity that this piece of legislation proposes to affect. I guess I should continue: I think it also talks about school boards and irrigation districts.

After giving the document a read through, the only conclusion I can come to, given the short time we have, is that legislation such as this requires a little more time than the government has allocated. Now, that's fine. Time is the currency of the Legislature; that's understood. But something this encompassing, something that affects people right down to the neighbourhoods, hamlets, and settlements that they live in, needs more than cursory attention to detail, Madam Speaker. We need to do our due diligence. That's why my colleagues and I are so insistent that this bill be referred to the proper legislative committee. As my colleague from Livingstone-Macleod mentioned, I too have some questions that need to be answered. Now, whether we get the answers is entirely a horse of a different colour.

Madam Speaker, I'm a pretty big fan of movie westerns. If you were to take a walk through my office here at the Federal Building, it would take you several minutes to take in the western memorabilia that I've brought to Edmonton in order to have a place that I feel comfortable in when I write speeches like this one. Now, if this bill were a western, it might be characterized as *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* because, in my opinion, there are elements of each here.

Let's start with the bad. I feel like a glass-half-empty kind of guy today. That being said, some of the bad includes, for starters, in my opinion, the fact that this legislation appears to me likely to increase third-party advertisers, or political action committees. Third-party advertisers' presence in municipal elections is likely to increase. Now, this has been a huge bone of contention with the government as far as provincial politics are concerned. I certainly have no problem with the fact that big money was taken out of provincial elections. Let's be clear here. This side of the House certainly supported that change right out of the gate, and we're proud to do so.

9:20

Now, the political action committees have primarily been seen in the provincial realm in Alberta politics due to changes made by this government's reform to election laws, but it has not dissuaded the government from attempting it here for other realms, I guess I would say. The new proposed rules appear to favour political action committees over candidates, especially outside of the election period. Political action committees appear to be able to spend with limited impunity possibly directed at a specific candidate or incumbent. I mean, I don't know how else you could read the intent here. PACs certainly need to disclose any contributions they receive, but they need to disclose those contributions that will be used to promote or oppose a candidate.

Madam Speaker, what is being suggested here is that we bring provincial partisan politics and the ways of provincial partisan politics into the realm of municipalities and Métis settlements and school boards and irrigation districts, where, in my experience, this kind of politics has not been seen. Based on that statement alone, I believe that the amendment that has been put forward here from my good friend and colleague from Airdrie to refer this bill to committee is absolutely the right thing to do.

I have served as a councillor in a municipality, a small municipality, not a city by any means. The geographic area of that municipality is 2,150 square miles, so it covered a big area. I think it would comfortably fit the city of Calgary, the area that that city sits on, six times within that municipality. Of course, there's a slight discrepancy with population. I think our municipality was populated with 6,800 people. The municipality that I was part of the council for actually only had 3,800. One town and five villages made up the rest of that population.

In my tenure I certainly was never aware of any councillor that took a contribution in order to get themselves re-elected. Actually, I never heard of a councillor taking a donation to his campaign in rural municipal politics, period. It doesn't mean it didn't happen, but in my experience I certainly never saw it. But, like I said, I was a councillor in a small municipality, where everyone knows who the councillors are, and it really would be somewhat rare for a contentious election at all. Door-knocking in rural Alberta is usually still the preferred way to remind ratepayers that there's an election coming up and that you may be running in it.

But I understand that this isn't necessarily the case when it comes to municipal politics in cities, certainly the big cities. I understand that councillors can and do raise money for their potential re-election bid at any time throughout the year. I kind of get the reason for this proposed piece of legislation when it comes to city elections, elections where councillors represent areas of the city or wards where big money may indeed be spent in one of those wards. For example, perhaps a developer whose project is coming before council the following week could offer a donation to a councillor of a ward where that may be happening in order to try and sway things more in his favour, and no one would ever know.

Back to what we were speaking about here a moment ago, political action committees and councillors and what the difference is when it comes to raising money for a campaign, again, I believe that this would be more likely in a big city, in my opinion, than in the vast majority of municipalities across this province.

While the individual is limited to only \$2,000 to spend over the first three years following an election, which is supposed to be countering a potential political action committee's narrative, guess what? The PAC appears to be able to spend unlimited amounts of money attacking various opponents or supporting various opponents. It just seems somewhat unfair to me, Madam Speaker, especially as I have always tended to side with the underdog in situations like that, for the most part.

Speaking of the little guy, why are we limiting the amount that an individual can actually campaign? After all, municipal elections are nonpartisan, and often the candidate's name recognition is key to their success. That certainly enhances concerns that these changes will further solidify the chances incumbents will have to retain their position. After all, local politics is often where people first get involved because of the nonpartisan nature. I can't be the only one that has deep concerns that these changes are kind of burdensome and may cause potential candidates to feel somewhat of a sense of intimidation.

In this day and age where groups across the political spectrum are trying to attract more people to get involved – as I think we all know in this room, all levels of politics seem to have the same problem – I'm not sure how any of these changes would give newcomers the kind of incentive required to get involved. Why are we throwing up additional barriers, Madam Speaker?

Has the government done any outreach on this subject? That would be a question I would have. If they have, we certainly haven't had it shared on this side of the House. This is, I think, a solid argument for sending this bill to committee. Why not hear from representative groups of all sorts to see what they have to say? I mean, what could be the harm? Why are we making things more onerous?

Speaking of which, I'll segue right here into another onerous little tidbit. Why is it that in provincial politics the threshold for donation disclosure is set at \$250, but the legislation that we're talking about today wants to make the threshold \$50? I just wonder: why not \$250, which would mimic the provincial rates? It's just another question. I would certainly like to hear the reason for that number.

Speaking of cents, a little tongue-in-cheek, of course, wordplay, we do have a dollars-and-cents issue, and that is that there seem to be significant changes to the campaign limits. It seems that if you're a candidate running for re-election or simply a candidate who's looking to get a head start on campaigning early, you won't be totally prohibited, but there are certain restrictions. During the first three years the proposed rules would allow you to spend up to \$2,000 on things like door-knocking and literature promoting you as the candidate. If you're a self-funded candidate, however, your eligible contribution has been lowered from \$10,000 to \$4,000, matching the new donation limits. Now, I'm not sure of the rationale here, to be honest. I mean, if you're self-funded, it's your money. Another reason to toss this to committee to find out if this is something that potentially is a huge problem here in municipal campaigns. In my experience I certainly haven't heard of this being an issue, certainly from the small municipality side of Alberta politics. Of course, big-city and small-town politics certainly have different situations. I'd like some clarification on that for sure.

Going back to local politics, these new campaign financing rules, in my opinion, this certainly seems to me that it makes raising money for a local campaign much more difficult when you're raising it \$50 at a time. Unfortunately, the main complaint we've heard from stakeholders and constituents in the little amount of time we've had to speak with them regarding municipal elections appears to have been totally missed. None of the proposed amendments in Bill 23 allow for a municipal candidate to issue tax receipts for municipal donations. It seems the legislation fails on this one point. Potentially there's a very good reason for it; I just haven't heard it. I would love to hear what the minister would have to say about that.

To recap, this legislation makes it harder to raise money for local nonpartisan campaigns, it lowers the disclosure limit to \$50, it throws up hurdles that could limit people from jumping into or participating in local politics, it enacts legislation that may give rise to even more political action committees and in local politics no less, and it doesn't allow municipal campaigns to issue tax receipts. So, Madam Speaker, this seems to counter what I think the government is trying to accomplish here. Maybe I'm being a little too harsh or a little too negative. Maybe these fears are unfounded. Maybe that could easily be solved by consulting in an open forum in front of an all-party committee.

Now all that said, that's not to say that there aren't positives in Bill 23. To continue with the good, the bad, and the ugly, there is some good in there. There are elements that increase local autonomy. It puts elections back in the hands of local government by leaving the administration of elections with the local municipality. Elements of this legislation go to improving transparency and accountability of municipal elections, and I think everyone in the room and every municipality would agree that this is a good thing, Madam Speaker.

9:30

The thing that I feel is a vast improvement in the local election scene is that it goes a long way to extending the prohibition on campaigning, extending it to include the voting station property, and that includes the parking lot. I think that includes hallways, et cetera, no longer walking through an election-filled obstacle course. That, I think, once again, is more likely in a city, but I think that would be a pleasant change that a lot of people would agree with.

Another important aspect I find myself liking is the accessibility aspect. For instance, any municipality with over 5,000 people will now be required to have at least one advance poll ahead of the regular voting day. While several of us have some concerns about the cost being borne locally, ultimately this is about improving

turnout and making voting more accessible to people. Additionally, any legislation to increase locations for voting for people who can't get to traditional voting places is a big win in my books, Madam Speaker.

Now, I have decidedly mixed feelings about a couple of additional aspects of the legislation, notably the amendment that eliminates the need for a voter to have resided in Alberta . . .

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I really appreciate this opportunity to speak to you on this wonderful Wednesday morning. You know, I was so enthralled with my colleague's speech. I was hoping to hear a little bit more, so if he wouldn't mind continuing, I'd appreciate that.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I really didn't know I had an enthralling effect on those in the House today, but I'd be glad to continue.

As I said, I have decidedly mixed feelings about a couple of additional aspects of the legislation, notably the amendment that eliminates the need for a voter to have resided in Alberta for six months prior to being eligible to vote in an election, leaving only one requirement, the only requirement being that they're 18 years old and a Canadian citizen. Also, the part about expanding vouching provisions, which was explained to me earlier this week in the government's tech briefing. Staff verbally informed opposition parties that the rule was that one elector can vouch for one other elector. However, I can't see anything in Bill 23, in the proposed legislation, that appears to limit the number of times someone can vouch for an elector. Perhaps, if the government sees fit to grant our motion this morning, we can find ways to address this concern, bring more clarity, bring transparency, which is what the government is trying to do with this whole piece of legislation.

Now, the ugly part of this whole movie scenario can be subjective. To my way of thinking the ugly has to be the transitional aspect of this legislation. Despite not being passed, the bill is retroactive to introduction at first reading; in other words, November 5, 2018. What that means to me is that any councillor who has already started collecting contributions with the desire to participate in our democratic process, in our democratic system, if said candidate has already accepted contributions with the thought of running in a 2021 municipal election, they will be prohibited. They simply won't be able to accept any more contributions from now until January 1, 2021, upon passage of this piece of legislation. With all the limits this legislation has already heaped upon an individual who just wants to make a difference in some small way, a contribution to help make their community a better place – that's where a lot of great politicians get their start. To further restrict their ability to challenge the status quo, well, quite simply, I would call that another ugly addition to politics, Madam Speaker.

That's another compelling reason that I believe everyone should get behind this motion. Let's fix this legislation and make the political process a better one, better than the way we found it when we got here. Because unlike the time-honoured western movie that I have alluded to throughout this speech, this bill is anything but a classic in its current form. It should be sent back to the editing room or, in this case, a suitable legislative committee.

That being said, thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you very much. I have to say that the Member for Little Bow has done a wonderful job explaining to this House exactly what it is that we need to do. We need to refer this to committee. He's made some pretty compelling arguments. The fact is that whenever you've got government moving something this fast through the House, we need to maybe rein back and say: let's use some caution. I can tell you that when it comes to consulting with municipalities on this issue, I think that we all can agree that our elected leaders in rural Alberta and even urban Alberta all share a common voice that we need to get this right the first time.

Now, I really do think that the Member for Little Bow hit this concern right on the head when it comes to the name of one of his favourite westerns, *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*. Now I understand that this government really is trying to do good, but will there be bad coming out of this, and will it get ugly for the government? That is the real question here.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the referral? The hon. Member for Highwood.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's indeed a pleasure this morning to rise in the House to speak on the referral amendment for Bill 23, An Act to Renew Local Democracy in Alberta. The main purpose of this bill is to better align local elections, including municipalities, school boards, Métis settlements, and irrigation districts, to provincial election laws, some of which have already been changed in this bill. This Bill 23 will amend the Local Authorities Election Act to reflect the changes that are being proposed. This would better align local elections with provincial elections regarding the rules around fundraising, donations, and political action committees.

Now, let's first look at the mechanics of this bill, starting with campaign contributions. First off, Bill 23 will seek to ban corporate, union, and employer organizations from donating to candidates in municipal elections. I believe this is a change that I can support. Members of this Assembly previously passed legislation that would institute these changes at the provincial level. It makes good sense to synchronize legislation between provincial elections and local elections. Furthermore, it's important to keep special interests at bay when influencing local campaigning.

The reality is that an individual cannot compete with a large union or corporation when they want the candidate's ear. Under this legislation local election candidates will only be able to accept donations from individuals, thus giving individual citizens more of a level playing field. However, corporations, unions, and employer organizations can donate to third-party advertisers, often known as political action committees, or PACs. These PACs have no limit on the amount of money they can collect from unions, corporations, and employer organizations. This means that these groups will have the ability to participate in local elections through third parties. Now, it's important to note that groups that are not unions or employer organizations cannot donate money to PACs or pay for advertising unless it was collected from its members expressly for that purpose.

Madam Speaker, another change that Bill 23 will make is a reduction in the campaign period to one year. Currently the campaign period is four years, from January 1 of the year following the election to December 31 in the year of that election. This change

may have some adversarial consequences, which is why I believe we need to refer this bill to committee. What is the impact of this on both current and prospective candidates? Has the government given proper consultation?

9:40

With a change like this, I think it's important that we hear directly from the stakeholders in a public forum because a question we can ask is: why are we limiting the amount of time that a candidate can campaign? Especially with the nonpartisan nature of local elections, incumbents will have a clear advantage in most circumstances. For a nonincumbent to be able to have a fighting chance at beating an incumbent, they often have to start campaigning more than a year in advance, and if they are unable to raise or spend money, how much of an effort can they really conduct? The reality is that these changes can further entrench incumbents and make it even more difficult to beat them in a local election.

The next legislative change that we can look at is the reduction of an individual's donation limit. Now, currently the limit is \$5,000 per candidate. With the changes that are being proposed, this limit will now be \$4,000 in total for all municipal candidates and \$4,000 for all school board candidates. This, of course, is bringing the donation limits more in line with provincial legislation, a common theme in Bill 23. However, an issue we can bring up with this is: what if a person wants to support more than one candidate? Many municipalities have large districts where voters can choose multiple candidates. What if they would like to financially support more than one candidate? I don't think this bill addresses that. That's another reason why we should send it back to committee. This could be very much a shortcoming of this legislation, in my opinion.

There's also no longer an exception for candidates who are self-funding their campaigns. Under the current rules candidates can spend up to \$10,000 of their own money on a campaign. This exception will be removed completely if Bill 23 passes. I think that individuals who want to individually donate to their own campaign should have the opportunity to do so.

Now, Madam Speaker, much like the provincial legislation, there are no limits on contributions for political action committees. I believe this may be a cause for concern. I don't know if we're getting this right or not, and I don't know the full implication of this change. I'd like to consult with some people to get some answers. Given the tight timeline we're in during this spring session – spring session? This is a fall session. Who wrote this speech? MLAs don't have much time to consult with local stakeholders; however, that is why we have committees. [interjections] I'm still thinking of my Arizona trip coming up this fall, I guess.

Committees are able to take the time to study legislation and give all factors due consideration. That is why we need to support the referral amendment and allow for this legislation to get the proper study it really needs.

Bill 23 will also seek to change the amount of money candidates can spend precampaign. Under the current rules the campaign period more or less lasts the entire time the candidate was or is in office, so there would be no need to have any rules around precampaign expenses. However, since this government decided to limit the campaign period so significantly, they had to create rules about how money is spent outside the campaign period. Bill 23 caps both the amount a candidate can spend and raise at \$2,000.

Now, we can ask the question about what impact that will have on municipal and school board politics. What if a candidate is being targeted by a third-party group? Can the candidate significantly defend themselves? Is a \$2,000 cap enough? I don't think so. These are all questions I have, and I don't know that I can say that I have the answers to them. I'm hoping that if this gets back to committee,

we can ask those questions of those people who are going to be impacted by it. Once again, that is why we refer bills to committee, to get these questions answered by experts, giving us legislators a better understanding of how to both vote on and improve legislation because that's really what our job is.

Another point of this I can bring up: does one-size-fits-all really work for noncampaign spending limits? Why does a municipality like Edmonton or Calgary have the same spending limit and fundraising limit as small towns, small towns where my hon. friends and I grew up in and live in? Two thousand dollars doesn't go very far in a big city. As such, I believe that this could be a shortcoming in this legislation and another reason to refer this bill to committee.

Madam Speaker, let's look at campaign period spending. Bill 23 will leave this up to regulations with caps likely to be based on the size of the municipality and school board. We, of course, won't be able to see the regulations until the bill is passed, so Albertans are going to have to trust the minister and the government to get the regulations right the first time. Of course, as the opposition we want to hold the government to account to ensure that these regulations are proper. However, this government has given us very little reason to trust them, so it is important not to leave too much up to the discretion of the minister. Too much power in the hands of the minister might not be a good thing.

Let's look at the enforcement of these new rules. Bill 23 will grant additional power to the Election Commissioner to investigate, prosecute, and enforce rules related to campaign finance and third-party advertising of municipal and local school board elections. Is this the proper way that local election violations should be investigated? It might be, but we would be able to have more of a complete picture if we referred this bill back to committee.

Madam Speaker, Bill 23 will also change some of the rules around third-party advertising and political action committees. This legislation will require PACs to disclose contributions they will receive to promote or to oppose a candidate. PACs will also have to register with the local jurisdictions and indicate whether they are for or against a specific candidate or a particular issue, special-interest groups. I believe that some of these steps are favourable. It is very important that additional transparency is legislated around PACs. Now, Albertans deserve to know what money is being influenced and where in local elections. Furthermore, registering with the local jurisdiction will give them some accountability and will assure residents that the rules are being properly followed.

However, I would encourage all members of this Assembly to vote in favour of this referral amendment because even if aspects of the bill before us appear to be positive – the good, the bad – we should still take the time to publicly consult with stakeholders and give proper consideration to this bill. Now, while some of these changes around increased transparency appear to be good, there are other problems – oh, the bad – that can emerge from this increased scrutiny.

Madam Speaker, most municipal candidates are campaigning on their own without large campaign teams behind them. Candidates may have difficulty following the new, stricter rules around campaign spending and reporting. Could this discourage potential candidates from running for office? Of course, it could if they feel that they lack the experience to fulfill the requirement of this legislation. That is not what we should be doing with this legislation, and I have concerns that Bill 23 could have the potential to do so.

Bill 23 will also require candidates to disclose donations over \$50. Fifty bucks. Why did the government come up with that number, and why is it lower than the \$250 disclosure limit for PACs? Why the discrepancy? It doesn't make sense to hold

candidates to a stricter standard so that it may appear that the new rules in Bill 23 favour PACs and third-party spenders as opposed to individual candidates.

Madam Speaker, as I've outlined, Bill 23 has too many questions and concerns for me to support at this point. That is why I'm supporting my colleague's referral amendment to have this bill studied at committee in depth. I think this government has failed to listen to Albertans over the past three and a half years in their legislative agenda. It's remarkable how many of these missteps could have been avoided if they had actually listened to Albertans and consulted with those who would have been most greatly affected by this legislation. Governments need to listen to Albertans. I think that if more legislation actually went to committee, they'd be more confident and comfortable with some of the legislation that has recently been passed in the last year. Look at Bill 6. Maybe they could have saved their public embarrassment if they would have consulted with more constituents. Furthermore, what if the government had listened to Albertans when they introduced their carbon tax? I may add that it was never campaigned on, and Albertans wish they would have actually listened to them.

So far on Bill 23 I've outlined my many concerns with this legislation, so let's put it in front of committee, bring in stakeholders, have in-depth knowledge and discussion on this topic, and debate the bill in a public forum, where Albertans can see how we're listening to them. So few pieces of legislation that this government has introduced have actually gone before committees. Maybe if they would have accepted our referral amendments more often, they would be in a more favourable position. Yet here we are, and I hope this government will listen to us at this time.

Madam Speaker, in closing, let's listen to Albertans and receive the feedback from stakeholders that will help us address our concerns with Bill 23. I encourage all members of this Assembly to vote for the referral amendment.

Thank you.

9:50

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Again I welcome this opportunity to speak in the House regarding Bill 23. I have to say that my colleague has really done a good job summing up exactly all the concerns or a lot of the concerns that he's hearing from his constituents. He's mentioned some important facts. This government has in fact failed when it comes to consultation, when it comes to many of their pieces of legislation. Now, when we're dealing with democracy and how it is implemented across Alberta, this is something that we just need to make sure we get right the first time. I always have concern when we rush through a piece of legislation and there could be or most likely are unintended results.

If you look at this bill, it's double-sided pages, almost 90 pages. This is quite a bill to get through. The opposition usually gets this for a couple weeks, and then we've already gone through the bill and really haven't had the time to be able to get out to our constituents to see if there are concerns. A lot of times I think that politicians across Alberta forget that there is something called dome disease. It might be something that we're here engaging in with each other, very much trying to work out some of the problems with this bill. As opposition it is our job to help strengthen the bill, and in some cases some people say that we're only critical, but I would argue that if we're doing our jobs, we're out there putting amendments forward like the referral that you see before you. The referral is important. It is telling all Albertans that they are

important when it comes to consulting, making sure we get this right.

I would question how many Albertans actually know right now how much consultation or whether this bill is even going through. A lot of them haven't had a chance to be able to actually get through this document. Look at it. It's – what? – I would say, three-quarters of an inch thick. We're looking at a lot of information here. If we look at what happened when it comes to this current government, they had moved a lot of the same legislation when it came to provincial elections, and we've seen repeatedly where they've actually had to go back and correct the stuff that they've already done because there was lack of consultation.

Now, I was on the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee, and I took a lot of pride in debating a lot of this, the direction we were going. It's unfortunate to see that it appears the government more or less disregarded everything that that committee had done, in the end – and I don't have the quote from the House leader – more or less said that it was a waste of time. I take issue with that because I, like those members of that committee, gave up a lot of my summer to dedicate my time to make sure we got it right, and that was for the provincial side.

When it comes to consultation, when it comes to the fact that this government shows and has a track record of a lack of it, the fact is that we're running through this too fast. We need to move this to a committee. We need to make sure that we bring forward our stakeholders like Edmonton and Calgary. Even the city of Cold Lake, for instance, might have some thoughts on how to improve this, yet we haven't given them that opportunity. What we've done is put this piece of legislation on the table, more or less put a press release out saying that it's good for all of Alberta, and then hope that this turns out well for them. Well, we're not going to know until the next municipal election if there are flaws in this, and then we're going to be scrambling to correct these gaps that could have been fixed.

Madam Speaker, consultation is the key. We need to move forward with this referral, and I thank my colleague for his wise words.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the referral?
The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Just briefly on the referral. I thank the Member for Airdrie for bringing it forward, but it's not the time to do this now. We need to move forward with this piece of legislation. As I said when speaking to this bill, during the municipal election in 2017, the last municipal election in Calgary, I heard from so many people: why aren't you doing for the cities and municipalities what you did for the province? It was a big deal. As I said, I went through all of the campaign records, financial records for those running in Calgary, and every single person who made the most money, spent the most money was victorious except the run for mayor. I noticed that one of the candidates actually spent nearly \$350,000. That's substantial. I'm very surprised by the Member for Calgary-Elbow actually supporting this piece of legislation, because that is 10 times the amount the Alberta Party actually raised last quarter. I mean, it's almost embarrassing, right?

Anyhow, in terms of consultation, Madam Speaker, this goes back to 2016, when we started to look at this. Really, we wanted to implement it before the last election, but there wasn't enough time to do the consultation that needed to be done. So here we are, we're trying to get it in place before the next election, and I think the consultation was robust: AUMA, RMA, city of Calgary, city of

Edmonton, Rural Municipal Administrators Association. The list goes on and on, and they received over 1,500 responses from a survey that was put out by the ministry. I think the consultation was robust.

With the regulations, we can make changes. If the opposition has amendments that they would like to bring forward, then I think they should do that. I don't think we need to stall this at this point. This is too important. These levels of government are so close to our everyday lives, and they need to be conducted fairly. I think it's pretty well known that conservative think tanks in this province have propped up local governments for many years. I think we need to put an end to that, and we will do that with the financing, levelling the playing field on the finances.

With that said, I didn't want to say too much, Madam Speaker, but I just wanted to say that I won't be supporting this amendment. I don't think we should be supporting this amendment. Let's just move forward. Let's get it through second reading and bring your amendments forward in committee.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

On 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you again for giving me the opportunity. I do recognize that every time we bring a referral about some important pieces of legislation, the government gets up and says that they've done the appropriate consultation, and then they get up again and they say that really it's not needed. But I will tell you that the last piece of legislation that had been put through here for the provincial elections has been repeatedly corrected by this government.

Again, a lot of the stuff that we're correcting the opposition actually brought up as potential concerns. The PACs, for instance, the super PACs: we were very clear that if the government didn't deal with super PACs during that initial piece of legislation, this would grow out of control. Then suddenly what happens is that super PACs grow out of control, and the government is shocked, and then they're saying that there's shadow money and all these other things coming forward.

I can tell you that it's distressing to see that this government continues to drop the ball when it comes to consultation. To hear that the reasoning that we shouldn't consult is because some members in past municipal elections spent \$50,000 seems to be very strange reasoning to be saying that the government shouldn't do its due diligence when it comes to this.

10:00

And to hear that the government had started this process in 2016 but didn't have it ready for the 2017 election – my question is that right now it appears that what we're trying to do, then, is be prepared for the 2021 election. I don't think that's unreasonable to say that we would want to have this in place. So why is it that we're not moving this to a committee? We have the time. Let's do this right. Yet the government is saying: well, we couldn't get it right just before the last election, so we're going to rush through it after the 2017 election. There's time available. Why not involve the municipalities? Why not involve Albertans in the consultation process? Why not make sure that we iron out these flaws that the government may have in this legislation?

But because we're moving through this so quickly and because this government seems so focused on moving through with legislation that I would argue we all want to see happen – I do believe that we all want to see in this House. I can't speak for all parties, but I can speak for the Official Opposition. The Official Opposition and the government stand on the same side about

banning corporate and union donations to elections. I think that if we can come out with this as one of the main goals, then that's great.

But I will tell you that what I don't hear from these guys is: let's make sure that we reach out and do some actual consultation. God forbid somebody else comes up with a good idea and they actually have to change the direction they're going in. That seems to be the hardest part for this government and one of the lessons that it continues to learn, unfortunately, the fact that our government right now seems to care more about its ideology instead of putting Albertans first.

Now, I again, when it comes to this, say that there may have been a good amount of support when it comes to saying that maybe we do need to limit contributions. But why \$4,000? Where did that number come from? Is that something that we all need to be wary of, that they're just pulling numbers out of a hat as a number that fits just because it's the provincial one? I understand that this government really hasn't got any real justification when it comes to this magic \$4,000 number. Some of the other numbers as well: where did they come from? Did they actually reach out to anybody? I will tell you that this government has failed in consultation. So will the government explain where the \$4,000 comes from?

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the referral? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak before this House. I know that my colleague from Little Bow and other colleagues across the aisle have spoken on this, and they are saying that a referral motion or amendment is not what Albertans or they are looking to move towards.

Now, if we truly look at the past, let's look at Bill 6. I actually am quoted in a debate during Bill 6 as saying that the name of that bill should have been the no-consultation bill because the government failed terribly when it came to consultation on Bill 6. We had farmers on the steps peacefully, I might add, demonstrating against the moves that this government was making. They had not been adequately consulted with, and in the end the government had to backtrack and restart the whole process of consultation. Now what has happened is that we're seeing that there's some confusion on exactly what the consultation after Bill 6 is actually leading to.

Now, I do believe that the government wanted with that legislation to ensure that farm workers were safe, and that's admirable. I want farm workers to be safe. I know that my colleagues want farm workers to be safe. We also want to make sure that there are protections in place for those workers. But when it comes to government using ideology to make decisions, there's no balance, and that is where this government has been lacking. It has been lacking in the fact that there is no balance to the decisions that they're making.

This is why referring this stuff to committee, ensuring that we actually get industry involvement in this process – now, in this case, this bill, this referral, we're looking for involvement from our municipalities, we're looking for involvement from our municipal leaders, and we're looking for involvement from our constituents. I can tell you that when it comes to involvement from all groups of Albertans, all levels of government, we win. We win when we have the strongest piece of legislation moving forward.

In one of my comments earlier – I had the fortune to sit on the Special Ethics and Accountability Committee. I would say that we agreed on a lot of things, but we may have disagreed on some. That actually is healthy. If we all agree on the same thing, what happens is that we usually get something called groupthink. That means that we're moving in the direction that we want to end up in. Sometimes

we need that devil's advocate there to say: "Is this is the appropriate thing? Are we moving in the right direction?" Yet what we don't see here is any voice when it comes to ensuring that municipal leaders have been heard across this province.

Now, what I will say is that this is a rather thick bill. When we're looking at this bill, we're looking at, again, almost 90 pages. There is a lot of stuff in this bill. A lot of times a misplaced comma can be reinterpreted in the exact opposite way of what you intended. We've seen this in court cases. The fact is that when we've given everybody the appropriate amount of time, especially when it comes to stuff that's affecting them, we will find and we will iron out these concerns. But when we have this bill in our Legislature probably for a two- or three-week period, we are not giving the appropriate amount of scrutiny we need, especially when it comes to something as important as elections. We need to make sure that we get this right.

When it comes to the government, what they have done is that they're saying: we've done all the consultation more or less, and we think this is ready. Now, my question, though, is: why is it that we're rushing this? Why can't we involve everybody in the process through a committee? I can tell you that when it comes to the fact that the government wants to pass legislation, that's fine. That's the government's prerogative. You know what? It is important that the government does move forward with policy. But I will tell you that what I don't see is a government that is actually going out and making sure that they get the consultation part right.

I am concerned that when it comes to something this important, if we get this wrong, these problems aren't going to be today, these problems aren't going to be tomorrow, but these problems are going to be in 2021 when we have our municipal elections. We're going to be reeling with some of the problems that have been created, that we won't know until it's too late. I guess what we'll end up seeing is that this stuff will be probably – if I had to hazard a guess, we're going to find problems with this over the next two or three years, and then we're going to be putting forward bills to correct this, that could have been caught in the committee process.

10:10

Now, one of the things that was brought forward is that the more restrictions we put on people, we're more likely to see fewer people going out and putting their name forward. I am concerned that what happens here is that by levelling the field, we're actually excluding people, and that we need to make sure that we're levelling the playing field and not excluding people. That, I think, is our goal here. I am hopefully saying that what we're looking to do is that we're making sure that we have a fair voice from all groups, sexes, demographics in Alberta to ensure that we get the best municipal governments across this wonderful province. If in the end we end up excluding somebody because it is too onerous to get in here because of the fact that we've made it too hard, that isn't good as well. While we may be doing something that we are hoping is with the best intentions, in the end what we're looking at doing is making sure that everybody has access to this.

Now, I hear the concern. We end up seeing a councillor putting a million dollars into a campaign. Nobody else can compete with that. Is that fair? I would argue no. I argue that in the end what we need to make sure is that there is the ability for people to be able to compete and be able to get their name and their voices through, and that what doesn't happen is the fact that when we have such a lopsided amount of money, we don't actually see that.

That's where my concern here is, that now by limiting this, are we allowing super PACs, these societies or foundations or nonprofits – I'm not sure how they're structured – to dominate municipal elections? Now, super PACs need lawyers, they need

accountants, they would need support staff, all these wonderful things. I can tell you that the average Albertan does not have the ability to compete with that, so we're actually making it harder for those that are playing by the rules. This was identified during the Special Ethics and Accountability Committee multiple times, that if there are groups out there that have more power or more influence than the actual candidates themselves, that's problematic.

I have to say that when it comes to the government, I do believe that they are trying to actually help people with this bill. I am concerned, though, that they're not going about it in the right way, and the fact that they're unwilling to test this bill with the public says a lot. A committee will test how strong a bill is based on the feedback and the stakeholders you get in there. So by bringing it to a committee, by referring this to a committee, and actually having a committee doing their job, we are all the winners. If it doesn't stand up in committee, then the committee can recommend to not move forward with this bill, but if the committee finds that the bill is fine or, God forbid, the committee actually fixes the problems within the bill, that is the best way to make sure we get this right.

What we're not seeing is a government that is willing to put this to the test. Why are you scared to put this bill to the test? I can tell you that in the end a lot of the concerns that I have got are: where did some of the numbers come from that you've picked up? Where did these thresholds come from? You know what? The fact is that is that it looks like you're just pulling stuff out of the dark.

Now, in my constituency of Bonnyville-Cold Lake there is a completely different campaign run between an urban municipal candidate versus a rural municipal candidate. When it comes to putting up lawn signs in, let's say, Bonnyville, it's a lot smaller. So what we're trying to do is that you're going to need fewer lawn signs, you're going to need less literature, but there's a larger compact population.

When it comes to rural Alberta, though, you need a lot more signs, and through my last election I can tell you that these signs are not cheap. They are very costly. It is important for people to know that there's a municipal election happening. It is important for people to know who is running. It is important for people to be able to hear what your platform is as a municipal leader. If we restrict this too much, are we preventing people finding out what these potential elected officials are trying to do for their communities? It could be that the person with the most literature is the one that wins this. Because we've added the super PAC component to this, that means that people with money are going to potentially have an advantage. I will argue that the whole point of putting this bill forward is to prevent money from being the absolute reason why people get elected.

Why won't this government, why won't you move this to committee? Why won't you test your legislation against the public? I can tell you that right now it appears to me, anyway, that you're scared to. You're not willing to put this to the test because you know that there are potential problems with this legislation, and you're scared that it'll come out in the committee process. You're scared that in the end we will have Albertans upset with you for putting forward this and not actually correcting the problems with this. I will tell you that when it comes to this, there is no rush to get this done by the end of 2018 because we have at least, well, another two years before the next municipal election.

Let's make sure we get it right because if we don't get it right, then we're going to find out that we could end up with a municipal election that really ends up as an unfortunate incident when it comes to the fact that we're not able to ensure that it was a fair process. I really feel that this government needs to consider a referral. This is one of the most important ones. It did create the Ethics and Accountability Committee before, even though it disregarded our

recommendations during the committee. A committee would work. I truly believe that we're all on one page. We want to make sure that we get this right.

I truly believe that if we work together, we can strengthen this legislation to do something that works for everybody in this House. That is true government, a process that is working together, strengthening legislation. Whether you are government or opposition, we all just want to see the best legislation passed through this House. What we don't want is flawed legislation, and this legislation could potentially have some significant effects when it comes to 2021. My concern is that while this might be a bill that the government is putting forward and has full confidence in, without the committee process we're not going to see the government's ability to be able to project to Albertans as a whole that this is a perfect piece of legislation, and I think that we all can learn from that.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yeah, under 29(2)(a). I am confused about the concern of the member around consultation. I wanted to ask him what he thinks his leader meant when he said that should, God forbid, he win the election, he would hire people to draft orders in council for cabinet to adopt the week it's sworn in. He said: one of the key elements of structural reform is to move quickly; speed creates its own momentum; it makes it harder for the opponents of reform to obstruct it. He said that he doesn't want to get bogged down with public consultation, so his party is doing as much as it can now on the big issues. What did he mean by that? I'm just wondering if he has any comments on that.

Thank you.

10:20

The Acting Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? [interjections] Hon. members.

The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm really fascinated by the discussion of the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake because he seems to be waxing eloquent about the role of democracy and the importance of consultation. I'm always very intrigued about it because sometimes I feel that he might think that bills and changes to important acts just come out of thin air. It's kind of like we get together – you know, I always felt as an MLA that I relied on the public service, that had for years and years worked on issues of appropriate bills and were trained, professional civil servants, and that a lot of what a government does comes from the experience of professional public servants and lawyers and others who, in this case, have done the work of ensuring that Alberta keeps all elections democratic, transparent and allows the engagement of as many people, Albertans, as possible in the democratic process.

I would like to ask the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake, two places that I find are fantastic – and I'm sure that those people there would want to make sure that as they vote for municipal councillors and school trustees, the process is fair and transparent and they actually have access to it. I'm really wondering: what is the member's view of the impact on the formation of bills of professional civil servants, and why does he think that the bill has not been carefully thought through before it's even been brought to the House?

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?
The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you. You know, the member across the aisle – and I welcome her to my constituency every time she comes up. Actually, all members, please come up to Bonnyville-Cold Lake. Wonderful people up in my constituency. I will say that the member – and I don't have the Blues in front of me – says that we don't pull these bills out of thin air. Well, I can tell you that the veterinarians, when they were viciously attacked by this government – viciously attacked by this government – were sat down with the bill in front of them and told: this is our consultation. I will tell you that when it comes to contract negotiations, there are others that are just as fed up with this government. I also will say that farmers across this province also saw the lack of respect by this government, and our pharmacists also are seeing a lack of respect.

You know, when it comes to this government saying that they've consulted, consultation doesn't mean putting a bill on the table and saying: "You can read it for the next half hour. By the way, we're tabling it, and this is what we're debating, and you've got three weeks to more or less accept what we've put forward." That is what we're seeing right now.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the referral?
The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thanks to my colleagues for the opportunity to rise and speak to the referral. I want to start, though, with the name of the bill, Bill 23, An Act to Renew Local Democracy in Alberta. Renew democracy. You know, if there's anything that we're challenged with, if there's anything that is our stewardship, our legal obligation, our personal obligation, our complete obligation to our constituents, it's to enhance democracy, to get democracy right. When you think of world history and how far we've come, where we get to disagree and argue with words instead of swords or bullets or whatever, it's because of democracy. It's because of thousands and thousands of people, hundreds and hundreds of risks they've taken over the years to give everyone an opportunity to have their voice heard.

Madam Speaker, that's why I so support this amendment, the amendment to send the bill to committee, the amendment to take a sober, longer, complete second look, the opportunity to bring in all Albertans who have insight, who have ideas, who have knowledge, who have experience, just the time for government members, whether they're cabinet members or otherwise, the time for us here in the opposition to talk a little bit more to our constituents, to talk a little bit more to the elected officials, to hear what the insight they have is. My goodness, how important is it?

I believe that in Medicine Hat, in the municipal election which was just about a year ago, which is why there is time to get this right, our turnout was 34 per cent. Madam Speaker, we had a 34 per cent turnout; 66 per cent of eligible Medicine Hatters didn't go to the polls. Maybe that's where we need to start with An Act to Renew Local Democracy in Alberta. Maybe we need to have some committee time that looks at why so many Albertans feel that their vote or their voice doesn't matter, doesn't count, isn't important, because my six and a half years of politics have taught me how important it is. I can't count the number of good ideas that I've heard in six and a half years that Albertans have shared. Advocacy groups that routinely come here and express their ideas and concerns: it's amazing how often they get listened to. My goodness, being MLAs, one of the joys but one of the curses at the same time

is that daily log of e-mails we get. There's so much good information that gets forwarded to us.

Madam Speaker, 34 per cent last election: why would we not do anything – why would we not do anything – to try to enhance that? What was the turnout in the last provincial election? I think it was somewhere around 55 per cent, wasn't it? Federally maybe it gets up to 75 per cent. You know, to me, that's one of my questions right there: why do people – when the vote is the closest, when the vote makes the most difference, why is the turnout the lowest?

Mrs. Pitt: Fifty-eight per cent.

Mr. Barnes: Fifty-eight per cent in the last provincial election. Thank you.

Potentially, Madam Speaker, these are questions that I believe this bill has completely missed. I've been sitting listening to my colleagues on both sides of the House, and I haven't heard anyone mention this, so perhaps this is something that the government missed in their haste to get this, or with adequate due diligence it was missed. Maybe that's the real good we can do with this referral amendment for Bill 23, An Act to Renew Local Democracy in Alberta. Just to summarize, democracy is the essence of why we're here, it's what built Alberta, it's what built Canada, it's what built so much opportunity for all of us. Let's do what we can to get it right. I think that in this case it's especially important.

10:30

Our hard-working staff, who when we're in session, my goodness, work night and day and do a great job, have provided this summary. The Local Authorities Election Act provides a framework for local authority elections, including municipalities, school boards, Métis settlements, and irrigation districts. The proposed amendments in Bill 23 would better align municipal election rules with recent changes made to provincial election rules. Well, my goodness, look at how diverse and how many people it encompasses, how many people with different vested interests, different needs, different good ideas, different ways to make things better, from municipalities to school boards. Look at the varying sizes of municipalities, the varying risks and opportunities they have: Métis settlements and irrigation districts. The irrigation district in Cypress-Medicine Hat: my goodness, excellent, excellent stewards of the land, always balancing that great opportunity to feed the world, that great opportunity to innovate and do things better but sharing and balancing the use of water. At this point does Bill 23 adequately take into account all the changes and unintended consequences that could happen there?

Métis settlements: my goodness, we have a great heritage of Métis people in Cypress-Medicine Hat. They have been there for hundreds and hundreds of years. I absolutely believe that when they've reached out to me and helped me learn and understand, helped me understand their good ideas and what's important to them, in a heartbeat they would come to committee and would make sure that this government got it right. If there were any improvements, if there were any ideas, they would make sure that they were presented. Again, in Committee of the Whole in this House, yeah, we get to walk around, we get to be a little bit more informal, but it's just us. It's not access for 4.1 million Albertans that could absolutely make this better.

Again, it's a bill to renew democracy, but we're going to minimize democracy while we renew it. We're just going to do it our way. We're looking at four broad groups who are crucially important to Alberta's future for culture, for collaboration, for the education of our kids, for the enhancement and protection of cultures, and for economics. My goodness, we all know how

Alberta's economics are under threat right now with our differential price, with our layers of burden of taxation and rules and regulation. My goodness, let's not take the unintended-consequence chance. Let's not take the risk of getting it wrong for people that are already challenged to provide jobs, to pay taxes, to build wealth.

I want to talk about unintended consequences. Every single law, every single bill, probably everything we do in life always has unintended consequences. You can think things through, you can plan, but until your law becomes a reality, one doesn't really know what's going to happen, what the unintended consequences are, like a carbon tax. When municipalities, Métis settlements, school boards, and even irrigation districts touch almost every single Albertan, why would we dare take the chance of having unintended consequences? Why would we dare take the chance of not hearing from them?

Of course, back to the good summary, the good hard work that our staff provides: to align municipal election rules with recent changes made to provincial election rules. Of course, we've all spoken time and time again in favour of taking union and corporation money out of politics, making it so that everyday, hard-working Albertans and everyday, hard-working Alberta families have the loudest voice, as it should be. But we've seen how big money has drifted into PACs. We've seen how unions and other groups that have an interest in Albertans have also taken bigger positions, different positions, attracting money, spending money, having political influence. Madam Speaker, as we know, that bill is fairly new. That bill has considerable potential problems, considerable unintended consequences, so before we even analyze that bill, we're just going to do it again. What's that saying in life? If somebody fools you the first time . . .

Mr. Hunter: Fool me once, shame on you.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you. Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me. Thank you, my hon. colleague from Cardston-Taber-Warner, who knows those things.

Here we are. We're not even sure how it's working, but we're going to double down. We're going to try it again. From what I can see when I read this, it does not address or improve the transparency and accountability of third-party advertisers and their corporate or union supporters. And what is the worst kind of unintended consequence? When you get exactly the opposite of the result you intended. Probably all 87 of us have stood up here and said: "Yeah, yeah, this is great. Take corporate and union money out of politics. Put Alberta families and Albertans in charge." And the number one unintended consequence is that we've got the opposite happening.

Madam Speaker, if this is allowed to go to committee, potentially we can summon some of these union and PAC people. Potentially we can hear where we're at. Potentially the 87 of us can have a look at what is actually happening, and we can determine if the government has completely failed in their effort to renew local democracy in Alberta, or we can look and see what's working. Again, when An Act to Renew Local Democracy in Alberta minimizes debate, minimizes Albertans' ideas, minimizes discussions, I really wonder: why? I really wonder what the rush is. Of course, an election is coming up, March 1 to May 31. Potentially it's that. You know, when democracy and caring for Albertans is our number one obligation, our number one priority, why would we allow this government to have free rein on potentially getting it wrong?

Madam Speaker, I've always been a big fan of what I hear in Ottawa and how they have permanent standing committees instead of Committee of the Whole in here. My goodness, we know how the government of Alberta can make a law in just 48 hours, with a

one-day break on either side of Committee of the Whole. That may be necessary the odd time, but to renew local democracy in Alberta, where people are voting now in the mid-30s and that's not even being addressed? If we had a chance, if we had an understanding from Alberta voters, all Albertans, even those that aren't old enough to vote, so that they know they can come and have their voice heard, if they know that almost every time this Legislature did something, they would have an opportunity to analyze it, to make it better – you know, I can't think of . . .

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, I was very interested to hear my colleague speak quite well about the need to be able to bring this bill to committee. What's interesting is that there has been a model where we've seen this concept work, and the model was presented when Bill 201 came forward from our hon. colleague from Highwood. There was a good intention with the bill, and then there was a realization that more needed to be done. It was brought before a committee, the Resource Stewardship Committee, and Resource Stewardship was able to debate it and figure out the end result, where that bill should go.

10:40

At that point it was able to come back in here, and we've seen how even the member who brought this private member's bill forward is recognizing: "You know what? The best intentions of this bill were to help volunteer firefighters so that they don't lose their jobs, but in the end the unintended consequences outweighed those positives to the bill." So what happened was that, you know, it's still being debated, but it shows a good model, Madam Speaker. It shows the model that sober second thought is always valuable to the process here.

In the Westminster parliamentary system we have, we've seen a few things happen. We've seen a member from the opposite side leave that caucus because she established: the party whip was saying how we should vote on certain things. This is maybe one of the negative parts to the Westminster parliamentary system, but the positive part to the Westminster parliamentary system, Madam Speaker, is that we have the ability to have that sober second thought, the ability to have a debate, a robust debate where we can say: "What are the pros and what are the cons to this bill? How is it going to be beneficial to Albertans as a whole?" Then, at the end of the day, we have the ability to hopefully come up with legislation that will be of benefit not just to the current generation but to generations to come.

This is the value of our Westminster parliamentary system, but when we shortchange it, Madam Speaker, when we take away the rights as legislators to be able to have that robust discussion and robust debate, then we do not only ourselves a disservice, but we do a disservice to Albertans and to future generations. I have said this before in this House, but I'll say it again. I believe that the characterization of many people I've talked to, who say that the way they describe this government is as the government of unintended consequences, is not far off the truth, and the reason why is because they continue to ram through this legislation in order to be able to get things done that they believe are the right things for Albertans.

I actually like the federal system a lot better, Madam Speaker, because at least there they have committees that really do go deep into the legislation. They cannot ram it through quickly. It has to go to these committees. It has to be able to be vetted properly. I think that that's actually a system that works better because it is the

vetting process that helps us to figure out all those little nuances to bills and to legislation that could be problematic. Not that I'm saying that the NDP are looking to hurt Albertans, but I'm saying that there could be unintended consequences, and those unintended consequences, whether they have the best interests of Albertans in mind or not, would come out in that vetting process, during the committee process.

I think that we've seen a good model. They were willing to do that with a private member's bill. Why aren't they willing to do that with this type of a bill?

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Any other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein ... [The time limit for questions and comments expired]

We are now back on the referral. Are there any other members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment REF1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:45 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, W.	Fraser	Schneider
Barnes	Hunter	van Dijken
Cyr	Pitt	Yao
Ellis		

Against the motion:

Bilous	Hinkley	Payne
Carlier	Hoffman	Phillips
Carson	Horne	Piquette
Connolly	Jansen	Renaud
Coolahan	Kazim	Rosendahl
Cortes-Vargas	Larivee	Sabir
Dach	Littlewood	Schmidt
Dang	Loyola	Schreiner
Drever	Malkinson	Shepherd
Feehan	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha
Fitzpatrick	McKittrick	Westhead
Ganley	Miller	Woollard
Gray	Nielsen	

Totals: For – 10 Against – 38

[Motion on amendment REF1 lost]

The Acting Speaker: We are now back on the original bill. Are there any members wishing to speak?

Mr. Feehan: Madam Speaker, I'd just ask for leave to have unanimous consent to move to one-minute bells.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Acting Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, I will put the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for second reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:02 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Bilous	Hinkley	Payne
Carlier	Hoffman	Phillips
Carson	Horne	Piquette
Connolly	Jansen	Renaud
Coolahan	Kazim	Rosendahl
Cortes-Vargas	Larivee	Sabir
Dach	Littlewood	Schmidt
Dang	Loyola	Schreiner
Drever	Malkinson	Shepherd
Feehan	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha
Fitzpatrick	McKittrick	Westhead
Ganley	Miller	Woollard
Gray	Nielsen	

Against the motion:

Anderson, W.	Fraser	Schneider
Barnes	Hunter	van Dijken
Cyr	Pitt	Yao
Ellis		

Totals: For – 38 Against – 10

[Motion carried; Bill 23 read a second time]

Bill 24

An Act to Recognize AMA Representation Rights

[Adjourned debate November 20: Mr. Dreeschen]

The Acting Speaker: Are there any members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Yao: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It is an honour to rise in the House today to speak to Bill 24, An Act to Recognize AMA Representation Rights. This bill, while being only four pages, has a lot we need to address.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, just for clarity, have you not already spoken to second reading of this bill? I believe you have.

Is there anybody else that would like to speak to second reading? The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. We look alike.

Mr. Yao: Sure.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Madam Speaker and colleagues for the opportunity to rise and talk about Bill 24, An Act to Recognize AMA Representation Rights. It's an honour to rise today to talk about this act. This bill, as previously mentioned, while only being four pages, has a lot we need to address. At first glance this bill seemed relatively harmless and well intended. However, after reaching out to numerous physicians across Alberta, we have learned that there are many issues with this piece of legislation that need to be addressed.

Madam Speaker, of course, to address things properly, we need more time. We need more time to reach out to all affected stakeholders to make sure that this bill is actually in the best interests of all Albertans and especially the best interests of Alberta patients. The bottom line is that we need to study this bill more

going forward. We need some time to make amendments, to talk about it because, once again, as we just talked about with Bill 23, this government has not only forgotten to consult with all relevant stakeholders but is blocking Albertans' democratic right to come in and discuss how to make this better.

11:10

I'm very proud of our UCP team, MLAs and members and staff, and I'm very pleased to say that they've been actively reaching out to physicians over the last few weeks, and we've received some great feedback. First of all, do you know what we're hearing from physicians in regard to this bill? Most of them had absolutely no idea that this was even coming forward. Most of them had absolutely no idea that this bill was being presented and was going to become the law of Alberta and become the rules and regulations that govern their livelihoods, their careers, their futures. Madam Speaker, I ask: does that seem like good consultation to you?

Madam Speaker, we've seen it consistently, continually. This government always shows that they'll push through their agenda regardless of the consequences, regardless of advice from deputy ministers and bureaucracy, regardless of 2,000 people on the steps out front. This government has an agenda, and unfortunately too much of our economy, too many Alberta families and communities are paying the price for that agenda. As important as health care is, let's make sure that doctors and patients and families don't pay that price.

You know, Madam Speaker, what I was referring to with the 2,000 people on the steps here was, of course, Bill 6, with 1,500 people down in Cypress-Medicine Hat, hundreds of people everywhere. As a matter of fact, I was just in Mossleigh, Alberta, last week. There had to be 50 people talking about how the government rammed that down their throats, talking about ideas to go forward.

It also recently happened on Bill 21. When opposition parties brought forward excellent amendments, the government didn't listen. They shot them down. They know best, better than Albertans.

Now, I'm not saying that this bill will have widespread consequences, Madam Speaker, but what I am saying is that we do not know enough about the bill to support it. Again, some consultations will be necessary, especially when it's our belief that a very, very small percentage of physicians knew about it, were consulted about it. Of course, they're very, very important to Alberta families.

We do not know about the possible implications of this bill or even how the majority of physicians feel about it. But we've seen this time and time again. The government refuses to do adequate consultations, and then they ask us: trust us; trust us. Again, we saw what happened with so many of the other bills. Potentially the unemployment figures in Alberta show what happens when that trust is misplaced.

Government has given us, of course, no reason to trust them. They've had to backtrack on numerous bills because of public outcry. You know, in the opposition we try hard to read the bills, to discuss them, to reach out and consult with Albertans. Madam Speaker, we intend to continue to give Albertans our very best. That starts with listening and goes, second, to working collaboratively, with the goal to make the legislation as good as possible so all Albertans can achieve the opportunity and the outcome that they are looking for.

Of course, with physicians I feel it is very, very important that they have the right to share their recommendations and concerns with government, and we aim to do that. Ten thousand – 10,000 – physicians in Alberta and growing numbers of nurse practitioners,

physician assistants, many other allied health professionals have a vested interest in this, Madam Speaker. So many of these good people want to give Albertans and Alberta families the best quality of care and service they can. Let's make sure that when we're talking legislation and rules and regulations, they have the opportunity to do that.

I wonder why so many members of the AMA did not have a chance to vote on this, why a backroom, backdoor deal between the AMA and the government maybe seems to be happening. You know, it never hurts – it never hurts – to shed sunlight and transparency on anything, and when we desire to have all Albertans engage in our future, in the political process, why would we do anything that would slow that down? Again, Madam Speaker, it's simple. We just need more opportunity to do our due diligence, to talk to some physicians to ensure that it's something that they actually want.

I'm so impressed. You know, I was at a Diwali celebration Saturday night in Medicine Hat. There were 300, 350 people there and several physicians. I was so impressed with how they came up to me and told me how the number of people in their clinics with broken bones from slips and falls had dramatically increased, and they asked me to spread the word to be cautious, especially to older, potentially more vulnerable Albertans. I asked a few of them if they knew about this, and I was met with a blank stare. Madam Speaker, that just so easily proves my point of how our physicians, our health professionals absolutely want to do their best. To ensure that people can do their best, they need to be involved, and they need to have a say. They proved that. They proved that at the social setting when we were all there with our spouses and our families and they took the time to express that.

Some of these physicians, others that we've reached out to, are actually a little bit upset because they're believing that it wasn't put out to them. If we don't take some time to debate this and potentially look at it and make amendments – and I hope the government will listen to amendments – then their opinions don't matter. Can you imagine being tasked with the life, the care, and the future health of Alberta children and families and not being allowed to have your input?

Madam Speaker, thank you very, very much for this chance to discuss this bill. I hope my colleagues in the government across the floor will endeavour to listen to what our good health professionals feel is in Alberta's best interests.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to be able to rise and speak to Bill 24, An Act to Recognize AMA Representation Rights. When the bill was first introduced, I thought: well, this is going to be easy; it's a small bill, six pages, and we can take a look at it and be able to figure out fairly quickly if it is something that's good for Albertans or not good for Albertans. Unfortunately, it did take us a little while because we had to go back to our physicians and start talking to the physicians and ask them what their opinion was. So we were able to do quite a bit of that consultation in this last week. When I say quite a bit of that consultation, it was by no measure something that I would say is fulsome and robust enough to be able to in good conscience say that this is a good or a bad bill, but what we did hear from Alberta's physicians, the ones that we talked to, is that they had no idea about this bill.

So with that, Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to be able to introduce an amendment.

11:20

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, can you just wait till you've tabled a copy and the original, please?

Mr. Hunter: Can I keep it?

The Acting Speaker: No. The original goes to the table, please.

Hon. member, your amendment will be referred to as HA1. Please go ahead.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I move that the motion for second reading of Bill 24, An Act to Recognize AMA Representation Rights, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following: "Bill 24, An Act to Recognize AMA Representation Rights, be not now read a second time but that it be read a second time this day three months hence."

Now the reasoning for this, Madam Speaker. It was evident that when my colleague a little over a week and a half ago stood in this House and read a letter from a very successful, well-credentialed physician in Alberta, it was an indictment on the argument that this government has made numerous times that the consultation was fulsome and robust and was enough. Once again, prior to my introducing this amendment, I referenced that we thought that after a six-page bill came before us, it was going to be quick and we would be able to figure this out. But once we started to make calls to a few of the physicians that we had talked to, we recognized that something was amiss. I'd like to give in evidence to the members of this Chamber the reason why we believe a hoist amendment is the proper approach for this bill.

We've had an opportunity to speak this morning on a few other bills, talking about the necessity of consultation, talking about how important it is to not just our generation but future generations as well, Madam Speaker, that we allow them the courtesy to be able to have a fulsome debate about this legislation so that we make sure that we mitigate the unintended consequences that could cause problems not just for our generation but for generations to come. This is the problem that we've seen with this bill. Because of the track record of this government, the track record in that they say that they've done a fulsome consultation and they tell us, "Scouts honour, that's the truth," and then we find out afterwards that in reality that has not happened, so many of the people who should know, actually, don't know about a bill that is going to have a material effect on their livelihood and on their ability to provide for their families.

Madam Speaker, when we heard that this doctor from Calgary had no idea about this bill, we started to dig a little deeper, and here are some of the things we found. We found that when the doctors voted – when we got the government brief on this bill, they had said that 89 per cent of physicians were in favour of this. We thought: well, that seems to be a fairly fulsome debate and fulsome endorsement by the physicians of Alberta. But when we dug down deeper into, I guess, the spin that the government put on this, what we found out was that only 30 per cent of physicians actually took part in this negotiation. This idea that 89 per cent is sufficient, we've already seen cracks in it.

Then we took a look at what they were actually voting on, and what we found out is that the members of the AMA were not presented with the contents of the bill; they were presented with no fee increases. The 89 per cent yes vote was not a vote on this bill, which is what was actually presented by the government as what they were voting for, but in reality it was a vote for no fee increases.

Once again we see this government trying to pull the wool over Albertans' eyes.

It gets discouraging, Madam Speaker, when we are in this House to take a look at the pros and cons of bills to be able to figure out whether or not these things are going to be good for the members of the AMA, good for physicians, and good for the people of Alberta, and then we find out that, in reality, the numbers that have been presented to us are not even correct. This is why I think, just for that reason alone, that it's a prudent approach to take this to committee and actually get a fulsome discussion by our physicians, our health care professionals and ask them what the pros and cons to this are, get them in front of a committee to help us figure out whether or not this thing is actually what they want and then whether or not Albertans want it.

In a committee we'd have the opportunity to be able to say: okay; if physicians have this and they get this and they want this, what do Albertans want? There are two parts to this situation. There is the physicians' responsibility and rights, and there's also Albertans' responsibilities and rights. Being able to get direction from both of those parties would be important. Now, if the government had actually done their job and actually got even just good information from a large set of physicians, then maybe they'd have an argument that we should be able to move forward here. We're talking about 30 per cent that voted, but they voted on fees. They didn't even vote for the content of this bill.

I've sent this bill now to four or five of the doctors that I know in my riding, and not one of them had heard about it. Not one. In coming days I will be presenting more evidence to talk about how they're concerned about the fact that there's a bill that's going to have a material effect upon their livelihood and upon their profession that they know nothing about. That is an indictment on this government. This is something that this government needs to take seriously and recognize. How can they in good conscience create a bill and not ask physicians, whom it's going to affect, what they think about it? It just doesn't make sense.

When you go into this bill, it starts talking about what the bill does. One of the things that the government has touted is their ability to negotiate no fee increases for two years and that that was ratified by AMA members. That had 89 per cent ratification by AMA members. That is a true statement. That is a true statement, that 89 per cent of AMA members that voted – they forgot to finish the sentence – voted in favour of no fee increases. What did they give up? What was the concession that they gave up for that? The concession was that they were going to create program stability.

11:30

This is in an article, Alberta Doctors Agree to Fee Freezes in Two-year Deal with Province, by Keith Gerein in the *Edmonton Journal*, May 30, 2018. In this he says that the AMA, as they were doing the negotiations with the government, recognized that because of the environment in Alberta – you know, we were in a recession, we were in real struggles here, and lots of people were losing their jobs – a no-fee increase was the right thing to do. But the concession that the government made in there was that they were going to create this program stability. Now, a good question to ask would be: what is the program stability? Like, what does that actually mean? Program stability: what's the definition of that?

You know, they were touting the ability to get that two-year no increase in fees. They did that with the United Nurses of Alberta and the Health Sciences Association of Alberta as well, a two-year freeze on pay. However, dentists and pharmacists: in this article it says that they actually took a decrease. We'd actually love to be able to get the pharmacists and dentists in front of a committee as well to find out what they thought about this. They have seen zero

increases in a few of the unions that we've seen in negotiations. However, the pharmacists and the dentists didn't see that, the no increase. They saw a decrease in their fees. It would be interesting to have them in front of a committee to be able to figure out: well, what happened? What happened in the negotiations? What did the government do?

Now, we do know that with the pharmacists, they didn't give them consultation. They told them: "This is exactly what you're going to get. Take it or leave it." They didn't give them, really, time. No negotiations at all. We heard about this in the last little while, in the last session, again another indictment on this government. If they're supposedly for Albertans, I guess it means that they're actually for only certain Albertans. Why didn't they give the pharmacists and dentists no fee increases? Why did they decrease it? Again, that information would all come out in committee if we hoisted this bill and gave it the proper due diligence and the vetting process that these bills deserve.

One of the other problems that I see with this bill and why I think it would be good to have this is to get RPAP in front of the committee, because according to this bill the retention benefit program is going to end. In rural Alberta, where I'm from, it is tough to be able to get doctors to come there. We had a couple of doctors from South Africa, and they came into Milk River. One stayed, and one hasn't stayed. They do have struggles with that. The consequences or the struggles in having rural Alberta retain those doctors is going to be a big problem.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just wanted to ask the member: in your dealings with the physicians that you've been speaking with, did you encounter that perhaps – when you talk about a backroom deal, we want to be careful in this House; I don't want to accuse anybody of anything. But to come up with the agreement that the physicians did come up with and based on the small numbers of physicians that were actually consulted, based on your comments, have you heard that there has been perhaps the idea that physicians want more control over our health care system and less collaborative practice in exchange for taking that freeze?

The Acting Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I'd like to thank the hon. member for the good question. Now, here's what's interesting.

That question could come up in committee, and then we would be able to get the doctors and, actually, then a third party, like myself, interpreting what the doctors are saying. This is the classic value of being able to bring this to a committee, so that we could have those kinds of deep-thinking questions asked.

Now, I'm not about to say that there was any collusion, that there was any arm-twisting that happened. What I'm hearing from doctors, hon. member, is that they just don't know about the bill. There's not even an answer to "what is happening in the negotiations?" because they just don't know about it. They knew about the freeze. There were 30 per cent that took part in that vote. But the real problem is that they just don't know, so that's a concern.

I want to get back to the point that I was making earlier about the rural physicians – and I'll just end with that, Madam Speaker – and that is that it's really tough to be able to find physicians that are willing to stay in rural Alberta. This bill actually gets rid of that retention benefit program. Depending upon the years of service, they're paid anywhere between \$5,000 and \$12,000 each year as an incentive to stay in the province and in that area. This is something that I think is going to make it very difficult for us in rural Alberta to be able to retain good doctors, good family physicians, general practitioners. So this is a big concern. Again, if we brought this to committee, I think we'd be in a good situation, where we could at least figure out whether or not there are some unintended consequences for our rural physicians.

With that, Madam Speaker, I appreciate being able to present today, and I hope all of the people will vote for this.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[Motion on amendment HA1 lost]

[Motion carried; Bill 24 read a second time]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Just noticing the time and the great progress we made this morning, I suggest that we call it noon and reconvene at 1:30 this afternoon.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:38 a.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, November 21, 2018

Day 51

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)

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Coolahan	Miller
Cooper	Nielsen
Goehring	Nixon
Gotfried	Pitt
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Cyr
Deputy Chair: Mr. Dach

Barnes	Malkinson
Carson	Miller
Clark	Nielsen
Gotfried	Panda
Hunter	Renaud
Littlewood	Turner
Luff	

Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola
Deputy Chair: Mr. Drysdale

Babcock	Loewen
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Fildebrandt	Panda
Hanson	Rosendahl
Kazim	Schreiner
Kleinsteinuber	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, November 21, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Ms Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to present to you and through you all of the students and teachers of l'école Parc from Fort Saskatchewan. We have apparently 22 – but it felt like the 30 that I have on my sheet – students that were very nice to visit with and were full of questions and energy. I even got an invitation to a dance recital and a hockey game. I look forward to more visits with them in the future, but if their teacher and chaperone, M. Spencer Dunn and Mme Ashley Charlton, could please stand, and if all of the rest of the students could rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members in this Legislature students from St. Catherine elementary school. They're accompanied by their teachers, Ms Savage and Mrs. Jagusinski, and their chaperone, Alpha. I had the chance to meet the students and take a photo with them earlier. They told me that they really enjoyed their tour of the Legislature, and one of them indicated to me that she would love for this to become her home, not in the sense of being elected; she'd just like to live here. Of course, this House belongs to all Albertans, so I'd ask them to rise and receive its warm welcome.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a group of incredibly intelligent, sharp students from the school of Beacon Heights in my riding of Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. Now, I know they are an incredibly bright group because I had an opportunity to read to them during Read In Week and they asked some amazing questions about our Legislature and the provincial government, so I'm thrilled that they're able to join us here today. They're here with their teachers, Meryl Roberts along with Emily Robertson, and I would ask them all to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome to all three school groups.

Are there any other school groups? The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 40 students from Parkview school. They are here with Ms Amber Reid, Jillian Price, and a student teacher. Oh, I guess that is the student teacher. Parkview is an awesome school, and I would like them to rise now, please, and receive the warm welcome of the Legislature.

The Speaker: They may not yet be present, hon. minister.

Are there any other school groups?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning. There you are.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Colonel (Retired) Paul de Boucherville Taillon, of Quebec. Colonel Taillon served as a reserve officer in the Canadian Army for over 38 years across Canada, in Kosovo, Bosnia, the U.K., U.S., Oman, Ukraine, and Afghanistan. In civil life he has an interesting and varied career in counterespionage and counterterrorism in over three decades in the Canadian Security Intelligence Service prior to taking post as director, office of the Communications Security Establishment Commissioner, where he led and conducted oversight reviews. He holds a doctorate from the London School of Economics and three master's degrees.

Colonel Taillon was the counterinsurgent and strategic adviser to the commander of the Canadian Army during the later stages of the Afghanistan campaign. He remains an acknowledged international expert on geopolitical and strategic security matters. Mr. Speaker, beyond all that, he is the direct descendant of two premiers of Quebec. A long-time friend of our Sergeant-at-Arms, he spoke last night to the community and military leaders at the cavalry dinner of the South Alberta Light Horse Regiment. He is seated in your gallery, and I would now ask him to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Welcome, and merci for your service to our nation.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly constituents from Edmonton-Ellerslie. I'm so pleased that they could join us today. Later I'll be speaking about Mawlid al-Nabi, the celebration of the birth of the Prophet Muhammad – peace be upon him. I thank my guests for giving me the opportunity to celebrate and learn alongside them. I ask my guests to rise as I call their names: Sheikh Saffiullah of JRJ mosque; Sabah Saffiullah, his wife; Ihaa-Noor, his daughter, who I will say is also an amazing public speaker, and one day we hope to see her as an MLA in this House; also, Dr. Mohammad Hasan, who is a member of Al Fatima mosque; Arqum Riaz, who is a special gentleman who has memorized the Quran from cover to cover; and, of course, my wonderful constituency assistant, who I could not do my job without, Haiqa Cheema. Please give them the warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three sets of introductions, and as always I will keep them brief. It is my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you an incredible group of advocates. These individuals have long called for strong action against poverty, better supports for Albertans with disabilities, and indexing of social programs. Suzane Huppie receives AISH and is a strong voice in her community. Grant Clark also receives AISH and has been an important advocate for change, and it was a pleasure to have him at one of our round-tables as well. Sandra De Bruin is a community advocate who has worked with many Albertans to help them access AISH and get the supports they need. It's an honour to have them as guests here for the second reading of Bill 26. I ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

My second set of guests, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through Ms Reshma Pandit. Reshma is a world-renowned, award-winning tabla maestro from Delhi-Punjab gharana of India. At the age of five she learned to play the tabla, and she had her first performance at age 12. She continues to

perform around India and throughout the world, and I encourage all in this House who haven't seen her yet to please do so. I want to thank Reshma for visiting us here in Alberta and wish her all the best as she continues to break down gender barriers in Indian classical music and inspire audiences around the world. I ask Reshma Pandit to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to also introduce the Sarb Akal Music Society of Calgary. I'm pleased to introduce Harjeet Singh, Jasbir Chahal, Payal Patel, Asjad Bukhari. They are the executive of the Sarb Akal Music Society. They are joined by Rajbir Singh – also a classical singer – and Hardeep Singh, Harpal Singh, Sarbjeet Singh, Manjeet Singh, Ahmad Shakeel Chughtai, Jagdeep Singh from Edmonton, Ravi Parkash, Vipul Jasani, Paranjit Kaur, Sukhman Kaur, and Amandeep Kaur, who is also joined by her three kids. I have the honour of attending many Sarb Akal events in Calgary, and I'm a proud supporter of their work to promote the culture, traditions, and classical music of India. I look forward to continuing to work with them to promote diversity and cultural sharing across Alberta. I ask all of my guests to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce to you and through you the next MLA for Edmonton-Castle Downs, Moe Rahall. Moe is a local entrepreneur. He runs a string of barbershops, which I have been told by other people are very, very good at what they do. No personal experience here at all, unfortunately. Moe is joined by his father-in-law, Anwar. I would ask Moe and Anwar to please rise now and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

1:40

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you two amazing advocates: Vasant Chotai, vice-president of Public Interest Alberta, who has been a long-time antipoverty advocate and champion for social change; and Cheryl Whiskeyjack, co-chair of EndPoverty Edmonton and the executive director of Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society. Cheryl is an outstanding community leader who has advocated for and provided strong programs and services for indigenous families and communities. Both Vasant and Cheryl have worked for decades to create a more inclusive, fair, and accessible province for all Albertans. We are pleased to have them here for the second reading of Bill 26. I ask Cheryl and Vasant to now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you and to all members of the Assembly a friend of mine from the great riding of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, Ralph Sliger, who has the privilege of calling home the crown jewel of the David Thompson highway, the area between Rocky Mountain House and Nordegg, one of the most beautiful places in the world, where he runs a helicopter tourism company. It's great to have a friend with a helicopter except for when you get elected and you can't go on private aircraft no more, but he does a great job out there. Further to that, he spends a lot of time promoting our province, particularly

tourism in the great area that we get to call home. I'd ask that he rises and receives the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Members' Statements

Rimbey Area Fatal Highway Crash

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, let me tell you what my constituents do know about the death of their son. He was killed when a driver ran a stop sign at a T-intersection, travelling at almost 100 kilometres per hour, near the town of Rimbey. His friend died in the crash, and the driver of the vehicle was seriously injured. They also know that the driver was charged with a traffic offence: careless driving. That's it. That's all they know.

This is what they do not know. They do not know why a driver who killed two vibrant young people and seriously injured another was not charged with a criminal offence. They do not know why a judge dealing with this traffic offence was not told right away from the beginning that two people were killed. They do now know that the driver only had her licence suspended for three months and was fined \$2,000 for causing two fatalities.

Perhaps that was the best the judge could do with the traffic offence. But they do not know why a plea deal was offered. They do not know if the Justice minister's triage policy, which sees lesser offences plea bargained to clear courts for more serious crimes, contributed to this situation. They do not know how many lives had to be lost that day to count as serious. They do know that their son and friend are gone. Hearts are broken in the family and friends of the victims lost, and they have lost faith in the justice system. And this is what I know, Mr. Speaker: that I will continue to fight for my constituents. It is the least that they deserve on behalf of this tragedy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mawlid al-Nabi

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mawlid al-Nabi, or the birth of the Prophet Muhammad – peace be upon him – is observed in the third month of the Islamic calendar, Rabi al-Awwal. People around the world gather to celebrate and reflect on the Prophet Muhammad's – peace be upon him – life and legacy. I have had the opportunity to celebrate and learn with my constituents in Ellerslie. Prophet Muhammad's – peace be upon him – compassion and willingness to serve humanity in worship of God continues to inspire Muslims to this day.

We are blessed that Muslims have been calling Canada home for approximately 200 years, before Alberta was even recognized as a province. It was for this reason that our government decided to proclaim last October and every October in the future Islamic Heritage Month in Alberta. Muslims have been at the forefront helping fellow Albertans when they have needed it most. Whether it was the floods in 2013 or the tragic Fort McMurray wildfire in 2016, Muslims were there to provide aid and welcome Albertans into their homes and their mosques. The values of the Muslim faith are reflected in your everyday actions and generosity, and Alberta is so much better for it.

I also know, however, that the Muslim community faces Islamophobia and bigotry. I want you to know that our government stands with you, and we will continue to work with you to make sure that every Albertan is respected and safe in this province, regardless of their religion, race, or gender.

Brothers and sisters joining us in the gallery today and all those watching this statement at a later time and date, I wish you and your families an abundance of blessings for generations to come. May Allah [Remarks in Arabic] strengthen your iman and continue to inform your actions as Muslim Albertans. I thank you for your contributions. Let us continue this journey together and work towards unity and peace for all. To all Muslim Albertans and those around the world, Mawlid al-Nabi Mubarak.

Bighorn Area Land Use

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the matter of the Bighorn area is one of great concern to a number of Albertans. This issue is clouded in a void of accurate information because the government is anything but forthcoming. It came to a point when the NDP had an internal e-mail distributed calling for the creation of a new wildland park for the Bighorn area. That upset a lot of Albertans from all walks of life. The NDP then tried to walk back from it. Fast forward a few weeks. One of the resolutions proposed at last month's NDP provincial AGM was, quote, that the Alberta NDP urge the provincial government to establish a wildland provincial park for the Bighorn. It's certainly not hard to see why people are confused about the government's intentions.

But there's more, Mr. Speaker. It recently came to my attention that the government's signs are popping up in the Bighorn stating that OH vehicle trails are closed due to noncompliance. Now, I'm not sure how to take this. Is this that the government is unable to enforce existing laws, so they are simply closing down trails and denying entry to compliant riders, seniors, and mobility-challenged users? I think that's a bit of an overreach. With that logic, one should close highway 2 between Calgary and Edmonton because of speeders. There must be hundreds of noncompliant users on it every day.

Now, just last week the minister stated, "We're looking at proposing a mix of land designations that will conserve and protect natural landscapes while accommodating a wide range of economic, recreation, and tourism opportunities in the Bighorn." I guess that recreation does not include OH vehicles, by the looks of it. The question, though, Mr. Speaker, is: who else will the NDP leave out, our forestry industry, our agriculture industry, our tourism industry, our film industry? Once again this government is picking winners and losers, and it is not about equal access.

This government continues to refuse to consult with the people who are actually using this area, with the local community, and instead sits behind closed doors, focused on their ideological agenda and appeasing foreign interest groups. This government needs to immediately start consulting and working with Albertans. They should have started a long time ago.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

Cancer Treatment and Public Health Care

Ms Babcock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Imagine for a moment that we live south of the border. The weather would be warmer, the population would be larger, and people around us would be declaring bankruptcy or dying because of lack of funds for health care. It happens every day to our neighbours in the south. In the U.S. the average cost for cancer treatment is approximately \$150,000, even more if it's a complicated case. Not only are cancer patients two and a half times as likely to declare bankruptcy as healthy people, but those patients who go bankrupt are 80 per cent more likely to die from the disease. This is the reality that our counterparts on the other side of this House threaten Albertans with.

Privatizing health care hurts everyone. No one knows when they will need to access health care. I spent a decade not accessing health care in any significant way. During a routine exam my doctor found my cancer. I went for many expensive tests, I had incredibly expensive treatment, including a hospital stay, blood transfusions, and I didn't pay a cent out of pocket.

Cancer is a disease that doesn't discriminate. It hits rich and poor alike. The last thing people need when trying to deal with the emotional backlash of a daunting prognosis, navigating an unfamiliar health system, learning about many new medications, trying to figure out how to deal with work, and explaining everything to family, friends and colleagues is to decide if they can afford treatment. Privatizing health care hurts everyone, but it exponentially hurts people in lower socioeconomic situations, people who are already vulnerable, who are already more likely to have complicated health issues and fewer safety nets in place.

I don't know about you, Mr. Speaker, but I don't want to live in a place where the very system that should care for everyone in need hurts them. Thank you.

1:50

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

Northern Gateway Pipeline Project Cancellation

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a question for the hon. the minister of the environment. When she was a staff member of the Alberta Federation of Labour, did she attend a hearing of the National Energy Board . . .

Mr. Mason: Point of order.

The Speaker: Point of order noted.

Mr. Kenney: . . . as part of an AFL submission opposing approval of the Northern Gateway pipeline?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to know what the question is in relation to government policy. Perhaps the opposition wants to know more about how I fought for refining and upgrading in Alberta for years against a Conservative government that made promises but in fact delivered nothing. For 10 years in Ottawa this hon. member did in fact nothing. In fact, he did more to create this situation of Alberta's land lock than he did to fix it. I'd also like to know how the Leader of the Opposition wants to bring billions of dollars and tens of thousands of jobs by refining and upgrading to this province.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

I would remind the member to stick with the government policy question.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the failure to construct the Northern Gateway pipeline is in part a result of the NDP's opposition to the construction of Northern Gateway. The reason we are in a crisis today with this massive giveaway of Alberta oil is in part because that pipeline was vetoed by the Trudeau government. We have an environment minister here who won't admit it, but she sat in front of the National Energy Board to argue against Northern Gateway. Yesterday she implied that was not the case. Will she be forthcoming today and admit that she went before the NEB to argue for the vetoing of Northern Gateway?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. Again, hon. member, I was searching for the question, and I suggest that you address government policy in the next supplemental. It referenced the historic matter about an individual member, and I would respectfully request that you act accordingly.

The hon. Deputy Premier.

Mr. Nixon: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have to admit that I am stunned that the member opposite continues to bring up his greatest failure or at least one of his greatest failures while he was in Ottawa in government for a decade. In fact, the member opposite, as our minister said, did more to cause the land lock than he ever did to fix it. He knows full well that the reason Northern Gateway was on its deathbed was due to his own government's persistent bungling of its approval. Despite that, this side of the House, our government, our NDP government will never stop fighting for Alberta jobs, and we will get the job done.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I was a member of a cabinet that approved the NEB's recommendation in favour of Northern Gateway. The Deputy Premier is a member of a party that actively campaigned against Northern Gateway, which would have been operational within a few months from now had it gone forward.

I would like to ask the government: does it have any regrets for having consistently opposed the construction of the Northern Gateway pipeline? Does it not think that was the wrong approach to take? Have they learned anything from that huge policy mistake?

Ms Hoffman: Why on earth you choose to highlight 10 years of failure is beyond me, Mr. Speaker. His 10 years in government in Ottawa left Alberta land locked, and now he wants us to trust him to fix what he couldn't fix in 10 years. We're going to keep working to fix the mess that he made, fix the differential, increase our takeaway capacity, get pipelines built, and continue to grow upgrading right here in Alberta. I'm very proud of that.

The Speaker: I believe we're at the second main question.

Oil Price Differentials

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the hon. the Premier tried to deny that she had opposed Northern Gateway, but in April of 2015 she said to the *Calgary Herald* editorial board that Gateway is "not the right decision." The environment minister went before the NEB to argue against the construction of Northern Gateway. Does the government not understand that that decision, together with its support for the Trudeau government's killing of Energy East, is what landed us in this land lock disaster, which has us giving away our most important assets today?

Ms Hoffman: It's truth time, Mr. Speaker. The truth is that when faced with one project on its deathbed and another project full of potential, our Premier advocated for the pipeline that would actually get built. It's true that she threw herself behind the Trans Mountain pipeline, even while the member opposite said that no pipeline is a national priority. It's true that he failed to defend pipelines in Ottawa for 10 years in cabinet, and finally it's true that the last thing we need is for him to bring that record of failure here to Alberta. That's the truth.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, this is sad, to see a government that belongs to a party which spent its entire history militating against our energy industry, which militancy put us in this position, not

having the humility to admit that they were wrong to lobby against the Northern Gateway pipeline, to accept their friend Justin Trudeau's killing of Energy East.

Now, yesterday I called on the government to join with us in calling for a voluntary reduction in production by Alberta energy companies. A number of companies have done so. Will the government join with us in calling on other companies to follow their lead?

The Speaker: Thank you.

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, the falsities that were mentioned in the preamble are so insulting, so insulting to the hard work and labour of people who've been the backbone of our party for decades. The differential, we know, affects every Canadian. The member opposite had 10 years in Ottawa in cabinet to fix the problem, and he failed. The differential is hitting Albertans hard, so we're going to fight to create jobs here in Alberta, and we won't let up. He had 10 years in federal government in Ottawa, and we aren't going to give him another 10 years. Now he's going to attest that he's going to fix the problem now that he's here in Alberta. How can we trust that? How can we trust that he'll fix it when he had 10 years in federal cabinet and failed?

The Speaker: Hon. minister, I would urge that you avoid using words like "falsities." It is not in respect for this House.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the government hasn't even tried to answer any of these questions, so let me try this again. A number of voices in Alberta's energy industry have called for a voluntary reduction in output by about 5 per cent to clear out the current glut in inventories and to stabilize the price. They believe that this would reduce the price differential by about 50 per cent. A number of responsible actors in our energy industry have led voluntarily, but some have refused to do so. Will the government join with us in calling on those companies to join in a voluntary reduction of output so that we can get the price . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, I think that what the Premier said yesterday is important for the member opposite to heed the wisdom of. Calling for a voluntary initiative that would lead to collusion would indeed be that. Rather than asking a bunch of corporations to collude, we're fighting as hard as we can to get full value. That includes taking on the differential and doing so through legal and upfront matters, fighting for new pipelines that the member opposite failed to get built while he had 10 years in federal cabinet to break our land lock, and ensuring that our energy upgrading is being done here in Alberta. Decades of failure in successive federal governments have left Canada holding its economy hostage.

Oil Price Differentials

Federal Policies on Oil Transportation

Mr. Kenney: Well, that answer demonstrates a complete misunderstanding of the law and the urgency of this matter. For a company to make its own individual voluntary decision to reduce production has nothing to do with collusion, Mr. Speaker. Is she accusing the majority of Alberta oil producers that have already voluntarily reduced production of collusion? Is she saying that by taking those actions, they're breaking the law?

The Speaker: Hon. member, please direct the comments through the chair, if you would.

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, our energy resource belong to us, to every single Albertan, and we're not going to sell them to folks south of the border for nothing. We're going to take action on all fronts – that's our plan – creating jobs right here in Alberta, fighting for pipelines, making sure that we have supercharged energy upgrading, making sure that Albertans are working for Albertans. His plan for the economy is to fire 4,000 nurses, 4,000 teachers, and hope for a different outcome than what he failed to achieve when he spent 10 years sitting at the federal cabinet table. We're going to work through legal channels to make sure we get the best outcomes for all Albertans.

2:00

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, none of that is true.

Now, not only is the NDP's close friend and ally Justin Trudeau bringing forward the no-more-pipelines law, Bill C-69, but his federal government is accelerating the phasing out of the jacketed CPC-1232 oil tanker railcars and in so doing will aggravate the problem of the bottlenecking of our resources. Will the government join with us in asking the federal government not to accelerate this phase-out because we do need, with the lack of pipelines, to move more oil by rail?

The Speaker: If I might, just again, hon. member, I heard "falsities," "not true." Please, hon. members, it's an honourable place. Try and stay away from those phrases which leave an implication not intended.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, point of order.

The Speaker: Point of order noted.

Ms Hoffman: I am very proud to stand in this House and tell the truth, Mr. Speaker, and the truth is . . .

The Speaker: Hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: I'm telling the truth. That's what I'm saying. The member opposite accused me of not doing so. I'm honoured to tell the truth, Mr. Speaker, and the truth is . . .

Mr. Nixon: Point of order.

The Speaker: Two points of order.

Ms Hoffman: . . . that we have had many opportunities to break the land lock. We had a federal government that failed to make any progress on that, Mr. Speaker. The truth is that we have an opportunity now, an opportunity with a Premier who won't back down on any front. That's why she's fighting for the upgrading that's happening in the province. That's why she's fighting to make sure we break the land lock. That's why she's travelled from coast to coast to coast and brought us to a place where the nation supports this project, and it's about time the Leader of the Official Opposition did.

Speaker's Ruling Accepting a Member's Word

The Speaker: Hon. members, I just remembered why there was an upside of not being here yesterday.

Hon. members, please, let's not let the dialogue float to the bottom about accusations of what's true and what's not true. We are hon. members, and we ought to treat that accordingly. I see the Government House Leader puzzled at my comment. But when a member makes a statement, you believe, as I understand it. In this

place it's taken as the truth. It does not need to be implied to any other person as to what it might be. That's my understanding, and that's the way I've tried to rule in the past.

I think the hon. Government House Leader has a question. Is that right?

Mr. Mason: Point of order.

Mr. Nixon: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: What are we at now, five?

Oil Price Differentials Federal Policies on Oil Transportation (continued)

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the hon. minister did not even attempt to answer a very serious question raised by the energy industry. The Trudeau government is seeking to accelerate the phase-out of the jacketed tanker cars, which are the backbone of moving oil by rail. This will cause even further bottlenecking and even greater price differential. Will the government undertake to join with us in calling on the federal government not to accelerate the phase-out of those cars, which will make the price differential problem even more severe?

Ms Phillips: Well, certainly, Mr. Speaker, the differential is of pressing importance to this government, to this province, to all working people here in Alberta, and that is why we have appointed three envoys to work with industry on short- to medium-term solutions, including solutions around rail. We've already called on the federal government to take some action on rail. Those envoys will work with industry to work out solutions that will work more in that short to medium term.

In the long term, Mr. Speaker, 15,000 Albertans are being put to work on upgrading and refining. That is also a solution to add value to our resources right here at home and create value for Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Animal Protection Act

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Lots of accusations, no pipelines, finger pointing while other important legislation falls by the wayside.

This government is always happy to point out how long it's been since legislation was updated. As a service to the government I'd like to point out that the minister of agriculture hasn't updated the Animal Protection Act while he's been in office. The act hasn't been updated since 2006. To the minister of agriculture: why haven't you updated the Animal Protection Act, and do you have any plans to do so before the next election?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. You know, this government is committed to the protection of animals. I think all Albertans are committed to that. We had an incident recently on wildlife that was tortured to death. We don't want to see any of that. We value our animals, our companion animals, our livestock animals right across the province. I will continue doing so, making sure that our peace officers and others have the tools they need to be able to do just that, and that's to protect our animals.

Mr. Fraser: Mr. Speaker, a lack of consultation with veterinarians, and we still rank at the bottom of the list in Canada when it comes to animal protection. There's room for improvement in the regulation, and the substantive changes that animal protection groups are asking for require the Animal Protection Act to be opened and amended. That's what other jurisdictions have been doing, and the lack of action has landed Alberta, like I said, at the bottom of animal protection in Canada. To the same minister: how do you explain your government's failure to address this important issue during your time in office?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a government we'll continue to work with industry and stakeholders to do what we can to be able to protect our animals right across the province. Our government is committed to making sure that we meet the goals of the Animal Protection Act and making sure that the front-line officers, the peace officers out there as well have the tools they need to protect animals. What will not help is if there are going to be large cuts right across the public service. That would not help.

Mr. Fraser: Mr. Speaker, opening the act costs no money at all.

With all due respect, Minister, we've been working with your office for over a year to get some of these very reasonable changes made. Animal protection organizations and stakeholders have been doing a lot of work and research to bring this minister up to speed surrounding animal protection. In light of another disturbing video showing animal abuse, we need to take this very seriously. To the same minister: will you commit and act now on these important changes, or will Albertans and our beloved animals have to wait?

Mr. Carlier: Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to protecting animals, whether they're companion animals, livestock animals, or wild animals. That's important. The video that the member is speaking of was heart-wrenching. I personally couldn't watch it all myself. It was that bad. We're absolutely committed to be able to do what we can to protect animals and are working with our industry stakeholders to see what can be improved. I agree with the member. We can always do better and are looking forward to working with industry to do just that.

The Speaker: Hon. members, as we move to question 4, I want to emphasize the preamble question that was discussed a number of times before. There are statements that allow ministers to make statements, but we are in Oral Question Period.

The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Red Deer Justice Centre Construction

Mrs. Schreiner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General. Red Deer provides services to approximately 400,000 Albertans, including those who access from surrounding communities. In March 2017 this government announced that \$97 million was to be allocated to support a justice centre. Currently our traffic court is being held in a nearby hotel. To the minister: can you comment on when the constituents of Red Deer and surrounding communities can anticipate seeing shovels hit the ground?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the incredibly important question. We know that the Red Deer justice centre is very important to folks in Red Deer and throughout

central Alberta. The centre is currently in its design phase. After the design work is completed, we will be issuing a construction tender. Budget 2018 invested \$181 million over five years, which would provide 12 courtrooms upon completion with additional shelled courtrooms available to accommodate growth performance up to 2040.

Mrs. Schreiner: To the same minister. This proposed justice centre is slated to offer a resolution wing to provide dispute resolution, civil and family mediation . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member. Preamble.

Mrs. Schreiner: These services are imperative to our Alberta families to seek peace of mind and provide all central Albertans with important resources. Can you speak to how many jobs these important services will create?

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the member for the important question. We continue to work on determining the demand for services and the specific number of staff needed to provide those services. Once the construction tender is issued, we'll have a better understanding of how many construction jobs will be involved. However, I'd like to point out that this government is proud to invest in court services. Budget 2018 provided funding for 20 new Crown positions, four new Provincial Court judges, and up to 55 court clerks.

Thank you.

2:10

The Speaker: Cut the preamble, hon. member.

Mrs. Schreiner: To the same minister: given the justice centre's plans to support an increase of courtrooms from seven to 12 and given that this almost doubles the number of cases that can be heard, expedites processes, and gives resolution to pending circumstances that deeply impact our neighbours, family members, and friends, can you speak to how this increase will translate to time efficiency?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's clear that the Red Deer justice centre is an important project for central Albertans. It will increase access to justice for residents of central Alberta because it will address a long-standing shortage of space in the current courthouse. This investment is another important step in our government's actions to help address pressures on Alberta's justice system. I'm proud that our government supported this, where the opposition would vote against it.

Oil Price Differentials

(continued)

Mr. Fildebrandt: Alberta oil producers face a glut crisis due to the government's inability to get any pipelines built despite massive carbon taxes and crushing regulations they impose in order to buy so-called social licence. The industry is divided on how to address this problem, with some calling for controls to limit production. Collusion to set production levels or prices constitutes a cartel, however. Is it the government's intention to establish some kind of prairie OPEC cartel?

The Speaker: The Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I suppose the short answer is no. The actual approach is to ensure that the Trans Mountain

pipeline, the new process with the NEB, stays on its timelines. We're working with the federal government, putting pressure on them, holding their feet to the fire on more rail capacity and other short- to medium-term solutions that are being worked on by our special envoys on the matter. Of course, the Premier also announced a new approach to upgrading and refining, \$2 billion of new investment, 15,000 new jobs, and partial upgrading . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Mr. Speaker, under sections 45 and 46 of the Competition Act of Canada it is illegal for business interests to collude with their competitors in setting prices or levels of production. The Competition Act is an important protection of free enterprise against crony capitalism with public risks and private rewards.

The Speaker: Where's the question?

Mr. Fildebrandt: Is it the government's view that colluding to fix oil prices and production levels is illegal under the Competition Act?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The member is quite right that the law says a certain thing, and that is the thing that it says.

In addition to investing in upgrading and refining and putting working people to work in this province in the oil and gas sector and getting a better value for Albertans, a long-held vision certainly on this side of the House and in this party, we also need to make sure that the federal government fixes that broken regulatory system that we have inherited from the previous Conservative government and this, in fact, Conservative leader.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Given, Mr. Speaker, that a free-enterprise economy requires competition to survive and given that anti dog-eat-dog legislation may smooth markets from competition in the short term but rots capitalism in the long term and given that voluntary price production fixing is illegal collusion but that government price and production fixing is supply management, will the government reject any attempts to impose supply management on our oil industry?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There was a lot there, but I think at the end of the day what we need to make sure is that we're safeguarding competitiveness for our oil and gas sector. We're doing that through, of course, continuing to work on the AER regulatory process to make sure that the feds get it right with respect to Bill C-69. We can't fix an already broken system with a broken system. We certainly don't want to do what the current Conservative leader has done, which is to do more to cause the problem than to fix it. We will continue to work on those things that we know will deliver value to Albertans and to working people in this province in the long term.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Coal Phase-out Costs

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, it seems the NDP government's coal phase-out is having an impact not only on Alberta but across

Canada and into the U.S.A. Westmoreland Coal, the American miner contracted to supply thermal coal for Alberta's power plants, has filed a NAFTA claim for \$500 million against Canada because Alberta violated NAFTA. The NDP government is paying out \$1.3 billion to coal-fired power generators as a settlement. Did the NDP forget the real cost would be close to \$2 billion just for this coal phase-out?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure if I heard a question in there or not, but what I will say is that there is a dispute settlement procedure that's now in place, so I won't comment on that further. What I can tell you is that our government has stood up for Alberta's interest on this issue. We've had the backs of community coal workers and communities through a number of programs to help them transition, and we will continue to have their backs, unlike the opposition. The Leader of the Official Opposition, when he was in Ottawa, brought forward regulations to phase out 12 of 18 coal communities and did nothing for them.

The Speaker: I did hear a question in the first one, hon. minister.

Mr. Panda: Given, Mr. Speaker, you heard my question and if the government of Canada loses the case, the taxpayers across Canada will have to pay \$500 million for the NDP government's anti-trade actions and given the NDP government's coal phase-out alone will cost taxpayers close to \$2 billion on top of the \$2 billion for the PPAs, to the minister: why is it fair to stiff taxpayers in the rest of Canada with the bill to compensate an American miner, and will your best friend and ally Justin Trudeau come after Alberta for that money?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I had mentioned, there are a number of programs that we've rolled out in support of coal workers to help them in coal-affected communities. We rolled out the coal community transition fund, which is supporting communities across the province to look into opportunities to diversify their local economies, to attract investment. We'll continue to work with them. There have been a number of successes, quite frankly, in this area. We know that in Parkland county Champion Petfoods, an incredible \$250 million facility, is well under way. That will bring many jobs to the area. We continue to work . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Panda: Given, Mr. Speaker, that Parkland county did its due diligence and did not accept any coal phase-out money for studies and given that Parkland county wants infrastructure investment, not studies, and given that NDP tosses away \$2 billion instead on the coal phase-out, minister, now you're costing Canadians from coast to coast to coast for your disastrous coal phase-out. How are you ever going to compensate Parkland county for destroying their livelihoods while your Trudeau Liberal allies keep sending money south of the border to the U.S.A.?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I refute the premise of that question. In fact, in Parkland county there are an incredible number of new opportunities that are presenting

themselves. We work closely with them. What I'll clarify for the member opposite is that his leader, the Leader of the Official Opposition, was in Ottawa as a cabinet minister when his government brought in regulations to phase out 12 of the 18 coal-fired plants in Alberta. Twelve of them. I know you're dying to know what was their plan to help these communities and workers. They had no plan. In fact, the Leader of the Official Opposition turned his back and turned the lights out on those communities. Our government is committed to working with them.

Pipeline Development

Mr. Loewen: I am often amazed by some of the statements made in this House. On a regular basis we hear the NDP say things that are entirely false. We hear assertions as ridiculous as suggesting Conservatives are somehow cheering for pipeline failure. Since this seems to be the government's excuse when it comes to masking their own failures on pipelines, I have a simple question: can the government point to a single major pipeline proposal that Conservatives, federal and provincial, didn't approve and support when they had the opportunity?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, no pipelines were built to tidewater while the Leader of the Opposition was in government. That is demonstrable. It is true that there was a pipeline approved by the federal government, but then it was thrown out by the Federal Court of Appeal because the Crown did not adequately consult indigenous people. Not the proponent. The proponent did their work, but the Crown refused to have those conversations with indigenous people. That is a shameful record, and it's not just shameful for indigenous people . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister. Thank you.

2:20

Mr. Loewen: Given that there isn't such an example and given that the minister just described something that happened under their watch with the pipeline today and the government might have to throw out their absurd suggestions that Conservatives can't get pipelines built now and given that this Premier has opposed Northern Gateway and Keystone XL and given that she didn't object when Justin Trudeau killed Energy East, could the government tell Albertans why they should now be comforted by the move to put the responsibility of solving the price differential crisis in the hands of an NDP insider with a history of opposing the interests of our industry and our province and therefore sending a pipeline obstructionist to do a pipeline advocate's job?

Ms Hoffman: Sorry. I can't resist the opportunity to highlight some of the excellent work that Mr. Topp did to support our government while he was here and beyond, Mr. Speaker. We inherited agreements with physicians that were so out of whack with the national standard on compensation, and the physicians acknowledged that we were in a difficult economic time when they agreed to come back to the table. What was the result of that? Hundreds of millions of dollars returned to the people of Alberta, improvements in health care, and Mr. Topp supported me with those negotiations. I will not apologize for bringing in people with a track record of proven success in negotiations because we need everyone at the table to fight for the people of Alberta.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Loewen: Given that despite their past record I'm willing to accept that the government has at least publicly started to support our industry and given that I would like to give the government a chance to be extremely clear with Albertans and given that despite changing their minds, the past actions of members of this government bolstered the anti-oil, antipipeline, and anti-Alberta movement, will someone, the environment minister perhaps, stand up and make clear that, on reflection, protesting pipelines and Alberta hydrocarbons was a mistake? Perhaps she could even consider writing a book to clarify the matter.

The Speaker: Folks, try and stay away from the personal comments about members.

Mr. Nixon: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd love to compare the track record of our Premier versus the Leader of the Official Opposition any day. Our Premier has done more for market access than the Leader of the Official Opposition did in the 10 years when he was in Ottawa. How many pipelines to tidewater? None. They couldn't get it done when they had a PC government here in Alberta and a Conservative government in Ottawa. What our Premier has done is move the ball further down the field. We will get Trans Mountain built. We've committed 50,000 barrels per day to the Keystone XL pipeline to ensure that that pipeline gets built. We know that line 3 is well under way in construction. We will get all three pipelines built.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Carbon Levy and Agricultural Costs

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, Alberta's greenhouse operators are very concerned that their carbon tax exemption, better known as the greenhouse rebate program, will be coming to an end on January 1, 2019. The agriculture minister recognized that plants growing in the greenhouse absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and, in order to protect the competitiveness of Alberta's greenhouse operators, gave them an 80 per cent exemption on the carbon tax. Minister, will the greenhouse rebate program be extended beyond 2018?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is the case that a number of different industries have a review period for their carbon levy and the carbon competitiveness regulation as well. The greenhouse industry is no different. We will work with them and assess where they are at with respect to some of their efficiency investments and so on and where the industry is at right now and what will be required going into the future.

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, given that intensive agriculture in greenhouses received a carbon tax exemption, recognizing that greenhouse plants absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, but given that farmers who need to run grain dryers powered by natural gas and propane are not eligible for any rebate program although their plants also absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, Minister, how is it fair that one sector of agriculture gets a carbon tax exemption for absorbing carbon dioxide while another sector of agriculture does not?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's important to note that when I talk to farmers and ranchers and processors across the province, what they ask me is: what can they do to reduce their own greenhouse gas emissions, and what can they do to increase their profits in doing just that? I want to correct the member. There is actually a 50 per cent rebate program through the climate leadership plan on retrofitting and upgrading those grain dryers, so there is an opportunity for farmers to become more efficient, reduce their costs, and become more profitable.

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, grain farmers were not involved in the program with the carbon tax exemption.

Given that Alberta agricultural production absorbs carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and given that Canada is a neutral carbon sink, helping to clean the atmosphere for the rest of the world, and given that this NDP government is setting Albertans up to fail by refusing to claim our fair share of global CO₂ absorption while their policy is all tax with no environmental benefit, Mr. Speaker, why won't the NDP scrap their job-killing carbon tax?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Given that the premise of the question is premised on a number of different scientific statements that actually are at variance with reality, the rest of the answer to the question is necessarily difficult to give. Climate change is real and anthropogenic. CO₂ emissions cause the change in climate. There are a number of different ways that we are both reducing our greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to a change in climate. All of those things are facts.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Community Economic Development Corporation Tax Credit

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta organizations that work in rural communities or with social outcomes have long advocated for a tax credit for community economic development corporations as exists in other jurisdictions. Momentum, a Calgary-based organization, has been spearheading consultations on encouraging local economic development. A few weeks ago the Minister of Economic Development and Trade announced a new tax credit that promotes investment in local economies. Could the minister give us the background to this announcement?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. You know, Alberta businesses told us that they need enhanced access to capital, and we listened. We know that this is especially true for businesses who operate in the social and community economic development sphere. That's why we introduced the community economic development corporation tax credit program. This is going to support diversification initiatives that contribute to improved economic and social outcomes for Alberta communities. We're very proud because communities have been asking previous governments for many years, and our government delivered.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for the announcement. This tax credit is similar to that

offered in some Maritime provinces but is new to Alberta. In what way is this tax credit . . .

An Hon. Member: Preamble.

Ms McKittrick: . . . different from the two previous programs introduced in Bill 1?

The Speaker: Is the hon. minister ready to answer that question?

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member for that amusing comment. During our stakeholder consultation, when we went out and talked with industry and community leaders on the investor tax credit, they recommended that we find a way to be able to provide a similar tax credit for community economic development corporations. We're allocating \$9 million over three years for that very purpose. What do these tax credits do? If a group of people, whether it's a co-operative or a social enterprise, want to come together to create a corporation, they can do so. They can then go out and raise equity, offering 30 per cent tax credits for Albertans who invest in this entity, which in turn invests in . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
Be cautious of the preamble.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Could the minister give the Assembly ideas of the kinds of economic development projects this tax credit would help spur or develop?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the member for her advocacy and her work in this space. Quite frankly, the member participated in a number of consultations that we had with groups like Momentum and other community initiatives. Some of the examples. A business owner offering mentorship and training to employees to help them overcome employment barriers could qualify. A business offering affordable food products to low-income families. A value-added ag business or tourism operator developing a new product or resource in a rural community would also qualify. There are a number of projects, and we're proud to support them.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The Member for Calgary-West.

2:30

Diabetes Support in Schools

Mr. Ellis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Approximately 4,000 Alberta children with type 1 diabetes need daily injections, regular blood sugar checks, and awareness of food consumption and physical activity. A supportive school environment is critical, but most Alberta schools do not adequately accommodate them. As a result, they are excluded from field trips and school events and may not even have access to the snacks they need while in the classroom. To the Minister of Health: why is Alberta one of only two provinces that does not have a policy or guidelines to support children with diabetes?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. member for the question. Certainly, this has come to my attention over the last number of months, and we know that we need to have a coherent type 1 diabetes strategy in our schools to ensure that

students are both healthy and ready to learn. I'm very happy to say that we've been working diligently on such a plan and strategy, and there'll be more to come very, very soon.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Ellis: Mr. Speaker, thank you. Given that students in Alberta should be able to expect the full support of their educators and given that teachers and education professionals can be instructed to and given permission to administer life-saving treatments such as epinephrine injections, Minister, will you commit to allowing educators to receive training to recognize low blood sugar symptoms and administer life-saving insulin to diabetic students?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Dr. Starke: You don't give insulin for low blood sugar.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. An interesting medical diagnosis going on here on the floor of the Legislature.

This is very true, and we know that there are a lot of advances in the administration of medications and therapies for type 1 diabetes. It takes more effort and extra attention, but certainly we are on the road to building a coherent strategy to help to solve this problem. You know, having education aides on the ground certainly helps, and we've hired thousands of them to actually help with the job.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. member. [interjections]

Mr. Ellis: Yeah. Sorry, Mr. Speaker. I'm just trying to help kids. I'm not a vet or a doctor.

Given that children with type 1 diabetes can need more than 10 test strips per day to monitor their blood sugar and given that families who rely on these test strips face sometimes out-of-pocket costs of more than \$2 per strip, or \$600 a month, and given that there have been innovative medical advancements that provide new and better tools to address this issue, will the minister commit to finding a solution that helps families better manage this disease?

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, as I said before, we are working on finalizing the guidelines around this. You know what you need to do, though? You need to make sure you have people on the ground. You don't fire 4,000 teachers. You don't fire 4,000 nurses. You don't come out saying: it's going to hurt. We have a plan that's going to help.

The Speaker: Calgary-Hays.

Energy Resource Revenue

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When I asked the Finance minister to tell Albertans how much the oil differential is costing us, the minister assured us that, quote: good news is on the way in the second-quarter fiscal result. Meanwhile his department forecast a \$22-per-barrel differential, and that figure hit \$50 yesterday. To the minister: why do you refuse to admit your government has a revenue crisis when your own numbers from your own department tell a very different story?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To the member. Our path to balance is intact. It's based on three principles: a strong and diversified economy, stable spending and cost containment, and reducing our reliance on resource revenue. We laid out a plan that would not bring in reckless cuts, cuts that the member from Lac La Biche said would hurt. On that side of the House they have no plan. They don't believe in diversification. They are cheering for Alberta to fail. They are cheering for our energy industry to fail. We are standing up for our energy industry and our business owners and operators in this province.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

First supplemental.

Mr. McIver: Thank you. Given that the minister won't answer the question and given that the government's real-time national lost-revenue counter goes up a million dollars every 18 minutes but that the minister refuses to tell Albertans how much of that is Albertans' lost revenue and given that Alberta accounts for 80 per cent of Canada's crude oil production and that the counter will easily hit \$7 billion today, to the minister: doesn't this mean, by your own figures, not mine, that Alberta losses have already reached \$5.6 billion since August 30? Can you at least confirm that?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What we've demonstrated through the lost-revenue clock is to ensure that every single Member of Parliament, when they go in and out of the buildings, sees that this is an absolute crisis, the price or the differential, and that action needs to be taken and taken immediately. That's why I'm very proud to work with a Premier who has taken action on a number of different fronts, including adding even more value to our resources here in Alberta. Previous governments talked about it. You know what? I'll give credit to one Premier. Peter Lougheed did really lay the groundwork for investment in our pet-chem sector . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. McIver: Given that the government won't admit the shortfalls in their own information and given that according to revenue loss numbers provided in the committee last month by Energy department officials that Alberta loses \$210 million a year for every dollar of differential and given that the differential hit \$50 yesterday and continues to climb and that we do not have one new pipeline to lower that figure, to the minister. According to your figures, not mine, Alberta losses will run \$9 billion to 10 and a half billion dollars in the coming year. Do you at least agree with that number out of your own department, unlike agreeing with the others?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll tell you what won't help Alberta and Alberta families: a \$700 million tax cut for the richest 1 per cent, firing 4,000 teachers and 4,000 nurses. This is all part of their grand formula that the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills said would hurt. We are investing in our energy sector. We are investing in our province. We will continue to fight for pipelines in all directions. Albertans know that we committed 50,000 barrels per day for Keystone XL. We will continue to fight for Trans Mountain. Canadians want it. We will continue to hold the federal government's feet to the fire and not take advice from that side of the House.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Charitable Gaming in Rural Alberta

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have heard from several charities in my constituency – the Cold Lake Ag Society, the Dove Centre, and the Bonnyville seniors' society, to name a few – and these organizations have two key findings. First, they work hard for the seniors, farmers and ranchers, and disabled within my constituency. Second, they are all concerned that they are not treated fairly by the AGLC's management of charitable gaming in Alberta. Will the minister acknowledge that rural charities have a legitimate concern about their access to this revenue stream?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I agree with the member from Lac La Biche – pardon me. Not the member from Lac La Biche; I don't agree with him at all.

That was a good question, the first one that I've heard today. What I will say to the member is that – you know what? – we are aware of the concerns that are being raised about several aspects of the Alberta charitable gaming model. We are working with AGLC to ensure that our charitable gaming model serves the best interests of all Albertans, including rural Albertans, and they are evaluating possible improvements to the charitable gaming model that will benefit the charities, the operators, the players, and, of course, communities.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
First supplemental.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, again, to the minister for the first answer I've heard today.

Given that rural MLAs like myself hear about this problem of increasing prices for these charities and given that one of the key grievances is the wait time for charities' gaming opportunities and given that this gaming region for my constituency is having to wait up to or in excess of 40 months, will the minister admit that we need to change this so that Alberta rural charities can access this resource, just like everybody else?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member. Again, that is a very, very legitimate concern that he's bringing forward. I'm going to invite the member to bring that issue specifically to the Minister of Finance. As I had mentioned, we are working with AGLC. We've raised those concerns. We recognize that, especially for rural charities, waiting up to two years is a significant period of time and that a lot of charities rely on the casinos for a significant portion of their operating budgets. I thank the member for raising that question, and we are working with AGLC to identify solutions.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you again to that minister for answering my question. I very much appreciate it.

Given that the current model for distribution of revenue means that rural charities are at a severe disadvantage and given that under the current model a charity in urban centres can expect to receive in some cases up to 600 per cent more in funding, will the minister admit that the current revenue distribution model is unfair for rural

charities, who are helping some of the most vulnerable Albertans, and take the steps to review it?

Thank you, sir. [An electronic device sounded]

2:40

The Speaker: Hon. member, I'm sure it can't be true, but I thought I heard a phone vibrate in here. I hope that's not the case.

The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again I'll thank the member for that question on this important topic. As I had mentioned, we are aware of this concern. The Minister of Finance is working very closely with the AGLC and also engaging with different entities around the province. What I will say is that, you know, a lot of these charities are doing very good work, but I can tell you that what wouldn't help them is blowing a huge hole in the budget in order to give a \$700 million tax cut to the richest 1 per cent while at the same time firing thousands of teachers and nurses and cutting off programs that help these very communities. I am proud of . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister. [interjection] Thank you.
Hon. members, in 30 seconds we will continue with Members' Statements.

Members' Statements (continued)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Oil Sands Development

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently a good Canadian patriot released information pertaining to a campaign against our oil sands. She provides information that the groups that are funding these campaigns use environmental groups for these attacks in order to secure America's energy future, not for environmental reasons but economical. This Canadian industry, the oil sands, that enriches our nation, that funds the construction of our schools and hospitals, that employs thousands of Canadians, is being attacked under the guise of environmental stewardship.

Syncrude contributed to the Birch River wildland provincial park, enabling the creation of a conservation area of 3,300 square kilometres connecting Wood Buffalo national park to several other parks to form a protective boreal forest twice the size of Vancouver Island. Syncrude's east mine will be completely reclaimed within the next decade, which fully includes reclaimed sections like the Sandhill fen research watershed. The west mine was reclaimed using the water capping process. Water capping, composite tailings, and centrifuge tailings are remediation solutions where Syncrude invested \$3 billion to develop these made-in-Canada solutions.

The oil sands initially did have serious emission concerns, in 2009, but thanks to Canadian industry that invested in research and continues to develop more efficient mining practices, in 2017 CNRL's pathway project brought emissions down to below the U.S. refined average, freshwater usage dropped by 30 per cent, 25 per cent less natural gas was used, Mr. Speaker, and carbon dioxide is captured and sequestered. That is less emissions than they create in Alaska's northern slope, Brazil's Frade project, the Marun fields of Iran, Indonesia's Duri region, and Venezuela's Hamaca fields. I guarantee that none of these nations are investing in environmental initiatives on par with what our oil sands industry has done. I won't delve into things like labour rights, community investment, or human rights, that aren't exactly priorities in these areas.

It's time Canadians stood together in pride for our oil sands industry, fight fraudulent activists, and ensure a Canadian energy independence.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Members of the Legislative Assembly's Role

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What is the role of an MLA? I'm often asked this question by school groups, at the door, or when meeting constituents. There is no job description and no formal obligation beyond sitting in this House. Some of our work is public: opening businesses, making announcements with ministers, and also, of course, through the Assembly webcasts. Some of the work happens in our constituency offices, like notarizing documents, discussing provincial issues with residents, or helping them resolve government service matters.

However, another equally important role that MLAs have is as community builders. We have the responsibility to work with our communities to support emerging initiatives and to be a booster for our constituents both within our constituencies and in the Assembly. It is an honour to be an MLA. It means representing my community and speaking about their achievements, and it means working within my community to help make things happen for the better.

This summer, after an incident on the Sherwood Park freeway, a group of cycling clubs, shops, and organizations came together to advocate for safer cycling.

Because the opioid crisis affects all our communities, a group of Sherwood Park agencies and individuals collaborated to create an interactive exhibit and outreach campaign in our community.

Early in my mandate as an MLA I brought together a group of constituents to form the Strathcona County Diversity Committee to develop antiracism initiatives in our community. Thanks to their work, council and community organizations now recognize our First Nations and Métis communities before every meeting. This group continues to work to make our community inclusive and safe for everyone.

Another group of constituents formed the Strathcona Sustainability Association and have organized forums on solar energy, recycling, and waste-reducing alternatives.

Mr. Speaker, c'est un privilège pour moi de parler de ma communauté. It is a privilege to highlight the achievements of individuals and organizations building communities in my constituency.

The Speaker: Hon. members, there is a request for unanimous consent to introduce a guest.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests

(continued)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to introduce to you and through you to all the members of this House Elizabeth Johansson, president of the Non-Academic Staff Association. She's accompanied by Nancy Furlong, the director of operations of the same union. Of course, many of you know that I had the privilege of being the president of this union, which represents the workers at the University of Alberta. They are here for a specific announcement that will be made by our Minister of Labour that will

impact the lives of approximately 5,000 of their members. I'm so happy that we're able to do this for them. Please give them the warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: Proceed, hon. member.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to provide notice that at the appropriate time I will move the following motion pursuant to Standing Order 30:

Be it resolved that the ordinary business of the Legislative Assembly be adjourned to discuss a matter of urgent public importance; namely, to discuss the impact of the significant recent increase in the oil price differential, its negative impact on Alberta jobs and the economy, and measures that can be taken to ensure that pipelines are built following the delay or cancellation of several recent major projects.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Bill 28

Family Statutes Amendment Act, 2018

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to introduce Bill 28, the Family Statutes Amendment Act, 2018.

The proposed legislation will modernize family law in our province to better support all families. Bill 28 would do three things. First, it would provide clear rules about property division for unmarried couples, which would help promote settlement and decrease stress on families and children. Second, it would allow applications to be brought for sick or disabled adult children of parents who are not married or are not divorcing. Third, we are proposing to repeal the Married Women's Act. This legislation is out of date and no longer needed.

2:50

This is another step to ensuring a fair and accessible justice system for all. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 28 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Labour and democratic renewal.

Bill 29

Public Service Employee Relations Amendment Act, 2018

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise and introduce Bill 29, the Public Service Employee Relations Amendment Act, 2018.

The act governs the relationship between some public-sector employees, employers, and unions. With this bill we are ensuring the act aligns with what is in place for workers in other jurisdictions across the country. These changes build upon earlier changes that were needed following Supreme Court decisions on the right to strike. With this bill we are also creating consistency for labour relations in the postsecondary sector. These changes will help bring the Public Service Employee Relations Act in line with existing

constitutional protections for employees and create more consistency in the way labour relations are governed in our province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 29 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three letters here to table for my constituents. They are concerned about charity funding across my constituency, but this is a problem across Alberta. One of them is from the Bonnyville Senior Citizens Society, and it was written to my office on November 14, 2018.

The next one is from the Cold Lake Ag Society, and they're very, very concerned.

The last one is from the Dove Centre, which is a centre that helps people with disabilities.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Any other members? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table a column in today's *Calgary Herald* by Licia Corbella called A Lesson in Insults by the NDP in Alberta's Legislature, which talks about the ongoing inappropriate behaviour of the government in the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Yes. I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies of an article in the *Calgary Herald* by Corbella that says at the top: "To say that Topp, Notley's former chief of staff, is hostile towards Alberta's main industry would be a gross understatement." I think we're pretty clear on where the NDP stand on these issues. Of course, their ranks are full of unapologetic anti-oil activists, and this article talks about that very same thing.

Thank you.

The Speaker: I have one tabling today also. I would like to table five copies of the annual report of the office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner for the period April 1, 2017, to March 31, 2018, as per the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Acting Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the hon. Mr. Carlier, Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, pursuant to the Marketing of Agricultural Products Act the Alberta Agricultural Products Marketing Council annual report 2017-2018.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we have a historic list of points of order today, and it's my hope that some of my clarification might minimize those numbers. I need to clarify that my intent was directed at the tone of the comments, and I think I may have left an impression that it was specific comments that were made. I think that at least a couple of these points of order may, I hope, become not points of order after we hear. Nonetheless, it would be the members.

I have the first point of order, which I believe was by the Government House Leader.

Point of Order

Questions about a Previous Responsibility

Mr. Mason: Yeah, I believe it was as well. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. During the questions from the Leader of the Official Opposition he attempted to ask the Minister of Environment and Parks a number of questions on activities that she may or may not have been involved in prior to becoming an elected official or a member of the government, including appearing on behalf of her employer at the time, that I believe was the Alberta Federation of Labour, at a hearing.

It's very clear under *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, page 498, that it says that question period "constitutes the most visible part of the parliamentary day where the government is held accountable for 'the administrative policy and conduct of the ministers, both individually and collectively.'"

Now, quoting that, Speaker Bosley of the House of Commons said:

It has always been a fundamental rule of questioning Ministers that the subject matter of the question must fall within the collective responsibility of the Government or the individual responsibility of one of its Ministers. This is the only basis upon which Ministers can be expected to answer questions.

Then under the guidelines in *House of Commons* on pages 508, 509:

When recognized in Question Period, a Member should . . .

And there's a list of them, but the relevant one is to

- ask a question that is within the administrative responsibility of the government or of the individual Minister [themselves].

Furthermore, there are precedents indicating that a question should not . . .

- address a Minister's former portfolio or any other presumed functions, such as party or regional political responsibilities; [or] . . .
- seek information from a Minister of a purely personal nature.

And it goes on. There are a number of others that I could go through.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that you did deal with it, but I find it interesting that the opposition should question people about things that they did long before they were involved in elected office. I think that they should look in the mirror in this respect because their leader, of course, claims that his previous positions, using the notwithstanding clause to prevent same-sex marriage or his opposition to a women's right to choose, are no longer material to his role as the Leader of the Official Opposition. He can't have it both ways.

The Speaker: The Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, if you look back at this question period and every question period since the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed has become the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, I'd say 80 per cent of the content of the answers back to him are talking about his past role in the federal government, certainly before he was in this Chamber. So I think, first of all, it's a little bit rich of the Government House Leader to do that.

But with that aside, the question was to the environment minister. The environment minister still currently has that portfolio. She has not moved from the environment portfolio. I think it would be tough for the Government House Leader to argue that the hon. environment minister does not have a significant role within her department to play on pipelines, in regard to Northern Gateway in particular.

Mr. Speaker, it would also be hard to argue that Northern Gateway is not important to the province. If it had gone through, it would provide 525,000 barrels per day of capacity. In fact, according to CAPP, for example, producers would have had no way of knowing ahead of time that 525,000 barrels per day of the Northern Gateway pipeline project approved in 2014 by the Conservative government would then be rejected by a Liberal government in 2016. This is what's important: if Northern Gateway had come on as planned, we wouldn't be in the situation we are in today. It's very important. We have the environment minister, who takes positions on these issues. The fact is that this pipeline is not being built, and it is a serious, serious issue to be discussed with the government.

The leader brought up the fact that somebody from the environment minister's last organization she worked for – I don't know if it was the last organization but an organization she worked at before – said, and I quote:

It's good to be back at a hearing . . .

a hearing where the AFL spoke against Northern Gateway.

3:00

The Speaker: Keep going. Get to the point.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am getting to the point.

. . . to present at this stage. I have with me Shannon Phillips . . .

Sorry; the hon. minister of the environment, though not at that time.

. . . and she is one of the Alberta Federation of Labour's executive staff,

which then confirms that she was at the NEB hearing.

Now, the Leader of the Official Opposition asked that question because the minister of environment's position on Northern Gateway is important to her government's philosophy or intent when it comes to pipelines. The fact that they protested against and actively tried to stop Northern Gateway and then ultimately stood by as Justin Trudeau stopped that pipeline is an important and reasonable thing for the constituents that we represent, to understand where the environment minister's position is.

I would also point out, Mr. Speaker, that in the supplementals to that question, once he, the Leader of the Opposition, tried to establish in his opening question some content and some history to it so he could ask the question, he then went on to ask very clear questions about the environment minister and her cabinet colleagues and the Premier's position on Northern Gateway and ask for an explanation on why they protested against a pipeline that, if it had gone through, would probably be built right now or very close to it, and we would not be in the terrible situation that we're in. It certainly has to do with government policy.

The Speaker: Hon. members, this is a copy of the Blues that I have. The statement by the Leader of the Official Opposition says:

When she was a staff member of the Alberta Federation of Labour, did she attend a hearing of the National Energy Board . . .

The Government House Leader made a point of order. I then noted that. The hon. leader then continued:

. . . as part of an AFL submission opposing approval of the Northern Gateway pipeline?

The minister responded by saying:

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to know what the question is in relation to government policy.

Oral questions. Based upon the information, the guidelines that we're all familiar with, the government must have the administrative competence that is related to the point. Issues outside the influence of the government ought not to be considered. Read paragraph 409 of *Beauchesne's* and page 509 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*. I do want to give as much latitude in

asking questions and providing answers, but I would again ask that you ensure the focus is clearly on government policy.

You've heard me say today a couple of times that indeed you ought to be staying away, all of the members in this place, from questions that are purely of a personal nature. I recognize that that is not entirely a science, but I think the expectation of myself and this House generally is that personal comments ought to not become a part of the question. They need to be focused on policy. In this particular instance I would think and I know that the opposition leader will no doubt be conscious of that going into the future. In this particular instance there probably was a point of order, but I think the resolution is more on a go-forward basis.

The Opposition House Leader makes a good point. The Government House Leader can take it under consideration. There have been in the past references to members of a personal nature that I think need to be in tow.

The Opposition House Leader.

Point of Clarification

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on a second issue. I believe that in the first supplemental of the last question that we were talking about you rose in the middle of that question and then interrupted the Leader of the Opposition to give him some instructions. I don't have the Blues in front of me, so I don't want to attempt to quote those instructions, but I believe it was in the first supplemental. I'm just trying to make sure we're roughly on the same page. I know there were a lot of points of order. You interrupted him and then asked him to move on, that his question was not about government policy. That question clearly was about Northern Gateway, a pipeline that – if the government across from us had not protested against it and let Justin Trudeau cancel it, we would not be in the serious energy crisis that we're in at this exact moment. That is a fact. He was asking about that. So I rise on 13(2) and ask if you could please explain to us how Northern Gateway and the government's position on Northern Gateway are not part of government policy.

The Speaker: You're asking for an explanation from me?

Mr. Nixon: On 13(2), if you could explain your ruling.

The Speaker: I'm going to read the Blues.

Does the Government House Leader or anyone else have any comments to make with respect to the request?

Mr. Mason: Is that allowed under 13(2), Mr. Speaker? You know, if you want me to make a comment, I will. The question that you ruled out of order was not just about pipelines but was actually directed towards the minister's personal opinions in the past.

The Speaker: I'm going to read the Blues, if I might.

Hon. members, I was qualifying the – I just read the Blues, and the reason I made the decision that I did: again, context, hon. member. The reference was: "Yesterday she implied that was not the case. Will she be forthcoming today and admit that she went before the NEB to argue for the vetoing of Northern Gateway?" That was that reason as to why I made the comments that I did.

Is that your clarification, or is that your case in terms of the point of order? Do I address your question?

Mr. Nixon: Well, you've explained that that's your ruling, and I don't think I get an opportunity to explain why you're wrong, so I would like to move on.

The Speaker: I'm not wrong. The chair is never wrong.

Mr. Nixon: Exactly.

The Speaker: I know all of you experienced members recognize that principle.

I hope that points of order 3 and 4 – I hope I made my comments more clear about my interpretation of the comments about truths and falsehoods, et cetera. I was speaking to the general principle of avoiding these issues that cause so much consternation on both sides of the House.

I think point 3 is yourself, hon. member.

Point of Clarification

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate your comments. I am not convinced that it makes it clear. I do think that it is worth a moment to attempt to provide some clarity to members so that we don't end up in this spot for the remainder of the time that we're here.

3:10

I'll explain to you why real quick, Mr. Speaker. I will refer to *Hansard*, November 20, 2018. I actually think that may be yesterday. I may be mistaken. The Deputy Speaker, speaking from the chair, said:

Hon. members, I have reviewed the Blues. The hon. Premier did not accuse the Leader of the Official Opposition of intentional falsehood or lying. As noted in *Beauchesne's* paragraph 494, "it is not unparliamentary... to criticize statements made by Members as being contrary to the facts." Again, this is a difference in how things are interpreted and not a point of order.

Now, certainly, the context that was discussed at that time was nowhere near as tame as what took place in the House today. I find myself in a different position than I'm used to, one defending the Deputy Premier as well as the Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition. There were times today when you rose, Mr. Speaker, and made comments about falsehood, basically implying that it was similar to putting false motives on another member or flirting, I guess, with calling another member a liar, which is certainly unparliamentary. In the case of the Deputy Premier, while I do think that what the Leader of the Official Opposition said in the question was accurate, the Deputy Premier clearly disagrees. Her right as a member in this Chamber is to be able to stand up and say: what you were saying about me I don't believe is false or true. The Leader of the Official Opposition also did that a couple of times today, and both times, Mr. Speaker, you cautioned him to not use the word "false."

I believe that it is clear that a member should be able to rise if they feel that what is being said about them is wrong and say: that is false. I do not think that rose to the level that either the Deputy Premier or, quite frankly, the Leader of the Official Opposition was calling either of their colleagues a liar. So I rise again, Mr. Speaker, on 13(2) to ask if you could explain that because I sense that it's confusing for all sides of the aisle at this point after this question period.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, on 13(2) I also think that there is some greater clarity required on this question because I think some members on this side were rather confused. In my time here it's always been the case that it's not the words themselves particularly but the context in which they're used that determines it. So there's nothing unparliamentary, in my experience or my opinion, about saying that a statement is false. If you say that a statement is a lie, then you're implying that the person deliberately used a falsehood

to mislead the House. So you can't say "lie" in any context, and I understand that. But to say that a statement is false, in my opinion, is not the same as saying that the member deliberately made a false statement, which is clearly unparliamentary.

I think it's an important distinction. It's not the words themselves that offend the rules; it's how they are used. If they imply that another member of the House particularly, deliberately misled or lied, that is out of order, but to suggest that a statement is false, in my experience, Mr. Speaker, is not unparliamentary.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I believe that I need to give greater clarity. I may well have left an impression of confusion on both sides of the House, and I will go back and review my comments more explicitly. I'm inclined to say that my comments earlier, notwithstanding what the Government House Leader has said about context – that is always the place. But I need to be more clear to the House in the future. I think the arguments being made by both sides of the House are correct. I was however responding to the tone where there seemed to be a sense of deterioration with those kinds of comments. I will review the matter and make sure that I clarify the matter so people are not confused in the future. I'm hoping that might apply to number 4 as well. I think it's the same issue.

Mr. Nixon: Just in trying to make sure that everybody is on the same page, maybe I could help you, Mr. Speaker. I believe number 4 was by the Government House Leader. He seems to be indicating that it was the same issue that I just raised, so I'm assuming he's withdrawing it. I don't want to withdraw on his behalf.

I do have two more, and they are different issues. I will attempt to be brief on the next one if that's okay, Mr. Speaker.

Point of Clarification

Mr. Nixon: On this one, again, we need an explanation, not in a way to try to slow down the House, but the opposition is confused on this issue and possibly the government members are. Yesterday there was a point of order and there have been a couple of points of order where we were talking about members not talking through the chair. But today, Mr. Speaker, again you called out the Leader of the Official Opposition. It appears to us that you're now indicating that not only should we be speaking through the chair, which I do agree is the process of this place, but that we need to continue to maintain eye contact or look at the chair the entire way through the question. I'm not aware of anywhere in standing orders or in parliamentary tradition where that is the case, and it is causing confusion for us on this side of the House. I guess what I'm asking is: what exactly is "through the chair" to you, and how would you like us to handle that? If it is to look at you the entire time, if you could explain where that is in parliamentary process so that we understand what we are supposed to do.

The Speaker: Government House Leader, do you have any comment?

Mr. Mason: I'd rather look at you, Mr. Speaker, than at some members of the opposition.

The Speaker: I'm sure other speakers may have experienced the same phenomenon. When I hear the two parties disagreeing with each other, I feel that I must be doing something right, but when they agree with each other, it begins to make me a little uneasy.

On the question, the context of 13(2), you will note and, I think, you would find ample demonstration of that also given by myself earlier as well as by other Speakers of the House that have

addressed it. I can only speak to when I was here. I've made that same comment to several ministers over the period.

Again, back to the point that was made earlier, it is always about context. For me, the ruling was tendered – probably what prompted me was to avoid what I sensed at the time would be the issue of an escalation of personal comments. If you'll note, I seldom say, if at all, to keep your eyes on the Speaker all of the time. I think there is ample flexibility, and I hope that clarifies for the future. At the time that I make that, I will try to be more explicit when I ask that. But it's not a correction. It's just a preventive intervention on my behalf.

What are we on now?

Point of Clarification

Mr. Nixon: The last one, I believe. Mr. Speaker, I rise on this one in regard to a question with the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky Lake.

An Hon. Member: Smoky.

Mr. Nixon: Smoky. Sorry. Smoky Lake is on the other side of the province, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker. Fair enough.

Mr. Speaker, you stopped the member in the middle of his question and called him out and corrected him for making a comment which I believe was something to the effect that perhaps she should write a book. This is causing, again, some confusion. We have seen rulings from the chair in this place. Your comment at the time was that that was a personal I don't know if the word was "attack" – I'm not trying to put words in your mouth, Mr. Speaker; please know that I'm not; I don't have the Blues – but that it was of a personal nature.

We've seen rulings from the chair, Mr. Speaker, when some of our members have been called xenophobic in this place, where that was not found out of order. We've seen rulings when some of our members have been called snowflakes. That was not found out of order. We've seen several rulings from the chair when we've been called climate change deniers, which was not ruled out of order. It has always offended many people over here because of its relation to Holocaust denier and the similarities in the two terms. That was repeated. I'm not questioning those rulings. Those are the rulings that you are making, but it seems to become pretty confusing to us.

It's further confusing to us because the last comments and rulings from the chair – you were not sitting in the chair at the time – were in regard to some comments that told this side of the House that we and the people that support us were not capable of critically thinking. At the time the chair said that she felt it was "lighthearted banter" and that she would like to see more of that in this place.

3:20

The hon. member did not refer to anything personal, suggested perhaps that somebody would like to write a book about other ideas, and that is now too far and enough to interrupt them during question period as they were attempting to ask questions on behalf of their constituents.

I think you can see, Mr. Speaker, how it's pretty confusing. From our perspective, it looks like the government of the day is allowed to call us some pretty horrific names in our perspective, and our member is called out for just suggesting that somebody write a book. I'd like you to explain that under 13(2).

The Speaker: Does the Government House Leader have any comments? I take it that he's not looking at the chair when he's speaking, so one must assume that he needs to be told as well to speak to the chair. Do you have any comments, Government House Leader?

Mr. Mason: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think it's pretty clear that in this place there's a great range of latitude that's afforded to members in terms of characterizing the other side, the other side's ideas, and so on. I don't know about writing a book. I personally wouldn't be, you know, offended if someone told me to write a book.

An Hon. Member: I think I'd like to read it.

Mr. Mason: You won't like it.

The Speaker: It's seldom that I see the Government House Leader searching for words.

Context, context, context: that always applies. It seems to me that, with the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky, I was again in the context of today and particularly the situation. This is what I said. It was one of preventive intent. I said "folks." I didn't identify the member. I was speaking to both sides of the House. "Folks, try and stay away from the personal comments about members." The book reference did get mentioned in earlier parts of this Legislature. I'm not sure if that was the intent of the member at all, but I was intending it as a method, a word of: let's not go down those personal comments any further. That's where I think point of order 1 started, with the need for me to be more clear.

Do you have another comment, hon. member?

Mr. Loewen: Yes. Thank you very much. I just want to be clear here that the members of the governing party can call us names over here, personally attack us, and a suggestion to write a book is something that is ruled out of order? I just need to have that clarified.

Point of Clarification

Mr. Loewen: And I guess that under 13(2) I do want a little clarification, too. Is it standard under 13(2) that the Government House Leader gets to comment? I understand that 13(2) is your opportunity to explain yourself to us, so I'm not sure if it's quite appropriate. Maybe you can clarify that.

The Speaker: Point well taken, hon. member. Because we are in the points of order list today, I procedurally may have departed from the norm. Your point is well taken about the book. Again, I can only tell you, hon. member, that the intention was around avoiding, staying away from the personal comments on both sides of the House. I hear what the Opposition House Leader has said, and they apply in both places. In the instance of the book, we all have history of these events in this place, and that was the intention as to why I was doing it. I will be more clear, more concise, inasmuch as I can be, as each individual context comes forward in the future.

That was a very interesting day.

Request for Emergency Debate

The Speaker: A Standing Order 30 resolution by the Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Oil Price Differentials

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I moved this motion for emergency debate because of the existing situation. As you know, Alberta oil is produced with great difficulties because of the climatic challenges and logistic challenges. In spite of all these challenges Albertans have put in a lot of hard work to produce that oil, which we are selling at a discount of unprecedented levels. Usually the discount is at \$5 to \$15 per barrel between WCS and

WTI, but in the last few months we have noted that it has reached approximately \$45 to \$50, in U.S. dollars, just the discount. So we are only getting a fraction of the price of WTI.

That warranted some emergency debate, because the industry has come forward – the industry used to be together before, and thanks to the NDP government now the industry is divided. After their climate change plan and after these issues with the differential, now the industry is not on the same page. Some of them want production cuts; some of them don't want that. Now all the employees that are unemployed are losing hope, and the ones that are still working think that some of those companies may lay them off soon, so they are also worried. Recently the Keystone pipeline was also delayed because of the Montana federal court's judgment. Also, Trans Mountain: this Premier and the front-benchers here and the backbenchers have taken a victory lap so many times in so many months, and it is still halted. There is no timeline from the federal . . .

The Speaker: Urgency, hon. member, urgency.

Mr. Panda: Also, Northern Gateway was killed. Tim McMillan of the upstream producers' association, CAPP, said that if Northern Gateway had come as planned, we wouldn't have been in this situation.

Because of all those reasons, Mr. Speaker, this is a real crisis. It's a national economic crisis, and we owe it to Albertans to discuss and talk about the actual issues and offer them constructive solutions. Our Leader of the Official Opposition proposed voluntary cuts to production. That's one solution. And there are many other solutions. I'll talk about what we've proposed and how the government has time and again mocked us, ridiculed us, and brought Albertans to this stage.

The Speaker: Hon. member, we've got to talk to the principle of necessity.

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, as you may have noted in the last few weeks, just in the last 10 months Albertans have lost about \$13 billion, not millions but \$13 billion. That's why I'm asking for this emergency debate, because people are losing hope. This government is appointing envoys who have actually in the past opposed the development of the oil sands and opposed pipelines. Because of this government's actions, Albertans are on the edge. That's why we need to debate this, so please allow us to debate this.

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, those arguments were far from compelling about the urgency of this situation. Make no mistake about it; this is an urgent situation, and the Premier has made it very clear that the price differential and the surplus of oil in our province that we can't move to market has indeed created a serious crisis. Alberta is losing money, the economy is losing money, and Canada's economy is affected as well.

3:30

It's something that the government takes very seriously and is very focused on, Mr. Speaker. To that end, we've taken action on a number of fronts in recent days and weeks, including doubling our support for petrochemical upgrading, building our support for the Trans Mountain expansion project in addition to other actions we've taken such as supplying significant amounts of oil to support the Keystone XL project as well.

I'd like to thank the member for bringing this forward and to indicate on behalf of the government that we do believe that this is an urgent matter and that we support the application to set aside this afternoon's business in order to discuss this critical topic, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll just briefly add my voice to the call that this an urgent matter that I think deserves the attention of the House this afternoon, at least for part of this afternoon. A Standing Order 30 should not be taken lightly. Some recently published research that was sent to me by a constituent says that pipeline bottlenecks in this province are depriving our upstream industry of between \$15 billion and \$39 billion in royalty applicable earnings in 2019 alone – that's a single year – which could translate into roughly \$1.5 billion to \$4.1 billion of lost revenue to this government. That is, I think, a crisis, and I would urge you, please, to support an urgent debate for this afternoon.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there any other members who wish to speak to the matter?

The oil differential being experienced by the Canadian oil industry is having a major impact on the economy. I think we all recognize that. It is my sense that the House recognizes the urgency of the matter and wishes to dedicate its time and energy to address that urgency. Therefore, as it seems to be the desire to discuss that, I would rule that it is urgent.

I will now ask whether debate on the urgent matter shall proceed. If there are any objections to the question, in accordance with what is outlined in Standing Order 30(4), I'll be asking members who support the motion to rise in their places. If there are no objections, the debate will proceed.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Emergency Debate

The Speaker: Hon. member, please proceed with the discussion.

Oil Price Differentials

Mr. Panda moved:

Be it resolved that the ordinary business of the Legislative Assembly be adjourned to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, namely, to discuss the impact of the significant recent increase in the oil price differential, its negative impact on Alberta jobs and the economy, and measures that can be taken to ensure that pipelines are built following the delay or cancellation of several recent major projects.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Like I said before, Albertans are losing, even in our Premier's own words, \$80 million to \$100 million per day. I want to talk briefly about how we got here and what we can do to remove some of these bottlenecks that currently we are experiencing. The reason we are here is because of the actions and inactions of this government, so I would like to talk about some of those actions.

When this government came in, the oil price was low, so I don't blame them for the world oil price. But they made a bad situation worse with a series of actions when they came in. When they came in, they started the royalty review. That created some uncertainty with investors. Then they brought in bills like, you know, the climate change action plan and then the cap on production, the 100-megatonne emissions bill. Then they increased corporate taxes.

They increased the personal income tax. Most importantly, they brought in labour laws. So they changed them, and also they brought in lots of layers of regulatory overburden. With that, Mr. Speaker, the confidence of investors was shaken because they were worried about the competitiveness of this industry. As you know, we have our own challenges. Because of the climate in Alberta and because we are landlocked, our cost of production in northern Alberta is really high compared to the light oil in the U.S. and everywhere else.

There is also another thing, Mr. Speaker. Of all these infrastructure projects that were on the drawing board when this government came into office in 2015, three of them are gone now. When they came to power, Northern Gateway was there, and then their federal ally Justin Trudeau killed that project, and our Premier actually supported that. Instead of opposing that, she actually supported it and celebrated. The same thing with Energy East. When the Prime Minister changed the rules midway through the project, this government didn't protest. They were very quick in protesting Northern Gateway when they were in opposition, but when the Prime Minister was killing these projects, they didn't lift a finger for Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, that actually caused a lot of concerns with the industry, and all the multinationals started leaving Alberta because of the views of this Premier and because of some of those appointments this Premier made, like Tzeponah Berman to the oil sands advisory group. Even the minister of environment, I mean, now she can conveniently say that her views have changed, but we found the proof that she actually protested against the Northern Gateway pipeline. Now we have Brian Topp leading this group of envoys to go and meet with industry leaders. Those actions have unsettled the industry. That's why they are all coming out and telling us that they don't have any confidence in this Premier's team of ministers and advisers and envoys.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Also, Madam Speaker, when the Trudeau government brought in Bill C-48 and Bill C-69, this side of the House actually wrote to the standing committees and wrote to the federal government. We asked the Minister of Energy and the minister of environment to join us or include us in efforts to stop those bills, but for months and months this government sat on their hands and did nothing to stop the federal government.

Also, Madam Speaker, we talked about turning off the taps to B.C. because if we don't take any action, the opponents of the pipelines, who are emboldened by the front lines of this government – you know, they're tasting the victories of court battles and blockades and physical protests and all. This government hasn't done anything, so that's why we asked them to follow our lead on the fight-back strategy.

The Leader of the Official Opposition talked about how to fight the opponents, who are actually the enemies of Alberta and the enemies of Canada because they're doing a disservice to Canada. We said, "Join us in our fight to stop those antipipeline activists and antinationals," and this government just mocked us and did nothing. Now Prime Minister Trudeau said that he wants to phase out the Alberta oil sands, and he's doing one action after another. Our Premier thought that she had the support, and she thought that by implementing the carbon tax, we'd get social licence, but we didn't get that.

Now she's asked for crude by railcar, and she's asked for additional locomotives and tanker cars. The Prime Minister's team is looking at how to withdraw those railcars, so that means that we won't have the capacity to move the oil by rail. All these actions

one after the other, Madam Speaker, are causing a lot of anxiety to the industry, and they're fleeing Alberta and Canada one after the other and taking their capital to other jurisdictions where they can get a better rate of return.

3:40

Madam Speaker, that's why we said: okay; industry cannot come together on their own for two reasons. One, a legal reason, is that they can't appear to be colluding; the second, thanks to this government's efforts they're divided. Now they're not on the same page. This government actually divided the industry, which was working together for decades and decades. They've done some good things together. They shared the innovation, they shared their research, and all that is under threat because they can't talk to each other thanks to this government's efforts.

Now, we don't know what Brian Topp is actually going to talk to them about. We know that there is an election coming in six months. Now the Premier brings Brian Topp and others. Particularly, Brian Topp being a former political operative, I don't know what his mandate is. For the reasons I explained, I can't trust even if he has good intentions because we have seen what Tzeponah Berman did before. She got the opportunity to know all the secrets of the government, sitting on the oil sands organizing committee, and now she is using all that information to work against us. Brian Topp: what is he doing? Is he going to do fundraising for the NDP? What's his mandate? I don't know.

The possible solutions we talked about came from the industry itself. Voluntarily some of them have agreed to cut production. About 145,000 barrels they agreed to cut, but if others also come forward and cut the production to the extent of 250,000 barrels, that will stabilize the market. Currently we have about 300,000 to 400,000 barrels of oil that is creating the off balance in the market. As our leader proposed, if the industry comes forward and does that as a temporary measure – it's only a temporary measure.

There is a lot to be done by this government, which they haven't done for three and a half years. Now just before the election, six months before the election, they're trying to tell Albertans that they're trying to do something, but credibility is the issue here, Madam Speaker. Industry has lost confidence in this government. So they have to act swiftly. They have to consult them; they can't divide them.

Our proposal is to help them get together because they can't do it themselves. Let the government work with them and advise them because it's in the public interest. It's Albertans who own that resource; it's not those oil companies: Suncor or CNRL or Shell. They only have the licence to operate as long as it is in the public interest. They had to get that. They're there at the pleasure of Albertans, so if they're not working in the interest of Albertans, then they lose that social licence to operate in Alberta. It's as simple as that. Albertans are the ones who have to grant permission.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister of economic development.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my honour and pleasure to rise today to speak to this emergency debate on the differential. You know, I'll start off by clarifying a few points from the hon. member across the way. Essentially the reason that we're in this situation is because of a lack of market access, but I want to clarify the significant number of proactive steps and measures that our government has taken, our Premier, our Minister of Energy, in order to support Alberta's energy sector.

Madam Speaker, first and foremost, Alberta energy producers are the most responsible energy producers in the world. We have the highest standards here in Alberta when it comes to our

environmental standards and oversights to our safety standards to our approval processes.

Now, our government did a number of things. When we first came into office, the price of oil was collapsing, Madam Speaker. That's part of the reason the former Premier called the election a year early. We are starting to recover. Let me tell you that one of the first things we did was announce and carry out a royalty review. Now, what the member opposite fails to acknowledge or understand is the number of companies around this province who applauded our government's work on the royalty review. We assigned a panel that went around the province engaging with industry. They listened, they made recommendations, and our government adopted them.

Because of that, Madam Speaker, the activity, the number of wells being drilled, the activity in our energy sector increased. We made changes so that our royalty framework would reward innovation and would encourage wells to continue to be drilled even when their output starts to decline. We made it even more competitive for industry here in Alberta, and I challenge any member of this House to find companies who will go out and criticize our modernized royalty framework that our government undertook. That's something I'm very, very proud of, the work that our Minister of Energy did.

As well, Madam Speaker, there are a number of initiatives that we've done: calling on the federal government, working with them, to try to reclaim orphan wells to get companies back to work and to deal with that issue. As well, I know that the Minister of Energy has been working with the AER on the issue of regulatory approvals, trying to find ways that the AER can expeditiously approve projects, which is very, very important.

As well, you know, Madam Speaker, we did introduce a climate leadership plan and one I would argue is not only the most robust climate leadership plan in North America, but we've demonstrated real leadership that the environment and the economy go hand in hand. Quite frankly, that day that it was announced was a historic day, to have a number of energy CEOs on stage beside indigenous leaders, beside environmental NGOs, our Premier, and our Minister of Environment and Parks announcing Alberta's climate leadership plan. We were the first to develop a made-in-Alberta plan that has seen significant new investments in our province that would disappear the day that that plan – if it ever did disappear, the money would disappear. The opposition would rather have Ottawa impose a climate plan on Alberta. I don't think Albertans want that. I think they want an Alberta-made solution, and that's what our government has delivered.

But I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that the energy sector is not just onboard with a climate leadership plan; in fact, you've got companies like Exxon Mobil who are spending a million dollars to campaign in favour of a carbon tax or a price on carbon because they are investing hundreds of millions of dollars into energy efficiency, into reducing their greenhouse gas emissions, into reducing their footprint, their water usage. A great example: Imperial in their Aspen project that they just announced, several billion dollars of new investment here in Alberta announced a couple of weeks ago. The technology that they're using reduces their water consumption by 25 per cent. You know where that solution came from? Alberta Innovates. Alberta Innovates helped to pioneer the technology. They worked with energy and our energy sector and our business sector to develop this technology that now Imperial is using. I'm very proud of the fact that that's a made-in-Alberta solution that Imperial is using here in Alberta, that we will see used internationally. A number of innovative technologies and processes are developed here in Alberta because we are the best.

Now, Madam Speaker, what I will agree with is that we need to do more for market access, but what Albertans know and need to recognize is that it is a little rich coming from the Leader of the Official Opposition and the opposition to talk about the fact that we are lacking market access and pipelines to tidewater when the very member served for 20 years in Ottawa. Twenty years, 10 of those in cabinet. If we recall, the Northern Gateway pipeline, on that pipeline, the Federal Court of Appeal ruled that the Crown, a.k.a. the Leader of the Official Opposition and former Prime Minister Stephen Harper, failed to adequately consult with indigenous communities. That pipeline would not have moved forward, and that's on the shoulders of the Leader of the Official Opposition and the former federal government.

3:50

Our government and our Premier have been proactive since day one. We have been working with the federal government and with all Canadians to demonstrate the urgency and the need for market access. Madam Speaker, two weeks ago or a week and a half ago I announced the Keep Canada Working phase 2, demonstrating a lost revenue clock that will be displayed in Ottawa. I said it today in question period. Federal Members of Parliament will not be able to walk through that building without passing by at least one screen that shows the ongoing lost revenue. Over \$80 million a day Canadians are losing. This is a crisis. Since August 30 over \$6 billion has been lost because we lack market access. We on this side of the House have been trying to ensure the federal government understands this is a crisis and action is needed.

No one has been a louder champion and spokesperson for market access and pipelines than our Premier, Madam Speaker. She has travelled across this country several times demonstrating that Alberta's energy sector is the most responsible and that we are the best because of the actions that our government and our industry have taken – we've worked very collaboratively with them – and that this pipeline is critical. There is not a road, a school, a bridge, a hospital, or a bike lane in this country that does not owe something to Alberta's energy sector. The Premier has said it, our Minister of Energy has said it, and I've said it on numerous occasions.

What we need to do is move forward in ensuring that Trans Mountain doesn't get held up any longer. Now, our Premier has taken a number of steps, including appointing three special envoys to be able to engage with industry. The Member for Calgary-Foothills tried to say that industry used to be all united in their voice and somehow now they're not. I don't know where that member was in the past 20 years, but all of industry and CAPP especially do not all have one unified voice. There are different players. There are small companies, large companies, international companies, and those that are using different processes that aren't all on the same page. In fact, there are a number of companies that are calling for us to curtail. That is not a uniform calling. Not all of industry is calling for that curtailment, Madam Speaker.

Now, our Premier and our government have been very clear that all options are on the table, but what we are going to do with these three individuals is engage with industry to ensure that we hear their concerns, their feedback, their ideas before we act. We have done that from day one. The Premier has invited me to sit on a number of committees. One is a market access committee. I sit on the U.S. working group. I work with our industry in forestry to try to resolve the softwood lumber dispute that's currently going on. I engage with our manufacturers. Madam Speaker, we have and will continue to work closely with industry, acting on their advice and looking at ways to help move this forward.

We are looking at an immediate, a short-term, a medium-term, and a long-term strategy, including calling on the federal

government for increased rail capacity. I can tell you that we also have been calling on the federal government to appeal the Federal Court of Appeal's decision. They haven't done that yet. We are turning up the heat on the federal government because they must act, and they must act now. This is a Canadian crisis. This is not just about Alberta.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to thank my colleague the Official Opposition Energy critic for having brought forward this motion as I called for this Legislature to debate the urgency of the price differential crisis this past Monday. As members have indicated, this has gone from a serious economic problem to a bona fide crisis for Alberta. Let us be clear. What we are facing now in terms of its gravity and its potential impact on Alberta's economy and this government's finances is of the same order of magnitude as the global financial crisis posed to many national governments in 2007 and '08. If the severity of this price differential continues in what is by far our largest industry and export product, it will permanently impoverish Albertans and massively damage the fiscal health of the Alberta government. So this is truly an emergency.

Madam Speaker, it's true that historically Alberta has received less than the global price for its oil and gas sales, but it is far more true now than ever before in our history. Over most of the past month the global price for heavy crude has been trading north of \$60 a barrel while we've been skipping just above \$10 to \$15 a barrel for Alberta heavy crude. West Canada select price yesterday, \$14 a barrel, but west Texas intermediate, around \$60 a barrel; a \$45 price differential. That is devastating. The Premier has suggested that the implication of this is an opportunity cost of \$80 million a day. Most of those in the industry indicate that it's costing Canada's economy at least a hundred million dollars a day.

Jim Gray, one of the éminence grise of Alberta's energy industry, former CEO of Canadian Hunter Exploration, calculated for me his view that the total de minimis cost to the Canadian economy of the oil price differential plus the gas price differential plus the \$12 billion that eastern Canadians spend on importing foreign oil is at least \$46 billion per year and \$14 billion in forgone government revenue, at least \$5 billion in annualized forgone royalty revenues for the government of Alberta that is already dealing with an \$8 billion NDP deficit, parenthetically, the highest deficit of any provincial government as a share of gross domestic product.

This is a crisis, Madam Speaker. We've seen this train wreck happening in slow motion over the past several years as it has developed, and many Albertans, including this party, have been blowing the whistle, calling for urgent leadership and action. Instead – instead – as Gwyn Morgan, the former president of EnCana, in a *Financial Post* editorial today said: every time it looked like we saw a light at the end of the tunnel, it turned out to be a train bearing down on Alberta's economy driven by Justin Trudeau.

Let us unpack this, Madam Speaker. First of all, there are two issues here. There is what I would call the structural reasons for the price differential related to the failure of governments to get coastal pipelines built, and then there is more of a temporal challenge in terms of current inventories, that I will address first.

My colleague the member for Calgary already spoke to this, but the consensus in the energy industry is that about \$20 of the \$45 price differential, about 50 per cent of the current differential, is a structural challenge attributable to a lack of global market access, meaning that we are price takers, as we all know, and end up having to sell our oil to the Americans at whatever price they want to give

us for it. But another 50 per cent of the current catastrophic price differential, about \$20 to \$25 per barrel, is attributable to a current glut of oil inventories in Alberta, which has put the market off balance. Now, we're producing about – what? – 4.4 million barrels per day in Alberta, which is significantly higher than a couple of years ago because of increases in incremental production as a result of major capital investments, particularly in the oil sands.

The problem is that that has bottlenecked, and some are arguing that the vertically integrated companies are playing into that bottlenecking problem by maintaining high levels of production because ultimately they profit from the low price for the feedstock by selling cheap Alberta oil downstream to refineries in the United States, paying royalties on only \$14 a barrel here, then upgrading in the U.S., selling in global markets at \$55, \$60 a barrel, paying a lower U.S. corporate income tax rate. But this resource, Madam Speaker, belongs to Alberta. It belongs to Albertans, not to those companies to whom we give a permit to develop it responsibly. That is why I called on upstream producers to take voluntary individual action, not through any form of horizontal collusion but voluntary action, to reduce by approximately 5 per cent of oil production in Alberta, which would be in the range of a quarter million barrels per day. If we can get to that point through voluntary action, we believe that that would bring the current inventories back to balance and would eliminate about half of the current price differential. We'd be going from roughly \$15 a barrel to roughly \$35 a barrel, and at least the industry could make a go of it at that price point, and the impact for the Alberta treasury would be less severe.

4:00

I'd like now to reiterate that call. Madam Speaker, this has nothing to do with collusion. Most of the upstream producers have already done the responsible thing in reducing voluntarily and unilaterally their production, but a few major producers are refusing to do so because they're making huge profits off it. I understand the market, but I also understand that in the long run – in the long run – the temptation to engage in predatory pricing to drive mid-sized and small producers out of the market is not in the long-term interests of the Alberta economy. If this situation continues for six or nine or 12 months, the impact on employment and investment in this province could be catastrophic. That is why I've called for this action. I invite the government to join us in that call.

There are other measures that could be taken, too many to detail here, but one would obviously be increased rail shipment. It's deeply concerning that the federal government is now proposing an accelerated timeline to remove jacketed railcars for oil shipments, that will accentuate the bottlenecking. Let's plead with the federal government, which is hammering us on so many fronts, to at least maintain those railcars in place. They are the backbone of our capacity to move about 300,000 barrels per day on rail right now.

I need now to switch in my two minutes remaining to the structural challenge, a federal government, cheered on by the Alberta NDP government, that vetoed the Northern Gateway pipeline. The hon. the environment minister went before the NEB to lobby for a veto of Northern Gateway. The Premier publicly said that she was opposed to Northern Gateway. This government did nothing to defend our constitutional jurisdiction when the feds forced TransCanada to drop the Energy East pipeline because of this ridiculous proposal to link that project to upstream carbon emissions. The NDP's opposition to Keystone XL, the Trudeau government's surrender to President Obama's veto of that project, and the failure to overcome the obstructionism of the B.C. New Democrats on Trans Mountain all have created this crisis.

We need a fight-back strategy. We need to create alliances across the country. I commend the new government of New Brunswick,

which is joining with Alberta, at least with this party, in opposing Bill C-69, the no more pipelines law. I applaud the new government of Ontario in doing the same thing in their financial statement. But, Madam Speaker, in my last 30 seconds, we need to have a fight-back strategy to respond in real time aggressively to the lies and myths told about our energy industry, to put the anti Alberta energy special interests on the defensive, to challenge the charitable status of political pressure groups masquerading as charities, like the David Suzuki Foundation. We need to empower the majority of First Nations, who are pro development.

I can carry on at a later date. But we need to move from the defence to the offence to protect our resources.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Ms Littlewood: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's a privilege to be able to rise and speak about this very important issue. In my constituency of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, that is where many of the workers in this industry make their lives. I often talk about the fact that the towers that the management and the owners are in are in places like Calgary, but it's actually the workers that drive to the plants every day in Fort Saskatchewan and surrounding areas that make our home their home. So this issue is of great value and importance to our community.

I think about the homes that they buy, the hockey teams that they help invest in and help coach and donate money to and collect bottles to support, and I think about the hospitals that are invested in also because of our very important oil and gas and energy industry in the area. That is the cost of the inability to get market access. The cost of not being able to utilize and get our full value into our economy is hurting those things. It's hurting families that want to be able to come out and make Fort Saskatchewan their home, make Lamont their home, make Bruderheim their home. It's hurting, the fact that we see a lot of nonprofits that have had a much more difficult time fund raising in the last four years, five years because of being hit with a suffering global oil and gas market economy.

The more than \$80 million a day that is lost to the United States from Canada is absolutely unacceptable. It's part of the reason why we have been working on the Keep Canada Working campaign. I know that everyone around here has been standing behind it, and we've had so much support from Alberta and across the country. That's why we have been able to get from it being 4 out of 10 Canadians to 7 out of 10 Canadians understanding what we lose every day that we don't work together and work in the best interests of our entire economy.

Thirty billion dollars, Madam Speaker, is being lost to the United States. I said before – and I'll say it again – that it's not good that we do have members of this Chamber that have been actively campaigning for the President of the United States, that would rather keep \$30 billion in the United States as opposed to it building our bridges, building our pedestrian walkways, that are very important to our constituents. You know, I'm fine with America wanting to make themselves great, but I would rather them not do it with our money. That's unacceptable. It's our resource.

I'm very thankful that our Premier has been working on this issue for so long. Those that think this has been newly taken on by the Alberta government have not been paying attention. This is something that I have been talking about since the election. It was something that I proudly talked about in both forums in our constituency, talking about the Trans Mountain expansion and Energy East, because they were and are projects that can and should go to Canadian coasts, where we have the most control over our

own political climate. I'm glad to see that we are supporting the Keystone XL pipeline. We have committed 50,000 barrels a day to that because any option does become necessary when we are trying to get more of our resources to market so that we can create the jobs that actually fuel our economy.

The idea that this has not been a priority since our Premier was sworn in: they just were not paying attention to how hard she was working. She had agreements with governments across Canada, and we had people that were coming on board because of the incredible work that was being done around leadership on climate change. The inability to break the land lock, that the Leader of the Official Opposition was unable to do: 10 years of failure of being in a federal Conservative government, working with a provincial Conservative government in Alberta and not able to get the job done.

After we were elected, we chose not to kick sand in the faces of people that we were trying to work with because we are all trying to come to the table to be team Alberta and team Canada. That doesn't mean that you scream and pound your fists and flail on the floor to try and score political points when it's to the detriment of our economy here.

We continue to work on this issue. It's an issue where what we are doing now is we are grabbing the bull by the horns. The Premier announced an incredible announcement yesterday, a transformative policy, that she chose the RMA, the rural municipality association, as incredible partners, as municipal leaders because that is where petrochemical facilities are built, because they need space. She chose those reeves and those councillors and those mayors to share transformative policy about adding value in Alberta to Albertans' resources to create jobs.

4:10

We have an example of where it's already working. This isn't a pie in the sky idea. We actually see a project that is now up and out of the ground just outside of Fort Saskatchewan in Strathcona county. Inter Pipeline was putting piles in the ground this year. They were able to reach a final investment decision a year ago on a policy that our government put forward to actually incent that investment. So we have 150 businesses that are involved with that project right now – 150 Albertan businesses – and more than 500 workers on-site putting that site together. They are procuring the pieces of that amazing puzzle, that is going to become a polypropylene facility. They are procuring those pieces from Alberta businesses. That's why they were successful, because we said that you need to invest in Alberta if you are going to use Albertans' money.

The people that have the jobs there are the people that keep our local economies working. They are the people that send their kids to university. They are the people that spend money at local small businesses. Without that investment we would not have the sort of positive feelings of the people that really have faith in their economy. It wouldn't be there if it wasn't for the work that we're doing. That was really important news to be sharing on behalf of the government. So yesterday the government decided to double the investment of a piece of legislation that we put forward in the spring that will invest in upgrading. It will invest in infrastructure for petrochemical projects. It will invest in those things that add five times the value or more to raw resources that we are awash in.

We have the skill of our workers, and we have an incredible society that is built on public health care and public education and roads, that are paid for by the taxes that we pay, and they know that they're going to be able to get their resources to market.

Investing in twinning a bridge that goes into Fort Saskatchewan grows the economy. I don't know why the Conservative

government before never did it. I don't know why it was not a priority to invest in not only safety but in economic growth. They apparently thought that it would just take care of itself, but it doesn't. These sorts of things take thoughtful policy, that an NDP government would do, that the Conservatives refuse to do. I don't know why that is, Madam Speaker. I don't know why that is that the UCP call that feeding at the trough.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. The pipeline bottleneck and the impact that that is having on everyday Albertans, on jobs, on the take to this provincial government, the impact on the deficit on this province, the impact on debt are nothing short of a crisis.

What's so tragic is that it is a crisis that was absolutely avoidable. There is plenty of blame to go around. It goes back to previous federal governments. It goes back to this government, when they first came to power, not really being serious about making sure that pipelines got built. They didn't look over the shoulder of the federal government to make sure that the Trans Mountain regulatory process was done properly.

The recent Trans Mountain court ruling that stalled that project is not new law. The federal court did not make up new law. All they did was apply law that was found originally in the Northern Gateway case. So it was absolutely knowable by experts in Alberta Energy, by the minister, and by the Premier. They should have known that this pipeline was at risk if the regulatory process run by the Trudeau government was not executed properly.

As we now find out, to the great detriment of Albertans, to the great detriment of our finances and the countless, tens of thousands of Albertans who are out of work now as a result, we're in a real crisis situation in this province. There are no easy answers to this. The long-term solution is to build pipelines, but the long-term solution to build pipelines has been known for a decade or more.

Some of the things that the hon. member had just talked about in terms of petrochemical diversification: while those may sound like great ideas, we're a decade away from those bearing fruit, best case maybe five years. What does that do for the family right now who is having a hard time making ends meet because they can't get work? What does that do for the companies that are choosing to invest not in Canada, not in Alberta, but in the United States? It is booming in Texas and in North Dakota, and what are we doing here in Alberta? We're sending our rigs down south, we're sending our workers down south while Albertans are having a hard time making ends meet. That is the result of poor government policy choices by the NDP and by the federal government, and that is why this is a national crisis.

Total Energy Services recently announced that they were going to close five western Canadian branches. They are in the best case moving the people who were going to have those jobs here in Alberta down to the U.S. More likely, they're hiring Americans. They're not hiring Albertans. Those are people who will not be able to suit their kids up for hockey this winter. Those are people who are going to have to go deeper and deeper and deeper in debt at a time of rising interest rates. Those are people who are entrepreneurs, who've got a welding unit on the back of their truck, who are going to see that sitting idle, who are having a hard time finding work, can't find work at all.

The rig count in this province has gone down from a high of 850 rigs in 2013 to 590 rigs today, and a forecast recently by Peter Tertzakian is that it may drop again to 500. Peter Tertzakian very recently said that there's a risk we could lose this winter's drilling season.

The dilemma, the challenge, the crisis that we face is not related only to heavy oil. It's having a contagion on light oil as well. While we know that the differential for heavy oil, for western Canadian select, is in the \$40 range and we're getting between \$13 and \$18 for a barrel of oil – the cheapest oil on the face of the earth is coming from Alberta as a result of pipeline bottlenecks – light sweet crude is trading at a 50 per cent discount to WTI. That is a massive impact on the take to Albertans from the resource that all of us own.

There are a lot of reasons why this has happened. I think the federal government deserves a lot of blame for the changes they made in the 2017 budget, which I believe today's announcement may or may not address, to the capital cost allowance treatment for oil and gas investment. It used to be that you were able to write that off in a year, like you can in the United States. If you're an investor with capital to invest in the energy industry, where are you going to invest it? In the place that gives you the best return. So that capital has been flowing out of this country into the United States ever since that change was made.

It's part of a layering problem. It's not just low commodity prices. In fact, until very recently the price of oil was upwards of \$70 a barrel. That's more than enough margin to make a very healthy profit. But it's the layering impact of labour law changes, of federal tax changes, of provincial tax changes, of hostile regulators. That makes it very, very difficult to do business in this province as it relates to oil and gas.

So what's the answer? Scotiabank just today released a note that talks about the impact of the differential. They say that Alberta producers are potentially losing between \$15 billion and \$39 billion a year in royalty applicable earnings – not top-line revenue; royalty applicable earnings – in 2019 alone through this differential. That results in a cost to the Alberta treasury of between \$1.5 billion and \$4.1 billion for one year. While this government says their path to balance is intact, under no circumstances can we get anywhere near a balanced budget with a \$1.5 billion to \$4.1 billion hole in the budget.

4:20

While the Official Opposition may say that we can ask producers to voluntarily withhold production, that creates a real problem, several problems. One is the free rider problem. If company A reduces production and company B does not, company B disproportionately benefits. This is not the kind of problem that can be solved simply by crossing our fingers and asking nicely. The other problem, of course, is collusion. If the government convenes a group of private industry to sit down together and decide collectively to reduce production, that creates a problem with collusion.

My strong view – and this is a view that Scotiabank has actually done the arithmetic on. They have found that if we take collective action, Scotiabank suggests that under section 85(1) of the Alberta Mines and Minerals Act the provincial government has the power to “make regulations fixing the maximum amount of petroleum that may be produced under Crown agreements” if such a regulation is found to be in the public interest. Scotiabank believes that if we temporarily reduce output by 140,000 barrels a day, roughly 4 per cent of conventional oil sands output, we will save in the neighbourhood of \$300 million to \$2.9 billion to the Alberta treasury in the form of royalties. That would avoid between \$3 billion and \$27 billion of the \$15 billion to \$39 billion in forgone upstream royalty earnings to the province. That's a lot of numbers, Madam Speaker, but what it means is that in desperate times, desperate measures are required.

This government: instead of acting definitively and decisively in the best interests of all Albertans in protecting the value of the

resource that all of us collectively together own, what do they do? They do what every government does who is frozen and paralyzed like a deer in the headlights, not sure what to do. They strike another committee. In Calgary just yesterday for a couple of events in my constituency, I can tell you that the people in my constituency have told me that they are furious that someone like Brian Topp is being flown back in from Ontario to tell them their business. That is the last thing this province needs. What this province needs is a government with the guts to take action. Is it a dramatic step to forcibly constrain and curtail production for a short period of time? It absolutely is. Is it a simple thing to do? No. But when we're facing the kind of dilemma and we're facing the kind of crisis that we are in this province right now, it demands leadership and it demands action. It does not demand another committee.

If we can save the schools and the roads and the hospitals and the debt repayment costs, if we can save the jobs of those tens of thousands of Albertans – I can tell you that I'm hearing stories about potential layoffs coming in head offices, potential layoffs coming in the field. Those are potential layoffs coming very, very soon as a result of this high differential, at a time when we should be recovering with higher oil prices, we should be thriving, we should be prospering, our budget should be on the way to balance. There's absolutely no excuse for that. There are people who are going to work every morning wondering: "Is today the day? Having survived the worst economic downturn in a generation, is today the day that I lose my job? Is today the day that I have to go home to my family and say: 'I'm sorry; we can't afford Christmas this year. I'm sorry; we're going to have to give up hockey'." That's what it means to the people of Alberta.

That is why this government needs to show leadership, take strong, definitive action, and have a reasonable plan to curtail production, get the price back up, and keep Albertans working. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister of the environment.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise on this pressing matter of the widening differential and its persistence. It is not at all out of the realm of possibility that this short-term commodity bump, now that it has moved into a longer term issue for Alberta's balance sheet, very soon will become an issue for the national conversation. I have not yet had a chance to review the federal Finance minister's quarterly update this afternoon, but I will say this. If we do not see an appropriate response from the federal government with the kind of urgency with which our government has addressed this matter, then I will be left dismissing this quarterly update as something of a tone-deaf piece of political communication. I think the time for action is now on this matter.

That is why we ask the federal government for their co-operation with respect to rail capacity. I was in the hon. member for Strathcona county's constituency a couple of weeks ago, and you could just see the bitumen cars lined up at the rail station, Madam Speaker. I remember saying to my kids: "You know, that's millions of dollars for schools, for hospitals, for roads, for bridges sitting in those railcars right now that can't go anywhere. If you wonder why you hear the word 'pipeline, pipeline, pipeline' on the news all the time, kids, that's why." Within those cars are jobs. It's the future of this province, but it's also the economic driver for the country. So we definitely need some of those short-term solutions around rail.

We definitely need to explore some of the short-term solutions with industry around supply. There's no question about that. That's why we appointed three very respected negotiating envoys to discuss that matter with industry because it is by no means a

consensus, a suite of solutions out there. If it was, it would be done already, Madam Speaker, but it's not.

Then, of course, other short-term solutions include making sure that the 22-week timeline, as laid out by the federal government, with respect to the marine scoping of the NEB redo proceeds according to an appropriate timeline, Madam Speaker, and then, of course, that the redo on the indigenous consultation, for which there isn't a specific timeline for reasons of ensuring that the duty to consult is appropriately discharged by the Crown, also proceeds. But the regulatory piece is something that our government is watching very, very closely. Once again, if we see that that 22-week timeline is slipping, we will have much more to say about it, and it'll be much more than a clock meeting the Members of Parliament as they go into the House of Commons to go to work in the morning.

In the medium term, Madam Speaker, this government must grapple with the broken regulatory system that led us to this place in the first place. Of course, we have a new piece of legislation that the feds have brought in, in part to address some of these issues, the fact that the Federal Court of Appeal dismissed the Northern Gateway approval as well as the TMX approval. We have to make sure that we're not fixing a broken system with a broken system.

And there is no question that when the Northern Gateway pipeline approval was rejected by the Federal Court of Appeal, its approval by federal cabinet was rejected on the grounds of inadequate indigenous consultation, and not just a little bit, Madam Speaker. The court was scathing in its appraisal of the Crown, which was the previous Conservative federal government, and how they discharged the honour of the Crown in engaging indigenous people.

Here are just some quotes.

The inadequacies [were] more than just a handful and more than mere imperfections. [They] left entire subjects of central interest to the affected First Nations, sometimes subjects affecting their subsistence and well-being, entirely ignored.

They went on to say that it was not a case where the proponent of the project,

Enbridge itself, had failed to reach out to aboriginal peoples.

Far from it,

said the court.

Once the pipeline corridor for the Project was defined in 2005, Northern Gateway engaged with all Aboriginal groups, [et cetera], with communities located within 80 kilometres of the Project corridor.

This failure lies squarely at the feet of Stephen Harper's federal government, that failed to take indigenous consultation seriously, just as they failed to take indigenous issues seriously with respect to poverty, with respect to the missing and murdered indigenous women and girls inquiry, Madam Speaker, just as they did with respect to economic inequality, social inequality, child poverty, all of the other important issues that the federal government utterly – utterly – abandoned their duty on, their fiduciary responsibilities under the Constitution Act of this country and their basic level of human decency when it comes to reconciliation with indigenous peoples.

4:30

That's where the failure of Northern Gateway lies. So own it, and then fix it. Do not do more to undermine the system. But Stephen Harper's government did more to undermine the system when they refused to scope in the marine safety components that were within the NEB process of the Northern Gateway, within the TMX approval. They just didn't do it. They just didn't bother, Madam Speaker. Now we are at a place where, again, the courts are saying: well, no; actually, you have responsibilities to discharge here. So there's plenty of blame to go around because, in my view, the

federal government ought to have caught that, too. They didn't, and that's why they need to fix it. They need to fix it expeditiously. They should have fixed it with a legislative solution, but if they can stay to that 22 weeks, then we'll see. But at the end of the day, there must be a pipeline to tidewater.

So that's that piece, Madam Speaker. Then there's the longer term solution, and that is, of course, Alberta getting full value for its resources here at home – upgrading, refining, partial upgrading – so we get better capacity within pipelines. All of those things put Albertans to work. I know that for a generation oil and gas workers have been sort of on-site or in their union halls or elsewhere around their kitchen tables wondering: “Why don't we get better value for our resources? Why aren't we upgrading our natural gas and other light ends into plastics, into polypropylenes, all these things? And why aren't we shipping more refined product?”

Sure. It does mean that we would have to account for the greenhouse gas emissions associated with those activities here in Alberta. That's why we have a climate leadership plan to deal with those emissions, because climate change is real, and you have to. So many working-class people have said for so long in my experience both in the labour movement and the New Democratic Party and elsewhere: why aren't we getting better value? The Minister of Transportation, when he led our party, certainly took that position, and I was so proud to run on that in the 2012 election, in fact, Madam Speaker, because I come from a family with lots of oil and gas workers on the one side.

My dad was an electrician who worked on the oil rigs. People like to talk about my past, apparently, in this House. They want to, you know, bring my personality or my past into this Chamber. Okay. Let's totally have that conversation. Let's talk about how my dad lost his job during the national energy program. That's why, when people say, “Oh; we should bring a Trudeau in to make climate policy for us,” I say: “Oh, no. I don't think so.” Because in my house that was a big, fat I-don't-think-so in the 1980s, when my dad lost his job.

You know, on my dad's side of the family there were lots of oil and gas folks, lots of kind of socially conservative folks. We didn't always agree on a lot of things growing up, around the Christmas table and so on. Certainly, my parents were a little more progressive, but some of the extended family, not so much. But one of the things that we always agreed on was adding value to Alberta's resources so that we as Albertans, as owners of those resources, would get the full economic and social benefits of those things.

So when my Premier stood up yesterday to announce a new program that would bring in \$20 billion worth of new investment in upgrading, adding value to our resources, with 15,000 jobs for ordinary working people – construction jobs, oil and gas jobs – I've never been so proud. You know, my dad is not here anymore. He spent his life not doing fancy jobs in the oil and gas industry. He wasn't in one of those towers. The phone would ring at 2 o'clock in the morning, and he would have to go and drive to the oil rig. He would be so proud of this, too.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to be able to talk here today about this issue and this crisis. Of course, it is a crisis when we look at this price differential and how it affects the budget. We know that Budget 2018 didn't account for the current oil price differential. That's something we do know.

When we hear the government say, “Oh; we're still on track,” I am skeptical. I'm sure a lot of Albertans are skeptical, too. I think

what probably is most alarming is that the government plan already is to take us to over a hundred billion dollars in debt and billions of dollars in interest each year. When we see these things happening, we see this price differential, we know it's costing the Alberta government millions of dollars. What is the effect going to be down the road? So that way we know it's a crisis.

Nobody believes that things are still on track. This government doesn't have a very good track record when it comes to planning anything fiscal, that's for sure. Of course, we in the Legislature here are being asked to vote on programs and make fiscal decisions without a clear understanding of the province's finances. There's no way we should be asked to do this without the government being very clear and open and transparent about how this is going to affect the finances of this province.

Now, we know this is an issue, too. We have the Energy minister on April 9, 2018:

We need, as I mentioned earlier, two out of the three pipelines. If Kinder doesn't go, we still have KXL and line 3. Like, we need two of the three.

Madam Speaker, we don't have two out of the three. We've got zero of the three; that's what we have. We have exactly zero.

The Finance minister says, quote: we built pipeline revenues into our path to balance projections; we're confident all the pipelines will be built, so we're just going to keep going down this road. End quote. Madam Speaker, that doesn't sound like a very good plan right now, does it? We have zero pipelines. He's confident that all pipelines will be built. Now, this month's court ruling delaying Keystone XL and the ongoing delay of the Trans Mountain expansion put this budget's expectations into doubt. There's no doubt about that. This fiscal plan assumed that pipelines would be built, and still the government had projected upwards of a hundred billion dollars in debt. So, Madam Speaker, this is a crisis. The government needs to come clean. The Finance minister needs to come into this House and tell the people of Alberta what the finances are in Alberta.

Now, when the Premier was asked if she'd told Trudeau there'd be no objection if Northern Gateway was vetoed, this is what she said:

What we did was that we talked to the federal government, right after they were elected, about the need to get a pipeline to tidewater. We said that we needed one of those pipelines to go west and that we would work with them to get one of those pipelines to go west.

Well, Madam Speaker, we've got zero pipelines right now. This government sat on their hands and watched as Northern Gateway was vetoed and shot down and said absolutely nothing.

Also on Northern Gateway the Premier said:

Interestingly, what happened with respect to Northern Gateway is that the courts ultimately said that Gateway was not the right decision because the members opposite failed to consult appropriately or respectfully with the people that it was impacting.

Well, that's interesting. When the Northern Gateway was shut down for lack of consultation, what did this government do? We saw the minister do it just now. Blame the Conservatives, of course.

Now, Trans Mountain has the same issue. It's shut down right now, too, because of consultation. What does the NDP do now? Well, they cry foul: this is horrible; this is absolutely unacceptable. What happened with Northern Gateway? Nothing. Crickets. If two are shut down for the same reason, why wouldn't the reaction be the same? Madam Speaker, I would say that it's because this government really doesn't have their heart in pipelines. Their heart is not there. Their mouths are there. Their heart is a long ways away.

When we talked about Bill C-69, the Deputy Premier said:

How is it standing up for Alberta to hop on an airplane and jaunt off to Ottawa every time you get a chance.

That was on May 16, 2018. Well, of course, on February 8, 2018, Bill C-69 was introduced. On June 4, 2018, the NDP government defeats Motion 505 to fight C-69 in this House here. On June 20, 2018, Bill C-69 passes in the House of Commons. Then on September 25 the Premier finally says that ministers will go to Ottawa about C-69. That's three months later, after it's already passed. We asked for action long before that.

4:40

Now, Madam Speaker, let's talk about Keystone. The Premier on May 2, 2015, in a CBC interview, when they were talking about the NDP federal leader, was against Keystone. What did the Premier say? Quote: we're against it. End quote. Does that sound like support for the oil and gas industry? Does that sound like support for a pipeline, a pipeline that they say that they need for their budget, which will still leave us a hundred billion dollars in debt?

When asked about lobbying the U.S. for Keystone, what did the Premier say? Quote: no realistic objective. End quote. Does that sound like support for pipelines? Does that sound like a reason why we might be here today in a crisis? Sounds like it to me. We had an Alberta envoy to Washington who was told to stop lobbying for a pipeline, and then, of course, they replaced him.

Now, there was an article, an op-ed, done. The title was A Pipeline that Should Not Be Built. Who would have written such an article? Well, one of the three people that the government calls respected envoys to go and support pipelines. Does that make sense? Brian Topp: that's the person that the government has appointed as an envoy over this issue, the guy that wrote an article entitled A Pipeline that Should Not Be Built.

We know that we've seen pictures appear like the environment minister at an anti Northern Gateway rally. We know she spoke against Northern Gateway at an NEB hearing. We have a minister of this government that's travelled to B.C. to campaign for an anti-oil activist. We have an Education minister that chants "no new approvals" for oil sands on the steps of the Legislature. We have NDP that have hired anti-oil activists: Tzeporah Berman, Brian Topp, and others. We could create a huge list.

Today I asked for an apology, a retraction. Can you at least say: we were wrong; we shouldn't have hired these people; we shouldn't have been protesting pipelines for the last five to 10 years? Could we at least have an apology and a retraction for Albertans, an admission that they did something wrong? You know what happened? Nothing. No apology. Unapologetic anti-oil activists.

So why are we here today? Well, that's a really good question, isn't it? We have people like this that are saying that they're representing the oil and gas industry in Alberta when their past has said otherwise. What I would suggest is that we get credible people working on this. Credible people. I don't know that when the environment minister goes off to Ottawa supporting pipelines they can actually take her seriously, with her past. I don't know that when Brian Topp goes to Ottawa and talks to people anybody will look at him seriously either. How could they?

Madam Speaker, we've heard a lot today about how the Conservatives couldn't get pipelines built. Well, earlier today I asked in this very House one simple question: can anybody in the government point to a single major pipeline proposal that the Conservatives didn't approve and support when they had the opportunity? You know what I got for an answer? Nothing, of course, because there isn't one. When the Conservatives were in power, they built four pipelines. That's actually built. They approved all pipelines while they had the opportunity.

What do we have here? We've got two pipeline cancellations, we have a crisis on our hands of epic proportions, and we have a government that nobody believes has their heart in this. We hear the words. We see the lips moving, but we don't see the heart in it, and I don't think Albertans see it either, and that needs to change.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the motion?

Seeing none, we will move on.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

Bill 25

Canyon Creek Hydro Development Act

The Chair: Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Chair. An Act to Recognize AMA Representation Rights. We've had the opportunity this morning to talk about this bill a little bit, and some information was brought forward that we felt made it incumbent to send it to committee. Now we are in Committee of the Whole, and we are talking about the substance of the bill. Unfortunately, because we're not going to be able to have more time and more opportunities to be able to present to Albertans a fulsome discussion on this bill, at this time I would like to be able to bring forward an amendment.

I will provide that for you, Madam Chair, at this time.

The Chair: This is amendment A1. Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. Hunter: Okay, Madam Speaker. I am to move that Bill 24, An Act to Recognize AMA Representation Rights, be amended in section 1(2) by adding the following after the proposed section 40.1(4):

- (5) The Minister shall make available to the public any proposed amendments to the AMA Agreement respecting compensation matters at least 3 months prior to amending the AMA agreement to allow the public to . . .

The Chair: Hon. member, I believe you're speaking to the wrong bill. This is to Bill 24. We're on the Canyon Creek Hydro Development Act.

Mr. Hunter: I'm sorry. I had two people talking at once.

The Chair: The amendment is for a different bill. We are on Bill 25, Canyon Creek Hydro Development Act.

Mr. Hunter: I thought they said 24.

The Chair: All right. We are on Bill 25, Canyon Creek Hydro Development Act. Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

[The clauses of Bill 25 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

4:50

Bill 24

An Act to Recognize AMA Representation Rights

The Chair: Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. Hunter: You know, I have lots of grey hairs, but my hearing is probably because of my construction background, Madam Chair.

It's now my pleasure to be able to stand and speak to you about this amendment. If you would indulge me, I would like to read the amendment at this point. Is that okay?

The Chair: Actually, the document is back here at the desk.
Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you. I move that Bill 24, An Act to Recognize AMA Representation Rights, be amended in section 1(2) by adding the following after the proposed section 40.1(4):

- (5) The Minister shall make available to the public any proposed amendments to the AMA Agreement respecting compensation matters at least 3 months prior to amending the AMA Agreement to allow the public to provide feedback on the impact of the proposed amendments on patient outcomes and the effective use of public resources.
- (6) The Minister shall make public any feedback received pursuant to subsection (5) with the consent of the submitter.
- (7) If the consent of the submitter cannot be obtained under subsection (6), the Minister shall make public that feedback in an anonymized format.

The purpose of this amendment, Madam Chair, is to be able to help provide physicians with certain rights. We felt it was also incumbent as there are two parts to any equation. In this situation the other part to the equation with physicians is the patients, the people who are actually involved in receiving that treatment and the care. What we're trying to accomplish with this amendment is providing some transparency for the system that this bill would be introducing, the value of that transparency, which this government has talked about many times, being able to provide that transparency in a system where we hear on a constant basis from patients that they need to know, you know, what kind of care they're receiving, what the outcomes are, and if there are any good ideas, that they could be able to give that feedback to the physicians. This bill I believe should be, really, about doing best for what the patients want and need.

"The primary objective of Canadian health care policy is to protect, promote and restore the physical and mental well-being of residents . . . and to facilitate reasonable access to health services." Physicians have told us that they know nothing about this agreement, which we talked about earlier. Some have even said that they do not want the AMA to negotiate with the government on their behalf. As the information is trickling in, we're starting to get this information from physicians. Even the way that it was presented to us in this House – maybe we can talk about it a little bit more in Committee of the Whole. It was very disingenuous in the way that they presented it to us.

Physicians now, from what we're getting in terms of feedback, Madam Chair, are completely blindsided by this. This bill is something that should have been presented to physicians and provided for them to give their feedback – these are the pros and cons to it; these are the things we like or we don't like – yet they haven't done that. When they gave their brief on this, they said that this has been accepted by 89 per cent. In reality only 30 per cent of the physicians took part in it, and of those 30 per cent that actually

took part, they were voting on zeros for the contract, not an actual bill such as this bill.

That's been flawed, and hopefully we'll be able to talk a little bit more about that and get some answers from the government on that, but when it comes to being able to make, in my opinion, a faulty bill better, I think that it's important and incumbent of the government to take a look at the other part of the equation. That other part is the patients.

This is what this amendment does. It provides the ministry with a mechanism so that we can get the feedback and we get that transparency with how that interaction with the patients is going. By doing that, if this bill does pass, which as the government has a majority in this House, there's no doubt that it will pass, but at least this would provide that patient that kind of care and transparency to what is happening here in the House.

Now, is the public aware of how their resources are being spent? This has been a question that has been asked in this House many times. I believe that they do have the right to know about future proposed amendments the government is making on any agreement regardless of the association. This bill would facilitate the mechanism where they can do that, where they can have that knowledge about any future amendments to this so that they would have at least three months to be able to consult and get that fulsome discussion that they so need. The money being used to fund these agreements are, after all, the public resources. They should know about any future proposed agreements and should be allowed to provide feedback on the impact those agreements will make on patient care and outcomes and also public resources.

This bill does nothing to address patient care and outcomes, which does bewilder me why that's the case. In our province patient wait times have become unmanageable. The province has been throwing more money at the system with nothing to show for it. The very people that this bill will affect have not been consulted, so, again, there are two parts to this equation. You've got the physicians and you've got the patients, yet the patient component has not been consulted. Both physicians and Albertans should be involved in any decision that will affect them. That's just good governance. This government has done little to prove to Albertans since the beginning of their term that they have their backs and are looking out for what's in their best interest. In speaking with Albertans, this bill just proves that there has to be more transparency and accountability when it comes to matters that will affect physicians and the general public and their resources.

Now, the province is spending almost \$22 billion on health care every year, and I believe that accountability is paramount for a file this large. This is actually the largest, as you know, and has been talked about many times in here. We spend more on health care than any other province, than any other jurisdiction in Canada, so having that transparency is, I think, just a prudent approach. This cost of health care needs to be addressed if Alberta is going to deal with its fiscal challenges, and if there is any hope to be able to gain a path to balance, this file certainly has to be addressed.

This amended agreement with the province says that doctors in the province of Alberta will not receive an increase until 2019. What about after 2019? What's the case at that point? Now, do we really think that any deal made with any associations should not be made public to Albertans so that they are given the opportunity to address their concerns or to give their praise? Again, providing the pros and cons to it. Are Albertans not footing the bill when amendments are made in the future regarding compensation matters? This is something that we believe is prudent, to be able to approach this at this point and provide that option for us to know: what are the future amendments that are going to take place, especially on a \$22 billion file?

5:00

Since we know that most physicians were not involved with this current amending agreement and that their feedback is not being taken into consideration, it is safe for me to say that this is just another decision this government has made that has the potential to increase spending on health in the province without having to prove that it will also improve patient care and outcomes.

This NDP government has proven to Albertans that they do not consult the public on how to spend their money, and this amendment would give them that recourse. This amendment would make sure that the public, which would include all Albertans and physicians, would be fully aware of any proposed agreement between the minister and the AMA at least three months prior to its amendment. It would allow the public at that time to provide feedback on the impact of those proposed amendments on patient outcomes and the effective use of our public resources. It would also make the public's feedback public, which, obviously, makes sense, seeing as it's public feedback. This is exactly what the government says that they are trying to do with this bill, so I can't see why this amendment would make them nervous in any way. If the AMA is made the sole representative of all physicians, the minister should make physicians' pros or cons public in the future.

I have also asked to have included in the amendment that if the submitter's identity is either not included or is illegible, then the feedback will still be made public in a proper format.

Madam Chair, all we're trying to accomplish here today is what the people of Alberta want, increased transparency and accountability. The reason I feel it is necessary to bring forward these amendments is because the bill does not deal with patient outcomes and the effective use of public resources, which is a concern that I hear on a regular basis. We want Albertans to be aware of any future agreements after 2020 so that they have a place where they can respond.

Unfortunately, this government's narrow focus on the next election dominates their thinking. A short-term focus is not what Albertans want or need and not what this legislative body should be ramming through. With high-running deficits that have ruined the economy, the short-term focus neglects very real fiscal challenges. In Alberta those challenges are massive, and the NDP government is not ready for them.

In a CBC article from March of this year entitled *We Need to Have a Difficult Conversation about Alberta's Health-care Costs*, it discusses how spending has been soaring, particularly for our oldest patients. The article goes on to say that "if you talk with enough health-care thinkers about why Alberta has historically spent so much on health, you'll hear the same answer: We could afford it!" Madam Chair, the problem is that Alberta is not doing as well as we used to. The policies the NDP have implemented negatively impacted energy investment in Alberta, and if you read the article, the plummeting oil prices have been the cause of Alberta's future demise.

This is why making the public's feedback about the impacts of proposed amendments on patient outcomes and the effective use of public resources public is so very important. Albertans deserve to know how their money is being spent and be able to express their experiences on whether they feel they're getting their money's worth. You'd think that this would be accepted by the NDP because it's very voter facing.

Now, I ask all members of the House to vote in favour of our amendment to Bill 24 in an effort to show an act of solidarity and transparency and accountability, which this side of the House is very much in favour of.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Chair and to the member for an amendment which gives us an opportunity to both reply to the amendment and, I think in response to the amendment, to some of the questions that were also raised during second reading that I know hon. members want an answer to that directly relates.

I just want to back up. The member talks about how this came as a surprise and out of nowhere, and I actually just want to go through some of the facts and the timeline, back to the 2011 negotiation. In 2011 – as you'll recall, it was before this government was in place – there had been a Conservative government at that time for many decades. In the 2011 AMA agreement the government of Alberta committed to work towards giving the AMA general recognition with an opportunity through an appropriate legal framework if the AMA provided a written request. This was section 2(b) of the 2011 agreement. The 2011 agreement has been in place for a long time. It was negotiated under a Conservative government, implemented under a Conservative government. They actually renegotiated multiple times even after that, but 2011 was the first time they said that they would recognize it within an appropriate legal framework if the AMA provided a written request. Again, section 2(b):

Upon the written request of AMA, [Alberta Health] will work towards entrenching a general recognition of AMA within an appropriate legislative framework.

That was what was agreed to in 2011.

We have records from at least as far back as 2013, from December 2013 I have for sure, where there was a written request from the AMA. Again, that was an agreement negotiated by a Conservative government, and the request came to a Conservative government in 2013, and then it was in 2015, when we formed government, that we had an amending agreement and now a final, ratified agreement yet again. This isn't something that came out of nowhere. I want to start with that.

Secondly, there are many, many, many AMA letters to members and to all physicians across Alberta talking about the negotiation processes and some of the things that were unfolding in that discussion. These were sent to physicians in Alberta. Certainly, I understand that not everyone has time to read every piece of correspondence that comes to them, but this is from the AMA to all of the physicians of Alberta, and there are many records of discussions around negotiations and what some of the items were that had been agreed to or were being considered. The AMA, like all staff group organizations, wants to ensure that their members are informed of what they have an opportunity to vote on. There are many of those documents. We get the President's Letter sent to our constituency offices as well, and there's regular correspondence between staff associations and MLAs.

Physicians definitely had an opportunity to review the agreement and vote against it if they did have concerns. The AMA provided those regular updates and detailed themes of the negotiations and president's messages. I just want to reinforce that this is something that was in the works since 2011. What is new is that we said that we would do it when we sat down in the last round of negotiations, not just that if they sent a written request, we would do it, but we agreed that we would table it this session.

I understand, you know, once burned, twice shy. They asked for it in 2011. They said that it was going to happen. They wrote a letter saying: we'd like it to happen. It didn't happen. But we said that we were going to do it, and this NDP government had a consultation in good faith and said that we would follow through on the commitment, that was made under a previous Conservative government, that wasn't implemented. I just want to make sure that everyone is aware of that piece of the timeline.

The other piece in regard to the amendment that I want to mention is that no other staff group negotiation – I know we have at least one former Conservative Minister of Labour. Certainly, no negotiations with staff groups would have been publicly posted three months ahead of time for any of those staff groups for members of the public to engage through the negotiation process. There is a role for the employer, and there is a role for the payee, or the employees, and physicians definitely are in receipt of payments from the government of Alberta, and the government of Alberta has to act in the role of an employer when they're entering those discussions.

I just want to clarify that this is about representation rights. This isn't officially a negotiation. This is about sitting down in good faith and working through challenges and coming up with solutions. I think we have a very good track record of doing that. Both the amending agreement and the new, ratified agreement of this last year I think show that when we sit down at the table and we work through the challenges, we can come up with good outcomes that lead to better outcomes for Alberta patients, more funds being returned back to the pot to be able to provide additional front-line services, and I think we've done that in a way respecting the employment arrangement that is in place with physicians here in Alberta.

5:10

It's my opinion that we should be voting down the amendment. I think it would compromise potential negotiations in the future. It would definitely impact the relationship, and it doesn't reflect what was actually reached through discussions with the AMA. Tentative agreements are shared with all members for a significant amount of time before being ratified, and I think that that is something that was available for members to choose to read or not read, but this is something where I stand by the process that we put in place.

I think what is evident is that, yes, not everyone voted, but even in our democratic elections not everyone votes, yet we respect the opinion that is rendered on decision day. That is indeed what happened here. An overwhelming majority of those who voted yes, that they wanted to move forward with ratifying this agreement, and this is one piece of ratifying that agreement. That's why I'm recommending to all colleagues that we vote against the amendment as proposed.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Madam Chair. It is an honour to rise in the House today to speak to the amendment presented by my good friend and colleague the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner. This amendment will bring patient care and patient outcomes to the forefront of Bill 24. It will ensure that the bill is focused on the patient, holding the AMA and government accountable for how money is being spent.

Physician compensation is expected to take up \$5.1 billion of the \$22 billion health care budget. Nearly a quarter of our health care budget is spent on physicians, and this bill does not have any transparency or accountability for this money and how it is being spent. In order to make this bill stronger, we must ensure that transparency and accountability are adopted. This amendment can do this by making sure that the public is aware of compensation arrangements between the government and the Alberta Medical Association and by ensuring that all changes to an agreement are made public three months prior to any amendments.

The amendment will also provide an avenue for the public to weigh in on the changes made to the AMA agreement. Physicians and all Albertans will have the opportunity to raise their concerns about how the changes could affect the outcomes for patients.

Madam Chair, Bill 24 is not as strong as it needs to be, and that is why I stand in support of this amendment. This bill does not include any form of transparency or accountability, which seems like a potential oversight by the government but one we're used to from this government. It also fails to address the quality of care that patients are receiving as well as their health outcomes, and that is one key part that we are missing in our health care system, accountability to the patient. By creating a method for the public to actually engage in the amending process, we create greater transparency in our health care system. All agreements made must put the patient first.

Alberta's patients should be in the centre of any legislation that looks to make changes to health care. This bill does not anywhere address the patient. It does not talk about holding physicians accountable for the treatment that they give their patients. We all want to see a health care system that is efficient in delivering high-quality care. We all want a system that does not leave people waiting for surgery for over a year. We all want a health care system that is solely focused on achieving the best possible outcomes. In saying this, I feel it is important that physicians have the right to share their recommendations and concerns with the government. The proposed amendment will allow physicians to voice their concerns with any changes made.

You know, we have been reaching out to physicians across this province, and I certainly have done that. A lot of physicians, due to our single system, are already under the AMA and are accepting of everything that they have provided thus far, but there are other physicians, particularly specialists, who don't feel that the AMA represents them well. You know what? You can use that comparison in any group setting, for any group that has a membership to something. There are always going to be factions, groups within that that may not agree entirely, that may not be entirely feeling represented. Those are some of the key points that we're seeing in this, that there are groups within the AMA that aren't in agreement with some of their decision-making.

This amendment will make sure that physicians can continue to make their voices heard without any repercussions. The lack of consultation has resulted in a lack of understanding about the possible implications of this bill or about how the majority of physicians feel about this particular piece of legislation. We have seen time and time again that this government does not do adequate consultations. For three and a half years we have tried to teach you how to consult.

Certainly, you embraced it with the time zone changes that you wanted to do, the daylight saving time, and we thought then and there: they finally understand consultation; they finally understand that they have to speak to people other than their own membership to get some answers. It's unfortunate that again I have to stand here and remind the government side about what consultation is. In this situation you truly didn't consult a lot of the physicians. You were relying on the very association that you're empowering to relay the message to the physicians that are their members, and the members are saying that they weren't even aware of this. This government did not provide any oversight to ensure that the membership that they're going to legislate to their association – that's disappointing. Anyways, this amendment will stop this from happening in the future. The government already knows what the concerns are and could act on them accordingly.

Nevertheless, we need to bring this back to the patients. The government could have used this bill to create accountability within

the Alberta Medical Association to improve patient outcomes. The goal of this bill could have tied compensation to those outcomes, which has been discussed many times, but instead you're just using this to formalize a process. In Bill 24 not once are patients mentioned at a time when this government should be advocating for patients. This government is supposed to be the protector of our health care system and needs to do everything it can to get the best deal for Albertans, yet we've seen wait times for hip, knee, and cataract surgeries rapidly rise under this government's mismanagement.

You chose to spend money on building laundry services for some of your health regions when they could have simply contracted that out. You chose to try and build a structure for your lab, and your people can't even do the basic accounting and project management on it, to the point where it's costing you double, \$600 million. It doesn't even faze you over there. It's a shame.

I mean, have you told the doctors what you did with the pharmacists, that when you were negotiating with them, you only allowed two in the room and made them sign a nondisclosure agreement? Are the physicians aware of what you did with the pharmacists, that you sent them on their way unable to even tell their own pharmacists what they had signed? That certainly is the interpretation from the pharmacists. I'd love to get clarity on that. Have you told the physicians what you've done? Are you going to lock them in a room, too? Probably.

Anyways, the trend is very concerning, and we need to address this growing crisis at hand: again, mismanagement in our health care system; spending has increased while outcomes decrease.

This bill completely ignores the patients' best interests in order to appease the negotiating body. Don't get me wrong; I respect what the AMA tries to do in some regards. We know that the collective voice tends to be stronger than an individual's, and that's why this amendment is so important. This amendment states:

The Minister shall make available to the public any proposed amendments to the AMA Agreement respecting compensation matters at least 3 months prior to amending the AMA Agreement to allow the public to provide feedback on the impact of the proposed amendments on patient outcomes and the effective use of public resources.

If you do not believe that the money we relay to physicians affects the treatment and care, I challenge you on the pharmacists. The pharmacists have been attacked provincially and federally on their fees, to the point where it is actually economically unfeasible for them to even provide the influenza vaccinations. Does that worry you at all, that people are going to get reduced access to flu vaccination simply because pharmacists aren't being compensated enough?

5:20

Can you imagine the efficiencies we'd find with help from professionals who are on the front line? Can you imagine the innovative, cost-saving, efficient way of driving ideas that would come this way when we incorporate everyone in the process? This government didn't go out into Alberta's many communities and consult with physicians on this bill. You did not give our many health professionals the opportunity to weigh in on this.

I cannot see a reason why this amendment would not be supportable. The government goes on about how they've expanded transparency. I would challenge that you even know the definition of transparency and accountability. I know that those are big words.

Now, the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner hit the nail on the head with this amendment. If the government will not give us more time to study this bill, then we will propose an amendment that will allow for continuous consultation going forward. Will the government

have to listen to the recommendations brought forward from the public? No, but they will all be on record. If 200 physicians write to the government to raise a concern and the government chooses to ignore them, that failure is on them.

I cannot express how important this amendment is. It is a way to fight for better quality services with the most cost-effective investments available. I'd like to thank all the members for listening to me speak about this very important amendment, and I hope they rise in support of this crucial change to Bill 24.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Mr. Dreesen: Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, I would like to compliment my colleague from Cardston-Taber-Warner for introducing this amendment. I believe it's a very important amendment that's brought forward today. I think that the most important aspect of the amendment is that any compensation agreements should be disclosed publicly for the benefit of the taxpayer. I think that's a fundamental, paramount, important thing for all Albertans to hear, that we're actually having these discussions, that there are voices fighting for them and defending that critical, important issue. I hope that the members opposite actually support this amendment going forward when we vote on it.

The biggest issue, I think, to be coming from this is a matter of confidence. When you look at this government, whether it was the carbon tax that they brought in after a campaign went by in its entirety and they never even mentioned it or Bill 6, that, again, saw massive protests outside this building by farmers coming up and saying that they had never been consulted, the need for transparency on consultation is important. I think that for any government it's important but also for this NDP government, with two glaring issues that have happened in the past where better consultation would have made a way better outcome for Albertans. I urge the members opposite to consider this, that we need to strengthen consultation and to make public at least three months prior to amending an AMA agreement – the public feedback is a very simplistic but important amendment to Bill 24.

Broader issues from Bill 24. As mentioned earlier, I think that freedom is a very important aspect. Whether it's freedom of association of doctors and physicians being able to have a choice of whether to have the AMA representing them or not, I think it should remain a voluntary decision for these doctors and physicians. I wish that that was in Bill 24, but unfortunately it is not.

With a parallel to Bill 6, you had mandatory WCB coverage, that this NDP government thought was important. Again, rather than the voluntary nature of lots of farmers being able to have the private insurance that they chose, they're actually being forced to have WCB coverage, to which lots of farmers would say: okay; well, I'll just have two sets of insurance because I would prefer my private insurance, which has better rates for the workers. Again, it's this mandating nature of the NDP to have mandatory WCB coverage or mandatory AMA representation that I think does a disservice to Albertans.

I encourage again the members opposite to consider this amendment. There was a tremendous amount of work put into it by my good colleague down the way, and I hope that they can actually approve this amendment.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Are there any other speakers to the amendment? Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to the amendment that's being presented today by the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner. This amendment, I believe, speaks to some of the sensibilities that we need to bring to the negotiating process that's been presented in Bill 24. We know that the main purpose of this bill is to formalize the relationship between the government and the AMA and that this bill ultimately creates a large negotiating body that is going to oversee negotiations between the Alberta government and the doctors, the physicians, of Alberta.

When we take a look at the historic role of the AMA, we can see that it offers and has offered residents, physicians, and medical students a wide variety of services and benefits that can help them with personal, professional, and financial needs. Alberta's physicians have principally been paid in Alberta through a fee-for-service model, in which doctors bill the government a predetermined fee for each service that they perform. The AMA has been the organization that has represented most but not all of the doctors in Alberta when negotiating that fee-for-service model. This amendment speaks to this process. This amendment, I believe, is worthy of support because it's trying to bring some balance to ensure that in something that's as critical as the health care of our province and the services that we provide for our citizens, they will have some capacity to understand and be consulted when these kinds of negotiations are going on.

Madam Chair, we know that this amendment speaks to the concept or the idea that they would like to see a three-month window where consultations could take place that would allow for public feedback on the impact of any proposed amendments or compensation matters within the agreement. This amendment speaks to this concern that the public needs to have some sort of say. It would be at least a three-month window prior to amending the AMA agreement, which would allow for public feedback and would allow for public consultation on the impact of the proposed compensation amendments on patient outcomes. They could have some feedback on how that's going to affect patient outcomes and the effectiveness of the use of the public resources that we have through this agreement.

Madam Chair, we know that every government, including this one, can sometimes struggle with consultation. It can create serious issues for Albertans when we don't consult in an appropriate fashion. I know that we've had this conversation in this House many times over the last three and a half years. I can remember having this same kind of discussion when it came to Bill 6. I was just speaking to a farmer in the last couple of weeks, and we were talking about Bill 6 and the imposition of OH and S and workers' compensation on the farmers of Alberta. He was still not happy with the consultative process that went through and believed that these were just imposed on him as a farmer. His words were that he'll never be able to hire another worker again simply because there wasn't a proper consultative process that actually listened to the farmers in the process.

I would encourage this government to consider this amendment, which would bring in a three-month period of consultation. I know that I've had many conversations. We in this House have all gone through the Electoral Boundaries Commission, and we realize that in the next set of elections there will be new boundaries. Should I be successful in my campaign to once again represent Drayton Valley-Devon, my boundaries will be changed to include portions of the county of Parkland.

5:30

I have sat down already with elements of the county of Parkland, with the mayor, Rod Shaigec, and I have had the opportunity to hear their concerns with regard to the coal phase-out. They were very

concerned with the fact that decisions with regard to the coal phase-out were made without any consultation with the county of Parkland, one of those counties that is going to be primarily hit by those decisions, when they have Sundance, Keephills, and Genesee, all of these power plants in my constituency. I was able in my conversations with them to find out that it's the county of Parkland that will have a 25 to 30 per cent reduction in their tax base, hundreds of workers that will be without jobs.

They were talking about the problems that have been created because of a lack of volunteer firefighters now because they no longer have, well, the good-paying jobs that have been there through the coal. Now they're going to have to start hiring a professional firefighting force, all because there was a lack of appropriate consultation.

I would encourage this government to support this amendment because it will allow for some consultation and for the patients to be able to get involved in this process and be able to look at whether or not this is going to be a positive impact for the citizens of Alberta. Madam Speaker, "the Minister shall make available to the public any [changes] respecting compensation matters at least 3 months prior to amending." This will allow the public to consider any new compensation arrangements and to provide feedback on the impact these compensation arrangements will have on patient outcomes. Now, this amendment will allow Albertans to reflect on how addressing physician compensation will not only impact the proposed amendments but also whether it's an effective and efficient use of public resources.

Madam Speaker, we know that – I keep saying Speaker; I'm sorry, Madam Chair – we're going to be going into an election where there's going to be a \$50 billion debt. This government, in my opinion, has made some very poor choices and decisions that have placed us in this position. We're going to have a debt-servicing cost of around \$3 billion a year. The resources that we have as a province are going to have to be managed in a very, very careful and efficient way. This amendment speaks to this capacity to allow Albertans to be able to ensure that the resources that are going to be used in the Alberta government, in health care – if it's going to allow this to be done more efficiently and to be able to have the feedback to ensure that we have efficient use of these resources, then this is a good thing. This is a positive thing that we need to be able to consider doing.

The decisions made by government do affect the citizens of this province. None are more important than the decisions that can and will affect the health of our citizens. It's a reasonable position, I believe, Madam Chair, to have the minister "make available to the public any proposed amendments to the AMA Agreement respecting compensation matters" so that Albertans can have the opportunity, can provide the feedback that they need in an era when the fiscal realities of this province are going to be stretched to the limit.

I would ask that this House carefully consider this amendment, that they realize on both sides of the House that we are going to have an opportunity here with this amendment to make this piece of legislation better.

With those comments, Madam Chair, I would thank you for your time.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Chair. As always, it's an honour to rise, and it's really a huge honour to rise on this particular amendment. We're always talking about transparency. It's probably one of the most used words in this Legislature on both sides of the House.

One of the things that I wanted to share was that this summer my uncle, who was a very, very dear man to us – he actually passed away this summer – had a fast-growing glioblastoma, and it was some of the best care I've ever seen in my life. He had actually gotten hurt and as a result went into the hospital, and as a result of the injury was diagnosed with the glioblastoma. We had just some of the best people with us at that time: the neurosurgeons, the neurologists, all of the people that were there, the nurses, the doctors, the whole thing. It was just such a privilege to see the level of care when he came in, especially in emergency. He was a lovely, lovely human being. I mean, they loved him on the floor. The cancer was growing very, very rapidly, so he had bits and pieces that he was able to retain, and then other days he was fully aware.

You see that level of quality care, especially in emergency, and if any of you have ever had an experience in emergency, especially when you're coming in on an ambulance or anything like that, it's pretty incredible in this province. It's pretty incredible once you're triaged and put through, the level of care that we receive here.

These discussions around this particular thing and why it's so important to me in particular is that when my uncle was going through this, that quality of care and the commitment to the people that were in there, that was like an actual phenomenon. These people don't even have to think about this; this is their job. These are incredible people. These are people that we should be uplifting and honouring for who they are. When you look at the membership of doctors – I mean, this is just for doctors in particular, but I'm sure that there will be other situations where other groups will be getting involved. But if you look at how we honour the people that take care of our loved ones, especially when they have limited days left on Earth and you know that, we want to make sure that when we're passing legislation of this magnitude, that 30 per cent isn't our number.

I guess the question, Madam Chair, that I have is: when we're thinking about this group of people, what was the process that they went through in order to make sure that they had access to be able to answer the questions on the survey? I'm not quite sure how the government got to the point of having, well, I guess it's 29.4 per cent, whatever the number is, of the membership to vote on becoming a part of this association. The reason I ask is, again, because all of us have been impacted. All of us have been there. All of us have had those doctors standing across from us giving worst-case scenarios in the kindest voices.

Four and a half years ago a very good friend of mine passed away from pancreatic cancer at the Tom Baker centre. Again, those doctors that were with us in the ICU were some of the strongest, most incredible people I've ever met, and they stood with him. We didn't realize we'd only have him for another hour or two. Like, we didn't know if he had days or what. Because of his brain power, he was totally lucid right up until he passed away. He was still giving out codes to his wife and the passwords for the computer and the bank statements and all that kind of stuff. Again, the incredible doctors that were there, that were taking us through this process, they were incredible people.

I don't think that we can take lightly the level of intervention of an association like this and feel safe to be able to pass legislation with only a small percentage of them buying into that legislation. That's why we've tried to refer it. That's why the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner is asking for time to be able to share information, which is, by rights for all Albertans, exactly what I'm assuming health care is all about, to be able to transparently share that information. But when you look at the numbers, I think the government would have a difficult time explaining this to the average Albertan as well.

Like I said, once we got the bill, I actually sent it out to all of the various mediclinics and doctors in our area. We have amazing doctors

out in Chestermere, Rocky View, Langdon, and Strathmore. And, like I said, I only received a few responses back, but the responses that I got back were that they didn't know about it. That's concerning, don't you think? That's concerning from the perspective of the fact that we have this honourable and incredible group of people that we hold at this high level to be transparent, yet they're not equally represented.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Seeing none, I will call the vote.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:40 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hunter	Smith
Drysdale	McIver	Stier

Against the motion:

Babcock	Gray	Miller
Bilous	Hinkley	Nielsen
Carson	Hoffman	Payne
Connolly	Kazim	Renaud
Coolahan	Kleinstauber	Rosendahl
Cortes-Vargas	Larivee	Sabir
Dach	Littlewood	Shepherd
Dang	Loyola	Sucha
Drever	Malkinson	Turner
Eggen	McCuaig-Boyd	Westhead
Fitzpatrick	McKitrick	Woollard
Ganley		

Totals:	For – 6	Against – 34
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[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

The Chair: The committee will now rise and report progress.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Mr. Hinkley: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 25. The committee reports progress on a bill: Bill 24. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Seeing the very late hour, I move that we call it 6 o'clock and adjourn until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon. Happy RMA to everyone.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:58 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, November 22, 2018

Day 52

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (NDP), Speaker
Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (NDP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (UCP),
Deputy Leader of the Official Opposition
Anderson, Hon. Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (NDP)
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (UCP)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (NDP)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (NDP)
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (NDP)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (NDP)
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP),
Alberta Party Opposition House Leader
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Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (NDP)
Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP)
Cortes-Vargas, Estefania, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (NDP),
Government Whip
Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (UCP)
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (NDP)
Dreesen, Devin, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UCP)
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (NDP)
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)
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Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP)
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Deputy Government House Leader
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Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (NDP)
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (AP)
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (NDP),
Deputy Government House Leader
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Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)
Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Conklin (UCP)
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)
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Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)
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Official Opposition Deputy Whip
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Kazim, Anam, Calgary-Glenmore (NDP)
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Deputy Government House Leader

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Malkinson, Hon. Brian, Calgary-Currie (NDP)
Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),
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McIver, Ric, Calgary-Hays (UCP),
Official Opposition Whip
McKittrick, Annie, Sherwood Park (NDP)
McLean, Stephanie V., Calgary-Varsity (NDP)
McPherson, Karen M., Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill (AP)
Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (NDP)
Miranda, Hon. Ricardo, Calgary-Cross (NDP)
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)
Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (UCP),
Official Opposition House Leader
Notley, Hon. Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),
Premier
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (UCP)
Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (UCP)
Payne, Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (NDP)
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (NDP)
Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (NDP)
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (UCP),
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)
Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (NDP)
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP)
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)
Schneider, David A., Little Bow (UCP)
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (NDP)
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (NDP)
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (NDP)
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (UCP)
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (UCP)
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (NDP),
Deputy Government Whip
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)

Party standings:

New Democratic: 53 United Conservative: 26 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Freedom Conservative: 1 Independent: 2 Progressive Conservative: 1

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Shannon Dean, Law Clerk and Executive
Director of House Services, and Acting
Clerk, Procedure
Stephanie LeBlanc, Senior Parliamentary
Counsel
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel

Philip Massolin, Manager of Research and
Committee Services
Nancy Robert, Research Officer
Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of
Alberta Hansard

Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms
Chris Caughell, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms
Tom Bell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

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Rachel Notley	Premier, President of Executive Council
Sarah Hoffman	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health
Shaye Anderson	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Sandra Jansen	Minister of Infrastructure
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Children's Services and Status of Women
Brian Malkinson	Minister of Service Alberta
Brian Mason	Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Community and Social Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

Parliamentary Secretaries

Jessica Littlewood	Economic Development and Trade for Small Business
Annie McKittrick	Education

STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

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Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	Luff
Dang	McPherson
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

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Deputy Chair: Mr. van Dijken

Carson	Littlewood
Connolly	McPherson
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schneider
Fitzpatrick	Starke
Gotfried	Taylor
Horne	

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

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Fraser	Shepherd
Hinkley	Swann
Luff	Woollard
McKitrick	Yao
Miller	

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Shepherd
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Aheer	McKitrick
Gill	Pitt
Horne	van Dijken
Kleinsteinuber	Woollard
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Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

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Cooper	Piquette
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Anderson, W.	Orr
Babcock	Rosendahl
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Drysdale	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
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Coolahan	Miller
Cooper	Nielsen
Goehring	Nixon
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Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Dach

Barnes	Malkinson
Carson	Miller
Clark	Nielsen
Gotfried	Panda
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Littlewood	Turner
Luff	

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Clark	Malkinson
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Fildebrandt	Panda
Hanson	Rosendahl
Kazim	Schreiner
Kleinsteinuber	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, November 22, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Hon. members, as our friends and neighbours south of our border take a pause for Thanksgiving, let us reflect on the close relationship that our two nations sustain with each other. Let us not forget that reaching out to work in partnership with others only serves to make all of us better.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you 17 students from Oliver school. They're accompanied today by their teacher, Mrs. Jennifer Severson. I offer them my sincere apologies for missing the opportunity to take a photo with them earlier, but I'm very happy to have them here at the Legislature. I ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the rest of the members of the Assembly the Wildwood K to 9 school from Wildwood, Alberta. Wildwood is located 115 kilometres west of Edmonton, and the community is a 110-year-old Albertan farming community, originally established by black Canadian farmers. The school now has a total of 105 students and advertises itself as a small school with big ideas. They are accompanied by teacher Mrs. Gayle Kowalchuk and chaperone Mr. Curtis Schendel. I'd like everyone here today to extend to these students and staff the warm welcome of the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly students from Harvest Baptist academy. The students are accompanied by their principal, Mr. Michael Reilly, as well as Ms Gail Schedlosky, one of their TAs. I would ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other school groups here today?

Seeing and hearing none, the hon. Member for Peace River.

Ms Jabbour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce on your behalf some very special guests this afternoon, Jessica Dion and Deacon and Robert Barclay. Jessica will be a familiar face to many as she has worked in the LAO since the spring of 2014, first as a paralegal and administrative specialist with Parliamentary Counsel and since May of 2016 as executive assistant to the Clerk. Jessica's tireless work ethic and unwavering positivity have made her an esteemed teammate in the organization. I especially appreciated her help to me personally when I recently hosted the Canadian Women Parliamentarians. For many years Jessica has

also been a key and dedicated volunteer at the Edmonton Folk Music Festival and looks forward to it every year.

With Jessica is her nephew Deacon Barclay, who is 12 years old and in grade 7 at William E. Hay secondary campus in Stettler. Deacon is also looking forward to joining his aunt and kookum in volunteering at the Edmonton Folk Fest. The family is very proud of his eagerness to contribute to the community. Deacon's father, Jessica's brother Robert Barclay, is also with us. He has been with Finning for 18 years, currently as a heavy equipment technician. Jessica continues to be inspired and motivated by her brother's courage in fighting adversity. Jessica, Deacon, and Robert are in the Speaker's gallery. They are standing, so please give them the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: May I also echo the welcome.

The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am so pleased today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly several fantastic councillors from the beautiful Rocky View county. I would ask that they rise as I say their names: Councillor Kim McKylor, division 2; Deputy Reeve Al Schule, division 4; Reeve Greg Boehlke, division 6, and his beautiful wife, Lynne Boehlke; and Councillor Daniel Henn, division 7. I'm so proud to work with these fantastic, hard-working folks who make life better for Albertans. Please give them the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you four guests from Calgary and one all the way from Chile. Olga Barceló and Henry Wearmouth are students at Mount Royal University. They're involved in the MRU New Democrats Club and the New Democratic Youth of Alberta, and they are both also student interns for Advanced Education and Education. Olga's cousin Gonzalo Barceló is visiting from Chile to learn English. He's a lawyer and has been involved in different student movements in Chile in recent years. I'd also like to recognize Olga's mother, also named Olga, and father, Claudio Barceló, who arrived in Canada over 40 years ago. Olga was a United Nations sponsored refugee, and now they own and operate a business at the Calgary airport. And they are all very much NDP supporters. I would like to thank my guests for joining us here today, and I'd like to ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm excited to rise – Happy Grey Cup, everyone – to introduce several guests who are here to witness the Calgary Stampeders win the big game on Sunday. I'd ask that they please rise as I say their name. Jaclyn O'Shaughnessy is from Ottawa, Ontario. Joshua Smith is a podcast host from Hamilton, Ontario. I have Ryan Rollier from Calgary, and Jessica Strickland, Jen Hill, Dave Hill, Deb Strickland, and Vince Rulé, who are all from Calgary. To note as well, last Grey Cup Deb and Vince got engaged. Vince is a Redblacks fan, and Deb is a Stamps fan, so hopefully that engagement lasts after Sunday. I'd ask that the House give them a warm welcome. Go, Stamps, go.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I hope you noticed that there was actually a green sweater up there as well.

The hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly 10 communications and public engagement interns seated in the members' gallery. They are Shawna King, Afton Doe, Luis Flores, Deanna Miyauchi, Samson Swan, Kristina Stocks, Kandice Kew, Rebecca Isbister, Meagan Houle, and Marina Bryan. These are talented individuals who have come from a variety of backgrounds. They started with the Alberta public service in July and are gaining practical hands-on experience in their chosen field of communications. I ask that they please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today is National Housing Day, a day that shines a light on the importance of safe, affordable housing and the great people and organizations that work tirelessly to provide the right housing at the right time with the right supports. On behalf of my colleague the Minister of Seniors and Housing I'm honoured to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Legislature leaders in the housing community. Please stand as I read your name: Mark Hoosein, chief operating officer, Capital Region Housing; Raymond Swonek, chief executive officer, Greater Edmonton Foundation Seniors Housing; Irene Martin-Lindsay, executive director, Alberta Seniors Communities and Housing Association; Nancy Laing, executive director, Leduc Regional Housing Foundation; Anne Stevenson, president, Right at Home Housing Society; and Kevin Capowski, executive director, CMHC, Heartland Housing Foundation. They have already risen, so I ask my colleagues to give them a warm welcome.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Are there any other introductions, hon. members? The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

1:40

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If you would indulge me, I have two introductions. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the rest of the members of the Assembly the Whitecourt Classical Conversations group from Whitecourt, Alberta. They are a home-school group with a classical education focus that meet once a week. Their group of eight- to 16-year-olds have been learning about the Alberta political system and how it functions. I would like everyone here today to extend these students and their families the warm welcome of the Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Mr. Carlier: Mr. Speaker, for my second introduction I'd like to introduce an incredible young man. Evan Jamieson has recently been selected as the youth representative for 4-H in Alberta. This summer Evan was a recipient of the 4-H Alberta Premier's award. This means that he will now spend the next year attending events across the country attesting to how amazing 4-H is. He has a passion for livestock judging and volunteers at many of the summer camps offered by 4-H. He now attends the University of Calgary, where he is studying marketing. Evan is here with his parents, Neil and Laurie, and his siblings Logan and Jordynn. I would now ask my guests to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

National Housing Day

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize National Housing Day, a time to reflect on the challenges too many Canadians face in finding a safe and affordable place to live. Today is an opportunity to recognize how essential housing is. Having a place to call home is the foundation for a brighter future. All Albertans should have a safe, permanent, and affordable place to call home regardless of their income.

I am proud to be part of a government that recognizes this and which is working to provide people across the province with quality, affordable housing. This government has taken action by investing \$1.2 billion in housing. While the members across the aisle are proposing massive tax cuts for the wealthy, this government is building and renewing over 4,100 new affordable housing units.

This government also created Alberta's first provincial affordable housing strategy. The strategy goes beyond the bricks and mortar of housing. It prioritizes people. It ensures that affordable housing focuses on their well-being, providing them with the tools that they need to succeed. I am proud to be part of a government that is committed to putting people first and helping families.

Mr. Speaker, today is an occasion to raise awareness of the importance of housing, to recognize all the work that is under way in Alberta and all the work that still needs to be done. I am proud to say that this government is declaring today National Housing Day in Alberta. This declaration reflects our government's commitment to Albertans' housing needs. I know this government will keep working with housing providers and Albertans to make sure everybody has a safe and affordable place to call home.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Holodomor Memorial Day

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This Saturday Canadians will remember one of the greatest crimes of the 20th century, the deliberate starvation of millions of Ukrainian men, women, and children in the famine and genocide of 1932-33. Those deaths resulted from the murderous policies of Joseph Stalin's Communist regime, which sought to crush Ukrainian resistance to collectivization by confiscating food and sealing off targeted regions. It remains one of the worst crimes against humanity ever perpetrated.

A decade ago our leader played a role in Canada becoming one of the first nations in the world to recognize the Ukrainian famine of 1932-33 as an act of genocide. Parliament unanimously passed a bill establishing the fourth Saturday in November as Ukrainian Famine and Genocide Memorial Day, or Holodomor, and he announced the government of Canada's official recognition of the genocidal nature of the Holodomor in the presence of then Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko during the 75th anniversary commemorations of the Holodomor on Parliament Hill.

Memory of the Holodomor was officially repressed by the Soviet Union, as it is to this day in the Russian Federation. Many in the western media knowingly co-operated in the shameful – shameful – cover-up of this crime. We should never forget how truth was sacrificed for political reasons in this campaign of lies. That is in part why Holodomor commemoration and education is so

important. We must recover the memory of this unspeakable crime and prayerfully remember the millions of victims. For them, let us recall the words of the Byzantine liturgy for the dead. [Remarks in Ukrainian] Memory eternal.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

School Playgrounds

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Play is key to the physical, mental, intellectual, and social well-being of children, but right now in Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill there are almost 2,000 students that are attending schools without playgrounds. The parent associations at Kenneth D. Taylor, Our Lady of Grace, St. Hubert, and St. Bede schools have been doing a phenomenal job of raising money and planning new playgrounds for the schools their children attend. Kenneth D. Taylor and Our Lady of Grace are new schools, and the students there have never had a playground. While we've all heard that this is because the previous government denied playground funding to schools, that doesn't make any difference to kids missing out on the chance to improve their gross motor skills and their mental health at recess.

St. Hubert had their playground torn down two years ago because the structures were deemed unsafe, and St. Bede lost theirs for the same reason last summer. The St. Hubert Parent Council has been working tirelessly to raise money and are now about \$8,000 away from their very modest \$90,000 goal while St. Bede's parent council has already raised \$30,000. I can only imagine how much fitter the Grit Fit kids at Our Lady of Grace will be when they can incorporate playground equipment into their program.

A good playground costs about \$250,000, and this is an excellent investment in our future. Young people who are physically active can learn better and can manage their emotions better. They form stronger bonds with their peers and benefit from stronger social ties. B.C. recently took over funding of playgrounds from parents, recognizing that some communities have an advantage over others when it comes to fundraising. The money there is divided between new, accessible playgrounds and old structures that pose a risk. Kenneth D. Taylor school is holding a Christmas craft fair on Saturday. It's in Evanston, and it's to raise money for the playground, and I encourage everybody in Calgary to support their efforts. All students in Alberta should have access to playground equipment while they're at school.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Opioid Use

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thirty-four overdoses, three dead, and all in the first three weeks of November, all on the Blood reserve. Children are losing their parents, friends are losing friends, and the community is overwhelmed. The opioid epidemic is pushing the Blood tribe, EMS, police, and the administration to the breaking point. But, sadly, they're not alone. There are no typical opioid addicts. On average, more than one Albertan dies every day from an overdose. It is a crisis, and it is about time that we started treating it like the emergency that it is.

Declaring a province-wide public health emergency seems to be an obvious step, and I call again on the Minister of Health to do so immediately, to help the people on the Blood reserve and all over Alberta. A public health emergency is far more than just symbolic. It would give the government and front-line personnel in health care and elsewhere new tools, and it also likely results in federal

funding, like B.C. found when they declared their public health emergency.

I'm glad to see that the supervised consumption sites have started operating around the province, and I encourage the provincial government to continue to roll these out. But I have to note that the UCP, and in particular their leader, has strongly opposed these even in the face of overwhelming evidence that they work. Earlier this year the Leader of the Opposition said, quote: helping addicts to inject poison into their bodies is not a solution to the problem of addiction. That is shocking, regressive, outdated, and damaging. As one person said on social media: if we applied this twisted logic to driving, we'd take seat belts and airbags out of cars because people would be driving too fast.

Finally, we need to recognize that not all addicts are street involved. Addiction treatment must be available through our family doctors and emergency rooms, and we need to expand treatment facilities throughout the province. We also need to expand opioid replacement therapy. This crisis is not going away fast enough. Albertans are dying, and we need action today.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek.

Guru Nanak

Ms Woollard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the privilege today to speak about Guru Nanak, the first Sikh guru, or teacher. His teachings laid the foundation upon which the Sikh religion was formed. Guru Nanak travelled across South Asia and the Middle East to spread his teachings, advocating the existence of one God and teaching his followers that every human being can reach out to God through meditation and other pious practices. The Sikh faith emphasizes the importance of leading a spiritual life by serving others and leading an honest life. Some of the key practices of Sikhism are meditation and the recitation of Gurbani, the hymns composed by the gurus. The religion advocates overall justice and equality, and it urges its followers to serve mankind.

1:50

Guru Nanak's preachings came at a time when there were religious conflicts, but his teachings contributed to peace among the religious groups. He condemned slavery and racial discrimination and advocated justice and gender and social equality. Guru Nanak emphasized the importance of equality of people and contributed greatly to the empowerment of women in India, appealing to his followers to respect women and treat them as their equals. He taught that the Creator is deeply involved in what man is trying to achieve on Earth. He taught his ideals by serving as a living example to others on attaining salvation while focusing on the importance of family and community.

Finally, we have a wonderful memorial to Guru Nanak Dev Ji here in Edmonton at the University of Alberta hospital. On the fourth floor of the Mazankowski Heart Institute is the Guru Nanak Healing Garden, a 4,000-square-foot indoor garden space, a place of sunlight, quiet, and contemplation.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Statement by the Speaker

Accepting a Member's Word

The Speaker: Hon. members, before we start the clock, I'd like to offer a brief clarification. Yesterday several requests for clarifications were made under Standing Order 13(2) with respect to how disagreements as to facts are to be handled, particularly

following my interventions. I want to be clear that it is not unparliamentary to say that a statement made by another member is incorrect, untrue, or false. What is not permitted is a suggestion that a member has intentionally misrepresented the truth or lied. You'll find the reference to this rule in paragraph 494 of *Beauchesne's*, sixth edition. Yesterday, in my desire to encourage members to be mindful of their tone in this place, I may have unintentionally caused confusion to members as to how this rule will be applied. I hope this further clarification resolves any remaining confusion. Like all of you, experience gives wisdom.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Carbon Levy

Mr. Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, this morning the Premier announced that drillers are now exempt from the carbon tax. I guess that's good news. At least the government is finally acknowledging that their carbon tax is damaging and that it is not getting pipelines built. The question then becomes: now that the government has acknowledged that, why are everyday Albertans still paying that carbon tax, why are small-business owners still paying that carbon tax, why are other job creators still paying that carbon tax, why are farmers still paying that carbon tax, why are charities still paying that carbon tax, and why are municipalities still paying that carbon tax? The list goes on and on. Why is that still being put on the people of Alberta when we now know without a doubt that it is a failure?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I understand that the members opposite earlier this week voted to encourage Canada to withdraw from the Paris climate accord, apparently because they don't think that climate change is an issue that we need to take action on. Experts around the world know that pricing carbon is, in fact, the most effective way to bring about a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. In Alberta we have a made-in-Alberta plan. Part of that plan right from day one – the members opposite, I'm sure, are aware of it – focused on protecting trade-exposed industries, and this was part of that.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, that is a ridiculous comment from the Premier. In fact, during that debate this side of the House was clear that we thought that emissions had to be dealt with, but we were clear that her tax that she had brought on the people of Alberta, one, would not be high enough to be able to do that – that's why we don't think you should use a carbon tax – and, two, was just basically a tax grab.

But the point is – and I'll go back to my original question, that the Premier does not seem to want to answer. Now that she has removed the carbon tax from drillers, acknowledging that her tax is not getting social licence and pipelines built, acknowledging that it's damaging, why is she punishing everyday Albertans with her carbon tax? Why does she continue to go down this policy direction and hurt the very people that she represents?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the member opposite knows, when we brought in a plan to price carbon, we did that with a progressive plan that included rebates to ensure that low- and middle-income families were protected as we move forward on this. I appreciate that members opposite disagree with the Nobel prize winning economists who say that, in fact, pricing carbon is the best way to address emissions. Of course, the members opposite have offered up absolutely no plans to address emissions. In fact, this is a matter that Albertans deserve leadership on.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, again the Premier is putting words into our mouths. Nobody said that we disagree with that. Also, let me clear about my earlier comments. I'm not saying that we want a higher carbon tax. My point is that they know their carbon tax can't even reduce emissions.

My question, though, to the Premier, who continues to dodge the question, is: why is she hurting the people she's representing, why is she hurting charities, why is she hurting the most vulnerable, why is she hurting fixed-income seniors, why is she causing trouble for our municipalities, and why does this Premier continue to go down this road when again today she's acknowledged, by removing the carbon tax from drillers, that her policy is a failure, is not getting pipelines built, and is hurting our economy?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Notwithstanding many of the challenges that we know our oil and gas industry is facing right now, the fact of the matter is that since we brought in the climate leadership plan, Alberta has led economic growth in this country, a year ago and this year, so in fact it hasn't had quite the impact that the members opposite suggest. We have put in a rebate system. We have put in grants to assist many of the organizations the member opposite refers to to bring down these emissions. But there is a cost in doing nothing, and the members opposite . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Support for Business

Mr. Barnes: Yesterday the federal Finance minister issued his fall economic update. It left a lot to be desired. While it did include capital cost writedowns, it failed to mention any plan for Alberta: nothing on the differential, nothing to speed up pipeline construction, nothing to make equalization payments fair, nothing to reduce the regulatory burden, and nothing to liberate free enterprise in our province, deep in recession. To the Premier: are you worried that your advocacy has been undermined by the mixed message your environment minister is sending on pipelines?

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much for the question. Mr. Speaker, our advocacy has resulted in the accelerated capital cost allowance being put in place for Alberta's oil and gas industry. Now, they didn't go as far as we wanted, but we have not been shy about speaking up for the needs of this province, including the oil and gas sector, and we'll continue to do that.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, the NDP's managed decline of the Alberta economy has seen business after business flee for Texas. Sadly, this has resulted in well over 180,000 jobs lost, including more today. Sixty billion dollars of investment have already bolted, and more will follow. This has also resulted in Alberta families losing billions of their retirement savings as Alberta companies plummet in value. To the Premier: what are you doing to reduce

regulation, attract investment, and make Alberta the free-enterprise capital that it was for decades?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact, our economy is leading the country. It led the country last year in growth and will lead the country this year in growth. A number of programs our government has brought in: three different tax credit programs, that the business community asked for, in order to level the playing field. We've seen significant investments by a number of companies, including Imperial, that just announced a few weeks ago a \$3.6 billion investment, using technology that Alberta Innovates helped to develop, to reduce their water usage by 25 per cent. There are a host of other companies like Amazon and Google that are investing here in Alberta.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, the NDP's friend and ally Justin Trudeau's fall economic update was bad news for Alberta families and communities, offering only empty words, a ballooning deficit, and doubling down on their commitment to do nothing to get the pipeline built. To the Premier: will you admit that your big-spending ways, failed social licence, our province quickly heading to a hundred billion in debt and billions more in annual interest expense have done nothing but destroy wealth, destroy jobs, and left Alberta families and communities much worse off?

2:00

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding that much of the introduction there is not things that I can agree with, I do think that I can agree with the member opposite today about the level of frustration that all Albertans feel with respect to the fiscal update that we just witnessed. This morning I was in Calgary speaking with oil well drillers, and I understand that there are thousands of people in the streets of Calgary right now expressing their frustration. I have to say that I am with them. I feel their pain, and we agree with them. The differential is hurting Albertans, and it's hurting Canadians. We're working furiously to find solutions.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.
The Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Northern Gateway Pipeline Project Cancellation

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. According to the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers we would not be in today's oil differential situation if the Northern Gateway pipeline had not been cancelled. On June 17, 2013, the environment minister personally appeared at the National Energy Board hearing to argue against the approval of Northern Gateway. I just have a simple question.

Mr. Mason: Point of order.

Mrs. Aheer: To the Premier: after you were sworn in, did your government allow the Trudeau Liberals to cancel Northern Gateway because your environment minister recommended it?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When we first took government, Northern Gateway was already dead because the previous federal government and the previous Conservative government did not do their job. They did not follow the process,

and they did not engage. The Leader of the Official Opposition was at the cabinet table when that process was done, so the question has to be asked to that leader, not to this side of the government. On this side we're standing up for energy, for pipeline access, and all the important jobs that come with it.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP environment minister was photographed attending a June 16, 2013, protest against Northern Gateway. In fact, proud Leapers Naomi Klein and Avi Lewis, cofounders and coauthors of the anti-Alberta, anti oil and gas Leap Manifesto, endorsed this minister, saying, she "is exactly the kind of person anyone [would] want in elected politics." To the minister of environment: do you still think that it was right to cancel a 525,000-barrels-per-day pipeline for Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister of environment has been defending working people in this province for years, and I stand behind her one hundred per cent. Let me say this. If you want to take a trip down memory lane, as recently as this summer the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake bragged about his work to elect the President of the United States. That is the very same President of the United States who is today celebrating Saudi Arabia for driving down the price of oil and encouraging them to do it even more. So my question is: is this the new UCP . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.
Second supplemental.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The environment minister has actively worked against the Northern Gateway pipeline. She appeared at the national board to oppose it with the Alberta Federation of Labour.

Mr. Mason: Point of order.

Mrs. Aheer: This is a group that to this day, Mr. Speaker, continues to oppose Trans Mountain, Energy East, Keystone XL, and several other pipelines. To the minister of environment: will she now acknowledge that it was wrong to attend these protests and to work against Northern Gateway, and moreover will she apologize to Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Leader of the Official Opposition was part of a government that oversaw the failure of Northern Gateway. Here's what the Federal Court of Appeal had to say about the quality of the work by the former Conservative government. This government's mistakes were "immense, massive in size and affecting so many diverse groups and geographic habitats in so many different ways." That is a level of incompetence that is really quite jaw-dropping. In the world of apologies my question is: do they have one to offer?

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Rural High-speed Internet

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We learned at RMA this week that rural municipalities are still being consulted about rural Internet and broadband service in Alberta and that government has not provided a budget or a desperately needed implementation plan.

This is just a discussion without timelines or commitments and with plans based on old assumptions and outdated technology. Why is the government working against the success of its own rural Internet strategy by not investing in high-speed connectivity now?

The Speaker: The Minister of Service Alberta.

Mr. Malkinson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the Ministry of Service Alberta is currently in the process of developing a rural broadband strategy, which will of course be ready early in the new year. I've had several great conversations with many counties during RMA, and they are excited about what we are going to have to offer. I'd just ask members of the Legislature to stay tuned on a rural broadband strategy.

Ms McPherson: The fact is that they promised for this fall.

Yesterday's federal fiscal update didn't include anything for Alberta's energy industry, one of the traditional economic drivers for rural Alberta, so rural municipalities have to innovate and focus on other economic development opportunities, and that takes having all the pieces in place to attract new business. One of the critical elements for attracting new business is high-speed Internet. The provincial government has consulted with rural Alberta about this issue for at least a decade. Why aren't you committed to investing in this critical piece of infrastructure for rural Alberta economic development?

The Speaker: The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I do agree with the member that connectivity and broadband are critically important. We know that. We've been working with municipalities. The Minister of Service Alberta is leading our government of Alberta response. I will tell the hon. member that a number of municipalities have received funding through our CARES programs to be engaging with different opportunities in broadband. There are examples of communities like Olds that have O-Net that have taken matters into their own hands. The municipalities know that they've got an incredible partner in our government and in our Minister of Service Alberta.

Ms McPherson: Clearwater county's resolution at RMA states that "connecting to the [government] of Alberta's fibre optic infrastructure backbone (the SuperNet) is cost-prohibitive to ISPs and municipalities." The CRTC has mandated broadband Internet as an essential service at speeds of up to 50 megabits per second for downloads and 10 megabits per second for uploads with an unlimited data allowance by 2021. Rural Alberta needs Internet speed and accessibility. When can they expect both from the publicly owned SuperNet?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Service Alberta.

Mr. Malkinson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned, we're developing our rural broadband strategy. Also, I met with Clearwater county, you know, and I'm definitely excited about looking at the proposals that they're bringing forward. Our rural broadband strategy will be ready at the beginning of the new year, and of course as part of that we're working to make sure that Alberta's municipalities will have access to improved high-speed Internet access as well as federal funds. Also, a big part of that is making sure that our rural broadband strategy makes sure that our indigenous communities are not phased in last, that they're going to be a part of this new rural broadband strategy as well.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Reynolds-Alberta Museum Expansion Project

Mr. Hinkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Reynolds-Alberta Museum is an award-winning museum celebrating Alberta heritage, based in Wetaskiwin in my constituency. For years we have known that the Reynolds-Alberta Museum needed to expand its facilities for storage, restoration, and display of Alberta agriculture, transportation, and aviation artifacts. Can the Minister of Infrastructure tell us what will be included in the new facility?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. In Budget 2017 we allocated \$35 million over three years for the expansion of the Reynolds-Alberta Museum. We're very excited about this project. There are right now approximately 400 artifacts that are being stored outside. We obviously have to take care of that issue. The new facility is going to be pretty special. It's over 9,000 square metres and will include a museum-quality indoor stage, protection and preservation of historic objects, and safe access to objects for their relocation. It's going to be a great project.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
First supplemental.

Mr. Hinkley: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year in August the Minister of Infrastructure provided an update on the construction schedule of this important facility. Can the minister update the House on what phase of building the facility is in? Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd be happy to provide an update on our work on the Reynolds so far. Two design firms have been selected at this point. One of them is Alberta-based HFKS Architects. The design process is under way right now. Construction is expected to begin in the spring of 2019. The targeted completion date is 2021. It's going to take a little bit of time to do this. We're preparing right now to issue a construction management request for proposals, an RFP, and we'll be posting that RFP in the near future on the Alberta purchasing connection website for anyone who's interested.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

2:10

Mr. Hinkley: Thank you. That's very encouraging. It is great that this expansion project will move ahead through a community benefits agreement as it will consult local, hire local, and have the community as partners every step of the way. Can the minister tell us the status of this community benefits agreement pilot?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, on September 19 our Premier announced a community benefits agreement pilot at the Building Trades convention, and we're pretty excited about this. We have spent some time out in the Wetaskiwin area, met with area leaders and indigenous leaders to talk about what that whole piece looks like. Now, one of the things that we're going to look at out there in that area is the local employment and skills development opportunities. We want to keep as much of that \$35 million in the area as possible. We'll be hosting a job fair. We'll be engaging youth to build leadership capacity. We've got lots of opportunities

out there for that, and we're going to be posting an RFP in the near future.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The Member for Calgary-Greenway.

Energy Policies

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Lately we have learned that some in this Legislature are pushing for the government to impose price and production controls on the energy sector. Price-fixing and production control are anti free enterprise and, quite frankly, anti-Alberta. We need to ensure that free-enterprise principles are upheld and that competition is allowed. Will the Premier side with free enterprise against those who want to establish supply management price-fixing on our energy industry?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, from day one we have fought for what matters in this province, which is our energy industry, the good jobs that it brings, and pipeline access. Right now the price differential that we see is an example of why we need market access, something that previous governments failed to get for us when times were good and they should have been working on it. We're working very hard right now to get that access because we're on the side of Albertans.

Mr. Gill: Given, Mr. Speaker, that as a conservative it is obvious to me that there should be no arbitrary government imposed or requested price- and production-fixing – that would be illegal collusion if voluntary or supply management socialism if required – and given that the Tories have supported both of these positions on different days this week alone, will the government clearly state that there should be no production limits on oil in Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we're exploring our options. We've been in constant contact with the industry, who do not have one definitive position themselves. There are many who say, "Let's curtail production," some who say, "Let the market go as it is." We have an opposition who says one thing. We have another party who says another. That's why we've struck an energy advisory group, an envoy committee. They're going to be talking to all those folks and seeing what kind of options we may have.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that I wasn't surprised when the Premier called for the nationalization of the Keystone pipeline but I nearly spit out my coffee when I learned that my own party at that time was in bed with the NDP on this multibillion-dollar boondoggle and given that I recall that much of the Tory caucus didn't support this decision, Premier, will you finally admit that it was a bad decision to buy this pipeline?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, what I would admit is that we had previous governments, including a Prime Minister from Calgary, we had an opposition leader who was from Calgary as well, who did not stand up for Alberta when they had a chance federally. Now we're paying the price. We don't have pipeline access to tidewater in Canada, and we need that because

we have a differential that's killing us. We need to work very hard on some options now to fix this mess that was given to us by previous governments. To be clear, on this side of the House we're on the side of the energy industry, on the side of Albertans, and the side of good jobs.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

Mobile Home Site Regulations

Ms Luff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is a crisis happening in mobile-home parks across Alberta. Owning a mobile home used to be a great option for affordable housing, but due to outdated legislation this is no longer the case. Skyrocketing pad rents at a park in my riding has led to extreme stress for residents, many of them seniors on fixed incomes, and the practice of economic eviction is common, where individuals are singled out for rent increases and citations in order to force them to move, often leaving behind their home at a loss. I know the ministry has been aware of this issue for years now but has chosen to do nothing. To the Minister of Service Alberta: why are you dragging your feet when people are losing their homes?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Service Alberta.

Mr. Malkinson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, our government is always available to Albertans who need assistance. That is why I have actually heard directly from mobile-home tenants in Calgary-East, and of course my ministry has been monitoring the situation closely. I will point out, of course, that in cases where the provincial government is unable to intervene, these matters can be pursued through the municipality as well. I would encourage any member in a mobile-home park to come out and reach out to either Service Alberta or to their local municipality.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Luff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish the province would stop downloading the responsibility for this onto municipalities.

Given that mobile-home owners face issues such as increased pad rent, disrepair of pads and parks, and being blocked by owners when attempting to sell their homes and given that currently the only option available to settle disputes is in the courts and given that the AUMA recommended allowing mobile-home owners to be able to access the residential tenancy dispute resolution service in 2016, will the minister commit to amending the Mobile Home Sites Tenancies Act to allow residents to access the RTDRS?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Malkinson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, as you said, we're always looking at ways to support Albertans, including those who are in mobile-home parks. You know, when we took office, we had 44 years of Tory mismanagement to clean up, and that applied to every single ministry here. We have done a lot in three and a half years, and, yes, we are continuing to work for a second term, so we continue to fight hard because there is still more to do on this.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Luff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you that the residents in my park do not feel supported by this government. Given that the Mobile Home Sites Tenancies Act has not been reviewed in many years and given that it is clearly not serving the needs of mobile-

home owners, to the point where they are losing their homes, will the minister commit to a full review of this act as soon as possible?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Malkinson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we are always looking to help Albertans in any way we can. I would encourage any member to write to my ministry, because we are looking for ways to help Albertans. I am always open to looking at changes, and, with that, I would of course encourage all those members to reach out to us, because we are a government that's here to make life better for Albertans.

Pipeline Development

Mr. Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, as the environment minister spent years as a Greenpeace activist and even helped write a book called *An Action a Day: Keeps Global Capitalism Away*, I even wonder if she won a Pulitzer for that because we've seen billions of global investment capital leave Alberta over the last few years. Now, what direction did the environment minister give her department and cabinet regarding Northern Gateway and Kinder Morgan? Did she offer them lessons from the book she helped write against global investment in Alberta?

Mr. Mason: Point of order.

The Speaker: Point of order noted.

The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake seems a little curious about the past and wants to talk about the past but doesn't seem too keen to talk about his own past, just two years ago. But let's just take a little trip down memory lane, where he spent 10 months in the United States campaigning for the current President. Now let's go through some of his chronology. On February 7, 2016, he campaigned in Manchester, New Hampshire; on February 8 he was in New Hampshire again. On the 18th he was in South Carolina. Now, on the 23rd of February the member campaigned in Houston, Texas, and that's when his candidate said that he wanted to punch a protester in the face and said that Black Lives Matter activists should be roughed up.

The Speaker: Folks, I must have repeated it many times more than you wished to hear. Please avoid these personal comments.

First supplemental.

Mr. Dreeshen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While I was door-knocking in Edmonton-West Henday last night with my good friend and colleague from Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, people would question at the door why the environment minister on Tuesday in question period would drift into tangents regarding oil pipeline questions. I'd like to just ask a very simple question again. Why is the NDP trying to redefine their record as proponents of pipelines when for so long they were protesters of pipelines? Can the government explain why they continue to push their failed social licence scheme on Albertans rather than just admit it hasn't worked to get pipelines built?

2:20

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, it is pretty rich, coming from that member, to be talking about this government's record, which is all he's allowed to ask questions

about, because of what this government, since it's been the government, has done to build the pipelines that this province needs, to deal with the differential, to make sure that our oil sector prospers, and that people are working, unlike the other side. We could talk about their past before they were in the Official Opposition, but that is irrelevant. What's relevant is . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Dreeshen: Well, Mr. Speaker, maybe to a third minister. Given that for over three and a half years the NDP claimed that their social licence scheme would get us new pipelines and it obviously didn't – all their social licence scheme resulted in was an oil price differential crisis in Alberta – now to the minister of environment: does the NDP have any ideas to get pipelines built, like create a business environment where our oil industry could flourish, or is it just carbon taxes, more regulation, and nationalization of the means of production, something like their good friend and ally Justin Trudeau has already done with Kinder Morgan?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Mr. Bilous: Oh, Mr. Speaker, I think I need to take the hon. member out for coffee and just review history a little bit here. What I will say is that our government has done more to get a pipeline to tidewater than previous governments in the past 20 years. Now, the hon. member's leader was in Ottawa as a federal cabinet minister for 10 years and couldn't get a single pipeline to tidewater. We have done more: standing up for our energy industry, modernizing our royalty review, and making it more profitable for companies to continue drilling when wells start to tail off. We've also brought in supports for our drillers and . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Sharp Hills Wind Project

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Sharp Hills project, approved by the Alberta Utilities Commission for the Oyen area, will bring some of the largest turbines ever built into Canada. There will be 83 turbines. Each of them will stand 200 metres tall, which is taller than the Calgary Tower. Minister, these types of structures have never been tried in North America. In fact, it is my understanding that they're designed for ocean installation. Why was there not a requirement to test this type of technology here first?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is true that the province of Alberta has opened up the most lucrative renewables market in Canada and one of the best opportunities on the continent, creating over the life of our program 7,000 jobs and several billion dollars' worth of new investment. The fact of the matter is that these particular turbines were approved through both AUC processes and our updated Environment and Parks wildlife directives.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that local residents tell me that no impact studies on human effects are known on these types of structures and given that all studies will be postconstruction and given known issues with harmonic resonance on migratory and predatory bird kills in other wind farms, Minister,

are you comfortable making these 83 towers a world-wide experiment on Albertans' health?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To start off with, there have been comprehensive peer review studies of effects of adjacent wind turbines on human health, and none of those – none of those – have been found to have any evidence. So let's ground our questions in fact. Second of all, all of our renewable projects are backed by AUC approvals and Environment and Parks wildlife directives.

Mr. Strankman: Given, Mr. Speaker, that the AUC deemed this project to be a moderate risk to raptors and waterfowl in the area and given that the AUC's report indicates there may be some migratory disturbance, Minister, is the risk to migratory birds, raptors, waterfowl, bats, and the unknown effect on wetland amphibians in addition to the unknown effects these untested towers have on Albertans' health a sufficient trade-off for the project?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated, there is no science to back the claim that the member has introduced into this House, that there are any effects on human health. That is simply not true. There is no scientific evidence to back that.

As concerns the wildlife directives, we updated all of those directives in anticipation of the fact that we would have new renewables investments, which we did. We know that no project is benign, but there are mitigation measures. We have ensured that our directives are the best on the continent.

Veterans' Licence Plate Eligibility

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, in April 2017 I asked the Minister of Service Alberta why my local constituent Neil Lowes and thousands of retired police officers from all across Alberta are being denied access to veterans' licence plates when the same plates are offered in many other provinces. To the minister: in the last 20 months since I first asked the question, have you reconsidered your position, or is the new minister just like the old minister?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Malkinson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the hon. member can see, I do not look like the old minister.

What I will say is that, of course, we are always open to consulting with Albertans on a variety of issues. As the member may be aware, we just introduced two new licence plates into Alberta supporting charitable causes, for both the Edmonton Oilers and the Calgary Flames. As a part of my ministry I would like to see more options for licence plates for Albertans and will definitely continue to work with the member on this.

Mr. Cooper: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that we do know that this minister has no problems making changes to the licence plate program – we've offered the same opportunity to Flames and Oilers fans, which is a good idea – I happen to know that my constituent, Mr. Lowes, came to my office yesterday and said: why is it that Flames fans can have access to plates but veterans of the RCMP can't have that same access?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Malkinson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, with our veterans' licence plates, any veteran who's served as a part of the Canadian Forces can get one of those plates. Some of the members that are veterans of our Canadian Forces also have had other careers with various police services, and those members can do that. Who is a veteran, for licence plate purposes, is worked out with the Legions in the province and throughout Canada. I will say that if he is a veteran who served in the military, he can get a plate.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Cooper: Well, Mr. Speaker, this is great news.

Given the fact that the Legion has already endorsed the use of veterans' plates for retired RCMP officers and given that the RCMP is already supportive of this plan, it seems to me that the only barrier is the minister. Can the minister please explain to us why retired police officers and retired RCMP officers that have served overseas can have access to these plates but those that have served at home don't have the same access?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Malkinson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I said in an earlier answer, we, of course, are aware of the issue, and I'm willing to continue to work with the member on this particular issue.

As the Minister of Service Alberta we have had many licence plate options, including the Flames, which have had great success. When it comes to licence plates, the Support Our Troops plates as well have been a very popular option, where Albertans who are not veterans can show their support for veterans by buying one of those Support Our Troops plates.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Flood Damage Mitigation

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been more than five years since the devastating floods struck southern Alberta. The constituency of Calgary-Elbow was hit especially hard. But in the past five years no significant flood mitigation has been built to protect my constituents or the core business district of downtown Calgary. To the Minister of Transportation. My constituents are extremely frustrated by the lack of progress on the Springbank off-stream reservoir. They haven't heard an update since the federal regulator asked your department for more information this summer. Is that project still on track to protect downtown Calgary by the spring of 2022?

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, we do keep in regular contact with the groups in Calgary that are fighting for flood protection, that were badly affected. We don't want to see that ever happen again. Calgary, of course, downtown Calgary in particular, is the nerve centre of the Alberta economy. There are hundreds, in fact thousands of homes that are at risk for flooding, and our project is dedicated to make sure that that doesn't happen. We are working through the regulatory process very systematically and rigorously because we do not want to be sent back to the starting post as we've seen in the case of the federal government . . .

2:30

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister. Thank you. Hon. member, you exceeded the time. I passed the motion. Please, when I acknowledge you, you'll stand but not before. Okay? Thank you.

First supplemental.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the next answer I would hope the minister could please give us an update on the timeline for this project. Given that this past summer the federal environment regulator asked your department to provide more information and given that part of their request was a call for further consultation with indigenous groups, again to the Minister of Transportation: when will your government provide a response to the regulator, and can you assure me that you are conducting extensive two-way consultations with all indigenous peoples impacted by this very important project?

The Speaker: Now, hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Now, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Mason: I can assure the hon. member that we are working diligently through the hundreds of questions that we've been asked to answer as part of the regulatory process, and we intend to meet our self-imposed deadline of the end of this year to answer all of those questions. We are systematically meeting with indigenous groups that are affected or have a historical claim to this territory. We have reviewed the court decisions with respect to TMX to make sure we are in full compliance with respect to indigenous consultation requirements that the court has set, and we are confident that we are going to get this done, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
Second supplemental.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, another important aspect of managing flood risk is flood mapping. Given that the Minister of Municipal Affairs has been working with Environment to create new flood maps and given that the floodway development regulation is still a work-in-progress and given that developing this regulation without a full understanding of mitigated flows could devastate property values, to the Minister of Municipal Affairs: when can Albertans expect to see updated flood hazard maps, and will you commit to doing this in the right order, mitigate, then map, then regulate?

The Speaker: The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I appreciate his advocacy on this issue. It has been a complicated and comprehensive review and mapping process, and we do feel that having in hand the most information possible to make this decision is the best way forward. To do this regulation, as the member stated, to have that there in the right way and the right process and the right order I think is what we want to do, and we intend to do that. We have put a lot of money into Calgary for mitigation in other aspects. AUMA and my department do a lot of work down there with the emergency management professionals. As I did state, we will get this done in the right order.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The Member for Airdrie.

Urban Crime Rates

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Crime rates are increasing right across this province. In fact, 7 out of 10 of the cities in Alberta have

seen the largest increase, with Edmonton ranking close to 13. We've seen an increase of over 71 per cent in break and enters in Edmonton. I would like to know if the minister has had any conversations with city officials at the city of Edmonton and what they've had to say.

The Speaker: The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. Protecting Albertans' safety and providing a fair and efficient system is one of the top priorities of this government. That's why we provide half a billion dollars to our forces across this province. That is why we have taken steps to hire additional officers. That is why we have taken steps to hire additional prosecutors. I want to assure all Albertans that we remain committed to providing all resources to our forces to make sure that . . .

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay, Mr. Speaker. Crime rates are going up in the city of Calgary as well. Break and enters are up 30 per cent, robberies are up 20 per cent, and vehicle thefts are up 16 per cent just in the last year. Albertans are concerned about their safety and security. Has the minister met with officials in the city of Calgary about this issue, and what have they had to say?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I've said, keeping our communities, keeping our cities safe is a top priority for our government. That is why we've worked with our police and all relevant partners to combat crime, and every year, as I said, we invest half a billion dollars. We have made improvements that will allow our officers to spend more time on the streets fighting crime instead of sitting at the desk and doing paperwork. That's why additional people were hired, so they can do that work and more officers will be on the ground to tackle crime.

Thank you.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure if the minister has been talking to anybody in our major cities about the rising crime rates. Minister, 12 to 15 cars are stolen in Edmonton each and every day, and many of them are never recovered. Thefts from vehicles are up 69 per cent under this NDP's watch. Minister, what is this government doing to help the victims of property crime?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will just list a few things that we have done. We have hired 59 additional RCMP officers, we have hired 20 new Crown prosecutors, 40 new RCMP civilian personnel, four new provincial court judges, 55 new court clerks, 30 new bail clerks, and the UCP has voted against all these improvements. It's rich coming from them that we have not done anything. We are working with our partners to address crime issues.

Provincial Fiscal Sustainability

Mr. Gotfried: Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary budget office recently said that either permanent tax increases or spending reductions of 2.3 per cent of GDP, upward of \$7.5 billion, are needed for fiscal sustainability and responsibility in Alberta. Since then, the floor fell out of oil revenues. Keystone XL is delayed yet again, and the minister has assured that his up, up, up path to balance is just around the next corner. To the Minister of Finance:

when will the government acknowledge that its so-called path to balance is leading Albertans straight off the fiscal cliff?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The path to balance is something we talk about in the year 2023-2024, and we've already reduced the deficit by \$3 billion. We have already put effort into diversification so that we can see more revenue streams other than the oil and gas revenue stream, which since the end of 2014 has had a disastrous drop. We have been coming through the recession. We grew the most last year. We're going to continue moving forward and balance in 2023.

Mr. Gotfried: Mr. Speaker, given that a strong, diversified economy is impossible if businesses lack the confidence to invest and create jobs and given that this government's approach to cost containment amounts to ordering a larger container of red ink and given that its incompetence on the pipeline – or should I say pipelines? – file is sadly and swiftly turning much-needed resource revenues into but a distant memory, again to the minister: does the government not recognize that the longer they ignore business fundamentals, the more damage they do to investor and business confidence in this province?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What we have seen is billions of dollars of new investment come into the province because our Premier and our government are building on the legacy of former Premier Peter Lougheed, investing in energy upgrading and value-added to a very critical sector. Earlier this week the Premier announced that we are doubling our second round of petrochemical upgrading, which can attract up to \$20 billion worth of activity. We know that we have the right fundamentals. Alberta continues to remain the best province in the country to invest, to do business, to raise a family. We have the lowest taxes, and we . . .

Mr. Gotfried: Mr. Speaker, this minister is obviously not talking to the same people I am in downtown Calgary. Given that ignoring this problem will not make it go away and given that Albertans have no faith that this tax-and-spend government could bear to let up on either of those things, again to the minister. Please be honest with Albertans, Alberta businesses, and investors and tell them which taxes this government will be hiking to close the fiscal gap.

Mr. Ceci: Mr. Speaker, you know, we have no sales tax in Alberta. We have no payroll tax in Alberta, no health care premiums in Alberta. Alberta is a great place to do business, and that was the message that the Leader of the Opposition took to India when he was there. In fact, the leader in India said that Alberta is competitive, has low taxes, and low power prices. Why doesn't that member listen to his leader?

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

2:40

Energy Policies (continued)

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister of environment in 2013 when she was opposing Northern Gateway stated that, quote, we submit that there is no reliable evidence of the significant economic benefits from Northern Gateway, unquote, has this antipipeline opinion informed NDP policy on pipelines?

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, the opposition wants to make a great deal about actions that people took when they were not part of this government, when they were working for another employer. That has no relevance. This government is committed to finishing the pipeline to make sure we have access to tidewater. The hon. member's leader had 10 years in Ottawa to do exactly that, and he botched it. They made no progress in getting pipelines to tidewater, and the Supreme Court kicked out the Northern Gateway file because of the incompetence of that leader and his government.

The Speaker: Hon. member, again, on government policy.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It might have been because this minister was actively opposing pipelines.

Mr. Mason: Point of order.

The Speaker: Point of order.

Mrs. Aheer: Why did the environment minister state in 2013 that there is no reliable evidence of a functioning free market to ensure the health of the business in the producers of western Canadian energy? Unquote. I was just curious, Mr. Speaker: in her capacity as the environment minister does she still agree with this antimarket activism? Yes or no?

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, I want to speak on behalf of all members of this government that we have worked very hard to make sure that we have access for Alberta's petroleum resources to tidewater, and any suggestion to the contrary is completely false. It's clear, however, that the leader of that party, when he was a cabinet minister in Ottawa, absolutely failed to do that when he was in a position to do it. If he can't do it when he's a federal minister, he sure can't do it here.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, does the environment minister still believe that 525,000 barrels per day does not equate to economic benefit?

Mr. Mason: Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member persists in asking ministers on this side what their beliefs are, were, whatever, instead of accepting the fact that this government's actions prove that its intent has always been to get access to tidewater for Alberta's resources and that we worked resolutely, consistently throughout our mandate to do that, and that is what we're going to do in the second mandate as well.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I've had a request for unanimous consent to introduce some guests.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests (continued)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly an English language learner class from Dickinsfield Amity House, a drop-in centre located in the heart of Edmonton-Decore. Today with us we have over 20 ELL students who come from all over the world and have decided to settle in the wonderful ridings of not only Edmonton-Decore but even Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. Along with the students we also have Frieda Maaskant, Bertha Groot, Pat

Barnum, and they are joined by their outstanding teacher, Louisa Bruinsma, who has been an integral part of the success of this program. The Minister of Economic Development and Trade and I were also privileged enough to visit their classes last week to talk about the Legislature and our lives as MLAs. They were eager to learn how our government works and participated with great interest and enthusiasm during both our visits. Unfortunately, they weren't able to stay, but I would still ask if the House would provide the traditional warm welcome.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I'm not sure we need the 30. We will have 15 seconds.

Members' Statements (continued)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Solar Energy Programs

Mr. Hinkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year I spoke on the value of LED light bulbs and energy efficiency. The installation of energy-efficient products resulted in \$330 million in energy savings for Alberta families. Thousands of jobs were created, and Alberta's economy grew by almost half a billion dollars.

Today I want to talk about solar energy. Albertans save more than \$3 on every dollar invested in energy efficiency. Albertans have reduced emissions equivalent to taking three-quarters of a million cars off the road for a year. Millions of tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions have been avoided.

Who is at the forefront of the solar economy? It's farmers, indigenous people, businesses, municipalities, and homeowners. Today twice as many farmers applied for solar panel energy programs than could be offered. Many farmers in my constituency wish they would have been doing so many years ago. Indigenous communities continue to expand their installations. Each of the four nations in my constituency is saving money and investing it in social programs, housing, and infrastructure. Municipalities are saving millions on rinks, recreation centres, administration buildings, and schools. Some 1,500 Alberta businesses, nonprofits, and institutions are investing in energy efficiency, saving money that can be invested in other areas. Alberta businesses are saving millions in energy costs, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and being competitive in foreign markets.

Solar panels are becoming more efficient, and storage capabilities are improving, which is why I am so pleased that with the help of Energy Efficiency Alberta I was able to install solar panels on my home.

Exaggerations about the carbon levy costing \$5,000 per family have proven false. We can all do our part to increase energy efficiency, and the work of the climate leadership plan and today's announcement on community recreation generation programs make it that much easier.

Thank you.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Loyola: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to table five copies of the report of the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship that summarizes the presentations received by the committee at its public meeting on October 23, 2018. Additional

copies of the report are available through the committee office and online.

Thank you very much.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give notice pursuant to Standing Order 34(3) that I'm advising the House that on the next available Monday Written Question 5 will be accepted and the written question will be dealt with. Additionally, motions for returns 13, 14, 15 and 16 will be accepted, and Motion for Return 17 will be dealt with.

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the five requisite copies of an article by Ricardo Acuña entitled *Albertans Hardly Noticed the Province Untangled an Administrative Mess that Plagued Those with Disabilities for Decades*, which was published in the *Vue* on November 14, 2018. The article outlines some of the government's fantastic work in improving and reforming AISH.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's north is a resourceful region and plays a significant role in building a strong and resilient economy. Since 1963 the Northern Alberta Development Council has been championing the cause of Alberta's northern economies and communities, providing valuable advice. Pursuant to section 8 of the Northern Alberta Development Council Act I'd like to table five copies of the NADC 2017-18 annual report. I encourage all members to learn more about the activities and initiatives undertaken by the council over the past fiscal year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've got four tablings. The first one is a news release from CN Rail, back from June 12, saying that they're investing \$320 million to expand and strengthen Alberta's rail infrastructure.

The next three are for my colleague from Chestermere-Rocky View. The first one is two endorsements from the founders of the Leap Manifesto, Avi Lewis and Naomi Klein, for the environment minister.

The second one is a copy of a brochure promoting an antipipeline rally as well as a tweet by the minister of the environment saying that she was heading to the rally.

The third one is a partial transcript of the Alberta Federation of Labour's oral argument against the Northern Gateway pipeline in which the minister of environment is introduced as well as an image of that event.

Thank you.

2:50

The Speaker: Any others, hon. members?

I think I had a tabling here, did I not? I have. I'm tabling today five copies of the 2017-2018 annual report of the Child and Youth

Advocate for the period April 1 to March 31, 2018, as per the Child and Youth Advocate Act.

Hon. members, we didn't hit the record of seven from yesterday, but we certainly got to four as I understand it. I believe the first point of order is from the Government House Leader. Is that correct?

Point of Order

Questions about a Previous Responsibility

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Several times today members opposite – in my first point of order I will reference the hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View – asked questions about the opinion of the environment minister and actions that she had taken before she was a member of the government, before she was an MLA, when she was an employee, in this case, of the Alberta Federation of Labour and speaking on their behalf. It's been clear – and we made this point of order yesterday, and we'll keep making this point of order as long as the opposition persists in attempting to ask questions about things that are not related to government policy.

Mr. Speaker, it's absolutely clear, as I said in answer to some of the questions, that this government has been very consistent with respect to its approach to the energy industry and its support of that industry and its advocacy for access to tidewater for the industry. Actions have been ongoing and consistent throughout the term of this government, yet the opposition persists in trying to find things in the past where other members had expressed opinions that have nothing to do with government policy. Of course, they don't have to look very far. They can look in the mirror, and they can see examples of where their own leader has adopted positions now that he is Leader of the Official Opposition that are at variance with his positions before he was elected or even at variance with his positions when he was a member of the Conservative caucus in Ottawa.

It's clear, and I just want to read a ruling by yourself, Mr. Speaker. Just as recently as, why, yesterday you stated the following:

Based upon the information, the guidelines that we're all familiar with, the government must have the administrative competence that is related to the point. Issues outside the influence of the government ought not to be considered. Read paragraph 409 of *Beauchesne's* and page 509 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*. I do want to give as much latitude in asking questions and providing answers, but I would again ask that you ensure [that] the focus is clearly on government policy.

You've heard me say today a couple of times that indeed you ought to be staying away, all of the members in this place, from questions that are purely of a personal nature. I recognize that that is not entirely a science, but I think the expectation of myself and this House generally is that personal comments ought to not become a part of the question. They need [to] be focused on policy. In this particular instance I would think and I know that the opposition . . . will no doubt be conscious of that going into the future. In this particular instance there probably was a point of order, but I think the resolution is more on a go-forward basis.

Well, Mr. Speaker, here we are on a go-forward basis, and the opposition is still persisting in ignoring the track record of the government and trying to throw dust in the eyes of voters about what this government's actual record is. I consider that to be, you know, not the highest standard of probity and ethics, but certainly it is as well, in the way they're going about it, contrary to the rules

of question period. They're abusing question period in order to create a misconception upon the part of Albertans about what this government is doing. It's very clear, very transparent what their intent is, and I think it is beneath them and it is beneath this House.

The Speaker: The Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me first start off with: this side of the House is happy to talk about this government's record any time. It's a dismal record, and we're quite happy to highlight it.

A couple of things. First, the hon. Government House Leader points out that questions should be about government policy or something within the capacity of the administrative role or the competency of the government. He then references the hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View's question, which I believe is the point of order that we are on. Mr. Speaker, I have her notes. You have the benefit of the Blues, so you will know if she spoke outside of those notes in the question. I would not know. There's no way I can remember every word, obviously. But her first question was: "A simple question to the Premier. After you were sworn in, did your government allow the Trudeau Liberals to cancel Northern Gateway because your environment minister recommended it?" The cancellation of Northern Gateway is certainly something to do with this government. The environment minister is certainly something to do with this government. Certainly, it even references when they were sworn in. I'm certain the Government House Leader wouldn't try to say that when they were sworn in, they weren't the government.

The second question, when the next point of order was called, to the minister of environment: does she still think it was right to cancel a 525,000 barrel-per-day pipeline for Alberta? Mr. Speaker, as you know, because you granted just recently an emergency debate in this Assembly, I believe, actually, yesterday because of the great crisis that we're facing due to the differential crisis, the Northern Gateway has a significant impact on that crisis, both the fact that it was cancelled without a protest from this government – in fact, they supported it; there's lots of evidence on the record on that while they were in government and before they were in government and then went forward – and then, going forward, on how we're going to be able to solve the differential crisis. Of course, we're still going to be able to need pipelines, and Northern Gateway is a very relevant part of the conversation that we are currently facing.

I don't know if it is the intention of the Government House Leader to deal with the other separate questions and separate points of order, which I'm happy to deal with. I don't know if that's the intention. If not, I'll speak to the other questions. I'm not sure if . . .

The Speaker: I'm dealing with one.

Mr. Nixon: One at a time. Perfect. Well, then, in regard to those two, those are two clear questions to deal with government policy.

I will point out one other irony. In each of those questions the government then got up and spent their entire answer referring to the Leader of the Opposition in those questions, his past record inside the House of Commons, past policies, most of it, I would say, inaccurate. But that's fine. That's what they brought forward. So it is a little bit ironic that on one hand they say: we don't want to answer for our record and the things that we say, but we want everybody else in this Chamber to answer for them.

3:00

The Speaker: Hon. members, this is what I read from the Blues:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. According to the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers we would not be in today's oil differential situation if the Northern Gateway pipeline had not been cancelled. On June 17, 2013, the environment minister personally appeared at the National Energy Board hearing to argue against the approval of Northern Gateway. I just have a simple question.

There was a point of order by the Government House Leader.

To the Premier: after you were sworn in, did your government allow the Trudeau Liberals to cancel Northern Gateway because your environment minister recommended it?

I believe that both sides of the House – I talked about it yesterday, and I'll talk about it again today – still reference their arguments around individual past action. In this particular instance I determined that there was a question that was in order, and it was a question that was specifically asked to the Premier.

Number 2. The Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: I'll withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Give me a minute to read the Blues if I could.

Mr. Mason: Sure.

The Speaker: Number 2 is withdrawn.

Number 3. No?

Mr. Mason: I've lost track, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yesterday I lost track.

How about number 4?

Mr. Mason: I didn't make a fourth.

The Speaker: My notes indicate it was the Government House Leader who raised the point of order. Withdrawn?

Mr. Mason: I'm done, Mr. Speaker. I have no more points of order to argue.

The Speaker: Okay.

Orders of the Day Government Motions

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Evening Sittings

36. Mr. Mason moved:

Be it resolved that, pursuant to Standing Order 4(1), commencing November 26, 2018, the Assembly shall meet on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday evenings for consideration of government business for the duration of the Fourth Session of the 29th Legislature 2018 fall sitting unless the Government House Leader notifies the Assembly that there shall be no evening sitting that day by providing notice under Notices of Motions in the daily Routine or at any time prior to 6 p.m.

[Government Motion 36 carried]

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

Bill 26

An Act to Combat Poverty and Fight for Albertans with Disabilities

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to move second reading of Bill 26, An Act to Combat Poverty and Fight for Albertans with Disabilities.

This is a truly historic bill that, if passed, will index benefit rates to help a quarter of a million Albertans. This legislation fights poverty, protects people with disabilities' right to dignity, and brings greater stability to people's lives. It also corrects a fundamental and historic lack of fairness for persons with disabilities, low-income Albertans, and low-income seniors, whose supports seldom kept pace with inflation. This bill will forever change how social programs are delivered in this province, and we are very proud to bring it forward.

But I want to be clear that we have not done this alone. I want to recognize the two cosponsors of this legislation, the MLA for St. Albert and the MLA for Lethbridge-East. Both MLAs along with many of my colleagues have been strong advocates on these issues for a long time. Madam Speaker, I also want to thank the thousands of self-advocates, antipoverty advocates, seniors, persons with disabilities, families, and community leaders who have also advocated for these changes. Self-advocates and community leaders like Ian Young, Mark Chrichton, Mary Salvani, Sandra DeBruin, Leah McRorie, Amy Park, Les Landry, just to name a few; and groups like Disability Action Hall in Calgary, Vibrant Communities Calgary, EndPoverty Edmonton, Edmonton Social Planning Council, Inclusion Alberta, Public Interest Alberta, the Self Advocacy Federation, Momentum, the YWCA, the Calgary Housing Company, United Way, women's centres, just to name a few.

For many years these and many other individuals and groups have created petitions, organized town halls and meetings, made phone calls, and written letters calling for this change. To these advocates and leaders I want to say: your work has not been in vain. Unlike the previous government, our government heard you and is taking action. It is because of your commitment and dedication that our bill is here today. So thank you for continuing to push, for telling your stories, and for advocating for all Albertans. Please know that our government is with you and fighting for you.

Madam Speaker, AISH, services for low-income Albertans, and supports for seniors have been a priority for our government since day one. When times got tough, instead of making reckless cuts like the members opposite propose, we ensured that our public services were protected and strengthened. We added \$182 million in funding to AISH to ensure that Albertans who needed support could get it and weren't turned away. We have protected supports for seniors and invested in health care. We took action to fight poverty and help low-income families through our investment in the Alberta child benefit, a \$25 million increase to FCSS, an increase to the minimum wage, and a \$1.2 billion investment in affordable housing, and we are not done fighting. We have always committed to looking at the benefit levels, as the province's finances permit, and through this bill we are keeping that promise.

As our province is coming out of the worst recession in generations, we are taking action to make sure we are not leaving people behind. We are ensuring that this recovery reaches all

Albertans. For too long Albertans with disabilities, Albertans living on low incomes, and seniors have had to beg governments for increases to their supports as the cost of living rises. They have been subjected to politics, they have been asked to prove their need again and again, they have been blamed for the situation they find themselves in, and they have been stigmatized for being on social supports. I'm proud to say that this bill puts an end to all that.

This bill will establish new, increased rates for AISH and income support as of January 1. Most importantly, this bill will take politics out of decision-making by establishing annual indexing of benefits for AISH, income support, and seniors' benefits. This bill will support a quarter of a million Albertans who need assistance covering their basic needs like groceries and rent.

3:10

Madam Speaker, I do want to highlight that indexing will be protected in the act, which means that no government will be able to cut rates behind closed doors. This will stabilize and protect supports so that they are tied to the cost of living and will ensure predictability so that individuals and families can plan for their future.

Madam Speaker, this change is based on the advocacy of many Albertans, Albertans like Amber Cannon, an AISH recipient, who said, and I quote: this will help me eat breakfast in the morning. End quote. Or Mark Chrichton, who said, and I quote: indexing might mean having better food, paying all your bills, living a bit more comfortably. End quote. Or Ian Young, who said, and I quote: indexing will take away a bit of the desperation of managing in the face of yearly inflation; I'm glad to see that the Premier recognized this voice and acknowledged the need of Albertans on AISH; being heard is one thing; having your concerns addressed is gratifying. End quote. Amber, Mark, and Ian believe that all people deserve dignity and fairness, and I couldn't agree more.

That is why we are indexing these supports and doing what we are doing instead of doing what the opposition would want us to do, cuts and more cuts. And we all know that that is what they would do because they have said as much, like the MLA for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, who said that the cuts are, quote, going to hurt; or the Member for Calgary-Hays, who criticized supports for people with disabilities when he said that government has, quote, a whole variety of giveaways from light bulbs to better health care for disabled persons; or the Leader of the Official Opposition, who said that the spending level should be in line with B.C., which means another \$500 cut per month to AISH. We think this is the wrong thing to do. We believe these 250,000 Albertans deserve better.

We believe that we need to put politics aside and do what is right for Albertans. That is why, in addition to indexing, we are proposing other changes. For instance, supplemental and personal benefits associated with these programs will also be indexed. Families with children will see added supports. The asset limit will be changed to ensure that Albertans don't need to jump through multiple hoops to get the supports they need. The asset limit for the AISH child allowance will increase from \$3,000 to \$100,000. In other words, once you qualify for AISH, you qualify for the child benefit, too. This will allow people to get access to supports for their children like the child care benefit or an emergency benefit for an unforeseen or individual-specific situation. The asset test for the AISH personal benefit will also increase from \$3,000 to \$5,000, so they don't have to deplete everything to get those benefits.

Madam Speaker, all of the changes in this bill follow a commitment of our government since day one: Nothing about Us without Us. We have heard from Albertans that these changes are needed and long overdue. We have heard their stories. We believe

their stories are real, their challenges are real, and their pain is real. I can tell you with absolute certainty that cuts are not what Albertans want. They want stability so they can live their lives and care for their families, they want action to fight poverty, they want investment in Albertans to support increased opportunity in our communities, and this is what this bill is about. This is why we are so proud to bring this forward.

But I also want to be very clear. We know that there is more work to do, and we are committed to undertaking that work. For instance, the AISH program, which was established in 1979, uses the term "severely handicapped." Quite frankly, Albertans no longer use this term. We will address their concern with the name of the program and work with them to replace this with a more suitable name. We will work with all concerned to look at the cohabitating partner policy and explore what type of income should be exempt and the exemption levels.

This bill is an important step forward, but there is more to do with the issues I outlined and other issues, and we will do that. We will continue listening to Albertans and work collaboratively with them to make life better for Albertans. Thank you once again to everyone who shared their feedback to make this bill possible.

I want to end my comments with a Nelson Mandela quote that was shared with me by Franco Savoia from Vibrant Communities Calgary. Quote: like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not natural; it is man-made, and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings. End quote. Madam Speaker, we all have Albertans living in poverty in our communities and in our constituencies. As their representatives we can and must take action to end poverty, and we know Bill 26 is an important step in making this a reality.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I hope all my colleagues will speak in support of this bill and in support of all those thousands of Albertans whose lives will be positively impacted by this bill.

Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

I'll now recognize the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm very happy to rise today to speak to Bill 26, An Act to Combat Poverty and Fight for Albertans with Disabilities. Hopefully, the minister will be able to answer a couple of questions that I still have on it.

There are thousands of Albertans living on AISH, income supports, receiving seniors' benefits and other supports that have been long awaiting the indexing of their programs to CPI. You know, when I first read the bill and was looking at this speech, it reminded me of, I believe it was a year and a half ago or two years ago, when I tabled a letter in the Chamber that was brought to me by two seniors from Willingdon that drove all the way to my office in St. Paul to deliver a letter along with a quarter, which summed up the total increase to their seniors' benefit. Actually, it was a penny over, because they'd each received a 1 cent per month increase to their seniors' benefit, so they rounded it up to a quarter just to make it easier for me to bring it to the House.

I'm also reminded of the question that I had to the minister, I believe, during the spring session on the clawback formula. When it comes to AISH payments, the only ones that are really affected are seniors, who get clawed back because of their seniors' benefits. It's not the same as if there were a cohabiter that had a job that was bringing in that much money. They wouldn't be clawed back, but because it was a seniors' benefit, it would be. So if you could clarify that that has been changed in this bill, that would be really appreciated.

Also, interestingly enough, on Tuesday morning the leader of our party along with myself and a lot of our colleagues went down to tour Hope Mission in downtown Edmonton, and we stayed around there and helped serve lunch to a bunch of homeless people there. During the tour we talked about one of the old buildings that they use for housing the homeless there, the Jamieson building.

3:20

They have been given permission to tear down that building and build a new facility in two phases. The first phase is about \$15 million, and they're having a hard time raising the funds to get that done. The city of Edmonton isn't being very helpful. But at the same time we look at the recent announcement by the government of over \$1 billion to build the west line LRT. I just find it interesting that we seem to really have our priorities a little bit skewed when it comes to that. I'll go on with the rest. I just thought it was interesting that, you know, a small project of \$15 million can't be supported but building a west line LRT, where there's already access by bus service, taxi service, Uber, many forms of transportation to get you from the west end to downtown, benefits by over \$1 billion from the province.

As the cost of living increases year to year, making it more difficult for low-income Albertans to afford the necessities, we also see that life is becoming ever more expensive for Albertans under this NDP government. The NDP's carbon tax, which affects low-income families disproportionately, has made it more difficult for families to heat their homes in our frigid winters or to drive to work. It is not only the case that the cost of everything has gone up under this NDP government, but the ability to afford the necessities has also become more challenging. The NDP has driven away jobs and those who create jobs. Investment is fleeing due to the uncertain bureaucratic and burdened economic climate led by the NDP's increased regulatory red tape. It has become more and more difficult for Albertans to find jobs, so it is vastly more important in light of this to strengthen and improve supports to those who need them.

In the case of Bill 26 I'm happy to see that there will be a one-time, catch-up increase to financial support for recipients of AISH, something that has been mentioned to me many times in my office as well, and also to the Alberta seniors' benefit and supportive living and lodge subsidies. The government stated the cost of this initial increase but has not yet specified what this will be costing the government annually in the years to come. There needs to be transparency in what government is doing. It is our duty as legislators to hold the government to account. Albertans deserve to know what their government is doing and why. It is their money that the government is using to do it.

On this same issue of transparency, I understand that the changes that are coming to the support programs are not equal across the board. I would like for the government to elaborate on why they have decided to make greater increases to some programs than to others and what their rationale was. Again, I'll bring up the clawback to seniors when it comes to AISH. Can the government also elaborate on which stakeholders were consulted for the changes that were brought forward in this bill? It is crucial to ensure that proper consultation is done beforehand as we have seen what happens when the NDP does not consult.

Madam Speaker, we know that the NDP's detrimental and burdensome policies have made it more difficult on the already strained finances of low-income and vulnerable Albertans. Adding up the costs of everyday life, it has become more difficult to afford along with the cost of medications or other necessary goods. It may even be the case that this increase to AISH supports will not be enough to cover the costs that they will be incurring.

Another question I have about these increases: what will be the impact on AISH recipients in regard to their CPP and medications? Will that be clawed back due to the increases in the amount that they are receiving? I'm happy to see that the amount being paid out is increasing and that we are supporting those that need it most. However, while it is vital that we adequately provide support to those who need it, it is equally as important that we ensure we are allowing them to also help themselves and not doing anything to inhibit them from doing so.

I'm happy to see that the government is increasing the asset limits, which gives the opportunity for individuals receiving these limits to save more. Under these higher limits there is less cost to saving; otherwise put, this decreases the clawback rate of saving. This will help those who are trying to save up and potentially be able to graduate off financial supports. If their supports are not being clawed back as fast as they are able to save money thanks to this increased limit, then there is more reason to save.

Madam Speaker, this indexing to CPI will greatly benefit all support recipients who have been waiting for years for an adjusted amount that reflects today's cost-of-living increases. We've heard, devastatingly, from AISH advocates that some cannot even afford basic necessities. This is absolutely unacceptable. The supports are in place in order to ensure that this is never the case for anyone. The fact that this is still happening is unacceptable and must be addressed. Every Albertan, as a base, should be confident in their ability to afford personal hygiene products and other necessities. There is absolutely no one who should worry if this will be impossible for them. This is fundamentally why we have these programs in place. It makes me happy to see that this bill will help address this.

The increase in the supports that this bill addresses will go directly to the Albertans it seeks to help and where it will be of the most use. I'm glad that it's going directly to those who need it rather than into administrative costs. Beyond this increase in payments, we must also talk about additional supports that are necessary in order to have a far-reaching beneficial impact. These supports include mental health supports as we cannot group everyone's situation as one and treat them all the same. Strong mental health supports will greatly help Albertans with developmental disabilities and are vitally needed.

On the case of mental health, I brought forward many questions regarding the St. Therese health centre in St. Paul, which is the psychiatric hub for northeastern Alberta. One of the questions that was brought to the minister by one of the local mayors was the fact that people are brought into the facility from outside of the town of St. Paul, brought in sometimes by RCMP from Lac La Biche or Cold Lake, dropped off at the hospital. They spend four or five days there and get corrected, back onto their meds. But a lot of times these folks then are discharged by the hospital with no money, sometimes without identification, unable to find their own way home. The answer that we got, shockingly, from the minister was that that's a municipality's problem. So while we're addressing these issues, there are many, many more issues to consider.

There must also be support to enter and participate in the labour market. Due to the current lack of jobs available to Albertans due to NDP mismanagement, there must be structure in place to help those individuals with securing a job and give a hand up to those who are in poverty.

I'm so happy that there is an increase in the supports for the recipients of AISH, income supports, Alberta seniors' benefit, and supportive living and lodge subsidy and that this will help them in the race to keep up with the ever-increasing rising cost of living thanks to such policies as the carbon tax. This is why I will be supporting Bill 26.

Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills. I enjoyed his remarks today. I think they were right on the mark. I rise today to speak in support of Bill 26. I'm glad to see a piece of legislation of this kind here in the Assembly. I actually think it should have been here a long time ago, quite frankly. I would question what took 3.5 years for the minister to get this legislation to the Assembly, but I am glad to see it here today.

I, like other members in this Chamber, have heard from many people who are AISH recipients, heard about how tough it is to currently live under the current numbers. We've heard from AISH recipients who cannot afford basic necessities, as the hon. member just described, I mean, basic hygiene necessities and things along those lines. I think all of us can agree that we have to ensure that AISH recipients are able to at least have an appropriate standard of living. Not being able to buy hygiene products, quite frankly, is appalling, that they would be in a situation like that. Supporting employment for people with developmental disabilities also will have a far-reaching, positive impact. I'm glad to see that in this bill. As well, raising asset limits for individuals receiving financial supports is important because it will allow them to save and potentially graduate off financial supports in the future.

I think this piece of legislation is good. I'm glad to see it here. I will be happy to support it. We will have some questions that hopefully can be answered in Committee of the Whole by the minister, but we'll be happy to bring up some of them today. The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills raised some of them already. One question we have, though. I understand that some programs, Madam Speaker, through you to the minister, have seen greater increases than others. Can the government please share how they determined the relative rate increase in each program and which stakeholders they consulted with on this?

3:30

The second question, Madam Speaker, that we'd be interested in hearing about: will recipients of AISH see their CPP medications clawed back because of these increases? I think that's a good question to make sure that we've got right while we're doing this legislation.

The third question that I would have. While increases to AISH are important, it's equally important that we provide AISH recipients with educational and employment opportunities in the hopes that one day they may obtain full-time employment and graduate out of AISH. Now, not everybody is going to be able to graduate out of AISH, but there are certain circumstances where that's possible, and I think it's important that we support people that are doing that. My question specifically, Madam Speaker, through you to the minister, is: what is the government doing to address the serious lack of employment opportunities for our disabled population?

Lastly, income support caseloads have continued to rise in recent years. For the category of people expected to work, caseloads rose from 29,111 in 2016 to 34,375 in 2017. That's a significant increase. This is due in large part to negligence on economic files by this government, which has led to massive unemployment and hardship in our province. Income supports are important, but what is really important, of course, Madam Speaker, is getting Albertans back to work. I think it's important that this government address how they will also deal with that issue.

With that support in mind and looking forward to some answers to questions and maybe some further conversation in Committee of the Whole when this piece of legislation gets there, I will also point out some of the irony that I see in this legislation coming from this government at this time. I'm glad it's here. I wish it had been here before. But as the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills pointed out in his speech, quite well I think, it is very ironic that this government continues to hurt the less fortunate in our province significantly through their regressive carbon tax, that they continue to make life more expensive for people that are in vulnerable situations, certainly for people on AISH, and life more expensive for fixed-income seniors, which, of course, are also part of this legislation and important to remember.

You know, I don't know how the government, with a straight face, could justify repeatedly over the last few years voting against removing the carbon tax from people in these types of circumstances at the very least. We're against the carbon tax. I want to make that clear. Before the members across the way ask what we would do, then, in this case, which they like to heckle about, I'll be very, very clear. We will remove the carbon tax, one hundred per cent, from everybody in Alberta. This government did choose to go with the carbon tax, but at the very least they probably should have supported the opposition's attempts to be able to provide people in these types of circumstances with exemptions.

It costs a lot of money, not only the direct cost, for people in a fixed-income situation like that to be able to pay for heat or electricity, gas when they drive, those types of situations. Actually, as you know, Madam Speaker, it ended up being a tax on everything. Everything in our society ended up with the tax on it, and it's increased for a couple of reasons. One is because most things in our society come by truck or train, and it costs gas to be able to get them there. Then, of course, places like the grocery store had to pay extra for heat and had to pay extra for getting their products to the store, so that, then, increased the costs for these people in these types of circumstances. But to not be able to even provide them some sort of exemption from that – which we tried.

Further to that, the nonprofit agencies. As the hon. minister knows – and I know he will agree – our nonprofit partners do significant work in working with people facing poverty in our province. I know the hon. minister actually worked for one of those nonprofit organizations, as did I, so he knows the importance of that role there. This side of the House tried to provide an exemption to those agencies to be able to help people in those situations, and that side of the House, the NDP, voted yet again to make life harder for those individuals.

I think it's important. The minister in his remarks talked about how he felt that we, being the United Conservative Party, may not be compassionate on this issue or something along those lines. I think he's mistaken. But I think what's really clear and is fair to point out is that this government has shown, with their voting record on this issue, that they are at least tone deaf to what people are experiencing. Now, I do know that one point they will often raise when we talk about this issue is the carbon tax rebates, which have been clawed back and definitely have not kept going with the increase in the carbon tax.

This bill also impacts seniors. I don't know if all the hon. members have gotten to that portion of this legislation. Under this government's watch, who have brought this bill forward, they allowed seniors' carbon tax rebates, which only cover the fixed side of the equation – as I was referring to earlier, Madam Speaker, of course, this is a tax on everything; it's raised the cost of everything in our society – to be clawed back 30 per cent, to 70 per cent, without a word of protest from the minister. I can tell you that I know that my colleagues and I and, I suspect, my colleagues in the

government caucus hear about that often when we're visiting with seniors in our communities.

While I think this is a good first start and we will look at some of the other questions that we have to see if we can possibly even make this legislation better or catch some stuff that the government may have missed, we definitely will continue to support it.

But I do think it's worth pointing out that the government should go all the way. They shouldn't go halfway and continue to allow their carbon tax and their policies to hurt the very people that they're trying to help within this legislation. Certainly, as we know from the Premier's announcement this morning, with the decision to remove the carbon tax from drillers, a decision I would support, that is confirmation that, one, the carbon tax is having a negative impact and, two, that it's not getting us pipelines or the social licence that was promised with that carbon tax. Certainly, if drillers or corporations should not be receiving or having to pay that carbon tax in the future, I would think that, at the very least, people that are on AISH and fixed-income seniors should not have to pay that carbon tax anymore going forward. Now, if this side of the House is fortunate enough to form government in a few more months, fortunately for them they won't have to for much longer.

But it is disappointing that the government continues to allow these people to feel pain and to have to suffer consequences as a result of the decisions that this government has made. I hope that they consider that as we're debating this bill.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I will recognize the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Dr. Starke: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 26. I'd like to thank the hon. minister for bringing forward this piece of legislation. I think that it is always important that as legislators we look to do what needs to be done to take care of the most vulnerable in society. I'm pleased to note that the legislation extends beyond just the soon-to-be-renamed assured income for the severely handicapped. I'm glad to hear that that name is going to be altered. I think that it's important that the language we use is appropriate and that the language we use when we're working with and working co-operatively with those who require assistance from government be done in a compassionate way.

I'd also like to thank the minister for listing off many of the advocates that worked with him and his department in creating this legislation. I note, in fact, that he included the names of some people who have been very critical of him and his department, and I appreciate that, Minister. I think it's important that we listen to critical voices and that we acknowledge that they also add to the conversation. I think that's very healthy.

I want to give a little bit of background perspective, from my own perspective, on this file both as a representative MLA but also as a member of the previous government. I will tell you, Madam Speaker, that one of the initiatives and one of the measures that was taken by former Premier Alison Redford, that I, frankly, think is one of her shining moments, was when she increased the AISH benefit in the 2012 budget by \$400, from \$1,188 per month to \$1,588 per month. You know, there's a lot said about previous Premiers, and there's a lot said about previous ministers and certain portfolios and that sort of thing. Hindsight, of course, is always 20/20.

But I will say that, having just joined the government around the time that the 2012 budget was put in place – and there was a lot of

criticism of that budget from the Official Opposition of the day – this was a measure that, certainly, I heartily supported. To give you just some perspective, that increase to \$1,588 was a \$400 increase from the previous rate, which had last been adjusted in April 2009. There had been a three-year time period where there had been no adjustment.

3:40

There's one thing that this piece of legislation finally does address, and that is that there has not been an adjustment to the AISH benefit since 2012. It has been frozen at \$1,588. I fully acknowledge that it was the party that I was part of, the government that I was part of that made no adjustment for the first three years, but it was the current government that made no adjustment for the next three years. So I'm glad that this legislation makes an attempt to address that six-year time period. Really, it'll be seven years by the time the actual increase takes effect. But the increase in amount over that period of time is actually only about half of what it should be.

I will provide some evidence to that, and I will also be providing an amendment in committee stage that actually recommends that the basic AISH benefit be increased by more than what the current legislation calls for. I believe that if we're really trying to make sure that recipients are keeping up with inflation, which indexing it to CPI correctly does going forward, then we shouldn't lock in the fact that over the last six years there has been no adjustment. If we only increase it by \$97, which is what the current legislation provides for, we are locking in the fact that we won't have the benefit correctly adjusted.

I think there are a few other things that we do need to look at when we're looking at this legislation. One of the concerns I have expressed to me on a regular basis by constituents is that disability pension benefits are clawed back. If there is someone who contributed to a disability pension or a disability plan and was receiving a benefit from that plan, that is used to then reduce the amount of their AISH benefit. I'm not sure that that's entirely fair. If at the time that they were working or at the time that they were involved in employment, they contributed to a disability plan, they clearly will receive that benefit. But why should that then be turned around and clawed back from their AISH benefit? Certainly, that's something I have a great deal of difficulty explaining to my constituents that raise that as a concern, and I would appreciate having that discussion, perhaps at committee level, or perhaps the minister can address it during his comments on the closing of debate on second reading.

Another area that I will address today as well with regard to Bill 26 perhaps doesn't have to show up in the legislation, but I think it is something that we should very much at least look at – I know that the minister is very aware of this issue – and that is that an increasing number of recipients of AISH benefits are benefited greatly by the ownership of service dogs. We saw that even as recently as – now, this is a different health situation, but on Tuesday evening we saw the incredible situation where I met a service dog that was trained to detect high and low blood sugars. I mean, if you want to talk about an amazing level of training, it's to be able to train a dog to be able to detect high and low blood sugars for diabetes patients. But having a dog like that, I will tell you, Madam Speaker, is not an inexpensive proposition. The initial training and acquisition of such a dog and then the care of a dog like that is, you know, not an inexpensive proposition.

For many of our handicapped or for many of our recipients of benefits – I'm going to avoid the use of the word "handicapped" – for many of those recipients the service dog is an absolutely vital and critical part of their lives. That's whether that service dog

assists them with a specific physical handicap or whether it assists them with PTSD or whether it assists them in some other way. These dogs are as vital to them as medication. They are as vital to them for companionship and in a number of other ways.

I'm sure the minister knows where I'm heading with this, and again this is through some of my conversations with Mr. Les Landry, that he acknowledged in his opening remarks. These dogs are critical, and just as recipients of these benefits should not have to choose between purchasing personal hygiene items and food or paying their rent or paying their utilities, they certainly shouldn't have to make decisions with regard to how they care for these service dogs. They have to be fed. They have to have veterinary care. There are costs involved in pet ownership. These dogs are not just pets. These dogs are vitally important. So I'd like to see – and if it's not done in the course of the legislation, then certainly in the course of the regulations flowing out of the legislation – some provision for an allowance for those AISH recipients who have service dogs to assist them with whatever situation that they are in.

I think we have to look, as I said, at the disability insurance premium or the payouts and how those are clawed back, and I will raise some of these in the course of debate in the committee stage.

But I do want to say that this is a positive matter, and I do think that the indexing of these benefits, not just benefits under the AISH program but other benefits, to inflation is the right thing to do. It means that for people who require the assistance, that are dependent on that assistance, they are not going to be in a situation where even when our finances are challenged, we say: look, we just simply can't afford it. That was the answer that AISH recipients received for three years from the government I was part of, that's the answer they've received for three years from this government, and I think we can both share in the acknowledgement that that answer quite simply isn't good enough.

So I will be happy to support Bill 26. I will be bringing forward some amendments that I think would improve Bill 26, and I'm certainly hopeful that the minister will consider them favourably. In the meantime I think it is important that we as a Legislature and that we as a society indeed recognize that it is our obligation to make sure that the most vulnerable in our society are taken care of, that the most vulnerable in our society do not get left behind.

You know, I speak in terms of my own personal approach to the things that I deal with. Whether it was in my business practice or whether it was just as a community member or whether it was chairing our health foundation or my involvement in the Rotary Club, it was always a chance to look for those folks that otherwise might get left behind. We live in a prosperous and caring society, Madam Speaker, and there is absolutely no reason why people should get left behind or people should not be cared for. I know that there are instances where that happens, and I think, quite frankly, that those are the instances that we should try to root out and eliminate in as many ways as we can. I think Bill 26 is part of that, and I will be happy to support it.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I will recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. First of all, I would like to start by thanking the minister for the opportunity to sit down with him and understand the bill more clearly and have a conversation about this important bill. I really appreciate the time that he took.

The bill modifies AISH, income support, and the seniors' benefit, and what I really appreciate is that in the bill it standardizes the child benefit rates for AISH and income support. The way the legislation stands now, there's a variance between the different programs. Now for the first child a \$200 a month benefit in both of those programs, and subsequent children are \$100 a month. I think this is a really good idea. It makes things predictable for families, especially families who are facing difficult situations.

Some other good things that I like about the bill. The asset limit changes I think are reasonable. They take reasonable circumstances into consideration. I'm really, really grateful for indexing increases to CPI. I think that something that we've heard from nonprofits and schools and municipalities is how predictability is key to success, and I think that for people who rely on these programs, they need the same sort of predictability. They need to know that from year to year they'll be able to accommodate the increases that they'll see in their cost of living. So I'm really appreciative of that feature.

3:50

I really like that the seniors, people who have worked their whole lives, are getting their provincial benefits indexed as well, just like they are federally. People who rely on all of these programs are the least able to change their circumstances, so any kind of accommodation that we can make for changes that are outside of their control I think makes a lot of sense. It's the same for any person who finds themselves needing support from the government in some kind of an income support program.

Things that I think could make the bill a bit better. We'll be bringing up amendments in Committee of the Whole. Something that I've heard in my office is how people are treated when they're going to seek benefits, both with AISH and income support. I will be bringing forward an amendment to deal with a client bill of rights so that when people go to different programs for support, they have a good understanding of what to expect, what sort of treatment to expect, what kind of treatment is outside of acceptable standards, and what kind of recourse they might have if they experience something that discourages them from being able to seek help.

One other thing that I'd like to see in the bill is indexing the amount of income that AISH recipients can earn without a clawback. What we've seen over the last three years is that the minimum wage has increased, and what that has meant for AISH recipients is a net decrease in the number of hours that they could work to be able to supplement the income that they're getting from AISH. I would really like to see that income indexed as well so that it keeps pace and so that AISH recipients know they won't be penalized for having a part-time job.

I am really grateful for this bill. I think it's really important. One of my biggest concerns, though, is that it's taken a few years for it to come to the floor. I really wish that we had seen this two or three years ago for some of the reasons that we've already heard this afternoon. There hasn't been an increase to AISH since 2012. That's six years ago. For people that are relying on a very low amount of money to be able to get by every month, six years is a long, long time, and these are people that aren't necessarily in a circumstance where they can do much about their situation. To echo some of the sentiments that my colleague from Vermilion-Lloydminster shared earlier, these are people who we need to take care of. People who are unable to change their circumstances are people that are most deserving of our support.

So for these reasons, I'm looking forward to Committee of the Whole. For the most part, by and large, I really do support this bill.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I will now recognize the Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Before I actually get to my comments, I just have a couple of comments to previous speakers.

The Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills mentioned the Jamieson centre. Now, the Jamieson centre strikes a chord with me because it needed to be replaced back in the 1990s when I was working in parole here in Edmonton. In fact, the former Premier not only wouldn't provide any supports; he actually attended the centre and threw money at the residents and told them to get a job. I felt it was important to make that note.

The second was actually kind of a question for the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster. I appreciate most of what you said. One of the things you mentioned was your response when people asked you about fixing it in the years from 2012 to '15. You said that your party's response was: we can't afford it. You said that answer wasn't good enough, and I agree. But why didn't you speak up? That's just something for you to think about.

Dr. Starke: I did. Just so you know, I did.

Ms Fitzpatrick: You did. Okay. Thank you.

I'm standing here today in support of this bill, and I do so on behalf of my constituents. I must support it because my constituents have been negatively affected by the former government's decisions in relation to this bill. I must support it because, upon the passing of this bill, it will be making Alberta a better place for my constituents and all Albertans to live. At its essence, this bill is rooted in our belief that as Alberta is coming out of the worst recession in generations, we will not – we will not – leave people behind. Our recovery needs to be a recovery for all Albertans. I believe that all Albertans deserve to live with dignity and have a chance to succeed, as the minister said.

My constituents with disabilities, seniors, and those needing income supports have told me and showed me how they have struggled to pay rent and to put food on the table. This legislation not only provides better supports today to help them to do just that; it ensures AISH clients and low-income Albertans won't need to fight to afford the basics tomorrow. It provides stability and certainty that as the cost of living increases, so will their benefit rates. The opposition leader in our Legislature has said we should match the B.C. level and, in fact, the minister referenced that. As well, he said that would cut AISH by \$500 a month. I say absolutely not, and our government agrees that we cannot and must not do that.

Do you remember in the spring of 2015 when the Premier before the last election presented a budget which showed cuts across the board? A current member of the Official Opposition has said in the last couple of months that his party will cut and it will hurt. Sounds like the replaying of a bad record, a bad scenario for Albertans and, in particular, for vulnerable Albertans who are finally seeing some relief in their lives with this bill.

Since being elected, many constituents have come to my office and spoken to me about each of these areas. Both those persons with disabilities and seniors and their advocates have told me over and over again that it should not just be increased but indexed with inflation so that they don't take two steps forward only to take one, two, or even three steps back. One of my constituents, Ben Rowley, an AISH recipient, said, and I quote: with cost-of-living increases I don't have to worry about getting poorer and poorer every day. Ben, I'm happy you gave me that, and now it's in *Hansard* forever.

Throughout the economic downturn our government has committed to maintaining benefits, and in fact we increased overall program funding for AISH, income support, and seniors' benefits to support increased demand for services. Our province has grown and so has the need for services, all services. Our government has also committed to revisiting rate increase indexation as the province's finances would allow. Every little bit counts and increases the quality of one's life. Having stability through indexation does add peace of mind, and that's what my constituents have told me.

Do we have more to do? Absolutely. But this is a huge beginning by setting in stone indexing with inflation. I have spoken to senior after senior both at the Lethbridge Senior Citizens Organization in Lethbridge-West and Nord-Bridge Seniors Centre in Lethbridge-East, where, incidentally, I've been a member for a number of years. In speaking about this bill, I still have to speak a little bit about history. I will speak mostly about Nord-Bridge, where I have spent a considerable amount of time, and I will also speak from my perspective as a senior.

4:00

When I speak to anyone at Nord-Bridge, they tell me about the struggles of living on a fixed income and how it becomes more and more difficult to make ends meet. They talk to me about their hearing aids because I can relate. They talk to me about their income tax. I initially referred them to their MP but realized that to get something done, they needed to go see Harry or Laurie at Nord-Bridge, who are member volunteers who worked with over 1,300 people last year to address tax and tax-related issues, including seniors' supports, which require that one's income tax be filed each year to have access.

They also tell me how important it is to be able to come to Nord-Bridge and talk to me and my staff about their concerns, whether it's an issue of their power being turned off because they just can't make ends meet or just to tell me that they have a date for their knee surgery. They talk to me about their adult children who have special needs or disabilities of different sorts. They speak to me about being members of Nord-Bridge, where they have a place to come every day and be active, enjoy the jam session on Monday or play floor bowling on another day or just visit with friends.

When I ask any of the members what the focus is at Nord-Bridge, they may not be able to pinpoint exactly what that may be. However, if one were to ask Mike or Bob or Pat or Harry, they will tell you that it is prevention and support. It really speaks about the prevention of social isolation, the prevention of injury, the prevention of dementia by providing activities to stimulate one's mind. It speaks to inclusion and community, and they are very proud of that focus. It provides support.

I think this bill has taken huge first steps with indexation, and when Rodney spoke to me last week, he said that that is fantastic. Then he said that he had some ideas for future improvements. Rodney is never without an idea. Rodney, they have been shared. I know we have more work to do, and I will continue to support what this bill is doing and to advocate for future improvements as finances allow.

Now a quick highlight reel for this bill. There will be a one-time increase to AISH and income support to account for cost-of-living increases and then annual indexing with inflation going forward. As of January 1, 250,000 vulnerable Albertans receive increases in financial supports, annual indexing of Alberta seniors' benefits and related special needs assistance program, supplementary accommodation benefit, and seniors' lodge program, protection against negative inflation. Investment: \$46 million in 2018-19 and \$194 million in 2019-20.

All of those are reasons to support this bill, and I ask every one of my colleagues, everybody in this room, to support this bill. It makes a difference for every single Albertan.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Mr. Nixon: Yes, Madam Speaker. Thank you very much. Thanks to the hon. Member for Lethbridge-East – I always get both sides of that town confused or the members, which side they represent – for her speech. I do want to clarify. In her speech she made some accusations against members of this side of the House, specifically implying that there would be a cut or that we have said that we would cut and that there would be a certain amount that people would lose on AISH or those similar things because of that. That, in fact, is not factual. The member is mistaken on that fact. That's okay. I understand that it was probably hard to adjust the talking points when it was found out that we were voting yes. Nevertheless, that is not factual.

But I am interested in the hon. member's remarks, particularly her remarks to the independent member from Vermilion-Lloydminster: you know, why didn't you stand up? Madam Speaker, I would ask the same question, then, under 29(2)(a) on comments and questions: why did this member not stand up as the government that she belongs to brought in a punishing carbon tax to hurt these very people? Why did she not stand up when it took three and a half years of people on AISH and seniors saying that this is a problem that has to be fixed? Why did she stand by idly waiting for that to happen and not make it clear that action needed to happen?

The fact is, Madam Speaker, that what that member and her colleagues want to forget and at the same time then point and accuse other members of this place of planning to do, you know, huge cuts, which is not true – that's not what this side of the House is intending. We've been clear on that, and we won't be campaigning on that. But while she and her colleagues are doing that, they want to just disregard and forget about the fact that constituents that they even represent are being hurt by the policy decisions of this government.

You know, I've been in Lethbridge a few times this year. I have met with homeless shelters in Lethbridge. I've met with social agencies in Lethbridge and nonprofit agencies in Lethbridge. The number one thing they bring up with us when we meet with them is how much the carbon tax is punishing the very people that they're trying to serve. Every time that I talk to former colleagues that work in the nonprofit sector with people facing poverty, they bring up the carbon tax. This side of the House stood inside this place and moved amendments several times in an attempt to try to help those populations, and that member and her colleagues voted against those amendments.

Food banks, which we have been bringing up here several times over the last several years through this process, have repeatedly and very publicly talked about the struggles they're having already because of the economic downturn, that this government has overseen and created in some cases and made worse, certainly, and said that what's happening with the carbon tax is making it harder for them to be able to serve people in vulnerable positions. That member: where was she and her colleagues when it came time to stand up for them at that time?

My point, Madam Speaker, is that it's a little rich to sit in here with a speech and make up random accusations of us intending to cut things which we're not going to. That's another reason why we're supporting this bill, because we think that, quite frankly, it's

been too long, as some other members have brought up. I'm shocked that it's taken this government this long to get a piece of legislation here to be able to start to address this issue. But it's a little rich to do that, to stand up and say, "We support this; those guys and gals over there are evil; they're going to cut everything" – not accurate – and then ignore the fact that that member and her colleagues have sat in this place repeatedly, over and over, voting for something that is actually hurting those populations. Completely attempting to ignore that fact is frustrating. It doesn't matter whether it's frustrating for me, but it's certainly frustrating for the people that it impacts.

I'm disappointed in that. I was very disappointed each and every time that the members of the government caucus stood on record . . .

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Madam Speaker. An opportunity to rise in support of Bill 26 today, and I just wanted to add my comments and some context to this. I've had a great opportunity during my life and career to work with many organizations in the nonprofit sector, from CUPS to Momentum food bank, UNICEF, Red Cross, Meals on Wheels, Chinese Service Association, Fresh Start, horizon drop-in centre, Calgary Homeless Foundation, Mustard Seed, Inn from the Cold, and the list goes on. I've had an opportunity to work with them either as a volunteer or in fundraising opportunities as well to help them to meet the needs of the vulnerable and, in some cases, Albertans that are in need of assistance over and above what we can provide as government. I certainly salute those organizations.

4:10

I've also been lucky enough to be brought up giving back to the community, volunteering in the community, and ensuring that we as Albertans, not just as the government but as individuals and as communities, support the individuals in our community. I've been lucky enough in my corporate career to also work for some companies that believe that when you do well, you must also do good, and that often when you do good, it actually helps you to do well. Those are some things that I think that I've learned in my career. Those two things can go hand in hand as we support the communities around us. We have the opportunity as working Albertans to support the vulnerable in our community by being responsible but also having a very close eye on the fact that we need to generate wealth to achieve that.

Madam Speaker, we've seen, through the actions of this government, a lot of negative impacts on organizations in my constituency: recreation facilities, places of worship, community centres, nonprofits, other individuals that are struggling, fixed-income households. I see that all the time. I see the recreation facilities coming up with their own programs to ensure that families that are going through difficult times can still attend hockey camps and be involved with sports in their community and have access to services.

I see that in the places of worship. In my own community the Deer Park United church, for example, is right beside a Calgary Housing Company facility. They do incredible work in supporting many of those families, the new immigrants there, who are working on very fixed incomes. That work is being impacted by the fact that they have carbon taxes on their facilities as well that are deeply impacting their ability to deliver those services to members of the community who are going through difficult times or coming here

and settling into a new situation, who may be on fixed income through AISH and other programs that have been in place.

Madam Speaker, I think that we have to understand here that there's recognition that although as Albertans we have a commitment to sustain and provide adequate funding and the supports necessary for vulnerable people and those that, through no fault of their own, need that kind of support, we also have the ability to fund that through fiscal responsibility, by taking care of those vulnerable people in our communities – and I applaud the increases here. I believe we need to ensure that those people that are on these incomes, AISH and other programs, do have the funding that they need to live a safe and comfortable life.

We went through it with one of my wife's cousins, where she was worried. I could tell – she is physically handicapped and blind and deaf and has various other disabilities – that she had concerns, worries about her budget and whether she was going to be able to afford things and maybe to be able to save a little bit of that every month in case there was an emergency. Those things, I think, are good, and the indexing, I think, is important for us as well. But we need to also make sure that we're not overburdening the middle class to achieve that. We have to make sure that we have an economy that is robust, that we do well in this province so that we can do good. That, to me, is an issue that we need to address here: the sustainability.

We've seen it in many other government programs, where they damage the affordability and the balance of costs on one side. They damage those, and then they try and put a Band-Aid on things by increasing things. I think they need to look inside themselves. Again, three and a half years to get this bill out, but in the meantime we've seen the carbon tax impact those fixed-income individuals. We have a 67 per cent increase in that carbon tax coming, and that is not going to be offset in any way, shape, or form by this. Obviously, we've heard that that money is going to go into general revenue, not into rebates.

Quite frankly, the minimum wage, which was brought in to supposedly, again, help lower income individuals, at the same time is going to damage those on fixed incomes, that are on programs like AISH in this province, and the seniors on fixed incomes and others. The unintended consequences of some of these programs are things that we can't always throw Band-Aids on, Madam Speaker. We need to ensure that we're looking at those as we're bringing them in so that we don't have to keep going back.

Indexing, I think, is something that is a natural thing to do because we don't want those people on those fixed incomes to be falling behind day by day by day and year after year to the point where they can't put food on their tables, it's hard for them to make rent, it's hard for them to live a respectable and respectful life and to ensure that they have that opportunity.

Madam Speaker, I think that it is incumbent on all of us in this House to ensure that we take care of our vulnerable people, that those people in our economy here are given the opportunity to generate that wealth so that we can do this, and I think I mentioned it in the question period today, not with red ink, not with a larger, family-size container of red ink, and that we actually learn how to sustain this economy in a way that allows us to do well and to do good and to deliver those types of services on an ongoing basis and that we can look forward five and 10 and 15 and 20 years and know that we can afford to do that and maybe we can even afford to do it better and to take care of those people in a higher and more respectful and compassionate way.

So, Madam Speaker, we'll be supporting this bill. I'll be supporting this bill. There are a lot more questions we would like to address I think in Committee of the Whole as well, but I do thank the minister for bringing this forward, for addressing this. It's taken a little while, but here we are, an opportunity for us to do the right thing, and I'll look forward to supporting it.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, I'll call on the hon. Minister of Community and Social Services to close debate.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you to all the members who participated in the debate, and I look forward to more detailed discussion in the next stage. With that, I close debate.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

[Motion carried; Bill 26 read a second time]

Mr. Mason: Madam Speaker, in light of the hour I am going to move that we call it 4:30 and adjourn until 1:30 on Monday.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 4:18 p.m.]

Bill Status Report for the 29th Legislature - 4th Session (2018)

Activity to Thursday, November 22, 2018

The Bill sponsor's name is in brackets following the Bill title. If it is a money Bill, (\$) will appear between the title and the sponsor's name. Numbers following each Reading refer to Hansard pages where the text of debates is found; dates for each Reading are in brackets following the page numbers. Bills numbered 1 to 200 are Government Bills. Bills numbered 201 or higher are Private Members' Public Bills. Bills numbered with a "Pr" prefix are Private Bills.

* An asterisk beside a Bill number indicates an amendment was passed to that Bill; the Committee line shows the precise date of the amendment.

The date a Bill comes into force is indicated in square brackets after the date of Royal Assent. If a Bill comes into force "on proclamation," "with exceptions," or "on various dates," please contact Legislative Counsel, Alberta Justice, for details at 780.427.2217. The chapter number assigned to the Bill is entered immediately following the date the Bill comes into force. SA indicates Statutes of Alberta; this is followed by the year in which it is included in the statutes, and its chapter number. Please note, Private Bills are not assigned chapter number until the conclusion of the Fall Sittings.

Bill 1 — Energy Diversification Act (McCuaig-Boyd)

First Reading — 6 (*Mar. 8, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 50-51 (*Mar. 13, 2018 morn.*), 184-87 (*Mar. 15, 2018 aft.*), 233-43 (*Mar. 20, 2018 aft.*), 301-08 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft.*), 919-27 (*May 9, 2018 morn.*), 981-84 (*May 9, 2018 eve.*), 1054-59 (*May 14, 2018 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1286-87 (*May 29, 2018 aft.*), 1280-86 (*May 29, 2018 aft.*), 1299 (*May 29, 2018 eve.*), 1311-18 (*May 29, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1488-92 (*Jun. 5, 2018 morn.*), 1523-24 (*Jun. 5, 2018 aft.*), 1525-41 (*Jun. 6, 2018 morn., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 11, 2018; SA 2018 cE-9.6]

Bill 2 — Growth and Diversification Act (\$) (Bilous)

First Reading — 118 (*Mar. 14, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 243-46 (*Mar. 20, 2018 morn.*), 294-96 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft.*), 314-25 (*Mar. 22, 2018 morn.*), 411-12 (*Apr. 4, 2018 aft.*), 702-05 (*May 1, 2018 eve.*), 928-33 (*May 9, 2018 morn.*), 1061-68 (*May 15, 2018 morn.*), 1101-04 (*May 15, 2018 eve.*), 1163-67 (*May 16, 2018 eve.*), 1202-06 (*May 17, 2018 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1253-58 (*May 29, 2018 morn.*), 1288-97 (*May 29, 2018 aft.*), 1299 (*May 29, 2018 eve.*), 1379-82 (*May 30, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1492-94 (*Jun. 5, 2018 morn.*), 1510-23 (*Jun. 5, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation, with exceptions; SA 2018 c8]

Bill 3 — Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2018 (\$) (Ceci)

First Reading — 184 (*Mar. 15, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 221-26 (*Mar. 19, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 261-68 (*Mar. 20, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 296-98 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 28, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force Mar. 28, 2018; SA 2018 c1]

Bill 4 — Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2018 (\$) (Ceci)

First Reading — 165 (*Mar. 15, 2018 morn., passed*)

Second Reading — 226-32 (*Mar. 19, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 268-75 (*Mar. 20, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 298-301 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 28, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force Mar. 28, 2018; SA 2018 c2]

Bill 5 — An Act to Strengthen Financial Security for Persons with Disabilities (Sabir)

First Reading — 200-201 (*Mar. 19, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 360-62 (*Apr. 3, 2018 morn.*), 482-87 (*Apr. 10, 2018 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 847-54 (*May 7, 2018 eve.*), 1084-88 (*May 15, 2018 aft.*), 1361-64 (*May 30, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1418-21 (*May 31, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 11, 2018; SA 2018 c12]

Bill 6 — Gaming and Liquor Statutes Amendment Act, 2018 (Ganley)

First Reading — 448 (*Apr. 9, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 533-34 (*Apr. 12, 2018 aft.*), 669-79 (*May 1, 2018 aft.*), 1010-13 (*May 10, 2018 aft.*), 1101 (*May 15, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1158-63 (*May 16, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1360-61 (*May 30, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2018 c7]

Bill 7 — Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act (Carlier)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 491-97 (*Apr. 10, 2018 aft.*), 534-36 (*Apr. 12, 2018 aft.*), 679-83 (*May 1, 2018 aft.*), 908-09 (*May 8, 2018 eve.*), 913-14 (*May 8, 2018 eve.*), 1097-98 (*May 15, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1299-1311 (*May 29, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1365-74 (*May 30, 2018 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 11, 2018, for sections 1-6 and 20-21 and April 1, 2019, for sections 7-19; SA 2018 cS-23.3]

Bill 8 — Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2018 (S. Anderson)

First Reading — 374 (*Apr. 3, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1639-45 (*Oct. 30, 2018 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1645-53 (*Oct. 30, 2018 morn.*), 1667 (*Oct. 30, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1763-65 (*Nov. 1, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Nov. 19, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force November 19, 2018; SA 2018 c14]

Bill 9* — Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act (Hoffman)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 497-502 (*Apr. 10, 2018 aft.*), 785-93 (*May 3, 2018 morn.*), 775-76 (*May 3, 2018 morn.*), 807-08 (*May 3, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 909-13 (*May 8, 2018 eve.*), 957-61 (*May 9, 2018 aft.*), 992-94 (*May 10, 2018 morn.*), 1088-96 (*May 15, 2018 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1352-60 (*May 30, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 11, 2018; SA 2018 cP-26.83]

Bill 10* — An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements (S. Anderson)

First Reading — 528 (*Apr. 12, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 611-12 (*Apr. 19, 2018 aft.*), 643-50 (*May 1, 2018 morn.*), 761-72 (*May 2, 2018 eve.*), 973-81 (*May 9, 2018 eve.*), 1049-54 (*May 14, 2018 eve.*), 1180-87 (*May 17, 2018 morn.*), 1242-47 (*May 28, 2018 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1287-88 (*May 29, 2018 aft.*), 1299 (*May 29, 2018 eve.*), 1374-79 (*May 30, 2018 eve., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1555-71 (*Jun. 6, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2018 c6]

Bill 11 — Lobbyists Amendment Act, 2018 (Gray)

First Reading — 505 (*Apr. 11, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 612-13 (*Apr. 19, 2018 aft.*), 650-56 (*May 1, 2018 morn.*), 772-74 (*May 2, 2018 eve.*), 967-73 (*May 9, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1157 (*May 16, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1382-86 (*May 30, 2018 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 11, 2018, with exceptions; SA 2018 c9]

Bill 12* — Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act (McCuaig-Boyd)

First Reading — 547 (*Apr. 16, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 736-46 (*May 2, 2018 aft.*), 854-55 (*May 7, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 961-65 (*May 9, 2018 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 994-96 (*May 10, 2018 morn.*), 1135-54 (*May 16, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 18, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2018 c P-21.5]

Bill 13* — An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future (\$) (McCuaig-Boyd)

First Reading — 606 (*Apr. 19, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 746-53 (*May 2, 2018 aft.*), 808-16 (*May 3, 2018 aft.*), 855-64 (*May 7, 2018 eve.*), 947-57 (*May 9, 2018 aft.*), 1169-80 (*May 17, 2018 morn.*), 1247-50 (*May 28, 2018 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1322-34 (*May 30, 2018 morn.*), 1397-1404 (*May 31, 2018 morn.*), 1449-79 (*Jun. 4, 2018 eve., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1573-92 (*Jun. 7, 2018 morn., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation, with exceptions; SA 2018 c10]

Bill 14 — An Act to Empower Utility Consumers (McLean)

First Reading — 590 (*Apr. 18, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 718-24 (*May 2, 2018 morn.*), 915-19 (*May 9, 2018 morn.*), 1098-1101 (*May 15, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1319-22 (*May 30, 2018 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1421 (*May 31, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2018 c5]

Bill 15 — Appropriation Act, 2018 (\$) (Ceci)

First Reading — 610 (*Apr. 19, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Second Reading — 683-89 (*May 1, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 753-56 (*May 2, 2018 aft.*), 757-60 (*May 2, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 776-85 (*May 3, 2018 morn., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*May 14, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 14, 2018; SA 2018 c3]

Bill 16 — Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Statutes Amendment Act, 2018 (Gray)

First Reading — 879 (*May 8, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1010-13 (*May 10, 2018 aft.*), 1105-22 (*May 16, 2018 morn.*), 1155-57 (*May 16, 2018 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1258-64 (*May 29, 2018 morn.*), 1299 (*May 29, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1421-22 (*May 31, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 11, 2018, with exceptions; SA 2018 c4]

Bill 17 — Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2018 (Ceci)

First Reading — 806 (*May 3, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 864-65 (*May 7, 2018 eve.*), 1014-15 (*May 10, 2018 aft.*), 1058-59 (*May 14, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1157 (*May 16, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1364 (*May 30, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 11, 2018, with exceptions; SA 2018 c13]

Bill 18 — Statutes Amendment Act, 2018 (Mason)

First Reading — 1201 (*May 17, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1251-52 (*May 28, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1387-97 (*May 31, 2018 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1481-88 (*Jun. 5, 2018 morn.*), 1507-10 (*Jun. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 11, 2018; SA 2018 c11]

Bill 19* — An Act to Improve the Affordability and Accessibility of Post-secondary Education (Schmidt)

First Reading — 1621 (*Oct. 29, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1667-81 (*Oct. 30, 2018 aft.*), 1690-1701 (*Oct. 31, 2018 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1718-28 (*Oct. 31, 2018 aft.*), 1828-35 (*Nov. 6, 2018 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1845-65 (*Nov. 7, 2018 morn.*), 2000-05 (*Nov. 20, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 20 — Securities Amendment Act, 2018 (Ceci)

First Reading — 1621 (*Oct. 29, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1681-84 (*Oct. 30, 2018 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1716-18 (*Oct. 31, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1765-66 (*Nov. 1, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Nov. 19, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force November 19, 2018; SA 2018 c16]

Bill 21* — An Act to Protect Patients (Hoffman)

First Reading — 1666 (*Oct. 30, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1685-90 (*Oct. 31, 2018 morn., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1729-32 (*Oct. 31, 2018 aft.*), 1835-43 (*Nov. 6, 2018 aft., passed with amendments*), 1900-10 (*Nov. 8, 2018 morn., recommitted, adjourned*), 1924-28 (*Nov. 8, 2018 aft., passed with amendments*), 1928-29 (*Nov. 8, 2018 aft., recommitted, passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1899-1900 (*Nov. 8, 2018 morn., recommitted to Committee*), 1928 (*Nov. 8, 2018 aft., recommitted to Committee*), 1929-32 (*Nov. 8, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Nov. 19, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force November 19, 2018, with exceptions; SA 2018 c15]

Bill 22* — An Act for Strong Families Building Stronger Communities (Larivee)

First Reading — 1714 (*Oct. 31, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1735-49 (*Nov. 1, 2018 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 2005-16 (*Nov. 20, 2018 aft., adjourned, amendment introduced*)

Bill 23 — An Act to Renew Local Democracy in Alberta (S. Anderson)

First Reading — 1778 (*Nov. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1809-12 (*Nov. 6, 2018 morn.*), 1974-82 (*Nov. 20, 2018 morn.*), 2018-28 (*Nov. 21, 2018 morn., passed on division*)

Bill 24 — An Act to Recognize AMA Representation Rights (Hoffman)

First Reading — 1762-63 (*Nov. 1, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1799-1809 (*Nov. 6, 2018 morn.*), 1881-97 (*Nov. 7, 2018 aft.*), 1969-74 (*Nov. 20, 2018 morn.*), 2028-31 (*Nov. 21, 2018 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 2058-63 (*Nov. 21, 2018 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 25 — Canyon Creek Hydro Development Act (McCuaig-Boyd)

First Reading — 1879 (*Nov. 7, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2017-18 (*Nov. 21, 2018 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 2057-58 (*Nov. 21, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 26 — An Act to Combat Poverty and Fight for Albertans with Disabilities (Sabir)

First Reading — 1923 (*Nov. 8, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2078-86 (*Nov. 22, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 27 — Joint Governance of Public Sector Pension Plans Act (Ceci)

First Reading — 1995 (*Nov. 20, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 28 — Family Statutes Amendment Act, 2018 (Ganley)

First Reading — 2044 (*Nov. 21, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 29 — Public Service Employee Relations Amendment Act, 2018 (Gray)

First Reading — 2044-45 (*Nov. 21, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 201 — Employment Standards (Firefighter Leave) Amendment Act, 2018 (W. Anderson)

First Reading — 118 (*Mar. 14, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 201-14 (*Mar. 19, 2018 aft., referred to Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future*), 1620 (*Oct. 29, 2018 aft.*), 1780-92 (*Nov. 5, 2018 aft., motion to concur in report, adjourned*)

Bill 202 — Alberta Taxpayer Protection (Carbon Tax Referendum) Amendment Act, 2018 (Kenney)

First Reading — 179 (*Mar. 15, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 549-63 (*Apr. 16, 2018 aft., defeated on division*)

Bill 203 — Long Term Care Information Act (Schreiner)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 632-40 (*Apr. 30, 2018 aft.*), 829-33 (*May 7, 2018 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1221-30 (*May 28, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1434-41 (*Jun. 4, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 11, 2018; SA 2018 cL-22]

Bill 204 — Land Statutes (Abolition of Adverse Possession) Amendment Act, 2018 (Gotfried)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 833-41 (*May 7, 2018 aft., adjourned*), 1031-37 (*May 14, 2018 aft., reasoned amendment agreed to*)

Bill 205 — Supporting Accessible Mental Health Services Act (Jabbour)

First Reading — 1008 (*May 10, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1037 (*May 14, 2018 aft., deferred to Monday, October 29, 2018*)

Bill 206 — Societies (Preventing the Promotion of Hate) Amendment Act, 2018 (Coolahan)

First Reading — 1008-09 (*May 10, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1037 (*May 14, 2018 aft.*), 1441-47 (*Jun. 4, 2018 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 207 — Municipal Government (Legion Tax Exemption) Amendment Act, 2018 (Rosendahl)

First Reading — 1418 (*May 31, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 208 — Public Recreation Areas Consultation Act (Westhead)

First Reading — 1418 (*May 31, 2018 aft., passed*)

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, November 26, 2018

Day 53

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (NDP), Speaker
Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (NDP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (UCP),
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Anderson, Hon. Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (NDP)
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (UCP)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (NDP)
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Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (UCP)
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (NDP)
Dreeschen, Devin, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UCP)
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (NDP)
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)
Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (NDP)
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP)
Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP),
Deputy Government House Leader
Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (FCP)
Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (NDP)
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (AP)
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (NDP),
Deputy Government House Leader
Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (Ind)
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)
Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Conklin (UCP)
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (UCP)
Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (NDP)
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)
Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (NDP)
Hunter, Grant R., Cardston-Taber-Warner (UCP),
Official Opposition Deputy Whip
Jansen, Hon. Sandra, Calgary-North West (NDP)
Kazim, Anam, Calgary-Glenmore (NDP)
Kenney, Hon. Jason, PC, Calgary-Lougheed (UCP),
Leader of the Official Opposition
Kleinstauber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (NDP)
Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (NDP),
Deputy Government House Leader

Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (NDP)
Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (UCP)
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)
Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (Ind)
Malkinson, Hon. Brian, Calgary-Currie (NDP)
Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),
Government House Leader
McCuaig-Boyd, Hon. Margaret,
Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (NDP)
McIver, Ric, Calgary-Hays (UCP),
Official Opposition Whip
McKittrick, Annie, Sherwood Park (NDP)
McLean, Stephanie V., Calgary-Varsity (NDP)
McPherson, Karen M., Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill (AP)
Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (NDP)
Miranda, Hon. Ricardo, Calgary-Cross (NDP)
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)
Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (UCP),
Official Opposition House Leader
Notley, Hon. Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),
Premier
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (UCP)
Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (UCP)
Payne, Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (NDP)
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (NDP)
Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (NDP)
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (UCP),
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)
Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (NDP)
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP)
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)
Schneider, David A., Little Bow (UCP)
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (NDP)
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (NDP)
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (NDP)
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (UCP)
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (UCP)
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (NDP),
Deputy Government Whip
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)

Party standings:

New Democratic: 53 United Conservative: 26 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Freedom Conservative: 1 Independent: 2 Progressive Conservative: 1

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Shannon Dean, Law Clerk and Executive
Director of House Services, and Acting
Clerk, Procedure
Stephanie LeBlanc, Senior Parliamentary
Counsel
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel

Philip Massolin, Manager of Research and
Committee Services
Nancy Robert, Research Officer
Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of
Alberta Hansard

Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms
Chris Caughell, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms
Tom Bell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

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Rachel Notley	Premier, President of Executive Council
Sarah Hoffman	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health
Shaye Anderson	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Sandra Jansen	Minister of Infrastructure
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Children's Services and Status of Women
Brian Malkinson	Minister of Service Alberta
Brian Mason	Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Community and Social Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

Parliamentary Secretaries

Jessica Littlewood	Economic Development and Trade for Small Business
Annie McKittrick	Education

STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Mr. Coolahan
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	Luff
Dang	McPherson
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha
Deputy Chair: Mr. van Dijken

Carson	Littlewood
Connolly	McPherson
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schneider
Fitzpatrick	Starke
Gotfried	Taylor
Horne	

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

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Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Orr
Ellis	Renaud
Fraser	Shepherd
Hinkley	Swann
Luff	Woollard
McKitrick	Yao
Miller	

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Shepherd
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Aheer	McKitrick
Gill	Pitt
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Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

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Babcock	Nixon
Cooper	Piquette
Dang	Pitt
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Standing Committee on Private Bills

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Anderson, W.	Orr
Babcock	Rosendahl
Drever	Stier
Drysdale	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kleinsteinuber	Taylor
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Coolahan	Miller
Cooper	Nielsen
Goehring	Nixon
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Standing Committee on Public Accounts

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Carson	Miller
Clark	Nielsen
Gotfried	Panda
Hunter	Renaud
Littlewood	Turner
Luff	

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Babcock	Loewen
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Fildebrandt	Panda
Hanson	Rosendahl
Kazim	Schreiner
Kleinsteinuber	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, November 26, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Hon. members, let us pray or reflect, each in our own way. Yesterday marked the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. May we take a moment to reflect on how we as family members, as community leaders, and as legislators can take a stand against violence against women. May we collectively set the best possible example for our children, our grandchildren, and young Canadians in educating them that this behaviour is always inexcusable and never acceptable, and may we find ways to be allies and supporters to survivors.

Hon. members, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Ms Jinting Zhao, and I would invite all to participate in the language of their choice.

Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!
True patriot love in all of us command.
Car ton bras sait porter l'épée,
Il sait porter la croix!
Ton histoire est une épopée
Des plus brillants exploits.
God keep our land glorious and free!
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour and a privilege to rise today and introduce to you and through you students from one of our amazing new schools, Sister Alphonse academy, that came equipped with a wonderful playground. The students are accompanied today by their teacher, Mr. Sean Brass, along with their chaperone, Karla Bergstrom. I would ask that they now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly the students and staff of Calmar school. Calmar is a small community in my constituency, just outside of Edmonton, that I've had the privilege of visiting several times over the past three years to talk about the role of an MLA and this Legislature. It would be my dream that one or two of the students today, as a result of their visit to this Legislature, would grow up to become provincial leaders and to one day sit in this very Chamber themselves. Would the staff and the students of Calmar school please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's truly my pleasure and honour to introduce the hard-working and dedicated sheriffs and commissioners that work around the clock to ensure the safety of all members in this Assembly as well as the public. I'll ask them to rise as I call their names. I'll begin with the sheriffs: Sheriff Munib Malik, Sheriff Keith Taylor, Sheriff Jared Carbert, Sheriff Lisa Goertzen, Sheriff Mark Howell, Sheriff Chris Bijelic, Sheriff Sheldon Denis, Sheriff James Filgate, and Sergeant Warren Posch. I'd also like the commissioners to rise as I call their names: Jean Paul Grimard, Jin Kim, and Bhuwan Ponta. Please join me in extending the traditional warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Welcome, and thank you for your service.

The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Ms Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure for me to introduce to you and to the House Strathcona county councillor Paul Smith. He represents ward 5 of Strathcona county, which is the part of the county that includes both Alberta's Industrial Heartland and a lot of farm area. Paul is also the TransCanada Yellowhead Highway Association president and is also a leader on an intermunicipal team that recently resolved a negotiated annexation agreement that had been long awaited between Strathcona county and the city of Fort Saskatchewan. The Smith family are local pioneers and have been farming in Strathcona county for generations. I'm sad to hear that Paul and his wife, Merla, retired from farming last year, but that is likely to spend more time with their two children and four grandchildren. I'm proud to see Paul everywhere in his community being an excellent representative, including at the Christmas in the Heartland event, that was just over the weekend. I would ask everyone to extend the traditional warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to introduce five special guests in the gallery. First, Brendan Fisher was born in Calgary, and he enjoys attending Bowness high school. His passions include refereeing hockey and snowboarding. Asher Betts was born in Banff and is in grade 6 at Lawrence Grassi middle school in Canmore and plays soccer, hockey, and skiing. Drew Betts is a proud Albertan, born in Calgary, raised in St. Albert, and enjoys supporting the local women's shelter, coaching hockey, and helping to organize an annual food bank drive for the past 20-some years. Dawson Rodney is 10 years old, attends grade 5 at Lawrence Grassi middle school, a hot hand, as he is known by his sports peers, and is a dedicated and focused athlete. I'm told he's also a politically astute young man. Last but not least is our former colleague Dave Rodney, the former dean of this place, the CEO of Tourism Canmore Kananaskis. He says that his most important job is being a dad to Dawson and Evan and husband to Jennifer. I would like to ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Continuing with the introductions of the Minister of Justice, it's my honour to recognize some of the fine folks who work in this building and in the Federal Building and take such excellent care. The folks that I'll be introducing are caretakers. We know that this building beams with pride for all Albertans, and it's because of the hard work of these folks who I'm going to introduce. I ask that they rise as I say their

names: Rhonda Sorochan, Nelcy Mendes, Nimfa Zoleta, Emma Yakhina, Terrance LeBlanc, Claudia Delgado, Steven Bourns, Ahmed Asfour, Sandi Aamot, and Sandra McCuaig. There will be more by my colleagues, but please, hon. members, join me in thanking these hard-working public servants.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions here today, please. The first would be personal friends of mine, Jay Summach and his good wife, Anne, who are in the gallery. I'd like to introduce them to you and through you to all members of the Assembly. Jay is the account manager at Yellow Pencil, a digital agency that works with the public sector to deliver digital services, and his fine wife, Anne, is a nurse practitioner directing a nurse practitioner clinic for seniors at the SAGE Seniors Association here in Edmonton. These fine people in the gallery here today are actually constituents of the Member for Edmonton-Glenora, but they have been long-time hunting guests at our family farm. I'd ask that Jay and Anne please rise and receive the traditional welcome of the Assembly.

1:40

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to continue on introducing our good-looking Infrastructure team up in the galleries. It is absolutely my pleasure to help introduce some of the amazing men and women who keep this building in tip-top shape. On behalf of all members of the Assembly, all government staff, and visitors I want to offer my sincere thanks for the incredible hard work they do all the time and always with a smile. Will you please stand: Loretta Bieneck, facilities manager; Mario Galka, gardener; Richard Redden and Geoff Visscher, grounds supervisors; Claude Smith, gardener; Christin Siminiuk, carpenter; Jim Walsh, electrician; Bill Stecyk, facilities co-ordinator; and Donald Sieffert, facilities manager. Thank you so much.

The Speaker: Thank you and welcome. I have learned very much from these people.

I believe you had another introduction. My apologies, Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce also to you and through you again to all the members in the House other friends of mine. Some may think that I may not have that many friends. They are Bill and Kim Rock, who operate the C Store in Amisk, Alberta, near Hardisty. Bill is the plumber of the constituency, and Bill has also been a friend of mine since the beginning of what I call the Wildrose cycle of conservatism in Alberta. Bill and Kim, if you'd please rise and receive the typical warm welcome of the Assembly, I'd be appreciative of that.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To continue on with the introductions that the ministers of Justice, Health, and Infrastructure have started with regard to the people who work in and around this building – on this side of the House we're extremely grateful for the hard-working Albertans who keep our public buildings running safely and smoothly – it's with great pleasure that I introduce some of our caretakers, and I would ask that they rise as I call their names: Abe Jara, Fadumo Mohamed, Michael Ramjug,

Mohammed Yagoub, Rustamali Hudda, Jesu Junio, Nathaniel Jorquia, Maura Del Rosario, Yulier Sotolongo, and Berhane Ghebrekirstos. Please join me in extending the traditional warm welcome and appreciation of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome and thank you.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to continue to introduce some of the hard-working staff who keep the Legislature grounds and building going. I'm not sure what's happening out there. They're in here, so hopefully they've got people in their stead right now to keep us going because I know that without them, we'd be in disarray. They're seated in the members' gallery, and I hope I get all their names right. If they could rise when I call their names: Ben Pike, Joe Plante, Benoit Morin, Angela Neuman, Barry Malayko, Laurie Fedorchuk, Lou Webb, and Randall Sorochan. I would wish that everybody could give them the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome to you.

To the Minister: the real work happens out there.

The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this House a couple of my family friends, Mrs. Rehana Rafiq and Mr. Zafar Nabi. Mrs. Rehana Rafiq is a family violence counsellor by profession, and she also works at YWCA Sheriff King, while Mr. Nabi is a secretary to the government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. It's equivalent to a deputy minister here. I also want to add that Mrs. Rehana Rafiq has a degree, an MSW, from the U of C. When I was applying for the same program, I benefited from her advice and guidance, for which I am grateful. They are also accompanied by their daughters Shifa and Maha and their niece Aliza Zia. I ask my guests to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Second introduction.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to introduce to you and through you Nim and Nita Herian. Mr. and Mrs. Herian are the parents of my staff member Reena Herian and a staff member of the Minister of Environment and Parks, Ayesha Herian. They have dedicated their lives to working for Alberta Health Services. Mrs. Herian is a clerk at the U of A hospital, and Mr. Herian is a dialysis technician, providing life-saving services to remote communities across Alberta. Mr. Herian is also the cofounder and director of the Punjab United Sports & Heritage Association, a nonprofit organization that brings together folks from all ages and backgrounds to promote diversity, heritage, and community health. They are celebrating their 40th anniversary this year, so congratulations. Mrs. Herian is an advocate of Brahma Kumaris, a UN-designated nonprofit that works to deliver global supports through meditation. I ask my guests to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ms Goehring: Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce to you and through you Dylan Maguire and Katy DeCoste. Katy is working towards a bachelor of arts, combined honours in English and history, at the University of Alberta. She's also involved with the Concert Choir and student journalism society. Dylan is studying acting in the bachelor of fine arts program at the University of Alberta and has

been following politics since grade 4. I met Dylan and Katy during their first visit to the Alberta Legislature. I sent them a note wishing them well, and the note inspired them to reach out to my office to return the well wishes and do something that they had wanted to do for a long time, volunteer for the provincial NDP. Dylan and Katy, thank you for joining us here today and for your help on my team. I'd ask you now to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you two friends of mine. They're both fathers, they're both family people, and their greatest concern right now is Alberta's economy. Mr. Speaker, you may know them because they're both formerly from Medicine Hat. Could I please ask my friends Dean Weber and Cameron Chenier to rise and accept the traditional warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of this House a young conservative who has been helping me in my constituency office. Mr. Hadyn Place is one of the many conservative activists who is looking to help bring common sense back to Alberta and back to Calgary. Hayden used to be the debating rival to the Member for Calgary-Hawkwood. Hayden really, really doesn't like Justin Trudeau, and I'm sure that Mayor Nenshi has some choice words for Hayden's choice in civic causes. Hayden is visiting Edmonton after cheering on the Calgary Stampeders to victory in the Grey Cup on Sunday, so please join me in giving Hayden the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Hon. members, any other guests today? Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly an amazing group of parents and students and community members who are here representing the larger community of the residents that are advocating for a Langdon area senior high school. The community is one of the fastest growing in Alberta, with 30 per cent of its population under the age of 15. It is also one of only two communities of its size without a high school. Our current designated school is at capacity and will just continue to be stretched past its limits with student growth. They are here today to put faces to the hundreds of letters that you've been receiving highlighting the need for this high school. I will be tabling those letters later. I would ask that they rise when I say their names and please remain standing with us: Chrissy Craig, Sarah Craig, Frances Trevors, Leah Henderson, Tony Baker, Louise Howatt, Samantha Graham Chamberlain, David Chamberlain, Michael Chamberlain, Brandi-Lee Mouck, Corrie Carrobourg, Susan Pilling, Janice Jesenovec, Teresa Wasylenchuk, Linda Isbister, Alain Carrobourg, Evelyn Carrobourg, Jacqueline Weiss, Denise Twizell, Stephanie Brundige, Theresa Layzelle, Marilyn Collins, Rody Visotski, Joshua Neiszner, Isabelle Thuy, and then the Tweit family: Travis, Lorraine, Chase, Cole, Brody, and Bryce. Please give them the traditional warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

1:50

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed and Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, go Stamps. Congratulations to the Calgary Stampeders on a huge Grey Cup win last night. I'm sure all members will agree with that, especially the Edmontonians here.

Oil Price Differentials

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, it has been estimated by Professor Fellows from the University of Calgary that the price differential for Alberta oil at \$39 a barrel would cost this province's treasury \$7.2 billion. But the price differential in the last month has been averaging nearly \$45 a barrel. Can the Finance minister tell us: how much is this costing the Alberta treasury, the current price differential?

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. I know that the Premier has said that when it comes to getting fair value for our resources, nothing is off the table. But for all members let me be clear. We are going to make sure that we use every tool that's available to us to ensure we get full value. We're not going to accept the differential as being a sure thing. That's why we've been fighting to get our access to tidewater, and that's why we're considering increasing options with things like rail and working with our partners in the oil and gas industry as well, because Albertans deserve fair and full value. We wish we would have gotten it years ago, but thank goodness we're here at the table and we're able to do something.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. However, my question was not for the government to recite its cliché talking points. It was a very simple, statistical question, so I'll ask it again: does the government have an estimate of the forgone revenues that would accrue to the Alberta treasury as a result of the current \$45 price differential? It's not a partisan question; it's not a negative question; it's simply a factual question. Do they have an estimate of how much this is costing the Alberta government?

Ms Hoffman: Well, Mr. Speaker, we've been very clear that \$80 million a day is the estimate for the impact to the country of Canada. Certainly, we think it's important that folks in Ottawa and all Canadians and all Albertans know about that impact on the national economy. Of course, Alberta is a big share of that, and that's why we won't rest. But this isn't just in Alberta's interest; this is in all Canadians' interests, and that's why we're not backing down. We're going to make sure that every option that's at our disposal is used, and that's why we're fighting so hard to get this pipeline built that the member opposite had 20 years while he was in Ottawa, 10 at the cabinet table, to get done. But we're going to make sure it happens.

Mr. Kenney: Just for the record there, Mr. Speaker, a simple, factual, nonpartisan question and a partisan attack in response: par for the course for that minister and this government.

Mr. Speaker, we understand that the hon. the Premier will be visiting Ottawa this week. Will she be meeting with Prime Minister Trudeau?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, I will never stop fighting for the people of Alberta and reminding them of the record of all hon. members when it comes to fighting for these projects. That's why I'm so proud that our Premier won't back down. She is fighting every single day to make sure that we get our access to tidewater, that we're leaders on the environment, and that we protect the jobs that are so important to the people of Alberta and grow our economy, not just in Alberta but across our nation. From coast to coast to coast, the Premier keeps working on this. Certainly, the Prime Minister will be hearing from the Premier; I can assure you of that. I believe he's heard from her already, and he will continue to hear so because she sure is fighting for this province.

The Speaker: Second main question.

Mr. Kenney: Well, the minister couldn't answer the first question about the estimated forgone revenues, and she can't even answer the second question about whether the Premier will be meeting with the Prime Minister. That seems peculiar, Mr. Speaker.

Federal and Provincial Energy Policies

Mr. Kenney: This NDP government gave the Liberals everything they wanted: they supported the veto of Northern Gateway, didn't protest the killing of Energy East, supported the emissions cap on the oil sands, supported the imposition of a carbon tax. Yet Justin Trudeau came here last week and gave us nothing but a condescending pat on the head. What has the NDP managed to get for energy workers out of their alliance with the Trudeau Liberals?

Ms Hoffman: Just to reiterate, the Premier has made her message loud and clear to the people of Ontario, including the Prime Minister, and she's going to continue meeting with people who are directly impacted by the decisions of the federal government and consecutive federal governments, I might add, Mr. Speaker, that failed to get our product to tidewater. The Premier is going to be meeting directly with a number of people in Ontario, and she's definitely made her position clear to the Prime Minister and will continue to do so. Never count our Premier out. She is tenacious, she is hard-working, and she is fighting for Albertans.

Mr. Kenney: So, in other words, the government cannot identify a single thing that they've gotten from their alliance with the Trudeau Liberals.

Last week over 2,000 Calgarians came out to welcome Justin Trudeau on short notice to condemn his government's failure to defend this country's biggest engine of job growth in the past, our energy sector. Now, again, the federal Liberals got out of this government a carbon tax, an emissions cap. This government folded on Energy East and on Northern Gateway. What did we get in exchange? Did we get a single railcar? What have we gotten from the federal Trudeau Liberals in response?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, I can understand the frustration felt by the folks who were outside the meeting. I have to say that, as the Premier said before and I'll say it again, I'm with them. Our government is with them. The differential is hurting Alberta, and it's hurting Canada. It's important that Ottawa and the Prime Minister are well aware of that. That's why we won't back down. That's why we launched the Keep Canada Working 2.0 campaign, that's why we're working furiously to find solutions, and that's why we'll continue to fight to make sure that Alberta gets a fair share from Ottawa, which we didn't get when the Leader of the Official Opposition was there for his 10 years. While we continue to push forward again right now, we won't back down. That's for sure.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the NDP told Albertans that the punishing carbon tax on heating homes and filling up gas tanks would get us a coastal pipeline. We don't have a coastal pipeline. Why do we still have a punishing carbon tax?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, the fact that the member opposite keeps drawing attention to the failure of the government that he was a part of for over a decade in Ottawa and now decides to blame us for it astounds me. It's true that the member opposite did fail to get products to tidewater. That's why our Premier is in the middle of this fight right now. That's why we continue to push forward and why we won't back down. This is in the national interest. We haven't gotten a Canadian pipeline to Canadian tidewater in 65 years, but you know who's going to make it happen? Our Premier. That's for sure. Not only did the members of the previous federal government get no pipelines to tidewater; they actually created greater opposition to pipelines than ever before. But that's turning because . . .

The Speaker: Thank you.
Third main question.

Oil Production Volume

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, Alberta oil producers have voluntarily reduced their production of oil by approximately 150,000 barrels per day in the last three weeks. They've done so because of the severity of the current price differential, much of which is caused by a glut of inventory in Alberta right now. There are a handful of companies that have not followed suit with their own voluntary reductions in production. Will the government join with us in calling on those companies to also participate in these voluntary reductions so that we start getting a decent price?

The Speaker: Thank you.

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the concern that the member is raising with regard to the differential. We, too, share that concern, and that's why we created the envoy that's working diligently to make sure that we get full value for our resource. That is certainly one part of the solution. The other part of the solution is to continue forging forward on making sure that we get fair value by opening international markets, something that we've been fighting for since day one. The member opposite actually said that no pipeline is a national priority when he was in Ottawa. I'm shocked by this. I think in *Hansard* he said the word "pipeline" one time. Enough is enough. We have faith in our Premier. She's getting this job done.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I said that coastal access was a national priority. I must confess that as minister of immigration I wasn't responsible for pipelines.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister please tell us: why will she not call on all players in the Alberta industry to follow the lead of most companies in reducing production so that we can get an increase in the price? Right now we're underselling Alberta oil by \$45 a barrel. This is a crisis. It's been described to me as a five-alarm fire by people in the industry. Will the government join with us in calling for voluntary action?

2:00

The Speaker: Thank you.

Ms Hoffman: I am shocked that the Leader of the Official Opposition is owning the fact that he did nothing to get our pipelines built when he was sitting around the federal cabinet table for 10 years. That is sad. That is sad. What is his answer? That he wants us to make him Premier and trust that he'll do it because, magically, he's going to focus on something that he failed to act on when he had the opportunity around the federal cabinet table for 10 years. Enough, hon. member.

Mr. Nixon: Point of order.

Ms Hoffman: It's time you stand with Alberta, stand with our Premier, and make sure you put your partisan attacks aside and get our pipeline built.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the question was not a partisan attack. It was about voluntary reductions in production. I would remind the minister that while she and her colleagues were protesting Northern Gateway, Trans Mountain, and Keystone, the Harper government saw the construction of four pipelines that increased movement of oil by 1.72 million barrels per day, doubling oil movement in Canada. Why will the government not stand up and call on all producers to participate in the voluntary reduction of production to increase the price of Alberta oil?

Ms Hoffman: You know what, Mr. Speaker? Our resources belong to all of us. I believe it was Peter Lougheed who called on us to act like owners of that resource, and I wish that when the member opposite was in Ottawa for 20 years, 10 around the federal cabinet table, he would have acted like an owner because we'd be in a different position than we're in today. But I have to say that one of the solutions is fixing the differential. That's why we've created our special envoy. One of the solutions is increasing our takeaway capacity, getting a pipeline built to tidewater, and growing upgrading right here in Alberta, and that's what our government is fighting for.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-South East.

Oil Price Differentials (continued)

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Prime Minister visited Calgary last week, and as far as the energy industry is concerned, he rode in on a lame horse with empty hands. There was no support for a struggling industry that is so important to our province and this country. It's time for Alberta to take steps as a province to address the price differential directly, not wait for federal help that may never come. To the Deputy Premier: will your government take steps to curtail production and address this huge discount our oil is currently selling for?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. Our Premier said and I will reiterate: nothing is off the table. That's why we've created our special envoy. That's why we are making sure that we are working to address the differential, addressing access to various markets, including considerations around that. Of course, we continue to push forward for a Canadian pipeline to Canadian tidewater to get a fair value for all Canadians, something that would solve an \$80-million-a-day gap in federal revenues. This is something that is of national importance. The differential is certainly one piece of it, and

we are absolutely working to make sure we get full value for all Canadians for this resource, that we are all owners of.

Mr. Fraser: The federal Minister of Finance said in an interview on Sunday that they would not be supporting Alberta's request for more rail cars to transport oil. Morneau said that it wasn't a consideration because it would take nine months to get going even. Premier, we can't afford nine months of cheap oil. We need to take action now. If not curtailment, what action does your government actually intend to do today?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said in a previous answer, we are committed to fixing the differential. There are certainly a number of different tools in our ability to do that. We have a special envoy that we need to entrust – they were named about a week ago – that we have doing that work, reporting directly back to our Premier and making sure that they're continuing to move forward on making sure that we close that gap. That should have been addressed decades ago, but we certainly are at the table working to make that happen because of this Premier and this government. We're also working to increase our takeaway capacity, getting pipelines built to Canadian tidewater, growing upgrading right here in Alberta, all things that owners should do when they own a resource, and owners are . . .

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Fraser: Our hearts go out to the workers in Oshawa who just lost their jobs, but let's be very clear. Alberta has been dealing with substantially more job losses in oil and gas and may lose more now because of low oil prices. It's imperative that our energy industry and the workers who have lost their jobs remain a top national priority. To the Premier: what are you doing to ensure that the crisis in our energy industry remains a top priority for all levels of government?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. One of the things our Premier did was create a very talented special envoy because she knows it's important to have the best negotiator, the best talent at the table fighting for Albertans every single day, and that's what we've done. That's another reason why our Premier will be in Ottawa later this week, because she is speaking to people who are impacted. Everyone is impacted by this impact of the differential and by the lack of access to international markets. The best way to fix that, of course, is ensuring that we have our pipeline to tidewater, but she won't back down on any of the other options that are available at her disposal, and I am so proud to be a part of her team.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

Diversity and Inclusivity Initiatives

Ms Kazim: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Within my own constituency of Calgary-Glenmore and the city of Calgary as a whole there is a breadth and depth of diversity that is reflective of the population of Alberta. I have the pleasure of regularly interacting with Calgarians that are bilingual, multilingual, or of different ethnic backgrounds and who practise different faiths. To the Minister of Education: how is the government supporting these communities so they feel a sense of belonging within the province of Alberta and are able to continue contributing to their communities?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am, too, very proud of the diversity that we find not only in the city of Calgary but right across the province of Alberta as well. Two things. We have started to build the Anti-Racism Advisory Council. We have interviews that are being conducted right now to help to get advice and to reach into communities across the province. We also have a grant program by which groups can make application to projects that they want to do in their communities to fight racism, foster acceptance, and to promote inclusivity.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Kazim: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that among my constituents are individuals and organizations doing all they can on behalf of racialized communities and that we need to do more to ensure they're heard and acknowledged, again to the same minister: how is the government ensuring racialized communities have a voice and can impact government decision-making?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we've been hosting these round-tables right across the province. I thank all of my colleagues for your work to bring people together in your communities to look for ways by which we can fight racism and foster acceptance as well. We also are building a new curriculum. I think it's very important for young people to be able to see themselves reflected in the curriculum, to see their histories reflected in the curriculum, to recognize that they are supported and thus will be more successful in school.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Kazim: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that there are many people actively working to create more welcoming and caring environments, I cannot help but wonder how far that impact could go if these organizations were better supported. To the same minister: how can the government help these individuals in the great work they're already doing within their communities?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we believe by using established programming and ways by which community groups have already been doing very good work to fight racism in their communities. We would like to support that and supplement that with the grant program that came out of the antiracism initiative. We're working very hard, and we need all Albertans to pull together to foster inclusivity and to build a more accepting society for all.

Federal-provincial Relations

Mr. Fildebrandt: Last night the Calgary Stampeders on behalf of all Alberta defeated Ottawa to win the 106th Grey Cup. Unfortunately, Alberta hasn't beaten Ottawa at anything else in a very long time. While Ottawa has been playing with unnecessary roughness, Alberta's NDP has been playing with two-hand touch. Last week the Minister of Finance said, quote: if we were, say, Bombardier or if we were the auto industry, there would be all hands on deck trying to address this oil crisis as quickly as possible. Are you just figuring this out now?

Mr. Ceci: You know, we saw just last week how Calgarians poured into the streets to address the issues of the federal government. They weren't happy with the federal government. I wasn't happy with the federal government's federal fiscal update as well, Mr. Speaker. I let them know that. We are going to continue to speak loudly and longly, as long as we can, until action is taken by the federal government on this differential.

Mr. Fildebrandt: When the Stampeders want to put points on the board against Ottawa, they put up Cornish and Cahoon. When the NDP want to put points on the board, they put up Charlie Brown and let Ottawa hold the ball. The fact is that Stephen Harper was right in 2001, when he said that Alberta needed to build firewalls to protect our prosperity and decision-making. Does this government agree that it is time for Alberta to repatriate all of our powers under the Constitution to bring decision-making and prosperity back to Alberta?

Mr. Ceci: What this side of the House believes, Mr. Speaker, is that the Premier is going down to Ottawa to continue to press the need for pipelines to tidewater for addressing the differential as quickly as possible. Crude by rail is that interim solution that will take us to a better future once pipelines are in place, and we're not going to give up on that.

2:10

Mr. Fildebrandt: The sad reality is that when Liberals are in Ottawa, Alberta is actively undermined. When the Tories are in Ottawa, we are mostly ignored and taken for granted. When the referee is working for your opponent, you need to change the game. Confederation is broken. If Alberta is ever to be treated as more than a glorified colony, then we must reject the status quo, that treats us as such. Will the government agree to hold a referendum in conjunction with the next provincial election for Alberta to renegotiate its constitutional relationship with the federal government?

Mr. Ceci: Mr. Speaker, you know, we started off talking about the differential, so I'll just continue on that. The differential is something that we need to address right away. We are pushing Ottawa to address that in an interim solution. We have envoys who are talking to oil companies in this province to try to get them voluntarily to address this issue. What seems to be the best thing for Albertans is to make sure our economy is functioning on all cylinders. We are doing that on behalf of Canada, too, because so much of Canada depends on a sound, functioning economy in this province.

Oil Price Differentials and Provincial Debt

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, Alberta is in the middle of a crisis of this government's making. The differential is costing Alberta \$210 million for every differential dollar. Kent Fellows, a research associate at the University of Calgary, estimated the differential would translate into a \$7.2 billion loss to the Alberta government if it persisted for a year. That was in March. To the minister: how much more is the deficit going to grow because of your pie-in-the-sky differential projections, that you missed by \$25 a barrel?

Ms Hoffman: I can't help but chime in on this for the first one, Mr. Speaker. I have to say again that the members opposite were in government here in Alberta for 40 years, and the member opposite's leader, the Leader of the Official Opposition, was in Ottawa around the cabinet table for 10 years. They failed to fix this, and now they're saying that it's our fault, that magically overnight we are to

blame for the differential. You know what? That couldn't be further from reality. But you know what is reality? We're creating an envoy, we're fighting hard to get our product to tidewater, we're closer than we've ever been before, we're going to make sure we address the differential, and we are going to move forward because we are the owners of this resource, and it's about time Alberta had a Premier who acted like it . . .

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Barnes: Given that Alberta is in the middle of this government's fiscal crisis and managed decline and that over 180,000 Albertans are unemployed and that over 90,000 Albertans have exhausted their employment insurance and given that hard-working Albertans have seen their RSPs lose value as Alberta companies like Canadian Western Bank and Boardwalk have dropped in value, to the minister: why didn't you stand up to your ally Justin Trudeau, who won't finalize our pipeline approval but just provided Canada's richest families half a billion dollars for their newspapers while Alberta families see our savings evaporate?

Mr. Ceci: Mr. Speaker, with regard to the deficit I can tell you that this province and this government were dealt a really tough hand when the collapse of oil prices happened in late 2014, but we focused on what matters to Albertans, and that is jobs and diversification and health care. We cleaned up government and all the expenditures like the sky palace and insider deals that were taking place from the former Progressive Conservatives. Our plan is working, and things are looking up. Ninety thousand Albertans got full-time jobs, mostly in the private sector, in 2017, and we cut the deficit – cut the deficit – by \$3 billion since our original budget.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, this NDP government has increased Alberta's debt by 650 per cent since 2015, a burden of \$50,000 per family of four. This puts every important Albertan priority at risk. Again to the minister: when will you stop burdening Albertans with unsustainable interest, unsustainable deficits, chasing investment out of our province, something that even the *Globe and Mail* reports is rapidly turning Alberta into a have-not province, and instead get focused, get focused on re-establishing Alberta as the beacon of free enterprise for families and all Canadians?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much. You know, Mr. Speaker, if we want to talk about debt, let's focus on what the Leader of the Opposition and the governments he was part of did when they were in Ottawa: six straight deficit budgets, a \$56 billion deficit in just one year alone. He added, their government added \$145 billion, with a "b," to the national debt and \$309 billion in interest payments. What about that as a record over there? We will continue to stand up for hard-working Albertans and make sure this economy comes back . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister. [interjection] Thank you.

Oil Price Differentials (continued)

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, there are several names for Canadian oil blends like light sour blend, peace sour, central Alberta, Syncrude sweet premium, sweet crude, Hardisty light, et cetera, but they all have one thing in common: they sell for less than the lowest price oil blend from Texas, where many pipelines are being built to tidewater. To the minister: investors built production on good faith

that pipelines would be built for export. Where are Alberta's pipelines to tidewater?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, from day one we have fought as a government for what's important to Albertans, and that's responsibly producing our resources and access to tidewater, and we continue to do that. We wouldn't have had to do that had previous governments had the vision 10 years ago, 20 years ago that this was going to be a problem. They failed to get access to tidewater. They failed to upgrade our resources here in Alberta. But we're not failing that on this side of the House. We're working hard for that.

Mr. Panda: Given, Mr. Speaker, that Hardisty light is now selling for \$6.42 a barrel, which is 4 cents a litre, and given that we are selling our oil for less than the price of bottled water and that the second-quarter update is due later this week, to the Minister of Finance: how deep is the budget deficit going to be because of the differential, and how many people are going to lose their jobs? We need answers, not an attack. The Leader of the Official Opposition actually helped build pipelines so . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Mr. Ceci: Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you an answer. The answer is that we cut the deficit by \$3 billion already since 2015's budget, \$1 billion this year already. The member is right. We'll have the Q2 update this week, and I will tell Albertans where we are with regard to the first six months of this budget year and how we're staying on budget. We're doing a better job than the drunken sailors on that side.

Mr. Nixon: Point of order.

The Speaker: Point of order.

Mr. Ceci: When they had money, they spent, Mr. Speaker. When they didn't have money, they didn't.

The Speaker: Hon. minister, you may want to be thinking about that.

Mr. Panda: Given, Mr. Speaker, that Ottawa has abandoned Alberta on differential prices and given that sources around the province report that businesses like Trican, Repsol, and Torch are suspending, cancelling, and ending projects and pulling out of the communities and that at the same time no one is applying for permits to build new homes, to the minister: given that your best friend and ally Justin Trudeau came to Calgary to shed some crocodile tears and offer lip service, where are the jobs for Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you that anyone who doesn't understand our energy sector or work to promote it and support it is no friend of this government. We are extremely disappointed with the federal government. They have demonstrated that they are tone deaf and out of touch with Alberta's energy sector. And, really, it should be Canada's energy sector. When Alberta does well, Canada does well. That's why our Premier is in Ottawa fighting, as she always has from day one, for market access

and for pipelines to tidewater. She's accomplished more in three years than that leader did in 10.

The Speaker: The Member for Airdrie.

Sheriffs' Mandate

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have been talking to sheriffs here in Alberta, and they're very concerned that they don't have the necessary tools to be able to do their jobs. They have reportedly lost their ability to act in certain situations even where there are reasonable, probable grounds to do so. Minister, are you confident that our Alberta sheriffs are being utilized to their full potential?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Well, of course, we work with our law enforcement at all times to ensure that they have the necessary tools to perform the functions that they are given. It's very important to this government to ensure that all workers throughout the province have the necessary tools. We certainly will continue working with the sheriffs to ensure that they have the ability to enforce a whole range of different things out there in our communities and to keep Albertans safe.

2:20

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, given that when the public sees a sheriff, they see a fully armed law enforcement member yet the public doesn't know that their hands are tied in many situations and yet the sheriffs play an important role in the safety in our communities, Minister, have you had a meeting with the sheriffs about this issue, and are you aware of the public's perception of our sheriffs?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, somewhere in that slightly oddly worded question is probably what I understand to be a reference to the fact that sheriffs are, in fact, peace officers as opposed to being police officers, so they have slightly different powers. That is, of course, a legacy of when they were created. When this government took office, as we do with many things, we've been reviewing that. We've been working with the individuals who work on the front lines, and we will continue to have those conversations.

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, crime is on the rise here in Alberta, and given that the United Conservative Party released a report that called for a review of the sheriffs' mandate to be expanded and given that our law enforcement officers want to do everything that they can for Albertans, but they need to operate within the set of rules of the government, will the minister please tell this House what she's doing to address their concerns?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I'll start with two things that we're doing to ensure that we keep Albertans safe and to ensure that we keep our law enforcement safe. First of all, we're funding for additional positions, matters which that party voted against. Further, we're continuing to work with our law enforcement officers to ensure that they have the necessary tools, unlike the opposition, who takes the time to attack both the police in Lethbridge and the RCMP. We will continue to work with the front lines to ensure that they can keep Alberta safe.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Kindergarten to Grade 4 Draft Curriculum

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Ordinary Albertans have yet to see any of the instructional materials that will be used in the draft K through 4 curriculum field testing and eventual rollout. Since the curriculum itself is so light on the details of what it will be teaching, Albertans need to be able to evaluate the instructional materials before they can make informed judgments about the curriculum itself. When will the Minister of Education release the instructional materials for the K through 4 draft curriculum?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you so much for the question. As the hon. member knows, we have the draft of the K to 4 curriculum up on the Alberta website now, so Albertans are very welcome to take a look at it. Of course, when the rubber really hits the road is when you are field testing. So this is the part of the process that allows to build content and allows to flesh out the curriculum. We're very proud of what we've done so far, and we can't wait for more input to get the job done.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the identities and the affiliations of the curriculum's designers remain a mystery to Albertans and given that the perspectives of the creators will inevitably make their way into the instructional materials and given that in a province as diverse as Alberta it is vital that a broad range of perspectives be included, to the same minister: where are the instructional materials coming from?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud to say that our consultation with the curriculum thus far has been unprecedented, with more than 110,000 interactions with Albertans. You know, it's not only created excellent curricular material; it's created excellent engagement, where people are talking about education and actually working through these things with their kids, with their families and so forth. You know, I find it a bit rich for the member opposite talking about this curriculum. I know that his leader said that he would put it through the shredder, so I don't know exactly what constructive mechanism that happens...

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta is indeed a broad and a diverse society and given that Alberta's schools teach from a myriad of cultural, religious, and educational perspectives and given that it would be impossible for a central committee to identify much less produce a wide enough range of appropriate materials, to the minister: how much flexibility will the minister allow for Alberta's diverse educators to choose materials appropriate to their students?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's an excellent question. You know, we defer back to the professionalism of our teachers to make choices around content material to teach the curriculum here in the province of Alberta, and the degree to which you allow that professionalism increases, I believe, the quality of

teaching and the engagement of students, teachers, parents and so forth. So this is the way we're going to roll. We respect teachers here on this side. We certainly wouldn't fire 4,000 of them, as the members opposite would suggest. In fact, we do quite the opposite. We're building schools. They say that it's going to hurt. We say that we're here to help.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Early Learning and Child Care Centres

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For parents in my riding of Edmonton-McClung and all over Alberta finding affordable child care is a struggle. Recently I visited the Jamie Platz YMCA, located in my constituency, which is a designated \$25-per-day early learning and child care centre. One father I spoke to told me that he and his wife would save over \$36,000 in child care costs over the next five years while their two children are enrolled there. What is the Ministry of Children's Services doing to ensure that all parents in Alberta who wish to work outside the home have access to the safe and affordable child care options they deserve?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Larivee: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. When parents drop their kids off at daycare, they should feel confident that their kids will get the same level of love and attention that they would at home. I've heard from parents how important these \$25-a-day centres are for their families, and that's why I'm so proud of the work that we've done to expand our pilot now at over a hundred new centres, with thousands of new spaces this year alone. These investments are making life more affordable, and I'm going to keep fighting for every parent in Alberta to have the affordable child care that they deserve.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that these pilot projects are clearly working but too many parents still don't have access to affordable child care, will the Ministry of Children's Services consider making this program universal so that every parent and child is able to benefit?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely, that's my goal. Unlike the Conservatives, our government doesn't think that investing in affordable child care is a waste of money. On this side of the House we're committed to growing our \$25-a-day child care program until every single family in every single corner of this province is able to access safe, affordable care for their children. We know the positive impacts that these centres are having on families, on communities, and on our economy, and we believe that everyday families are worth investing in.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that programs for children and families were often first on the chopping block during each round of Conservative austerity, again to the Minister of Children's Services: how are these ELCCs benefiting Alberta's families?

Ms Larivee: Mr. Speaker, every time I talk to a parent who's accessing these \$25-a-day centres, the first thing they tell me is that these investments are life changing for them. That's why it's so

heartbreaking to hear Conservatives talk about how they'd roll these programs back. Jacking up the price of daycare and cutting programs that families rely on just so they can pay for a \$700 million tax giveaway to the richest Albertans is only going to make things harder for Alberta families. Only a party that wants to hurt everyday Albertans would think that that's a good idea.

Mobile Home Site Regulations

Mr. W. Anderson: Mr. Speaker, in my riding of Highwood I've heard concerns from occupants of manufactured homes who are facing the problem of substantial increases to the price they pay to rent the pad their home sits on. Some owners of manufactured homes are facing unbearable rent increases. In 2016 the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association supported a motion from the town of Okotoks asking the government of Alberta to amend the Mobile Home Sites Tenancies Act offering residential tenancy dispute resolution services. Given that this motion was passed two years ago, can the Minister of Service Alberta explain why no action has taken place by this government?

Mr. Malkinson: Well, thanks very much to the hon. member for the question. Of course, our government is always available to any Albertans who need assistance. We are always open to also hearing from Albertans. I'd encourage anyone who, you know, has particular concerns with the Mobile Home Sites Tenancies Act to contact my office, and we will look into them.

Mr. W. Anderson: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that the town of Okotoks sent a letter to the Minister of Service Alberta asking for a timeline on when they might hear of any possible solutions to this issue and given that the minister responded in a letter – and I'll table it later – that he has no additional information for them, can the Minister of Service Alberta tell this Assembly and my constituents of Highwood what he plans to do to address this problem that manufactured homeowners are facing?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

2:30

Mr. Malkinson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, I will point out that in cases where the provincial government under the current Mobile Home Sites Tenancies Act, or MHSTA, is unable to intervene, these matters can be pursued through the courts or through local municipalities. Under the MHSTA municipalities do have tools to help mobile-home owners and tenants. Of course, municipalities have the authority to receive and investigate complaints as well as requirements of the owner of the mobile-home park to remedy any dangerous or unsightly conditions.

Mr. W. Anderson: Mr. Speaker, given that this topic was brought to the minister's attention last week in question period and that the Minister of Service Alberta's response was for these Albertans to write letters, can the minister explain why he needs a letter-writing campaign for him to take action when his department has been well aware of this problem for over two years and has done absolutely nothing about it?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Malkinson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, you know, our government is always out there to support affordable housing options for Albertans, and some of those include mobile homes, so our government is considering changes to various acts that would provide additional low-cost remedial measures for

cases like what we often see in mobile-home parks. Of course, before we make any changes, it is important that we do proper consultation with all those involved because we are always open to ways to make life better for Albertans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Infrastructure Project Prioritization

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There seems to be a great deal of confusion for those outside of the government on the criteria used to determine which capital projects are built in this province. Constituents in my riding were certainly confused when Rocky View-Langdon junior-senior high school remained on the unfunded list for capital projects despite the fact that the community has 30 per cent of its population under the age of 15. It is also only one of two communities of its size without a high school. To the minister: what criteria are used to determine which schools are built in Alberta, and has Langdon fulfilled those criteria?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member, and I thank her, of course, for advocating for her constituents very enthusiastically. I certainly got her extensive list of capital submissions, I think over 15 now, which is wonderful and enthusiastic. We will consider all of those capital submissions as we go through with our ministerial capital committee and make the difficult choices of how to spend the capital money we spend in this province.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that when a Rocky View councillor inquired about this school project during the RMA convention, the Infrastructure minister informed the councillor that they take their marching orders from the Minister of Education but given that if an inquiry is asked of the Minister of Education, they defer to the Ministry of Infrastructure, who has control over half a billion in the schools capital budget, my question is to one of the ministers of the government. Who is the one and only point of contact for school boards and municipalities with respect to the capital construction of new schools: Education or Infrastructure?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. You know, I had the great pleasure of meeting with representatives from Langdon here this afternoon and had a very constructive conversation about the school that they are interested in building. We use geography, we use enrolment, and we use imminent needs as factors for building schools. Each of the lists that we've built over the last number of years has been very fair and balanced. We have a growing enrolment population. It's a good problem to have. We have lots of young families, and we're building lots of schools.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mrs. Aheer: Yes, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to thank the minister for meeting with the Langdon families today.

Mr. Speaker, given that the Auditor General had a choice of words for the government when it comes to setting capital priorities and given that the government seemed content to approve a bunch

of backcountry chalets for construction, which never appeared on the unfunded capital list over the last three years, while other important capital projects like schools never proceeded, I have a question, actually, for the Minister of Environment and Parks. Did you use the mysterious in-year, outside-of-the-budget capital planning process to get Treasury Board to sign off on your chalets instead of schools?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will make no apologies for the fact that we have built more than 240 school projects in the province of Alberta in the last three years. That side failed to build schools for more than 20 years. Then when communities like Langdon come, they're so relieved to come to my office because they know that I actually build schools. This government actually builds schools. We're very proud of that fact. You wouldn't be able to do so by making big cuts. It's going to help. They're going to hurt. End of story.

Public and Private Health Service Delivery

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, our province has a deficit of over \$8 billion, our debt will exceed \$50 billion this year, and our energy industry is crumbling under this NDP government. Despite all this, this Health minister continues to invest in laundry services, but numbers haven't been updated or released. Your last estimate was between \$54 million and \$200 million. How much will it cost to build and invest in your laundry services? Or is accounting difficult?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much for the question, Mr. Speaker. When I travel, in rural communities especially, throughout Alberta, they say to me: "You know, we're worried because we've heard that the former government was planning on laying us off, consolidating these jobs, and creating a super laundry facility. This would impact our rural communities and our rural health outcomes as well, potentially, because we know that if grandma loses her dentures and the laundry is done down the hall in this hospital, we'll be able to get them back, and if it's not, they'll be somewhere else." So I'm proud to defend those front-line workers. I'm proud to defend rural health care. Feel free to keep asking me to cut and fire because on this side we believe in building and hiring.

Mr. Yao: Three years later and she still hasn't figured out how much laundry services cost.

Mr. Speaker, this minister commissioned a report by the Health Quality Council of Alberta, which concluded that there is no difference in the quality of lab services provided whether it's private or public. The current provider, DynaLife, is one of Alberta's best workplaces and one of Canada's best-managed companies. Why is this minister investing in lab infrastructure, that has already doubled in cost from \$300 million to \$600 million? You can't even build a building on budget and on time. Why are you doing this?

Ms Hoffman: You know, Mr. Speaker, again, nothing is further from the truth. I've explained to the hon. member that what he saw originally was a three-year fiscal plan, and then we rolled out a six-year fiscal plan. I am not apologizing for the fact that we're defending quality lab services in this province. We know that the members opposite wanted to outsource to multinational corporations on labs and on laundry, but on this side of the House we know that it's very important for Albertans just like Anne, the

nurse practitioner in the gallery, to have quality information that she can rely on no matter where her patients are anywhere in the province. Under this government that's what we've done. We've invested in the things that matter to Albertans.

Mr. Yao: No one can not answer questions like this minister.

Given that this minister has now had the opportunity to learn about the pharmaceutical industry and has learned how efficient and effective our pharmacies are at distributing medications, why is this minister spending time and money on pharmacy infrastructure, to the tune of \$36 million, instead of utilizing our free-enterprise pharmacists?

Ms Hoffman: Again, Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to explain that the way that pharmacy works in Alberta is that we work together. We bulk buy. We bring in medications, and we make sure that they're available to all of our facilities. Those drugs need to be manufactured in other facilities and stored in our facilities, so it's important that we have these available. Instead of continuing to fire and outsource, we're investing in the people of Alberta. Obviously, if you can buy or rent, it's more long-term sustainable if you buy and make sure that you've got that asset and you've got those good, long-term jobs. I'm not going to apologize for that. I appreciate that you're coming clean with your ideology, hon. member, but on this side of the House we're standing up for ordinary Albertans.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Dental Fee Guide

Mr. Carson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. More than two decades ago the Conservative government of the day cancelled the Alberta dental fee guide, leaving us as the only province without one. Since then my constituents have been subject to the highest and fastest-rising dental fees across Canada. Canadians in every other province, whether they live in a small town or a big city, have gotten a better deal on dentistry than Albertans. It's been one year since this government brought back the Alberta dental fee guide. Can the Minister of Health please update the House on its impact?

Ms Hoffman: The member is absolutely right that we were the only province that failed to have a fee guide. As a result, our fees were by far the highest of any jurisdiction in Canada, Mr. Speaker, so of course you look at what broke the situation, and you bring in a tool to help fix it. I'm very proud that the college and association of dentists sat down and worked with us on this. They brought forward a recommendation of an 8.5 per cent reduction in fees, which we felt was a very good start. As of today about a third of Alberta dentists are charging in line with that. Before we brought in that guide, only about 6 per cent of Alberta dentists were, so it's definitely a good start.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Carson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that dentists are still free to set their own fees, how does the voluntary fee guide actually affect the prices families pay at the dentist?

Ms Hoffman: Again, Mr. Speaker, we worked in partnership with the college of dentists and with their association, and what we came up with was a fee guide for common procedures across Alberta. We want them to come in line rather than being dramatic outliers in the nation. We want to be getting full value for Alberta residents who choose to access dental services in the province, and we want

everyone to feel that they can do so. What it is is a tool now for consumers to use. Even myself, when I went to the dentist, I said to the billing agent there: do you charge in line with the fee guide? Of course, I was very pleased when she said yes, but if she didn't, she'd have an opportunity to explain why, and as a consumer I could make a choice if I wanted to stay or go.

2:40

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Carson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the time of the fee guide announcement some critics claimed that it would be too great a burden on dentists' businesses. What has the reaction been from Alberta's dentists?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We knew that it wouldn't be able to snap to a national average overnight, but our plan here is to help Albertans get better informed and get better outcomes for the value that they do pay. Hundreds of dentists have played a role in making sure that they were in line very quickly with the fee guide. As consumers we can continue to use the fee guide as a tool to make sure that we are asking our dentists and using that tool to get full value for ourselves. We're getting greater value outside of the public health care system, and we're also getting greater value within the public health care system and investing in front-line workers. Instead of proposing that we cut 4,000 nurses, on this side we're hiring and protecting those services that Alberta families count on.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Inspiration Award Recipients in Edmonton-Decore

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Friday, November 23, recipients of the seventh annual inspiration awards were announced at a ceremony in Calgary. Every November during Family Violence Prevention Month the government presents the inspirational awards to honour individuals, organizations, and business leaders who have shown exceptional dedication to violence prevention and to promoting healthy relationships and community safety. I'm proud to say that two individuals from the wonderful riding of Edmonton-Decore were chosen to receive an award: Emma Potter in the area of bullying prevention and Mana Ali in the area of family violence prevention.

Emma Potter is the helplines manager at the Canadian Mental Health Association in Edmonton. She oversees the contact centre, which responds to calls for the Edmonton distress line, 211, the family violence information line, and the bullying helpline. She ensures that staff and volunteers are prepared to respond to clients in great need. She has built links between community organizations and the helplines to ensure that clients get the support they need. Emma has responded to countless calls from those experiencing abuse and has helped them feel heard and supported as they look for a path forward.

Mana Ali was born and raised in Mogadishu, Somalia. In 1991 Mana moved to Canada as a government-sponsored refugee to escape the war. Mana arrived with fluency in English and a degree in English but struggled to find employment. She persevered, and after several years began working at the Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers, where she has been supporting immigrants with stories much like hers for a long time. Fast-forward to 2018,

and you can see that she continues to work tirelessly to help those around her.

The award recipients and nominees demonstrate incredible commitment and leadership in violence prevention. They inspire others to take action and make a difference in their communities. I would like to personally thank both of them for their efforts in building awareness, contributing to violence prevention, and advancing healthy relationships for all Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Grey Cup 2018

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past weekend Edmonton hosted the 106th Grey Cup. This great city hosted the Ottawa Redblacks from the east and, for the third straight year representing the west, the Calgary Stampeders. Thousands of CFL fans converged from across Canada, celebrating a great season with parties and events throughout the city. Jasper Avenue was hopping.

But it was the big game yesterday that so many Canadians came to see, and, Mr. Speaker, it would appear that for Calgary the third time was the charm. The Calgary Stampeders took an early lead and never let go, defeating the Redblacks 27-16. We saw history made as Calgary's Terry Williams ran 97 yards to the house to close out the second quarter, setting the record for the longest ever touchdown return in Grey Cup history. Bo Levi Mitchell was the game's most valuable player, a crowning achievement in a season that saw him the CFL's most outstanding player. From the party headquarters at the Shaw Conference Centre to a horse riding through the lobby of the Hotel Macdonald, CFL Commissioner Randy Ambrosie told us that it's clear Edmontonians know how to throw a party.

Mr. Speaker, as Calgarians celebrate with their team, there are others who are planning the path to next year's Grey Cup, which is to be hosted in Calgary. As we look to the future, we can see bright days for the CFL and Canada's game, with talks of a 10th team, the Atlantic Schooners, that would see the league become a truly Canadian affair, with teams from coast to coast.

This weekend saw a Spanish-language broadcast of TSN's production of this CFL Grey Cup game, aired on ESPN3 in Mexico. This may lead to future CFL games being played in Mexico.

So as bright days lie ahead for the CFL, we stand today to offer heartfelt congratulations to the Calgary Stampeders on becoming the 2018 Grey Cup champions.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

Ms Babcock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday, November 25, was the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. Women's rights activists have observed the 25th of November as a day against gender-based violence since 1981. This date was selected to honour the Mirabal sisters, three political activists from the Dominican Republic who were brutally murdered in 1960. It took another 20 years for the UN to officially designate this important day and invite governments, international organizations, as well as NGOs to join together and organize activities designed to raise public awareness of the issue every year on this date.

Violence against women and girls is the most widespread, persistent, and devastating human rights violation around the globe. The shame, stigma, impunity, and silence that surround the issue means that this violence remains largely unreported. This has

adverse effects on women's psychological, sexual, and reproductive health and can affect women at all stages of their life. Some of our sisters are particularly vulnerable to violence: young girls, older women, women that identify as lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or intersex, migrants, refugees, indigenous women, ethnic minorities, women living with HIV, women with disabilities, just to name a few. Here in Alberta we still have some of the highest rates of gender-based violence in the country. We need to do better as a province and a society. Our government is committed to doing that work.

Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to supporting our most vulnerable. We have boosted funding for women's shelters by \$15 million to ensure that no woman fleeing violence is turned away. We have invested in more supports for survivors of sexual violence. We have invested in police and court support and crisis assistance in communities. This government has made it easier for survivors of domestic violence to get out of dangerous situations by allowing them to break residential leases without financial penalties. There are many ways in which we as a society can and must support and encourage the strength of women.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Government Policies

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, this past weekend Edmonton hosted the 106th Grey Cup. Football fans from across the country were out in full force to take in the festivities, the parade, the legendary Spirit of Edmonton hospitality suite, and, of course, the game at Commonwealth Stadium, seeing the Calgary Stampeders beat the Ottawa Redblacks 27-16.

But, Mr. Speaker, in this House another game is under way, played by a team that I'll call the NDP Government Rams and Team Liberal Elite. For the NDP Rams, their slippery fingers have been continuously dropping the ball, racking up the debt, growing that points deficit, and getting scorned by the Alberta fans. The Liberals' quarterback, an elite named Trudeau, keeps intercepting pipeline plans time and time again. The Rams' defence has only been to play footsie with Trudeau, without mounting any credible defence to the quarterback's game plan to give lip service to pipelines but obstruct all efforts for any touchdowns and field goals.

The Rams' total offence has amounted to a 10-day wine ban on their affiliated NDP team in B.C. As a result, the Rams keep racking up penalties. The flags on the play fly as they keep getting caught offside with everyday Albertans. Once in a while the Rams land a first down, which results in their Premier quarterback doing a touchdown dance. The NDP Government Rams have been caught holding: holding down the economy with their carbon tax. They even got an illegal procedure call over their power purchase agreement boondoggle. If only they could land a safety, but they keep coming up short with more credit downgrades. Team NDP keeps getting called for unsportsmanlike conduct because of name-calling, even going as far as labelling opponents as sewer rats, nearly earning some members a game ejection.

Albertans love a football bandwagon, but the NDP Government Rams are a disaster. Albertans will chalk this up to experience and never jump on this NDP bandwagon ever again.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

Support for Seniors

Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to rise today to speak of the great work seniors do in my constituency of Calgary-Bow and around this province. Whether it is through their hard

work, volunteerism, or community involvement, seniors contribute to this province every day. In my own constituency we have formed an advocacy group made up of seniors, social workers, police, firefighters, Alberta Health Services, and my constituency office called the seniors constellations. We meet on a monthly basis to discuss issues affecting seniors in the community. On Friday over 100 people attended a workshop about safety in the home. We also discussed fraud and consumer protection. It is my privilege to know and partner with so many seniors in Calgary.

2:50

Our government invests close to \$3 billion into senior supports every year. We protected the seniors' benefit program through tough economic times. We launched a home repair program to help seniors age in place in their home and communities close to friends and family. In June we invested \$20 million in the Temple community to help provide 70 supportive units for people over 55. And in 2017 we passed important legislation through the Alberta Human Rights Act that prohibited discrimination based on age.

Mr. Speaker, I am concerned for the calls for cuts from the other side of the House. Cuts will have a direct and negative impact on our seniors. We even heard a member opposite say that it is going to hurt. Seniors have contributed so much to the success of this province, which is why I will proudly fight for them every day. I want seniors in my constituency and across this province to know that I and this government have your back.

Thank you.

The Speaker: I recognize the Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 7(8) I'm rising to provide notice to the Assembly that the daily Routine shall extend beyond 3 p.m.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Highwood.

Out-of-country Health Service Reimbursement

Mr. W. Anderson: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to address the situation that one of my constituents is facing when dealing with Alberta Health and the out-of-country health services application process. After exhausting all options for treatment in Alberta, Mr. Manchulenko, a resident of Highwood, travelled to Germany to have a 3-level M6 ADR lumbar surgery performed. As a result of this surgery Mr. Manchulenko is pain free, off medication, and has returned to work. Mike is back at work serving his community as a firefighter and putting his life on the line for all Albertans.

The surgery came at a cost of \$60,000, so, as he's entitled to, he made a claim through the out-of-country health services application process for reimbursement. Unfortunately, what should have been a clear-cut case was anything but that. Mr. Manchulenko submitted his application in September 2015, and after dealing through all bureaucratic mess, his application was ultimately denied. I've been advocating on behalf of my constituents since he submitted his application. Unfortunately, the Health minister has not stepped in to address this issue. In 2018, two and a half years after the initial application, OCHS sent a cheque for \$8,000, far less than the cost of surgery. It turns out that he will have to continue to fight to get his rightful reimbursement.

Mr. Speaker, there is no reason that this constituent of mine should have to fight for this. He is no longer a burden on the health care system, he is off medication, and he is contributing to the Alberta economy again. In fact, the cost of \$60,000 that the Alberta government is responsible for covering is far less than the cost it would have been bearing if Mr. Manchulenko did not receive the

surgery in Germany. I call on the Minister of Health to do the right thing and help him and direct her department to reimburse Mr. Manchulenko for the cost of the treatment out of country.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Notices of Motions

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to give oral notice of a bill for the next Order Paper, that bill being Bill 30, the Mental Health Services Protection Act, which will be sponsored by the hon. Minister of Health.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you. This is on behalf of the Member for Calgary-Foothills. Mr. Panda is to ask the government the following question, due date 53: how many megawatt hours of coal-fired electricity has the Alberta Electric System Operator imported, broken down by month, from generators located in the state of Montana from April 1, 2016, to May 31, 2018?

The Speaker: Hon. member, I would seek the guidance of the table officers, but I don't believe that that is a notice of motion. That will be a little while later.

Tabling Returns and Reports

Mr. W. Anderson: Mr. Speaker, I just want to table the appropriate number of copies of two letters I am in possession of, one from the mayor of Okotoks to the Minister of Service Alberta and his subsequent response to the mayor of Okotoks.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members? The Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table a letter that was written to our caucus by Dr. John T. Huang, MD. He's a select delegate for ophthalmologists and with the Alberta Medical Association.

The Speaker: Same subject matter? Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite five copies of a package of letters written by kids who attend the Langdon and area senior high school in my riding. I'm proud to represent these kids, who are showing such an interest in civic engagement so early in life. I know that many of the students from this school have already taken the time to write the Minister of Education about their concerns.

Langdon and area is a thriving community that is focused on small-town living and a simpler way of life, where everyone knows their neighbours and kids stay out until the street light come on. Many nights you can hear people gathering around the fire pit. This community is one of the fastest growing in Alberta, with 30 per cent of its population under the age of 15. It is also only one of two communities of its size without a high school and will continue to be stretched past its limits with student growth.

I introduced this group of concerned residents earlier, who are here today to put faces to the hundreds of letters the minister has been receiving highlighting the need for this high school. I want to sincerely thank the Minister of Education today for taking the time to speak with this group earlier. I have the five requisite copies.

Thank you.

Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

The Speaker: Hon. members, I believe we're at points of order. The Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Nixon: Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's great to be back this week. Another day, another point of order. I will try to be brief.

I rise on 23(h), (i), and (j), particularly language to create disorder, in regard to comments made by the Finance minister at the time that I called the point of order to the member who was asking the question, which escapes me at the moment, Mr. Speaker, but you probably have the Blues. My focus will be on the Finance minister.

The Finance minister very directly referred to us as drunken sailors, not that we "spend like drunken sailors" or anything like that, very directly as drunken sailors. Now a couple of things to that, Mr. Speaker. First of all, none of us are intoxicated on this side of the House; I can assure you of that. I know the hon. Finance minister probably has talked the most about his love for beer in this Assembly. I won't speak for him, but I will make it clear that we are not.

And in addition to that, most of us are not sailors either. You may have noticed that we come from a landlocked province, so sailing is not the most common hobby. In fact, I think that if we were not land locked, we would have a lot fewer problems inside this Chamber.

With that said, I can see the hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville is heckling during a point of order. That is the point. That is where this government has ended up. We continue to be in this spot. So I think the government should do the right thing, Mr. Speaker, to rise and apologize and withdraw.

The Speaker: Thank you. I think I've got it.
The Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't think the minister was out of order in his comments. You know, the Free Dictionary online has defined the expression to spend like a drunken sailor as meaning "to spend money freely and frivolously." The minister was clearly engaging in debate about the matter of spending responsibly or not, as the case may be.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I would be quite curious and surprised to believe that the members opposite didn't have concerns with the previous government in terms of their choices, you know, of flying around Alberta as if it was a private jet. Certainly, if the sky palace wasn't spending like drunken sailors, I'm not really sure what is. The expression has been used several times in the Assembly, often by the Minister of Finance, including on October 29 and November 19, when no point was made. Curiously, Heather Forsyth used the same expression when discussing the previous government's fiscal track record during question period on March 26, 2015, when she told the Premier at that time: "I think we should make something very clear. We're in the fiscal situation because of your government spending like drunken sailors."

3:00

The Speaker: I think I got your message as well, hon. minister.

Member for Calgary-Hays, is there a really new – I'm prepared to make a ruling on this.

Mr. McIver: Yes. Two things. One, the minister referred directly to us and not through the chair, which I believe you will find to be a point of order, and, two, I differ from the House leader from the

government. The expression wasn't "spend like drunken sailors." He said: "like those drunken sailors over there" or something close to it if you have the Blues. In other words, that was directly calling a name, completely unparliamentary. The only right thing to do is to stand up, apologize, and withdraw those comments. I believe this is probably a simple one for you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Let me just read for those of you who were captured by this moment. I'm not going to read it all.

The member is right. We have Q2 update this week, and I will tell Albertans where we are with regard to the first six months of this budget year and how we're staying on budget. We're doing a better job than the drunken sailors on that side.

The Minister of Finance is normally a very gentle, respectful member of this House. I think that in an earlier comment, though, I did also hear that he made a statement about insider details. On this particular matter, again, we've talked many times: context, context, context. Yes, I have heard the phrase "drunken sailors" used in this Chamber before, but I think in this particular context it was unnecessary. I believe there was a point of order and would ask that the minister withdraw the comment.

Ms Larivee: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, on behalf of the minister I will withdraw that comment.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Orders of the Day

Written Questions

[The Acting Clerk read the following written question, which had been accepted]

Power Purchase Agreements

Q5. Mr. Panda asked that the following question be accepted.
As of May 31, 2018, how many power purchase agreements remain in place, and what is the expiry date of each remaining power purchase agreement?

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Montana Coal-fired Electricity

Q4. Mr. Panda asked that the following question be accepted.
How many megawatt hours of coal-fired electricity has the Alberta Electric System Operator imported, broken down by month, from generators located in the state of Montana from April 1, 2016, to May 31, 2018?

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm disappointed the hon. Government House Leader wants to reject my question on how much coal-fired electricity is being imported from the state of Montana in the United States of America into Alberta. Now, the question of coal-fired electricity imports in light of our own coal-fired electricity phase-out was brought to my attention earlier this year by a number of Albertans. It was further made clear to me that there was something to this when during the budget estimates debate for the Department of Energy on April 9 – you can refer to *Hansard* page RS-739 – the now Minister of Service Alberta and the Member for Calgary-Currie asked the Minister of Energy:

I get questions saying that the government is buying coal power from Montana because we're phasing out our coal power. Is that true, Minister?

to which the Minister of Energy responded:

No. That's the famous Facebook false facts. Yeah, I've seen that on Facebook as well. It's talking about 196 megawatts of coal-fired electricity from Montana, and it's absolutely false. The Alberta government does not purchase coal-fired electricity from Montana under any arrangement.

That's what the minister said, Madam Speaker. The Minister of Energy went on to elaborate about the Montana Alberta Tie line.

Enbridge has said that the project was for connecting wind energy in Montana to Alberta's demand for power.

Madam Speaker, one needs to watch the words the minister has used here. The minister has used the terms "the Alberta government does not purchase coal-fired electricity," and to that, I would concur that the government does not purchase the electricity for Albertans.

But, Madam Speaker, the minister never refuted the Alberta Electric System Operator, the AESO, or Enbridge, the operators of the Montana Alberta Tie line, from purchasing coal-fired electricity from Montana. When Albertans say that Alberta is buying coal-fired power from Montana, Albertans are talking about Alberta as a whole, beyond just the government. They're talking about everything and everyone who makes up the province. The average Albertan does not know the complex terms to refer to corporate bodies like the AESO or use the legal speak the Minister of Energy used at the budget estimates. They talk about Alberta in the broadest general sense.

Hearing the minister make this assertion at the budget estimates, I investigated. I had my people call Enbridge, and Enbridge said: yes; coal-fired electricity moves across the line. The Montana Alberta Tie line has a rated capacity of 400 megawatts. Given that there's only 189 megawatts of wind power connected to this transmission line between the Canada-USA border and the substation near Great Falls, Montana, and given that on multiple occasions this year the AESO was drawing more than 189 megawatts from Montana – therefore, some of those extra megawatts had to be coming from coal-fired electricity.

On May 29, 2018, I asked the Minister of Energy in question period about the electricity coming in from Montana – it can be found on page 1275 in the *Hansard* – and the minister again demurred, saying:

It is a private contract. I can't remember the number of kilowatts. It's a very small contract between a private operator and Montana.

The minister went on:

I could delve into it and see what I could find out, but I'm guessing that when it's a private contract, it's not any business of the government.

When asked if Montana's coal-fired electricity will enjoy a prominent, low-cost place of privilege in the forthcoming Alberta capacity market, the minister said,

I appreciate the question, but it is misinformed and not totally full of facts.

I was not satisfied with the minister's answer, Madam Speaker, so I submitted this written question. If the NDP is truly serious about their climate leadership plan, the importation of coal-fired electricity to Alberta represents a serious piece of carbon leakage to Montana to backstop an electricity system that is going for 30 per cent renewables. We know the wind doesn't always blow and the sun doesn't always shine. That's why baseload from generators of coal and natural gas is needed. So how about it? How much coal-fired electricity are we importing from Montana?

When AESO appeared before the Public Accounts Committee on the 6th of November, 2018, page PA-760 of *Hansard*, the question

was put to Mr. Michael Law, the senior vice-president and chief operating officer, who responded:

Electricity flows that occur on interties are managed by the Alberta Electric System Operator, but we do not have ownership of or have any insight into the origin of those original flows. So we do not track the source of those power flows, whether they are from renewables or from coal.

3:10

I would submit to you, Madam Speaker, that as much as the government of Alberta does not know and as much as the AESO does not know, at least the AESO has those commercial relationships with Montana's equivalent independent system operator and Enbridge and could at least make the ask for the information. This is important. We are shutting down our own coal-fired power plants. Westmoreland Coal, the U.S. company, was not compensated by the NDP government, and they have now filed a NAFTA, which is USMCA now, challenge for \$500 million, affecting taxpayers across all of Canada because of this NDP government's action. Not only Albertans but Canadians from coast to coast to coast are going to pay, or at least they're on the hook, for this \$500 million.

Meanwhile, in December 2017 a 60 million tonne expansion of Westmoreland Coal's Rosebud mine was approved in Montana in order to serve the 2,100-megawatt Colstrip power plant in eastern Montana. Madam Speaker, that is a 2,100-megawatt coal-fired power plant, which is a size of significance, and they're adding 19 more years of coal mining to fuel a power plant that is bigger than any power plant in Alberta. You know what? Actually, the governor of that state of Montana is a Democrat. He's not even Republican, and they're building such a massive coal-fired power plant. It's not fair to close our mines and plants and then create carbon leakage to Montana and create a fly ash shortage in Alberta's construction sector.

That's why this written question is so important. I hope I made my case and ask the hon. Government House Leader or the minister to reconsider the advice they have received.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I don't mean to be argumentative, but I think this question portrays a fundamental lack of understanding of how Alberta's electrical system works. All of the data clearly shows that the overwhelming majority of power consumed in Alberta was and is generated here compared to overall Alberta demand. In 2016 Alberta's grid was a net importer of only three megawatts on average over all the hours of the year. At peak times private operators, not government, to be clear, but private operators in Alberta, import power. They do so to ensure that Albertans have a reliable source of electricity. But let me repeat: all of the data clearly shows that the overwhelming majority of power consumed in Alberta was generated here.

The source of the power consumed in Alberta is almost wholly determined by the mix of sources in Alberta's electricity system. Madam Speaker, the Alberta Electric System Operator, or AESO, tracks the amount of electricity imported into Alberta from other jurisdictions month to month. It also tracks the amount of electricity exported by Alberta to other jurisdictions. That includes imports and exports between Montana and Alberta. AESO can tell us, for example, that in September of 2016 private operators exported 9,969 megawatts to Montana but that they imported 7,094 megawatts from Montana in the same month, almost 3,000 megawatts less. What AESO does not do, however, is track every individual electron of electricity generated in Montana that might

subsequently be exported to Alberta because, of course, to do so is impossible and to attempt to do so would be absurd. There is simply no way of distinguishing one electron from another in terms of whether it was generated by coal versus wind versus hydro versus gas.

Before the opposition goes further into undermining trade with our neighbours to the south, let's be clear. Montana has all of these sources in their electricity supply. But the important point here is that it isn't how the system works. To differentiate the source of electrons coming into Alberta in that way would require a separate line from each facility in Montana to come to Alberta separately. That would, of course, be extremely expensive for Alberta's consumers. I certainly hope that this is not the vision of a future that the opposition has for our utility consumers, but at this point it's not surprising.

In 2013 our first international intertie was built when Enbridge invested in a line between Montana and Alberta. They said explicitly that they were building the intertie in order to bring low-cost excess wind energy from Montana into Alberta. In fact, I'll read from their corporate social responsibility report. "Our first power transmission project – the 300-[megawatt] Montana-Alberta Tie-Line – went into service in 2013, supporting the electric transmission needs of new wind power facilities in north-central Montana and strong power demand in Alberta."

In fact, because coal power in the United States is no longer competitive against lower cost, cleaner gas power, Montana's coal power has fallen in recent years. Indeed, the proportion of its power from coal has been lower than that in Alberta. There is no other line from Montana into Alberta.

We have seen rounds and rounds of rhetoric from the opposition claiming that Alberta is importing coal power from Montana, and now, apparently distrusting Enbridge, they want an accounting of exactly how much coal power we have imported. I'm not sure why they are so keen to argue with Enbridge's previous statements on that matter, but regardless the simple answer is that this is just not how the system works. Even if we had all that info at our fingertips, I'm not sure that it's a precedent we want to set. Imagine if other jurisdictions started demanding a specific accounting of exactly which facility supplied the fuel for a local gas station or exactly which farmer's wheat was used to bake a particular loaf of bread.

In closing, Madam Speaker, I'm sorry, but the information the opposition is seeking is impossible to provide. Therefore, we have no choice but to deny their request.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Yes, I'd like to speak in favour of this question here from my hon. colleague. I think it's actually very important to know how many megawatt hours of electricity are coming from coal-fired generators in the state of Montana. We know that there is power crossing the border – and that's fine – but I think it's important that we have that knowledge of what is coming from coal-fired generators down in Montana.

Obviously, this government brought in the carbon tax and has heavily taxed the coal that's being burned in coal-fired generators in Alberta. They've also of course accelerated the shutdown of coal-fired generating plants, and it's cost Albertans over a billion dollars to phase out the coal. If we have a situation here where we're shutting down coal-fired generating in Alberta but buying coal-fired generated electricity from Montana, I think Albertans deserve to know how much that is.

I note that the minister just finished speaking about it, saying that we can't tell how much is coming in or out or where it's coming from or anything. I don't know. I would think that these generating plants actually have some sort of meter to measure what's going out. If you have a meter to see what's going out and you have a bill going to somebody that has to buy that power, I would think that it should be relatively easy to calculate.

It has nothing to do with, as she mentioned, undermining trade. I mean, it's absurd to suggest that this is undermining trade. This is simply a matter of getting the facts for Albertans, and I think Albertans deserve to know what is coming out of Montana coal-fired generators.

You know, we've seen here where Westmoreland Coal was not compensated by the NDP government and has now filed a NAFTA challenge for \$500 million. That's affecting taxpayers from all across Canada, Madam Speaker. I mean, the whole situation that this government has created around coal-fired generating in Alberta by the early shutdown of these coal-fired generating plants is costing taxpayers billions of dollars. I think that why it's so important to have this information is because of the cost that Alberta has burdened taxpayers with with this early shutdown of the coal-fired generating plants.

We know that some of the plants were about to be – you know, their lifespan was to run out anyways, and the plan with the federal government was to wait for their timeline to run out anyways. That wouldn't have cost taxpayers any money. But, of course, this government decided to take some of our newest coal-fired generating plants and shut them down early so that the companies would lose money, the companies that had in good faith built these coal-fired generating plants. Obviously, not being able to recover their input costs, their investment costs, they needed to be compensated, and of course, because of this government's actions, taxpayer money has had to go to these coal-fired generators.

3:20

Now, Madam Speaker, it seems like maybe the government thinks this is some sort of burden or something, but I think that maybe there's a problem with transparency here. I think they probably do not want to admit how much is being bought from coal-fired generators in the U.S. I know the minister talked about how the net exchange isn't that much, but if the net isn't that much, that's somewhat irregardless if we're buying massive amounts of coal-fired generated electricity, bringing that into Alberta at certain times of the day or at certain times of the month or whatever. Even though there's electricity going back, that's irregardless. The fact remains that we need to know how much coal-fired generated electricity is coming into Alberta, and I don't think that's too much to ask. Obviously, we need a way to have a steady supply of power. If we have to get that from Montana, then I guess that's the situation, but we need to know where that power is being generated in Montana. We don't want to see the people of Alberta and the companies of Alberta out of power at any point. We want reliability, and reliability is important, obviously, in the electricity market.

Madam Speaker, this is a simple question. Like I say, I have to believe that anybody that's selling electricity has some way to gauge it, some way, some metering system to figure out exactly what's going back and forth and where it's coming from. It isn't like, you know, there's wind power generation in Montana and coal-fired generating power in Montana and they just push it all together in one big lump sum and then send it across the border without metering it until it comes together. I'm sure it's metered as it comes off each plant. That's the only thing that makes sense.

This government has caused an enormous amount of hardship in Alberta because of their power boondoggles. What's happened,

Madam Speaker, is that the first time the government brought anything to do with electricity before this Legislature, they messed it up from the start, and then ever since then they've been trying to play catch-up and trying to patch up the mistakes that they've made all the way along. Each one of these mistakes has cost Albertans lots of money in electricity, like I say, over a billion dollars in the coal phase-out alone. Now, of course, we've got a NAFTA challenge for \$500 million because of this government's actions, and we're closing out near-new coal plants and paying billions of dollars out to those companies to shut down these plants. In return, these companies either have to retrofit or they have to build natural gas generators so that we can backstop the wind and solar.

Madam Speaker, none of this makes any sense. Again, this government has over and over again been making huge mistakes when it comes to electricity in Alberta, and each of these mistakes – I mean, they put a price cap on electricity, 6.8 cents a kilowatt hour, when electricity was 3 cents a kilowatt hour. Obviously, they knew there were some problems coming, and after three and a half years we know who's responsible for these problems. This government seems to want to blame previous governments for everything, but after three and a half years sooner or later they're going to have to take responsibility for their own actions. I think it's time that this government accepts responsibility for what they've done and admits that they've made huge mistakes when it comes to electricity in Alberta, and these mistakes, of course, cost Albertans billions of dollars.

Again, I don't think there's any problem with the government being able to get this broken down so that we can find out about this electricity from Montana, where it's being generated. Again, it only makes sense that these generators have meters, and somebody has to be keeping track of how much electricity is going back and forth. The minister used some numbers, even, on how much electricity is going back and forth. Now it's just a matter of breaking down where it's coming from.

Again, I think this question should be answered by the government. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm very, very grateful to the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills for bringing this forward. I think it's probably worth a little bit of a trip down memory lane, and the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky had already started us on that, but let's just start with a couple of things. This government changed us to a capacity market. That was their decision, and as we went through the entire process, all of us on this side, in fact all Albertans could see this intense puzzle being put together that started initially with the destruction of the system that we already had. One of those was getting rid of the electricity police that actually monitors this in the first place, the MSA.

Even more importantly, when we skip ahead a couple of months, a couple of many, many late nights of discussion and debate around this issue, we found out that the taxpayer, the ratepayer in Alberta was on the hook for a grand total, at least at this point, of \$4 billion because of the boondoggle of this government. Putting all of the other things aside, that in itself – you know, I just had a school group in here today from Langdon looking to build a school, that they have been working on for the last four years, to find out why they're not at the top of the list, why they're on the unfunded list, and why they keep getting moved around. Well, I can easily tell you that when you have a boondoggle of that level, there are going to be people that suffer. Langdon is one of them.

The rate riders that were on the electricity grid as it was before for the people helped to mitigate any issues that were going on in

the electricity market, and then the government brought in a 6.8-cent cap that hides absolutely everything that's going on, and I can guarantee you that that's why the minister cannot give us any numbers. We have electricity right now going back and forth on a tie-in that has existed for some time. It's not like this is new information.

You know, what I find absolutely mind-boggling is that we shut down our own coal-fired, but now we're buying even more from the United States. How is that possible? We shut down our own excellent, high-functioning, extremely efficient coal operations here, creating a \$4 billion boondoggle to the ratepayer, and now we can't get a straight answer on how much we're paying for coal-fired electricity that's coming from Montana into the province of Alberta, Madam Speaker. How is that even remotely okay? All we're asking for is to have some clarity on how it's broken down month to month so that the ratepayer understands what's going on.

We've had money that had been paid to the Balancing Pool right off the bat, \$750 million to the Balancing Pool, because of the mess-up from the government on the PPAs, because they didn't read their binders when the information came to them, or at least that's what was told to us in here. Then all of a sudden the Alberta ratepayer is on the hook for that mistake, and now, when we're asking for a clarification, really, in all honesty, a little bit of transparency, we're being told – and I'll try and quote the minister here – that the power is to be determined and that there is a distrust with Enbridge, if I understood correctly. Maybe she can correct me if I misunderstood that, but that was what I understood.

Hopefully, she'll take a chance to correct me on that, but I'm curious how it is that Enbridge could have a relationship with the government, then, and not be able to produce numbers on the amount of electricity that is coming into our province so that we have an understanding of what it is that we're paying for. There's a mandated 30 per cent of renewable energy, they've phased out coal-fired electricity, they're paying out practically brand new coal-fired facilities for \$1.1 billion, and the minister had said how we have to buy from the United States at certain times because of the way the electricity boosts up during the day. Okay. That's probably true. However, is there a possibility that we could have provided that for ourselves had we not phased out our coal-fired in the first place? It's just a question.

I just find the whole thing ironic, that we're buying coal-fired from somebody. Does anybody else in here find that ironic, Madam Speaker? Even to say the words out loud seems absolutely disastrous, and I think anybody who's listening to this is just really questioning the ability of this government to make decisions about the energy sector at all.

3:30

While we're on the subject of Enbridge, I have another question, not related to this, necessarily, about the pipeline. I'm curious about that pipeline. Maybe the minister could fill us in on that, too. That pipeline is weeks away from being done. I'm just curious how that tie-in is going and when that capacity is going to be online. We haven't heard about that either on line 3, the Enbridge line 3. Just curious. Just thought I'd bring it up since we're talking about Enbridge. It'd be nice to know that that capacity is actually going to be available when the government says it is. But then again, maybe we're just not supposed to ask those questions. Evidently, it doesn't really matter how much electricity is going from one end to the other because it's all hidden under this 6.8-cent cap on electricity, and the rest of us are supposed to just sit here and trust the government that they've got our backs when it comes to electricity. Good luck.

When you take away signals from a market, a market will become distorted as a result of not getting those signals. What happens when you put a cap on a capacity market like this is that you remove the signals from the industry as to how they're supposed to react. It doesn't matter whether it's renewables. It doesn't matter whether it's coal-fired, cogeneration, or any of those things. When you remove the signals, the market is not able to respond.

When a minister in this Legislature is unable to provide numbers on a piece of infrastructure that provides electricity to this province and is not able to update the House, which is basically all that the hon. member is asking for, it leads us to great concern that the government doesn't know what they're doing. It's a simple request for an update. I could understand it if the minister said, "Give me a week" or "Give me a couple of days; I'll get back to you with that." That would have been a reasonable response, very reasonable. But, unfortunately, even with having given the question, with giving time, with trying to be understanding about what is going on – I'll tell you that Albertans don't get it. They are getting their bills right now. They don't get it. They don't understand. Especially – let me tell you – when people start finding out that electricity, coal-fired electricity, is coming from Montana and that we're paying for that to boost our energy, that supposedly has a mandate to bring on renewables that were supposed to cover the amount that was going to be lost by coal-fired in the first place, all of us are sitting here going: what? Honestly, Madam Speaker. I could go on.

You know, the government is planning to tender in June 2018 to procure over half of its energy from solar power. I've said this a hundred times in here: I love solar power. I have 40 panels on my house. I think it's fantastic. I love it. However, the way that it works is that when my solar power panels aren't working because the sun is not shining, I am dependent upon the grid. The sun doesn't always shine, and the wind does not always blow. And according to the Canada Solar Industries Association solar comes in at 6.0 cents per kilowatt hour. Isn't that interesting? That's below the cap.

Interestingly, the Independent Power Producers Society of Alberta indicates that the 2016 wholesale price of electricity averaged at 1.7 cents per kilowatt hour. If I'm not mistaken, there is a payment that has to happen when we're below that 6.8 cents. We are dinged for that. The Alberta ratepayer pays the difference when it does not go to that 6.8-cent cap. The minister had mentioned that before when it was coming in at 3.7 cents per kilowatt hour. I think it was – what? – about eight months ago. It was some sort of great buy-in into the grid. That meant that the rest of the grid was being subsidized for that 6.8 cents, but you wouldn't know that, Madam Speaker, because it's hidden under the cap. So I would really, really love an explanation. How is it that this government, first of all – I mean, there's an election coming up fairly soon here. I'd like to know how the government is going to be able to explain the PPA debacle, \$4 billion of unnecessary spending because they messed up the file. How are they going to explain it?

Then, on top of that, I mean, I'd love to know how the folks from Hanna feel, the ones who lost their jobs because of the coal mine phase-outs.

Mr. Nixon: Out in the cold.

Mrs. Aheer: Out in the cold, right? How would they feel knowing that a percentage of our energy in this province is being boosted through coal-fired coming from our friends to the south? Just curious.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak?

The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak to WQ 4. The whole issue here is that we would like to know: how many megawatt hours of coal-fired electricity has the Alberta Electric System Operator imported from outside of Alberta, specifically from the state of Montana?

Madam Speaker, this government sometimes makes some very poor decisions. I know that if there is one constituency in the province of Alberta that has been hit by those poor decisions when it comes to electricity, it's my constituency. Presently in my constituency I have both Westmoreland Coal as well as the Genesee power plant. Should I be successful in running in the next election, my new constituency of Drayton Valley-Devon will also include the Sundance and the Keephills power plants along with the coal mining that goes along with those power plants. This question is us asking the government if they can provide us with the numbers to try to explain how much of the electricity that is coming into Alberta is from the Montana-Alberta tie-line. Enbridge are the owners of the Alberta-Montana tie-line. We need to be able to understand and we want to be able to confirm how much coal-fired electricity moves across this intertie.

Now, we know that about 189 megawatts of wind power are installed along the Montana-Alberta tie-line. We also know that with the 30 per cent renewable energy target, there is also going to be solar. Madam Speaker, the fact that we have renewables and solar and wind provides some real problems for the province of Alberta because neither of those are baseload energy. When the wind doesn't blow, wind does not create electricity. When the sun doesn't shine, the solar panels do not create electricity. We find ourselves in a situation in Alberta where this government has actually refused to look at alternatives that would actually be renewable and baseload and, instead, by looking at solar and wind and phasing out the coal-burning power plants in my constituency, have forced us into going towards a capacity market where we have peaker power plants. We pay companies not to generate electricity but for the capacity to generate electricity when the solar and the wind are not producing electricity.

Madam Speaker, in my constituency they struggled when this government said that we need to phase out the best coal-burning electrical generating plants almost anywhere in the world because of health concerns. Yet when I went to the West Central Airshed Society and I looked up the facts and figures, they have had a continuous monitoring of air in my constituency for over 30 years. In that 30-year period of time we have quintupled the amount of oil and gas and coal activity in my constituency, yet we have today better air quality than we had 30 years ago. The reasoning that they gave us for phasing out the coal-burning power plants was specious.

Madam Speaker, I have talked to many constituents in my constituency that happened to bump into a couple of German engineers. Why was Germany sending engineers into my constituency? Because Germany is moving away from wind and solar. They're going back to coal. Where do they go to find the cleanest burning coal plants in the world? To Alberta, to my constituency.

3:40

We find ourselves in this Keystone Kop operation where we now have a Montana-Alberta tie-line that is rated at 300 megawatts of capacity, where 189 megawatts of wind power could potentially be going into that line, but because it is renewable and because it is not baseload, when it is not producing, we now have to go and get electricity from someplace else. And where do we go? Not to my constituency, not to Alberta-created electricity, not to the cleanest coal-burning facilities in North America. No. We couldn't do that. We couldn't create the jobs here in Alberta. We couldn't maintain

the tax load and the tax base for my constituency. No. We go to Montana.

I just don't understand it. When I go to my constituency and I tour the Westmoreland Coal facility and I talk to the people that have got good, high-paying, quality jobs at Westmoreland Coal – and they're now looking at those jobs being phased out – and then they ask me why it is that this government would prefer to pay Montanans rather than Albertans, it makes no sense.

Importing coal-fired electricity to Alberta represents a serious piece of what we call carbon leakage to Montana. In other words, Madam Speaker, we have a situation where, under the guise of environmental arguments, trying to deal with the climate issue – everyone in this House, I believe, supports the whole concept, the idea of climate change. We don't understand how this government believes that climate change ends at the Alberta border, that there's this big wall, that it doesn't make any difference whether it's produced in Montana or Ontario or China or India or Japan. We have the capacity to create electricity and to do it in the most environmentally friendly way of anywhere in the world when it comes to coal, but we choose to go down to Montana.

They didn't even consult with the county of Parkland. I talked with the mayor of the county of Parkland, and he explained to me that the changeover from coal to natural gas is going to attack the tax base of the county of Parkland by between 25 and 30 per cent and that they never had one conversation with this government.

Madam Speaker, what is as perplexing to me is when I realize that there are actually renewable sources of electricity that we could be pursuing that are actually baseload energy. I know that I have talked with one company that is working in Germany, that's in Japan, that's in Holland, that wanted to start deep-well, geothermal electricity, wanted to start it in my constituency yet could not get the ear of this government. They have identified 25,000 abandoned and orphaned wells that they believe will provide the heat and will provide the electricity for this province, which alone would meet our 30 per cent renewable rates, yet this government would not talk to them.

Madam Speaker, it is not an unreasonable question to ask. How much of the electricity going through this Montana-Alberta tie-line is based on coal? The minister says that it's impossible to be able to provide.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, I've had a request to briefly revert to Introduction of Guests. We need unanimous consent. Is anyone opposed to that request?

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests (reversion)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Mrs. Schreiner: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to introduce to you and through you guests from the Alberta Federation of Rural Electrification Associations, who are here today in support of my motion to promote long-term viability and sustainability of REAs and other co-operatively organized utility associations. The AFREA represents member-owned co-operatives that distribute electricity throughout rural Alberta. These co-ops have distributed electricity for over 75 years. Here today are President Dan Astner, Vice-president Charles Newell, and Vice-president Robert Peyton. The board has been instrumental in bringing the important topic of REA sustainability to my attention.

Also joining us today is CEO Al Nagel, who has worked in the electricity industry for over 50 years. Al has been with the AFREA for the past 10 years. I ask my guests to now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Debate Continued

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the question? The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise this afternoon to address this issue that I think is a pertinent question raised by the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills. Now, as I listen to the banter back and forth, obviously when you have that opportunity, you have the opportunity of being able to think about what the questions are that haven't been answered. One of the comments that was made by the hon. Minister of Energy was that she just had no way of knowing. The first thing that comes to my mind is that – and I think that my hon. colleague has stated it correctly – well, this is not a Mickey Mouse organization. These are multimillion, hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of investments. You don't think that they know exactly where those electrons are being sold to or being created from? It's absolutely ridiculous and ludicrous to think that that would be an answer from a minister of the Crown.

Now, I guess the next question that I think would probably be asked is: if the minister is going to at least establish that she can't figure out whether or not it's coming from renewables or from coal-fired, Madam Speaker, when are we receiving those electrons? When are we receiving that top-up that we need? I can guarantee you that if we're receiving it in the evening or after the sun goes down, we can certainly rule out that it's coming from solar. On this side of the House we're getting lots of yeas; on the other side, silence. That I think is maybe the start. Now, remember, these questions were provided to the minister days in advance so that we could have an answer. Her answer was: I just don't know. You know, it could have been: stay tuned; we'll get back to you. I mean, that seems to be the answer that we usually receive. But this was: no, we don't know.

3:50

Now, the other question that I was thinking about is: whatever that timeline is that we're receiving it, we're getting that top-up, is it feasible to think that if we can't actually receive those electrons, that electricity, at that time from our renewables, is it conceivable to think that we would be able to receive electricity from Montana's renewables? I think that it makes sense that if we can't get it done with our renewables here, it is pretty sure that they can't get it done with their renewables down there as well. Again, the sun doesn't always shine. The wind doesn't always blow.

We get back to the central question. The reason why we're asking this question – and we've dug deep into this before – is that this government has made a policy choice. Now, hindsight is always 20/20 vision. We're starting to see the outcome of those policy decisions. The outcome is that they have decided that coal-fired is not something that they want to do here. That's their decision. They're in government. But they don't get to choose the outcomes, and the outcome is that that baseload has been retired way too soon, and because of that we're having to buy from Montana.

Because they don't get to choose the policies for Montana, they don't get to choose whether or not those electrons created down there are from coal or from renewables. This is a decision that they've made, and they need to own it. This is what we're getting to, Madam Speaker. In the event that the NDP government could

dictate to Montana and say to them, that no, Montana has to follow their decree about how wrong coal-fired generation is, then we could guarantee and say: “You know what? Carbon leakage: we’re going to fix it. In fact, we do it all over the place; in China, in Germany, in Europe, wherever they’re creating electricity through coal-fired.” But they cannot do that. We always get back to this issue, which is that we create in Canada 1.9 per cent of the GHG emissions throughout this world, and that’s supposed to be leadership that we’re going to be able to pull back some of our, well, get rid of our coal-fired, to tell you the truth.

But what they cannot control is what other jurisdictions are doing, and now we’re seeing that this not very well-thought-out policy and direction is now coming back to haunt them, and that’s why we’re asking the question. That’s why my hon. colleague has asked the question. He recognizes that there is a flaw in the way that they think, a flaw in their strategy. That is that they cannot control whether or not it’s going to be coal-fired generation down in the States, and therefore if we have to buy that – we’ve punished our people from Hanna. We’ve punished our Albertans from Alberta, and we’re in a situation now where we’re rewarding the people from Montana that made a different policy decision. That is something that this government has to take responsibility for, and that’s what we’re trying to establish here, Madam Speaker.

Because of the policy decision they made, they have hurt Albertans. They’ve hurt communities that have these coal-fired plants and they’ve shut them down, and because they shut them down, they’re trying to hide that under the 6.8 cents, which my hon. colleague talked about so eloquently. Yet their answer, Madam Speaker, is that they have no way of telling? Again, the transparency. This government said that they were going to be more transparent, that they were going to be the transparent ones. That is something that this government – and I’m not from that industry, Madam Speaker, but intuitively I can’t understand how they could say that we wouldn’t know where those electrons are coming from. It doesn’t make sense.

Again, I ask the question. It only makes sense intuitively that if we can’t produce it up here with our renewables, wind and solar, when that power is coming in here, I guarantee you that it cannot be coming from renewables down in the States, down in Montana. So if we’ve established that, then the government needs to own up to it and say: “You know what? We probably didn’t think this thing through. We probably didn’t realize that this was going to be the outcome and that we’re going to have to start buying coal-fired from other producers. In reality our program is not working.” Just own up to it. If they’ve made a mistake, own up to it. I actually haven’t heard them ever do that in three and a half years, Madam Speaker, not once where they own up to it.

What we’re talking about now in terms of the macro aspects of this is our electricity prices skyrocketing. You’re not buying that coal-fired electricity at 1.7 cents a kilowatt hour. You’re buying it at premium price because we can’t do it here; therefore, they’re going to charge us premium price. It is a premium dollar that we have to pay for that electron to come up here even though we have the intertie here. It’s still a premium dollar we have to pay because we could not supply it ourselves. When supply and demand don’t meet, the equilibrium price goes up. So we’re in a situation now where not only are they saying, “Well, we’re going to have to buy coal-fired,” which we disagree with here, but they’re going to also pay premium dollar for that coal-fired because they shut down the baseload of Alberta, which is coal-fired.

Once again, if this government has made a policy decision, own up to it, take responsibility for it, and tell Albertans that you’re sorry. That would be the responsible thing to do. I have not heard that from this government, not even once. Now, the sad thing about

that is that we see the same kind of issue plaguing every decision this government makes. It chases away businesses, private-sector investment; \$36 billion, according to the Conference Board of Canada, left this province in the first two years.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak? Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Mr. Dreesen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Again, as was mentioned before, it’s a very simplistic, straightforward question from my colleague from Calgary-Foothills of just having an understanding of the megawatt hours of coal-fired electricity that’s being imported from the United States. It’s a very simplistic, easy answer. It’s just on the NEB website that 47 per cent of our electricity comes from coal here in Alberta, 40 per cent natural gas, 7 per cent wind, 3 per cent hydro, 3 per cent biomass, so there are measurements. It’s simplistic. There are great people that work in the Department of Energy. It has great employees. They do a great job of measuring this type of information.

The fact that the NDP – I’m assuming that they are hiding away from giving out this information due to embarrassment. I think it was talked about earlier that, again, the billion-dollar boondoggle that they’ve had to pay out for phasing out coal plants was a mistake, and we’re seeing that now, where we’re importing a lot of electricity from the United States. They should just take ownership, Madam Speaker, for that bad decision. Ultimately, when you look at the United States, it’s a boon for them. They’re quite happy that they get to export electricity coming up into Alberta.

I would rather and I would assume that everyone in this Assembly would rather that our electricity comes from Alberta resources and from Alberta plants with Alberta workers and our jobs here in Alberta. It makes no sense that we would have to import coal-fired electricity from somewhere else when in Alberta we’re blessed. We sit on a massive, huge coal bed. We’re one of the richest coal areas in the world, and it’s just mind boggling, Madam Speaker, why we’re actually having to do this. Even in my riding, one of the major roads is called the Coal Trail. Alberta has had a great history of using coal. Again, today we use a lot of coal, and we’ll use a lot of coal tomorrow as well. But it’s unfortunate that the NDP decided to make this decision.

Again, the \$1.1 billion that they spent to phase out our perfectly good coal-powered plants: it was for an ideology, Madam Speaker. It ultimately made no sense. I would hope that the NDP could see the errors of their ways on this, at least give the information that, again, my good friend from Calgary-Foothills asked for, which is: how much coal-fired electricity is actually coming from the United States? I would hope that through this discussion her colleagues might be able to even encourage her to actually provide this information because I think it makes all of them look like they’re hiding from something, and that’s unfortunate. I don’t think that that is something the members opposite actually want to have done. So I hope that they can come to their senses, Madam Speaker.

I appreciate this opportunity. Thank you.

4:00

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak? Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. [interjection]

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I see the hon. member from – I don’t know what riding, to be honest, but she seems very excited to hear me talk, which is great. Hopefully, I won’t disappoint.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to rise and speak to the hon. member’s question. I think it was a very reasonable

question. I think my caucus members have articulated some pretty good arguments about why the question should be answered. I thank the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, who I think in a matter of moments just here in the Chamber was able to find out some of the answer to the question just by using Google. Google is a wonderful thing.

But I don't think it is unreasonable for the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills, who, by the way, is the Energy critic, the shadow minister for Energy, inside this Legislative Assembly, to ask a question. The government's key piece of policy and decision-making process in their time in government in Edmonton is to make decisions that certainly impacted the electricity industry, particularly around coal-fired electricity providers. The fact that we now find out that despite the fact that we see communities like Hanna decimated and other communities in our province go through significant hardship as a result of that decision, we in Alberta are still getting electricity from coal-fired sources despite the fact that basically the whole government's position is that we could not do that any more and it would not work for their environmental agenda, which was the point of carbon leakage that we have expressed in this Assembly.

Now, again, the question is reasonable, and it is a pattern with this government of not answering reasonable questions. As you know, repeatedly I as well as several other colleagues in this place have asked some simple questions about the fact that the government's budget was based on three pipelines being built. Later on they said that it would be okay as long as two of the three pipelines were built. We now know that Keystone XL is gone. We should know that because the Premier was against Keystone from the very beginning. Trans Mountain, the pipeline that they promised would be built, in fact even had celebrations saying that it was a done deal, we now know is on the ropes and very unlikely to be built.

An Hon. Member: Spiked the football.

Mr. Nixon: Yeah. Spiked the football on first down or – sorry – had a touchdown celebration because they got a first down, as the hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock said today in his statement, which was a great statement and a great point.

When you ask the government, who has lost two pipelines – their entire budget is based on those pipelines being built and based on Alberta oil, quite frankly, being sold for a considerable amount more than it is now. I'm not sure. The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills would probably know the difference between the Finance minister's projections and where we are at right now, but it's significant. It's – what? – about \$30?

Mr. Panda: Easily.

Mr. Nixon: Easily \$30. Maybe a \$40 difference.

So you ask the Finance minister, who's in charge of our finances: can you stand up and explain to us how that will change your projections, how that will change our deficit, how it will change how much debt Albertans will be on the hook for? He has still not been able to answer that question the entire fall sitting. That's the Finance minister. Now you have the Energy minister, who can't answer a simple question. I actually suspect she can answer the question. I think she's capable of it. That's not my point. My point is that she will not answer the question in the Assembly.

I think Albertans have to be starting to ask themselves: why? Why does this government continue to hide facts from the people of Alberta? The government made a decision to shut down, as the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon pointed out, some of the

cleanest coal-fired generators in the world, if not the cleanest, made that decision, left those communities and the people that are employed in that industry hanging, and then has electricity coming into the market from other coal-fired sources. It's reasonable for Albertans to know that and how much that is. It's a reasonable conversation for this Chamber to have.

But when it comes to the NDP government of the day, they clearly keep showing over and over that being reasonable is just not how they're going to operate. They're not interested in being reasonable, Madam Speaker. They're not interested, certainly, in reasonable questions. Anybody who's ever watched question period of late in this place will be able to testify to that. Today was another example: one reasonable question after another, very simple questions about budget and statistical questions along those lines from the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. Each time the Deputy Premier got up and did not answer the question, in fact, would not allow the Finance minister to answer the questions about his own budget and his own projections and instead had to answer for him and then gave partisan attacks instead of being able to answer the question.

It's because, as I've said – and I know you know, Madam Speaker – this government can't rely on or defend their record. They can't defend their record. Instead, they will hide things from Albertans. This is another example. Now, I don't blame them for not wanting to talk about this, quite frankly. I think that if we were in government and we had chosen, which we would not have, to go through the process that they did, to just suddenly and rapidly shut down an entire industry and wipe out entire towns in our province and decimate families, we certainly would not want to rise and then point out to them: "Oops. Sorry. We did that, but actually we haven't combatted emissions on the coal side because we still have coal burning."

It's exactly what we said would happen. The jobs left our province because of the carbon tax. We're still creating on the global scale, on this macro issue the same amount of emissions because other jurisdictions are burning coal still. I know that it frustrates the hon. members, but the big neighbour to our south, the United States of America, doesn't have a carbon tax or those types of things. They're not playing by the same rules. That's our biggest competitor and our biggest trading partner. Their most greenest state – most greenest state – Washington, twice now in a referendum has had a carbon tax defeated. If Washington state can't even get a carbon tax in the United States, no state is going to get a carbon tax in the United States.

This government continues to send our industry to have to compete on a global scale with one hand tied behind their back. Emissions continue to still go up or stay the same as they are, maybe lower here. Maybe. We don't know that because there's no reporting mechanism for this government because that's another thing they hide, as the Auditor General pointed out.

Now you've got a government who will do anything to avoid being accountable for their record. So the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills comes and asks a simple, well-researched question – a well-researched question – and the Energy minister can't even be bothered to stand up and answer it in any reasonable way, says that she can't track it, and then launches into a partisan rant. The first clue of politics, for anybody who's followed it for a long time, is that once a government can't even stand up in the Assembly that they hold a majority in and brag about their record or show off their record, that probably means that they have been a complete and utter failure on that issue.

If this is not happening and if this is not a big deal – the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills has not said that he knows for sure; it's why he's asking the question – then the government would be excited to answer it inside this Assembly. Instead, I suspect his

point has been proven. They ran away and would not answer the question, would not be accountable to the people of Alberta. That's who they're avoiding. Madam Speaker, they often forget that when we rise in this place, we rise on behalf of 50,000 or 60,000 people that want a question answered, each and every one of us, just like them. That is our responsibility. When they refuse to answer that question, they're refusing to answer the people of Alberta, because our job as representatives is to ask questions.

The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler has a community inside his constituency that has been absolutely decimated by the policies of this government. Then they find out now that the same product that they produced is probably still being used to produce electricity that we're burning in this province, but the Energy minister cannot be bothered to answer. It's disappointing. It's ridiculous.

As I said before, Madam Speaker, I don't care about the reputation of this government. This government has blown their reputation, and shortly they will face the boss at the ballot box, and I suspect that the boss will fire them. But while they have done that, while they have destroyed their reputation, they have hurt the very people that we were sent here to protect. It's shameful. It's ridiculous, quite frankly. Again, the ministers should take the time and do their job and answer a simple question, because either they can't answer it or they're avoiding answering it. Either way, that's wrong, that's not their role, and it's disappointing.

4:10

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak?

The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills to close debate.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to thank all of my colleagues on this side of the House who tried again because – if you look at this, I brought this up at the budget estimate stage, asked those questions. No answers. I asked the same question again in QP, and the minister didn't answer those questions, and that's why I gave it by writing and asking a written question and asked this. Probably today – how many of us spoke here? – eight members of the opposition spoke in this House again asking the same question. Is it really that difficult?

Madam Speaker, we are in 2018. It's not that difficult to identify the electrons that flow through that tie-in line. If there is a will, there is a way – I always say that; my dad used to say it – but they don't want to. Why? Because they want to hide that information, because they implemented job-killing policies in Alberta because of their ideological reasons. Now they realize their mistake. The reason they banned coal-fired electricity in Alberta is to reduce emissions whereas just south of the border the electricity is flying through this tie-in line generated through the same source, which is coal-fired. The government has no answers, so they're trying to hide this information, but at some point the truth will come out.

Albertans are realizing that this government has devastated Albertans and Alberta economically because of their ideological policies. It's Whac-A-Mole policy, we call it: to fix one policy, then they have to bring in another policy. To support their climate change leadership plan, they phased out coal first. They accelerated. They say: okay; the Conservative government federally, the Harper government, has brought in that. Yes, but that was in 2030. The Alberta NDP government accelerated the coal phase-out, including the new plants, which have very low emissions, which have a very high benchmark for clean energy. Those plants are also closed.

As a result, this government is on the hook. They made Albertans pay \$2 billion to settle those coal phase-outs and then another \$2 billion on the power purchase agreements because they haven't

turned back those – when they brought in this climate change plan so that they became unprofitable to some of those coal-fired electric generators, that triggered the returning of power purchase agreements. This government, if they were wise, could have cut the losses for Albertans. They would have accepted that. But because they want to prove someone else wrong, they found this silly Enron clause, and the Deputy Premier stopped the returning of those PPAs. As a result, now we are on the hook for \$2 billion more to settle those PPA losses. Two plus two: how much is it? Four billion dollars.

Now, we recently found that U.S. miner Westmoreland, who is producing coal-fired electricity for Alberta, took us to court under NAFTA, so they have a claim filed. That is another \$500 million. It's adding up: 4 and a half billion dollars and counting just on this electricity file, and this government still has the nerve to stand up in this House and blame us, that we will fire 4,000 teachers and 4,000 nurses. What would this 4 and a half billion dollars do for Albertans? Madam Speaker, I leave it to you. Even a kindergarten student will know that this government is misleading Albertans. They have blown up 4 and a half billion dollars just on electricity.

On the pipelines – that's the next subject we'll talk about – my colleague from Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre talked a little bit on that pipeline, too. So this government put all their eggs in one basket and said: okay; we are not going to support Keystone or Northern Gateway, but we'll get the Trans Mountain expansion built. They celebrated many times . . . [Mr. Panda's speaking time expired]

[The voice vote indicated that Written Question 4 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:15 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hunter	Schneider
Dreeshen	Loewen	Smith
Drysdale	Nixon	Stier
Fraser	Panda	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Goehring	Nielsen
Babcock	Hoffman	Payne
Bilous	Horne	Phillips
Carlier	Kazim	Piquette
Carson	Kleinstauber	Renaud
Ceci	Larivee	Sabir
Coolahan	Littlewood	Schmidt
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Schreiner
Dang	Malkinson	Shepherd
Drever	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha
Eggen	McKittrick	Sweet
Fitzpatrick	Miller	Turner
Ganley	Miranda	Westhead
Totals:	For – 11	Against – 39

[Written Question 4 lost]

Motions for Returns

[The Acting Clerk read the following motions for returns, which had been accepted]

David Suzuki Foundation Correspondence

M13. Mr. Panda:

A return showing copies of all correspondence between the government and the David Suzuki Foundation from May 1, 2015, to May 15, 2018.

STAND Correspondence

M14. Mr. Panda:

A return showing copies of all correspondence between the government and the organization known as STAND, or stand.earth, and formerly known as ForestEthics, from May 1, 2015, to May 31, 2018.

Leadnow Correspondence

M15. Mr. Panda

A return showing copies of all correspondence between the government and the organization known as Leadnow from May 1, 2015, to May 31, 2018.

Dogwood Correspondence

M16. Mr. Panda:

A return showing copies of all correspondence between the government and the organization known as Dogwood from May 1, 2015, to May 31, 2018.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Electricity Price Cap Documents

M17. Mr. Panda moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all documents, including tables and graphs, prepared between May 5, 2015, and May 31, 2018, in connection with the projections and forecasts used by the government to determine the 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour price cap on electricity.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Albertans are not getting the true picture of the cost of their electricity. It's being hidden behind the 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour price cap. We know from the budget estimates that \$74,310,000 has been set aside for 2018 and 2019 to help cover the costs of the regulated rate option price on electricity for consumers. I want to know how the government of Alberta came to decide that just over \$74 million was enough money to subsidize power bills for 2018-2019, and I want to know how the government came to decide that 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour was the magic price to implement the cap. Meanwhile the higher taxes the consumers are paying in the form of the carbon tax are being used to help pay these power bills. It's a shell game. You take from one pocket of the consumer and make it look like you're helping to pay from the other pocket.

From page 95 of the 2017-18 annual report of the Department of Energy:

On November 22, 2016, the government announced a four-year price cap to protect families, farms, and small businesses from volatility in electricity prices as the province makes necessary reforms to the electricity system. The program runs from June 2017 to May 2021. During this period, consumers on the Regulated Rate Option (RRO) will pay the lower of the market rate or the government's ceiling rate of 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour.

Madam Speaker, I have even looked at this year's business plan, and there is no mention of this in that business plan. It was buried in the climate leadership plan. I want the government to show me the mathematics and the economics they used to come up with this

\$74.3 million expenditure at the rate of 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour. There are some very smart people working for the government, and it would not be like them to make up some numbers out of thin air. I would like to see the evidence used to come up with this rate for the cap and if they looked at a higher price, especially for the REAs, the rural electrification associations, who needed a different set of rules to implement the cap, or if they looked at a lower price, which would have cost the taxpayers even more. Showing the homework to me allows me to understand the drivers: carbon tax revenue to spend, renewables coming online and coal being phased out, electricity price volatility, and the classic NDP shell game of robbing Peter to pay Paul and driving up the deficit, the debt, and the taxes in the process.

Madam Speaker, I don't know why they rejected my motion for a return. There is a pattern on this side of the House. I've been using all the avenues like the budget estimates and question periods to ask for information. This particular Department of Energy is supposed to be transparent in providing information to Albertans, but I don't see a reason why they are hiding this, because they know that this 6.8 cents is an artificial cap. Their actual cost is much more, but they don't want the ratepayers to pay because they think that they will lose votes if the power prices are higher. That's why they're making taxpayers pay. But it's the same. Ratepayers and taxpayers: they're all the same. I don't know how long this government can hide the information from Albertans. They're trying, but people are smart enough to understand.

We asked the Finance minister today about his budget deficit, how much it is going to rise and how much the debt is going to go up. The budget is based on about a \$15 to \$20 per barrel differential, but today the differential is about \$45 U.S. per barrel. That makes a big hole in the budget estimates of this government. But the Finance minister wouldn't answer. He just goes on attacking and calling us – what's that?

Mrs. Aheer: Drunken sailors.

Mr. Panda: Drunken sailors. Nice of him. He's probably still high from yesterday's game; I don't know.

But that's not fair, Madam Speaker. Albertans are asking their questions through us. As Official Opposition it's our job and as a critic for Energy it's my job to hold this government to account and get the answers for Albertans. But this government is not giving us the correct information here and is misleading Albertans. That's why I asked for this information one more time using this legislative tool to get answers for Albertans.

4:40

With that, Madam Speaker, I trust that the hon. Government House Leader or the Minister of Energy will allow me to inspect the department's homework so that I can understand the thought process of the government to bring in this additional expenditure on top of the billions of dollars of other expenditures in electricity. When I say other expenses, I already talked about \$2 billion that Albertans are on the hook for for PPAs and \$2 billion for the coal phase-out and then another \$500 million, that NAFTA claim that a U.S. miner has placed on Albertans. With this, Albertans are paying on so many accounts, and this government is hiding that. When we ask for clarification on behalf of Albertans, we are called drunken sailors. That's not fair.

With that, I leave it there. I'm hoping to hear some answers from the minister through me to inform Albertans and through this House. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Our government is protecting Alberta families, farms, and small businesses from high electricity costs through a four-year price cap of 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour. This protection gives Alberta families . . . [interjections] Did you want to listen to this or not?

Mr. Nixon: Point of order.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: This protection gives Alberta families and entrepreneurs the certainty that they need to live . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. minister, we have a point of order.
Go ahead, hon. member.

Point of Order

Addressing Questions through the Chair

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Again, we've spoken about this many times. Standing orders are clear, as you well know. I'd encourage the minister to speak through the chair, please.

The Deputy Speaker: Anyone wish to speak to the point of order? Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Westhead: Yeah. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I think it's just a little rich for these members on the other side to be calling this out. You know, they talk across the aisle on multiple occasions. So I think that there's no point of order here. It was a slip-up on the part of the minister, and I would encourage us just to get on with the debate.

The Deputy Speaker: Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to the point of order. I think my hon. colleague referenced language that was likely to create unrest, in 23(h), (i), and (j), as you know, Madam Speaker. I also know that he had some concerns about not speaking through the chair. In this particular case I think the minister very specifically and directly efforted to reprimand members on this side of the House, which is very clearly your role in adjudicating the duties of the chair, and very specifically referred to members on this side of the Chamber with: do you guys "want to listen to this?" She was not referring to members of the opposition by their appropriate titles or by the fact that we, too, are as equally elected as she is. I think that it would be very reasonable and prudent for her to withdraw and apologize for the comments and get back to the business at hand.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Madam Speaker, I'm happy to withdraw my comments. Should I be allowed to continue, I would hope that there'd be people on the other side listening.

This protection gives Alberta families . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. minister, before you continue, I just wanted to add that it's helpful for all of us to keep in mind speaking through the chair, and I encourage everybody to continue to do that.
Go ahead, hon. minister.

Debate Continued

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: I'll continue. This protection gives Alberta families and entrepreneurs the certainty they need to live their lives and build their businesses without worrying that their electricity bills will spike without warning. In past years we've seen the RRO spikes as high as 15.3 cents per kilowatt hour, and they have regularly risen over 8 cents, 10 cents, and even breaking 12 cents

more than once in the past years. I've said before and I'll say it again: these kinds of price spikes are not acceptable. It's not reasonable to expect families to afford those sorts of energy prices. It's not reasonable to ask families to live from month to month afraid that their energy prices will spike suddenly and without warning. It's not reasonable to ask families to plan and budget with this sort of uncertainty. I would note that we have not seen electricity prices come anywhere close to the levels Albertans suffered under the previous government in 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2014.

Yes, there is a cost to the program, and we've been transparent about reporting the costs in months where the costs to providers exceeded the RRO cap, but our government is not going to apologize for providing protections to Alberta families and businesses, who continue to fear the return of the price spikes and volatility that they experienced under the Conservatives' energy-only market. We are not going to let this happen. While we're taking the necessary time to build an electricity system that works better for Albertans, we will continue to protect Albertans from price spikes.

What we cannot provide, however, is sensitive information that was used to inform a decision by cabinet, particularly when we have an electricity market made up of commercial operators. Therefore, I'm afraid we have no choice but to deny this request.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to this particular motion for a return and to specifically address the minister's comment with respect to what she is or isn't going to do. You know, the minister, through you, Madam Speaker, to her, took some significant period of time in her remarks talking about what she's not going to do. She's not going to stand for price fluctuations – be very careful with that particular word in the House – and price variances, with them being all around the map.

But this motion for a return has absolutely nothing to do with those factors that are inside the marketplace and has everything to do with how and why a government would come to a decision, which may or may not be arbitrary, of 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour. All that my good colleague from Calgary-Foothills . . .

Mr. Panda: An outstanding riding.

Mr. Cooper: Yes. All that my colleague from the fantastic riding of Calgary-Foothills is trying to ascertain and to get to is: how and why did they make this decision around 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour, not 7, not 6.5, not 3, not 12 but 6.8? He was asking for some clarification around this. We know that this government does all sorts of things that aren't based in reality or fact, so all that he was asking for was some clarity or proof that that was the case here with the 6.8 cents.

It kind of reminds me, Madam Speaker, of the carbon tax: why did they arrive at \$50 a tonne and not, say, \$300 a tonne, as some of their friends and allies suggest it will take to change behaviour, \$300 a tonne? Now, I'm certainly not advocating for that. In fact, I think they should do away with the \$50-a-tonne carbon tax. But just like they didn't do any research on or certainly at the time were unwilling to provide evidence of the economic impacts that that arbitrary number would have, here too we see them picking a number, 6.8 cents. As far as I could tell from the comments of my hon. colleague from the fantastic constituency of Calgary-Foothills, he wasn't asking about the politics around creating a cap. He was merely asking about why and how they arrived at 6.8 cents.

The minister came to the House to provide some very, very, very soft, weak explanation based on shields, if you will, for what we can only assume is their lack of research. We're not asking for proprietary information. We're not asking for information that's going to negatively impact any of the businesses that are in the power market. We're only asking: what data did they have to show that 6.8 cents was the appropriate measure and not 7.5 or 3.8 or whatever number would have made sense?

4:50

So it's more than a little disappointing to see the government continue a lack of transparency, continue a lack of respect for the marketplace, particularly when it comes to proving their economic data and legislating at the same time. What we've seen time and time again is this government that legislates and then asks questions later. All we're asking for is the information that led to that path for this decision, and again the government has elected not to. I am more than a little disappointed that the government wouldn't allow this information to be released. I'm not altogether surprised because of the track record that this government has with respect to hiding the facts, particularly on the economic side of the equation.

They like to roll out facts in all sorts of different areas, but when it comes to the economic side or the impact of their decisions, how they will be applied, they time and time again refuse to provide that information. Madam Speaker, I think it's important to remember that it's not that they're refusing to provide that information to the opposition, because, frankly, not a whole ton of folks are overly passionate about politicians, broadly speaking, but it's that they are refusing to provide the information to Albertans.

It is Albertans that deserve the right to have a better understanding about this particular piece of information. It's Albertans that have a right to know about the ways that this particular decision may have an impact on the nuances of the capacity market. I'll be the first to say that there is very little about the electricity market that isn't complicated, but more information is always better than less information, and Albertans deserve that information. If this government wants to try to re-establish any sort of trust on this particular file, they would be well served to answer the question. It's not a hard question. They must have the information, so they should stop hiding behind the minister and provide the information to not just this side of the House but to all Albertans.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak?
Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to just throw out these numbers again. The hon. member from the amazing constituency of Calgary-Foothills . . .

Mr. Cooper: Fantastic.

Mrs. Aheer: Fantastic. Sorry. Thank you.

. . . spoke about \$4 billion in the boondoggle plus \$500 million as a result of coal miners in Montana who, through the NAFTA agreement, will be seeking remuneration from Alberta for that. So we're at \$4.5 billion. I keep thinking that if we go back to the pipeline discussion where we were just talking today, one of the ministers was saying that we're losing \$80 million a day in product not getting to the coast, not getting into the global market. I mean, the cumulative burden of dollars that are being misspent and being lost through policies that this government has helped create is mindboggling and, actually, a little bit nauseating.

When I think about it, actually, I don't really actually know how to put my head around the amount of lost money that is leaving this

province. Then on top of all that, the government is leaving the ratepayer and the taxpayer with the burden of their mistake. I mean, if you just added that up for a minute on a weekly, daily basis, what have we been looking at? This year country-wide we're looking at a \$5 billion loss, right? I'm absolutely flabbergasted.

You know, the minister had said that this is about creating certainty. How, then, do you explain that every company that we're speaking to, anybody who's looking at Alberta potentially – and I hope so much that people are looking at Alberta – to invest here is running away because the market signals are not there? The government has actually taken away the signal that allows companies to know: oh, this is a good time to buy in because the signal tells you to do so. There isn't one anymore.

To be clear, the other question I have, too, is that the Member for Calgary-Foothills brought up the fact that we're just wanting to understand that 6.8 cents was not plucked from the air. How can that be a sensitive discussion? The minister said in here that due to the sensitive nature of the discussions she cannot discuss how she came to 6.8 cents. Why? Madam Speaker, do you not believe for one moment that Albertans deserve to know? This is impacting them.

You know, to be fair, there have been spikes in the electricity, and I am the first one to admit that. However, the rate riders went extremely low, too. There was a balance there. To be clear, the energy-only electricity market was debt free. The minute that the government came in and blew up the PPAs, we were immediately – immediately – \$750 million in debt to the Balancing Pool, when we came from a debt-free situation, where we had no electricity debt. We had no debt.

Mr. Hunter: Positive.

Mrs. Aheer: Yes, we were positive, in fact, because the rate riders reflected what was going on in the province at that time.

The whole reason that the MSA was there was to watch those spikes. When those things happened, those companies were held accountable by those people. All that accountability is gone now. On top of that, they will not answer to Albertans on how they got to the 6.8 cents. How can that be a secret? I mean, for months and months we heard about how there was this secret Enron clause and how it was a disaster and that the government was coming in to save us on a white horse of 6.8 cents, saying that that was all secretive, saying that that happened behind closed doors, that nobody knew about it.

They were informed right when they got into government about the PPAs and about that section and about what was going to happen should they prove to be more unprofitable. This is even worse because this has happened on their time under the auspices of wanting to help Albertans. Yes, there may be less volatility, but you're just going to let those prices rise slowly? And you believe that Albertans are just going to buy into that?

If this week of seeing Albertans fight back about pipelines has not taught us anything about how Albertans fight back, none of us has learned anything in here. The government should take responsibility and look at how Albertans fight back for their energy resources and for what they need in this province. They will not stand for this. It will not happen. I can guarantee you that the minute that people understand all of the things that the NDP government is trying to put through under a cap of 6.8 cents and slowly, slowly, slowly raising that, pretending that there's no volatility, pretending to have the backs of Albertans, when we know that the prices are already going up – that is absolutely ludicrous.

Like I said, take a look at what happened in downtown Calgary this week when the Prime Minister came and how Albertans reacted

to people who do not understand the energy industry and are actively working against our prosperity. Take a note because, let me tell you, Albertans are not going to stand for this. They will not sit by and let a government pretend that they have Albertans' backs when we see those energy costs going up. It's a cumulative burden: \$2 billion to pay out, \$2 billion to buy back the PPAs, \$500 million because the government didn't understand the NAFTA agreement with the coal-fired people. And to even suggest that we're buying coal-fired from the United States when our own families in this province, who the government had to compensate for shutting down coal-fired in the first place, now no longer have jobs. But you're willing to buy it from across the border? In what world is this okay, Madam Speaker?

Albertans will not understand. They will be standing up. They're going to be mad. They're going to be so angry when they find out that that's what this government has done and that somehow they believe that they are doing a favour for Albertans. I guess, Madam Speaker, the government knows better than everybody else, don't they?

If anything, I hope this government has learned that this province is savvy. The folks that work in this province: they're savvy, they're smart, and they're resilient. They know what's going on. And I'll tell you that the folks on this side have spent the last three and a half years being educated by those people. We sit with them because those are the experts in the field, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt, hon. member, but the time allotted for that portion of business has now elapsed.

5:00 Motions Other than Government Motions

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Utility Organizations

507. Mrs. Schreiner moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to strengthen partnerships with rural electrification associations, REAs, and other co-operatively organized utility associations by developing policies that promote the long-term viability and sustainability of REAs and other co-operatively organized utility associations.

Mrs. Schreiner: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It is an honour to bring forward Motion 507 on behalf of the tremendous Albertans who persevered to build and support our great province, the agricultural sector. This motion speaks to the future sustainability of our co-operatively owned associations, which contributed significantly to this province's success. Fellow members, I am speaking to the rural electrification associations and gas co-ops and the rural Albertans who depend on them to meet the needs of their families and businesses outside of our urban centres.

The dawn of REAs occurred in the 1940s and gas co-ops in 1973. These necessities contributed to the great success of our agricultural sector and are paramount to the competitive advantage that we experience today. We know that Alberta's oil and gas have driven the economic prosperity in this province and in this country. Alberta's agriculture industry has also played a significant role in driving that same economic prosperity. There is little doubt that the establishment of REAs was an important factor in that success.

In the late 1940s REAs came about as those in our agricultural sector looked for more efficient ways to run their businesses. With electricity available in urban centres but not in rural communities, people took initiative to meet their own needs. Within a decade of the introduction of the rural electrification program almost 90 per

cent of Albertan farmers took advantage of this. Like all business owners, farmers look to maximize efficiency, and bringing electricity to rural Alberta helped them do just that. REAs were established as not-for-profit co-operatives of at least five members who jointly owned the assets, equipment, and other technology. Governed by the Rural Utilities Act, they distributed electricity from the Alberta interconnected electric system to each member.

Within Canada, REAs are unique to Alberta and were originally commissioned as a way to provide rural Albertans with electricity to meet the personal and business needs of the agricultural sector. The early models of REAs were differentiated as self-operated REAs, which manage the co-op and conduct their own maintenance, and operating REAs, which manage the co-op but hire contractors to maintain and service their lines and equipment. Examples of both are still around today but in a reduced form as compared to the initial REAs of 70 years ago. The two distinct models illustrate the unique character of REAs and the unique needs they meet, but both were built on a foundation of collaboration. Working together, rural Albertans recognized the value of investor-owned utilities in some cases which were able to operate according to the needs of rural Albertans.

We cannot dismiss the needs of those who supported this innovation. Their vision was the foundation of an advantage in the competitive farming industry, and our rural partners stepped up to the challenge. Without efficient electricity farm families faced more hazards and found it more difficult to maintain a livelihood. With REAs, farmers could eliminate the dawn-to-dusk limitations that previously dictated when they could work, which also helped them to harness help from their families, which are the very fabric of Albertan society.

Madam Speaker and fellow members, I am bringing forth this motion for many different reasons. Our REAs are vulnerable as a result of historic regulations and agreements that remain static and impede their growth. Alberta has changed significantly since the late 1940s, when REAs were established. Rural Alberta has shifted, and as a result many areas that were once farmland have evolved into urbanized areas. This has diminished the ability of REAs to serve their mandate due to regulatory barriers.

The Rural Utilities Act, which governs REAs, was enacted to support a growing province and the need to help agricultural producers develop and enhance their operations. Community-based REAs evolved in response to community-based needs, but there are many changing dynamics that have affected our rural regions and our REAs' ability to maintain their market share in rural Alberta: Alberta's population growth since the inception of REAs, increased urbanization of Alberta's population, changing trends in the farming industry such as many farms getting larger and others dissolving, the reduced number of REAs as a result of amalgamation or sale to investor-owned utilities, and changes in technology.

While change is inevitable over the course of 70-plus years, it's important to remember where we have come from. REAs have served to promote the growth, viability, and sustainability of our agricultural sectors. Like investor-owned utilities, REAs have evolved to serve the growing needs of our province. Right now over 40,000 Albertans belong to the 32 REAs that still exist, down from the peak of 381 active REAs. It is crucial to consult with stakeholders about how we can best support the future sustainability of these important institutions.

It was my pleasure to meet with the Alberta Federation of Rural Electrification Associations, Equis, and Fortis. Our conversations helped form the basis of this motion. This motion seeks to open the dialogue about the changes taking place in rural Alberta and their impact on REAs. We cannot influence Albertans' choices on where

to live, but we can seek to preserve REAs and the services they provide to the 40,000 rural Albertans who rely on them. The result of shifting populations is that there are areas where both REAs and investor-owned utilities operate, and REAs are losing market share.

Madam Speaker and fellow members, I would also be remiss if I did not mention the many community organizations that REAs support. Many choose to reinvest in the communities they co-operatively serve. This is true of many investor-owned utilities as well, and we can conclude that both types of operations can bring value to their communities.

In the case of REAs, I have heard from many groups about the positive impacts that REAs have had. For example, Wettstein Safety Strategies and co-op concurs.

REAs are an integral part of rural Alberta and contribute meaningfully as both community builders and electricity [and other resource] distributors. These member-owned cooperatives have a long and proud history of distributing electricity to our communities and investing in organizations such as ours.

Another example is the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada, who said:

We have been fortunate to find a strong partner in . . . AFREA. Their generous support of over \$300,000 for the past 12 years has allowed us to support individuals affected by MS in more than 30 rural communities across Alberta.

The different needs of REAs vary depending on a number of factors. Agreements made at the outset of the REAs served to meet the rudimentary needs of early REAs but may or may not serve present or future needs. Nominal changes in government may or may not balance the changes that have taken place over the last 70-plus years. That's why it's so important that we begin this dialogue.

I welcome the opportunity to further debate our support for policy development that will encourage stability, viability, and sustainability of these important co-operatively owned associations. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

5:10

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to thank the hon. Member for Red Deer-North for bringing in this motion and for also inviting the representatives of the industry. I support the spirit of this motion, but when we talk about the viability and sustainability of REAs, I want to go a little bit into those details.

As you all know, Albertans, particularly rural Albertans, know that the UCP has got their back. [interjections] Yeah, yeah. You can laugh. We will see. I wouldn't be surprised, Madam Speaker, through you – we'll see next time. You won't believe how many rural seats the UCP will be honoured to represent. This is coming from a Calgary guy who travelled in all those rural ridings, including the one of the member on the other side who is laughing. I was in her riding, too. And I was in your riding, too, Madam Speaker, if you remember. It was an honour.

But I want to bring in how we got here. This NDP government and caucus just doesn't know when to stop when it comes to meddling with Alberta's electrical system. The whole afternoon today we talked about electricity. First, we had the coal-fired generation phase-outs, both the federally mandated one and the end-of-life mandated one, and then the NDP imposed a provincial one on assets that were not clear end-of-life. So a real waste of capital, Madam Speaker. Then we had the power purchase agreement debacle, the hundreds of millions of dollars it will cost the taxpayers to bail out the billions of dollars the Balancing Pool lost, and then the capacity market debate because the generators needed money to replace the old coal plants with natural gas based and keep prices stable.

Thankfully, the new wind generators under the renewable electricity program are not getting the capacity payments because that would make the capacity market a simple political sop to the NDP's world travellers. And now we find out that the Balancing Pool was behaving in a nonconsultative, noncommercial manner and has cost the privately owned generators an estimated \$2.9 billion. Is the Crown about to be sued for that amount? I know that I would. All of these scandals were around the generation component of the electricity system.

The NDP never touched transmission, and the NDP never touched distribution until now. The motion before us reads:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to strengthen partnerships with rural electrification associations . . . and other co-operatively organized utility associations by developing policies that promote the long-term viability and sustainability of REAs and other co-operatively organized utility associations.

At one point there were nearly 400 REAs in Alberta. As of November 2016 there were 31 REAs grouped across 11 REA districts, comprised of 40,838 customers. On average, each REA has 1,317 customers. The largest REA is Equis, spanning 26 municipal districts and counties, with over 11,550 members and 28 per cent of REA customers from Barrhead to the U.S. border.

REAs are surrounded by ATCO Electric and FortisAlberta Inc. as competitive investor-owned utility distributors and electrical equipment owners. REAs are locked in the market share turf war with private companies, and it seems that the market is not set out with level playing fields for the REAs. By not having a level playing field, the REAs are out there calling for a monopoly on distribution to customers who consume less than 500 kilowatts per annum and want to compete for customers that consume more than 500 kVa. They also want a monopoly on their service area.

I'm a capitalist, Madam Speaker, and that makes me believe in competition. Can an update be made to enable the REAs better competition powers? I think the case can be made. After all, if someone can leave Equis for Fortis, then someone should be able to leave Fortis for Equis. But this is the NDP that we are talking about here, and knowing the NDP, they will try and damage anyone that makes money. If the NDP can harm power generators like they have, then the NDP can harm power distributors like REAs, too.

We all know that the NDP have no leg to stand on when it comes to the electricity file. Witness the evidence of holding on to the power purchase agreements longer than needed. When the companies moved to cancel the PPAs because they had been made more unprofitable by the NDP, the Balancing Pool held on so that the NDP could try and sue itself. Witness the Balancing Pool treating those PPA assets in a noncommercial manner, losing \$750 million and taking out loans from the government of Alberta, and witness the Balancing Pool losing \$745 million from January 2017 to September 2018 and costing other generators \$2.9 billion over the same period of time.

We know that the NDP have been manipulating electricity prices through the 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour rate cap, the PPA cancellation delay, the Balancing Pool's noncommercial behaviour, the numerous subsidies and programs to backstop wind and solar, their indifference to geothermal, and the early closure and phase-out of practically brand new, high-efficiency coal-fired generation plants at Genesee and Keephills, which, I will add, will create a fly ash shortage for the construction sector for anything built with concrete. With the NDP's record on electricity, how can we trust the NDP to resolve the issues with the REAs?

I want to back the truck up here and talk about the 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour. The REAs cannot find the efficiencies to make that 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour price for their members. They have to

charge a higher rate. Why? Membership. They do not have enough members to enable large electricity bulk buys to pass those savings on to their members. REAs can charge a billing rate that is in excess of the rate cap of 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour. This is distinct from the large regulated rate option, RRO, suppliers, who are capped at 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour.

When asked about this at the budget estimates in April 2018, Assistant Deputy Minister David James explained that the reference rate was created using the RRO prices of EPCOR, Enmax, and Direct Energy and adding 10 per cent. In that way, the REAs can be reimbursed for prices above the 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour. This creates a situation in that the REA members may switch to another distributor in order to get a lower rate and affect the long-term viability of the REAs.

Madam Speaker, while the NDP put forward nice motions and promises to REAs, the NDP government has no credibility on the electricity file. I thank you for the opportunity to address Motion 507.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I always find it entertaining when the Member for Calgary-Foothills talks about REAs. I'm hoping that maybe after I finish speaking, he'll understand some of the background of REAs. I also have to ask the question: why was it that under the previous government nothing was done to support the REAs and enable them to be more viable and to resolve some of the issues that came about because of some of the changes in the urban and rural divide? That's my first question.

5:20

Madam Speaker, my question today is really: how many MLAs in this Assembly have ever pondered the uniqueness of the rural electrification associations? Do you all know that Alberta is the only province that has them? This is a very unique thing that was created by the farmers of Alberta. Our rural electrification co-ops, that I'm going to just call the REAs, and our gas co-ops are only present in Alberta, and I think it really speaks to the uniqueness of our agriculture and the tendency of our agriculture sector to realize that they needed to meet their electricity demands, and because the government wasn't interested in helping them access electricity, they all got together to form these REAs.

Another question that I think we need to ponder is how close our farmers in the 1940s came to not having electricity. It was only because these farmers got together and invested their own funds that our farmers got access to electricity. I think we often talk about the investor-owned utilities, the IO utilities, and the fact that we think they're the greatest thing, but I want to reinforce the fact that when the farmers needed electricity, those big companies did not want to support the farmers because it was going to be too expensive. This is why the farmers followed what had happened in other provinces and formed the co-operatives, which we now call REAs.

It's also interesting to note that the farmers in Alberta didn't only form REAs and water co-ops and later on gas co-ops. By forming REAs, they joined the growing diversity of co-operatives formed by rural Canadians, like mutual insurance. Most farmers in the past were insured through a mutual. A mutual is a co-operative; it's just a different name. Most of the mutuals have now been demutualized.

There are the agricultural stores like the UFA, which is one of our biggest co-operatives, which has had such importance in the history of Alberta. There are the water co-operatives, the gas co-ops, and the credit unions. Without these co-operatives, which the

REAs are a part of, our rural economy, our farmers and so on would have been really challenged to provide as much to the economy of Alberta as they have. They're really the backbone of our economy, and they maintain to be the backbone of our economy.

I just read an interesting report around REAs, that I'll be happy to table tomorrow. It's called the Toma and Bouma report. This report is kind of interesting because it demonstrates that under the former PC government, that many of the members are very closely linked to, there were opportunities then to do something about the REAs, to help them and support them, and nothing was done. I'll be happy to table it in the future.

I also think it's quite interesting to find out the history of co-operatives. Again, I'm wondering how many knew that the co-operatives sector in Alberta was started by two Catholic priests. Did you know that Moses Coady and Jim Tompkins out of Antigonish, Nova Scotia, were the two Catholic priests who, following a Catholic social teaching, started the co-operatives? If you know anything about rural Alberta, you would also realize that a lot of the farmers who were very involved in the co-operatives sector were from the Dutch Reform church. So our co-operatives movement has strong Christian roots, initially from the Catholic movement and, especially in Alberta, from the Christian Reformed church. These priests were interested in forming co-operatives because they realized that there were a lot of inequalities among the farmers and the fishers, and they needed to find a way to make sure that people had access to a good price.

I just wanted to quote a little bit from that time. The movement advocated reforms that included forming co-operatives because on the social issues it really was a need to make sure that people had access to good wages and all the tools that they needed to be able to, in this case, farm or be able to sell their product. Those two priests, Moses Coady and Jim Tompkins – and maybe some of you have seen the Coady institute, which is still very important in Antigonish and throughout the world – believed implicitly in the power of people to accomplish anything if they could but awaken to the opportunities of the moment and use their collective energies in a determined effort to improve their status.

One of the things that I appreciate so much about the REAs, not only their histories but up to the present day, is that this is what the REAs are all about. People have collectively put their efforts, they collectively put their money to make sure that they had access to electricity, that they could build the poles and connect them to the main grid and work together to do this. This is why I think it's very important for all of us to support the REAs to ensure their viability.

The other part that really interests me about the REAs is: did you all know that the REAs have been really interested in renewable energy? They have been involved in various committees and various efforts to explore the way that as REAs, because they have the infrastructure, they have the administration, and they have the members, they could work with our government to form a community renewable energy project or to support farmers installing solar energy or wind energy. They really understand that the face of energy is changing in Alberta, that they can participate in that and use their power of membership and locally made decisions to work with the government to be involved in renewable energy.

One of the things I really appreciate about the REAs and the gas co-ops and the UFA and other institutions that the farmers have started in Alberta is that by forming a co-operative, as members they can make decisions over the goods they produce or, in this case, over the way that electricity is going to be distributed and how their organization is going to be covered. I think it's very, very powerful.

Myself, I can't belong to an REA because I live in an urban centre, but I actually belong to an electricity and gas co-operative that is modelled after the REAs, and my electricity and my gas are distributed by this co-operative. It's called ACE co-operative, and it's based on the same principles, where I as a member share all the risk and I share all the benefits and I have the ability to make decisions.

I think that while we look at the REAs as being rural – and in my own municipality of Strathcona county we have an REA in our rural areas – it's important to understand their viability and the importance they have in ensuring that our farmers have electricity but also the importance they have when looking towards the future. What can be for them in the future in terms of rural energy or other aspects of the electricity system is very important. It's applicable to everyone in this House.

I wanted also to thank the members of the FREAs.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Once again, it's always a pleasure to rise in this Legislature to discuss legislation that's important to all Albertans, and today is certainly no exception as we discuss private member's Motion 507, which reads:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to strengthen partnerships with rural electrification associations... and other co-operatively organized utility associations by developing policies that promote the long-term viability and sustainability of REAs and other co-operatively organized utility associations.

Now, that is a mouthful.

5:30

Well, Madam Speaker, I have to confess that I'm not quite sure where the motion would come from. I'm not of any understanding in the last 30 minutes that I have sat and listened, any understanding where the REAs in Alberta are necessarily concerned about their partnerships with the government of Alberta. I certainly didn't hear any outstanding reasons from the member that introduced the motion nor the last speaker.

It could be, to me anyways, that the concern stems from the fact that Alberta has had no substantive updates or changes to legislation impacting REA operation in over 40 years. That's 40 years. Now, that's 40, for those at home. That's pretty significant if you ask me, Madam Speaker. So it would appear that as a result of this, this stale state of legislation, Alberta's REAs have been unable to expand market share or attract new membership in any substantial way. Because of this, almost a third of REAs that were around in 2012 have since been sold to investor-owned utilities.

I've certainly been wrong before, and I suspect I'll be wrong many times yet before my time here is done, but that certainly would make me think that REAs could be in a bit of trouble for their sustainability; in fact, that the trends seem to be that REAs could end up being absorbed by these investor-owned utilities in a decade or so. That should give us, especially those in rural Alberta, a slight cause for concern.

What I know for sure is that historically rural electrification in Alberta started in the 1940s. At that time in Alberta's history utilities first began providing electric service to farms that happened to be close to the transmission lines, transmission lines that were carrying power to larger urban centres. That was working out just fine for the farm sites that happened to be located in the right spot, but obviously there were farms located far from existing lines that energy travelled through. A quick determination was that the costs associated with the possibility of connecting a delivery system for those farms made serving them uneconomic.

In the late '40s the Alberta government created legislation that allowed in part the creation of farmer-owned, not-for-profit rural electrification associations. The legislation also provided for loans to the REAs that were guaranteed by the government so that the associations could finance the capital costs of constructing a distribution network. After construction the associations could take ownership of and also operate the lines, transformers, and substations. Over the years since these basically made-in-Alberta, unique creations were formed and up and running, certainly, government was involved with varying subsidies.

Now, my grandfather left Scotland by ship and landed on the east coast of Canada in 1904. He worked his way across Canada on the Canadian Pacific Railway. He ended up in the western town of Stavely in 1908 and paid \$10 for a quarter section of land some 50 or 60 miles to the east of where he was standing, land he'd never seen, but he was so happy to be in a country where land was available that it didn't matter. He made his way to the Armada area, which is east of Vulcan. I'm not sure how he got out there. He was Scottish. He worked for four years to get his way out west, so I suppose it's possible that he had enough wherewithal to purchase a horse to ride, possibly a workhorse. At any rate, no pun intended, he got to his land, he proved up, and he was given the adjoining quarter section. He was well on his way to becoming a successful homesteader in early Alberta. He met my grandmother sometime before 1920, and they married. Now, she was English. So they together were, shall we say, frugal but not so frugal that they lacked of the conveniences in life that were becoming available.

For power on their farm, that was certainly a long way from the future distribution lines, they had a windmill that charged batteries, and I remember the generator that they had purchased sometime after they were part of rural electrification to provide power when the lines were down. When power went out in those early days, it was sometimes out for days or weeks at a time. A heavy snowstorm could take down lines in a huge area. Wind could take lines down. It was the infancy of electricity in rural areas in Alberta.

At any rate, my grandfather and his two sons were part of rural electrification at the time of the area. They helped to install power poles, string wire to areas within their specific geographic boundaries. So while I've never been part of an REA on my own operation, I have always felt that I have a small connection to the history of rural electrification.

But to the present, Madam Speaker, what we have here is a group of REAs basically at a sort of crossroads in their existence. As of November 2016 there were 31 REAs grouped across 11 REA districts, comprising some 40,838 customers. Now, that gives us on average 1,317 customers per REA. The largest REA is Equis, spanning 26 municipal districts and counties, with over 11,550 members. That number represents 28 per cent of REA customers in Alberta, from Barrhead to the U.S. border.

Now, to me, where the trouble lies is that these REAs are pretty much surrounded by ATCO Electric and FortisAlberta Inc. as competitor distributors and electrical equipment owners. In the fall of 2012 FortisAlberta interpreted some rulings to mean that customers could choose to not be members of an REA and therefore would become customers of FortisAlberta by default, regardless of the usage of the electric service. REAs are of the opinion that this cuts two ways: if a customer can choose to not be a member of the REA, they can also choose not to be a customer of FortisAlberta and be a member of an REA. What's good for the goose is good for the gander.

As a result, the Alberta Federation of Rural Electrification Associations has been advocating for legislative change to support the sustainability and, hence, the membership base of REAs. Compounding the issue was a critical development that occurred

this last summer. What happened was that the Alberta Utilities Commission decided that Fortis should have exclusive rights to distribute electricity in the lands annexed by four municipalities, municipalities with which they already had a pre-existing franchise agreement. What this meant was that the four REAs affected by these annexations could not coexist with Fortis within these lands and compete for distribution. This only further weakened the province's REAs.

I guess the purpose of this motion is to make sure that REAs continue to exist and remain a viable option to rural customers. Now, I can certainly get behind that, Madam Speaker. As you are well aware, the people in this party that's represented by this caucus are big believers in open and fair competition. Options are always good. I just find it odd that the government is championing this, when it wasn't too long ago, under another bill – I believe it was during Bill 13 debate for a capacity electricity market – that the NDP put some amendments forward into the Gas Utilities Act giving the Alberta Utilities Commission the power to order a specified penalty against a retailer like the Northern Lights Gas Co-op in Mackenzie county for failing to deliver natural gas. As we've brought up several times in this House, for two winters now that gas co-op has had trouble maintaining line pressure, and it will take them probably close to a decade to raise the capital needed to effect repairs and address their rapid growth, while the NDP solution was to set the AUC on them and penalize them for it. Not exactly standing up for Albertans.

The bottom line is that these REAs could play a much larger role as a trusted partner with the provincial government in economic development activities if government would simply allow them to. But until that day we will have to treat this motion as an important step in the right direction. So I will be supporting this motion.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Ms Littlewood: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to be able to rise in the House and speak to the motion from the Member for Red Deer-North asking the government to strengthen partnerships with rural electrification associations, otherwise known as REAs, and how we can look at promoting the long-term viability and sustainability of REAs and, of course, other co-operatively organized utility associations because, as the discussion today focuses on REAs, we have other co-operatives in rural Alberta that are quite important. In my community especially we have a water co-op, we have gas co-ops, we have UFA: companies that are able to do an incredible job of keeping money local, keeping jobs local, keeping investment local, and keeping decision-making local, which is, of course, the most important thing.

5:40

In my own constituency of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville I have the pleasure of supporting and representing a few different REAs. We have the Lakeland REA, we have the Battle River co-op, and we also have the Zawale REA. When I have been in conversations with people from my neighbourhood as well as the executive of the AFREA, I've been learning a lot about what those services are that are delivered and how it is that they came to exist in the first place. As was elaborated on a bit earlier by our MLA for Sherwood Park, it was neighbours and farmers coming together in the absence of government and business.

I was on my way to a Lakeland AGM the other day, and I was thinking about how to draw some sort of parallel with my own life

because I do live in an investor-owned utility-served area. One night I was on my way home from Tofield, from visiting with the high school awards recipients, and I was headed north on highway 34. I came upon a deer, and the deer did not survive. I took it on with my truck. By the time I turned around, it was certainly in the middle of the road, no longer with the life that I had come upon it with, the point being that I came upon it and I didn't know what I was going to do. I knew that I was going to call Fish and Game and call AMA and try and figure out how to take care of my truck and the carcass.

I was thankful because I threw on my four-ways and a neighbour came upon me and the accident. They pulled up beside me, and they had actually recognized me from the high school awards because one of their children was a recipient. The husband was able to offer his assistance. Thankfully, the deer was in one piece, so he was able to help and take the deer off the road by its legs. That was something that I was thankful to have happened because that was a need that I had, to make sure that the area was safe and that my truck was okay. It took neighbours. You know, with probably a three-hour wait for fish and wildlife and a three-hour wait for AMA, in the absence of government and business it was neighbours and farmers coming together. It was actually a farm owner from just a couple of miles over that helped me out in that moment.

That is how the entire province was electrified. It's incredible that people were able to come together for a very important cause. They knew that there was a need with developing agriculture to be able to serve that industry as it grew, and really that's a major reason why we have a strong farming industry today.

There have been quite a lot of changes that have taken course over the last number of years, including urban drift that has come out of rural areas, amalgamated farms, subdividing into acreages. All of these things start to pose a challenge when it comes to having enough customers to be able to pay for the things that keep the REA sustainable and viable and thriving. That, along with some changes in technology and those issues, is why we're talking about this today.

It's why the AFREA and the REAs that I represent came and met with me basically as soon as I was elected. They knew that we shared values of co-operatives and having local, democratic decision-making of member-owned businesses. They have been asking the government to undertake looking for ways to help them help themselves. They're not asking for a handout; they're just asking for someone to be a good partner.

It has been great to see some of the announcements that have come lately, including the intermingled electricity study that Alberta Forestry and Alberta Energy have been undertaking in order to analyze pricing, financial information, how we can promote economic growth. We hope to see the results of the study soon. As I do understand, it should be coming in short order. That will give us some of those answers.

In the meantime the ability of our REAs to be great partners in community generation with renewables is absolutely incredible. The announcement at the rural municipalities association convention last week that announced \$200 million in community generation would help groups that can take this on as a project and a means of economic means, including ag societies, schools, community groups, neighbours, and co-operatives. We know that REAs want to be a partner in doing this. That \$200 million is backed by the price that we are applying to carbon as part of the climate leadership plan, so we need to have those funds available to do good work, to reduce greenhouse gases but also diversify local economies in rural Alberta, because the more that we can do that, the more that rural

Alberta becomes more sustainable and viable into the future. I know that that's what everyone agrees with.

Going forward, I know that there are more opportunities that REAs are discussing, and I certainly hope to hear more in the conversations of possibly Internet and broadband development in rural areas that could be delivered by REAs because that is the way of the future. That is how we are going to hang onto students that need to be able to do their studies, businesses that need to be connected with a global market, and emergency services. So I'm definitely hoping to hear some more of that work that might be going on right now so that we can potentially collaborate on those solutions because we are working towards the same ends on that. Alberta has been trying to get better Internet service in all of our communities in rural Alberta, especially northern Alberta and indigenous communities, for years. If these groups were able to electrify the entire province, I don't see why they can't help connect it as well.

I'll end my remarks there, Madam Speaker. I just want to thank all of the work that the MLA for Red Deer-North has done and my fellow MLAs, both urban and rural, that are supporting REAs and our co-operative values moving forward.

Thank you so much.

The Deputy Speaker: Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. There is little time and much to talk about today, so I will try to be as efficient as possible. I do want to start off by just quickly responding to some comments from the member for Vegreville-Viking.

Ms Littlewood: Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Mr. Nixon: Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville: that neck of the woods out there in northeastern Alberta.

Just to be really clear, this REA member is looking forward to the carbon tax being gone, for sure. This REA member also has some questions about why we are only seeing a motion in this Assembly. First of all, I want to start off by thanking the member from Red Deer. I think she has good intentions with this motion. She's brought it here in good faith, and I believe – in fact, I know, Madam Speaker, that she's spent considerable time interacting with REAs, including REAs that I represent. I think she is doing the best she can as a private member of this Assembly to bring this important issue to the floor of this Assembly.

But, Madam Speaker, you and I both know that this motion is toothless. I will certainly support it, and this side of the House will certainly support it, but this motion does nothing to help REAs with the problems that they're facing. This motion assumes that the government will act on it. I can't remember the last time that this government acted on a private member's motion in this place, which begs the question: why is there no bill before this House? Now, the hon. member, who obviously thinks this issue is important – and good for her – probably only drew a private member's motion, and she probably was only able to use that as her mechanism to bring that to the Chamber, to bring this issue to the forefront. Good for her.

This government has been in power for almost four years. How come that agriculture minister right there has not stood up in this Chamber and brought forward a piece of legislation to deal with it? As the hon. member from Vulcan – Little Bow: that's where he's from; Vulcan is there, though – brought up, this is decades-old legislation, and this government has refused to address it, so it's a little bit rich for government members to stand in this Chamber and

then say that they're being able to champion this issue on behalf of REAs when they know as well as I know that this motion will do little to move forward REA issues.

5:50

In addition, talking about co-operative issues, this side of the House has some concerns. This government, back under the Bill 13 debate on the electricity capacity market – at that time we found out, as you know, Madam Speaker, that the NDP put forward some amendments to the Gas Utilities Act where the AUC can order a specified penalty against a retailer like Northern Lights Gas Co-op in Mackenzie county for failing to deliver natural gas. Now, for two winters that gas co-op has had trouble maintaining line pressure, and it will take them 10 years to raise the money needed to effect repairs and address the rapid growth in the communities, and the NDP dared to just send the AUC on them and penalize them for it.

This government is not concerned. There are some private members within this government that are concerned about dealing with issues like REAs, but this government as a whole is not concerned about it at all because, again, like so many things that they do in this Chamber, their lack of action shows more than their words.

It's okay to stand in this Chamber and give the history of REAs, which is very important. I don't have enough time to deal with that before we hit the clock to have to vote on this. It's important. Without REAs we wouldn't have this province, particularly the areas that most of us on this side of the House represent. The history of REAs is fascinating. I think it's one of the great stories of our province, and I think REAs have a role, certainly, to play in the future of our province. I actually represent the largest constituency as far as REA members considered numerically in the province. REAs have a role to play.

When members want to stand in this Chamber and act like they're going to champion this issue but then sit with a government that refuses to address it at all – I know for sure that REAs have come and met with the government for several years, trying to get the agriculture minister to move on this, and again no action from this government. We see it on so many other issues. The examples are long, Madam Speaker, as you well know, everything from pipelines, carbon tax, all those types of issues, but on this specifically, again no action. The question has to become for the private members on this side why the government won't truly take action.

Again I want to stress in the little time that I have left – I'm watching the clock because I know you'll call it – that the hon. member from Red Deer has come here in good faith, which is why I will support this. I think that she has taken a considerable amount of time on this motion, and I completely support it – but I do want to outline that it has no ability to make the government act, and the government has refused to act so far. So the members on that side who are attempting to champion issues of REAs: the most important thing they could do is talk to their cabinet, talk to the members of the government. The private member from Red Deer is not a member of the government. I recognize that, but she is a member of the party that is the governing party at this moment. She could talk to cabinet to find out why they won't address this issue once and for all, bring forward some legislation to be able to deal with it.

You know, when I first heard about this from my REAs, from the Rocky REA, they thought this was a bill. They thought this was going to be something that was significant to move this forward. When I explained to them what a private member's motion was, I think they were probably disappointed. They were still excited that

their issue was being discussed – that’s important – but they really thought something would happen about it.

I think it’s important to be clear that the NDP government went out of their way over and over not to address the REA issue and instead has buried it to make some of their private members be quiet or to appease them in the backbench instead of taking action on it, and those private members should start to hold their government accountable for that action.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North to close debate.

Mrs. Schreiner: Thank you again, Madam Speaker. We can all agree that our REAs have invaluable contributed to the success and prosperity of our agricultural sector and were key in the progress that our farming industry was in great need of. It is important to note as well that this innovation also reinforced the ability of rural families to enjoy time that may not have been available without innovation and efficiency. I am proud to know that we are willing to acknowledge the historical contributions that REAs have brought to our agricultural industry and continue to provide today. I appreciate the thoughtful debate and discussion from colleagues here in the Legislature.

Our discussion today brings realization of our pledge to support those who put food on our tables. We are all committed to supporting rural Albertans and our agriculture producers. We are committed to finding solutions to support our rural electrification associations and all co-operatively owned associations as they aim to serve Albertans, even if we don’t always agree on the exact way to provide that support.

The dynamics within rural electrification models suggest that thoughtfulness is required when looking to support the future of their sustainability. There is much capacity within the REAs themselves, and I am glad to know that governance training has been offered and provided to those boards that wish to maximize and make efficient use of the resources within their means. It is this kind of dialogue that will lead to the effective policy direction that will provide the best outcomes for REAs and the rural Albertans who rely on them.

I just want to emphasize once again the kinds of changes taking place in rural Alberta that are challenging our REAs: Alberta’s population growth since the inception of REAs, the increased urbanization of Alberta’s population, the changing trends in the farming industry such as many farms getting larger and others dissolving, the reduced number of REAs as a result of amalgamation or sale to investor-owned utilities, and changes in technology.

While there have been in the past hundreds of REAs all across the province, that number has since dwindled to 32, but those 32 REAs provide an invaluable service to over 40,000 rural Albertans who depend on them. As I mentioned earlier, there are many not-for-profit organizations that benefit from this province’s REAs as well. These co-operatively organized utility providers reflect some of the very best about what it means to be Albertan. As Albertans we work together to overcome the challenges our environment has presented to us, and we give back, supporting those among us who need it.

Before we vote on this motion, I want to once again encourage all of my colleagues to support it. We need to develop policy that will encourage stability, viability, and sustainability for these important co-operatively owned associations. They are part of our history, and it would be a shame to lose them. We must make them part of our future.

Thank you.

Cortes-Vargas: Madam Speaker, just seeing the time, I ask that we make the bells for this motion to be one minute.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North has proposed Motion 507.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 507 carried]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Seeing the time and the progress that we’ve made, I would move that we adjourn the House for the time being and reconvene at 7:30 this evening.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:59 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday evening, November 26, 2018

Day 53

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Monday, November 26, 2018

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: Good evening. Please be seated.

Government Motions

Committee Membership Changes

35. Ms Larivee moved:
Be it resolved that the membership of the Assembly's committees be replaced as follows:
- A. on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts that Ms Payne replace Mr. Malkinson and Ms Kazim replace Ms Luff;
 - B. on the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship that Ms Payne replace Mr. Malkinson;
 - C. on the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices that Ms Payne replace Mr. Malkinson, Ms Payne replace Mr. Malkinson as deputy chair, and Mr. Cooper replace Mr. Gill;
 - D. on the Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund that MLA Drever replace Ms Luff;
 - E. on the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future that Mr. Dreeshen replace Mr. Taylor;
 - F. on the Standing Committee on Families and Communities that Ms Goodridge replace Mr. Ellis;
 - G. on the Standing Committee on Private Bills that Mr. Gill replace Mr. Orr.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to request one-minute bells for votes related to Government Motion 35.

[Unanimous consent denied]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Speaker. On behalf of the Government House Leader I move Government Motion 35.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 49(2) I move that the question be now put.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, for clarity of the House before we move on, the motion for the previous question under 49(2) serves to curtail the debate. After it is moved and carried, no further amendments may be made to the main motion as has been moved. The motion may be debated by every member who has spoken to the main question. If this motion is carried, then the vote is immediately called on the original question without any further debate, as in Standing Order 49(3).

Are there any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

Ms Luff: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would ask that the House vote this down right now, please. According to this motion that is now before the House, I have been removed from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. I was hoping to be able to move an

amendment to allow myself to not be removed from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts because it is against best practice in parliamentary procedure. According to the Canadian Audit and Accountability Foundation: the Public Accounts Committee should be free from government interference; it should be committed to working in a crosspartisan fashion; member turnover and substitution are discouraged whenever possible; and the Public Accounts Committee finds consensus and unity on its decisions.

The fact that the Official Opposition and the government are working together right now to not allow me to move an amendment to speak to the fact that they're choosing to take me off this committee against my wishes – I asked specifically not to be removed from this committee – and the fact that the government and the Official Opposition are working together right now to prevent me the opportunity to speak and to provide an amendment is absolutely abominable, Madam Speaker. This is a tragedy. I stand on this side as an independent because I feel that the democratic processes of this House do not work as they are intended to work, and this is absolutely an example of that. So I would ask very much that you allow amendments and debate on this motion to continue, please.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: I sure do, Madam Speaker. It is truly a remarkable day when two parties – the government party, that is, if anybody was to tune in for Oral Question Period, to be in pitched opposition to the Official Opposition – somehow find it in their hearts to come together when it is time for committee reassignment when it serves their own political interests. Like the Member for Calgary-East, I have a couple of amendments I'd like to put to this. I suspect the Member for Strathmore-Brooks may have as well.

It is entirely remarkable that the government and the Official Opposition, the NDP and the UCP: here they are hand in hand working together finally. Maybe that's the purpose of being a centrist. Maybe that's what it is. Maybe, finally, we've actually united these two parties. We've found something that they can actually agree on.

What they did: very clearly, when the hon. Deputy Government House Leader moved the motion, the Official Opposition House Leader sprang to his feet, just like that, lickety-split. In fact, he got up even before she moved the motion because very clearly they had colluded, and they had a plan, this nefarious little plan in the backrooms of this building, the kind of thing that Albertans absolutely hate and reject.

Now, democracy isn't always convenient, it isn't always simple, it isn't always straightforward, but, you know, democracy means that officially recognized parties of this Assembly, of which the Alberta Party caucus is one, would be on all of the major committees. I remind the government side that when their members the now Premier and the now Government House Leader were but two members of the Assembly sitting in this very spot, perhaps at one of these very desks, those two members were on every single committee, including Legislative Offices and including Members' Services, the two committees that govern how we run the Legislative Assembly.

But they've decided to exclude the Alberta Party caucus, an officially recognized third party, from those two committees. They've decided to exclude the Member for Calgary-East from any committees at all, which is completely unheard of, when the Member for Calgary-Mountain View, the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster as single-member caucuses are part of a committee, when independent members in the past have always been assigned

at least to one committee. That is unconscionable, that they would seek to exclude those members from those committees especially. Back when the NDP was a small party – Madam Speaker, I think that if they continue behaving this way, they may find themselves once again being a very small party represented by only a couple of members of the Assembly – they found themselves in a completely different position, where they were put on every single committee.

I wonder, if we actually were able to ask each one of the backbench members of the government party how they felt about this, if they actually, really felt that this is the right thing to do, not just excluding us from the committees that we are legitimately entitled to be a part of but this procedural trickery that's being used in collusion between the NDP and the UCP late at night, when no one seems to be watching, to just get their way, to steamroll and use the power of the Legislative Assembly and get together and roll over us smaller parties.

Well, it's not why I went into elected office. In fact, maybe in some ways it is, because I went into elected office to fight against this sort of thing, to fight against this sort of entitlement, using your muscle, this kind of bully tactics to get your way.

Mr. Yao: Shame.

Mr. Clark: It is shameful. It's ironic to hear that from a member of the UCP backbench because you're part of it. You're part of this. My arguments are so compelling that we've got UCP backbenchers heckling their own motion.

It's bizarre. I mean, we're through the looking glass on this, and while it may be a technical and procedural motion and while this may not be the topic of choice at the Red Deer Tim Hortons on the drive back to Calgary at the end of the week, this does matter. This really does matter. What happens in this House matters. How we conduct ourselves, how the business of the Legislative Assembly is conducted actually matters. It matters to the real lives of everyday Albertans. We're sitting here debating a procedural motion to exclude even the possibility of us presenting amendments, which I'm not so naive as to think would perhaps be accepted by the government although we've presented this request to the government, would like very much, I think, to be on these committees, because that's what was done when the two government members, back in 2008, were the lone voice of the NDP in the wilderness, by the way, as a two-member caucus, were an official party at the time. The Alberta Party now as a three-member caucus is an official party. They were on these committees that we seek to amend ourselves onto, but they're not going to even allow us the chance to debate that, as to why we should be on those committees.

I'm very angry with this, and I think if Albertans tuning in today were to see what's going on, they would be angry with this as well. This is not, I think, what they thought they were going to get when they elected a new government to sweep out a 44-year dynasty, but surprisingly, three and a half years in, they're starting to behave exactly the same way.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

7:40

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. This is perhaps the most petty and vindictive motion I have ever seen come before this Legislature, and in the three and a half years I have been here, I have seen a lot of petty and vindictive. This is the most heavy-

handed and extreme antidemocratic attempt by any member of this Legislature that I have ever seen in the entire time I've watched Alberta's Legislature in action, including before I was elected.

Now, the government motion before us here was originally vindictive enough to take the Member for Calgary-Greenway and the Member for Calgary-East off of committees. Now, I remember in my time on the Public Accounts Committee the Member for Calgary-East. However restricted by party discipline she was, she was, within the confines of that, perhaps one of the more thoughtful and well-studied people on that committee. Government members were not allowed to ask their own questions. They were written and scripted, but I could tell that she at least did her homework, which is more than I could say for many. Regardless of whatever political differences are there, she has experience on that committee and, I think, brings value.

But that's not what this is about. This motion to take the members for Calgary-Greenway and Calgary-East off these committees and move them around as the big parties see fit isn't about what's going to make the most functional and collaborative and intelligent committees of this Legislature possible. It's about power and vindictiveness.

Now, I expected to come in here this evening and debate Government Motion 35 to take them off these committees. The Member for Calgary-East would move a motion that would get defeated by the government, the Member for Calgary-Elbow would move a motion, likely, that would get defeated by the government, and I myself would make a motion that would get defeated by the government. That's what opposition is, and when you're smaller opposition parties, it's particularly futile sometimes, but it is our duty as the opposition to hold the government to account. Even if we expect we're going to lose votes, we have to make our point.

For the first time I've ever seen, the government and the Official Opposition are colluding to not even allow an amendment to a government motion. Now, can you imagine for one second if the NDP had brought forward a similar motion to not allow any amendments to Bill 6? When the NDP brought forward legislation that myself and many on the opposition and, I think, quietly, some members of the government, although they couldn't say so, felt was an attack on rural Alberta and farmers, the Official Opposition Wildrose at the time and the Progressive Conservative third party at the time put forward amendments. We knew that every single one would be shot down, but it was our duty as the opposition to oppose the government but to propose ways to make what they were proposing better. That is our job, and the government would have never dared to say that the opposition can't bring forward an amendment to what they're doing.

But – lo and behold – what happens when democracy becomes two foxes and a hen voting on what to have for dinner? This is collusion. This is making bipartisanship a negative, pejorative word. Bipartisanship is really when the two big parties gang up to screw the people together, when they work together to monopolize the political system, when they work together to make sure that there are no other voices. In fact, no one is even allowed to speak. What they are attempting to do is to make sure that – from my estimation and research, it's by far the busiest this distant corner of the Legislature has ever been, with one three-member caucus, three recognized single-member caucuses, and two independents – no one over here is allowed to make an amendment to a motion from the government.

Shame on the day when the Tories are bedfellows with the NDP in shutting down debate in this Legislature. I know that all of my colleagues on both sides of this House will remember the outrage from the NDP, when they were a small caucus sitting in the nosebleeds on this side of the Legislature before the last election,

when the old Tories invoked closure on debate. They were outraged. Now, that type of outrage tends to dissipate when one goes into government. Sometimes it becomes inconvenient. But there hasn't even been an election since members on this side of the House were outraged when the government imposed closure on several bills: on the carbon tax, if I'm not mistaken, and on the Bill 6 attack on our farmers. The NDP government imposed closure on debate.

But at least even closure on debate wasn't saying: no debate. It wasn't saying: no amendments. We remember the rightful indignation of the Wildrose and Progressive Conservative caucuses a mere two years ago – two years ago – when we were debating Bill 6. We were outraged that the NDP invoked closure on debate because it was the wrong thing to do. But even the NDP wouldn't have had the gall to say: there can't be amendments proposed to our own legislation. They at least had the guts at the time to argue against those amendments and vote them down. That was a little more brave than saying that there can't even be amendments. But the most shameful thing here is that the Official Opposition is colluding to shut down debate in this Legislature. Can you imagine the small, little, brave two- and four-member NDP caucus doing this? Can you imagine the grassroots democratic legacy of the Wildrose doing this? Working hand in hand with the NDP to shut down debate or even propositions of changes to the government's plan in this place: that is shameful.

Now, I have great respect for the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo. He's going to be very angry at me for mentioning this at all, but he's a good guy. He came in just as we were going on here and was unaware that this motion was actually moved by the Official Opposition House Leader, and as the Member for Calgary-Elbow was making a very, I think, good argument against this motion, he said, "Shame." It was a shameful motion, and I agree. And I don't mean to embarrass him, I don't mean to get him in trouble, but it was a moment of honesty, and he couldn't have known. He just assumed that this came from the NDP because this is something that's beyond what the NDP have ever done. This is beyond closure. I genuinely do not want to get him in trouble. He's a good guy. [interjections] I don't care what you guys say about him; he's a good guy. But he said, "Shame" before knowing that – I had to whisper in his ear, "Psst, this is a motion from your party." And that should say something here.

To every private member on the government side of the House, these are your cabinet ministers and your whip telling you what happens to you if you step out of line. This is telling you that if you step out of line and do something brave and speak up like the Member for Calgary-East has, this is what's going to happen to you. Members of the Official Opposition, you know in your hearts you are against this. You know this is what you stood for. Especially those of you who stood in the Wildrose with me, you know that this is the old, antidemocratic, Tory establishment way of doing things. You know in your heart that it's wrong. But I know that you're in a very tough spot, that there is extreme party discipline and whips here and that there are consequences if you break from it. But I know what's in your hearts. I know what's in your hearts, and you know this is wrong.

Vote for the government's motion to change these committees if you want. If you want to stack them with your members, okay. Fine. That's for your party. But at least vote against this particular motion, which will bar anyone in this Legislature from bringing forward an amendment to the government motion or even debating the motion itself. You know in your hearts that this is wrong. So I beseech you, private members of the government – I know who I'm talking to. I know this is not going to happen. But I'm telling you, private members of the government, that this is strengthening the party whip's crack on you.

Members of the Official Opposition, look in your hearts. You know this is against everything you stood for when you got elected. You know this is against democracy and free votes from MLAs. If you voted to oppose the government's closure of the Bill 6 debates, then surely you will vote against an even more draconian measure which will end debate, which is closure on this motion, and not even allow for an amendment to the government's motion.

7:50

If you're going to vote for the motion overall, fine – that's for your party; do it – but search your hearts and vote against this motion to invoke closure and not even allow for debate and amendments on a bill. I ask you. I know that in your hearts you know it's the wrong thing. Please have the courage of your convictions to throw the party whip aside for an evening and just see what happens.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Look, I just have a couple of questions for you. First of all, maybe just in terms of clarity, the Member for Strathmore-Brooks said that Calgary-East and Calgary-Greenway will not be on any committees, so I, not knowing if that was true or not, went out and checked. I don't know if the member realizes, but Calgary-East is on Families and Communities, and Calgary-Greenway would be on the Private Bills Committee. That's just a point of clarity which is important to know. I think that it's important for members to be able to be on committees here so that they have the ability to express themselves, whether they're on the government side, the Official Opposition, or as a private member or a third party. I think it is important to have that. It's important to have that clarity, Member, so that you know that there's just not a complete shutout.

Now, one of the other things that I wanted to just clarify as well here is that there was a hue and cry made by the Member for Calgary-Elbow that somehow working with the members opposite, the NDP, was absolutely unconscionable. I heard the same thing from the Member for Strathmore-Brooks. What is interesting about that, Madam Speaker, is that I know that on multiple occasions both of these members have worked many times with the government on amendments. I guess I'm just trying to figure out whether or not they have just stood up to pontificate or whether or not this is an actual concern that is legitimate. If you're going to cast stones, just make sure that you're not living in a glass house.

I ask the member if he would be willing to answer these questions because they are genuine questions that I have. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Fildebrandt: I want to thank the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner for his questions. They're actually well-taken, fair questions. I think I'm somewhat clarifying on behalf of the Member for Calgary-Elbow. I think he may have slightly misspoken in saying that the Member for Calgary-East wouldn't be on any committees. That's not the case. She is to be on one of the policy committees, which, we all know, get so much done in this place. Both the members for Calgary-Greenway and Calgary-East have been assigned to those committees but are, against their wishes, being taken off Members' Services and Public Accounts. When I say that the Member for Calgary-East is being taken off Public Accounts, I'm not saying that she's being removed from all committees. She is being left on a committee.

Now, to the member's questions and points about working with the NDP, I'm willing to work with any member of this Legislature on policy issues. Amendments I have put forward: the vast majority of them were unsuccessful. Some of them have been successful. I think one was successful. My least favourite of them was successful, but it was successful. The Minister of Health looks very indignant at this. But I'm willing to work with any member of this Legislature – I don't care if they're from the Rhinoceros Party – on improving legislation. What I am not willing to do is work with any member of this Legislature in shutting down debate. I'm not willing to work with any member of this Legislature on invoking closure on debate. I'm not willing to work with any member of this Legislature in saying that no member will be allowed to bring forward an amendment to a motion or an amendment to legislation. That is beyond the pale.

I have sincere policy disagreements on a lot of issues with the members across and significant disagreements with maybe some members of the opposition, but we probably see more eye to eye on the bulk of things. I will work with people where there's any common ground. But one thing that is unconscionable, regardless of our ideologies or party affiliation or even personalities, is any attempt to invoke closure on debate.

As the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner will know – and I remember – he was very right when he denounced the NDP passionately for closure on Bill 6. Now, this motion is even more extreme. This is invoking closure on this motion, to say that we may not even debate the main part of the motion. This is a motion to shut down debate on the motion, to say that we're not allowed to have a single word of debate on the motion itself and that no member – government or opposition, the third party, single-member caucuses, or independents – can bring forward amendments. That is even more extreme than the motions for closure brought forward by the government on Bill 6, on the carbon tax, and on a number of other issues where they wanted to stop debate.

I know that in his heart he knows this is right. I have great respect for him, and I ask that he stand up to do the right thing here.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, we will vote on the first question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on the previous question carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 7:56 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Goehring	Payne
Anderson, S.	Hoffman	Phillips
Bilous	Horne	Piquette
Carlier	Hunter	Renaud
Carson	Jansen	Rosendahl
Ceci	Kazim	Sabir
Connolly	Kleinstauber	Schmidt
Coolahan	Larivee	Schreiner
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Shepherd
Dach	McCuaig-Boyd	Smith
Dreeshen	McKittrick	Stier
Drever	Miller	Sucha
Drysdale	Miranda	Westhead
Eggen	Nielsen	Yao
Fitzpatrick	Nixon	

Against the motion:

Clark	Fildebrandt	Luff
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Totals:	For – 44	Against – 3
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[Motion on previous question on Government Motion 35 carried]

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, I will now put the next question forward.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The fundamental role of the Speaker is to ensure and protect the right of every member of this Legislature to speak. That is the ancient duty and privilege of the Speaker of any Legislative Assembly or parliament in our Westminster tradition. It is your duty to ensure that every member here gets to speak and gets to be heard and speak for their constituents. I cannot recall any precedents in the history of Alberta where on a government bill or motion it has been illegal to debate or propose amendments. There has never been a government motion or piece of legislation where it was illegal for members of the Legislature to debate or move amendments. It is a violation of privilege of the members of this Legislature that they are not allowed to speak to a government motion. It is a violation of privilege of every member of this Legislature that they are barred from presenting amendments. So I would ask that you rule in favour . . .

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, do you have a standing order that you would like to reference in regard to your point of order to me?

Mr. Fildebrandt: You've got to give me a minute. I wasn't expecting you to side with me.

The Acting Speaker: You still have to provide a reference to a standing order.

We will move on.

[The voice vote indicated that Government Motion 35 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 8:15 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Goehring	Payne
Anderson, S.	Hoffman	Phillips
Bilous	Horne	Piquette
Carlier	Hunter	Renaud
Carson	Jansen	Rosendahl
Ceci	Kazim	Sabir
Connolly	Kleinstauber	Schmidt
Coolahan	Larivee	Schreiner
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Shepherd
Dach	McCuaig-Boyd	Smith
Dreeshen	McKittrick	Stier
Drever	Miller	Sucha
Drysdale	Miranda	Westhead
Eggen	Nielsen	Yao
Fitzpatrick	Nixon	

Against the motion:

Clark	Fildebrandt	Luff
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Totals: For – 44 Against – 3

[Government Motion 35 carried]

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: I would like to call the committee to order.

Bill 23

An Act to Renew Local Democracy in Alberta

The Deputy Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered in respect of this bill? The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Chair. I do have an amendment to . . .

Mr. Cooper: What? It's your bill.

Mr. S. Anderson: I know. A House amendment. I have the copies here, so I'll wait.

The Deputy Chair: Minister, if you could please send the copies to the table. As soon as I have the original, you can go ahead.

Hon. minister, your amendment is referred to as A1.

Mr. S. Anderson: Perfect. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Municipal bylaw and technical amendments here. The municipal bylaw for pre-election disclosure: this first proposed amendment will give local authorities the discretion, should they choose to use it, to require candidates to disclose their campaign finances prior to election day. Municipalities and school boards can choose to use this authority, but they are not required to. If they choose to do this, they'll need to do it by way of bylaw, and in the bylaw the local authority will need to set out when, how, and what candidates will need to disclose beyond the legislative requirements to disclose postelection. This amendment empowers local authorities to further enhance transparency in the local election process if they believe it is appropriate for their community.

We also have a technical amendment. This amendment simply corrects a drafting oversight. The current bill references section 165 when, in fact, we need to reference section 147.34.

We're also cleaning up language to reference "campaign expense limits" rather than "election advertising expense limits."

This final proposed amendment is, once again, a simple technical amendment to address a drafting oversight. What we're doing here is aligning the offence amounts in sections of the Local Authorities Election Act with the amounts for administrative penalties in the new section 193, which authorizes the Election Commissioner to impose administrative penalties in the event of contraventions of certain parts of the act.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Well, thank you. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to amendment A1, moved by the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Madam Chair, you'll know that inside this House over an extended period of time this member spent a lot of time talking about how much consultation he does and how impressive he is. Essentially,

he certainly implied that when we had been speaking about this piece of legislation, it was near perfect. In fact, if you listened to him, you would be surprised that there could be any error in a piece of legislation that he was responsible for. Let me just say this: the irony is not lost on me that the minister would have to come to the House and make an amendment that actually includes a fairly substantial piece here in this particular amendment.

I appreciate the minister actually providing a little bit of a heads-up that this particular amendment may or may not have been coming, but the piece around this law that allows the municipality to make a bylaw that then may require a pre-election report is actually a fairly significant change to the bill. I don't know if you'll remember, but I know that members on this side of the House asked for this particular bill to be sent to committee so that we could study these sorts of things and actually hear from municipalities as to whether or not the bill that he reportedly consulted on actually is going to have the intended consequences that he says it is.

Now, I would submit to you that this evening we have seen the minister make the admission that his legislation has challenges and problems and errors and omissions and, in fact, that it is not complete. I would be surprised now if he didn't think it was a good idea to actually ask some folks about the legislation. Clearly, a municipality raised some concerns, and he heeded those concerns and is now making an amendment. You know, by and large, I support the amendment in its intent, but again, if he had . . . [interjections] It's committee. He can speak as many times as he wants.

Mr. S. Anderson: I'm not talking to you.

Mr. Cooper: I know, but I'm listening to you.

Mr. S. Anderson: First time for everything.

Mr. Cooper: Hey, well, you know. The same could be said here this evening for you, Mr. Minister. There is a first time for everything.

I encourage you to heed the advice because I actually have also been doing some consulting, and while I'm disappointed at your lack of action to send this to committee, where we could do meaningful consultation, I do have a number of amendments to help improve your piece of legislation.

With that said – and I know that we had lots of opportunity to discuss a number of very important things this evening – I would like to make sure that we're moving forward. Given the fact that you are amending section 147 in this amendment – and of course you'll know, being the procedural guru that you are, that when a piece of legislation is opened up to an amendment, that then cannot be amended in another portion of committee.

With that said, I intend to move a subamendment to your amendment and encourage you to support it. I will pass that to the chair now and then proceed in an expedient manner.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Member.

Your subamendment will be referred to as SA1, subamendment 1. Go ahead.

8:40

Mr. Cooper: Thank you. Subamendment SA1. I move that amendment A1 – that's the minister's – to Bill 23, an Act to Renew Local Democracy in Alberta, be amended in part A by renumbering clause (a) as clause (a.1) and adding the following before clause (a.1):

- (a) in the proposed section 147.4(1) by striking out "\$50" wherever it occurs and substituting "\$250."

Now, for those of you who are following along at home, in section 147 of this particular piece of legislation it speaks specifically about the amount of money that would need to be declared when it comes to donations. In this case someone wants to make a donation to a local candidate. Any amount over \$50 would have to be disclosed in the disclosure act.

Now, for the record I support the disclosure of contributions to campaigns. Having said that, at the provincial level you'll know, Madam Chair, because I understand that in the constituency of Edmonton-Manning there is a significant amount of fundraising that takes place, that if someone is going to donate to your campaign or a PAC at the provincial level, the requirement to disclose is \$250. We've heard the minister speak at some length about trying to make the sets of rules similar in terms of getting big money out of politics, banning corporate and union donations, and all of those sorts of things at both the municipal level and at the provincial level, but what he's doing is that he's creating two totally different sets of rules, one at the municipal level, one at the provincial level.

What this amendment does is that it creates uniformity. I know that those guys over there like Unifor, but this is uniformity. That is in the context of creating the same requirement to disclose at the provincial level and the municipal level. This minister is trying to muddy the waters by creating a \$50 limit municipally and keeping the \$250 limit provincially. I think that this makes good sense, to have one amount at both levels. Whether you're donating to a third party or whether you're donating to a candidate, there is no good reason to have one set of rules at the municipal level, one set of rules at the provincial level.

I strongly encourage the minister to support this common-sense solution that creates certainty and parity. If he trusts that provincial politicians can't be bought at \$250, why does he not trust municipal politicians at a \$50 ability to disclose when it comes to campaign financing? I encourage all members of the Assembly to support a good, common-sense amendment that creates certainty, uniformity, and is an all-round good idea.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would love to speak to this subamendment. Yes, I'm a policy wonk. I know everything that's going on in this House, hon. member, so thank you.

Here we go again. I want to say that I can't for the life of me understand why the folks over there continue to believe that municipal elections shouldn't be beholden to the same transparency rules that they and we have to abide by. If anyone in this House accepts a donation over \$50, we have to disclose the name and address of that donor. It's that simple. We're making the process more transparent in lining it up with the provincial requirements. I have to wonder who you're consulting with, fine sir, who's recommending less transparency in municipal elections. Certainly not me.

I'll remind the members of this House that the current disclosure requirement for municipal campaigns is \$100. Instead of proposing more transparency, you're proposing less transparency by increasing that dollar amount by 150 per cent. The point of this bill is to reduce the influence of big money, increase transparency, and streamline the process for candidates. So far this amendment has been counter to those goals.

When we went out and consulted with Albertans over the summer – yes, consulted – and received over 1,500 responses, they were overwhelmingly supportive of increasing transparency and reducing the influence of money on municipal campaigns. My advice to the opposition would be to start talking with Albertans.

I will not be in favour of this subamendment, Madam Chair. Surprise, surprise.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Fildebrandt: I want to thank the minister for his comments. I think it's overall a positive bill, but I think the amendment before us is rather common sense. I just have a simple question for the minister. Does he believe that a \$250 donation can significantly influence a politician seeking office?

The Deputy Chair: Are there any other members wishing to speak to the subamendment?

Seeing none, I will put the question on the subamendment.

[Motion on subamendment SA1 lost]

The Deputy Chair: We are now back on the original amendment, amendment A1. Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Seeing none, I will call the question on the amendment.

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills to speak to this bill as amended.

Mr. Cooper: Well, thank you. I'm sorry that the minister didn't support our subamendment, which was not that exceptional of him, and I continue to not agree that that is what the amendment did do. Clearly, he knows that the amount at the provincial level that has to be disclosed is \$250, not \$50. We are creating two sets of rules, and that is problematic.

One thing that's very interesting, though, Madam Chair – and I know that you, too, will find this interesting – is that we just heard the minister speak about wanting to be open and transparent. If he, in fact, does want to be open and transparent, then he should have absolutely no problem – absolutely no problem – supporting this next amendment that I intend to move. One thing that has come as a bit of a surprise to many – well, in fact, it's not a surprise at all – is that this government is trying to again create special rules for their friends, and it's tucked away in the back. [interjection] Let me just say that you don't have a friend in me.

It's tucked away in the very back of this particular piece of legislation, Bill 23, in section 170, for those that would like to get their bills out, and this particular section is around additional rules for groups. You'll know, Madam Chair, that those groups typically are third-party advertisers, unions, those who want to engage in the process.

Section 162(1)(h) on page 55 defines a group as

an unincorporated group of individuals or corporations acting in consort for a common purpose and includes a trade union and an employee organization or any combination of individuals, corporations, trade unions or employee organizations.

So that is what a group is.

8:50

Now, in section 170 it defines how those groups can utilize the resources that they have and also puts some parameters around what resources can be applied to the members and what will be considered a contribution of the group. But here's the big problem, Madam Chair. The big, big problem is that this government in this piece of legislation has created one set of rules for non-union groups or employee organizations and another set of rules for unions.

In section 170 it clearly makes it against the rules for a group to collect fees from its members and apply them or spend them on political contributions and then spread it out amongst their members. It prevents people from doing that except in clause (c), where it essentially creates an exemption for unions. So the union

still could make a contribution to the third-party group or they could still spend the resources, but they don't have to have explicit permission from their members. So I don't know. Let's, say, just use for an example mandatory union fees that they may take from their members and then spend on a political contribution. It creates an exemption so that they don't have to have that from their members but every other non-union member organization has to.

Now, I think this is crazy. It is absolutely wild that this government goes around talking about how they want to get big money out of politics, that they want to create similar rules for unions and corporations, yet they have put in an exemption.

I'll pass the amendment to you, as I see you're just waiting with bated breath for it. I'll wait for you to provide me with the indication to proceed.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, your amendment will be referred to as amendment A2. Please go ahead.

Mr. Cooper: Amendment A2. It's shocking to me that the government – and now I can predict, I'm pretty certain, that the minister is going to stand up and be, like: "No, no, no. My lawyers are better than your lawyers, and this isn't really what the path forward is." However, I have consulted extensively with those in the legal profession, and they very clearly state that this, in fact, is what the government is doing. They are creating themselves an exemption for their friends and union allies that makes one set of rules for them, allows unions to continue to take mandatory fees and utilize them for political gain or political contributions against the will of their members, but wouldn't allow, say, a chamber of commerce, without explicit permission from its members, to utilize their resources for a third-party contribution. I say: shame on you. I don't understand why you are saying one thing and doing another.

So the solution is very simple, Madam Chair. It is to strike out clauses (b) and (c) – essentially, both get removed – and, as such, all of section 170(a) would be applied equally to both of those types of organizations. This would mean that "an advertising contribution from funds collected from a group's members may be attributed to its members only if," and then sections (i), (ii), and (iii) would also, then, be followed.

You know, I said it was surprising – but it's not really – that the true face of this government is now showing in what, we can all hope, may be the dying days of this government, that they are endeavouring to create one set of rules for unions and employee organizations and another set for non-unions and other groups.

The other significant concern here is that this particular piece of legislation is only going to apply to municipal PACs or municipal political advertising, and there's another complete set of rules at the provincial level. So if we're going to do as the minister says and – you know, I'm surprised that this isn't a democratic reform bill and is actually a Municipal Affairs bill because so much of this has to do with elections. But it's clear that the left hand doesn't know what the left hand is doing over there. We all know that there's very little right hand over there. It's by the left, by the left, by the left. The left hand doesn't know what the left hand is doing because the minister responsible for democratic reform and renewal, that passed six pieces of legislation in this House on election reform, passed them under one set of rules, and now the Minister of Municipal Affairs, who, you know, has done consultation, is passing virtually another set, totally different than the last set. The previous failed amendment was an example of that.

So if the minister actually wants to do the right thing, to not create one set of rules for unions, to not prop up his union friends, then he will support this amendment, repeal these two clauses, and allow all organizations to be treated equally.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Mr. S. Anderson: First off, I don't think you understand how unions work. They're democratically elected people that are in there, and they have to be accountable for every cent that their union members bring forward. But that's cool; you can look that up.

As well, we are going to reject this. This is verbatim what's in the provincial legislation. So on that count we will reject this amendment.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak?

Mr. Cooper: Well, Madam Chair, it's no surprise that the government wants to protect their union friends and allies and not support an amendment like this. I seem to recall some significant discussion about this particular amendment in the provincial legislation as well. It was equally bad there.

The minister isn't afraid to have two sets of rules although I think that it is outrageous, and if he truly wants to send the right signal to nonprofits, business groups, municipal organizations, all of these types of organizations who are being treated differently by their leadership than the leadership of non-union organizations, he would in fact repeal these two sections. I know that many of my colleagues have a lot of things to say on this. I also think that it's a bit ironic when he says that unions are democratically elected. Sure, they are, but that doesn't mean that they don't continue to spend mandatory fees on things that their members don't support.

I just have a sneaking suspicion that my colleague from Drayton Valley-Devon has some concerns around this very issue. So I encourage my colleagues to make the case as to why the government shouldn't just reject this out of hand and should take some serious thought about this. I don't believe that Albertans look lightly upon the fact that this government creates one set of rules for unions and one set of rules for the job creators.

9:00

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2? The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Chair. I wish to rise and speak in favour of the amendment. One of the things that I think we try to strive for in this House is that we want to create an Alberta, a society, in which its citizens have the freedom to be able to control their finances and their spending and have some control over the organizations that they belong to. We've heard clearly from the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills that this piece of legislation would allow unions to have a different set of rules than would other organizations. That creates a serious situation that we really need to address.

I know that as a teacher in the public school system I did not have a choice as to whether I was going to be part of the ATA. I was automatically a member of the ATA, and I had no problems with that. I saw many valuable things in the ATA in my 30 years as a teacher. I appreciated it. It was a professional association. I appreciated the fact that at the ATA we were able to get together and work on professional issues, on professional conduct, that it allowed teachers to work together on setting standards for professional development, that my professional association could help to set best practices.

These are legitimate uses and were very positive things that the ATA could work together on, and as a teacher and as a part of that professional organization we could work together to advance the

cause of education. I even appreciated the ATA as a collective bargaining unit that would work towards helping teachers to bargain collectively, to work on working conditions, to promote collegial relationships. So when I stand up here today, I am not trying to present a situation that is bashing a union. However, I will bring to the attention of this Legislature that there was one thing that always bothered me when I was part of the ATA, and that was that you should not make mandatory dues pay for what should be voluntary, what should be a voluntary choice of the individual who is a part of that organization.

Voluntary decision-making is an important piece of being a part of a profession. I would argue that when you pay your dues and you're part of a union or professional association, it's a fine thing for those dues to be used – for instance, I can remember as an ATA member that we had a special levy attached to our dues for a number of years in order to help build Barnett House in Edmonton. That was a perfectly good use of my dues. But now to have those dues, in turn, used to support Public Interest Alberta: well, there are many teachers in the ATA who would not necessarily support the work of Public Interest Alberta. Why should our mandatory dues be used to support that?

I would argue that this amendment allows for an even playing field. It means that professional associations and unions should only be able to use those dues for professional issues and that anything else should be a voluntary decision of the individual member of that organization. For instance, there is a criteria that we use for all other organizations in this bill that says that you would use the same criteria for a non-union organization when deciding how to use those dues, that they would be (a) voluntary, (b) for the purpose of the donation, and (c) attributed to the member from which the funds came. First point: it's voluntary.

I would suggest that this amendment speaks to a level playing field, to a fairness. It doesn't limit the ability of any group to donate money as long as it is collected in a voluntary and transparent fashion. That seems eminently reasonable and should have the support of all the members of this Assembly. All of us should have the capacity to make voluntary choices about how our monies are spent.

Thank you very much.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2? The Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Chair. At this moment I would like to move that the committee rise and report progress.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion that the committee rise and report progress carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:07 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Eggen	Miranda
Anderson, S.	Fitzpatrick	Nielsen
Bilous	Hoffman	Phillips
Carlier	Horne	Piquette
Carson	Hunter	Rosendahl
Ceci	Jansen	Sabir
Connolly	Kazim	Schmidt
Coolahan	Kleinstaub	Schreiner

Cortes-Vargas	Larivee	Shepherd
Dach	Loyola	Smith
Dreeshen	McCuaig-Boyd	Stier
Drever	McKitrick	Sucha
Drysdale	Miller	Westhead

Against the motion:

Clark	Fildebrandt	Luff
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Totals:	For – 39	Against – 3
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[Motion that the committee rise and report progress carried]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 23. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour, please say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Acting Speaker: Opposed, please say no. So ordered.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Madam Speaker . . .

The Acting Speaker: There weren't enough of you standing when I looked over.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Speaker. At this time I would like to move that we adjourn until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:26 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Eggen	Miranda
Anderson, S.	Fitzpatrick	Phillips
Bilous	Goehring	Piquette
Carlier	Hunter	Rosendahl
Carson	Jansen	Sabir
Ceci	Kazim	Schmidt
Connolly	Kleinstaub	Schreiner
Coolahan	Larivee	Shepherd
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Smith
Dreeshen	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha
Drever	McKitrick	Westhead
Drysdale		

9:40

Against the motion:

Clark

Totals:	For – 34	Against – 1
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[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 9:42 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday morning, November 27, 2018

Day 54

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (NDP), Speaker
Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (NDP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (UCP)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (NDP)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
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Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (AP)
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Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Conklin (UCP)
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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

10 a.m.

Tuesday, November 27, 2018

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Deputy Speaker: Good morning.

Let us reflect. This evening the Legislature will be hosting those of the Islamic faith for an Eid ceremony. The Jewish community will begin the start of Hanukkah on Sunday, and next week the Legislature will officially light the Christmas tree to begin the celebration of Christmas. As we begin to celebrate the holiday season, let us be reminded of the one thing that we all have in common, the desire to make our province a better place for future generations. Let us reflect on how we can achieve that goal both individually and by working together.

Please be seated.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

Bill 27

Joint Governance of Public Sector Pension Plans Act

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville on behalf of the President of Treasury Board and Finance.

Ms Littlewood: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It is my absolute privilege to join you here today in our Legislature to move second reading of Bill 27. We are just coming out of Public Accounts, so I will get my breath and I can get ready here.

Thank you so much. It's my privilege as the MLA for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, who has the pleasure and honour to represent many public service employees, including registered nurses, firefighters, corrections officers, fish and wildlife officers, and many more, too many to count, to talk about the importance of making sure that public-sector pensions are in the hands of those that contribute to them, those that they belong to, to ensure that they can take care of themselves and their families when they retire.

The purpose of the proposed Joint Governance of Public Sector Pension Plans Act is, of course, to implement a joint governance structure for three of Alberta's major public-sector pension plans – the local authorities pension plan, the public service pension plan, and the special forces pension plan – and register them as jointly sponsored plans under the Employment Pensions Plan Act.

Madam Speaker, for years employees and employers have advocated for a change in the governance of public-sector pension plans to a new structure that gives employers and employees equal say in how the pension plans they pay into are managed and administered. Our government has listened and we have worked with stakeholders to develop the structure and transition plan spelled out in draft legislation.

For almost three decades successive governments have been making promises to move on these practical reforms, and now we are proud to say that our government is making good on these promises. This proposed legislation lays the track to transition these plans to joint governance by March 1 and to embrace a new spirit of fairness and co-operation as we work to ensure our public-sector pension plans are well run and sustainable now and in the future. Our government believes that hard-working Albertans who have

been saving up and paying into their pensions for decades should be able to retire in dignity.

Madam Speaker, each year members contribute thousands of dollars of their own money to these plans, and their employers do the same. These members include police officers, nurses, who I mentioned, other health care workers, municipal employees, education sector workers, and public servants who deliver and maintain a wide range of programs, services, and infrastructure that makes life better for Albertans.

Given the plans are funded by participating employees and employers and the assets held in the plan belong to the members, it follows that employees and employers should be able to make decisions that will impact these plans. Going forward, these plans will be governed fairly by employers and employees by giving equal voice to employees and employers, who are taking the politics out of pensions. There is no change to plan benefits or how the plans are funded and no cost to government as a result of the change. In recent decades joint governance of public-sector pension plans has been implemented in many Canadian provinces, including Ontario, British Columbia, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland.

To understand the nature of the changes being proposed, it might be helpful to members of this Assembly if I took a few minutes to compare current and future governance structures. Upon implementation plan members will not see any change in their pension benefits or how their plans are funded, but behind the scenes there will be significant changes to plan governance. Currently these plans are subject to the Public Sector Pension Plans Act, with plan rules written into legislation and regulation. The minister currently fulfills the role of trustee and administrator for these plans. That role, coupled with the plan rules being contained in regulation, provides the government with considerable decision-making authority over these plans. Of course, something that I heard concern about ever since the election was on what would be our plans to make sure that those pensions are protected, because they had been used as political footballs in previous years.

The proposed legislation would remove the President of Treasury Board and the Minister of Finance as trustee and administrator of these plans in transferring these roles where they belong, to employees and employers in the form of joint governance. This is a common structure for public-sector pension plans in other Canadian jurisdictions, including British Columbia and Ontario, and the so-called pension deal becomes a joint undertaking of a plan's employee and employer sponsors.

Of course, as I mentioned earlier, these three plans will be registered under the Employment Pension Plans Act, under which the plans will be subject to the minimum standards, applicable generally to most pension plans in Alberta. They will be also overseen by the superintendent of pensions.

I would now like to draw your attention to some important aspects of the new governance structure as articulated in the proposed legislation. Madam Speaker, under the proposed legislation sponsor functions and trustee functions will be separated. Sponsor functions include determining pension plan design and benefits whereas trustee functions include the legal responsibility to safeguard pension plan assets and to act solely in the interests of the participants and beneficiaries of the plan.

Each plan will have its own sponsor board and will determine plan design and benefits. Seats on the sponsor board will be evenly distributed between employers and employee groups. The initial distribution is to be set out in legislation, but in the future sponsor boards will be able to make changes to board composition.

Sponsor boards will have a representative role, with each board member representing the views of the organization that nominated

them, and will be responsible for setting the pension deal. Sponsor boards will have specific responsibilities and authorities, including setting contribution rates and benefits, making plan design rules, and establishing pertinent policy such as those related to funding, conduct, and conflicts of interest. Each plan will also have its own corporation and corporate board that will carry out trustee and administrator duties. The sponsor organizations that make appointments to their sponsor board will also make an equal number of appointments to the corporate board for their plan. As trustee the corporations will be responsible for managing the plan funding, including investments and making payments out of the fund to cover costs.

As administrator the corporations will be responsible for carrying out all of the administrative duties set out in the Employment Pension Plans Act and all other actions required for proper administration of the plan as prescribed by the legislation. The corporations' duties and responsibilities include investing plan assets, hiring external service providers, arranging for actuarial evaluations, and ensuring the plan complies with all applicable legislation and regulations.

On the transition date, March 1, several things will happen. All plan assets will be transferred from the minister as trustee to the corporation as trustee. The corporation will become the administrator of the plan. The Crown will cease to have responsibilities, functions, duties, obligations, or liabilities in relation to the administration of these plans other than as a participating employer in the public service pension plan and as per the agreement made by the previous government, a contributor to the special forces pension plan pre-1992 of liabilities. Also on the transition date – and this is a subtle but important point – the plan members will continue as members in the plan, and plan employers will continue as participating employers in the plan. The plans will continue to be overseen but through registration under the Employment Pension Plans Act and by the superintendent of pensions.

10:10

A few other important details that should be pointed out include the fact that these pension plans will continue to use the services of the Alberta Investment Management Corporation for investment management and the Alberta Pensions Services Corporation for pension administration services for a period of at least five years, after which corporations renew their agreements to consider alternatives. Agreements currently in place for part-time employee participation in these plans will remain in effect for three years before any changes, if any, can be made by plan sponsors. In the event of a merger or other employer succession event where the employees are absorbed by a new employer, the proposed legislation ensures employees can remain in their pension plan. No participating employer can withdraw from the plan for five years unless otherwise agreed to by the sponsor board.

All plan expenses will be paid out by the corporation from the respective plan fund, including expenses related to the transition. There will be no cost to government, and the pension plans will be able to absorb the cost. Plans will be required to disclose plan information specified in the act on a public website to better ensure accessibility and transparency.

Madam Speaker, going forward, sponsor boards will have the authority to make changes to the plain text, including contribution rates and benefits, provided the board with 50-50 representation from employees and employers can come to an agreement. As with most other pension plans in this province these plans will be regulated by the superintendent of pensions under the Employment Pension Plans Act.

As you might expect, some changes will have to be made to other statutes to ensure consistency such as schedule 4, which consists of various consequential amendments to other statutes, including the Conflicts of Interest Act, Employment Pension Plans Act, Financial Administration Act, Interpretation Act, Public Sector Pension Plans Act, and the Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions Compensation Act. Assuming the bill is passed, work to transition to joint governance will get under way as soon as the bill receives royal assent.

To sum up, Madam Speaker, this is an important piece of legislation that will provide balance to the governance of those pension plans. The benefits of joint governance are numerous, including clear roles and responsibilities, shared responsibility for plan design, shared responsibility for financial health of the plan, shared trusteeship of plan assets, equal representation of employer-employee groups, flexibility to choose service providers, and protections for plan members affected by a restructuring. We believe that employees and employers jointly should make these decisions about their plans and be equally responsible for the financial health of their pension plans. In our view, a worker's pension plan should not be subject to periodic shifts in the political winds, and it should be well run, well funded, and stable. Joint governance is a good idea, one that is used across the country and one that is long overdue.

I would ask all members of this Assembly to support this bill, and I look forward to the debate. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It, too, gives me great pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 27, Joint Governance of Public Sector Pension Plans Act. Every member of this Assembly works also for the taxpayers of Alberta, and more than 350,000 of those taxpayers are members of Alberta's public sector. I think it's fair to say that these public-sector workers hold a special place in the thoughts of those of us who are privileged to be elected in this province. One of the reasons they are so special is that each one of us is aware that when we discuss services and programs for Albertans, it is our public servants whom we envision carrying out that hard and capable work: nurses, Crown prosecutors, forestry technicians, and caretakers in this very building that take such great care of us. I could go on and on. Whenever I mention one public servant, I'm absolutely sure that my colleagues here will naturally think of another. That is how important they are to our daily lives and how important they are to this being a well-functioning province. I think that is something we can agree on, a rare occurrence in this House, so naturally we all take great interest in Bill 27.

When we look up advantages of working for the Alberta public service on the government website, it lists many advantages of working for the people of Alberta. One of the many benefits it mentions is that the government of Alberta offers a comprehensive benefit package. Madam Speaker, that comprehensive benefit package includes a pension plan.

Now, Madam Speaker, we know that Alberta is experiencing troubled fiscal times. Because of this NDP government our debt load is climbing at a rate that must alarm even members on that side of the floor, over \$3 billion added to our debt just in October, over \$15 billion total. We have known since this NDP's first budget that debt for Alberta taxpayers was going to reach shocking limits, but recently we've also seen the discount on our excellent oil production climb to alarming heights. Many Albertans can't help

but feel that they're teetering on a cliff edge, and they need to know where that firm cushion is.

Madam Speaker, public-sector workers are fortunate because the vast majority of them are covered by a registered pension plan, and the fiscal surety their pensions offer them is crucial to their futures. These pensions, of course, are what we are here to discuss today. Bill 27 is proposing a shift in the way public-sector pensions have been governed in Alberta, an intriguing proposal, one that as Finance critic for the United Conservative Party I have reviewed closely, paid attention to my colleague's opening remarks, and will continue to do so.

However, Madam Speaker, I am curious why the government is bringing forward the concept of joint employee-employer trusteeship for three of Alberta's largest public-sector pensions at this stage, at this time. This NDP government had three and a half years to do so, and now it appears that they're rushing the framework. I invite the Finance minister to advise me otherwise, but I understand that a framework for moving to this new governance system was unveiled this summer, and now, just months later, it's coming forward into law on the floor of the Legislature. It makes me wonder how extensive consultations were with employee organizations, employers, and all members of the public.

Madam Speaker, the local authorities pension plan alone involves 420 employers as it includes municipal governments from villages to large cities as well as school boards and, of course, Alberta Health Services, our biggest public organization. Employees range from all kinds of municipal staff, firefighters, transit drivers, and health care workers throughout the province and many more capable, hard-working employees and school board support and administrative staff, a broad range indeed. Yet by the speed of this legislation we are led to believe they all quickly agreed – quickly agreed – to one common framework. Perhaps. Perhaps they did, but this government is planning on implementing the transition to joint governance quickly as well.

10:20

Madam Speaker, I note that the transition is anticipated for March 1. As joint governance of pension plans is a new concept for Alberta, I am surprised that this government didn't start this work long before. It's waited so long now that it has to make this shift swiftly because there is a certain deadline coming up. We sincerely hope, should this bill pass, that this transition is completed in as seamless a way as possible. We are talking about a lot of money coming under the governance of these boards and the future of so many Albertans. How much money? Sixty billion dollars. Sixty billion dollars.

That's why as United Conservative Party Finance critic I am raising these concerns. There is no room for error when we're talking about vast investments and the future of our hard-working employees and our taxpayers. Of course, we're also talking about people's futures and investments made by employers, including the taxpayers of Alberta. Madam Speaker, so far I have just mentioned the local authorities pension plan, the largest of three covered by the act, but I certainly do not mean to give short shrift to the thousands of government employees and nonacademic staff covered under the public service pension plan or, for that matter, police officers across the province who participate in the special forces pension plan.

Madam Speaker, since I have noted the \$60 billion worth of employee-employer funds invested in these three plans, I do have a question for the Minister of Finance. It is clear that Bill 27 transfers all authority – all authority – for these plans to the new sponsorship and corporate boards, and currently that decision-making authority and responsibility for the pensions falls to the minister, the Minister

of Treasury Board and Finance. Perhaps the Minister of Finance can clarify if the new corporation becomes responsible for the full pension liability under Bill 27.

The statement on the government website outlining the proposed governance board seems to indicate that it does transfer all liability today and in the future to the boards. Let me quote.

Employer and employee sponsors would also share responsibility for the risks associated with funding defined benefit plans, including the risk of investment losses that may require changes to contributions and/or benefits.

Madam Speaker, I would greatly appreciate it if the minister could clarify this important point. Thank you and thanks to him.

Returning to the many substantive changes proposed to Bill 27, I do note that joint governance, otherwise known as the trustee model, is deemed as the best practice in the industry. Some other provinces have already taken this route, and it is my hope that in crafting a framework that is unique to Alberta, the Minister of Finance has directed his ministry to work with other provinces to ensure that we learn from all of their experiences. Again, my concern is for the time, as mentioned earlier.

Any new framework results in evolution, and my hope is that we have learned as others have evolved and subsequently incorporated their lessons in Alberta's framework. As I have already mentioned, the NDP has waited to near the end of its mandate before making this legislative change and appears now to be doing it in a rapid hurry. Hopefully, it has not overlooked the changes other provinces have already made to the original models.

Madam Speaker, that brings me to another important point, and this is the expected expertise of representatives appointed to both the sponsorship and corporate boards that my colleague spoke of and the legislation outlines. Albertans will want to ensure that the 52 members appointed to these six boards meet a high threshold of knowledge, expertise, and care. Perhaps the minister can address the standards and oversight that will take place with regard to the appointees for each of these boards.

Madam Speaker, I note that Alberta's model separates each plan in to sponsorship and corporate boards, each of which perform different but equally important functions. As such, the representatives will have to have specific knowledge for the different boards. This will be especially challenging in the early years when there will not be an opportunity for succession or learning on the job, as occurs with many governance boards. It is important that all pieces of legislation, and I quote, get it right from the outset. It's especially important with Bill 27 because the stewardship will be transferred to the boards. We'll see them manage \$60 billion worth of pension funds, hard-working Albertans' monies, hard-working employees' and taxpayers' money, and for that the boards must meet the highest standard right from the very beginning.

That is why the United Conservative Party wants assurance that all partners have had ample time to provide their input into this model of trustee governance. These boards are to become custodians of billions of dollars' worth of funds contributed by workers, employers, and taxpayers. Madam Speaker, the new governance boards will perform a sacred trust, and UCP plans to monitor the process every step of the way because that is the right thing to do for all Albertans.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 27, Joint Governance of

Public Sector Pension Plans Act. The work that our public sector workers carry out is unparalleled in importance for everyone in our province. There isn't anybody that doesn't deal with a public servant at some point just about every day of their lives. From teachers to police officers to Crown prosecutors to paramedics, every single public servant does a duty to keep Albertans' lives running smoothly. We are grateful for the work that they do. As legislators it is our duty to serve the people of Alberta and of those the over 350,000 that work in the public sector. It is reasonable to say that everyone in this province, regardless of if they work in the public or private sector, has benefited from the good work done by Alberta's public servants.

It is unfortunate to know that the burden of the NDP's climbing, overwhelming debt is on the back of every working Albertan, present and future. Due to this government mismanagement of finances, every working Albertan is saddled with the debt load and the surrounding challenges that the NDP is granting on to them. We often talk about the \$50 billion in debt and the \$3 billion per year that will be going into just servicing debt in the form of interest payments to big banks.

With the level of debt that the NDP has sunk Albertans to, most are worried about what the future looks like for their children and for themselves. Many in the private sector are wondering whether next week's paycheck will be their last. As public servants look ahead, considering their future years, they picture their retirement and the pensions that await them, and they should be very concerned about any major changes that may affect the reliability or dependability of those investments.

Nowadays retirees are still moving as fast as they did in preretirement. They don't slow down. Therefore, pension administrators must take into consideration the long-term needs of our seniors. Pension portfolios must work for those that will be needing them down the road. That means that they need to be stable and reliable and held in trust. Albertans have faith in those that are administering their pensions on their behalf. Conversely, the administrators must have stable conditions to work with.

Therefore, we must ensure that the new governance boards that are charged with public pensions have the tools in place to act reliably and to act in the best interest of the Alberta workers and employers. With the importance of this move and what is at stake here for Albertans, I ask myself why the NDP is rushing this critical framework. This needs to be done correctly, and there is no room for error when dealing with the future of Albertans who are dedicating their lives to serving the province. There is no do-over and no backup plan when it comes to assuring public pensions to workers. Every aspect must be given proper consideration, and there cannot be any oversights.

10:30

This government has had the last three and a half years to take action and take steps towards putting together a framework to provide assurance to Alberta's public workers. However, they only released the discussion paper, as was mentioned by my colleague, this summer outlining the model that they were proposing, which affects hundreds of thousands of Albertans. How can we trust that something that seems so rushed will function without fault for something so crucial to Albertans? They waited until the end of their mandate to make such a significant and vital move, which makes me very nervous and should make public-sector pension workers nervous as well.

Bill 27 puts into action the most significant changes to the public-sector pension since 1992, and after all this time there is such a vast amount that must be considered. I have a hard time understanding how they could get all that needs to be done done so quickly while

still being thorough and prudent. We've seen what happens when this NDP government rushes to make changes such as in the electricity sector.

As the opposition it is our duty to hold the government to account on behalf of all hard-working Albertans, so as the opposition we would like to review and ensure that the government is making changes accountably that will work to benefit all Albertans. We must ensure that those who are being affected by this change have been consulted and that their voices have been heard. We need assurance that this bill reflects the best interests of workers and employers and that there are no boondoggles that happen with this move as it is one that is so critical. With the scale of people that are affected by this piece of legislation, there is no room for error, and there must be enough time provided for pension members to have input into it and have their voices heard.

With other provinces having experienced this transition to a joint governance model, we must look at those jurisdictions to ensure that we are learning from those experiences and having as secure and stable a transition as possible. We must also look at the framework and compare it with jurisdictions that have carried it out successfully.

It is so important that the membership of the new sponsorship boards and corporate boards are experienced and principled. They have such an important mandate. The UCP would like assurance that those sitting on these boards will be experts, professionals, and that they will be stewards for the hard-earned pensions of the hundreds of thousands of hard-working public servants. As my colleague mentioned, \$60 billion in value is a huge amount of money. But if you're not properly invested, it can take a downward turn at any time.

That raises questions. We're currently being overseen by AIMCo, and the ability to move that away from AIMCo after five years – I would hope that consideration is given to the success of AIMCo in the past before moving those pensions to another management firm for some reason other than, you know, thinking that they're going to get better results.

We have seen in the past here in Alberta where bad decisions have been made that have affected pensions. I recall – I believe it was back in the '80s – where one group decided to invest in golf courses and lost millions and millions of dollars for their union. So that would be my caution, just to make sure that the people that are sitting on these boards have the best interests of the employees and the employers in mind.

I would encourage all my colleagues to support the bill with the concession that we do a thorough check and make sure that the transition is being done properly. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any others wishing to speak to the bill? Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to Bill 27, the Joint Governance of Public Sector Pension Plans Act. It's very clear that this is an important bill as it does impact, as we've heard, over 350,000 public-sector employees in this province, who are active, deferred, or may even be retired. Some of those may be recently retired, looking for long and fruitful retirements. We're blessed in this province that we have a long life, a long opportunity. Of course, the stability of those pensions, going forward, for many is extremely important and concerning, I think, to many as well.

Madam Speaker, \$60 billion in assets managed currently through AIMCo is a big thing – that was at December 31, 2017 – \$60 billion of hard-earned and hard-contributed money to ensure a comfortable and safe retirement. Of course, it covers the defined benefit pensions of three significant categories of workers across this province who, as mentioned by some of my esteemed colleagues before, are the people that we work with every day in this building, across the government, throughout the Legislature, and in those organizations and sectors that are covered by the plan throughout the province, our neighbours, our friends, our relatives, and so many others that are very dedicated and hard-working employees of various levels of government.

Madam Speaker, it's important, I think, that we recognize that these amendments to the governance of the pension plan are important and need to be well thought through and that the consultation with the various individuals and organizations and experts in this field are extremely important, and it does concern me that we seem to be in a little bit of a rush on this bill. Although we're supportive of the move in change of governance in this, we do want to ensure that there is transparency across the stakeholders in this as we would like to ensure that they are not only aware of what those changes are but what the impact of those changes might be going forward. Again, new employees in the government sector may not be accessing the benefits of this program in some cases for 25 or 30 years, and there are people that are still working who will look to those as a safe and stable retirement income for them in the future.

You know, Madam Speaker, this joint governance is important to us. We've talked about the fact that there is a longer life expectancy for many Albertans, gratefully so, those we used to talk about as seniors. I've been reminded very often by the seniors in my community that they are now active agers because they are extremely active. They're active still in business, many of them. Many of them become entrepreneurs later in life. Many of them are key volunteers in our community organizations, both at the grassroots level but also even at the board and governance levels. Many of them are great fundraisers. They are the people that knock on our doors sometimes raising funds for great causes, charities, and nonprofits throughout our city. We obviously see many of them being forced to seek employment later in life to ensure that they have that balance and stability in their incomes as they face ever-increasing costs across this province, and that concerns me as well.

We've talked in this House on numerous occasions about the carbon tax and about the minimum wage and about many other factors that are impacting, with primarily the greatest impact, those people on fixed incomes, the seniors in our province not only on public pensions but on their own life savings. We talk about people that are on different income programs and support programs from the province and our seniors at large who are also facing the challenges of those ever-increasing costs, whether they be living in their own homes, trying to access home care, or whether they be living in a different residential environment where those costs and services are increasing as well. The management of this pension fund is, again, something that we need to very much keep close tabs on, and the governance and the management of that governance model will determine much of that management going forward.

We hear and we've heard that AIMCo does a great job, that the returns of that organization for our public-sector employees have been a top performer, quite frankly. Sometimes I look at my own portfolios and look at AIMCo and think that there's a performance there which is really second to none in the investment community. The good news, I think, in this governance model and in having some latitude is to evaluate and to compare and to ensure that

there's competition between AIMCo and other choices that these organizations have and will have in the future if they feel that their funds can be managed better elsewhere. I'd like to think that AIMCo will continue as a top performer in management of pension funds and other funds that are in various ways attached to the public sector in Alberta. I think that those are important things.

10:40

Joint governance, as we've seen, has been deemed a best practice in other jurisdictions, but best practices need to be measured, not just today and tomorrow but as to their impact in the future. I hope that the government has taken that diligence to talk to those administrators, those governance bodies, those board members in other provinces and ask the various parties that are being brought forward in this legislation what their experience is as well in terms of that best practice governance model. Is it working? Can it be improved? What is the track record, and what is the performance? Quite frankly, what is the feedback of those members and those pensioners that they serve going forward, Madam Speaker?

Again, we have seen that it's 350,000 employees, and, you know, we've had three and a half years, I guess, to ponder this possible change and to see if this is the right thing for Albertans. Again, I'm hoping that the diligence and consultation have been done at every level, not just with the leaders of these organizations but with those employees in the field, as it were, or those past employees who are now pensioners, on what their feelings are.

We've talked about the performance of some of the pension plans in the past and the current status of them as well, Madam Speaker, and we see that there are some that are fully funded. We've got the LAPP, with \$43 billion, 104 per cent funded today; the PSPP, with \$14 billion, 94 per cent funded; and the SFPP, with \$3 billion, 89 per cent funded. But we have to remind ourselves that these are snapshots. These are snapshots of the performance today, and as we all know, there are business and economic cycles, and I guess we're lucky in many respects. The meltdown, the economic world financial crisis of 2008-2009: I'm sure that if we looked back at that time, we would see that these portfolios were probably significantly more challenged than these percentages indicate today. We have to remind ourselves that these cycles can come again, that the volatility of financial markets and world resource markets, as we are experiencing here in our great province, are not something that can be guaranteed.

I remember when I was in the housing industry looking at the United States. I think the term in the United States was that people were using their houses as credit cards because the value, of course, was going to go up and continue going up forever and ever and ever, so why not spend that forever equity increase that they had counted on? Until those fateful days in 2007-2008, when the entire real estate market and financial markets in the U.S. collapsed, leaving people with no savings, leaving people with little equity, leaving them with negative equity – that's an interesting term – basically, red ink in their principal residences that they had been using as a credit card. Of course, the entire market there came crashing down with subprime lending.

We can see the impact of these very quick and in many cases very unexpected structural changes to the economy although that one maybe should have been anticipated and how those can affect pensions as well. What looks great today, what looks like 94 per cent today, could end up being 64 per cent tomorrow. What's 104 per cent today could be an underfunded liability to those pensioners in the future. We need to keep that in mind in terms of being very prudent, being able and having, I think, a very broad and high-level view of the governance of these pensions, to ensure that they are not underfunded, Madam Speaker, going forward, not underfunded

for the benefit of those employees who have given so generously out of their own savings, their own incomes to achieve that but also for their employers, who also do that.

The employers in this case are the government of Alberta and the people of Alberta, who contribute to ensure that that pension is something that can be counted on and funded in an appropriate manner and not put in jeopardy because of the performance of markets. I guess we all wish we had a crystal ball to look forward because then we would all have these incredible 120 per cent funded retirements. I always say that it's very sad when we look at these retirement opportunities, when the worst thing that could happen to you is that you live too long, when we are driving towards having this incredible medical system in our province and in this world, where people can have long and more fruitful, more active lives.

Madam Speaker, I look at the opportunity here for us to do things right, for us to consult, as we should. It seems that this was a bit of a hurry-up, three and a half years later. This was not in a government platform, but we're seeing it as a best practice. Now we're in a bit of a hurry-up, it seems. I hope that through debate here and through consultation with the stakeholders we can find that there's an opportunity here to ensure that this bill, Bill 27, meets the needs of the pensioners that are part of this, the 351,210 public-sector pension members who will count on this today, tomorrow, and into the future – our friends, our neighbours, our relatives, our constituents – and that we have addressed this in a way which really meets their needs.

Again, I believe it's something we should test going forward, that we make sure that this governance model is such that we are very, very clear that we have done the right thing, that the governance model is working. We should certainly keep a pulse on that through ongoing consultation, again, with all the stakeholders, not just the leaders, not just the investment managers, not just the corporate governance side or the sponsorship board side but also with the employees, to make sure that they're comfortable with the level of funding and possible liabilities that may accrue towards the government and towards taxpayers in the future.

Madam Speaker, I'm happy to support this bill, with some reservations, of course, as we should all have some reservations when we bring bills to this House to make sure that we bring the best possible legislation to the people of Alberta – and I'm quite pleased to be able to see the positive aspects of this – but make sure that we also take the opportunity to recognize that when we're doing things on a best practice basis, that changes often and that we need to consult widely and broadly. We need to ensure that we are meeting the needs not only today but in a changing world, a volatile world where what looks like something that might be certain and something that might actually look great on paper today can change in a heartbeat tomorrow, and we need to have the appropriate governance in place to achieve that.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this bill, Madam Speaker, and I thank the previous colleagues for their input as well. Hopefully, we continue with thoughtful discussion on this.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, the hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I would like to seek unanimous consent of the House to do an introduction.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'd like to take this moment just to acknowledge some members of the Alberta Law Reform Institute who are here in the gallery today. They're here for second reading of Bill 28. I'd ask them to rise as I call their names: Laura Buckingham, Katherine MacKenzie, and Sandra Petersson, who is the executive director of the Alberta Law Reform Institute. They have created a fantastic report that has led to these changes, that I think will be beneficial to all Albertans. I would ask that the House extend the traditional warm welcome.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly members of the Alberta Caregivers Association. They are Sandy Sereda, who's the executive director; Debbie Cameron-Laninga, who's the program lead; Debra Paches, the caregiver adviser; Tristyn Wilm, the communications co-ordinator; and board member Anthony Abinader. Alberta Caregivers provides support in 140 communities in Alberta. They support the caregivers, and they are such a wonderful organization. Today they are here to make sure that all members of the Assembly know that they're an organization that's worth while to support because they care for every single member in that community. I would like to ask all members to please give them the customary welcome of the Assembly.

10:50

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 27

Joint Governance of Public Sector Pension Plans Act (continued)

The Deputy Speaker: Speaking to the bill, the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a privilege to stand today in the House and share my thoughts on legislation. It's interesting to see our friends in the gallery who talk about law reform, and we're here to talk about legislative reform. Today we're discussing Bill 27, which deals with the joint governance of public-sector pensions. As I understand, this new framework changes pretty much everything in how the public service pensions are administered here in Alberta. That's an important piece of legislation. I'm in the process of tepidly supporting it, but I wish to speak to some of the parts of the legislation that I think are important.

The way it's laid out now is that the Finance minister is the man in charge of these public service pensions. He is the sole administrator. This important change before us will affect hundreds of thousands of hard-working public servants and their pension plans. These plans include the police and the special forces pension plans, folks like those that work for the provincial government that contribute to the public service pension plan, and those in our local municipalities, school boards, and Alberta Health Services. So this is an important and huge change of direction in the administration or, as we're saying in the legislation, the governance of the pension plan. I'm sure everyone here wants to make sure these changes are done as smoothly as possible, with little interruption to these workers.

Madam Speaker, in my time in the Chamber I've seen that there are and can be intended and, many times, unintended consequences

to legislation. Sometimes these consequences rear their heads long after the legislation is presented and the public becomes fully aware of the exact wording of the legislation.

These new changes now create a joint governance model for Alberta's three largest public-sector pension plans. All decisions about plan contributions, investment directions, and board appointments will be made by employer-employee or union governance boards instead of, as mentioned, being under the Minister of Finance. Bill 27 transfers that authority and all other responsibilities for new sponsorship and corporate boards.

In five years the boards will have the ability to choose an investment manager other than the Alberta Investment Management Corporation, now known as AIMCo. Under the current structure AIMCo is responsible for investing public-sector pensions. After five years the corporate boards will have the ability to choose another investment manager to invest and manage their pension funds. Public-sector pension funds account for more than 60 per cent of AIMCo's current portfolio. Pension funds have \$60 billion in assets with AIMCo as of December 31, 2017, and affect a bit over 350,000 public-sector pension members.

This is a huge change of direction, Madam Speaker. Plans regulated by Bill 27 represent the most significant change to the way these pensions are governed and overseen since 1992. Significant, very significant.

As an aside, despite all the recent talk about this joint governance model it was never an acknowledged piece of the NDP's 2015 platform. A small oversight, but we've seen this before. Because, as we know, it was such a priority to this government, why would they wait until late in their mandate to push this forward? This government has had three and a half years to propose a governance framework for Alberta's public-sector pension plans, but they waited until this past summer to release a discussion paper outlining their proposed model. Perhaps I should not necessarily go down this particular rabbit hole, Madam Speaker, but it is interesting and, I believe, cognitive nonetheless to be advised of or present a perception of the government's presentation of the legislation.

As I talked about earlier, this new model creates a joint governance model. Now, Madam Speaker, this model is deemed to be a best practice, with B.C., Ontario, and Saskatchewan having a similar model although not as layered as Alberta's. The NDP has kind of rushed to put this together, but it looks as though Bill 27 proposes making wholesale changes to the governance structure, and we need some surety that both workers and employers have been fully heard and that their recommendations are reflected in this piece of legislation. After all, it's well and good for the NDP to say that it consulted with the employee and employer organizations. This new-found governance framework is undoubtedly of interest to the 350,000 pension members. We want to ensure that they are fully aware of Bill 27 and have had ample time to provide their input into it.

As we know, this government's record on fulsome consultation prior – and the key word, Madam Speaker, here is “prior” – to legislation is spotty. I remember standing in this House at the conclusion of the legislation known as Bill 6, with the high emotion that was presented outside the Chamber and inside the Chamber.

As with any piece of proposed legislation, especially one that makes such significant changes to an important decision-making and delivery framework for so many Albertans, it is critical to get it right from the beginning so we aren't scrambling to fix a piece of flawed legislation later on simply because it was rushed. That's not what we want to do on this side of the Chamber, Madam Speaker, and it's why I'm sure that that's not what the government wants to have happen either. I'm hoping and I believe that they've learned from experience.

Many other provinces have deemed that joint governance is the best practice in the industry, and it's worth while to explore this framework while making sure to get it right. When we are talking about the sums of money, the gigantic sums of money, involved and the sheer number of hard-working public-sector employees that are affected, it is important that the pensions are stable and that contributions are reasonable for workers and employers alike. We need to ensure that these new governance boards have the framework in place to give the surety and confidence that workers expect of someone tasked with such an important aspect of their later lives.

Retirees aren't old and inactive any longer, and changes to this system and to the way these pension plans are administered need to reflect this new reality. Our health care system, our health care are far better than they were. Medical advances are seeing retirees live longer, more active lives, and by necessity these new realities have to take a long-, in fact longer term view that includes all factors that could affect the pension portfolios held in trust for them.

I really hope that this government isn't rushing this legislation through. Too much is at stake here. Too much money and too many people could be adversely affected if this isn't done right. Since this joint governance is modelled after other provinces' models, I can only hope that they have a solid idea of how to proceed going forward. Did they ask for guidance from these other jurisdictions, Madam Speaker? Did they arrange for someone to go there and study these models first-hand? Perhaps they arranged with other provinces to liaison someone to help them navigate the highways and byways of this new governance style. I'm not sure. No one from that side has said. This is too important and too critical to learn on the job, as it were. With an anticipated transition date of March 1, 2019, boards will have a two-and-a-half-year window to establish themselves, with no time for picking it up on the go.

As I mentioned earlier, under the current system AIMCo is responsible for investing public-sector pensions, and after five years the corporate boards will have the ability to choose another investment manager. Of course, as one would expect, all pensions are to be registered under the Employment Pension Plans Act, which is good, I believe. What does bother me, to be honest, is that I'm not sure what the safeguards are that may be or are in place here. I sincerely hope that the minister shares that with us, because one item of note I saw was that under these Bill 27 changes the Auditor General is prevented from auditing these pension plans. As long as we have assurances that safeguards are in place, then perhaps that isn't an issue, but it does cause me pause.

11:00

Before I took that detour, I was discussing the new structure, the two governance boards responsible for each of these plans. To my understanding, the sponsorship board determines the pension deal, including setting up contribution rates, changes to eligibility, and benefit levels. It also has the mandate to determine director recruitment and remuneration of those directors as well as corporate board appointments.

The corporation, I guess, delivers the pension deal as the administrator and fund manager, including establishing investment policies and choosing the investment managers. They also take responsibility to communicate with members and to liaise with provincial regulators. Again, this is a new, fundamental shift in the way things will be done, and only time, Madam Speaker, will tell if it proves for the better.

We can only hope that due diligence has occurred, that safeguards are in place, and that the money these proud, hard-working Albertan public servants have contributed during their working careers is safe, secure, and remains fluid so that when the

money is needed later in their lives, it's there for them to enjoy as they have responsibly believed that it will be. There is much at stake, Madam Speaker. Lives can be irreparably harmed if we don't get this right. With over 350,000 people and billions in assets on the line, the UCP will be monitoring these changes closely to keep this government accountable and ensure that employers', employees', and taxpayers' money is well taken care of now and in the future.

With that, I wish to say that I tepidly support the bill, Madam Speaker, and I relinquish my time. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville to close debate.

Ms Littlewood: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my privilege to move to close debate on Bill 27.

[Motion carried; Bill 27 read a second time]

The Deputy Speaker: Before I call on the hon. Minister of Justice, we've realized that the clock is travelling in double time for some reason this morning. We've already noted it, and we're taking steps to get that fixed.

The hon. Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm about to speak very quickly, apparently.

Bill 28

Family Statutes Amendment Act, 2018

Ms Ganley: It's my honour to rise today and move second reading of Bill 28.

Madam Speaker, our government wants to ensure that Alberta's laws respond to the needs of today's families. Bill 28, the Family Statutes Amendment Act, 2018, would modernize family law in our province and better support all Albertans. It will do three things if passed: ensure that unmarried couples have clear rules around property division if their relationship ends, clarify that parents of disabled adult children can seek support under the Family Law Act, and repeal the Married Women's Act.

The proposed legislation would make it easier for unmarried partners to divide their property if their relationship breaks down. We know that more and more Albertans are choosing to live together before getting married or are not getting married at all. Currently there's a lot of confusion in our province about what happens when an unmarried couple breaks up. Many unmarried couples believe that Alberta already has clear laws for fairly dividing property if a relationship breaks down. People believe everything from an equal division of property to parties having no rights at all to each other's property.

A relationship breakup can be one of the most difficult times in a person's life. The current lack of legislation makes the situation even more difficult. It can result in costly and time-consuming legal battles that add stress for partners and for their children. Currently the partner without the property needs to make a constructive trust claim and prove that they are entitled to some property at all. Madam Speaker, in many cases this places the onus on the party with less money and less power and can create a very challenging and inequitable situation. Generally these new rules would presume that property acquired during a relationship will be divided equally. They would also allow people who want to make different

arrangements to be able to make their own agreements about property division.

The act would apply to adult interdependent partnerships as defined in the Adult Interdependent Relationships Act. That means that people who have been living together as an economic and emotional unit for three years, who entered into an agreement, or who have children and have been living in a relationship of economic and emotional interdependence of some permanence would be impacted by the act. In addition, it will create clear rules for those who were adult interdependent partners before they were married.

Madam Speaker, I think it's worth pointing out that this will not impact roommates. I know that there is some confusion out there, but it does require a relationship of emotional and economic interdependence. Simply living with someone will not be a trigger.

These changes reflect many of the recommendations of the Alberta Law Reform Institute. Madam Speaker, they have been carefully considered, and I think that they will have a positive impact on all Albertans. I should also mention that the Alberta branch of the Canadian Bar Association has been asking for these changes for years.

We recognize the changes we are proposing could have a significant impact on people's lives, and we want to give Albertans an opportunity to become informed about the changes and provide them with time to organize their financial affairs accordingly. That's why, if passed, these amendments would come into force on January 1, 2020.

This legislation will provide certainty in the law and promote settlement where possible. Madam Speaker, I think it's worth noting that the impact of family breakdown on the individuals in the family can be quite traumatic, particularly in cases where that breakup ends up being long and drawn out because the legal proceedings are not yet settled. People who are entering a breakup in their lives are often very emotional, and then at the same time they have to deal with the division of property and with a number of other things as their lives reorient themselves. Providing them with clear rules so that they can reach a settlement, so that that time of confusion and strife can end in their lives more quickly will have a huge impact on them.

Madam Speaker, I think it's worth noting as well that as the science of this advances, we are more and more aware of how much of an impact those relationship breakdowns and that high conflict can have on the children of a relationship. In many of these cases where there are children and the partners are not married, this high-conflict period can go on for years because it's difficult to resolve. There are no clear rules, so there isn't an impetus to reach a settlement. I think all members of this House are concerned with ensuring that we do our best to ensure that we are lessening those impacts on children. I believe that this act will create clear rules that will shorten that period of conflict and allow those children to move on with their lives as well.

The legislation is intended to help prevent complex and expensive legal battles between unmarried couples. It will also, Madam Speaker, free up court time that can be used for other matters.

Next, Bill 28 would also amend the eligibility criteria for adult support as set out in the Family Law Act. Currently the wording in the Family Law Act does not allow an application for child support for adult children unless they are in school and under the age of 22. Meanwhile the Divorce Act, which is federal legislation, an act that people have access to if they were legally married and are seeking a legal divorce, allows the court to consider support in any scenario where an adult child cannot provide for themselves independently. This means that in Alberta a parent or the child cannot apply for

support for a disabled child who's over the age of 18 unless they are getting a legal divorce. That excludes some of the most vulnerable from access to child support, and these old rules are unfair to some families. Our proposed amendment is overdue in the province, and it would provide all Alberta families with the same rules and better support adult children with disability or illness.

11:10

Finally, Madam Speaker, we are also proposing to repeal the Married Women's Act, which was enacted in 1922. The act allowed married women to own their own property and sign their own contracts. Looking around this room, I think it's worth noting how far we have come in just under 100 years. Since then Alberta has enacted legislation that supplants the need for these rules, and women are permitted in all circumstances to own property and form contracts. Specifically, the Family Law Act recognizes that a woman is her own person regardless of whether or not she is married. The nearly century-old Married Women's Act is no longer necessary and will be repealed.

In conclusion, together all the proposed amendments to the legislation will bring Alberta forward. They will reduce expensive and drawn-out legal battles for unmarried couples who are separating, and they will protect vulnerable Albertans who would otherwise not have access to child support. This is another step our government is taking to make the justice system work more fairly and efficiently for everyone, Madam Speaker.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 28, the Family Statutes Amendment Act, 2018. A number of years ago it was brought to my attention that Airdrie had a number of old bylaws that were still on the books and were never repealed or changed although they became outdated in many ways. In particular, my favourite is the bylaw in the town of Airdrie that you cannot store your explosives underneath the stairs, still a bylaw on the books in Airdrie. There's another bylaw on the books in Airdrie that says that you can't tie your horse up in downtown Airdrie. So there are some interesting things that you find out and laws that are just simply never updated or looked back upon. It's great to see here today that there is no longer a need for the Married Women's Act, that was created in the 1920s to give rights to married women, who did not have them previously. It's a pleasure to see that here in this updated legislation today.

Madam Speaker, the Family Statutes Amendment Act, from what I see, brings common-law property division in line with that of a married person. It's going to make it more clear for lawyers and for judges in particular how property should be divided upon the breakdown of a relationship where spouses are not married, more particularly some clarity around those situations where couples are not married and there are children involved. This is a really great, common-sense amendment to the act, and it's really, really great to see.

Madam Speaker, I very briefly had a passing-by conversation with the minister in regard to the Dower Act, which is something that's been brought to my attention a number of times by constituents of mine over the years. Perhaps there is an attitude or a scenario in the coming days, weeks, months where we can take a look at that and maybe see that it is also outdated and that perhaps it is a good, common-sense step forward to repeal that in terms of red tape reduction. Really, I think it's become essentially a law that's potentially outdated. Now, I say this without due course in

looking at the legislation or the consultation that's necessary in repealing such an act, but perhaps we'll be in a case where we see that in the near future in this Assembly, and I think that would be a good thing.

But I digress. We're talking about Bill 28, the Family Statutes Amendment Act, 2018, which, in my mind, is pretty common sense, a great update to the legislation. This will save our courts a lot of time and money to alleviate the stress around the situations where relationships break down between unmarried couples, Madam Speaker.

It's great to see that this legislation will give some time for the public to become aware of what's happened and the consequences, or lack thereof, that may happen as it will not come into force until January 1, 2020.

Madam Speaker, we know that according to Stats Canada 1 in 10 couples are in a common-law relationship here in Canada, and in fact common-law relationships are probably on the rise. They're the most common, pardon the pun. It's important that we have legislation that keeps up with the times and provides that clarity for our system here in Alberta.

The particular piece around the Court of Queen's Bench ruling on November 5, 2018, stating that it's unconstitutional for the Family Law Act to be more restrictive than the Divorce Act in terms of the age of a child for child support eligibility, Madam Speaker, particularly in terms of a child with disabilities: I think that not having that descriptive of a law around the age really is able to cater to and give discretion to the courts in determining what is best for each individual family and their situation. I think that's an important piece, and it's good to see that the courts had recognized that and that the government has recognized that in the legislation changes here today. My understanding was that this bill was something that came to this Assembly in the early 2000s, and it's interesting that we didn't repeal the 1920s Married Women's Act at that time, but there are some necessary pieces in this particular legislation that needed to happen as well. We're happy to see that here today.

Madam Speaker, it's also important to recognize in this legislation that people related by blood or adoption are not to be deemed interdependent partners, nor would a paid domestic employee and their client. In complex cases a decision whether two people were in an adult interdependent relationship would be made by a judge, and a person who falsely claims that they were in a common-law relationship is legally liable for damages to compensate the person that they wronged. So there's, of course, a piece of this legislation that speaks to those who may make a false claim in an effort to mine for money, I guess, from a person that they may know. There's always a portion of the population that doesn't always do the right thing, and it's important that we create legislation to close the loopholes or speak to that and, certainly, send a message to those who would effort to be fraudulent in that regard.

Madam Speaker, that's all I have to say at this stage of the bill, and I would encourage my colleagues and all members of this Assembly to support this piece of legislation in second reading. I look forward to the conversation and debate in Committee of the Whole. With that, I will sit down.

Thank you.

11:20

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Today I rise to speak to Bill 28, the Family Statutes Amendment Act, 2018. Sometimes the bills

in this House don't make a lot of sense to me, but I clearly state that I agree with the premise of this bill. I'm in support of it. I think both the need is there, the intent, and the results here are valuable and important to our society. Tragically, too often relationships do end up in difficulty and in conflict. It's never a fun experience. It's never something that you would want to have to go through, but the reality is that they do, and therefore we need to help couples that find themselves in those kinds of situations and do what we can to make their lives a little bit better.

Maybe just a little bit of a story. I have a grandmother on my wife's side, actually, a lady who lived with a husband for many years. It kind of almost began to be a little bit of a family entertainment that she actually – her husband died, and then she married another, and he died, and she married another. After four husbands passing on, somewhere along the way they began to create relationships that were in writing. They kept the property of each for each side of the family, and it was very helpful that way.

The point is, though, that because she chose to marry them, the laws were very clear. It was much more simple to sort these kinds of things out, but today in our world for common-law couples it's not so simple. It is a lot more complex. It's a lot more murky in the sense that the guidance and the direction are not there about how the property would be divided, how the relationship ends, so I think it's important that we actually create these kinds of guidelines for common-law couples as well as for married couples.

Historically in western culture marriage has been the norm. Not even all marriages manage to survive or work out, but at least we have laws for married relationships. We don't have nearly as clear a guidance for those in common-law relationships, and therefore this current legislation will go a long way to improving that situation and providing some guidance and some help in that regard. It will essentially extend these same provisions to common-law couples as it does to married couples before the law, and hopefully it will make for better judgment on the part of the judicial system and a clearer understanding in society in general.

Judges render decisions based on the statutes of the law. They don't render them based on random thoughts or personal bias. They render them based on the statutes of the law, so providing clear statutes for the judges, I think, is an important step. Society, through elected legislators, defines what the societal norms are and what the boundaries of the law are, so as issues arise and culture changes, it's important for people to direct the judges, through a lawful enactment, on what would seem to be right and just and fair for all. That's, in a nutshell, I think, what this law is attempting to do.

Hopefully, as a side effect it will make the courts more efficient as well. We all know that the courts are overloaded. Family law courts are often overloaded. Hopefully, as one of the consequences it will make the courts more efficient and also render clarity and justice for plaintiffs as they find themselves in these difficult situations. I think it's important that we give the guidance of law so that the judges can make these kinds of clear and consistent and just decisions as they have to deal with these kinds of difficulties. It will empower judges. It will guide judges and make the decision-making process for them much easier although that doesn't mean to say that the dissolution of relationships ever gets easy. It's always challenging and difficult.

When two people are living together, they are essentially in a committed relationship. Regardless of whether they have a marriage certificate or not, the impacts are very real, and the relationship should be fair and just. No one should be sort of out of luck if the relationship breaks down. The reality is that this bill will affect and protect women possibly more than men, so the courts should be directed in this regard, and hopefully it will be truly beneficial in our society.

This law has been something that the Alberta Law Reform Institute has actually been asking for for several years. In June 2018, this year, they released an extensive report with regard to that. It's something that both public opinion and legal opinion have spoken out on, so I think that it's valuable in that regard as well and that we're responding both to society and legal opinion for the benefit of the courts and the benefit of a just system.

It is a factor to consider that common-law relationships – or, actually, that's really not the right language anymore, in Alberta at least; it is in other jurisdictions and it is federally, but in Alberta the proper legal term is "adult interdependent relationships" – are on the rise in Canada. Increasing numbers of couples – quite honestly, I was a little bit surprised to realize that the Stats Canada 2016 census data identified 1 in 10 adults. I would have thought it was more than that, but I don't know what their statistics-gathering questionnaires, whatever, were. But it's at least that many if not more.

The challenge will be here, though, I think, that this bill is completely dependent in many respects on another statute in Alberta, called the Adult Interdependent Relationships Act. This act is not being changed at this time, just to be clear. It stands, and it's appropriate. It's the act that will help define – and judges will refer to that act, the Adult Interdependent Relationships Act – and they will refer to it in trying to determine if a couple is in fact living common law or, more properly in Alberta legally, in an interdependent adult relationship. That's going to be part of the challenge moving forward, people who will argue, "I am" or "I am not," "We were," or "No, I wasn't," that were actually in this kind of a legal relationship. So the judges will have to try to untangle those thorny and difficult pieces of stories and lives. But that Adult Interdependent Relationships Act is the one that will give guidance and direction.

I think that it's extremely important that everyone in Alberta should make themselves aware of the changing nature of the legislation here in Alberta particularly and how that might impact them, what it might have as an effect on them, whether they are living in a codependent relationship or not. And I need to say that this impacts both young people and all the way to older people. It doesn't make any difference, and I think that there's a reality that many people may not realize that the nature of their relationship with someone else could be interpreted by the other person and by the law, in fact, that they are in fact in an adult interdependent relationship.

This is an important piece of understanding that I think needs to be brought to public awareness. I realize it isn't necessarily a direct part of the discussion of the bill, but I think that as a government in working toward building a better society, I would really like to see some sort of enactment or policy or whatever to bring awareness to the public of the changing nature of the relationships. I think the one part that may catch a lot of people completely unawares and maybe older people, in fact, older individuals who choose to live together in a home to save money or just for companionship, is that people may feel like they're in a platonic relationship. By definition, one does not have to be in a conjugal relationship in order to be in an adult interdependent relationship. People may find themselves in situations where their living arrangements commit them to a legal definition that they are not aware of.

11:30

This also has an impact on the Alberta Wills and Succession Act, particularly for people who are in some kind of a relationship, a nonmarried relationship but a relationship nevertheless, and the one person passes away. The other person may in fact have a legitimate claim to being an adult interdependent person, and if there are no

genetic children of the person who passes away, then the entire estate would go to the other person in the adult interdependent relationship. If they can establish that in court, they would be entitled to the entire estate. If there are children of the person who passed away, then the person who can establish adult interdependency would in fact receive 50 per cent of the estate, and the other portion would be split with the surviving children of the person who passed away.

I have spent enough time in palliative care rooms and doing many, many, many funerals and have seen and experienced the tragedy of what I'm going to call family warfare over the estate. Too many times the estate is a trigger for deep, deep conflicts in extended families. This is a piece of this relationship and this law that I think needs clear education and that eventually might need a little bit of clarity in terms of how the estate is administered, how people become entitled to claim the estate. This moves much beyond the nature of just the relationship and the division of property of two living partners. But all of this with regard to the estate is clearly an element of what this law will help to define and help to deal with.

Quite frankly, I think it will also create some further murkiness that may need to be clarified in the future. That's just a comment that I would like to suggest. I'm not suggesting the bill is wrong in this, but I think it's something that will need to be watched, and maybe we will at one point have the Alberta Law Reform Institute making some further suggestions with regard to that.

I think that the repeal of the antiquated Married Women's Act is long overdue. I know of stories where back in the '30s and '40s some family members, women in particular, were left with absolutely nothing, put out on the streets with children. The repeal of that act, actually the fact that it probably complies with human rights these days, is long overdue. That was a law that basically gave the right of control over land and property of any woman who married to the husband. That was clearly an imbalance and an injustice that it's about time was fixed.

The age cap being lifted is in many cases beneficial, particularly, I think, as it also implies or refers to children with disabilities. There is an ongoing need there for them. I think this is a law that is useful and beneficial. Of course, any time a relationship dissolves, whatever kind of relationship it is, it's sad and tragic. We need to do whatever we can to support families. We need to do whatever we can to encourage families to find help if they can.

I'm not suggesting that every relationship will survive. In fact, I realize that many relationships don't. Sometimes the breakup of a relationship is caused by tragedy. Sometimes it's just an overly idealistic expectation and disillusionment. Sometimes it's just the emptiness of soul that another person can't possibly fill. Sometimes it's failure to invest and nurture. Sometimes it's our own dark demons that erupt in betrayals and addictions and abuses.

While tragedy in relationships is all too common and I grieve for those people that experience it, I do think it's helpful to have rules of engagement, if you want. I think it's helpful to be able to provide a way for people to disconnect that hopefully minimizes rather than increases the conflict and the pain and the suffering. This is really, in some ways, about property rights. I think we need to protect the property rights of both people in a relationship and do what we can to make relationships heal or for postrelationship folks to be able to heal to be able to move on as quickly as possible.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the bill? Fort McMurray-Conklin.

Ms Goodridge: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour to rise in the House today to speak in support of Bill 28, the Family Statutes Amendment Act, 2018. This piece of legislation seeks to address a very real and growing problem in our province. Every year the number of common-law partnerships continues to rise faster even than the rate of marriage. While married couples have resources available to them after a relationship has ended, many common-law partners do not. This bill will also help to simplify our court system for common-law relationships, leading to a wide range of effects on our province. The bill also will hold both parents accountable for their adult children with disabilities. Previously, when a common-law relationship would end, there would be no measures to address who would be responsible for adult children with disabilities or full-time students, and this bill closes that gap.

According to Stats Canada across Canada there were 6.3 per cent of couples involved in a common-law relationship in 1981. By 2016 this number had increased dramatically to 21.1 per cent across Canada. Currently we see that about 10 per cent of all couples in Canada are in a common-law partnership. Statistics Canada figures show that the number of common-law relationships grew at a rate more than four times that of married couples between 2006 and 2011. The Canadian Research Institute for Law and the Family says that many people in common-law relationships are unaware of their rights and entitlements or lack thereof. Laws governing common-law relationships differ across the country in both the length of time two partners must cohabit before they're considered to be common law and what the partners are entitled to in the event of a breakdown or a death.

There was an Angus Reid poll completed back in May of 2018 that found that 53 per cent of Canadian adults felt that marriage wasn't necessary, although it's worth noting that that same poll found that 47 per cent thought that it was important for couples in long-term relationships to have legal marriages. All in all, this shows a growing trend away from legal marriages and towards common-law partnerships. I think this is due to a change in societal norms. A generation ago a couple living together unmarried was often said to be living in sin. However, this social taboo has almost all been erased. Many millennials are choosing to start their career and purchase a home before getting married, if at all.

We really need to respond to this change in Alberta society, and I believe that this bill accomplishes that. It aims to clarify the process after a common-law relationship has ended. It provides a guideline for judges to follow when splitting the assets that the two shared, and having legislation to guide judges will save court time and money and alleviate some of the distress that comes with a relationship breakdown.

The legislation will help simplify the proceedings after a common-law relationship has broken down, and as I stated earlier, this kind of relationship is on the rise in Alberta. Furthermore, more couples are choosing to be in common-law relationships for longer periods of time if they do in fact choose to get married. This bill will help create stability if that relationship eventually dissolves so that it takes into account the time spent in the common-law relationship and not just the married portion for the division of assets. I'm happy to see that this government has decided to address this before it becomes a huge mess.

However, there are other benefits that this bill brings forward. For example, the Jordan decision has led to a drastic increase in the number of dismissed cases across Canada. This bill will help streamline the court system, which will hopefully result in appropriate charges for those who have committed crimes. The Supreme Court of Canada's 2016 Jordan decision establishes timelines that trials must be heard by: 18 months after charges are laid for a province's main entry point into the court system and 30

months after charges are laid for a province's superior court. Madam Speaker, 206 Jordan applications were filed in Alberta courts from October 25, 2016, to November 22, 2018; 10 are pending; 68 dismissed by the courts; 70 granted, three of which were appealed by the Crown; 42 abandoned by the defence; 22 proactively stayed by the Crown on the basis that they wouldn't have survived a Jordan application; and 47 resolved that were unrelated to Jordan.

11:40

More than 200 criminal cases from across the country have been tossed due to unreasonable delays since the Supreme Court's landmark Jordan decision two years ago. The court cases include murderers, sexual assault, drug trafficking, child lurers, all stayed by judges because the defendants' constitutional right to a timely trial was infringed upon. Why I bring this up is that this bill will help streamline the courts. This bill will help make sure that we are seeing these cases in a more timely fashion.

It also is going to give parents sharing the financial burden of disabled children a little bit more stability and similar rights to what a married couple in a similar situation would have. The law gave divorced parents the ability to continue getting financial support once the child turns 18 but didn't extend the same rights to common-law parents.

This government has created a really good bill because they did adequate consultations. This is a common-sense bill that has been introduced after extensive work by the members of the legal profession and the justice system. I wish more bills were the result of meaningful consultation such as this. So thank you.

The government has historically ignored or avoided consultations. For example, during Bill 6 the government chose to force legislative changes on farmers in Alberta, leading to public outcry, that ultimately pushed the government to make the right decision. Consultations are crucial in order to get the most well-rounded and comprehensive legislation possible, and I am grateful that this government has decided to consult on this bill. I also hope that they have learned that consultation and due diligence lead to good legislation.

Also, the fact that it comes into effect on January 1, 2020, allows for people to consider what this change in legislation will mean for them. It's important that all people have the opportunity to learn about this bill and how it will affect them before it comes into law.

As I previously stated, the Canadian Research Institute for Law and the Family says that many people in common-law relationships are unaware of their rights and entitlements or lack thereof. Furthermore, it found that some people chose to be in common-law relationships to avoid some of the legal property division requirements of marriage. This is an important point. People were choosing common-law relationships over marriage because of the perceived legal benefits. So we need to make sure that they're very much aware that there are some changes here. It is critical that we educate and raise awareness on this bill so that all individuals are knowledgeable about their rights and the rights of their partners.

But I will say that this bill isn't quite perfect, or if it is, I'm not quite sure of all the answers, so I've got a few questions on what this bill will entail. It's really easy to determine if someone is married or not and when that marriage starts. A few questions about how exactly we will go about stipulating as common law and when there are arguments therein, which would typically be found when a relationship dissolves. How will these provisions impact people on various types of income support? What happens when one partner was not aware of their rights? What happens with the splitting of pensions? It's my understanding that pensions can only be split between spouses and not common-law partners. So where

does this fit? Also, would existing cohabitation agreements between common-law partners be valid when this bill comes into force? My assumption is probably, but I think we need to have some clarification on that.

Overall, Madam Speaker, this is a good bill. It focuses on real issues that need to be addressed, and it helps to solve more than one issue at a time with limited potential to add more problems down the road. It will hopefully help lower the burden on our court systems, allowing our judges to hold criminals accountable for their actions. It also provides much-needed support for parents who have children with disabilities, ensuring that both common-law partners are responsible for their adult children with disabilities. And to go a little bit further into the point that my colleague from Airdrie made, getting rid of the Married Women's Act is a very, very much appreciated piece. It's good to see antiquated pieces of legislation being removed from the books. It helps make things easier for Albertans, for legislators, and for the legal profession.

I would just encourage everyone to support this bill here, and I'm excited to hopefully get some answers to my questions come Committee of the Whole. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm really pleased to rise today and speak to Bill 28, Family Statutes Amendment Act, 2018. I've heard many of my colleagues talk about the mechanics of the bill and the technical aspects of it. I want to take this opportunity to tell a story.

My constituent Christina Ryan has a daughter named Emily. I've gotten to know Christina and her partner Ron and Christina's daughter Emily and Ron's daughter Sophie over the last year and a bit. I learned from Christina that she was facing a situation with her daughter Em. Em has multiple disabilities and requires extra care. She uses a wheelchair and has to see doctors quite a few times a month to manage her health.

What Christina discovered when Em turned 18 is that Alberta is the last province that has no requirement for common-law parents to continue to support their dependent child once they turn 18. The only alternatives for Christina and Em were AISH, which only provides a lower than poverty line income, and the burden of financial support fell solely on Christina. What this means is that Christina has to take 12 days off a month to take Em to her doctor's appointments, and Christina's income is vastly lower than it could be because of this. It means that when Em needs a new wheelchair, which is an expense of \$3,000 to \$4,000, Christina would have to raise this money on her own. Medical supplies and aids to daily living like wheelchairs aren't covered for adults with disabilities under AISH.

These are huge financial burdens for a single parent with an adult dependent child to have to bear on their own under the current rules. The other parent can simply walk away without any further financial responsibility for their child. Christina thought this wasn't fair. She hired a lawyer to legally challenge Alberta's Family Law Act, and she also called on Alberta Justice to amend legislation, which is why we're debating this bill here today. If anyone here or anyone watching ever thinks that a single person can't make a difference, I want you to remember Christina and Em and the bill that we are debating today. She's made a real difference for a lot of people.

What this bill means is hope for families to rise out of poverty. It means Emily will be able to receive the therapies that are required

to manage her health but sometimes are out of reach because of financial constraints. This bill means hope for the future. It means that Christina and Em know that there's hope to have a more secure quality of life. People with disabilities deserve the same care as anyone else.

Finally, I'd like to share a little piece of information that I learned while researching this bill today. Over 50 per cent of our human rights in Canada are entrenched because of people with disabilities bringing them forward.

Because of all of this, I'm very happy to support Bill 28, and I encourage my colleagues to do the same as well.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Any other speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm very happy to stand in this House and speak my support for Bill 28, the Family Statutes Amendment Act, 2018.

I have had two long-term marital relationships in my life. One was a marriage, which I've already described in this Legislature and which ended eventually in charges being laid and an annulment. The second relationship was a 27-year common-law relationship. Now, I've spoken to many constituents as well as many other women and men from around this province about the issues being addressed through this bill. Many of their experiences mirror my own in either of my long-term relationships. So I am thrilled to see the Matrimonial Property Act amended to reflect property division rules for unmarried partners to the degree possible and the Married Women's Act repealed. I will say a little about both of these changes, and then I intend to say a lot about the Family Law Act.

11:50

In 1922, when the Married Women's Act first came into force, it would have been considered forward movement for women. I did a little research, and I wanted to know what the purpose of that act was. I came across a couple of sentences which virtually grabbed me by the throat, and I quote: although the husband and wife were one in the law, the husband was the one. As Blackstone expressed it, "the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband."

You can imagine how that affected me. But I believe that that bill was the precursor to the ruling in 1929 when some women in this country became persons. For other women it did take longer. As much as the name of the bill, the Married Women's Act, makes my teeth grate, it did have a purpose. In this day and age I believe it is truly redundant – thank goodness – as the advantages it had provided are now addressed in the Family Law Act. The repeal of the Married Women's Act takes effect on royal assent.

As I said, I am also pleased to see that within the common-law relationship the Matrimonial Property Act, insofar as possible, will see the law be equally reflective as compared to a married relationship. Currently in Alberta when a married couple separates or gets a divorce, the law clearly says how the property should be divided through the Matrimonial Property Act. However, this does not apply to nonmarried couples. When unmarried couples break up, they have to figure out how to split their belongings and assets. There is no legislation that says how to divide the property when a nonmarried couple breaks up. This can result in uncertainty and costly legal battles if the couple cannot agree on how to divide their property.

I know that this is a problem because I experienced it. My former common-law partner made a larger salary than I, only because I put my career on hold and moved three times to support the advancement of his career. When we separated, he not only assumed the property should be his, but he told his family it was. Fortunately for me, I had the foresight to make sure that that property was jointly owned; therefore, it had to be equally divided. He, in fact, could not give me property of which I was already the rightful owner but only because I'd insisted on joint ownership when we purchased assets.

An older constituent of mine had been in a relationship her entire adult life, and when this relationship deteriorated into a separation, she felt she didn't have a leg to stand on because he had insisted on putting everything in his own name even though she also made payments on everything that she thought was mutually owned. The amendments to this act will give her the right to her fair share of that mutual property.

The Matrimonial Property Act will be amended to provide legislated property division rules for unmarried partners. These rules will largely mirror the rules that apply to married couples to the degree possible. This part of the bill, if passed, will come into force on January 1, 2020. Updated educational materials will become available and work with stakeholders will be done to update the public information.

I think one of the most crucial pieces of this bill will be the amendments to the Family Law Act. I so clearly remember Jane Doe and two of her three children sitting in my office trying to share her story with me through tears of desperation. I saw her bruises. I heard her anguish. I heard her children echo her story. She and her children were hiding in a shelter. She felt that she and her children were the only ones experiencing this horror, and in that time and in her world they were. I remember sobbing as she shared her third child's medical history and how the father of those children was withholding her ability to access medical treatment and supports until she agreed to move back with him. The proposed amendments to the Family Law Act would have prevented him from being able to do that.

The Family Law Act will be amended to allow a claim for child support to be made for an adult child of unmarried parents who is unable to withdraw from parental charge because of an illness, disability, full-time student status, or other cause. The amendments to Family Law Act child support eligibility will come into force on royal assent.

I think that it is about time we have this legislation. I know it would have had an impact for me, and I know from the number of people that I've spoken to not just in my constituency but right across the province that this will have a huge impact to make their lives better.

I expect everybody in this House to support this bill. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Mr. Fildebrandt: Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 49(2) I move that the question be now put.

The Deputy Speaker: Any members wishing to speak to the motion?

[Motion on previous question on Bill 28 carried]

[Motion carried; Bill 28 read a second time]

Mr. Fildebrandt: I wish to speak to the motion.

The Deputy Speaker: I believe, hon. member, we have . . .

Mr. Fildebrandt: I wish to speak to the motion first.

The Deputy Speaker: No.

Mr. Fildebrandt: I rose before the vote was called.

The Deputy Speaker: We've had the vote. There are no speakers. It's done.

Pursuant to Standing Order 4(2.1) the Assembly stands adjourned until 1:30 this afternoon.

[The Assembly adjourned at 11:58 a.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, November 27, 2018

Day 54

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, November 27, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the consul general of Japan in Calgary, Mr. Shigenobu Kobayashi, and his spouse, Keiko Kobayashi, as well as the deputy consul general, Mr. Yasuhiko Tanaka, and the honorary consul general in Edmonton, Olenka Bilash, and staff from the consulate general. Alberta and Japan have enjoyed a very strong and productive relationship for decades, and there's tremendous potential to strengthen that relationship even further, especially under the TPP agreement. We look forward to continuing our work with the consul general to further our trade relations and our connections with such an important partner, friend, and ally. Alberta remains committed to our partnership with our sister province, which is Hokkaido, and looks forward to celebrating the 40th anniversary of the agreement in 2020. I now ask all of our guests to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. M. le Président, c'est avec fierté que je me lève à cette Chambre aujourd'hui pour introduire the students from Leo Nickerson elementary school. The students are accompanied by their teachers Mrs. Stephanie Desjarlais and Mme Roxanne Walter, their chaperones Ms Holly Cosgrove and – I apologize if I don't get your name right – Ms Awa Ndoye. I would ask all of the students, chaperones, and teachers to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 17 students from the school of Legal. They are accompanied by their teachers Mr. Jason Paik and Caroline Corbett along with parent chaperone Greg Bauwens. I would ask that they please rise at this time and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Mr. Hinkley: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you teachers, chaperones, and students from Maskwacis Cultural College, in my constituency. They are social workers, and they're in a political policy class so, no doubt, here to advocate also for a new college facility. If they would rise when I call their names, please: Joyce Crandall, Wilda

Listener, Ally Bull, Geraldine Rain, Darryl Montour, Kaylene Buffalo, Mekwun Moses, Sherelle Johnson, Anissa Omeasoo, Tannis Swampy, Shaunita Potts, Lyvia Bruno, Barb Docleen, and Paige Hamelin. If everybody would please give them the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other school groups today? The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to rise and introduce a school group to you at this point in time. They won't be joining us until 2 p.m., but of course we'll be in the middle of Routine, so on their behalf, ahead of them arriving here, I rise to introduce to you and through you a school group from St. Jerome Catholic school. There are, I believe, around 30 students with two of their teachers, Alicia Centis and Diane Lacika. I can tell you that St. Jerome is a science-based academy school, and I've had the honour of being a guest judge every year at their science fair. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, when it was part of his riding, was a guest judge for many, many years. Incredibly bright students. The future of our province is in great hands. With that, I would ask all members to join me in welcoming the group from St. Jerome.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Other school groups, hon. members? The hon. Member for Calgary-Acadia.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Minister of Health I rise to introduce to you and through you some guests who are here today to support the introduction of Bill 30 later this afternoon. These folks have fought long and hard for some of our most vulnerable Albertans to be protected and for more of our mental health services to be regulated. I'm proud that our government is working with them. I want to thank them all for their dedication to making Alberta a better place for those who need help and for their families. If they could please stand and remain standing as I call their names. We have Kim and Mike Argent from Red Deer, and from around our province representatives of the Federation of Associations of Counselling Therapists in Alberta, or FACT-Alberta. We have the chair, Nicole Imgrund, and her husband, Colin Peterson; Laura Hahn, Sean Swaby, Amy Cote, Lorain Gellink, and Nicholas Renaud. These are some of the folks helping us to get mental health and substance use supports right for all Albertans, and I'd like to invite them to please receive the warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Stier: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Rob Siewert, who is a councillor for the municipal district of Foothills, near High River, where he represents division 1. It's my home riding. I'm very proud that he's here. Rob has been a devoted community member throughout his many years in Foothills as a volunteer in his local school, church, kids' camps, and just being there as needs arise. I've had the pleasure of working with Rob since he was first elected in 2017, and I look forward to continuing to partner with him in the future. Located in the public gallery today, Rob is joined by his wife, Sarah, and their children Leslie, Alysha, Megan, and Ross Siewert. I would ask that they please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this House some guests: Imran Khan, Sobia Aziz, Ahmer Khan, Anamta Imran, Waseem Hamza, and Nadia Khurshid. All of these guests came all the way from my hometown of Calgary, and they also belong to my hometown of Rawalakot, Azad Kashmir. Imran Khan is a filmmaker, a recent graduate of the Toronto Film School, and he just moved back to Calgary; and Sobia Aziz is an office-bearer with Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, Azad Kashmir. I ask my guests to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Mr. Speaker, today it is my honour to introduce two senior members from the Wilberforce Project. If they would rise as I call their names: Stephanie Fennelly, the executive director of Wilberforce; and Katie Campbell, the vice-president of communications, Wilberforce. They are a grassroots group of mostly young Albertans working on re-examining laws around abortion services in Alberta. I've been meeting with them today to define areas of common ground on potential parental notification for minors obtaining abortions, improving adoption services, and the importance of repealing the Bill 9 attack on free speech for pro-life Albertans. I ask that all members of the House join me in giving them the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

1:40

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the mayor of Drumheller and her fine husband, Kelly. Mayor Colberg is here today to meet with government members in regard to flood mitigation, which has been an ongoing problem in the city of Drumheller, and I'm pleased to have her rise and receive the traditional welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, it's indeed an honour and a privilege to be able to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly some of the best and finest representatives of construction companies in Canada. I'd like them to rise as I call their names: Rod Schenk, director of PCL; Mike Martens, director of public affairs, PCA; Paul De Jong, president, PCA; Dennis Perrin, Alberta director of CLAC; Wayne Prins, executive director of CLAC; and Jay Bueckert, regional director of CLAC. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a gentleman from Lacombe, Myles Chykerda. He actually left the sunny city of Los Angeles, where he's a PhD candidate in archaeology, to participate more directly in democracy here in Alberta. He's the Alberta Party candidate for Lacombe-Ponoka. I'd like Myles to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

Official Opposition Leader and Pipeline Development

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The UCP leader sat in Ottawa around the cabinet table for 10 years. For two of those years he was the minister responsible for employment, but shockingly he told this Legislature yesterday that "I wasn't responsible for pipelines." Not responsible? Pipelines to new markets mean thousands of jobs for working people in Alberta and across Canada. They mean a better price for our energy resources and billions in revenue for the things that matter to families like schools, hospitals, and roads. As the minister for jobs and the right-hand man to the Prime Minister he was responsible, but he failed. He blew his chance to secure market access for our resources when he had the chance.

Now, it's true that as minister of immigration he was more focused on things like cutting health care for vulnerable refugees and making it harder for families to reunite with their loved ones in Canada and allowing corporations to abuse the temporary foreign worker program to drive down wages, but he should have been focused on fighting for Alberta jobs.

The facts are clear. The UCP leader's government in Ottawa did not get a single new pipeline built to the east or west coast. That is what's truly needed to get full value for our oil. They didn't get the job done despite having Conservatives in power in Ottawa and here in Edmonton for a decade. Not only that, but they caused more Canadians to oppose pipelines than ever before. Now he's asking folks in Alberta to trust him to fix a problem he created.

On this side of the House we take our responsibilities seriously. We will keep fighting for a pipeline to tidewater and a better price for our oil. That's what will ensure every working family feels our economic recovery, and we won't stop until that job is done.

North American Energy Industry Competitiveness

Mr. Barnes: I recently read an article by Seeking Alpha called Who Wins as Oil Price Differentials Widen in the Permian Basin? that focuses on the Texas commodity markets. The article talks about the widening price differential and how terrible it is that the average Texas basin differential was almost \$8. Will the differential get worse? Yes. The differential for Texas Permian basin blends is expected to increase through most of 2019 until "two large oil pipelines operated by EPIC and Plains All American become operational in late 2019."

Yes, Mr. Speaker, you heard that right. Two large pipelines being built by private companies are set to come online in late 2019. What glorious mysteries it is to consider that private companies would be willing to invest in something like pipelines, and despite the growing differential for Permian basin oil, investment in Texas has been torrid, nearly \$50 billion in capital investment last year. Fifty billion dollars. That accounts for a third of the total capital investment in the United States. Contrast that with Alberta. Northern Gateway: cancelled. Energy East: cancelled. Trans Mountain: halted and nationalized after being abandoned by the private sector. This has led to an outflow of investment that Jim Davidson, former CEO of GMP FirstEnergy, says is the worst he's ever seen. Enerplus, one of Canada's largest independent oil and gas producers, will spend 90 per cent of its capital in the United States this year and next. This investment flight has real-world consequences for Alberta families. It means that while Texas

families and communities are seeing more jobs, higher wages, and better benefits, Alberta families are being asked to take 10, 20, 30, and even 40 per cent wage reductions.

This is a result of that NDP's managed decline of our economy. It needs to stop, and this spring it will.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek.

Universal Health Care

Ms Woollard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Reflecting on the importance of universal health care has brought back memories from my younger years which I think are worth thinking about. When I was six, polio ran rampant through Edmonton, caused consternation among parents especially. The polio vaccine had not yet been developed, and we did not have universal health care. Working-class families were vulnerable. My clearest memory of this time took place in a house on our block. Mothers and children had gathered there because a child of the house had taken sick. The mothers were trying to determine whether the child had polio or not. I was very young and didn't understand it all, but I knew that the adults were afraid and that the child was quite sick.

As an adult I realized several things. One is that it was very reasonable to be afraid of polio. Without a preventative vaccine or treatment polio is a horrendous disease. Every block had a family affected by it: someone who was in an iron lung, someone who was in the hospital receiving treatment, some who had to go to the Shriners hospital in Winnipeg.

The second thing I realized was that without universal health care people couldn't afford to seek medical help. We must consider carefully the vital importance of having health care available and affordable for our loved ones and the benefits of having good health care for everyone. We must remember the anguish that people suffered when they didn't know if their loved ones would live or die and the desperation they must have felt.

Many things make us who we are, but I think the most important is that we take care of each other. How we treat those most in need in society tells us what kind of people we are.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Government Policies

Mr. Dreeshen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been an interesting first month representing my incredible constituents of Innisfail-Sylvan Lake up here in Edmonton. There have been a lot of firsts. However, I don't think I was prepared for the full extent of the NDP's hypocrisy.

Last night we discussed why the NDP was refusing to provide the amount of coal-generated electricity imports from the United States. This NDP government went out of their way to shut down Alberta coal plants only to import coal-generated electricity from the United States. It's mind boggling why this Alberta NDP government would shut down businesses here in Alberta, destroy jobs here in Alberta, and destroy communities here in Alberta just to help their friends in the U.S. energy industry.

Then, Mr. Speaker, there was the NDP minister of the environment in question period last week, where again she tried to hide her work as an anti Alberta pipeline protester. I asked whether she now really supports pipelines, if she's actually changed her mind, whether the NDP regretted fighting against pipeline development in Alberta for so many years. Not only did she not have an answer; she denied it. She said that she had never opposed

pipelines, that it was all fake. She went on Twitter and even called me a liar. She even told reporters that it was a lie. So we showed her a transcript where she appeared at the National Energy Board hearing arguing against the Northern Gateway pipeline. Then we showed her a tweet encouraging an NDP MP to attend an anti Alberta pipeline protest. And then we showed her a photo of her attending that same anti Alberta pipeline protest.

We've asked time and again what advice this tar sands campaign, Greenpeace activist minister advised her department and cabinet regarding Alberta pipelines, but all we get is obstruction. Albertans are able to see through this NDP rhetoric in which they pretend to be proponents of pipelines when for so long they were protesters of pipelines. Last week, Mr. Speaker, the Premier said that she had a hundred per cent confidence in her minister. In a few months we'll see if Albertans share that . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. Thank you.

Hold the clock a minute. I just want to think.

1:50

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: Start the clock. The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Bighorn Area Land Use

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently this government announced significant changes to the area known as the Bighorn. This area is important to our local community, our energy industry, our forestry industry, our film and tourism industries, outdoor enthusiasts, and tens of thousands of recreational users that use it a year. The NDP brought forward their ineffective consultation process to happen over the Christmas holidays in an attempt to get their predetermined outcome rubber-stamped. My question is to the minister. What I would like to know is this: the North Saskatchewan regional plan is not even completed, so on what basis did you base your design of this new park system?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, there have been years of consultation in this area. Clearwater county put out their tourism development strategy in 1992; the previous government did nothing. The regional advisory council made certain recommendations in 2014; the previous government did nothing. There's a tremendous economic development opportunity here, and I as environment minister have a responsibility to make sure that that happens, just like I have a responsibility to get pipelines built. As environment minister that is my responsibility, just like it's everyone in this caucus's and in this cabinet's responsibility.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, let's be very clear. This minister has not consulted with the community, certainly not with Clearwater county. She misinformed us about a meeting she said she had with the mayor of Rocky Mountain House about it, most famously. This is a minister who has done everything possible to avoid talking to the very people that are going to be affected by this. There is a regional access committee. This minister has completely avoided talking to them. The question is this: why does she keep avoiding talking to the people that will be impacted by this? Why does she continue to hide from them and not have a real conversation, just stand up and do partisan rhetoric? Talk to our community. Stop hiding, Minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I find it curious that the hon. member wants to reject \$40 million of investment into his own constituency. He wants to reject economic development for his own constituents. He wants to reject the perspective of business owners in and around Nordegg. Economic development is all of our responsibility, just like getting pipelines built is all of our responsibility. That is something that we're focused on as a government.

Mr. Loewen: Point of order.

The Speaker: Point of order noted.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, nobody is rejecting anything. In fact, in these questions I never even said that we would reject capital investment. There are lots of important areas, including along highway 11, that I actually think inside this plan are a good idea. The question I have is about the consultation process that this minister has followed. Let's be clear. She has completely avoided the community. She will only do invite-only meetings. She will not meet with people that disagree with the plan that she has. She is only focused on foreign interest groups that are pushing for things in our backyards. She is ignoring business owners, who I do talk to all the time in Rocky Mountain House. She is also ignoring the community as a whole and Albertans across the whole province who want input into the process and, further to that, is ignoring the process in law. Again, will this minister commit to . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member.

Mr. Nixon: . . . consulting with . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, time is up, and I didn't hear a question in there.

Mr. Nixon: Point of order.

The Speaker: Point of order noted.
Go ahead, hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Mr. Speaker, I've heard from almost 22,000 people who sent postcards. I've heard from countless area residents. I have heard from business owners. I'll read a couple of quotes. "Our residents enjoy outdoor recreation. Protected headwaters not only benefit the residents of Spruce Grove, the North Saskatchewan." That's from the mayors of Spruce Grove and Stony Plain. I've heard from the member's own constituents, quote: there is a need for public investments and trail infrastructure, parking areas, outhouses, enforcement, that has not occurred under PLUZ management. These are business owners in the member's own riding. I have questions as to who he's representing, just as to who he's working for. I know who I'm working for, and that's the people of Alberta.

The Speaker: Keep the discussion about the policy matters, not the individuals on each side of the House.
Second main question.

Mr. Nixon: In making this announcement, the minister has shown a complete disregard for the comprehensive planning process for the region in an attempt to ram through changes. Now, leaked documents from the process show that these changes are completely against the recommendations of the regional advisory council in the area. The NDP is clearly not satisfied and wants to focus on the demands of their special-interest groups. Again, Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: why are you spending so much time

and effort to avoid consulting with a full representation of the community, not a hand-picked representation of the community?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, in August of 2018 the Clearwater trails partnership wrote me a letter that asked for the establishment of a west country PLUZ – this recommendation comes with it – a public land use zone, that people asked for. Clearwater county called this a positive step forward. The regional advisory council was made up of local reeves, residents, First Nations. They conducted 21 town halls. I know we didn't do exactly what the RAC advice said, because, for example, this proposal comes with an indigenous coal management for the parks areas, and that wasn't in the original RAC advice. So we are deviating in places where we think it's right to do so because that's . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister. Thank you.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the Clearwater Trails Initiative – I spoke to them again today – have not been consulted. That's what they say. Clearwater county says that they have not been consulted. The town of Rocky Mountain House says that they have not been consulted. West Fraser and those types of people working within the Bighorn have not been consulted. The minister has only done consultation with select, invite-only groups inside our constituency. Will she commit to holding an open, public town hall, open to all, right away with me?

Ms Phillips: Well, in fact, we do have a telephone town hall so that all Albertans can participate, Mr. Speaker. We are waiting to finalize the details on that, and as soon as those details are available, whether it's this week or next, we will be sharing them with the House. I have heard from other constituents, the hon. member's own constituents, and I find it so curious that he's not listening to them. Here are some. Declaring the area west of Nordegg a wildland provincial park aligns with our community's vision for the spaces we call home: that's Hollen from Nordegg. Lorri from Nordegg: "Like the Wild West, it appears people are not adhering to common-sense rules, and incredible wild areas are being destroyed. That's why we want to have protection for the wildland provincial park."

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Nixon: Again, Mr. Speaker, nobody is saying that there shouldn't be protection of the west country; in fact, there should. The question is about the consultation process this minister followed to get to this spot. This NDP's record on consultation is terrible. They have abused Albertans over and over during their consultation process. Stakeholders in the public will now have until January 31 to provide feedback on this government's announcement. My question to the minister is this: will she commit today publicly in this House to release all of the stakeholder-public feedback received once the consultation period is complete, or will she continue to hide it as she has for other consultations?

Ms Phillips: Well, you know, one of the things we're consulting on, Mr. Speaker, is the concept of a trails pass. We want to hear from local off-highway vehicle organizations. It's something they've been asking for for years, whether it is feasible to have a trails pass to access some of these new areas such as the west country PLUZ after we make those requisite investments in them. I find it curious that the member stands in his place and rejects those

kinds of investments in his own backyard for people that are his neighbours, that are his relatives. Why is he rejecting jobs and economic development in his own constituency?

The Speaker: Third main question.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the minister just said in her own answer: private meetings, invite-only meetings with select people that she chooses, that she wants to meet with in the community. I've had town halls with well over 1,000 people there, where highways had to be shut for people to be able to have their views made on the record about this situation. This minister has disregarded a petition in this place with 21,000 signatures calling on her to do something different. Again, will she commit to public consultation, come to Rocky Mountain House, have a town hall, and talk to the people of my constituency? You'll find out what they think.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Now, this idea that there hasn't been consultation on the North Saskatchewan regional plan is incredibly disrespectful to the many women and men from that area and from elsewhere that participated in good faith in the regional advisory council process. There were 21 town halls associated with that. Since then, there have been other consultations, including the overall consultation on the North Saskatchewan regional plan. Now, what the member wants to reject is economic development for his constituency, I guess, because it's not his department, just like his leader, who didn't take responsibility for a pipeline because he said he wasn't responsible for it. There's a theme here.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, nobody is rejecting economic development. We're talking about consultation and how the minister got to this place. This minister has not had public consultation. She's avoided it. She even did the announcement in Edmonton, not even in the communities that were involved, because she doesn't want to go and talk to them. Now, the stakeholders she lists as being consulted with have all confirmed with us that they were not consulted by this minister, so why does this minister keep standing up in this House and making things up and dodging the question? Will she have public consultation in Rocky Mountain House? Yes or no? Will she participate in it? Yes or no?

2:00

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, there are plenty of opportunities over the 75-day consultation period for Albertans to engage, and certainly we have committed to a telephone town hall so that all Albertans who have a stake in this — folks who have written to me from Spruce Grove and Stony Plain; folks who have written to me from, yes, Nordegg and Rocky Mountain House; folks who have written to me from Red Deer, from Edmonton — can all participate because this is a fundamental Alberta priority to conserve landscapes and have economic development, just as a pipeline is a fundamental Alberta priority. We're working on that, and we're working on all of our shared values.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, let's be clear. There was a consultation process with the RAC, which this minister has rejected. The people from the RAC who she refers to as being consulted are not consulted. They're insulted by this minister because she disregarded what they said. They've made that clear to us. The

surveys from that process this minister has continued to hide from the public, but FOIP shows that well over 80 per cent of the public do not like the direction that they're going right now. Again, will this minister commit to actual public consultation, stop avoiding the people that are being impacted, stop hiding in Edmonton, and come to Rocky Mountain House and talk to our community? Yes or no? If not, what is she hiding?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To be honest, the member's comments are insulting to the women and men who served on the regional advisory council. That council was made up of local reeves, residents, First Nations and Métis, farmers, tourism operators, scientists, business owners, ranchers, hunters, and industry. That council gathered input from thousands of Albertans, conducted 21 town halls to come up with their advice on regional planning, which included unanimous support for increased protection for parts of the Bighorn backcountry. In addition, there have been a number of tourism development strategies in that area. The previous government did nothing with them. This plan moves that forward.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Health Care Costs

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We need to have a serious conversation about getting health spending under control. One way that organizations can try to curb spending is to offer early retirement packages. This lets employees near retirement age leave with financial security and lets the company trim personnel costs. When Shaw recently opened up 16 early retirement packages, nearly 3,000 people applied, showing it can be a popular option. To the Minister of Health: would you consider offering early retirement packages to people working in our health care sector in order to help curb health care spending?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks very much for the question. Certainly, Health has been working very hard to get spending under control. I'm very proud to say that we've moved from about 6 or 7 per cent down to just over 2 per cent in terms of annual growth. So considering the population growth and so forth, I think that the ministry and AHS are doing a good job to get spending under control, of which this suggestion could be an option.

Mr. Fraser: Another way to try to contain the growth in the health spending is through managed attrition. In an organization as big as Alberta Health Services there are thousands and thousands of positions, and we need to make sure that those positions are necessary and effective. If they aren't, then as people retire or leave those jobs, we need to consider not rehiring anyone else to fill them. This is a way that we contain costs without imposing job cuts. To the same minister: is there an attrition plan in place to help manage the growth of positions in Alberta's health care system and reduce its costs?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks very much for the question. Certainly, it's important to make sure that you are keeping a close eye on costs every step of the way. I think the minister and the ministry and Alberta Health Services have been doing a very

good job. I mean, I think options are open to be creative in this regard, but one option that's not open is to move to private health care when public health care serves the public efficiently and more equitably by far.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Minister, I've outlined two ways to save our health care system money without having to lay anyone off. While you like to refer to these measures as billion-dollar cuts, the fact of the matter is that without some action on health care costs, we're actually putting the whole system at risk. Recently released performance metrics are showing that not only is the health care spending increasing, but results are getting worse. To the same minister: with increasing costs and decreasing performance, don't you think it's time that your government tried a new approach?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we're keeping a very close eye on controlling costs every step of the way. I would dispute the assertion that performance is decreasing. I think that in targeted areas we see a marked increase in delivery of health care, especially in home care, acute care. In certain key areas it's definitely improving, and we can do that on a public health platform. The UCP is talking about privatization of health care. That's unconscionable, it's not a good use of money, and Albertans don't want it.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Gender X Marker on Government Documents

Ms Fitzpatrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently the Minister of Service Alberta visited my constituency and had a conversation with a particular constituent about the gender X marker. Would the minister expound on the number of people who are choosing to use the X marker?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Service Alberta.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am the Minister of Service Alberta. I'm also responsible for fighting for pipelines and creating good Alberta jobs, something I take seriously.

Our government took an important step by announcing human rights in Alberta by introducing the X marker. Albertans can now choose female, male, or X on their driver's licence, ID card, and other vital statistics records. Since June 177 Albertans have opted for the X as their gender identifier on their driver's licence or ID card, and 26 people have chosen the third marker on their vital statistics records.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. As my first follow-up, would you expand on the work that has been done across the government and the collaboration it has to do with other governments?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Adopting the X marker is another step forward in making sure that Alberta is a province that respects, protects, and advances human rights. When doing this, we wanted to make sure that a third marker on our provincial

vital statistics documents aligned with other jurisdictions. By adopting the X as a third option, we followed the direction the federal government took on federally issued documents. This also puts us in line with other provinces and ensures that our provincial documents remain valid when we move, travel, or need access to interjurisdictional programs and services.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Finally, is our government concerned about the Doug Ford government refusing to work alongside Alberta on respecting gender identity?

Mr. Malkinson: Just last week our government raised the transgender pride flag to commemorate all of those who have lost their lives due to transphobia and violence, and I was happy to be there, Mr. Speaker. It's very concerning to hear that the Conservative leader's best friends in the Ontario PC Party are currently debating whether or not trans people deserve the same basic human rights. Shame. I'm concerned that we are seeing similar ideologies on display here such as a UCP member comparing the pride flag to a swastika. These are views that are not welcome on this side of the House. I wish that the Leader of the Opposition would follow through on his pledge to reject these extreme views and kick this member out of the UCP.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Health Care Costs and Service Delivery

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Health care costs continue to rise. In 2013 a hospital stay cost 25 per cent more in Alberta than the national average while in 2017 it cost 35 per cent more. The average cost fell by \$34 to \$5,992 nationally but rose by \$459 in Alberta to \$8,112. The Yukon reduced the cost over the same period by \$835. Why hasn't the government been able to get hospital costs under control?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I pointed out in my last set of questions, we have moved down the rate of growth in health care spending here from 9.2 per cent in 2010 to just 2.2 per cent this year. That's in keeping with the growth of the population. I think that's a great accomplishment that we need to carry on. Certainly, there are measures to continue to look at for controlling costs, but that is not at the expense of health care and the security that health care provides for all Albertans.

Ms McPherson: Given that in 2013 Alberta's large urban trauma hospitals had an average of eight patients waiting for a hospital bed per hour, which has risen to 11 this year, and given that this metric has remained stagnant at medium urban hospitals and given that the government has increased its Health budget from \$18.6 billion to \$20.7 billion, why have Albertans not seen improvements to their health care experience?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, as I said, I dispute this notion that we've not seen improvements in targeted areas. We certainly have. There's lots of room for improvement always because health care is dynamic and health care is most important not just for your own personal physical health but for peace of mind.

What you don't do is like the leader of the Alberta Party, who came in here unelected and proposed a billion dollars in cuts in health care.

Ms McPherson: Given that AHS released its provincial diverse populations strategy over six years ago and given that social determinants of health must be supported by sustainable programs in the social services sector and given that every week constituents complain to us about front-line social services workers who fail to understand or respect diverse needs, when will strategies to reach out to underserved populations start collecting input that supports service improvements?

2:10

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A very good question. It's very important that we integrate health care outcomes with other ministries as well. For example, in Education we are building partnerships between mental health strategies, between Alberta Health Services, social services, and Education. And, you know, the degree to which we can find that synchronicity, I think that you can really see marked improvements. What you don't do, though, is blow up hospitals, blow up health systems, or talk about private health care, as the UCP has been. That's not the way Albertans operate. That's not the way we deliver health care in this province.

Oil Price Differentials

Mr. Loewen: The NDP try to tell us that debt is under control, and they downplay it like it's no big deal. Albertans, on the other hand, know that \$50 billion of debt and \$2 billion in interest per year and growing is a big deal, and they know it jeopardizes our children's future. We know that the government didn't budget for the price differential we have now and that they banked on pipelines being built. The U of C says that the government was losing \$7.2 billion per year at \$38 differential. CAPP tells us that every dollar means \$210 million in lost provincial revenue. Can the minister give Albertans the facts, as of now, about how the differential will affect the government's bottom line?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the Minister of Finance I'm also responsible for fighting for pipelines and creating good jobs.

You know, the differential is punishing to Albertans, Alberta's companies, and the oil and gas sector, and it's costing Canada \$80 million per day. That's why we're standing up for pipelines in this province. That's why we're taking the message to Ottawa. That's why the Premier of this province is in Ottawa today, and she will be having more to say tomorrow about the actions this government will be taking.

Mr. Loewen: Given that the differential has been caused by a lack of pipeline capacity and given that while Conservatives were building pipelines and approving pipelines, everyone that came before them, the NDP were opposing and protesting pipelines and given that when the NDP say that Conservatives couldn't get pipelines built, it's absolutely not true and given that the government has prematurely celebrated one pipeline three times that still isn't built, can the government point to one major pipeline that has been built in their three and a half years in power? Just one.

Mr. Mason: Well, Mr. Speaker, that's easy. Line 3 is under construction right now, hon. member. But, you know, this hon.

member's leader spent 10 years in cabinet – 10 years – and they didn't get a single pipeline built to tidewater. And the leader says that it's not his responsibility. Well, on this side of the House, it's everyone's responsibility to fight for pipelines.

Mr. Loewen: Given that the minister just admitted that they haven't got one pipeline built – not one – and given that the NDP ministers often try to say that the NDP and the Premier supported pipelines from day one and given that that isn't exactly reflective of reality and given that the Premier spoke against Keystone XL pipeline and Northern Gateway and given that the environment minister protested Northern Gateway and given, Mr. Speaker, that isn't even close to support, can the government tell Albertans right here and now what they're doing to solve the price differential other than hiring anti-oil activists to represent the industry and giving lip service during this critical situation?

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, what a pile of baloney that is. You know, when this member's leader was a cabinet minister in the federal government in Ottawa, the Supreme Court threw out the Northern Gateway thing. They laughed the federal government out of court because they'd failed so abysmally to properly consult. That's that government's record, and that leader says: well – you know what? – it's not my responsibility; I have no responsibility.

Mrs. Pitt: Point of order.

Mr. Mason: On this side, Mr. Speaker, as Minister of Transportation I can tell you that fighting for pipelines is my responsibility, and the same goes for everyone here.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Carbon Levy and Education Costs

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The carbon tax continues to drag down Alberta's families, businesses, and public services. This year alone the High Prairie school division's carbon tax bill could have paid for another teacher, and the Calgary board of education expects to lose over \$3 million. Across the province real educational priorities are taking a back seat, from staffing to maintenance to inclusion to class sizes. To the Minister of Education: how much could class sizes be reduced if schools were not subject to the carbon tax?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you so much for the question. It's very important, of course, that our climate action plan is not just in terms of revenue but in terms of an opportunity for people to learn and understand and to know that we are taking action on climate for the next generation. This resides in schools and everywhere, and as a way by which we can make sure that we are more efficient, we're building more energy-efficient schools, we're putting solar panels on the roofs of new schools and others, as you'll see soon. We're doing a job for now and for the next generation. I will make no apologies for . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
First supplemental.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that rising transportation costs are eroding transportation services and given that students lucky enough to get a ride are stuck on the bus for longer and longer periods of time and given that there is no such thing as a solar-powered school bus and that the carbon tax hits

school transportation budgets particularly hard, to the same minister: how many more students could get on the bus, and how much shorter could the bus rides be if schools were not subject to the carbon tax?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we know that we can always make improvements to student transportation, especially in the rural areas, and we've been doing consultation to look for ways by which we can find those efficiencies. But just put it into context. The carbon levy we expect to be costing perhaps around \$18 million a year for all the school boards, and we've invested more than \$1.6 billion into our schools to hire teachers, to hire support staff, and to make sure that our education system is strong. Context is always important.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
Second supplemental.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that dyed diesel and gasoline are exempt from the carbon tax and given that the Premier has finally made a concession to reality by exempting oil and gas drillers from the carbon tax and given that no one in Alberta would say that education is less important than agriculture or the oil patch, why hasn't the Minister of Education asked the Premier to exempt schools and school boards from the carbon tax as well?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, as I said in my first reply, it's important that we are building the educating element of the climate action plan. Certainly, it's important. For example, when we are putting the solar panels on the roofs of new schools and others now as well, we have a real-time readout for kids to be able to use that as part of their education. We are saving literally millions of dollars by building new schools that are much more energy efficient, to a LEED silver standard. We look for ways by which we can help schools every step of the way, but certainly one way that you do not help them is to make cuts, cutting 4,000 . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Brewing Industry Policies

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, yesterday this government announced yet another change to the beer taxation system in Alberta. While we support the challenge against unfair nontariff barriers imposed by the Ontario liquor board, I can't help but wonder. Minister, you took three and a half years to challenge this inequity. Was that because you meshed ideologically with Wynne's government but now that Premier Ford is in charge, you've decided to challenge it?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just want to say right at the outset that not only am I the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, but I am also responsible for fighting for pipelines and creating good jobs.

To answer the member's question, there was a Conservative government in Alberta for 44 years that did nothing to address the discriminatory practices that the Ontario government has against Alberta brewers. On this side of the House we stand up not only for economic diversification; we stand with Alberta brewers, and we will fight provinces that have unfair trading practices.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, given that when they lost their court case, Justice Marriott wrote that your grant program discriminated between craft brewers and craft beer based on provincial origin and given that the beer-is-good folly of yours cost Alberta taxpayers \$2.1 million, again to the minister: since your new small-brewer system looks remarkably similar to the old one we had before you started messing, how much in total are taxpayers on the hook for your failed beer policies?

The Speaker: The hon. Finance minister.

Mr. Ceci: Well, thank you very much. In another role I'm the President of the Treasury Board, and in that role I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I'm also responsible for fighting for pipelines and creating good jobs in this province.

On the beer program we brought in yesterday, that was really supported by the small brewers in this province and the association that is part of that, I can tell you that the new markup rate, Mr. Speaker, will continue to support small brewers regardless of where they are from. The new program is better than the old programs. We're going to continue to see beer in this province, and great beer is what happens in this province when you support it.

2:20

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, given that this government has fostered a climate that sees investment fleeing the province by the billions and given that the business community simply needs this government to get out of its way, Minister, given your carbon tax, failed pipeline policy, layers of paperwork and bureaucracy coupled with poor policy decisions that continue to cost the hospitality industry, will you do the right thing and cancel the business-killing carbon tax?

Mr. Ceci: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure how we got to the carbon tax from beer, but I can tell you that that member's questions are flat, just like the beer that he buys.

You know, we have seen the growth of the small brewers in this province nearly triple. There are over 105 small brewers here as a result of the programs that we have supported for Albertans and the liquor industry. The liquor industry is thriving under this government; it never did under that government. I'm proud every day for the diversity that is there on the shelves.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Health Care Costs and Service Delivery (continued)

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, Alberta Health Services spent \$360 million more this year than last, yet fewer surgical procedures are being performed. Our health care budget has increased by over \$2 billion since this NDP government took office, so why is AHS, under this government's management, cutting front-line services, ultimately increasing wait times for patients?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, it's important to always keep a focus on wait times here in the province of Alberta. We have more than 280,000 surgeries performed across Alberta by 55 different sites. You know, we know that as our population grows, proportionally so, too, do the demands on the health system. That's why in the budget this year we put \$40 million to focus on wait time reductions for surgeries, specifically cancer, cardiac, hip and knee,

and so forth. You know what's interesting? The UCP voted against that very thing.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, let us start with the south zone. Given that the total number of procedures performed decreased by 4 per cent and given that in 2015 hip wait times were 42 weeks versus 49 weeks today and knee surgeries in 2015 were 48 weeks compared to 55 weeks today in the south zone, can you please explain the rationale for these cuts?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we have been making serious investments in targeted areas to reduce wait times in our health care system. It's very important to see as well, from the CIHI statistics that just came out, that globally we moved from about a 9 per cent increase in health care when there were \$100 barrels of oil, you know, and not so much focus on efficiency to this year, where we're at a 2.2 per cent increase, which is in keeping with inflation and the population. So you know what? I think they've been doing a pretty good job. We can always do better, but let's hear it for Alberta Health Services.

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, in the central zone, the Red Deer region, they've been asking for this government to enhance services, but given the fact that this government has cut back on total surgeries performed in this region by over 5 per cent while cutting knee surgeries by a whopping 8.4 per cent – and here you are spouting out that you're increasing these things – and given that in 2015 it took people 27 weeks to access those knee surgeries versus today, where they're waiting now 39 weeks – one more time for our viewers, very clearly – what is this government's rationale for cutting these vital operations despite your increased spending? What are you spending money on? Why are you cutting surgeries?

The Speaker: Thank you.
The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, it's important to focus and target reductions in surgeries. For example, Alberta Health Services did focus on cardiac, hip and knee, and cancer surgeries as well. Putting in, as I said, that \$40 million focus on wait time reductions, you know, is having a targeted positive effect. You can't not do those things if you don't make those investments. If you fire 4,000 nurses, as the UCP suggested, or give \$700 million in tax cuts to the richest 1 per cent, that's money that doesn't go . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Dementia Care

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, since I first started asking about Alberta's poor track record on dementia care, I've heard from Albertans all over the province. They've shared their stories of poor conditions in long-term care facilities, real struggles accessing home care, and continued stigma around dementia and aging in general. Recently the Dementia Network Calgary released an advocacy survey. Eighty-eight per cent of respondents felt that Alberta's dementia strategy should shift from a task-based model to a relational model of care. To the Minister of Health: is that on your radar, and if so, what are you doing to make it happen?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, it's a very good question from the hon. member. As we know that we're seeing increasing rates of dementia across the province, we need to have not just a targeted strategy but a larger societal one as well, so building and educating along with having more home care, and to be able to make investments. Since 2015 we've invested about \$6.8 million into measures to give families tools to help support their loved ones. I mean, I know that this is a very difficult thing, but certainly we're all in it together, and we need to support each other, especially when dementia strikes a family.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the respondents to the Dementia Network survey said: "The biggest problem is not enough staff. Some patients need more . . . care. It's appalling to see residents sitting in soiled clothing, unable to eat in front of a TV for hours. They deserve better." Albertans do deserve better. To the Minister of Health: what are you doing to fix this problem?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, this condition and others are very, very difficult. We certainly feel for individuals and families and staff that work with dementia and work in facilities such as this. We know that we need to look for better diagnosis, early diagnosis, better brain health, and stronger community supports for years to come. By investing in health care, by redoubling and making sure we're investing in home care and community supports, I think that together with all parties we can help to relieve some of the suffering that dementia does cause.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that system navigation was identified as a big problem and given that people are struggling as full-time caregivers and simply don't have the ability or expertise to also be a system navigator and given that this creates a huge gap between haves and have-nots, between those who are able to advocate and those who are left to fend for themselves, and given that one of the best navigation tools available today is the First Link line, to the Minister of Health. There's some concern that this important resource may be cancelled. I'll ask you for a simple yes or no. Will you continue funding First Link?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you so much for the question. We know that since 2015, in fact, the Health ministry did expand the First Link program with \$1.95 million more of funding and also has been investing in specifically trained dementia nurses through the Health Link, 811. So, yes, absolutely. Having a knowledgeable navigation through the system is absolutely essential. You want to make sure you keep it simple, you want to make sure you keep it powerful, and you want to make sure that there are lots of different options available for people.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
Calgary-West.

Rural Crime

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Two years ago the UCP tried to convince the NDP government that rural crime had reached epidemic proportions. We introduced a motion for an emergency debate, and 200 rural residents, most of them victims of

crime, filled the galleries to help us press home this very point. But the Government House Leader, after noting that his family vehicle, too, had been broken into a couple of times, indicated that crime was certainly a worry but didn't really quite qualify as an emergency. Minister, why did you refuse to recognize that rural Alberta was in a crisis back then?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the very important question. Well, of course, this government has recognized that there is a significant challenge in rural Alberta with respect to rural crime. That's why we took action eight months ago to ensure that we put money into the system, to ensure that we're investing in RCMP officers and civilian staff and prosecutors in courtrooms. That strategy is working. The members opposite were the ones who voted against that strategy and then took additional months to study the issue.

2:30

Mr. Ellis: Mr. Speaker, let's start with a fact here. This government could not even recognize that we were in a crisis back then, and given that new crime stats released in 2017 paint a picture that should have been alarming to the minister at that particular time because they showed that the firearm homicide rate during that time in rural Alberta was double that of urban Alberta, Minister, were you actually not aware of this shocking statistic or did you just choose to ignore this stat?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We were absolutely aware of the fact that rural crime was on the rise in certain areas. In fact, I spoke to that in the House and in the media when I announced our rural crime strategy. The fact that there was a challenge with rural crime in Alberta is the reason that we launched our strategy. Meanwhile the members opposite voted against that strategy – they wanted additional time to study the issue – and they voted against additional RCMP officers again in the budget. I think that the government has moved forward on addressing this. I wish the opposition would do the same.

Mr. Ellis: Mr. Speaker, given that the minister loves to point out that the UCP did not vote for her government's \$10 billion deficit accompanied by the high debt and given that she fails to tell Albertans that her never-ending triage protocol, introduced in early 2017, has resulted in numerous cases being tossed, letting criminals walk free and victims being revictimized by the system, and given that in 2015-16 she reduced the budget for Crown prosecutors, Minister, how can you pretend to be a champion of justice in the face of this record?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, I think that we ought to deal with facts here in this place, and the fact is that we introduced a strategy to deal with rural crime, and that strategy is having an impact. I think that that's good for the people of the province. I understand that the members opposite are upset that we've had an impact and that we've brought down rural crime rates, but that doesn't change the facts. We're going to continue working with the RCMP. We're going to continue working with the Crown prosecutors and with all rural Albertans.

I'll just go ahead and add that I'm also responsible . . .

The Speaker: Thank you.

Municipal Cannabis Transition Program

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, the legalization of cannabis should not leave municipal governments scrambling to cover the costs of enforcement and education around where and when it is appropriate to light up. My constituents are concerned that the municipal cannabis transition program fails to recognize the true costs to their municipality and that property taxes will need to increase to cover off this shortfall. Does this government intend to line their pockets with taxes from cannabis while the municipalities are left hung out to dry?

The Speaker: The Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, we expect to have a net loss in the first two years as a result of setting up a program to distribute, supply chain, watch, inspect cannabis in this province. There are start-up costs. We have dealt with the municipalities and provided them \$11.2 million over two years so that they can address their enforcement costs. Municipalities under 5,000: their enforcement costs for policing are paid for by the province of Alberta, so we're going to pick up those costs, of course.

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, given that municipalities have start-up costs also and given that the federal government agreed to give the province 75 per cent of the taxation from cannabis on the condition that significant portions of the funding are shared with municipalities and given that the tools required to keep our communities safe and drugs out of the hands of children will increase costs to municipalities and given that a number of my municipalities will receive no assistance to help with education and enforcement, is it the opinion of this government that these municipalities will have no increased costs associated with the legalization of cannabis?

The Speaker: The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a minister of municipalities I know that fighting for good jobs and pipelines will actually bring money to our municipalities to help us with cannabis. In that vein, there are three provinces that funded municipalities in this country, and we're one of them. We're ahead of the game on this. I've spoken extensively to my municipalities. We had a Cannabis Secretariat, consulted with them, and we know that we will adapt over time. We will see what is coming in. We knew that setting up a program like this in the province would cost millions and millions of dollars. You know, it was like Y2K. Everybody thought . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, given that in municipalities in my constituency with a population over 5,000 people have great concern that the meagre funding under the municipal cannabis transition program is a pittance compared to the costs they will incur to keep their communities safe, will the minister commit to meet with the urban municipalities to discuss adequate distribution of the excise funds to all municipalities in a manner that respects the role municipalities play to keep our communities safe?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: All right. Thank you very much to the hon. member for the question. I meet with the AUMA board routinely

and other municipalities routinely on this, and we did say, going forward, that once we have more information on what effects this is having across our province, we will evaluate. That is something we promised to do. We have acknowledged there are costs across the province, some more than others in particular, with the province setting up this massive program of legalization that was put upon us by the feds. We've done an admirable job. I'm very happy with what the Minister of Treasury Board and Finance and our Minister of Justice have done.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Calgary Board of Education Construction Project Management Costs

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, over the past two years the Calgary board of education was required to cover \$43 million for unfunded project management services for new schools, including \$20 million in actual construction costs. To a minister: why do you make the Calgary board of education dig into their reserves to build new schools?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, as the Minister of Infrastructure I, too, fight for pipelines.

One of the ways we get the revenue to build schools in this province – and we have done a remarkable job in the past number of years in an NDP government of building schools. It's because we decide that children are worth it. Children are worth the effort to build schools. I'll tell you something else, Mr. Speaker. When we decide, unlike the opposition, who cries wolf over consultation but doesn't do the effective consultation to keep children safe in schools . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister. Thank you.

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, given that the minister doesn't care about kids enough to take away the \$1.7 million in interest charges on that \$20 million – that's actually \$40 million altogether that the schools have had to pay – and given that making the board of education fund tens of millions of dollars out of their reserve places unnecessary pressure on their finances and given that the board traditionally designates its reserve for improving the classroom experience for students, to the minister: why do you expect school boards to fund construction costs out of reserves, which are meant to be spent on kids in the classroom?

Ms Jansen: Mr. Speaker, I find it incredibly rich that when I shared a bench with the member opposite, he was not all that concerned that schools had to use reserve funds. It's pretty incredible that now he's changed his tune. I'll tell you who cares about schools. This government cares about schools, and we care about children.

Mr. McIver: Well, given that I am happy to talk about a floor crossing any time the minister wants to and given that the board of education recently submitted its \$40 million-plus project management bill for schools to the government and given that the interest payments are now lost forever from the classroom, to the minister: will you ensure at least that this bill is now paid quickly so the board can redirect it back to the classroom where it belongs, and will you reimburse the interest costs to the board of education?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. What we've seen since 2015 is that this government you see over here has financed 240 school projects across the province of Alberta. You know, for a good 20 years the members on the opposite side were failing to build those schools on time. We had overcrowded classrooms, schools that were crumbling, and we turned that around. In Calgary, certainly, they received a great number of those schools, and we're working always to make sure that they get what they need as opposed to cutting 4,000 teachers, making things hurt.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Logging in the Mustang Hills

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's forests provide many economic and environmental benefits. The Mustang hills, located along highway 66 and adjacent to the Elbow River, is scheduled for timber harvesting operations in the next few months. Located in sensitive wildlife habitat, the Mustang hills also draw hundreds of recreational visitors each year, thousands, in fact. To the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry: what is being done by the department to address the concerns raised regarding logging in this area?

2:40

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've heard from local residents that they want the best possible balance between supporting the economy and protecting the environment when it comes to timber harvesting in the Mustang hills. I want to thank the Member for Banff-Cochrane for his continued advocacy. Spray Lake Sawmills, based in Cochrane, saw public input on its harvest operation. Because of that, they've removed one of the cutblocks that they were going to harvest, they've increased retention within blocks, they changed block design for better aesthetics, and they better protected nondesignated trails.

The Speaker: Thank you.

First supplemental.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: given the significant recreation opportunities in this area, will the department work collaboratively with recreation stakeholders to safeguard existing trails by putting a buffer around them?

Mr. Carlier: Mr. Speaker, the company has been proactive with hiking trails in the area and sought to address concerns of those who enjoy them. Nondesignated trails near the area's natural boundary will be respected during harvest operations. Forests are naturally dynamic, and harvesting, when done right, can ensure biodiversity and ecological health. Over thousands of years Alberta forests have evolved from natural disturbances such as wildfire. Harvesting has evolved to resemble natural disturbance patterns that contribute to biodiversity and wildlife habitat. By law Alberta requires reforestation be initiated within two years of completing harvest operations.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: what steps are being taken through the operating ground

rules to protect watercourses, wetlands and ensure that there are no negative outcomes for aquatic species and water quality?

Mr. Carlier: Mr. Speaker, harvest areas are designed to maintain cover and different habitat types for a variety of species. Areas such as watercourses are protected with buffers, and species of special concern have additional management strategies addressed through timber harvest planning and operating ground rules. The rules to protect species like bull trout and pure strain westslope cutthroat trout. As further steps to assure sustainability, Alberta has a risk-based system in place to assess and review forest industry field operations. The forest operations monitoring program is designed to concentrate inspection activities on areas of high environmental and sustainable value.

The Speaker: Thirty seconds, hon. members.

Members' Statements

(continued)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

Holiday Season

Ms Kazim: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The holiday season in Alberta has arrived. This festive time of year is remarkable and outstanding, particularly in Alberta. In our amazing province when we celebrate, we celebrate our people and our diversity, and we do this by hosting events of various kinds, religions, cultures that bring Albertans of all walks of life together. No matter what occasion is being celebrated, the declarations, feasts, songs, and music bring joy and happiness to all as we celebrate our differences.

In my amazing riding of Calgary-Glenmore the churches are lively with Christmas choirs to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, and restaurants are cozy with Christmas carols. Synagogues are brightened for Hanukkah celebrations, the Jewish festival of light celebrating the rededication of the holy temple of Jerusalem. Community events are hosted to celebrate Eid Milad un-Nabi, the birth of the Prophet Muhammad – peace be upon him – along with Eid-e-Zehra, the festival of Fatima's family. Homes are decorated to celebrate family and friends.

One of the greatest gifts we can give to ourselves and to the world is to reach out to those who need assistance or companionship at this time of year. Albertans embrace the tradition of sharing hope with others and extend it throughout the year to make our homes, our communities, and all of Alberta a better place to live.

The holidays are a chance to embrace these honoured customs, enjoy time together, and reflect on our blessings. They also remind us how fortunate we are to live in a province where all traditions and faiths can coexist peacefully. I extend my best wishes to Albertans. May this holiday season find all Albertans enjoying the warmth and fellowship of family and friends world-wide.

Oil Price Differentials

Mr. Loewen: The price differential is the difference in price between the market price for oil and what we receive for our oil. Currently sitting at \$40 per barrel, this situation is an immediate crisis and is seriously jeopardizing thousands of jobs. This situation is the result of the NDP and the federal Liberals failing to get even one major pipeline built. When the federal and provincial Conservatives were in power, four major pipelines were built, increasing exports by over a million barrels of oil per day. Also, Northern Gateway was approved. What is the NDP record? Northern Gateway was cancelled, Energy East was purposely

killed, Trans Mountain is in continued limbo, and Keystone XL is stalled again. The federal Liberals have brought forward bills C-48, the tanker ban, and C-69, also known as the no-more-pipelines bill.

The NDP stand up in this House and say over and over how the Premier has been the oil and gas sector's biggest supporter since day one. The facts, however, say otherwise. The Premier spoke against Northern Gateway publicly. The environment minister appears in pictures at rallies against it and also went to the NDP hearing against it. They did absolutely nothing to protest its cancellation. Energy East was killed, and the NDP responded with a letter. The Premier has publicly spoken against Keystone XL. The NDP did nothing to object to Bill C-48, the tanker ban, that all but nullifies any pipeline to the northern B.C. coast. The NDP has done too little, too late to object to Bill C-69.

The NDP have been giving lip service to the Trans Mountain pipeline, but they have sat on their hands while we've seen delay after delay because of their B.C. NDP allies and their radical anti-oil friends. Now we have the price differential growing and in response the NDP picking an anti-oil activist to be one of the envoys. You can't make this stuff up.

On this side of the House we have consistently supported all pipelines. We can only hope that the Premier and the NDP put aside partisanship and their anti-oil ideology and join us to come up with an immediate solution to the price differential and then work expeditiously to get pipelines built. Conservatives have experience in actually getting pipelines built. You do it by supporting all pipelines, not by campaigning against them, and you appoint pro oil and gas advocates, not anti-oil activists.

We need to get this done in order to get Albertans back to work and to realize the full value of our resources.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier and Minister of Health.

Bill 30

Mental Health Services Protection Act

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce the Mental Health Services Protection Act for first reading.

This bill will aim to ensure that Albertans are able to access professional mental health care in safe and regulated environments. It sets out licensing requirements and standards for residential substance use treatment facilities, and it will create a college of counselling therapy to ensure standards of practice. Our goal is peace of mind for patients, for their families, and for all Albertans.

I look forward to the discussion ahead and to making sure that we work together to ensure that mental health services are protected for Alberta patients. Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 30 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the five requisite copies of the Alberta REA Strategic Review: Rural Economic Impacts, 2013, which I referenced in my speech last night when I mentioned that the REAs had been working towards sustainability since before the election of this government and had tried to engage the former government to work with them.

Thank you.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Acting Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Minister Miranda, Minister of Culture and Tourism, pursuant to the Alberta Foundation for the Arts Act the Alberta Foundation for the Arts 2017-18 annual report; pursuant to the Historical Resources Act the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation 2017-18 annual report; pursuant to the Alberta Sport Connection Act the Alberta Sport Connection 2017-18 annual report.

2:50

The Speaker: Hon. members, I believe there were three points of order. I wish to advise that on the third point of order the Member for Airdrie has withdrawn the point of order.

I believe the first one was the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky. The Opposition House Leader.

Point of Clarification

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky, and I'll rise on 13(2). He called a point of order during a question that I was asking, which was clearly in the leader's role. It seems to us that you're now providing different instructions for leaders' questions, and we'd like some clarification. You indicated that you were having trouble, one, hearing a question. Well, there was clearly a question at the end. That would be my first point to you. Second point. As you know and have already ruled, no doubt, leaders' questions have significantly more leeway in preambles, so we'd just like to get some clarification on what you're trying to tell us.

The Speaker: So it's under 13(2), and it is with respect to the point that I made with respect to the question. Did I understand correctly?

Hon. member, before I comment on that, my notes suggest that maybe the point of order that you raised was with respect to that, but it was to the interjection by myself and why I did that? Is that correct?

Mr. Nixon: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Well, I do hope I'm on the same issue as you are. Let me just read a little bit from the Blues that I have with respect to your comments. I'm not going to read the whole thing. It was quite long.

She is also ignoring the community as a whole and Albertans across the whole province . . . ignoring the process . . . Again, will this . . .

I interjected because in actual fact, for all of the members present, I rely on the table, who are very meticulous with respect to their control of time, and you had clearly gone over the time limit on the basis of what, at least, I heard, and I still hadn't heard a question. You asked for my explanation, and that was it.

Is there something . . .

Mr. Nixon: We're on a different point of order. I apologize. Nobody called a point of order at that time. So if the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky confused you — you did certainly point out that I was out of time, and I was out of time. You stopped the clock, as you should, Mr. Speaker, as is your role. You did a great job on that. I can be long winded sometimes. Ask my colleagues.

We are referring to another comment later on where you said a similar thing, but it was not to do with the clock. Mr. Speaker, I guess maybe there can be some confusion. Under 13(2) I just would like that we get some clarification, then, on the rules around leaders'

questions, that they have not changed, and if that's the case, then we can just move on and call it a misunderstanding.

The Speaker: Well, I'm not sure if there's a misunderstanding or not. I think we agree on 13(2) with respect to the intervention on time.

With respect to the other matter did you question me with respect to preambles or the leeway given to the first core questions?

Mr. Nixon: That's correct, Mr. Speaker. You may not recall it, but at one time you did say, you know: I have not seen a question. The second time was for the time limit question. It prompted a question similar to how it would when we were dealing with questions outside of the leader's role, and that's the clarification I'm looking for you to give to us as a House. I'm just asking the question this way. Under 13(2) have the rules changed for leaders' questions? Yes or no?

The Speaker: I believe that, unless I've missed something, to my knowledge the standing orders are approved by this House, and, no, they haven't. I can give you the same speech as I gave the other day to the Government House Leader there, who is attentively listening, that the standing orders are approved by this House. Accordingly, I ruled on the context at the time.

I hope that brings closure to the matter.

Mr. Nixon: It does.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 29

Public Service Employee Relations Amendment Act, 2018

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

Mr. Horne: Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker, and welcome to the chair. I'm honoured to rise today on behalf of the Minister of Labour to move second reading of Bill 29, the Public Service Employee Relations Amendment Act, 2018.

This act governs the relationship between employers, employees, and unions for government of Alberta staff; nonacademic staff at publicly funded postsecondary institutions; and some agencies, boards, and commissions. This government has made significant changes to labour relation laws over the last few years. We updated the Public Service Employee Relations Act and the Labour Relations Code in 2016 to include essential service provisions. These changes were needed following a Supreme Court decision on the right to strike. We also made changes that moved academic postsecondary staff from the Post-secondary Learning Act to the Labour Relations Code.

The changes proposed in Bill 29 build upon these earlier updates. They will provide more public-sector employees with their constitutionally protected freedom to collectively bargain, and they will create greater consistency for the postsecondary sector. If passed, these changes would further align the Public Service Employee Relations Act with Supreme Court of Canada decisions that employees have a right to collective bargaining. Currently under the act there are five groups or classifications of employees that are restricted from joining a bargaining unit. These are systems

analysts, budget officers, hearing officers, auditors, and disbursement control officers. Proposed changes would remove the restrictions on these employee classifications so they would no longer be prevented from collective bargaining. If passed, these changes would take effect June 1, 2019.

Other proposed changes would remove restrictions on what can go to arbitration, like pensions and job classifications. This means that if the employer or the union is unable to reach an agreement, they have the option to resolve the matter through arbitration. These proposed changes align with our essential services legislation, which states that all issues can be considered under collective bargaining. They would also give public-sector employees arbitration rules similar to those under the Labour Relations Code, creating more consistency for Albertans.

Other changes will create greater consistency for the postsecondary sector. Changes to legislation in 2017 brought academic staff at postsecondary institutions under the Labour Relations Code. Bill 29's proposed changes will move nonacademic staff from the Public Service Employee Relations Act to the Labour Relations Code. If passed, these changes would mean that all unionized staff at postsecondary institutions would be governed by the Labour Relations Code. This will create consistency for our postsecondary institutions. It also means that nonacademic staff will benefit from recent updates to the Labour Relations Code that are not in the Public Service Employee Relations Act. I understand that the minister is proposing that these changes will not take effect until July 1, 2022, to give postsecondary institutions time to adjust.

Together these proposed changes would give more public-sector workers the right to unionize, bring the Public Service Employee Relations Act in line with existing constitutional protections for employees, and create more consistency in the way labour relations are governed in our province.

I hope that everyone in this Chamber shares the excitement and will vote with me to support this bill. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, followed by the hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Hunter: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a privilege to be able to rise and speak in this House during second reading on Bill 29, the Public Service Employee Relations Amendment Act, 2018. Bill 29 amends the Public Service Employee Relations Act, the Post-secondary Learning Act, and the Labour Relations Code. It makes three primary changes that, in my opinion, could have major implications on Alberta's future and therefore deserve to have close scrutiny by this House.

The first change repeals section 30 from PSERA, that restricts matters which may proceed to a compulsory arbitration board. The second change repeals five position classifications from the list of exclusions from the bargaining unit. The final change transitions nonacademic staff at public postsecondary institutions from PSERA to the Labour Relations Code, giving them compulsory arbitration rights.

3:00

I think it is important, Madam Speaker, to finish the sentence that was made by the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert. What he said was that it would allow them to have arbitration rights. But it's important to remember that these are compulsory arbitration rights, which is, again, something that is a little different than what he said.

Now, you would think that at a time of economic crisis, which the province of Alberta is currently in, the government's focus

would be more about bringing forward more relevant legislation that would encourage economic growth and stability. The actions of late from our current government have increasingly put at risk future generations of this province, that will foot the bill for their legislation for years to come. Unfortunately, Albertans will suffer the consequences of this government's mismanagement.

Now, in getting into the details and minutiae of this bill, it appears that the government is repealing section 12(1)(f) as part of some kind of deal with AUPE to get them to move on other areas of collective bargaining. The government says that PSERA is unconstitutional, but they've lost their case at various levels, from arbitration to the Labour Relations Board to the Court of Queen's Bench and the Alberta Court of Appeal.

The coming-into-force date of June 1, 2019, doesn't give the universities enough time. Individuals in the five positions under section 12(1)(f) were previously excluded because these people were privy to sensitive information. That fact has not changed. The universities asked for between two to four years, Madam Speaker, in their submissions to the government and are only getting six months. This isn't enough. This isn't even half of what they had asked for. I don't understand how the June 1, 2019, date came about. It seems to be an arbitrary date that has just been picked out of the sky. I'm not sure exactly how they expect the HR departments and the legal teams to be able to get ready for that date. I'm wondering whether or not this government would be interested in future amendments, that we will be bringing forward, that will talk about the changes to these dates so that these governing bodies have the necessary time to be able to properly implement and to make this transition.

Now, from some of the communications where we tried to reach out to some of the employees that are part of the five categories that were excluded, we're finding that they don't want to be unionized and are waiting to see the results of these fights to determine what happens to their own personal jobs. They've not been asked what they want, and they've not been consulted. What I'd like to know is whether or not this government, under the Labour minister, would be willing to table in this House what consultation was done and how robust it was so that we can find out what percentage of these some 19,000 members that are affected will actually be in favour of this.

We've seen countless examples over the tenure of this government where consultation has been lacklustre at best, so I think that it's only natural for us to ask the question, Madam Speaker: really, have they done the proper consultation? Is there a reason why they're pushing this forward in six months and doing it so quickly?

Now, I guess the question that we have to ask ourselves, as we've seen with some of the other legislation, is: why has this happened? Why have they done it? I recognize that they state that they didn't get the job done correctly at the beginning and that they are just amending their past legislation so that they can say that they got it right. But, really, who have they gotten it right for, Madam Speaker? The question that I have and that many people I've talked to have is: is this actually just getting it right for their friends the unions, or is this actually getting it right for the public service sector at large? I have to say that I question whether or not they're actually getting it right for these 19,000 some-odd members of nonacademic staff.

Now, what's interesting about this is that this legislation means that employees don't have any way to vote to get out of the union or to make change to the unions that they're involved in. This is something that we've seen many cases of, where people have come to this government and said: "We did not want to have you unionize our organization. You went ahead and did it anyways."

They have created a situation where they say that it's fair representation, but they've taken away the rights of individuals to have the most common way of being able to vote about whether they're going to be a union or not, the secret ballot. This is the sort of thing that we've seen in the past, and we're concerned that as possibly the dying days of this government come, they'll be in a situation where they're trying to stack the deck in their favour and get much of Alberta's public sector unionized. This is the sort of thing that we see with this kind of bill, and it obviously makes us wonder: is this really in the best interest of Albertans, or is this in the best interest of their union buddies?

The Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert said that this was just bringing it in line with past legislation and Supreme Court rulings. Well, let's just talk about that for a second. In a number of decisions since AFL versus the Mounted Police was decided by the Supreme Court, the Alberta Labour Relations Board and the Alberta Court of Queen's Bench have all ruled that section 12(1)(f) is constitutional. Once again, let's remember that in 2017 the NDP denied they were removing the rights of secret-ballot votes even though they did for many Albertans. This is exactly what they went ahead and did and took it away. This is another example that the NDP is forcing people to unionize without their consent.

Now, there's another section in here, in this bill, Madam Speaker, that's concerning, and this is the removal of section 30. What's concerning about this is that section 30 basically states what individuals can bring forward to the compulsory arbitration board, which issues and who can bring them forward. The issues that they're allowed to bring forward to the compulsory arbitration board are things such as:

- (a) the organization of work, the assignment of duties and the determination of the number of employees of an employer;

That's just the first group.

- (b) the systems of job evaluation and the allocation of individual jobs and positions within the systems;
- (c) selection, appointment, promotion, training or transfer;
- (d) pensions.

Let's just go back, first of all, really quickly, to the first part there: "the organization of work, the assignment of duties and the determination of the number of employees of an employer." Let's just think about this for a second, Madam Speaker. This government has said many times that they are going to get to a path to balance by 2023. First of all, we know a couple of things. One, the differential that we're dealing with in oil and gas is certainly going to put a hole in their budget. But this also could cost this government the ability to be able to balance their budget as well and for any subsequent government thereafter. Here's the situation. Because it says that they're actually going to get rid of section 30, they will be able to determine the number of employees of an employer.

Let's give you an example, Madam Speaker. In the event that the public-sector cleaners decided that they were understaffed and that they needed to have double the number of cleaners to clean the buildings for the government, under this they could take that to the compulsory arbitration board, and the compulsory arbitration board might just say: "You know what? The government says that, no, you're not underrepresented and that you have enough people, but because the union says that we need at least double, we'll give you 50 per cent more."

3:10

Now, can you imagine, Madam Speaker, if every public-sector union said this and did this? How would that affect the budget? How would that affect Alberta taxpayers' taxes? I think that it would

completely destroy their budget and their ability to stand up in this House and tell us that they have a path to balance on their budget. I don't believe that if they're going to implement something like this, they would be able to do that. When they allow unions to be able to go and add an extra 19,000 nonacademic staff to this as well, they're now in a situation where all of these groups can go before a compulsory arbitration board.

In my opinion, those are grounds, obviously, for this government and especially for the Finance minister to start to question and ask: "Is this sustainable? Is this something that can be sustained?" I can't see how it will be, Madam Speaker. I don't know how they can be good stewards with the taxpayers' dollars when this is the provision that they're now offering unions, their close friends and allies.

These are some very concerning questions that I have about this, and I hope that this government would be very interested in having a robust discussion as we get into Committee of the Whole. Like I said, Madam Speaker, we will be bringing forward some amendments to this.

Probably the two biggest concerns that we have, just in conclusion, Madam Speaker, are that we are concerned that this government will not be able to balance their budget based upon these kinds of rights that they're giving to the unions, adding an extra 19,000 people to unions and not allowing them to have the right to be able to change unions or get out of unions, and then the last thing, obviously, is this idea that the universities have asked for two to four years and were given a mere six months. By not giving them enough time to be able to make that transition, it would almost seem like this government for some strange reason needs to be able to get these things done as quickly as possible.

I cannot support this bill presently unless there are more amendments that could come forward that would be able to make this less bad. I hope that all members of this Assembly will take a look at this and vote no on this.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Under section 49 I move that the question be now put.

The Acting Speaker: Okay. Just a reminder for all members of the House that the motion for the previous question serves to curtail the debate. After it is moved and carried, no further amendments can be made. The motion may be debated by every member who wants to speak to the main question.

Hon. member, would you like to speak? No? You're just going to move it? Okay.

Anybody else wishing to speak to the motion for the previous question?

Mr. Nixon: I would encourage my members, certainly my colleagues, to actually vote no on this motion.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, you already spoke to it.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Madam Speaker, this is considered a new motion, to which I was speaking. My standing earlier would be considered standing to speak to . . .

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, you've already spoken. When you introduce a previous motion like the question, you have time to debate it when you introduce it. If you choose not to speak, you cannot speak again.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Madam Speaker, if I can state that this is considered a completely separate, debatable, substantive motion, meaning that the clock is reset. Everyone who spoke to the previous motion is allowed to speak again to the current motion. If you like, I could cite the sections for you. I've done my homework on this one. Every member who has spoken previously to the motion on second reading of the bill has the privilege of speaking again to the motion that the question now be put, with the clock reset.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. member, a member may move that the question be now put. The previous question cannot be, then, proposed by the mover of the motion, which means that just like when you introduce any other amendments, you have an opportunity to speak to the amendment when you introduce it. That's my ruling. It's in the standing orders, and you can refer to *Beauchesne's* if you'd like, which is paragraph 522(1).

All right. Any other members wishing to speak? Seeing none, I will put the vote on the question.

[Motion carried]

The Acting Speaker: We will now put the question on the main motion.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for second reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:16 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Horne	Phillips
Babcock	Jansen	Piquette
Carlier	Kazim	Renaud
Connolly	Kleinstauber	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Littlewood	Sabir
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Schmidt
Dach	Luff	Schreiner
Drever	Malkinson	Shepherd
Eggen	Mason	Sucha
Feehan	McCuaig-Boyd	Turner
Fitzpatrick	McKittrick	Westhead
Gray	Miller	Woollard
Hinkley	Nielsen	

Against the motion:

Anderson, W.	Gill	Schneider
Barnes	Hunter	Starke
Clark	McIver	van Dijken
Ellis	Nixon	Yao
Fildebrandt		

Totals: For – 38 Against – 13

[Motion carried; Bill 29 read a second time]

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: Hon. members, I would like to call the committee to order.

Bill 24

An Act to Recognize AMA Representation Rights

The Deputy Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered in respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a privilege to be able to stand and to speak during Committee of the Whole on Bill 24, An Act to Recognize AMA Representation Rights. One of the interesting things about this bill has been that as we've had the opportunity of being able to go back to our respective ridings and talk with the stakeholders, those people who are actually physicians in our areas, we've found that a majority of the people we have talked to have said that they knew nothing about this bill.

Originally we had said that this bill needs to go to committee so that we could hear from physicians, we could hear of their concerns. We are not saying that this is a bad bill. We're saying that the consultation has not been done. For us over on this side of the House we actually have no physicians on this – well, actually, I should say that in terms of this caucus we have no physicians that we can have representation for physicians. It would be, I believe, incumbent upon this government to be able to send this back to committee in order to be able to hear from physicians and to find out what the process was and what happened. But in spite of that plea, this government has decided that they are not going to do that. So what we did is that we went back to physicians. We sent out requests to find out how the process had worked, what had happened.

I'd like to tell you about a letter I received from Dr. John Huang, and he is president of the Eye Physicians and Surgeons Association of Alberta and very qualified to speak on this bill, yet he will have no opportunity to do that. Therefore, he has provided me with a letter. I will read portions of this letter just to be able to show you that they have not been consulted and also to show you that they have a grievance with this whole process going forward.

He says that he has deep concerns about Bill 24 and would like to have "proper consultation occur before Bill 24 is put to a final vote." I don't think that that's unreasonable. I know that one of my other colleagues has also read into the record that another doctor that he talked to was very concerned about this as well.

This letter talks about an objective of this bill, which is to permanently recognize in legislation the Alberta Medical Association as the sole representative of ALL Alberta Physicians in negotiations with the Government of Alberta.

All legislation regarding the status of physicians (Medicare act, Canada health act etc.) has always considered physicians as independent contractors. This is a fundamental principle.

Madam Chair, what's interesting is that in one fell swoop a six-page bill is going to take and completely change the dynamics of the relationship between the government, the AMA, and its physicians. I think that even though it's just a six-page bill, the fact of what it's doing has got to have us have a second sober thought on this.

Again, Dr. Huang also says the same thing.

This is why medical associations are and have been allowed by physicians, with their consent, to from time to time negotiate with governments and then the agreements are then voted on. This is an arrangement that has worked for decades.

Is this process broken? That's maybe the first question that we should have asked ourselves. Is this process broken? If it is broken, bring forth the evidence that shows that it was broken and had to be fixed. We have not heard one shred of evidence from this government or from the crafters of this bill that have said that this process was broken. In fact, we have heard evidence, lots of evidence, to show that this process had been working for decades.

He goes on to say: “why the need for change and why the rush.” We’ve been saying that now for a few weeks, Madam Chair. Why the need, and why the rush? What impending doom needs to be addressed, and how is this government trying to fix that impending doom?

Now, he says:

Membership in the AMA and all medical associations is and has always been voluntary. While membership in the AMA remains voluntary [under this bill], making the AMA the sole legal representative in negotiations effectively removes this choice. The reason is that one must be a member in the AMA if it is legally recognized as the sole financial representative.

Otherwise, that physician has no say in financial matters.

3:40

The majority of the doctors are their own business, and that collective of businesses are members of the AMA. The problem is that the AMA, if they have the sole right to be the collective bargaining unit for all physicians – even if a physician is not a member of the AMA, they have to take what that AMA collective bargaining unit struck in terms of financial remuneration. The problem is that this, as we’ve said before, is a problem for rural Alberta doctors, for remote area doctors. Once again, why don’t we get those physicians to come forward to be able to present to us as a House their concerns and what we can do to mitigate those concerns?

He says that it’s important to remember that

AMA negotiates for many physicians but not all.

For example, laboratory physicians and physicians on salary (eg. those in Alternate relationship plans and Hospitalists) all negotiate salaries separately from the AMA.

It is also distressing that Bill 24 and the significant change it represents is NOT about patient care. No part of this bill is about or aims to improve patient care.

I brought that up in my first speech to this House about this bill, talking about the fact that this is about unionizing another sector in this province, and it was done in a shady fashion.

In fact, when you go and take a look at the numbers, they originally said that 89 per cent of AMA members were in favour of this. The truth is that 89 per cent of the 30 per cent that actually took part in this were in favour of it. Thirty per cent of the full gamut of doctors and physicians in this province is not a strong sample size. We’re in a situation now where they have to question: why was this not brought forward? Why was this bill not brought forward? To make things worse, Madam Chair, that 30 per cent that actually voted were not voting on this bill; they were voting on zeroes. They were voting on the ability for them to be able to get a raise or to increase their fees or not. That’s what they were voting on. This doctor, this physician, corroborates that assertion that we made earlier.

The debate at the AMA on this agreement was focused on the financials and some at the RF did object to the idea of legislative representation.

It must also be recognized that clause 1(h)b speaks of the need for “further input from others will be required”.

In this situation the recommendation was that further consultation was required. Yet once again, “What’s the rush?” he says. It’s a valid question, Madam Chair.

He goes on to say,

Such input on Bill 24 has not been requested of physicians by the AMA nor did they vote on Bill 24. It is also concerning that the representative forum was not asked about this legislation at its Spring 2018 meeting, held September 21-22, 2018.

It is unacceptable this was not discussed and voted on at a representative forum especially as the RF is the governing body

of the Alberta Medical Association and thus the AMA cannot claim the physicians of Alberta support Bill 24.

How can you get any clearer than that, Madam Chair? I’m going to read that again because I think it’s important for this government that believes so much that they are consulting with Albertans and with the members of this society, that here is a classic example. This man was there. He saw it. He says that there was no consultation at all, and they did not discuss it. I’ll read it again just so that it’s in the record here.

It is unacceptable this was not discussed and voted on at a representative forum especially as the RF is the governing body of the Alberta Medical Association and thus the AMA cannot claim the physicians of Alberta support Bill 24.

Now, from what we’ve seen, Madam Chair, is that there seems to be an internal conflict within the AMA as to whether or not physicians are interested in having AMA become the collective bargaining unit for all AMA members and all physicians. Wouldn’t it be prudent for us as politicians to step away from this, to say: “You guys, work it out first, and then come to us with what your recommendations are. Then we can create legislation based upon what your recommendations are”? How arrogant of this government to think that they have the ability to decide what is good for doctors and physicians.

We have a doctor on that side. I have not heard the doctor from that side of the House speak once for or against this bill. It would be, I believe, incumbent on that member to stand up and be able to state at least his position, albeit as a backbencher, on this bill, to provide us with the ability to know, as a person that’s in the trenches, that has seen what happens with physicians, what he thinks should happen. If he says, “You know what; I actually see a lot of value to this,” fantastic. He is a physician. I think that his opinion should be weighted that way.

But it’s pure arrogance on our side, on the side of politicians, to believe that we know what’s going on in the trenches. It is evident, Madam Chair, that they have an internal conflict going on about this issue of whether or not the AMA should have the exclusive rights, because that’s what we’re talking about, to be able to negotiate in collective bargaining for remuneration for physicians. If they are in conflict now, how do you think they’re going to be after this is rammed down their throats? I don’t think they’re going to be happy at all.

I don’t understand why this government is continuing to reject our proposal to take this back to committee so that we can hear from physicians in committee on whether they are for or against this, but I have to say that I imagine the reason is as clear as can be. They have zero interest in receiving that consultation. They have zero interest in knowing what Alberta physicians feel about this bill, and because they have zero interest in knowing what they care about this bill, they refuse to even address it in this House. I’ve asked this question now – this is now in Committee of the Whole. We’ve gone through first and second readings, and I’ve had absolutely no feedback from this government as to whether or not this was a robust and proper consultation and if the doctors and physicians are onboard. Because of that, this is the most egregious approach that I can think of.

Madam Chair, I hope that this government and this whole Assembly will take sober second thought and be willing, even in this Committee of the Whole, to stand up, and I invite the hon. doctor on the government side to stand up and give us his opinion on this, to give us what he, in the trenches, would say is the best approach for this. I’d love to be able to hear from him, and I think that this is definitely the venue to be able to do that.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's an honour to rise to speak to Bill 24, An Act to Recognize AMA Representation Rights. As my colleague before me had spoken to, it is a rather short bill, six pages long, but those six pages have very large consequences, I believe, and need to have the due diligence necessary to ensure that we are able to move forward with a health system that is robust and sustainable and also that the health system is able to attract the physicians necessary to continue on with the health system and to serve Albertans properly.

3:50

What concerns me is how rapidly this is moving forward and, I believe, without the full consultation and the transparency necessary to ensure that we in this House can make a decision based on the input from all of the stakeholders involved, all of the people, the doctors especially, the ones that will be impacted by this going forward. But it does have impacts on all Albertans, going forward, in ensuring that we have quality health care.

Probably the concern that has come forward the most is the concern with regard to the consultation and the process by which the doctors within the AMA were able to actually have their say and have their discussion. We're hearing from doctors that were completely unaware of this process moving forward. Sure, we see that the minister is stating that 89 per cent of doctors voted in favour of this, but it was 89 per cent of the doctors that were present at the vote that voted for this. Only 30 per cent of the doctors participated. It does give me a certain amount of cause for concern when we start to hear from those that were not fully informed of the process and were not being made aware or that feel that they're not fully aware of the changes that are being proposed at this time.

Bill 24 essentially gives the AMA, the Alberta Medical Association, the powers to be the negotiating body, similar to a union but not actually a union, for all physicians in the province of Alberta. I believe that the AMA, the association, has done good work in the past and continues to do good work, but I also do have some concern with moving forward in a manner that does not allow others that would like to operate in a more independent manner the ability to do so. I have some concerns from doctors that have approached me with questions about whether or not this is going to impact their ability to operate as independent contractors and ensure that they can continue their small-business practice the way they have in the past and if that will continue on in a manner that they feel actually protects their small business and the rights to operate within the province of Alberta.

Another concern when I look at the process that we've had here: I look at the deal that came out of this. We hear that the minister is talking about saving \$98 million in health costs by a fee freeze, that the AMA had agreed to a fee freeze. Giving consideration to a fee freeze at the same time as we look at the — one side gets what they want and the other side gets what they want in a negotiation. I am concerned that the AMA as an association, not being necessarily the voice for all physicians in this province — now we are moving in a direction that gives them full, exclusive rights to negotiate. We lose some of our ability to negotiate independently with the groups, which could be detrimental. Possibly some of the physicians would see that as detrimental to their future, and possibly we could look at that as that it might be detrimental to the ability for the government to negotiate with the physicians going forward. The government, of course, is representing all Albertans. We need to have the

confidence that the government is able to do that in a way that is going to protect the future of all Albertans going forward.

One thing that we have with all legislation is that, of course, there's regulation that comes out of that. We don't have a lot of information here from the minister with regard to the regulations that are being developed out of this legislation. I think it's important, you know, whether we're in the committee process or whether we're in this process, that we ensure that all questions are being answered, that Albertans can feel confident that this is a very transparent approach to governance, that there's a certain level of accountability as the government moves forward with this legislation, and that Albertans can be confident that this is in their best interests.

With that, Madam Chair, I'd just like to highlight that I do have concerns that we're moving forward in a manner that does not actually hear from all physicians properly, I believe, that we are not able to hear the concerns from some of the physicians that have approached our caucus. I do believe that we have a responsibility to have that transparency so that Albertans can be confident that this is legislation that is in their best interests.

I believe that this agreement that has come upon us between the AMA and the government, where now we give the AMA exclusive rights to negotiations in this province, should be enough of a warning bell, a warning signal that would say to Albertans: what did the AMA get out of this? They have agreed to a fee freeze. In that negotiation I think Albertans are probably asking the question: is it in the best interests of Albertans going forward, of doctors going forward, of physicians going forward that the AMA is essentially given these exclusive rights, almost in the position of a superunion, within the province of Alberta?

With that, Madam Chair, I believe I will continue to ask questions and to seek guidance and to ask the government to take a pause and look towards proper consultation on this bill to allow Albertans to be fully informed before we take the step of moving this legislation forward into third reading.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 24?

Seeing none, I will put the question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 24 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Deputy Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Bill 22 An Act for Strong Families Building Stronger Communities

The Deputy Chair: Are there any comments or questions to be offered? The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Madam Chair. If my information is correct, I believe we are on the amendment moved by my colleague from Calgary-South East on my behalf when this was adjourned. Perhaps I'll just confirm with you that that's, in fact, what we're on.

The Deputy Chair: That is correct.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much. I thought so.

First off, I just want to say a word of thanks to my colleague from Calgary-South East for moving that amendment on my behalf. I think what's been, I will say without much hesitation, the most rewarding process that I've been a part of as part of the 29th Legislative Assembly has been the work that we have done together as part of the child intervention panel. What was so compelling about that work was the challenging subject matter that we tackled together in a crosspartisan way. Being an all-party committee, we had the opportunity to really dig deep into what is a very complex and a very challenging issue that has been a topic that has been investigated in numerous committees, reports by the Child and Youth Advocate, previous panels and committees of the members of the Assembly. Many ministers have tried to tackle improving the lives of kids in care, in particular indigenous children in care.

4:00

I think it's important that we remember why we started this process in the first place, which is the case of Serenity, who died very, very tragically, having been in care. We should never forget what the circumstances were that led her to be in that very terrible situation. None of the changes in this bill will be able to undo that terrible, terrible tragedy, and we should never ever forget that. What we need to do is focus on what we can do to make sure that nothing like that ever happens again. I'm confident that the changes that this bill brings should give us more opportunity to say that we took this challenging issue forward. We should be in a position where, I think, this does improve the lives of kids in care and does improve the likelihood that fewer numbers of children will come into contact with the child intervention system and, in particular, creates a pathway for indigenous children to get better care, to stay connected with culture, with community, and with family.

Back to the process, and that's the substance of the amendment that I've moved. This bill, like many, will be reviewed every five years, but in so doing, I thought it was important that we put some parameters around what that review is. If it's simply a matter of sending it to a committee of the Assembly, while that can be effective, this subject matter has some very specific requirements in terms of overview. Five years from now I would hope that we'll have the opportunity to say that we have made substantive progress, that we've reduced the terrible overrepresentation that we see of indigenous kids in care: 69 per cent of kids in care are indigenous. Only roughly 5 to 10 per cent of kids in the province of Alberta are indigenous, so there's that vast overrepresentation.

That's why I've moved this amendment, which will create a review committee composed of

- (a) one or more persons [who are] representative of
 - (i) Indigenous communities,
 - (ii) guardians and caregivers of children, and
 - (iii) providers of services to children and families, and
- (b) one or more members of each caucus represented in the Legislative Assembly.

That, I hope, creates and carries on the same spirit of crosspartisan work focused on outcomes.

I want to say thank you to the minister. You'll recall that at the outset of this process, almost exactly two years ago, the government was not interested in creating an all-party panel. They also had very, very tight constraints on what the panel was to review. Working together with other opposition parties, we were able to convince the government that we needed to broaden that review. We needed to travel the province, visit indigenous communities where they live, and hear their stories first-hand. We did that, and there are a number of members in the Assembly, yourself included, Madam Chair, who participated in that process. I think we should be proud of the work that we have done there.

Now, that isn't to say that we mustn't remain vigilant, that we can wash our hands of it and just hope that this bill solves all the problems, because it doesn't. The challenges and the paths that lead children into care are ones that comes from many, many decades, centuries of a colonial legacy, that we will take a very long time, sadly, to overcome. We need to acknowledge where that comes from and understand how it is that we got to the place that we are. But I believe that this bill takes steps forward that will help address some of the current issues that are making it more challenging for kids in care, in particular indigenous kids in care, and then I hope that this amendment – and I will thank the government, in particular the Minister of Children's Services, for working together with us in crafting this amendment, something that I hope the government can accept. I would hope all members of this Legislature, opposition and government, would be willing to get on board with this and ensure that the good work that we have done carries on and that every five years we come back and go through another thoughtful and thorough process.

I will just end by encouraging the government and all members who are here in the Assembly, opposition and government, to really look at this process and ask yourselves if the outcomes that we see here, which I think are good outcomes, are the kind of thing we'd like to see on other issues as well. I would suggest it absolutely is. If I was to compare it to the first all-party panel I was a part of, the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee, that process sure seemed pretty tilted from the very beginning. The government, on that one, had a pretty good idea what outcome they wanted. They needed to create a committee to make it look like they consulted when in fact from the very beginning they knew exactly what they wanted to do, and it was not a great process.

This process on the other hand was very open ended. The government asked very general questions. I think all members of the committee came together and focused on doing the right thing for kids in care, and we had some challenging conversations. We didn't always agree on everything, but we worked together as a team, and we worked through those things. We engaged with people with lived experience. We engaged with indigenous communities, with service providers, with foster parents, with birth parents, and I think the results were positive. That's the substance of my amendment, to ensure that that good work happens again every time this legislation is reviewed. I would encourage all members of the Assembly to support it.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to rise on the amendment to Bill 22, An Act for Strong Families Building Stronger Communities. I appreciate the intent of what the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow has brought forward here with his amendment. There are certainly things there that I agree with. A regular review of the legislation is good housekeeping for all bills, but I think this one in particular could use an assurance that the bill will be reviewed on a regular basis because the fact is that the issues with children in care have been a problem. As I understand it, every province and every state of the U.S. has had ongoing issues, which I suppose means that it's a complex problem.

In that spirit we need to make the legislation as good as we can. I wouldn't say that I agree with the mover of the amendment's assertion that what's in this bill will help prevent a reoccurrence of what happened to Serenity. In fact, I would say there's a place where it's fallen woefully short, and I would just call that an honest

disagreement between myself and the hon. member on whether it's effective that way.

Madam Chair, I have a subamendment which I would like to bring forward with your permission.

The Deputy Chair: You can just have the original come to the table, please, Member. Once I have that you can go ahead. Hon. member, please go ahead.

4:10

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Chair. For those that haven't received the hard copy yet, the subamendment says to move that amendment A2 to Bill 22, An Act for Strong Families building Stronger Communities, be amended in the proposed section 131.2(3)(a) by striking out "and" at the end of subclause (ii), by adding "and" at the end of subclause (iii), and by adding the following after subclause (iii):

(iv) the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate.

For those of us that were on the committee, I'm happy to hear what any hon. members have to say, because where I do agree with the mover of the amendment is that we all did our best to act in a nonpartisan way, because it's that important, because we need to look after children. We certainly heard a lot of testimony and received a lot of information from a lot of people across the province, some stakeholders, some adults that had been in the system as they grew up, certainly from a lot of indigenous people, who are severely overrepresented in the system. I'm sure all of it was honest, I'm sure all of it was true, I'm sure all of it was heartfelt, but not all of the information we received agreed with one another, and that's probably because different people in some cases had different experiences in the system or with the system or even their viewpoint from outside of the system.

But the fact is that one thing that I found consistent is that a trusted voice was the office of the Child and Youth Advocate, which is why this subamendment would include the office of the Child and Youth Advocate. Now, boy, there's an office, in my view, that has one of the toughest jobs in the government of Alberta, in the province of Alberta, dealing with the worst circumstances that occur to, you know, in many cases, the most vulnerable children amongst us. Reporting in an accurate, strong, and I would even say a compassionate and loving way on behalf of the children who are either injured and sometimes die in the system, that have bad experiences, those files end up in the office of the Child and Youth Advocate, who, I'm sure, does the severely unpleasant job of deep dives on the files, investigations, looking into evidence on behalf of the child, looking at what might have caused, or what did cause in many cases, the children in the system to suffer or die or any combination of bad circumstances that end up on the advocate's desk.

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

To really, in my view, bring focus to it, bring focus in a way that not just people in this committee but, I think, anybody who hasn't done it and those maybe watching at home on TV, if you go on the website of the office of the Child and Youth Advocate and read some of their reports, any of the reports, really, that that office has published, you will find that the work is professional. It's thorough. Again, it's compassionate and loving towards these kids. The more we can involve the office of the Child and Youth Advocate, in my opinion, when we are dealing with children in care, the better chance that we have of (a) getting better outcomes for kids that have contact with the system, and (b) I think the more we involve the office of the Child and Youth Advocate, the better chance we'll have to make ongoing, substantive, and important improvements to

the system and the better chance we'll have of learning not only from mistakes made and problems that occur but, actually, perhaps even learning from the things that we do right and the interventions that help kids along the way.

Our chances of understanding the nuances in this obviously complicated file – you know, you might say: so what's so complicated about looking after kids? Well, I guess anybody that's a parent would probably think that it's fairly complicated.

This is nonpartisan, Madam Chair. When a Conservative government was in government here, we had problems in the system with children in care, and with the current government we've had problems with children in care. Again, this not a partisan issue, in my view. It's bigger and more important than partisan bickering because it looks after kids that are actually in the care of the 87 of us that are elected to sit in this Chamber. In my view, all bear a personal responsibility for the welfare and the safety and the nurturing of every single child that touches that system.

Madam Chair, I know you were on the committee with me and you did yeoman's work there and even tried to direct us cats, as you're doing now, because lots of times things were orderly, but there were times when people felt strongly about how to change the system and how to try to make things better, more safe for kids in care.

I hope that Members of the Legislative Assembly . . .

The Chair: Hon. member. Hon. member.

An Hon. Member: I'm sorry.

The Chair: I appreciate that, yeah. We are in committee, but it's still not appropriate to go around the front there. Thank you.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate that.

Members of the House, I hope that you will consider the value of this subamendment. I hope that even the mover of the amendment might see that this will be an improvement to what I think is a well-intentioned amendment that he put on the floor. I hope that you will join with me in supporting this because this really is just about making the legislation as good as it can be while we're in this House today and making it as good as it can be for the very good reason of protecting Alberta's children that we are responsible for because they are in the child care system.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. Sucha: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I echo some of the sentiments that have come from the Member for Calgary-Hays. I'm very optimistic of this process, that we can continue to have this as a nonpartisan approach. I want to thank the Member for Calgary-Elbow as well for his words earlier about talking about the process and the intent of the government members during this process. Thank you very much. I sincerely believe the same from the members of the other side of the aisle here.

The way the current amendment proposed by the Member for Calgary-Elbow stands, I do support. However, I have some challenges supporting the subamendment, and I'll explain why. The first process is that we haven't consulted with the office of the Child and Youth Advocate. Before having that discussion with him, I'd be apprehensive of actually bringing forth this subamendment without discussing about opening up that scope in his office. In the previous legislation that we brought forth last spring, we've actually opened up the scope of what the Child and Youth Advocate's office can do. Now their office is responsible for reviewing every death that occurs, and they have a substantive

amount of extra powers that will allow them to do that review process.

The other concern I have, too – and this is something that came up – is that when we were reviewing the existing legislation in the ministerial panel, we were also responsible for reviewing the review process itself. If you remember, Madam Chair, that was part of our phase 1 approach. One of the things that we determined in that approach – and legislation has changed – is that there was a need for changes within the advocate's office: the way reviews were done, which reviews should be completed, and what's within their scope.

With that being said, I would have some concern – and, you know, by no means am I alleging or making an assumption of any malice. One of the things that was a very positive approach was having those fresh eyes and outside approaches looking into the review process and determining what was working and what wasn't working and bringing in experts and people from across the country, including the advocate's office, to discuss with us. You could have the allegations coming forth that there could be a perceived conflict of interest if the advocate is reviewing his own processes and the way his office operates, so I can't support the subamendment.

I do want to thank the member for bringing this forward and taking an open-minded approach to this bill.

4:20

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the subamendment? Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you. Thank you, first of all, to the Member for Calgary-Hays for bringing forward this important subamendment. I think he did a great job of pointing out why adding the Child and Youth Advocate to the process makes sense.

I served on the ministerial panel with the Member for Calgary-Hays as well as several members of this Chamber, including yourself, of course, Madam Chair. One of the things that really struck me during the process and after the process was how much the lack of accountability for the government of the day as well as a lack of accountability for the ministry were the biggest part of the problem that we were attempting to fix. As the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays says, this is really a nonpartisan problem. It's happening in other jurisdictions, certainly, not just in Canada but around the world. It's happened to the government that he had the privilege of being a minister of, and it's certainly happened to this government.

When the case of Serenity came to light, the hope of this Chamber – I think I can speak on behalf of everybody here – was that if there was this ministerial panel, we would be able to address some of the issues in particular with the case of Serenity. I think we all went into it skeptical on the opposition side – skeptical – given our experience with the NDP government on other issues. But we went into it with good faith. In fact, we compromised and agreed to essentially slow down the discussion about Serenity in this Chamber and then go in a bipartisan way and have a path. We thought, as you know, Madam Chair, that it should have been a committee, an official committee that was responsible to this Legislature. It should have been a committee that could have called witnesses, that was on *Hansard* and was on the record. But we decided in the interests of Serenity's family and in the interests of trying to make sure a tragedy like that did not take place again in this province that we would compromise and we would go through the ministerial panel process.

At the time, though, lots of media spoke out as well as us about the concern that this would just be put back under the carpet again

and nobody would really go into the actual details that were sent there. Unfortunately, time has now shown that that is what happened. The NDP used the panel to tone down where it was politically in the province, the frustration of Albertans about this tragic and horrible story, to kind of ride that out, to come into this place and say: we're working on this issue. In fact, ministers would rise and say: "We are reviewing parts of the Serenity case on the panel. We don't know what the hon. members are referring to."

Then we'd go to a panel meeting right after the question period or right before the question period where those questions were asked, and the NDP majority on that panel would block us from asking specific questions about the Serenity case over and over, which then prompted Paula Simons, now Senator Simons, to say in one of her articles near the end of this situation – this is not a quote from the opposition. This is not a quote from a columnist who – I don't think Paula would be upset if I said that she was not an overly conservative columnist. In fact, I think she would agree with me, I suspect. I've had the privilege of having meetings with Paula in the past when we've talked about this issue over coffee and sharing some of her knowledge on this file. She says: "They've never reviewed Serenity's case – which they only learned about [the following] fall. Now, in light of the all-party panel, they [will] put off [that] review indefinitely."

One of my great regrets of this last term was that in hindsight and, I think, with good intention the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays, who was the leader of the third party at that time, and our leadership in the Official Opposition, the Wildrose Party at that time – I know that our heart was in the right spot. We wanted to try to work with the government to get something that could solve this issue once and for all. We were worried – and sadly it's now been shown – that the NDP was going to put that under the carpet and avoid dealing with the issue.

I think what the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays is trying to do with this amendment is to address that issue, to make sure that governments of the day, not just this government but future governments, including ourselves if we're given the privilege of forming government after the next election, can't do the same types of things that the NDP did with that ministerial panel. They cannot, you know, just sweep these issues underneath the carpet. The most logical person to participate in that process, I think, is the Child and Youth Advocate. I think that's the hon. member's intention with this amendment.

You know, one of the things that the panel wanted, particularly the opposition and the experts that were on the panel – I suspect that some of the NDP members who were on the panel also wanted it, but unfortunately because of political circumstances within their own party I would assume that they weren't able to support it – was actually to have a committee that the Child and Youth Advocate would answer to in a public way about this, that could be similar to our Public Accounts Committee, that all of us in this room are familiar with, where the Auditor General works with the Public Accounts Committee, which is also chaired by the opposition and is able to present reports, to call upon government departments to answer questions about stuff that's been, you know, brought to light, to help hold the government accountable, and to be a resource in some ways to the Auditor General and to work with the Auditor General.

We wanted to see that same process for the Child and Youth Advocate because what we recognized – I'm sure the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays will agree with this – is that ultimately, as we dug into this, nobody was responsible. Nobody wanted to take the responsibility. I don't blame them. I wouldn't want to be responsible for some of these horrific things. Nobody, when you followed the process, was ultimately responsible. You know, of

course, we weren't allowed to get into too many of the details of how the steps along the process – that was continually blocked by the NDP as well. What was clear was that nobody was accountable for it and also that nobody was being a true watchdog of the system itself. Instead, we continued to rely on the system that had failed people like Serenity, on the very department that had failed people like Serenity instead of being able to put in place systems that will be able to make it fixed.

It seems to me that it's disappointing that the NDP worked so hard to block the Child and Youth Advocate from having that resource and the ability to do that. This is not a partisan individual. Nobody would claim, certainly, that the current Child and Youth Advocate has been operating in a partisan way. He's been very, very focused on children, which is his mandate. Having him have an ability where we could publicly talk about these things in a transparent way is definitely what the panel wanted, the majority when you include the experts. Certainly, the government members on there, in the end, did not agree with that, but I think it's what Albertans would have wanted. Unfortunately, as we know, the NDP did not do that.

Now we have a situation where the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays has brought forward a very reasonable amendment to at least attempt to try to do something similar, to make sure that the watchdog for children, you know, an officer of this Legislature, whose ultimate responsibility is this issue, could participate in the process. I would submit to you, Madam Chair, given the comments from the backbench member of the government on this amendment, that it appears the NDP is going to continue that practice of not wanting this process to be transparent and accountable.

Unfortunately, Madam Chair, what that means is that this is going to continue. That is without a doubt what members of the panel learned. People go through these processes with good intentions. They really do. I think all members did. I mean, that was a hard job, and you were the chair of that committee. It wasn't easy to be able to go through that. Some of the stuff was pretty tough, that we all heard. But we go through these processes, and then because nobody will put in the systems to make sure the system is held accountable for it, nobody will put in a process to make sure that the system meets those goals that were established by those panels.

As you know, Madam Chair, we weren't the first panel to try to address this. In fact, there are bookshelves and bookshelves of content on things that could be done to fix the situation that unfortunately have not been implemented. That's another thing the panel – that was clear. I don't think any member who participated in that panel would argue about that, that there are other people that have talked about that. There are lots of similarities. My late friend, the former minister Manmeet Bhullar, had a ministerial – it was a little different but the same thing – round-table. When you read through some of the stuff that they learned in that process or some of the recommendations they had, quite frankly, it was very similar to some of the stuff, I think, the conclusions that we all came to. There were a lot of similarities. You know, then the question for me became: well, why didn't we implement those when those people did that fine work?

4:30

I think that at the end of the day it came down to: there's no process to hold people accountable. Let's be clear. While I respect and thank the people that work in the ministry on what has to be one of the hardest topics and hardest situations that anybody would have to work in – and when you talk to some of those individuals that are working very, very hard, I couldn't imagine having to do that for a living. It's really, really hard. You're dealing with tragic

circumstances all the time and not enough money ever, no matter what you do, and not enough time in a day. You know, that's not easy. We're not blaming them for that. But, at the end of the day, the very system that failed Serenity and others is still in charge of the process. We're still in the same spot that we were when Minister Bhullar and others did this and when others before them did this.

Now with this amendment at least we get a chance of having an outside, nonpartisan officer who answers to this place, ultimately is responsible to this place, to the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices, as you know, Madam Chair, who could then be at least one of the people on there holding the system to account and being a watchdog and also then coming out to the news. When governments of the day, like this government, decide to sweep things under the rug and come into this place and pretend like they're dealing with things in a panel when they're not – I mean, that's easy to determine – that Child and Youth Advocate then is in a position to go: wait a minute; wait a minute; this is wrong.

With our panel, we at least had opposition members that were able to participate that did that. We had to come out and say: no; when the NDP say that they're doing this, that's not quite the way we see it; this is actually what's taking place. We were able to then get the word out to Albertans about the behaviour of the NDP on that panel. But now, when we go into this process, we need to make sure that there's somebody that will continue to do that.

With that said, I strongly encourage all members to support this. I don't know why you would not want the Child and Youth Advocate to participate in this process. Quite frankly, I think that by not doing that, you show that the intention of the NDP government is to continue to hide things and not bring them into the light to be able to make sure that we fix them so that people don't end up in the same situation as Serenity and others, who, I will remind you, Madam Chair, as I close, lost their lives in the care of our system. That is a pretty serious thing that we want to make sure is avoided, and having the Child and Youth Advocate here to hold the government accountable is completely appropriate.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. You know, I just want to respond to a few of the comments. I talked in my initial remarks about this process, how it was a crosspartisan process. I want to be careful because I don't want to get too deep and sort of push back too hard, but I do take issue with a number of the things that the member said about a lack of accountability or a lack of action or a lack of oversight, that the system is the same as it always was. It feels like – no. I'm going to try to keep this high level.

Look, this morning we had Public Accounts with the Ministry of Children's Services, and we talked about their action plan. Coming out of the child intervention panel, there was a detailed action plan, some 39 actions that were to be completed by 2022. That's on the website. You can look at them in the child intervention action plan. There are 16 immediate actions to be completed by April 2019. Now, there's a website that lays out what those 16 actions are. Part of one of those actions is to pass Bill 22. What I asked the ministry officials there was if they could perhaps provide us with some more details on that website about the progress on each one of those 16 areas. It's not correct to say that the system hasn't changed. It is not perfect and, frankly, never will be, but action has been taken.

Bill 18, which we passed last spring, gives the Child and Youth Advocate, specifically to your subamendment, hon. member, the mandate to review every single child death. One of the things, as I talked with the minister and her officials about this amendment that we see before us now – in fact, my original draft of my amendment A2 had the office of the Child and Youth Advocate included in

there. One of the reasons why the minister suggested that that perhaps should be taken out – and I agreed – was that the office of the Child and Youth Advocate is always doing the work of ensuring that children in care are treated appropriately. If there is ever a death, as tragic as it is, the Child and Youth Advocate will do a report on that death, and his office issues reports on a regular basis.

The mandate is bigger than it was previous to Bill 18, and that review is for not just children up to age 18 but up to age 21, because one of the things that we heard in the panel was that once children age out of care, they sort of fall off the radar. You know, if a child ages out of care and dies from suicide or from some other reason a day after their 18th birthday, it's important for us to understand as a community how that happened. So the Child and Youth Advocate continues to do that work.

To the Member for Calgary-Shaw's point, I think there is some legitimacy. Part of the panel's work at the outset was to review the role of the Child and Youth Advocate, and I think that in five years' time, when this bill is reviewed again, I would hope that that panel does also look at the work of the Child and Youth Advocate with the benefit of five more years of time and looking at the reports that that office has done. Certainly, if I find myself in this Assembly five years from now, hopefully on the government side, I can assure you that I will personally make sure that the review panel would make sure that the Child and Youth Advocate is presented to that panel, likely more than once. I can imagine there would be an entire stream of work related to presentations by the office of the Child and Youth Advocate, as there was for the child intervention panel. The OCYA, Mr. Graff and his team, came to visit that panel on multiple occasions.

I'm comfortable in saying that the work of the Child and Youth Advocate and the input of that office as well as a review of the appropriate role for that office would be considered in this panel, going forward, based on the amendment that we have before us, so I see no reason to add the OCYA to the panel as the subamendment suggests.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the subamendment? Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate this opportunity. Now, I'm a little incredulous at what I've heard from the previous speaker and the Member for Calgary-Shaw. I think it was suggested – I don't have the Blues here, so I may not get the words exactly right – that you don't want him checking his own work. Well, this isn't about checking his own work. This is actually about: who's reviewing the legislation every five years?

I think the Member for Calgary-Elbow is correct in having somebody representing indigenous communities, somebody representing guardians and caregivers of children, and somebody representing providers of services to children and families. But, as we've heard the Member for Calgary-Shaw and the Member for Calgary-Elbow speaking, they're saying that the office of the Child and Youth Advocate has been given more authority. Because they're so trusted, they've been given more work. They're probably if not the foremost experts amongst the foremost experts on what needs to change in the legislation and what doesn't need to change in the legislation. So why would you not include the most knowledgeable, trusted party to give you advice about the legislation? I mean, why wouldn't you?

Let's face it: the office provides crucial oversights. They're mandated to work with vulnerable young people, and some are the most knowledgeable people in our province on how the legislation is being implemented on the front lines. They have their hands

either on the legislation or on the results of the legislation every day for the five years, so who better to give whatever government of the day is in place advice on how to change it or upgrade it? Or indeed they might advise to leave the legislation alone if we get to a place where things are working a lot better. You know, since the change in the legislation could easily change the roles and responsibilities of the Child and Youth Advocate, they should be heard because they play such an important role.

You know what, Madam Chair? At some point in the future they might say that they should have an even bigger role, or it's possible that they could say: well, actually, we need a smaller role. Either way, their voice is so important. It's so important. The Child and Youth Advocate is, right in its name, by definition, an advocate. Well, they represent the voices of vulnerable children, and those voices are crucial. So they advocate for children.

4:40

Now, we all need to be advocates for children. We all ought to be. Surely, representatives of the indigenous communities, when they're looking at the legislation, will be advocates for children, and the guardians and caregivers ought to be and, I'm sure, will be advocates for children, and the providers of the services that work in the field should be advocates for children when the legislation is being reviewed. But why not have the advocate, the person most responsible, the party most qualified, the party that's seen and reported on and had to sign their name to reports, to the good, the bad, and the ugly?

Who would be better qualified to look at the legislation and say, for example, that the access to information needs to change, that they couldn't get to the bottom of these files because they didn't have access to information. They might also say that the privacy of children was compromised unreasonably because the access to information needs to change a little bit differently in another section. Who can see all this stuff in such a way that they could actually know and report on how the legislation should be made bigger, smaller, or remain the same than the party that looks after the aftermath of the worst cases?

This whole thing started with Serenity. And thank you to the minister . . .

Mr. Nixon: Senator.

Mr. McIver: Senator. Pardon me.

. . . to the Senator who wrote about this and brought this all to our attention, Paula Simons. And thank you to Minister LaBoucane-Benson, who was on the committee as an independent member.

Mr. Nixon: Senator.

Mr. McIver: Senator. Again, sorry. I'm grateful for my colleague correcting me because I'm wrong each time.

The Senators were there, but also thank you to the other members of the committee. Surely, you remember that the office of the Child and Youth Advocate was seen as a force for good, as an advocate for children, as someone that could recommend the actual individual changes, the on-the-ground changes on how children in care are handled: the on-the-ground changes, the legal changes, the privacy changes, the need for cultural recognition changes.

I'll tell you what. If we're going to make legislation – and maybe that's part of the problem with the legislation in front of us. Even though it's well intentioned, it's lacking in some ways. I guess that since the government itself said that it's part 1 of 3, they admit it's lacking, so I'll let them off the hook for that. They said themselves, when they said that it's part 1 of 3, that they've got a lot more legislation to go.

Now, I'm wondering whether the office of the Child and Youth Advocate advised on this piece of legislation. I hope so. Perhaps the minister or somebody from the government side will stand up and let us know. If they didn't, then the ball was dropped. If the Child and Youth Advocate isn't involved in the legislation five years from now, in the updating of it, then the ball will be dropped again.

That's why the amendment is here, to make the legislation better, to make the process better, to make the review five years from now better, and then five years after that to make it better again. We can't quit on making things better for kids who are in our care, who are under our responsibility. We have taken on the burden of their care and survival, allowing them to be the best, most independent adults that they can possibly be after they get through with the system.

Honestly, if we're not including the office of the Child and Youth Advocate both this time and the next time we look at the legislation, then we haven't done our job right, which is why I hope all members of the House will vote for this subamendment.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the subamendment?

Seeing none, I'll call the vote.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on subamendment A2-SA1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:45 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, W.	McIver	Starke
Barnes	Nixon	van Dijken
Ellis	Schneider	Yao

5:00

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Gray	Phillips
Babcock	Hinkley	Piquette
Bilous	Horne	Renaud
Carlier	Jansen	Rosendahl
Clark	Kazim	Sabir
Connolly	Kleinstauber	Schmidt
Coolahan	Littlewood	Schreiner
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Shepherd
Dach	Malkinson	Sucha
Drever	Mason	Turner
Eggen	McKittrick	Westhead
Feehan	Miller	Woollard
Fitzpatrick	Nielsen	

Totals:	For – 9	Against – 38
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[Motion on subamendment A2-SA1 lost]

The Chair: We are now on amendment A2.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Madam Chair. Pursuant to Government Motion 36 I am just notifying the House that there will be no evening sitting this evening and that when we do adjourn, we will recommence at 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The Chair: Are there any further comments on amendment A2? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Chair. In the never-ending attempt to make the legislation that comes out of this place better, I have a subamendment to be considered.

The Chair: This will be known as subamendment A2-SA2. Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate this. Subamendment A2-SA2 says to move that Bill 22, An Act for Strong Families Building Stronger Communities, be amended in the proposed section 131.2 by adding the following after (7), which I guess would be:

(8) The proceedings of the review committee must be conducted in public.

You know what? If there's anything that we learned along the way it is that if you want to deal with this subject of children in care, the discussion needs to stand up to public scrutiny so that that guarantees that it's in the interests of children in care. It needs to be on the record because, frankly, there are too many kids depending upon it to allow things to get swept under the carpet.

I know, again, when we had this last committee, what I learned is that the opposition lobbied very hard for a committee of the Legislature because it would be on the record with *Hansard* and conducted in public and have some rules and any particular minister would not be able to bury all or part of the proceedings. We didn't get that. Finally, after a great deal of the opposition standing together and, frankly, embarrassing the government into it, we did get a ministerial panel for which I am grateful despite the fact that we had to fight so hard for what should have been easy. I think it was the Premier that finally relented one day in question period and finally said: we'll do something. Thank you, Premier, for that. Thank you to the minister for that. It wasn't what we really wanted, but it was surely better than nothing, and again I was grateful for the way that members from all sides tried to and I think almost a hundred per cent did work in a nonpartisan way, which is a positive outcome.

Well, I think what we've learned is that in looking after children in care, if you want to make it better, sweeping the issues under the carpet doesn't make it better. I think we tried that. Surely, the previous government that I was part of tried that, and that didn't work. Since then there have been attempts to sweep some of the problems under the carpet, and that didn't work. I think that we actually need to have some of these painful conversations out loud if we're going to make the way that we look after children in care better. If you want to actually fix difficult problems, you need to face up to the difficult problems, and that requires that the proceedings happen in public. That's why this subamendment is forward. For the sake of future and present kids that are in care, I hope that all members of this Assembly will support this subamendment. I believe it's genuinely an improvement to the amendment, which is good. I think this makes it more good.

Let's face it. Following the Serenity case, Albertans justifiably have some concerns, ensuring that children in care are safe and protected. For the sake of public trust it's important that the proceedings of the committee be conducted in public and on the record. During the child intervention panel we advocated for the proceedings to be recorded in *Hansard*, and the government refused.

You know what? You could say that if there's nothing to hide – but here's the thing. If there's a problem and children die in care and they shouldn't have, there is something to hide, but unless you actually talk about it, you're not going to actually fix it. So I'm not even going to say: if there's nothing to hide. I think that when things go wrong, perhaps there is something to hide because no one wants

to take responsibility for a child that dies in care. I appreciate that some kids die in care because they just happen to get sick. Well, then there's nothing to hide there, but if somebody made a bad mistake that caused that child to get injured or die, then there is something to hide. What's most important is that it doesn't get hidden if you actually want to put procedures and legislation and policies and plans in place to prevent a reoccurrence. You should have to not hide what you want to hide, and that's why this subamendment is here, so that what we're uncomfortable with doesn't get hidden, what we're uncomfortable with gets confronted.

You know what? Five years from now I don't know whether I'll be gone, whether I'll be on this side of the House or that side of the House or any of it. It doesn't matter. The fact is that it doesn't matter who's in government; this is a nonpartisan issue. Whoever is there needs to face up to the real, serious, tough responsibilities of when you take a child out of their family home, you are responsible for them, and when things go wrong, we need to have those difficult discussions. That's why this subamendment is here, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to subamendment A2-SA2? The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just some clarifying questions for the hon. member. When we were on the Ministerial Panel on Child Intervention, we did run into some situations where individuals who had just been in the system who were in their early 20s were very nervous about appearing in front of the public and even just people who were afraid of reprisal if they came forward. I'm just trying to wrap my head around the interpretation of this. Is there an opportunity for in camera sessions, or is the intent for everything to be public?

Mr. McIver: Listen, when the discussions about the legislation are taking place, it should be in public. If there are discussions outside of that about specific cases to give context, that could surely be in camera, but the discussions about the legislation and its affects need to be in public so that people know what is changing and why.

Certainly, the hon. member is concerned about, you know, the privacy perhaps of even victims of mistakes. I share that with him, but that's not a discussion about the legislation. That's a discussion about individual cases and context. But the discussions about the legislation need be in public, and that's what I have laid before the House here. And I'd be grateful if the hon. member and all members of this Legislature would support it.

5:10

Mr. Sucha: Okay. Well, thank you to the hon. member for that clarification. I don't see why we can't support this subamendment if that's the opportunity. If it's talking about the legislation or reforms around it, I absolutely can support this subamendment.

The Chair: Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you. I guess I just want to ask a question, and I don't know, frankly, if the government can answer this. Of course, our friends from Parliamentary Counsel can't speak to this specifically. You know, just to what the Member for Calgary-Shaw had raised, the only question I would have about this and the concern would be: would we find ourselves five years down the road having a review committee which would be precluded from going in camera to hear very personal stories?

That was a big part of what this past child intervention panel was all about. It was not a common thing. It's not something that the panel did very often. The vast, vast majority of our proceedings were in public, but our deliberations were not. They were in camera,

and I think that's appropriate. So I guess my question would be: would this create perhaps an unintended consequence of constraining the work of the committee, preventing that committee from having very open dialogue about very sensitive matters? Would it prevent people from coming and presenting to the committee in a way that would be comfortable for them?

There are many people who perhaps have lived experience being a child in care who are now adults. Perhaps even there may be a scenario, although we didn't have this last time and I don't know if it ever would be appropriate, to actually have a child who's currently in care or had lived experience with that under the age of 18 present. As I recall, we did not have that in the child intervention panel, but we did have some now adults in their early 20s who had been children in care. I, I guess, feel that this amendment may perhaps unintentionally preclude future reviews from hearing the lived experience of people who have been in care.

I understand the intent that the review committee must be conducted in public. I'm a big, big believer in open debate. That's a big part of the reason that I'm in this Assembly. But I also acknowledge that there will be times, especially in cases like this, where we're dealing with child intervention and children in care which have some very legitimate confidentiality and privacy considerations. We need to be mindful of those.

Yes, you know, if this past process is any indication – certainly, I would hope that, based on what I'm proposing in my amendment – the intent very much is to have a very public and very open review. The wording around the “committee must submit to the Minister a report” and that “the Minister shall lay the report before the Legislative Assembly” if it is sitting, and if not, “within 15 days after the commencement of the next sitting of the Legislative Assembly”: so the amendment, as I've proposed it, already does have some significant transparency, I guess, requirements, and that's very much the intention.

The other, I guess, fail-safe, if you will, in my current amendment, which perhaps renders the subamendment from the Member for Calgary-Hays redundant, is that “one or more members of each caucus represented in the Legislative Assembly” would be a part of the process. I hate to predict the future – and perhaps I'm wrong about this – but if we have opposition parties that are not of the same ideological bent as the government of the day, I suspect that they're probably not going to allow for too much secrecy in the review process. If there was too much secrecy, I suspect that they would create a minority report and also kick up a fuss in the media, as well they should.

I have to say that having gone through the process we just went through, my intention with this amendment is to in the future re-create that process. Now that I've said that on *Hansard*, I hope that historians five years from now will go back and remind that committee of its terms of reference. That's very much the intention of this amendment as we put this into legislation, to replicate as close as possible the process that we've just gone through here in the child intervention panel. But that process did have some in camera sessions. My question and, I guess, a concern would be that if we do pass this subamendment, we would constrain that panel's ability to do that important work and respect confidentiality as necessary.

Thank you.

Mr. Sucha: You know, I can appreciate where the Member for Calgary-Elbow is coming from. To be honest, in kind of looking into it, my initial inkling was, you know, that we're trying to achieve a very transparent process, to review this intensely within five years' time. For the most part, this amendment, to be honest, kind of drew it out and let people know the process. But I also did

understand where the member was coming from, where I thought it was redundant.

I can appreciate where the Member for Calgary-Elbow is coming from with his concerns in relation to protecting privacy and family. Granted, depending on how black and white it is, law is always up for interpretation. I can really understand and respect where the Member for Calgary-Elbow has some serious concerns in relation to this unintentionally opening the door and making it difficult for people to come forward. It doesn't really spell out the parameters for when the committee could go in camera or when it would allow privacy for families that require or need the privacy or have requested it. It could actually be a detriment to the committee. So I thank him for bringing that up in this as well.

The Chair: Any other speakers to the subamendment?

Mr. McIver: Madam Chair, I listened to the Member for Calgary-Elbow, and I've got to say that he probably should, when he gets a quiet minute, pour himself a glass of wine and listen to himself. He was talking in circles. He was talking in circles. He said in one breath that he wanted everything to be open and transparent. In the next breath he wants to vote against a motion to make it open and transparent. It can't be both.

He said in one breath that he wanted a process just like the last one, but the amendment that he put forward, that I liked, just for the record, says a "review committee." What we did was a ministerial panel, nothing at all like what he's proposing. What he's proposing is fine. What he just argued for is completely different. Based on his argument, he would vote against his own amendment. That's not what he was supporting when he was on his feet just now. He was supporting the exact same process. The exact same process wasn't good enough. It wasn't even close to being good enough.

What the hon. member put in his notice of amendment is "review committee," not at all like what we just did. I'm a little taken aback and a little gobsmacked, if you will, by what I just heard because I have no idea what the member intends now. What he wrote in black and white seems to be okay. At least, I think it would improve the legislation, and I could support it. But what he just said when he was on his feet was completely – completely – at odds with what he signed his name to on this piece of paper, the amendment.

I don't know where he stands. I hope he's going to support the subamendment that I put forward. But all I'll say for the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow is that what he committed his signature to in writing is much better than what he just said when he was on his feet five minutes ago.

The Chair: Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you to the Member for Calgary-Hays for this important subamendment. I share some concerns, that he has articulated, in regard to both the comments of the private member from the NDP side of the aisle on this and even more to the comments of the House leader for the third party.

You know, to defend and try to ignore the real problems with the process takes away from being able to fix this problem. Again, I'm going to use a quote from Paula Simons which I think really articulates the problem, where we ended up at the end of this ministerial panel. To defend that that process worked a hundred per cent is, quite frankly, ridiculous. She says:

Albertans didn't elect an NDP government to prop up . . . [the] status quo. Albertans elected them to clean up the messes of their Tory predecessors – and to protect the vulnerable. With this vague and wishy-washy report, they've failed to do either.

The results that came from the panel: well, there were certainly some good recommendations. I would not say that the intention of the Member for Calgary-Elbow was in any way negative. I think he had a good intention in participating in it, as I do think every member of the panel did.

5:20

But to ignore where it ended up does a disservice to the very people that we were sent there to try to help. To ignore where the process ended up and then to try to say that that's the process we should use going forward I think is disappointing. It's also confusing, quite frankly, given his amendment that he's moved in this Chamber, that we will debate when we're finished with the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays' subamendment.

Further to that, though, I think a point worth bringing up, after listening to the Member for Calgary-Elbow's comments, is that this is about a legislative review, your amendment, about reviewing legislation. This amendment is not giving a mandate to do criminal investigations or to do those types of things where certainly confidentiality would be important. Certainly, there could be some circumstances where there would have to be an in camera process to maybe have a discussion about some sensitive things that had taken place so that the people on the legislative committee could be able to come up with ideas and understand what needed to change. But the idea that legislation could not be made in a public way, that the conversation could not be in a public way is what we reject and, quite frankly, is the problem that we have that has taken us through all the last two years or longer. As we've started this process, this journey, all of us together, you know, that's the problem. That's where we've ended up.

Despite the fact that every party in this place, so the Official Opposition, the government party, the independent members, who participated in it tried to participate in this in good faith, the reality is that the government – I won't say that their individual members didn't participate in good faith. The government as a whole did not. They went out of their way – it was very obvious – to make sure that the issue that we were sent there to deal with could not be dealt with, and now we're back in this Chamber with the government. I think it's ridiculous to continue to try to stand up here and not acknowledge the fact that you, the government, through you, Madam Chair, to them, said to this place: "We're going to do this all-party ministerial panel because we're going to address the Serenity issue. We're going to find out why that little toddler was murdered in our care." Then they went out of their way to block any minutes.

In fact, I don't know how many members in this place know this. In the initial part of the committee the government members spent most of their time trying to make sure that there could not even be a recording of the proceedings, and I'm not just talking about a written, *Hansard*-type recording, a recording so that people outside of Edmonton could be able to listen to the proceedings. From the very beginning it was that simple a thing. For other people who could not, you know, travel to the capital or who had other commitments but wanted to be able to hear what was going on with the panel and look at it in a transparent way and then possibly do written submissions or those types of things to be able to help us with our work: the government spent most of the beginning trying to make sure that they couldn't even hear the proceedings.

The interesting thing about this panel, Madam Chair, was, of course, that there were outside experts on it. Most of the members in this Chamber would be used to a standing committee, which is where this should have gone, quite frankly – we now know that – where it's just MLAs that are participating. They have the majority in the case of a majority government, and they can push their

agenda through. In this case there were actually some outside experts that were also part of the panel, and they were not partisan politicians, so they often had to be the tiebreaker on what we would be able to do in there despite the fact that the government wouldn't let votes happen unless they were trying to stop something.

Ultimately, frankly, I think that actually because of pressure from the press we were able to get the proceedings recorded but were still not allowed to get a transcript. So to this day you cannot go back and look at the work that that panel did. You can't even look at the debate or how they came to their conclusions unless you listen through many, many, many hours of recording. I mean, the panel was well over a year. It travelled all over the province. There's a lot of content, much of it good content. You can't search it. It's not a searchable type of database. It is extremely disappointing.

But what would have happened, Madam Chair, if we'd had the ministerial panel – I want my colleagues to think about this – but the government had convinced us to agree that the press and the public could not participate at all in the process? They would not be able to see what the ministerial panel was doing. I don't know what you think would have happened. I can tell you what I think would have happened. We certainly wouldn't have gotten the proceedings recorded in the end, because the media helped us push for that. We certainly would not have had the media, including Paula Simons, writing articles pointing out the hypocrisy of the government of the day on some of these issues.

Instead, the public wouldn't have known about it, and then we would have seen examples like we did see, Madam Chair, concrete examples – you can go back and look at *Hansard* – of the minister rising in this Chamber and answering questions on this issue and claiming that the panel was reviewing the Serenity case. Members of the panel, including the Member for Calgary-Hays and myself, were saying: “Well, we're not. You're blocking us from reviewing this, Minister. Why? Was this your intention, Minister?” It was her panel, but she was not a daily participant by design. And then she would rise and say: “Oh, yeah. Of course. It can all be reviewed. You can look through *Hansard*.” Then on the very same day you would then leave this Chamber after question period and go to a panel meeting, and the NDP majority would block any conversation to do with Serenity.

Now, do you think that that would have come to light if the press weren't able to watch and to point out some of those hypocrisies? Probably not. So the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays, in pointing out that this needs to be public, is very right. No longer can we continue to allow this process to be done behind closed doors. And not just because of the NDP government of the day. As we've been very clear about since the start of this debate, this is an issue that goes across party lines. It's an issue that has happened to the previous government, it's an issue that's happened to this government, and it's an issue that's happened to governments all across the country and, quite frankly, the world. But how are you going to fix it if you continue to hide it?

If I was an NDP member, what I would be most disappointed in is the fact that I was sent there to try to make sure that this was dealt with and that my government fell back into the trap, the same trap that other governments have fallen into, of trying to sweep the stuff under the rug and deal with it behind closed doors. Often I think that the intention is good, but the reality is that by doing that, we have just turned this all back over to the same department that failed Serenity.

You can't ignore when a reporter like now Senator Paula Simons – not minister but Senator – has written extensively on this issue. You know, there's some stuff that Paula has written over the years that weren't my favourite columns – that's for sure – but on this issue I don't think there's any member from any party, in any walk

of life that would not acknowledge the hard work that she's done on this file, the incredible reporting that she did. The fact is that without her we would not even be standing in this Chamber talking about this. I don't know if she would consider herself an expert on this, but she's definitely extremely knowledgeable. I know that when I was on the panel, I sought a meeting with her to just talk about the history of this because she had reported on this so much, and she was a valuable resource to the work I did on the committee. I don't know if anybody else had an opportunity to meet with her.

When somebody like that, then, writes that the process did not work, that the report is wishy-washy, and that it won't save one child's life, should we not, then, be asking as a Chamber: what went wrong with the process? Not just the process that resulted in the death of Serenity but the process that we left this Chamber to go do for the minister.

You know, I talked about it earlier today, Madam Chair, again, that one of my great regrets – I don't know how the Member for Calgary-Hays feels about this – is that in the end we actually agreed to do this, not because I didn't want to review the issue but because our better judgment said that if we gave the minister the panel and we gave up on an all-party committee, this is what would happen. In fact, we all met about it, and we said: you know, this is likely what they're going to do, because this is, sadly, what other governments have done. But we realized that it was in the best interests of children in this province and Serenity's family and we had to give it a try, and we gave it a try.

That doesn't take away from some of the solutions that came from the panel. It doesn't at all. I think some of them are positive. I know I see some of my language, some of the ideas that I had, come out in it, and I'm sure the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays does as well. But what I don't see is anything about this: nothing about the issue that we got sent there for, nothing about how it was that it took well over two years for a cause of death to even be determined by the medical examiner, how the police found out about this case on the news because reporters broke it several years after that child's death, how it was that people from the medical community had reported that there was a problem and still nobody got in a truck and drove out there to check on that child.

5:30

I think the most shocking thing that needs to be determined is how a mother of a child who is now in care because that mother is dealing with situations in her life, who has her children in the care of a foster home where they, by all reports, were stable and they were doing well. Then those children are moved, and then that mother reports that “There's a problem with my children,” gives some information that would indicate that there is possibly a problem. And that doesn't mean that for sure there's a problem. I recognize that a family in that type of situation may report something that's not true. This mother certainly did not, but I recognize that that's a possibility. But then still, even after that, nobody got in a car and drove out there and checked on that little girl and her siblings.

An Hon. Member: Take a look.

Mr. Nixon: Just took a look. She would be alive today, Madam Chair, if that simple thing had happened. That's a fact. That doesn't mean that the government or child services are responsible for her death. That's not what I'm saying, but the fact is that if that step was taken, she would be alive today, almost certainly, and we were not allowed to poke through the process to find out why that step wasn't taken. It seems to me that that is the most important question in this entire case.

If you don't put a process in that's public, you will continue to see what happened with the panel which they had to make semipublic because of pressure from the media and political pressure but was really not that public, not as public as it should have been, that's certain. You would see the same process here again where it's not public, and how do we know what's going on? How would we know that we have another case like this and it's going to have a discussion on how you can fix legislation or make things better to make sure this case doesn't happen in the future, that the same process will not be done by the government of the day, to sweep this under the rug and actually not talk about the issue?

When I talk to most of my constituents about this and I let them know we weren't even allowed to ask those simple questions, like how the police did not even know about this, how the police did not have the file – that's a pretty reasonable question. I don't see that as a controversial question. I think that's a pretty reasonable question. Not allowed to ask it, which is why the member is proposing to make sure this is public, to hold this situation and people accountable for it in the future.

It's disappointing that, again, the government continues that process in the panel. I will remind you, Madam Chair, there's a possibility that they won't be the government the next time that this is an issue. I certainly think that at that point they probably would want this to be public so that they could do their job as the Official Opposition or the third party or the independent party or whatever they are at that point. But by doing this now, it's short sighted because they aren't able to do that, but further to that, it just ain't right. This is the right thing to do.

Yes, it will make it harder for the government of the day that is dealing with these tough situations, that are not easy to deal with, certainly. But that doesn't matter. Sometimes we have to make it tough to be able to get things fixed because the sad reality is, Madam Chair, that the way the NDP have approached this, we're going to be back in this Chamber talking about this again. And all of us are going to have to look each other in the eye and go: "You know what? The Chamber failed on this."

And they failed because of the NDP's leadership on this this time. That lands on the NDP's lap. Not the consequences of a child who's killed or something along those lines. You can't put that on them. They don't take those actions. But the fact that we're back here still having to deal with that lands on their lap. Private members across the way should think about that. They should really think about when we agreed to do this panel if this is what they expected the members of their caucus to do, to go in there and hide the issue and refuse to discuss the very issue that we sent there. They should really think about Serenity's family. They should think about that little girl who lost her life, but most of all, they should be thinking about the next little girl that may lose their life or the next little boy because that was our responsibility to get fixed.

The Chair: Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Madam Chair. When we look at the amendment here, I think we all agree on what the intent is here. I don't think the Member for Calgary-Elbow, who participated in the panel meeting in good faith – and we had a chance to sit and actually do the blanket exercise together, which was very moving, to say the least. I think his amendment, A2, is here with good faith. I have to give him credit because I was on one end and he convinced me on another, which was the fact that there are some unintended consequences that might come from the subamendment.

With that being said, we intend to have these meetings public. We want to open these meetings up to public, but the Member for

Calgary-Elbow has already outlined some very harsh, unintended consequences. To put a vernacular that the Minister of Service Alberta would say: we're all driving a car and we want to get from point A to point B, but we all have to gas up and we're thinking about gassing up this diesel car with regular gasoline. With that being said, what I would encourage is that members don't support this one but that we work together and we find more clarity in what we want to have public because the Member for Calgary-Elbow has already outlined concerns about the unintended consequences of people not feeling comfortable to come forward, the fact that we might not get people that we do want to hear from at these panel meetings. Let's sit down, and let's have a discussion around how we outline this to be conducted in public but that we have these safeguards in place.

With that being said, I'm not going to support the subamendment, but I'm happy to sit down. I am happy for us to get a bit more thoroughly into how we want this to be done in public because the intent that I have and I believe the Member for Calgary-Elbow has is that this meeting is going to be in public. But if we're too prescriptive with this subamendment, we run the risk of these unintended consequences that he's outlined.

The Chair: Any further comments? Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Well, I'm disappointed to hear that, Madam Chair. The government was on the cusp of doing the right thing. They were that close to grasping some transparency. You heard my description of the Member for Calgary-Elbow's amendment, where he argued for transparency and then against this amendment at the same time. Apparently, that crazy analysis won the day over on the government side, at least so far. So that's just – we are in bizarro land right now.

I'll tell you what. What the hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw just said, about "we'll sit down and negotiate a better process": well, we tried that this time and then we got into the committee meeting and we weren't able to talk about Serenity. You know what? This is the problem. If you go back – and don't take my word for it. I think we'd all agree that Senator Paula Simons did a great job on this. One of the first things she started writing about with children in care, even before the Serenity case but more so during the Serenity case, is that part of the problem is the fact that there's too much hidden from the public, which is why it never gets fixed.

The hon. member now wants to be able to sweep stuff under the carpet. I was ready to heap praise on him here. I told him that I agreed with him before because he was right. Apparently, that inspiration in favour of transparency and accountability went out the window in the last 20 minutes somehow. That's very disappointing that the government has decided to – the government was on the verge of doing the right thing here. You know what? People, no matter who they are, no matter what party they're from, when they make a mistake, it's always tempting to hide the fact that you made a mistake. That's not an NDP problem. That's not a Conservative problem. It's everybody's problem. That's all of our problem. You know what? When something goes wrong, we always say, "Well, how do I fix it without anybody knowing?", but many times – many times – you can't unless you actually talk about it out loud and admit you made a mistake.

Twenty minutes ago the government was there. I guess they had – I don't know what they had – some kind of an epiphany that transparency isn't good, that kids in care aren't deserving of that transparency. You know what? I'm sorry. This is disappointing. This actually matters. This is how you get this fixed. By not doing this, you're feeding the narrative that there's the problem that the government, whoever is the government of the day, will hide the

facts. Our government did it. That was wrong. This government is now doing it, and that's wrong, too. Come on, folks.

Mr. Ellis: This is an easy one.

Mr. McIver: This is an easy one. This is a gimme. We should all give our collective heads a shake and say yes. We can't fix the most embarrassing problem unless we're going to talk about it, because if you want to fix it, at some point it has to see the light of day.

5:40

If you're going to leave it to whatever government is in place – and I'm not saying who that's going to be. It could be you folks, could be us, could be some party that hasn't been invented yet. But five years from now, someone will be the government here. Someone will be the minister in charge of children in care, and that minister, he or she from that party, whatever it is, is going to be tempted to say: you know, this will be really embarrassing if we talk about it, so maybe the next minister can fix it; maybe the next government can fix it. That's where you're leaving it, folks. Now it really makes me wonder why you went to all this trouble.

This is like lesson 1. Even before the ministerial panel started, these things had to be more transparent, less hidden, less swept under the carpet, and now the government of the day is choosing more hidden, less transparent, more swept under the carpet, exactly the opposite of what's right, exactly the opposite of what gives us a chance of making it better.

Mr. Ellis: This is easy.

Mr. McIver: This is easy. It's unbelievable that the government, after coming to the right conclusion, was persuaded by an argument that said: let's be more transparent by not operating in public. This is what the government signed on to. The government just said: let's be more transparent by not operating in public.

Well, Madam Chair, you just can't make this up, and you just can't defend the position that the government and the Member for Calgary-Elbow have taken. Ridiculous.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the subamendment?

Calgary-West.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you. You know, I'll be very brief here, Madam Chair. Look, this is very simple: "The proceedings of the review committee must be conducted in public." As I've indicated here to my colleague from Calgary-Hays, this is a gimme. We are trying to do what's in the best interests of children here. Quite frankly, to vote against a very simple and transparent amendment like this would be utterly ridiculous.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the subamendment?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on subamendment A2-SA2 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:43 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, W.	McIver	Starke
Barnes	Nixon	van Dijken
Ellis	Schneider	Yao

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hinkley	Phillips
Babcock	Horne	Piquette
Bilous	Jansen	Renaud
Carlier	Kazim	Rosendahl
Ceci	Kleinstauber	Sabir
Clark	Littlewood	Schmidt
Connolly	Loyola	Schreiner
Coolahan	Malkinson	Shepherd
Dach	Mason	Sucha
Drever	McKitrick	Turner
Eggen	Miller	Westhead
Feehan	Nielsen	Woollard
Gray		

Totals:	For – 9	Against – 37
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[Motion on subamendment A2-SA2 lost]

The Chair: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Feehan: Madam Chair, I suggest that we rise and report Bill 24 and, of course, report progress on Bill 22 at this time.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 24. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 22. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this day for the official records of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report? Say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Any opposed? So ordered.
The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Given the hour and the progress made today I would make the motion to adjourn for today, reminding everyone that the Eid ceremony takes place in the rotunda. It has been delayed now until a quarter after 6, but we encourage everyone to attend. We will reconvene tomorrow at 9 o'clock.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:49 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday morning, November 28, 2018

Day 55

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (NDP), Speaker
Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (NDP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (UCP),
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Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (UCP)
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Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (NDP)
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Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (NDP)
Dreesen, Devin, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UCP)
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (NDP)
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)
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Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP)
Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP),
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Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (NDP),
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Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)
Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Conklin (UCP)
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Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)
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Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Wednesday, November 28, 2018

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Deputy Speaker: Good morning.

Let us reflect. As members of the Alberta Legislature let us always be mindful of the privilege inherent in our role and the responsibility invested in us as we fulfill our obligations with honesty, integrity, and mutual respect, and may our first concern always be for the good of the people of Alberta.

Please be seated.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders

Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

The Chair: I'd like to call Committee of the Whole to order.

Bill 22

An Act for Strong Families Building Stronger Communities

The Chair: We are currently on amendment A2. Are there any members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Seeing none, are we ready for the vote?

[Motion on amendment A2 carried]

The Chair: We are back on the main bill. Any questions, comments, amendments? The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Dr. Starke: Well, thank you, Madam Chair, very much. I want to make a few comments initially to preface my remarks on this bill, and then I do have an amendment as well. Actually, what I'll do is that I'll hand the amendment off to our page staff, and they can get it distributed.

I want to start by saying that I'm really pleased with the work that was done by the ministerial panel and by the minister in continuing with this ongoing challenge we have. There can be no doubt that the entire area of child intervention, that the entire area of dealing, you know, with difficult situations of children in care is one of the most challenging that we have in governance. I'm not even going to say government but governance. It is a problem that is not unique to Alberta. It is a problem that is not even unique to Canada.

It is one that is a challenge to us, and I can't help when we have these discussions but think about our former colleague Manmeet Bhullar because when Manmeet was given the responsibility for this file, I still remember vividly – it would have been about five years ago; it would have been December of '13 or maybe January of '14 – being at a meeting where he talked about reviewing every last file where there had been a death of a child in care. I can tell you, Madam Chair, it is a memorable sight to see a 300-pound man weeping at a caucus meeting when he talked about reviewing each and every one of those files.

I am glad that this minister has tackled this issue, and I'd also like to say about the approach on Bill 22 that I've truly appreciated this minister and the approach that she has taken with regard to inviting amendments, inviting discussion to it. I think this bill so far has had

some sort of record in terms of the number of amendments that have passed. Minister, that's a very good reflection on you and your department and the approach that has been taken on this piece of legislation, and I can't help but think that that's partly because this minister at one time was a member of TUXIS youth parliament. That has proven to be a very good training ground for young parliamentarians. One thing about TUXIS that was interesting is that it was nonpartisan.

So with those preface remarks, Madam Chair, I'd like to move the following amendment. Dr. Starke to move that Bill 22, An Act for Strong Families Building Stronger Communities, be amended in section 3 in the proposed section 1.1 by adding the following after clause (d). That would be:

(e) the family is the basic unit of society.

Now, Madam Chair, that might not seem like a big deal. That might not seem like a major amendment, and in fact some might say: well, gosh, that seems self-evident to me. But in the feedback I've received on Bill 22, much of it has been very positive from my constituents. I have been especially pleased with the feedback I've received from people who are foster parents or who are formerly foster parents. They're especially glad to see the assistance that will come about with regard to indigenous children because in many cases if the foster parents or the foster family does not have any indigenous cultural background, it is something that they are unable to discuss or even to have a good working relationship with the child in care. So the families that contacted me are very glad to see this.

But I also had a number of people who were very concerned about a change in wording. It's small and it's subtle and you have to really dig to find it, but it is there. If one compares the wording of the old act, in the old act section 2(a) states, "The family is the basic unit of society and its well-being should be supported and preserved." In the new act the proposed wording under section 2(a) is, "The child's family has the primary responsibility for the safety and well-being of the child and the family's well-being should be supported and preserved."

Madam Chair, the second half of the original clause (a) is still there, but the first half has been amended or changed, and the very clear statement that the family is the basic unit of society has been eliminated from the proposed bill. I have a problem with that. A lot of Albertans that I have spoken to have a problem with it as well.

I want to talk a little bit about why it's important that those words appear. Those words are nothing new, Madam Chair. I'm going to quote now from the United Nations universal declaration on human rights, which was passed in 1948, one of the first documents that the United Nations agreed on. Article 16(3) of the universal declaration on human rights states, "The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State." That's in the United Nations universal declaration on human rights. While I know that there are in some quarters some people who doubt the activities of the United Nations, who feel that the United Nations is an organization that is no longer relevant in today's world, I think some of the base statements from the United Nations are ones that we still hold to, and some 70 years after this document was ratified, I think that those statements still hold true.

If you're not sure about that, Madam Chair, I'm going to refer to a letter, and this letter was written by Dr. Ruth Halperin-Kaddari. Now, Dr. Halperin-Kaddari is quite a remarkable woman. She was born in 1966. She is an Israeli legal scholar, an international women's rights advocate. She's known for her work in family law, feminist legal theory, women's rights in international law, and women and religion. In addition, she is the vice-chair of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against

Women and has served on that committee since 2006. She was one of the first recipients of the U.S. Secretary of State's international women of courage award for her work on international women's rights in 2007, and she was rated as one of the world's 100 most influential people in gender equity policy just earlier this year in 2018.

I say all these things to establish Dr. Halperin-Kaddari's credentials as an expert in this area. In 2012 Dr. Halperin-Kaddari wrote a letter or made a submission to the recommendation from CEDAW. Now, who is CEDAW? Well, CEDAW is the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. It is also a United Nations document. It was adopted in 1979 and has been ratified by 189 of the UN member states. Curiously, it hasn't been ratified by the United States, but it has been ratified by Canada as well as 188 other countries.

In her submission to the 2012 meeting, which was held in Istanbul – and I will table these documents later – she writes:

As stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the family is the basic unit of society. It is a social and a legal construct, and to some, it is also a religious construct. The family is where all of us human-beings get our very basic notions of interrelationships: the understanding of the meanings of connections, care, as well as roles, duties and responsibilities. It is the place of socialization for children, who become young adults, and in the process they internalize the norms, the social patterns, the various family roles they witnessed in their families. When the family functions on the basis of gender equality and equity, these are the values that shall accompany those who grew in such families throughout their adult lives. When maltreatment, exploitation and inequality characterize the family, they shall characterize their members throughout their lives.

9:10

Madam Chair, Dr. Halperin-Kaddari in her opening statement in this letter to the CEDAW convention was very, very clear that the family is indeed the basic unit of society. I think that that is something that we should support, and in fact Article 16(3) of the universal declaration on human rights states that it "is entitled to protection by society and the State." Whether it's by oversight or whether it's something that was designed this way, the new legislation does not contain that statement, and that's a concern to me. That's a concern to many Albertans that I've spoken to.

The amendment I'm proposing is a simple one. The amendment proposes that we reinsert the language that the family is the basic unit of society. While it may seem most logical to put it into section 2, section 2 had already been amended, so when we were working with Legislative Counsel on this, we were unable to amend that section. But then I suggested and they worked with me on this that we add it to the section under guiding principles and that it be added at the bottom of the guiding principles section as:

(e) the family is the basic unit of society.

Madam Chair, to many this will seem like a small change. To many this will seem like this is just a cosmetic thing, but to many Albertans this is an important statement. Families define themselves. Families define who is in them by their own members, and I accept that. I also accept that our families take on many different forms in society today. But I think it is also true and, certainly, the intervention panel will have determined, I think, that where families have discord, where there is family strife or breakup, where children are not raised in a community of love, where they are not raised in a household or in a home where equality and equity and respect are the guiding principles, those children are vulnerable. Those are often the children that require assistance sometimes through a government agency or by other means.

I'm asking my colleagues in the House to consider this amendment. I don't think that this is a hugely significant amendment, perhaps in terms of being very symbolic, though. I think it is very important to many Albertans that I've spoken to. I guess my question is: if you're opposed to this amendment, you need to be able to understand or you need to be able to explain to Albertans why you are opposed. Why are you opposed to including the statement that family is the basic unit of society in legislation that deals with family matters?

With that, Madam Chair, I would urge all of my colleagues to support this amendment, and I look forward to the discussion.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Larivee: Thank you, Madam Chair. Rather than focusing on what is not in the act, I want to focus on what is in the act that clearly shows how important our government understands family to be when it comes to supporting the child. Bill 22 is actually called an act for strong families, showing that we clearly want to strengthen families and how they're supported. It puts families at the heart of every single step of the child intervention system, and to suggest otherwise is incorrect. All children should be safe, healthy, and live with their families whenever possible, which is why we're updating the wording in the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, so families are not simply the basic unit but have primary responsibility for the safety and well-being of the child and will help strengthen the focus placed on families. It recognizes that families have the primary role and must be supported and preserved whenever possible.

Bill 22 also broadens our understanding of family and will make sure that family connections are recognized, respected, and considered in every decision. Right now the legislation has no guiding principles, but with this act we are adding new guiding principles, including one which already says and clearly states the importance of family to every child. Along with that, under the updated matters to be considered it clearly states that family has the primary responsibility for every child and that family connections must always be considered when making decisions. This will help ensure that family connections aren't just an item on a potential shopping list of matters to be considered but are going to be embedded in every single court and caseworker decision when it comes to any major decision for a child.

Certainly, when I was meeting with Kee Tas Kee Now Tribal Council last evening to talk about this act and what was coming forward, we all agreed, very much so, that we need to support strong families. Strong families and strong communities are what our children know in order to grow and thrive, which is why we have embedded family throughout the whole, entire legislation, have made sure it's clearly understood that they're important to every child. As we go forward, there will be further amendments expected as we continue to engage with indigenous partners, but all of them will continue to clearly state and understand that.

With that, I do feel that we've fully embedded the importance of family throughout this legislation and will not be supporting this amendment.

The Chair: Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just quickly, I would like to thank the hon. member for his amendment. I completely, completely agree with this amendment. There's a huge difference between recognizing family and actually having a strong statement on family. The hon. member makes a very good point, that that unit, the beautiful thing that this entire bill is about protecting, has to be stated clearly, not just a statement of understanding but a clear

statement about recognizing the family unit. I'm very, very happy to support this amendment.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A3? Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Dr. Starke: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a few comments in response to the minister. I certainly appreciate exactly what is in the bill. I appreciate that "family" is embedded in the bill. I appreciate that the title of the bill includes strengthening families. To me, it is incongruous that you would not support an amendment that further strengthens that statement. The statement that "the family is the basic unit of society" is not some construct that I've pulled out of thin air, it's not some construct that belongs to a specific political party or movement, and I don't think it's an idea or a statement that in any way threatens the integrity of this legislation. But I will tell you that its absence causes significant discomfort to a large group of Albertans, and its absence could be interpreted in ways that I think the minister doesn't intend. Voting this amendment down could also be interpreted in ways that this government, I think, has no intent to do.

The statement that "the family is the basic unit of society" is one that is entirely in alignment with the United Nations universal declaration of human rights, and it is a statement that gives comfort to those for whom the family unit is one that is extremely important. Now, I recognize that there may be differences of opinion with regard to that, but if this legislation is indeed as the minister states – there for the protection, the strengthening of families and to recognize the important role of families – then it should not have any difficulty stating that in the guiding principles. Frankly, I'm very pleased to see that the guiding principles section is included in this bill. I think that's really good, and I would agree with the minister that it's better that it's in the guiding principles than just one of a shopping list of items to be considered. Absolutely, I agree with that.

Why wouldn't this statement be included in those guiding principles? I'm not saying and I'm not advocating the removal of any of the proposed guiding principles. I agree with them. They are all strong statements, and they should be there. But the notion that the statement that "the family is the basic unit of society" should not be in this bill, should not be in the act going forward despite all of the other very good language in the act is troubling to many Albertans. It's troubling to me.

9:20

You have to then answer the question: why isn't it there? Why does this government not support including a statement that says that "the family is the basic unit of society" in a bill that they are proposing? I think that's an important question that needs to be answered. It won't need to be answered by me, it won't need to be answered by those who support this amendment because clearly they agree with it, but it will need to be answered if the members opposite decide to vote against this amendment. Certainly, it can be said – and it would be quite accurate – that this government does not support the notion that the family is the basic unit of society. If it did, it would be included in this piece of very important legislation. If it does get voted down, then clearly that's not the opinion of this government, and that is problematic, Madam Chair. It's problematic to many, many Albertans.

With respect, to the minister – and I agree with much of what she has said – what is not in this bill is, in fact, important to Albertans. It is, in fact, significant, especially when one half of what was a very strong statement in the original legislation is deleted from the

new proposed act but the other half, the second half, that talks about preserving and protecting the family, is still there. I'm glad that it's still there, but when I saw that the first half of a statement that is basically lifted almost word for word from the United Nations universal declaration of human rights is removed, that's troubling.

I would urge members throughout the House, all of my colleagues, to support this amendment because I think this amendment reflects the will of Albertans. Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A3?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A3 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:22 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Drysdale	Smith
Clark	Fildebrandt	Starke
Cooper	Hunter	Stier
Dreesen	Pitt	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Goehring	Piquette
Babcock	Gray	Renaud
Bilous	Hinkley	Rosendahl
Carson	Hoffman	Schmidt
Ceci	Horne	Schreiner
Connolly	Jansen	Shepherd
Coolahan	Kazim	Sucha
Dach	Kleinstauber	Turner
Dang	Larivee	Westhead
Feehan	Miller	Woollard
Fitzpatrick	Payne	

Totals:	For – 11	Against – 32
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[Motion on amendment A3 lost]

The Chair: We're back on the main bill. Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today to speak to Bill 22 in Committee of the Whole here. I'm going to move an amendment first, and then I would like to speak to it. I will wait until you've received the amendment and tell me to proceed.

Thank you.

9:40

The Chair: This will be known as amendment A4.

Go ahead, hon. member.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Madam Chair. I actually rise to move this amendment on behalf of my colleague. I'll read this into the record. I'm actually not sure if I'm allowed to say the name in this one. Am I? No. All right. The Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre to move that Bill 22, An Act for Strong Families Building Stronger Communities, be amended in section 17 by striking out the proposed section 105.74 and substituting the following:

Director's duty

105.74(1) When a director becomes aware of

- (a) an incident giving rise to a serious injury to or the death of a child that occurred while the child was receiving intervention services, or
- (b) an incident referred to in section 105.771(1)(b),

the director must, as soon as practicable, report the incident to the Minister and the Chair of the Standing Committee of the Legislative Assembly with the mandate to consider matters pertaining to the Minister's ministry.

(2) The Chair must distribute a report received under subsection (1) to all members of the Committee.

(3) Prior to providing a report to the Chair under subsection (1), the director shall remove information from the report that reveals or could reveal the identity of the child.

Madam Chair, I move this amendment out of memory, to be honest. When this issue first came to this Assembly a couple of years ago, at that time the then minister of human services – the process was to report to him – was neglectful in his duties and refused to act on the report that was provided to him by the office of the Child and Youth Advocate. We know that. The government eventually did respond, and now we have the Ministry of Children's Services and the Ministry of Community and Social Services, which I think is a good move because of the manner in which the minister mishandled this file so completely, which was absolutely disgraceful at that time. For so many of us it became such an emotional issue in this Assembly and for members of the public to hear of the disgusting abuse that happened to Serenity and the complete inaction from the government and the minister of human services at that time, in particular.

This amendment would make it mandatory that any incident involving the death of a child is reported to the minister but also, as a safeguard, to the Standing Committee on Families and Communities, Madam Chair. There's a safeguard in there where the identity of the child would not be revealed to members of the committee for reasons of liability, particularly. The name of the child is not necessarily relevant in that case. This will allow for members of this Assembly to hold the government of the day to account. This is important no matter who the government is. We hopefully will not see a situation again where the minister shows such disrespect not only to the child and their family but to this Assembly.

Madam Chair, we know that when the report of little Serenity was tabled in this Assembly and all members had the opportunity to read what had happened to her, the ministry was still refusing to give reports to the police, that they needed to conduct their investigation. This whole thing was just an absolute bungled mess. That's why we're here today with part 1 of 3, is my understanding, of the work that came out of the panel. Also, my understanding is that there were no conversations allowed to happen about what did happen to little Serenity, which is extremely unfortunate.

But we have a responsibility and a duty in this Assembly to make sure that that never happens again, that the complete mismanagement of this file and this case never happens again. This is a layer of accountability that I'm sure all members of this Assembly can vote for. Madam Chair, all members of this Assembly have to vote for this if we are truly concerned about not allowing this to happen again in this Assembly. This layer of accountability is important for the work that this Assembly needs to do, the minister more specifically. We know that committee can be a good place to flesh these things out, and if there's mandatory notification to the committee, that is certainly what I suspect will happen. It's the right thing to do.

With that, this amendment is moved, and I would just remind all members of this House of what did happen in this Assembly many years ago when the then minister of human services refused to act

and work with the RCMP in their investigation. This is why this amendment is so important here today.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, thank you for the opportunity to speak to this. I agree with the hon. Member for Airdrie. The opportunity to be able to flesh out ideas and talk about things in Committee of the Whole is incredibly important to the process of how it is that you carve out legislation. You know, if you're able to bring forward an amendment that offers really sound advice as to procedure – and to some degree the amendment that the hon. member is bringing forward is procedural in the sense that it adds an accountability piece to make sure, as she has said, that this doesn't happen again.

You know, I often go back to the article that Paula Simons wrote, the critical report on four-year-old Serenity. The reason I do this, Madam Chair, is because it's imperative that we don't forget. The emotions and everything that we went through, that this entire House went through as we went through this process is something that, as difficult as it was, is a necessary visceral reaction that you have not only to this situation but to really, really wanting to do something solid to make sure that that doesn't happen again.

I had mentioned the last time that I was in the House that just even recently a young man named Dakota actually died in care. He was actually hit by a vehicle. To a large degree, what was happening in his life – by the time he was 14, he had been moved 19 times. He actually died this year. He was living with a parent that, unfortunately, had succumbed to his addictions as well. Dakota was in and out of homes; he was in and out of addiction. There was just never a place that was able to handle the very complex needs of this child and, moreover, to offer that loving familial support. We had mentioned in an earlier debate how important that family unit is. When a child is moved along the system like that, you can't even imagine – I personally can't imagine it, Madam Chair.

Paula Simons actually talked about this in her article, about how important it was to know who Serenity was to be able to attribute the horrors that this child went through, actually knowing who this child was. She's not just an apparition or something that we made up. She was a real human being. It was interesting to read what the minister had mentioned, that it was an unfortunate error. I'm grateful that the minister did actually take responsibility on behalf of the government. That's not an easy thing to do in this situation.

9:50

I think that the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays was saying this yesterday in one of his speeches, that it's really difficult to acknowledge that something has gone wrong, especially when it includes the death of a child, especially when that's on us, right? Even though some of us were not in governance at that time, Madam Chair, now that we're here, we take on that responsibility with the unimaginable hope that we can actually change enough things so that no child would ever have to suffer like this again.

It's amendments like this one from the hon. Member for Airdrie that help to add that level of accountability to this legislation. It would be very, very difficult to understand why the government would disagree with this amendment. When such a horrible thing happens and the answer is that it was an unfortunate error, I think we need to take a look at – it's not just language. It's about acknowledging the loss of this life and the loss of this life while that child was in state care, acknowledging our responsibility to the children that are in state care and actually looking at all of the fundamental pieces of this legislation.

There are some really good pieces in this legislation, but we have pointed out some really fundamental things that bring it around to helping us to understand how it is that we build supports around these munchkins. You can talk about it lots. There's lots of great language in here around what we should do. But panels like this and our responsibility need teeth. They need actionable items that have teeth and that dig into it and that actually work to protect these kids and, moreover, to potentially put those families back together.

We all talk in this House, Madam Chair, about family-centred care. We talk about family-centred care until family-centred care isn't important all of a sudden. It depends on who's talking about it and how it's being used. Well, it is important. When we talk about kinship specifically, there's a piece in the legislation that the band council needs to be notified when a child goes to court. Part of the reason for that is because of the way that First Nations families work within the nation. It's a much larger piece; it's not just the family expanse.

It's actually very similar in my culture in that way. We talk to our grandparents, and we talk to our aunts. We talk to everybody when we're making decisions. I know my sons do. It's a huge family discussion when something is happening in our house. It might drive you crazy, but it's what we know and what we love – right? – about our family. My mother-in-law is actually an amazing woman. She's not able to read and write in any language, and she's the smartest woman I know. Her financial ability is probably beyond mine, so even when I'm making very, very difficult financial decisions, I talk to my in-laws all the time, actually. The reason for that is because of the family structure that we have. I really can honour and respect the complexity of the differences between cultures and the cultural provisions that have been put in.

But what we always have to come back to, Madam Chair, and what I think the government forgets is that this is a safety issue as well. We're not in this discussion because we're just talking about everyday families. We're talking about massive trauma. We're talking about incredible, horrible circumstances from which these children make their way to us. Why would we not want to strengthen the legislation to make sure that those kids have every bit of protection possible, to make sure that everything that we do is about helping them overcome things that probably many of us have never, ever had to endure. It's about helping them to potentially end up back with their families or what they would consider family.

I would like to thank the hon. Member for Airdrie for this excellent amendment, and I would hope that the government would vote in favour. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Larivee: Thank you, Madam Chair. Absolutely, you know, looking at the intent of this amendment, it is emphasizing the importance of accountability and transparency around the child intervention system, something that I agree with very, very strongly. I do want to look at this, though, within the context of the full suite of changes that are being made in terms of the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act, in terms of not just this act but also, you know, Bill 18 in the previous sitting of the House around changes.

This section that we're looking at around the director's duties, section 17, previously required reporting to the council for quality assurance. Based on the recommendations of the panel, in Bill 18 the council for quality assurance was removed, and in fact we required, as a result of that, the office of the Child and Youth Advocate to investigate every single death. In fact, throughout the act there are mandated requirements to report, you know, all of these incidents immediately to the office of the Child and Youth

Advocate. I certainly don't think the reporting should just be to the minister – we do need to do it – but we are reporting these incidents broadly to the Child and Youth Advocate.

Also, if you turn to section 22 of the bill on public reporting of serious injury, it actually requires the minister to “publicly report . . . an incident giving rise to the serious injury to or death of a child that occurred while the child was receiving intervention services . . . within 4 business days after being notified of the incident.” You know, Madam Chair, this goes beyond reporting it to a Legislative Assembly committee. It's about making sure that the Child and Youth Advocate, who investigates these incidents and can provide recommendations on them, knows as soon as possible, making sure that the public knows broadly, which includes, obviously, that every member of this House would have access to that same information. This is just ensuring, of course, that the minister who is accountable for the department also knows, on top of that.

You know, I really don't see our legislative committees as review committees. That's not necessarily their role. In terms of incidents, absolutely we need to look at the big picture in terms of what's happening in terms of reviewing the work that needs to be done, but that role falls very much to the Child and Youth Advocate. Individually we can look at that information, but I feel that at this point in time around accountability and transparency we've done great work moving forward to ensure that broadly the advocate as well as the public are notified of these.

I feel that we've already addressed accountability and transparency. I don't feel that a legislative committee is necessarily an addition to that, so I won't be supporting the amendment.

The Chair: Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I would like to just make a point of clarification. To the minister: thank you so much. We understand on this side of the House the role of the advocate. It's a completely different piece. I want to make sure that we're talking about the same thing here.

In the legislation the child advocate is legislated to do exactly what the minister said. I completely agree with that. We're not talking about that, though. We're talking about the standing committee and actually about the public knowledge that goes out. As you know with what happened with Serenity, Madam Chair, we didn't find out until the media brought it forward. This is about providing accountability to the standing committee that has been put together, you know, under the auspices of this government to be able to speak of and talk to the way that we tweak and alter legislation in order to make sure transparency is there. This is completely different.

Just to clarify, I didn't mention anything about the advocate. I understand the role of the advocate. All of us on this side understand the role of the advocate. We understand the legislative duties of the advocate. In fact, we've advocated on behalf of the advocate because all of a sudden the entire section of this went towards the advocate. Everything changed when that committee was disbanded and the advocate was legislated to stand in and bring forward all this information. We understand that.

This is a completely different piece of the legislation. Transparency and accountability come at many levels. The advocate is obviously going to do that, but by the time the public or even the opposition has the opportunity to review, see, or otherwise comment on files, especially when it only comes after the death or serious injury of a child, you can imagine the difficulty that the opposition would have in trying to amend or change or help out with legislation once this has already happened.

10:00

What we're asking for is another level of accountability. Just to clarify, we understand the role of the office of the Child and Youth Advocate. We want to clarify the role of the committee and the absolute necessity for that level of transparency within the process of making sure, as the hon. Member for Airdrie said, that this never happens again.

This has to be a common goal in this House. There's absolutely no point of this legislation or any legislation like this if the goal is not, Madam Chair, to make sure that no child ever undergoes what these children and, especially in this case, Serenity have undergone.

Please, I would beg that the government look at this as an opportunity to be able to report. Again, there's absolutely no way that extra reporting in this particular situation can harm the situation. It would only be helpful. I would ask that the minister relook at her no vote on this amendment and please vote yes.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Seeing none, we'll call the vote.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A4 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:02 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Drysdale	Smith
Cooper	Hunter	Stier
Dreesen	Pitt	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Fitzpatrick	Piquette
Babcock	Goehring	Renaud
Bilous	Gray	Rosendahl
Carson	Hinkley	Schmidt
Ceci	Horne	Schreiner
Clark	Jansen	Shepherd
Connolly	Kazim	Sucha
Coolahan	Kleinstauber	Turner
Dach	Larivee	Westhead
Dang	Miller	Woollard
Feehan	Payne	

Totals:	For – 8	Against – 32
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[Motion on amendment A4 lost]

The Chair: Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to Bill 22? Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: I'd like to adjourn debate on 22, please.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 23

An Act to Renew Local Democracy in Alberta

The Chair: Moving on, we're on Bill 23, An Act to Renew Local Democracy in Alberta, considering amendment A2. Any comments on amendment A2? The hon. Member for . . .

Mr. Cooper: Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. I know it's a little surprising to me, Madam Chair, that one could be remiss to

remember the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. But I digress, and I appreciate the great work that you're doing in the chair this morning.

I'd just like to take a couple of quick seconds, Madam Chair, to sort of frame up where we're at. I know it's been a few days since we've been chatting about amendment A2, a good, solid amendment, I might add. I just think that I will remind the House about why this is important, and then I expect that some of my colleagues will be able to provide some context as to why it's important that we move forward with such a reasonable amendment.

You'll know, Madam Chair, that this particular amendment makes clear what third-party groups can and cannot do and how donations may or may not be attributed to their members. And you'll know that in this particular piece of legislation it creates an exemption for how non-union organizations would be treated compared to how union or employee organizations would be treated. While I heard from the minister at the beginning of this week that this is the exact same wording that is used in the provincial legislation, I just might like to add that during the debate on the provincial legislation it was highlighted, too, that this is not the best path forward, that creating one set of rules for unions and employee organizations and a separate set for others doesn't create fairness. It doesn't create openness. It doesn't create transparency and, in fact, allows unions to continue to collect mandatory dues and make a contribution or spend those dues without informing those who paid those dues as to what the usage of those dues would be.

We on this side of the House don't believe that that is appropriate. I certainly know that in the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills this is a topic of discussion that has come up around what unions are allowed to do, and not just, I might add, from folks that might have voted for the right-of-centre side of the spectrum but from some union members even who – I'll correct that, because in this situation it wasn't specifically a union member. It was a couple of individuals of an employee organization expressing some concern around their mandatory fees being used to support a cause or a political movement that doesn't align with their particular political stripes. They had some concerns about this. We have some concerns about it.

10:10

This amendment will ensure that all organizations are treated equally. I think it's important that we note that it doesn't prevent the union or the employee organization or the non-union from actually contributing. It just requires them to inform their members to do it honourably, to do it in an open and transparent process, and to not take money from those who might not like to support, say, the NDP or perhaps support the conservative movement in the form of third-party advertising.

So that is where we're at. I know it's a bit of a refresher for folks. I look forward to hearing from some of my colleagues on some of their concerns around this particular piece of legislation. I know that the Member for Livingstone-Macleod, who is an old sage, you might say, providing lots of wisdom and insight into legislation over a long period of time, has some comments as well as the young man from Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, who believes in the democratic process and making sure that it's strong and robust.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for the chance to provide some clarity on this. I'm not able to support the amendment that the hon. member has put forward as it would create

a significant inconsistency between the Local Authorities Election Act and legislation governing provincial elections. The current proposed wording for section 170 in Bill 23 is essentially the same language used in section 44.3 of the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act. This alignment ensures that we have essentially the same set of rules in both provincial and municipal elections when it comes to contributions and disclosure of third parties and those that make contributions to them. By drafting section 170 in this way, it not only ensures consistency but reduces the risk of confusion between provincial and municipal elections and how third-party contributions are treated.

With specific respect to the member's stated concerns about the treatment of trade unions, I should clarify that the legislation will continue to treat trade unions and corporations in the same way when contributing to a third party. Corporations are not required to attribute contributions to the names of employees of the corporation, just as trade unions do not have to attribute contributions to individual members of the trade union. This recognizes that there is a significant difference between large organizations like corporations and trade unions and smaller, more informally structured groups. Groups tend to be a lot smaller than trade unions and are more ad hoc in nature, meaning that they are less permanent. However, recognizing that trade unions and employee organizations can be substantial in size and in their ability to contribute, this section had built-in clarity surrounding how trade unions may contribute to a third party.

In relation to the Alberta Labour Relations Code trade unions are treated more in accordance with corporations, meaning that they can be prosecuted, be sued, or are capable of suing. In contrast, groups are not defined in the same way. Members of groups are liable and able to be prosecuted, sued, or are capable of suing. This means that groups and trade unions are distinct entities from a legal context.

Bill 23 also recognizes these differences in the way it addresses offences that could be committed by various entities. Offences are distinct and different between an individual who has committed an offence versus an offence committed by a trade union, employee organization, or a corporation.

Based on all of the above and, in particular, in recognition of the need for consistency between legislation governing local elections and legislation governing provincial elections, again, I cannot support the proposed amendment.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Well, thank you. I appreciate the minister's comments. I just find them very ironic. You'll know, Madam Chair, that amendment A1 was to create similarities between the rules at the municipal level and the provincial level in terms of the requirement to disclose the amount of a donation. The provincial rules say that any donation over \$250 needs to be disclosed, so we suggested that this is the best path forward. Yet the minister chose to leave the amount at \$50. It wasn't because we had an ideological bent towards \$50 or \$250; it was just to create a certainty and similarity in the legislation. And he said that no, he's not willing to do that. Now he's saying: no, I'm not willing to make changes to this because it will create uncertainty in the legislation and discrepancies between the municipal elections act and the Election Act.

So I don't know. Is it an apple and an apple or an apple and an orange? When is an apple an apple, and when is an orange an orange? I don't quite understand the minister's logic or reasoning here. I think it's unfortunate because, in fact, both are good

amendments, and he's picking when he wants consistencies and when he's comfortable with inconsistencies, and I don't think that that is a net positive for the legislation on the whole, but I'll let some of my colleagues speak more to the other points.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Stier: Well, good morning and thank you, Madam Chair. Good morning, everyone. It's an interesting debate that we're having here on the local elections changes for local councillors and so on and so forth for municipalities this morning. That's for sure.

As we went through the bill, we found an awful lot that was significant in there. And as we all know, throughout municipal elections, particularly in the larger urban centres, you see an awful lot of feistiness and you see an awful lot of unfortunate situations that some of the other members today may be speaking of beyond this particular amendment in terms of polling station issues and so on.

I would just like to readdress what's been discussed so far this morning a little bit by going over some of the stuff that has come to light when we were researching this. Just to remind everyone, what we're talking about here with this amendment, A2, is that we're going to be striking out in clause (b), under section 170, the words beginning with "other" that say "other than a trade union or employee organization," and also we're going to be striking out clause (c). So there seems to be a bit of a loophole in this little set of circumstances that we're discussing, from the manner in which it's been presented.

You know, section 56 in the proposed section 170 of the act outlines the rules for groups who wish to make an advertising contribution to the party. What is a group? You know, why this "group" is being separated out is a concern. I note, too, that if I go back into the earlier part of the briefing that we had on this, one of the things we were trying to do overall in these changes to election acts and the way they're working is to disallow corporate and union donations, yet here we have, it seems, a way for the unions to be involved. It doesn't make sense to me.

Anyway, the definition for group is important to note here, I think. It's section 162(1)(h), on page 55, which defines a group as an unincorporated group of individuals or corporations acting in consort for a common purpose and includes . . . and includes

. . . a trade union and an employee organization or any combination of individuals, corporations, trade unions or employee organizations.

Now, that is what is in the definition in the act. I didn't write that myself.

It seems that Bill 23 is proposing that a group can donate to a third-party advertiser only, one, if its members donated the money to the group voluntarily and two, if the group made it clear to its members that the money it was collecting was being donated to a third-party advertiser and if the names of the members who made the payments and the amount that they paid each are recorded by the group and provided to the third-party advertiser.

So, you know, our amendment that we're proposing here would remove the exemptions for unions that allow them to donate money to third-party advertisers that was not collected explicitly for that purpose; in other words, union dues. Section 170 says that groups that are not unions or employee organizations can only donate to a third-party funds that were collected from its members voluntarily explicitly for the purpose of donating and that are attributed to the member from which the funds came. It seems like it is exempting unions and employee organizations from any of these restrictions.

10:20

On one side you've got one set of arguments. On the other side you've got another set of arguments within the same bill. This exemption, if left unchanged, would allow the unions to donate money to third-party advertisers that was collected from its members that the union told them was for, actually, possibly other purposes. It's disappointing to see this going in this direction, and what we're doing with our amendment is trying to clean that up, taking out the words in clause (b) and striking out "other than a trade union or employee organization" and closing a loophole.

Those are my comments at this stage, Madam Chair. I look forward to hearing what else may be brought up from others here at this time.

Thank you.

The Chair: Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Mr. Dreeshen: Thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to speak here today on this amendment to Bill 23. I concur with my two former colleagues that this is a very important amendment because . . .

An Hon. Member: Former?

Mr. Dreeshen: My colleagues that went before me. Sorry.

I do believe that it does make a very important change to this piece of legislation. I do find it interesting, Madam Chair, that the minister and the NDP just couldn't help themselves. They had to create a backdoor, a trap door, exemption for unions to be able to have their hidden union money funnel in through to PACs. Really, it's astonishing. It's almost like they thought they could get away with it, and I think that it's great that we're actually calling this out. I hope the media actually does a good job in reporting this because unions should only be allowed to contribute to these third-party advertisers with consent from their membership. It makes sense that you would have to actually inform the unions' members that they would use this money for partisan purposes. I think it's very important not just for the benefit of democracy in Alberta but also to actually have unions' members and their rights protected through this legislation so that this sort of hidden union money isn't allowed in municipal elections.

Again, I do believe that the minister thought he could get away with it, but I think it's good that we have this amendment. I'm surprised the minister said that he wouldn't support this amendment.

Madam Chair, if you'd allow me, Jerry Dias, the president of Unifor, a couple of weeks ago came out with some very heavy partisan attacks against Conservatives and to say that we will stop Conservatives. It's interesting that here you have a union boss who goes out of his way to engage in hyperpartisan attacks and then weeks later the Oshawa plant closes and 2,500 of his members are going to lose their job. To me it's unbelievable when you allow unions to be left unchecked. They're not actually going to work in the best interests of their members, especially with this loophole in this piece of legislation allowing union bosses to be able to funnel money in through to third-party advertisers.

I think this is a very good amendment that blocks that abuse from happening from unions, and I do hope that the minister would actually consider this amendment. Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Madam Chair. A couple of brief comments. I will not be supporting this amendment simply because

the opposition just doesn't understand. It's that simple. It's remarkable that all of a sudden they care about union members and their dues. You know, they haven't cared about them before. I mean, all of a sudden there's this sympathy for union members. It's not true what they're saying, that union members don't know where their dues are going. There are monthly meetings held. There are strict financials. They know where the money is going.

The other thing is that most unions do not support political parties. They support ideas, good ideas, platforms, which is why they just don't support our friends on the other side. It's that simple. It is that simple. It's too bad that sometimes the opposition wouldn't stand up for other people that even aren't in unions, workers that aren't in unions. I mean, we've seen, you know, maybe corporations who do donate a lot of money to parties. Well, maybe all that money could've gone to those pensions that they failed to pay sometimes, right? There are a million examples. You've got an old one, Nortel, and Sears recently, where they're just not paying pensions but maybe that money is going into political donations.

I'm not sure about that, but I can't support this amendment because the opposition just can't come up with a strong enough argument to support it. I think the minister has done a good job of explaining this to them, and I'm trying to help them along, too. I will say that I will not be supporting this amendment and let's move on. If you have more amendments, bring them on.

Thank you.

The Chair: Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Mr. Dreeshen: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just in a quick response to the Member for Calgary-Klein, who just recently said that "unions do not support political parties." I find that extremely rich when the Alberta Federation of Labour, actually, in the New Democratic Party's constitution have seats. It's written into their constitution that they're actually part of the New Democratic Party. I find it fascinating that the NDP would stand in this Assembly and say that "unions do not support political parties." It's fascinating. I just thought that I needed to point out that inaccuracy in the member's statement.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2? Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today to speak to the amendment by the hon. Member for . . .

Mr. Cooper: The outstanding . . .

Mr. Smith: . . . the outstanding constituency of Olds-Rimbey . . .

Mr. Cooper: Didsbury. Whoa, whoa, whoa.

Mr. Smith: Olds-Didsbury and . . .

Mr. Cooper: Three Hills.

Mr. Smith: Three Hills. Thank you very much. I know.

Mr. Cooper: He doesn't even care about me.

Mr. Smith: Madam Chair, I may have just burned a few bridges with that introduction there. I'm sorry. I apologize to the member.

I wanted to rise to speak about a gentleman that has been in contact with me over the last two or three weeks who has raised this very concern to me. We'll call this man John. John has some concerns about the fact that union dues, which are mandatory, are

often used to promote issues that should be voluntarily supported by individuals rather than mandatory through the dues.

There are often times, we understand, when unions and other organizations are made up of a collection of people. That's the way it was when I was in the ATA as a professional organization. There were people of all political stripes within the ATA, some them Conservatives like myself and some that would have felt more comfortable in, say, the NDP. We all have different political points of view in these organizations, and for an organization to take a mandatory due and then use it for a political purpose which not all of its members would share seems to me to not pass the test of fairness. He has brought this to my attention, and he is very concerned about the fact that dues are being used for hyperpartisan and hyperpolitical positions and that that should not be legal.

10:30

This amendment addresses that. This amendment tries to level the playing field and make sure that the same rules would apply for those that belong to unions and other professional organizations and those that do not.

I think that most Albertans, when they look at this issue, can understand that there's a discrepancy here that this amendment addresses, and I think that it should receive the support of this House. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Hunter: Madam Chair, in listening to the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon – I got that right – I heard about John, as he was describing this guy. There was another situation that I had heard about from another union member, a new union member. He was newly inducted into a union. Because of being concerned about getting in trouble with the union, he's asked that I do not share his name. I won't call him John. We'll call him Pat.

Pat stated that when he joined the union, he had to sign two papers. The first paper, the first, I guess, contractual agreement, was that the union could use those dues to do what they felt fit, basically allowing them to decide where those union dues were going to go. The second was that he would pay union dues. The interesting thing that he thought was: why do they need to have two of these forms that they were actually signing? He felt that this was completely wrong and unacceptable and that they were overstepping the purpose of the union.

There's nobody in this House, I believe, that believes that unions do not have a purpose. They do have a purpose. They serve a very good purpose, as a check and balance on the private sector and governments that want to take advantage of them. They have to have that right to be able to unionize, and if they so choose, then that is something that they should have the right to do.

However, in this situation we are seeing, once again, a scenario where the government is stacking the deck in favour of those who are giving them a monetary reimbursement or a monetary instrument to be able to help them fight and win an election. In this situation, Madam Chair, this is the government that has proposed that they are going to take dark money out of elections. This is the government that said that they want to take corporate and union donations out. Yet they are making a provision here that would allow them to circumvent the complete narrative that they have presented to Albertans.

It is completely disingenuous, Madam Chair, and it's amazing that they would actually stand in this House, once we've caught them and brought it out, and try to say that this is absolutely not happening. It is plain that this is exactly what they're doing, and we're seeing evidence from union members that are actually sending us some letters saying, you know: we're very concerned about this.

Now, if it's the purpose of the unions to be able to advocate for their members, then do that. But if it's the purpose of the unions to act as a PAC, then let's at least be honest about it with Albertans: "You know what? We're a hundred per cent behind the NDP" or whatever left-leaning political organization that they are supporting. But be honest with Albertans about it so at least Albertans know what playing field they're dealing with, because every time that they argue the fact that big business is buying elections and point the finger there, three are pointing back at them. This is an optics problem that they're going to have to deal with.

I think that this is a reasonable amendment. I think that the hon. member has dug deep into this, has consulted with a wide variety of people, and this is the concern that has been brought forward. I think that this is the natural place that we can talk about this and bring this to light. If we so quickly say that there is nothing to it, once again we're seeing this arrogance that has cost the past government the government. I think it's folly – complete folly – for this government to do this after, basically, three and a half years.

I would be very much in favour of voting for this, and I would recommend that all of our members vote in favour of this. I thank the member for his diligent work, for being able to bring this to light, and for helping me to understand this situation.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Any other speakers to the amendment? Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Mr. Dreeshen: Thank you. Just another quick question, Madam Chair, and it might actually sway some votes on this amendment, hopefully. I just checked. The AFL is actually an association of unions, so the Member for Calgary-Klein can feel good about that. But I just wanted to ask the minister if he could at least tell us: in his consultations did union leaders from the AFL actually ask for this exemption to be put in the piece of legislation?

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A2 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:36 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Drysdale	Smith
Cooper	Hunter	Stier
Dreeshen	Pitt	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Goehring	Payne
Babcock	Gray	Piquette
Bilous	Hinkley	Renaud
Carson	Horne	Rosendahl
Ceci	Jansen	Schmidt
Connolly	Kazim	Schreiner
Coolahan	Kleinstauber	Shepherd
Dach	Larivee	Sucha
Dang	Luff	Turner
Feehan	McPherson	Westhead
Fitzpatrick	Miller	Woollard

Totals: For – 8 Against – 33

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

The Chair: Back on the main bill. Are there any comments, questions, or amendments? Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to rise to speak to Bill 23 this morning, An Act to Renew Local Democracy in Alberta. I think, you know, the minister means well by this bill. I know he's a good guy and well respected amongst all the municipal councillors that I talk to. I think he's doing a good job. It's just that I find myself in this job as opposition. I guess it's my job to oppose government bills, so I'm going to have some comments. My comments are around the fact that I spent 15 years as a municipal councillor. I've been on that side of it, so I see this side, and I can tell this House that municipal politics, at least rural municipal politics, is nonpartisan. There's no partisan in it, so I have some concerns about this.

Talking to all my colleagues in municipal politics – I visit with them lots as part of my job – I've never heard concerns from them asking for these kinds of big changes in local elections, so I'm a little surprised at some of the things in this bill. You know, the minister, when he introduced it, said that he had support of RMA and AUMA. I'm sure he probably did talk to the chairs or whatever and they give him support. But I hope he didn't show them the bill before he introduced it. I'm sure he didn't. He probably just assured them that it was all good and it was a good thing for them, so of course they're going to support it. But, I mean, the bill has 89 pages in it. I don't think he went through all 89 pages with RMA or AUMA to explain the changes there. If he says that it's good, they'd believe him and say: yeah; we'll support you on it. But the devil is always in the details, and in 89 pages there's a lot of details.

I've talked to my mayor of Grande Prairie. I've talked to lots and lots of rural councillors at the RMA last week. I know a lot of them, and none of them that I talked to knew the rules in the bill. Most of them didn't even read anything about the bill, quite frankly. My mayor did, but he didn't know the details, and probably he shouldn't because he wouldn't have been shown the bill before. But they were all surprised when they heard some of the things in there, like nonresidency and vouching for as many people as you want. They all said, "That's not in there." And I said: "Yeah. Well, read the bill." Of course, none of them had.

So those are some of my concerns. They didn't agree with some of those things once they heard the details, and that's just a few of them.

One of the other things in this bill is moving municipal elections financing into PACs and unions like this government has done with the provincial elections. Now they're forcing it into municipal elections. I don't really agree with that, and I'm a little confused by this government. Like, a month ago they were saying how bad PACs were and they're no good. They say: well, we took big money out of politics. Well, I'm afraid they didn't. They just drove it underground. We don't see where it is in all these PACs and unions. Before maybe there was money there, but it was all accounted for and shown and reported and everybody knew where it was. Now I can tell you that you've got no idea where some of these PACs are getting their money from. Now they're trying to force that on municipal elections.

So does the government like PACs or do they not, and if they don't like them, why are they forcing them on municipal elections? I'm a little confused about that. I know that just, like, a month ago they were saying in this House how bad PACs were for it. I think forcing money underground so we don't know what's going on

hasn't helped the transparency of either our provincial or now municipal elections. I'm not sure if this is the way for this government to have unions now influence municipal elections, whether the unions can get people on our big city councils to affect how those councils are going to vote and treat unions. I'm just not sure why. That's my suspicion.

The financial disclosure statements: I mean, it's all good to bring in all these more rules and make it harder. You know, there's a big difference between small rural councils and big city councils, and I know that in a big city maybe more rules are needed. But in the small rurals, most of it – I went through five elections there, five years, and never raised any money. It was all self-funded. Now all of a sudden it's going to make it harder to do that, all the rules and reporting. I saw it the last time that some good people got disqualified because they didn't follow the rules. Of course, there are a lot of rules and they don't understand them all and didn't deliberately do anything wrong, but they misstepped on some technicalities, and they were kicked out.

I just hope that passing this legislation and the way they're going – maybe we need to separate between small rurals and big cities. I'm not going to talk about big cities, but I just hope we're not taking people that live in their communities and really care what happens in their communities and are just good, solid people in their communities – I hope we're not chasing them away from running and we're going to build our councils out of lawyers and accountants because they're the only ones that can figure out these technical, crazy rules. Somebody else isn't going to bother with that stuff and just say: the heck with it. I know that back when I first got into municipal politics as a farmer, I wouldn't have. I would have just said, "To heck with it" and wouldn't have run. I just hope we're not doing that. That's why I have some concerns about this legislation.

11:00

You know, we say, "Well, we want to mirror the rules in provincial and municipal elections; we want everything to be the same," but then we've already heard in some amendments that they're not the same. Like, if we're going to make them the same, why not give municipalities the ability to give tax deductions? That's the way it is provincially. You want to make it the same but, no, not quite the same; you want to keep separate rules.

You know, these are just some of my concerns generally. I just think we should have a difference between small rurals and big cities. I'm not necessarily against the bill. There are a lot of good things in here, whether you vote for it or against it. I'm just not sure why we have all this stuff in the bill. I'm suspicious of it, and so are some of my municipal colleagues.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak this morning, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to my colleague from Grande Prairie-Wapiti. I know that his commitment to public service has been long standing. I think that between his municipal service and his service now in this House it's 26 years if I'm not mistaken. You know, anyone that has given their life's work to our province, whether it's at the municipal level or the provincial level, I believe deserves our thanks. Unfortunately for this place, that hon. member is not going to see too many more days here in this Chamber.

On behalf of the good people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills I personally would like to thank him. I know that I have learned a significant amount about what it is to serve the public, about what

it is to serve this Chamber, about what it is to interact in the legislative precinct, you know, to act in all aspects of this job with integrity and honesty, and if there is anyone who has been a reflection of that over his whole career, it is the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

I actually hadn't planned on thanking him, but I do believe that he really does deserve our thanks. I can see him shaking his head back there. I know how uncomfortable this sort of public recognition of such an incredible commitment to our province makes him. That's just the kind of person that he is. He doesn't have a desire to have recognition for his commitment to the province. He really just wants to leave the place better than he found it, and I really, truly believe that that's exactly what he's done. So from the bottom of my heart thanks so much for everything and for what you've taught me and all of the work that you've done.

I hope that as an Assembly, as we get closer to the end of this term, we'll have an opportunity to recognize in a more formal way some of those that have done an incredible amount of service to this place.

Having said that, let's get back to the business of the morning, and that is this bill, Bill 23, that my colleague from across the way has proposed, the act to save local democracy or whatever it's called, something close to that. I would like to just propose an amendment briefly this morning on that, and I'll just wait for your command.

The Chair: This will be known as amendment A3.

Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. Cooper: Excellent. Well, thank you, Chair. I move that Bill 23, An Act to Renew Local Democracy in Alberta, be amended in section 51 in the proposed section 147.34 by striking out "election expenses" and substituting "campaign expenses."

Now, Madam Chair, I believe that this should be a fairly easy amendment for us to deal with this morning. It appears that there was a small oversight in the drafting of the legislation. You know, I know that I have jested with the member across on how he talked about his consultation and how the bill is so perfect. Then he had to amend his own piece of legislation because it turns out that it wasn't perfect. I think that in the name of due diligence and consistent study we should make sure that the legislation accurately reflects the intention of the minister, which, in fact, from time to time is the main goal of the Official Opposition.

I believe that on page 41, section 147.34, where it discusses campaign expense limits being left to the regulations, the challenge is that it uses the words "election expenses" and not "campaign expenses" in the text of the subsection. As such, election expenses are not actually defined anywhere in the bill or, in fact, in the Local Authorities Election Act. It would create some significant uncertainty. I know that we've heard from the minister this morning that sometimes he's okay with inconsistencies between the municipal elections act and the Local Authorities Election Act, and other times he's not. But it's my sense that the minister, too, recognizes that this is a small oversight, and it would make good sense that we correct this particular section.

You'll know, Madam Chair, that on page 34 the proposed section 147.1(1)(a) does in fact define a campaign expense as

any expense incurred, or non-monetary contribution received, by a candidate to the extent that the property or service that the expense was incurred for, or that was received as a non-monetary contribution, is used to directly promote or oppose a candidate during a campaign period, and includes an expense incurred for, or a non-monetary contribution . . .

The definition of campaign expense is clear; for election expense it is not. As such, I believe that we should go ahead and make this amendment quickly. We're going to have some significant discussion around these campaign expenses later on in some of the amendment process, but I think that for now it would make very good sense for us to go ahead and pass this amendment so as not to continue to create uncertainty for those looking for clarity around the rules of what is or what isn't a campaign expense and not, in fact, an election expense.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will never claim to be perfect, but if the member keeps saying that, my face might be as red as the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti's when he, deservedly so, got kudos for his long service.

The Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills and I like to give each other a hard time and rib each other from time to time. Though we might not agree on much, Madam Chair, even a broken clock is right twice a day. In that spirit, I do believe that this is a good amendment. He's not even listening to my good jokes. Come on.

Mr. Smith: That's okay. I appreciate it.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Member.

We believe that election expenses and campaign expenses were basically the same thing, but the member raises a good point that "election expenses" is not defined in the act whereas "campaign expenses" is defined as a term under section 147.1(1)(a). This amendment would add consistency and clarity to the act, and I thank the hon. member for bringing it forward. I urge all members to support this amendment.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A3?

Seeing none, we'll call the vote.

[Motion on amendment A3 carried]

Larivee: At this time I would like to move that we adjourn debate on Bill 23.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

11:10

Bill 29 Public Service Employee Relations Amendment Act, 2018

The Chair: Any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you. It's a pleasure to be able to rise and speak to Bill 29, the Public Service Employee Relations Amendment Act, 2018. We've had a few good discussions, I believe, on this bill, and I had indicated earlier that I would be bringing forward amendments to this bill. What I would like to do, Madam Chair, is that I would like to provide you with an amendment at this time. I have the requisite number of copies.

The Chair: This will be known as amendment A1.

Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Chair. For this amendment I move that Bill 29, Public Service Employee Relations Amendment Act, 2018, be amended in section 8(1) by striking out "June 1, 2019" and substituting "December 31, 2019." This is, I think, a common-sense amendment that addresses the concern that the

universities have provided in their written submissions to this government as they were crafting this bill. The submission and the concern that they had brought forward is that they needed to have more than six months in order to be able to implement for HR departments, for legal teams this act and this legislation.

I have crafted this amendment in the hopes that the government will take a sober second look at this and do the right thing and provide the universities, which this will be having a direct material effect on, with that necessary time. They had asked for two to four years; we're asking for just another six months. I think it's a reasonable compromise, Madam Chair, and I hope that the members opposite will take a serious look at this amendment in our debate here today.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Labour.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and thank you to the member for the suggested amendment. We have been in conversations with universities and those impacted by the changes to this bill. The member is correct that the postsecondary sector did request a longer adjustment time specifically for the moving of nonacademic staff from under PSERA as a labour relations regime into the Labour Relations Code. We have given them that longer adjustment period because the transition period for that move is going to be July 1, 2022. That date was chosen because it aligns with the change that is also happening for academic staff. This allows us to have a single bargaining regime in our postsecondary sector, because all academic and nonacademic staff will be under the Labour Relations Code, as opposed to having some under the Labour Relations Code and some under PSERA.

The changes that are happening on June 1, 2019, are dealing with a section that specifically excludes some workers from being able to be part of the bargaining unit based on some classifications. This is a section where we've received the strong legal opinion that it would not be upheld given the recent Supreme Court rulings around the importance of the right to collectively bargain. The reason that that section is happening on June 1, 2019, is because we're dealing with constitutionally protected rights of workers to be able to collectively bargain.

I can tell you, from the correspondence and the work that we've done with the postsecondary sector, that universities were expecting this change, and it had been communicated to them. Their concern about a longer transition period is really about the bigger change of nonacademic staff moving into the labour relations system. I'm very pleased to say that we were able to work with them and exceed their request for amount of transition time because that change will not happen until July 1, 2022.

Because extending the transition period or the implementation date would essentially delay workers having that Supreme Court protected right to collectively bargain, I will not be supporting this amendment. But the member's concern that we give appropriate transition to our universities is absolutely well taken, and we have done that in the areas where they have the greatest concern, again, by not transitioning nonacademic staff until July 1, 2022. I appreciate the intent, but I will not be supporting this amendment.

Mr. Hunter: Madam Chair, I appreciate the minister's comments on this. One question I have for her. As she was speaking, she said that she was concerned or that the ministry was concerned that this would not meet a constitutional challenge. Is there a constitutional challenge presently?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much. Section 12, that we are talking about, specifically excludes bargaining rights to people of five different titles. One of those I have personal experience with because the title is systems analyst. Working in the IT world, I knew many people with this title. It's a title that my husband has held at various employers in various pieces of the process.

Right now there has been a concern around whether this section is constitutional. Now, the lower courts, as the member mentioned in his opening comments during second reading – he's correct that some of the lower courts have said that they don't think that there's a constitutional challenge, but it's currently under appeal. It hasn't been fully litigated, and given the Supreme Court rulings in a number of cases it is the strong legal opinion that our government has received and my belief that under this new labour relations climate this section would not be upheld. It's a priority for me as Minister of Labour to make sure that we have a labour relations system that would meet the test of respecting the rights of workers to collectively bargain. For that reason, we are making this change and removing that exclusion for these five titles of workers.

My understanding is that the current challenge is moving forward into an appeal process, and this change will mean that that process would not need to proceed because we would remove the exclusion that is currently under legal debate. I hope that answers the member's question.

Mr. Hunter: Madam Chair, I appreciate the minister, and she knows that I have the deepest respect for her, but let's be one hundred per cent clear here. This is not just a few court cases or a court case.

I'm going to read into the record so that the members of this House have an understanding of the scope of how many times AUPE has actually challenged this: AUPE versus Alberta, 2014, ABCA 43; Alberta Union of Provincial Employees versus Alberta, 2013; Alberta versus Alberta Union of Provincial Employees, 2011; Red Deer College versus the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees, 2017; Alberta Union of Provincial Employees versus University of Calgary, 2008; Alberta Union of Provincial Employees versus Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, 2015; Alberta Union of Provincial Employees versus Board of Governors, Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, 2011; Alberta Union of Provincial Employees versus Board of Governors, Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, 2010; Alberta Union of Provincial Employees versus Alberta, 2011.

There are nine challenges there that I've just read, nine challenges that indicate that AUPE has been trying to establish that 12(1) is their constitutional right. They have brought this forward not just in terms of a legal challenge, but they've brought this forward to the Labour Relations Board as well. Each time, Madam Chair, this has been rejected, and they have ruled in favour of the government and in favour of the universities.

11:20

I think that what the minister is saying is: the legal opinion, we believe, is that if it was brought as a constitutional challenge, it would uphold the AUPE's challenges for these many years. If that is the case that she's bringing forward, why does she need to actually give legislative right to the AUPE prior to that challenge happening? It would seem, in my opinion, that it would be prudent for the government to wait for the challenge to actually happen. If the AUPE believes in the efficacy of their argument, that it is actually something that is right, then I don't see why they need to have legislation to actually force – force – 12(1) on PSERA. This seems heavy handed to me.

Look, I'm interested in hearing a rebuttal to that. I think that Albertans and especially members of PSERA – I believe we're talking about almost 19,000 members. I believe they deserve to have an answer to this.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you, Madam Chair. Really quickly, we're not talking about 19,000 members. We're talking about, right now, people of five job titles who are not part of the union because they've been excluded. We are talking about people who have been denied their constitutionally protected right to collectively bargain. The examples that the member cited of previous court cases all took place before the 2015 Saskatchewan Federation of Labour versus Saskatchewan ruling by the Supreme Court that reinforced and upheld that constitutionally protected right to collectively bargain. It's the result of that 2015 decision – our legal opinion now strongly suggests that this is unconstitutional. As to why we don't wait, again, it's because this government believes in protecting the constitutional rights of all workers, all Albertans.

Those are my just brief rebuttals. This is about fairness, and this is about making sure that all workers, their rights, are protected.

Thank you.

Mr. Hunter: Madam Chair, fine. I accept the argument. Once again it does not answer the question, which is: if she believes in the value of her argument, then – this is a court challenge – let them take it to the Supreme Court and let them fight it out there. Let AUPE challenge this in the Supreme Court. I don't see why, again, they have to have this heavy-handed approach to ramming this through. The only reason why I can see this happening is because this government is very concerned that they are not going to be in government in the next six months, and they have to have this legislative cudgel in order to be able to get this done for AUPE. If that's the case, I'm calling them out on it. I believe that Albertans deserve to have the right to know that this is what's happening.

Now, she said that this does not affect 18,900 of the 19,000 members. She's absolutely right. I asked her chief of staff, when we did the technical briefing on this, how many it actually does affect, and the answer was that they don't know. But our researchers are a little better than theirs – I just wanted to make sure you were listening this morning – and I found out that it's about 6,774 employees. That is a substantial number of people. I think that at least those members deserve to know the background on this situation and at least need to know how many times these five classifications have gone to court: nine times.

The courts have found that those classifications should be exempted from the collective bargaining because of the sensitivity, from what I understand, of the information that they have. I want to just read to you who those people are. We're talking about a budget officer, a systems analyst, an auditor, a disbursement control officer, a hearing officer. Those positions and those classifications have important information that could cause a material effect on collective bargaining, and this is the reason why they're exempted.

I once again think that this is just an issue that this government is bringing forward because they don't believe they're going to be in government and they need to be able to tie up these loose ends and bring a little more of their public servants into the union fold of AUPE.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Mr. Dreesen: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would just like to speak in favour of this amendment from my good friend from Cardston-Taber-Warner because I think it's a simple one. We're ultimately just asking for more time. It's not just my colleague from Cardston-Taber-Warner that is asking it, but also the universities have been asking for more time to wrap their heads around this. I think it's a reasonable amendment, and I hope the minister and the folks across the way will support this.

Just a quick question to the minister on the court case that is pending right now: what effect does she think this legislation in its current form would actually have on the ongoing court case?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much. It is my understanding, although I am not a lawyer, that the appeal that is currently planned and moving forward would no longer be necessary because this legislation would resolve the constitutional concern that that court case is discussing.

I would like to just clarify very quickly that this is not about AUPE, as the members across have suggested multiple times. This is about five professions of workers not receiving their constitutionally protected right to collectively bargain and being excluded from that collective bargaining process. There are a number of workers within those professions, so this is not about a particular union. This is just about fairness and making sure that we protect the constitutional rights of workers.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

The Chair: We're back on the main bill. Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments?

Mr. Hunter: Madam Chair, I would like to bring forward another amendment to this bill. I will provide the necessary copies and wait for your information.

The Chair: This will be known as amendment A2.

Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that Bill 29, Public Service Employee Relations Amendment Act, 2018, be amended in section 8(2) by striking out "July 1, 2022" and substituting "July 1, 2027."

Now, there is a five-year add to this. Very simply, Minister, this is an issue of: they asked for two to four years. This is adding more time because the transition is substantial. There's going to be a lot of work in terms of the HR and legal departments. I've already made the argument for increasing the timelines in the last amendment, so I will not pontificate anymore on this one.

I would urge all members to be able to vote for this. Again, the issue is about giving them the necessary time to be able to implement these things.

11:30

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much. With the current transition timeline of July 1, 2022, we are giving sufficient time to the postsecondary sector. More importantly, that date aligns with the date when academic staff will be falling under the Labour Relations Code. It makes sense to have this transition for both academic and

nonacademic staff happen at the same time rather than one many years later. So I will not be supporting this amendment.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A2 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:31 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Drysdale	Smith
Clark	Hunter	Stier
Dreeshen	Pitt	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Goehring	Piquette
Babcock	Gray	Renaud
Bilous	Hinkley	Rosendahl
Carson	Horne	Schmidt
Ceci	Jansen	Schreiner
Connolly	Kazim	Shepherd
Coolahan	Kleinstauber	Sucha
Dach	Larivee	Sweet
Dang	McCuaig-Boyd	Turner
Feehan	Miller	Westhead
Fitzpatrick	Payne	Woollard

Totals:	For – 8	Against – 33
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[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

The Chair: Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to Bill 29?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

Hon. Members: Question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 29 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Larivee: Thank you, Madam Chair. At this time I'd like to move that we rise and report Bill 29 and report progress on bills 22 and 23.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 29. The committee reports progress on the following bills: Bill 22 and Bill 23. I wish to table all copies of amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report? Say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Larivee: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Given that we've made great progress this morning, I'd like to move that we adjourn until 1:30 today.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:50 a.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, November 28, 2018

Day 55

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (NDP), Speaker
Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (NDP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (UCP),
Deputy Leader of the Official Opposition
Anderson, Hon. Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (NDP)
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (UCP)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (NDP)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (NDP)
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (NDP)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (NDP)
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Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (NDP)
Dreeschen, Devin, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UCP)
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Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (NDP)
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Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (NDP)
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (AP)
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (NDP),
Deputy Government House Leader
Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (Ind)
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)
Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Conklin (UCP)
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)
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Schneider, David A., Little Bow (UCP)
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Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)
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Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (UCP)
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (NDP),
Deputy Government Whip
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)

Party standings:

New Democratic: 53 United Conservative: 26 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Freedom Conservative: 1 Independent: 2 Progressive Conservative: 1

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Kleinsteinuber	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, November 28, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is really my pleasure today to rise and introduce to you and through you 28 brilliant students from the greatest constituency in the province. Honestly, I'm sorry I missed a photo with them because I was enjoying so much time here in this Chamber while they were trying to get their photo. Seated behind me from George P. Nicholson school are the students accompanied by their teacher, Mrs. Lorelei Campbell, along with their chaperones: Mrs. Kelly Miller, Mrs. Stephanie Pajo, Mr. Dennis Pajo, and Mrs. Nancy Mah. If they'd please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and to introduce to you and through you 48 students, the second group from Leo Nickerson elementary school in St. Albert. The students are accompanied by their teachers Dillon Knoll, Joel Wood, and Nacima Strader and their chaperones Carly Chalupa and Jenny Schroeder. I ask them all to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Peace River.

Ms Jabbour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to the House a guest of yours seated in your gallery. Wayne Resch has been the acting president of Medicine Hat College since March of this year, but his history in the city and particularly at the college goes back nearly two decades. Wayne was a student athlete playing for the Medicine Hat College Rattlers volleyball team before joining the college's administration in 2003. He continued with the administration throughout the years, holding positions of manager of financial services, chief financial officer, vice-president of administration, and then was named acting president earlier this year. Wayne has been an invaluable asset not only to Medicine Hat College but the city as a whole. I would ask him now to please rise and accept the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you some dear family members by marriage. First off is a fine young lad named Manitoba Watson, who is with his dad, Daniel, and his mom, Geraldine, from Fillings, France, a beautiful spot in the Alps that my wife and I had the chance to visit this summer. With them is Manitoba's grandmother, Sheryl Watson, from Devon, and Manitoba's great-grandmother, Anna Owen, from Edmonton. It is not often that we get the chance in this House to introduce four generations from one family, so I'd ask that my guests now rise and we give them a rousing traditional welcome.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a friend of mine from Nordegg, Monica Ahlstrom, who, of course, is part of Ahlstrom helicopters in that area. She gets to live in one of the most beautiful places in the world. First of all, her family does a tremendous amount of work there, but she's also the president of Search and Rescue Alberta, so when you are in my backyard and you make a silly mistake or even if it wasn't so silly, she and her team are the ones coming to get you and get you back home. We had a great meeting with her today, and I would ask that she rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my absolute privilege to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a group of leaders from the Lebanese community. Later today I will be speaking about the 75th anniversary of Lebanon's independence. I would ask my guests to rise as I call your names: Monsignor Charles Saad, Sheik Rabih Salamy, Father Issa Maamar, Joe Hak, Youssef Abou Rjeily, Bassam El-Ahmar, Joseph Rustom, Samir Bleibel, Marcelle Abou Rjeily, Nicolas Samia, and Tom Choucair. Thank you, all, for coming today and for your incredible leadership. I would ask that all members join me in extending the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Pat Garrett, who is the executive director of WINGS of Providence in Edmonton-Ellerslie. As we all know, November is Domestic Violence Awareness Month, and Wings offers a second-stage shelter and affordable housing for women with children who have experienced family violence. They address the social, psychological, and health issues affecting women and children, with inclusive programs for clients of all backgrounds. I had the privilege of visiting Wings alongside the Minister of Health last month and got the chance to tour their new youth room and visit with their families. I want to thank Pat and all of her staff for the amazing work that they do day in, day out not only for Edmonton-Ellerslie but for all Albertans there. Pat, please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Mr. Rosendahl: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you and to all members of the Assembly Mr. Neil Rieger, president of the Edson Rotary Club. Neil has been instrumental in the club's highway to Mexico project, where used vehicles and supplies are driven to Mexico and distributed to communities in the Mazatlán area. The Rotary clubs of Edson and Grande Prairie have donated over 60 vehicles since the start of the project. I will speak more about the highway to Mexico later today. I will ask Neil Rieger to now rise to receive the traditional welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my distinct privilege to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a group of stakeholders that are in the gallery today to watch as I introduce private member's Bill 211. This bill is a request to the government to look into establishing the mandatory underground infrastructure notification system. Over half of line strikes in Alberta last year were because no locate requests were sought out with Alberta One-Call. As I say your name, please rise: Michelle Tetreault, Alberta Common Ground Alliance; Sean Sullivan, Alberta Common Ground Alliance; Brian Bettis of Telus; Darcy Hurlock of Telus; Darwin Durnie of the Alberta Public Works Association; Mat Steppan, Association of Science and Engineering Technology Professionals; Iain Stables, ATCO; Melissa Pierce of Suncor; and Jonah Porter of Plains Midstream. They've already risen. Please accept the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all the members of the Assembly two amazing Alberta women, Christie Bergman and her mother, Jody Nicholson. Christie is heavily involved in politics – actually, I think that's probably an understatement – in the Leduc-Beaumont area. In fact, I had supper with her last week, and it was amazing to see the impact that she's had on her community and how much they love her and how much she has brought that community together. Jody is the executive director of VALID, an organization that supports persons with disabilities in Vegreville. These amazing, powerful ladies are both working to make Alberta a better place every day, and I am so grateful to them for that. Would you please rise, and let's give them the warm traditional welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. members, are there other guests to be introduced today? The hon. Member for Calgary-Acadia.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you someone who is well known to the Calgary New Democrat MLAs, our NDP field organizer, Ryan Robinson. He joins us today from Calgary. It's actually his first time getting to come see our government in action, which is great because that means we're going to send him home with the inspiration to make sure that there are just as many if not more of us on this side of the House come 2019. On behalf of all the Calgary MLAs and everyone else we work with, we wanted to take a moment to say thank you to Mr. Robinson for his work supporting our local ridings and the work to ensure term 2 for this wonderful government, that's doing its best to make life better for all Albertans. I would ask that he now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

1:40

The Speaker: Welcome. Are there any other guests, hon. members? The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise to introduce to the Assembly today a dedicated Albertan joining us all the way from Lethbridge. Kurt Schlachter serves as the chair of the board of governors at the University of Lethbridge. We met earlier today to discuss some of the initiatives that are being undertaken by that university. I am pleased to say that the new science building there is on track. Kurt told us those magic words that every minister wants to hear when it comes to an infrastructure project: on time and on budget. We're pleased to be opening that building in the very

near future. In recognition of his service to the university and our province I'd ask Kurt to please rise and accept the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: Hon. members, I'd just use this opportunity to remind all of you that there will an emergency testing taking place today at 1:55. That will be sent out to most cellphones. I'm sure there are no cellphones in here, but just in case there are, I kindly remind all of you to put your phones on silent.

The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Female Genital Mutilation

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. November 25th marked the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and launched 16 Days of Activism, a campaign to highlight the discussion around ending violence against women and girls world-wide. Even today 1 in 3 women world-wide experiences gender-based violence. This violence is not limited to faraway places with unstable political regimes. In fact, it's happening right here in our own backyard. Female genital mutilation, FGM, affects 200 million women and girls world-wide. A recent 2016 study found that FGM procedures have taken place on Canadian soil although the majority of FGM takes place when Canadian girls are sent abroad over their school breaks, a practice referred to as "vacation cutting."

Mr. Speaker, all of this is strictly illegal under the Canadian Criminal Code. Despite the prevalence of the practice, there has never been a criminal prosecution on FGM in Canada. In fact, last week in the United States I was heartbroken, absolutely heartbroken, to learn that a judge had dropped nearly all of the charges against a Michigan doctor accused of performing cutting on at least nine underage girls, claiming that the federal FGM law was unconstitutional. I am sickened that in this day and age, when we have the tools available to us to protect these girls, we have allowed them to be further victimized and this time by the justice system. It's unacceptable. This is an act of brutality that cannot continue.

Mr. Speaker, we must stand up and protect our girls. We have to take action. We have to talk about these issues no matter how horrific they are. We have to educate. We have to work with these communities. We need our governments at all levels to take accountability for putting an end to this practice.

As part of the 16 Days of Activism I promise to continue to use my voice to speak out against this horrific act and to do everything in my power to make sure that this despicable practice is a thing of the past.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Rotary Club Highway to Mexico Project

Mr. Rosendahl: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I recognize the Rotary clubs of Edson and Grande Prairie on a successful 16th year of the highway to Mexico project. Since the project's inception in 2002 the clubs have made the annual 5,000-kilometre journey from Edson to Mazatlán, Mexico, in used school buses, ambulances, and fire trucks. Upon arrival the vehicles are donated to a partner Rotary Club, who distributes them based on greatest need throughout Mazatlán and surrounding communities. This past year one fire truck, five buses, and one rescue unit were donated. So far in total 88 vehicles have been delivered since 2002. And a historic

landmark will be reached in 2019, when the project intends to deliver their 100th vehicle.

In addition to the vehicles, volunteers distribute much-needed goods, including school supplies, computers, firefighting equipment, first aid equipment, and wheelchairs. They also provide training and expertise to emergency workers. This allows local groups to protect the property and lives of the people in their communities. This project is truly an Alberta-wide effort, relying on the generosity of individuals, communities, and businesses from across the province. The city of Red Deer, MD of Greenview, Woodlands county, Mackenzie county, and the town of High Level as well as SemCams, Diesel Shop, Three Penguins Signs, Morad Communications, and Shell Canada have all generously donated to the cause.

Rotarians report that the extensive planning and gruelling week-long drive become immediately worth it after seeing the dramatic impact the project has on the quality of life for people in the Mazatlán region. To the Rotary representative with us today, Edson president Neil Rieger: thank you for your personal commitment.

Carbon Levy and Agricultural Costs

Mr. Cooper: Today I'd like to recognize the thousands of hard-working farmers in our province. Unfortunately, it wasn't a great harvest year, mostly due to unco-operative weather, but working long hours and accepting these risks are just what our farmers do. I think I can speak for everyone here in the House that we all are so, so thankful for their hard work. You know, farming is a tough business, and when it comes to this business, so much of it is out of their control. They deserve for us to have their backs.

Over the past two years I've heard members in this Legislature declare that farmers are exempt from paying this government's carbon tax, but that's not exactly true. Farmers pay the carbon tax in a variety of ways, be it heat, electricity, fertilizer, grain drying, or rail transportation. Recently my office has learned of yet another way that this government is going after farmers, through local suppliers. I have a constituent who provides feed-grinding services for local beef producers. The government recently ordered him to switch from the farm fuel benefit program and register instead as a tax-exempt fuel user. What's the difference, you ask? Under the TEFU program he's expected to pay carbon taxes. But it's a shell game. At the end of the day, he'll be forced to pass these costs on to his customer, the farmer.

The bottom line is that the farmer who owns his feed-grinding equipment will pay less tax than the farmer who hires to have the work done. The same amount of work is being done, the same animals are fed, the same emissions are produced, so who benefits from this bureaucratic arbitration approach to taxation other than government bean-counters? No one. Taxing them is just another backdoor tax on our farmers and ranchers. All farmers and ranchers deserve better. But the good news is, Mr. Speaker, that better is on the way.

Lebanese Community

Ms Goehring: Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to rise today and speak about the country of Lebanon and of the impact of Lebanese culture and heritage here in Alberta. In 1943 Lebanon gained its independence, and this past Thursday, on November 22, Lebanon celebrated its 75th year of independence. Lebanon is a diverse country, with a population of 6 million people and over 18 religious groups. It's home to beautiful scenery, a deep history, and very delicious cuisine, but most importantly Lebanon is home to a proud, generous, and hospitable people.

Alberta has seen this pride, generosity, and hospitality. Immigration to Canada started in 1882 and continues today. Lebanese-Canadians have succeeded as entrepreneurs, academics, politicians, athletes, actors, musicians, and soldiers. Many Lebanese-Canadians have served in the Canadian Armed Forces. With pride Joe Hak shared the story of his maternal ancestors that homesteaded in what is now Hanna, Alberta. Sam Hallaby and his two sons Stanley and Alex joined the Canadian Armed Forces in 1939. Sam and Alex returned, but Stanley and many of his brothers in the Canadian Armed Forces paid the ultimate sacrifice in the battle of Mount Cassino in Italy. As the government of Alberta's liaison to the Canadian Armed Forces I am grateful for this service and sacrifice.

My constituency of Edmonton-Castle Downs and north Edmonton are home to a vibrant and large Lebanese population. I attended high school at Queen E and fell in love with the Lebanese community, culture, and food. Across Alberta, Lebanese pride is visible throughout businesses, community associations, schools, mosques, and churches. Every day I am honoured to live in such a diverse and hospitable community and province. Every day I have the privilege to be a representative of this community as the MLA for Edmonton-Castle Downs, and I would like to thank Lebanese-Canadians for their contributions to Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

1:50

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

Oil Price Differentials

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the leading experts in Alberta's energy industry says that we are facing, quote, a financial catastrophe with the price differential. Another has referred to this situation as, quote, a five-alarm fire requiring immediate action to prevent a potentially serious recession from being triggered by this price crisis. Will the government join with us in supporting mandatory curtailment of oil production in Alberta so that we can begin getting a fair price for our energy?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we know that the price differential is very damaging. That's why we've been working with industry since day one. That's why we created a special envoy. We certainly have all options on the table. Why do we need those options on the table? Because while the member opposite sat in Ottawa for 20 years, 10 years around the federal cabinet table, he said that, quote, it wasn't his job to defend pipelines. I think most Albertans would be shocked to hear that. It's no wonder why we're in this situation, and certainly our Premier is working diligently to fix it. I wish the hon. member would have done something when he had the chance for 10 years around the federal cabinet table.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the minister just fabricated a statement I've not made.

Today I just did a news conference on an issue that relates to our vital economic interests and for 45 minutes did not utter a single criticism of the government because the future of jobs in this province is more important than partisan politics. I would ask the government for at least for a moment to rise above partisan chippiness, to actually think about Albertans who are facing job losses, and to join with us in calling for mandatory reductions in energy production so that . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Ms Hoffman: I've said it previously, and I'll say it again: certainly, every option is on the table, Mr. Speaker, absolutely. Guess why? Because even though I'm Minister of Health, it's also my job to stand up for all Albertans and all of their jobs. Members of the federal House of Commons: it absolutely is their job, especially when they are minister of employment. To be minister of employment for two years and fail to say the word "pipelines" and pretend you're standing up for Alberta: the hypocrisy is astounding. I think most Albertans would be very disappointed and shocked to know that that's the hon. member's record. He should defend it, or he should revoke. I think we know what the answer is. He doesn't stand up for pipelines.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, that kind of response does a disservice to the office of the Deputy Premier. I sat around a cabinet table that approved four major pipelines, that doubled pipeline capacity by 1.72 billion barrels a day, while members of the party opposite were attending protests against the same pipelines.

Will the government at least consider amending section 85 of the Mines and Minerals Act to include bitumen in the definition of petroleum to allow for production reductions to get a fair price for our oil?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, I've said it before, and I'll say it again: we certainly have all options on the table. This morning our Premier announced that she will be investing, if it comes to that, if the federal government refuses to do so, to get 120,000 barrels per day on rail. Why? Because the member opposite, when he was responsible for employment, failed to get a pipeline to tidewater. I am responsible for Albertans. Every person in Alberta who's elected is responsible to stand up for Albertans. Enough of the hiding. Take responsibility for the fact that the member opposite was around the federal cabinet table for 10 years, two of those being responsible for employment, and failed to get the job done. We failed to get market access to tidewater, and we . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Deputy Premier.
Second main question.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, Albertans watching that performance will be disappointed to see a senior minister acting as though this is some kind of a high school debate. We are talking about the vital economic interests of Albertans. Industry leaders are saying that we may be facing a financial catastrophe with tens of thousands of job layoffs that cannot be addressed by additional rail capacity a year from now. Action is required today. Will the government join with us in acting immediately to seek reductions in energy output to stop the glut that is driving down prices and jeopardizing thousands of Alberta jobs?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, again, the Premier is in Ottawa at this very moment continuing to champion our oil and gas industry. Why? Because when the member opposite was in Ottawa for 10 years as a federal minister, he said that it wasn't his job to do so. Our Premier will continue to do that. She will continue to accelerate rail capacity. She will continue to work to address the differential. All options are on the table, and she will continue to fight to get our product to tidewater because – guess what? – it's her job. It's every member of this government's job, and it certainly was the federal cabinet's job to make sure they got our product to tidewater when the member opposite had a decade of failure.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Deputy Premier.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, instead of the Health minister angrily hurling partisan insults, perhaps I could actually ask the Energy minister to address this matter of the gravest importance to the workers and businesses in our energy sector. Does the minister not understand that if action is not taken immediately, companies are going to be slashing their capital budgets, shutting in, stopping drilling plans for this winter, that could have devastating effects in the service sector and in communities all across Alberta. Does the Minister of Energy understand this?

The Speaker: Thank you.
The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, as I've articulated, the Premier is working to expand rail capacity diligently. She is working, through the envoy and with a number of stakeholders, directly with industry to make sure that we address the differential as expeditiously as possible and as legally as possible. All options are on the table, and she's continuing to fight for that pipeline. Now, will the Leader of the Official Opposition acknowledge that he had responsibility when he was at the federal cabinet table to stand up for Alberta jobs, when he was the minister of employment to fight for Alberta pipelines to tidewater? That's the question.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, once again I will ask the Minister of Energy, whose responsibility this is, whether she will agree, at least as a preventative measure, to co-operate with the opposition in the adoption of an amendment to section 85 of the Mines and Minerals Act that would allow for production controls on bitumen as well as conventional oil so that we could see immediate price correction and then allow the market to come back into balance. Is the minister willing to commit to work with us in a nonpartisan way to achieve these measures to save Alberta jobs?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, certainly, the Premier, the Deputy Premier, the Energy minister, and every member of our government knows that it's our job to stand up for Alberta jobs and to make sure that we are protecting those. No matter what our title is, all of us owe it to stand up for Alberta suppliers. That's why we have the special envoy, that's why we're working with industry, and that's why we know that it's our job to fight for pipelines. The member opposite failed to do so. Don't worry; we've got a number of strong women who are certainly happy to do that with the support of a number of strong men on this side of the House because we know it's our job. The hon. member the Leader of the Official Opposition: it was his job, too.

The Speaker: Third main question.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, Albertans want to see their representatives discussing practical solutions to a crisis that is jeopardizing tens of thousands of jobs. They don't want to see an endless string of partisan insults hurled across this Chamber.

I will ask the Minister of Energy – the Minister of Energy – whose responsibility this is: will she join with us in seeking ways to enforce the fair application of rules with respect to apportionment on the common-use pipelines like the Enbridge main line to prevent the marked distortion known as air barrels?

The Speaker: Thank you.
The Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. You know, as the Deputy Premier and our Premier have said, all options are on the table. As the leader opposite knows, the industry is extremely divided on the matter of curtailment, so that's why we've sent experts in to talk about the solutions that are going to be working. Certainly, the one he describes is one solution. There are many solutions. We need short-term, medium-term, and long-term solutions to this issue, and the long term absolutely is pipelines.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for a thoughtful and serious response.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister agree with me that there are legitimate concerns about manipulative marketing practices in nominating so-called air barrels that have created distressed barrels and pushed down the price? Will she not agree with me that action is necessary to stop this reduction in the price of Alberta oil, which belongs, after all, not to the oil companies but to Albertans? Will she join with us in addressing this problem around access to the main line?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

2:00

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our government certainly is very concerned about the impact that the differential has had. That's why we know how important it is to get our product to tidewater. The only way we can have certainty in the long term is to make sure that we have access to global markets so we can get global prices. We're in this situation because of a decade of failure by the federal Conservative government while we had a provincial Conservative government in this House. Fortunately, we've got different people at the table fighting hard every day to make sure that we address the differential, that we increase our capacity by rail when necessary, and that we get our pipeline to tidewater.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, let me again ask the Minister of Energy, whose responsibility this is: does she agree with me that energy producers have reduced voluntarily production by some 200,000 barrels per day, approximately, but that we would need to see a sustained reduction in the range of 400,000 barrels per day for the current glut in inventories, at 35 million barrels, to be cut in half and to bring the market back to balance? Does she agree with that basic math, and does she therefore think that the voluntary approach is not sufficient to restoring balance to Alberta's oil markets?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, it's very clear that the member opposite has flip-flopped on his position on this than he did a few days ago. It's a good thing we didn't follow his advice at that time. What we've been doing is working with all of the partners in industry through the energy envoy to make sure that we get fair prices for our product. We need that because it's been 65 years since we've got a Canadian pipeline to Canadian tidewater. Sixty five years. I know that the member opposite had 10 years while he was in the federal government in Ottawa to fix that. He said that it, quote, wasn't my job. Well, it certainly was his job, but fortunately we're here to make sure that we move this forward and that we get the job done.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government promised to get Alberta off the oil roller coaster. After committing

to buy into the stalled federal Trans Mountain pipeline, we now learn that Alberta will be investing an unknown and unapproved amount of public funds in rail cars to carry oil. To the Premier: what are Alberta energy companies supposed to do to deal with the crushing price differential until rail cars are delivered next year?

Mr. Clark: We need help right now.

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we do need help. We needed help 10 years ago, we needed help 20 years ago, and fortunately we will continue to move forward to close that differential. One of the pieces is working through the envoy to make sure that we have the very best opportunities, to make sure that we address the differential immediately. That's why all options are on the table. Another additional piece is to make sure we get more capacity. That's why 120,000 barrels per day will be funded by rail if that's what it takes. We're certainly not going to back down from that. That's also why we need to make sure we get pipelines.

Ms McPherson: If and when we do get rail cars, the oil market we rely on will still be severely constrained for the next few years because scheduled oil refinery maintenance in the U.S. is ongoing. Our enthusiastic investment in drilling means we'll be over capacity in Alberta for some time. This is a long-term problem that can't be fixed by doubling down on oil exclusively. Why are we still balancing our books, our economy, and our future on oil?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud of the job that the Finance minister did in taking a number of careful, cautionary decisions to make sure that we had room for unforeseen situations to be addressed within the budget and for us to still be on track to be balanced. This is important to all Albertans. It's important to all Albertans that we have good jobs, that we have access not just to U.S. markets but to international markets, and for the former minister of employment to say it wasn't his job to fight for pipelines is strictly false. Absolutely it was his job, and it's all of our jobs to fight for our market access.

Ms McPherson: The Alberta Party, industry stakeholders, experts, and finally the Leader of the Opposition have suggested curtailment. The government appears to have ignored calls for curtailment from small players in order to slow down well completion. While we will be waiting for more than a year for rail cars, Alberta will lose \$4 billion in royalty revenues. Why won't the government immediately curtail production to solve this problem today?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. While certainly all options are on the table, that one option wouldn't have long-lasting, long-term impacts. It doesn't mean that we're ruling it out. All options are being considered. We certainly are considering it among others, but short-term options don't lead to long-term solutions. In an interim solution we'll be increasing capacity through 120,000 barrels per day on rail, and a long-term solution is to get the pipeline built. But don't worry. Even though members opposite thought it wasn't their job when they had the ability to do so in Ottawa for a decade and failed, we've got a Premier who's fighting every step of the way to get the job done.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Transportation Infrastructure in Banff-Cochrane

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Transportation. A significant infrastructure deficit left by the previous government exists across my riding. This includes a number of critical transportation projects. In the hamlet of Waiparous there is a clear need to replace the bridge over Waiparous Creek in the near future. Can the minister commit that action will be taken on this important crossing?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I can tell you that the initial look that we've taken at this indicates replacing the bridge at the existing position of the road. It's just an example of the neglect of the previous government for Alberta infrastructure. It's created a whole series of problems. Now they want to bring in a tax cut of \$700 million for the richest Albertans. They want to lay off 4,000 teachers and 4,000 nurses as well. It's unacceptable.

The Speaker: Thank you.
First supplemental.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the residents of Waiparous have expressed concern with the proposed realignment, can the minister commit to ensuring that residents' concerns are addressed in the design phase of this project and that the department will work collaboratively with the people who call Waiparous home?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the hon. member for the excellent question. I can commit to you and to the residents of Waiparous that their concerns will be addressed. We're committed to finding a workable solution and will collaborate with the community on this bridge replacement, unlike the Official Opposition, who had 10 years in Ottawa to get a pipeline and didn't get it done.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the intersection at highway 22 and highway 758 in Bragg Creek is also in need of significant improvement, can the minister provide an update on this important project and when residents can expect some action from the ministry?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you again to the hon. member for that question, Mr. Speaker. We know that thousands of Albertans go through this intersection every day. The member knows well that it's a four-way stop, and it's challenge to put in traffic lights because of the narrow right-of-way. I can update the member that we're in discussions with Rocky View county about a possible cost share for a roundabout, which would greatly improve the safety and quality of life for local residents. We are working very hard on this to make up the infrastructure deficit. Certainly, a \$700 million tax cut for the richest Albertans would not help.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Tourists from Germany

Dr. Starke: Mr. Speaker, this past summer a German tourist named Horst Stewin travelled to Alberta along with his family to celebrate

his 60th birthday. After spending some time visiting relatives in the Vermilion area, they were on their way to Banff when Mr. Stewin was critically injured in a random drive-by shooting incident. To the Minister of Culture and Tourism: what supports were provided by our government to Mr. Stewin and his family in the aftermath of this incident?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, the minister of culture will respond to the two supplementaries. I just want to take this 30 seconds to thank the hon. member for his service to the people of Alberta. We heard his announcement this morning. I think that the class, the civility, and standing up for LGBTQ rights within his party, even when it was very dangerous to do so, is something that will be deeply missed. Thank you, hon. member.

Dr. Starke: Well, Mr. Speaker, thank you to the Deputy Premier. One now knows the extraordinary measures one must go to to garner all-party support in this place.

Mr. Speaker, back to the Minister of Culture and Tourism: what specific measures have the minister, the tourism department, or Travel Alberta taken to repair the damage that this incident has had on Alberta's reputation as a safe tourism destination in light of the widespread coverage this incident has had in the German news media?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Culture and Tourism.

Miranda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also join in thanking the member for his service now that he has announced that he won't be seeking re-election.

Mr. Speaker, I was saddened to hear of this senseless crime, as was the hon. member. Thanks to his diligence in giving me the phone number of the family, I did contact the family directly. Now, we do have plans in place through Travel Alberta and the Culture and Tourism ministry. We have talked to our partners in Germany to ensure that this is conveyed as what it is, an isolated tragedy that does not reflect the warmth and hospitality that Alberta is known for.

2:10

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Dr. Starke: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that German tourists account for nearly a quarter of the booked room nights by international visitors to Alberta and given that this incident has seriously harmed our reputation as a safe and secure travel destination and has the potential to significantly decrease the number of visitors from Germany, to the minister: what impact has this incident had on visitation from Germany, or given the department's inability to gather accurate and timely visitor statistics, how would we even know?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Miranda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We continue to monitor the situation, of course. We have contacts through the consul general from Germany, and of course we have an office in Germany that we work with from Travel Alberta, so we are definitely monitoring the numbers, the flights, and ensuring that we continue to convey the same message, that this was an isolated event, an unfortunate and tragic event but one that does not reflect our province and our hospitality.

Thank you.

Oil Price Differentials and Provincial Revenue

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, Alberta oil today is selling at less than \$12 U.S. That's about 10 cents a litre, less than a fraction of a bottle of water. I believe it's the lowest real price ever for Alberta oil today. Professor Fellows at the University of Calgary estimates that a \$39 price differential would cost the Alberta treasury \$7.2 billion on an annual basis. This is a \$40 price differential. Does the hon. the Finance minister agree with Professor Fellows that the loss to the treasury could be in the range of over \$7 billion?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the Leader of the Opposition for his recent interest in this important issue. We know that this is something that matters to all Albertans and to all Canadians, frankly, that we get fair value for our resources. That's why under the Premier's leadership the mark has moved from 4 in 10 Canadians to 7 in 10 Canadians supporting market access to tidewater. We will continue to move forward on that as well as addressing immediate initiatives as required for addressing the differential and expanding our access by rail.

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, the question was to the Finance minister about the estimates made by the Department of Finance of royalty revenues that would be forgone as a result of a \$40 price differential. Is the Finance minister unable to answer that question? Can he please inform Albertans about the projections for forgone revenue as a result of an annualized \$40 price differential?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much. As Deputy Premier I'm happy to respond on behalf of our government to the Leader of the Official Opposition's questions. He certainly has the right to let any of his caucus members ask questions, Mr. Speaker, but I'll continue to answer his questions, and he can certainly call on any of his caucus members when he sees so fit. I think it's really important that people have the ability to speak up and use their voices to fight for pipelines. We have done that on this side of the House every day in government. We didn't have the job as employment minister for two years in Ottawa, fail to do so, and then say: oh, well, it wasn't my job. Of course it was the Leader of the Official Opposition's job to fight for pipelines when he was employment minister.

Mr. Kenney: I can only infer from these non answers and the refusal of the Finance minister to answer a simple, factual question that the government of Alberta does not actually have an estimate of the forgone royalty revenues for a \$40 price differential. I'll have to accept Professor Fellows' assessment that it's in the range of \$7 billion.

Mr. Speaker, a growing number of industry leaders are calling for immediate action through mandatory curtailment, the failure of which could double the province's deficit. Will the government respond if not to me then to those industry leaders by agreeing at least to seriously consider mandatory curtailment of production?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're certainly working with industry leaders and working with the special envoy to make sure we get fair and full value for our resources. Every member of our government is working on this. Our Premier is in Ottawa making announcements, fighting for international access to our products because the member opposite had a decade of failure to do

so when he was in Ottawa because he said it wasn't his job. Quote: it wasn't my responsibility. Well, it was his responsibility then. It continues to be the Premier's responsibility now. She will continue to fight for us on market access through rail, making sure she addresses the differential and pipelines because it's our job.

Oil Price Differentials and Energy Industry Activity

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, given that the projections I've just offered in terms of a \$7 billion loss in royalty revenue and given that industry leaders are indicating that there may be a massive reduction in drilling activity this winter if we do not take immediate action, does the government have any projections about the job losses that could result from a massive reduction of drilling activity this upcoming winter?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Premier is working to address the differential. All options are on the table. The Premier is also working to expand market access through rail and through pipelines because those resources belong to all Albertans, and we're fighting every day to get full value for them. Decades of failure by successive federal governments have left Canada holding its own economy hostage, and now the member thinks that, well, maybe Alberta's economic well-being is his responsibility. It was his responsibility for a decade while he failed to act. We are taking action on all fronts. It's our responsibility to make sure we get full value for Alberta resources because we are the owners.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Deputy Premier.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, in 1947, after the Leduc discovery, the then Alberta government brought in prorationing to ensure that production of oil did not far outstrip our capacity to ship it. That continued until the early 1970s. It was brought back by Premier Lougheed in the early 1980s. So through most of the history of our energy sector we have had prorationing of production. Does the government agree with the principle, established by previous governments and foreign countries, that in extreme moments like this there is a need to bring production in line with the takeaway capacity for shipping energy?

The Speaker: Thank you.
The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I just said, all options are certainly on the table. Pipelines mean good jobs for Albertans, increased rail capacity means more barrels to market in the interim, and addressing the differential is certainly an important immediate issue as well. The reason why is because what the Premier isn't doing is modelling after the efforts of the Official Opposition for a decade while he was in Ottawa and failed to get the job done because he said that it wasn't his job. Of course it was his job, and it is our job to make sure that we get our products to market access, that we make sure that we close the differential, and that we continue to move forward protecting Alberta jobs.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I've said no such thing.

Mr. Speaker, the government keeps talking about rail capacity. Do they not understand that incremental rail capacity will only have an incremental effect on our capacity to ship Alberta energy, perhaps an additional 200,000 barrels by the end of next year? Do they not understand that that is inadequate to address the emergency

that is happening right now as companies are laying people off and cutting their capital plans? Do they not understand this?

Ms Hoffman: As I just said, Mr. Speaker, all options are on the table. Just this morning our Premier was taking the fight to Ottawa to continue to get our product moving. She announced another step in our made-in-Alberta plan to get fair value for our resources. What was the member opposite doing? He was explaining yet again why in his 10 years sitting in the Ottawa cabinet he didn't think it was his responsibility to act on pipelines. He was literally minister of employment for two years. You can't make this stuff up.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, does the hon. the Minister of Energy have any current information on planned capital spending for the upcoming winter drilling season?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, as has been mentioned, we are working with special envoy experts to work with the industry. As the member himself knows, he's had various opinions the last week about this matter, and that's how divided the industry is as well. So we're looking at every option, as our Deputy Premier has mentioned, looking at short-term, mid-term, and long-term. We're also looking at diversification options which, we have heard from industry, will also bring value to Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps my question wasn't clear, so let me restate it. Does the hon. the Minister of Energy or her department have current information on planned capital spending for the upcoming drilling season in the winter of 2019, and if so, what is it?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to further articulate government policy on this matter. Our policy is that we are committed to making sure we act on three fronts: one, making sure we address the differential immediately, because instead of planning for a decade of failure, we're working and fighting for Alberta's success; making sure that we increase rail capacity as quickly as possible, 120,000 barrels per day; and making sure we finally finish the job that the federal government that was Conservative and the provincial government that was Conservative failed to do when they had 10 years of alignment because they, quote: didn't think it was my job. That's not true. It was their job, and we'll get it done.

2:20

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, should I infer from that complete non answer that the government has no idea what planned capital spending is for the upcoming drilling season?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, this certainly is an interesting style of questions now. Maybe the former minister of employment now thinks it's his job to ask about drilling. We're working on all fronts to make sure that we're moving forward by increasing drilling, and how do we do that? We do that by addressing the differential – all options are on the table – we do that by increasing shipping supply through rail, and we do that by finally getting the failure of the last 10 years of federal Conservative government out of the way and

moving our product to tidewater, as should have been done when the member opposite failed to do his job in Ottawa for 10 years.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

Sexual Assault Services

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. All Albertans deserve to feel safe in their everyday lives. When a person is sexually assaulted, an appropriate and timely response is key to preventing further harm and reducing the risk of mental health issues. To the Minister of Health: what health supports are available for people who have been sexually assaulted?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. More and more Albertans are coming forward, bravely, to make their stories of sexual assault known more publicly, and we owe it to them to make sure that they have the supports they need. The member is right: a timely response is very important. That's why sexual assault response teams provide co-ordinated crisis response to patients within 96 hours of an assault. The sexual assault response teams provide medical treatment and can help co-ordinate supports for survivors, including counselling, follow-up assistance, and working through the legal and court systems if survivors choose that option.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Are these supports also available for people in rural Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We have sexual assault response teams in Edmonton, Calgary, the member's riding of Red Deer, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, and Lloydminster. Work is under way to implement these teams in Fort McMurray and Grande Prairie as well, and we will continue to expand these services across the province so that survivors living throughout our province can get the support that they need no matter where they live. Certainly, we've done a lot, but there is still much more to be done.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Me Too movement has led to an increase in reporting of new and past sexual assaults. How are we ensuring survivors get the necessary counselling that they need to deal with the trauma and potential PTSD resulting from an assault?

Ms Hoffman: Earlier this year the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services told us that they were seeing a significant increase in the demand for counselling services that were requested following the Me Too movement, Mr. Speaker. We heard their calls. That's why we took immediate action to support survivors of sexual violence with an \$8.1 million increase to front-line services. This investment means that survivors are getting more timely access to the counselling and care that they need, because no matter what the price of oil, it's important that we invest in our communities, that we support survivors, and that we get them the help that they need.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Oil Price Differentials

(continued)

Mr. Panda: Thank you. Albertans are sick and tired of the over-the-top, divisive rhetoric and non answers coming from this Deputy Premier. I'm proud of my leader, who helped to build three pipelines in the national interest, including Keystone, Alberta Clipper, and Northern Gateway. Mr. Speaker, if you remember, my very first question in this House was asking you to help me get the answers on behalf of Albertans. And today I'm so disappointed. People are watching these non answers on television. Would you help us get straight answers in the interests of Albertans?

Speaker's Ruling Insisting on Answers

The Speaker: Hon. member, I believe that comments or questions to the chair are inappropriate, and I would be prepared to discuss that matter with you outside of this House. But the decisions that are made here are not made lightly. You have a responsibility, all members – that goes for all sides of the House – to determine whether you got your question answered or not. Did you have a question to the government about government policy?

Mr. Panda: I do. I'll try again.

Oil Price Differentials

(continued)

Mr. Panda: Given, Mr. Speaker, that the price of WCS this morning was \$11.56 U.S. per barrel, or roughly 7 cents U.S. per litre, a discount of almost \$40 U.S., and given that the oil and gas CEOs told me that the mandatory 10 per cent prorationing of oil production will boost prices, royalties, and save jobs, Deputy Premier, if you don't act swiftly, we lose the winter drilling season. Time is of the essence here, and we are ready and willing to help as opposition. How long will your envoys be consulting before action is taken to protect Alberta jobs and the economy?

The Speaker: Tell you what, hon. member. I think you exceeded your time limit by about two or three times, so I'm going to consider that a main question. No more supplementals.

Is there an answer?

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate what the member is trying to ask. What I will remind him is that the reason his leader has changed his suggestions or position numerous times is because I think his leader finally realized that the industry is divided. This is part of the reason why the Premier created an envoy to engage with industry, with small, mid-sized, and large companies throughout the value chain, to understand the impact of curtailment. Now, as the Deputy Premier pointed out, all options are on the table, but they have significant consequences, which we want to make sure we evaluate to make the right decision. We recognize time is of the essence. This is exactly why the Premier is in Ottawa fighting on behalf of Albertans and Alberta's energy sector.

The Speaker: The Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Bighorn Area Land Use

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Love Your Trails is a coalition of 14 different Alberta organizations, all stakeholders in the Bighorn. On Monday they stated that unless

the framework and decision-making process ... [respects] the provincial organizations and associations on the landscape, including them as decision makers [for] the activities and users they represent ... [we] can not support this massive land use reclassification.

Why has the government no respect for all these Albertans?

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I completely disagree with the member's preamble. It couldn't be further from the truth. The Minister of Environment and Parks is in the process of engaging not only with municipalities, municipal leaders, but also with the different regions. I actually will point to the fact and will table this today that Clearwater county, which happens to be a municipality in the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre's riding, has said that they look forward to "working with Alberta Environment and Parks and to participating in discussions and consultation related to the Bighorn Country proposal."

Mr. Nixon: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order. [interjections] Order, please. First supplemental.

Mr. Orr: Yeah. Mr. Speaker, the mayor and hundreds of people have been excluded from that thing today.

Given that on August 16 the deputy minister of environment wrote in a leaked internal e-mail,

Colleagues ... government [will] hold off releasing and consulting on the draft [North Saskatchewan regional plan]

and given that he also wrote,

My department will proceed with ... a proposed Bighorn complex

and that, lastly, he wrote,

Reinforce within your departments the need to be silent with stakeholders [on the Bighorn],

why is the department reinforcing silence with stakeholders? What happened to transparency?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned, the Ministry and the Minister of Environment and Parks are in the process of engaging with municipalities. The proposal has been posted. She will be hosting a town hall in the coming weeks that will allow every Albertan who is interested in participating to voice their thoughts and share them with our government, with us. What I find fascinating is that members from the opposition are opposed to a proposal that will be the biggest economic development opportunity that the region has ever seen. We're talking about thousands of jobs and a potential of hundreds of millions if not billions of dollars of investment. I'd like to know why the opposition ...

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister. Second supplemental.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that a document was recently received through a freedom of information request – 713 pages, over 7,000 responses to the North Saskatchewan regional plan, the complete results of a survey conducted by the government of Alberta this spring – and given that of the 3,809 respondents for or against the Bighorn park, 85 per cent of them voted specifically no for a park, why is the minister proceeding with the exact opposite of 85 per cent of Alberta respondents?

2:30

Mr. Bilous: Mr. Speaker, we've heard from a number of different community members, municipalities in the region that are looking for not only economic development opportunities. They want parks. They want opportunities for their OHVs to be able to go through. They want to be able to continue to enjoy this part of Alberta that is beautiful. We are investing in this part of Alberta. You know, I find it interesting that today the opposition – or maybe it's every day – is opposed to job creation and jobs in this much-needed economy.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Fort McMurray-Conklin.

Federal and Provincial Energy Policies

Ms Goodridge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's oil industry is in crisis. Western Canadian select was selling at a mere \$11.56 U.S. a barrel, yet there's no national reaction and no real understanding of this crisis. Alberta's economy is currently losing \$3 million an hour, yet this Premier and her best friend and ally Justin Trudeau are still moving forward with policies and regulations that hurt our oil industry, like the carbon tax, the tanker ban, and the no-new-pipelines bill. Why did it take so long to ask the Trudeau Liberals to kill Bill C-48?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As has been mentioned several times today, our Premier is in Ottawa at this very moment taking the case for Alberta to the east. We know that she's announced today about purchasing railcars to move 120,000 barrels per day by rail. We know that's a mid-term solution, but we have spoken out loud about Bill C-69, that in its current form is not acceptable to Alberta. In fact, today with C-48 she said that this bill...

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Ms Goodridge: Mr. Speaker, given that the oil price differential is truly a crisis and given that this is made worse by a lack of pipelines to tidewater and given that three and a half years ago we were told that there was a silver bullet called a social licence through a carbon tax that would magically build pipelines and given that we haven't seen any luck getting pipelines to tidewater actually built and we need plural pipelines to solve the crisis, will the government agree to scrap the carbon tax?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I failed to mention earlier that I am the Minister of Energy and I do support pipelines. That is my responsibility. Our Premier is in Ottawa today. She has spoken against Bill C-69, that it cannot pass in its current form. She also said that the tanker ban needs to go back to the drawing board or, in fact, maybe the trash bin because it is not helpful to Alberta. We're working every day to find solutions for our market access. We absolutely know we need pipelines to tidewater. The pipelines mentioned...

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
Second supplemental.

Ms Goodridge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the NDP government in B.C. announced yesterday that they were intervening

in support of the Trudeau Liberals' fight against Saskatchewan's carbon tax challenge and given that your government has said that you will not proceed with Trudeau's carbon tax hikes until the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion is built, will your government intervene in support of Saskatchewan and Ontario and against your best friend and ally Justin Trudeau?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know what? I'm proud to be part of a government that not only acknowledges climate change is real but has taken significant action in order to curtail it. Now, what's fascinating is that the very member should talk to some of the oil companies in her own riding, like Exxon Mobil, that is investing a million dollars to advocate in favour of a price on carbon because they know that this is one of the tools and one of the ways that we're going to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. Imperial made a great announcement a few weeks ago of \$3.6 billion in northeastern Alberta, which is using technology that uses 25 per cent less water, reduces their greenhouse gas emissions while continuing...

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister. Thank you.

Ms Luff: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order noted.

Oil and Gas Transportation

Mr. Loewen: Recently, in response to the ongoing market access bottleneck and the worsening oil price differential, the government announced their plan to increase rail capacity for oil by increasing the number of cars available. There is no doubt that we need to increase rail capacity, but with this government's current plan, by their own admission, new capacity won't be available until late 2019, with full implementation not happening until summer 2020. To the minister. Another year of this extreme differential is untenable. What else is the government going to do to deal with this crisis?

The Speaker: The Energy minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we're working on a number of fronts on this issue, and some of them I'd like to talk about. Certainly, we heard from industry that we need to bring more value-add to Alberta, so we're working on energy upgrading with a number of programs: partial upgrading, straddle plants, you know, feedstock strategies, and more petrochemical diversification. This is all going to bring value to Alberta. We know that we can't keep shipping to the U.S., something that the three pipelines that the Leader of the Opposition questioned...

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Loewen: Given that Alberta is suffering under the pressure of this crisis and this crisis is immediate and given that the NDP allies in Ottawa are pursuing an accelerated phase-out of more than 1,000 jacketed railcars and given that the NDP-Trudeau alliance has failed to deliver market access through pipelines, will this government finally go to Ottawa, stand up for Alberta, and demand that the federal government immediately shelve the plan for the accelerated phase-out of railcars?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the Premier is in Ottawa today advocating exactly that plan. With or without the federal government's help we're going to purchase railcars to help with the bottleneck that we are experiencing. We've been assured by CN that the railcars they currently have are part of, you know, the latest standard of railcars, so that is not an issue at this time. We're going to continue to do a number of things, consulting with industry about short-term, mid-term, and long-term solutions.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Loewen: Given that the Premier is in Ottawa but she is not meeting on this, contrary to what the minister said, and given that our market access dilemma has been long standing and well known and given that we are selling our oil for \$10 to \$12 per barrel when the market price is at \$50 plus and given that this means Albertans aren't getting significant royalties for their resource and given the inability of this government to get pipelines built, why did it take this government so long to come forward with a rail strategy for Alberta oil?

Mr. Bilous: Mr. Speaker, you know, never will the opposition cease to amaze me. One day it's a spend day; the next day it's a cut day. One day it's a do-something day; the next day it's a do-something-different day. Listen, we know that this is a crisis. We have been communicating this to the federal government. We engaged in our phase 2 of Keep Canada Working, that is now fully going. Not a single Member of Parliament can walk into the federal building without seeing the clock which shows how much Canada has lost in revenue because of the differential. We know this is a crisis. This is why the Premier is in Ottawa. We are engaging with industry and looking at all options.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

Athabasca University

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituents in the Athabasca region were happy to hear the recent announcement of a partnership between Aspen View school division, Athabasca University, and Northern Lakes College. They're also happy to know that Athabasca University is at record enrolment levels and that its future looks bright. We've come a long way. To the Minister of Advanced Education: what work has your ministry been doing to grow Athabasca University and to protect jobs in the community of Athabasca?

Mr. Schmidt: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's a tough but fair question from the hon. member. I want to thank him for being a powerful advocate for Athabasca University and the town of Athabasca. The third-party report into the future of Athabasca University outlined the need for AU to work in collaboration with other institutions to make sure that people throughout the north can receive a high-quality postsecondary education. This latest collaboration between the school division, Northern Lakes College, and the university means that people in Athabasca will have the opportunity to go from kindergarten to PhD right in their home communities.

We know that the university set up the Athabasca University . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
First supplemental.

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for that answer. My constituents in Athabasca will be very pleased to hear that.

Can the minister inform the House on how these new partnerships can help bring more high-quality, mortgage-paying jobs to Athabasca?

Mr. Schmidt: Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member continues to pull no punches.

Given the previous Conservative government's deep cuts to postsecondary education it was only a few years ago that Athabasca University was concerned about going bankrupt. Today we're pleased that the university is on a solid financial footing and is growing. This is thanks to the commitment and hard work of the faculty, staff, administration, and board of governors. By providing stable 2 per cent annual increases to the operational funding of Athabasca and our recently announced \$4.9 million grant to upgrade the IT infrastructure at that university, the university is growing. We understand that it's currently recruiting for six positions.

The Speaker: Thank you again, hon. minister.

2:40

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the minister assure the House that this government continues to be committed to Athabasca University as a critical part of the Athabasca community?

Mr. Schmidt: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad the hon. member only gets three questions because I don't know if I could stand much more of this barrage.

I want to thank him for his ongoing advocacy for his constituents and I want to assure him and the people of Athabasca that our government is committed to making sure that AU remains a critical part of the town of Athabasca. I know that he and others from the town are worried because the cuts to postsecondary education, that the members opposite continue to advocate for, had serious effects on the town from 2013 to 2015. Our government is committed to continuing to invest in postsecondary education in Athabasca to keep the university and the community strong.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we'll continue in 30 seconds.

Members' Statements

(continued)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Northern Spirit Light Show in Grande Prairie

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Each winter the Northern Spirit Light Show turns Grande Prairie's Evergreen Park into an enchanting nighttime wonderland. Please imagine a dark, icy evening with a soft glow from the snow-covered ground. You venture out to Evergreen Park, where more than 200 brightly lit displays sparkle in the crisp air. Some displays give the appearance of motion while others arc over the pathway, and when you look up, stars dot the sky. The bells of draft horses jingle softly as a team gently pulls you in a rustic wagon, where you huddle under a blanket with family and friends. This is the Northern Spirit Light Show, which has become a family tradition for tens of thousands of Grande Prairie residents.

The creativity and innovation of the charming homemade displays are wondrous to children and adults alike. Volunteers from the Peace Draft Horse Club dedicate countless hours to making this

Christmas dream world a reality for our community. These hard-working, fun-loving people make the experience much more enjoyable for everyone. Through this event the club also collects contributions for charities like the Food Bank and the Salvation Army. Last year it raised \$50,000 from donations alone.

Mr. Speaker, this club grants Christmas wishes every year. Our community values the immense work that goes into creating this magic. For this reason I'd like to share my own special Christmas wish. A generation from now I hope that my young granddaughters experience the same delight as Sherry and I when they, too, have the opportunity to cozy up in a horse-drawn wagon with their families at the Northern Spirit Light Show.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Oil Price Differentials and Pipeline Development

Mr. Carson: Mr. Speaker, when I talk to people in my community, I hear constantly about the need to diversify our economy and get better value for our resources. The price differential we are currently experiencing is hurting Albertans across the province. Many ask me how we ended up in this situation.

Certainly, the Premier is doing her part. Just today she went before the Canadian Club of Ottawa to call for solutions to fix the differential, like adding rail capacity. She has fought since day one to secure a pipeline to tidewater because she understands the importance of opening new markets. When the Trans Mountain expansion is complete, it will be the first pipeline to tidewater in more than 60 years.

But there have been opportunities lost long before our government came into office. Take the Northern Gateway pipeline, a project that was mismanaged by the opposition leader and his pals in the Stephen Harper cabinet. The Federal Court of Appeal said the federal Conservatives "failed to make reasonable efforts to inform and consult." They said the Conservatives "fell well short of the mark." The Conservatives refused to listen to First Nations and provided incorrect information about this critical project. When asked about his record on pipelines in this very House this week, the opposition leader said, "I wasn't responsible for pipelines." Interesting.

Now the opposition leader is seeking a mandate with the promise that he will actually pay attention to our energy industry and our economic interests. Mr. Speaker, that's about as believable as an immigration ceremony hosted by Sun News media and the Leader of the Opposition. After all, the opposition leader was proud to bring in the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, who worked on the presidential campaign for Donald Trump. Just last week Trump was gloating about how the dictatorship in Saudi Arabia is deliberately suppressing the price of oil. With friends like these, who needs enemies?

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure glad that I sit on this side of the House, because as a member of the government caucus I can say without hesitation that I am responsible for fighting for pipelines to new markets, whether it's in my job title or not.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to give oral notice of a bill for the next Order Paper, that bill being Bill 32, the City Charters Fiscal Framework Act, which will be sponsored by the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Bill 211

Alberta Underground Infrastructure Notification System Consultation Act

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to request leave to introduce private member's Bill 211, the Alberta Underground Infrastructure Notification System Consultation Act.

The goal of this bill is a reasoned request to the government to establish a mandatory underground infrastructure notification system. Unfortunately, Alberta One-Call, according to the act, requires only provincially and federally regulated pipelines to be registered. All other buried utilities or infrastructure participate solely on a volunteer basis. Fifty-one per cent of all damages in Alberta in 2017 went forward without a locate request to Alberta One-Call. This legislation will help with the path forward.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 211 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 74.1(1)(b) I would move that Bill 211, the Alberta Underground Infrastructure Notification System Consultation Act, be referred to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship and that this committee report the bill back to the Assembly the week of March 4, 2019, in order to allow the necessary stakeholders the opportunity to provide their feedback before we proceed with debate.

[Motion carried]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have three tablings of reports. The first is the Alberta Gaming, Liquor and Cannabis 2017-18 annual report. I'm pleased to table five copies of it. The tabling of these five copies will ensure compliance with the Gaming, Liquor and Cannabis Act.

The second one is the Alberta Capital Finance Authority 2017 annual report. I'm pleased to table five copies of this report. It includes the audited financial statements. Tabling these five copies will ensure compliance with the Alberta Capital Finance Authority Act, Mr. Speaker.

Lastly, I am tabling five copies of the Alberta Securities Commission 2018 annual report. The tabling of ASC's 2018 annual report will ensure compliance with the Alberta Securities Act.

That's all I have to table. Thank you.

2:50

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister. I wonder if you've had an opportunity to do any sailing lately. No?

Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite number of copies for three tablings. The first is a news release from Love Your Trails, a coalition of 14 different organizations in Alberta. I also include with this one a list of the 14 organizations so that everyone can see them.

The second one, Mr. Speaker, is a copy of a letter that we received, e-mailed by the deputy minister, outlining the fact that they were going to hold off on consulting on the North Saskatchewan regional plan, that they were going to proceed with the Bighorn complex anyway, and that members of the departments were to be silent about it with stakeholders.

The third one, Mr. Speaker, is a copy of a few of the 713 FOIPed pages, with some of the details, many pages of the comments, from individuals that indicate that 85 per cent of respondents to the North Saskatchewan regional plan survey were, in fact, clearly opposed to the creation of the Bighorn park.

Mr. Schneider: Mr. Speaker, I rise to table the requisite copies of nine letters from Alberta stakeholders that support Bill 211. They are Alberta companies that support a mandatory underground infrastructure notification system. Requesting a locate with Alberta One-Call before you dig costs nothing.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I sent you a note in advance asking your indulgence for about 60 seconds to read into the record a letter that I sent you this morning, before question period, dated today.

It has always been difficult for small parties and independents to make themselves heard in Alberta's legislature, but recent attempts by the Government and Official Opposition to monopolize power and even debate, has made this... task impossible.

I write this letter to you to highlight some of [the] already stated concerns, and would request an urgent meeting with you to help address some of the necessary reforms that are required to return some balance to the Assembly.

In this discussion with you I wish to address the correction of: question period rotation, committee membership, and the misuse [of] Standing Order 49.

The unprecedented actions of the Government and Official Opposition on the evening sitting of November 26th, 2018 was an open and malicious attempt to silence all members of the Legislative Assembly outside of their two parties.

Mr. Mason: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Nixon: Point of order.

The Speaker: A point of order has been noted.

Mr. Fildebrandt:

The imposition of Standing Order 49 without any debate whatsoever has never been undertaken in the history of Alberta.

I recognize your role as speaker as an impartial arbitrator [and upholder of rights of members] and as such...

Mr. Nixon: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Mason: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I'm sensing that the House would like that this matter not be shared any longer. [interjection] If you would have a chair, please.

Thank you.

The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Earlier today in question period I had referenced a news release from Clearwater county, and I want to table the requisite number of copies. Clearwater county "looks forward to working with Alberta Environment and Parks and to participating in discussions and

consultation related to the Bighorn Country proposal, as the process moves forward."

The Speaker: The Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table several letters – I have the appropriate number of copies – from people associated with the Alberta Common Ground Alliance in support of looking at Bill 211, which this House sent to committee today to be looked at.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Acting Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the hon. Mr. Carlier, Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, pursuant to the Farm Implement Act the Farmers' Advocate office annual report 2017-18.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I believe we are at points of order. The Official Opposition House Leader.

Point of Order

Language Creating Disorder

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise under – I believe we're on the first point of order – 23(h), (i), (j), particularly "language... to create disorder" in this place. The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade, in response to a question that was being asked by the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka, I believe, made a couple of statements. I'll be very brief in explaining to you my concerns with them.

He referred, first of all, to Clearwater county in a way that made it sound like Clearwater county was endorsing the NDP's plan, which is very far from the truth. Instead, what Clearwater county said is that they're looking forward to working with the government. Most of my community, Mr. Speaker, is looking forward to working with the government. We wish they would show up and talk to us. Lastly, he referred to open consultation during their 70-day period of consultation over Christmas.

Now, the reason I rise on this, Mr. Speaker, and I believe this language creates disorder in this place is that, first of all, that is not what Clearwater county said. I believe that is a misrepresentation which will cause disorder in this place. Second of all, this morning in this so-called consultation my staff were blocked and hundreds of people from Rocky Mountain House were blocked. That is not consultation. Further to that, not one town councillor was allowed to be in the consultation this morning.

For this government to continue to stand up in this House and pretend that they're doing consultation during their sham process creates disorder in this place. That minister should apologize, one, for their ridiculous...

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. I think I've heard the point. We're speaking more to the subject matter.

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand that the Official Opposition House Leader and Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre is unhappy with the nature of the consultation around the Bighorn. Nevertheless, there is no point of order. Simply because he disagrees with the characterization of the minister of the consultation that took place around the Bighorn and is taking place around the Bighorn does not make it a matter of a point of order. If it causes disorder, it is only in – well, I don't know

how to put this – the mind of the hon. member. I understand that there are people in the community that do not agree with the approach. But in dealing with the point of order here, it's a disagreement between members and nothing more.

The Speaker: Is there something substantive you have to contribute to the discussion?

Mr. Fildebrandt: Always.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I think I've already concluded my decision with regard to this particular point of order.

In this instance I agree with the Government House Leader. This was a question of interpretation. I refer all of you yet again to paragraph 494 of *Beauchesne's*. It is a matter of disagreement about the facts.

I think we have a second point of order, and I think the second point of order is from Calgary-East.

Point of Order Recognizing Members in Oral Question Period

Ms Luff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on a point of order under standing orders 16 and 17, which state that every member wishing to speak will rise in his or her place and that when two or more members rise to speak, the Speaker will call on the member who, in their opinion, first rose. Now, today and other days I have risen towards the end of question period to be recognized, several times very clearly, particularly today, before another member has risen to speak.

Now, I recognize, Mr. Speaker, that it is the convention of the House to use lists to determine the order of question period, but there is no rule that states it must be so. In *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, page 505, it states that "the Speaker is under no obligation to use such lists." In a ruling of the federal House of Commons in 2013 Speaker Scheer noted that the chair's "authority to decide who is recognized to speak is indisputable and has not been trumped by the use of lists." According to page 317 of *Procedure and Practice* "it is the responsibility of the Speaker to act as the guardian of the rights and privileges of Members and of the House as an institution." Since as an independent member I am not involved in House leaders' meetings, I can't advocate to increase my number of questions. Therefore, it falls to the Speaker to make these decisions.

3:00

It is my understanding as per page 498 of *Parliamentary Procedure* that the role of question period is to allow members the opportunity to hold the government to account. Now, currently not all members in this House are given equal opportunities to perform this role. Official Opposition members get approximately 1.7 questions per week each. Alberta Party members get approximately 2 questions per week each, but independent members, Mr. Speaker, only get one question each per week. Now, I do recognize that backbench members of the government don't get that same opportunity, but I think that if you look at the role of question period as holding the government to account, it is fair that they get fewer questions. Also, in some parliaments in Canada backbench government members don't get questions at all.

I'd also like to point out that particularly today, Mr. Speaker, the Official Opposition was not going according to the list. The Leader of the Official Opposition stood up when he felt it suited him. They messed around a little bit towards the end. I could tell, because I was able to stand up so soon before them, that they weren't entirely sure what was going on. I don't think it's entirely fair.

Also, I think it's fair to point out that nearly all of the questions from the Official Opposition today were the same question. They were the same question over and over and over again, and the government gave the same answer over and over and over again. That's not really a particularly good use of question period in my mind, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I think I've heard the case you're making. I'm trying to determine if it's an explanation on decisions I've made or it is with respect to a specific standing order.

Ms Luff: Well, the specific standing orders, Mr. Speaker, are standing orders 16 and 17. I am challenging the use of lists as the way that we've decided to do things in question period.

The Speaker: Thank you.

I'm sure I'm going to hear from the Government House Leader and maybe the Opposition House Leader on this point.

Mr. Mason: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. An interesting point of order, one that I think completely misses the point and the intent of the rules and the practices of this place. Now, the hon. member has quoted standing orders 16 and 17. Standing Order 16 says: "Every Member desiring to speak is to rise in his or her place and address the Speaker." Number 17 says: "When 2 or more Members rise to speak, the Speaker calls on the Member who, in the Speaker's opinion, first rose in his or her place."

Mr. Speaker, this of course refers to people wishing to speak in debate, because there's an entirely different set of rules, which the hon. member should know, surrounding question period. Let me just provide a little bit of enlightenment here. The long-standing practice of this Assembly is consistent with guidelines outlined in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, namely that the bulk of question period consists of questions from the Official Opposition as well as other recognized parties. Every day there is at least one question from an independent member who, based on the precedent of the Assembly, are each entitled to one question per weekly rotation.

The *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* says this at page 504. It's a little bit of a lengthy section, but I think it's worth reading.

At the beginning of the Thirty-Sixth Parliament in 1997, an arrangement for the conduct of Question Period was put in place by Speaker Parent after consultations with the House Leaders of all officially recognized parties. This pattern has slightly evolved to this day. It now consists of having the Speaker recognize the Leader of the Opposition, or the lead questioner for his or her party, for a round of three questions. The Leader of the Opposition, or a second Member from the Official Opposition, is then recognized for two more questions. Afterwards, lead questioners from the other officially recognized opposition parties are recognized. After this initial round of questions, the recognition pattern varies depending on party representation in the House and the number of Members in each party. Members are typically allowed to ask an initial question followed by an additional question; historically, the second one was to be a supplementary question, arising from the first, but the linkage between initial and supplementary questions is no longer required.

Members representing the governing party are also recognized to ask questions, although not as often as opposition Members.

This is important, Mr. Speaker.

Participation in Question Period is managed, to a large extent, by the various caucuses and their Whips and can be the subject of negotiations among the parties. Each party decides

which of its Members will participate in Question Period and each day provides the Speaker with a list of the names and the suggested order of recognition of these Members. Each party's list is typically compiled by the Whip or the Member, or Members, managing that party's strategy for Question Period. Although the Speaker is under no obligation to use such lists, it has become a common practice of the House. With this list as a guide, the Speaker uses his or her discretion in recognizing Members to ask questions.

Members of political parties not officially recognized in the House and independent Members are permitted to ask questions, although not as frequently as those Members belonging to recognized parties. During the Thirty-Fifth Parliament (1994-97), when the number of these Members climbed as high as 17 over the life of the Parliament, the Speaker attempted to recognize at least one of them every other Question Period, if not every day, generally towards the end of the proceedings. Since 1997, independent Members have been recognized to pose questions on a regular basis and, in recent years, on a daily basis.

That is from the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, Mr. Speaker, which has long served as a guide for us in this House, although it can be that practices in the Parliament are slightly varied in this Assembly.

Now, Mr. Speaker, consistent with this and consistent with the practice of this Assembly, the various House leaders of the parties who have been recognized in this House met to discuss question period rotation and the rotation of members' statements and have reached an agreement and a proposal, which was put to you in writing. I don't have the date exactly. That was accepted by you, and this forms the guide for the conduct of question period for this House. The hon. member who has raised this is granted one question every four days, as are all the other independent members. She will have a question tomorrow, which is day 3 in the rotation, and in day 7 of the eight-day rotation. That is consistent with the practice of this place for independent members.

It may not have escaped people's notice, but the Westminster system is not a system that is designed for individual personalities pursuing their own goals and desires. It is set up as facilitating a team approach because the function of the parliament is to create a team of people who are capable of forming a government. That is not accomplished by a bunch of individual people each pursuing their own direction. I might add, Mr. Speaker, that caucuses, including whips and House leaders, are provided for in the legislation that governs this place. I hate to break it to the hon. member and some other independents, but this system is designed to facilitate the functioning of a government and an opposition who seeks to replace that government. It is not dominated by individuals, as some would perhaps prefer.

That, I think, Mr. Speaker, summarizes the position here. In my view there is absolutely no point of order. Of course, we were wondering why the hon. member kept popping up and down during question period, but hopefully she will get a ruling from you that will straighten out the matter.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The House leader for the Official Opposition.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks for recognizing me. I will not be as long as my colleague the Government House Leader. I think that there's no point in repeating much of what he has stated, though I do agree with what he has referenced. I will reinforce, though, that the standing orders that the hon. member references are in the category of debate and not question period. It's fairly clear within our standing orders at the top that it has to do with debate.

Additionally, I think the second point that I would like to reinforce through you, Mr. Speaker, is that there is a question period rotation and a members' statement rotation that has been agreed to by the House leaders. It is negotiated outside of the Chamber, but then it has ultimately been submitted to you. You have then read it to this place and have agreed to what the House leaders have recommended on behalf of their caucuses.

3:10

The third thing I would like to point out, Mr. Speaker, is that you have asked us in your capacity as the Speaker and the chair, who is never wrong, to actually not have our members pop up during question period and to wait until they are recognized by you. I would like to continue to do those instructions for you whereas where the member is going on right now, we would have everybody attempting to pop up.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, as you know, in our caucus, in my role as Official Opposition House Leader, I quarterback question period. While I'm disappointed to hear that the hon. member did not like the questions I called, it's okay; I didn't like the answers that came with the questions that I called. That's the reality of my role.

As you know, I attempt to communicate with you as I make those changes to the order, and then I submit that list to you in advance to try to make life easier for you. We will continue to do that, but we will also continue to exercise our right and our ability to put up members that we think are most appropriate given what is happening with the tone in question period.

With that, I would ask that you rule against this point of order.

The Speaker: Member for Strathmore-Brooks, do you have something substantive? Again, I'd speak to the matter.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Of course, I do, Mr. Speaker. I would hate to disappoint you.

The Speaker: I think I have my decision on that, so I am going to ask you to be very brief and speak to the point of order.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Yes. Well, you've allowed two members speaking against it and one for it. I do have further to add to it. I will not repeat arguments already made. The hon. Government House Leader referred to precedents around this that occur on question period rotation. It is based on precedents of one question every four days. I will withdraw if I am, in fact, mistaken, but if I am not mistaken, the two single-member caucuses for the Liberal Party and the Alberta Party when they were single-member caucuses – one still is – at the beginning of this Legislature had three questions every two weeks. I will withdraw that if the Member for Calgary-Elbow would correct me. But if I'm not mistaken, independent and single-member caucuses actually did have more questions during this very Legislature with three questions every two weeks. I just wanted to correct the record. And if I'm not mistaken, those questions were at a higher order of precedence in the question period rotation.

Now, the House leaders' agreements surrounding question period are negotiated by the Government House Leader, the Opposition House Leader, and the House leaders of other recognized parties. It is generally accepted that the Speaker accepts it but is not required to. But in this we are in a rather unprecedented situation where there are five MLAs, the G-5, if you will, who are not aligned with officially recognized parties. There are several other officially recognized caucuses, but the G-5 is an unprecedented number, and to have it entirely excluded even from consultation on a House leaders' agreement excludes a very significant, large number of Albertans.

I do consider this a point of order, but at the very least it's worth consideration that there are five MLAs, which is more than enough to form, actually, an official party, not that that's going to happen. That would be a bit of a stretch. Those five represent more than an official party. None of us have even been consulted or asked. That is to be taken into consideration. As the Government House Leader himself has said – I'll end with this, Mr. Speaker – when it comes to the House leaders' agreements, you are under no obligation to use such lists. So I would ask that you rule that this is a point of order and, in any case, consider calling a meeting of the House leaders.

The Speaker: I think the arguments that have been put forward are interesting. I have spoken to the Member for Calgary-East about this issue and have, I think, communicated a couple of notes to her. For the record, in addition to some of the other members of the House, I too saw you rising on numerous occasions over the last few days. But it's important to remember that you're correct, first of all, on the point about where it applies. The reference that you were dealing with was in a debate rather than in the OQP. Secondly, as it's been cited here, you are correct to the extent that the Speaker does have the authority, if need be, to determine how he or she would distribute the questions.

However, in this instance – and I'm trying to reflect – I believe there may have been one. I'm not certain, in my term in the chair, that I may not have accepted that agreement, but almost always consistently I have accepted the agreement reached by the House leaders. Now, in addition to that, there was the tabling. I believe the Deputy Speaker tabled an order on I think the date was November 20. It laid out the order of various questions to the Member for Strathmore-Brooks. I can't recall the exact configuration, but the principle was that myself as the Speaker had agreed to the agreement that had been brought forward.

I would encourage the Member for Calgary-East and others, if they wish, to make contact with the House leaders, express your concerns, and they may well consider the points of view being made, but it stands as of today. I've accepted it, and that's where we're going to move to.

Now, I think I saw four or five other points of order. Which one? Who wants to start, and who's prepared to withdraw?

Point of Clarification

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, under 13(2), "The Speaker shall explain the reasons for any decision on the request of a Member." Today the Member for Strathmore-Brooks stood in his place and began to read out in full a letter that he had written to you. The first reason that I rose was because I was wondering why the member wasn't called to order. When people are tabling correspondence, they're normally limited to just a sentence or two to explain what the correspondence or what the document contains. That was the first thing.

The second thing I wanted to ask about was: the rule, as I understand it, is that because it's question period and to prevent members from deliberately disrupting and interfering with the conduct of a set of questions, those points of order are taken at the end. Now, as far as I'm aware, any other points of order that are made are to be dealt with at the time and the speaker is normally interrupted.

So I guess I would ask you to explain those two decisions.

The Speaker: To the first point about the amount of time that was used in getting it read into the record, it was excessive, and I did ultimately interject. However, I also know that in times past brevity

has not always existed when documents like that – and I can't believe that the Government House Leader might be an example of that. But the normal practice that you speak of: I'm finding that there's very little similarity to what is normal. It has everything to do with at the time.

To the second question that you asked, you make a very good point. I'm going to take a look at that issue and see whether or not the manner in which I dealt with the matter was appropriate. Again, though, I would argue that the principle that I think you're addressing is that ultimately it is the Speaker's decision to decide that, as the Opposition House Leader has pointed out. Just because the two House leaders don't agree, it doesn't necessarily change my mind.

Are there any other points of order?

Mr. Nixon: My point of order is similar to the hon. Government House Leader's, and I will happily withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

3:20

Orders of the Day Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

The Chair: I'd like to call Committee of the Whole to order.

Bill 26 An Act to Combat Poverty and Fight for Albertans with Disabilities

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to once again speak to Bill 26, An Act to Combat Poverty and Fight for Albertans with Disabilities. We are so proud of this bill and have been overwhelmed by the responses of Albertans, Albertans who have said that they have been calling for this change for decades and are finally seeing a government listen, Albertans who have said that indexing will provide greater stability to their lives so that they can care for their children and plan for their future, and Albertans who have said that for far too long they have been stigmatized, made to beg for supports while politicians turned their backs on them. I can't agree more. This change is absolutely overdue, and we are proud to bring it forward.

The previous government did nothing in this regard for 44 years. They never indexed these supports despite repeated calls from disability and antipoverty advocates and when oil was trading at \$100 a barrel. Instead, they made Albertans beg for supports. They portrayed people who rely on these supports as fraudulent and undeserving, just as the Member for Calgary-Hays did when he called health care for people with disabilities giveaways, or the Leader of the Official Opposition, who has called for spending levels in line with B.C., which would mean a \$500 reduction to people's monthly AISH benefit.

The members opposite have shown a disregard for the rights and dignity of people with disabilities, and our government will not support that. Instead, we are taking action to fight for these Albertans through this bill. Our proposed changes will support a quarter of a million Albertans with disabilities and low-income Albertans. They will provide greater stability and predictability for families and improve affordability. We have been overwhelmed by the positive response to this bill, and we are grateful to the

thousands of Albertans, disability advocates, and antipoverty advocates who have worked for these changes.

Before I turn it over to my colleagues to speak, I do want to take a moment to respond to a few questions that came up during second reading. The Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre and the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills raised a question about access to medications. I want to confirm that this bill will not change medication coverage for AISH clients. AISH will continue to provide prescription and nonprescription drug coverage from any Alberta pharmacy through the AISH health benefit card. We are absolutely committed to protecting these important health benefits because we know how important they are to the people who count on AISH.

The Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills raised a question about the funding for this bill. We have shared this information from the beginning, but I can certainly share it again. We are committed to providing strong and stable funding for public services, including health care, education, and social services, while staying on our path to balance. This much-needed investment in Albertans and in our communities will be \$46 million in '18-19 and \$194 million in '19-20.

The Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster also raised the issue of supports for Albertans with service dogs. I'm pleased to address this, as this has been a priority for our government. I also want to recognize the important advocacy of many Albertans, including Mr. Les Landry, who has been a strong advocate for this issue. As the member may know, for too many years Albertans with disabilities, with PTSD have had to deal with long wait-lists. That is unacceptable. That is why in 2017 we made changes to increase Albertans' access to service dogs and cut down on wait times.

Our changes allowed more schools to train dogs, which gave more Albertans opportunities to participate in their communities. Individuals with owner-trained dogs can also get their animal tested to become qualified. For Albertans on AISH with service animals there is a monthly benefit available. This assists Albertans with the usual cost of caring for a service dog. To better support these Albertans, our bill proposes to index this benefit and other personal benefits as of January 1.

There was also a question about CPP. I mentioned this in my comments, and I am pleased to speak to it again. We know there is much more work to do to address the issues the previous government neglected. We are very interested in hearing feedback from Albertans on this issue. We know there are concerns, and we are committed to exploring this issue and all other issues that matter to them with Albertans. We would like to look at this more fully and in the context of other exemption categories. We have heard from people that they want an opportunity to share feedback on this issue, and we are absolutely committed to doing that.

The last thing I want to do before I wrap up is to speak to an amendment we are bringing forward. I would like to move this amendment on behalf of my colleague the Member for St. Albert. As mentioned during the Henson trust bill debate and in the second reading of this bill, we committed to looking at employment earnings exemptions. We have done this work and are pleased to bring forward an increase to earning exemptions caps for Albertans who count on AISH. We know these earning exemptions are very important to Albertans. Employment provides a connection . . .

The Chair: Hon. minister, if I could just ask you to pause for a second and maybe distribute the amendment before you go ahead and explain it. That would be helpful to the House.

Mr. Sabir: Sure. I can wait until it's distributed.

3:30

The Chair: Go ahead, hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Chair. I was talking about employment. Employment provides a connection to community and allows people to have more money in their pockets. These exemptions have not been changed for many years. The amendment brought forward by the Member for St. Albert changes that. Employment exemptions will be increased as of January 1.

The full exemption maximum for a single person with no children will jump from \$800 to \$1,072, an almost \$300 increase. In addition, the client can exempt 50 per cent of employment income earned between \$1,072 and \$2,009. And single clients will therefore be able to exempt a total of up to \$1,541 of employment income, which is an almost \$400 increase. For families the full exemption maximum will jump to \$2,612. Families can also exempt 50 per cent of employment income earned between \$2,612 and \$3,349. Families will therefore be able to exempt a total of up to \$2,981 of employment income.

Going forward, the new income exemption threshold amounts would be increased in proportion to future increases to Alberta's minimum wage. In addition to this change, our amendment will increase passive business and spousal pension income exemptions to put more money in people's pockets.

I'm very pleased that my colleague is bringing this forward, and I look forward to her speaking to this amendment in greater detail later today. I also hope all the members will be able to support this, and thank you. I look forward to your comments and discussion in the House.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for — I'm doing it again — Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to the amendment. I would like to thank the minister, as much as it pains me from time to time to do that . . .

An Hon. Member: Feel free to do it often.

Mr. Cooper: Oh, I spent most of the day thanking the Minister of Municipal Affairs, all sorts of stuff. It wasn't my best.

. . . for sending the amendment to my office prior to now. As you can see, Madam Chair, it is a significant amendment with significant ramifications. I can't remember if it was on this particular piece of legislation or not, but I know that on occasion I have certainly made recommendations that we consult on legislation once it's introduced in the House. One of the reasons why members of the Official Opposition continue to make this recommendation is not just for fun but because these sorts of amendments — large six-, seven-, eight-page amendments — come before the Assembly asking the opposition to vote on an amendment on what, in many cases, is short notice. So I am grateful for the fact that we did have the opportunity to preview this amendment prior, but I think the point remains the same with respect to committee. One of the great things is that if we had been at committee, we would have been able to discuss more fully why this amendment is needed. We could have heard from individuals.

I know — and I'm sure the member will remember, and I definitely know that the Member for Calgary-Currie will remember — that the last time we discussed some of these very similar issues, members of the Official Opposition proposed amendments and made recommendations that are very similar to what is in this particular amendment. In fact, in a conversation that I had with the

minister not that long ago, I had expressed some desire or an indication that the Official Opposition was in fact considering an amendment similar to the one that we have before us. It's not identical, and this particular amendment is a bit wider in its breadth than the one that we had prepared and were ready to move on behalf of individuals that are on AISH and would also like to earn income from jobs that won't have a negative impact on their AISH payment.

You'll know, Madam Chair, that there are massive, massive positive effects that can come from employment of those individuals who also receive AISH benefits, both benefit to the individual as well as benefit to the economy. It was the reason why initially the members from the Official Opposition had recommended an amendment similar on previous legislation, because any time that we can provide folks with more value, with more desire to strive, with more desire to be part of a wider economy and to reward their efforts for that – it seems so strange that if folks are able and willing and it is possible for them to have a positive impact, we would limit their potential.

I certainly will be supporting this amendment. I encourage my colleagues of the Official Opposition to do so, just as, Madam Chair, I will be supporting the legislation. I haven't had much of an opportunity as of yet to speak to that. I intend to do that a little bit later in debate, but on balance this particular piece of legislation is going to make a great impact in the lives of many Albertans and, in particular, those who receive AISH benefits.

I know that one of my favourite constituents – now, I know that that's a dangerous thing to say, Madam Chair, to single out any one constituent as your favourite. [interjections] I didn't say the favourite; I said a favourite, so you can have more than one favourite. Trust me. If you have more than one child, you know that you can have more than one favourite. Her name is Christine. She knows that during the legislative session I'm in the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills every Friday, so every Friday Christine pops by the office. She's also an AISH recipient, and she also has worked at the A&W in Olds for the last 14 straight years. She comes and sees me every Friday.

An Hon. Member: I thought you'd see her at the drive-in.

Mr. Cooper: Yes. I often see her at A&W as well, but in this particular case she comes and sees me every Friday, and we have a chat about all sorts of stuff.

She, for the record, really doesn't like the federal government. She's generally speaking not too keen on this government as well, but I gave her the news that she was going to receive a significant income should the legislation pass. Of course, I would never presuppose a decision of the Assembly, but I provided her the information that if the bill would pass – and I would expect that it would – she would receive a significant increase in her AISH payment. What an amazing difference it made to her, and she was so, so, so very excited about the things that she was going to be able to do now because of that. And then she was equally as excited when I suggested to her that I was also going to try and increase the amount that she could work at A&W so that it would be an added incentive for her.

3:40

That particular conversation took place prior to the conversation that I had with the minister where I found out that he had also decided that that would be a reasonable change to make at this point in time. I know that she was very excited, as are so many. I also appreciate the fact that the larger piece of legislation is going to be

tied to the CPI and trying to depoliticize some of these sorts of decisions that can be made by the Assembly from time to time.

With all that said, I encourage my colleagues to support the amendment and look forward to continuing to support the legislation as we move forward in the debate.

The Chair: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm very happy to speak to this amendment and actually provide a little bit of perspective to this amendment. Clearly, this amendment focuses on the people who currently receive AISH. There are currently 55,000 people who are on AISH. A lot of those folks do work, whether they work part-time, casually, some of them full-time, and they do that for a number of reasons that I'll get into. It's really important not just to take the really bold step to index AISH benefits but to also look at employment earnings, and I think tying those future changes to minimum wage was perfect because it was about employment.

But, again, what I'm going to speak to a little bit is that I think it's really important to provide some perspective as to how we got here. For people with disabilities who are tuned in today, I do want to speak directly to them and provide some important perspective.

For the last four decades, until 2015, Albertans have been under the rule of one political party. Under that one party supports for people with disabilities suffered the same fate as infrastructure, education, health care, and other social services. The reality of Band-Aid solutions constantly being applied to gaping wounds got us to the place we arrived at in 2015, when Albertans chose a new way. The opposition has taken the position of late that they will soon resume their rightful place as the ruling party. Using that lens, I would like to remind Albertans with disabilities where we came from and how we've progressed over the last three and a half years and how we got to this place today: Bill 26 and this amendment.

In the 1990s the Conservative mantra was Cut First, Ask Questions Later. As revenues from the oil and gas industry dropped more than 50 per cent, the Conservatives instituted a 15 per cent reduction in program spending over six years while giving out \$11 billion in subsidies to agriculture, oil, and gas. The Conservatives' cuts focused on health care, education, and social services. Between '92 and 2000 the Conservatives cut 14,753 health care positions. As the international price of oil started to climb and the economy was showing signs of recovery, the Conservatives slowed that economic recovery. They slowed it by putting thousands of people out of work, overburdening social programs like AISH, and reducing the purchasing power of families. The Conservatives refused to invest in infrastructure, and we continue to deal with that deficit today. They made us more dependent on one resource, instituting a flat tax that literally took \$2 billion out of government coffers.

So why am I looking backwards? I wanted to provide a context as to why this bill is so unique, so essential, and so important. It took a lot of courage for us to do this and to arrive here today.

During the Conservative focus on deficit reduction in the '90s we saw the AISH program's failure to adjust to the cost of living, a failure to protect people with disabilities from the effects of inflation. In 1993 AISH was \$810 per month. Four years later AISH was raised by \$18. In '97 AISH was \$818 a month. Two years later AISH was raised by \$32. Six years after that it was raised by \$338. Obviously, prices were good. Money was thrown at this program. In 2005 AISH was \$1,188 per month. Seven years later AISH was raised by \$400. It seemed like a great win at the time, but the seven years leading up to that were brutal. In 2012 that put AISH at \$1,588, where it sat until now.

Bill 26 proposes to do what no Conservative combination of government and leadership had the foresight or courage to do since

the creation of AISH in 1979. Bill 26 ensures that Albertans with disabilities, their families, and allies will know that their AISH benefits will be adjusted to the consumer price index. It's important to compare this change to the actions we know Conservatives have taken when the international price of oil creates economic hardship in an economy that has not yet diversified sufficiently to absorb the shocks of falling prices. That's not all. The legacy of decades of one-party rule, Conservative Party rule, created deficits within the AISH program that we are finally addressing. Let me remind you that the AISH program provides over 50,000 Albertans with \$1 billion in benefits.

The UCP told Albertans that they would feel pain. The UCP crow about B.C.'s spending levels, which are 20 per cent lower than Alberta's. Where do you think they're going to take us if they resume their rightful place? Imagine a 20 per cent cut to AISH benefits. A 20 per cent cut to \$1 billion in AISH benefits is \$200 million. What does a cut like that to AISH look like? If you use an annual benefit amount of \$20,400, that translates to 9,800 AISH recipients. Add to that the cost of not funding intake, that means not supporting people who are newly eligible – perhaps they're injured or they moved to Alberta or they turn 18 – and the deficit is massive. The problem is huge. While I appreciate that the opposition members will stand up and act supportive of supports for people with disabilities, remember their history and listen to their nonplatform platform. It will hurt. They can tell you all they like about how much they support this amendment and this bill, but when it comes down to it, when the rubber meets the road, they will not vote for a budget that increases AISH benefits.

In November of 2016 Alberta's Auditor General brilliantly outlined improvements to AISH that were long overdue, once again ignored by decades of a previous government. People with disabilities, their allies, and families knew first-hand that the AISH application process was not easily accessed and was the opposite of user-friendly. I believe the Auditor General said that the AISH application process was best suited for people good at filling out forms. That was a system created under the Conservative government. Finally we're introducing changes that should have been made decades ago. The websites and links have been updated, tested, and revised. That's called consultation. The website is accessible from mobile devices. The AISH application is finally in plain language, and staff are being trained so that there is equity in decision-making. Applications for end-of-life care and for people who are already approved for PDD supports are shorter and simpler.

Albertans who have applied for AISH benefits know that eligibility processes were broken. They knew that. They knew for a long time. AISH application processing times were far too long. There were not sufficient processes in place to monitor processing times and practices. Information given at the denial phase was not consistent, and appeal panel decisions were not tracked. The huge number of very costly AISH decision appeals was an indicator of a broken system. The previous government knew that, and they didn't do anything about that. We've now addressed these old deficits and have installed mechanisms to enable us to track and analyze processes.

Alberta's Auditor General also told us that there were inadequate performance measures to monitor and report on the efficiency of the program, leaving us unable to monitor outcomes, identify gaps, and ultimately improve. We've changed that, and that's where you see real progress because we have a baseline. As we move forward, we will be able to make changes that matter.

3:50

In three and a half years we've continued to pull this old system into the 21st century. It's important to acknowledge the progress

made in the short three and a half years. I acknowledge that the last three and a half years have not been perfect. I'm far from a patient person, and I would've liked it to happen a lot faster, but I am profoundly grateful that it is happening. There is a huge difference between our vision and the path forward and that of the UCP. They may not say much, but that says a lot. The difference is one of going backwards while claiming it's the Alberta advantage or one of continuing to consult and revise old systems while reaching for a future that embraces progress and inclusivity.

That future began in 2015, when Albertans chose a government that would create a future that doesn't leave anyone behind. In three and a half years while trying to manage the worst recession in decades, we did not cut and fire but began the process of addressing a system that was neglected, overburdened, and underfunded for decades. Over 50,000 Albertans who rely on AISH deserved better all along, and now they're getting it. A new vision and a path forward for AISH is what we are committed to doing: to improve the intake process and practice; to index and to increase AISH benefits for both the standard of living allowance and the modified living allowance; to maintain health-related personal benefits such as special diets, orthotics, equipment and maintenance of mobility aids, service animal supports, addiction-related expense, and special dietary needs; maintaining health benefits that are essential to people with disabilities; and amending employment earnings exemptions and indexing future rates to Alberta's minimum wage.

This was a dream for many people with disabilities and their allies. The fact that it's happening today: I'm just so enormously grateful. Why is this support for employment so important? Well, I think the member touched on it a little earlier. First of all, let me say that our government proclaimed DEAM. I think last year was the first year that we had ever done so. We joined countries all over the world to focus on Disability Employment Awareness Month, which is in October. We did that because there is an absolute value to affording and supporting somebody with a disability to be engaged in employment and to contribute to themselves, their families, and their communities through work. It affords people dignity and inclusion and respect.

We have to continue focusing on inclusive opportunities for people with disabilities beyond simply using a Conservative tactic to do so. Think back a few years. The Conservative government decided to focus on employment for people with disabilities by cutting supports to people with disabilities through the PDD system. A wholesale cut was set to devastate the lives of people. Using an assessment tool, the old supports intensity scale, the Conservative government projected test scores to justify wholesale cuts to supports beyond simply targeting employment standards.

That was when I met our Premier, Rachel Notley, and was inspired actually to run. Our response is much different: no more Band-Aids. It might take us a little longer to get there, but no more Band-Aids. We cleaned up some easy pieces that had been ignored for years, even during the good years. We finally removed the minimum wage exemption where employers could apply to pay people with disabilities less than minimum wage. We changed the Marriage Act so that people with disabilities no longer have to get a doctor's note before getting married. We paused the PDD safety standards and conducted an extensive, two-phased review. I have never seen a review like that, and I have been to so many reviews and consultations that I can't even count them.

We established a new standard for consultation and review in terms of the panel members, the process, and the result. It goes beyond plain language and access. It's about community. It's about leaders within the community. It's about self-advocates and their families and their friends, and it's about listening. I can tell you first-hand that's exactly what it was because I was there for every

step of it when we did the safety standards review. What I can say is that I travelled the province with that group, and not one – not one – opposition member showed up to any of those community consultations. And they were in your community. That process led to the PDD review that is under way today. The panel that has been appointed and the process are essential and are groundbreaking.

Service dogs: we addressed a huge need, a life-saving support. We addressed the need for additional dogs to support people. We addressed the high cost. Is there more to do? Absolutely. But we know it's a need, and we've finally started talking about it. We talk about public information and awareness. It might just be a sticker on a business door, but it might just help one person. We've approved more service dog organizations, and now service dogs that may have been trained by their owners have the ability to be tested in order to obtain legal access.

We have an associate page program right here in this Chamber. Young people with disabilities can also apply to be a page and have a life-changing experience.

We have a disability advocate through a private member's bill which became government Bill 205. It established an essential position and committed significant resources, once again, in a budget that the opposition, I can almost guarantee, will not vote for. Certainly, it is not quite at the level of the Child and Youth Advocate, but it is a fantastic start. Think about the Leader of the Official Opposition and his friend in Ontario whose sentences he finishes. What did they just do to the Child and Youth Advocate?

I would also mention the Henson trust legislation that was introduced. I'll let another member speak to that because I know that's near and dear to his heart.

All of these changes have taken time and have required extensive resources, and in the three and a half years we have worked hard. We know there is much to do still. Let me just say how happy I am that we are finally indexing AISH, increasing the wage exemption, and linking future changes to minimum wage. This takes courage and foresight. We are unique. Alberta is a leader in Canada for people with disabilities.

I was at the Military Family Resource Centre not that long ago, and we were told that St. Albert is home to a lot of military families. We were told that many military families with members with disabilities specifically asked to be posted to Alberta because of the incredible level of support. When they heard about the changes, of course, that just emphasized why.

This is our Premier's leadership, and this is what we are committed to. When our Premier tells us that economic recovery is not complete until all Albertans are included in that recovery, I believe her, because she walks the talk every day. Our commitment to indexing is evident, even when times are tough. It's not about austerity; it's about being brave enough to say: nobody gets left behind. I'm looking forward to future conversations and consultation around other issues that are outstanding, some related to AISH and some not. But I know, based on the past three and a half years, that this government is not going to forget about people with disabilities and their allies. We're here every day doing the important work that we were sent here to do. We have much to talk about around cohabiting partners, around asset levels, and other clawbacks.

There are very stark differences between our paths forward for people with disabilities; our path forward and the opposition's path forward. We are committed to continue consultation and progress, not austerity. Their actions to date show no commitment. In fact, their leader has said as much. We are committed to moving forward and building an inclusive future. The UCP want to return to the good old Klein days and the Alberta advantage. We are committed to a future where no group of people is left behind, a future where

a person with a disability is as important and as valued as a wealthy political donor or special interest group. That's the kind of Alberta we're building, where nobody is left behind.

Again I thank everybody involved for getting us to this place, and I encourage all members to support this amendment. Thank you.

4:00

The Chair: On the amendment, Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a privilege to stand and speak a little bit about my support for this amendment to Bill 26, An Act to Combat Poverty and Fight for Albertans with Disabilities.

I just want to, first of all, say that it gets a little discouraging when it doesn't matter whether we support it or don't support it and the same rhetoric comes from the members opposite. We believe that this is actually a fairly good, common-sense amendment and that the bill was good and that it's something that needs to be done, yet here we hear once again how bad we are for accepting it, supporting it, and voting for it. And the answer from the opposite member is: don't trust us, that somehow we're supporting it for nefarious means. Madam Chair, I don't know how they can continue on the same path, the same rhetoric and still think that Albertans are buying it. You can't say one thing out of both sides of your mouth and expect them to believe it. So that's the first thing I wanted to say.

The second thing I wanted to say, Madam Chair, is that when the government portrays the past and decides that they're going to rewrite the past, I feel it incumbent upon me to stand and to clarify what's happened. When they talk about a failed 44 years and then many of them have said how much they loved Peter Lougheed, I hate to tell them this, but that happened in 44 years. Again, Albertans are confused by their message. It doesn't make sense.

But let's just get back to this concept here that they're talking about, the idea of these wraparound services. The wraparound services that we have in Alberta – I had a very interesting conversation while door-knocking, talking to a teacher. I'd like to be able to let you know what was said when I talked to the teacher. I asked him what he thought about the government. He said, "Well, I think the government is doing a good job." I said, "Well, I'll take that to mean that you're going to vote for them in the next election." He said yes. I said, "Well, why are you going to do that?" He said, "Well, they're helping us."

I wanted to dig a little deeper. Normally I'd just move on, but I wanted to dig a little deeper, so I said to him, "Well, my question to you is: how much do you make?" He says: "I know what you're going to say. I know that I make more money as a teacher than any other jurisdiction in Canada." I said: "Actually, no. You make more than any other jurisdiction in North America." I said, "How did you get there?" He thought. "I got it; collective bargaining," he said, and I said: "Wait. I appreciate that there's good collective bargaining, and that's the ATA. But every other jurisdiction has collective bargaining units as well, so why did you make the money that you made in Alberta?" And he kind of said: "Okay. Why is it?" I said, "The reason why is because a Conservative government in the past actually helped public servants get to this point."

Now, what's interesting about it, Madam Chair, is that this government likes to say how bad it was under a Conservative government, but we have some of the top-paid public servants. Why? Because we did something different in Alberta. We had the thing called the Alberta advantage, which this member just stood up and said how bad it was, how we want to go back to it. Absolutely, and every public servant should want to go back to it as well because the Alberta advantage wasn't just helping private sector; it helped public sector as well.

It's interesting that the members tried to have this revisionist history lesson in this House, but the facts speak for themselves, Madam Chair. So when we stand up and we say that, you know, we want to get back to something where we can have fulsome employment amongst Albertans, that we can have an opportunity for Albertans to be able to really have something they can be proud of, that Alberta advantage – it's not just for private sector but for public sector as well – this is something that we should crow about. This is something that we should be actually proud of in this province, yet we have continued to hear from the other side of the House that they are ashamed of the 44 years. We have done something right in this province, something phenomenal in this province, and we should never be ashamed of it.

Now, when we stand up in this House and we say that they got it right, instead of the government side standing up and saying, "Well, we agree; it's fantastic that we agree here" and taking the high road, raising the bar in this House, which we have tried to do – still it's amazing, the heckling, the laughing. I don't know if they're ever going to get it. I hope they do because I think it just shows that they can be classy sometimes. The sad thing about it is that when we actually do agree on a piece of legislation or an amendment and for them to get up and have this overheated rhetoric, it's discouraging, and I think that a lot of Albertans are looking at this saying: are they truly a government that we want to have another term of? I can tell you that I've heard many, many times people say: thank you very much for raising the bar in this House.

I've said this before. I think that it's important for this government to be able to stand up and to raise the bar as well. We can have a policy debate. We can have a robust discussion. We can have a robust debate. But why does it always have to be couched in this overheated rhetoric and slamming? They only seem to know one speed, and that's anger.

We will support this. I think it's a very good amendment. We are willing to support any good amendment that's going to help all Albertans in the future. But let's remember that how we got to this point was through a Conservative government for 44 years.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much. I'm going to support the amendment on the floor, and I just want to extend my appreciation to the Minister of Community and Social Services because he is the first minister on this file in Alberta's history that is actually bringing forward indexation of these important programs. The Conservatives had 44 years to do it, and they didn't do it.

What the hon. member on the other side was just talking about, that we should thank the Conservatives for their stewardship of this file: Madam Chair, nothing could be further from the truth. When times were tough in Alberta in mid-90s, the Conservatives, the ones he is lauding, cut this program, cut programs for people on welfare supports, as it was called then. They cut programs for people who were vulnerable. They cut programs for the families that needed our support as a government. They cut them, and they saved money. They said: we have to get back to balance, and we're doing it on the backs of the most vulnerable in this province. That's who he's lauding over there. That's who he's saying is providing the necessary importance of this program. Nothing could be further from the truth.

I'm glad he's supporting this amendment. I'm glad that side is supporting this amendment. That's really great. But, you know, we don't see what they would actually do; we only hear what they would do. We hear things like, you know: health care is too expensive; we need to cut it 20 per cent to match B.C. levels. We

know that that would affect the workers in the health care system, the nurses, the insurance. The valuable health care provision that is in this province would be cut as well, the programs. We know that people would get less service. That's what we know from the other side. We don't have a shadow budget from the other side, so we really don't know if they would support this should they come to power. We really know that what they would do, from the things they have said they want to do, Madam Chair, is cut programs and services, and this is an area where they would likely go to first because the previous government, their legacy parties, did the same thing in the mid-90s on the backs of poor people.

Madam Chair, I want to go back to the actual work that this government and that Minister of Community and Social Services are doing. He has brought forward something that hasn't been done in this province before. In fact, I think he might have said that only very few provinces have indexed the programs that we're going to index starting in 2019, and that is something that I can tell you will benefit thousands upon thousands of families in this province going into the future.

4:10

We also know that the child care benefit rates in some of those programs are going to be harmonized and be something that creates greater dignity and more support for young people in those families, something, again, that the previous government left undone, left to be corrected by this government, actually, because we actually – actually – put children and families first, even those who are experiencing difficult times, Madam Chair.

I often have said that the thing that brought me to politics, politicized me, if you will, was the cuts to important supports for people in this province in the mid-90s, and that was supported by all of cabinet back then, but of course the Minister of Finance back then was the person who held the pen for those cuts. I'm proud as the Minister of Finance for this province, for this government, to hold the pen to make sure that that minister and ministry have the necessary supports for Albertans.

I went to my very first protest, you know, a young man growing up in Toronto, university, then came out here in the '80s. I worked in helping people out, worked in helping networks in Calgary. The first time I got politicized was during those Klein cuts of the mid-90s and the effect it had on the people that I was trying to support, the women and children, the families that I was trying to support. In 1993 or 1994 – I can't remember the exact date – I was on the steps here with 5,000 Albertans protesting those cuts. Many of them, of course, were clients of the system of those programs and services, and they were here to say: "You are cutting us back. We don't have the wherewithal to necessarily have the lobby support, the ability to raise funds to counteract, so we're coming out to do what we can do, and that is to be on the steps of the Legislature and to say to the government that we don't agree. We want you to roll back those cuts." That was not done, Madam Speaker. That was 1993, 1994, and after that period of time I said to myself: well, I'm going to get elected to help the most vulnerable.

In 1995 I got elected and served on council for 15 years, and my primary remit, the thing that I was most proud of and most interested in, was to try and improve the social programs in Alberta through my work as a city councillor. One of the areas that I was really proud of working in to see some change was in FCSS, family and community support services, that program for all Albertans. That was held at about \$60 million, maybe even less back then, and the governments of the day, the Conservative governments of the day, did not increase that program to help preventive social services to keep people off of income supports. They kept it at an amount of money, and a bunch of us formed a coalition. We said: we've got

to lobby for increased funds for FCSS. That minister, again, of Community and Social Services in our very first budget argued that the FCSS program should be increased from \$76 million to \$101 million, and it has stayed at that level for four years, Madam Chair.

As an hon. member from the other side talks about, you know, how we should recognize the good work of the Conservative governments in the past, I can point to two things right there. They didn't increase FCSS even though there was a coalition and everyone was saying that this needs to go up to prevent people getting into poverty. They kept it at the level they kept it at. Finally, with this government we increased it \$25 million, and \$100 million more has gone into that area since we were elected.

We don't know what the other side would do. The other side hasn't brought forward a shadow budget, so though they say that they support these amendments, that they would support these improvements to the income support programs, I am loath to believe that because they vote against everything. They are saying that they'll support this, but really we don't know. You know, it's a bit of shell game. You will only know if they bring a shadow budget and they put their pen to paper and say: these are the things we can support.

Who was it that said, you know: "Don't tell me about what your values are. Show me your budget, and I'll tell you what your values are"? Though those folks are saying that they value income support programs, that they value support for low-income people throughout this province, that they support increases, and that they support indexing, show me your budget, and then I'll tell you what you support. That's what I'll say, Madam Chair.

Just a point about – and I know that the Minister of Community and Social Services had talked about this earlier – the coalition, the interest that this bill, his Bill 26, has had with regard to combatting poverty and fighting for Albertans with disabilities. I can tell you that my friends in the poverty reduction community across this province are so proud to finally see the recognition their efforts have achieved in terms of this government and this bill. We are doing things, Madam Chair, to address poverty through the supports we're bringing forward.

In addition to, you know, "I'll tell you what your values are by looking at your budget," another axiom is that poverty reduction is not only about money, Madam Chair, but it involves money, and we are putting that money to the forefront with this bill. We are saying that for far too long these amounts have been too low. They need to go up with inflation every year. Only a few provinces have done this, and we as a province believe in this value. You can look at our budget and you can find out what we value. We value hard-working Albertans. We value supporting people who are vulnerable, supporting people who are trying to put their lives back together. When they have difficulty, they should be able to count on their government. On this side of the House they can count on their government.

That side of the House is all talk. They have no shadow budget. Until they bring forward something that looks like a shadow budget, we can assume that they're only playing politics, Madam Chair. That's what they're doing. Really, though they're talking about supporting this amendment, supporting these initiatives, I know that with the next breath they will get up and say: you know, this government is reckless. Well, we are supporting Albertans. It doesn't matter what they say. They need a shadow budget. Until they do that, really, it's all talk.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Madam Chair. First, I'd like to say a couple of things. I'll be supporting this amendment. I'd also like to thank the Member for St. Albert for her incredible work that she's done on this. I know that she's worked very hard on behalf of that community, not just today but, I think, for most of her life. And I'll commend the minister for indexing incomes. Instead of it being a regulation, now it's legislation.

You know, Madam Chair, it's always interesting to me. I have sat in this Chamber now for almost seven years, and I, too, like some of the members, like the Minister of Finance, got politically involved because I saw places where we needed to change. We needed to evolve not just as a government, but we needed to evolve as a people in this province.

One of the questions that I ask grade 6 kids is: "What is the greatest invention ever created?" They say things like hockey, and some say oil or cellphones. But I say, "What about the caveman and the stone wheel?" They're, like: "Oh, yeah. Right." Then I ask them, "Did we ever run out of rock?" They go: "No. Look at the mountains. We have tons and tons of rock." But guess what? Times change. I say: "What do they make wheels and tires out of now? Completely different things."

4:20

I'm a bit disturbed when I hear the Minister of Finance, a minister of the Crown, in a roundabout way basically defame people that I know have sat in the office of human services, that have given their blood, sweat, and tears: the hon. former Premier Dave Hancock and the hon. Manmeet Bhullar, a dear friend of mine. It is disgraceful to think that those two people did not work tirelessly on behalf of Albertans. Now, I'll say this, and this is maybe something that we don't hear enough in this Chamber. Yes, I was elected as a Progressive Conservative in 2012, and whatever that government did in the day and whatever that government did in the past, I am happy to wear it all, because if you're going to blame the former government, then you had better thank the former government for a lot of the very good things that happened in this province.

There's a saying that pride cometh before the fall. While you have done an excellent job on this particular file, there are other places in your government where you just don't have it right yet. And if you think you have it right, well, then, I'll go back to that saying, that pride cometh before the fall. As Progressive Conservatives we certainly didn't have it right. When I sit as a minister of the Crown or even as an MLA, as a father, as a human being, as an Albertan, I don't always get it right. But I continue to work hard to refine myself, to refine my thoughts, and I think that Manmeet Bhullar was on that path, and I dare somebody in this Chamber to deny that. Trying to get to a place on a very, very complex file – and I'll say this as a paramedic on the street. When you see people in crisis with different issues and then you hear their stories about AISH and income supports and how people disrespect them because of the place they are in their lives, it is absolutely unacceptable.

So I am glad that we are getting, particularly on this particular file, to where we're getting it more and more right, where we're actually having a debate and where people are accepting amendments. That's what we should be doing in here. We should be trying to get to a place where both sides have some credibility on this issue. Look, I left the United Conservative Party, but I know that many of the people there if not all of them on this particular file absolutely do care. Their way to get there might be different, but I know they care. I know that the Alberta Party caucus cares. I know that the Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill has done a lot of work on this particular file, and she should be commended.

But it's pretty easy in this Chamber to find where we have common ground – and I believe that this is one of them – and to have respectful debate rather than blaming. You know, nobody comes into this Chamber without a goal, I don't think. There might be a few that have the wrong intentions. When we think about Peter Lougheed, Don Getty, each Premier and each government has contributed in some way, some good and some bad. That's just the reality. But our job in here is to have respectful debate, to stand on the records that we have.

You know, Madam Chair, I'll tell you one of the things we did with the consultations on this particular file, and I'm going to say a couple of things in this Chamber that some people might be surprised at. I've had the opportunity to go to some of those things, and you absolutely feel heart-wrenched. You recognize that in that particular community there are people who over the years have been great advocates for their children and/or the people that they're caring for. They were great advocates, and they were able to get more money. Yet somebody who had more severe disabilities who didn't have a great advocate was getting less, and you saw them fall through the cracks. We tried to address that.

But I'll tell you some things. Again, when I look around the province, whether visiting my father in a rural hospital – I have to tell you that I'm absolutely embarrassed that with a government of 44 years, that I was a part of, some of the facilities look like that. I can say that. That's responsibility, and I'm not asking for any credit. But it's stuff that we need to continue to work on. This particular file, like I said, is very complex, and this is not going to end. I don't care who forms the next government. If you think that you've got it down, and if the next government that forms government, whoever it may be, thinks that this is going to be an easy file, it's not going away. There are going to continue to be issues.

Another time, in visiting a mental health facility and walking in there, I went: "Hold on a minute. We're one of the richest provinces in the world, and this is what this place looks like? These are the conditions we're asking mental health professionals to help our children and our loved ones in? This is what we've given them?" Well, you know, with all due respect to the government, you've been there for three and a half years, and these facilities still look the same way. I'm not blaming anybody. What I'm saying, Madam Chair, is that running a province, running the government is very, very complex. Everybody has a different approach. But we would be better served and more well served if we were actually collaborating on these particular issues.

I'll say it again: the government has done some good things. Everything the United Conservative Party talks about in trying to tighten the belts of our fiscal responsibility is not all wrong, nor are the amendments from the Alberta Party caucus and some of the independents. When we start looking at each other as fellow Albertans, remember this: if you are the government and you're there to govern everybody, are you not there to try to govern us and be respectful of us as taxpayers and vice versa?

There is an opportunity whenever an election is called. Whether Albertans feel I'm fit enough to come back to this Chamber or not, there's an opportunity, moving forward, for members that do get re-elected and for whoever forms government to start elevating the debate in this province to deal with files like this, where there are people suffering. You know, some of these people and the things that they feel they have to resort to to get the money that they need is just – again, I've seen it on the ambulance. It's despicable that we stand here and we argue about some of the petty things and who is to blame.

Madam Chair, I just think that if we were to collaborate more and be open to some ideas and not blame and say that the other side is always wrong, because they're not, then I think we'd be far better

off. Isn't it our goal, at the end of the day, that I should be trying to help support this minister even though I sit on the opposition benches with the Alberta Party, to try to give him or the Deputy Premier on the file of Health or the Minister of Justice my best ideas? That's how I can best serve Albertans rather than my own political interests.

Madam Chair, I'll leave it there, but I will be supporting these amendments, and I look forward to further debate. Thank you.

Mr. Hunter: Madam Chair, I just want to clarify a couple of things. First of all, in terms of this bill I have a brother who was born with osteogenesis imperfecta, so he had brittle bone disease. By the time he was I think in grade 6, he had spent more time outside of school than in and had to be tutored and home-schooled so that he could keep up. It has been a devastating disability for him. He had a big heart, big ideas, but his body wouldn't keep up. You know, I speak very passionately about this.

I believe that it needed to be indexed for some time, and I was never in a position where I could advocate for that. I'm now in a position where I can advocate for it, and I want to be able to do that, because I've seen the face of an individual in our society, a close person to me, my brother, who has been affected.

Ms Ganley: Are you going to vote for the budget this time?

Mr. Hunter: You know, the heckling at this point is so unclassy, very unclassy.

Ms Ganley: That wasn't a heckle.

Mr. Hunter: I'm amazed. I'm sharing my heart here, telling about why I feel the value of this, and a member opposite cannot stop heckling. Unclassy. Absolutely unclassy.

But let me get back to the point. The point here is this. I believe that society has two parts. They have the heart and the head. The heart is those wraparound services for someone like my brother, who through no fault of his own is in a situation where he needs to have that hand up. He has tried where he can to be able to get the work that he can do and that his body will allow him to do, but as I've watched him – and we're very close in age – I've recognized that it's very difficult for him and that we need to be able, as a compassionate society, to have those wraparound services for him.

4:30

I believe that in this situation this is a good program for him, and I think that this will help him. This is why I personally am voting in favour of this amendment and in favour of this bill, because I believe it is the right thing to do not just for my brother but for the people that are struggling just like my brother has.

I want to just finish with this. There was an article in the *Tyee*, that's from B.C. It says Jump in Alberta Disability Benefits Leaves BC Far Behind. I can't go through it all because we don't have the time, but it basically goes on to say that B.C. would have liked to have followed the direction that Alberta was taking to be able to increase these AISH payments, but they couldn't, and the number one reason why they couldn't was because they were so far in debt. The cost to service the debt prohibited them from being able to make those kinds of decisions for the people of B.C. As you know, the *Tyee* is not a conservative magazine. They are just calling out the truth.

The reality is that Alberta had gotten us into a position where we had that ability to be compassionate, to be able to increase those AISH payments, and there were many people that were able to benefit in Alberta from it. In fact, in this article it goes on to say that many people from B.C. wanted to move to Alberta in order to be

able to be involved in that AISH program and how compassionate it was.

That was the point I was trying to make earlier about some of the decisions that we made here in Alberta that allowed us to be able to have that benefit, not just the benefit to private sector and public sector but to actually benefit and to be able to provide a compassionate side. That's what I think is valuable. This is something that I think is a big reason why I am very much in favour of this amendment, and I just wanted to make sure that I pointed that out.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I just want to rise to ask the hon. member a question. I apologize that I spoke out of turn. I know that sometimes in committee people speak back and forth, and I perhaps took that a little bit too far. It obviously wasn't intended as a heckle, so I'll simply stand and state my question on the record for the hon. member. What I asked was – and it's simply because this is one of the things that made me passionate and drove me into government, the idea that ultimately our budget does signal what our values are. What I was simply asking was: you know, this bill does a fantastic thing. I'm very proud of the thing that this bill does, but it does cost a certain amount of money. Simply what I wanted to ask the hon. member opposite, since he feels so passionately about it – I think we found a point of agreement – is whether or not he intends to vote for the money in a budget to support this bill.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm hoping that we can change the tone of the conversation because this is a really good bill. It helps a lot of people, and this is a really good amendment that makes a bill even better. I'm really pleased to see a lot of the changes that this amendment introduces to the legislation. I think they're really important changes. Indexing of income: as you know, I introduced an amendment last spring to try and achieve a very similar goal to that. I think it's really important.

I want to thank the minister for being so open with information and also the Member for St. Albert. She's been a huge educator for me to learn more about this particular issue, and I really want to acknowledge her contribution both to me and to the sector at large. It's been really important.

I do have a subamendment that I'd like to introduce.

The Chair: This will be known as subamendment A1-SA1.

Go ahead.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to move that amendment A1 to Bill 26, An Act to Combat Poverty and Fight for Albertans with Disabilities, be amended as follows: Part A is amended by renumbering clause (a) as clause (a.1) and by adding the following before clause (a.1):

- (a) in the proposed section 3 by adding the following after subsection (2):
- (3) The provision and administration of benefits provided under this section shall be carried out in accordance with a client bill of rights established by the regulations.
- (4) A client bill of rights established pursuant to subsection (3) shall:
 - (a) include a requirement for the provisions of the bill of rights to be considered and applied by all

persons authorized to administer and make determinations respecting benefits under this section, including eligibility for benefits;

- (b) provide that access and education regarding services and benefits should be culturally appropriate;
- (c) provide that clients and individuals applying for benefits must have access to supports to assist in navigating the application and appeal process;
- (d) require that, upon request, an explanation of an appeal decision be provided to a person who is refused a benefit;
- (e) be reviewed by the Minister and any impacted groups every 5 years, beginning 5 years after the date on which the bill of rights comes into effect.

(b) by adding the following after clause (d):

- (e) by adding the following the proposed section 3.3:

Consultation

3.4 The Minister shall, in accordance with the regulations, consult with any groups potentially impacted by proposed amendments to this Act or the regulations that would substantively change a benefit or the manner of determining eligibility for a benefit.

Part B is struck out and the following is substituted:

B. Section 2(5) is amended

- (a) in clause (a) by adding the following after the proposed section 12(1)(a.4):
 - (a.5) establishing a client bill of rights in accordance with section 3(3) and (4);
- (b) by adding the following after clause (a):
 - (a.1) by repealing clause (c);
- (c) by adding the following after clause (b):
 - (b.1) by adding the following after clause (d.1):
 - (d.2) respecting the requirement for consultation under section 3.4 with groups impacted by any substantive changes to benefit.

It's too bad we can't use visual aids because that's quite an exercise in logic right there.

The reason that I introduced a subamendment is because the amendment opened up the clauses that need to be addressed in order to entrench a client bill of rights and in order to entrench a requirement for consultation in the future for any changes. The client bill of rights came about because of conversations in my office with clients who are applying for AISH and appealing decisions from AISH. I think it's important that each of the clients of AISH understands either why they were turned down or how they can go about appealing the process, and they need to know what the standard of service is that they can expect consistently, regardless of which worker they may be working with.

The second part of the subamendment has to do with consultation. The reason that I wanted to incorporate that into the bill is because what I hear from the PWD community again and again is: Nothing about Us without Us. This entrenches that into the legislation. I'm sure all of us have had people dealing with AISH in our offices and seen the frustration, felt the pain that they have felt in dealing with what their circumstances are and in dealing with the AISH program. These issues are dealt with in the subamendment.

I think that in a compassionate way – I really believe that this subamendment makes the amendment better, and the amendment makes the bill better. For these reasons I really encourage everybody in the House to support this subamendment.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

4:40

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Member, for bringing forward this subamendment. With respect to some of the things that are mentioned in the proposal for the bill of rights – for instance, there needs to be better clarity with respect to eligibility for the benefits; individuals who are applying need to better understand the procedures – after that Auditor General report came out, we came up with an AISH action plan. Many of the things that are included here are somewhat addressed in there as well.

For instance, we created new simple-language forms, and along with that we created three more guides as well. One of them was explaining what this program is about, who is eligible, in very simple language. The other guide was talking about essentially every clause, every step of the way, what information is sought in that form and explaining what is expected and what is needed. There were many things addressed there. There was also an adjudicative framework that was part of that action plan to make sure that the decisions are consistent across the province. Also, there was a recommendation with respect to increased individualized support for individuals who are applying for those benefits, and it was expected that improvements were also made.

In bringing forward this piece of legislation, we talked to thousands of self-advocates, antipoverty advocates, persons with disabilities, their families, and I can even name certain groups like Disability Action Hall, Vibrant Communities Calgary, EndPoverty Edmonton, Edmonton Social Planning Council, Inclusion Alberta, Public Interest Alberta, Self Advocacy Federation, Momentum, YWCA, Calgary Housing Company, Poverty Talks! In Calgary. I was meeting earlier even with EndPoverty Edmonton as well. What I want to say is that, for the most part, pretty much what we did is that we worked with the community on all these issues. The reason we did that, that we believed in: Nothing about Us without Us. It's important that we consult them when we make any changes to this legislation, to the programs that affect them. Things that are included in this amendment were advocated by many of these advocates, and we received over 2,300 letters.

I would, I guess, ask for a little bit more clarity. Has the member consulted with the community on any of these amendments? What were, I guess, those discussions? Does she have anything more to share? If not, I think I will take time to consult on these issues. I recognize that these are important issues, but at this point, unless I have something substantial, I would urge my colleagues not to support this amendment at this time.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the subamendment?

Seeing none, I'll call the vote.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on subamendment A1-SA1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:44 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Fildebrandt	Hanson	McPherson
Fraser	Hunter	Nixon
Goodridge	Loewen	Orr
Gotfried	Luff	Strankman

5:00

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Ganley	Malkinson
Bilous	Goehring	Mason
Carlier	Gray	McCuaig-Boyd
Carson	Hinkley	Miller
Ceci	Hoffman	Miranda
Connolly	Horne	Payne
Coolahan	Jansen	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Kazim	Sabir
Dach	Kleinstauber	Schmidt
Dang	Larivee	Schreiner
Drever	Littlewood	Turner
Feehan	Loyola	Woollard
Fitzpatrick		

Totals:	For – 12	Against – 37
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[Motion on subamendment A1-SA1 lost]

The Chair: Back on amendment A1, are there any further speakers to this amendment?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

The Chair: Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to Bill 26?

Are you ready for the question?

Hon. Members: Question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 26 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

Bill 28

Family Statutes Amendment Act, 2018

The Chair: Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise today and speak to Bill 28, the Family Statutes Amendment Act, 2018, here in Committee of the Whole. I want to thank my colleagues for acknowledging their commitment to this bill and identifying concerns, which I'll be happy to address.

The proposed legislation will modernize family law in our province to better support all families. First, it would provide clear rules about property division for unmarried partners. Second, it would clarify that applications for child support can be made for sick and disabled adult children of parents who are not married or are not divorcing. Lastly, it would repeal the Married Women's Act, which is now out of date.

I would like to address the questions that my colleagues have raised concerning second reading. First, a question was asked about whether existing agreements between unmarried partners will remain valid. The short answer is: if they were valid before, they will be again. Agreements that were enforceable prior to the new legislation coming into force will remain so, but I must reiterate that they needed to be enforceable before the legislation came into force.

Even if the legislation passes, people will still be able to choose to draft their own agreements for property divisions if they don't want the new rules to apply to them.

With our proposed amendments the presumption of equal division will begin on the date the couple began living in a relationship of interdependence. This rule will apply both to adult interdependent partners and spouses who live together prior to being married. A question was asked on what happens when partners can't agree on when their relationship of interdependence began. In the event that parties are not able to agree on this, it will fall to the courts to decide. A court decision will be made on a case-by-case basis and guided by the definitions and factors set out in the Adult Interdependent Relationships Act. These include considering if partners are emotionally committed to one another and whether the parties function as an economic and domestic unit as proven by factors like whether the persons have a conjugal relationship, their contributions to each other's well-being, and the degree of financial interdependence.

The member also asked about the potential impact of new property division rules on current or potential income support recipients. Income support, Madam Chair, is a needs-based program intended to provide for household units while supporting the transition to self-sufficiency. The amount of income support received is based on the difference between a household's needs and financial resources. As a result, any impact depends on the particular facts of each case, and any property the income support recipient receives as part of a property division claim or settlement may be taken into account, depending on the particular legislation.

With respect to wills and successions another concern that was raised was how our proposed rules will impact a deceased partner's estate and how it will be split. Simply, Bill 28 will not change the rules that are set out in the Wills and Succession Act. The act sets out how and to whom property is transferred when someone dies, Madam Chair.

Another question was if this bill will impact how pensions are divided. To clarify, we're not changing the definition of pension partner in the pension legislation. An unmarried pension partner refers to a marriagelike relationship and being in such a relationship for at least three years or of some permanence if there is a child of the relationship. This is a narrower definition than an adult interdependent partner. A person can be an adult interdependent partner in a platonic relationship although we have heard from family law practitioners that these types of relationships appear, from their experience, to be very few in number. A person can also become an adult interdependent partner in a shorter period of time than it takes to become an unmarried pension partner by signing an adult interdependent partner agreement.

Our proposed amendments include a provision that clarifies that nothing in the act enables transfers or payouts to a person who is not a pension partner under the pension plan where the requirements in the pension legislation are not met. However, the court is required to distribute the value of the pension benefit in accordance with the proposed legislation when making a family property order. This means that for those adult interdependent partners who do not fit into the pension division regime, while they cannot ask for a division of the pension from the plan, the value of the benefit will be taken into consideration in terms of the overall property distribution.

Madam Chair, our proposed new rules will apply by default, which means that parties will obtain the benefit of the new rules without needing to take action to opt in. Many people do not know how the current law operates for unmarried couples or that unmarried couples do not currently enjoy the benefits of legislated property division rules.

We recognize that the changes we are proposing could have a significant impact on many people's lives. We must give people the opportunity to become informed and provide them with the time to govern their financial affairs. That's why, if passed, the new property division rules for unmarried partners would come into force in January 2020. This provides us an opportunity to both inform the public of the changes and increase the overall awareness of the legal rights of adult interdependent partners in this area. The department will take advantage of this opportunity and will update and prepare educational materials targeted at the legal profession, the general public, government staff, and stakeholders.

I also wanted to echo a colleague's comments about how this bill will streamline the courts and help reduce delay. This legislation will provide certainty in the law and promote settlements where possible. This is intended to help prevent complex and expensive legal battles between unmarried couples and will free up court time. Madam Chair, we hear a lot in this place about court delays with respect to criminal matters, and those are certainly a concern, and I think they should be a concern to everyone. But I think it's worth noting that when we're talking about court delays, they can occur in family law matters as well. Each one of those is a family waiting for resolution, so I think it's important that we're able to take these steps to ensure that these matters can move forward in a timely manner as well.

Finally, a member asked whether the Dower Act should be repealed. We want to thank the member for raising the issue, and we will note it for future consideration.

Any time legislation is amended or repealed, there can be a wide range of impacts, and care must be taken to ensure that these are understood before future amendments are proposed. That's why with respect to these amendments we've worked with the Alberta Law Reform Institute, who has done fabulous work on a wide range of legal issues, and they provide us with great advice.

Madam Chair, our government believes that Albertans, married or not, deserve equal access to the law, and Bill 28 is just another step in ensuring a fair and accessible justice system. Thank you.

5:10

The Chair: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 28. Thank you to the minister for the answers to a lot of the questions that have been raised. I think these are important answers.

I'd just like to elaborate a little bit – it's appropriate, I think, for Committee of the Whole – on maybe some further dialogue back and forth in terms of some other potential questions. I'd like to start with regard to the 2020 deadline or date of implementation, I guess. A pair of questions go with that. Do people really need that long? Really, the important issue here is not so much time, but how are people going to be advised and educated? Two years could go by, and people wouldn't be any more informed than they are today. You did say that the department will be doing the information rollout. I guess my further question with regard to that would be: when can we expect to see some of that? What's the estimated cost, and is that coming out of the current budget or a future budget?

I do think that the awareness and education piece will be extremely important here, particularly with regard to, I guess, two demographics. I think that for youth, who may be unaware of legal realities and legal systems and all these kinds of things, who ease into a relationship but don't understand the implications or the consequences: how will we target awareness and education at youth rather than just the legal profession, staff, lawyers, that kind of thing? Secondly, I think, the demographic of seniors. There are

many seniors as well who aren't particularly following all the legal stuff, maybe aren't online, who may be in relationships more because of economic reasons or for companionship. How are we going to target education and awareness to them? That's the first thing that I would like to raise.

The second one. I guess I would hope that there would be some guidance coming with regard to the content of adult interdependent agreements. The legal status of adult interdependent relationships is still not quite as clear as that of a marriage on a legal front, and the potential for complex legal issues is really and truly there. Is there going to be guidance on that? Is this the kind of thing that only a lawyer can draw up? I think that there's the possibility of many conflicting legal issues with regard to property and those kinds of things. Is the guidance going to be that, really, only a lawyer should be doing this?

I guess my third and last question would be: is there going to be some guidance with regard to the concern of resolving custody for children? I know that even in marriage dissolution and law all too often children are caught in a battle back and forth between parents. They're too often left literally for years in limbo as courts work through this process. What are we going to do for the benefit of children who may be caught in the crossfire of parents who are battling this out with lawyers? I think it's a really important issue that we need to be thinking about as we extend the rules and the legal benefits from marriage to also include adult interdependent relationships. Children all too often do get caught, and I think we need to be thinking about: how do we create systems and situations where they're not suffering unduly and for overly long periods of time because of legal conflicts?

Those are my questions and my concerns, and hopefully the government can give us some answers on some of those kinds of things. Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to Bill 28? The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin.

Ms Goodridge: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's an honour to rise in the House today to speak in favour of Bill 28, the Family Statutes Amendment Act, 2018. This bill looks to address a very real issue, and I truly appreciate many of the questions that I had asked during second reading having been answered by the minister earlier today.

As I shared during my previous speech, common-law relationships are becoming more and more common across our province, and they're even growing at a higher rate than those of married couples. These common-law relationships have proven to complicate proceedings after the relationship has dissolved and, ultimately, ends and has created an unpredictable court process creating very inconsistent decisions.

This bill rises to meet the issues. It helps by streamlining the process and by giving clarity in legislation for our courts to make more consistent decisions. This will help with our limited funds and allow for more resources to be diverted to the more serious cases and the more pressing cases. Furthermore, it will help to make sure that those that are most vulnerable within our society are well taken of, and it would be my hope that we would see fewer Jordan decision cases dismissed. While this bill is not perfect, it has many good intentions.

Millennials are facing many challenges that generations before them did not face. While they did not live through the Great Depression or a world war, they have had to experience a different set of struggles. For example, the overall cost of living has significantly increased, which has been noted by many millennials as a barrier, and many are choosing to cohabitate and often enter into common-law relationships before even considering marriage.

Furthermore, homes are becoming more and more expensive for a generation that has not seen the same percentage of pay increases, which makes the dream of home ownership much more difficult. Millennials are holding onto the idea of home ownership, and therefore they tend to wait a lot longer to get married, if they even choose to. There are also factors in regard to the cost of postsecondary education having increased, causing even further delays in choosing whether to get married or not.

With these factors, common-law relationships are clearly on the rise, and Stats Canada data shows that this is very much true. Between 2006 and 2011 the number of common-law relationships grew at a rate more than four times that of married couples during that same period of time. In 2016 we found that 1 in 5 Canadian couples said that they were living in a common-law relationship, compared to just 6 per cent in 1981. As you can see, society has changed, and it's time that our laws reflect this change. In fact, here in Alberta common-law relationships or cohabiting couples doubled over the same period of time from 7.7 to 16.8 per cent.

We must be aware of the fact that the dissolution of common-law partnerships could create an increased strain on our already taxed court systems. More Canadian couples are opting to live together rather than tying the knot, which is particularly true for younger generations that value flexibility and individuality over tradition and formality, and more and more young couples are choosing to live together to test out whether their relationship will withstand a long-term match. In fact, many of my friends have shared with me that they would choose to live with their spouse prior to even considering getting engaged or married as a measure to try and reduce their chance of getting divorced. To some, not legally being married typically makes it easier for them to split if they find that they're incompatible.

However, with this trend, it can make things a lot more complicated when common-law relationships create families down the road and then those families end up dissolving. While the solution of common-law relationships creates, in theory, an easier breakup, it can create a messier family, something that I believe that this bill will help to solve, which is really important for society and our ever-changing reality.

5:20

Yesterday I talked quite at length about the Jordan decision and why it's important that we make sure that resources are diverted from less severe cases like common-law disputes towards more serious cases. I decided to go a little bit deeper into the subject matter, and I would like to share an example as to why I think that finding these efficiencies within our court system is so very important.

In the summer of 2016 there was a young mother in Fort McMurray that had to watch a man that she accused of sexually assaulting her walk free due to the charge being stayed because it took four years and four months to be seen, which was deemed too long under the Jordan decision. This was only one of five cases – and all five cases were sex-related charges – that were dismissed in the summer of 2016 across northern Alberta due to the Jordan decision.

This is exactly why we need to make sure that our court system has all the efficiencies available to it, so that we can spend our time and resources where they're most needed. In fact, there have been hundreds of cases across Canada that have been dismissed by judges since the framework was changed. The current system dealing with common-law separations diverts resources away from this very large problem for Albertans, and I'm glad that this bill aims to fix it.

This bill aims to create a process that creates a more stable and predictable process for individuals in common-law partnerships. This is a good, common-sense solution that will help make things easier during these difficult times. No one wants to break up with somebody. This is typically not something that you start a relationship planning to do, to break up. This is typically during a very difficult time in someone's life, so having this clarity in legislation makes this difficult time a little bit easier.

It will also add some much-needed fairness to couples that are in common-law relationships for an extended period of time, choose to get married, and then, unfortunately, end up getting divorced. This bill will allow the division of assets to take into account a more true version of the length of their relationship. As more and more millennials specifically and, really, all Albertans are choosing to be in common-law relationships prior to entering into a marriage, this change will help protect more Albertans.

It also removes some of the complexity for judges when making decisions on common-law separations. As it currently exists, it is left to the judge to make these decisions for the separation of assets using the concept of an unjust enrichment – basically, one person is enriched at the expense of another – and the courts are left to try and decipher how to split the assets between these partners, which could be a really complex and long-drawn-out process, much more difficult than most people would have expected due to them being in common-law relationships. This is also a much more expensive system, requiring a lot more time to go through the courts and putting a lot of onus on common-law couples to fight this rather than simply having a little bit more clarity, as married couples would have.

This bill also aims to remove the Married Women's Act. I must say, Madam Chair, that this was very long overdue. It's amazing to me to think that in 2018 a law that results in a husband acquiring all of a wife's land and income was still in place. While this was not used, I appreciate that the government has chosen to remove this piece of legislation. I can assure you that women are more than capable of managing their own land and income.

While there are a lot of good aspects about this bill, I still have a couple of questions. How exactly will a judge determine if a relationship is classified as common law? I know there are certain criteria that need to be met, but if one of the partners does not view the relationship as being a common-law relationship – what happens, specifically, when they disagree on the time when they became a common-law couple? Also, how will the government spread awareness about this piece of legislation? I think it's truly imperative that Albertans know their rights before they're entering into any kind of a binding relationship.

I've heard from many Albertans and many of my own friends that actually chose to be in common-law relationships to avoid some of the legal ramifications. In fact, the Canadian Research Institute for Law and the Family noted that many people in common-law relationships were unaware of their rights and entitlements and lack thereof. So I believe that the education piece around this bill is something that is really important and really needs to be addressed.

I just want to thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity. And thank you to the minister for answering my questions earlier. I truly appreciate it.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Pursuant to Government Motion 36 I would like to notify the House that there will be no evening sitting this evening.

The Chair: Any other questions, comments, or amendments with respect to the bill? Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gottfried: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today to speak in support of Bill 28, the Family Statutes Amendment Act, 2018. And thank you to the minister for her explanation of some of the subtleties of this bill.

Madam Chair, it's very clear that we've got an opportunity here to support some legislation which is in significant need of updating and changing. Reflecting on some of the information that I did some research on, it's very interesting. In the 2016 census common-law relationships were already on the rise. In that census over 320,000 Albertans, about 1 in 10 adults, did already live in a common-law relationship, and I suspect that that's expanding as time goes by. That's compared to nearly 1.6 million Alberta adults in marriages. Again, that's a significant percentage of that number. Of course, more same-sex couples are choosing common-law relationships rather than marriage. That's now a balance of 7,655 to 4,560, again, from the 2016 census, a number I suspect is increasing.

There's also adult interdependent relationships, which are currently governed by the Adult Interdependent Relationships Act, which is, of course, another key factor in a number within this particular issue. The AIRA defines an interdependent relationship as

a relationship outside marriage in which any 2 persons

- (i) share one another's lives,
- (ii) are emotionally committed to one another, and
- (iii) function as an economic and domestic unit,

which I think is a very technical way of explaining a relationship.

An interdependent relationship is recognized when two people cohabit for at least three years or with some permanence if there's a child from the relationship by birth or adoption or if they enter into a formal agreement establishing that relationship, obviously outside of marriage itself.

A person may not have more than one adult interdependent relationship at once, nor may a married person enter such a relationship while living with their spouse. That probably makes some sense, in section 5. Falsely alleging such a relationship incurs liability for damages, and the onus of proof, of course, for establishing that the relationship exists is on the person claiming that it does exist. So, again, there is some onus of proof, which is, I think, always a positive thing.

Of course, there are clauses for unjust enrichment as well, which we need to be cognizant of. Nobody wants unjust enrichment, and that, of course, is covered in this legislation and in other legislation. Division of property at the end of a relationship is currently governed by the legal concept of unjust enrichment, which is highly dependent on the individual interpretation of the presiding judge. Whereas divorcing couples who have lived common law before marrying may also be subject to this legal regime, again, there are some principles of fairness there which are invoked, including some of the property agreements. Common-law couples may and in many cases probably should enter into the equivalent of a prenuptial agreement regarding division of property if the relationship ends. That's probably put into place just to protect both parties, I think, under those circumstances, particularly if they've brought assets together in that relationship, which should be taken as something that they've brought together and which needs to be respected in the future of that relationship.

These agreements are provided for in the bill, in section 38, and each partner must make a free and informed decision and each must have their own lawyer. Again, that appropriate representation is key and, I think, very important in this legislation.

Market value of certain kinds of property will be exempted from distribution, as it currently is for married couples, and these will include things like gifts, inheritances, settlements, and insurance payouts, which may be, again, predating that relationship and therefore exempt. The rule for this is that the market value of the item either when it's acquired or on the date of entrance into a relationship is exempted, but the value of increase, of course, typically is not exempt from that as both parties may be contributing to that.

5:30

Madam Chair, the Alberta Law Reform Institute does a lot of great work on many different pieces of legislation and in this case has also done some great work in their report, which can be found on their website. Some of the keys there are relative to unjust enrichment, again, which requires a court to consider the facts of each case and exercise discretion to achieve fair results and provides a little guidance for future cases and different facts, in fact, there as well. Again, I think that these are very good and positive reviews by the ALRI, which I think supports some of the work done in this legislation.

For separating partners access to justice would mean being able to divide their property fairly. Without presumptions or formulas to help them negotiate a fair settlement or the resources to pursue a claim in court, separating partners experience barriers to access to justice. That, again, allows for the legal process and the justice system to properly and fairly address assets.

The lack of legislated rules made it difficult for partners to settle disputes without unjust enrichment. There were two main reasons for that, as pointed out by the ALRI. First, it's difficult to find and interpret the applicable law, particularly for self-represented individuals. The law of unjust enrichment is found in court decisions, not in legislation, so this is a positive move in this regard. Public legal education resources do exist but generally provide little information beyond the fact that a claim for unjust enrichment is possible, and it is wise to seek legal advice. Again, some instructive advancements, I think, with this legislation as well.

Secondly, it's difficult to predict the outcome in a particular case which discourages settlement, and when individuals or their lawyers cannot predict how a court would resolve their dispute, they have great difficulty in evaluating options for settlement. Again, there were a lot of grey areas that pre-existed this.

With respect to individuals they often have very different perspectives on what is fair, and they look to the law as a source of objective standards that can be applied to their case, which I think is always the case because there are different valuations on different assets and different perspectives on how to divide those assets, and when they cannot identify objective standards, it cannot be determined whether a proposed settlement is a fair one or not. Again, that's where it can be very subjective, but it needs to be looked at objectively with the new legislation and how that's allowed.

It's often difficult to settle disputes. Partners are pushed towards litigation, and litigation is both time-consuming and expensive for both parties in these cases. There's usually only one sort of level of enrichment that happens, and that's often with their legal counsel, who are enriched as they battle over things that are not appropriately covered. Again, both expensive and risky for both plaintiffs and defendants, and many of them don't have the resources. They're trying to preserve what little assets they may have from the relationship and to move those forward to start a new

life and in many cases may have to abandon the claim due to the lack of access to an appropriate legal or legislative environment.

Again, the ALRI, Alberta Law Reform Institute, does also provide some other insights and some quotes. Unjust enrichment claims are risky. A plaintiff faces the possibility that the claim will be entirely unsuccessful after much hard work and litigation of that, and if so, the plaintiff will receive nothing while having to pay considerable legal fees. Again, that is never the preferred outcome, to go into long and drawn-out legal battles which may in fact burn up any of the assets that they sought to fairly and legally allocate and usually, of course, the paying of the costs going to the defendant, who may also face an unknown outcome with respect to their rights within that particular dispute.

Madam Chair, reform is needed to improve access to justice for the separating partners. Again, justice is what we all seek in terms of the legislation. Regardless of whether the separating partners negotiate or litigate, they would benefit from appropriate legislated rules with presumptions and formulas that can be brought forward in a more objective manner. The presumptions or formulas will help partners resolve those disputes without having to resort to going to court. They can do that outside of court. They can do it with negotiation and other means of settlement and streamline the litigation process for those who are unable to settle in moving forward with that.

Madam Chair, I think that I personally am very supportive of this initiative to try and update the legislation and update the protection of common-law partnerships and other relationships that are governed by this new legislation. I'm happy to support this.

In closing, I'd like to move that we adjourn debate on this bill. Thank you.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Chair: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I would now move that we rise and report Bill 26 and report progress on Bill 28.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Mr. Hinkley: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill with some amendments: Bill 26. The committee reports progress on Bill 28. I wish to table copies of the amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report? Say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Any opposed, say no. So ordered.
The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Seeing the progress that we've made today, I would now move that we call it 6 o'clock and adjourn until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:38 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday morning, November 29, 2018

Day 56

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (NDP), Speaker
Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (NDP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (UCP),
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Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (NDP)
Dreeschen, Devin, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UCP)
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (NDP)
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)
Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (NDP)
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP)
Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP),
Deputy Government House Leader
Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (FCP)
Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (NDP)
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (AP)
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (NDP),
Deputy Government House Leader
Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (Ind)
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)
Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Conklin (UCP)
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (UCP)
Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (NDP)
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)
Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (NDP)
Hunter, Grant R., Cardston-Taber-Warner (UCP),
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Jansen, Hon. Sandra, Calgary-North West (NDP)
Kazim, Anam, Calgary-Glenmore (NDP)
Kenney, Hon. Jason, PC, Calgary-Lougheed (UCP),
Leader of the Official Opposition
Kleinstauber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (NDP)
Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (NDP),
Deputy Government House Leader

Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (NDP)
Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (UCP)
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)
Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (Ind)
Malkinson, Hon. Brian, Calgary-Currie (NDP)
Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),
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McCuaig-Boyd, Hon. Margaret,
Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (NDP)
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Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (UCP)
Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (UCP)
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Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (NDP)
Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (NDP)
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Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)
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Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (NDP)
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (UCP)
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (UCP)
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (NDP),
Deputy Government Whip
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)

Party standings:

New Democratic: 53 United Conservative: 26 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Freedom Conservative: 1 Independent: 2 Progressive Conservative: 1

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Director of House Services, and Acting
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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Thursday, November 29, 2018

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Prayers

The Acting Speaker: Good morning.

Let us reflect or pray, each in our own way. Today finds us in the middle of National Addictions Awareness Week. May we battle stigma and encourage education to better understand this devastating illness. May we support the loved ones whose lives have been upended by this disease. Perhaps most importantly, may we as elected representatives lead by example by being compassionate to those living with addictions.

Thank you, and please be seated.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

Bill 29

Public Service Employee Relations Amendment Act, 2018

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie on behalf of the hon. Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal.

Loyola: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am honoured to rise and move third reading of Bill 29, the Public Service Employee Relations Amendment Act, 2018.

This bill proposes changes that will give more public-sector employees their constitutionally protected freedom to collectively bargain, remove restrictions on what can go to compulsory arbitration, and create more consistency for postsecondary institutions. One proposed change would be to remove restrictions that prevent five classifications of employees from collective bargaining. The five classifications of employees that are currently restricted from collective bargaining are systems analysts, budget officers, hearing officers, auditors, and disbursement control officers. When we looked at other jurisdictions in Canada, we saw that it was rare for these types of positions to be excluded from collective bargaining, so by removing restrictions on these employee classifications, we are giving these employees the same rights as their counterparts all across the country.

I'd like to point out that removing exemptions from the legislation does not mean employees will be automatically unionized. If this legislation passes, whether affected employees are unionized will need to be determined by employers and unions. Factors such as whether employees are in a supervisory role or have access to sensitive information could influence the decision on whether they should be part of a bargaining unit. The process for determining whether previously exempt positions will be unionized may vary, depending on the employer.

Another proposed change would remove restrictions on what can go to arbitration, like pension and job classifications. These proposed changes align with our essential services legislation, which states that all issues can be considered under collective bargaining. They would also give public-sector employees arbitration rules similar to those under the Labour Relations Code, creating more consistency for Albertans. Earlier this month government staff met with affected employers to discuss the

proposed changes to remove restrictions on the five classifications of employees and on compulsory arbitration. If passed, these changes would take effect on July 1, 2019.

Another proposed change would remove nonacademic staff at postsecondary institutions under the Labour Relations Code. Earlier this month government staff met with postsecondary institutions to discuss this proposed change, and postsecondary institutions provided feedback during the meeting. They were also given the opportunity to provide written submissions on how the proposed changes would affect them. We heard that this change could have a significant effect on postsecondary institutions and that they may need time to adjust. In response we're proposing that this change not take effect until July 1, 2022, giving postsecondary institutions more than three years to adjust. If passed, this change will create consistency for postsecondary institutions once implemented. It also means nonacademic staff will benefit from recent updates to the Labour Relations Code that are not in the Public Service Employee Relations Act.

If passed, Bill 29 would bring Alberta in line with the rest of the country by giving more public-sector employees the ability to collectively bargain and give public-sector employees similar arbitration rules to other Albertans and also bring all postsecondary staff under the same labour legislation, creating consistency for the postsecondary sector. I can only hope that all members of this Chamber will support this bill.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. Just for a point of clarity, you are moving third reading on behalf of the minister?

Loyola: Indeed I am, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you. Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to be able to rise this morning, and good morning to you and to my fellow colleague here this morning. We have had fairly robust discussions about Bill 29. Some things have come out that we didn't receive in the technical briefing. Actually, interestingly enough about this technical briefing: we were told as it was being introduced in the House that we would be allowed to be able to come to a technical briefing. It was a little spotty at first, and the information was not as forthcoming as we would have liked. However, here we are today discussing in third reading Bill 29, Public Service Employee Relations Amendment Act, 2018.

Now, I just want to talk first of all about what the bill is. The Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, who just started the process here this morning, talked about those five classification exemptions. Those five classification exemptions include a budget officer, a systems analyst, an auditor, a disbursement control officer, and a hearing officer. From what I can understand, the reason why these were exempted in the past is because the information that they had for the employer was sensitive information, so when going into collective bargaining for these individuals, to be part of a union would be a conflict of interest. These five classifications were exempted and were kept from being part of the union, which was a prudent approach because, as we like to say on this side of the House, it's important to have the proper balance. Unfortunately, by taking away these five classification exemptions, it actually balances it in favour of the unions.

Now, I guess I'm not surprised at that as we have seen a plethora of bills coming forward in this House over the last three and a half years that have certainly stacked the deck in favour of the NDP's

union buddies. I get that. They are their biggest contributor. In fact, some of the fees that every union member pays go directly into the NDP coffers, so I guess it makes sense that they're going to be giving back to those people who are, I guess, helping them get elected the next time.

But let's just be one hundred per cent clear here. This is stacking the deck for their union buddies, and that is the main reason for this. The Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie stood up, and there were two things that he said. First of all, he said that most of the jurisdictions in Canada did not have that exemption for the five classifications, so we were just bringing it in line with the rest of Canada, but then he said that this will make it like everyone else in Canada. I don't know if you can actually have both of those; it's either most or everyone. I think there was a mistake in the statement that he made there.

You know, one of the things that I'm concerned about with those five classification exemptions being part of that union: he said also in his opening remarks that that does not mean that they have to be unionized. Now, in the context of this bill I would agree with him, but in the context of the last three and a half years I would not agree with him. They have certainly stacked the deck in favour of the unions in terms of union certifications. There was a situation where organizations received a remedial certification. They had no right – no right – no ability to vote. The Labour Relations Board slapped a remedial certification on them, and they were unionized. One day they weren't unionized; the next day they were unionized. This kind of heavy-handedness is exactly the reason why there needs to be balance between the employee and the employer and unions, yet this takes completely away that balance that we've had in the past.

9:10

You know, remedial certification is a big concern, and also taking away the secret ballot is a big concern. We've brought these issues up in this House many times, Madam Speaker, and it is something that we are hearing from employers and that we are also hearing from people who do not want to be part of a union.

Now, let's just carry on here with what is in this bill. It also talks about removing section 30, and that is what can go before a compulsory arbitration board. This can be very problematic as well. One of the problems that I see – and I'll just actually go through some of the things that they're allowing now. Section 30 basically said what an organization can bring before a compulsory arbitration board, and the things that were not able to be brought before were the organization of work, the assignment of duties, and the determination of the number of employees of an employer.

Now, let's just go with that last one, the number of employees of an employer. If this government is so sure that they're going to be able to balance their budget in 2023, which I'd like to talk about a little later on in my remarks, what would happen if the cleaners in every federal building decided that they were understaffed and that they needed to double the number of cleaners they had and took that to the compulsory arbitration board? The compulsory arbitration board now has the ability to say, "You know what; we're probably not going to give you double, but let's give you 50 per cent," and that knocks off the budget of this government. How are they going to be able to go back to Albertans and convince them that they have a firm grasp on their budget and their ability to be able to get out of deficit territory? When you take section 30 out, I can't see how they're going to be able to do that.

This bill talks about the timelines in implementation as well. We took a look at what the universities were asking for in terms of their nonacademic staff, bringing them into their union fold and making the changes. What they realized is that this is a monumental task. There are almost 19,000 nonacademic staff, and I recognize that not

all of these are going to be affected by this five-classification exemption, but there are 19,000 PSERA staff. These individuals are now going to be affected materially by this legislation. Universities have said: give us two to four years in order to be able to implement this. We brought forward reasonable amendments to their start date timelines, and each of those was rejected by this government. Very disappointing as they had already been asked by the universities to be able to have these longer timelines, yet we're seeing the first implementation of the first sections, 1 through 7, from what I understand, by June 1, 2019, a mere six months from now. This isn't enough time. This isn't enough time for universities to be able to get their HR and legal departments onboard, and this is something that is very concerning. That was the other thing that we saw as a concern for this bill.

The other thing that I wanted to talk about with this is: why the need for this government to be able to move from courts being able to decide action or direction to legislation being able to decide that? Yesterday I talked about eight different court challenges that the AUPE had initiated in order to be able to change the section 12(1) provision in particular, which basically said that PSERA is a violation of section 2(d) of the Charter. This has been brought forward eight times at least in the course of a little over a decade. Each time, Madam Speaker, those courts have ruled in favour of the universities and PSERA.

Each time they have said that there is no Charter challenge, yet we see a situation where this government has said – in fact, the minister stood up yesterday if you'll remember – that they are quite confident that this is a Charter breach, that 12(1) is a Charter breach, so they are going to bring forward legislation. Now, if that is the case, why would they need to have a blunt instrument such as legislation to be able to do this, when in reality they have the courts? If they really felt there was a case, then they could take that case before the Supreme Court, let AUPE, in due course, do a Supreme Court challenge.

When I asked that question yesterday, asked for clarification on that, the minister was silent, would not answer that question, which is telling. Which is telling. We're in the dying days of this government according to all the polls. This government is moving as fast as they can in order to be able to help bolster their union buddies, and here we're seeing how they're throwing principle out the door in order to be able to use a blunt instrument to be able to get what the unions have been trying to do for the last decade. This is the sort of thing that's appalling to Albertans, it's appalling to this side of the House, and I'm calling them out on it. This is something that this government will be held responsible for.

The next question that needs to be asked is: does PSERA want to be AUPE members? Do they want to be rolled into the AUPE? The nonacademic staff that I talked to were not interested in that. They did not want to be a part of that. They felt that PSERA was doing a fine job and that they needed to have that representation where it was. I don't understand why this government – well, actually, I do understand why this government is doing this. They're doing it because AUPE is a major contributor to their campaign to win the next election.

Now, that being said, Madam Speaker, I want to get back to this issue of the government's claim that they can balance the budget. If they do measures such as this, which is going to allow this kind of collective bargaining for issues like how many employees you can have in a government organization or a public organization, this is just one indicator that Albertans are concerned about, that this government has zero interest in balancing the budget.

One of the things that I think is telling and one of the other issues that Albertans are concerned about is how they want to get to a path to balance. There was a CBC article on March 22, 2018, Alberta

Betting on Pipelines to Balance Budget. In it it says, “Alberta’s path to balanced budgets is built on hopes for construction of three new pipelines, including the controversial Trans Mountain expansion, plus reaping extra revenue generated by the federal carbon tax.” I remember the Finance minister saying that it was only built on two of the three, yet back in March they were saying how their ability to balance the budget was based upon three pipelines.

9:20

Then it goes on to say, “Plus” – so not just those three – “reaping extra revenue generated by the federal carbon tax.” Since March this government has waffled. They have gone all over the place. They have now said that they’re not going to increase to the \$50 federal carbon tax until they get Trans Mountain built. This is a situation where Albertans are receiving mixed messages. It’s the same thing with this bill. With this bill it’s a mixed message. They cannot in good conscience tell Albertans, “We are going to be good stewards with your money; we are going to be good stewards with your tax dollar,” yet they bring in these types of things.

I just don’t know how they’re going to sell it to Albertans. How are they going to sell to Albertans that they can actually balance their budget by 2023 when they bring in all of these things that say that they can’t balance their budget by 2023. Granted, this differential has thrown everybody under the bus. Albertans are hurting terribly from it. But there are measures that this government could do, measures that they could implement. Our leader has given them a complete, fulsome plan about how to be able to address this issue of the differential. Yet what are they doing? They’re consulting more.

I would have to say that I don’t know whether or not this government is that committed to being able to get our resources to market and getting our resources a proper, fair value. Certainly, what we’ve seen in the past is pipeline protesting, anti-oil and gas protesting, yet now we see a complete 180 change. Again, that’s a hard thing for Albertans to believe, that these guys are genuine in their approach and what they’re saying.

I’ve tried to explain what I think are the concerns with this bill. I’ve tried to explain what I think is a reasonable reason why we’re not going to be in support of this bill. The timelines are not there. The universities have asked for a longer timeline. The nonacademic employees that I’ve talked to do not want to be part of the AUPE. This wide-sweeping change to who can go before a compulsory arbitration board is a very big concern.

With all of this taken into account, Madam Speaker, as we’ve tried to talk and figure out what this bill is, we have come to the realization that this is just the same old NDP approach to the economy and to our society, to give their union buddies what they’re looking for, give their union buddies their due, and hopefully those union buddies will take them to a win in the next election. This is no longer about what’s good for Albertans. It’s about what’s good for their political fortunes.

It’s the saddest thing to see, Madam Speaker. We’re supposed to be in here – we’re supposed to be in here – thinking about what’s best for Albertans, and in reality all we see is this cynical approach to what’s best for their buddies. You know, with all the talk and the rhetoric that we’ve heard from this government, the talk and rhetoric of them being such a champion for the little guy, such a champion for all Albertans and every Albertan, “We’re not happy until every Albertan is benefitting,” the things that we’re seeing here definitely don’t validate that.

With that, Madam Speaker, I will not be in support of this legislation passing third reading, and I would encourage all members of this House to vote no on third reading of this bill. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Good morning to all. Good morning to you. I’m pleased to rise and speak today on Bill 29, the Public Service Employee Relations Amendment Act, 2018. Bill 29 amends the Public Service Employee Relations Act, the Post-secondary Learning Act, and the Labour Relations Code.

Madam Speaker, I understand that there are three changes being proposed. First of all, repealing five position classifications from a list of exclusions from the bargaining unit, repealing the provisions that restrict which matters may proceed to a compulsory arbitration board, and transitioning nonacademic staff at public postsecondary institutions from PSERA to the Labour Relations Code, giving them full compulsory interest arbitration rights.

It’s an interesting bill, just to sit and read it and read our brief. There are so many things to get your head around, and whenever that happens, Madam Speaker, I immediately wonder why the government is rushing things. Of course, we know that we are almost on the edge of an election. Of course, we know that the Alberta economy and the oil differential are huge – huge – concerns to all Albertans, to all Canadians for that matter. But this government, as we’ve seen so often in three and a half years, is absolutely determined to change the culture and the nature and the economic balance sheet of Alberta and fully intends to plow ahead despite the consequences, intended and unintended.

You know, Madam Speaker, I understand that my hon. hard-working colleague from Cardston-Taber-Warner twice made amendments to delay the timeline a bit to allow our good, good Alberta public servants, our Alberta managers, our universities, our boards of governors, our politicians, our legal people, any Albertan that cares a chance to reflect on this, a chance to offer their 2 cents, a chance to help get it right. Of course, those two amendment attempts were defeated. This government is plowing ahead – plowing ahead – before the spring.

Of course, Madam Speaker, I’ve stood up several times over the years and talked about how so many of these bills should go to committee, a committee where the main thing is that Albertans with expertise, Albertans who are ultimately going to have to be paying the taxes, Albertans who are ultimately very much, and fairly, in receipt of the payments, whether it’s income or pensions or whatever, have the opportunity for their voices to be heard. Of course, any time that we on the opposition side try to have reflection, to put in the time so that Albertans can be involved or experts can get it right or Albertans can give us their good, good ideas, it doesn’t happen.

This government is absolutely determined to change our culture, to change our economy, to pile the debt on into the hundred-billion-dollar range. Madam Speaker, so many parts of this bill, Bill 29, the Public Service Employee Relations Amendment Act, appear to have not had the benefit of that full consultation, that sober second thought, that time for reflection. Again, I think the government, you know, in hindsight will be measured on that and the intended consequences and the unintended consequences. Unfortunately, too much of that will be the damage they have done to Alberta, our families, our communities, and our economy.

There are kind of five areas that I want to talk about in particular when it comes to Bill 29, the Public Service Employee Relations Amendment Act. Those areas, Madam Speaker, are around this government’s pledge to balance the budget, which, of course, according to their election campaign was supposed to be met this year, not missed by the \$9 billion that our Finance minister and Premier missed it by. Secondly, unintended consequences, Madam

Speaker: what can happen so often when these things happen. Third, I want to talk about equity. I want to talk about autonomy. Then I want to talk some about labour peace as well.

9:30

I guess let's start with unintended consequences. One of the clear goals of the three changes – or is it the removal of section 30? – does have the potential to have consequences on government spending and on taxpayer obligation. Of course, that removal allows the union, if it's formed, and some of the existing unions the opportunity to go to the board and arbitrate on so many more things. My hon. colleague from Cardston-Taber-Warner talked about how if a staff decided they needed more employees, it may happen: no regard for the budget, no regard even for the Finance minister. Can you imagine if the Finance minister really means that he wants to balance the budget and he has to add 4,000 more employees to the payroll? How in the world is he going to be able to do that?

How in the world is he going to be able to send a strong signal to bond-rating agencies? Madam Speaker, I don't feel I have to remind this House that our Finance minister has had his credit record downgraded six times. Six times. When I looked two days ago, the Alberta government is now borrowing, at 3.3 per cent, billions of dollars. It's billions of dollars of interest on the approximately \$50 billion that's outstanding. I think that in October we the people, we the taxpayers of Alberta borrowed almost \$3.2 billion. At 3.3 per cent, that's \$100 million of interest, give or take, \$100 million every year. That's just on one-eighth of what bills this NDP government has rung up.

Now, you're a rating agency. You're a person whose obligation is to get it right as to the financial shape that Alberta is in, and you realize that yet another part of what may cost the Alberta taxpayer is out of Treasury Board's hands. That bill may go up. Is that more or less likely to give us a worse rating? Madam Speaker, I know what I would do. Business loves certainty. Business needs certainty. Bond ratings are the same. They want to see a plan where expenses have some relation to revenue, where debt is only taken on responsibly and managed responsibly. Madam Speaker, it's clear that this bill, this yet NDP way of attacking what has worked so well in Alberta for so long, is going to have huge unintended consequences.

You know, let's not even talk on the macro level; let's talk on the micro level. Earlier this year, in March, the University of Alberta board of governors issued a 4 per cent cut – a 4 per cent cut – in response to the tuition freeze imposed on them. The Non-Academic Staff Association president, Elizabeth Johansson, said that in the past few months nonacademic staff positions were eliminated and people on contract were told their positions would not be renewed. Moving nonacademics from this PSERA to the labour code stops the board of governors from being able to change their remuneration, potentially. But where is the budget going to find its level? Where is the consequence going to come out?

I am very, very concerned that this removes a lot of autonomy from our excellent colleges and excellent universities. Madam Speaker, we're so fortunate that places like Medicine Hat College, the University of Alberta, the University of Calgary, my goodness, the University of Lethbridge have an excellent reputation for education. There are so many schools; obviously, I can't list them all. But those reputations and that service to our students, of course, mostly Albertans but all Canadians and people from around the world – that reputation for that good work has been earned carefully over tens and tens and in some cases hundreds of years. If all of a sudden the board of governors at the U of A realizes that they may not be able to control 3 per cent of their budget – I have no idea what the number would be – well, maybe the prudent thing to do,

maybe the cautious thing to do is not to innovate, not to expand. Maybe the cautious thing to do is – well, you've got to make sure that you can pay your bills at the end of the month, at the end of the year. My goodness, I think that's any family, any business, any institution: make sure you meet your obligations.

You know, I'll digress to the Medicine Hat College for a second, how hard they work and how hard they innovate to look at trades and technology but at the same time add programs, four-year programs in conjunction with – I think Mount Royal and the U of C are the two main ones. Regardless, they keep working hard to find new ways so Albertans, of course, in my case, particularly from southeastern Alberta, have the opportunity to receive top-quality education close to home. Madam Speaker, I'm a believer that if you take away autonomy, if you take away authority, if you take away the ability to control making sure that you're being able to cover all your expenses from your board of governors, the unintended consequences may be serious. It may lead to a further decline in what this government has done to our education.

You know, I want to talk for a sec about the necessity of this, and I want to say why this NDP government's rush to change the culture and the makeup of Alberta surprises me so much and why I wonder – wonder – what the necessity of it is. Madam Speaker, I don't remember too many strikes in Alberta, so that tells me that we have pretty good labour peace. Thank goodness that Alberta has so many quality, quality public servants. Thank goodness that Alberta has so many hard-working people that every day show up to do their best to make an imprint on Alberta's future and our kids and our innovation and our technology. My goodness, we all know it's such a fast-paced, informative world right now that we have to be as good and as competitive as we can.

You know, Madam Speaker, I sit here and wonder. I remember reading about a year ago that Alberta had the highest wages in all of Canada, okay? We've got labour peace, and we've got the highest wages in all of Canada. And then I've seen the CFIB put out things that suggest that public service wages are comparable to 12 per cent higher than equivalent work in the private sector. Now, I absolutely know that to draw a comparison from one job to another across private versus public sectors, with different profit versus community or government objectives ... [Mr. Barnes's speaking time expired] My goodness.

Thank you.

9:40

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

We now have 29(2)(a). Are there any members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to third reading? The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you for the opportunity to speak to third reading of Bill 29, Public Service Employee Relations Amendment Act, 2018. I understand that Bill 29 is set to do three main things, three big things: the first one is to repeal five position classifications from the list of exclusions from the bargaining unit; second, repeal the provisions that restrict which matters may proceed to a compulsory arbitration board; and thirdly, transition nonacademic staff at public postsecondary institutions from PSERA to the Labour Relations Code, giving them full compulsory interest arbitration rights. At first glance these appear to be reasonable, but as the expression goes, the devil is in the details. When one scratches the surface and takes a deep dive, there are concerns here with Bill 29.

It appears the government is repealing section 12(1)(f) as part of some kind of deal with AUPE to get them to move on other areas

in collective bargaining. Individuals in the five positions under section 12 were previously excluded because these people were privy to sensitive information. Now, Madam Speaker, that fact has not changed. Section 12(1)(f) presently reads:

A person employed by an employer

- (f) in a position classified under the Public Service Act as
 - (i) a budget officer,
 - (ii) a systems analyst,
 - (iii) an auditor,
 - (iv) a disbursement control officer, or
 - (iv) a hearing officer who hears matters under the Provincial Offences Procedure Act,
 or performing for an employer substantially similar duties to a person employed in any of these positions.

In a number of decisions decided by the Supreme Court, the Alberta Labour Relations Board and the Alberta Court of Queen's Bench have both ruled that section 12(1)(f) is constitutional. Now, we've been hearing that the current government believes they have a case here that it's not constitutional, but a number of decisions have shown us otherwise. I cannot understand why one would want to unionize auditors and hearing officers, for example. These individuals will have definitely been exposed to sensitive information of their employer, and this would possibly put that information into the hands of those that are not supposed to be privy to it. It looks like a conflict of interest, oversight and adjudication all belonging to the same group as the front-line staff: a union.

Next up the NDP want to remove section 30. The removal of section 30 does have the potential to put the government even further into debt. We see where the potential for a loss of the ability to have control over hiring and control over numbers of staff can have a significant impact on the bottom line of the government. Madam Speaker, during a time of economic crisis the government should be focusing on the economy and jobs. Instead, their focus is on making changes that will make things more expensive for the taxpayer.

Madam Speaker, it's been three and a half years that I've been elected as an MLA, and over those three and a half years I've watched a government move in a direction that follows their ideology without fully comprehending the reality that is before us. We take a look at the significant impact of the downspin of an industry over the last three years, and I believe this government has been five steps behind throughout the whole last three and a half years. It appears that they're finally moving, trying to get into a position of having product moving to markets and accessibility to markets abroad for our oil and gas industry.

Madam Speaker, here again I look at NDP inaction on focusing on the real job at hand of ensuring that the economy and jobs are paramount and that we have the ability to actually take care of the people of Alberta and the social responsibilities that we have in our governance structure, take care of the needs of the market, the needs of the entrepreneurs and the employers within an economy, and many of the social needs that we are expecting as Albertans will take care of themselves.

Section 30 reads,

- (1) A compulsory arbitration board may only consider, and an arbitral award may only deal with, those matters that may be included in a collective agreement.
- (2) Notwithstanding subsection (1), none of the following matters may be referred to a compulsory arbitration board and provisions in respect of the following matters shall not be contained in the arbitral award of a compulsory arbitration board:
 - (a) the organization of work, the assignment of duties and the determination of the number of employees of an employer;

- (b) the systems of job evaluation and the allocation of individual jobs and positions within the systems;
- (c) selection, appointment, promotion, training or transfer;
- (d) pensions.

The NDP want to eliminate that law from the Public Service Employee Relations Act, Madam Speaker.

Then we have the transitioning of nonacademic staff from the Public Service Employee Relations Act to the Labour Relations Code. Almost 19,000 employees, Madam Speaker, will be directly affected, and this needs to be done democratically. Once again it appears that the NDP does not want to consult with Albertans and employees. The coming into force date of June 1, 2019, doesn't give the universities enough time. The universities' recommendation of an implementation date is, you know, two to four years, and here we're giving them six months. I believe we haven't given them full consideration in the recommendation that they have given.

Some of the excluded employees do not want to be unionized and are waiting to see the result of these fights to determine what happens to their jobs. They have not been asked what they want. This is not democracy. Thousands of employees will be directly affected. This needs to be done democratically.

Should there not also be a choice of union that they will be a part of? Maybe the nonacademic staff don't want to join the AUPE. Maybe they want to join another union, whether it be Unifor or whichever. This appears to be a case of the NDP making a side deal with the union, in this case the AUPE. Why else would they take an issue that the union has been losing in court for a decade and say that they have to do it to uphold the Constitution when the courts have said that the law is constitutional already? I dare say it is because the NDP is in a conflict of interest with the union because the union leadership gets guaranteed seats on the board of directors of the New Democratic Party. Bill 29, I believe, is another part of serving their union bosses only without taking into full consideration the impact on Albertans and Alberta taxpayers.

With that, I thank you for this time, Madam Speaker, and for the opportunity to address my concerns with Bill 29.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to third reading?

Seeing none, I will now call on the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie to close debate.

9:50

Loyola: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Before I close debate, I just wanted to address a few things, the most important of which is that we need to recognize that in this province we have never really had labour peace. In fact, I remember, before this NDP government being elected, a number of times being out on the steps of this very Legislature with other union representatives, other union members, fighting for the rights that we should have. [interjections] Now, I see that the members across the way are chuckling. They're laughing at that. As a member of a union, you're part of a democratic institution.

See, this is the thing that Albertans need to know really well, Madam Speaker. You know, the members across the way try to accuse us of being ideological, but I can see no other members in this House that are more ideologically entrapped than those members from across the way because they are ideologically opposed to unions here in the province of Alberta. That's what their comments lead to. I want to remind them that unions are democratic institutions whereby the leadership of those institutions are

democratically elected. I've gotten up in this House and talked about that before.

Now, my concern is that the members across the way think that in a free-market society organized labour should not exist. [interjections] I think I heard a "that's true" over there if I'm not mistaken.

Mr. McIver: I said "it's not true."

Loyola: I have to ask if the members across the way even understand the Labour Relations Code. The fact that this government has focused on updating that code and, of course, occupational health and safety right here in this province – we've dedicated so much time and energy to doing that. Why? Because the workers of this province have been asking for this for decades. For decades they've been asking for this.

You know, across the way the members will be like: oh, some of the members don't want this. Well, I have to remind all the members of this House that the plural of anecdote is not data. You could hear one story here, one story there, and one story, but the important part is that you put all this information together, you study it, you use statistics, and you understand: what do the majority of the people want?

I can speak to the fact that members of the Non-Academic Staff Association, not just the leadership, actually came to this government. Not only did they come to this government, but they also came and spoke with several of the members of this House and specifically requested that which is being done in this bill.

I want to say, Madam Speaker, that it's about time because these changes that we're doing right now are what are going to lead to real labour peace in this province, making sure that workers feel that their rights are protected, that their rights are being considered, and that they're being treated fairly in this province. That's what this is all about.

With that, I'll close debate on Bill 29. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for third reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:55 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Carson	Goehring	Payne
Connolly	Hinkley	Piquette
Coolahan	Hoffman	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Horne	Rosendahl
Dach	Jansen	Sabir
Dang	Kazim	Shepherd
Drever	Littlewood	Sucha
Eggen	Loyola	Turner
Feehan	McCuaig-Boyd	Westhead
Fitzpatrick	Miller	Woollard
Ganley	Nielsen	

Against the motion:

Anderson, W.	McIver	van Dijken
Ellis	Pitt	Yao
Fildebrandt	Schneider	

Totals:	For – 32	Against – 8
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[Motion carried; Bill 29 read a third time]

Bill 26

An Act to Combat Poverty and Fight for Albertans with Disabilities

Ms Fitzpatrick: Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today and move third reading of Bill 26, An Act to Combat Poverty and Fight for Albertans with Disabilities, and to do so on behalf of the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Madam Speaker, our government is so proud of this bill. We have been moved by the response of Albertans across this province. Albertans from my constituency and across Alberta have said that this change is long overdue. They want stability and predictability in their lives, just like all of us. They are tired of politics determining whether or not they'll make rent each month. I have heard, my colleagues have heard, and I'm sure the opposition has heard Albertans say that they don't want to see cuts to their supports, and they worry about what they are seeing in Ontario, south of the border, and about comments that have been heard about cuts that will hurt from a member across the Chamber. We have heard these voices loud and clear, and we are indexing benefits to ensure these supports will forever be protected and grow as the cost of living grows.

I want to thank the minister for listening to Albertans and, in particular, listening to my colleague the MLA for St. Albert, who has been such a vocal advocate for persons with disabilities. I have listened to Chris, Ben, Veronika, Bev, Dave, and so many others and provided that feedback to the ministry. They listened. Those Albertans who have struggled and struggled are part of our community, and I believe that we have an obligation to support our community, all of our community. This legislation not only provides better supports today to help them to do just that; it ensures AISH clients and low-income Albertans won't need to fight to afford the basics tomorrow. It provides stability and certainty that as the cost of living increases, so too will their benefit rates.

I have to reiterate a few comments from second reading which I feel are worth repeating. My constituents with disabilities, seniors, and those needing income supports have told me and showed me how they have struggled to pay rent and put food on the table. This legislation not only provides better supports today to help them to do just that; it ensures AISH clients and low-income Albertans won't need to fight to afford the basics tomorrow. I have repeated it now in this House three times, so I hope you've heard it.

The opposition leader in our Legislature has said that we should match the B.C. spending levels. That would mean Alberta AISH benefits would be cut by \$500 a month. I say absolutely not, and our government agrees that we cannot and must not do that.

Again, I must repeat this statement. Do you remember in the spring of 2015? The Premier at the time presented a budget which showed cuts across the board. A current member of the Official Opposition has said in the last couple of months that his party will cut and it will hurt. It sounds like the replaying of a bad record, a bad scenario for all Albertans, in particular vulnerable Albertans who are finally seeing some relief in their lives with this bill.

I am standing here today in support of this bill, and I'm doing so on behalf of all of my constituents and all Albertans. I must support it because it is making Alberta a better place for my constituents to live. I am proud to support this bill and to move third reading.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Pursuant to section 49 of the standing orders I move that this question be now put.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. Would you like to speak to the motion before we proceed to anybody else? No? All right.

Just to clarify for the House again, the motion for previous question serves to curtail the debate and after it is moved and carried, no further amendments to the main motion may be moved. The motion may be debated by any member who has spoken to the main question. Are there any other members wishing to speak to the previous question?

Seeing none, I will put the question to a vote.

[Motion carried; Bill 26 read a third time]

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 30 Mental Health Services Protection Act

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Acadia on behalf of the hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Madam Speaker. On behalf of the hon. Minister of Health it is my privilege to move second reading of Bill 30, the Mental Health Services Protection Act.

It is fitting that we are debating this bill during National Addictions Awareness Week. Madam Speaker, when Albertans access substance-use treatment or mental health services, they should feel safe in doing so. They should be able to trust that they will receive quality services from appropriately trained and regulated professionals in a safe environment. This bill keeps a promise we made to Albertans in the Speech from the Throne this spring to introduce legislation that will protect Albertans seeking health care during a difficult and vulnerable time in their lives.

Albertans are often shocked to learn that service providers in this field are largely unregulated and that private treatment facilities are not regulated in any way. Our goal is peace of mind for patients and for their families.

Albertans who have needed this kind of help have shared stories about facilities that offered services of questionable value and in some rare cases were unsafe. On Tuesday you heard the story of Kim and Mike Argent, the parents of Taylor. In 2007, when he was just 17, Taylor died in a private treatment facility outside of Red Deer.

10:20

Taylor's parents believe that it was the lack of regulation and oversight at the facility that led to his death, and a fatality inquiry in 2010 agreed. In his report Judge J.A. Hunter noted that the facility didn't require certification from any body, governmental or otherwise, when it opened. There was no evidence that the facility was ever inspected by any agency of government. The operator had no formal training nor did most of his staff. Judge Hunter described the employee who was on duty the night Taylor died as "woefully unprepared to deal with anything out of the ordinary." What's more, Madam Speaker, even as Taylor's condition worsened, there was no attempt made by the facility to contact his parents or contact for help.

I'll quote directly from one of Judge Hunter's conclusions. "Anyone can start up a treatment facility and operate the same without any standards or measure of the care the participants receive." Can any member of this House imagine that statement being acceptable for a seniors' home, a child care facility, or any kind of health care facility? Yet here we are: a facility presenting itself as offering health care, but held to no standards whatsoever, with fatal results.

That was 2010, Madam Speaker, eight years ago. I think it's safe to say that the findings of Judge Hunter's inquiry and his recommendations were utterly ignored by the Conservative government of the day and by a series of Conservative governments that followed. Three Conservative Health ministers came and went, including the current leader of the Alberta Party, with no action taken. And the Argents, sadly, were not alone. Alberta Health is aware of dozens of complaints from patients and families describing steep fees, unethical business practices, ineffective treatments, and in rare cases abuse.

I am very proud that this government is taking action. This bill will finally provide Albertans with protection from this kind of exploitation. Initially the legislation will set out licensing requirements and standards for residential treatment facilities and provide a framework for future standards. It will also create a college of counselling therapy of Alberta to ensure professional practice standards.

Madam Speaker, a phased approach to implementing the proposed legislation will ensure that government balances the need for initial standards without creating onerous requirements on service providers that could shock the sector and lead to a reduction in services. It will require residential treatment facilities to have policies, procedures, and standards, including critical incidents reporting, consent in service standards and contracts, and clear record-keeping requirements. Over the next two years Alberta Health will work closely with service providers to establish common-sense standards that protect Albertans. This bill will give government the authority to follow up on any complaints, address concerns, and the ability to amend, suspend, or cancel a licence.

The legislation would also create new standards for substance-use treatment and mental health care professionals. Amending the Health Professions Act to create a new college of counselling therapy of Alberta will regulate about 5,000 currently unregulated health professionals working in Alberta's substance-use and mental health system. This will provide stronger assurances to Albertans seeking substance-use and mental health services that the professionals caring for them have the expertise needed to provide safe, quality care.

When we are sick or hurt, we assume that all of the people around us providing care are held to professional standards. This government believes Albertans have the right to the same expectation when they have a mental health or substance-use concern. These issues are health issues and should be treated as such. We've heard this call from many in the field, and I certainly note that the chair of the Federation of Associations of Counselling Therapists in Alberta was present at Tuesday's announcement. I'm proud that our government listened and is taking action. We would be the fifth province to regulate counselling therapists and the third province to regulate private residential substance-use treatment.

Madam Speaker, I would like to stress that there are many – in fact, the majority – well-run facilities and dedicated caregivers throughout our province, and this legislation will formalize the policies and standards that they are already adhering to.

Through Bill 30 we will ensure Albertans have access to safe, quality care when accessing residential substance-use treatment facilities as well as protections as consumers. I encourage all Members of the Legislative Assembly to support second reading of Bill 30, and I look forward to debating this bill with my hon. colleagues.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Yao: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It is an honour today to rise in the House to Speak to Bill 30, the Mental Health Services Protection Act. This bill in its current form aims to solve two very real problems here in our province. The first is a lack of consistency and accountability for our health counsellors. In Alberta right now there are 14 different associations that represent the different sections of counselling, and that means there are 14 different practices, standards of best practice, 14 codes of ethics, and so on, and so on, and this leads to a great number of discrepancies between the various sections, which does not benefit Albertans necessarily nor result in better outcomes.

Mental health is a very real issue today that our society has now truly embraced and recognized, but I understand that for the last – well, since time began, really, mental health is one of those intangible things that people have, I suppose, looked at more cautiously. But as our communities experience life-altering events like fires in their communities or floods and other disasters, when people deal with the pain of the opioid crisis in our province, and so many other issues, what we see in our society is that identifying those people who aren't as able to cope with a lot of these harsh realities as much is very difficult.

Certainly, when I was entering the health professions back in the year 1991, way back, the most mental health training they gave us was the fact that they made sure that we had the ability and knowledge to talk about the things. What it boils down to is being able to talk about the things with someone that you trust, someone who understands – maybe they can show some empathy – but sometimes by talking about things, we come out with how to address and deal with these things.

In emergency services there were counsellors available, but we often trained our own people as well. I myself had a course on PTSD, that's posttraumatic stress disorder, and I would work with my co-workers if we identified that any of them had any issues after a call. But that doesn't make me a mental health therapist 28 years later.

I guess the point here is that we have to make sure there are certain standards because the issues that they're dealing with are very critical, and as much as anyone who has any of these weekend courses or other different levels of education currently provided, I understand their intentions are good, but unfortunately the skills and the qualities that they may actually possess may not necessarily address the issues of those individuals.

It's for those reasons that FACT-Alberta, who represented all 14 associations, campaigned for this government and this opposition and so many other people across the industry to regulate mental health therapists. I think this is a good thing. To that effect, we do need to thank them for being advocates for their industry, advocates for our mental health strategies, advocates to ensure that people do receive the appropriate help that they need by qualified personnel.

The college of counselling therapy of Alberta, that this bill seeks to create, would result in just greater consistency, and they would all be subject to codes of ethics, which is excellent. They'd all be bound by a strong set of principles that focus on patient care and outcomes, and more importantly, Madam Speaker, they will be held accountable if they choose to abuse the sacred trust they have with patients. As we've seen with our other health professions, they do have a sacred trust, and these people, who are mental health therapists, are no different. They are expected to embrace people and listen to them and deal with their issues when the people that they're addressing are at their most vulnerable moment in their lives.

10:30

Again, this bill helps to create more consistent meanings of the word "counsellors." I have a PTSD course from 20-plus years ago, but is that fair for me to say that I'm a counsellor or a therapist? I'd have to say no. But that said, it should not discourage people from having the ability to speak to anybody about their personal issues that affect their mental health. That is a point, to be able to speak to someone that you know and trust. Just talking does a phenomenal amount of help with people's issues when they address things.

There are other groups that have always emphasized mental health. I think that our law enforcement groups have always emphasized these things. Again, that's another group that deals with a lot of hard issues on the streets. These are very stoic professions: firefighting, EMS, law enforcement. You know, we don't like to say that we need help, especially with mental health, but certainly that evolution, that change, in our society has helped bring those things to the fore, and it's easier for nurses and even doctors and other health professionals to come forward and say that they do need some help.

We cannot take Alberta's mental health for granted. I'm glad that this bill seeks to clarify a lot of the issues that surround this topic. I am grateful that this bill aims to expand the titles available for counsellors. Again, this will allow the college to develop a scope of practice more specific to an individual's area of expertise. Overall, Madam Speaker, I think we can agree that a college of counselling therapy in Alberta is a good thing and will result in a better standard of care for all Albertans.

I guess that some concerns we have, that may have been addressed when we were briefed on this by your government, are the concerns around a lot of these smaller groups that provide therapy. For instance, a lot of the counsellors that we use for drug addictions – not a lot, but there are some – may not necessarily have the educational background, but what they have is the experience in actually being in that situation, being that victim of pharmaceuticals. Their experiences are great in that they can truly understand the perspective of being under those negative influences and how to try to help. It gives them a level of empathy that helps them to address the issues when they're listening to these people.

We have other groups like Alcoholics Anonymous and other similar groups that have counsellors and stuff like that. These are venues where we're just trying to encourage people to talk. I believe that this bill does not discourage these groups even though they are not perhaps, as we hope to obtain, qualified mental health therapists. They're simply – what's the word I'm looking for? They're certainly to facilitate the conversation. They get people to talk about their feelings and their emotions and their experiences with the hope that that verbalization will help their mental status.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Ah, Mr. Speaker. You're so fluid.

The second area that this bill focuses on in its current form is the licensing of residential addiction treatment centres. This is another good thing that comes from this bill. Currently anyone can open a centre, hypothetically, that deals with addictions and treatments. Again, they tend to be all over the board in regard to some of the positions that they hold within these organizations and the qualifications. Some of these groups charge, like, substantial amounts of money in order to treat these people. Again, we just want to give anyone who is entering an addictions facility or treatment centre the assurances that they are being helped and treated by qualified people. This is a good thing. This is noble.

You know, we've heard stories from individuals who've lost their lives while in the care of some of these organizations, and we

just need to make sure that these centres do have high standards in regard to their staffing. I recognize that when people lose their lives when receiving treatment, it's not necessarily the centre's fault. Let us be clear on that. But, again, it is about just ensuring that they do have a minimum standard so that we as a public have assurances that these facilities are good and real because many of these facilities require donations from community members, from Albertans, and we want to make sure that the money we're donating goes to a proper, legitimate cause that realistically addresses the issues.

Again, the standardizations that we're going to put in here I think are excellent. By bringing this bill forward in its current form, we are ensuring that these centres will be regulated and will have to adhere to a high standard of practice and that they would also be held accountable if they do not follow proper procedures. The procedures include the requirement to create and maintain records. They must also send records to directors, and if any of this is not done, the centre risks a licence cancellation and would be unable to apply for a new licence for two years after the decision.

The question I might have about this, though, is in regard to the volume of records that is being expected. Well, unfortunately, these are the things that come with regulation. Now, a lot of these small agencies, quite honestly, are going to be burdened by the fact that they do have to be held accountable, and their records are going to have to be that much more firm, and it will be difficult for them. There is also the financial burden that this creates. With all the work in becoming a legislated body and all the work in becoming licensed premises, they will have to invest money to ensure that their facility and their resources are upgraded and that their guidelines and everything else are up to date. Again, that all requires effort, which requires sometimes financial obligations. That is the one negative to this, I suppose, the increased financial burden but with respect to the fact that it is necessary.

You know, the bill, in regard to these regulations, in its current form also says that inspections will be randomly done from time to time, which will help hold these centres accountable. I think that's good as well. But, again, I wonder how it will affect things like the Edmonton Bissell Centre, the Calgary drop-in centre, and even the Lethbridge emergency centre, many of which are operated by volunteers with varying degrees of backgrounds in mental health. We don't want to discourage a lot of these things because it's important that people be given any opportunity to speak about their mental health issues, okay?

Our religious institutions. I know many people in this room might not value our religious institutions, but, you know, they provide a lot of support for our communities, and a lot of things that they do are providing mental health supports. When people need someone to reach out to, sometimes they walk into a church or something just to talk to someone. Again, I don't think that those are things that should be discouraged because the religious institutions I've talked to do have all the resources available so that when they recognize that someone has a need or something, they know which Alberta Health facility or what other supports, human services supports, are available to them, and they do guide them in those directions. It's just part of belonging to a society that overall really cares, and we have so many different areas trying to address the issues that are within our mental health.

10:40

If there is any guidance I could provide on this bill, it would be to tighten up the language used to describe a residential addiction treatment service. In its current use,

"residential addiction treatment services" means services provided to individuals who have an addiction in which overnight

accommodation is provided for all or part of the duration of the services and includes, without limitation, withdrawal management services, but does not include services provided in an approved hospital as defined in the Hospitals Act or services provided by a person or service provider exempted by the regulations.

Because no scope has been laid out in the bill's current form, that means that this would apply to emergency shelters, transitional housing, permanent supportive housing, special care and addiction treatment facilities, intoxication shelters, and detox shelters, all of which would fit in the current definition. So the wording of one night as the time component when describing addiction treatment service: it loops in so many of these other organizations that we utilize to help our most vulnerable. In everyone's community, in all 87 of our constituencies, we have some sort of shelter, some sort of system there where people can stay for the night. What's common are mat programs where it's just a heated space, a place that's safe. You're given a mat, and you can sleep on that mat. It's not the most luxurious of accommodations, and there are a lot of people that enter these facilities with a lot of issues. I myself in my previous career had to go to many of these agencies to pick up patients that were having issues.

Again, the way that the Mental Health Services Protection Act is worded, I just worry about impairing a lot of these facilities from providing these very basic services that amount to one night when their intent might not necessarily be to directly address mental health but just to provide support to people who might have issues or are homeless. What will be the impact on these organizations if they now have to purchase licences? On that I'm very curious. Again, it's the financial burden. This government puts carbon taxes on all these charities, carbon levy, and . . .

Mr. Fildebrandt: Tax.

Mr. Yao: . . . tax. But, again, with making a whole sector more regimented, there will be additional costs to everyone involved. I mean, is it going to be a couple of hundred bucks, or a couple of thousand, or several thousand? Those will be the interesting things to see.

What the college of counselling therapy is trying to mimic, though, is also reflective in all of our other medical professions. We've always had the college of physicians. They're the pinnacle, the peak, of our medical professions, a very well-established group that's self-managed. Over time all the so-called sub health professionals from paramedics to X-ray technicians and diagnostic imaging and lab technicians have all fought for that ability to become their own college and manage themselves and not necessarily be run by government. For that, I commend this group.

A lot of the unanswered questions in here, personally, I'm not too worried about because I've seen a lot of those unanswered questions in a lot of the other health professional groups as they evolved to become colleges. It's only when they sit down and develop that college do they try to address a lot of the issues that are inherently questions in this bill. As much as I'd love for this government to provide more clarity on that, I recognize that we are going to have to rely on the college to address a lot of those issues, a lot of these questions that we have. A snap of a finger and a piece of legislation and a book is only the beginning of that. This is an evolution that every health profession has done and this group will continue to do for many years to come.

This isn't something that we create and then set aside. This is something that all 87 of us have to monitor in our own communities, talk to those agencies and see how they're addressing the issues. Again, it's not just the official addiction centres. It is your local

faith groups. It is your local homeless shelters. It is your local counselling groups like your AADACs and whatnot. We've just got to make sure that their issues are addressed.

With that, Madam Speaker – Mr. Speaker. Sorry. Again, your fluidness just messes me up. I'd like to thank the government for introducing this bill, and I'd like to adjourn debate.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mrs. Pitt: Just a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: There's a point of order?

Mrs. Pitt: The Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo moved to adjourn debate.

The Speaker: Did the member adjourn debate at the end? I'm sorry. I didn't hear that.

Mr. Yao: Yes, sir.

The Speaker: I'm sorry. Is there still a point of order?

Mr. Clark: Point of order, Mr. Speaker, if I may. I'm not convinced that the hon. member managed to get the words "adjourn debate" out before the time had expired. [interjections]

The Speaker: Are we on the point of order at this point?

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to say that the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow makes a good point, and we'd be happy to hear him speak. We withdraw our point of order is, I guess, what I'm saying.

The Speaker: Okay. The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is always an honour to rise in this House and speak to any legislation, but speaking to an important piece of legislation such as Bill 30, which really speaks to the heart of one of the issues that is most important to our province and our communities and something I hear a lot about in my constituency office and in my travels and talking with Albertans, both my constituents in Calgary-Elbow and beyond, and that is mental health.

You know, I just want to start with picking up on some of the comments made by the Member for Calgary-Acadia, and I just want to express my disappointment at the opportunity that she took to take partisan shots at the Alberta Party leader and former Health minister, Stephen Mandel. What is so disappointing is that this is a piece of legislation that I think very likely we will support on this side of the House, and I just think that it really does a disservice both to the importance of the topic of this legislation but also just to the overall tone and tenor of debate in this Assembly when we see unnecessary partisan shots lobbed across the aisle here.

It's not like that particular member. I don't know whether this is some grand strategy kind of cooked up behind the scenes and then she's a part of that or if that's something that she genuinely takes to heart. But it, frankly, doesn't help, and I don't think it actually looks all that good for the government to be doing that. We seem to see that tactic being adopted increasingly, shots at the Alberta Party itself, and I can only conclude, Mr. Speaker, that they obviously see the Alberta Party as a threat in the next election. So here we are.

Having said that, I think that the legislation itself is positive. Perhaps I'll start with a case specifically in my own constituency dating back about a year or so, when an individual who had absolutely no training whatsoever in addiction treatment or

counselling had proposed to turn his 25-foot-wide infill house, which was located immediately across the street from an elementary school, into what he called a, quote, addiction treatment facility. As we went through that process, we discovered at the time that there was absolutely no provincial rule that prevented that from happening. There were some zoning concerns with the city, but the project was initially approved by the city of Calgary's planning department, and Alberta Health had absolutely no say about this.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Now, I want to hasten to add and make sure I emphasize the fact that addiction treatment facilities, a diverse and broad range of those facilities – public facilities and private facilities and not-for-profit facilities and faith-based facilities, all of these – have a place in Alberta's landscape for addressing mental health and especially addictions issues.

10:50

I want to be very clear that I as the MLA for Calgary-Elbow am very proud to be home to a number of addiction treatment facilities, and they operate very professionally. They operate very ethically. They genuinely help people, and many of those facilities, the ones in Calgary-Elbow in particular, are residential treatment facilities embedded within neighbourhoods, within the communities that make up Calgary-Elbow. And I'm absolutely honoured to have those facilities within the boundaries of my constituency, as I know that many of my colleagues are with the facilities that exist in their communities.

However, there have to be some rules that guide who can call themselves a counselling therapist and who may open a residential or an addiction treatment facility of any kind. This is something I've advocated to the government for for some time, and I'm very pleased to see that most of what I have advocated for has come to fruition in this legislation. That's a very positive thing, so I'm glad to see that.

I have to say that some of the questions I hope to hear answers to from the government side through the course of this debate would revolve around the process. Some of the challenges that I've heard about from some folks who've been in touch with me happened when the College of Social Workers was founded and when there was an expectation that social workers would be licensed. Now, I have to say that beyond a fairly high-level summary that I've received, I actually don't know all of the details of what happened there, but I wanted to just put on the record that some folks have expressed some concerns to me that that process was not particularly well handled from the perspective of the person that raised this issue to me. In particular, it created some confusion, I understand, and also added to the cost burden for, in particular, contracted service providers.

I haven't yet had an opportunity to talk with the contracted service providers for their perspective on this bill. I'll endeavour to do that coming up here tomorrow as I head back to my constituency, as we prepare for debate on the further stages of this bill into next week. I would hope the government could answer some of those questions proactively for us in terms of: have you talked with those services providers? What will the implications be on them for meeting these standards? Although there's a timeline here of November 1, that's actually a relatively short time frame for these organizations to get ready for accreditation and also for the people who work as service providers within those organizations to themselves become accredited or licensed and recognized.

Now, that may, frankly, be a concern or solving a problem that doesn't exist. I have to say that I don't have the full landscape of exactly how this fits together in existing facilities, but it is a

question I wanted to put on the record. I hope the government can answer it for us because I think it's an important one. I do understand that in the social work profession, when that happened, there were some challenges there, and to this day it's perhaps created some challenges. Without question, the basic principles of the bill I'm very supportive of.

You know, one of the questions that I had initially was whether either faith-based programs or sort of group programs like AA or Gamblers Anonymous, those sorts of things, whether they would be subject to new regulations or restrictions or constrained in any way. I'm glad to see – and my understanding from the information we have been provided by the minister is that that, in fact, is not the case – that those facilities will be outside this legislation and allowed to continue on as they do.

I was also not surprised to see that there are a number of private facilities that are not regulated. The vast majority of those facilities, I understand, are highly professional in their work. Many of them, I understand, are accredited through Accreditation Canada or a similar accreditation body which has a very high standard of accreditation.

What I would hope is that as the ministry goes forward with the licensing for those facilities, they would perhaps look at an equivalence, if a facility is currently accredited under Accreditation Canada or a similar, very high-standard accreditation regime, that would essentially allow them to pass the licensing process. The concern is that for facilities that have been in business or in operation for a long time, that are providing a very high level of care with very high professional standards – I would hope that the province does not impose a huge burden on them. The cost would be high for that and take money out of what they would otherwise be using to provide care, especially where they've gone through a process of seeking and receiving a high level of accreditation. That's something I just wanted to put on the radar for the government.

A question I have for the province is: how are you going to work with facilities that are on-reserve? I know those facilities are federally regulated, often funded, I understand, by Health Canada and operate to their standards, but the province then would make it optional for them to comply with provincial standards but work with them to license. I'm just interested in exactly how that will

work. Same thing in terms of – and of course off-reserve facilities would follow provincial laws, as I think should happen.

The focus of the bill, I understand, is not so much on efficacy of treatment or treatment methods specifically but on safety for folks seeking treatment, on consent, and on an ability to investigate and make sure that that, in fact, happens. I can tell you that, you know, in my experience working with friends and family and people that I know who've gone through the tremendous challenge of trying to overcome addiction, there is no one size fits all. Not one process works for everyone. Twelve-step programs have been proven to be very effective for some people. They're not as effective for other people. I think that we need some flexibility there to ensure that a variety of treatment methods are allowed, because not everything works in every individual case.

The other question, I guess, which I'll close with, Madam Speaker, is that initially there was some conversation about conversion therapy, and that's not included in this bill. As we move forward with debate, I'd be very interested in hearing from the government on what their rationale is for not including that in this bill, if they plan to bring forward further legislation at some point to address conversion therapy. I understand there's a private member's bill, potentially, that may be coming from the government side which would address that. I think that given the lateness of the calendar perhaps we won't get to that this fall, but that is something that I understand other provinces have addressed, and I see no reason why this province should not also address that. I'd be very interested to see what their rationale is for not including it with this bill. I'd love to hear, in fact, if they plan to bring that forward at some point.

With that, Madam Speaker, I will conclude my remarks, and I will move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you. As we have done excellent work and been very efficient with the help of the opposition today, I suggest that we call it noon and return at 1:30 this afternoon.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 10:59 a.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, November 29, 2018

Day 56

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, November 29, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have been humming *La Marseillaise* to myself all day today because I'm pleased to rise and introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly the ambassador of France to Canada, Her Excellency Kareen Rispal. As well, she's joined by Mr. Philippe Sutter, consul general of France in Vancouver; Mr. Fabien Agenès, also from the consulate; Mr. Anthony Bertrand, the honorary consul of France in Edmonton; and Mr. Xavier Bonnet, from the embassy of France.

Mr. Speaker, Her Excellency's visit is an opportunity for Alberta and France to explore how we can expand on our strong relationship. The potential for our two jurisdictions to expand bilateral trade and collaborate is high, especially with the Canada-EU comprehensive economic and trade agreement now provisionally applied. We look forward to working with Her Excellency on further developing and strengthening our relationship with France. I'd like the ambassador and her guests to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's really my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly four grade 6 classes from the Simons Valley school. This is in the wonderful constituency of Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill. There are 108 students, parents, and teachers here today. It's really big; there are four classes. The students are accompanied by their teachers Shane Spriggs, Andrew Cull, Luc Mackay, Colleen Nabata, Laurie Reeve, Vanessa Blyth and by their parent chaperones Brad Blick – and I apologize for mispronouncing any names – Mana Abbas, Peter Locke, Bahareh Taghipoor, Andrea Kehler, Jennifer Ruff, Joan King, Maegan O'Brien, Julia Bassendowski, and Pamela Chan. If they could all rise, please, and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome. A big school.

Are there any other school groups today, hon. members?

The hon. Member for Peace River.

Ms Jabbour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce on your behalf someone who's familiar to most of us as one of the many hard-working and dedicated staff members employed by the Legislative Assembly Office. Judy Bressmer has worked as the bills and *Journals* clerk for nearly 19 years and has her retirement clock on her desk in countdown for her 20th anniversary. Judy is one of many of the staff at the Legislature who puts in long hours processing the many amendments and bills of this House. Without the unsung efforts of staff like Judy, the business of this House would simply grind to a halt. I'd like Judy to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome. Thank you for your service. There may be a few people in this Chamber that might want to use that counting on the clock that you have for other reasons.

The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions. First, it's my pleasure to introduce the artists who have their art featured this year on my Christmas card. The first – and I'll welcome her to rise as I say her name – is Ella MacNaughton. She's a grade 1 student from Holy Cross school, which is in Edmonton-Glenora. She's joined by her parents, Cindy and Jason, and her little brother Charlie as well as her grandparents, Dan, Denise, Gary, and Yvonne. If they could all stand.

The second artist is Seva, who is a grade 6 student at Brightview school. He's joined by his mom, Natalia – please also rise – as well as his brother Mykhael and his teacher, Tyson.

Both of these schools are in my constituency, and I'm very proud to be part of a government that engages with parents, teachers, and all Albertans in supporting students in achieving their full potential. I'm so proud to have their art featured on my Christmas cards. Thank you very much for sharing your talents and for being here today. Colleagues, please join me in welcoming these students and their families.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ms Hoffman: My second introduction today is to honour and introduce five guests who are in the members' gallery from HIV Edmonton. This coming Saturday, December 1, is World AIDS Day. I know that my colleague from Edmonton-Centre and all of my colleagues will share in recognizing this day this weekend, and I believe that my colleague from Edmonton-Centre will be doing a member's statement.

This government shares HIV Edmonton's goal of zero stigma or discrimination, zero new infections, and zero AIDS-related deaths. I am very proud of the work that we did with them in moving forward on PrEP earlier this year. I ask that Shelley Williams as well as Heather, Manpreet, and Thomas please rise and receive the warm welcome of our Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think my guests are not here yet.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a real pleasure to be able to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly two very outstanding individuals. Today with us we have Sarah McCrimmon and Caitlin Fleming from Edmonton Meals on Wheels. Sarah and Caitlin work in fund development and communications. I've had the privilege of partnering with Meals on Wheels by collecting cards made by many of the students in my constituency so that they can be delivered to clients that are facing isolation. I would like to thank Sarah and Caitlin for their service, and I would ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Ms Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly guests from the St. John's Institute in Edmonton. Later today I will

be speaking about the 100th anniversary of St. John's Institute and their legacy of service. I ask my guests to rise as I call their names: board chair Tania Mysak; treasurer Bill Skorobohach; board members Ivan Lypovyk, Diane Pysyk, Myrna Kostash; former board members Orest Fitzowich and Don Lutzak; and last but certainly not the least favourite, the executive director of the institute, Suzanna Brytan. [Remarks in Ukrainian] and thank you so much for joining us here in our Legislature. I would ask all of my colleagues to extend the traditional warm welcome.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Merci, M. le Président. I think I should speak French today in honour of our guests from France, my country of birth, but my guest in the gallery doesn't speak French, so I'll speak in English.

Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a resident of my constituency of Sherwood Park, Mr. Randy Richards. Mr. Richards approached my office with his concerns over window-tinting regulations for vehicles. He has taken the lead in collecting signatures for a petition asking for changes to this regulation, that I will be tabling this afternoon. As the MLA for Sherwood Park it is my pleasure to support residents in engaging with the legislative process. Thank you, Randy, for your initiative and perseverance. I would ask you now to please rise and receive the traditional welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Are there any other introductions? The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise to introduce two guests in the gallery from Fort Myers, Florida. Please welcome Marivic and Isabella Gamez, who are visiting Edmonton for the first time. They came up here for the weather. Marivic is originally from the Philippines, so [Remarks in Tagalog], and Isabella is a professional pairs figure skater who previously won the silver medal at the U.S. national championships and skated for Spain. I would like to ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome. You might find better ice here than in Florida.

Are there any other introductions, hon. members? The Minister of Service Alberta.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to introduce some great public servants from the Ministry of Service Alberta, starting with Darwin Barber, Giancarlo Palazzo, and Mathew Neuman from the mailroom. They work to keep our documents moving smoothly between the various departments and buildings in Alberta. Also here are Julie Barber, Louisa Andrews, and not here but one we all know is Zenek from the fleet vehicle department at Service Alberta. For anyone who knows me and cars, you know that we have a very long conversation every time they come into the room. Lastly, from our IT service department we have Cory Kuehn, Richard Dobbin, Garrick Smith, Harpreet Sadhrey, and Ashish Patel. They're, again, from our IT service department. They're the ones who politely tell me when I phone them up that I need to take my phone out of airplane mode. Thank you very much. If they could please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House, these hard-working public servants.

The Speaker: Welcome.

1:40

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

St. John's Institute Centennial

Ms Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Perogy, holubtsi, kubasa, a nalynsny, all smothered in golden fried onions and dill cream sauce. Do I have your attention yet? The Ukrainians who arrived in Alberta over 100 years ago as trailblazers and nation builders had foresight to create a haven, a home away from home, for their children attending postsecondary education. That haven, St. John's Institute, still stands proudly.

In 1918 the institute, originally named for Mykhailo Hrushevsky, was built. Parents and students from Alberta farm communities could breathe easier because of quality housing, home-cooked meals, and the offering of cultural life and faith programming in the spirit of the Ukrainian Orthodox tradition. As Alberta grew, a new home was chosen in Edmonton's university area. The cornerstone and chapel of the new building were blessed by the Most Reverend Metropolitan Ilarion on June 8, 1959, and the organization facility was renamed St. John's Institute. On March 29, 1963, a group of community advocates enshrined the charitable goals and purposes of the organization in An Act to Incorporate St. John's Institute, an act proclaimed by Alberta's Legislature.

In 2009 a new board of directors shepherded the institute into the 21st century. This converted the institute into a source of provincial affordable housing, with first-rate meal services, meeting and event space, and support for other nonprofits and charities. Through social enterprise SJI flourishes as a hub of art, culture, education, and human services, where they regularly host organizations of every faith, culture, ethnicity, and recreation. It is a gathering place for generations young and old, for alumni and their children, and for the new faces of Alberta.

As our Premier said following her remarks in attendance at the 100th anniversary celebrations hosted at SJI this past September 8, "For 100 years, with the innovative spirit that has long defined the contributions of Ukrainian people to our province, the St. John's Institute has been [a] . . . beacon of hope, opportunity, warmth and goodwill in our community."

Here's to 100 more for this life-changing organization.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

Provincial Response to Crime Statistics

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We in the UCP had to pull this NDP government kicking and screaming to the awareness that a dangerous spike in crime was taking place. The Justice minister spent two years denying that there was even a problem. Now, through newly released stats, we're aware that she would have known all along that crime took a dangerous uptick about three years ago.

But, Mr. Speaker, let me bring some experience to bear on this very sad situation. I served as an incident commander with the Calgary Police Service, and this is what occurs when we become aware that there is an actual threat to public safety. First, we collect all of the facts as quickly as possible. While they're coming in, we're already mobilizing officers on the ground, and we're communicating effectively and establishing a command post, because the "public" in "public safety" means that people will need to be informed. Yes, we tell them when we are in a crisis. As we gain information, we assess and deploy the necessary resources. We then call in specialized teams if necessary, we relay information to

officers on the ground, and we liaise with other police services and agencies as required.

In short, we use all the appropriate tactics and adjust them accordingly based on the growing knowledge of the situation. We don't sit back and mutter, "Nothing to see here" or "Move along" or just hope that everything goes away. We find out what is happening, and we react rapidly. We use all of the resources available to protect our citizens because, Mr. Speaker, that is our paramount responsibility. I suggest that the minister should have taken some steps when crime first spiked in 2015, when it climbed further in 2016, and when it clearly got out of control in 2017. As we say in incident command: your response to this crisis is a fail.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

29th Legislature Reflections

Mr. Fraser: Welcome, sports fans, to the proceedings of the 29th Session of the Alberta Legislature, otherwise known as the Bitumen Bubble Classic. Right off the bat we have a lineup change. The Premier is not on the front line of the government. She's been called up to the big leagues federally, where she has yet to make an impact.

The puck is dropped. The Leader of the Official Opposition opens with a question posed by the Alberta Party weeks ago about oil curtailment. The Deputy Premier takes a shot from the UCP leader, stickhandles into the NDP corner. She's cycling the puck and cycling and cycling. Here we go. She takes a shot back, unwilling to accept responsibility after three and a half years in government. It's another weak shot.

Another UCP member attempts to take the shot, but it's stolen by the leader. The leader for the UCP takes a big windup, shoots again, aiming for some other minister of the Crown. The front bench of the government looks back and forth as to who is up in the rotation, and it's back to the Deputy Premier, who takes the question, keeping her teammates seated on the bench.

The UCP leader fires back again with the same question, hits the crossbar. Back in the NDP corner the Deputy Premier seems to be cycling the question in her own corner again. It's an unusual strategy if you thought you had the mandate to forecheck for Albertans.

As we reach the half, we'd like to recognize the contributions of some of the amazing players in this Legislature and hope that one day their jerseys are retired in the rafters of this place: the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti, the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster. Their character, principles, and dedication to this province are commendable. They have served Albertans with dignity, passion, and truth. I will miss them. Alberta will miss them.

Okay, folks. Back to the game. Possession is back with the UCP. It appears they're having some trouble with bench depth, so back to the leader, who fires a shot. He seems to be taking the same shot over and over again, hoping to slip one by, but the government is standing firm and refusing to give an answer. Again the NDP Deputy Premier cycles back in the NDP zone, refusing to answer the question. Hold on. The Deputy Premier shoots. It's on target. Both teams crash the net. The puck is lost in the scrum. Folks, we need to go to video replay. It looks like both teams are so busy fighting each other that nobody managed to get the puck over the line.

With that, the game ends, and Albertans are wondering if both sides have forgotten who they're playing for.

Retrospective by the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster

Dr. Starke: Mr. Speaker, to everything there is a season and a time to every purpose under heaven. Now, some of us will remember those words from *Turn! Turn! Turn!*, a '60s folk tune popularized by The Byrds. Pete Seeger wrote *Turn! Turn! Turn!*, but the rest of the words were lifted word for word from King Solomon's Book of Ecclesiastes. Now, that scripture has personal importance to me. It was the sermon text at both my father's and my mother's funerals, and it guided the decision I announced yesterday.

Now, I've used these member's statements a lot of different ways, but for what is likely my last one, I just want to say thank you.

First, to the people of Vermilion-Lloydminster: twice you've entrusted me with the tremendous privilege of being your representative. It has been the honour of a lifetime, and I thank you.

Second, to my colleagues of the 28th and the 29th Legislatures: our disagreements, of which there were many, were never obstacles to respect and understanding. I am a better person for having learned from your passion for our province, and I thank you.

Third, to the amazing people who've worked with me, both here in Edmonton and back home: I'm blessed to have worked alongside such passionate people, their dedication and commitment to serving Albertans, and I thank you.

Finally and most important, to my family. To Roland, to Alastair, to Sarah: when I said that I would chase this dream seven years ago, you said that you'd stand behind me, and you've been true to your word. To my wife and my teammate, Alison: seven years ago, when we left veterinary practice together, I said that we'd be moving on to something else. Well, it's been something else, and I look forward to our next something else on our journey together.

As for final words of wisdom, well, Mr. Speaker, I can only think of the words we always recited at TUXIS youth parliament before every sitting: let us pledge ourselves anew in an unselfish quest for the best in our homes, in our churches and communities, in our places of work, remembering always that life is not a goblet to be drained but a measure to be filled. [Standing ovation]

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

To the students, particularly, that are in the Legislature today: you will see exchanges and different opinions shared on the floor here, but you also see a respect for each other. So if there is anything that I would urge that you take away from this event, it's that you recognize that this commitment to democracy also has a human side, a very important aspect of this job. What you saw evidenced here in the last few minutes was exactly that.

1:50

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank that member for his service as well.

Oil Price Differentials

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, today Alberta oil is selling for its lowest price in history, \$10 a barrel. Yesterday it was \$12. Last week it was \$15. It is taking a nosedive. It's worth less than a bottle of water or a can of pop. Employers are burning through cash and may be on the cusp of announcing major layoffs. When will the government act not for railcars in 2020 but to stop a crisis in the Alberta economy from unfolding right now?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The member is right that the differential is hurting Albertans, and nothing is more important than fixing this problem soon and with lasting results. The only long-term solution is access to international tidewater, a Canadian pipeline to a Canadian port. But in the medium term, as the Premier announced yesterday, we'll be moving oil by rail to clear the bottleneck and make sure that it doesn't creep back upon us, and in the short term all options are on the table to choose a path that will best close the price gap. We will have more to say on that very soon.

Mr. Kenney: I appreciate that answer, Mr. Speaker. However, if the government is to follow the recommendation to impose mandatory curtailment of production to bring our market back in balance, which could increase the price, it's estimated, from \$10 to \$30 a barrel, it would need an amendment to the Mines and Minerals Act, section 85. This House is scheduled to rise a week from today. Will the government co-operate with the opposition to adopt that amendment expeditiously – we could do it this afternoon or on Monday – to get that in place at least so the government has an option to curtail production and prevent a potential catastrophe in our economy?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to reiterate that all options are on the table when it comes to getting fair value for our resources. We certainly welcome all members of this House, on an issue of such critical importance, to participate. I appreciate that clearly the member has taken a big departure from his ideology and the ideology of his party, which has championed even as recently as last week and definitely for many years – I know that there are members from his own caucus that went to jail because they fought so freely for the free market. I appreciate that that must have been very challenging to change his position on this matter. We'll continue to have more to say in the days to come.

Mr. Kenney: Facing what some call a five-alarm fire or financial catastrophe, that minister can't help herself but be partisan and chippy. It's unfortunate, Mr. Speaker.

I think we should put aside the politics to find common ground to stop potential massive layoffs for Albertans. Given that the Premier's envoys won't be apparently reporting back until tomorrow and that the Legislature is scheduled to rise next week, will the government at least work with us on potentially expeditious passage of legislative amendments allowing for curtailment of bitumen together with the already existing powers for curtailment of ...

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I very clearly answered the question, and I will continue to do so. There's nothing more important than making sure that Albertans get fair value for their resources. Certainly, much could have been done in the decade that the member spent sitting around the federal cabinet table to make that happen, but today he is here. Today our Premier is in Ottawa fighting and taking on the job that the member could have done when he was in Ottawa, when he failed to save pipelines more than once in the House of Commons because he said that it wasn't his job. On this side of the House we know it's all of our jobs. I appreciate that this must have been very difficult for the member,

to divide so far from his ideology and the values that his party was founded on to come up with a solution. We'll continue to work to the betterment of all Albertans.

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy Premier.
Second main question.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, it was actually small "c" conservative governments that used the power of production controls in the past to protect the interests of the owner of the asset. Talk about property rights: property that belongs to the people of Alberta is now being given away.

On this point, there is speculation that the government will incentivize curtailments in production through royalty writeoffs. Mr. Speaker, does the government not understand that that will take time to design and doesn't have a certainty of outcome? We need certainty and action now. Are they considering potential mandatory curtailment to get the action we need to save Alberta jobs?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's interesting to hear "certainty and action" when two days ago the member was calling for voluntary reductions. The week before he was calling for a free market, and today he's calling for arguably changing the way that we engage with the free market. All options are on the table. What I was acknowledging is that, unless the member wants to correct me on history, Conservatives have always talked about the free market. Members of his own caucus, earlier this week, talked about the free market. I appreciate that this must be challenging for many members of the caucus, but the solution here is – whatever decision we make is going to have lasting impacts. We need those to be ones that close the gap, protect jobs, and keep people working.

Mr. Kenney: Well, perhaps the minister didn't hear the question, so we'll try this again, Mr. Speaker. There's been speculation that the government does not intend to support mandatory curtailment, which has been used through most of the history of Alberta's energy industry, but rather royalty writeoffs. We're getting zero royalty for our oil right now at \$10 a barrel. If we do have curtailment, the price, it is expected, will triple. All the companies will actually be generating some revenue, some cash flow, some profits. Why would the government give them a royalty writeoff? The people of Alberta deserve something for this resource that belongs to them.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our Premier is working on all fronts to make sure that we close the gap in the price differential. This is for no reason – it's not for one person's political benefit or another person's political benefit; this is for the benefit of all Albertans. Eighty million dollars a day is what this is costing us. It is costing Albertans certainty, it's costing the market certainty, and it's certainly impacting the bottom line of those employers. All options are on the table. We will continue to fight each and every day for the people of Alberta. That's our goal, to make sure that we support all Albertans.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the government has spoken about adding additional railcars in 2020, which will not alleviate the crisis we are facing today. Can the government tell us: how much does it budget on spending on those railcars? Private-sector industry leaders: none of them have indicated to me that they're asking the government to buy railcars. The private companies are adding rail

capacity to ship oil out of Alberta, so what is the rationale for the government buying those railcars, and how much will it cost?

Ms Hoffman: Certainly, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to fighting for Albertans, getting fair value, we've said before that nothing is off the table, and we've shown that. The member has shown that on this issue and many others related to oil and gas, he continues to flip-flop. While we are going to make sure that we – we said that we would buy a pipeline if that's what it took to get our product to tidewater. The federal government has acted on that: Canadians now own a pipeline and are working to get that expansion. That's the long-term solution. The interim solution is making sure we get fair value and can move our products east and west, because over a decade in Ottawa the member opposite failed to secure that with a pipeline. The short term: we'll have more to say in the days to come.

The Speaker: Third main question.

Mr. Kenney: Once again wrong, Mr. Speaker: four pipelines, 1.73 million barrels per day in additional movement, most of those pipelines opposed by the NDP. We can keep doing it every day, this ridiculous exchange, but it doesn't get any Albertans back to work.

Unemployment

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, according to a report today from the University of Calgary the duration of unemployment in Alberta has tripled over the course of the past decade. On average an unemployed Albertan is waiting for 20 weeks to find work again. Is the government proud of that record, and does it think that higher taxes, higher debt, and higher regulation have helped in terms of this unemployment crisis that we're facing?

Ms Hoffman: It's interesting because the member in his earlier questions was talking about us having more involvement and making sure we get full value, and now he's talking about less involvement. But what I can tell you is that no matter what, our Premier and this government have the backs of Albertans. We want to make sure that everyone has the opportunity of full employment. That means that no matter what the price of oil is, we're going to keep fighting and make sure that we drive it up while protecting important front-line services, Mr. Speaker. Instead of fighting for a \$700 million tax giveaway to the top 1 per cent, the extremely wealthy, we're investing in all Albertans. We're investing in things like two trains, 120,000 barrels per day, to make sure we can get our product to tidewater and fair value.

Mr. Kenney: The minister says that they're investing in trains, but they can't even tell us how much money they're talking about. This is incoherent, Mr. Speaker. I take it that the minister, the government are indifferent about the fact that the duration of unemployment in Alberta has tripled in the past decade, from seven to 21 weeks. Today the Global Petroleum Survey indicated that Alberta has fallen from the 14th-best place to invest in the world to the 43rd-best place during the NDP's government. What has the NDP done to turn that around, to stop the nosedive in Alberta's ...

The Speaker: Thank you.

2:00

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, I want to reaffirm that nothing could be further from the truth in terms of standing on this side for regular working folks. We are fighting every day to make sure that we get the best price and the best value, and that means the best jobs and the best benefits for all Albertans. Whether you're one of the people actually building the pipeline that's going to be able to pay your

family's mortgage from that job or whether you're one of the people who's working in a hospital or a school that will benefit from the additional revenue that the province of Alberta and the country of Canada gets, we are working on the short, medium, and long terms to make sure that we both address the differential and get full value for the resource that we all own for the benefit of all Albertans.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, if the government's policies are working for ordinary Albertans, why has unemployment gone up for each of the last six months to the highest level outside of Atlantic Canada? Why are 184,000 Albertans looking for work? Why has the duration of unemployment tripled from seven to 22 weeks?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We do know that in 2017 90,000 full-time jobs, mostly in the private sector, returned to this province after the worst recession in two generations. We are focused on a number of other initiatives to get people back to work, to support people in their training, and that is having a positive effect as well. We will continue to have the backs of Albertans, as the Deputy Premier has said, as we go forward because we know that a full-time job is the most important thing for a sustainable life with your family.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Energy Industry Jobs Oil Price Differentials

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Official Opposition has joined with us in calling for mandatory production cuts in order to address the oil price differential. We've been arguing that this is the best short-term answer to depressed oil prices for weeks, but hopefully the growing consensus will convince this government to act. However, even with immediate action on the differential we are still in danger of another round of job losses because of low oil prices. To the Deputy Premier: is there a plan in place to deal with further job losses in our energy industry caused by low oil prices?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thanks, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Certainly, our priority is to make sure that every Albertan has an opportunity for full employment, fair compensation, and a good job. That's why our Premier is in Toronto today working with the board of trade and with other job creators and employers to make sure that they know what we're doing in Alberta to address the pressures and the impact that the drop in the price of oil and the increase in the differential have had on those types of employers and others. We're going to keep working to make sure that we address short-, medium-, and long-term impacts of the differential, that we're also diversifying our economy, and that we're investing in health care and education instead of laying off 4,000 teachers and 4,000 nurses.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We in the Alberta Party caucus believe that mandatory curtailment is the right response to the oil price differential, but we also know it will come with costs. Although curtailment will be a net benefit for Alberta, there will be those who lose work because of lower production. Instead of playing catch-up and helping affected workers like this government

did with the coal phase-out, let's be proactive and make sure there are supports in place for those workers. To the Deputy Premier: will you ensure that any plan for curtailment will also include measures to support affected workers?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We're certainly keeping working people as top of mind as we continue to have these important discussions. That's why we're not flip-flopping. We're not rushing. We're making sure that the decisions we make are grounded in the best outcomes for Albertans. When one is in government, you know that those decisions you make or those news conferences you hold impact real people, real families, so we're working diligently to make sure that we follow the best path to support job creators, to support working people, and to make sure that we get full value for our resources.

Mr. Fraser: With the current low price of oil every day without action could be more potential job losses. While the Premier has said that they plan to purchase more railcars, that is neither a long-term nor immediate solution. We need pipelines, but we also need immediate action from this government, not railcars that won't be ready for over a year. To the same minister: when can we expect your government to take real, immediate action on the differential?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We've been taking action for weeks and months. We've been working directly with employers and with industry. We've created an envoy that is engaging in important discussions and important research to make sure that we make the right decisions moving forward. We've acted on our lobby around Keep Canada Working 2.0, making sure that everyone in Ottawa and everyone across this country knows the impact of failing to have a pipeline, and making sure we're investing in rail to increase the export of our product. We'll have more to say on the differential soon.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

Organ and Tissue Donation

Ms Babcock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The donation of organs or tissue to another person is literally the gift of life. I think every member in this House was moved by the donation of Logan Boulet, who died following the Humboldt bus tragedy. Logan's choice saved six lives and led to a fourfold spike in registration rates here in Alberta. We know this issue is both deeply emotional and highly complex. To the Minister of Health: what is the current state of organ donation here in Alberta?

Ms Hoffman: I want to begin by thanking the member for important work and advocacy on this issue, Mr. Speaker. Organ donors in 2017 saved 462 lives, which has increased every year since 2015, and more than 550,000 Albertans have registered with the Alberta organ and tissue donation registry since it was launched. About 2,500 Albertans register every week. We are heading in the right direction, but there's definitely more progress to be made.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Babcock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: what work is the government doing to improve registration and donation rates, and what barriers remain to those increased donation rates?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've embarked upon an audit of the donor system, and that is nearing completion. We're specifically looking at ways to make sure that we are taking full advantage of every donation opportunity, and we're also developing stronger information systems to manage donations more effectively throughout our province and our country. Despite all this great new technology, a requirement to mail or fax your consent documents was written right into legislation under the previous government, and the truth is that many young people have never seen a fax machine, let alone used one, so there are certainly areas where the legislation could be modernized.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Babcock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm looking forward to working with Alberta Health to address these ongoing barriers.

Beyond government policy, what can Albertans do to help ensure that organ and tissue donations are there when we need them?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: I'm so proud to work with this hon. member, Mr. Speaker. We certainly have a lot of work to do to optimize our system on the government side, but my main message is to talk to your family, to every Albertan. Families are the final trustees of their loved ones' wishes, and it's absolutely vital to make sure that your family knows what your wishes are. A very close friend of mine received a liver, actually the same week his wife gave birth to their daughter, and last week he walked her to school instead of having her grow up without a dad. So, please, have these conversations with the people you love and make sure that you give the gift of life if you do come to that difficult situation.

Election Advertising Financing

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is facing some very serious issues, and that is why it is so upsetting that our politics are so messed up. In 2015 the Premier passed laws that were supposed to take big money out of politics, but instead they introduced U.S.-style PACs that have made our politics uglier and less transparent. Now big unions and corporations can play dirty politics, and political parties can pretend to be innocent. Will the Premier admit that bringing PACs to Alberta was a mistake and that these shadow parties hurt our democracy?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Labour and democratic renewal.

Ms Gray: Thank you, very much, Mr. Speaker. I believe very strongly that Albertans deserve to know who is trying to influence their opinions. That is why our election system is made more transparent by taking big money out of politics, imposing strict spending and contribution limits, and we now have new accountability measures for third-party advertisers, which is how Albertans know who is behind the various campaigns. It's clear from what we've seen lately that the Conservatives are still hell-bent on getting around these rules and returning Alberta back to the same system of entitlement that Albertans rejected last election.

Mr. Gill: Mr. Speaker, PACs are now calling the shots in Alberta politics, and that isn't right. Given that unelected and unaccountable PACs now dominate political party nominations and our leadership contests in parties like the UCP and given that instead of

transparency and accountability we have gotten dirty tricks and the secretive funding of party politics, will the Premier admit that her changes to political funding have failed and fix things before we go into a U.S.-style mess of an election next spring?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Albertans said clearly that they wanted dark money taken out of politics. They wanted a light shone on where the money was coming from and who was speaking. We did just that, and we brought in some of the strongest and most aggressive regulations against PACs in our country. We're ensuring that elections are fair and balanced and that it's regular Albertans deciding the outcomes of the election, not those who spend the most money. Transparency is what we brought to our electoral system.

2:10

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that it isn't just the provincial politics that PACs have invaded since the government has introduced a law which will result in the creation of PACs in municipal politics and given that the changes proposed will make municipal political fundraising less transparent and more like the failed system that we now have provincially, will the Premier admit that her changes to political fundraising will make things worse, not better, and will she withdraw the proposed legislation?

Mr. S. Anderson: This is rich, about ethics, coming from this member, Mr. Speaker. Albertans have the right to know who is influencing their . . .

Mr. Gill: Point of order.

Mr. S. Anderson: . . . elections, which is why rules around third-party advertising are vital. Mr. Speaker, we're making third-party advertisers register with each local jurisdiction they intend to advertise in to disclose their finances. Albertans asked for it, and we are doing it.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

Provincial Electoral System Government Caucus Question and Voting Practices

Ms Luff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In Canada majority governments are often elected with less than a majority of votes, including this one we have here. The last elections in Ontario and Quebec are good examples, with majority governments getting elected despite having less than 40 per cent of the popular vote. Many provinces across Canada have begun to look at changing their elections to a proportional representation model. This is something many Albertans are interested in and many of my constituents are interested in. Given that it would ensure that every vote counts, to the minister of democratic renewal: has your ministry begun any work on looking into models of proportional representation or into consulting Albertans on this important matter?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud of the work that we've done to strengthen and improve democracy here in Alberta: banning corporate donations, bringing in new spending limits, making PACs more accountable, and thanks to our government voting will be easier and more accessible than ever. We

will continue to work to make sure that ideas and not bank accounts decide our elections.

Ms Luff: I'm going to take that as a no, Mr. Speaker.

Given that proportional representation has many benefits, including increased voter turnout, increasing diversity in elected officials, electing Legislatures with more parties, more diverse voices, and given that 80 per cent of OECD countries use some form of proportional representation and given that proportional representation was on the NDP platform in 2012, why is Alberta lagging behind the world and the rest of Canada in improving our democracy?

Dr. Starke: Because they won, for a change.

The Speaker: Order.

Given the speech earlier I'm going to move on past making any comments.

The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I've had very constructive conversations about proportional representation with people like the member from our Liberal caucus, and we continue to have conversations about these topics. But I have to say that when I'm out at the doors, people are concerned about the price differential; people are concerned about pipelines; people are concerned about jobs, putting food on their family's table, health care, education. I have yet to knock on a door and have someone tell me about mixed-member proportional representation.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Ms Luff: I just had a town hall where at least half of the people who attended asked me to ask about this.

Given that my constituents are concerned about the state of democracy and given that they feel their elected representatives are more concerned about loyalty to their party than to their constituents, does the minister for democratic renewal believe that whipping all votes and scripting all the committees is good government policy?

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, you know, it's very interesting to listen to that hon. member ask a question like that. Clearly she doesn't do well under the team-play situation that we deal with in this House, but that's the nature of this Assembly. The Assembly is designed for teamwork to create teams that can form a government. That's what it's about. It's not about individual members following their pet projects. [interjections]

The Speaker: Students, there are no recesses in this place.

The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Carbon Levy and Pipeline Development

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. "Social licence doesn't mean complete consensus. It means a majority of people are prepared to go along with it, and that's what we're still working for. That's what it means to me." That's what the Premier said in *Maclean's* magazine in December 2016. Today the majority of Albertans consistently oppose the carbon tax, a job-killing tax that was supposed to get social licence for pipelines. Those pipelines were cancelled or delayed, leading to today's crisis, \$80 million a day. So why are Albertans still stuck paying a carbon tax?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, carbon pricing is an effective way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. If one believes climate change is real, then the next question is: what is one going to do about it? The folks across the way believe that we're not to do anything about it, it seems, because they have not been clear about what that plan might be. Our plan carefully balances economic development with environmental protection because we on this side do believe that climate change is real. We also believe there is a tremendous amount of economic opportunities that go along with climate action, and I'll be pleased to discuss those in the supplementals.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Actually, the economic crisis is real.

Given, Mr. Speaker, that the new Premier of New Brunswick has proposed a multiprovincial holding corporation to shepherd the Energy East pipeline through the National Energy Board hearings before handing it back to the pipeline company for construction and given that time is of the essence with Bill C-69, the no-more-pipelines act, threatening resource-producing provinces courtesy of the NDP government and their best friend Justin Trudeau, to the minister: do you support Premier Higgs' proposal, and if not, why not?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We've been very clear from the beginning that we are willing to work with all provinces or municipalities or others who want to see Canada's economy grow through tidewater access for Alberta's energy resources because of the tremendous benefits that accrue to the rest of the country when that happens. That particular individual is welcome to reach out to us any time. As for our approach to pricing carbon and reducing our greenhouse gas emissions and our contribution to climate change, we're doing things like investing in Calgary's green line, that will create more than 12,000 jobs. We're investing in . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
Second supplemental.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. B.C. announced earlier this week that they are intervening against Saskatchewan's court challenge against the carbon tax, siding, again, with the NDP's friend Justin Trudeau. Given the crisis of our economic situation, to the Premier: why are you refusing to join Saskatchewan's court challenge and scrap the carbon tax?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On this side of the House we don't believe it's necessary to back a dump truck of cash onto the lawns of high-priced lawyers in order to tell us that the Constitution is real. What we are doing here is focused on our own plan, which is reducing greenhouse gas emissions, growing the economy, taking our environmental challenges seriously, and working productively with other jurisdictions who share those values. We're not interested in fool's errands that are legal challenges that we see elsewhere. We're focused on our own priorities.

Oil Price Differentials and Provincial Revenue

Mr. Barnes: The NDP government has projected that their \$8 billion deficit this year is based on a modest \$22 differential. Even though the NDP seem not to be concerned about where their revenue is coming from or if it's even coming, we, the responsible adults in this room, are concerned. To the minister: with this disastrous differential growing daily and assuming that you are not in the dark about what is happening within your own ministry, can you state exactly what your deficit will be under the current \$40 differential?

Mr. Ceci: Well, I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that the deficit for this year is \$7.8 billion, and in Q2 we'll update everybody again with regard to where the deficit is. We have dropped the deficit \$3 billion since our first budget, \$3 billion through the worst recession in two generations. We're finding savings that were left behind, savings that we actually took out of the budget because that side was benefiting CEOs with golf memberships. They had a private air force and . . .

The Speaker: Thank you. [interjection] Thank you, hon. minister.
2:20

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, given that this horrendous problem with our growing differential cannot be ignored, postponed, or deflected and given that not giving a direct answer and spouting repetitive rhetoric would be an insult to the 275,000 hard-working Albertans who depend on oil and gas to put food on their table, again to the minister: how much revenue will Albertans lose because of the NDP-Trudeau alliance that failed to gain pipeline access?

Ms Hoffman: Sorry. I just can't help but address the question around a Trudeau alliance. What we've done on this side of the House is create a made-in-Alberta solution that invests in energy efficiency, invests in ordinary folks, and invests in diversification. On that side of the House they're arguing for us to throw it all out and implement – what? – the plan Justin Trudeau has created, Mr. Speaker. I can't help but say that I think somebody else might be best friends with the Prime Minister. On this side of the House we're fighting for ordinary Albertans to come up with Alberta solutions.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that not long ago they used to protest pipelines and given that now the government's response is usually based in rhetoric, future promises, or plans that repeat past failures and that Budget 2018 put Alberta on track for a staggering \$100 billion in debt by 2023: how much does this government expect our debt to be past \$100 billion because of our current \$40 differential?

Mr. Ceci: Mr. Speaker, if he wants to ask about past failures, all he has to do is look two spots over to his right and ask about the deficit that was accumulated under that person's watch: \$56 billion in one year alone, hundreds of billions of dollars put to the federal government debt, and interest payments amounting to hundreds of billions of dollars. We've cut the deficit \$3 billion already under the toughest – the toughest – financial situation that Alberta has been in in a long time.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

H.A. Kostash School in Smoky Lake

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In 2012 a RECAPP facility evaluation report was done for the H.A. Kostash school in Smoky Lake, in the Aspen View school division. That report recommended that extensive repairs were required to maintain the integrity of the school roof to prevent leaks. To the Minister of Infrastructure or of Education: were the recommended repairs carried out, and if so, why are pails and garbage cans required to catch water in the hallways and classrooms during rains?

The Speaker: The Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and answer on behalf of the Minister of Education. I can't speak, of course, to the particulars of this file, but what I can tell the member opposite and all members of this House is that our government has been engaged with the largest school construction project in the history of this country. We've built over 240 schools all across this province to make sure that we have room for the students who need to go to school.

What won't help the constituents of that member's riding is \$700 million in cuts that they plan to give away to the millionaires and billionaires of this province in addition to the planned cuts that they want to make to the . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Hanson: Well, thank you for that non answer, but it's raining in Smoky Lake.

Given that Alberta Infrastructure had a feasibility assessment and life cycle cost analysis conducted by AECOM – unfortunately, that report is not dated – that shows many deficiencies in the current building and indicates either modernization or a total rebuild, Minister, can you confirm for the students, parents, and teachers at H.A. Kostash whether they can look forward to a modernization or a rebuild and, more importantly, when, and where does this sit on the priority list?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Nothing is more important to this government than making sure that our students have modern, new schools to learn in. That's why we've been engaged in the largest construction project of schools in this country's history.

You know, the member opposite says that it's raining in the school in his constituency. If he had the opportunity to form government with his colleagues across the way, they would have no school in his constituency. He has been very clear that the cuts that he plans to make to the education system are going to hurt, and that's going to hurt the students in Smoky Lake.

Mr. Hanson: Just to be clear, Mr. Speaker, the school is actually in the constituency of Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

Given that I have personally received over 200 letters from concerned parents, students, and teachers, which I'll table later, and given that the Premier, both the ministers of Education and Infrastructure as well as the MLA for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater have also received these letters, Minister, why has no one, especially their MLA, responded to the valid concerns of these constituents?

Mr. Piquette: Oh, give me a break, Dave. You know damn well I already . . .

The Speaker: Hey, hey.

An Hon. Member: Point of order.

The Speaker: Did somebody say "point of order"? Noted.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't know what kind of response the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills has made to those parents, but I can imagine it goes something like this. "Dear parents of concerned students of Smoky Lake: if you elect a UCP government, you can be guaranteed billions of dollars of cuts to education, making sure that the students in Smoky Lake won't get a new school and, in addition to that, that the teachers are going to be put out of work." Our government has done a lot to invest in education. We've got 240 new schools and 4,000 more teachers because of the investments that we've made in education and that those guys want to reverse.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Genetic Test Information Use

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Two years ago the Senate of Canada and the House of Commons passed Bill S-201, the Genetic Non-Discrimination Act, which protects folks who want to get genetic testing done in order to be aware of their health risks and prepare accordingly. Individuals who have genetic markers for specific diseases can be charged higher premiums for insurance or denied insurance coverage altogether. To the Minister of Health: is your government aware that some Albertans are being discriminated against simply based on genetic characteristics?

Ms Hoffman: I want to thank CIJA and all members of the Israeli and Jewish community for their work right across this country, Mr. Speaker. I had the honour of meeting with representatives from CIJA this morning, and we reaffirmed our government's commitment to continue to support the federal legislation as it continues to move forward. It's important that no form of discrimination is tolerated.

Mr. Speaker, when members of Alberta who are involved in a number of organizations are behaving in a way that's promoting hateful views, that leadership is to call that out and make sure it has no place in politics or in public service.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that stakeholders like the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs and the Jewish Federation of Edmonton and the Talmud Torah Society have told us how this can impact their communities and given that people will avoid getting tested for genetic markers if it means insurance will be more expensive or unavailable, to the same minister: will you ensure Albertans are protected from genetic discrimination by insurance companies?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and again to the members of CIJA, who are doing this work on behalf of all Canadians. There is federal legislation working its way through. We certainly respect that legislation. We want everyone to know that in Alberta we do not tolerate hate, antisemitism, or discrimination in any form. To the members of CIJA: thank you for your tireless advocacy on this matter. Our government has your back.

Mr. Fraser: Given that Jewish-Canadians are not the only group that is especially affected by genetic diseases and therefore genetic

discrimination and given that it would be a help to many communities affected by genetic diseases if they were protected from discrimination and given that genetic testing gives people time to focus on their health, if needed, to the same minister: will you commit to bringing forward legislation similar to the federal legislation to protect Albertans from this kind of genetic discrimination?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, in the meeting that I had this morning with folks from CIJA, I made it very clear that our government fully supports the federal legislation. It applies to all jurisdictions across our country. We believe that it's important that it be enforced from coast to coast to coast. Everyone deserves an opportunity to have proper health information and make good, informed decisions for themselves without risk that it could result in discrimination that could hurt them in the future. So we continue to stand with CIJA and members of the Jewish community.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Calgary Board of Education Construction Project Management Costs

Mr. McIver: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, over the past two years the Calgary board of education covered \$43 million for schools on behalf of the government of Alberta, including \$20 million in actual construction costs. When I asked about this two days ago, both the Infrastructure minister and the Education minister refused to give a straight answer, so let's try the Finance minister: do you even acknowledge that the government of Alberta owes the Calgary board of education over \$40 million?

Mr. Schmidt: Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to answer again on behalf of the Minister of Education and reinforce the fact that every child in Calgary and across Alberta deserves an education that prepares them for success in a fast-changing world. By fully funding enrolment growth, we've put tens of millions of dollars more into the CBE than would have been the case under the Conservatives. As such, I expect the board to balance its budget and continue to provide the excellent education that it's been expecting. What should be made clear is that under their plan the CBE would be experiencing a hundred million dollar deficit in its budget, which would clearly negatively affect the . . .

2:30

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. McIver: Well, given that so far the minister has refused to acknowledge that the government owes the board of education in Calgary over \$40 million and given that over \$1.7 million in interest has been paid that would otherwise be earmarked for classrooms, for kids of Albertan families, and given that two ministers and now a third have refused to answer questions on this important matter, let's go back to the Finance minister. Why does the government of Alberta expect school boards to fund construction costs out of reserves which are meant to be spent on kids in classrooms?

Mr. Schmidt: Well, Mr. Speaker, I just want to refresh the member's memory on some of the investments that we've made in the Calgary board of education. We've increased by \$63 million their operating fund. We've provided them \$18 million to fully cover the cost of reducing instructional and transportation fees, \$13 million in additional funding to classrooms, and over a hundred

million dollars in capital investment. If the Member for Calgary-Hays is so concerned about the state of the Calgary board of education's facilities and students, then why is he campaigning on a \$700 million tax cut to millionaires and billionaires in addition to firing 4,000 teachers?

Mr. McIver: Well, Mr. Speaker, we just heard the minister say that he depends upon schools to balance their budgets, but he obviously depends on the government to balance its budget on the backs of those schools because he won't pay his bills. Again, this is kids in classrooms.

Given that I've asked about kids in classrooms and the minister talks about anything except kids in classrooms, which actually matters, to the minister: do you even acknowledge that your government owes the Calgary board of education \$40 million plus?

Mr. Schmidt: Well, Mr. Speaker. I can reiterate the significant investments that we've made in the Calgary board of education and the students of Alberta all across this province, yet I have yet to hear the member opposite admit that he is campaigning on a \$700 million tax cut to millionaires and billionaires that would have no positive effect on the students, and he would include cancelling a bunch of construction projects in Calgary and all over the province of Alberta. I am looking forward to him campaigning to the students of Alberta on that platform because they're going to . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Agricultural Concerns

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As of late my office has been getting plenty of inquiries on several important issues that could have far-reaching consequences for Alberta farmers and ranchers. Today I'm hoping to get some clarification for their sake. Minister, recently a cow coming from the interior of B.C. and slaughtered here in Alberta was discovered to have bovine TB. What impact could this have on cattle producers here in Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the very, very good question. He realizes that we had our own bovine tuberculosis scare here last year or the year before, very close to your own neighbourhood, Mr. Speaker, as well. So we recognize that this can be very stressful for ranchers. This is a file that is led by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. It's my understanding that with the portion of this animal that was discovered, nothing has entered the food chain, there is no risk to human health, and it should not affect our bovine tuberculosis free status. But as minister I will keep a close eye on this file.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that pests may take many forms in Alberta and given that the federal government's pest management regulatory agency is looking at banning the use of strychnine in Canada, used extensively to control Richardson's ground squirrels, commonly known as gophers, Minister, what is the status of this possible ban, and what are you doing to advocate for Alberta farmers and ranchers?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the member for the very important question. I understand very well that strychnine

is used to control Richardson's ground squirrels, gophers, throughout the province. It had been registered, you know, some years ago. That proved to be disastrous. There were a lot of crop and forage losses, especially in southern Alberta, so I absolutely hear from producers across the province about how important that is, a tool in their tool box to control the pests. So I have told the federal government that we do not support the proposed ban until some other, more effective methods are developed.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Given that I am also getting plenty of calls on the federal PMRA's possible banning of the use of neonics used to control flea beetles in canola fields and given that this may result in farmers doing more spraying, leading to higher costs and lower yields while also increasing the possible unintended environmental risks, Minister, what help are Alberta farmers getting from your office on this file?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the member for the very important question. The government is committed to supporting Alberta's farmers and making their lives better. We know that farmers, you know, throughout the history of farming in Alberta have been very good stewards of their land. They understand the importance of protecting their environment. It protects their crops as well. But discussions with the PMRA are based, I believe, on limited information that does not necessarily align with the reality here, so again our department is going to share those experiences, sharing our science that we have here in Alberta, with the federal government to ensure that Alberta's concerns are taken . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Bighorn Area Land Use

Mr. Schneider: Mr. Speaker, concerns have arisen from companies currently carrying on activities in the public land-use zones in Kananaskis Country. They are under constant threat of legal action, and they are constantly having to defend themselves from environmental groups focused on stopping legitimate and legal economic activities in the public land-use zone. Minister, by creating a huge, new public land-use zone in the Bighorn, are you at all concerned that you will create the same kind of dynamic in the west country public land-use zone?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to congratulate the Minister of Environment and Parks for the work she's done on creating parks for us all to enjoy here in Alberta. As with Kananaskis, with Bighorn there are a number of public engagements that have been going on. There will be a public engagement, a telephone town hall type thing, you know, for feedback on that, and stakeholder groups will be invited, as will all Albertans, to participate.

Mr. Schneider: Mr. Speaker, given that the minister has recently claimed that broad consultation on the Bighorn has occurred but given that the feedback provided to the Official Opposition has cast doubt on the accuracy of that claim, to the minister: did your office consult with affected forestry or energy companies doing business in the Bighorn area and the new public land-use zone prior to the launch of this proposal last week?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As with many things our government does, we absolutely consult with all stakeholders in those areas, and I certainly have a number of great quotes here from different municipalities and stakeholders. One is, quote: a positive step forward. That's Jim Duncan, who is the reeve of Clearwater county in his comments welcoming infrastructure spending to boost tourism in the Nordegg-Rocky Mountain House-Drayton Valley area. Other comments, quote: I am writing to ask you to keep the government's promise to protect . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister. [interjection] Thank you. Time is up.

Mr. Schneider: Mr. Speaker, given that there is direct impact on these economic activities that help to drive the economies of communities like Drayton Valley, Rocky Mountain House, and many others, will the speaker clearly state for the record that existing logging, mining, and energy extraction in what will soon be the west country public land-use zone be allowed to continue those activities in the future?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That's no problem at all. Certainly, public land-use zones allow for a number of different activities. They balance recreational uses, which are happening right now, and plan them appropriately with logging activities, with extraction of various oil and gas or other mineral resources as well as existing grazing leases. Public land-use zones accommodate all of those various uses. They are a planning tool that allows us to make sure that we've got a working landscape, but people can also enjoy themselves.

Health Care Patient Information Portal

Dr. Turner: I've been practising medicine for over 40 years and have relied on Alberta's world-class laboratory medicine and diagnostic imaging to provide accurate and individualized diagnosis and therapy for my patients. In 2002 Netcare was introduced to Alberta, and it remains the best lab information system in Canada. It facilitates referrals and is essential for quality medical care. To the Minister of Health: the data collected in Netcare belongs to the patients, who have been asking for a patient portal. Please provide the House with an update on making a patient portal available to all Albertans.

2:40

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much to the member for this important question, Mr. Speaker. This member has been a tireless advocate for his patients and for all Alberta patients not just for the 40 years that he's practised medicine but also as a member of this government caucus, and I want to commend him for that work.

He's right that Albertans have been waiting for too long for a time where they have a digital tool in their own possession with their own health care information. They have that in almost every other aspect of their lives, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to be sure that when we launched this portal, Albertans will immediately find it useful, and I look forward to doing that soon.

Thank you.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Dr. Turner: Thank you. I'm very much looking forward to that.

Given that the pharmacy information network is on the same platform and can be accessed by health professionals, including pharmacists and nurse practitioners, will the PIN also be available to patients through the patient portal?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans will be able to see their pharmacy records among other health records, and Albertans will be able to have a wide range of features to help them track their existing records and upload new data that they have from their own mobile devices. Probably many people in this Chamber are wearing Fitbits at this time, and that information could be useful to incorporate from a patient perspective into their own electronic health record. This kind of modernization of personalization of health care is only possible when you have a government that makes health care a priority and invests instead of cutting. I'm proud that this side of the House has chosen to do that.

Dr. Turner: Will the patient portal be useful in integrating the personal directives such as the organ donor consent, that we heard about earlier, into the electronic medical record for Albertans?

Ms Hoffman: Thanks again for this important question. We plan on rolling out the digital tool, and like with many digital tools, there will be updates in the years to come and months to come. I think it's a good idea. I know that the member has worked on these concepts for many years. Albertans maybe don't always know it because we've had many of these conversations in person, Mr. Speaker, so I'm glad to be able to update the House with some of the tremendous work he's done on this effort. When we do get a time to announce, very soon, I hope all Albertans will recognize the contributions from you, hon. member, and many colleagues that have worked with you on this effort for many, many years.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I have a request for unanimous consent for introductions.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests

(continued)

The Speaker: Go ahead, Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce today to the Assembly a group of nattily attired visitors, the board of governors and executive leadership team at Portage College. Access to higher education for rural and indigenous learners is incredibly important to me as well as to Portage College. Portage is a leader in opening doors to higher education for rural and indigenous Albertans. I want to thank my guests for their tireless efforts to make sure that we have an excellent college in northeastern Alberta and for their contributions to the postsecondary system in Alberta as a whole. I'd ask that they please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce guests today from the Pakistan Canada Association of Edmonton, which has existed for 45 years as a community hub for Pakistanis around this city. Through its programs the PCAE has helped many new Canadians integrate within the greater community while

promoting the cultural heritage of Pakistan. I have attended many of their events, and I have to say that the food is always my favourite part. Between the Minister of Labour and democratic renewal we have a number of guests that we'll be introducing, but I'll call, first, Ziad Memon, who's a director for the youth wing, who leads a mentorship program; Khalid Aziz and his wife, Ayesha Aziz – Khalid is the general secretary and works behind the scenes to ensure community concerns are addressed – and my good friends Jamil Shaikh and his wife, Rehana Parveen. Jamil is the chairman for the hall committee and an avid community leader. I'm so happy that my guests could join us today. Please give them the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Labour and democratic renewal.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure as well to introduce members of the Pakistan Canada Association of Edmonton. As I call their names if they would please rise: Mr. Salman Naseer, the president, and his wife, Mrs. Rabia Naseer; Mr. Muhammad Haseeb Khan, who is the director of finance and grants; Mr. Omer Choudhary and Mr. Jawad Choudhary. If there are any other members of the Pakistan Canada Association who have not been introduced, please rise. From organizing cultural festivals, food drives, and major community events, PCAE has contributed greatly to Alberta society. I'm very proud that I and my office work very closely with their dedicated team, be it proclaiming Alberta's first Islamic Heritage Month or working with the association's women leaders. It's wonderful to have community partners like yourselves. I ask you to now please receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

We have another introduction, from Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I actually have two brief introductions. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this House Ms Andrea Silverstone. Andrea is the executive director of Sagesse Domestic Violence Prevention Society and the co-chair of Calgary Domestic Violence Collective. For over 20 years Andrea has advocated and taken action to combat domestic violence and invest in prevention. I met Andrea earlier today to discuss how we can collaborate together to deal with this issue. Thank you for your leadership and dedication. I ask Andrea to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Mr. Sabir: Mr. Speaker, to you and through you I also want to introduce Mr. Jason Loewer. Jason is the executive director of EmployAbilities and a strong advocate for persons with disabilities and their families. I was pleased to meet Jason today and hear about his organization's amazing customized employment program. Our government supports inclusive employment and proclaimed October as Disability Employment Awareness Month to recognize this issue. I ask Jason to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

It's an introduction? Okay.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With your indulgence I have two groups to introduce to you today. It's a privilege to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly

Cosette Dubrûle and Celena and Randy Campbell. If they'd please rise. Celena and Cosette are cofounders of All Cycles Edmonton, a nonprofit here that acquires menstrual products for homeless and income-insecure people across the gender spectrum. Their grassroots project helps the most stigmatized and vulnerable people within the entire city of Edmonton. I want to thank them for the great work that they do, and I ask that they please receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Mr. Dang: Mr. Speaker, also in the gallery today is my constituency assistant, Matthew Callaway. He doesn't want to be introduced, but I have to introduce him because he's the one that keeps me on track and on time, or tries to keep me on time, for all of my appointments. If he'd please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome as well.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Mr. Rosendahl: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the Bubik family, who are here to observe third reading of Bill 25. Peter Bubik is an engineer in the renewable energy business and cofounder of Turning Point Generation, the company behind the Canyon Creek pumped hydro energy storage project in Bill 25. He is here with his wife, Corrie, their children Matthias, Nellie, Tobias, and Linnea Bubik. Often it's families that carry the unprecedented burden of business ventures, and they deserve to be recognized. The Bubiks are here to witness the historic moment of Alberta's first ever pumped hydro energy storage project and hope the project will serve as a testament to our willingness to be responsible stewards of our environment. I ask the Bubiks to rise – and they already have – and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome. I think I see Cinderella's dress up there. We will have Members' Statements continue in 15 seconds.

Members' Statements (continued)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

2:50

Government Caucus Practices

Ms Luff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As everyone knows, the NDP kicked me out because I spoke out against their wishes. I wouldn't do what they told me. Luckily, they have 50-plus others who will. The NDP leadership refuses to speak with me. To them I no longer exist. This is how they treat people that disagree with them. What did I do to deserve this mistreatment? I expressed how I felt. I asked for an independent investigation into what I saw as wrongful behaviour. Their response was to ignore and silence. They're continuing with this behaviour. They have removed me from a committee with an action that the NDP themselves described as tuggery just a few years ago.

All I am asking for is transparency and honesty. I'm urging the government again to put in place an independent third-party process that can be followed in cases of bullying to ensure for future governments that MLAs and staff won't be mistreated. I'm asking for them to put in place policies that allow more autonomy for MLAs to represent their constituents. This government is refusing to make it easier for constituents' voices to be heard in this Legislature. They're upholding mistakes of the past. Saying that this is just how it is is unacceptable.

When I ran in 2012 and 2015, I did so because I felt the NDP was different. I told people on doorsteps that the NDP was different. Yet as soon as they became government, they began to run roughshod over democracy and to replace the old PC cronies with new NDP cronies. They feel it's their right as the government even though they railed against Conservatives for the same behaviour for years, and I have no doubt that the UCP would be exactly the same.

My constituents overwhelmingly tell me that they don't believe in politicians, that politicians are all the same, that they don't listen. They're not alone. Nearly half of Canadians don't vote regularly, and recent polls have shown that less than half of Canadians trust their government. Politicians complain about uninformed voters, about lack of engagement. They say that the public needs to change. I say that politicians need to change. Politicians need to represent their constituents. Instead, they hide behind the status quo and point to the structure of the system as a scapegoat.

Well, if the system isn't honouring Albertans – and it's not – then the system needs to change. As MLAs we owe it to Albertans to change it.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

HIV/AIDS Awareness

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This coming Saturday will be the 30th observance of World AIDS Day, founded on December 1, 1988, to unite people around the world in fighting HIV and commemorate those who live with or have died from an AIDS-related illness. The first clinical cases of HIV appeared in the early 1980s. Today fewer people are becoming infected, and although there's still no cure, treatment and care are helping most people with HIV stay healthy, avoid AIDS, and live long lives. But while we've made significant progress, there is still work to do. Far too many living with HIV also live with unnecessary stigma and isolation. Today we remember them, and we commit that we will continue to work to ensure that they have the support and dignity that they deserve.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to recognize the many individuals and organizations working in my community to do that work and advocate for those in need and help to curtail the further spread of HIV: HIV Edmonton, Living Positive through Positive Living, the Ribbon Rouge Foundation, team ARCH at the Royal Alexandra hospital, Streetworks, and the Edmonton Men's Health Collective. It's in part because of their work and advocacy that our government recently introduced universal coverage for PrEP, a drug that is up to 99 per cent effective in stopping the transmission of HIV. They have also been promoters of and advocates for making testing more accessible in the community and promoting the adoption of harm reduction such as needle exchanges and supervised consumption sites to support those struggling with substance use.

But most importantly, Mr. Speaker, World AIDS Day is about hope, the belief that through research, support, and education we can slow and prevent the spread of HIV, that we can support those living to do so in health and dignity, and that we can one day find a cure.

This Saturday our city will remember the 36 million lost worldwide by dimming the lights on the High Level Bridge and lighting 11 buildings red, including the Alberta Legislature, to remember those living with the disease. It's my hope that all Albertans will join in this remembrance and wear a red ribbon in support.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Pursuant to Standing Order 34(3) I'm rising to advise the House that on the next available Monday written questions 6, 7, and 8 will be accepted. Additionally, Motion for a Return 18 will be accepted, and Motion for a Return 19 will be dealt with.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: Hon. minister, you get a second opportunity.

Bill 31

Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2018

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to request leave to introduce Bill 31, the Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2018.

Mr. Speaker, this bill has been circulated to the opposition parties, and I believe there is consensus on all of the clauses of the bill, so it is our hope it can be passed, therefore, without debate in the House.

[Motion carried; Bill 31 read a first time]

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Bill 32

City Charters Fiscal Framework Act

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise and give first reading to Bill 32, the City Charters Fiscal Framework Act.

Calgary and Edmonton are two of the fastest growing municipalities in Alberta, and to support this growth, the cities need permanent, predictable funding for their local infrastructure priorities. This legislation is about establishing a historic partnership that helps Edmonton and Calgary build the infrastructure they need in a way that the province can afford. This framework delivers certainty to the cities by recognizing that they are partners in our growing economy and should share in both the good and the tough times.

The province is also delivering on the long-term transit needs of Calgarians and Edmontonians in legislating long-term transit funding. This historic long-term transit funding will allow Calgary and Edmonton to build out their transit networks, create jobs, reduce greenhouse gases, and make our cities better places to live and work.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of Bill 32. Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 32 read a first time]

Statement by the Speaker

Statements during Tablings

The Speaker: Hon. members, I'd just like to make a few comments. Yesterday there was an exchange in the House which resulted in some points of order with respect to the process for tabling reports and returns. It has been a long-standing practice of this Assembly that members should only give a brief description of the item they wish to table and not read the item itself.

I'm learning every day. If you would allow me one more opportunity to say that context always applies, almost always. I myself have indicated, as was quoted yesterday, that there have been statements that I've made in this Legislature that were not less than other speakers. I want to just remind the House of the brevity of the issue, and keep that in mind when you're introducing and tabling documents.

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: I believe I have Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will try to be brief. These two tablings resulted from a conversation I had at the FCSS breakfast this morning, where we discussed the utilization of their services and how it's increased over the last three years. I'd just like to point out that FCSS is celebrating their 51st year, so hardly an NDP invention. The first document I have here is 2018 Beyond Food Revisited. It's a report about the Edmonton food bank. It shows from 2015 to 2018 an over 40 per cent increase every month in the utilization of the food bank in Edmonton.

The second document is from Food Banks Canada, HungerCount 2016. This is just a brief summary of it, where it shows Alberta's utilization of the food banks increased 136 per cent from 2008 to 2016 while the rest of Canada increased by only 28 per cent.

The Speaker: Brevity. Brevity.

Hon. Government House Leader, we may well be going past 3.

Mr. Mason: Yes. I'd like to advise the House that we're going to continue with the Routine past 3 o'clock.

3:00

The Speaker: Thank you.

The Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table the appropriate number of copies of the Law Enforcement Review Board's annual report for 2017.

The Speaker: Are there any others? The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the five requisite copies of a petition that was presented to my office by Mr. Randy Richards. I'd like to once again thank him for being here in the Legislature with us today. The petition calls for changes to Alberta's motor vehicle regulations in relation to tinted windows. I would also like to note for the record that there are currently two online petitions on this subject that have collected 18,000 signatures to date.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Now, I believe that we are at three points of order today.

The Member for Calgary-Greenway.

Point of Order

Language Creating Disorder

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak on this point of order. In question period today when I was asking questions about the impact of political action committees in our politics provincially and also their impact municipally, I asked the government a very simple question. Like, we see the ads of political action committees everywhere, and we see how the

Official Opposition has been using political action committees and the government is using their big unions. The question was: what is the government doing so that this culture, these policies do not impact municipal politics? And the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs said, "This is rich . . . coming from [that] member." Under Standing Order 23(i) and (j): "imputes false . . . motives" and "abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder."

My question was just speaking on behalf of Albertans, like, that we do not convert Alberta politics into the United States style of PAC-driven politics. I think that it's a simple question, and the minister should have given a simple answer instead of attacking me personally. So I ask the hon. minister to withdraw his comment and apologize.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Oh, Mr. Speaker, I really wonder what the minister could have been referring to when he was saying that a question about preserving democracy coming from Calgary-Greenway was rich. Well, it's clearly a matter of debate and not a point of order. There's nothing wrong with saying that something is rich. It's not abusive. But, you know, in case the member has forgotten, the reason he's sitting where he's sitting is because he left the UCP caucus because there were allegations that he stuffed ballot boxes in an annual general meeting of his constituency.

The Speaker: Hon. member.

Mr. Mason: This is all on the public record, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Speak to the point of order.

Mr. Mason: Well, you know, I guess I believe it is. It's a matter of public record. This was investigated by a retired judge for the UCP, and the result was what were termed to be credible allegations, and the hon. member is sitting now as an independent.

Mr. Speaker, the question of whether it's rich or not, I think, is a matter of opinion between members. I happen to share the opinion of the Minister of Municipal Affairs that it is a bit rich to be lectured by that member . . .

Mr. Fildebrandt: Point of order.

Mr. Mason: . . . on preserving democracy in our province, Mr. Speaker. On that basis I don't think there's anything to withdraw, nothing to apologize for.

The Speaker: Any other members? I unfortunately cannot see my Standing Orders document here, but the specifics of the case, as I see it, is that this is what was said. "This is rich, about ethics, coming from this member, Mr. Speaker. Albertans have the right to know who is influencing their . . ." And it's at that point that the Member for Calgary-Greenway raised the point of order. I believe that in this particular instance what comes into play, Government House Leader, is 23. As I understand, it talks about "impute" in the House, that this would cause disorder. I find that a comment like that from what I know to be a very professional and committed minister and MLA – upon reflection, he might have thought that that particular comment was not contributing to the constructive dialogue that takes place in this place. I'm not sure if the minister has any reflection comments that he might wish to make on the matter. You do not?

Well, I believe in this particular instance, Government House Leader, that there was a point of order, and it is based upon context.

Second point of order.

Point of Clarification

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, in section 13(2): "The Speaker shall explain the reasons for any decision on the request of a Member." I am making a request. You know, to suggest that somebody saying something is rich is a point of order, I just don't understand that. I don't understand why if it makes you uncomfortable or it makes any member of the House uncomfortable, that means it's out of order. It either violates the rules or it does not.

The Speaker: The rules are, Government House Leader, that 23 implies: is it going to cause disorder? Is it disrespectful? That's what I understand it to mean. My explanation is based on the fact that I have determined in this situation that that does, and therefore that is my reason under 13(2).

The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll be extremely brief. Your ruling that there was, in fact, a point of order as it concerns the comments of the Minister of Municipal Affairs, I think, is well taken, but those comments were repeated and affirmed by the Government House Leader. So I think that it's appropriate to find that there would be essentially a duplication of this point of order about the comments made.

The Speaker: Hon. member, you're at a point in the jurisdiction that I make the decisions I do independent of whether in any member's opinion that's good or bad. So I don't know that the point you're raising now is going to contribute in any way to the decision that I might make. I will therefore keep moving on.

By the way, I just got a note: we should refer to 318 in *Beauchesne's* to the point I just made.

The other point of order. The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Point of Order Parliamentary Language

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise under Standing Order 23(h), (i), and (j). Earlier when my colleague from Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills was asking a member of the cabinet questions today in regard to a school that's in dire repair, all members of this Assembly very clearly heard the Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater using extremely unparliamentary language in this Assembly. I know that you heard it because you did make a stern look in his direction, but I would ask that that member apologize not only to my hon. colleague from Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills but also to members of this Assembly and to members of the public that most definitely, assuredly, heard that through their television screens.

The Speaker: Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

3:10

Mr. Piquette: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do believe that, with your indulgence, I do owe the House an explanation and an apology. I do understand the importance of keeping parliamentary language. Generally speaking, I think I've been very cognizant of these rules. I have to say that I was surprised and provoked by the audacity of the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills' statement regarding H.A. Kostash school and that I hadn't been doing anything about it.

This is a school that I have visited on multiple occasions. I've worked closely with the school board to advocate strongly to the Minister of Education for replacing the school. I've had this at the top of my riding priority for the past three years. I've also worked

with the town and the county on the same issue. I've spoken to many parents. As a matter of fact, I was at the letter-writing workshop where many of these letters came from, and I actually gave them tips on how to write effective letters, and I wrote my own strongly-worded letter to the minister, which I would be happy to table on Monday. I would've tabled these letters from parents, but unfortunately they were received in my office this week and I haven't been back to my constituency yet.

That's a bit of an explanation of why I lost my temper, but I do understand that it is unacceptable. So I would like to retract the word and apologize to the House and to members in the gallery for my language.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. I appreciate that very much. I think the House does as well. That's another example of how those comments made sometimes cause reactions across the hall, across the aisle. My sense was, in your case, sir, that the emotion took over, but let's be cautious about what you say because you may be getting that reaction back.

Hon. members, I think we're at Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders

Third Reading

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Bill 25

Canyon Creek Hydro Development Act

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is indeed my honour to rise today to move third reading of Bill 25, the Canyon Creek Hydro Development Act.

It's a further honour that we have the owner of Turning Point, Peter Bubik, and his family here today to witness this third reading. This act arises out of requirements in sections 9 and 10 of the Hydro and Electric Energy Act. The passage of this bill would allow the Alberta Utilities Commission to issue authorization to construct the Canyon Creek pumped hydro storage project near Hinton. It would also allow the AUC to authorize operation of the facility at the appropriate time. While this act meets our legislative requirements to grant the appropriate authority to the AUC, it does not remove any of the regulator duties of that body or the Alberta Environment and Parks approval requirements, and that's important. As we know, this project brings real economic benefits and opportunities, which I know are exciting for the local area and exciting for the Member for West Yellowhead, who is a cosponsor of this bill.

It's also important that the environmental processes are still in place. I understand that the opposition questioned the province's system of environmental approvals and timelines during discussion. I want to address that and be clear. Albertans deserve to be confident that our regulatory system works to protect and manage our water resources properly, but they also deserve to know that this system imposes no unnecessary delays that would undermine opportunities for economic development. Albertans can be confident that we are doing everything we can to marry both those objectives.

When we took government in 2015, the Water Act approvals process had been aggravated long before that and was further aggravated by the floods of 2013. When we came to office, we found a system that was fraught with delays and complexities, but we took action. Since 2016 we have reduced the backlog of applications by 20 per cent. This is despite the fact that the volume of applications in the last two years was higher than in previous

years. Not only are more works planned and under way in Alberta, which is a good sign for economic recovery, but we are processing those applications more efficiently.

Still, given the system that we inherited, some applications continue to take longer than we'd like, and that's why we're doing the long overdue work of improving our systems and streamlining our processes, like moving to online applications. It's also why we have developed an environmental approvals plan to reduce times for approvals under the Water Act, Public Lands Act, and EPEA. We are tackling this backlog and confident that we will eliminate a problem that we did inherit. The Canyon Creek project along with hundreds of others we received this year are benefiting from the improvements that we made in that process.

With that, I'd like to thank all my colleagues in the House for supporting this bill and allowing the private-sector proponents of this project to move forward in their development efforts. Again, it's not often we actually see the face of a project, and I want to thank the Bubiks for coming here today. Lastly, I'd also like to thank my cosponsors. I'm very glad to join with my cosponsors and our House here to promote this strong and good project.

With that, Madam Speaker, I conclude my remarks. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Mr. Dreesen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would just like to comment again on this third reading of Bill 25 – and I rise to speak on it – the Canyon Creek Hydro Development Act. The fact that we've had to have this debate in this Assembly just shows the serious indication of red tape in this existing legislation. The Turning Point Generation received approval from the Alberta Utilities Commission back in August for a pumped-hydro energy storage project on Crown land 13 kilometres northeast of Hinton in a former Obed mountain coal mine site. The project is 75 megawatts of green energy capacity, over 37 hours of full capacity generation, acting as essentially a battery with 80 per cent efficiency.

Now, Madam Speaker, it's November 29. The NDP held up this bill. We could have had this passed a lot sooner. It's already been delayed by red tape for three months, so let's not delay this project any further. I hope Alberta Environment and Parks will not be holding up water and land-use permits for this project. However, that minister has protested and opposed Alberta energy development in the past. But I hope that won't be the case going forward. Let's pass this bill and watch over \$200 million in private investment, which, again, I think is a foreign concept to this government. Three hundred construction jobs near Hinton will have a great impact to that local economy.

I do appreciate the opportunity, Madam Speaker, of speaking to this important bill. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

Mr. Piquette: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I also would like to rise and speak in support of Bill 25, the Canyon Creek Hydro Development Act. I will try to be brief. The other speakers have already spoken on a bit more of the details of the project. What I'd like to do is highlight what is admirable about it and, you know, also how it demonstrates a clear contrast between ourselves and our predecessors. It's almost a metaphor for, you know, the direction that we're taking in this province compared to the direction it had been previously.

Before I talk about that, I would like to very strongly commend the MLA for West Yellowhead for his advocacy for this project. He's done his legwork, and it was because of that that I felt quite comfortable being able to cosponsor this. I know he'd spoken to the

stakeholders, you know, on the initial thing and that the community was definitely behind it. In fact, this is very welcome.

3:20

Now, on what I was looking into, the wording of the bill. You know, it's a beautiful concept. It's my understanding that Ontario has had a similar type of hydraulic battery storage system that's been in operation since the 1950s. I know the United Kingdom has a very large, significant facility that's been set up, tasked specifically to be able to store the excess for wind power and to be able to balance out power draw, which does go to show that all the naysaying that renewable energy, especially wind power and solar power, was unrealistic and unworkable for the province – some of this was actually put about by our opposition – and that there are simple technological fixes that are environmentally friendly, sustainable, and quite affordable to be able to balance demand with power capacity.

Now, as I go back to it, when I was looking at the location for this new project, as the hon. member just pointed out previous to my speaking, it's at the old site of the Obed coal mine. I remember this site quite well, Madam Speaker, because I live in the community of Boyle, which, like many of the communities in my riding as well as many communities, period, draws our water from the Athabasca River. All of us were horrified on October 31, 2013, to discover that a dam holding up a tailings pond burst on the Obed site, dumping almost 1 billion litres of toxic slurry into the Athabasca River, causing the water to be undrinkable for about the first 40 kilometres. The long-term effects of this spill remain to be determined. My family drinks this water, as do thousands of other Alberta families, and it was something that was obviously upsetting to us.

What was also very upsetting was to discover in 2015, due to the auspice of the Auditor General, that, in fact, this dam had never even been registered by Alberta environment. It had never been inspected. You know, they had no record of this, so there was no due diligence, there was no oversight. When it burst, there was no warning, and whatever steps might have been taken couldn't have been taken because nobody was watching. After this fact, of course, the coal company was fined 4 and a half million dollars.

The Auditor General's report was damning on this in 2015. Basically, it pointed out that there were over 1,500 dams within the province of Alberta and that the government did not know where these dams were, they did not know the status of these dams, and they didn't even know how many had been registered. Of course, of the ones that they did know about, many of them hadn't been inspected until the 1980s or 1990s. Our Premier, a private member at the time, characterized this as gross negligence, and I think that was a very apt description of it.

Now, why do I think that this project in that sense stands as a metaphor for, you know, the type of situation we find ourselves in as a province? Well, the previous member talked about red tape. You know, this is a theme that the opposition likes to harp on: "Get rid of red tape. Get rid of red tape." They're promising to roll back the long overdue changes to regulations, to consumer protections, to environmental protections that we've brought into force, all on this weird ideological quest to give the impression that any type of government oversight, any type of due diligence, any type of looking out for the public interest is something to be avoided. I think that this bill gives you kind of an objective lesson in what can happen when you don't, you know, do due diligence and when you're lackadaisical with your responsibilities as a government, which unfortunately characterized our predecessors far too often. Even more unfortunately, the opposition promises to bring this back to the province if they become the government in 2019. You know,

I don't think that's a good direction for the province to be going in, obviously.

What type of direction should we be going in? Well, we should be going in an environmentally friendly, sustainable way. We should be acting progressively rather than regressively, and we should be supporting projects like this that make sense to the community, that make sense environmentally, and make sense to, in fact, humanity by responsibly doing what we can to reduce our carbon usage while being able to maintain our economy and, you know, all the good things that that economy brings to us.

I'm a big fan of this project, and I urge all members to support it. It was an honour to be able to speak on this.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to everybody who's speaking about this. I just wanted to say to one of our newest members, from Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, that I want to thank you very much for your passion on this and having just so much knowledge that you're showing in this very small amount of time that you've had in this Legislature. Thank you so much for that work. It's pretty impressive.

I wanted to actually mention to the hon. member across the way: you were talking about a metaphor, and what you just described – thank you very much for bringing that up. It's a very, very important piece of information. You're right. There are absolutely things that are needed to be looked at with the environment, that need to be fixed and changed, absolutely no doubt. However, what I find interesting is that you speak about that with such passion and legitimately so – you lived there; it was your drinking water, absolutely – yet you're okay with your government postponing this bill and with pushing it forward with the red tape that's actually disallowing this kind of infrastructure to go forward. This is like a piece of low-hanging fruit. This is a fantastic idea, so why are we waiting? Why isn't this going forward? To your point, I'm not quite sure I understand the red tape that's holding this up at all. Again, I thank the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake for bringing that forward.

Part of the issue that we have with so many of the things that are going on is the inability to actually get things done like this. I mean, there's a regulatory burden, and the AUC had already approved this project. So if the AUC had already approved this project, to bring it into legislation to debate it at this level, I'm not quite sure I understand why because of how the hydro and electricity act is written. If somebody could please explain to me that piece of it, I would be very, very grateful. If the AUC approved the project and the proponent is waiting for their permits under the Public Lands Act and the Water Act from Environment and Parks so they can proceed, so proceed. Correct? Am I understanding this correctly?

The thing is that if that has already been okayed, why aren't the permits issued? Maybe that should be the question that we're asking in here. The question should be about the regulatory burden, about the permits not being issued so that this project can go forward, right? I'll give you a chance to answer in just a second.

The other thing, too, that I wanted to mention, from the member across the way, is that you talk about the metaphor. A metaphor is saying one thing is like another, correct? I'm assuming that you are trying to put us into a metaphor of whatever it was that you were talking about, about the past and past decisions.

Well, one thing I would like to say is that I'm extremely proud of our industry, hundreds of thousands of jobs. They were able to bring

oil out of sand. This is an industry that is the greenest in the world, and if you have not figured out yet that it is our responsibility to tout the energy industry in this province, you are sorely mistaken. Our energy industry is the best, cleanest, greenest, most incredible industry in the world, and it happened long before any of us were in this Legislature. If the members on the government side are still going to continue to advocate against the very people of this province that grew this province, to the privilege that all of us have to be here right now, it brings into question whether or not you actually understand how this province was built.

I would like to thank the government for this piece of legislation. However, the red tape that it took us to get here is a little bit disturbing considering that this project was already passed by the AUC and only required the approvals and permits to be issued by Environment and Parks.

Thank you.

3:30

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'll just be very brief. I would like to offer some comment, more importantly saying hello, to Molly and Brady, my children, who are watching online right now.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other speakers to the bill?

Seeing none, the hon. minister to close debate.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's been an honour to stand and speak to this bill. I have to assure all members that it is a requirement that we have to put through this law. It was faster to do it this way than to change the law, so we have worked expeditiously. I also want to say that we co-ordinated third reading today so that we could accommodate the Bubik family to be here for it today. I urge everyone in this House to please pass this bill so that they can get on with their project.

[Motion carried; Bill 25 read a third time]

Bill 24

An Act to Recognize AMA Representation Rights

The Deputy Speaker: I'm looking for someone to move third reading. Banff Cochrane.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise this afternoon to move second reading on behalf of the hon. Minister of Health for Bill 24 . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, you're moving third reading?

Mr. Westhead: Yes.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Westhead: Oh. I apologize. I said second.

I'm moving on behalf of the Minister of Health third reading of Bill 24, An Act to Recognize AMA Representation Rights.

This is a bill that, we all know, formalizes a long-standing relationship that has existed informally between the AMA and the Alberta government. This is something that doctors have overwhelmingly spoken to us about and said that they'd like to have this move forward, so I'd encourage all members to vote in favour.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak in opposition to third reading of Bill 24, An Act to Recognize AMA Representation Rights. Bill 24 is slim, only four pages long, even though it is amending the Alberta Health Care Insurance Act, which is important to individual doctors and patients alike. The concern with slim bills like this one is that they leave almost every detail to the minister to determine through regulations. In effect, this bill gives the minister a blank cheque. She gets to fill out all the details.

Madam Speaker, during Bill 24's passage through this House we in the opposition were hoping to learn more about it than what we found out in the four pages, but our well-intended questions went unanswered. Let me point out that we were asking these questions on behalf of physicians blindsided by the bill and patients, who today still have no idea of its existence. UCP members in this House did due diligence by checking with the physicians in our communities about their awareness of Bill 24. We were alarmed that they did not know about it, yet the government had presented a different scenario. That sent up red flags for us.

It's important for us to respect that this bill makes the AMA the representative of all doctors, whether they want it to be or not. The more we asked doctors about whether they voted in favour of this bill, the more we heard that they did not vote on it. They didn't even know about it. I would think that physicians would have been interested to know that this bill is a blank slate, and they would also have preferred the opportunity to weigh in on it before cabinet makes arbitrary decisions behind closed doors that fill in the empty spaces in it.

Actually, when we look at the many vague subsections in Bill 24, the regulations will probably end up being much longer than the slim bill itself, and what else might the government decide to include in regulations while it's making them? Hardly anyone scrutinizes orders in council. The fact is that they generally go under the radar. Is the minister counting on this? The UCP is also concerned about patients' awareness of the changes. Patients seem to be a forgotten factor in this bill. We brought forward an amendment to bolster transparency for patients, but the government rejected it.

To sum up, Madam Speaker, the lack of consultation with physicians and their awareness of this bill, the bill's lack of content, and the government's dismissal of patients' right to know what's going on are all reasons I am voting in opposition to Bill 24.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker and to both members who just spoke on this matter and particularly to my caucus deputy whip for standing in in my place. I specifically want to respond to the reference to there being outstanding questions. We did respond to questions in second reading and in committee, and they certainly are in *Hansard*. I don't want to spend more time reiterating those same responses.

I will give the general theme, which is that this is something that the previous Conservative government committed to in 2011 through discussions that looked a lot like negotiations. They weren't necessarily negotiations, but there was back and forth, and there was an agreement reached that they would embark upon this process. They didn't. In 2016 we reached an amending agreement with the AMA. This came up again, but it wasn't part of the amending agreement. In the final, new agreement, Madam Speaker, in return for a lot of the concessions that were made, this is one of

the asks that was given, that there be formal recognition so that in the future the kind of constructive relationship . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. minister, my apologies. I understand we've got a little procedural thing that got messed up.

Ms Hoffman: Because he moved on my behalf?

The Deputy Speaker: Exactly. You can't speak right now. You'll have to just close debate.

Mr. McIver: She's not closing it, right?

The Deputy Speaker: No, no.

So, you know, we'll start over again. Is there any other member who wishes to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm grateful for the opportunity to speak on Bill 24, the government's bill intended to recognize AMA representation rights. That is what they call it, An Act to Recognize AMA Representation Rights.

Now, Madam Speaker, not the minister but the previous speaker from the government side actually had the, I'm trying to think of a polite word, courage – that's a polite word – to say that there was overwhelming support. Now, with all due respect, I don't think the hon. member knows whether there was or not. The government continually points at some 89 per cent vote, but the 89 per cent vote, we've come to learn from doctors that have talked to us, was not on the topic of AMA representation. Further, when that vote happened, only 30 per cent of the members were in attendance. So they got 90 per cent, apparently on a different topic, of 30 per cent. So they had 27 per cent, if you do the math, or just under 27 per cent of a discussion on a different subject matter, and the government turns around and calls it overwhelming support. Sorry, but that's ridiculous.

We've heard from doctors across Alberta that were somewhat dumbfounded to hear about the legislation because they hadn't even been let know about it, let alone been aware that they had a voice or a vote on it. I guess it would seem that potentially zero per cent of doctors had a vote on it if you go by the 30 per cent vote that the government keeps waving around and calling overwhelming support.

Madam Speaker, you can hardly blame Albertans and you can hardly blame the opposition for not taking the government's word for it on this or on any piece of legislation where they constantly stand up and talk about how well they've consulted and then get proven time and time and time and time again to have not done so, to have exaggerated the comments. I would say to people on this topic and other ones that sitting in the same room answering e-mails while someone is talking and not listening to them and then saying, "The time is up; you've got to go" doesn't really qualify as consultation, and too many ministers of this government, I believe, think that that does pass for consultation and have represented that as passing for consultation for some time over the last three and a half years.

3:40

Here are a couple of examples. An ophthalmologist from Calgary:

I'm writing to express concerns on Bill 24 . . . [before the] final vote in the Alberta legislature.

So I guess the letter got here on time.

The main objective is to . . . recognize . . . the [AMA] as the sole representative.

It says that medicare and the Canada Health Act have always considered physicians as independent contractors.

The doctor considers that to be a fundamental principle.

One needs to ask why the need for change and why the rush for change.

In fact, even if what the minister said just now is true – and I'm not challenging her on the part of her remarks when she said that some form of this has been talked about for some time – perhaps the reason the previous government didn't do it was because there wasn't the overwhelming support that the government talks about having at this point. That would be, actually, a good reason for not doing it.

This letter talks about how this law

has not received the consent from the AMA physician membership.

Even the doctor here says:

It has been stated [that] 89% of physicians approve . . .

While that number can be seen as . . . impressive, it is not unanimous. Also, only 30% of all AMA members voted on second agreement to amend the AMA agreement in which the above clause is contained. Thus, effectively only a quarter of all AMA physician members

were demonstrated to be in favour of this.

It also says in this letter:

It must also be recognized that clause 1(h)b) speaks of the need for "further input from others will be required."

Well, apparently, the government is going ahead without further input from others even though that is in the communication from the AMA to the doctor.

You know what? The government hasn't really met the test of showing that they've done their work. They haven't met the test of showing that they have consulted in a way that they can demonstrate that the majority of doctors want this.

Here's another communication, from the Alberta Society of Dermatologists. It says:

We've been apprised that the sole representative of doctors will be the AMA, as mandated by Bill 24. We feel the mandate was achieved without the full knowledge or agreement of physicians of Alberta, and we feel that sections of the AMA should be consulted and represented in any negotiation with the government. If the AMA truly represents its members, no legislation is necessary to force its membership to accept the AMA as its representative.

Isn't that a fair comment? If you are forced into a relationship where somebody is talking on your behalf and you don't agree to that relationship, I'm not sure that that is a healthy relationship. Yet these are the grounds upon which this government is passing legislation forcing that relationship on, potentially, a majority of doctors in Alberta, that do not want this exact relationship. Yet they are going to get it delivered onto them, whether they like it or whether they do not, by this NDP government, this government that so very consistently doesn't consult the way they say they do.

You know what? This is textbook from this NDP government. They roll in here with a piece of legislation, talking about the consultation that they did, and then the next thing you know, whoops, all this evidence that they didn't do it actually comes forward, and they just can't bring themselves to admit that what they said wasn't so, as with several pieces of legislation. I certainly remember a piece of legislation that the Minister of Municipal Affairs brought through this House not long ago. He ranted up and down that everything was perfect and walked in the next day with major amendments to the bill. Bill 6 comes to mind, where they talked about what great consultation they did. The next thing we knew, we had thousands of people on the doorstep. This is a pattern

of behaviour by a government out of touch with Albertans, and this is one more example today.

You know what, Madam Speaker? Here's the silly thing. It could be that the majority of doctors do want this. The fact is that the government hasn't done the work to actually know whether they do or whether they don't. You'd think it would be incumbent upon the government of a province of Canada, if they make a statement about that level of support, to actually be able to demonstrate it in a way that is credible. They have not met that test.

Madam Speaker, I can't support this. No one should because it's making a permanent change, forcing a relationship that quite potentially the majority of doctors in Alberta do not want. It's irresponsible under those circumstances to vote for it, and I will not. I recommend to other members of the House that they shouldn't be voting for it either.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Just to follow up, I do want to rearticulate and ask a question. Hon. member, I hear that the main reason why members of the opposition don't feel like this is valid consultation is because even though physicians were notified through the monthly newsletters of the AMA and had an opportunity to vote on ratification of the contract, the majority didn't choose to vote on ratification. It was less than 50 per cent who voted on ratification. While I understand that that can be frustrating, even in the most recent by-elections the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake had over 80 per cent support of the constituents who voted. They voted for him, but only 31 per cent showed up to vote. The Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin had 32.6 per cent voter turnout in her riding. While clearly the majority of constituents didn't vote for those two members, the majority of people who did vote did clearly vote for those two members, and as a result they have the right to take their seat in this Assembly.

It's the same when we have democratic processes around organizations that represent people. Whether they see themselves as a contractor or a member of an organization or an employee, they have an opportunity through a democratic process to have their voice heard, and certainly that was the case in the AMA ratification of the agreement. Again, this has been communicated to members since 2011 in various iterations based on discussions that were had between the government and the AMA. This is about reaffirming that relationship and actually putting it in legislation, something that I think is fair.

We've had an excellent relationship with physicians in the province of Alberta even during the difficult economic downturn, when we asked them to put money back on the table so we could put it towards expanding front-line services instead of individual compensation. They have worked with us along the way, and I think that we owe it to them to continue to have fair and respectful discussions when it comes to compensation as we move forward. That's what they've asked for in this agreement. They have taken zeros, they've put money back on the table, but they want us to say that we will enshrine the relationship, which has a duty to consult. Again, a vast, vast majority of those who did choose to vote, a greater percentage than either of the by-election percentages and a greater percentage turnout.

Either way we still respect the democratic process. I guess my question to the hon. member is: if you disagree that this was democratic, how do you feel about your colleagues sitting in this Assembly in the seats that they've earned through their by-elections?

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. McIver: Madam Speaker, let me point out to the hon. member – and I'm grateful that she admitted that she doesn't know if the majority of doctors support this or not. I'm grateful that we finally heard that out loud from the minister.

But here's what's different. Both of our members who won in the by-election won by bigger numbers than this NDP government did, but there's another key thing here, too. When an election happens, there is no system in place that goes on. The mandate of the previous MLAs expires, and you actually need to have a government there. The mandate of the AMA has not expired, so you're actually not required to put something in place that you can't demonstrate the majority of doctors want. That's a fundamental difference, minister. A fundamental difference.

At the end of this term someone will become government. It might be your side, it might be our side, it might be somebody that we haven't heard of yet, but the point is that all of our mandates to govern this province expire at the time that that election comes, and you actually must put somebody in place. You have to go with the system. That's what's different. The AMA isn't going anywhere. That's why you don't force a new mandate upon all the doctors. They're not going anywhere either. At least we hope they're not because we need them. Albertans depend upon them.

I think the minister asked a fundamentally sound question. I'd like to think I'm giving her a fundamentally sound response because it's completely different. You leave an important institution with no representation, which is what would happen at a general election or even a by-election with the province, whereas with the AMA and the doctors you are not leaving a vacuum when you make a decision that the majority of the doctors may not want. There is a system in place. There are doctors that can negotiate on their own. There is the AMA that, if doctors want, can negotiate for them.

3:50

You know what? Again, I'm grateful that the minister has finally acknowledged what the opposition has been saying since the beginning of this debate, that the government truly cannot demonstrate that the majority of doctors in Alberta support what the government is doing today. That is exactly our argument. It's not our only argument, but it's certainly the biggest and most obvious one. It's that the government's main claim cannot be substantiated. Again, we got letters from doctors that actually are making exactly the same complaint as the Official Opposition.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Mr. Dreeshen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Just to comment on the Deputy Premier's comment about my by-election in Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, yes, it is true that I got over 80 per cent of the vote and the NDP did get less than 10 per cent of the vote in that by-election. I think her point was that not over 50 per cent of everyone in the riding actually voted and that the turnout was low. Again, I would like to remind her that it was the Premier that called that by-election during the middle of summer. It was the heart of July and it...

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, are you speaking to the bill?

Mr. Dreeshen: Sure. I was just commenting on the point of voter turnout, Madam Speaker.

With that, there was a clear ballot-box decision, there was a clear question put to the voters when they came out and had their voter turnout in my by-election. The fact that doctors in this situation were not given a clear question, a clear decision of what they were

actually voting on I think is the biggest issue and, again, something that my colleagues on this side of the House are addressing.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any further speakers to the bill?

Seeing none, the hon. minister to close debate.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I just want to reiterate that I'm very proud of the positive relationship that has enabled us to stabilize health care spending, improve patient care, and focus every dollar that we invest on expanding those front-line services. If passed, Bill 24 will provide the Alberta Medical Association with statutory representation for physicians in Alberta. This new legislation, of course, would formalize existing processes that have been in place between government and the AMA, and it clearly establishes and articulates the roles and responsibilities of the AMA.

The question that was asked to physicians is: do you support ratification of the agreement? This was one of the pieces that we had to hold up in ratifying this agreement. That being said, I'm very proud of the fact that our government made a promise, that we're living up to that promise, and that we continue to do that, Madam Speaker, on this side of the House.

We know that physicians are a critical part of Alberta's health care system, and I want to thank the AMA and all physicians for the work that they've done with our government to meet Alberta's health care needs. I ask that we have the support of all members regarding third reading of Bill 24 so that we can not only fulfill our

promise to the physicians through the AMA but also make sure that we move forward establishing that relationship that is built on trust and collaboration and having fair dialogue as we continue to move forward, Madam Speaker.

Thank you very much.

[Motion carried; Bill 24 read a third time]

The Deputy Speaker: I've had a request to revert briefly to Notices of Motions. Is anyone opposed to the request?

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Notices of Motions

(reversion)

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It appears that when I was providing notice of written questions, I may have omitted to mention that the government intends on accepting Written Question 9. Pursuant to Standing Order 34(3) I'm rising to advise the House that in addition to the items given notice earlier today, Written Question 9 will be accepted.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Seeing the progress we've made today and the hour, I would move that we adjourn the House and reconvene at 1:30 p.m. next Monday.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 3:55 p.m.]

Bill Status Report for the 29th Legislature - 4th Session (2018)

Activity to Thursday, November 29, 2018

The Bill sponsor's name is in brackets following the Bill title. If it is a money Bill, (\$) will appear between the title and the sponsor's name. Numbers following each Reading refer to Hansard pages where the text of debates is found; dates for each Reading are in brackets following the page numbers. Bills numbered 1 to 200 are Government Bills. Bills numbered 201 or higher are Private Members' Public Bills. Bills numbered with a "Pr" prefix are Private Bills.

* An asterisk beside a Bill number indicates an amendment was passed to that Bill; the Committee line shows the precise date of the amendment.

The date a Bill comes into force is indicated in square brackets after the date of Royal Assent. If a Bill comes into force "on proclamation," "with exceptions," or "on various dates," please contact Legislative Counsel, Alberta Justice, for details at 780.427.2217. The chapter number assigned to the Bill is entered immediately following the date the Bill comes into force. SA indicates Statutes of Alberta; this is followed by the year in which it is included in the statutes, and its chapter number. Please note, Private Bills are not assigned chapter number until the conclusion of the Fall Sittings.

Bill 1 — Energy Diversification Act (McCuaig-Boyd)

First Reading — 6 (*Mar. 8, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 50-51 (*Mar. 13, 2018 morn.*), 184-87 (*Mar. 15, 2018 aft.*), 233-43 (*Mar. 20, 2018 aft.*), 301-08 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft.*), 919-27 (*May 9, 2018 morn.*), 981-84 (*May 9, 2018 eve.*), 1054-59 (*May 14, 2018 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1286-87 (*May 29, 2018 aft.*), 1280-86 (*May 29, 2018 aft.*), 1299 (*May 29, 2018 eve.*), 1311-18 (*May 29, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1488-92 (*Jun. 5, 2018 morn.*), 1523-24 (*Jun. 5, 2018 aft.*), 1525-41 (*Jun. 6, 2018 morn., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 11, 2018; SA 2018 cE-9.6]

Bill 2 — Growth and Diversification Act (\$) (Bilous)

First Reading — 118 (*Mar. 14, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 243-46 (*Mar. 20, 2018 morn.*), 294-96 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft.*), 314-25 (*Mar. 22, 2018 morn.*), 411-12 (*Apr. 4, 2018 aft.*), 702-05 (*May 1, 2018 eve.*), 928-33 (*May 9, 2018 morn.*), 1061-68 (*May 15, 2018 morn.*), 1101-04 (*May 15, 2018 eve.*), 1163-67 (*May 16, 2018 eve.*), 1202-06 (*May 17, 2018 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1253-58 (*May 29, 2018 morn.*), 1288-97 (*May 29, 2018 aft.*), 1299 (*May 29, 2018 eve.*), 1379-82 (*May 30, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1492-94 (*Jun. 5, 2018 morn.*), 1510-23 (*Jun. 5, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation, with exceptions; SA 2018 c8]

Bill 3 — Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2018 (\$) (Ceci)

First Reading — 184 (*Mar. 15, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 221-26 (*Mar. 19, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 261-68 (*Mar. 20, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 296-98 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 28, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force Mar. 28, 2018; SA 2018 c1]

Bill 4 — Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2018 (\$) (Ceci)

First Reading — 165 (*Mar. 15, 2018 morn., passed*)

Second Reading — 226-32 (*Mar. 19, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 268-75 (*Mar. 20, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 298-301 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 28, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force Mar. 28, 2018; SA 2018 c2]

Bill 5 — An Act to Strengthen Financial Security for Persons with Disabilities (Sabir)

First Reading — 200-201 (*Mar. 19, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 360-62 (*Apr. 3, 2018 morn.*), 482-87 (*Apr. 10, 2018 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 847-54 (*May 7, 2018 eve.*), 1084-88 (*May 15, 2018 aft.*), 1361-64 (*May 30, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1418-21 (*May 31, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 11, 2018; SA 2018 c12]

Bill 6 — Gaming and Liquor Statutes Amendment Act, 2018 (Ganley)

First Reading — 448 (*Apr. 9, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 533-34 (*Apr. 12, 2018 aft.*), 669-79 (*May 1, 2018 aft.*), 1010-13 (*May 10, 2018 aft.*), 1101 (*May 15, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1158-63 (*May 16, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1360-61 (*May 30, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2018 c7]

Bill 7 — Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act (Carlier)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 491-97 (*Apr. 10, 2018 aft.*), 534-36 (*Apr. 12, 2018 aft.*), 679-83 (*May 1, 2018 aft.*), 908-09 (*May 8, 2018 eve.*), 913-14 (*May 8, 2018 eve.*), 1097-98 (*May 15, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1299-1311 (*May 29, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1365-74 (*May 30, 2018 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 11, 2018, for sections 1-6 and 20-21 and April 1, 2019, for sections 7-19; SA 2018 cS-23.3]

Bill 8 — Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2018 (S. Anderson)

First Reading — 374 (*Apr. 3, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1639-45 (*Oct. 30, 2018 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1645-53 (*Oct. 30, 2018 morn.*), 1667 (*Oct. 30, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1763-65 (*Nov. 1, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Nov. 19, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force November 19, 2018; SA 2018 c14]

Bill 9* — Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act (Hoffman)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 497-502 (*Apr. 10, 2018 aft.*), 785-93 (*May 3, 2018 morn.*), 775-76 (*May 3, 2018 morn.*), 807-08 (*May 3, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 909-13 (*May 8, 2018 eve.*), 957-61 (*May 9, 2018 aft.*), 992-94 (*May 10, 2018 morn.*), 1088-96 (*May 15, 2018 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1352-60 (*May 30, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 11, 2018; SA 2018 cP-26.83]

Bill 10* — An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements (S. Anderson)

First Reading — 528 (*Apr. 12, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 611-12 (*Apr. 19, 2018 aft.*), 643-50 (*May 1, 2018 morn.*), 761-72 (*May 2, 2018 eve.*), 973-81 (*May 9, 2018 eve.*), 1049-54 (*May 14, 2018 eve.*), 1180-87 (*May 17, 2018 morn.*), 1242-47 (*May 28, 2018 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1287-88 (*May 29, 2018 aft.*), 1299 (*May 29, 2018 eve.*), 1374-79 (*May 30, 2018 eve., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1555-71 (*Jun. 6, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2018 c6]

Bill 11 — Lobbyists Amendment Act, 2018 (Gray)

First Reading — 505 (*Apr. 11, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 612-13 (*Apr. 19, 2018 aft.*), 650-56 (*May 1, 2018 morn.*), 772-74 (*May 2, 2018 eve.*), 967-73 (*May 9, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1157 (*May 16, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1382-86 (*May 30, 2018 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 11, 2018, with exceptions; SA 2018 c9]

Bill 12* — Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act (McCuaig-Boyd)

First Reading — 547 (*Apr. 16, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 736-46 (*May 2, 2018 aft.*), 854-55 (*May 7, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 961-65 (*May 9, 2018 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 994-96 (*May 10, 2018 morn.*), 1135-54 (*May 16, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 18, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2018 c P-21.5]

Bill 13* — An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future (\$) (McCuaig-Boyd)

First Reading — 606 (*Apr. 19, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 746-53 (*May 2, 2018 aft.*), 808-16 (*May 3, 2018 aft.*), 855-64 (*May 7, 2018 eve.*), 947-57 (*May 9, 2018 aft.*), 1169-80 (*May 17, 2018 morn.*), 1247-50 (*May 28, 2018 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1322-34 (*May 30, 2018 morn.*), 1397-1404 (*May 31, 2018 morn.*), 1449-79 (*Jun. 4, 2018 eve., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1573-92 (*Jun. 7, 2018 morn., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation, with exceptions; SA 2018 c10]

Bill 14 — An Act to Empower Utility Consumers (McLean)

First Reading — 590 (*Apr. 18, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 718-24 (*May 2, 2018 morn.*), 915-19 (*May 9, 2018 morn.*), 1098-1101 (*May 15, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1319-22 (*May 30, 2018 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1421 (*May 31, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2018 c5]

Bill 15 — Appropriation Act, 2018 (\$) (Ceci)

First Reading — 610 (*Apr. 19, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Second Reading — 683-89 (*May 1, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 753-56 (*May 2, 2018 aft.*), 757-60 (*May 2, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 776-85 (*May 3, 2018 morn., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*May 14, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 14, 2018; SA 2018 c3]

Bill 16 — Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Statutes Amendment Act, 2018 (Gray)

First Reading — 879 (*May 8, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1010-13 (*May 10, 2018 aft.*), 1105-22 (*May 16, 2018 morn.*), 1155-57 (*May 16, 2018 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1258-64 (*May 29, 2018 morn.*), 1299 (*May 29, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1421-22 (*May 31, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 11, 2018, with exceptions; SA 2018 c4]

Bill 17 — Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2018 (Ceci)

First Reading — 806 (*May 3, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 864-65 (*May 7, 2018 eve.*), 1014-15 (*May 10, 2018 aft.*), 1058-59 (*May 14, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1157 (*May 16, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1364 (*May 30, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 11, 2018, with exceptions; SA 2018 c13]

Bill 18 — Statutes Amendment Act, 2018 (Mason)

First Reading — 1201 (*May 17, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1251-52 (*May 28, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1387-97 (*May 31, 2018 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1481-88 (*Jun. 5, 2018 morn.*), 1507-10 (*Jun. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 11, 2018; SA 2018 c11]

Bill 19* — An Act to Improve the Affordability and Accessibility of Post-secondary Education (Schmidt)

First Reading — 1621 (*Oct. 29, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1667-81 (*Oct. 30, 2018 aft.*), 1690-1701 (*Oct. 31, 2018 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1718-28 (*Oct. 31, 2018 aft.*), 1828-35 (*Nov. 6, 2018 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1845-65 (*Nov. 7, 2018 morn.*), 2000-05 (*Nov. 20, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 20 — Securities Amendment Act, 2018 (Ceci)

First Reading — 1621 (*Oct. 29, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1681-84 (*Oct. 30, 2018 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1716-18 (*Oct. 31, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1765-66 (*Nov. 1, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Nov. 19, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force November 19, 2018; SA 2018 c16]

Bill 21* — An Act to Protect Patients (Hoffman)

First Reading — 1666 (*Oct. 30, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1685-90 (*Oct. 31, 2018 morn., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1729-32 (*Oct. 31, 2018 aft.*), 1835-43 (*Nov. 6, 2018 aft., passed with amendments*), 1900-10 (*Nov. 8, 2018 morn., recommitted, adjourned*), 1924-28 (*Nov. 8, 2018 aft., passed with amendments*), 1928-29 (*Nov. 8, 2018 aft., recommitted, passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1899-1900 (*Nov. 8, 2018 morn., recommitted to Committee*), 1928 (*Nov. 8, 2018 aft., recommitted to Committee*), 1929-32 (*Nov. 8, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Nov. 19, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force November 19, 2018, with exceptions; SA 2018 c15]

Bill 22* — An Act for Strong Families Building Stronger Communities (Larivee)

First Reading — 1714 (*Oct. 31, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1735-49 (*Nov. 1, 2018 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 2005-16 (*Nov. 20, 2018 aft.*), 2158-69 (*Nov. 27, 2018 aft.*), 2171-76 (*Nov. 28, 2018 morn., adjourned, amendments agreed to*)

Bill 23* — An Act to Renew Local Democracy in Alberta (S. Anderson)

First Reading — 1778 (*Nov. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1809-12 (*Nov. 6, 2018 morn.*), 1974-82 (*Nov. 20, 2018 morn.*), 2018-28 (*Nov. 21, 2018 morn., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 2123-26 (*Nov. 26, 2018 eve.*), 2176-81 (*Nov. 28, 2018 morn., adjourned, amendments agreed to*)

Bill 24 — An Act to Recognize AMA Representation Rights (Hoffman)

First Reading — 1762-63 (*Nov. 1, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1799-1809 (*Nov. 6, 2018 morn.*), 1881-97 (*Nov. 7, 2018 aft.*), 1969-74 (*Nov. 20, 2018 morn.*), 2028-31 (*Nov. 21, 2018 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 2058-63 (*Nov. 21, 2018 aft.*), 2156-58 (*Nov. 27, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 2244-47 (*Nov. 29, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 25 — Canyon Creek Hydro Development Act (McCuaig-Boyd)

First Reading — 1879 (*Nov. 7, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2017-18 (*Nov. 21, 2018 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 2057-58 (*Nov. 21, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 2242-44 (*Nov. 29, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 26* — An Act to Combat Poverty and Fight for Albertans with Disabilities (Sabir)

First Reading — 1923 (*Nov. 8, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2078-86 (*Nov. 22, 2018 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 2200-09 (*Nov. 28, 2018 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 2220-21 (*Nov. 29, 2018 morn., passed*)

Bill 27 — Joint Governance of Public Sector Pension Plans Act (Ceci)

First Reading — 1995 (*Nov. 20, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2127-34 (*Nov. 27, 2018 morn., passed*)

Bill 28 — Family Statutes Amendment Act, 2018 (Ganley)

First Reading — 2044 (*Nov. 21, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2134-40 (*Nov. 27, 2018 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 2209-13 (*Nov. 28, 2018 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 29 — Public Service Employee Relations Amendment Act, 2018 (Gray)

First Reading — 2044-45 (*Nov. 21, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2153-56 (*Nov. 27, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 2181-84 (*Nov. 28, 2018 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 2215-20 (*Nov. 29, 2018 morn., passed on division*)

Bill 30 — Mental Health Services Protection Act (Hoffman)

First Reading — 2152 (*Nov. 27, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2221-25 (*Nov. 29, 2018 morn., adjourned*)

Bill 31 — Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2018 (Mason)

First Reading — 2240 (*Nov. 29, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 32 — City Charters Fiscal Framework Act (S. Anderson)

First Reading — 2240 (*Nov. 29, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 201 — Employment Standards (Firefighter Leave) Amendment Act, 2018 (W. Anderson)

First Reading — 118 (*Mar. 14, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 201-14 (*Mar. 19, 2018 aft., referred to Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future*), 1620 (*Oct. 29, 2018 aft.*),

1780-92 (*Nov. 5, 2018 aft., motion to concur in report, adjourned*)

Bill 202 — Alberta Taxpayer Protection (Carbon Tax Referendum) Amendment Act, 2018 (Kenney)

First Reading — 179 (*Mar. 15, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 549-63 (*Apr. 16, 2018 aft., defeated on division*)

Bill 203 — Long Term Care Information Act (Schreiner)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 632-40 (*Apr. 30, 2018 aft.*), 829-33 (*May 7, 2018 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1221-30 (*May 28, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1434-41 (*Jun. 4, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 11, 2018; SA 2018 cL-22]

Bill 204 — Land Statutes (Abolition of Adverse Possession) Amendment Act, 2018 (Gotfried)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 833-41 (*May 7, 2018 aft., adjourned*), 1031-37 (*May 14, 2018 aft., reasoned amendment agreed to*)

Bill 205 — Supporting Accessible Mental Health Services Act (Jabbour)

First Reading — 1008 (*May 10, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1037 (*May 14, 2018 aft., deferred to Monday, October 29, 2018*)

Bill 206 — Societies (Preventing the Promotion of Hate) Amendment Act, 2018 (Coolahan)

First Reading — 1008-09 (*May 10, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1037 (*May 14, 2018 aft.*), 1441-47 (*Jun. 4, 2018 aft., adjourned*)

Bill 207 — Municipal Government (Legion Tax Exemption) Amendment Act, 2018 (Rosendahl)

First Reading — 1418 (*May 31, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 208 — Public Recreation Areas Consultation Act (Westhead)

First Reading — 1418 (*May 31, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 211 — Alberta Underground Infrastructure Notification System Consultation Act (Schneider)

First Reading — 2196 (*Nov. 28, 2018 aft., passed, referred to Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship*)

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, December 3, 2018

Day 57

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (NDP), Speaker
Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (NDP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (UCP)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (NDP)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-Ste. Anne (NDP)
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Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP)
Cortes-Vargas, Estefania, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (NDP),
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Dreeschen, Devin, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UCP)
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Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)
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Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)
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Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (UCP)
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (NDP),
Deputy Government Whip
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)

Party standings:

New Democratic: 53 United Conservative: 26 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Freedom Conservative: 1 Independent: 2 Progressive Conservative: 1

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, December 3, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let us reflect or pray, each in our own way. Today the Assembly hosted a ceremony to commemorate the United Nations International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Let each of us take a moment to think of how we may meaningfully engage with and lead by action for the positive inclusion in our society those living with disabilities, their families, and their advocates, including those disabilities that may not always be obvious to us.

Hon. members, ladies and gentlemen, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Mr. R.J. Chambers. I would invite all of you to sing along in the language of your choice.

Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!
True patriot love in all of us command.
Car ton bras sait porter l'épée,
Il sait porter la croix!
Ton histoire est une épopée
Des plus brillants exploits.
God keep our land glorious and free!
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

The Speaker: Thank you. Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly a group of grade 6 students from Hillview school. They are seated in the members' gallery, and today they are joined by their teachers, Herman Chang and Rebecca Price. I would like them to rise, please, and have the traditional warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions today if I may. To you and to the House I want to introduce Leah McRorie. I'll ask her to stand. She's a long-standing advocate for seniors and people with disabilities in the community and was here for the celebration today. She's also our candidate in Edmonton-West Henday. Let's give her a warm welcome.

I'm also privileged today to bring in at least half of my grandchildren. They're in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. I'm blessed that my two daughters are here with them, and I'll ask them to stand: Kirsten and her three – four. Four. Sorry. On the right is Kloe; Kiel, a hockey player from Calgary; another hockey player, Uziah, from the other family; and Konnor, who's an all-sports kind of guy; Uziah's mom, Tandela, and Eden are there; and on her right is Rafayel. They're all here to wish me well in my next phase of this journey. Oh, there's one more. Oh, yes. Don't ask me their birthdays, Mr. Speaker. And this is half of them. On the left is our premier danseur, Koen, also a graduate of Alberta Ballet School. Let's give them the warm welcome.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I'd just like to remind you that Christmas is coming. Knowing names is going to be very important.

The hon. Minister of Children's Services and Minister of Status of Women.

Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House the Metis Settlements General Council executive and the General Assembly and their fantastic staff who support them in doing their good work. This year marks the 80th anniversary of the very special relationship between Alberta and the Métis settlements. When the Métis Population Betterment Act was enacted, for the first and only time in Canadian history Métis people had a land base to call home. It is an honour to stand here and introduce all of these Métis leaders today, who are working so hard for the community every day, for the protection and development of Métis culture, identity, and language. I'm fortunate enough to know many of these Métis leaders here today personally, and I consider them my friends. They represent three of the settlements: East Prairie, Gift Lake, and Peavine. Métis people in Alberta are an integral part of our province's history and our future, so please extend the warm welcome of the House and join me in a round of recognition for our guests, the Metis Settlements General Council and the Métis leaders and their incredible team of staff that supports them right across Alberta.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today is the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. As such, it's my great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly some people from St. Albert, from the Lo-Se-Ca Foundation and Transitions. I would ask that my guests stand as I say their names. Here from Lo-Se-Ca are Tracy Hughson, Cheri Lefebvre, Dan Huising, and Sue Duffhues; from Transitions, Dan Atkinson and Megan Poltorak. I thank all of my guests for their service to the community, and later today I will speak more about supporting people with disabilities. I ask that my guests receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

With the indulgence of the House, there's a visitor that I believe the Leader of the Official Opposition would like to introduce.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce my friend Elaine Taylor, former Deputy Premier of the Yukon Territory. She represented Whitehorse West in Yukon's Legislative Assembly and was a very formidable opposite minister to me in labour markets and employment. First elected in 2002, she served until 2016, having won re-election in 2006 and 2011. She's accompanied by her son Will and her brother Cory Raketti, who is an Edmontonian working with EllisDon. I would ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three sets of introductions. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities. This group of exceptional advocates provides advice about inclusion and opportunities for persons with disabilities to participate equally and fully in society. The council is made up of 15 members with a broad range of diverse disability issues,

representing regions across Alberta. Two representatives of the council are here today in honour of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities along with the great secretariat staff that supports the council: Mr. Cam Tait, a member from Edmonton; Ms Vicki Bertoia, director of council secretariat; Mr. Doug Darwish, manager of council secretariat; and Mr. Devon Winters, staff member. I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

1:40

The Speaker: Welcome.

Mr. Sabir: My second introduction, Mr. Speaker, through you and to you, is the Persons with Developmental Disabilities Review Panel. For the last two months the PDD panel has been travelling across the province to seek input from people with developmental disabilities, their families and guardians, agencies, and community leaders. This week they are in Edmonton. Five representatives of the panel are here today. I ask my guests to please rise as I announce their names: Dr. Dorothy Badry, co-chair and mother of a young adult that receives PDD services; Mr. Ryan Geake; Mr. Lloyd Thornhill; Mr. Dan Huising; Mr. Johnathon Red Gun. I ask my guests to receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

This is my last introduction. Through you and to you, Mr. Speaker, I want to introduce Alberta's first disabilities advocate, Mr. Tony Flores. Mr. Flores is the first-ever Advocate for Persons with Disabilities in Alberta and is doing a great job. The advocate's office opened last month and is very busy helping Albertans. Mr. Flores is a strong advocate for the rights of persons with disabilities, and he joined us for the International Day of Persons with Disabilities celebration in the rotunda today. I want to thank Mr. Flores for all his work and the work of his office to assist Albertans with disabilities. Please extend a warm welcome to Mr. Tony Flores.

The Speaker: Welcome to all of you, and thank you for your service.

The Minister of Environment and Parks and minister responsible for the climate change office.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am honoured to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly J.P. and Danielle Fortin. They operate Pursuit Adventures, based in Red Deer since 2010. Pursuit Adventures' goal is to make sure Albertans are able to find their unique adventure in our mountains, snowshoeing in the winter, today, hikes in the summer. Among their many tours J.P. and Danielle offer special excursions in the Bighorn for international visitors. They've been waiting for more than five years for government to support this region and to provide investment certainty, and they're looking for a real plan on the table that supports their business west of Red Deer. I now ask J.P. and Danielle Fortin to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise today to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly members of the Eastside Grannies. On December 1 it was World AIDS Day. The Eastside Grannies are a group of local volunteers who work in partnership with the Grandmothers to Grandmothers campaign. Grandmothers to Grandmothers was launched in response to the crisis faced by African grandmothers who care for millions of children orphaned by HIV and AIDS. The

Eastside Grannies raise money for the campaign in a number of creative ways like their Annual Rhubarb Rally and the Scrabble tournament called Good Words for Africa. They will always be glad to take your unwanted rhubarb and turn it into amazing jams. I would like to introduce today Charlotte Bragg, Cora Rolph, Lynn Wilson, Gladys Teske, Lesley Ratcliff, Shirley Reid, and the creator of Good Words for Africa, Carol Maier. I would also like to add that these incredible women are also involved in the Canadian Federation of University Women, the ecumenical mission of Strathcona county, and are world travellers. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

Cortes-Vargas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To follow up the Member for Sherwood Park, I would just like to also introduce a few other members from the Eastside Grannies, who have been raising money for decades, and to thank them for their work. Since 2006 the Grandmothers to Grandmothers campaign has raised over \$33 million, and 90 per cent of that money has been sent directly to community-based organizations. I would just like to introduce to you and through you Joyce Armstrong, Etty Cameron, Colleen Middleton, Vivian Cloutier, Helen Rawa, Iona Froehlich. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Deputy Premier and Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions. First, it's my pleasure to introduce a group of medical students who are here from both the universities of Alberta and Calgary, and they're seated in the public gallery. Today is their annual public education day at the Legislature, and each year a group of students from both programs visits the Legislature to meet with MLAs and the Minister of Health and talk about their vision for health care. We had an excellent discussion earlier today about increasing awareness and specifically the number of organ donors here in Alberta and successful donations. These leaders make me very excited about the future of our health care system. I now ask that Kaylin, Angela, Harleen, Naik, and their other colleagues who are here please rise and receive the warm welcome of our Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ms Hoffman: For my second introduction, Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce to you Basically Babies, a registered charity that's in the riding of Edmonton-Glenora that I have the honour to represent. They are celebrating their 25th anniversary this year. They provide the utmost care in assembling beautiful layettes to help provide clothing, blankets, and, of course, a few special extras that are all colour co-ordinated to newborn babies and their families to support that first year and making sure that that's something that those families don't need to worry at all about. It's a great way to support families. I know there are a number of parents in this Assembly who probably are holding on to some special keepsakes, and if you want to pass them on to a family in need, I encourage you to consider doing that for Basically Babies. I ask that their founder, Shannon Stewart, please rise, along with Rod, Sawyer, Donna, Jeff, Arlene, Chelsea, Donna, Shannon, Candace, and Gillian, their board members and volunteers, and if I missed anyone, please also rise. Thank you so much for what you do for our community.

The Speaker: Thank you very much and welcome.

The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Minister of Labour, it is an honour to introduce to you and through you 15 staff in the Ministry of Labour, who are here today to participate in a Labour policy team-building activity group. These public servants work hard to keep our workplaces safe for all Albertans, and it is my distinct pleasure to thank them for that. They are seated in the members' gallery this afternoon, and I would ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

Métis Settlements 80th Anniversary

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This year we celebrate the 80th anniversary of Métis leaders and the Alberta Legislature coming together and setting aside land specifically for the Métis. In 1938 the province enacted the Métis Population Betterment Act, marking the beginning of a new relationship between Alberta and Métis people, with a vision for Métis self-governance and self-determination. As a proud Métis person and a member of this Assembly I am honoured to speak to the historic relationship between Alberta and the settlements, acknowledge our achievements, and look to the future of our strengthening relationship.

In the 1930s the provincial government held a royal commission, the Ewing Commission, to investigate Métis socioeconomic issues. They came together and decided on land settlements as a solution to economic problems and as a way to protect linguistic and cultural identity. This led to the first and only land allotment specifically set aside for the use of Métis people in Canadian history. A place that Métis people could call home was the vision of Gabriel Dumont and Louis Riel, who spent their lives fighting bravely for their people. This was also the vision of the 1975 Métis leaders Adrian Hope, Maurice L'Hirondelle, Lawrence Desjarlais, Sam Johnston, and Richard Poitras of the Alberta Federation of Metis Settlements, who in 1989 signed the Alberta-Metis settlements accord, which promoted Métis advancement and preserved Métis identity and heritage.

We celebrated the anniversary of this accord on November 1 and raised the Metis Settlements General Council flag. On the 80th anniversary of the settlements I am inspired thinking about the future of the relationship between Alberta and the Métis. I'm excited about the work ahead as the Métis settlements continue to develop in local autonomy and self-determination. It is important to acknowledge the contributions that Métis people have made to the development, success, and history of our province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin.

1:50

Energy Industry Opposition

Ms Goodridge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's oil industry is in crisis. The oil price differential is causing us to sell our quality oil at a massive discount, hurting Alberta jobs and our economy. It's truly sad to see Canadian companies targeting our oil and gas industry in these times. However, this is exactly what Lush cosmetics is doing, leading fear-driven campaigns aiming to land-lock our oil by protesting pipelines, the safest, most environmentally friendly way to move oil.

They are a so-called ethically conscious company calling for a tanker ban off the west coast, attacking the oil sands, and proudly funding eco-activist organizations. They even celebrated after Keystone XL and Northern Gateway were denied and took credit for these decisions. For a company that claims to pride itself on taking ethical stances, they seem to have no issue operating storefronts in countries like Saudi Arabia and Iran, two countries that have absolutely atrocious human rights records and basically nonexistent environmental standards.

This is exactly why Alberta needs a fight-back strategy to counter the misinformation being shared by these anti-Alberta, left-wing eco-activists. As such, I applaud all those who are taking a stand and are choosing to purchase their bath bombs and lotions elsewhere. I would hope that all members of this Assembly choose not to support this anti-Alberta company. Personally, I have not made a purchase at Lush since they took a stand against the oil sands many, many years ago.

While I understand that the glitter and the smells can be enticing, I would urge all Alberta shoppers, especially as we enter into this holiday season, to choose to buy their products from stores that celebrate and support Albertans. I would hope that all Alberta companies such as Lush that want to see hundreds of thousands of hard-working Albertans lose their jobs and livelihood are avoided. This Christmas I hope that Santa leaves some quality Alberta oil sands in Lush's stocking in place of the coal that they deserve.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

Oil and Gas Production

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to commend the Premier on the very difficult but necessary decision that she announced last night to give some short-term relief to our energy sector and save jobs. I would also like to thank the government for having approached this in a nonpartisan manner. I think we've demonstrated to Albertans that when it comes to our vital economic interests, sometimes we actually can work together in this place. Some people are concerned, however, that this will be a permanent new level of intervention in energy markets in Alberta. Could the Premier confirm that there is effectively a sunset clause on the mandatory curtailment?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Let me also say that on this side of the House we appreciated the constructive contribution to the conversation that we received from both the Official Opposition as well as the third party in the House on this important matter. With respect to the sunset clause, by moving forward by way of regulation, we have committed that the matter will be reviewed every month with a view to dialling back the amount of curtailment and the volume of curtailment and moving off of it as quickly as possible.

Mr. Kenney: I thank the hon. the Premier for her response and confirmation that this is a temporary measure. Mr. Speaker, would the Premier join with me in calling on the government of Saskatchewan to follow Alberta's lead insofar as Saskatchewan produces about 15 per cent of Canada's crude oil? It's understood that a portion of their market in the Bakken and the southeast is fully integrated into the U.S. market, but would the Premier agree with me in principle that it would be helpful if the government of

Saskatchewan were to replicate the call made by the Premier last night?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I mean, there's no question we've reached out to Saskatchewan, and we've indicated to them what we are doing. Of course, it would be great if they joined with us, but what we also know from our work and from our research is that the size of the Saskatchewan market is not of such a nature that it would have much impact on the work that we are doing and that the curtailment that we have engaged will be adequate to bring about the objective that we're seeking. If they joined us, that would be great, but it's not actually necessary.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In responding to this disaster of a \$40 price differential in Alberta oil, we should not lose sight of an equally problematic differential loss of value in our natural gas. Alberta natural gas typically is selling at 80 or 90 cents per bcf today, but in Chicago at the Henry hub market: \$8 per bcf. Does the Premier have any plans to address this massive loss of wealth to our natural gas markets?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact, we have been meeting with industry players in the natural gas sector. We have established a working group, and we are talking with them right now to look at the depth and breadth of the problem there. It's not as urgent as what we're dealing with right now in the oil sector. But, nonetheless, the work is there, and we are waiting to receive advice from that working group.

Oil and Gas Transportation

Mr. Kenney: I thank the Premier for her answer. Mr. Speaker, many leaders in the Alberta energy industry have indicated that one of the reasons we got to this absurd \$10 giveaway fire sale of Alberta oil last week was because of mischief in commodity markets, where commodity traders have been nominating barrels of oil for the Enbridge main line, barrels that do not actually exist, pushing many real barrels back into storage through apportionment. They're calling for more rigorous regulation to ensure that only real barrels are nominated for real destinations. Will the Premier agree to look into this matter?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, we have been engaging with industry leaders on the matter of apportionment, and in fact, as the member opposite probably knows, there is a committee of industry players in Alberta that is working on that matter right now and is very close to coming up with a consensus set of recommendations.

On one hand, we're going to observe how the action that we announced yesterday impacts the market. On the other hand, we're going to continue to work with that industry group to determine whether there is additional work that we can do on their recommendations, much closer to consensus than they were on the other matter.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Kenney: Pleased to hear that, Mr. Speaker. The government has announced the intention to acquire railcars that would come into service in 2020 to move an additional estimated 120,000 barrels per day, but the industry has already announced contracts that would add about 200,000 barrels per day of shipment out of Alberta at their cost. What will the cost of these government railcars be, and by intervening in that market, are we going to end up elevating the price of the railcars that the private sector is bringing onboard?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact, the intended acquisition of additional railcars by the private sector is part of the overall need that we have established and has been worked into the formula that we used to come up with the numbers that we're pursuing.

Part of the reason that we are also engaging in it is because not all producers can actually get access to the railcars that the big, big producers can afford to bring online. As a result, we are also doing that work. In the long term we think it will help us clear the market and keep it cleared in that time between line 3 and TMX.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the federal government is accelerating the phase-out of the jacketed 1232 oil cars, which are the mainstay of the fleet currently moving Alberta oil by rail. Would the Premier join with me in calling on the federal government to explore extending the life or maintaining the original lifespan of those cars, which could be repurposed to shipping bitumen, which has a lower flashpoint than light crude? They could move bitumen safely, it is widely believed in the industry. Would she join with me and the opposition in calling on the federal government to review this matter not to take these cars out of service if not strictly necessary?

The Speaker: Madam Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact, the work and the conversations that we've been having with people in the rail industry suggest that that's not necessary, that they can meet our needs and also meet the new safety standards that have been put in place by the federal government. Of course, it's fundamentally important to ensure that we do maximize safety as much as possible as we significantly increase the amount of crude by rail. At the end of the day, we know it's more expensive, more greenhouse emissions, and not as safe as pipelines. Of course, the irony is that those who fight pipelines on behalf of the environment are now actually creating a less safe situation.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Third main question.

2:00

NDP and Pipeline Development

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Speaking of fighting pipelines, I do recall that the Premier opposed the construction of the Northern Gateway pipeline, saying that, quote, we're against it, referring to it by saying that there's no realistic objective of its construction. Last week, being interviewed in Ottawa, the Premier was asked: do you think you were right to oppose Northern Gateway? She said: no; I think we should have kept all of our options open. To clarify, does the Premier think it was a mistake for the government to have opposed the construction of Northern Gateway?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The comments that the member opposite is referring to are my comments with respect to Bill C-48 and the tanker ban. You know, the Northern Gateway project, as the member opposite knows because he was in government when the decisions of his government were rejected by the court, was rife with challenges, and it was probably not fixable. That being said, the subsequent decision of the federal government to ban tanker traffic off the west coast means that a better project cannot get started. We need to consider that. We need to keep those options open because we ultimately need to be able to get our product to tidewater.

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, we all make mistakes. We have a very capable Premier, but I think that perhaps she might admit that she made a mistake in this respect. I commend her because on November 28, when asked by Vassy Kapelos, quote, "Do you agree with the decision not to approve that pipeline?" Northern Gateway, the Premier responded: no; I think we should have kept all our options open. To clarify, does the Premier now recognize it was a mistake for her initially to oppose Northern Gateway?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, as I've said, I believe I've answered that question. The issue that we are raising now is the matter of keeping options open with respect to Bill C-48. I mean, everyone makes mistakes. The member opposite was in Ottawa for many, many years and was part of one of the many successive federal governments that failed to get us a pipeline to tidewater. You know, there's a long list of mistakes to be shared around this room, I'm sure. But right now the key is that we act on the current issue, that we engage in curtailment, that we invest in rail, that in the long term we get that pipeline to tidewater, and that we build our upgrading because that's what the people of Alberta need to happen.

Mr. Kenney: The only coastal pipeline to come before the Harper cabinet was Northern Gateway, which approved it while the NDP was opposing it.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP also opposed Keystone XL. In fact, the Premier called it a threat to Alberta's natural resources in September 2015. Would the Premier now stand and recognize that it was an error for the NDP to oppose the approval of the Keystone XL pipeline?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Just to clarify, the decision of the Harper cabinet around Northern Gateway was the subject of an extensive critique by the Federal Court because of numerous errors that were made and failures to consult, failures to consider environmental issues, failures to consult with the community. That is why the project failed.

Now, that being said, with respect to Keystone there is no question that as we got to the point where pipeline capacity was being threatened, our government reconsidered the matter, as we need to do on behalf of the people of Alberta. We invested in Keystone, we supported it, and we still do, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Oil Production Curtailment

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Lack of market access has led to a crisis for our energy industry, and low prices are hurting our provincial revenue. The steps the Premier announced yesterday

are necessary, and I want to thank the Premier and all the members of this Assembly for listening to our call for curtailment. It's a reminder of what we can accomplish when we focus on Alberta first with an Alberta-made solution. To the Premier: how soon will we begin to see the effect of curtailment on resource prices?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to echo the Premier's thanks to both the opposition party and the third party for their input on this most important decision. As was mentioned, we've been fighting all along for a pipeline, which is going to be the long-term solution. You know, we're taking steps to upgrade our product, more value-added, in Alberta, which is, again, a long-term solution. In the medium term, as was discussed, it is crude by rail and railcars. Certainly, the moves that we made yesterday are going to help the differential in the short term.

Mr. Fraser: The timeline of when we will see results is important because every day at current prices costs us \$80 million. It's also important because it shows the need to approach problems proactively. Premier, in the March fiscal plan you identified that supply would exceed our oil takeaway capacity in 2018 and that this would have a negative impact on oil prices. To the Premier: if your government knew about this impending crisis, why are we playing catch-up now, and why weren't plans developed when this first appeared on the horizon?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would say that we have been working on a number of solutions. Certainly, the solution that was announced yesterday is not our first go-to. We struck a committee to look at the natural gas sector, crude by rail. We have engaged immensely with industry on all of these. I have to say that yesterday was a very serious move. We didn't take it lightly, but we are taking it because we know that leadership matters, and we need to fight for Albertans.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A call for curtailment came as a result of consultation that our own caucus undertook with the energy industry. I understand that the opposition party eventually consulted with the industry and came to the same conclusion. In a briefing ministry officials also stated that they'd consulted with industry last summer and that that informed yesterday's decision to curtail production. Clearly, curtailment was the best short-term solution for dealing with depressed prices. Respectfully, Premier, at \$80 million a day, was it worth waiting for Brian Topp to tell you what you and everyone else already knew?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When we first engaged in talks with industry about other options, we weren't at the \$80-million-a-day figure. It was much lower. As with anything, there was disparity in what some of the options were, so we struck the committee not that long ago to see if we could bridge some of those opposite sides. Again I want to reiterate that this is a serious decision we took yesterday. It's not one we would take lightly, and it wasn't our first go-to to jump into.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

Energy Policies

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday our Premier made a difficult decision. She announced the short-term reduction in oil production to defend Alberta jobs and the value of energy resources owned by all Albertans. To address the excess supply, starting in January 2019, Alberta is reducing or curtailing production by 325,000 barrels per day till we have enough shipping space to clear the current glut and improve prices. This is expected to take three months. To the Minister of Energy: why did the government decide this difficult decision was necessary?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I've mentioned many times in this House, we had a number of years of people not having that vision to look at getting pipelines to tidewater. All of our pipelines were going south, and we needed to expand our markets. That said, we are in a situation where we have one customer and an excruciating differential right now. In the last few weeks that's reached epic proportions, so we made the difficult decision yesterday to start moving the backlog of what we have and draw down our supply.

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Mr. Speaker, given that the decision to moderately and temporarily curtail oil production to clear the glut in the market was a difficult one and given that this is only a short-term solution to defend Alberta jobs and increase the value of Alberta resources, again to the Minister of Energy: what steps is the government taking to close the price differential in the medium and, more importantly, in the long term?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, as was announced yesterday, the short-term solution is curtailment. You know, that will draw down the supplies. We are full. We need to manage our supplies going forward. But, again, you're right: that's short term. The long term, absolutely, is pipelines. We need to get other markets. We need our pipelines to go both east and west. We need them operational. But in the meantime another option is our crude by rail, to try to ship that extra supply until we can get those pipelines built.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Albertans have long believed that we don't get enough value for our oil and gas and given that successive provincial governments since Premier Lougheed have failed to make upgrading and adding value to our resources a priority, to the Minister of Energy: what is the government doing to diversify our economy to get Alberta off the boom-and-bust price roller coaster?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, Premier Lougheed was the first Premier in my voting life, and at that time he painted a wonderful vision of value-add here in Alberta and made a good start when their government provided incentives for NOVA Chemicals. But that vision was lost. In the meantime we're the government picking that vision up. We've announced PDP programs, energy upgrading, and there'll be more to come on that. But it's good news for Alberta because the money is staying here.

2:10

Oil Production Curtailment

(continued)

Mr. Fildebrandt: For weeks now the Tories and lobbyists have been demanding that draconian supply management be imposed on the oil industry. If these measures had been first proposed by the NDP rather than the Tories, they would have been denounced as Chavista economics. The Premier's announcement last night was dangerous and destructive but was bizarrely less intrusive to the market than other proposals, with a less extreme production quota. Why has the government decided that a supply management reduction of 325,000 barrels is preferable to the proposed reduction of 400,000 barrels?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. As has been noted, the government, the Official Opposition, and the third party have all agreed that it's important that at this time we engage in supply management to ensure that we get the right price for our commodity. We didn't engage in this decision lightly, that's for sure. This side of the House looked at all of our options. Long term the only solution is more market access through pipelines, in the interim increasing rail, and of course in the short term it was necessary for us to engage in supply management, which the Leader of the Official Opposition supported.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Now, try as I might to warn the NDP that their beer tax tariffs violated our free trade agreements and the Constitution, they assured us that everything was all right until they lost in court half a dozen times. The NDP-Tory plan to impose supply management on oil production runs the very real risk of violating our obligations under the USMCA, raising the possibility of retaliatory measures from the Americans, yet the Premier assures us again that everything is all right. Is the government as confident in their oil supply management as they were with their beer tax tariffs in free trade agreements?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since the Premier's announcement on curtailment yesterday we've already seen a positive impact on the differential. We will continue to monitor the situation closely, but we are fighting every day to protect and to improve opportunities for employment in Alberta in all sectors, of course including the oil and gas sector. This morning our cabinet firmed up rules that have given the Alberta Energy Regulator the power to curtail, and we will revisit this regulation and the amount of curtailment every month because it's important to us that we protect jobs and we protect the wealth that belongs to every single Albertan.

The Speaker: Hon. member, you've noticed that in the last few days the House has been more tolerant around supplementals and maybe some matters, but I would just use this example to all of you, particularly to yourself right now, to try and stick by the minimization of the supplemental issue and focus on the policy question if you wouldn't mind.

Please proceed.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Mr. Speaker, there's nothing so permanent as a temporary government program. When Milton Friedman said that, he could have been talking about dairy supply management, the Wheat Board, or the income tax, but he very well could have been

talking about the NDP-Tory supply management plan for oil. When governments grant themselves new powers, the market conforms, special interests take hold, and governments seldom give them up. Extreme government control over the economy always takes place in times of crisis in a matter of weeks, but undoing those controls takes decades. Does the government believe that supply management has ever worked?

The Speaker: Maybe I should stand up this time. Again I urge the House: please try and focus on policy. This is the time for question and answer – this isn't Members' Statements – so please focus on that. I apply that to all members, not just the Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our government believes that it's important that we protect the resources that belong to all Albertans, that we work with industry to make sure we get full value, and that, of course, there are times where supply management is an important necessity. Even the Leader of the Official Opposition and members of his own caucus who have gone to jail fighting for free-market access have acknowledged that it's important that we engage in making sure that we get full value, because for a decade, while the Leader of the Official Opposition was in Ottawa, he failed to get pipelines. That's the only long-term solution, a pipeline to tidewater, and I know that he's had a decade of failure. That's why it's important that we react on short-, interim-, and long-term solutions.

Provincial Fiscal Update

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, one of the first things this government did after being elected was increase taxes on corporate job creators by 20 per cent. The opposition warned this would result in a decrease in revenue, and that's exactly what happened. In this Finance minister's second-quarter update corporate taxes were budgeted for \$4.5 billion, but only \$4.1 billion were collected. When will this Finance minister quit hiding and start recognizing the damage that his tax policies are doing to Alberta's wealth creation?

Mr. Ceci: You know, Mr. Speaker, what the hon. member didn't say is that personal taxes went up in the second quarter. We will see more of those as a result of the actions that we are bringing in to diversify the economy, to support people in good jobs in this province, and to make sure Albertans know we have their backs every step of the way. We were dealt a tough hand with the collapse in oil prices, but we're coming through the worst recession in a generation, and we're going to balance in 2023. That's the important part of all this.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Finance minister's update also doesn't recognize the fact that because of the differential Albertans are receiving no value for our world-class oil and that a corporate and economic slowdown is intensifying and given that the minister refuses to acknowledge in his estimates that Albertans' paying billions of dollars of carbon tax have failed to increase pipeline takeaway capacity, will the minister quit hiding and conduct an economic assessment and objective budget forecast so Albertans know that our social programs and front-line providers will be protected?

Mr. Ceci: Mr. Speaker, just Friday I gave the second-quarter fiscal update. By the end of February I have to give the third-quarter fiscal

update, and I'll follow that. You know, he talked about tax advantages or competitiveness of Alberta, and I can say that there's no sales tax, no payroll tax, no health care premiums. Alberta is the best place in the country to do business, and we are getting back to growth in 2019, again, at 2 per cent, which is a good cruising rate.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, given that Alberta's fiscal report card also shows \$52.8 billion in debt, almost \$2 billion in annual interest expense, and now the Alberta government is borrowing at 3.3 per cent, why is this minister hiding from the fact that the significant transfer of wealth to rich Bay Street bankers could have been used – could have been used – instead to hire thousands of nurses, teachers, or addictions counsellors?

Mr. Ceci: Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. I want you to know that instead of the deep cuts and privatization that that side always wants to do and make sure happens in Alberta, we won't let that happen. We're focused on the issues that matter for Albertans, and that is jobs, diversification, health care, and education. Our plan is working. We've cut the deficit by \$3.2 billion already from our budget of 2015, but we know there's more work to do. We'll continue doing that for Albertans each and every day.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, a couple of weeks ago I asked the Finance minister if he was bracing for Alberta's seventh credit-rating downgrade on his watch. The minister assured us the soon-to-be-released second-quarter fiscal update would bring good news, but the best he could muster last Friday was an evidence-free claim that his government is on track to balance the budget. To the Finance minister: how can the minister deny our credit rating is poised to fall again when billions of dollars in expected resource revenues are just plain not coming in?

Mr. Ceci: Mr. Speaker, our borrowing costs are lower than B.C. and Saskatchewan and Ontario, and Alberta has the best balance sheet of any province in the country. That will still be the case in 2023, when we balance. We've dropped the deficit \$3.2 billion already. That side, to drop the deficit, would have fired 4,000 teachers and 4,000 nurses, and that would be just the beginning.

Mr. McIver: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that the minister is doing his best to erase that advantage and given that the Finance minister's press release cited revenue losses to the Canadian economy but did not reveal losses to the provincial economy – you know, the one he's in charge of – and given that the Finance minister continues to hide the fact that Albertans must be losing at least \$60 million a day in resource revenues, to the Finance minister: does the minister not realize that this shell game will not work with credit-rating agencies and that the truth really is out there?

2:20

Mr. Ceci: You know, Mr. Speaker, again, somebody is attacking Alberta and our competitiveness. I want you to know that when the Leader of the Opposition was in India recently, he said of Alberta's tax advantage, in fact: we are competitive; we have low taxes and low power prices. I think that's really accurate. Why doesn't the member over there listen to his leader?

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, given that the minister is still trying to erase the advantages he's talking about and given that every time our credit rating drops, we pay more to service the growing NDP debt, and given that debt payments cost almost \$2 billion a year now and that money is lost for government programs and services,

to the minister: when Alberta's credit rating drops the next time – and it will – how much heavier will debt payments be on the backs of Alberta families?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, we put forward a plan to balance a budget in 2023 without firing thousands of teachers and nurses, something that side would do, a repeat of 1993, when they cut budgets 5 per cent across the board and thousands of people were out on the streets protesting all of that. We're putting jobs and the economy first. We're backing up Albertans to make sure they have the supports they need to get through this recession. We're into recovery, and in 2019 we will grow 2 per cent.

Workers' Compensation Sustainability

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, recently I was reading through the 2019 premium rates employer highlight report published by WCB, and I noticed that fully funded claim costs had risen almost 40 per cent since 2015 whereas assessable earnings have decreased in this same period. The fully funded claim costs have risen from \$768 million to over a billion dollars since this government took office. Is the minister aware of this, and can she tell us: why the increase?

Mr. Ceci: Mr. Speaker, with regard to WCB we are continuing to support Albertans. Claim costs are one thing, of course, that – employers contribute to WCB to make sure that workers have all they need. We'll continue to watch this as we go forward.

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, given that the highlight report also brought to light that WCB will not be able to collect enough dues to cover the costs accumulated for 2019, can the minister tell us how many times in past years this has happened, and can she provide this House with assurance that WCB is sustainable and that large rate increases are not imminent?

The Speaker: The Justice minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. WCB is, of course, a program that is absolutely critical to workers throughout the province. We're very proud of the changes we made to that program to make sure that we have the backs of workers and that we'll continue fighting for them. These rates are set independently of government, and they're set based on the financial sustainability of the plan, and they will continue to be so in the future.

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, given that the NDP's Bill 30, passed in 2017, made changes to the WCB by removing the previous cap on insurable earnings, which we now see has increased claim costs by 40 per cent, Minister, does your government not see that their poorly thought out policies like those made with the electricity system, the expensive carbon tax, and also now with the WCB premiums are making things more expensive and unsustainable for Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. Justice minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As we know, WCB premiums in Alberta have been lower than anywhere else in the country for quite a long time. These rates are, as we've said, set independently. At the end of the day this government is a government that has the backs of workers and has the backs of families, and we're not going to apologize for that.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Justice Services in Indigenous Communities

Mr. Hinkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Justice: as many First Nations reserves do not have courthouses, thus requiring their people to travel off-reserve, what is Justice doing to ensure fairness and reduced discrimination in the court systems for indigenous constituents?

The Speaker: The hon. Justice minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the incredibly important question. We work closely with indigenous communities and organizations in the courts to ensure that the justice system takes into consideration the cultural and personal experience of indigenous people. That's why the indigenous court worker program is available in 37 provincial court locations across the province. I think we've made real progress with Gladue reports under this government, and we will continue working with those communities to ensure that everyone feels respected in the system.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Hinkley: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the proximity of courthouses impacts the outcome of court cases for people living on reserves, does the minister have any plans to put either courthouses or courthouse processes at Maskwacis, where the population is greater than neighbouring communities, which each have a courthouse?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Well, the courthouse renewal initiative does not include funding to establish a courthouse in Maskwacis currently. We are open to continuing discussions with all four nations regarding a court facility in Maskwacis. I was happy to meet with the member and with members of those nations to discuss this issue just last week. As discussed there, there are several complicating factors, but we're happy to continue to work with those nations to ensure that where we can make services available in a way that's accessible to them, we do that.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Hinkley: Yes. Again, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank to the minister for meeting with the Maskwacis chiefs, the councillors, and the justice committee members. Can the minister provide some insight into possible viable steps for on-reserve court processes, control of civil enforcement, and fine redistribution?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we are working with those nations on some of those issues and also many others. At the end of the day, we will continue to work with those individuals to make sure that we are creating a process that is respectful of everyone. At the end of the day, the justice system relies on individuals to buy into it. That is a system that is there for everyone, and therefore that system must be respectful of everyone.

Thank you.

NDP and Pipeline Development

(continued)

Mr. Loewen: In recent months this NDP government has launched a campaign to convince Albertans that they are fighting for pipelines. They are trying to sell a message that they have been advocates for our industry in expanding market access. Luckily, we have the ability to look at their record, like the Premier opposing Northern Gateway and Keystone. We can also look at what they laid out as priorities in their past throne speeches, and – you know what? – I looked back, and in 2015 they didn't mention pipelines once. In 2016 the word "pipeline" only appeared two times. Obviously, pipelines weren't a priority for this government at that time. To the minister: is the NDP really committed to pipelines, or did you just start supporting them as the election started to draw near?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our record on tidewater access, on upgrading and refining, on strengthening our oil and gas sector through this recovery from a devastating recession: all of these things speak for themselves. We had a very nice nonpartisan moment with respect to the conversation around taking action on the differential. Now it would be great to have a nonpartisan moment on protecting the environment or acknowledging that climate change is real.

Mr. Loewen: Given, Mr. Speaker, that in the last couple of years the NDP have started to claim that they are all about pipelines but given that they have not seen a single pipeline completed on their watch and given that what has happened is that Northern Gateway and Energy East were cancelled, Keystone and Trans Mountain significantly delayed and given that we have seen the NDP prematurely claim victory despite saying that they wouldn't celebrate until oil started to flow, how can this NDP government claim that their record on pipelines is anything but one of failure?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the Leader of the Opposition had 10 years to get action on tidewater access, and he failed. He failed Albertans. He failed Canadians. Now, on this side of the House we understand how important it is to get those pipelines not only approved but built. We understand how important things like indigenous consultation are. These are lessons that the folks across the way could use, both in opposition and in their time in government in Ottawa.

Mr. Loewen: Given that on October 27, 2015, a notable Albertan said, "Can the Premier tell us what the strategy is going forward: leave it in the ground or get it to market?" and the same person asked the Premier, "Will you back away from these beliefs and act to protect Alberta jobs?" and given that she went on to ask, "When are you going to . . . start selling Alberta and its industries the way we desperately need you to now?" and given that this notable Albertan is the Member for Calgary-North West – sorry; I mean the Minister of Infrastructure – can anyone in government explain why they didn't support our oil and gas sector when the opposition was begging you to?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can assure members in this Assembly that we have fought for market access from day one. I have worked personally very hard, as have my

colleague the Minister of Environment and Parks, our Premier, many of our ministers, to engage with industry on a number of matters, but the most important one has been on pipelines access. Yesterday, when we made our announcement, we immediately had validations from Nexen, Cenovus, CNRL, many small industry players who support what we're doing. Derek Evans from MEG Energy commended us for . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

2:30

Environment and Parks Minister

Mr. Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, last week ministers had to rise in QP to take blame for the Premier and the minister of the environment for opposing and protesting Alberta oil pipelines for over a decade while from 2006 to 2015 Conservative governments supported and approved pipelines. The 2008 Tar Sands Campaign strategy said, "land-lock the tar sands so their crude could not reach the international market where it could fetch a high price per barrel." Is the minister of environment satisfied that her activism achieved its objective of a historic oil price differential and the current financial situation the Alberta government is in today?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I will help him with his trip down memory lane. Last week his leader, the Leader of the Official Opposition, who spent 10 years in Ottawa at a cabinet table and two of those as the minister responsible for employment, said it wasn't his job to fight for pipelines. Guess what? This side of the House disagrees. I think Albertans disagree. I think they'd be shocked to hear that somebody who's campaigning to be Premier and who sat around the Prime Minister's cabinet table failed to fight for pipelines, only mentioned the word once in his 10 years around the cabinet table and 10 years before that in the House of Commons as well. That is our record. This side of the House is fighting hard for pipelines.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, it seemed like it was his job because four pipelines were completed in Alberta under the Harper Conservative government despite the decade of pipeline protests under the NDP. Given that a fifth pipeline was actually approved to tidewater despite the Premier saying, "I think Gateway is not the right decision" and the well-known fact that the environment minister protested it, did the minister, from her time as a Greenpeace activist, introduce concepts from the tar sands campaign to the NDP cabinet and the environment department?

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, you know, we saw the Premier last night on television. Albertans see her in Ottawa, they see her in New York, they see her in Toronto, everywhere fighting for pipelines, the fantasies of some members on the other side notwithstanding. They're not listening to that nonsense; they are listening to the Premier, and they're seeing her in action and this entire government fighting for pipelines day after day after day.

Mr. Dreeshen: Mr. Speaker, we don't see the Premier actually advocating for pipelines here in Alberta when she was protesting outside the Legislature.

Given that the minister of environment went to the NEB to oppose Northern Gateway, given that she invited federal MPs to protest it with her, and given this government's record of attacking our oil industry, is it safe to assume they are still opposing it, just

more quietly given that the Premier said that she has a hundred per cent confidence in her minister of the environment? Given the fact that investor confidence in Alberta has nearly vanished, what confidence would the Premier be referring to?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll put my record as a private citizen up against the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake's any day of the week given that he did spend 10 months of his life campaigning for Donald Trump on team Breitbart. Now, here's the actual record of his leader and the cabinet table that he sat around. Here's what the federal court had to say about Northern Gateway. The FCA went on to say that the Harper government, at paragraph 186, "failed to make reasonable efforts to inform and consult . . . fell [way] short of the mark," "was less than willing to hear the First Nations on this," that their errors were massive in size, that they fell . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Pipeline Development and the Carbon Levy

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the sake of my constituents and all Albertans I'm glad that this government took advice from the United Conservative Party, experts, and industry by announcing a temporary reduction of oil production in response to the price differential that is costing our economy \$80 million a day. We need to get our oil to new markets. Minister, why did your NDP government offer no opposition to the Trudeau Liberals' decision to scrap the Northern Gateway pipeline?

The Speaker: The hon. Energy minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, thank you to my hon. colleague, who pointed out that we did engage, in fact, with a number of people on a number of matters. As we've outlined, we have a long-term solution, which absolutely is pipelines. Medium term: rail capacity, increase that. Another long-term solution is upgrading. The short term is what we announced yesterday. We know that that matters. We know that Albertans expect leadership, and they're seeing leadership from this side of the House.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. They are not showing leadership on the Northern Gateway pipeline given that the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers said, and I quote: if Northern Gateway had come on as planned, we wouldn't be in this situation. End quote.

Given that our oil and gas companies are fighting to stay afloat and that the NDP's carbon tax has clearly not helped us get a pipeline and given that many Albertans are struggling to just make ends meet, Minister, my constituents want to know why they're still paying a carbon tax to put gas in their cars and to heat their homes.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When we're talking about the Northern Gateway, had the job been done properly, we would have had it. To be fair and clear, the job that was missed was the federal government's with the opposition leader in that cabinet, who failed to do their due diligence to consult with indigenous, to do their proper work. That's what the Federal Court of Appeal said.

At the end of the day, that pipeline was dead in the water because of their failures.

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, given that I have constituents that are expressing deep discontent with the Trudeau Liberal government and given that our Prime Minister doesn't show any compassion or respect for our oil industry and its workers and given that the NDP's carbon tax is hurting Albertans, Minister, why do you continue to stand even now with the Trudeau Liberals, and why won't you join us and other provinces against a carbon tax?

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In actual fact, we have a made-in-Alberta climate change plan in this province, that provides an on-site processing exemption. It provides robust methane policies, investment in clean technologies for the oil and gas sector. Contrast that with the opposition plan, which is to have the Trudeau plan imposed on us, to roll out a red carpet for Ottawa to make decisions on our oil and gas sector here in Alberta. I know whose side I'm on, and that's Alberta's.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Oil Production Curtailment (continued)

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Friday the publisher of BOE Report published an open letter to the Premier calling for production cuts to reduce the oil price differential caused by the lack of pipeline capacity. He said, and I quote: if this continues, historic, record-setting layoffs will be coming within weeks, and \$12-a-barrel oil is the most efficient, aggressive job killer there is. While our leader supports the government's actions, my question is: why did it take so long for your government to act?

The Speaker: The Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I've said many times previous to today and today, we spent the time to get this right because we know that what we announced yesterday is precedent setting. We used powers that we already had, but it was important to get it right. We consulted with industry. When we first started consulting, the differential wasn't as wide as it has become recently, but we took that decision from early accounts from industry. It was the right decision. We're going to monitor things closely, and we're also going to keep fighting for pipelines and upgrading.

Mr. Orr: Given that in the same letter to the Premier, BOE says that this job loss will be coupled with historic, record-setting bankruptcies and all the terrible economic changes that will follow and given that businesses are seriously at risk, why has this government not enacted a curtailment that takes effect immediately but, rather, waits until January 1, leaving industry to bleed another 30 days, losing a potential \$2.5 billion more?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The reason that we are starting January 1: that's when the curtailment will start, but we took action today, last night and today, because industry is planning for January. It's important that we get this in place today so they have the assurance that this is where we're going forward. They know what the rules of the game are. They helped us with that, and we're providing that certainty for them, but they're doing their planning now. They don't just wake up on January 1 and decide what they're going to do that day.

2:40

Mr. Orr: I think that the BOE publisher also cites the effect the loss of revenue will have on the provincial coffers, with billions lost. When can Albertans expect to get a deficit and debt update that actually takes into account the loss of revenue to the provincial government caused by this massive failure of government policy?

Mr. Ceci: Mr. Speaker, I've laid that out in the past, and I'll just lay it out again. We had a Q2 update on Friday. That takes us to the end of September. We're two-thirds of the way through, two months through the next quarter, the third quarter, and we know that the impact on our deficit is that we've dropped it \$3.2 billion and perhaps even more at the next update. We will continue to monitor the situation. As we go forward, a path to balance will be included. Budget 2019 certainly is our path to balance, and we'll show more then.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Highway 15 Fort Saskatchewan Bridge

Ms Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For 40 years highway 15 has been a subject of discussion in this House, with issues in my area going back to the former Social Credit MLA Walter Buck's time. My constituents of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville are hoping for an update on the highway 15 Fort Saskatchewan bridge, a badly needed infrastructure project neglected for years by each and every Conservative government. To the Minister of Transportation: would you be able to give us an update on when the intersection beside the new bridge will be complete, share with us where the plan is, and also let us know if the final bridge design will require any homes to be moved?

Mr. Mason: Well, thank you very much for that question. Unfortunately, the people in Fort Saskatchewan had to wait a long time to get rid of the PC government, but that's now happened. I want to thank the member for her question. The highways 37, 15, and 825 project is now in the construction phase. It's in winter shutdown, but it's 70 per cent complete, and it will be finished in August 2019. The design of the bridge is complete. No homes will be required in order to complete this project.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for that very welcome news. Given that residents and businesses expressed concern that the project will require a disruption of the rail service that runs over part of highway 15 and given that the Ministry of Transportation has been in discussions with CN to try to mitigate this issue, would the minister be able to provide us an update on whether there will be any rail disruption as a result?

Mr. Mason: Well, I want to thank the hon. member for that follow-up question, and I want to particularly thank her for her advocacy on behalf of this project. She's been a very effective MLA for the people of Fort Saskatchewan, and this is largely due to her work. I'm pleased to report that there will be no disruption because CN – we'll be able to do the work during blocks of time when they have no rail traffic, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given the lack of a few connection points to the Trans Canada Trail,

residents also want to know if the new bridge will have, for the first time, pedestrian access, and they would like to know who's paying for it. Could the minister provide to this House an update so that I can inform constituents who have been long advocating for hiking and cycling paths that connect the region?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker, and thanks for the question. I can confirm that the River Valley Alliance, the city of Fort Saskatchewan, and Sturgeon county have entered into an agreement to raise funds to provide for pedestrian access. Ultimately, funds will flow from them through Alberta Transportation for this. Discussions are ongoing. The design will be the responsibility of the alliance, and they're working on it as we speak. I hope that we can provide more information to the member's constituents in the future. It's very important. We have 25,000 vehicles that go across the bridge every day.

The Speaker: Hon. members, in 30 seconds we will continue with Members' Statements.

Members' Statements

(continued)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

International Day of Persons with Disabilities

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 1992 December 3 was proclaimed International Day of Persons with Disabilities by the United Nations General Assembly. This year's theme is Empowering People with Disabilities and Ensuring Inclusiveness and Equality. Nice words. The work of ensuring inclusiveness and equality is complex and requires dogged determination and focus. Words are nice; action is vital.

Creating communities that are inclusive and equal demands that we use a specific lens in all of the work we do and all the decisions we make. Using inclusivity and equality as a measure of success is not easy, particularly in an environment where forces exist that flirt with populism, austerity, and a return to a pull yourself up by the bootstraps mentality.

Still in 2018 people with disabilities face rates of unemployment that far exceed the numbers of peers without disabilities. People with disabilities make up almost 40 per cent of self-reported incidents of violent crimes. These numbers increase to 45 per cent when we look at female victims. Poverty is all too familiar of a life-defining reality for people with disabilities. Financial exploitation, isolation, and segregation of Canadians with disabilities exist.

On this day, International Day of Persons with Disabilities, we must recommit to action because words without action don't mean much. We must all commit to supporting inclusive education and employment. We must work towards building a barrier-free community and province. We must address the alarming rates of violence against people with disabilities. We must acknowledge the pervasive poverty of people with disabilities and be courageous in the steps we take to address this reality. So today, on International Day of Persons with Disabilities, I hope all members of this House will join me in committing that no one be left behind.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to wish a Happy Hanukkah to all those celebrating in Alberta.

The Speaker: Hon. member, you're going to get your time back. I think I might have screwed up the order again.

The Member for Airdrie. My apologies.

Support for the Energy Industry

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, politicians would be wise to heed the words of notable Canadians who are valiantly fighting for our energy sector. One of them, Rex Murphy, recently addressed Albertans at a conference in Red Deer. He called for the onus on jobs and development to be reversed. He asked thoughtfully: why do those who offer development, technology, and jobs have to stagger through years of hearings, assessments, protests, court cases, and appeals to get permission to supply a basket of incontestable benefits? What are protestors bringing to the table that merits them standing?

Another notable Canadian, independent researcher Vivian Krause, has been bringing awareness to how some American foundations like the Tides Foundation are funding the fight against Canadian oil sands and pipelines. She estimates that as much as \$90 million U.S. dollars have been used to oppose our energy industry in the last decade. These foundations are focused on destroying the Canadian energy industry, not the American energy industry.

Being complacent is no longer an option if we want an economy that allows families to flourish. We follow the highest possible standards in Canada, and there's no reason we should resign ourselves to sit on the sidelines while the United States, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Norway reap the benefits of our oil.

Tim McMillan, CEO of the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, says that a lack of pipeline capacity is now costing the economy as much as a hundred billion dollars per year. Think of what that money could be used for, Mr. Speaker.

Charities like the David Suzuki Foundation should not be allowed to engage in activities aimed at hampering job creation and economic growth in Canada.

Citizens can play their part by shopping at businesses that support our vital energy industry. Unfortunately, a few companies like Lush cosmetics side with the bogus charities.

It is time to stop being a soft target and fight back against the foreign meddling in our energy industry, do the right thing, and get pipelines built.

The Speaker: Now Edmonton-McClung.

Hanukkah

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to wish a Happy Hanukkah to all those celebrating in Alberta. Yesterday at dusk I was honoured to participate along with you, sir, as well as Chabad Edmonton's Rabbi Drelich, Rabbi Claman from Beth Israel synagogue, our Deputy Premier, the MLA for Edmonton-Centre, and a large crowd on the Legislature Grounds. The lighting of the candles represents the spread of light, wisdom, enlightenment, and faith throughout the world. Hanukkah celebrates and commemorates the strength and perseverance of the Jewish people and their struggle for religious freedom. It is a demonstration of how every individual has the ability to change the world for the better.

2:50

As dark voices rise around the globe, with the growth of right-wing hate groups which threaten to invade mainstream politics, let us all take this time to remember that a little light goes a long way. We must never be afraid to stand up for what's right, to call out hate

and anti-Semitism, and to embrace our differences. Alberta's long history of cultural diversity makes us strong.

As the MLA for Edmonton-McClung I am proud to represent a diverse constituency that overwhelmingly welcomes everyone into the community. McClung is home to two synagogues and the Talmud Torah school that has been educating Edmonton Jewish children for over a century.

The Jewish community in Alberta has a long and proud history of contributing to the growth of our province. In fact, 2019 will mark 130 years since the first permanent Jewish settlers made Alberta home.

I hope that this year as we celebrate the holiday season in our own special ways we take a moment to acknowledge that Alberta Jews feel threatened in their own communities and places of worship. The right to worship without fear is a right that we must vigilantly protect by standing against hate and injustice with love and with light. Our NDP government caucus is resolutely committed to doing just that. While making that pledge, let me express my hope that everyone celebrates Hanukkah together with family.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

29th Legislature Reflections

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As we approach the end of the 2018 fall session, this may be my last opportunity to wish Albertans a very Merry Christmas. Unfortunately, for many Albertans this Christmas will be anything but merry. Let's talk about this government's record over the last three and a half years and where it has left the good people of this province, especially at Christmas.

While we constantly hear that things are better, that the sun is shining, you get a totally different picture when you actually get out and talk to Albertans. I attended an FCSS breakfast last week. Speeches given by the Minister of Children's Services and the Minister of Community and Social Services made it fairly obvious that an election is just around the corner, which may be the best Christmas gift this government could give Albertans. I also heard at that breakfast that services provided by FCSS in our communities are seeing ever-increasing demands.

Last week I tabled in the House some statistics from Food Banks Canada and the Edmonton food bank. I'd like to take a moment to discuss some stats from those tablins. Where do our food bank stats sit nationally? 2015-2016 saw an increase of 17.6 per cent in food bank usage across the province. Overall, from 2008 to 2016 we saw an increase of 136 per cent, the highest in the country. If we want to focus on Edmonton, over a four-year period from 2015 to 2018 we saw a monthly average increase of 40 per cent per month. In addition, the Edmonton Christmas Bureau announced last week that they expect to provide 24,000 hampers, which is up 7,000 from last year.

These are just a few examples of the organizations that have been hit hard by the economic downturn and the carbon tax. I know that the Minister of Finance claims that we have the highest growing GDP of any province, but if there is actually a recovery in progress, then average Albertans are not feeling it. Tell that to those Albertans facing layoffs three weeks before Christmas.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Mr. Speaker, at the appropriate time I wish to give notice that I will be presenting a motion under Standing Order 42 requesting an emergency debate on issues before us today that are obviously very pressing concerning the oil differential and different policy proposals that have been presented.

I'll present written copies right now if Mr. Speaker will allow.

The Speaker: Yes. My apologies. You're required to read the motion. If you would.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Yeah. Thank you. I'll be introducing the following motion.

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly support facilitating market-oriented development of Alberta's diverse, abundant, renewable, and nonrenewable energy resources as a key driver of economic prosperity, ultimately benefiting all of Canada, and in restoring the independence of our energy regulators from political interference and that this Assembly rejects any attempt to impose supply management on Alberta's energy industry by the use of quotas or any other legislative or regulatory measures to curtail production as proposed by the government and Official Opposition.

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to table the required number of copies of the Report of Selected Payments to the Members and Former Members of the Legislative Assembly and Persons Directly Associated with Members of the Legislative Assembly, also known as the MLA report. This is tabled for the year ended March 31, 2018, pursuant to the Legislative Assembly Act and the Conflicts of Interest Act. This disclosure of MLA payments ensures that all remain accountable with public dollars, ensuring they are spent responsibly and in line with legal and ethical standards. Information listed in the report includes salary, expenses, benefits, allowances, fees for serving on standing committees of the Legislative Assembly, and travel expenses while travelling on MLA or government business.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Are there any other documents to be tabled? Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I have three tablings today. Last Thursday during question period I made reference to letters written from students, teachers, and parents from H.A. Kostash school.

The second tabling is also in that same question I referred to, a RECAPP facility evaluation report done for the Aspen View region that recommended roof repairs.

I also referred to an executive summary where they did a cost analysis of either a rebuild or upgrades to the school.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Mr. Dreeshen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of the 2008 Tar Sands Campaign strategy which I made reference to in my questions to the environment minister earlier, where many of my constituents are concerned about the environment minister's involvement as a Greenpeace activist. In the

strategy that I'm tabling, the main strategy of it, which was to land lock the tar sands so their crude could not be . . .

The Speaker: I think we've got it, hon. member. I think we've got it.

Mr. Dreeshen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Mason: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yeah. I hear a point of order.
Point of order, hon. member.

Point of Order

Points of Order

Allegations against a Member

Mr. Mason: Under 23(h), (i), and (j) I want to be clear for the hon. member. That's the second time he's said that the environment minister was a member of Greenpeace. That is not true, and I would ask the hon. member to check his facts before informing the House incorrectly about the previous history of hon. members of this House.

The Speaker: Hon. members, apparently the practice has been that you would make those points of order at the end of the Routine, but I am at this point now, and I suggest that we keep going.

Mr. Nixon: I think, Mr. Speaker, we discussed this last time. That's a separate issue, I guess. But at this stage, I thought your instructions were to us that the points of order would be at the end of question period so we didn't interrupt question period, but we're past that, so that might be part of the confusion. I await your instructions, though. Would you like to wait until after?

The Speaker: I'd like to proceed. That was the point that we discussed last week.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wouldn't want to not comply with the instructions.

First of all, I think this is a matter of debate, but the hon. member did not say that. I didn't hear him say that she was a member. He did say that the minister of the environment was an activist associated with Greenpeace. There's been lots of things that have been tabled to document that, so I'm not really sure what the argument is on that. With that said, I do think it's a matter of debate, and we should move on.

The Speaker: Hon. members, even though this is a relatively small issue, maybe, I would in fact like to think about that position being made, and I might well be asking for a discussion with the House leaders with respect to the length, the preamble issues, these sorts of related questions as well. I think we need some more discussion in this House if for no other reason than to give me greater guidance of the House's expectations on these kinds of matters.

3:00 Motions under Standing Order 42

The Speaker: I believe we are under Standing Order 42, with the Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Just to remind the member, your task here is with respect to the urgency of the matter and the pressing necessity of the matter being discussed today. Hon. member, please proceed.

Mr. Fildebrandt: So this is speaking to the necessity of the debate right now, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you.

Energy Policies

Mr. Fildebrandt:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly support facilitating market-oriented development of Alberta's diverse, abundant, renewable and nonrenewable energy resources as a key driver of economic prosperity ultimately benefiting all of Canada, and in restoring the independence of our energy regulators from political interference, and that this Assembly reject any attempt to impose supply management on Alberta's energy industry by the use of quotas or any other legislative or regulatory measures to curtail production, as proposed by the government and the Official Opposition.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think that in the very number of SO 42s and, I believe, 30s, the various different forms of emergency debates in this House, there has been disagreement over time about the level of urgency, and many of those things are political differences. But I think it is very fair to say that this is the single most urgent issue facing Alberta today. There seems to be at least some degree of political consensus if not economic consensus but certainly not unanimity. This is an incredibly important policy decision and debate, currently supported by the government, the third party, and the Official Opposition, obviously not supported by the rather lonelier FCP caucus, but it is a debate of incredible importance to Albertans.

It is largely unprecedented in Alberta history to be going down this road. For some time the Alberta opposition parties and various lobbyists have been calling for this, and the Premier made an announcement just last night, a significant announcement. And you can tell how significant it is if a government decides to purchase advertising time to make an announcement on television, which the Premier did last night, obviously demonstrating the urgency of it. It is very rare that a government would make a paid major announcement on prime time television on a Sunday. That obviously refers to the government's own belief in the necessity of this, that it had to happen on a Sunday, which is quite extraordinary and rare.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, point of order.

The Speaker: Point of order. Cite the rule here.

Point of Order Language Creating Disorder

Mr. Nixon: Standing Order 23(h), (i), and (j), language to create disorder. The Premier did not do a paid announcement; neither did the Official Opposition. They had a press conference. The facts that the hon. member is presenting are very far from the truth, and we should get that clear, I think.

The Speaker: I have a sense, hon. member, that this might be with respect to the interpretation of the events. Nonetheless, try and keep it on the urgency and necessity issue.

Mr. Fildebrandt: With regard to the point of order it was my understanding that this was paid time on networks, but the Government House Leader informs me with his facial expressions that that was not the case. If, in fact, it was a regular TV slot and not paid time, then I would withdraw those remarks as incorrect.

Debate Continued

Mr. Fildebrandt: But it certainly does not change my primary point, that the Premier made a rather extraordinarily timed address on prime time on a Sunday, which is very rare. This is obviously a major issue facing Albertans and has not been debated before this House in any kind of detailed manner.

I would just conclude by stating that since there is no bill coming forward on this and that these changes proposed by the government are to be regulatory in nature and that there will not be a bill coming before the House but that it is still a very significant piece of policy, I think it behooves us to at least take a little bit of time here to debate the issues today. I would certainly be in favour of making my point and keeping it as short as possible so that the government and private members can get on to other business that they have if they were to agree.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 42, as you may recall, requires unanimous consent to proceed with the motion as proposed by the Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

[Unanimous consent denied]

Mr. Fildebrandt: Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: Yes, hon. member.

Mr. Fildebrandt: I believe we can call a division on any vote before the House.

The Speaker: The question was on unanimous consent. There is no vote on that. Unanimous consent was not granted, and we need to move on.

Orders of the Day

Written Questions

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

[The Acting Clerk read the following written questions, which had been accepted]

Power Purchase Agreements

- Q6. **Mr. Panda:**
From May 1, 2015, to May 31, 2018, how much money has been spent by the government, broken down by contract, to terminate power purchase agreements before the agreement expiration date?

Trans Mountain Pipeline Construction Costs

- Q7. **Mr. Panda:**
How will the government fund the up to \$2 billion commitment on potential cost overruns for the construction of the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion, as referenced in the government news release dated May 29, 2018?

Service Dogs Qualifications Regulation

- Q8. **Mr. McIver:**
Between August 1, 2017, and June 1, 2018, what organizations have been added to the qualified list, as referenced in the service dogs qualifications regulation, Alta. reg. 59/2017?

Orphan Well Association Contracts

- Q9. Mr. Panda:
Does the government collect information on which companies have received contracts from the Orphan Well Association to reclaim orphan well sites or orphan pipeline segments, and if so, what companies have received these contracts from April 1, 2017, to March 31, 2018?

Motions for Returns

[The Acting Clerk read the following motion for a return, which had been accepted]

Orphan Well Association Correspondence

- M18. Mr. Panda:
A return showing copies of all correspondence between the government and the Orphan Well Association from April 1, 2017, to March 31, 2018, concerning the Orphan Well Association's criteria for awarding contracts to companies to reclaim orphan well sites or orphan pipeline segments.

Electricity Price Cap Documents

- M17. Mr. Panda moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all documents, including tables and graphs, prepared between May 5, 2015, and May 31, 2018, in connection with the projections and forecasts used by the government to determine the 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour price cap on electricity.

[Debate adjourned November 26: Mrs. Aheer speaking]

The Acting Speaker: Are there any members wishing to speak?
Seeing none, I will call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion for a Return 17 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:08 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Dreeshen	Hunter	Nixon
Goodridge	Loewen	Pitt
Hanson	McIver	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Goehring	Nielsen
Babcock	Hinkley	Payne
Carlier	Hoffman	Phillips
Carson	Horne	Piquette
Ceci	Jansen	Renaud
Connolly	Kleinstauber	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Larivee	Schmidt
Cortes-Vargas	Littlewood	Schreiner
Dach	Loyola	Shepherd
Dang	Malkinson	Sucha
Drever	Mason	Turner
Fitzpatrick	McKittrick	Westhead
Ganley	Miranda	Woollard
Totals:	For – 8	Against – 39

[Motion for a Return 17 lost]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: I think the government goes first, don't they?

Mr. Mason: Yes.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Hon. Government House Leader, I just need the hon. member to move it first, and then I can address you.

Mr. McIver: Okay. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate that.

Service Dogs Qualifications Regulation

- M19. Mr. McIver moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all policy documents and recommendations prepared by Alberta Community and Social Services or its predecessor between January 1, 2016, and August 1, 2017, in connection with the development of the qualified list, as referenced in the service dogs qualifications regulation, Alta. reg. 59/2017.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I would wish to inform the House that the government is going to recommend rejecting Motion for a Return 19. The reason, primarily, is that it is a request for recommendations to the minister that the minister received and considered before making his decision. As such it's an excluded category under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. So the government is recommending rejection.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the motion? You've already moved the motion, hon. member. You can close, but if there are any other members that would wish to speak first – the hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays did not quite understand what was going on there because of the confusion, but I will attempt to stand in for him.

It's interesting to hear the government's comments – actually, you know what? Alberta regulation 59/2017 is the service dogs qualifications regulation. The document requested by the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays will aid in answering many questions such as some of these. Section 1(2) requires that the minister establish a "Qualified List" of accredited organizations to provide service dog training in Alberta. Since then 12 organizations have been accredited and are listed on the government's website.

How did the minister develop the training standards in subsection (2)(b)? Did the training standards meet the national and international standards? Seems like a reasonable question. How many of the 12 organizations on the current qualified list had been performing service dog training prior to the province announcing it would create this list? How many organizations actively training service dogs prior to Alberta regulation 59/2017 applied and did not qualify for the qualified list? Is there an appeal process? Do organizations seeking accreditation for the qualified list need to display a track record of successful training in partnership with clients? Organizations are required to include proof of incorporation in their application for the qualified list. Is that information made available to the general public?

Section 1(5) states: "The Minister shall publish and maintain the Qualified List and the Training Standards referred to in subsection

(2) as the Minister considers appropriate.” What was the minister’s rationale for including the 39 specific qualifications outlined in the Alberta service dogs qualifications assessment? According to subsection (5) the 39 assessments exercise are those the minister considers appropriate. Were there some deemed not appropriate? Another reasonable question. What consultation was involved to create the qualifications assessment list? Was any consideration given to provide flexibility for the list for the service dogs assisting with unique conditions? If so, how is that reflected in the 39 qualifying exercise? The mitigation tasks are blank. Does that mean they are at the discretion of the assessor? What kind of medical information is required by assessors to determine if the service dog is able to meet the needs of the person it is assisting?

Seems like lots of reasonable questions, which is why the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays has brought forward Motion for a Return 19, that says:

copies of all policy documents and recommendations prepared by Alberta Community and Social Services or its predecessor . . .

The reason he has to add “its predecessor” is because, as you know, the Premier had to split the ministry in two when the government fumbled the Serenity file, so what the hon. member is looking for is from both those departments now.

. . . between January 1, 2016, and August 1, 2017, in connection with the development of the qualified list, as referenced in the service dog qualifications regulation, Alta. reg. 59/2017.”

All of us in this House have heard from people associated with both training of service dogs and people with needs for service dogs and some of the frustrations that surround getting dogs at appropriate times, some of the issues around that. I think we all also know how important it is for people who ultimately are able to obtain service dogs to help them in their everyday life.

3:30

I don’t have much experience personally with service dogs, but I do remember when former Leader of the Opposition and former leader of the legacy party that I belonged to, Heather Forsyth, a long-time cabinet minister in this place, had a service dog, and the members that were here back in the 28th Legislature will remember Quill. In fact, Madam Speaker, it had its own Twitter account, and before I was an MLA, I would follow Quill’s Twitter account, fascinating to me. It seems that Quill always interpreted the day very differently than the members of the Assembly. But that service dog helped my good friend Heather Forsyth to be able to hear. She had some trouble with hearing, still does, and Quill is still around. I saw Quill not too long ago, a pretty cute dog, actually. He used to sit on this Chamber floor to help that hon. member as she did her work.

We know and we hear stories like that all the time, and I think that it’s important that the member brought these questions forward. I suspect that when he closes debate, he will have more to say about that. But I think it is disappointing that the government will not co-operate with such a simple request for information on – well, really, I can’t see this being a partisan issue such that the minister would want to not provide accurate information to this House. It seems to me the Government House Leader’s argument was that the minister does not have to provide this information because it was provided to the minister as advice. Well, I don’t think that’s fair, and I do think that the Government House Leader could still provide that to this House even if there is a rule that would allow him not to. I’m not sure. I’d have to check into that. But I certainly think that he still could if they so chose. One would have to ask why they would not want to talk about something as simple as this, and hopefully somebody over there will explain why as this debate progresses.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Ms Littlewood: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I hear that the hon. member is asking many good questions. However, as I understand it, there doesn’t seem to be any reason that asking for these briefing documents would bring any of the further information that he is requesting. However, I am sure, as I understand it, that he would be able to submit these things as written questions, and I do believe that if he were to submit them as written questions, they would produce many of the answers that he is in fact seeking out.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the motion? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Yeah, I’d like to take a moment to talk on this, too. I guess I thought it was kind of interesting that the member opposite suggested that the reason they can’t answer this question is because it’s excluded by FOIP. That’s kind of the point of the operation here, to get information to provide some clarity on different things going on in government. To use that excuse I thought was maybe kind of a little bit strange, but whatever excuse they want to use, I guess they can. But when I was kind of looking through this, too, myself, I think there are a lot of questions that we could answer by having this information. I think the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre had mentioned some of the things, the questions that could be answered had we had this information.

But when I kind of looked through here myself, I looked at the regulation itself, and under Qualifications it says:

A dog has the qualifications of a service dog for the purposes of the Act if

- (a) the dog has successfully completed a training program delivered by a school or institution that is accredited by, or that has candidacy status with, Assistance Dogs International Inc., or
- (b) the dog has successfully completed
 - (i) a training program delivered by an organization identified on the Qualified List referred to in this section, or
 - (ii) a test administered by an organization identified on the Qualified List referred to in this section.

Madam Speaker, there are some guidelines, I guess, there, and those guidelines don’t necessarily answer the questions that we would like to find here today. But if the government would provide these documents and the recommendations, then we would know exactly, you know, what process was used to get to this point.

Now, it goes on to talk about a “Qualified List” here under Qualifications in subsection (2).

The Minister shall, by order, establish

- (a) a Qualified List, and
- (b) the Training Standards that must be met for an organization to be eligible for the Qualified List.

It brings up these training standards, and that was one of the questions we had as far as the training standards. Where did they come from, who helped to make recommendations, and, you know, how did this all come about?

Now, when I look at the training methods, the list that’s created here on the government’s website: training methods and standards for dogs. Of course, this is the information that we’d be looking for, the documents and recommendations prepared by Alberta Community and Social Services or its predecessor between January 1, 2016, and

August 1, 2017, in connection with the development of the qualified list as referred to in the service dogs qualifications regulation.

Getting back to Training Methods and Standards for Dogs, that the government has listed on its website, it says:

1. The organization uses training methods that support the ethical and humane treatment of service dogs that do not cause fear, pain or other negative responses in the dog, for example, no shock collar, prong collar or similar equipment is to be used in the training or testing of a service dog.
2. The organization has a service dog training or testing program that ensures dogs that are trained or tested meet the following standards.

It goes on to talk about health, public appropriateness, behaviour, basic obedience skills, advanced skills. Under Health – again, this is under the Alberta training standard that the government has listed here – the dog is between the age of 18 months and nine years old, has current vaccinations, has been spayed if female or neutered if male, have an operating microchip that is a full duplex type conforming to ISO standards. That's on the health end of things.

Then under Public Appropriateness:

1. Are clean, well-groomed and do not have an offensive odour.

Of course, that would be pretty valuable if you have your dog in public.

2. Toilet only in appropriate circumstances and locations.

Also good if you're in public.

3. Display a jacket, cape, harness or other equipment to indicate that it is a working animal assisting a person with a disability.
4. Present as healthy and able to work.

Now under Behaviour:

1. Do not solicit attention, visit or annoy any member of the general public.
2. Do not disrupt the normal course of business.
3. Do not vocalize unnecessarily, i.e. barking, growling or whining.
4. Show no aggression towards people or other animals.
5. Do not solicit or steal food or other items from the general public.
6. Work calmly and quietly in a harness [or] leash.
7. Are able to perform tasks in public without showing distress or avoidance.
8. Are able to lie quietly beside the handler without blocking aisles, doorways, etc.
9. Stay within 24 inches of their handler at all times unless the nature of a trained task requires them to be working at a greater distance.

Madam Speaker, my wife actually has been working in child care for some years now, pretty much her whole life. She retired from that just this year, and she decided that she was going to take up volunteering for search and rescue. We both have a love of dogs, and particularly we like Jack Russells, and right now we have a Jack Russell-German shorthaired pointer cross, which, of course, is a high-energy dog but pretty intelligent, actually. That kind of interested my wife as far as maybe a search and rescue dog and the training that it would take to do that.

Now, I wish I would have paid a little closer attention when she was talking to me the other day and explaining to me the process to be able to have a dog trained for search and rescue, but I know it was very extensive. In fact, I think it even took a year or two of working with somebody that had a trained dog as a helper kind of thing in order for you to be able to handle your own dog on your own. I know the training was extensive for the dog, and I know the training for the handler was extensive, too.

We have a situation where we have these guidelines here for these dogs, these service dogs, and we know, like I say, and I've

heard how extensive the training is to have a search and rescue dog and what the handler and the dog have to go through, so it's interesting to see the guidelines that the government has here. I think that's why we would like to see these documents and these recommendations, so that we would know exactly how the government came up with this list.

3:40

Now I'll go back to the list of the requirements for the dog. Under Basic Obedience Skills the dogs:

1. Are able to demonstrate mastery of basic obedience skills sufficient to support a disabled person having public access with that dog.
2. Are able to focus on the person with a disability despite distractions, such as children running, loud noises, flashing lights, traffic, and presence of food, balls, toys or other attractants.

I know one thing about Jack Russells: if you throw a ball out there, then the chances are that that's going to take the attention of the dog. So, obviously, service dogs can't have that issue.

3. Have prompt recall directly to the handler.
4. Respond to commands 90 per cent of the time on the first command in all public environments.
5. Exhibit good canine citizenship and be able to demonstrate that the dog is safe to be in a public setting.

And under Advanced Skills. Of course, I think a lot of these things that we've discussed here so far are fairly basic for a dog to have in public.

1. Have mastered the Basic Obedience Skills set out above.
2. Are capable of performing three (3) or more tasks in order to mitigate aspects of the handler's disability, i.e. performing specific tasks which the handler is unable to do themselves due to their disability.
3. Have received a minimum of 240 hours of advanced training.

That's a fair number of hours there for advanced training.

Madam Speaker, again we go back to this motion for a return. The request is fairly simple: "policy documents and recommendations prepared." I don't feel that there should be a big issue with providing this. I don't think this is anything that would be out of the ordinary to provide. There's nothing to hide here from the public or from the opposition. This should be nonpartisan. I don't think the excuse that, "Well, it's excluded from FOIP, so we're not going to do it" is really a justifiable answer as far as being able to answer some of these questions.

We don't know what consultation was involved to create the qualification assessment list. We don't know if there was any consideration given to providing flexibility for the list for service dogs assisting with unique conditions. We know that the people that these dogs are for could have a variety of disabilities, and we don't know what kind of flexibility was allowed on that list for that. Also, what kind of medical information was required by assessors to determine if the service dog is able to meet the needs of the person it is assisting? You know, when we look at these training methods and standards for the dogs, I think we need to be sure.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Today is the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, so I'm thrilled to stand up and speak to something that is sort of peripherally related, service dogs. I don't know about you all, but when all of this came out quite some

time ago, I read through all of the lists and information that you just proceeded to go through. I am happy to talk about service dogs any day of the week. I do so in St. Albert, I do so online, and I do all the time. We talk about it. I understand it. I've gone to see the organizations that work. I know the testing standards, as do we all, because we actually understand this information.

So I'm kind of left with: what are you doing? I get the feeling sometimes that on Mondays, when it's supposed to be private members' business, we need to talk about really important things other than what your question is and, you know, your ability to run the clock out, talk about bills like private members' bills that address hate groups that want to register in Alberta. So I just wanted to stand up and say that I think service dogs are vitally important. I always have. I'm amazed and I'm thankful for the work that we've done. I know we're going to continue to do the work. I know we have lots of work to do in the future, so I hope we can wrap this up and move on to some private members' business, which is what Monday afternoons are all about.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak to the motion?

Seeing none, I will call on the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays to close debate.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you. I appreciate the introduction from the previous speaker. As is usual here, the previous speaker is wrong about almost everything she said, starting with the fact that she's talking about the opposition bringing this item together on a Monday and making suggestions about why that is. But it occurs to me, if I shuffle through my papers here and find the Order Paper for today, that this was actually due last week. As it turns out, it was the government's decision to do this today, so the main complaint by the member across is entirely unfounded.

Ms Renaud: We didn't ask you to read the rest.

Mr. McIver: Huh?

Of course, when you file a motion for a return, I'm not sure that anybody looks at what day it will come to the House. You have a question, you ask it, and it comes when it comes. So the hon. member's comment is completely unfounded and off base, but that's not a surprise.

But what she was right about is that this is the international day of people with disabilities. It's kind of apropos, really, that we should be talking about services dogs today, and I'm proud to have raised this important issue. Now, as my good friend and hon. colleague from Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre pointed out, there was a member in this House at one point that had a service dog, and certainly I became somewhat acquainted with that member and other people with service dogs, too.

It's also appropriate to raise it today, Madam Speaker, because it wasn't very long ago that a person was not allowed in the Legislative Assembly with their service dog. The only thing I'll say about it is to acknowledge that my understanding is that there are legal proceedings on that right now as a result of the person not being able to stay in here, which is probably another good reason to have a discussion about this. I won't be talking about that particular case. That would be inappropriate.

The fact is that what you have is a Government House Leader stating that he won't give the information because he doesn't have to, and you have a government backbencher saying that everybody knows. Well, if everybody knows, then the government backbencher should probably be pushing the minister to release the information

that everybody knows. [interjection] Now, the hon. member had her turn to speak, but she's not done yet, so I think perhaps we'll hear more at another time.

There are several questions here, and some of my colleagues, Madam Speaker, touched upon those. They're legitimate questions. I think it's fair to ask how, when this thing came forward, the minister developed the training standards and whether indeed those training standards meet the national and international standards because, of course, people with service dogs, like the rest of us, live their lives where they want to, and if they travel from province to province, it would be certainly convenient if the standards were the same across the country and internationally. That would have been a simple question for the government to answer, and they had the opportunity but chose not to.

Again, how many of the 12 organizations on the current list had been performing service dog training previous to the government announcing that they were going to create the list? It's a legitimate question. In other words, how many of those operators are long-time, professional, experienced operators that are just registering now that it's time to register, and how many started in the business – it could be zero, or it could be 12; I don't know – just because the government was creating the list?

Another legitimate question might be that we would have hoped to know, with communication between the government and others on this: the 12 organizations, do they all train the dogs themselves, or do some ship the dogs out to somebody else or subcontract someone else to train those dogs? Now, if they're supposed to be qualified, it's a legitimate question about whether they would actually send the dogs out somewhere else or train them themselves.

You know, really, the question that the hon. backbencher from the government asked was: what is there to know? I guess the question I would ask is: what's there to hide? That's the real question here. When the government backbencher is claiming that everything is so simple and well known, yet the government won't disclose it, one really has to ask, Madam Speaker: what, indeed, if anything, does the government have to hide? Of course, when they refuse to give any information, we can't answer that question.

Again, organizations: do they display a track record of successful training in partnerships with clients? How often does the government check on them? What was the government's motivation for making the rules that are there? Another question that one of my colleagues asked, that I think is a fair one, too, is: how much health information is asked of the person that needs and requires the service dog? One would think that primarily they would only need to know the fact that they qualify for a service dog.

Members of the House, the government . . .

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion for a Return 19 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:50 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Dreeshen	Hunter	Nixon
Goodridge	Loewen	Orr
Hanson	McIver	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hinkley	Payne
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Babcock	Hoffman	Phillips
Carlier	Horne	Piquette
Carson	Kleinstauber	Renaud
Ceci	Larivee	Rosendahl
Connolly	Littlewood	Schmidt
Coolahan	Loyola	Schreiner
Cortes-Vargas	Malkinson	Shepherd
Dang	Mason	Sucha
Drever	McKittrick	Turner
Fitzpatrick	Miranda	Westhead
Ganley	Nielsen	Woollard
Goehring		
Totals:	For – 8	Against – 37

[Motion for a Return 19 lost]

Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am requesting unanimous consent of the Assembly that notwithstanding Standing Order 8(1) Bill 206 in second reading be the first private member's bill we discuss going forward today.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Bill 206 Societies (Preventing the Promotion of Hate) Amendment Act, 2018

[Debate adjourned June 4: Mr. McIver speaking]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am rising in support of Bill 206. I think we can all agree in this House that the promotion of hate and bigotry in our society is unacceptable, and the United Conservative Party stands resolutely against it.

Alberta has been successful because it's been a welcoming place for all people from all backgrounds. This needs to be protected. It needs to be maintained, and it needs to go on into the future. This has to be a place where everybody is fully part of society, with all the rights and privileges. We need to stand against those that would promote hate and bigotry in every case. It's a positive step, in my view, that we as a Legislature are making that statement and making that stand through this piece of legislation today. I commend the member opposite for bringing it forward. Thank you.

You know what? There's just so many reasons. The fact is, Madam Speaker, that society hasn't fully learned this lesson. We see examples all the time where people need to be if not reminded, then to learn the lesson of equality in the first place. We will know, when we are finished this debate, that the Legislative Assembly of Alberta has stood for equality not for most Albertans, not for some Albertans, but for all Albertans. That is something where, on the one hand, it is sad that it has to be said; on the other hand, it's a very positive thing that it is being said.

Madam Speaker, it's certainly my feeling that this will set a tone that's positive, that sends a message not only to people coming to Alberta but in some cases to people that have lived here their entire life that we need to, in order to stay strong, remain a place that's welcoming to everyone.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays, but under Standing Order 8(7)(a)(i), which provides up to five minutes for the sponsor of a private member's public bill to close debate, I would like to invite the hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

4:10

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is great to rise to close debate on Bill 206, Societies (Preventing the Promotion of Hate) Amendment Act, 2018. It's been a long time to get here, but I'm glad we're here. I believe this piece of legislation, although simple, is a very important one. Since it has been several months since we have discussed this, I thought I'd take a few minutes to refresh our memories on the purpose of Bill 206. This bill seeks only to keep hate groups from becoming societies in Alberta and to keep them from becoming legitimized under the law.

Madam Speaker, Bill 206 amends the Societies Act by adding the term "lawful purpose" in subsection (1). This is the most important part of this legislation as it gives the registrar the ability to consider the purpose of an applicant to become a society from a perspective that considers whether its intentions are for a lawful purpose. While this seems obvious, as I've noted before, the KKK, the Ku Klux Klan, was a society until 2003, and without passing this legislation, there is nothing to stop this infamous hate group from reregistering as a society in Alberta.

The second primary change in Bill 206 is that it puts the onus on the director of a society that the group applying for society status has a lawful purpose and to ensure that this is not only valid at the time of application but that this declaration is carried out in perpetuity.

Now, a very important and positive consequence of the changes being proposed in Bill 206 is the fact that without being able to become a legitimate society, hate groups will not be able to accumulate wealth as a society. Societies are able to own and inherit property, and much like with any other organization, Madam Speaker, it is money that enables a registered society to sustain itself and grow.

We recently saw the hate group Soldiers of Odin show up at a UCP fundraiser to take selfies with the three UCP nomination candidates. Two of these candidates claim to not have known who the Soldiers of Odin were or what they represent. If we take this at face value, it lends more importance to ensuring that Bill 206 is passed in this Assembly. If potential political candidates aren't aware of an infamous hate group – apparently, they've changed their name again – why would we expect registrars to be familiar with organized hate groups? Which is why, as I stated last session, registrars will be encouraged to have a relationship with hate crime units to keep apprised of what hate groups are operating in the province and under what names.

Madam Speaker, as we know, there has been a disturbing rise in organized hate groups around the world, and unfortunately, this is very true right here in Alberta. They have become emboldened, and they've become highly visible. The fact is that hate groups appear to feel that it's a good time to rise, and Albertans should be concerned and appalled. It is the brazenness of these groups in Alberta that was the impetus for me bringing Bill 206 forward. Seeing groups such as the World Coalition Against Islam, or the WCAI, openly promote their message on the steps of Calgary city hall was very disturbing.

Now, I think we have seen good bipartisan support for this bill, as it should be, and I thank the previous speaker for his comments. I do hope that this continues. Bill 206 is a small but important part of combatting hate and hate groups in Alberta. It's small in the sense that it's not going to really reach into systemic hate, Madam

Speaker. We know that. However, we cannot as a society legitimize these groups by allowing them to become a society under the law.

With that said, Madam Speaker, I encourage all members of this Assembly to support this bill, move it forward, and send the message to these hate groups that they are not welcome and will not be legitimized as societies in Alberta. Thank you.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for second reading carried unanimously]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:15 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hanson	Nielsen
Babcock	Hinkley	Orr
Carlier	Hoffman	Payne
Carson	Horne	Phillips
Ceci	Hunter	Piquette
Clark	Kleinstauber	Renaud
Connolly	Larivee	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Littlewood	Schmidt
Cortes-Vargas	Loewen	Schreiner
Dach	Loyola	Shepherd
Dang	Malkinson	Strankman
Drever	Mason	Sucha
Fitzpatrick	McIver	Turner
Goehring	McKittrick	Westhead
Goodridge	Miranda	Woollard
Totals:	For – 45	Against – 0

[Motion carried unanimously; Bill 206 read a second time]

**Motion to Concur in the Report
from the Standing Committee
on Alberta's Economic Future**

**Bill 201
Employment Standards (Firefighter Leave)
Amendment Act, 2018**

[Debate adjourned November 5: Mr. Hunter speaking]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a privilege to be able to stand and speak to this bill, that was brought forward by our Member for Highwood. One of the things I wanted to talk about, first of all, really quickly, is that we had on September 11, 2001 – 9/11, the infamous day of 9/11 – a terrible event that happened in the world, but in 2017 on September 11 another terrible event also happened, and this was the Kenow fire in my riding.

What happened was that the fire came from B.C. When I came to check on the firefighters that were there, in anticipation they had done the necessary preparations. They had done the work that they needed to do in terms of being able to protect the townsite, to protect the park structures, and to protect one of the landmarks in that area, the Prince of Wales Hotel. What was interesting was that there were 135 firefighters that had come to help in that support. Sixty of those firefighters were structural firefighters from many jurisdictions outside of that area. They came with one purpose, and that was to protect heritage and history and to protect the property of Albertans. Many of them were volunteers. Some of them were not volunteers

– they were professional firefighters – but many of them were volunteers.

When I went to visit them, I looked into their eyes and I could see that they were concerned. This was a very fast moving fire, as we found out on September 12. When it actually came down over the Akamina Pass, it came so fast, because of the wind, that there was fire that was actually, I think they said, over a hundred feet above the treetops. It moved at breakneck speed, Madam Speaker, moving directly towards the town. They had done their necessary preparations. They had set up sprinkling units all around the outskirts. They had set up units that would immediately get to areas where these fireballs were falling from the sky because of the size and immensity of this fire, and they were able to respond quickly.

These units would actually go around to the different homes and watch the roofs and make sure that the roofs weren't on fire. If there was fire that was falling, even on them, they still got in there, and they made sure they put those fires out. They didn't lose one of the structures that they had originally planned on not losing. It was amazing to see. And it was amazing to see the brotherhood and sisterhood that was felt by all that were doing this, that were actually fighting this fire. This event showed to me the value of our hard-working and devoted firefighters.

I know that when the Member for Highwood brought forward this bill, he brought forward the bill with the intention of being able to help those firefighters, with the intention of being able to say: "You know what? We need to recognize that if they're going to step up, if they're going to stand up and do this sort of act of heroism, we need to make sure that we protect them." He had heard concerns, that had been brought forward by some of the firefighters, that perhaps if they did step up, if they were willing to be able to take the time – and even in the preparation for this Kenow fire that these firefighters had to go do, they had to take time away from their work, time away from their families. They had to sleep out there because they didn't know when it was actually going to happen, when that fire would come down over the Akamina Pass.

When the call was made, they were ready, and they were willing. What's interesting about this bill is that it was designed to address that. So, in good faith, this is the reason why the member brought this bill forward. He brought it forward with the best of intentions, but here's what happened, Madam Speaker. He brought it forward, and then we went to committee. It was sent to committee in order to be able to find out if there are any unintended consequences to this bill.

What we heard was a lot of information from business owners that if we were to pass this bill, the business owners would be, under legislation, at a disadvantage. So they implored us to take a second look, a sober second look at this bill and to try and focus on the fact that – you know what? – generally speaking, whether you're an employer or you're a reserve firefighter, Albertans are good people, and we'll rally around each other. This was what we heard.

Now, the importance of this process is that we have seen how this House can work, where you bring forward a best-intentioned bill, and then you take that best-intentioned bill and you vet it. You find out whether or not there are any unintended consequences. What we found was that this bill had some unintended consequences that we hadn't seen, that the Member for Highwood had not intended. So we took a step back and we said: "You know what? We shouldn't have this thing go forward. We should believe in Albertans that they can do the right thing when it comes to not firing our volunteer firefighters." This was a good process, Madam Speaker.

Unfortunately, what we've seen in the last three and a half years is that we have brought forward these concerns and asked this government to bring their bills to committee so that they can be properly vetted. What we've seen, unfortunately, is a complete disregard for that vetting process. Now, in this House we have the opportunity of being able to do some back and forth when we get into Committee of the Whole. That is a committee – I grant them that – but it is not where we can have a stakeholder or someone who's going to be affected by these unintended consequences come forward and give material evidence that it will be a problem for them.

We've had this discussion and conversation a few times, but I wanted to bring your attention, Madam Speaker, to the fact that we have now seen how the process can actually work properly and effectively. I think that the value of being able to say, "Let's vet these bills; let's take them back and see whether or not there are any unintended consequences" can only benefit Albertans, can only benefit the people whom we decide we're going to add a regulatory burden onto. I hope that the government has had the opportunity to be able to see this process, to be able to see it and how it can be effective, and I hope that they'll reconsider future bills.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

4:40

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Anybody else wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Mr. Dreeshen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm happy to rise today in the House to speak on the concurrence motion for Bill 201, the Employment Standards (Firefighter Leave) Amendment Act, 2018, which was introduced, as was mentioned earlier, by my colleague from Highwood earlier this year.

This bill would have prevented employers from discriminating against employees who are volunteer firefighters, Madam Speaker. With this legislation employers could not dismiss employees based on their work as a volunteer firefighter. I commend my colleague for introducing this legislation. As the Member for Highwood has said, this bill was introduced after a volunteer firefighter was actually dismissed because of his role as a firefighter. His employer ultimately gave him an ultimatum, saying: you either give up firefighting, or you give up this job. This was obviously a very unreasonable employer. However, this situation did happen, and there is a possibility that a volunteer firefighter could be in this situation again. The Member for Highwood heard this concern and introduced this private member's bill as a response, which I give him credit for. That's what our role as legislators is. It's to listen to Albertans and to represent their interests in this Assembly.

Now, Madam Speaker, I have a great deal of respect for the firefighters of our province. There are few other occupations where workers sacrifice time away from home and away from their families to protect other Albertans, and firefighters are often putting their own lives on the line to ensure the safety of others. Answering the call as a firefighter means you have to be ready for anything, and you don't know what you could be facing. You never know the situation that you will end up in, and you never know the danger that you will be put in. However, the firefighters that I know would not have it any other way, and they are truly honoured to serve.

Now, the riding of Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, that I represent, covers a large rural area, and I know first-hand how volunteer firefighters in my riding and in other rural ridings across the province are vital to Alberta's economy. Industries located outside of major centres need to have fire services close by. However, in rural counties and small towns they simply cannot afford to staff a fully functional fire

detachment, and that is where volunteer firefighters come in. They are able to come in and assist when needed but are still able to work at a full-time job. Really, a volunteer firefighter is a story of being a good citizen. It's about helping your neighbour, and there are few better ways to serve your community.

In fact, just last month in my constituency a truck carrying hay bales caught fire just south of Innisfail on highway 2. Of course, everyone in this Assembly knows how busy highway 2 is and can be. Knowing that, they can imagine how many people could have been put at risk because of this fire. However, the hard-working firefighters from both Bowden and Innisfail, both in my constituency, answered the call and were able to secure the scene. They kept people out of harm's way, and after four hours they were able to extinguish the fire. A local farmer even came out to assist. Stories like these from firefighters: they happen every day, Madam Speaker. In Alberta we have to give a tremendous amount of respect to those front-line personnel. Again, on a personal note, last Saturday I was in Springbrook honouring firefighter Thomas Crozman with an Alberta emergency service medal, and two weeks ago I was at Gleniffer Lake honouring firefighter Logan Dye with another Alberta emergency service medal.

Now, Madam Speaker, as a rural resident I know the struggles that rural and small-town fire departments face trying to recruit firefighters. Many of these firefighters are my friends, neighbours, and important community members. When fire detachments cannot find volunteers, they have to start looking for paid staff. This puts an increased burden on municipalities and their tax base as they don't have the population to support it. Businesses suffer, and residents have to pay more in taxes to support the fire department. This has a possibility to make municipalities uncompetitive to businesses and hurt their economy. We know that this current government has already taxed Albertans enough, so any measures that can help recruit volunteer firefighters and lower the tax burden are a good thing for Alberta.

Another issue that arises in rural areas is response times going up when there are not enough volunteers. This is also bad for businesses, but it can also be a serious safety issue if municipalities are unable to provide enough firefighters to adequately provide this service, which brings us to the bill that is before the Assembly. Bill 201 would attempt to make it easier to recruit firefighters by preventing employers from discriminating, losing them their job because of their involvement as a volunteer firefighter. This could solve this issue. Businesses would be more viable to recruit, and recruitment would be easier, and taxes would be lower, and our rural economy could thrive. If this bill could accomplish this, I believe that it would be a very noble and worthwhile cause.

However, as this bill was studied at committee, some concerns were brought up by stakeholders. One of the first concerns that was brought up was the creation of an adversarial relationship between businesses and the fire departments. Businesses do not want to be handcuffed with this legislation. The stakeholders that spoke expressed concerns for the unintended consequences of this bill if it was brought into law. As I mentioned earlier, there is a great concern with the recruitment of firefighters, and some felt as though putting this additional regulation on employers would make it more likely that an employee would not volunteer to be a firefighter as they would not want to damage the relationship with their employer.

Madam Speaker, further to this, a few rural fire chiefs expressed concerns that this bill would undermine the work that they have done to build relationships with local businesses and recruit firefighters. Rural fire chiefs know that they have to work hard to get recruits, which is why they try to create partnerships with employers that potential recruits actually work for. This is a strategy

that, according to stakeholders, is helping recruit additional volunteers. I have concerns that passing this bill would undermine some of that work. I trust that what the rural fire chiefs are doing is actually working and that they know the business. I believe that they know what is the best way to actually recruit firefighters.

Madam Speaker, I appreciate the efforts of my colleague bringing forward this bill, and I appreciate that he was able to attempt to create a solution for this problem of recruiting volunteer firefighters. I believe that that was a worthwhile goal, and I respect that he was able to listen to Albertans in developing this bill.

I would also like to acknowledge the work of the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future as it was able to study this legislation carefully and gather input from relative stakeholders. This is how legislation should be developed. The work of committee is very important in the legislative process, and I am happy that we were able to use it in the progression of this bill. I know that this government can actually take a few lessons from proper consultations, and listening to stakeholders is something that the NDP might actually be able to learn from. Maybe they wouldn't have put forward their carbon tax, that they never actually proposed to Albertans, or maybe they wouldn't have introduced Bill 6, which, again, was a disastrous record for consultation. But committees ultimately are set up to study legislation in depth, and it would be wonderful if this government would use committees to actually study its legislation. But at least this time around, for Bill 201 we were able to listen to stakeholders and do our due diligence to ensure that we got it right.

Bill 201 was a very well-intended piece of legislation, and its desire was the increase in availability for rural fire detachments to recruit and retain volunteers. However, Madam Speaker, I hope all members of this House and especially the government continue to consult with firefighters in Alberta and find out additional ways that we can actually support them. As I said earlier, firefighters have a very important role, and they sacrifice much to serve the community. As elected officials let's continue to reach out to rural communities and rural fire chiefs and study other ways that we can be of assistance to first responders in our province. They truly are the heroes of our communities.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

4:50

Mr. Cooper: Why, thank you. It's a pleasure to rise today. I would just like to thank my colleague from Innisfail-Sylvan Lake for his thoughtful comments as well. You know, if there's one thing he knows about, being the son of a farmer, it's rural Alberta and the unique challenges that rural Alberta faces. He's done a great job in many respects here in the House already in his short time; as well, he has done a great job in the constituency of Innisfail-Sylvan Lake. I know that I have the opportunity to speak to lots of his constituents. As you know, Madam Speaker, our constituencies are side by side. Not yours and mine, but the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake's and the constituency that I have the pleasure of representing are side by side, so we wind up with a number of different joint projects as well as constituents that share information with both of our offices. I just so much appreciate the collaboration and co-operation that can take place in that great central Alberta region.

The Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake has done a lot of great work on rural fire protection and has been a strong advocate for

volunteer firefighters in that region. I know that you know, Madam Speaker, the vital role that volunteer fire departments play not just in rural Alberta or in central Alberta but clear across our province. The vast, vast, vast majority of all those who protect our property from fire are actually volunteers.

In fact, just yesterday many folks in this very Chamber had the pleasure or the displeasure . . .

Mr. Strankman: Adventure.

Mr. Cooper: Adventure. I think my colleague from Drumheller-Stettler has hit the nail on the head here.

. . . the adventure of travelling to the capital. You know, we're so blessed and honoured to be able to do that week in and week out, and some weeks are more exciting than others, in particular yesterday, Madam Speaker, even here in Edmonton. I can only imagine that your commute was a few blocks, but for some of us, travelling up and down highway 2 can be an adventure. It certainly was that yesterday.

I know that the good, the outstanding volunteer fire department from Olds was out on the highway for an extended period of time yesterday protecting not just the lives of those who had been involved in a number of motor vehicle accidents but also protecting everybody else using the highway to ensure that they were also safe. I know that my colleague from Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills or Bonnyville-Cold Lake or whatever the new name is of the constituency was in Calgary this weekend and also travelled through that particular area of the province and saw the good work that our volunteer firefighters do. It's not just fighting fires, but it's also spending time saving lives, predominantly, at least in Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, along the provincial highways, in particular highway 2. Those of you who are from the east side of the province will certainly know they do a lot of work on highway 21 as well, these busy transportation corridors, protecting both those who have been in motor vehicle accidents and those using the highway.

One of the reasons why I was pleased to see my colleague from Highwood bring forward this particular piece of legislation, Bill 201, that protects individuals from loss of employment because they are or have become a part-time or casual or volunteer firefighter: I think that it's important that we respect and honour the commitment that these volunteer firefighters make and that we respect and honour the fact that they are putting their lives on the line. Some have experienced hardship in their employment situation as a result of that commitment to the public. I know that my colleague from Highwood was seeking to endeavour to create some solutions around this very problem.

Like the government so often does – and I know my colleague from Drumheller-Stettler is very familiar with this process, very, very familiar with the process with respect to private members' business. As they so often do, they send a piece of private members' business to committee, and that's exactly what happened here on Bill 201, as you know. I know some of my colleagues have chatted at some length about this particular bill and the fact that it wound up in committee. More often than not, with respect to government business anyway, members of the Official Opposition or other independents or whatever other folks here in the Assembly will make a recommendation to send bills to committee. The reason why they do that is for thoughtful consideration. I think that it really helps the process and creates certainty around the legislation.

Now, it's unfortunate, though, that the government, during this term of the Legislature anyway, has actually used committee as a place to send legislation – they would like to send it to die.

Mr. Strankman: Terminate.

Mr. Cooper: Terminate.

Really, more often than not, the legislation that the government has sent with respect to private members' business has been dead on arrival at committee, and I think that's also what we've seen here with Bill 201.

Now, I understand that there were a number of stakeholders who presented at the committee, particularly the professional firefighters. Let me just take a moment to thank those individuals as well, the men and women that protect our cities and the larger communities across the province, that put their lives on the line and do so in a professional manner. You know, they do incredible, incredible work. But in this case many of those associations and organizations, along with the professional firefighters, had some concerns about this legislation, and I think the government heard those concerns more than – sorry. I will apologize and withdraw that particular reference to the government because it certainly wasn't the government that heard those concerns louder. It was certainly the committee that heard those concerns louder than the concerns of some of the smaller rural fire departments or smaller rural firemen or -women that defend our smaller regions across the province.

The committee definitely, it would seem – and I know that you have read the report with, I would imagine, bated breath while you read it with anticipation of just exactly what was in the report, so you'll know that that report raised some significant concerns.

I think that it's important that we reiterate that across rural Alberta and in these smaller departments – you know, I think of departments like the communities of Carstairs and Didsbury and Three Hills, all of which would have less than 30 members, many of which have employment outside of the community. If we were just to use the example of Sunday's call, I know that the department was out on the highway for upwards of six hours while they cleared multiple vehicle accidents. So here's a situation where these folks have left their families and the ones that care the most about them to go out and stand in the middle of a blizzard to protect the needs of those who have been injured in this accident and to manage the highway for the rest of us.

While on this particular occasion it was on a Sunday, so there was no loss of employment and there were no concerns for most of them – obviously, some of them would work on a Sunday, but the vast majority of them would have not had to leave work in order to do that – should that have been any other day of the week, it does present a challenge for those individuals that have to leave work and could potentially have a negative impact on their employment. I was a little disheartened that the committee didn't take the concerns of those rural departments and the ability . . .

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Hon. members, the time limit for the consideration of this item has concluded.

5:00 Motions Other than Government Motions

The Acting Speaker: I will now recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Active Transportation

508. Mr. Shepherd moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to undergo an examination of government of Alberta websites, educational resources, and public information campaign print material to develop new content to encourage active transportation through physical activity

and to ensure that existing communications do not create barriers to engaging in active transportation through physical activity.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is indeed a pleasure to rise in the House today to bring forward Motion 508. Now, the reason I brought this forward is that one of the challenges we face as a very technologically engaged society, where it sort of is part of everything that we do, is that often we don't understand the full impact of adopting a new technology until well after it's become so fully adopted that we can't imagine living without it. By that point it can be incredibly difficult to make changes to counteract what may be some negative effects while hanging on to the positive changes.

One significant and transformative shift in the last century was the introduction of the automobile, bringing cars in. You know, they started out as a novelty, but as prices came down, more and more people started buying them. The number of cars on the streets started to increase, and we had to figure out how we were going to accommodate them in what was at that time a public space. In the 1910s and '20s there was a lot of fierce debate over how we were going to use our city streets because at that time they were a public space. They were full of pedestrians, street vendors, horse-drawn carts, and streetcars, and cars coming into that space changed that dynamic.

By 1925 we had nearly 16,000 people dying annually, mostly children and seniors, after being struck by cars. That's a 16-fold increase over 20 years previous. As we had more cars, we had more incidents of people dying, and we had to figure out how this was going to be addressed. Those accidents at the time were largely viewed as the fault of drivers in vehicles because they were the new piece on the road, and there began to be real advocacy amongst people for limits on vehicles, including putting limits on how fast a vehicle could go, building that right into the cars.

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

Car companies, of course, got concerned that it could impact their sales. They mounted an intense campaign to change public perception. They implemented school safety classes, that they paid for, to teach children that streets were for cars and they should not play there. They lobbied for new traffic laws, creating the brand new crime of jaywalking, along with a public campaign shaming people who entered to cross a street anywhere but in a crosswalk. They spent money to influence newspaper coverage.

That was a perception that began to take root, so eventually we had that change in public perception. Streets became dedicated to cars, and as our cities grew, we began to design our streets and our communities around them. The result is that a vast majority of people now drive instead of walking, biking, taking transit, or using some other form of active transportation, and the unintended side effect is that as a result we're much less healthy.

We know that chronic conditions and diseases are responsible for about 80 per cent of health care costs, illnesses, and disabilities because of hospitalizations, emergency department visits, and family physician visits. Indeed, we know that the risk of obesity increases by 6 per cent for every hour that an individual spends in a car each day. Indeed, the Canadian physical activity guidelines note that being physically active can in fact help prevent many chronic conditions and diseases such as being overweight and obesity, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, certain types of cancer, and stroke.

Even though we know that is true, we also know that 43 per cent of adults in Alberta are not in fact getting the recommended 150 minutes of physical exercise and activity per week that would

achieve those health benefits. We know that just even the simple act of walking to and from public transit can help an adult achieve 8 to 33 minutes more of physical activity each day. For 11- to 12-year-olds walking to and from school can contribute 22 minutes, or over one-third, of the total recommended daily moderate to vigorous activity to maintain their health.

With health care being the largest line item in the provincial budget and chronic conditions being a significant driver in the growth of those costs, it makes sense to me that the government of Alberta should want to encourage more people to use active transportation when and where they can. But at times, unfortunately, this hasn't always been true. I don't think that's intentional. I think it's more just a case that, understandably, sort of the patterns that we've built as a society, these longer term cultural biases, just happen to lead to these sorts of views appearing in some of the longer standing educational resources and safety campaigns.

A couple of years ago I had some constituents that reached out to me to express concern about an Alberta Health web page on cycling safety that suggested it was dangerous for parents to transport young children by bike because of the danger of falling or being struck by a vehicle. That's despite the fact that new equipment like bike trailers and cargo bikes greatly reduce the injury in a fall and that the growth of protected and separated cycling infrastructure gives many parents safe places to ride.

As Edmonton's downtown continues to be revitalized, with more and more people living and moving through our streets in my constituency, and recognizing that those streets can have a high volume of traffic, I've had constituents reach out to me to express concerns about the traffic safety messaging from Alberta Transportation that they felt suggested that the sole responsibility for safety lies with pedestrians.

As I noted in telling that story initially about how we got to the point where we are and the advent of jaywalking and some of these other things, the public messages we send and the priorities they communicate can have a real impact on how individuals perceive and choose to behave. That can ripple out and have far larger consequences. That's why I've brought this motion forward today to encourage the government of Alberta to conduct a review of all the materials it produces on the question of traffic safety and active transportation to ensure that it aligns with what is clearly a goal for all orders to government, to encourage and enable people to be more active in every aspect of their everyday life.

On that note, I'd like to acknowledge some of the progress we've already made on that front. In both of the instances I mentioned with Alberta Health and Alberta Transportation, I was able to reach out to them to share my concerns. In the case of Alberta Health they immediately removed the incorrect information from their website, and it was shortly replaced with updated and more accurate information. In the case of Alberta Transportation I had the chance to first reach out to and speak with and later have a meeting with some of the leads of the communications team in that department to discuss their pedestrian safety campaigns. We were able to work together to find some adjustments that helped improve some of their messaging.

I'm also aware that Alberta Transportation has been working with local municipalities to create standards and guidelines for active transportation infrastructure such as bike lanes and that Alberta Health Services supports and funds initiatives like the UWalk website, WalkABLE Alberta, and the Alberta Centre for Active Living, which work to help get more people out and get active in getting to work or around in their communities. My motion is intended to build on that good work in partnership with many in the community who are also advocating to make active transportation

a truly safe, accessible, and enjoyable option for Albertans across the province in all communities.

I've had the pleasure of working with my colleague the MLA for Sherwood Park in supporting a coalition of cycling organizations in preparing a report with recommended updates for cycling legislation. This came together after five cyclists were injured while on a group ride in August after being struck by a vehicle on the Sherwood Park freeway. I'd like to thank the Minister of Transportation and his staff for their willingness to hold an open dialogue on that work.

The city of Edmonton also continues to make improvements. They've recently implemented scramble intersections in some high-traffic areas of our city. Scramble intersections provide a light cycle that is only for pedestrians, where pedestrians can cross either on the diagonal or other ways. This reduces interaction between vehicles and pedestrians, making things safer and more efficient for everybody.

When Stantec, a major international engineering firm based here in my constituency, recognized that many of the employees they were recruiting wanted to live downtown and be able to walk and bike to work, they conducted a free study and analysis for a protected bike grid in downtown Edmonton. They presented it to the city of Edmonton, who immediately adopted it and funded it, and it opened last year.

I've also had many good conversations with Greg Christenson of Christenson Developments, a passionate supporter of walkable communities who works to design and build residences for seniors that incorporate infrastructure and are built in areas that allow and encourage them to be able to safely walk and be active as they go about their day.

I've had the chance to work and talk with folks in organizations like Safe Healthy Active People Everywhere, or S.H.A.P.E., Ever Active Schools, and others about their work to help establish programs to support kids to safely walk, bike, and wheel to school. Of course, I've had the opportunity to work with some of my local community leagues and folks like Bike Edmonton, Paths for People, and the Downtown Edmonton and Oliver community leagues, who all continue to raise and advance these conversations around safety and accessibility.

5:10

I'm very pleased to hear about the work that's being done in various ministries across government to promote and support active transportation, and it's my hope that this motion can support that work by ensuring that all government resources and communication support the goal of encouraging and enabling Albertans to find more opportunities to incorporate physical activity as a natural part of their everyday lives and does not discourage them from doing so.

I look forward to the debate here and hearing from some other members, and it's my hope that we will see this motion pass. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Any members wishing to speak to Motion 508? The Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One thing I appreciate is that when the MLA for Edmonton-Centre speaks about active transportation, I know that he practices it. I think we all know that this MLA is dedicated to cycling to work. I really admire him because he's so passionate about active transportation and he lives out the talk. I think that as an MLA this is something incredible, and maybe we should all follow his example of doing that.

I really appreciate the motion because we all know the importance of active living. Since I'm an older adult, I have come

to really understand that if you don't start active living and if you don't start walking, cycling, or really rethink your attachment to your car when you are younger, as you get older you won't be able to continue to have an active lifestyle. I can say that this is one of the lessons that I personally have experienced, and I'm so glad that we have this motion that hopefully will incite the government to really start working not only on their websites but also with community to make sure that young people really start to have an active lifestyle earlier.

I don't know about you, but I wear a Fitbit, and if we were able to talk to each other in this Assembly, I'm wondering how many of the MLAs are attached to their Fitbit and make sure that they do their 10,000 steps every day. It's probably easy for us because we go between the Federal Building and the Assembly and we run up and down the stairs, so in a way we're very lucky. But I think that, apart from the Member for Edmonton-Centre and a few of the MLAs that live around the Legislative Assembly, we come here by car. Some of us, unless we are addicted like myself to our Fitbits and go up and down the stairs, probably have no opportunity to walk, and we might regret it in later years.

I've kind of looked at examples of what the government has supported in the past around active living and especially what communities have done around Alberta. The first thing. I think today we heard a really perfect example of encouraging the government to be active in active transportation with the discussion that the Minister of Transportation had in response to my colleague from Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville when talking about how the river alliance is going to connect trails to a bridge. Having been on those trails that the river alliance has been working on along the river, I know that there are many hikers, walkers, and cyclists who are going to really use that connecting bridge to possibly make it easier for them to commute into Edmonton from Fort Saskatchewan or Sherwood Park. I think that's a really good example of what the Member for Edmonton-Centre is looking at.

I used to work for a university where if you cycled to work, you had an incentive. You could benefit from discounts and so on. That was a way that that employer used, through their website and through employee programs and so on, to incite the workforce and the students to use a cycle. Maybe the government, as it does the examination of its website, educational resources, and public information campaigns, might also develop some incentives to encourage people.

Then I think of an organization like folk fest. Now, I don't know about the Calgary folk fest, but I'm a huge attendee at the Edmonton Folk Fest, where there is encouragement to bike or to walk because there are safe places to put your bike. Maybe through this information campaign the government could work with other organizations to make sure that there's safe parking for bikes and also that they encourage their patrons at other festivals to walk.

Then I'm looking at older adults. As I've said, I'm an older adult. I look to see what's happening with the older adult population. There's a club here in Edmonton. I'm sure there's probably the same one in Calgary. It's called the Rocky Mountain seniors club. What do you think these seniors do? During the spring and summer and fall months these seniors cycle, and they don't just cycle 10 kilometres and so on. They understand the importance of active transportation, and they cycle 40, 50, 100 kilometres. They do it every day. I could see that this website could give information about a club like the Rocky Mountain seniors club. This group cycles during the summer and spring, and then they ski in the winter.

Then I'm thinking about the work that the Member for Edmonton-Centre and I have done with the cycling coalition around safe cycling. One of the things that prevents people from cycling is

that they don't feel safe on the roads. The bike lanes in Edmonton are going to result in a lot more people looking at cycling.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Every time I see an adult cyclist on the sidewalk, I know that they're on the sidewalk because they don't feel safe on the road. If you're an experienced cyclist, you know that cycling on the sidewalk is often more dangerous than cycling on the road because nobody knows that you're on the sidewalk. So I'm very, very delighted by efforts of Calgary, Edmonton, Red Deer, Lethbridge, I think, and other municipalities. They really understand that if they're going to encourage people to cycle or to walk, then they need to make sure that we have the appropriate bike lanes.

When I look at the need, I also think of what's happening in schools. We know that we have built our communities so that it's more and more difficult for children to cycle or to walk to school. We have school of choice, and parents are transporting their children not by the bus. When I was more involved with the elementary school system, when my kids were younger, there was a really interesting program that's called the walking school bus, where parents got together to encourage children to walk to school. They pretended it was like a bus. There was a leader that was the bus driver, but it was a walking person – I can't remember the term – and then children all followed up in a bus. I could see this website helping parents or parent councils develop more walking school buses so that more and more children and parents feel safe to have their child walk to school.

I know that the Member for Edmonton-Centre has looked at the whole issue of safe bike racks for schools, right? If the parents and the children, the students, feel that they can cycle to school and that it's safe and that there's an appropriate bike rack for their bike, then they're more likely to cycle. There's nothing worse for a child than to cycle to school and then go and pick up their bike at the end of the day and find that their bike is gone.

There are all kinds of things that could happen through these enhanced websites and educational resources around looking at what the barriers are to active transportation, be it among the young people, adults commuting to work, or the older adults who really want to remain active. I know there's somebody that I know that's going to be coming later on this week to be introduced. This is an incredible lady. She's in her 70s, and she can do 100 kilometres per day on her bike. The reason that she can do it is because she's maintained an active lifestyle all through the years, and she really didn't just drive around the car without walking or cycling.

5:20

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, I really appreciate this motion. It sounds like, at first ring, it's a motion that is status quo. But the more that you kind of look down at some of the existing barriers to active transportation among the various age groups, as you look at municipal planning issues, when you look where the schools are located, when you look at the lack of information, you realize what an important motion it is.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, I'll ask the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre to close debate.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I will take it from the lack of debate that there is general support for the motion in the room. I recognize that this is not something that perhaps rises to the level of some of the current issues that we're dealing with in the

province, whether those be some of the fiscal challenges and realities or the current crisis on the oil differential or some of these other things, but as I outlined, I think it is part and parcel of the work that we do as a government.

As I outlined earlier, I think the way that we communicate things, the way that we talk about things does have an influence on the behaviour that people choose. I think we are working now towards trying to adjust some elements of the culture that we've developed around transportation and the way we design our cities and other things in light of recognizing the impacts that have begun because small things ripple out and have larger effects. As I outlined, the kinds of health crises that we're facing, that we're dealing with, the kinds of challenges we're facing in our health care system: many of them are preventable, but it requires a new approach and some adjustments in our lifestyle. Part of how we help people adjust lifestyle is that we adjust how we think about some of the different systems and indeed the impact of design on people's everyday life. I know that many of our municipalities, the city of Edmonton and others, and indeed cities across Canada and around the world are beginning to have these conversations about how we better design our environments to provide people with incentives and natural opportunities to be able to change the way we move around.

Now, to be clear, Madam Speaker, I am not against cars. I own a vehicle. I've owned a vehicle steadily for many, many years. I recognize there are times when I need to drive. Indeed, this is probably the year when I've cycled less than I ever have before for a number of circumstances, some to do with health, some simply to do with my schedule and other issues. But I recognize that driving is a necessity, and it needs to be still supported and incorporated as part of how our cities move. Indeed, the lifestyle that we have depends on being able to move and transport goods and people by vehicle. That's important. But what I am saying is that it's important that we continue to work on what changes we are able to make to help people be able to live a healthier lifestyle by providing the supports and infrastructure that allow them and, in fact, incent them to use active transportation.

The city of Edmonton has been doing some great work on this. They've signed on to the Vision Zero campaign, which is a campaign that's working towards zero fatalities from collisions between vehicles and pedestrians or cyclists. The Vision Zero campaign works not by shaming anybody involved in that, whether that be drivers or pedestrians or cyclists, but on improving design. They've found many tried-and-true methods simply by changing how an intersection is structured or signed or how paint is laid on the road. It changes how people perceive, how drivers behave, and

indeed how pedestrians, cyclists, and other people that are engaging on the roadways act. These provide natural nudges, as it were, kind of like they do with advertising and other psychological nudges, that just create a safer environment and make it easier for everyone. I think that's incredibly important.

As my colleague the hon. Member for Sherwood Park noted, seniors, young people, that traditionally used to be much more active in the community, used to play in the streets, used to ride their bikes around the community – seniors want to be able to do that still. I have a number of seniors' residences downtown, and I often hear from them about their concerns about crossing busy roadways or changes in infrastructure that make it more difficult for them to get around and how that limits them. Then they end up having to stay at home more. They're not able to get around. That lowers their opportunities for social interaction and leads to degradations in their mental and indeed their physical health.

These are very important steps to take, and what this motion is about is simply recognizing that we ought to continue to update how we talk about this as a government, as one of the leading bodies that is working with health care providers, that is working with sports and recreation groups, that is working with the population, that we want to show leadership in using messaging that doesn't discourage people, that doesn't create further shame but instead helps advance that conversation for cyclists, for drivers, for pedestrians.

I really appreciate that groups like the AMA, the Alberta Motor Association, have been very active on this front. They've been working with the cycling coalition that the Member for Sherwood Park spoke about, that we've been working with. They've been showing real leadership in wanting to advance that conversation, improve our messaging, our education, and help move this forward as well. I really want to recognize all the folks that have been doing this work in the community.

Thank you, everyone, for this motion.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 508 carried]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Seeing the time and the progress we've made, knowing that we've got an evening ahead of us tonight, I would propose that we call it 6 o'clock and adjourn until 7:30 this evening.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:27 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday evening, December 3, 2018

Day 57

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Monday, December 3, 2018

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: Good evening. Please be seated.

Government Motions

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ethics Commissioner

34. Larivee moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly concur in the report of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices tabled on November 7, 2018, Sessional Paper 353/2018, and recommend to the Lieutenant Governor in Council that the Hon. Marguerite Trussler be reappointed Ethics Commissioner for a term to expire on May 25, 2024.

Larivee: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Anybody wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you very much, Madam Chair – Speaker. Sorry. We'll get to Madam Chair a little later tonight. I will also rise on behalf of the opposition caucus in regard to this motion from the Government House Leader and indicate our support for the reappointment of Justice Trussler as Ethics Commissioner, and I would suggest to all of my colleagues that we vote in support of this motion.

The Acting Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, would the hon. Deputy Government House Leader like to close debate?

Larivee: Sure. I would now like to close debate.

[Government Motion 34 carried]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Statutes Repeal

37. Larivee moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:
Be it resolved that pursuant to section 3 of the Statutes Repeal Act, SA 2013, cS-19.3, the Legislative Assembly resolves that the following statutes, appearing on the list of statutes to be repealed which was tabled in the Assembly by the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General on April 11, 2018, Sessional Paper 81/2018, not be repealed:
1. Black Creek Heritage Rangeland Trails Act (2004 cB-2.5)
 2. Forest Reserves Amendment Act, 2004 (2004 c9) s8
 3. Health Professions Act (RSA 2000 cH-7) ss155(1)(c), 156(n), (u), scheds. 1
 4. Health Professions Amendment Act, 2008 (2008 c34) ss12, 13, 15
 5. Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves and Natural Areas Amendment Act (RSA 2000 c34 (supp)) s8 (adds s8.1(3)).

Larivee: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak to the motion?

Seeing none, Deputy Government House Leader, do you want to close debate?

[Government Motion 37 carried]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Enactment Continuation

38. Larivee moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly approve the continuation of the following enactments:
- A. the ATB Financial Act;
 - B. section 2 of the Rural Electrification Long-term Financing Act;
 - C. sections 32 and 33 of the Rural Utilities Act; and
 - D. sections 3 and 36 of the Rural Electrification Loan Act.

Larivee: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak to the motion?

Seeing none, Deputy Government House Leader, do you want to close debate?

Larivee: Yes, please.

[Government Motion 38 carried]

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 30

Mental Health Services Protection Act

[Adjourned debate November 29: Mr. Clark]

The Acting Speaker: Are there any members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. A privilege to rise and speak today to this bill. I think it's an important bill. Of course, we're just getting into it, so there are lots of questions yet. I'm optimistic, though, that there are some good things here. I have a series of questions, though, that I think will be helpful.

Let me begin by saying that good counselling is extremely important. I really do believe that many, many people in life do profit from the opportunity to sometimes just share their concerns and have somebody to think their way through their problem with, sometimes to receive encouragement and help, sometimes to get some, actually, concrete guidance that's useful for them to appropriate. So I think it's important that we consider this.

Of course, there are two pieces to this Bill 30, one with regard to counsellors, the other with regard to the licensing of addictions centres, which is a different consideration altogether in many ways. I've had the privilege of being quite involved in a number of addictions treatment centres and counselling situations throughout the years.

Let me begin, first of all, by talking about the college of counselling therapy. One of the values here of this will be that the insurance companies will have a clear understanding of who is an accredited or a reliable counsellor. So in many cases there are health policies and mental health policies that they would pay toward, but in some cases now they're unsure about that: they're not, they do.

It's a questionable issue for them, so I think it will be helpful in that way. I spoke to a counselling centre this afternoon in Red Deer, and they're actually in support of this bill basically for that very reason, because they feel it will help make clear for both them and the insurance companies when payment is to be authorized and when it's not.

They also feel that creating a college of counsellors may in fact help to relieve the shortage of qualified and capable counsellors in Alberta. We are facing tremendous addiction issues and the challenge of fentanyl and other things, and there is a need for counsellors. In many cases people are having to wait for months and months to actually be able to see a qualified therapist, so by creating a college, this will I think help to clarify some of this, help to make it just a better relationship all around because, quite frankly, it is quite a wide open field at this point in time. So I think that it will be helpful in that regard.

Smaller associations, though, have expressed some concerns about representation rights, so I hope that that will be addressed, whether the representation will be fair and equitable all the way along. Yeah. There are about 14 different associations across the province, so pulling them together and making an equal playing field for all there, I think, will be a useful exercise.

With regard to the addiction treatment centres and licensing for them, I do have some questions on this, and I suspect that while this bill is going through, again, in a rushed format, a couple of days – we just got it Thursday. We expect to have this passed in a few days here. How much consultation has actually taken place with some of those that are really doing addictions treatment? I suspect not a lot. I know that a couple that I have phoned, no one ever spoke to them about it. So once again we have a government that's rushing through with ideas. Don't know where they get them from because in many cases they're not speaking to the people who are actually doing the job, the people who are actually creating the assistance for people.

There's a question that has been raised by one of them about the possibility of regulation of fees, particularly for private centres. Will the fees be regulated? How will they be set, and on what basis will they be set? This is an important question for them. They would like to know, with regard to fees, how that's going to be managed or how it's going to be regulated and how that will compare with the cost of government-run facilities.

7:40

There's also clearly expected to be an increased cost to participants in some cases. For many people finding treatment is an extremely expensive proposition. Residential treatment is not cheap anywhere. Is this going to push the cost up again in a way that will exclude some people and actually create fewer people being able to take advantage of addiction treatment?

There are questions about how this will influence AADAC. AADAC was originally created as a forum or as a context where Albertans could help Albertans. There has always been a huge value of humans helping humans. I get a little bit concerned if we take the idea that all help has to be somehow elitist or somehow professional, as if ordinary people can't help ordinary people. In many cases it's friends, it's neighbours, it's family that stick with people that have addictions challenges, that walk with them through the journey, that pick up the pieces with them over and over and over again. I think it's important that we somehow in the midst of this preserve the idea that all Albertans actually have something to contribute to this conversation because it impacts their families, it impacts their lives, and it impacts their jobs. So I think that we really do need to make sure that this does not make it somehow

exclusive in the sense that Albertans can't help Albertans, can't participate in that.

It's been an ongoing challenge for new treatment centres to open. Sometimes it takes real spontaneity and creativity. I can cite two, for example, that are somewhat unique to the average, run-of-the-mill centre. In my riding there's one out in the country. It's out in a very rural area. It was started by, actually, a worker from Fort McMurray who used to work up there or do some contracting up there. His daughter was killed by an alcoholic in a driving accident. Rather than just get mad and be mad at the world forever, this individual chose to try to do something about it. He began to start to work just with people that he knew. He slowly built up a counselling centre. He has professional staff on-site. He has detox on-site with 24-hour medical people available. He's expanded. He now has another one in Kelowna, one on the east coast, one in California and is still growing. The kind of innovation and creativity and spontaneity that he was able to exhibit to create a centre that now touches, has touched over the years hundreds of people's lives.

I'm concerned when government regulation gets in the way and prevents those kinds of very good things from happening in Alberta. I hope this doesn't become an issue where those kinds of new initiatives are restrained, are prevented through excessive regulation, where these kinds of good works for Albertans are no longer able to happen.

I was also going to say that the other centre, of course, is in Calgary. A lady there, whose daughter also was having addictions issues, has been able to create some addictions treatment by really using the challenge and the effort and the discipline and the training of running. By taking patients and working with them and challenging them to get to the point where they can run marathons, it helps them to get their lives under control, to develop some of the discipline and the inner strength to overcome. It's their own counselling. Again, something that probably wouldn't start in a traditional professional sense, a very creative, innovative, unique, spontaneous kind of approach, and yet it's proven itself to be a very effective way of helping certain individuals find a way to manage and to deal with their addictions issues.

In each of these cases unique and creative stories of how Albertans are helping Albertans, and I think that's an important piece that we need to not lose in the rush to regulate everything.

Other questions have been raised. Who will be doing the inspections? Who will be going around and certifying and approving? The point was made by a couple of different people that, hopefully, it's somebody with both credentials and also real experience, someone who's actually worked in the field. To just send someone around with theoretical knowledge, with academic training, and straight out of school but with no real experience isn't likely to be very effective, so it's one of the concerns that was raised.

Quite frankly, to be blunt, the statement was made that we really hope it doesn't become a nitpicky, rule-driven situation versus one with common sense. Sometimes we get too much government regulation, and rules become more important than actually helping people and actually creating human, innovative, creative, engaging ways of helping people. It will be good to have some guidelines, but there are certainly some questions. There are certainly some concerns.

I think also that there are challenges going forward with how things will be defined. What will be the impact of those kinds of definitions? For instance, who will be providing the training for residential addiction, and again how do new ones ever get started? We certainly, clearly, need more than we have in our province right now. So where does this professional development come from? I

mean, there have been many, many studies done that in many cases professional counselling doesn't even work, that people statistically have as much success on their own as they do with so-called high-level professional training.

Is this going to become a very siloed, single-focused model of treatment based only and entirely on a medical model when, in fact, the problems that in many cases bring people to addictions in the first place are not medical? They're personal, they're social, they're economic, they're spiritual, and sometimes if you don't address these underlying issues, the addiction isn't actually dealt with in a way that's helpful.

Then how much will all this cost? What is the licensing cost to the facilities? What is the licensing going to involve for the government to manage all of this? I think these are important questions. We have no idea what this is supposed to cost.

Will standardization of practices – I've kind of already said this – create a single model or a very narrow focus of what counselling or, particularly, addiction treatment centres can actually look like? Again, as I've just outlined, two unique, different models, one out in the country, where being out in the country, out of the rush of the city has proven to be a very helpful environment for a lot of clients. Will this exclude the opportunity for private facilities to even operate or to begin? Much the same as I would argue for choice in education, I think those with addictions ought to have the opportunity of choice in treatment. Not every facility, not every model works for everyone. One size does not fit all, and unless we allow an openness and a freedom to create many useful forms of service – we need a diversity of service in this as well. If we really believe in diversity, then the policies and the regulations need to reflect that. They need to be supportive of that. So a couple of those questions.

I think those are my main points, my main concerns. I think that I will leave it at that, and hopefully we'll get some answers, as we move forward, to some of these kinds of things.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I will now recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

7:50

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Pleased to rise and speak today to Bill 30, Mental Health Services Protection Act, and at the outset to congratulate the minister and the government for taking on what is obviously a thorny issue after so many years of neglect. Somehow in this province we have allowed practitioners to put up a sign that says that they can do such-and-such in the mental health area but that they can't do it in the physical health area or in any other profession: law, engineering. It's long overdue that we put some kind of standard in place, training requirements, consistent evaluation, ongoing education, evidence that they are moving with the times and learning new approaches to mental health and addictions issues, the most complex issues that our society deals with.

It is eminently reasonable that we use the best available evidence and ensure that we not only license people that are capable of providing the services they say they are but evaluate them in an ongoing way so that we don't allow slippage, so that we don't allow incompetence, so that we don't allow some of the failures that we have experienced in our own personal lives through a failure to either see the right professional or be referred to the right professional or have those professionals accountable for results.

I guess I would have to say that the whole system suffers from a lack of evaluation, whether it's medical doctors or others. We need a rigorous system of evaluation that points to issues that are not satisfactory either in terms of personal competence or in the practice of referral, when people recognize that it's beyond them and refer to someone else whom they feel has the competence to deal with that particular issue, or if it's an institution that is providing suboptimal environments for healing and health to develop.

I was very much involved with the organizations under the acronym FACT, the Federation of Associations of Counselling Therapists and their 13 associations, who have been pressing this for several years. I supported them and was very pleased to see the minister take the time, create the energy around this, and provide some leadership that would ensure that people do get appropriate referrals, appropriate treatment, at least to the best of our knowledge. That includes, as I say, continuing education for these folks, because we have to be evaluating, researching, and learning all the time to provide the best, especially in a society that's changing as quickly as ours. The stresses upon us clearly are changing with the times given, for example, the virtual reality that we now live in and the tremendous impact of social media and the new addictions that we're identifying in relation to social relationships and issues, including the different drug problems.

I was pleased to see this come forward. I have a few concerns about some of the sections, and I'll raise those in passing, but for the record this bill does create a new college of counselling therapy to oversee and regulate the profession, oversee training, licensing, continuing education, and sanctioning when there is a failure to meet standards. It requires residential addiction treatment facilities to be licensed, which will empower the province to enforce minimum standards and to address complaints. Part of the concern I have is that if the province can enforce minimum standards, what's the role of the college in enforcing minimum standards? I think one of the questions has to be: what is the role of the province versus the role of the college in terms of individual centres and individual practitioners? The residential treatment facilities will be able to apply for a licence for up to four years, starting July 2019, and will need to have something in place by November 1.

This is all good. Licensing and inspection and evaluation are all, I think, going to improve the protection of the public. In response to complaints, section 9 of the bill permits facility licences to be amended, suspended, or revoked, and inspectors can enforce standards by issuing stop orders and administrative penalties of up to \$10,000 a day. All those, I think, are consistent with our standards for seniors' care, for example, and they need to be present for all public services as far as I'm concerned.

Section 24 troubles me a bit in that it authorizes the minister to give directions to a service provider or any other person for the purposes of this Act where the Minister considers it to be

- (a) in the public interest, or
- (b) appropriate for the purpose of providing for matters related to health or safety.

Again, this muddies the waters, I think, unless it's more clear than I recognize, in relation to practitioners' quality versus the institutional setting and how far the government will step in where there's an ambiguity around whether it's the working conditions or the environment versus the quality of care provided by the individual practitioners, where the college should rightly have the primary role.

Section 29(2) protects the designation "psychotherapist" for the exclusive use of the college of counselling therapy, the College of Alberta Psychologists, and the College of Physicians & Surgeons. Section 29(3) creates a new college of counselling therapy to regulate the profession and set standards for education and licensing

and the titles of counselling therapist, addiction counsellor, drug and alcohol counsellor, child and youth care counsellor. These are specific expertise areas that really do need to be clarified. Training is somewhat unique, and it should be. The research has pushed us to new levels of understanding of family dynamics, child development, the need to distinguish between adult and child therapy, whether it's in addictions areas or other mental health issues. So I am pleased to see that.

Currently the residential addictions treatment facilities are not subject to inspections and are not required to follow minimum standards. This has to change, and I'm pleased to see that with the passage of Bill 30, Alberta will become one of three Canadian provinces to regulate residential addiction treatment centres and the fifth to regulate mental health counsellors. So we're making progress, as far as I'm concerned.

Now, the devil is in the details. What standards are we going to require? What level of evidence will we base some of our evaluations on? One has to believe that in the process of evaluation we'll provide the best of evidence from around the world, that we will set standards that are world class, that we will have evaluators and accreditation experts that have looked at the literature, that have gotten a balance between the rigid medical model, which I heard the previous member mention – I would say the rather narrow focus of the medical model – and the need to expand that model much more broadly around mental health and addiction services to the social, to the spiritual, to the environmental and other dimensions of well-being.

With the passage of Bill 30, 65 per cent of clinical facilities in the province, which are privately operated, and 5,000 currently unregulated practitioners will be brought under some kind of an umbrella of oversight, which, to me, speaks to why we have a postsecondary institution. We set standards, we train by standards, and we evaluate by standards. It's imperfect, but it's the best we have, and we have to bring that to bear on the mental health and addictions system.

I'm interested to note that Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous will be exempt from these. I'm not quite sure why, but I suppose it's partly because they don't enjoy the same public funding. I'd be interested to know more about that.

The lack of clarity around where the government has a role to intervene and where the college has a role to intervene in quality-of-care services: it's not yet a clear area to me, and maybe it needs to be fleshed out in the regulations as it is with other colleges, where it is more clear what the institutional responsibility is and what the professional responsibility is for quality of care and ethical practice guidelines.

8:00

I see very little in this to cause consternation except for the timelines. Let me say, as my colleague from Vermilion-Lloydminster has pointed out, that this could impose a significant increased cost. No doubt. It's worth it as far as I'm concerned to provide some security and accountability for those systems, but how will we deal with grandfathering those who are competent, who are effective, who are successful in their programs? To pull them out of their setting and force them to do a degree program or to do something to provide a whole new standard of degree is inappropriate. There needs to be some grandfathering over a period of five to 10 years for those who have been in practice for years and who have demonstrated a level of clinical competence, not necessarily academic competence. I'm sure the minister is considering how to deal with transitioning and the timing that's required for that as well as the respect for those who have learned on the job.

Here I'm thinking also of what are called peer counsellors. Peer counsellors and people with lived experience, former addicts, people with bipolar disorder, those who have been effectively cared for and managed to heal to whatever extent they can and to be treated successfully. They are tremendous potential candidates for therapy, for being in group therapy, for being one-on-one counsellors. They have a tremendous life experience that must not be dismissed and must not be sidelined simply because we establish a college that needs to, indeed, set some standards for training and some standards for evaluation.

This transition is going to be critically important. It could be very harmful to some communities. It could be very harmful to getting the results we want if the cost becomes prohibitive for individuals to pull out of what they're doing to establish a new credential in a short period of time. That cannot happen. We have too much stress on the system at the present time. We need these people to stay, in many cases, exactly where they are, do what they do but to offer them the opportunity to upgrade, to learn new skills, new approaches to addictions and mental health issues. It should be a bonus for them, to not penalize them but, in fact, add value to their own lives and to their own work.

I'm quite supportive of this next stage in Alberta's mental health and addictions programming, and I applaud the government for bringing this forward at a very challenging time in our history. That very challenge with the opiate crisis, with the new methamphetamine crisis, with the suicide challenges, the mental health issues that are increasing in our society: it begs even more the need to set standards and to have some confidence in where this whole service area is going. I think this is a very positive step in the right direction.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Dr. Starke: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise tonight to speak to Bill 30. I want to say from the outset that in general I support the intent of this bill, and I support the notion that mental health and addictions treatment facilities should be brought under some form of regulatory purview and that this is required. But as my colleague the Member for Calgary-Mountain View just correctly pointed out, there are concerns that have been raised by existing organizations that have a long track record of successfully working within the addictions treatment area.

I want to specifically talk tonight about one such recovery centre that is in my constituency, the Thorpe Recovery Centre. The Thorpe Recovery Centre was founded in Lloydminster in 1975, 43 years ago, by a gentleman by the name of Walter A. "Slim" Thorpe as well as Ron Harris Sr. These two gentlemen, who were absolutely instrumental in getting the recovery centre going, recognized the need within the city of Lloydminster for an addictions treatment and detox facility, and they set up a two-bed facility in an old nurses' residence that was no longer being used for that purpose in Lloydminster. From those humble beginnings in 1988 a 30-bed facility in Lloydminster was constructed. Most recently in 2012 I attended along with former Premier Alison Redford when the 72-bed Thorpe Recovery Centre was officially opened, a 54,000 square foot facility just west of Lloydminster near the community of Blackfoot.

I give that background, Madam Speaker, because the Thorpe Recovery Centre has a 43-year track record of providing absolutely essential and outstanding treatment to literally thousands of

individuals. I'm always gratified when I hear the issue of addictions treatment and when this issue comes up in the popular media and when I hear it discussed on various radio programs, with the number of people that refer to having been former clients of the Thorpe Recovery Centre in Lloydminster. This is truly an outstanding facility. It is a facility that is not-for-profit. It has a volunteer board of directors, an extremely hard-working staff, and is running with some significant financial challenges. The Member for Calgary-Acadia, the former Associate Minister of Health, is well aware of the Thorpe Recovery Centre. She was very helpful in terms of providing support, and I wish to thank her for that this evening.

But the Thorpe Recovery Centre is having some challenges financially. We have invited the Minister of Health to visit the centre, and we certainly hope that at some point she takes us up on that invitation. I think she will be impressed like everybody else who has toured the centre not just with the building but with the whole ethic, the whole culture of the Thorpe Recovery Centre. When it celebrated its 40th anniversary three years ago, Scott Oake, the noted CBC television sports personality who tragically lost a son as a result of addictions a few years ago, was the keynote speaker at that event. I can tell you that the impact of having a professional detox facility, a professional addictions treatment facility, a facility that does not just treat addiction of alcohol but also addiction of various drugs, of gambling, of sex, of a wide variety of things that we as human beings are susceptible to – the Thorpe Recovery Centre is there, and it has been there for many, many years.

When Bill 30 was introduced, I immediately got in touch with the Thorpe Recovery Centre, and I said: "What do you think? How would this impact you, an organization that has been operating and operating with a level of success for many, many years?" There are a number of significant concerns. Once again, they said that they welcomed the opportunity to be licensed, to be regulated and that they hoped that that accreditation would open the doors to additional clients from other parts of Canada because I know there is some disappointment that despite its location both the Alberta and the Saskatchewan governments fund a very small number of beds within that facility. The vast majority of the beds are funded privately, quite often by employers of people who are facing addictions.

While licensing will offer opportunities, there's a lot of ambiguity within the bill that caused concern for the recovery centre. For example, in section 7, the licensing fees: what are those fees? What are all those fees going to be? They're to be set at some point in the future, but for a not-for-profit organization that is already running on a very tight budget, that is already running in many cases with a lot of volunteer labour, an additional licensing fee, especially if that fee is for a license that has to renewed annually, is a concern. My own feeling would be that that licensing term should be no less than three years and preferably the full four years that is being suggested in the legislation.

8:10

There is concern that requires that the staff be regulated members of the college of counselling therapy. Again, I certainly want to echo the comments of my colleague the Member for Calgary-Mountain View. It's not just about your academic accreditation and qualifications. There's a gentleman in Lloydminster who two years ago was a guest of the Crown, I guess we could call it. He was in and out of prison and remand centres on a regular basis. He was fortunate in that he got the necessary counselling services to address the underlying mental health issue that he had that was causing his addiction, that was driving his criminal activity. Today that gentleman, Tyler Lorenz, has opened a counselling organization in

Lloydminster called Residents in Recovery, where he provides counselling services and just support services and education to people trying to escape from a life of addiction that Tyler is incredibly familiar with, and he became familiar with it the hard way. Tyler is an individual who went to school and got a certificate in addictions counselling, but does he qualify under these regulations? Would he be able to be at that facility? It's unclear. There are concerns about that.

There are concerns about the penalties, you know, that it's not to exceed \$10,000, but here again we are talking about an organization that operates on a very tight budget. It is extremely efficient, and a good chunk of their budget comes through donations from the general public. A \$10,000 penalty for what may be a clerical error would be a significant impact to that organization, so they have a concern about that.

Another area that they pointed out to me is under section 12(1) in terms of notice of inspection, where under 12(1) currently there's no requirement for any notice or previous indication of an inspector visiting the facility. I can tell you that in a residential addictions treatment facility that is just plain unfair. This facility is the people's home, and to have an inspector walk in unannounced is simply unfair and can cause significant setback and damage to their treatment. The suggested minimum period for some form of notice that I've received from the Thorpe is four hours. Now, if you've got major problems in your facility, four hours is not enough time to gloss over the problems in your facility, not even close. But it is enough time to let your residents know that you're going to be receiving a visit from an inspector and that if they are uncomfortable being seen by that person or that sort of thing, that they know that there will be a stranger in their midst.

Now, I've visited the Thorpe Recovery Centre a number of times, but I will tell you that each and every time that I go, I'm very well informed that there are folks I won't see that will be staying in their rooms, or they'll be staying in areas that are not open to the general public simply because they don't feel comfortable with people from the general public in their home.

So I will be planning in committee on moving an amendment to at least mandate a minimum four-hour notice period, which I think is only fair. When I was in veterinary practice, Madam Speaker, we were inspected every three years by a practice inspector, and we received one day's notice that that practice inspector was coming. That was certainly very helpful because it meant that we could make sure that the things that were necessary for the practice inspector to see were readily available to them and that we had at least one staff member available on that date to tour them through our hospital. If they arrive unannounced on one of the busiest days of the year or a day where you have got, you know, an incredible amount of other things going on, again, in my view, it is simply unfair to the facility. This is another concern that I have and that I share with the Thorpe Recovery Centre.

Critical incident reporting is another facet that concerns the Thorpe Recovery Centre. What about the critical incidents that happen after an individual leaves the care of the facility? If that individual should happen to have something serious like, for example, a suicide attempt after they leave the care, the truth of the matter is that the facility is only able to track that individual if they stay in touch with the facility through one of their alumni programs. If they by their own choice decide not to do that and they have a critical incident, there is no way that facilities like this can be aware that they've happened. So because of that, how can they do the reporting that is mandated under this?

There are additional concerns about duplication between AHS and Alberta Health, and I'm sure that this is probably already causing my colleague to smile because this is a favourite topic of

his. There's ambiguity within the legislation as to whether now these recovery facilities are responsible to AHS, with whom some of these facilities have contracts and are required to report to, or Alberta Health and whether they, in fact, now will have to report to both, which, in my view, is an unnecessary duplication and requires additional administration. Clearly, these facilities want to put their limited resources into counselling and treatment and not into administrative overburden.

For example, once again in the reporting of critical incidents, under the service contract of AHS the Thorpe centre is currently required to report critical incidents to AHS. Now under this legislation it's expected to be reporting to Alberta Health as well. The concern that the Thorpe has communicated to me and that I wanted to talk about today is that while they welcome accreditation and they welcome the idea that somebody is going to monitor and regulate organizations like theirs and they have absolutely no concern because they're already accredited under the national addictions treatment centres, they are concerned with the additional costs that this will confer upon these facilities.

I want to say one other thing. The Thorpe Recovery Centre operates near Blackfoot, Alberta. The closest large centre is Lloydminster, but it is very much a rural located centre. It is not easy to recruit qualified staff to that centre, and if these qualified staff members have to go for repeated reaccreditation visits and if they can't get that accreditation done within the centre and have to travel to Edmonton or Calgary and if they have to do it every year and if there is a fee involved in being part of an accredited college, that's yet another additional cost that has to be borne either by the counsellor or borne by their employer.

Some of these costs may not sound like they add up to a lot, but I can tell you, from having many conversations with people at the Thorpe, that they will tell you that every penny is very carefully scrutinized. All they see in this piece of legislation are additional costs, and they don't necessarily see a great deal of additional benefit because many of these things are already being done in some way, shape, or form. That said, they're not opposed to the idea of scrutiny. They welcome scrutiny because they're proud of the work they do.

Madam Speaker, I have concerns about Bill 30. I will support Bill 30, but we certainly hope that in these last days of this fall session the government is open to looking at some amendments that I think would improve it and would certainly assist with organizations that are already operating. I would restate and certainly repeat my invitation to the Health minister to attend and to visit the Thorpe Recovery Centre because I'm sure that she will be very impressed with what we are doing.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Deputy Premier and Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I was going to try to keep all of my remarks until the end of debate, but I think that there are a few questions I want to address now that were raised by the hon. member and that relate to the questions from the Member for Calgary-Mountain View as well.

I just want to begin by saying that the reason why AA, NA, faith-based therapies, volunteers, MAT program shelters, people with lived experience who aren't calling themselves counselling therapists are excluded is because they're working in a peer support environment or drawing on that lived experience. They're not calling themselves counsellors. That's why they themselves wouldn't be part of the college, because they're coming at it from a

different skill set and a different level of expertise, but they also have a different trust relationship with the client.

8:20

I think back to a piece of legislation that we just passed earlier this session around protecting patients accessing health care services. The level of engagement with somebody who calls themselves a counselling therapist: when it comes to that level of engagement and trust, the risk that could be in place around sexual assault and those types of things speaks to why it's so important that we actually do bring about a licensing process and a college and that we move this profession so that with that level of trust – as the Member for Calgary-Mountain View has said, many people have hung a shingle and called themselves counselling therapists and put themselves in that position of trust – there will be a level of responsibility. That's the role of a college, any college in any governed profession. I did want to respond to that in relation to this question that was asked.

The other piece I just want to say is that we use the same baseline around inspections that we have for the Supportive Living Accommodation Licensing Act that would apply to long-term care, and it's also the same licensing that we have for foster homes. Certainly, I believe that long-term care facilities and foster homes are homes for the residents that live there. I think that because of that it's important that we have that level of privacy honoured, obviously, but also that level of safety and confidence in a facility. The language around inspections was pulled specifically from those two pieces of legislation, where we also believe people are living in a home, to have it in alignment with that, that somebody living with a substance use condition not be treated any differently than somebody else who has another health condition that's requiring long-term care. That's where we got the inspection language.

I'll just deal with those two points at this time, and I'd be happy to respond to additional questions in closing, Madam Speaker. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Under 29(2)(a), the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just want to raise a question with the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster. I have some difficulty in inspections being planned and predictable. I think that where there are some really unhealthy and unfortunate things going on in institutions, we need to find that out by showing up at unexpected times. It may well be true that it's inconvenient and that it discomforts some people. But would he not say that in the public interest, the patient interest, we do have to have unannounced inspections to uncover some unsavoury things that you would not otherwise identify?

Dr. Starke: Well, Madam Speaker, with the greatest respect to my colleague, I'm specifically talking about the specific centre that I represent. I have a high level of confidence that even if you did walk in with zero notice, they would happily and easily pass any inspection. But this is the level of the concern that they have for their clientele, and they are protective of their clientele.

With all due respect to the Health minister, I do think there is a difference between a detox or an addictions treatment centre and the protection of privacy that the clients of those centres deserve and a residential or a long-term care facility. I absolutely think it's a different level. So I don't think you can just simply carte blanche lift a section out of another piece of legislation, that may well work fine for that piece of legislation, and transplant it into something like this. I think that had the time been taken to talk to people in addictions treatment – perhaps that time was taken, but certainly

nobody talked to the Thorpe – they would have been happy to offer that piece of advice.

You know, with due respect, I don't disagree with what my colleague says with regard to finding out about unsavoury practices, but four hours will not allow you to cover up an unsavoury practice. I can tell you that right now. But four hours will at least allow you to provide a dignified level of notice to vulnerable persons who are receiving addictions treatment at a time in their lives when they, too, are vulnerable. I think it's incredibly important that we provide that.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin.

Ms Goodridge: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour to rise in the House today to speak to Bill 30, the Mental Health Services Protection Act. I'd like to start by acknowledging that this government has chosen to respond to two very real and important issues that are facing our province. Maintaining good mental health services is really crucial if we are going to help our most vulnerable within society. The attempts to do this through the creation of the college of counselling therapy aims to bring accountability to our mental health professionals. It also brings in mandatory licensing for addiction treatment centres, which will hopefully increase the level of care provided to those that are requiring these services.

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

This legislation is coming at a time when the mental health needs of our province have continued to plummet due to the difficult economic times and the deterioration of our mental health services. This is especially the case in my riding of Fort McMurray-Conklin. As is the case after most serious natural disasters or tragedies, the demand and need of mental health services increased substantially. In fact, there was some research that was released at the end of October of 2018, just a few months ago, that suggests that the effects of the fire are still lingering within my community, and they're continuing to see an increased rate of depression and other related mental health issues. The survey based its research on about 486 responses that were completed using a standard psychiatric test to assess the mental health effects of the fire, and then through this research it found that close to 15 per cent of the respondents were suffering from some form of depressive disorder. It's worth noting that the average rate in Alberta is about 3.3 per cent, so this is still staggeringly high compared to the Alberta average.

It also found that those with depressive disorders were far more likely to have alcohol abuse and substance disorders. The research also found that emotional and social supports were absolutely elemental in ensuring the resilience of people. It found that people that received little to no support were 13 times more likely to have a depressive disorder compared to those that did. It also found that those with a depressive disorder were substantially more likely to have substance abuse or alcohol abuse issues.

Under this government we've seen the mental health budget nearly double, yet we haven't seen any real result increases with that doubling. We've seen that of 74 per cent of children and youth that are offered mental health service treatment – that's down from 89 per cent in 2014-2015 – unfortunately, only 64 per cent of these children and youth actually end up receiving the mental health treatments that they're seeking, which is down from 82 per cent in 2014-2015. We have a long ways to go, and I hope that this bill actually serves to make this better.

As I stated earlier, Mr. Speaker, Albertans are suffering, and the need to have access to appropriate services is more important now

than ever. I'm glad to see that this government has closed some of the gaps in our services and is aiming to address them. For example, by establishing a college of counselling therapy, we will hopefully restore confidence in our counselling professionals and ensure that all Albertans are receiving the absolute highest standard of care available. Through regulations established by the college, we will hopefully be able to ensure that all professionals calling themselves counsellors will have adequate credentials, education, or life experience to be able to provide Albertans with the care they need. Right now anyone in Alberta can state that they're a counsellor, and that can be really misleading to those that are really requiring this help.

One of the things that I find might be especially of benefit is that the college will also be able to hold its regulated members accountable for their actions. I truly believe that accountability is so important in our society, and I think that that's a really good step in the right direction. But as we've seen in the past, colleges don't always have the tools they need to deal with the issues that they face. In fact, the government is going to have to continue to work with this college to ensure that the outcome and the interests of Albertans are always at the forefront and are the top priority. It will also help to create a higher standard of care for all Albertans.

This government seems to have done some consultations before tabling this bill, which I'm very grateful to see. Consultation prior to tabling a bill is something that I believe is truly invaluable, and I was happy to hear that all 14 counselling associations were consulted and are in favour of this change. However, I must admit that upon doing some consultations of our own, I was disappointed to find out that the government neglected to consult with the Canadian Addiction Counsellors Certification Federation, which represents about a fifth of all counsellors in Alberta, including indigenous addictions counsellors, international addictions counsellors, national defence addictions counsellors, amongst others, and as we've heard from some of my colleagues, facilities in their communities also were not consulted.

By creating a medical college, we can also have some negative aspects. For instance, we've heard that smaller associations might feel like they have fewer rights when they're grouped in with larger associations in the same college. It's also harder for regulations to address each individual association's needs. As we've come to learn, a one-size-fits-all system often doesn't work, but I really do hope that the college will do its best to meet the needs of all of the 14 existing associations.

8:30

The licensing aspect of the residential addiction treatment centres also has some positive aspects. For instance, it establishes who is able to open a residential addiction treatment centre by requiring licensing. Currently any person or organization can open up a centre, regardless of their qualifications, education, or experience. While this can be a major benefit, this can also be a downside, and this bill will help to ensure that all centres are maintaining the highest standard of care for those with addictions.

The collection of records and reporting to a director will ensure that the standard of care is maintained over the long term, allowing facilities to perhaps find and identify trends. However, it's often difficult to get these statistics as many of these organizations operate, as the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster indicated earlier, where they don't necessarily have the long-term aspects unless the patients themselves choose to join in the alumni statistics.

Furthermore, mandatory inspections will help ensure that the centres are meeting a level of service that Albertans would expect. However, as was previously pointed out, there are some concerns around the inspections and the timing and making sure that

everyone within the facility feels safe and at home. Typically when you're at one of these addiction centres, you're not necessarily there at the best times of your life, so making sure that there's adequate protection for these people that are already feeling very vulnerable is, to me, something very important.

One thing that really does worry me is that we can only assume that licensing will come with some kind of a cost to the facility and the organization. These facilities are often nonprofit organizations and are run by grants and donations, with very limited government funding. I'm concerned that from some of the facilities I've reached out to, they're very concerned with what the cost of the licensing will be and how long the licence will last. If they have to get relicensed every year, that could add some financial burdens as well as some serious administrative burdens. In fact, we heard from stakeholders who have expressed serious concerns about the potential cost increases that may come down the road and how they might be able to even accommodate these.

The increased regulations will result in higher credentials being required to provide these services, and while we must ensure that Albertans are receiving the highest standard of care, we also must ensure that these services remain viable over the long term. There's value in having a variety of different counselling options available. One size, method, or option does not work for all seeking assistance.

Furthermore, the vague definition of residential treatment centres is also alarming as many services may potentially be impacted. For example, it seems to me that a homeless shelter might possibly fit into the definition put forward by the bill. This bill could also potentially increase the cost to taxpayers at a time when Alberta's economy is already suffering. For me, there are way too many unanswered questions in the legislation, and I hope that this government will give us some time to find some of these answers. I think that that would be extremely helpful, if we can get some of these answers. I'd like to ask the government: how much will the increased regulations cost the centres affected? What is the cost of the licensing? How long will the licensing last? Like I said, we've had multiple stakeholders express concern over the cost, and to me this is a very real issue. How does the government intend to maintain the viability of these services as the costs rise? Mr. Speaker, did the government intend for this bill to have such wide-ranging implications? Do we perhaps need to tighten up the language on the definition to make sure that it's truly serving the intended goal?

With that, I would like to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 31

Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2018

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Government House Leader I move second reading of Bill 31, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2018.

The Acting Speaker: Are there any speakers to Bill 31?

Seeing and hearing none, are we ready for the question?

Hon. Members: Question.

The Acting Speaker: The Minister of Children's Services to close debate.

Larivee: Yes, I would like to close debate. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 31 read a second time]

Bill 32

City Charters Fiscal Framework Act

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour and a privilege to rise today and move second reading of Bill 32, the City Charters Fiscal Framework Act.

Last week, when I stood together with the Minister of Finance and the mayor of Edmonton, I said that it was truly a historic day. Our province is entering a new era in the provincial-municipal partnership. I emphasize the word "partnership" because for the first time the province and our two largest cities have come together on a fiscal approach that works for everyone. If passed, this act will provide permanent, predictable funding for local infrastructure. As we all know, local infrastructure is vital to Albertans. It connects people to their families and friends and workers to their jobs. It enables trade and can help spur development.

Mr. Speaker, more than half of Albertans live in Calgary or Edmonton. This act will have a direct impact on the quality of life for 2 million plus people. A historic partnership will help Edmonton and Calgary build the infrastructure they need, in a way that the province can, to move forward. This framework also delivers certainty to the cities by recognizing that they're partners in our growing economy and should share in both the good and the tough times.

This framework respects the province's path to balance and is fiscally responsible. Specifically, it will move people and goods more efficiently with better roads and bridges. It will improve the quality of life for families who rely on rec centres, pools, arenas, and parks. It will increase the safety of residents, with more fire halls, police stations, and water and waste-water systems and will reduce emissions through stronger mass transit systems.

Bill 32 would also legislate historic long-term transit funding for Calgary and Edmonton so they can build out their transit networks, create jobs, reduce greenhouse gases, and make our cities better places to live and work. Starting in 2027, an additional \$400 million will go to transit projects in these two cities every year. This money will come from the climate leadership plan revenues and create jobs, support the quality of life, and help protect our environment now and into the future. Edmonton and Calgary are two of the fastest growing municipalities in Alberta, and as their populations increase, so does the demand for robust transit networks. We want to make it easier and faster for Calgarians and Edmontonians to commute throughout their city, access essential services, and travel to and from work and school.

As many members of this Assembly know, we have been working towards a new funding agreement with our two biggest cities over the past number of months. The process began as part of the work to create city charters for Edmonton and Calgary. Charters recognize that our two largest cities need a little more flexibility in how they operate so they can continue to build strong, vibrant, world-class cities that attract trade and investment, and I'm proud to say that we were able to come to an agreement for a new fiscal framework.

I'm sure many of the members who represent constituents outside of Edmonton and Calgary will want to know about the rest of the province. There are, in fact, 340 other municipalities that also want a permanent, predictable funding program. To these members, I say: we are working on this. We recognize that all municipalities require stable, predictable infrastructure funding, and that is certainly our intent. Right now we are working with the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association and the Rural Municipalities of Alberta on a replacement program for all municipalities. The

associations wanted more time to review the approach and talk to their members before they signed on. I certainly respect that need. The good news is that we do have time. MSI does not expire until 2022, and all municipalities, including Edmonton and Calgary, will continue to receive MSI up until that point.

8:40

Now, turning to the details in this proposed bill, the funding is split into two parts, general infrastructure funding and funding specific to transit. Let's start with the general infrastructure funding. This is the portion that could be considered the replacement for what is now MSI. In the first year of the framework, which is fiscal '22-23, the two cities will share \$500 million. The exact split will be determined based on a formula that takes into account things like fuel sales, population, and kilometres of roads. Our current estimate is that Calgary will receive about \$289 million and Edmonton about \$211 million. Importantly, this funding is tied to provincial revenues. Edmonton and Calgary are partners in our growing economy, and revenue sharing recognizes this contribution. The cities will receive more funding in good times, when revenues are growing, but also less when times are tough. That's a true partnership.

Looking at the transit portion, the two cities will share \$400 million each year, split down the middle. This funding will kick in in 2027, once the current LRT funding agreements are complete. Funding for transit will come from revenues generated under the climate leadership plan. This is an important link to make since investment in mass transit allows us to make GHG reductions. For those of us who believe in taking action to fight climate change, that's a big step in the right direction.

Overall, this is a significant piece of legislation, one that will help Edmonton and Calgary attract investment, support growth, and create jobs. It is equally important to note that this is an approach that we can afford as a province as it supports our path to balance. Mr. Speaker, this is the type of approach that the cities have been looking for. We listened, and we delivered.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Stier: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. A pleasure to see you in the chair this evening, sir. Good evening, everyone. Thank you to the minister for his presentation. It's my privilege tonight to speak to Bill 32 briefly. It's called the City Charters Fiscal Framework Act. A bit of background, I think, would be appropriate. Funding for Alberta's municipalities has been a struggle faced by successive governments here in Alberta. I think we've heard for years and years about predictable, sustainable funding. I know I have since I was elected in 2004 on a local council, and it was always a contentious issue then.

In fact, in 2007 the Stelmach government introduced the municipal sustainability initiative, or MSI, as we know it today, which is basically a provincial grant that helps support local infrastructure priorities and build strong, safe, and resilient communities. The grants have fewer strings attached than other municipal grants, and funding is based on a formula for distributing provincial funding for capital projects and is not necessarily project specific. MSI funding is allocated annually and paid to municipalities following legislative approval of the provincial budget, a submission of sufficient project applications, and submission and/or certification of statements of funding and expenditures.

It should be noted that the Stelmach government promised municipalities to provide almost \$11.3 billion over 10 years.

However, MSI funding never really lived up to that promise too well over the years, in some cases. It only met those promised amounts twice annually, once in 2007 and again in 2014.

Now we get into some details. It actually has been based over the years on a funding formula. It's been something that was worked on by municipalities for a long time and has had widespread buy-in for many years from all of the major stakeholders because it was so complex that everyone was consulted. It's worked reasonably well, I should think.

It actually incorporates two different formulas, one for MSI and another for the basic transportation grant, which was an existing grant that was incorporated into funding allocations when MSI was first established. For MSI, the formula for this funding is a complex equation, and I think we probably have seen that. If you've looked at the bill, it's still there today. It's basically the same as what it's been. It is extremely complex, and it's based on municipal populations, education property tax, requisitions, kilometres of local roads, and it includes base funding for all municipalities and sustainable investment funding for municipalities with limited local assessment bases.

The transportation grant portion is based on municipal status, with Calgary and Edmonton receiving funding based on litres of taxable road-use gasoline and diesel fuel sold in the province, and the remaining cities and urban service areas based on a combination of population and the length of primary highways. Towns, villages, and summer villages, actually, improvement districts, and even the townsites of Redwood Meadows receive funding based on population only. Rural municipalities and Métis settlements receive funding based on a formula that takes into account, in their case, kilometres of open road, population, equalized assessment, and terrain, in fact.

Here today we are looking at a new bill that's been put together in an interesting way and presented here in this House. It's the first time I've seen a bill like this come forward where the actual agreement that the government is making in terms of funding to municipalities is brought to the House for discussion and debate. In the past they've just gone ahead and made these announcements over the years and worked with the municipalities to the best of their ability. But here we have a bill that's very complex because of the formulas, very complex because of the years that it spans.

I would like to say at this time, Mr. Speaker, that we're somewhat supportive of what is being proposed in the bill, but the new arrangement described therein is so complex that we have a lot of concerns and many questions that we look forward to debating in more detail in Committee of the Whole and during the rest of the bill process. It proposes to enshrine in legislation, therefore, a funding framework for the cities of Edmonton and Calgary that will replace, actually, the capital funding regime for them at this time.

According to the government website information, it says that if passed, the City Charters Fiscal Framework Act would provide Edmonton and Calgary with infrastructure funding tied to provincial revenues.

I think the minister talked about this already. It

would provide Edmonton and Calgary with a baseline of \$500 million in the first year [apparently], split between the two cities [only]. This new agreement would replace the cities' Municipal Sustainability Initiative (MSI) funding when the program is complete in 2022.

The framework would also support growth in the Calgary and Edmonton regions with \$400 million annually for long-term transit funding, split between the two cities.

And I underline: split between the two cities.

In addition:

A \$50-million annual program to fund significant regional infrastructure projects that support economic development would

also be introduced in 2022, supporting cooperation and collaboration between municipalities. One third of the funding would go to [also] the Calgary Metropolitan Region Board . . .

That's the new growth board they've put together.

. . . one third to the [existing] Edmonton Metropolitan Region Board . . .

That's been operating for several years now.

. . . and one third to other regional entities on a competitive basis.

That's interesting. There's not a lot of detail to that, but that's an interesting idea.

As a side note, all the other municipalities outside Edmonton and Calgary have not got a program ready to go yet, and I understand through the minister and some of the statements made tonight and earlier that they are working on that with the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association and also the Rural Municipalities of Alberta or what we used to know as the AAMD and C. But it's a very complex issue there with all the different sizes of municipalities, I suspect, and it's going to take some time, I would imagine, for those kinds of negotiations to come to a conclusion.

Looking at the new proposal, we see some benefits. It provides a stable, predictable, long-term funding model for Calgary and Edmonton. We have been talking about that for years, as I said earlier in this presentation, and it would appear that they have addressed this in some regard for the two cities. The amount is less than the cities received in the combined funding for 2014 to 2017, initially. The funding will result in cities more directly impacted by a fluctuation of provincial revenues. Calgary and Edmonton will have funding certainty when they are approving their capital and operating budgets, and we all know that they have to do these three-year plans and these five-year plans, so that certainly should be of help. However, we have quite a few concerns and questions that we will be raising slightly now but also in the Committee of the Whole process.

8:50

The first observation, among many that I'd like to make, is that this bill is extremely complex. We've basically got a negotiated settlement here in writing in the form of legislation. I would not like to have been necessarily at the table on some of these negotiations; it must have been extremely difficult. However, it would have been interesting to be there, I should think. What it does is it commits the province to funding levels regardless of the fiscal situation. That's an interesting little situation just in that statement itself. Another observation: the funding is linked to a carbon tax. Perhaps a questionable strategy these days. Based on a three-year delay, too, it may result in cities' funding increasing despite actual decreasing in provincial revenues during a downturn or a recession. There could be a little bit of a timeline issue there when you're working on a baseline two or three years in prior days.

Again, we do say that we've noticed that there's no deal with other urban or rural municipalities. This is going to give a little bit of concern to those other municipalities. Will this allocation therefore take away from other municipalities' allocations in the future? These are some of the things that we are hearing about these arrangements. Politically speaking, a lot of the other municipalities are saying: well, this is special treatment for the cities. We can understand how they might say that. It looks like there's going to be a future change to this funding agreement perhaps, therefore, and it will require, if that is the case, additional change to the process.

Another observation we have is that any changes to capital and transit funding will therefore have to be debated in the Legislature as a result of this, which, of course, may increase the public awareness but it certainly may increase the public involvement.

A bit of a note on something they released at the same time if I may. I know it's not a part of this bill, but they did release a large set of amendments to the existing city charter regulations. And with this change, that charter is going to be effective. There will be a number of regulatory changes that have the building industry and others in investment, in that type of world, greatly concerned. Of particular concern they have noted, wondering about off-site levies and inclusionary housing, where, in the case of these new regulations that are proposed with the bill, there are no quantifiers as to limits. They're very worried about that, and they just are not sure how far cities may go with their new freedom to put these additional burdens onto their industry and onto our economy. Will that perhaps have a little bit of a negative aspect to investment in Alberta? One has to ask these questions.

Now, despite the fact, as I've said, that these are not debated in the House, we will be looking forward to raising some of those questions during the debate in Committee of the Whole, especially because they coincide with this new funding model with the cities. So it is relevant that we talk about that.

So to conclude, Mr. Speaker, this is a complex bill. This is something new. We do have to be careful with it. We will be presenting our concerns during Committee of the Whole, as I've said, and I look forward to those discussions in the next couple of days.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Any other speakers to Bill 32?

The hon. Member for Calgary-Hawkwood.

Connolly: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and speak on Bill 32, the City Charters Fiscal Framework Act. It's really my pleasure to help the minister and cosponsor of this bill as this is such an important bill, and it's such a great bill for Calgary and, of course, for Edmonton. But we mostly care about Calgary because it is the better city, obviously.

The municipal sustainability initiative, MSI, as we all know, will expire in fiscal year 2021-2022. Our government is committed to replacing the MSI program with a provincial revenue-sharing agreement for municipal infrastructure prior to its expiry. Discussions on a new program began with Edmonton and Calgary as part of city charter discussion for a new legislated fiscal framework to replace MSI and promote sustainability and predictability.

Now, as we all know, Calgary and Edmonton are two of the fastest growing municipalities in Alberta. To support that growth, the cities need permanent, predictable funding for their local infrastructure priorities. This historic partnership helps Edmonton and Calgary to build the infrastructure they need in a way that the province can afford. The cities need a permanent, predictable program that allows them to plan long-range projects. We listened, and with this bill we delivered. This framework delivers certainty to the cities by recognizing that they're partners in our growing economy and should share in both the good times and the tough times. This framework respects the province's path to balance and is fiscally responsible. The revenue-sharing agreement takes effect after the municipal sustainability initiative is complete in 2022. It's a historic and first-of-its-kind partnership in the country.

The province is also delivering on the transit needs of Calgarians and Edmontonians by legislating long-term transit funding. I'll touch on this a bit more in a couple of minutes. Now, we are building a long-term future together with our municipal partners and continue to work with AUMA and RMA to develop a funding agreement for all Alberta municipalities. We committed to having a new system operational by the time the MSI commitment expires

and to legislate that system. That is still our commitment for all municipalities.

The City Charters Fiscal Framework Act provides Edmonton and Calgary with infrastructure funding that is tied to provincial revenues. We know that Calgary and Edmonton are partners in growing Alberta's economy, and this agreement recognizes that. Revenue sharing ensures that the cities receive more funding in good times when revenues are growing but also less when times are tough. This approach is consistent with our path to balance. It's fiscally sustainable and maintains the strong level of support our government has always had for municipalities. The cities have made it clear to us that they are prepared to accept both the risks and rewards of linking funding to provincial revenues.

Now to go back to long-term transit funding. The province is delivering on the transit needs of Calgarians and Edmontonians by legislating long-term transit funding. This historic, long-term transit funding will allow Calgary and Edmonton to build on their transit networks, create jobs, reduce greenhouse gases, and make our cities better places to live and work. Starting in 2027, an additional \$400 million will go to transit projects in these two cities every year. Edmonton and Calgary are two of the fastest growing municipalities, like I already said, and as their populations increase, so does the demand for robust transit networks. That's something that previous governments before us have constantly failed on.

As we know, here in Edmonton it can be quite difficult, and even in Calgary, to get around on transit. It is impossible to get from one end of the city to the other in Edmonton just on the LRT, and that's not right. We need to make sure that our cities are sustainable and are looking towards the future. That's why our government was so proud to support the valley line here in Edmonton and the green line LRT in Calgary. They're vital to the infrastructure and the growth of our cities. That's why I'm so proud of this bill and our Minister of Municipal Affairs for really getting this work done. We deserve future cities where more companies want to invest, where companies know that if they do decide to move to Calgary or Edmonton, they're going to have that basic transit infrastructure that they need to support their workers. I'm very proud of this bill, and I'm very happy to support it. I really hope my colleagues will support it as well.

We want to make it easier and faster for Calgarians and Edmontonians to commute throughout their cities, access essential services, and travel to and from work and school. We have made a \$3 billion commitment to Calgary and Edmonton for transit funding through the climate leadership plan, that has seen historic investments in the green line in Calgary and the valley line in Edmonton, like I already said. After that, this long-term transit investment will begin.

To conclude, Mr. Speaker, this is really why this bill is important, to make sure, like I said, that our municipalities have the funding they need to grow, to make sure that our communities have access to the funds they need to improve upon themselves. Once again, I would ask all my colleagues in this House to support this bill and our minister.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Mr. Nixon: I'm trying to move a motion. You can do 29(2)(a).

The Acting Speaker: Okay.

Any other members under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing and hearing none, any other members? The Member for Rimbe- Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that we go to one-minute bells for the duration of the evening both in and outside of Committee of the Whole.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Acting Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to Bill 32? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

9:00

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate this opportunity to speak to Bill 32, the City Charters Fiscal Framework Act. Now, this is an interesting kettle of fish, this particular bill. There's certainly things, I would say, to like, and there's things to wonder about. I just want to touch on some of those if you don't mind too much.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this bill to some degree is to replace the MSI, the municipal sustainability initiative, that was passed – I don't know – 10 or 15 years ago. Interestingly enough, the MSI was passed at a time when I was both on Calgary city council and on the AUMA board, which I think might make me just slightly unique in this Chamber right now. But here's a couple of the things that I remember when that was done back then. [interjection] The minister is making fun of me because I'm old.

An Hon. Member: I think you're special.

Mr. McIver: Oh, special. Okay. Special but not old, Minister, is that it? Okay. Thank you. I appreciate the clarification. He's still making fun of me, but that's all right. I'm okay with that, Minister.

So here's a couple of things that I think members of this House might find either interesting or instructive or, if none of that, I hope just slightly entertaining. Back then the municipalities, through the AUMA and the AAMD and C – the AAMD and C has now become the RMA. If you go back enough years, then that happens; sometimes things have changed their name. But at the time the government and the municipalities, both Calgary and Edmonton as well as all the other 300-plus municipalities in Alberta, had been talking for some time about a new fiscal framework, and the formula was actually done in a way that was somewhat ingenious by the provincial government.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Let me explain what I mean by that. With 300-plus municipalities, as you might imagine, when the government puts some money on the table and says that it is for municipal infrastructure and you're dealing with the largest municipality in Alberta with over a million people and the smallest municipality in Alberta with a population of probably somewhere in the neighbourhood of the hundreds instead of the thousands... [interjection] I appreciate that, Municipal Affairs minister. I don't know the exact number, and I don't want to be too far off it.

But the whole point is that there is a wide variation of audience for the particular plan that the government put forward at the time. The ingenious part would be, if you don't mind my saying – and I'm okay if everyone disagrees with me, but I think some of you might even agree with me – that the government said at the time: "We've got this much money to put on the table, about \$1.2 billion, and you municipalities can have it, but you've got to figure out yourselves how to divide it up. So there it is. It's there in a bank account, and the minute you tell us how you've agreed to divide it, then you can have it." So you can imagine that that was quite a discussion. You know, with municipalities with populations in the hundreds and municipalities with populations in the millions all

sitting around the table together determining how they're going to split up \$1.2 billion.

I wasn't privy to all of those conversations. I was privy to some of them, and you can imagine that they were pretty entertaining, of course for proper reasons, because every elected person from every municipality, big or small, was doing their best to represent their own constituents in the way that was best for them. Of course, the larger municipalities said that what was best for their municipality is that they should split it up by population – done; let's go home; let's call it a victory – and the smaller municipalities said: not a chance; not a chance ever that we are going to agree to that. Some of them said something to the effect of, "What if we did it by kilometres of road and number of culverts?" something that would severely favour the smaller municipalities.

Mr. Strankman: Culverts are important.

Mr. McIver: I couldn't agree more, hon. member. Culverts are important; roads are important; population is important. It's all important.

But my whole point here is that there is a diverse audience when it comes to municipal funding agreements. As a result of that, then there was a fairly complex agreement that I would dare say had the government of the day – and this is why I think it's ingenious. Had the government of the day come forward and said, "This is the formula that we are imposing upon you, and you all have to sign off on it," I would suggest to you that 330 out of the 340 or 350 municipalities would have said: no way. But by having the municipalities come up with the formula, then they agreed to it before it went to the government.

I think that you've got to admit that was a little bit ingenious in order to bring agreement to a group that isn't – while they're all nice people, and they understand each other's problems, they wouldn't naturally agree on this unless, of course, they had to in order to get their mitts on \$1.2 billion. Given that challenge, they rose to that challenge, and they came up with an agreement. And that was pretty fantastic.

Madam Speaker, this is a little bit different. This is where the government has gone to the two largest municipalities, Calgary and Edmonton, saying: we're going to cut you a special deal; it doesn't mean we're going to be bad to the other municipalities. The government didn't say that, and I won't accuse them of it. It doesn't say: we're going to be better than the other municipalities. The government didn't say that either, and I'm not going to accuse them of it. But this is a different kettle of fish in the way the government has gone about it.

Consequently, that is part of the reason why when it dropped on the table with, you know, very few days left in the scheduled sitting of the Legislative Assembly, it makes it just a little bit hard to internalize, understand. Indeed, one of the big outstanding questions which none of us, at least none of us on this side of the House, can answer is: how will that affect the other 300-plus municipalities that are not called Edmonton or Calgary? Of course, this legislation doesn't give us any answers to that question.

Knowing that, I think that was – I don't know if I put everybody to sleep. If I did, I apologize. But that background, I thought, was pertinent, and I thought it was genuinely meaningful in terms of how we look at this piece of legislation, this Bill 32, in front of us, Madam Speaker. That is a big question mark: what happens to the other 300-plus municipalities if indeed the Legislative Assembly of Alberta passes this agreement?

So what we have here in the legislation is – and it purports to provide stable, predictable, long-term funding for Calgary and Edmonton, something that is important to them. The mayors of the

cities seem happy. Because I live in Calgary, I've heard more in the media from the mayor of Calgary than Edmonton, so, Edmonton's mayor, please forgive me. It's just that where I live, I hear the other mayor's voice on the radio more often than I hear yours. But what I have heard is the mayor of Calgary saying that indeed it is less than they're getting right now until I think he said 2027, in which case it becomes more. So that's an interesting variation. Also, the funding agreement will result in cities being more directly impacted by a fluctuation of provincial revenues.

Now, here are some things I just heard from the previous speaker, from Calgary-Hawkwood, and just so the speaker knows, these are things that I think he's right on and I agree with him on. He said that the revenue sharing will start after 2022 if I heard him correctly. He's nodding his head. Okay. I think he said that the transit funding will start after 2027, which is the same year when the mayor of Calgary said that this agreement will provide more dollars than they're getting today.

Mr. Cooper: My kid is going to be in university then. He's in grade 6 now.

9:10

Mr. McIver: That is 10 years from now, just about, yes.

Here's the funny thing, and it's a little odd to me. I also agree with the Member for Calgary-Hawkwood who said that this agreement will provide more money to the two largest cities in Alberta when times are good and less money when times are tough. It sounds quite a bit like riding the oil and gas roller coaster, if you ask me, when you actually think of it that way. Having said that, Madam Speaker, I'm actually not saying that the legislation is bad. I'm just saying – I'm trying to look at it with an open mind here, but nonetheless that does look just a little bit like riding the oil and gas roller coaster up and down, as the current government has said they don't want to do anymore.

Now, here's a little piece. There's something very similar if not exact in the previous formula. In section 4(2) of the legislation:

For the purpose of subsection (1)(a), the percentage for an applicable fiscal year is calculated in accordance with the following formula.

If you're at home trying to keep up – I know I can't keep up, and if you can keep up at home, you're smarter than me, which isn't hard to do. Here's the formula:

$$[(0.48 \times A/A + B) + (0.48 \times C/C + D) + (0.04 \times E/E + F)] \times 100\%.$$

So I'm sure everybody now knows exactly how much Calgary is getting and how much Edmonton is getting.

Now, in fairness to the government and in fairness to the minister, this particular calculation is something that was pretty similar to what was in the previous legislation from the previous government. So while I'm making fun of the calculation, I can't genuinely make fun of this particular government without at the same time making fun of the previous government because the calculation is the same.

But my point, which I'm sure you're all waiting for with bated breath, is that with all of this complexity and with the short period of time in which we've had to look at this to understand it – and we do care. Of course, while we care about all Albertans on all sides of this House, we all understand that the two major cities comprise over half of the population of Alberta, so it's pretty important for the two major cities. It's also pretty important because whatever gets spent there can't get spent in the other almost 50 per cent of the population and all of the other 300-plus municipalities across Alberta. So I think it's reasonable that I could move an amendment, Madam Speaker, which I would like to move now. Unless you tell me differently, I'll sit down until you give me permission to continue, okay?

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. If you could just wait till the table has a copy.

Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Here's what the amendment says for those folks following at home. I move that the motion for second reading of Bill 32, City Charters Fiscal Framework Act, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 32, City Charters Fiscal Framework Act, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

Now, Madam Speaker, the first part of my speech was all about setting the table about just how complex this is and how important this is and that we've only had it for a very short period of time. I think it's legitimate that the Legislative Assembly would want to look at this in committee so that we could as a team look at this. It's important. What you haven't heard me say is that the bill is bad, and you haven't heard me say that the bill is good. I think the bill is interesting. It's worthy of further discussion.

With that, Madam Speaker, having moved this amendment and getting close to running out of time, when you're going to force me to sit down and stop talking, I will now move that we adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: I would like to call the committee to order.

Bill 31 Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2018

The Deputy Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? We're in Committee of the Whole right now. Is anybody wanting to speak?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[The clauses of Bill 31 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Deputy Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Bill 27 Joint Governance of Public Sector Pension Plans Act

The Deputy Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the chance to rise today and talk about Bill 27, Joint Governance of Public Sector Pension Plans Act. Of course, I spoke at great length at second reading about how good our public servants are, how hard they work, the quality of services they provide for all Albertans, and how important it is to protect their pensions, protect their compensation, and to ensure that, in competing going forward, Alberta not only

competes in the world with our great commodities and our great tech sectors but also competes with top-drawer public services. That, of course, is crucial. That, of course, is dear to the hearts of so many of us. I spoke during second reading about how you don't have to turn around too many times or go to too many places before you get the chance to engage and talk to some of our fine public servants, both for the province of Alberta and our municipalities, our school boards, our irrigation districts.

It's been a bit of a whirlwind, getting a 119-page bill less than a week ago. Of course, we know that that's how this government likes to do things, fast and furious and never mind what the unintended consequences may be. I've had the good chance to talk to many, many Albertans. Some felt that the consultation was good, but many said: what consultation? Some felt that it just kind of scratched the surface, again one of the reasons why all these bills should go a little slower and to committees and that kind of thing for a second reflection and also for the opportunity to have some experts.

I want to propose three amendments, and these amendments are based on accountability, fairness, and effectiveness, just to make sure that Albertans' pensions, our public service pensions, have the best chance going forward and that Albertans have the opportunity to make sure that as a taxpayer things are in order.

Madam Chair, I am a bit concerned. When I reached out to experts about some of the things that surround the liability, the transfer of the liability, there is concern about the government dipping into these funds and using them for their incredibly huge deficit. There is concern – there is concern – about the discount rate that these funds are based on and the sustainability. Again, in a week it's hard to talk to many people, but I'm so pleased with my team and my assistants and my colleagues. We certainly did our best.

9:20

There are concerns around some of the effectiveness, with some of the agreements around unanimous votes going forward, and again with the lack of consultation. Nevertheless, let's move forward. I would like to start by making a notice of amendment. I'll just give our hard-working pages the opportunity to pass this around. The first amendment has to do with . . .

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, if you could just wait until I see the original, please, just to make sure it's in order.

Please go ahead. Your amendment will be referred to as A1.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Madam Chair. Amendment A1. I move that Bill 27, Joint Governance of Public Sector Pension Plans Act, be amended as follows. In part A schedule 1 is amended in part 2 by (a) striking out section 13 and substituting the following:

Auditor General

13 Notwithstanding section 11 of the Auditor General Act, the Auditor General is the auditor of the Corporation and the Plan.

And (b) by striking out section 19(4).

In part B schedule 2 is amended in part 2 by (a) striking out section 13 and substituting the following:

Auditor General

13 Notwithstanding section 11 of the Auditor General Act, the Auditor General is the auditor of the Corporation and the Plan.

And (b) by striking out section 19(4).

In part C schedule 3 is amended in part 2 by (a) striking out section 12 and substituting the following:

Auditor General

12 Notwithstanding section 11 of the Auditor General Act, the Auditor General is the auditor of the Corporation and the Plan.

And (b) by striking out section 18(4).

Again, Madam Chair, I just want to restate the objective. We're proposing a few amendments to Bill 27 because we want to ensure that the joint governance framework is fair, that it's effective, and that it's effective for all the members of the new boards, all the pensioners, all the beneficiaries, and we want to ensure a high level of accountability for members of the pension plan as well as Alberta taxpayers.

Interestingly, the Auditor General is currently the auditor of these plans. I was a bit surprised when I saw the section of the plan that said that the Auditor General cannot – cannot – be the auditor of the three pension plans that this Bill 27 pertains to. I just thought that, for the sake of the taxpayer, for the sake of the beneficiaries, the Auditor General needs to remain auditor to ensure that the billions of dollars in these plans are protected, to ensure the continuation of the people that have been looking at it on behalf of the taxpayer. Not having the Auditor General do this, Madam Speaker, may put taxpayers' dollars at risk. Of course, the government of Alberta is the main employer contributing to the public-sector pension plan, which is now worth some side of \$13.5 billion. Again, the government of Alberta is the main employer-contributor, the taxpayer of Alberta, for the \$42.8 billion local authorities pension plan as, of course, this one funds Alberta Health Services. According to the Auditor General's 2014 report, so we're back almost four years, the government share in each of these plans is approximately half of the total, or approximately \$30 billion.

Madam Chair, it seems like good sense. The Auditor General, in my six years being in here, has only impressed me, past and present, with the thoroughness, the quality, the effectiveness, and it just makes absolute sense to me to have this continue and to have the taxpayer of Alberta's representative continue to monitor these funds. I want to say that I was surprised that the Auditor General's office was not consulted about being removed as the long-standing auditor for these three pension plans. The office was informed of it Monday, November 19, the day before the minister introduced the bill in the House. I don't know. It's sort of like breaking up by text maybe.

Ms Hoffman: What do you know about that?

Mr. Barnes: I'm married 31 years. I know little.

We have this great department, who's done great work for years and years, from whom at the PAC committee, every time we asked for something, the response was amazing. They didn't even consult in the proper way. Perhaps the minister can tell us today why he included this section preventing the Auditor General from being the auditor for billions of dollars – billions of dollars – of pension funds, pensioner and taxpayer. The Auditor General has been the auditor for these pension plans for decades. He has an in-depth knowledge of the risks associated with these investments. The Auditor General's office also audits AIMCo, the plan's investment manager. So the Auditor General, again, has comprehensive, overarching knowledge and experience. The Auditor General is in a rare position to analyze all the implications for the taxpayer of the government's investments in these pension plans. Having the Auditor General continue to audit the pensions guarantees public transparency because the Auditor General reports to the Legislative Assembly. After all, Madam Chair, we're Albertans' representatives, both the pensioner and the taxpayer.

Madam Chair, an independent auditor may not have the same formal requirement to report to Albertans. Does this government want to hide our financial position from the pensioners and from Albertans? That's absolutely what it looks like. The Auditor General also has in the past recommended better risk management

practices regarding the sustainability of public-sector pension plans. One of the concerns, again, that I heard was on the discount rates that are being used, and we'll see when that rooster comes home to roost. The Auditor General points out that taxpayers are ultimately responsible if the plans are not sustainable. That's why it's crucial. The Auditor General points out that taxpayers are ultimately responsible if the plans are not sustainable.

Madam Chair, colleagues, I ask you to support this amendment. Let's enhance the protection for our pensioners and our taxpayers.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Madam Chair, I just want to stand and say that I think that this is a very reasonable amendment, and I am actually disappointed to hear that the hon. members from the government side are not willing to even address this issue.

An Hon. Member: Terrible.

Mr. Hunter: And then they're mocking it.

We're talking about accountability for a \$60 billion fund. To make sure that we have some kind of clarity on why this is happening, if there's someone who is willing to speak to this, I would absolutely love to hear from them.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. You know, we of course care about accountability on this side, transparency, and I can tell you that we are ensuring this through this joint governance bill. For about 30 years these pension groups have been asking for independence from government. They want to set their own pension deal, they want to set their own way forward, and the government of the day always stymied that. The governments of the day promised that they would bring this joint governance in and never did. We are following through with a commitment we made.

I believe, of course, in properly looking after pensions for people. That's why we're setting up independent boards, both for the pension deal and for the administration and the corporations. When you grant this kind of independence, you also are allowing them to make sure everything is in place. They have to structure their own reviews of their books by hiring an auditor, by engaging an auditor. They are going to be doing that on their own.

9:30

If we were to say, "You can have your independence, but you can't look into who's your auditor; we don't want you to have that responsibility," well, that's not really granting independence. That's keeping a chain on these boards, and frankly that's not what we agreed with them to do. I'm confident that they will seek auditors who will provide a clear indication of the finances of their pension monies and be able to pass that on to their members, both their retirees and their current members.

Madam Chair, I would not accept this amendment because these pension boards, both administration and sponsor boards, will be able to do this on their own. They can engage an auditor. Auditors have a responsibility to operate under the proper rules of accounting, actuarial and other kinds of things, and provide that to their clients, which are the corporation boards. We are supporting the choices of independent, jointly governed pension plans. That's in the best interests of both them as operators, as people who own,

along with the employers, the monies that are for their pensions, long-term pensions.

Madam Chair, I'm not going to be accepting these. I'm looking forward to other amendments.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, and thanks to the Minister of Finance for standing up and clarifying a bit. I guess I'd just kind of like to ask him to please do that again and talk a little bit about, you know, the superintendent of pensions, what his involvement is going to be, what his role is going to be, particularly if we run through a tough time, a downturn, particularly if something in the market changes. Hon. Minister, could you talk about that, please?

The Deputy Chair: The Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you again. You know, a key component of legislation is that the three plans will be registered under the Employment Pension Plans Act, meaning that they will be subject to regulatory oversight by the superintendent of pensions. That superintendent is charged with the administration and enforcement of this act and must ensure that plans comply with the legislation. Boards will be expected to submit annual audited financial statements – of course, they'll be hiring their own auditor to do that – annual information returns, and actuarial valuation reports regularly to the superintendent. That superintendent, of course, has oversight, as given by the Employment Pension Plans Act, not only for these pensions but pensions in Alberta.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak?

Hon. Members: Question.

The Deputy Chair: Seeing none, I will call the question on amendment A1.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:34 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Barnes	Hunter	Nixon
Goodridge	Loewen	Orr
Hanson	McPherson	Strankman

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Horne	Payne
Bilous	Jansen	Piquette
Carlier	Kleinstauber	Rosendahl
Carson	Larivee	Sabir
Ceci	Littlewood	Schmidt
Connolly	Loyola	Schreiner
Coolahan	Luff	Shepherd
Dach	Malkinson	Starke
Dang	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha
Drever	McKittrick	Swann
Fitzpatrick	Miller	Turner
Goehring	Miranda	Westhead

Hinkley
Hoffman

Nielsen

Woollard

Totals:

For – 9

Against – 40

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

The Deputy Chair: We are now back on the original bill. Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise again to propose another amendment. We've obviously seen less than a concern for the liability and the protection of 275,000 hard-working Albertans' pensions and taxpayer dollars, but the next thing I'm concerned about is the speed at which this government is trying to do things. Again kudos to the very, very hard-working, capable UCP staff, who immediately got on the phone and phoned countless people involved in this, from the Auditor General, to lawyers, to pensioners, to hard-working public servants. A lot of the answers came back: they had no idea what was going on. A lot of the answers came back: geez, this is pretty rushed. I saw some government members across the floor shaking their heads when I passed on the concern that one person was concerned that the government was dipping into these funds to cover their other deficits and debts. It never hurts to go a little slower. It never hurts to get things right. Of course, the way this bill is set up is that by March 1 the three sponsor boards, the three corporate boards can be started to be set up, could be set up.

9:40

Madam Chair, the amendment that I wish to make to Bill 27, Joint Governance of Public Sector Pension Plans Act, is to move that it be amended as follows: first of all, schedule 1 is amended in section 1, (a) in subsection (1)(u) by striking out "March 1, 2019 or, subject to subsection (2), such later date as set by the Lieutenant Governor in Council" and substituting "September 1, 2019," and (b) by striking out subsection (2). Schedule 2 is amended in section 1, (a) in subsection (1)(u) by striking out "March 1, 2019 or, subject to subsection (2), such later date as set by the Lieutenant Governor in Council" and substituting "September 1, 2019," and (b) by striking out subsection (2). Schedule 3 is amended in section 1, (c) in subsection (1)(u) by striking out "March 1, 2019 or, subject to subsection (2), such later date as set by the Lieutenant Governor in Council" and substituting "September 1, 2019," and (d) by striking out subsection (2). Schedule 4 is amended in section 5(3), in the proposed subsection (1.1) by striking out "March 1, 2019" and substituting "September 1, 2019."

Thank you, colleagues. Thank you, Madam Chair. Not much of a change to go from March 1 to September 1. My goodness, March 1 is, like, 85 days away. I mean, we have Christmas in there, we've got the normal government business, we've got \$65 billion of hard-working Albertan beneficiaries, their pension assets, under trust, not to mention the liability held by taxpayers, and this government is in a hurry to get things done by March 1. Does that relate to some other promises or some other negotiations that have happened? Who knows? But let's get to the point where we're doing things the right way. I can't imagine, you know, \$65 billion in some side of 85 days and where it could go.

I think the objective is to allow sponsorship and corporate boards and the corporations themselves – the people that work at Alberta Health Services and municipalities, the irrigation districts, the school boards – six months longer to establish. I think I heard my hon. colleague say that for decades – for decades – the past government had not done what was being asked of them by some

Albertans. Well, two ways to look at this, of course, Madam Chair, and one of them is that if it's been decades, what the heck difference is six more months going to make? I would recommend that a little, you know, somber second thought, a little reflection, a little opportunity to get the right people in place and do the right things are probably a good idea.

What I'm trying to do here is improve the effectiveness of these new governance boards. We're going to be setting up six new boards – can you imagine all the moving parts in that? – and legislation: I mean, I just read in two minutes 10 or 15 subsections. Can you imagine all that these hard-working people have to go through? The transition date for Bill 27: again I want to remind you, Madam Chair, that more than \$60 billion of pensions are being transferred to the new corporations in 85 days. \$60 billion. My goodness.

I was at a little Christmas party yesterday at Suffield, and God bless our men and women in uniform that serve to protect Canada. Commander Onieu was having a little Christmas party. We have a lot of British training soldiers there as well. And my goodness, the Phoenix pay system – the number of people I talk to that have encountered hardship because of the Phoenix pay system. I think, if I remember right, it was between three and four years that they've been dealing with this. Can you imagine? Can you imagine if you guys get \$65 billion worth of pension transfers wrong because of your haste to get in before March 1? We all know what March 1 to May 31 is all about. We just hope you do it right.

Madam Chair, the employee-employer organizations identified in the legislation currently have about 85 days to recruit members, appoint members, train members, establish quorum and voting requirements, set up administrative support, and establish offices.

Can you imagine if one of those areas at one of those boards, whether the special forces and then God bless the service people that are part of the special forces pension, can you imagine that because of this government's haste to beat March 1, something goes wrong? Can you imagine the headlines then? Can you imagine – again, I think of that poor taxpayer that will be working a little longer, a little harder, to cover a mistake that we could do something now.

Madam Chair, Bill 27 offers no guidance on the kind of background expertise that these board members will need or what training will be required to ensure educated stewardship for the billions of pension funds that will come under their control. Billions of pension funds.

Madam Chair, that's obviously not a process that should be rushed. Delaying the transition date by six months will ensure that members are better prepared for the responsibilities that will fall to them when acting as trustees for the billions of dollars worth of funds in the three pension plans.

Madam Chair, ever talked to someone that's been executor or coexecutor for an estate? It's such an important responsibility, but I'm always aware of how that impacts people in their desire to get it right and be fair and all those things. Now we've got billions of dollars, 275,000 Albertans direct beneficiaries, 4.1 million Albertan taxpayers that have ultimate responsibility for the liability. And this government is in an 85-day rush.

Providing more time will also ensure employees and employers and pension plan members can have confidence in the transfer of these public-service pensions to the brand new boards. Confidence. Again, just a short time ago one of these recipients told me that he thought the government might dip into his funds and use it for something else. Confidence.

Madam Chair, I would ask all my hon. colleagues for their support in this amendment, and let's do all we can to protect our hard-working public services pensions. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you, Madam Chair. With regard to the rapidity of the consultations, I want you to know that we didn't just start this yesterday. We started working with the representatives and others back in the early, early summer. Meetings started taking place, and there were a lot of meetings from all representatives of the pension plans, the employee representatives, and government that came to the table. There were consultations and there was a letter-writing campaign that I received 1,800 plan members' requests to call for the changes that we're bringing forward now.

9:50

Over the summer we considered input gathered from multiple stakeholders, Madam Chair, including survey respondents, written submissions, and, as I said, there were numerous meetings.

We got a number of those organizations who were involved as representatives of employees writing us and urging us to get on with it. In fact, as I said earlier, there were promises that were made back almost 30 years ago. Governments have been making promises to move on the practical reforms that are in our bill, and I'm proud, Madam Chair, to say that our government, this government, is finally making good on those promises and those good intentions.

We have had legal experts involved from all sides getting the organizations ready to undertake this responsibility, and they have prepared themselves well. So it's not just 85 days. It's not just 90 days since I tabled this. It is actually months and months of activity. Frankly, there are writers from across the province who say: get on with it. They have a deep mistrust. This person says that they have a deep mistrust for previous actions of previous governments. They want to see the pensions in the hands of the joint governance representatives, meaning employee representatives and employers. Right now I'm the sole trustee and administrator of these pensions, and frankly the pensions can probably get greater stewardship, more regular involvement every step of the way by having the owners of those plans at the tables, whether they're the sponsorship tables or the administrator tables, and stewarding those things.

Madam Chair, I think this is in the right direction of what we need to do. The organizations that have been involved have been involved since the summer. They have legal representatives who are giving them guidance every step of the way. They have skills and abilities and energy to undertake what's necessary to get them ready. I think we should not support these recommendations of delaying yet again the commitments to joint governance. Actually, this government made a commitment to take care of this business so that it doesn't wander and get reversed potentially by somebody else being at the table. I'm at the table now, and my commitment was to bring this in, and I'm going to stick to my word about what we did.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2?

Mr. Hunter: Madam Chair, I appreciated listening to both my colleague and the Finance minister. I guess the question that I have

is: if there was such a need to get it done and you've been in office now for three and a half years, what took you so long?

Mr. Ceci: Madam Chair, I don't know how many bills our government has brought in, but there's more than this many that we've brought in and passed in the House. We have had a full legislative agenda, full and useful and in the direction of where Alberta needs to go. I think that we're getting to it now because, frankly, it's an important piece of legislation to get done. I want to continue to build the trust of important employee and employer groups as we're following through with what we said we were going to follow through with. We started working on this bill in the early summer, and now we're here on the 3rd of December. The timeline for this kicking off will be March 1. So I think, all things considered, that we've got an activist legislative agenda that we've been fulfilling for three and a half years, and this is just a continuation of it.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Any other members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, I'll call the question on amendment A2.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A2 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:56 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Barnes	Hunter	Orr
Goodridge	Loewen	Strankman
Hanson	Nixon	

Against the motion:

Bilous	Horne	Payne
Carlier	Jansen	Piquette
Carson	Kleinstauber	Rosendahl
Ceci	Larivee	Sabir
Connolly	Littlewood	Schmidt
Coolahan	Loyola	Schreiner
Dach	Malkinson	Shepherd
Dang	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha
Drever	McKittrick	Turner
Fitzpatrick	Miller	Westhead
Hinkley	Miranda	Woollard
Hoffman	Nielsen	

Totals:	For – 8	Against – 35
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[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

10:00

The Deputy Chair: We are now back on the original bill. Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you again, Madam Chair. Thanks to my colleagues. Okay. We've seen a government that's in a hurry, that they're not concerned about liability, unintended consequences, not concerned about getting it right, but we'll keep trying. You know, as I said in my opening remarks, I've looked at this amendment idea, and I've looked at the bill with the idea of enhancing accountability, fairness, and effectiveness. We want to talk about

accountability and effectiveness in this one, and I will propose another amendment, please.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, your amendment will be referred to as A3. Please go ahead.

Mr. Barnes: Okay. Thank you again, Madam Chair. I move that Bill 27, the Joint Governance of Public Sector Pension Plans Act, be amended as follows: (a) schedule 1 is amended in part 2 by adding the following after section 20(1):

(1.1) An appointment to the board of directors under this section shall not be made if it results in other than one half of the directors being appointed by employee organizations and one half of the directors being appointed by employer organizations.

And (b) schedule 2 is amended in part 2 by adding the following after section 20(1):

(1.1) An appointment to the board of directors under this section shall not be made if it results in other than one half of the directors being appointed by employee organizations and one half of the directors being appointed by employer organizations.

And (c) schedule 3 is amended in part 2 by adding the following after section 19(1):

(1.1) An appointment to the board of directors under this section shall not be made if it results in other than one half of the directors being appointed as employee representatives and one half of the directors being appointed as employer representatives.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

This legislation as it's written now provides flexibility for the sponsor organizations. Again, each of the three pensions have a sponsor board and then a corporate board with different roles and responsibilities. But one of the responsibilities of the sponsor board is to appoint different representation to the corporate boards than on the sponsorship board, and I just think that the balance going forward, the balance of fair and timely and sustainable remuneration for our good, good public servants, our hard-working public servants, needs that balance of the government representative from Alberta Health Services through the sponsorship board, of course, through the government representative from a municipality or a university or an irrigation district. I think it's important to have that balance and that safe route: yes, the employees as well but, ultimately, for somebody who's representing that government corporation that is responsible generally for at least half – at least half – of the contributions to these pensions, and, Madam Chair, sometimes more. Sometimes the employer is paying a greater contribution than the employee. If that's what's been negotiated, that's fine, but equal balance and fair representation on the board doing the text, on the board doing the other rules and regulations seems paramount to me. We address fairness by ensuring that in the new governance boards the balance is always equal.

The NDP has stated the importance of equally weighted employee-employer representation on the sponsorship and in corporate boards for each pension. It has indicated that the representation would be the same for both boards. However, Madam Chair, Bill 27 allows the sponsor organizations to appoint a different number and balance of members to the corporate boards. We've looked through this thing. We couldn't find anywhere where it said that the corporate boards had to have the same fairly balanced representation as the sponsorship boards, hon. Finance minister. Hopefully, it's an oversight. Okay. Hopefully, we can pass this amendment and ensure that . . . [interjection] I've had a few, but maybe not this one.

Okay. As indicated, it looks like it allows the sponsorship organizations to appoint a different number and balance of members to the corporate boards. Let's change that. The rules for

the sponsor boards require an equal number of members appointed by employee and employer organizations. This requirement does not exist for the corporate boards. Again, in our short time with this we've looked through it, we've read it, and on and on, and it appears not to be there. This amendment matches the language in Bill 27 that requires parity – and thank you to our hard-working table officer people for helping us with that – between employee- and employer-appointed representatives on the sponsorship.

Colleagues, approving this amendment will extend the same requirement to the corporate boards, and why wouldn't we want it so? Please support my amendment.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm looking through information that I have, and it says that sponsor boards and the board of directors of each corporation will have an equal number of employee and employer appointees and will be selected by sponsor organizations without government approval. The initial distribution of seats will be set by government, but sponsors are authorized to change the composition of the sponsor boards in the future while maintaining the equality of employees and employers.

Madam Chair, it's fairly straightforward that this amendment is not required because there is no intent to have a different number other than an equal number of employee representatives and an equal number of employer representatives as directors. So it's not needed, and I just want to say in this House that the joint governance of public pension plans is something government took very, very seriously. We have worked diligently, and a lot of people have put in significant time and energy both on the employee side, on the employer side, and on government side to make sure there were no unintended consequences, and I don't believe there are any unintended consequences. The owners of these plans will have the opportunity to address their own plans in the future.

At this point there is no change at all contemplated to plan benefits or how the plans are funded, and there is no cost to government as a result of this change. I have used all the people in my department, in my ministry, and we have committed to our due diligence in making sure there are no unintended consequences. We're so proud of the work that is finally going to culminate in the joint governance of three public-sector pension plans, which was promised and started 30 years ago. This government took their responsibility seriously and followed through with something that these plan sponsors have had for that amount of time. We're confident that we've covered all the bases, and we're not the only people inputting into this. It was the representatives of employees, too, who have taken all of this with great sincerity and been chomping at the bit to make this happen, and it's going to happen.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

10:10

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd just like to add a few words here if I could and particularly to those words of the President of the Treasury Board because I know that he is trying to do his job with the greatest of due diligence, as is the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat. I don't believe that there is any intent for inappropriateness here. It's part of the responsibility of our jobs

here in the Chamber, Madam Chair, to try and improve this legislation as we go forward. I think the minister also recognizes that sometimes things do get by, and sometimes there may be unintended consequences. Therefore, I'd urge the minister again to revisit the amendment made by my colleague from Cypress-Medicine Hat because he's making that with the best of intentions. I'd like to support the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat. It's an important part of the legislation that we go forward with, and I'll just leave my comments at that.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A3?

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A3 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:12 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Barnes	Hunter	Orr
Goodridge	Loewen	Strankman
Hanson	Nixon	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hoffman	Nielsen
Bilous	Horne	Payne
Carlier	Jansen	Piquette
Carson	Kleinsteuber	Rosendahl
Ceci	Larivee	Sabir
Coolahan	Littlewood	Schmidt
Dach	Loyola	Schreiner
Dang	Malkinson	Shepherd
Fitzpatrick	McCuaig-Boyd	Turner
Goehring	Miller	Westhead
Hinkley	Miranda	Woollard

Totals:	For – 8	Against – 33
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[Motion on amendment A3 lost]

The Deputy Chair: We are now back on the original bill. Are there any members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 27 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Deputy Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Larivee: Thank you, Madam Chair. At this time I'd like to move that the committee rise and report bills 31 and 27.

[Motion carried]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Ms Miller: Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the

following bills: Bill 31 and Bill 27. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Does the Assembly concur in the report? All those in favour, please say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Acting Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Larivee: Thank you, Madam Speaker. At this time I would like to move that we adjourn for the evening until 10 o'clock tomorrow morning.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 10:18 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday morning, December 4, 2018

Day 58

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (NDP), Speaker
Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (NDP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (UCP),
Deputy Leader of the Official Opposition
Anderson, Hon. Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (NDP)
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (UCP)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (NDP)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (NDP)
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (NDP)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (NDP)
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Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (NDP)
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Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP)
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Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (AP)
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (NDP),
Deputy Government House Leader
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Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)
Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Conklin (UCP)
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)
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Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)

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New Democratic: 53 United Conservative: 26 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Freedom Conservative: 1 Independent: 2 Progressive Conservative: 1

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Drever	Turner
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Luff	Woollard
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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

10 a.m.

Tuesday, December 4, 2018

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Deputy Speaker: Good morning.

Let us reflect. During this past week, throughout AIDS Awareness Week people around the world took time to remember lives lost and forever changed by AIDS. Let's take a moment today to reflect on ways we continue to support and help those persons who are living with HIV and AIDS along with their families and loved ones.

Please be seated.

Orders of the Day

Government Motions

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Amendments to Standing Orders

22. Ms Ganley moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:
Be it resolved that the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta be amended as follows. Standing Order 61 is amended by adding the following after suborder (2):
- (2.1) Notwithstanding Standing Order 3(1) and 4(2), (2.1) and (3), if at the time at which the Committee of Supply must rise and report in accordance with Standing Order 4(3) there are fewer than 15 minutes remaining in the time allotted for consideration of the interim or supplementary estimates then under consideration by the Committee, the Committee of Supply, subject to suborder (2.2), shall continue its consideration beyond the normal adjournment time to fulfill the time allotted for consideration of the estimates.
- (2.2) If under suborder (2.1) the Committee of Supply does not fulfill the time allotted for its consideration of the interim or supplementary estimates within the 15 minute period immediately following the normal adjournment time, the Chair shall interrupt the proceedings and call on the Committee to rise and report without question put.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much. By way of explanation, Madam Speaker, I can indicate that this is a minor change aimed at closing a loophole whereby a three-hour allotment of debate in Committee of Supply could find itself unfinished, with the supply schedule or vote potentially delayed as a consequence of a minor interruption or minor delay at the beginning of Orders of the Day for that sitting day.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: This motion is debatable. Any members wishing to speak?

Hearing none, the hon. Deputy Government House Leader to close debate.

Ms Ganley: So closed.

[Government Motion 22 carried]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Committee Referral for Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act

30. Ms Ganley moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:

Be it resolved that:

1. The Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act be referred to the Standing Committee on Families and Communities and the committee shall be deemed to be the special committee of the Assembly for the purpose of conducting a comprehensive review pursuant to section 14 of that act;
2. The committee may without leave of the Assembly sit during a period when the Assembly is adjourned or prorogued;
3. In accordance with section 14 of the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act the committee must submit its report to the Assembly within six months after beginning its review, and that report is to include any amendments recommended by the committee.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. On behalf of the Government House Leader I move Government Motion 30.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Government Motion 30. I rise with some concerns that I have in regard to the special Standing Committee on Families and Communities. I appreciate that work is being forwarded to the committee from this Assembly to debate and explore. My concern is that this particular Committee on Families and Communities hasn't met since April 27, 2018. That's a significant amount of time since this committee has last met, and there have been a number of things that have come forth to this committee that could have been dealt with.

In particular, on August 24 I sent a letter to the chair of the Families and Communities Committee asking for a review of the Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act, or the PCHAD Act. This is in response to the feedback that I have from a constituent of mine. Her name is Lisa, and she approached me because she's had some personal experience regarding this act and been touched very closely by it and has highlighted a number of problems that she feels need to be addressed. She doesn't have the solutions, Madam Speaker, but given that this act hasn't been reviewed in 12 years – it took effect in 2006; it is now 2018 – and there are a significant number of changes that have happened in society in the last 12 years, I think that all members of this Assembly would agree that this should be or is an important review that needs to happen.

This particular Committee on Families and Communities hasn't been doing any work over the summer. There's been no legislation before it. There's been nothing. There's been no meeting, yet when I asked for a review on August 24, 2018, I received a response from the chair on September 4. In my opinion, that would be a timely response.

I'll just read the letter that I sent to the committee, and then I would like to read the response – this is important – and then I will have more to say. I am writing to the chair of the Standing Committee on Families and Communities.

I am writing to request that the Standing Committee on Families and Communities consider a review of the Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act.

Constituents have reached out to me with concerns that the legislation needs to be updated in order to better support families with children suffering from drug addiction. In particular, it may

be worthwhile to explore options to better encourage long-term rehabilitation.

The concerns I am hearing would not be limited to residents of Airdrie, as drug addiction affects many individuals and families throughout the province.

As you are the chair of this committee, I thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Madam Speaker, I know that you know that we are facing a crisis in this province not only with the increase in opioid addictions, but children's mental health issues are on the rise, and many are not able to access treatment. Times have changed, and legislation should change with it.

The response that I received from the chair I will also read.

Dear [Member for Airdrie]:

Thank you for your letter of August 24, 2018, recommending that the Standing Committee on Families and Communities (the "Committee") conduct a review of the Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act (the "Act"). I will provide a copy of your letter, and this response, to committee members for their consideration.

Side note: again I will remind you that the committee has not met since April.

Comprehensive statute reviews are mandated through legislation or a referral by the Assembly. The Act does not provide for a statute review in this case, however, much of what you would like to be accomplished could... be achieved by reviewing the subject matter through an inquiry, public meeting or review of a related regulation. If committee members are interested in pursuing work involving this... matter I would encourage them to speak to you directly to find out more information about the issues involved. You may also want to speak [with] the Ministry of Health, which has responsibility for the Act, if you have specific suggestions for legislative changes that [may] be brought forward through a Bill.

Thank you for... [your] time to share your concerns with the Committee. Should you have any questions please contact the Committee office.

Madam Speaker, the letter very clearly states – and so also does this Government Motion 30 – that the Assembly may direct the committee to review legislation. The government has done so, and they've chosen not to do the PCHAD review and direct it to the committee for review, but they've chosen the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act, which is a very important piece of legislation. But I'm saddened to hear that in this day and age the Protection of Children Abusing Drugs Act is not top of mind for the government, in particular to review in the Assembly.

10:10

I also wrote to the Health minister on behalf of my constituent, who wrote back to me in a very confusing manner. I could read the letter into the record, actually, and I will, and then I will highlight the concerns that I have and again why this review is important.

Thank you for your email [and] your experience with the Protection of Children Abusing Drugs... Act program.

The PCHAD Act took effect in 2006, allowing parents and legal guardians to apply for protection orders from the Courts wherein their children under the age of 18 can be taken to a protective safe house for up to 10 days, even if they do not want to go. This 10-day period provides children with a structured and protective setting in which to begin detoxification, which can be extended for five additional days with a second court order. The time spent in the protective safe house also allows counsellors a chance to assess substance use and offer treatment recommendations to follow once they have been discharged from the program.

Please know that improving the substance use and mental health treatment system is a priority for our government. We

released Valuing Mental Health: Next Steps on June 27, 2017 in response to recommendations from the Valuing Mental Health: Report of the Alberta Mental Health Review Committee. The Ministry of Health worked with government and community stakeholders, including people with lived experience, to develop 18 actions that build upon and support the good work already happening on the front lines.

And this part is very important, Madam Speaker.

While I appreciate your invitation to meet to further discuss your experience with the program, my schedule does not permit me to do so.

I wonder what the minister is doing.

I encourage you to contact...

I actually won't say the name.

... [the] Director of Child, Youth & Family Initiatives, Community Seniors, and Addiction & Mental Health... to discuss your concerns.

Madam Speaker, I don't know what could be more important, first off, than meeting with a parent who is going through extreme hardship. The family is in utter chaos. All she wants to do is make it better for those that will go after them. That's all she wants to do. This family is thinking of other people and trying to help, using their experiences to do that.

What an important step this Assembly could have taken today or in the last six months, while the Standing Committee on Families and Communities wasn't reviewing any legislation. Review of PCHAD could have taken place while members of this Assembly on that committee were on summer vacation. We could have been working hard for our constituents and making use of this committee, Madam Speaker, and I know – I know – that there are other members of this Assembly that surely agree with me. There have been conversations amongst the members in regard to this legislation. I know, if I could be so bold, that every single member in this Assembly has had a constituent that has reached out to them with their concerns, with children going through a life of drug abuse and various other issues. These parents just simply want to help, and this Assembly had the opportunity to do so.

So I'm very disappointed, Madam Speaker, that the government has not chosen to take an opportunity to do the right thing for families in our province and, in particular, for children who are facing a very difficult future. I don't know what the answer is to strengthening the PCHAD legislation. It's been highlighted in here that perhaps the 10-day period that allows for children under the age of 18 to be taken into a protective safe house needs to be changed and reviewed. It's been suggested as such. There needs to be a longer time of assessment and treatment of the disorder. I would like to highlight that on behalf of my constituent for the members of this Assembly. I would hope – and I would encourage the government to consider this as a review, at a future date, through this committee. Hopefully, the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act will move through quickly, and we can get to some other important work as well.

Thank you for your time, Madam Speaker and to members of this Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the motion? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I speak in support of what the previous member was raising. As part of the mental health review I heard lots of concerns about the protection of children addicted to drugs, the PCHAD Act, and wrote letters to both the minister and to the chair just in the last month about the critical need to review PCHAD. It's not working as it could and should for a number of reasons. There are many issues, including

the length of time, the process of going through court, the lack of wraparound services when people are in this position, the lack of real, I guess, concerted efforts around helping young people with a life-and-death situation.

Notwithstanding that this is not necessarily focused on this particular motion to refer, I hope the government will take this opportunity to refer the PCHAD Act to committee for review. That's based on a number of mental health professionals that continue to contact me to say: "It needs to be reviewed. It needs to be updated. It needs to be changed." I just want to get on the record to support the awareness that this act hasn't been reviewed in 12 years, and it needs to be. There's a tremendous momentum out there in the health care community to make this act work better on behalf of children and families with addictions.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Any other members wishing to speak to the motion?

Mr. Ellis: Madam Speaker, I just want to take a moment to echo the last two speakers. As someone who has understood the positive effects of PCHAD, in my policing career I've had the ability to effectively use that piece of legislation in order to help a child get into some form of start on a recovery road. However, I think, as I've discussed with previous members in this House before and as the previous speaker from Calgary-Mountain View had indicated, this piece of legislation hasn't been reviewed in about 12 years and, certainly, I think, requires some assistance to make it better.

One thing, certainly, from my experience in dealing with somebody who is an addict is that, you know, a 10-day assessment sometimes is not enough. I wish I could tell you what that number is, Madam Speaker. However, that's where that committee comes into play, to help us better understand from the experts in the field what that specific number is. In my experience, when dealing with the kids that I've had to help out, of course, by using that piece of legislation, sometimes they spent that 10 days really just surviving the 10 days, with the full intent to continue down a negative path of addiction.

Certainly, I would like to thank the Member for Calgary-Mountain View and the Member for Airdrie for bringing up some very important points in regard to sending this to a committee, which, I think, would be able to bring in all the necessary experts to help strengthen that piece of legislation, which I believe, at the time of conception over a dozen years ago, was one of the first, if not the first, bills of its kind in Canada. Again, Alberta was leading the way when it came to this important piece of legislation, and I know that we as Albertans can make this legislation better.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Question or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the motion?

Seeing none, the hon. Deputy Government House Leader to close debate.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the comments from all around the House today. I think they raise some interesting issues. Certainly, it would never be our intention to delay a review. In fact, the motion itself is intending to create a review of an act, an act that we are reviewing as a result of an amendment that I actually accepted, being the minister who sponsored this initially.

10:20

I think the members raise excellent points, Madam Speaker. You know, I think all of us in this House have a deep desire to move the province forward. We've done a number of reviews of acts. We had the opportunity recently to update labour laws that hadn't been updated since 1988. Certainly, I've started looking at the Police Act, which also harkens from 1998. I think the members are absolutely correct. There's certainly a lot of progress to made in this place. I think we have made some of this progress over the last three and a half years, but I guess I would concur with their comments and say: much done; much more to do.

With that, thank you very much.

[Government Motion 30 carried]

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 30 Mental Health Services Protection Act

[Adjourned debate December 3: Ms Goodridge]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

Mr. Ellis: Madam Speaker, thank you so much for allowing me to speak to the Mental Health Services Protection Act. I rise on this Bill 30. You know, there's a lot to be said in regard to this particular bill. Regarding structure and importance of a bill of this magnitude, I certainly understand the importance of it and it certainly is, without doubt, complex.

Now, our health critic has done very much due diligence in reviewing this bill. You know, that's not easy in this Assembly, where bills sometimes are introduced very quickly and swiftly through the House, which obviously to me has always been a bit of a concern, especially when there are these, we'll call it, possible unintended consequences when bills come in and out so quickly, which is why it's always important to consult with the necessary stakeholders, either before or certainly if anything is ever referred to a committee. Then you really have that opportunity to bring in those necessary stakeholders in order to assist with strengthening a bill of this magnitude.

I have a few stories I wanted to touch base on, and I will get to my notes on this. You know, there are so many fields that this particular bill touches on when it comes to counselling and people who are peer supports and advocates: people that provide spiritual faith guidance, as an example, rehabilitation, problem-solving. As I've stated before, I'm certainly for structure and understanding that there is an accountability portion to anything, really, that we do. I certainly have a concern, questions that I think will be reasonably brought up in Committee of the Whole, which of course has to do with those people that do peer support. Many of them who do that were at one point in time former victims of addiction, some of whom themselves are going through the process.

I myself have an acquaintance who was a constituent, who has reached out to me. We've stayed in touch over the last four or five years. His name is Sheldon. He's a very nice young man. He's one of these fellows, you know, that had a great job, had a beautiful family, had the house, had the car, had everything going for him, but sadly he fell into the depths of addiction and drug abuse and lost it, lost everything. When I had the fortune in this House of passing Bill 205, the pill-press bill, and the work that I've done in regard to the fentanyl crisis, he reached out to me.

Over the last few years, obviously, he's been struggling in order to find work, work in a field that he had been in before, which, I

believe, was the oil and gas industry and which, sadly for him, he's been unable to find over the last several years. Through conversations I've had with him, he's trying to get involved in helping others, addictions. Now, he himself struggles, right? However, on a positive note, he always updates me as to how often he remains clean and sober, which is very important and a struggle that many of these people have to go through every day.

What I love about him is his enthusiasm to help others. It has become very infectious. You know, we've had great discussions regarding the fentanyl crisis. We talked about cocaine addictions, crack addictions, crystal meth addictions, and, obviously, fentanyl, carfentanil, heroin, all of these drugs that have sadly plagued our society.

You know, he sent me a note not too long ago, and he was really excited that he was getting an interview with an addictions advocacy group for people on active addiction. It's very much harm reduction based. He's doing this not because of his qualifications in the oil field; he's doing this because of his experiences as an addict and what he has overcome in order to help others, to help guide them.

One of the things that I've certainly experienced in my time dealing, again, with people with mental health and addictions – I guess we'll stay on the addictions topic at the moment – is that when you're trying to help somebody with that addiction, a lot of times the respect comes from those who have walked the walk and talked the talk. Not everything can be derived from the person who has that doctorate in the field of whether it be counselling or addictions. However, sometimes the best experiences and the best help can come from those who are in the peer support area.

As we relate it back to the bill, which has to do with the Mental Health Services Protection Act, certainly, those who have the experiences that provide huge value to those people who are going through the addictions themselves currently, I wouldn't want to see them prohibited in any way from helping people that are going through those struggles. We can include, of course, the mental health portion of things as well, Madam Speaker. Anyway, he provides what I consider to be a huge value, and I wouldn't want to see him or anyone like him having any sort of barrier to prevent them from helping others who are also going through any form of mental health and addictions struggle.

10:30

I think of another lady who has reached out to me. She herself was an addict – sadly, one of her kids became an addict who became very much lost within the system – again somebody that I have maintained contact with over the last several years. I'm proud to say that she's a very vibrant lady who has really pulled things together. She is providing support and helping people who are also going through mental health and addictions issues, and while doing that, she is providing support for her daughter, who herself has become a mother. I think it's important that she be allowed to continue her work that she's doing as a peer support for people not only in the community but within her own family.

As I worked downtown, Madam Speaker – this is in Calgary, of course – for about two and a half years and then also worked as a judicial interim release hearing officer in the jails for also, again, two and a half years, I dealt with many people, and I would say that, well, pretty much the vast majority of them had mental health or addictions issues. I saw the benefits of places such as the Mustard Seed, the Centre of Hope – what are some of the other ones that were downtown? – the Salvation Army, as an example, even one of our detox areas in Calgary called the Alpha House. You know, many of these people that are working there do what they can to help people. They provide coaching and, again, that peer kind of

support. Some of them themselves had been in the system, and they've lifted themselves up through the assistance of others, where they've got a job, again, helping others. I certainly wouldn't want to see any sort of a barrier for them in regard to this bill.

As my friend and colleague from Fort McMurray had indicated, this is a very complex bill, and I think it's important that we have the ability to analyze all components of it to make sure that there are no unintended consequences and that there is achievable buy-in from all stakeholders involved. Again, in Alberta specifically – and every jurisdiction has different little nuances – there is so much good work being done by so many different organizations, and I would not want to see any one of those good things being done by people from northern Alberta to central Alberta to southern Alberta have an unintended consequence of somehow being precluded from doing the good work that they're doing because of a bill that may not have been thoroughly thought out.

Again, Madam Speaker, I certainly appreciate the bill that's coming in. I understand the structural component. I certainly want to make sure that people themselves have – you know, I think that there has to be some form of structure, that there has to be consequences sort of as part of making sure that not just anybody, I guess, can do this. However, we also must appreciate and understand those services that are being provided throughout Alberta. There's just so much great stuff, and I just wouldn't want to see anybody precluded from doing some of the great stuff that they're doing.

If I may add, what I've found, too, is that – we're talking about essentially maybe a college that's potentially being created – we have to understand the nuances of the people who sometimes face these mental health and addictions problems. Some of them, sadly, in the throes of their addictions have fallen in to trouble with the law, and some of them may have criminal records. I certainly wouldn't want to see any of them precluded from doing the good work that they're doing as they've turned their lives around in order to help others within the community.

Madam Speaker, I just would like to add maybe a story that really just comes to mind from a gentleman that was downtown in Calgary. Sadly, I think he's still on the streets of Calgary, and this is going on probably about at least 15-plus years now. This is a gentleman that, sadly, fell into the throes of schizophrenia. You know, I myself had dealt with him, and . . .

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Hearing none, any other individuals wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 30, the Mental Health Services Protection Act. There are two parts to this bill – I think it's important to recognize that – one part being the piece around licensing of treatment facilities, and then the second piece being around the creation of the college. I am pleased to see especially, in addition to my comments from this morning in regard to the PCHAD legislation, that there is some action being taken by this government in regard to improving mental health services in this province.

Madam Speaker, I have a constituent named Mike. Mike is a constituent born and raised in Airdrie. We actually grew up together. Mike went through a significant battle with mental health and addictions. If you ever have the opportunity to meet Mike, he has become this fantastic advocate in our community and this wonderful speaker. He does this spoken word piece, and he does it in various avenues throughout the community. He's recently started

to go into the schools and speak to those high-risk youth in our schools about the life he's lived, how he got there and the challenges that he had and the challenges that he still currently faces. He's wonderfully open about it, and he's making such a difference and having such an impact on the people that meet him everywhere he goes.

Mike was actually recently the recipient of the Lieutenant Governor's true grit award. I wrote a letter of recommendation for him to the Lieutenant Governor, and I know that a number of community leaders in the city of Airdrie also very proudly spoke for him in regard to winning this award. He is an individual that is unforgettable, and I truly believe that he is changing lives in a way that most people will never be able to, Madam Speaker.

He is everywhere in our community. Just this fall he completed the fourth annual unmasking mental health event in Airdrie, that brings families together around Halloween time. They dress up, and Spider-Man always comes, and there's face painting and lots of candy. It's a great event.

10:40

He raises money for various charities in our community, and he does so with a smile on his face. This year it was particularly challenging for him because he was receiving his true grit award on Friday here in Edmonton and then Saturday was his event, that's become quite a large event in Airdrie. But he was able to manage those things and be very successful with that and get it done despite the freezing cold weather that happened at that time.

Airdrie is pretty proud of Mike and the work that he's doing in our community, Madam Speaker. But Mike never went to postsecondary education. He doesn't have a degree. Yet he's having an impact on so many different people: young people, high-risk youth, adults who are battling addiction. This is a guy that you can phone at 2 o'clock in the morning, and he will answer the phone, and he will come over and talk to you. He has saved many lives. I know that Mike has been to houses at 2 o'clock in the morning for friends that were trying to kill themselves. Mike has been there, and Mike is able to have these sort of real-life conversations with these people, that are impacting their lives and are saving lives.

It's just absolutely wonderful to see. I'm so honoured to know Mike and to hear of the work that he's doing in our community, not just from him, but you hear it from everybody else. My concern, Madam Speaker, with this legislation is: does this limit Mike's ability to be able to help those around him? Does this limit his ability and the ability of others to participate in peer support groups, peer support settings unfacilitated? I would have some questions surrounding a lot of those things.

I know a great man in this province. His name is Theo Fleury. He's a former hockey player for the Calgary Flames, Madam Speaker. There are many in this province that know him and his story quite well. He facilitates these peer support groups, and I have yet to actually see in this legislation if this is now going to be shut down. That's the concern that I have: will Mr. Fleury and will Mike in Airdrie still be allowed to run these groups that are having an impact? I've been able to participate, just sit in the corner and see and hear what this is doing in people's individual lives. So I do think of Theo and Mike when we talk about this type of legislation, and that needs to be addressed by the government, absolutely. I'm certain that the Minister of Health will respond under 29(2)(a), hopefully, and address those concerns for myself and for my colleagues and for Mike and for Theo and for many others who are making a difference in our communities in that regard.

Madam Speaker, as you may know, there are many former addicts that are the ones that are paying it forward and facilitating these types of activities, and if this legislation hampers that in any

way, shape, or form, we are doing a disservice to those in the industry and to those that struggle with addictions and mental health. I don't think that's the intent of this House, but that does need to be addressed because we are at crisis levels in our province when it comes to help, whatever you might call it. It's trauma specialists, on this end, that have really specific training, and then there's Mike who helps people, and there's AA, Alcoholics Anonymous. Those are people that have just been through it, that have come together to support each other, and it works for a lot of people. A lot of these peer support groups work for a lot of people, and this is the point I'm trying to stress here today. So I hope that the government can address that for me as we move forward.

I do have some concerns around the process for treatment facilities and sort of the red tape and the regulation that could bog down these very, very slim financial operations, that we know don't always have the manpower or the dollars to get this paperwork done. Is this going to bog them down? I actually think it's very important to have quality when it comes to treatment of mental health and addictions, Madam Speaker – and I applaud the government for addressing that – but there are some concerns for a lot of these organizations that deliver these services that do not have the ability to hire somebody to do the paperwork. So what does that look like? I think there are a lot of questions that these organizations have around that.

Those are some of the things I will address here in second reading of Bill 30, the Mental Health Services Protection Act. I ask that the government consider Mike and consider Theo and people like them that are doing good work in our communities and, hopefully, not limit their ability to pay it forward, to give back, to make a difference, and to save lives for our constituents and the people in our communities.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), the hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I did respond to some of the same line of questioning last night, but I'll be happy to do so again today just to provide that clarity and assurance that this is in no way about peer support programs or other types of programs where they aren't indeed selling themselves as counselling therapists or addictions counsellors. Definitely, 12-step programs and peer support programs, whether they're faith based or not, such as AA, as has been mentioned, or NA operate outside of residential treatment facilities and operate outside of classifying themselves as health professionals. They are certainly providing a service that is health related, but they're doing it from a position of lived experience. We really want to honour their expertise, and this is in no way to limit that.

This is about providing assurance to people that are often in some of their most vulnerable positions, when they're reaching out for help, living through substance use issues and asking for help for themselves or for a child or another loved one, for example, Madam Speaker. It's incredibly important that we give them the assurance. For somebody to call themselves a therapist, they have to actually have some kind of oversight training and expertise through a college.

The other piece that it does, of course, is that by bringing people who are counselling therapists or addictions therapists under a college, it creates that assurance to the public that they are held to a high standard around things like the bill we just passed earlier this session, around protecting patients from sexual assault, sexual misconduct, and being able to revoke a licence for somebody to practise in that field if they've engaged in any of those inappropriate

behaviours. Today if that's the case with somebody who calls themselves a therapist, we don't have those tools. By passing this legislation, there will be oversight, there will be protection, and that's important for patients. It will indeed not impact services that are provided through peer support and mentoring as it's so important, as mentioned by the hon. member and many others.

I just wanted to give that extra clarity that this is not about peer mentors. This isn't about people with lived experience who provide an important service to their community and help people living through their substance use. This is about people who call themselves addictions counsellors and addictions therapists and making sure that they're held to a high standard, that they're working with the public in a way that we would all be proud of, and if they're not, that they don't have the ability to continue doing that work, Madam Speaker.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Airdrie.

10:50

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Just a follow-up question. I'm seeking clarification on the creation of the college and those that are regulated under that. This may not be a question that you can answer. But when a college is created, for third-party insurance purposes to be eligible, there needs to be a college and a number that insurance companies can process, which is great. I actually think that's a good step forward to improving access to quality mental health treatment and will address a number of various concerns because financial barriers are certainly one of those, and there are many with third-party insurance that would like to access a marriage counsellor or addictions counsellor, those types of things, and may be able to do so with the creation of the college. Have you had any conversations with third-party insurance companies or the college itself? Will this be a further step down the line that is considered? Speak to that, please.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, hon. member. Well, that college hasn't been created yet. Because this is an area where there is no existing college or oversight per se, we aren't in a position to be able to liaise with them on those questions, but should the bill be passed, then regulations will be created to support the creation of a college. Those are the exact kinds of things that government, the college, and the people of Alberta can work through. It usually takes about a year to set up a college from scratch, so these are the kinds of questions that will be worked through to make sure that we not only protect patients but also find ways to increase access.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Right. I still have time. Is there any response from, particularly, Alberta Blue Cross that this is something that they're considering or see as a good step forward? Could you speak to that?

Ms Hoffman: Yeah. For Blue Cross, through the government programs that are public access programs, definitely we work with them on making sure that we have a good scope of services available. Then with private insurers, of course, they have a responsibility to the owners of those plans to make sure that they consult with them on those pieces. I regularly meet with Blue Cross and so do officials from my department to talk about the public plans and the . . .

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, the hon. minister to close debate.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker and to my colleagues for their engagement in this important discussion. When Albertans access substance use treatment or mental health services, they should absolutely feel safe in doing so, and Bill 30 aims to ensure that Albertans are able to access these professional mental health care services in a safe, regulated environment.

We've heard this call from many in the field. Focused consultations were held in the summer in both Edmonton and Calgary, and there was an online survey available to members of the public in addition to that. Of course, there are many very well-run facilities with dedicated caregivers throughout our province, and for them this bill will formalize standards and policies that already exist. It's important, I think, that workers be recognized and have the recognition of their expertise.

Albertans have needed this kind of help and have shared stories about facilities that offered services of questionable value, in some cases were even unsafe. At the announcement we referred to the 2007 fatality of Taylor Argent. Taylor was a young man, a very young man. After struggling with his substance use, his family admitted him to a facility that they assumed had safeguards, oversight, and protections. What happened to Taylor at that facility was heartbreaking. He consumed a poisonous substance – it was stored unsecurely in an unlocked shed – and he suffered for many hours before he was finally taken to hospital and later died.

In 2010 there was a fatality inquiry by Judge Hunter. It recommended that the government set up minimum standards of care at these facilities and that they be licensed and inspected on an ongoing basis. These recommendations were ignored by the government of the day and by successive Conservative governments as well.

In 2018 we decided that it was very important that we act on this. We committed to introducing legislation in our throne speech to ensure safety, quality care at private treatment facilities, and we're proud to deliver on that promise for the Argent family and for every Albertan who accesses this kind of care. We did this because we know how important it is for Albertans to trust that they will receive quality services from appropriately trained professionals in a safe environment.

I have to say that I wish this legislation was passed in 2010 following the fatality review. I actually wish it was passed before 2007, before Taylor was in this facility and any other person who suffered in an unregulated environment and assumed that there were these protections and safeguards. But I am very proud that our government is taking action to make sure that this can't continue, that we protect those who are accessing services in these facilities and in other areas in the community.

I'm very grateful that so many members of the public and people who work in these fields have reached out to us to work with us through this process and make sure that we have the very best protections for patients and make sure that Albertans get the kind of care and assurances that they deserve.

Thank you, hon. colleagues. I look forward to this bill proceeding.

[Motion carried; Bill 30 read a second time]

Bill 32
City Charters Fiscal Framework Act

Mr. McIver moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 32, City Charters Fiscal Framework Act, be amended by deleting all the words after “that” and substituting the following:

Bill 32, City Charters Fiscal Framework Act, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

[Adjourned debate on the amendment December 3: Mr. McIver]

The Deputy Speaker: Any members?

Mr. McIver: I’ve actually got a minute and a half left or something, right?

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Mr. McIver: Okay. The amendment was to refer this to committee because it’s a fairly complex bill, as I stated. I really think that it’s worth taking a look at. Obviously, it affects the two largest cities, and it affects all Albertans, of course, because if 53 per cent live in the two largest cities, then whatever dollars, assets, things that go to those cities are unavailable for the rest of the province. So it really is important to the whole province and not just to the two major cities. It’s a fairly complex change to what we do now. As such, I think it would be responsible to take a look at it together. Particularly, as part of Bill 32 there are a lot of changes to the way that land-use approvals will happen in the future, dedication of land during the approval process.

I hope everyone will support this.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Any other members wishing to speak to the referral amendment?
The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It’s always a pleasure to rise in this building to discuss legislation that is important to all Albertans. Of course, today is no exception as we discuss Bill 32, the City Charters Fiscal Framework Act.

Now, I’m prepared to cautiously support Bill 32 at this point, for the moment. It talks about city charters and how the funding would work and has been going on for some time now in the background. I support it for the moment and look forward to hearing some of the questions that we ask being answered, I’m sure. The minister is usually good at that. We’ll see what happens as we approach Committee of the Whole stage.

Anyway, I was watching the Legislature on TV last night – I know it’s hard to believe that you’d sit here most of the day and then go home and watch it on TV – and I saw the Member for Calgary-Hays make a referral motion. Now, I support that motion. Like he just finished saying, this is a very complex piece of legislation, so I certainly concur with the fact that having a committee look at that would be a good idea.

Bill 32 proposes to enshrine in legislation a funding framework for the cities of Edmonton and Calgary that will replace the current municipal capital funding regime. Now, that municipal capital funding regime is known as the municipal sustainability initiative, that we always called the MSI. That deal was reached with input from all of the municipalities, by the way, back in 2007.

I believe the Premier of the day – I think it was Stelmach – initiated the MSI way back then and left Alberta municipalities with \$11.3 billion over 10 years as a support for local infrastructure

priorities and a way to build strong, safe, and resilient communities. He left the Alberta municipalities with that much money, but he left the municipalities themselves to determine how much money would be handed out and who would get how much money. That seemed, to me, to certainly be a fair way to do things, a fair way to have the money administered. In my days as a councillor we certainly were appreciative of the fact that we were eligible and able to receive money from the province. That was certainly my opinion.

11:00

Now, as I recall, governments between then and now have toyed with the length of the years that that municipal sustainability initiative money might be paid out to municipalities. At any rate, the two largest cities in Alberta will, when this deal comes to fruition in 2022, no longer be receiving municipal sustainability initiative funding from the provincial government. No municipality in Alberta will actually be receiving any funding because that grant is set to be completed by that time. Now, I have to say, because it has recently come to my attention, that it sounds like the minister is certainly working with the Rural Municipalities of Alberta and the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association on developing a replacement model to the municipal sustainability initiative. I’m certainly not aware of any details of such an agreement yet, mostly because, I suspect, there are no details yet.

Now, Madam Speaker, Bill 32 is the Edmonton and Calgary funding model that, of course, replaces MSI. It was way back in ’07, when I was elected for the first time to a rural municipal government – and the announcement had already been made before I took office – but I recall the municipal sustainability initiative being a very big deal for a lot of communities within our rural area. It was a big deal, certainly, for our municipality as well – don’t get me wrong – but there are a lot of municipalities in Alberta that have no way to raise money, over and above taxation, for capital projects. Believe me, MSI funding for those municipalities was and still is a very important part of their operations. It was the be-all and end-all of its time, I believe.

For the next minute or two on behalf of those area municipalities I will ask a question of the minister. I know that it has nothing to do with Bill 32, the City Charters Fiscal Framework Act, but it is a question on the lips of the municipalities from all over this province. We now have seen what is intended for the two largest municipalities in Alberta when the MSI funding ends in ’21-22. Fair enough. The two largest municipalities in Alberta, I think we all realize, have very different issues than the other municipalities in Alberta. But the question I’m hearing from some of the other 350 municipalities in Alberta is: what is the funding agreement or the funding legislation, and what will it look like for them in ’22-23? Cities and towns and rural municipalities are worried that the uncertainty about MSI’s replacement, whatever that may be, cannot help but leave a terrible gap or some kind of a breach in their capital budgets: water infrastructure in their municipalities, roads in their municipalities, fire protection in their municipalities. These are the questions that all municipalities in Alberta, certainly the municipalities that I talk to, are starting to ask questions about.

The funding for things like that is based at the community level, of course, and the Municipal Government Act makes it very clear that the responsibility for services like I just mentioned, which are needed to enhance quality of life in those municipalities, falls entirely on those municipalities. So, clearly, while it may be nice to see that the two biggest municipalities within the province seem to be looking forward with a degree of certainty to what their funding looks like in ’21-22 and onward, the other 350 Alberta municipalities are wondering what theirs will look like, and I can’t really blame them.

Just one final thought on that. All municipalities in the province initially, when it was rolled out in 2007, of course, just fell in love with the program. It was a source of money that they really were lacking. Actually, they have counted on MSI funding since 2007, so they more than initially liked the program. They fell in love with it, and they have come to rely on the funding offered by the province.

I've spent a lot of time at the AAMD and C conventions over the years, talked with other leaders from other municipalities, and we were all in agreement that we liked the program, that we liked the formula, and certainly everyone liked the money. But as the program moved through the years, what we found was that we could no longer count on the funding as it was when the program was started. The Finance minister and the Minister of Municipal Affairs pretty much decided what the funding would be in a given year, depending on what the other needs were in the province at the time, because MSI was a grant. Therefore, the funding became less per year, and the time to the end of the funding period was stretched out. What we find now is a program that was to end in 2017; we now see it ending in the '21-22 fiscal year.

I want to be clear that I'm not blaming any one government for the way the program is ending up, just relaying the thoughts of those that I've spoken to over the years with regard to the MSI program. The common complaint has been – and I'm sure that the minister has heard this as well – that municipalities wanted a legislated agreement so that their funding would be more predictable and stable. Anyway, I had to get that little thing off my chest. Rural municipalities are who I deal with; I've been listening to them for years.

But we are here to talk about Bill 32. This bill sets out to provide predictable infrastructure funding from the provincial government for a number of years to come to the two largest cities. Starting in 2022, both Edmonton and Calgary will split \$500 million in funding. After that point funding levels will be tied to provincial revenue. It will increase or decrease based on both a revenue component and a fuel component. In 2022 the funding arrangements consist of \$252 million from the revenue component and \$248 million from the fuel component. In subsequent years the revenue component increases and decreases based on the changes in total provincial revenues in the fiscal year three years prior. Now, that number will be excluding the carbon tax and any new fiscal policy changes. The fuel component, in contrast, increases or decreases based on changes in the number of litres of gasoline and diesel fuel sold in the fiscal year three years prior that is subject to taxation under section 4 of the Fuel Tax Act but does not include tax-exempt fuel as defined in the act. There's nothing complex about that at all; that's a joke.

For the revenue component of this financing deal, the formula for both cities, the formula for what each city will receive, is the same as the formula used for the municipal sustainability initiative funding. On page 8 of the legislation that formula, from what I understand, is the formula that has been used since the program was introduced, where the municipal populations of Calgary and Edmonton are determined in the fiscal year three years prior to the applicable fiscal year; where the aggregate amount of the education property tax requisitions to be paid by Calgary and Edmonton are calculated as of the day, in the fiscal year three years prior to the applicable fiscal year, on which the consolidated fiscal plan is required to be made public under section 4(4) of the Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act; and then the number of kilometres of open roads maintained by Calgary and Edmonton as of December 31 in the fiscal year three years prior to the applicable fiscal year, as reported to the Minister under section 577 of the Municipal Government Act. The revenue component ends up being \$252

million. Now, that represents how the revenue component of the deal works for the two cities, and it is represented on pages 8 and 9 of the legislation.

Now, the fuel component is just a little different. The city of Calgary's allocation is 55 per cent of each year's total fuel component while the Edmonton component shows them with 45 per cent of each year's total fuel component. Now, remember that the fuel component increases or decreases based on changes in the number of litres of gasoline or diesel fuel sold in the fiscal year three years prior that is subject to taxation under section 4 of the Fuel Tax Act. Of course, that doesn't include tax-exempt fuel as defined in the act. For the '22-23 fiscal year the fuel component funding for Calgary ends up being \$136.4 million and \$111.6 million for Edmonton, a total of \$248 million.

Now, to further complicate things for the tens of folks watching at home, there is also a transit deal that is part of this legislation, which will be paid with the carbon tax revenues. Starting in 2028, each of the two cities will get \$200 million per year to build out their mass transit systems, and it appears that this particular deal goes all the way out to 2041. Before that, however, the government will provide transit funding to the two cities that has been raised from the carbon tax to the tune of \$3 billion, which is to be paid out from the time of royal assent to 2027, or, to be more accurate, from fiscal year 2018-19 to fiscal year '26-27. Now, the funding is not to exceed \$3 billion, and that amount represents the total amount of money announced for funding to Calgary and Edmonton transit previously. This is, of course, to provide some sort of certainty that if government proposes changes any time from now forward, the legislation would have to go back to the House and through the parliamentary process right here, with input from the two municipalities.

Now, I think we can begin to see how complicated these formulas are becoming as we get further into this bill, which, from my standpoint, is another good support for sending this entire thing to committee for some fulsome research.

11:10

Also, it should be noted that despite some speculation by pundits when this was rolled out, there are to be no new taxation powers for either city, but there are some changes to taxing powers that already exist in the two cities. That shows up particularly around the discussion of off-site levies. Now, Madam Speaker, these types of levies are typically put on new developments in a city and used in order to help pay for things like fire halls, water, and sewer. I think I talked about that a few moments ago. However, I believe that if either of the two cities wants to put an off-site levy on something like a recreation centre, I believe that is to be allowed.

Something that isn't specified in the bill is whether the money will go to the municipalities with no strings attached or whether the province would have the final say on some of the issues with regard to the \$400 million, that I spoke about a moment ago, in transit funding from the carbon tax. Now, that's a good question for the minister and another reason for some more clarity, which again supports sending Bill 32 to committee.

Now, Bill 32 also changes eight important areas of city charters for Edmonton and Calgary. These are very important changes, in my opinion, and I'd like to discuss a few of them here. These changes, Madam Speaker, include allowing cities to establish their own debt and debt-servicing limits, meaning that the cities would have to obtain their own credit ratings. Specifically, the exemptions from debt limit regulations do not come into force until such time as the cities have approved the debt limit and debt-servicing limit policies and have obtained an external credit rating. Now, that's an important aspect, because we all know that some of these

municipalities – I’m not pointing at anyone in particular – simply aren’t good at controlling their debt load compared to their income.

Additionally, the changes also establish a requirement for each city to hold public hearings in their respective cities on these changes, which can only be beneficial to residents and stakeholders residing and operating within those cities.

Well, I think my time is about to expire here. We did hear from build Alberta, that has some concerns, but we’ll probably talk more about that as the legislation moves forward. Despite that, Madam Speaker, I’m considering the benefits of this new framework, and I hope that during the next stages of the debate any concerns that . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak on Bill 32. It’s a pleasure to rise to speak on Bill 32, City Charters Fiscal Framework Act. I’m rising to speak on an amendment to refer this to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship to be able to bring some transparency and some accountability into the process. I believe an important aspect of our job here is to ensure Albertans are confident that decisions made here are done in a way so that true consultation is taking place and that the people that are impacted by these decisions have been able to witness those decisions and have been able to have input into those decisions.

With regard to Bill 32, City Charters Fiscal Framework Act, I believe the Resource Stewardship Committee is the right committee to review this and to bring some more transparency to this process. I believe that calling in witnesses such as the mayor of Calgary, Naheed Nenshi, to appear before the standing committee would certainly add a spark of interest around here to our legislation process. I believe Mayor Nenshi is a colourful character, and this would help to highlight the process that we’re currently going through and highlight the decisions that are being made here. I would welcome having the mayor appear before a committee of the Legislature to give his opinion and his two cents into the process and be able to answer questions that others might have with regard to how best to move forward with a fiscal framework that will work for the two largest cities in Alberta.

I also recognize that the mayor of Edmonton, Don Iveson, essentially by his proximity to the Legislature has been able to be leading the charge on city charters and the fiscal framework required. I believe that Mayor Iveson’s insights would be a very valuable piece on this legislation and that the Resource Stewardship Committee would allow this to be able to come out in the open and be able to be discussed in a very transparent manner.

Missing from Bill 32, I believe, is that we need to call on the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, the AUMA, and their CEO, Dan Rude, and the chair, Mayor Barry Morishita from the city of Brooks. I wonder how the other urban municipalities throughout Alberta feel about the fiscal framework that is being proposed for the two largest cities and about the funding that the two largest cities have negotiated, or that has come forward, anyways, in this fiscal framework and about how that’ll impact the other municipalities, the urban municipalities throughout the province, and about what funding deals those smaller urban centres can expect to get or possibly should get. I believe that these individuals that come forward from the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association will help to have input into how we best move forward not only with Bill 32, but then we take a look at how to move forward with funding deals for these other municipalities.

I also would like to hear from the Rural Municipalities of Alberta, the RMA, to get an understanding of if they are comfortable with the funding framework that’s being proposed for the metropolitan centres and how the metropolitan centres have been able to get these funding arrangements. I would like to hear from Mountain View councillor Al Kemmere, president of the RMA, and see what he has to say and also to see what other rural municipalities might want to say. Rural municipalities are facing pressures also. Now, the rural municipalities don’t have stadiums and LRTs to look after, but they do have other things that are needing to have the assistance of the province to fund, their bridges and so on.

You know, we take a look at what has been transpiring in municipalities in the southern end of the province, Vulcan county, Lethbridge county. They’re needing to try and understand how they’re going to fund their culvert and bridge replacements. As many of these are reaching end of life, they have questions and concerns on sustainability going forward and how the funding arrangement for the cities, those metropolitan areas, is going to affect their ability. We saw Lethbridge county take an unusual step of imposing a head tax on the intensive livestock operations in their county, the feedlots. The specialized head tax for the intensive livestock operations was in order to help pay for some of these concerns that they have with regard to their crumbling infrastructure.

Now, this wound up in court, and I guess what’s needing to be discovered here is what the special funding arrangement will be for rural Alberta. Will the water/waste-water infrastructure still be a separate application based on competitive grants in that they’re applying to the province and never really knowing if they’re going to be funded or not funded?

11:20

Bill 32, you know, Madam Speaker, is taking into consideration the current MSI, municipal sustainability initiative, funding program. That formula runs until ’20-21. Both of our legacy parties, the Progressive Conservative Party and the Wildrose Party, supported MSI. The Wildrose, I know, worked for many years to try and find improvements to make MSI even better, and I believe that Premier Ed Stelmach and his government should be commended for their foresight in implementing the MSI funding model. The MSI funding model that we see in Bill 32, the way I understand it, is that that funding model was very instrumental and adopted into Bill 32. I believe the formula, although being quite complicated, was developed by the municipalities. Municipalities came together in negotiations with each other to come up with a formula that could be workable for all sizes of municipalities: large, medium, small, rural, urban. All entities had the ability to have input into how to move forward with the funding model.

The funding model I believe has worked well. Going forward, I think what I hear from my municipalities is nervousness about whether or not this year or next year or the years going forward they are going to receive the funding. This Bill 32, I think, tries to address some of that so that they can have some certainty in funding going forward.

In the development of the formula the two largest cities, the AUMA, the RMA, all put their differences aside and came to an agreement on how the MSI funding would be allocated. Now, like I said, the MSI wasn’t perfect. While the formula is very good, the level of funding was not always predictable. We see that over the course of the original agreement, from 2007, I believe, the first 10 years or so, the funding that was promised was repeatedly reprofiled and extended over a longer period, where we now see Bill 32 recognizing the amount of funding under the MSI, the current program, stretching that out to years 2021-2022 and then the Bill

32 framework kicking in in the fiscal years after 2021-2022, essentially kicking in in the year 2022.

I think that one of the issues we have heard from municipal stakeholders, that I've heard from municipal stakeholders, is that MSI funding fluctuated fairly significantly from year to year based on the province's overreliance on nonrenewable resource revenue. I'm not exactly sure, but, to me, when I go through Bill 32, it looks like we have not necessarily been able to address that part of the concern. If I can find it here, we see in the calculations that it's the provincial revenue for fiscal years 3 and 4 prior to the current year to essentially describe what's going to be in calculations, provincial revenue. The only revenue stream, I think, that is specifically left out is the carbon tax, the carbon levy, that's currently in place. Otherwise, it still is susceptible to that revenue stream, possibly faced with significant fluctuation there.

Bill 32 attempts to address the issue of unfulfilled promises by legislating the funding aspect. This leaves much speculation as to why the government did not use a more stable revenue stream such as the corporate personal income tax revenue stream, which is somewhat more stable and is less susceptible to fluctuation. Those kinds of questions could be sought out and tried to be understood during committee work and to possibly come up with a better standard to work from for calculating the provincial revenue that would allow these municipalities to have some more level of certainty going forward.

These types of questions, I believe, we can find answers to if we send Bill 32 to committee. We can grill the Deputy Minister of Municipal Affairs to get the answers we need in a transparent and a very accountable manner. Madam Speaker, I hope that I have been able to elaborate a little bit on why the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship needs to see Bill 32 and why we need to hear from the mayors, Mayor Nenshi and Mayor Iveson, going forward. We also need to hear from other stakeholders like the AUMA and the RMA, the Rural Municipalities association.

Finally, I believe that we also need to hear from the department itself. The Resource Stewardship Committee can ask questions of the department to get the answers that they would need to feel confident that the formulas being described here and the revenue streams that are being anticipated to be used in the formulas are the right numbers that will give us a certain level of comfort, that the cities and all the municipalities, as we move forward with these types of arrangements, can all feel confident that they are being recognized as an arm of the province established by the province to help these communities to function and to govern themselves and also to take care of the things that their municipalities need to take care of in ensuring that they're providing the roads and the services necessary to their stakeholders.

I'd like to thank you, Madam Speaker, for granting me the time.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you to the members for their comments today. I appreciate that.

I'll be really brief, with just a couple of things about this bill and about what the members are talking about. We've done extensive consultation with the two big cities. We have also been and continue to be involved in conversations with the AUMA and the RMA about legislating a deal with them because it's something they've asked for for quite some time, to have sustainability and certainty. It's a promise we made, and it's a promise we will keep, as we are doing with the big cities.

Just a real quick point that the 340 municipalities and Métis settlements outside of the two big cities have been kept whole with MSI. It's in the budget. It is there until '21-22. So they have that certainty of that funding. The big cities, as Mayor Iveson has said, took a haircut of \$152 million a year each. So they've helped us get to our path to balance. We've worked with them on this. We wanted to make sure that we legislated something so that in the middle of their budget cycle they weren't worried about this going away, that they have certainty.

As I said, it's a promise made and a promise kept. Though I applaud the member's tenacity in wanting to send, I think, almost every single government bill to committee, unfortunately I will have to say that I am not in favour of sending this to committee.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Seeing none, I'll call the vote.

[Motion on amendment to second reading of Bill 32 lost]

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any further members wishing to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs to close debate.

11:30

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to all the speakers so far for bringing up very valid points. I really appreciate it, and I look forward to Committee of the Whole, where we can have a little bit more of a robust discussion on this. I think it's a good bill, and I'm looking forward to, like I said, having that discussion.

With that, I will close debate.

[Motion carried; Bill 32 read a second time]

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

The Chair: I'd like to call the Committee of the Whole to order.

Bill 28 Family Statutes Amendment Act, 2018

The Chair: Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'd just like to take this opportunity to address some of the additional questions that were raised at Committee of the Whole. One of the questions that came up was about what will happen when parties disagree as to when the adult interdependent relationship began or whether they are adult interdependent partners. This was raised previously in Committee of the Whole.

Of course, this is one of the issues that may potentially arise. The sort of pool of common property begins at the time when folks became adult interdependent partners. In most cases, I would say in the vast majority of cases, it's going to be clear, but it is possible that a dispute would arise. I want to reiterate again that in this legislation, if passed, in the event that parties are unable to agree on when the relationship of interdependence began or if one of them maintains there was no such relationship, it would ultimately fall to

the courts to decide the matter. There may still be some areas of a little bit of uncertainty, but the idea here is to create as much certainty for as many people as possible so that we can keep as many people as possible out of sort of high-conflict court matters. The courts will be guided by the Adult Interdependent Relationships Act in terms of answering these questions. That act has been in force for 15 years, so family law judges and lawyers are fairly familiar with it.

Another question that was asked, Madam Chair, was how people can prepare an adult interdependent partnership agreement. In order to be valid, an adult interdependent partnership agreement must be in the form set out in the adult interdependent partnership agreement regulation. In addition, there are a couple of rules around this. Both parties must be at least 16 years old or at least 18 years old if the parties are related to each other by blood or adoption because, of course, the adult interdependent partnerships act can take into account a few different types of relationships. Neither party can be in an ongoing marriage or have another adult interdependent partnership agreement. The parties must live or intend to live together in a relationship of interdependence. Finally, each party's signature must be witnessed by at least two witnesses.

The parties do not need to get legal advice in order for an adult interdependent partnership agreement to be valid. However, they may wish to get legal advice in order to better understand their rights and obligations. Entering into an adult interdependent partnership arrangement can be thought of as similar to entering into a marriage. We do not require couples to obtain independent legal advice before they get married although it's not always a bad idea.

Finally, with respect to custody issues a member also asked whether this bill would address custody issues for children whose parents are separating. Bill 28 addresses property division for unmarried partners and eligibility criteria for adult child support. Parenting arrangements, parenting time, child custody, and access issues are outside the scope of this particular bill. Madam Chair, these issues are addressed in the Family Law Act. The impact of that will vary in the individual cases, but the act, again, emphasizes the best interests of the child.

At the end of the day, one of the reasons for this act is that clear rules often shorten the duration of conflict, and that shorter duration of conflict will be very beneficial for the children of those

relationships, but the specific custody issues are addressed already in that act.

With that, I believe that was the answer to all of those questions. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to Bill 28?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

[The clauses of Bill 28 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would move that the committee rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 28.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report? Say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Any opposed, say no. So ordered.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Seeing the incredible progress we have made this morning and the hour, I would move that we call it 12 o'clock and adjourn until 1:30 this afternoon.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:37 a.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, December 4, 2018

Day 58

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Kleinsteinuber	

Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	Miller
Cooper	Nielsen
Goehring	Nixon
Gotfried	Pitt
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Cyr
Deputy Chair: Mr. Dach

Barnes	Miller
Carson	Nielsen
Clark	Panda
Gotfried	Payne
Hunter	Renaud
Kazim	Turner
Littlewood	

Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola
Deputy Chair: Mr. Drysdale

Babcock	Loewen
Clark	Nielsen
Dang	Panda
Fildebrandt	Payne
Hanson	Rosendahl
Kazim	Schreiner
Kleinsteinuber	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, December 4, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly our distinguished guest, Ms Lucia Piazza, consul general of the United States for Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Northwest Territories. She's accompanied by Mr. Keith Gacek, political and economic specialist with the U.S. consul general in Calgary. The U.S. is Alberta's largest trading partner, and bilateral ties between us remain deep and far-reaching. In 2017 our bilateral trade was more than \$106 billion, supporting jobs on both sides of the border. Alberta is also the largest foreign supplier of crude oil to the United States, greatly contributing to its energy and economic security. Alberta will be home for Consul General Piazza for the next few years, and I hope she enjoys the warm hospitality of Albertans. I look forward to working with her during her tenure in our wonderful province. I would like to ask Consul General Piazza and Mr. Gacek to please rise to receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome. Thank you for your visit.

The hon. Minister of Transportation and Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First, I'll introduce my school group, and then I have another introduction for the minister of . . .

The Speaker: We're at visitors now.

Mr. Mason: Okay. Sure. I'm happy to do that then, Mr. Speaker, in that order.

It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly on behalf of my colleague the Minister of Health, Minister Glen Abernethy of the Northwest Territories. His wife, Carolyn, and son John are with him today, and they're seated in the Speaker's gallery. Re-elected in 2018, Minister Abernethy has several portfolios, including Health and Social Services, the Minister Responsible for Seniors, the Minister Responsible for Persons with Disabilities, and the Minister Responsible for the Public Utilities Board. That's a lot, I think. I know that the Minister of Health deeply appreciates their working relationship and regrets that she's not able to introduce him herself. I will now ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome. It's particularly nice to have that child; this place could use more of those sounds.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Now the Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Now, Mr. Speaker, it's my great pleasure to introduce to you and to all members of this Assembly a group of 20 brilliant grade 5 students and their teachers from the north side Al Mustafa

Academy, which is located in my constituency of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. These students have been very busy here today and have already visited the Borealis Gallery and the Pehonan Theatre in the Federal Building. They have also just finished a tour of the Legislature Building. They are accompanied by teacher Lahoucine Saheem and Mohammed Saheem as a chaperone. I would ask them and their teachers to please rise and accept the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you some fantastic students from St. Theresa school. St. Theresa has a Ukrainian program, and it's a school where every time we have an election, municipal or provincial or federal, the students get together and have a forum. Today the students from St. Theresa have their teachers, Lisa Hall and Kurt Davison, and they have chaperones Amie Gartner, Rae Rees, Rebecca Kostura. I would like to ask the students to please stand up and receive the customary welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members roughly 30 students from Millwoods Christian school who have been spending the day here learning about the Legislature. They are joined by their teacher, Ashley Merta. I would like to ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other school groups for introductions today?

I've looked at my pages and pages of invitations here, so I just remind you about brevity as we move along. The hon. Member for Peace River.

Ms Jabbour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions on your behalf. The Salvation Army is very visible during the festive season, but they actually do good work throughout the year. They are the largest nongovernmental direct provider of social services in the country, serving over 1.7 million people a year in 400 communities across Canada and 16 Alberta communities, where they provide emergency shelter, transitional housing, addictions treatment, mental health support, food security, outreach counselling, family supports, and so much more. The Salvation Army Christmas kettle campaign is one of Canada's most recognizable charitable events, and it's now under way. It has raised funds for more than 125 years. We are very pleased today to have in your gallery Major Margaret McLeod, who is the divisional commander for Alberta and the Northwest Territories, stationed in Edmonton. Major McLeod has served across Canada in postings of ever-increasing responsibility. She was raised in Medicine Hat and is a keen skier. Major Alan Hoeft is the divisional secretary for public relations and development and area commander of the northern region. He and his wife, Karen, most recently stationed in Yellowknife, are both Rotary Paul Harris fellows. Major McLeod and Major Hoeft are in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, and I'd invite them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ms Jabbour: It's also my pleasure to introduce to you and through you three members of the Aramark team here at the Legislature. We have Patricia Jimenez, who has worked here at the Legislature for almost 10 years, since November 2009. She is our baker, cashier, a hard worker, and an important key to our daily operations, always focused on providing the best customer service. We have Guruprasad Kulkarni, who recently joined the team at the Legislature in October. He's the food service supervisor at the cafeteria. And we have Luiss Vaskess-Kilsans, who has worked here at the Legislature for one year, since November 2017. He has worked for Aramark for five years, is the chef manager, managing the three cafeterias at the Legislature and the Haultain and Terrace buildings. On your behalf I'd like to thank them for their service in keeping us well fed and fuelled, always being friendly and providing great customer service. If they could please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome. Mr. Manager, I want to point out that Pat is a great public relations agent.

The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

Cortes-Vargas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly two constituents from Strathcona-Sherwood Park, Rosella Bjornson and Bill Pratt. I'd ask them to rise as I continue on. Rosella has shown that when it comes to living your dream, the sky is the limit. She recently received the highest honour that the province of Alberta can bestow upon a citizen, the Alberta Order of Excellence. Rosella was recognized for her leadership in the aviation industry as the first female airline jet pilot in Canada, the first officer in a twin engine in North America. She paved the way for other women to enter into the world of aviation. Rosella's husband, Bill, has literally been her co-pilot in life, and they both continue to fly today. I ask Rosella and Bill to rise, which they have already, and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Sherwood-Park.

Ms McKittrick: Sorry, Mr. Speaker. I was just thinking about flying and the incredible work that the previous person did.

Today it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Ms Jeannine Basken. Ms Basken received her degree in interior design from the University of Alberta and is currently an interior designer in Edmonton. She has travelled the world and worked overseas as an au pair. This is her first trip to the Legislature. She is with her grandfather, my constituent Mr. Reg Basken, who just recently also received the Alberta Order of Excellence. I would ask both of my guests to rise and receive the customary welcome of the Assembly.

1:40

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm introducing guests for Human Rights Day, and I'd ask my guests to rise as I call their names. First, Manwar Kahn is dedicated to raising public awareness of bullying across Alberta, and he launched the province-wide antibullying campaign Do Not Be a Bystander, which empowers bystanders to intervene in a safe way through antibullying techniques. Manwar has received the Governor General's caring Canadian award and the Alberta community justice award in the category of community mobilization.

Marco Luciano is the founder and director of Migrante Alberta, which carries out education and advocacy work for persons who are in Canada on temporary work visas. He assists individuals who are facing discrimination and ensures that public policies change to treat temporary workers fairly. Marco also organized a memorial candlelight vigil in solidarity with Syrian refugees and was a key organizer in the campaign to make Edmonton a sanctuary city.

Ali Mahdi is a family and youth community worker with the Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers. Ali has worked tirelessly in many ways, including through a program which helps Somali youth successfully graduate high school. As a mentor with the police and youth engagement program Ali works with other community leaders to teach youth the role of police and Canadian laws and to help police understand the challenges that newcomer youth face. Ali also recently started free citizenship preparation classes.

Giscard Kodiane is the president of Pont Cultural Bridge. Giscard works to rally and unite communities, community members, and community structures in Edmonton. Giscard uses oral history traditions to teach history to future generations. Giscard also contributes to the Ivory Canadian Community of Edmonton and the community of African francophone associations of Edmonton and the establishment of the Ivory Coast consulate representation in Edmonton.

Chantal Hitayezu is the founder of the African Canadian Performing Arts Foundation. She dedicates her time to planning activities for local and international artists and connects with accomplished refugee artists, world peace ambassadors, genocide survivors, and emerging and underrepresented female talents. Chantal works as a home support operator and volunteers as a settlement counsellor for Rwanda social services and family counselling.

I thank all my guests for their impressive service and leadership, and I ask that they receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise this afternoon to introduce three incredible individuals from the 4-H community. Nora Paulovich, Mark Sayers, and Pat Sayers will be inducted into the Alberta 4-H Hall of Fame this year. Nora Paulovich is a volunteer 4-H leader in the Peace region, a role she has had for over 20 years. Nora was active at the district level as district president and district representative and at the regional level as rep for the provincial 4-H Beef Advisory Council. She is currently serving as the Peace representative on provincial council. Nora is an excellent organizer, 4-H mentor, and she continues to make a lasting impact on 4-H around the province. She's joined by her husband, Bob Noble. Both Nora and Bob are active farmers in Manning, Alberta. Mark and Pat Sayers have both been involved in 4-H since 1993. They have been instrumental in planning well-remembered leaders' conferences and highly successful provincial beef shows. Both Pat and Mark have served on the 4-H Council of Alberta, with Mark serving as president during his time. From their local club to national events Pat and Mark have made a significant impact on the 4-H community. They currently live in Lethbridge and are just as active in their community as ever. With them is the Peace region 4-H specialist from my department, Nicole Hornett. I would now ask all my guests to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore. I think you have two.

Mr. Nielsen: I do have two introductions, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. It's a privilege to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly local entrepreneur Sandi Jewett. Sandi owns and operates the award-winning business A Ribbon in Time, which offers training and business services. Sandi is also here as a representative of Coming Home Alive, an organization that promotes education and safety in the commercial driving business. I would like to thank Sandi for all of her work enhancing our community and for promoting safety on our roads. I would ask that she now please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Of course, it's also a privilege again to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a group of individuals from the Today Family Violence Help Centre. With us today we have Richard Ouellet, Merle Linton, Cindy Furlong, Monique Methot, Danielle Sehn, Maryam Chamanifard, Kaitlin Schmitz, and Cecilia Kasten. The Today Family Violence Help Centre's mission is to raise awareness and build capacity by providing immediate, inclusive, integrated services for those impacted by family violence. They are the first stop for anyone affected by family violence and provide nonjudgmental help to anyone regardless of their situation, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or culture. I would certainly like to thank them for all of their help in creating a safer and more inclusive society. I ask that my guests please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have the incredible pleasure and honour today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Emily Pitchers, Christina Ryan, and Christina's partner, Ron Taylor. Emily and Christina have long fought to make sure that all adult children with disabilities can apply for child support regardless of their parents' marital status. I think that this is an incredible story of how someone can, despite all odds, make a difference in the lives of those around them. I'm glad that they were able to join us today for third reading of the Family Statutes Amendment Act, 2018, and to work to help to modernize this act for all Alberta families. I'd like to ask Emily, Christina, and Ron to please accept the traditional warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of this House three constituents of Red Deer-South. Cindy More has been married to Rick for the past 36 years, is the mother of daughters Lindsey and Stephanie and sons John and James, and is the cofounder of the Smiles Thru Lindsey foundation. Cindy is employed at the Cosmos group of companies, where she helps to improve the lives of those with developmental disorders. Rick is the cofounder of Smiles Thru Lindsey, and he is an amazing advocate for mental health and depression in our youth. Rick is on the board of the Central Alberta Child Advocacy Centre, and he's the current interim CEO for the Red Deer & District Chamber of Commerce. Steph is the daughter of Rick and Cindy and big sister to Lindsey. Losing her sister to suicide has shaped her life in a direction she would never have imagined. She resides in Red Deer with her fiancé, Marshall, and is

employed at the Collicutt Centre. Would you please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

I'd like to welcome back the Minister of Seniors and Housing.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly an inspirational senior from Edmonton-Riverview, the riding I have the honour to represent, Mr. Bill Gilroy. Bill turned 90 in November, and he attributes his longevity to exercising every day. He exercises with the November Project and is the oldest member in the world. He's also a member of the Edmonton Hash House Harriers, a social running group, and he's run more than 1,500 times with hashers around the world and is also the oldest hasher in all of Canada. Bill says that the key to healthy aging is staying active, and certainly he exemplifies that. Bill Gilroy is here today with his family: his wife, Margaret Golberg, his daughter Christa Gilroy, and his daughter-in-law Kathy Kiel. I'd like my guests to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Government House Leader, unanimous consent to continue with introductions?

Mr. Mason: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Will we return to this after question period?

The Speaker: We could, or we could complete the introductions now with unanimous consent.

1:50

Mr. Mason: I will ask the House, then, Mr. Speaker, for unanimous consent to finish the supposedly brief introductions today and then go to question period.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Government House Leader. I will keep it brief.

I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly six outstanding Albertans who are here today celebrating Human Rights Day at the Legislature with us. First, from Canadians for a Civil Society I would like to introduce the president, Vasant Chotai, and board director Prabhjot Punnia. Also here from Canadians for a Civil Society is board director Netta Phillet. Glori Meldrum is the founder of Little Warriors. Jonn Kmech is the program manager of the homeless partnering strategy with Alberta Rural Development Network. Lastly, I introduce Colin Campbell, regional manager of Native Counselling Services of Alberta. All of these individuals are outstanding advocates and leaders in their communities. Thank you, all, for all the work you do to create a safe and inclusive province for all Albertans. Please know that our government stands with you. I ask my guests to rise, which they already have, and receive the traditional warm welcome.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Labour and democratic renewal.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my absolute pleasure to introduce six guests who are here today for Human Rights Day at the Legislature. I ask them to rise as I call their names. From the Edmonton Police Service: Sergeant Colleen Mooney and Sergeant David Jones. Sergeant Jones co-ordinates a multi-agency

project working to prevent violence, extremism, and radicalization in Edmonton. He also volunteers his time serving on the board of directors of KidSport Edmonton. Sergeant Mooney is a patrol sergeant and co-ordinates the reintegration team that implements a program to help police officers affected by PTSD.

Maigan van der Giessen is a program facilitator and arts lead with the John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights. Maigan brings youth perspectives on human rights issues to the forefront through a number of different programs and initiatives that she has led.

John Kolkman is a research associate for the Edmonton Social Planning Council, a nonprofit focused on finding solutions to poverty. John has researched, published, and presented on many social policy issues, including poverty, wealth, income inequality, and the list goes on, Mr. Speaker.

Oliver Kamau is a manager at the Edmonton Immigrant Services Association, where he oversees settlement and integration programs offered at 82 locations in the greater Edmonton area.

And last but not least is Jitendra Shah, president of the Mahatma Gandhi foundation in Edmonton. Jitendra provides active leadership in the local community. He has been the founding member and chair of the Mahatma Gandhi Foundation for World Peace. He recently received the Polovnikov-Mokray lifetime service award from Project Ploughshares.

I'd like to thank my guests for their contributions and invite them to receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two sets of introductions. I rise to introduce to you and through you five members of the Muslim Association of Canada, also known as MAC, who are joining us in the public gallery. MAC is one of the largest Muslim organizations in Canada, with a national presence across 13 major cities, and recently they celebrated their 20th anniversary. They provide essential leadership for the Muslim community and beyond. Their MAC Rhama mosque in my constituency of Edmonton-McClung is a key community hub and a welcoming space for all. I ask my guests to rise as I call their names: Sharaf Sharafeddine, Abdussalam Nakua, Ali Assaf, Hassan Gabbara, Angie Teliani, and Issam Saleh. Please receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Mr. Dach: I also want to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker, who are here today to celebrate Human Rights Day. I ask my guests to rise as I call their names, starting with Reverend Audrey Brooks, a pastoral minister with the Unitarian church of Edmonton who has focused her actions on human empowerment and social justice. Her many activities include the Women's Wellness Advisory group at Grey Nuns hospital, initiating the annual Genocide Memorial Service, being a member of the famous Raging Grannies, and being a spiritual counsellor and support for LGBTQ2S youth. As a U of A chaplain, she helped found the pride alumni chapter and offered spiritual support at the TRC hearings. Reverend Brooks also serves on the capital region interfaith housing initiative board.

I'm also pleased, Mr. Speaker, to introduce Katherine Tracy, who is here on behalf of Jan Fox and the Reach Edmonton Council for safe communities. Reach is a co-ordinating council that works closely with social agencies, businesses, and citizens to make Edmonton a safer place to live, work, and play. As Reach's executive director Jan Fox has been an outstanding champion for human rights. Jan's experience includes being the first warden at

the Edmonton Institution for Women, founder of Women in Police and Corrections, and a leader of the Rotary aboriginal partnership.

Next, Noel Somerville is with the Seniors Task Force of Public Interest Alberta. In 1997 Noel retired as executive secretary of the Edmonton public teachers' local of the ATA. Since then, he has been active in social justice issues and serves on the city of Edmonton's Subdivision and Development Appeal Board. Noel has served on the board of directors of Public Interest Alberta and has been chair of the Seniors Task Force for 14 years.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, from the Earth Group I introduce Kori Chilibeck and Matt Moreau. The Earth Group is a social enterprise which produces bottled spring water, Alberta-grown tea, and fair trade organic coffee. The Earth Group exists entirely to provide free food, water, and education to children globally through the United Nations world food program and donates 100 per cent of their profits to fund school meal programs. They have provided nearly 4 million school meals globally and have the only business card which you can plant. Thank you for all your work.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to also introduce guests joining us today to celebrate Human Rights Day and the 70th anniversary of the UN declaration on human rights. I ask them to rise as I call their names. Meghan Unterschultz is assistant dean with the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research at the U of A. She also volunteers as a big sisters mentor and serves on the boards of Goodwill Industries of Alberta and the YWCA Edmonton. Meghan has served on the EndPovertyEdmonton community well-being committee and on the Parkland Turning Points Society board, that offers counselling and programs to end the cycle of family violence.

Marnie Suitor is a founding member of Aspiring Women in Leadership and Legacy, which provides a forum where women from all backgrounds can come together to give and receive wisdom, support, and mentorship. AWILL's vision is to see all women fully living out their leadership potential. As a management consultant Marnie works extensively with indigenous communities, and as co-owner of the Nook Cafe she partners with social agencies to support those less fortunate.

Gail Haynes is the manager of housing services and peer supports for the Canadian Mental Health Association. The CMHA housing program provides safe, secure, affordable housing to individuals who live with mental illness or in poverty. Gail oversees the management of 146 units in seven properties and provides leadership to the CMHA staff. She's chair of the Edmonton Coalition on Housing and Homelessness.

Salma Lakhani is a clinical biochemist who currently manages her husband's medical practice. Salma has been volunteering in many different capacities such as with Compassion House, the Lois Hole hospital outreach team, and the John Humphrey Centre for Peace and Human Rights board. Salma has been a mentor for students at NorQuest College and currently serves on the 1000 Women Advisory Committee, which raises funds for the college.

Lastly, Michael Hoyt is a social worker at the city of Edmonton working on programs and initiatives that focus on engaging men in building healthy relationships in gender equality to prevent gender-based violence. He's involved in creating spaces like the Men's Sheds movement, where diverse men come together to embrace healthy and respectful relationships, prevent violence and discrimination, and promote the improvement of community health.

I thank my guests for their service to Albertans and ask that they now receive the traditional warm welcome.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin.

Ms Goodridge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unlike some of the people that have gone before me, I will try and keep this brief. I would like to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Maryanne McGrath, who is here today to watch her very first QP live. Maryanne is a fourth-year political science student at MacEwan University who was born and raised in the fabulous community of Fort McMurray. She's an expert campaigner, having worked on countless campaigns for her father, one of the regional municipality's councillors and Catholic school board trustees. I would ask her to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, I request unanimous consent to move immediately to question period.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Oil Price Differentials Keystone XL Pipeline Project

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's not often that we can celebrate good news here, but today Alberta oil is trading at \$28. Last week it was at \$10. The differential has come down from \$45 last week to \$25 today. Will the Premier please confirm that this appears to be the result of the very difficult but necessary decision around curtailment of production?

2:00

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Indeed the member opposite is correct. Preliminary responses within the market are positive, and we are certainly seeing the differential come down. We're not, you know, out of the woods yet by any means, of course, and we know that it's likely to pop back up a bit as the market unfolds, but it's a good start. We're going to continue to work with industry to make sure that we find the right amounts and that we can clear the market as soon as possible and move out of distressed-barrel economics as soon as possible and do a better job of getting our product to market.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Kenney: I thank the Premier, and I'm glad that she's not tempted to do any victory laps on this one, Mr. Speaker, as there's a long way to go.

Mr. Speaker, one of the concerns raised by some Albertans about the policy of curtailment is that cuts in production will result in cuts in jobs. Our view is that by increasing the price and getting some positive cash flow into the energy sector, this will actually help to save jobs by saving capital spending in 2019. We understand that MEG Energy, for example, has confirmed that this has saved jobs. Would the Premier like to comment on how this policy could actually help to prevent unemployment in Alberta?

Ms Notley: My goodness. I almost feel like the member opposite was in our caucus meeting and we were putting together some – I thank him for that question. There is no question that our focus as we moved forward on this policy was very much front and centre

on saving jobs and, with any luck, in fact, encouraging the kind of capital flow that would see jobs increasing as we go forward into the next fiscal year. On a preliminary basis that seems to be what we're seeing. As I say, we will continue to work with industry to make sure that that's the outcome for all Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Kenney: Yes. If I carry this on, I might be accused of lobbing puffballs, Mr. Speaker. Heaven forbid.

Mr. Speaker, as we know, there was a negative decision on the Keystone XL project at a federal court in Montana two weeks ago. The U.S. administration is appealing that decision to an appeals court. Is it the intention of the government of Alberta to intervene in any way either in that appeal or in the pending regulatory reassessment being led by the United States State department?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, there's no question that we have been in touch with TCPL to offer them any and all support that we can provide. Certainly, we've seen our minister of environment travel and make representations where there were regulatory hearings around line 3, and there may well be the opportunity to do that with KXL as well. We'll continue to work closely through our office in Washington as well as through our relationship with TCPL and offer assistance and support wherever we can.

The Speaker: Second main question.

Carbon Levy and Federal Carbon Pricing

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the United Conservative Party has filed an application before the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal to seek intervenor status on the pending constitutional reference brought forward by the government of Saskatchewan and supported by the governments of Ontario and New Brunswick, challenging the constitutionality of a threatened federal carbon tax. Will the government of Alberta join in support of Saskatchewan, Ontario, and New Brunswick in that challenge if for no other reason than to protect provincial jurisdiction over our own regulatory authority?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think on that matter we're going to have to agree to disagree, and I'm sure that the member is very disappointed that we've ended this wonderful relationship. Nonetheless, you know, our commitment is to spend our legal dollars on taking positions that support our government's efforts to support our oil and gas industry, to get our product to market, and to pair that with the work that our government is doing, a made-in-Alberta plan that supports our industry as it becomes more and more sustainable and more and more marketable to more and more markets that care about greenhouse gas emissions. We will keep on doing that.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, on the question of the carbon tax the Calgary board of education has confirmed that they are spending an estimated \$3.3 million per year on the NDP's carbon tax. As a result, they've had to reduce bus service for Calgary students. How does it help the environment or Albertans to make kids wait longer to get a school bus ride to get to class?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact, under our government's leadership the Calgary board of education has received extensive support and financial support over the course of the last three years. We have put across the province roughly 4,000 more teachers into classrooms because we support our public education system. We have also funded the reduction of school fees across many parts of this province because we support public education. We have funded class-quality improvements because we support public education. We expect the Calgary board of education to manage that money.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the reality is that the NDP's carbon tax, which they want to raise by at least 67 per cent, makes it more expensive not just for people to heat their homes and drive to work but for school boards to operate. As a result of the NDP's carbon tax forcing the removal of five Calgary school buses, this means that this affects 400 students, many of whom are now being driven to school by their parents, actually increasing emissions. Does the government not understand that this is one of the many unintended consequences of their carbon tax?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact, what would make things more expensive for the Calgary board of education would be if we had engaged in the funding plans that the member opposite's previous party would have put forward; i.e., freezing funding at 2015 levels. What we have done is that we have funded enrolment. We have funded more teachers. We have funded more class-quality improvements. We have done the things that improve public education. The Calgary board of education needs to use the generous amount of funding they have received from this government over the last three and a half years to . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.
Third main question.

Federal Bill C-69

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, in 1981 Premier Lougheed won a historic fight to establish in section 92A of the Constitution exclusive provincial jurisdiction over the production of oil and gas, recognizing that this Legislature has exclusive authority over exploration, development, conservation, and management of nonrenewable resource development. This constitutional authority is being challenged by Justin Trudeau's Bill C-69. Why is the NDP government not challenging this attack on our constitutional authority?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, as the member opposite knows, there is joint authority when it comes to environmental issues. The member opposite is fully aware of that, but he also knows that we have been working very hard and pushing very hard to have the federal government change and amend Bill C-69 in order to reduce the uncertainty that that bill is creating for industry. We have seen some minor progress, but it is not good enough. It happens to be one of the issues that I will stand up for Albertans on when I'm in Ottawa with the first ministers next week.

Mr. Kenney: I'm glad to hear that the Premier will do that. It's unfortunate that her Energy minister signed on to a communiqué from provincial energy ministers that raised no objection to C-69 even though Ontario and Saskatchewan did. It's odd that we have Ontario defending our rights more strongly than the government of Alberta. The problem, Mr. Speaker, is that the government has only objected to the federal assessment of downstream carbon emissions associated with pipelines. Bill C-69 attacks our authority over upstream regulation, which section 92A says is the exclusive authority of the provincial Legislature. Why is this government surrendering our exclusive authority?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, two Fridays ago, I believe, so about 10 days ago the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment issued a communiqué in which Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba ensured that there was language around Bill C-69. In addition to that, the regulatory authority over upstream emissions, we have said to the federal government, shall be covered off through Alberta's climate plan. The existence of that climate plan then keeps the federal government out of our jurisdiction.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, it seems the government is missing a critical point here. The exclusive provincial jurisdiction over the regulation of upstream production of oil and gas is not a matter for negotiation. It is nonnegotiable thanks to the victory of Peter Lougheed in 1982. This is not about haggling about whether the feds or Alberta will punish consumers more for driving to work. It's a question of defending this hard-fought exclusive provincial jurisdiction. Will the government join with us in doing so and objecting to those provisions in the federal no more pipelines act, Bill C-69?

2:10

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our government has stood up for the rights of the province of Alberta since day one. We have stood up for the need to get our product to market since day one. We have also stood up to ensure that we can work with industry to develop a responsible plan for protecting our climate now and into the future. Now, I understand that the members opposite want to object to every effort to protect our climate now and into the future, but that is not our vision of leadership.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Unemployment

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unemployed Albertans are out of work 50 per cent longer now than they were two years ago. The University of Calgary's School of Public Policy recently cautioned that longer unemployment means increased difficulty in finding re-employment. I know I've spoken to a number of my constituents, previously in professional careers, who cannot find a job after three or four years. People looking for jobs are significantly worse off today than they were two years ago. What specifically is the government doing to address this critical issue?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the drop in the price of oil has caused the worst collapse and recession in Alberta's recent history, for two generations. It's worse and it's

been longer than the collapse in 2008. We know that this is really hard on all Alberta families, of course. That's why we know that there's much more work to do, and we are doing that work so that all Albertans feel the economic recovery.

We're putting jobs and economic diversification first, investing in training programs across our economy so that Albertans have greater hands-on experience with \$10 million through the integrated training program. I'm sure I'll address more things later.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Ms McPherson: There were three times the number of men aged 15 to 24 looking for work for six months in Alberta in 2017 as there were women. Experienced professionals, engineers, geologists, and systems analysts are having trouble finding work bagging groceries or working in security. Employers are turning them away because they are overqualified. When does the government believe that these people will have the chance to rejoin the workforce?

Mr. Ceci: Certainly, I hope that all Albertans have a great chance to rejoin the workforce and for prosperity for their families. In addition, we're creating workforce placements so that Albertans can build the connections with employers, Mr. Speaker. There are 1,300 of those workforce partnership placements. We know there's more work to be done, and we won't stop until all Albertans feel this economic recovery. In addition, we're investing in building much-needed infrastructure, that has helped put companies and Albertans back to work, and we're going to continue to see that bill go forward.

Ms McPherson: The number of women in their peak earning years looking for work for a year or more has almost doubled in the last two years. We know that different groups experience unemployment and underemployment differently. Indigenous populations usually see a decrease in employment rates after a downturn. We need to tailor supports so that people can access help in an appropriate way. What specific measures has the government implemented to recognize the differences in unemployed groups?

Mr. Ceci: Mr. Speaker, perhaps this is a better question for other ministers. I know that they are supportive and I've been supportive of making sure there's increased monies there for social assistance caseloads when we need them and people are unsuccessful in getting employment. We, of course, pushed Ottawa in the past around EI benefits and extending those to Albertans who were suffering through the downturn. We're going to continue working on the jobs front, supporting diversification and getting more Albertans back to work.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Federal Mortgage Rules

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With the changes to the federal mortgage rules over the past 10 years, it's become harder and harder for first-time homebuyers to purchase a house. Now it seems the new federal stress test involving the Bank of Canada benchmark is forcing Alberta to address a problem it doesn't have to counter issues in B.C. and Toronto. More and more Albertans are unable to purchase a house or refinance their homes when dealing with hardships because of these rule changes. To the Minister of Finance: what communications have you had with your federal counterpart surrounding this issue?

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much to the member. You know, it does seem like Ottawa is on a different economic plane from time to time and not looking at our needs. This stress test was intended to deal with issues in Vancouver and Toronto, but it has had an impact here in Alberta. I've heard from hard-working Albertans that it's difficult to buy a home at this point in time because of these rules. Now, it's important for Albertans to be able to afford their homes with good, mortgage-paying jobs, and that is challenging for many Albertans. That's why Ottawa cannot ignore the punishing differential. We need support around that so we can get back to good, mortgage-paying jobs.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that these rules are imposed by the federal government because they are concerned about rising consumer debt and given that the federal government has done nothing to curb issues like credit card debt, which is the root of the problem, to the Minister of Finance: are you looking into solutions to either empower ATB or our credit unions to provide alternative solutions for consumers?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much again, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Again, Ottawa doesn't seem to get it. That's why here in Alberta we've done things to make life more affordable like axing payday loans, that were put in place by the previous government. We brought in \$25-a-day daycare to make life more affordable, and we froze tuition fees. Those things are making life more affordable . . .

Mr. Fildebrandt: Point of order.

Mr. Ceci: . . . for more Albertans as we go forward. On the personal banking side of things, Mr. Speaker, we'll continue to work with ATB and our credit unions to find solutions to community issues like this.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that consumers and brokers are having a hard time renegotiating mortgages, preventing them from being able to qualify for financing, and given that all real estate markets are local and the federal government's national solution has hurt Alberta's housing market, will the Minister of Finance urge the federal government to consider measures which reflect the regional nature of Alberta's real estate market?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker and to the member for his advocacy. A couple of months ago I did write a letter to Ottawa saying that any interest rate decisions should take into account Alberta's situation and that we're looking at the Bank of Canada's next potential increase and thinking it may not happen as a result of some of the things going on in our economy. We know there's still more work to do, and until all Albertans feel this economic recovery, we're not going to stop. We know that the path forward is not to cut 4,000 teachers and 4,000 nurses from their positions like the opposition wants to do every day of the week. Next week I'll be in Ottawa talking to the finance ministers . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Energy-sector Unemployment

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier claims that government oil production cuts will not result in job losses, but production cuts of 9 per cent, more than 325,000 barrels, mean fewer workers needed. Canada's banks estimate that Alberta's GDP growth will fall by 50 per cent next year. This will cause economic pain. Does the Premier have a plan to deal with a 50 per cent decline in GDP growth?

The Speaker: The Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We knew when we made our call the other day that the cost of doing nothing was more job losses and a continuance of \$80 million a day in the Canadian economy, so we took the action, a short-term curtailment, to help our companies get more cash flow, take care of the resources that we have here in Alberta, the resources that all Albertans know. We're working on crude by rail, we're working on energy upgrading, and we're working on pipelines.

Dr. Swann: Mr. Speaker, Christmas is coming. What assurance can the Premier give to Albertans working in oil and gas related work that they will not be losing their jobs this Christmas season?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we have such a variety of industry in this province, and every industry will be affected differently by this curtailment. We have protected the small producers, and we're working with the 25 producers in this curtailment through the AER, listening to any concerns they have or questions, and we're working with every industry. But we know that had we done nothing, there would have been job losses.

Dr. Swann: A last question, again for the Premier: will the Premier, given 70 layoffs recently at Trican Well Services and reduced drilling budgets for the 2019 season, join the Alberta Liberal opposition and support our call for the federal government to reinstate enhanced unemployment benefits to hard-hit Albertans who have lost their jobs, especially in Calgary, where we've hit an unemployment rate of a phenomenal 8.4 per cent?

2:20

The Speaker: The Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In addition to working with our industry, we are working with a number of critical groups like PSAC, the small drillers, CAODC for their impact, and I thank them for their advocacy. PSAC has been out to Ottawa many times talking about the impact that this whole crisis has on their members. We are working together as a group because Albertans own the resources, the industry helps extract the resources, and we need to work together. Together we can tackle this crisis and get ahead of it.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Prime Minister's Remarks on Construction Workers

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Canadians were absolutely horrified to hear the Prime Minister's condescending and demeaning comments at the G-20 summit regarding the hard-working men and women that literally build our country. My question is to the Premier. Do your policies support your friend Justin Trudeau's gender-lens analysis of our hard-working pipeline construction workers?

The Speaker: The Minister of Children's Services and Status of Women.

Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I first want to say thank you to all our hard-working men and women in the oil and gas industry in this province, who are out there working so hard, and to the families that they have, who make many sacrifices on their behalf as well. You know, we have a stand-alone Status of Women ministry here in this province because we all do need to work together across all industries in order to ensure that we support women to be successful, to support women to continue to do better. We'll continue to work across all those sectors in order to do so and look forward to continuing to improve the well-being of women in the province.

The Speaker: Thank you.

First supplemental.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that this government will not stand up for the hard-working men and women who work on these national projects but instead hides behind their friend Justin Trudeau as he creates excuse after excuse to promote and justify his no more pipelines bill, Bill C-69, to the Premier: are you going to stand up for our construction workers, or are you going to continue to allow the Prime Minister to bash our industry, our resources, our province, and the hard-working folks who work on the pipelines that you supposedly want built?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, I can't help but set the record straight. On this side of the House we are fighting every single day for working people – working men, working women – for their families, making lives more affordable. On this side of the House we know that it's government's job to stand up for pipelines. The Leader of the Official Opposition, when he was a minister of the Crown in the federal government for 10 years, two of those as a minister responsible for jobs, failed to act on pipelines. He only said the word "pipelines" in the House of Commons once, and when we asked him why, he said: because it wasn't my job. You bet it was his job. It's this government's job, and every single one of us is standing up for our sector.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, given that a large percentage of the folks working directly on these crucial infrastructure projects is male and given that the social impacts of the people working on these projects are that they live in local hotels, they buy food from local restaurants and grocery stores, and they buy their clothes there and their supplies and ultimately actually contribute to the economic prosperity of these communities, to the Premier: will you commit to calling out Mr. Trudeau on his derogatory comments and set the record straight for Albertans and Canadian workers?

Ms Hoffman: I commit, Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Health and the Deputy Premier to fight for the people of this province, including fighting for pipelines. I don't need somebody to put it in a mandate letter to know that that's my job. For the Leader of the Official Opposition to have his left hand stand up and criticize us for the work we're doing on this project when we've taken it further than he ever did when he was in Ottawa is mighty rich. I have to say that we will continue to fight for the women and the men of this province every day because that's our job, and it should have been his job when he was in Ottawa.

NDP and Pipeline Development

Mr. Nixon: The Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers says that the cancellation of Northern Gateway was the most damaging thing that has been done in our economy. Now, back in April 2015 the Premier told the *Calgary Herald* that Gateway is “not the right decision,” and then this NDP government supported the Trudeau Liberals in Ottawa as they scrapped the project. Sadly, now Albertans are living with the consequences of that terrible decision. Will the NDP, after denying it so long in this House, finally admit their mistake and apologize to the people of Alberta for not supporting Northern Gateway?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, what I will admit, first of all and foremost, is that all of us on this side of the House are fighting for pipelines every day. Northern Gateway was dead in the water a long time ago, and it was dead in the water because the federal government under Stephen Harper did not do their job, nor did the Leader of the Opposition, who was at the cabinet table at the time. The Federal Court of Appeal clearly outlined that there were mistakes made, but it wasn't mistakes on this side; it was mistakes by the federal government. We stand by that.

Mr. Nixon: Given that this alliance the Alberta NDP has pursued with the Trudeau Liberals in Ottawa has had dire consequences for Alberta – the NDP have sided with Trudeau over and over instead of with the people of Alberta – will this government finally admit their mistakes and apologize for opposing Northern Gateway; for siding with Justin Trudeau over Albertans; for voting in this House to support Bill C-69, the no pipelines law; for protesting against Keystone and not fighting for it; for standing by idly as Trudeau killed Energy East; and for standing with Trudeau over and over and over while he decimated Alberta's energy industry?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you. You know, the mistakes that were made were a lot of inaction by the federal government when it mattered – they should have had a vision 10 or more years ago that we needed pipeline capacity and not just more capacity to the U.S. but capacity east and west; that was not done – a cabinet that, when times were good, did not pay attention to the matter. Mr. Speaker, we are paying attention to the matter. We're fighting every day for access in all directions because we see the result of a lack of pipeline access. We have a huge differential right now, and we are addressing that and many other things such as pipeline capacity.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, let's be clear. At the same time period that she's talking about, the minister, these people across from me were protesting that pipeline and our energy industry. Again, will this government finally admit their mistakes and apologize to Alberta, apologize for opposing Northern Gateway; for siding with Trudeau; for supporting Bill C-69 in this Chamber, the no more pipelines bill; for protesting against Keystone and not fighting for it; for standing by idly as Trudeau killed Energy East; and for standing with Trudeau over and over while he decimated our energy industry?

The Speaker: The Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I along with my colleagues here stand up every day for the energy industry. We

know it's our job to build pipelines. We know it's our job to get market access, something the previous federal government and our previous colleagues across the way did not understand and did not know and did not do anything about. We are working very hard with our industry partners. We know that pipeline access matters. That's a long-term solution. In the meantime we've got crude by rail, that we're working very hard on. As of Sunday we are doing curtailment because we know that that will make a difference in the short term. At the end of the day, these are resources Albertans own. We are responsible for those resources.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin.

Energy Industry Opposition

Ms Goodridge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The oil sands and Alberta's oil industry in general have been under attack for far too many years. Unfortunately, many of these anti-oil and antipipeline campaigns have successfully helped to see pipeline projects delayed and denied. We are hearing of a growing number of layoffs throughout Alberta's oil patch, and foreign-funded campaigns to land-lock our oil are working as hard as ever. What, if anything, is this government doing to fight back?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned, we are doing a number of things. Short term, as was announced last Sunday, we are doing a curtailment because we have too much supply. We're not able to ship everything we can produce, so we're managing that oversupply in the short term. In the medium term we're working to get more railcars so we can move product in many directions. Longer term we have a made-in-Alberta energy upgrading strategy that you'll hear more about soon as we are working on the pipelines.

Ms Goodridge: Mr. Speaker, given that in Fort McMurray and across Alberta we have watched countless Greenpeace protestors, left-wing eco-activists, and celebrities talk down our oil industry and my hometown and given that the minister of environment used to be one of the far too many anti-oil, antipipeline activists and given that I would hope all Albertans are cheering for our oil and gas industry, will the minister of environment finally admit that standing up against Alberta pipeline projects was bad for Alberta?

The Speaker: The Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, for many years we've heard talk about diversification, but this is the government that is taking that in hand and working with it – folks in Fort McMurray are going to be a critical part of that – in using bitumen for a number of things here in Alberta. That's going to keep jobs here in Alberta. It's going to create new jobs, more taxes, more jobs, more people working in our industry to create value here, keeping the money in Alberta rather than shipping it out elsewhere.

2:30

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Goodridge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Dan Woynillowicz was formerly of the Pembina Institute and who's now with a group named Clean Energy Canada and given that Mr. Woynillowicz was a presenter at the infamous Rockefeller Brothers meeting wherein they schemed to land lock our oil sands and given that at this meeting he advocated for stopping and limiting pipelines

and refinery expansion and reduce the demand for oil sands, I'd like to know: how many times has the minister of environment spoken to Mr. Woynilowicz since becoming the minister of the environment?

The Speaker: The Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I believe it's once, when Dan – I don't know his last name – stood on a stage on November 22, 2015, with the CEOs of CNRL, Suncor, Shell, and Cenovus in announcing the climate plan. So perhaps the hon. member should direct her question to CEOs of the largest employers in her riding.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Racism and Hate Crime Prevention

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We live in an interesting age, a time when the rise of social media has combined with economic and political disruption to create an environment where voices of hatred and intolerance have been able to rise, and in my work with Alberta's diverse communities – Muslim, indigenous, African, Caribbean, Jewish, South Asian – they regularly tell me about the fear and anxiety this creates for them and their support for our government's work to take action on racism and questions about our progress so far. To the Minister of Education. The applications for the Anti-Racism Advisory Council closed in September. When will you be announcing the first 25 members?

Mr. Schmidt: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise and answer this question on behalf of the Minister of Education. Interviews for the Anti-Racism Advisory Council are ongoing as we speak and will continue for the next week or so. We've had over 300 applicants to the council, with interviews for more than 100 of them. We're taking the time to be mindful and considerate of all of the powerful personal experiences that applicants have shared and to ensure a diverse membership that accurately reflects Alberta's population. Appointments will be announced early in the new year, with the council's inaugural meeting to take place soon after.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Shepherd: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that experts suggest there are at least 130 extremist right-wing groups operating across Canada and given that hate crimes in Canada are on the rise and given that these groups are growing increasingly bold and working to infiltrate and influence both the military and conservative political parties, to the Minister of Education: how close are we to establishing a provincial hate crimes task force, as called for in your report?

Mr. Schmidt: Mr. Speaker, we're actively working on all priorities addressed in our government's antiracism report. We know that the data clearly indicates that indigenous and black Albertans are disproportionately affected by certain practices and that there is a rise of Islamophobia demonstrated through disturbing examples of intolerance and prejudice in our province, our country, and in other parts of the world. The hate crimes unit is an important part of our antiracism work that will directly impact these realities and create a safer, more inclusive Alberta for our diverse communities. Consultation and development of the hate crimes unit is ongoing, and I look forward to continuing to work closely with the Minister of Justice and ...

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
Second supplemental.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that one of the best ways to combat racism is education and that when people know more about others, they're less prone to hate and given that we've committed to include the history of indigenous Albertans, including residential schools, in our curriculum, are you also working to ensure that the history of Alberta's other many diverse communities, such as African-American settlers, Muslims, and Sikhs, will also be taught to students?

Mr. Schmidt: Our government is fostering inclusion and diversity within schools and across the province. We know that standing up against racism and hatred is the right thing to do. That's why we're listening to diverse perspectives in writing the new curriculum, because when students see themselves reflected in what they learn in the classroom, they're confident in their identity as Albertans and as Canadians and they feel empowered to speak out against hatred. The minister has had the opportunity to directly engage with thousands of Albertans from many cultural backgrounds and faiths on both the antiracism initiatives and the new curriculum, and he's very thankful for their ongoing advice and support. In fact, this afternoon his staff are meeting with engaged individuals from ...

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Health Facility Construction Costs

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government has continually failed to meet the needs of our health care system despite increasing our health care spending by over \$2 billion. Under the ASLI program the previous government with its partners were able to build beds for \$65,000 a bed. Meanwhile in Fort McMurray 144 beds are being built at a price tag of \$110 million, or \$764,000 per bed. Can this government provide the logic and explain the difference in the construction costs?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure that the hon. member is well aware that many things in Fort McMurray cost a bit more than they do in other parts of the province like Edmonton and Calgary. I imagine that he probably experiences that when he's visiting his riding in his time away from this place. We certainly are aware of that. We also worked with the hon. member and the former Leader of the Official Opposition on which site they felt was most appropriate, something that we thought was important that the people of Fort McMurray have a say in, and they chose a site that requires more investment to make sure that it's the right fit. The reason why we're investing in Fort McMurray is because Conservative governments failed to do so, but we will act as the NDP government.

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, the private sector will have created 72 per cent of the 2,081 beds projected to be built by this spring. Given that the ASLI program was able to build these builds for about \$65,000, a significantly smaller number than those being built in Fort McMurray and other places, and given that when asked about these numbers, we just don't get a clear answer from this government, to the minister: why did you scrap the ASLI program?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, we worked with partners to make sure that we increased the level of care to long-term care and dementia care beds throughout our province. I want to rearticulate, though, that it isn't fair to present the Willow Square project or any other project on a cost-per-bed basis because the total projected budget

includes costs associated with developing space for outpatient and in-patient programs as well. We're doing this in a way that respects the community's feedback. You'd think that's something that the MLA who represents the riding would want, that he would want us to actually build the project in the core of the city, where the community said that they wanted it, not on the edge of town, that he'd want to have these wraparound services in a fantastic public build close to the hospital rather than having people outsourced to other spaces.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, here's an example about construction costing and management. There's a superlab being built in this province in this city. It initially cost \$290 million. It has doubled in cost to \$600 million for a building. It is a big box. It is a superlab. It is a space that you could have leased in any old Sears space. The value in a lab is the people and the equipment in the lab. Why did it cost that much? Why did it double in cost?

Ms Hoffman: The fact that we continue to have members of the opposition refer to quality health care environments that people work and live in as fancy boxes is outrageous, and it is so out of touch with the reality of ordinary Albertans, Mr. Speaker. We're not talking about petri dishes and test tubes in a shopping mall, for heaven's sake. We're talking about top-quality lab materials, making sure that we have safe results. These decisions impact patient care. I won't apologize for investing in the people of Alberta and making sure that we don't privatize and outsource to multinational corporations things that should be done within Alberta. I'm proud of that, and the member opposite should be ashamed of himself.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I had a lapse there. Forgive me.

Health Facility Policies on Assisted Dying

Dr. Swann: My questions are for the Health minister. The Catholic church hasn't managed hospitals in this province for over 50 years. I'm wondering to what extent the minister believes that Covenant Health should be in charge of restricting constitutional rights for people who request assistance with medical assistance in dying in this province as a publicly funded institution.

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Every patient in Alberta deserves the same level of dignified, compassionate care no matter what facility they happen to be in. The federal direction is that this is a legal procedure. It's our direction, of course, that there be ease of access and that the patient's choice be respected. Covenant did ensure that their updated policy reflects that assessments can be done on-site as well as signing of final papers. I think that that reflects the will of the people of Alberta, and I'm proud that we're going to be moving forward with patients as the number one guider in that policy.

Dr. Swann: Well, Mr. Speaker, I've been hearing from both physicians and patients that, in fact, this policy does not reflect the will of Albertans and physicians, who see a discriminatory approach within Covenant Health, who feel that the process of providing – the policy says: may provide those services on-site –

does not go far enough, that it should be mandatory to provide constitutional rights. Will the minister require all publicly funded institutions in Alberta to provide assessment and care regardless of institutional support?

2:40

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I believe that today's – or I guess it was yesterday's now – policy update is a very good step moving forward, and we will continue to work with our partners who provide care on the front lines to ensure that patients are supported and that their wishes are respected. Anyone who read those stories about citizens who were accessing their health care at a bus stop or outside of a facility knows that that was wrong, and that's why I asked Covenant to update their policy. That's why they made sure they did so. But we're not going to make it mandatory for it to happen there if they want to go home to have their assessment done there, but absolutely, if they want it done in the facility, it will be.

Dr. Swann: I believe that's a red herring, Mr. Speaker. We're not talking about mandatory on-site; we're talking about the policy of the institution requiring them to, where it's requested, allow the services on-site. This is a constitutional right. This minister said that she abides by the . . .

The Speaker: The question only. The question.

Dr. Swann: Given that she has said that she will abide by the Constitution of Canada on health care, why will she not insist that this be a required service in our publicly funded institutions?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, it's important to me that we make sure that every Albertan who wants to exercise their right to choose with regard to legal health care procedures be supported in that, and that is why we made sure that the new Covenant policy confirms that when a patient request is made, an AHS care co-ordinator service will assume responsibility for arrangements for that process, and our care co-ordination services are a made-in-Alberta plan to ensure Albertans who want medical assistance in dying can access that help and support throughout all stages of the process. This is still a relatively new procedure in Canada, and we are continuing to work as it moves forward.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Social Studies Curriculum Redesign

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week a hand-picked member of the government's secretive curriculum working group resigned citing a litany of problems with the process and results of the curriculum redesign. It turns out that many of my concerns about the new curriculum learning outcomes, its dearth of instructional resources, and its one-size-fits-all approach are shared by someone with a PhD in curriculum studies and by many of his former colleagues. To the Minister of Education: now that some of your experts have lost confidence in the curriculum redesign, will you finally admit that the process has been flawed?

Mr. Schmidt: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure it'll come as no surprise to the member opposite that I'd make no such admission. In fact, it's long past due that our province undertake this work in updating the curriculum. We're sorry that the member of the curriculum

redesign group resigned. We understand his differences of opinion with the way this is going, but, you know, it's been a long time to take to get to this point to review the curriculum, and we won't make any apologies for updating something that was more than 30 years old.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this professor stated, and I quote, that the rationale and the justification offered for redesigning the K through 12 Alberta curriculum was not relevant to the current Alberta social studies curriculum, end quote, and given that the professor is clearly not a UCP supporter, concerns about this agenda-driven curriculum redesign are clearly across partisan lines and given that this social studies curriculum expert does not believe the government's talking points, to that same minister: what was the real reason for redesigning the social studies curriculum?

Mr. Schmidt: Well, Mr. Speaker, it should come as no surprise to the member opposite that in our schools right now we're still teaching about the Soviet Union as if it still existed. It's long past due that we update the curriculum. It's something that their government refused to do when given the chance. We're finally undertaking the work to make sure that our students learn a modern social studies curriculum that's updated to reflect the current realities of the world that our students live in today so that they're better prepared to engage in the democratic processes of their communities, their province, and their country.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the professor stated that, quote, much of the work completed during social studies curriculum working group meetings has been altered or revised by Alberta Education staff and given that he also stated, quote, that decisions about the architectural design and structure of the social studies curriculum were made before the curriculum working group ever met, end quote, when will the minister apologize to the curriculum working group and to the members of the public he supposedly consulted for using them as a cover for this predetermined, agenda-driven curriculum redesign?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, Mr. Speaker, let me answer that question with a question. When will the member opposite and all of his colleagues apologize to the people of Alberta and the members of the curriculum working group for smashing their names in public and promoting conspiracy theories about their secret, hidden agenda to indoctrinate our youth? The only members of this House who need to apologize for their comments about the curriculum working group are that member opposite and all of his colleagues in that party.

The Speaker: Two more days, folks. Two more days.
The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Road Maintenance

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's cost-effective, performance-based road maintenance system offers Albertans the best value for their tax dollars. Now we hear that the Minister of Transportation is plowing forward with wholesale changes that will result in a more costly model. Can the Transportation minister

assure Albertans that adopting B.C.'s model will not increase the cost of road maintenance for Alberta's taxpayers?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm not quite sure what the hon. member means by "B.C.'s model." I can assure him that the changes that we have implemented and are implementing, which have been done in consultation with the industry, will make it a more performance-based model, will improve the performance, I believe, and will find economies; for example, working with rural municipalities doing the same work on the same roads. When they cross, they raise their blade and put their blade back down on the other side. There are all kinds of efficiencies we can find.

The Speaker: Thank you.
First supplemental.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the B.C. model shifts all risk to road maintenance contractors and that will require contractors to adjust their business plan to take on more costs and given the minister recently retendered some of the road maintenance contracts using this system and the tenders are closing in a couple of weeks, to the minister: why the urgency? Usually contractors have much more time to bid. Is this just another way to justify taking road maintenance in-house?

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the member, the House, and the industry that we have no plans to bring highway maintenance services in-house. However, I've told the industry that because of the financial difficulties that we're facing, we're going to have to sharpen our pencils, and they're going to have to sharpen their pencils. We need to get better value for money, and we need to make sure that we do things in a way that keeps our roads safe and operable year-round.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that snowplowing is an essential service, as evidenced by the recent snowfall that caused havoc on our highways across the province, and given that expediting this new model could result in contractors changing their priorities to absorb the extra cost of liability, to the minister: is this new contract going to cost taxpayers more or decrease the service? You can't have it both ways.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I want to assure the member and all Albertans that the safety of our highways is the highest priority. We need to make sure that we get good value for our money from contractors, but I think there are better ways to do it that require a little bit more innovation on the part of the industry, and I am sure that they are up to the challenge. They do a good job for us, and they are going to continue to do a good job for us.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

Workplace Safety

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Fourteen years ago the government of Canada introduced the Westray law. This law was meant to hold employers criminally responsible in cases where workers lost their lives in workplace accidents where employers

ignored the health and safety of their workers. But it's been a decade, and we still haven't seen much progress. To the Minister of Labour: what are you doing to ensure that Westray is enforced and supported?

2:50

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our government is fighting for what matters to Albertans, and that includes ensuring that workplaces are safe and healthy and that workers get home safe at the end of the day. That's why last year we signed a memorandum of understanding with 10 different police services across the province that clearly defines the protocols for investigating workplace incidents and ensures that OHS and the police are able to work together to assess when charges might be laid. This MOU will help ensure that in the case of a tragic incident the intent of the Westray law is not only followed but the families can feel confident that, where warranted, action will be taken for their loved ones.

The Speaker: Thank you.
First supplemental.

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that employers have the most responsibility to keep workers safe and given that if they ignore this responsibility, there can be tragic consequences like we saw in the Westray mine disaster, to the same minister: what are you doing to ensure that employers know what's expected of them?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, when we were elected three years ago, we inherited a set of labour laws that had not been updated in decades, 30 or 40 years in many cases. That wasn't right. I'm very proud of the work that we've done to make workplaces safer and healthier. It's now every employer's responsibility to ensure that their workplaces are safe not only from physical hazards but from bullying and harassment as well. We're continuing to work with employers and workers to make sure everyone understands the new rights and responsibilities.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that workers have often been shut out of health and safety discussions in their workplace and given that we know that when workers are involved in these decisions, workplaces are more efficient and have better results, again to the minister: what are you doing to ensure that workers have a say in their own safety?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. By giving workers the right to know about hazards in their workplace, the right to participate in health and safety on their work site, and the clear right to refuse unsafe work, we are able to keep workers safer and ensure that fewer Albertans are hurt on the job. These are all rights that the Conservative leader has promised to roll back at the request of Conservative insiders and the highest bidder. I know that the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills promised that the Conservative plan would hurt workers, but even I was surprised that they would be so literal about it. We're not going to let that happen. We're going to keep fighting for workers and make sure that every worker comes home safe at the end of the day.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I've been asked if there is unanimous consent for the introduction of a guest. It's been an unusual amount of time already. Is there unanimous consent?

[Unanimous consent denied]

The Speaker: I would ask that members depart.
Government House Leader, you might have a request.

Mr. Mason: I was going to make it a little closer to the wire, but I can inform the House that under Standing Order 7(8) we'll be extending the Routine past 3 o'clock.

Members' Statements

Human Rights

Loyola: Mr. Speaker, the UN declaration of human rights is an international agreement outlining the fundamental rights of all human beings. Within this document is the acknowledgement of the sovereignty of each nation and their responsibility to uphold these rights for their citizens. This is accomplished through a collaborative approach by governments working together with civil society.

I want to acknowledge the organizations joining us today to recognize this important partnership. Together we are all working hard on ridding our society of systemic injustices that violate the human rights of all who call Alberta home.

Standing up for human rights requires more from politicians than just lip service at election time. It requires action. On this side of the House we've got the backs of newcomers and cultural communities, and we're fighting for what matters to them. Whether it be for the religious freedom of the Sikh community or for refugees' access to drivers' licences, we're making real, concrete changes that are making life better.

Unfortunately, though, even with all this work we're still seeing an upsurge of Islamophobic and anti-Semitic views. Even worse, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that these views seem welcome in the Conservative party. This fall the Conservative leader approved candidates who again and again expressed Islamophobic views, including one who compared Muslims to bank robbers. But this is nothing new. The Conservative leader was part of a caucus that openly attacked Islam. They stated that the niqab is firmly "rooted in a culture that is anti-women." He did nothing to speak up against such bigotry.

To all Albertans I say: let's fight racism and hatred together. The first step is to get to know one another. Don't let fear of the other inhibit you from learning more about your neighbours and their religious and cultural practices. Mr. Speaker, when we observe and protect the human rights of all, we prevent violence in all its forms, and if we abandon these rights and freedoms, we put people at risk, especially those from cultural communities. To quote one of my heroes, Nelson Mandela, "To deny people their human rights is to challenge their very humanity."

Christmas

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, as you are well aware, Christmas is my favourite time of the year. I love everything about Christmas. I love the traditions that are associated with this joyous season. I love that it represents the birth of the baby Jesus to the virgin mother, Mary, in a stable in Bethlehem. I love the strong element of family associated with Christmas. In fact, every year when my children were young, we would enact the nativity play, with the girls always wanting to be Mary and the boys always wanting to be the donkey. I'm not sure what that says about the boys, but I'll leave it at that.

I love the songs, both traditional and modern. One of my favourite songs is *Silent Night*, which was composed in 1818 by Franz Xaver Gruber to lyrics by Joseph Mohr in a small town in Austria. It goes:

Silent night, holy night!
All is calm, all is bright.
Round yon Virgin, Mother and Child.
Holy infant so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace,
Sleep in heavenly peace.

Now, I would have sung that for you, Mr. Speaker, if it weren't for the fact that my singing voice is roughly as bad as Elmer Fudd's.

In all seriousness, Mr. Speaker, I hope that we can take time this Christmas season to light up the world around us, to lift up the downtrodden, to share a meal with someone in need, to talk a little longer with an aging grandparent, to help in a soup kitchen, and maybe even get out and do a little carolling.

Mr. Speaker, to all my colleagues in the House and to all Albertans: may you have a truly wonderful Christmas and a Happy New Year; may your holidays be spent roasting chestnuts by open fire with families and friends close by. As little Timmy says in Charles Dickens' classic, *A Christmas Carol*: May God bless everyone.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

Smiles Thru Lindsey Foundation

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to talk about Smiles Thru Lindsey, a charity started by Rick and Cindy More after their family experienced one of the most tragic losses a family could ever endure. Lindsey More was beautiful inside and out. She had a big heart, and she loved to laugh. She had an outgoing personality, and like 1 in 5 Canadians, she battled mental illness. Lindsey's passion for helping others masked the sadness inside her.

With the sudden passing of a friend who took his own life, Lindsey was determined to make a change. She wanted to start a foundation that would be able to help children, teens, young adults get the help they need to fight mental illness. Sadly, Lindsey did not live to see her dream come to fruition. On September 20, 2015, Lindsey More lost her battle with depression, and she took her own life. She was 22 years old.

One month later the Smiles Thru Lindsey foundation was created. The foundation is an endowment fund created under the Red Deer & District Community Foundation. Its mandate is to finance programs that will directly aid youth dealing with mental health and depression issues. Only 1 in 4 youth facing mental health challenges will receive treatment. Research has shown that half of all lifetime mental illness begins by age 14 and that early support and intervention is vital to our children and youth. Thanks to Smiles Thru Lindsey over \$300,000 has been donated by businesses, citizens, and anonymous donors in central Alberta to help our children and youth living with mental health.

I personally would like to thank Rick, Cindy, and Stephanie, the Smiles Thru Lindsey team, for carrying on Lindsey's amazing legacy to help others. Lindsey, you may be gone from this earth, but your memory will live on forever in *Hansard*.

Thank you.

3:00

Retrospective by the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake

Mr. Cyr: Mr. Speaker, on May 5, 2015, I had the immense honour of being elected to serve the people of Bonnyville-Cold Lake. When selected, I committed to my constituents that I would go to

Edmonton and serve their interests and make sure their priorities were heard. Specifically, I committed to improving relationships between our municipalities, moving forward the Bonnyville waterline that had stalled for 15 years, and advocating for improvements to highway 28. We've seen the headway in all of my commitments during my mandate as the MLA.

Mr. Speaker, I have tried to empower my constituents and my communities, raising issues that really matter to them. Part of doing this meant helping to fulfill my constitutional duty of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition to oppose the government when they forgot the interests of the everyday Albertan, to voice the concerns of many Albertans who disagree with the direction this government has taken, and to uphold the tenets of our Westminster democracy, upon which our province and our country was built.

The other part of my job, as I saw it, was to work collaboratively with the government where possible and get things done for my constituents. Additionally, through hard work with both the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Education, which I thank adamantly, I was able to pass a private member's bill, finally providing Albertans with statutory protections against unwanted distribution of intimate images.

Following the next election, as I return to private life, I want to leave this House with two things: first, by thanking my family, friends, constituents, and all those who supported me through this wonderful journey that I've been on; and second, by saying that serving in this House, serving the people of Alberta has been and will always remain the greatest honour and privilege of my professional career.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, I would like to wish my oldest daughter, Amelia, a happy 13th birthday today. I love you.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member, and thank you for your service.

The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Soutien à la Francophonie

Ms McKittrick: Merci, M. le Président. Je suis fière d'être une francophone en Alberta. L'Alberta a une des plus larges et diverses populations de francophones.

Notre gouvernement a prouvé que nous sommes engagés à travailler avec les franco-albertains. Nous avons annoncé la première politique de service en français. Nous avons proclamé le mois de mars comme le mois de la francophonie. Nous avons désigné le drapeau franco-albertain comme un symbole de distinction sous la loi albertaine gouvernant les emblèmes officiels. Nous offrons un financement stable et prévisible pour les écoles à travers l'Alberta, incluant nos écoles francophones, qui s'accroissent rapidement. Nous construisons et modernisons également 11 écoles francophones. À travers la province j'observe l'immense contribution que la francophonie albertaine apporte à nos communautés, à notre économie, et à notre société en général.

Comme les autres francophones à travers le Canada, je suis choquée et déçue par l'annonce de Doug Ford portant sur la suppression du Commissariat aux services en français et l'université francophone. Ces attaques sur les minorités sont honteuses et auront des effets nuisibles et persistants sur la communauté franco-ontarienne. N'oublions pas que le leader de l'opposition albertaine dit que lui et le premier ministre Ford sont bon amis et chacun peut finir la phrase de l'autre. Je suis profondément inquiète quand je vois Doug Ford attaquer les droits des minorités et le chef de l'opposition albertaine et le parti conservateur uni observent assidûment et prennent note.

M. le Président, en regardant l'Ontario de Doug Ford, nous pouvons prévoir ce que le chef de l'opposition albertaine et ses collègues veulent dire quand ils planifient des coupures budgétaires qui vont faire du mal aux albertains. Ce qu'il dit aux franco-albertains c'est qu'ils ne comptent pas, leurs droits ne comptent pas.

Sous ce gouvernement cela n'arrivera jamais en Alberta. Merci, M. le Président.

[Translation] I am a proud francophone Albertan. Alberta has one of the largest and diverse francophone populations.

Our government has demonstrated that we are committed to working with francophone Albertans. We introduced Alberta's first-ever French policy. We proclaimed for the first time March as Alberta Francophonie Month. We designated for the first time the franco-Albertan flag as a symbol of distinction under the Emblems of Alberta Act. We have created the first Alberta Advisory Council on the Francophonie, to ensure Alberta's French-speaking population has a voice to help government enhance services in French in meaningful ways. We are providing stable and predictable funding for schools across Alberta, including our fast-growing francophone schools. We are building and modernizing 11 francophone schools. Across the province I see the tremendous contributions that Alberta's Francophonie make to our communities, our economy, and our society as a whole.

Like my fellow francophones, I am shocked and disappointed by Doug Ford's announcement that he will abolish the French-language services commission and the French university. These attacks on minorities are shameful and will have lasting, damaging impacts on the Franco-Ontario community. And let's remember that the Leader of the Opposition says that he and Premier Ford finish each other's sentence. So it is of deep concern to me, when I see Doug Ford attack minority rights, to think that the Leader of the Opposition and the UCP are watching closely and taking notes.

By looking to Doug Ford's Ontario, we can see what the Member for Calgary-Lougheed and his caucus mean when they say that they are planning cuts that are going to hurt Albertans. What he is saying to Franco-Albertans is that they don't matter, their rights don't matter.

Under this government, that will never happen in Alberta. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [As submitted]

The Speaker: Thank you. Merci.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Official Opposition and Government Policies

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When a well-intentioned person provides good advice, most people will accept it with grace. Unfortunately, we rarely see that kind of wisdom from the NDP when the Leader of the Official Opposition provides this government with his wise counsel on challenging issues.

Let me give you a few examples. Our leader was ridiculed when he recommended that Alberta's government turn off the taps to B.C. He was attacked for suggesting the NDP government oppose Justin Trudeau's pipeline-killing Bill C-69. He was mocked when he and other UCP members called for emergency action on rural crime. He and the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View were criticized for pushing the government to protect patients from predatory doctors, and he was attacked in this House for urging the NDP to curtail oil production in the face of a record-high differential. The Premier actually suggested that our leader was advocating for collusion.

The NDP acted like the advice was worthless, ridiculous, uncalled for, but, Mr. Speaker, what was the end result? They introduced turn-off-the-tap legislation. They finally spoke against Bill C-69. They finally admitted rural crime had reached crisis

proportions. They not only introduced legislation to deal with predatory doctors; they buckled to our calls for a lifetime ban.

Each time the NDP finally agrees with the opposition, their decision-making improves. You see, we are the government's best advisers. The NDP's pattern of dismissing our leader's wise counsel only to adopt it a short time later does not concern him. You see, he's looking to help Albertans because, Mr. Speaker, that is the mark of a true leader.

Thank you.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Respectfully I raise a question of privilege pursuant to 15(2) of our standing orders for the purpose of calling the Member for Leduc-Beaumont in contempt of Standing Order 23(h), (i), and (j) of this Assembly for interfering in the lawful investigation conducted by an officer of this Legislature.

The purpose of raising privilege in either House of Parliament is to maintain the respect and credibility due to and required of each House in respect of these privileges to uphold its power . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, just to clarify, you will get an opportunity to speak to the substance of that. I would ask, though, that you read into the record the specific motion.

Mr. Gill: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Thursday the Minister of Municipal Affairs and especially the Minister of Transportation engaged in accusing me of the worst crime by an elected official. You ruled that the comments were out of order. However, the comments were never withdrawn and apologized for. All I want is just to take some time and clear my name. I have the requisite copies of the motion.

3:10

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Bill 209

Strategies for Unemployed and Underemployed Albertans Act

Ms McPherson: Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce a bill being the Strategies for Unemployed and Underemployed Albertans Act.

Even though the economy is showing signs of recovery, many Albertans haven't found work since losing their job, or they haven't been able to find suitable work. Bill 209, the Strategies for Unemployed and Underemployed Albertans Act, will provide them with a framework to find jobs.

I've spoken to many unemployed Albertans looking to get back on their feet. They're frustrated by a lack of useful supports that recognize their employment situations. That includes many young men entering the workforce and experienced career professionals who've been out of work for years. I've spoken to employment-training providers who want to work with employers to retrain and upskill employees to meet the challenges of a modern economy but have experienced resistance when proposing their plans. I've spoken to economists who see opportunities for Alberta workers that aren't being developed. I've spoken to employers who are frustrated that they can't find qualified workers in Alberta.

This bill will enable stakeholders to pool their knowledge and insights in a quick and responsive manner to help address Albertans' employment needs with alacrity. I look forward to

debating this bill with my colleagues in the House, and I thank you for the opportunity.

[Motion carried; Bill 209 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Apparently, my petition hasn't gone to the table officers, so I'll bring it at a future date.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the appropriate number of copies to table from the Campaign for a Smoke-Free Alberta, which calls on the government of Alberta to take quick action to reduce youth vaping simply by proclaiming a section of the Tobacco and Smoking Reduction Act. I'll table the appropriate copies.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Any other returns or reports?

Hon. members, yesterday, you may recall, there was a point of order raised by the Government House Leader.

An Hon. Member: Mr. Speaker, she's been standing.

The Speaker: You have a tabling? Go ahead.

Ms Goodridge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite number of copies of two reports that I would like to table, the first being the tar sands campaign that I referred to earlier today in my question, where Mr. Dan Woynilowicz gave a presentation to the Rockefeller Brothers meeting, where, amongst other things, he advocated for stopping and limiting pipelines and refinery expansion and reducing the demand for oil sands.

The second document I would like to table is a tweet from the minister of the environment from March 14, 2018, where she said, "Great to run into @DanWoy" and included a photo of them together. Considering that the minister of the environment said earlier today that she'd only met with him once, I believe that she perhaps has misled the House.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I think, give the members an opportunity to read that once you circulate it. That would be ample.

Are there any other tablings? The Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: I have a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: You have a point of order?

Mr. Mason: Yes.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I'm going to speak to this issue in a minute. Point of order is noted.

Mr. Mason: Thank you.

The Speaker: We will deal with it after the Routine.
The Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Yes. I have a tabling on behalf of my colleague from Drayton Valley-Devon, five copies of a Twitter thread where Dr. Lindsay Gibson explains his reasons for resigning from the social studies curriculum working group.

The Speaker: For the third time, hon. members, are there any other tablings?

I do hope that the members appreciated my going back to that item. We actually missed it by two turns, tabling returns and then Tablings to the Clerk, so I urge you to make those tablings at the appropriate time into the future.

Point of Order

Points of Order

Allegations against a Member

The Speaker: You'll recall that yesterday there was a point of order raised by the Government House Leader during, ironically, Tabling Returns and Reports. I took the matter under advisement as there was a question raised pertaining to the correct procedures to be followed on points of order during the daily Routine. To deal with the matter procedurally first, the usual practice, I'm told, is for points of order raised during the daily Routine to be considered following the conclusion of the daily Routine. The Speaker may on occasion hear a point during the Routine if the matter needs to be dealt with urgently, but the normal practice to wait until the end of the Routine is preferred as there is a limited amount of time to get through the number of business items prior to 3 p.m. Now, I know that yesterday both the Government House Leader and the Opposition House Leader had a different understanding of that, but the record seems to suggest what I've outlined.

The point of order raised by the Government House Leader related to comments made by the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake. While tabling a document, the member characterized the Minister of Environment and Parks as a Greenpeace activist. The Government House Leader rose on a point of order and clarified in his remarks that the Minister of Environment and Parks was not previously a member of Greenpeace. This clarification closes the matter in terms of the remarks made in relation to the minister. But this also – hon. member, it's important that you hear this part – provides an opportunity to remind all members of the manner in which documents should be tabled.

As I did on March 20, 2017, I will again cite Speaker Schumacher's ruling from April 11, 1995, at page 1159 of *Hansard* for that day.

The tabling should consist merely of a brief almost mechanical description of the document being tabled. Members should resist the urge to embellish, expound upon, decorate, editorialize about, emphasize, ruminate, extrapolate, [or] annotate.

Had this practice been observed while the document was being tabled yesterday, the comment leading to the purported point of order would, I believe, not have been made in the first place.

Again, I encourage all members during Tabling Returns and Reports to be brief and keep their comments limited to the document being tabled. I believe that closes the matter other than to reference again that a couple of times over the last couple of weeks we've had interactions in the House respecting personal comments about members. I want to underline the importance of staying away from that practice into the future.

Now, speaking of brevity, I think the next point of order might be related to that matter. I would recognize the Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Point of Order

Brevity

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I feel a certain need to keep my point of order brief in the spirit of brevity. I will do so to the best of my abilities. Under Standing Order 7(2) and 7(3), citing

introduction of visitors and guests, it speaks of brief introductions made of groups or individuals, et cetera. We've gotten a bit out of hand here. I would just ask the Speaker to remind individuals that introductions are not members' statements and that we should really try to limit the use of introductions and keep them as brief as possible. I would leave it at Mr. Speaker's discretion to notify members who might be particularly less brief than others.

Thank you.

3:20

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In this particular instance I agree with the hon. member and regret that what happened today during introductions took up far too much time in the House. We will endeavour in the future to co-ordinate these activities more effectively so as to proceed through introductions in a timely fashion.

The Speaker: The Opposition House Leader. To the same point?

Mr. Nixon: Yeah. Very briefly, again, I completely agree, Mr. Speaker, and I hope that you could help us do that. We will also try to help the government and other parties in this House accomplish that goal.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I appreciate the exchange and the agreement in the House. I think it's important to underline. You'll note that I mentioned brevity, but we ought to remember, all of us, that when we take that amount of time, we may be showing disrespect to other people that are waiting to be introduced and also to your fellow members, so I wanted to encourage you. I chose not to interject today out of respect for the people in the Assembly, but please, I don't want to interject on this. Try and practise that brevity principle, which I realize is a relative point.

To point of order two.

Point of Order Factual Accuracy

Mr. Fildebrandt: Well, let's see if we can continue the spirit of brevity, Mr. Speaker. Referencing Standing Order 23(h), (i), and (j), I want to refer – I don't have the benefit of the Blues at hand – to the comments from the Minister of Finance. It's not one for me to defend the previous government, but the Minister of Finance's comments, if I got them correctly, that he stated that the previous government introduced payday loan stores – I wasn't around when the Socreds came to power, but I do believe payday loan stores have been around longer than the previous ruling party or the previous Premier when he had come to power. Referring actually to a ruling you just made involving tabling of documents, you referred to the importance of making sure of, in addition to the brevity issue, the importance of factual information.

Many issues are for debate here and are matters of perspective, but some things are just very clear. The Government House Leader made the point that the hon. minister of the environment was not in fact a member of Greenpeace, and we take that at face value, but that was a matter of fact and setting the record straight. Just the other day the Government House Leader and Opposition House Leader corrected a small factual matter that I got incorrect around a paid advertisement. So I would just ask that on behalf of the Finance minister the Government House Leader would withdraw the comment or clarify that the previous government did not in fact introduce payday loan stores.

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not intimately familiar with the history of payday loans in the province of Alberta. I could take the hon. member's comments with respect to that. Just to indicate, in my view, what the Minister of Finance meant is that the previous government had failed to deal with the problems with payday loans, something I am quite familiar with being in opposition and having raised that issue in the House and others outside the House trying to get some resolution to this difficult issue that the previous government failed to deal with. I don't know if they caused it or not. I remember when some of those stores first popped up. This was well after Social Credit, hon. Opposition House Leader, but it was during the PC period when these payday loans became more prevalent. Whether or not they existed in the ancient history I have no way of knowing.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I won't try to argue too much with the hon. Government House Leader on history. He's certainly been around a little longer than I have. I do appreciate the Member for Strathmore-Brooks trying to get a straight answer from the government, which are very few and far between in this Assembly, but this is very clearly a matter of debate.

The Speaker: Hon. members, the Blues said – and I'm just reading – “that's why . . . in Alberta we've done things to make life . . . affordable like axing payday loans, that were put in place by the previous government. We brought in \$25-a-day daycare to make life more affordable, and we froze tuition fees,” et cetera. I acknowledge the Government House Leader and Opposition House Leader. I think this is a matter of opinion, and I certainly am not aware of the facts other than what members are. But, again, it seems to me that it's an illustration of blame. We all need to be responsible in here about making facts rather than just allegations.

I believe we have a third point of order from the Member for Strathmore-Brooks. No?

Ah, yes. I get confused, you know. You're always standing up.

Point of Order Allegations against a Member

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. During tablings the Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin tabled a copy of a tweet with the Minister of Environment and Parks with an individual and claimed that the minister had said that she'd only ever met with this person once and then suggested that the Minister of Environment and Parks may have misled the House. That is, as you well know and all members should know, completely unacceptable, especially on the basis of a photograph on social media of somebody that the minister clearly said she ran into. That does not constitute an additional meeting.

I think this is a ridiculous way of twisting things to make allegations against the minister, and to suggest that because she ran into somebody, posted a picture on social media, that constituted a meeting and therefore the minister was allegedly misleading the House is beyond acceptable, in my view, Mr. Speaker. The member is relatively new, but by now I think all of us should be familiar with some of the rules around suggesting that a member has misled the House, and on the basis of such sketchy evidence it's doubly bad, in my view.

The Speaker: The House leader for the opposition.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do find it a little weird that that same House leader once argued a point of order and a point of privilege in regard to a similar issue by saying that a picture on Twitter constituted a meeting, but I will not bother to go down that road.

Let me be very clear. The member said, and her exact words were: I believe that she may have misled the House. So the member did not accuse the minister of misleading the House. She was pointing out that she felt that she had some evidence that shows that the minister may have been mistaken or the facts that she presented may not have been factual.

Having said that, certainly, to use the words “misled the House” is something that we would avoid. It’s a serious accusation, certainly, within the tradition of this institution. The member is one of our newest members, so I would be happy to withdraw that comment on her behalf.

The Speaker: Thank you very much. Again, I remind about the point I made earlier: be cautious about the remarks you’re making about other members in the House. This is free speech, but it’s not unmanaged free speech.

I believe we are at the point of privilege. The Member for Calgary-Greenway.

Privilege

Obstructing a Member in Performance of Duty

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m rising on a point of privilege. On Thursday the Minister of Municipal Affairs and especially the Minister of Transportation engaged in accusing me of the worst crime an elected official can be accused of, corrupting an election. You ruled that the comments were out of order. However, the comments were never withdrawn or apologized for. So I now rise at the earliest opportunity to present my privilege complaint and take a few minutes to clear my name.

3:30

An accusation of this nature goes beyond a point of order in that it goes to the fundamental nature of democracy. Being accused of stuffing a ballot box is such an affront to democracy, such a corrupt act that it impairs my ability to conduct my business as an MLA. It’s an obstruction, and it is an interference and an intimidation of the worst form.

In *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, page 111, Speaker Fraser ruled:

The privileges of a Member are violated by any action which might impede him or her in the fulfilment of his or her duties and functions. It is obvious that the unjust damaging of a reputation could constitute such an impediment.

Mr. Speaker, because I cannot use the courts to correct the ministers, I ask that you give me a few minutes to clear my name and to get the real story into *Hansard*. I have been accused of something ridiculous, something that no one in their right mind would ever do. I was subjected to a flawed investigation, just how flawed I did not know at that time. Even the flawed investigation only found one accuser against me.

I was threatened with a massive disruption to my personal and family life and with financial harm if I pursued my rights. The ambition and purpose of my friends and supporters would have also suffered if I had pursued my rights. In my weakness I caved in and agreed to quietly sit as an independent. But by not defending myself to the fullest ability, Mr. Speaker, I left the impression that I had done something wrong, and now the Minister of Transportation, who, to be fair, knows nothing about that issue, has left a permanent

record in this Assembly that I tampered with the ballot box and corruptly interfered with democracy. It will be there in *Hansard* forever, and I must have an opportunity to correct the record.

Mr. Speaker, the accusations against me all have to do with crooked and racist nomination politics. After my Calgary-Greenway constituency was radically redrawn, I considered which other areas to run in. I was told by Alan Hallman that the leader of the UCP wanted me to stick to ethnically Indian areas in Calgary and that they would not interfere in my nomination if I did so. In truth, they interfered a lot. They accused me of stealing blank AGM board ballots and running away with them to distribute them to ineligible supporters. When she made her accusation, there were no other witnesses who confirmed it, but within a short period of time Alan Hallman appeared on the scene and convinced the party official to cancel this meeting.

The party then called a sham of an investigation, which resulted in the investigator concluding that the situation was as he said, she said affair and that they believed my accuser. The investigator did not interview several key witnesses who were in immediate proximity at the time of the allegations, including employees of the Legislative Assembly and practising lawyers. These witnesses were sitting at a balloting table mere feet away from the individual who made the allegation, but they were denied the right to testify as to what they saw. I subsequently complained to the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays about this issue, but he was not willing to risk the wrath of the party leader and speak up for me.

After the sham of an investigation I was told in no uncertain terms that my political career was done, and it was suggested to me that if I continue to fight to defend my name, the party would use massive financial resources to bankrupt me in court. This was happening at a complicated time in my personal life. If I did not resign my position in caucus, I would be kicked out. I decided to go quietly and not risk disruption to my life and that of my friends and family. In doing so, I left the impression that I had done something wrong, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of Transportation now has put the impression permanently in *Hansard* and, in doing so, obstructed and interfered with my ability to conduct my role as an MLA. Mr. Speaker, the accusations against me are part of crooked party politics inside the UCP. The grassroots UCP members have meddled with dozens of nomination races, backroom party elites interested in installing yes-men who will never object to the party . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, I want to point out that you’re raising a point of privilege against a member that said something at an earlier sitting. I think you need to focus on that matter rather than the details.

Mr. Clark: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. I think that what we are hearing from the hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway is relevant to his arguments for privilege.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I’ve consulted with the table here. At this juncture that is not a point of order but one of guidance to the Speaker to facilitate this matter. I’m sure you would agree with that.

The hon. member.

Mr. Gill: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. I will be very brief. The accusation against me is all part of crooked party politics inside the UCP. The grassroots UCP members have seen dozens of nomination races meddled with by the backroom party elite, interested in installing yes-men who will never object to the party leader and not the candidate who has the real support of Albertans. We all know that politics can be dirty, and the leaders and their

backroom operatives in the establishment parties have run the processes for their own interests. The Tory elite bosses of today are as bad as they have ever been. They are obsessed with appointing candidates based on race and sex in scores of constituencies across Alberta, and they have interfered in democracy to do so.

Only one person, who supported my opponent, accused me of this, and no one else confirmed her allegation. Independent observers in the room saw nothing, and all of this supposedly happened while I had blown out my knee and could only shuffle slowly from place to place. The investigation was a farce, and my reputation was harmed. But the truth should be in *Hansard*, and I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for letting me put it in *Hansard*. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Minister of Transportation should withdraw their remarks and apologize, like you asked them to do last Thursday. Not to apologize is to violate my privilege as a member.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you very much for the opportunity given to me.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising to address a purported matter of privilege raised by the independent Member for Calgary-Greenway. Many Speakers have ruled in the past that a point of privilege is one of the most serious matters that can be brought before the House and should only be brought in the most serious and grave of circumstances. I strongly submit that this is not a matter of privilege for three primary reasons. First, the allegation mentions the interference to a lawful investigation conducted by an officer of this Legislature, yet as far as we're aware, there is no such investigation. Secondly, the matter, I believe, is out of order in that it reflects on a decision of the Speaker that has been made and therefore ought to be considered closed. Finally, it alleges that the accusation of corrupting an election took place. No such allegation was made by myself or the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs. I'll try and deal with each of these three principles in turn.

First, the member's letter alleges that the minister should be guilty of contempt for interfering into a lawful investigation conducted by an officer of this Legislature. Mr. Speaker, we do not know what lawful investigation the member is referring to, nor do I know in what way it was interfered with. Had the House ordered an investigation into a matter, then perhaps the minister could be found in contempt for interference, but as far as we are aware, no such investigation has been ordered, and therefore no such investigation can have been interfered with.

Secondly, as I mentioned, the member ought to know that he should not be reflecting on decisions made by the chair, as outlined in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, edited by Bosc and Gagnon. At pages 620 and 621 it says:

Reflections must not be cast in debate on the conduct of the Speaker or other Presiding Officers. It is unacceptable to question the integrity and impartiality of a Presiding Officer and, if such comments are made, the Speaker may interrupt the Member and request that the remarks be withdrawn or immediately give the floor to another Member. Only by means of a substantive motion, for which 48 hours' written notice has been given, may the actions of the Chair be challenged, criticized and debated. Reflections on the character or actions of the Speaker or other Presiding Officers have been ruled to be breaches of privilege.

As the member has noted, the minister made a comment, the member raised a point of order, and the Speaker ruled that it was indeed a valid point of order. I can only presume that that concluded the matter.

3:40

Indeed, page 625 of the same book continues:

Should the Speaker find the utterances of a particular Member offensive or disorderly, that Member will be requested to rise in his or her place and withdraw the unparliamentary word or phrase unequivocally. The Member's apology is accepted in good faith and the matter is then considered closed. However, if the Member refuses to obey the directive of the Speaker to retract his or her words, the Chair may refuse to recognize the Member until the words have been withdrawn.

It is argued in the member's letter from this morning that the comments were never withdrawn or apologized for. Mr. Speaker, anyone who watches this place knows that not all points of order, even if found to be valid, result in the corrective action outlined above being taken. Now, the member might have had more of a case had the Speaker ordered the member to apologize and had the member refused, but that was not the case. Had it been the case, it would presumably have been dealt with immediately, not a number of days later.

Third, Mr. Speaker, the member claims that a serious allegation has occurred, the allegation of corrupting an election. No such allegation has been made. As I outlined when speaking to this matter last Thursday, I was of the view that the matter constituted a legitimate matter of debate given that reference was made to allegations that are now on the public record and have been documented in news reports. In your wisdom you ruled that there was a point of order, and rightly so. We will not revisit the argument other than to reiterate that only information on the public record was referenced by the minister and myself.

In conclusion, I'd also like to point out that in addition to not meeting the threshold for being a *prima facie* case of privilege, I don't believe that this motion is in order in the first place, Mr. Speaker. Standing Order 15(2) states that notice of at least two hours must be provided to any person whose conduct is called into question. My office did not receive notice until approximately 12:30 this afternoon. Further, the matter was not raised at the earliest opportunity. As noted in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, page 142:

A complaint on a matter of privilege must satisfy two conditions before it can be accorded precedence over the Orders of the Day.

First, the Speaker must be convinced that a *prima facie* case of breach of privilege has been made and, second, the matter must be raised at the earliest opportunity.

Now, Mr. Speaker, members know that the alleged breach took place on Thursday of last week, five full days ago. The member could perhaps have raised the matter at that time or yesterday instead of waiting until today. Apparently, what the member has done is to raise a point of order successfully and then attempted to deal with the same matter again several days later as a point of privilege. I would leave it to you as to whether or not that is the intention of the rules of this place.

Lastly, I should note that the specific allegation raised in the letter from the member states that the minister should be found in contempt of Standing Order 23(h), (i), and (j), Mr. Speaker. These particular standing orders, of course, relate to points of order, specifically to when members ought to be called to order. I believe that this point further reinforces my view that the matter in question was a point of order and not a matter of privilege as indeed those very same standing orders were cited by the member in arguing the point last week.

To conclude, Mr. Speaker, as I said at the outset, Speakers have consistently stated that a point of privilege is one of the most serious matters that can be brought before the House and ought to be done so only in the most serious of cases and with well-founded

arguments and evidence to support them. I would submit that this fails dismally with respect to that test, and therefore I'd argue that there is no point of privilege.

The Speaker: The Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I won't belabour the point by resubmitting to you the same reference points that the Government House Leader has. I'd just, rather, reinforce a couple of quick points and then turn this over to you. The first is that I believe this is a matter that you already ruled on in this Chamber. It was a point of order. I really am indifferent to the content that went back and forth between the government and the independent member of the Chamber. But you did make a ruling. This seems to me like a backdoor attempt to revisit something that you've already made a decision on. That concerns me. I do think that that alone makes it out of order.

Second, I do not believe that we received notice in time either, which also would make it out of order.

I have another point that I'd like to make. It seemed to me that the hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway was referring to some sort of investigation by an independent officer of this Chamber. I'm not aware of any such investigation, and I certainly have not heard anybody speak about an investigation of that kind. I would also reinforce that the United Conservative Party and the members that I represent as their House leader in this Chamber have not referred to any such investigation in this Chamber. I do not know what bearing any investigation, whether it be a party or an independent officer, would have on this place because I don't believe it's part of our proceedings.

Lastly, the member makes some references to a situation that happened from a political or party side. I won't go through that here because I actually suspect that it has no relevance in this Chamber, but if at any time, Mr. Speaker, you need that information to help you with this point of privilege, I would be quite happy to provide that to you.

With that said, I do not believe that this is a point of privilege, and I would hope that you could rule it out of order. I await your opinion.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to add to this debate. Both the Government House Leader and Opposition House Leader have stated that they did not receive notice in time. The standing orders require that two hours' notice be given. I think that all members can reference the document placed on their desks, stamped that it was received by your office at 11:22 a.m., which, if I'm correct, is more than two hours before the beginning of question period and the daily Routine. Now, how quickly that got from your office to other offices is a matter for the courier, but I think that according to the document on all of our desks, unless the photocopy misleads us, this states that it was received at 22 after 11 today in your office.

Now, in reference to this, this is not dealing with necessarily the same matter as your point of order ruled last Thursday, Mr. Speaker. This is referring to the breach of privilege in that the Member for Calgary-Greenway successfully made the case that there was a point of order. In the standing orders in section 23, dealing with calling a member to order, if you'll just allow me to jump to 23, you ruled that there was a point of order under section 23.

23 A Member will be called to order by the Speaker if, in the Speaker's opinion . . .

In this case it was found under sections (i) and (j).

- (i) imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member.
- (j) uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder.

You ruled that there was, in fact, a point of order there.

The next section following immediately after, section 24, states:

Naming a Member

24(1) If a Member, on being called to order for an offence . . .

I do believe that Mr. Speaker did find there was offence, and he should therefore be called to order.

. . . persists in the offence or refuses to follow the Speaker's directions in the matter, the Speaker shall name the Member to the Assembly.

Section 2 prescribes escalating consequences to defying you, and your wrath from there, Mr. Speaker.

Now, I don't have the benefit of *Hansard* in front of me, but I do believe that you requested that the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs do apologize. I could be corrected if I'm wrong about that. I'm unsure if you requested that the Government House Leader apologize, but if I am correct, you did ask the Minister of Municipal Affairs to apologize, to which there was no apology, which would constitute under section 24(1):

If a Member, on being called to order for an offence, persists in the offence or refuses to follow the Speaker's directions in the matter, the Speaker shall name the Member to the Assembly.

In that case, it has not happened.

In reference to comments from the hon. Government House Leader, I would refer members and you, Mr. Speaker, to section 484(3) of *Beauchesne's*.

3:50

I will cite the very same section, actually, that the hon. Government House Leader has been citing.

In the House of Commons a Member will not be permitted by the Speaker to indulge in any reflections on the House itself as a political institution; or to impute to any Member or Members unworthy motives for their actions in a particular case.

Now, in this case, I believe the Government House Leader has been imputing that there are motives for the Member for Calgary-Greenway in trying to reraise an issue, so I do believe there would be an issue there, but that's not my point, Mr. Speaker.

I will skip ahead to: "[no member shall] question the acknowledged and undoubted powers of the House in a matter of privilege." It is, I think, very obvious that if this was a matter of privilege, the House would have the power to deal with it. The hon. Government House Leader has called into "question the acknowledged and undoubted powers of the House in a matter of privilege."

Mr. Speaker, it is your decision to decide if this is a matter of privilege or if this is a continued matter of a point of order. But I think it is very clear from your ruling on Thursday that there was a point of order and that the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs was called to order, asked to apologize, and in the event that he did not do so, that section 24(1) – I won't say requires – generally behooves you to require that the member abide by your rulings.

The Speaker: The House leader of the Alberta Party, you had at one point wanted to say something?

Mr. Clark: No. I certainly appreciate the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, but no. I think that both in the interest of time and I think that the landscape has been covered here. I will say that I think the Member for Calgary-Greenway does make a compelling point, and I'm pleased that he at least had the opportunity to put out his side, his version of events, which has been bandied about a lot in public and

in private. I think those were very serious allegations coming from the other side. I'm pleased that he had the opportunity to do so. Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, just to repeat what several of the members have said, a point of privilege is probably the most fundamental principle that exists in this institution. There have been several over the last three to four years. In accordance with that principle I will take your views into consideration today and reflect upon the point raised, and I would hope to come back to the House and report at a future date.

I believe, hon. members, that now leads us to Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders

Third Reading

Bill 28

Family Statutes Amendment Act, 2018

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Good afternoon. It's an honour to rise today and move third reading of Bill 28, the Family Statutes Amendment Act, 2018.

I want to thank my colleagues from around this room for acknowledging their commitment to this bill. The proposed legislation will modernize family law in our province and better support families and ensure that they are treated fairly. Conflict is hard for partners, and it's damaging for children. This legislation will allow couples to resolve their disputes more quickly. Passing the Family Statutes Amendment Act means that the justice system will work more fairly and efficiently for today's families when they need it.

Our legislation would provide clear rules about property division for unmarried partners. Generally the new rules would presume that property acquired during a relationship would be divided equally; they would also allow people who want to make different arrangements to make their own agreements. The proposed amendments would promote unmarried couples settling out of court, saving money and stress on these individuals and on their children.

Madam Speaker, I suppose it is somewhat of a lawyer thing to be excited about the orderly and sane and rational resolution of disputes, but I must say that I'm very excited to move this bill forward. I think it will help a number of Albertans to have clear rules to allow them to resolve their debates more quickly and, at the end of the day, to not get into legal battles that will ultimately be very trying for them and very trying for their families.

Madam Speaker, another thing in this bill that I think is a very exciting story has to do with amendments that would make it clear in legislation that applications for child support can be made for adult children with disabilities or illnesses regardless of their parents' marital status.

Madam Speaker, when I think of this bill, I will always think of Emily and Christina, who are still waiting in the gallery to see this bill pass. Previously, Madam Speaker, a parent of some of our most vulnerable adult children with disabilities, like Emily, could not seek child support under the Family Law Act. When we introduced this bill, Christina told us: it's so important because my daughter is nonverbal, so for her to be able to change legislation is remarkable, and not many people get to do that. This amendment will make our laws more fair. Thank you to Emily for bringing to light this

important issue and to you and your mom for helping us to change a law that will benefit Alberta families for generations.

Madam Speaker, in closing, I will just note that this is truly an amazing story of how someone can, despite all odds against them, make a difference in the lives of those around them. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Madam Speaker. This is a pretty emotional moment for us here in the Assembly, and we don't often get the opportunity to do something quite like this and to have Emily here to witness it, and Christina and Ron. So I just wanted to say thank you to the minister.

I won't go into all of the details, but this has really been a remarkable journey for Christina and Emily and Ron. You know, what is quite amazing is when the government takes up a cause that is an important one but doesn't require the courts to force the government to do something. It realized as this was making its way through the legal process that there was something fundamentally wrong with the way the legislation was set up such that someone like Christina needed to spend a tremendous amount of her own money, put a lot of herself out there to fight against the monolith of government.

To the government's credit, instead of fighting back and digging in their heels and waiting for the courts to force them to do something, they recognized that there was a fundamental injustice here and took up the cause. I want to thank the minister for her work on that and all the people behind the scenes, who we don't get to see and who don't get a lot of credit in public for this. I want you to know through the Assembly that I know that a lot of work happened behind the scenes and that there are a lot of people who deserve credit but none more so than Emily and Christina and Ron as well for their incredible bravery to get to this point. You've made a huge difference in the lives of many, many people.

Again, thank you to the hon. minister and to all members for supporting this very, very, very important bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

4:00

Mr. Sucha: Yeah. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'll be very brief on the subject here as well. As many members in the House have alluded to, any breakdown in a relationship is never a pleasant experience, but it does happen from time to time. There are many reasons around it, but the one thing that I really appreciate, the focus that was on this, was really this thing that centred around the care and compassion around the children and making sure that we protect those who need to be taken care of within our society.

You know, one thing I'll touch on as a personal note. As I alluded to, just like many members in this House I've also been through a separation myself, and I remember saying to a member: "Well, maybe I should have been common law. Maybe I shouldn't have gotten married." And someone said to me: "Well, no. You should have gotten married because in Alberta it is a disaster to try to get separated if you're common law and you own property and you have kids." Now that has changed, and I feel blessed that no one has to worry about that moving forward.

To be honest, I'm very fortunate. When you go through a separation, you're very lucky to have the law, and it's very cut and dried and black and white when you go through this process. If you have someone who's a caring parent or people who are very respectful, just as I'm very fortunate to have someone who is a very good mother to my three kids, once you know what the law is, you can move through the process as amicably as possible because we

all know how the courts are going to rule. We all know how the process is going to move forward, and at the end of the day it's a lot more affordable to those who are going through a very stressful situation.

I want to thank the legal community, who has come forward and been very vocal on this. I want to thank the minister for ensuring that she listened to many of the stakeholders moving forward. Realistically, even though lawyers were the ones who under this circumstance were likely going to make the most money from it, the legal team, the family law teams, were some of the most vocal advocates around this, about improving it, because they do care about the compassion of their clients.

With that being said, I want to thank the House for moving this forward and for its co-operation, and I look forward to seeing this pass. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

Ms Luff: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Again, I'll be brief as well. I just wanted to get up and express my support for this bill. I think it's a good bill. You know, as time goes on, increased numbers of people are living in common-law relationships. Fewer people are getting married, so from time to time modernizations and changes to laws are necessary, and I appreciate that the government took this into account and looked at this and listened to lawyers who were saying that this kind of law was necessary and decided to make this change. I myself lived, I suppose, in a common-law relationship for 12, 13 years before my husband and I decided to get married, much to the consternation of my grandmother.

Dr. Starke: Was it the getting married part?

Ms Luff: The getting married part, yeah. She wanted it to happen before she died. I think that was the concern that she had. She liked my husband very much.

You know, we bought a house before we got married. The folks who live across the street from me, I believe, are in a similar situation. As more young people make different choices and don't adhere to traditional sort of mores of how we are supposed to go about things in life, this kind of change to law becomes increasingly necessary. I like that it has flexibility. I like that it provides the safeguards there for people who need them when they need them. If your relationship should break down and you manage to part amicably, then that is something that it allows for as well.

I think, you know, they listened to the experts. They listened to the people who were affected. It's something that is increasingly affecting more and more people in our society. I do of course particularly appreciate the changes to child support for adult children with disabilities. I think that's huge. It's very important. I can think of several of my constituents who've come and talked to me about things like this, and it will make a big difference. I just wanted to be on the record as being supportive of this bill, thanking the government for bringing it forward, and I assume that everyone will be supporting it.

Thanks very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Any other members wishing to speak? Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I do not rise to speak. I rise to move the following motion, that we move to one-minute bells for the duration of the night both inside and outside of committee.

The Deputy Speaker: Just to clarify, no ruling has yet been made on a night sitting, so you can make it for . . .

Mr. Nixon: Madam Speaker, I don't know what the procedure is, but I would be happy if that motion continued even into a night sitting. I don't know if that's legitimate, but what I am trying to do is at least make sure that between now and supper we are on one-minute bells.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much. I don't even know if I can do this. I would like to move to amend the motion to indicate that the first set of bells would be five minutes, just to allow members who may be outside the Chamber and unaware of this conversation to return.

The Deputy Speaker: You accept that as a friendly amendment? As I understand the motion, the very first division will be for five minutes, and then any subsequent division bells will be for one minute for the duration of the afternoon.

Mr. Nixon: Yes.

The Deputy Speaker: That's correct. All right.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

Hearing none, the hon. minister to close debate.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I think that for the most part everything that needs to be said has been said on this bill. I'll just take one final opportunity to thank Emily for her contribution to all Albertans.

Thank you very much.

[Motion carried; Bill 28 read a third time]

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

The Chair: Hon. members, I'll call the Committee of the Whole to order.

Bill 22 An Act for Strong Families Building Stronger Communities

The Chair: Questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to speak today on Bill 22. As I have pointed out throughout the debate on this legislation, we've talked a lot about the fact that the child intervention panel, primarily through efforts by the NDP members on it, blocked the panel from being able to talk about Serenity during those panel meetings. But I do think there's another issue that panel members were forbidden from being able to speak about that is very relevant to this piece of legislation, and it is not directly

associated with the Serenity end of it, though. That, certainly, I would say, is the most important thing that was blocked.

As you know, Madam Chair, we were forbidden from discussing the publication ban during the panel. Panel members made it clear that we wanted to discuss the publication ban and how to properly balance transparency with privacy. It was an extremely complicated issue – I will grant that to the minister and to the government members on the panel – but it was fairly clear during the sessions the panel had that this was one of the most important issues that people wanted to see addressed. The suggestion from the NDP members and the minister was to leave that with the department. It was certainly the perspective of many people on the panel that that was a mistake and that we should have completed our mandate in regard to that.

Now, let me read the formal wording of a motion that achieved consensus, actually, on April 19, 2017, in the panel meeting. For some members that may be confused on how that achieved consensus, one of the things that was interesting about the ministerial panel is that it was not a standing committee, as you know, Madam Chair, but it also included outside experts. So while the government members who were on the panel did outvote the opposition members who were on there, there were certain circumstances where the experts managed to side, quite frankly, with the opposition members. This was one of them, and this is one of the reasons why it passed.

4:10

The motion said that the minister will bring a consultation plan to the panel within two weeks; that the minister will pull information related to the subject from the 2014 review, including details noted as available and information from other provinces regarding a publication ban; that the minister will also provide advice as part of the plan as to how this consultation can be incorporated into phase 2 of the work.

What that did, in addition to asking for that information, was that that then made a decision to take the publication ban issue and put it into the second phase of the ministerial panel. It allowed the panel to build a report on the first phase so that we can get some legislation to this Assembly on the first phase. If you recall, Madam Chair, the panel was broken into two phases. It was responsible to report to the minister twice.

Now, interestingly enough, Madam Chair, the information never came even though the panel went overtime and met for a year. It met longer than originally scheduled. There seems to be no circumstance where the minister can justify the fact that her panel asked for that information within two weeks. The panel certainly went well beyond that two-week period. It was clearly the will of the panel to discuss this issue in phase 2, but it kept being blocked by the NDP panel members, who, I can only assume, were taking orders from somewhere else, particularly because during the publication ban discussion most of the NDP members on the panel indicated they wanted to speak about it. Something changed.

The panel members were told that it was a complicated issue. I can assure you, Madam Chair, almost every issue that was addressed during that panel was a complicated issue. I think that you would concur with me on that. It's one of the most complicated subjects that had to be dealt with. Now, I would also say, though, that that is a fairly patronizing comment. Everything about the child intervention panel, of course, is complicated. As I said, the panel's mandate was incredibly broad, also one of the concerns that came out of the panel. But that panel consisted of several members of the Legislature and many experts that understood the issue significantly well and certainly should have been allowed to complete their mandate.

Now, UCP panel members were baffled as to why government members of the panel were being ordered to block discussions of the publication ban. That still has not been explained despite lots of debate during the process and questions from the media. At this point it was not about taking a position on what the publication ban regulations should look like. It was about discussing it, period – discussing it, period – which is all the panel wanted to do, make sure they could complete the mandate that they were sent there to do. We know for sure – I mean, the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays will verify this – that this came up several times from people who presented to the panel.

Again, a very complicated issue, balancing the privacy of children and their families during some very horrific circumstances but also balancing that with the need for transparency both within the media and the department to make sure that those horrific circumstances do not take place again. I would say that some of the witness presentations to the panel on that were some of the hardest to watch. I do not deny that it was a tough issue, but I do take offence that we weren't allowed to tackle that tough issue. At this point I still haven't heard anything from the minister or the ministry on how they've attempted to deal with it on their own.

Then we discover that back in 2014, when the current Premier was in opposition, the leader of the third party, I believe, she had an amendment to the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act pass in this House, in this very Chamber, saying that changes could not be made to the publication ban regulations without them first being considered by an all-party committee of the Legislative Assembly. Now, to be clear, the panel was not that. The panel was not an all-party committee. As you know, the government fought to make it a ministerial panel and not have it as an all-party committee.

The NDP refused to let that actual committee of the Legislature look into the Serenity case, which is now history, obviously, instead setting up a consensus-based panel, which I have articulated to many members during my time in this Chamber on this issue was only a consensus-based panel when the opposition agreed with the government, but if there was any argument from the opposition side, then all of a sudden it was a voting panel. Basically, they wanted to have more control. That is the only reason why the minister would want a ministerial panel, to have more control. They didn't want to have it in a standing committee or someplace like that, where the control would have been a little bit more limited from the minister's office.

Now, a legislative committee would have met on *Hansard*, creating transcripts of the meetings, and adhered to *Robert's Rules of Order*, something that certainly did not happen during the process that we undertook. The opposition had to fight hard, as I've talked about before, just to have basic meeting summaries, just to even get that created for the panel meetings, let alone a proper record of the proceedings.

It really seemed to me, Madam Chair, that the NDP refused to let the panel talk about the publication ban because they did not want to bring attention to the fact that because they refused to make it a legislative committee to begin with, the panel's recommendations on the publication ban would then have needed to receive a seal of approval from the legislative committee because of the Premier's motion in this Assembly when she was the leader of the third party, something I would have voted for if I was in the Legislature. I think she is right, that that should have been dealt with in a panel. It could have been slightly embarrassing for the government perhaps – maybe that's why they chose not to do it – and this is honestly the only reason I can think of. There is no other reason why that issue should not have taken place.

Now, the opposition members participated in this process in good faith, and instead of being transparent, the NDP put politics and

self-interest ahead of good policy and honouring the wishes of the panel.

Madam Chair, the Premier is on record as saying, “The regulations as passed are deficient and do a disservice to the children in government care and to the public interest in improving conditions for them.” That was in 2014. The Premier also noted while in opposition that a number of different concerns had been expressed about the publication ban regulations in their current form. The now Premier’s concern, as I understand it, was that the statutory director, the government, can apply for a publication ban, so the director might apply in order to hide wrongdoing rather than to protect the privacy or the best interests of a child. So it is really too bad that the panel wasn’t allowed to talk about those concerns that their current leader brought up in this very building.

Moreover, because the bill before us today does not open section 131.1, where the Premier’s restrictions are listed in the legislation, I can’t even move an amendment today to repeal this section so that we do not end up in the same situation again. I cannot endorse this government’s deliberate oversight on the publication ban. While there are still some good measures in this bill that I am pleased to see, for this reason and for others, though, I cannot support this legislation, and I would suggest to my colleagues that we cannot support this legislation.

In addition to the publication ban, we have seen in this Chamber over the last few weeks this government repeatedly vote on this bill to block amendments to bring transparency to this process. The number one issue that the panel determined, without a doubt, was that transparency was the biggest problem that was happening within the system, the fact that things continue to be hidden from the public eye and that reporters had to break stories about murdered children in our care that nobody knew about, that sometimes, in some cases, like the case of Serenity, the police did not even have files for.

That was the number one issue, and in this Chamber over the last few days, underneath, I would assume, the minister’s instructions, they have voted to block the Child and Youth Advocate from having more transparency in the process, making sure the public could see what was going on, and have continued to leave the solution, ultimately, to this great problem to the very people that already failed on this issue once in regard to Serenity and others.

So while I do applaud some of the issues within this legislation, it falls well short. It is troubling to see the government continue this practice, that they have done on this issue for several years, of avoiding transparency and of avoiding actually getting to work on this very issue. If we are fortunate enough and given the privilege by Albertans in a few months to form the government, we will get to work on this issue. We will stop sweeping it underneath the rug, which this government seems bound and determined to do.

As such, I cannot support their legislation.

The Chair: Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, I was part of the Ministerial Panel on Child Intervention. I sat with that hon. member and with the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays and later the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View, and I’m struck by the difference in tone by different members of that caucus when participating in the committee process.

You know, I’ve held my tongue as best I can when listening to the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre talking about this process. What this brings me back to is what we on the opposition side expect from government. We say things all the time like: “If only you’d listen to the opposition. If only you’d incorporate our feedback into government process. If only you’d

hold all-party committee meetings. If only you’d talk to stakeholders. If only we’d travel the province. If only you’d tackle the root cause issues that have caused challenges in the government.” All of those are things that happened as part of this process, so while this is not a perfect process, it is not a perfect bill, it is a world better than what it could have been. Frankly, I wonder sometimes what exactly the UCP expects from government.

4:20

Now, I’m not going to be a permanent apologist for everything this government has done. There are plenty of things I disagree with this government on philosophically: job creation, on the way they’ve handled the carbon tax, on the electoral reform process. There are a lot of shortcomings in this government. But, Madam Chair, this bill and this process are not one of those shortcomings, and I find it frankly disingenuous for the UCP to continue to raise this bill and the issues surrounding this bill as some negative.

Frankly, let’s just talk through some of the history of how it is we got to this point here on December 4, 2018. Almost exactly two years ago the government created an all-party panel, ostensibly, but the terms of reference were incredibly narrow, so myself, the leader at the time of the Wildrose Party, the then interim leader of the PC Party, and the leader of the Liberal Party at the time held a news conference in the basement of this building, and we said: we will not participate in this panel unless the government changes the terms of reference. So the government changed the terms of reference, and we participated in the panel. That’s a good thing. That’s a government being responsive to what the opposition says. That’s what we should want.

Then as we went through the process, we found: “You know what? With the timeline that has been created for this bill under the leadership then of a new minister, the current minister, we just simply haven’t got enough time to dig into this thing. It’s a big, big, big challenge.” So in response to the request from the committee the minister said: okay; we’ll extend the timeline.

Then we found that, you know, it doesn’t make any sense for us, as we dig deeper into this issue of indigenous kids in care – well, here we are sitting in almost literally an ivory tower in Edmonton, the representation of a lot of very tragic and shameful history in this province, and expecting indigenous people to travel here and tell us their stories and then wondering: why is it that we’re not getting a representative sample of what actually happened? Well, that’s because we needed to go visit and travel to where people live, so to the minister’s credit she said: okay; let’s find a way to do that. So we travelled on-reserve in treaty areas 6, 7, and 8. We engaged with Métis people as a direct result and as a response to what the opposition and the public and stakeholders had asked for.

As part of that process we discovered: you know, we really probably need more indigenous representation on this child intervention panel. What government, even this government, so often, far too often does is to say: “No, no. This is the way it’s going to be. The answer we get depends on the question we ask, so we’re going to form it in a way that gives us an answer that we want.” Instead, the government asked an open-ended question and said: how are we going to fix what has been broken for so very long, what has been the subject of so many panels and so many reports, all of them thoughtful, all of them well intended?

All of those reports, in varying degrees, have ended up as a report on a shelf, no meaningful action, and nothing significant has changed over time. One of the big pieces of feedback we received through the process is that we needed more indigenous representation. So what did the minister do? She added Tyler White to the panel, added more expert representation.

The opposition likes to raise the Serenity case as a failing of this process. Well, there are some very legitimate reasons why that case could not be fully explored by the committee, primarily because it was before the courts and remains so. The government is legally prevented from raising that issue in any sort of fulsome way, but they still did offer an in camera review to Members of the Legislative Assembly who were part of that panel to provide whatever information they were legally able to provide as an update of the Serenity case itself.

The Serenity case is incredibly tragic – deeply, deeply tragic – and my heart breaks every time I think about that little girl, every time I think about her family, her mother, and I know that the minister feels the same way. It is not acceptable that that happened. We can never know if this bill that we’re debating here means that that can never happen again. We can’t know that. But I think that what I can say with some certainty is that this bill moves us closer to a place where the terrible situation that Serenity found herself in is less likely to happen.

When dealing with child intervention and the results of decades, more than a century of colonialism, dealing with poverty, with addiction, with the many, many, many complex issues that we’re dealing with as it relates, in particular, to indigenous children but not just indigenous kids, we can never have a hundred per cent certainty. For those of us in opposition to somehow expect the government to be perfect on this file is not realistic.

At the same time we should never let up in holding the government accountable. I feel that through this panel process, through the Legislative Assembly we have done that. Frankly, I would like to see far more from this government that looks like the child intervention panel, far more legislation that is the result of a long and thoughtful process, far more times when the government actually accepts amendments from the opposition that seek to replicate that consultation process, just exactly like the government has done in this case.

I am not a New Democrat; I never will be. I don’t agree with this government on a lot of things. But on this thing, on this particular bill, it is a vast improvement and a step on the road – it is not an end in itself but is a step on the road – to making things better for kids in care, to preventing children from coming into care in the first place, and for those kids who are already in care, to re-establishing family connection and becoming more connected with their culture, to genuine healing.

It’s not perfect. It never will be perfect, Madam Chair. But this bill makes things much better for kids today. It will make things better for kids in the future, and I think it’s important that this House recognizes that and recognizes the government for the work they did to get us here.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak?

Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I listened to that little bit with great interest. It’s interesting to hear a member stand up and say, “I won’t be an apologist for the government,” and then immediately become an apologist for the government, which is what he did. Then he said, “We’ll never let up on holding the government to account,” after which point he immediately stopped holding the government to account. It was actually kind of sad for me to watch. We should all have been sad to watch and hear the performance that just went on here.

You know what? We’ve tried on this side to be fair, but the hon. member has an interesting recollection of some of the events. I’ve said, Madam Chair, that I believe that the government members and

all members, including the one that just spoke, tried during the panel to be nonpartisan when we went through this thing, and I stand by that because I really think that was the way it was. But what the member failed to say is that the terms of reference that we were stuck with – and he’s right; we had a media conference. We went and talked to the world and said that we weren’t happy with the government’s terms of reference, and we changed them.

But the hon. member forgot to mention just now that we still weren’t happy with them, and we actually had to make a decision: do we actually not be involved in an imperfect process, or do we stick with an imperfect process because it’s a little bit better? We decided, for the sake of children in Alberta and the memory of Serenity and other kids, that we would do that. He makes it sound like the terms of reference were made perfect by the government. They weren’t. They were barely workable, but we worked with them anyways because the issue was important enough.

He also forgot to mention some of the other shortfalls. We tried to talk to staff, and I believe they were either afraid to talk or told not to talk. I can never know that for sure. But it was pretty obvious to us that some of the staff could have actually shed light on a lot more of what goes on within the system. I had the feeling that they wanted to talk, but they weren’t able to.

To make this sound like the member just did now, like everything is perfect – it isn’t. The government didn’t even say that it’s perfect. They said that it’s report 1 of 3. Good for them for saying that out loud. I commend them for that. But for the member that just stood up to try to paint this as some perfect process when we didn’t get to talk about Serenity, when we didn’t get to deal with the privacy issues is pretty disingenuous. He really is acting as an apologist for the government and has stopped holding the government to account.

The Chair: Any further questions, comments, or amendments? The hon. Minister of Children’s Services.

Larivee: Thank you, Madam Chair. I do just want to take a moment to reiterate what is in this bill as opposed to a lot of conversation about the process of the panel.

Madam Chair, thank you for your role in it as well, and thank you very much to the Member for Calgary-Elbow for participating in that process in the way that it was intended and really contributing throughout.

4:30

You know, Madam Chair, this bill is giving First Nations standing in court in terms of their kids, something that they have been crying for.

It also deals with the fact that at this time, children who are in care – when a person is applying for private guardianship, there are two separate and possible, concurrent and conflicting processes that can happen. One of them, at this point, does not include a mandatory home study or a mandatory cultural plan, something that again our indigenous friends have cried long and hard for change on.

It’s putting important and essential guiding principles in place that will ensure that all caseworkers and the courts, whenever they’re making important decisions about children who are in care, are making them based on what is most important, and that is safety, embedding safety throughout the act as well as ensuring that they have that connection to family and community, that we have the voice of the child reflected in those decisions. As well, it also includes a number of matters to be considered, you know, that will ensure again that it’s not just cherry-picking a few items to make

some decisions but looking at a comprehensive understanding as we make any decision about children who are in care.

Madam Chair, this is important work. This is important work that's based on the action plan. Cindy Blackstock, one of my own personal heroes – and it was my privilege to work with her through the ministerial panel – said that, you know, if we actually put it into action, it's going to be life changing. This is putting it into action. The Child and Youth Advocate for the province said virtually the same thing as Cindy Blackstock and, again, looking at the bill, couldn't believe that we were actually taking the kind of aggressive progressive action to make the real change that needs to happen with the child intervention system.

You know, Madam Chair, I have to say that I am disappointed with the Official Opposition's choice on that. This is not about the panel and whether they were happy with the panel process or not. This is about the fact that we are making real change on behalf of the child intervention system, taking the steps forward that should have been taken 40 years ago. I for one am incredibly proud of this bill and cannot wait to be able to vote on it.

With that, I will now be quiet, but thank you for allowing me to make those remarks.

The Chair: Any other questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

[The remaining clauses of Bill 22 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

Bill 23

An Act to Renew Local Democracy in Alberta

The Chair: Any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you. It's a pleasure to rise today and speak to the bill, Bill 23, An Act to Renew Local Democracy in Alberta. As you know, Madam Chair, I find some irony in the name, particularly given that it implies that local democracy is in some sort of massive need of a saviour in the form of the minister riding in on his white horse to save local democracy and to renew it.

Mr. Nixon: With his reindeer and his beard.

Mr. Cooper: Yes. In a very Santa Claus kind of way.

Yet at the same time it does the exact – maybe not the exact opposite. It has many consequences that don't in fact renew local democracy in Alberta and does a number of things that will actually create challenges to local democracy being renewed. So I'd like to propose a number of amendments this evening. I know that my colleague the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs, who is a thoughtful, well-rounded individual, will consider these amendments in the fullness of their completeness and support many of them.

In the name of time I will move the amendment, and then I will continue at your command.

The Chair: This will be amendment A4.

Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you. Madam Chair, the purpose of A4 is to create some similarities in the rules between making political contributions municipally that you can provincially. What the minister has done in this particular piece of legislation is that he's defined the campaign period as January 1 to December 31 of an election year. Donors are allowed to donate up to a maximum of \$4,000 in aggregate for a campaign period. What that does is that it limits an individual's ability to donate to a municipal candidate at any other time than in the year of an election.

Let me be very clear that we on this side of the House have supported donation limits at some length. You know, Madam Chair, that this government has introduced now seven pieces of electoral reform legislation, and on many occasions the Official Opposition has supported those.

Now I'm going to recommend to my colleagues that they join me in voting against this piece of legislation because I believe the unintended consequences of the legislation are actually greater than the good that it's going to include.

One of those things that I'm certain that we're going to hear from the minister in his response: doing this, allowing candidates to only receive donations inside an election year, actually is going to benefit new people to the table, and it will harm incumbents. But those that I have spoken to that are nonincumbents – and I know the minister has done, you know, every single piece of consultation that one could ever imagine, although he did have to amend his own piece of legislation because he didn't consult on that one little piece or whatever the case was. The folks who are the nonincumbents that I have spoken to actually firmly believe that this is going to create a greater incumbent advantage: to limit their ability to spend any money outside of a campaign period – correction: \$2,000, which is virtually nothing – and to not raise money outside of a campaign period.

This amendment: what it does is that it actually extends the campaign period so that individuals could donate to those campaigns on a year-over-year basis. As you know, Madam Chair, an Albertan can donate \$4,000 to your campaign in the north, or they can donate \$4,000 to any political party of their choosing, or they can break that up, or they can also donate \$4,000 in the municipal field of politics. They can do that year over year over year over year provincially, but municipally they can only do it one time in the year of the election.

4:40

That doesn't make such an impact in communities like Carstairs or Olds or Didsbury or Carbon or Acme or Linden, all of the small communities across our province, but in areas like Red Deer, Lethbridge, Grande Prairie, particularly those areas where candidates don't represent a ward system but they run in the city and the top six across the line are elected, you know, a simple mail-out to the whole city can cost a significant amount of money.

The other challenge in some of the large municipalities: for example, if you were looking to take on the incumbent mayor of Edmonton in the form of Mr. Iveson and you wanted to start doing some market research, some polling, some focus grouping, these sorts of things, the way that this legislation will likely be passed would prevent a nonincumbent from doing that. I firmly believe that we're going to see PACs or political parties engaging at the municipal level as an end around to this particular problem that the government is now creating, that is limiting people's ability to donate to a municipal politician in the previous years leading up to an election and only allowing them to do it in the year of the election.

I also question the constitutionality of such a piece of legislation, that essentially limits an individual's ability to engage in the

political process at the municipal level outside of the year of an election, which is exactly what the minister has done.

I think that this particular amendment allows transparency. It allows openness. It also creates similarity in the rules between the municipal government and provincial government. I think that it's common sense.

I would never speak on behalf of the minister, but I can assure you that I am most likely to be disappointed by him in the fact that, you know, I can only imagine that he's going to say, "No, no; the member from the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills couldn't be more wrong" and that he's actually going to help nonincumbents and that he's going to help get big money out of politics and all of these talking points that they like to deliver. But just like so many other pieces of legislation that this government has passed, they've either had to come back and fix it, or they've created all sorts of problems inside the process.

So I strongly encourage all members of the Assembly. If you believe that municipal politicians are equally as honest and should be treated as equals to provincial politicians, then they should have similar or the same donation rules and donation limits. We should support this amendment, which does just that.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the member for his amendment and for his comments. You know, I appreciate where he's coming from. I'll just make a few comments here. He won't be happy at the end of it, but I'm sure he'll get over it pretty quickly.

When we talk about who we consulted with and who we went out and spoke to, there were over 1,500 responses to our survey, overwhelmingly in favour of getting big money out of politics. I will give a list of some of the people that we consulted with so that he has an understanding: AUMA, RMA, city of Edmonton, city of Calgary, Local Government Administration Association, Alberta Rural Municipal Administrators Association, Alberta Municipal Clerks Association, the Association of Summer Villages of Alberta, Alberta School Boards Association, and quite a few more.

What I will say is that there are differences with provincial and municipal elections. What we have found is that when we did an analysis of who is raising funds outside of that one-year campaign period, it was overwhelmingly incumbents, so it gives them the advantage. They already have the advantage of being there, their name, their face. They're already in the public. That's great for them, of course, but we know that that will benefit them to raise this money. If we extend it outside this one-year campaign period, it will overwhelmingly benefit them.

So this is one way, out of a multitude of ways through this legislation, that we are trying to level the playing field, and we heard this loud and clear. These are not things that I just magically thought up. These are things we went out and consulted on and that we heard directly from the people out there that they wanted.

Unfortunately – I know the member was hoping differently – I will have to say that I do not support this amendment, but I do thank him for bringing it forward.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[Motion on amendment A4 lost]

The Chair: Any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to the bill? Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Madam Chair. After this amendment I will cede to my colleague from way down the bench there.

I would like to move another amendment, that is equally as amazing. I'll just make sure I get the copies here for you. This is a good one. The last one was good, too, but the minister doesn't agree.

The Chair: This will be known as amendment A5.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that Bill 23, An Act to Renew Local Democracy in Alberta, be amended in section 56 in the proposed section 162(1)(e)(i) by striking out "May 1" and substituting "January 1." Again, this comes to a point of creating continuity, and the minister has spoken at some length about his desire to create continuity. In fact, just last week we had the ability to work together, and you know that teamwork makes the dream work. We passed an amendment because we needed to change something from "election expenses" to "campaign expenses." This particular amendment does similar sorts of things in creating the same rules for third-party groups or other groups as for those who would like to contribute to a campaign.

This amendment amends section 56 in the proposed section by extending the period in which campaign expense limits are placed on third-party advertisers to align with the same period as for the candidates. The amendment would move the start date of the campaign expense limit from May 1 to January 1, which is when the expense limit is proposed for candidates. This amendment is simply about levelling the playing field and fairness. It's a common-sense, no-brainer amendment. The same rules should apply for everyone, both third parties as well as the candidates. Currently the candidate campaign period begins January 1, and for the third-party advertisers or additional groups – like we spoke at some length about last week, with the minister creating one set of rules for certain organizations and another set for others – this particular amendment would make the dates the same, being January 1.

4:50

The current bill provides a huge advantage for third-party advertisers over candidates as their campaign period wouldn't begin until May. As such, candidates are already limited to a \$2,000 spending limit outside of a campaign period while third-party advertisers have absolutely no limits on what they can spend. On top of that, their campaign expense limit doesn't begin to start counting until May. As such, the third-party advertiser could be spending at some length during the months of January, February, March, April, and May, and we've already heard that the last amendment that this government defeated is quite likely to lead to more third-party advertisers at the municipal level.

Given that the third-party advertisers can actively campaign for or against a candidate, it seems totally unfair, the result of this particular section. I hope that this was a small oversight since during the tech briefing the minister's staff originally stated that third-party advertisers' expense limit would be the same as for candidates. However, inside the legislation they have not been treated the same. My proposal in this amendment would be that we treat both organizations the same.

I encourage the minister to do the right thing and make this small adjustment.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Chair. This is an incredibly interesting bill. I don't know why nobody else wants to speak to it, but of course I'll go back and forth with the member.

I do appreciate the intent of this amendment – of course I do – to reduce the risk of third-party influence in local election campaigns. The amendment to this act does aim to increase transparency and accountability among third-party advertisers while striking a balance with the right to free speech. Provincially restrictions on third-party spending are only in effect for between four to six months leading up to the election. The proposed LAEA timeline would enact restrictions for five and a half months, lining up with the time frame used provincially and set out in the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act.

Unfortunately, I have to recommend that all members not support this amendment.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[Motion on amendment A5 lost]

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to introduce an amendment as well this afternoon.

The Chair: This will be known as amendment A6.

Go ahead, hon. member.

Ms McPherson: Thank you. I'd like to move that Bill 23, An Act to Renew Local Democracy in Alberta, be amended in section 33 as follows:

- (a) by adding the following after clause (a):
 - (a.1) in subsection (4) by adding "or relative" after "the elector's friend";
- (b) in clause (c), in the proposed section 78(5), by adding "or relative" after "accompanied by a friend."

I believe this is simply an oversight in drafting this bill, and I'll provide a little bit of background.

The current Local Authorities Election Act states in section 78(3):

The deputy, if requested by an elector described in subsection (1) who is accompanied by a friend or relative who is at least 18 years of age, shall permit that friend or relative, on making the prescribed statement, to accompany the elector into a voting compartment for the purpose of marking the elector's ballot and the ballot when marked shall be delivered by the elector or the friend or relative to the deputy to be deposited in the ballot box.

However, in section 78(4) of the LAEA it refers to an elector's friend only and not to their relative.

The deputy shall not permit an elector to vote under subsection (3) until the elector and the elector's friend have made the prescribed statements.

The bill before us proposes to make a small change to 78(5) of the LAEA using the following language:

If an elector who is blind is not accompanied by a friend into a voting compartment under subsection (3) and the municipality has passed a bylaw setting out the blind elector template in accordance with subsection (4.1), the deputy must

- (a) provide the elector with a blind elector template, and
- (b) instruct the elector in its use.

The amendment I'm proposing is to make references to "friend" in subsections 78(4) and 78(5) consistent with references to "friend or relative" in subsection 78(3).

We, I think, intend to have electors who need assistance be able to request the help of a friend or relative under subsection (3). Mechanically, if an incapacitated elector chooses to bring a relative to help them vote instead of bringing a friend, we want the elector's relative to be able to make the declaration under subsection (4).

With the act's current wording, only an elector's friend could make the statement.

Similarly, the bill proposes that an election official must provide information to a blind elector about how to use the voting device if the blind elector is not accompanied by a friend, but it is silent about when a blind elector is not accompanied by a relative. This amendment would make sure that a blind elector would still receive instructions on how to use the voting device if they are not accompanied by a relative.

I assume that this is simply an error of omission, and I hope that everyone in the House supports this amendment to make voting work better for all Albertans.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill bringing this amendment forward. A goal of this legislation is to remove barriers for Albertans to enable further participation in our elections and democracy. Voting is a democratic right in this country, and we want to ensure that we make it as accessible as possible. This proposed amendment helps to ensure consistency throughout the section where it references "friend" to also include "relative" and does not change the intent of the legislation or this particular section.

On that basis, I am prepared to support this amendment, and I encourage all other members to support it as well. I thank the member for bringing it forward.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? Seeing none, I'll call the vote.

[Motion on amendment A6 carried]

The Chair: Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I'm glad that we provided that clarity, because very few of my relatives are also my friends. I'm just kidding. Love you, Mom. I'm pretty certain that if I wasn't wearing this amazing Christmas tie, I would have worked my way off all of my relatives' Christmas lists and card lists, but since I am wearing this awesome tie, I'll be safe.

I would like to propose another amendment this evening. I hope that I will have the success that we have just seen previously. I'll wait for your instructions.

The Chair: This will be known as amendment A7.

Go ahead.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you. Madam Chair, I rise to speak to amendment A7. This particular amendment provides some clarity around who, when, why, and how one can vouch for an elector. I think that it is very important that the integrity of our elections is upheld. I want to reiterate, as I've said in the House on numerous occasions, that most people want to follow all election laws and have no desire to do an end around, usurp, or work against the democratic process.

Having said that – and I know it's hard to believe, Madam Chair – there are some people who don't have the same respect for the electoral laws as others. Sometimes people make bad choices with respect to elections. Sometimes they even do things that are untoward that may or may not get them removed from political organizations. So we can ascertain from that that it's possible that people won't do the right thing on election day.

5:00

In Bill 23 there is no certainty around ensuring that that happens with respect to vouching for an individual who is not on a voters list or may or may not have ID or may or may not have a residence, all sorts of scenarios like this. I know that I heard on some radio interviews that the minister spoke at some length about how he would be ensuring that all polling stations had voters lists. I know that a particular radio host on QR77 asked that particular question, about whether or not voting stations would have voters lists, and the minister assured us although that's not included in any piece of this legislation. So I have some concerns about that, and I hope that he can provide some clarity around that voters list.

But let's just say that there was no voters list and that someone who wanted to vote didn't have any of the appropriate ID or that sort of thing. I also think that it's reasonable that those people can still vote if they have someone who can vouch for them to prove their identity. This particular amendment will create some limits on the ability of individuals to do that. As such, they couldn't vouch for a whole group of people, like tens and tens and tens or hundreds or whatever, I suppose, busloads, or however they arrive.

In the current legislation it says that a person can vouch for a person, but it doesn't create any limit on the number of times they can do that or the number of polling stations they can do that in. This particular amendment would limit the number to three people. So you could vote, and you could also vouch for three other individuals.

I will be the first to admit that three was selected as a number that seemed reasonable, that wasn't over the top but also would allow an individual who, you know – like, let's say that I was taking my grandma and grandpa to the polls and they forgot their wallets. I'm not suggesting that we make vouching so restrictive that I couldn't bring my grandma and grandpa, two people, to the polls and still have them vote but not so wide open that you could vouch for literally a bus full of people. We selected three because it seemed like a reasonable number, not too big, not too small. That is how we arrived at that point.

I think it's important, though, that we provide some checks and balances in what some would say is the most important process that the public engages in, the election of those who represent us. I think that this is important.

I know the minister has liked to pick and choose when he creates certainty and similarities at the provincial level and the municipal level, and he hasn't applied that same rule all across this piece of legislation. So my sense is that he'll rise and say: listen, we don't have any checks and balances at the provincial level. My words; not his. He might use some slightly different words but essentially say that, you know, you can vouch for as many people as you want provincially and that we shouldn't be doing things to restrict access to democracy and a number of other points. But I would also submit that when we made changes to previous pieces of legislation, we had suggested that this vouching challenge was also an issue then, and it wasn't adhered to. I would say that now would be a great time to do that, to adhere to a good, common-sense, balanced approach that doesn't say no one, that doesn't say just one person but provides you some flexibility, even a family of individuals: mom, dad, or aging parents, and another relative, an uncle or whatever, who lives at the same house.

I think that this makes good, solid sense. I would encourage all members of the Assembly to go ahead and support this amendment as I think that protecting our democratic institution and elections is exactly what we need to do. It would be my strong recommendation

that the minister heed the advice of the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills and support this amendment.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. It is true that these elections that we do with municipalities, irrigation districts, schools, Métis settlements are very complex, so there are subtle differences here and there between provincial and municipal elections. As I've said before, this bill is about increasing transparency and aligning municipal campaign rules with those that currently govern provincial elections as much as possible. This proposed amendment would result in different rules between municipal and provincial elections, and these current provisions align with the provincial Election Act.

As in the Election Act we will be clear that a person may only vouch for another person if that first person has the appropriate identification. In other words, a person who has been vouched for may not then vouch for another person. The Election Act does not place any restriction on the number of persons someone may vouch for, and to our knowledge this has not created any significant problems in provincial elections since the turn of the century. In fact, these particular rules have been in place since 2000. We've also added teeth to the legislation, which has empowered the Election Commissioner to investigate any and all complaints brought forward.

With that, I won't be supporting this amendment.

The Chair: Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Chair. I do have another amendment I'd like to move this afternoon.

The Chair: We're still on amendment A7.

Ms McPherson: Oh. I'm so sorry. It's been a long sitting.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A7?

Seeing none, we'll call the vote.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A7 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:08 p.m.]

[Five minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Cooper	Fraser	Stier
Dreeshen	McIver	Taylor
Drysdale	McPherson	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Horne	Nielsen
Babcock	Jansen	Payne
Carlier	Kazim	Phillips
Carson	Kleinstaub	Renaud
Connolly	Larivee	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Littlewood	Sabir
Cortes-Vargas	Malkinson	Schmidt
Drever	Mason	Schreiner
Eggen	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha
Fitzpatrick	McKittrick	Turner
Ganley	Miller	Westhead
Hinkley	Miranda	Woollard
Hoffman		

Totals: For – 8 Against – 37

[Motion on amendment A7 lost]

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Chair. Obviously, I need to meditate more so I can be more present. I do have another amendment I would like to introduce.

The Chair: This is amendment A8.

Ms McPherson: I'd like to move that Bill 23, An Act to Renew Local Democracy in Alberta, be amended in section 51 in the proposed section 147.22 (a) in subsection (3), by adding "Subject to subsection (4)," before "Subsections (1) and (2) do not apply" and (b) by adding the following after subsection (3):

- (4) Subject to subsection (5), an elected authority may, by passage of a bylaw on or before June 30 of the year following the year in which a general election occurs, adjust the amounts specified in subsection (3) to which subsections (1) and (2) do not apply for
 - (a) that local jurisdiction, or
 - (b) one or more wards in that local jurisdiction.
- (5) An elected authority in adjusting the amounts specified in subsection (3) may consider only
 - (a) the number of electors in that local jurisdiction or its wards, and
 - (c) the geographic size of that local jurisdiction or its wards.
- (6) A bylaw made under subsection (4) may not increase either amount specified in subsection (3) to an amount greater than \$7500.

This amendment makes candidacy more accessible to new participants by addressing the \$2,000 precampaign fundraising and spending limit proposed in the bill for nonincumbents. This amendment would allow local election authorities to set precampaign fundraising and spending limits according to local conditions if they do not find that the default \$2,000 limit is appropriate for their circumstances. On the one hand, incumbents in large cities have a huge advantage in using public resources to communicate with electors, which can be worth far more than \$2,000. On the other hand, some local positions in remote areas struggle to attract any attention or candidates, so the \$2,000 limit may be too high. We also need to consider how many electors must be reached and how they're distributed in a local jurisdiction or ward. Travelling around a large municipality has different costs than canvassing apartments.

The amendment would enable an elected authority to set the precampaign spending limit well in advance of future elections so that the limit is known to challengers ahead of time. Practically speaking, in the absence of a sensible precampaign limit, folks interested in becoming candidates might choose to be really active in their own communities on a particular issue, to become well known that way. Meanwhile they're raising and spending unlimited funds to get attention and collect information about potential voters, and all they have to do is declare their candidacy at the last minute in order to avoid this \$2,000 precampaign limit.

5:20

This amendment was born of conversations with recently elected municipal officials who expressed concerns about the ability of people who are not incumbents to be able to be elected. It was identified that the \$2,000 limit really was a problem. It would prevent people from being encouraged to put their names forward. Democracy, you know, dictates that positions should be available

to people to take a chance, to put their name forward. Based on that, I would encourage all members of the Assembly to support this amendment.

Thanks.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Chair. Although I understand the intent of this proposed amendment, unfortunately I cannot support it. We've given this particular section a lot of thought and consideration, and we feel that this is an adequate amount to allow individuals to take part in precampaign activities.

I'd like to remind all members that one of the key intentions of Bill 23 is to reduce the impact of big money in the local election process and make running for office more accessible to those without deep pockets. Increasing the amount of money that can be spent in the years leading up to the campaign period isn't consistent with that objective. I would also point out that increasing the amount that can be spent prior to the official campaign period generally tends to create a significant advantage for incumbents whereas our intent is to create a more level playing field for all candidates.

I also worry that this proposed amendment will create greater confusion across the province and even within individual communities because not only could each municipality and school board have the potential to have different limits, but those amounts could vary between individual wards within local jurisdictions, and that would make transparency and clarity for local electors much more difficult to achieve.

For all those reasons, I am not able to support this amendment.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A8?

Hearing none, I will call a vote.

[Motion on amendment A8 lost]

The Chair: Any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill?

Mr. Cooper: Well, it truly is the most wonderful time of the year, and it is a pleasure to rise at such a time as this to move an amendment. I will provide it to the page and await further instructions.

The Chair: This is amendment A9.

Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you. Well, Madam Chair, what we have seen here this evening and over the last week is this minister, you know, not materially accepting changes to his legislation. I say "materially" because we did accept an amendment today which basically defined a friend as a relative or a relative as a friend, and we did find in the last week that the minister meant to call something a campaign expense, and he called it an election expense, an election expense a campaign expense. So we fixed some grammar in his legislation.

Broadly, the minister has introduced a piece of legislation in the House called An Act to Renew Local Democracy in Alberta. It is a bold title. It is a broad, self-congratulatory title where he essentially implies that the legislation, in fact, will do just that, renew local democracy, as if it was broken.

The reality is that the consequences of this bill are going to not do what he says. In fact, in many cases I believe it's going to do the opposite. I thought that what I would do is do the minister a favour and allow him the opportunity to actually change the name of the

legislation so that in a period of time, certainly after the next election – you know, there’s a good possibility that one of us will remain in this House, and in all fairness we’re going to miss him. But I think that as a legacy, if you will, of the Minister of Municipal Affairs, when he looks back and sees that the changes he has made don’t renew local democracy and do the opposite, create third-party advertisers, engage political parties in the municipal process . . .

Mr. McIver: Put a lot more dark money in.

Mr. Cooper: Put more dark money in, less transparency as a result of his legislation.

I think that he will want to not bear the burden of implying that he was going to renew local democracy but failed at that. As such, the local authorities election amendment act, 2018, would be a much more appropriate title for such a piece of legislation as this. He still gets to accomplish everything he wants, but we depoliticize the title and also create an opportunity in the future, when the results aren’t as he’d hoped they would be, that the title will just reflect what we actually did, which was amend an already existing piece of legislation in the Local Authorities Election Act, and refer to the year.

You know, frankly, so many pieces of legislation should be titled such that we are amending legislation that already exists, but we’ve seen time and time again – and not just this minister. I don’t mean to pick on him specifically. I would never want to do that for obvious reasons. But time and time again the government continues to overpoliticize the names of legislation. They overpoliticize so much about the process.

This would accurately communicate what we are doing here, what we did do. It’s an easy change. It doesn’t change anything to the mechanics of the legislation but names it more appropriately. I strongly recommend that all members of the Assembly vote in favour of this amendment.

Mr. Shepherd: Madam Chair, though I recognize given some of the events today that this may be a fraught request, I just wanted to see if I might be able to get unanimous consent of the House for what I assure them would be an extremely brief introduction.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests

(reversion)

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Chair. I’d like to introduce to you and through you to the House some constituents of mine who are here for the Legislature light-up ceremony: Heather MacKenzie, who is a local community advocate, consultant, and a former municipal and federal candidate; her husband, Justin; and her two children Grace and Jaycen who join us here today. Please give them the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Bill 23

An Act to Renew Local Democracy in Alberta

(continued)

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A9?

Mr. McIver: No. I just wanted to thank the hon. member for making that short, and perhaps he could give lessons to some of his teammates.

The Chair: Any further speakers on amendment A9? The hon. minister.

5:30

Mr. S. Anderson: Yes. I will try to be brief on this, Madam Chair. Thank you to the member for his comments and for his humble way of talking about this House. I really appreciate it over there. I’m not sure why he thinks the name of this is highly politicized. I mean, we didn’t call it making democracy great again, or anything. We could have made it highly political. We chose not to.

Madam Chair, I appreciate all the comments in here and the commentary on this bill. I heard loud and clear. I’ve had many, many messages from before the last municipal election and since about what the public has seen and what they want to see in this province. It’s accountability. It’s transparency. It’s people getting into politics for the right reasons. It’s people getting in there to help one another, to help their communities, and to push their communities forward. We think that this bill is a huge step towards that.

The member likes to say that I say that everything is perfect. Well, nothing is perfect, Madam Chair. I’m sure that in the future there might have to be changes, but with the amount of consultation we’ve done and the people we’ve spoken to, we feel that this is a good piece of legislation. I am very proud of the people that have worked on it. My staff has been incredible.

I will not be supporting this amendment today.

The Chair: Any other speakers to amendment A9?

Seeing none, I’ll call the vote.

[Motion on amendment A9 lost]

The Chair: We’re back on Bill 23. Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill?

Hearing none, are you ready for the question?

[The remaining clauses of Bill 23 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That’s carried.

The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would move that the committee now rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Cooper: Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bills with some amendments: Bill 22, Bill 23. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official record of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Any opposed? So ordered.

Government Bills and Orders
Third Reading
(continued)

Bill 31
Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2018

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Larivee: Thank you, Madam Speaker. On behalf of the Government House Leader I would like to move third reading of Bill 31, the Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2018.

The Deputy Speaker: Does anyone wish to speak to this bill?
Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

[Motion carried; Bill 31 read a third time]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Larivee: Thank you, Madam Speaker. At this time I would like to notify the House that pursuant to Government Motion 36 no evening sitting will take place and the House shall adjourn until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Deputy Government House Leader, go ahead.

Larivee: Okay. I'd like to move that we adjourn.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:35 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday morning, December 5, 2018

Day 59

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (NDP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)

Party standings:

New Democratic: 53 United Conservative: 26 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Freedom Conservative: 1 Independent: 2 Progressive Conservative: 1

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Wednesday, December 5, 2018

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Deputy Speaker: Good morning.

Let us reflect. Hon. members, as the end of this sitting approaches, our staff from all across the province are gathering in Edmonton for their winter constituency seminar. Let us reflect on these dedicated individuals. For most of them, like for all of us, they view their roles as one of great privilege and responsibility, and they carry it out with great integrity on our behalf in our constituencies representing us. They're truly part of our team, and we greatly appreciate their role, so let's recognize their contributions to each of us and to the institution that we represent.

Please be seated.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

The Chair: Hon. members, I'd like to call Committee of the Whole to order.

Bill 32

City Charters Fiscal Framework Act

The Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments with respect to this bill? Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Yeah. I want to take this opportunity to speak to Bill 32, the City Charters Fiscal Framework Act. As we look at this bill and everything, I think there's some good things in this bill, of course. I think that the cities, Edmonton and Calgary, you know, should have stable, predictable long-term funding. I think that's a good principle though I also think that the other municipalities should have that same expectation, too. Of course, this bill doesn't address that, and I would hope that the government is working on that at this point, too, though I haven't heard what the government has in store there or what they're planning to do or if they're actually in any kinds of discussions on that. I guess, maybe to start off with, I would like to ask the minister on that: is the government in any kinds of discussions with the other municipalities, RMA or AUMA?

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak?

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just asked a question. I guess I'm not getting a response on that one. Like I say, I was concerned about whether the government has been talking to the other municipalities as far as some sort of stability in long-term funding. I think all municipalities in Alberta are concerned about their funding going forward as they make their budgets now and try to decide where they're going in the future. I think it's good to have some sort of framework in place on that issue.

Maybe in the future – I'm not sure what's going to be happening, but I'm guessing that since we have this Bill 32 that deals with Calgary and Edmonton specifically, maybe there'll be more different funding agreements with the other municipalities. I don't

know if that means there will be three or four or more different funding agreements with the other municipalities, but it would be nice to find that out and find out what direction this government is going on that.

Right now the government is using, you know, a funding model here that provides basically a base, I guess, amount of income. Some of their revenue is dependent on different incomes within the government. I guess there's maybe in some parts of it somewhat a stable funding model, and other parts of it are maybe a little more fluid, so I wondered if there wasn't a more stable revenue stream such as corporate or personal income tax to be basing this funding model on. Maybe I'll pose that question to the government again to see if I get an answer to this one. Why did the government not use a more stable revenue stream such as corporate or personal income tax?

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Mr. Carson: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. It's an honour to rise today to speak to Bill 32, City Charters Fiscal Framework Act. Just on the point of whether we're in consultations with other, smaller municipalities, of course, we've been able to reach an agreement with the two larger cities, the two big cities, which is very important in terms of stable funding moving forward. We recognize that all municipalities require stable, predictable infrastructure funding, and, as was mentioned, we were able to reach an agreement with Edmonton and Calgary through the charter process. We will now move on to the next phase in partnership with municipal associations. As the minister, I believe, stated, we are currently in discussions with the AUMA as well as the RMA right now, and we are committed to coming up with a funding agreement with them as well.

It's also important to note that other municipalities will have stable funding until 2022 under the current MSI framework while Calgary and Edmonton did take a \$456 million cut over three years just to ensure that we're able to reach our budgetary constraints or that we do address those. We're committed to making sure that Alberta's mid-sized cities, towns, villages, MDs, and counties are able to meet their infrastructure needs. We do believe that a legislated capital funding framework will allow these communities to continue to build and thrive, and we're committed to seeing that happen.

As I mentioned, we are currently in negotiations with the AUMA and RMA. We weren't able to come to an agreement at this point, but we are very sure that we will be able to make that happen in the future. We've also said that, as part of the city charters we developed for Edmonton and Calgary, there will be a fiscal framework based on provincial revenues to support capital projections.

On the question of stable funding in terms of where the revenue stream is coming from, I think that on the transit funding side of things using the money put forward by the carbon levy and the climate leadership plan is as stable as it gets. Using that money to build important infrastructure projects and transit, like the valley line LRT moving towards my side of the city, the west leg: I think it's a good plan. Obviously, we'll see emissions reductions with more people taking transit and also just more opportunities for people to be able to move throughout the city without necessarily having to use their vehicles. Obviously, smaller municipalities will have different needs than the big cities, but that's something that we're hoping to address through the ongoing consultations with the other municipalities.

Thank you.

The Chair: Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Well, thanks for the answer. I appreciate those comments there. I did have kind of one quick comment here. You said that part of the funding was going to come from the carbon tax, of course. I understand that the idea of the carbon tax is to reduce emissions. If the emissions are reduced, then I would presume that there would be less consumption of carbon-based fuels. I'm wondering if the government is predicting a reduction in income from the carbon tax, thus affecting the funds going to the cities of Edmonton and Calgary as the consumption is less. If the point of the carbon tax is to reduce emissions, obviously that would mean less carbon tax being paid, less revenue, so does that mean less money to the cities of Edmonton and Calgary?

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak?

Mr. Carson: Just quickly, to address that, I don't necessarily have a perfect answer for you, but I don't see the changes in terms of the funding that we would receive from the carbon levy. I think that they would be somewhat negligible, but I will try and get you an answer for that.

Thank you.

9:10

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much for that. You know, I think, when we look back at the MSI, I mean, that seemed to be something that was working fairly well. I'm sure it wasn't perfect, but the municipalities have worked together to decide how that money was going to be split up and everything from the beginning. I think, like I say, it was probably complicated. Admittedly, I don't know that this one maybe is much less complicated as far as the formulas that they use to calculate the money. But I think, like I say, it's good. Like, we support the principle of this bill, of course, having the stable, predictable long-term funding. I think that's good.

Now, of course, when we see that part of this money is going to be dependent on other different things and relies on special formulas and some of these formulas will be changing as we go on as each year there's different percentages and everything, I guess I would hope that the government, as they go forward with this, will be able to ensure that the cities of Edmonton and Calgary, since that's what we're talking about in Bill 32, will have that stable funding going forward and be able to keep that money somewhat steady. I know that when I'm in discussions with the local municipalities and towns in my constituency, they sit down and try to make up budgets, and of course they're looking two, three years down the road because some of the commitments they make are multiyear commitments. That makes it very necessary that they have a proper funding model that has that predictability and long-term funding.

But I appreciate the answers to those questions so far this morning, and I may have some more later as we go through this morning session. Thank you.

The Chair: Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Mr. Carson: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Just on the point of MSI being a good program used over the years, I would tend to agree with that. I think that it's been able to build some important infrastructure throughout our province. Obviously, the main concern is the sustainability of it moving forward. Obviously, we've seen a reduction to the MSI for the cities, so moving forward, as we look at budgetary constraints and returning to a balanced budget in '23-24, we had to make some hard decisions. I think that

through the negotiations with the big cities, both Calgary and Edmonton, they also recognize that, which is why we were able to come to an agreement the way that we did. I know that the city of Edmonton – I can't speak for the city of Calgary – is currently in their budgetary consultations, and they were greatly concerned with being able to come to an agreement before those proceedings ended.

Here we are today with Bill 32, which I think is very important for them to be able to commit to their long-term sustainability. Also, of course, as has been mentioned, MSI was planned to end or conclude in '21-22, so we had to come to a new agreement, which is why we are here today.

I've had many conversations with my city councillor of ward 1, Andrew Knack, about the concerns moving forward and the potential for them having to create a budget without having this funding or framework for the funding. I'm very happy that we're able to move forward on this, hopefully with the will of the House, to make sure that they're able to build the things that they need to build moving forward.

Thank you.

The Chair: Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Stier: Yes. Good morning. Thank you, Madam Chair, for recognizing me this morning. Good morning to everybody. Suddenly we're on to Bill 32 this morning, I just understood, so I'm just putting things together here at this moment in time. Anyway, this is an interesting topic that Bill 32 has brought forward. It's actually a new agreement between the province as the parent and its children, the municipalities, particularly the two main municipalities, the cities of Calgary and Edmonton.

As I had said in my earlier remarks a couple days ago in second reading, in 2007 the Stelmach government actually put together the municipal sustainability initiative. I can remember those days as a councillor. There were an awful lot of circumstances that led to this new initiative, and it was not something that happened overnight. It was a long, long era of constant battle on behalf of municipalities, who came literally with their hat in their hand every year to try to figure out how they could manage their infrastructure funding requirements and their needs for grants to keep managing their municipalities. Just imagine a small municipality, Madam Chair – a small village, a hamlet, a town – who did not have the tax base to bring in the thousands and thousands and millions of dollars to support the upgrades to their utility systems, to their roads, maintenance, buy new equipment. In those days costs, just like today, were going crazy in terms of buying equipment and paying their skilled labour forces, et cetera, et cetera.

In those days the government finally realized that they would have to put together some sort of a fair system, and it was called MSI. It really doesn't have a lot of strings attached to it as it has been. It has been something that they have gone over and over and over and tried to look at each year in some way or form of speaking, and they tried to hand out to municipalities, as the budget would see fit, sufficient monies to satisfy the needs of the municipalities.

Unfortunately, a few years ago municipalities were required to do three-year and five-year financial plans. This put a little bit of a problem into the whole system because MSI has been something of a moving target every year. Like a cork on the water, it's floated around. Different amounts of monies were distributed over the course of the past few years with it. In fact, as I mentioned the other day, even though \$11.3 billion over 10 years was promised, only twice did it meet its goals, in 2007 and '14. The full commitment was never realized until the last promises of this current government, where they extended the program.

Here we are today with a bill called 32, and as I said the other day, we are more or less supportive of this, but we do have a lot of questions. What we have here, for the first time in my experiences so far in the past seven years, is actually, basically the general idea and principles that were decided in the months of negotiation between the two major cities and the province, and it deals with a fair number of topics. Just if you look on the first page of the bill, it talks about the authority to provide funding, the amount of funding, the payment plan, how the money is to be used, eligible expenditures, transit, accounting for the use of the funding, and other kinds of terms.

Yet the whole bill is called the City Charters Fiscal Framework Act. It encompasses an awful lot of big dollars, and it's based upon a formula that was agreed to years and years ago with the help of municipalities from every portion of the province, who had to try to work together, both AUMA and, at the time, AAMD and C, in determining what would be fair to work with in terms of a formula, if you will, to make sure that this would be something that could be utilized across the whole base. If you look at page 8 in the bill, you'll find that the funding for Calgary is described, and that basic formula is used for Edmonton as well. It's in section 4(2). It looks like I've been taken back in time to my math classes of 1973, when I took extra courses just to get a little handle on calculus. It is very complex, this whole system that they've put together. It has worked reasonably well over the years.

But now the government has decided, I guess, after months of these negotiations, to release it in a new way, and that new way is to participate in revenue sharing. That's a very open statement, but it basically means that instead of assigning a certain number of dollars in the budget every year from a fixed standpoint, they're now going to have a little bit of a variable in there. In good times, as the system works out, the province will be providing a little extra funding, and in tougher times the province will be providing a little less. When times are good, we all do well; when times are bad, we don't do so well, I think, is the basic concept. I don't want to get in to specifics because if you look through the bill, you'd have a lot of trouble getting in to specifics.

9:20

I suspect that for months and months and over the course of the past three years, while this government has been in power, we all know there's been an awful lot of discussion between the municipalities and the associations – it goes from small towns, big towns, mid-cities, the two main cities – on how all this could be done. In fact, what we find is that this bill is only regarding the two cities and how they're now going to be allowed to work with different mechanisms within this agreement and through the regulations to adjust and change the way cities are basically financed. That's what the city charter system was all about.

Just a couple of years ago I had a whiteboard with a number of us working on about 15 to 20 topics. If you remember Bill 20 or Bill 8, I identified at one time 55 different topics in those huge MGA amendment bills that were of concern: you might remember the 5 to 1 ratio, you might remember the intermunicipal collaboration, you might remember the requirements to do municipal development plans. Of course, all of those kinds of needs were really having to be based upon budgets. How could municipalities work with all these new costs? Naturally, they had their own tax bases to work from, and they would have to look for extra support to the government, which the government did in fact offer, to some extent, for those new requirements. Nonetheless, these new funding models that we're seeing now are a result of all of those discussions.

I suspect that department managers and the people that we call – and I hate the word, frankly – bureaucrats, the people that we have working in Municipal Affairs, some of them for many years, some of them that I know and have known for a long time, were probably scratching their heads and talking to the legal world and the accountant world. Compared to our two people that we have for staff that have helped me with this, they have reams of people in the backrooms. You people probably know about them. They probably have reams of people back there or reams of paper being used every day, dozens of people that have talked to their counterparts in the two cities to try to come up with something that makes sense.

I guess, from our standpoint, it's hard for us to dig into this in any great detail this morning with respect to all of the different things that this really entails. Nonetheless, we do have a few questions. I did the other day raise some concerns, and I'd just like to pore over some of those this morning if I could because we had a few observations that day. I might say, first of all, that the amount is less in the initial few years than what the cities have been used to getting. We've done some graphs, and we've run some numbers, and in the first three years, up to 2022, it certainly looks as if there's going to be, you know, a bit less.

It makes us wonder if, with the variable that's involved in this agreement, when times are good, this will affect how the formula works, this will affect how funding is coming forward. When times are good coming ahead, then the numbers for a few years later will be good. But what if at that time the numbers aren't so good for other things? How is this variable going to work if it's going to look like a sine wave? I'm wondering if the member across the way that was responding earlier could speak to that variable and how the system of future payments to the two cities will be affected. Do they have concerns about something being based on two years in the past, that could bite them later on in the future when times are bad?

I'll wait for the response, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak?

Mr. Stier: Well, Madam Chair, in the absence of a response to my question I guess I'll move forward. Those fluctuations in the provincial revenues, obviously, from our side anyway, in the absence of a response – and I notice that we have the Minister of Finance here as well. Perhaps he could assist. Calgary and Edmonton have huge operating budgets, which he was involved with in the past. We think that this bill seems to commit the province to solid numbers, regardless of the situations. Transit funding is another one that is in there, and that's always a huge number. With these variables, perhaps I could ask the Minister of Finance: does he have any comments to make with regard to our concerns about the province committing to these funding levels, regardless of the current fiscal situation at the time in the future?

The Chair: Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Mr. Carson: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to go back to the funding framework here, of course, monies are calculated based on revenue growth, as was mentioned, from three years prior, and the percentage change in revenue is multiplied by a constraint factor. The factor will be 50 per cent for the '23-24 calculation, increasing by 5 per cent each year until it reaches 100 per cent in '33-34, after which it will stay at 100 per cent. I think that's something that's been addressed through the House.

Of course, last year we saw our GDP growth be the highest across the country, of all provinces. We're projected to be somewhere around there again this year as far as I know. As far as we can see, the projected revenues are to rise in the future. I mean, really, this framework is about predictability. That was something, as was

mentioned by the member, that we weren't necessarily seeing under MSI, whether it was a change in government or financials changed for the province. I think we need to move away into something more sustainable. While I do appreciate the questions, I think that this new framework is more predictable than what we were seeing.

I believe there was a question of whether the cities were in support of this entirely, and they are. We saw Mayor Iveson standing with the minister a few days ago, I believe, in support of this. Once again, I mean, they're going through their budgetary process, and they were very concerned about whether they were going to be able to have a number in front of them, so we committed to that. After some tough negotiations from both sides, we were able to come to an agreement.

Thank you.

The Chair: Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Stier: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for your response, Member. As we have looked at the way this is to be funded, we have got a question related to what we just were discussing, and that is that there are some portions of the revenue stream for the province that we think were not perhaps considered to be in this revenue stream that this is sourcing. I'm wondering if the member would have a comment as to why the government did not use a more stable revenue stream, such as corporate and personal income taxes, in these arrangements. While those two seem to fluctuate up and down as well, it's one of the more stable revenues, I should think. I'm just wondering if the member could respond as to why those items weren't considered, please.

The Chair: Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Mr. Carson: Thank you, Madam Chair. CIT and PIT are in fact included in the revenue model. Yeah. Thank you.

Mr. Stier: Thank you for that clarification. Through the chair again, Madam Chair, another observation we had – I mentioned it briefly here just earlier this week and today – this amount of money is going to be coming out of the budget, more or less, each year. It's dollars that will be assumed to be spent, I should think. I'm just wondering. This particular agreement with the two cities: will this have any impact, will this have any bearing or be taken into consideration in discussions, I believe, as the minister said the other day, between the municipal associations and the municipalities they represent? Will it have any impact or any effect on a potential new deal for municipalities throughout the province that are not the two cities, please?

The Chair: Edmonton-Meadowlark.

9:30

Mr. Carson: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think it's an important question, indeed. Of course, Edmonton and Calgary have worked with us to achieve our path to balance. They saw their funding reduced by \$456 million over three years to help us achieve those savings. No other municipality in Alberta, I think it's important to recognize, saw a reduction in their MSI over the last few years, and they were able to enjoy constant funding. That was a conversation that we had to have with the bigger cities, and we appreciate their willingness to help us get back to balance.

I think, once again, it's important to recognize that though the major cities or the big cities saw a reduction in their funding, none of the smaller municipalities did. We do remain committed to legislating a replacement for MSI for all municipalities. No, the agreements that we've made with the city of Edmonton and the city

of Calgary do not have any bearing on the negotiations that we'll be having around MSI with other municipalities.

Of course, we do recognize that all municipalities do require stable, predictable, and permanent capital infrastructure funding, and that is why we continue to be in negotiations with both the AUMA and the RMA regarding a long-term revenue-sharing agreement.

Thank you.

The Chair: Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Stier: Thank you, Madam Chair. To the member that has responded, thank you for your response once again.

Madam Chair, there are a number of other implications that come from this. Because this is the funding and it is partially being legislated in some degree regarding other matters, which includes a lot of those that are controlled by the regulations that we've already had – as a side note, I should say that when city charters were first discussed one and a half to two years ago under the previous Municipal Government Act amending bills – I think it was 21, 20, and 8 – some topics like inclusionary housing and a lot of topics to do with off-site levies came up. As I said earlier, in those bills there were a lot of topics, and we didn't get into the roots and evils of all of them. Nonetheless, it was intended that when the city charters were going to come forward, there was a great amount of concern from the building industry, from the development industry, from the contracting industries, from all points of the province regarding what the implications may be when the city was granted certain powers.

Today we're seeing, as we discuss the bill, some answers on some of the things we have, but while I recognize that regulations are not normally debated in the House, the government chose to release the new regulations, that are tied to this legislation in some respects, on how the cities will be responding, in turn, when they set up bylaws and other things to be able to comply with the new regulations. I understand these regulations are not in place yet. There's a 60-day window yet for comment. Members of this Assembly, constituency offices all across the province are now receiving an awful lot of concerns from those industries in our e-mails, et cetera, et cetera, phone calls, what have you.

To the member: I'm wondering if he could respond with regard to these two topics in any way. While we don't discuss regulations, they are directly – directly – involved in this legislation. We know that in these regulations municipalities are required to put together bylaws and an awful lot of other things to work with developers on these two critical topics, and those are inclusionary housing and off-site levies. Developers are working and acquiring land for their developments and are going to the municipalities to see what the rules are going to be. The administrative costs and fees, as time goes along, and commitments for roads and all the other things that they have to put in – and it varies in different municipalities – are extremely costly. It gets down to the point where if you're a developer and you're going to be creating a whole new subdivision, a place for people to live, for thousands to live and recreate and enjoy, there's a cost to doing that, and it's a huge cost. The city sets density rules and the city sets all kinds of guidelines and principles that have to be met before a developer can proceed. Taking into account what has happened in the years gone by without some of these new requirements, developers have had to struggle with increasing costs for materials and all other kinds of extra administrative expenses.

Nonetheless, now they're being faced with a release of control, to some extent, in terms of where the rules came from. Originally, you know, in land planning you have the regional plans, which

affect the municipal development plans, which affect the intermunicipal development plans, which affect all these things in the hierarchy of planning, but now the developer has to look at a new risk venture in his idea. If he wants to come and put in an area structure plan that will involve several hundred homes, parks, he has to consider whether there's going to be a municipal reserve being taken from his property, whether there are going to be other hindrances, and one of the biggest worries they have is that it won't be predictable. We're talking about predictable funding in this discussion.

So what I'm wondering, hon. member, if you can respond to some extent here: do you know why this regulation was released at this time and if the government would consider extending the time for proper discussion on these regulations for public input? These have been announced just prior to the Christmas season. There's been a lot of focus these days on different priorities that people have this time of year. Why was this brought out at this time, and when will these regulations possibly be put into place?

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Mr. Carson: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will do my best to address some of the points that were brought up by the hon. member. First, I would like to recognize that while the city charter framework was put into place in the spring of this year for the big cities, any time that they do want to make a change, it must be posted for 60 days, as I believe the member did recognize, before a regulation can be amended.

I think we have to recognize that Edmonton and Calgary are home to 53 per cent of all Albertans and that they have to be able to make decisions on their own as well. I do want to recognize once again, as the member stated, that these regulations aren't within this bill, but they are important questions that go along with it.

I just want to first of all touch on the eight regulations that were proposed. The amendments do give the ability to define types of development that qualify for off-site levies, which was mentioned; develop their own inclusionary housing programs; manage their own debt limits; more time to impose local improvement taxes; more flexibility in how they advertise or notify residents about large-scale rezoning; clarification for disposal processes for school properties that have been acquired at no cost; and the ability to work with school boards to develop broader uses for the lands around school sites.

It's important once again to recognize that these cities have to have the ability to make these decisions, and I think that modernizing these regulations is an important move forward. I believe that there is an ability to comment on these changes until January 28, I believe, so if people have comments, they are able to do so online.

I do also recognize that there are stakeholders, industry stakeholders who have concerns, and those are things where we need to be able to sit down – those consultations or conversations have begun already – and come to an agreement, just as we did on the entirety of this framework.

I'm not sure if I addressed some or all or none of his concerns, but we will do our best to do that in the future. Thank you.

The Chair: Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Stier: Well, thanks again, Madam Chair. I note that the minister perhaps will be able to respond himself, I suspect, at this time if I was to redirect a couple of questions his way. I had mentioned this, Minister, to the other member that was responding this morning with regard to a lot of concerns we had in relation to

this, but for your benefit, just to let you know, I did recognize that there must have been a lot of discussion with a lot of important people to come to the complex agreement that you've arrived at that is contained in the legislation.

9:40

But I would like to say that I'm a little concerned here that the regulations – they are sort of not normally discussed in the House, which I recognize, but are sort of tied to this bill – were released at the same time. Would you like to speak to that, and could you perhaps clear up a couple of things for me here?

There's a great amount of concern about what's contained in the regulations. The updates were made at the same time as the new bill for funding came out, and therefore I believe it is a fair topic to discuss, to some minor degree, in the House. I'm just wondering if you could speak on why these regulations have come out now. Could this consultation period be extended, perhaps, beyond what is now in the midst of the Christmas holiday season? Could that be extended? Why did they come out now?

As well, I'm wondering if you could speak, in addition, to this. It seems like there's no limit, if I could use that term loosely, sir, with respect to the power that the city would have in terms of quantifiers on just how much inclusionary housing, just how many off-site levies. How much does the developer perhaps have to be worried about in his risk assessments when he's doing his development plans with such open-ended clauses that appear to be in these new regulations?

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Chair. The member is right: it is a complex piece of legislation. It's something that we've been working on for – I can't say – a long time with the cities and a lot of experts that know a lot more about some of the things you're talking about: inclusionary housing, off-site levies, and these types of things. These are the types of things that the cities have been asking for for quite a long time, actually. In fact, when you talk about the off-site levies, what we're doing here is basically codifying some of the stuff that Calgary already does. They work with the developers on their communities to build sustainable and smart communities that people want to move to. What this does, with all of these provisions, in fact, is that it allows them to work with the city to develop the bylaw with them or to be consulted on the bylaw, to have public open houses on the bylaw, to make sure that they have certainty on where they're going to go.

Really, it's making sure that all parties are accountable and that they work together on this. I think that, as I said, this is something that Calgary already tends to do a fair amount. The big cities need to make sure that they hold these consultations and talk about these in a broad-based way with as much public input and developer input as possible. I know that some of our members spoke to developers last night about that, and I know that some of the developers were concerned and were kind of unsure. But, like I say, it is something that is already done in Calgary. It's just codifying it. The same with inclusionary housing: they're going to have to work together on this.

Sometimes when we put parameters on the 342 municipalities, they work in a broad-based sense, but the two big cities are kind of a bit of a different animal now. Working together with the developers, I think, is a smart way to do this. They have a lot more complexity to them in the big cities, so that's why we want to give them that ability and to make them accountable for themselves and to the public. That's kind of where we're at right now. That's why

we did that. It was something that was asked for. We spoke to the developers about this, too, and they understand where we're going with this legislation.

If there's anything specific, obviously I will try to answer that for the member.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Stier: Madam Chair, thank you, and I appreciate the response from the minister this morning. As I've taken a fair amount of time this morning in discussing the bill, I will probably be concluding here shortly on my portion of this. But I would just like to say that there were a lot of conversations we had, Minister, prior to your attending. We discussed the RMA, the AAMD and C, and the other associations and how those discussions are probably ongoing. I recognize that there are a lot of people in the department with their pencil over their ear and their sleeves rolled up doing their job, trying to get that together.

Nonetheless, as you and I have discussed before and some may know, I spent quite a few years in Municipal Affairs and worked on appeal boards and subdivisions, and in our planning committee we discussed municipal reserve. Municipal reserve over the years has been taken from developers when land is subdivided and worked with or developed. Municipal reserve normally does not have any compensation attached to it. Developers have to supply land for municipal reserve. It's right in the act. I can't remember the number, but I believe it's in the 650s somewhere. It's also in the subdivision and development regulations, which is a smaller pamphlet, but nonetheless it's regulations. It says that most of the time municipalities may take up to 10 per cent of the original property in terms of municipal reserve and that it's at the discretion of council. Now, a lot of municipalities would take the full 10 per cent. If a guy was coming in with 120 acres, he would therefore be acknowledging ahead of time that he was going to probably lose 12 acres.

That land would be held in reserve by the municipality and had to be used only for certain things: schools, parks, et cetera. That was in the act. Municipalities, however, could do something with that land as they chose, including selling it if they decided to do so in a proper process. Nonetheless, when developers are looking at this inclusionary housing and when developers are looking at land reserves that they're having to give and other costs, if they can set aside a clause in the act of up to 10 per cent, it would make sense to me that in the regulations you might consider – or they may have considered and decided against; I'm not sure which – to put in some sort of a percentage to have a quantifier or a limit on what these developers and/or landowners may have to look at in terms of the risk potential of their projects.

Would the minister have any comments on that, please?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Sure. I appreciate where the member is coming from with that. During our discussions with the cities and with the other folks that we've included in these conversations, inclusionary housing did come up in a big way because we know that in Alberta we need more of that. Again, when we talked about the percentages, what kept coming up over and over again was the ability to work with the developers on it long before that development was started. That's what was worked on with them, that every situation is going to be a little bit different. So if we set a certain number on it, then you have to meet that threshold or be above or below it, whatever the case may be. It wasn't something that the people, when we talked to them, and the cities were in favour of. They wanted the accountability to work with the developers because if some

developers wanted to go higher than that, they wanted that ability, too, just depending on the developers. We wanted to use that I guess flexibility is the word I'm looking for. There was the need to do that. That's why we left it that way, so that they can work together on that and make sure that they collaborate in the best way that's going to fit the community in whatever part of the city they're going to build.

Mr. Stier: I thank the minister for his response, and I believe that one of my colleagues will be following up.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Chair. Good morning. I just wanted to stand and speak to this bill. I would not assume to know even a tenth of what my colleague who just spoke knows about this bill. I received correspondence from BILD, which I think probably the minister is aware of. I just wanted to be able to bring this to the attention of the House so that those members in the House realize that once again we have an issue here, I think, of transparency that has been lacking and also consultation that has been lacking.

9:50

Now, from what I understand, "the Premier committed to working with industry and meeting with BILD Alberta in a letter dated November 20" and "failure to consult with industry on Bill 32 will be addressed." They talk about how they're going to address that in future days. What they say is that BILD "was notified . . . moments before a joint press conference with the Municipal Affairs Minister and the Mayor of Edmonton." Here's the association that is going to be building the homes, the communities, the subdivisions, and they are only addressed and notified moments before a joint conference with Municipal Affairs. As they put it, BILD Alberta is extremely disappointed.

Now, it goes on to talk about their concerns, but I don't need to stand here and talk about their concerns because I believe the Member for Livingstone-Macleod has done an adequate job with that, but it once again smacks at the concern that I've been hearing from Albertans for three and a half years now, which is that there is an agenda and that the government is pushing the agenda at breakneck speed and that there are unintended consequences.

You know, this is a big bill. It's a complex bill. I will readily admit that I have not dived into this bill as deeply as I would have liked just because of some other labour bills that came forward, but it is concerning when you think about the ramifications of this bill, the potential ramifications of this bill to Alberta and to the ability of a potential NDP government balancing their budget, their ability to provide . . .

Mr. S. Anderson: What does this have to do with anything?

Mr. Hunter: The minister just asked what this has to do with it. I'll explain it if you'll indulge me. It looks like he hasn't had his coffee this morning.

The issue here is that this government can promise a whole lot of stuff, thinking that they're going to be able to get into government by promising those things, but the question that Albertans all have on their mind is: if they promise something, can they fulfill it, and can it be sustainable? With this government's past record, I can't see how Albertans would agree that they have the ability to be sustainable in their promises.

They're either going to balance the budget in 2023 or they're not, but Albertans have to make an electoral decision in 2019. They can

make all sorts of promises to Albertans, saying, “We’re going to give you this; we’re going to give you that, and we’re still going to balance the budget,” but, in reality, it’s about as good as their forecast to be able to balance the budget in 2019. I think that was the first time you guys said you were going to balance the budget, and now it’s 2023. So it seems to be a moving target. I’m wondering whether or not this is one of the components that is going to knock off their budget, just as the differential is, just as all of the other factors that they’ve brought in that are destroying the revenue streams for any future government.

This is the reason why I have concerns about this. Again, I haven’t looked into this. I will say that in terms of the positive – I don’t want to leave on a negative. It is Christmastime, so I’ll leave with a positive. I imagine that being able to come to a consensus on this was very difficult, so I give the government and the minister credit for being able to sit down with both of the two largest cities in Alberta to try to draft an agreement. I do give him credit for that. I applaud his efforts. I just think that in their haste to be able to get something that they can take to the electorate and say, “You know, Calgary, we are better than you think we are; come vote for us” – perhaps they could have thought this thing through and had some meaningful debate and consultations with someone as substantial as the BILD Association of Alberta.

That’s the only thing that I wanted to say here today. I do appreciate the opportunity to speak on this bill, but once again, as I said, the Member for Livingstone-Macleod is the guru on this issue, so I will abdicate to his better wisdom on this.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

Ms Babcock: Thank you, Madam Chair. I’d like to start with a quote from Mayor Don Iveson.

This new funding formula recognizes the key role our city and region have in driving growth in the provincial economy. It offers a sustainable funding mechanism that will allow us to plan our upcoming budgets more effectively, and continue to build out critical infrastructure that will benefit over a million people living in the Edmonton Metro region. Most importantly, this is a deal that respects our taxpayers, by fairly balancing their interests as Edmontonians and as Albertans.

To address the previous member’s comments, you know, the municipal sustainability initiative was never meant to be a long-term solution. It had an expiry date. We had extended that. Our minister has worked in-depth with both large cities and the AUMA and the RMA and is coming to agreements on all of those things with the different parties involved. There’s been a lot of consultation on this bill, Madam Chair.

For the first three years the funding amounts are specified, and after that they’re subject to changes in provincial revenues and provincial fuel sales. Those can go up and down, so the cities are putting that on the line. They think that they are going to be able to handle that as large cities. You know, we’ve heard consistently from the cities that their long-term capital planning is held back by not knowing how much money they will receive from the province in a given year. The lag ensures that the information required to calculate the funding is available long before the funding is provided, so we’re not doing this in last-minute stints. This will provide certainty to the cities about how much they can expect to receive, enabling more informed decision-making.

Madam Chair, you know, this is a permanent program. This is the reason that we have to replace MSI. It’s historic. It’s the first of its kind in our country. It provides funding tied to provincial revenues, which will ensure predictability and sustainability for our large-city

funding. It’s a much better program for municipalities and Albertans. That’s why we didn’t just extend MSI again.

Provincial revenues. They’re going to include all of the province’s consolidated revenues as published in the annual report minus the revenues associated with the climate leadership plan, and that means all revenues other than the carbon levy and contributions to the Climate Change and Emissions Management Act. Simply put, this is designed to make sure that municipal funding isn’t dependent on policy choices of the provincial government, to address the previous member’s comments. One of the goals of this process was to give our cities more predictability in their capital funding so that they can make more informed fiscal decisions. This section further strengthens that predictability by making sure that provincial changes do not ripple through to the cities, so they can make needed investments in their communities even if the province reduces its own revenues.

The minister and this government recognize that all municipalities require that stable, predictable infrastructure funding. You know, they were able to reach an agreement between Edmonton and Calgary through the charter process and now move on to the next phase in partnership with the associations as stated, the AUMA and the RMA.

Alberta has the highest provincial funding of municipalities in the country because we understand the importance of local infrastructure to all Albertans. During the depths of the recession we resisted calls from the opposition for cuts and maintained strong supports for each of our municipalities. I know that in my local municipality it made a big difference. There are projects that were on and off the books for almost 20 years, Madam Chair, that had never been accomplished, and now those projects are moving forward in a timely fashion.

This is all about their long-term funding sustainability and predictability, which MSI has never given to any of our municipalities. There was a commitment made in the spring to have the new system operational by the time MSI expires and to legislate that system, and that is the commitment that the minister has continued to make.

It’s important to note that all other municipalities have stable funding until 2022 under the current MSI framework. While in Budget 2018 Calgary and Edmonton took a \$456 million cut over three years, we’ve committed to making sure that Alberta’s mid-sized cities, towns, villages, MDs, and counties are able to meet their infrastructure needs. We believe that a legislated capital funding framework will allow these communities to continue to build and thrive, and we’re committed to making sure that happens. We’re taking the time that is needed to get this right. There’s been a good amount of consultation, and there will continue to be consultation as the current MSI program, again, doesn’t expire until ’21-22. We won’t rush the details of the important agreements that the minister is working on.

10:00

This funding is going to allow neighbouring municipalities to partner on projects that benefit the entire region and recognizes that all residents of a region utilize the same infrastructure, whether they live in Calgary or Airdrie, Edmonton or Sherwood Park. I know that the EMRB has had some discussions with the minister on this as well. This program will help communities work together to build the type of province that Albertans expect and avoids the costly duplication of infrastructure within the same region. We can all work in our little silos, Madam Chair, and we can have something good in every small community and every mid-sized community and have something really good in each city, but when we work

together as a region, we get something great when we pool our resources and we no longer work in silos.

It's important to notice that neighbouring municipalities can take that collaborative and co-ordinated approach to local infrastructure. It supports jobs, creates a regional economy that offers more opportunities. This is something that I see in my region every day. The trimunicipal region of Stony Plain, Spruce Grove, and Parkland county is much more successful because they work together so well. Details of this new regional program are going to be developed and released closer to when the program launches in 2022, but we expect eligible projects to be of regional significance that support the economic development of an entire area.

You know, Edmonton and Calgary have worked really closely with this government to help us achieve our path to balance. They were reduced in funding, again, by \$456 million over three years. No other municipality in Alberta saw their funding reduced. All other municipalities have enjoyed constant funding throughout the downturn, and they will continue to do so until 2022.

We remain committed to legislating a replacement for MSI for all municipalities, and there's lots of time to do that. We're working very closely with the AUMA, the RMA, and the municipalities themselves. You know, everybody needs sustainable, predictable, permanent capital funding, and that's why we're engaged in continuing these discussions, so that we have a long-term revenue-sharing agreement with the province. The infrastructure needs of Albertans in mid-sized cities, towns, villages, MDs, and counties are important. Our commitment remains to form a legislated capital funding framework so that these communities can continue to build and thrive.

Madam Chair, as a rural MLA I will say that I am very impressed with the work that the minister has done on this file working with our big cities and that he continues to do working with the RMA and the AUMA every single day.

I will end with one more quote if I can find it. I just wanted to have a conversation about – I can't find it, unfortunately, so that is all I have to say.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

[The clauses of Bill 32 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

[The voice vote indicated that the request to report Bill 32 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:04 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For:

Anderson, S.	Gotfried	McCuaig-Boyd
Babcock	Gray	McKittrick
Bilous	Hanson	Miller
Carlier	Hinkley	Miranda
Carson	Hoffman	Orr
Ceci	Horne	Piquette
Coolahan	Hunter	Pitt

Cortes-Vargas	Kazim	Rosendahl
Dach	Kleinstauber	Schreiner
Dang	Littlewood	Starke
Drever	Loewen	Stier
Eggen	Loyola	Sucha
Feehan	Luff	Sweet
Fitzpatrick	Malkinson	Turner
Ganley	Mason	Woollard
Goodridge		

10:20

Totals: For – 46 Against – 0

[Request to report Bill 32 carried]

Bill 30

Mental Health Services Protection Act

The Chair: Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to bring forward the next important step in ensuring that Bill 30, Mental Health Services Protection Act moves forward to indeed protect the mental health services that so many Alberta families are counting on these days.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

I am incredibly proud. As has been mentioned, there are two main sections to this legislation, one that regulates health professionals that are billing themselves as counsellors or therapists and the other that regulates residential treatment facilities. Both are incredibly important in making sure that we address the mental health crisis and substance use challenges that we are facing in our province. I've had the honour of discussing this bill with many of my colleagues both in this House, in the hallway, and in my office. It's incredibly important legislation.

I heard a desire to ensure that this doesn't impact peer-support programs, including 12-step programs, and I want to assure all hon. members that I completely agree. Those are important, valuable programs, and it's important for peer mentors to have an opportunity to continue to support each other without fear that a college could negatively impact that. It's my understanding that it wouldn't, but to ensure certainty, I have the following amendment and the requisite number of copies to provide that absolute clarity to all hon. members and all Albertans.

What I'm proposing is that we amend the bill as follows: that section 29(3) be amended by adding the following after 3(3) of this proposed schedule 3.1.

(4) For greater certainty, in this section, "counselling relationship" does not include providing emotional, social or practical support between individuals who share a common lived experience.

I think this is fundamental to what my colleagues have been saying. I don't believe that the legislation would have negatively impacted that as the college will be defining the role of therapist and counselling therapist, but I appreciate the concern that they had in wanting to ensure and enshrine that that would not be the case, Madam Chair. That's why we've proposed this amendment as it is.

Some might say that we should remove addiction counselling from this bill entirely. I don't believe that that's the solution. In fact, this morning I was reading – and I'll be happy to table this piece during tablings later in the day – in the *Vancouver Sun* piece The

Missing Harm-reduction Measure? Regulating Mental Health Professionals. I'll just read a few sections. It says:

For more than 20 years, mental health professionals have warned that unqualified or bad practitioners are killing British Columbians. Finally, the overdose crisis may have pushed their concerns on to the public agenda.

The journalist goes on to say:

Anyone in British Columbia can build a website and sell their services as an "interventionist" promising to rescue people from the throes of addiction and get them into care.

In fact, without government regulation, anyone can claim to be a mental health professional, use the name "counsellor" or "therapist", set up a private practice and charge whatever they want.

The problem has festered [in the last] two decades. But now, it has taken on more urgency as the province [British Columbia, this being] enters the third year of a public health emergency due to the illicit-drug overdose crisis, and an increasing number of grifters are taking financial advantage of desperate families willing to pay anything if it helps their loved ones.

Madam Chair, it is with that same thrust – and this is very timely. Just this morning in British Columbia this piece came out calling on the federal government to indeed regulate addictions therapists and folks working in that space. That is why I think it's really important that we do regulate it through our bill, which is the case in the bill as proposed, but that we do provide that certainty to folks working on a 12-step program and a peer-to-peer program. That's why my amendment didn't go further. That's why my amendment specifically outlined that the counselling relationship doesn't apply to peer support or people with lived experience working in a mentor-type way.

I believe that Albertans seeking relief from substance use have a right to know that the people supporting them are held to a high standard and that they are regulated health professionals. People who are counsellors or counselling therapists have called on governments to do this for a number of years, and I am proud to be acting on that. So have the family members, as we mentioned when we introduced this bill, called for that greater oversight. With this amendment I believe that we will ensure both, that peer support, like 12-step programs, is supported and that counselling therapists are regulated, including addiction therapists, which I believe has the ability to save lives, Madam Chair, and help Alberta families. What's more important than that? I don't think much. It's hard to think of anything more important than saving lives and helping families. That's why I'm proposing this amendment, to give that clarity to all Albertans and to my hon. colleagues and to make sure that we do move forward with that as our utmost focus.

With that, I'd be happy to address questions or concerns regarding the amendment. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Dr. Starke: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'd like to thank the Health minister for this amendment. I do think it improves the bill and provides for that. I guess I just do have one question, though, and it's a clarification. The last few words of the amendment include the words "who share a common lived experience." Certainly, we know that the folks who do share a common lived experience are very valuable in terms of their expertise and that lived experience. But what about those who do not share the common lived experience? Are they then disqualified from providing these services? I just want to make sure that we're not being unnecessarily too restrictive. I mean, I certainly agree

with the value of people who have a shared experience, but I know there are also people that provide counselling that don't necessarily have that common shared experience. Would they be unable to provide those services? If I could get some clarification.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Member.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much for the question. Certainly, if they want to deem themselves to be in a counselling relationship, if they're there to counsel, they would need to become part of the college and become counsellors. The lived experience piece speaks to the 12-step programs like AA, NA. Those are all peer-support programs that are run by people who have lived experience. Our intent is to specifically carve this out in terms of addictions expertise and say that the legislation, and specifically the requirement to become part of a college and a regulated health professional – if you're coming to this through those avenues, through your lived experience, then you're not billing yourself as a counsellor or as providing that counselling therapy relationship.

That's why if people that don't have lived experience want to work in that field and want to do it as a profession in a trusting relationship, they should indeed become part of the college, regulate, and make sure that they are providing that assurance to the public and to their clients. But for people who are part of programs like NA and AA and other community-driven peer support, faith based and non faith based, they're not billing themselves as being health practitioners, and therefore they shouldn't have to be part of the college if they don't choose to act in that way. That's the rationale.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Minister.

The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Madam Chair, and through you to the minister. Minister, I appreciate the effort with this amendment in terms of peer-support groups, which I think is what this addresses in the amendment. What is not addressed specifically is counselling services provided by a minister or a pastor in a church setting in terms of addiction or mental health treatment not going under the banner of the college. The question is: will the pastor or minister within a church be able to provide counselling services to their members?

10:30

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Member.

The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I want to start by addressing the Member for Airdrie, who spoke about her constituent – I think his name was Mike – in previous iterations of this debate. It's exactly for people like Mike, who are coming to this from that angle as, you know, a peer mentor with common lived experience, that we crafted this amendment, this wording to specifically make sure that we had carved that piece out.

Just to reiterate, this is about people who are talking about themselves as counselling therapists and using that title to bring in folks from outside. In terms of the religious relationship with somebody who's your spiritual adviser and who may be counselling you from that angle, spiritual counselling isn't part of the legislation. Certainly, when you're working with somebody through a religious organization, that is the focus of the counselling that they're providing. The legislation isn't intended to address that relationship with somebody who's working spiritually. It's around people who are billing themselves as being health professionals,

counselling therapists, and using that health title, essentially, and making sure that it has a parameter around it, just like a paramedic or a pharmacist or a doctor has a title around it.

You might go to your spiritual adviser, your priest, your pastor, somebody else in your spiritual community, a mom to get advice that relates to those types of things in your life, maybe even health advice, but you wouldn't go to them with the same level of relationship as you would to your physician. That definitely is a unique kind of relationship that this piece doesn't apply to.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any other members who wish to speak? The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's an honour to rise and speak to the House on this Bill 30, the Mental Health Services Protection Act. I want to take this opportunity, and I'm hoping the government side will listen . . .

The Deputy Chair: Just to clarify, we're on amendment A1. I just wanted to make sure that you're aware of that.

Mr. Yao: Yes. On this amendment.

The Deputy Chair: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Yao: I appreciate the fact that we have been trying to work together to get this bill good. We have been relaying information back and forth. With all due respect, I don't believe that this amendment addresses the issues that we're trying to accomplish. This is a good bill. Mental health is a serious issue, as we all know. I guarantee you that when this session is over, there are going to be 87 people who have fewer issues with mental health because of getting out of this House here. Honestly, Madam Chair, I was pretty jaded coming into this session, and then I see this bill. Up till now we get no answers to questions in the House. The government side ultimately outnumbers us on everything, gets everything through. Then I saw this bill, and this bill gives me hope that we can work together and address these issues surrounding mental health.

What my references are in regard to this bill are learning lessons from other jurisdictions, learning from Ontario, as an example. Ontario, as your staff mentioned, did this back in 2007. There are some interesting things to note about Ontario's legislation. It started in 2007; it doesn't get finished and proclaimed until December 31, 2019. Why? They recognize that it was a very comprehensive bill, that it captured more people than they recognized, so much so that they felt it necessary that they had to put in a buffer to allow the college to evolve and develop. That's another aspect of this bill, that any time we're asking a college of professionals to develop their own institution that will be self-managed, we aren't necessarily sure about what rules they're going to impose.

When you have the 14 groups come together with all their representatives, they're looking at anything that touches mental health, and they're going to be bringing all that into their jurisdiction. The problem with that is that our society still doesn't understand mental health. We are still evolving, we are still learning, and we will be doing that for a long time because, you know, it is complex. Those are the concerns.

But what we can do is that we can learn from other jurisdictions. Again with Ontario, they started theirs in 2007. It won't be finished until the end of next year, but if you were to look on their psychotherapist website, you would see information pertaining to things like a draft policy. These draft policies – they have a couple

on there – are quite firm in their language because they've taken 11 years to develop this. They only released this information this year. I will be tabling this later. They provided a list of activities that may be deemed to be outside the control of active psychotherapy.

A registered psychotherapist

may do some of these activities as an ancillary activity within the scope of their psychotherapy practices, but providing only the services below would not constitute the controlled act. These activities include, but are not limited to . . .

and there's an entire comprehensive list of descriptions of some of the services available that they have excluded from their bill that they figured out after 10 years, after a decade of studying this, after a decade of working through, after a decade of imposing rules on a lot of these groups and then finding out that there's a bit of kickback. We can learn all the lessons from them, or we can experience them all ourselves. I don't want to go through – I'm someone that learns from our history.

This is so important. If you look at this list, it describes everything from 12-step programs and problem-solving to rehabilitation to spiritual or faith guidance and counselling to teaching social skill development, emotional regulation, from counselling and support, advice giving to instruction, assisting in resolution of dilemmas. The list goes on. I will table this. It is a very comprehensive list of all the groups that they recognize they had to exclude.

Again, mental health is something that we're still learning about. We're still evolving to that point where we can grasp everything surrounding our mental health, and it is so important that we get this bill right. This minister has to understand, this government has to understand that by instituting this bill, you are planting a seed, a seed that will develop and grow. It is a bill that is responding to the needs of a good portion of our community as well as a group of professionals that want regulation so that we don't get the very same things that you said. But it is so important that we can learn from Ontario on these issues.

Again, with that in mind, we're trying to make the bill better. In discussions with counsel, I'd like to add a subamendment to this amendment.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, if you can just wait until I have copies at the table before you speak to it so that I can make sure it's in order.

Mr. Yao: Certainly.

Now, we only have a few minutes to absorb this, so I hope I get this right when we discuss it.

The Deputy Chair: Just wait.

Mr. Yao: Yeah. Absolutely.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member. Your amendment will be referred to as SA1. Please go ahead.

Mr. Yao: I move that amendment A1 to Bill 30, Mental Health Services Protection Act, be amended by striking out part A and substituting the following:

A Section 29(3) is amended in the proposed Schedule 3.1 as follows:

- (a) in section 3 by striking out subsection (2), and
- (b) by adding the following after subsection (3):
 - (4) For greater certainty, in this section, "counselling relationship" does not include providing emotional, social or practical support between individuals who share a common lived experience.

10:40

What I'm trying to do is that I'm trying to capture the essence of Ontario's policies that they are finalizing right now, putting some buffers in to ensure that so many of these groups don't get affected. If we're concerned about a lot of these groups providing some of the services that they require, I would certainly consider and recommend that we send that aspect of this bill to committee to discuss it further. Again, when you're discussing spiritual groups and crisis intervention and just overall case management, clinical follow-up and discharge, coaching, co-ordination services, parental co-ordination, mediating, problem solving, psychometric testing or assessment, there's a reason why they thought that these things need to be excluded from the psychotherapy bill in Ontario. They recognize that it is complex. They recognize that people are complex, that mental health is complex, and that we can't necessarily address all issues immediately through this legislation. We have to give some aspects time to evolve and to grow.

As I stated previously and other times I've spoken on this, I mean, at the heart of mental health is the ability to talk to somebody and to be able to vent and express your concerns and have someone listen and understand, and for 99 per cent of the issues, for 99 per cent of the people that is more than enough. How many of the members of this Legislature walk out of here and talk to a loved one or a friend about what they have experienced in this Legislature today or yesterday or for the last four years? We all do, I hope. Even as a young paramedic student these are the things that they emphasize with us, that the one thing you need to understand if you're going to deal with the stresses of the stuff that you're going to see is that you need to be able to have someone to talk to. Okay?

Since people have been around and we have had civilization, the institutions that have actually been providing that kind of support have been our religious institutions. People who need someone to talk to would be able to talk to their pastor, their priest, or their holy person, whatever they may be. That's what they're there for. That's what we emphasize in our religion, the ability to help one another. I mean, that alone, the spiritual and faith guidance counselling, is quite specific in this draft policy that's been proposed by the Ontario psychotherapists.

I can't preach enough about how important it is that we get this bill right, because it does affect mental health. We need to just adjust it. These are just slight variations to this. Again, it's not to say that we ignore the aspects that you identified that we learned from British Columbia as well, but we need to send that perhaps and study it further. There's nothing to say that we can't take portions of this and study it through a committee and do proper outreach and try to come up with some more firm professional credentials for people that would say that they are mentors or counsellors.

Madam Chair, I truly hope that the government will consider this, that we will fix this bill to make it better than what it is. As I've said, we have been working with your Health ministry to figure this out, to draft it. I provide them with all this information, I provide them with my amendments, and in turn you guys provide me with an amendment. But, again, that amendment that you're providing doesn't quite address it. So I'm really looking for your support in approving these amendments that I'm trying to provide. They are not spiteful. They are not vengeful. They are not partisan. This is about getting it right for our mental health workers. Again, it is about learning from our peers. It is about learning from Ontario, who have been studying it since 2007, and only in 2018 did they come out with some draft proposals and say: we need to exclude all these things because we were overreaching and we were overbearing.

Again, when you develop a college, we are making assumptions about what this college is going to accomplish. We are trusting their professional instincts to provide that guidance and that structure for mental health workers. But with that, they are going to embrace all of them. They are going to take them all under their jurisdiction. They are going to be telling groups that they cannot provide certain therapies or provide certain counselling. Again, a lot of those groups don't necessarily work with your description of those who live a common lived experience, as the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster has identified.

We need to get this bill right because this is about mental health. If we do not, we risk exposing many people who would ordinarily get supports from certain groups, and they may be discouraged from that. At the same time, I recognize what the minister is saying about what's happened in British Columbia, where you get a lot of fly-by-nighters. In Fort McMurray, with the fire, I saw hints that there are a lot of unregistered therapists and whatnot. Their intent was good, but again we ultimately don't know what quality they're providing. I understand what this bill is trying to provide. We are trying to ensure that quality. But, again, we can't knock out so many other groups that provide the type of counselling that the majority of the population can absorb, manage, and feel good about afterwards.

I would certainly like to hear from the minister on what her thoughts are on this subamendment. Again, this is part of some subsequent amendments to address the issues that we're trying to accomplish here, and that is to learn from Ontario and figure things out.

You know what? There are other issues surrounding this bill that I have concerns about. Again, it's about consulting. How many times do we have to teach you how to consult?

If I just might point out one group that this bill will affect, and it's called the Canadian Addiction Counsellors Certification Federation. This is a group that has managed to get nation-wide certification for their counselling sector. I guess what is affecting this is the fact that this is the group that manages all of the counsellors that are on our federal military bases and in all of our indigenous communities. With our indigenous communities and our military bases, this bill can potentially knock out those people from getting the counselling that is presently being provided to them.

I've received information from the Canadian Addiction Counsellors Certification Federation. They have over a thousand members in this province operating as counsellors. They are concerned that this equates to one-fifth of the total counsellors that are certified here in this province. They are concerned that because of this bill a thousand of their members are going to be excluded, that every indigenous reserve in our province and every military base in our province is going to have counsellors knocked off their premises, that they won't be able to function legally due to this bill. This is a big concern.

Let us be clear: this group does support regulation. They were the first ones to be able to accomplish that at the national, the federal level. But this bill, as they've identified, could potentially knock them out because they have not been included in this college. They have not been asked to participate. This is a group that represents one-fifth of the official members in this province. So that is concerning.

It is interesting to note that of all the associations that are a part of this bill, none of them are addiction counsellor associations, unless you can clarify that for me. I did not see anything in that list that indicates that there are specific addiction counsellor groups in there. They weren't even included in the discussions.

With that, I thank you, Madam Chair, for this opportunity to speak to this House about this very serious issue that I believe we're all working together to come to an arrangement on.

Thank you so much.

10:50

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I know that when some people use the term partisan, they mean it in a derogatory way. I just want to clarify that I absolutely did this work thinking about the values of the party that I was elected to represent: the values of working people, the values of ordinary families. It was in that effort that we crafted this legislation, working with folks who were incredibly negatively impacted by people who took advantage of them in a time of extreme need.

I want to clarify that, absolutely, we talked to people that work in this field. The Health Sciences Association, which many paramedics are members of and also represents many people who work in the addictions world, has been lobbying successive Conservative governments to make this change, to protect their profession, their title, and the work that they do, for years. I'm glad that as an NDP government we worked with them to make sure that we are helping protect the profession and protect patients.

I also want to add that I think that the proposed amendment would weaken the legislation. I think that not only are we learning from things that have happened in Ontario over the last decade – it's true that they passed their Psychotherapy Act in 2007 – but we also have Nova Scotia who had the Counselling Therapists Act in 2008. New Brunswick has the Licensed Counselling Therapy Act. Quebec had marriage and family therapists incorporated into their order of their legislation as well, Madam Chair.

Definitely, I think that we need to retain addictions counselling in this legislation. Taking it out would be incredibly dangerous to the profession, to people who work in this field, who we have absolutely worked with to make sure that we get this right, but also dangerous to people who count on people who call themselves addictions counsellors to be held to a high standard, to make sure that they are conducting themselves in a way that is regulated, that is professional.

When I think back, again, to the bill that we just passed, I believe unanimously in this House, not that long ago around protecting patients from regulated health professionals who may violate them through sexual misconduct or sexual assault, if we pull this section out, if we exclude people working in the addictions field, we don't provide that same level of protection to those patients, and I think there would be real harm to the people of Alberta and to the legislation.

Not only are we learning from what I'd see as the gaps in these other jurisdictions that pass legislation, but again we are learning from the extreme hardship that is being faced by families in British Columbia right now. There are calls ongoing in that jurisdiction for people to act before more people are taken advantage of, by creating a college and a regulatory body to govern people working in the addiction counselling field.

I am speaking in strong opposition to this proposed subamendment. I believe that it would undermine the intent of the bill and the protection that we've been called on to bring for people working in Alberta, but I appreciate the interesting arguments that were put forward by my hon. critic.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the subamendment. The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Yao: Okay. I guess, Madam Chair, just to clarify the lessons that they did learn in Ontario. Even the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster pointed out that the government's description regarding those who live a common lived experience still excludes a lot of groups in here. Again, without taking the time to go into the nuances and understanding the very details of the bill – I know that the government has received this list, the draft policy, of activities that do not constitute the controlled act of psychotherapy. There's a reason why they came up with this list after 10 years in Ontario, that only now, this year, did they release this list. It was because of all the issues that they addressed.

Again, this government has the right intention – the legislation, legislators have the right intention – but it is the college that is ultimately going to create the rules and regulations. They are the ones that are going to look at anything in mental health. Think about that: anything that reflects mental health, which is virtually everything. Any type of medium where you're talking to another person about an issue would be under their purview.

I mean, if we have to look at this list, if I have to read this out, just so you understand some of the things that they recognize, that are only descriptions because they don't even have titles for so many of these things – and there's a reason for that. It's because of all the issues that they found were impairing the process. Advocating – simply advocating – was out. Applied behavioural analysis is out. Case management is out. Clinical follow-up, care, and discharge planning is out. Coaching is out. Co-ordinated services, including parental co-ordination, is out.

Counselling and support includes advising and advice giving, instruction, assisting in resolution of dilemmas, assisting in improvement of coping strategies; with subheadings for crisis intervention and management, including de-escalation, safety planning, referral to other services; information, advice, and knowledge transfer; instructing; intake and referral. Even hypnotherapy is knocked out of this, and mediating, milieu therapy. Just so you guys understand what that is – and I don't say it with a very good French accent – it's the psychotherapy in which you control their social environment, who they interact with, right? Addicts: sometimes you want to keep them away from their regular friends, who might bring them down a certain path. Then monitoring; problem solving, including information, advice giving, 12-step programs, social skill development; psychometric testing or assessment; rehabilitation; single-session counselling; spiritual and faith guidance; and teaching are in here.

I guess the point is that in 10 years – sorry, 11 years because this has only been released this year, and they started the process in 2007 – they recognized that there are so many nuances to all these issues, that they couldn't put a descriptor for a lot of the people that were providing these services. But they also recognized that it's a step-by-step process, and this government can also recognize that it's a step-by-step process. The intentions are good, but what you're doing is planting a seed that will grow into a beautiful, beautiful bill. They recognized that they were overreaching on a lot of their stuff.

What we're trying to do is confine the descriptions of the people that we're impacting to give it a little bit more flexibility. Again, these things are going to evolve and grow, but the variable that we cannot control is the college that you are creating with this and the rules that they are going to impose on so many of these groups. By not including them in the discussions and now creating a group that

is going to oversee them, this is going to create great difficulties for a lot of these institutions that I just described. These are institutions, these are groups that are in every one of our 87 constituencies, and every one of them is going to be affected by this, depending on what the rules are that the college creates.

You can't tell me that you can't – our obligation is to allow that college to grow, those professionals to develop it based on their understanding. But, again, when addictions counselling isn't even included in the group and you have a federal group that wasn't even consulted on this, you know, that's tough. There's nothing to say that we can't study these things, send that portion to committee, and try to figure it out with the college that is being developed. There's nothing to say that we can't do that, that this government doesn't have it within their abilities to do that.

I implore you guys to consider this amendment and help me with the definition of addictions counsellors. That's what this is about. We're trying to influence the definition of addictions counsellors with this amendment, okay? If not, again, we risk pushing out a lot of groups with that. I don't know if I can convince you guys any further of this. Again, this isn't a spiteful change. This isn't partisan. This is about ensuring that so many of the groups that help our community aren't knocked out.

11:00

We need to learn from another province. We need to learn from the biggest province in our nation, the province that is considered to be the most progressive, the province that only this year released a list of things that: "Jeez, you know what? We were overreaching. We were overbearing." They recognized that they still have to study these things, as we all do, because we still don't understand mental health.

If anyone says that we have perfected the science of mental health, they're daft. Okay? We are so far away from understanding all the nuances of our brains and how we all work and how we are wired, and we need to get this right.

This is a good bill. The intention is fantastic. Again, these mental health therapists have been asking for this for a long time, but so have all the other health professionals. You know, this minister prides herself on the fact that they approved the paramedics, which I was, to become a proper college, and some other health professions. The thing is that we took a long time to evolve to that state, and I agree that we had to take time because we had to develop our own repertoire of skills and stuff like that, just so we understand how these colleges work. Those are my peers. Those are other paramedics saying: "You know what? We have the skills. We have the knowledge that we can do pericardiocentesis decompression, that I can stick a needle into someone's chest and I can pull those fluids out or that air out and save that life." That is something only a doctor could do. We had to prove that we could do that in the streets.

We had to get a doctor to say: "You know what? I've worked with you guys. I understand your quality and your skills. You guys know how to do landmarking. You understand anatomy and physiology. I know that you can do this truly life-saving treatment that only physicians can do." We had to demonstrate that over years, that we could do chest decompressions, that we could do a cricothyroidotomy, that I could do an RSI, that's rapid sequence intubation, where I could give a patient a lot of medications and drugs to sedate them in order that I could breathe for them.

It took time because before that we were ambulance drivers. Our job was to get people into a vehicle and get them to the hospital as quickly as possible. It was only after the Vietnam War, when all these medics from Vietnam, American soldiers, came in and joined their fire services, that they recognized that, hey, they can provide

medicine in the streets. You know who they were inspired by? A good Canadian, Bethune, a physician who went to China and Asia and helped out providing medical services in the field during some bad wars. But I digress.

The point is that colleges need time to evolve and develop, and if we impose these rules on them now, we may be enabling, even though their intentions are good, that they're actually restricting a lot of the services that we need in our communities, that we don't have quite that definition for. With that, I implore this government to please consider this recommendation and limit the colleges' ability to embrace all aspects of mental health, which is everywhere – so many groups provide that – that you consider this and that we do an evolution on this, evolve.

With that, I'd ask for any help on that. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Just very briefly, I want to ensure that the hon. member is aware that actually addiction counsellors are captured by the Ontario legislation. They just fall under the definition of psychotherapy or psychotherapist. They are actually encapsulated in this, and taking them out of our legislation would not just be a harm to the international comparator, who the hon. member's leader, I think, said was the heartbeat or economic engine. I forget what the word was.

This member talks about the most progressive province. I'm pretty proud of Alberta and the work that we're doing here with our health professionals to make this work, align with the needs of Albertans and with the people working in the field. Again I recommend that we vote against this. The amendment is indeed pulling out – for anyone who's looking at the hard copy of the bill, it's page 23, the left-hand side of the page, subsection (2), which actually talks about the actions that addictions counsellors take. I think it's incredibly important that we keep that in the legislation for certainty of the profession and for public confidence. I again strongly recommend that we vote against the proposed subamendment.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the subamendment?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[Motion on subamendment A1-SA1 lost]

The Deputy Chair: We are now on the original amendment, A1. Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would just like to refer to this amendment. I will say that mental health issues are extremely important. It is an issue that all of us need to be concerned about and aware of. Quite frankly, it probably affects everybody's family, all of our families, extended families in some way or another. While I applaud the amendment that has been put forward by the government to include peer counselling, I am concerned maybe a bit more about the implication partly with regard to the newspaper article that the minister used to support the movement going forward.

I guess some of my questions to the minister on this would be, first of all: does the minister have any figures or facts with regard to how much counselling occurs in this province? How many

clients are served by government medical addictions treatment versus what I would call nongovernmental – in other words, private – whether they're for profit or nonprofit? The majority of them are probably nonprofit. What's the percentage? How many people are actually being treated by either those currently under the authority and regulations of the government and those who are currently not, which this bill would hope to achieve?

Then following up on that, the newspaper article that was cited gives the implication that all of those services that are not under government control and mandate, all of those private services, are somehow disreputable, somehow dishonest to clients, that somehow all of them are providing terrible services. I will agree that there are some individuals out there who are providing inadequate and inappropriate services, and they need to be addressed. But to advance the bill on the implication that all other services that are not government-controlled are somehow terribly defective, terribly abusive, I think, is a mistake, and I don't think it will do anyone any good.

I guess I would ask the government, then, in that regard: does the government have any actual, real statistics on the government-controlled and -mandated individuals and facilities that actually report to us on how well they are doing, how successful they are in their treatments? Generally government reporting gives us procedural reporting, it gives us statistical reporting, and it gives us busyness reporting. But I'm asking about real health outcomes, real recovery results. How many people that go through government facilities are actually successfully able to overcome their addiction and stay unaddicted for a year, two years, five years, whatever the number might be? I guess in that regard I just felt the urgency to rise and ask these questions.

With regard to a story – actually, it's more than a story – a letter that we received from an Albertan just recently, it says:

Our journey started with my son in grade 7, we visited many doctors and psychologists . . .

To be clear, these are the government-approved and -authorized ones.

. . . who either wouldn't share with me what was going on in their discussions . . .

Here's a family with a child. Family support is extremely important in any kind of mental health intervention.

. . . or [they were] prescribing Vitamin D and another prescribing nausea medication that those on chemotherapy take. This ultimately led to a suicide attempt . . .

under the management of government-authorized addictions counsellors,

. . . and being admitted to ACH mental health unit for 3 weeks where they focused on sleep therapy and referred to youth addiction. Youth Addiction is a voluntary program and they were unable to provide any meaningful treatment to a youth in active addiction. Things continued to spiral out of control as his addiction condition continued to progress – we landed back at ACH mental health unit for another 3 week stay. This time when he was released we were under the care of a [government-authorized] psychiatrist from ACH who saw my son once a month basically to renew his prescription for anxiety and sleep medication.

Not a lot of help and counselling there.

She even told me after about the [third] followup appointment that she believed that he was [fully] recovered. In hindsight nothing could have been further from the truth. She did refer us to the Youth addiction outpatient program at Foothills. After many months waiting [that's helpful] for our assessment, Dr. Chang advised that my son had two choices, go into treatment at [a] Youth Addiction site out of town or Woods Home voluntary program. My son ran and it took us many terrifying hours to finally find him and with the help of the police he was admitted

to Foothills [again] and after a night in emergency he was transferred to Unit 26. While on Unit 26 they put [my son] through extensive testing and [the doctor again] advised us that we only had one option – The Alberta Adolescent Recovery Centre. Our lives felt like we were on an out of control merry go round in a [real] horror movie! It was at [Alberta Adolescent Recovery Centre] that we finally found a treatment centre and counsellors who understood the situation and how truly sick my son was. After 10 months of treatment and no government funding, we graduated.

11:10

So here's my question to the minister: how is this legislation going to guarantee effective and adequate real treatment to truly help people so that we don't end up with more stories like this under government-approved, -authorized, and -mandated medical help and control? We need a broader, wider, fuller solution.

I'm not advocating that we should allow people who are scammers and abusers to exist, but I also want to know: in the process how are we actually going to create a system that isn't just about busyness and bureaucracy and creating a monopoly for a certain group of professionals so that they can have their profession protected and have a franchise on something that excludes everybody else when, in fact, it's the other people that probably provide the majority of counselling services in this province and in many cases do the best amount of work?

In this case, the government-authorized person had a terrible experience and had to go to a nonprofit with no government funding, no government authority in order to get the kind of help they needed. Those are just some of the questions I have. Again, I'm in favour of the bill, and I'm in favour of the amendment, but what I really want to see in Alberta is really effective treatment, and just government authority will never, never do it.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thanks very much. I'll be happy to respond to the questions.

The first question that the member asks is about the percentage of people that are in facilities that are run by AHS or contracted by AHS versus facilities that aren't. This is the exact reason why we need this legislation, because there is no way that there is any kind of reporting or evidence given to the people of Alberta to be able to make those kinds of decisions. They operate in their own silos without any oversight or accountability.

One of the pieces that this legislation will enable is the ability to answer that question once all of the residential treatment facilities are registered. It will be about a year, probably, for that process to unroll. By this time next year they should all be registered, and we should be able to have some better accountability to the people of Alberta, particularly people who are making choices that are literally life and death in trying to save the lives of their loved ones and themselves.

I just want to tell about one more piece that relates directly to the member's question. It was actually a facility in the member's own riding, where the family that stood with me on the day we brought this legislation forward talked about how they took their son to that facility because they trusted that he would be safe there. What happened is that he went to a storage shed, I believe the mom said, that was unlocked, and he consumed what was essentially poison. She thought it was antifreeze or windshield washer fluid of some kind.

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

Having some oversight would say things like: poisonous substances need to be controlled, they need to be locked up, they need to be secured. If somebody does consume a poisonous substance, you have an obligation to call EMS and to bring in health professionals or to take that person to a health facility to get them help. Instead, what happened, according to the mom and according to the fatality review, is that this young man, Taylor, suffered for many hours. Eventually he was brought to a hospital, but it was too late, and he died.

There was a fatality review, that was completed in 2010. He died in 2007, so it took a number of years. They said that regulating and having oversight of these facilities potentially could have saved his life. That's my summary of it. Those weren't exactly the words, but that was the recommendation from the fatality review, that there be oversight on this. The government of the day said: "Yeah. We get it." And now it took a new government for us to bring in this protection. This is really about giving answers to the questions that the hon. member has asked.

The original amendment – I think we're still dealing with A1 – is about making sure that peer support programs can continue on without nervousness that they might be hampered in some way. That's why we brought forward this amendment, to make sure that there was absolute clarity. We've looked at other jurisdictions and at what's been done there, and we certainly believe that peer support programs – AA, NA, 12-step, and others – have a role to play in society in making sure that people are connected and have supports outside of residential treatment facilities or other types of substance-use treatment facilities in an ongoing way.

Again, I'm still hoping that everyone will support the amendment. I'm happy to have been able to address the questions, and I look forward to being able to answer them when this bill passes and there's some information that is brought in and able to be shared more publicly to give that certainty to all Albertans.

Thank you.

Mr. Orr: I thought I'd just respond briefly. Yes, I'm fully aware of that situation, and I'm not surprised it got raised. I will say, though, that part of the situation there – and I agree about the importance of locking up controlled substances – is that it was supposed to have been locked up, but it was accidentally left open. The reality is, too, that the individual actually did not notify anyone that he'd even taken anything. Nobody knew, and he was hanging out in his room.

While I sympathize with the family, I think it's a little bit unfair to blame the facility overly much because they have actually gone on over the years. They have become fully accredited with a number of different agencies. They've grown and spread. They have instituted all kinds of practices that actually have made them into a very good facility, but still the government will not – they've tried for 12 years, quite frankly, even though they're accredited, to be cited on the Alberta government website as a treatment facility that is accredited. They're continually refused.

There are many facilities that have made mistakes, and quite honestly government facilities sometimes make them, too. So my real plea is: how do we focus away from just the bureaucratic process and actually create effective, safe health care that produces, really, health outcomes and not just numbers outcomes and statistics? That's my real concern.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1?

Seeing none, we'll call the question.

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

The Chair: Any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to Bill 30?

Mr. Yao: On the main bill?

The Chair: Yes. Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Madam Chair. We need to ensure that this bill is good and has an adjustment period to ensure that all the aspects of this bill are firm. Again, it is about learning the lessons from other jurisdictions. In Ontario they put in a transition period of 12 years. The Ontario Psychotherapy Act was proclaimed in 2007, but they were given a 12-year buffer, which they call a transition period, which ends on December 31, 2019. The reason is that they did recognize that by empowering a college, they didn't necessarily have all the assurances as to who it was going to impact, because mental health is such a broad subject. Again, we see the result of their review and research and real-life experience over 11 of those 12 years. They came out with that list, which I read out to this House, that talked about a description of activities that were excluded but empowered to continue on.

With that, Madam Chair – and I'd be looking at any friendly amendments to this – I'd like to move an amendment.

The Chair: This will be known as amendment A2.

Go ahead, hon. member.

11:20

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Madam Chair. In this amendment I move that Bill 30, the Mental Health Services Protection Act, be amended as follows. In part A section 28 is struck out, and in part B section 30 is struck out and the following is substituted:

Coming into force

30(1) This Act, except section 29, comes into force on January 1, 2029.

(2) Section 29 comes into force on Proclamation.

What we're trying to do is recognize that we as bureaucrats, as politicians may not understand all the nuances, all the idiosyncrasies of the mental health profession. Though we are empowering this college to be developed and to set out rules right away – and there's nothing to say that they cannot set out many of the rules right away, immediately. But it does give a buffer, a 10-year buffer, for them to work out all the aspects of it. Please recognize that Ontario gave theirs 12 years. We're that much more efficient here. We can do it in 10 in Alberta, right?

Mr. Ceci: We can do it in one.

Mr. Yao: We can do it in one? Well, you know what? That's another aspect. I'd be looking at any friendly amendments to this, but the point is that we need time. A year might not be enough, quite honestly, because it's the unintended consequences, sir. It is the unintended consequences that we get with this. In Ontario they figured it out. They put in 12 years, and only in year 11 do they come out with amendments. We need to give our health professionals, our mental health professionals, time to figure this out.

Again, you know, one group that is very prominent that has concerns about this is the one national/federal mental health group that we have, the Canadian Addiction Counsellors Certification Federation. They weren't even included. That's one-fifth of the members in this province that could potentially be knocked out.

With that, Madam Chair, I certainly ask that the government side consider this friendly amendment adding some sort of buffer in order to allow the college to evolve and develop without impairing

so many other institutions and groups that we have a hard time putting into a box, putting into a descriptor.

With that, Madam Chair, I thank you very much for this opportunity to speak to the House, and I hope that the government side truly considers this amendment. Thank you.

The Chair: Edmonton-Manning.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Madam Chair. I've been listening for the morning. I have a couple of comments, specifically to this amendment. I can't support this amendment based on, well, actually, quite a bit of what I've been hearing this morning. We talk about the importance of mental health. We talk about the importance of supporting Albertans and addressing the concerns around addictions and mental health and the urgency that is attached to it. For me, to see an amendment that says that we should wait 10 years until we put legislation in place to actually address the urgency of the issue is a little counterintuitive.

Just to give you a little bit of background, I've worked in addictions and mental health most of my career. I actually did my very first practicum as a social work student at AADAC, before it became Alberta Health Services, a long, long time ago. I understand the dialogue that is happening around ensuring that the people that are supporting Albertans through their addictions and mental health are actually people that are certified.

The reason for that is that this isn't about government versus nonprofits versus private health care. This is about the fact that we need to ensure that the people that are working with people with mental health and addictions are trained in the areas that they're working in. Coming from that background and coming from working in social work – I worked at Boyle Street in the inner city, which was primarily a hub for addictions and mental health – there wasn't a single person in that nonprofit or any partner that I worked with in youth mental health, in youth addictions that wouldn't be willing to be registered and willing to, like, be held accountable to their profession.

People that work in this area understand the importance of being educated, understand the importance of having that expertise. They understand that they need to be continuously upgrading their training and learning about the new drugs that are being introduced into the community, the different strategies around managing behavioural and social counselling. There's also recognition in the profession that people have different expertise. I'm a registered social worker, but I don't do clinical social work practice because I don't have the expertise to be a clinical social worker, which means that I don't do one-on-one counselling. Even within our professions there's a recognition of skill-based education and being able to do the work that we're doing.

So, for me, having an amendment that says that we should wait 10 years to figure out who should be included in this and who shouldn't doesn't address the issue that we are talking about today, which is that we have a responsibility to support the area of addictions and mental health, and that includes supporting Albertans that are needing the support. But it also supports the workers that are in that area because it gives them a guideline around the expectations of their profession, and there is nothing wrong with that.

When we hear the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo speak about when he was working as a paramedic, the importance of them being registered and being part of an association, well, this is the same thing. Addiction counsellors, mental health workers want to be part of an association. They want to have those guidelines, those expectations. Unfortunately, I can't support us waiting 10 years to set those regulations in place.

The Chair: Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd just like to clarify. All those things that the Member for Edmonton-Manning has expressed: I'm not saying that those things get knocked out or are delayed by 10 years. Again, it gives the college 10 years to figure out unintended consequences.

Just so we can clarify what unintended consequences are, in looking at that draft policy that the College of Registered Psychotherapists of Ontario figured out and put on their website, again, it is everything from advocating to teaching, with spiritual and faith counselling and co-ordinating services and peer-to-peer supports and everything else in between there. Those were the unintended consequences that they discovered were happening, that were impacted by this college. Eleven years it took for the College of Registered Psychotherapists of Ontario to release this list and say: "You know what? These are all excluded from our purview." Ontario's won't even be finished till 2019.

The work will still start. The college will still develop. There's nothing to say that they can't put in some of their rules and regulations almost immediately, especially if they have some things developed and figured out. But we need to give them time to understand all the unintended consequences. Again, we're empowering one institution now to develop everything regarding mental health. The consultation didn't include every group, specifically the Canadian addictions counselling group, as one example, one federal group that manages one-fifth of the therapists in our province currently.

Again, I just implore this government to consider this 10-year option or if you choose to have some other wording in there that would still address the issues of ensuring that they have a buffer of 10 years or some time to figure out the nuances, that no one in here is an expert on. Okay? Let's be clear about that. There's no one in here that is an expert on mental health, and we're putting all our weight and resources into one group, experts. I would question that.

With that, I'll certainly say thank you very much, Madam Chair, for this opportunity to speak. I would certainly ask the government if they would consider any kind of a buffer to develop this, or, as Ontario put it, a transition period. They put in a 12-year transition period. Surely, we can do a 10-year.

Thank you very much.

11:30

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2? Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a very brief comment. The Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo has made a few references to the CACCF not having the opportunity to be involved in this conversation. I just wanted to note that FACT-Alberta, the Federation of Associations of Counselling Therapists in Alberta, has been listening to the debate and the conversation, and they have made a comment online via Twitter noting that they have on a few occasions invited the CACCF to join with FACT-Alberta and work together with them but that there hasn't been mutual interest in that. They do also note that two of the members of the CACCF do in fact sit on the steering committee for FACT-Alberta. So they are indeed involved in the conversation. They are indeed part of the group that's been discussing this, perhaps not quite in the way that the member might have wished or feels that it should have taken place, but I felt it was important to have some clarification on the record that they have not indeed been shut out of the consultation. They have the opportunity to participate

through their involvement on the steering committee and through an ongoing offer of collaboration with FACT-Alberta.

Thank you.

Mr. Yao: Just to clarify where my comments came from, Madam Chair, I only spoke with the head of the Canadian Addiction Counsellors Certification Federation and expressed their concerns through the head of the institution. Obviously, there might be discrepancies even within their own organization. Again, we spoke to the head of the organization, who expressed concerns about this bill, who expressed concerns about the thousand people that they represent, who expressed concerns about the thousand members that they have who are going to be knocked off every indigenous community as well as every federal institution, which includes our military bases.

Ms Hoffman: Don't make stuff up.

Mr. Yao: I'm sorry; what?

The Chair: Hon. members, though the chair, please.

Mr. Yao: Oh, no. This is directly from them.

The Chair: Through the chair, please.

Mr. Yao: I'm going to bite my tongue on that heckle that I got from the Minister of Health. I could say that about everything that she's ever done in this House.

I'll leave it at that.

Mr. Orr: Madam Chair, I would just like to clarify a comment I made a few minutes ago. I think I may have misspoken or misheard; I don't know which. I did not intend to say that organizations should not be held accountable for what happens on their site. What I do mean to try to suggest is that all organizations across the spectrum, whether they're government or not, should be held accountable. There needs to be a fair and equitable assessment of that, and it shouldn't be used as a way to sort of attack private or nongovernmental institutions. As the Member for Edmonton-Manning has said, this isn't about that.

I think it needs to be kept clear that there needs to be a fair and equitable accountability across all, and the assumption that's implied that nongovernmental organizations are somehow unaccountable or irresponsible or out there creating all kinds of havoc is not entirely a fair statement. I'm going to want to assume that the government isn't trying to imply that, but sometimes it almost comes across that way. I'm just asking that there be a fair and equitable approach. Some of the institutions are actually doing a lot of good out there.

In response to the minister's point – and it's a valid point; it is an important issue – I think, though, that we should also point out that that very same facility has done a massive amount of good work in many people's lives. They have hundreds of people who actually are in support of what they have done, who have been helped, who have gotten off their addictions, who have learned how to manage their lives and manage the issues. I think we need to keep a balance there. Accountability is always extremely important at every level, but let's also give credit where credit is due.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

The Chair: We're back on the main bill. Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments? The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Dr. Starke: Thank you, Madam Chair. I do appreciate the opportunity to address Bill 30 this morning. Again, as I said during debate on second reading, I'd like to thank the hon. minister for bringing this forward.

I'm not wanting to dwell too much on the previous amendment, but I would say that while we are always endeavouring to craft the best legislation we can in this House, I think sometimes we have to also apply the 80-20 rule, and that is that if you get it 80 per cent right, to try to get that last 20 per cent perfect is, sometimes, in fact, like Voltaire said, perfect can be the enemy of the good. Or as another old philosopher said, better to have a diamond with a flaw than a perfect pebble. This may well be a flawed diamond, but I think we should proceed with the flawed diamond. There is still one flaw that I'd like to get my jeweller's tools out to fix. So I do have an amendment. If the pages will pick it up, I will wait until it's distributed before I read it into the record.

In prefacing my comments, Madam Chair, I do want to say that I think balance is something that I've talked about in this House before. In speaking again, as I did in second reading, about my conversations with the Thorpe Recovery Centre, we talked a lot about the balance that's required. It is, I think, absolutely necessary that there be some regulation of counselling and addictions treatment services in our province. You know, the fact that there is really nothing there currently and that many of the organizations and institutions that provide these services are doing it on a voluntary basis does leave the potential for some, shall we say, abuse or the potential for some people who are not skilled or not properly trained to enter into this very, very important area. Certainly, we know that the whole issue of addictions has been brought into greater focus in recent years as a result of the opioid crisis.

Specifically, in my conversations with the Thorpe Recovery Centre there was concern expressed when I spoke with the executive director about section 12. Just to reiterate, section 12 deals with inspections of accredited facilities. Section 12(1) deals with inspections that occur as part of, shall we say, the general assurance of compliance with the act. So I would call that a routine inspection, if you like. Section 12(2) deals with inspections that occur as a result of a concern over a possible breach of the act or, as my colleague the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View mentioned during second reading debate, the potential that there is some unsavoury practice going on. Certainly, this is something that we would want to see rooted out as quickly as possible.

I mentioned during debate on second reading that I felt, especially when we're dealing with an addictions treatment facility, that the residents in that facility deserve some degree of notice that an inspector was going to be coming for a visit. The Health minister justifiably asked me why an addictions treatment facility should be any different from, say, a long-term care home or a group home and said that, in fact, language in this bill was being lifted essentially word for word from the acts that govern those institutions. The difference, Madam Chair, is that for people who are in a long-term care centre with, for example, dementia or some other specific health needs requiring long-term care, there's no stigma attached to that. There's no stigma, and in fact in many long-term care centres people come and go and visit on a very regular basis.

But if you're in an addictions treatment facility, in a residential treatment facility like the Thorpe Recovery Centre near Lloydminster, you have an addiction, and you're addicted either to alcohol, drugs, gambling, or sex. Those are the four areas that are

being treated at the Thorpe, and I can tell you that there's a considerable amount of stigma attached to all of those. The people who are receiving treatment for any of those addictions I think have a justifiable concern about their privacy. So one of the things that the Thorpe Recovery Centre always does when someone is going to visit the facility is make sure that the residents who are currently there are aware of that so that if some residents would prefer not to be seen in public areas, they have that opportunity to stay in their room. You know, it's just so that people are aware.

11:40

Now, there was some concern expressed that perhaps an institution that was doing some things that were against the regulations or against the law would hide something. I tried to assure people that a four-hour notification was nowhere near enough time to cover up things that are unsavoury. But in speaking again with the executive director at the Thorpe Recovery Centre, I suggested: how about a two-hour notice for a routine inspection only, not for an inspection covered under 12(2). I'm not suggesting that we should amend 12(2) in any way. If there is suspicion of some improper activity going on within a residential detoxification or addictions treatment facility, then I fully agree that the inspector should be able to enter that facility without warrant or without notice. But in the case of a routine inspection visit, I think that in those situations it is reasonable given the sensitivity of addictions treatment and given the need for confidentiality especially, I am going to say, in a small community – I mean, again, it may be a little bit difficult for someone living in a larger centre to appreciate this, but when you're living in a smaller community and you walk into one of these facilities, the chances are pretty good that you will see somebody that you know, and they may not want to be seen by you.

Because of that, I'm going to introduce the amendment that has now been distributed. Madam Chair, you have the original. I move that Bill 30, Mental Health Services Protection Act, be amended in section 12: (a) in subsection (1) by adding "subject to subsection (1.1)," after "at any reasonable time" and (b) by adding the following after subsection (1):

(1.1) An inspector or a person authorized in writing by the inspector shall give at least 2 hours' notice of the time and place of the inspection to the owner of the facility, location, premises or place that will be the subject of an inspection under subsection (1).

Madam Chair, again I stress that this is for a routine inspection that is being done to ensure compliance with the act. I know that the frequency of those inspections is going to be dealt with under regulation, and there are different arguments as to how frequently that should occur. I think this is a needed change that recognizes the unique nature of an addictions treatment facility and the unique nature of the need for the residents of those facilities to at least have the option of having notice and not being in public areas or being seen. People guard their privacy. These institutions do not have a lot of visitor traffic; in fact, they have very little visitor traffic.

Again, I return to what I said in debate on second reading. The Thorpe Recovery Centre has an outstanding 40-plus years track record of treating people with addictions. I think that we should draw on that experience to try to perhaps remove this small flaw in the legislation. I do think that this improves it, and I do think that it strikes the balance between the need to be able to inspect institutions that are perhaps engaged in activities that are not compliant with the regulations or with the act but at the same time providing a balance such that residents of that institution are given appropriate notice that their privacy is being protected.

I would ask for support of the amendment.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Chair and to the member for the amendment and for bringing this notion forward in second reading and having further dialogue with us on it over the last few days. I think that what he's asking for around the ability for folks to be able to guard their privacy is fair and reasonable around routine inspections. Obviously, if it's a safety concern and it's a focused inspection, this section doesn't apply to those. The hon. member understands why we won't be able to give prior notice to the facility and to the residents because we want to ensure their safety. I think that this is a reasonable and fair amendment. I'll be keen to support it.

I just wanted to clarify with regard to some of the information that was shared previously. There are approximately – and we say approximately because, again, not everyone needs to report to us because there is no official oversight or regulation regarding residential treatment facilities. But we believe there are approximately 16 on-reserve that we know of. They don't employ thousands of people. The bill does not impede operations of facilities on First Nations. A person working in those facilities may choose to become a member of the college, particularly if they use the protected titles that the college will have with regard to a counselling therapist or addiction therapist. Elders and peer support are exempt. They are federally funded and are required to meet standards that exceed those in our act that we're proposing. That's a little bit of fact to connect back to the previous speaker.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A3?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[Motion on amendment A3 carried]

The Chair: Any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

[The remaining clauses of Bill 30 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

Mr. Feehan: I move that we now rise and report bills 32 and 30.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek.

Ms Woollard: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 32. The committee reports the following bill with some amendments: Bill 30. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official record of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report? Say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Any opposed, say no. So ordered.

Government Bills and Orders

Third Reading

Bill 32

City Charters Fiscal Framework Act

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour and a privilege to rise and move third reading of Bill 32, the City Charters Fiscal Framework Act.

This historic legislation will help Edmonton and Calgary build the infrastructure they need in a way that will move the province forward. This framework also delivers certainty to the cities by recognizing that they are partners in our growing economy and should share in both the good and the tough times, and this framework respects the province's path to balance and is fiscally responsible. It will improve the quality of life for families who rely on rec centres, pools, arenas, and parks. It will increase the safety of residents with more fire halls, police stations, and water and waste-water systems, and it will reduce emissions through stronger mass transit systems. Bill 32 would also legislate historic long-term transit funding for Calgary and Edmonton so that they can build out their transit networks, create jobs, reduce greenhouse gases, and make our cities better places to live and work.

I want to thank opposition members for sharing their questions on a few key items related to this bill. They are legitimate questions, so allow me to speak to a few of those. There are, in fact, 340 other municipalities that also want a permanent and predictable funding program. I represent three of those municipalities, and I would like to reiterate that we are working closely as we speak with RMA and AUMA on a long-term funding framework for all municipalities. This is because we recognize that all municipalities require stable, predictable infrastructure funding.

11:50

The associations wanted more time to review the approach and talk to their members before they signed on, and I would certainly respect that need. The good news is that we do have time. MSI does not expire until 2022, and all municipalities, including Edmonton and Calgary, will continue to receive MSI up until that point.

Now, turning to the details of the city charter regulations. As has been noted on all sides, these are not part of Bill 32 in a formal way, but as the Member for Livingstone-Macleod has rightly noted, they are related. Let me just make some comments about off-site levies and inclusionary housing.

Proposed off-site levy reforms would allow Calgary and Edmonton city councils, via bylaw, to identify the types of infrastructure for which an off-site levy may be imposed and establish the method for calculating off-site levies. As I've noted, this is already practised in the city of Calgary. Inclusionary housing reforms would allow Calgary and Edmonton city councils, via bylaw, to design and establish their own inclusionary housing program. Bylaw changes to off-site levies or to establish inclusionary housing programs will be determined by city councils, not the government of Alberta, and councils will have to work with developers and hold public hearings to institute any changes as part of a public and transparent bylaw process.

Processes to change off-site levies or establish inclusionary housing programs will have to go through a public bylaw process, and that means ensuring industry input on any changes. There will

continue to be transparency on these issues, and cities will be compelled to work with developers. This is about building smart, sustainable cities that balance the needs of everyone.

City charters, at their very core, are about empowering Alberta's largest cities to better meet the needs of their citizens. I'll remind this House that Calgary city council and Edmonton city council are elected bodies. Councillors are elected in larger wards and represent more people than any member in this House. I believe that these councils deserve the right to work with developers and their citizens to ensure they can grow their cities in smart, sustainable ways, and I believe that they are best positioned to implement inclusionary housing programs to create more affordable housing spaces.

Finally, I believe we should respect locally elected officials and the fine people who work at the city of Calgary and the city of Edmonton to make the right decisions for their communities and their economies. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Stier: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the minister's speech for third reading. I only have a few brief comments. I'd like to say that this has been a complex issue that has been an ongoing situation for many years in Municipal Affairs, and it's good to see that we're making some progress. I'm just not sure how well this is going to turn out, frankly. Funding Alberta municipalities has been a struggle faced by successive governments, and I think it will likely continue to be the case given the current state of the province's finances.

We've always talked on our side of the House here about moving to some sort of revenue-sharing model for municipalities that all municipalities could work with and have – as the minister has said as well – predictable and sustainable funding. Hopefully this will address that, and I look forward to being able to work with this in the future, and perhaps as we return to a better revenue stream in the next few years to come with this province, we can somehow rely on some sort of municipal funding program like this, whether it needs amending or not, and make sure that municipalities receive the funding and stability that they require.

Those are all my comments. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

Ms Luff: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just have a few brief comments on this. Overall, I have to say that it's a good framework, and I'm pleased with the bill on the whole. I do represent a riding in Calgary, and certainly, you know, it provides predictable funding and the ability for Calgary to move forward on key transit initiatives that are important to my constituents, key transit initiatives like the green line and the 52nd Street mass bus transit, and that predictable transit funding is something that's really important and something that I appreciate and residents of Calgary appreciate in this bill.

However, in the short term I do just want to note that I have heard from councillors in the city of Calgary that this does actually represent a cut to municipal funding for the city of Calgary, and it will make it difficult for Calgary to do some of the things that it needs to do over the short and medium term in planning for a growing city. While I appreciate the collaborative nature of how this came about, and I appreciate the predictability of the funding, I do just want to make a note that it does in the short term represent a cut to funding for Calgary and for things that Calgary wants to do.

Ultimately, when I speak to my constituents, municipal issues are some of the things that come up the most often, things like snow clearing, transit, road maintenance, bylaw maintenance, all of these things. The things that really matter to people on a day-to-day basis

are often things that happen at a municipal level. A bill like this really does affect everybody who lives in the city of Calgary, who lives in the city of Edmonton, because it affects how those cities have the ability to pay for the things that residents of those two cities – most of the residents of Alberta live in the two cities now – need and want.

I appreciate the effort that's gone into this bill in order to, you know, work collaboratively with the two cities and provide predictable funding that both municipalities and cities have looked for over a long period of time. I think it's important that we are enshrining this in legislation because what that does is it does provide the predictability and makes it more difficult for subsequent governments to change these rules that are laid out.

Overall, I'm supportive of this bill. It does, I think, have a few shortcomings, but I appreciate the minister for bringing it forward. That is all I wanted to say right now.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any others wishing to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, the hon. minister to close debate.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to close debate, please.

[Motion carried; Bill 32 read a third time]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Noticing the time and the good work that has been accomplished this morning, I would recommend we call it noon and adjourn until 1:30 this afternoon.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:57 a.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, December 5, 2018

Day 59

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

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Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (UCP)
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (UCP)
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (NDP),
Deputy Government Whip
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)

Party standings:

New Democratic: 53 United Conservative: 26 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Freedom Conservative: 1 Independent: 2 Progressive Conservative: 1

Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly

Shannon Dean, Law Clerk and Executive
Director of House Services, and Acting
Clerk, Procedure
Stephanie LeBlanc, Senior Parliamentary
Counsel
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel

Philip Massolin, Manager of Research and
Committee Services
Nancy Robert, Research Officer
Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of
Alberta Hansard

Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms
Chris Caughell, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms
Tom Bell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

Executive Council

Rachel Notley	Premier, President of Executive Council
Sarah Hoffman	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health
Shaye Anderson	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Sandra Jansen	Minister of Infrastructure
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Children's Services and Status of Women
Brian Malkinson	Minister of Service Alberta
Brian Mason	Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Community and Social Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

Parliamentary Secretaries

Jessica Littlewood	Economic Development and Trade for Small Business
Annie McKittrick	Education

STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Mr. Coolahan
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	Horne
Dang	McPherson
Drever	Turner
Ellis	

Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha
Deputy Chair: Mr. van Dijken

Carson	Horne
Connolly	Littlewood
Coolahan	McPherson
Dach	Piquette
Dreeshen	Schneider
Fitzpatrick	Starke
Gotfried	

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Goehring
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Drever	Orr
Fraser	Renaud
Goodridge	Shepherd
Hinkley	Swann
Luff	Woollard
McKitrick	Yao
Miller	

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Shepherd
Deputy Chair: Ms Payne

Aheer	McKitrick
Cooper	Pitt
Horne	van Dijken
Kleinsteuber	Woollard
Littlewood	

Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Wanner
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Babcock	Nixon
Cooper	Piquette
Dang	Pitt
Drever	Westhead
McIver	

Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms Kazim
Deputy Chair: Connolly

Anderson, W.	McKitrick
Babcock	Rosendahl
Drever	Stier
Drysdale	Strankman
Gill	Sucha
Hinkley	Taylor
Kleinsteuber	

Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	Miller
Cooper	Nielsen
Goehring	Nixon
Gotfried	Pitt
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Cyr
Deputy Chair: Mr. Dach

Barnes	Miller
Carson	Nielsen
Clark	Panda
Gotfried	Payne
Hunter	Renaud
Kazim	Turner
Littlewood	

Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola
Deputy Chair: Mr. Drysdale

Babcock	Loewen
Clark	Nielsen
Dang	Panda
Fildebrandt	Payne
Hanson	Rosendahl
Kazim	Schreiner
Kleinsteuber	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, December 5, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly 70 students from Millwoods Christian school who are here to visit the Legislature. The students are joined by their teachers, Jose Reyes and Sarah Inman. I would like to invite all of the students and their teachers to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. minister, I'm glad you chose not to introduce each one individually. Thank you for that.

The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly the students and staff of H.W. Pickup school in Drayton Valley. Some of the people in the gallery today are former colleagues and some are former students of mine, bringing their kids here to see the Legislature. At least one is a former pastor of mine. I consider all of these people special to me as we live in community together in Drayton Valley. I would ask them all to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

And, yes, hon. members, I would remind you of the event we had yesterday, so out of respect for all of the guests and your fellow members, please practise brevity.

The Minister of Seniors and Housing.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Sergeant (Retired) Bill Patton, whose ongoing contributions to Alberta are truly remarkable. After joining the RCMP in 1957, Mr. Patton moved to Blairmore, Alberta. Over the next 61 years Mr. Patton and his family lived in more than 30 communities throughout our province. After 37 years of exemplary service with the RCMP Mr. Patton became active in the RCMP Veteran's Association, serving first as president of K Division, followed by president at the national level. He's been a volunteer in his community for 50-plus years, and he enjoys retirement living in the beautiful constituency of Edmonton-Riverview. Today Bill is joined by his daughter Carolyn Patton, his grandson Dane Patton, his sister-in-law Barb Pearson as well as his brother-in-law John Pearson. I ask them all to please rise and accept the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Dr. Starke: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two guests from the town of Vermilion, Susan and Brian Hodges-Marlowe. Now, Brian recently was recognized with his 10-

year service pin as an instructor in the fire training school at Lakeland College in Vermilion. Susan has served for the past five years as my constituency assistant in the office in Vermilion, for which she will be recognized with an award tomorrow and, I understand, also qualifies her for sainthood. I'd like all of my colleagues to join in giving them the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed a pleasure to introduce to you and through you my constituency assistants, who have travelled here from Fairview. Dianne Nellis and Eileen Coristine do stellar work every day in my office back home, keeping me in touch with my constituents. I know everybody in this Assembly appreciates the work our CAs do while we're here in the Chamber. I'd ask Dianne and Eileen to stand up and please receive the welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and to all members of this House some long-time constituents, friends, and supporters of mine who are visiting the Assembly today. Of course, we know Blake Evans, who's our very talented director of House business. He and his staff do wonderful work on behalf of the government caucus and the Assembly as a whole. His partner, Myfanwy, home-schools their children, dog-sits, and is a member of a very active group of Edmontonians that sponsor Syrian refugee families as they resettle here. Their son Marlowe is deeply into strategic board games as well as Jamaican meat patties, and their daughter Ilya loves music and dancing. I would ask that Blake, Myfanwy, Marlowe, and Ilya please rise now and accept the warm traditional welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Dr. Turner: Mr. Speaker, I've got two introductions today of two nurse heroes of mine. First, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislature a friend and colleague who I've worked with at the Cross Cancer Institute for years, and she was also a teammate of my wife's on several women's soccer teams. Val Kamitomo was mentioned in my member's statement recently on the RAM iron lung exhibit. She worked with polio patients who survived the iron lung. Her late husband, Gary McPherson, was one of them, and she helped Gary lead a fully rewarding life.

The second introduction is for Shirley Fisk, an RN at the Royal Alex for many years. She's also an accomplished cyclist and has represented Alberta on two occasions at the Canadian ladies' curling championship on team Betty Cole. I ask Val and Shirley to rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Begging your indulgence, but I have two sets of visitors this afternoon. My school group will be arriving at 2 p.m., and I do hope I can get consent to introduce them at that point.

I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two members of the Sturgeon bus contract

association. Mr. Dean Millar is the president, and he is here with a fellow bus contractor, Darrel Granger. They've visited me today in the Legislature to discuss their concerns over school busing. I would ask that these gentlemen please rise and accept the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. member, normal practice is that we wouldn't be asking for unanimous consent in the OQP time, but maybe your group will be able to stay.

The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you some members of Islamic Relief Canada. I ask my guests to please rise as I say their names: Imam Sadique Pathan, Mohamed Rahall, and Ayan Abdille. Islamic Relief Canada is Canada's largest Muslim charity, dedicated to providing humanitarian aid and relief within and outside Canada's borders. With operations in over 35 countries Islamic Relief has done a tremendous amount of work both internationally and here in Canada. I thank them for the work they do, and I ask my guests to receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

1:40

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House two great, special constituents from Grande Prairie-Wapiti, Sean and Megan O'Toole. It's not too often that I get visitors all the way from Grande Prairie, but I'm pleased to have them here today. The reason they're so special: Sean is my plumber. I ask them to now please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Members' Statements

Provincial Election 2019

Mr. Gotfried: Mr. Speaker, 1,311 days since the last election, yet for some it seems like an eternity. I could talk about the 46,000 fewer jobs in the private sector; a lack of investor confidence; misguided public policy; regulatory burden; a perception of less than business-friendly government; 167,000 unemployed; 115,000 no longer receiving EI benefits, struggling to make ends meet; lineups at food banks; families falling behind on bills and mortgage payments, fearing foreclosure and homelessness; depression; substance abuse; domestic violence; marital breakdown; and, with great finality, suicide.

But, Mr. Speaker, I prefer to talk about hope of a brighter future for all Albertans and a return to the Alberta advantage. What does that mean to me, to my colleagues, and to Albertans? Reigniting our renowned entrepreneurial spirit, building on the strengths of our world-famous prairie work ethic, taking our rightful place as a free-enterprise leader, and championing our role as a trading nation on the global stage; jobs for new graduates, work experience opportunities for youth, employment options for those with disabilities, and mentorship roles for active agers; jobs for moms and dads to support their growing families; empowering seniors' organizations, recreation facilities, places of worship, and nonprofits to enrich their communities; regulatory certainty, open for business, investor friendly, job creation, and prosperity; and pipelines. Yes, pipelines to world markets. Goodbye social licence croquet and hello to good old Alberta hardball. Real investment, real jobs, real prosperity, and a return to fiscal sanity.

Mr. Speaker, respectfully, election 2019 cannot come soon enough for the Albertans I speak with every day. Let us all remember that forming government is not about power. It is about the privilege of representing hard-working Albertans as we support them in fulfilling their hopes, wishes, and dreams for a brighter future.

Thank you and Merry Christmas to all.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Community Grants in Red Deer

Mrs. Schreiner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past Thursday I had the distinct pleasure of hosting the hon. Member for Calgary-Cross in my constituency. With a gathering of 100 stakeholders it was amazing to learn more about the initiatives and enhancements from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism's community initiatives program and community facility enhancement program.

Focus on the essence of community brought to light the diversity of projects that have been happening in my city over the last three and a half years and a strong recognition of the community champions who are incredibly invested in drawing attention to Alberta's third-largest city. While I have met with most and have written many support letters to encourage their projects, it was a proud moment to look throughout the room to see how CIP and CFEP grants truly make Red Deer a phenomenal place to live.

Red Deerians are invested Albertans. They seek to evolve the cultural experience of our city, and the aforementioned funding streams enable this. During my tenure we have seen community initiatives that are environmentally, historically, and socially responsible and encompass elements that serve to drive the economic stability and viability of growth within Alberta's third-largest city. But what is most influential is the passion and drive that Red Deerians have to make their community a great place to live, work, and raise a family.

I have spoken before on Red Deer being an important hub for the surrounding municipalities who share our resources, and I am eternally grateful to those who push limits to enable the growth of my city. Having this event with the Minister of Culture and Tourism was a strong example that this government recognizes the true potential of Red Deer and those who seek to build upon its legacy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Retrospective by the Member for Battle River-Wainwright

Mr. Taylor: As we approach Christmas, we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, who was and is the greatest gift that mankind has been given. We also recognize the gifts that we have been given from our friends, families, and at times from complete strangers. Today I want to say thank you to my constituents for giving me the confidence and the gift to be able to have served these three and a half years as MLA. Every day that I walk up the steps of the Legislature, I pause and reflect within myself on what an honour it has been to serve here and represent not just Alberta but specifically the constituents of Battle River-Wainwright and their concerns.

The job of an opposition MLA is to hold the government to account and to represent his constituents. These past years I've had the distinct privilege to hold the critic positions for Advanced Education, Infrastructure, and property and surface rights. However, working with the communities has been the most amazing privilege I've had. I've seen many victories I fought for, like the construction of a new school in Irma and a hospital upgrade, and although it was not a new hospital that I was fighting for, we

have an expansion to our existing facility that will include a new ER and a CT scan, that are coming soon. With this, more doctors are attracted, with a better lifestyle because of less on call and a wider range of services. But in the past this has not been the story for our hospital.

Unfortunately, this contrasts with fighting for justice for the Dahl family and the tragic accident that they are still reeling from today. Two lives were lost, one seriously injured, and still many unanswered questions. It is my fervent hope that we all make sure that other victims' families don't have to sacrifice justice and closure for the sake of expediency.

Thank you to my friends, family, and the constituents of Battle River-Wainwright and to my colleagues in the UCP for the gift and the privilege of serving them and serving with them. It's a great honour. I wish you all the best. Merry Christmas.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member, and thank you for your service.

Recreational Use of Public Lands

Mr. Westhead: If it wasn't bad enough that the UCP plans to experiment with private health care, they now propose to privatize Alberta's public lands, some of our best and most important wildlife habitat. Pay to play might appeal to the UCP's well-heeled donors, but the rest of us like to keep those lands just like our health care system, public. Perhaps this is why the UCP is so against protecting Bighorn Country. Maybe they'd rather sell it to their rich pals, too. Alberta Backcountry Hunters and Anglers say that the sale of public lands will be, quote: a disaster for Alberta hunters and anglers. End quote.

In stark contrast, the NDP has worked to make hunting and fishing more accessible. We made hunting more affordable for seniors. We increased tags for elk and deer and gave landowners more opportunity to hunt elk on their property. We reversed a proposed angling ban on the Ram, Clearwater, Kakwa, and North Saskatchewan rivers. We ensured that hunting and fishing would continue in the new Castle parks. We also put land-use plans in place that improve habitat security for elk, grizzly bears, and native trout.

Hunters and anglers are some of the most conservation-minded folks that I've ever met. Now their way of life is being threatened by the UCP's leader, who says that he doesn't want to get bogged down with consultation and threatens to move so quickly that Albertans won't have time to react. For all we know, he's already promised the lands in exchange for donations, just like he's done with car dealers seeking to roll back workers' rights and consumer protections.

Alberta's hunters and anglers and other conservation-minded organizations stand to lose in a big way from the UCP's public land liquidation plans. Nobody who cares about conservation, habitat, or public access to our land should take this lying down. I'm calling on hunters and anglers and everyone who cares about wildlife to stand up against this land grab by the UCP. Let's keep our public lands in public hands.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Christmas Memories

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Christmas is a special time for many Albertans, a time that creates many memories for generations. A few of my favourite memories began as a small child, when my father would pack my brother and I into our car to drive from Sparwood, B.C., to Pincher Creek every Christmas Eve. He would

turn on the Santa Claus report, and we would listen as we followed where he had been seen around the world. We would arrive at my uncle's farm in time to attend the Christmas Eve service at the Mennonite church on my uncle's land. My cousins would always play Mary and Joseph in the nativity scene, and all of us children would receive a small brown bag full of sweets and a mandarin orange. At the end of the service the congregation was invited across the road to the homestead, where we would have our midnight supper.

1:50

On Christmas morning all of my 13 cousins and 10 aunts and uncles along with my grandparents would head into town for the Christmas morning service at the Baptist church, a special church to my family, that my grandparents helped build. We would sing our favourite hymns, and all of us children would sit around on the steps of the pew and listen to the story of Christmas.

We would then head back to my grandmother's house, where the living room was full of games and the largest puzzle a person could find. We would spend hours trying to put that puzzle together.

One of my favourite treats of our Christmas dinner was the fruit punch that my grandmother made. No one knew exactly how it was made, but it sure tasted good. None of us have ever been able to make it since.

Mr. Speaker, as we move into the Christmas holidays, let us all remember those fond memories, whether it be attending a church service, a Christmas concert, a staff party, or just having those precious moments with loved ones. Christmas is about the memories, memories that I can't wait to share with my future children. To those who are celebrating: Merry Christmas and God bless.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and Merry Christmas to one and all. Lovely to hear the seasonal spirit here today.

Pipelines to the East Coast

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I have discussed with the new New Brunswick Premier, Blaine Higgs, his plan to revive a coastal pipeline like Energy East, that was killed by Justin Trudeau's new regulations on up- and downstream carbon emissions. Will the hon. Premier commit to meet with Premier Higgs at the first ministers' meeting to commit Alberta's support to his plan to revive the Energy East pipeline?

Ms Notley: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Kenney: The best answers are the shortest, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that.

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, the new Quebec Premier, François Legault, indicated yesterday that he will oppose that plan even though Quebec is receiving \$9 billion a year from the federal government in net transfers, much of that coming from Alberta and our energy sector. Will the hon. the Premier commit to raise the concern of Albertans with Quebec's Premier Legault that if they want to benefit from transfers that come from Alberta, they should be partners in resource development?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There is absolutely no question that we have already been engaging in

conversations with provincial leadership across the country about the need to find a renewed path for energy infrastructure to the east of Alberta, and we're not going to stop doing that. Now, I don't know that we necessarily need to immediately accelerate to public threats. I think that at this point we'd like to have some conversations with the new leadership in Quebec and to look at ways in which we can come up with some mutually beneficial strategies, and we are committed to doing that on behalf of the people of this province.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Kenney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No one was suggesting threats but, rather, raising the legitimate concern Albertans have when they see billions of our tax dollars effectively being transferred to the Quebec government. While we're in a deficit, they're in a surplus. They have 5 per cent unemployment; we have 7.2 per cent unemployment. They've had years of growth; we've had years of stagnation or economic decline. Is it not reasonable to make the point to the Quebec leadership that if they want to benefit from the resources of Alberta, they should be partners in the development of those resources?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the member opposite doesn't actually spend a lot of time listening to the speeches that I give. I mean, he should because they're sometimes somewhat helpful. Nonetheless, the fact of the matter is that I've been making the point across Canada for well over a year now that Alberta is a net fiscal contributor to all of Canada and that obviously those provinces that are not net fiscal contributors benefit from all of the economic growth and economic prosperity and the downright good, hard work of Albertans. I've been making that case for a great amount of time, and I will continue to make it because Canada needs Alberta, Canada needs Alberta to be working, and Canada needs . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.
Second main question.

Mr. Kenney: We share that sentiment, Mr. Speaker. The point is that the leadership of Quebec needs to hear that clearly from Alberta's leadership.

Federal Fiscal and Energy Policies

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, Albertans contribute net about \$20 billion to the rest of the federation through their federal taxes; that is, we pay \$20 billion more to Ottawa than comes back in the form of federal services. Does the Premier agree with me that the strongest leverage we have with Ottawa on getting market access and a fair price for our assets is those transfers? Will she raise the need for equalization reform with the Prime Minister at the first ministers' meeting?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the net fiscal \$20 billion: I do actually speak to the federal government, to business leaders, to community leaders, to schools, to schoolchildren from coast to coast to coast on a regular basis about the import of Alberta's strong economy. That transfer is not a function of equalization; that is a function of the tax system. We will continue to make the point that all of Canada needs Alberta to do well because, quite frankly, there is not a school, a hospital, a

bike lane, or anything else in Canada that doesn't owe itself to Alberta's industry.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, will the hon. the Premier commit to ask Prime Minister Trudeau at the first ministers' meeting to repeal and reverse his veto of the Northern Gateway pipeline?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the Northern Gateway pipeline is not currently a project that is being pursued, but what we have said is that we want them to review their tanker ban so that those proponents of additional projects that are better put together can get investment dollars and get off the ground. That is exactly – exactly – what we have already done, and we will continue to do that. As I've said before, we need to get our product to tidewater because all Canadians need for that to happen. We will continue pushing for that because we are going to continue to push for Alberta's economy.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the Premier just committed to asking Ottawa to, quote: review its tanker ban. Will the Premier instead ask Ottawa to withdraw its proposed tanker ban, Bill C-48?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, in fact, I've already done that. It's very clear. I've been very clear for the last week and a half that Bill C-48 and the discriminatory treatment of Alberta's nonrenewable energy products need to stop. It doesn't make sense that big tankers full of LNG are okely-dokely but refined product or other kinds of nonrenewable product from Alberta are somehow not. In fact, what we need to do is to be able to operate like an economic country and an economic nation that can punch above its weight and be effective on the international stage. We need to stop these barriers, we need to stop the internal fighting, and we need to get on with building our economy as a whole.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.
Third main question.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, it's unfortunate, then, that the NDP voted against a motion from the United Conservative Party calling on the federal government to withdraw its tanker ban, Bill C-48.

Energy Policies and the Provincial Fiscal Position

Mr. Kenney: In northern British Columbia there is a consortium of First Nations who are in favour of a coastal pipeline for Alberta energy, for Alberta oil, who are opposed to the federal tanker ban, Bill C-48, and are trying to raise funds on the Internet to sue the federal government for failing to consult with them before the Trudeau government vetoed the Northern Gateway pipeline. Will the Premier commit to work with those First Nations who make up the Eagle Spirit consortium?

Ms Notley: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, last week in Ottawa my speech specifically spoke to the Eagle Spirit project. It also spoke to the fact that we needed to allow for the opportunity for a variety of proponents that were able to put together a proper plan, that had proper consultation with all communities and met the standards that were required for them to be able to get off the ground, to attract investment, and to go forward and that, in fact, Bill C-48 barred that and that it was effectively discriminatory to Alberta's product. Those are exactly the points that I made when I was in Ottawa last

week. Those are exactly the points that I will continue to make because, once again, Canada needs Alberta to succeed.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, recently released StatsCan data indicates that the total monthly compensation in Alberta has declined significantly since the NDP came to office, from \$12.7 billion to \$11.8 billion. Is this evidence that the NDP's economic plan is working, that Albertans three and a half years later are making less money?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think that the data that StatsCan relied on is a bit out of date. What we know is that Alberta's average weekly earnings have recovered to postrecession levels and that we always were leading and continue to lead the country in terms of average weekly earnings. We also know that since the depths of the recession the economy has created well over 100,000 jobs. The differential crisis was threatening to stall that growth, but because we took action, we're going to make sure it doesn't, and we're going to continue on the path to recovery, not just for a few Albertans but for all Albertans.

The Speaker: Thank you.

2:00

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, this is very new data. In fact, it's based on income reported in September, just a couple of months ago, and it's down by 10 per cent since prior to the recession, a mark of failure of this government's policy. Professor Tombe at the University of Calgary estimates that if the economy had continued to grow at its same pace that it did prior to the NDP, Albertans would be \$5 billion better off in monthly payments. So why does the NDP continue to threaten us with a further tax increase to the carbon tax given that Albertans are poorer under the NDP?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, you know that the members opposite love to say "prior to the NDP" and just completely forget, of course, the fact that the price of oil dropped by 75 per cent. People aren't buying that. What they do know is that our government has been focused on standing up for regular Albertans. We have been focused on job creation. We have been focused on making life more affordable. We have been focused on protecting those important public services that all Alberta families rely on. Schools, hospitals: those are the things that build the economy. Those are the things that have Alberta leading the country in economic growth. Those are the things that are making us come out of this much differently than those places that adopted . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.
Calgary-South East.

Gay-straight Alliances in Schools

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta Party caucus is fully supportive of GSAs in schools and a student's right to privacy and safety in joining. Recent reports that a child was taken off school grounds by an adult not affiliated with the school without the parents' awareness have raised some questions, though. We need to be clear. A student's right to privacy is intended to ensure their safety, not circumvent existing protections. To the Minister of Education: how is your department going to ensure that any visitor coming into a school has to register with the front office, and can you explain how that policy was overlooked in recent reports regarding GSAs?

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. We know that GSAs are an important part of our schools. GSAs help to save lives in schools. We also need to know that there's a separation between the GSAs and the policy that we built here and field trip policy and so forth. It's my expectation that schools and school boards follow field trip policy to the fullest extent that they have built that policy and that we make sure that kids are safe every step of the way. That is what we're here for, and that's what we will continue to do.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Minister.

GSAs are a vital peer-to-peer support group for young people struggling with bullying and/or acceptance, and the right to privacy is necessary to assure participants that actually it's safe to participate. We also need to be aware that there must be reasonable limits placed upon what activities are appropriate when parents aren't being informed, especially activities that take place off school grounds. To the same minister: is your ministry considering the development of standardized policies around GSAs, what activities are acceptable, and what activities are not appropriate without parental notification?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we all know here, GSAs are support clubs in schools. As I said in my last answer, field trips are a separate issue that has to be dealt with, a separate policy. Schools and school boards have those policies in place. It's very important, the confidentiality of students in GSAs. The idea of outing kids who join GSAs goes against the very grain of what they are supposed to be as a safe and caring place. Anyone who suggests that kids should be outed in a GSA doesn't understand and, in fact, is hurting the basic idea and the kids that are in a GSA in the first place.

Mr. Fraser: Minister, six months ago I asked a very heartfelt question about how your government is working with families of LGBTQ children and those who are supportive and those who are just not there yet. To the same minister: can you point to one specific example of how you're working with school boards to foster an open sharing of LGBTQ students along with their parents and families?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you. Good question, and I thank the hon. member for his assistance on this matter. I'm very proud to say that all public school boards in the province of Alberta, all Catholic schools, all francophone schools, all charter schools, and the vast majority of private schools have built their own safe and caring policies, with faith-based principles built right into them if they chose to do so. I'm so proud of that process that we've gone through over these last three and a half years. But I also must say, Mr. Speaker, that if you take public money for schools here in the province of Alberta, you must follow the law just like anybody else.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

Political Participation

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the past year we've seen the rise of many different political action committees, or PACs, here in Alberta. These organizations often work in the shadows and have a big influence on the elections that we've seen in both Calgary and Ontario. To the minister responsible for democratic

renewal: what are you doing to make sure that PACs don't have an unfair influence in Alberta elections?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our government is fighting for what matters to Albertans, and that includes having control over their democracy. For too long in Alberta, elections were controlled by those who had the most money. I know that some parties think that they can auction off their platforms to the highest bidder. That is not how our democracy works. The first thing we did when we came into office was to get big money out of politics. Contrary to what the members opposite shout at me, we know that banning PACs is not constitutional, so what we did was bring in the strictest rules around PACs in the whole country.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that PACs often also rely on this big money, again to the same minister: what are you doing to ensure that we keep that big money out of politics and PACs?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased that as of last Saturday all PACs in Alberta are now under a \$150,000 pre-election spending cap. That means fewer newspaper wraps, fewer fake calls and radio ads, and a clampdown on these attempts to put big money back into politics. We've all seen the unbelievable rise in third-party advertising over the last few months, and we know that while we'll never be able to stop the Conservatives' rich friends from trying to buy the election, these rules will help ensure that it's regular Albertans, not just those at the top, who have a say in their own elections.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that a healthy democracy relies on people getting out to vote and sharing their opinions, again to the minister responsible for democratic renewal: what are you doing to encourage more Albertans to vote?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That's a great question. Thanks to the changes made by our government, voting over the next election will be easier and more convenient than ever. We're ensuring that all Albertans are enumerated so that when election time comes, they'll be on the list and they'll know where they're supposed to go. We're taking advantage of voting technology to ensure that those who have different mobility needs can vote as easily as possible. We've increased the number of advanced polling days and are ensuring polling stations are in more places than ever before.

Agricultural Methane Emission Reduction

Dr. Starke: Mr. Speaker, the climate leadership plan calls for a 45 per cent reduction in methane emissions by 2025. Now, 70 per cent of Alberta's methane emissions comes from the oil and gas industry, and last year regulations were released to tackle this objective. But 24 per cent of Alberta's methane emissions comes from agriculture, and much of that is from the livestock industry. To the minister of agriculture: what measures are being taken to

reduce methane emissions from livestock production in Alberta, and what results have been achieved thus far?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the very good question. I've had the opportunity to talk with genetics people at the University of Alberta and look at the very exciting research they're doing around feed, around different practices for the agriculture industry to do their part, too, because when I talk to producers and ranchers across the province, they want to do their part to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, including methane. Some really exciting new technologies, that I'm looking forward to being implemented in the future.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Dr. Starke: Well, Mr. Speaker, long on rhetoric but short on results. Other countries have aggressively tackled this challenge. Given that an Australian study that added red algae to sheep diets resulted in an 80 per cent reduction in methane production and given that work at the University of California, Davis, feeding cows a strain of seaweed has resulted in a 55 per cent reduction in methane production, to the minister of agriculture: what comparable work – and give me the numbers, please – is being done in Alberta?

Mr. Carlier: Thank you for the very interesting question, for the little tidbits there, you know, understanding, too, that there are different charcoal products that can be used to reduce methane. But over and above the feeding of the cattle, we have had the opportunity to use funds from the climate leadership plan to assist JBS, a very large meat-processing facility near Brooks, Alberta, to reduce their methane over some of their effluent ponds. There are opportunities right across the sector, Mr. Speaker, to find those efficiencies.

Dr. Starke: Mr. Speaker, given that measures to reduce methane from livestock production have the potential to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions by some seven gigatonnes – that's 10 times Canada's annual output and 28 times Alberta's – and given that the Alberta Livestock and Meat Agency, or ALMA, that used to support research like this, was disbanded by this minister in 2016, to the minister. Alberta is falling behind in areas that we could and should be leaders in. Will you re-establish ALMA or a similar agency so that Alberta can once again assume its leadership position?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and Member again for the very, very interesting question. You know, work is going on. Progress is going on with our higher institutions, with the Alberta Beef Producers, with a major packing plant. Everyone wants to be able to find those efficiencies. Within those efficiencies are some economics as well, using genetics, the science of genetics, where there are now beef cattle that are eating upwards of 400 pounds less feed in their lifespan than they were even a few years ago. Research is continuing to be able to find those efficiencies within our processing.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

2:10 Adoption Advertising Legislation Proclamation

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Adoptive families across this province are still waiting on the proclamation of Bill 206, the child, youth, and family enhancement amendment act, which would allow families to put their profiles online. While we wait, adoption rates actually continue to drop in this province and the list of families looking to give a child a loving home continues to grow. To the minister – I'll ask again because Albertans are continuing to ask me – when will Bill 206 be proclaimed? Why is the government delaying it? It passed in the Legislature over a year ago.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely, all children deserve safe, welcoming, and loving homes, and adoptive families do play a critical role in helping to ensure that children in our province get exactly that. We share the member's commitment to ensuring that the adoption process gives both children and parents the best possible outcomes. We continue to consult with Albertans on next steps, but we do need to take the time to make sure that we get this right on behalf of all those involved.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you. Well, Mr. Speaker, it's been a year. Last week I had the opportunity to speak with the minister's team about this important issue during the Public Accounts Committee. They informed me that their consultations are ongoing and that they have not yet done the work of summarizing any of the concerns highlighted by the stakeholders through this process. Minister, given that your department has had over a year to complete this work, I can only assume that you've not made this a priority, that you're deliberately choosing not to proceed for partisan reasons. Why?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely, what I can say again is that this is about the well-being of children and making sure that the process gives the parents and children who go through this process the best possibility of a solid and sure outcome. It is incredibly important that we get it right, so we are talking to young people, to families, to parents and organizations, and we're working together to look for improvements. I know that the Conservatives might have no problem in rushing through changes to make life harder for families, but we're not going to do that.

Mrs. Aheer: Well, Mr. Speaker, the amount of correspondence that is coming into my office and the offices of my colleagues: these are the messages of desperate families that are wanting to complete their forever loving homes. I need to ask the minister as I head home to chat with constituents over the Christmas holidays: what do you want me to say to the families about why they won't be celebrating Christmas with the child that they so desperately want?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I will say is that when we talk about adoption, it's an incredibly complex issue and, in fact, there's a lot of different perspectives around how we need to proceed as a province going forward. That's why it's so incredibly important to talk to people and to get it right. You know, while the Conservatives want to hurt families with big cuts to health and education . . .

Mr. Nixon: Point of order.

The Speaker: Point of order.

Larivee: . . . we've got the backs of Albertans, and we will continue to fight to get this right and ensure we do what we need to do for the things that matter to Albertans.

Financial Reporting by Government

Mr. Barnes: The Finance minister has sent my friend and colleague the chair of the Public Accounts Committee a letter stating that the Finance department will be changing the way it reports its financial position to Albertans in just over 90 days. My colleague received this letter just yesterday. My question to the minister is simple. Why did you decide to change the way Treasury Board and Finance reports key financial information to Albertans just weeks before a provincial election and your four-year mandate is over? What are you hiding?

Mr. Ceci: Nothing. We're not hiding anything on this side. We have, you know, different groups who've said that we've got the best reporting of any province out there, and we're going to continue to win that race amongst all the provinces and do the best job reporting. What I'm changing is actually going to save the government of Alberta money. I'm not going to be requesting audited financial statements from each minister because we have an auditor who looks at the final audited financial statements of government. We don't need to do that work with 20 auditors and then another auditor. We can do it once, do it well, and save money.

Mr. Barnes: What you're changing is all the red ink the printer is now using.

Given that the minister held notification until after the Public Accounts Committee had completed and he has unilaterally changed how Treasury Board and Finance will report revenues and expenses, including removing all of the department's individual revenues and expenses, and given that on March 31, 2018, the financial report showed that Albertans are already \$67 billion in debt, paying \$1.4 billion in interest annually, with our last borrowing at 3.61 per cent, Minister, what are you planning on hiding . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. [interjection] Thank you.

Mr. Ceci: Nothing could be further from the truth. We're not hiding anything. Though he can say it every time he gets up, it's not true. You know, no information will be lost. No financial information is lost. The Auditor General: remember that person? Actually, they recommend and support the action we're taking with regard to one final audited statement of all the government ministries. Instead of re-creating this and making busy work with 20 auditors, we're saving government money, and we're following the AG's advice.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, curiously, this was disclosed to Public Accounts after our last meeting, and our last meeting, just yesterday, was with Treasury Board and Finance, the very public servants who will be dealing with this change in 90 days on how this Finance minister and this NDP government want to disclose information.

The Speaker: Get to the question.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, all committee members, from both sides of this Legislature, were denied the opportunity to demand answers

yesterday for Albertans. Minister, what are you hiding... [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon members.

Hon member, the question is on government policy.

Minister, answer the question.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll just remind the member on the other side...

Mr. Nixon: Point of order.

Mr. Ceci: ... that the Auditor General supports the work we're doing. The Auditor General believes we don't have to re-create audited financial statements for all of the ministries and then do it again as a government. They trust the information that our ministries bring forward. We're rolling that up into an audited statement at the end, which is reviewed by the Auditor General. Mr. Speaker, we have one of the best reporting processes of any province out there. We are given an A plus every year, and we're going to continue to get that.

Gas Price Differentials and the Carbon Levy

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, now that we have dealt with the oil differential price crisis, it is time to deal with the crisis facing natural gas producers. On Monday in question period the Premier alluded to a working group of industry players that the NDP government is waiting to receive advice from. Sources indicate there is a draft report. To the Premier: who is on this working group, how long has this working group been running, and when will the report be released?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member is quite correct that we appointed a natural gas advisory group, that we've been in constant contact with. We are receiving their advice, and we will be having more to say soon. In addition to pipelines, that we are working for every day, we do have issues with natural gas, and we're looking at things that we can do to help with that. I'd be happy to say more in the next question.

Mr. van Dijken: Given, Mr. Speaker, that Alberta natural gas producers have to contend with British Columbia producers dumping gas onto Alberta's pipeline network, causing prices to drop so low that sometimes gas sells for a negative price, and given that the NDP's fellow-travellers in British Columbia continue to act as an impediment to moving Alberta's oil to market and given that we have not seen any social licence granted by the B.C. NDP government, when will this government admit their climate leadership plan has failed and scrap their job-killing carbon tax?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have been listening to our gas producers and many other producers, for that matter, and some of the things we're hearing are that we need to add more value here in Alberta, and that's exactly what we're doing. A while back we did our first PDP project, and it's well under way, Inter Pipeline in the Alberta Industrial Heartland. It's creating jobs all around the province. A second one is about to announce their FID. With last year's bill we are incenting more projects, that I'll be happy to talk about in the third question.

2:20

Mr. van Dijken: Mr. Speaker, given that these carbon taxes are all pain and will have no measurable impact on our climate or on emissions and given that Albertans recognize that the carbon tax is a sham – it's no wonder the NDP hid the carbon tax from Albertans in the last election – will this government admit that their plan has failed and apologize for the unnecessary pain the carbon tax has instilled on all Alberta families?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member is mistaken. In fact, our climate leadership plan has already reduced greenhouse gas emissions by 11 megatonnes, roughly the annual emissions of Newfoundland. This is not immaterial, and Alberta is showing that kind of leadership. Another thing that we're doing for natural gas, though, is making sure that we are phasing in natural gas electricity sources. This is a very good thing for natural gas producers here in Alberta. It is cleaner burning, obviously. We're making sure that we've got the capacity market in place to make those projects economic as we phase out coal. The previous government obviously failed to do...

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

School Bus Safety

Mrs. Schreiner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know that seat belts save lives and prevent injuries. In 2010 Transport Canada released the results of a study which concluded that in the event of side impacts and rollovers children travelling on our school buses were more vulnerable to injury. This study was not made public until October 2018 and poses a great concern to our Albertan students who are bused back and forth to school daily. To the Minister of Transportation: can you speak to the precautionary measures being currently considered to protect our students who require buses to attend school daily?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. You know, it's absolutely important to us that safety of our children comes first, and it's one of our most important responsibilities. All school buses in Alberta must meet the engineering and design standards of Transport Canada, but some new evidence has come to light which we take very seriously, and I've asked my department officials to look into this and to contact Transport Canada as well as other jurisdictions in order to provide me with the best possible advice to continue to keep our children safe.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mrs. Schreiner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the fact that Albertan seat belt laws govern the safety of all who travel our roads and highways and given that even bus drivers are required by law to buckle up and that there is, however, currently nothing in place which supports our most vulnerable assets, our children, to the minister: can you speak to the importance of school buses being equipped with seat belts?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, the question was very similar to the one I just answered, and of course

the safety of our children is of paramount importance. We are looking at the best way to do that. Based on historical research, the advice was to not have seat belts in school buses. There is new research that would contradict that, and the department is working very hard in order to provide me with some options to make sure that we can continue to have the best practices to keep our children safe.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mrs. Schreiner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that just this school year there was an unfortunate accident involving a school bus in which some of our Albertan children were physically hurt and in shock and given that three-point seat belts would prevent injuries and save lives, to the same minister: can I count on your support to put the safety of our Albertan students first and foremost and address the seat belt issue in our province?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. Absolutely, hon. member. This is something that we take very seriously, and as I've indicated in the answer to previous questions, we are studying this as we speak. I've told the department that I wish to give it the utmost priority, and we're going to come back with the best options in order to keep our kids safe.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Tow Truck Driver Safety

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last fall my colleague from Grande Prairie-Wapiti's private member's bill would have allowed tow trucks to use blue and white warning lights along with the currently permitted amber. The industry repeatedly asked for this change because their work on Alberta's roadsides creates hazards for them as well as members of the motoring public. During last week's snowstorm two tow trucks were struck by passing cars. Minister, you opened up the Traffic Safety Act twice while in government. Why hasn't this legislation been changed?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to remind everyone that safety, including of our tow truck operators, who operate in hazardous conditions, is the highest priority. People are required, if they're passing a tow truck with lights on in an adjacent lane, to slow down to at least 60 kilometres an hour. That's the law. They're treated in that respect the same as any police, fire, or ambulance vehicle that might be on the highway.

With respect to changing the colours of the lights, that is under active consideration, Mr. Speaker, as we speak.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Given that allowing tow trucks to use more visible blue and white warning lights increases safety for all motorists and given that Saskatchewan and four other provinces successfully made this change, to the minister. You can easily make the required changes to this act through regulation. What's stopping you from making this change before a fatality occurs?

Mr. Mason: Well, the hon. member has posed the question as if, Mr. Speaker, if we made this change immediately, people would not be killed in accidents. What we need to do is make sure that

people slow down and move over when they're passing any vehicle with flashing lights, first of all. We are studying the experience of Saskatchewan in particular, that has added blue lights. If that improves the safety of tow truck operators, we will do it.

Mr. Strankman: Well received, Mr. Speaker.

Given that the occupation of tow truck drivers is one of the most dangerous jobs in North America and given that you have repeatedly stated you would look into this since I first asked you about this issue in 2015, Minister, you could commit today to enacting this change immediately and help these Albertans return home safely every night.

The Speaker: Was there a question in there, hon. member? That was a question, was it?

Mr. Strankman: Could the minister commit today to enacting this change immediately?

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Mason: I will commit, Mr. Speaker, to doing whatever is necessary to improve safety on our highways, including for tow truck operators. When I have a clear understanding of the best option to put forward, that's what I'll do.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Carbon Levy and Agricultural Costs

Mr. Dreeshen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Farmers in my riding are sending me copies of their natural gas bills, pointing out the NDP's carbon tax. In just one month a grain farmer spent \$3,761 just on natural gas and a staggering \$1,766 in carbon tax, over \$1,700 in carbon tax in just one month: not rent, not groceries, just a carbon tax. Given the devastating impact the carbon tax has had on Alberta farmers, will the minister of agriculture be a minister for farmers or just their carbon tax collector?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for that slightly odd question. We've done a lot with farmers. We were able to make sure that marked fuel is carbon levy exempted. We've also reduced small-business tax by one-third, which, of course, helps farmers right across the province. From the climate leadership plan we've injected \$81 million to find efficiencies. When I talk to farmers across the province, they want to be able to know: what can they do for their part for greenhouse gas emissions? They have been great stewards of the land for generations and continue to be so.

Mr. Dreeshen: Well, Mr. Speaker, farmers do find it odd that they have to pay a carbon tax on natural gas just to dry their grain on a very difficult harvest.

Given that the minister actually had a very similar response in a letter that was written to him, where he was quoted as saying that Alberta has one of the lowest natural gas prices in North America, to the minister of agriculture: are you actually telling Alberta farmers that the government is eroding our ag industry's competitive advantage with the NDP's carbon tax?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again for the very odd question. You know, Alberta continues to have the lowest taxes

overall, even with the carbon levy, across the country. So to say that we've somehow eroded our competitive advantage, of course, is very false. Through the climate leadership plan we are devoting funds, as a matter of fact a 50 per cent rebate for those farmers that are upgrading or retrofitting their grain-drying operations, looking to find those efficiencies, efficiencies not only to reduce greenhouse gas emissions but economic efficiencies as well.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Dreeshen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, it is odd that the minister is unaware that farmers actually do not want to pay their carbon tax.

Given that the NDP seems eager to pick winners and losers of who has to pay the carbon tax and those who don't have to pay their carbon tax and given that Alberta's carbon tax does nothing to reduce greenhouse gases and given that, unlike other sectors, farmers actually grow plants that remove CO₂ from the atmosphere, can the minister of agriculture explain why hard-working farm families are being forced to pay the NDP's job-killing carbon tax?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

2:30

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yeah. Again for the member, I'll let him know that a lot of farmers use marked fuel for their operations, the kind, you know, that they put in their tractors and such things. Actually, that fuel is exempted from the carbon levy, knowing that that's a big part of their operations, making sure that it works for industry, including the agriculture industry, and that at the same time we'll find those efficiencies. It has been very successful. That's the second member now that says that carbon pricing is not effective. It's been effective around the world. There's a Nobel prize winner who won for coming up with the concept of carbon pricing. It is working, and I'm very proud of that.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Economic Development and Energy Project Approval

Mr. Cyr: Mr. Speaker, as every MLA in this House knows, Alberta is in a tough spot. Many, many Albertans are unemployed or underemployed, and many Albertans also are struggling to put food on the table, fill their gas tank, and send their kids to hockey practice. Unfortunately, it seems when job creators set out to spur the economic activity to create jobs in Alberta, they end up facing overbearing and cumbersome barriers of regulation. To the Minister of Economic Development and Trade: will the government finally admit that its obsession with overregulation is hurting Alberta's international profile?

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, what I will admit is that when the price of oil collapsed, it had a significant impact on every business, every community, every worker in this province. We recognize that it's been a very challenging period of time. That's exactly why the Premier recreated the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, so that there is a ministry solely dedicated to supporting our businesses, helping to take our companies internationally to support new markets. We've introduced a number of different tools that are helping to create jobs, that are supporting our job creators here in the province, that I'm very proud to talk more about momentarily.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Cyr: Given, Mr. Speaker, that one example of regulatory overreach can be seen in the case of Prosper Petroleum, an Alberta company that has been waiting since 2013 for regulatory approval of a new oil sands project, and given that despite finally receiving the project approval from the Alberta Energy Regulator in June, the government continues to sit on an order in council that they need to proceed and given that this project represents nearly 11,000 potential jobs for hard-working Albertans, to the Minister of Energy: can the NDP government tell us why the order in council has not been issued already?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We absolutely recognize the importance of this project to the proponent and the investors, and we also recognize the potential economic benefits for Alberta. The Alberta Energy Regulator submitted a recommendation for an order in council to the Department of Energy this past August 2018. The matter is currently making its way through the decision-making process. I can tell you as Energy minister that my number one focus is supporting our energy sector and the good jobs it creates. We are fighting for pipelines, we are fighting for a better price in oil, and we are fighting to upgrade our resources.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Cyr: Given, Mr. Speaker, that this isn't a unique circumstance and given that according to CAPP there are 13 separate projects waiting for regulatory approval, including projects from companies like Osum, which directly creates jobs in my constituency, and given that these held up projects represent jobs and prosperity for Albertans in a time when they are needed the most, to the Minister of Energy: will this government finally stop standing in the way of wealth-creating private enterprise, streamline the regulatory approval process, and let Albertans get back to work?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know what? I'm very proud of the work that the Minister of Energy has done, working with the AER to look at ways that we can improve efficiency to approve projects. Now, I'm very proud of the fact that Imperial has made a final investment decision to move forward with their \$2.6 billion Aspen oil sands project. Nexen is also investing \$400 million in their Long Lake expansion. There are a number of companies that are making investments in our province that are helping to create jobs. But you know what's not going to help our economy? Firing 4,000 teachers, 4,000 nurses and giving a \$700 million tax break to the richest 1 per cent. That's not going to help.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Private-sector Job Creation

Mr. Gotfried: Mr. Speaker, in spite of what we just heard, there are 46,267 fewer private-sector jobs in Alberta than there were three years ago. The Minister of Finance tells us that everything is up, up, up, and the minister of economic development sings the praises of this government's supposed green shoots. Investors and businesses have lost confidence in this government. To the minister of economic development: given this dismal statistic, can you please tell us when private-sector job creation will overtake job losses in this province?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, I'll start off by saying that we recognize that it has been a very challenging time. The global collapse in the price of oil has impacted every sector, not just our energy sector but all sectors. That's exactly why our government has rolled out a number of supports, including three different tax credits, funds to help companies access new markets as well as supporting our start-ups but also recapitalizing the Alberta Enterprise Corporation, which helps investment come back here into Alberta. These are all very positive moves. We know that there's more work to do, but firing 4,000 teachers and 4,000 nurses . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Gotfried: Mr. Speaker, given that there are 78,733 new jobs in the public sector and given that, as the Fraser Institute notes, "a robust private sector is needed to generate the wealth to support government activity – including government jobs," of course, and given that uncontrolled growth in public-sector employment will inevitably lead to tax increases, negatively impacting private-sector jobs to support them, to the Minister of Finance: how does your path to balance address the need to grow private-sector investment and jobs given your path to dismal performance to date?

Mr. Ceci: Mr. Speaker, we have a commitment of balancing in 2023, and we're doing that by a number of things. First of all, we're cutting out all that waste that was left behind by the Conservative government, things like sky palaces, an air force, golf memberships, and other things. We're getting back to balance by finding their waste, we're getting back to balance by diversifying the economy, and we're getting back to balance by making sure Albertans have good schools and hospitals and places like that to get a better education and health care.

Mr. Gotfried: Mr. Speaker, it's interesting. We see robust investment in job creation in the U.S. in their energy sector, but given Alberta's flat GDP, reduction in total employment, record unemployment, lower negative interprovincial net migration, dismal job creation, and depressed tax revenues and given the flight of over \$40 billion in foreign direct investment on your watch and given that the wealth and job-generating engine of the private-sector activity is faltering, to the minister of economic development: can you tell Albertans today, right here, right now, how you expect to bring back investor confidence and create more good, stable, mortgage-paying jobs in Alberta?

Mr. Bilous: Well, I'll start off, Mr. Speaker, by – I don't think that the members opposite forming government would bring back investor confidence. We'll start with continuing with a government that supports not only the public sector but the private sector. You know what? A lot of international companies that are looking at setting up shop north of the border are looking at things like high-quality health care. They want good schools for their kids. They want a high quality of life. All three of those we offer here in Alberta, including continuing to be the lowest taxed jurisdiction in the country. We have some of the best talent. We are investing in our postsecondaries. That's how we're going to attract companies, by having high-quality talent and the right regime.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
The Member for Calgary-Bow.

Flood Mitigation on the Bow River

Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Residents from my constituency who reside in riverfront communities suggest that limiting the 100-year return period target flow rate on the Bow River in Calgary to 1,230 cubic metres per second, as addressed in the city's Flood Mitigation Measures Assessment report, will not be sufficient to protect these communities from damage from groundwater flooding, that constitutes about 80 per cent of the damage from flooding events. Can the minister update this House on flood mitigation measures on the Bow River?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the hon. member for her advocacy for the people of Calgary-Bow. Of course, we're investing \$150 million for local flood protection projects in the city of Calgary. We made that commitment in 2015. We're making good on it. We also are investing in a feasibility study for our options on the Bow River Working Group. Of course, that means different recommendations on modifying operations at TransAlta, new structural projects. I'll give more detail in the supplementals.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What can the minister say to my constituents who are concerned that to efficiently reduce groundwater damage, the peak flow rate needs to be reduced to below 800 cubic metres per second through upstream mitigation, as was projected as a target in the advance to government on water management for the Bow River basin?

2:40

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're moving forward with short-term options, obviously, for the Bow, and then we need to make sure that we've got all of the correct studies and recommendations in place on the longer term projects. These are large-scale projects. Some of them can be quite expensive, including the addition of Spray Lakes and Lake Minnewanka using Barrier Lake for flood mitigation rather than drought mitigation. All of these things require a government that is committed to keeping the people of Calgary safe and making those investments in the infrastructure to make it so.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the province has recently commissioned a study to further define the upstream options for the Bow River identified in this report, to what extent will the study look to identify flood mitigation schemes that reduce the peak flow rate to 800 cubic metres per second?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Of course, all of the recommendations are being studied for how they are going to keep the people of Calgary safe, including the people of Calgary-Bow. But I can tell you this. Ideological cuts to our infrastructure program will not keep the people of Calgary safe. It will mean no investment in long-term flood mitigation. Waffling on the Springbank dam will not help the people of Calgary, and failing to invest in the Bow will also not keep the member's constituents safe or anyone else in Calgary safe.

The Speaker: We will proceed in 30 seconds with Members' Statements, hon. members.

The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request your permission to revert to introductions.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: Please proceed, hon. member.

Introduction of Guests

(continued)

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 35 students from H.A. Kostash school in Smoky Lake. The students are accompanied by their teachers, Mrs. Ashley Romaniuk and Mr. Murray Lalonde along with their chaperones, Mr. Adam Edwardson, Mr. Brendan Melnyk, Mrs. Stephanie Mahon, Mrs. Roxanne Kozakewich, Mrs. Kelly Klein, and Mrs. Shawne Bishop. I would like to ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Mr. Piquette: Yeah. Mr. Speaker, they're looking forward to my tabling hundreds of letters from the Smoky Lake community, that they brought with them this afternoon, advocating for a new school as well as giving their own letters directly to Minister Eggen. I think the minister knows what they want for Christmas.

The Speaker: Welcome to the Assembly. I'm glad the member got a chance to introduce you.

Members' Statements

(continued)

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Water Fluoridation in Calgary

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Have you ever held your child's hand as they go through intensive dental intervention, pinching your pennies to pay for it, wondering where you went wrong or how this could have been prevented? Well, I, like many parents in Calgary, have, and a lot of this occurred after fluoride was removed from Calgary's drinking water. Since 2011 dentists as well as not-for-profits in Calgary have seen a spike in the number of cases of tooth decay in our city. The impacts are even worse in lower income areas, where families may not have the means to pay for regular dental care. This was all done to save the city only \$750,000 per year. If you add that up per citizen over their lifetime, it's less than one filling.

The fact is that fluoride naturally occurs in our water supply, including some Canadian communities that have the recommended .7 milligrams needed. However, the clear, mountain water from the Rockies only carries .1 to .4 milligrams at best, which is not enough to help prevent against oral disease. Meanwhile, Health Canada's research proves that it has no negative impact on your personal health.

Organizations in our city like the Alex and CUPS support this being a priority as they recognize that community water fluoridation is one measure that helps decrease dental disease within our population. For the Alex, 46 per cent of the children they support have tooth decay. Let's talk about these savings. Is that

costing us in AHS when these infections get out of control, in FCSS for additional preventative measures, or additional resources for our not-for-profits that they have to pay?

Right now Calgarians for Kids' Health are advocating to return this basic right to our city's drinking water, and if you support them, I urge you to get involved. This decision by the city of Calgary in 2011 to override the decision that was made by Calgarians in a referendum has caused a tremendous amount of pain to children and a financial burden to families. I urge the city of Calgary to re-examine this and AHS to be part of the conversation or at the very least to bring this question back to citizens.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

Mr. Cyr: Mr. Speaker, as the chair of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts I am pleased to table five copies of the 2018 report for the Standing Committee on Public Accounts covering its work during 14 committee meetings for the period of January to December 2018 for the Fourth Session of the 29th Legislature.

I want to acknowledge the hard work and commitment of the committee members past and present as well as the LAO and the caucus staff who provided support to this committee and its members. I also would like to thank all of the ministries, agencies, boards, and commissions who participated in these meetings.

This report will be posted to the external committee website, and copies will also be available through the committee's office. Thank you.

Presenting Petitions

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to present a petition on behalf of 1,625 Albertans. The petition seeks to urge the Alberta government

to reinvest at least 50% of any savings anticipated from generic drug cost reductions resulting from the 5-year agreement recently negotiated between the Pan-Canadian Pharmaceutical Alliance and the Canadian Generic Pharmaceutical Association effective April 1st, 2018, into frontline pharmacy services and programs to ensure the delivery of better healthcare for Albertans and the sustainability and job security of the thousands of Albertans employed in pharmacies and drugstores across our province, including Alberta pharmacists who have a demonstrably positive impact on the healthcare outcomes of Albertans and [while they do so] do save the healthcare system money.

I have two petitions, one signed by myself and one I am tabling on behalf of the hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In accordance with section 4(5) of the Election Act the Chief Electoral Officer has prepared a report on the July 12, 2018, by-elections in Fort McMurray-Conklin and Innisfail-Sylvan Lake. Pursuant to section 4(6) of the same act as chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices I am pleased to table five copies of that report.

The Speaker: The Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table 11 letters from various groups that are concerned about the legislation on mental health.

I also would like to table one more letter that comes from the Canadian Addiction Counsellors Certification Federation. I just want to say that this morning I was disappointed by the unparliamentary language used by Edmonton-Glenora and the statement by Edmonton-Centre on this particular issue. I just want to read out one portion of this that the Canadian Addiction . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, I understand you had some concerns that may have been expressed with regard. I don't think this is the time that you raise them. Are there any other documents you could put forward?

Mr. Yao: Just this letter from the Canadian Addiction Counsellors Certification Federation that expresses concerns that they were not included.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

2:50

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the five requisite copies of two documents, both of which I made reference to in my comments on H.A. Kostash school in the House last week. The first document is a collection of the most recent letters from community members in the Smoky Lake area advocating for the replacement of H.A. Kostash school.

The second document is a letter which I wrote to the Minister of Education asking for the same school replacement project.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table a letter from the Finance minister to the chair of Public Accounts, our MLA for Bonnyville-Cold Lake, that clearly outlines that he is going to change key financial information to Albertans just weeks before the provincial election.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise in this House to table the five requisite copies of responses from the Alberta Federation of Labour's Fair Start campaign. Having begun my own search for good-quality, affordable child care for my children some 45 years ago, with little success, and knowing that many of my constituents are doing the same today, I'm very supportive of the Fair Start campaign, which calls for the expansion of the \$25-per-day child care centres pilot.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table a letter from the Backcountry Hunters and Anglers dated November 27, 2018, that I referenced today in my member's statement, where they call the plans to sell off public lands, the liquidation of public lands, a disaster for all Alberta hunters and anglers.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gottfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table various articles in support of my member's statement and question period today. The first one is from the *Calgary Herald*: Suncor CEO Warns Foreign 'Exodus' from Oil Sands May Not Be Over.

Secondly, I have from the Fraser Institute a research bulletin: The Illusion of Alberta's Jobs Recovery: Government vs. Private Sector Employment.

Thirdly, I have an article from Global News: Number of Unemployed Albertans Living Without EI Benefits Remains High, at over 100,000; 133,000, to be exact.

Lastly, from Statistics Canada statistics on the number of unemployed in Alberta in 2018 versus 2017.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier and Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a copy of an article that I referred to this morning in Committee of the Whole for Bill 30. It's a *Vancouver Sun* piece: The Missing Harm-reduction Measure? Regulating Mental Health Professionals. I referred to this in my remarks, and I'm tabling the requisite number of copies in accordance with that.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

Ms Kazim: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the five requisite copies of an editorial from the *Edmonton Journal* entitled Mental Health Professionals in Alberta Need Regulation from March of this year. It outlines the need to regulate counselling therapists, which I'm proud to see our government addressing through Bill 30.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Do any other members wish to make a tabling? The Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Dr. Starke: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the requisite number of copies plus a bonus sixth copy for the minister of agriculture of an article that I referenced in my question from *MIT Technology Review* cleverly entitled Seaweed Could Make Cows Burp Less Methane and Cut Their Carbon Hoofprint.

The Speaker: Are there any other members who would have a tabling? Calgary-East.

Ms Luff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table two documents today, the first being a letter that I wrote to you and sent yesterday just outlining some things that I think would make the Legislature a better place for all MLAs and that I hope to see considered in the next meeting of the Members' Services Committee; secondly, an article from the *Edmonton Journal* from November 25 of this year entitled 'We Are Stuck': Mobile Home Residents in East Edmonton Lose Advocate for Change, just outlining the issues that mobile-home residents are facing in Alberta right now.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Acting Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Mr. Sabir, Minister of Community and Social Services, pursuant to the Premier's Council on Alberta's Promise Act Alberta's Promise annual report 2017-18; pursuant to the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities Act the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities annual report 2017-2018; pursuant to the Protection Against Family Violence Act the Family Violence Death Review Committee 2016 annual report.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I believe we might be at points of order. The Member for Airdrie.

Point of Clarification

Mrs. Pitt: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise under Standing Order 13(2). When my hon. colleague from Cypress-Medicine Hat was asking the Minister of Finance questions regarding secrecy in the way that Treasury Board and Finance were changing reporting of key financial information to Albertans and highlighting the fact that this could appear to be hiding something, a very sneaky way of changing reporting to Albertans, you asked that the member at that time stick to government policy. I can't think of a policy more important than financial reporting of government budgets and financial statements. I would ask that you explain your ruling.

The Speaker: To be clear, I'll just read it. I think I said, "Get to the question." I also said to the member to get to the government policy question. As well, I told the minister to answer the question.

The issue is this. The member at the time was clearly moving on the edges of the parameters of preamble that has vague – vague – barriers in this House, but the member was delving into committee activities, which is an intervention which, in my view, is not appropriate here. If you go to *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* page 513: "When questions have been asked about a committee's proceedings, Speakers have encouraged Members to rephrase their questions, or have ruled the questions out of order." Therefore, that is my reason.

The other point of order you are withdrawing? Is that correct?

Privilege

Obstructing a Member in Performance of Duty

The Speaker: Yesterday at 11:25 a.m. the Member for Calgary-Greenway provided notice to my office of a question of privilege that he intended to raise in the Assembly. I did hear arguments yesterday, and I am prepared to rule today. Under Standing Order 15(2) a member wishing to raise a question of privilege must provide notice to my office at least two hours before the opening of the afternoon sitting. While this deadline was met, the member did not, based on the comments by the Government House Leader, provide a similar notice by that time to the members whose conduct would be called into question, which is also required by the standing order.

Notwithstanding the procedural deficiency, I did review the substance of the matter and concluded that the Member for Calgary-Greenway has not met the test for a prima facie case of breach of privilege or contempt. In fact, the member for the most part in his arguments drifted into matters pertaining to political parties, and little was said as to the reasons why the comments made by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Government House Leader on November 29, 2018, would give rise to a question of privilege.

An alleged breach of privilege or contempt, as I have said in this House many times, is a very serious matter, and the member's arguments did not support such a finding. As the Member for Calgary-Greenway notes in his letter providing notice of the question of privilege to my office, I ruled last Thursday that the Minister of Municipal Affairs was indeed out of order. The Member for Calgary-Greenway could have raised a question of privilege under Standing Order 15(5) on the day the words were spoken, but he chose to proceed by way of a point of order. He cannot now revisit the matter as a question of privilege.

3:00

Furthermore, the member was clearly aware at the time that comments were made that were offensive to him, and by waiting until yesterday to raise the matter as a question of privilege, he has not done so at the earliest opportunity, as required by Standing

Order 15(6). Accordingly, I find that there is no prima facie question of privilege.

I believe we are at Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders

Third Reading

Bill 27

Joint Governance of Public Sector Pension Plans Act

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Madam Clerk and Madam Speaker. I rise today to move third reading of Bill 27, the Joint Governance of Public Sector Pension Plans Act.

Over the past week I've enjoyed reading in *Hansard* and listening to the debate about this important legislation. This legislation has been a long time coming, over 28 years, Madam Speaker, and I have been happy to see it move forward in the last couple of weeks.

With regard to the purpose of the bill, as I've mentioned earlier, the proposed legislation is to implement a joint governance structure for three of Alberta's major public sector pension plans – the local authorities pension plan, the public service pension plan, and the special forces pension plan – and register them as jointly sponsored plans under the Employment Pension Plans Act. We proposed to do this because it makes sense. Our government believes that hard-working Albertans who have been saving up and paying into their pensions for decades should be able to retire in dignity.

The plans are funded by employees and participating employers, and the plans' assets rightly belong to the plans' members. By giving equal voice to employees and employers, we're taking the politics out of pensions. The owners of the plan will now get to make decisions about their plan. Those who bear the risk should be in charge.

Under joint governance the establishment of benefits provided under the plan is subject to agreement between employee and employer sponsors. Employee and employer sponsors also share responsibility for the risks associated with funding defined-benefit plans and are empowered to make the necessary adjustments when required without approval from government. The benefits of joint governance are numerous, including clear roles and responsibilities, shared trusteeship of plan assets, and equal representation of employee-employer groups.

Madam Speaker, I realize that any time a government proposes pension changes, a number of questions may be associated with that, so let me provide a few assurances. The plans are well funded, well managed, and have well-established risk management systems in place. They are well equipped to take on additional responsibilities associated with joint governance. The plans will be subject to regulatory oversight by Alberta's superintendent of pensions. For plan members the legislation will not change their pension benefits. The legislation will also provide further protection to accrued pension benefits, which may be particularly reassuring to retired members of these plans.

For those still working, their pension plan will continue as before. Behind the scenes their plan's governance structure will change, but the contributions they pay into the plan and the benefits they earn will continue, and their employer will also continue to make contributions on their behalf. There is no change to planned benefits or how the plans are funded and no cost to government as a result of these changes.

Madam Speaker, by giving equal voice to employees and employers, we're taking the politics out of pensions. Under joint governance pension management decisions will no longer happen to the owners of the plans; they will happen in partnership with the owners of the plans. The proposed legislation has the support of employers and employees and provides a path to transition these plans to joint governance by March 1, 2019.

Madam Speaker, I support this bill, government supports this bill, and we ask all members of this House to do the same. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I, too, rise today to speak in support of Bill 27, Joint Governance of Public Sector Pension Plans Act. Nine days ago, when I spoke to second reading of Bill 27, I highlighted that stewardship of the three public-sector plans covered by this legislation will be a privileged trust on the part of the new boards. As our UCP caucus prepares for third reading of Bill 27 this afternoon, I want to reiterate that statement.

Madam Speaker, today we heard a lot about joint governance and the establishment of sponsorship and corporate boards as well as other bureaucratic sounding terms. Understanding these important terms is important because they will form the foundation of the framework that shifts stewardship of the local authorities pension plan, the public service pension plan, and the special forces pension plan from the Minister of Finance to the contributors of each of the plans.

You know what else is important, Madam Speaker? The 350,000 – 350,000 – members of the pension plans. Every time we spoke of Bill 27 in this House, we thought of these members because they are Alberta's important public-sector employees. They are the firefighters, municipal snowplow operators, MRI technicians, home-care workers, and many, many more who dedicate their working hours to Albertans, to the people of our province. Bill 27 transfers \$60 billion of their pension funds – \$60 billion – to the new governance boards created by this legislation.

UCP supports moving to a joint governance model, but we still spent a lot of time scrutinizing this legislation because we wanted to ensure, Madam Speaker, that this transfer occurs as responsibly as possible. When reviewing the details of the proposed legislation, we looked and asked ourselves the following key questions. First, does Bill 27 provide fairness and balance for all employee-employer groups involved in the plan? Second, can the boards establish quickly enough to provide effective stewardship from the start? You'll recall that that's March 1; that's less than 90 days. Third, does Bill 27 ensure a high level of accountability for the members of each pension plan as well as Alberta taxpayers? With these questions guiding us, we used our initial time in the House to pose these questions to the Minister of Finance. Then during Committee of the Whole we proposed three amendments – three amendments – that we felt would strengthen the bill for the betterment of all.

One of these amendments, Madam Speaker, addressed the NDP's decision to choose March 1 as the quick-change date for the pension plans to transition to the new trustee boards. If the NDP government had introduced the legislation prior to the fall session, we wouldn't have thought it was rushed, but as the boards, including the pension corporations, have only a few months to get established, we believe the NDP is rushing and expediting the governance transfer. Our amendment was fair and simple. It would have extended the transition date to September 1, 2019, still much short of a year, and the opportunity to get it right and avoid some unintended

consequences. This would have given the board six more months to fully set up before they accepted the stewardship of billions of dollars of pension funds, the hard-earned property and the hard-earned rights and savings of Alberta public servants and their families. It seemed to make a lot of sense. Delaying the implementation to the fall of 2019 is not a long time, but it would have ensured that members could be fully prepared to become the trustees of these three plans. I spoke at length about the significance and the importance of trustees. We were disappointed when the minister quickly dismissed this common-sense suggestion.

3:10

The next amendment addressed the balance of employee-employer representation on the boards. Madam Speaker, the minister spoke many times of the need to ensure a balance between employees and employers on the sponsorship and corporate boards. In fact, he described it as a key foundation – a key foundation – of the new joint governance structure. However, I pointed out to the minister that there may have been an oversight because we noticed that the bill requires equality on the sponsorship board but not on the three corporate boards. My amendment would have ensured even representation on all boards. The minister assured the Assembly, he assured Albertans that Bill 27 requires fully balanced membership on all boards. However, he did not point to the section in the bill that addresses this for corporate boards. He just went on to reject our amendment and asked NDP caucus colleagues to do the same.

Our third amendment, which is actually the first I brought forward, would have required that the Auditor General of Alberta be the auditor for the new pension corporations, which is currently the case. Madam Speaker, this amendment addressed a key issue I mentioned from the outset. That key issue is accountability for taxpayers' hard-earned funds. Again, the Auditor General has audited Alberta's public-sector pension plans for decades. The Auditor General also audits AIMCo, which is the investment manager for the pension plans and has been quite successful.

As you can see, the Auditor General's comprehensive analysis cannot be replicated by an independent auditor. This isn't a mark against independent auditors. It's just a fact. It's a fact because the Auditor General is in such a rare position to look at the whole picture, the totality of all of Alberta taxpayers' hard-earned tax dollars. That's one point. Another key point is that the Auditor General reports to the Legislative Assembly, so there will always be full disclosure to Albertans. Through 87 of us there would have always been full disclosure to Albertans. An independent auditor, on the other hand, will have no such requirement to provide an annual public report.

Why is this important to our UCP caucus? Because, Madam Speaker, approximately half of the funds in these pension plans, around \$30 billion, has been contributed by Alberta taxpayers, the 4.1 million hard-working Albertans. These are, after all, public pension plans, and governments both provincial and municipal are major contributors to them. To our UCP caucus it only made sense to amend Bill 27 to ensure that the Auditor General remains the auditor of the plans. That they are moving to a new governance model does not seem relevant to the fact that \$30 billion worth of government funds are invested in these plans.

Madam Speaker, let me also point out that the Auditor General's office was not consulted when the government was deciding to remove it as the pension plan auditor. One of our best, hard-working departments was not consulted. The office, however, was informed about it the day before – the day before – the minister introduced the bill in the House. My goodness. Why are they in such a rush?

The minister chose not to support this common-sense amendment either. Madam Speaker, while we're on the topic of accountability, I want to note that I have been unable to obtain a clear answer. I've been unable to obtain a clear answer from the minister about where the liability from the plan rests after the transition occurs, billions and billions of dollars, the important property and in some cases life savings of our hard-working public servants.

Let me explain, Madam Speaker. Bill 27 transfers all authority for these plans from the Minister of Finance to the new sponsorship and corporate boards. All authority. The transfer of authority presumably includes transferring liability for the \$60 billion worth of investments to the new pension plan corporations. I asked the Minister of Finance and his office to confirm this interpretation of Bill 27. They did respond, but the answer was not as clear-cut as I would have hoped. I then posed the question to the Minister of Finance, but unfortunately I did not receive an answer.

So, Madam Speaker, as you can see, the UCP has performed due diligence with Bill 27. I am happy to note that an important point we have learned during this process is that all three pension funds report good health today. There was some concern about the discount rate being used, but all three pension funds report good health today. According to information we received from the minister's office, they are either fully funded or almost fully funded.

We also appreciate that joint governance is considered a best practice and many jurisdictions are moving towards it. In fact, Ontario, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia have already transferred stewardship to the contributors of their plans.

So, Madam Speaker, we certainly have faith in this structure. Still, as the Official Opposition it is our job to do our best to ensure Alberta's framework is well constructed, the foundation is strong...

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member. Hon. members, please take your seats. We're not in committee. Thank you.

Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you. Still, as the Official Opposition it is our job to ensure Alberta's framework, Alberta's foundation is well constructed from day one.

Madam Speaker, I accept that the government is absolutely keen to transfer all authority to the new governance boards in less than 90 days, by March 1. But I also note that the legislation allows cabinet to choose another date. The legislation allows cabinet to choose another date. Hopefully, the minister monitors the process and shows prudence on this point for the benefit of our hard-working pensioners.

Madam Speaker, crafting legislation is complex, and it's always important, crucial, that it is done well. This is especially important with Bill 27 because the new boards created under this legislation will become custodians of billions of dollars worth of workers' and employers' contributions. During the passage of Bill 27 and through our amendments the United Conservative Party sought to ensure that the boards are able to meet the highest standards right from the beginning, to get it right right from the beginning. Again, we were very disappointed that the minister chose to dismiss all our attempts to strengthen this bill. But, in spite of this, we have great faith in the appointees of the new board. We have great faith that the appointees will show great responsibility – great responsibility – as they meet the important challenges before them in this new era of pension stewardship.

Madam Speaker, thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a privilege to rise and speak to third reading of Bill 27. I just wanted to clarify some of the comments and concerns that were brought up by the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Having boards, having the governance models changing from the sponsorship to the sponsorship boards: it's not exactly a new thing that's happening within the pension plans. Many – the LAPP, the PSPP – already have boards that must report to their members annually. They provide an update at the end of each year about how much each member has contributed, how much they're eligible for if they are to retire, and what the plan has currently in it.

3:20

The difference now, when we're looking at the changes, is that we're just removing the politics out of the game. Joint governance really removes the Finance minister out of being able to be the only person that makes the ultimate decisions of the plan. Now we will have equal representation from the employer and equal representation from the employees. They actually get to discuss and make decisions based on their plan as equals instead of having someone being able to come in and say: well, we recognize you've made these decisions, but now the Finance minister has decided to go a different direction.

One of the reasons why joint governance is something that's supported in many other public pension plans across the country is because of the fact that there can be unilateral changes made by governing parties. We saw this in 2014, when there was a decision being made around whether or not public service pension plans should still have the same retirement age as before, or when we were looking at removing the COLA, which is the cost-of-living allowance. There was a significant pushback in the province in 2004 by many of the holders of the LAPP, the PSPP, and the securities pension because of the fact that there was going to be an arbitrary change to the pension plans. This plan now gives equality between both sides, the employer and the employee.

The other thing that's extremely important about this was the comments about the Auditor General and the fact that, you know, ultimately maybe he should be the one that's reviewing the plans. Well, in other joint governance areas in other areas in the country, it's not the Auditor General that does it. It's an agreed-upon auditor on behalf of the employer and the employee that audits the plan. They still have a responsibility under the legislation to report back to the plan owners. There will be an annual report, no different than under the PSPP as it exists now and under the LAPP as it exists now, and that report will be made public. There's still the ability to have that transparency, like, to the owners of the pension plan. The difference is that it doesn't have to be reported to the Legislature, again removing the politics out of the governing of the pension plan.

The other piece that I wanted to talk to as well is about the investment. The hon. member was talking about how these are public dollars that are being invested in these pension plans, so taxpayers should be concerned about what this all looks like. Well, to be honest with the member and to everyone in this House, as a contributor to the public service pension plan, as a contributor to the LAPP they are also taxpayers. So I'm pretty sure that they're going to be very concerned not only of the fact of what their retirement future will look like – and they will want to have viability in their plan – but also the fact that they are contributing to the plan on both sides.

They are taxpayers, and they are also employees. They have significantly more vested interest to make sure that the plan is successful. The one thing we have to always remember when we're talking about people that work for the government of Alberta is that they are not just people that work for the government of Alberta;

they actually pay taxes and they actually contribute to society outside of just being a public servant. So they are very much concerned about tax dollars and what the government is doing around spending and all of those things.

The additional comments as well about where the investment currently sits. There's a five-year transition plan. If the investors of the plan on the employer and the employee side decide that they want to continue to have the plan invested where it is, it can continue to stay there. There is nothing in this legislation saying that they must pull the money out of where it's currently invested, absolutely nothing. If everybody sits down together and they have a conversation and go, "Our plan is viable. The investments are working. We like the relationship that we have with our investor," then they can continue to do that. If for some reason the boards and the governing bodies decide that the relationship isn't working the way that they'd like and the investment isn't viable, then maybe they can change it.

But the reality is that this isn't something that on March 1 all of a sudden billions of dollars are going to be pulled out of an account and transferred somewhere else and we're going to create a whole bunch of pension plans that aren't viable. That's just not the way that it would work. The pension contributors wouldn't want that to happen because that is their retirement fund. They want to make sure that they're just as viable as any other plan that they would be investing in, whether it would be their RRSPs or any of those other things. Investors want to make sure that they have viability in their plans.

I just wanted to clarify that. There isn't much else. I just wanted to make sure that we were clear on that, and I think I'll cede the floor so that someone else can speak to some of the comments that were made.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'll be brief. I wanted to just say that, first of all, I think that the idea of being able to have control of your own pension is a great idea. I own RRSPs. I'm very interested in being able to make sure that they get their greatest return investment. I think it's a fantastic idea. I like the model, and I will be voting for it.

First of all, the LAPP is 104 per cent funded, the PSPP is 94 per cent funded, and the SFPP is actually 89 per cent funded. The question that I have is: in terms of consultation has the government had the opportunity to be able to bring representatives of each of those pension funds into a room and at least tell the LAPP that you're going to be bringing on a group that is only 89 per cent funded, so they have an unfunded liability? I think that that's something I haven't heard in the debates that we've heard here, and it would be great to be able to get some of that information. I think that that's important for all of these pension funds in order to be able to know what they're getting themselves into.

The other point, really quickly, that I wanted to make, Madam Speaker, is that when I asked the Finance minister why it took him three and a half years to bring this forward, I was actually very disappointed in his answer. His answer was, after lots of scoffing and mocking on the other side: we've had a busy slate. Now, if this was so important to do, you would think that this would have been done in year 1. I guess the disingenuousness of the argument, that "we had a busy slate; sorry we couldn't get to it until right at the end of our mandate," is surprising that they would actually make that kind of argument. If this was really that important and really that valuable to the pensions, then they would have done that in year

1. They had the time, and this could have been brought forward. There's no doubt about it. So that argument is very weak. Because I didn't have the opportunity to respond to what the minister said, I wanted to make sure that in third reading here I was able to get that on *Hansard*.

With that, I actually am, again, happy with what I'm seeing in terms of what it's doing for each of these pensions, being able to gain that control. I will be very much in favour of this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Dr. Turner: Well, thank you very much. It is indeed a real honour and pleasure to rise and speak to third reading of this Bill 27, Joint Governance of Public Sector Pension Plans Act, fall 2018. I have worked as a physician at the Cross Cancer Institute and the University of Alberta for over 40 years. I've enjoyed all of that experience. The success of whatever I've been able to achieve is entirely due to a phenomenal staff at both of those institutions. When I'm talking about the staff, I'm talking about nurses like those two hero nurses that I introduced in Introduction of Guests today, to laboratory technologists and radiology technologists as well as radiation therapists. They're actually the technologists that administer radiation therapy to patients needing it.

3:30

There are also research scientists that work at the Cross. In fact, my wife had a 25-year career as a research scientist in radiobiology. Her pension is through the LAPP. I have to tell you, just listening to these comments coming from the other side, that it's clear there's some misunderstanding of the importance of making sure we've got good human relations with our staff in these sorts of institutions and that people feel valued, the folks that are doing this great work. I mean, my nurses are working 24 hours a day. They are the interface with my patients. The success of my treatments, as few as the successes may be, whatever successes I've had, I can ascribe to the ability of those nurses to be able to interact with the patients and because they know that they're valued by their supervisors and by their employer and by people like me. They don't feel valued if they feel that their pension might be altered at some time in the future arbitrarily.

In fact, that was what was going on in I believe 2012, when there was the last sort of big review of public-sector pensions. There was a threat – and it's been alluded to here already – to actually change the terms and conditions of public-sector pensions. It was a dire threat. I felt it as the spouse of somebody carrying that pension. I've heard from the nurses that I work with and the lab techs that I work with and the cleaners in the hospital that I work with that they were feeling very much under the gun because the government of the day, one of the legacy parties of our opposition, wanted to make some dire changes to the pensions.

Actually, Madam Speaker, I'm sure you were going through that same experience at that time, everyone that was working in health care and, by the way, everyone, for instance, that was working for the special forces – our sheriffs and peace officers and other folks – the wildlife officers that work protecting our environment, the hydrologists that I know, that work to make sure that our water quality is really safe. And I could go on and on. All of these people, that this province depends upon to provide quality service, were really worried that the pensions that they had been contributing to were going to be arbitrarily changed and that it was going to be done in a paternalistic way by the government of the day.

What this bill does: it basically removes that anxiety. It tells our valued public servants that they are valued, that we respect them, that they have made a contribution, not just a monetary contribution to their pension plan, but they've made a contribution by being employed by the government of Alberta to provide these services that all Albertans depend upon. This is the main point that I really want to make on this. I have been interested in pension reform for a long time, going back to probably 1992, when the last big changes in the pension structures were made, and there's obviously still a lot of work to be done. I think there were good changes made in 1992, but there is a need to make these further changes.

The last comment I'm going to make is just in response to a previous speaker and some other one who was concerned about whether the LAPP is going to be overwhelmed by the deficit. In fact, as with most other pension plans in this province, these plans are going to be regulated by the superintendent of pensions under the Employment Pension Plans Act. You know, each of the three pensions is going to have a separate corporate and sponsor board. There's not going to be mixing, if you wish – and I don't think that that's all that big a threat – of the funds from the LAPP with the special forces, et cetera.

I'm going to finish with some stakeholder quotes, and I'm going to give one from a registered nurse. Again, those two nurses that I introduced today: I've worked with one of them for over 30 years. She's continuing to work on a part-time basis at the Cross Cancer Institute. The other nurse had worked at the Royal Alexandra hospital for many years. That's our major downtown hospital. It provides a phenomenal service to Edmonton and, actually, to all of northern Alberta. We're dependent upon those folks. Well, let me tell you what a nurse, Karen Kuprys, said:

I am so happy about this. As a nurse and a frontline health-care worker, I want to be able to always focus on the well-being of my patients. So it's great that the promise made by the government almost 30 years ago has finally been honoured.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other speakers to the bill?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

[Motion carried; Bill 27 read a third time]

Bill 22 An Act for Strong Families Building Stronger Communities

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Larivee: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It is my privilege to rise today to move third reading of Bill 22, An Act for Strong Families Building Stronger Communities.

This bill represents a decisive step forward for Alberta and the more than 10,000 children and youth who are currently receiving services across our province. Bill 22 is a first step, one which will make the child intervention system fairer for indigenous peoples and improve supports for children and youth in and out of care. These changes will help protect vulnerable children, support strong families, and ultimately prevent children from coming into care.

Since creating the Ministry of Children's Services last year, our government has committed to improving Alberta's child intervention system and strengthening supports for the children and families that it serves, which is why we formed the all-party Ministerial Panel on Child Intervention, which included members from both sides of the Legislature. I'm proud of how all parties came together, putting politics aside, to listen to families and

experts like the Child and Youth Advocate and Cindy Blackstock. I want to thank all the members of the ministerial panel for devoting their time and energy to this important endeavour.

As a special note, I want to thank the Member for Calgary-Elbow for standing with us yesterday when the Official Opposition was grandstanding on this extremely important matter, when they chose politics over doing the right thing. The Member for Calgary-Elbow knows and we know that Bill 22 reflects many of the challenges and frustrations heard by the panel. He knows and we know that this bill comes from listening to indigenous voices and that it reflects their concerns. It reflects the ideas and frustrations that I've heard too often from indigenous families, communities, and leaders across our province. Indigenous leaders in Lesser Slave Lake and throughout Alberta have told me over and over again about problems that undermine trust in the child intervention system and about the need to make changes that will meet the needs of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children across our province. In the lead-up to Alberta's apology for the '60s scoop I repeatedly heard survivors say how devastating it was to lose their connection to their families and communities, their culture, and their language.

Madam Speaker, our government listens to Albertans, and we listened to these indigenous communities in order to get this first step right. When action is needed, our government stands up and does what is right, and nothing is more important than the safety and well-being of children. That is why this bill offers practical, common-sense solutions to problems that have been overlooked and ignored for far too long, for decades, under previous governments.

3:40

Under Bill 22 First Nations will be automatically notified and could appear in court whenever someone applies for private guardianship of children of their band. Currently the Family Law Act allows applications for guardianship of a child without requiring a mandatory home study and cultural connection plan. This bill closes that Family Law Act loophole and ensures that every child benefits from a mandatory home study, cultural connection plan, and ongoing supports to meet their needs. Right now children also lose financial supports for permanency if their guardian dies, moves away, or otherwise changes. Madam Speaker, this is wrong. No child should be deprived of the supports that they need, and no caregiver should be prevented from stepping up because they lack the financial means to care for a loved one. We are making sure that financial supports stay with the child to help pay for counselling, respite care, transportation, or other important services.

Madam Speaker, the child intervention system is incredibly complex, with life-changing decisions made every single day. This bill introduces important changes that will help caseworkers and courts make better decisions. This includes new guiding principles that highlight child safety and make indigenous involvement a fundamental component of the system. New mandatory decision-making criteria will also require courts and caseworkers to consider every facet of a child's safety and well-being when deciding whether to remove a child from a home or grant a guardianship order or make other life-altering decisions. Every child's culture and family connections must be respected, and every child's opinion must always be heard. We're ensuring that these aren't just items on a shopping list in our matters to be considered but are embedded in all court and caseworker decisions.

Our government is committed to reconciliation and to creating a stronger, safer child intervention system. We will not let recommendations sit on shelves. This bill is the first step of a three-step review of the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act. We

know there is more work to do, and we're engaging with indigenous peoples this winter on the next round of changes, but Bill 22 is an important step forward, one that addresses the ministerial panel's consensus-based recommendations and fulfills the very first action mentioned in our public action plan. All of these changes are important steps towards creating a stronger, safer tomorrow, where children are kept safe, where indigenous families and cultural connections are better respected, and where children are kept with their families and their communities whenever possible.

If passed, Bill 22 will come into force on February 28, 2019. I am proud of this bill and what it means for the children and families of this province. These changes will help keep children safe, supported, and connected to their community so that they can grow up into healthy, thriving adults. All children deserve that chance no matter where they are born or where they live.

We have still got a long way to go, but make no mistake: we are taking meaningful action to protect children and support families and communities. This bill should transcend party lines, and I ask all members to put aside partisan politics to recognize that we need to do a better job to support the children of Alberta. I urge you to support this important legislation.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have some wow words spinning around in my head after the minister gave that little presentation starting from very partisan standpoints and ending with a "we should not be very partisan on this issue" standpoint.

Madam Speaker, let me be very clear. We are here because of the government's inaction and complete failure on this file three and a half years ago. Three and a half years ago in this Assembly we engaged in an emergency debate over the inaction and complete failure of this government and the mishandling of the Serenity file. The public was outraged because of this NDP government's failure. Not only that, but they refused to put together a legislative committee where we could have open and transparent dialogue through the course of a panel process. Now, I understand that there was good work that happened on this panel. I have been told as much by colleagues of mine that were able to participate in this process. There were good things that came out, and there are some very, very good things in this bill.

The government also mentioned the apology for the '60s scoop, Madam Speaker, which, I should mention, was initiated and pushed forward by my hon. colleague from Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills. The reason that this government is aware of the issues surrounding the '60s scoop is from the Official Opposition. This is the second case, just in my conversation today, of the Official Opposition leading and the government following. And you know what? Albertans are pretty thankful for that. They're absolutely pretty thankful for the leadership that the Official Opposition has shown on the child intervention file because without that, jeez Louise, we'd still have the minister of human services standing up and saying: I've accepted the report; I've accepted the report, but I will refuse to act on any of the recommendations made in that report. That's why we're here.

This government failed, absolutely, completely failed, and then they come forward with the recommendations from the child and youth panel, part 1 of 3. We are months away from an election. Will we see part 2 and part 3? At what point is this government going to completely do the work, and what is the reasonable expectation that this government has for the Official Opposition to blindly say yes to part 1 of 3? When offered amendments in this House, the government refused to engage, saying: "It's not important. It's

okay. We don't need to define family. This isn't what this bill is about. Don't worry about it."

Madam Speaker, there are so many things to say in regard to Bill 22. It's got a great name, An Act for Strong Families Building Stronger Communities. I hope that I've reminded the government of the failures that they've been leading in the last three and a half years and of a "you're welcome" from the Official Opposition to Albertans in bringing these issues forward. I'm happy to see that our leadership over the last three and a half years has proven to be fruitful for the children in this province, most importantly, especially those in our child intervention system.

I think I've said what I need to say in regard to this legislation. I have many concerns around this being a portion of the whole bill that is yet to come. I have concerns that part 2 and part 3 are never going to come to this House, never going to come to this Assembly. The government has all the information now, too, because this wasn't an open and transparent process.

With that, Madam Speaker, I myself will find it very hard to support this for the reasons that I've outlined. I look forward to the government continuing to attempt to fix the failures that they have been a part of in the last three and a half years of their mandate, and I urge all members of this Assembly to think hard and long about the impacts of this legislation for our children in the child intervention system moving forward.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

Ms Luff: Thank you, Madam Speaker. When I hear a story like Serenity's or, in fact, the story of any other child when there are reports from the Child and Youth Advocate, my heart absolutely breaks. I think of my own kids, and I think how children are born ready to learn, curious, and full of joy, and I know that every member of this House feels a heavy responsibility to do everything possible to ensure that no child's story ends the way that Serenity's did.

3:50

Firstly, I'd just like to thank all of the members who served on the ministerial panel. I know a lot of time was spent travelling around the province, and I know that what you heard was heavy, and it was challenging to hear. I think that this work that you did was extremely valuable and has led to changes, some of which are reflected in this bill, so thank you to every single member who spent the time doing that work over the course of the last year.

There are a few pieces of this bill that I particularly appreciate. The Guiding Principles section at the beginning is really important because it serves to ensure that children's well-being is central to this legislation. As has been mentioned before, giving First Nations official standing in court is huge, and it works to peel back some of the years of colonial principles that our justice system was built on.

Thirdly, the thing that I really appreciate about this bill is that it ensures the voice of the child is included in choices that affect them.

Last fall I had the opportunity to attend a spoken-word performance by the Stardale Women's Group. It was a performance that was written and performed by indigenous girls aged 11 to 17, and they spoke frankly about the challenges – racism, stigma, and mental health issues – that they face. When I had the opportunity to speak to some of the girls afterward, they shared stories of their experiences in the child intervention system and, in many cases, strong desires to be reunited with their parents. It was hard to hear that the system, they felt, hadn't served them appropriately. Also, earlier this fall, at the march for missing and murdered indigenous

women in Calgary, I heard the tearful pleas of a young man who simply wanted to know where his younger siblings were and if they were okay.

Ensuring the voices of children are heard is crucial to their well-being and to their safety, so I particularly appreciate this part of the bill. These are good steps, and I'm hopeful that we're on the way to even more good steps. You know, I don't think that the work is done until we know that every child in care is safe in Alberta and that every child's well-being is being considered, and I know that all of us want to work towards that together.

I'm thankful for this bill, I'm happy to support it, and that is all I have to say. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, the hon. minister to close debate.

Larivee: Yeah. Let's just go.

[Motion carried; Bill 22 read a third time]

Bill 30 Mental Health Services Protection Act

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I think I will give the floor to my colleagues to enter into debate and save my remarks for closing on third, but it's my pleasure to move third reading of Bill 30 at this time and welcome my colleagues to join in with their questions and comments.

I think we had some fruitful conversation earlier today, and I look forward to that continuing as we take action to improve and execute the commitments that we've made, both in the throne speech that were recommended through fatality reviews and that we know many members of the mental health community have been advocating for for years.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

I'm proud to be in a government that makes promises, keeps them, and works to make life better for families. Certainly, the families we've heard from accessing mental health services in times of extreme nervousness, chaos, and uncertainty deserve every certainty that they are being well served, protected, and that the professionals that are working with them are held to a high standard as well as the facilities that they are living in.

I look forward to hearing from some of my hon. colleagues, including the cosponsors of this very important bill.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to speak on third reading of Bill 30, the Mental Health Services Protection Act. This bill consists of two parts, as has been mentioned in this House and as I have read the bill myself as it reads. The portion surrounding the regulation and licensing with treatment facilities and then the second part, being the creation of a college for counsellors here in this province – I'm not sure if I have mentioned this piece before, but this was actually one of the first issues that I contacted my own MLA about, prior to being elected, many, many years ago in response to the creation of a college for counsellors.

It's important for a number of different reasons, I think, most importantly creating a quality and a standard of care in this province and also creating more access to quality counselling services. Madam Speaker, as you know, we're facing crisis levels in this province when it comes to that particular issue, and I think this is a good step forward in helping to address that crisis. Then in relation to the first part of the bill in terms of licensing and regulation of the treatment facilities, providing good, quality care in the facilities is extremely important for my constituents but most certainly for all Albertans.

I look forward to watching the process as this goes along. I think it's important to watch it very closely. I mean, the creation of a college is a process in and of itself, but we've outlined a number of potential unintended consequences through the course of this debate and some examples that have been seen in the province of Ontario, that's done a very, very similar thing. I think it's important that we keep an eye on this legislation, see how it rolls out, and watch it and adjust as necessary as this moves along.

With that, I am pleased to support Bill 30, and I urge that my colleagues support it as well. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Peace River.

Ms Jabbour: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm truly honoured today to stand and speak to third reading of Bill 30, the Mental Health Services Protection Act. I'm incredibly pleased to see this bill come forward as it's something that I've long advocated for. Prior to getting elected, I was working as a provisional psychologist in High Level, and it was seeing the consequences of decades of neglect of mental health services by the previous government that spurred me to run for election, among other things. My private member's Bill 205, supporting accessible addiction treatment facilities, addressed the need for an online registry of addiction treatment facilities, and I look forward to working with the Department of Health as this part of the bill is implemented.

But I have an even more personal reason to support improved mental health and addiction treatment services, and I'd like to share just some of my family's story to help highlight just who Bill 30 is intended to help. I have a family history of depression, and I've had my own battles with the disease. I've lost family members to suicide and addictions. Depression took its greatest and final toll, however, on my daughter Amaya. She fought the illness for years. When she was suicidal, we'd sit in the emergency room for hours while a stream of people with visible, external pain were seen first. We'd finally give up and go home. As her pain continued with no real relief, she began the cycle of self-medicating. It began with prescription meds, then gradually escalated to more powerful substances.

Amaya did not want to be addicted; she just wanted the pain to stop. She tried to get support and help to get well, but every step of the way she encountered barriers. For example, to get into treatment, you need to be clean, so for days at a time Amaya would have to show up at detox at 9 every morning to see if there was a bed. Can you imagine arriving at emergency sick, bleeding, and in pain, only to be sent away and told: "Come back tomorrow. Maybe we'll help you then"?

Trying to get into a treatment facility was equally difficult. There's no easy way to access information about these facilities and find out when and where there's availability. As we've heard throughout debate on Bill 30, not only are there government-run facilities, but there are many operated by nonprofit agencies and on-reserve. There are no consistent standards or guidelines to help

individuals know what that treatment might look like, whether it is offered by qualified staff, and whether they can have confidence in the process. The application process itself is incredibly discouraging. I found it daunting myself to navigate. Can you imagine how much harder it would be for someone who's already desperately ill?

4:00

The provisions of Bill 30 will go a long way towards improving access, but it does even more. In my experience as a provisional psychologist, I know how important it is that individuals have confidence in their therapists. In terms of effectiveness the personal relationship between client and therapist matters more than the individual qualifications of the counsellor. Whether they're an addictions counsellor, a psychologist, or a social worker, however, it is essential that these professional titles are protected and recognized. Albertans need the confidence that they are receiving help from someone who is qualified in their respective field to provide it. For far too long in Alberta anyone could call themselves a counsellor. I'm really pleased that this is going to change.

By providing legitimacy and requiring licensing of facilities, Bill 30 will help reduce the stigma and move us further towards treating individuals with mental illness and substance-use disorders as people with medical problems deserving of the same kind of respectful treatment given to those with cancer or diabetes or any other illness.

I think it's really important that we talk about the stigma. The Mental Health Commission of Canada estimates that more than 60 per cent of people with mental health problems and mental illness won't seek the help they need. Stigma is one of the main reasons. In my family we certainly found this to be true. During Amaya's last months of life she went to emergency several times desperately seeking help. She was dismissed as just another addict and sent back out into the street. She told me how horrible she was made to feel by the very people whose role was supposed to be to protect, help, and heal.

The stigma impacted me and my other daughters, too. We all felt it. Stigma allows others to distance themselves and say: "It's not me. It's not my family." This creates a fear of reaching out to ask for help and admitting that there's a problem. The messaging is subtle. You watch your loved one in pain, and you know that they're struggling with an illness beyond their control, but you feel helpless and at times impatient and frustrated with their behaviour. Stigma impacts the way health professionals and front-line service providers react. Stigma creates an environment where someone with an addiction is looked down on as being weak, as having made really bad choices, and perhaps even deserving the consequences.

Well, let me tell you this. Amaya was the strongest person I know. She fought hard. She wanted to get well. She did not want to give up. She did not choose to have a mental illness, nor did she choose to become addicted. She has a family who loved her and did their best to support her. My last conversation with her was about a plan to support her in recovery, and she was ready and willing.

Amaya was beautiful, kind-hearted, generous. She was an incredibly talented singer, musician, and artist. She had a great sense of humour and was so much fun to hang out with. She leaves a large hole in our family and in our hearts that will never be filled. That is what mental illness and addictions look like.

During the process of researching my Bill 205 over this past year, I heard Amaya's story over and over. I heard from many stakeholders that I consulted with: support groups, health care professionals, law enforcement, community elders, and First Nations. I've received numerous letters and calls and was

privileged to have individual conversations with many Albertans who shared their own deeply personal stories with me.

One in 5 Albertans experience an addiction or mental illness, and they're very often co-occurring. It is estimated that 1 in 10 Albertans will require substance-use treatment at some point in their lives. Bill 30 takes another step towards addressing concerns highlighted in the 2015 Valuing Mental Health report and is part of more than 100 initiatives under way across the province.

Unfortunately, while starting to implement these recommendations, the government was forced to respond to an opioid crisis, a health crisis of incredible and previously unmatched proportions. And make no mistake. This crisis was a long time in coming and a consequence of years of Conservative government neglect in the area of mental health. In 2017 there were 569 unintentional, fentanyl-related deaths in Alberta. My daughter Amaya was one of them. In the first 32 weeks of 2018 425 Albertans lost their lives to fentanyl overdoses, and we continue to average almost two accidental drug poisoning deaths related to fentanyl every single day. That's why it's so important that this bill be passed and implemented without delay as it will provide yet more support and access to treatment for those dealing with opioid addiction.

As part of the spectrum of treatment facilities I just want to briefly speak about the importance of the supervised consumption services that have been opened in several locations beginning this spring, including at the Royal Alexandra hospital. These programs save lives, reduce the transmission of infections, enhance community safety, and help individuals access treatment. Had these services been in place earlier, they might well have saved Amaya's life.

Bill 30 reinforces that our government is committed to supporting Albertans to access co-ordinated and integrated addiction and mental health services and supports. A better understanding of the co-occurrence of these disorders is needed along with an understanding of the importance of fair, timely, and evidence-based treatment.

Although the provisions of this bill will improve access to treatment facilities and help Albertans have confidence in the safety and quality of the treatment they receive, there's still much to be done to alleviate the burdens and the obstacles facing patients seeking help. When researching my private member's bill, I heard about the many barriers faced: challenges accessing appropriate treatment, the need for locations that are accessible, more supports for families and individuals with children who need access to treatment, and so much more.

We still need to work to ensure that individuals are treated respectfully and with nonstigmatizing language. Not only health providers but peace officers, judges, justices of the peace, other front-line workers, and Albertans in general need to be educated regarding mental health, substance-use disorders, the co-occurrence of mental illness and addiction, and harm reduction strategies. We need to shift our thinking and perception towards understanding mental illness and addictions as a medical issue, thus helping reduce stigma and barriers.

Unfortunately, stigma and shame persist, creating significant barriers for those seeking help, and there also remains a resistance and skepticism to the research and best practices around treatment. Sadly, we've even seen these attitudes coming from the Official Opposition when it comes to programs like supervised consumption, which have been characterized by their leader as: nothing more than helping addicts inject poison into their bodies.

Make no mistake. Substance-use dependency is not a choice. People seeking treatment need many options through which to access immediate care, and we must provide a wide range of support services to help them on the path to recovery, stability, and

health. Not only is this essential for the individuals who are ill, but their families also need our support and understanding.

Our government is working to build robust services for people living with mental illness and substance-use disorders. Bill 30 will continue to build upon that work and ensure that Albertans are aware of the treatment services available to them and are able to access these services with the same level of support we give Albertans with other illnesses. Licensing treatment facilities and regulating the counselling profession also enhance confidence in the quality of the treatment itself. I look forward to working closely with the Health ministry as they continue to put these concepts into practice in the effective delivery of mental health and addiction treatment services in the province.

When I made the difficult decision to speak publicly about my family's experience and about the loss of my daughter Amaya, I did so in the hopes of increasing understanding and improving the dialogue, thus reducing stigma. Mental illness and addiction have serious consequences for each and every one of us. It is a disease, not a choice. We need to openly discuss the nature of mental illness and substance-use disorders and educate ourselves about addiction. Individuals with addictions and mental illness are our daughters, our sons, our parents, our neighbours, our co-workers, our brothers, our sisters. They need our support and understanding so they can freely seek treatment and manage symptoms without facing roadblocks and stigma. We need to help them get well and ensure that they are always treated with the dignity and the respect they deserve.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Ms Littlewood: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just wanted to take the opportunity to thank the member for sharing an incredibly personal experience that none of us would want to have to go through. A number of us were able to come and attend your daughter Amaya's funeral, and it was one of those moments where we realize how small the world is. I didn't know that friends of mine were friends with your daughter, so I had the opportunity to support not only you but my friends at that funeral.

4:10

The thing that I remarked on, having the opportunity to share in that and learn a bit about her life, seeing her as a friend and a daughter, an artist and a performer, those things, is that it's tragic to feel that loss in a community. Our Health minister, our Deputy Premier, was just remembering the video that was shared of your daughter singing *The Sun Will Come Out Tomorrow*. It was an amazing moment to be able to share with you.

The things that we fight for in this House, that there was no movement on before having a Premier and an NDP government to move them forward, things like harm reduction services and having more resources being allocated to emergency housing – people find themselves in very compromised and tragic circumstances, and we need to be able to do more to support those people.

I'm so impressed and honoured to be able to serve in this Legislature with you because your ability to continue to advocate on these issues and be such a powerful voice, to help us continue to do this work even when faced with such incredible loss is an example for us all to look up to you for. Thank you for that. If I had to offer another song, it would be *You'll Never Walk Alone* by Rodgers and Hammerstein – I think those are the names of the writers – you know, because you're part of this team. We share the

same values, and we fight for the same things, and we always, always have your back. We're here for you. Thank you again for sharing an incredible story.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Under 29(2)(a) the hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just wanted to take a moment to acknowledge the incredible strength and courage and leadership shown by the member in sharing such a personal story. All of us being able to share what our experiences are is the kind of example that we need to set for Albertans, that the experiences that we have are the experiences that they have. I'm in complete agreement with the member about the approach to treating addiction. It shouldn't be a fight; it should just be common sense. It should just be a fact that we provide the kinds of services that are required to prevent and treat addictions. Once again, thank you very much for sharing your family's experience.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Madam Speaker. In the abbreviated time that's available, I want to thank the member for everything she did to contribute to the ministerial panel after this had occurred. She brought her experiences to the table. I think we're seeing that in the legislation that we're bringing forward. She had a very unique perspective on what was on the table, and because of that, our child intervention system is going to be better off for it, too. I want to thank the member for all that she brought to the table and continues to bring to the table as we discuss legislation in this House.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Any other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to take a moment to talk about this bill, Bill 30, the Mental Health Services Protection Act. Mental health has been a chief focus for me in many ways in my time as an MLA over the last three and a half years. So I really appreciate the steps that we've been able to take as a government and, indeed, the leadership that the Minister of Health has shown on many fronts, and the former Associate Minister of Health and now Member for Calgary-Acadia. So I really appreciate the opportunity to speak to this bill.

I'd like to begin by acknowledging, as others have, the powerful words that were just shared by my colleague from Peace River. Indeed, my sympathy goes out to her. I've known far too many and still know far too many people that have lost loved ones because they've been unable to find the help they needed when they needed it, for whatever reason that might be, and unfortunately decided that their pain was too much. My sympathies are with her, and I thank her for her leadership in bringing forward her private member's bill, which is along similar lines to a lot of what we're debating here today in wanting to lay out a patients' bill of rights in accessing mental health supports or help in addressing substance use for much the same reasons as we're laying out here. We want to recognize that those that are seeking those supports and those services deserve to be able to access them in dignity, in safety, free from stigma and, indeed, as this bill lays out, to be able to access them from people that they know, when they claim that they are offering a level of

professional service, indeed have the training and understanding and the qualifications to be able to do so.

Now, I wanted to address some of the comments that were made this morning when we were debating this in Committee of the Whole. As I listened to the members, I had several thoughts come to me, and I wanted to comment on a few. The Member for Lacombe-Ponoka was speaking and expressing his concerns about limiting choice available to individuals who were seeking help, and he spoke specifically about excluding options in accessing supports for counselling for mental health and addictions. He spoke of his concern that we are going to restrict them only to government-approved services and the lack of knowledge about the quality or the efficacy of those services that are being provided.

What occurred to me, Madam Speaker, is that, you know, I've spoken openly often about my own struggles with mental health. One of the things that maybe I have not spoken about as much is my own challenges with physical health. For a number of years I've struggled with severe food intolerance, a number of other symptoms, a number of other issues. I spent a lot of time going to a lot of different doctors, medical doctors, specialists, getting all of the medical tests run. When I exhausted all of those and nobody could provide me with any insight or help, then I saw many naturopaths and many doctors that worked in alternative medicine and a whole gamut of other people because – I can tell you, Madam Speaker – when you're in that situation and feeling that kind of desperation, you'll look for any opportunity for help.

But the fact that I had to go through all of that and that I ended up finding help through a lot of my own research and indeed by going outside the system in many respects – indeed, I ended up finding a naturopath who had an understanding, who I could work with, and I've seen a great improvement over the last couple of years as I've worked with him. But the fact is that I am still very glad that that naturopath works with a college and is regulated.

You know, I may cut myself and be able to bandage that wound myself. I may be able to get help from a friend or an acquaintance who has a little bit of medical knowledge. I could have a sore throat or a pulled muscle. I could have a chronic problems with headaches. And maybe there's an herbal remedy that I might hear about from someone that might help me with that situation. Or I may even be living with chronic pain, diagnosed, and simply looking to an alternative to going on a heavy course of opioids or other painkillers and instead find help maybe through meditation or mindfulness or group therapy or other things that might help me. But the fact that those other options exist does not preclude the fact that we need to regulate the medical services that are involved and the medical people that are involved in those things. Those things can all exist simultaneously.

It is similar with mental health. Now, as I said, I had my own struggles, and through the years I saw a number of different individuals in looking for that help. Starting out as I did, as a young man coming from the faith community, I was sent to see a man who was, I believe, a psychologist. But you know, when I first went to see him, he told me that I was oppressed by a demon and wanted to work with me on that front. When we finally found no success, then he referred me to a psychiatrist.

4:20

I saw that psychiatrist, and she – I will be honest that I was not an easy person to diagnose. I was not able to communicate very well because I was in a state of pretty dark despair, severe anxiety, without any language of knowing how to communicate what I was experiencing or what was happening to me because all I knew was what I had lived and grown up with. She diagnosed me with

schizophrenia. Didn't tell me that; I found that out later when my family doctor saw the medical records. Tried me out on a few different medications, and I'll tell you that there were some pretty freaky side effects that put a lot of fear into me and made it a lot worse in some respects. It was a long journey. That started out in 1991, 1992. I saw all manner of therapists, counsellors, individuals.

I can tell you, Madam Speaker, as I said, that I recognize the need to have different alternatives for different places where people might be. Somebody who's struggling with alcoholism may benefit from a 12-step program. Some people go cold turkey, and they're perfectly fine with working that out on their own. Others need to go into a medical facility and sit down with folks who have the training and the knowledge who are able to provide them with that support. Same with people who are struggling with their mental health. Somebody who's struggling with anxiety or depression, maybe because of experiences growing up or trauma they've experienced: maybe talk therapy is going to be good for them. Maybe for them sitting down with their imam or their pastor or a yogi is going to give them the ability to talk that through and work those issues out.

But for others they may need professional help. They may need a dedicated program like when I had the honour of participating in the day treatment program at the University of Alberta hospital, where I got to spend just over three months with trained therapists in an approved and accredited program that helped me begin to lay the groundwork for, frankly, years later, when I would be able to actually start to pick up on some of the things that I heard and was taught in that room and be able to implement them to improve my own life.

But it's essential that when people in this incredibly vulnerable state – and let me be clear, Madam Speaker. When you are in this place, you are so vulnerable. When your mind is racing, your emotions are out of control, you have lost all perspective, and you don't know where you can turn, it is incredibly important that folks who are representing themselves as professional therapists, who are offering services be regulated, that we know that when people are reaching out and asking for help, the help that they are going to receive from individuals who are representing themselves as such is going to be qualified, particularly for folks that are going into residential programs where they are entrusting themselves physically in a situation of incredible dependence and, indeed, trust. We want to be sure that the provision of those services is being done in a safe and regulated manner.

I deeply appreciate the work that the minister has done on this, the consultation that she's had, and indeed recognizing the work that FACT has done. I remember meeting with the executive director. Her name again was Nicole Imgrund. I remember meeting with her in my office and talking with her, and I really appreciate the hard work and advocacy she has done over an extended period. To be clear, Madam Speaker, this was not arrived at overnight. This has been an ongoing conversation for quite some time, and I deeply appreciate when I see folks in the community who take that time and work carefully in their advocacy, reach out to talk to other groups to build that consensus and come and thoughtfully engage with government about moving forward on these things.

The Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo this morning expressed some concerns around the consultations that have been happening and identified a group that he felt had not been heard. I appreciate that Nicole's organization, FACT Alberta, clarified that, indeed, they'd actively reached out to that particular group and that members from that group, in fact, sit on the steering committee for FACT Alberta and have had some input as part of this.

I do regret that as the member made his tabling today, he seemed to suggest that both myself and the Minister of Health, in discussing these things, have engaged in unparliamentary language. I would certainly encourage that member that if he feels that I used any unparliamentary language in my comments today, he bring that to the record or perhaps would consider at the time calling a point of order. Regardless, I recognize that he's done work in the field, that he himself has probably had some traumatic experiences in his work as a paramedic, so I can understand the passion that he brings to the table in wanting to ensure that people are helped.

But I think we need to be careful in these discussions, Madam Speaker, to be measured in how we're approaching this because, again, I do not think it's unreasonable that we bring in some basic standards, as other jurisdictions have done before us, so that we ensure that the types of services that are being offered to people are clearly identified, that they can clearly know when they are dealing with somebody who is a professional, who has training, who has background, who has education, has schooling and, again, ensuring that as we do so, we leave the room for these other options that indeed need to be available for people.

I recognize, Madam Speaker, that over the years we are just starting to get to the point where we recognize that mental health is every bit as important and as necessary as physical health, and because we have not historically had that recognition, we have not built up the same kinds of systems and indeed public coverage, access. Government has largely been absent from the provision of what are really often key medical services that are every bit as important as a person's physical health, and in the time before we began to recognize that importance, indeed, I recognize that other communities have indeed provided that service, and we are incredibly thankful that that has been there, that people have had the opportunity to talk with, you know, peer counsellors, that they've had the opportunity to find spiritual support when that is what they need and that is what they're looking for, that organizations have stepped up and provided counselling on a free or sliding scale basis.

It's an incredibly important network of services that we need to have available as we continue to address the issue of mental health because we recognize that the more we talk about it, then the more people recognize the need. Indeed, we see growing numbers of people trying to access services, and we just cannot keep up with the capacity to address it, so we need to have folks at all different points on the spectrum of services to help provide people with what they need when they need it. But, indeed, I think we need to move forward with ensuring that we have a level of services that are clearly identified as being provided by individuals who have training, who have knowledge because we do continue to learn. We do continue to find proven therapies. When we get into psychiatry and other areas, there are definitely proven methodologies and approaches that we know are effective, so it's important that we have a layer of services that is protected and regulated.

Indeed, the creation of this college of counselling therapy is not the last step on the road. This is the first step. So members that have been expressing some concerns about how this might impact other groups: there is room after the passage of this bill to have that conversation and to sit down and continue to work through regulation as this is established, just as has been done with every other college that has been created in the province.

I recognize that, again, some groups may feel a bit of fear about this change coming in, and I can understand that. With change comes some uncertainty. Again, these are groups who have provided important and essential services. But I truly believe, having spoken

with some of the folks that have been advocating for this – and I think that with the opportunity we're going to have to appoint people and see people elected into positions to take on this work – that we have the capacity to do this well and do this right. This bill is the important first step on that road as we continue to acknowledge the incredible importance of mental health, as we continue to acknowledge the work we need to do to support people who are struggling with addictions in a humane way with a harm reduction approach that, as my colleague from Peace River noted, is rooted in ending stigma.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Like everyone, I'm sure, I was just fascinated by what the Member for Edmonton-Centre had to say, so I would love it if he would continue to talk about why this bill is so important and really sort of impress on everybody what the actual facts are.

4:30

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you to the Member for St. Albert. I'll just conclude briefly. I was just wrapping up my remarks.

Again, as we proceed with this, I think this bill is a very important first step on the road, setting up the structures to ensure that we will have the college that will help determine how we regulate, how we protect. We've had some excellent amendments that have helped ensure that this has a minimum of negative impact on those who provide these services while providing good protection for those who need to access them.

I thank all the members that have shared their thoughts on this. I thank the minister for bringing this forward, and I look forward to voting in support of this bill.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, we have a request for unanimous consent to revert back to introductions.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests (reversion)

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you so much, Madam Speaker. It's such an honour and a pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly the three most important people in my whole life, my husband, Kent, and my children, Molly and Brady. They are here to learn something as they maybe should be in school, but they are going to see first-hand the proceedings here in this Assembly this afternoon. My husband is wonderful and amazing, and he's here to fix all the broken things over the last year that have happened in my Edmonton residence. Molly, just so you all know, members, is a wonderful, beautiful, smart girl who is into competitive swimming. She's currently trying to beat my 24-year-old swimming record, and I am certain that she's going to be accomplishing that. My son, Brady, is a very, very good hockey player and spent his summer at a camp at the university, building a robot that can solve a Rubik's cube. I would ask that the three most important people in my life, my loves, please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Government Bills and Orders
Third Reading
Bill 30
Mental Health Services Protection Act
(continued)

The Acting Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have to say that whenever we talk about mental health, clearly this is something that I think has touched almost every person's life in this House. I can say that in my constituency of Bonnyville-Cold Lake suicides have been something that have been a very troubling trend, with the lack of work or underemployment.

Having said that, I reached out to my local charities and societies that do counselling in my constituency to get some feedback on Bill 30 – I couldn't get to them all, but I did get to a few – and I've got a few responses, but the one that actually comes forward here, that I would like to read to the House, I think the Minister of Health would be pleased with. It says:

Hi Julie . . .

That's my constituency assistant.

. . . I think that the Bill 30 is a good one and will help . . . consumers to distinguish between a real service and one that is [just] a money grab. As one of the organizations in the region most impacted by this, I would like to see some support [and] compensation to assist with compliance as it will not be cost neutral on our part.

Thanks for reaching out and asking for feedback, much appreciated.

Audrey

Audrey McFarlane is the executive director of the Lakeland Centre for FASD.

When we make laws like this, there are going to be consequences, and one of the consequences here is that there might be some needed training or ability for these organizations to be able to react. I think that she brings up a valid point. She supports this bill, and she says that it really is something that will focus this profession. I think that when it comes to dedicated members of our society like Audrey, we need to commend each and every one of these counsellors that actually are on the front lines doing work within Alberta to make sure that some of our most vulnerable Albertans get the help they need.

That is all I wanted to say. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I actually rise just simply to notify the House that pursuant to Government Motion 36 no evening sitting will take place tonight.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, Minister, would you like to close debate?

Ms Hoffman: I would love to close. Thank you so much, Madam Speaker. I want to say what an honour it was to move third reading of Bill 30, the Mental Health Services Protection Act.

I'm getting emotional thinking about all of the work of our entire caucus. I know it's my title that goes on these bills, but they are such a work of commitment with our caucus committees, with our

cabinet committees. This is what happens when you have a government made up of ordinary folks that love and care for one another, that work in these professions, and that move things forward that matter and will make a real difference to ordinary families. To all of my colleagues: I want to thank them for all of their contributions. I know that it's my name on this bill, but it is every single one of us that needs to feel really proud of our accomplishments today.

I want to thank the members of the Assembly for adding their feedback through second reading and Committee of the Whole and now in third as well.

Madam Speaker, all Albertans have a right to feel safe when seeking support for their substance use or for mental health treatment. They should feel confident that they are receiving safe, quality services from licensed facilities and appropriately trained, regulated health professionals. For decades this hasn't been the case in Alberta. This legislation will introduce licensing requirements and core standards that will protect Albertans who seek help from residential substance-use facilities in a much better way than they are today.

I also want to thank the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster for his thoughtful amendment in supporting patient privacy. I think that when we had a chance to sit down and talk between second reading and today, it was clear that he was wanting to ensure just that patients have a little bit of time to prepare, that that was something one of the stakeholders that he reached out to said would help. I appreciate that he originally was thinking maybe bigger than he ended up bringing forward in the amendment. He understood that if there were safety concerns, we can't exactly call and say, "We'll be there in two hours to check," that it's still important that we have timely access, but that in routine inspections it's important to think about patient-centred care and how we can give that little heads-up for patients.

I also want to thank the members who asked questions about clarifying that the counselling relationship wouldn't negatively impact people with lived experience. The Member for Airdrie talked about somebody she knows – I think his name was Mike – and how he's providing important supports to members of his community. So we wanted to make sure that we were crystal clear in the legislation that peer support and people with lived experience offering that support aren't captured unless they start calling themselves "counselling therapists," which, of course, they won't be allowed to do because it will actually be a regulated title, a regulated professional title, moving forward. I'm really excited about that.

I want to say that, ultimately, this legislation will ensure that Albertans receive consistent, quality care. As we move forward, Alberta Health will work with the service providers to develop standards that prioritize Albertans' safety and security, and this will ensure that the implementation of this legislation does not cause an onerous requirement on service providers that could negatively impact access to treatment.

We also met with some members of this House to talk about our hope that we'll be able to make it free of cost at the beginning, and if there needs to be a cost, that it be minimal as we move forward, but that there not be any cost for moving forward with regulation at the beginning. We want to make sure that this isn't an impediment to good quality care and that it doesn't result in a reduction of services. Unless, of course, services don't meet the criteria. Then we don't want them to be available. We want them to make sure that they change their criteria, that they make sure that they're rising to that higher standard.

I want to thank the cosponsors, both the Member for Peace River, who is the Deputy Speaker, as well as the Member for Calgary-

Acadia, who was the Associate Minister of Health, with a real focus on mental health, when we started this work earlier this year. I want to say that both of these women have brought forward a number of really thoughtful contributions to the legislation itself as well as the work we've done with the community in preparing for today.

4:40

Specifically, I want to mention, obviously, the Member for Peace River, who talked about her lived experience as a mom. I know that, seeing those pictures, there's no way Amaya, when she was that passionate eight-year-old playing Annie in a school play, thought: one day I want to grow up and have an addiction. She wanted to be a star, right? Any one of these kids who comes through this building has dreams and hopes, and it's our responsibility to make sure that we support them in reaching their full potential, that we keep them here another day.

I want to thank the members who've talked about the comprehensive work we've done around mental health and substance-use support in addition to the work that's in this specific bill, because there is no way that it is a choice to live with a substance-use issue. Getting the right help and the right support to be able to exercise your desire to get treatment, I think, is something that we have an onus to make sure we do safely.

This legislation will reinforce the dedicated efforts of highly qualified care as well as ensure that well-run facilities in our province can say that they're part of the proper oversight that's being given and support themselves in continuing to access additional avenues for support. This bill will make Alberta the fifth province to regulate counselling therapists and the third to regulate residential substance-use treatment. I think that nobody in Alberta should feel that they have any less quality of care than any other province, and I'm glad that we will be addressing it in both of these areas to make sure that we move forward with the patient and the family as the focus.

Madam Speaker, everyone in this room knows somebody – I think we talk more openly about it – who has mental health challenges or has substance-use challenges, but we also, probably every one of us, know somebody who's accessed treatment at some point, too. We know that this is something that will continue to be a need as we move forward, so let's make sure we get it right.

Also, when I was with the Member for Peace River this summer, we went and visited the Peace River opiate awareness working group. I want to say that I know we talk a lot about the hon. member's lived experience, but when we were with this working group, we also heard from other people who talked about the lived experience of people in the region as well. It isn't just somebody's daughter. It was somebody's father, somebody's father who in the middle of calving season acquired a muscle injury and couldn't afford to take time off, obviously, in this important season to take care of his body and therefore went and got a prescription.

No community is immune from substance-use addiction, and it is our obligation to make sure that when people are injured, when people have a substance-use issue, we give them the right supports to be able to move forward and reach their full potential, become what it is that they aspire to be. I know that Bill 30 will support Albertans who are seeking this support.

I know that some people have said: "Well, maybe this just isn't the right time. Maybe this will be too cumbersome or too expensive." You know, the right time was before Taylor passed away. The right time was before 2007. The best day to plant a tree was 20 years ago; the second best day is today. So today I ask that all of us plant a tree, move forward in supporting patients in their mental health needs, and make sure that we pass this legislation and don't waste any more time. Don't talk about taking 10 years to fully

implement it. Let's make sure that we plant the tree today and that we move forward to make sure that everyone gets the care that they need as we all move forward as Albertans.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker and hon. members, for your time and attention on this important matter and, hopefully, your vote of yes. Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 30 read a third time]

Bill 23

An Act to Renew Local Democracy in Alberta

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek.

Ms Woollard: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is an honour to rise today and move third reading of Bill 23, An Act to Renew Local Democracy in Alberta, on behalf of the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

I'd like to begin by thanking all the Albertans and stakeholders who helped shape this bill throughout our consultation. We heard from over 1,500 Albertans who expressed a desire for less monetary influence in municipal elections, greater transparency, improved accessibility, and stronger accountability and enforcement, and that's what this bill delivers.

I'd also like to thank the staff at Municipal Affairs. You know, none of us would be able to accomplish what we do in this House without the strong commitment of our teams. These folks work so hard, burning the midnight oil to make it all happen. So a special thanks to Gary, LaRae, Laura, and Cathy, who, I'm sure, are watching right now, and all the other staff who helped contribute to this bill. We all greatly appreciate your work.

Our government made it clear, when we updated provincial election laws, that we wanted to take big money out of provincial politics, and now we're doing the same on the municipal level. We consulted with Albertans, and we know they want to see local elections that are more fair and transparent. People should be running for elections on their ideas, not on how much money is in their bank account. These rules will create a more level playing field for everyone who wants to run. This bill will ban corporate and union donations, mirroring the provincial legislation and reducing the influence of corporate and union donors. This proposed reform will ensure that politicians are working for Albertans not campaign donations. Albertans expect nothing less.

We've streamlined the process to remove barriers for candidates to run and to create more competitive local campaigns. Elected officials should be focused on delivering results for their community, not on building a war chest for an election years away. These new rules will also close some of the funding loopholes currently in the act. This bill will increase voter accessibility to the polls by requiring municipalities of over 5,000 to hold at least one advance poll day for those who can't make it to the polls on election day.

Albertans have the right to know who is trying to influence their elections, which is why rules around third-party advertising are vital. In the last municipal election we saw PACs campaigning without any rules or regulations. This bill will change that, requiring PACs to register and disclose their financing, subjecting them to the same rules that they must adhere to at the provincial level, the strongest PAC regulations in the country. Laws must be enforceable to be effective. The reforms before us today would give new powers to the provincial Election Commissioner to investigate offences and make sure the rules are being followed.

Madam Speaker, it's time to update our laws to get big money out of local elections, make it easier for Albertans to vote, and

create a more transparent election process. Albertans asked for these reforms, Albertans support these reforms, and we are delivering. Passing this legislation now would give our local authorities time to learn about, train on, and enact these changes so that the next set of elections run as smoothly as possible.

I thank all the hon. members for their comments and feedback and hope that all members of the House will support this bill. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 23, a bill that I have had the opportunity to speak about at some length over the past couple of days. So in the spirit of the season I will let my comments on the record speak for themselves.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, would the hon. member like to close debate?

4:50

Ms Woollard: I would be happy to close debate. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

[Motion carried; Bill 23 read a third time]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I rise to request unanimous consent of the House that notwithstanding Standing Order 3(1) the morning sitting of the Assembly tomorrow be cancelled and that we resume at 1:30.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Seeing the excellent progress that I think we have made today, I would now move that the Assembly adjourn until 1:30 tomorrow.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 4:52 p.m.]

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Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, December 6, 2018

Day 60

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

Fourth Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (NDP), Speaker
Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (NDP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (UCP),
Deputy Leader of the Official Opposition
Anderson, Hon. Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (NDP)
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (UCP)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (NDP)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP)
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (NDP)
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (NDP)
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Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (NDP)
Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP)
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Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (NDP)
Dreeschen, Devin, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UCP)
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (NDP)
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)
Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (NDP)
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP)
Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP),
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Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)
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Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (NDP)
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Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (UCP)
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (NDP),
Deputy Government Whip
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (NDP)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)

Party standings:

New Democratic: 53 United Conservative: 26 Alberta Party: 3 Alberta Liberal: 1 Freedom Conservative: 1 Independent: 2 Progressive Conservative: 1

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Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, December 6, 2018

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Hon. members, let each of us reflect or pray, each in our own way. On this National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women let us remember the 14 women who were killed on this day 29 years ago at l'école Polytechnique in Montreal, Quebec. Today we remember Geneviève Bergeron, Hélène Colgan, Nathalie Croteau, Barbara Daigneault, Anne-Marie Edward, Maud Haviernick, Barbara Klucznik, Maryse Laganière, Maryse LeClair, Anne-Marie Lemay, Sonia Pelletier, Michèle Richard, Annie St-Arneault, and Annie Turcotte. Hon. members, these were the loved ones, the women, the daughters, the wives, the mothers. We must not forget that our work in this place must make sure that everyone in our province is safe and never at risk.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly a number of distinguished indigenous leaders in the province of Alberta seated in your gallery. I ask that the chiefs rise as I call their names: Treaty 8 Grand Chief Arthur Noskey from Loon River First Nation, Treaty 8 Deputy Grand Chief Gerald Giroux from Swan River First Nation, Treaty 8 Secretary Treasurer Chief Ramona Horseman from Horse Lake First Nation, Kee Tas Kee Now Tribal Council Grand Chief Albert Thunder from Whitefish Lake First Nation, and Chief Rupert Meneen from Tallcree First Nation.

These chiefs work hard in their communities every day to make life better for all their people. They have come here today to remind us of all of their constitutional rights to be consulted before actions are taken that might impact their treaty rights. They're also here to show their willingness to work with Albertans on a new relationship, one built on trust, respect, and understanding. This can only be achieved if rights are respected and efforts are made by every Albertan to build positive relationships. If we could all offer them the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Hon. members, there are staff from constituency offices who will be attending in the galleries later this afternoon. I would anticipate that there will be a request for unanimous consent to continue introductions following OQP.

We do have some school groups here today. The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Dr. Starke: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my very great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 27 students and their teachers, Rolanda Beaudette and Ted Wheat, from St. Jerome's school in Vermilion. St. Jerome's has marked a couple of milestones in the last few years, its 50th anniversary just a few years ago and the completion of a major renovation and

refurbishing that was started under our administration but completed under the current Education minister's administration; therefore, he claims credit. Nonetheless, I'm very pleased to invite these 27 students and their teachers to rise and receive the very warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you today to members of this Assembly the parents, the teachers, the staff, and the grade 6 class of H.W. Pickup school. I'm beginning to sound like a bit of a broken record, I think, but once again with this class today I have colleagues that I have taught with, I have students that I have taught, and I have the kids of students that I have taught. The only thing that I don't have and that I have had at times is the grandchildren of students that I have taught. Could the staff, the parents, and the students of the grade 6 class at H.W. Pickup please stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

I'm surprised that at your age, hon. member, you haven't taught some grandchildren.

Ms McKittrick: M. le Président, c'est avec fierté que je me lève à la Chambre aujourd'hui pour vous présenter 66 étudiants et étudiantes avec leurs enseignants de l'école Our Lady of Perpetual Help school. Ces étudiants parlent très bon français, et je suis fière d'eux. These students speak really good French, and maybe one day you'll speak French in this Assembly. Les étudiants sont accompagnés de leurs enseignantes, Mme Miller, Mme Taylor, et Mme Brown, ainsi que de leurs chaperons, Mme Klinck, Mme Houle, M. Hall, Mme Ramsay, et Mme Bonsant. Est-ce que vous pouvez vous lever, s'il vous plaît, pour recevoir la bienvenue chaleureuse de l'Assemblée.

The Speaker: Au revoir.

The hon. Member for Peace River.

Ms Jabbour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on your behalf to introduce to all members of the Assembly members of your family who are seated in your gallery. First of all, your eldest daughter, Shauna Wanner Crowley, who is a stay-at-home mom, one who challenges all the nieces and nephews in the French language as she's the only family member who is completely bilingual. With her is Vincent Crowley, her husband, who is Canadian Fertilizers' chief steam engineer in Medicine Hat; Ella Crowley, who is in grade 9 and enjoys playing the horn and the piano and is an avid volleyball player; and Maiah Crowley, your oldest grandchild and the person who said that her grandfather needed to run as an MLA in 2015. Maiah graduated grade 12 last year and is still deciding what the next chapter in her life will be. Missing is Cian Crowley, who is in grade 12 and felt his studies came first. They're also accompanied by your wife, Joan Emard-Wanner, and grandson Josh Bjorndahl. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome. It's nice to have you here.

The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly someone who you need no introduction to, Megan Ducker. She is the Office of the Speaker's special assistant to you and has proven herself as a

dedicated worker day to day in your office. I know that many of you already have a similar appreciation for Megan's work, so I'd ask everyone in the Assembly to give her the traditional warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Welcome, Megan, and thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is an absolute honour to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly someone who makes sure that I know where I'm going, that I know when to be there, and that I know what to say when I get there. It is not easy, I can assure you. I know all of you have such tremendous respect for your constituency managers. Jodi Christensen is here today. Jodi is joined by Barb Currie. Barb Currie is the heart and soul of the Alberta Party caucus research staff, Alberta Party caucus employee number one. Barb has a long, long history here at the Assembly and has done a tremendous amount of work on behalf of many members and helps make this place go. If I could please ask Jodi and Barb to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

1:40

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you members of the Edmonton Metropolitan Region Board. We talk a lot about the importance of collaboration and co-operation for the success of our municipalities. These folks are walking the walk. They're an amazing group of people who are working hard with that positive change in their communities and setting a fine example.

Members of the board are seated in the members' gallery, and I ask that they rise as I call out their names: board chair Dr. Jodi Abbott, board CEO Ms Karen Wichuk, Mayor William Choy from the town of Stony Plain, Mayor Rod Frank from Strathcona county, Mayor Alanna Hnatiw from Sturgeon county, Mayor Cathy Heron from the city of St. Albert, Mayor Ray Ralph from the town of Devon, Mayor Rod Shaigec from Parkland county, Mayor John Stewart from the town of Beaumont, Mayor Barry Turner from the town of Morinville, and Mayor Bob Young from the city of Leduc. I ask that all members join me in providing them with the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Children's Services and Status of Women.

Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you some very special guests who are working hard every day serving the needs of children and families who need those supports the most. From the beautiful constituency of Lesser Slave Lake I'm pleased to recognize the compassion and dedication of Angela Mulholland, who is a registered nurse and mental health worker who helps support the needs of patients and families through her work at the family care clinic. She's also a mother of five, two of whom are adopted, and I've seen first-hand just how passionate she is about work and family as she's a former co-worker of mine, and I'm proud to call her a friend.

I'm also pleased to be joined by Terri Skinner. Through her work as a home visitation co-ordinator at the Norwood Child & Family Resource Centre in Edmonton, Terri is making a difference to the well-being of the many families who are supported by the centre every year. About 3,000 families benefit, many of whom are in

extremely difficult circumstances. I was so glad to see the tremendous impact of the centre when I visited there.

I invite Terri Skinner and Angela Mulholland to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Health and Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce Rose Seerey and Richard Kennedy, who are amazing volunteers who are always willing to lend a helping hand. They both help out in my office regularly and at community events, and when community leagues call to say that they need help with casinos, they're the first two to help volunteer, and we really appreciate it. I'm proud to have Richard, Rose, and Heather, who's my constituency manager, here today. They're all residents of Edmonton-Glenora. Please join me in giving them the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three sets of introductions. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you members of the Association of Islamic Charitable Projects Calgary. This group has been supporting Muslim Albertans since 2012. The AICP provides a space for the Muslim community in Calgary to get together for congregation and prayers and a forum to address issues facing the community. I want to thank this group for their commitment and service to the people of Alberta, and I now ask my guests – Maher Habbas, Shaykh Nasser Ghanem, and Shaykh Walid Badwaki – to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Mr. Sabir: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to also introduce to you and through you Balwinder Kahlon, Rajesh Angral, Manjit Singh Piasa, Chand Singh Sadioura. These guests are here from Calgary and are part of an organization called the Drug Awareness Foundation. They work tirelessly to build healthy communities and prevent alcohol- and drug-related problems in society. Every year they hold multiple blood drives to build awareness and bring the community together for a good cause. They're also friends with the Member for Calgary-Greenway. I would like to thank them for their work and ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Continue.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to introduce to you and through you Ms Renée Vaugeois. Renée has worked to advance and promote human rights through education, dialogue, and community building in Edmonton and abroad for the past 15 years. I wish to congratulate Renée on her recent win of the Ram Krishna Bajaj memorial global award and thank her for all the work she has done to make our communities, make our province a better place. I ask Renée to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today, and I'd just like to take a very brief moment to thank all of

our Legislature security, who do such a wonderful job of keeping us safe and greeting the public. But for my introduction I'd just like to focus on one particular security guard who does a wonderful job, Garet Bonn. Thank you for everything you do. I also understand that your \$20 payment to the Legislature security social fund is currently due.

The Speaker: For a moment there I wondered where that political contribution was going.

Are there any other introductions today, hon. members? The Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Dana Francis, who is a constituent of Leduc-Beaumont. Ms Francis has been instrumental in spearheading a petition asking for an amendment to the Cemeteries Act to allow for emerging technologies to be used in place of conventional cremation methods. I would like to thank her for her hard work and enthusiasm. I will table the petition later today. Dana, I ask you to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Any other introductions?

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, it's a privilege to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly someone who did not want to be introduced here but someone who plays a very integral role in helping myself and another MLA in our caucus to do what we do. I'd like to have Shannon Hamelin please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. members, I believe there will be an introduction for constituency assistants later today.

Ministerial Statements

The Speaker: The Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Treaty 8 Recognition

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise today. I'd first like to acknowledge that we're here on Treaty 6 territory. I rise today on something very important, and it's a rare honour for me. I rise to recognize and acknowledge Treaty 8 Grand Chief Arthur Noskey, Deputy Grand Chief Gerald Giroux, Secretary-Treasurer Chief Ramona Horseman, and KTC Grand Chief Albert Thunder, Chief Billy Joe Laboucan from the Lubicon Cree Nation, and Chief Rupert Meneen from Tallcree First Nation. In particular, I want to formally congratulate Grand Chief Arthur Noskey from Loon River Cree, who this summer was appointed as the very first full-time grand chief in Treaty 8's history.

I want to update the House on this historic relationship. In addition, marking a first for me, I've been asked to read a statement from Grand Chief Noskey to all of the Members of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. His letter:

Treaty No. 8 was agreed to in 1899 between the Dene, Beaver and Cree Peoples and the Crown, Queen Victoria. This Treaty agreement ensured that our ways of life would continue as if we never entered Treaty. Our way of life included Hunting, Fishing, Trapping, and Gathering.

Recently it has been suggested that Alberta should sell crown lands in order to help deal with our deficit. In 2005, the Supreme Court in Mikisew ruled that there is a Duty to Consult First Nations. Mikisew Cree First Nation is a Treaty 8 First

Nation and all Albertans should understand and respect our Treaty and the relationship with the Crown before making such statements.

We are challenging the Province's assumption of crown lands. The Treaty people have always had a different position on this. These lands have always been our treasury, our food source, and our pharmacy since time immemorial. When it comes to what is considered Crown land, it is critical that any Government understands Treaty. When government looks ahead, does it plan for the next 7 generations as our First Nations do? Or does it see an environment occupied with nothing but Industrial Development? We worry that some people may intend to undermine Treaty by dealing on things that affect Treaty without consulting First Nations.

I acknowledge that the Province of Alberta is finally recognizing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and I extend my sincere gratitude to the Government of Alberta for its leadership and commitment towards its implementation. An important part of that Declaration is Article 19 that refers to "Free, prior and informed consent."

Good work has been accomplished by this government especially the resolving the land claim of the Lubicon Lake Band. To complete an 85-year process in their short time in office is an accomplishment to be commended. However, there is a current outstanding land claim settlement with the Beaver First Nation in the Peace Country that must be addressed as a priority by government.

The Treaty 8 First Nations in Alberta are not opposed to economic development, pipelines or beneficial opportunities within the oil and gas sector. We are always open to dialogue regarding sustainable resource development that ensures the protection of our Treaty and Inherent Rights and our way of life.

Grand Chief Arthur Noskey.

1:50

Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to have been able to do that on behalf of the grand chief and all the assembled chiefs. Indeed on this side we respect indigenous consultation. We don't take the word lightly. We know what meaning it carries and how past governments failed to give it proper attention or its deserved respect. In my role, which is unique, I think, with respect to my colleagues, I have the honour of speaking with and listening to indigenous leaders and their peoples each and every day. It's meant some amazing conversations and led to some groundbreaking accomplishments. Sometimes it's things that have been in the works for many years, like the Lubicon Cree land agreement, a historic conclusion to a long-standing concern; sometimes it's recognizing the hurt and the suffering that has happened over the generations and apologizing for our past, like we did with the residential schools and the '60s scoop; and sometimes it's exploring new opportunities for collaboration, that for too long went unheard, like supporting indigenous participation in Alberta's energy market, co-operative management agreements for new parks, new housing and health initiatives, or finally bringing clean water to people on reserves, all of which we have done.

Then there's the work that continues, the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples and murdered and missing indigenous women. Government is not perfect. We are not perfect. Trust takes time. It takes effort and commitment. All members need to understand that consultation is not just required; it is crucial.

I must say, Mr. Speaker, that I am very concerned that in this whole session the opposition has not asked one single question of the Minister of Indigenous Relations regarding any issue for First Nations people. Your silence is deafening. That's why I thought the grand chief should be able to share his words. Consultation is not

an open-and-closed book. It's not something to get bogged down by. It's not something to throw your hands into the air and say: enough is enough. It's work. It's trust. It's healing. It's listening. It's moving forward together.

It's important to me, it's important to the chiefs, and it's important to all indigenous peoples, and indeed it should be important to all Albertans. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to stand and respond. On behalf of the United Conservative caucus I would also like to welcome and recognize our guests here today from the Treaty 8 First Nations. Our caucus recognizes and respects the importance of engagement, consultation, and continued relationship building with the indigenous peoples of Alberta. We are pleased that Treaty 8 Grand Chief Arthur Noskey, Deputy Grand Chief Gerald Giroux, Secretary-Treasurer Chief Ramona Horseman, KTC Grand Chief Albert Thunder, Chief Billy Joe Laboucan of the Lubicon Cree, and Chief Rupert Meneen of Tallcree First Nation could join members in the Legislature today.

I would also want to offer the most sincere congratulations of our caucus to Grand Chief Noskey on his historic appointment. I thank you very much for the invitation. I much enjoyed the swearing-in ceremony that I attended this fall.

We look forward to working collaboratively on many issues that affect the Treaty 8 peoples, Alberta's wider indigenous community, and all Albertans. We know the importance of the relationship between the elected representatives of Alberta, Albertans, and the many diverse indigenous communities in the province.

We also know that, like people all over Alberta, recent years have been very hard on Alberta's indigenous communities. We know that the economic circumstances that we find ourselves in impact indigenous people every day. United Conservative MLAs hear from their indigenous constituents, and we hear their concerns about rural crime, unemployment, and fleeting economic opportunity that makes it harder to provide full and prosperous lives for their families.

What we can tell these indigenous families is that our caucus will continue to work tirelessly to expand prosperity and opportunity for indigenous Albertans and our entire province. We are here to listen, we are here to engage, and we are here to work with you towards a better future for Alberta's Treaty 8 people.

Again, congratulations and welcome to our Legislative Assembly. Hay-hay, masi chok.

Mr. Mason: I would like to ask for unanimous consent of the House to allow a representative of the third party to respond to the ministerial statement.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd also like to acknowledge that we are meeting on the traditional territory of the Treaty 6 First Nations and Métis Nation zone 4. Thank you to Grand Chief Arthur Noskey, Deputy Grand Chief Gerald Giroux, Secretary-Treasurer Chief Ramona Horseman, KTC Grand Chief Albert Thunder, Chief Billy Joe Laboucan from the Lubicon Cree band, and Chief Rupert Meneen from Tallcree First Nation. And thank you to the Minister of Indigenous Relations for sharing these words here today. They are so important for us to hear.

Our caucus wants to be very clear. Reconciliation is the responsibility of each and every Albertan. We are all treaty people, and we must work to ensure that the nation-to-nation dialogue with indigenous peoples is a partnership and that our conversations are respectful and fulsome. We stand with every member of this House in working toward reconciliation in recognition of treaty rights. We recognize that reconciliation isn't possible without acknowledging the truth of our shared past and acknowledging the historic wrongs that were visited upon indigenous peoples. Recognizing and implementing the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples is the minimum that all treaty people should expect of any provincial, territorial, or federal government, and that includes consulting with First Nations before making any announcements about plans for disputed lands.

Indigenous brothers and sisters, thank you. We are grateful that you allow us to walk the path with you.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Point of order.

The Speaker: Point of order.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

Unemployment

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, in May of this year 6.2 per cent of Albertans were unemployed. In October 7.3 per cent were unemployed: six straight months of growing unemployment. Will the government acknowledge that this is the result of the failure of high-debt, high-tax NDP economic policies?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and to any Albertan who is feeling the impacts still lingering from the economic downturn, we absolutely are working hard for them. We're fighting for them to make sure that we have an economic recovery that's built to last and that impacts every single Alberta family. Since the depths of the recession we have more than 100,000 new full-time jobs in the province of Alberta. That's certainly a step in the right direction, but we know it doesn't go far enough. What would make it absolutely worse, though, is to fire 4,000 teachers and 4,000 nurses to give a \$700 million tax giveaway to the top 1 per cent.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, when the NDP came to office three and a half years ago, 139,000 Albertans were unemployed; now 184,000 Albertans are unemployed, a growth of 45,000 Albertans looking for work. Will the government acknowledge that this is the result of the failure of high-tax, high-debt economic policies of the NDP?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, once again I'll say that for anybody who doesn't yet feel the full impacts of the economic recovery, we're fighting for those families every single day and for all families. Since the depths of the recession we've added more than 100,000 new full-time jobs. We know that the recovery hasn't been felt by every family yet, and that's why we can't take our foot off the momentum that we're building in this province. What would absolutely do that and move the depths of the recession back to where they were is to lay off thousands of public-sector workers, including 4,000 teachers and 4,000 nurses. That certainly would be the wrong direction, and we won't follow the Leader of the Official Opposition's advice on that one.

2:00

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, when the NDP came to office three and a half years ago, 62 per cent of young Albertans were employed. That's down to 56 per cent, a huge decrease in youth employment. Sixty thousand women were unemployed when the NDP came to office, and now 76,000 Alberta women are unemployed. Will the government acknowledge that this is the result of the failure of high-tax, high-debt NDP economic policy?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, certainly, for anyone who is feeling the impacts of the downturn in the economy, we certainly are working to make sure that that isn't lasting and to make sure that they have opportunities for full employment. The opposition leader recently quoted Professor Tombe. I will paraphrase what he said when he pointed out that the rate of unemployed Albertans continues to decline. The rise in employment, he said, is due largely to workers coming from places like Saskatchewan, where policies like the member opposite has proposed have failed.

The Speaker: Second main question.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, when the NDP came to office three and a half years ago, unemployment in Calgary was 5.8 per cent. Now in Calgary it is 8.2 per cent, the highest unemployment of any major city in Canada. Will the government acknowledge that this is the result of the failure of high-tax, high-debt NDP economic policy?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, we're certainly fighting for the people of Calgary every day, fighting to make sure we get access to tidewater, something that the member opposite said wasn't his responsibility when he was in Ottawa for a decade around the cabinet table and a decade before that when he was supposed to be representing the people of Calgary. This side of the House will absolutely fight for the people of Calgary and for all Albertans. Again, Dr. Tombe said that people are moving here from Saskatchewan because of the kinds of impacts of policies that the hon. member is proposing. We're not going to act on that. We're going to fight for ordinary families and make sure that we have an economy built to last.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, when the NDP came to office three and a half years ago, 7.8 per cent of Albertans were unemployed for a year or longer. That's now 15.6 per cent. We have seen a doubling of the number of Albertans unemployed for a year or longer during the three-and-a-half-year tenure of the NDP. Will the government acknowledge that this disaster is a result of high-tax, high-debt NDP economic policies?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, we're fighting every day for ordinary Albertans to make sure they get the things that matter to them like a pipeline to tidewater, that the member opposite said, quote: wasn't my job when I was in Ottawa to fight for that pipeline. It couldn't be further from the truth. Three and a half years ago when we came into government, the city of Calgary had been screaming for a Calgary cancer centre for decades, and they were given the runaround by Conservatives year after year after year. You know what? We've invested in Calgary. We're building that cancer centre. We're putting people to work. There are four cranes on-site today. We're going to make sure that we have an economic recovery that helps people in health care, that helps people in construction, and get that pipeline built.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, since the NDP came to office three and a half years ago, the per capita gross domestic product of Alberta

has declined by 7 per cent. That means the average Albertan is 7 per cent poorer since the NDP came to office. Monthly payrolls have declined from \$12.7 billion when they came to office to \$11.8 billion today, a billion dollars less in income for Albertans. Will the government acknowledge that Albertans are poorer today because of the failure of high-tax, high-debt NDP policies?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, we're fighting every day for every Albertan. That side of the House wants to fight for a \$700 million tax giveaway to their wealthy friends and insiders. On this side of the House we are investing in ordinary folks. We're making sure that we're building things that matter to people in the province of Alberta. In Saskatchewan, where the member likes to spend time and say his great mentor, Mr. Moe, to the east, they brought in a tax on construction, a tax that certainly impacted ordinary folks working on the front lines. On this side of the House we're building, we're investing, we're freezing tuition to make life more affordable. Austerity provinces like the Official Opposition wants to model . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Deputy Premier.
Third main question.

Provincial Fiscal Policies

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, when the NDP came to office three and a half years ago, Alberta's debt after 110 years of history stood at \$13 billion. It now stands at \$56 billion, climbing towards a hundred billion dollars. We are spending more on debt interest to bondholders than we are on services for 19 of the 22 Alberta government departments. Will the government acknowledge that this fiscal catastrophe is the result of high-debt, high-tax NDP fiscal policies?

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, it's difficult to take advice from the hon. member given his record. When he was in government in Ottawa, there were six straight deficit budgets. There was a \$56 billion deficit in just one year, and they added \$145 billion to the national debt. Will the opposition leader stand up and justify that now?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, since the NDP came to office three and a half years ago, food bank use is up, crime is up, poverty is up, bankruptcies are up, unemployment is up, debt is up, taxes are up, but incomes are down. Will the government acknowledge that this disastrous record is the result of high-tax, high-debt NDP economic policy?

Mr. Mason: Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, it's interesting. The previous government was here for 44 years, and they failed to diversify the economy, remaining dependent on a very volatile natural resource for 30 per cent of Alberta's program spending. Everyone knows that the price of oil goes up and down except, apparently, Conservatives.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, given the total failure of the NDP and given their overseeing and provoking economic decline in this province, will the government commit not to come back to this place in the spring with a lame-duck, high-tax, high-debt budget but to allow the people of Alberta to pass judgment on this government's record at the earliest possible date by calling an election on February 1, 2019?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There certainly is a law in place around an election period. We know that Conservatives in Alberta never followed the law when it comes to calling elections, but this side of the House plans on doing so. You know what we also plan on doing? Things that the Leader of the Official Opposition said weren't his job, fighting for pipelines. House of Commons for 20 years and said the word "pipelines" once because it, quote: wasn't my responsibility. You know what, hon. member? You couldn't be further from the truth. The reality is that it was your responsibility. You failed, and we look forward to making sure we get the job done.

Mrs. Pitt: Point of order.

The Speaker: Point of order noted.

Ms Hoffman: That's why our Premier is in Montreal fighting for pipelines at this very moment.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Medical Laboratory Service Costs

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP has failed to focus our health care system on its core business, and that is delivering patient care. First, it was bringing laundry services in-house at great expense. Then they decided to take over the efficient and professional outsourced lab services. The cost of building Edmonton's superlab has doubled, and now we're learning the impact that moving lab services in-house will have on Alberta's bottom line. Through a document leaked today to the Alberta Party caucus, we discovered that management positions inside AHS will expand significantly when labs are brought back in-house. Not surprising. To the Minister of Health: why are you increasing administration at a time when Albertans are demanding that we save?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that the member opposite sits in close proximity to the Official Opposition, so sometimes he might hear their accusations louder than reality. Well, let me give the reality. The reality is that we stopped the privatization of lab services to a multinational corporation. We stopped the privatization of laundry services, which are in communities throughout all of our ridings, hon. members, ridings in your communities that you represent, hospitals in your communities, good jobs in your local communities that were going to be privatized under the Conservatives. We stopped that. We kept jobs in your ridings. We're proud to do so and to work for all Albertans because that's our job.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
First supplemental.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, the new org chart for the megalab is called towards a brave new world, which seems like a fitting title given that the original book is a cautionary tale of what happens when government is in control of absolutely everything. The org chart lists 6,218 positions. To the Minister of Health: how many positions exist in labs today, and how many brand new positions will be created by moving the lab into AHS?

Ms Hoffman: Just to go on a trip down memory lane, lab services, we know, impact 70 per cent of health care decisions. Making sure we get lab results right drives good decision-making for health

outcomes for patients and, of course, for the bottom line by reducing duplication. Mr. Speaker, Ralph Klein didn't like the results of privatizing the Calgary lab services. He looked at what the reality was, and he brought those services back into a public system. Ralph Klein knew that there were too many things at risk to have patient care entrusted to a multinational private corporation. I am happy to follow that one example that he gave us.

2:10

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Clark: Truly through the looking glass, Mr. Speaker, when the NDP is praising Ralph Klein.

In addition to that ballooning head count, though, Mr. Speaker, I'm really interested in what this is going to cost Alberta taxpayers. The current model undeniably works, and it won't be improved by adding thousands of managers to an already top-heavy Alberta Health Services. Once again the NDP has set out to solve a problem that we don't have. Again to the Minister of Health: how much do we currently spend on lab services, and how much more will your new model cost to deliver the same service or possibly worse?

Ms Hoffman: If the member thinks there isn't room for improvement in terms of health care, I absolutely think there's room for improvement. I think there are opportunities for even greater outcomes. Mr. Speaker, when I met with the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster just yesterday, we talked about things like people not being able to have their lab results when they move from one part of the province to another part of the province. That certainly is inefficient, and it's not in the best interest of patients. That's why having one lab system that will be able to ensure that those results follow patients throughout the province is something that I'm incredibly proud of. It will be more efficient and lead to better health outcomes. It's a win-win-win.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

ESL and Literacy Programs for Immigrants

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I direct my questions through you to the Minister of Labour. A very large number of newcomers whose first language is not English live in my riding of Edmonton-McClung. Many seek English as a second language training classes that are easily accessible and meet their needs. How do we help immigrants and refugees find available ESL programming so that they can get gainful employment sooner rather than later?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Labour and democratic renewal.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our government has the backs of newcomers, and we're fighting for what matters to them. That includes making sure they have access to the services and supports that they need. That's why not only are we supporting community organizations and delivering settlement, language, and integration programs but we also recently expanded our training programs to ensure families have even more opportunities for training and skills development. Through our training-for-work programming newcomers can access training to link their education and experience to the Canadian labour market.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again to the same minister: can ESL programs adapt to offer part-time, targeted literacy classes?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and for the important question. Ensuring that newcomers get the language training they need is a priority for our government. We currently support a number of literacy programs through Advanced Education, including ESL and foundational learning options, and the Alberta settlement and integration program provides funding to language support services such as English language assessment services, ESL drop-in centres as well as funding innovative projects that support and enhance the ESL system as a whole. We also know that some newcomers face barriers to learning English in regularly scheduled ESL classes, so ESL drop-in centres are available.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
Second supplemental.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Could the province offer funding for programing for industry-specific language development; for example, level 1 child care or hotel hospitality services?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We believe strongly that no matter where someone is from or what their background is, everyone deserves the same opportunities for success and employment. That's why we fund organizations that help immigrants and refugees gain the language and skills needed for certain industries such as hospitality and child care. Programs like the Multicultural Health Brokers' first steps to employment are already providing language, cultural supports, and training to help refugees and immigrants get and keep jobs in the hospitality industry. We know that programs are making a positive impact in the lives of many newcomers. We're going to keep fighting to ensure that they get the support they need.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

Political Action Committees

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is a chance that this might be my last question in this Assembly, so please bear with me. In 2015 the Premier passed laws that were supposed to take big money out of politics, but instead they introduced U.S.-style PACs that have made our politics uglier and increased the power of party leaders. Now the party leaders can use PAC money to do dirty politics and shrug their shoulders and pretend to be innocent. Is the Premier aware of reports that PACs are being directly run by Alberta political parties to hide money and get around the law?

Ms Hoffman: No, Mr. Speaker, and certainly if the hon. member has any evidence or information that he'd like to bring forward, I would certainly be very concerned if that were the case. I appreciate him raising this. If he has any information that could bring light to this, I think it is deeply troubling.

The Speaker: The hon. member. First supplemental.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Party leaders and the PACs they control now call the shots, and that is not good. Given that there are rumours that the party leaders have used envelopes full of undisclosed PAC cash to interfere with the leadership contest in parties like the UCP and given that instead of clean politics we have gotten more dirty tricks than ever before, has the government asked the Election Commissioner to investigate whether PACs were involved in illegal activities in the UCP leadership race?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud of the race that we had. We had three fantastic leadership candidates, who ran very fair and reasonable campaigns, and I'm very proud of the kind of democracy we've built through a leadership campaign in our party rather than what it sounds like the hon. member is referring to. Certainly, any time people are making negative kinds of promises based on underhanded concerns, that's very concerning to me. I certainly would welcome the hon. member to raise his concerns with the Ethics Commissioner or an elections officer.

Mr. Gill: Mr. Speaker, given that it appears that there were more than \$40,000 in very suspicious donations made to a UCP leadership candidate who attacked Brian Jean in the UCP leadership race and who ultimately endorsed the Leader of the Opposition and given that there are rumours that this money actually came from a PAC associated with the Leader of the Opposition, can the government confirm that the Election Commissioner is investigating this PAC and these questionable donations?

Ms Hoffman: I can't, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, the Election Commissioner reports to all members of this Assembly, but if the hon. member has information about that that he is hoping to highlight, I imagine it would be best to go to the Election Commissioner. We know that some people like to say, you know, that things that are alleged fraud belong with internal party mechanisms. I think that alleged fraud belongs with the police, and if there are concerns about alleged fraud in political activities, then it should be brought to the police. I think that if the hon. member has concerns about elections, then he should certainly bring those as well to the election officer.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

Support for Students with Special Needs

Ms Luff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Too often I hear from parents and teachers that children with special needs are not getting the supports that they require in Alberta public schools. I regularly meet with parents who tell me that they struggle to get their child properly tested. This happens because schools have a limited number of psychological assessments they can offer a year, and these usually go to the students with the most severe behaviours. This can mean that students with less overt needs, who could be helped by early intervention, fall through the cracks. Imagine being the parent of a struggling child who can't afford the thousands of dollars it costs for private assessment. To the Minister of Education: why is there a limit on psychological assessments for students who need them?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks very much for the question from the hon. member. Certainly, we know that assessing students' special needs is very important. We have built a structure that allows us to bring in special-needs assessment when it is required and when it is asked for by teachers and from schools. In this last year, for example, we have invested more than \$66 million in the regional collaborative service delivery program, which has allowed us to hire more speech pathologists, social workers, nurses, and other front-line staff. Certainly, there's more work to be done, but we're heading in the right direction.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
First supplemental.

Ms Luff: Thank you. Given that there are numerous early learning screening tools available and given that universally applying these tools could find children who need intervention sooner and at lower cost than traditional testing and given that when children have access to early intervention, they have better outcomes, why are we not applying this kind of screening province-wide?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we know that by assessing and using screening procedures, we can help to identify issues that require extra attention. I have been working to strengthen those every step of the way, and our entire caucus and government have been working to strengthen that by making the necessary investments in education. You have to put in money and time and effort in order for these things to happen. You certainly can't do it by cutting.

Ms Luff: Given that there are many things that schools need, from playgrounds, furniture, computers, and instruments to education assistants, nurses, and counsellors, and given that many schools have to fund raise for things that should be considered essential and given that this can cause major inequities between schools across Alberta and that every student deserves the same quality of education despite their postal code or their parents' income, will the minister commit to reviewing the per-student funding model and also commit to defunding elite private schools?

2:20

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, there's a lot in that particular question. We know that, say, for example, playgrounds are a very important part. That's why our government, for all new school programs, is building a new playground as well. It goes with that. That allows us more money to make investments for other communities, building new programming so that we can reach into places where they're having difficulty raising that money. We do all of these things because we believe in education. We believe in investing in education. You can't make cuts and compromise the future of our students.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

NDP and Pipeline Development

Mr. Loewen: We hear the same messages from the government day after day. They keep telling us they are great supporters of our oil and gas industry. They keep telling us that they want to get pipelines built. The fact is that they can repeat these lines over and over again, but it doesn't make them true, and it won't change their record of opposition to critical pipeline projects. It won't change the fact that their ministers used to show up to protest our prosperity. It won't change the fact that a minister's name appears as a contributor to a book designed to impede our economic progress. What might be a good first step forward is an apology for this policy. Will the minister of environment start with an apology for protesting Northern Gateway and for her other . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, from day one our government has fought for what's important, and that's our energy industry and the good jobs it brings to Albertans and indeed

the country. We have worked hard, as all members know, on pipelines and diversifying our energy here in Alberta because we know that that's a long-term solution for our industry. In the meantime we're fighting very hard to get more railcars to get the excess supply that we have out. Just this week we announced a curtailment, which will be a short-term solution to that.

Mr. Loewen: Given that it seems an apology isn't forthcoming and given that I'm sure they will continue to tell Albertans that they are champions of pipelines and given that Albertans want the government to prove that their support consists of more than just empty words and given that the Premier has already admitted on CBC that she was wrong for opposing Northern Gateway – it makes me wonder why she said that she's been supporting it since day one – will the Premier at least take responsibility, provide Albertans in this House with the same level of honesty that she provided the state broadcaster in Ottawa, and tell us that the NDP government was wrong to oppose Northern Gateway?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Sure. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to go back to the Federal Court of Appeal decision that threw out the Northern Gateway decision. Paragraph 255 said that after providing false information to indigenous people, the federal government, of which this member's leader was a part, was "less than willing to hear the First Nations on this and to . . . correct the information."

Mr. Speaker, I am not going to take lectures on how to get pipelines or large projects built from a group of people that have that kind of record when it comes to indigenous consultation, when it comes to upholding the honour of the Crown, especially when we had all of the Treaty 8 chiefs here today.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Loewen: Given that a sign of a humble government would be to admit where they got it wrong and take responsibility instead of lashing out and blaming Conservatives for NDP failures and given that the failure of the NDP-Trudeau alliance to get pipelines built ultimately means that Albertans are worse off, with thousands of jobs gone and billions in revenue lost, looking forward, can the government commit to Albertans that they will cease both their apathy in some areas and support in other areas for Trudeau's continual barrage of anti-Alberta policies?

Ms Hoffman: I'm incredibly proud of our Premier's and our ministers' record on fighting for the people of this province. MEG Energy corporation's chief executive officer, Derek Evans, said that his company was considering laying off workers and slashing production at its Christina Lake project by 30 per cent until Alberta's mandated oil production cut-offs lifted Canadian heavy crude prices. He said, quote: we were looking at laying off people; we were looking at how we were going to make it through this first quarter and the first half of 2019. He went on to say: the Premier's plan has taken away the belief that we're going to have to lay off people right before Christmas. This Premier is fighting for ordinary folks and fighting for their jobs, Mr. Speaker, and we're not going to back down.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Energy Policies Bighorn Area Land Use

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three questions today about energy. Alberta is an energy province, and despite the best

efforts of environmental radicals and the lacklustre efforts of our federal government, that energy will include fossil fuels for years to come. We need pipelines to get some of the cleanest, most ethically produced oil on the planet to world markets. To that end, my constituents in Drayton Valley held a rally and circulated a petition this week. They're coming to Edmonton on Monday to present that petition to the Legislature, and I would like to know which of the government's ministers will be willing to meet with them to receive that petition.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, it's interesting because I had a meeting today with the Treaty 8 chiefs. We met with them even though the Leader of the Opposition refused to. They said: "We don't oppose economic development. We want pipelines. We want to share in the benefits of the great natural resource gifts . . .

Mr. McIver: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Ms Phillips: . . . that we have in this province," and that's what we're focused on. We're focused on prosperity for everyone, but we're also focused on what we know are our constitutional obligations. In part, it is a duty to consult.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Smith: I would still like to know if it's going to be the Minister of Energy or the minister of environment.

This is also an energy-related question. Given that Alberta is an energy province and given that the renewable energy company Ever has identified over 20,000 orphaned and abandoned wells suitable for geothermal production and given that I have been putting this concept of geothermal baseload energy before this government for two years and given that repurposing these wells could keep drilling and well-service workers busy for at least 20 years, what possible reason could there be for this government's inaction on this file?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's rather rich coming from a side of the House that has derided renewable energy, that has spread false conspiracy theories about renewable energy. All of a sudden now, because they want economic development, renewable energy seems like a good idea.

We're moving forward with the regulatory framework for geothermal, Mr. Speaker. We have already funded a couple of pilot projects with respect to the Hinton development. I will have more to say throughout 2019. The fact of the matter is that you take action on renewable energy when you believe that climate change is real.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta is an energy province and given that the government's Bighorn plan extends new regulatory controls over an area bigger than some European countries and given the significant forestry, energy, and recreational activity that currently occurs in the proposed west country public land-use zone and given that assurances to stakeholders regarding the Castle region plan were not honoured, how can the industrial and recreational users be confident that they're not being bamboozled on the Bighorn?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, I think it's strange that folks don't want economic development in

their constituencies. I would like the opposition, actually, to write me a letter that indicates that they don't want investment in their constituencies, that they don't want an extension to tourism lease terms, that they don't want a trail pass system for off-highway vehicle users, something they've been asking for for years, and that they don't want indigenous comanagement in parks. That might seem obvious to us all now. I would like it written down in a letter that they don't want us to invest meaningfully in their own ridings.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Provincial Third-quarter Fiscal Update

Mr. McIver: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, the second-quarter fiscal update covered a period prior to the spike in the oil price differential, and the minister has acknowledged this fact. The next fiscal update will report on government revenues from October to December. It was during this time that the oil discount hit a record high and our resource revenues plummeted. To the Finance minister. Albertans will need an honest look at our finances this spring. When will the minister release the third-quarter fiscal update?

Mr. Mason: I can tell the hon. member that the third-quarter fiscal update will be released by the Minister of Finance at the appropriate time.

You know, Mr. Speaker, we've had a really tough hand dealt to us, and it's been made worse, quite frankly, by the previous government's failure to diversify the economy and its failure to diversify the sources of revenue for this government, becoming far too dependent, as we had been telling them for years, on volatile royalty revenue to pay for the costs associated with the government of this province. It's a challenging situation. They've left us a terrible mess to clean up, and we are doing a great job . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, it's kind of rich that the minister would say that when this government has become more dependent upon the price of oil and, as a result, has a higher deficit than has happened in as long as almost anybody remembers. Given that the third-quarter fiscal update is crucial to providing Albertans with the full financial impact of the oil differential and given that the NDP's balanced budget counts on revenues from at least 2 out of 3 proposed pipelines and given that the government's pact with Justin Trudeau has brought zero pipelines, to the Finance minister: will you commit to releasing the third-quarter fiscal update before March 1?

2:30

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, the fiscal update is an important measurement of how the province is doing. The Finance minister, I know, takes it very seriously, our government takes it very seriously, and we will make sure that that fiscal update is released at the appropriate time. But I do want to say that these are challenging times. Our government has risen to those challenges. We have brought the price of oil back by this timely intervention that the Premier made with respect to the differential. We're going to continue to do the right thing for Albertans and their jobs.

Mr. McIver: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that I have to ask because the minister actually failed to provide a second-quarter update in 2015 even though the law required him to do so at that time and given that the third-quarter update will reinforce other economic indicators that show almost no growth in wages and salaries this

year and given that the NDP might see the lack of happy economic news as a reason for delaying the third-quarter fiscal update with an election coming, to the minister: will the minister commit to release the third-quarter fiscal update even if we are in the midst of a general election?

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, I don't know when the election is going to be, but I know that the Minister of Finance is very concerned with making sure that we have a good understanding of the economic situation facing this province. It is a difficult economic situation, made far worse by the previous government's repeated failures to do anything about an overdependence on one commodity to finance government operations. They left this province in a terrible mess, and we've improved the situation significantly, and we're going to continue to do that in term 2.

Support for Survivors of Sexual Assault

Ms McPherson: Yesterday the government announced a three-year pilot program through the Elizabeth Fry Society to provide free legal advice to survivors of sexual violence. Two years ago Bill 2, An Act to Remove Barriers for Survivors of Sexual and Domestic Violence, removed time limits to bring forward civil claims. Does the Minister of Status of Women agree that removing time limits is effective in encouraging women to come forward to report sexual assault?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the very important question. We were very proud to move that bill forward with respect to removing the barriers. At that time the conversations I had with the survivors that I spoke to indicated not that they would necessarily bring forward claims but that they liked to have the option available to them so they didn't feel like they were forced into a decision at a time when they were still traumatized.

Thank you.

Ms McPherson: Given that sexual assault has often devastating effects on survivors and given that becoming strong enough to report an assault can take years, decades in some cases, and that creating the opportunity to come forward should encourage more survivors to report historic sexual assault, what outcomes indicate the success of Bill 2 since 2017, and what are the expected outcomes of this pilot?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. You know, in general with these sorts of instances, to us what indicates success would be survivors feeling better supported moving forward. They've certainly indicated that these are the things that will make them feel better supported and better able to make their own decision. At the end of the day, this is about agency. This is about giving the survivors of sexual violence agency in their lives, the ability to make the decisions when they're prepared to make the decisions and to engage in the way that they're prepared to engage.

Ms McPherson: Thank you to the minister for the answer.

Given that we agree that no time limit is a good thing for survivors to be able to bring information forward in the legal system and that the pilot is a good idea, is there a reason that this pilot does

not include women who live south of Red Deer, and what, if any, alternative supports are available to women in southern Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and again to the hon. member for the very important and informed questions. Certainly, this is a pilot project, and these supports will be available initially on a limited basis for a few years. We've done a number of other things. Certainly, as the member referenced, we have removed the time limits on bringing forward sexual claims. Another thing that I'm very proud of is that we've worked with police services to put in place guidelines for dealing with victims who do choose to come forward to the police and to seek that particular route. It's important that they be respected at every step of that process, and I think everybody agrees on that.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Trampoline Safety Standards

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The growing popularity of trampoline park facilities has raised serious safety concerns, with several high-profile injuries and, sadly, one death in B.C. having taken place in recent memory. Currently these facilities aren't subject to any regulations that set standards for them. I met with the Minister of Municipal Affairs last spring to discuss what can be done to improve safety in these parks. Minister, what progress has your department made in developing regulations to make trampoline parks safer?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti for the question and his continued advocacy on this issue. We've had a few discussions, as he said, on this file now, and I appreciate his passion for ensuring the safety of Albertans. We have been working very hard on this file over the past few months. We've been consulting with industry and stakeholders on this file because we want to make sure we get this right. Ultimately, the safety of all Albertans is our top priority.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that spinal cord injuries are common injuries sustained on trampolines and given that specialized first aid training could mean the difference between life and death, to the same minister: will you consider creating regulations that would require employees at trampoline park facilities to have this first aid training?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you. You know, the member is right. We want to make sure parents and children alike can enjoy these parks with the comfort of knowing they're regulated and that their safety is top of mind. It is something we have heard from folks out there when we're doing consultation, and I can share with you that we're very close to having new rules in place and a proper regulatory system in place for trampoline parks. I look forward to sharing the details with the folks in this House and all Albertans in the near future.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that trampolines send an average of four Alberta children to emergency rooms across the province each day and given that the majority of these injuries are sustained on backyard trampolines, to the Minister of Health: what consideration has your department given to launching a public awareness campaign to educate parents on the dangers of backyard trampolines?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the things we have done is to be in contact with the Minister of Health on these types of things and consulting.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity – I'm not sure if I'll get the chance again – to say this. I'd like to thank the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti for his service. He's spent a lot of years in public service. He's an honourable, respectful, hard-working person. I have an immense amount of respect for him, and I think I speak for all of us in here: from the bottom of our hearts we wish him all the best in the future. Thank you, Member.

The Speaker: Well, that doesn't happen very often.
Agreed. I think I speak for the House, hon. member.

Labour Relations Board

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, since the NDP took government, the Alberta Labour Relations Board has been granted wide, sweeping powers. The purpose of the ALRB, according to their website, is to be an "independent and impartial tribunal responsible for the day-to-day application and interpretation of Alberta's labour laws." We have seen an alarming spike in remedial certifications granted by the ALRB. To the Labour minister: do you believe that the ALRB, with all the changes you have made, is still an independent and impartial tribunal to both the employee and the employer?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Labour.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to inform the member that he may have noticed a spike because the ALRB did not have the powers of remedial certification prior to the changes in the law. So, yes, they are now able to do something they could not do before. The Labour Relations Board is absolutely an independent arbitrator. They are there to ensure that both employers and workers are operating on a fair and balanced playing field. I'm very pleased that we were able to update labour laws that were woefully out of date and out of step with the rest of Canada as part of our changes to workplace legislation.

2:40

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, given that the ALRB's role is to serve both the employees and employers fairly and given that when I went through the bios of each of the 34 board members, I could only see about a maximum of seven members, one-fifth of the board, that had any private-sector job-creating experience and given that a large majority of the ALRB's board members are past or current members of unions, does the minister still believe that the ALRB can operate as an impartial tribunal?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much. I believe very strongly that the Alberta Labour Relations Board does operate fairly and impartially. We updated the workplace legislation for the first time in decades and brought in clear rules, making sure that employers and workers

were able to nominate individuals who would then be chosen for consideration for appointment to the board. We've been including employer representatives in this appointment process as well as labour representatives when it comes to worker representatives on the Labour Relations Board. Mr. Speaker, making sure we have a fair and balanced board is . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, given that David Harrigan, Rick Eichel, Thomas Hesse, Nancy Furlong, and Lyle Kane, all members of the ALRB board, have donated massive amounts of money to the NDP this year alone, does the minister still believe that the ALRB is impartial, and is she concerned that these board members are in a conflict of interest? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order, please.
The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The member there seems to be accusing some very upstanding and dedicated servants of impropriety, and I think that's an inappropriate use of his time here in this building. We know the Conservative plan for workers. We've seen it for decades. We saw Albertans falling through the cracks, not getting fairness and justice because their workplace laws were 40 years out of date. We've updated the legislation. We are making sure that the Labour Relations Board is properly resourced. These are wonderful people who are fighting on behalf of both workers and employers, and I'm very proud to . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Fort Saskatchewan Area Road Construction

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The northeast river crossing, or NERC, was a project identified in 2011 to serve the Edmonton capital region and Alberta's Industrial Heartland. Four municipalities and Alberta Transportation partnered on a \$1.4 million study to identify the location of a future river crossing west of Fort Saskatchewan, but mid-study Alberta Transportation pulled a fast one on the municipalities and announced a \$90 million upgrade to the Vinca Bridge for heavy haul instead. Minister, did you betray the voters of the four municipalities, especially Fort Saskatchewan, who have not given up on the building of the NERC?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, this member couldn't be more out of touch with the people of Fort Saskatchewan, you know, if he lived on the moon because the people of Fort Saskatchewan spend an hour every morning and an hour every afternoon in congestion because there's not a crossing that's a four-lane crossing in their city. We have provided exactly what they want, exactly what they need. That bridge should have been twinned nearly 20 years ago because the traffic counts are so high. We have done what Fort Saskatchewan and its people want, and that member doesn't understand it at all.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Hanson: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister and the MLA for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville announced the upgrade of the Vinca Bridge to handle heavy loads for the heartland but given that the landowner adjacent to both ends

of the Vinca Bridge has called us and complained that no one has called him about the project and the impacts to his land, Minister, is the Vinca Bridge project actually real, and if so, will you and the MLA call the landowner to address his concerns around the project?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, the location of the Vinca Bridge will take heavy- and high-load traffic between the Industrial Heartland and Fort McMurray. It's critically needed. We did a careful study of the entire high- and heavy-load corridor in the province, and this was part of it. So that is well supported in the region as well. I'm sure that the landowner will be contacted in due course about the expansion of that bridge – it's an existing bridge, I might add – because we are working really hard to promote real economic development for northeast Alberta.

Mr. Hanson: Given, Mr. Speaker, that the MLA for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville believes in twinning the highway 15 bridge so much that she's been making sure the traffic count stays high, as witnessed by her 80,000-kilometre mileage claim, and given that there is a lot of dirt being moved around up there right now to fix the intersection at highway 37 but the bridge twinning has not yet commenced and given that the 2018-2019 capital plan does not have any special breakout line items for any bridge twinning to Fort Saskatchewan, are the minister and the MLA for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville announcing projects to the voters of Fort Saskatchewan that are not really grounded in reality?

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, first of all, in terms of the preamble it was uncalled for and rude and so flippant that it really debases the question. Yes, we have done careful studies and careful consultation with the surrounding municipalities on these needs. If that member thinks that that project isn't needed, I invite him to come to the middle of Fort Saskatchewan and stand on a street corner and tell people that because, you know, they're going to laugh him right out, and he'll be laughed right out of the next election. I know he says that it's going to hurt, but – you know what? – we're here to make it better.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

Arts and Culture Industries

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. With the recent commitment from the city of Calgary's budget to invest in creative industries through stable-based funding for arts and cultural organizations and since the industries are a key pillar of their economic development strategy, it appears that Calgary is poised to attract some top talent within the growth sector. My question is to the Minister of Culture and Tourism. What are the plans to support cultural industries and further diversify the economy?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Culture and Tourism.

Miranda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Our government recognizes the important economic role that cultural industries play in Alberta not just in times of prosperity but in times of economic challenges as well. That is why we've increased funding to the Alberta Foundation for the Arts by \$5 million in Budget 2017. This is a commitment that will allow the AFA to continue supporting this growing sector. The UCP wants to provide \$700 million in tax cuts, and we know from their policy proposals that we would see the funding to the Alberta Foundation for the Arts all but disappear.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that our creative sector helps diversify the economy and create economic growth, I'd ask the minister: in what other ways is the government supporting creative industries in Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Miranda: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. In this government we know that the arts contribute to the economy. In 2016 Alberta exported over \$777 million of cultural products, and the industry contributed approximately \$1.3 billion to our provincial GDP. That is why in just a few weeks we will be proclaiming January as the Month of the Artist in Alberta to recognize the important work that artists do to strengthen our society and our community.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I ask what could be the final question of the session, I'd like to congratulate the minister on the news of his nuptials over the Christmas holidays.

I'd like to ask him this final question – and to the Member for Strathmore-Brooks: brace yourself – how will the proclamation of the Month of the Artist help the creative industry here in Alberta?

Miranda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for those kind words. During the month of January there will be numerous artist appreciation events. We will also release our guidelines to ensure that artists are properly compensated for their work. We'll be naming our first artist-in-residence program in our province's history, and all artists in any discipline who would like to represent and reflect Alberta in their work are encouraged to apply before December 10. The info can be found on the ministry's website.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I thought maybe you were going to consider unanimous consent.

Mr. Mason: Oh. Well, I have something to just announce first, Mr. Speaker, if I may. Under Standing Order 7(8) we will be continuing Routine past 3 p.m.

I would then ask that we have unanimous consent to revert to introductions, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests

(continued)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Ms Jabbour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three introductions. First, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and all members of the Assembly Brian Walters. Brian recently joined the Medicine Hat constituency office and has proven to be a valued asset to the Medicine Hat team. Brian previously worked as an educator and musician. His wife, Shauna, is a guitar instructor and piano teacher. His son and daughter are both pursuing degrees at universities

within Alberta. He is seated in your gallery – he’s already risen – and I’d ask that he be given the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

2:50

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ms Jabbour: Second, it’s my great pleasure to introduce to you and to all members of the Assembly Michelle Huley and Barb Wendt. Michelle and Barb manage my two offices in the Peace River constituency and succeed in co-ordinating communication across the largest constituency in the province, which is a real challenge given that I’m always on the road and they never see me in person. Michelle Huley is a long-time resident of Peace River, a former journalist, and a dog show junkie. Barb Wendt is a former chief of Beaver First Nation. She’s a community advocate and a devoted mom and grandma. They’ve risen. Would you please give them the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ms Jabbour: I also would like to introduce to you and through you a very important group of individuals in the galleries today who play a key role in the democratic process in the province of Alberta. Our constituency assistants are often the first point of contact for the people in the communities that we serve. Their jobs can be very rewarding, but they’re also demanding and difficult. We’d like to take a moment to thank them for their dedication to all Albertans. They are here today participating in the winter constituency employee learning and development seminar, which is developed each year with their unique roles and requirements in mind. The seminar provides an opportunity to network with each other and obtain an overview of the numerous programs and services available through the Legislative Assembly Office. Each year the service and contributions of these individuals are celebrated with an employee recognition dinner, which you, Mr. Speaker, will be holding later this evening. Today over 83 constituency office employees are with us from all corners of the province. I would ask that they all please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: A special welcome to all of you, I think, collectively on behalf of all of the members. This place would have challenges without people like yourselves.

Any other introductions? The Minister of Children’s Services.

Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know there was a collective introduction, but throughout all of my time in the Legislature I’ve not had the opportunity to introduce my two incredible constituency assistants, Merry-Lee Newcombe and Cathy Wilcox, helping me out with an office both in Slave Lake and in High Prairie. You know, it’s kind of isolated sometimes in the north, and they work really hard to continue to stay connected with constituency assistants across the province. They do an incredible job serving my offices in both Slave Lake and High Prairie. Thank you for the opportunity to recognize them. I ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s a privilege to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislature my constituency office staff. I have two ladies working for me in the Barrhead office, my office manager, Audrey Neuman – she has

been working in the constituency office for the better part of 30 years and has never had the opportunity to be introduced here – and also her assistant, Julie Tomm. They do incredible work for me in my constituency office. I’d like them to please rise and accept the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Calgary-MacKay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly my constituency staff that are here today from Calgary-MacKay-Nose Hill. Carol-Lynn Darch and Bronson Ha have both recently started in my office, and I have the utmost appreciation for them, keeping me on track and also serving the people of Calgary-MacKay-Nose Hill. If they could please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I had this sense that this might happen this afternoon in spite of my pleadings to make a group introduction, but who am I to control the emotions of the House?

The Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I did kind of seek the permission of our caucus so that I could make this introduction. It is my privilege to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly my senior CA, Arie deValois. He is compassionate, organized, patient, and an absolute political junkie. I thank you, Arie, from the bottom of my heart for all that you do to support me. Please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to introduce my calendar angel, as I like to refer to her, Vicki Welsh. If you could please stand and receive the warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you my assistant in my office, my office manager. You know, anybody that can keep me going from appointment to appointment and figure out where I need to be and who I need to be talking to is a much better person than I am. I would like to introduce to you Mrs. Wendy Snow. If she would rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Mr. Speaker, for the second time today I would like to collectively introduce to all members our constituency assistants here today and ask that you give them the warm welcome of the House collectively.

The Speaker: Well, that was unusual.

Hon. members, we will in 15 seconds move to Members’ Statements.

I may not get the opportunity personally to express for my family an appreciation of the festive season. I think all of you deserve a break, and I hope you have a very peaceful and relaxing new year.

Members’ Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

Human Rights

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The United Nations General Assembly adopted the universal declaration of human rights 70 years ago. Every year since, on December 10 we observe Human Rights Day. The declaration is critically important in establishing the equal dignity and worth of every human being, regardless of their race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, or other status.

Eleanor Roosevelt famously said of the declaration: "Where . . . do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home . . . Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere." Those words are still very true today, Mr. Speaker.

Hate groups with a goal of attacking the rights of others are establishing themselves across our province, groups like the Soldiers of Odin or the Worldwide Coalition against Islam, who felt comfortable promoting their hateful message on the steps of Calgary city hall. It is deeply concerning that Alberta has seen an upsurge of extremist views. So many Albertans are vulnerable when hate groups are emboldened.

On this side of the House we've got the backs of newcomers, of cultural communities, and of LGBTQ and gender-diverse Albertans. We're fighting for what matters by making real, concrete changes that are making life better for all Albertans. I am proud to be part of a government that has been active in addressing systemic racism and bigotry and protecting the rights of LGBTQ youth, something that previous Conservative governments didn't prioritize.

As leaders and legislators we must be firm and united in our condemnation of anyone or anything that threatens the human rights of our citizens. Eleanor Roosevelt also said, "Without concerted citizen action to uphold [human rights] close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world." On this side of the House on Human Rights Day and every day we proudly stand in action.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Carbon Levy

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

'Twas the night before Christmas, and all through the house

Not a light was turned on, and the furnace was out.
The stockings weren't hung. The chimney was bare.
You see, the NDP taxman would soon show up there.

The children were covered by quilts on their beds.
Their stockings were wrapped round their shivering heads.

Mama in her kerchief and I in my cap
Tossed and turned; it was too cold to nap.

Then out on the lawn, there arose such a clatter
I jumped out of bed to see what was the matter.
I hoped and I prayed, but it was not to be.
The NDP taxman had finally found me.

With a line item there and a fuel tax here,
I checked on my bank account totals with fear.
More rapid than eagles those taxes they came
The NDP penance for climate-guilt shame

No carbon, no fuel, no coal, and no gas,
No driving, no heating, no hockey, no class.

To the top of the tax hikes, to the top of them all,
Now tax away, tax away, tax away all.

3:00

As the taxman laughed before my empty account,
The costs of living, they began to mount.
Up to the top the expenses they grew,
And before we knew it, the neighbour's broke, too.

You see, the Christmas season is especially hard
For families that are struggling to pay a credit card.
And for those folks it doesn't seem funny
When it's the carbon taxman taking all of their money.

No presents for kids, no treats for the dogs,
No tax breaks for gas; we can't afford logs.
The carbon sales tax is making life heavy.
When I told the NDP, all they said: "It's a levy."

It's going to be hard with kids to explain
The government is causing this Christmastime pain.
But hope is near. This I do know.
A new government in waiting when the snow will go.

The UCP will come one day soon
And chase away that taxman and horrible gloom.
They will make life better and keep taxes low.
The UCP will give that tax a heave-ho.

So a leader and team are here to explain:
This is the last year of carbon tax pain.
Sorry if I bored you with this carbon tax fight.
Merry Christmas to all, and to all a good night.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Alberta Party and Official Opposition Policies

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. With increasing frequency the Leader of the Official Opposition has taken credit for Alberta Party initiatives. Last spring the Alberta Party introduced a sunset clause amendment to Bill 12. Imagine our surprise when we heard the hon. member claim on national television that it was his idea.

Fast-forward to this fall. An Act to Protect Patients bill hit the floor with a mere five-year requirement before doctors could reapply for their licence. I worked really hard on that amendment for a lifetime ban, and I introduced it as soon as the bill entered Committee of the Whole. I did it because no health professional should ever get their licence back after assaulting a patient. Again, on social media what I found was the Leader of the Official Opposition claiming responsibility for the exact same amendment.

On November 17 my colleague from Calgary-Elbow asked the government about curtailment, and weeks later the UCP took credit for the idea after abandoning their potentially illegal voluntary curtailment suggestion.

Even today, in the year-end presser, the Member for Calgary-Elbow asked that the NDP release the third-quarter results before calling an election, and lo and behold, we heard exactly that same request in question 10 today.

Now, if you're wondering what the UCP will be talking about later today or in two weeks, listen to what the Alberta Party has to say.

Christmas Reflections

Mr. Fildebrandt: Mr. Speaker, Santa is putting the finishing touches on his naughty and nice list, and he has asked me to share an exclusive copy of it with the hon. members here today.

First on his naughty list is the Minister of Labour, who, having passed card check legislation, turned Santa's workshop into a closed shop, unionizing it without even allowing the elves a chance to vote.

On the nice list is Canada Post. Going on its yearly strike at Christmastime has undercut his biggest competitor, grandma and grandpa.

On the naughty list is Prime Minister Trudeau. Having attacked the North Pole for its culture of toxic masculinity, the new gender-based analysis on the effects of Christmas on Mrs. Claus has ended in the banning of one of Santa's favourites, *Baby, It's Cold Outside*.

On the nice list is the Minister of Finance's AGL Ceci, whose open market on cannabis sales ensures that the milk and cookies will taste better than ever this year.

On the very naughty list is the Soldiers of Odin for their overly literal understanding of the words to *White Christmas*.

Santa has also assured me that I will be on the nice list this year for not shooting any more of his reindeer.

Collectively on the naughty list are the NDP, Tories, and Alberta Party for imposing supply management on toy production when we all know the answer is more sleighs. Speaking of sleighs, also on the naughty list is the hon. Premier, whose \$30 a tonne carbon tax has grounded Santa's sleigh.

But naughty or nice, agree or disagree, I believe that every hon. member here today is honourable and trying to do what they think is right. As we all head home this afternoon to our families, I want to thank each and every one of you for a rigorous debate, Standing Order 49 closure notwithstanding, and I want to wish each and every one of you a very Merry Christmas.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
Calgary-Greenway.

Retrospective by the Member for Calgary-Greenway

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If the Premier calls an election early or the spring session is short, then this might be the last time ever I speak in this beautiful Assembly, so please be patient with me today.

As I consider my career, I think about how my two children will look upon it in later years. I've been here less time than most other members, and I take a moment to think about my friend Manmeet Bhullar, whose untimely death is the reason why I'm here. Manmeet was Sikh, just like me, and he provided the example that led me into politics. As I possibly leave politics, I wanted to speak out about service and what is important.

As a Sikh I thank God for all his blessings on me and my family, and my faith has led my effort to treat everyone equally in the world and in this Chamber. My faith has also driven my approach to politics. Sikhs reject the notion that any faith, even our own, has a monopoly on all spiritual truth. Likewise, I have approached politics in a gentle way, always seeking to hear others and understand their point of view. I've been well served in politics by listening and not thinking that I have all the answers or the only truth. That's a lesson that leaders should follow. My faith also leads me to service since looking after the less fortunate and serving others is extremely important, as is conducting oneself in an honourable fashion. Where I come from, if you seek someone's help and support, you keep your promises to them.

Mr. Speaker, I wish I could tell you that everyone in politics is honourable and they do not lust for power or hide their truths from the world, but that is not so. But I can say this. Those who pursue power for its own sake are doomed to failure. Those who live righteous lives, who practice honour, try to serve others, and create community and fellowship: those people will be loved.

In the end, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my mother, my wife, my two beautiful children, my community, my supporters, and all of you guys for giving me courage to serve. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women

Ms Fitzpatrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was a cold day in Montreal on December 6, 1989, but it became bone chilling for the engineering students attending an evening class. The males in the class were ordered to leave by a man, Marc Lépine, who entered the room. The learning stopped. The piercing sound of bullets rang through the air. Fourteen women dead, 14 others injured, and countless more family, friends, and community members traumatized by the evening's horror.

Why did it happen? In the days that followed, we learned that he had a long list of women's names in his pocket that evening, women he considered to be feminists. His victims were targeted. Before the perpetrator fired, he was heard to say: I hate feminists. Monique Simard, who was on that list, said that for a long time December 6 made women afraid to admit that they were feminists. But today it's not shameful to be a feminist, and even if it was, Mr. Speaker, I proudly call myself a feminist.

The National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women is held every year on this date in commemoration of those 14 women murdered at l'école Polytechnique in Montreal. We must remember this horrific event. It has become the basis to recognize and support action against widespread violence committed against women in our society.

Why does violence continue to prevail? I believe that until societal attitudes change, until all people are valued and respected in society, until we think about the words we use and how we use them, until we all treat others as we wish to be treated, it will not change. I commit to treating others as I wish to be treated, as I have always done. Will you?

Thank you.

3:10

Presenting Petitions

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to present a petition today. The petition is on options for human burials. The petition prayer states:

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to introduce legislation to amend the Cemeteries Act to explicitly allow for alkaline hydrolysis and other emerging green technologies as approved methods for the disposition of human remains.

Earlier I introduced the person who spearheaded this petition.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Bill 214

Traffic Safety (Safe Distances for Passing Bicycles) Amendment Act, 2018

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I nearly wore my cycling jersey today, but I just wore earrings in commemoration of this

important bill that I'm asking leave from you to introduce. I'm asking you leave to introduce Bill 214, Traffic Safety (Safe Distances for Passing Bicycles) Amendment Act, 2018.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans deserve to be safe on our roadways no matter how they choose to get around even in winter, once these cyclists are on the roads, even commuting to the Legislative Assembly. As a frequent cyclist I have frequently felt unsafe when passed by motorists. Bill 214, Traffic Safety (Safe Distances for Passing Bicycles) Amendment Act, 2018, will ensure that cyclists on Alberta provincial roadways are safe and free to travel by mandating a minimum passing distance for motor vehicles overtaking a bicycle on a provincial road.

I wanted to thank all those cyclists who have asked me and worked with me on making this bill possible.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 214 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of letters, a letter from the Minister of Finance to the chair of Public Accounts Committee and a letter from the office of the Auditor General to the Minister of Finance. I want to do this in order to clarify comments made yesterday by the Minister of Finance, and these letters will help set the record straight on the government's decision to improve its year-end reporting. While the decision was not based on a recommendation made by or advice given by the Auditor General, the letter states that the OAG has reviewed the proposed changes and agreed that key financial information is being retained.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I have one tabling this afternoon. I rise to table five copies of the 2017 Legislative Assembly Office annual report.

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, I have five copies that I'd like to table of an earlier comment that I made in my question regarding the donations that were made to the NDP party earlier.

The Speaker: Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the five requisite copies of a letter to the Premier from the Treaty 8 First Nations of Alberta concerned about the sale of Crown land and the UCP's plan to sell that land.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I believe we are now at points of order. First of all, I'm advised by the Member for Airdrie that she has withdrawn the second point of order.

The Member for Calgary-Hays.

Point of Order Imputing Motives

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll try to be brief. I don't know if the opposition will accommodate me on that or not.

At some point during the question the hon. member from the other side made a statement about how the Leader of the Official Opposition had refused to meet with the chiefs that were here today. Under 23(i): "imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member." You know what? I'm sure that the hon. member that said that may have some example where the chiefs have tried to get a

meeting with the Leader of the Official Opposition and haven't been able to do so yet, and if they wanted to raise that issue in some attempt to embarrass the Leader of the Official Opposition, I suppose that's fair game. But to claim that the Leader of the Official Opposition is refusing to meet the chiefs is beyond what's fact, and that's what imputes false or unavowed motives. You know, The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition was looking forward to meeting with the chiefs at some point in the future. On that basis, Mr. Speaker, I would hope that you would hold that it's a point of order because it's an unavowed motive applied to a member of the House under 23(i).

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I don't have the Blues, but I do believe that the minister of environment indicated that the Leader of the Official Opposition had refused to meet with the chiefs in question. While I don't think that it's a matter of a point of order – it's a matter of debate – I do think that the minister misspoke. I've had a chance to discuss this with her. Her understanding is that the Leader of the Opposition had indicated he would not be able to meet with the chiefs today. I think that that was somewhat misinterpreted as a refusal to meet. The minister understands that and wishes to apologize to the Leader of the Official Opposition, and I'm happy to do so on her behalf.

Mr. McIver: Thanks to the minister.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. members.

Orders of the Day

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. McIver: Do tell. What are the orders of the day?

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much. We've got some great new legislation for you, but that will come later, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to start by thanking you, Mr. Speaker. This may or may not be the last day of sitting of this term. I suspect we will be back in the spring, but I don't know that, so I want to take the opportunity to thank you, in particular, for your work and your patience in this place and making sure that the place runs as well as a place like this can run. So thank you.

I'd also like to acknowledge all of the hard-working LAO and Chamber staff for their work in making sure that this place runs in a more or less orderly fashion and that the decisions of the elected representatives are translated into the legislation and the decisions that we've made. So I want to thank them very much.

I want to thank the pages for their hard work. I think they move faster than just about anything I've ever seen. I've worried that they're going to trip sometimes. But they are very, very helpful to us and make sure that this place runs well and that we can communicate with each other.

The Speaker: The new pages who are here, hon. minister, have been told about an experience that one of them had in 2015.

Mr. Mason: I'm sure they have, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The application of health and safety.

3:20

Mr. Mason: But, you know, they make sure that this place runs well and that nobody drinks coffee without a lid.

I'd like to thank security as well.

I'd like to thank the MLAs, from all parties, for their contributions. I think we've had a very, very successful session and a number of sessions before that, and I'd like to thank them for their thoughtful contributions. In particular, I want to thank those of them who've indicated they will not be running again. It's been an honour to serve with them.

And, Mr. Speaker, if I may say, it's been a wonderful 18 years for me in this place. [Standing ovation] Thank you very much, members. For all of the conflict, I think we've developed constructive relationships. With all of the very strange and arcane rules by which this place runs, I love this place, and I'm going to miss it very much and all of you.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to formally advise the House that pursuant to Government Motion 31 the business for the sitting is concluded.

Merry Christmas.

The Speaker: Thank you, Government House Leader. I think, as is evidenced by the applause that you received, that there is no division upon the contribution that you have made to this Assembly, and I personally would like to thank you on all of their behalf. I am a little uneasy, though, about who will add that humour to this sometimes too in-depth discussion. I do hope that someone else steps up to the plate.

I'd also like to echo the comments of the House with respect to our staff of this place and all the public servants. This building does not exist if they are not there.

So, hon. members, pursuant to Government Motion 31, agreed to on October 30, 2018, the House stands adjourned until February 2019.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 3:23 p.m. pursuant to Government Motion 31]

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Bill Status Report for the 29th Legislature - 4th Session (2018-2019)

Activity to Tuesday, December 11, 2018

The Bill sponsor's name is in brackets following the Bill title. If it is a money Bill, (\$) will appear between the title and the sponsor's name. Numbers following each Reading refer to Hansard pages where the text of debates is found; dates for each Reading are in brackets following the page numbers. Bills numbered 1 to 200 are Government Bills. Bills numbered 201 or higher are Private Members' Public Bills. Bills numbered with a "Pr" prefix are Private Bills.

* An asterisk beside a Bill number indicates an amendment was passed to that Bill; the Committee line shows the precise date of the amendment.

The date a Bill comes into force is indicated in square brackets after the date of Royal Assent. If a Bill comes into force "on proclamation," "with exceptions," or "on various dates," please contact Legislative Counsel, Alberta Justice, for details at 780.427.2217. The chapter number assigned to the Bill is entered immediately following the date the Bill comes into force. SA indicates Statutes of Alberta; this is followed by the year in which it is included in the statutes, and its chapter number. Please note, Private Bills are not assigned chapter number until the conclusion of the Fall Sittings.

Bill 1 — Energy Diversification Act (McCuaig-Boyd)

First Reading — 6 (*Mar. 8, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 50-51 (*Mar. 13, 2018 morn.*), 184-87 (*Mar. 15, 2018 aft.*), 233-43 (*Mar. 20, 2018 aft.*), 301-08 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft.*), 919-27 (*May 9, 2018 morn.*), 981-84 (*May 9, 2018 eve.*), 1054-59 (*May 14, 2018 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1286-87 (*May 29, 2018 aft.*), 1280-86 (*May 29, 2018 aft.*), 1299 (*May 29, 2018 eve.*), 1311-18 (*May 29, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1488-92 (*Jun. 5, 2018 morn.*), 1523-24 (*Jun. 5, 2018 aft.*), 1525-41 (*Jun. 6, 2018 morn., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 11, 2018; SA 2018 cE-9.6]

Bill 2 — Growth and Diversification Act (\$) (Bilous)

First Reading — 118 (*Mar. 14, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 243-46 (*Mar. 20, 2018 morn.*), 294-96 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft.*), 314-25 (*Mar. 22, 2018 morn.*), 411-12 (*Apr. 4, 2018 aft.*), 702-05 (*May 1, 2018 eve.*), 928-33 (*May 9, 2018 morn.*), 1061-68 (*May 15, 2018 morn.*), 1101-04 (*May 15, 2018 eve.*), 1163-67 (*May 16, 2018 eve.*), 1202-06 (*May 17, 2018 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1253-58 (*May 29, 2018 morn.*), 1288-97 (*May 29, 2018 aft.*), 1299 (*May 29, 2018 eve.*), 1379-82 (*May 30, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1492-94 (*Jun. 5, 2018 morn.*), 1510-23 (*Jun. 5, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation, with exceptions; SA 2018 c8]

Bill 3 — Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2018 (\$) (Ceci)

First Reading — 184 (*Mar. 15, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 221-26 (*Mar. 19, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 261-68 (*Mar. 20, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 296-98 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 28, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force Mar. 28, 2018; SA 2018 c1]

Bill 4 — Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2018 (\$) (Ceci)

First Reading — 165 (*Mar. 15, 2018 morn., passed*)

Second Reading — 226-32 (*Mar. 19, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 268-75 (*Mar. 20, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 298-301 (*Mar. 21, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 28, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force Mar. 28, 2018; SA 2018 c2]

Bill 5 — An Act to Strengthen Financial Security for Persons with Disabilities (Sabir)

First Reading — 200-201 (*Mar. 19, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 360-62 (*Apr. 3, 2018 morn.*), 482-87 (*Apr. 10, 2018 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 847-54 (*May 7, 2018 eve.*), 1084-88 (*May 15, 2018 aft.*), 1361-64 (*May 30, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1418-21 (*May 31, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 11, 2018; SA 2018 c12]

Bill 6 — Gaming and Liquor Statutes Amendment Act, 2018 (Ganley)

First Reading — 448 (*Apr. 9, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 533-34 (*Apr. 12, 2018 aft.*), 669-79 (*May 1, 2018 aft.*), 1010-13 (*May 10, 2018 aft.*), 1101 (*May 15, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1158-63 (*May 16, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1360-61 (*May 30, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2018 c7]

Bill 7 — Supporting Alberta's Local Food Sector Act (Carlier)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 491-97 (*Apr. 10, 2018 aft.*), 534-36 (*Apr. 12, 2018 aft.*), 679-83 (*May 1, 2018 aft.*), 908-09 (*May 8, 2018 eve.*), 913-14 (*May 8, 2018 eve.*), 1097-98 (*May 15, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1299-1311 (*May 29, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1365-74 (*May 30, 2018 eve., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 11, 2018, for sections 1-6 and 20-21 and April 1, 2019, for sections 7-19; SA 2018 cS-23.3]

Bill 8 — Emergency Management Amendment Act, 2018 (S. Anderson)

First Reading — 374 (*Apr. 3, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1639-45 (*Oct. 30, 2018 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1645-53 (*Oct. 30, 2018 morn.*), 1667 (*Oct. 30, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1763-65 (*Nov. 1, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Nov. 19, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force November 19, 2018; SA 2018 c14]

Bill 9* — Protecting Choice for Women Accessing Health Care Act (Hoffman)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 497-502 (*Apr. 10, 2018 aft.*), 785-93 (*May 3, 2018 morn.*), 775-76 (*May 3, 2018 morn.*), 807-08 (*May 3, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 909-13 (*May 8, 2018 eve.*), 957-61 (*May 9, 2018 aft.*), 992-94 (*May 10, 2018 morn.*), 1088-96 (*May 15, 2018 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1352-60 (*May 30, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 11, 2018; SA 2018 cP-26.83]

Bill 10* — An Act to Enable Clean Energy Improvements (S. Anderson)

First Reading — 528 (*Apr. 12, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 611-12 (*Apr. 19, 2018 aft.*), 643-50 (*May 1, 2018 morn.*), 761-72 (*May 2, 2018 eve.*), 973-81 (*May 9, 2018 eve.*), 1049-54 (*May 14, 2018 eve.*), 1180-87 (*May 17, 2018 morn.*), 1242-47 (*May 28, 2018 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1287-88 (*May 29, 2018 aft.*), 1299 (*May 29, 2018 eve.*), 1374-79 (*May 30, 2018 eve., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1555-71 (*Jun. 6, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2018 c6]

Bill 11 — Lobbyists Amendment Act, 2018 (Gray)

First Reading — 505 (*Apr. 11, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 612-13 (*Apr. 19, 2018 aft.*), 650-56 (*May 1, 2018 morn.*), 772-74 (*May 2, 2018 eve.*), 967-73 (*May 9, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1157 (*May 16, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1382-86 (*May 30, 2018 eve., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 11, 2018, with exceptions; SA 2018 c9]

Bill 12* — Preserving Canada's Economic Prosperity Act (McCuaig-Boyd)

First Reading — 547 (*Apr. 16, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 736-46 (*May 2, 2018 aft.*), 854-55 (*May 7, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 961-65 (*May 9, 2018 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 994-96 (*May 10, 2018 morn.*), 1135-54 (*May 16, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*May 18, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2018 c P-21.5]

Bill 13* — An Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future (\$) (McCuaig-Boyd)

First Reading — 606 (*Apr. 19, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 746-53 (*May 2, 2018 aft.*), 808-16 (*May 3, 2018 aft.*), 855-64 (*May 7, 2018 eve.*), 947-57 (*May 9, 2018 aft.*), 1169-80 (*May 17, 2018 morn.*), 1247-50 (*May 28, 2018 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1322-34 (*May 30, 2018 morn.*), 1397-1404 (*May 31, 2018 morn.*), 1449-79 (*Jun. 4, 2018 eve., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1573-92 (*Jun. 7, 2018 morn., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation, with exceptions; SA 2018 c10]

Bill 14 — An Act to Empower Utility Consumers (McLean)

First Reading — 590 (*Apr. 18, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 718-24 (*May 2, 2018 morn.*), 915-19 (*May 9, 2018 morn.*), 1098-1101 (*May 15, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1319-22 (*May 30, 2018 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1421 (*May 31, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2018 c5]

Bill 15 — Appropriation Act, 2018 (\$) (Ceci)

First Reading — 610 (*Apr. 19, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Second Reading — 683-89 (*May 1, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 753-56 (*May 2, 2018 aft.*), 757-60 (*May 2, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 776-85 (*May 3, 2018 morn., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*May 14, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force May 14, 2018; SA 2018 c3]

Bill 16 — Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Statutes Amendment Act, 2018 (Gray)

First Reading — 879 (*May 8, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1010-13 (*May 10, 2018 aft.*), 1105-22 (*May 16, 2018 morn.*), 1155-57 (*May 16, 2018 eve., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1258-64 (*May 29, 2018 morn.*), 1299 (*May 29, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1421-22 (*May 31, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 11, 2018, with exceptions; SA 2018 c4]

Bill 17 — Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2018 (Ceci)

First Reading — 806 (*May 3, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 864-65 (*May 7, 2018 eve.*), 1014-15 (*May 10, 2018 aft.*), 1058-59 (*May 14, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1157 (*May 16, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 1364 (*May 30, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 11, 2018, with exceptions; SA 2018 c13]

Bill 18 — Statutes Amendment Act, 2018 (Mason)

First Reading — 1201 (*May 17, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1251-52 (*May 28, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1387-97 (*May 31, 2018 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 1481-88 (*Jun. 5, 2018 morn.*), 1507-10 (*Jun. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 11, 2018; SA 2018 c11]

Bill 19* — An Act to Improve the Affordability and Accessibility of Post-secondary Education (Schmidt)

First Reading — 1621 (*Oct. 29, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1667-81 (*Oct. 30, 2018 aft.*), 1690-1701 (*Oct. 31, 2018 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1718-28 (*Oct. 31, 2018 aft.*), 1828-35 (*Nov. 6, 2018 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1845-65 (*Nov. 7, 2018 morn.*), 2000-05 (*Nov. 20, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force February 1, 2019; SA 2018 c19]

Bill 20 — Securities Amendment Act, 2018 (Ceci)

First Reading — 1621 (*Oct. 29, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1681-84 (*Oct. 30, 2018 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1716-18 (*Oct. 31, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1765-66 (*Nov. 1, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Nov. 19, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force November 19, 2018; SA 2018 c16]

Bill 21* — An Act to Protect Patients (Hoffman)

First Reading — 1666 (*Oct. 30, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1685-90 (*Oct. 31, 2018 morn., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 1729-32 (*Oct. 31, 2018 aft.*), 1835-43 (*Nov. 6, 2018 aft., passed with amendments*), 1900-10 (*Nov. 8, 2018 morn., recommitted, adjourned*), 1924-28 (*Nov. 8, 2018 aft., passed with amendments*), 1928-29 (*Nov. 8, 2018 aft., recommitted, passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 1899-1900 (*Nov. 8, 2018 morn., recommitted to Committee*), 1928 (*Nov. 8, 2018 aft., recommitted to Committee*), 1929-32 (*Nov. 8, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Nov. 19, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force November 19, 2018, with exceptions; SA 2018 c15]

Bill 22* — An Act for Strong Families Building Stronger Communities (Larivee)

First Reading — 1714 (*Oct. 31, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1735-49 (*Nov. 1, 2018 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 2005-16 (*Nov. 20, 2018 aft.*), 2158-69 (*Nov. 27, 2018 aft.*), 2171-76 (*Nov. 28, 2018 morn.*), 2328-32 (*Dec. 4, 2018 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 2376-78 (*Dec. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force February 28, 2019; SA 2018 c24]

Bill 23* — An Act to Renew Local Democracy in Alberta (S. Anderson)

First Reading — 1778 (*Nov. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1809-12 (*Nov. 6, 2018 morn.*), 1974-82 (*Nov. 20, 2018 morn.*), 2018-28 (*Nov. 21, 2018 morn., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 2123-26 (*Nov. 26, 2018 eve.*), 2176-81 (*Nov. 28, 2018 morn.*), 2332-37 (*Dec. 4, 2018 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 2384-85 (*Dec. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force various dates; SA 2018 c23]

Bill 24 — An Act to Recognize AMA Representation Rights (Hoffman)

First Reading — 1762-63 (*Nov. 1, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1799-1809 (*Nov. 6, 2018 morn.*), 1881-97 (*Nov. 7, 2018 aft.*), 1969-74 (*Nov. 20, 2018 morn.*), 2028-31 (*Nov. 21, 2018 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 2058-63 (*Nov. 21, 2018 aft.*), 2156-58 (*Nov. 27, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 2244-47 (*Nov. 29, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force December 11, 2018; SA 2018 c22]

Bill 25 — Canyon Creek Hydro Development Act (McCuaig-Boyd)

First Reading — 1879 (*Nov. 7, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2017-18 (*Nov. 21, 2018 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 2057-58 (*Nov. 21, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 2242-44 (*Nov. 29, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force December 11, 2018; SA 2018 cC-2.2]

Bill 26* — An Act to Combat Poverty and Fight for Albertans with Disabilities (Sabir)

First Reading — 1923 (*Nov. 8, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2078-86 (*Nov. 22, 2018 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 2200-09 (*Nov. 28, 2018 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 2220-21 (*Nov. 29, 2018 morn., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force January 1, 2019; SA 2018 c17]

Bill 27 — Joint Governance of Public Sector Pension Plans Act (Ceci)

First Reading — 1995 (*Nov. 20, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2127-34 (*Nov. 27, 2018 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 2287-93 (*Dec. 3, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 2372-76 (*Dec. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force December 11, 2018, with exceptions; SA 2018 cJ-0.5]

Bill 28 — Family Statutes Amendment Act, 2018 (Ganley)

First Reading — 2044 (*Nov. 21, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2134-40 (*Nov. 27, 2018 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 2209-13 (*Nov. 28, 2018 aft.*), 2304-05 (*Dec. 4, 2018 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 2327-28 (*Dec. 4, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force December 11, 2018, with exceptions; SA 2018 c18]

Bill 29 — Public Service Employee Relations Amendment Act, 2018 (Gray)

First Reading — 2044-45 (*Nov. 21, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2153-56 (*Nov. 27, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Committee of the Whole — 2181-84 (*Nov. 28, 2018 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 2215-20 (*Nov. 29, 2018 morn., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 1, 2019, with exceptions; SA 2018 c21]

Bill 30* — Mental Health Services Protection Act (Hoffman)

First Reading — 2152 (*Nov. 27, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2221-25 (*Nov. 29, 2018 morn.*), 2275-82 (*Dec. 3, 2018 eve.*), 2297-2300 (*Dec. 4, 2018 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 2346-56 (*Dec. 5, 2018 morn., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 2378-84 (*Dec. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force January 1, 2019, with exceptions; SA 2018 cM-13.2]

Bill 31 — Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act, 2018 (Mason)

First Reading — 2240 (*Nov. 29, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2282 (*Dec. 3, 2018 eve., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 2287-93 (*Dec. 3, 2018 eve., passed*)

Third Reading — 2338 (*Dec. 4, 2018 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force December 11, 2018, with exceptions; SA 2018 c20]

Bill 32 — City Charters Fiscal Framework Act (S. Anderson)

First Reading — 2240 (*Nov. 29, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 2282-87 (*Dec. 3, 2018 eve.*), 2301-04 (*Dec. 4, 2018 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 2339-46 (*Dec. 5, 2018 morn., passed*)

Third Reading — 2357-58 (*Dec. 5, 2018 morn., passed*)

Royal Assent — (*Dec. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force April 1, 2019, or an earlier date determined by the Lieutenant Governor in Council; SA 2018 cC-13.3]

Bill 201 — Employment Standards (Firefighter Leave) Amendment Act, 2018 (W. Anderson)

First Reading — 118 (*Mar. 14, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 201-14 (*Mar. 19, 2018 aft., referred to Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future*), 1620 (*Oct. 29, 2018 aft.*), 1780-92 (*Nov. 5, 2018 aft.*), 2268-71 (*Dec. 3, 2018 aft., motion to concur in report, adjourned*)

Bill 202 — Alberta Taxpayer Protection (Carbon Tax Referendum) Amendment Act, 2018 (Kenney)

First Reading — 179 (*Mar. 15, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 549-63 (*Apr. 16, 2018 aft., defeated on division*)

Bill 203 — Long Term Care Information Act (Schreiner)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 632-40 (*Apr. 30, 2018 aft.*), 829-33 (*May 7, 2018 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1221-30 (*May 28, 2018 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1434-41 (*Jun. 4, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Jun. 11, 2018 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force June 11, 2018; SA 2018 cL-22]

Bill 204 — Land Statutes (Abolition of Adverse Possession) Amendment Act, 2018 (Gotfried)

First Reading — 425 (*Apr. 5, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 833-41 (*May 7, 2018 aft., adjourned*), 1031-37 (*May 14, 2018 aft., reasoned amendment agreed to*)

Bill 205 — Supporting Accessible Mental Health Services Act (Jabbour)

First Reading — 1008 (*May 10, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1037 (*May 14, 2018 aft., deferred to Monday, October 29, 2018*)

Bill 206 — Societies (Preventing the Promotion of Hate) Amendment Act, 2018 (Coolahan)

First Reading — 1008-09 (*May 10, 2018 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1037 (*May 14, 2018 aft.*), 1441-47 (*Jun. 4, 2018 aft.*), 2267-68 (*Dec. 3, 2018 aft., passed on division*)

Bill 207 — Municipal Government (Legion Tax Exemption) Amendment Act, 2018 (Rosendahl)

First Reading — 1418 (*May 31, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 208 — Public Recreation Areas Consultation Act (Westhead)

First Reading — 1418 (*May 31, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 209 — Strategies for Unemployed and Underemployed Albertans Act (McPherson)

First Reading — 2321-22 (*Dec. 4, 2018 aft., passed*)

Bill 211 — Alberta Underground Infrastructure Notification System Consultation Act (Schneider)

First Reading — 2196 (*Nov. 28, 2018 aft., passed, referred to Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship*)

Bill 214 — Traffic Safety (Safe Distances for Passing Bicycles) Amendment Act, 2018 (McKittrick)

First Reading — 2401-02 (*Dec. 6, 2018 aft., passed*)

Alberta Hansard is available online at www.assembly.ab.ca

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**Alberta Hansard 2018
(29th Legislature, Fourth Session)**

Indexes

The cumulative index, which provides subject access to debates of the Alberta Legislature, is uploaded on a weekly basis. It is provided for reference purposes only and is unedited and unofficial.

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Abbreviations

Political parties

AL	Alberta Liberal Party
AP	Alberta Party
FCP	Freedom Conservative Party of Alberta
IC	Independent Conservative
Ind.	Independent (no party affiliation)
NDP	New Democratic Party
PC	Progressive Conservative Party
UCP	United Conservative Party

Abbreviations not included in the above list are in the subject index in alphabetical order.

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Main Estimates 2018-2019

The main estimates (budget) for 2018-2019 are all being considered in the legislative policy committees. Below is a list of ministries, the schedule of debate, and links to posted transcripts. At 3 p.m. on April 19 the Committee of Supply will meet to vote on the estimates.

Meetings start at 9 a.m. (morning), 3:30 p.m. (afternoon); or 7 p.m. (evening). Estimates debates are scheduled for three hours except for Executive Council, Culture and Tourism, Infrastructure, and Service Alberta, which are scheduled for two hours. The ministries of Economic Development and Trade, Energy, Environment and Parks, and Justice and Solicitor General each have two meetings scheduled for a total of six hours' debate per ministry.

Listing by date:

<i>Ministry</i>	<i>Committee</i>	<i>Meeting Date</i>
Indigenous Relations	Resource Stewardship	April 3 afternoon (3 hours)
Justice and Solicitor General	Families and Communities	April 3 afternoon (3 hours)
Treasury Board and Finance	Resource Stewardship	April 4 morning (3 hours)
Seniors and Housing	Families and Communities	April 4 morning (3 hours)
Justice and Solicitor General	Families and Communities	April 5 morning (3 hours)
Advanced Education	Alberta's Economic Future	April 5 morning (3 hours)
Energy	Resource Stewardship	April 9 evening (3 hours)
Culture and Tourism	Alberta's Economic Future	April 9 evening (2 hours)
Labour	Alberta's Economic Future	April 10 morning (3 hours)
Energy	Resource Stewardship	April 10 morning (3 hours)
Health	Families and Communities	April 11 morning (3 hours)
Transportation	Resource Stewardship	April 11 afternoon (3 hours)
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Economic Development and Trade	Alberta's Economic Future	April 12 morning (3 hours)
Service Alberta	Families and Communities	April 12 morning (2 hours)
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Agriculture and Forestry	Alberta's Economic Future	April 17 morning (3 hours)
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Status of Women	Families and Communities	April 17 afternoon (3 hours)
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Municipal Affairs	Resource Stewardship	April 19 morning (3 hours)
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Act to Implement Certain Provisions of the Budget Tabled in Parliament on February 27, 2018 and Other measures, An (federal Bill C-74)Provincial response ... *Hoffman* 820; *Nixon* 819**Act to Improve the Affordability and Accessibility of Post-secondary Education, An (Bill 19)**

First reading ... *Schmidt* 1621

Second reading ... *Anderson, W.* 1668–69; *Clark* 1690–91; *Cooper* 1691, 1693, 1697–98; *Cyr* 1674; *Dang* 1673–75; *Dreeshen* 1698–1700; *Ellis* 1669–70; *Fitzpatrick* 1693–94; *Hoffman* 1678–79; *Hunter* 1694–95; *Jabbour* 1698; *Kazim* 1670–71; *McIver* 1680–81; *McKittrick* 1695–96; *Nixon* 1676–78; *Payne* 1676; *Pitt* 1690; *Schmidt* 1667–68, 1670, 1700; *Shepherd* 1679–80; *Smith* 1691–93; *Swann* 1675–76; *Yao* 1671–73

Act to Improve the Affordability and Accessibility of Post-secondary Education, An (Bill 19) (continued)

Second reading, motion to refer bill to Alberta's Economic Future Committee (referral amendment) (Nixon: defeated) ... *Clark* 1690–91; *Cooper* 1691; *Hoffman* 1678–79; *McIver* 1680–81; *Nixon* 1676–78; *Pitt* 1690; *Shepherd* 1679–80

Second reading, points of order on debate ... *Acting Speaker (Sweet)* 1701; *Cooper* 1701; *Larivee* 1700; *Pitt* 1700; *Schmidt* 1701

Second reading, points of order on debate, member's withdrawal of comments ... *Schmidt* 1723

Second reading, points of order on debate, request for member to leave the Chamber ... *Acting Speaker (Sweet)* 1701; *Schmidt* 1701

Committee ... *Aheer* 1834–35; *Anderson, W.* 1828–29; *Cyr* 1830–31; *Dreeshen* 1831–32; *Drever* 1726–27; *Hanson* 1724–26; *Littlewood* 1723–24; *Loewen* 1722–23, 1832–33; *McIver* 1830; *Nixon* 1829, 1835; *Orr* 1727–28; *Renaud* 1718–19; *Schmidt* 1724, 1726, 1828–34; *Schreiner* 1722; *Smith* 1829, 1831, 1833–34; *Starke* 1720–22; *Woollard* 1719–20

Committee, amendment A1 (mandatory noninstructional fees) (Schmidt: carried) ... *Anderson, W.* 1828–29; *Cyr* 1830–31; *McIver* 1830; *Nixon* 1829; *Schmidt* 1828–31; *Smith* 1829, 1831

Third reading ... *Carson* 1862–64; *Connolly* 1848; *Dach* 1857; *Gotfried* 1852–54; *Hanson* 1864–65; *Hunter* 1859; *Loewen* 1848–51; *Miller* 1851–52; *Orr* 1845–47; *Panda* 1857–59; *Pitt* 1863–64; *Schmidt* 1845, 1854–55, 1861–62; *Shepherd* 1852, 1855–57; *Starke* 1859–61; *Yao* 1849–50

Third reading, points of order on debate ... *Deputy Speaker* 1859, 1861, 1864; *Feehan* 1859–61, 1863–64; *Pitt* 1859, 1861, 1864; *Starke* 1861

Alberta College of Art and Design provisions ... *Drever* 1727

Grant MacEwan University and Mount Royal University governance provisions ... *Schmidt* 1726

International student tuition and fee provisions ... *Aheer* 1835; *Dang* 1674; *Dreeshen* 1699; *Ellis* 1670; *Gotfried* 1854; *Kazim* 1671; *Littlewood* 1724; *Miller* 1852; *Orr* 1728; *Panda* 1858; *Smith* 1693; *Swann* 1675; *Woollard* 1720

Mandatory noninstructional fee provisions ... *Loewen* 1832–33; *Schmidt* 1832–33, 1845; *Yao* 1850

Ministerial powers under act ... *Dreeshen* 1832

Noninstructional fees provisions ... *Cooper* 1698; *Dreeshen* 1699

Provisions for collaboration between universities and non degree-granting institutions ... *Dreeshen* 1831; *Schmidt* 1726

Provisions for colleges to become universities ... *Dreeshen* 1831–32; *Miller* 1852; *Shepherd* 1852

Regulation development ... *Anderson, W.* 1668; *Dreeshen* 1669, 1832; *Loewen* 1833; *Schmidt* 1833; *Smith* 1833

Section 47, postsecondary institution sectors ... *Anderson, W.* 1668; *Schmidt* 1668

Section 48, comprehensive academic and research universities sector role ... *Hanson* 1724; *Schmidt* 1724

Stakeholder consultation ... *Anderson, W.* 1828–29, 1889–90; *Connolly* 1846; *Cyr* 1894; *Dreeshen* 1831–32; *Ellis* 1890–92; *Goodridge* 1884–85; *Hoffman* 1885, 1891–92; *Hunter* 1889–90, 1892; *Loewen* 1846; *Nixon* 1894; *Orr* 1845–46; *Schmidt* 1829–30, 1845; *Smith* 1829

Act to Protect Gas and Convenience Store Workers, An (Bill 19, 2017)

Implementation ... *Gray* 1410; *Westhead* 1410

Members' statements ... *Turner* 797

Act to Protect Patients, An (Bill 21)

First reading ... *Hoffman* 1666

Second reading ... *Aheer* 1686–88; *Hoffman* 1685–86; *Larivee* 1689–90; *Loyola* 1688; *Pitt* 1688–89

Second reading, division (carried unanimously) ... 1690

Committee ... *Aheer* 1840–41, 1905–6; *Cooper* 1839; *Cortes-Vargas* 1903–5; *Drever* 1907–8; *Fildebrandt* 1836–37; *Goodridge* 1838, 1908–9, 1927; *Hoffman* 1729, 1731, 1836–39, 1841, 1901, 1909–10, 1927–28; *Kenney* 1841–42, 1901–3, 1906–7; *McIver* 1924–25; *McPherson* 1728–30, 1840, 1842, 1903, 1928; *Nixon* 1925–27; *Swann* 1730, 1838–41; *Yao* 1835–36

Committee, amendment A1 (section 7, removal of ability to reapply to practice in Alberta) (McPherson: defeated) ... *Hoffman* 1729; *McPherson* 1728–30; *Swann* 1730

Committee, amendment A1 (section 7, removal of ability to reapply to practice in Alberta) (McPherson: defeated), division ... 1730–31

Committee, amendment A2 (section 7, extension of time before individual can reapply to practice in Alberta) (Yao: defeated) ... *Hoffman* 1836; *Yao* 1835–36

Committee, amendment A2 (section 7, extension of time before individual can reapply to practice in Alberta) (Yao: defeated), division ... 1836

Committee, amendment A3 (hearing tribunal membership) (Fildebrandt: defeated) ... *Fildebrandt* 1837; *Hoffman* 1837–38

Committee, amendment A4 (evidence of physical or psychological injury or harm in complaints alleging sexual abuse or sexual misconduct) (Swann: carried) ... *Hoffman* 1838; *Swann* 1838

Committee, amendment A5 (section 7, extension of time before individual can reapply to practice in Alberta to 5 years after completion of sentence) (Goodridge: defeated) ... *Cooper* 1839; *Goodridge* 1838; *Hoffman* 1839; *McPherson* 1840; *Swann* 1839–40

Committee, amendment A5 (section 7, extension of time before individual can reapply to practice in Alberta to 5 years after completion of sentence) (Goodridge: defeated), division ... 1840

Committee, amendment A6 (lifetime ban on practising for individuals convicted under Criminal Code) (Aheer: defeated) ... *Aheer* 1840–41; *Hoffman* 1841; *Kenney* 1841–42; *McPherson* 1842; *Swann* 1841

Committee, amendment A6 (lifetime ban on practising for individuals convicted under Criminal Code) (Aheer: defeated), division ... 1842–43

Committee, amendment A7 (sections 7 and 26, lifetime ban on practising for individuals found guilty of sexual abuse; 5-year ban for individuals found guilty of sexual misconduct) (Hoffman: carried as amended) ... *Aheer* 1905–6; *Cortes-Vargas* 1903–5; *Drever* 1907–8; *Hoffman* 1901; *Kenney* 1901–3, 1906–7; *McPherson* 1903

Committee, amendment A7 (sections 7 and 26, lifetime ban on practising for individuals found guilty of sexual abuse; 5-year ban for individuals found guilty of sexual misconduct) (Hoffman: carried as amended), subamendment SA1 (lifetime ban on practising for individuals convicted under Criminal Code) (Goodridge: withdrawn) ... *Goodridge* 1908–9; *Hoffman* 1909–10; *McIver* 1924–25; *Nixon* 1925–27

Act to Protect Patients, An (Bill 21) (continued)

Committee, amendment A7 (sections 7 and 26, lifetime ban on practising for individuals found guilty of sexual abuse; 5-year ban for individuals found guilty of sexual misconduct) (Hoffman: carried as amended), subamendment SA2 (lifetime ban on practising for individuals found guilty of sexual abuse or convicted under the Criminal Code) (Goodridge: carried) ... *Goodridge* 1927; *Hoffman* 1927

Committee, amendment A8 (section 16, hearing tribunal membership) (McPherson: carried) ... *Hoffman* 1928; *McPherson* 1928

Committee, motion that committee rise and report, division ... 1839

Committee, points of order on debate ... *Deputy Chair* 1908, 1910; *Ganley* 1908, 1910; *Hoffman* 1909; *Nixon* 1908–9

Third reading ... *Clark* 1931; *Cyr* 1929; *Drever* 1930–31; *Hoffman* 1899–1900, 1928–29, 1931–32; *Jabbour* 1931; *McKittrick* 1929; *McPherson* 1900, 1928, 1930; *Nixon* 1899–1900; *Yao* 1929–30

Third reading, recommittal to Committee of the Whole to reconsider sections 7 and 26, motion for (amendment REC1) (Nixon: carried) ... *McPherson* 1900; *Nixon* 1899–1900

Third reading, recommittal to Committee of the Whole to reconsider sections 7 and 26, motion for (amendment REC2) (McPherson: carried) ... *McPherson* 1928

Penalty provisions ... *Aheer* 1687, 1914–15; *Hoffman* 1731, 1915

Penalty provisions, members' statements ... *Yao* 1923

Practitioner licence revocation provisions ... *Aheer* 1687; *Kenney* 1870; *Notley* 1870

Section 25, minister's direction ... *Aheer* 1687

Stakeholder consultation ... *Hoffman* 1731

Victim support provisions ... *Aheer* 1687

Act to Protect the Health and Well-being of Working Albertans, An (Bill 30, 2017)

Implementation ... *Gray* 1410; *Westhead* 1410

Act to Recognize AMA Representation Rights, An (Bill 24)

First reading ... *Hoffman* 1762

Second reading ... *Anderson, W.* 1888–90; *Barnes* 1885–87; *Cyr* 1808–9, 1887, 1893, 1896; *Ellis* 1890–92; *Goodridge* 1883–85; *Hoffman* 1799, 1885, 1891–92; *Hunter* 1883, 1888–90, 1892–94; *Larivee* 1802; *Nixon* 1882–83, 1894–96; *Payne* 1803–4; *Pitt* 1804–6; *Schneider* 1806–8; *Swann* 1887–88; *van Dijken* 1802–3, 1881–82; *Westhead* 1799, 1882–83; *Yao* 1799–1802

Second reading, motion to refer bill to Families and Communities Committee (referral amendment REF1) (Pitt: defeated) ... *Anderson, W.* 1888–90; *Barnes* 1885–86; *Cyr* 1808–9, 1887, 1893, 1896; *Ellis* 1890–92; *Goodridge* 1883–85; *Hoffman* 1885, 1891–92; *Hunter* 1883, 1888–90, 1892–94; *Nixon* 1882–83, 1894–96; *Pitt* 1805–6; *Schneider* 1806–8; *Swann* 1887–88; *van Dijken* 1881–82; *Westhead* 1882–83

Second reading, motion to refer bill to Families and Communities Committee (referral amendment REF1) (Pitt: defeated), division ... 1896

Regulation development ... *van Dijken* 1802

Stakeholder consultation ... *Cyr* 1808–9; *Nixon* 1882–83; *Pitt* 1805; *Schneider* 1807; *van Dijken* 1802; *Yao* 1800

Act to Regulate Political Action Committees, An (Bill 214, 2017)

General remarks ... *Swann* 1115–16

Act to Renew Democracy in Alberta, An (Bill 1, 2015)

General remarks ... *Gray* 1015–16

Act to Renew Local Democracy in Alberta, An (Bill 23)

First reading ... *Anderson, S.* 1778

Second reading ... *Anderson, S.* 1809–10; *Coolahan* 1810–11; *Stier* 1811–12

Ban on campaigning at polling stations under act ... *Stier* 1811–12

Campaign financing and disclosure provisions ... *Anderson, S.* 1809; *Coolahan* 1810; *Stier* 1811

Campaign period reduction under act ... *Anderson, S.* 1809; *Stier* 1811

Enforcement provisions ... *Anderson, S.* 1809; *Coolahan* 1810; *Stier* 1811

General remarks ... *Anderson, S.* 1821; *Fraser* 1821

Mandatory advance poll provisions ... *Anderson, S.* 1809; *Coolahan* 1810

Retroactive clause ... *Stier* 1811

Stakeholder consultation ... *Anderson, S.* 1809; *Coolahan* 1810–11

Third-party advertising provisions ... *Anderson, S.* 1809; *Coolahan* 1810

Voter eligibility provisions ... *Coolahan* 1810; *Stier* 1812

Act to Restore Fairness to Public Revenue, An (Bill 2, 2015)

General remarks ... *Panda* 185

Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future, An (Bill 13)

First reading ... *McCuaig-Boyd* 606

Second reading ... *Aheer* 752–53, 862–64, 1175–77, 1179; *Barnes* 947–49, 1247–48; *Cooper* 751, 1171–75; *Cyr* 813–15; *Dang* 749–52, 815; *Drysdale* 748–49; *Fildebrandt* 957; *Ganley* 1173; *Gill* 951–53; *Gotfried* 808–10; *Hunter* 856–58, 861, 863–64; *Loewen* 949–52, 954; *Mason* 858; *McCuaig-Boyd* 746, 861; *McKittrick* 1179–80; *McLean* 746–47; *McPherson* 1250; *Orr* 813, 1169–71; *Panda* 747–48, 859–62, 956, 1170–71, 1174–75, 1177–79; *Phillips* 948; *Pitt* 858–59; *Schneider* 815–16; *Schreiner* 810–11; *Smith* 953–55; *Swann* 855–56; *Taylor* 1248–50; *Turner* 749, 950, 1172–73, 1177; *Yao* 811–13, 955–56

Second reading, motion to refer subject matter of bill to Alberta's Economic Future Committee (referral amendment) (Pitt: defeated) ... *Aheer* 862–64; *Barnes* 947–49; *Cooper* 1171–72; *Fildebrandt* 957; *Gill* 951–53; *Hunter* 861, 863–64; *Loewen* 949–51, 954; *McCuaig-Boyd* 861; *Orr* 1169–71; *Panda* 859–62, 956, 1170–71; *Phillips* 948; *Pitt* 858–59; *Smith* 953–55; *Turner* 950, 1172–73; *Yao* 955–56

Second reading, motion to refer subject matter of bill to Alberta's Economic Future Committee (referral amendment) (Pitt: defeated), division ... 1173

Second reading, motion to not now read (3-month hoist amendment) (Cooper: defeated) ... *Aheer* 1175–77, 1179; *Barnes* 1247–48; *Cooper* 1173–74; *McKittrick* 1179–80; *McPherson* 1250; *Panda* 1174–75, 1177–79; *Taylor* 1248–50; *Turner* 1177

Second reading, motion to not now read (3-month hoist amendment) (Cooper: defeated), amendment ruled out of order ... *Cooper* 1173; *Deputy Speaker* 1173–74; *Ganley* 1173

Second reading, motion to not now read (3-month hoist amendment) (Cooper: defeated), division ... 1250

Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future, An (Bill 13) (continued)

Second reading, motion to not now read out of order ...
Cooper 1173; *Deputy Speaker* 1173; *Ganley* 1173
 Second reading, division ... 1250
 Committee ... *Aheer* 1401–3, 1453–55, 1458–59, 1463–67, 1470–72; *Anderson, W.* 1455–56; *Barnes* 1329–30; *Clark* 1400–1401; *Cooper* 1459–60, 1469–70, 1476; *Dang* 1400, 1465–66; *Gill* 1328, 1459–61; *Hanson* 1399; *Hunter* 1451–53, 1468–69; *Kenney* 1474–78; *Loewen* 1403–4, 1467–68; *McCuaig-Boyd* 1322–23, 1325; *Nixon* 1324–25, 1397–99, 1449–51, 1466; *Orr* 1326; *Panda* 1326–28, 1332–33, 1456–58, 1461–63, 1473–74; *Schneider* 1330–32; *Taylor* 1328–29, 1333–34; *Turner* 1329, 1333; *Yao* 1399–1400
 Committee, amendment A1 (removal of sections 1(2), allocation of costs and benefits in the public interest, and 5(1), coming-into-force date) (*McCuaig-Boyd*: carried) ... *McCuaig-Boyd* 1322–23, 1325; *Nixon* 1324–25; *Orr* 1326
 Committee, amendment A2 (ISO payments to capacity market participants) (*Panda*: defeated) ... 1330–32; *Barnes* 1329–30; *Panda* 1327–28; *Schneider* 1330–32; *Taylor* 1328–29; *Turner* 1329
 Committee, amendment A3 (stakeholder consultation on regulations) (*Panda*: defeated) ... *Panda* 1332–33; *Taylor* 1333–34; *Turner* 1333
 Committee, amendment A3 (stakeholder consultation on regulations) (*Panda*: defeated), division ... 1397
 Committee, amendment A4 (replacement of “efficient and based on fair and open competition” with “fair, efficient and openly competitive”) (*Nixon/Panda*: defeated) ... *Aheer* 1401–3, 1453–55, 1458–59; *Anderson, W.* 1455–56; *Clark* 1400–1401; *Cooper* 1459–60; *Dang* 1400; *Gill* 1460–61; *Hanson* 1399; *Hunter* 1451–53; *Loewen* 1403–4; *Nixon* 1397–99, 1449–51; *Panda* 1456–58; *Yao* 1399–1400
 Committee, amendment A4 (replacement of “efficient and based on fair and open competition” with “fair, efficient and openly competitive”) (*Nixon/Panda*: defeated), division ... 1461
 Committee, amendment A5 (capacity market provisional rules) (*Panda*: defeated) ... *Aheer* 1463–67, 1470–72; *Cooper* 1469–70; *Dang* 1465–66; *Hunter* 1468–69; *Loewen* 1467–68; *Nixon* 1466; *Panda* 1462–63
 Committee, amendment A5 (capacity market provisional rules) (*Panda*: defeated), division ... 1473
 Committee, agreement to remaining clauses, division ... 1478
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 Third reading ... *Carlier* 1580; *Cooper* 1586–87; *Cyr* 1573–76, 1578, 1580, 1582, 1584; *Ganley* 1573; *Jabbour* 1580; *McCuaig-Boyd* 1573; *McKitrick* 1588; *Nixon* 1578–80; *Panda* 1576–78, 1590–91; *Schneider* 1588–90; *Schreiner* 1575–76; *Smith* 1582–84; *Stier* 1587–88; *Strankman* 1576, 1580–82; *Swann* 1591; *Yao* 1585
 Third reading, motion to recommit bill to Committee of the Whole to reconsider sections 2 and 3 (recommittal amendment REC) (*Nixon*: defeated) ... *Carlier* 1580; *Cyr* 1580, 1582, 1584; *Jabbour* 1580; *Nixon* 1579–80; *Smith* 1582–84; *Strankman* 1580–82; *Yao* 1585

Act to Secure Alberta's Electricity Future, An (Bill 13) (continued)

Third reading, motion to recommit bill to Committee of the Whole to reconsider sections 2 and 3 (recommittal amendment REC) (*Nixon*: defeated), division ... 1585
 Third reading, motion to not now read (3-month hoist amendment HA) (*Cooper*: defeated) ... *Cooper* 1586–87; *McKitrick* 1588; *Panda* 1590–91; *Schneider* 1588–90; *Stier* 1587–88; *Swann* 1591
 Third reading, motion to not now read (3-month hoist amendment HA) (*Cooper*: defeated), division ... 1591
 Third reading, division ... 1592
 Penalty provisions ... *McLean* 747; *Schreiner* 811
 Provisions for gas retailers ... *Nixon* 1578; *Panda* 1577; *Smith* 1583–84; *Yao* 1585
 Regulation development ... *Gill* 951; *Panda* 1474, 1577
 Stakeholder consultation ... *Aheer* 862, 1465; *Hunter* 861; *McCuaig-Boyd* 861, 1325; *Nixon* 1325; *Panda* 860, 1175; *Pitt* 859
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 Second reading ... *Aheer* 484–85; *Cooper* 361–62; *Dach* 483–84; *Malkinson* 482–83; *Sabir* 360–61, 486–87; *Swann* 486; *Turner* 483; *Woollard* 486
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 Committee, amendment A1 (treatment of trust income) (*Cooper*: defeated) 847–48; *Aheer* 848–49, 851–53, 1084–87; *Cooper* 850–51; *Drysdale* 849–50; *Fildebrandt* 1087; *Gill* 850–51; *Hunter* 853–54; *Malkinson* 850; *Sabir* 854, 1086–87
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- Bill 5 *See* **Act to Strengthen Financial Security for Persons with Disabilities, An (Bill 5)**
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Information about any of the following bills may be found by looking under the title of the bill.

- Bill 10 *See* **Act to Amend the Alberta Bill of Rights to Protect Our Children, An (Bill 10, 2014)**

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- Bill 1 *See* **Act to Renew Democracy in Alberta, An (Bill 1, 2015)**
- Bill 2 *See* **Act to Restore Fairness to Public Revenue, An (Bill 2, 2015)**
- Bill 6 *See* **Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act**

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Information about any of the following bills may be found by looking under the title of the bill.

- Bill 1 *See* **Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act (Bill 1, 2016)**
 Bill 5 *See* **Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act (Bill 5, 2016)**
 Bill 20 *See* **Climate Leadership Implementation Act**
 Bill 25 *See* **Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act (Bill 25, 2016)**
 Bill 27 *See* **Renewable Electricity Act**
 Bill 30 *See* **Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act**
 Bill 34 *See* **Electric Utilities Amendment Act, 2016 (Bill 34, 2016)**
 Bill 35 *See* **Fair Elections Financing Act**

Bills, government (previous sessions, 2017)

Information about any of the following bills may be found by looking under the title of the bill.

- Bill 19 *See* **Act to Protect Gas and Convenience Store Workers, An (Bill 19, 2017)**
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 Bill 206 *See* **Societies (Preventing the Promotion of Hate) Amendment Act, 2018 (Bill 206)**

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- Bill 207 *See* **Municipal Government (Legion Tax Exemption) Amendment Act, 2018 (Bill 207)**
 Bill 208 *See* **Public Recreation Areas Consultation Act (Bill 208)**

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- Bill 202 *See* **Alberta Local Food Act (Bill 202, 2015)**

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- Bill 205 *See* **Pharmacy and Drug (Pharmaceutical Equipment Control) Amendment Act, 2016 (Bill 205, 2016)**

Bills, private members' public (previous session, 2017)

Information about any of the following bills may be found by looking under the title of the bill.

- Bill 202 *See* **Protecting Victims of Non-consensual Distribution of Intimate Images Act (Bill 202, 2017)**
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